

# SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

## LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

**Context: Residential Development and Suburbanization, 1880-1980**

**Theme: Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970**

**Subthemes: Apartment Houses, 1895-1970**

**The Bungalow Court, 1910-1939**

**Courtyard Apartments, 1910-1969**

**The Dingbat/Stucco Box, 1954-1968**

**Multi-Family Residential Historic Districts, 1910-1970**



*Prepared for:*

City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning  
Office of Historic Resources



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## PREFACE

The theme of Multi-Family Residential Development is a component of Los Angeles' citywide historic context statement and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating significant examples of multi-family building types. Refer to [www.HistoricPlacesLA.org](http://www.HistoricPlacesLA.org) for information on designated resources associated with this sub-theme as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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This narrative is greatly indebted to the work of Todd Gish, whose 2007 dissertation (University of Southern California) on the development of multi-family housing in early twentieth century Los Angeles stands out amid a scarcity of detailed scholarship on the topic.

## INTRODUCTION

This theme examines the design and development of multi-family residential buildings from the mid-1890s, when multi-family residential development begins in Los Angeles, through the 1970s. Multi-family residential properties represent significant building types from this period of significance as well as trends in city planning and zoning to accommodate a housing type for an increasing population of full and part time residents, visitors, and tourists.

The narrative context provides a historical overview of multi-family residential development in Los Angeles followed by a discussion of the evolution of associated property types, presented as subthemes, which include: Apartment Houses, Bungalow Courts, Courtyards Apartments, and the Stucco Box/Dingbat. Multi-family buildings may be individually significant or may be contributors to multi-family residential historic districts. Districts may include one or more of the property types discussed above.

Though referenced in the context narrative, this theme does not encompass garden apartments, including public housing projects constructed under federal housing programs and private projects constructed by profit developers. Garden apartments are fully covered in the National Register of

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Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), “Garden Apartment Complexes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955.”<sup>1</sup> In addition, the theme does not include boarding houses which were often not originally constructed for that use.<sup>2</sup> And finally, this theme does not include modern, purpose built condominiums dating from the 1960s and later.<sup>3</sup>

Multi-family Residential Development may overlap with other SurveyLA contexts and themes as follows:

- Many multi-family buildings are significant for their architectural quality and may also be evaluated under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context.
- Apartment houses that functioned historically as hotels or residential hotels may also be significant under the Hotels theme of the Commercial Development context.
- Multi-family properties may also be contributing features to residential districts identified with the Suburban Planning and Development themes of the Residential Development and Suburbanization context. These districts may be exclusively multi-family properties or a mix of single- and multi-family properties.
- Multi-family properties, and in particular Bungalow Courts, may also be evaluated under the Entertainment Industry Housing and Neighborhoods theme within the Entertainment Industry context.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

### Multi-Family Residential Development in Los Angeles, 1895-1970

There is a perception that has long endured that Los Angeles is a “City of Homes” – that in Los Angeles apartment living was a temporary condition, and that the domestic ideal for every Angeleno was a detached single-family house. As noted by Robert Fogelson in his book, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, “Americans came to Los Angeles with a conception of the good community which was embodied in single-family houses, located on large lots, surrounded by landscaped lawns.”<sup>4</sup> According to Todd Gish, this myth of Los Angeles as a city based on the single-family home was actively promoted by local boosters starting in the early 1900s, and been perpetuated by historians, journalists, and policymakers since then.<sup>5</sup> As Gish notes:

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<sup>1</sup> The MPDF was prepared by GPA Consulting in 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Boarding houses were often large single-family residence later converted to room rentals. The term also refers to owner-occupied single-family residences where rooms are for rent. Boarding houses were used for short and long-term stays.

<sup>3</sup> The development history of modern condominiums in Los Angeles is the subject of future study.

<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles 1850-1930* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 144.

<sup>5</sup> Todd Douglas Gish, “Building Los Angeles: Urban Housing in the Suburban Metropolis, 1900-1936” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2007), 3.

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For Los Angeles, single-family detached houses – small and affordable ones for workers, solid and commodious ones for the middle-class, and big, luxurious ones for moguls and magnates – constituted the central element of not only an idyllic setting but also an idealized lifestyle. (The private, landscaped lot amid more of the same is an all-important corollary.)<sup>6</sup>

Within this construct, the apartment house and other forms of multi-family dwellings are often dismissed as insignificant factors in the overall development and evolution of Los Angeles' urban landscape throughout the twentieth century. This perceived hierarchy of residential building types is reflected in much of the scholarship, in which the importance of multi-family housing to the development of Los Angeles is typically diminished, if not overlooked entirely. However, as Gish argues in his detailed examination of multi-family housing trends in early twentieth century Los Angeles, multi-family housing has been a critically important component of the city's dwelling stock since the turn of the twentieth century: "Rental housing in multiple dwellings large and small was essential to urban growth and development – an integral component of the city's larger landscape as well as its economic workings, political affairs and social formation."<sup>7</sup>

The reasons for the proliferation of multi-family housing in early twentieth century Los Angeles are manifold. Primary among them was simple demand. Multi-family residences played a critical role in meeting the widespread need for housing created by the city's exponential population growth during this time. In 1900, the city had barely a hundred thousand residents; by 1930 that number had exploded to over 1.2 million. In the 1920s alone, the city's population doubled as Los Angeles went from the nation's tenth largest city to the fifth largest.<sup>8</sup>

For many Angelenos a multi-family dwelling was a more desirable living situation than a detached single-family house. Multi-family living was generally more affordable and located "further in" – close to urban amenities such as employment centers and shopping districts. By contrast, potential homeowners often had to be "courted and coaxed out to the urban edge, where they might or might not find paved streets or sewer connections, but where often-steep mortgage payments would be waiting regardless."<sup>9</sup> Unlike in other American cities, where apartment housing was associated with overcrowding and unhealthy living conditions for the urban poor, Los Angeles' varied stock of rental units accommodated Angelenos with a wide range of economic means, from working-class fourplexes, to middle-class bungalow courts, to high-rent luxury apartment towers.

Apartment living also met the requirements of new Angelenos seeking readily available housing. Bungalow courts and courtyard apartments offered shared landscapes which "helped create community out of discrete dwellings, providing a spatial expression of common identity for residents recently

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1-2

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 35.

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arrived from elsewhere.”<sup>10</sup> Apartment buildings with distinctive architectural detailing, perhaps with an illuminated rooftop sign declaring the building name, offered “instant community to a newly arriving population.”<sup>11</sup> Individual units might come fully furnished and equipped with hundreds of household items, from towels and linens to kitchenware. In more luxurious buildings, rental fees might include daily bed making and cleaning, as well as laundry and linen services.<sup>12</sup>



*Apartment Buildings on Bunker Hill, Downtown Los Angeles. No longer extant. (Los Angeles Public Library)*

As the city’s population rose in the early twentieth century, and the demand for affordable rental units kept pace, there were plenty of entrepreneurs happy to add to the supply of multi-family housing. Development of multi-family dwellings provided investment opportunities up and down the socio-economic scale, “from lower middle-class white and minority single-lot owners on up to real estate tycoons and everywhere in between.”<sup>13</sup> Small-scale buildings were the earliest examples of this kind of income-producing residential development, due to the relative ease with which they could be constructed and with minimal up-front capital. Larger buildings did not appear in substantial numbers until the 1920s, when a combination of even more rapid population growth, a burgeoning tourism industry, and widespread availability of investment capital “drove an apartment construction boom in Los Angeles that dramatically altered parts of the city.”<sup>14</sup> Smaller buildings would then give way to larger apartment houses, towers, and ultimately expansive complexes which could offer a greater return on investment.

Los Angeles’ multi-family housing stock accommodated thousands of permanent residents as well as a large population of temporary residents in the form of tourists from all over the United States. In early twentieth-century Los Angeles, tourism was becoming a major economic force and a major factor in the city’s growth and expansion. According to author Carey McWilliams, seasonal tourism had a noticeable impact of the city’s multi-family housing stock:

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 215-216.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>13</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

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With winter tourists pouring into Southern California by the thousands – 60,000 in 1901, 30,000 in 1902, 47,000 in 1903 – the construction industry began to boom. Blocks of four-family flats were built for the accommodation of winter tourists.<sup>15</sup>

At a time when tourist travel was measured in months rather than days or weeks, visitors often sought a more private, domestic living arrangement during their stay, renting an apartment or courtyard bungalow, or even a single-family house rather than staying in a hotel. As Gish noted: “Long-stay tourism was in fact temporary relocation.”<sup>16</sup>

Visitors from the East and Midwest arrived daily by cross-country rail to stay for extended periods, enjoying the climate and well-publicized attractions.<sup>17</sup> The 1915 edition of the *Handbook of Southern California* noted that “Year by year tourists flock to Los Angeles in greater numbers [while] her permanent population increases by leaps and bounds, both classes called hither” by the region’s charms.<sup>18</sup> Tourism was also promoted through the All-Year Club of Southern California, which boasted the region as a year-round destination.



*View of Apartments in Central City, 1913 (Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

As tourism grew, apartment living became increasingly important to the local economy and The Apartment House Association of Los Angeles County formed. Incorporating in 1920, the organization was designed primarily to meet the concerns of apartment house owner and managers. Their publication, *The Apartment House Journal*, featured articles on management principles, national and local trends, and new building construction.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-1920s, the city’s non-permanent population – alternately referred to as “temporary” or “floating” – was estimated to be as high as ten to thirteen percent, with some sources suggesting that some twenty percent of these non-permanent residents had been in Los Angeles for more than three years.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Press, 1973), 130.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Handbook of Southern California* (North American Press Association, 1915), 1, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 51.

<sup>19</sup> The journal was first known as *The Apartment House Trade Journal* and later the *Apartment Journal*.

<sup>20</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 51-53.

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This complex combination of recent arrivals, extended-stay tourists, and long-term visitors led to much difficulty in characterizing and quantifying the city's resident population during this period. A 1929 survey of Southern California's tourist population noted that "some of these nonpermanent residents are tourists, and some are those who are employed here, or residing here, and have not definitely made up their minds as to whether they are going to remain or not."<sup>21</sup> As varied as the city's multi-family housing stock was at this time, the living arrangements in these buildings were even more so. As Gish notes:

In reality, shelter occupancy occurred more along a continuum than in some kind of binary. Longtime residents might rent in a bungalow court or apartment building for years, and vacationers from out-of-town might reside in a single-family house for a three-month trip. Urban elites might purchase a luxury apartment in a cooperatively-owned building, or lease a suite in a swanky hotel.<sup>22</sup>



*Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival Apartments in Exposition Park Square Historic District dating from 1913-1928 (SurveyLA)*

What was abundantly clear, however, was that these residency trends were a strong urbanizing force in Los Angeles at the time and led to the construction of thousands of multi-family dwelling units of every type. The 1929 tourist survey estimated that some fifteen percent of all the city's dwelling units was rented by a tourist household.<sup>23</sup> After witnessing this reciprocal relationship between local tourism and residential development, the All-Year Club, declared "Tourist traffic is [a] godsend to [the] apartment industry."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Tourist Survey of Southern California for the All-Year Club of Southern California" (Eberle Economic Service, 1929), as quoted in Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 52-53.

<sup>22</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 55-56.

<sup>23</sup> "Tourist Survey," as quoted in Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 54.

<sup>24</sup> *Apartment Journal*, January 1934, as quoted in Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 50.



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One of the earliest mentions of multi-family housing in Los Angeles appears in a *Los Angeles Times* article on New Year's Day of 1895, which remarked that "the rapid extension of the city... has led to a demand for flats ... and this demand is rapidly being supplied."<sup>25</sup> By 1899, flats were numerous enough to be recognized as a separate residential classification by the City's Building Department. By the 1910s, the term had become shorthand for the four-family flat (a.k.a. fourplex), symmetrical in plan and façade, with



*Craftsman Duplex at 734-736 Hartford Avenue, Westlake, 1902 (ESA PCR)*



*Hipped Roof Duplex with side-by-side units at 1431 E 54<sup>th</sup> Street, Southeast Los Angeles, 1902 (SurveyLA)*

a pair of units on each of two floors.<sup>26</sup> Two-family dwellings – now called duplexes – also started to appear by 1900 and came in various configurations, including the “double bungalow” (a single-story structure with side-by-side units), the “double house” (a pair of adjoining two-story units), and the “two-flat” (a two-story building with a unit on each floor).<sup>27</sup>

It was not until after the turn of the twentieth century that apartment buildings of several floors began to appear in any numbers. The fashionable Westlake district became home to a number of apartment houses up to 10-stories in height including the Bryson Apartments (2701 Wilshire Blvd., 1913). A 1911 *Los Angeles Times* article noted the tremendous opportunities for building apartment houses on this stretch of Wilshire Boulevard in what was then considered the outskirts of the city: “Apartment house and flat construction goes on apace...being projected for sites which even two years ago would have been considered hopelessly remote for this kind of improvement.”<sup>28</sup> Such was the pace of multi-family dwelling production that in 1910, the City's Chief Building Inspector asked the City Council to hire “an inspector who is an expert on the arrangement and construction of apartment houses ... on account of the erection of an extraordinary [sic] large number “of these buildings.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1895, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 109.

<sup>26</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 91.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>28</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1911, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 184.

<sup>29</sup> *Los Angeles Building Department Annual Report 1910-1911*, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 36.

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*Craftsman Four-flat at 918 W 40<sup>th</sup> Place, South Los Angeles, 1915 (SurveyLA)*



*Shingle Style Triplex at 1205 S Hoover Street, Wilshire, 1904 (SurveyLA)*

It was also around this time that the bungalow court began to flourish in the local landscape. Originating around 1908, the bungalow court first appeared in the city of Pasadena, a nearby tourist destination. However, it soon proliferated in various parts of Los Angeles, most notably in Hollywood, evolving into more permanent, year-round rental housing. This new housing type became quite popular with both tourists and middle-class residents who sought a more domestic setting than was offered by a typical apartment house, but at a more affordable rent than most single-family houses.



