

Theme: Residential Development

Across the United States, as GIs returned from the frontlines and began to settle back into civilian life, the nationwide demand for housing dramatically increased. The GI Bill provided significant economic benefits to returning veterans, including reasonable loan terms for home purchases, and credit for college tuition.³⁸² To address the housing shortage, developers responded with tracts of mass-produced single-family homes built quickly and cheaply. The first and most influential planned community in the United States was Levittown, New York. Developers of Levittown constructed thousands of homogenous tract homes in response to the housing crisis, a model which was repeated across the country and ultimately transformed suburbia.³⁸³

Like so many Southern California cities, Pomona's population density increased during the immediate postwar period. Communities with large agricultural parcels, such as those in the Pomona Valley, offered the room necessary for residential expansion and the development of large-scale postwar tracts. Large developers like Weber-Burns and Kaiser Community Homes adopted similar models of quick, cheap tract home construction in communities throughout the region. Although these large housing developments typically featured Ranch-style homes, some developers also partnered with architects to offer homes that leveraged modern architectural ideas and elements to distinguish their products. Custom, single-family residences designed by architects appear to be rare in Pomona. Unlike some communities that have a substantial number of individual Modern residential designs, the emphasis in Pomona during the postwar period was clearly on tract housing development.

There were approximately 400 residential tracts recorded in Pomona between 1945 and 1980, significantly expanding the footprint of the city. This section provides an overview of residential subdivisions in Pomona. Table 5 at the conclusion of this section lists the largest postwar housing developments that are now located within the city limits. Details about select postwar tracts in Pomona are included in Appendix A.

POSTWAR SUBURBANIZATION IN POMONA

One of the earliest and largest postwar tract developments in the Pomona area was Pomona Homes, first developed in 1946.³⁸⁴ Spearheaded by builders C.T. and W.P. Stover, Edwin A. Tomlin and Company, and R. J. Daum Construction Co., the new development was located on 475 acres of the former ranch lands of S. W. Beasley, southwest of present-day Mission Boulevard and S. Dudley Street.³⁸⁵ The planned community comprised 2,500 homes developed in conjunction with FHA guidelines with plans to sell to veterans.

³⁸² Though as with many other government programs, the GI Bill primarily benefitted white veterans, and the "wide disparity in the bill's implementation ended up helping drive growing gaps in wealth, education and civil rights between white and Black Americans." Erin Blakemore, "How the GI Bill's Promise was Denied to a Million Black WWII Veterans," <https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits> (accessed April 2022).

³⁸³ Levittown also had restrictive covenants that prevented non-white residents to own or rent property in the development.

³⁸⁴ At the time it was subdivided, the tract was located outside of the City limits; it was later annexed by the City of Pomona.

³⁸⁵ Beasley and his wife had donated land to the Seventh Day Adventist College of Medical Evangelists in 1944.

Pomona Homes was a large and early example of the mass production of tract houses. Its construction was delayed until the fall of 1946 as the developers worked to compile the needed construction materials that had been scarce during the war. Once the necessary materials were obtained, the development adopted many of the efficiencies used during the war effort, including establishing a production assembly line for the prefabricated housing components.³⁸⁶ To aid construction, the project established a five-acre warehouse containing 2.8 million feet of lumber, 15 carloads of cedar shingles, 2,000 doors, and large quantities of plumbing, electrical, and other building supplies.³⁸⁷ Pomona Homes also established a concrete plant west of the stockpiles so they could quickly pour the foundations for up to four to five residences each day.

