

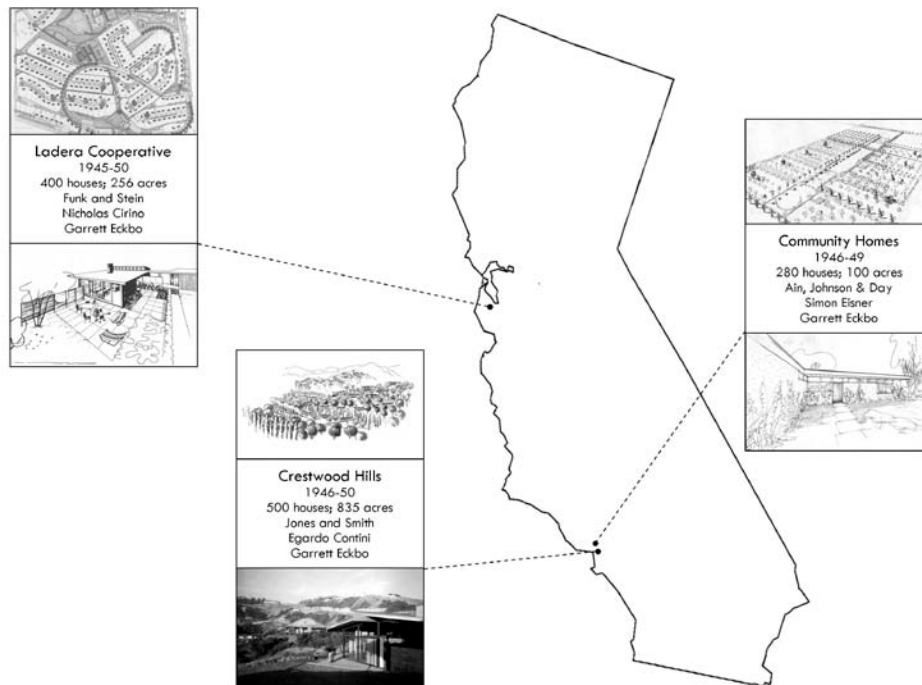
California's Postwar Suburban Cooperatives: Race, Design and the FHA

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It is by now widely accepted and well-known that, even though President Truman pledged that “all men have a right to equal justice under law and equal opportunity to share in the common good” in his inaugural address, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) promoted racial segregation in the late 1940s. Thurgood Marshall, then working for the NAACP, complained to Truman: “The achievement of racial residential segregation is the purpose and the effect of FHA’s policy.”¹ Charles Abrams, Columbia professor, lawyer and housing administrator, likewise argued: “FHA adopted a racial policy that could well have been culled from the Nuremberg laws. From its inception FHA set itself up as the protector of the all white neighborhood.”² These practices surely carried long-term social implications that are immeasurable but acutely present.



Some groups resisted and in effect used design as an expression of protest: architectural design, landscape design, and urban planning. Three cooperative housing projects in California — the Ladera Cooperative, Crestwood Hills, and Community Homes — are particularly noteworthy for their resistance. These projects shared several key features: a cooperative organizational structure, a social commitment to racial integration, a ‘suburban’ planning concept, and an allegiance to modern design. Indeed the similarities are striking. Each project was initiated in 1945-46 by a core group with fairly modest intentions, who then expanded their ambitions after being surprised by intense interest and commitment of new members. Each developed a bold (perhaps utopian) design for a completely planned community, including not only houses and parks, but schools, community centers and businesses. Each encountered several levels of institutional resistance, from smear campaigns by real estate interests to refusals by banks and mortgage insurers, due primarily to the issue of race. Each fought for their principles and agonized over potential compromises for a

period of years, while many members lived in temporary accommodations. And because of the government's policy of segregation each project ultimately failed to be built as planned.

More broadly, these projects can be understood as critical alternatives to the emergent 'Levittown pattern'³ of suburban housing, both in terms of politics and design. In the postwar period, tract homebuilders rarely, if ever, faced the cooperatives' dilemma when negotiating with the FHA because they did not seek to be racially-integrated. Indeed William Levitt's own statement that "We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two,"⁴ indicated of the political stance of tract homebuilders generally. A close reading of the cooperative projects reveals a fairly explicit link between formal innovation and political resistance. Moreover, differences among the cooperatives may show a more finely-tuned alignment between progressive politics and progressive design.

In Northern California, a group of Stanford University professors formed the Peninsula Housing Association — known as the Ladera Cooperative — in 1945. Within a year, membership reached 150 and the group purchased a 256-acre rural parcel with the intention of building 400 houses plus an elementary school, community center, non-denominational chapel, and relatively large cooperatively-run shopping center whose profits would be divided among the members. The cooperative aimed for its members to "enjoy the advantages of country living, but without the high costs, isolation, and inconveniences we would face if we each tried to go it alone."⁵

After interviewing many architects, the group selected John Funk and Joseph Allen Stein to design the community, though neither had any specifically-related experience; suburban cooperative housing was essentially uncharted territory for architecture. They began work in early 1947. Civil engineer Nicholas Cirino assisted with the site plan, and Garrett Eckbo designed the landscape plan. The hillside community would be organized around "two meandering arteries" and cul-de-sacs, while most of the shared facilities were located at the entrance to the development.

