



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR  
September 10, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: LaTanya Bellow, Interim City Manager  
 Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Director, Planning and Development Department  
 Subject: Mills Act Contract – 7 Greenwood Common

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Mills Act contract with Anne and Michael Ray for the City Landmark property at 7 Greenwood Common.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Approving the Mills Act contract for the City Landmark property at 7 Greenwood Common would reduce the property tax bills for the owners by approximately \$23,800 in year one, about 30% of which (\$7,100) would be diverted from Berkeley's tax revenue. Final amounts are determined by Alameda County after contract execution. This will be an annual impact to the City's tax revenue, as the contract runs for ten years, in comparable annual amounts, and automatically renews annually thereafter unless notice of nonrenewal is given. In turn, the work plan commits the owners to spending the anticipated tax savings on restoring the landmarked property. The Mills Act also specifies procedures for cancellation of the contract for a breach of conditions.

Council approval will allow property tax reduction for this property to begin in the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On March 19, 1990, the property at 7 Greenwood Common was designated as a City of Berkeley Landmark, making the property owner eligible to take advantage of the Mills Act (see Attachment 2).

On August 1, 2024, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) reviewed the proposal by the present owner, Edith Hofmeister, Trustee of the Edith M. Hofmeister Trust, to enter into a Mills Act contract for 7 Greenwood Common, including a proposed scope of work and maintenance schedule, and voted 6-0-0-2 to recommend approval of the Mills Act Contract application to City Council (Moved/Second Crandall/Enchill; Yes: Enchill, Finacom, Crandall, Twu, Montgomery, Orbuch; No: none; Abstain: none; Absent: Leuschner, Schwartz).

## BACKGROUND

The Mills Act allows owners of historic properties to voluntarily enter into individual contracts with the City, in order to obtain limited ad valorem tax relief at the discretion of host jurisdictions, in exchange for maintaining and restoring their historic property. The property tax savings are offered to create an incentive for owners to maintain their historic properties, to designate historic properties that are currently not protected, and to purchase and upgrade already dilapidated historic properties.

In Berkeley, owners of those properties designated by the LPC as either a Landmark or a Structure of Merit may apply for a Mills Act contract. The Alameda County Assessor uses a formula, consistent with the provisions of the Mills Act, to determine the amount of property tax reduction, which applies a capitalization rate to the calculated net operating income for the property under the Mills Act contract. The Mills Act application includes a ten-year work plan to restore and maintain the subject property. The total investment in the work plan is intended to equal or exceed the total amount of the property tax relief over the contract period.

On February 24, 1998, the Berkeley City Council passed Resolution No. 59,355-N.S., which authorizes the local use of the Mills Act of 1972, as amended, which is codified in California Government Code Section 50280-90 and Revenue and Taxation Code Section 439.

In 2011, State law was amended to include more specific requirements regarding inspection, fees, and cancellation. The amendments clarified that the local legislative body may require fees for providing services pursuant to the Mills Act; shall inspect the property prior to a new agreement and then every five years thereafter; and shall cancel the contract if it determines that the owner has breached the conditions of the contract. As a result of these amendments, Land Use Planning fees for the approval and monitoring of these contracts were added in July 2012, and an ongoing inspection program is in place.

## RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In order to qualify for Mills Act consideration, 1) the property must qualify as historic; 2) the contract must adequately meet the requirements for Mills Act contracts; and 3) the type of improvements outlined in the work plan must meet the City standards, which require that tax savings be used according to the rules and regulations outlined in the Act.

The property located at 7 Greenwood Common is eligible for the Mills Act contract because it is a Berkeley Landmark. The contract template has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office for conformance to all relevant City and State regulations. Finally, the contract includes a comprehensive work plan that the property owner has agreed to complete within the first ten-year contract period (see Attachment 3) and that provides for the property "use, maintenance and restoration as to retain its

characteristics as property of historical significance.” The LPC has concluded that the proposed work plan meets the standards adopted by the City Council, and the costs of the proposed improvements are anticipated to equal or exceed the tax savings afforded the owners.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE IMPACTS

Approval of the contract would encourage historic resource rehabilitation, materials conservation, and construction and demolition waste diversion.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council could deny the application if it found that it did not satisfy the requirements of the Act.

CONTACT PERSON

Jordan Klein, Director, Planning and Development Department, 510-981-7534  
Fatema Crane, Principal Planner/LPC Secretary, 510-981-7413

Attachments:

1. Draft City Council Resolution
2. Notice of Decision, Landmark Designation for 7 Greenwood Common, dated March 19, 1990
3. Exterior Rehabilitation Schedule, dated May 31, 2024
4. LPC Staff Report August 1, 2024

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A MILLS ACT CONTRACT AND ANY NECESSARY AMENDMENTS WITH EDITH M. HOFMEISTER, TRUSTEE, OF THE EDITH M. HOFMEISTER TRUST, FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION OF A HISTORIC PROPERTY LOCATED AT 7 GREENWOOD COMMON, IN RETURN FOR THE OWNER TO OBTAIN A PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION

WHEREAS, on February 24, 1998, the Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. 59,355-N.S. which authorized the use of Mills Act contracts; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 1990, 7 Greenwood Common was designated as a City of Berkeley Landmark, which renders it eligible to take advantage of the Mills Act; and

WHEREAS, on August 1, 2024, the Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the proposed projects listed in the Mills Act Contract Application for 7 Greenwood Common, and recommended that the City Council enter into a Mills Act contract with the property owner; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley Mills Act program requires each contract to be approved by the City Council and signed by the City Manager; and

WHEREAS, the City Council, in light of all evidence, finds that the contract is consistent with the purposes of the Mills Act program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is authorized and directed to execute a Mills Act Contract and any necessary amendments with Edith M. Hofmeister, Trustee of the Edith M. Hofmeister Trust for the maintenance and restoration of the historic property located at 7 Greenwood Common and in return offer a property tax reduction for a period of at least ten years, with a recorded copy of such contract and amendments to be on file in the Office of the City Clerk and Alameda County Clerk- Recorder.

DEPARTMENT

MENT

603 126  
CURRENT PLANNING  
DEC 23 1989

(APPLICATION REQUESTING DESIGNATION FOR LANDMARK STATUS)

Ordinance 4694-N.S. Individual Landmark \$50.00 Historical Dist. \$100.00

Name of Property GREENWOOD COMMON Survey Code No. 2244

2. Building \_\_\_\_\_ Site  Open Space \_\_\_\_\_

3. County ALAMEDA 4. City BERKELEY

5. Street Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, + 10 Greenwood Common (and enclosed common garden space)

6. Vicinity (if rural) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Present Occupant Nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, + 10 GREENWOOD COMMON (See attached)

8. Present Owner See attached

9. Original Owner (if known) See attached

10. Date of Construction See attached 11. Style See attached - Post WWII Bay Area Modern

12. Architect/Builder See attached 13. Original Use RESIDENTIAL

14. Historic Value: national \_\_\_\_\_ state  county  city  neighborhood   
none \_\_\_\_\_

15. Architectural Value: national \_\_\_\_\_ state  county  city  neighbor-  
hood  none \_\_\_\_\_

16. Notable Garden or Landscaping: yes  no \_\_\_\_\_

17. Photographs: contemporary See attached historical See attached  
dates \_\_\_\_\_ dates \_\_\_\_\_  
photographer \_\_\_\_\_ photographer \_\_\_\_\_  
repository \_\_\_\_\_ repository \_\_\_\_\_

18. Bibliography: Published Sources State of CALIFORNIA  
Public Records HISTORIC RESOURCES INV. (B) 2244  
Interviews \_\_\_\_\_  
Other SEE ATTACHED

Block Number 5.6 20. Lot No. 13.1421. Lot Size: Frontage 320  
Depth 240

Current Zoning Status R-1H 23. Adjacent Property Zoning Status R-1H

Present Use: residential (single family  multiple \_\_\_\_\_) office \_\_\_\_\_  
store \_\_\_\_\_ public \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ specify \_\_\_\_\_

Adjacent Property Use (check all that apply): residential (single  
family  multiple \_\_\_\_\_) office \_\_\_\_\_ store \_\_\_\_\_ public \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_ specify \_\_\_\_\_

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Assessed Property Value: current n/a 5 yrs. ago n/a 10 yrs. ago n/a

Present Condition of Property: exterior: excellent  good  fair  poor   
interior: excellent  good  fair  poor   
grounds: excellent  good  fair  poor

Property Endangered: yes  no  source, if yes DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL; DISFIGUREMENT  
SECOND STORY ADDITIONS

Potential New Property Uses: \_\_\_\_\_

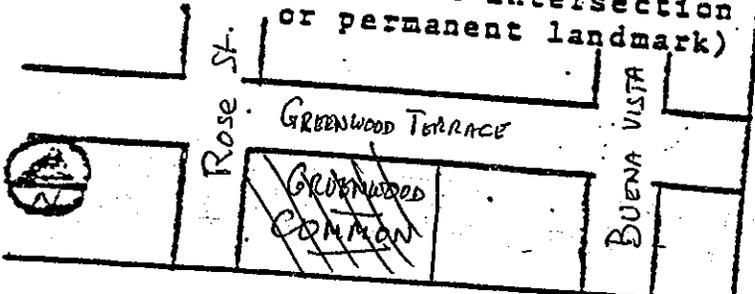
History: Briefly describe the historical significance of this property

SEE ATTACHED

Architecture: Briefly describe the appearance of this structure. Indicate notable features as well as later alterations and changes. Include notable landscaping or natural features.

SEE ATTACHED

32. Location Map (nearest intersection or permanent landmark)



33. Photograph (Contact print from 35mm black and white photo)

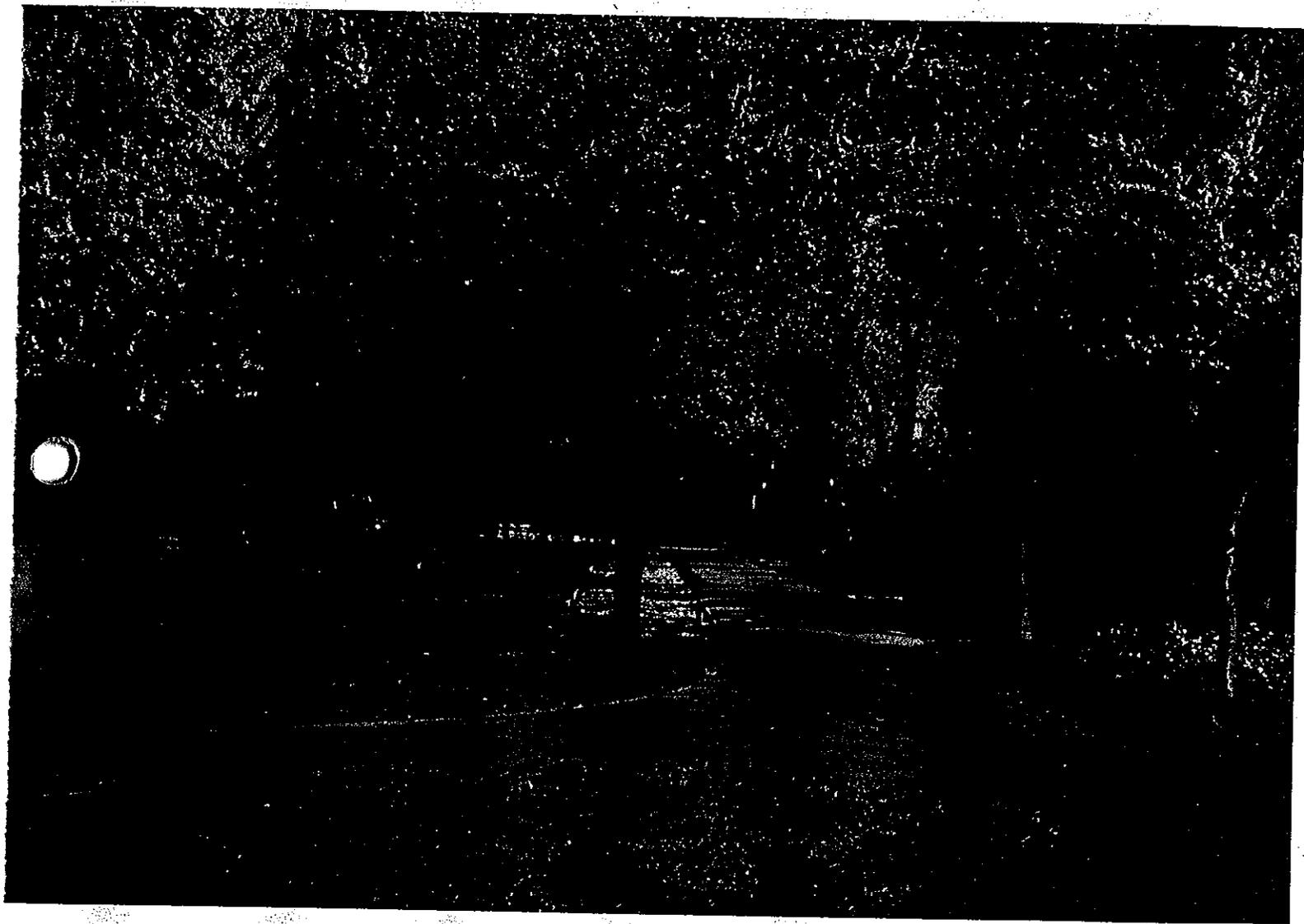
Additional Comments or Continuation of Previous Answers

SEE ATTACHED

Recorder: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



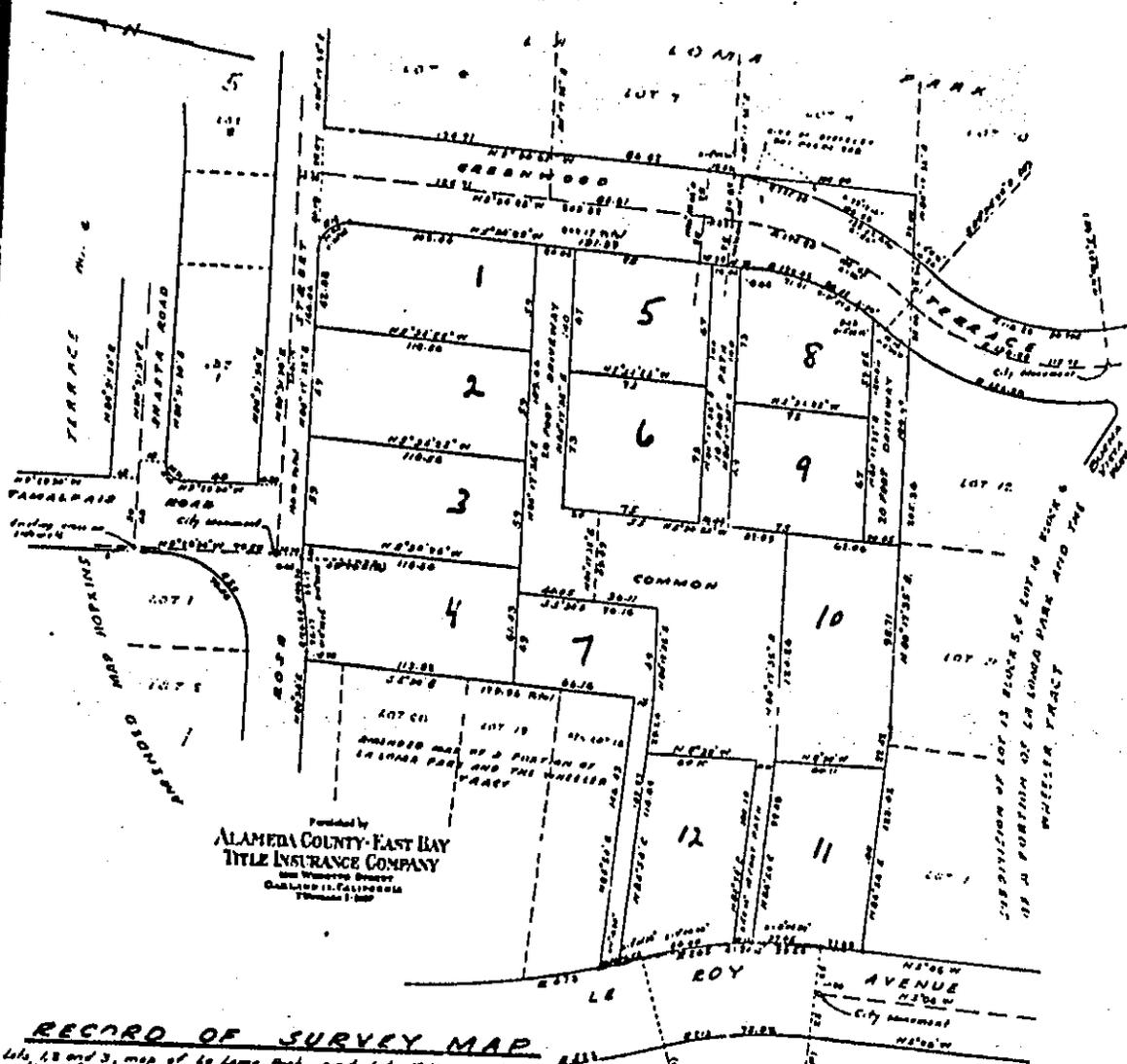
Greenwood Common



Greenwood Common

71-40024

RE:4746 M:509



Provided by  
**ALAMEDA COUNTY-EAST BAY  
 TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
 100 WASHINGTON STREET  
 OAKLAND 12, CALIFORNIA  
 THOMAS F. BIRD

**RECORD OF SURVEY MAP**

Lots 12 and 3, map of La Loma Park, and lots 10, 11 and a portion of lot 12, sheet 6, divided map of a portion of La Loma Park and the Wheeler Tract, situated in the City of Berkeley, County of Alameda, State of California

Sheet 1 of 1

FILED AUG 25 1952 IN  
 BOOK 5 AT PAGE 34 OF  
 SURVEYS BY LICENSED SURVEYORS  
 ALAMEDA COUNTY RECORDS

This diagram is prepared from data appearing in the county records, but constitutes no part of any report or policy of title insurance to which it is attached, and the company does not insure against any differences in the location and dimensions delineated thereon that an accurate field survey of the real property may disclose.  
 FORM 114 908 2 2 ALAMEDA COUNTY-EAST BAY TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY

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Answer to Question No.7

Present Occupants: 1 Greenwood Common Ann and Robert W. Birge  
2 Greenwood Common Phyllis and Samuel Schaaf  
3 Greenwood Common Katinka and Frederick S. Wyle  
4 Greenwood Common S.B. Master and James Symons  
7 Greenwood Common Joan and Richard McDonough  
8 Greenwood Common Elliot E.Porter and Iris Weiner  
9 Greenwood Common Diane and David Weber Shapiro  
10 Greenwood Common Anna Maenchen

Answer to Question No. 8

Present owners: See answer to question No. 7.

The present occupants are the present owners.

Answer to Question No.9

Original Owners: Greenwood Common

- #1 Ann and Robert W. Birge
- #2 Phyllis and Samuel Schaaf
- #3 Mr. and Mrs. J. Ackerman
- #4 Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Duhring
- #7 Mr. Warren Gregory /Mr. W.W. Wurster
- #8 Mrs. W.W. Douglas
- #9 Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Blaisdell
- 10 Mr. and Mrs. Maenchen

Answer to Questions No. 10 and No. 12

Date of Construction and Architect/Builder

1	Greenwood Common	1955	Donald Olsen
2	Greenwood Common	1957	
3	Greenwood Common	1954	Joseph Esherick
4	Greenwood Common	1954	Harwell Hamilton Harris
7	Greenwood Common	c. 1920	R.M.Schindler
8	Greenwood Common	1953	Howard Moise
9	Greenwood Common	1954	Henry Hill
10	Greenwood Common	1952	John Funk

The planning of Greenwood Common was a joint effort of William W. Wurster and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, who designed the communally owned central park as well as two of the private gardens, namely that of No. 7 and No. 3 Greenwood Common.

T H E G U I D E T O

# ARCHITECTURE IN SAN FRANCISCO AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Revised edition by  
**David Gebhard**  
**Eric Sandweiss**  
**Robert Winter**

David Gebhard  
Roger Montgomery  
Robert Winter  
John Woodbridge  
Sally Woodbridge



Gibbs M. Smith, Inc.  
Peregrine Smith Books  
Salt Lake City  
1985

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## AUTHORS

**DAVID GEBHARD** is a professor of architectural history and curates the Architectural Drawing Collection of the Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara. He is vice-chairman of the City of Santa Barbara Landmark Committee, and for many years has been involved in planning and architectural review in Santa Barbara. He has served on numerous national bodies, including the presidency of the Society of Architectural Historians; as a member of the National Architectural Accrediting Board, and as a juror for national architectural competitions—including the 1985 competition for the Phoenix City Hall. He has organized exhibitions of architecture and design at a number of major American museums, including the 1985-86 "High Style Vanguard Design in America," organized with other guest curators for the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Much of his recent writing has dealt with traditional architectural images in America in this century.

**ROBERT WINTER** is a professor of the History of Ideas at Occidental College in Los Angeles. He has been cited by the mayor and city council of Los Angeles for his 12-year membership on the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Board and currently serves on the Pasadena Cultural Heritage Commission. He has received a Presidential Citation for his work with the Los Angeles Chapter, American Institute of Architects. He has authored and co-authored several publications dealing with California architecture and design.

**ERIC SANDWEISS** received a degree in American folklore from Harvard. He worked for three years at The Foundation for San Francisco's Architectural Heritage, surveying over 5000 buildings in San Francisco and lecturing on local history. He has written reviews for California publications. Currently he is a PhD student in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley.

○ Greenwood Common L. Halprin, land. arch.

- No. 1 1955; Donald Olsen
- No. 3 1954; Joseph Esherick
- No. 4 1954; Harwell Hamilton Harris
- No. 7 c.1920; R. M. Schindler
- No. 8 1953; Howard Moise
- No. 9 1954; Henry Hill
- No. 10 1952; John Funk

Designed as a country retreat from San Francisco.

for year-round living, but conserves a rustic character.

○ William Wilson Wurster, famous Bay Region architect and former Dean of the College of Environmental Design, subdivided the property on the flat meadowland

into seven sites around a grassy common. The architects of the Greenwood Common houses, though not all of the same school, held compatible design philosophies which insured a harmonious relation of place and part.



13. House

14. **Rowell House** 1915; John Hudson Thomas  
Rem. 1921 149 Tamalpais Rd.  
Thomas' great house in the Craftsman Style expresses a personal handling of masonry and half-timber.

15. **Manchester House** 1911; Williamson & Winterburn. Rem. by Bernard Maybeck  
2645 Shasta Rd.

Once a cottage on the edge of a canyon, Maybeck "Chalet-ed" it into an imposing house of three stories on the canyon side. The two porches on the road have typical Maybeckian wood joinery.

16. **House** 1959; Charles Warren Callister  
2625 Rose St.

**House** 1958; Charles Warren Callister  
2637 Rose St.

Two houses by an influential Bay Area architect. The upper one presents a formal, closed aspect to the street while the lower one is nearly submerged in the hillside. They are more visible from Shasta Rd.

17. **Warren Gregory House** 1903-06; John Galen Howard  
1459 Greenwood Terr.

Designed as a country retreat from San Francisco, this house was enlarged after the 1906 earthquake for year-round living, but conserves a rustic character. For over 20 years it was the home of William Wilson Wurster, famous Bay Region architect and former Dean of the College of Environmental Design, who subdivided the property on the flat meadowland opposite the house into seven sites around a grassy common. The architects of the Greenwood Common houses, though not all of the same school, held compatible design philosophies which insured a harmonious relation of place and part.

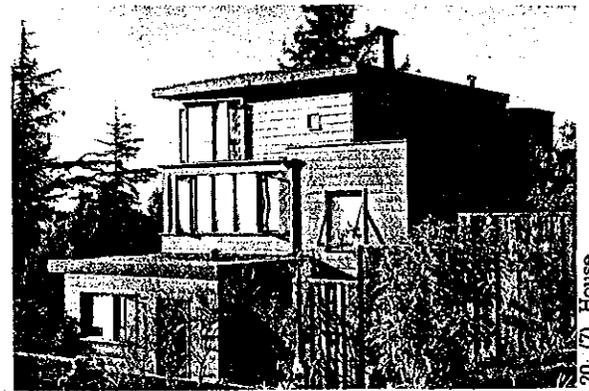
18. **Two cottages** 1955; Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons  
1405 & 1425 Greenwood Terrace

A pair of small shingle cottages, one of which has been considerably added to in recent years.

19. **House** c.1950; Winfield Scott Wellington  
1471 Greenwood Terr.

20. **Greenwood Commons** L. Halprin, land. arch.

**No. 1** 1955; Donald Olsen  
**No. 3** 1954; Joseph Esherick  
**No. 4** 1954; Harwell Hamilton Harris  
**No. 7** c.1920; R. M. Schindler  
**No. 8** 1953; Howard Moise  
**No. 9** 1954; Henry Hill  
**No. 10** 1952; John Funk



20. (7) House

21. **Francis Gregory House** 1907; Bernard Maybeck  
1476 Greenwood Terr.

A restrained and elegant box whose roof line echoes the slope on which it perches. The hand-crafted, somewhat whimsical aspect of the houses up Buena Vista Way is absent here.

22. **Warren Gregory House** 1912; John G. Howard  
1486 Greenwood Terr.

Howard's essay in the Maybeckian Craftsman mode.

23. **Jackson House** 1939; Michael Goodman  
2626 Buena Vista Way

A characteristic stripped-down Regency design of the 1930s.

Over the crossroads of La Loma and Buena Vista hangs an imaginary sign saying "Abandon 20th century hang-ups, all ye who enter here!" This is Maybeck country, a land of invention coupling experimental materials and craft tradition. The houses listed below present a vocabulary of Maybeck's design ideas; from cutaway eaves as in 2704; to the use of "bubble-crete" dipped sacks for siding as in 2711; to steep-pitched, shingle roofs, polychromy, and industrial sash in 2733. Maybeck lived in 2711, and designed some of the other houses for members of his family and close friends. Far from being a pure designer, he did a large part of the construction himself and particularly enjoyed hand-finishing the interiors.

\$1.95 (U.S.: 14/00)  
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# BUILDINGS OF THE BAY AREA

A Guide to the Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region

By John and Sally Woodbridge

For the sightseer no less than the architectural student, this book offers a unique guide to the architectural riches of one of the few flourishing regional styles in America. In the San Francisco Bay Area, history, site, and climate have combined to produce one of the pioneer regions in the development of modern architecture, an architecture that is peculiarly American, comparable only to the brilliant but short-lived flowering of Chicago at the end of the last century.

The visitor to the city who wants to enjoy the surprises offered by San Francisco's local architecture will find this guidebook invaluable. It is designed primarily for use: carefully indexed for easy reference, it is organized by areas, each with an individual map closely keyed to the hundreds of buildings described and illustrated. A tour to the outlying areas is mapped out for the motorist interested in the numerous contemporary houses that dot the hillsides around the bay, and the armchair tourist, looking for a survey of the architectural history of the Bay Area, will delight in the pictorial view of a spectacularly endowed region.

JOHN MARSHALL WOODBRIDGE, the book's author and photographer, is a working architect who has been associated with architectural firms in New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. His wife, SALLY BYRNE WOODBRIDGE, who did the research for the guide, majored in art history at Duke University. PHILIP THIEL, the designer of the book, is a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has been engaged in visual design in the San Francisco area. The sketches are by RAI OKAMOTO.