*Spanish Colonial Revival Bungalow Court at 807-809 N Martel Avenue, Hollywood, 1926 (SurveyLA)*

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Row of Craftsman Style Flats at 3401-3467 E Mission Road, Lincoln Heights, 1915 (SurveyLA)

In the years prior to the City's first zoning ordinances, the urban landscape was largely shaped by the private sector, primarily through the use of restrictive covenants incorporated into land deeds. Some residential subdivisions limited construction of multi-family dwellings to major streets on the outer edges of the development, while others forbade them entirely. On occasion, entire subdivisions (or significant portions thereof) permitted apartments or flats, particularly in the Central City or near transit lines.<sup>30</sup> In these cases, developers might permit large apartment houses, or limit development to small two- and four-unit buildings.<sup>31</sup> However, this level of thoughtful residential planning was evident only in larger subdivisions, and was not representative of development patterns in much of the city: "Despite pockets of functionally partitioned development,

the overall mixed-use urban pattern persisted. A typical *unrestricted* city block might still hold any combination of single-family residences, boarding houses, apartment buildings, shops, offices, and factories.<sup>32</sup>

The largely unorganized and unplanned manner in which Los Angeles' urban landscape had evolved at the time was beginning to pose serious challenges to city officials. Thus, in 1920 the Los Angeles City Planning Commission was established with the expressed purpose of guiding all future land-use decisions. When it came to housing, city officials had two primary goals which seemed at odds: to maintain the city's low density while continuing to make room for a lot more housing.<sup>33</sup> Planners' initial attempts to address these goals were focused on the protection of detached one-family housing from encroachments of undesirable land uses, including more dense housing. Commissioners wanted to effectively segregate single-family dwellings from multi-family housing, which was considered commercial development.<sup>34</sup> To accomplish this, the commission came up with a binary system of residential classification – "single-family housing and everything else" – thereby placing the detached housing in its own exclusive category.<sup>35</sup> This hierarchy of land use was codified in the City's first comprehensive zoning ordinance, enacted in 1921. While it indeed protected the single-family house, it would create other problems by treating all multi-family housing types alike.

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<sup>30</sup> Central City is considered the core of Downtown.

<sup>31</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 317-318.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 324.

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In response to the immense growth in population during the 1920s entrepreneurs erected new apartment houses at a staggering rate: the proportion of new construction that was devoted to multi-family dwellings advanced from just eight percent in 1920 to 53 percent in 1928.<sup>36</sup> While still a small percentage of the overall residential building stock, multi-family housing was constituting an ever-larger proportion of the city's total dwelling units. By the mid-1920s, nearly half of all of the city's residential units were in multi-family buildings, including duplexes, four-flats, bungalow courts, and apartment buildings.<sup>37</sup> However, despite the Planning Department's mandate to expand and protect single-family development, most of the city's zoned area permitted the building of multi-family dwellings. As of 1926, nearly 60 percent of "urban Los Angeles" was placed in "Zone B" (allowing both single- and multi-family dwellings), as compared with just under ten percent in "Zone A" (restricted to single-family only).<sup>38</sup> *The Apartment Journal* promoted the concept of zoning to "keep the income rental properties of a city grouped in one or more certain definite areas – and not dispersed haphazardly thru [sic] practically all of the residential districts in the city."<sup>39</sup>



*Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival Apartment Houses in Leimert Park, 1929  
(Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

By the 1920s, all manner of multi-family housing types could be found in any part of the city that could support such density. Smaller-scale structures continued to proliferate, while new types were introduced, such as the two-story courtyard apartment. A natural successor to the bungalow court, the courtyard apartment retained the emphasis on shared open space and landscaping while accommodating a greater number of units and, as such, a better return on investment. However, unlike the bungalow court, which tended to be rather restrained in its styling, the courtyard apartment was often more expressive, referencing various exotic or romantic architectural motifs, from Spanish hacienda to Tudor manor to French chateau. This set-design approach to residential design was surely encouraged by the city's burgeoning movie industry.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> *Weekly Letter*, Eberle and Riggleman Economic Service, November 30, 1925, as quoted in Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 126.

<sup>38</sup> *Los Angeles City Planning Department Annual Report, 1927-1928*, as quoted in Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 329-330.

<sup>39</sup> Harry G. Palmer, "The Relation of Zoning to the Apartment House Business," *The Apartment House Journal* (December 1929): 7-8.

<sup>40</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 102-103.

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*Andalusia Courtyard Apartment at 1471-1475 Havenhurst Ave, Hollywood, 1926, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 435 and listed in the National Register (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*



*Grauman Court Apartments, 1922, no longer extant (Los Angeles Public Library)*



*French Revival Courtyard Apartment at 8016 W Selma Avenue, Hollywood, 1937 (SurveyLA)*

The peak of Los Angeles' multi-family housing development came in the mid- to late-1920s, as larger and taller apartment blocks and towers began appearing in more parts of the city. Rising property values, along with high property taxes, were powerful motivators for owners to develop their land more intensively than they might have a decade earlier. Other forces at work which led to this explosion of higher-density apartment houses in the 1920s included the availability of affordable financing, the low cost of building materials, and the expansive amount of land zoned to allow multi-unit dwellings.<sup>41</sup> While the city's 150-foot building height limit did not allow construction much above thirteen stories, these taller apartment buildings stood out as they were often constructed alongside low-scale stores, offices, and other smaller apartment buildings. However, in a few places – notably in Hollywood and along Wilshire Boulevard – apartment houses were intentionally concentrated, growing these areas' residential densities exponentially.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 294, 297.

<sup>42</sup> Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 151; Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 104.

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*View of Apartment Buildings along Wilshire Blvd., circa 1937 (Herman J. Schultheis Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

While real estate values along Wilshire Boulevard had been rising for years, the opening of the Ambassador Hotel (not extant) on New Year's Day of 1921 helped to spur them even higher. In the vicinity of the Ambassador, forward-thinking developers would soon erect dozens of multi-story apartment houses transforming this part of Wilshire Boulevard into a "high-status hotel and apartment row."<sup>43</sup> Among the more elaborate of these buildings were the 13-story Gaylord (3355 Wilshire Blvd, 1924), directly across from the Ambassador; the 10-story Talmadge (3278 Wilshire Blvd., 1924) two blocks east, developed by the husband of film star Norma Talmadge; and the 5-story Los Altos (4121 Wilshire Blvd., 1925), several blocks "further out" to the west.<sup>44</sup> These buildings were touted at the time not only for their architectural merit, but also for the sophisticated lifestyle that upscale apartment living supposedly afforded. Thus, of the thousands of rental units that were built in this area in the 1920s and 1930s, many were soon occupied by "permanent" Angelenos wanting to



*Gaylord Apartment House, ca. 1929, 3355 Wilshire Blvd (Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

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<sup>43</sup> Roderick and Lynxwiler, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 65.

<sup>44</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 235. The Los Altos Apartments are listed in the National Register and are City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 311.

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reside along the fashionable Wilshire corridor near offices, theaters, shops, restaurants, and public transportation.<sup>45</sup> According to Kevin Starr, of the 51 apartment buildings under construction in Greater Los Angeles in August of 1929, eleven of them were on or near Wilshire Boulevard, while ten were in Hollywood. Indeed, “as with other signs of urbanism, apartment-house living was arriving in full force in Los Angeles.”<sup>46</sup>

These larger buildings not only transformed the skyline, but also the commonly-held perceptions of apartment house living: “If quaint little courtyard buildings harkened back to old Barcelona, then the new lot-filling, four- to thirteen-story hulks springing up in the Wilshire district and Hollywood gave observers a glimpse of New York City.”<sup>47</sup>

Other concentrations of larger-scale, multi-family development were stimulated by particular industries which required a density of housing to accommodate a substantial workforce. The most notable examples of this pattern are in San Pedro, where mostly single men were employed at the Los Angeles Harbor, and Hollywood, where many newcomers sought employment in the city’s thriving movie industry. In most instances, areas zoned for multi-family development were improved by multiple real estate developers or builder/owners. Building activity often occurred in piecemeal fashion over time, according to the pace and desire of each builder. While buildings were typically constructed in the popular styles of the day, these concentrations often have a longer period of development and lack a singular architectural aesthetic.



*Spanish Colonial Revival Apartment House at 615-619 W 40th Street, San Pedro, 1923 (SurveyLA)*

With the success of the Wilshire district as a desirable community of multi-family residential development, City planners began to consider the *apartment boulevard* model, where large-scale multi-family housing was seen as a suitable alternative to commercial development along certain major traffic corridors or neighborhood thoroughfares – areas which may be less desirable for single-family development, but still presented an attractive opportunity for residents who sought a more urban domestic setting. As planning director G. Gordon Whitnall reported in 1928, “the planning commission has led the way in trying to

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>46</sup> Starr, *Material Dreams*, 214-215.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 103-105.

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preserve Wilshire Boulevard as a residential street throughout its length,” first in elegant mansions, then in apartments and hotels.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, across town, Los Feliz Boulevard below Griffith Park was zoned residentially in the “A” and “B” categories, permitting both single- and multi-family dwellings, and establishing this street as a high-class residential corridor.<sup>49</sup>

As Los Angeles continued to grow exponentially, public officials, realtors, and boosters faced many difficulties in their efforts to guide urban growth. Possibly their thorniest challenge was making space for an increasing number of newcomers while trying to maintain the city’s reputation as a haven for home ownership:



*Art Deco Apartment House at 4643 W. Los Feliz Blvd, 1929, (SurveyLA)*

An image of tree-lined subdivisions containing attractive bungalows on spacious lots, extending mile after mile from the mountains to the sea, was a vital component of both nationwide publicity and local identity. But the growing demand for, and diverse supply of, flats, courts, and apartments for rent was equally important to the city’s development. This did not fit this carefully-crafted story told time and again in the external discourse of Los Angeles.<sup>50</sup>

The fever for apartment construction was so high in the 1920s that planning commissioners spent much of their time hearing petitions for even *more* land to be so zoned.<sup>51</sup> However, the existing zoning code which treated all multi-family residential buildings regardless of form or scale often resulted in the “invasion” of an established low-density neighborhood by tall, lot-covering multi-family structures, leading to numerous complaints to the City Council.<sup>52</sup>

It was not only single-family districts that were impacted by this trend of ever-larger apartment houses. The booming real estate market of the 1920s unexpectedly resulted in a new construction of hulking structures which dwarfed not only nearby bungalows, but smaller-scale multi-family buildings as well. As

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<sup>48</sup> G. Gordon Whitnall, quoted in “New Zone Proposal Approved,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1928, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 367. Over time, however, much of Wilshire Boulevard would be transformed from apartment concourse to commercial thoroughfare.

<sup>49</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles, 367.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.



## Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement

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a 1928 *Los Angeles Times* article reported, “owners of limited multiple-dwelling units in...Los Angeles are raising protests against the helter-skelter erection of high apartment-houses adjacent to their duplexes, four-family flats and triplexes, which thereby shut out light and air from the homes, destroy the residential beauty of the section.”<sup>53</sup> Suddenly, those smaller-scale multi-unit building types previously deemed unsuitable in single-family neighborhoods were now seen as an acceptable compromise, permitting higher residential densities was necessary in a growing metropolis while maintaining the image of a low-scale city of homes.<sup>54</sup> The City’s 1935 Yard Ordinance required front yards for all residential zones, reduced some of the impacts of larger multi-family construction projects, and also resulted in consistent setbacks in areas zoned multi-family residential.<sup>55</sup>



*View of Period Revival Apartment Houses on Plymouth Blvd., ca. 1939 (Herald-Examiner Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

The result of the concerted effort to promote construction of apartment buildings was that by 1930, there were at least 4,000 apartment houses in Los Angeles accommodating approximately 25% of the population. Most were constructed during the previous decade at a cost of approximately \$425 million.<sup>56</sup> That same year, city planners issued a revised zoning code, a primary focus of which was the proliferation of multi-family housing and the various issues that were resulting from the previous zoning scheme’s failure to differentiate among multi-family dwelling types.<sup>57</sup> The new zoning code eliminated the overly broad “Zone A” and “Zone B,” and instead established a more graduated system of four residential classifications: “R1” through “R4.” The new “R1” zone simply replaced “Zone A,” allowing for single-family residential development only. However, “Zone B” was now sub-divided into three zones: “R2” permitted two to four units and up to two-and-a-half stories in height, accommodating duplexes and four-flats; “R3” allowed for apartment buildings up to four stories; and “R4” permitted multi-family structures up to the city’s 150-foot height limit.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 1928, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 301.

<sup>54</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 126.

<sup>55</sup> City of Los Angeles, *Report of the Board of City Planning Commissioners*, July 1, 1936 to June 30, 1938, 28.

<sup>56</sup> William Berkowitz, “Selection of Apartment House Sites,” *The Apartment House Journal* (February 1930): 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>58</sup> *Los Angeles City Planning Department Annual Report, 1928-1929*, as quoted in Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 348.

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By this time, attitudes toward smaller multi-family dwelling types had shifted dramatically, at least among city planners, who now saw these structures as appropriate and necessary components of low-scale residential districts throughout the city. As declared by the Planning Commission in its 1930 Annual Report, “[t]he primary need was for...zone[s] which would protect districts particularly suited for duplexes, four family flats and small multiple dwellings from the encroachment of large multiple-story apartment houses and hotels.”<sup>59</sup> However, despite the massive increase in apartment house production during the 1920s, in 1930 Los Angeles still had fewer multi-family dwellings as a percentage of its overall residential housing stock than almost any other comparable metropolis at the time.<sup>60</sup>

During the early 1930s housing production of all varieties slowed dramatically. While Los Angeles’ apartment boom did not burst, it deflated over a period of about three years between 1928 and 1932, and remained very slow between 1932 and 1936, when annual permit counts for apartment buildings numbered only in the dozens.<sup>61</sup> However drastic this decline in multi-family housing construction was, it was not as severe as in single-family housing during the same period. By the mid-1930s, when construction of single-family homes was increasingly rare, the development of apartment houses remained appealing to investors who could turn vacant lots into income-producing rental units.<sup>62</sup>

These private development efforts – which had been the foundation for multi-family development in Los Angeles – began to languish in the latter part of the decade, just as the societal effects of the Great Depression were leading to widespread poverty, even as the city’s population continued to grow. This combination of factors led to a tremendous housing shortage, as well as an accelerated deterioration of existing housing stock. In response to these conditions, and with funding from the Housing Act of 1937 (also known as the Wagner-Steagall Act), the City of Los Angeles planned, designed, and constructed the first public housing complexes as part of a comprehensive program to alleviate housing shortages, eradicate slums, and improve housing quality. Development of these complexes came at an opportune time, as their completion coincided with the United States’ entry into World War II and Los Angeles’ critical need for defense worker housing.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 348-349.

<sup>60</sup> Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 145.

<sup>61</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 303-304

<sup>62</sup> Merry Ovnick, *Los Angeles: The End of the Rainbow* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 1994), 168.

<sup>63</sup> With funding from the 1937 Housing Act, ten public housing projects were constructed in Los Angeles: Aliso Village, Avalon Gardens, Estrada Courts, Hacienda Village, Pico Gardens, Pueblo del Rio, Ramona Gardens, Rancho San Pedro, Rose Hill Courts, and William Mead Homes. In 1949, additional funding was allocated for the construction of Mar Vista Gardens, Nickerson Gardens, and San Fernando Gardens. This multi-family type is covered in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Garden Apartment Completes in the City of Los Angeles, 1939-1955,” 2018.

