

January 10, 2000

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Dear Robie,

Thank you for sending me the evaluation that was written December 16, 1999. I found the evaluator's comments concerning the Baldwin Hills Village Landmark application to be invaluable. However, I do not agree entirely with her analysis.

I would like to make two general comments before I respond to each of the evaluator's written paragraphs. First, Baldwin Hills Village is essentially a powerful political and social statement about how modern communities can be designed to protect basic human rights in terms of affordable housing and community living. Clarence Stein and the four founding architects were products of a long historical period, beginning in the mid-1800s and continuing into the early 1900s, when American society was dramatically changed by the Industrial Revolution. This situation created enormous social and political problems in terms of decent housing and the quality of life in the urban environment, particularly for the poor and the working classes. The problems were intensified when the nation's economic structure collapsed and the Great Depression took place during the 1930s. This situation was the catalyst for the founding architects in designing and building Baldwin Hills Village as a solution to alleviate the nation's suffering. Actually, this site is an outstanding example of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's progressive idealism (a product of the Great Depression) that sought to protect the rights of the individual including access to affordable housing. I understand this particular way of thinking because I spoke at length with Robert Alexander (the last of the founding architects) about the creation of this site. These conversations took place during a three-year period before he died in 1992.

Second, a Landmark application needs to prove national significance of a particular site during the past four hundred years of American history. Thus, it needs to deal with broad historical movements containing relevant sites, personalities, events, and issues that will further this objective. The

Baldwin Hills Landmark application has followed this objective (proving national significance) by tracing major political, social, and artistic movements that have influenced the areas of urban planning, architecture (community housing), and landscape architecture. The following basic texts were used to verify these major historical movements: Kostof's *The City Shaped*; Reps' *The Making of Urban America—A History of City Planning in the United States*; Chudacoff and Smith's *The Evolution of American Urban Society*; and Goodman and Freund's *Principles and Practice of Urban Planning*.

SECOND PARAGRAPH: The evaluator states: "Baldwin Hills is not a complete garden city." Stein agrees with this statement; that is why I use the term "garden city principles" in connection with Baldwin Hills Village. The evaluator states: "A true garden city...included extensive greenbelts and industrial, educational, and commercial components." This definition deals with physical (and superficial) manifestations of a garden city. A more comprehensive definition would include Ebenezer Howard's distinctive political, social, and economic philosophy for the formation of a garden city (Howard was the founder of the garden city movement). This highly sophisticated and well thought-out approach was a response to the negative impact of capitalism, an economic system produced by the Industrial Revolution. For instance, the concept of an **economically sustainable** community is important because of the garden city's solution to the widespread economic and global exploitations of capitalism. Also, **sharing of community resources** (such as public spaces and facilities) is another important concept. This was a reaction to the damaging competitiveness of capitalism. Finally, the creation of a **rich social community life** is a distinguishing feature of a garden city to counteract the impersonality of the industrial city. Please see Lewis Mumford's article on *Modern Planning* (I have already sent this article to you) to obtain a more complete definition. I recommend reading the primary source for understanding the garden city concept: Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

I agree with the evaluator's judgment that a true garden city may not exist in America because of our existing political and economic way of thinking. The closest to a true garden city that I have encountered is Kitimat, British Columbia, which is Stein's last project in building a new community. During 1997, I traveled there in connection with this project, and was able to stay for a week in order to study the community design and to interview the people living there. It has the physical components described by the evaluator along with being economically sustainable, an on-

going rich social community life, and the sharing of community resources (public spaces and facilities).