Residences in the development were planned by Long Beach-based architect Hugh Gibbs so that no two houses of the same design and color on the same block. The three-bedroom houses consisted of twenty-two different styles on four different concrete pad configurations, and with 64 different color schemes. The slightly curving streets were named after early Pomona pioneers: McComas, Buffington, Fleming, and Vejar, among others. By January of 1947, there were 490 homes for sale at Pomona Homes.³⁸⁸

Pomona Homes ushered in a wave of new subdivisions in Pomona. The development of Pomona Homes, along with the establishment of the Convair industrial plant, spurred the creation of some of Pomona's largest residential tracts in what is now the western part of the city, adjacent to the Kellogg Arabian Horse Farm. These included Kellogg Park Units 1 and 2 (1952) by the Liberty Building Co.; Kellogg Park Units 3 and 4 (1953) by George and Robert Alexander; Pomona Estates (1954) by Weber-Burns; Valwood Estates (1954-1956) by Weber-Burns; and Parkview Pomona (1954-1955) by Mark Taper's Biltmore Homes.

During and immediately after the war, the architectural community began to experiment with new technologies and building techniques that would influence residential subdivisions for decades. The influential Case Study House program was the creation of John Entenza, the Southern California-based editor of *Arts & Architecture* magazine. During the war, Entenza, along with a number of other architects, discussed new ideas in residential design and construction that could only be talked about because of wartime service and restrictions.³⁸⁹ Among them were Ralph Rapson, John Rex, Richard Neutra, Charles Eames, J.R. Davidson, Whitney Smith, and Thornton Abell. The program announcement stated that each "house must be capable of duplication and in no sense be an individual 'performance'... It is important that the best material available be used in the best possible way in order to arrive at a 'good' solution of each problem, which in the overall program will be general enough to be of practical assistance to the average American in search of a home in which he can afford to live."³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ Another early tract to employ the assembly line method of construction was the Towne House development in southeast Pomona. Here, the 120-man Curlett-Harwood Co. crew (plus 40 other building trades) constructed all walls and partitions in the project yard and trucked them to the home sites for assembly.

³⁸⁷ "90 Units Started in Pomona Homes Housing Project," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, November 8, 1946, 1.

³⁸⁸ "90 Units Started in Pomona Homes Housing Project," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, November 8, 1946, 1.

³⁸⁹ David Travers, "Case Study House Program: Introduction," <http://www.artsandarchitecture.com/case.houses/index.html> (accessed April 2022).

³⁹⁰ Travers, "Case Study House Program: Introduction."

Over the course of the program, which lasted from 1945 until 1962, over 30 projects were designed by many of Southern California's most renowned Modernists. The real impact of the program was the national attention that it brought to modern design in California. "Publication in *Arts & Architecture* became a door to national and international renown for West Coast architects. Reyner Banham said that '*Arts and Architecture* changed the itinerary of the Grand Tour pilgrimage for European architects and students: America replaced Italy and Los Angeles replaced Florence.'"³⁹¹

Many prominent developers in the postwar era commissioned architects to help layout their subdivisions and provide residential designs, further amplifying the tenets of the Case Study program and other experiments in low-cost housing. In Pomona, numerous residential subdivisions were designed by noted architects and designers. Marshall Tilden's Cliff May Homes development was designed by Cliff May and Chris Choate. Valwood Estates was designed by Palmer & Krisel, AIA; College Grove Ranchos was designed by Roland Logan Russell, AIA; Pomona Rancho Village was designed by Roy M. Watkins. Val Vista was designed by L. C. Major & Associates.