Cover design by Philip Thiel / Photo by John Woodbridge

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Guide to the architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region

BUILDINGS OF THE BAY AREA John and Sally Woodbridge / Philip Thiel



# BUILDINGS of the

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A Guide to the Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region

*B. Paulsen*

compiled by **John Marshall Woodbridge**

and **Sally Byrne Woodbridge**

sketches by **Rai Yukio Okamoto**

designed by **Philip Thiel**

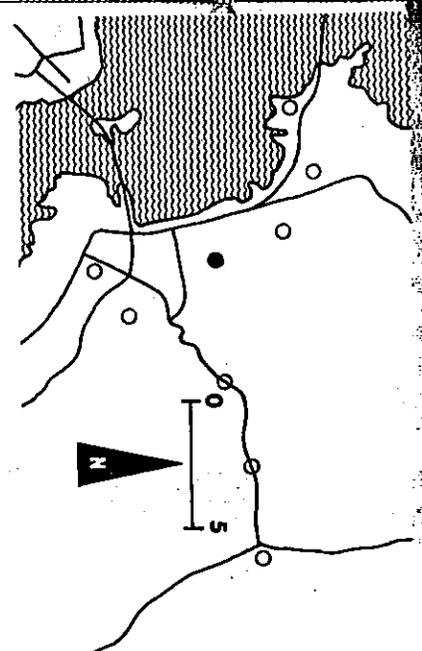
## **BUILDINGS OF THE BAY AREA**

Produced with the assistance of a special  
committee of the Northern California chapter  
of the American Institute of Architects

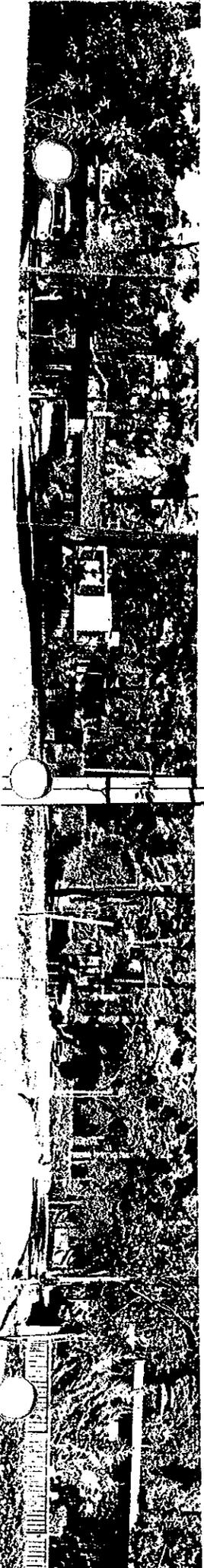
Grove Press, Inc. New York



- c No. 7
  - d Residence  
1486 Greenwood Terrace  
John Galen Howard 1912
  - b Residence  
1401 Greenwood Terrace  
Roger Lee 1955
  - c Residence (formerly Gregory res.)  
1459 Greenwood Terrace  
John Galen Howard 1903-06
  - d Two Cottages  
1425-1437 Greenwood Terrace  
Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons 1955
  - e Greenwood Common  
No. 1—Donald Olson 1955  
No. 3—Joseph Escherick 1954  
No. 4—Harvill H. Harris 1954  
No. 7—R. M. Schindler c. 1932  
No. 10—John Funk 1952  
No. 9—Henry Hill 1954  
No. 8—Howard Moise 1953
- Greenwood Common is an example both of private community planning and a group of houses by well-known architects. The land originally formed the grounds of the Gregory house above the common and was divided to leave a square in the center of the group to be owned and landscaped in common. The most interesting houses of the group are the Gregory house above, which displays all the fine qualities of the early Bay Region style, and the Schindler house at the foot, which shows the peculiarly cubistic quality that distinguishes his work.*



**GREENWOOD COMMON 12 EB**



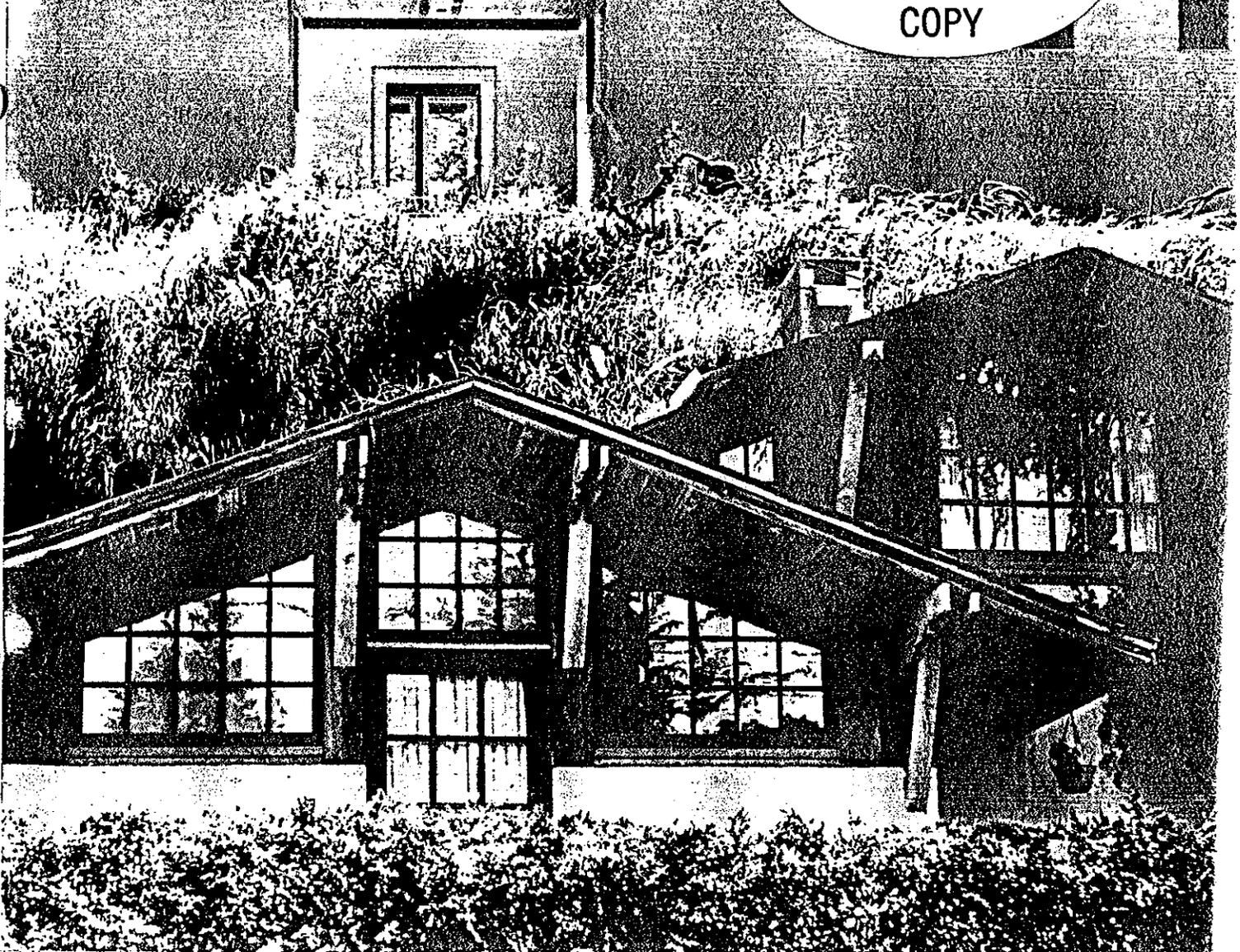
# BAY AREA HOUSES

**NEW EDITION**

EDITED BY  
SALLY WOODBRIDGE  
INTRODUCTION BY  
DAVID GEBHARD



**AUTOGRAPHED  
COPY**



# Bay Area Houses

NEW EDITION

*Edited by*  
**SALLY WOODBRIDGE**

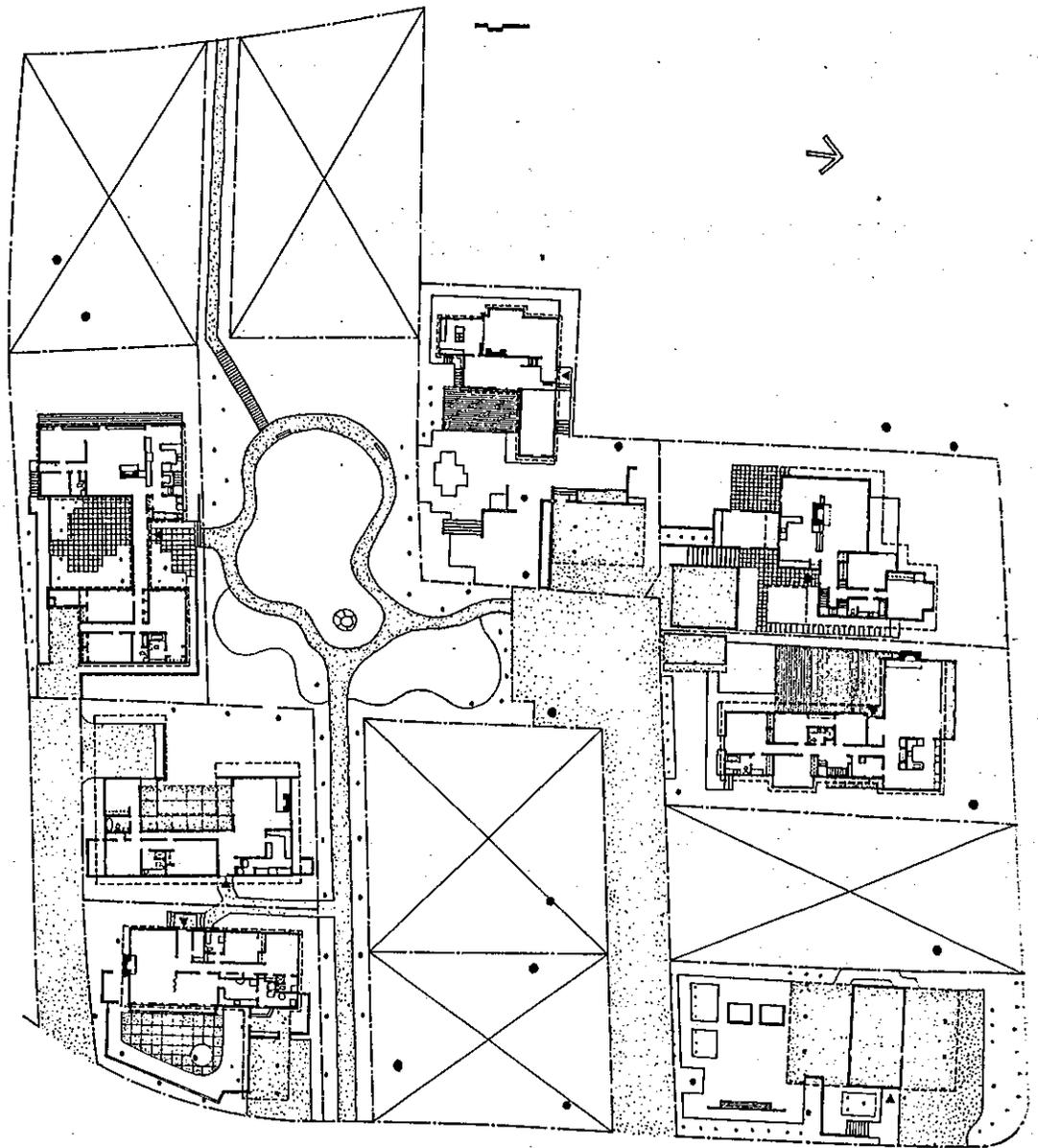
*Introduction and Foreword by*  
**DAVID GEBHARD**

*Photographs by*  
**MORLEY BAER, ROGER STURTEVANT,**  
*and*  
**OTHERS**

*Architectural drawings by*  
**RANDOLPH MEADORS**  
*and*  
**FLOYD CAMPBELL**



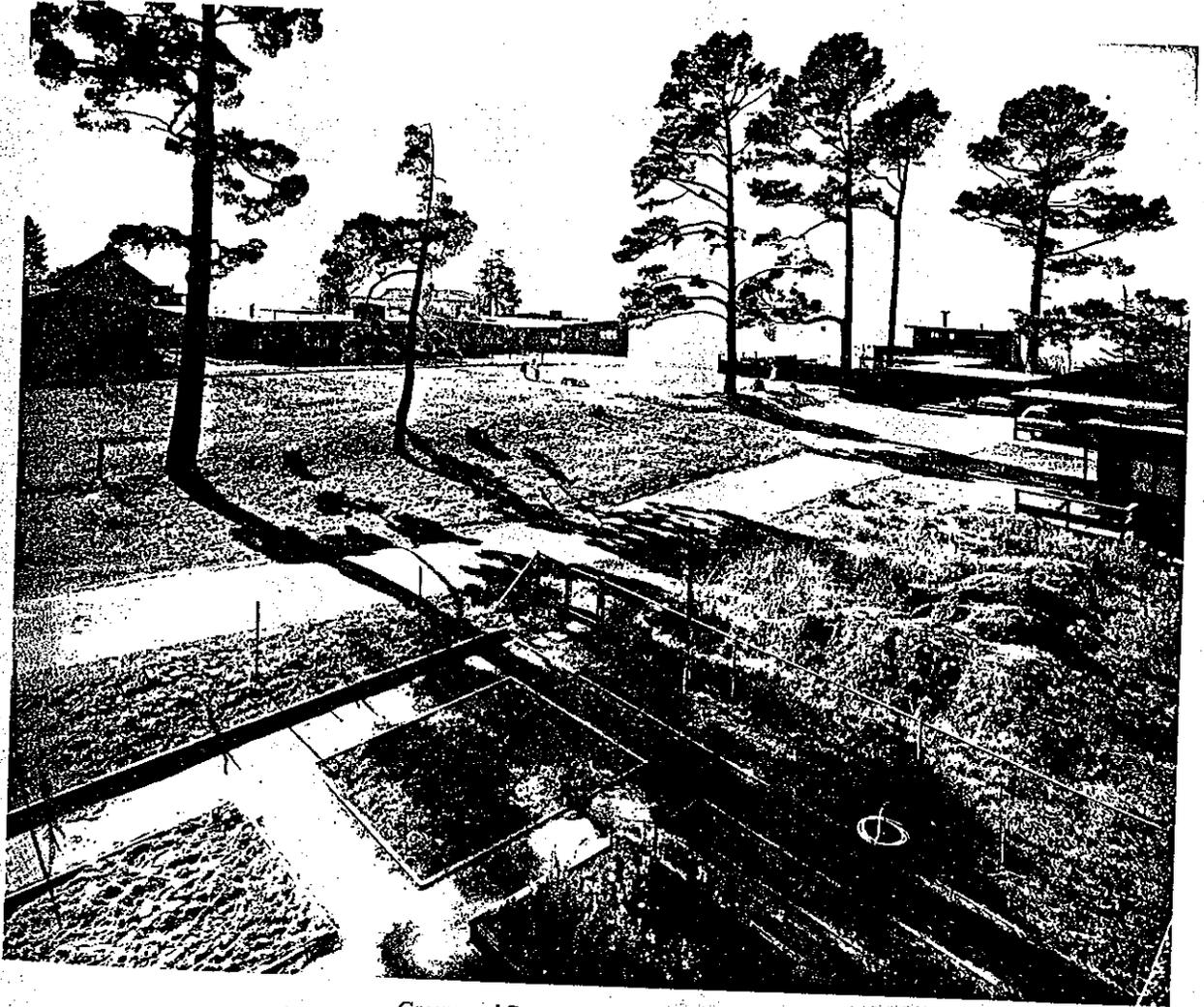
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SALT LAKE CITY



HALPRIN, *Greenwood Common, Berkeley, site plan, c. 1950*

Homes in Los Angeles. Best known and most complete among Bay Area examples is Ladera on the San Francisco Peninsula. Here John Funk, who did considerable war housing work in addition to his wide custom-house practice, Joseph Stein, who had a reputation as a particularly political type among designers in the mid-forties, and the widely experienced social housing landscape architect Garrett Eckbo planned

an ideal residential community. A significant element of this community actually got built before postwar housing boom, inflation, lending institute hostility, and a decline in utopian optimism caused to halt development. Interestingly, Joseph Eichler, the great mass-producer of pure 1950's style Bay Area design, would partly finish the project a decade later. Ladera remains one of the few palpable im-



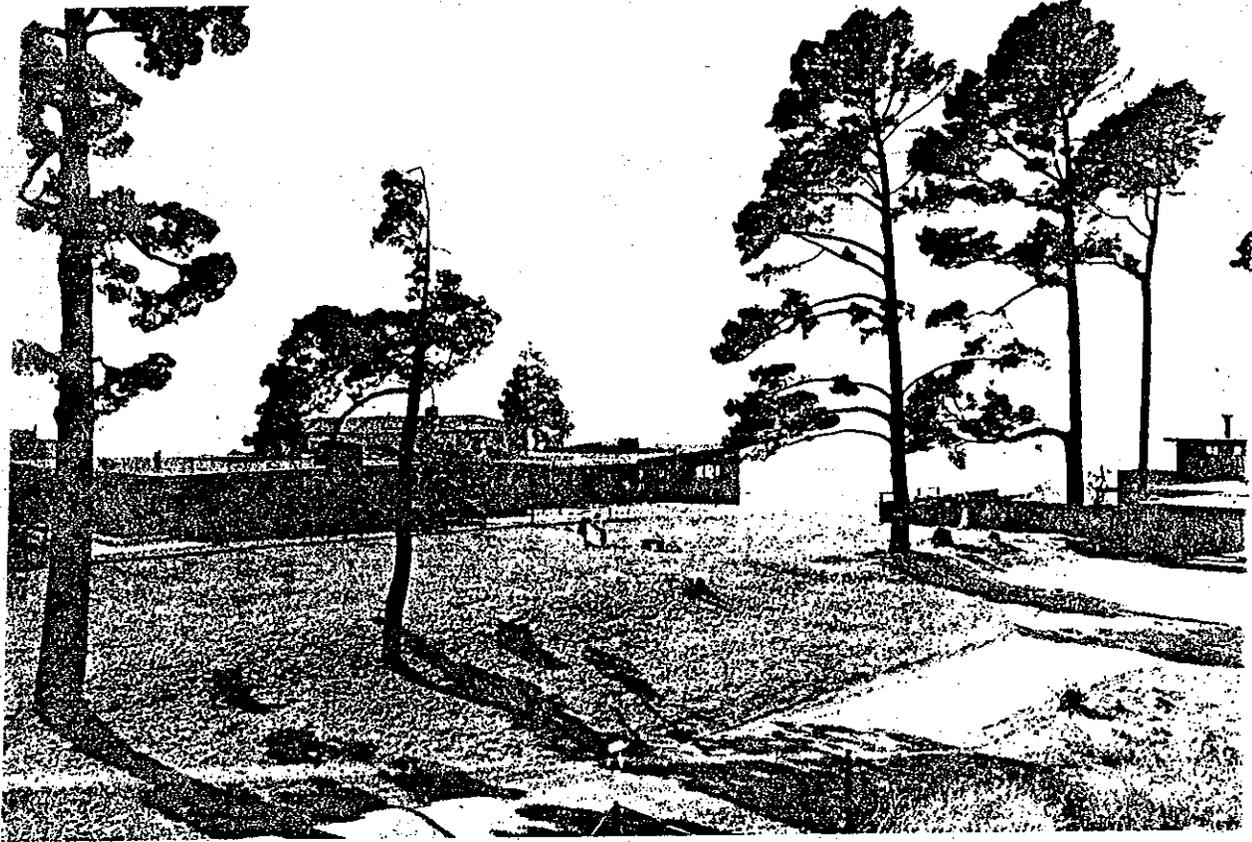
*Greenwood Common, general view (Baer)*

frag-  
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piled  
:hler,  
Bay  
:cade  
dica-

tions of the special spirit that informed mass housing as the Second World War closed.

Much less idealistic, more pragmatic, somewhat later, and more conventionally architectural rather than social, another project of the postwar era, Greenwood Common, merits special mention. About 1950 William W. Wurster inherited the opportunity to buy the Gregory property in Berkeley, a small es-

tate owned by his and John Galen Howards's patron, Mrs. Warren Gregory. Wurster subdivided the land in a very special way. Instead of covering the area with lots, he made a ring of relatively small sites around a central, communally held park. The resulting cluster plan became a milestone in group housing design, in a sense the first of the planned unit developments (PUDS) that by the 1970's would dominate



Completed Common will have two additional houses in open area at left. Proposed planting will include more pine and plant trees.

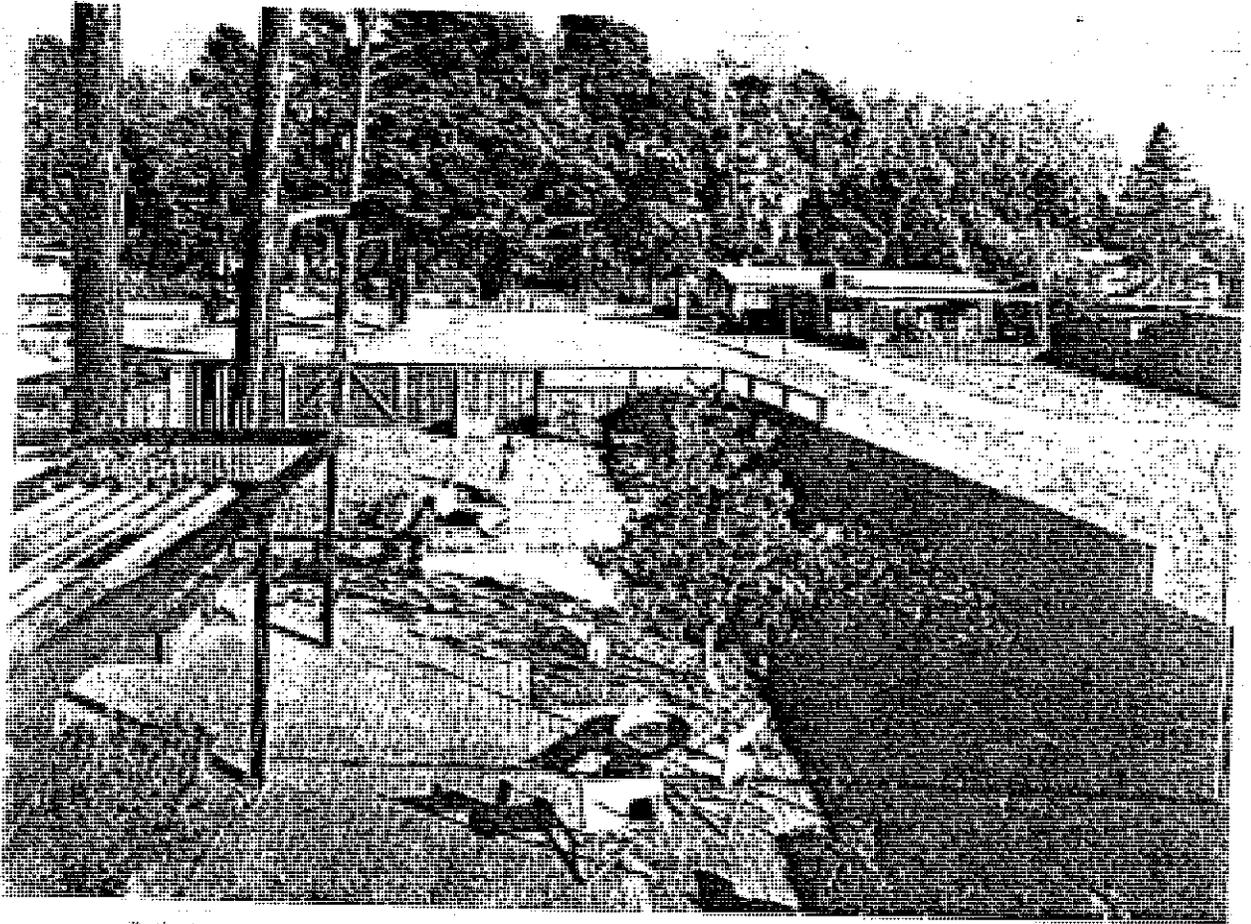
... and a big view across the bay

Photos: Morley Baer



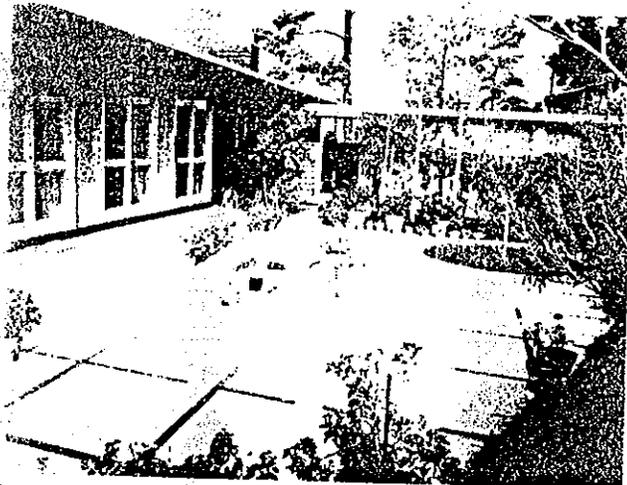
Greenwood Common

BY-PASSED LAND (cont. and)



Patio for House No. 12 was also designed by Lawrence Halston for the same project as the other patios.

### Every house has its own private outdoor space



Greenwood Common

At Greenwood Common, the patios are half the size.

That's so because the lots are small. Yet the owners feel the same about outdoor space they need, and they make the most of it.

Each private outdoor space is really one of a kind. The door rooms are screened and the neighbors' privacy is, of necessity, paved, landscaped, furnished and equipped as well as above. These outdoor rooms are the ones you want for entertaining friends, sunbathing, playing on the lawn, and to play without cost or interruption. In fact, these outdoor areas are real patios in the traditional sense.

What's more, they are very spacious patios, as the pictures show. And each was designed for maximum privacy and minimum upkeep.

Patio for House No. 7 is a half the size of the other patios.

Answer to Question No. 18

Published Sources: (partial list)

1. The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California, Revised Edition by David Gebhard, Eric Sandweiss, Robert Winter, Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City, 1985
2. Bay Area Houses, New Edition, edited by Sally Woodbridge, Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City
3. Buildings of the Bay Area; A Guide to Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, by John Marshall Woodbridge, Grove Press Inc. New York

Articles about the Common or individual houses were published for example in:

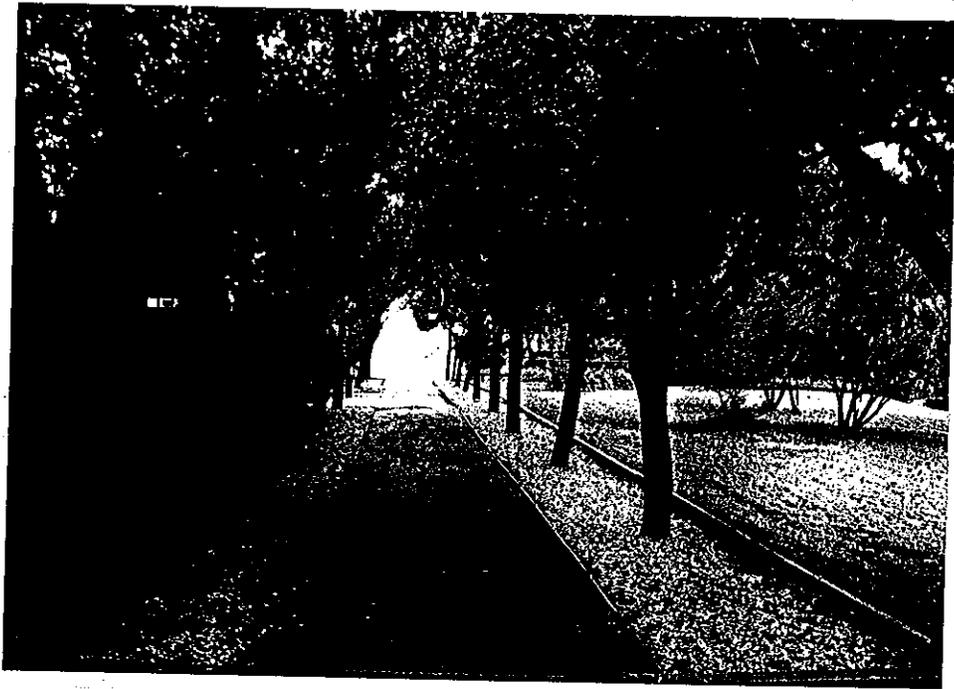
- Architectural Design, September 1955, p. X 19
- House and Home, February 1957
- The New York Times, Sunday, August 8, 1965
- San Francisco Chronicle, February 27, 1955, p. 4
- Oakland Shopping News, May 19, 1955



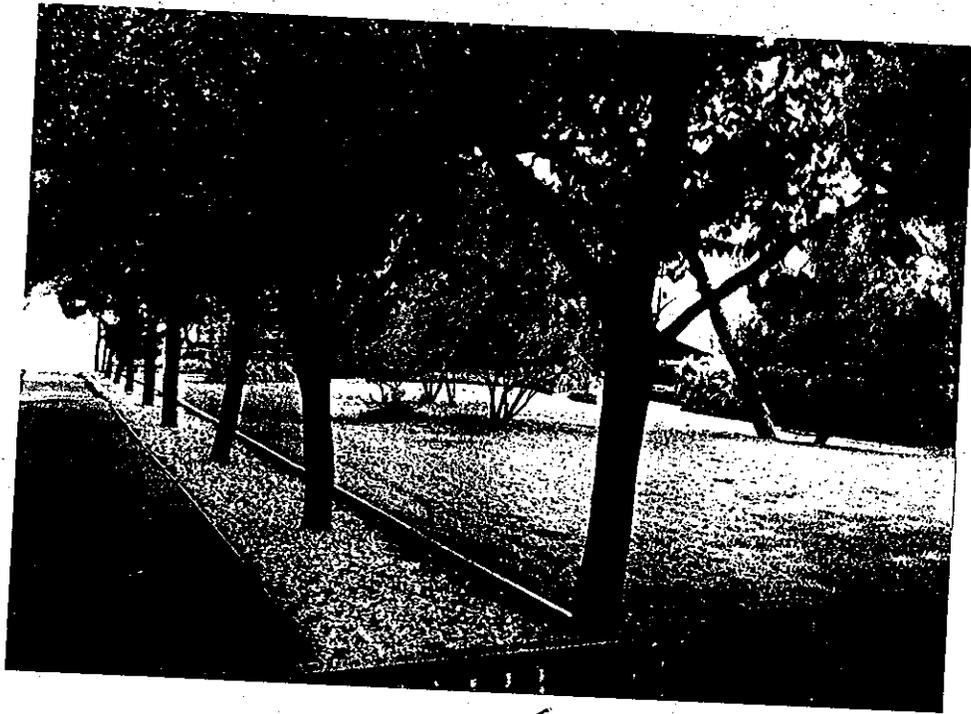
Greenwood Common



Greenwood Common



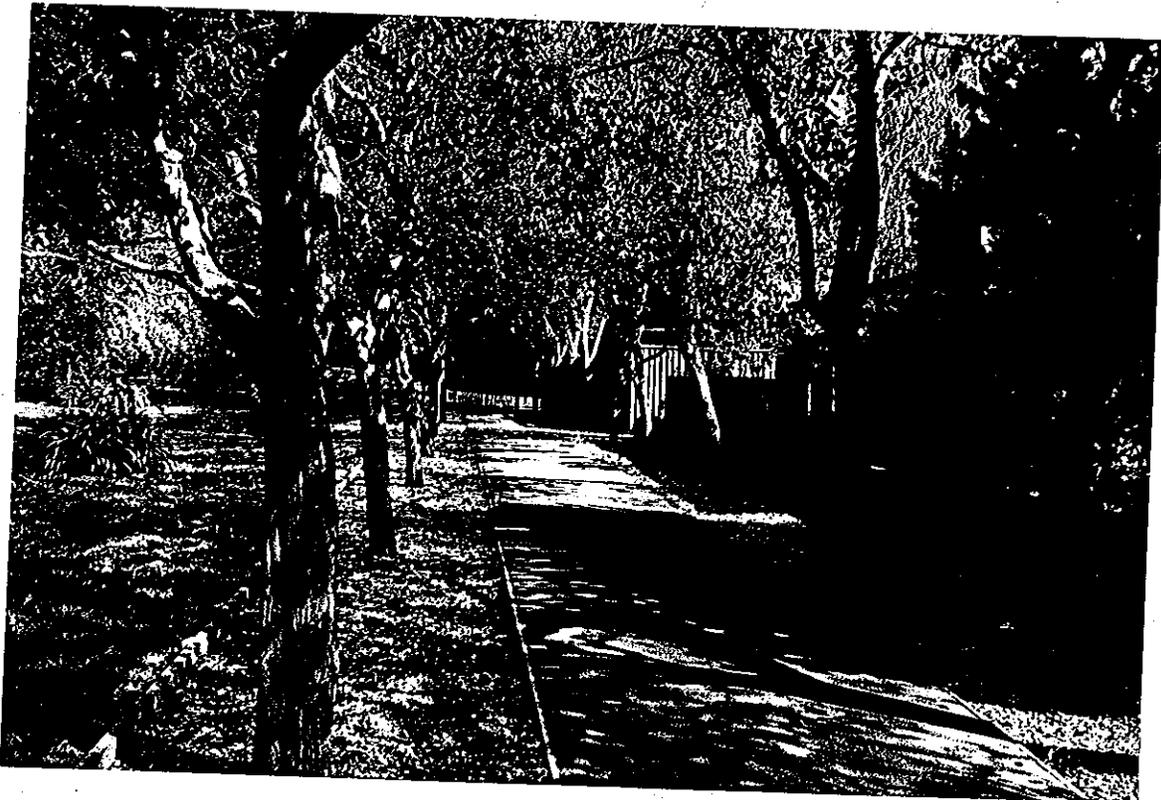
Greenwood Common



Greenwood Common



Greenwood Common



Greenwood Common

Answer to Question No. 28

Greenwood Common is one of the fore-runners and models of the post-World War II planned community developments in the US. Designed by the Dean of the College of Environmental Design, University of California Berkeley, William W. Wurster, it consists of a plot of land in Berkeley, subdivided so that there is a ring of houses carefully planned around a central, communally held park.