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*Rancho San Pedro Housing Project, circa 1940 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

By the late 1930s, Los Angeles' housing market began a remarkable rebound. In 1937, single-family construction multiplied eleven-fold over the previous year, and multi-family by a factor of fourteen, as new multi-family dwellings were once again numbering in the hundreds.<sup>64</sup> By 1940 – even after several years during which multi-family construction dropped sharply while that of new single-family housing climbed – apartments still accounted for about 48 percent of the city's total dwelling units.<sup>65</sup>



*Washington Gardens Multi-Family Residential Historic District, Pico Union, 1940 (SurveyLA)*

Residential construction efforts were largely diverted to the war effort during World War II and it was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that multi-family residential production resumed in earnest. While some multi-family dwellings constructed during this period were familiar examples of prewar types, such as the courtyard apartment, overall development began to reflect a more modern approach. Designs for multi-family dwellings became more simplified, due in large part to mass production methods developed during the war, which were now being applied to housing construction. This

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<sup>64</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 304.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

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improved level of efficiency led to more streamlined architectural styles – buildings lacking in ornamentation and detail could be built constructed more quickly – thereby minimizing cost and maximizing profit. Garden apartments continued to be constructed during this time, and in some areas of the city apartment districts were developed.

By 1954 the City Planning Commission reported 40 percent of building permits issued that year were for multi-family housing and that, whereas the majority of the new single-family homes were built in the San Fernando Valley, the units were fairly well distributed throughout the city.<sup>66</sup> By late 1957 the commission further reported that there were more building permits issued for multi-family units than for single-family homes for the first time on over 30 years.<sup>67</sup>



*1950s Apartments in the Vantage Avenue Multi-Family Residential Historic District, West Valley Village (SurveyLA)*



*Mid-Century Modern and Minimal Traditional Apartments in the Barrington Multi-Family Residential Historic District, Mar Vista, 1953 (SurveyLA)*

One of the most distinctive of the multi-family housing types in postwar Los Angeles, is the stucco-box apartment house, commonly called the “dingbat,” that proliferated throughout various part of the city in the 1950s and 1960s. These typically two-story apartment houses, developed over the full depth of a single-family lot with tuck under parking and minimal ornamentation, reflected developers’ attempts to capitalize on the widespread demand for postwar housing with as little investment and as much profit as possible. As noted by writer and urban designer John Chase, the stucco box was “ruthlessly expedient, made out of the cheapest materials, by the simplest construction methods, allowing the maximum number of units to be shoe-horned onto a single lot.”<sup>68</sup> However, the stucco box’s most important design determinants were local parking requirements. The one-to-one parking space per dwelling unit requirement led to its creation in the 1950s, more stringent requirements rendered the type obsolete in the 1960s.

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<sup>66</sup> City of Los Angeles, City Planning Commission, *Accomplishments*, 1954, 10.

<sup>67</sup> City of Los Angeles, City Planning Commission, *Accomplishments: A Decade of Planning*, 1960, 32.

<sup>68</sup> John Chase, *Glitter Stucco & Dumpster Diving: Reflections on Building Production in the Vernacular City* (New York: Verso, 2000), 3.

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*Marina Dingbat Apartments, 7838 West Manchester Ave, Westchester, 1961 (SurveyLA)*



*Contributor to the Hayworth Dingbat Apartment Historic District, 625 N Hayworth Avenue, Hollywood, 1958 (SurveyLA)*

In the 1950s, many of the areas of the city that had been zoned for multi-family buildings before the war were now largely built out. Thus, multi-family development in the latter half of the twentieth century largely became a matter of replacement, as single-family houses and lower-density multi-family buildings alike were being demolished to make way for larger multi-family buildings. One notable exception to this pattern was the San Fernando Valley, which was still largely agricultural at the end of World War II and just experiencing its first population and building boom. However, unlike in other parts of the city where early efforts at mass housing production were haphazard at best, the Valley's postwar boom benefitted from the enhancements to city planning and zoning that took place in previous decades.

As early as 1932, the City Planning Commission developed a land-use template entitled "Application of New Zoning System to a Quarter Section Subdivided Under Standard Gridiron Layout," which was eventually to be replicated in residential subdivisions across the San Fernando Valley.<sup>69</sup> Applying the then-newly adopted R1-4 residential classifications, this template placed multi-family residences along tract or subdivision's perimeter to act as a buffer between single-family housing and busy thoroughfares. This basic planning unit – measuring a half-mile square – was intended to be mirrored vertically and horizontally into a square-mile quadrant, and repeated over and over again, ultimately replacing the Valley's vast agricultural lands with housing tracts. As Gish notes, "The ensuing pattern, copied mile after mile would (and did) result in a vast gridded landscape of primary and secondary streets alternating at half-mile intervals, most lined with medium-sized and small apartment buildings respectively, with minor and major commercial corners at alternating principal intersections."<sup>70</sup> Indeed, it is this land-use pattern that characterizes large swaths of the San Fernando Valley to this day.

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<sup>69</sup> Gish, "Building Los Angeles," 354-355, 358.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 358-359.

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*Bella Vista Apartments, 1963, altered; 17938 Burbank Blvd, Encino, (Valley Times Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

Also in the postwar period, development in the Los Angeles basin expanded westward and city planners sought to identify areas where substantially higher densities would be appropriate and therefore should be encouraged. In 1958, the City Council established height districts and adopted a citywide Height District Map. This eliminated the former 13-story height limit, but required substantially more open space. While one of the stated purposes was to encourage a more interesting skyline for the city, the increased building height limits allowed for new high-rise apartment towers in parts of the city.<sup>71</sup> The effect of this decision was particularly evident along Wilshire Boulevard in the Westwood neighborhood, which was transformed over time by the addition of numerous high-rise residential towers, including the Wilshire Terrace (10375 W. Wilshire Blvd., 1958), the Marie Antoinette Towers (10787 W. Wilshire Blvd., 1962), the Wilshire Ardmore (10501 W. Wilshire Blvd., 1963), and the Holmby Wilshire (10433 W. Wilshire Blvd., 1963).



*Mid-Century Modern Wilshire Ardmore Apartment Building at 10501 W. Wilshire, Westwood, 1963 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>71</sup> "High Rise Puts Stamp on Area," *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1961; City Planning Commission, *Accomplishments*, 195, 39.

#### Conclusion

Over time it has become widely accepted among urbanists that a diverse housing stock is critical to the long-term health and stability of any American city, and that multi-family dwellings of various types are necessary components of an evolving urban landscape. Low-scale multi-unit housing types, in particular duplexes, four-flats, bungalows courts, which were once commonplace in pre-war neighborhoods, are now termed “missing middle housing,” as urban designers seek to reintroduce these types as important features of walkable, mixed-income, transit-oriented urban neighborhoods.<sup>72</sup> For many Angelenos, the primacy placed on the single-family house in Los Angeles continues to the present. For others, however, whether by choice or circumstance, multi-family living is no longer seen as a temporary condition on the way to eventual homeownership, but as a way of life in an ever more crowded and expensive city. And new multi-family types are taking their place in Los Angeles as historic commercial and industrial buildings are adaptively reused for multi-family living and new high-rise, purpose built condominiums begin dotting the skyline.

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<sup>72</sup> Missing Middle Housing website, accessed December 2017, <http://missingmiddlehousing.com/>.

## MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SUB-THEMES/TYPES

### APARTMENT HOUSES, 1895-1970

The apartment house can best be defined in contrast to the bungalow court and other forms of courtyard housing that were being constructed in the early twentieth century. Unlike courtyard housing, the apartment house is designed to maximize lot coverage, with little or no lot area land dedicated to useable open space. And unlike courtyard housing, which is typically oriented onto a central common space, apartment houses are oriented toward the street, with architectural detailing concentrated on the street-facing façade. Apartment houses vary widely in terms of density, from one-story duplexes to high-rise luxury apartment towers. They can accommodate a variety of architectural styles, and therefore often reflect the dominant residential styles of the period in which they were constructed. Due to their versatility, apartment houses were built throughout the twentieth century and in nearly every part of Los Angeles.



*Duplex near 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Westlake (William Reagh Collection Los Angeles Public Library)*



*Duplex in Leimert Park (Security Pacific National Bank Collection Los Angeles Public Library)*

One of the earliest and most modest types of apartment housing in Los Angeles was the duplex. There were several reasons that development of the duplex prevailed during the early days of multi-family development in the city. Chief among them was the fact that duplexes presented even the average homeowner with the opportunity to capitalize on the concurrent population and real estate booms. Composed of two separate dwelling units, the arrangement of the typical duplex allowed the homeowner to live in one unit while renting out the other, thus enabling the construction of both a residence and income property on a single lot. Duplexes were also appealing because their size and scale resembled that of the single-family homes with which they sometimes shared the block. Todd Gish explains the various iterations of the most common duplex plans:

The “double bungalow” was a single-story structure divided down the middle, forming two units side-by-side. These buildings were often perfectly symmetrical in plan and



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front elevation. The “double house” was a two-story version of this, essentially a pair of adjoining row houses, with living rooms and kitchens below and bedrooms above. The “two-flat” was a two-story building with a unit on each floor—a double-decker, in other words. An architecturally elaborate form of the two-flat became popular in the 1920s and ‘30s, characterized by stylized accents such as wrought iron grilles, Spanish tile roofs, and ceramic tile panels. Most noticeable in this version was a prominent exterior stair ascending to the second-floor unit’s entrance from a small patio outside the lower unit’s entry...<sup>73</sup>

The similarity in scale and massing allowed duplexes to be designed in many of the same styles as were popular for single-family residences at the time, including the Craftsman style and various Period Revival styles. Gish notes that double bungalows appear to have been the most popular, likely due to their affordable single-story construction, and that the double-house or row-house pair was comparatively rare.<sup>74</sup> Duplexes of all kinds, however, were built in large numbers for decades, and were classified as a distinct dwelling type by the Building Department well in to the 1920s.<sup>75</sup> Part of what distinguished the development of the duplex was that it could be constructed anywhere, and individual examples were indeed built throughout the city. Today, examples of the dwelling type can be found citywide in areas of including Westlake, Wilshire, San Pedro, Echo Park, South and Southeast Los Angeles and others.



*Two-story Craftsman Duplex at 519 W. 40<sup>th</sup> Street, San Pedro, 1918 (SurveyLA)*



*Two-Story Spanish Colonial Revival Duplex at 332-334 N Orange Drive, Wilshire, 1927 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>73</sup> Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 89.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 89, 91.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

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Apartment houses of all sizes grew in popularity as developers sought higher-density solutions to the population boom. Some were smaller, typically two stories in height, with three or four units.<sup>76</sup> The “four-flat” buildings more closely resembled their duplex cousins than their higher-density descendants. The typical four-flat, or fourplex, was symmetrical in plan and façade, and consisted of a pair of units on each of two floors.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps its most notable feature was its clustering of the four separate entrance doors within a single, large front porch or entry portal—creating the impression of a large single-family dwelling.<sup>78</sup> As a result four-flats, like duplexes, could be integrated into existing single-family neighborhoods with greater success than larger buildings, which were more likely to be located in more urban areas. Like the duplex they were designed in the prevailing architectural styles of day.



*Craftsman Fourplex at 1512 S. Menlo Avenue, Pico-Union Neighborhood, 1913 (SurveyLA)*



*Neoclassical Fourplex at 9813 W Venice Blvd, Palms, 1915 (SurveyLA)*



*Mediterranean Revival Fourplex at 4001-4007 Pacific Avenue, San Pedro, 1922 (SurveyLA)*



*Streamline Moderne Fourplex at 844 S. Plymouth, Wilshire, 1936, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 970 (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*

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<sup>76</sup> The three unit triplex is less common in Los Angeles than the duplex or fourplex.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

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*American Colonial Revival Four-flat at 2301-2305 N Pasadena Avenue, Lincoln Heights, 1900 (SurveyLA)*



*Mid-Century Modern Duplex at 5030-5032 E Aldama Street, Highland Park, 1961 (SurveyLA)*



*Neoclassical Fourplex at 930 S. Albany Street, Westlake, 1895 (SurveyLA)*



*One of two Craftsman fourplex apartment houses built side by side in San Pedro at 409 W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, 1921 (SurveyLA)*

Larger apartment houses from this early period could range anywhere from two to six stories in height, with four or more units. Early examples constructed during the 1910s were mostly modest vernacular structures constructed of brick or wood frame, while into the 1920s they began to take on more decorative, even fanciful, stylistic elements. Their comparative affordability and the ability to pack as many units onto a lot as possible made the two-story apartment building a particularly attractive investment for both novice and seasoned developers.<sup>79</sup> As many as a dozen or more two- and three-room units could be fit into this simple type, greatly increasing the potential rate of return relative to outlay for construction.<sup>80</sup>

By the 1920s, however, the influx of affluent middle-class residents demanded a more sophisticated approach. Among the first neighborhoods to see concentrated development of such buildings was Westlake, one of the earliest upscale neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Apartment building in Westlake took off after 1910, as contractor-entrepreneur Hugh W. Bryson established the first luxury high-rise

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

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apartments in the area.<sup>81</sup> A native of Tennessee, Bryson came to Los Angeles around 1895 after working in various positions in banking and real estate. He took a job as manager of the F.O. Engstrom Company, a large general contracting firm. By 1904, he owned a one-third share in the company and had risen to director of the firm, and had also become president of a concrete appliance company.



*French Revival Layden Hall/Horton Hall Apartment House at 2041 N. Vermont Avenue, Los Feliz, 1928 (SurveyLA)*



*Mediterranean Revival Iris of Hollywood Apartment House at 5757 W. Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, 1927 (SurveyLA)*

F.O. Engstrom, who became Bryson's father-in-law, was recognized in his field as an authority on apartment house construction. His company, the largest construction firm west of Chicago, was widely known to be a world pioneer in the use of modern gravity flow concrete distribution in high-rise construction.<sup>82</sup> In 1913, Bryson opened three luxury buildings in swift succession: The Rex Arms, The Bryson, and The Westonia. Kevin Starr noted that the buildings "offered a full spectrum of urban amenities and, by implication, a fully materialized urban identity."<sup>83</sup> Soon, the Bryson buildings became the benchmark for luxury apartment house design.<sup>84</sup>



*French Revival Fourplex at 1926 N. Alexandria Avenue, 1938 in the Los Feliz Square Multi-Family Residential Historic District (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>81</sup> LSA Associates, "Intensive Survey: Westlake Recovery Redevelopment Area," prepared for the City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, Hollywood and Central Region, June 15, 2009, 32. The discussion of Bryson's contributions to the development of Westlake is excerpted from page 32 of this report.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>83</sup> Starr, *Material Dreams*, 215.

<sup>84</sup> The Rex Arms and Westonia buildings were subsequently demolished; the Bryson remains extant and is designated City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 653.

