

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Multiple Property Listing

California
State

Contents

Section E. Statement of Historic Contexts	1
I. Introduction	1
II. An Overview of National Trends.....	2
III. The Development of Public Housing and Garden Apartment Complexes in Los Angeles.....	14
Section F. Associated Property Types	28
Section G. Geographical Data.....	37
Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods.....	38
Section I. Major Bibliographic References.....	42

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 1

Section E. Statement of Historic Contexts

I. Introduction

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) traces the development of multi-family residential housing that falls under the umbrella of the garden apartment complex, including public projects constructed under federal housing programs and private projects constructed by for profit developers. Therefore, this document provides a framework for the evaluation of both public and private garden apartment complexes in the City of Los Angeles. The historic context examines the circumstances surrounding the development of the property type as well as the physical changes the type underwent from the 1930s through the mid-1950s. It is separated into two sections – an “Overview of National Trends” and “The Development of Public Housing and Garden Apartment Complexes in Los Angeles.” The “Overview of National Trends” section outlines the national factors that ultimately contributed to the development of public and private garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles. This includes historical trends that shaped housing policy at the federal level and as well as the private construction industry. As early as the turn of the twentieth century, housing reformers, seeing the deplorable conditions that had developed in the wake of industrialization, began agitating to improve urban housing. Early attempts did little to change the country’s housing situation. It was not until the Great Depression that the federal government stepped in to provide housing for citizens of low income. This was the beginning of the country’s public housing program, one that continues to this day. This MPDF, however, examines the program’s history until the post-World War II period. It also traces the evolution of private garden apartments, which also began to be constructed as an answer to the country’s housing problem in the first half of the twentieth century. Influenced by the ideas of Sir Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City in England, the Garden City movement spread to the United States in the 1920s. The ideas of the Garden City movement influenced both the design of private garden apartment complexes and public housing projects, as the designers for both overlapped initially. “The Development of Public Housing and Garden Apartment Complexes in Los Angeles” section then traces the evolution of the property type in Los Angeles specifically, including the local and regional factors that contributed to its development.

Though public and private garden apartments are examined in order to layout the specific social and political factors that contributed to their respective development, as a property type they are both based in the tenets of the Garden City movement. As such, they share many of the same physical characteristics. Where they differ is in the factors that contributed to their development. The country’s public housing program was created in response to the economic crisis of the Great Depression, eventually leading to the formation of the United States Housing Authority and local housing authorities (in Los Angeles, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, or HACLA). Private garden apartments, on the other hand, evolved as part of the larger trends in multi-family residential development in Los Angeles.

The period of significance for this MPDF is 1939 to 1955, the period in which extant examples of the property type can be found in the City of Los Angeles. It uses as its basis the period of significance established in the “Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949” Draft National Register of Historic

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 2

Places Multiple Property Submission by Paul R. Lusignan, Judith Robinson, Laura Bobeczko, and Jeffrey Shrimpton (2004) but extends it further into the postwar period to address the construction that continued to occur in Los Angeles until that time. As such, this MPDF creates a framework for the evaluation of later projects in Los Angeles. It also incorporates private garden apartments, which were studied separately in the Los Angeles Conservancy's "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles, Historic Context Statement," written by Katie Horak and Steven Keylon of Architectural Resources Group (2012). By 1955, the construction of both public and private garden apartments had ceased in the city due to a number of factors.

II. An Overview of National Trends

The development of public and private garden apartments in Los Angeles represents the culmination of decades of attempts to provide housing to low-income residents around the country. With the rapid industrialization and increased immigration that followed the Civil War came crowded and worsening conditions in the country's urban centers. During the Progressive Era at the turn of the twentieth century, reformers began to advocate for better housing conditions at a low cost, through both the public and private sectors. Early attempts by the private housing industry and local legislation did little to alleviate the problem, and it was not until the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s that the federal government stepped in to address the issue in any meaningful way. This overview provides a look at the early stages of housing reform in the United States, as well as the forces that shaped public housing at the national level until the post-World War II period. It also examines the development of private housing, namely the Garden City movement in England and the United States, that shaped the garden apartment property type throughout the country and ultimately in Los Angeles.

Setting the Stage: Housing Reform through World War I¹

The rapid industrialization of the second half of the nineteenth century brought a surge in population to the nation's cities. This, coupled with increased immigration, led to over-crowding and worsening conditions in urban centers. As part of the Progressive Era's more general reform attempts, agitation for housing reform began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Publications such as Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* highlighted the deplorable conditions in the country's slums and tenements and brought the issue to the fore.

Early reform attempts during the Progressive Era targeted social problems attributed to slums, including poverty, disease, and crime. Slums were seen as threatening "the physical and moral welfare of its residents, and of society as a whole," and therefore a problem that must be addressed and, if possible, eradicated.² Local governments responded to the crisis by passing housing and building codes, such as New York City's tenement housing law. The first in the country upon its passage in 1867, the law set

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section was gathered from Lusignan, Paul R., et al., "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949," Draft National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, December 2004, E5-E10. A citation for this document has been used only when a quotation was directly excerpted from the source.

² Lusignan et al., E5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 3

minimum standards for ventilation, fire safety, and sanitation. However, implementation and enforcement proved ineffective, a problem that was repeated throughout the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the face of ineffectual legislation and programs, Progressive Era reformers sought to bring national attention to the housing problem, resulting in the settlement house movement, which provided social services to those living in urban slums, lobbied for reform, and raised funds for better facilities such as parks and libraries. Their efforts made the federal government take note of the problem, but beyond the appropriation of funds to study the issue, early federal efforts went nowhere. During this period, the government expected local governments and private charities to provide for those in need.³ Thus, early attempts to address the issue remained largely confined to the private sector.

The first federal intervention into the private housing market did not occur until World War I. As industrial production for the war effort increased, populations in industrial city centers surged. The resulting housing shortage forced the federal government to step in, since the lack of suitable housing became, in essence, a matter of national defense. In 1918, Congress created the U.S. Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation (EFC) and the U.S. Housing Corporation (USHC). The EFC made loans to private realty companies incorporated by shipbuilding firms in order to construct housing for employees. It ultimately supervised the design and construction of over 8,000 single-family homes and 800 apartment units in 23 cities around the country. The USHC, on the other hand, was able to directly construct and manage housing for war workers, including 6,000 single-family homes and 7,000 apartment units, an unprecedented level of involvement for a federal agency at the time.⁴

Following the end of the war, the federal government once again removed itself from any participation in housing, dissolving the EFC and USHC and selling all housing through mortgage defaults. The belief remained dominant that the problem of wartime housing and peacetime social reform were distinct issues. However, the government had set a precedent for both the allocation of federal loans to private housing corporations and the direct supervision of housing construction, elements of its later public housing program. After World War I, housing reformers began agitating for a more active governmental role in housing construction and slum clearance.⁵ They hoped that elements of the government's wartime housing program could be applied during peacetime. The agitation for reform was also spurred by a significant housing shortage that followed the armistice. Peaking between 1919 and 1921, the shortage resulted from a combination of factors, including a lack of capital within the private building industry, inflated construction costs, a rise in housing costs and rents, and low vacancy rates. Though the housing market began to recover in 1922, building costs remained high throughout the decade, perpetuating the problem. The crisis convinced housing reformers that the efforts of the private sector alone were not sufficient and that finding any long-term solutions to the country's housing problems would only be achieved with the assistance of the federal government.⁶ Prominent among reforms

³ Lusignan et al., E4, E7, E8.

⁴ Lusignan et al., E9.

⁵ Lusignan et al., E10.

⁶ Roy Lubove, *Community Planning in the 1920s: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1963), 17-18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 4

during this period was housing economist Edith Elmer Wood, who argued that ‘The crux of the situation which confronts us [...] is the excessive cost of home-building.’⁷ Private companies simply could not provide enough housing for low- and middle-income wage earners to address the problem. She noted that “many feel in this country, as students of housing did in the older countries years ago, that the only source which commands a sufficient supply of credit and can provide it economically at a sufficiently low rate of interest is the Government.”⁸

It was not until the Great Depression that the federal government took the first significant step into the housing debate. In order to provide jobs and boost the construction industry, it began to clear slums and build housing. When the public housing program gained momentum in the 1930s, the health and safety standards influenced by Progressive Era reform, as well as the urban planning tenets of the Garden City movement, would be incorporated into the program.⁹

The Influence of the Garden City Movement

The Garden City movement, espoused by Englishman Sir Ebenezer Howard in the late nineteenth century, promoted the creation of self-sufficient towns as an alternative to the crowding and squalor in England’s urban centers. In his book *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* and other writings, Howard advocated for “a migratory movement out of the overcrowded urban core and into carefully planned new towns in the rural districts outside of (but near to) the city.”¹⁰ His goal was to create a union of urban and rural life that combined traditional elements of both. Howard teamed up with Raymond Unwin and Barry Shaw to design and build Letchworth, the first Garden City in England. Located approximately 30 miles outside London, Letchworth (1903) was situated on 1,200 acres of land and was intended to be a completely self-sufficient town of no more than 30,000 inhabitants. The main goal of Howard, Unwin, and Shaw was ensuring that all inhabitants (and ultimately all people) were provided with decent housing in a peaceful setting. Unwin insisted that “every house should have its garden and should be so placed and planned that all its rooms should be flooded with light and sunshine, unblocked by other houses or by its own projections.” In order to achieve this, “It was necessary to break away from the customary type of street with its endless rows of houses, cramped in frontage, hideous in appearance from the street, and squalid in the congestion of its back projections and its yard.”¹¹ The community at Letchworth not only included residences but also recreational areas, retail shops, and educational facilities. The buildings were interspersed between ample parks and green space, and the urban grid was abandoned in favor of curvilinear roads that followed the land’s natural topography.¹²

⁷ Lubove, 25-26.

⁸ Lubove, 26.

⁹ Lusignan et al., E5.

¹⁰ Katie Horak and Steven Keylon (Architectural Resources Group), “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles Historic Context Statement,” Los Angeles Conservancy, October 2012, 11.

¹¹ Unwin quoted in Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 12.

¹² Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 5

Howard's ideas, expressed at Letchworth and later Welwyn (1919-1920), as well as similar ideas in other European countries, were highly influential in the United States. City planners, architects, and landscape architects in the U.S. in the first half of the twentieth century believed they could use the ideas of Howard and others to develop "brave new communities – uncluttered, throbbing with new life and vigor."¹³ Leaders in the movement in the United States were Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. In the 1920s, Stein and Wright's primary challenge was how to provide quality housing in a superior environment at a low cost. This issue, Stein believed, could not be addressed through the efforts of private development, for the desire for profit led to dense construction that did not "meet the needs of the people for a healthy and sane community life."¹⁴ To address these issues, Stein and Wright, along with other prominent urban planners of the period, formed the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) in 1923. The RPAA advocated for the "comprehensive and enlightened group action necessary to create the Garden City, and to create that new regional framework, based upon the more effective relation of communities and industries to the natural environment, to power, to water, to fresh air and 'nature,' in which garden cities will be possible."¹⁵ The detached single-family home and semi-detached apartment unit provided "neither privacy nor comfort nor free exposure to air and sunlight," and the RPAA promoted alternatives to the housing types that dominated the built environment in America.¹⁶

In 1924, Stein and Wright traveled to England to meet with Unwin and Howard and to study the Garden City principles applied at Letchworth and Welwyn. They would use these ideas, not as a strict blueprint, but rather as the inspiration for a new type of community in the United States.¹⁷ Building on Howard's ideas, Stein and Wright sought to design communities that offered "a beautiful environment, a home for children, an opportunity to enjoy the day's leisure and the ability to ride on the Juggernaut of industry, instead of being prostrated under its wheels."¹⁸ This resulted in the idea of the regional city, which expanded upon the ideas of Howard's Garden Cities or New Towns. The regional city centered upon "the preservation of the integrity of small towns and villages as well as the reconstruction and renewal of metropolitan centers."¹⁹

To achieve these goals, the American Garden City presented an entirely new manner of organizing and designing housing. It was designed to be an insular community, differentiated from the surrounding environment by the use of the superblock. The superblock, which originated in Germany, was comprised of large areas of land separated from the surrounding urban grid. Automobile traffic was limited to perimeter roads and segregated completely from both housing and pedestrian paths. Residential buildings faced inward toward large expanses of green space, which dominated the community, and

¹³ Architect and housing advocate Albert Mayer quoted in Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 13.

¹⁴ Stein quoted in Lubove, 38.

