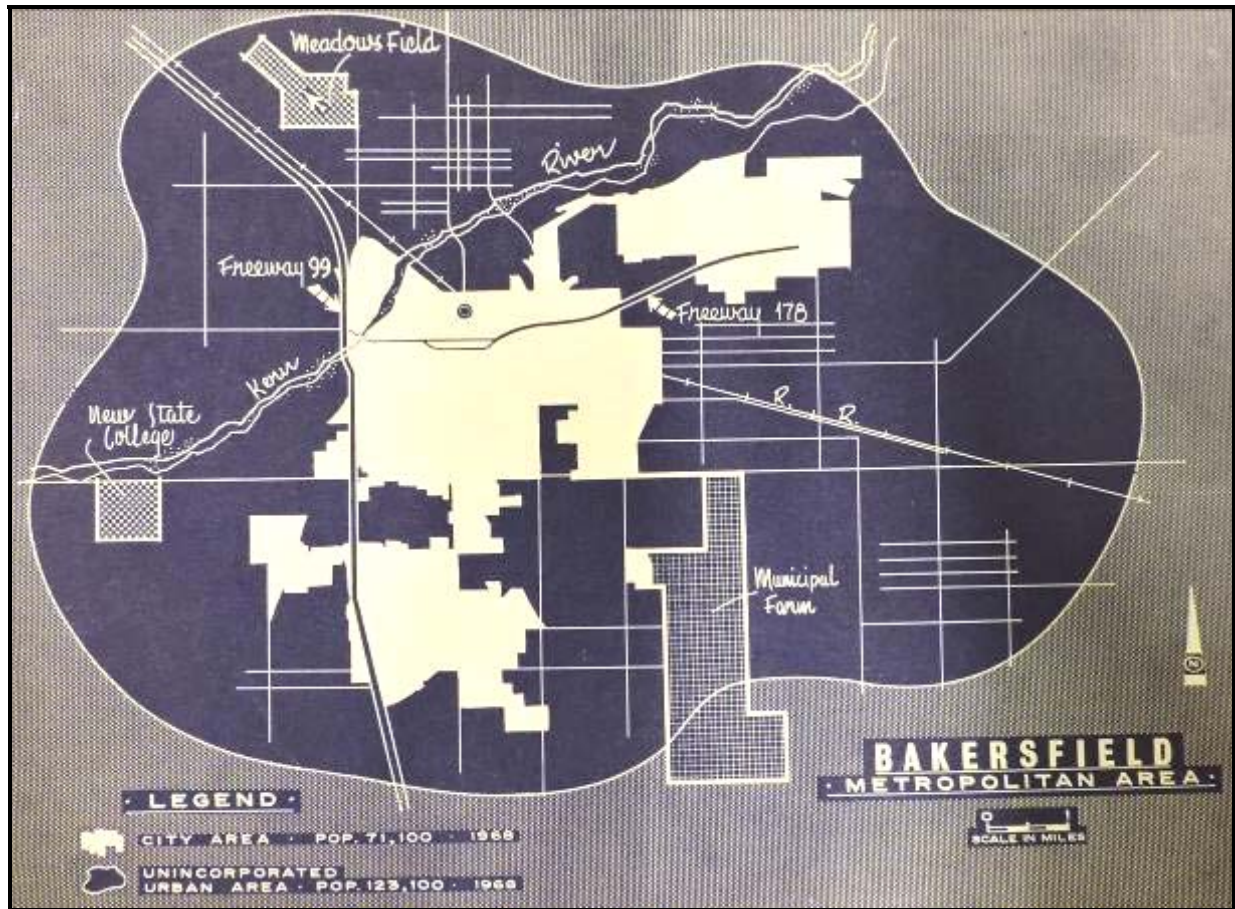


# KEY POSTWAR HOUSING TRACTS WITHIN THE GREATER BAKERSFIELD AREA, 1945-1973



## Prepared For:

City of Bakersfield, California  
and  
California Department of Transportation

## Prepared By:

JRP Historical Consulting, LLC  
2850 Spafford Street  
Davis, CA 95618

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Cover illustration: “Bakersfield Metropolitan Area,” December 1967. Vertical file: Bakersfield, 1960-1971. Beale Memorial Library, Jack Maguire Local History Room. Kern County Library.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

JRP Historical Consulting, LLC (JRP) prepared this report under subcontract to Parsons Corporation for the City of Bakersfield and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The work was conducted to assist in the performance of Stipulation II.A.1 of the "Memorandum of Agreement between the California Department of Transportation and the California State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Centennial Corridor Project, City of Bakersfield, Kern County, California" January 2015 (MOA).

Stipulation II.A.1 of the Centennial Corridor Project MOA called for the preparation of:

...a detailed report with a narrative description and contextual history of the development of postwar housing tracts within the Greater Bakersfield area generally covering the period 1945-1973. Using the broad themes and context introduced in Caltrans' *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973* (2011) and the historical context and themes established in the HRER [Historical Resources Evaluation Report] for the Centennial Corridor [State Route 58] project as a foundation and expanding on historical information collected for other nearby transportation projects, the new study will provide specific historical information of the major tract housing development in the City and the immediate surrounding unincorporated area.

The organization of this report provides all elements of the stipulation, which also requires discussion of the general themes and historical context for residential subdivisions (Chapter 2), and a narrative context for local subdivisions of the period, which along with a characterization of common housing styles and a profile of local developers, is included in Chapter 0. Chapter 4 presents a history and description of representative key tracts, including the builders and developers involved, historic illustrations, and current photographs showing typical streetscapes and residential buildings. Chapter 5 consists of the Conclusion. This report is based on research conducted in various local libraries and sources, including period newspapers, planning documents, historic photographs, previous architectural studies, and other relevant material, and it was prepared by professionally qualified staff, all in accordance with the stipulation (Chapters 6 and 7). Appendix A contains a list of 18 postwar tract developments originally considered and from which 8 were ultimately selected for more in-depth study. Figure 4-1 on page 39 depicts the general location of the 8 key postwar tracts.

Greg King, Parsons Corporation, oversaw the preparation of this report on behalf of the City of Bakersfield; he also wrote the Conclusion; Philip Vallejo, Chief, Cultural Resources Branch of Caltrans' District 6 (Fresno) reviewed and provided comments on the draft report. Elizabeth Koos, Parsons Corporation, served as the technical editor.

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## 2. INTERWAR AND WORLD WAR II DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF BAKERSFIELD

To better understand post-World War II housing tract development in Bakersfield, we must first briefly go back a few decades earlier. Bakersfield's economy, long since based on the local agricultural and oil industries, was on an upswing when the United States entered World War I. The war disrupted this growth, by pulling people and resources away from the area, and sustained the Kern County economy because the region offered a unique combination of raw materials (i.e., petroleum and agricultural products) required by the war effort. Production in both sectors increased to meet these war demands and then slowed after the war as demand waned and petroleum workers were laid off. Agriculture filled the economic void in the 1920s as cotton became king in the areas around Bakersfield, while continuing to also produce alfalfa, grapes, melons, potatoes, and citrus fruit.<sup>1</sup> The success of regional agriculture spurred a period of growth in Bakersfield and the surrounding region, and the city's development stretched west to Oak Street and south Brundage Lane. This expansion stalled at the close of the 1920s when the stock market crashed and the Great Depression began for the residents of the incorporated City of Bakersfield and its outlying areas, as it did for the rest of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Great Depression and Government-Supported Recovery

The greater Bakersfield area experienced ups and downs during the interwar years, which was a contrast to the growth experienced in the late 1910s and 1920s when development extended to the south and west and annexations of outlying areas became more common as vacant land was subdivided into tracts for new construction. By 1929, the incorporated City of Bakersfield encompassed 7 square miles and had an estimated population of nearly 34,000.<sup>3</sup> Bakersfield, like many urban centers in the state, was hit hard by the economic crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, during which bank failures across the nation led to a diminished money supply, bankruptcy of businesses, and rampant unemployment. The economic crisis was further compounded by the drought (Dust Bowl) that plagued the nation's Southern Plains during the 1930s. Kern County agriculture, which supported years of previous growth in Bakersfield and other local towns, suffered a similar drought during this same period. This compounded Bakersfield's problems as Dust Bowl farm families migrated to California in search of employment opportunities in Central Valley agriculture. Bakersfield became a stopping point for a great number of these migrants, who traveled on the valley's main north-south thoroughfare through the Bakersfield region. Once in California, the hopes of work for these migrants were quickly dashed as they found climate and economic conditions little better than they had left.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard C. Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire: An Illustrated history of Bakersfield* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984) 87.

<sup>2</sup> Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire: An Illustrated history of Bakersfield* 89.

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 89; "May Annex Suburbs of Valley City," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Jan. 1923; "City of Bakersfield Annexes Territory," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1924; "Street Map of Greater Bakersfield, Kern Co., Calif.," (Bakersfield, CA: M.R. Parra & Co., 1917); "Bakersfield Boasts Population of 33,777," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1929, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Walter J. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973) 21-24, 51.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the New Deal programs, a sequence of experimental projects and programs intended to alleviate economic and social despair brought on by the depression, during the 1930s that helped restart both national and local economies. The largest of these, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Public Works Administration (PWA), provided jobs on federal, state, and local civic improvement projects, and federal aid to jump-start commercial and residential construction. In Kern County, WPA and PWA projects utilized more than \$1.5 million in the construction and/or improvement of numerous local bridges, overpasses, public buildings, parks, and roads.<sup>5</sup>

A critical part of Roosevelt's economic recovery strategy was to stabilize and expand the housing market. To this end, Congress passed the National Housing Act of 1934, which created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to insure home mortgage loans and thus encourage financial institutions to issue more mortgages. The FHA mortgage guarantee program backed home loans of up to 80 percent of the purchase price with a term of up to 20 years. This was a stark improvement to previous home loans, generally accessible to only the wealthy because a homebuyer could only borrow a maximum of 50 percent of the home price with a 5-year repayment plan that often ended with a balloon payment with the rest of the loan principal immediately due. FHA loan guarantees opened the door to homeownership to much of the working-class population. Revisions to FHA's insurance program in 1938 increased the maximum loan to 90 percent and the term to 25 years.<sup>6</sup> Coupled with the WPA and PWA construction programs, the FHA mortgage guarantee helped revitalize privately financed construction across the country. The area in and around Bakersfield was typical of this effect, as told by the number and value of building permits issued during the Depression era – between 1935 and 1940, the value of city building permits more than tripled, signaling the beginning of economic recovery in Bakersfield.<sup>7</sup>

The economic rally of the last half of the 1930s in Bakersfield saw new commercial and civic buildings and more residences. The increase in housing construction was aided in part by FHA and its small house program that established standards for the design and development of small, easily constructed, affordable houses funded by FHA-backed mortgages. However, the population influx of Dust Bowl families during this period of economic insecurity outpaced the fledgling recovery and initially resulted in a significant local housing shortage. As the national economy recovered, however, so did Bakersfield's. The City issued a steady stream of building permits as housing tracts, like that of Alta Vista and La Cresta Heights in the bluffs of the Kern River, were established and constructed northeast of the city in the late 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "County W.P.A. Projects Listed," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 1938; City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1935), 38; City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1936), 35; City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1941), 17-18.

<sup>6</sup> California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," (Sacramento, CA: 2011) 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1935), 38; City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1936), 35; City of Bakersfield, City Manager, Annual Report (1941), 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 91-93; Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration*, 21-24, 51; City Manager Annual Report (City of Bakersfield, 1935), 38; City Manager Annual Report (City of Bakersfield, 1936), 35; City Manager Annual Report (City of Bakersfield, 1941), 17-18; Chris Brewer, *Historic Kern*

## **2.2 Pre-war Housing**

Pre-World War II housing in Bakersfield generally reflected the trends established across the country during that time – landowners had their holdings surveyed and divided into streets and residential lots, but typically sold the parcels without building any houses. The subdividers often offered street paving, water and sewer connections, curbs, or sidewalks to increase the marketability of the lots; however, those improvements were not required by the City of Bakersfield or Kern County. Some tracts of this period were merely a recorded map on file at the county, and the prospective buyer was responsible for all aspects of improvements. The purchaser would then contract with a builder/contractor, who had no ownership stake in the lot, and the builder would construct a house. Some builders/contractors also purchased and developed a few lots at a time on speculation, and then sold the homes for a profit. In general, prewar tracts, which typically were laid out with a rectilinear street pattern, were slow to develop, and because a single tract could have several builders, homes often reflect a wide range of dates, styles, and materials. Most communities of any size across the county, including the greater Bakersfield region, had a large subset of homes built by these independent builder/contractors, who often only built a handful of homes each year.

During the late 1920s and 1930s, prewar housing subdivisions started to evolve into more standardized development as a handful of landowners with the necessary capital started to construct homes as well, although they still sold vacant lots to homeowners who wanted to build their own residences. During this period, some subdivider/builders, often referred to as merchant builders, devised new construction methods that greatly increased the completion rate of homes. These new and quicker building methods became key to the evolution of housing tracts in the post-World War II era.

## **2.3 Transportation Patterns**

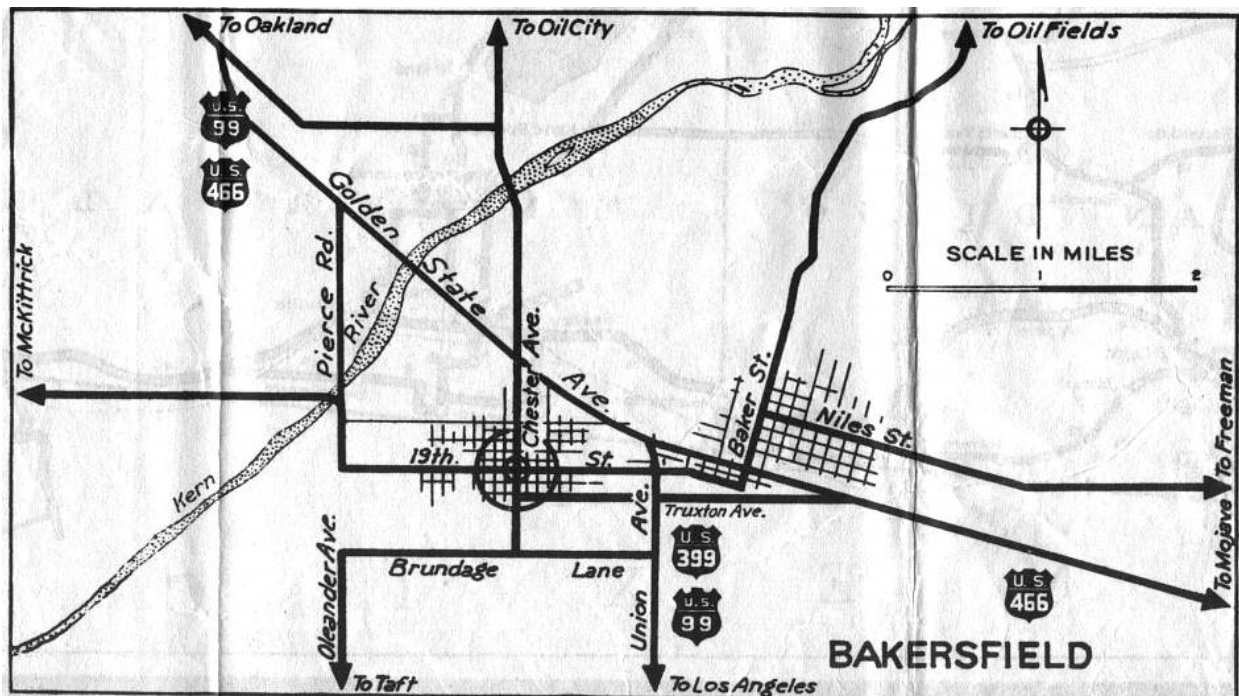
The automobile had a significant effect on Bakersfield and its patterns of development during the first half of the twentieth century. As increasing numbers of Californians purchased automobiles, the regional road network of Bakersfield and its environs continued to expand, and by World War I, the rural areas around the city had an established grid of local roads. The grid pattern was formed because most county roads ran along section lines of the General Land Office survey system that was common to rural areas throughout the nation. Other early local routes paralleled the nineteenth-century rail lines (i.e., Southern Pacific Railroad and Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railway), and included early state highways that traversed Kern County. Bakersfield itself had two centers of developed city blocks and lots, arranged in a typical gridiron from the earliest years of Anglo-European settlement, one along either side of Chester Avenue, and the other farther east along Baker Street near the Southern Pacific rail depot. By the interwar years, Kern County and the City of Bakersfield had already begun improving main arterials and secondary local roads. The main city streets included Truxtun, Chester, and Union avenues and Sumner

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*County: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield and Kern County* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Pub. Network, 2001), 78; City of Bakersfield Planning Commission, Greater Bakersfield Area Urban Growth Map (1950).



Street, with routes like Rosedale Highway and Brundage Lane extending into the unincorporated county, see **Figure 2-1**.<sup>9</sup>



Railroads are not shown on this map; however, the Southern Pacific line parallels Golden State Avenue, and the AT&SF line came in from the west, roughly paralleling 15<sup>th</sup> Street south of Truxton Avenue, before meeting the Southern Pacific alignment (see Figure 2-2).<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2-1. Bakersfield roadway transportation grid in 1936.**

The other major transportation corridors that affected Bakersfield growth and development were the railroad lines. The Southern Pacific Railroad line ran generally northwest-southeast through the San Joaquin Valley between Sacramento and the Tehachapi Mountains, south of Bakersfield. Bisecting the town of Kernville or Sumner (later known as East Bakersfield), it skirted the northernmost portion of the City of Bakersfield. The Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad passed through Bakersfield on an east-west alignment that paralleled much of 15<sup>th</sup> Street through the city. As in the previous century, the rail lines continued to provide a major shipping link for large-scale commercial agriculture in the Central Valley during the early twentieth century, albeit at a lesser scale as rail transportation was slowly being supplanted by automobile and commercial trucking.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A.E. Stegman, *Map of Kern County, California*, 1918; A.E. Stegman, *Map of Kern County, California*, 1928.

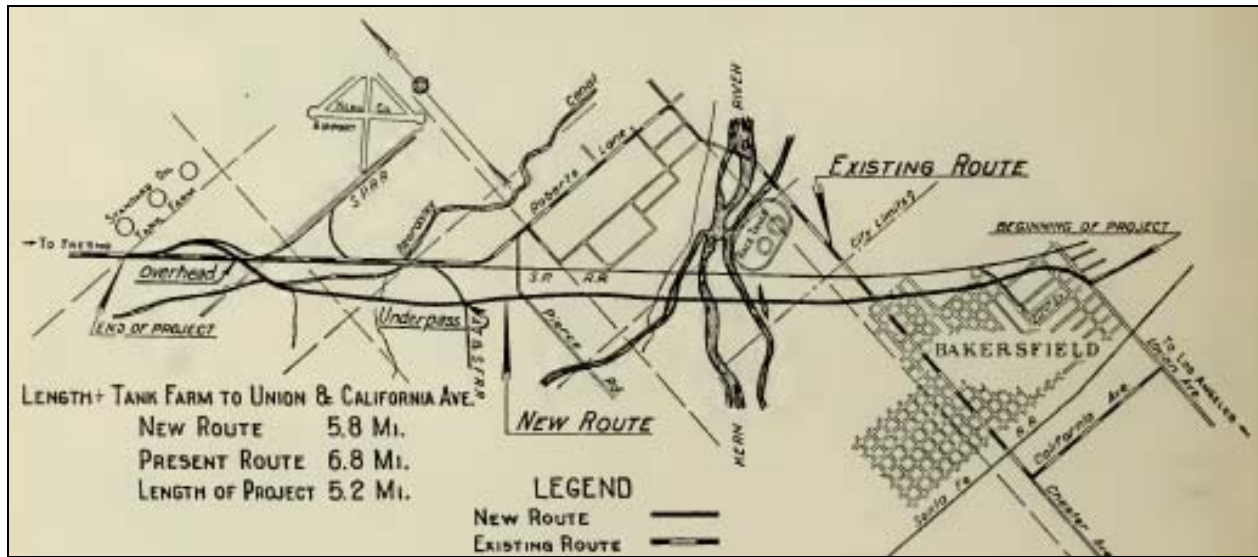
<sup>10</sup> California Department of Public Works, Division of Highways, *Road Map of the state of California, 1936-1937*.

<sup>11</sup> Alice L. Carothers, "The History of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the San Joaquin Valley," M.A. Thesis, University of Southern California, June 1934, 41-42; William L. Preston, *Vanishing Landscapes: Land and Life in the Tulare Lake Basin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 122-123; Eugene Burmeister, *The Golden Empire, Kern County, California* (Beverly Hills, CA: Autograph Press, 1977), 121.

The evolution of local transportation networks during the interwar years included changes to the primary north-south highway through Bakersfield, now US 99, which had its beginnings when the state Division of Highways established Route 4 in the 1910s. The early alignment of this state highway entered the Bakersfield area via a local road (present-day Union Avenue) and passed through the center of Bakersfield on existing city streets, making its way to Chester Avenue and north along Chester Avenue to a bridge over the Kern River. Once north of the river, Route 4 followed adopted local roads through Oildale, westward to the Southern Pacific Railroad line. After its designation, Route 4 quickly became a primary route for those passing through Bakersfield, as well as local traffic. The State improved the highway through Bakersfield during the 1920s, when it was then designated as US 99. By the early 1930s, the rapid rise of automobile use led to heavy congestion along the Bakersfield portion of the highway, so to ease traffic, the state constructed State Route (SR) 204 (also known as Golden State Highway), which bypassed a portion of US 99 between Union Avenue in Bakersfield and Snow Road near Oildale. The new highway alignment was completed in 1934 and paralleled the Southern Pacific Railroad line, bringing highway traffic to the north, away from city streets (Chester and California avenues), see **Figure 2-2**. The bypass experienced almost immediate heavy use in Bakersfield and functioned as the main state highway transportation corridor through the city until it was bypassed in the 1960s by construction of modern US 99.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Raymond Forsyth and Joseph Hagwood, *One Hundred Years of Progress: A Photographic Essay of the Development of the California Transportation System*. Sacramento: Signature Press, 1996), 11-13; California Highway Commission, *Report of the California Highway Commission, a Subdivision of the Department of Public Works of the State of California to Accompany the First Biennial Report of That Department* (Sacramento, CA: California State Printing Office, 1922), 191, 204; Ben Blow, *California Highways: A Descriptive Record of Road Development by the State and by Such Counties as have Paved Highways*, (San Francisco, CA: The H.S. Crocker Company, Inc., 1920), 52-53, 150-155; J.R. Thornton, "Street Map of Bakersfield and Environs," Kern County Chamber of Commerce, 1941; U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), *Gosford, 7.5 Minute Quadrangle*, 1932, 1950, 1954, 1954 photorevised 1968; USGS, *Oildale, 7.5 Minute Quadrangle*, 1935, 1954, 1954 photorevised 1968; Fred J. Grumm, "By-Pass Considered Logical Plan for Routing Through Traffic in Cities" in *California Highways and Public Works* (December 1931): 114-15, 26; W. Beuthel, "Bakersfield Realignment Cuts Out Five Grade Crossings; Avoids Traffic," *California Highways and Public Works* (July-August 1933):4-5, 14; R.S. Badger, "Bakersfield By-Pass Relocation is Opened with Dedication Ceremonies" in *California Highways and Public Works*. (June 1934): 4-5, 22, 31; Chris Brewer, *Historic Kern County: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield and Kern County* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2001), 67-68.