THIRD PARAGRAH: The evaluator states that “there should be some mention to the city planning advocates and designers such as John Nolen, who similarly adopted garden city principles and beaux arts planning...”. John Nolen ( 1869-1937) did not adopt garden city principles. As a landscape architect, he made his important contribution following the tradition of the early colonial town planners and the City Beautiful movement by focusing on pure design of the urban environment. He did not share Stein and the garden city movement’s agenda; this agenda was designing total communities to further political, social, and economic improvement. This evaluation is confirmed in Engst and Hickerson’s *Urban America: Documenting the Planners (1985)*. This is an exhibition catalog that includes blueprints of both Nolen and Stein’s major works. Nolen’s work for Venice, Florida and Balboa Park in San Diego clearly indicate his interest in working with civic designs rather than housing and community projects. In contrast, Stein’s Radburn blueprints indicate the garden city’s objective where the focus is on improving the quality of life for the individual through proper community design; this included the first innovative solution to the role of the automobile. The Baldwin Hills Village application already mentioned the very limited influence of those that built garden cities (see page 30). Please read Stanley Buder’s *Visionaries and Planners—The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community*. Further discussion of Nolen (including the City Beautiful movement) and those who had limited success with the garden city movement would, in my opinion, will not advance the Baldwin Hills Village’s case for National Landmark status.

The evaluator states the need for including “communities created during WWI by the U.S. Housing Authority and the Emergency Fleet Corporation.” I see no need to do that because these communities are not high points in the large-scale political, social, and artistic movements in the United States with which a National Landmark application must deal. Stein and his colleagues on the contrary, were forced to go to England during the early 1900s to find better ways of building better communities because there were no existing viable models in the United States. The Greenbelt, Maryland’s architects also went to England to obtain new ideas about community housing (see NL application).

FOURTH PARAGRAPH: I have already mentioned the important impact of the FHA in terms of financing and the Baldwin Hills Village design on pages 13 and 14 of the application. Also, the evaluator mentions properties that are not significant or high points in our nation's four-hundred-year history of designing and building better communities. In my opinion, this will not advance Baldwin Hills Village's application for National Landmark status. Those mentioned by the evaluator are: Colonial Village in Arlington, Virginia; communities of WWI by the U.S. Housing Authority and the Emergency Fleet planning; garden apartment villages in Arlington and Alexander; and then in the fifth paragraph: Seaside (Bridgeport, CT), Fairview, and Seaside in Florida (which is too recent to evaluate. Are they related to the major historical movement of Clarence Stein and his colleagues of the Regional Planning Association?

FIFTH PARAGRAPH: The evaluator states: "My biggest problem with this nomination is the emphasis on Clarence Stein". Historic evidence indicates strongly that Stein is critical to the design and creation of Baldwin Hills Village. Prior to designing this site, Reginald Johnson and Robert Alexander (both lacking experience in designing new communities) traveled to Stein's eastern garden communities for the purpose of studying this special type of architecture (see pages 6 and 7 of the application). These concepts and architectural motifs were clearly incorporated into the Baldwin Hills Village design as the application points out. My 1996 site visitations to Greenbelt, Maryland, Radburn, Phipps Garden Apartments, Sunnyside, Hillside, and Chatham Village confirmed the evolution of these architectural ideas. In the application, I have described the evolutionary work of Stein and his Regional Planning Association colleagues as they sought to design more improved versions of the garden city. Then I demonstrated how this body of work was later refined at Baldwin Hills Village (see pages 40 to 57 of the application).

The significance of Stein in community planning and the Baldwin Hills Village project is also evident when one studies the founding architects' limited success in community planning following the completion of Baldwin Hills Village. Johnson began designing new communities near the end of his career and used Stein as a consultant for all three housing projects he completed. Baldwin Hills Village was his last project.

Similarly, after Baldwin Hills Village, Alexander was not able to achieve a community project that came close to this site (i.e., national stature). The political times were against the formation of garden cities. In the 1950s and 1960s, the sharing of common property was considered "communistic" and

also the developers had control of Los Angeles city. I discussed this situation with Robert Alexander during the three years that I knew him. Unlike Stein, Alexander did not have the opportunity of a “Kitimat” or the eastern garden cities that would give full expression to his ideas. This situation also applied to the other Baldwin Hills Village architects—Edwin Merrill and Lewis Wilson.

In contrast, Stein received national and international recognition for community design with an involvement in fourteen projects (Radburn being a major landmark) for a career that lasted over 50 years. See pages 655 to 659 of K.C. Parson’s *The Writings of Clarence S. Stein* (1998) for the list of Stein’s projects. Most important, Stein wrote a seminal book in urban planning that was used during several decades as a basic manual for designing new planned communities, and that influenced other urban planning textbooks. The argument for Baldwin Hills Village’s status as a National Landmark is possible because of its close connection to Stein and his colleagues of the Regional Planning Association—they represented a major historic movement in our nation’s history.

