

23 November 2025

City of Berkeley / Landmarks Preservation Commission

Re: Initiation of Terrace West and East Apartments (Roger Lee, 1963-64)

Dear fellow commissioners,

Through my tenure on the LPC, I have continually advocated for buildings that are publicly-facing, of different types than the usual custom-built single-family home, and modern in style. I was honored to have the commission's unanimous support in landmarking the Havens Apartments (1949) over the summer, which I felt exemplified those goals.

This month Commissioner Finacom brought to my attention another project in Berkeley which I feel would be a continuation of these efforts: architect Roger Lee's Terrace West and Terrace East Apartments, completed in 1964. He proposed that I co-sponsor an initiation effort for this property at December's meeting, and that given an affirmative decision, he would see through the process after my departure. I would collaborate in writing the nomination, which I anticipate the commission would see by early spring of 2026. I agreed with this proposal, because I truly believe that this project rises to the aforementioned goals.

Born and raised in the East Bay, Roger Yuen Lee (1920-1981) is among the Bay Area's most significant and prolific mid-century modern architects. He graduated from UC Berkeley's School of Architecture in 1941 and immediately made a name for himself for his thoughtful, modern residential work that was published widely. In 1963, when he was only in the middle of his career, he was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. Moreover, as a Chinese-American, his career is remarkable given the mid-century's widespread anti-Asian racism, and he is part of a group of architects including Paul R. Williams, Helen Wong, and Gin Wong who overcame the era's obstacles to achieve great professional success.

The Terrace East and West Apartments were developed in the middle of Lee's career when his practice (Roger Lee Associates) had grown into a medium-sized and well-respected firm. In the 1950s, Lee had specialized in small modernist homes, but as his reputation grew apace with housing demand, by the 1960s he was designing multi-story apartment structures in Berkeley and across the Bay Area. Among the most prominent of his multi-family housing designs were the Terrace East and Terrace West Apartments, built between 1963 and 1964 on an L-shaped parcel that fronted on both Shattuck Avenue and Walnut Street.

The pair of four-story buildings (containing 34 units) represents the height of well-designed, postwar multi-family modern housing. Lee's mid-century design for the Terrace West Apartments features a primary facade, entirely visible from Shattuck Ave, that is symmetrical but rhythmic — an effect created by protruding balcony volumes. Likewise, the Terrace East apartments, located on the portion of the parcel facing Walnut St, mimic a similar sense of repetition. In 1965, the project was *nationally* recognized by the National A.I.A. Honor Awards Program, which awarded the project with an "Award of Merit." As the jury explained, the project was "an example of outstanding multiple housing on a small site," and one of only eleven projects selected nationally for the award.

The Terrace West and East Apartments have long stood in exceptional condition, are highly visible from the street, and still utilized as middle-income multi-family housing. Due to the size of the project, they are not at high risk of redevelopment. Therefore, a landmark designation would not be a burden to the city's housing development but a recognition of Lee's

contributions to architecture and housing. The property's current condition makes it clear that it is owner has made an effort to maintain the design.

Over the past few years, Lee's work and biography has been the recipient of increased attention. His work is widely cited in any survey of Bay Area modernism and his first monograph is currently underway. Two of his homes were featured on the recent *Berkeley Modernism* tour, and a recent tour led by DocomomoNoCA was dedicated solely to his Berkeley work. Additionally, a current exhibition at the College of Environmental Design on Asian American architects prominently features his work, which members of the LPC might enjoy attending before it closes in January 2026.

This all being said, I highly encourage the commission to consider initiating this project, which represents an important, recognized, and yet unique example of mid-century modern housing in Berkeley. Please see a selection of relevant materials below.

Regards,

Commissioner Leuschner

Information:

Terrace West and East Apartments (1963-1964)

Roger Lee Associates (Ward Higgins AIA, partner-in-charge)