Ladera's members came "from all walks of life" but believed that the cooperative "could make their money count for more." Membership included three black families and one "Oriental" family. Some notion of their political character can also be gleaned from the fact that the group studied successful cooperative housing projects in Denmark and Sweden, and organized an adult education course for new members. Before construction began, they held Sunday picnics on the site.⁶

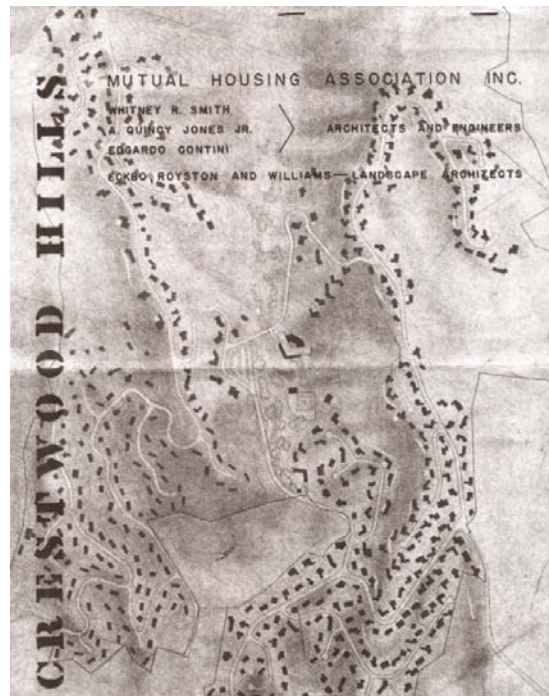
In Southern California, four orchestra musicians founded the Mutual Housing Association in 1946. Notably, two of the founders had previously lived at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin, which was effectively an



intentional community.⁷ The membership rapidly grew to 65, and the group purchased an 835-acre site in west Los Angeles that they called Crestwood Hills, planning for 500 homes.

The Crestwood Hills site featured a difficult topography, ranging from flat to 30 percent slopes, which was relatively inexpensive because tract housing developers considered it unbuildable. Moreover, it also proved socially challenging. The land stood above the all-white Brentwood neighborhood, which “had been zoned for higher income families since the turn of the century” and included numerous celebrities.⁸

The members selected architects A. Quincy Jones and Whitney R. Smith; civil engineer Egardo Contini would design the site plan, while Garrett Eckbo was enlisted as the landscape architect. The plan called for several public facilities — a community center, nursery school, gas station, medical center, grocery store and swimming pool — to occupy a flat area at the center of the site, while houses would be grouped in serpentine clusters along the ridges.



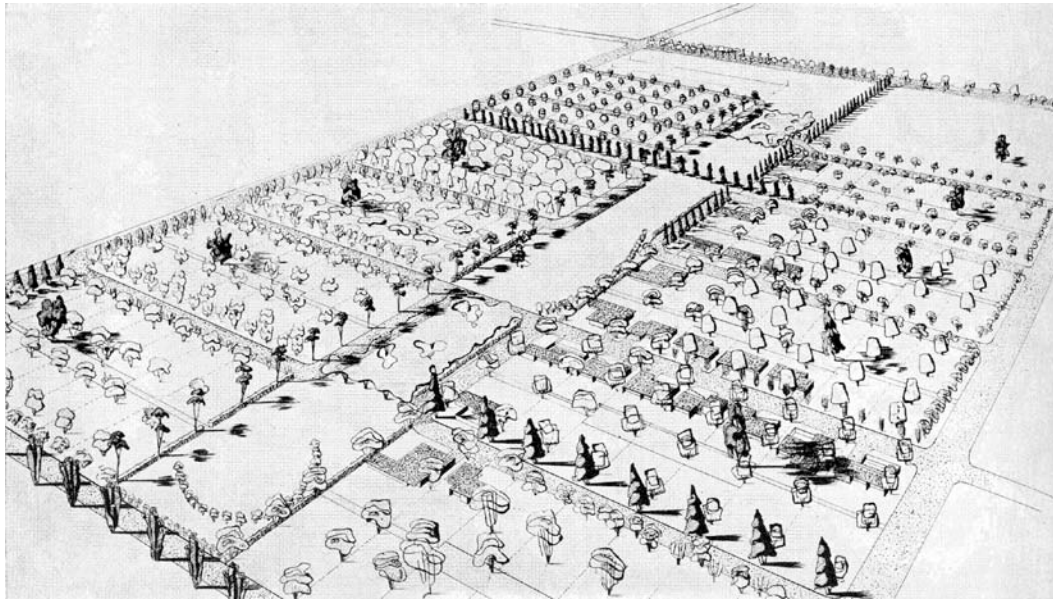
Crestwood Hills’ membership was “dominated by Jewish professionals ... leftists, and modernists ... a few members of the Communist Party.”⁹ Photographer Julius Shulman later said that “a copy of the *Weekly People* [sic] would be on the living room table” whenever he visited¹⁰, but one period publication emphasized that the membership included business executives as well as teachers, doctors and musicians.¹¹ Jones and Contini also joined. The membership shared an attitude about race: “The critical moment in the membership interview was the question (as written in the interview protocol), ‘Would you object to living in a neighborhood in which there were also negro, japanese, mexican or other minority group families?’ A positive answer disqualified an applicant.”¹² Zellman and Friedland concluded: “[Their] commitment to racial integration was ... astounding.... This was one year before Jackie Robinson would step to the plate for the Brooklyn Dodgers.”¹³