The evaluator asks for the clarification of Stein’s involvement as an advisor. I described this role on pages 11 to 12 of the application with reference to K.C. Parsons’ *The Writings of Clarence Stein* and Stein’s Baldwin Hills Village blueprints in his archives at Cornell University. In addition, a contract that describes Stein’s duties was found recently at the Stein archive at Cornell University by Robert Nicolais (who wrote the description in this application). Cornell will be sending this document to him, and we will be glad to send a copy to your office.

The evaluator states that more credit should be given to Johnson, Alexander, and others. I did that on pages 4 to 19 and then pages 42 to 44 of the application. I describes how these architects represented the most sophisticated and experienced in their field. First, their training was exceptional: two were trained at M.I.T. (the nation’s premier and first architectural school) and the other was educated at Cornell University (one of the top architectural schools in the nation). Second, they had an incredible eye for architectural details and display because of their many assignments involving a wealthy and demanding clientele. Third, they possessed a remarkable social conscience and a drive to improve social conditions, particularly in the area of affordable housing. I described in the application how these characteristics were critical to the excellence of this site’s overall design and plan. The Baldwin Hills Village architects’ more outstanding talents were very evident to me when I visited Stein’s other garden cities (including Kitimat) in 1996 and 1997.

I did mention the founding architects' modernism (page 53 and 54 of the application) because of Southern California's life style and weather. Also these pages described the various architectural styles of the eastern garden cities based on site visitations. Contrary to the evaluator's statement, only Sunnyside had the predominately Colonial Revival architecture.

The evaluator states that Stein is given too much credit for his early work, and that Henry Wright (1878-1926) should be mentioned. I agree with the evaluator. In the next revision, I will give credit to Wright (with Stein) for the design of Sunnyside, Radburn, and Chatham Village. Wright is more deserving of recognition for his work, but his life and career were short; he died at 58 years old and had a 36 year career. In contrast, Stein died when he was 92 with a career that spanned almost 60 years; he was still active in his 70s and 80s with writing and designing new communities. In the next revision, I also will name other members of the Regional Planning Association. K.C. Parson's article "Collaborative Genius—The Regional Planning Association" does an outstanding job in describing the various individuals of the RPAA (I already sent this article to you.)

The evaluator states that Stein is given too much credit for the New York City Comprehensive Plan. I disagree with this because two reliable sources already evaluated Stein's participation: Daniel Schaffer who has written one of the most authoritative books on the American garden city movement and Lewis Mumford, noted writer and urban historian. They both stated Stein's important contribution to the New York City housing plan in 1923-1926 (see pages 29 and 30 of the application).

The evaluator asks the question: Did Stein really claim Baldwin Hills as his design in *Toward New Towns for America*? The evaluator can find the answer to her question on page 208 where Stein gave credit to the Baldwin Hills Village architects for the conception and design. Stein was a modest individual who consistently collaborated with professional teams to produce an evolving and improved modern community environment. He encouraged other people's version of the garden city concept (see *Toward New Towns in America*; revised foreword). He definitely was not a prima donna who "claimed" an architectural creation as his own.

The evaluator states that Baldwin Hills Village is not Stein's seminal work. It would help to have the evaluator's definition of "seminal" and to know what standards she uses to define what work of Stein's is "seminal." After studying the literature and the personal papers in Stein's archives at Cornell, I have come to the conclusion that Baldwin Hills Village is a vital part of Stein's career. At this site, he and the founding architects made a significant contribution in extending the garden city principles. This is

documented in his influential book (pages 189 to 216 on Baldwin Hills Village), which is considered a seminal book in urban planning. In addition, Stein was recognized for the Baldwin Hills Village project (along with the founding architects) by the American Institute of Architects when it presented the Twenty-Five-Year Award to this site in 1972 and also by the Museum of Modern Art (temporary exhibition at the museum in 1944 and part of a traveling exhibition from 1944 to 1949).