Tak Sakanashi, landscape architect

Jack Kositsky, structural engineer

CM Peletz Co, contractor

Terrace West Apartments

1725 Shattuck Avenue

APN 58-2177-18-1

Terrace East Apartments

1750 Walnut Street

APN 58-2177-8



PHOTOS: JOSHUA FREIWALD



Roger Lee Associates *Partner in Charge: Ward Higgins, AIA*

Project

Terrace East and Terrace West Apartments
Berkeley, California

Structural Engineer

Jack Kositsky

Landscape Architect

Tak Sakanashi

General Contractor

C. M. Peletz Co

Jury Comment

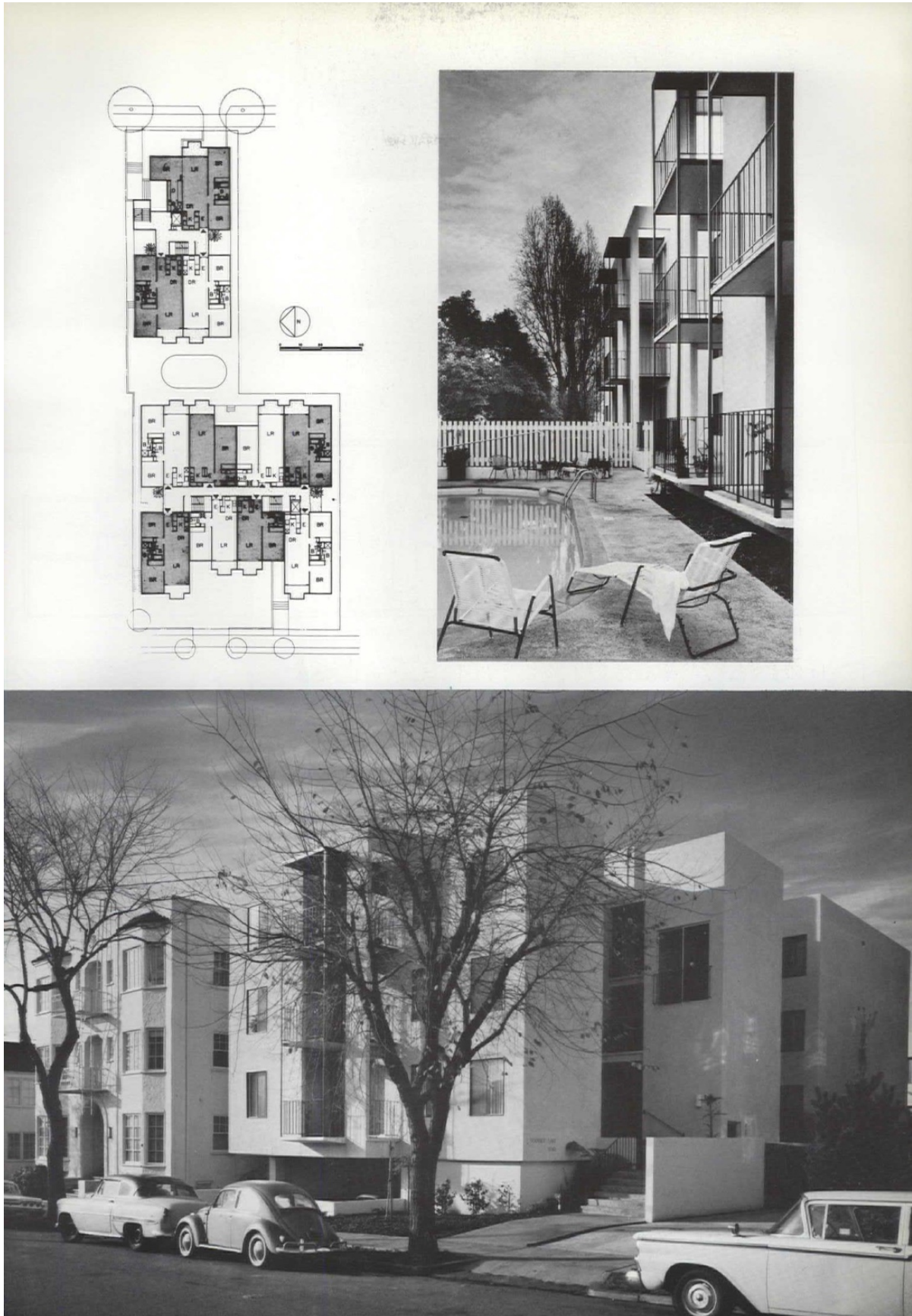
An example of outstanding multiple housing on a small site. Modest in character and detailed with great care, the project is a compatible addition to its neighborhood. Design interest is achieved by juxtaposing voids—balconies in iron—and surface-smooth windows.

Architects' Statement

The L-shaped site near a central city area lies in two different zoning districts: the larger west portion

fronting on a main street with large commercial and residential buildings; and the smaller east portion fronting on a quiet residential street of relatively small apartment buildings, which face a botanical garden and greenhouse. The site has a 12-foot difference in grade from east to west. It has excellent views in those directions but unsightly ones to the north and south sides of the property.

The solution attempts to be compatibly scaled with adjacent development by providing two structures, large and small, with a common swimming area. There are no windows facing the sideyards; landscaped courts at each end of the buildings provide views and light for bedrooms and public corridors, while major rooms face the desirable views or the central landscaped area. All apartments have balconies which are open for views but partially recessed for privacy. All parking is kept unobtrusive by being placed beneath the buildings and is screened by solid walls. A walk along the north side permits access to the centrally located laundry and pool areas and a convenient route to local shopping and transportation at the west street.



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