Also in Southern California, a group of Hollywood animators established a cooperative called Community Homes in early 1946. Again, there was tremendous interest, and by the end of the year 264 families joined. They purchased a 100-acre parcel, and planned to build 280 detached single-family homes, a school, community building, and store.¹⁴

Community Homes’ site differed greatly from the other two projects: a flat 100-acre parcel in Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley, ensconced in a sprawling grid and to be surrounded on all sides by future tract housing. Unlike the other two projects, it did not have a single point of entry and would not be physically set apart from neighboring areas.

The group enlisted architect Gregory Ain, who assembled a kind of ‘dream team’ to assist him. Reginald Johnson, the ‘eminent dean’ of Southern California architects, would help secure FHA financing. Johnson’s son Joseph and Alfred Day joined Ain’s office. Simon Eisner joined the team as its site planner. And here too Garrett Eckbo would be the landscape architect, providing the only tangible continuity between

the three projects. Ain and Eckbo had completed an immensely interesting private tract called Park Planned Homes, and were working on a few other projects together as well. Eckbo soon came to admire Community Homes to such an extent that he became a member of the cooperative himself.¹⁵



Community Homes' membership was racially integrated from the beginning, with an Asian-American cartoonist among the founders. Eventually, non-whites made up fifteen of the 280 members, including singer Lena Horne. The founders were all active in liberal political groups, and indeed many of them would be accused of being Communist and blacklisted during the course of the project. (One even admitted so and later named some fellow cooperative board members in front of HUAC.) Furthermore, Ain the architect was the most forwardly political architect practicing in the region at this time, known as 'simpatico' or a 'fellow traveler' in the language of the period. He had attended Communist Party meetings in the 1930s, and the cooperative's leadership likely knew that many of his pre-war houses had been completed for clients who were active in the party.¹⁶

An account of the first meeting noted that "interest in the good of the community" formed the primary motivation. It was also well-understood that, in the postwar housing crisis, "Trying to build one small house today is next to hopeless. Small builders can't get materials. Big builders won't take small jobs. But if a group of veterans pool their plans and finances they might interest a big builder and stand some chance of getting new homes."¹⁷

In the context of postwar housing, to be organized as a cooperative carried political connotations that presented enough difficulties, particularly as the Red Scare gained hold in the cultural imagination. (In fact there *were* significant connections between the Communist Party and the cooperative movement, as perhaps confirmed by the summaries above, and also acknowledged by Charles Abrams.¹⁸ Plus, Levitt's statement, "No man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist,"¹⁹ showed how clearly those ideological battle lines could be drawn.) But ultimately all three cooperatives discovered that the added element of racial integration brought problems of a different order.

At Ladera, "one of the most keenly felt ... issues was the question of an interracial community." In November 1946, members voted 93-42 for a no-restrictions policy. A year later, a compromise "quota statement" was proposed, which stated that minority membership could be denied if "the proportion of the

population of Ladera equals or exceeds the proportion of such race to the entire population of California.” The board of directors opposed this policy, but members supported it by a vote of 78-75 in January 1948.²⁰

Still, Ladera was an interracial cooperative, and as such the FHA refused to guarantee a loan to the group, though they “did not openly state that their denial of a loan was based on the community’s ethnic composition.”²¹ With the roads completed and over \$500,000 in debt, the cooperative faced bankruptcy without FHA support. They disbanded and sold the land in March 1950. Members later recalled: “Those were sad days for the PHA, and the memory of those days can still bring tears to many eyes ... Ladera had been a dearly-held dream, and its failure was a strongly emotional experience for many.”²² The 35 houses underway were completed with private financing, and none of the communal facilities were realized.

At Crestwood Hills, the community’s plan for racial integration touched off significant protest. “Major landowners and developers, local realtors, and the adjacent community all swung into action to keep Brentwood white.”²³ (Later Eckbo would frequently bemoan the ‘trinity’ of real estate interests, bankers, and government agencies that, in his view, blocked progress.) In this case, the seller suddenly insisted that the deal be amended to require racial covenants. With the deal in escrow, and members’ down payments of \$1,000 in the balance, the cooperative faced a decisive moment. One of Crestwood’s founders, Jules Salkin, argued that the covenants would soon be struck down as a result of a case pending in the U.S. Supreme Court (*Shelley v. Kraemer*; see below).