Eight houses were built around the periphery in the fifties, and the whole development was laid out by Laurence Halprin, the famous landscape architect, working cooperatively with William Wurster and the eight architects.

Their product, Greenwood Common, combines a rare harmonious visual style with a rural feel. On the high (South) side of the Common, there are three one-story houses, close to the common walk way lined with flowering plum trees. The light and sun comes over their roofs to the rest of the development. The central portion is the park-like area, the equivalent of about 30% of the total area. On the downward sloping lower side (the North side) of the Common are four houses of two stories, with the lower story on the down slope, towards Rose Street.

For approximately thirty years, the Common remained as first designed and built. In the last few years, as owners have begun to change, a threat has slowly developed, and in 1989, it became acute. This is a threat of maximum expansion of zoning space, by erecting second stories on the high (South) side of the Common, blocking out the sun and light, crowding more square footage onto very small lots, blocking the view, creating a risk of damaging or even killing some of the plum trees, and changing the entire nature and architectural integrity of the Common.

The Common has become a regular stop on architectural tours and study trips. It is in fact an informal landmark in Berkeley already, featured in most or all architecture books of the Bay Area (see samples attached). The threat is very real, as one new owner, even before moving in, filed plans in August of 1989 for adding a second story higher than the existing first story, with disastrous potential consequences for the Common. Only quick and determined opposition prevented those plans from going into effect (see Application No. B0420, dated, no date; proposed date of decision, August 14, 1989; and community letters in opposition, in the Office of Zoning and Planning, City of Berkeley. For convenience sake, copies of some of those letters are attached).

Answer to Question No. 28

page 2

The owner of one of the other small houses on the high (South) side has also communicated his plan to add a second story, and the risk of a wall of second stories along the South side of the Common, blocking sun and light, threatening trees, and oppressively crowding the Common, is now very real. The historical, if informal, landmark quality of this site would be clearly ruined by such a series of second stories or other expansion. The new owner of NO. 9 Greenwood Common is continuing his conversations with the Berkeley Zoning officials about his plans for a second story, without the necessity of any zoning department permit or neighbors' consent. We therefore believe that community action is necessary.

# Lawrence Halprin

444 Brannan  
San Francisco, California 94107  
Telephone: (415) 546-1952

30 August 1989

Vivian Kahn  
Current Planning Officer  
Zoning Dept., City of Berkeley  
Berkeley, Calif. 94704

Re: Greenwood Commons

Dear Vivian Kahn:

I have recently been told that there are changes underway regarding this project which I worked on in 1955.

As with all of my projects, I remain concerned and interested in their continued well-being.

The Greenwood Commons project was a unique and avant garde project for it's time. There was a wonderful collaboration of landscape and architecture. It was evidenced by the congruence of the modest, elegant architecture which was all of a Bay Area Modern style -- all in scale and built around a common area.

All of this has given the project a unique quality for which it has become widely known. It therefore seems important to maintain this remarkable quality, and not alter it.

Sincerely,

  
Lawrence Halprin

CURRENT PLANNING

AUG 14 1989

2599 Buena Vista Way  
Berkeley, California 94708  
August 14, 1989

Ms. Vivian Kahn, Zoning Officer  
c/o Current Planning Division  
2180 Milvia  
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Ms. Kahn:

Although our entrance is on Buena Vista Way, our house is located on the promontory of which Greenwood Common is the central part. We are directly beside No. 10 and adjoin No. 9 on a diagonal. We were therefore deeply concerned when we learned of the proposed addition of a twenty foot second story to the latter.

Greenwood Common is unquestionably one of the most remarkable architectural inventions in Berkeley. Starting with a spectacular site, William Wurster, then Dean of the School of Architecture at Cal, envisioned a graceful arc of houses around a central common, reminiscent of the town greens he had known in Massachusetts when he was at MIT. Each house would have its own architect and individual character, but roof lines, landscaping and driveway access would be coordinated in such a way that visual harmony and, in this case, a totally modern sense of community would be created. Outstanding architects were chosen by the individual owners. Wurster's unique concept was realized, crowned by the allée of plum trees on the south side and the towering Monterey pines that frame the area. It is a remarkable moment in the architecture of the Bay Area and a monument to Bill Wurster's genius. All of this would be destroyed by the current proposal. With the roof lines no longer coordinated, the visual balance would be lost, the harmony of scale shattered.

We hope that the planning officers will consider these aesthetic and historical values as well as any possible legal rôle to be played by the Common's neighborhood association and/or specific covenants attached to the various properties. We respectfully urge the city not to approve the proposed second story.

Sincerely yours,

*John and Mary Lee Noonan*

John T. Noonan, Jr.  
Mary Lee Noonan

CURRENT PLANNING

AUG 11 1989

1491 Greenwood Terrace  
Berkeley, CA. 94708

August 12, 1989

Zoning Officer  
c/- Current Planning Division  
2180 Milvia Street,  
Berkeley, CA. 94704

Dear Sir/Madam.

We understand that a permit has been requested to build a second story onto the existing structure at 9 Greenwood Common, Berkeley. We wish to lodge a formal objection to this variation in the present environmental status of the Greenwood Common area.

This very special place is an architectural heritage for Berkeley developed with professional foresight by the great U.C. Berkeley architect Professor Wurster.

Home owners in the area have bought their properties well aware of the history and landscape balance. The homogeneity, integration, scale and line of sight vistas should be preserved.

A unique open area such as Greenwood Common, adds considerably to Berkeley's architectural charm. There are many other places where two-story houses with larger floor areas are appropriate.

We request that the permit be denied.

Yours sincerely,

*Bruce A Bolt*  
*Bruce Bolt*

CURRENT PLANNING

AUG 14 1989

19 Tamalpais Road  
Berkeley, CA 94708  
August, 13, 1989

Current Planning Division  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, CA 94708

Dear Officer Kahn:

We are writing concerning use permit no. B0420. This permit describes plans for addition of a second story to a height of twenty feet and rear yard set back of 6 feet 6 inches to the home of David Weber Shapiro at 9 Greenwood Common. We strongly oppose an addition to that house or any other house on Greenwood Common. The Common was designed years ago by William Wuster, a well known architect, and it has become an historic spot of beauty in Berkeley. An addition to that house would drastically change the intended design for small homes along the Common. As long term residents of the neighborhood we object to any change in the architectural or landscape design of Greenwood Common.

Sincerely,

*Melinda and Bob Buchanan*  
Melinda and Bob Buchanan

LARRY FOURNIER

2535 Hawthorne Terrace  
Berkeley, California 94708

Telephone: 548-7186

September 7, 1989

Ms. Vivian Kahn  
Zoning Officer  
Current Planning Division  
City of Berkeley  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, CA 94740

Subject: Use Permit Application B0420

Dear Ms. Kahn:

I am writing to you in regards to an application for a second story addition to an existing single story house at 9 Greenwood Commons. I take a special interest in this application for a number of reasons:

1) I have resided a half block away at 2535 Hawthorne Terrace for the last ten years and quite often choose the Commons as a destination for a short uphill walk. It is especially magnificent in the spring when the cherry tree walkway is in full bloom and a beautiful spot any other time of the year. The proposed addition will have a major negative impact on the fragile beauty of the cherry tree walkway and the general sense of openness.

2) For five years I worked as a personal assistant to Lawrence Halprin, the landscape designer, for the Commons. The Commons as it exists now is of major significance as statement of the Northern California residential design aesthetic of the mid-50's. Having been raised in New Orleans where preservation of the architectural heritage is a major concern, I can only think of the term "tout ensemble" to describe how important it is to our Bay Area heritage to maintain the Commons in its entirety.

Several years ago the City allowed an addition to one of two matching William Wurster buildings at the east edge of the Commons. The results of was an unmitigated disaster. The addition being larger in size than the original, of greater height, and of absolutely no architectural merit. Once these mistakes are done they can never be undone. I don't think the City of Berkeley would allow the owner of a Maybeck, a Morgan, or any other of the City's early twentieth century architectural masterpieces to destroy the character of these homes with grotesquely out of character and out of scale additions.

3) At another level, the concept of the Commons reflects an awareness and sense of cooperation between neighbors to the betterment of the community which typifies Berkeley socially and politically. The egotistical and disruptive attitude displayed by the applicant over the objections of neighbors runs counter to the essence of what makes Berkeley a city in which its citizens are proud to claim residence. To my understanding, the owner is a contractor with a record of buying properties for resale and has no intention of residing at the house; hence the lack of concern for the history of the Commons and the legitimate needs and concerns of the neighbors.

On all these grounds, I strongly urge that you deny the use permit application.

Sincerely,



Larry Fournier

Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California  
94708  
12 August 1989

City of Berkeley  
Zoning Officer  
Current Planning Division  
2180 Milvia  
Berkeley, California  
94704

Dear Zoning Officer;

This letter relates to your proposed zoning decision on application number B0420, a second story proposed for #9 Greenwood Common.

We the neighbors on Greenwood Common have a number of concerns regarding this proposal.

The "Common" is a central, communally owned piece of land around which our houses are all built and which serves as our common garden. It is our communal entrance to all our houses. Thus here, more than in most locations, the actions of any one of us affect the lives of all.

Our specific concerns are as follows:

- 1) Greenwood Common is an area of special architectural interest, included in all the guidebooks and prominently featured in Sally Woodbridge's Bay Area Architecture as "a milestone in group housing design", "the first of the planned unit developments". As such, Greenwood Common became a model for many communities in California and around the world, as a way to maximize open green space and harmonize the built environment.

Each house was designed independently by a different architect, but the architects consulted with each other and took care in the matter of the proportion, height, building materials, colors, etc. they employed, in order to achieve a harmonious and coherent

whole. Based on the many architecture classes and buffs who come walking here to look, we think the original plan must be judged a great success. Architects whose work is represented here include Joseph Esherick, Henry Hills, and R N Schindler. The developer was William Wurster.

The proposed second story at #9 Greenwood Common is the first major addition to this "group housing design", our neighborhood, since it was conceived (except for an addition at #7, which is set back, over the crest of the hill, and does not abut the Common). The proposed addition would be located in an extremely prominent place, at the high side of the Common, directly abutting it, and just in the center, so it has a particularly great impact. There is no set back from the Common at #9.

For all these reasons, we feel the proposed addition would change the character and proportions of this special architectural area, which have been so well respected and preserved until now, in a significant and detrimental way.

- 2) We are also concerned about the double row of cherry trees which the proposed addition would touch and overshadow. This lane was planted by Larry Halprin, the well-known landscape designer and space planner of the Common, and is enjoyed by ourselves and by our neighbors, who come in Spring to walk under the flowering branches toward the Bay view at the Western end. The proposed addition encroaches so closely on these trees that some branches would almost certainly be damaged or need to be cut; more significantly, the light to at least two of these trees will be limited to such an extent that we fear they will die.
- 3) The proposed second story is very tall in proportion to the existing house and the size of the lot. In the model shown us by Mr Shapiro, the house looks top heavy and unbalanced. The existing house, by the famous Bay Area architect Henry Hill, is particularly sleek and low, which would exacerbate the looming effect of the proposed addition. The existing house is already on the highest part of the Common, further exaggerating the height effect of the proposed second story.
- 4) The height of the proposed second story will cut down on light to the Common, and cast a deep shadow where now we enjoy dappled sun. #9 Greenwood Common is just along the flat part of the

Common, where children play; this will now be in shade at times of the day when it is now in sun.

- 5) This same height will also prevent us from looking across the Common and seeing the cherry trees silhouetted against the sky. With the addition, we would see only a dark mass of building.
- 6) Finally, we are concerned about the process regarding the proposed zoning decision. Each of us had one conversation with Mr Shapiro, and were told by him that he was legally entitled to do what he was proposing, that he was within zoning regulations, and that in effect we had no basis for objecting to his plans. Our clear impression was that he was talking with us out of "courtesy", not because we were part of any process, or had any potential "say" in what was going to happen. Perhaps based on this impression that we couldn't do anything anyway, we did not vehemently object to his plans.

On calling the Zoning Department, we learned that Mr Shapiro had told the Zoning Department that "no one had any problems with his proposals". This is incorrect, as outlined above. We did not wish, nor did we authorize Mr Shapiro, to make such representations on our behalf. To the extent that we have the right to object to the proposed addition, we specifically do so in this letter as stated above.

Yours sincerely,

*Ana Maescher*  
10 Greenwood Common

*J B Master*

4 Greenwood Common

*Jane Lynn*

*Fredrick S Wyle* (FREDRICK S. WYLE) 4 GREENWOOD COMMON

3 GREENWOOD COMMON

*John + Richard McDonough*  
7 Greenwood Common

*Samuel A Schauf*

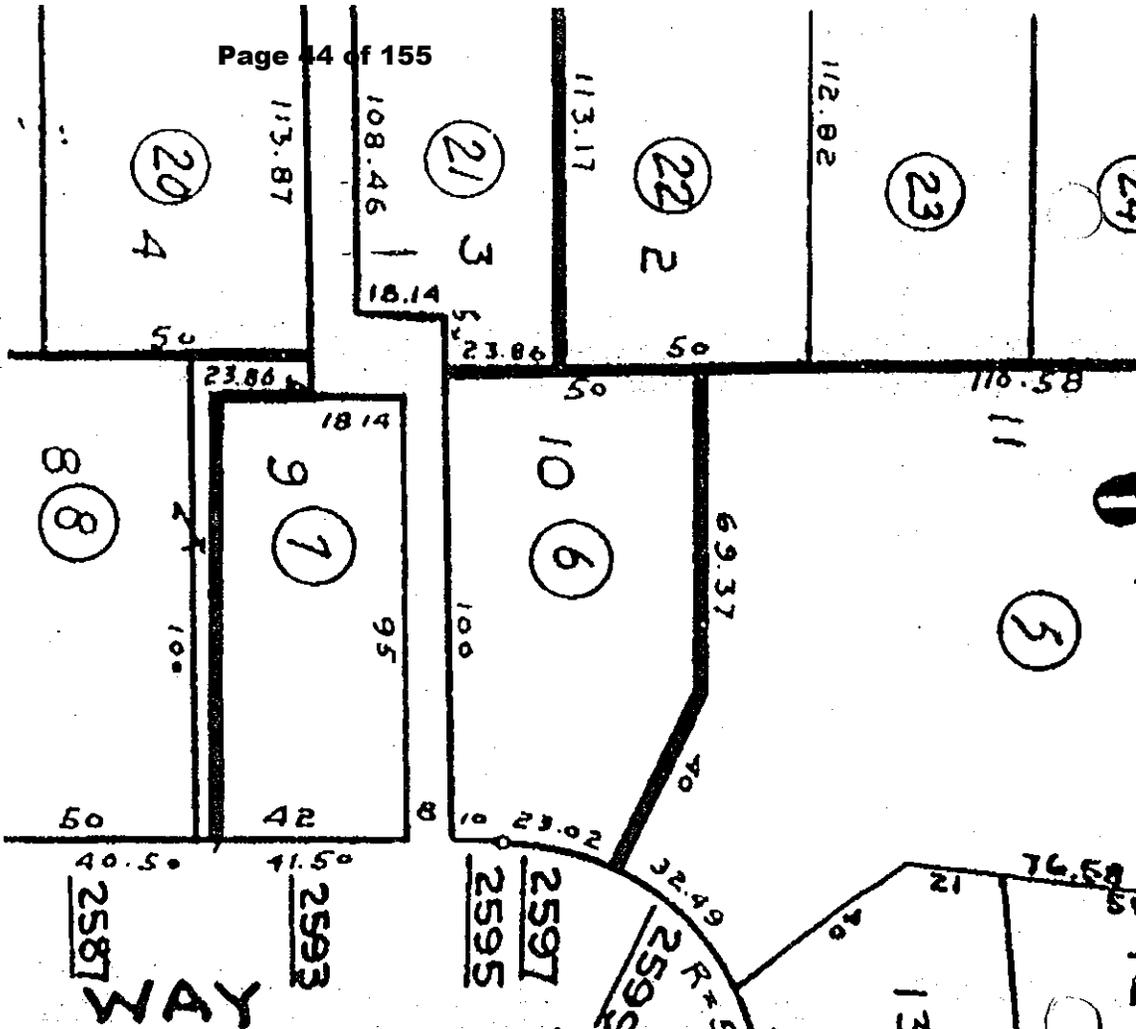
*Phyllis B Schauf*

2 GREENWOOD COMMON

Answer to Question NO. 30

quoted from the State of California Historic Resources Inventory, (8) 2244, VTM W/565220/4192000, page 2, No.20. Significance:

"The natural meadow was subdivided by William Wurster shortly after he bought the Warren Gregory house and property in 1954. He wanted to create a cluster of houses by the best Bay Area residential architects of the day around a communally owned space. Though not all of the same school, the architects held compatible design philosophies which insured a harmonious relation of place and part. One house, #7, was designed by R. M. Schindler about 1920, yet looks as modern as the others. They are #1 (1955) by Donald Olson; #3 (1954) by Joseph Esherick; #4 (1954) Harwell Hamilton Harris; #8 (1953) Howard Moise; #9 (1954) by Henry Hill; #10 (1952) John Funk. These are some of the most prestigious addresses in Berkeley. "



**WAY**

2587

2593

2595

2597

2599

1486

**GREEN**

Subdivision of Lot 13 Block 5 and  
 Lot 14 Block 6 a portion of La Loma  
 and Wheeler Tract. 19x 20.



Amended Map of a portion of

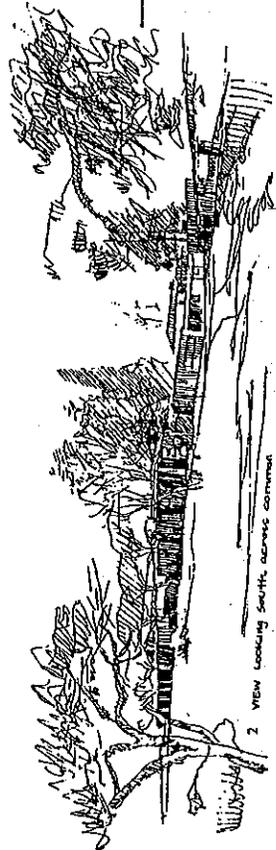
Answer to Question No.31

See attachment for question No. 28

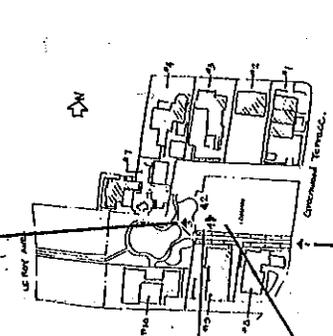
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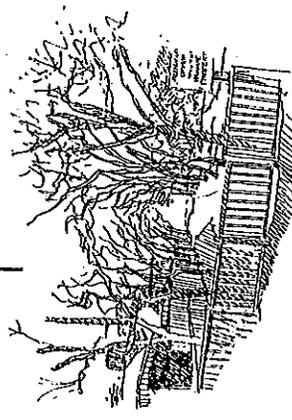
3 View looking west towards bay



3 View looking south across common



Site Plan Greenwood Common View Locations



1 Entrance to Greenwood Common



4 View from common looking north

GREENWOOD COMMON LANDMARK PRESERVATION APPLICATION

VISUAL SURVEY: BUILDINGS/OPEN SPACE RELATIONSHIP

CURRENT PLANNING

FEB 20 1990

#1,3,4,7 Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, CA 94708

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
City of Berkeley  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, CA 94704

February 18, 1990

Dear Commissioners :

In accordance with the request of the Commission at the public hearing of January 29, 1990, we enclose herewith supplemental materials in support of the three initiations of landmarking for Greenwood Common, that is, the application of December 1, 1989 (the "owners' application"); the application of December 30, 1989 (the "Berkeley residents' application") and the initiation by the Landmarks Preservation Commission itself on December 18, 1989, all for landmark status for Greenwood Common as described in those applications and in the State Historic Resource Inventory ((8)2244).

We believe that the substance of the Commission's request is provided herewith. We have had the invaluable assistance of our authority and consultant on the historical and architectural contents of this submission, Elisabeth Kendall Thompson, FAIA, architectural historian; Senior Editor, Architectural Record, retired; and Editor, Sept/October issue of Architecture California. Ms. Thompson resides at 2877 Shasta Road, Berkeley, CA 94708. The authors of various sections of this submission are identified in the Table of Contents.

We have not accomplished a complete reorganization of the original applications in the time available, but we believe that the material herewith submitted will serve as a self-contained supplement on the history and architectural significance of the Common, a description of its architects and houses and how their work fit into the times and style of its creation, and the legal methods involved.

The questions in the "application requesting designation for landmark status" to which these supplemental materials are directed are principally Questions # 7-18, and #30-31, as more fully discussed in the Commission's "HISTORIC/ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS".

If you have any further questions, please advise any of the undersigned.

Yours very truly,

Jean P. McDonough #7

J.S. Masten #4

Rachel B. McDonough #7

Frederick S. Wyle #3  
Victoria J. Oude #3

## Greenwood Common

(Supplemental Materials For Answers to Questions #7-18 and 30-31 of Application of Dec 1, 1989, and Dec 30, 1989, and in Support of Initiation by Landmark Commission of Dec 18, 1989)

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February 18, 1990

①

Greenwood Common

I. Early History

Joan McDonough  
and  
Katinka Wyle

Feb 18, 1990

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### Greenwood Common : Early History

One of the most striking features of Greenwood Common is its magnificent stand of Monterey Pines. These were planted over 100 years ago in the mid-1870's by Captain Thomas, a former cavalry officer who first arrived in San Francisco in 1863. After several business ventures in San Francisco, Captain Thomas in 1867 moved his Standard Soap Company to Berkeley, where he built a large factory at a site bounded by Addison Street, Allston Way, Second and Third Streets. He prospered, became the president of the California National Bank of San Francisco and the owner of the Berkeley Ferry Boat Line, and sometime after 1867 purchased 14 acres in the Berkeley Hills which he called "La Loma."

Some years later he added 18 more acres. His combined 32 acre estate, including the current Greenwood Common, was bounded on the south by Cedar Street, on the north by Rose Street, on the west by LeRoy Ave, and on the east by Buena Vista Way. He built his residence just east of the present Greenwood Terrace. He also constructed a log house, a barn, and several farm buildings on the property. On the crest of the hill overlooking the current Common he built "Fort La Loma", from which on holidays he fired a cannon in celebration. He planted an orchard, some grapevines, and the impressive Monterey Pines which continue to give the area its characteristic rustic appearance.

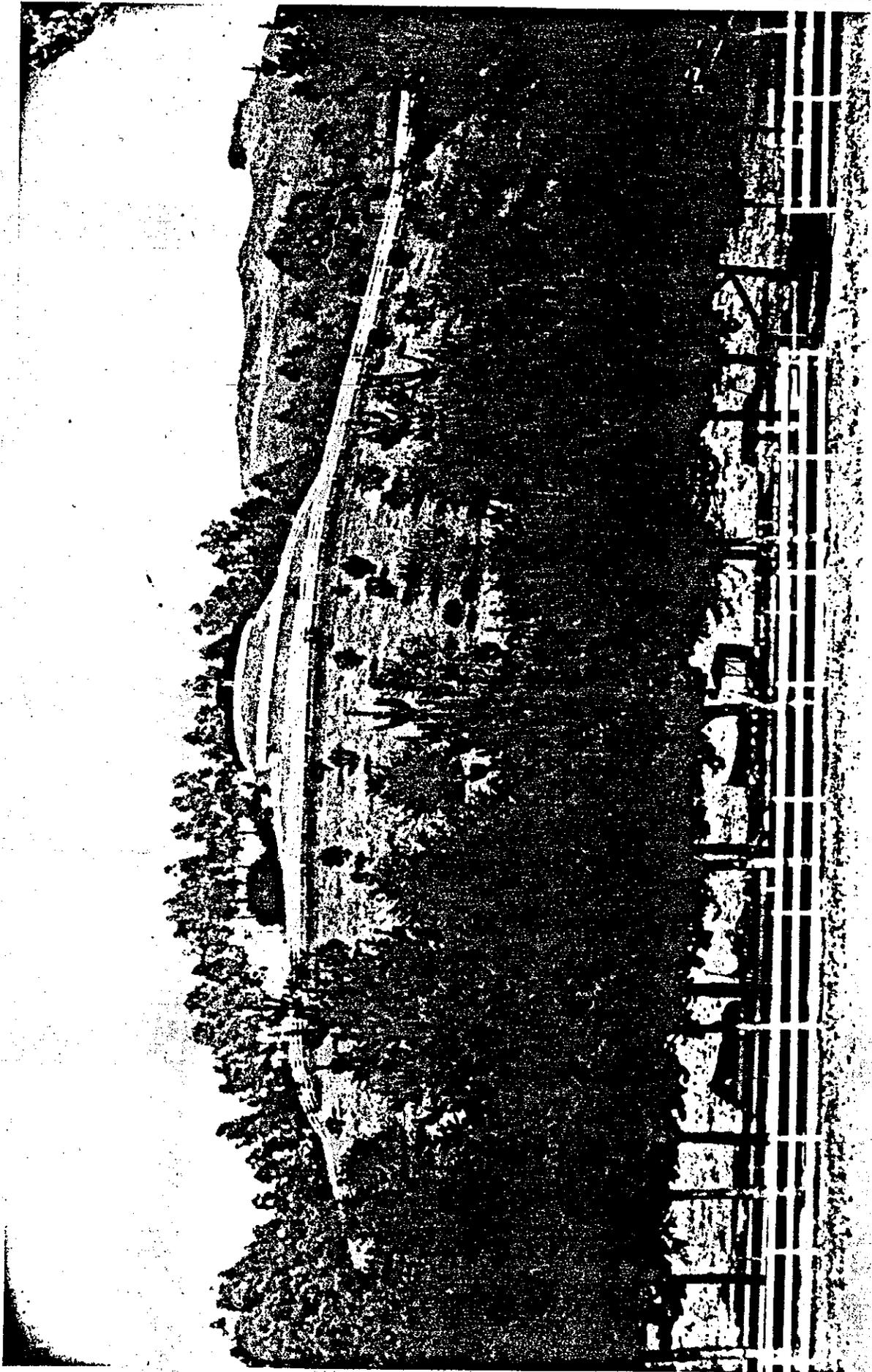
Captain Thomas died on May 28, 1890, and a portion of the property including Greenwood Common was acquired in 1903 by Warren Gregory, a prominent San Francisco lawyer and one of the founders of the Sierra Club. In 1903 Mr. Gregory commissioned John Galen Howard to build a substantial country home in the Berkeley Hills, on the property which included the current Greenwood Common and several lots on Greenwood Terrace. In 1906 - after the San Francisco earthquake and fire - the Gregorys moved to Berkeley and made 1459 Greenwood Terrace their permanent home.

During this period, both John Galen Howard and Bernard Maybeck built other houses for Gregory family members in the immediate vicinity. Daniel Gregory, Warren Gregory's grandson, remembers many interesting gatherings in the Gregory home, at the famous "La Loma salons" presided over by Mr. & Mrs. Gregory.

Warren Gregory died in 1927. Mrs. Gregory continued to live on Greenwood Terrace and to maintain the "La Loma salons" for many years. A few years before 1952 Mrs. Gregory returned to live in San Francisco, and a friend, Elizabeth Ellis, resided in the Gregory home and carried on the tradition.

When Mrs. Ellis died in 1952, William Wurster, a close family friend of the Gregorys, offered to purchase the property and

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Greenwood Common

II Architectural History and Significance

Elisabeth Kendall Thompson

Feb 18, 1990

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## Greenwood Common: Its Architectural History and Significance

Greenwood Common is a neighborhood, consciously designed as such, and conscientiously held to a neighborhood scale in a plan that derives from that used in New England villages, where the "common" - an open space for the common use of all - is an important part of the pattern of life of the residents. Such an arrangement had other, more recent, precedents, though the scale was larger: Radburn in New Jersey was one famous city plan based on commonly enjoyed open space. Here in Berkeley, Rose Walk and Orchard Lane had common walkways, and were conscious proposals for planning in other than the usual layout of houses, open areas, and streets.

