

State of California The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

**DRAFT**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
NRHP Status Code 3CG

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 42 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Belmont Square

P1. Other Identifier: Columbia Place

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

- \*a. County Los Angeles and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)
- \*b. USGS 7.5' Quad \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_; R \_\_\_; \_\_\_ of \_\_\_ of Sec \_\_\_; \_\_\_ B.M.
- c. Address 200-240 Columbia Ave., 200-252 Columbia Pl. City Los Angeles Zip 90026
- d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone \_\_, \_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_ mN
- e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, decimal degrees, etc., as appropriate)

See Continuation Sheet Page 2

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

See Continuation Sheet Page 3

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP3 (Multiple family property), HP31 (Urban open space)

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other

P5b. Description of Photo:  
View facing northeast on  
Columbia Ave; March 20, 2016

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source  
 Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1924

\*P7. Owner and Address:  
Multiple

\*P8. Recorded by:  
Don Lee and Stephen Sedalis  
234 Columbia Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

\*P9. Date Recorded: 3/21/16

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)  
Intensive

\*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")  
Netronline real estate information  
and public records research:  
<https://datastore.netronline.com>

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location Map

- Continuation Sheets  Building, Structure, and Object Record  Archaeological Record
- District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  Artifact Record  Photograph Record
- Other (List): Sketch Map, Photo Key

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\*P2e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, decimal degrees, etc., as appropriate)

### Location Map

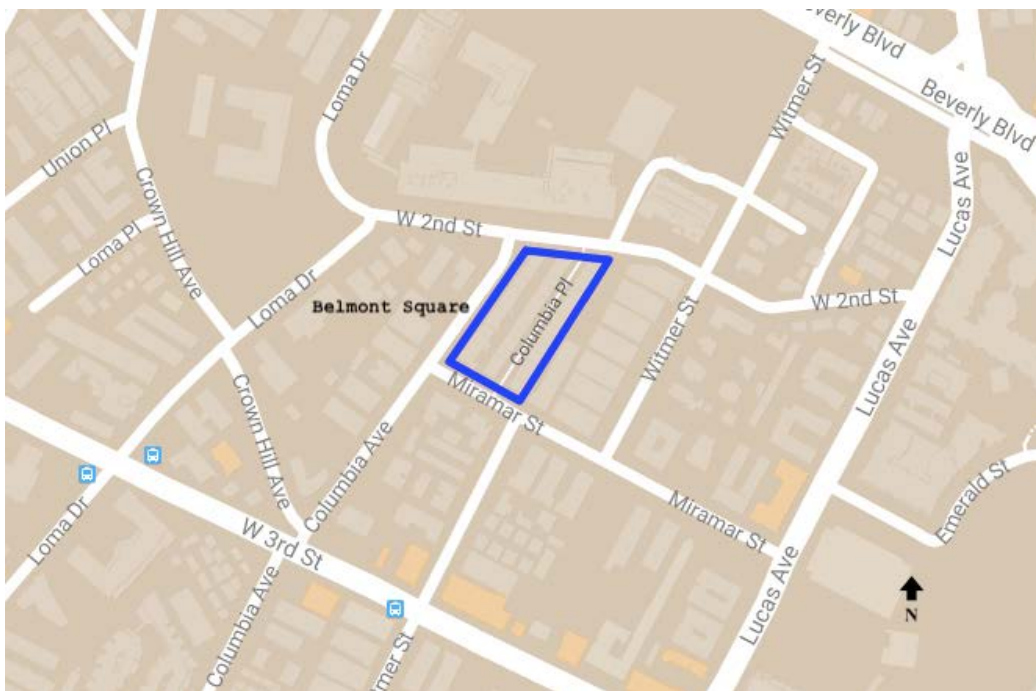
#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Northwest corner: 34.061099 -118.262692

Northeast corner: 34.061041 -118.262152

Southwest corner: 34.060471 -118.263239

Southeast corner: 34.060252 -118.262761



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**\*P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

Belmont Square is a distinctive garden courtyard residential complex located in the Westlake neighborhood of Los Angeles, one of the earliest suburbs that developed in Los Angeles with the advent of the streetcar. The buildings of the complex have a design similar to East Coast row houses and were constructed as connected parcels in three rows. Rows 1 and 2 face each other along Columbia Place, a narrow footpath that opens to West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Miramar Avenue. Row 3 faces Columbia Avenue. The flanking gardens and the double row of homes along Columbia Place create an enclosed space with vegetation and trees that provides relief from the hardscape of the Los Angeles' thoroughfares.

Thirty-six contributing resources include thirty-five parcels each containing a duplex, plus an extended garden area between Rows 1 and 2. Three duplex parcels are noncontributing resources due to loss of integrity. The duplex on each parcel is stacked with an upper and lower unit. Units are constructed with wooden frames and stucco. The combined façade of two adjacent parcels creates a symmetrical design. The façade is executed in a minimal art deco style while details such as windows, doors, and trimmings reflect the American craftsman movement. Units on Columbia Avenue retain more integrity than the units along Columbia Place.