Source: Beuthel 1933.

Figure 2-2. Overview of the highway bypass project (SR-204), as built.

## 2.4 Military Industry and its Effect on Population and Housing in Bakersfield

The United States' entry into World War II in 1941 had a dramatic effect on California at the state and local levels. Prior to the war, state and local governments pursued economic recovery through job creation via federally subsidized construction programs for both public projects and private enterprises, such as residences and commercial buildings. As the possibility of entering the European conflict increased, the federal government concentrated on military-related and support projects. Dozens of military facilities were constructed throughout California, and industrial production also ramped up to meet construction and military supply demands. More than 1 million wartime workers flocked to California during the early 1940s, attracted by the jobs created in the state with the most military training facilities and military contracts for ship and aircraft building.<sup>13</sup>

The war effort helped to maintain a stable economy for the greater Bakersfield area during the 1940s. The U.S. Army Air Corps opened Minter Air Field (then known as Lerdo Field for the nearby unincorporated community) in June 1941 approximately 15 miles northwest of Bakersfield to serve as a basic pilot training center. During the war, more than 10,000 cadets graduated from its training program. Wartime manufacturing plants, such as Lockheed Aircraft Component Factory, also established facilities in or near Bakersfield, with three plants announced in January 1943. Although the local economy benefited from these war-related jobs and addition to the regional consumer base, the Bakersfield area did not grow at the same exponential rate as other California cities during the war. In 1940, the population of the greater Bakersfield area was estimated at 74,000, and by the close of the war, it was estimated to have increased by less than 10 percent. In contrast, Kern County overall experienced a 30 percent population increase during the war. Still, Bakersfield suffered a housing shortage during the war that further increased demand created by Dust Bowl migration during the 1930s.

<sup>13</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973, 9-13."

With construction materials diverted to the war effort, relatively few additional houses were built in and around Bakersfield during the war, and approximately two dozen housing tracts were recorded in Kern County between 1942 and 1945. By 1944, the lack of available housing was at a critical point. Newspapers reported overcrowded rentals, landlords often refused to rent to families with children, and various local officials publicly urged homeowners to rent out rooms to ease the crisis. By the end of the year, however, the City of Bakersfield reported the beginning of a building boom, and a record number of building permits were issued. More than 60 residential permits were issued in December, compared with 80 or so for the previous 11 months, and just 20 in 1942 and 1943 combined. Most of the new residential permits were to be constructed under the federal emergency housing program, and by late 1945, the de facto moratorium on residential construction brought on by the war had all but ended.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *Heart of the Golden Empire*, 93; Stanford Research Institute, "Planning Factors in an Industrial Program for Greater Bakersfield," prepared for Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, Bakersfield, California, October 1957, 18; "War Veterans Seek Houses, Apartments in Bakersfield," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 11, 1943, 5; House Shortage Prompts Plea for Building Materials," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 11, 1944, 7; "Minter Asks Home Owners to Help with Housing Need," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 13, 1945, 7; City of Bakersfield, Spatial Data Library Tract Maps, accessed online November 2017 at <http://bakersfelddatalibrary-cob.opendata.arcgis.com/>; "Need for Home," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 2, 1945, 20; "Building Boom Hits City," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 4, 1945, 9.

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### **3. POST-WORLD WAR II GROWTH AND SUBURBANIZATION OF METROPOLITAN BAKERSFIELD**

#### **3.1 Postwar Economy**

The postwar era was marked by unprecedented economic growth throughout the nation. With a new sense of optimism, the nation witnessed a dramatic increase in marriage and birth rates as new families were formed and expanded. These changing demographics, after years of a lack of consumer goods, increased consumerism and further fueled the economic boom. Because of the high number of industrial and military facilities established in California during the war, and U.S. involvement in subsequent military conflicts in Korea and Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s, the State's military funding remained relatively high after World War II as military and defense industries continued to bolster California's economy over the ensuing 3 decades.

The Bakersfield metropolitan area followed the wider trends immediately following the end of World War II, but stalled when a series of earthquakes, with two major quake events, hit the region in the summer of 1952. The quakes damaged or destroyed dozens of buildings in the city's business center, at an estimated \$30 million in damages. The City responded by constructing and/or upgrading numerous civic and educational buildings, as well as repairing, improving, and expanding infrastructure. Similarly, the private community renovated or built new religious centers, hospitals, and commercial and industrial buildings. This rebuilding effort was so important to the metropolitan area, that the Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce dubbed it "America's newest City."<sup>15</sup>

As before, during the late 1930s and World War II, one of the major pillars of the greater Bakersfield area economy was agriculture, with cotton accounting for nearly one-third of the agricultural base, followed by potatoes, grapes, and livestock. It was not the only important sector, however, because manufacturing industries also increased dramatically, and by the end of the 1950s, an estimated 200 manufacturing plants were in operation in the Bakersfield metropolitan area. Major facilities included production of electronic equipment and metal fabrication. Oil also remained a significant factor in the local economy, with hundreds of wells drilled in the Fruitvale Oil Field, just west of Bakersfield, north of the Kern River.<sup>16</sup>

#### **3.2 Housing Shortage and Federal Programs**

A major federal program that influenced postwar housing was the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the G.I. Bill. This legislation recognized that housing for

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<sup>15</sup> "Kern County Building Activity Spiraling Up," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 April 1954; Bailey, 96-100; "New City Rises After 52 Quake," *Bakersfield Californian*; "Bakersfield Street Map," Rand McNally & Company, 1960; "Bakersfield High Building Approved," *Bakersfield Californian*, 25 May 1953: pg. 27 (col. 1); "Building Progress," *Bakersfield Californian*, 31 Dec 1954: pg. 32 (col. 4); USGS, Gosford 7.5-minute quadrangle, 1954; Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, *America's Newest City*, (Bakersfield, CA: Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, ca. 1957); "Quake Loss Reaches 30 Million as Bakersfield Cleans Up Rubble," *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1952, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Stanford Research Institute, "Planning Factors in an Industrial Program for Greater Bakersfield, 25-42; JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, *Historical Resources Evaluation Report, Centennial Corridor Project, Bakersfield, Kern County, California*, January 2013, 20-21; California State Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development and Research Department, *An Economic Survey* (Bakersfield, CA: Kern County Board of Trade, 1959).

returning veterans would be a significant issue and, among many other important veterans' benefits, it provided residential mortgage guarantees. Administered by the Veteran's Administration (VA), the Act substantially increased opportunities for homeownership. Ultimately, the VA program closely paralleled the guidelines and procedures of FHA. By allowing the splitting of mortgages—one backed by FHA and one backed by VA—veterans could borrow 100 percent of the home price, requiring no down payment. The Act established what was among the most successful postwar government incentives for homebuilding, and in the first 5 years after the war, approximately 41 percent of all homes built in the U.S. were financed through VA mortgages.<sup>17</sup>

The housing crisis that Bakersfield and Kern County experienced during the war years not only persisted but increased into the postwar era as veterans returned to the area to restart their lives. At the same time, the federal government removed wartime controls on building materials at the end of 1945, but instead of constructing homes, private developers initially built commercial and entertainment facilities. In mid-1946, Congress passed the Veterans Emergency Housing Act (VEHA). Designed to expedite the availability of housing for veterans by resuming governmental controls over construction materials, VEHA also curtailed housing prices and rents. To encourage homebuilding, it provided \$600 million of subsidies to private industry for production of building materials that were then earmarked for home construction, and it provided loans to housing prefabrication companies with the intent that these firms could close the housing gap with 750,000 new homes built across the nation in 2 years. Although some progress was made, by the end of 1946, this aspect of VEHA was deemed a failure and controls were lifted. Nevertheless, the legislation did provide some relief because emergency housing was first allotted to veterans. In the Bakersfield region, the scarcity of housing was so severe in late 1946 that the local newspaper reported that more than 800 veterans were still homeless in the greater Bakersfield area, and at one veteran emergency housing project in Bakersfield, approximately 600 families had applied for its 140 available units. In response, hundreds of housing units were created in the metropolitan area by the conversion of decommissioned military facilities or by construction of new low-income public housing projects between 1946 and 1947.<sup>18</sup>

Although VEHA eased the shortage somewhat, other federal programs, specifically continuation of FHA, helped jumpstart construction of postwar housing. The FHA federally insured private residential mortgages encouraged lenders to finance these types of loans. The program was particularly important during the postwar years because it set stringent standards designed to encourage construction of more affordable housing through use of standardized building materials and more efficient construction methods. These standards were initially developed in the 1930s and distributed in various technical and

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<sup>17</sup> National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *A Model for Identifying and Evaluating the Historic Significance of Post-World War II Housing* (Washington, D.C: Transportation Research Board, 2012) 56-57; Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 17.

<sup>18</sup> "Kern Homes Crisis Aired," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 December 1945; "Three Hundred Veterans Join Rush for 90 Homes," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 May 1946; "Shutdown on Veterans' Housing Project Averted," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 1946; "Minter Field Units to House 400 Families," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 February 1947; "Housing Pact Canceled by Bakersfield," *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1952; "FPHA Modifies 'Cease Work' Order on Veteran Housing Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 27, 1946, 9; Scott Soliday, *Tempe Post-World War II Context Study*, December 2001; Alexander von Hoffman, "History Lessons for Today's Housing Policy," Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University (August 2012), 14-17.



planning bulletins, but they were sustained (and occasionally updated) during the postwar era. FHA publications included guidelines for small house design, prefabrication methods, subdivision layout and lot development, and design principles that would reduce repetition for grouping of similarly designed homes. FHA also provided incentive for large-scale builders of residential subdivisions by way of governmental credit and financial subsidies, thereby making the construction of homes, not just the subdivision of land, more profitable. As such, the FHA program had wide-ranging effects on the planning, design, and construction of postwar housing tracts throughout the nation.<sup>19</sup>

One of the reasons that the program was so influential was that FHA standards were enforced not only on those individual homes and subdivisions seeking FHA mortgage insurance, but also by many financial institutions that used the same requirements and specifications for mortgages not backed by FHA. Along these lines, in 1947 an independent nonprofit research and educational organization, Urban Land Institute, backed by the private development industry, published the *Community Builders Handbook*, which became the definitive guide for community planning and housing development.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.3 Transportation and Suburban Growth

World War II and the subsequent growth of the postwar period resulted in significant changes to Bakersfield's road system. Manufacturing of automobiles increased fourfold in the first decade after the war, and the automobile became the primary mode of transportation (over public transit) for much of the nation and state. Postwar increases in the commercial and industrial sectors, as well as population, led to congested and dangerous conditions on regional highways, such as US 99, and the State implemented many expansion projects in response, including widening the highway to six lanes in the late 1940s.<sup>21</sup> Around this same time, Bakersfield and Kern County sought to address the increasing congestion, safety, and maintenance issues by proposing a variety of street and highway improvements to facilitate traffic in and around the growing metropolitan area. The local governments preferred bringing traffic around the outskirts of the central business district by bypassing US 99 to the west of downtown. The State, however, suggested building the US 99 Bypass (referred to early on as the West Bakersfield Freeway) parallel to Oak Street through two residential tracts. After more than a year of local opposition to the State plan, in late 1957 the California Highway Commission adopted that alignment. In less than 5 years, the 18-mile-long bypass, which included 10 interchanges, 10 separations, and 3 railroad crossings, was complete, see **Figure 3-1**.<sup>22</sup> Construction of the US 99 Bypass was

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<sup>19</sup> National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *A Model for Identifying and Evaluating the Historic Significance of Post-World War II Housing* (Washington D.C.: Transportation Research Board, 2012), 54-58; Greg King, Parsons, *A History of the Westchester Tract, Bakersfield, California, 1945-1964 (Draft)*, June 2017, 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 48-49; Greg King, Parsons, *A History of the Westchester Tract, Bakersfield, California, 1945-1964 (Draft)*, June 2017, 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> JRP Historical Consulting Services, "California Historic Military Buildings and Structure Inventory, Volume II: The History and Historic Resources of the Military in California, 1769-1989," prepared for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, March 2000, 7-1; Earl T. Scott, "Important Highways in District IV Will Require Large Expenditure to Provide Adequate Service," *California Highways and Public Works*, November 1938, 1; T.E. Whaley, "Widening of U.S. 99 in Bakersfield to Six Lanes Will Reduce Traffic Accidents," *California Highways and Public Works*, September-October 1947, 6-7, 26-27.

<sup>22</sup> "City Barely Touched," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 2, 1957; "State Okays Oak Street Freeway," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 26, 1957; "Grade Separations Loom Large in Master Scheme," *Bakersfield*

financed largely by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 (commonly referred to as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act), which authorized construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highway. It was to that point, the largest U.S. public works program.<sup>23</sup>

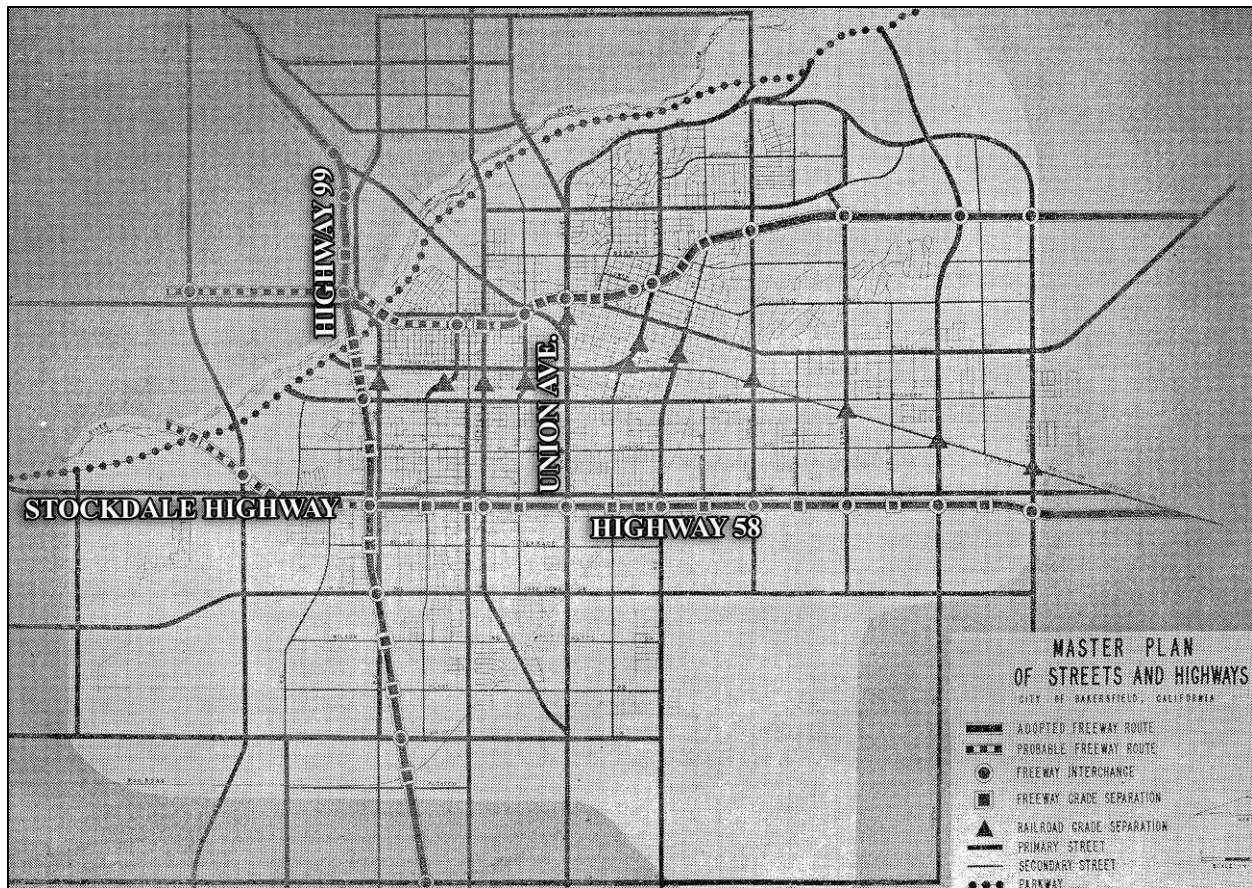


Figure 3-1. Bakersfield's Master Plan for Streets and Highways, 1959.

At the same time the US 99 Bypass was being planned and constructed, State and local agencies were deliberating the East Bakersfield Freeway, or present-day SR-178. The State recommended an 8.4-mile-long alignment from M and 24<sup>th</sup> streets, just north of downtown Bakersfield, running northeast through East Bakersfield, and then north of the Bakersfield Country Club. Anticipated to cost upwards of \$33 million for the longest route, 42 miles between Bakersfield and Isabella, construction in Bakersfield started in the mid-1960s during a second wave of interstate expansion. It was completed to Mount Vernon Road by 1968, approximately 2 miles east of Union Avenue. Construction funds for the longer route were depleted by 1974, and the full route was not completed until the mid-1990s.<sup>24</sup>

*Californian*, March 10, 1949, 19; "Annexation Problems, Rezoning Bids Up Before City Planners," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 6, 1949, 21; City, County Planners Agree to Co-ordination," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 12, 1950, 21.

<sup>23</sup> California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 18.

<sup>24</sup> "Kern Canyon Road Slated to be Freeway," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 30, 1960, 9; "Canyon Freeway Heads County's Priority List," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 2, 1965, 14; LSA Associates, Inc., *Historical*

Expansion of the freeway system in and around Bakersfield was one of the major factors that supported the concurrent expansion of residential subdivisions during the later decades of the postwar period. The earliest subdivisions were located on the edges of the existing downtown grid before construction of the first several miles of SR-178 or the US 99 Bypass. But by the late 1950s, as plans for these projects were made public, developers saw the opportunity to convert unincorporated county lands to housing accessible by these modern roadways. The new routes (US 99 Bypass and SR-178) drew growth to the south and west, and to the northeast, respectively, while widening and improvement of existing routes like SR-58 (Stockdale Highway) encouraged housing developments farther from the Bakersfield city center, see **Figure 3-2**.<sup>25</sup>

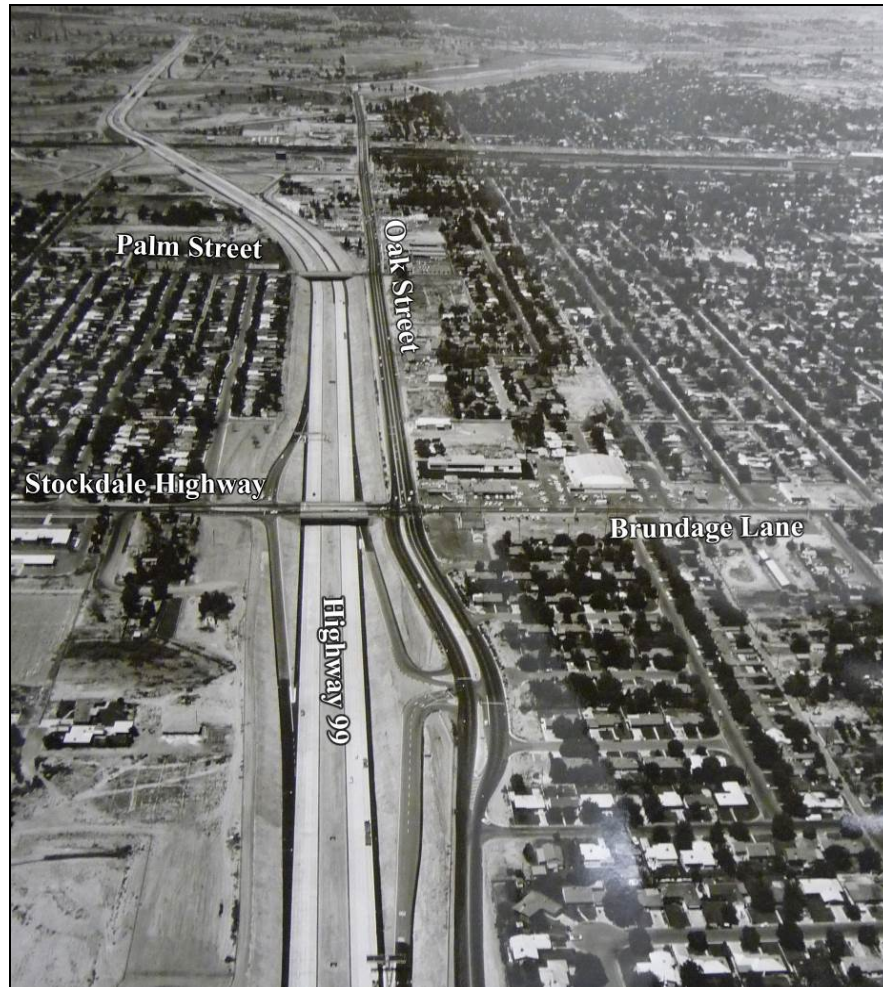


Photo Source: Caltrans Library

**Figure 3-2. 1965 aerial photograph looking north along the US 99 Bypass.**

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*Resources Evaluation Report, 24<sup>th</sup> Street Improvement Project, City of Bakersfield, Kern County, California,* (EA 06-484700) March 2012, 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> USGS, 7.5' Topographic Series Quadrangles: *Gosford, Lamont, Oil Center, Oildale, Rosedale, Stevens* (various editions, 1906-1985); City of Bakersfield Planning Commission, *Greater Bakersfield Area Urban Growth Map* (1950); Kern County, "Housing Element of the Kern County General Plan," Kern County Board of Supervisors, (1972), 31-32, and Table 9: Housing Units by Age.

### 3.4 Bakersfield Postwar Residential Subdivisions

The postwar era was one of the most expansive periods in Bakersfield in terms of residential construction. The successful postwar economy was based on several factors, the most important of which was the return of veterans and an increased number of California residents, all who needed housing. Although Kern County established the Postwar Planning Council in 1943 to alleviate a postwar “let-down” by, among other things, outlining plans for postwar projects, the organization disbanded at the end of 1945, and there was no clear evidence that its work was constructive in terms of bridging the local housing gap. Instead, local developers and builders chipped away at the housing deficiency by subdividing land around the city of Bakersfield’s periphery. This construction represented an increase, with individual builders going from producing three or four a year, to dozens, but the trend was hindered by a shortage of building materials, a lingering consequence of government control on materials during the war. Thus, completion of new housing tracts varied widely during the first years of the postwar period. In 1949, Kern County reported that most of the 34 new subdivisions recorded with the County for the year were in and around Bakersfield; however, that was more than a 60 percent drop in subdivisions filed the previous year.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, during the first decade following World War II, Kern County’s population more than doubled, and 20 square miles of new residences were constructed in the Bakersfield metropolitan area. Between 1950 and 1955, an estimated 12,000 new residential units were built in and around Bakersfield, including 23 new residential tracts. The population of the metropolitan area, estimated at 80,000 in 1945, increased to 140,000 by the end of 1954 – a 37 percent increase from 1950.<sup>27</sup> This mushrooming demand for housing continued, encouraged by low interest rates, longer term fixed mortgages, and reduced or no downpayments for veterans and an ever-increasing local population.

