

# Los Angeles Department of City Planning

## RECOMMENDATION REPORT

### CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

**CASE NO.: CHC-2008-4976-HCM  
ENV-2009-204-CE**

**DATE:** March 19, 2009  
**TIME:** 10:00 AM  
**PLACE:** City Hall, Room 1010  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Location: 1281 S. Dunsmuir Avenue  
Council District: 10  
Community Plan Area: Wilshire  
Area Planning Commission: Central  
Neighborhood Council: PICO  
Legal Description: Lot 99 of TR 4588

**PROJECT:** Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the  
DUNSMUIR FLATS

**REQUEST:** Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

**APPLICANT/  
OWNER:** Joseph Schwarzenbach  
1281 S. Dunsmuir Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90019

### **RECOMMENDATION**      **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **Declare** the property a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.7
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP  
Director of Planning

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

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Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager  
Office of Historic Resources

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

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Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect  
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

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Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner  
Office of Historic Resources

**Attachments:** November, 2008 Historic-Cultural Monument Application  
ZIMAS Report

## **FINDINGS**

1. The building “embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction” as an example of International Style residential architecture.
2. The building is associated with a master builder, designer, or architect, as a work of master architect Gregory Ain (1908-1988).

## **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) FINDINGS**

The Commission hereby recommends that Council find the proposed designation of the Dunsmuir Flats property as a Historic-Cultural Monument to be exempt from further analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Sections 15308 (Class 8) and 15331 (Class 31).

## **CRITERIA**

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

## **SUMMARY**

Built in 1938 and located in the Wilshire Vista Heights neighborhood, the multi-family residential building exhibits character-defining features of the International Style. The complex consists of four interconnected two-story flat-roof buildings separated by narrow passageways. The subject buildings are stepped and follow the site’s irregular shape and slope. Each unit has a separate covered entry. A four-car garage is located in the slope beneath the main unit facing the street. The cast concrete buildings are clad with smooth white stucco, broken up on the north side by a continuous ribbon of fixed casement windows. On the south elevation, continuous glazing creates light-filled interiors on the first floor, with bedrooms opening onto trellised balconies on the second floor. Landscape features include patios and gardens on the south elevation. Significant interiors include clerestory windows and hardwood floors.

The subject building is the work of master architect Gregory Ain (1908-1988). Ain was a noted and influential architect of twentieth century modern architecture. Ain attended the University of Southern California, School of Architecture and worked early in his career with master architects Richard Neutra and R.M. Schindler. Two of Ain’s earliest residential designs were the Charles H. Edwards House (HCM #260; 1936) and the Amsalem A. Ernst House (HCM #840; 1937). Ain was awarded with a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940 to study prefabricated housing. Ain moved to Pennsylvania and became the Dean of School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University from 1963 to 1967. In addition, Ain formed a partnership with Phillip Johnson and Alfred W. Day after World War II, and designed large housing tracts. Completed in 1949, Mar Vista Tract, one of Ain’s Modernist tract housing projects, was designated a Historic

Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) in 2003, becoming the first post-World War II historic district in the City of Los Angeles.

Alterations include the alterations of kitchen cabinetry and floors in some units.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Dunsmuir Flats property successfully meets two of the specified Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: 1) “embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction,” and 2) is associated with a master builder, designer, or architect. As a residential building designed in the International Style by master architect Gregory Ain, the property qualifies for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument based on these criteria.

## **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting of February 5, 2009, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the application under consideration. On March 5, 2009, the Cultural Heritage Commission toured the subject property.

## **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) REVIEW**

State of California CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15308, Class 8 “*consists of actions taken by regulatory agencies, as authorized by state or local ordinance, to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.*”

State of California CEQA Guidelines Article 19, Section 15331, Class 31 “*consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic buildings.*”

The designation of the Dunsmuir Flats property as a Historic-Cultural Monument in accordance with Chapter 9, Article 1, of The City of Los Angeles Administrative Code (“LAAC”) will ensure that future construction activities involving the subject property are regulated in accordance with Section 22.171.14 of the LAAC. The purpose of the designation is to prevent significant impacts to a Historic-Cultural Monument through the application of the standards set forth in the LAAC. Without the regulation imposed by way of the pending designation, the historic significance and integrity of the subject property could be lost through incompatible alterations and new construction and the demolition of irreplaceable historic structures. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards of Rehabilitation are expressly incorporated into the LAAC and provide standards concerning the historically appropriate construction activities which will ensure the continued preservation of the subject property.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 8 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals of maintaining, restoring, enhancing, and protecting the environment through the imposition of regulations designed to prevent the degradation of Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The use of Categorical Exemption Class 31 in connection with the proposed designation is consistent with the goals relating to the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of Historic buildings in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.

# Los Angeles Department of City Planning

## RECOMMENDATION REPORT

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**APPLICANT/  
OWNER:** Joseph Schwarzenbach  
1281 S. Dunsmuir Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA 90019

### **RECOMMENDATION**      **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal may warrant further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP  
Director of Planning

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

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Ken Bernstein, Manager  
Office of Historic Resources

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Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect  
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**Attachments:** November, 2008 Historic-Cultural Monument Application  
ZIMAS Report

## **SUMMARY**

Built in 1938 and located in the Wilshire Vista Heights neighborhood, the multi-family residential building exhibits character-defining features of the International Style. The complex consists of four interconnected two-story flat-roof buildings separated by narrow passageways. The subject buildings are stepped and follow the site's irregular shape and slope. Each unit has a separate covered entry. A four-car garage is located in the slope beneath the main unit facing the street. The cast concrete buildings are clad with smooth white stucco, broken up on the north side by a continuous ribbon of fixed casement windows. On the south elevation, continuous glazing creates light-filled interiors on the first floor, with bedrooms opening onto trellised balconies on the second floor. Landscape features include patios and gardens on the south elevation. Significant interiors include clerestory windows and hardwood floors.

The subject building is the work of master architect Gregory Ain (1908-1988). Ain was a noted and influential architect of twentieth century modern architecture. Ain attended the University of Southern California, School of Architecture and worked early in his career with master architects Richard Neutra and R.M. Schindler. Two of Ain's earliest residential designs were the Charles H. Edwards House (HCM #260; 1936) and the Amsalem A. Ernst House (HCM #840; 1937). Ain was awarded with a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940 to study prefabricated housing. Ain moved to Pennsylvania and became the Dean of School of Architecture at Pennsylvania State University from 1963 to 1967. In addition, Ain formed a partnership with Phillip Johnson and Alfred W. Day after World War II, and designed large housing tracts. Completed in 1949, Mar Vista Tract, one of Ain's Modernist tract housing projects, was designated a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) in 2003, becoming the first post-World War II historic district in the City of Los Angeles.

The subject building may be eligible for HCM designation as an example of International Style architecture and its association with a master architect.

Alterations include the alterations of kitchen cabinetry and floors in some units.

## **CRITERIA**

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

## **FINDINGS**

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property is significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

**SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET**

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

*Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page*

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

THE Dunsmuir Flats IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF  
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT  
International Style [Modern] ARCHITECTURE  
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8)

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION  
OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

AND / OR

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

THE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS BUILT IN \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT YEAR BUILT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF FIRST OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER WAS IMPORTANT TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

**HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT  
APPLICATION**

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

**IDENTIFICATION**

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT THE DUNSMUIR FLATS
2. STREET ADDRESS 1281 S. DUNSMUIR AVENUE  
CITY LOS ANGELES ZIP CODE 90019 COUNCIL DISTRICT CD-10
3. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 5085-015-023
4. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT 4588  
BLOCK NONE LOT(S) 99 ARB. NO. NONE
5. RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY 1279 S. DUNSMUIR AVE, 1279-1/2 S. DUNSMUIR AVE,  
1281 S. DUNSMUIR AVE, 1281-1/4 S. DUNSMUIR AVE, 1281-1/2 S. DUNSMUIR AVE, 1281-3/4 S. DUNSMUIR AVE.
6. PRESENT OWNER JOSEPH C. SCHWARZENBACH  
STREET ADDRESS 1281 S. DUNSMUIR AVE.  
CITY LOS ANGELES STATE CA ZIP CODE 90019 PHONE (310) 379-1547  
OWNER IS: PRIVATE X PUBLIC \_\_\_\_\_
7. PRESENT USE OWNER RESIDENCE + 3 APARTMENTS ORIGINAL USE 4 APARTMENT UNITS

**DESCRIPTION**

8. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE INTERNATIONAL STYLE [MODERN]  
(SEE STYLE GUIDE)
9. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET)

[SEE ATTACHED]

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**HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT  
APPLICATION**

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT THE DUNSMUIR FLATS

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: FACTUAL 1938 ESTIMATED \_\_\_\_\_

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER GREGORY AIN

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER SAMUEL H. KAPLAN

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS 07/07 - 11/08 [ON BACK OF PHOTOGRAPHS]  
(8X10 BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY)

14. CONDITION: ☐ EXCELLENT ☒ GOOD ☐ FAIR ☐ DETERIORATED ☐ NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

15. ALTERATIONS. [SEE ATTACHED]

16. THREATS TO SITE: ☒ NONE KNOWN ☐ PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ☐ VANDALISM ☐ PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT  
☐ ZONING ☐ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

17. IS THE STRUCTURE: ☒ ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE ☐ MOVED ☐ UNKNOWN

**SIGNIFICANCE**

18. BRIEF STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSON ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITE (SEE OPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET)

[SEE ATTACHED]

19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) \_\_\_\_\_

[SEE ATTACHED]

20. DATE FORM PREPARED 11.30.08 PREPARER'S NAME JOSEPH SCHWARZENBACH

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ STREET ADDRESS 12815 DUNSMUIR AVE.