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Belmont Square \*NRHP Status Code 3CS  
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B1. Historic Name: Belmont Square  
B2. Common Name: Columbia Place  
B3. Original Use: Residential B4. Present Use: Residential

\*B5. Architectural Style: Art Deco

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)  
Completed in February 1924. Alterations to specific units occurred at different times after completion and are identified in individual descriptions.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:

B9a. Architect: David Julius Witmer b. Builder: A.A. Daugherty

\*B10. Significance: Theme Streetcar Apartment Suburbs, 1906-1940 Area Los Angeles  
Period of Significance 1924 Property Type \_\_\_\_\_ Applicable Criteria 3  
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

See District Record D6. Continuation Sheets Pages 18-21

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) \_\_\_\_\_

\*B12. References:

See District Record D7. Continuation Sheet Page 22

B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: Don Lee and Stephen Sedalis

\*Date of Evaluation: March 21, 2016

Affiliation and Address:

Homeowner  
234 Columbia Place  
Los Angeles, CA 90026

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



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\*NRHP Status Code

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

D1. Historic Name: Belmont Square D2. Common Name: Columbia Place

\*D3. **Detailed Description** (Discuss overall coherence of the district, its setting, visual characteristics, and minor features. List all elements of district.):

See Continuation Sheets Pages 6-18

\*D4. **Boundary Description** (Describe limits of district and attach map showing boundary and district elements.):

The boundary encompasses the thirty-eight residential parcels and the contiguous garden. Belmont Square is bound by West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north, Miramar Avenue to the south, Columbia Avenue to the west, and a wall that separates it from a multi-family complex to the east (Location Map Page 2).

\*D5. **Boundary Justification:**

The three rows that make up the development and the surrounding landscaping and hardscaping.

D6. **Significance Theme** Streetcar Apartment Suburbs, 1906-1940 **Area** Los Angeles

**Period of Significance** 1924 **Applicable Criteria** 3

(Discuss district's importance in terms of its historical context as defined by theme, period of significance, and geographic scope. Also address the integrity of the district as a whole.)

See Continuation Sheets Pages 19-22

\*D7. **References** (Give full citations including the names and addresses of any informants, where possible.):

See Continuation Sheet Page 23

\*D8. **Evaluator:** Don Lee and Stephen Sedalis **Date:** March 21, 2016

**Affiliation and Address:** Homeowner, 234 Columbia Place Los Angeles, CA 90026

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**\*D3. Detailed Description** (Discuss overall coherence of the district, its setting, visual characteristics, and minor features. List all elements of district.):

### *Belmont Square as a District*

Belmont Square is comprised of thirty-nine parcels, thirty-eight each containing a duplex and a garden area. Parcels are connected to one another and are built in three rows. Rows 1 and 2 (parcels 1-14 and 15-27 respectively) face each other along a narrow footpath called Columbia Place. The garden area along Columbia Place has been landscaped with trees and vegetation and creates a lush and intimate space providing a feeling of detachment from the hardscape of Los Angeles' sidewalks and the noise of the city's thoroughfares (**Photo 1**). The path also slows down foot traffic by encouraging pedestrians to stop and look at the myriad of plants and trees and varied colors and textures of the row homes (**Photo 2**). Row 3 (parcels 28-38) faces Columbia Avenue.

Parcels 1-38 each have a two-story duplex, in an East Coast-style row house shell. Uniformity of the rows is achieved with a gentle wash of a minimal art deco style, along with details of doors, windows, and trimmings that reflect the American Craftsman vernacular. The façade of two adjacent parcels (e.g., parcels 3 and 4) create one symmetrical design (**Photo 3**). Rows 2 and 3 have an odd number of parcels and thus their end parcels on the north side (parcels 15 and 28) show only half the design. In general, the entrances to the upper units of two parcels sit at the center of this façade and share a concrete stoop. They are flanked by pilasters and topped by details echoing decorative cornices. Above the entrances sit a pair of wooden windows also flanked by pilasters (**Photo 4**). At each end of the symmetrical façade, two entrances leading to the bottom levels of two units sit on separate concrete stoops. Two windows flank each entrance to the lower units. Three windows belonging to the upper unit are found above this entrance (**Photo 5**). The molding on the façade that visually separates the bottom and top units is either a long band (Row 1) or rectangle design (Rows 2 and 3). The parcel lines go down the middle of each symmetrical façade and are visually demarcated through various paint colors and/or textures.

Fenestration consists of paired multi-light wood casement windows and are similar to those found in craftsman homes throughout Los Angeles. Door designs vary from having three to four small square windows at a person's eye level, or consisting of two small square windows and two to four longer rectangular ones that terminate near the mail slot (**Photos 6 and 7**). Some details from the interior include hardwood floors and subway and hexagonal floor tiles in the bathroom.

The upper and lower units of a parcel are roughly 700 square feet each. Besides the stairwell, which cuts through both levels, the floor plans are nearly identical. The floor plans of adjacent parcel units (e.g., the bottom units of two parcels that share a symmetrical façade) mirror one another. This is not the case for parcels 1, 15, and 28 (the end units at the northern end),

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where the wall facing the street is aligned with West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, thus creating a more trapezoidal plan. Parcel 1, in particular, has a shape such that there is only one window per unit on its façade as opposed to multiple windows all other units. All three units have windows that open up to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street on the north side. The floor plan for all other parcels is a rectangular shape. Half of it is comprised of a living room, the stairwell, and a large closet-like space. The other half is a bedroom, a bathroom, and a kitchen. A back door in the kitchen opens to an alleyway. Upper units have a small wooden balcony with stairs leading down to the alleyway. The end parcels on the south side (14, 27, and 38) are similar in floor plan with the addition of windows that open up to Miramar Street.

These defining features and characteristics differentiate Belmont Square from other garden complexes in Los Angeles.

- Superblock plan of three connected rows.
- Repetition of nearly identical façades on two parcel units.
- Simplicity: stylized pilasters and details echoing cornices that reflect a minimal Art Deco style.
- Shared garden space between Rows 1 and 2, with main entrances and windows facing garden.
- Footpath flanked by garden space is unique to residential complexes in Los Angeles.
- High density: 76 separate units on 38 parcels.
- Designed as compact East Coast row houses rather than low-flung Spanish/Mediterranean Revival or American Craftsman-style duplexes, fourplexes, and/or bungalows common to Los Angeles.

### *Integrity*

Overall, Belmont Square retains physical characteristics that reflect a strong sense of time and place from its 1924 period of significance and architect David Witmer's creativity and vision for the complex. The loss of materials and workmanship, namely decorative façade features, suggested the property may not retain sufficient integrity for National Register listing. Belmont Square retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association for listing on the California Register for its association with David Witmer and his experimentation with garden complex ideas.