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Apartment house construction expanded following World War I as newcomers continued to stream into the city. The higher-density buildings, termed apartment towers, often eclipsed surrounding existing development due to their height, transforming the urban landscape. However, builders and developers were still restricted by the 150-foot height limit, which allowed for roughly thirteen stories in building height. The solution to the constraint was to build outward – often all the way to the lot line. Gish explains the impact of this move on the streetscape:

In the years before setback regulations, some developers built to the front and side lot lines, maximizing lot coverage and, hence, rentable units. On the occasion that many neighboring builders chose to do this, the overall effect was of a continuous street wall fifty feet high or more. In dense concentrations...this kind of residential development worried planners, and led to a 1935 ordinance requiring yards on all sides of residential buildings.<sup>85</sup>



*Beaux Arts Classicism/Mediterranean Revival Bryson Apartments at 2701 Wilshire Blvd., Westlake, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 653 (Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

Both apartment houses (two to six stories in height) as well as apartment towers (six stories or more) were constructed during this period. In terms of size, buildings of four to six stories in height prevailed, with over 400 such buildings constructed between 1921 and 1930; by comparison, thirty-seven buildings of seven stories or more were constructed during the same period.<sup>86</sup> In the 1920s, the Westlake area exemplified the trend in development of smaller apartment buildings of three to five stories; individual proprietors and investors constructed hundreds of these properties in the area during the 1920s and 1930s, many in the proximity of streetcar lines for easy access to Downtown.<sup>87</sup> In some cases (such as on Rampart Boulevard and Union Avenue), an entire block of moderately-priced apartment buildings went up within the span of a year or two, instantly creating a dense multi-family community in an area originally subdivided for residences.<sup>88</sup> Similar concentrations of apartment houses were constructed along major traffic corridors such as Wilshire Boulevard and Sixth Street, as well as throughout Hollywood and Hancock

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>87</sup> LSA Associates, "Intensive Survey: Westlake Recovery Redevelopment Area," 33. See also the Streetcar Suburbanization theme of the citywide historic context.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

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Park. Examples constructed in the 1920s and 1930s largely reflected the popular Period Revival styles of the time, such as Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, and French Revival. Later examples were also constructed in Art Deco or Streamline Moderne styles.

Although a few low-scale apartment buildings continued to be developed in the 1930s through the 1960s, the Great Depression and World War II dampened the construction of multi-family properties in the Central City.<sup>89</sup> After World War II,

public opinion and financing priorities led to the development of affordable single-family residences in suburbs to the north and west, and thus many would-be apartment dwellers moved out of the Central City.<sup>90</sup> However, the postwar population boom motivated multi-family residential development in westerly neighborhoods including Westwood, Brentwood, Century City, and West Los Angeles. Apartment houses continued to be developed in residential neighborhoods in these areas from the 1950s to the 1970s, while high-rise apartment towers were developed along major corridors such as Wilshire Boulevard. These towers echoed the lower-density apartment houses, frequently featuring a single common building entrance and street-facing orientation. However, they are differentiated by their height and vertical massing, as well as the exhibition of later architectural styles such as Mid-Century and Corporate Modernism.



*Spanish Colonial Revival Apartment House at 6824 N Figueroa Avenue, Highland Park, 1929 (SurveyLA)*



*Mid-Century Modern Wilshire Manor Apartments at 10401 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood, 1951 (SurveyLA)*



*Mid-Century Modern Wilshire Terrace Apartments at 10375 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood, 1958 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

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*International Style/Streamline Moderne Gertrude and Harry Kaye Building (Hannah Schwartz Apartments), 1947, 328-330 S Almont Drive, Wilshire, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1002 (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*

While apartment towers are anything above six stories, later examples were substantially taller due to a relaxation of the City Zoning Ordinance in 1958, when a new Height District Map was adopted by the Los Angeles City Council. This wave of higher-density residential development in various parts of the city continues to this day.

## **Eligibility Standards for Apartment Houses**

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Apartment houses evaluated under this theme are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development. They represent an important building type that proliferated throughout the city during most of the twentieth century and reflect trends in urban planning to accommodate a wide range of full and part time residents as well as tourists and other visitors. Many examples are also significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of their respective architectural styles. Apartment houses range from modest duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes to mid- and high-rise apartment buildings. Due to their versatility, apartment houses are among the most common multi-family residential building types in Los Angeles, with examples constructed in nearly every part of the city. Early examples are becoming increasingly rare.

**Period of Significance:** 1895-1970

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1895, when multi-family residential development begins in Los Angeles, in particular with the appearance of the duplex type. The start date may be revised if earlier examples are found. The end date in 1970 and may be extended over time to include additional multi-family types.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Community Planning and Development; Architecture

**Criteria:** **NR** A/C      **CR** 1/3      **Local** 1/3



## Associated Property Type No. 1: Duplex

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	Duplex
<b>Geographic Location:</b>	Citywide
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A duplex is a multi-family residential property that contains two units and is oriented toward the street. The earliest extant examples of duplexes date from the turn of the twentieth century. Configurations include the “double bungalow” (a single-story structure with side-by-side units), the “double house” (a pair of adjoining two-story units), and the “two-flat” (a two-story building with a unit on each floor)
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	A duplex is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the city’s earliest and most dominant multi-family residential building types.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Was originally constructed as a duplex</li><li>• Is an excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Composed of two units, arranged horizontally (one story) or vertically (two stories)</li><li>• Configurations include the “double bungalow” (a single-story structure with side-by-side units), the “double house” (a pair of adjoining two-story units), and the “two-flat” (a two-story building with a unit on each floor)</li><li>• Typically occupies a single residential lot</li><li>• May also be a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder</li><li>• Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: Craftsman, Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, French Revival, Streamline Moderne</li></ul>

## Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Residential Development and Suburbanization/Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970

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#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Feeling
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable.
- Security bars may have been added
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types

## Associated Property Type No. 2: Apartment House

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	Apartment House
<b>Geographic Location:</b>	Citywide
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	An apartment house is a multi-family residential property that is two to six stories in height, has three or more units, is designed to maximize lot coverage, and is oriented toward the street.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	An apartment house is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region’s dominant multi-family residential building types throughout most of the twentieth century.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is two or more stories in height</li><li>• Is an excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Was originally constructed as an apartment house</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Designed to maximize lot coverage</li><li>• Two or more stories; may be up to five or six stories</li><li>• Typically three or more units (flats or apartments). Triplex examples occur but are not common</li><li>• Generally rectangular in plan, often with one or more light wells</li><li>• Oriented toward the street, with architectural detailing on the street-facing façade</li><li>• Early examples are often vernacular in design (wood or brick), and may not exhibit the features of a particular architectural style</li><li>• May have a single common building entrance with unit entrances opening onto interior corridors, or multiple ground-floor entries</li></ul>

## Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Residential Development and Suburbanization/Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970

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- May have central landscaping or other feature, but it is not a focus of the design
- May also be significant as a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder
- Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: American Foursquare, Shingle, Craftsman, Art Deco, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, French Revival, Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, Mid-Century Modern

#### **Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Designed to maximize lot coverage
- Two or more stories; may be up to five or six stories
- Typically three or more units (flats or apartments). Triplex examples occur but are not common
- Generally rectangular in plan, often with one or more light wells
- Oriented toward the street, with architectural detailing on the street-facing façade
- Early examples are often vernacular in design (wood or brick), and may not exhibit the features of a particular architectural style
- May have a single common building entrance with unit entrances opening onto interior corridors, or multiple ground-floor entries
- May have central landscaping or other feature, but it is not a focus of the design
- May also be significant as a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder
- Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: American Foursquare, Shingle, Craftsman, Art Deco, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, French Revival, Classical Revival, Renaissance Revival, Mid-Century Modern

## Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Residential Development and Suburbanization/Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970

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#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Feeling
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Parapets may have been removed to comply with seismic regulations
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable.
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types.

### Associated Property Type No. 3: Apartment Tower

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	Apartment Tower
<b>Geographic Location:</b>	Citywide with concentrations found in Wilshire, Westlake, Hollywood, Westwood
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	An apartment tower is a multi-family residential property that is six or more stories in height, is designed to maximize lot coverage, and is oriented toward the street.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	An apartment tower is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region’s dominant multi-family residential building types throughout most of the twentieth century.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is six or more stories in height</li><li>• Is an excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Was originally constructed as an apartment tower</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Designed to maximize lot coverage</li><li>• Six or more stories in height; later examples tend to be taller</li><li>• Generally rectangular in plan, often with one or more light wells</li><li>• Vertical massing</li><li>• Oriented toward the street, with architectural detailing on the street-facing façade</li><li>• Early examples are often vernacular in design (brick), and may not exhibit the features of a particular architectural style</li><li>• Single common building entrance, often with a lobby; unit entrances opening onto interior corridors</li><li>• May have a central landscaping or other feature, but it is not the focus of the design</li></ul>

## Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement

### Residential Development and Suburbanization/Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970

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- Earlier examples may feature a rooftop sign.
- Later examples may be articulated with projecting or recessed balconies
- May also be a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder
- Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: Art Deco, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, French Revival, Renaissance Revival, Mid-Century Modern, Corporate Modern

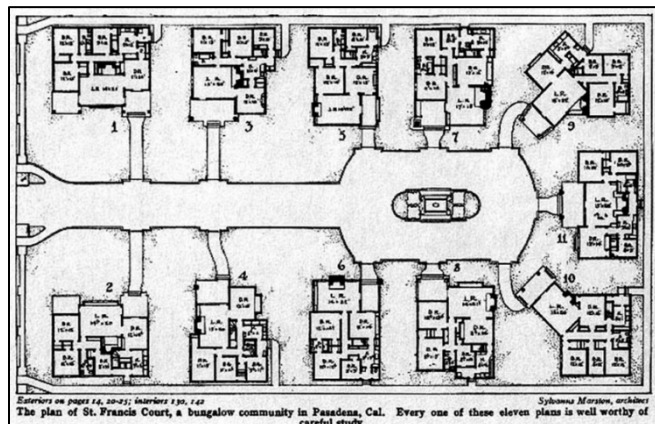
#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Feeling
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable.
- Parapets may have been removed to comply with seismic regulations.
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types.

## THE BUNGALOW COURT, 1910-1939

The bungalow court was the earliest iteration of the low-rise, high-density courtyard apartment building which would eventually become the predominant multi-family housing dwelling type in Southern California.<sup>91</sup> Consisting of small, single-unit bungalows clustered on large lots, the bungalow court dates primarily from about the 1910s until the end of the 1930s, during which time it flourished throughout the Los Angeles county region, particularly in rapidly growing areas such as Hollywood and in the cities of Pasadena and Santa Monica. The early courts were designed as vacation residences for those spending winters in California and were promoted as a tranquil, homelike alternative for affluent visitors tiring of resort hotels.<sup>92</sup> As the population of Southern California exploded in the 1920s and 1930s, bungalow courts became more associated with year-round rental housing for people with moderate or lower incomes.<sup>93</sup> The appeal of the bungalow court was summarized by one critic, “a house in one of these courts virtually combines the conveniences of the modern apartment house with all the privacy and freedom of the individual home.”<sup>94</sup>

The earliest occurrence of the bungalow court in Southern California is generally attributed to the city of Pasadena, but the property type soon became popular in Los Angeles. While bungalow courts are often associated with the work of noted architects, the majority were developed by contractors or owner-builders; indeed, it was their ease of construction by small-scale developers that allowed for the proliferation of the housing type throughout Los Angeles. The bungalow court evolved as a symmetrical grouping of freestanding single-story rental cottages bounding a landscaped court.<sup>95</sup> A typical bungalow court might include between six and ten units, depending on the size of the property on which it was constructed.<sup>96</sup> Smaller lots often featured linear plans of multiple units joined in a single row by common walls, while larger lots could accommodate a U-shaped plan around a shared central courtyard.



St. Francis Court site plan by architect Sylvanus Marston, 1908  
(Department of Geography, UCSB)

<sup>91</sup> Stephanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, James Tice, and Julius Shulman, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles: A Typological Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 9.

<sup>92</sup> Edward B. Bosley, “Sylvanus Martson,” in Robert Winder, ed. *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts and Crafts Architects of California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997, 170; Robert Winder, *The California Bungalow* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1980), 58-67.

<sup>93</sup> Winter, *The California Bungalow*, 66-67.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Alma Byers, “The Community Court, Its Practical and Artistic Possibilities,” *The Touchstone* III (April 1918): 58.

<sup>95</sup> Todd Gish, “Building Los Angeles,” 97.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.



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### Residential Development and Suburbanization/Multi-Family Residential Development, 1895-1970

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Architectural historian Robert Winter attributes the concept of the bungalow court to East Coast influences, observing that the roots of the building type “go back to groupings of cottages built usually in religious campgrounds from Martha’s Vineyard to Chautauqua to Winona Lake in Indiana and beyond.”<sup>97</sup> The bungalow court can also be seen as a direct offshoot of the California Bungalow tradition – a regionally suitable, moderately priced, and carefully designed domestic architecture. The bungalow court was a unique compromise for high-density housing, bringing together the amenities of privacy and open space usually reserved for single-family living with the convenience of an apartment. With front porches and common areas encouraging socializing among the residents, bungalow courts also helped provide new residents with a sense of identity and place.<sup>98</sup>

St. Francis Court (1908) in Pasadena is generally identified as the first bungalow court in the Los Angeles area and the first of its kind in the United States. Attributed to architect Sylvanus Marston, the court was touted in contemporary advertisements as “a wonderfully artistic arrangement of eleven beautifully furnished bungalows around a large private court. Soon other architects and contractors capitalized on Marston’s idea, and the building type would become “a favorite in Southern California for the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>99</sup>



*St. Francis Court in Pasadena. (Pasadena Museum History)*

Another notable designer of bungalow courts was architect Arthur S. Heineman. In addition to the three courts constructed by Heineman and his brother in Pasadena (those for which they are best known) the brothers also developed bungalow courts in the Los Angeles area, and especially in Hollywood.<sup>100</sup> A *Los Angeles Times* article published in January 1911 reported that the Heinemans had been hired by Mrs. W. S. Crane to design a bungalow court on Santa Barbara Avenue near Vermont.<sup>101</sup> They designed at least three other courts in Los Angeles, including the Manor Court, the Hollywood Court, and Ivan Court.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>98</sup> City of Pasadena, *Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report*, prepared by Historic Resources Group and Pasadena Heritage, October 2007.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>100</sup> Christine Lazzaretto, “The Bungalow and the Automobile: Arthur and Alfred Heineman and the Invention of the Milestone Motel” (Master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 2007), 49.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Location of these courts is not known.

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As Robert Winter notes, while “not the originator, Heineman and his younger brother Alfred certainly capitalized on the idea of bungalow courts, usually planning them for people with somewhat lower incomes than Marston’s court serviced.”<sup>103</sup> Indeed, it is the widespread adoption of more modest courts which Winter thought more representative of the bungalow court’s character.