After a contentious debate, the Mutual Homes Association voted to accept the race restrictions. The cooperative obtained financing, 160 houses were built in 1948-49, and indeed the enforceability of covenants was soon ruled unconstitutional. Was the compromise worth the securing of homes and a deferred realization of the social goal of an interracial cooperative community? Perhaps not. The minority families, of course, withdrew, and a number of other families did too in protest. The project was not completed due to financial challenges, and many of the shared facilities were not built. The community had not integrated by 1961 when 45 homes burned in a wildfire.²⁴

When Community Homes’ plans became public, it triggered a “vicious campaign [by] local real estate boards and chambers of commerce” who believed that the project would reduce local property values.²⁵ A local ‘Race Restrictions Board’ asked the group to place race-restrictive covenants on a portion of the property, but they refused. On more than one occasion Community Homes was “informally advised” that FHA financing would proceed more easily if the covenants were placed on all but twenty of the lots; once they were promised that processing could be completed within two weeks.²⁶ Again and again, the cooperative refused to negotiate on principle.

These struggles continued for three years, culminating in Thurgood Marshall’s lengthy letter of support to President Truman, mentioned above. The cooperative finally voted to disband in late 1949 and the land was sold. None of the houses were built. One of the cooperative’s leaders had reported: “The fact of the matter is that the local FHA had shut the door in our faces completely, and solely on the basis of the interracial character of our development.”²⁷ Eventually the land would host “the lowest common denominator of tract housing — no green belts or finger parks, just houses set row on row ...”²⁸

The FHA had begun to openly advocate racial segregation in 1935, when it endorsed exclusionary devices such as restrictive covenants. According to the 1938 FHA *Underwriting Manual*, “If a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall be continued to be occupied by the same social and racial classes.”²⁹ These were the policies that led Charles Abrams to compare FHA rules to Hitler’s Nuremberg laws; other scholars have concluded that “the Roosevelt administration itself sought to write race into space.”³⁰ In Southern California, racial covenants were written into most neighborhoods and the

practice of ‘redlining’ prevented minorities from obtaining long-term, low-interest mortgages. Meanwhile, the code of ethics of the National Association of Real Estate Boards instructed realtors to “never be instrumental in introducing in a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individual whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in the neighborhood.”³¹

In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court decided the landmark case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*³², which is commonly believed to have outlawed race restrictive covenants. Instead, it prohibited *judicial enforcement of race restrictive covenants*, but covenants themselves were not vacated and they continued to be used, with FHA approval, through the 1950s. Indeed there were probably many cases, including the three cooperatives, where FHA officials insisted upon covenants *after* the *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruling, even if they could not be enforced.

Ultimately, the ‘Faustian’ bargain that the FHA offered the cooperatives — abandon your principles or abandon your project — represented “evil ... of a peculiarly enduring character,” as Charles Abrams concluded:

Thousands of racially segregated neighborhoods were built, millions of people re-assorted on the basis of race, color, or class, the differences built in, in neighborhoods from coast to coast. FHA simultaneously undermined the old pattern of heterogeneous neighborhoods in communities from coast to coast where people of mixed races and mixed religions had been living nearby or in the same block without a qualm or a quibble.³³

The landscape architect Garrett Eckbo remarked in 1988: “We find this unbelievable these days, but [FHA segregation policy] was there then, like a rock.”³⁴

For all three cooperatives, the ideology of racial equality was directly inherited from Rochdale, the 19th-century British consumer organization whose principles remain the basis for the modern cooperative movement. The Rochdale Principles, which had been revised in 1937, stated that cooperatives “should be wide open to admit all people of good character into their ranks,” and maintain “neutrality [which] applies equally to Politics, Religion, Race and Nationality.”³⁵ Racial integration, then, was known as a core tenet of the cooperative movement in the 1940s. Reflecting a consciousness of origins, the Peninsula Housing Association members considered “New Rochdale” as a name for their community before choosing Ladera (Spanish for hillside). And Crestwood Hills included a “Rochedale Lane” in their plan, which exists today.

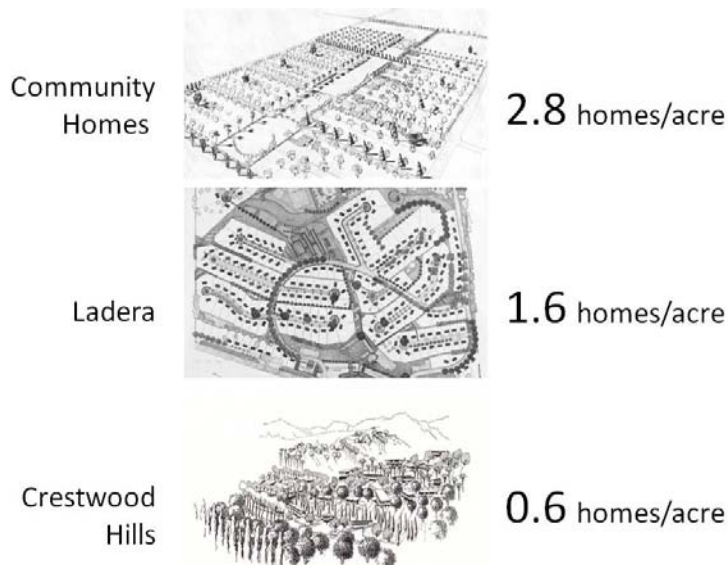
Certainly the two groups located in Southern California would have been aware that “the Los Angeles housing authority had been one of the first in the nation to desegregate in 1942”³⁶ (though not without struggle). Integration of the city’s public housing projects, including the flagship 802-unit Aliso Village (Ralph Flewelling and Lloyd Wright, 1942), was quickly touted as a success story. By 1944, the Los Angeles Housing Authority would “point with pride to the harmony that has been achieved in its Aliso Village, an 802-unit slum-clearance development devoted temporarily to the housing of war workers among whom are large representations of various races, colors, religions, and nationalities.”³⁷ The city’s ‘emergency’ projects such as Rodger Young Village, completed in 1946 just as the cooperatives formed, not only accepted all races but celebrated this fact in promotional photographs.³⁸ Based on these examples, the cooperatives could plausibly have believed themselves to be near the safe middle of a cultural shift, rather than at its leading edge.