Parcels remain in their original location. The three rows of connected parcel duplexes and the contiguous garden complex between Rows 1 and 2 are firmly maintained. Rows 1, 2 and the garden complex are physically and visually separated from the surrounding density of the neighborhood, i.e., the entrances of rows 1 and 2 face each other and open up to the garden rather than the main thoroughfares. Gardens, maintained according to the tastes of individual owners, contain a variety of plants and trees that create a sort of micro ecosystem that does not exist elsewhere in the neighborhood.

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The garden space and footpath create a unique environment that successfully reflects David Witmer's vision for living spaces that incorporate natural landscaping and facilitate communal interaction. The proportions of the garden, created by the distance between the homes on Rows 1 and 2, also add to the intimacy of the space. Moreover, David Witmer deliberately designed each parcel duplex's façade to be a single part of a larger superblock row design. The two long rows of homes and the repetitive façade designs of the superblocks dramatize the garden. As such, walking along the footpath creates a strong feeling of detachment from the immediate urban environment, an aspect that remains unchanged.

There are thirty-eight residential parcels of which thirty-five are contributing resources (HP3). The original façade designs on resources 6, 18 and 19 have been compromised, i.e., the complete elimination of decorative pilasters and cornices and the closure of window openings, and the three resources are noncontributing. A contributing open garden space (HP31) is located between Rows 1 and 2.

David Witmer's overall façade designs are maintained for the remaining parcels. These include decorative details of the façade and arrangement of fenestrations and doors (**Photo 5**). Although material details of certain resources have been altered by various owners throughout the complex's history, i.e., replacement of doors, windows, and lighting fixtures, and garden spaces have been fenced according to the owner's choice and taste (**Photo 8**), alterations do not detract from the overall integrity of Belmont Square as an early experimentation in garden apartments. Known alterations to individual units are addressed in the resource descriptions. Dates of most alterations are unknown since many owners who made certain changes no longer own the resources, and did not record alterations. The table identifies contributing and noncontributing resources.



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Sketch Map #	Address	Type	Status	Photograph #
	Row 1			
1	200-202 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	9
2	204-206 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	10
3	208-210 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	10
4	212-214 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	11
5	216-218 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	11
6	220-222 Columbia Place	HP3	Noncontributing	
7	224-226 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	12
8	228-230 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	12
9	232-234 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	4, 13
10	236-238 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	14
11	240-242 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	14
12	244-246 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	14
13	248-250 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	15
14	252-254 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	15
	Row 2			
15	201-203 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	16
16	205-207 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	17
17	209-211 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	17
18	213-215 Columbia Place	HP3	Noncontributing	
19	217-219 Columbia Place	HP3	Noncontributing	
20	221-223 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	18
21	225-227 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	18
22	229-231 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	18
23	233-235 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	19
24	237-239 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	14, 19
25	241-243 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	14, 20
26	245-247 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	20
27	249-251 Columbia Place	HP3	Contributing	21
	Row 3			
28	200-202 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	7, 8
29	204-206 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	22
30	208-210 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	22
31	212-214 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	23
32	216-218 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	23
33	220-222 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	24
34	224-226 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	24
35	228-230 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	5, 6
36	232-234 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	5
37	236-238 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	3
38	240-242 Columbia Avenue	HP3	Contributing	3
39	Garden space	HP31	Contributing	1, 2

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Detailed parcel descriptions follow. The numerical order of each parcel corresponds to the sketch map numbers in the table. The overall design of each duplex complex is first explained in terms of how the façade details (i.e., pilasters, cornices, geometric bands, etc.) have been maintained or altered. Any alterations to the garden area are also detailed in the overall design. Specific material details such as altered fenestration, doors, and lighting fixtures for individual units are provided under their respective address numbers. Window and door proportions are also addressed. Units that have original proportions of doors and windows with replacement doors or windows are also noted. Units on Columbia Avenue (Row 3) retain more material integrity than those along Columbia Place (Rows 1 and 2).

### Row 1

1. 200-202 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016042

Contributor  
Photo 9

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around garden area of the parcel. Unit 200 (lower): Door and window proportions altered with replacements. Replacement lighting fixtures. Addition of screen door and faux brick sliding. Unit 202 (upper): Door proportions altered with replacement door. Window proportions maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixtures. Addition of screen door. Original rectangular window above entrance maintained.

2. 204-206 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016041

Contributor  
Photo 10

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 204 (upper): Window proportions maintained with replacements (including rectangular window above entrance). Door proportions altered with replacement. Replacement lighting fixture. Unit 206 (lower): Window proportions maintained with replacements. Door proportion altered with replacement door. Replacement lighting fixtures. Addition of bars over windows.

3. 208-210 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016040

Contributor  
Photo 10

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 208 (lower): Windows, doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Window and door proportions maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Unit 210 (upper): Windows, doors, and lighting fixtures replaced. Window and door proportions maintained. Original rectangular window above entrance maintained. Addition of screen door.

4. 212-214 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016046

Contributor  
Photo 11

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Façade details intact for both units. Unit 212 (upper): All windows, door, and lighting fixture replaced. Window proportions maintained. Door proportions altered. Addition of screen door. Unit 214 (lower): All windows, door, and lighting fixture replaced. Window proportions maintained. Door proportions altered. Addition of screen door.

5. 216-218 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016037

Contributor  
Photo 11

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 216 (lower): Replaced windows, door, and lighting fixture. Proportions of window and doors altered. Addition of screen door. Unit 218 (upper): Original door and rectangular window above entrance maintained. Window proportions maintained with replacement. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door.