In this booming market, the early postwar subdivisions often sold out quickly, usually before homes were completed. This was the case in 1948 for Pat Paola’s 50-lot Terrace Gardens (Tract 1380) located at H Street and Belle Terrace, just south of the Bakersfield city limits. A year later, Paola subdivided and developed 108 lots in Sunkiss Rancho tract (Tract 1445) east of Bakersfield (at the corner of Breckenridge Road and Morning Drive) on a 40-acre former orange grove. At Sunkiss Rancho, a buyer could buy a lot and build their own home, or purchase lot and house built by the developer.<sup>28</sup> Around this time, two other large-scale developments, Westchester and Hillcrest, were initiated in Bakersfield, the size of which were not typically seen in smaller Californian communities. The larger and first of the two was Houchin and Bradford’s Westchester tract (Section 4.1.1), lying on the north side of 24<sup>th</sup> Street between the Stine (since renamed Carrier) Canal and F Street. Initiated in 1945, the tract was 280 acres, with more than

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<sup>26</sup> “Postwar Blueprint Started,” *Bakersfield Californian*, February 16, 1943, 7; “Planning Body Votes to Disband,” *Bakersfield Californian*, November 27, 1945, 9; “34 Subdivisions mark Kern Growth in Year of 1949,” *Bakersfield Californian*, December 31, 1949, 4; “Bakersfield Population Estimated at 140,000,” *Bakersfield Californian*, January 12, 1955, 41.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Brewer, *Historic Kern County*, 78-79; “Big Population Increase Noted,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1955; Ron Taylor, “Annexation or None, Bakersfield Area Moves Toward Regional Planning,” *Fresno Bee*, 5 March 1956; “Kern Wartime Growth Cited,” *Bakersfield Californian*, October 17, 1946, 13.

<sup>28</sup> “Paola Offering Sunkiss Rancho in New Tract,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 30, 1949, 3.

700 homes and a separate but adjacent shopping district. Construction of Westchester was delayed by a postwar shortage of building materials when construction began in 1947, and by the mid-1950s, most of the residences were complete. Hillcrest was established a year later by builder and developer Howard Nichols, the previous developer of La Cresta, in east Bakersfield (south of College Avenue, east of Oswell Street, and north of Niles Street). Although a bit smaller than Westchester (180 acres), Hillcrest included 530 homes mostly constructed between 1948 and 1955, as well as a shopping center, which opened in 1951. Homes in Hillcrest were geared toward the more affluent buyer, with prices starting at \$11,000, approximately \$1,000 more than the highest priced homes in Westchester.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike Hillcrest's higher prices, most of the postwar housing tracts built in the late 1940s and early 1950s were constructed either as low-cost, as in Gannon Gardens (Section 4.1.2) where homes started at \$7,500 in the late 1940s, or as affordable housing for returning veterans. Most of these developments were built to FHA and VA specifications, and some tracts were initially offered strictly to veterans and then later opened to the general public. With the passage of new housing legislation in the early 1950s that further reduced down payments and eased requirement of FHA loans, residential construction in the Bakersfield area hit record numbers in the early and mid-1950s. In spring 1954, more than 14 subdivisions with 2,300 homes were planned or underway, and Bakersfield's boundaries expanded to the northeast and southwest with annexation of the College Heights and Planz Park tracts, respectively. The metropolitan area was also increasing as new subdivisions and other developments were being built farther out in unincorporated land as far south as Taft Highway (SR-119 or Panama Lane) and southwest along Stockdale Highway, where several new postwar housing tracts, including the 262-house Stockdale Manor and Mobilhome Corporation's Rancho Vista (Section 4.1.3), were constructed.<sup>30</sup>

The development pattern of postwar subdivisions in the greater Bakersfield area shows concentric rings around the prewar Bakersfield city limits for each decade of the postwar period (see **Figure 3-3**). Buildable land within the corporate limits was sparse and expensive and subject to City ordinances regulating new construction, so developers were more inclined to build new tracts farther away from the city. This development located along the margins of Bakersfield led to annexation movements during the postwar period as local government planners sought to address problems caused by these ever-increasing rings of development. Problems, such as insufficient services for unincorporated Kern County residents and the City's financial loss in property taxes, strained the infrastructure and planning efforts of the City and County. While the pro-annexation movement heavily promoted expansion of the city in the mid-1950s, these annexation propositions were often defeated, and in 1956, voters overwhelmingly rejected one annexation proposal (Figure 3-4) presented to the voters by the 150,000 Club (its name referring to the population size after annexation), which would have made Bakersfield the

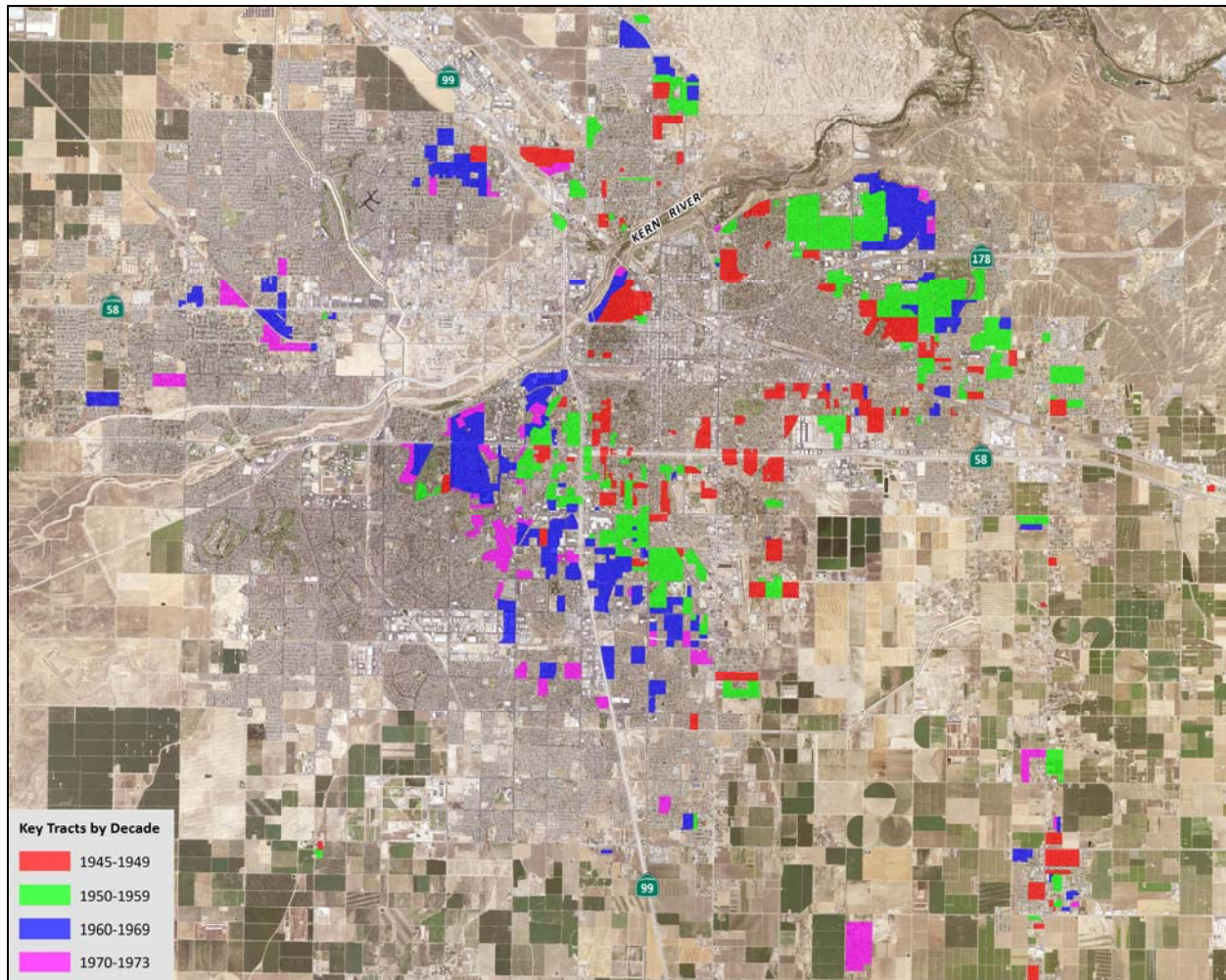
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<sup>29</sup> "\$10 Million Subdivision Laid Out Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 22, 1948, 17; "Hillcrest Home Places Accent on Modern Planning," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 25, 1948, 8.

<sup>30</sup> "Regulations Cut Down Payment on G.I. Homes," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 12, 1951, 30; "Outlook Promising for Better Built Homes, Businesses in Ensuring Year," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 31, 1952, 14; "Kern County Permits Reach All-Time High," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1955, E8.



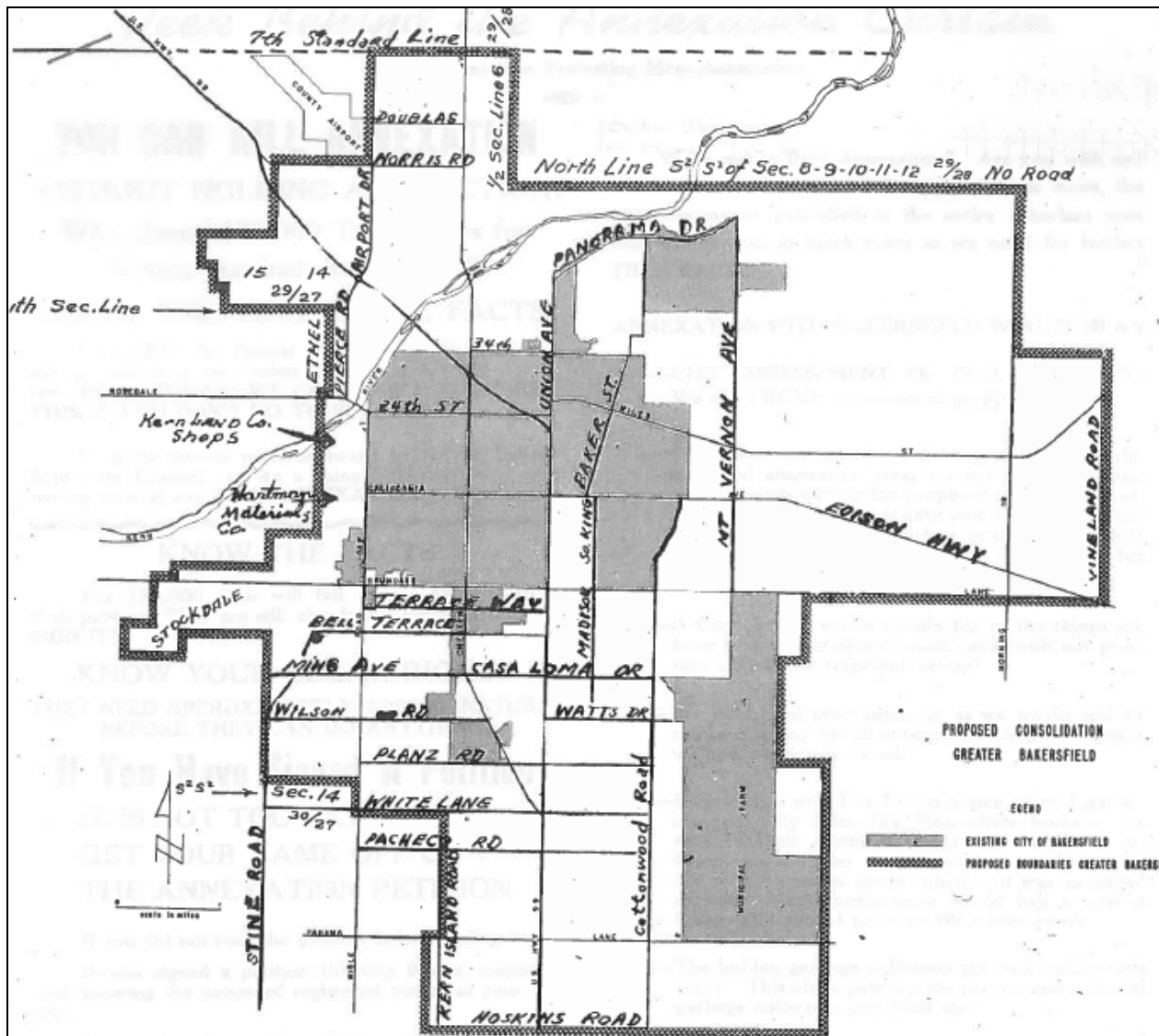
largest city in the San Joaquin Valley. Nonetheless, the city continued to expand incrementally through numerous smaller annexations, often because of construction of new subdivisions.<sup>31</sup>



Data Source via Kern County GIS, 2017.

Figure 3-3. Dispersion of postwar housing tracts.

<sup>31</sup> “Annexation is Defeated in Bakersfield Vote,” *Bakersfield Californian*, June 6, 1956; “New Kern County Housing Projects Given Approval,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1955; “Site Work Underway for Industrial Park,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1961; “Kern County Building Activity Spiraling Up,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1954; “Big Building Year Seen for Kern County,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1955.



The shaded area shows the city limits in 1956.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 3-4. Proposed annexation of 150,000 Club.

By the mid-1950s, new residential development in the greater Bakersfield area was concentrated northeast and southeast of the Bakersfield city center, and although the area southeast of Bakersfield had a large housing stock, it was noted in one planning report as of “lower quality.”<sup>33</sup> The hotly disputed annexation efforts of this period, coupled with a lack of coordinated City and County planning, the State’s proposal for construction or improvement of highways through the metropolitan area, and pressure from the federal government to eliminate blighted areas, led to the creation of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission in 1956. The joint commission focused on transportation, land use, and parks and recreational facilities. The establishment of

<sup>32</sup> “Protest Against Annexation with the City of Bakersfield,” Pamphlet, ca. 1956, on file at Beale Memorial Library, Jack Maguire Local History Room.

<sup>33</sup> Stanford Research Institute, “Planning Factors in an Industrial Program for Greater Bakersfield,” 60-61.



this planning effort led to development of a series of reports on local planning issues and eventually to the first general plan for the Bakersfield metropolitan area in the early 1960s.<sup>34</sup>

The advent of this regional planning effort also ushered in a new era in postwar housing in Bakersfield in the 1960s, as the City recognized that “new subdivisions, freeways, shopping centers, schools, parks...all are part of the expanding picture of Bakersfield’s future during the coming decade.”<sup>35</sup> During this time, the Bakersfield Building Department issued more than 1,600 building permits for 1960-61, and more than half of those were for residential projects. Housing tracts of 300 homes or less remained largely the norm, but Stockdale Development Corporation also began development of a master-planned community, complete with commercial, industrial, residential, recreational, and educational zones, along Stockdale Highway in the southeastern region of the metropolitan area. The concept covered 3 square miles of land and included development of several smaller residential villages, each with its own plan, that would include more than 15,000 homes. Kern City (Section 4.2.1), a community exclusive to those over the age of 50, was the first to be developed in 1961. When built out by the mid-1980s, Stockdale Development Corporation’s planned villages eventually encompassed much of the land south of the Kern River and west of US 99.<sup>36</sup>

Bakersfield’s metropolitan population was estimated at 165,000 spread over approximately 17 square miles by the mid-1960s. Fewer single-family houses were constructed during this period, a likely result of more restrictive conditions for home financing and the region’s changing demographics, which paralleled the nation with smaller families and more single-parent households. Typical home prices ranged between \$15,000 and \$28,000 (or about \$120,000-\$225,000 in 2018 dollars), with the lower priced homes found in the Kern City and Oildale areas and the higher priced houses in Park Stockdale and around Bakersfield College. More multi-family housing, in the form of apartments, townhouses, and condominiums, began being constructed as well. The City of Bakersfield annexed less land, despite the continuation of suburban growth during this period.<sup>37</sup>

The Stockdale Development Corporation’s parent company, Tenneco Incorporated, donated the land for a new state university (present-day Cal State Bakersfield) along Stockdale Highway in 1969. Tenneco specified that the donation was contingent on the State preparing a master plan of the surrounding area so that the proposed university could be integrated into the community. The

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<sup>34</sup> “Annexation or None, Bakersfield Area Moves Toward Regional Planning,” *Fresno Bee*, March 5, 1956, 3B; “Metropolitan Planning Unit Sought,” *Bakersfield Californian*, March 8, 1956, 23; Establishment of Metropolitan Planning Board is Approved, *Bakersfield Californian*, December 15, 1956, 15.

<sup>35</sup> City of Bakersfield, City Manager’s Annual Report, 1960-61, published by *Bakersfield Californian* (September 30, 1961), 9A.

<sup>36</sup> “Kern Land Com. Plans Project at Bakersfield,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1960, B8; City of Bakersfield, City Manager’s Annual Report, 1960-61, published by *Bakersfield Californian* (September 30, 1961), 10A; USGS, 7.5’ Topographic Series Quadrangles: *Gosford, Lamont, Oil Center, Oildale, Rosedale, Stevens* (various editions, 1940-1970); City of Bakersfield Planning Commission, *Greater Bakersfield Area Urban Growth Map* (1950).

<sup>37</sup> Brewer, *Historic Kern County*, 80; Federal Housing Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Analysis of the Bakersfield, California Housing Market as of May 1, 1967” (February 1968); Kern County, “Housing Element of the Kern County General Plan,” Kern County Board of Supervisors, (1972), 31-32, and Table 9: Housing Units by Age.

plan, published in 1970, was later revised to include all Tenneco land in the area, including village densities, location of schools, parks, and retail centers.<sup>38</sup> By 1970, when the university opened, the region's population had grown 23 percent, and during the following decade, the Stockdale area was the primary location of housing tract development. Along with Stockdale Development Corporation's Quailwood tract (Section 4.3.1), Pinon Springs Village, a development of fourplexes, was included as part of Stockdale's larger master plan in 1972. By that time, Stockdale included a 32-acre shopping center and an industrial park. Although some of the Stockdale area was annexed by the City of Bakersfield in the 1960s, most became part of the Bakersfield municipality in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.4.1 Tract Designs

Because postwar housing was, at its core, based on the prevalence and use of the personal automobile, residential housing tracts tended to be established at the peripheries of California cities as State and local roadway systems were extended and expanded to serve the quickly growing population. The pattern of construction and the designs of individual tracts within the Bakersfield metropolitan area are no exception. Largely sited on land recently used for agriculture, only a handful of tracts were developed within the central city, or within the city limits as defined during World War II. The locations of postwar tracts are at first glance scattered and seemingly arbitrary, they generally appeared along or very near well-established thoroughfares like Brundage Lane, California Avenue, or Union Avenue. Tracts established in the 1940s, immediately following the end of World War II, surround most sides of the historic city limits. Swaths of new tracts spread to the northeast and southwest in the 1950s and 1960s, creating rings of tract development farther from the city, especially to the south and west by the early 1970s (see Figure 3-3).

Postwar housing tracts in the greater Bakersfield area varied greatly in size. Many were relatively small – the smallest containing a dozen lots along one street. In general, tracts in Bakersfield, as in other smaller cities in the state, had fewer than 200 lots. Only the largest residential developments, such as Westchester, Hillcrest, College Heights, and Kern City, which often consisted of multiple recorded tracts developed over a period of a few years, included more than 300 houses (see Chapter 4). The size of the tracts often corresponded with the prior land use—in Bakersfield, the land purchased for larger tracts was often held by large land companies, such as Kern County Land Company (KCL), as in the case of Westchester and Kern City. The developer of the latter postwar subdivision, Stockdale Development Company, utilized its vast holdings to create a master-planned community of multiple villages within the larger Stockdale area, as discussed in the previous section.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless of when a postwar residential tract was designed or built, or how large it was, most of the subdivisions in the greater Bakersfield area were similar in terms of planning, layout, and design. Lot sizes were relatively consistent in size, typically ranging between one-ninth and one-

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<sup>38</sup> Christine Ferguson, "Tenneco Credited in Stockdale Boom," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 23, 1976, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Federal Housing Administration, Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Analysis of the Bakersfield, California Housing Market as of May 1, 1967" (February 1968); "Loews/Snyder to Build on Tenneco Property," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1972, N10.

<sup>40</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 45.

fifth acre. Curvilinear street layout is also a key characteristic of larger postwar subdivisions that could accommodate the gentle curves of this type of transportation pattern, which was a popular street layout employed to reduce automobile speeds. Cul-de-sacs and loop (or U-streets) were also speed deterrents and are often found in suburban tracts in Bakersfield. Long blocks (generally of 20 houses or more) with few cross streets were also common because developers could reduce cost of infrastructure in this layout, while also dedicating more land to house lots. A sizable number of the smaller infill tracts of this period retained the grid pattern of adjacent prewar subdivisions because these tracts were inserted among existing roads and infrastructure, so they also tended to utilize long blocks in their design. Alleyways were typically not a feature of postwar housing tracts, but they can be found in Bakersfield, with a few dating to each decade of the postwar period. The most common features found in Bakersfield postwar residential subdivisions – curvilinear and hierarchical street patterns, long blocks, exclusion of alleys, minimization of cross streets – were all guidelines of the FHA programs and in the *Community Builders Handbook*.<sup>41</sup>

Although some of the larger subdivisions included community buildings (e.g., schools, churches, shopping centers, fire stations, community centers), this type of development was not typical of the area. Instead, developers set aside land for these uses and sold it to others who then constructed the education, social, religious, and civic buildings. Schools were often focal points of these developments and were embedded within tracts and away from main arterials, where shopping centers were sited. Apartments, sometimes included as part of the larger community developments, were located near shopping centers thus providing a buffer zone between the commercial and single-family zones. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the nation's demographic began to shift toward single-person households as postwar families reached maturity and divorce rates rose. As a result, the demand for apartments and other multi-family housing, like condominiums, increased. Later developments of postwar housing included more of these denser housing types and, in some cases, entire tracts were devoted to these types of housing units. In Bakersfield, Pinon Springs Village was developed off Ming Avenue (in Stockdale) during the early 1970s. The development included 127 fourplex condominiums.<sup>42</sup>

The changing population also led to the development of retirement communities by the 1960s as life expectancy and income security increased, and adults were retiring earlier than before. Geared toward the nation's growing senior population, retirement communities as a planned development were pioneered by Fresno native and Arizona building contractor (and merchant builder) Delbert E. Webb (1899-1974), of the Del Webb Corporation. In Bakersfield, Del Webb teamed with KCL (under the umbrella of Stockdale Development Corporation) to develop the master-planned retirement community of Kern City in the Stockdale region (see Section 4.2.1). Opening in 1961, the development included single- and multi-family homes for purchase, along with recreational and social facilities, as well as areas for retail and service buildings.

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<sup>41</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 43-49. A road hierarchy refers to a system of local, collector, and arterial streets for distributing and moving vehicle traffic.

<sup>42</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 49-53; "Loews/Snyder to Build on Tenneco Property," *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1972 N10.

### 3.4.2 Industrialization of Postwar Housing

One of the ways that the building industry tackled the issue of the severe housing shortage was to look to the automobile and ship and aircraft industries and the precedent they set incorporating mass production and assembly line methods. Applying a modified assembly-line method for mass production of housing, whereby specialized workers moved from building to building, performing a set of repeated tasks, builders were able to construct a record number of homes at extraordinary speeds. Using this modified assembly line, for example, San Francisco Bay Area builder David Bohannon was building one house every 45 minutes. The ability to quickly build quality homes, using standardized materials and assembly techniques, at affordable prices, was key to addressing the postwar demand. Merchant builders (who purchased large tracts of land, built infrastructure and houses, and then sold the homes), using these mass-production methods started to close the housing gap in Bakersfield and other cities across the state and nation.<sup>43</sup>

Another crucial benefit of mass production was affordability, which was a key component in the success of postwar residential construction. While speed was crucial, so was the cost of labor and materials. Breaking down the construction steps into simple assembly-line tasks meant that builders were able to use inexpensive unskilled labor for many of the construction phases. Similarly, some builders experimented with the pre-assembly of building components or entire buildings to further cut costs and time. Builders also found cost reductions by purchasing large quantities of materials at one time at discounted rates. Furthermore, innovations in building materials, such as precut lumber and standard-sized sheet materials (plywood and drywall, the latter of which replaced the use of more expensive interior lathe and plaster) improved speed of construction and lowered costs.<sup>44</sup>

Some builders experimented with prefabrication to answer the housing shortage, although, in most cases, houses were built onsite by a construction crew and tradesmen. Typically, materials were shipped to the site, and while some pieces might have been prefabricated, most of the construction was done at the house site. Prefabrication in California was marginally successful at best, and most attempts at prefabricated components were short lived because this method required large initial investments to set up factories and demand for the components needed to be high to be profitable. In addition, because of the diversity of local building codes, it was difficult to create components that were acceptable in all communities. Thus, prefabrication in the state's postwar housing was never fully realized.

