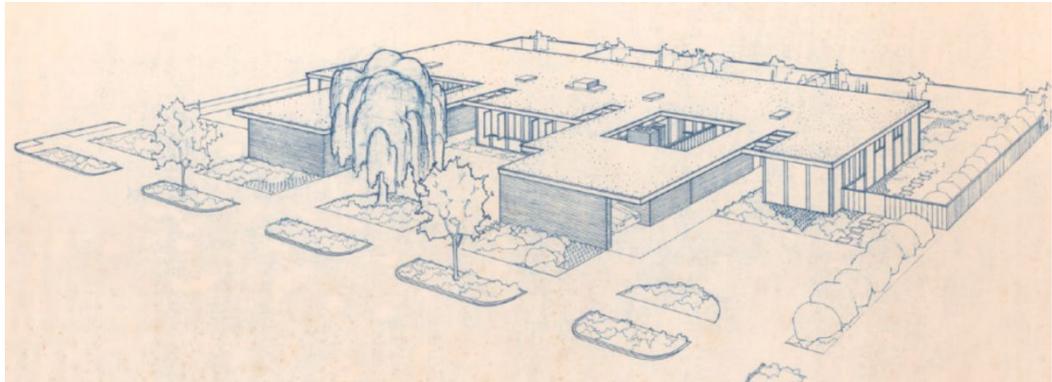
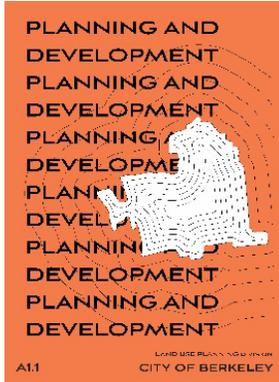


# Landmarks Preservation Commission Staff Report

## 2000 Blake Street (Havens Apartments) Landmark Initiation – #LMIN2025-0003

September 4, 2025



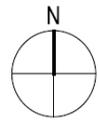
Quick Facts	Project Description:
<p><b>Applicant:</b> Landmarks Preservation Commission, represented by Commissioner Luke Leuschner</p> <p><b>Property Owner:</b> Elaine F. Kawakami Trust</p> <p><b>Project Address:</b> 2000 Blake Street</p> <p><b>GP Land Use:</b> High Density Residential</p> <p><b>Zoning:</b> R-4</p> <p><b>Historic District:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>CEQA:</b> Exempt, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) "Review for Exemptions"</p> <p><b>Submittal Date:</b> July 14, 2025</p> <p><b>Date Deemed Complete:</b> August 1, 2025</p> <p><b>Project Planner:</b> Boshi Fu</p>	<p>The applicant is seeking consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation for a six-unit multifamily property, constructed in 1949 (APN: 055-1821-019-00).</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Permits Requested:</b></p> <p><b>Landmark or Structure of Merit Designation.</b> To designate a property as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit, pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Staff Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Staff recommends that LPC:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receive public testimony and close the hearing on this matter.</li> <li>2. Consider the extent to which the property meets the criteria for local designation under BMC Section 3.24.110.</li> <li>3. Take favorable action and adopt the draft Findings for Designation Approval.</li> </ol>

**VICINITY AND HISTORIC RESOURCE MAP**



Historic Resources

-  Districts
-  Features
-  Landmarks / Structure of Merit
-  Partially Demolished
-  Demolished



Comparison of Adjacent Properties			
Vicinity	GP Land Use	Zoning	Current Use
North	High Density Residential	Multi-Family Residential District (R-4)	Mixed (residential, vacant buildings)
South	Medium Density Residential	Restricted Multiple-Family Residential District (R-2A)	Single and multi-family residential
East	High Density Residential	Multi-Family Residential District (R-4)	Single and multi-family residential
West	High Density Residential	Multi-Family Residential District (R-4)	Multi-family residential

**AERIAL**



**STREET ELEVATION**



Figure 1: Front (north) facade of the Havens Apartments, on Blake Street. Source: Landmark Application

## BACKGROUND



Figure 2: Photographs of the Havens Apartments on Blake Street (North), shortly after construction. Source: Rondal Partridge Archive

## Subject Site

The subject property is located at 2000 Blake Street, at the southeast corner of Blake and Milvia Streets. The parcel measures 162 feet by 130 feet and is in the Multi-Family Residential (R-4) District. The site comprises the Havens Apartments, a multifamily residential complex designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris in 1949. The property includes a fourplex fronting Blake Street, a duplex, and an attached garage facing Milvia Street. Additional addresses on the property include 2002 Blake Street, 2004 Blake Street, 2006 Blake Street, 2533 Milvia Street, and 2535 Milvia Street.

## Site History

The property remained undeveloped until 1948, when John Weston Havens Jr requested renowned modernist architect Harwell Hamilton Harris to design a multi-family residential building. The development followed the housing boom following the end of World War II. The Havens Apartments were designed by Harris in 1949, and construction was completed the same year. The apartments are an outstanding example of Harris's innovative Mid-Century Modern style. The design is characterized by horizontal massing, minimalist aesthetics, and the pioneering use of contemporary building materials, specifically Cemesto panels.

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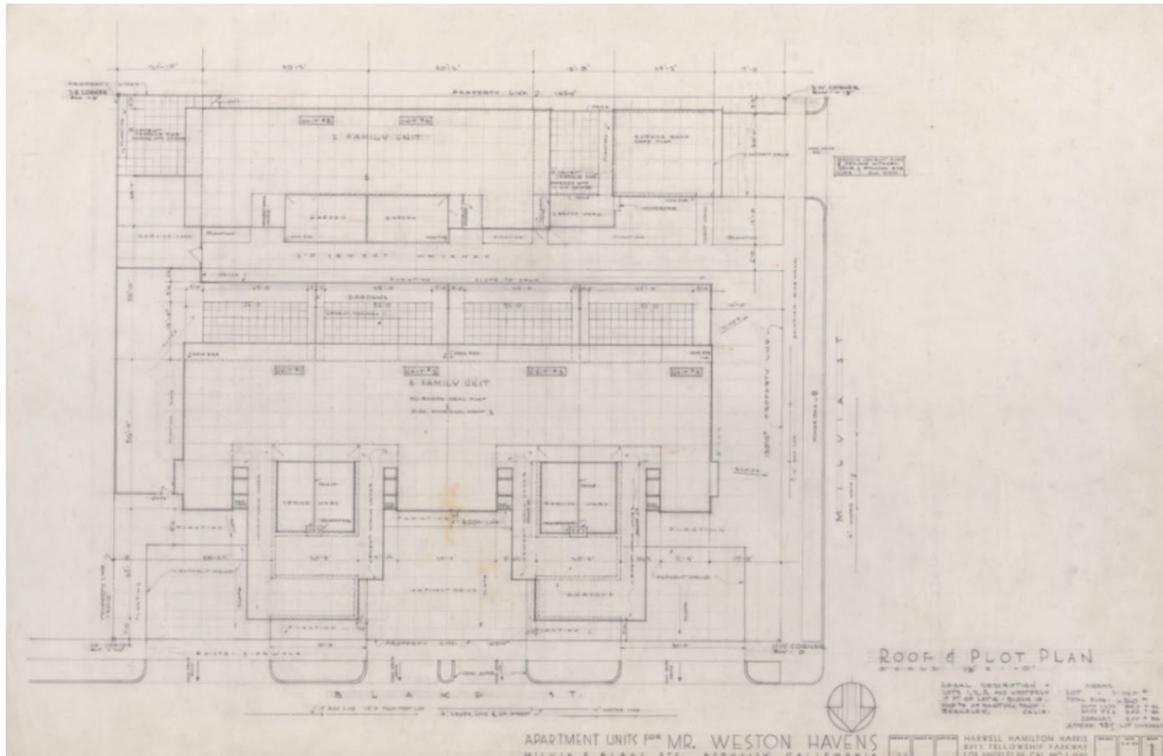


Figure 3: Original site plan of the apartments. Source: Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection, University of Texas

### APPLICATION CHRONOLOGY

On June 5, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to initiate the landmark designation process for 2000 Blake Street pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.120.

On July 14, 2025, the City's Land Use Planning division received a Landmark/Structure of Merit application (see Attachment 2) from Commissioner Luke Leuschner, representing the Commission.

On August 5, 2025, staff sent a letter to the property owner informing them of the initiation and pending public hearing.

On August 25, 2025, staff mailed and posted public notice for the September 4, 2025, hearing, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.140. Staff received three letters of support for the landmark designation on the August 25 and August 27, 2025. See attachment 3.



Figure 4: Covered entry at 2004 Blake, taken from the Blake Street driveway (looking south). Source: staff.

### **PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

**Parcel:** The subject property is an approximately 22,000 square-foot rectangular corner lot located at the intersection of Blake (north) and Milvia (west) Streets. The parcel has vehicle access from both Milvia and Blake. A wide driveway entrance along Blake Street leads to a central paved courtyard and attached brick garages serving the 2002 and 2004 units. Additional driveways on Blake Street leads to the other side of the garage for the 2000 (west) and 2006 (east) units. A separate driveway from Milvia Street provides access to a detached garage at the rear of the site.

The fourplex includes a central paved entry framed by two projecting brick volumes, creating a symmetrical front façade with recessed and shaded entries. Each of the units within the fourplex features a covered entry, as shown in Figure 4, above. There are small lawn areas located in front of the projecting garages, between the sidewalk along Blake Street. Most of the remaining site area is paved, with minimal landscaping along the edges of the property. There is a large L-shaped planter along the western side of the property, between the fourplex and the sidewalk on Milvia Street. The fourplex and duplex are separated by a driveway/alleyway that leads up to 2533 Milvia Street. The alleyway serves as the primary entry to both units within the duplex and is a key feature in preserving and maintaining the spatial arrangement and relations between the two buildings, as shown in Figure 5, below.



Figure 5: Private Alleyway, separating the fourplex from the duplex, taken from Milvia Street (west). Source: staff.

**Buildings:** The property contains two residential buildings, a fourplex fronting Blake Street and a duplex located at the rear (south) of the lot. Both structures are one story and depict strong Mid-Century Modern design by architect Harwell Hamilton Harris.

The fourplex is the most prominent structure on the site. It features a flat roof, horizontal massing, and a modular wood frame system expressed in a four-foot grid. The façade facing Blake Street includes two projecting brick garage volumes that create a symmetrical alignment, shown in Figure 6, below. Each unit entry is recessed between two projecting brick volumes and is partially covered by trellises and overhangs.



Figure 6: Photo of the Blake Street façade (north), showcasing a symmetrical alignment created by the projecting garages. Source: staff.

The exterior is composed of Cemesto panels, steel framed windows, and painted wood cladding. Cemesto is a prefabricated building material made from sugarcane fiber core and surfaced with asbestos cement. It was utilized heavily during the World War II and postwar housing periods for being lightweight, fire resistant, and easy to install. It supported faster and more economical construction during a time of need. See Figure 7 below for more details

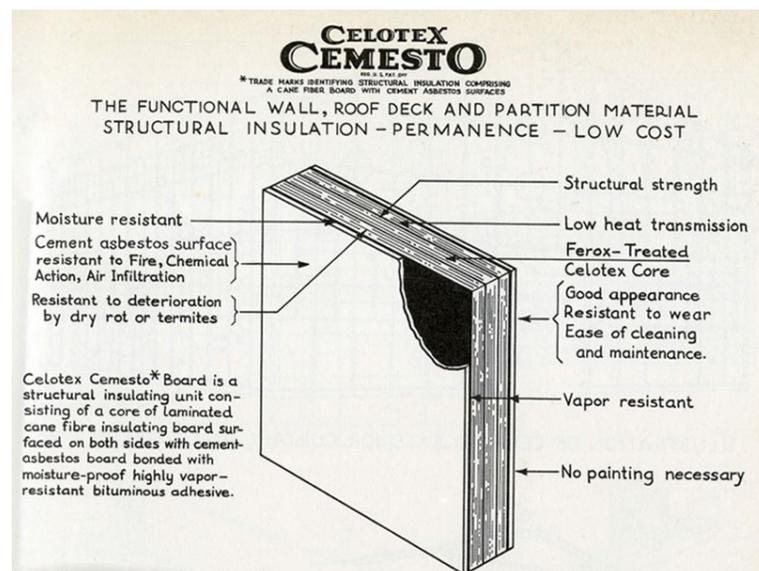


Figure 7: Image of Cemesto composition. Source: Cemesto Design and Construction Application Data, Celotex Corporation in 1950. [The Getty Conservation Institute](#).