6. 220-222 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016045

Noncontributor

Façade details are missing. One of three window openings of the upper unit has been closed off, and the long rectangular window above the entrance of upper unit has been drastically altered. Parcel no longer has sufficient integrity to convey significance.

7. 224-226 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016034

Contributor  
Photo 12

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 224 (lower): Replaced windows, doors, and lighting fixture. Window and door proportions are maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over window. Unit 226 (upper): Replaced windows (including rectangular window above entrance), doors, and lighting fixture. Window and door proportions are maintained. Addition of screen door.

8. 228-230 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016033

Contributor  
Photo 12

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 228 (lower) Replaced windows, doors, and lighting fixture. Window and door proportions are maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over window. Unit 230 (upper): Original door maintained. Replaced windows (including rectangular one above entrance) and lighting fixture. Window proportions are maintained. Addition of screen door.

9. 232-234 Columbia Place

Contributor

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APN: 5153016032

Photo 4, 13

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 232 (lower): Door, windows, and lighting fixture replaced. Window and door proportions are maintained. Addition of screen door. Unit 234 (upper): Original door and rectangular window above entrance maintained. Windows and lighting fixture replaced. Window proportions have been kept. Addition of wooden screen door.

10. 236-238 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016031

Contributor  
Photo 14

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 236 (upper): Windows (including rectangular window above upper level entrance), doors, and lighting fixtures replaced. Window and door proportions maintained. Addition of screen door. Unit 238 (lower): Windows, doors, and lighting fixtures replaced. Window proportions maintained. Door proportions have been altered. Addition of screen door and bars over windows.

11. 240-242 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016030

Contributor  
Photo 14

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 240 (lower): Windows, doors, and lighting fixtures replaced. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Door and window proportions maintained. Unit 242 (upper): Windows (including rectangular window above entrance), doors, and lighting fixtures replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door.

12. 244-246 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016029

Contributor  
Photo 14

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 244 (upper): Windows (including rectangular window above entrance), doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door. Unit 246 (lower): Windows, doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over windows.

13. 248-250 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016028

Contributor  
Photo 15

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 248 (upper): Windows, doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Unit 250 (lower): Windows (including

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rectangular window above entrance), doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door.

14. 252-254 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016027

Contributor  
Photo 15

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 252 (upper): Windows (including rectangular window above entrance), doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door. Unit 254 (lower): Windows, doors, and lighting fixture replaced. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door and bars over windows.

### Row 2

15. 201-203 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016026

Contributor  
Photo 16

Façade details are intact for both units. Façade facing north on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is also maintained. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 201 (lower): Door and window proportions have been altered with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Unit 203 (upper): Door proportion has been altered with replacements. Window proportions have been maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Original rectangular window above entrance is intact.

16. 205-207 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016025

Contributor  
Photo 17

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 205 (lower): Door and window proportions are maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Unit 207 (upper): Door and window proportions are maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Original rectangular window above entrance is intact. Addition of screen door.

17. 209-211 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016024

Contributor  
Photo 17

Some façade details are missing. Units maintain architectural cohesion (i.e., window and doors openings, geometric bands) with neighboring units to convey significance. No fence around parcel. Unit 209 (upper): Window and door proportions have been altered with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture and addition of screen door. The proportions of the rectangular window above entrance has been maintained with replacement. Unit 211

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(lower): Window and door proportions have been altered with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Bars over windows and addition of screen door.

18. 213-215 Columbia Place Noncontributor  
APN: 5153016023

Parcel was damaged in a fire and no longer retains sufficient façade details. Parcel no longer has sufficient integrity to convey significance.

19. 217-219 Columbia Place Noncontributor  
APN: 5153016022

Parcel was damaged in a fire and no longer retains sufficient façade details. Window above the upper unit entrance has been closed off. Parcel no longer has sufficient integrity to convey significance.

20. 221-223 Columbia Place Contributor  
APN: 5153016021 Photo 18

Façade details maintained for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 221 (lower): Window proportions maintained with retrofitted windows. Doors proportion has been altered with a replacement door. Replacement lighting fixture. Unit 223 (upper): Window proportions maintained with retrofitted windows. Door proportion has been altered with a replacement door. Replacement lighting fixture. Original rectangular window above entrance is intact.

21. 225-227 Columbia Place Contributor  
APN: 5153016020 Photo 18

Some façade details are missing. Units maintain architectural cohesion with neighboring units to convey significance (i.e., original doors, window and door proportions). No fence around parcel. Unit 225 (upper): Original door maintained. Window proportions are maintained with retrofitted windows. Original rectangular window over entrance is intact. Lighting fixture has been replaced. Addition of screen door and awning. Unit 227 (lower): Original door maintained. Window proportions have been altered with replacements. New lighting fixture. Addition of screen door and awning.

22. 229-231 Columbia Place Contributor  
APN: 5153016019 Photo 18

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 229 (lower): Original door maintained. Window and original proportions have been altered. Lighting

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fixture have been replaced. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Unit 231 (upper): Original door maintained. Window and original proportions have been altered. Lighting fixture have been replaced. Original rectangular window above entrance maintained. Addition of screen door.

23. 233-235 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016043

Contributor  
Photo 19

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 233 (upper): Original lighting fixture. Original door proportion maintained with replacement. Window proportions have been altered with replacement windows. Addition of screen door. The proportions of the rectangular window above entrance has been maintained with replacement. Unit 235 (lower): Original lighting fixture. Original door proportion is kept with replacement. Window proportions have been altered with replacement windows. Bars over windows and addition of screen door.

24. 237-239 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016016

Contributor  
Photo 14, 19

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 237 (lower): Proportions of doors and windows altered with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door. Unit 239 (upper): Window proportions have been altered with replacement windows. Door proportions have been maintained with replacement. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door. The proportions of the rectangular window above entrance has been maintained with replacement.