Nevertheless, in Bakersfield, there was one exception. Hugh Curran's Mobilhome Corporation, which produced mass-produced homes using a whole-house prefabrication technique, was quite successful. Curran developed the process in the 1940s to produce homes built entirely at a local factory using an assembly line method. The homes were then transported whole, on a specialized truck, to their permanent locations, placed on a concrete foundation, and hooked up to utilities. Curran's homes typically exceeded local building requirements and FHA's standards. Although

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<sup>43</sup> "Kern Homes Crisis Aired," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1945, A2; Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 57-66.

<sup>44</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 58-61; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 205.

not constructed as fast as some of the large-scale merchant builders, Mobilhome houses could be completed and fully installed in approximately 2 weeks. Mobilhome sold hundreds of homes throughout Bakersfield and even developed its own Bakersfield housing tract made up entirely of its prefabricated homes (see Rancho Vista, Section 4.1.3). The company thrived, and by 1949, it had factories in 13 major cities across the nation.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.4.3 Housing Types and Styles

The following subsection provides an overview of the most common types and styles of houses found in greater Bakersfield postwar housing tracts. The house types share a commonality of overall form, size, and plan. Within house types, there may be differing styles or substyles featuring a repeated set of architectural details. Individual examples of residential buildings in other types and styles, or completely custom homes that do not fall within these common types, exist in the larger housing stock, but the following were the most popular within the subdivisions of the greater Bakersfield area during the period covered by this study. Representative photographs and contemporary drawings of residential buildings in these common styles are provided in Chapter 4.

#### 3.4.3.1 *Minimal Traditional Style*

The style now commonly known as Minimal Traditional developed in the 1930s following the decline in popularity of Bungalows, as a continuation of the small house design tradition that dates to the nineteenth century. In the 1930s, the popular period revival dwellings that emulated Colonial (Spanish and East Coast) houses, picturesque medieval (so called “Tudor”) houses, or rural European cottages, began to give way to a simpler style. Highly ornamented houses were economically infeasible for moderate homebuyers during the Depression, and the emphasis on simplicity and unadorned surfaces of the Modern architectural movement began to modestly influence domestic architecture. Considered a “compromise style,” the Minimal Traditional house reflected the form and shape of earlier housing styles, but without the decorative detailing. Generally, these residences have low to medium roof pitches, with close rather than overhanging eaves. They are moderately sized, of wood frame construction, and exterior walls are clad in wood siding, stucco, brick, stone, or a mixture of materials. Some have large chimneys, and detached garages were often sited adjacent to or to the rear of the residence. Aided by establishment of FHA and its small house program in the mid-1930s that established standards for the design and development of small, easily constructed and affordable houses funded by FHA-backed mortgages, Minimal Traditional-style homes were built in great numbers in California, especially up to and during World War II, to satisfy the substantial housing demands of wartime workers.<sup>46</sup> Minimal Traditional houses continued to be built during the postwar period, but by the mid-1950s, homes in large housing tracts stylistically evolved to a more modern aesthetic.

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<sup>45</sup> JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, *HRER: Centennial Corridor Project*, January 2013, 36-43.

<sup>46</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 586-595.

### 3.4.3.2 *Postwar Minimal Type*

The Postwar Minimal house developed as an intermediate style between the traditional small house and later Ranch-style houses that developed out of the Modern movement. As the predominant house type built during the 1940s and 1950s, these small houses were considered starter homes for new, young families establishing themselves in the postwar economy. Housing tracts that employed this style generally offered only a few different plans (sometimes only one plan was used with minimal differences in exterior trim), with their uniformity interrupted only by reversing plans and alternating roof forms, window configurations, and paint colors. Sometimes referred to as the G.I. House, they were largely built as part of sizable residential developments, but their small size and quick and economical construction also lent themselves to the small and narrow lots created decades earlier in many subdivisions.<sup>47</sup>

Consistent with its predecessor, the Minimal Traditional, the Postwar Minimal also exhibited a compact plan (usually less than 1,000 square feet), minimal to no overhanging eaves, and little architectural detail, but generally incorporated large multi-light picture windows and subordinate, attached garages. While one-car garages were common in the early postwar years, two-car garages became more common by the 1950s. Wood and stucco siding (or a combination of both) were typical, as were composition shingle roofs. Window types, both wood double hung and steel casement sashes with divided lights, were like those found in Minimal Traditional homes.<sup>48</sup> Unlike the full, rambling examples of Ranch residences associated with the 1950s and 1960s, the compact scale and massing of the Postwar Minimal was well-suited to small lots in smaller, infill tracts.

### 3.4.3.3 *Ranch Type*

Ranch-style houses began to emerge in the 1930s during the post-Bungalow phase of residential architecture in California. The style is characterized by elongated, linear floorplans that tend to maximize the primary façade along the parcel frontage and by layouts that combine indoor and outdoor living areas. The Ranch style incorporated a variety of historic precedents, including the nineteenth century California adobe house and nineteenth century California single-wall, board and batten rural buildings. Eventually, the style also integrated aspects of Modern architecture, emphasizing horizontality, large windows, unadorned surfaces, and open floorplans.<sup>49</sup>

The style first emerged regionally in California in the 1930s and 1940s, and it reached national attention in the first 2 decades after World War II. As it gained popularity, builders of middle- and upper-income homes across the country copied the designs of early custom homes of California. The sprawling style fit the “expansive mood of the post-World War II suburbs”

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<sup>47</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 586-595; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 204; Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 67-70.

<sup>48</sup> McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 586-595; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 204; Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 67-70.

<sup>49</sup> David Gebhard, Eric Sandweiss, and Robert Winter, *Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 1985) 579; Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 70-78.

perfectly.<sup>50</sup> California's early Ranch-style architects included Cliff May, H. Roy Kelley, and William Wurster, and their general influence can be seen where modest ranch homes have open plans that include wood frame construction in the Anglo-American tradition, combined with the Hispanic linear plan and understated exterior finishes.<sup>51</sup>

The popularity of the Ranch style in residential construction surpassed that of Minimal Traditional and Postwar Minimal homes by the early 1950s. By that time, the severe housing shortage felt across the state and the greater Bakersfield area had eased dramatically. Instead of residential construction being driven by the lack of housing, typical population increases and the upward mobility of Californians in general began to determine demand. Unlike the years immediately following the war, when all houses sold quickly, a buyer's market emerged. The smaller postwar houses were deemed inadequate as young families grew and prospered in the postwar economic boom and developers responded with larger, more expensive houses on bigger lots. Where Postwar Minimal homes typically included two bedrooms and one bath, the larger Ranch homes of the 1950s had at least three bedrooms and 1.5 to 2 baths. By the 1960s, these homes were 50 percent larger than those built in the first 10 years after the war.

Typical Ranch suburban house features include elongated, asymmetrical one-story plans with low pitched hip, cross gable, or side gable forms. Eaves are usually wide and create an overhanging shelter for a walkway along the sides of the house. A recessed entry is also common, as are large picture windows on the main facade. Early examples may feature metal casement windows but sliding metal frame windows are the most common. Siding can be wood, brick, stucco, or a combination. Houses were typically composed of wings in a U or L shape that create semi-enclosed outdoor living areas at the rear, often accessible from much of the house. Garages are usually attached. While custom sprawling, high-style Ranch houses were popular during the 1950s and 1960s, most Ranch houses were mass produced in postwar housing tracts and were unassuming in both size and design.<sup>52</sup> Most of the Ranch houses within postwar subdivisions in the greater Bakersfield area are modest examples of the type.

The Ranch form evolved into several subtypes with stylistic variations including Rustic Ranch, Storybook, and Asiatic, all of which can be found in postwar tracts built in the greater Bakersfield area. These subtypes, although distinct in their exterior ornament, share the basic low horizontal massing, asymmetrical facades, and prominent attached garages or carports of the

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<sup>50</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 240; National Park Service, Keeper of the National Register, "Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places," *National Register Bulletin* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002) 66.

<sup>51</sup> National Park Service, Keeper of the National Register, "Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places," 66; Alan Richard Michelson, "Towards a Regional Synthesis: The Suburban and Country Residences of William Wilson Wurster, 1922-1964," Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University, 1993, 153-154, 168; Marc Treib, "William Wilson Wurster: The Feeling of Function," in *Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, Marc Treib, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 27-29; Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 70-78.

<sup>52</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 70-78; Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 596-611; Cliff May, 1997. *Western Ranch Houses*, 1958. (Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1997) 13-24.



larger type. These styles were never wholly used in any one postwar tract in the Bakersfield metropolitan area but rather were one of several different styles applied to the basic Ranch form.

#### *3.4.3.4 Rustic Ranch Style*

Beginning in the 1950s, architects and builders began to apply rustic features to Ranch-type houses in residential tracts. Reminiscent of rural farm houses of the American West, the residences were often clad with vertical or board and batten siding (sometimes in combination with other types of siding) and had wood shake roofs with exposed rafter ends and roof beams that were commonly shaped. Windows may have diamond-shaped panes or pent roofs over windows or garages. In Bakersfield, builder Ken Mynatt coined the term “Farmaire” for his “custom” homes built in the Westchester subdivision (Section 4.1.1) and other tracts in the early 1950s. Newspaper advertisements described his rustic farm-type houses as a new idea, and they were often marketed as “Ken Mynatt’s Farmaire.” Rustic Ranch houses were popular through the 1950s, but by the mid-1960s, houses marketed in California as rustic were a much more modest representation of the earlier examples.<sup>53</sup>

#### *3.4.3.5 Storybook Style*

The Storybook style originated during the mid-1950s in Los Angeles, shortly after the opening of Disneyland. It quickly became a popular regional style, and within a few years, it spread to other communities in California and across the nation. Sometimes referred to as the Disneyland, Chalet, or Cinderella Ranch, the style has decidedly feminine influence, with the architectural details drawn from Tudor and other period revival styles of the 1920s and 1930s. Characteristics of Storybook Ranch houses include sweeping gable (also known as catslide) roofs, decorative shutters and window trim, scalloped or shaped bargeboards, and planter boxes below windows. The use of Storybook style on Ranch houses was relatively short-lived, and like the Rustic Ranch style, by the early 1960s had fallen from favor.<sup>54</sup>

#### *3.4.3.6 Asiatic Style*

Although not as popular as the Storybook or Rustic Ranch styles, Asian architecture influenced postwar housing from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. They were predominantly characterized by gable-on-hip roofs with exaggerated eaves with upturned corners, vertical wood boards to divide façade into panels, Asian-influenced hardware, and vertical wood latticework. Peaking in the early 1960s, later examples of the Asiatic Style were much more reserved representations.<sup>55</sup>

#### *3.4.3.7 Contemporary Style*

Contemporary style houses were initially built in postwar tracts during the first few years of the postwar period. Coined as “contemporary” to differentiate these modern homes from the more traditional tract houses, the early examples of this style were often associated with the Postwar Minimal type. They were small with compact plans and had little variation within tracts. Because of the austerity of the styles, open floorplan, and predominant use of post and beam construction

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<sup>53</sup> Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 85-86.

<sup>54</sup> Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 86-87.

<sup>55</sup> Caltrans, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” 86-87; National Cooperative Highway Research Program, *A Model for Identifying and Evaluating the Historic Significance of Post-World War II Housing*, 111-112.

(as opposed to wood frame), they were less expensive to construct than other house styles, making them popular with merchant builders. Postwar Contemporary houses are marked by very low-pitched roofs with wide open eaves and exposed roof beams. All forms of roofs (gable, hip, shed and flat) were used, although gables were the most common. Siding consisted of stucco or wood (applied horizontally or vertically). The asymmetrical facades tended to have wide areas of uninterrupted space. Rear facades were often dominated by windows, as are gable ends. Simple solid plain doors were often recessed and typically included sidelights or transoms.<sup>56</sup>

Merchant builders sometimes included a Contemporary house plan in tracts along with more traditional house types; however, it is common for postwar housing tracts to be entirely built with this style. Those tracts tended to be small (less than 150 houses) perhaps because builders were at first unsure of the style's marketability. Builders often hired reputable modern architects for their house designs. In Bakersfield, the Stockdale Manor subdivision, which consisted of 3 separate tracts with 262 houses, was constructed entirely of Contemporary houses designed by the prominent Pasadena architectural firm of Smith and Williams. In the mid- to late-1950s, the compact Contemporary houses gave way to larger plans, with elongated T- and L-shaped footprints. The style peaked around this time, and few tracts used this style after 1960.<sup>57</sup>

#### 3.4.4 Builders and Developers

The builders and/or developers discussed herein are a few of the many individuals and companies involved with postwar residential construction in the greater Bakersfield area. They were among those responsible for the development and construction of the key postwar housing tracts discussed in Chapter 4. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but it presents some of the more prolific and successful builders who worked in the greater Bakersfield region between 1945 and 1973.

##### 3.4.4.1 *Hugh Curran*

Hugh Curran was born in Bakersfield in 1900 into a local pioneering family. His father, James, was the first to manufacture locally produced common sandstone bricks beginning in the late 1880s and established the Bakersfield Sandstone Brick Company around the turn of the twentieth century. Hugh Curran followed in his father's footsteps and worked in the family business, but after his World War II military service, his career took a different path when he established Mobilhome Corporation in 1947 to make prefabricated houses. Mobilhome's approach was to build an entire house at a factory using an assembly-line technique, transporting it in one piece to the buyer's property using a specialized truck, and then installing it at the buyer's property. In appearance, size, and quality, Mobilhome houses far surpassed other versions of complete prefabrication and helped solve the housing shortage in many cities throughout the country. Mobilhome produced thousands of houses for individuals and local and federal government agencies, as well as the entire Rancho Vista residential subdivision in Bakersfield (Section 4.1.3). Mobilhome expanded its operations with more than a dozen factories across the United States, but by the mid-1950s, the demand for prefabricated housing decreased and Curran began

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<sup>56</sup> Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 80-85; Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American House*, 629-634.

<sup>57</sup> JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, *HRER: Centennial Corridor Project*, January 2013; Caltrans, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation," 80-85.

to develop residential housing using the more traditional methods of construction. Curran and his Mobilhome Corporation (along with its subsidiary, Cencal Development Company, established in 1955) also subdivided and developed much of the College Crest area in northeast Bakersfield in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His companies diversified into the development of commercial and school buildings, and in 1969, Curran sold his business to the American Homes Industries.<sup>58</sup>

#### 3.4.4.2 J. L. Dandy

A native of New York, James Leslie Dandy came to the Bakersfield area by way of Los Angeles County, where he had established himself as a real estate investor, broker, and builder by the late 1920s. He was also president of Southwest Investment Corporation (later known as Southwest Development Corporation) and J. L. Dandy Company (sometimes referred to as J. L. Dandy & Company), which he started in the late 1930s. By 1940, he had developed numerous commercial properties and built more than 200 houses in the Los Angeles area. Dandy continued this success as he branched out to Redlands, Fresno, and the Bakersfield regions after World War II, opening offices in or near those respective locations, while keeping his Los Angeles County offices as well. Dandy constructed hundreds of custom and tract “Dandy Homes” in these communities by the time he permanently relocated to Bakersfield in about 1949 and began working exclusively in the Kern County metropolitan area.<sup>59</sup>

Dandy, operating under Dandy Homes, Inc., and J. L. Dandy Co., and his earliest residential work in Bakersfield included home building in already established tracts, such as Tract 1262 in East Bakersfield near the corner of Quantico and Potomac avenues. His firm also began work on the Washington Park tract (Tract 1492) in southern Bakersfield in 1949. Located on the periphery of a predominantly African American neighborhood in Bakersfield, Dandy purchased the tract from the original owners and subdividers and removed the covenant that restricted the purchase of, or habitation by, non-Whites in the tract. This effectively became one of, if not the first, postwar housing subdivisions in the metropolitan area where African Americans could, and did, purchase homes.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Mobilhome Group Spreads Operations Through U.S.,” *Bakersfield Californian*, July 9, 1949, 13; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 30, 1955, 4; “Mobilhome Gets U.S. Contract,” *Bakersfield Californian*, November 9, 1957; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 30, 1955, 4; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 12, 1957; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 13, 1958; Obituary, Hugh Curran, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 28, 1982; Obituary, Roland Curran, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 21, 1985, E21; “A Visionary Builder,” *Bakersfield Californian*, 28 July 1982.

<sup>59</sup> Fifteenth Census of the United States, Population Schedule, 1930, Beverly Hills City, Los Angeles County, California, Enumeration District 19-828, Sheet 10B; “Examples of New Homes in this Region,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1940, 64; “Investment Corporation Starts Acreage Sale Here,” *Van Nuys News*, July 7, 1932, 2; “Firm to Build 20 New Homes in Redlands,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, February 28, 1947, 16; Advertisement, *Fresno Bee*, March 7, 1948, 32. Obituary, J. L. Dandy, *Bakersfield Californian*, April 1, 1970, 34; Steve E. Swenson, “A Jim Dandy,” *Bakersfield Californian*, March 24, 1996, F1.

<sup>60</sup> J.L. Dandy & Company advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, 11 March 1948, 6; J.L. Dandy & Company advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, 8 January 1949, 6; Washington Park / J.L. Dandy classified advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, 23 September 1950, 22; “Bright Future Seen for Dandy Houses in Washington Park,” *Bakersfield Californian*, 16 December 1950, 3; Steve E. Swenson, “A Jim Dandy,” *Bakersfield Californian*, March 24, 1996, F1; “J.L. Dandy & Co. Celebrates 65 Years of Homebuilding,” *Bakersfield Californian*, June 4, 1994, F2.

J. L. Dandy Co. continued to develop homes and subdivisions throughout the greater Bakersfield region for much of the postwar era and became one of several large-scale homebuilders in Kern County. Although he focused on affordable housing for veterans early in his career, ultimately the company built homes in all price levels. James F. Dandy took over the company by the early 1960s, which continued in operation through at least the mid-1990s.<sup>61</sup>

#### 3.4.4.3 Joseph Gannon

Brothers William and Joseph Gannon established Gannon Construction Company in Bakersfield in 1936. Their earliest projects included constructing individual residences and commercial buildings, but the brothers soon focused their attention on the rapid construction of multiple houses. When a fire destroyed the house of a local resident in August 1940, the Gannons volunteered their expertise to help build a new house in a single day. After World War II, the brothers were among the first developers to start building homes in Bakersfield. Their early projects were small, consisting of 10 to 20 homes. During the late 1940s, they teamed up with Ralph L. Smith, Jr. (Section 3.4.4.7) to subdivide and/or build numerous residential tracts, including more than 45 homes in the Holtby Park area (between Palm and Dracena and east of Myrtle) between 1946 and 1947, and Gannon Gardens No. 1 and No. 2 between 1949 and 1950 (their first postwar residential tract, Section 4.1.2). Most notably, the Gannons were among many local developers and builders to be involved with the Westchester tract (Section 4.1.1). Westchester is considered the first large-scale post-World War II residential housing tract built in Bakersfield and received local attention for its size (more than 700 residential lots), proximity to downtown, and for incorporating Blandings' Dream House, a nationwide promotion that brought the exact design from the movie "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" to communities across the country in 1948.<sup>62</sup>

William Gannon left the family business in 1952, and Joseph continued to run the construction company and Gannon Realty (established in 1968) through the late 1970s. Gannon Construction continued to develop large tracts throughout the Bakersfield area, including La Crest Manor with Randall Presley in northeast Bakersfield and Niles Grove east of Bakersfield in the 1950s, Panoramic Heights near Bakersfield College in the 1960s, and Quailwood (Section 4.3.1) in the

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<sup>61</sup> "Lou Mar Village on Wible Road Opens," *Bakersfield Californian*, 13 January 1962, 4; "Dandy Homes, Inc., Enter Low-Cost Housing Field," *Bakersfield Californian*, 10 November 1962, 6; "New Subdivisions Started," *Bakersfield Californian*, 9 March 1963, 8, 10; "Westhaven Custom Homes Hold Open House Sunday," *Bakersfield Californian*, 12 October 1968, 9A.

<sup>62</sup> "Highland Park," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 16, 1937, 3; "Handsome Two-Story Business Building Slated for Downtown District," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 12, 1938, 4; "Franks Home Built in One Day," *Bakersfield Californian*, August 13, 1940, 9; "2000 Vet Homes Built Here Since War's End," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 26, 1947, 7; "New Mark is Set in Building Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 9, 1947, 13; "43 Home Construction Permits Issued Within City for March," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 26, 1948, 15; "Permits Issued for 217 Houses," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 15, 1948, 13; "City Ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in West in Building," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 11, 1948, 15; "Blandings Dream House Opens to Public," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 4, 1948, 4; "Gannon Project Combats Housing Lack," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 19, 1949, 4; George Gilbert Lynch, "Bakersfield Builds 'Blandings Dream House,'" *Bakersfield Californian*, September 15, 2008; "Permits to Build 39 New Houses Granted," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 27, 1947, 11; "Permits for 32 New Homes Issued Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 27, 1947, 11; "Gannon Joins Real Estate 7," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 30, 1977, 20; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, August 10, 1975, 18.