Community Homes’ leaders, somewhat curiously, overlooked local examples and cited a Milwaukee public housing project as a social model. Parklawn, built in 1936-37 and integrated despite bitter protest, commanded the attention of the group’s financial consultant Raymond Voigt: “For the first time in the

history of public housing in the United States,” Voigt claimed, “an interracial community was established.... It did work out, and with no damage or harm to anyone, and with no depreciation or jeopardy of property values.”³⁹

Beyond race, the nature of modern architecture was inherently political at this time. Community Homes’ architect Gregory Ain found himself engaged in a contemporaneous struggle with the FHA over the architecture of his Mar Vista housing project (not a cooperative), where housing officials repeatedly asked that Colonial, Cape Cod, Italian and Spanish styles be included among Ain’s flat-roofed modern houses.⁴⁰ Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonia I, a Michigan cooperative made up of university faculty and staff, was denied financing due to its ‘unusual’ design, which would reduce the resale value of the homes.⁴¹ Soon it became widely recognized, as *Architectural Forum* reported, that: “Most ‘modern’ architects who have encountered FHA processing agree that the most disheartening aspect of the situation is official insistence on routine planning with which they are familiar and a complete unwillingness to try anything new.”⁴² For Crestwood Hills, even after they abandoned their social principles and accepted racial covenants, they still had to send a delegation to Washington, DC, in order to secure FHA financing because of the architectural style of the houses. As Vernon DeMars noted in *Progressive Architecture*, cooperatives could be realized only “if the owners ... didn’t have too unconventional ideas about architecture, nonsegregation or restrictive covenants.”⁴³

In terms of design, broad differences between the (politically progressive) cooperatives and the (conservative) private housing tracts were both profound and obvious. However, among the three cooperative projects, a close reading reveals several meaningful linkages between the political and formal. These relationships lead to the conclusion that the most progressive group on the issue of race sponsored the most innovative design, while the cooperatives that opted for political compromise exhibited (relatively) less radical forms of architecture, landscape design and community planning.



Due to their varied approaches to site selection, the three communities would each exhibit a different character in terms of density. Community Homes consisted of 2.8 homes/acre, Ladera would have 1.56 homes/acre, and Crestwood Hills planned for .6 homes/acre. However these figures are somewhat misleading due to dedicated open space and it is more accurate to describe density in other terms. At Community Homes, a typical lot measured approximately 7000 square feet (about 1/6 acre) while most houses were separated from the next by ten feet. At Ladera, lots ranged between 1/4 and 2.5 acres, with at

least 24 feet between homes. Crestwood Hills consisted of 1/4-acre lots and a typical distance between dwellings of more than 20 feet.⁴⁴ Clearly Community Homes would possess a rather urban character (especially relative to the context of Los Angeles), while both Ladera and Crestwood Hills created an ex-urban condition.

All three projects differed in their planning from the 'Levittown pattern' because they emphasized shared facilities, whereas tract housing gave priority to private space⁴⁵. But of the three, Community Homes was the most progressive in both its functional emphasis on the pedestrian over the auto and its symbolic representation of shared space.

At Community Homes, a wide greenbelt park would occupy the center of the project, linking the houses with the elementary school, so that children could walk there without having to cross a street. Functionally, planner Simon Eisner intended to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic for the safety of children, influenced particularly by Radburn, New Jersey and Baldwin Hills Village (which Community Homes' architect Gregory Ain recognized as "one of the best [housing projects] ever done in the country"⁴⁶).

Clearly the greenbelt had symbolic as well as functional value; it was Jefferson's lawn in the working-class suburbs. Interestingly, as Community Homes intended to employ the greenbelt to bring an interracial community together, they would subvert the meaning of the form. As Charles Abrams noted, the greenbelt as a planning device was usually meant to separate black neighborhoods from white.⁴⁷

Neither Ladera nor Crestwood would possess a feature of equivalent symbolic power. Ladera's plan gave primacy to its shopping center, which was located as a gateway at the single point of entrance to the community. The elementary school was centrally located and would have been a functional 'center' for its users, but the plan did not construct axes and views to heighten its status as a focal point. Ladera would also include "a park strip sixty feet wide" which would link the homes and school for the safety of children. It was not, though, described as a greenbelt, nor was it graphically presented as an open space that would become a unifying focal point for the community.