Greenwood Common's derivation differs, however, in that it is small. An open space, undefined, has no particular form. It is the houses that surround the Common that define and give form to this exceptional and unusual planned development. There are eight, all built within four years, with the exception of #7 on the "point", which had been built some 18 years before William Wurster's concept of Greenwood Common became possible of implementation.

As a young student of architecture at the University, Wurster had visited the hill north of the University campus on his rambles through what no doubt seemed an incredible place to the boy from flat, dry, hot Stockton, where he had been born and grown up.

"Gee, who can live in such beauty as that?", Wurster later remembered saying to himself when he saw the noble pines, and the large open space in front of Warren Gregory's house (Exhibit A). And, he says, he never forgot it.

He could not know then that, some thirty years later, he would own that beautiful place, would live in the old house on the hill, and would be able to share the beauty with colleagues of like mind and spirit.

The site had long been coveted by many who knew it, among them Robert Gordon Sproul who became president of the University and lived on nearby Tamalpais Road, and Ernest O. Lawrence, the great physicist, who also lived nearby; and numerous young architects eager for a dramatic site on which to place the house they burned to design. But neither the old house, nor the land across the road, was for sale - until, in 1951 Bill Wurster, by then dean of the School of Architecture at the University, broached the subject to Mrs. Gregory, who suggested an appraisal of the property preliminary to any discussion of the possibility. It turned out that the house was so in need of repair that its value was nothing; the land however was "very valuable". In Wurster's account of the event, Mrs Gregory said to her son

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group met. This priceless asset now is held as open space by the group, enlarging the Common to approximately twice its original size, and enhancing the role of the common open space.

Wurster seems to have made no formal restrictions for the design of the houses on the Common, but, in his memo to participants of April 24, 1952, he indicated his preference for dark colored houses, gently sloping or flat roofs, and single story houses on the flat area, so that "the project would appear more spacious." (Exhibit C). Wurster believed in the people who had bought the lots; he believed as well and as thoroughly in the architects chosen by the lot owners to design the houses, and what he believed was that they would share his concept of the Common - a neighborhood of people with similar values and intentions to make a community in the fullest sense of the word, to respect each other and the inherent beauty of the place with a will to create something beyond the usual use of land. And owners and architects understood his concept, concurred in it, saw his vision, and found it well pleasing. Written rules were not necessary in such a climate of mutual sensibility.

Wurster had in mind that the houses would be designed by distinguished architects and again he rested his trust in the owners who picked young architects who had already made their mark, locally and in most cases, nationally. Most later achieved international reputations, and were published in many parts of the world in architectural publications - books, magazines, newspapers. Each of the seven houses built between 1952 and 1957 was designed by a different architect. Bill Wurster proud and delighted that it worked out that way, calling it "an alphabet of architecture." The variety of architectural approach and the recognizable common thread of design principles discernible in each house made the group of exceptional interest to students in architecture, professors of architecture, architectural historians, writers, editors, and others, who flocked to see the Common, or called or wrote Wurster - "all the time" - to ask "how it can be duplicated in another place."

The houses, like the owners and the architects, are individual solutions, each in a "style" of its own but all in the Bay Area tradition. What that tradition is sometimes is debated, but there is certainly much that is intangible, stemming from topography, climate, easily available materials, but underscored always by the great sense of freedom, as Wurster himself pointed out in an essay, "A Personal View" (Exhibit D): freedom from the past, from old custom, from accepted convention, freedom to respond to the "immensity of the scene."

The Bay Area Tradition has been characterized as having several periods of development: the Greenwood Common area

Excerpts from

Transcript of Oral History:

William Wilson Wurster; College of Environmental Design,  
University of California, Campus Planning and Architectural  
Practice; An Interview Conducted by Suzanne B. Riess, Berkeley, 1964  
Bancroft Library.

p. 252 Riess: How do you come to live in this house (1459 Greenwood Terrace)? Would you tell the story of that?

Wurster: Well, in 1913 I was a freshman, just came from Stockton, which has flat country. I lived south of the campus, and I walked up north and came on this little road with all these pine trees and thought, "Gee, who can live in such beauty as that?" And I never forgot it.....

p.257 Riess: When you returned from Cambridge where did you live before you moved here?

Wurster: In 1950 we took the Max Radin house....Then we bought the little house out on the point here [ 7 Greenwood Common, by R.M. Schindler, ca. 1932, below the present home]. Then I organized a group which bought Greenwood Common and divided that up, made an interesting neighborhood plan so that the center lot is owned by everybody and nobody can build on it unless there is complete approval. The houses in the Common are all done by famous architects. Howard Moise's staff did Helen Douglas's little house. Henry Hill did the [Thomas C.] Blaisdell. John Funk did the [Otto] Maenchen. Harwell Harris of Texas and Southern California did Mrs. Duhring's, and Joe Esherick did Jim Ackerman's. And Don Olson did the [Robert W] Birge house. It's an alphabet of modern architects. ....

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....., it's been a great success, so much so that I get letters all the time from people asking how it can be duplicated in another place.

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TO: Participants in Greenwood Common  
 FROM: William W. Wurster  
 DATE: 24 April 1952  
 SUBJECT: Notes

As you know it is thought best not to become entangled in restrictions, yet certain things have been mentioned which might be listed in order to have a harmonious project with minimum disappointment or friction. Most of these have been stated in conversation and can be clarified at our meeting in May.

1. Television antennas might be limited to the normal size (not permitting 30' extensions, etc.). Is there a way to have a central antenna at the east of the property?
2. Dark colored houses (either natural woods or paint) will cause the project to appear more spacious.
3. Gently sloping or flat Haydite or gravel roofs will tend to increase the view for everyone and be less insistent.
4. Lots #10 and #11 to have a height restriction which will protect the clear sweep from the Common and from Lot #9.
5. Trees on Lots #10 and #11 may be topped by anyone on the project if they pay on same. (Some such rule might be applied to all trees on all properties?)
6. It is hoped to retain as many pine trees as possible.
7. All decisions such as steps to LeRoy, fencing of Common, etc., will await action of Board after its election. At the same time there could be consideration in regard to the possible adoption of some uniform fencing for the project.
8. It is hoped that great consideration will be given to the height of all the houses on the flat area (Lots #5, #6, #7, #8 and #9), for if they were to be only one-story above the Common the project would appear more spacious. (This is written as a suggestion only and not to be construed as a mandate or restriction.)
9. If the houses on Rose Street (Lots #1, #2, #3 and #4) are kept at the north end of the lot, each house will have a sheltered south garden and it will add to the unity of the project. (This is written as a suggestion only and not to be construed as a mandate or restriction.)
10. In the third interim report I called attention in Item #4 to the approximate character of the plot plan. For instance, if the hedge is on the Greenwood Common property on the south side (adjacent to Jenkins) it may be advisable to widen the access lane to 18' or 20' in order to save the hedge. This would decrease the width of the walk-in-vista which is now shown as 20'.

I send these at this time before we are started and there should be free and open discussion at our meeting on these or other points.

cc: Mr. Newman  
 Mr. Steigalman

Mr. Howard Wayne  
 Mrs. Warren Gregory

W. W. W.

EXHIBIT ( II )

## P. 2 William W. Wurster, A Personal View

it was soon translated to access so a person could not only see the out-of-doors but could walk into it and become a part of it. Of course, the climate played a part in this as did the lack of bugs and insects. But it took someone to perceive this, and the imaginative group of men I have mentioned gave a foundation for all of us who have come later. In the beginning it might have needed flamboyant sites to free the designers from convention but now the obvious advantages of this freedom mean that even the most prosaic locations have a share in this viewpoint. The Berkeley fire of 1923, which destroyed sixty blocks north of the Campus, swept away much of the very thing I have described. With trees destroyed as well as structures there was small incentive to attempt the same venture again.

California in some degree shares the quality of the desert light of Arizona, which has ever stressed distance rather than the near-at-hand. This explains why delicacy of detail in California seems trivial compared to its real use and need in New England, where the air is hazier and the immediate surroundings are filled with the green of leaves. This means there is every inclination to examine the flutings on the fireplace, which are not unlike the very blades of grass in the foreground. The long dry season in California, from May until November, leaves its mark on life and so, in turn, on the design — no need of shelter from summer rains and great need of ground areas covered with gravel or brick, which do not need water.

There is no recipe in which one can place all these ingredients and foresee a result. But I do think in analyzing the vitality of the work of this area it is necessary to list some of these differences from other places, not only to star the results as a Baedeker, but to help find why they are so.

The West has still a pioneer society. An element of gambling, of taking a chance, exists still, and this goes into the lives so that *who* you are is not so important as *what* you are. This is quickly translated into the houses, and there is not such a fetish of permanence or tradition.

The hills and great bay, which can be shared by so many homes, have always brought the emphasis on what you look *at*, not what you live *in*. This is added to the other reasons for the lack of minute decoration.

Take-a-chance clients, mild, even climate, no insects or bugs, a long dry season and, above and over all, the immensity of the scene — all have had their share in shaping the design. Is it small wonder to find the vitality of architecture with these as the starting point?

of materials and forms: that it had a place for personalities as different as Maybeck and Dailey and Wurster and Kump. What seemed to me admirable in the style that had developed during the last half century was that it was a steady organic growth, producing modern forms accepted as natural and appropriate by both client and architect. Even the speculative suburban house in the Bay Region, during the last fifteen years, has not been untouched by this movement. But in perspective, the work of this style was part of a worldwide movement: a movement in which no single country can claim pre-eminence. To identify the modern in architecture with the work of Le Corbusier and his followers seems to me to betray a provincial misunderstanding of both architecture and history; while to attempt, as some Eastern critics have done, to disparage the work in the Bay Region by referring to it as the "redwood cottage style" is to display an ignorance of its varied resources and achievements.

For the most part, this organic architecture seems to have come about through an unforced personal growth: at the beginning Maybeck and Gill acclimated to California the seedlings that had been planted East of the Mississippi by Richardson, Sullivan, Wright, and their followers. The ideas behind this Bay Region movement were not perhaps formulated to the point of finding literary expression; yet one must not perhaps attribute too much intellectual innocence to this movement, merely because it was conspicuously lacking in manifestoes. I am sure the leaders of this school knew what they were doing and why, even if they did not explain themselves in print.

There comes a point in every human development, however, where further growth is impossible without achieving a certain degree of self-consciousness; and it is useless to complain, as a Bay Region patriot did a little while ago in the *Architectural Review* of London that the Bay Region architects didn't want to be "discovered" and theorized over by officious Eastern critics. Such self-consciousness, such critical reevaluation, is the price of maturity; indeed, it was from the autobiographic observations of one of the best of the Bay Region school, as we drove around Berkeley in 1941, that I first was able to trace, from the inside, the origins and continuities of this vital modern tradition. Standing in front of Maybeck's Christian Science Church, I learned from William Wurster's lips the direct effect of Maybeck's poetic architectural imagination on his own work, while still a student at Berkeley.

The problem of modern architecture is no longer to escape the burdens of imitating or adapting dead historic forms: only in such moribund departments of architecture as the design of college buildings is architecture any longer under such restraints; and even in a conservative part of the country like the Southeast, the proposal to design Wake Forest College in "Georgian" awakened a scandalized protest on the part of the local architectural profession. The main problem of architecture today is to reconcile the universal and the regional, the mechanical and the human, the cosmopolitan and the indigenous. No manner of building that exaggerates the local at the expense of the universal can possibly answer to the needs of our time; and if the Bay Region work were so singular and so confined, it would hardly be worth critical recognition at this late day. It is for just the opposite reason that the best Bay Region architecture is significant. Here the architects have absorbed the universal lessons of science and the machine, and have reconciled them with human wants and human desires, with full regard for the setting of nature, the climate and topography and vegetation, with all those regional qualities whose importance Frederick Law Olmstead wisely stressed two generations ago in his exemplary program for the development of Stanford University.

Bay Region architecture both belongs to the region and transcends the region: it embraces the machine and it transcends the machine. It does not ignore particular needs, customs, conditions, but translates them into the common form of our civilization. These qualities are what makes the work of the Bay Region architects so significant — both as achievement and as promise.

Greenwood Common

**II (continued) Bibliography**

Elisabeth Kendall Thompson

Feb 18, 1990

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**Greenwood Common**

**III. The Houses of Greenwood Common (General)**

**Elisabeth Kendall Thompson**

**Feb 18, 1990**



### The Houses of Greenwood Common

An alphabet of architecture, Bill Wurster called this collection of eight houses around the Common, with the 1905 house for the Warren Gregorys across the road and up the hill to represent the earlier period, often called Bay Tradition #1, when the then-contemporary names of distinguished architects were John Galen Howard, Ernest Coxhead, Julia Morgan, Bernard Maybeck. When Wurster added two small rental units on Greenwood terrace, the alphabet was well represented.

The houses around the Common, with one exception, were all designed and built in the 1950's, a period that could be called Bay Tradition II. The exception is the house by R.M. Schindler, once thought to have been designed and built in 1920, but later fixed by Wurster himself as "circa 1932". The Schindler house is not part of the Bay Tradition, either I or II; it derives from Schindler's European origins, although it shows the influence of the special qualities of its California location. Many alterations through the years have taken from it whatever purity it once had, and yet through all the remodelings and additions, Schindler's strong forms and his convictions on design are still there.

Of the 1950 houses, it can be said that they, like earlier and some later houses, are in the genealogy of a Bay Area tradition based in simplicity, honesty and an esthetic of beauty that climate, topography and the great Bay have engendered.

Each house is individual, each is what its architect would design because of himself - his background, his education and training, his particular sensitivity to the elements of design. That they are part of a "Style" cannot be argued. That they have *style* is self-evident. These architects were affronted when an English magazine picked up a comment by Lewis Mumford that they were exemplars of the Bay Region Style. Their outcry became a *cause celebre*, clarified only through the catalog essay by Mumford in 1949 in connection with the exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art. (Exhibit A).

In describing these houses we have not repeated comments as to the place of each in regard to Bay Traditions I and II. Suffice it to say here that they represent what each of these architects was doing in that period of his architectural life, and if "Tradition II" covers their vitality, their individuality and their excellence, that is a satisfactory chronological categorization.

The principal things to remember about the architecture of the Bay Region, especially as shown in architect designed houses, are these:

From Lewis Mumford: "Bay Region architecture both belongs to and transcends the region...It does not ignore particular needs, customs, conditions, but translates them into the common form of our civilization." (Exhibit B).

From William Wurster: "The hills and great Bay, which can be shared by so many homes, have always brought the emphasis on what you look at, not what you live in...The West has still a pioneer society. An element of gambling, of taking a chance, exists still, and this goes into the lives so that *who you are* is not so important as *what you are*. This is quickly translated into the houses, and there is not such a fetish of permanence or tradition." (Exhibit C).

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*A symposium for architects was held in the Auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art on the evening of February 11, 1948. The discussion was based on an excerpt from the Skyline by Lewis Mumford in The New Yorker, October 11, 1947, which follows:\**

Meanwhile, new winds are beginning to blow, and presently they may hit even backward old New York. The very critics, such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who twenty years ago were identifying the "modern" in architecture with Cubism in painting and with a general glorification of the mechanical and the impersonal and aesthetically puritanic have become advocates of the personalism of Frank Lloyd Wright. Certainly Le Corbusier's dictum of the twenties—that the modern house is a machine for living in—has become old hat. The modern accent is on living, not on the machine. (This change must hit hardest those academic American modernists who imitated Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe and Gropius, as their fathers imitated the reigning lights of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.) Sigfried Giedion, once a leader of the mechanical rigorists, has come out for the monumental and the symbolic, and among the younger people an inclination to play with the "feeling" elements in design—with color, texture, even painting and sculpture—has become insuppressible. "Functionalism," writes a rather pained critic in a recent issue of the *Architectural Review* of London, "the only real aesthetic faith to which the modern architect could lay claim in the inter-war years, is now, if not repudiated, certainly called into question . . . by those who were formerly its most illustrious supporters."

We are bound to hear more of this development during the next decade, but I am not alarmed by the prospect. What was called functionalism was a one-sided interpretation of function, and it was an interpretation that Louis Sullivan, who popularized the slogan "Form follows function," never subscribed to. The rigorists placed the mechanical functions of a building above its human functions; they neglected the feelings, the sentiments, and the interests of the person who was to occupy it. Instead of regarding engineering as a foundation for form, they treated it as an end. This kind of architectural oneness was not confined to the more arid practitioners. Frank Lloyd Wright, it is said, once turned upon a client—let's call him John Smith—who had added a few pleasant rugs and comfortable Aalto chairs to Mr. Wright's furnishings, and exclaimed,

\*(By permission copyright 1947, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.)

"You have ruined this place completely, and you have disgraced me. This is no longer a Frank Lloyd Wright house. It is a John Smith house now."

Well, it was time that some of our architects remembered the non-mechanical and non-formal elements in architecture, and that they remembered what a building says as well as what it does. A house, as the Uruguayan architect Julio Vilamajó has put it, should be as personal as one's clothes and should fit the family life just as well. This is not a new doctrine in the United States. People like Bernhard Maybeck and William Wilson Wurster, in California, always practiced it, and they took good care that their houses did not resemble factories or museums. So I don't propose to join the solemn gentlemen who, aware of this natural reaction against a sterile and abstract modernism, are predicting a return to the graceful stereotypes of the eighteenth century. Rather, I look for the continued spread, to every part of the country, of that native and humane form of modernism one might call the Bay Region style, a free yet unobtrusive expression of the terrain, the climate, and the way of life on the Coast. That style took root about fifty years ago in Berkeley, California, in the early work of John Galen Howard and Maybeck, and by now, on the Coast, it is simply taken for granted; no one out there is foolish enough to imagine that there is any other proper way of building in our time. The style is actually a product of the meeting of Oriental and Occidental architectural traditions, and it is far more truly a universal style than the so-called international style of the nineteen-thirties, since it permits regional adaptations and modifications. Some of the best examples of this at once native and universal tradition are being built in New England. The change that is now going on in both Europe and America means only that modern architecture is past its adolescent period, with its quixotic purities, its awkward self-consciousness, its assertive dogmatism. The good young architects today are familiar enough with the machine and its products and processes to take them for granted, and so they are ready to relax and enjoy themselves a little. That will be better for all of us.

LEWIS MUMFORD

### The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, Spring 1948: Vol. XV, No. 3

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page 17, G. E. Kidder Smith; p. 18, G. E. Kidder Smith; page 19, Roy Stevens.

Exhibit A (III)

Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region Catalog of exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art, Sept. 16 to Oct. 30 1949

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Lewis Mumford

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE BAY REGION

THIS EXHIBITION repairs a serious omission in the existing histories of American architecture: it establishes the existence of a vigorous tradition of modern building, which took root in California some half a century ago. Apart from the buildings of Irving Gill and the Brothers Greene, some of the best examples of this work were produced in the Bay Region area; and the early work shows qualities of boldness, directness, and human sensitivity, combined with a certain quiet restraint, that seem embedded in the very character of the region. The Bay Region architects have given form to their very informality.

Apart from a few illustrations in Talbot Hamlin's *Pageant of American Architecture* (1926), the existing histories of American architecture pay no attention to this remarkable tradition: even the revised edition of Tallmadge's history (1936) included no example. That singular omission will probably be duly remedied in Professor Hugh Morrison's forthcoming history of American architecture; but it stands as a reproach to those who have cultivated the field. Yet perhaps the architects of the Bay Region are themselves partly to blame for this neglect: but for Bernard Maybeck's fine reticence, his work would have been hailed long ago as the West Coast counterpart to Wright's prairie architecture. Yet the impulse to bury their lights under a bushel, so foreign to our usual American tendency to over-expose, over-publicize, over-claim, was a highly honorable one: that example of humility and self-respect makes the older architects of the Bay Region school worthy leaders of the new generation.

At the time of writing *Sticks and Stones* in 1924, I was as ignorant of the Bay Region school as my later successors. When I published *The Brown Decades* in 1931, however, I went out of my way to mention the work of Gill and Maybeck, though it did not fall directly within my purview; and since that time I have buttonholed every promising young scholar I could find, begging him or her to explore in detail the work of the early Bay Region school. None of these efforts bore any visible fruit, until a few years ago, by some unfortunate-slip, I characterized the buildings that have been assembled for this exhibition as examples of the "Bay Region Style," and contrasted it with the restrictive and arid formulas of the so-called "International Style." That reference conjured up the proverbial (tea-with-lemon) tempest: chiefly because its basis and its applications were misunderstood. Dr. Sigfried Giedion, of Zurich, even thought for a brief moment that I was making a reactionary attack upon the whole modern movement. A symposium was conducted by the Museum of Modern Art for the purpose of clarifying the issues that had been raised.

My purposes, I would emphasize, were entirely honorable. What I was calling attention to, in the work of the Bay Region school, was the fact that, though it was thoroughly modern, it was not tied to the tags and clichés of the so-called International Style: that it made no fetish of the flat roof and did not deliberately avoid projections and overhangs: that it made no effort to symbolize the machine, through a narrow choice

P. 2 Lewis Mumford

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of materials and forms: that it had a place for personalities as different as Maybeck and Dailey and Wurster and Kump. What seemed to me admirable in the style that had developed during the last half century was that it was a steady organic growth, producing modern forms accepted as natural and appropriate by both client and architect. Even the speculative suburban house in the Bay Region, during the last fifteen years, has not been untouched by this movement. But in perspective, the work of this style was part of a worldwide movement; a movement in which no single country can claim pre-eminence. To identify the modern in architecture with the work of Le Corbusier and his followers seems to me to betray a provincial misunderstanding of both architecture and history; while to attempt, as some Eastern critics have done, to disparage the work in the Bay Region by referring to it as the "redwood cottage style" is to display an ignorance of its varied resources and achievements.

For the most part, this organic architecture seems to have come about through an unforced personal growth: at the beginning Maybeck and Gill acclimated to California the seedlings that had been planted East of the Mississippi by Richardson, Sullivan, Wright, and their followers. The ideas behind this Bay Region movement were not perhaps formulated to the point of finding literary expression; yet one must not perhaps attribute too much intellectual innocence to this movement, merely because it was conspicuously lacking in manifestoes. I am sure the leaders of this school knew what they were doing and why, even if they did not explain themselves in print.

There comes a point in every human development, however, where further growth is impossible without achieving a certain degree of self-consciousness; and it is useless to complain, as a Bay Region patriot did a little while ago in the *Architectural Review* of London that the Bay Region architects didn't want to be "discovered" and theorized over by officious Eastern critics. Such self-consciousness, such critical reevaluation, is the price of maturity; indeed, it was from the autobiographic observations of one of the best of the Bay Region school, as we drove around Berkeley in 1941, that I first was able to trace, from the inside, the origins and continuities of this vital modern tradition. Standing in front of Maybeck's Christian Science Church, I learned from William Wurster's lips the direct effect of Maybeck's poetic architectural imagination on his own work, while still a student at Berkeley.

The problem of modern architecture is no longer to escape the burdens of imitating or adapting dead historic forms: only in such moribund departments of architecture as the design of college buildings is architecture any longer under such restraints; and even in a conservative part of the country like the Southeast, the proposal to design Wake Forest College in "Georgian" awakened a scandalized protest on the part of the local architectural profession. The main problem of architecture today is to reconcile the universal and the regional, the mechanical and the human, the cosmopolitan and the indigenous. No manner of building that exaggerates the local at the expense of the universal can possibly answer to the needs of our time; and if the Bay Region work were so singular and so confined, it would hardly be worth critical recognition at this late day. It is for just the opposite reason that the best Bay Region architecture is significant. Here the architects have absorbed the universal lessons of science and the machine, and have reconciled them with human wants and human desires, with full regard for the setting of nature, the climate and topography and vegetation, with all those regional qualities whose importance Frederick Law Olmstead wisely stressed two generations ago in his exemplary program for the development of Stanford University.

Bay Region architecture both belongs to the region and transcends the region: it embraces the machine and it transcends the machine. It does not ignore particular needs, customs, conditions, but translates them into the common form of our civilization. These qualities are what makes the work of the Bay Region architects so significant — both as achievement and as promise.

William W. Wurster

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## A PERSONAL VIEW

THE YEAR was 1913 and the impressions were those of a seventeen-year-old freshman coming from the great valley of California, coming from a conventional background to begin the study of architecture at the state university.

The moving experience of the first evening was to be repeated to a greater and lesser degree many times when one realized that here was a group of clients and architects who placed greater value on ideas and proportions than on permanency, refined detail, conformity or amount of money spent. The ascendancy of this point of view has come to mark the best domestic architecture of the area around San Francisco Bay.

It was a big room with four-foot-wide boards in panel form on the walls and ceiling. The redwood was left unfinished as it came from the tree, which takes on a pink-brown color with the years. A natural pine floor, no carpets or rugs and a fireplace with a raised hearth used for a seat the twenty-four feet of the width of the room with a flat continuous cushion on the hearth except directly in front of the fire. There was a long window seat with a similar cushion. There was a piano in one corner and a gnarled oak trunk with brown leaves standing from floor to ceiling in back of the piano. I can't recall any pictures, and there was no other furniture — no ornaments, no curtains — and spread out far below were the lights of the city.

Such a place as this doesn't need permanence or really precious materials or workmanship to make it convincing. It doesn't need the patina of age which we are so apt to over-invest with interest.

It took great skill to bring about this room. It meant giving up the idea of windows as holes in the wall, of competing with the view with the triviality of fabric, color or pattern. It meant steering free of the ruffles of existence. The gain was rewarding, for I know that many were inspired by this sort of thing, and you find it in much of the work of Schweinfurth, Coxhead, the Greenes, Polk, Howard and Maybeck. This phase of architecture was almost an anonymous one, for the architectural publishers sought in the main for the monument and heavy commercial and civic pieces. These wonderful homes were enjoyed and exclaimed over, but they defy photography. And they should, for you can seldom take a picture of space as it can only show surface at the end of space.

The magic of the room I described could never be translated to the written or picture page, for it was a way of living and the house a frame for such a life. The intertwining of the interior and the exterior might have started with the view from the window, but

Exhibit C (III)

it was soon translated to access so a person could not only see the out-of-doors but could walk into it and become a part of it. Of course, the climate played a part in this as did the lack of bugs and insects. But it took someone to perceive this, and the imaginative group of men I have mentioned gave a foundation for all of us who have come later. In the beginning it might have needed flamboyant sites to free the designers from convention but now the obvious advantages of this freedom mean that even the most prosaic locations have a share in this viewpoint. The Berkeley fire of 1923, which destroyed sixty blocks north of the Campus, swept away much of the very thing I have described. With trees destroyed as well as structures there was small incentive to attempt the same venture again.

California in some degree shares the quality of the desert light of Arizona, which has ever stressed distance rather than the near-at-hand. This explains why delicacy of detail in California seems trivial compared to its real use and need in New England, where the air is hazier and the immediate surroundings are filled with the green of leaves. This means there is every inclination to examine the flutings on the fireplace, which are not unlike the very blades of grass in the foreground. The long dry season in California, from May until November, leaves its mark on life and so, in turn, on the design — no need of shelter from summer rains and great need of ground areas covered with gravel or brick, which do not need water.

There is no recipe in which one can place all these ingredients and foresee a result. But I do think in analyzing the vitality of the work of this area it is necessary to list some of these differences from other places, not only to star the results as a Baedeker, but to help find why they are so.

The West has still a pioneer society. An element of gambling, of taking a chance, exists still, and this goes into the lives so that *who* you are is not so important as *what* you are. This is quickly translated into the houses, and there is not such a fetish of permanence or tradition.

The hills and great bay, which can be shared by so many homes, have always brought the emphasis on what you look *at*, not what you live *in*. This is added to the other reasons for the lack of minute decoration.

Take-a-chance clients, mild, even climate, no insects or bugs, a long dry season and, above and over all, the immensity of the scene — all have had their share in shaping the design. Is it small wonder to find the vitality of architecture with these as the starting point?

Exhibit C-2(III)



Greenwood Common

III. The Houses of Greenwood Common (Continued)

A Description of Each House: Architects, Owners, Architectural Characteristics

Elisabeth Kendall Thompson, with James Symons for #4 Only

Feb 18, 1990

1 Greenwood Common

Date of Construction: 1955  
 Architect: Donald E. Olsen

Donald Olsen was born in Minneapolis and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.A. degree in architecture in 1942. In 1945 and 1946 he attended Harvard University Graduate School of Design and graduated in 1946 with an M.A. in architecture. He opened his own office in 1953 after working in the office of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons for three years. He has been architect for a number of residences, for several commercial buildings, and was one of the three firms selected to design Wurster Hall (College of Environmental Design) at the University of California, Berkeley. His work has brought him a number of design awards, especially in the residential field.

In addition to his architectural practice, Don Olsen is a professor of architecture at the University of California. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the highest honor the Institute can bestow on a member.

Owners: Original and Current:  
 Robert W. and Ann C. Birge. Dr. Robert Birge is Associate Director, Emeritus, Physics Division, of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. Dr. Ann Birge is Professor of Physics at California State University, Hayward.

The Birge residence is at the corner of Greenwood Terrace and Rose Street, and occupies the site of the Gregory's former tennis court. Because of the low level of the tennis court, the architect was able to work out a two-story plan which would still keep the overall height of the house relatively low.

To enter the house from Greenwood Terrace there is a bridge to the front door; planting in this area stays green year

round. The house is oriented due south, and its slight elevation above the roadway gives it the view to the Bay across the central Common -- an important program requirement -- from the combined living and dining room. On this same level are the bedrooms (master bedroom on west side, children's rooms on north).

With a look to the future, the architect provided for a fourth bedroom and bath within the original envelope of the house, so that no addition need be made.

This house is an Olsen interpretation of the International Style, but it is clearly transmuted by the special qualities of the Bay Region itself, by customs, values, climate, a way of life quite different from that lived anywhere else. This is a straightforward house, and its program was straightforward, says Don Olsen, the architect. But it is much more: an aesthetic that reflected the straightforwardness and simplicity and lasting search for truth and honesty that is the scientific ethic.