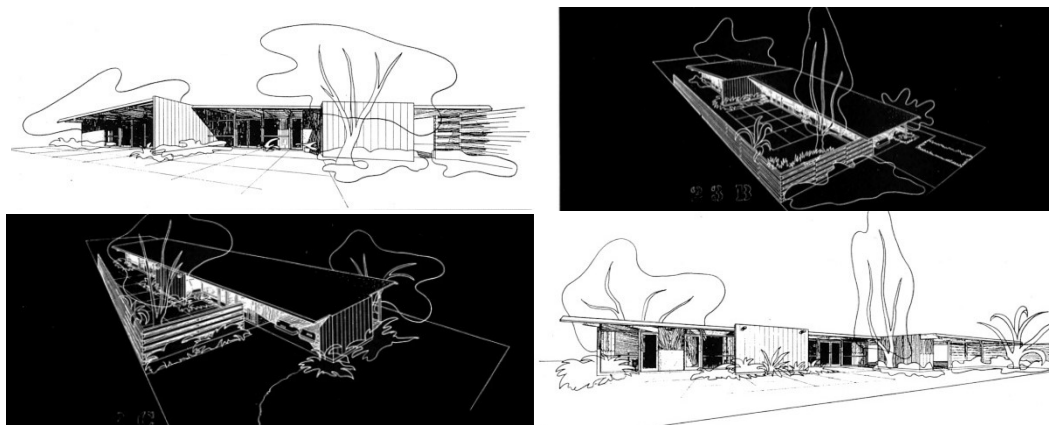


College Grove Ranchos, photographed by Julius Shulman in 1956. *Photos by Julius Shulman. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)*

³⁹¹ David Travers, "About *Arts and Architecture*," <http://www.artsandarchitecture.com/about.html> (accessed April 2022).

One of the first postwar developments in Pomona with architect-designed residences was Westmont Homes, designed by architect Arthur Lawrence Miller. Westmont Homes was developed by the same group as Pomona Homes and sited immediately to its west.³⁹² The subdivision was an early example of total design, including the planning and execution of a community center, school, and commercial/retail stores. By 1949, 550 three-bedroom homes were built within the former walnut grove.³⁹³

The *Los Angeles Times* declared Westmont Homes to be the first Mid-century Modern style tract development in Pomona and one of the first in the Los Angeles area.³⁹⁴ Miller's Mid-century Modern designs for the residences included clerestory windows to provide views of the surrounding hills, a wall of glass leading out to the patio, and an open plan. Miller used carports, storage units, and fences to create a unique architectural cadence not found in most tract home construction. The more typical practice to achieve this type of cadence was to vary the rooflines, which was much more costly than Miller's approach. The three residential plans were paired on angled on the lots to create a thoughtful approach to the siting and create a varied streetscape.



Renderings of Westmont Homes. *Arts & Architecture*, May 1950.

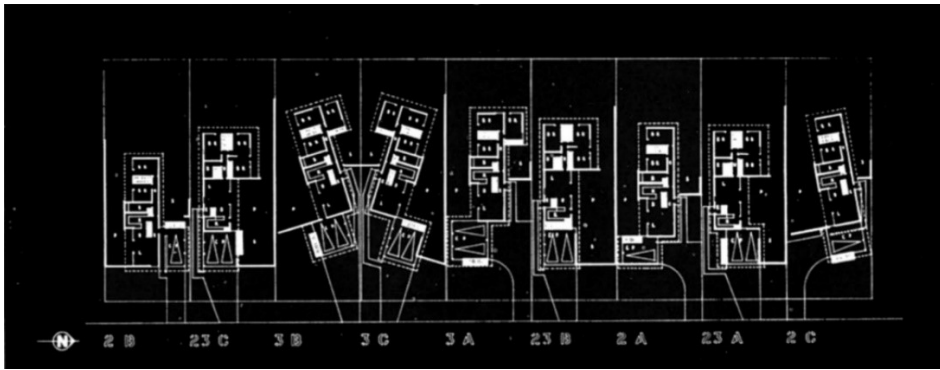
In 1950, Westmont Homes was featured in *Arts & Architecture* magazine as an exemplar of tract home design—specifically calling out the superior plan design and siting on exceptionally narrow lots as “...much better than on the conventional tract plan layout of lots 10 to 15 feet wider.”³⁹⁵ The tract was designed with three different plans, each with three variations in the treatment of the primary façade. The initial price point of \$8,500 and the availability of FHA financing made the design achievement even more noteworthy. Westmont Homes were featured in *Life* magazine in 1954.

³⁹² Tract maps from 1947 through 1952 indicate the formation of seven new tracts with different combinations of investors.

³⁹³ “Ground is Broken for Westmont Area Shopping Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1949, E9.

³⁹⁴ Edith McCall Head, “Contemporary Gets Down to Business,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1951, F4.

³⁹⁵ “New Tract Houses,” *Art & Architecture*, May 1950, 33.