¹⁵ "Report of the Committee on Community Planning," Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, 1925: 114, 115 quoted in Lubove, 46.

¹⁶ "Report of the Committee on Community Planning," Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, 1925: 113, 121 quoted in Lubove, 47.

¹⁷ Lubove, 2.

¹⁸ Clarence Stein, "Dinosaur Cities" (Survey Graphic 7, May 1925) quoted in Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 14.

¹⁹ Lubove, 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 6

away from the street. Complexes often included community amenities as well, such as libraries and recreation centers.²⁰ Stylistically, Garden City complexes were influenced most directly by European Modernism. The work of Le Corbusier and German architects including Ernst May and Walter Gropius left a particularly lasting impression on members of the RPAA. Housing complexes being constructed in Frankfurt am Maim, Germany, as part of the city's master plan, were particularly influential.

The planners and architects of the RPAA, fed up with the inefficacy of early legislation that sought to address housing problems of the period, wanted to widen the scope. Their goal became making well-planned, large-scale housing communities within the reach of low-income residents, and they believed it was the duty of the government to supply such housing to its citizens at a reasonable price.²¹ Through the creation of large-scale communities, financed by low-interest government loans, the RPAA believed that housing could better the lives of all Americans, regardless of income level.²² Architects and planners of the period also believed strongly in the ability of housing to solve social problems and create community harmony. By ensuring that residents had ready access to fresh air, open green space, and proper recreational facilities that promoted social interaction, the crowded tenements that bred social disorder in the nation's cities could be transformed into "beacons of urbane living."²³

The RPAA formed the City Housing Corporation to design, finance, and build two residential suburbs – Sunnyside Gardens in New York in 1924 and Radburn in New Jersey in 1928. Sunnyside Gardens was a low-rise development located on 77 acres in the borough of Queens. It consisted of attached one-, two-, and three-family row houses situated along the perimeter of each city block in the development. These houses enclosed shared gardens and recreational amenities. Though they hoped to make use of the superblock, Stein and Wright were forced to use the existing city grid in their plan. This was an early expression of the designs that would be seen in later garden apartments in Los Angeles.²⁴

Radburn, the second Garden City planned by Stein and Wright, was laid out on approximately 1,200 acres in an unincorporated part of Bergen County. It eventually accommodated 400 families in duplexes and garden apartment groups. It had the type of curvilinear street system that could not be used at Sunnyside Gardens. Though it "never approximated a genuine Garden City with industry, greenbelt, and cooperative land holding" it was even more successful than Sunnyside Gardens as an experiment in residential planning and design, due in part to the ability to use curvilinear streets and superblock site planning.²⁵ The community's design attempted to reconcile the use of the automobile with resident safety, while also providing recreational facilities. Though not fully realized due to the onset of the Great Depression, Radburn nonetheless brought to fruition Stein and Wright's Garden City principles.

The RPAA had hoped that the large, low-density communities of Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn could provide low-income housing in a better residential environment. However, despite being financed by

²⁰ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 12, 14.

²¹ Lusignan et al., E13-E14.

²² Lubove, 47.

²³ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 34.

²⁴ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 13.

²⁵ Lubove, 62-63.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 7

low-interest loans and minimizing costs wherever possible while still offering good residential design, the overhead costs of large-scale operations still made the projects at Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn more expensive than those of the speculative developer and unable to meet the needs of low-income groups.²⁶ Though ultimately unable to provide low-income housing, Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn were nonetheless innovative projects that would influence later public and private housing in the United States in general and Los Angeles in particular.

The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Beginning of the Public Housing Program²⁷

The prolific writings of RPAA members as well as the National Public Housing Conference, held in 1931, helped bring the issue of public housing to the national stage in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁸ The RPAA and other reformers pushed for government involvement into public housing, but the government could not be convinced to intervene. Due to economic prosperity and a housing boom in the 1920s, the government would not consider housing programs for low-income families. It passed the onus back to the states, whose programs were largely geared towards the middle class. A few large-scale projects by private developers attempted to address the housing needs of low-income families, such as the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Apartments in New York City and the Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments in Chicago, but the high overhead costs associated with private development on this scale made these projects inaccessible to this economic group. By the late 1920s, it was clear that private development and state and local governments could not provide adequate low-income housing on their own, yet the federal government remained aloof. It took the economic collapse and stagnation of the residential construction industry brought about by the Great Depression to convince the federal government to finally step in.²⁹

With the sudden economic downturn, urban slums became even more crowded as migrants from rural areas and small towns moved to cities in search of employment and financial relief. In addition, those who fell on hard times were forced to move into these neighborhoods, and deferred maintenance due to lack of funds contributed to worsening conditions. With no end in sight to the problem or the Great Depression itself, the government passed the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) in 1933. The NIRA created the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA) to provide employment opportunities. Included in the PWA's projects was "construction... under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum clearance."³⁰ The Housing Division of the PWA could provide low-interest loans to limited-dividend corporations, award money to state and local agencies, or construct projects on its own. Though one of the Housing Division's goals was slum clearance, fewer than half of the PWA's housing projects resulted in slum clearance, and the majority of PWA projects end up being constructed on vacant land outside urban slums. This was due to the ruling in a 1935 Supreme Court case (*USA vs. Certain Lands in the City of Louisville*) that the federal government could not use eminent domain to acquire land for housing. Furthermore, early PWA projects did not end up being affordable for low-

²⁶ Lubove, 59-60.

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section is drawn from Lusignan et al., E11-E24, E36-553.

²⁸ Lusignan et al., E11.

²⁹ Lusignan et al., E14, E16.

³⁰ Lusignan et al., E18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 8

income families. In 1934, the PWA began directly financing and developing public housing projects. In an unprecedented level of federal involvement, the PWA could acquire vacant land and oversee construction; it also owned and operated the completed housing projects. It consulted with local architects and contractors, since it was felt that they knew the needs of their community best. None of these PWA projects occurred in Los Angeles, though three sites were selected, including a site that eventually became the Aliso Village public housing complex.³¹

Though the PWA program was limited in scope and success, it served as a significant source of employment during the Depression. It also increased public acceptance of federal government involvement in the construction of low-income housing. The program resulted in the construction of 22,000 units of public housing between 1933 and 1938, and it set the stage for the public housing program as it developed in years to come.³²

An early example of the PWA's housing projects was Hillside Homes, designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright. Located in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, and constructed between 1933 and 1935, the complex was very similar to Radburn, though of higher density. It utilized the superblock and had buildings situated on residential streets and around open space. Community amenities included offices, recreation areas, and a nursery school, among others. At the time, it was the largest federal public housing project under construction.³³

These early public housing projects clearly illustrated the influence of the Garden City movement and European Modernism. They utilized superblock site planning and low-density construction, and they included on-site community centers, among other features. PWA architects were encouraged to be creative, and many early PWA projects show an innovative use of materials and design lacking in later public housing.³⁴ As time passed, however, the program and its projects became more standardized, and efficiency of construction and cost control began to limit innovation in design.

In 1934, the federal government increased its involvement in the private housing market with the passage of the National Housing Act, which established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The FHA made housing more affordable for Americans by lowering both interest rates for mortgages and the down payment needed to purchase a home. Though intended for privately constructed projects and the single-family residence, over 200 multiple-family residential projects in the garden apartment mode were insured by the FHA between 1935 and 1940.³⁵ Housing under the FHA was intended for the middle class, and the program did not provide housing for low-income wage earners. However, like the PWA housing program, it helped set the stage for increased federal involvement in housing construction in subsequent years.

³¹ Lusignan et al., E24; Cuff, 111.

³² John F. McDonald, "Public Housing Construction and the Cities: 1937-1967," *Urban Studies Research 2011* (2011): 4, accessed September 8, 2016, doi: 10.1155/2011/985264.

³³ Lusignan et al., E20-21.

³⁴ Lusignan et al., E19.

³⁵ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 16.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 9

The limitations of the PWA and FHA programs only highlighted the need for a comprehensive public housing program that would provide affordable living accommodations for those in need. Reformers again agitated for reform at the federal level. Their efforts culminated in the passage of the Housing Act of 1937, also known as Wagner-Steagall Housing Act. The Housing Act created the United States Housing Authority (USHA) within the Department of the Interior as well as local housing authorities, and it authorized the USHA to provide loans to these local agencies. Unlike the PWA, the USHA could not directly build or manage housing; it was limited to providing oversight and financial support. The majority of responsibility for the construction of public housing lay with local housing authorities. They selected sites, made design choices, and applied for federal subsidies to finance projects. The passage of the Housing Act of 1937 prompted a wave of local legislation to create housing authorities. In many cases, this legislation was the culmination of efforts that had begun in the early 1930s. Between 1933 and 1938, 30 states and the District of Columbia passed legislation related to slum clearance, public housing construction, and the creation of housing authorities (nearly 50 communities had created housing authorities by 1938).³⁶ The passage of the Housing Act of 1937 bolstered these efforts and provided federal support.

Public housing complexes constructed under the Housing Act were organized using the superblock or were situated on multi-block sites. They were usually low in density, though higher density complexes were constructed as part of the need for economy. Units constructed under the Housing Act were subject to strict cost guidelines and became increasingly standardized. Public housing constructed after 1937 tended to be International Style in design, and it often lacked the architectural innovation of PWA-era housing. However, the housing constructed in the late 1930s and early 1940s under the Housing Act remains “a significant body of modernistic architecture, of a scale and form unlike almost anything built up to that time in America.”³⁷ Their layout was influenced by the belief that housing could solve social problems. As a federal public housing administrator noted in 1938 after the passage of the Housing Act, with the construction of new public housing complexes, “streets will be closed, rerouted or widened, and new health centers and schools strategically located. Large courts with vistas of green grass and trees will gradually replace the miles and miles of dirty narrow shafts and unsightly backyards. Health will improve, crime will decrease, and morals will rise. In short, we will eventually build cities for people to live in with surroundings that create contentment.”³⁸ To achieve these goals, housing authorities often included a variety of community amenities for residents in public housing complexes such as social events, recreational facilities, and social programs.

The initial success of the USHA was short-lived. By 1939, anti-New Deal sentiment in Congress turned the political tide against public housing, while an upswing in the economy made it seem unnecessary. Congress refused to extend the public housing program beyond the original three-year period outlined in the Housing Act of 1937, nor would it provide any further funding to the program until 1949.³⁹ Despite these limitations, the Wagner-Steagall Act had a profound impact on public housing in the United

³⁶ Lusignan et al., E 36-37.

³⁷ Lusignan et al., E52-53.

³⁸ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 18.

³⁹ Lusignan et al., E52.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 10

States. Between 1939 and 1943, 160,000 public housing units were constructed.⁴⁰ In Los Angeles, approximately 3,500 units had been constructed across ten projects by the end of 1942.⁴¹

The scope of slum clearance under the Housing Act of 1937 was also limited. The Act included an “equivalent elimination” provision, which specified that for every public housing unit constructed by a local agency, one unit of slum housing had to be demolished, condemned, or rehabilitated through “compulsory repair or improvement.”⁴² However, a later amendment to the Act allowed deferment from slum clearance if a local government could illustrate that it suffered from a significant housing shortage. This amendment limited the amount of slum clearance that ended up being undertaken by the USHA or local housing authorities.

World War II⁴³

As the United States began mobilizing for the war in Europe, the country’s defense centers saw an influx of workers. The subsequent lack of decent housing quickly proved to be a problem. The federal government resumed the dormant public housing program in 1940 but shifted its focus from housing for low-income families to housing for defense workers. In this sense, providing housing for defense workers and their families became as essential to the wartime construction program as did other aspects. The federal government passed the National Defense Act in 1940, which enabled the USHA to work with local housing authorities as well as the Navy and War Departments to make “necessary housing available to persons engaged in national defense activities.”⁴⁴ The Act also protected the federal government from legal battles surrounding eminent domain, waived the low-income requirement of earlier public housing programs, and eliminated the stipulation that one unit of slum housing must be demolished for every unit of public housing constructed. By 1942, much of the low-income housing that had been under construction or completed in late 1940 had been converted to defense housing.

The majority of the housing erected during the war was privately constructed and consisted of small single-family homes removed from the inner city and wartime industrial centers. Much of this housing was financed by FHA-backed loans. In 1942, Congress amended the National Housing Act of 1934 to include Section 608, which provided mortgage loans insured by the FHA. Up to 90% of the cost of a privately constructed project could be financed through Section 608 as long as the project met FHA guidelines for design and construction. The amendment was designed to encourage construction of private housing for war workers (this later included returning veterans after the resumption of peace). Though housing reformers pushed for the construction of permanent public housing that could be utilized as low-income housing after the war, the private construction industry argued that the government should limit its role to providing loans and mortgage guarantees to support private

⁴⁰ McDonald, 4.