As a house on the Common, it offers another dimension of architectural approach. Like all the others it is a wood frame building, but here sitting on top of a stone block base. The exterior siding is wood boards, laid vertically and stained, in the natural wood color, not painted. It is a simple rectangle in form, but its interior is not dogmatic; the wood-finished living and dining rooms, the shelves of books, the comfort and simplicity clearly recognize the humane needs and the human ways, and make their satisfaction easy and natural.

"It was a joy working with Don," said the Birges in a note about their house. "What a joy it was to do the house with you," said the architect when recently he and the Birges met at a meeting. Clearly, the meeting of minds, and hearts, is the way to a good house.

#1 Greenwood Common is in very good condition. The original owners cherish their house and take good care of it. Don Olsen knew Wurster from Cambridge days and from working for him in San Francisco, and they understood each other's aims. The Birges spent an hour with Wurster, absorbing what his concept of the Common was, what he hoped each lot owner would do with his property. After that, he left the architect--and the clients--alone. He gave no specifics. He believed in the individual, and he deeply believed in young architects, especially when they had shown their potential for excellence. Those who were chosen for Greenwood Common did not let him down.

## 2 Greenwood Common

Date of Construction: 1957

## Architect:

Robert Klemmedson, AIA. Klemmedson's work, largely residential at the time that the Schaafs chose him to design their house, found inspiration in Japanese architecture and designed several houses in the vicinity of Greenwood Common that show this influence. The Schaaf house has some of this influence as well. Klemmedson continues to practice at this date (1990) at 14 Orinda Way, Orinda, with his son Ronald.

## Owners:

Professor and Mrs. Samuel Schaaf. The Schaafs are the original owners. Mr. Schaaf is professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at the University.

## The House at 2 Greenwood Common

The wide sweep of the pitched roof of this house shelters an open plan for the social areas of the main floor, and the glass south wall opens these rooms to the fenced garden, making this part of the house like a pavilion, and in this sense Klemmedon's pleasure in Japanese architecture is clear. The roof's rafters are open to the interior, creating exceptional spaciousness. The house is set back from the roadway which runs from Greenwood Terrace to the garage for #7, and the small parking area. This provides a sunny patio and garden (designed by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin).

Both exterior and interior walls are redwood.

The lot falls steeply from the Common to Rose Street. Bedrooms are located on the lower floor, and in the years since this and the other houses on the north side of the Common were built, a high leafy hedge of pittosporum has grown and shields these rooms from traffic on Rose Street. Although this street is a dead end at La Loma, it is one of the two ways of reaching the Common.

The house appears to be in very good condition and is well-maintained. It complements the other houses on the Common, and appropriately meets Wurster's aim of providing "an alphabet of architecture" through the varying approaches to design of the different architects.

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3 Greenwood Common

Date  
of Construction: 1954

Architect:

Joseph Esherick, FAIA. The American Institute of Architects presented its Gold Medal, its highest honor for any architect in the world whose work has contributed in great measure to the field of architecture, to Esherick in 1989. In 1986, the Institute gave Esherick's firm the Firm Award, for the excellence of design and quality of practice it has shown over the years of its existence.

Joseph Esherick, founder of the firm whose present principals are, besides Esherick, George Homsey, Peter Dodge and Charles Davis, founded the firm in 1946, when he returned from service in World War II. Earlier, he had worked for Gardner Dailey, a distinguished architect whose polished designs housed many of San Francisco's prominent citizens.

In 1952 Esherick was asked to lecture at the University College of Environmental Design. He subsequently became associate professor, professor, and chairman of the department of architecture (1977-81). He retired from the faculty in 1985, but continues to practice architecture at his office on Potrero Hill in San Francisco.

Bare facts do not tell the quality of his design or of his teaching. The awards attest to the respect in which his peers in the profession of architecture hold him. But to know what he is as a teacher it is necessary to talk to those who have been his students. Like Christopher Wren's works, Joe Esherick's speak for him, both in terms of physical presence--his buildings--and in terms of passing the torch--the learning experience his teaching made happen. One student said "I am an architect because of Professor

Esherick." Another speaks of learning to "deeply respect people and cultures." Yet another, "he influenced virtually every aspect of our own work and study." And one summed it up: "Teacher of teachers, Master, Builder and Friend."

Owners:

Original: Prof. and Mrs. James Ackerman  
1954 - 1960  
Later: Prof. and Mrs. William Farnham  
1960 - 1975  
Current: Mr. and Mrs. Frederick S. Wyle  
1975 -

Professor Ackerman was professor of Architectural and Art History at the University of California, Berkeley, the highly respected author of a book on the Renaissance architect Palladio (and a video tape on the same subject). He was professor of Art and Architectural History at Harvard since 1960, and retired recently; he now holds the title of professor emeritus.

Professor Farnham was professor of English at the University. Mrs. Farnham was also a professor of English, at Holy Names College.

Frederick S. Wyle is an attorney with offices in San Francisco. His wife, Katinka, is active in community and school affairs.

3 Greenwood Common is very much an Esherick house, from the siting and the approach to the entrance through a rectangular patio (actually a deck) to the high-ceilinged living room with its great-scaled windows. Esherick designed the house with two special aims in mind: to provide for the paintings that Jim Ackerman collected--it was his joy to "discover" young artists and help them on their way, artists like Paul Warner and Richard Diebenkorn--and to make a house in which Mildred, his wife, could move about easily and do all the things necessary for keeping and enjoying the house. Mildred had had polio and used a wheelchair.

The house does achieve both. There are splendid spaces where paintings can hang, in light that lets them fulfill

their intent, on walls that make a suitable background for whatever their colors and forms and line. Joe is a magician of light: his rooms are filled with light but never with glare. How does he do this? By careful balance, by sensitive sensing of the quality of light in a particular place, and fitting the sources--with Joe, windows are never holes in the wall; they are the means to lighting appropriately. The living room in this house has this magical quality of light. Great doors, almost floor to ceiling glass, open to the patio on the south; a corner window to the west brings in sunlight filtered through pine branches, two windows to the north, tall and narrow, add cool light from the sunless north. In warm weather, the doors to the patio can stand open, and the room is less room-with-walls and more space without boundary.

When the house was designed, barrier-free architecture had not begun to be talked about, but that is what the design is really intended to provide. Many of the ways Joe accomplished this were of his own devising; there were no "standards" and no specialized equipment. The kitchen sink was set at a low height, the plumbing was installed to make it possible for a wheelchair to fit under, counters were low-set, with space for the chair, cupboards were accessible, drawers easy to open. Doorways and halls were wide enough for the chair to roll along unimpeded. Bathrooms similarly were geared to wheelchair use, with hardware now readily available, but unknown then. Joe adapted, or designed, what he saw as essential aids to living easily.

The current occupants, the Wyles, find the house right for them though these special needs are not theirs. "It's such an easy house to keep," says Mrs. Wyle. The kitchen's windows have a lovely view to the northeast and the Berkeley hills. Some minor changes were made in this area in the late 1970's, and old equipment was replaced (refrigerator, ventilator). In a recent interview, Joseph Esherick volunteered the comment that this house "is one of my favorites."

One major change was made in 1961, when the Farnhams owned the house; the bedroom nearest the living room was changed to make a dining room. The west wall was brought out two feet--which made the entry more protected--and a closet to the south was closed off. At the same time the one-car garage was enlarged to take two cars. Otherwise the house today is as originally designed.

On the lower level there is a study, a bedroom and bath, and storage space. The bedroom is used for guests, and

though with less light than the study, is actually a "cozy place," and guests have enjoyed its quality. There are three bedrooms on the main level, one with eastern exposure, one facing south with French doors opening into a small garden, and one facing west on to the patio. The western view from the corner window in the living room, beside the fireplace, is toward the Bay and Mount Tamalpais, framed by Monterey pine branches, and the tall windows make the branches themselves something to look up to see.

The house is in excellent condition. It is a wood-framed structure, with wood floors. Window frames are also wood, painted black (a recognizable Esherick design feature). The Wyles added a hot tub at the northeast corner of the lot, removing a short concrete stair to do so.

#### 4 Greenwood Common

Date of Construction: 1954

Architect:

Harwell Hamilton Harris, FAIA, was born in Redlands, California in 1903 and attended Pomona College and the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, where he studied sculpture among other subjects. He continued his training in engineering and city planning in the offices of MT Cantell and Richard Neutra respectively. From 1930 to 1933 he collaborated with Neutra on projects for the Congres Internationale D'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) and served as Secretary of the organization.

In 1934 he started his own practice in Los Angeles. The 432 sq. ft. pavilion-like house in Fellowship Park (1935) which he built for himself drew immediate attention, and became a mecca for young architects drawn by its simplicity, and by the simplicity in lifestyle that its design demanded. The Fellowship Park house has been widely admired but has proved difficult to imitate successfully. It brought Harris not only fame but clients, many wealthy enough to want more spacious houses that have become equally famous.

In addition to practising architecture, Harris taught design at the Chouinard Art School and Art Center and at the University of Southern California, and was a visiting lecturer in architecture at schools and colleges in many parts of the U.S. In 1951, he became director of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas, Austin, leaving that position in 1955 to return to private practise. In 1961 he went to Raleigh, North Carolina as Professor of Architecture at the North Carolina State University.

Harris' work has been widely published in this country and abroad. He has received numerous awards and is the subject of a book to be published next year by Lisa Germany. In 1965, a collection of photographs of his work and selections from his writings and talks was compiled by the Student Publication of the School of Design at North Carolina State. In 1983, the University of Texas organized a travelling exhibition

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of his work and a catalog of it was compiled by Lisa Germany. A revised and updated edition is forthcoming and will carry a foreword by Harris' friend Bruno Sevi of Italy.

Harris retired from practise in 1975 and lives in the residential half of the building in Raleigh which also housed his office.

**Owners:**

Mr and Mrs Frederick Duhring 1954-74

Unlike most of the original owners, the Duhings were not connected with the University. Frederick Duhring was with Mason-McDuffie, the real estate company, and may have been introduced to William Wurster in this connection. The Duhings also knew Weston Havens, a local property owner and investment counselor with an office at the American Trust Company in Berkeley. Havens was a friend and great admirer of Harwell Hamilton Harris, by now a prominent Southern California architect, and when Mrs. Duhring asked Havens to suggest the names of architects, he referred her to Harris, reminding her that Harris had designed his own landmark house on Panoramic Way (1941) in Berkeley, with its dramatic inverted truss.

Prof and Mrs Woodbridge Bingham 1975-88

Professor Bingham was a sinologist at UC Berkeley. His wife Ursula was for many years a noted figure in civic affairs in Berkeley. She is best known for the formation of the Women's Town Council of Berkeley, founded to bring together women representatives from civic organizations and boards and commissions of the City of Berkeley. Mrs Bingham presently lives in Oakland.

SB Master and James Symons 1988-

SB Master, a graduate of UC Santa Cruz and the Harvard Business School, is President of Master-McNeil, Inc., a consulting firm. James Symons is a physicist and is presently the Director of the Nuclear Science Division at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. Their son is Henry Ben, age two.

## Description of #4 Greenwood Common

### The House

Harris' work demonstrates his deep interest in and concern for both the natural and the urban surroundings of his buildings and houses. He has used a variety of materials over the years with considerable success. In the Duhring house he chose shingles, which were in line with the design guidelines accepted for Greenwood Common and echoed the tradition of Berkeley's earliest houses.

The lot slopes away to the north and west and is barely visible from the access road. The Duhring's children recall their parents' respect for their new neighbor, Professor Walter Hart of the UC Berkeley English Department; the house was sited carefully by Harris to take advantage of the topography, and to avoid overlooking the patio garden of the Hart house on Leroy. (Professor Hart's house was originally designed by John Galen Howard for his own use, and Julia Morgan later added a splendid second floor library overlooking the patio.)

The Duhring lot had beautiful views toward Mount Tamalpais and the Bay in the northwest and toward the Bay Bridge and San Francisco in the southwest. Harris incorporated these views, framed by windows in the corners of the living and dining rooms respectively. Between these symmetric view corners the west wall is solid. The Duhring's concern that the house should not overlook the Hart garden is probably one reason for this but an additional explanation can be found in Harris' experience with the all-glass west wall of the Havens house, which also looks due west to the view. At night the Havens view is unparalleled, but during the day the light is so strong, and the glare so severe, that the curtains must be kept drawn a good deal of the time. The Duhring house design solves this problem.

The house was designed using a 3 foot module; this is characteristic of Harris, who experimented with many different modular sizes during this period. The house has a compact plan: the living room, dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms are on the entry level. On the lower level, facing Rose Street, are a Studio (Mrs Duhring was an artist) and a third bedroom.

An interesting feature of the design is that all of the main rooms (the living room, the dining room and the studio) have french doors which open onto an adjacent patio, garden, or deck. This close relationship of indoors to outdoors, and the resulting juxtaposition of indoor and outdoor spaces, exemplifies the Second Bay Area style.

The exterior of the house is finished in shingles; the interior walls are wallboard painted white with many design elements such as light fixtures and mouldings that are consistent throughout the house. The structure is wood framed. The

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interlocking, low-pitched roofs seem appropriate to their location among several tall pine trees.

Since Harris was practising in Southern California, he needed a local architect to supervise the work. For this he selected Hervey Parke Clark, an architect with offices in San Francisco. Clark was an excellent architect, well recognized as one of the Bay Area's important younger designers. He was a man of quiet temperament, but the addition of a third voice in the process may have contributed to some tension that apparently existed between the strong-willed clients and architect.

Few changes have been made since the house was built, with the exception of the kitchen which was remodelled by the present owners in 1988.

### The Garden

The garage, gates and fences around the house were designed by Harris and are an integral and very successful feature of the design. Maximum use of the available space is made by dividing the garden into four distinct areas, separated by board and batten fencing. These fences are arranged in such a way that the interior of the house is entirely hidden from view as visitors enter the garden and approach the front door. The landscaping was designed by Geraldine Knight Scott, the noted Bay Area landscape designer, who was also considered as landscape designer for the Common.

The entry from the Common is particularly effective; it consists of a porch and a gently sloping brick stairway, lit by Japanese lanterns leading to a small formal garden in the Japanese style. This area features Japanese maple, sasanqua, flowering crab apple and species rhododendrons.

The patio garden outside the dining room is also in the Japanese style, but to the north of the house, the garden outside the studio is planted with California natives which fill the slope down to Rose Street and shelter the house from view.

7 Greenwood Common

Date of Construction:

According to William Wilson Wurster, FAIA, in an interview in 1963, the house was built "c. 1932". Mr. and Mrs. Wurster lived in the house 1950-1953.

According to present resident and owner, Mrs. Richard McDonough, who recently had some interior work done on the house, it is possible that an earlier house had been remodelled in 1932.

Architect:

Rudolph Schindler, a Los Angeles architect whose other work in the Bay Area is a house for Professor Kaun at Point Richmond.

Owners:

Warren Gregory, to 1950.

William Wurster, 1950-1953. Dean, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley.

Morley Baer, 1953-1972. Architectural photographer Addition by Henry Hill in the 1950's.

David Wetle, artist, 1972-1973. Mr. Wetle died in 1973 after living a #7 for 12 to 18 months.

Clifford Morse, 1974-1976. Architect

Joan and Richard McDonough, 1976- Addition 1984, by Jay Claiborne Landscaping by Meacham & O'Brien Addition 1988-89 and remodeling by Gary E. Parsons, architect.

The architect for the house as it was known in 1932 has been identified by Dean Wurster as Rudolph M. Schindler, by that date a well known Southern California architect. Schindler was born in Vienna, Austria, September 5, 1887, educated at the Imperial Institute of Engineering and at th Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, and worked as an architect in Europe until 1914 when he emigrated to the United States.

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Schindler greatly admired the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (published in Germany in 1911), and it was this admiration and strong sympathy for the philosophy of Wright that drew him to the Chicago area. He became an assistant to Wright and when Wright went to Japan for the building of the Imperial Hotel, he sent Schindler (in 1920) to Los Angeles, where Wright's house for Aline Barnsdall was under construction. After Wright returned from Japan, Schindler remained in Los Angeles, where he had met many local residents and had no doubt found kindred spirits among many Europeans who had gravitated to Southern California, some to work in the film industry - artists, musicians, writers, and film directors.

Research to date has turned up very little work that Schindler did in the Bay Area. This house and a house in Point Richmond (1936) for Professor Kaun of the Slavic Languages department at the University in Berkeley, a remodeling for Prof. Mathurin Dondo, some furniture designed for a client named Perstein in 1933, are listed in the chronology of Schindler's work in the catalog for the 1967 exhibition in Los Angeles of his work.

Schindler was ahead of his time in his spatial concepts, and innovative in expressing them. While still a student, he wrote in a "manifesto": "The old problems have been solved and the styles are dead...The architect has finally discovered the medium of his art: SPACE. A new architectural problem has been born." Cezanne, Wright, Otto Wagner, Cubism, De Stijl - these fired his imagination and reinforced his developing philosophy of design, and in time became part of his work in his own individual expression. Three of his Southern California houses stand out: the Lovell Beach House at Newport Beach in 1926, the Buck House in Los Angeles in 1934, and his own house in Kings Road, Hollywood, in 1922. But there are many more in that area. The few Bay Area examples, while not outstanding as are those named, nevertheless lend luster by their origin to the Bay Area.

The many remodeling of the Greenwood Common Schindler make it difficult now to ferret out the original. Even so, there is something individual about it, for all the ideas that have changed it through the years, and a careful study of Schindler work makes possible a good sense of the special genius of this singular and prophetic architect, to use Esther McCoy's phrase. She knew him well, having worked in his office during the war years.

Greenwood Common as it is in 1990 is a two story house, with three bedrooms and three baths, a study, living room, dining room and kitchen, with pantry. The entrance from the Common is from the parking area along a covered path which runs beside a small landscaped court on one side and the wall of

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one of the additions - Morley Baer's photographic darkroom and studio (added by Henry Hill), now used as a bedroom.

The small entry can be seen through a glass door, framed in wood painted black. The living room, though not especially large, seems nevertheless spacious because its space flows through to the dining room, sunk below entrance level, and out beyond the house walls to a wide deck with a superb view to the Bay. Unlike the panoramic view so prized in sales talk, this view is tempered by the presence of trees which frame and enhance the beauty of the outlook. Sliding glass doors, floor almost to ceiling open the dining room to the deck.

The kitchen, added in 1988-89 by Gary Parsons, gets light from "clerestory" windows (this room is dug into the hillside), and borrows light from the large windows in the dining room. Parsons changed a short stairway in the living room to more appropriate form for the character of the room; it leads to a study, mid-level between living room and small sitting room and bedroom and bath. Above this level is another floor with two bedrooms and baths.

A walled garden juts out toward the central green, and can be reached through large-paned glass doors in the sitting room. Lawrence Halprin designed the garden during the time that the Morley Baers and their son Josh lived in the house.

This Schindler house, presumed to have been used by the Warren Gregorys as a guest house, is one of his relatively rare wood frame houses. He came to use concrete and stucco as materials that reflected and permitted more plasticity of form than wood. Windows are framed in wood (except for later additions). When the dining room was being remodelled in 1988-89, it was discovered that beneath the wood floor there had been a floor of brick. Was this once a patio? This may be one of the enigmas of architecture, unless research finds a way to discover its original intent.

In 1990, it is a house of great charm and warmth. Its recent remodelling has enhanced its character and greatly added to the comfort and enjoyment of the residents and their visitors, without changing the spaces and places of the house in more than minor ways.

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8 Greenwood Common

Date of Construction: 1953

Architect: Howard Moise, Professor of Architecture at the Department (later School) of Architecture, University of California, 1887-1965.

Howard Moise was born in New Mexico, but was not there long: his family moved to Los Angeles when he was four years old, and he was educated in that city's schools. He began his training in architecture in the office of Myron Hunt, an architect of unusual perception, who was an early exponent of modern ideas in design, and an ambassador of California's special climate and topographical assets.

He went on to study at Harvard, where he received the B.A. and M.A. degrees in architecture, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa (not often bestowed on students in architecture), was a member of the Signet Club and editor of the Harvard Lampoon.

For several years he worked in architectural offices in New York City, principally in those of James Gamble Rogers, where he was made responsible for the exterior design of the "first vertical hospital" - Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center - a high rise hospital. In 1933 he was asked to come to the University of California at Berkeley as professor of architecture, a post he occupied until retirement in 1954. He initiated a course in Planning and one in Housing, intended for non-architecture students, as a means of educating public officials in the issues and basics of those fields. An able and sensitive designer himself, he became an exceptional teacher both in those courses and in design courses for

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architecture students. Throughout his teaching career, and in line with department custom, Professor Moise maintained a small office for the practice of architecture, where he designed a number of unusually fine residences in Berkeley and Contra Costa County. One of his best known works was the remodeling and additions to the President's House on the Berkeley campus.

Moise died in 1965 at the age of 78.

Owners:

Mrs. W.W. Douglas, original

Victor and Annie Mae Jones,  
1966-1985

Elliot E. Porter, 1985-

The House at 8 Greenwood Common

The house is a one story house situated on the southeast corner of Greenwood Common. The lot is small, and so is the two-bedroom house, but Moise made the most of the opportunities it offered. Unlike the other houses on the Common, its original garage opened directly off Greenwood Terrace, and shields the house to some extent from automobile traffic along this access road. (The garage was converted into a study by the Jones, and a carport next to the original garage was added, also opening directly to Greenwood Terrace.) To the south the house is bounded by the easement leading to garages for #9 and #10. On the north is a pedestrian walkway lined with flowering plum trees, one of the features of the Common. On the West was a charming entry garden, shared with #9. The current owner has enclosed it, however, with a tall wrap-around fence.

Mrs. Douglas was a widow when she built her L-shaped house. It is a "cozy", not a showy, place. It makes no strong architectural statements, but is obviously a reflection of the client and her requirements. The house has no view, but the architect's clever use of the space available provided a private patio on the sunny side of the house (which also acts as a buffer against traffic along Greenwood Terrace, the access road to the Common). The large living room encompasses a dining space which can be closed off by folding panels.

Here, and in the Blaisdell and Maenchen houses, the wood exterior boards are drop-sided to give a flush-set

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appearance - a statement of the simplicity their architects believed in and wanted to certify.

This is one of three Common houses to have a pitched roof - a perhaps less simple form than a flat roof would have provided - but suitably handled here as to scale, and appropriate to the character of the house.

The condition of the house seems good, but some of the exterior boards are beginning to buckle, on the south and west sides, where the sun strikes with the greatest fervor.

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9 Greenwood Common

Date of  
Construction:

1954

Architect:

(Albert) Henry Hill

Born in England where his father had business, Henry Hill (called Albert in his early years) came to Berkeley at the age of 4, was educated in Berkeley schools, and lived in this city until he retired and moved to his home in Carmel in 1971. He died in Carmel at the age of 72.

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, with a B.A. in architecture, Hill attended Harvard University, studying with the renowned German architect, Walter Gropius, and graduated with an M.A. in architecture. Gropius and the International Style were influences on Hill's work, but he was nevertheless essentially a Bay Area architect, and his houses were internationally known for their charm and grace as well as their straightforward, open and basically simple designs. Hill was an individualist, and whatever influences he absorbed from whatever sources--the early Bay Area architects, the International Style, French Impressionist painting, music (he designed his houses to the strains of classical music)--became so much a part of him that he seemed to extract and meld into his own interpretation the significant aspects that played into each concept. He was sensitive to the elements of design, and so well trained in their architectural application, that his work shows no false moves in scale, proportion, appropriateness; his houses are restrained yet warm and inviting, simple in plan, spatial concept and flow, and rich in the experience of architecture.

He was the architect for some larger projects: the Longshoremen's Hiring

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Hill in San Francisco (1950) is a large concrete-framed, domed structure in the Fisherman's Wharf area of the waterfront. Hill won the commission in a competition held by the Union. Among his near 500 designs for houses is the large housing project for embassy employees in the Vienna Woods, just outside Vienna, Austria. In this country he had clients in Illinois, Kentucky, Connecticut, and Southern California in addition to various locations in Northern California and, of course, the Bay Area.

Henry Hill began the practice of architecture in the office of John Ekin Dinwiddie, one of the younger architects in the Bay Area and an innovative and generous architect who later became Dean of the School of Architecture at Tulane University, New Orleans. After Hill returned to the Bay Area when his service in World War II was over, he became a partner in the firm of Dinwiddie and Hill. For a brief period, the firm included the distinguished German architect Eric Mendelsohn (Dinwiddie, Mendelsohn and Hill 1946). From 1947 to 1965 he practiced as Henry Hill, Architect; in 1965 the firm became Hill and Kruse (John Kruse had been his long-time associate). After leaving Dinwiddie, the Hill offices were at 555 Clay Street, an address to which architects from many parts of the world found their way to visit and confer with Henry Hill.

Hill was not daunted by the size of a commission. He designed a house in Kensington which he called "The Peanut" because it was so small. But it was eminently liveable, and in the few times it has been on the market, has been so sought after that its price now has skyrocketed. Another small one was done for a client who said to him "Do architects design houses for clients with a total budget of \$10,000?" "Of course," Hill unhesitatingly replied.

And he did a delightful house and garden on a hilltop lot which gave joy as well as satisfaction to its owner.

Owners:

Original: Dr. and Thomas C. Blaisdell. Dr. Blaisdell was professor of political science at the University of California from 1951 until he retired. During the Truman and Roosevelt administrations he held a number of high positions, including that of Assistant Secretary of Commerce under President Truman. He was one of the major planners of the Marshall Plan. He died in December 27, 1988.

Mrs. Blaisdell was Catherine Maltby of Connecticut, a graduate of Columbia University with B.A. and M.A. degrees. She was a well-known teacher of remedial reading, at Sara Dix Hamlin School in San Francisco and at Hillside School in Berkeley. She was active in the University Y.M.C.A., League of Women Votes and the Town and Gown Club. She died at the age of 86 in 1979.

Subsequently, after Dr. Blaisdell's death, from June of 1989, Diane and David WeberShapiro. Mr. WeberShapiro is a real estate operator and builder.

The house built for the Blaisdells is small and compact, making the most of the small flat lot on the south side of the Common. The bedrooms are rooms with walls, doors and windows, but the rest of the house is "open plan," very typical of Hill's approach to design. A large plate glass fixed panel opens the living room to a grassy lawn on the west side, held in place by a low retaining wall. There are two bedrooms and a study with a small fenced garden to the south. Entrance was from a garden court shared with the house at #8; both houses gained in the arrangement. On the north the house is bounded by the allee of flowering trees that leads to the original common area and its great view to the Bay. The corner kitchen wall was made up of panels of plywood painted in soft shades of blue and rose, and of glass in the same shape which admit daylight over the sink.

Hill's houses are always a delight to be in, to live in and to use. He was an imaginative, innovative designer whose

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joy in life and thoughtful concern for others was integral with what he designed.

The condition of the house seems to be fairly good. Some interior changes have been made since June of 1989, and the exterior window space has been increased, taking the place of painted plywood panels, but otherwise it is essentially as originally designed and built.

The low profile of the house is appropriate to its location of the Common, unobtrusive visually and respectful of sun for the trees and lawn.

10 Greenwood Common

Date of  
Construction: 1952

Architect: John Funk.

John Funk was born in Upland, California. He is a graduate of the University of California Berkeley (B.A. and M.A. in architecture). After graduating, Funk worked in the offices of William Wilson Wurster in San Francisco for several years, leaving to travel abroad for a year. Then he returned, opened his own office, and although more or less retired in 1990, continues as John Funk, Architect.

The 1945 publication of Built in USA by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, featured Funk's house for Marvin L. Heckendorf in Modesto on the dust jacket and in the book, and its earlier publication in Architectural Forum (March 1941) gave his practice a big boost nationally, marking him as one of important younger architects of the period, along with Hill, Esherick, Dinwiddie and, of course the older masters, William Wurster and Gardner Dailey.

The Heckendorf House (1815 Patricia Lane, Modesto) is "remarkably free of personal idiosyncrasy on the part of client or architect...and has a classic dignity and restraint," said Elizabeth Mock in Built in USA. This freedom from idiosyncrasy, and the classic quality of its restraint and dignity are hallmarks of Funk's work. His work--whether in houses, apartment buildings or the large School of Dentistry at the University of California in San Francisco, is clear, crisp in detail, elegantly simple.

Owners: Professor and Mrs. Otto Maenchen. Mrs. Maenchen was still living in the house in 1990. Prof. Maenchen died some

years earlier. Prof. Maenchen was a professor of history of art at the University; Mrs. Maenchen is in fact Dr. Anna Maenchen, a psychiatrist, who until recently practiced from this house.

As of this date (February 1990), the Maenchens have been the sole owners and occupants of #10.

The Maenchen House well represents Funk's qualities as an architect. The location of the lot at the western end of the southern side of the Common gave it inherent prominence but imposed restraint in expressing that important position relative to the other houses. Funk's solution was to keep the profile of the house low, but to give it interest by designing the roof as a shallow V, a form often called "butterfly roof." This visually notable distinction recognized the important location without violating the low line of demarcation for the southern boundary of the Common which had been the Wurster concept: the roofs on the south side are at almost the same height the length of the row.

Designed as a two story house (possible because of the lot's slope to the west), the main floor was used by the owners, and Mrs. Maenchen's mother occupied the "mother-in-law apartment" on the lower level.

The H-plan of the house places bedrooms and Prof. Maenchen's study in a wing toward the east, connected by a glass-walled entrance gallery to the social rooms on the west, with a broad view of the Bay and hills of San Francisco and Marin Counties, and the Bay and Golden Gate bridges. A sunny patio makes for views on an intimate scale from master bedroom and living room. A landscaped entry court, planted simply, appropriately echoes the simple landscaping of the Common to the north.

The exterior siding, stained dark reddish brown (or brownish red), is set vertically to offset the low height of the house. Prof. Maenchen's study is finished in redwood. The house is wood framed, and has a large crawl space under the upper floor areas on the east; the lower floor is on a concrete slab.