CITY LOS ANGELES STATE CA ZIP CODE 90019 PHONE (310) 779-1547

## HISTORICAL-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION:

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937-1938]  
1281 S Dunsmuir Avenue,  
Los Angeles 90019 Gregory Ain, architect

11.10.08

### **9. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

#### **The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937-1938]**

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments consist of four, two-story, two-bedroom townhouse units in the Wilshire Vista Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. It is exemplary of the International Style of Architecture. The site is a long, narrow, gently rising, slightly irregular lot that fronts east onto South Dunsmuir Avenue. By orienting the alignment of the units' plan with the rear property line, shifting the buildings' mass to within six feet of the northern property line, and sliding each unit six feet to the north of the preceding unit, architect Gregory Ain produced a saw-toothed shape building with a narrow entry garden to the north and wider private patios and gardens on the south. Although conceived as one multi-unit building, the Dunsmuir Flats was realized as two separate buildings. A three foot wide passageway separates the first two-unit building from the back two-unit building. Ain accommodated his building to its sloping site by stepping each of the first three units a precise 1'-4" above the preceding unit. With this series of rotations, horizontal shifts, and vertical lifts, he was able to adapt the buildings' program to its site, gaining natural light, cross ventilation, southern facing gardens and increased privacy to each unit.

The four car garage at street level, its side and rear walls of reinforced concrete, is set into the hillside. The first of the four, two-story townhouse units and its garden patio rest upon the garages. The foundation of all units is of reinforced concrete, with the sill plate bolted to the stem walls. A small basement is provided for each unit which houses the utilities. The two story apartments are wood framed with a smooth painted stucco cladding. The buildings were constructed using an innovative framing system: nominal 4x4 posts at four feet on center, balloon framed from the foundation to the roof joists. All exterior openings exploit this post system [exposed and painted] as jambs, thereby foregoing the necessity for additional trim. All windows and doors on the exterior elevations fit tightly between these exposed posts. This detail helps create a modernist unified industrial image, permitting the windows to read as continuous horizontal "ribbon" windows. All windows are wooden framed and are either fixed, casement, or awning type. The doors are wood framed, relieved with glazing that continues the line and module of the windows. The flat roof, a shallow parapet with built up asphalt roofing, slopes to downspouts, which drain primarily along the southern facade. The hardware, doorknobs, window latches, hinges, and fixtures, are a combination of original and replacement. There is evidence in the original hardware of what Ain referred to as a "contractor's aesthetic", which is to say, standard, simple, "off the shelf" hardware, readily available at the time.

Each of the principal elevations adjusts itself to the particularities of the site and the programmatic requirements of the building. At the east [Dunsmuir Street] elevation, Gregory Ain used the four one-car garages as a horizontal pedestal upon which to perch the first of the four

units. The garage doors are clad in continuous 1 x 8 horizontal ship-lap siding. The garages step back as they unfold right to left to allow the building's principal facade to adjust itself to the convex curvature of Dunsmuir Avenue. This 'step-back' formula anticipates similar strategies in the north and south elevations, as well as in the saw-tooth like raises as the roof line conforms to the natural topography of the lot. All four units are provided with separate covered entryways which are accessed by means of a narrow saw-tooth garden walkway on the north side of the lot, approached up a flight of concrete steps to the right of the garages. The north [entry] elevation is perhaps the purest expression of the International Style; rhythmically interconnected taut rectangular one and two story volumes, articulated solely by twin courses of narrow fixed ribbon windows, regularly relieved with opening wood-frame awning windows. On the south elevation, Ain established a quite different character. Generous and wide, nearly continuous glazing and doorways open this side of the apartments to establish a full and intimate connection to the patio and garden. The windows are either fixed or outward swinging wood frame casement windows. The horizontal step-back and vertical step-up of each unit insures separation and privacy to each tenant. A trellised balcony on the second floor affords exterior space above, as well as solar screening to the living area below. The west elevation is the unadorned, stucco clad extruded form of the building's section, as if to announce the potential for unlimited extension of the plan. There are no openings on this facade which merely houses the electrical panel.

### **Interior**

Each of the four two-bedroom, two-bath units is governed by the identical well organized floor plan of just under 1200 square feet. A centralized entry gives direct access to the living room, utility room [and beyond the kitchen] as well as the stairway to the second floor's bedrooms and bath. The galley style kitchen opens to the dining area, which in turn, opens to the living room, patio and garden. The second floor is comprised of a hallway, two bedrooms and a bath. Each bedroom opens to a balcony separated by a planter box, and overlooks the gardens below. Each bedroom is equipped with built in wardrobe and closet. All built in cabinetry adheres to the essential 1'-4" module established by the structural system. Spare detailing of cabinetry, windows, doors, and openings maintains the minimalist aesthetic of the International Style.

### **Landscape & Hardscape**

The building is fronted by a concrete driveway, providing space for four uncovered parking spaces and the entryway. Stucco clad planters have been added along the south property line. A stucco clad CMU wall and steel and glass entry gate has been added on the north side stairway to the entry garden. This stucco wall follows the north and west property lines. Ain does not appear to have developed a landscape scheme for the units' individual gardens, other than the use of trees to create natural screens between them. Today, the gardens at the south side of the property include mature - and at times overgrown - trees and shrubs.

**HISTORICAL-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION:**

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments      [1937-1938]  
1281 S Dunsmuir Avenue,  
Los Angeles      90019      Gregory Ain, architect

11.30.08

**15. ALTERATIONS:**

**EXTERIOR:**

1. Entry Gate and Wall along North and West Property Line; added at later date.
2. Landscape Planters along South Property Line at Street; added at a later date.
3. Exterior Light Fixture on East Elevation and at Entry Gate; added at later date.

**INTERIOR:**

4. UNIT 1281: Kitchen Cabinetry on East Wall has been replaced at a later date.  
Tile work in Second Floor bathroom has been replaced.
5. UNIT 1281-1/4: Hardwood Floors replaced.
6. UNIT 1281-1/2: Hardwood Floors replaced on Second Floor.

## HISTORICAL-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION:

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937-1938]  
1281 S Dunsmuir Avenue,  
Los Angeles 90019 Gregory Ain, architect

11.19.08

### **18. ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

#### **Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937-1938]**

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments, designed by noted Modernist architect Gregory Ain, is an important surviving example of a significant moment in the history and development of modern architecture in Los Angeles. The building clearly meets two of the eligibility criteria for local designation in the City of Los Angeles: as a significant example of the International Style of architecture; and as a noteworthy example of the work of Gregory Ain, one of Southern California's most influential modern architects.

#### **The International Style: From Weissenhofsiedlung to the Case Study Project [1927-1945]**

When the Dunsmuir Flats Apartments were completed in 1938, the International Style, whose roots were firmly established in Europe, was only just beginning to gain a foothold in Southern California. The International Style may be credibly [if somewhat arbitrarily] traced to Adolf Loos' seminal 1908 essay, "Ornament und Verbrechen" [Ornament and Crime]. Translated and published in 1920 by Swiss architect Le Corbusier in his influential French publication "Esprit Nouveau", Loos' essay called for "form without ornament" and went on to declare that a house would, "...no longer [be] an object of representation, "but rather,"...something to be used."<sup>1</sup> Or, as Le Corbusier would later reformulate it, the house is "a machine for living."<sup>2</sup>

These revolutionary principles were embraced and promulgated by a group of European architects, most notably Peter Behrens, Walter Gropius, JJP Oud, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe. They all contributed designs for a provocative housing exhibition, The Weissenhof Project [Weissenhofsiedlung], constructed in Stuttgart, Germany in 1927. This was a forceful demonstration housing project that declared the rules for the new Architecture:

- Simple, plane geometric forms
- Flat roofs
- No artificial or added ornament or adornment
- Articulation of the volumes by the use of only architecturally utilitarian necessities, principally, windows and doors.
- A machine aesthetic, with references to industry as opposed to nostalgic domesticity.

The arrival of the International Movement into Los Angeles can be directly traced to two Viennese architects, Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra, who had arrived in Los Angeles in the early 1920's to supervise construction of Frank Lloyd Wright's Barnsdall Project. Once in Los Angeles and on their own, they began to stoke the flames of the new architecture: first, Schin-

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays".

<sup>2</sup> Le Corbusier, "Towards An Architecture" (Vers une architecture, 1923).

dler with his King's Road House [1921-1922], followed by his Lovell Beach House [Balboa, 1922-1926]. The new International aesthetic was spectacularly represented with the completion of Richard Neutra's Lovell House [1929] in the Hollywood Hills.

Gregory Ain, who had worked for both Schindler and Neutra, and a small group of like minded "internationalists", furthered the modern impulse in Los Angeles architecture. This group, dubbed by Esther McCoy "The Second Generation"<sup>3</sup> included J. R. Davidson, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Rafael Soriano, and Charles and Ray Eames.

From the mid-30's to the mid-40's, they struggled to develop the potentials of the international style as a solution to the housing needs of Southern California. By the close of the Second World War, they understood that a great housing boom was expected in Southern California and that the International Style could be the proper solution. In 1945, John Etenza, publisher of "Arts + Architecture" magazine [with whom Ain had collaborated on a variety of design projects] proposed the Case Study House Program, an attempt to demonstrate the potential for modern architecture to provide attractive and affordable alternatives to conventional contractor developments. Los Angeles was to have its own Weissenhof Housing Exhibition.