Historians quite naturally tend to illustrate their writing with the best they can find of the genre, thus suggesting to the reader an amount of work of high quality which simply did not exist. Every one of the literally thousands of bungalow courts in Southern California cannot come up to the high standards of the Heinemans and Marston. But it is surprising how many come off extremely well. They may have been a speculator’s dream, but they also performed a service. While designed at first for vacationing easterner and Midwesterner, the courts could be and were adapted to the use of people with moderate or lower incomes; thus, the bungalow courts extended at least a touch of “casual California living” even to the poor. For the social historian not enslaved to high art, the very simple bungalow courts...are at least as interesting as the work of the masters.<sup>104</sup>

Even as the bungalow court evolved to a lower-cost permanent housing model, characteristics found in Marston’s initial design remained and came to define the housing type. Whether modest or extravagant, bungalow courts retained the same essential composition regardless of their style, level of architectural detail, or amenities. Indeed, as architect Ross Chapin acknowledges, the success of the form comes in part from the ease with which it could adapt to lot dimensions and the wide variety of styles that were possible.<sup>105</sup> According to Chapin, early courts in the United States



*Mission Revival Bungalow Court at 1222-1224 N. Kenmore Avenue, Hollywood, 1924 (Cary Moore Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

constructed through the mid-1910s were mostly organized in a U-shaped plan on lots with a street frontage of 150 feet or more and equal depth. This allowed for a central garden space 50 feet wide, with room for porches, small private yards, and significant landscaping in the shared court.<sup>106</sup> Early versions of the type were also composed of a single row of detached units arranged along a side court. These types of courts replicate the experience of a single-family house because though the individual bungalows are often very small, they are usually freestanding or include only one common wall with a neighboring unit.

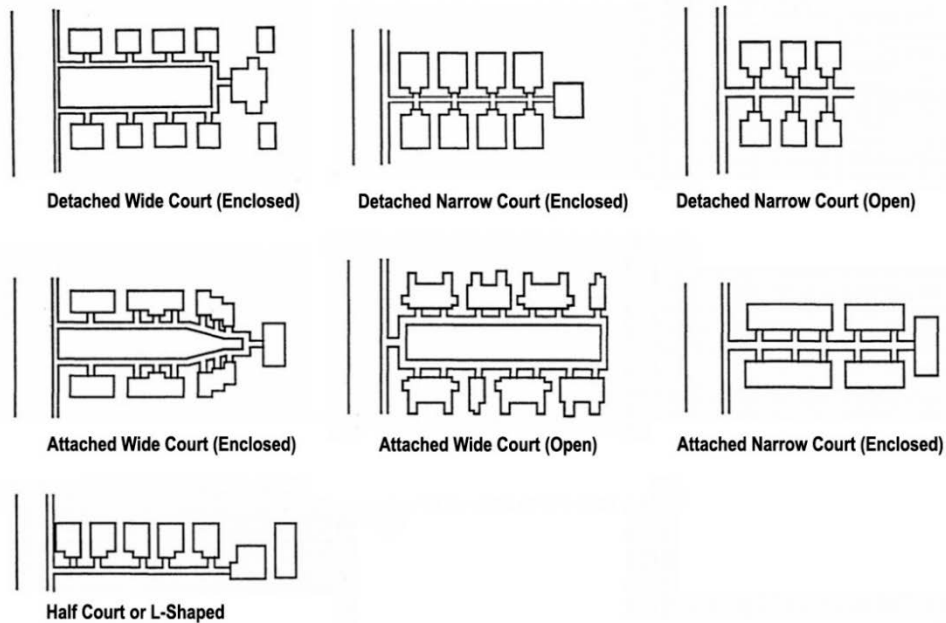
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<sup>103</sup> Winter, *The California Bungalow*, 60.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>105</sup> Ross Chapin, *Pocket Neighborhoods: Creating Small-Scale Community in a Large-Scale World* (Newtown, CT: The Taunton Press, 2011), 46.

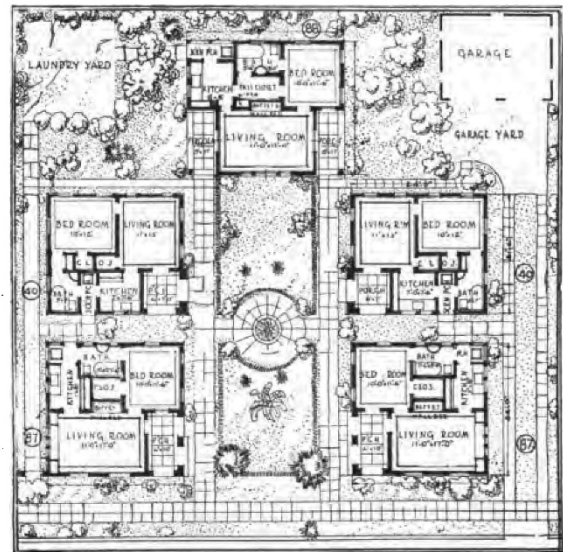
<sup>106</sup> Chapin, 46.



**Sampling of Bungalow Court Plans**

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In Los Angeles, bungalow courts were often located on double lots that were originally intended for much larger houses with gardens when the area was expected to be much less densely developed. Early land subdivision in Southern California favored the single-family dwelling lot – typically 50 feet by 150 feet – so it was this land parcel that became the basic unit of development for the bungalow courts, which “sprouted even in these tight spaces, interspersed among the single-family houses.”<sup>108</sup> Because bungalow courts tended to blend nicely into single-family streetscapes, they were “utilized extensively in spot development that did not disrupt the physical and social context of given neighborhoods.”<sup>109</sup>



*Detailed bungalow court plan, 1915 (Ideal Homes in Garden Communities, 76)*

<sup>107</sup> Taken from “Bungalow Courts in Pasadena, Amendment” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, November 15, 1994.

<sup>108</sup> Polyzoides et al., *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 12.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

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After World War I it was more common for the courts to be composed of larger residential buildings containing a series of attached units, reflecting the increasing density of Los Angeles. However, units were still arranged in the characteristic pattern, with separate entrances oriented directly onto a central court. Often a larger multi-unit building was situated at the rear of the courtyard, creating a U-shaped configuration and providing a visual terminus to the courtyard itself.

Land prices increased after World War I, which led to courts being constructed on even narrower lots, to about 75 feet wide, with the common space taking up the slack.<sup>110</sup> A half-court pattern appeared on a still smaller lot, in an L-shaped configuration. Pushing the limits further, some court layouts morphed into a series of one- or two-sided attached garden apartments.<sup>111</sup> Although these later buildings did not have the same character as the earlier one- or two-unit bungalow courts, they were a step in the transition in courtyard housing from true bungalow courts consisting of single or duplex units to U-shaped courtyards. Winter notes that, “Important was the tendency to try to unify these assemblages not only with a stylistic theme, but also a design focus – some imposing feature such as an entry gate or a tower in the rear.”<sup>112</sup>



*Craftsman Bungalow Court at 2320-2324 W Fair Park Avenue, Eagle Rock, 1922 (SurveyLA)*



*Craftsman Bungalow Court at 7175-7189 N Figueroa Street, Highland Park, circa 1925 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>110</sup> Chapin, *Pocket Neighborhoods*, 46.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>112</sup> Winter, *The California Bungalow*, 67.

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*Craftsman Bungalow Court at 2337-2347 W Ridgeview Avenue, Eagle Rock, 1927 (SurveyLA)*

Bungalow courts in Los Angeles reflected interpretations of popular architectural styles of their period of construction. The earliest courts reflected the contemporary taste for the Arts and Crafts Movement, and in particular the Craftsman style. In response to the widespread marketing of Southern California as America's answer to the climate and tradition of the Mediterranean region, the design of many bungalow courts employed the vocabulary of Mediterranean and Indigenous Revival Styles.<sup>113</sup>



*Spanish Colonial Revival Bungalow Court at 1836-1842 W Chickasaw Avenue, Eagle Rock, 1929 (SurveyLA)*

Widely popular in Southern California from the late 1910s through the 1930s, the Spanish Colonial Revival style emerged from a conscious effort by architects to emulate older Spanish architectural traditions. The affordability of stucco over other building materials like redwood veneer was also a factor in the proliferation of the style.<sup>114</sup> Well-suited to Southern California's warm dry climate, the Spanish Colonial Revival style's exotic appearance and a sense of historic depth appealed to many

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<sup>113</sup> Associated styles include Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival among others. For more information see the Mediterranean and Indigenous Revival theme of the Citywide historic context.

<sup>114</sup> Caroline Raftery, "The Bungalow Courts of Hollywood, California: Hollywood Bungalow Court Survey, Preservation Analysis, And Recommendations," (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 2016), 40.

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*Spanish Colonial Revival Bungalow Court at 4381-4387 E York Blvd, Eagle Rock, 1940 (SurveyLA)*

Southern California residents, particularly those relocating from other parts of the country.<sup>115</sup> Other common, though less prevalent architectural styles embraced by the Los Angeles bungalow court include American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Storybook, French Norman, Mediterranean Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Exotic Revival, and later Art Deco and Moderne styles.<sup>116</sup> Today bungalow courts are an increasingly threatened property type. Examples are located citywide in areas primarily developed from the 1910s to the 1930s. Areas with concentrations include Westlake, Echo Park, Venice, Northeast Los Angeles, and especially Hollywood.

#### **The Bungalow Court in Hollywood**

The bungalow court took on particular significance in Hollywood, due to its close association with the burgeoning entertainment industry. Between 1910 and 1920, the Hollywood area alone saw a population increase from 5,000 to 36,000. Writing in 1937's *History of Hollywood*, Edwin O. Palmer observes that "agriculture was practically abandoned, being replaced by businesses and high-class residences, *bungalow courts* and apartments...This great growth was undoubtedly due to motion picture business" (emphasis added).<sup>117</sup> Hollywood's first film studio was established on the northwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and Gower Street in 1911. Nestor Studios was drawn to the area for its predictable weather and varied landscapes that were ideal for the production of motion pictures. Impressed with the company's success in Hollywood, other studios soon followed. Within months of Nestor's arrival, fifteen companies were shooting in and around Hollywood. By 1926, the weekly payroll in the local film industry reached two million dollars.

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<sup>115</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 417-418.

<sup>116</sup> Winter, *The California Bungalow*, 67.

<sup>117</sup> Edwin O. Palmer, *History of Hollywood*, Volume One (Hollywood, CA: Arthur H. Cawston, 1937), 259.

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*French Norman Style, Covert Cottages, 938-944 ½ N. Martel Avenue, Hollywood, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 783. (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*



*Colonial Revival Style, Whitley Court, 1720-1728 N. Whitley Avenue, Hollywood, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 448. (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*

The local population grew rapidly to support this new industry, and by the late teens and early twenties scores of small independent studios were operating in Hollywood, transforming the area from a residential community of spacious homes on large lots to an active urban center. By the end of the 1920s, Hollywood's population had soared to 50,000.<sup>118</sup> As Hollywood Boulevard became more commercial, the residential cross-streets to the north and south began to be developed with increasing density. New residential housing types began to populate these streets, including apartment houses, residential hotels, and bungalow courts. Today, the Hollywood area contains by far the largest concentration of bungalow courts in Los Angeles, with over forty different plan configurations.<sup>119</sup> Also due to the influence of nearby movie studios, Hollywood boasts some of the most architecturally distinctive Exotic Revival and Storybook examples, from Moorish or Egyptian motifs to the fairy-tale influence of Disney films.



*Storybook bungalow court known as the "Snow White Cottages," 2906 Griffith Park Blvd., Los Feliz, 1931-1932. Disney animators are said to have lived here in the 1930s while working on the first animated feature film. (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>118</sup> Leonard and Dale Pitt, *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 203.

<sup>119</sup> Raftery, 43.

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*Craftsman Bungalow Court at 348-358 Douglas Street.,  
Westlake, 1923 (SurveyLA)*



*Spanish Colonial Revival Bungalow Court at 5115-5125 W. De  
Longpre Avenue, Hollywood, 1923 (SurveyLA)*

By the middle of the twentieth century the bungalow court type was becoming obsolete as increasing land values and more stringent parking requirements necessitated higher densities.



## Eligibility Standards for the Bungalow Court

<b>Summary Statement of Significance:</b>	Bungalow courts evaluated under this theme are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development. They represent an important multi-family building type that proliferated throughout the city during most of the twentieth century and reflects trends in urban planning to accommodate full and part time residents as well as tourists and other visitors. The bungalow court provided the privacy, open space, and other features associated with a single-family house, with the convenience and affordability of apartment living. Many examples are also significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of their respective architectural styles. Bungalow courts are becoming increasingly rare and are a highly threatened property type.
<b>Period of Significance:</b>	1910-1939
<b>Period of Significance Justification:</b>	The period of significance begins in 1910, the date of the earliest bungalow courts in Los Angeles, and ends in 1939, as bungalow courts were rarely constructed after this time. Thought not anticipated, the start date may be revised if earlier examples are found.
<b>Geographic Location:</b>	Citywide in areas that were predominantly developed in the 1920s and 1930s. They typically occur on residential streets, including those developed with single-family residences and/or other multi-family types.
<b>Area(s) of Significance:</b>	Community Planning and Development; Architecture
<b>Criteria:</b>	<b>NR</b> A/C <b>CR</b> 1/3 <b>Local</b> 1/3
<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-types:</b>	Bungalow Court
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A bungalow court is a purpose-built multi-family residential property that is one to two stories in height and composed of

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multiple detached or semi-detached buildings oriented around a central common court area.

#### **Property Sub-type Significance:**

A bungalow court is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region's dominant multi-family residential building types from the 1910s through the 1930s, and as a housing type indigenous to this region.

#### **Eligibility Standards:**

- A good to excellent example of the type
- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Represents an intact court plan from the period of construction

#### **Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- One story, occasionally with a two-story structure at the rear; two-story bungalow courts are rare
- Composed of multiple detached or semi-detached buildings
- Typically occupies a single or double residential lot
- Units are oriented around a central common open area, a primary feature of the design (typically a landscaped area with a central walkway or simple cement sidewalk; a paved central motor court is less common)
- The primary entrance to individual units open directly onto the shared central walkway; front units may open onto the street
- Early examples have little or no accommodation for the automobile. Examples that accommodate automobiles may include a central motor court or side alleys leading to a parking area or garages. Examples built on steep topography may have parking garages at the street level.
- May also be significant as a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder
- Property as a whole is composed of a unifying architectural style. Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: Craftsman, Mission Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Exotic Revival, Storybook

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- Bungalow courts are of particular significance in Hollywood, where large colonies once existed to accommodate people working in the burgeoning entertainment industry

#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Setting (must retain the relationship between the units and the courtyard), and Feeling
- Some original materials may be altered or replaced
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Original landscaping may have been altered or removed
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types.

## COURTYARD APARTMENTS, 1910-1969

The courtyard apartment was the natural successor to the earlier development of the bungalow court in Southern California. Courtyard apartments were first built beginning in the 1910s, when multi-family residential construction in Los Angeles began in earnest, with the type continuing to evolve in form and style through the 1960s. However, proliferation of the courtyard apartment in Los Angeles reached its zenith in the 1920s. The growing popularity of this multi-family housing type during this period coincided with the greatest population growth in the city's history. While the bungalow court reflected the earliest attempt at a compromise between privacy and density, the pressing demand for more housing made it necessary to develop a higher-density residential alternative.