25. 241-243 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016015

Contributor  
Photo 14, 20

Façade details intact for both units. Unit 241 (upper): Replacement door, windows, and lighting fixture. Door and window proportions have been altered. The proportions of the rectangular window above entrance has been maintained with replacement. Addition of screen door. Unit 243 (lower): Replacement door, windows, and lighting fixture. Door and window proportions have been altered. Addition of screen door.

26. 245-247 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016014

Contributor  
Photo 20

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of wooden fence around parcel. Unit 245 (lower): Original windows maintained. Replacement lighting fixture. Replacement door with altered proportions. Unit 247 (upper): Original lighting fixture and rectangular window above

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entrance. Replacement door with altered proportions and windows retrofitted into original proportions.

27. 249-251 Columbia Place  
APN: 5153016044

Contributor  
Photo 21

Façade details intact for both units. Unit 249 (upper): Proportions altered with replacement door. Original window proportions maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of awnings along windows facing south to Miramar Avenue. Original rectangular window above entrance maintained. Unit 251 (lower): Original windows maintained. Replacement door with original proportions. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door.

### Row 3

28. 200-202 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016011

Contributor  
Photo 7, 8

Façade details intact on both units. Addition of wooden fence around parcel. Unit 200 (lower): Original door and windows maintained. Addition of awning over main entrance. Lighting fixture replaced. Unit 202 (upper): Original door and windows maintained. Rectangular window above entrance maintained. Addition of awning over windows. Lighting fixture replaced.

29. 204-206 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016010

Contributor  
Photo 22

Façade details intact on both units. Unit 204 (lower): Original door, window, and lighting fixture maintained. Addition of screen door. Unit 206 (upper): Original door and lighting fixture maintained. Rectangular window above entrance maintained. Window proportions kept with retrofitted glass louvers. Addition of screen door.

30. 208-210 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016009

Contributor  
Photo 22

Façade details are intact. Unit 208 (upper): Windows and lighting fixtures maintained. Original door proportions with replacement. Addition of screen door. Rectangular window above entrance maintained. Unit 210 (lower): Window and lighting fixtures maintained. Original door proportions with replacement. Addition of screen door.

31. 212-214 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016008

Contributor  
Photo 23



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Façade details intact for both units. Unit 212 (lower): Door and lighting fixture maintained. Original window proportions maintained with replacements. Addition of screen door and bars over windows. Unit 214 (upper): Original lighting fixture maintained. Door and window proportions maintained with replacements. Addition of screen door; rectangular window above entrance maintained.

32. 216-218 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016007

Contributor  
Photo 23

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 216 (upper): Original fenestration, including rectangular one above entranced, maintained. Door proportion maintained with replacements. Replacement lighting fixture. Unit 218 (lower): Replacement windows, doors, and lighting fixture. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of bars over windows.

33. 220-222 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016006

Contributor  
Photo 24

Façade details intact for both units. Unit 220 (lower): Original fenestration and door. Replacement lighting fixture. Unit 222 (upper): Original door and fenestration maintained, including rectangular window above entrance. Replacement lighting fixture.

34. 224-226 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016005

Contributor  
Photo 24

Façade details intact for both units. Unit 224 (upper): Replacement windows, doors, and lighting fixture. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door. Original rectangular window above entranced maintained. Unit 226 (lower): Replacement windows, doors, and lighting fixture. Door and window proportions maintained. Addition of screen door.

35. 228-230 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016004

Contributor  
Photo 5, 6

Façade details intact for both units. Unit 228 (lower): Original door, fenestration, and lighting fixture. Addition of wooden fence and awning over windows. Unit 230 (upper): Original door, fenestration, and lighting fixture. Original rectangular window above entrance maintained.

36. 232-234 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016003

Contributor  
Photo 5

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Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 232 (upper): Original lighting fixture. Door and window proportions maintained with replacements. Proportions of rectangular window above entrance maintained with a replacement. Addition of screen door and awning. Unit 234 (lower): Original fenestration and lighting fixture. Proportions of door maintained with replacement. Addition of screen door and awning.

37. 236-238 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016002

Contributor  
Photo 3

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of fence around parcel. Unit 236 (lower): Original fenestration, including rectangular window above entrance. Door proportions maintained with replacement. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of awning. Unit 238 (upper): Original fenestration. Door proportions maintained with replacement. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of awning.

38. 240-242 Columbia Avenue  
APN: 5153016001

Contributor  
Photo 3

Façade details intact for both units. Addition of chain-linked fence around parcel. Unit 240 (upper): Window proportions maintained with replacements. Door proportions altered with replacement door. Replacement lighting fixture. Proportion of rectangular window above entrance maintained with replacement. Addition of awning. Unit 242 (lower): Window proportions maintained with replacements. Door proportions altered with replacement door. Replacement lighting fixture. Addition of screen door and awning.

### *Garden Space*

39. Contiguous garden area  
APN: N/A

Contributor  
Photo 1, 2

Open urban space. Individual parcels have been allotted a plot of the garden (visually indicated by fences). Plots connect to form one contiguous garden area with a footpath (Columbia Place) that bisects the center.

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**\*D6. Significance** (Discuss district's importance in terms of its historical context as defined by theme, period of significance, and geographic scope. Also address the integrity of the district as a whole.)

Belmont Square is eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 as an important courtyard residential complex designed by architect David Julius Witmer (1888-1973) during the streetcar-influenced suburbanization of the city. Belmont Square is a unique and an invaluable property type within the context of residential development in Los Angeles. It represents a notable response to the contradictory pressures inherent in urban Los Angeles: to 1) accommodate increased density while appealing to those seeking affordable housing and to 2) integrate living spaces with the mild climate and landscape of Los Angeles.