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937] stands squarely at the intersection of the ideals of the European International Style with the needs of Southern California for an affordable architecture suited to its social and climatic setting. Designed in 1937 and constructed in 1938, the Dunsmuir Flats Project, with its innovative structural system, its sleek modernist aesthetic, and its calm, democratic social aspirations, helped to bring attention to Los Angeles as one of the new centers of the International Style, here-to-fore centered primarily in Western Europe.

Set on a gently sloping site on what was then the western edge of Los Angeles [not far from Pico Boulevard and La Brea Street], the four, two-story apartments step gracefully back and up the long, narrow site in a disciplined series of saw-tooth horizontal shifts and vertical rises. Coupling this rhythmic massing with meticulous attention to proportion and minimalist modernist detailing, Ain was able to beautifully marry his "urban row" housing prototype to the subtleties and vagaries of the site.

In the Dunsmuir Flats Gregory Ain fully employed the vocabulary of the International Style, while at the same time striving to transform and alter the strict rules of modernism to adapt his building to the environmental and domestic concerns of Southern California. Thus, we are able to see on the street and entry elevations, the sleek white horizontal volumes, articulated by precise, thin 'ribbon' windows, indicators of pure International Style; while on the garden elevations, he dispenses with these taut modernist quotations, as the building opens up to its patios and gardens with wide, generous openings and a rhythmic series of balconies, planters, and trellises. This is Gregory Ain at the peak of his powers, particularizing and regionalizing the International Style to suit the requirements of Southern California.

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<sup>3</sup> Esther McCoy, "The Second Generation".

In his planning and detailing, Ain was able to achieve twin goals of livability and affordability. By means of his vertical and horizontal plan shifts, he was able to admit natural light into three sides of virtually all the interior spaces. By opening up the floor plan to allow the kitchen to flow into the dining area, which in turn, opens both into the living room and onto the garden patio, he was able to achieve a very high level of pleasant, functional, naturally lit and ventilated spaces. A unique attribute of the Dunsmuir Flats is that it is one of the few examples of multi-family "row housing" that experiments successfully with the international style. In the Dunsmuir Flats and subsequent projects, Gregory Ain adopted the principles and aspirations of the European Modernist Movement and adapted and transformed them to the idiosyncratic and climatic requirements of Southern California, truly helping to establish Los Angeles as a center of the International Style.

### **Gregory Ain [1908-1988]**

In his senior year of high school, a young Gregory Ain was directed by a friend of his father to a visit with Rudolf Schindler and his wife at his King's Road house/studio. The meeting was a felicitous one for the young student, as Ain came away with the conviction that modern architecture could be an agent for progressive social change. The field of architecture would permit Gregory Ain to combine his strong passion for social change [instilled in him by his father] with a mathematically keen analytical mind. In 1926, he transferred his studies from UCLA, where he had been studying Mathematics and Physics, to the study of Architecture at USC, where he graduated in 1927. While working in the offices of Los Angeles architect B. Marcus Priteca, between 1929 and 1935, he also worked for both Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler, inheriting and refining many of their aesthetic and theoretical approaches to architecture. By 1935, he was able to open his own practice and devote the rest of his career to his twin concerns: architecture as a force for social progress, and modern architecture, with its rational rigor and applied industrial methodology, as the best agent to achieve these changes.

His first completed project, the Edward's house [1935] already exhibited many of the themes and strategies he would struggle with throughout his career: strict attention to the floor plan, use of the entry to gain access to all spaces; opening up of the interior spaces of the house to the exterior gardens; using a modernist vocabulary of simple taut geometric forms, devoid of any superfluous decor; and the articulation of the volumes solely announced by the windows and doors. He also restricted his material palette to stucco and wood frame as a method of controlling costs. In a remarkable series of projects to follow, Ain would pursue and revise these strategies in an attempt to develop an affordable and appropriate response to an architecture for Southern California. It is in this area that Gregory Ain can be seen as most influential to design and architecture in Los Angeles.

In 1937, Ain refined his modernist approach to design in the Dunsmuir Flats Apartments. It was in this project that he began to address the concern for multi-family affordable housing. In the Dunsmuir Flats, for the first time, he fully opened the kitchen to the dining, living and garden patios. He also began to experiment in treating apartments as homes, giving each unit its own en-

try and opening to its own back garden. Ain, himself, later considered the Dunsmuir project "...as his most successful."<sup>4</sup>

In several projects to follow, Ain was to explore and condense his approach to architecture. In his 1938 Slavko-Vorkapich Studio design, he experimented with a pre-fabricated panel system for the first time. In 1945, his Park Planned Homes project in Altadena utilized standardization and repetition to achieve an affordable single-family residential neighborhood. 28 homes were built of the projected 60 home development. Here, Ain began to employ landscape design as a strategy to both provide a park like public community space and to create a corresponding private garden space for each family. In 1946, he formed a partnership, Ain, Johnson and Day, to take on a remarkable project, Community Homes, in Reseda. Using innovative urban planning, greatly aided by the landscape planning of Garret Eckbo, they designed a project for 280 homes of various sizes and configurations, which was also to include a school, community meeting space, and retail space. The plan employed an ingenious street layout which created an interior system of linear parks that provided a complete separation of automobile and pedestrian traffic. The project, unfortunately, foundered over racially restrictive mandates demanded by the FHA, and never went to construction. In 1947-1948, his firm planned and oversaw the Mar Vista Project; 52 homes of a planned community of 102 were constructed. In 2003 Mar Vista became the first modernist planned community to be designated a Historical Preservation Overlay Zone by the City of Los Angeles.

By 1950, he had gained a national and international recognition and was selected by the Museum of Modern Art to design and construct an experimental house in their Manhattan courtyard garden. Between 1952 and 1970, he further added to his influence on architecture through his writings and teachings: from 1952-1962 as a professor of architecture at the University of Southern California, and, from 1963-1970 as the Dean of Architecture at Penn State University. Gregory Ain, as an important member of the second generation of Modernist Architects, was instrumental in the continuity of modernist architectural theory and practice. His influences may be seen in the succeeding generations of Los Angeles architects: Thorton Abell, Craig Elwood, Charles and Ray Eames, Peter Koenig, Ray Kappe, Frank Gehry, Jon Jerde, and Morphosis Architects.

This combined body of work, as an architect, planner, writer and educator all reveal the skills and influence of Gregory Ain as he strove to develop a modern, rational, and affordable housing appropriate to the climates of Southern California and sympathetic with the needs of the peoples of Los Angeles.

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony Denzer, "Gregory Ain; Modern House as Social Commentary", 87.



**HISTORICAL-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION:**

The Dunsmuir Flats Apartments [1937-1938]  
1281 S Dunsmuir Avenue,  
Los Angeles 90019 Gregory Ain, architect

11.30.08

**19. SOURCES:**

The Architecture of Gregory Ain: the Play Between the Rational and High Art.  
by David Gebhard, Harriette Von Breton and Lauren Weiss,  
Hennessey + Ingalls, Santa Monica, 1997.

Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living  
by Marc Treib and Dorothée Imbert,  
University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997.

Gregory Ain: The Modern Home as Social Commentary  
by Anthony Denzer,  
Rizzoli, NY 2008.

Gregory Ain Vista Tract Historic Resources Survey  
prepared by Myra L. Frank & Associates for Los Angeles Planning Department,  
Los Angeles, September, 2002.

Los Angeles: an Architectural Guide  
by David Gebhard and Robert Winter,  
Gibbs-Smith Publishers, Salt Lake City, 1994.

Los Angeles: the City Observed  
by Charles Moore, Peter Becker, and Regula Campbell,  
Hennessey+Ingalls, Santa Monica. 1998. The Second Generation  
by Esther McCoy,  
Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake City, 1984.

"Set Back Planning Gives Privacy," Architectural Record,  
Vol. 87, May, 1940, pp. 45-47.

Katie E. Horak  
Architectural Resources Group  
65 N. Raymond Avenue, No. 220  
Pasadena, CA 91103

2

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND SAFETY  
BUILDING DIVISION

Application for the Erection of a Building  
OF  
CLASS "D"

To the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles  
Application is hereby made to the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles through the office of the Superintendent of Building for a building permit in accordance with the description and for the purpose hereinafter set forth. This application is made subject to the following conditions, which are hereby agreed to by the undersigned applicant and which shall be deemed conditions entering into the effect of the permit:  
First: That the permit does not grant any right or privilege to erect a building or other structure therein described, or any portion thereof, upon any street, alley or other public place or portion thereof.  
Second: That the permit does not grant any right or privilege to use any building or other structure therein described, or any portion thereof for any purpose that is, or may hereafter be prohibited by ordinance of the City of Los Angeles.  
Third: That the granting of the permit does not affect or prejudice any claim of title or right of possession in the property described in such permit.

Lot No. 99 as per B.P. 56 p. 36-37 of map.

Tract 4588

-NO PLOT PLAN-

Location of Building ~~1281-1281 1/2~~ DUNSMUIR AVE

Approved by  
City Engineer

Between what cross streets ~~Padua & Serenity~~

Dep't.