*Villa Monterey Apartments, 2270 N. Beachwood Drive, Hollywood (Herman J. Schultheis Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*



*La Vista Terrace Apartments, 7275 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, Not extant (Los Angeles Public Library)*

The courtyard apartment of the 1920s and early 1930s built on the early twentieth century trends but the form of its buildings and the integral landscaped spaces depended to a much greater extent on precedent found throughout the Mediterranean region and Mexico. According to Stephanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice, authors of *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, European and Middle Eastern sources for the courtyard apartment include what they label as the “urban patio house” and the “urban *callejon*.”<sup>120</sup> The former was a basic element of urban structure in western antiquity. On the Iberian Peninsula, it can be traced through six centuries of Roman domination. The *callejon* is a dead-end urban street that is typical of Arab cities in southern Spain. Though it is composed of different buildings, the scale of the street, framed by the openings of the attached buildings creates a dynamic, unified space. Another ingredient in the development of 1920s and early '30s courtyard apartment houses was the contemporary interest in vernacular adobes of California, many of which were arranged around a central courtyard or patio. These buildings were the subject of numerous publications,

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<sup>120</sup> Polyzoides et al., *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 28.

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including Donald R. Hannaford and Revel Edwards' *Spanish Colonial or Adobe Architecture of California, 1800-1850*.<sup>121</sup>



*Spanish Colonial Revival Corunna and Barcelona Apartments, 1932, 4615-4627 Los Feliz Blvd., (SurveyLA)*

By the late 1920s, Southern California courtyard apartments were labeled by New York architect and housing expert Henry Wright as a “California Type”— essentially a complex constructed around an open patio.<sup>122</sup> These projects were seen as regional variants of the “garden apartment,” a concept that Wright and others endorsed as a desirable solution to the cause of humane urban living.

Courtyard apartments were distinguished from their predecessors by their multi-story massing, which could more than double the number of units that could be accommodated on the same lot. Because of the unobtrusive manner in which courts merged with smaller and less socially active buildings, they were utilized extensively in spot development that did not disrupt the physical and social context of given neighborhoods.<sup>123</sup> Also, courtyard apartments contained their residential units in a single building, or perhaps a mirrored pair of buildings, allowing for greater density than could be achieved with earlier bungalow courts, where units were freestanding. Furthermore, unlike the relatively modest bungalow court, whose construction originally dominated the early development of multi-family housing in Southern California, the courtyard apartment of the 1920s was primarily designed for and marketed to somewhat more affluent residents. As architectural historian Robert Winter explains, the dwelling type offered an attractive solution to the problem of housing the growing middle class:



*El Cabrillo Apartments, 1832-1850 N Grace Avenue, Hollywood, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 773 (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*

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<sup>121</sup> Donald R. Hannaford and Revel Edwards, *Spanish Colonial or Adobe Architecture of California, 1800-1950* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., 1931).

<sup>122</sup> Henry Wright, “The Apartment House, A Review and Forecast,” *The Architectural Record* 69 (March 1931): 260.

<sup>123</sup> Polyzoides et al., *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 12.

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Although medium-rise apartment buildings began appearing in Los Angeles during the 1920s, residents preferred more space than these structures afforded. If it was necessary to put more people on less land, why not preserve some of the amenities of the recent past? For instance, would it be possible to design Spanish Revival-style structures that would offer a compromise between the privacy of a single-family house and the density of a large apartment building?<sup>124</sup>

The initial form of the courtyard apartment complex evolved from that of the bungalow court: one or two buildings, typically two stories in height, oriented around a central common area.<sup>125</sup> Examples of courtyard apartments constructed during the height of their development in the 1920s frequently featured a U-shaped plan, which is believed to account for some eighty percent of the known courtyard apartments in Los Angeles.<sup>126</sup> Alternate arrangements included the similar double-L plan or the completely enclosed O-shaped plan. Buildings could contain as few as four or as many as twenty units, sharing common walls. Few windows faced the street; instead they were concentrated on the courtyard facades to provide more attractive views.<sup>127</sup> In the central open area of each building were one or more courtyards with fountains, and, often, luxuriant tropical plants in small private garden spaces.<sup>128</sup>



*Aerial Diagram of U-Shaped, Double-L, and O-Shaped Courtyard Apartment Plans. (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources)*



*Spanish Colonial Revival Courtyard Apartment at 1972-1974 N. Palmerston Place, 1930, Los Feliz (SurveyLA)*

<sup>124</sup> Robert Winter and Alexander Vertikoff, *The Architecture of Entertainment: L.A. in the Twenties* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2006), 90.

<sup>125</sup> Refer to form diagrams in figure "Types of Bungalow Courts," within the Sub-theme: The Bungalow Court, 1909-1930.

<sup>126</sup> Polyzoides, et al., *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 38.

<sup>127</sup> Winter and Verticoff, *The Architecture of Entertainment*, 90.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

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As the location, density, and quality of courtyard housing shifted to accommodate a growing upper-middle-class clientele, architects became increasingly involved in their design. Several architects were instrumental in the development of the courtyard apartment as a building type during the 1920s.

The best-known examples were designed by noted architects and brothers F. Pierpont Davis and Walter S. Davis, and by the husband and wife team of Arthur and Nina Zwebell. Walter S. Davis published an early, but important, work on California courtyard housing types in 1915 entitled *California Garden City Homes*.<sup>129</sup> The work is credited as “the seed of the most important architectural ideas that the firm...realized in the brief years of its existence.”<sup>130</sup> Both brothers traveled extensively through Europe in the teens and 1920s and were inspired by Spanish and other Mediterranean architectural styles they found there, which they interpreted through the lens of their classical architectural training. While their practice included the design of single-family residences, they are perhaps best known for their courtyard designs, which include the Roman Gardens in Hollywood (1926) and the El Greco apartments in Westwood (1929).



*Spanish Colonial Revival Casa Laguna, 1928, 5200 Franklin Avenue, Los Feliz, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 832 (www.casalagunaapts.com)*



*Spanish Colonial Revival Courtyard Apartment at 2135 W Fair Park Avenue, Eagle Rock, 1939 (SurveyLA)*

By contrast, Arthur Zwebell was a self-taught architectural designer who, together with his wife Nina, developed some of the earliest and most highly-stylized examples of courtyard apartments, which comprised nearly the entirety of their work as a designers. The Zwebell’s complexes were holistic environments, with exteriors designed by Arthur and interiors created by Nina. Arthur Zwebell’s background as an inventor allowed the couple to incorporate unique technological innovations and planning solutions which included the thoughtful arrangement of parking spaces, subterranean parking garages, and one of the earliest examples of automatic garage doors. While much of their early work was concentrated in what is now the city of West Hollywood, the Zwebells received several important

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<sup>129</sup> The book was subsequently republished under the title *Ideal Homes in Garden Communities*.

<sup>130</sup> Polyzoides et al., *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, 100.

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commissions in Los Angeles, including the Andalusia in Hollywood (1926, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 435); El Cabrillo in Hollywood (1928, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 773), and Casa Laguna in Los Feliz (1928, City Historic-Cultural Monument No. 832).<sup>131</sup>



*Spanish Colonial Revival Courtyard Apartment with U-shaped plan at 3843-3853 27th Street, West Adams, 1923 (SurveyLA)*

The character of courtyard apartment complexes was defined through the work of these architects and others throughout the 1920s. As Polyzoides explains, “The ideal image of the suburban landscape (coupled with early building regulations safeguarding against earthquakes) kept the courts to a two-story limit. Within these limits, courts had no need to advance or radically depart from common building technologies of the period from 1910 to 1930.”<sup>132</sup> As a result, significant departures from the original building type were not seen until later decades, when increased density requirements forced the intensification of building within the court envelope.<sup>133</sup>

Today, examples of 1920s-1930s courtyard apartments can be found throughout the city, particularly in those neighborhoods that originally developed or saw rapid growth during this period. The majority of extant examples were designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, with others popular styles of the period represented in smaller numbers, including Mediterranean Revival, French Norman Revival, Tudor Revival, and Streamline Moderne. Known architects of these properties, in addition to those mentioned above, include C.S. Arganbright, Charles Gault, Arthur W. Larsen, Allen Ruoff, Milton R. Sutton, Frank M. Tyler, and Paul R. Williams.

The next evolution of the courtyard housing type occurred in the 1940s. Government regulations for construction controlled price, size, financing, permits, and materials, which curbed the expression of

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<sup>131</sup> Arthur and Nina Zwebell’s house is located at 4221 N. Agnes Avenue in the Studio City area of Los Angeles.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.



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earlier architectural forms and channeled building toward small houses and apartment houses.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, the postwar population boom necessitated a sudden and substantial need for housing.

Developers of courtyard apartments during this period responded by moving away from the O-shaped plan and adopting the E-shape plan, which allowed for the construction of a greater number of units. Complexes also continued to exhibit the traditional U-shaped plan, but complexes now featured a central building entrance with common stairwells and interior corridors, rather than the former plan of individual entrances. Garages were no longer incorporated into the plan for the apartment complex itself, but were detached from the building and frequently situated at the rear of the property. Styles, too, evolved during this period, away from the widely utilized Spanish Colonial Revival and other Exotic Revival styles popular during the 1920s. Postwar courtyard complexes frequently exhibited the more modern American Colonial Revival or Minimal Traditional styles.



*American Colonial Revival Courtyard Apartment at 4425-4435 ½ Moorpark Way, Toluca Lake, 1948 (SurveyLA)*



*American Colonial Revival Courtyard Apartment at 13018 ½ Moorpark Street, Studio City, 1948 (SurveyLA)*

The 1940s iteration of the courtyard apartment was popular in the southeastern parts of the San Fernando Valley, which was developing during this period. Today, examples of the type can be found in Toluca Lake, North Hollywood, Valley Village, and Sherman Oaks. The residences tend not to employ architects, but instead are builder-designed.

The 1950s and 1960s marked another shift in the development of courtyard housing complexes. This period witnessed a new boom in apartment construction, as post-war baby boomers were getting married and preparing to start families of their own. However, for many young couples and families just starting out, a single-family home in the Los Angeles area was financially out of reach. Similarly, Los Angeles newcomers, attracted to the region by growing industries such as airplane manufacturing, often found that the cost of a detached single-family house was far higher in Los Angeles than from where they had just arrived. Despite unprecedented financial prosperity, Southern California housing costs were escalating more rapidly than the national cost of living.<sup>135</sup> As historian Merry Ovnick explains:

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<sup>134</sup> Merry Ovnick, *Los Angeles: The End of the Rainbow* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 1994), 284.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-312.

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They set up housekeeping in new apartments...Even professionals who relocated to Los Angeles found that the equity brought from the sale of a home elsewhere would not purchase a comparable home here. They might rent an apartment until they could adjust to the disparity.<sup>136</sup>

Additionally, the extension of commercial corridors and connecting traffic arteries, which were zoned for multi-family residential development, opened up large parcels of land for apartment construction. Construction firms, which perfected their mass-production techniques in the 1940s with the construction of single-family residential developments, were able to apply their experience to the development of apartment houses, which were sometimes constructed in groups of fifty at a time.<sup>137</sup> The resultant buildings tended to be larger than their 1920s or 1940s counterparts. In the postwar period, land values typically dictated higher densities, with building sometimes reaching three stories in height instead of just two, and frequently developed on two or more residential lots. Buildings still exhibited the typical O, U, or E-shaped plans – or paired L-shaped plans – oriented around a central common space. However, these spaces now frequently featured concrete patios and swimming pools.



*Mid-Century Modern Courtyard Apartments at 11519-11527 Venice Blvd, Mar Vista, 1956  
(Google)*

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

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While the better examples of these postwar courtyard complexes employed architects, such as Edward Fickett, most were builder designed. Buildings typically displayed modest interpretations of popular styles at the time, including most commonly Mid-Century Modern and the Traditional/California Ranch style. However, some builders embraced more exotic or fanciful motifs in an effort to persuade prospective renters away for its more prosaic neighbors. The Tiki or Polynesian style, for example, was used to evoke associations with vacations in a tropical paradise. As Ovnick notes: “In the commercial competition for apartment-seekers’ attention, such visual dramatization proved the margin of entrepreneurial success.”<sup>138</sup>



*Tiki Style Kona Pali Apartments, 10520 Balboa Blvd., Granada Hills, 1962 (SurveyLA)*



*Mid-Century Modern Courtyard Apartments at 3130-3138 S. Barrington Avenue, Mar Vista, 1953 (Google)*

Examples of 1950s and 1960s courtyard apartments can be found throughout the areas of Los Angeles that were built up during the postwar period. These areas include neighborhoods of West Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. Apartments tend to be concentrated along automobile corridors and adjacent to freeways.



*Minimal Traditional Style, One-story Court at 10913-10919 Moorpark Street, Toluca Lake, 1941 (SurveyLA)*



*Streamline Moderne One-story Court at 14532-34 W Dickens Street, Sherman Oaks, 1946 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 313.

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Another type of courtyard housing which evolved in a parallel fashion during the middle decades of the twentieth century offered a more modest, lower-density alternative to the typical courtyard housing developments. The mid-century, one-story court developed beginning in the 1930s through the 1950s. With its single-story configuration and limited number of units, this type more closely resembles the bungalow court from which it evolved. The court is composed of a pair of residential buildings facing each other, creating a minimal common space between the two structures. This common space may be landscaped or paved, or accommodate a drive leading to detached garages at the rear of the site. Each building typically contains three to five attached units arranged in a linear or L-shaped plan. Unlike their multi-story counterparts, the one-story court provides each dwelling unit with direct access to the outdoors, an attempt to replicate the relationship of the single-family house to its private yard. Examples employed modest versions of the popular residential styles of the period, including Streamline Moderne, Minimal Traditional, and California Ranch.



*"Pool, sundeck and courtyard of new Devonshire Arms, Bronze Medallion apartments at 18041 Devonshire Street, Northridge, is a typical example of the complex trend in the Valley designed for year-round fun." 1964, Extensively Altered (Valley Times Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

The mid-century, one-story court never experienced widespread popularity as a stand-alone residential development type, presumably because its low density did not provide enviable financial returns. However, these residential courts were a critical component of early planned suburban developments that appeared throughout Los Angeles in postwar period. Beginning in the 1940s, a handful of innovative developers designed neighborhood-scale development projects which became models of postwar community planning. Planned communities such as Fritz B. Burns and Henry J. Kaiser's Panorama City and Paul Trousdale's Westdale Village in Mar Vista were replicated throughout Los Angeles during the 1950s and 1960s. One of the characteristic features of these new developments was the placement of slightly higher-density dwellings along major thoroughfares at the perimeter of single-family neighborhoods. These properties not only provided a buffer between the traffic artery and the

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single-family neighborhood behind, but also made the community financially accessible to those of lesser means. Additionally, designing the courts in similar styles to the adjacent single-family neighborhoods made them compatible with surrounding development in both style and scale.