Site Plan for Westmont Homes. *Arts & Architecture*, May 1950.

By 1957, the pending freeway infrastructure made outlying areas such as Pomona viable “suburbs” for those who worked in downtown Los Angeles. This spurred investment in residential tract development in the northern part of the city, including new subdivisions both north and south of La Verne Avenue.³⁹⁶ The Pomona Valley was heavily marketed to Angelenos, although many tract developments within the city limits were frequently described as in neighboring communities of Claremont or Upland rather than Pomona.³⁹⁷

In the mid-1950s, Pomona tract developers coordinated to create a marketing campaign for the Pomona Valley, employing the slogan “Live, Work and Play in Pomona Valley.”³⁹⁸ Also known as the “Move to Pomona Valley” campaign, this marketing effort targeted veterans and nonveterans alike, encouraging them to purchase homes in one of six residential communities.³⁹⁹ According to historian Genevieve Carpio, “developers underscored career opportunities in the valley’s growing industrial plants, appealing to young families who sought proximity to employment and a suburban ideal of open space, safety, and shopping.” In early 1957, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that some 35,000 people toured the model homes of five Pomona Valley residential developments.⁴⁰⁰

In addition to the large regional development firms that built in the area, there were several local developers of note. In 1957, Robert A. Olin (1914-1973) established Olin Construction Co. in Claremont. After the war, Olin started as a general contractor in Chicago. After moving to the Pomona Valley, Olin built many civic and commercial buildings. By 1953, he was building tract homes in Covina. As president of the Home Builders Council, Inc. in the early 1960s, Olin was one of the original five signers to the petition to repeal the Rumford Act.⁴⁰¹

Ralph Lewis was another influential local developer in the Pomona Valley. Lewis partnered with Robert Olin to develop Claremont Highlands before founding Lewis Homes with his wife and sons. The Lewises were Jewish developers, a minority which was increasingly recognized as

³⁹⁶ The largest of these was Parkview Pomona by Biltmore Homes, Inc., with 374 units.

³⁹⁷ This may have been an ongoing repercussion of the redlining labels assigned to Pomona back in the 1930s.

³⁹⁸ “Developers Sponsor Campaign in Pomona,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1957, F9.

³⁹⁹ Genevieve Carpio, “From Citrus Belt to Inland Empire, 1945-1970” in *Collisions at the Crossroads: How Place and Mobility Make Race* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2019), 190.

⁴⁰⁰ “Thousands View New Pomona Dwellings,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1957, F10.

⁴⁰¹ “Builders Will Discuss Rumford Housing Issue,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1964, Q24.

white in postwar California. According to Carpio, “as the racial category of ‘white’ shifted to include previously excluded minorities in the postwar period, so too did residential patterns.”⁴⁰² The Lewis family adopted a racially inclusive strategy of residential development in the Pomona Valley.

Gee Builders, Inc. Land Subdividers and Developers was a Chinese American-owned company. Gee Builders were responsible for the development of West Pomona Manors.⁴⁰³ Roy Chan, one of the owners of West Pomona Manors, received a degree in architectural engineering from California State Polytechnic College. Gee Builders also hired J. Thomas Wilner, a tract home designer, for the plans and elevations for West Pomona Manors.⁴⁰⁴

During the 1960s, Pomona led all San Gabriel Valley cities in the number of dwelling units authorized. Between 1960 and 1963, 74 tracts comprising 1,993 lots were developed. Between 1964 and 1967, another 25 subdivisions were recorded.⁴⁰⁵ Through the 1960s and 1970s, it was standard practice for developers to establish Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) that included restrictions on the sale of residences within these newly-established residential communities to people of color and members of the Jewish faith. However, according to historian Gloria Ricci Lothrop, developers over saturated the housing market in Pomona and cutbacks from a declining defense industry forced the VA and the FHA to repossess homes. Vacancies abounded and many local realtors, eager to do business, signed non-discrimination policies and announced the availability of the repossessed homes to people of color. As a result, by 1977, a special state Census conducted in Pomona revealed that 52% of all Pomona residents had lived in the city for three years or less.⁴⁰⁶