USE INK OR INDELIBLE PENCIL

- Purpose of building 2 Family Flat Families 2 Rooms 10  
(Store, Residence, Apartment House, Hotel, or any other purpose)
- Owner (Print Name) SAMUEL H KAPLAN & M O'DONE Phone F19023
- Owner's address 2312 1/2 LONDON ST
- Certificated Architect. State License No. Phone.
- Licensed Engineer L. E. T. State License No. Phone.
- Contractor SAMUEL H KAPLAN State License No. 6454 Phone F19023
- Contractor's address. OK. 11 P.
- VALUATION OF PROPOSED WORK (including heating, ventilating, water supply, plumbing, fire sprinkler, electrical wiring and or elevator) \$7000.00
- State how many buildings NOW on lot and give use of each. NON (Store, Residence, Apartment House, Hotel, or any other purpose)
- Size of new building 24 x 68 No. Stories 2 Height to highest point 20 Size lot 51 x 61
- Type of soil decomposed granite Foundation (Material) concrete Depth in ground. 1'
- Width of footing 12" Width of foundation wall. Size of redwood sill. 12" x 12"
- Material exterior wall 244 Size of studs: (Exterior) 2 x 4 (Interior bearing) 2 x 4
- Joist: First floor 2 x 10 Second floor 2 x 8 Rafters 2 x 6 Material of roof composition
- Chimney (Material) Size Flue x No. inlets each flue Depth footing in ground.

I have carefully examined and read the above completed Application and know the same is true and correct, and hereby certify and agree that if a permit is issued all the provisions of the Building Ordinance and State Laws will be complied with whether herein specified or not. I also certify that plans and specifications filed will conform to all the Building Ordinances and State Laws.

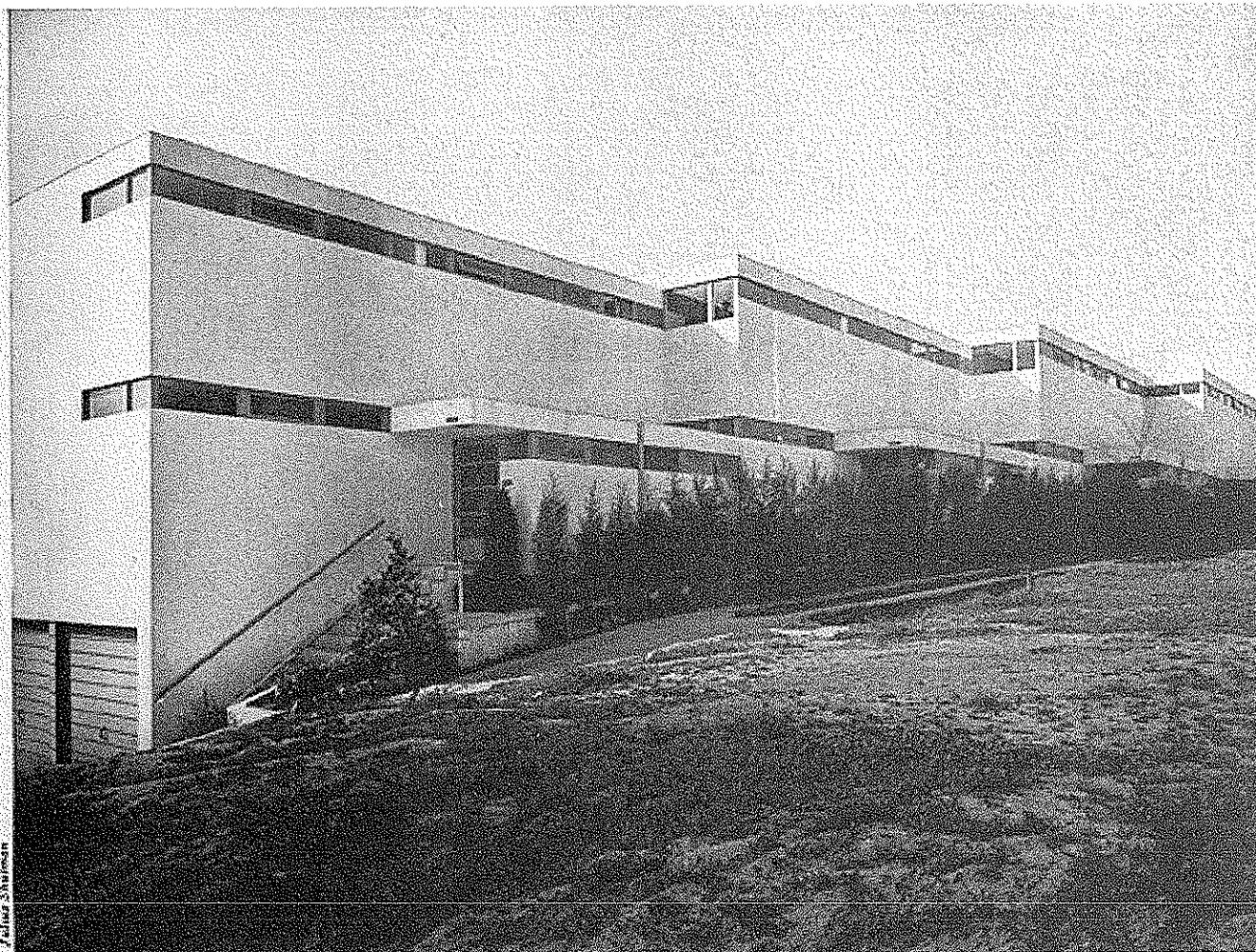
Sign here

Samuel H Kaplan  
(Owner or Authorizing Agent)

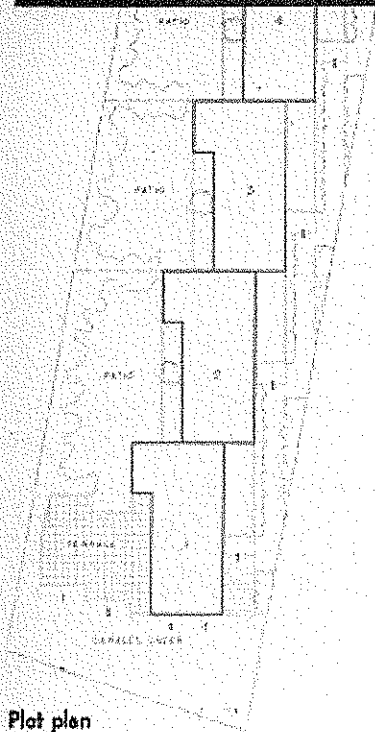
Plans, Specifications and other data must be filed if required.

By

FOR DEPARTMENT USE ONLY				Fee
PERMIT NO. 15062	Plans and Specifications checked	Zone CR4	Fire District No. 14	Stamp here when Permit is issued
	Corrections verified	Blg. Line	Street Widening	
PLANS	Plans, Specifications and Application rechecked and approved	Application checked and approved		Inspector
	For Plans Fee	Filed with	Clerk	
Ret'd	SPRINKLER		Required Valuation Included	Specified Yes - No



John S. Shuman

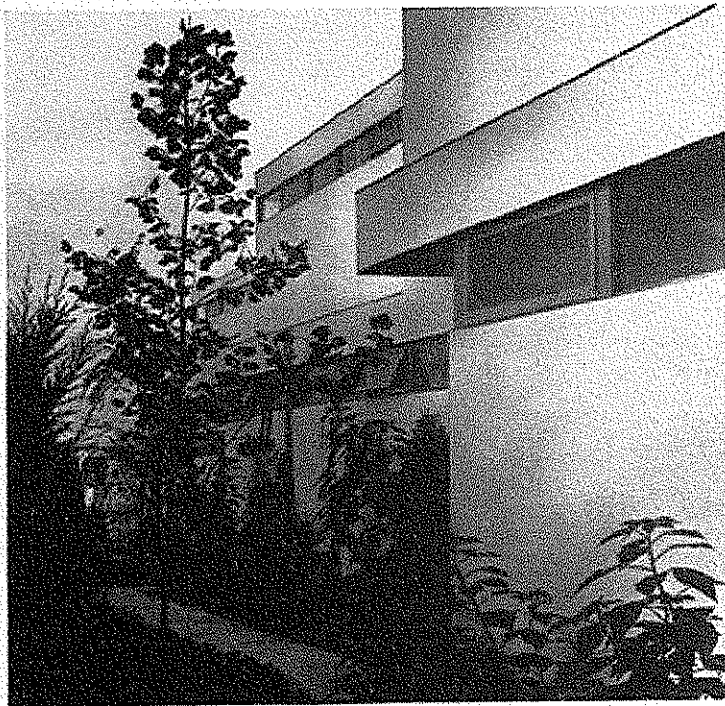


Plot plan

## STEP-BACK PLANNING GIVES PRIVACY

In the Duasmuir Flat Building, erected on a 49-ft. Los Angeles inside lot, Designer GREGORY AIN managed to meet an exceptionally rigorous set of basic demands: complete homes for four small families, each with a private patio, cross ventilation and sunlight in all rooms, and as much privacy for each one of the units as is usually obtained in detached single-family dwellings.