At Crestwood Hills, the plan reserved "the best flat land at the center of the tract" for the communal facilities,⁴⁸ and the community center/nursery school clearly occupied a privileged place in the hierarchy of space. Perhaps the most potent symbolic gesture was a long pedestrian bridge linking a small commercial building to a club house and restaurant, a fine expression of community connectivity. However, it is unclear whether any of these features would be highlighted (or even perceptible) by constructed axes and views. The communal buildings were "dispersed" among several acres of sycamore-covered land.⁴⁹ As at Ladera, the elements certainly would help the community function differently than a private hillside tract, but they perhaps lacked a powerful visual expression of cooperation. (Julius Shulman's photos of Crestwood Hills showed clusters of homes that highlighted the modern architecture but failed to convey its nature as a cooperative.)

Innovative types of small-scale shared space also expressed the cooperatives' desire to explore new forms of social relationships. Crestwood Hills featured a cooperatively-run nursery school. Both Ladera and Community Homes included "finger-parks," which would link groups of back yards, like green pedestrian alleys. And more radically, at Community Homes Ain placed 'two-family drying yards' between pairs of homes. The notion of cooperative domestic work would challenge social conventions enough by itself, but when considering the added dimension of racial integration this spatial device would have been positively revolutionary. On a more mundane level, but perhaps no less significant in symbolism, pairs of driveways would be adjoined at alternating property lines.

Notably, the plans of both Ladera and Community Homes were cited as ‘excellent models’ by their respective planning commissions, and Crestwood Hills won an AIA merit award. Thus they were poised to offer alternative physical concepts for tract homebuilders, independent of their economic organization and the issue of race, which might have positively affected the American suburban pattern. Such a legacy of influence never materialized, however, in part because none of the projects was (fully) realized.

As architecture, all three projects responded to problems of repetition and homogeneity that were increasingly recognized as a defining shortcoming of the Levittown pattern. “Mass-produced, standardized housing breeds standardized individuals, too — especially among youngsters,” one psychologist later warned in the *New York Times*.⁵⁰ Lewis Mumford’s famous description of Levittown epitomized this line of critique. He described the pattern as:

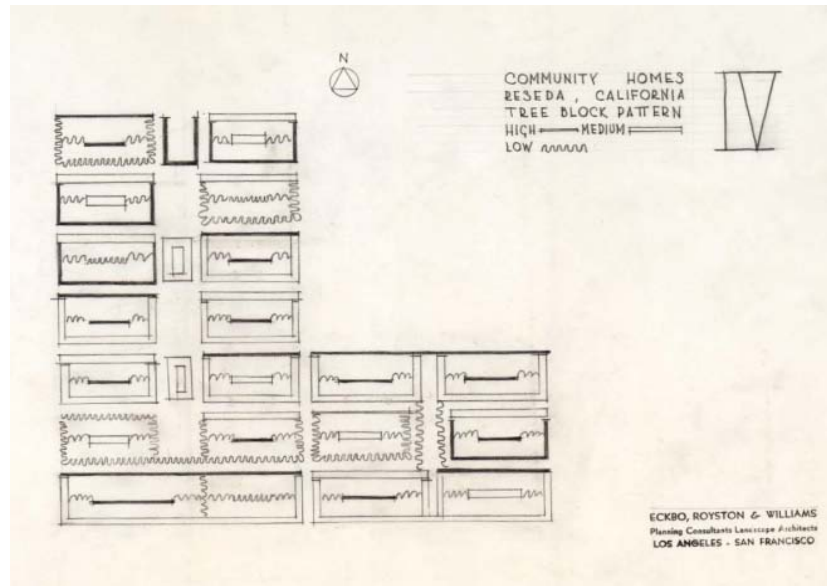
a multitude of uniform houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold.⁵¹

The cooperatives took a different approach to economic variety. In the Levittown pattern, each neighborhood would have consistent house sizes and prices, and this economic homogeneity was intended to produce both social homogeneity and a predictable resale market. In the cooperative philosophy, economic variety was considered a virtue. At Community Homes there were six basic house types ranging from 784 to 2,016 square feet. Construction prices for the houses would range from \$6,000 to \$12,000. At Crestwood Hills, prices ranged from under \$10,000 to over \$25,000⁵², an order of magnitude higher but again representing an uncommonly large range. Ladera included thirteen different house types with seven variations. Some were compact and others reached out into the landscape. Projected home prices are unknown, but they would vary in size from 1010 to 2100 square feet, suggesting again that the community would accommodate different classes of people.

Furthermore, the cooperatives’ architects emphasized architectural variety. Community Homes’ six house types could be reversed and mirrored, plus some included expansion plans; in effect, there were 26 different houses. Crestwood Hills originally included 28 unique designs. At both Crestwood Hills and Ladera, the houses were positioned at a variety of angles to the streets to produce variation.