⁴¹ Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 152.

⁴² Lusignan et al., E44.

⁴³ Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section was obtained from Lusignan et al., E53-E64. A separate citation has been utilized only when a quote was directly excerpted from the source.

⁴⁴ Lusignan et al., E54.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 11

enterprise. Only private development, they insisted, could build the needed housing quickly enough. This argument was ultimately successful, and it curbed the scope of the public housing program during the war, a trend that continued even after the resumption of peace. The Lanham Act, passed in 1940, provided funding to the Federal Works Administration to construct a large amount of housing quickly and cheaply in the defense centers that needed it the most. However, the majority of this housing was of temporary construction. Of the 625,000 units of public housing built under the Lanham Act between 1940 and 1944, more than 580,000 of these were of temporary construction. In 1943, Congress amended the Act to forbid the use of this temporary housing for low-income residents after the resumption of peace and specify that housing constructed under the Lanham Act had to be disposed of after the end of the war. This ensured that the housing constructed during the war would not interfere with private enterprise in the postwar period.

Since the rapid construction of housing was the primary goal of the Lanham Act, maximum unit costs for housing were much lower than unit costs for USHA housing. The scarcity of materials available to divert from the war effort also placed restrictions on the construction of housing during this period. Design, which had become more and more standardized under the USHA housing program, became even more minimal. Design variation between building units, pedestrian courts, and open space were either eliminated or at least restricted. Complexes built under the Lanham Act typically displayed minor architectural detail.

The Post-World War II Period

Even before the end of World War II, it became apparent that existing public housing, whether permanent or temporary, would not be enough to address the country's housing needs in the postwar years, when it was anticipated that the population of cities would surge from an influx of war veterans and others looking for work. The federal government realized that a postwar housing program would be urgently needed. To exacerbate the situation, the country's existing housing stock of 37 million homes was in desperate need of improvement. According to the 1940 census, half was rated as deteriorating or deficient; many homes lacked hot water, plumbing, and other basic facilities. This was in part due to a limitation on private development to conserve materials for the war effort.⁴⁵ Despite the preference given to the private construction industry during the war years, it was unable to mobilize itself to address the housing shortage in the postwar period. Between 1944 and 1946, approximately fifteen million veterans returned home; though many were single, many were married and looking to start or expand their families.⁴⁶ This meant they needed housing. The country turned towards its public housing program once again to provide shelter for its returning veterans. In 1945, President Truman issued an Executive Order that gave priority to returning veterans in housing built under the National Defense Act. Rather than being demolished, temporary defense housing was converted into permanent housing for

⁴⁵ Richard Freeman, "The 1949 Housing Act versus 'Urban Renewal,'" *Executive Intelligence Review* 23, no. 50 (December 1996): 27, accessed September 21, 2016, http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1996/eirv23n50-19961213/eirv23n50-19961213_027-us_housing_policy_the_1949_housi.pdf.

⁴⁶ Freeman, 27.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 12

returning veterans. Much of it was used into the early 1950s until private or other public housing could be constructed.⁴⁷

To address the urgent need for housing, Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949. Begun as the Wagner-Ellender-Taft bill in 1945, the 1949 Act aimed to provide “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.” The Act revived the public housing program begun under the Housing Act of 1937, providing funding to construct 135,000 units of public housing per year for the next six years (a total of 810,000 units). This was estimated to be approximately 10% of the total housing needed at the time. Rents in these units had to be 20% below the lowest rent for a comparable private unit in the same locality.⁴⁸ Under the Act, preference in housing was given to World War I and II veterans and to residents displaced by slum clearance or redevelopment.

Despite the Act’s commitment to the construction of public housing, it took approximately 20 years for the government to construct the 810,000 units it intended to build in six. This was in large part due to political opposition that the renewed program faced from its inception. The real estate industry launched an anti-public housing campaign shortly after the passage of the 1949 Act, mobilizing to oppose local housing projects and appropriations. In general, this opposition was much stronger in the South and West, where political support for public housing was weaker than it was in the East and Midwest.⁴⁹ The U.S. entry into the Korean War in 1950 also led to funding cuts to the public housing program. President Truman, who was concerned that the program would draw needed materials away from the war effort and bring back inflation, reduced the construction allowance of the program from 135,000 units to just 30,000 units for the remainder of the year.⁵⁰

The program fared no better under Truman’s predecessor, President Eisenhower. Opposed to public housing, it was only under considerable political pressure that he supported it at all. In 1953, he introduced a bill to Congress that cut back the number of units constructed that year to just 35,000. The Republican-controlled Congress, even more opposed to public housing than Eisenhower, passed the bill. For the remainder of the decade, the budget for the housing program was limited to between one-sixth and two-fifths of the goals set out in the 1949 legislation. By 1960, less than half of the Act’s intended housing units had been constructed.⁵¹

One of the Act’s most significant and far-reaching aspects was its provision for urban redevelopment. It required that local housing authorities demolish or renovate one unit of slum housing for every unit of public housing built. To achieve this, the Act authorized \$1 billion in loans to cities to assist in slum clearance and urban redevelopment, whether public or private. The concept of urban redevelopment was not a new one. It was introduced under the Housing Act of 1937, which also required that one unit of

⁴⁷ Lusignan et al., E65; McDonald, 4.

⁴⁸ Freeman, 28.

⁴⁹ Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no 2 (2000): 311, accessed September 21, 2016, https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/hpd_1102_hoffman.pdf.

⁵⁰ von Hoffman, 311.

⁵¹ Freeman, 28.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 13

slum housing be demolished for every new unit of public housing built. However, the idea was largely abandoned after the passage of an amendment that localities could defer this requirement (known as equivalent elimination) if they could demonstrate a significant housing shortage. During World War II, momentum gathered for urban redevelopment, and 25 states passed legislation designed to achieve it.⁵² In the postwar period, urban redevelopment and slum clearance gathered political support at the federal level, resulting in the provisions of the Housing Act of 1949, though redevelopment projects did not begin until the mid-1950s due to debate over the interpretation the 1949 Act. It would gain further momentum after the passage of the Housing Act of 1954, which included provisions for “rehabilitation and conservation of existing structures, enforcement of building codes, relocation of displaced inhabitants, and citizen participation in formulating renewal schemes” rather than the simple land clearance called for in the 1949 Housing Act.⁵³

This increased emphasis on slum clearance as well as policy changes at the federal level caused a shift in the nation’s public housing program and the tenancy of public housing projects. Private redevelopment projects often had higher rents than the slums they replaced, and displaced residents, many of them poor blacks and other minorities from inner city areas, could not afford the new housing. Instead, they were added to waiting lists for public housing projects.⁵⁴ In addition, early public housing was geared towards working-class tenants, both black and white, who were more or less assimilated into urban life. Those at the very bottom of the socio-economic ladder were viewed as being the responsibility of charities and social workers, rather than public housing programs. After World War II, both increased enforcement of segregation in public housing projects and stricter enforcement of income limits (which moved many upwardly mobile tenants out of public housing) changed the character of public housing and its residents. Many residents of public housing during this period became poor rural migrants from the South, Puerto Rico, and Mexico who were often unaccustomed to urban life. Yet during the same period, the social services, community facilities, and activities that had been a keystone of earlier public housing complexes largely ceased to exist. Without these social programs, the likelihood that tenants could work towards assimilation into an urban setting and move out of public housing projects decreased.⁵⁵ Tenants were more likely to become lifelong residents rather than moving on to better accommodations. It was during this period that public housing obtained the negative image that plagued it throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.

To address the housing shortage, public housing during this period was constructed on a larger scale than that of the prewar period. They were also typically denser than their prewar counterparts. Often consisting of multi-story buildings situated around large courtyards, they were highly standardized in their design, with a “stripped modern” style that gave them “a severe, institutional appearance” that was in stark contrast to the design of earlier complexes. As previously mentioned, public housing in the postwar period lacked the community amenities that had been incorporated into earlier complexes.⁵⁶

⁵² von Hoffman, 304, 310.

⁵³ von Hoffman, 313.

⁵⁴ Freeman, 28-29; Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 20.

⁵⁵ von Hoffman, 312, 316; Lusignan et al., E67.

⁵⁶ Lusignan et al., E66.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 14

III. The Development of Public Housing and Garden Apartment Complexes in Los Angeles

The larger trends in public housing that occurred from the late 1930s through the mid-1950s were reflected at the local level in Los Angeles. As was the case in urban centers around the country, the city’s explosive growth during the Great Depression and World War II resulted in a desperate need for housing for low-income residents and war workers. The construction of public housing, however, also reflected the unique factors contributing to the development of Los Angeles’ urban landscape as a whole; these include the impact of the city’s rapid population growth from the 1920s through the 1940s, importance of the automobile, development of multi-family housing in the first half of the twentieth century, and creation of a city-wide master plan in the early 1940s. These all affected the construction of public and private garden apartments in Los Angeles and laid the groundwork for the reaction to public housing programs during this period.

Background and Housing Trends in Los Angeles Before World War II

By the 1920s, Los Angeles had ballooned from a small pueblo to a rapidly expanding metropolis. Drawn by the promise of available land and beautiful weather, people from the Midwest and East Coast flocked to the city. Between 1910 and 1920, Los Angeles’ population increased from 319,198 to 576,673 people. In the next decade, it more than doubled to 1,238,048.⁵⁷ In the face of these rapid population increases, the shortage of housing became a serious issue. The California Commission of Immigration and Housing wrote that from cities throughout California, including Los Angeles, “comes the cry for more houses – more housing accommodation – and the remedies suggested vary from tent cities and the use of public buildings to the closing of the doors of the state to transient population.” The Commission lamented that the “problem daily becomes more and more serious, as the present building program of the state is not even meeting the normal required housing increase, to say nothing of making up the shortage.”⁵⁸

Developers had to find a way to address the urgent need for housing. Though the single-family home was constructed throughout new communities and neighborhoods, multi-family residential buildings were also utilized to increase density. Largely low in scale, the dominant type of multi-family residential buildings in Los Angeles included duplexes, fourplexes, bungalow courts, and later courtyard apartments. Originating in Southern California, the bungalow court became popular in the 1910s and 1920s and “was the first multi-family property type to integrate common garden or courtyard space into the site plan.”⁵⁹ It consisted of individual units or duplexes situated around a landscaped courtyard. The property type offered the privacy of the single-family residence while also providing the benefits of a shared communal space. The bungalow court remained a popular multi-family residential type until World War II.⁶⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s, the modest bungalow court began to give way to the larger and

⁵⁷ California State Data Center, “Historical Census Populations of California, Counties, and Incorporated Cities, 1850-2010,” Department of Finance, accessed November 2, 2016, http://www.dof.ca.gov/Reports/Demographic_Reports.

⁵⁸ Lubove, 20-21.

⁵⁹ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 10.

⁶⁰ City of Pasadena Planning and Community Development, “Bungalow Courts in Pasadena,” City of Pasadena, accessed November 2, 2016, http://www.cityofpasadena.net/Planning/Bungalow_Courts_in_Pasadena/.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 15

more elaborate courtyard apartment. While bungalow courts were typically developed without the services of an architect, courtyard apartments were often designed by architects inspired by the housing of the Mediterranean region. They included patios or balconies overlooking elaborately landscaped courtyards. The type remained popular into the postwar period, though later examples tend to be more stripped down in style than those from the 1920s.⁶¹ The courtyard apartment in turn evolved into the larger-scale garden apartment complex. Unlike the courtyard apartment, which was generally confined to a single parcel of land, the garden apartment complex, inspired by the Garden City movement, utilized the superblock. It also integrated large amounts of green space into the plan.⁶²

With the stock market crash in 1929, the country was plunged into a more than decade-long economic depression. By December of that year, Los Angeles was feeling its effects, most notably in the sharp rise in unemployment. After attending a meeting with representatives of the Board of Education, the state employment office, and other groups, a Los Angeles American Federation of Labor official noted that “there is an acute condition of unemployment in this city that is general in its extension and is quite serious in many directions.”⁶³ Residential construction stalled, and home vacancy rates rose as families struggled with rent and mortgage payments. Families doubled up in existing housing, and overcrowding became an increasingly urgent problem.⁶⁴ The city’s population swelled as people migrated to California seeking employment. Local welfare groups such as the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Catholic Welfare Bureau became unable to address the needs of those who came to them seeking help. It was not until the passage of the Emergency Relief and Construction Act in 1932, which provided \$300 million in federal loans to state and local governments that the employment situation began to see any improvement. This was followed by the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933, the creation of the Civil Works Administration (CWA) later that same year, and the formation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935.⁶⁵ The Roosevelt Administration’s New Deal programs helped ease the economic destitution and unemployment facing the country.