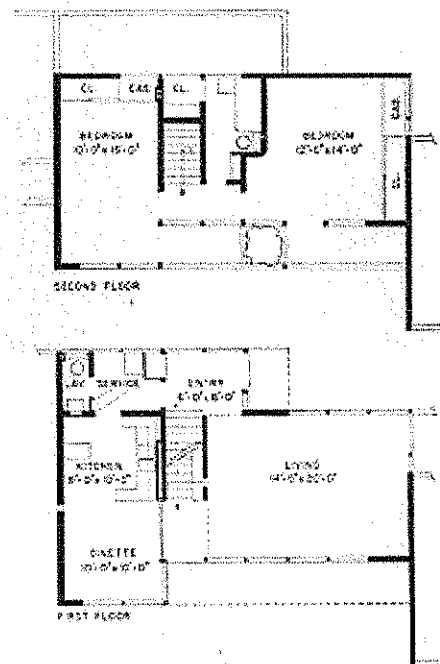
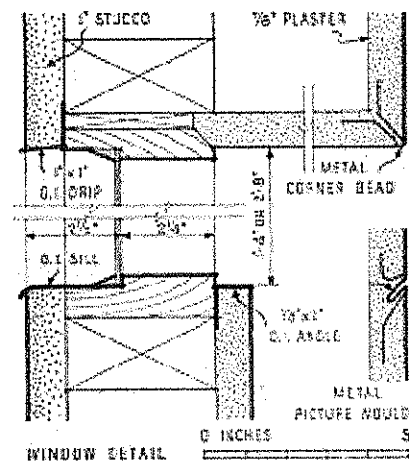
MR. AIN TELLS US that "reactions by house hunters, unacquainted with 'modern architecture', were interesting. It took a month longer to rent these flats than to rent a conventional flat building erected simultaneously on the same street. But when they were rented, these flats were leased for a year (rather unusual for inexpensive flats in Los Angeles), and the owner reports a 25% higher rental than for neighboring flats of the same size." Principal vertical construction members are 4-by-4 posts, continuous for the two stories. These are notched to receive continuous lintels, providing a strong, earthquake-resistant rigid frame. The uprights also serve as finished door and window jambs, thus eliminating much detail. The cost of the group came to approximately \$3500 for each of the units.



On the sides toward the street and entrances, clerestory windows are used.



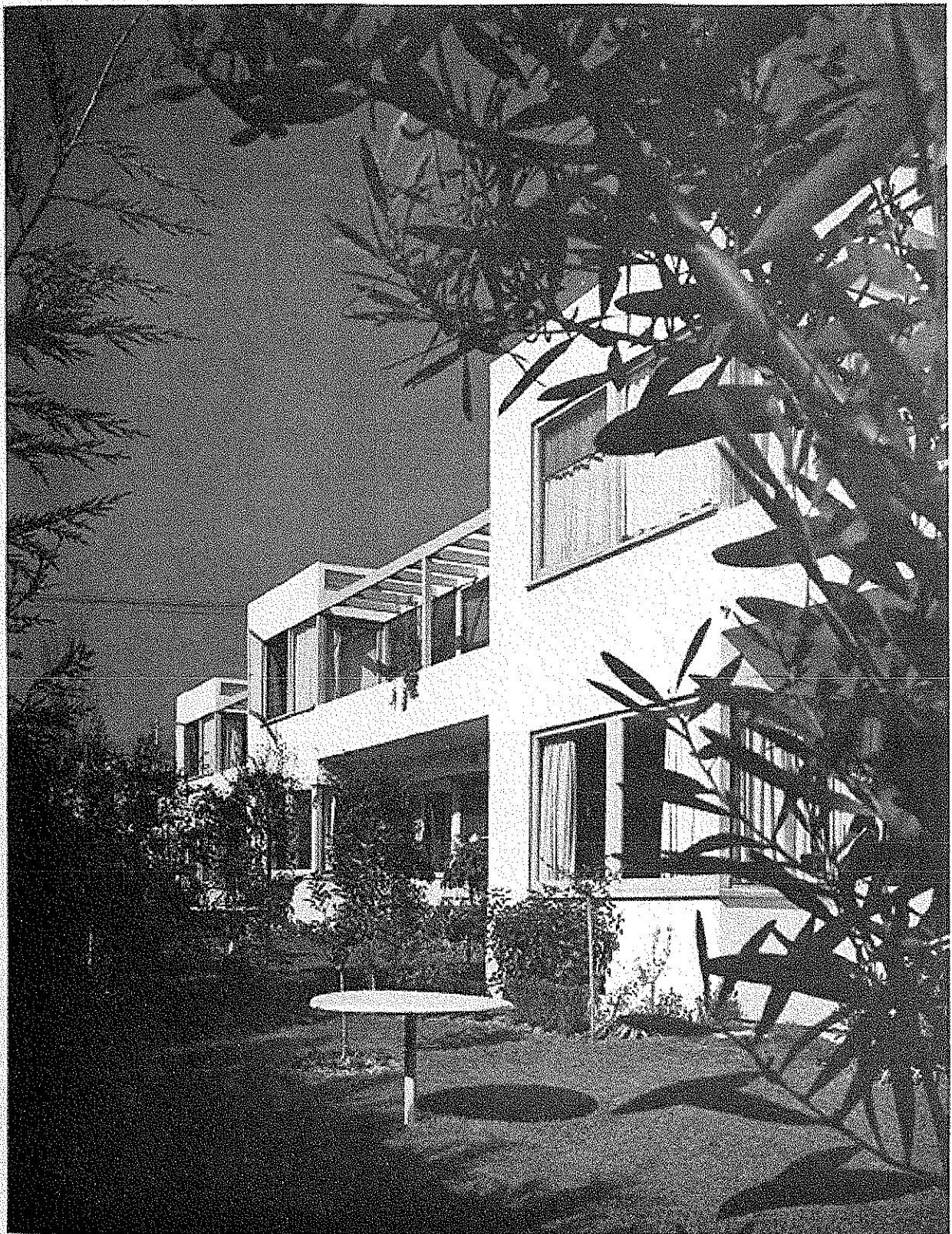
Toward the patio, the sill level of the windows is dropped to 26 in.



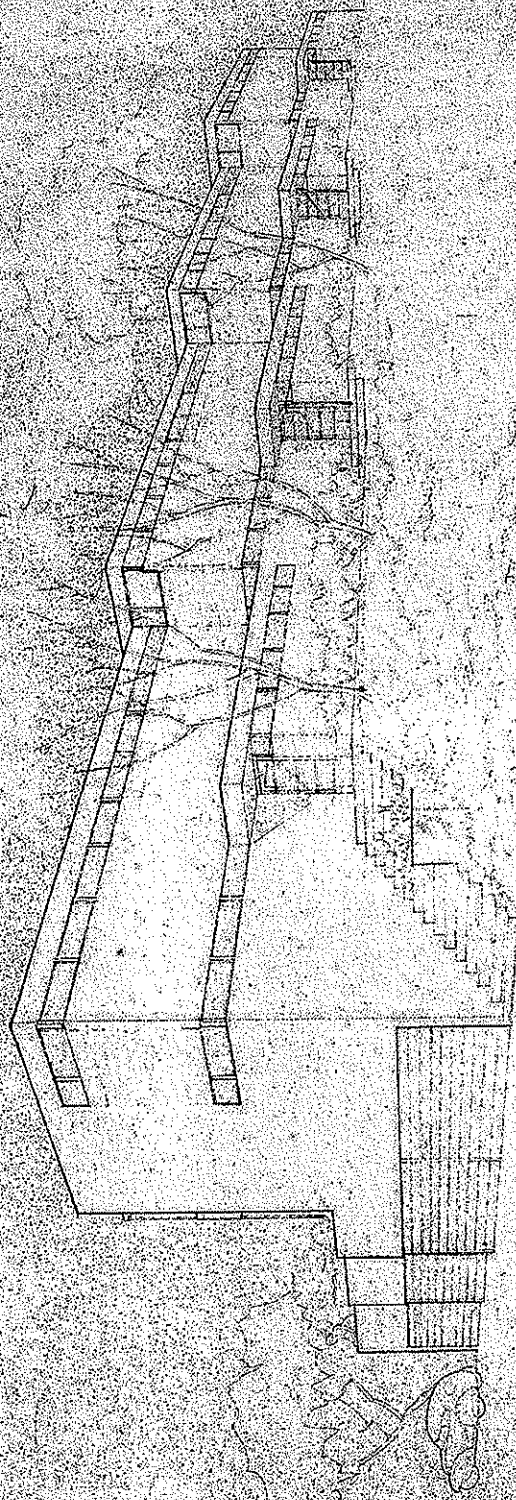
Plans of typical unit

ALL ROOMS of each unit are directly accessible from the entrance and stair hall. The living room, kitchen-dinette, and both bedrooms in each apartment have windows on three sides. Yet this entails no loss of privacy, as those facing the entrance or street fronts are clerestories, above eye level. Between the living room and the dinette is a sliding glass door, 6 ft. wide, which permits closing off of the cooking space from the living room, while retaining the light. From the living room, a glass door leads out to the private patio.