In February 1990, the original integrity of the house has been maintained intact.

The condition of the house in February 1990 appears to be relatively poor, needing repairs. The owner has been very

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ill for some time, and is now very old, so this is not surprising. Nevertheless, what the house is remains clear and its elegance is not impaired.

Greenwood Common

**IV. The Landscape Plan**

- A) Design and Evolution**
- B) Significance**

S.B. Master

Feb 18, 1990

## Greenwood Common: The Landscape Plan

### (a) Landscape Plan Design and Evolution

In the book "Lawrence Halprin: Changing Places", published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name which took place at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art from 3 July to 24 August 1986, Mr Halprin's work on Greenwood Common is described as follows:

On a 2.5 acre site purchased and subdivided by William Wurster into twelve individual lots and a shared open space, Halprin designs five of the private gardens and a common area as a centerpiece for the development. Addressing the idea that suburbs lack communal parks, each lot has access to the half-acre common, while each house sits on a small, private, low-maintenance lot skirting the common. The plan allows all residents to enjoy a view of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge. This project will later influence Halprin's approach to The Sea Ranch by clustering houses around a shared common space. Gardens include Ackerman Garden, Baer Garden, Maenchen Garden, Schaff Garden, and Wurster Garden. Completed 1958.

That Mr Halprin was an excellent choice to provide the balance of man-made and natural that the Greenwood Common site called for is suggested by a comment of Proctor Melquist, editor of Sunset Magazine, who noted about Mr Halprin "Lawrence Halprin is concerned with every mark man makes upon the land and every move man makes across the land. If Halprin's philosophy is wide-ranging, his practice of landscape architecture and environmental planning tends to prove his point."

Another telling comment appears in critic Elin Schoen's review of Mr Halprin's book "Cities", in which Schoen notes that Halprin "makes it obvious that man-made habitats can be as pleasant to live and be in--that they are, in their way, as natural as pristine green ones."

Mr Halprin had become involved in the Common at a very early stage, as he explained in a letter to Mr Morley Baer dated 28 January 1955 (Exhibit 1). "...When the Common was first being developed, Mr Wurster asked me to come over from San Francisco and advise him on the trees to plant on either side of the walkway into the Common. This I did as a simple courtesy to him and advised the plums and their present spacing ... This is essentially all I did, although I believe I also suggested the gravel on either side of the asphalt walk, the type of toping and the width of the walk."

When it came time, several months later, for the owners to consider the overall landscape of the Common itself, as closely associated as Mr Halprin already was with Greenwood Common, his selection as landscape architect was not preordained. On 29 June 1955, 30 June 1955, and 20 August 1955 a committee of

owners (Mr Baer, Mr Ackerman, Mrs Douglas, and Mrs Birge) interviewed Lawrence Halprin, Geraldine Scott, and Robert Tetlow for the job. Each gave different suggestions, recorded in the committee's notes (Exhibits 2, 3, 4). Mr Halprin "favored leaving the Common as simple and open as possible. He felt the most satisfactory ground cover would be grass...A large open area of this sort would truly supplement the small gardens and play areas of the individual lots...The area should function as a community center rather than as a strictly decorative piece."

Geraldine Scott "favored planting trees heavily in spots, lightly elsewhere, and leaving open space for recreation. She was not enthusiastic about the Board's desire for ground cover or tanbark (too windy), suggested pebbles or grass, preferably the later a cheapest to install (though not to maintain)."

Mr Tetlow "was concerned about a sense of entrance to the Common, both from the green path and from the north access drive. He thought the entrance to the green path from Greenwood Terrace might be enhanced, and a unified border on the north access road would help. He also expressed the need for a sense of unity for the houses facing on the Common."

By 25 September 1955, the date of a letter to Mr Halprin (Exhibit 5), Mr Halprin had been selected. It has been suggested that this was as much for his ability to pull together the group, and his vision of touch football matches on the Common, as for the simplicity of his preliminary plan discussed with the Committee in June.

A contour map was provided Mr Halprin on 8 October 1955, prepared by Elmer F Steigelman, Consulting Engineer, for a fee of \$25. Then began a series of letters and discussions between Mr Halprin and the Greenwood Common's landscape committee, based on Greenwood Common Inc's decision, at their board meeting on 5 October 1955, to proceed with the landscaping. (Exhibit 6).

Work on the preliminary plan began, and by 3 April 1956 both a preliminary cost estimate (\$7402), and a Statement for the Greenwood Common Landscape Plan-upon completion of preliminaries (\$250) was submitted by Mr Halprin. It is interesting to note that four benches and a cast fountain were included in these preliminary estimates. (Exhibit 7).

This estimate apparently proved rather high for the owners to undertake all at once, and Mr Halprin was asked to provide a plan for proceeding in stages. (Exhibit 8). Meanwhile, the owners reviewed Mr Halprin's preliminary plan, and provided suggestions for changes; there was much concern to eliminate any unnecessary expense, and to safeguard views by the planting of light airy trees and low shrubs.

By 14 May 1957 the plan had been agreed upon, and bids were submitted on 25 June and 3 July by Tak H Sakanashi, the landscape contractor associated with

Halprin's firm. (Exhibits 9 & 10). On 1 May 1958 another bid was received from Mr Sakanashi for the installation of the lawns. (Exhibit 11).

Looking back on the project from the vantage point of 1989, Mr Halprin wrote the following:

"The Greenwood Commons project was a unique and avant garde project for its time. There was a wonderful collaboration of landscape and architecture. It was evidenced by the congruence of the modest, elegant architecture which was all of a Bay Area Modern style--all in scale and built around a common area.

All of this has given the project a unique quality for which it has become widely known. It therefore seems important to maintain this remarkable quality, and not alter it."

(b) Landscape Plan Significance

It is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the significance of Lawrence Halprin's Greenwood Common landscape plan in isolation, so intertwined is it with the design of the houses. And that, in many ways, is the basis of the Common's great success and significance; it is a finely balanced "wonderful collaboration of landscape and architecture," consciously designed, and very much an expression of the 1950's Second Bay Area Style. Fortunately for us today, the designed landscape retains its integrity of location, design intent, materials, workmanship, and overall feeling. The design of the landscape, placement of the building sites, paths, plantings, driveways, and lighting is complementary to and totally integrated with the architecture.

As such, the Greenwood Common landscape, its relation to the houses, and the houses' relation to each other, can be seen as one of, if not the, most successful expressions of "Postwar Dreams", as this aesthetic is referred to by Roger Montgomery in his essay "Mass Producing Bay Area Architecture", published in the book "Bay Area Houses", Sally Woodbridge, editor. Montgomery writes:

Among the most interesting of these efforts at idealized postwar environments were those that the architects developed for themselves. All across the country, as the Second World War ended, architects helped bring into existence small communities that integrated more or less successfully Modern design, responsible and conservative land management, the spirit of communitarianism and cooperation, and an enlightened upper-middle-class life style. In the west, these ideals produced communities like Mutual Homes in Los Angeles. Best known and most complete among Bay Area examples is Ladera on the San Francisco peninsula...

Much less idealistic, more pragmatic, somewhat later, and more conventionally architectural rather than social, another project of the postwar era, Greenwood

Common, merits special mention...Wurster subdivided the land in a very special way...The resulting cluster plan became a milestone in group housing design, in a sense the first of the planned unit developments (PUDS) that by the 1970's would dominate Bay Area mass housing...The themes of Greenwood Common, planned unit design of dwelling groups married with an exaggerated effort to individuate each actual dwelling, led to the ubiquitous condominium-vernacular of the late sixties and early seventies.

The role of Halprin's landscape plan in consummating this marriage cannot be overestimated. His retention and highlighting of the existing Monterey pines, the simple, perfectly placed plum walkway and other paths, the broad, naturalistic swath of meadow, the minimal use of showy plant materials in favor of natives and other drought tolerant selections; all reiterate and reinforce the inherent unity and unpretentiousness of Wurster's vision.

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GREENWOOD COMMON, INC.

LAWRENCE HALPRIN  
landscape architect

JANUARY 28, 1955

MR. MORLEY BAER  
7 GREENWOOD COMMON  
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

DEAR MORLEY:

THANKS FOR YOUR INQUIRY ABOUT MY INTEREST IN GREENWOOD COMMON. PLEASE LET ME ANSWER AS BEST I CAN.

FIRST, I HAVE BEEN TOLD BY VARIOUS PEOPLE THAT MY PLAN FOR GREENWOOD COMMON WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE. I WOULD LIKE AT THE START TO CLEAR UP MY RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMON AND THE PEOPLE BORDERING IT. WHEN THE COMMON WAS FIRST BEING DEVELOPED, MR. WURSTER ASKED ME TO COME OVER FROM SAN FRANCISCO AND ADVISE HIM ON THE TREES TO PLANT ON EITHER SIDE OF THE WALKWAY INTO THE COMMON. THIS I DID AS A SIMPLE COURTESY TO HIM AND ADVISED THE PLUMS AND THEIR PRESENT SPACING. THE USUAL FLOWERING STREET TREE IN BERKELEY IS PLUM OR PEACH AND THE PEACH IS SO SUBJECT TO FIRE BLIGHT (A DIFFICULT DISEASE TO CONTROL) AS TO MAKE IT, I BELIEVE, A POOR STREET TREE SELECTION. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY ALL I DID, ALTHOUGH I BELIEVE I ALSO SUGGESTED THE GRAVEL ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ASPHALT WALK, THE TYPE OF TOPPING AND THE WIDTH OF THE WALK. I MADE NO PLAN FOR THE COMMON AND REALLY COULD NOT HAVE, SINCE I KNEW NOTHING, AT THE TIME, NOR DO I NOW, OF THE USE WHICH ITS PEOPLE WANTED TO MAKE OF IT AND HAD SPOKEN TO NO ONE ABOUT IT.

THE ONLY PLAN I HAVE EVER DEVELOPED FOR YOUR AREA IS THE GARDEN I DESIGNED AND SUPERVISED FOR MR. AND MRS. MAENCHEN. IN ADDITION, MRS. DOUGLAS ASKED ME TO ADVISE HER ON HER PLANTING AND I SPENT A SHORT AND PLEASANT HOUR WITH HER ONE DAY LAST YEAR SUGGESTING PLANTS SHE MIGHT FIND REWARDING IN HER GARDEN--THOUGH THE ACTUAL PLAN OF HER OUTDOOR AREA WAS DESIGNED BY THE ARCHITECT FOR THE HOUSE, MR. MOISE.

SECOND, AS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLANS FOR THE COMMON, I WOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS:

1. THAT A COMMITTEE OF GREENWOOD COMMONERS DETERMINE A PROGRAM FOR THE COMMON WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE USES TO WHICH IT WOULD BE PUT, COST OF INSTALLATION, AMOUNT OF MAINTENANCE IT WOULD RECEIVE, STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE "QUALITY" THEY WOULD LIKE TO HAVE, ETC., ETC.
2. THAT SURVEY INFORMATION BE ORGANIZED OF THE AREA UNDER CONSIDERATION.
3. THAT THEN THE COMMITTEE DISCUSS THE DESIGN OF THE AREA WITH WHATEVER OFFICES IT DESIRES THROUGH A SERIES OF PERSONAL INTERVIEWS, PREFERABLY, TO DETERMINE FEES AND THE DESIGN

Exhibit 1

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MR. MORLEY BAER

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JANUARY 28, 1955

ATTITUDES OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

IF YOU SHOULD WISH, I WILL BE HAPPY TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH DISCUSSIONS WHEN THE TIME COMES,  
AND PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF I CAN BE OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

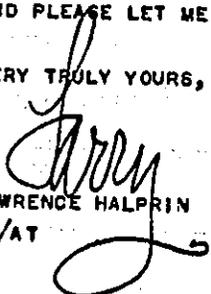
  
LAWRENCE HALPRIN  
LH/AT

Exhibit 1 (cont)

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REPORT ON DISCUSSION WITH LAWRENCE HALPRIN ABOUT  
THE COMMON, JUNE 29, 1955.

Members present were Mr. Baer, Mr. Ackerman, Mrs. Douglas, and Mrs. Birge.

Mr. Halprin favored leaving the Common as simple and open as possible. He felt that the most satisfactory ground cover would be grass. His second choice was the existing rye grass. He thought that maintenance need not be excessive, and the area could then be used for a variety of purposes, from relaxation in the sun to passing a football. A large open area of this sort would truly supplement the small gardens and play areas of the individual lots. Mr. Halprin thought that plantings should be kept to the periphery, and a minimum of trees fused. The area should function as a community center rather than as a strictly decorative piece. Mr. Halprin felt strongly that the existing path to the Maenohsen house cuts up the area badly and should be moved. Probably the last two plum trees should also be moved.

Mr. Halprin suggested working on an hourly basis. He charges \$10.00 per hour for his ~~paid~~ time, and \$6.00 per hour for office time. He thought a preliminary plan would cost about \$200.00 on this basis. He estimated the cost of grass and sprinklers as roughly 20¢ per square foot, and asphalt at 30¢ per square foot.

Ann C. Birge

Exhibit 2

REPORT OF DISCUSSION WITH GERALDINE SCOTT ON LANDSCAPE  
PLANS FOR THE COMMON, JUNE 30th, 1955

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Members present: Mr. Paer, Mr. Ackerman, Mrs. Birge.

Mrs. Scott favored planting trees heavily in spots, lightly elsewhere, and leaving open spaces for recreation. She was not enthusiastic about the Board's desire for ground cover or tanbark (too windy), suggested pebbles or grass, preferably the latter as cheapest to install (though not to maintain). Favors a new bluegrass that needs cutting only every 2 weeks, easy to maintain, rugged. Requires watering weekly, more in driest spells. Initial stages need more regular care. She advised a gardener on contract.

Watering systems for grass improved. Recent rubber pipe systems can be employed after lawns are down, so decision does not have to be made at the start.

Any work done on the common requires some grading and soil work, and whatever is planted will involve 20¢ a foot minimum.

Trees: Monterey pine is not a good bet since it tends to develop a disease common at present. Bishop pine looks very much the same, and is hardier. The original thick planting in spots could be thinned later as desired. Members of the common might find the new growths blocked their view at a certain point, but the plan would be to have them grow <sup>above</sup> the view.

For childrens play space large, smooth stones can be attractive and fun. \$250 would give us a sizable mound of good ones.

No final decisions on parking. Mrs. Scott did not want to make conclusions without an adequate map of the Common.

A fund was advised for the care of the pines that are already on the common. Mrs. Scott suggested that a growth of this age may not survive long.

Price. Mrs. Scott estimated that her design fee would be about \$300. she suggested that she be retained afterward to supervise, since the maintenance ought not to be left uncontrolled.

Exhibit 3

## REPORT ON DISCUSSION WITH ROBERT TETLOW ABOUT THE COMMON,

AUGUST 20, 1955

Members present were Mr. Baer, Mr. Ackerman, and Mrs. Birge

Mr. Tetlow was concerned about a sense of entrance to the Common, both from the green path and from the north access drive. He thought the entrance to the green path from Greenwood Terrace might be enhanced, and a unified border on the north access road would help. He also expressed the need for a sense of unity for the houses facing on the Common. Mr. Tetlow liked the position of the existing walks, and thought that the plant material used in the southeast corner of the Common might be different from that on the rest of the Common. He liked the existing fence on lot #7 but thought the corner might be softened with plantings. The slight slope between lots #6 and #7 that gives a feeling of the Common declining into lot #7 might be leveled. He was very interested in doing the job and estimated his charge for a preliminary plan as \$100.00.

notes by Ann C. Birge

Exhibit 4

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Sept. 25, 1955.

Mr. Lawrence Halprin  
566 Commercial St.  
San Francisco 11, Calif.

Dear Mr. Halprin,

In connection with survey information on Greenwood Common, Mr. Elmer Steigelman has already made up a map of the Common showing contours at five foot intervals. He thought, however, that you would probably need a map showing one foot intervals. He can make up such a map from information he has from his previous survey for a fee. Would you please let me know what sort of map you will need for your landscape plan? I will try to call you Monday about this detail so that a decision can be reached at the directors' meeting Monday evening.

The annual meeting of the membership of Greenwood Common, Inc., will be held on Wednesday evening, October 5. We will consider the requirements for the landscape plan of the Common and hope to get all the suggestions from the members at that time. If you have considerations that should be on the agenda that evening, would you please let Morley Baer or myself know them before Oct. 5? The basis for consideration at the present time is ~~the~~ contained in the following section taken from the minutes of the directors' meeting of June 2, before our preliminary discussion with you:

After considerable discussion, the Directors compiled the following list of requirements for the Common Property. (1) The plan should be simple in form, and an open feeling should be maintained. (2) Native plants should be used that would not require watering after they were once established. (3) There should be a ground cover that would keep the adobe soil from cracking. (4) Some area should be left without plantings for children's play. This area, possibly covered with tanbark, might be out on the brink of the hill to the south of lot #7. Although there would be no play equipment at present, a play sculpture or large wooden stumps might be considered in the future. The Directors did not think swings would be suitable for the Common. (5) Some area should also be available for adult relaxation with a book and a blanket. (6) Definite plans should be made for replanting the pine trees. (7) Any plan should be designed to carry well into the future. (8) More adequate use of the parking area should be made than at the present time, but the area should not extend more than a few feet further into the Common. (9) A walk is needed from the parking area to the center of the Common, with a ramp up onto the level of the Common in place of, or in addition to, the existing steps. (10) Money should be set aside at the beginning for maintaining the plantings while they are getting established.

We will also consider grass as a ground cover, as suggested by you in our meeting with you on June 29. We would certainly welcome further suggestions from you for discussion Oct. 5.

Very sincerely yours,

Exhibit 5

Ann C. Birge, Secretary  
1 Greenwood Common

Mr. Lawrence Halprin  
566 Commercial Street  
San Francisco 11

Dear Larry:

I have been appointed to take Morley's place as Chairman of the Landscape Committee for Greenwood Common. The Committee has asked me to meet with you to proceed with the preliminary plan for the landscape development. Before we meet, however, I would like to set down what I understand to be the feelings of the membership on what ought to be included in the instructions to you. I am authorized to speak for the membership until you have completed the preliminary, after which we will call another meeting to discuss what appears there.

In addition to what I am setting down below, I shall send you our reports relating to landscaping in the past. These include (a) report of a discussion with Robert Tetlow, (b) report of a discussion with Geraldine Scott, (c) report of a discussion with yourself, (d) a list of suggestions to the membership on the character of building and environment desired on the Common, (e) minutes of the Board meeting of October 5th, 1955, in which we resolved to proceed with the landscaping. The following notes are largely based on the last meeting of the Landscape Committee on November 21, 1955. They should be considered as additions to the proposals set down in Mrs. Birge's letter of September 25th to you, which will probably be in your files.

#### CENTRAL AREA

1. Grass is understood as an acceptable ground cover. The toughest possible, requiring the least care. If the program is to be achieved in stages, the ground cover is to have a low priority.
2. "Reforestation". Note that Mrs. Scott's objection to Monterey pine should be answered if this kind is suggested. The membership is not necessarily committed to pines. There is some difference of opinion on a planting scheme that might cause blockage of the view during the early years of growth.
3. The play area for children should be considered as having low priority in gradual scheme.
4. The walk that angles in towards the Maenchen door, if it is to be changed, should not be designed so as to bring passersby along the Blaisdell fence or the M. windows. Though a change is generally wanted, both of these families are concerned for their privacy. A compromise solution is in order.
5. A walk is needed from the parking area to the path mentioned above.
6. Low lights for pedestrians along the access from Greenwood Terrace to the Maenchen's and from G.T. to the Baer's should be provided, possibly to be supplied with power at the expense of individuals nearest to them.

Exhibit 6

PEI

6

611

7. The present plan traces along the path... suggested by the members, though putting others in their place would be advantageous in the beginning.

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PARKING

- 8. The development of the parking area in front of the Baer's is considered among the most important initial steps. It should follow suggestions 8 and 9 of Mrs. Birge's letter.
- 9. The driveway leading to this area may be widened to its full width, and the possibility of using one side of it for parking, given enough room, should be considered.

ACCESS DRIVEWAY

- 10. The mouth of the driveway towards Greenwood Terrace should be such as to suggest entrance, a focus.
- 11. The owners of property on the North side of this driveway are considering planting in a uniform fashion and would like to have a scheme presented that they could carry out individually. Involving the few feet of border along the drive.

ROSE STREET

- 12. The suggestion made in Item 11 goes also for the 20 foot setback area along Rose Street. A single scheme involving the four rear gardens of a general sort would be helpful. It should be rough enough to allow full play for individuality, and need not be drawn up in any detail.

Development: We have at present \$600 a year. Additional assessments can be made by unanimous vote. This has a drawback that if the assessment gets too heavy it will not be worth it for the members of the Common who are not around to pass on it. One member is selling his property and naturally doesn't want to sink much into it, though he is willing to do a little to improve the sale value. Our \$600 must take care of maintenance etc., and such things as typing this letter. As the minutes state, the decision on how to finance the work will depend on the discussions over the preliminary plan, so it is difficult to say much more about the financial end at this time.

I am sending you this material so that when you want to meet with me you will be clearer on what the problems are. I will wait for your answer as to when we can meet. You can reach me most afternoons at the University, extension 715. If not, try the Ark, extension 549, or my home evenings, Ashberry 3-4090. If we don't contact by next week, I will ring you.

Cordially yours,

J. S. Ackerman

Exhibit 6 (cont)

(61)

PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

1.	<u>BREAKOUT AND REMOVE PATH</u>				\$100.00
					300.00
2.	<u>GRADING</u>				825.60
	<u>GRASS</u>	4128 SQ.FT. @ .20			100.00
			W/ SPRINKLERS		100.00
	<u>HEADERS AT EDGE OF GRASS</u>	130'-0" @ .75			
3.	<u>IVY</u>	2400 SQ.FT. @ \$10 PER FLAT			240.00
4.	<u>WALKS</u>	1729 SQ.FT. @ .30			518.40
	<u>HEADERS</u>	576' PLUS 112 = 688 @ .50			344.00
5.	<u>BENCHES</u>	4 @ \$125			500.00
6.	<u>WOOD BULKHEAD</u>	100 FACE FT. @ \$2			200.00
7.	<u>ROAD</u>	WIDEN TO 20'	2820 SQ.FT. @ .30	= 846.00	
		REPAVE COURT	1911 " @ .20	= 382.00	
		PARKING SEWER	266 " @ .20	= 56.00	
		DRAINS & DRAINAGE	150 " @ \$5.00	= 750.00	2034.00
8.	<u>HOSE BIBBS</u>				150.00 PLUS OR MINUS
9.	<u>LIGHTING FIXTURES (HANSCHEN &amp; GODDARD)</u>	4 @ \$60.00			240.00
10.	<u>SOIL PREPARATION, PLANTS, PLANTING</u>		ALLOW		1000.00
11.	<u>FOUNTAIN</u>	CASTING	\$400		
		PIPING	100		
		PUMP INSTALL	100		
		SPOUT	50		
		PAVING	100		
			750		
					750.00
					<u>\$7402.00</u>

(NOT INCLUDED BECAUSE INFORMATION NOT IN HAND AT MOMENT - CONDUIT AND SWITCHES FOR PATH LIGHTS-FIXTURES AS ABOVE)

RWD 6 X 8 AS STEPS TO LOWER STREET NOT INCLUDED - \$450.00

COPY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

ASSOCIATES · JEAN WALTON · DONALD RAY CARTER · SATORU NISHI  
LAWRENCE HALPRIN 737 BEACH STREET · SAN FRANCISCO 9, CALIFORNIA · ORDWAY 3-476

Exhibit 7

MR. JAMES S. ACKERMAN  
2573 DUENA VISTA WAY  
BERKELEY, 5, CALIFORNIA

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APRIL 3, 1956

S T A T E M E N T

GREENWOOD COMMON LANDSCAPE PLANS - UPON COMPLETION OF PRELIMINARIES • • \$250.00

COPY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

ASSOCIATES • JEAN WALTON • DONALD RAY CARTER • SATORU NISHITA  
WRENCE HALPRIN 737 BEACH STREET SAN FRANCISCO 9, CALIFORNIA ORDWAY 3-4750

Exhibit 7 (cont.)

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GREENWOOD COMMON

STAGE # ONE

1. ROAD	WIDEN TO 20'	• • • • •	\$846.00	
	REPAVE COURT	• • • • •	392.00	
	PARKING <del>COVER</del> <i>SLIVER</i>	• • • • •	56.00	
	DRAINS & DRAINAGE	• • • • •	<u>750.00</u>	\$ 2034.00
			2034.00	
2. WOOD BULKHEAD	• • • • •			200.00
3. LINE STUBOUT FOR FUTURE SPRINKLER	• • • • •			<u>150.00</u>
				2384.00

STAGE # TWO

SOIL PREPARATION-PLANTS-PLANTING	• • • • •			1000.00
INSTALL HOSE BIBBS	• • • • •			<u>150.00</u>
				1150.00

STAGE # THREE

GRASS WITH SPRINKLER	• • • • •			925.00
GRADING	• • • • •			<u>300.00</u>
				1225.00

STAGE # FOUR

WALKS	• • • • •			518.40
HEADERS AT WALK	• • • • •			344.00
HEADERS AT GRASS	• • • • •			100.00
REMOVE EXISTING PATH	• • • • •			100.00
IVY	• • • • •			<u>240.00</u>
				1302.40

STAGE # FIVE

BENCHES	• • • • •		\$500.00	
LIGHTING	• • • • •		240.00	
FOUNTAIN	• • • • •		<u>750.00</u>	L490.00
			1490.00	

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

ASSOCIATES • JEAN WALTON • DONALD RAY CARTER • SATORU NISHI  
LAWRENCE HALPRIN 737 BEACH STREET SAN FRANCISCO 9, CALIFORNIA ORDWAY 3-4

Exhibit 8

72

Mr. James Ackerman  
3 Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California

RE: LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION FOR  
  
Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California

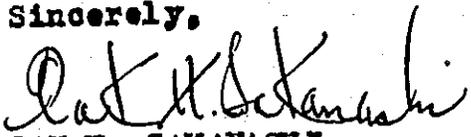
I hereby agree to do the landscaping in accordance with the plan submitted by Lawrence Halprin, Landscape Architect (Revis. 5/14/57), for the lump sum of \$3,500.00 (Three thousand five hundred dollars).

The base bid includes Items A, B and C. If Item A is replaced by either Alternate #1 or Alternate #2, deduct \$180.00 (One hundred eighty dollars) from the base bid.

It is also understood that the catch basin as shown on the plan has been omitted and replaced by a curved gutter on each side of the driveway and draining to the lowest point in the existing driveway.

Payment shall be as follows:  
One third (\$1,166.00) upon signing of this contract.  
Balance, to be paid progressively at the end of the month.

When all the work has been completed, the area will be cleared of all debris, etc., caused by my crew.

Sincerely,  
  
TAK H. SAKANASHI

APPROVED BY:

~~James Ackerman - Representing Greenwood Common~~

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibit 9

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Mr. James Aokerman  
3 Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California

RE: LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION FOR

The Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California

I hereby agree to do the landscaping in accordance with the plan submitted by Lawrence Halprin, Landscape Architect (Revised 5/14/57), for the lump sum of \$2,420.00 (Two thousand four hundred twenty dollars).

The base bid includes Items B, and C. Item A has been omitted.

It is also understood that the catch basin as shown on the plan has been omitted and replaced by a curved gutter on each side of the driveway and draining to the lowest point in the existing driveway.

Payment shall be as follows:

One third (\$807.00) upon signing of this contract.  
Balance, to be paid progressively at the end of the month.

When all the work has been completed, the area will be cleared of all debris, etc., caused by my crew.

Sincerely,

*Tak H. Sakamshi*  
TAK H. SAKAMSHI

APPROVED BY:

James Aokerman - Representing Greenwood Common

DATE:

tha/kk

Exhibit 10

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Mr. Schaaf  
15 Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, California

RE: INSTALLATION OF LAWN  
FOR THE GREENWOOD COMMON

Dear Mr. Schaaf:

I hereby agree to install the lawn in accordance with the plan submitted by Mr. Lawrence Halprin, Landscape Architect, for the lump sum of \$340.00 (three hundred forty dollars).

The above figure shall include the following:

1. Installing lawn - approximately 5,000 sq. ft. plus
  - a. Seeding at the rate of 6 lbs. per 1,000 sq.ft. using Golden Gate Mixture, fertilizing at the rate of 30 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft., and mulching with peat.
  - b. Includes the first watering, but no watering thereafter.
  - c. Includes the first mowing and, if necessary, reseeding.
2. As requested, weeding and cultivating the planting areas for an additional \$25.00 (Twenty dollars).

Payment shall be as follows: One-third (\$113.00) upon signing of this contract; the balance to be paid upon completion, except for \$10.00 which may be withheld until the first mowing has been completed.

When all the work has been completed, the area will be cleared of all debris etc., caused by my crew.

If the above is satisfactory please sign and return one copy of this contract for our files.

Very truly yours,

*Tak H. Sakanashi*  
TAK H. SAKANASHI

APPROVED BY:

*Robert M. Anz*

DATE:

5/5/58

Exhibit 11

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**Greenwood Common**

**V. Statements on History and Architecture by Original Owners and Participants, and Former Owners**

**Feb 18, 1990**

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Statements on History and Architecture By Original Owners and Participants, and Former Owners of Greenwood Common

1. Ann C. Birge, Original Owner of #1 Greenwood Common:  
Greenwood Common has been a very special place. It has been a model for other later developments, an example for architecture students, and a remarkably harmonious group of individual homes. When the homes were built, there was a general consensus for a harmonious project, all in scale, and with a sense of balance.

As Dean of the U.S. School of Architecture, William Wurster had tremendous influence on the original architects who designed the homes on Greenwood Common. Wurster's directions, though not adopted as legal restrictions, held great weight and were respected by all involved. In particular, he recommended that the houses be dark colored, that they have gently sloping or flat roofs, and that the houses on the flat area be only one story high (see attached memo of 24 April 1952).