As the country began mobilizing for World War II in the early 1940s, Los Angeles became an important center for the defense industry, including aircraft assembly and shipbuilding. However, housing conditions worsened with the population influx as people moved to Los Angeles looking for work. Between 1940 and 1950, the city grew from 1,504,277 to 1,970,358, an increase of almost 56%. During the same decade, estimates placed housing construction outpacing demolition at a rate of 18 to 1.⁶⁶ Despite this growth, the construction industry could not keep up, in part because of materials and labor shortages during the war, which “caused housing production to sink as slum populations rose. [...] These conditions worsened the deterioration of the little affordable housing available, and increased the unfilled demand for new housing of all types.”⁶⁷ Overcrowding and substandard building practices

⁶¹ Architectural Resources Group, “San Vicente Courtyard Apartments Historic District Assessment, Draft,” June 2015, 15-16.

⁶² Horak and Keyton, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 11.

⁶³ Leonard Leader, *Los Angeles and the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 3-4.

⁶⁴ Leader, 10, 13-14.

⁶⁵ Leader, 229, 231.

⁶⁶ California State Data Center, “Historical Census Populations of California, Counties, and Incorporated Cities, 1850-2010,” Department of Finance, accessed November 2, 2016, http://www.dof.ca.gov/Reports/Demographic_Reports; Cuff, 34.

⁶⁷ Cuff, 29.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 16

became common. According to the Real Property Inventory, published in 1939, approximately 7,700 people lived in accommodations without interior toilets. The 1940 Census reported that more than 19,000 families were living in overcrowded conditions.⁶⁸

The need to provide adequate and suitable living quarters was stressed by public housing advocates. Of primary concern was the linkage between slum conditions and social problems, including poverty, crime, and health. In Southern California, where many migrants had moved since the turn of the century for its promise of healthful living conditions and beneficial climate, the issue of slums and ill health was particularly poignant. Public housing was promoted as the solution to these issues.⁶⁹ Oftentimes, however, the classification of a neighborhood as a slum was politically driven. As historian Dana Cuff points out, in a 25 year period between 1910 and 1935, many of the working class neighborhoods adjacent to downtown were “physically and conceptually reinvented as ‘slum’” areas that needed to be improved and addressed by the newly-created public housing program.⁷⁰

Development of Public Housing and Garden Apartments in Los Angeles Before World War II

The earliest public housing and garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles were constructed at the end of the Great Depression. The threat of slum proliferation crystallized into a looming threat during this period as the economic downturn continued. In 1938, the state passed the California State Enabling Acts, which allowed public bodies involved in low-income public housing construction to “do any and all things necessary or convenient to aid and cooperate in the planning, undertaking, construction, or operation of housing projects.”⁷¹ The same year, the Housing Act of 1937 created HACLA. The Enabling Acts gave HACLA the right of eminent domain to begin slum clearance, since the existence of slums was “a problem that could be addressed by demolition paired with construction of modern, affordable housing.”⁷² Over the next several years, HACLA would transform neighborhoods into low-income housing utilizing these new rights. Some of the most well known architects in the region designed the housing projects of the next two decades, initially due to the dearth of commissions during the Depression years.⁷³

The wave of housing construction in the Los Angeles area began with the completion of two County of Los Angeles projects, Carmelitos in Long Beach and Harbor Hills adjacent to San Pedro Bay. Designed in consultation with Clarence Stein beginning in 1938, Carmelitos was comprised of 87 buildings on a 50-acre site. It was soon followed by the construction of Harbor Hills. Though the site was 102 acres in size, only 27 acres were developed due to its topography. The 52 buildings were arranged in a unique chevron pattern to accommodate the site’s canyons. Both complexes included recreational facilities; at Carmelitos, these included playgrounds and a nursery school, while residents of Harbor Hills were

⁶⁸ Historic Resources Group, “Building, Structure Object Record: Rose Hill Courts,” December 2002, 15.

⁶⁹ Cuff, 21, 103.

⁷⁰ Cuff, 126.

⁷¹ Cuff, 143.

⁷² Cuff, 143.

⁷³ Cuff, 21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 17

provided with a spray pool, nursery, and community building.⁷⁴ These projects were followed by Wyvernwood (1939), the first garden apartment complex constructed in the City of Los Angeles. Located in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights, the project was financed by the Federal Housing Administration and cost an estimated \$6,000,000. Work on the 72-acre project started in the spring of 1939 and was completed in phases. The complex, which was intended for the families of professionals, tradespeople, and businessmen, contained 142 two-story buildings with 1,102 units. Each unit included a garage, service yard, and garden. Approximately 70% of the complex's acreage was devoted to open green space.⁷⁵ Landscaping consisted of more than 600,000 trees, plants, and shrubs. Also included in the complex were parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, and a retail shopping area.⁷⁶ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that "the development of such residence areas, with their interior streets kept free as much as possible from traffic problems, has been long forecast. Whether it is the ultimate solution of a metropolitan problem remains to be seen, but it is at least interesting."⁷⁷ The *Times* was careful to specify on several separate occasions that Wyvernwood was privately owned and in no way connected to slum clearance projects. The property was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 through the Section 106 process.

After the formation of HACLA, the construction of public housing proceeded at a rapid pace. In 1941 and 1942, sixteen public housing complexes were constructed by the City and County Housing Authorities, generating about 9,000 units of housing.⁷⁸ The first ten projects constructed in the City of Los Angeles were Ramona Gardens, Pico Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, Rancho San Pedro, Aliso Village, Rose Hill Courts, Estrada Courts, William Mead Homes, Avalon Gardens, and Hacienda Village (now Gonzaque Village).⁷⁹ Ramona Gardens, the first public housing project constructed by HACLA, was built in 1940-1941. The 32-acre, 610-unit complex replaced substandard housing in the same location. It included recreational facilities such as a cooking school and music program.⁸⁰ The property was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

Rose Hill Courts, completed in 1942, involved the clearance of land that had been categorized as slums as well as the erection of a new housing complex on the site. The fourteen two-story buildings covered just 19% of the five-acre site. Like other public housing projects from the period, the residential buildings were arranged in parallel groups, which created a series of courtyards in the complex. An administration building completed the project.⁸¹ The beginning of World War II interrupted work, when all housing projects under construction were repurposed as defense housing. The property reverted back to low-income housing again after the war.⁸² Rose Hill Courts was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 through the Section 106 process.

⁷⁴ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 25.

⁷⁵ No Author, "Nation's Greatest Home Job Starts Here Soon," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1938, 1.

⁷⁶ No Author, "A City in Itself," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1938, A4.

⁷⁷ No Author, "A City in Itself," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1938, A4.

⁷⁸ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 25.

⁷⁹ Page and Turnbull, "Jordan Downs Historic Significance Evaluation, Los Angeles, CA," August 2011, 14-15.

⁸⁰ No Author, "Straus Tours Housing Units," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1941, A1.

⁸¹ Historic Resources Group, "Primary Record: Rose Hill Courts," December 2002, 1.

⁸² Historic Resources Group, "Building, Structure Object Record: Rose Hill Courts," December 2002, 4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 18

At the same time that the public housing program was being established to give “decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income,” the City and County of Los Angeles created a proposed master plan. The housing developments being constructed at the time were intended to fit into this larger master plan and in some cases to complement it.⁸³ The master plan also included improvements to major automobile thoroughfares, transportation, sanitation, and other aspects of the city’s infrastructure. Architect Richard Neutra, who authored the section entitled “Homes and Housing,” laid out the city’s current situation and argued that the public housing program was the most effective way to address the problems the city faced. He noted that the single-family residences existing in the city “are very rarely grouped in consistent and true neighborhoods” and that “social gathering space, communal play areas for children, so naturally gregarious and so endangered by motorized street traffic, are still singular exceptions.”⁸⁴ The plan hoped to address these issues through “improved practice in the future, although it is primarily the large scale housing projects, such as, for example, those sponsored by governmental agencies, which may be able to avail themselves of broader conceptions and of pertinent planning talent.” A homeowner could not achieve this as an individual.⁸⁵ In 1942, soon after the publication of the master plan, Los Angeles planner Mel Scott noted, “The need now is to relate all further improvements to broad, regional plans so that every street, home, park, and public building may form part of a completely harmonious community.”⁸⁶ The architects and planners working with the City and County housing authorities believed that “through organic community planning, life could be made simpler and more harmonious.”⁸⁷ Neutra noted that Los Angeles was in an ideal position to set an example for other cities, for the city had “abundant space, favorable climate, and diversification of population and material resources. It is less burdened by inert routine than other more aged centers, and it appears predestined to further novel and exemplary developments in matters of human shelter and living, of wholesome comfort, and of communal beauty for all.”⁸⁸

During the same period that public agencies sought solutions to the city’s overcrowded housing, real estate developers with federally subsidized loans, began building garden apartment complexes. These complexes, geared towards middle-class residents, aimed to provide the same superior living environment that public housing complexes did.⁸⁹ In Los Angeles, private garden apartment complexes constructed at this time included Wyvernwood (discussed above), Baldwin Hills Village (today Village Green), and Parklabrea (today Park La Brea).

Clarence Stein was involved in the planning of Baldwin Hills Village, which opened in 1942. Stein’s Garden City ideas were highly influential in the design of Baldwin Hills Village, and he considered the complex “to be more advanced conceptually than Radburn, particularly in its separation of pedestrian and automobile traffic.”⁹⁰ The 64-acre complex was designed by Los Angeles architects Reginald

⁸³ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 26.

⁸⁴ Richard J. Neutra, “Homes and Housing,” in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, ed. George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton, (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 194.

⁸⁵ Neutra, 194-195.

⁸⁶ Mel Scott quoted in Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 26.

⁸⁷ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 66.

⁸⁸ Neutra, 201.

⁸⁹ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 38.

⁹⁰ Dorothy Fue Wong, Robert Nicolais, and Michael Tomlan, “Baldwin Hills Village National Historic Landmark

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 19

Johnson, Lewis Wilson, Edwin Merrill, and Robert Alexander, and received funding from the Federal Housing Administration. The community featured large areas of open space punctuated by pedestrian walkways, community clubhouse, tennis courts, and playgrounds. As was typical of Garden City complexes, residential buildings faced towards landscaped courtyards and away from automobile thoroughfares.⁹¹ Baldwin Hills Village was nationally recognized for its design by the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1945 and the American Institute of Architects in 1972.⁹² The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001.

Parklabrea opened in 1943 and was constructed in two phases. The first phase consisted of two-story buildings arranged in a radial plan. The low-density buildings only covered 18% of the 175-acre site, and every unit looked out onto open green space. The project was developed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company – one of only seven in the country to be built by the company. Metropolitan Life briefly entered the housing market as a developer out of a desire to contribute in a meaningful, lasting way to communities through investment in public projects. Parklabrea’s second phase, located at the eastern side of the site, was developed with 13-story towers constructed in 1951 to address the post-World War II housing shortage in the city. It is the only garden apartment complex in Los Angeles to feature high-rise towers like these.⁹³

Pre-World War II garden apartment complexes, both publically and privately developed, clearly show the influence of Stein and Wright’s Radburn plan. These early complexes were constructed on multi-acre sites and utilized the superblock, differentiating them from the surrounding urban grid and turning the complex inwards towards open green space. Buildings faced this green space rather than streets, which in turn separated pedestrian from automobile traffic. At the same time, the garden apartment complex took on unique regional characteristics due to the area’s temperate climate and the influences of local vegetation and architectural styles.⁹⁴ The popularity of the automobile, which by the 1930s was a well-established mode of transportation in Los Angeles, also influenced the arrangement of garden apartment complexes in the city. More so than in other areas, designers of garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles had to integrate the use of the automobile into their plans. This included the inclusion of garages and vehicular roads. The superblock, however, proved conducive to accommodating the automobile, as vehicular traffic and garages were simply moved to the perimeter of the property, while pedestrian traffic and open space were situated at the center.⁹⁵ Any residential buildings adjacent to roads faced away from automobile thoroughfares.

These prewar sites were also characterized by the inclusion of community and recreational amenities such as educational facilities, a community building, and playgrounds.⁹⁶ These were considered an

nomination,” May 2000, 18.

