



HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

October 4, 2005

Dorothy Nichols
3120 Coolidge Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90066

RE: Westdale Village Courtyard Apartments

Dear Ms. Nichols:

You have requested that Historic Resources Group comment on the eligibility of the Westdale Village Courtyard Apartments, located at 11434 to 11546 1/2 National Boulevard, Mar Vista, for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. HRG has reviewed the materials you have provided, including the nomination, photo documentation of the site, as well as reports and letters in favor of and in opposition to the designation. After visiting the site and reviewing these materials, Historic Resources Group has concluded that this resource, a group of 12 four-plexes, is eligible for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument.

Historic Resources Group has a great deal of experience in the identification and evaluation of postwar housing in Los Angeles. HRG has developed several historic contexts for postwar resources, including the Modernist residences of the Case Study House program, 1950s stucco apartment buildings in Santa Monica, and 1940s large-scale suburban developments in the San Fernando Valley.

Specifically, HRG has determined two postwar residential districts eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Panorama City Historic District, developed in 1948 by Fritz B. Burns and Henry J. Kaiser, was determined eligible as one of the earliest and most influential examples of modern community planning. The Watts community of Parkside Manor, designed in 1944 by Paul R. Williams, was determined eligible in part for its association with postwar trends in residential development and community planning in Los Angeles. In addition to these eligible districts, HRG has reviewed many other postwar resources which were not to be eligible for designation.

Based upon this knowledge of postwar planned communities in Los Angeles, HRG believes that the Westdale Village Courtyard Apartments meets the criteria for designation as a Historic–Cultural Monument for its association with influential developer Paul W. Trousdale, as an intact grouping of low-density multiple family residences designed in the Ranch style, and as representative of significant trends in residential development in postwar Los Angeles.

- 1. This resource must be considered as a group of related buildings.** It is important that these buildings be evaluated not as isolated structures but as they related to one another as well as to the adjacent single family development of Westdale Village as a whole. As they relate to each other, this resource is a cohesive grouping of physically-associated buildings. Similarly, this is not a stand-alone development but should be viewed as an integral part of a larger planned residential community.
- 2. As a cohesive, intact collection of 12 Ranch-style four-plexes, this resource is not common.** The individual building type may seem ubiquitous. However, the resource in question is not an individual structure but an uninterrupted row of 12 such buildings, related by planning and architectural style. As such, this resource is quite unique. One should not be misled but the apparent ubiquity of such buildings. Much of the postwar housing stock in Los Angeles has been significantly altered over several decades. Because the historic significance of these buildings is often directly associated with their role in a larger planned community, intact groupings are worthy of consideration as remnants of an earlier period.
- 3. This resource is associated with the early planned suburban developments that transformed Los Angeles in the postwar era.** The great number of large-scale developments in Los Angeles from this period speaks to the tremendous impact of a handful of innovative developers in the 1940s, among them Fritz B. Burns, Henry J. Kaiser, Edward Fickett, and Paul Trousdale. Their development projects became models of community planning and were replicated throughout Los Angeles during the 1950s and 60s. It is important to distinguish the work of these early influential developers from the many similar developments that followed. Their new approach to residential development on a neighborhood scale is arguably the single most significant development trend in postwar Los Angeles and transformed the character of the city. Westdale Village was Trousdale’s first neighborhood-scale project.
- 4. This resource represents a distinct and identifiable type of postwar housing.** Not all postwar housing is the same. Postwar resources generally, and multiple family residences in particular, are only recently being examined closely by architectural historians and preservationists. When less was known about these resources they were often lumped together as “postwar.” However, the important

work of people like Alan Hess, John Chase, and others have defined distinct building types and architectural styles from this period. Multiple family residences alone range from 1940s two-story U-shaped courtyard apartments, to super-block complexes of garden apartments with much green space, to the 1950s stucco box that fully occupies a single residential lot. Each of these types are unique and should be evaluated in their respective contexts.

- 5. This resource is an example of the use of multiple family residences on the periphery of a single family development.** The placement of slightly higher density dwellings along major thoroughfares was a unique feature of postwar planned communities. These properties not only provided a buffer between a traffic artery and the single family neighborhood behind, but also made the community accessible to those of lesser means. While Westdale Village's houses averaged 1,400 square feet with 3 bedrooms and 2 baths, the four-plexes have one- and two-bedroom units. Kaiser's Panorama City development in 1948 employed the same strategy, developing two blocks along Roscoe boulevard with low-density multiple family residences designed to complement the single family neighborhood behind.
- 6. This resource exemplifies how the Ranch style can be adapted to multiple-family residences.** The Ranch style is very closely identified with the single family home. Westdale Village contains many intact examples of the Ranch house. Character-defining features of the Ranch house include its one-story configuration, L-shaped plan, low-pitch roof, horizontal massing, large steel or wood-frame divided-light windows, and wooden shutters. Adapting these features to these multiple family buildings makes them compatible with the adjacent single family neighborhood in both style and scale. Additionally, unlike multi-story apartment buildings, these buildings offer each dwelling unit direct access to a landscaped courtyard, replicating the relationship of the single family house to its private yard.
- 7. As a collection of single-story multiple family residences, this resource is representative of a building type that is obsolete.** With ever-increasing land values and intensifying development pressures, low-density multiple family housing in Los Angeles is a thing of the past. Duplexes, triplexes, four-plexes, and bungalow courts are being demolished throughout the city at an alarming rate, often replaced with multi-story apartment buildings with subterranean parking. Intact examples of these building types are becoming more and more rare.
- 8. This resource retains a high degree of integrity.** As with the significance, the integrity of these buildings must be considered as a group. Alterations have been made to individual structures. However, taken together, these buildings retain their original scale, massing,

materials, setting, feeling, and association both to each other and to the larger Westdale Village development. Minor exterior alterations, such as enclosed porches, do not substantially compromise the integrity of the grouping, nor its ability to convey its significance is an uninterrupted row of physically-related structures.

Within the context of postwar residential development in Los Angeles, the Westdale Village Courtyard Apartments are historically significant. Every aspect of their design, including building type, scale and massing, architectural style, number of structures, and relative location, is reflective of their relationship to the larger Westdale Village development. For these reasons, this resource meets the criteria for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument.

Sincerely,

Christy McAvoy, Principal

Kari Michele Fowler, Preservation Planner