Stockdale area in the 1970s, as well as multi-family developments, churches, and industrial and commercial properties. More than 10,000 homes in the greater Bakersfield area are attributed to Gannon Construction, which continued as Gannon Enterprises into the late 1970s.<sup>63</sup>

#### 3.4.4.4 C. Elmer Houchin

Virginia native Clarence Elmer Houchin came to Kern County in 1908 and during the next 45 years amassed an estate worth nearly \$10 million through real estate, oil development, and agriculture. He initially settled in the Buttonwillow area to run a beef cattle operation for Miller & Lux, a large cattle and landholding company, and within a few years he established a successful market business in Taft. His success allowed him to diversify his wealth by delving into real estate. He established Pioneer Realty Company and during the 1930s developed several residential tracts, such as Oleander Terrace and its extension (Tracts 1010 and 1113) in south Bakersfield. Because of Houchin's focus on development of that area, his neighbors approved a petition in 1937 to change the name of South F Street (the street on which Houchin lived) to Houchin Road. Like many real estate entrepreneurs, Houchin originally just sold lots in his subdivisions, but he later hired architects and builders to construct homes to be sold by his firm. From the 1920s and through at least the early 1940s, Houchin's firms, first Pioneer Realty and later Houchin and Bradford, were the exclusive agents for Miller and Lux lands. In total, Houchin was responsible for the sale of approximately 175,000 acres of Miller & Lux land holdings in Kern County, which included the townsite of Buttonwillow.<sup>64</sup>

Houchin's most important residential development, and perhaps his last, was his contribution to the Westchester tract (Section 4.1.1), initiated under the name of Houchin & Bradford, a firm which had been established in 1940. Built on 280 acres of land purchased from Miller & Lux, Westchester was the first large-scale postwar residential subdivision in the greater Bakersfield area. Officially subdivided in 1948, within 2 years the construction of more than 500 homes had been completed. Unlike many postwar housing tracts in California during this time, which had similar sized and shaped lots filled with cookie-cutter houses with little architectural distinction,

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<sup>63</sup> "200 New Homes Loom," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 4, 1950, 4; "Hammer Beats Mark Start of Gannon Homes Project," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 4, 1950, 5; "New \$800,000 Tract Emphasizes Growth of Greater Bakersfield," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 19, 1952, 5; "Model Homes Combines Attractive Features With Panoramic View," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 24, 1952, 5; "Down Payments for Veterans Decreased as New Tract Launched at Niles Grove," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 30, 1953, 7; "Gannon Joins Real 7," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 30, 1977, 20; *Bakersfield Californian*, December 22, 1962, 7; Camille Gavin and Kathy Leverett, *Kern's Movers & Shakers* (Bakersfield, CA: The Kern View Foundation, 1987) 42; "Long-time Bakersfield Building Joseph M. Gannon dead at 86," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 31, 1993, B3;

<sup>64</sup> "C.E. Houchin, Kern Leader, Dies," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 23, 1953; "Houchin Buys Opera Market," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 27, 1924; "To Sell Retail Market," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 27, 1920; "Houchin Purchases Apartments in Taft," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 8, 1922; "Plant Big Acreage by Modern Methods," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 28, 1924; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 27, 1924; "Garnett E. Adams, 'Cash and Carry' Pioneer," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 7, 1925; "Buttonwillow Townsite to be Formally Opened June 26," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 16, 1927; "Houchin, Bradford End Real Estate Partnership Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 31, 1946; Gavin and Leverett, *Kern's Movers & Shakers*, 25-26; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1010, September. 4, 1934; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1113, September. 11, 1939; "For Sale-City Lots," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 15, 1935; "Activity in Home Building," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 26, 1938; "Oleander Terrace Home of Distinction," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 11, 1941; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1235, February 14, 1945;

Westchester included a variety of lot sizes and numerous house plans and styles, thereby breaking up the uniformity of the tract. By the mid-1960s, Westchester included approximately 750 homes and a successful retail district.<sup>65</sup>

#### 3.4.4.5 Ken Mynatt

Tulare County native, Kenneth K. Mynatt came to Bakersfield by the mid-1930s and developed a successful career in the homebuilding and real estate business. In his early years as a real estate agent, he worked with his father, Dale C. “Slim” Mynatt and then branched out on his own. Ken Mynatt first built and sold houses on an individual basis, and after the war, he embarked on larger projects and began to subdivide and develop housing tracts. Between 1946 and 1949, Mynatt subdivided at least five tracts (Tracts 1281, 1300, 1369, 1397, and 1503) in East and Southwest Bakersfield where nearly 400 homes were built by 1951. Mynatt built and sold homes in Ralph Smith’s College Heights subdivision (Section 4.1.5) and several customized Rustic Ranch residences in the Westchester tract (Section 4.1.1), which he referred to as “Farmaire” homes, during the next several years. Mynatt coined the term “Farmaire” to evoke the rustic aesthetic or farm-like feeling for houses he marketed as “Ken Mynatt’s Farmaire” in the local newspaper. Perhaps Mynatt’s largest project was development of a cluster of multiple tracts in the Kenwood area of East Bakersfield in the late 1950s. More than 300 homes were credited to Mynatt, many of which were his Farmaire design. In the late 1950s, he joined forces with Leonard M. Parsons and Jack D. Reeder under firm P.R.M. Inc. to subdivide two adjacent tracts along the east side of Wible Road (north of Ming Road) in southwest Bakersfield. Although Parsons and Reeder were contractors, it appears P.R.M. sold lots to other builders who then constructed homes within these subdivisions. Mynatt died unexpectedly at the age of 49 in 1962.<sup>66</sup>

#### 3.4.4.6 Randall Presley

Randall E. Presley was born and raised in Pensacola, Florida. He served in World War II as a pilot and bombardier. In 1946, he began a career in real estate in Bakersfield. As a real estate broker and subdivider working at the height of the metropolitan area’s severe housing shortage, Presley focused his early projects on inexpensive, but quality-built houses. During his early years in the business, Presley typically subdivided land and marketed homes for which he subcontracted the architectural services and construction to others. His first development in Bakersfield consisted of 12 houses on 3 acres that he subdivided in 1946, but by 1950, he was reportedly selling more than 100 homes per year. Presley kept expanding his enterprises by

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<sup>65</sup> “C.E. Houchin Founder of Westchester,” *Bakersfield Californian*, June 13, 1951; “C.E. Houchin, Kern Leader, Dies,” *Bakersfield Californian*, November 23, 1953; Ancestry.com, *Social Security Death Index* [database online], Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2011.

<sup>66</sup> “Funeral Services Tomorrow for Kenneth Mynatt,” *Bakersfield Californian*, June 7, 1962, 32; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1300, January 8, 1947, Book 5 of Maps, Page 199; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1369, June 26, 1947, Book 6 of Maps, Page 51; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1281, Feb. 20, 1946, Book 5 of Maps, Page 124; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, April 9, 1949, 4; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, March 2, 1949, 7; *Polk’s Bakersfield California City Directory* (Los Angeles: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishers, 1937, 1938, 1942); “240 New Lots, Homes Planned by Mynatt in Kenwood Tract,” *Bakersfield Californian*, November 20, 1954, 7; Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, December 3, 1953, 38; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, February 27, 1954, 27; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, January 22, 1954, 6; JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, *HRER: Centennial Corridor Project*, January 2013.

founding a company that incorporated real estate and construction in 1951, and within a few more years he had completed homes and/or developed subdivisions in the Benton Park, Stockdale, College Heights (Section 4.1.5), and Panorama Drive areas of Bakersfield. Many of the tracts he established utilized standard Ranch-style plans, but Presley also constructed large semi-custom and custom homes. He founded Presley Development Company in Bakersfield in 1956 and then relocated the firm to Orange County in 1963. While he still had a hand in residential construction in the Bakersfield region, his focus turned to development of other communities in California and across the United States. By the late 1960s, Presley Development Company (later known as The Presley Companies) had grown into a national operation and became publicly owned and traded. He is credited with building more than 160 residential communities during his career. He eventually sold the firm for \$93 million, 38 years after getting started in the business.<sup>67</sup>

#### 3.4.4.7 *Ralph L. Smith*

The Smith name has been synonymous with local real estate and development in Bakersfield since 1909 when Harry F. Smith moved to the city. Harry Smith was well-known as a Bakersfield subdivider who developed Casa Loma Acres and the California Avenue Park tract. Smith's grandson, Ralph Lancaster Smith, first owned and operated a local service station, but he took over his grandfather's real estate business upon his death in 1937. By the end of the 1940s, Ralph had finished his grandfather's work selling lots and homes in the Casa Loma Acres, California Avenue Park, and other subdivisions, and he also built hundreds of houses in tracts he subdivided through his own real estate firm, Ralph Smith Company. He partnered with Gannon Construction Company (Section 3.4.4.3) in the late 1940s to subdivide and/or build numerous residential tracts in the Holtby Park area; Gannon Gardens No. 1 and No. 2 (Smith was the owner and subdivider of both) Tracts 1470, 1518, and 1396 in south Bakersfield; and the Westchester tract, for which he was the primary realtor during its initial offering. Although most of his subdivision projects in the late 1940s and early 1950s were connected to Gannon Construction, Smith worked with a variety of builders. He became known as "Buy This" Ralph Smith for his use of the term in his real estate advertisements between the late 1940s and 1960s. His most notable work in real estate development was perhaps the College Heights subdivision (Section 4.1.5), completed during the 1950s in northeast Bakersfield. Smith was owner and subdivider (various development companies were created for College Heights) of this 400-acre development that eventually included more than 1,600 homes. Smith built and marketed homes in College Heights, but he also sold lots to other builders who used various realtors to sell their homes. His brothers, Jack, Eugene, and Harry, were also involved in College Heights and other later Smith developments. It is estimated that during his career he developed more than 4,000 residential lots in the greater Bakersfield region.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> "Realty Row" *Bakersfield Californian*, November 3 1951; California Homebuilding Foundation "Randall E. Presley, 1987 Honoree, Founder, The Presley Company," accessed online at <http://www.myhcf.org/presley-randall-e.html> on December 13, 2017; "Builder of the Year Named," *The Daily Review* (Hayward), June 4 1972; "Subdivision Continues in Growth," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 10, 1953, 4.

<sup>68</sup> "Ralph Smith, Jr. In Realty Field," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 6, 1937, 5; "New Subdivision," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 3, 1949, 7; Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1530, April 4, 1950, Book 7

#### 3.4.4.8 Stockdale Development Corporation

Stockdale Development Corporation was established in 1960 as a joint venture between local KCL and Phoenix-based Del Webb Corporation to develop 3 square miles of KCL land southwest of the Bakersfield city limits. The project envisioned a master-planned community consisting of multiple residential villages, along with commercial and industrial areas. The development company's early plans called for a 6,000-acre community of 15,000 homes for a population of approximately 50,000 people and 900 acres of land set aside for an industrial park. The residential and commercial areas for the Stockdale community were generally bordered by the Kern River to the north, US 99 to the east, Gosford Road to the west, and White Lane to the south, and the industrial park, reportedly the first planned industrial park in the San Joaquin Valley with an expected initial investment of \$50 million over 10 years, was located on the south side of White Lane between Stine and Gosford roads.<sup>69</sup>

KCL was responsible for the land subdivision and planning, and some of the financing, while Del Webb's company managed construction of the early development. The first of the residential villages constructed was the 600-acre Kern City (Section 4.2.1), a planned community for "active adults" (often called a retirement community) that was based on Del Webb's Sun City in Phoenix. Opened to great success in 1961, Kern City included residential and social amenities, as well as its own shopping center. Around the same time, Stockdale Development planned Stockdale Country Club Estates just west of Kern City (adjacent to Stockdale Country Club) and Park Stockdale, which was located directly north of Kern City, on the north side of Stockdale Highway. Stockdale Development applied the basic plan of Kern City at the latter, where recreation facilities (swimming pool, tennis courts, and community center) were reserved exclusively for residents, and like Kern City, Park Stockdale's facilities were intended to be governed by a board of residents. KCL gained controlling interest in Stockdale Development (later known as Tenneco Realty Development) in 1965. A few years later, the company donated the land for California State University, Bakersfield. Stockdale Development Corporation went on to develop the villages of West Park, Westhaven, Sagepointe, Westwood Estates, and Quailwood (Section 4.3.1) and dramatically altered the landscape of southwest Bakersfield.<sup>70</sup>

#### 3.4.5 Cold War Residential Fallout Shelters

Some single-family housing built in Bakersfield during the Cold War included fallout shelters. The total number of shelters is unknown, but most appear to have been built during the late 1950s and early 1960s when the U.S. and Soviet Union struggled for global political and military supremacy and a nuclear arms race began between the two nations.<sup>71</sup> In response to fears of

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of Maps, Page 77-78; Janet Wheeler, "Bakersfield Association of Realtors, An Important Part of City's History," *Bakersfield Magazine*, October 1995.

<sup>69</sup> "Kern Land Co. Plans Project at Bakersfield," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1960, B8; "Bakersfield Area Industry Boosted," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1961, A10.

<sup>70</sup> "Park Stockdale to Provide Variety of Facilities for Children, Adults," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 9, 1962, 14; "Official of Tenneco to Address Board," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 10, 1977, 32; "Kern County Purchase," *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1965, N4.

<sup>71</sup> John S. Salmon, *Protecting America: Cold War Defensive Sites, A National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington, D.C: October 2011) 5 and 13; California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 35-37.



nuclear war, the U.S. established the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) in 1950 to promote public education about survival methods after a nuclear attack. The FCDA promoted the construction of fallout shelters throughout the 1950s; however, the federal government did not develop a nationwide program or guidelines, nor did it provide any public funding for their construction. Construction of fallout shelters nationwide spiked in the late 1950s, particularly after 1957 when the Soviet Union demonstrated its technological potential to deliver a nuclear weapon by launching the world's first satellite. However, it was not until the early 1960s, when increased tensions between the U.S. and Soviet Union and the subsequent funding augmentation of the nation's civil defense programs sparked a wave of fallout shelter construction.<sup>72</sup>

Between 1960 and 1961, three distinct events amplified the public's anxiety over nuclear attack: the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 spy plane over soviet territory; the Soviet Union and East Germany threatened to occupy West Berlin to curb defections; and the failed U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion led to the subsequent embargo and U.S. naval blockade of Cuba, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>73</sup> These events heightened the nation's fears about what many believed to be an impending nuclear war and led private citizens across the country to seek information on construction of fallout shelters.

Locally, Kern County's Civil Defense Office began distributing civil defense literature to the public and construction plans for family shelters in 1960. The public's increasing interest also prompted the office to construct a working model of an aboveground backyard fallout shelter on the grounds of the Kern County Museum in June of that year. The shelter was based on plans from the U.S. Office of Civil Defense Mobilization's "Family Fallout Shelter" booklets.<sup>74</sup> Around the same time, companies across the country began designing fallout shelters for sale to individuals. Prefabricated concrete and metal shelters, some of which could be assembled by the property owner, were advertised in newspapers and magazines across the nation, sold door-to-door, and peddled at state and county fairs. Local companies, architects, and builders also jumped into design and construction of private fallout shelters.<sup>75</sup>

Following the Berlin Crisis in mid-1961, the inquiries to Kern County's Civil Defense Office regarding fallout shelters increased dramatically. Growing fears of a nuclear strike led more than 1,700 people in the greater Bakersfield area to complete survival training, and by late summer 1961, the first building permits were issued by the City of Bakersfield for construction of subterranean fallout shelters. At that time, at least three local construction firms had fallout shelter designs that had been approved by City and County building departments. One such company was likely Benum Pools, which designed a precast reinforced concrete shelter certified by City and County building departments and approved by the County's Civil Defense Office. Its

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<sup>72</sup> California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 37-40.

<sup>73</sup> California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 37-40.

<sup>74</sup> "Individual Effort Important in Civil Defense," *Bakersfield Californian*, January 5, 1961, 20; "Family Fallout Shelter," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 28, 1960, 18; "Bomb Shelter on Display at Kern County Museum," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 5, 1960, pp. 21-22.

<sup>75</sup> "Family Fallout Shelter," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 28, 1960, 18; "Bomb Shelter on Display at Kern County Museum," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 5, 1960, 21-22; "Fallout Shelter," Kern County Museum; "McCarthy Fallout Shelter Attracting Lots of Attention at County Fair," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 30, 1960, 28; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, August 19, 1961, 7.

marketing of the “U.S. Shelter” touted advance acoustics from its concrete construction and a rectangular shape that allowed for easy placement of furniture, shelving, and wall hangings, so that it could be used as a spare room. The company later introduced enhanced models with stairways and storage space. The number of fallout shelter manufacturers reported nationally in mid-1961 increased from 40 in July to more than 120 companies with governmental approval in September. This, of course, does not include the unknown number of manufacturers and local contractors without federal or local approval who added this new construction type to their product line.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the certification or approval of some local fallout shelter plans by the City of Bakersfield’s and Kern County’s building departments, there were no local regulations that permitted or forbade the construction of aboveground or subterranean fallout shelters for the County or City prior to September 1961. Although both governments notified the public that building permits must be obtained for construction of fallout shelters, building departments used general health and safety specifications when approving their construction. This lack of standards was of concern in Bakersfield, where residents were being denied permits because the proposed shelter plans were incompatible with existing building codes. To “encourage property owners to construct shelters for the purpose of protecting human life from the hazard of radioactive fallout,” the City adopted an emergency ordinance regulating shelter construction in September 1961. The following month, the County adopted its own ordinance to establish a permitting process and specifications for fallout shelter construction in unincorporated areas.<sup>77</sup>

The wave of construction appears to have been highest in 1961; by the end of that year, as the Berlin Crisis and Bay of Pigs incident dropped from the headlines, home shelter construction dramatically declined. The number of fallout shelters constructed in Bakersfield between 1960 and 1961 is unknown. Various articles in the local newspaper marketing specific builders and locations identify only a handful of residential fallout shelters built in the greater Bakersfield area.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Fallout Shelter,” *Bakersfield Californian*, August 29, 1961, 24; “Kern County Residents Begin ‘Digging In’—Just In Case,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 16, 1961, 19-20; “Pool Builder Has New Shelter Design,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 18, 1961, 24; “Stairway Adds to Shelter Livability,” *Bakersfield Californian*, October 14, 1961, 28; Walter Karp, “When Bunkers Last In the Backyard Bloom’d: The Fallout Shelter Craze of 1961,” *American Heritage*, Volume 31, Issue 2, February/March 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Legal Notice, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 23, 1961, 32; “Shelters to be Taxed,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 12, 1961, 25; “Council Adopts Ordinance to Permit Shelter Construction in Front Yards,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 19, 1961, 19; City of Bakersfield, Ordinance No. 1383, September 18, 1961.

<sup>78</sup> California Department of Transportation, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973,” 37-40; “Fallout Shelter,” *Bakersfield Californian*, August 29, 1961, 24; “Kern County Residents Begin ‘Digging In’—Just In Case,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 16, 1961, 19-20. Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 13, 1962, 32, and August 11, 1961, 31. Among street addresses with fallout shelters were these: 3309 Baylor Street in College Heights and 2535 Beech Street in the Westchester Tract; model shelters were built at Hartman Concrete Yard (Truxtun near Oak Street) and Neudeck Pool Company at 507 West Casa Loma Drive (presently Ming Avenue). Sales and rental advertisements also indicate extant shelters on the residential properties of 3408 Laverne Avenue and 921 Sylvia Drive (in Highland Village tract of Planz Park).

In 1962, Congress appropriated more than \$200 million to the federal civil defense program; however, those funds were restricted for improvements to existing and construction of new public shelters. Nevertheless, interest in fallout shelters from a private and commercial perspective continued locally into early 1962.<sup>79</sup> The Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 brought civil defense and fallout shelters to the forefront of the news again, but increased construction of new family fallout shelters was not notable on a local or national level.<sup>80</sup> In Bakersfield, newspaper advertisements and articles about family shelter construction dramatically decreased during the year, and in December, the City of Bakersfield reported that it had issued only one permit for fallout shelters during all of 1962. By this time, it had become apparent that with the U.S. and Soviet's growing nuclear arsenals and the probability of complete destruction in the event of a nuclear attack, family shelters would be virtually useless. Over time, the sense of impending nuclear threat subsided. In 1963, the Limited Test Ban Treaty was signed by the U.S., Soviet Union, and Canada, which prohibited atmospheric and underwater testing of nuclear weapons. This, coupled with increased public attention on the Vietnam Conflict, pushed the U.S. and Soviet Union's nuclear programs farther into the background.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 37-40; "Architect Eddy will Take Fallout Course," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 2, 1963, 21.

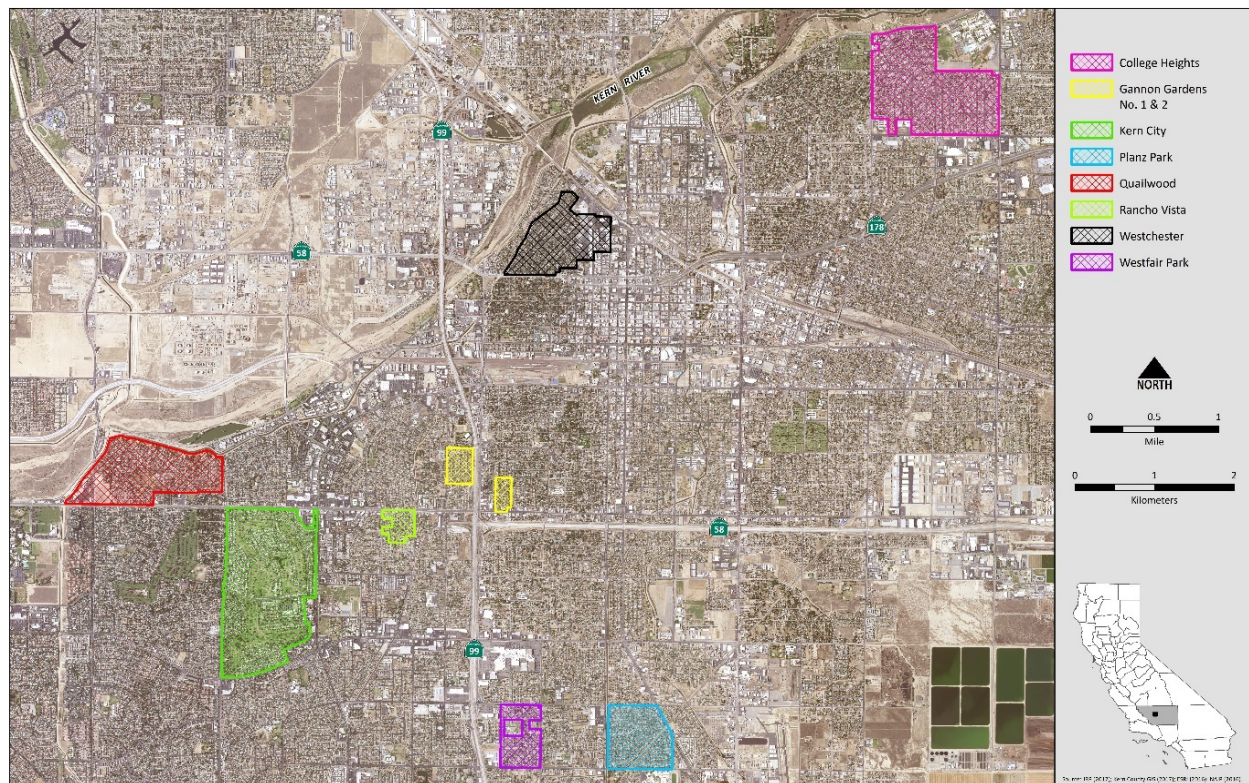
<sup>80</sup> Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) [ebook edition] 11, 19.

<sup>81</sup> "Chief Inspector Notes Building Decline in 1962," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 31, 1962, 20; California Department of Transportation, "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973," 40-41.

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#### 4. KEY POSTWAR HOUSING TRACTS IN AND AROUND BAKERSFIELD

The key tracts of postwar housing in and around Bakersfield were selected for a more detailed profile in this section because they were good examples of this type of development across the period of study from 1945 through 1973. The selected tracts represent a range of construction dates, as well as the general evolution of location and design of suburban development in the area (see **Figure 4-1**).