Because the three projects shared the same landscape architect, and because Garrett Eckbo treated the projects quite differently, the landscape designs may signify different intentions among the communities and perhaps even convey political meaning.

Again Community Homes exhibited the most progressive design ideas in terms of an implied criticism of typical practices. At Community Homes, Eckbo sought to relieve the monotony of the grid and “even to subvert its order,”⁵³ using techniques of modernist painting. With trees he would expand blocks across the suburban pattern the way that Mondrian constructed space beyond the frame of the picture. He planned to wrap the landscape around corners, a reinterpreted treatment of the three-dimensional relationship between front and side, as in Picasso’s human figures. He also needed to create variety, because, as he recalled, “the houses had a repetitive clarity with subtle variations.”

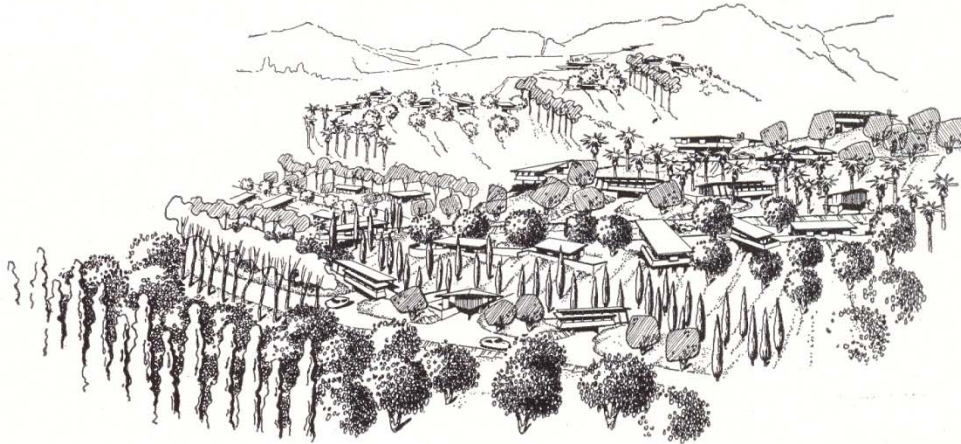


When Eckbo’s tree plan was overlaid on Ain’s distribution of houses, the resulting interference pattern would mean that not one of the 280 houses would be alike. Still he also recognized the need for “overall unity,” believing that the landscape design would shape the project’s character.⁵⁴ The unified treatment of the greenbelt would provide a rather monumental expression of a cooperative spirit, and certainly would have created the project’s principal image. But Eckbo also offered smaller gestures of significance, such as continuous plantings across adjoining front yards, which subversively ignored the property lines and were obviously planned in concert with Ain’s positioning of the shared driveways.



At Ladera, Eckbo sought to “produce an integral relationship between the houses, the hills, and the trees ... so that the buildings will be nicely related to each other and pleasantly integrated with their surroundings.”⁵⁵ Here his street tree plans showed, again, an impulse to express unity and variety at once, an exceptionally complex design problem. Essentially he created dozens of discontinuous lines of trees to serve as foregrounds and backgrounds for clusters of houses that had a different system of organization. As a result, the landscape would sometimes ‘connect’ disparate areas, and at other times would relieve repetition by creating space.

At Crestwood Hills, Eckbo’s master plan for the planting was meant to provide a link between the “rough primeval” character of the land with the “well-to-do residential neighborhood” below the new development. He used non-native trees of varying heights, such as palm, cypress, olive, and avocado, to give the hillside a new shape and sense of motion. According to Dorothee Imbert, Eckbo’s idea was sophisticated and balanced, but showed “the landscape architect’s distance from the project’s underlying philosophy.” The cooperative’s membership found it too “unnatural” and it was never implemented. The landscape of Crestwood Hills became “a collection of private designs,” and “a major disappointment” to Eckbo.⁵⁶



Broadly speaking, the three cooperatives clearly pursued formal innovation, often directly critical of tract homebuilders' practices, which corresponded to critical political positions about race and space. Clearly in this instance correspondence implies causation: progressive politics and a socialist economy would be inscribed in modern design, but those designs were blocked for their political character.

Furthermore, among the three cooperatives, there was a relatively strong correlation between the commitment to integration and attitudes about design. In simple terms, Community Homes was the least-willing to bargain, hired the most politically-active architect, and sponsored the densest community with the most unconventional plans; Crestwood accepted segregation, had the lowest density, and rejected a novel planting scheme, for example. These three communities, as examples, suggest a wider alignment between progressive politics and progressive design that may have been quite finely-tuned.

Perhaps it could be argued that the cooperatives' members did not set out to instigate a political battle — they simply sought homes in a well-designed community in a time of crisis. But by 1949 a new picture emerged. Community Homes had disbanded with nothing built, Ladera had dissolved with 25 homes under construction, and Crestwood Hills was partially under construction but fundamentally compromised. The one person directly hurt by all three failures, Garrett Eckbo, wrote a forceful appeal (published a year later) that clearly stemmed from his experiences with the cooperatives and the FHA. His conclusion points to a theme that is often missed by conventional architectural and planning histories, that innovative design (however brilliant) will fail to produce social progress by itself:

...we cannot rely on the integrity of either private enterprise or elected public officials to produce for us that wholesome new environment for the common man. The results that come out of urban redevelopment will be determined by one simple relation: what interests apply the most pressure in the most effective places at the most appropriate times....