### *The Streetcar Apartment Suburb*

In the 1880s, Joseph Witmer and his family arrived in Los Angeles and bought 650 acres on a hill adjacent to downtown Los Angeles. They called it Crown Hill. Once established, the family founded the California Bank and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Cable Railway that ran from downtown to help spur development on Crown Hill (**Figure 1**).<sup>1</sup> The Witmer family "imprint was all over Crown Hill, in the houses they built, in the land they sold, in the cable railroad, in the investments in the area."<sup>2</sup> The exemplary c.1890 Victorian home of Samuel Lewis, brother-in-law of Joseph Witmer, still stands on Miramar Street (Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Monument #39) (**Figure 2**). Initially, the cable car business was seen as a success and sparked development on Crown Hill.<sup>3</sup> After the company was sold in January 1887, it began to face political opposition and a myriad of technical problems. After being politically barred from extending their railways and nearing bankruptcy, the company shuttered in 1889 after a rainstorm partially buried a large portion of their tracks in more than twenty feet of mud.<sup>4</sup>

With the introduction of the electric car in 1901, businessmen such as Henry E. Huntington, owner of the Pacific Electric Railways (the "Red Car"), began laying hundreds of miles of track that provided developers incentives for building new suburbs around Los Angeles. Electric cars essentially took over what the cable railways had begun to do in the late nineteenth century. With the relatively cheaper cost of land for development outside the center city coupled with affordable fares back and forth, development of apartment suburbs such as Belmont Square attracted people of various socio-economic classes.<sup>5</sup> Even with the bankruptcy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Cable Railway, the Los Angeles Railway (the "Yellow Car") served Belmont Square and the

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<sup>1</sup> The Witmers, originally from Switzerland, came from a long line of people working in the banking industry.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia L. Comer, *In Victorian Los Angeles: The Witmers of Crown Hill* (Los Angeles: Talbot, 1988), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Christina Rice, "Second Street Cable Railway," *On Bunker Hill: A Lost Neighborhood Found*, July 14, 2008, <http://www.onbunkerhill.org/secondcablerailway/>.

<sup>4</sup> Nathan Masters, "LA Once Had Cable Cars, Too," *KCET: Lost LA*, December 27, 2012, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/la-once-had-cable-cars-too>.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 118-119.

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rest of Crown Hill with a stop at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Columbia Avenue.<sup>6</sup> The electric car had become the catalyst for the expansion and growth of urban centers in America during the first half of the twentieth century.

The Belmont Square complex, located in what became the Westlake neighborhood of Los Angeles, represents one of the earliest suburb apartment developments for the city. Prior to such a development, the Los Angeles suburbs were sparsely populated and dotted with single-family homes (**Figure 3**). With easier access to downtown from the periphery, new developments were attractive to people looking for affordable homes and open spaces with natural landscaping. A 1924 Los Angeles Times article observed that, "Crown Hill [had] recently been the center of considerable building and active improvement." It further opined, "Crown Hill [would] one day be the most desired residential district in the city...."<sup>7</sup> A month before Belmont Square was completed, a *Los Angeles Times* advertisement lauded the complex's proximity to downtown as one of its prime features: "Here you have the convenience of a Downtown hotel, yet the comfort of a high, quiet residential neighborhood" (**Figure 4**).<sup>8</sup>

### *David Julius Witmer*

Architect David Julius Witmer was the son of Joseph and Josephine Witmer and was born soon after the family's arrival in Los Angeles in 1888 (**Figure 5**). As a young man, Witmer received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1910 and obtained a graduate degree in architecture in 1912. He returned to Los Angeles in 1914 to start an architecture firm and left to serve as a first lieutenant in World War I three years later. He returned in 1919 and began an architecture firm with Loyall F. Watson, a fellow architect, who he worked with for the next forty years. Witmer became most famous for his role as chief architect of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. (1941-1943).

Witmer designed Belmont Square for Santa Monica based developer A. A. Daugherty. At the time, Witmer was becoming well known for his innovative courtyard residential complexes in Los Angeles, and Belmont Square reflects one of the earliest and unique designs on a large scale. After Belmont Square, Witmer went on to work on other significant garden residential complexes such as Wyvernwood Garden Apartments in Boyle Heights (1939) (**Figure 6**). In this light, Witmer's design of Belmont Square was an early experimentation in incorporating and realizing some of the ideas from the Garden City movement that were becoming popular among architects at the time.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The "Yellow Car" served Los Angeles from 1901 to 1963.

<sup>7</sup> "Duplexes Being Built on Own-Your-Own Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 1924, D10.

<sup>8</sup> "Live in One—Rent the Other," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1924, D4.

<sup>9</sup> The concept of the garden city was first popularized in the United Kingdom by Sir Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) in his book, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to a Real Reform*. He was largely motivated by a desire to improve the quality of life for city dwellers.

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Witmer was also responsible for a number of residences built on Crown Hill, including his own home still standing on Witmer Street, a minute's walk from Belmont Square. The simple Mediterranean Revival house was built in 1921 with the reinforced poured concrete he was known to have been testing.<sup>10</sup> This type of concrete became a signature for his firm, Witmer and Watson, due to its ability to withstand earthquakes.<sup>11</sup> Witmer was also an active member of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of the Architects (AIA), in which he served as director, secretary, and eventually president in 1926. From 1922 to 1924, when Belmont Square was designed and built, Witmer's firm received multiple honors from the AIA for "tastefully restrained homes...designed to encourage relationships to the patios, gardens, and outdoor living spaces..."<sup>12</sup> David Witmer was considered one of the most celebrated residential architects of the southwest.<sup>13</sup>

### *Belmont Square*

With the population of Los Angeles nearly doubling in the 1920s, there was a significant need for increased housing. During this time, low-flung, single-family homes made up most of Los Angeles' suburbs. As such, duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts were a popular means of increasing density among developers since it minimized the visual disruption of a multi-story apartment building in the outer suburbs of the city. Bungalow courts, in particular, were popular since they emphasized landscaped, outdoor spaces that provided residents with natural landscapes and facilitated communal interactions.<sup>14</sup> Within this context, Belmont Square's development drew the attention of the city since the concept of dense row houses was novel in the outer suburbs. There were hearings that questioned the kinds of living conditions it would bring and the possibility of congestion.<sup>15</sup> With A. A. Daugherty's vision of recreating New York City-style row houses and David Witmer's ability to incorporate skillfully the natural landscaping Los Angeles residents desired, Belmont Square was able to address concerns for density, affordability, and outdoor spaces.