The rear elevation is composed of floor-to-ceiling glass framed within the modular border, while each unit opens onto a private patio area enclosed by wood fencing. In contrast, on the front façade, only a few windows are visible.

The duplex is located behind the fourplex which is separated by a central paved driveway. This building shares the same modular design character and features a similar materials palette. While the duplex is similar in style, it is smaller and simpler in design. It also features a flat roof and a series of windows and panels. Each unit in the duplex opens to a small patio area with a privacy divider.

A detached brick garage is located along Milvia Street, providing parking for the duplex units. It features two car spaces, a flat roof, and a raised planter along Milvia. The existing buildings remain intact and retain a high level of architectural integrity to the original construction.

**Architect:** Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903–1990) was a modernist architect known for his regional approach and focus on modular design. Although he had no formal training or education, he worked under Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler in Los Angeles before starting his own practice in the 1930s. His work combined modern materials with thoughtful design, often emphasizing horizontal lines and wood construction. Harris designed the Weston Havens House in 1941 for John Weston Havens Jr., located at 255 Panoramic Way in the Berkeley hills. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was recognized for its structural innovation and aesthetic character. A key defining feature of the house is its three inverted triangular trusses, which support the roof, main floor, and lower level, allowing the structure to cantilever over the hillside and frame the views of the Bay.

Harris designed the Havens Apartments in 1949 for the same client, John Weston Havens Jr. At the time, he was focused on producing well-designed, efficient housing using affordable materials like Cemesto. Over his career, Harris also taught architecture in Texas and North Carolina and continued to design custom homes into the 1970s. To this day, his work remains an important part of American modernist architecture.

**Architectural Style:** The Havens Apartments reflect the Mid-Century Modern architecture through its usage of flat roofs, horizontal massing, and a four-foot module system. The buildings express the structural layout using exposed wood framing, standardized Cemesto panels, and evenly spaced windows and doors. The street-facing elevations are mostly solid, with brick volumes and Cemesto panels to maintain privacy, while the rear elevations consist of floor-to-ceiling glass opening onto private patios. The use of identical floor plans, simple materials, and minimal detailing reflects the project's focus on economical and livable design. These features are consistent with the goals of postwar modern residences and contribute to the building's overall architectural significance.

**Ownership:** The Havens Apartments were commissioned by Weston Havens Jr. and designed by architect Harwell Hamilton Harris in 1948. Havens was the original owner of the property, and it was eventually sold to the current owner in 2004. Havens Jr., or commonly referred to as Weston Havens, comes from the lineage of Francis Kittredge Shattuck, one of Berkeley's most prominent civic leaders and early land developers. Like his grand-uncle, Shattuck, Havens played a role in shaping Berkeley's cultural landscape. While inheriting Shattuck's estate, Havens also inherited his legacy, particularly through his philanthropy and support for modern architecture.

In addition to commissioning the Havens House, Weston Havens also contributed to the cultural, artistic, and educational fabric of Berkeley. Upon his death in 2001, he left the Weston Havens House to UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, which established a lasting resource for architectural education and stewardship. Havens also demonstrated civic philanthropy through the commissioning of a series of fountains along Shattuck Avenue. Harris was also the architect, and the project was dedicated to Havens' father. The installation, known as the Havens Fountain Plaza, was completed in 1961 but was later removed during the construction of BART.

In a broader context, Havens' legacy extended beyond Berkeley. His estate also established the Weston Havens Foundation, which supports medical and scientific research, including contributions to institutions such as the California Institute of Technology (CalTech).<sup>1</sup> Although these grants were distributed in 2007, after his passing in 2001, they reflect the philanthropic legacy that was established through his estate.

**Construction History and Occupancy:** Construction of the Havens Apartments began in early 1949 under contractor Bud Reininghaus and was completed by July of the same year. The complex consisted of six "Family Unit" apartments and was planned as income-producing rentals. The units were occupied by the end of 1949, with tenants including a high school librarian, a purchasing agent, a UC Berkeley instructor, and a bank secretary. The property has remained in residential use since construction and continues to retain a high level of integrity with its original design.

**Alterations and Modifications:** There have been minor exterior alterations to the Havens Apartments since construction in 1949. In 1964, garage doors were added to the four brick carports along Blake Street, which effectively enclosed the carports into garages. Wooden gates were later installed at the entries for two of the four units in the fourplex (2000 and 2006 Blake). Wood slats were added to the clerestory cutouts above the entry walkway in all units. Metal bars have also been installed on windows along the west façade of the fourplex.

The rear of the fourplex is partially covered by fencing, but the aerial photos suggest that there have been no expansions. Additionally, there are no permits on file for any structural alterations. The duplex at the rear is also largely maintained in the same envelope. However, one of the garage doors facing Milvia Street has been replaced with a non-original design, see Figure 8.

These exterior changes are very limited in scope and do not affect the original building massing, layout, or material. The design conceived by Harwell Hamilton Harris remains intact and clearly visible in 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> Weston Havens Foundation Awards Multiple Grants to Caltech (2007), [source](#).



Figure 8: Altered garage door for the duplex (right), along Milvia Street. Source: staff.

## ANALYSIS

**Historic Context.**<sup>2</sup> The subject property is located within the historic Shattuck Tract, one of Berkeley's earliest subdivisions. Although the subdivision was established in the late 19th century, the Havens Apartments reflect a pattern of post-World War II residential development within the area in the late 1940s. The complex was constructed in 1949, designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris, and represents an early example of local Mid-Century Modern architecture that is applied to a small-scale apartment complex. The buildings demonstrate a period of time that emphasized the usage of modular design, prefabricated materials, and strong horizontal massing. These characteristics aligned with the goals of economic and efficiency housing construction that emerged during that time. The project also reflects a specific instance of architectural patronage as a residential project that aligned the shared modernist approach of both Weston Havens and Harris.

**Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO) Review Standards and Criteria:** When it designates a property as a Landmark, Historic District, or Structure of Merit, the Commission must find that the property meets one or more of the required criteria codified in the LPO, BMC Section 3.24.110. These criteria are relatively specific and appear to align with California Register and National Register criteria.

The significance criteria for a Structure of Merit are broader than those for Landmark status and include properties that qualify individually as good examples of architectural design, or that qualify as contributors to the context of a larger streetscape or area. Staff completed a review of

<sup>2</sup> National Register Bulletin #15, Item V: *How to Evaluate a Property within its Historic Context* (2002); National Register Bulletin #16A, Section III: *How to Complete the National Register Registration – Period of Significance* (1997).

all of the available information and compared the evidence against the criteria for designation consideration. A summary of findings is provided below:

### City Landmarks Designation Criteria

#### 1. Architectural Merit:

- a. Architectural Merit – *first/last/only*. The criterion in BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(1)(a) considers properties based on whether they are the first, last, only, or most significant architectural example of their type in the region. While the Havens Apartments are a distinctive and early example of Mid-Century Modern residential design in Berkeley, the application and the condition of the property does not establish the apartment as the first, last, only, or most significant of its kind in the city or broader region. Similar examples of the style and period exist locally.
- b. Architectural Merit – *outstanding example*. Under BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(1)(b), properties that are prototypes or outstanding examples of a period, style, architectural movement, or construction, or are notable or among the best surviving works of an architect in the region are eligible for designation. The Havens Apartments meet this criterion as it demonstrates key features of Harwell Hamilton Harris' approach to Mid-Century Modern design. The buildings' features (strong horizontal massing, modular Cemesto panels, individualized unit entries) contribute to a strong modular grid that reflects its design integrity. The use of open outdoor space, distinct choice of materials, and innovative use of manufactured components further exemplifies Harris's contribution to regional modernism. It is also the only known surviving multi-family residential building designed by Harris in Berkeley; this further emphasizes its significance as an outstanding architectural example. Based on these characteristics, the property qualifies for landmark designation under this criterion
- c. Architectural Merit – *exceptional value as part of the neighborhood fabric*. BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(1)(c) considers whether the property provides exceptional value as part of the neighborhood fabric. While the Havens Apartments retain a high degree of architectural integrity and represent a strong example of Mid-Century Modern design, the surrounding neighborhood has experienced significant architectural change over time. The immediate area includes a range of newer developments and alterations to nearby parcels, resulting in a lack of cohesion in the street overall. The subject property is not part of a larger cluster of modernist buildings, nor does it reflect a development pattern consistent with a broader neighborhood fabric. Therefore, the building does not provide exceptional value as part of the neighborhood fabric and does not meet this criterion.

#### 2. Cultural Value:

BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(2) relates to properties associated with the movement or evolution of religious, cultural, governmental, social and economic development of the City. The property was commissioned by John Weston Havens Jr., an important cultural figure in Berkeley's mid-century history and a prominent UC Berkeley benefactor. However, the building itself is not directly associated with any significant civic or cultural movements. Therefore, the Havens Apartments does not demonstrate strong cultural

value.

3. Educational Value

BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(3) applies to structures that are notable for their usefulness as an educational force. The Havens Apartments could offer educational value to students and academics of architecture and urban design, particularly due to its demonstration of modular Mid-Century Modern design and use of prefabricated Cemestos. However, the property has not been historically used for educational purposes. While the design is well documented, it does not provide an active or unique educational opportunity beyond the existing archives and records.

4. Historic Value

BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(4) addresses properties that embody or express the history of Berkeley, Alameda County, California, or the United States. The Havens Apartments are connected to John Weston Havens Jr., a notable local figure with ties to Berkeley's early development and a well-known supporter of modern architecture. Although Havens' historical connections in Berkeley are meaningful, the property is not directly associated with any specific historic events or broader developments that shaped local or state history.

5. National Register

BMC Section 3.24.110(A)(5) is not applicable as this property is not listed on the National Register, as described in Section 470A of Title 16 of the United States Code.

**City Structure of Merit Criteria**

As discussed above, staff believe the subject property could meet the criteria for designation as a City Landmark. However, if the Commission concludes that it does not (in whole or in part), then the Commission may consider the extent to which it meets the criteria for designation as a Structure of Merit, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2) as presented below:

1. Age of the Structure

The Havens Apartments were constructed in 1949, during a period of significant architectural growth and postwar housing development in Berkeley. However, there are no designated Landmarks or Structures of Merit in the structure's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings that are similar in age or share the same Mid-Century Modern architectural style. Thus, the property does not meet this criterion under BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(a).

2. Compatibility

The structure is not compatible in size, scale, style, materials or design with other designated landmark structures within its neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings. It stands alone as the only Mid-Century Modern multifamily apartment complex in the neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings. While the building's integrity is maintained, it does not contribute to a broader historic building groups or streetscape. Therefore, it does not meet the criteria under BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(b).

3. Good Example of Architectural Design

The Havens Apartments are a strong example of Mid-Century Modern architecture, as outline in BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(c). The building has retained its original layout and materials, including the modular Cemesto panels, the exterior volumes, and the clearly defined entryways. The overall design is still visible and intact from the time of construction, which supports designation based on good architectural design.

4. Historical Significance

Although the property is associated with John Weston Havens Jr., a figure of cultural importance in Berkeley, there is no clear evidence that the building itself has historical significance to the City, or to the property's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings as required by BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(d). The structure is not directly tied to a specific historic event or period that shaped the development of the surrounding area or the city.

Conclusion: Havens Apartments appear to be eligible for local designation

The Havens Apartments appear eligible for local designation as a City Landmark based on its outstanding architectural merit as a significant and well-preserved example of Harwell Hamilton Harris' Mid-Century Modern design. However, should the Commission find that the property does not meet the threshold for Landmark designation, it can still qualify for Structure of Merit designation under BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(c), as the structure is a good example of architectural design.

Environmental Review

The proposed project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq. and California Code of Regulations, §15000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061 of the CEQA Guidelines ("Review for Exemptions").

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend the Landmarks Preservation Commission:

1. Receive testimony from the public and then close the hearing.
2. Consider the extent to which the property meets the significance criteria for local register designation under BMC Section 3.24.110.
3. Take favorable action and adopt the draft Findings for Designation Approval provided in Attachment 1, or

Make other findings as deemed appropriate for final action.