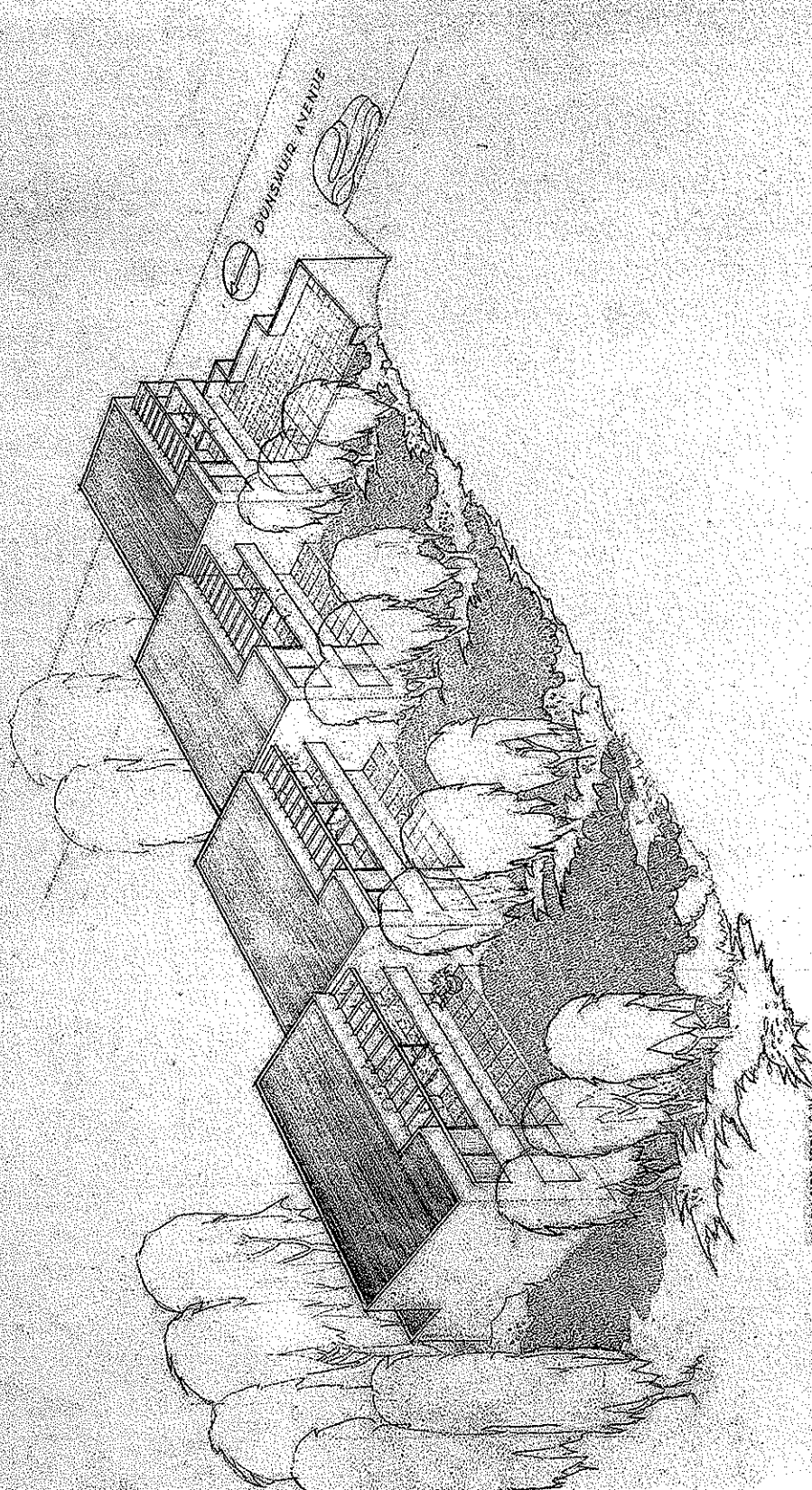


The garden front of the Dunsmuir Flats. Note how the step-back arrangement contributes to the privacy of the individual units



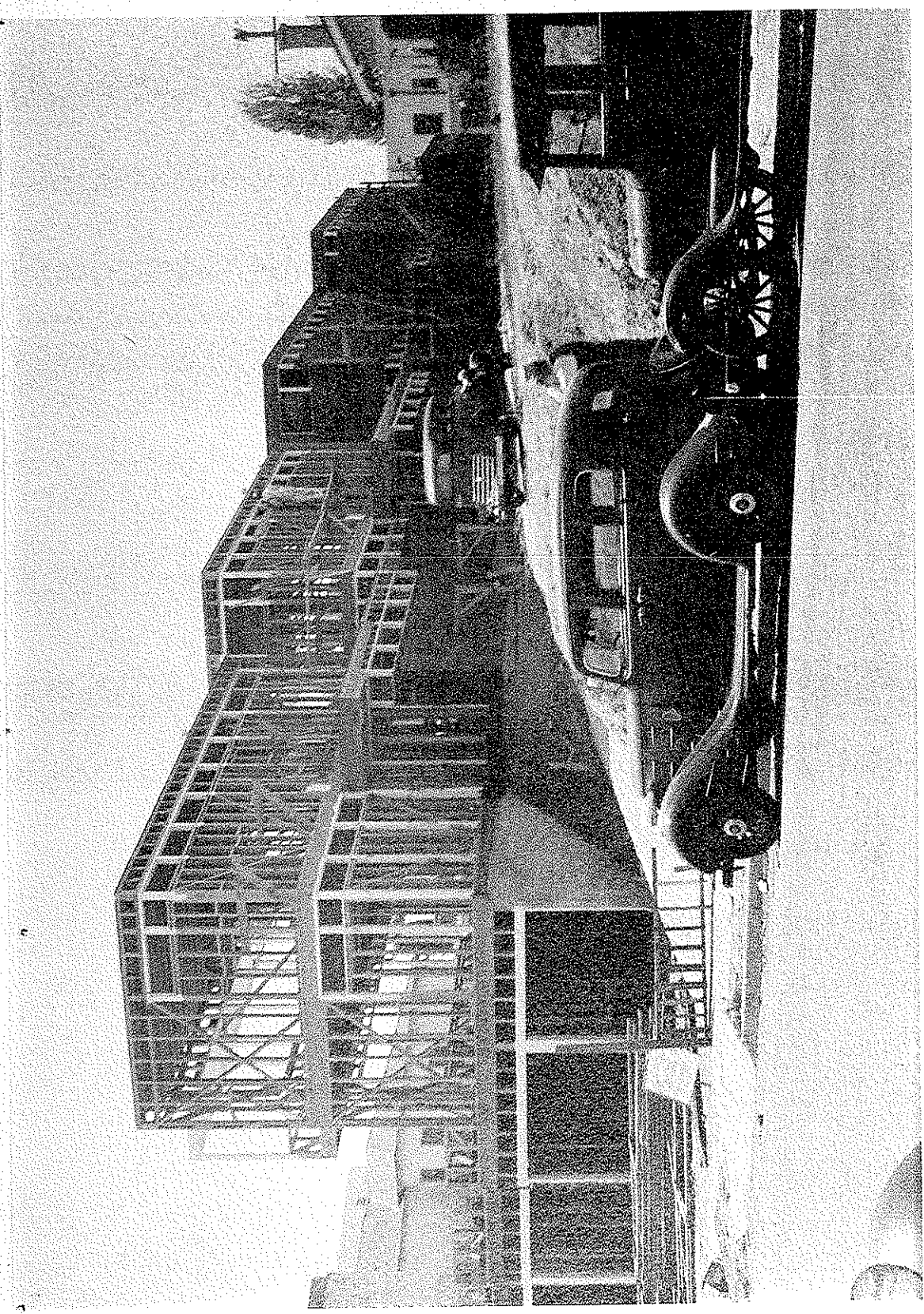
DUNSMUIR FLATS STREET SIDE FROM N.E.