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<sup>10</sup> Belmont Square also demonstrates some of Witmer's experimentation with concrete. This can be seen in the stoops, where the poured cast in place concrete echoed granite or marble steps that led up to the entrances of East Coast row houses.

<sup>11</sup> As an architect living in a city prone to earthquakes, Witmer was particularly interested in materials that could withstand one. In 1930, Witmer served as chairman of a committee that drafted a uniform building code in California based on earthquake resistance.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Keylon, "The Wyvernwood Architects: Witmer and Watson," *Baldwin Hills Village and the Village Green*, 2011, <http://baldwinhillsvillageandthevillagegreen.blogspot.com/2011/06/garden-cities-at-risk-chapter-two.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Comer, 77.

<sup>14</sup> Architectural Resource Group, Inc. Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historic Context Statement (Los Angeles Conservancy, 2012), 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> "New Type of Court Planned," *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 1922, 16.

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Belmont Square provides a look into how a development was able to increase density that duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts could not, while providing outdoor spaces and a quality of life on par with them. On each parcel, a duplex was stacked on two stories, and combined in three rows in a dense superblock plan. The division of the upper and lower unit for each parcel was a clever way in doubling the number of units, while simultaneously maintaining an exterior of row homes that did not visually highlight this increased density. Moreover, each parcel had a garden space that connected into a larger communal space where residents could enjoy the natural landscape and mild climate of Los Angeles. As early experimentation in the garden apartments that began to flourish in Los Angeles in the following decade, detailed ornamentation on the buildings itself was kept to a minimum, helping draw one's eye, instead, to the garden footpath. In essence, the complex had the density of East Coast row houses while including outdoor space that the people of Los Angeles believed provided a good quality of life.

Communal interaction was also made explicit on the deed of each parcel. It stated that each owner would have part ownership of the private walkway, service alleys, and other available amenities.<sup>16</sup> This meant that each owner owned up to the middle of the Columbia Place footpath, creating an interesting experimentation in community living. Decisions about these communal resources would accordingly be made in a housing association. The complex was completed in February 1924 for approximately \$750,000. Daugherty offered units on an "own-your-own" plan, where a family would purchase a duplex, live in one, and rent out the other in order to pay off the mortgage.

### *Conclusion*

Belmont Square is a unique district of row houses that provides one of the earliest case studies of how the streetcar influenced the suburbanization of Los Angeles and offers a look at the way in which the complex's design creatively addressed issues of affordability, density, and open spaces to provide a quality of life Los Angeles residents were seeking. The district also offers a glimpse into a particularly rare precursor to Los Angeles' garden apartments not generally discussed in Los Angeles' history of residential development and architecture. Garden apartments in Los Angeles are often discussed in the context of its evolution from duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts. Belmont Square provides a particular example of a prototype adapted through an architect's ingenuity and experimentation. David Witmer was able to take the established row house design found in East Coast dense urban areas and adapt it to a suburban Los Angeles, in a way that integrated the outdoor space and the natural environment. The development was an attempt at addressing a desire for more integrated indoor and outdoor living space.

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<sup>16</sup> Land Records Division, "Grant Bargain and Sale Deed," Los Angeles, California, September 17, 1924.

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**\*D7. References** (Give full citations including the names and addresses of any informants, where possible.):

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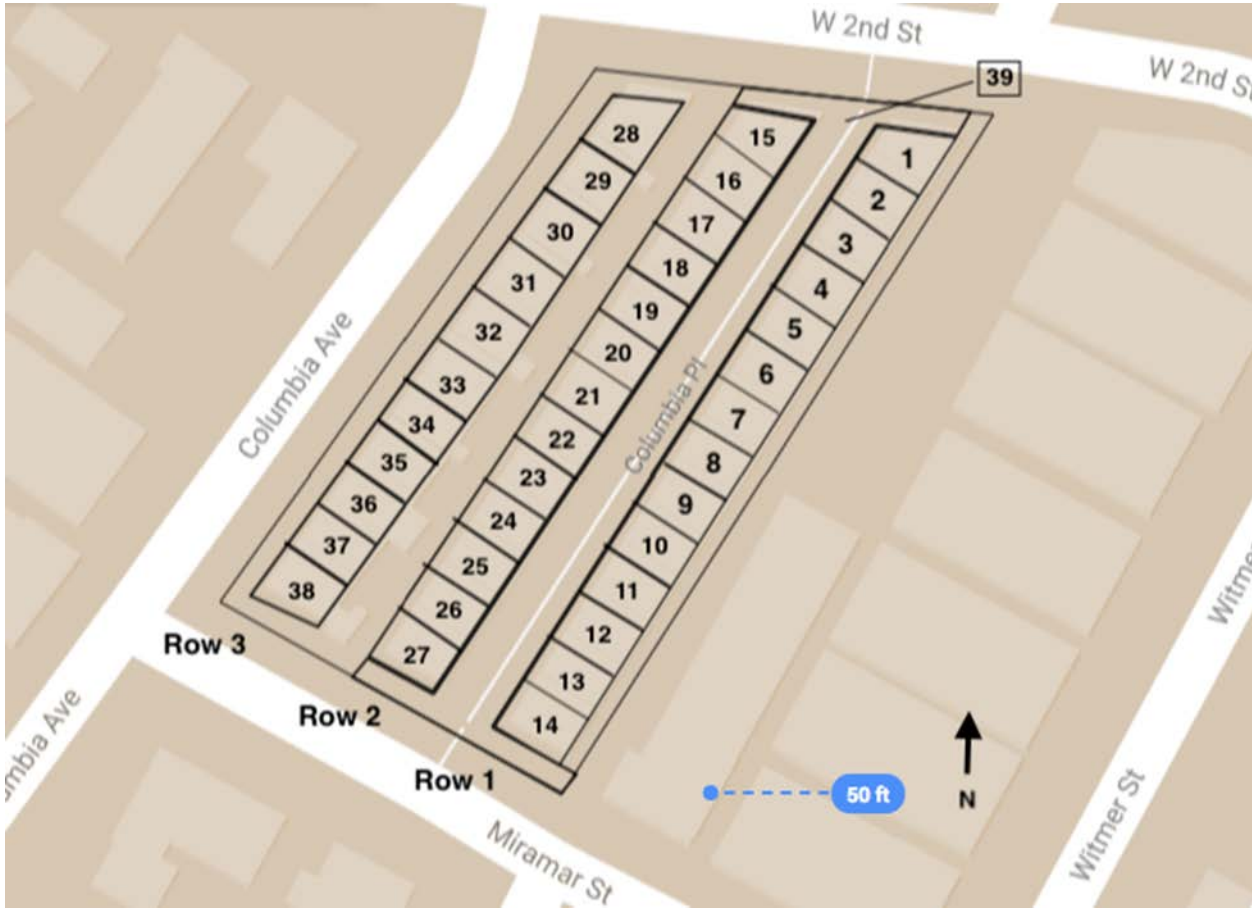
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### SKETCH MAP