Attachments

1. Draft Findings and Features to be Preserved
2. Revised Project Application Materials, received August 24, 2025
3. Letters of Support, received August 25 and August 27, 2025



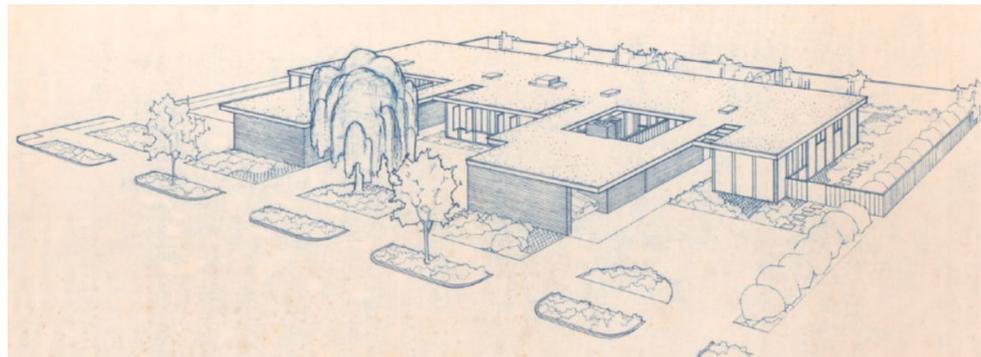
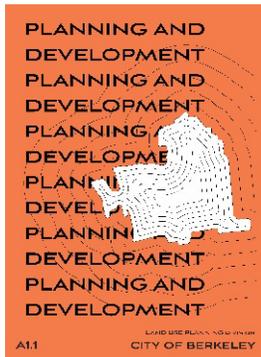


# Landmarks Preservation Commission

## Draft Findings for Designation

### 2000 Blake Street (Havens Apartments) Landmark Initiation – #LMIN2025-0003

September 4, 2025



Quick Facts	Project Description:
<p><b>Applicant:</b> Landmarks Preservation Commission (represented by Commissioner Luke Leuschner)</p>	<p>The applicant is seeking consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation for a six-unit multifamily property, constructed in 1949 (APN: 055-1821-019-00).</p>
<p><b>Property Owner:</b> Elaine F. Kawakami Trust</p>	<p><b>Permits Requested:</b></p>
<p><b>Project Address:</b> 2000 Blake Street</p>	<p><b>Landmark or Structure of Merit Designation.</b> To designate a property as a City Landmark or Structure of Merit, pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.</p>
<p><b>GP Land Use:</b> High Density Residential</p>	<p><b>Staff Recommendation:</b></p>
<p><b>Zoning:</b> R-4</p>	<p>Staff recommends that LPC:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receive public testimony and close the hearing on this matter.</li> <li>2. Consider the extent to which the property meets the criteria for local designation under BMC Section 3.24.110.</li> <li>3. Take favorable action and adopt the draft Findings for Designation Approval.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Historic District:</b> N/A</p>	
<p><b>CEQA:</b> Exempt, pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) "Review Exemptions"</p>	
<p><b>Submittal Date:</b> July 14, 2025</p>	
<p><b>Date Deemed Complete:</b> August 1, 2025</p>	
<p><b>Project Planner:</b> Boshi Fu</p>	

### **CEQA FINDINGS**

The project is found to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061.b.3 of the CEQA Guidelines (activities that can be seen with certainty to have no significant effect on the environment).

### **LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS**

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1. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110(A)(1)(b) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the property at 2000 Blake Street meets the architectural merit criterion for City Landmark designation as an outstanding example of Mid-Century Modern residential design by architect Harwell Hamilton Harris. The Havens Apartments demonstrate Harris' regional modernist approach through the use of strong horizontal massing, and modular four-foot grid framing system. The buildings also feature the integration of prefabricated Cemesto panels, brick volumes, steel-framed windows, recessed entries, and private rear patios. The property's intact massing, materials, and layout all reflect Harris' innovative and economical postwar housing responses. The buildings represent one of the only known surviving multi-family residential designs by Harris in Berkeley.
2. Pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.110(B)(2)(c) of the LPO, the Commission further finds that the property at 2000 Blake Street qualifies for Structure of Merit designation for its period of construction and as a good example of architectural design.

## FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

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This designation shall apply to the subject property, and the following distinguishing features of the property shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

### Property

- Flat-roofed, one-story height of the fourplex and duplex, and their location at the corner of Blake Street and Milvia Street
- Arrangement and relationship of the fourplex and duplex, separated by a private alleyway
- For both the fourplex and duplex: Original details per Harris design, including unpainted brick, expression of the four-foot module on the exterior via a painted four-foot board surface with a wooden batten, original steel- and wood-framed windows, placement and design of existing doors, and placement and design of original roof overhangs and roof volume

### Fourplex

- Primary (north) elevation and West elevation, including the original symmetrical layout of the four reversed units with their brick carports, overhangs, trellises, and clerestory cutouts
- Rear (south) elevation, with original overhangs and a wall of windows and doors
- East elevation of the fourplex

### Duplex

- West elevation of the detached garage for the duplex, fronting Milvia
- North elevation of the duplex

### Site and Landscape Features

- Landscape design per Harris design: one large planter at each end of the carports with low-lying shrubbery, planters beneath windows of the primary (north) elevation, landscaped area at the corner of Blake Street and Milvia Street, and concrete driveway
- Original planters/green space: two at the front of each carport and below windows
- Interior courtyards (“service yards”) within the fourplex





Detail of the Havens Apartments (1949). Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.

Landmark Nomination:  
**Havens Apartments**

Prepared for the City of Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission

By Luke Leuschner  
Version 1: 9 July 2025

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## 1. Street Addresses

2000 Blake Street (primary)  
2002 Blake Street  
2004 Blake Street  
2006 Blake Street  
2533 Milvia Street  
2535 Milvia Street

Berkeley, CA 94704

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## 2. Parcel Information

**APN#:** 55-1821-19

**Block and Lot:** Lots 1, 2, 3 and a portion of 4, Shattuck Tract

**Dimensions:** 162' long (Blake St frontage) x 130' deep

**Cross Streets:** Blake Street and Milvia Street

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## 3. Inventories

**Is property on State Historic Resources Survey?** No.

**Is property on Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey?** No.

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## 4. Scope

**Application for landmark includes:**

A. **Building:** Apartment building

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## 5. Names

**Historic Name:** n/a

**Commonly Known Name:** Havens Apartments

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## 6. Date of Construction

**Factual date of construction:** 1949

**Source:** City of Berkeley Permit Records; Historic newspaper records; Harwell Hamilton Harris Papers, Alexander Architectural Archive, UT Austin

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## 7. Architect

**Architect:** Harwell Hamilton Harris (FAIA, 1903-1990)

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## 8. Builder

**Builder:** Budd Reininghaus

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## 9. Style

**Style:** Mid-Century Modern

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## 10. Original Owner

**Original Owner:** John Weston Havens Jr. (1903-2001)

**Original Use:** Apartment building

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## 11. Present Owner

**Present Owner:** Elaine F. Kawakami Trust

**Mailing Address:** PO BOX 3479, Berkeley, CA 94703

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## 12. Present Use

**Present Use:** Residential, Multi-Family

**Current Zoning:** R-4, Multi-Family Residential

**Adjacent Property Zoning:** R-4, Multi-Family Residential (east); R-2, Two-family Residential (south)

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### 13. Present Condition of Property

**Exterior:** Good

**Interior:** *Unknown*

**Grounds:** Fair

#### Has the property's exterior been altered?

Yes, some minor alterations have occurred to the exterior of the Havens Apartments. The most significant alteration to the quadraplex is the addition of garage doors to the four carports facing Blake Street, added in 1964 by the successive owner of the property.<sup>1</sup> On the primary facade, wooden gates were added to the entryways of two of the quadraplex units (2006 Blake and 2000 Blake), and wooden slats and screens have been inset into the clerestory cutouts lining the entry walkway to each unit in order to obscure the view into the interior courtyard. On the west facade of the quadraplex, metal bars have been added to the historic windows.

Owing to a wooden fence (which appears to be original or in-kind), it is difficult to gauge the exact condition of the rear of the quadraplex, although aerial photography makes it clear that the property has not been extended beyond the original footprint, and the lack of building permits indicates that no (permitted) alterations have occurred. Likewise, the duplex is mostly obscured from the street, but aerials and a lack of building permits indicate no expansions or substantial alterations. While plans called for garage doors on the duplex garage, one garage door on the west facade of the duplex facing Milvia Street has been replaced with a newer incompatible design.

Overall, a selection of minor alterations have occurred on the exterior of the Havens Apartments, but none of them have compromised the architectural integrity and intent of Harwell Hamilton Harris's design, and all of them are easily reversible. The building as Harris designed it is wholly extant.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Berkeley Permit #100821, June 23, 1964, issued to Wells Fargo Bank.

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## 14. Description

### Grounds

The Havens Apartments consist of three separate buildings sited on a parcel at the corner of Blake and Milvia Streets. Fronting Blake Street is a quadraplex, and located immediately behind it is a duplex with an attached garage. The quadraplex and duplex are separated by an alleyway which runs the length of the property and is surrounded on either side by a wooden board and batten fence.

Landscaping on the site, which is mostly consumed by the two buildings, is minimal. On the side of the property facing Blake Street are three equidistant trees placed in sidewalk wells. A planter area is located in the front of either garage space. Originally planted with ivy, these planters now contain lawn. A planter at the corner of Blake and Milvia Street contains a large hedged shrub, underplanted with lawn and ivy. Wrapping the west facade of the quadraplex is a planter with ivy and a selection of shrubs and small trees. On the side of the property facing Milvia Street, two equidistant street trees are planted in sidewalk wells.

### Quadraplex

The quadraplex, the most visible and significant portion of the Havens Apartments complex, is a low-slung structure following Harwell Hamilton Harris's distinctive Mid-Century Modern style. The structure is one-story and topped with a flat roof. Following the basic tenets of modern design, it contains no ornamentation, emphasizes volume over mass, and was constructed with contemporary materials. Like other works of Harris, the structure is within a strain of distinctly American modernism and incorporates materials like brick to regionalize the otherwise stark nature of modernism as promulgated by the International Style.

The core of the building is a modern wood frame structure constructed on a module in which either a wall panel, window, or door was inserted. Harris's novel four-foot module system is visible throughout the core of structure, as the wood frame is expressed (similar to a batten) and unified around the entire structure. This system serves to give the structure a sense of symmetry and logic and is an evocative juxtaposition with the solid brick volumes. The wood frame portion of the structure, which contains the dwelling units, is painted and contains all the original steel frame windows.

The most distinctive visual elements on the quadraplex are the two brick carport volumes that protrude from the structure towards Blake Street. Two interlocking garages (originally carports) consume the interior space, with one garage entrance on either side of the volume. Viewed from Milvia Street, the unpainted brick carports appear as austere, unadorned volumes that emphasize the modularity and modern nature of Harris's design.

The carport volumes also serve to create a distinct horizontal entryway to each of the units, emphasized by an overhang that extends from the roof of the brick volume. The

portion of the brick structure immediately adjacent to the front door of each unit contains a row of clerestory cutouts that look into the interior courtyard. Further highlighting the elongated entryway is the wood frame portion of the structure, which is brought forward so that the entry area is inset and more private. The areas between the two volumes — wood framed and brick — area covered by an open trellis.

Altogether, the front of the quadraplex consists of a series of alternating volumes that are entirely symmetrical in plan. The rear of the quadraplex has a much simpler modern design, consisting of single flat elevation with a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors (in wood frame) inset into the four-foot module frame. The flat-roof extends along the entire length of the structure to create an overhang that shades facade. Each of the four units has a private patio area fenced in by a wooden board and batten fence

### **Duplex and Detached Garage**

Although the duplex contains the same elements and materials of the quadraplex, it is much smaller and simpler in design. A flat-roofed structure on a symmetrical plan, the walls are constructed of the same four-foot module system with an expressed frame inset with either wall panels, windows, or doors. The duplexes are entered via the alleyway and share a patio area at the center of the structure, with a divider creating a private patio for each unit.

The parking spaces for the two units are provided by a detached garage with faces onto Milvia Street and is separated with a service yard. The garage is constructed of solid brick walls topped with a wood frame roof, and faced with two garage doors. Constructed on a slight slope, the north elevation of the garage is wrapped by a raised planter.