Good urban redevelopment will come about through political action; there are no other routes.⁵⁷

Notes

1. Thurgood Marshall, "Memorandum to the President of the United States Concerning Racial Discrimination by the Federal Housing Administration," National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Library of Congress Manuscript Collections), February 1, 1949, p. 7.
2. Charles Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors: A Study of Prejudice in Housing* (New York: Harper), 1955, 229.
3. Although these projects were initiated *before* the completion of William Levitt's first community on Long Island, the pattern that Levitt would perfect was already being established in 1946, especially in Los Angeles with builders such as Fritz Burns, and designers such as Gregory Ain and Simon Eisner of Community Homes criticized this pattern before it had a name. I use 'Levittown pattern' to mean repetitive plan of simple traditional houses detached from the landscape and one another, with little connectivity to public space and commercial amenities, leading to an emphasis on the automobile. In all, the values of capitalism are inscribed more strongly than the values of community. The term is not meant to demean Levitt's innovations as a builder.
4. Levitt, quoted in Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1985, 241.
5. *Your Home in Ladera* brochure (1947), quoted in Dorothee Imbert, "The Art of Social Landscape Design," in *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 148.
6. Hallis Friend and Nancy Lund, *Ladera Lore* (Ladera, CA: Self-published), 1974.
7. See Anthony Denzer, "Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin as an Intentional Community," 2006 Communal Studies Association annual conference, Marshall, CA.
8. Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman, "Broadacre in Brentwood: The Politics of Architectural Aesthetics," in *Looking for LA*, Michael Roth and Charles Salas, eds. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute), 2001, 189.
9. *Ibid.*, 189-90.
10. Shulman, 1996, quoted in *ibid.*, 190.
11. "Mutual Housing Association: A Project for Five Hundred Families in Crestwood Hills," *Arts and Architecture* 65 (September 1948); 32.
12. Friedland and Zellman, "Broadacre in Brentwood," *op.cit.*, 188.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Most of the material regarding Community Homes is distilled and rewritten from Anthony Denzer, *Gregory Ain: The Modern Home as Social Commentary* (New York: Rizzoli), 2008, 120-128. Extensive references, particularly regarding the politics of Ain and board members, are omitted here but available there.
15. When Community Homes failed, Eckbo and approximately 15 families began the development of a 67-lot subdivision in Laurel Canyon on Wonderland Park Avenue, which became known as "Red Gulch" for its leftist politics. It was not a cooperative and did not include any public space. Some others joined Mutual Homes.
16. See note 14.
17. Mary Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," *New York Times Magazine* (August 4, 1946), 35.
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22. Friend and Lund, *Ladera Lore*, *op. cit.*
23. Friedland and Zellman, "Broadacre in Brentwood," *op.cit.*, 190.
24. Eunice and George Grier, *Privately Developed Interracial Housing, An Analysis of Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1960, 155.

25. Raymond A. Voigt, Financial Representative, Community Homes, Inc., correspondence to Catherine Bauer Wurster, August 14, 1947. Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
26. Grier, *op. cit.*, 149-150.
27. Voigt to Wurster, *op. cit.*
28. Esther McCoy, *The Second Generation*, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books), 1984, 121.
29. Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriting Manual* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office), 1938, Section 937.
30. Friedland and Zellman, "Broadacre in Brentwood," *op.cit.*, 188.
31. Stanley L. McMichael, *Real Estate Subdivisions* (New York: Prentice-Hall), 1949, 209.
32. *Shelley v. Kraemer* 334 U.S. 1 (1948), decided May 3, 1948.
33. Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors*, *op. cit.*, 236.
34. Eckbo, 1988, quoted in White, *Building in the Garden*, *op. cit.*, 83.
35. *The Present Application of the Rochdale Principles of Co-operation* (1937), International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), London. <http://www.ica.coop/coop/1937.html>
36. Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: MIT Press), 2001, 180.
37. Quoted in Abrams, *Forbidden Neighbors*, *op. cit.*, 315.
38. See Dana Cuff, "Fugitive Plans in the Provisional City," in *Looking for L.A.*, *op. cit.*, 122.
39. Voigt to Wurster, *op. cit.*
40. "One Convertible Plan," *Architectural Forum* (April 1949), 126-128.
41. See *Architectural Forum* 88 (January 1948), 79.
42. "Apartment Boom..." *Architectural Forum* (January 1950); 104-105.
43. Vernon DeMars, "Co-operative Housing: An Appraisal." *Progressive Architecture* 32 (Feb. 1951); 64.
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45. See, for example, Dolores Hayden, "Building the American Way: Public Subsidy, Private Space," in *The Suburb Reader*, Becky M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, eds. (New York: Routledge), 2006, 273-81.
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50. Sidonie M. Greunberg, "Homogenized Children of New Suburbia," *The New York Times Magazine* (September 19, 1954), 14.
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