*California Ranch Courtyard Apartments, 1951, 5344 N. Ben Avenue, Valley Village, 1951 (SurveyLA)*

The popularity of courtyard housing as a multi-family dwelling type began to wane by the 1960s, due in part to the Height District Map adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 1958. This gave rise to a new wave of high rise multi-family residential development, a trend which continues to this day.



*Tudor (late) Courtyard Apartments at 8227 Redlands Street, 1965, Playa Del Rey (SurveyLA)*

## **Eligibility Standards for Courtyard Apartments, 1910-1969**

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Courtyard apartments evaluated under this theme are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development. They represent an important multi-family building type that proliferated throughout the city during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century and reflect trends in urban planning to accommodate full and part time residents as well as tourists and other visitors. Many examples are also significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of their respective architectural styles. The courtyard apartment provided common open space and a connection to the outdoors not found in high-density multi-family housing types. Today, courtyard apartments throughout the city are threatened with demolition and replacement with large-scale apartment complexes.

**Period of Significance:** 1910-1969

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1910, when substantial multi-family residential development begins in Los Angeles, and ends in 1969, as land values, parking requirements, and up-zoning necessitated higher residential densities.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide

- In some areas of the city, examples may be concentrated on larger residential thoroughfares, providing a buffer between well-traveled roadways and single-family neighborhoods.
- In other areas, entire neighborhoods were developed with similarly-styled courtyard apartments.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Community Planning and Development; Architecture

**Criteria:** NR A/C CR 1/3 Local 1/3

## Associated Property Type No. 1: 1920s-1930s Courtyard Apartment

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	1920s-1930s Courtyard Apartment
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A 1920s-1930s courtyard apartment is a multi-family residential property that is two stories in height and oriented around a central common area, such as a landscaped courtyard.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	A 1920s-1930s courtyard apartment is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region’s dominant multi-family residential building types in the 1920s and 1930s.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two stories in height</li><li>• An excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Represents an intact court plan from the period of construction</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Generally O- or U-shaped plan; may be composed of two L-shaped buildings</li><li>• Units are oriented around a common outdoor area, typically a landscaped courtyard; may include a fountain or other features</li><li>• Individual units open directly onto the courtyard; front units may open onto the street</li><li>• May also be significant as an excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect of building</li><li>• Associated architectural styles may include, but no be limited to: Spanish Colonial Revival, American Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, French Revival, Egyptian Revival, Streamline Moderne</li></ul>

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#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Setting (must retain the relationship between the units and the courtyard), and Feeling
- Some original materials may be altered or replaced
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Original landscaping may have been altered or removed
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types.



## Associated Property Type No. 2: 1940s Courtyard Apartment

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	1940s Courtyard Apartment
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A 1940s courtyard apartment is a multi-family residential property that is two stories in height and oriented around a central common area, such as a landscaped courtyard or patio, and constructed during the 1940s.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	A 1940s courtyard apartment is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region’s dominant multi-family residential building types.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two stories in height</li><li>• An excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Represents an intact court plan from the period of construction</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Generally U- or E-shaped plan; may be composed of two L-shaped buildings</li><li>• Building is oriented around a common outdoor area, typically a landscaped courtyard or patio</li><li>• Central building entrance, with common stairwells and interior corridors</li><li>• Detached garage(s) at the rear</li><li>• May also be significant as a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect of building</li><li>• Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: American Colonial Revival and Minimal Traditional</li></ul>
<b>Integrity Considerations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Setting (must retain the relationship between the building and the courtyard or patio), and Feeling</li></ul>

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- Some original materials may be altered or removed
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Original landscaping may have been altered or removed
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types

### Associated Property Type No. 3: 1950s-1960s Courtyard Apartment

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential – Multi-Family
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	1950s-1960s Courtyard Apartment
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A 1950s-1960s courtyard apartment is a multi-family residential property that is two to three stories in height and oriented around a central common area, such as a landscaped courtyard, paved patio or swimming pool, and constructed during the 1950s or 1960s.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	A 1950s-1960s courtyard apartment is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region’s dominant multi-family residential building types.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two or three stories in height</li><li>• An excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Represents an intact court plan from the period of construction</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• O-, U- or E-shaped plan on a double residential lot; may be composed of two L-shaped buildings</li><li>• May have interior or exterior access corridors</li><li>• Building is oriented around a common area, a primary feature of the design (typically a landscaped courtyard, paved patio or swimming pool)</li><li>• Detached garage(s) at the rear, or integrated carport along the side or rear</li><li>• May also be significant as a good example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect of building</li><li>• Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: Mid-Century Modern, California Ranch, Tiki/Polynesian</li></ul>

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#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Setting (must retain the relationship between the building and the common area), and Feeling
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Original landscaping may have been altered or removed; central pool may have been filled in or paved over
- If it is a rare surviving example of its type, or is a rare example in the community in which it is located, a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types

## **Associated Property Type No. 4: Mid-Century One-Story Court**

<b>Property Type:</b>	Residential
<b>Property Sub-type:</b>	Mid-Century One-Story Court
<b>Property Sub-type Description:</b>	A mid-century one-story court is a multi-family residential property that is one story in height and composed of multiple detached or semi-detached buildings oriented around a central common area.
<b>Property Sub-type Significance:</b>	A mid-century one-story court is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the multi-family residential building types associated with postwar planned communities.
<b>Eligibility Standards:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One story in height</li><li>• An excellent example of the type</li><li>• Was constructed during the period of significance</li><li>• Represents an intact court plan from the period of construction</li></ul>
<b>Character-Defining/Associative Features:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance</li><li>• Often occur in pairs, occupying adjacent residential lots</li><li>• Typically three to five units, arranged in a linear configuration</li><li>• Units are oriented onto a minimal common area, generally a landscaped area or paved driveway</li><li>• Individual units open directly onto the common area, often with a small porch</li><li>• Detached garage(s) at the rear</li><li>• May also be significant as a good to excellent example of an architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect of building</li><li>• Associated architectural styles may include, and not be limited to: Minimal Traditional and California Ranch</li></ul>

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#### **Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Setting (must retain the relationship between the units and the common area), and Feeling
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed
- Replacement of some windows may be acceptable if the openings have not been changed or resized
- Security bars may have been added
- Original landscaping may have been altered or removed
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Mid-century one-story courts are relatively rare, therefore a greater degree of alteration or fewer character-defining features may be acceptable
- Where this property type is associated with an adjacent single-family residential neighborhood, it may also be significant under the Postwar Suburbanization theme; indicators include several examples in a row situated along a major arterial street
- Where this property type is situated within a grouping of multi-family residences, it may also be significant as a contributor to a multi-family residential district. A grouping may be composed of a single property type or a variety of types

## THE STUCCO BOX/DINGBAT, 1954-1968

The Stucco Box/Dingbat examines the design and development of this popular multi-family residential building type through its brief period of development from the mid-1950s to the late-1960s. The stucco box apartment house is one of the most recognizable and prolific examples of postwar multi-family residential development in Los Angeles. Nicknamed “dingbats,” in reference to the applied decorations that typically adorned their exteriors,<sup>139</sup> the stucco box apartment buildings that rose up in abundance during the 1950s and 1960s reflected developers’ attempts to capitalize on the widespread demand for



*Dingbat in the San Fernando Valley (Valley Times Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

postwar housing with as little investment and as much profit as possible. According to the English architectural critic and Los Angeles transplant, Reyner Banham, the stucco box apartment house can be defined as a “two storey walk-up apartment-block developed back over the full depth of the site, built of wood and stuccoed over.”<sup>140</sup> As noted by writer and urban designer John Chase, the stucco box was “ruthlessly expedient, made out of the cheapest materials, by the simplest construction methods, allowing the maximum number of units to be shoe-horned onto a single lot.”<sup>141</sup>

The primary force that spurred the development of the stucco-box apartment was the postwar housing crisis. Thousands of these apartments were constructed to accommodate the vast numbers of people moving to Los Angeles after World War II. As freeways began to crisscross the city, often leaving massive scars through the middle of established older neighborhoods, these low-cost apartment buildings would often spring up along its edges. As Banham notes, “Wherever a freeway crosses one or more desirable residential areas of the plains...it seems to produce a shift in land values that almost always leads to the construction of dingbats.”<sup>142</sup> The stucco box’s period of proliferation also happened to coincide with the rise of postwar Modernism, and its simple rectangular forms and smooth surfaces – driven more by a need for economy of design than by any stylistic preference – conveniently passed for Modern minimalism.

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<sup>139</sup> The use of the term “dingbat” to describe mid-century stucco box apartment houses was popularized by Reyner Banham in his 1971 book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Penguin Books, 1971).

<sup>140</sup> Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 175.

<sup>141</sup> John Chase, *Glitter Stucco & Dumpster Diving: Reflections on Building Production in the Vernacular City* (New York: Verso, 2000), 3.

<sup>142</sup> Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 175.

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Stucco box apartment houses were particularly appealing from a development standpoint. While large-scale developers were constructing sprawling housing tracts in the suburbs, small investors were taking advantage of zoning changes that permitted higher-density housing. As Chase explains, “Los Angeles rental property was an attractive investment for the reasonably well-off small investor. In many cases, the stucco box represented the life savings of its builder and was a solid, publicly displayed symbol of personal success.”<sup>143</sup> Often the owner and landlord were one and the same. Architect Jack Chernoff, a prolific architect and designer of over 2,000 stucco box apartment buildings, noted that “hopefully it would make the investor a living, but it would not make him rich.”<sup>144</sup>



*Dingbat at 11742-11744 Dorothy Street, 1956, Brentwood (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Frequently developed as infill construction in established single-family residential neighborhoods, stucco box apartment houses were typically designed to be constructed on a single residential lot. As a result, in plan the building stretched the full depth of its lot with minimal setbacks and little or no useable outdoor space. Compared with its immediate predecessor, the garden apartment of the 1940s, the stucco box was “more apartment with less garden.”<sup>145</sup>



*The Sunset Apartments (Keystone Photo Service, Los Angeles Public Library)*

The typical stucco box apartment building was two, or occasionally three, stories in height, containing between four and sixteen units. In the case of a double-lot example, matching side-by-side stucco boxes formed a central common space which, in the best-case scenario, contained a swimming pool. True to the name, they were decidedly boxy, with flat or very low-pitched roofs and minimal articulation. Simple

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<sup>143</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>145</sup> John Chase, *Exterior Decoration: Hollywood's Inside-out Houses* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1982), 74.



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wood-frame construction, stucco cladding, and the use of mass-produced components resulted in a design that was discernably low-cost and “made no attempt to hide this fact.”<sup>146</sup> Flush-mounted aluminum-frame windows were punched into facades with little or no surrounds, adding to an overall sense of flatness. This effect was particularly evident on the side and rear facades, which were “treated in the most pragmatic and economical manner possible, resulting in large areas of smooth stucco wall, rhythmically repetitive window patterns and cubic forms that hover over the voids of the carport.”<sup>147</sup>

Perhaps the most readily identifiable characteristic of the stucco box is its integrated parking. Indeed, local parking requirements were its most important design determinant, for just as one-to-one requirements led to its creation in the 1950s, more stringent requirements would result in its demise in the 1960s.<sup>148</sup> The open carport – alternately referred to as “soft-story” or “tuck-under” parking – was a pragmatic solution to the most vexing problem of apartment designers and developers of this period: how to build the necessary number of dwelling units on a single residential lot while meeting the city’s requirements for off-street parking, and do so in a manner that pencils out financially. The open carport was the most efficient use of limited square footage, allowing the same lot area to accommodate ground-level parking with rentable living space above. Recessed along one or more sides of the building, often including the primary façade, the carport became a defining element of the building type. The advantages of this approach were not only economical, but also eliminated the maintenance of garage doors and it made it easier to maneuver in and out of the parking spaces.<sup>149</sup>



*Lido Capri, 4216 Mary Ellen Avenue, Studio City, 1958 (SurveyLA)*



*The Sundial Palms, 3449-3455 Jasmine Avenue, Palms, 1961 (SurveyLA)*

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<sup>146</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 5.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>148</sup> Kari Michele Fowler, “Fast, Cheap and Out of Control: A Sympathetic History of the Stucco-Box Apartment House in Los Angeles,” unpublished paper, 2001, 17.

<sup>149</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 15. Over time, many open carports have since been enclosed with garage doors to allow for tenant storage and improved security.

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The ornamental elements of the stucco box were confined to the street façade, as “the front is a commercial pitch.”<sup>150</sup> Unlike the parking, which was an integral component of the building’s design, decoration was most often superficial, merely applied or affixed to the building façade. As Chernoff explained, “We’re looking for some dramatic punch that’ll bring the tenants in. Most important is an attractive exterior. We give them enough to get them in, not more. We don’t waste any money on exteriors.”<sup>151</sup>

Such applied decoration came in a number of different forms. Color and texture could be added to a façade with panels of wood, scored stucco, mosaic tile, or stone veneer, often framed by thin wood battens. The eponymous “dingbat” affixed asymmetrically to the building’s primary façade was often an abstract geometric form or referenced popular motifs of the Atomic Age, such as starbursts or diamonds. In some cases, these elements were purely decorative, while in others they doubled as ornamental light fixtures. Applied decoration may have also been part of a larger design motif, such as space-age or Tiki/Polynesian themes, an attempt to provide an “air of escapism.”<sup>152</sup>

Perhaps most important to the identity of a stucco box apartment house was its name – often displayed prominently across the façade in oversized plywood script. For the small investor, naming their apartment building held great significance, which accounts for the frequency with which buildings were given human, typically female, names such as the *Melody Ann* or the *Danielle*.<sup>153</sup> Other building names simply reference their location: the *Beverly Wilton* is at the corner of Beverly and Wilton, while the *Regent Palms* is on Regent in Palms.<sup>154</sup> Some sought to evoke images of more exotic locales, with names like *Tahitian Village* or *Kona Kai*. Still others referenced popular vacation destinations, such as *The Sands* or *Riviera Palms*. Such names and decorative motifs were an attempt to “dress up the dingbat” or “glamorize dingbat living.”<sup>155</sup>

Landscaping was another important element of a stucco box’s street presentation. Though not technically part of the building design itself, the planting of exotic species – such as palms, philodendron, and other tropical foliage – was employed to create added visual interest. In some cases, landscaping was illuminated, with plants “thrown in high relief by Kool-Aid colored Malibu lights”<sup>156</sup> and casting dramatic shadows on the building’s flat surfaces. For Chase, the stucco box’s use of landscape helps to place it in the context of other multi-family housing types: “The stucco box could either be classified as a 1940s garden apartment denuded of much of its garden or as a miniature tenement that

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<sup>150</sup> Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 175.

<sup>151</sup> “The Blooming of the Plastic Hibiscus,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 1972. As quoted in Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 13.

<sup>152</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 9.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>154</sup> Fowler, “Fast, Cheap and Out of Control,” 9-10.

<sup>155</sup> Richard Marshall, Preface to *Edward Ruscha: Los Angeles Apartments, 1965* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), 11.