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## **15. History**

### **The Architect: Harwell Hamilton Harris**

Harwell Hamilton Harris (fig. 1) was born in 1903 in Redlands, CA and grew up in a selection of Southern California locales. His father was an architect who practiced in a variety (and at times blend) of Period Revival styles, and while Harris would ultimately choose architecture for a profession, it was not a logical outcome of his upbringing.<sup>2</sup> After graduating from San Bernardino High School in 1921, Harris attended Pomona College, but soon dropped out after his father's death and then came to attend the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, a bastion of modernism where he studied sculpture and became familiarized with the architecture of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Erich Mendelsohn.<sup>3</sup> In particular, a visit to Wright's recently completed Hollyhock House in Hollywood (1925) propelled Harris' interest in architecture. Recalling the trip,

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<sup>2</sup> Lisa Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, Austin, 1985), 10-12.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 15-19.

he noted that it was “sculpture on a completely different scale” and quickly discovered the seminal Wasmuth portfolio of Wright’s architecture, like so many modern architects of his generation.<sup>4</sup>

It was shortly after this formative discovery that Harris found employment with Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, two Viennese-born architects (and students of both Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner) oft-cited for pioneering modernism on the West Coast. Schindler’s seminal King’s Road duplex (1921-22) was a low-slung structure constructed from cast concrete, redwood, and sliding canvas doors with influence from Wright, Loos, Irving Gill, the architecture of Japan, and a bohemian spirit advanced by his wife Pauline. Although Neutra, like Schindler, had been a disciple of Wright at the height of his “Organic Architecture,” he ultimately developed a starker, machined aesthetic best captured in his Lovell Health House of 1927-29.<sup>5</sup> Instead of pursuing his architectural education at the University of California, Berkeley as he planned, Harris worked for Neutra and Schindler, attended various classes and lecture series on architecture and engineering, and became part of a small but burgeoning culture of modern architecture developing in Southern California of the 1920s and 30s. Along with his friend and fellow architect Gregory Ain, who also worked in the Neutra office, Harris was a key figure in a constellation of young modern architects centered around Schindler and Neutra. (Neutra’s biography would see to him being featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*, while Schindler’s would see to him becoming largely forgotten.)

With no formal training and only a brief period of apprenticeship, Harris launched his own practice in 1933, designing a series of homes that combined Wright’s Prairie style, Schindler’s emphasis on contextualism, and Neutra’s interest in modern materials and modularity. His first great success was his Fellowship Park House of 1936, a one-room Japanese-inspired pavilion wrapped in glass (fig. 2). The house, which Harris designed for himself, won numerous awards, including an Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects (of which Harris was not even yet a member).<sup>6</sup> This project was immediately followed by a home in Santa Monica Canyon for John Entenza, the publisher behind *California Arts & Architecture* who would pioneer its seminal Case Study House Program only a few years later. Designed in a machined, more European idiom of architectural modernism, however, the Entenza house strayed from the style that Harris was developing for himself, which gravitated towards a more organic architecture typical of Schindler and Wright. His works like the Blair house (1939) (fig. 3), Hawk house (1939), Birtcher house (1941-42) (fig. 4) were designed on a low-slung, sprawling format with horizontal redwood siding that would become typical of his contextual yet modern work. By the end of the 1930s, Harris was an established and widely published architect, known mostly for his more thoughtful, regionally sensitive modernism.

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<sup>4</sup> Harwell Hamilton Harris, “Architecture as Art,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (November 1952), 216-219, quoted in Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1985), 32-25.

In 1939, Harris was commissioned by Weston Havens (fig. 8), a real estate heir, to design a hillside house on Panoramic Hill in Berkeley (figs. 5-9). Completed in December of 1941, the home became the most important of his career. For Havens, who was deeply interested in modern design, Harris designed a house that seemed to valiantly extend off its hillside site into the horizon of the Bay Area. Essentially consisting of three stacked wedge-shaped volumes, the home was designed to maximize views and sunlight, sheathed in redwood, and connected to the street by an angular bridge cantilevered nearly two stories above a central interior courtyard. Upon its completion, the “Sky House” (as Havens initially called it) was featured on the cover of *California Arts & Architecture*, photographed by surrealist Man Ray, and written up in nearly every architectural publication.<sup>7</sup> In 1956, the Havens house was selected by the AIA as one of the most important structures of the preceding one hundred years.<sup>8</sup> Harris would design a selection of other projects in Berkeley including the Naylor house (1940), just below the Havens house, the Duhring house on Greenwood Common (1953), and the Havens apartments (1949).

Havens practice continued to grow through the 1940s, during which period he mostly designed large custom residential work but experimented with other types of projects. During World War Two, like many modern architects, he became interested in well-designed mass housing, including his conceptual Segmental House designed as part of *Architectural Forum*’s “194X” program, which sought to imagine the future of architecture and housing after the war.<sup>9</sup> Another twist in Harris’s biography was his discovery of Greene and Greene in 1939, which further took hold in the late 1940s, when he and his wife, Jean Murray Bangs, a writer and architectural historian, led the efforts to document and archive the brothers’ work. In projects like the Johnson house (1947-48), Loeb pavilion (1947), Mulvillhill house (1948), and Wyle house (1946-48), Harris’s work of the late 1940s easily recalls a modernized version of Greene and Greene’s pioneering variety of the Arts & Crafts.

In 1951, Harris moved to Texas to accept position as the director of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas, Austin. During this formative period of the school’s development, Harris hired such seminal voices as the historian Colin Rowe and architect John Hejduk, reoriented the curriculum to contextualize contemporary practice in history, and invited speakers ranging from Wright to Buckminster Fuller.<sup>10</sup> One of his notable projects of this period, completed with a group of students, was the Pace Setter House developed for *House Beautiful* and built at the Dallas State Fair in 1955 (fig. 10).<sup>11</sup> The same year, Harris resigned from his post at UT Austin and pursued an architectural practice in Fort Worth and Dallas, where he continued to design

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<sup>7</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 85-89.

<sup>8</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 90.

<sup>9</sup> See Andrew Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 141-145.

<sup>11</sup> Germany, *Harwell Hamilton Harris* (1991), 148-149.

custom residential homes in addition to a selection of civic and commercial projects. In this later phase of his architectural career, from the 1950s into the early 1960s, his work markedly became more Wrightian in works like the Stevenson house (1955-56), Eisenberg house (1957-58), the Greenwood Mausoleum (1956), and First Unitarian Church of Dallas (1961-63). It was also in these final years that Harris worked on some of the larger works of his career, including Saint Mary's Episcopal Church in Big Spring, TX (1960), the Trade Mart Court in Dallas (1959), and even an unbuilt U.S. Embassy in Helsinki (1957-58).

For the final phase of his career, Harris relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina to accept a teaching position at the North Carolina State University. He also continued his architecture practice on the side, designing modern homes throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s for a numbers of professors and professionals in the region, before formally retiring in 1975. Upon his death in 1990, Harris was remembered as a pioneer of a distinctly American strain of modernism, one that emphasized regional sensitivity, organicism, and embraced references ranging from Schindler to Wright to Greene and Greene. In 1984, the famed California historian Esther McCoy published her survey *The Second Generation* which situated Harris among three other architects (J.R. Davidson, Raphael Soriano, and Gregory Ain) responsible for continuing the modernist project begun by their predecessors and mentors, Schindler and Neutra. Since the publication of that book, Harris has been the subject of two monographs, in addition to countless mentions in any survey of California modernism.

### **The Client: John Weston Havens Jr.**

John Weston Havens Jr. (fig. 8) was born in 1903 into one of Berkeley's oldest and most formidable families. His grandfather was Francis Kittredge Shattuck (1825-1898) and his father was Shattuck's nephew and heir, John Weston Havens. Shattuck was among the first of Berkeley's landowners of Anglo origin, becoming a formidable developer, booster, and political figure, as well as serving variously as a mayor, councilman, and county supervisor in Oakland. As Berkeley's "most important mover and shaker during the late nineteenth century," he saw to the development of the downtown (for which he is immortalized in the namesake thoroughfare), and such projects as the city's first public library and even Berkeley's railroad spur, constructed after his negotiations with Leland Stanford.<sup>12</sup> Over his life, stretching back to the original 160-acre parcel he acquired on the Peralta ranch (on which he was essentially a squatter) in 1852, Shattuck became one of the East Bay's largest landholders.<sup>13</sup> This property and legacy was passed onto his nephew John Weston Havens (1860-1929), who in turn passed it onto his son.

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Wollenberg, *Berkeley: A City in History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Wollenberg, *Berkeley*, 11-12.

The younger Weston Havens (who always went by his middle name) was raised by his father and grew up in Berkeley, coming to attend the University of California, from which he graduated in 1925 with a degree in economics.<sup>14</sup> After his father's death in 1929, Havens (who was the last in the Shattuck line) came to inherit the family fortune and its extensive real estate holdings in Berkeley and Oakland. He spent his life managing and growing the property holdings, but also became a patron of modern art and architecture. As a young man, Havens had traveled extensively in Europe and developed an avid interest in modernism, apparently meeting Le Corbusier on one such trip in 1938.<sup>15</sup> It was after that 1938 trip that he purchased the a steep hillside parcel off Panoramic Way and hired the modern architect Harwell Hamilton Harris to design him a house in 1939. At that point, Harris was a young but upstart modern architect whose residential works had already been published in magazines like *California Arts & Architecture*, *Architect & Engineer*, and *Architectural Record*.

Completed a week before Pearl Harbor, in December of 1941, Havens' house quickly became one of the most seminal works of California modernism (see preceding Harris biography) (figs. 5-9) and integral to Havens' biography. The home, which he lived in until his death in 2001, was filled with Havens' international collection of modern art and furniture, its walls lined with an extensive library. It became a gathering place for Berkeley's artists, architects, and intelligentsia. The home, moreover, embodied another key aspect of Havens' biography: that he was gay. As the architectural historian Annemarie Adams has examined about the home's "queerness," its bedrooms were arranged on non-hierarchical plan, the home was sited to maximize privacy and create a "cave-like" character, and Havens tightly controlled the home's (wide) media circulation, altogether creating a "house that occupied an overlapping space between queer space and dominant, normative space."<sup>16</sup>

Havens maintained a close personal friendship with Harris and his wife Jean Murray Bangs throughout his life, and would commission the architect for other projects in addition to a selection of alterations and renovations to the house. The first of the later projects (detailed in depth below) was a set of Berkeley apartments completed in 1949, and the second was a row of fountains in the median of Shattuck Avenue named the Havens Fountain Plaza (fig. 11). Completed in 1961, Havens had donated the Harris-designed fountains to the City of Berkeley in honor of his father, but they were demolished not long after for the construction of BART.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Annemarie Adams, "Sex and the Single Building: The Weston Havens House, 1941-2001," *Buildings & Landscapes* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 85.

<sup>15</sup> Adams, *Weston Havens*, 85.

<sup>16</sup> Adams, *Weston Havens*, 94.

<sup>17</sup> "Havens Fountain Plaza Dedication Set Tonight," *The Berkeley Gazette*, October 26, 1961; J.R. Ward, "What in the World...," *The Berkeley Gazette*, May 20, 1968. Harris designed another set of fountains to replace the original ones between 1969 and 1970, but they were ultimately unbuilt.

Havens died in 2001, bequeathing his iconic home to the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley. The Havens Family Foundation was established to distribute his fortune.

### The Building: Havens Apartments

Among the many Berkeley properties that Weston Havens owned was an empty corner at the intersection of Blake and Milvia. It had been part of his grandfather Francis Kittredge Shattuck's "Shattuck Tract" — among the city's earliest subdivisions — and had never been developed. In 1948, amidst a building boom that had been provoked by the end of the Second World War, Havens decided to develop the parcel (consisting of three lots and a portion of a fourth) as an income property. For the project, Havens commissioned Harwell Hamilton Harris, who had just designed Havens' famed hillside home prior to the war.

Harris was tasked with designing a complex of six apartments arranged in an adjoining quadraplex and duplex, with each unit intended to be rentable for \$90-100 a month.<sup>18</sup> The neighborhood very much embodied the direction of postwar development in Berkeley, which was seeing to a proliferation of housing types and varieties, and Havens' decision to develop an apartment complex seemed entirely logical for the neighborhood. The apartments were to be less than a block west of Shattuck Avenue and conveniently located to public transportation (then street cars). As the program explained, "the project must be for apartments as [the] neighborhood is too old for single-family houses, and not yet zoned for business."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the units were conceived for families, and each was labeled as a "Family Unit" on the blueprints accordingly.