⁹¹ Wong, Nicolais, and Tomlan, 5, 7.

⁹² Wong, Nicolais, and Tomlan, 18-19.

⁹³ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 39.

⁹⁴ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 34.

⁹⁵ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 34-35.

⁹⁶ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 25-26.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 20

important part of a complex's design due to the belief that housing could address and solve social ills. As had been common during the Progressive Era, it was believed that social problems resulted from low-income residents living in slum conditions. HACLA reported that, "you can't expect to produce good citizens if you force large segments of the population to live in sub-standard homes. You can't let idle or underprivileged individuals worry alone about their problems. Guidance and community activities must be provided. That is why the Commissioners of the City Authority have insisted that recreational space and community activities must be provided for all 16 developments" constructed in the early 1940s.⁹⁷ Architects and planners believed that by providing recreational facilities and other amenities, the social problems they saw as affecting those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale could be corrected.

Defense Housing and Private Garden Apartments during World War II

Even before the United States' official entry into World War II, the country began mobilizing for the war effort. The passage of the Lanham Act in 1940 aimed to provide housing, both permanent and temporary, for defense workers as quickly as possible and then incorporate that housing into the private real estate market after the war.⁹⁸ While certain aspects of the wartime housing construction program under the Lanham Act were controlled by the federal government, "the construction and management aspects of the operation were quickly decentralized to regional offices. Wherever possible, local communities and public housing authorities actively participated in determining what type of development would occur in a particular area and the selection of architects."⁹⁹ In Los Angeles alone, 700,000 permanent and temporary housing units were slated to be constructed for defense workers under the Act.¹⁰⁰ Though the country had not yet entered World War II, the defense industry was already gearing up for wartime production. The city's defense industries, including aircraft manufacturing and shipbuilding, drew people from all over the country looking for work. The population of Los Angeles exploded, and the housing shortage became immediate and dire. To exacerbate the problem, materials previously used for housing were being rerouted to the war effort and were increasingly hard to come by.¹⁰¹

In the face of the housing shortage, nearly all low-income housing complexes in the city were converted into housing for defense workers. Ramona Gardens was the only public housing project in Los Angeles that continued to serve low-income residents during World War II.¹⁰² It was intended that these complexes revert to low-income housing again after the end of the war.¹⁰³ Attempts to make existing public housing available to defense workers appear to have been successful. The Director of the Federal Public Housing Authority noted in 1942 that "Because the planning and construction of public housing

⁹⁷ Howard Holtzendorff, "Homes for Heroes," 1942, unpaginated, quoted on Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 35.

⁹⁸ Cuff, 177.

⁹⁹ Lusignan et al., E60.

¹⁰⁰ Horak and Keylon, "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles," 29.

¹⁰¹ No Author, "Straus Tours Housing Units," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1941, A1.

¹⁰² Lusignan et al., E56.

¹⁰³ No Author, "Vast Housing Program Begun on \$22,900 Loan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1942, 20.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 21

developments was so well initiated before Pearl Harbor, the conversion of these developments into a war housing program has enabled the working men and women in war plants to live in safe, modern homes near their work.”¹⁰⁴

The last of the original ten public housing projects built by HACLA was dedicated in late 1942. Aliso Village was constructed as defense housing on land that had been categorized as slums and slated for potential clearance as early as 1934. By 1938, it was publically known that the neighborhood would be razed for a public housing project. The neighborhood, known alternately as The Flats, Russian Town, or Boyle Heights Flats, was considered to be one of the worst slum neighborhoods in the city, though much of this opinion may have been politically motivated.¹⁰⁵ The 34-acre site was developed with 32 buildings for a total of 802 units. It also included a nursery school, play areas, and a community hall. The complex, the *Times* wrote, represented “another step in Los Angeles’ efforts to house it war workers in clean, attractive, healthful homes.”¹⁰⁶ Aliso Village was demolished in 1999 and replaced with a housing development called Pueblo Del Sol.

The earliest housing projects constructed by HACLA were racially segregated; however, the Citizens’ Housing Council protested this policy. The Council, whose membership included some of the city’s premier architects, had begun lobbying in favor of low-income housing programs in the 1930s. By 1942, due in part to the Council’s efforts, HACLA’s public housing complexes were among the first in the country to be racially integrated.¹⁰⁷ At the time, FHA and USHA guidelines dictated that the racial makeup of a public housing complex should reflect that of the surrounding neighborhood. This policy only promoted segregation further, as the neighborhoods selected for public housing were in general racially homogenous. During the war, an influx of African Americans and other minority populations and the enforcement of racial covenants, which restricted where minority groups could live, led to overcrowding and deteriorating conditions in established minority neighborhoods. In the face of these issues, HACLA initiated a more flexible approach. It created the Advisory Committee on Tenant Selection, made up of a diverse team of professionals, to oversee the population make-up of new housing projects and ensure that the tenant population reflected that of the surrounding area but also allowed for members of other races to apply. Ramona Gardens became one of the first integrated public housing projects in the country, though quotas were initially used to balance the tenant population (this policy was soon abandoned).¹⁰⁸ Aliso Village, also among the country’s first integrated public housing complexes, was open to “citizens of every race and creed,” for they were the “real owners of Aliso Village.”¹⁰⁹ The result was public housing complexes that varied in their racial composition, depending on the makeup of the surrounding community. The percentage of any given race varied from complex to complex but remained mixed. HACLA even offered housing to non-United States citizens (primarily from Mexico), but its progressive policies did not extend to Asian Americans. Very few Asian

¹⁰⁴ Nicola Giulii, Chairman of HACLA, letter to Mayor Fletcher Brown dated July 1, 1942, quoted in Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 30.

¹⁰⁵ Cuff, 52, 135, 147.

¹⁰⁶ No Author, “Aliso Village Ceremony Set,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1942, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Cuff, 144, 158-159.

¹⁰⁸ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 41-43.

¹⁰⁹ Cuff, 161; No Author, “Aliso Village Ceremony Set,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1942, 15.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 22

Americans applied to live in public housing complexes, though they often lived in the same substandard conditions as other minorities. This lack of interest reinforced the stereotypes held by social workers at the time that “both Chinese and Japanese Americans [...took] care of their own and staying out of trouble.”¹¹⁰

By 1942, HACLA was operating nine housing projects for defense workers with a total of nearly 2,700 units.¹¹¹ In addition, more public housing was constructed specifically for defense workers during the war, including Jordan Downs (1944, extant configuration 1955) in Watts and Imperial Courts (1944) in South Los Angeles. Both were utilized as public housing after the war.¹¹² Mayor Fletcher Bowron emphasized the importance of providing defense worker housing during the dedication ceremonies for the newly constructed Aliso Village project in 1942. “It is a healthy sign for democracy to be able to complete a public housing program while most of the world is wrapped up in thoughts of death and destruction,” he stressed. “Our city is playing a tremendous role in the death struggle with the Axis dictators. The spirit and strength of Los Angeles are being felt in every part of the world. I would like the see this community establish the policy that democracy must continue to develop through service to its people in times of peace as well as war. Public housing is one social movement which can make Los Angeles the servant of future generations.”¹¹³

Despite the mayor’s approval of low-income housing, projects faced opposition in City Council at times. The William Mead Homes project, originally known as the Ann Street project, was initially rejected due to the high cost of the land upon which it was to be constructed. The Council also opposed the location of the project, stating that the site, situated in an industrial neighborhood adjacent to railroad tracks, was not a suitable one for housing. Only the assurance of additional federal aid persuaded the City Council to approve the project. The 449-unit project involved the clearance of seven acres of slums and was originally constructed to serve low-income families, though when it opened in the spring of 1943, it was made available to defense workers.¹¹⁴ William Mead Homes was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Despite the rapid pace of construction of low-income and defense housing, the housing shortage remained a problem. As a result, temporary defense housing complexes were also developed, including the Wilmington Hall Dormitories, Wilmington Hall Annex, Channel Heights, and Banning Homes, all located in Wilmington near the Port of Los Angeles.¹¹⁵ Though these complexes were meant to be

¹¹⁰ Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009): 77-78 quoted in Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 44.

¹¹¹ Lusignan et al., E56.

¹¹² Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 30; Page and Turnbull, 16.

¹¹³ No Author, “Wartime Housing Cited as Proof of Democracy,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1942, 16.

¹¹⁴ No Author, “Council Delays Housing Plans,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1940, 9; No Author, “Slum Clearance Projects Defeated in City Council,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 29, 1940, A8; No Author, “Housing Project Again Rejected,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1940, A16; No Author, “President Approves Loan for Slum Clearance Here,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1941, A1; No Author, “Low Rental Homes Opened for Workers,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1943, A8.

¹¹⁵ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 30; No Author, “Wartime Housing Project in Harbor Area

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 23

temporary, they often included amenities such as those found at permanent public housing communities. Wilmington Hall, for example, included facilities such as a theater, library, recreational facilities, community store, and infirmary. Recreational activities planned for residents included movie screenings, softball games, dances, and vaudeville shows.¹¹⁶ Temporary defense housing was also constructed from Quonset huts, trailers, and other portable structures.¹¹⁷

The design and layout of World War II period public housing complexes was very much a continuation of their prewar counterparts. Density remained relatively low, and buildings were interspersed with landscaping, which became more austere, especially in temporary defense housing projects. Temporary complexes were intended to be reused after the end of the war. Infrastructure and even street layout were designed so that permanent single- or multi-family housing could be constructed to replace the temporary buildings.¹¹⁸

The Postwar Period and the 1949 Housing Act

With the resumption of peace, the population of Los Angeles once again surged as veterans both returned home and moved to the area. Between 1950 and 1960, the population of the city rose from 1,970,358 to 2,479,015.¹¹⁹ This rapid growth again resulted in a dire housing shortage in the city, which was still grappling with the issue of providing accommodations for wartime defense workers. Veterans and others looking for housing used Quonset huts, buses, and even old rail cars as refurbished living quarters. The situation was so drastic that the United States Employment Service discouraged people from moving to Southern California due to both a labor shortage and “an extremely critical housing shortage.”¹²⁰

Though the private real estate industry would eventually recover and challenge public housing, in the immediate postwar period, it was not yet strong enough to meet the incredible demand. Materials shortages and inflation stalled the recovery of the private construction industry. At the same time, it was estimated that the city would need 280,000 new units of housing per year to answer the demand.¹²¹ In the face of the housing shortage, local housing authorities agreed to extend the life of temporary defense housing and make them available to veterans.¹²² Many of these projects were utilized into the mid-1950s. In addition, the federal government passed the Emergency Housing Appropriation Bill, which sought to provide desperately needed housing for veterans. In Los Angeles, one of the sites resulting from this effort was Rodger Young Village.¹²³

Dedicated,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1942, A1.

¹¹⁶ No Author, “Housing Project Open to Women,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1943, B20.

¹¹⁷ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 30.

¹¹⁸ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 30.

¹¹⁹ California State Data Center, “Historical Census Populations of California, Counties, and Incorporated Cities, 1850-2010,” Department of Finance, accessed November 2, 2016, http://www.dof.ca.gov/Reports/Demographic_Reports.

¹²⁰ Cuff, 182-183, 220.

¹²¹ Cuff, 181.

¹²² Lusignan et al., E65.

¹²³ Cuff, 183, 220.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 24

Rodger Young Village was constructed in 1946 on 112 acres of land at the northeast corner of Griffith Park. The complex was finished in just over 90 days. Once completed, it consisted of 750 Quonset huts, each of which housed two families, a commercial center constructed in airplane hangars, community center, churches, and an elementary school. It housed 1,500 veterans’ families. There were over 13,000 applicants for the complex, an indication of the magnitude of the city’s housing shortage. Like other veterans’ housing complexes during the postwar period, Rodger Young Village was racially integrated. The community was demolished in 1954 despite vehement protests by its residents.¹²⁴

The construction of private garden apartment complexes continued in the postwar period, driven by the need for housing. At the end of the decade, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) temporarily renewed Section 608, which provided financing to developers of multi-family housing if they met FHA guidelines. These guidelines favored the design of garden apartments. As a result, in 1949 and 1950 alone, at least a dozen garden apartment complexes were constructed in Los Angeles.¹²⁵ Among the complexes constructed during this two-year period were Chase Knolls (1949), Belford Park Apartments (1949), Lincoln Place (1950), North Hollywood Manor (1950), and Sunset Barrington Apartments (1950).