GEORGE AIN - DESIGNER



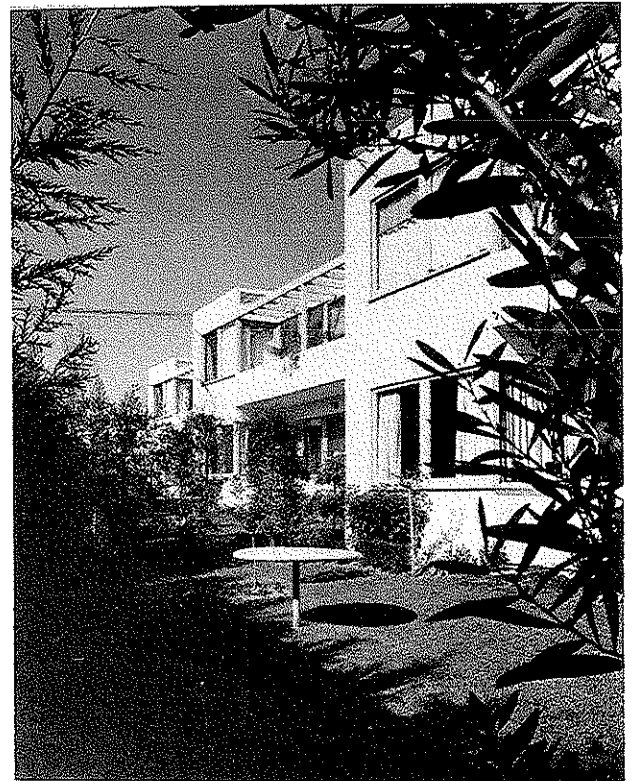
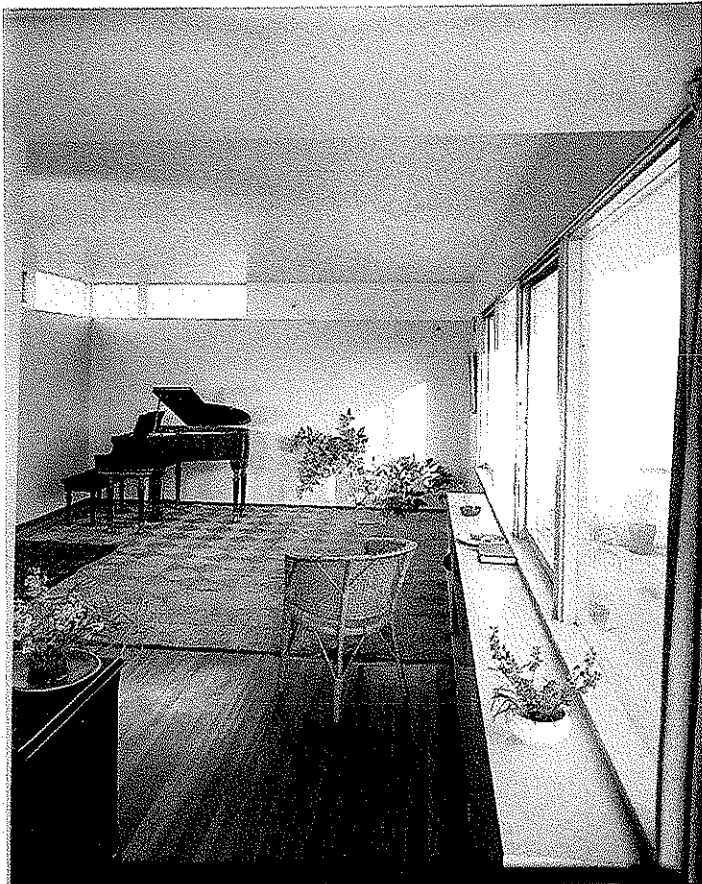
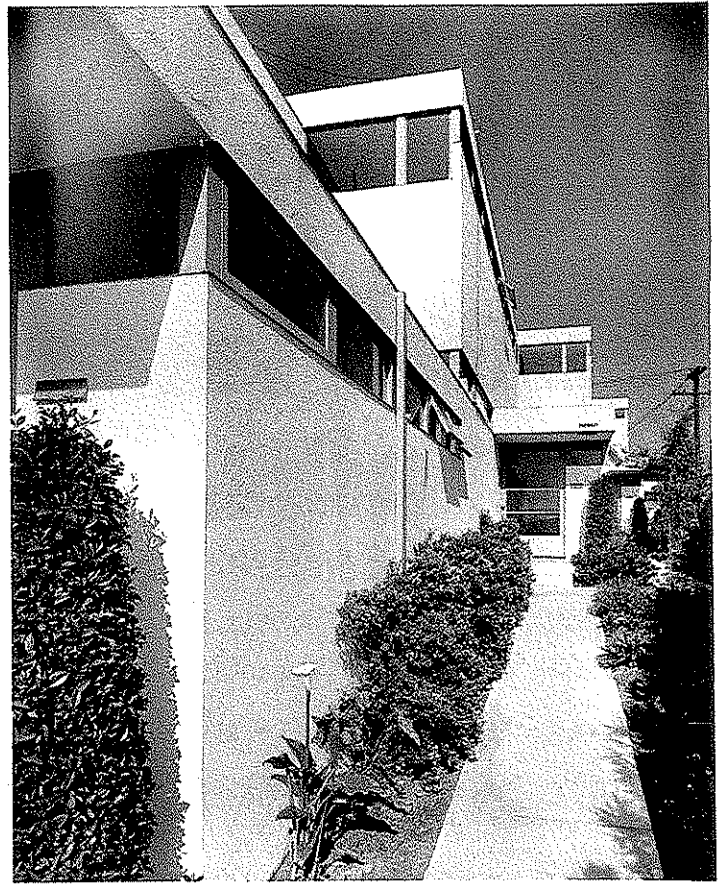
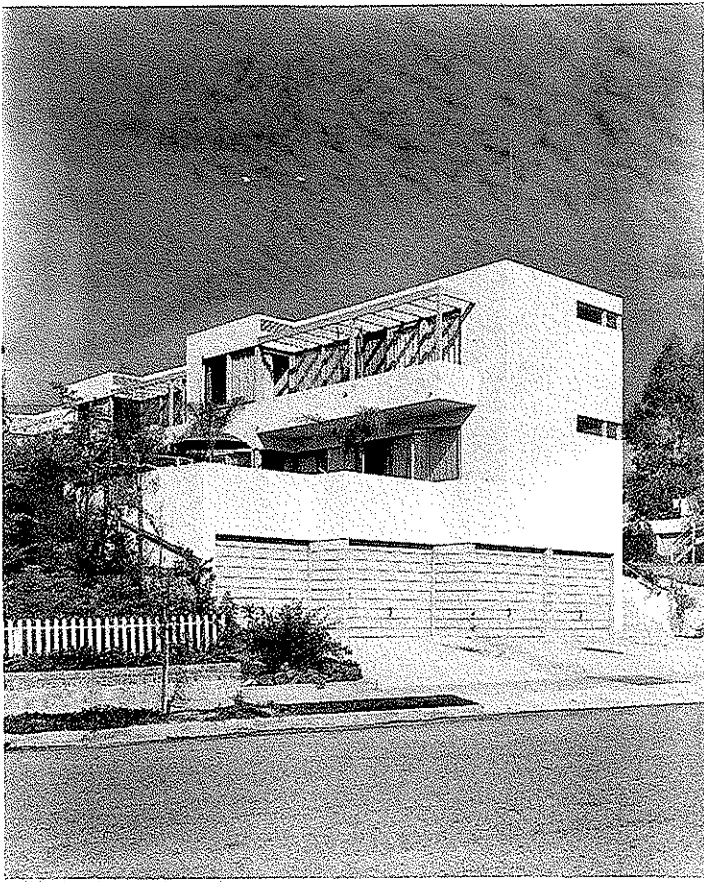
DUNSMUIR PLATE GARDEN SIDE FROM S.W.  
1937















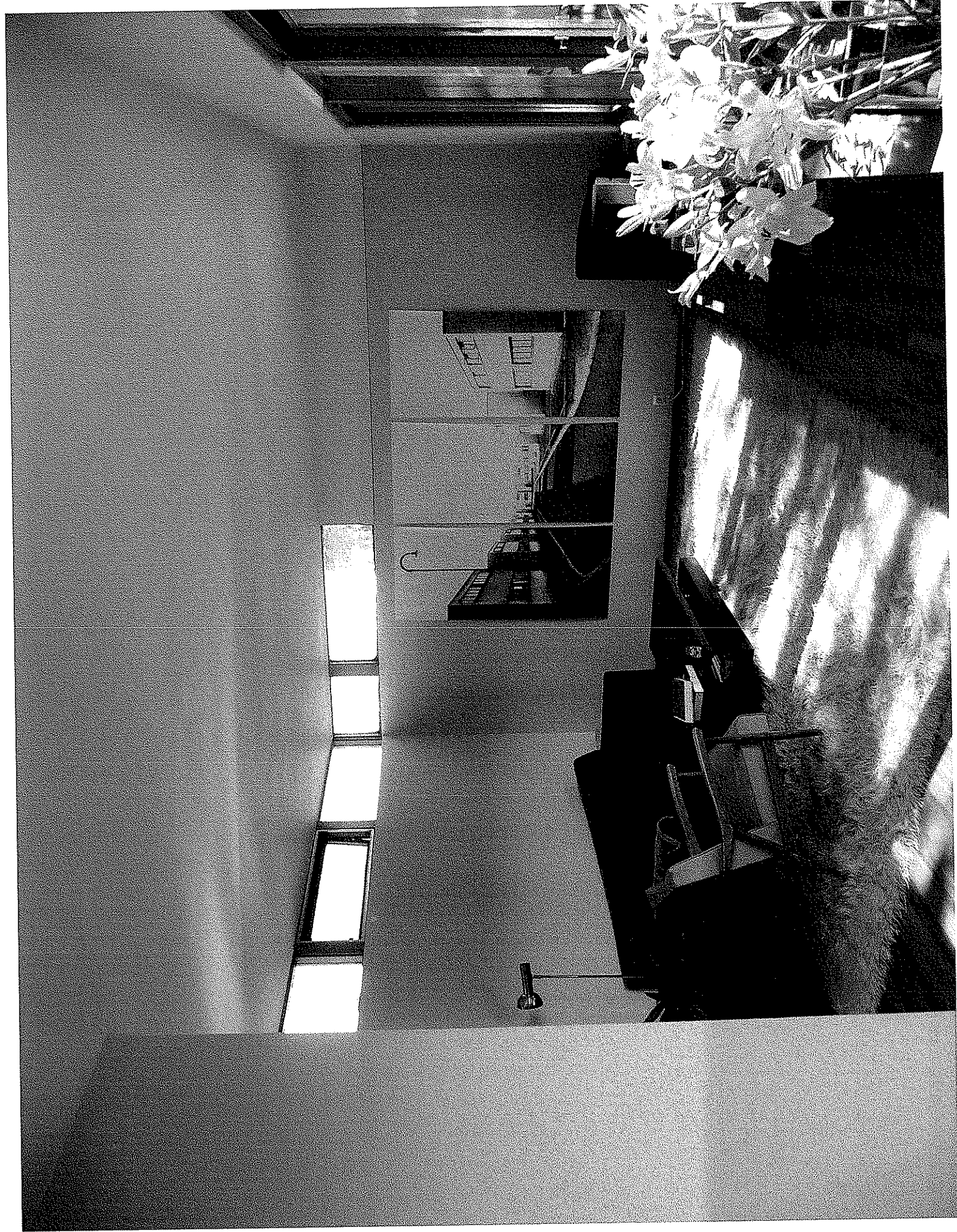














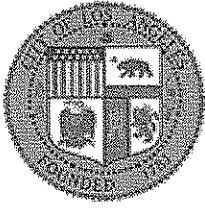












City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning

01/21/2009

**PARCEL PROFILE REPORT**

**PROPERTY ADDRESSES**

1279 S DUNSMUIR AVE  
1281 S DUNSMUIR AVE  
1279 1/2 S DUNSMUIR AVE  
1281 1/2 S DUNSMUIR AVE

**ZIP CODES**

90019

**RECENT ACTIVITY**

None

**CASE NUMBERS**

CPC-1986-823-GPC  
ORD-165331-SA3960

**Address/Legal Information**

PIN Number:	129B181 455
Lot Area (Calculated):	8,357.0 (sq ft)
Thomas Brothers Grid:	PAGE 633 - GRID C4
Assessor Parcel No. (APN):	5085015023
Tract:	TR 4588
Map Reference:	M B 56-36/37
Block:	None
Lot:	99
Arb (Lot Cut Reference):	None
Map Sheet:	129B181 129B177