Havens commissioned Harris in December of 1948, telling him to "go ahead full blast on the plans" so that construction, under Berkeley contractor Bud Reininghaus, could begin in January of 1949 and the units could be completed and rented by June (before Havens' scheduled trip to Sweden).<sup>20</sup> While such an advanced timeline seems nearly unthinkable, it was not particularly aspirational considering the actual timeline. Harris completed the full set of working drawings by the first week of February, and construction had commenced by the end of the month. Judging by the collection of correspondence in Harris' papers, the design and construction process seems to have proceeded with almost no interruption or complication. Havens, for his part, did not make any requests to the design proposed by Harris (but was seemingly very concerned and attentive to the upholstery color for his pair of Eero Saarinen-designed Womb Chairs in the same letters). The full set of apartments were completed by July, only one month after Havens' initial plan, and rented by the end of 1949.

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<sup>18</sup> "Requirements, Havens Apartments," ca. 1948, HHH Collection / UT Austin.

<sup>19</sup> "Requirements," 1948.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Weston Havens to Harwell Hamilton Harris, January 6, 1949, HHH Collection / UT Austin.

Although Harris would become known for his regional, American variation of modernism best seen in his custom-built estates, his design for the Havens apartments exemplified his accompanying and complementary interest in economy and modern materials. Like many other modern architects of the period, delivering thoughtful yet economical architecture for postwar families was an immediate concern (and overwhelming demand), and one that had been previously explored by Harris in projects like his Segmental House, featured as part of *Architectural Forum's* "194X" program, and a number of other conceptual works featured in publications like *Sunset Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Good Housekeeping*. A common theme in conceptual postwar domestic architecture was an emphasis on technology, modularity, and standardization (which had certainly been exemplified by Harris' expandable Segmental House), all of which formed the basis of the design for the Havens apartments.

The design of the apartment complex was essentially conceived around the contemporary material Cemesto, a composite cement board (surfaced with asbestos<sup>21</sup>) manufactured by the Celotex Corporation and beloved by architects for its standard sizes (typically 4' x 8') and affordability. Cemesto, which Harris had also used in the Havens house, was a particularly popular building material used in postwar experimental housing, ranging from works of high modern design to mass-produced Minimal Traditional suburban tracts. The very same year that Harris was designing the Havens apartments, Charles and Ray Eames' Case Study House No. 8 was completed and prominently featured Cemesto panels on its exterior steel grid, and even ten years prior, Richard Neutra had extensively incorporated Cemesto into his design for the Scioberetti house in Berkeley (1939).

For the Havens apartments, Harris essentially designed a wooden frame on a four-foot module into which was inserted either Cemesto panels, doors, and windows, or a combination (fig. 14). (The novel Cemesto system which Harris devised was at first questioned by the City of Berkeley's building inspector, who ultimately acquiesced.<sup>22</sup>) Some 398 Cemesto panels — of which 203 were the standard 4' x 8' size — were used to construct the core of the two buildings. This modular system was very clearly expressed in the design of the interior and exterior, giving the low-slung complex a clear uniformity. In the quadraplex facing Blake Street, which was the most visible portion of the complex, a set of carports constructed in brick (fig. 19) extended from the building's core and also provided a service yard/interior courtyard for each unit. These brick portions of the structure also created an elongated walkway to the front doors which were emphasized by an overhang with cutouts. From the street, these brick volumes appeared nearly hermetic, giving the otherwise simple modular design a

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<sup>21</sup> The preservation challenges presented by Cemesto, which contains asbestos, has been the subject of a selection of studies. See Cesar Bagues Ballester, Laura Matarese, and Chandler McCoy, *Eames House Conservation Project: Cemesto Panels Investigation Phase 1, Research Report* (Los Angeles, Getty Conservation Institute, 2023); Kallie Kothmann, *Wall Assembly Deterioration: Asbestos-Cement, Modernism, and Panel Construction* (Master's Thesis), University of Pennsylvania, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from H. S. Neighbor to Harwell Hamilton Harris, January 19, 1949, HHH Collection / UT Austin.

dramatically austere appearance. Harris also turned the structure inwards (a trick he likely learned from his time spent under Schindler and Neutra) to preserve privacy. From the street, the primary facade contained very few windows and mostly solid volumes of brick and Cemesto panels. However, the rear facade facing the private gardens inverted to nearly an entire wall of floor-to-ceiling glass, broken up by the even spacing of the wooden frame (fig. 20). In doing so, Harris effectively created a complex that maximized both the usage of space for housing and the needs of privacy.

In addition to the standardized building system, the floor plans of the units also provided further unification. Each “Family Unit” contained a modest living room with attached kitchen (fig. 28), two equally sized bedrooms, one bathroom, and a fenced-in private terrace at the rear (fig. 26). Like the exterior of the structure, the wood frame system was expressed throughout the interior, which was appointed with modern cabinetry, detailing, and appliances (figs. 28, 29). The floor plans were identical within both the quadraplex and duplex, and each unit was less than 1,000 square feet. The quadraplex prominently faced Blake Street, while the duplex was sited on the rear portion of the lot, accessible from Milvia Street, and divided from the quadraplex by an alleyway (fig. 20). Harris also developed a landscape scheme (fig. 18) for the entire site, completed near the end of construction in June of 1949, consisting of beds of ivy bordered by even rows of Japanese cheesewood, a low scheme which emphasized the horizontal nature of the structure.

By the time construction was completed, each unit had cost about \$11,000 to build (about \$150,000 adjusted for inflation) including Harris’ architect’s fee.<sup>23</sup> The apartments were rented by the end of 1949, and, as intended, a selection of middle-class families and professionals moved in almost immediately. Tenants included a high school librarian, a purchasing agent for a local company, a UC Berkeley instructor in business administration, and an assistant secretary at a local Bank of America branch. The only documented classified listing for one of the units (advertised by a businesswoman looking for a roommate) described them as “very modernistic.”<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after the completion of the apartments, the photographer Rondal Partridge photographed Harris’ design extensively for publication (figs. 19-29). Partridge, the son of famed Group f.64 photographer Imogen Cunningham and assistant to fellow members Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange, worked as a freelance architectural photographer in the late 1940s, photographing works for William Wurster, Thomas Church, Mario Ciampi, and other architectural luminaries of the region. His photographs of the Havens apartments emphasize the low-slung volumes, deep shadows, and finished edges of the precise yet thoughtful modern design. In one particularly evocative image, the sprawling, flat-roofed apartment complex is juxtaposed against a background of two-story homes with hip and gable roofs: a visual

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<sup>23</sup> Memoranda of Procedure, ca. 1948, HHH Collection / UT Austin; Another document in the Harris papers puts the construction price per apartment at \$8,745, although this figure does not seem to account for the architect’s fee among other things.

<sup>24</sup> Classified advertisement for 2002 Blake Street, *Berkeley Gazette*, January 31, 1950.

rhetoric which proposes the future of postwar housing. Despite Partridge's photography — whether he was hired by either Havens or Harris is unclear — the complex was never featured in any documented publications. *Architectural Forum* requested to publish the project in a January 1950 issue dedicated to apartment housing, but the feature never materialized.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the company behind Cemesto had requested, even before construction was complete, a set of plans to be used for promotion of the product. Whether they were indeed used by the company remains unclear, although Neutra's nearby Scioberetti house (1939) was a frequent feature in the company's advertisements and sales materials.

Despite the lack of recognition, the Havens apartments are a remarkable example of postwar architecture in their dedication to providing good, economical design tailored to the demands for efficient, modern, and livable housing. Moreover, they appear to be Harris' most successful attempt at realizing (affordable) housing for a popular audience, and their existence accentuates an impulse in many postwar modern architects to deliver that very type of housing.

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## 16. Significance

### Architectural Value:

National      State      County      City      Neighborhood

This nomination for the Havens Apartments posits that the property is eligible for Landmark status under **Criteria A: Architectural Merit**. It is a surviving and outstanding example of a Mid-Century Modern work by Harwell Hamilton Harris, one of the leading American architects noted locally for the home he designed for the same client, John Weston Havens Jr.

Harris, with an informal education in the offices of seminal emigre architects Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, is noted for pioneering a distinctly American form of modernism which embraced the larger tenets of the movement while using regional materials, forms, and typologies. Harris is a key figure in a small group of modern architects (including such figures as Schindler, Neutra, Gregory Ain, and Raphael Soriano) responsible for California's prominence in the larger modernism movement, in addition to being oft-cited in any survey of American modernism.

The structure is an outstanding, surviving, and particularly inventive example of Harris's distinct Mid-Century Modern architecture. His design emphasizes horizontality, is free of adornment, embraces contemporary materials, and features such elements as walls of glass, overhangs, and cutouts. Moreover, his unique use of a four-foot module (no doubt influenced by Neutra) showcases a distinctly postwar concern for economy and

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<sup>25</sup> Letter from Eleanor Bitterman to Harwell Hamilton Harris, December 1, 1949, HHH Collection / UT Austin.

technology. As a multi-family structure designed by a noted architect, it also conveys modern architects' role in envisioning of well-designed, livable housing in the postwar period.

The structure is substantially preserved and continues to convey its architectural merit.

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## 17. Is the property endangered?

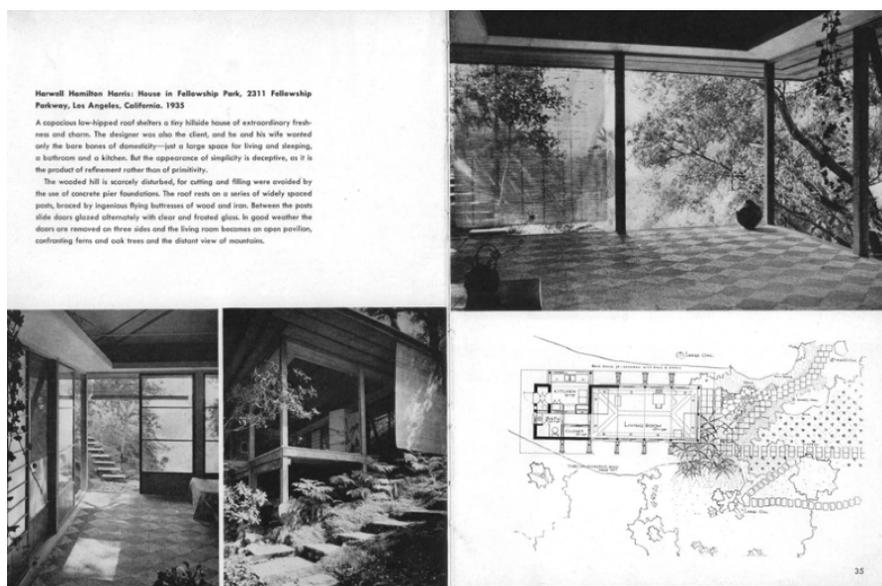
While there are no known plans or permits for the Havens Apartments property, it is located in a region of Berkeley that is at high risk of redevelopment. Its current zoning (multi-family residential) and large parcel size puts the property at the particular risk of demolition and redevelopment. Multiple multi-story housing projects have been recently completed or are underway in the immediate two-block vicinity.

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## 18. Historic Photographs and Materials



**Figure 1.** Portrait of Harwell Hamilton Harris with a sculpture by Constantin Brancusi. Photograph by Yousuf Karsh, 1944. Reproduced from Los Angeles Modern Auction herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 2.** Harris's first great success: his Fellowship Park home of 1935, published extensively in national architecture journals and exemplifying his regional modernism. Reproduced from Elizabeth Mock, *Built in USA — Since 1932* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1944).