The passage of the Housing Act of 1949 was intended to ease the housing shortage facing communities across the country. The Act authorized the construction of 135,000 new units of public housing per year for the next six years (a total of 810,000 units). Unlike earlier housing legislation, the Housing Act of 1949 intimately linked public housing construction with urban redevelopment or slum clearance. All over the country, inner city urban sites, often occupied by minority residents, were redeveloped with public and private housing. The passage of the Act sparked a new era of public housing construction in Los Angeles. HACLA received funding for 10,000 new units of public housing spread across eleven new housing projects.¹²⁶ This included both the construction of new complexes and the expansion of existing ones, including Aliso Village, Rose Hill Courts, Estrada Courts, Rancho San Pedro, and Pueblo Del Rio.¹²⁷

Even prior to the passage of the 1949 Act, housing advocates in Los Angeles had selected sites they felt were ideal for new public housing projects. The largest of these was Chavez Ravine, located on 254 acres adjacent to Elysian Park outside of downtown. The area was home to an established Mexican and Mexican American neighborhood of approximately 3,300 residents as well as agricultural land, a brickworks, the Palo Verde Elementary School, and a collection of buildings owned by the Catholic Church. The site was to be redeveloped as Elysian Park Heights, a community comprised of low- and high-rise buildings with approximately 3,600 public housing units, a community building, and two schools. Architects Robert Alexander and Richard Neutra designed the complex. In the face of public opposition, the high-rise buildings were eventually eliminated from the plans and the site’s density was

¹²⁴ Cuff 54, 55, 180, 186-187, 195, 199-201.

¹²⁵ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 40.

¹²⁶ Cuff, 55; Christopher Hetzel, “District Record: Mar Vista Gardens,” June 2014, 5.

¹²⁷ Page and Turnbull, “Jordan Downs,” 18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 25

reduced to 2,800 units. The residents of Chavez Ravine opposed the plan, and a third of residents refused to sell their property, forcing HACLA to commence condemnation proceedings.¹²⁸

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the political and public tide was turning against public housing in Los Angeles, often “bound up with the McCarthy-era criminalization of socialism and Communism [sic].”¹²⁹ In addition, the private real estate industry, finally recovering from the war era, became increasingly vocal against public housing. The governmental preference for the private real estate industry during the war continued into the postwar period, and as discussed above, the federal housing program, though intended to be bolstered by the 1949 Housing Act, faced obstacles from the beginning. In Los Angeles, real estate groups, individual homeowners, and others (including the *Los Angeles Times* and the Committee Against Socialist Housing) opposed the new projects and sought to block them. They accused the housing authority of being infiltrated by communists and socialists, and in the political climate of the early 1950s, this was more than enough to significantly hamper the public housing program.¹³⁰

Public opposition to the housing program also grew in the early 1950s. After HACLA received approval for the eleven projects funded under the 1949 Housing Act, property owners vehemently voiced their opposition. In the face of the political pressures of the day, the Los Angeles City Council, previously supportive of the public housing program, now began to oppose it as well. The City Council ordered HACLA to cease development on all of the proposed projects, and HACLA fought back, arguing that the City Council had no authority to cancel projects sponsored by the federal government. The case went to the state supreme court, which ruled that the City Council could not cancel its established agreement with the housing authority. In June 1952, in a public referendum on public housing, the majority of voters favored the end of the public housing program. As part of its ruling, the Supreme Court stated that the referendum would have no legal standing. However, by the end of June 1952, a new federal bill passed that ended funding for public housing projects in cities where votes such as the referendum indicated that such projects were opposed. Soon after, the mayor, along with members of City Council and HACLA, met with federal housing officials to discuss the termination of the housing program. Projects for which construction had already started were allowed to go ahead, but the Chavez Ravine project was terminated.¹³¹ By 1955, the public housing program in Los Angeles had ended, and the city shifted its focus to other urban renewal efforts. The land the housing authority had acquired in Chavez Ravine was eventually sold and developed as Dodger Stadium.

Among the last public housing complexes to be constructed in the city were Mar Vista Gardens (1954), San Fernando Gardens (1955), and Imperial Compton (now Nickerson Gardens, 1955). Jordan Downs and Imperial Courts, both originally constructed in 1944 as defense housing, were rebuilt in 1955. Mar Vista Gardens was constructed in West Los Angeles on 43 acres. The complex contains 62 two-story buildings with 601 units as well as a community center, maintenance building, and management building. The complex, originally known as the “West Los Angeles Site,” was completed in 1954 and

¹²⁸ Cuff, 55, 276, 287.

¹²⁹ Cuff, 199.

¹³⁰ McDonald, 7.

¹³¹ Cuff, 295; Christopher Hetzel, “District Record: Mar Vista Gardens,” June 2014, 6-7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 26

was the first new public housing project in the city constructed with funds from the 1949 Housing Act. Like other projects from this period, construction of the complex faced political and public opposition from the beginning.¹³² The reconstruction of Jordan Downs and Imperial Courts were referred to at the time as “reconversions,” in an attempt to lessen public disapproval to the projects.¹³³

Private garden apartment construction faced a similar fate during the 1950s. Funding from the Federal Housing Administration was drying up, and developers shifted their construction efforts to single-family residences. In addition, charges of corruption against private developers of garden apartments and FHA officials erupted in 1954, leading to scandal and further tarnishing the reputation of multi-family housing. Of the 70 projects involved in the “windfall scandals,” as they were known, five of these were located in Los Angeles. This cast a pall over the FHA’s construction program. Combined with a changing political climate, few garden apartments were constructed after 1955.¹³⁴

Public housing and garden apartment complexes from the postwar period differ in a number of aspects from their prewar counterparts. Though the influence of Garden City principles remains evident in their design and layout, postwar complexes are usually higher in density, “with more emphasis on unit count than open space.”¹³⁵ While prewar complexes typically had a density of anywhere from one to 20 units per acre, postwar housing complexes usually had a density of 20 to 30 units per acre. Postwar housing complexes typically feature less open green space and often lack the community and recreational amenities of prewar housing.¹³⁶ This is largely because postwar multi-family residential construction was motivated by the need to erect large amounts of housing quickly in order to address the shortage the city faced.

Conclusion

The United States’ public housing program represented the culmination of decades of agitation for housing reform. Seeking an alternative to the urban slums resulting from the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, housing reformers urged the federal government to step in and provide decent housing at an affordable cost when local legislation and private efforts proved ineffectual. It was not until the economic crisis of the 1930s that the federal government established a public housing program to provide shelter for low-income residents. The program was linked to slum clearance to varying degrees over the course the next 25 years, with mixed results. Competition between public housing and the private real estate industry, which oftentimes played out politically at the federal level, also affected the degree to which local housing authorities erected housing. Though the debate between public housing and private enterprise often limited the scope of public housing’s success, the program as it developed from the 1930s to the 1950s had a profound impact on the built environment and housing in America. It laid the foundation for the development of public housing in cities across the country, including Los Angeles.

¹³² Christopher Hetzel, “District Record: Mar Vista Gardens,” June 2014, 2, 7.

¹³³ Page and Turnbull, “Jordan Downs,” 18.

¹³⁴ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 21-22.

¹³⁵ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 40.

¹³⁶ Horak and Keylon, “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles,” 21, 40.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number E Page 27

The formation of the city’s public housing program resulted in the construction of numerous public housing projects by the outbreak of World War II in the early 1940s. The majority of these projects were converted to defense housing during the war to help alleviate the housing shortage the city faced. During the prewar and World War II period, the city’s tradition of relatively low-density housing continued with the construction of public housing and private garden apartments, in which low-rise buildings were interspersed with large amounts of green space. It was not until after the war that these housing types became higher in density, with more emphasis on raising unit counts than on providing green space and community amenities. It was also during this period that the political climate changed, and the housing program faced opposition from the public, organizations, and the private real estate industry. Charges of socialism and Communism tarnished the reputation of public housing during the 1950s, spelling the end of the public housing program in the city. Private garden apartment construction also largely ended at the same time due to the preference for single-family residential construction during the postwar period. By 1955, though construction continued elsewhere in the country, both public housing and private garden apartments had ceased being built in Los Angeles.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 28

Section F. Associated Property Types

The following section lays out registration requirements for publically and privately developed garden apartment complexes to guide their evaluation as a property type in the City of Los Angeles. Associated property types include pre-World War II and World War II period complexes and postwar complexes.

Pre-WWII and WWII Garden Apartment Complexes (1939 – 1945)

Description

Publicly and privately developed complexes from this period share many of the same physical characteristics, as both were influenced by the principles of the Garden City movement. They generally consist of individual buildings situated in groups on a large multi-block site. The number of buildings in a complex can vary. Lot density is low, typically between 20% and 25%. Automobile and pedestrian traffic are kept separate, with automobile traffic relegated to the exterior of a complex as much as possible. The layout of buildings on a site varies, but they are generally arranged around interior courtyards or landscaped green spaces. The site plan, amount of open space, and landscaping, including complexity of the landscape plan, will vary between projects, especially public and private projects. Public projects tended to have more pared down landscape plans due to budget constraints. A complex's buildings face toward its green space and away from automobile streets. Buildings are generally one to two stories in height, though they can be three stories in height as well. Buildings in complexes from this period generally reflect the influence of the Mid-Century Modern or Minimal Traditional styles as well as the International Style. Those in earlier complexes may show more architectural detail than those constructed later, as budget and time constraints in later years led to more restrained design. Garages are typically situated to the rear of residential buildings. Complexes may include a community or recreation building as well as other amenities such as playgrounds and laundry areas.

Public housing complexes from the pre-World War II and World War II period are generally located to the south and east of downtown Los Angeles, while privately developed garden apartment complexes from this period are scattered throughout the city, though they are generally located to the west of downtown.

The character-defining/associative features¹³⁷ of public and private garden apartment complexes from the pre-World War II and World War II period are as follows:

- Multi-block superblock set apart from surrounding urban grid
- Low-density lot coverage (buildings typically occupy less than 20% - 25% of the site)
- Separation of automobile and pedestrian traffic

¹³⁷ The character-defining and associative features have been adapted from the eligibility standards for garden apartments in the Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, specifically the Residential Development and Suburbanization Context. These include the property types for public housing complexes, garden apartments, and garden apartment complexes.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 29

- Landscaping may be an integral aspect of overall design, though it is more likely that overall site plan and the relationship between buildings and open space will be integral
- Site may include residential and non-residential buildings, such as community center or recreation center, and recreational areas such as playgrounds
- Buildings oriented inwards towards courtyards and landscaping
- Building layout can vary but generally consists of buildings arranged around a courtyard or open green space
- Garages are generally detached
- Buildings are generally one to two stories in height, sometimes three stories
- Buildings are typically stucco over wood framing, sometimes brick cladding or a combination of stucco and brick
- Buildings are generally designed in the Mid-Century Modern or Minimal Traditional styles as well as the International Style
- Stylistic characteristics of individual buildings can include flat or low-pitched roofs, wide roof overhangs, and horizontal bands of metal windows with minimal ornamentation
- Individual buildings may have cantilevered concrete or metal canopies over entryways, or brick or concrete belt courses

Significance

Criterion A

Public and private garden apartment complexes from the pre-World War II and World War II period may be significant for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. As stated in the "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" MPS "the development of federal public housing programs during the 1930s and 1940s represented a crucial event in U.S. history. The efforts of Federal, state, and local agencies and the individuals involved in the establishment of these programs comprised a complex series of political, economic, social, and military events that affected the lives of thousands and changed the face of communities across the nation."¹³⁸ In Los Angeles, complexes from this period include the first ten public housing projects constructed by HACLA. Most these were converted into defense housing during World War II, and back to public housing afterward. Two of these have been demolished; the eight remaining complexes may be significant under Criterion A as examples of the earliest federal efforts to assist local communities in slum clearance and low-rent housing construction and/or examples of federal efforts to alleviate severe housing shortages in important industrial centers like Los Angeles during World War II.¹³⁹

Public housing complexes from this period may be significant in the areas of Social History, Politics/Government, and/or Community Development, depending on the circumstances surrounding their construction. Some projects may also be significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage, as some of the projects operated by HACLA during the war were racially integrated, including Ramona Gardens

¹³⁸ Lusignan et al., F74.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 30

(1941), Hacienda Village (1942, now Gonzaque Village), Pueblo Del Rio (1942), and William Mead Homes (1942). Please see the "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" MPS page F74 for more information. It is important to note that the Multiple Property Submission points out:

"A comparative analysis will be important in circumstances where several properties in a given geographic area relate to the same themes or areas of significance, for example in a community that witnessed substantial infrastructure development in anticipation of the war or a community in which several public housing projects were developed within a short period of time as a result of enthusiastic local community activity. It may be that only certain of these associated resources played truly important roles relative to the historic theme."¹⁴⁰

Private garden apartment complexes from the period may be significant under Criteria A for their association with the development of private multi-family housing in Los Angeles. They were constructed to answer a similar need for housing in the private housing market, often for middle-class residents as opposed to low-income residents. An example is Baldwin Hills Village (1942, now Village Green). The complex is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark. Though only a small number of private garden apartments were constructed during the war due to shortages of materials and labor, they represent continued efforts by the private construction industry to provide quality multi-family housing at an affordable cost. They may also reflect the prevailing attitude at the time that housing could provide social benefits to its residents in the form of community amenities and programs. An example includes Park La Brea (1943, expanded in 1951); it has been previously determined eligible for the National Register. Like public housing complexes, the potential significance of private garden apartment complexes should be analyzed as part of a large whole.