Data source via Kern County GIS, 2017

**Figure 4-1. Locations of Key Tracts described in Chapter 4.**

Initial research and review of previous studies showed that the general trends and themes presented in the preceding sections were manifested in the spread of residential tracts from the periphery of the central city outward, mostly to the southwest and the northeast. The research also showed that the basic design of street layouts within the tracts transitioned from those that tied into the existing rectilinear street grid to those that employed more curvilinear layouts, with loop streets and cul-de-sacs. The size of the development varied widely throughout the study period. Taking this into consideration, the eight tracts that are described in the following section represent:

- Initial subdivisions of the early postwar years, 1945-1959
- The classic mid postwar developments of the 1960s
- The later years of the era, 1968-1973

More of the key tracts described in this section date to the first decade and a half of the Cold War because, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 0, it was during these important years that the change in

housing construction was the most dramatic. Local developers and builders were eager to meet the housing demand and, once moratoriums lifted and federal mortgage programs were in place, they applied the mass production methods learned during the war and went to work. Developers kept up the pace as the years progressed and as new state highways opened areas outside Bakersfield once considered too far from the city for suburban growth, so several of the key tracts date to the middle and later years of this period as well. Other factors considered in the selection of key tracts was the inclusion of a variety of types and sizes – those tracts that strictly offered single-family homes, to those that were planned communities, as well as mid-sized and larger projects that included hundreds of new homes. See Appendix A for a list of 18 postwar tract developments originally considered and from which 8 were ultimately selected.

## **4.1 Early Postwar Years, 1945-1959**

### **4.1.1 Westchester Tract<sup>82</sup>**

The origins of the Westchester tract date to mid-1945 when local developers C. Elmer Houchin and George L. Bradford (who had established a formal partnership, Houchin & Bradford, in 1940) publicized the purchase of 280 acres of undeveloped land north of Bakersfield for a residential subdivision. The project was located within the city limits of Bakersfield, just northwest of downtown. Houchin & Bradford enlisted the help of Charles B. Bennett, the City of Los Angeles planning director and nationally known planner for design of the restricted residential tract bordered by the Stine Canal to the west, the Southern Pacific Railroad to the north, and 24<sup>th</sup> and H streets to the south and east. The initial plans provided for 750 homes and a “satellite” retail district. Site clearing began in late 1945, and while Bradford announced that building would likely start in 1946, a severe shortage of building materials lingering from the war period delayed construction for more than 2 years.

Houchin & Bradford dissolved their real estate firm during the delay and established a new firm, Westchester Development Corporation. It was under that real estate company that Bradford and Houchin officially subdivided and recorded the map of their development, Tract 1387 (by then known as the Westchester tract) in March 1948. This initial phase of the subdivision encompassed approximately half of the land acquired for the residential development, approximately 138 acres, and was north of 24<sup>th</sup> Street generally between Beech and Drake streets. Its eastern and northernmost borders were nearly 0.25 mile from H Street and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, respectively, and included 628 residential lots, most of which were between 0.13 and 0.17 acre in size. In 1949, the Houchin Development Corporation, obtained ownership of approximately 60 acres immediately west of the initial Westchester tract and divided it into two tracts (Tracts 1472 and 1521). It appears that Houchin’s new company was legally separate corporate entity from the Westchester Development Corporation. Tract 1521 eventually became part of the location of the planned retail district that extended along F Street between the Golden State Highway (SR-204) and 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Tract 1521 included a handful of residential lots that were developed in 1950.

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<sup>82</sup> This section summarizes a history of the Westchester tract as presented in *A History of the Westchester Tract, Bakersfield, California, 1945-1964 (Draft)*, prepared by Greg King, Parsons, for the City of Bakersfield in June 2017.



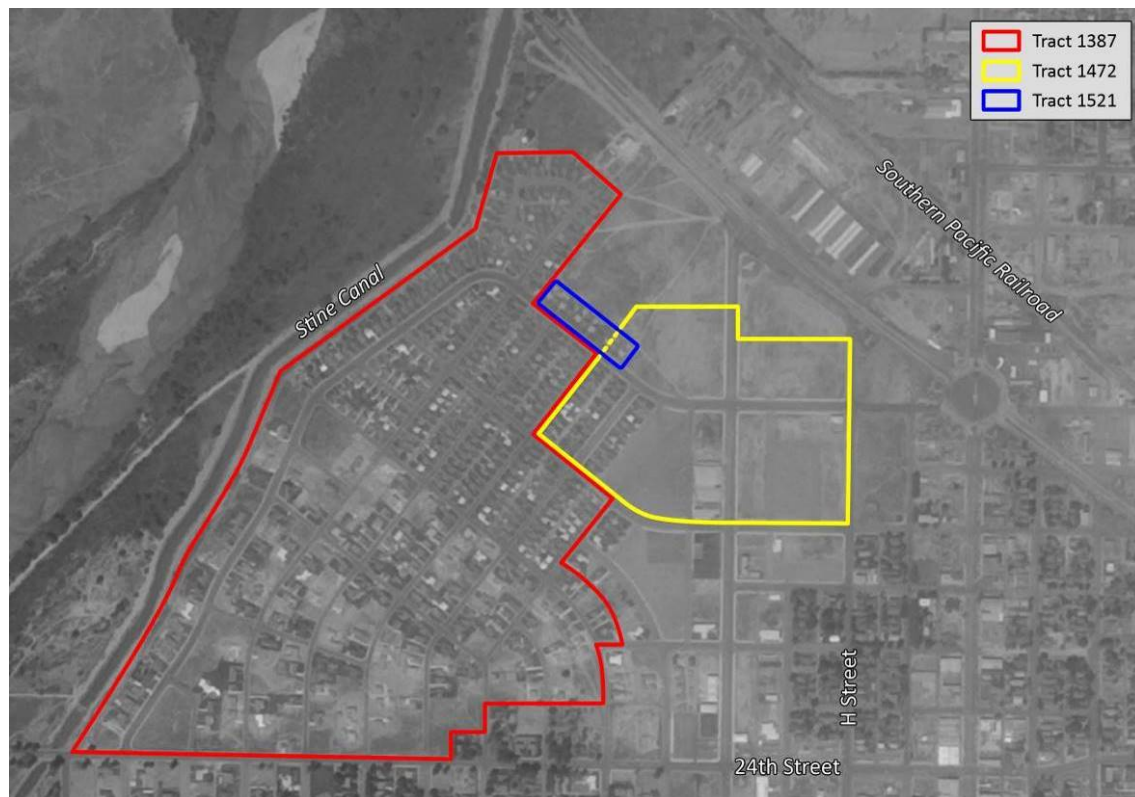


Figure 4-2. A 1952 aerial showing the three tracts that made up the Westchester tract.<sup>83</sup>

As designed, the plan for Westchester included a curvilinear street pattern. Alleyways were included in some areas, and sidewalks were constructed primarily on Beech Street. Contracts for construction of the tract's infrastructure were let in November 1947, and 6 months later, the City of Bakersfield issued building permits to Westchester Development for another 217 residences that were valued at a total cost of \$1.4 million. The City noted that, at that time, that was the largest group of permits ever issued. Construction quickly began in earnest.

The Westchester tract generally offered two- and three-bedroom, wood-frame homes designed predominantly in the Ranch style, with prices initially in the \$9,000 to \$10,000 range, or \$95,000 to \$105,000 in 2018 dollars. The tract and its houses met FHA specifications for housing tracts and had preapproval for FHA and VA loans. Like many of the other postwar subdivisions being constructed at that time, the earlier homes built in Westchester were small, at approximately 1,000 square feet. However, unlike other tracts that had homogeneous quality, with the same or very similar mass-produced type houses on uniform-size lots, Westchester was distinguished by its differing lot sizes (particularly the variety of widths) and the numerous plan options, roof types, and other exterior architectural elements that provided for a more architecturally diverse aesthetic.

<sup>83</sup> United States Department of Interior, Geological Survey, Aerial Photography Kern County, GS-WK 19-134, August 1952.

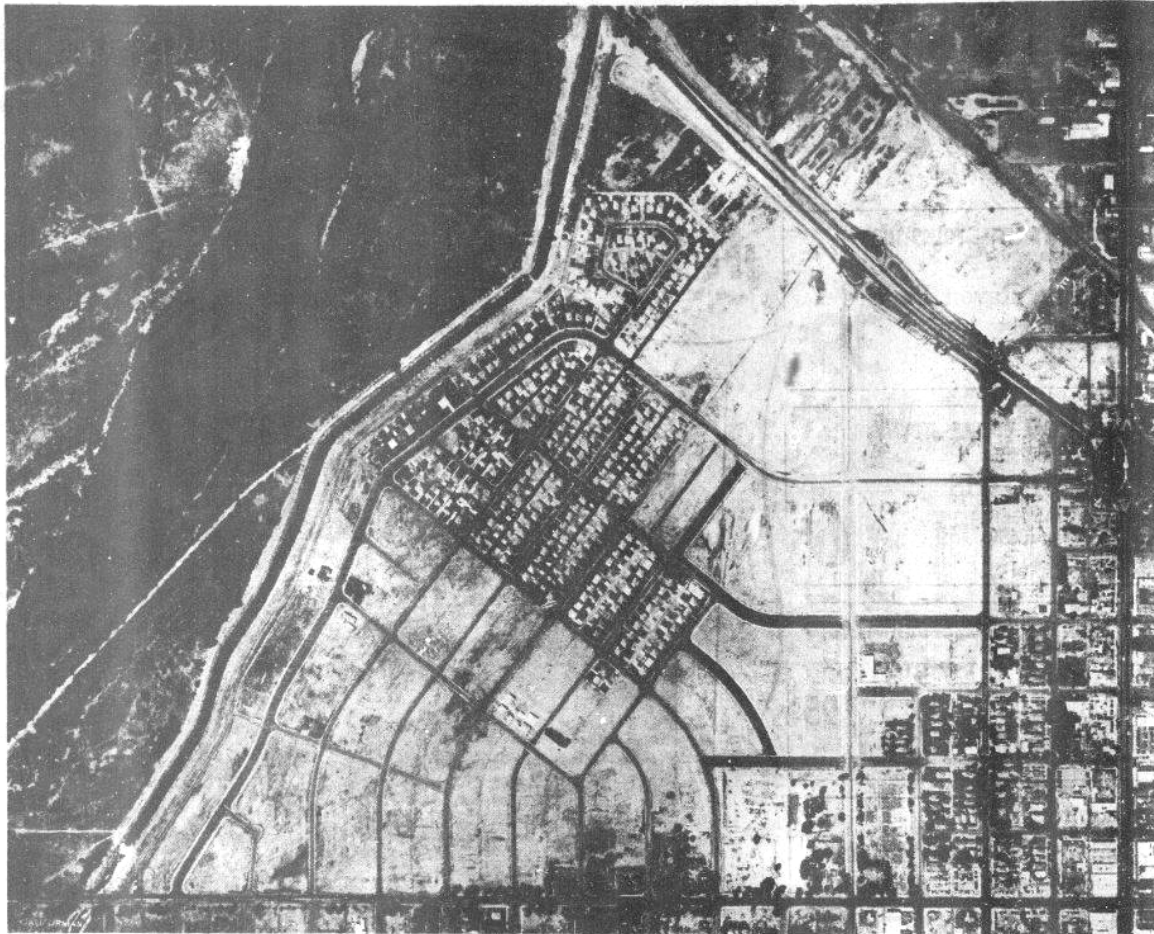


Figure 4-3. Aerial map showing the progress of the Westchester tract in 1949.<sup>84</sup>

Westchester Development designated Gannon Construction Company as builders of the first phase of the project. The real estate firm of Ralph Smith Company was named primary seller of the development, but within a year, Westchester Development opened the marketing of the homes to other firms, included its own agents like Bradford himself, John Baldwin, and A.L. Nevins. Some real estate firms merely sold houses as representative of the development corporation; others purchased and developed vacant lots and then marketed the houses as well.

The Westchester tract included numerous options for more customized homes to lure buyers. Houchin recruited high-end, Los Angeles builder Lewis Stoner to construct 24 houses that could compete in quality, although not price, with custom-built homes in adjacent neighborhoods. Larger in size (some upwards of 2,200 square feet) with additional options such as patios, solariums, and swimming pools, these homes were completed with landscaping. One such Stoner home of 1,415 square feet was noted in the local newspaper selling for \$14,750.<sup>85</sup> Another builder involved with the project, Ken Mynatt, offered “custom” homes in the Westchester development. Mynatt built and marketed his “Farmaire,” houses in the early 1950s, and although

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<sup>84</sup> “Westchester from the Air,” *Bakersfield Californian*, August 27, 1949, 4.

<sup>85</sup> “Westchester Tract to Get 24 New Custom Residences,” *Bakersfield California*, August 27, 1949, 5.



they were scattered around the development, newspaper advertisements noted several of these “rustic farm-type homes” were located along Alder Street. The houses were touted as a “brand new idea in home charm and comfort” by Mynatt, who was listed as the exclusive builder of Westchester Farmaire residences. “Ken Mynatt’s Farmaire” homes featured front garages, curved driveways, rustic redwood siding, and shake roofs; some included the potential for a studio space over the garage. Mynatt also built Farmaire houses in other residential tracts.<sup>86</sup> For a true custom home at Westchester, the development company set aside several larger lots for prospective homeowners who desired custom-built houses, which would still need to adhere to tract restrictions, even if using their own architect or builder.

Sales and construction of Westchester homes were steady, and by March 1950, the local newspaper noted that more than 500 residences had been constructed in the subdivision. With more than three-quarters of the residential subdivision complete, the developers turned their attention to the retail sector at the northeast corner of the development. Sale of commercial sites, which also included a large lot for a motel, began in spring 1950. The \$1.5 million Westchester Village began in spring 1950 with radial shopping (access to front and backdoors of stores) and ample, free parking. In less than 2 years numerous retailers, including bakeries, groceries, and liquor, furniture, and five-and-dime stores, as well as professional offices like Union Oil Company of California, had been established in the six-block commercial district centered along F Street. When an earthquake destroyed many commercial buildings in Bakersfield’s central district in August 1952, more than a dozen businesses whose buildings were badly damaged or destroyed relocated to Westchester. Westchester Village was a resounding success. Within a few years, the village was built out with restaurants, clothing, jewelry, and hardware stores, a pharmacy, and a motel.<sup>87</sup>

The remaining residential lots in the Westchester tract were developed through the 1950s and into the mid-1960s. In keeping with the overall design aesthetic of the development, the homes constructed during this period were generally designed in the Ranch or Contemporary styles. The original boundary of Westchester expanded in 1963 when John Deeter, of Deeter Homes, Inc., subdivided Tract 2815 along the west side of the Westchester development. The narrow tract was made available when the Stine Canal (present-day Carrier Canal) was rerouted to the west, closer to the Kern River. Deeter marketed the additional subdivision as Riviera Westchester, offering one- and two-story single-family homes and townhouses into the early 1970s.

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<sup>86</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield California*, October 5, 1951, 36; Advertisement, *Bakersfield California*, May 4, 1951, 39; Advertisements, *Bakersfield California*, December 14, 1951; Advertisement, *Bakersfield California*, February 25, 1954, 37.

<sup>87</sup> “Westchester Village Opens \$1,500,000 Shopping Area” *Bakersfield California*, March 18, 1950, 2;



Figure 4-4. Aerial photograph showing the completed Westchester tract in 1961.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Gannon Gardens (No. 1 and 2)

Property owner and subdivider Ralph L. Smith, Jr., established Gannon Gardens on former agricultural fields just outside the southwestern city limit of Bakersfield. Smith filed surveys of the two separate, but nearby, tracts (Tracts 1527 and 1530) less than 5 months apart, in late 1949 and early 1950 and hired local contractors Joseph and William Gannon of Gannon Construction Company to build the homes. The team named the tracts Gannon Gardens No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, and Smith's real estate company, Ralph Smith Company, marketed the homes.<sup>89</sup> Smith promoted Gannon Gardens as affordable housing selling in the \$7,500 to \$8,500 range, built to "meet FHA, state veteran and GI specifications" so that it qualified for federally backed home loans.<sup>90</sup>

Gannon Gardens No. 1 was the first of the two subdivisions to be built. This 20-acre tract fronted on Brundage Lane, just east of Oak Street, and was bounded to the north by Bank Street and

<sup>88</sup> Robinson Aerial Surveys, Inc. Aerial Photography of Kern County, Flight ABL-1961, 2bb-32, June 12, 1961.

<sup>89</sup> Kern County Tract Maps, Tract No. 1530, April 4, 1950, Book 7, Page 77-78 and Tract No. 1527, December 5, 1949, Book 7 Page 56, December 13, 1949

<sup>90</sup> "200 New Homes Loom," *Bakersfield Californian*, 4 February 1950, 4.

encompassed Beech and Cypress streets. The subdivision offered 83 residential lots, mostly ranging between 0.12 and 0.15 acre in size, along with three larger commercial parcels sited along Brundage Lane. Construction of the first dozen houses along Beech Street began in October 1949, and by the end of November, permits were issued for another 51 houses. Smith had sold all homes in this first phase of the development by March of the following year.<sup>91</sup>

Phase two of Gannon Gardens began in January 1950 with grading of the 35-acre alfalfa field for Gannon Gardens No. 2. Located on Oak Lane, the tract was generally bordered by Palm Street to the north, Real Road to the west, and included several lots south of Bank Street along Western, Wetherley, and Oakdale drives. The subdivision consisted of 189 lots of roughly 0.13 to 0.14 acre in size and represented an estimated \$2 million investment for the Smith and Gannon partnership. Once the infrastructure was in place, the Gannons utilized their considerable experience in mass homebuilding techniques to rough in (build the exterior shell—interiors completed thereafter) approximately two homes per day. Construction of the homes began in March 1950 and were completed by October. Most residences included three bedrooms, although some two-bedroom houses were available. Gannon Gardens No. 2 advertised modern amenities such as tiled kitchens and bathrooms and hardwood floors, attached garages, and paved driveways and sidewalks. Anticipating annexation into Bakersfield, the tract was built to meet the City's specifications for a residential subdivision and included paved streets with curbs and gutters, street lighting, and sewer system. In his promotion of Gannon Gardens, Joseph Gannon touted that the area was in high demand for its easy access to the city center and emphasized that there was no major highway to cross to get there.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Home Project Work Started by Firm," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 13, 1949, 36; "November building Hits Highest Peak on Record," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 22, 1949, 12; "200 New Homes Loom," *Bakersfield Californian*, 4 February 1950, 4; "Hammer Beats Mark Start of Gannon Homes Project," *Bakersfield Californian*, 4 March 1950, 5;

<sup>92</sup> "200 New Homes Loom," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 4, 1950, 4; "Hammer Beats Mark Start of Gannon Homes Project," *Bakersfield Californian*, March 4, 1950, 5; "Permits for 108 New Homes Allowed," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 4, 1950, 21.

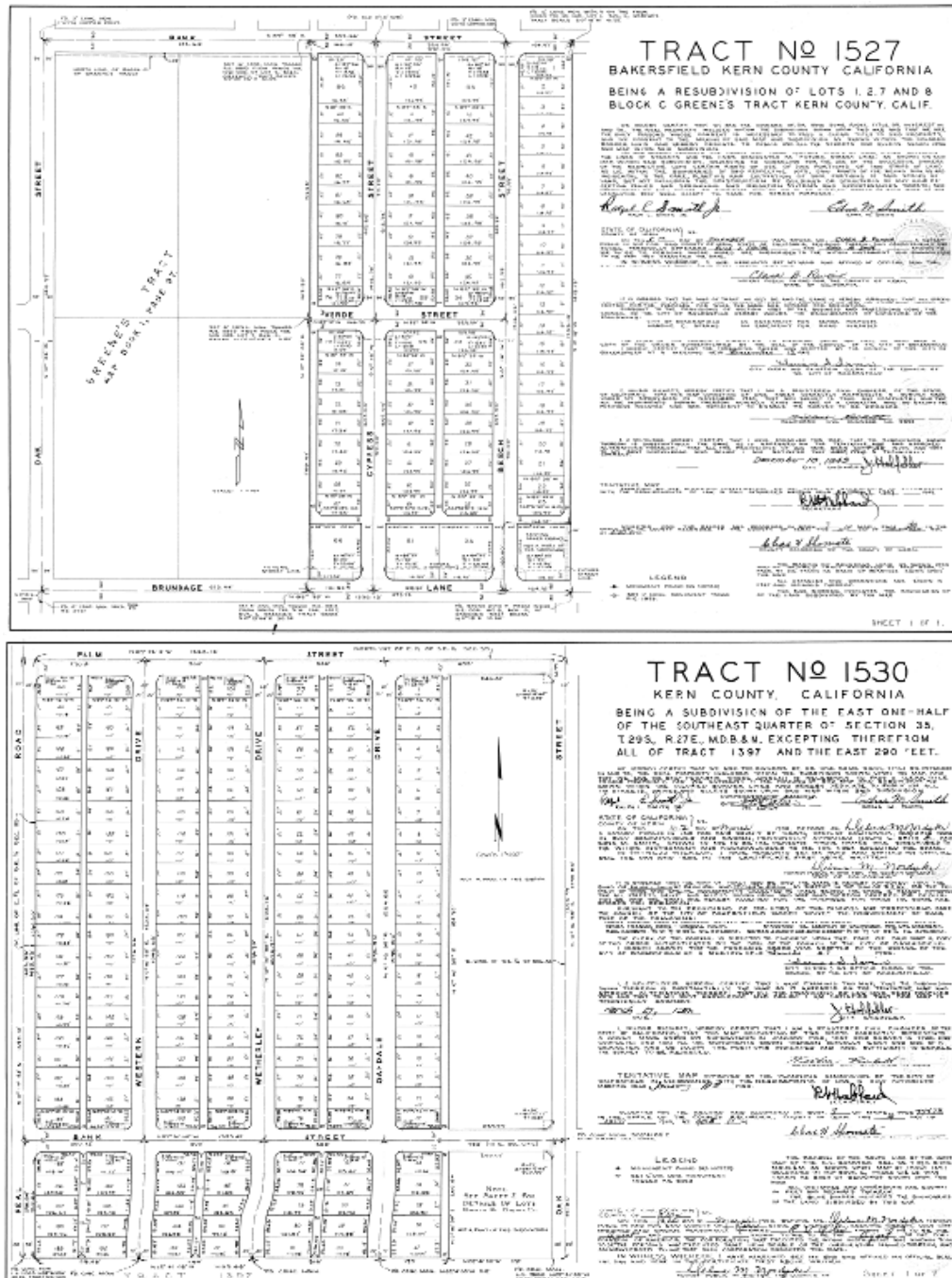


Figure 4-5. Recorded tract maps for Gannon Gardens Nos. 1 and 2, top and bottom, respectively.