**Figure 3.** The Lee and Mary Blair residence designed by Harris in 1939. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



**Figure 4.** The Cecil J. Birtcher residence designed by Harris in 1941-42. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



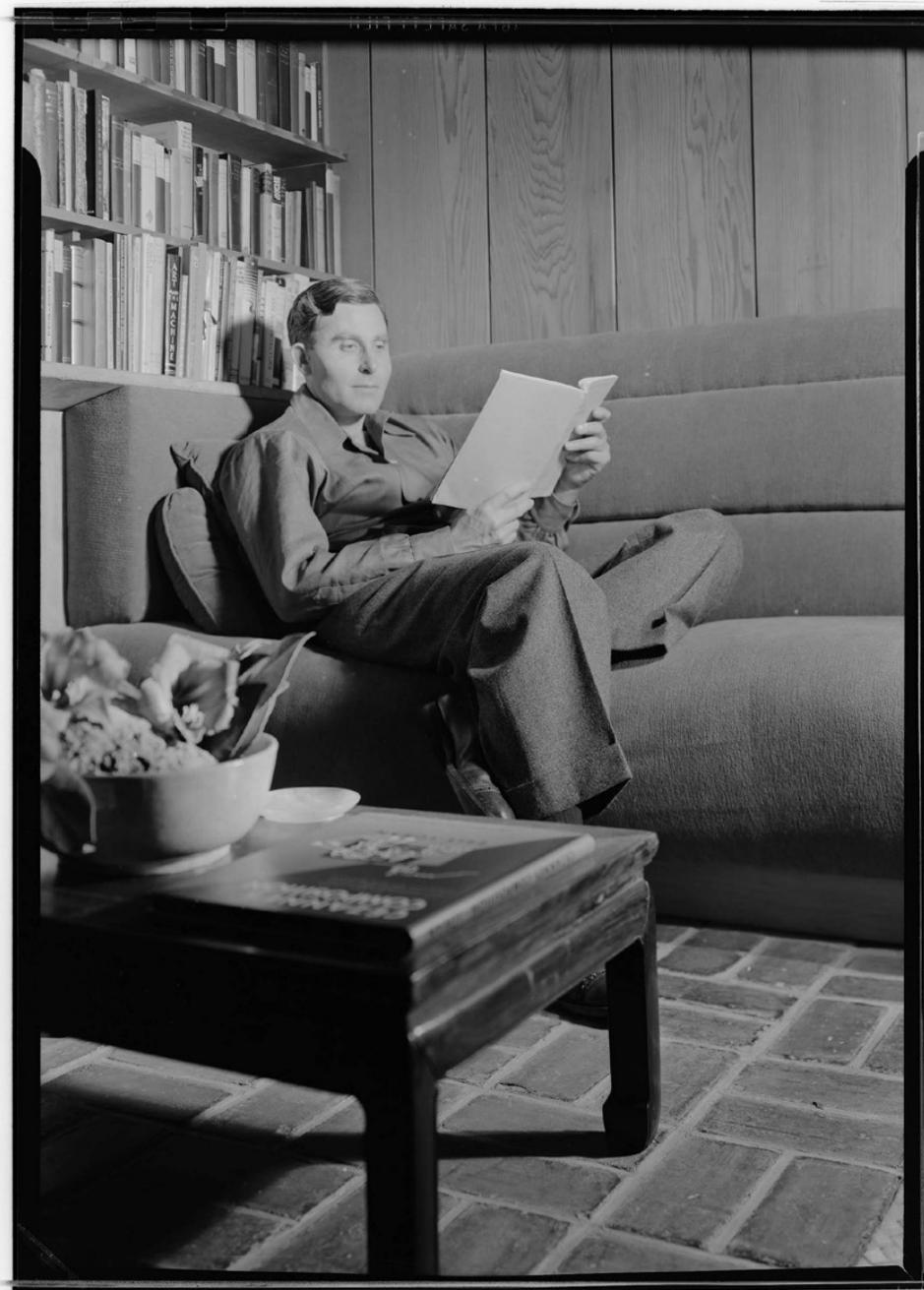
**Figure 5.** The Weston Havens house, Harris's seminal 1939 design in the Berkeley Hills. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



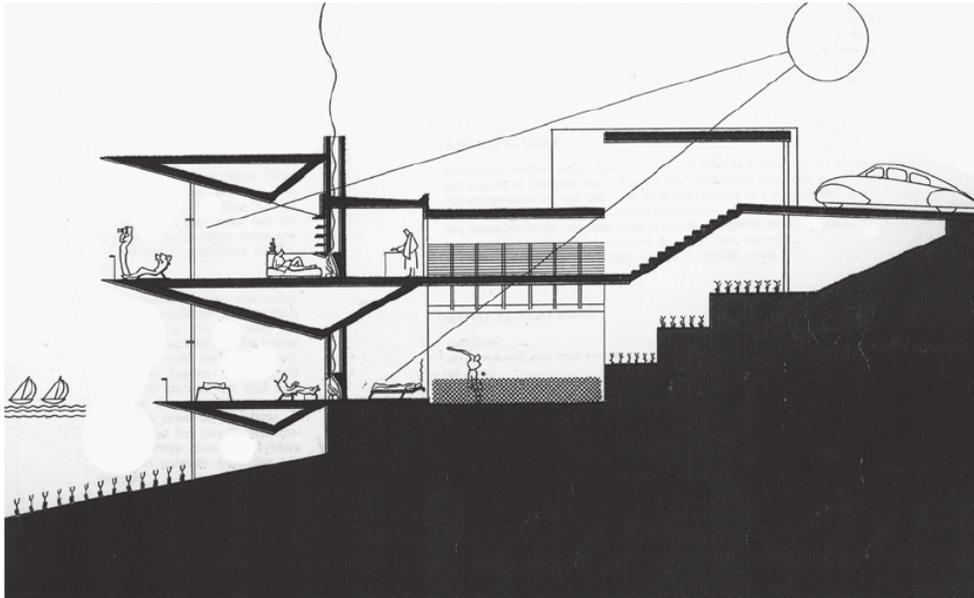
**Figure 6.** The Havens house perched on the side of Panoramic Hill, labeled by Havens as “Sky House.” Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



**Figure 7.** The modern interior of the Havens house. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.



**Figure 8.** John Weston Havens Jr. seated beside the fireplace inside his iconic Berkeley home designed by Harris. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

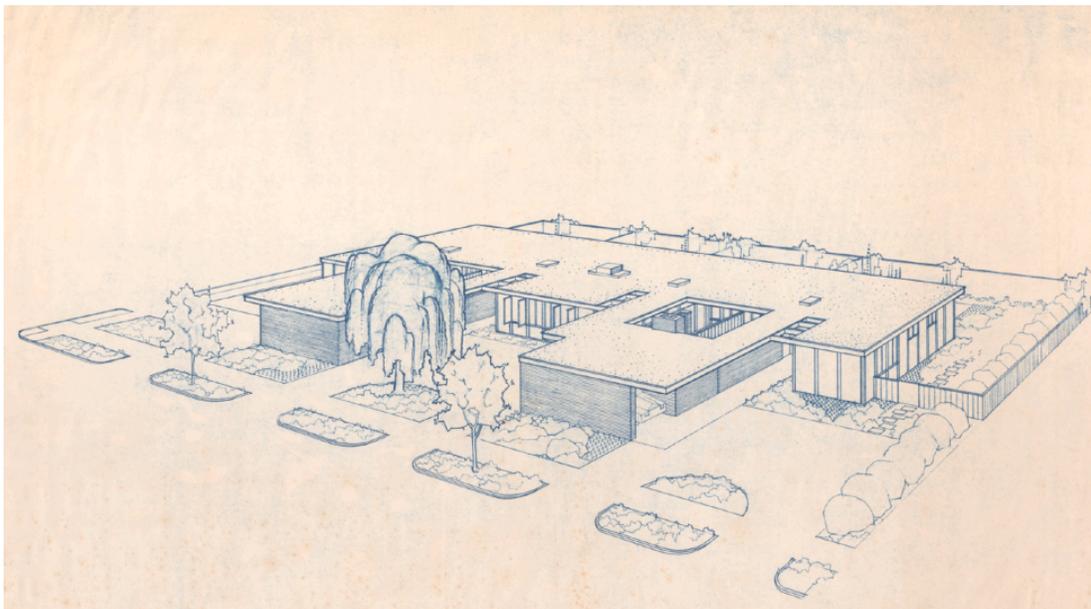


**Figure 9.** A section of the Havens house from *California Arts & Architecture*.

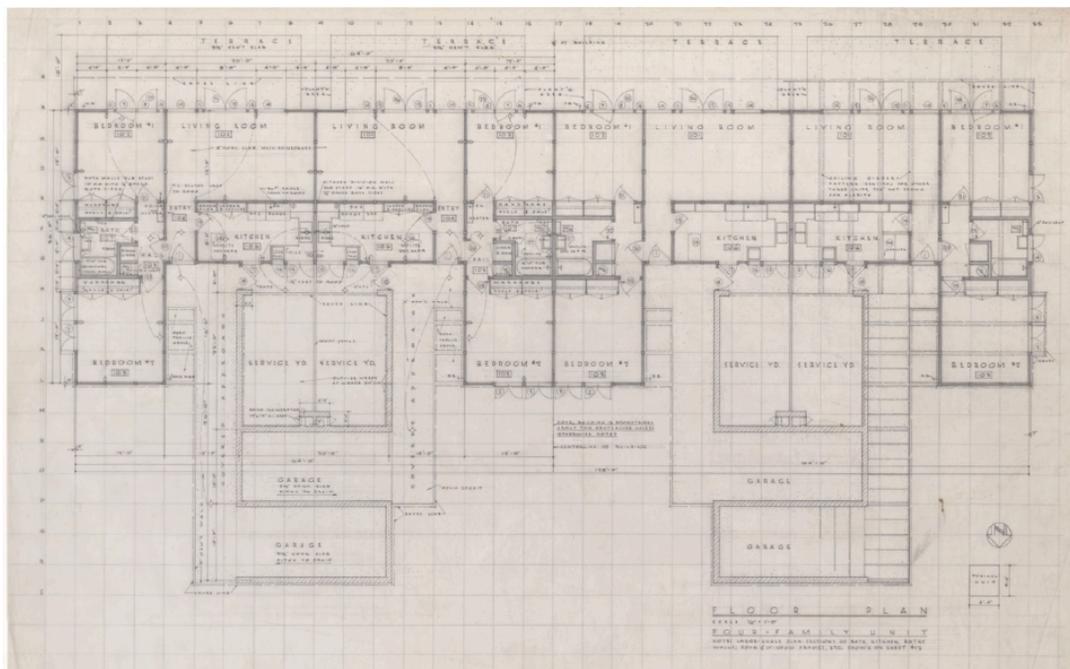


**Figure 10.** A notable work from Harris's career in Texas: the Pace Setter House of 1955. Photograph by Maynard Parker, courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