Now that Wurster is no longer here to wield his influence, the original consensus of design, with its general balance and harmony, could very easily be lost. Then the whole, so much greater than its individual parts, could be destroyed. Giving this area landmark status is required to provide the reasonable protection of a public hearing before changes can be made that might undo the balanced harmony of the Common.

2. Howard W. Wayne, Esq., Attorney for William W. Wurster at the formation of Greenwood Common:

"Professor William Wurster contacted me to assist in the formation of the legal framework to give substance to plans which had been formulated by Professor Wurster. My name had been mentioned to him by Professor Frank Newman. Mr. Wurster was Professor of Architecture; Professor Newman was at the Law School.

In early 1952, I attended meetings at the home of Professor Wurster, which were attended also by other interested parties. It was the dream of Mr. Wurster to prevent what then was believed to be the last substantial acreage of vacant land in a residential area of Berkeley from being excessively developed. Professor Wurster envisioned what eventually became reality: A carefully controlled, single family residential site with a maximum open space preserved in the center for the benefit of the several owners. The preservation of existing trees and foliage, maximum accessibility to sun and views were discussed. While specific height limits were assigned only to the western most lots, the desirability of preserving low rooflines, lines of sight and

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views were an important consideration. For example, one of the rights specifically included in the By-Laws was the right of each owner to instigate the topping of trees if the height interfered with the view of any of the owners. ...

....I believe that Professor Wurster considered his vision and his energy which resulted in the fruition of the project as one of his happiest accomplishments....."

3. William W. Wurster, Memorandum to Participants in Greenwood Common, 24 April 1952: (See attached.)

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4. Lawrence Halprin, Landscape Architect for Greenwood Common:

"...The Greenwood Commons project was a unique and avant-garde project for its time. There was a wonderful collaboration of landscape and architecture. It was evidenced by the congruence of the modest, elegant architecture which was all of a Bay Area Modern style - all in scale and built around a common area.

All of this has given the project a unique quality for which it has become widely known. It therefore seems important to maintain this remarkable quality, and not to alter it...."

5. Morley Baer, Former owner of #7 Greenwood Common, and architectural photographer:

"...Among all the architects I knew and for whom I worked as a photographer in the fifties and sixties, I found William Wurster to be the most informal, reasonable, and logical. He and his wife, Catherine, were previous owners of the house (#7GC) we bought and lived in during this period. Wurster first became a friendly neighbor, then a client, and finally the architect for our home on the Sur Coast near Carmel.

Through this association, friendship grew to our recognition that Wurster, alone among Bay Area architects, had the broadest knowledge, unmistakable poise and grace, that inevitably brought people to a better understanding and enthusiasm for "modern" design.

As this applies directly to GC, it was Wurster's idea of the community, his suggestion of younger architects for various houses, and his somewhat removed but nevertheless substantial interest in the commons that made it possible for a number of very individualistic families to live together in harmony and to do so without the usual written laws, rules, and limitations.

To now alter the physical appearance of this rare and indigenous Berkeley landmark would be an outrageously insensitive defacement...."

6. John Funk, Architect of #10 Greenwood Common:

"....In 1950 the small Gregory estate in the Berkeley hills, acquired by Architect William Wurster, was to become a milestone in group housing design. Wurster divided the land in a very special way. Instead of covering the property with individual lots, which was the standard practice of the times, he made a ring of small sites around a communally held park, reminiscent of the New England Common. The

resulting closely grouped plan, its open spaces, and its distinguished houses and garden by Bay Area designers became nationally acclaimed. In a sense it was the first of the planned group housing developments that would follow in the 1960's and 1970's.

In the light of these considerations it becomes evident that Greenwood Commons should not be tampered with. Berkeley should be proud to have such a unique area and should take care to preserve it in its present architectural and spatial forms...."

7. Ursula Bingham, Former owner of #4 Greenwood Common:

"....Professor William Wurster was living in the small house near the brow of the hill (Adr. #10 the Common) (sic. #7 Greenwood Common) to which he had added and enlarged (later he moved to Mrs. Gregory's house). She had disposed of all her property to Mr. Wurster who had envisioned the layout for the Common with simple one story houses for faculty members within easy walking distance of the University. All the lots to be sold to compatible friends faculty or not in some cases who could become a congenial community able to enjoy and care for their land and the small central common grass area which would provide each property owner with a view of the Bay by leaving that area free of a home.

After Mrs. Douglas built her home, Prof. and Mrs. Thomas Blaisdell built next to her, then the following in due course (see Greenwood Common files for dates if needed): Prof. and Mrs. Otto Maenchen, Prof. and Mrs. Robert Birge, Prof. and Mrs. Samuel Schaaf, Prof. and Mrs. Ackermann, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Duhring, friends of Mrs. Gregory. He was in the firm of Mason McDuffie Co., Real Estate - Berkeley, and a photographer (whose name I do not recall) moved into #10 (sic #7) and built a large addition towards the newly made driveway and parking area to accommodate the northern residents on the Common - for their guests and workers. This addition to #10 (sic #7) cut off a view of the Common from #4 Greenwood Common's dining and kitchen area which distressed the Duhings. All the houses had one floor/story and were constructed of shingles outside. The exceptions were the Schaafs and the Birges whose homes backed on Rose Street which lay well below the Common's level and Mrs. Maenchen's which was also on a slope, the lower floor of which was below the Common's level and done with the thought in mind that in their old age they should provide space for a couple to live in and care for their needs in later age...."

8. William W. Wurster, Excerpts from Transcript of Oral History, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1964, interview conducted by Suzanne B. Riess.:

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p. 257

Riess:

When you returned from Cambridge where did you live before you moved here?

Wurster:

In 1950 we took the Max Radin house... Then we bought the little house out on the point here (7 Greenwood Common, by R.M. Schindler, ca. 1932, below the present home). Then I organized a group which bought Greenwood Common and divided that up, made an interesting neighborhood plan so that the center lot is owned by everybody and nobody can build on it unless there is complete approval. The houses in the Common are all done by famous architects. Howard Moise's staff did the (Thomas C.) Blaisdell. John Funk did the (Otto) Maenchen. Harwell Harris of Texas and Southern California did Mrs. Duhring's, and Joe Esherick did Jim Ackerman's. And Don Olson did the (Robert W.) Birge house. It's an alphabet of modern architects...

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its been a great success, so much that I get letters all the time from people asking how it can be duplicated in another place.

3.  
 TO: Participants in Greenwood Common  
 FROM: William W. Wurster  
 DATE: 24 April 1952  
 SUBJECT: Notes

As you know it is thought best not to become entangled in restrictions, yet certain things have been mentioned which might be listed in order to have a harmonious project with minimum disappointment or friction. Most of these have been stated in conversation and can be clarified at our meeting in May.

1. Television antennas might be limited to the normal size (not permitting 30' extensions, etc.). Is there a way to have a central antenna at the east of the property?
2. Dark colored houses (either natural woods or paint) will cause the project to appear more spacious.
3. Gently sloping or flat Haydite or gravel roofs will tend to increase the view for everyone and be less insistent.
4. Lots #10 and #11 to have a height restriction which will protect the clear sweep from the Common and from Lot #9.
5. Trees on Lots #10 and #11 may be topped by anyone on the project if they pay on same. (Some such rule might be applied to all trees on all properties?)
6. It is hoped to retain as many pine trees as possible.
7. All decisions such as steps to LeRoy, fencing of Common, etc., will await action of Board after its election. At the same time there could be consideration in regard to the possible adoption of some uniform fencing for the project.
8. It is hoped that great consideration will be given to the height of all the houses on the flat area (Lots #5, #6, #7, #8 and #9), for if they were to be only one-story above the Common the project would appear more spacious. (This is written as a suggestion only and not to be construed as a mandate or restriction.)
9. If the houses on Rose Street (Lots #1, #2, #3 and #4) are kept at the north end of the lot, each house will have a sheltered south garden and it will add to the unity of the project. (This is written as a suggestion only and not to be construed as a mandate or restriction.)
10. In the third interim report I called attention in Item #4 to the approximate character of the plot plan. For instance, if the hedge is on the Greenwood Common property on the south side (adjacent to Jenkins) it may be advisable to widen the access lane to 18' or 20' in order to save the hedge. This would decrease the width of the walk-in-vista which is now shown as 20'.

I send these at this time before we are started and there should be free and open discussion at our meeting on these or other points.

cc: Mr. Newman  
 Mr. Steigalman

Mr. Howard Wayne  
 Mrs. Warren Gregory

W. W. W.

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**Greenwood Common**

**VI. Legal History of Commonly Owned Areas**

**Frederick S. Wyle**

**Exhibits:**

- 1. The 1952 By-laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**
- 2. The 1977 Amended By-laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**
- 3. The 1987 Amendment to the By--Laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**

**Feb 18, 1990**

## Greenwood Common: The Legal History of the Commonly Owned Areas

### The First Phase: 1952-1977

When Greenwood Common was planned by William Wurster in 1952, it was divided into twelve building lots and one open central area, approximately lot-sized. His concept was that the central area should be owned in common, dedicated to open space, so as to preserve the view to the Bay for all. The original common area is made up of the unnumbered portion on the attached survey map entitled "Common", and the walkways and driveways shown thereon. The central area was subject to development or sale only upon unanimous consent of the surrounding lot owners.

The legal device to achieve this common ownership was a not-for-profit corporation called Greenwood Common, Inc. Greenwood Common Inc's Board of Directors was charged with the governance and maintenance of the commonly owned areas, including various maintenance functions such as gardening, trimming trees that obscured the view of any member, etc. Each of the twelve lots was burdened by its deed with an obligation of contribution to maintenance costs. The By-Laws, Articles of Incorporation, and State of California Franchise Tax Board Exemption from Franchise Tax were filed in May and June of 1952.

Besides the common area and the ten building lots surrounding it, the subdivision included two lots, #11 and #12 on the attached survey map, which were physically apart from the other ten, because they are located over the crest of the Greenwood Common plateau, down a steep slope fronting on LeRoy Avenue. These two lots were burdened with height restrictions so that any houses built on them could not rise sufficiently high to disturb the view from the common area. They had a right of access to the Common above them by means of a ten foot wide strip of commonly-held land, which could be used to build steps leading up the hill onto the Common. They also had a one-twelfth ownership interest each in the commonly owned area above them.

Since under Wurster's design each of the twelve original lots had a veto right on the sale or development of the common areas, for practical purposes there was no possibility of common area sale or development. The By-Laws provided that "Action involving the transfer of land owned by the Corporation, or the right of access of members of the Corporation to their lots, may only be taken if all twelve of the member' votes are cast to approve the action." (II.3., By-Laws, 1952).

### The Second Phase: 1976/7-Present

The two original building lots at the center of the Common, lots #5 and #6 on the attached survey map, had since 1952 been owned by the "Russell heirs", but were maintained as open space in the same manner as the original common area, thus in effect tripling the open area, and creating the centerpiece of what has become known as the Common. For 25 years (1952-1977) the Russell heirs had preserved their option of building on lots 5 & 6, but had permitted the maintenance of these lots as garden, indistinguishable from and visually continuous with the original small common area. Since the beginning of William Wurster's project, therefore, neighbors and residents had thought of these two lots as part of the Common.

In 1976 the Russell heirs decided that they would not build on their two lots, and graciously offered them for sale to the residents of Greenwood Common. This was very

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much a gesture to the special character of Greenwood Common, and was done to permit Common residents to preserve the Common's character, scope, and balance as it had developed over the preceding generation. Maintaining the two lots as open space ensured the continued unobstructed view from Greenwood Terrace to the crest of the plateau and the San Francisco Bay beyond, preserving a view corridor down the entire length of the Common between the two rows of houses.

Upon being offered this opportunity, the eight houses on the Common agreed to purchase the two lots (#5 & 6), and to add them to the commonly-held open space, the Common. The transaction was accomplished by a transfer of lots 5 & 6 to trustees (Thomas C Blaisdell, Robert W Birge, and Frederick S Wyle), and by a subsequent transfer by these trustees to Greenwood Common Inc. in 1977, when the necessary funds to complete the purchase had been collected and paid to the Russell heirs..

The owners of the two lots on LeRoy (#11 & 12) declined to participate in this purchase. The re-stated "By-Laws and Declaration of Restrictions and Covenants Running With the Land and Property of Members" of February 28, 1977 (recorded March 4, 1977 in Reel 4746, Image 505 of Alameda County Records) accordingly limited both the maintenance contribution and ownership rights of the LeRoy lots (#11 & 12) to the original common area, and excluded them from maintenance obligations and voting rights for the part of the expanded common consisting of the former lots 5 & 6.

The By-Laws of February 28, 1977 were thereafter amended once more, on December 22, 1987, principally to update maintenance requirements and to insert a paragraph making explicit in the By-Laws the intent of the original By-Laws and members of the Common that all of the improved lots be used solely as single-family residences. The Certificate of Officers of Greenwood Common, Inc as to this 1987 Amendment was recorded on January 21, 1988.

Attached: By-Laws of 1952, 1977, and Amendment of 1987

**Greenwood Common**

**VI. Legal History of Commonly Owned Areas**

**Exhibit 1. The 1952 By-Laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**

**Feb 18, 1990**

BY-LAWS  
OF GREENWOOD COMMON, INC.

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I. Membership, and Members' Property and Voting Rights.

1. The members of this corporation are the legal owners of the lots described in the map attached hereto.
2. The property rights of the members in the assets of the corporation are to be determined as follows:

The owner of each lot is entitled to a one-twelfth interest in the assets. If a lot is owned by more than one person, they together are entitled to the one-twelfth interest. If because of death or other cause the ownership of a lot is unsettled, the one-twelfth interest is to be exercised by the executor or other person entitled to manage the lot.

3. The voting rights of the members are to be determined as follows:

The owner of each lot is entitled to one vote. If a lot is owned by more than one person, they together are entitled to the one vote; but if persons having equal interests in a lot are unable to agree, their vote will be counted only when all twelve votes are required to approve certain action, in which case their one vote will be counted as affirmative. If because of death or other cause the ownership of a lot is unsettled, the vote is to be cast by the executor or other person entitled to manage the lot. Any vote may be cast by proxy.

II. Management.

1. Except as provided in Paragraph 3 of this Section, the affairs of this corporation shall be managed by the Board of Directors, consisting of five members elected at the annual membership meeting to serve until the adjournment of the next annual membership meeting. Among all nominees, the five who receive the most votes shall be declared elected. No member shall serve as a director for more than three consecutive years, and each year at least one member shall be elected who did not serve during the preceding year. The Board shall elect its own chairman and secretary, and shall convene at regular meetings each quarter and at such other meetings as the Chairman or any two members of the Board deem advisable. All Board members shall be given reasonable notice of each meeting.
2. If any position on the Board becomes vacant, the Board shall appoint an acting successor to serve until a permanent successor is elected; and the election to fill any vacancy shall take place at the first membership meeting following the date of the vacancy.
3. Action involving the transfer of land owned by the Corporation, or of the rights of access of members of the Corporation to their lots, may be taken only if all twelve of the members' votes are cast to approve the action.

- Page 12 of 155
- (87)
4. Each member of the Corporation shall be entitled to have the Corporation grant him, without charge, underground utility easements through land owned by the Corporation, provided that the Board of Directors, by majority vote, decides that such easement, is reasonably necessary and desirable for the enjoyment of the parcel of land owned by the member, and provided that the Board of Directors shall approve the location of said easement. The member to whom such easement is granted shall be responsible for and pay all costs connected with the installation of such utilities and shall place the surface of the Corporation's land in its original condition at his expense, and hold the corporation harmless as to any and all costs, damages or claims connected with such easements.

### III. Membership meetings.

Membership meetings shall be scheduled at such times and places as the Board deems advisable, except that the annual meeting shall be scheduled in September or October. In addition, any members controlling at least five votes may by petition require the Board to schedule a meeting within ten days after the petition has been filed with the chairman. Reasonable notice of all meetings shall be given to all members whose mailing address is known to the secretary.

### IV. Dues.

The semi-annual dues are to be calculated by the Board so as to cover taxes and other expenses, and are to be assessed against each lot as follows; and 30 days after notice of the amount due has been mailed, together with a statement explaining how the amount was calculated, there shall be a lien on such lot to secure payment:

The anticipated taxes and other expenses shall be added, and the owner or owners of each lot shall owe one-twelfth thereof; but the annual amount thus owed for expenses other than taxes, liability insurance, and similar fixed charges shall in no event exceed \$50.00.

"Taxes" includes street assessments based on Rose Street, LeRoy Avenue, or Greenwood Terrace frontage of any of the lots described in the map attached hereto.

### V. Restrictions:

1. Any member whose view is obstructed by trees on the lot of another member, may apply to the Board of Directors and with its approval, and at the expense of the applicant, top the objectionable trees, without however otherwise interfering with or damaging the property of the member on whose lot the tree is located.
2. The two most westerly lots, bounded by the Wurster property in the north, the Oxley property in the south, LeRoy Avenue in the west, and extending 100 feet, more or less east from said LeRoy Avenue, are restricted as follows: The highest elevation of roof structure shall be no higher than El. 577.5 feet-Berkeley Datum-except that chimneys may extend 3'-0" above El. 577.5 feet.

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- Page 130 of 155
1. These by-laws may be amended by two-thirds vote at any membership meeting. But notice of the proposed amendment must be mailed to the members prior to the preceding membership meeting; the text must be read at that meeting and mailed to the members prior to the meeting at which the amendment is to be voted upon; and substantive changes may not be made at the meeting at which the amendment is to be voted upon, but only at the preceding meeting.
  2. An amendment that alters Paragraph 3 of Section II or that increases the dollar maximum specified for dues (other than those covering taxes, liability insurance, and similar fixed charges) becomes effective only if all twelve of the members' votes are cast to approve the amendment.

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify:

That I am the duly elected and acting secretary of Greenwood Common, Inc., a California corporation; and

That the foregoing by-laws, comprising three pages, constitute a true and correct copy of the original by-laws of said corporation as duly adopted at the first meeting of the board of directors duly held on July 28, 1952, and that there was attached to said original by-laws a copy of the Record of Survey Map referred to in said by-laws.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the seal of said corporation this 28th day of July, 1952.

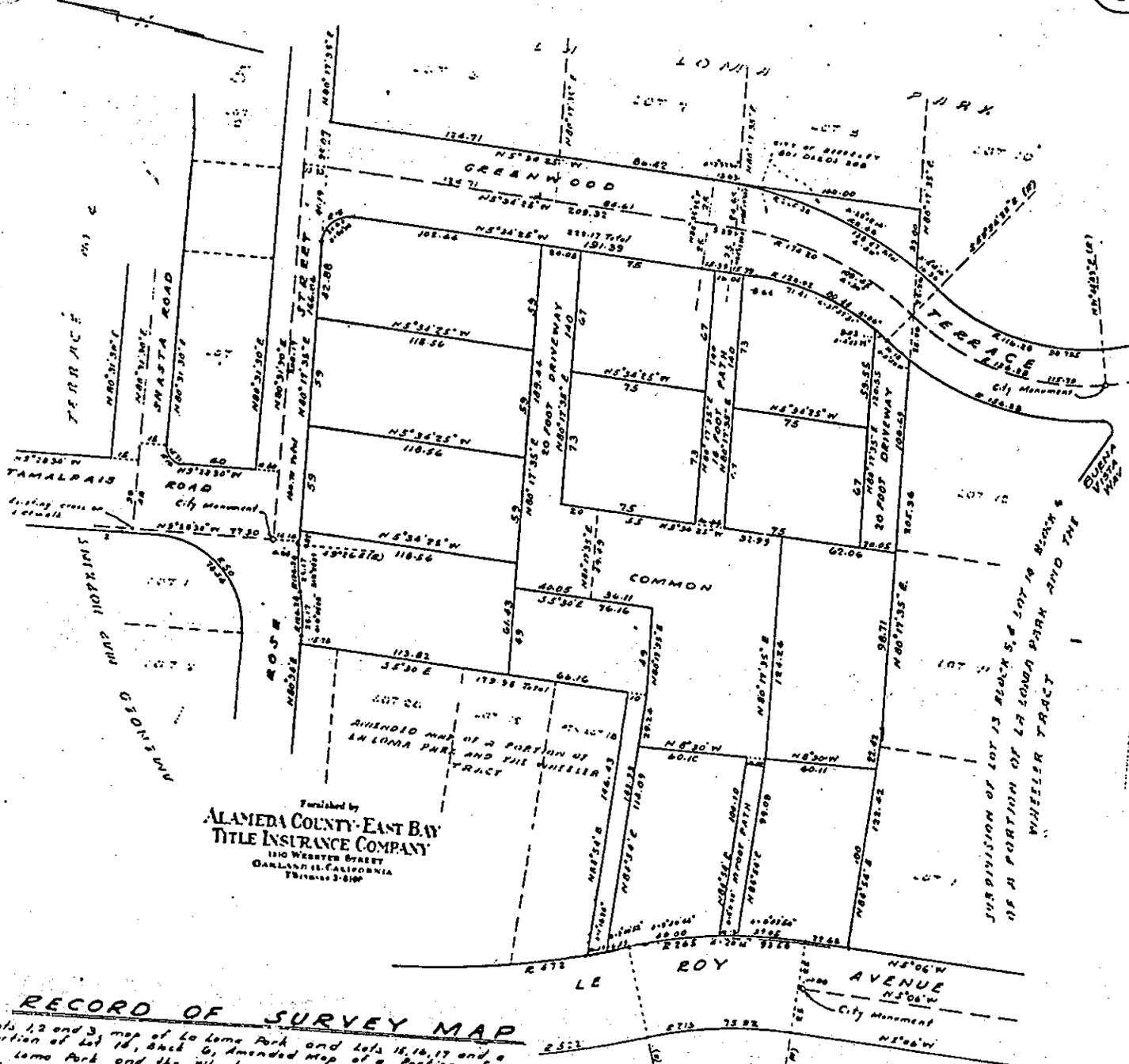
*Frederick T. ...*  
Secretary

4677819  
RECORDED & INDEXED  
JUL 29 1952  
L. H. ... Co.  
2:30 P

JUL 29 1952  
BOOK 6830 PAGE 513  
OFFICIAL ...  
ALBANY ...

330  
100 MAP 21F

89



Furnished by  
**ALAMEDA COUNTY EAST BAY**  
**TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
 1810 WEBSTER STREET  
 OAKLAND 12, CALIFORNIA  
 TELEPHONE 3-6100

**RECORD OF SURVEY MAP**

Lots 1, 2 and 3 map of La Loma Park and Lots 15, 16, 17 and a portion of Lot 18, Block 6, Amended Map of a portion of La Loma Park and the Wheeler Tract, situated in the City of Berkeley, County of Alameda, State of California

Sheet 1 of 1

FILED AUG 25, 1952 IN  
 BOOK 5 AT PAGE 36 OF  
 SURVEYS BY LICENSED SURVEYORS,  
 ALAMEDA COUNTY RECORDS.

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**Greenwood Common**

**VI. Legal History of Commonly Owned Areas**

**Exhibit 2. The 1977 Amended By-laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**

**Feb 18, 1990**

1977 MAR -4 AM 9:17

41

RECORDED BY  
AMZ LAL JC

BY-LAWS  
OF  
GREENWOOD COMMON, INC.  
A non-profit corporation

RENE C. GAYL SON  
ALAMEDA COUNTY, CA.

(As Amended and Restated as of February 28, 1977)

DECLARATION OF RESTRICTIONS AND COVENANTS  
RUNNING WITH THE LAND OF PROPERTY OF MEMBERS

PREAMBLE:

This document, once it has been recorded, shall take the place of the By-Laws of Greenwood Common, Inc., recorded September 22, 1952, in Book 6830, Page 513 in the office of the County Recorder of Alameda County. Successive owners of the real property referred to in this document shall be bound by the terms hereof for the benefit of the land owned by all of the respective owners of the several parcels of property hereafter described.

I. Membership, and Members' Property and Voting Rights and Restrictions.

1. A record of survey map was filed on August 25, 1952 in Book 3 at page 34 of Surveys by Licensed Surveyors, Alameda County Records. A copy of said record of survey map is attached hereto and made a part hereof. The members of this corporation are the legal owners of the lots described in the said record of survey map, to wit: twelve (12) in number. Lots 5 and 6 as such lots appear on the copy attached hereto, are presently owned by trustees, acting on behalf of certain of the members of this corporation, and they intend to transfer title of said lots 5 and 6 to this corporation. Upon such transfer of title having been consummated, the membership of this corporation shall number 10, to-wit: the owners of lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, as such lots are numbered on the copy of the record of survey map attached hereto.
2. For all purposes pertaining to the rights, duties and obligations of membership in this corporation, each of the 12 lots (or 10 after lots 5 and 6 are transferred to this corporation) shall constitute one (1) membership, and one (1) vote, to be shared collectively by all of the owners of each respective lot, if there be more than one owner. The term "owner" of each lot shall refer to the owner or owners, regardless of the number of persons who may have an interest therein.
3. The property rights of the members in the assets of the corporation are to be determined as follows:

The owner of each lot is entitled to a one-twelfth (1/12) interest in the assets until lots 5 and 6 are transferred to the corporation. Thereafter, the owner of each of the remaining 10 lots is entitled to a one-tenth (1/10) interest in the assets of this corporation, except:

- (a) The owners of lots 11 and 12 shall have no property or voting rights whatever as to lots 5 and 6 after such lots are transferred to the corporation (for the reason that the owners of lots 11 and 12 are not sharing in the acquisition costs thereof); and

- (b) The owners of lot 10 shall have an interest in lots 5 and 6, after such lots are transferred to the corporation, equal only to the fraction formed by 5/6.5 compared to the interest in lots 5 and 6 held by owners of lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9.
- 4. The voting rights of the members are to be determined as follows:

The owner of each lot is entitled to one (1) vote. If the lot is owned by more than one person, they together are entitled to one (1) vote. If two (2) or more persons have an interest in a lot, and are unable to agree upon their vote, their vote shall be counted only in the event such vote is necessary to approve a particular action, in which event the single vote shall be counted as affirmative. Any vote may be cast by proxy.

II. Management.

- 1. Except as otherwise provided in these By-Laws, the affairs of this corporation shall be managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of five members elected at the annual membership meeting to serve until the adjournment of the next annual membership meeting. Among all nominees, the five who receive the most votes shall be declared elected. No member shall serve as a director for more than three consecutive years, and each year at least one member shall be elected who did not serve during the preceding year. The Board shall elect its own chairman and secretary. The Board shall meet semi-annually, and at such other times as the chairman or any two members of the Board of Directors deem advisable. All Board meetings shall be given reasonable notice of each meeting, which meeting shall be held at one of the homes located within the area of "Greenwood Common".
- 2. If any position on the Board becomes vacant, the Board shall appoint an acting successor to serve until a permanent successor is elected; and the election to fill any vacancy shall take place at the first membership meeting following the date of the vacancy.
- 3. Any transfer of land owned by the corporation, or of the rights of access of members of the corporation to their lots, shall be taken only upon the affirmative unanimous vote of all of the members. Provided, however, that the owners of lots 11 and 12 shall have no voice pertaining to the transfer of any rights, titles or interests in and to lots 5 and 6, once such lots have been deeded to the corporation.
- 4. Each member of this corporation shall be entitled to have the corporation grant him, without charge, underground utility easements through land owned by the corporation, provided that the Board of Directors, by majority vote, decides that such easement is reasonably necessary and desirable for the enjoyment of the parcel of land owned by the member, and provided that the Board of Directors shall approve the location of said easement. Provided further, that owners of lots 11 and 12 shall not have any such entitlement as to easements

affecting lots 5 and 6, but may be granted such easements if the Board of Directors so determines, The member to whom such easement is granted shall be responsible for and pay all costs connected with the installation of such utilities and shall place the surface of the corporation's land in its original condition at his expense, and hold the corporation harmless as to any and all costs, damages or claims connected with such easements.

III. Membership Meetings.

Membership meetings shall be scheduled at such times and places as the Board deems advisable, except that the annual meeting shall be scheduled in September or October. In addition, any members controlling at least five votes may by petition require the Board to schedule a meeting within ten days after the petition has been filed with the chairman. Reasonable notice of all meetings shall be given to all members whose mailing address is known to the secretary.

IV. Dues.

The Board of Directors shall assess and collect annual dues, to be calculated so as to cover taxes and other expenses. The annual amount assessed for expenses other than taxes, liability insurance and similar fixed charges shall in no event exceed \$150.00 per member. The assessments shall be divided equally among all members, except that after lots 5 and 6 are deeded to the corporation, the assessments of lots 11 and 12 shall be three-fifths of the amount assessed against lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10, and regardless of whether capital contributions toward acquisition costs were equal or unequal. Provided, further, that no part of any real estate taxes assessed on lots 5 and 6 shall be charged to or assessed against lots 11 and 12.

The aforesaid assessments shall constitute a lien as to the respective lots against which they are assessed.

Any street assessments levied by any public authority based on improvements of Rose Street, Le Roy Avenue or Greenwood Terrace shall be equally shared among the owners of all the lots having an interest in Greenwood Common.

V. Restrictions.

1. Any member whose view is obstructed by trees or bushes on the lot of another member, may apply to the Board of Directors and with its approval, and at the expense of the applicant, top the objectionable trees or bushes, without however otherwise interfering with or damaging the property of the member on whose lot the tree or bush is located.
2. The two most westerly lots, to wit: numbers 11 and 12 on the attached map, fronting on Le Roy Avenue, are restricted as follows: the maximum elevation of roof structures shall be 577.5 feet (Berkeley Datum), except that chimneys may extend 3 feet above such elevation 577.5 feet.