**Jurisdictional Information**

Community Plan Area:	Wilshire
Area Planning Commission:	Central
Neighborhood Council:	P.I.C.O.
Council District:	CD 10 - Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
Census Tract #:	2171.00
LADBS District Office:	Los Angeles Metro

**Planning and Zoning Information**

Special Notes:	None
Zoning:	R3-1-O
Zoning Information (ZI):	None
General Plan Land Use:	Medium Residential
Plan Footnote - Site Req.:	See Plan Footnotes
Additional Plan Footnotes:	Wilshire
Specific Plan Area:	None
Design Review Board:	No
Historic Preservation Review:	No
Historic Preservation Overlay Zone:	None
Other Historic Designations:	None
Other Historic Survey Information:	None
Mills Act Contract:	None
POD - Pedestrian Oriented Districts:	None
CDO - Community Design Overlay:	None
NSO - Neighborhood Stabilization Overlay:	None
Streetscape:	No
Sign District:	No
Adaptive Reuse Incentive Area:	None
CRA - Community Redevelopment Agency:	None
Central City Parking:	No
Downtown Parking:	No
Building Line:	None
500 Ft School Zone:	No
500 Ft Park Zone:	No

**Assessor Information**

Assessor Parcel No. (APN):	5085015023
APN Area (Co. Public Works)*:	0.180 (ac)
Use Code:	0400 - 4 units (4 stories or less)
Assessed Land Val.:	\$1,000,000
Assessed Improvement Val.:	\$500,000
Last Owner Change:	03/21/08
Last Sale Amount:	\$0
Tax Rate Area:	67
Deed Ref No. (City Clerk):	955261 510335-6 486031

	1364665
	1358251
	1330479
	1164801
	1039688
	0-610
Building 1:	
1. Year Built:	1938
1. Building Class:	Not Available
1. Number of Units:	4
1. Number of Bedrooms:	8
1. Number of Bathrooms:	8
1. Building Square Footage:	4,784.0 (sq ft)
Building 2:	
2. Year Built:	Not Available
2. Building Class:	Not Available
2. Number of Units:	0
2. Number of Bedrooms:	0
2. Number of Bathrooms:	0
2. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)
Building 3:	
3. Year Built:	Not Available
3. Building Class:	Not Available
3. Number of Units:	0
3. Number of Bedrooms:	0
3. Number of Bathrooms:	0
3. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)
Building 4:	
4. Year Built:	Not Available
4. Building Class:	Not Available
4. Number of Units:	0
4. Number of Bedrooms:	0
4. Number of Bathrooms:	0
4. Building Square Footage:	None
Building 5:	
5. Year Built:	Not Available
5. Building Class:	Not Available
5. Number of Units:	0
5. Number of Bedrooms:	0
5. Number of Bathrooms:	0
5. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)

#### **Additional Information**

Airport Hazard:	None
Coastal Zone:	None
Farmland:	Area not Mapped
Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone:	No
Fire District No. 1:	No
Fire District No. 2:	No
Flood Zone:	None
Hazardous Waste / Border Zone Properties:	No
Methane Hazard Site:	Methane Zone
High Wind Velocity Areas:	No
Hillside Grading:	No
Oil Wells:	None
Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone:	No
Distance to Nearest Fault:	2.83848 (km)
Landslide:	No
Liquefaction:	No

#### **Economic Development Areas**

Business Improvement District:	None
Federal Empowerment Zone:	None
Renewal Community:	No
Revitalization Zone:	Central City
State Enterprise Zone:	None
Targeted Neighborhood Initiative:	Pico

#### **Public Safety**

Police Information:	
Bureau:	West
Division / Station:	Wilshire
Report District:	743
Fire Information:	
District / Fire Station:	68
Bataillon:	18
Division:	2
Red Flag Restricted Parking:	No

## CASE SUMMARIES

Note: Information for Case Summaries is Retrieved from the Planning Department's Plan Case Tracking System (PCTS) Database.

**Case Number:** CPC-1986-823-GPC

**Required Action(s):** GPC-GENERAL PLAN/ZONING CONSISTENCY (AB283)

**Project Description(s):** AB-283 PROGRAM - GENERAL PLAN/ZONE CONSISTENCY - WILSHIRE AREA-  
COMMUNITY WIDE ZONE CHANGES AND COMMUNITY PLAN CHANGES TO BRING  
THE ZONING INTO CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMMUNITY PLAN. INCLUDES  
CHANGES OF HEIGHT AS NEEDED. REQUIRED BY COURT AS PART OF  
SETTLEMENT IN THE HILLSIDE FEDERATION LAWSUIT

## DATA NOT AVAILABLE

ORD-165331-SA3960



City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning

07/29/2008

**PARCEL PROFILE REPORT**

**PROPERTY ADDRESSES**

5232 N SYLMAR AVE  
5230 N SYLMAR AVE

**ZIP CODES**

91401

**RECENT ACTIVITY**

None

**CASE NUMBERS**

None

**Address/Legal Information**

PIN Number: 172-5A151 203  
Area (Calculated): 6,479.9 (sq ft)  
Thomas Brothers Grid: PAGE 562 - GRID A2  
Assessor Parcel Number: 2248011006  
Tract: TR 6015  
Map Reference: M B 99-54/55  
Block: None  
Lot: 124  
Arb (Lot Cut Reference): None  
Map Sheet: 172-5A151

**Jurisdictional Information**

Community Plan Area: Van Nuys - North Sherman Oaks  
Area Planning Commission: South Valley  
Neighborhood Council: Sherman Oaks  
Council District: CD 2 - Wendy Greuel  
Census Tract #: 1285.00  
LADBS District Office: Van Nuys

**Planning and Zoning Information**

Special Notes: None  
Zoning: R1-1  
Zoning Information (ZI): ZI-2391 Baseline Mansionization  
General Plan Land Use: Low Residential  
Plan Footnote - Site Req.: 1  
Additional Plan Footnotes: Van Nuys  
Specific Plan Area: None  
Design Review Board: No  
Historic Preservation Review: No  
Historic Preservation Overlay Zone: None  
Other Historic Designations: None  
Other Historic Survey Information: None  
Mills Act Contract: None  
POD - Pedestrian Oriented Districts: None  
CDO - Community Design Overlay: None  
Streetscape: No  
Sign District: No  
Adaptive Reuse Incentive Area: None  
CRA - Community Redevelopment Agency: None  
Central City Parking: No  
Downtown Parking: No  
Building Line: None  
500 Ft School Zone: No  
500 Ft Park Zone: No

**Assessor Information**

Assessor Parcel Number: 2248011006  
Parcel Area (Approximate): 6,490.4 (sq ft)  
Use Code: 0100 - Single Residence  
Assessed Land Val.: \$31,337  
Assessed Improvement Val.: \$21,075  
Last Owner Change: 01/02/04  
Last Sale Amount: \$0  
Tax Rate Area: 13  
Deed Reference No.: 1022223  
Building 1:  
1. Year Built: 1928  
1. Building Class: D55B  
1. Number of Units: 1

1. Number of Bedrooms:	2
1. Number of Bathrooms:	1
1. Building Square Footage:	1,026.0 (sq ft)
Building 2:	
2. Year Built:	Not Available
2. Building Class:	Not Available
2. Number of Units:	0
2. Number of Bedrooms:	0
2. Number of Bathrooms:	0
2. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)
Building 3:	
3. Year Built:	Not Available
3. Building Class:	Not Available
3. Number of Units:	0
3. Number of Bedrooms:	0
3. Number of Bathrooms:	0
3. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)
Building 4:	
4. Year Built:	Not Available
4. Building Class:	Not Available
4. Number of Units:	0
4. Number of Bedrooms:	0
4. Number of Bathrooms:	0
4. Building Square Footage:	None
Building 5:	
5. Year Built:	Not Available
5. Building Class:	Not Available
5. Number of Units:	0
5. Number of Bedrooms:	0
5. Number of Bathrooms:	0
5. Building Square Footage:	0.0 (sq ft)

#### **Additional Information**

Airport Hazard:	None
Coastal Zone:	None
Farmland:	Area not Mapped
Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone:	No
Fire District No. 1:	No
Fire District No. 2:	No
Flood Zone:	None
Hazardous Waste / Border Zone Properties:	No
Methane Hazard Site:	None
High Wind Velocity Areas:	No
Hillside Grading:	No
Oil Wells:	None
Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone:	No
Distance to Nearest Fault:	6.19171 (km)
Landslide:	No
Liquefaction:	Yes

#### **Economic Development Areas**

Business Improvement District:	None
Federal Empowerment Zone:	None
Renewal Community:	No
Revitalization Zone:	None
State Enterprise Zone:	None
Targeted Neighborhood Initiative:	None

#### **Public Safety**

Police Information:	
Bureau:	Valley
Division / Station:	Van Nuys
Report District:	975
Fire Information:	
District / Fire Station:	88
Batallion:	10
Division:	3
Red Flag Restricted Parking:	No