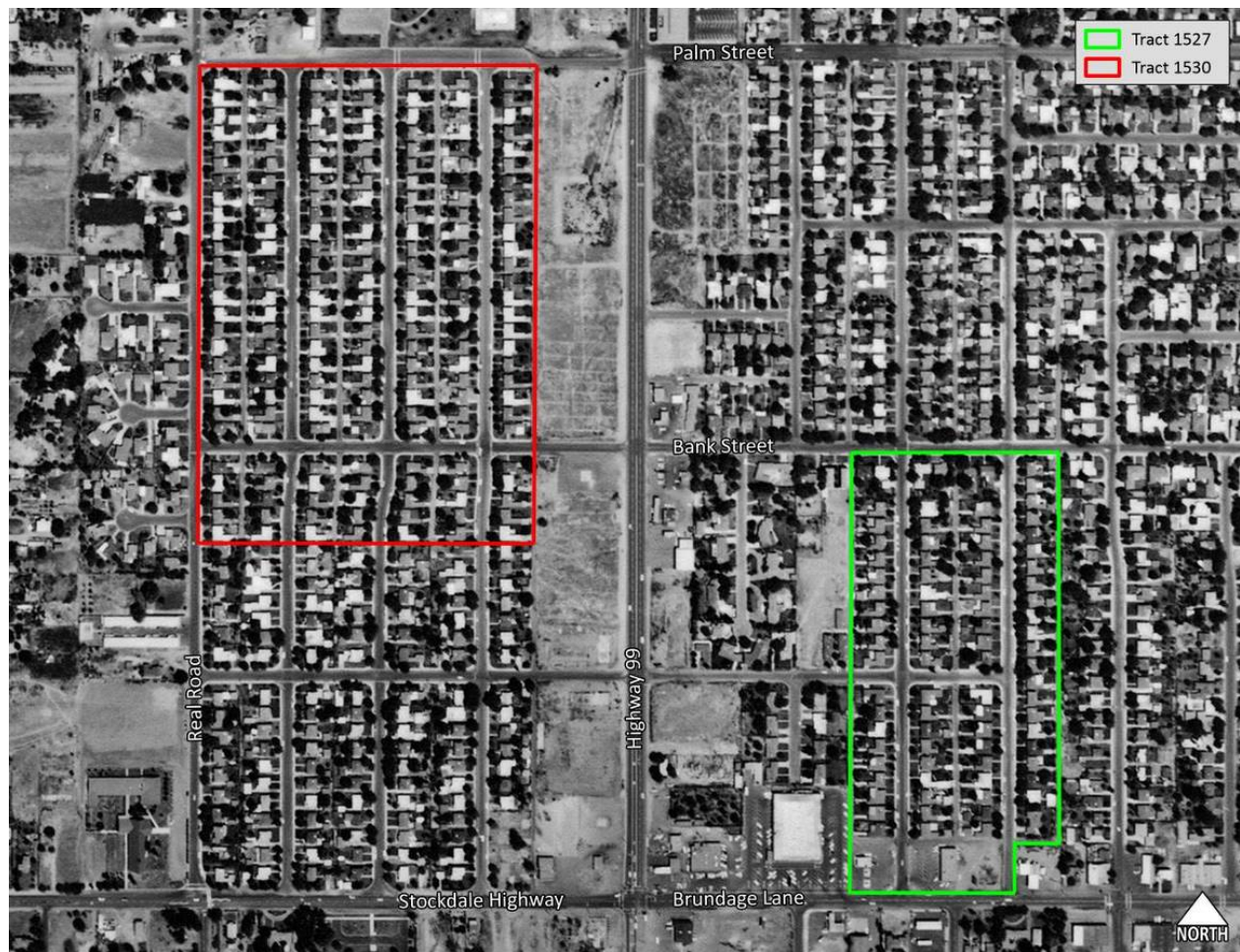


Figure 4-6. Gannon Gardens subdivisions in 1961.<sup>93</sup>

While Gannon Construction noted that the significant increase in the population of this area necessitated additional commercial amenities, the company's announcement that it would enlarge the nearby Oak Lane Village shopping center, completed by Gannon Construction at the corner of Oak and Chester lanes (north of both Gannon Garden tracts) in mid-1948 does not appear to have ever been realized. Later known as Oak Lane Shopping Center, it was one the first of its kind in the city. Only a handful of commercial buildings were constructed along Oak Lane during the 1950s.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Robinson Aerial Surveys, Inc. Aerial Photography of Kern County, Flight ABL-1961, 5bb-87, June 15, 1961.

<sup>94</sup> "New Oak Lane Village Shopping Center Thrown Open Today," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 19, 1948, 6; La Cresta Village, built by Joseph and William Gannon, was perhaps the first shopping center constructed in postwar Bakersfield when it opened in 1946 in the 2300-2400 blocks of Alta Vista Drive; see "La Cresta Shopping Center Plans First Anniversary Celebration," *Bakersfield Californian*, August 1, 1947, 12; "200 New Homes Loom," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 4, 1950, 4; Robinson Aerial Surveys, Inc. Aerial Photography of Kern County, Flight ABL-1961, 5bb-87, June 5, 1961; Gavin and Leverett, *Kern's Movers & Shakers*, 42.



**Figure 4-7. Typical streetscape of Gannon Gardens No. 1<sup>95</sup>**



**Figure 4-8. Typical streetscape view of Gannon Gardens No. 2.**

Both tracts were designed with a linear street pattern—the streets in Gannon Gardens No. 1 are a continuation of the street pattern established within the city of Bakersfield during the prewar era—and included alleyways, which were typically not used in later postwar tracts. Alleys provide access to the garages, most of which are located at the rear of the homes, and house utility lines. These design features are reminiscent of housing tracts developed in and before World War II, although the blocks are long, particularly in Gannon Gardens No. 2, which is common for postwar tracts. Both tracts currently have barrier (square) curbs with gutters. Concrete sidewalks were laid adjacent to curb (without a planting strip), and rectilinear concrete walkways lead from sidewalks to the main entrances of the homes. Today, most properties include a lawn, and many have mature trees in the front yard.

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<sup>95</sup> Current photographs in this section by JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, taken during field reconnaissance of key tracts in fall 2017.



The houses in both tracts are very similar and can be categorized as Postwar Minimal in design. In general, the homes have either a square footprint with a hip roof (Dutch-hip roofs are found in Gannon Gardens No. 2) or more rectangular footprint with side-gable roof. Slight differences in the fenestration, siding, and porches or stoops typically distinguished the homes in each type within Gannon Gardens No. 2.



**Figure 4-9. Example of two homes in Gannon Gardens No. 1 constructed using the same house type but with different exterior architectural details.**



**Figure 4-10. Examples of different house types in Gannon Gardens No. 1.**



**Figure 4-11. Example of two homes in Gannon Gardens No. 2 constructed using the same house type but with different exterior architectural details.**



Figure 4-12. Gannon Gardens No. 2

#### 4.1.3 Rancho Vista<sup>96</sup>

Bakersfield brothers Roland and Hugh Curran developed the Rancho Vista subdivision in the early 1950s in the Stockdale area of southwest Bakersfield. Rancho Vista was a unique development in that the houses were prefabricated at a local factory and installed (fully complete) as single units on the lots within the subdivision in a matter of days. Property owner Roland Curran subdivided 32 acres of unincorporated county land into 148 residential lots, identified as Tract 1522, in late 1949. Mostly undeveloped land formerly owned by KCL, the tract fronted the south side of Stockdale Highway (just east of the Stine Canal) and was generally bounded by Stine Road, Quarter Avenue, and McDonald Way and included portions of Curran, Griffiths, Jones, and Marsha streets and Peckham Avenue.

The Currans named the tract Rancho Vista, and other than the construction method of the houses, the subdivision is typical of the early postwar period. Its street pattern is mostly linear, with long north-south blocks, and small, uniform, rectangular lots that range between 0.1 and 0.17 acre in size. Streets now include curved curbs and concrete sidewalks with no planting strip. Only two blocks included alleys. Roland Curran was responsible for the initial survey and construction of infrastructure, while Hugh Curran's Mobilhome Corporation factory supplied the prefabricated homes for the small subdivision. The tract was mostly built up between 1950 and 1952, with a few more houses completed between 1953 and 1957.

The whole-house prefabrication technique used in this tract was the idea of Hugh Curran, whose military background in prefabricated buildings helped him develop a complete, solid house that could be built entirely in a factory setting and transported from the factory on a truck as one component ready for installation at its permanent location. Curran developed his Mobilhome method of prefabrication by mid-1948 and was selling four different house designs priced between \$4,000 and \$7,000 (or \$42,000-\$73,000 in today's dollars), which included construction, transportation via a specialized truck within 10 miles of factory, and installation of a finished home on a concrete foundation and connected to local utilities. The 600-foot-long

<sup>96</sup> This section summarizes a history of Rancho Vista as presented in the report entitled *Historical Resources Evaluation Report, Centennial Corridor Project, Bakersfield, Kern County, California*, prepared by JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, for Caltrans in January 2013.



assembly line at his plant featured two rows of rollers on which the houses would pass through each of approximately 10 different work stations. Houses could be completed in 10 to 12 days, and with installation and utility connections at the homesite, the total time for a completed home could be as fast as 2 weeks.

Transportation of a whole house required sturdier construction methods. Mobilhome houses used 2- by 12-inch (instead of standard 2- by 8-inch) lumber for floor joists; walls and floors were reinforced with steel cross straps; and plumbing and electrical components were inspected before delivery. For delivery of its homes, Mobilhome used a local trucking company, M and M Moving Company, which had developed a special tricycle rig, towed by a heavy-duty truck, that carried the 10-ton, 26-foot-wide houses. All homes met or exceeded local building code requirements and FHA standards; thus, they were eligible for federally backed loans. The assembly line prefabrication time to construct a completed house (interior and exterior) drastically reduced the final cost, which was passed on to the homebuyer.

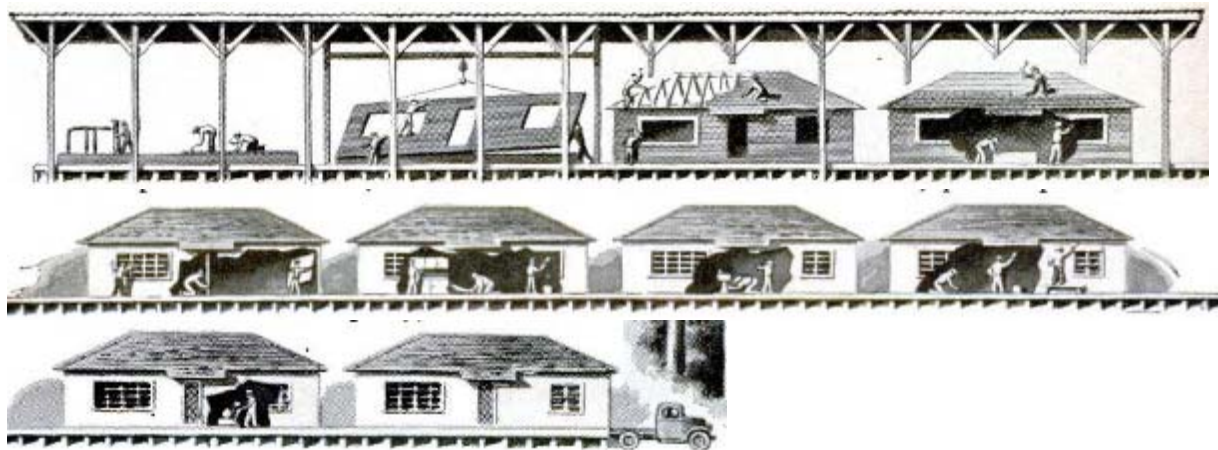


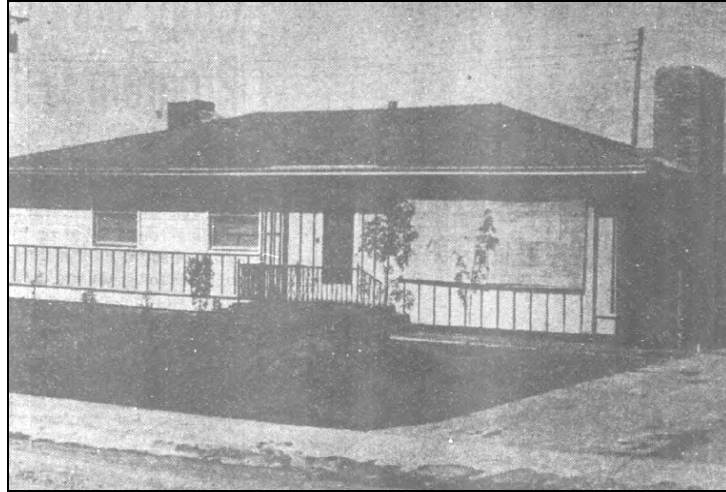
Figure 4-13. Assembly line construction of Mobilhome houses in the East Bakersfield factory.<sup>97</sup>

While Hugh Curran ran the Mobilhome factory, his brother Roland was responsible for the marketing and sale of the homes in the Rancho Vista subdivision. In May 1950, the \$500,000 development was publicized with the announcement of its opening of sales. To differentiate these permanent homes from prefabricated and moveable trailers, Mobilhome clearly promoted them as *not prefabricated*, although they were built offsite. Roland Curran advertised the modern homes at “bargain prices” and highlighted the tract as having a “park-like atmosphere” that included streets, sidewalks, curbs, and landscaping. Although planned as a 100 percent Mobilhome-house subdivision, the Currans gave prospective buyers the option of purchasing a lot for \$1,150 to \$1,300, and then building their own house, or buying the lot and one of the firm’s prefabricated models with special incentives. The purchase of every lot included a landscaped front yard. As part of its marketing, Roland Curran even constructed his own family home in Rancho Vista.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> “Assembly-Line Houses Hit the Road,” *Popular Science*, June 1949, 113-118.

<sup>98</sup> “Currans Show Faith in Rancho Vista by Putting Home There,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 20, 1950, 5.



**Figure 4-14. Mobilhome residence of Mr. and Mrs. Roland Curran in Rancho Vista.<sup>99</sup>**

All houses built by Mobilhome at Rancho Vista came with installed kitchens with steel cabinets and countertops, bathrooms, water heaters, furnaces, garages (attached or detached), and concrete driveways. Homes also included tiled kitchens and bathrooms. Mobilhome focused its early promotion of the tract on veterans who could obtain financing through the G.I. Bill, offering 100 percent financing. For as little as \$43 per month (approximately \$415 today), a veteran could buy a three-bedroom home. With the first house under construction during the subdivision's opening month, 9 months later nearly 70 Mobilhome houses had been constructed in Rancho Vista. By August 1951, only a handful of lots remained for sale. While the subdivision was deemed successful, in 1955 the company noted that 22 homes were still available.



**Figure 4-15. Rancho Vista in 1952 (left) and 1956 (right).<sup>100</sup>**

<sup>99</sup> "Currans Show Faith in Rancho Vista by Putting Home There," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 20, 1950, 5



**Figure 4-16. Typical streetscape in Rancho Vista.**



**Figure 4-17. Examples of Mobilhome residences in Rancho Vista.**

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<sup>100</sup> United States Department of Interior, Geological Survey, Aerial Photography Kern County, GS-WK 22-14, August 15, 1952; Hycon Aerial Surveys, Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-15R-132, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, July 15, 1956.

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#### 4.1.4 Planz Park

Planz Park is a nearly 173-acre residential subdivision initiated by Rex Whittemore in 1950 on the former Planz Ranch, 1 mile south of the Bakersfield city limits. Named after the pioneering Planz family, Planz Park is in southwest Bakersfield, bordered to the north and south by Wilson and Planz roads, respectively, to the east by Kern Island Canal, and to the west by South Chester Avenue. Whittemore, as president of Fremont Development Corporation, announced the new development in May 1950 with the letting of contracts for infrastructure construction. Anticipating 680 homes, the *Bakersfield Californian* noted it may have been the largest single real estate project in Bakersfield at that time, and ultimately, it was similar in size to the original phases of the Westchester tract. Sale of Planz Park's first phase began in June 1950 with the subdivision of its first tract, Tract 1541. Consisting of 126 lots at the northeast corner of the subdivision, 110 lots were designated for residential construction. Sixteen lots that fronted South Chester were reserved for and later developed as commercial properties.<sup>101</sup>

The initial construction phase in Planz Park included wood-frame homes with stucco siding on residential-sized lots that typically measure 60 by 110 feet and encompass approximately 0.15 acre. The developer offered Ranch-style homes in 34 designs. Two-bedroom houses included 950 square feet of living space, while the three-bedroom houses were 1,100 square feet. Regardless of size, all sales included concrete driveway, tiled bathrooms, and a planted front lawn. Planz Park promoted the wide overhanging eaves and insulation, which helped to cool the homes in summer and retain heat in the winter. The price of homes ranged between \$7,800 and \$10,000 depending on size and on other amenities that could be purchased, such as appliances, heating and air conditioning, incinerator, clothes line, shrubbery, etc. The homes were constructed to federal specification and thus were offered to prospective homebuyers qualifying for FHA and VA financing or through traditional mortgage. Before half of the 110 homes could be completed, this phase had sold out. Final construction was completed in winter 1951.<sup>102</sup>

Although located in an unincorporated agricultural area, the developers of Planz Park, which included Pasadena lumberman Richard Lawyer and Frank Olson, had also begun negotiations with the City for the subdivision's annexation. Once the tract was annexed, the City would extend the sewer system and connect the homes, and the septic systems installed prior to annexation would be abandoned. The City of Bakersfield officially annexed the subdivision, along with a narrow strip of land the City deemed uninhabitable, on January 2, 1951. Located 0.5 mile south of the city limit, the "uninhabitable" strip connected the subdivision to the city, which allowed for the Planz Park annexation. The validity of the annexation quickly came into question, however, when some of the 50 or so residents living within that "uninhabitable" strip claimed the City failed to respond to their written protest. As a result, the State of California and W.S. Weisenerger, a property owner and resident of the uninhabitable strip, sued the City seeking to void the annexation. The courts upheld the annexation in April, but 4 months later, the residents appealed the decision. The City was forced to stop all planned improvements to the area, including the laying of sewers. The nearly 2-year-long annexation dispute ended in

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<sup>101</sup> "Subdivision to Bring 680 More Homes," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 25, 1950, 23.

<sup>102</sup> "Subdivision to Bring 680 More Homes," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 25, 1950, 23; "Planz Park Homes Go on Sale to Veterans," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 1, 1951, 4.

November 1952 when the plaintiffs suddenly decided to withdraw the suit citing the many infrastructure improvements the area had received and the fact that most of the Planz Park residents were now in favor of annexation. Shortly thereafter, the City quickly installed the sewer system to Planz Park.<sup>103</sup>

• Every Home a Fine Home

**VETERANS**

LEARN OF THE ADVANTAGES OF HOME OWNERSHIP IN

**PLANZ PARK**

"Whittemore Homes" FASTEST GROWING RESIDENTIAL SECTION IN BAKERSFIELD

SECOND UNIT (217) HOMES NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION!

COMPARE THESE FEATURES

- STEEL SHIMERS
- ALL-STEEL CASEMENTS
- ALL-STEEL CASE
- COMPLETE INSULATION
- LAWN AND TREES PLANTED
- COOLERS AND ELECTRIC TO HALL
- CLOTHES POLES INSTALLED
- INCINERATORS
- SOLID HARDWOOD FLOORS
- BUILT-IN CUPBOARDS
- HOME STYLES TO CHOOSE FROM

2- and 3-BEDROOM HOMES

11- AND 2-CAR GARAGES

\$9,225 FOR 2-BEDROOM

\$10,485 FOR 3-BEDROOM

**WHITTEMORE HOMES**

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G. I. and CAL. VET

DOWN PAYMENT

G.I. \$625 - \$850

Monthly Payments From \$53.90 to \$54.90

Call or Visit Our Office for Information Regarding

**CAL. VET**

**NON-VET**

**FINANCING**

OPEN SUNDAY

**MODEL HOME**

**WHITTEMORE TRACT**

(PLANZ PARK)

1510 DORIAN DRIVE

(2 1/2 Blocks West of South Chester on Dorian)

Decorated and furnished by

**Urner's**

**VISIT IT SUNDAY!**

Open 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Other hours by special appointment

Figure 4-18. Newspaper advertisements for Planz Park in 1951 (left) and 1954 (right).<sup>104</sup>

While the annexation was being challenged, Whittemore continued to develop Planz Park under Whittemore Homes, backed by National Group of Beverly Hills (under the name of Bakersfield Joint Venture). The second phase of the subdivision, recorded as Tract 1577 in May 1951, included 217 houses at the southeastern corner of the development. Construction began in summer 1951, with most of the homes designed by Pasadena architect Harold J. Bissner.<sup>105</sup> Sale of this phase opened exclusively to veterans in September 1951, with homes later offered to "state veterans under Cal-Vet plan" and then to all other purchasers. The house types (eight general plans were offered), construction methods and materials, lot sizes, and extra amenities were very similar to the early phase. Two- and three-bedroom homes were offered, although nearly 90 percent of those planned and built were three bedrooms. The smaller homes came with single-car garages, while the larger homes had two-car garages. Air conditioning was now standard in each home, as were steel casement windows, incinerators, hardwood floors, and front lawns with 2- to 3-year-old trees. Although it was originally reported that the homes would go for around \$8,000, the price range was increased to between \$9,225 and \$10,485 (or approximately \$90,000-\$100,000 today). Advertisements listed homebuyers with GI loans paid as low as \$54 to \$61 per month, with downpayments of \$625 to \$785. Just after opening the second phase of Planz Park, a new federal housing bill passed allowing for greatly reduced payment amounts for certain federally backed loans, such as those for veterans. Whittemore

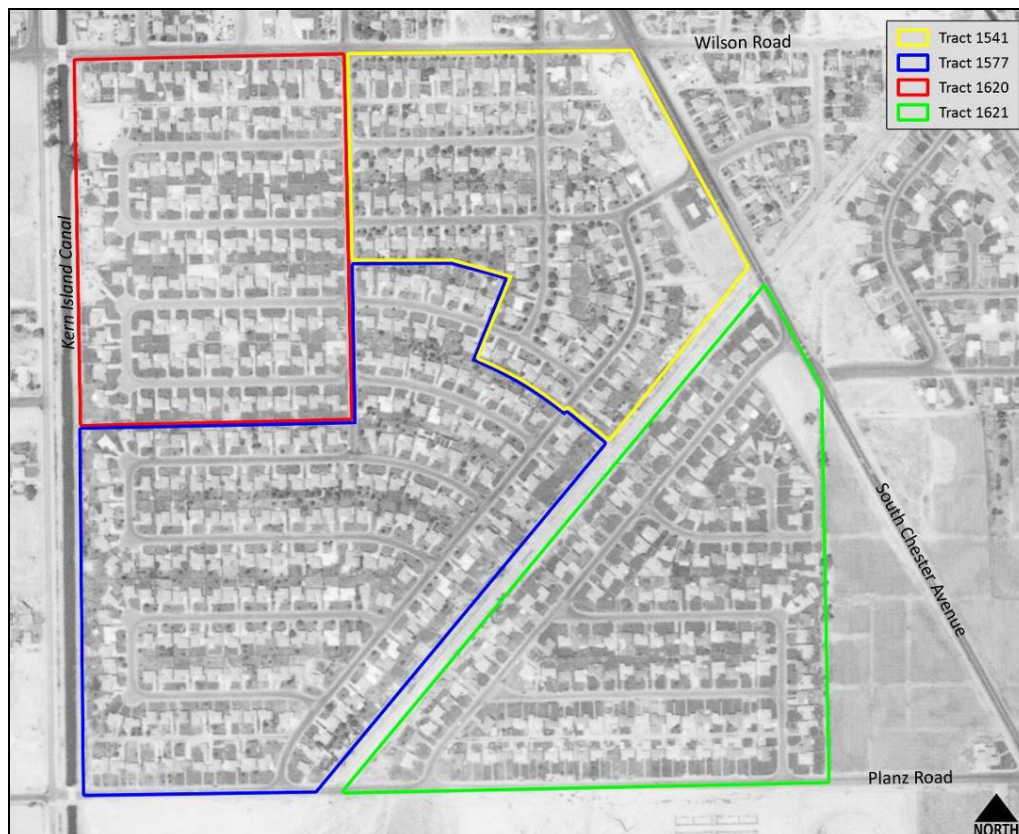
<sup>103</sup> "Subdivision to Bring 680 More Homes," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 25, 1950, 23; "Suit Challenges City's Move to Annex District," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 4, 1951, 43; "Appeal May Slow Improvement Plans for Planz Park District," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 20, 1951, 17; "Planz Park Sewers Will Be Completed by June 1," *Bakersfield Californian*, February 11, 1953, 28; "Work to be Resumed on Construction of Sewer Plant for Planz Park Area," *Bakersfield Californian*, November 5, 1952, 23.