Criterion C

A distinction has not been made between public housing and private garden apartment complexes under this criterion, as both were influenced by the principles of the Garden City movement and display the same character-defining features. In Los Angeles, public and private complexes share the same physical characteristics, including site layout, building density and orientation, and architectural style. The "Public Housing in the United States" MPS was utilized as a reference point for these properties. Though it only refers to public housing complexes, it may be extended to private garden apartments in most aspects since, as stated, the two types share many of the same physical characteristics.

Public and private complexes from this period may be significant under Criterion C as a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (historic district). An individual building in a complex would not typically be considered significant unless it can be shown that it is significant on its own. Complexes from the period would not be significant under this aspect of Criterion C alone, but would also have to be significant under Criterion A or another aspect of Criterion C.

¹⁴⁰ Lusignan et al., F75.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 31

Public and private garden apartments from this period may be significant under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The "Public Housing in the United States" MPS states "a property may be found significant as either an intact example of a planned residential community reflecting the important urban planning and housing design theories emerging during the period, or a representation of a distinctive architectural style."¹⁴¹ Properties may be significant "for the design and construction of innovative planned communities that illustrate significant examples of modern urban planning design theory."¹⁴² Public housing projects as well as private garden apartment complexes (in the case of Los Angeles) from this period were "often at the cutting edge of modern architectural design and planning philosophy. As built, these projects often stood out from the surrounding built environment and as such represented distinctive architectural components."¹⁴³

It should be noted that simply because a complex is designed in a particular architectural style does not make it significant as an example of that style. *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* points out, "To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction."¹⁴⁴ A property cannot simply possess the characteristics of the type or style, but must also an excellent example of that type or style. While the eight remaining public housing complexes in Los Angeles may possess some of the character-defining features of the Mid-Century Modern or Minimal Traditional styles or the International Style, the buildings in these complexes are not likely to be individually or collectively important examples. The case may be different for private complexes from the same period. For a property to be significant as a method of construction, it must be an important example of a particular building practice or construction type (or a variation, evolution, or transition of construction types).¹⁴⁵

Complexes may be significant for representing the work of a master. A single firm or the collaboration of an architecture and landscape architecture firm typically designed private complexes. Public complexes, on the other hand, were often the result of a collaboration of a group of architects, and generally a chief architect headed the team. This collaborative firm could be considered a "master" as a whole or group of master architects, depending on the nature of the collaboration. In the case of a single architect or firm, it must be shown that the architect or firm is a recognized master first and then that a property expresses "a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his or her work, or a particular idea of them in his or her craft."¹⁴⁶ A property is not significant simply because it was designed by a recognized master; it must also be illustrated that the property is significant in the overall body of their work. In the case of public housing projects designed by a group of architects in which that group is being considered a master or group of masters, it may be that the property illustrates

¹⁴¹ Lusignan et al., F77.

¹⁴² Lusignan et al., F76.

¹⁴³ Lusignan et al., F77.

¹⁴⁴ United States Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1990), 18.

¹⁴⁵ *National Register Bulletin #15*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ *National Register Bulletin #15*, 20.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 32

a design particular to that group's collaboration, one that is different than the work of any of the architects on their own. If a team was headed by a chief architect, it may be that a property is then considered significant as the work of that particular architect, if it can be illustrated that they are a master and the property is significant in the overall body of their work.

Integrity

In order to be eligible for the National Register, properties must not only display significance but they also must retain integrity, which is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The seven aspects of integrity are location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. The criterion or criteria under which a property is found to be significant has bearing upon those aspects of integrity, which are considered more or less important. Since public and private garden apartment complexes from this period will typically be evaluated as districts, both the overall integrity of the site as well as the integrity of individual buildings must be examined. The MPS notes "to be considered eligible, a substantial majority of a housing project's buildings must be intact."¹⁴⁷

Public and private garden apartment complexes from this period should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. Integrity of setting is particularly important since properties from the period were designed as a larger whole, incorporating buildings, site layout, and landscaping. It is not necessary for all original landscaping (specific plantings, trees, etc.) to remain since it is not always known what it consisted of originally. Rather, the overall site plan and use of the site plan, as well as the spatial relationship between buildings and open space should remain. A complex should retain overall integrity of design, especially since buildings are typically in the Mid-Century Modern or Minimal Traditional styles or International Style or were minimal in design originally. The replacement of materials (which impacts the integrity of materials as well as workmanship) will not necessarily result in a property being ineligible, if the materials have been replaced in kind. If replacement of materials or features has resulted the loss of key character-defining features or the overall character of a property, then this may result in ineligibility due to a lack of integrity.

Post-World War II Garden Apartment Complexes (1946 – 1955)

Description

Post-World War II public and private garden apartment complexes share many of the same overall characteristics as prewar and World War II period complexes. The influence of Garden City design principles remains evident. The use of the superblock remains prevalent, as does the separation of pedestrian and automobile traffic. Buildings face onto courtyards away from automobile thoroughfares and garages. There are, however, notable differences. This is a result of a need for large amounts of housing in the face of the city's postwar housing shortage. Postwar complexes generally have a higher density of buildings on a site than their prewar counterparts. Complexes also tend to be larger, and there is more emphasis on unit count than open green space. Postwar complexes usually contained fewer

¹⁴⁷ Lusignan et al., F87.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 33

community amenities, such as recreational buildings or playgrounds, than earlier complexes. Low-rise buildings continued to dominate public housing and garden apartment complexes in postwar Los Angeles, but one high-rise example exists (Park La Brea, 1943 and expanded in 1951). The site plan, landscaping (including the landscape plan), and architecture of later public housing projects was often increasingly utilitarian and less innovative due to increasing standardization of design in federal housing programs. This will not necessarily be the case for private complexes.

Public housing complexes from the postwar period are generally located to the south of downtown Los Angeles. Only a small number of new complexes were constructed; instead much of the postwar public housing program focused on the expansion or reconstruction of existing complexes. One of the few new public housing projects constructed during this period was Mar Vista Gardens (1954); it is the only complex located in West Los Angeles. Like prewar complexes, postwar garden apartments are scattered throughout the city, though they are generally located to the west of downtown and in the San Fernando Valley.

The character-defining/associative features¹⁴⁸ of public and private garden apartment complexes from the pre-World War II and World War II period are as follows:

- Complexes tended to be larger
- Use of the superblock in site planning
- Site planning and building layout was increasingly utilitarian and less innovative
- Continued separation of automobile and pedestrian traffic
- Higher density of buildings on the site
- Less emphasis on open green space, more emphasis on unit count
- Contained fewer community amenities than earlier public housing complexes
- Buildings face onto open courtyards or green space
- Garages are generally detached
- High-rise buildings potentially, though low-rise buildings still dominate
- Highly standardized in appearance and architectural design
- Buildings are typically stucco over wood framing
- Buildings are generally designed in the Mid-Century Modern, American Colonial Revival, or Minimal Traditional styles as well as the International Style
- Stylistic characteristics of individual buildings can include flat or low-pitched roofs, wide roof overhangs, and horizontal bands of metal windows with minimal ornamentation
- Individual buildings may have cantilevered concrete or metal canopies over entryways, or brick or concrete belt courses

¹⁴⁸ The character-defining and associative features for postwar public housing and private garden apartment complexes has been adapted from the Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, specifically the Residential Development and Suburbanization Context Theme Property Type (CTP) tables. These include the property type tables for garden apartments and garden apartment complexes. The tables for garden apartments were used as a basis for public housing complexes since, as stated previously, the two display many of the same physical characteristics. Though a public housing complex table exists, it was not utilized as it applies to World War II period projects.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 34

Significance

Criterion A

Public and private garden apartment complexes from this period may be significant for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Applicable themes or areas of significance may be Community Planning and Development, Social History, and/or Ethnic Heritage. The potential significance of a complex from this period should be analyzed as part of the larger trends of housing construction as laid out in the historic context for this MPD.

Public housing complexes from this period may be significant for their association with the revival of the public housing program under the Housing Act of 1949 and postwar residential development. With the passage of the 1949 Housing Act, the public housing program in Los Angeles became intimately linked with urban redevelopment, referred to at the time as slum clearance. The 1949 Housing Act resulted in the construction of new complexes, such as Mar Vista Gardens (1954) and Imperial Compton (now Nickerson Gardens, 1955) and the expansion of existing ones, including Rancho San Pedro (1953), Estrada Courts (1954), and Pueblo Del Rio (1955). However, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the political tide and public opinion were turning away from public housing in Los Angeles, linking it to communism and socialism. Other factors, including the recovery of the private real estate industry, which was vigorously opposed to public housing, and controversy over the Elysian Park Heights project in Chavez Ravine also contributed to the program's downfall. By the mid-1950s, the construction of new public housing projects had ended.

Private garden apartment complexes may be significant under Criterion A for their association with the surge in private residential construction that followed the war. The private construction industry stalled in the immediate postwar period due to continued materials shortages and inflation. Upon the renewal of Title 608 by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), financing became available to private developers of multi-family housing, provided the housing met FHA guidelines. This resulted in the rapid construction of private garden apartments in the late 1950s. The majority of extant private garden apartment complexes in the city were constructed during the postwar period. By the mid-1950s, however, funding from the FHA was drying up. In addition, scandal over the management of private garden apartment construction in 1954 essentially put an end to the development of private garden apartments after 1955.

Criterion C

Public housing and private garden apartment complexes from the postwar period may be significant under Criterion C as a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and/or as the work of a master. As with prewar and World War II period complexes, both public housing and private garden apartment complexes in Los Angeles from this period display many of the same physical characteristics. Therefore, a distinction has not been made between them under Criterion C.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 35

Public and private garden apartment complexes from this period may be significant under Criterion C as a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (in other words, a historic district). An individual building in a complex would not typically be considered significant on their own unless it can be shown that it is significant under Criteria A or C on its own. Complexes from the period would not be significant under this aspect of Criterion C alone, but would also have to be significant under Criterion A or another aspect of Criterion C.

Public housing projects and private garden apartments from the postwar period may be significant under Criterion C for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Complexes from this period display many of the same character-defining features as prewar and World War II period complexes, but there are notable differences. Postwar complexes are generally denser and larger than their prewar counterparts and display less innovation in site planning and layout. They also tend to be more standardized in their design and appearance; they often lack the community amenities of earlier public housing projects and garden apartments.

As with prewar and World War II period complexes, it should be noted that simply because a complex is an example of a particular architectural style does not make it significant as an example of that style. *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* points out, "To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction."¹⁴⁹ A property cannot simply possess the characteristics of a type or style, but must also be an excellent example of that type or style. For a property to be significant as a method of construction, it must be an important example of a particular building practice or construction type (or a variation, evolution, or transition of construction types).¹⁵⁰ It is not as likely that public or private complexes from this period will be significant for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a method of construction, as the priorities of low-cost, rapid construction did not encourage the use of innovative construction techniques or materials.

Complexes from the postwar period may be significant for representing the work of a master. Unlike prewar public complexes, postwar public complexes as well as private garden apartments were typically the work of a single architect (or partnership between architecture and landscape architecture firms). It must be shown that the architect is a recognized master first and then that a property expresses "a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his or her work, or a particular idea of them in his or her craft."¹⁵¹ A property is not significant simply because it was designed by a recognized master. It must also be illustrated that the property is significant in the overall body of their work.

¹⁴⁹ *National Register Bulletin #15*, 18.

¹⁵⁰ *National Register Bulletin #15*, 18.

