

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR
THE VILLAGE GREEN AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

Baldwin Hills Village is one of those extraordinary neighborhoods. As one of the most important planning developments in the United States, its history is well known to planners, architects, preservationists, and all who have a dedicated interest in preserving neighborhoods of true merit.

The classic books in these fields are filled with countless references to Baldwin Hills Village. And for good reason. Baldwin Hills Village is special for it has served for several decades as a model for the design of an ideal community---one that is enjoyed by its fortunate residents, and visitors alike. The special attention given to common areas and the restricted use of the automobile offer innovative solutions to the impersonality and traffic congestion of most contemporary urban environments.

---Leland S. Burns, Ph.D.
Professor of Urban Planning
University of California, Los Angeles

I have been a Professor of Urban and Regional Planning for more than 45 years. I hold a Masters degree in architecture from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in Regional Planning from Harvard University.

I have used photo slides of Village Green in my introductory course in urban and regional planning at the University of Southern California---emphasizing its excellent overall design, low density, separation of pedestrian pathways and automobile circulation, separate but close-by parking and garages, and the well thought out use of open space and landscape.

----Melville C. Branch, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Emeritus
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

The Village Green project offers a rare insight into the minds of the most progressive architects and planners of our country in the middle of the 20th century, trying to deal with the enormous challenges of urban decongestion and suburban design.

---Stefanos Polyzoides
Architect and Urbanist
Los Angeles, California

The urban planning and design principles are discussed in many textbooks on planning, and the site is still visited by students and scholars from around the world.

Baldwin Hills Village [Village Green] was intended as an innovative and idealistic social program, demonstrating how a well-planned and well-designed environment could improve human society. This ideal has been sustained at Baldwin Hills Village, which is today a mixed multi-racial community that has remained cohesive despite current social unrest.

----Ruthann Lehrer
President, California Preservation Foundation
Los Angeles, California

As a housing development that pioneered a number of planning concepts and practices that in today's practice of multifamily housing design are a standard part of the physical planning language and often codified into local zoning codes, I feel that Village Green is an important candidate for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

----*Craig O'Connor*
Senior Planner, Genesis Architectural Engineering Inc.
Los Angeles, California

Though built more than fifty years ago, Village Greens singularly embodies a full complement of planning ideals that are still promoted by planning professionals today. Based on design concepts that responded to specific urban housing problems of its era, such as overcrowding and lack of access to light, air and open space, it also responds to modern problems, such as sprawl, sense of community and human scale. Village Green is low-scale, but multiple-family and affordable; its design incorporates communal and private open spaces for recreation and relaxation, accommodates automobiles, without allowing them hegemony, and emphasizes people and community. Because these features continue to be relevant to and frequently elusive in planning today, they give Village Green a timeless quality and make it a model of urban living for all generations.

---*Reba Wright-Quastler, Ph.D., AICP*
President, American Planning Association,
California Chapter (1995)
Sacramento, California

The Village Green is historically significant as an outstanding example of urban development ideas of the 1930s and 40s and for its impact as a design model for other urban communities during the later half of the 20th Century. The high quality of stewardship that the residents maintain is exemplary of the esteem they have for the complex.

---*Christy Johnson McAvoy*
Preservationist and Principal of Historic Resources
Los Angeles, California

The Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village) has served for over 50 years as an urban planning model of national significance. It was designed by Clarence Stein, perhaps the foremost figure in the history of American planning along with Frederick Law Olmsted. It is one of the surviving examples of Stein's classic plans of the separation of automobiles and pedestrians within a greenbelt. It is now being discovered and treasured by a new generation and their young children.

---*Kathryn Smith*
Architectural Historian
Professor of History and Theory
Southern California Institute of Architecture
Los Angeles, California

The Village Green represents the greatest achievement in the Garden City movement on the West Coast, equaled in the United States only by the progressive plans for Radburn, New Jersey. The Village Green is a complete environment and successful experiment in social engineering that has contributed vastly to the theory of Urban Design. It is for these reasons that the Society of Architectural Historians, Southern California Chapter, is in full support of the application for National Landmark Status.

---Jeffrey B. Samudio, *President*
Society of Architectural Historians, Southern Chapter
Los Angeles, California

The importance of Village Green to the nation, specifically in the fields of architecture and community planning, has been acknowledged by our organization [American Institute of Architects] for several years. In 1973 this site received from us the twenty-five year award, which recognized works on a national level that have architectural design of enduring significance. We also recognized Village Green in 1976 when we selected it as one of one hundred highlights in American architecture in our nation's history for the July 1976 issue of the AIA Journal.

Village Green continues to inspire architects and urban planners with its clarity and elegance of design that is rare in 20th century urban planning. Its preservation as a National Landmark will offer future generations of architects and those interested in urban planning a special example of how humane and aesthetic communities can be designed.

---Nicola Solomons, *Executive Director*
American Institute of Architects, Los Angeles Chapter
Los Angeles, California

Baldwin Hills Village was the culmination of two decades of efforts by Clarence Stein to realize a superior form of American residential neighborhood. Stein was a primary American proponent of the English Garden City Movement, which he adapted to American economic, social and political realities. The Baldwin Hills Village concept was evolved by Stein through his work at Sunnyside Gardens (Queens, Long Island, New York) and Radburn (at Fair Lawn, New Jersey), and through his contributions as a consultant to the federal government with regard to the construction of the Greenbelt Towns in the 1930s.

Intended to demonstrate a more livable alternative to the single-family detached sprawling California ranch house residential district, it combined all of the best features of his earlier efforts in a privately constructed coordinated residential construction project.

Often imitated, but never replicated, Baldwin Hills set a successful precedent for the privately constructed large-scale residential projects of the postwar period and established a standard for a combination of environmental amenity, construction economy, and the creation of speculative investment value that has rarely been equaled in America.

Baldwin Hills Village has been recognized as an American urban development landmark by the American Institute of Certified Planners (though recognition of the collective works of Clarence Stein) and in the "Landmarks" series in Landmark Development Magazine (The National Association of Home Builders).

----Laurence C. Gerckens, AICP
National Historian, American Institute of Certified Planners
Emeritus Professor of City and Regional Planning, Ohio State University
Founder, The Society for American City and Regional Planning History

As a Village Green resident (10 years) and Residential Development Planner (25 years) I have the unique opportunity to experience the lifestyle that this community affords first hand and compare the concept with the countless other communities that I have investigated throughout the course of my consulting and development planning activities.

I believe that the Village is unique and merit worthy in several respects. For example, apart from its urban planning significance, Village Green stands as a viable example of a successful ethnically diverse community taking place within the context of the social unrest and racial polarization that characterizes parts of this city. Also, it works in accordance with the vision and principles laid down by the original architects in developing a harmonious unity of the physical and natural environment. In addition, the conversion of the rental property to condominium ownership in the 1970's was a major step in the evolution of the community toward self government and social responsibility as envisioned by the original architects.

*---David Mellin, M.A.
Housing Economist
DRM Associates*

The full text of these letters and other letters of support for the Village Green's National Historic Landmark are located in LandmarkWatch.org's Archives.

29 letters were collected during 1995 to 1996 by Dorothy Fue Wong, preparer of the Baldwin Hills Village Landmark nomination.