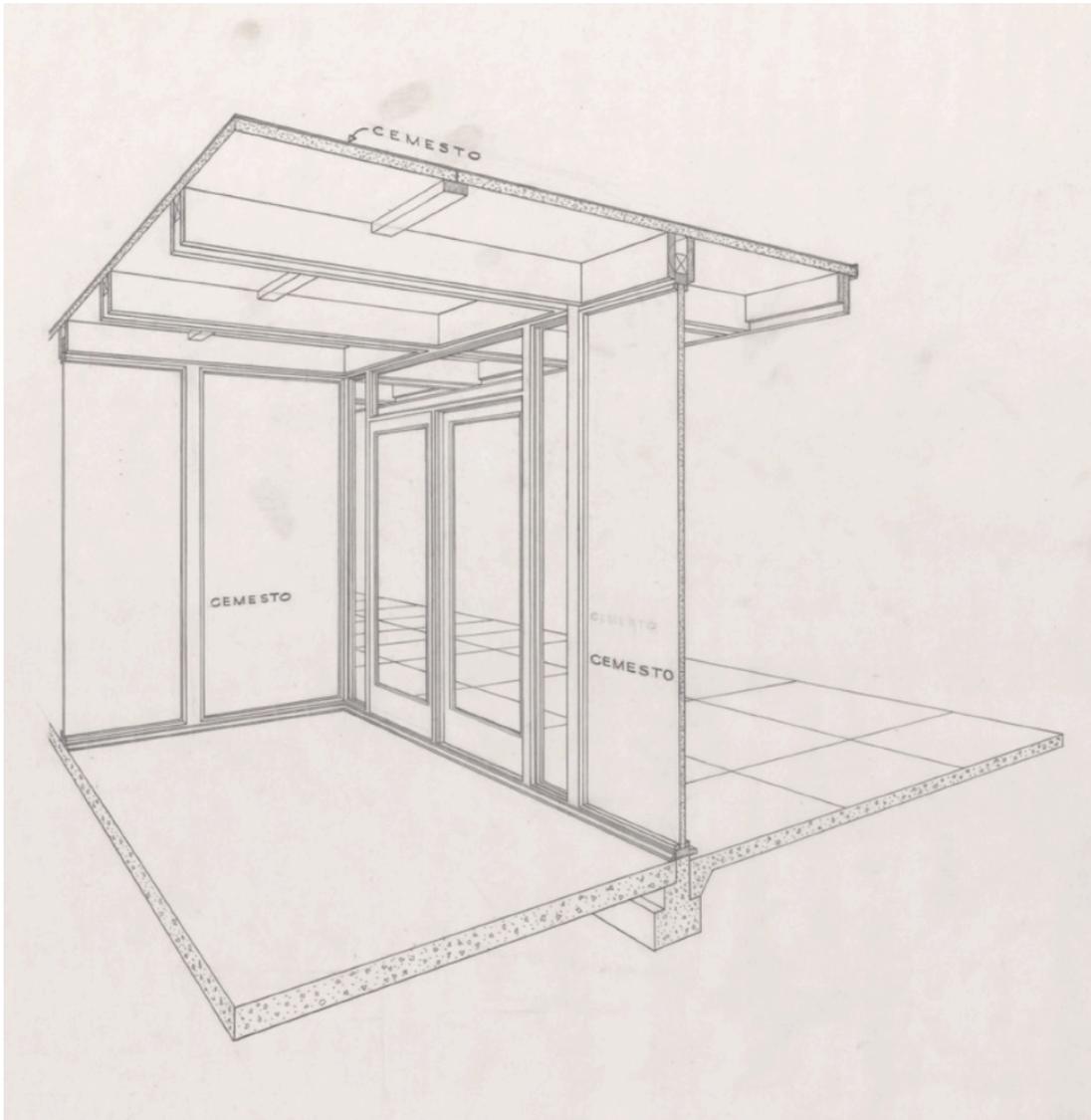




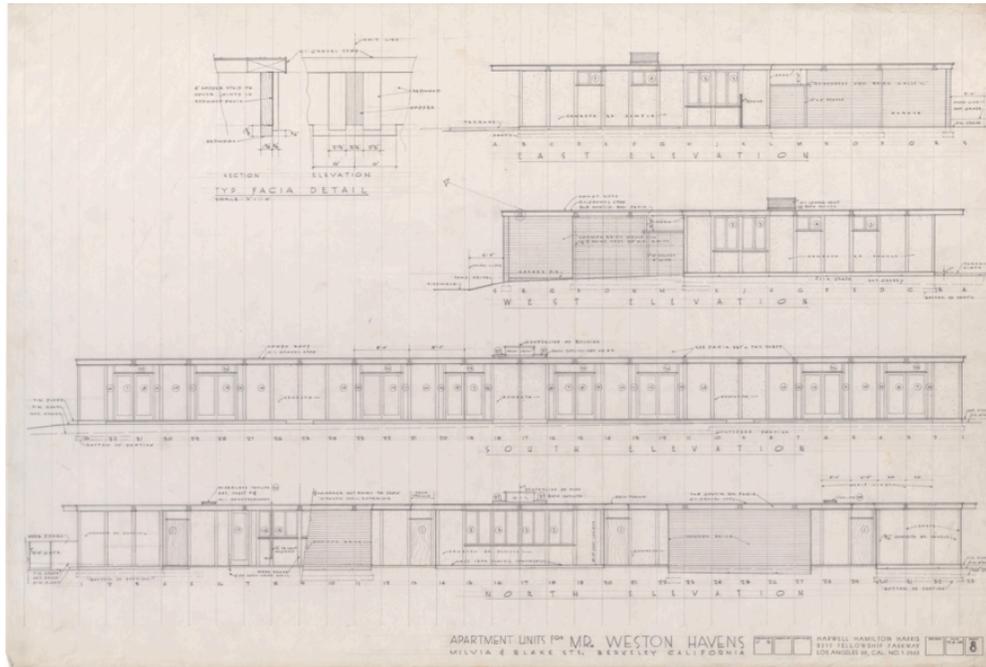
**Figure 12.** Harris's original rendering for the quadraplex facing Black Street. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



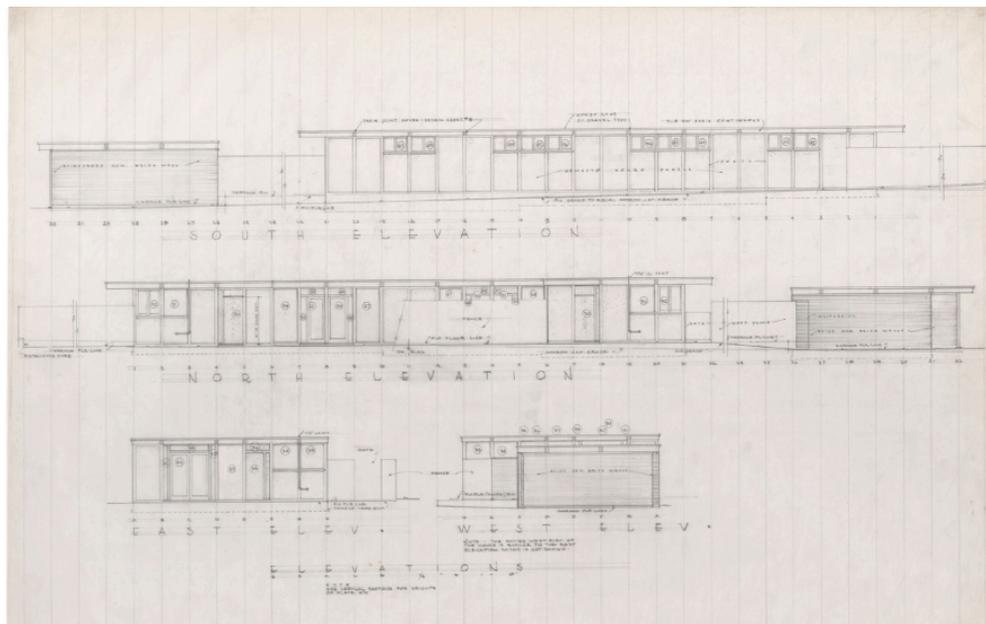
**Figure 13.** Original floor plan for the quadraplex. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



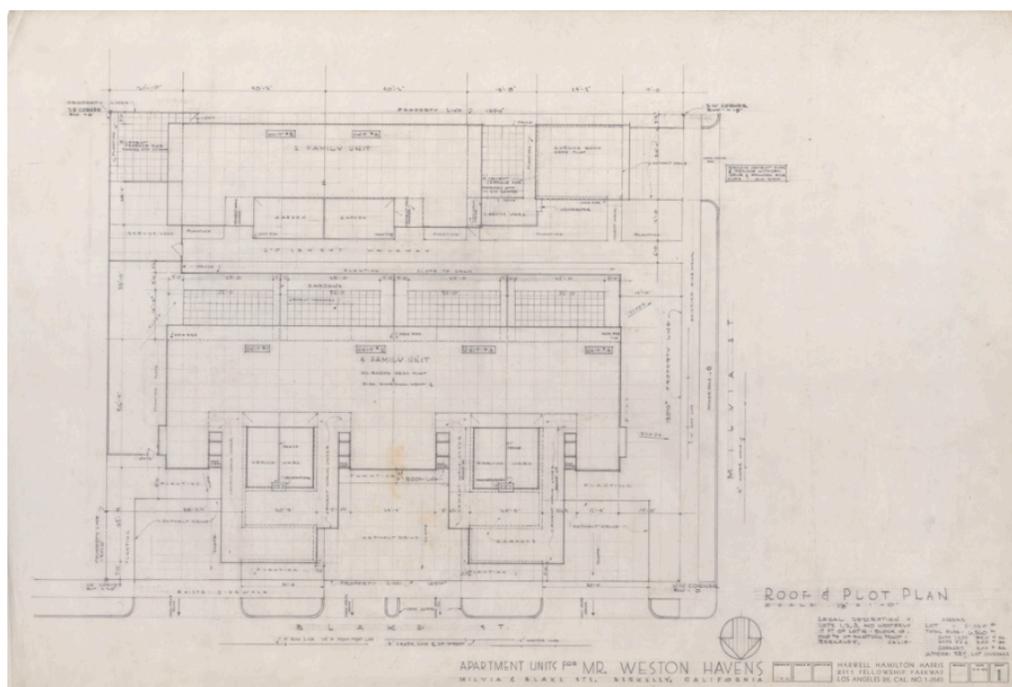
**Figure 14.** Schematic detail of the four-foot module system which Harris devised for the Havens Apartments in which Cemesto wall panels, windows, or doors were inserted into a standard frame. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



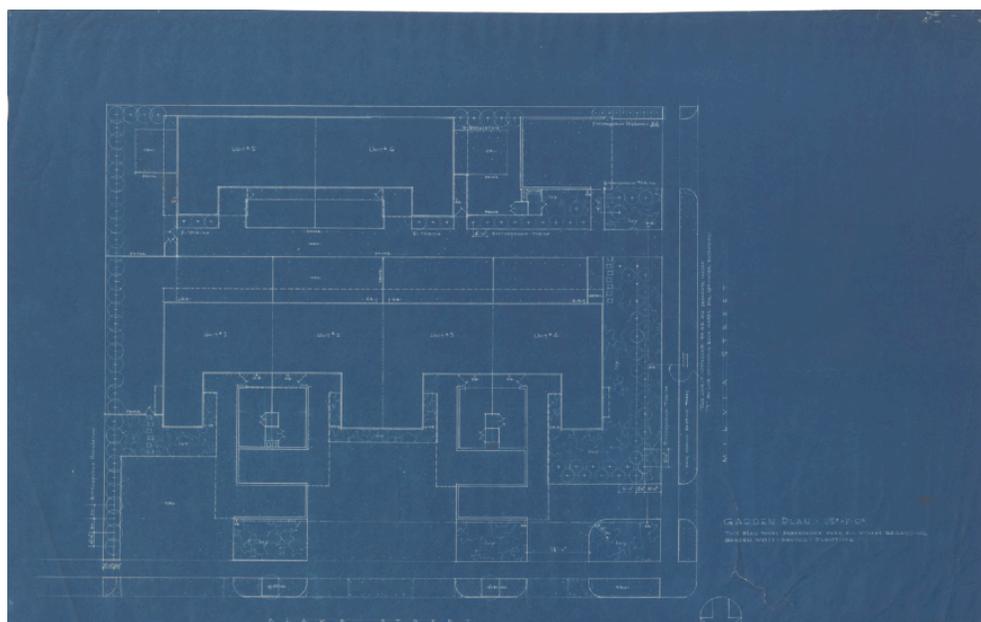
**Figure 15.** Original elevations for the quadraplex. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



**Figure 16.** Original elevations for the duplex. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



**Figure 17.** Complete site plan for the Havens Apartments. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



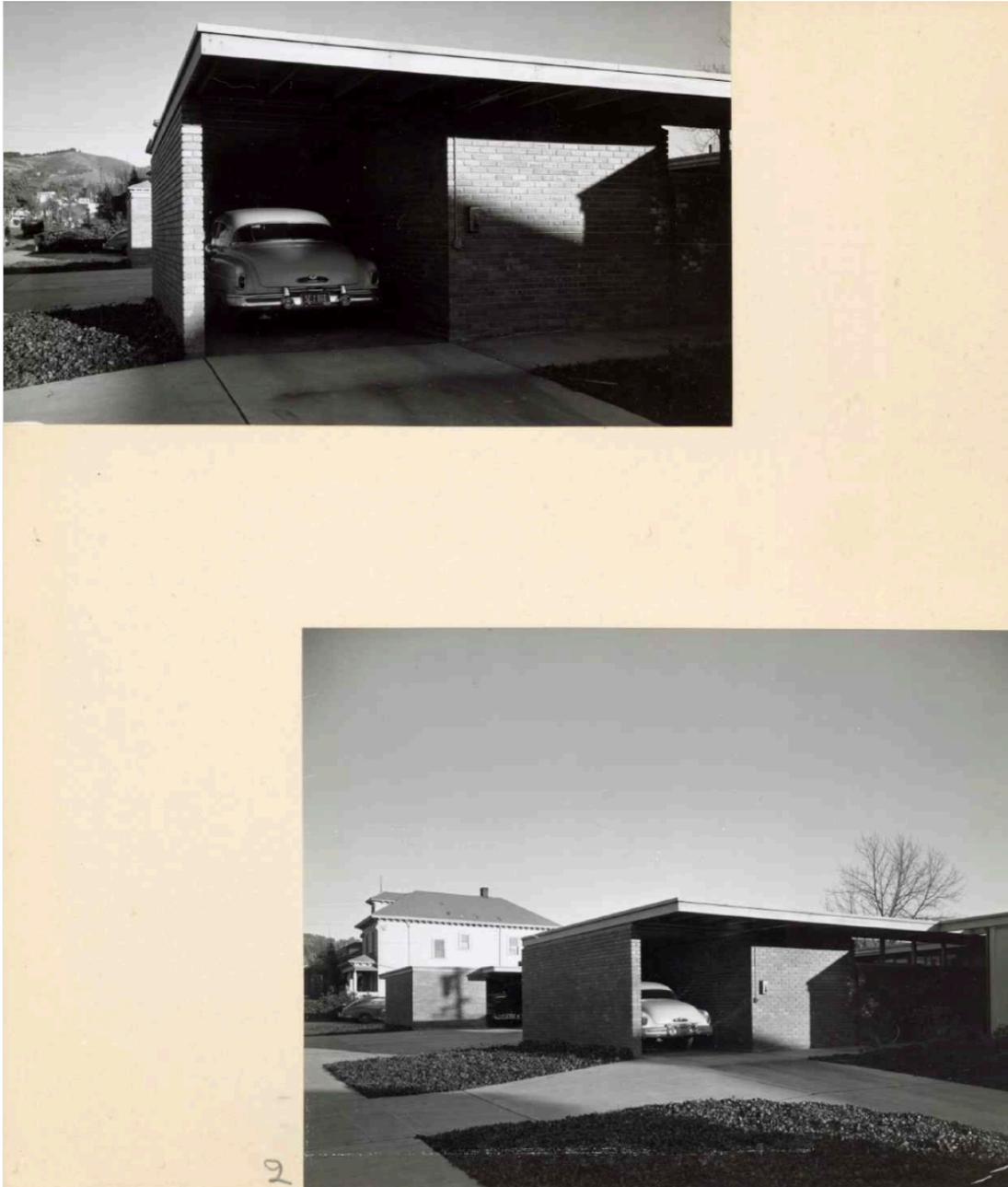
**Figure 18.** The landscape plan as designed by Harris. Courtesy of the Harwell Hamilton Harris Collection at the Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas, Austin.