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3. The duties and obligations arising from membership in this corporation shall constitute covenants running with the land of the several lots whose ownership constitutes the membership of this corporation, and shall be deemed appurtenant to such estates and pass with the title of the respective lots. The assessments made in conformance with the provisions of these By-Laws shall constitute a lien against the lot of the respective members, and shall be enforceable as such. Each successive owner of the respective lots is expressly bound by the terms hereof for the benefit of all of the lots whose owners constitute the membership of this corporation.

#### VI. Amendments.

1. These By-Laws and statement of restrictions constitute a restatement of By-Laws adopted on July 28, 1952 and recorded on September 22, 1952 in Book 6830 at page 513 of Official Records, Alameda County. These By-Laws may be further amended by a vote of two-thirds voting affirmatively at any membership meeting (as long as there are 12 members) and by affirmative vote of six after the membership is reduced to ten (after lots 5 and 6 are deed to this corporation). However, members must be notified of any proposed amendments not less than ten days prior to a membership meeting at which such amendment shall be voted upon. In the event the wording of a proposed amendment is changed at such membership meeting by a majority vote of those members present, no action shall be taken at such membership meeting concerning such proposed amendment, and in that event the vote on such amendment shall be postponed until the next membership meeting, prior to which the new text of the proposed amendment shall again be made available to all of the members no less than five days prior to the date such membership meeting is held.
2. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any amendment that alters subparagraph 3 of section II. of this document shall require unanimous approval of all members.

#### CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify:

That I am the duly elected and acting secretary of Greenwood Common, Inc., a California non-profit corporation.

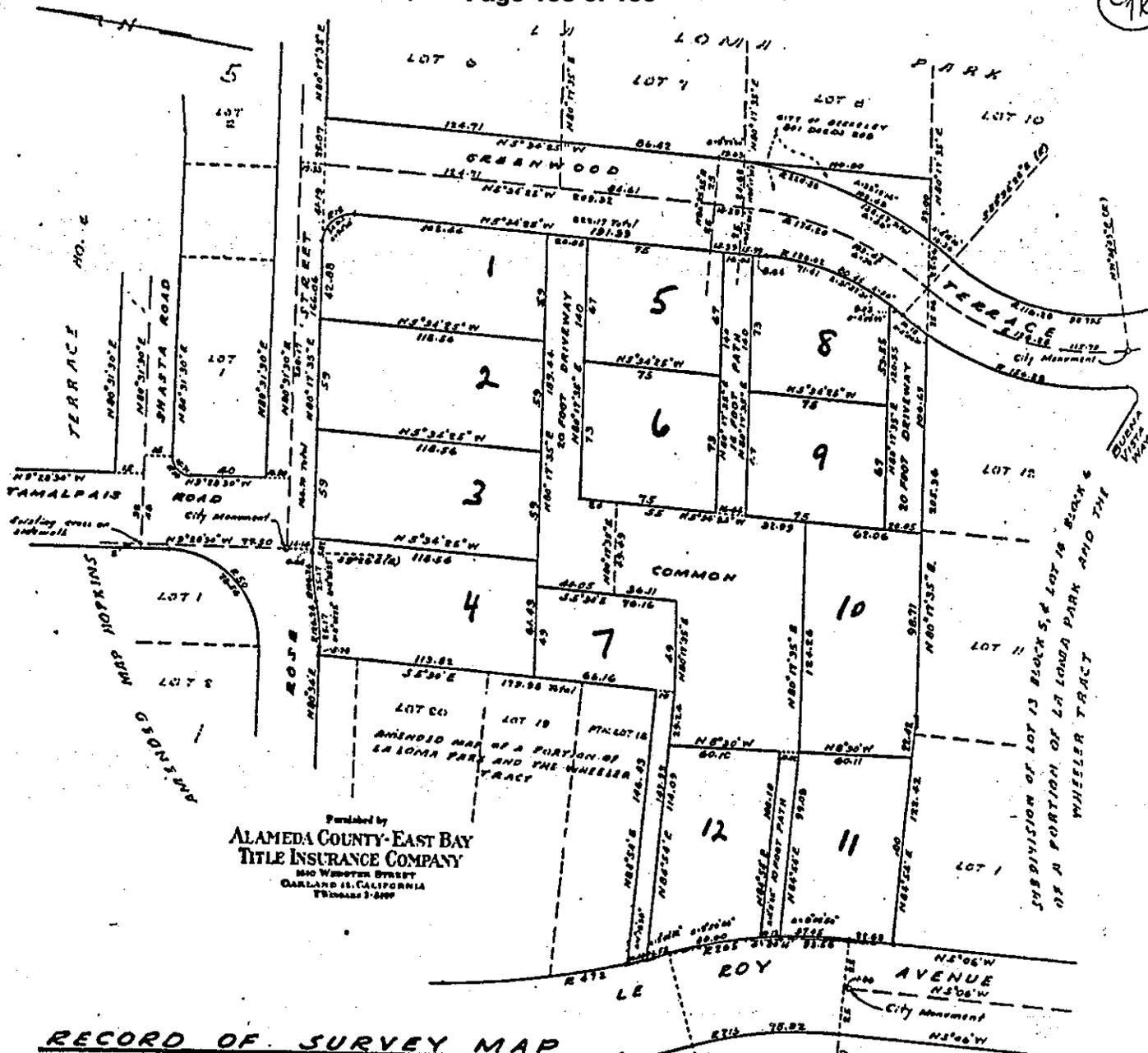
That the foregoing By-Laws and Declaration of Restrictions, comprising four (4) pages, constitute a true and correct copy of the original such document duly adopted at a meeting of the membership of the aforesaid corporation held on 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 1953, and that two-thirds of the membership voted affirmatively in favor of the adoption of said restated By-Laws at said membership meeting.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed the seal of said corporation this 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 1953.

Ursula W. Bindemann  
SECRETARY



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Published by  
**ALAMEDA COUNTY - EAST BAY**  
**TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY**  
 1410 WASHINGTON STREET  
 OAKLAND 16, CALIFORNIA  
 Telephone 3-8100

**RECORD OF SURVEY MAP**

Lots 1, 2 and 3, map of La Loma Park, and Lots 15, 16, 17 and a portion of Lot 18, Block 6, Amended Map of a portion of La Loma Park and the Wheeler Tract, situated in the City of Berkeley, County of Alameda, State of California

Sheet 1 of 1

FILED AUG 25, 1952 IN  
 BOOK 2 AT PAGE 34 OF  
 SURVEYS BY LICENSED SURVEYORS.  
 ALAMEDA COUNTY RECORDS.

This diagram is prepared from data appearing in the county records, but constitutes no part of any report or policy of title insurance to which it is attached; and the company does not insure against any differences in the location and dimensions delineated thereon that an accurate field survey of the real property may disclose.

FORM 114 208 R R ALAMEDA COUNTY - EAST BAY TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY

**Greenwood Common**

**VI. Legal History of Commonly Owned Areas**

**Exhibit 3. The 1987 Amendment to the By-Laws of Greenwood Common, Inc.**

**Feb 18, 1990**

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4/3 '88 JAN 21 AM 10 58

CERTIFICATE OF OFFICERS OF GREENWOOD COMMON, INC.  
A non-profit Corporation

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The undersigned, KATINKA WYLE and ELLIOT PORTER, and each of them, hereby state:

1. KATINKA WYLE is and at all times herein mentioned was the duly elected and acting President of GREENWOOD COMMON, INC., and ELLIOT PORTER is and at all times herein mentioned was the duly elected and acting Secretary of GREENWOOD COMMON, INC., a California non-profit Corporation.

2. The Amended and Restated By-Laws of GREENWOOD COMMON, INC., dated February 28, 1977, were recorded on March 4, 1977, in Reel 4746, Image 505 of Alameda County Records. Pursuant to paragraph VI of said By-Laws, as restated and amended as aforesaid, said By-Laws were further amended by an affirmative vote of seven members (an affirmative vote of six being required as the membership was reduced to ten after lots 5 and 6 were acquired by the corporation), said affirmative vote having been cast at a meeting held on December 22, 1987, after notice was duly given for the time and in the manner required by paragraph VI of said Restated and Amended By-Laws. Said amendment, adopted as aforesaid on December 22, 1987, is as follows:

Paragraph V. 3. was renumbered to be designated as paragraph V. 4., and a new paragraph 5. 3. was adopted reading as follows:

"All of the improved lots described herein are to be used solely as single family residences, and not to be converted or expanded or used for multiple dwelling units, without the unanimous

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affirmative consent in writing of all of the members. This paragraph is declarative of the original intent of the existing restrictions upon the use of lots of members."

Dated: January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1988

*Katinka Wyle*  
KATINKA WYLE, President

*Elliot Porter*  
ELLIOT PORTER, Secretary

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)

) ss.

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA )

KATINKA WYLE and ELLIOT PORTER, each for herself and himself respectively, having been first duly sworn, depose and say:

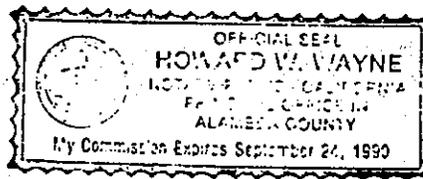
KATINKA WYLE is the President and ELLIOT PORTER the Secretary of GREENWOOD COMMON, INC., a non-profit corporation. Each of the affiants state that the facts above recited are true of his or her own knowledge.

*Katinka Wyle*  
KATINKA WYLE

*Elliot Porter*  
ELLIOT PORTER

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 19<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1988.

*[Signature]*  
Notary Public, Alameda County, California



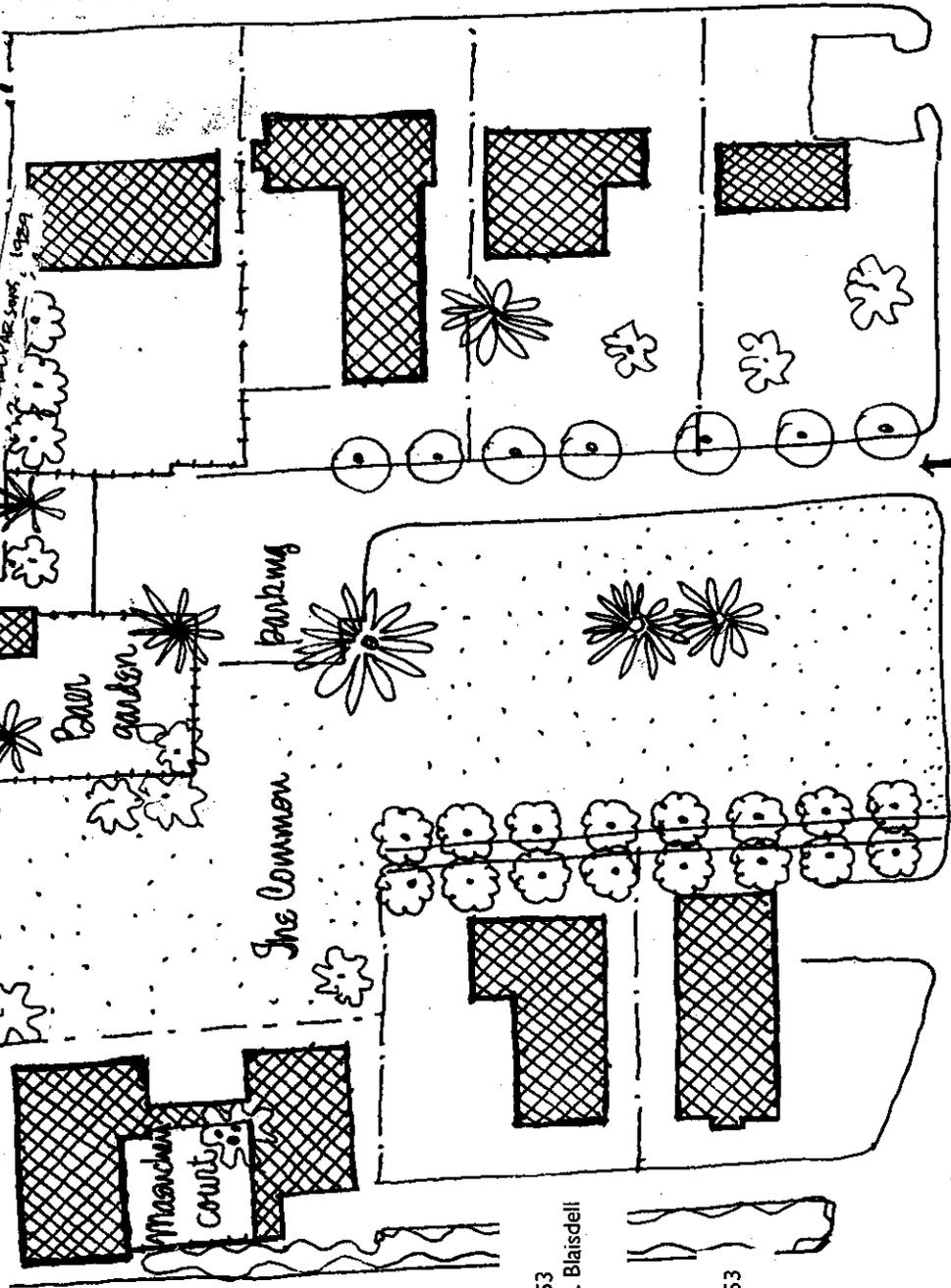


10 Greenwood Common, 1953  
 Otto J and Anna Maentchen  
 Architect: John Funk  
 Landscape Architect: Lawrence Halprin, 1954, 1957

9 Greenwood Common, 1953  
 Thomas C. and Catherine M. Blaisdell  
 Architect: Henry Hill, 1954

8 Greenwood Common, 1953  
 Mrs. W.W. Douglas  
 Architect: Howard Moise

Sasha Kaun 1940  
 Architect: Rudolph Schindler  
 William and Catherine Wurster, 1950-1952  
 Architect: William Wurster, c. 1950  
 Mr. & Mrs. Morely Baer (1953-72)  
 Architect: Henry Hill, ca. 1953 or 54  
 Landscape Architect: Lawrence Halprin, 1955  
 ARCHITECT: GARY ELLIOTT PARSONS, 1954



4 Greenwood Common, 1954  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Duhring  
 Architect: Harwell Hamilton Harris  
 Managing architect: Hervey Parke Clark  
 Landscape architect: Geraldine Knight Scott

3 Greenwood Common, 1954  
 Client: James & Mildred Ackerman  
 Architect: Joseph Esherick  
 Landscape Architect: Lawrence Halprin

2 Greenwood Common, 1957  
 Client: Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Schaaf  
 Architect: Robert Klemmenson  
 Landscape Architect: Lawrence Halprin

1 Greenwood Common, 1955, 1966  
 Client: Robert & Ann Birge  
 Architect: Donald Olsen, FAIA

15/5



Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Civic Center Building  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, California 94704  
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (415) 644-6915

(415) 644-6570

CITY OF BERKELEY  
NOTICE OF DECISION

FOR MEETING OF: March 19, 1990

PROPERTY ADDRESS: #1,2,3,4,7,8,9, and 10 Greenwood Common

Also Known As: Greenwood Common

PROPERTY OWNERS: #1 Greenwood Common - Ann and Robert W. Birge

#2 Greenwood Common - Phyllis and Samuel Schaaf

#3 Greenwood Common - Katinka Wyle

#4 Greenwood Common - S.B. Master and James Symons

#7 Greenwood Common - Joan and Richard McDonough

#8 Greenwood Common - Elliott E. Porter

#9 Greenwood Common - Diane and David Weber Shapiro

#10 Greenwood Common - Anna Maenchen

Greenwood Common Inc. #4 Greenwood Common

APPLICANTS: o Frederick Wyle et. al. \*

#3 Greenwood Common, Berkeley, CA 94708

\*(on behalf of the 138 City residents who filed a petition to initiate the properties listed above)

o Landmarks Preservation Commission

2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEREAS, a public hearing has been duly and regularly held upon the above property, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission, being fully advised, has voted to DESIGNATE the following:

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
 NOTICE OF DECISION  
 For Meeting of: March 19, 1990

Page 2

It was MSC (Kusmierski/McGlibery) that the Landmark Preservation Commission, designate "Greenwood Common" as defined by Lots #1-10 and the open space between them, a City of Berkeley landmark in recognition of its significance as an example of a designed landscape which incorporates as an integral part thereof, residential buildings as conceived of by William Wurster, then Dean of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California Berkeley, and designed by the prominent landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin, the eight residential buildings having been designed by a group of prominent California architects:

- #1 Greenwood Common - Donald Olsen (1955)
- #2 Greenwood Common - Robert Klemmedson (1957)
- #3 Greenwood Common - Joseph Esherick (1954)
- #4 Greenwood Common - Harwell Hamilton Harris (1954)
- #7 Greenwood Common - Rudolph Schindler (1932)
- #8 Greenwood Common - Howard Moises (1953)
- #9 Greenwood Common - Henry Hill (1954)
- #10 Greenwood Common - John Funk (1952)

Further, "Greenwood Common" represents the most significant and integrated example of the Second Bay Tradition design philosophy, in the City of Berkeley and is a prototype of the Second Bay Tradition architectural and landscape design movement in the Bay Area and California. Including such features as simple low maintenance gardens, native and exotic plants, including flowering plum trees and juniper, textured concrete surfaces embedded with gravel or small rocks, unpainted fences and structures which open onto gardens. These structures were stained in subdued earth tones, often with window trim of unstained redwood, but sometimes featuring earthtone paint, tar and gravel or shake roofs often flat or slightly gabled or sloping, creating a unique design relationship between the houses and the landscape. These features, taken together, represent a distinct architectural style of the 1950's and a distinct phase in the cultural and architectural history of the City. The Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that "Greenwood Common" fulfills the purpose of Landmark designation, as set forth in Section 3.24.060(A) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance:

"...to designate, after public hearings, structures, sites, and areas including single structures or sites, portions of a structure, groups of structures, manmade or natural landscapes elements, works of art or integrated combinations thereof, having a special character, or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest..."

and in so doing intends to review permit applications in accordance with Sections 3.24.240 and 3.24.350 of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance:

"...For permit applications to make exterior alterations or to carry out new construction ... The Commission shall consider the conformance of the proposed work with the purposes and standards in this chapter... the proposed work shall not adversely affect the exterior architectural features of the landmark...nor shall the proposed work adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural or aesthetic interest or value of the landmark and its site."

Page 146 of 155  
LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
NOTICE OF DECISION

For Meeting of: March 19, 1990

Page 3

This designation, excludes lots #11 and #12 which front on Le Roy Avenue because they do not actively contribute to the visual integrity of the Common, due to their being set below on another street, and in light of the fact that the views from the Common of the Bay have been protected by deed restriction on these two lots.

Motion Carried: Ayes: Aroner, Bright, Cerny, Jones, Kusmierski, McGlibery;  
Nay: -; Abstain: Roha (see footnote 1); Absent: Gordon, Marsh.

- 1/ Roha abstained due to her professional relationship, as an architect, with Don Olsen and Joseph Escherick, the architects who designed #1 and #3 Greenwood Common respectively, as well as with Elliot Porter and Iris Weiner who own #8 Greenwood Common.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE it Resolved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley that the decision is deemed final unless it is reversed, upon appeal, by the Council of the City of Berkeley.

---

DATE NOTICE MAILED: 4-2-90 THE APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRES AT 5 PM: 4-17-90  
FILE APPEAL WITH CITY CLERK BY THIS DATE

---

cc: City Clerk  
Codes and Inspection

ATTEST:

  
Mark Paez, Secretary

MILLS ACT  
**EXTERIOR REHABILITATION SCHEDULE**

Feature	Character Defining?	Condition	Recommended Treatment	Schedule	Budgets	Notes
<b>House Exterior:</b>						
A. Concrete building structure at rearward/downhill foundation	Yes	Fair	Repair and replacement including leveling of floor above	2031	\$87,500	a
B. Wood deck and guardrails at southwest corner and rear	Yes	Fair-poor	Repair and replacement of deteriorated wood deck structure, replacement of wood decking and guardrails similar to existing	2026	\$70,000	b
C. Fixed glass and casement wood sash windows with flat wood trims and sills	Yes	Fair-poor	Replace 7 windows at upper west side to match existing	2031	\$43,200	c
D. Sliding metal patio doors at rear deck	Yes - altered	Fair	Replace sliding doors at Dining Room with new high quality doors	2026	\$18,940	c
				Subtotal:	\$219,640	
<b>Carport &amp; Entry Way:</b>						
E. Gravel path to entry gates at carport	Yes - altered	Fair	Replace gravel at entry path with new brick	2026	\$9,600	d
F. Wood and lattice entry gates	Yes - altered	Poor	Replace entry gates with new wood gates	2026	\$2,900	d
G. Exposed aggregate concrete steps and walk at entry way	Yes		Replace exposed aggregate concrete at covered walk with new to match	2026	\$17,765	d
				Subtotal:	\$30,265	

MILLS ACT  
**EXTERIOR REHABILITATION SCHEDULE**

**Landscape:**

H. Perimeter wood fencing, board and batten	Yes	Replace wood fence at front (east) similar to original	2026	\$6,650	d
I. Upper yard ground covering and trees/plants	Yes - altered	Replace ground cover and plantings at upper area similar to original	2026	\$9,385	d
J. Brick garden paving, parquet pattern, framing planting beds on grade	Yes	Remove, repair grade and reinstall brick pavers and steps, including new wood steps to match	2026	\$13,200	d

Subtotal: \$29,235

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**Total Estimated 10yr. Budget = \$279,140**

**GENERAL NOTES:**

1. This proposed 10 year work plan is focused on the rehabilitation of the exterior house, carport and landscape.
2. The proposed work plan is commensurate with the estimated Mills Act tax reduction per the accompanying Spreadsheet.
3. This focused work plan represents only a portion of current and future rehabilitation work.

**REHAB NOTES:**

- a. Required structural repairs per SDC Structural Engineering report - dated Dec. 2022.
- b. Replacement deck per Eric Ashkenos Construction - dated May 2024.
- c. Replacement windows and doors per Anderson Windows - dated 5/23/24.
- d. Carport and landscape rehabilitation per Zamora Eco Landscapes, Inc. - dated 5/30/2024.



L A N D M A R K S  
P R E S E R V A T I O N  
C O M M I S S I O N  
S T A F F R E P O R T

FOR COMMISSION ACTION  
AUGUST 1, 2024

## 7 Greenwood Common

Mills Act Contract Application (#LMMA2024-0002) for a City of Berkeley  
Landmark residential property.

### I. Application Basics

**Property Owner:**

Edie Hofmeister  
7 Greenwood Common  
Berkeley, CA 94708

**Historic Architect & Consultant:**

Mark Hulbert, Architect  
Preservation Architecture  
446 17<sup>th</sup> Street, #302  
Oakland, CA 94612

**Recommendation:**

Approve the proposed rehabilitation schedule  
and recommend favorable action to City  
Council.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map showing nearby City Landmarks & Districts



	Landmarks / Structure of Merit; LM,		Parcels
	Features		Demolished
	Districts		Partially Demolished

**Figure 2: Existing Site Conditions – 7 Greenwood Common as seen from Greenwood Common, looking northwest** (Preservation Architecture, 2024)



**Figure 3: Existing Site Conditions – East and South Elevations, and Southeast Yard** (Preservation Architecture, 2024)



## II. Background

The subject property is located within the Greenwood Common neighborhood, which consists of eight single-family residences oriented around a common/shared green space, perched atop a hillside with sweeping views of the San Francisco Bay to the west. This mid-century era development is recognized as the most significant and integrated example of the Second Bay Tradition design philosophy (blending the landscape and architecture) in the City of Berkeley and served as a prototype for this design movement in the Bay Area and the state.

The subject property at number 7 Greenwood Common, in its own layered history, is associated with numerous master architects and prominent figures of Modernism, according to the Historical Architectural Summary in Attachment 1 as chronicled below:

- A small residential building was believed to have been built on the project site c.1930, predating the Greenwood Common development;
- In 1940, world-renowned Modernist architect Rudolph Schindler completed additions and alterations to the existing building for owners Alexander Sasha Kaun and Val Kaun, giving it its basic modern identity;
- Subsequently, UC Berkeley academic couple and notable designers William Wurster and Catherine Bauer Wurster owned the 2.5-acre property at large, and resided in no. 7 from 1950-1953 while developing plans for the eventual Greenwood Common. The Bauer-Wursters completed small architectural changes to number 7;
- In 1953, the Bauer-Wursters deeded the property to Morley Baer, a leading architectural photographer of the time, and his wife Frances Baer, an artist in her own right. The Baers added on to the property at no. 7 with a front and south side additions, designed by eminent Modern architect Henry Hill. The Baers also hired Lawrence Halprin, pre-eminent Mid-Century landscape architect, and the landscape designer of the Common itself, to design their private garden at the southeast corner, a carport and entryway at the northeast, and the deck at the southwest side of the residence (which retain their integrity).
- In 1961, the Baers had architect Harry W. Namitz add a second story bedroom and deck addition to the residence, marking the completion of its Modernist identity.
- Later small alterations (1984 and 1988) were also carefully designed by architects and do not adversely impact the property's significance.

Further details can be found in Attachment 1, which identifies the Period of Significance for 7 Greenwood Common as 1940-1972.

The subject property, along with a number of other residences on Greenwood Common, was designated as a City landmark in 1990; see the Landmark Designation Record included in Attachment 4 of this report.

On June 6, 2024, the applicant, on behalf of the property owners, submitted a Mills Act Contract Application for this City Landmark property.

### III. Issues and Analysis

The applicant's historic architect, who is also serving as the historic resource consultant, prepared the Mills Act submittal in line with the City's program requirements.

The Mills Act application includes the following components:

- 1) *Historic Architectural Summary* for the subject property (Attachment 1), which including a summary of character-defining features.
- 2) An Exterior Rehabilitation Schedule (Attachment 2), which outlines the projects identified for restoration, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the property over the ten-year contract period; and
- 3) A financial analysis spreadsheet (Attachment 3) for estimating the potential Mills Act tax savings for this request, based on property-specific figures calculated using standard formulas.

This purpose of this review is to confirm the eligibility of the property to participate in the program and verify the validity of the identified work plan items. Should the City enter into a Mills Act Contract with the property owner, the Alameda County Assessor's Office will be responsible for verifying the figures provided by the applicant, conducting calculations, and applying actual property tax reductions on future tax bills beginning in 2025.

All improvements included in the Rehabilitation Plan (Attachment 2) relate to restoring the historic, character defining features of the building and site, or extending the Landmark's useful life. All of the proposed work items included in the Mills Act Application (Attachment 2) can be considered "ordinary maintenance and repair" because the activities would restore existing features and do not include changes to the character of any of the exterior features. Many of the work items relate to restoring various eras of significance in the evolution of the property, as chronicled under the "Background" section of this report, including a restoration of the original surviving Lawrence Halprin landscape and hardscaped yard. All of the work proposed would be exempt from the requirements of a Structural Alteration Permit (SAP), pursuant to the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (Berkeley Municipal Code Section 3.24.260). If any future work is proposed to go beyond the scope of "ordinary maintenance and repair," then it would be subject to prior approval by the Commission.

The work plan items are justifiable in that they constitute restoration, repair, rehabilitation and continued maintenance of the subject property. Further, the work plan will provide for the property's "use, maintenance and restoration as to retain its characteristics as property of historical significance," as provided for in the Mills Act, Government Code Sections 50280 et. Seq., as authorized by the Berkeley City Council per Resolution No. 59,355 – N.S. For these reasons, staff concludes that the proposed work plan items represent improvements that are consistent with the requirements of the Mills Act.

#### IV. Mills Act Contract Proposal

The intent of the Mills Act is to provide property tax relief so that the property owners entering into Mills Act Contracts with the City will reinvest a significant portion of the property tax savings resulting from the Contract into preserving and/or restoring their property. The applicant's proposed 10-year plan of improvements is provided in Attachment 2, and summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Summary of Rehabilitation Schedule & Recommended Treatments**

Area of Work	Feature	Recommended Treatment	Estimated Year of Completion
Landscape	Perimeter wood fencing, board and batten	Replace wood fence at front (east) similar to original	2026
	Upper yard ground covering, trees and plants	Replace ground cover and plantings at upper area similar to original	2026
	Brick garden paving, parquet pattern, framing planting beds on grade	Remove, repair grade and reinstall brick pavers and steps, including new wood steps to match	2026
Carport & Entryway	Gravel path to entry gates at carport	Replace gravel at entry path with new brick	2026
	Wood and lattice entry gates	Replace entry gates with new wood gates	2026
	Exposed aggregate concrete steps and walk at entry way	Replace exposed aggregate concrete at covered walk with new to match	2026
House Exterior	Wood deck and guardrails at southwest corner and rear	Repair and replace deteriorated wood deck structure, replace wood decking and guardrails similar to existing	2026
	Sliding metal patio doors at rear deck	Replace sliding doors at Dining Room with new upgraded doors	2026
	Concrete building structure at rearward/downhill foundation	Repair and replace, including leveling of floor above	2031
	Fixed glass and casement wood sash windows with flat wood trims and sills	Replace seven windows at upper west side to match existing	2031

Per the applicant's calculations in Attachment 3, the owner's work plan represents a full reinvestment of the savings into the property (i.e. spending \$279,140 on the 10-year work plan, while saving \$264,381 in property tax reduction over the 10-year period).

## V. Recommendation

Staff has determined that all work proposed in the Mills Act Contract work plan provides for the property's "use, maintenance and restoration as to retain its characteristics as property of historical significance", and advises the Commission to recommend that City Council approve the Mills Act Contract request for the subject property.

### Attachments:

1. Mills Act Application for 7 Greenwood Common – Historic Architectural Summary, dated May 31, 2024
2. Mills Act Application for 7 Greenwood Common – Exterior Rehabilitation Schedule, dated May 31, 2024
3. Mills Act Application for 7 Greenwood Common – Financial Analysis Spreadsheet, dated May 31, 2024
4. Notice of Decision – Landmark Designation, March 19, 1990

**Prepared by:** Reina Kapadia, AICP, Senior Planner; [rkapadia@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:rkapadia@berkeleyca.gov) (510) 981-7485

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