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\*Drawn by: Don Lee \*Date of map: May 4, 2018





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## PHOTOGRAPH RECORD

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: Belmont Square  
City or Vicinity: Los Angeles  
County: Los Angeles County  
State: California  
Photographer: Don Lee  
Date Photographed: February 9 and June 19, 2018 as indicated

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 24 Columbia Place footpath facing southeast, February 9, 2018
- 2 of 24 View showing divisions of parcels through various paint colors and textures and their respective garden space, February 9, 2018
- 3 of 24 Two parcels, 236-238 (left) and 240-242 Columbia Ave. (right), create one full symmetrical design and are differentiated by paint colors, February 9, 2018
- 4 of 24 Details of pilasters, cornices, and rectangular window of 234 Columbia Place, February 9, 2018
- 5 of 24 Window arrangement on 228-230 (left) and 232-234 Columbia Avenue (right), February 9, 2018
- 6 of 24 Door design for 230 Columbia Avenue, February 9, 2018
- 7 of 24 Door design for 202 Columbia Avenue, February 9, 2018
- 8 of 24 Fence surrounding garden area of 200-202 Columbia Avenue, February 9, 2018
- 9 of 24 200-202 Columbia Place, June 19, 2018
- 10 of 24 204-206 (beige) and 208-210 Columbia Place (lavender), June 19, 2018
- 11 of 24 212-214 (yellow) and 216-218 Columbia Place (beige), June 19, 2018
- 12 of 24 224-226 (darker green) and 228-230 Columbia Place (lighter green), June 19, 2018
- 13 of 24 232-234 Columbia Place, June 19, 2018

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- 14 of 24 Right side: 244-246 (reddish brown), 240-242 (gray), and 236-238 Columbia Place (dark brown); Left side: 241-243 (beige), 237-239 Columbia Place (gray), February 9, 2018
- 15 of 24 252-254 (beige), 248-250 Columbia Place (blue), June 19, 2018
- 16 of 24 201-203 Columbia Place, June 19, 2018
- 17 of 24 209-211 (white) and 205-207 Columbia Place (gray), June 19, 2018
- 18 of 24 221-223 (gray), 225-227 (white), and 229-231 Columbia Place (light brown), June 19, 2018
- 19 of 24 229-231 (beige) and 237-239 Columbia Place (dark gray), February 9, 2018
- 20 of 24 241-243 (beige) and 245-247 Columbia Place (beige with green bands), June 19, 2018
- 21 of 24 249-251 Columbia Place, June 19, 2018
- 22 of 24 204-206 (left) and 208-210 Columbia Avenue (right), June 19, 2018
- 23 of 24 212-214 (left) and 216-218 Columbia Avenue (right), June 19, 2018
- 24 of 24 220-222 (left) and 224-226 Columbia Avenue (right), June 19, 2018

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**Photo 1.**



**Photo 2.**



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**Photo 3.**



**Photo 4.**



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**Photo 5.**



**Photo 6.**



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**Photo 7.**



**Photo 8.**



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**Photo 9.**



**Photo 10.**





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**Photo 11.**



**Photo 12.**



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**Photo 13.**



**Photo 14.**



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**Photo 15.**



**Photo 16.**



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**Photo 17.**



**Photo 18.**



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**Photo 19.**



**Photo 20.**



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**Photo 21.**



**Photo 22.**



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**Photo 23.**



**Photo 24.**



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**Figure 1.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Cable Railway Company, circa 1880. Courtesy of the Title Insurance and Trust, and C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, USC Libraries.



**Figure 2.** The Lewis House (Cultural Heritage Monument #10), built circa 1890. Courtesy of Big Orange Landmarks.



**Figure 3.** Crown Hill, circa 1885. Courtesy of the Metro Transportation Library and Archive.



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**Figure 4.** Advertisement for Belmont Square. January 20, 1924.  
Courtesy of *The Los Angeles Times*.

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**Figure 5.** David Julius Witmer.  
Courtesy of *In Victorian Los Angeles: The Witmers of Crown Hill*.

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**Figure 6.** Wyvernwood Garden Apartments, circa 1939. Courtesy of the LA Conservancy.