**Figure 19.** The quadraplex viewed from Blake Street shortly after completion. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 20.** The quadraplex viewed from the rear alleyway shortly after completion. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 21.** Views of the quadraplex. Photographs by Randal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 22.** View of the 2000 Blake Street unit in the quadraplex at the corner of Blake and Milvia. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 23.** View of the entryway of the 2004 Blake Street unit in the quadraplex. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 24.** View of the dramatic entryway standard to every unit in the quadraplex. Photograph by Randal Partridge, © Randal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 25.** Detail view of the west facade of the quadruplex facing Milvia Street, showing the four-foot module expressed in the structure. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 26.** View of one of the patios at the rear of the quadruplex, featuring floor-to-ceiling glass windows and doors. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 27.** View of interior courtyard in the quadraplex (with Weiner dog). Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 28.** Interior view of typical kitchen unit. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.



**Figure 29.** Interior view of living/dining area looking onto private patio, showing the expression of the four-foot module in the interior of the home. Photograph by Rondal Partridge, © Rondal Partridge Archive, reproduced herein under Fair Use.

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## 19. Contemporary Photographs



View of quadraplex primary (north) facade from Blake Street, looking south.



View of quadraplex primary (north) facade from Blake Street, looking southeast, showing the two protruding brick carport volumes.



View of quadruplex primary (north) facade from carport area, looking south, showing the four-foot module system constructed of a frame with standard panels.



View of quadruplex walkway on the primary (north) facade, showing the original overhang flanking the length of the brick carport volumes.



View of the west facade, facing Milvia Street, showing the original four foot module system expressed on the exterior.



View of primary (north) facade, looking southwest, showing brick carport volumes.



View from Milvia Street of the detached garage for the duplex at rear of the quadraplex, looking southeast.

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## 20. Bibliography

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## 21. Recorder

**Recorder name:** Luke Leuschner

**Date:** 9 July 2025

**Organization:** Commissioner, Landmarks Preservation Commission

**From:** [Luke Leuschner](#)  
**To:** [Fu, Boshi](#)  
**Cc:** [Riemer, Allison](#); [Hersch, Anne](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Landmark Nomination for 2000 Blake Street / Havens Apartments by Harwell Hamilton Harris  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 05, 2025 9:50:39 AM  
**Attachments:** [image.png](#)  
[image.png](#)

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Hi Boshi,

Thank you again for your help, and glad to hear that we'll be able to hear this at the Sept meeting. Attached is a list of features to be preserved which I've quickly typed out. If anything of them are confusing or too vague, please let me know and I can make amendments. There's a chance I'll want to add something else to them, but I can do so the night of the hearing if necessary.

1. The flat-roofed, one-story height of the quadraplex and duplex, and their location at the corner of Blake and Milvia Street
2. The primary facade of the quadruplex facing Blake Street (north elevation) and facade facing Milvia Street (west elevation), including the preservation of the original symmetrical layout of the four (reversed) units with their brick carports, overhangs, trellises, and clerestory cutouts
3. The rear facade of the quadraplex (south elevation) fronting a private alleyway, complete with original overhangs and a wall of windows and doors, and the side (east facade) of the quadraplex
4. The west elevation of the detached garage for the duplex (fronting Milvia) and the north elevation of the duplex
5. The arrangement and relationship of the quadraplex and duplex, separated with a private alleyway
6. Throughout the quadraplex and duplex, preservation of original details per Harris design: *unpainted* brick, expression of the four-foot module on the exterior via a painted four-foot board surface with a wooden batten, original steel and wood frame windows, placement and design of existing doors, and placement and design of original roof overhangs and roof volume
7. Landscape design per Harris design: one large planter at each end of carports with low-lying shrubbery, planters beneath windows of primary facade (north elevation), landscaped area at corner of Blake and Milvia Street, and concrete driveway
8. Original planters/ green space: two at front of each carport and below windows
9. Interior courtyards ("service yards") within the quadraplex

Many thanks!  
Luke

On Mon, Aug 4, 2025 at 7:02 PM Fu, Boshi <[BFu@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:BFu@berkeleyca.gov)> wrote:

Good morning Commissioner Leuschner,

No worries at all, appreciate your time on that list especially while out of country.

I believe we should be able to take this at the September 4 LPC meeting. To distribute correspondence to be included in the agenda, items should be submitted by **August 27**. Late communication inclusion will need to be on September 2, but the August date will be best.



## ATTACHMENT 3



**From:** Margaret L Crawford <mcrawfor@berkeley.edu>  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 24, 2025 2:20 PM  
**To:** Landmarks Preservation Commission <PlanningLPC@berkeleyca.gov>  
**Subject:** Harwell Hamilton Harris Haven's apartments nomination

**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know

I want to add my voice and assessment to the Landmark nomination of the Haven's apartments. As a professor of Architectural History specializing in Twentieth Century California Architecture, I believe that this ensemble of multi-family housing is significant in multiple ways. It is a unique example of a postwar economical housing complex, designed using new materials and modernist design principles. In addition, it is an outstanding example of the work of the important California architect, Harwell Hamilton Harris. Finally, it highlights the cultural role that Weston Havens played as an early patron and adopter of modern design in Berkeley. I urge you to protect these important buildings.

Sincerely yours,

Margaret Crawford, PhD  
Professor of Architecture

UC Berkeley

the content is safe.

## ATTACHMENT 3

**do.co.mo.mo\_us\_noca**

**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the  
**modern movement**

**Docomomo US/Northern California Chapter**  
admin@docomomo-noca.org  
www.docomomo-noca.org/

August 27, 2025

LPC Secretary  
LPC@Berkeleyca.gov

Dear LPC Secretary,

On behalf of the Docomomo US/Northern California Chapter, I am writing to express our strong support for the nomination of the Havens Apartments in Berkeley, California, for Landmark designation.

Docomomo US/NOCA is the Northern California chapter of the international non-profit organization Docomomo, which was formed to support the Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement (giving us our name, do-co-mo-mo) of modern buildings, sites, neighborhoods, and landscapes. Docomomo was established over 35 years ago to provide leadership, education, and advocacy assistance to people committed to saving places and collectively shaping the future of America's stories. The nomination of the Havens Apartments is directly aligned with our mission to advocate for significant works of modern architecture that embody innovation, cultural meaning, and architectural excellence. Docomomo US/NOCA strongly agrees with this nomination and believes that the property merits listing under Berkeley Landmark Criteria A, for its architectural significance.

The Havens Apartments are eligible for Landmark status under Criteria A: Architectural Merit, as a surviving and outstanding example of Mid-Century Modern architecture by Harwell Hamilton Harris. Noted locally for designing the nearby Weston Havens House (255 Panoramic Way), Harris was one of the most influential American architects of the twentieth century. Trained in the offices of émigré masters Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, Harris pioneered a distinctly American form of modernism—one that embraced the larger ideals of the movement while grounding itself in regional materials, forms, and typologies. Alongside Schindler, Neutra, Gregory Ain, and Raphael Soriano, Harris was central to California's international reputation as a leader in modern architecture.

The Havens Apartments are a particularly inventive example of Harris's architectural approach. The design emphasizes horizontality, structural clarity, and a modernist openness through walls of glass, deep overhangs, and cutouts. His innovative use of

## ATTACHMENT 3

### do.co.mo.mo\_US\_noca

**Docomomo US/Northern California Chapter**  
admin@docomomo-noca.org  
[www.docomomo-noca.org/](http://www.docomomo-noca.org/)

a four-foot module reflects a postwar focus on efficiency, economy, and technology. As a rare multifamily housing project by Harris, the building also reflects the modernist ambition to create livable, well-designed housing for the postwar era. Importantly, the structure remains substantially preserved, continuing to convey its architectural integrity and merit.

We urge you to recognize the Havens Apartments as a City of Berkeley Landmark, ensuring the preservation of this significant work of modern architecture and honoring the legacy of Harwell Hamilton Harris.

We appreciate your time and effort in considering this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Pullum', written in a cursive style.

Robert Pullum  
Board Member, Docomomo US/NOCA

## ATTACHMENT 3

Michael A. N. Montilla  
255 Panoramic Way  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
MichaelMontilla@Berkeley.edu

To the City of Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission,

My name is Mike Montilla. I am a PhD Candidate in the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, and the volunteer caretaker at the Weston Havens House on Panoramic Hill. I am writing you today in support of the Landmark Nomination for the Havens Apartments on the corner of Blake and Milvia Streets.

These apartments, originally commissioned by Weston Havens and designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris, represent Berkeley's special place in the history of architecture, and are understated monuments to the history of the City itself. Weston Havens was the descendant of City founder Francis Shattuck, and he viewed himself as a steward of the City. He constructed public plazas, supported art movements, and brought avant-garde architects to Berkeley to build not only houses for the well-to-do, but also environments that can be enjoyed by all.

The Havens Apartments represent this ethos. They are unique examples of California Modernism designed to be lived in by everyday people. Most of Harris' works are single family homes. They are noted for their early modernist aesthetics influenced by California vernacular styles, as well as for the refined sense of space achieved within their interiors. They are buildings that incite curiosity upon first glance, and awe as one experiences them over time. It is impossible to fully appreciate a Harris project without living in them. They utilize the space available to maximum effect while remaining as unobtrusive to their sites as possible. Harris completed numerous now historic homes in Berkeley, and designed at least two public plazas. He is an essential part of the fabric of the City's architectural legacy, and his work in other cities is often discussed in reference to his time in Berkeley. Harris designed the Havens Apartments with as much care and ambition as any of his other projects, but with an egalitarian goal to produce a space that anyone of any means could afford.

It is impossible to retell the history of the City without mentioning both Havens and Harris, and the Havens Apartments are the place where their admiration for the character of the City of Berkeley and its people is most evident. I have read hundreds of pages of correspondence between both men, and it is clear, they loved Berkeley. They strived to give back to the city, and it is only right that the City do what it can to preserve their efforts.

Finally, many of Harris' works are at risk, or have been lost in recent years. Most notably, the Pauline Lowe Residence, Harris' first commissioned work, burnt down in the Eaton Fire in January, 2025. Harris is one of the most important architects in American history, and preserving the Havens Apartments would help to ensure that later generations can experience his work. Frank Lloyd Wright believed that Harris crafted a distinctly American style, and the City would benefit from protecting his legacy. Landmarking the Havens Apartments would acknowledge his national importance, and signal an appreciation of how Berkeley continues to influence contemporary architects.



Michael A. N. Montilla  
Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025