With the onset of the economic recession in the early 1970s, residential development in Pomona stalled. As described in the *Los Angeles Times*, “...new housing construction was virtually unknown” in Pomona from 1974 to 1976.⁴⁰⁷ In 1976, there was just one single-family residence constructed in the city.⁴⁰⁸

As economic conditions improved in the latter part of the decade, construction activities resumed accordingly. In Pomona, one of the largest developments from this period was the redevelopment of the 2,241-acre Phillips Ranch into new residential communities. The former ranch land was purchased in the 1960s by Westmore Development Co., led by Al Lesser. Lesser embarked on a comprehensive master plan for the community which included 260 acres of land reserved for open space and a network of pedestrian and biking trails. No construction was undertaken until the late 1970s, when Lesser began selling tracts to other developers to create residential subdivisions. There were ultimately seven different subdivisions within the former

⁴⁰² Carpio, 191-192.

⁴⁰³ Prior to developing West Pomona Manors, Gee Builders constructed the Planz Park development in Bakersfield.

⁴⁰⁴ It is currently unknown whether Gee Builders placed any restrictive covenants on West Pomona Manors.

⁴⁰⁵ Ricci Lothrop, 115.

⁴⁰⁶ Ricci Lothrop, 117.

⁴⁰⁷ “Pomona Development Accent on the Positive,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1986, J1.

⁴⁰⁸ “Pomona Development Accent on the Positive,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1986, J1.

Phillips Ranch, allowing for a wide variety of single-family homes at various price points.⁴⁰⁹ An emphasis on “country living” combined with trends in architecture of the period resulted in most of Phillips Ranch being designed in a rustic contemporary style in accordance with strict standards of design and construction.⁴¹⁰ Most of the developments were only partially completed by 1980—with thousands of homes still to be built in the following decade. By 1980, however, buyers had purchased some \$60 million in new homes in Phillips Ranch.⁴¹¹



Hearthstone Homes, one of seven new subdivisions on the former Phillips Ranch, photographed by Julius Shulman in 1980. *Photo by Julius Shulman. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)*

However, a lack of funds and community opposition led to the abandonment of several other redevelopment projects in the city. This included a project that involved the City acquiring the Paretti Tract of 350 homes via eminent domain for commercial development. The project was opposed by protesting homeowners, many of whom were African American, Latino, and elderly white residents; the project ultimately failed. Another redevelopment project that never came to fruition was the Pomona Trade Center, a planned 12-story office, hotel, and retail complex. The center failed to secure sufficient funding and was abandoned by investors.

⁴⁰⁹ The seven developments within the former Phillips Ranch were Country Wood, by Kaufman & Broad; Diamond View Homes, by Criterion Development, Inc. and the John Martin Co.; Hearthstone, by W & A Builders; Falcon Ridge, by Griffin/Fletcher; Marlborough Country, by Marlborough Development; Meadow Ridge Homes, by Bauer Development Co.; and Sunnyslope, by Pacesetter Homes.

⁴¹⁰ “Display Ad 149,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1979, I6.

⁴¹¹ “Move-Ins Start Hub of Activity at Philips Ranch Neighborhood,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1980, I8.