<sup>156</sup> Chase, *Exterior Decoration*, 16.

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has gained a garnish of landscape.”<sup>157</sup> For the owner or developer, all of these flourishes – landscaping, a building name, a design motif, or a dingbat itself – were simple and inexpensive methods of individualizing one stucco box from another, a way for the building to “call attention to itself and distinguish it from a similarly plain apartment building next door.”<sup>158</sup>



3626 S. Vinton Avenue, Palms, 1963 (SurveyLA)



658 N. Hayworth Avenue, Mid City, 1960 (SurveyLA)

Despite their simple form and minimalist decoration, stucco boxes were not anonymous developer buildings, at least initially. As Chase argues, “many of them had architects, and their type and style were clearly defined as a genre of commercial vernacular architecture.”<sup>159</sup> Some architects, such as Chernoff, came to specialize in the design and development of stucco box apartment houses. Over time, however, as architects and builders increasingly applied mass-production techniques to the construction of housing, the stucco box apartment house was embraced as a multi-family building type that could be somewhat standardized and easily replicated. Thus, less attention was paid to the details that make for good architecture and designs became “increasingly formulaic.”<sup>160</sup>

In its day, the stucco box apartment house was often criticized for its impact on established residential neighborhoods where they often appeared as infill development. Unlike previous multi-family types like bungalow courts and garden apartments, which made a deliberate attempt to fit in with its neighbors, the stucco box apartment house was often an unwelcome intrusion into an otherwise cohesive streetscape. Where apartment houses were interspersed among existing single-family homes, this often resulted in incongruities of form, style, and scale. The replacement of landscaping with back-out parking – where driveways stretch the entire width of the lot from building façade to the street – disrupted existing patterns of parkways, street trees, and front lawns, and eliminated street parking for the public. In some neighborhoods, streets were transformed incrementally as entire blocks of modest bungalows were lost

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<sup>157</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 9.

<sup>158</sup> Marshall, Preface to *Edward Ruscha: Los Angeles Apartments*, 11.

<sup>159</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 12.

<sup>160</sup> Stephen Treffers, “Dingbat Apartment Context,” excerpt from “The Dingbat Apartment: The Low-Rise Urbanization of Post-World War II Los Angeles, 1957-1964” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 2012), 5-6.

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to these apartments, increasing densities ten-fold or more, and creating an “asphalt and concrete wasteland.”<sup>161</sup> However, in many instances the arrival of the stucco box apartment house was merely the first wave of higher-density housing to transform a neighborhood, signaling a trend of more intense land usage that would continue to the present.<sup>162</sup>



*Stucco Box Streetscape, Hayworth Avenue in, Hollywood, 2001*  
(Kari Michele Fowler)

In the 1950s and 1960s, several zoning ordinances were adopted by the Los Angeles City Council which directly affected the design and development of the stucco box apartment house. In 1958, citing concerns about inadequate street parking and unattractive streetscapes, the City Council passed an ordinance which increased the number of required spaces beyond the one-per-unit threshold.<sup>163</sup> The ordinance also dictated changes to curb space and driveway approaches, thereby restricting the construction of full-width garages along street-facing facades.<sup>164</sup> In 1968, the requirement was upped again, so that each three-room unit now required 1.5 parking spaces, and a unit of more than three habitable rooms required two spaces.<sup>165</sup> The passage of these ordinances sounded the death knell for the stucco box apartment house, as builders and developers were unable to meet these new requirements within the conventional building plan on a single residential lot. Thus, the stucco box was quickly rendered obsolete and its short-lived period of proliferation in Los Angeles soon came to an end.

While the stucco box has been much maligned over the years, at the time of their construction they were not universally derided. In the 1950s and 1960s, the stucco box was viewed by many as an appropriately modest and affordable housing type for young singles and couples without children. In Los Angeles during this period, apartment living was considered seen as a temporary arrangement for those in a transitional phase of life; private homeownership continued to be the ultimate goal.<sup>166</sup> The stucco box was also interpreted early on as an architectural metaphor for Los Angeles itself. In true Hollywood style, the stucco box is mere façade, both literally and figuratively. It is image without substance.<sup>167</sup> As such, the stucco box came to be viewed as the quintessential Los Angeles housing type.

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<sup>161</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 17.

<sup>162</sup> Fowler, “Fast, Cheap and Out of Control,” 17.

<sup>163</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 16.

<sup>164</sup> Treffers, “Dingbat Apartment Context,” 6.

<sup>165</sup> Chase, *Glitter Stucco*, 16.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

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124 N Rampart Blvd, Echo Park, 1960 (SurveyLA)



Glenlani Tiki, 1622 S Beverly Glen Blvd, Westwood, 1960 (SurveyLA)

In the mid-1960s, American artist Ed Ruscha identified the stucco box as a fitting subject for his artwork, both in photographs and graphite drawings. Having come to Los Angeles from Oklahoma, he was immediately enchanted by these seemingly ubiquitous buildings. In his 1965 book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, he turned his camera lens onto the city's vernacular multi-family residential buildings, capturing their hard edges and sharp horizontal lines. In his drawings, the viewer can appreciate the stucco box in a wholly uncluttered environment – devoid of cars, power lines and people – creating an even “more severe composition of planes and angles.”<sup>168</sup> Both his photographs and drawings of these buildings have been widely characterized as intentionally sterile or deadpan as a way to capture a sense of dislocation and alienation formed by the local landscape. Whatever the interpretation of these images as art, one cannot minimize the broader impact of Ruscha's work in identifying the stucco box apartment house with mid-century Los Angeles itself.



1553 S. Fairfax Avenue, Mid City, 1956 (SurveyLA)



The Polynesian, 7316 N. Variel Avenue, Winnetka, 1961 (SurveyLA)

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<sup>168</sup> Marshall, Preface to *Edward Ruscha: Los Angeles Apartments*, 6.

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Due to the simplicity of its design, minimal modifications to a stucco box apartment house can have a substantial impact on its overall integrity. With the removal of a building name or a telltale dingbat, or the enclosure of formerly open carports with garage doors, what once may have been an outstanding example of the type can be easily altered into a merely mediocre example. Many would-be excellent stucco box apartment houses have been lost in this way. Additionally, the continuing trends of rising land values and more permissive zoning have led to the wholesale demolition of numerous two-story stucco boxes for the construction of four- and five-story condominium complexes over subterranean parking that dwarf modest houses and dingbats alike.<sup>169</sup> Somewhat ironically, as it was once a harbinger of rising densities, this stucco box apartment house is now considered by developers to be outmoded and outdated as a viable multi-family residential building type in Los Angeles. Thus, much like the bungalow court before it, extant examples of the stucco box apartment house are increasingly under threat of demolition to make room for even higher density housing types. In addition, Los Angeles has a new law requiring seismic retrofitting of so called “soft story” buildings such as Dingbat apartments, which may further threaten extant examples. Nevertheless, examples persist today in various areas of the city such as Hollywood, the San Fernando Valley, Wilshire, and the Westside.

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<sup>169</sup> Fowler, “Fast, Cheap and Out of Control,” 18.

## Eligibility Standards for the Stucco Box/Dingbat

**Summary Statement of Significance:** A Stucco Box/Dingbat apartment house evaluated under this theme is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development as representative of an important building type that proliferated in various parts of Los Angeles from the mid-1950s through the 1960s. The Stucco Box/Dingbat is designed to accommodate the maximum number of dwelling units on a single residential lot, while also meeting local parking requirements. It is characterized by its simple rectangular forms, open carports recessed along one or more sides of the building, and applied decoration on the building façade. Due to increased parking requirements, and more recently seismic regulations, the Stucco Box/Dingbat is functionally obsolete and remaining examples are threatened with demolition and replacement with large-scale apartment complexes.

**Period of Significance:** 1954-1968

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1954, when land values and local parking requirements led to the creation of the Stucco Box/Dingbat apartment house, and ends in 1968, when an increase in parking requirements rendered the Stucco Box/Dingbat obsolete in Los Angeles.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide, with concentrations in the San Fernando Valley, Wilshire, Hollywood, South Los Angeles, and West Los Angeles.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Community Planning and Development; Architecture

**Criteria:** **NR** A/C      **CR** 1/3      **Local** 1/3

**Property Type:** Residential - Multi-Family

**Property Sub-type:** Stucco Box/Dingbat

**Property Sub-type Description:** A Stucco box/Dingbat is a two-story walk-up apartment block occupying a single residential lot and developed over the full depth of the site, with integrated parking and little or no useable outdoor space.

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**Property Sub-type Significance:** A Stucco Box/Dingbat is significant for its association with residential development in Los Angeles as one of the region's dominant multi-family residential building types from the late 1950s through the 1960s.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Occupies a single residential lot
- An excellent example of the type
- Was constructed during the period of significance
- A good example of its architectural style from its period and/or the work of a significant architect or builder

**Character-Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Designed to maximize lot coverage, occupying the full depth of a single residential lot with little or no useable outdoor space
- Composed of simple, rectangular volumes, flat surfaces, flush-mounted metal-frame windows, and stucco wall cladding
- Generally contains between 4 and 16 units; may be up to 20 units
- Units are accessed by exterior staircases and corridors
- Incorporates all of the following:
  - Soft story parking (tuck under) recessed into one of more sides of the building
  - Dingbat address number and/or signage
  - Exaggerated façade details such as light fixtures, starbursts, decorative patterns in the stucco, etc.

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, and Feeling
- Security bars may have been added
- Some original materials may have been altered/removed
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed



## **MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

Historic districts comprised of a significant concentration of multi-family properties are located throughout Los Angeles. Districts may be comprised of a single multi-family type, such as the duplex or Dingbat, or may be comprised of a number of multi-family types. Some districts represent a relatively short period of development while others span a period of years or even decades. Multi-family districts may be cohesive in architectural styles, such as the use of Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival, or may feature a range of styles prominent during the period of development.

Concentrations of multi-family residences may also be within neighborhoods developed with single-family residences. In this case, they are more appropriately evaluated under the suburbanization themes of the Residential Development and Suburbanization context.

Examples of multi-family district are identified throughout the narrative context. Other examples are illustrated below based on findings from SurveyLA.



*Beachwood Drive-Plymouth Blvd Multi-Family Residential Historic District, 1920s-1930s. The district includes parcels on the east side of North Beachwood Drive and both sides of North Plymouth Boulevard, just south of Melrose Avenue to Clinton Street. (SurveyLA)*

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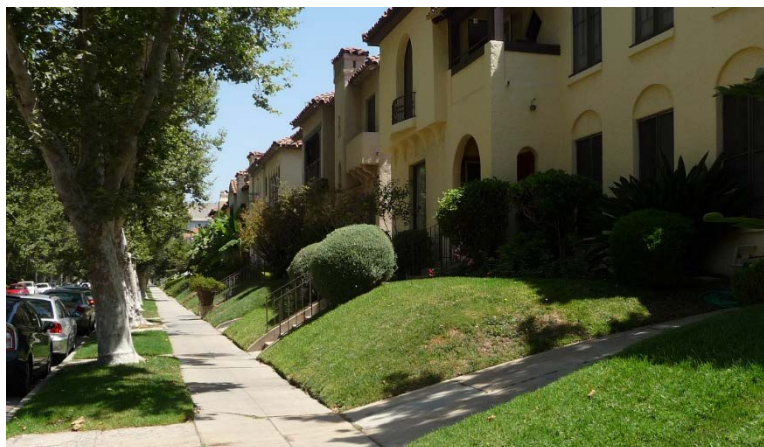
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*Duplex in the Browning Duplex Historic District, 1924.  
The district is four short blocks along Browning Boulevard just north of  
Martin Luther King Boulevard and west of Western Boulevard. (SurveyLA)*



*Los Feliz Square Multi-Family Residential Historic District, 1920-1951.  
The District is located north of Franklin Avenue between North Normandie  
Avenue on the west and North Edgemont Street to the east. (SurveyLA)*



*Sycamore Avenue-Citrus Avenue North Multi-Family Residential Historic District, 1923-1950.  
The district is within the area bound by South La Brea Avenue on the west and South Highland  
to the east, just south of Wilshire Boulevard to West Olympic Boulevard. (SurveyLA)*

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*Beverly Square Multi-Family Residential Historic District, 1929-1948.  
The district is along Flores Street just south of Beverly Boulevard and just north of 3rd Street,  
and along South Sweetzer Avenue, just south of Beverly Boulevard to 1st Street. (SurveyLA)*



*Oakhurst Drive Multi-Family Residential Historic District, 1930-1939.  
The district is located on the east side of North Oakhurst Drive, just  
south of Alden Drive to just north of West 3rd Street. (SurveyLA)*

## Eligibility Standards for Multi-Family Residential Historic Districts

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Multi-family residential historic districts evaluated under this theme are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development. They are comprised of a concentration of one or more multi-family building types and represent citywide patterns, trends, and planning principles relating to multi-family residential housing. Historic districts may include modest examples of a type or may be high style and the work of significant architects and builders. Many examples are also significant in the area of Architecture as excellent representations of architectural styles prevalent during the period of development.

**Period of Significance:** 1910-1970

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1910 to include the time period when multi-family residential house was becoming popular in Los Angeles, and ends in 1970. Most districts range from the 1920s to 1960s.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide with concentrations in the Hollywood, Los Feliz, Echo Park, Westwood, West Los Angeles, Palms, Mar Vista, South and Southeast Los Angeles. Later examples are located in the San Fernando Valley.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Community Planning and Development; Architecture

**Criteria:** NR A/C CR 1/3 Local 1/3

**Property Type:** Residential – Multi-Family

**Property Sub-type:** Multi-Family Historic District

**Property Sub-type Description:** Unified entity composed of a substantial number of properties constructed as multi-family residences during the period of significance. May include one or more multi-family types and represent one or more architectural styles. District as a whole is generally unified by planning features including street patterns, building setbacks, and landscape or street features such as streetlights or trees.

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- Property Sub-type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.
- Eligibility Standards:**
- Unified entity composed of a substantial number of properties constructed as multi-family residences during the period of significance
  - Is a good to excellent representation of multi-family residential development from the period of significance
- Character-Defining/Associative Features:**
- As a whole, district retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
  - Contains a substantial number of properties that are good to excellent examples of architectural styles of the period of construction
  - Conveys a strong visual sense of the overall historic environment from the period of significance
  - May be composed of a single multi-family residential property type of a variety of types
  - Retains original planning features including street patterns, building setbacks, and landscape or street features
  - May also be significant within themes related to streetcar, automobile, or post WWII suburbanization
  - For the National Register, contributors to the district must possess exceptional significance if less than 50 years of age
- Integrity Considerations:**
- As a whole, should retain sufficient integrity of Location, Design, Setting (the relationship between the buildings and landscapes), Materials, and Feeling to convey significance
  - Contributors to a district may have a greater degree of alteration than individually significant properties
  - May include some buildings constructed outside the period of significance
  - Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed

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