The evaluator states: "He was an advisor to Greenbelt, but others designed it." The Greenbelt architects used Radburn (Stein's work) as the model. Thus, Stein did not just advise; he influenced and enlarged their perceptions with the "real thing" that worked.

The evaluator suggested that Clarence Perry be included in the application. I am familiar with Clarence Perry, "who initiated the neighborhood unit" and his concept of the superblock. Perry's work was important during the early 1900s when American cities were looking for answers to urban problems of the early American industrial society. But the neighborhood concept was around for a long time. It was used by the British utopians in designing new industrial communities in the 1700s and 1800s (see Kostof's *The City Shaped*) and also by the Dutch in the 1600s when they built New Amsterdam, or New York City. Lewis Mumford placed Perry in proper perspective when he stated in *Toward New Towns for America*: "Before Clarence Perry wrote his able treatise on the Neighborhood Unit, Stein and Wright had, in Sunnyside, carried out many of his theoretic suggestions in concrete detail" (page 17). In this Landmark application, I have not mentioned Perry because he does not represent a historical high point (although important in the early 1900s) that influenced the design of Baldwin Hills Village.

SIXTH PARAGRAPH: I am pleased that the evaluator feel that the scope and depth of the research for this application could involve a group application for Stein's other eastern garden cities ("Sunnyside, Radburn, Chatham Village, Hillside Homes, Phipps, etc.") However, the evaluator needs to be aware that a discussion of Baldwin Hills Village will involve ultimately the study of Stein's other garden cities.

The evaluator states that Baldwin Hills Village "...comes so late..." I disagree. Baldwin Hills Village is not "late" compared to other of Stein's sites. The preparation and design of this site were in the 1930s when Greenbelt, Chatham Village, and Hillside were being built. As I pointed out in the Landmark application, Stein (1882-1975) was at the height of his working career when he worked on Baldwin Hills Village. He was 57 when

he began formally on this project in 1939 and he started Sunnyside (his first site) in 1923 when he was 41 years old (a span of sixteen years).

The evaluator states: "I'm left wondering why is Baldwin Hills important—my conclusion is that it represents outstanding artistic achievement in the design of residential community that is the synthesis of garden city principles and practice, West Coast innovations in housing design, and a federal housing policy that stimulated private investment while requiring adherence to specific design standards (i.e., garden-city principles espoused by Clarence Stein)." The evaluator indicates a basic understanding of the application. However, I would like to add that the Baldwin Hills Village architects intended this site to be more than an "artistic achievement." If they were simply interested in aesthetics, they would have continued designing for a discriminating and wealthy clientele. This site reflected the founding architects' commitment to the improvement of society during the Depression years. It represents one of the most powerful political and social statements created in the past century dealing with affordable housing and community living (see my comments on page one of this document). The Baldwin Hills architects created a model that continues to address the issues confronting urban environment globally: urban sprawl, proper land use, population density, the social impersonality of urban life, the distribution of wealth and power, affordable housing for different households, and the role of the automobile. Its viability has been acknowledged for several decades by many national awards and the large numbers of students and professionals who continue to come here to study this site.

**SEVENTH PARAGRAPH:** The evaluator states that Robert Simon was inspired by Radburn. It is likely that Simon was familiar with Baldwin Hills Village's advanced design because of Stein's book. Please see page 60 for an interview with K.C. Parsons who knows Robert Simon. As Parsons stated: these "second generation" planners were given Stein's book to study, and this book included a detailed description of Baldwin Hills Village because it extended the Radburn idea. Stein's book is still the best available on Radburn. (I discovered this when I visited Radburn in 1996.)

I doubt that the designers of Seaside in Florida used World War I shipbuilders' housing villages as their influence. These designers are the "new urbanists," and their context and agenda come from another source. I interviewed Stephanos Polyzoides, one of the founding members of the new urbanism (see page 61 of the application), and he gave credit to Stein and his work as a major source. No mention was made of World War I housing villages as a model. Also Reid Ewing, writer of a best selling book on urban

planning, stated that Stein's work serves as the dominant model for new planned communities (see page 60).