TABLE 5: SELECTED TRACT DEVELOPMENTS IN POSTWAR POMONA

NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
TR 13124 (Town House Tract)	c. 1947	Rogert Titus Smith, et. al.
TR 14197	c. 1947	A. Harold Wilkins/ Percy E. Wilkins
Pomona Homes	1947	Pomona Homes (Edwin Tomlin, et. al.)
Towne House	1947	Roger Titus Smith, Rufus Rountree, et. al. ⁴¹²
Homes of Tomorrow, Inc.	1947	Jack G. Booth, Booth Brothers and Pomona Homes, Inc.
Westmont Homes	1947-53	Edwin Tomlin, et. al.
TR 14792	c. 1947	Arthur H. Lichte
TR 17877	c. 1952	Capital Company/ Nate Bershon and David Bershon
TR 17386	c. 1952	Magnolia Downs
TR 18090	c. 1952	Edwin Saville
TR 16662	c. 1952	C. Douglass Ferry and Merle W. Ferry
Kellogg Park Unit 1 and 2	1952	Liberty Building Co./ Samuel Firks and Norman Feintech
Pomona Rancho Village	1952-53	Booth Brothers + H. Frank Nelson Co.
Hacienda Gardens (#1)	1952-55	Covina Park Homes Corporation/ Jack G. Booth et. al.
Prudential Homes	1952-54	Harry L. Scholer/Equitable Homes
Palmgrove Park	1953-54	Bershon Construction Co./Nate Bershon, David Bershon et. al.
Cary Lane Homes	1953	Allan-Williams Corporation
President Manor	1953	Braemar Homes of Pomona
Kellogg Park Unit 3 and 4	1953	George Estates/Reseda Homes Inc., a.k.a., George and Robert Alexander
Pomona Estates	1954	Arthur B. Weber and Associates/ Lee S. Burns, a.k.a., Weber-Burns
Parkview Pomona	1954-55	Biltmore Homes/S. Mark Taper
Valwood Estates	1954-56	Arthur B. Weber and Associates/ Lee S. Burns, a.k.a., Weber-Burns
Mayfair Homes	1954-55	Mayfair Homes Construction Co./Paul J. Wiener and Wade J. Howells
Cliff May Homes	1955-56	Marshall Tilden
TR 21183	c. 1955-56	Gary Development Company/Arthur and Gilbert Katz
TR 21678	c. 1955-56	Emerald Development Corp./ David Young et. al.
Cliff May Homes	1955-56	Phil Hunter and Joe Green
Crown Homes	1956	Curtis Mc Fadden/Campus Village Builders
West Pomona Manors	1956-57	Pomona Manors/Jasmine Gee and Roy Chan with Gee Builders, Inc.
Fairlane Park	1956-57	Fairlane Builders/Walter Smith and Paul E. Cooper

⁴¹²Although Jack G. Booth is not listed on the tract map, some newspaper accounts document that Booth Brothers was also an early investor in this development.

NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
Northgrove Homes	1956-61	Palmgrove Park Co./ Nate Bershon and David Bershon
Cinderella Homes	1956	Olin & Lewis/Claremont Highland Homes
TR 21309	c. 1956	Albert C. Johnson and Freda P. Johnson
Linda Lee Homes	1956-57	D & E Corporation
College Grove Ranchos	1956-58	Cherry-Hadley/Ray K. Cherry and John Hadley, et. al.
Garey Gardens	1957-60	Garey Gardens/ Hadley-Cherry; Ray R. Cherry and Max B. Elliot
Cinderella Royalty Homes	1960-61	Cinderella Land Co./Olin Construction Co./Robert A. Olin and John M. Watkins
Hacienda Gardens (#2)	1961-63	Hacienda Gardens Development Co./Jack Wagoner and John Barker
Benito Gardens	1962	Boyce Built Homes/ W. H. Boyce et. al.
Val Vista	1962-63	Forman Development Co./ Maston T. Noice
County Fair Homes	1963	Monarc Estates, Inc./ John C. Wilcox and Lawrence E. Cook
Carriage Homes	1963	Carriage Homes, Inc./ Olin Construction Co./Robert A. Olin and John M. Watkins
Meadow Ridge Homes	1978-79	Bauer Development Co./George A. Campbell
Marlborough Country	1978-80	Marlborough Development/ Ronald S. Lushing
Diamond View Estates	1979-80	Criterion Development, Inc. and John Martin Co./ Donald E. Boucher and Frank L. Fehse
Sunnyslope	1979-80	Pacesetter Homes
Country Wood	1979-80	Kaufman & Broad
Falcon Ridge	1979-80	Griffin/Fletcher
Hearthstone Homes	1979-80	W & A Builders