¹⁵¹ *National Register Bulletin #15*, 20.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number F Page 36

Integrity

In order to be eligible for the National Register, properties must not only display significance but they also must retain integrity, which is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The seven aspects of integrity are location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. The criterion or criteria under which a property is found to be significant has bearing upon those aspects of integrity, which are considered more or less important. Since public housing projects and garden apartment complexes from this period will typically be evaluated as districts, both the overall integrity of the site as well as the integrity of individual buildings must be examined.

Public housing and garden apartment complexes from this period should retain integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. Integrity of setting is particularly important since properties from the period were designed as a larger whole, incorporating buildings, site layout, and landscaping. It is not necessary for all original landscaping (specific plantings, trees, etc.) to remain since it is not always known what it consisted of originally. Rather, the overall site plan and use of the site plan, as well as the spatial relationship between buildings and open space should remain. A complex should retain overall integrity of design, especially since buildings were typically minimal in design originally. The replacement of materials (which impacts the integrity of materials and workmanship) will not necessarily result in a property being ineligible, if the materials have been replaced in kind. If replacement of materials or features has resulted the loss of key character-defining features or the overall character of a property, then this may result in ineligibility due to a lack of integrity.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
----- Name of Property Los Angeles, California
----- County and State

Section number G Page 37

Section G. Geographical Data

The City of Los Angeles.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number H Page 38

Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The MPDF for public and private garden apartments is based upon SurveyLA, the citywide historic resources survey of Los Angeles. SurveyLA was managed by the Department of City Planning's Office of Historic Resources and funded in part by a grant from the J. Paul Getty Trust. The field surveys, started in 2010 and completed in 2017, covered the entire city of Los Angeles within almost 500 square miles. The data from SurveyLA is available to the public through an online information management system called HistoricPlacesLA, a partnership between the Office of Historic Resources and the Getty Conservation Institute. HistoricPlacesLA includes properties listed under national, state, and local landmark programs as well as those identified as eligible for such programs in historic resource surveys like SurveyLA. HistoricPlacesLA enables searches by a variety of methods including name, address, and property type such as public housing complex and garden apartment. The only additional field surveys conducted for this MPDF were of the two nominated complexes, Ramona Gardens and Pueblo Del Rio. At the time, not all data entered.

As mentioned in the introduction, this MPDF traces the development of multi-family residential housing that falls under the umbrella of the garden apartment complex, including public projects constructed under federal housing programs and private projects constructed by for profit developers. Though multiple sources were consulted, the two foundational documents were "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" MPS by Paul R. Lusignan, Judith Robinson, Laura Bobeczko, and Jeffrey Shrimpton (2004) and "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles, Historic Context Statement," by Katie Horak and Steven Keylon of Architectural Resources Group for the Los Angeles Conservancy (2012).

The property type analysis was based on historical period: pre-World War II and World War II period complexes and postwar period complexes. These periods were defined for two reasons: postwar garden apartments were developed under a different set of political and social factors and have different physical characteristics than their prewar counterparts. Then there was the practical matter of complementing the existing "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949" MPS. Public housing complexes constructed by 1949 may be evaluated for eligibility under the MPS. Thus, there was no reason to create an alternative set of registration requirements, only to provide additional information about the development of public housing in Los Angeles.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955

Name of Property

Los Angeles, California

County and State

Section number H Page 39

Public and Private Garden Apartments
1938-1955
City of Los Angeles

Map Number	Name	Address	Year	Owner
1	Avalon Gardens	701 East 88th Pl.	1942	Public
2	Baldwin Gardens	5802 Bowcroft St.	1949	Private
3	Baldwin Hills Village (now Village Green)	5300 Rodeo Rd.	1942	Private
4	Belford Park Apartments	8809 Belford Ave.	1950	Private
5	Chase Knolls	13401 Riverside Drive	1949	Private
6	Chesapeake Rodeo Apts.	4500 West Rodeo Ln.	1951	Private
7	Crenshaw Village	4220 Santa Rosalia Dr.	1948	Private
8	Dorset Village	3130 West Slauson Ave.	1941	Private
9	Estrada Courts	3232 Estrada St.	1942	Public
10	Estrada Courts Extension	see Estrada Courts	1954	Public
11	Fairfax Park Apartments	5720 West Jefferson Blvd.	1948	Private
12	Gloria Home Apts.	3700 South Nicolet Ave.	1953	Private
13	Hacienda Village (now Gonzague Village)	1515 East 105 St.	1942	Public
14	Imperial Compton (now Nickerson Gardens)	1590 114th St.	1955	Public
15	Imperial Courts	2214 East 114th St.	1955	Public
16	Jordan Downs	2114 East Century Blvd.	1944	Public
17	Ladera Townhouse	6233 South La Brea Ave.	1950	Private
18	Lincoln Place	1042 Frederick St.	1950	Private
19	Mar Vista Gardens	11965 Allin St.	1954	Public
20	North Hollywood Manor	6724 Tujunga Ave.	1950	Private
21	Parklabrea (now Park La Brea)	6200 West 3rd St.	1943/51	Private
22	Pueblo del Rio	1801 East 53rd St.	1942	Public
23	Pueblo del Rio Extension	55th St and Long Beach Ave	1955	Public
24	Ramona Gardens	2830 Lancaster St.	1941	Public
25	Rancho San Pedro	275 West 1st St.	1942	Public
26	Rancho San Pedro Extension	see Rancho San Pedro	1953	Public
27	Rancho Vega	10403 Edison Way	1945	Private
28	Rose Hills Courts	4466 Florizel St.	1942	Public
29	San Fernando Gardens	10995 Lehigh Ave.	1955	Public

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
County and State

Section number H Page 40

30	Sunset Barrington Apts.	233 South Barrington Ave.	1950	Private
31	Verdugo Mesa	4269 Verdugo Rd.	1950	Private
32	William Mead Homes	1300 North Cardinal St.	1942	Public
33	Wyvernwood	2901 East Olympic Blvd.	1939	Private

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

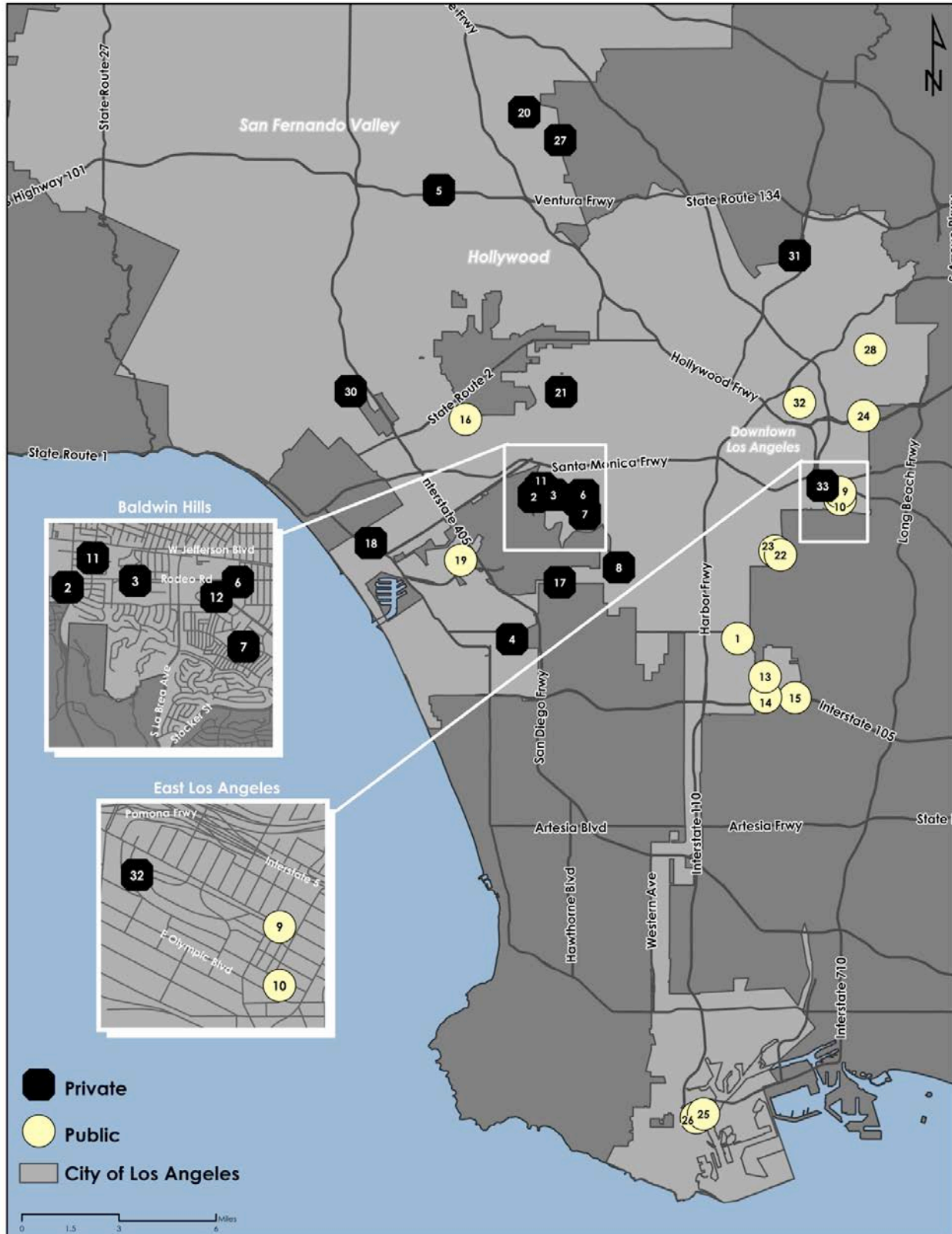
Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of
Los Angeles, 1939-1955

Name of Property

Los Angeles, California

County and State

Section number H Page 41



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
----- Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
----- County and State

Section number 1 Page 42

Section I. Major Bibliographic References

Architectural Resources Group. "San Vicente Courtyard Apartments Historic District Assessment, Draft." June 2015

California State Data Center. "Historical Census Populations of California, Counties, and Incorporated Cities, 1850-2010." Department of Finance. Accessed November 2, 2016.
http://www.dof.ca.gov/Reports/Demographic_Reports.

City of Pasadena Planning and Community Development. "Bungalow Courts in Pasadena." City of Pasadena. Accessed November 2, 2016,
http://www.cityofpasadena.net/Planning/Bungalow_Courts_in_Pasadena/.

Cuff, Dana. *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Freeman, Richard. "The 1949 Housing Act versus 'Urban Renewal.'" *Executive Intelligence Review* 23, no. 50 (December 1996): 27-29. Accessed September 21, 2016.
http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1996/eirv23n50-19961213/eirv23n50-19961213_027-us_housing_policy_the_1949_housi.pdf.

Hetzel, Christopher. "District Record: Mar Vista Gardens." June 2014.

Historic Resources Group. "Building, Structure Object Record: Rose Hill Courts." December 2002.

Horak, Katie, and Steven Keylon (Architectural Resources Group). "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles Historic Context Statement." October 2012.

Leader, Leonard. *Los Angeles and the Great Depression*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991.

Los Angeles Times articles, various dates.

Lubove, Roy. *Community Planning in the 1920s: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America*. Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1963.

Lusignan, Paul R., Judith Robinson, Laura Bobeczko, and Jeffrey Shrimpton. "Public Housing in the United States, 1933-1949." Draft National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Listing. December 2004.

McDonald, John F. "Public Housing Construction and the Cities: 1937-1967." *Urban Studies Research* 2011 (2011): 1-12. Accessed September 8, 2016. doi: 10.1155/2011/985264.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955
----- Name of Property
Los Angeles, California
----- County and State

Section number 1 Page 43

Neutra, Richard J. "Homes and Housing." In *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, edited by George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton, 189-202. Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941.

Normark, Don. *Chavez Ravine, 1949: A Los Angeles Story*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003.

Office of Historic Resources. SurveyLA Historic Context Statement Summary Tables: Residential Development and Suburbanization, 1850-1980.

Page and Turnbull. "Jordan Downs Historic Significance Evaluation, Los Angeles, CA." August 2011.

Parson, Donald Craig. *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Polyzoides, Stephanos, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice. *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles: A Typological Analysis*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992.

United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1990.

United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin #16B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service Cultural Resources, 1991, rev. 1999.

von Hoffman, Alexander. "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949." *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no 2 (2000): 299-236. Accessed September 21, 2016. https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/hpd_1102_hoffman.pdf.

Wong, Dorothy Fue, Robert Nicolais, and Michael Tomlan. "Baldwin Hills Village National Historic Landmark nomination." May 2000.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 250 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.