The evaluator asks: Can specific instances where later development used Baldwin Hills as a model or as a source of inspiration be noted? I asked several of the urban planning professionals about this, including Robert Alexander. They stated that Baldwin Hills Village was so unique that it cannot be duplicated. These same individuals emphasized the importance of this site's powerful design principles that stimulated creative thinking for planning future planned communities. Duplication is an impossible task because each new site (or planned community) is governed by numerous new variables, such as topography, financing, density ratios, weather conditions, and local customs. Consequently, the design principles that Baldwin Hills Village demonstrated are reinterpreted in later developments (such as at Irvine, Westlake, and Valencia). I suggest that the evaluator read again the letters of recommendation from leading design professionals for National Landmark status in order to understand Baldwin Hills Village's important influence. These were enclosed with the application.

FIRST PARAGRAPH: I am disappointed that the evaluator was not provided adequate time to study the application in depth ("I did a quick read through") nor to study the related primary documents (i.e., Stein's *Toward New Towns for America* and Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*). This site's application demands much time and effort in order to comprehend it fully because of the complexity of the subject matter, the efforts of the researcher/writer, and the help given by many people, both locally and nationally. The complexity of the subject matter has already been mentioned on page one of this letter.

Another way of measuring the complexity of this application is an analysis of time and funds I have expended as the researcher/writer. I have spent over five years working on this project. This included 20,000 miles of travel in studying Stein's eastern garden cities and his final project located at Kitimat, British Columbia. The traveling also included retrieving Baldwin Hills Village's primary historical documents on the east coast (very few of the historical documents that support Landmark status are located on this site).

During the last two and a half years, I had to stop temporarily my career in order to devote full time to finishing this research because of the extensive research and analysis required. The total cost in time is easily 4,000 hours and could reach 5,000 hours when everything is finished. My financial cost as of January 2000 after 29 months of full time is approximately \$75,000

and could reach \$85,000 to \$95,000 depending on when the hearing takes place. I estimate that it costs me \$2,000 to \$3,000 each month that I work on the application. These financial figures are modest considering the scope of the project and the benefits that both my community and the nation will receive from this designation. I want to add that the work has been highly organized because of the strong research skills that I have gained from completing a Ph.D. and three other graduate degrees.

Another measure in the complexity of this application is the large network of people that I enlisted to help both nationally and locally. The most critical was the participation of Cornell University, one of the nation's top universities in urban history, where the Clarence Stein and the Robert Alexander archives are located. Michael Tomlan (director of graduate studies in Historic Preservation at Cornell) and K.C. Parsons (foremost authority on Clarence Stein) volunteered to help me with the application. Michael Tomlan (who has a Ph.D. in urban planning) supervised the preparation of this application. He did this during one and a half years by e-mail, and made a substantial contribution to this application. In addition, I have phoned K.C. Parsons at Ithaca, New York for help whenever I had a problem understanding Stein and the garden city movement.

Through interviews, other urban planning professionals and archivists located across the nation have also made contributions to the application. Locally in Los Angeles, several scholars in urban planning at the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles have participated, along with urban planners working on private projects and with government agencies. Please see pages 71-73 for the listing of volunteers.

In addition to the above professionals, friends and contacts at Stein's garden cities continue to verify information about the various sites. Finally, the preparation of this application has been a community effort of long duration. For ten years, the following Village Green residents have helped to shape both the National Register and National Landmark applications. Robert Nicolais (architect) wrote the description to the Landmark application, retrieved old photographs from various archives, documented the site maps, and checked the information on architectural history. Loretta Rooney Hess (editor and writer) served as the copy editor for the National Register and National Landmark applications (four versions). And George Totten (Professor Emeritus of political theory and history at the University of Southern California) verified the political and historical information for the National Landmark application.

In conclusion, I want to thank the evaluator for her efforts. Because of her comments, I have decided to write a fifth version that is condensed and thus will provide more focus for the reader. However, this current version (number four) is very critical in understanding the full historical depth and scope of this site. It is the “defense” (or law case) for national significance that you requested at the beginning of the project.

I thank you for your long and conscientious efforts on this project.

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