<sup>104</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, September 1, 1951, 5 and July 26, 1954, 9.

<sup>105</sup> "\$1,710,000 Home Job Revealed," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 12, 1951, 19.

Homes immediately cut the previously advertised downpayments in half. The company also noted in the local newspaper that within 2 weeks of opening of phase two, all corner lots had been sold and others were selling quickly.<sup>106</sup>

By March 1954, the final 300 homes in Planz Park were reportedly underway at the southeast and northwest corners of the development. John Buckley, an “eastern contractor,” joined Whittemore for this phase of construction, with the designs by architect E.R. Kufus of Hawthorne, California. With a total estimated value of \$3.3 million, the last phase had eight house types, each improved slightly over the previous phase. According to newspaper articles, lots were slightly larger, and all homes would include two-car attached or detached garages. Fireplaces, “window walls,” patios, and 1.5 baths were included in various house models. Twenty-six of the 300 homes would be custom built and available with FHA financing—many of these were four bedrooms in size. Generally priced as low as \$9,000, the larger homes in this final phase were advertised at around \$13,500.<sup>107</sup>



**Figure 4-19. Planz Park nearly completed in 1956.**<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> “Planz Park Homes Go on Sale to Veterans,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 1, 1951, 4; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, September 1, 1951, 5; “Regulations Cut Down Payments on G.I. Homes,” *Bakersfield Californian*, September 12, 1951, 30.

<sup>107</sup> “New Planz Park Real Estate Tract of 300 Homes Valued at \$3,300,000,” *Bakersfield Californian*, March 11, 1952, 24; “7-Million-Dollar Planz Park Home Project Nears Finish,” *Bakersfield Californian*, January 9, 1954, 6 “Model Home Open House Showing Date to be Set,” *Bakersfield Californian*, February 27, 1954, 4.

<sup>108</sup> Hycon Aerial Surveys, Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-19R-32, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, August 3, 1956

Approximately 40 percent of the last homes in Planz Park were constructed within Tract 1620 (located on the southwest corner of Wilson and South H streets) and subdivided by Rex Whittemore in April 1952. It appears that this tract was built under Whittemore Homes; however, for unknown reasons, in November 1953, Whittemore sold the 40 acres of land slated for the other 60 percent of homes to McDonald Brothers, a contracting firm from El Monte, California, and its associated development company, Highland Village, Inc. Located on the southeast side of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, this land was physically separated from the rest of Planz Park. Although Whittemore was involved in its subdivision as Tract 1621, it does not appear he or his company had any hand in its further development. Instead, McDonald Brothers and its associated development company built the tract and marketed it as Highland Village. This subdivision was just one of at least three other similar tracts (also named Highland Village) that the McDonald Brothers and Highland Village constructed around the same time in Fresno, Fullerton, and Garden Grove. Bakersfield's Highland Village was sold out within 2 weeks of the opening of sales. Construction began in January 1954, the first homes were occupied in May 1954, and the tract was nearly complete in July.<sup>109</sup>



Figure 4-20. Typical streetscapes in Planz Park.

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<sup>109</sup> "New Highland Village Now Near Completion," *Bakersfield Californian*, July 10, 1954, 8; Deed, Book 2147 Page 368, recorded November 6, 1953; "Construction Starts on New Tract," *Fresno Bee*, October 18, 1953, 89; "Fullerton Tract Open," *Independent Press-Telegram* (Long Beach), November 8, 1953, 73; Many Visitors View Village, *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1954, 114.





**Figure 4-21. Typical streetscapes in Planz Park.**



**Figure 4-22. Examples of different house types in Planz Park.**



**Figure 4-23. Examples of different house types in Planz Park.**



#### 4.1.5 College Heights

The College Heights subdivision was the brainchild of Ralph L. Smith Jr., a locally well-known realtor and developer. Located in the unincorporated lands northeast of central Bakersfield, the approximate 400-acre development was bordered by Panorama and Mount Vernon drives to the north and east, respectively, River Road to the west, and Columbus Street to the south. It was subdivided by Smith and his various development companies between 1953 and 1956 and encompassed 10 separate tracts (Tracts 1680, 1684, 1699, 1700, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1795, 1796, and 1797) containing more than 1,600 residential lots and more than 15 miles of streets named after educational institutions (e.g., Yale, Harvard, Fordham). Early newspaper accounts of College Heights aptly described it as a mammoth development that was the size of a small town. Initial plans called for mostly single-family homes but also an area of multi-family residences.<sup>110</sup>

Although constructed on mostly vacant land, the new development was situated in an up-and-coming area of greater Bakersfield that included the adjacent La Cresta Heights, a large residential subdivision developed in the 1930s and 1940s immediately to the west, River Boulevard School (present-day Noble Elementary School), the site of the future Washington Middle School (on Columbus Street), and the new site for Bakersfield College at Panorama Drive and Mount Vernon. The college and school would be constructed concurrent with College Heights.

Taking its name from its proximity to the new site of Bakersfield College and its location northeast of central Bakersfield, early newspaper articles about College Heights noted it was “practically a college city” and was a \$20 million investment that would attract residents from all income brackets. Smith’s plans also called for an area of multi-family homes (closer to the college area) and development of shopping centers along the periphery (outside) of the subdivision. Lots were standard in comparison with other similar residential subdivisions, roughly between 55 and 70 feet wide and 125 feet deep (between 0.15 and 0.2 acre in size) and would contain two- and three-bedroom, 1- or 1.5-bath, wood-frame homes with approximately 50 different trim options for front façades. Alleyways provided utility and garage access (for those houses with rear garages). The homes were to be clad with stucco and/or wood siding.<sup>111</sup>

The early tracts of College Heights (west of Haley Street) were recorded in 1953 and 1954 and had a curvilinear street pattern that also employed U-loop streets with long blocks. The initial 42 building permits for homes, valued at just over \$400,000, were issued by spring 1953. The models for his initial phase, built and marketed by Smith, appear to have been constructed on Noble Avenue (within Tract 1680). By May, the first completed houses were ready for occupancy.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “College Heights Offers Many Attractions,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 9, 1953, 15; “Councilmen Squelch College Heights War,” *Bakersfield Californian*, December 18, 1953, 25.

<sup>111</sup> “College Heights Offers Many Attractions,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 9, 1953, 15; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 20, 1953, 5; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 24, 1953, 32.

<sup>112</sup> “College Heights Offers Many Attractions,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 9, 1953, 15; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 20, 1953, 5; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, July 24, 1953, 32.

Smith requested annexation to the City of Bakersfield in early 1953. Because the subdivision had no physical link to the city (as required under the Uninhabited Territory Act), Kern County relinquished land so that the city could create Panorama Park and Panorama Drive to gap the connection. The City officially annexed the 640-acre College Heights Tract, which included the Bakersfield College site, two school sites, Panorama Park, and Panorama Drive, in September 1953. Nevertheless, the annexation was met with some controversy, a result of one city councilman's somewhat personal opposition to Ralph Smith and the College Height subdivision in general. Ultimately, however, the annexation gained full support of the city council after Smith's agreement to pay considerable money for the sewer system for the tract, and the opposition was resolved in late 1953.<sup>113</sup>



Figure 4-24. Western half of College Heights (west of Haley Street) in mid-1953 (showing River Boulevard School in bottom center).<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> "649 Acres Involved in Issue," *Bakersfield California*, July 18, 1953, 15; "Bakersfield Gains New City Area," *Bakersfield California*, August 10, 1953, 17; "Councilmen Squelch College Heights War," *Bakersfield Californian*, December 18, 1953, 25; "College Heights Annexation Causes Problem," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 23, 1953, 32.

<sup>114</sup> "College Heights Offers Many Attractions," *Bakersfield Californian*, May 9, 1953, 15.



**Figure 4-25. Western half of College Heights looking north (showing River Boulevard School in bottom left corner) in July 1954.<sup>115</sup>**

The vast size of College Heights made it impossible for one contractor to build and sell all the homes. Home construction in the subdivision was primarily completed by local builders including Gannon Construction, Ken Mynatt, James R. Hewitt, Orvill Harris, Roy Wattenbarger, and Randall Presley. Each of those contractors marketed the homes they built, as did Smith and various other realtors, and most were available with GI, FHA, and Cal Vet financing.<sup>116</sup> The southern half of the subdivision was first built out with modest Postwar Minimal, Ranch- and Contemporary style residences that generally encompassed 1,000 to 1,200 square feet. Prices for these two- and three-bedroom houses ranged between \$9,000 and \$15,000, depending on the builder and the options selected.<sup>117</sup>

Among the many houses Ralph Smith marketed in College Heights was the affordable “Americana,” a model home that was located at the corner of River Boulevard and University Avenue. The Americana home came in three-bedroom/one-bath or four-bedroom/1.75-bath plans, and its size ranged between 1,000 and 1,200 square feet. It included a carport and patio and was priced between \$9,000 and \$10,000.<sup>118</sup> Randall Presley built decidedly more expensive homes in College Heights. Various newspaper advertisements list Presley homes on a College Heights lot with three bedrooms and a den for \$18,750. The same house could be purchased without a specific lot in mind for \$16,500.<sup>119</sup> As homes sold, development moved northward towards Panorama Drive and increased in size. In June 1955, Presley opened 33 more custom homes in College Heights for sale. The model, located at 1201 Shattuck Avenue, included two bedrooms and a den, two baths, two-car garage, combined forced air heat and cooling unit, wood and stucco siding, with interior hardwood floors, wood paneling, fireplace, and a rear patio with

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<sup>115</sup> “Record Construction Year in Sight for Kern,” *Bakersfield Californian*, July 31, 1954, 14.

<sup>116</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, December 3, 1953, 38; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, February 27, 1954, 27; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, January 22, 1954, 6.

<sup>117</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, December 3, 1953, 38; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, February 27, 1954, 27; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, January 22, 1954, 6;

<sup>118</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 4, 1954, 45.

<sup>119</sup> Advertisements, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 25, 1954, 26.

French doors, all for \$16,500.<sup>120</sup> The northernmost area of the subdivision came to be known as Upper College Heights. Lots fronting Panorama Drive and Princeton Avenue between Bryn Mawr Drive and Haley Street were between 0.33 and 0.5 acre in size, and the homes there appear to have been custom built. Constructed mostly between 1955 and 1956, houses in this area generally started around 2,000 square feet and included 3 to 5 bedrooms. The largest home was upward of 3,500 square feet in size. One of the smaller 3-bedroom homes on Princeton Avenue was marketed by Realtor Mark O. Deeter (the father of local builder John H. Deeter) in mid-1955 for \$27,750, or \$260,000 in 2018 dollars.<sup>121</sup> By 1957, College Heights was mostly built out.



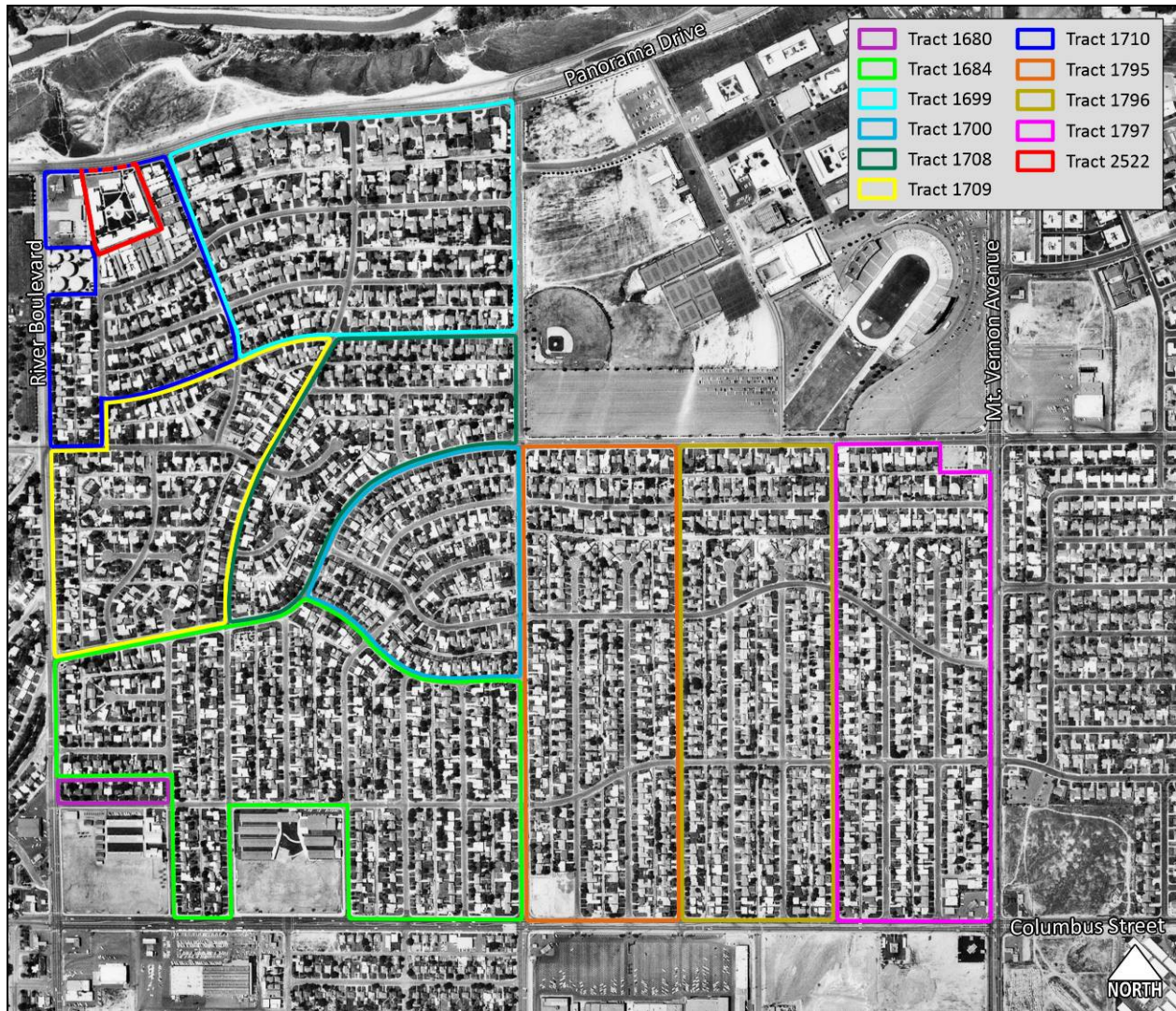
**Figure 4-26. Aerial photograph of College Heights**  
(showing Bakersfield College under construction at top right) in mid-1956.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> "Randall Presley to Open Model Home Wednesday," *Bakersfield Californian*, June 18, 1955, 21.

<sup>121</sup> Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, June 23, 1955, 45.

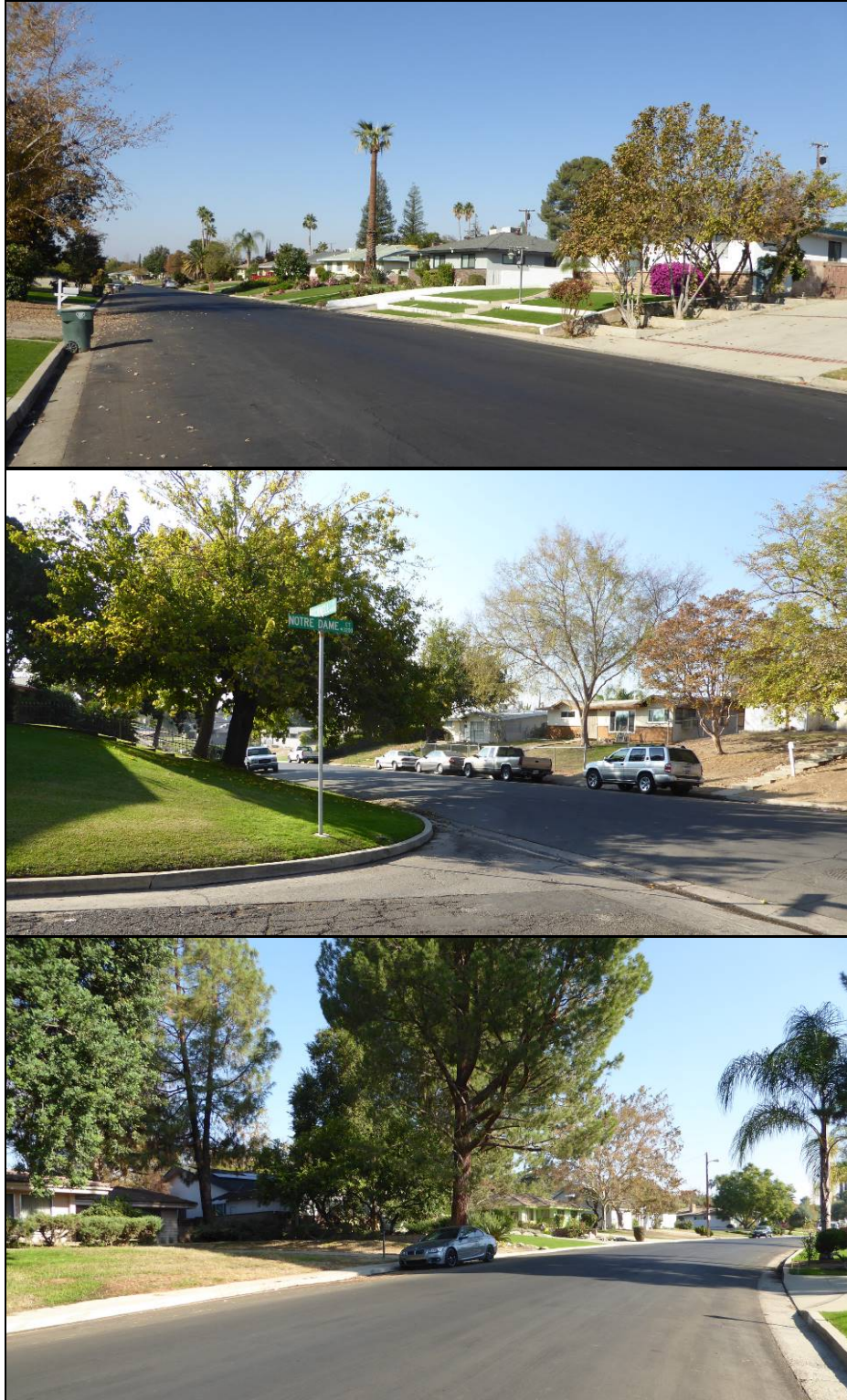
<sup>122</sup> Hycon Aerial Surveys, Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-14R-23, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, July 13, 1956.





<sup>123</sup> Western Aerial Contractors, Inc., Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-1967 6HH-119, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, May 16, 1967.





**Figure 4-28. Typical streetscapes in College Heights.**



**Figure 4-29. Typical homes in College Heights.**



**Figure 4-30. Typical homes in College Heights.**





Figure 4-31. Typical homes in College Heights.

## 4.2 Mid Postwar Years, 1960s

### 4.2.1 Kern City

Kern City represents a postwar housing development type designed to cater exclusively to the “active adult.” Although regularly referred to as a retirement community, Kern City was developed for, and restricted to, homebuyers at least 50 years of age. It is purported to be the first planned community constructed for the active older adult nearing retirement age in California and in the first wave of such development in the United States. Arizona building contractor Del E. Webb, of Del Webb Corporation, pioneered this new type of modestly priced community, geared toward the growing senior population, with his Sun City project. Located near Phoenix, Arizona, Sun City opened in January 1960 and was a resounding, instant success.<sup>124</sup>

Shortly after Sun City opened, Del Webb brought his concept to Bakersfield, joining forces with one of the largest landholders in the region, KCL (later subsumed by Tenneco Incorporated), to create a nearly identical community in California’s Central Valley. The two companies formed Stockdale Corporation to oversee all aspects of planning, sale, and construction of Kern City. While Kern City was a key development in KCL’s overall portfolio, it was the first phase of an even larger 6,000-acre planned city, which included other residential, industrial, and commercial

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<sup>124</sup> Several developers across the country marketed their projects to older adults during the 1950s, but the first known to have included actual age restrictions on ownership and residency was the Youngtown development by Ben Schliefer in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1954 (Judith Ann Trolander, *From Sun Cities to the Villages: A History of Active Adult, Age-Restricted Communities* [s.l.: University Press of Florida, 2011], 39-41, 80-81).



developments, intended for KCL's rural land along Stockdale Highway, southwest of Bakersfield (see Section 3.4.4.8).<sup>125</sup>

Under the umbrella of Stockdale Development, KCL was primarily responsible for the development of land and partial financing of Kern City. Del Webb oversaw construction and was also the big name that would bring in prospective buyers.<sup>126</sup> Described by KCL as a "total planning" concept, Kern City was conceived as a self-contained city for "active adults" of pre-retirement age with shared interests. Based on Sun City, the nearly 600-acre Kern City development provided affordable homeownership with country club amenities, as well as all the conveniences of city living for approximately 4,000 residents.<sup>127</sup> Stockdale Development enlisted the Los Angeles firm of Quinton Engineering Company for preparation of the master plan for Kern City, as well as Stockdale Country Club Estates, and the local engineering firm of Rickett, Reaves & Ward to implement the plan. By mid-1960, the first of many tracts for the development had been approved and recorded by Kern County.<sup>128</sup>

Kern City's initial phase included 750 homes and apartments (most of which were single-family residences) for a total investment of \$10.5 million. Purchases were restricted to single people or couples with at least one person aged 50 years and older. Unlike some postwar subdivisions, in which lots could be purchased separate from the home (to be built later), at Kern City, lots and homes were sold as a package deal. Construction began at the beginning of 1961 and on opening day in October an independent sewer system; a nine-hole golf course; town hall with a 700-person auditorium, kitchen facilities, and clubrooms; arts and craft center; pool with a bath house and dressing facilities; and nearby areas for games (e.g., shuffleboard, lawn bowling, croquet) had been completed. The shopping center was also nearly finished, and an area for an agricultural center for gardening had been set aside for later construction.<sup>129</sup>

As designed (**Figure 4-32**), the golf course was the focus of the development. The main entrance to Kern City was via Sundial Avenue, a wide boulevard with tree-lined median; the main community facilities (town hall, other recreational facilities, and shopping center) were located off this road. Single-family homes were located throughout the development, while most apartments were located off or near Sundial Avenue.

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<sup>125</sup> "Kern City Shop Center Opens Thursday," *Bakersfield Californian*, April 18, 1962, 33; "Kern City Begins to Mushroom Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 27, 1961, 34.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas W. Ennis, "Housing Colonies Booming on Coast," *New York Times*, May 16, 1965, R1.

<sup>127</sup> "Home is Where You Like It," *Tenneco Magazine*, Winter 1968, 22-25.

<sup>128</sup> "Kern City Prepares to Greet First of 4,000 New Residents," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 13, 1961, 25.

<sup>129</sup> "Kern City Begins to Mushroom Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 27, 1961, 34.



**Figure 4-32. Site map of Kern City in 1963.**  
**Hatched areas were to be completed after other areas had sold out.**<sup>130</sup>

More than 55,000 people from across the country visited Kern City on its opening day in October 1961, creating a mile-long traffic jam along Stockdale Highway. Prospective homebuyers had the opportunity to tour the facilities, six model homes offered at that time, as well as cooperative apartment models, designed by the local architectural firm of Eddy and Paynter. The two- and three-bedroom, wood-frame and stucco-clad homes encompassed between

<sup>130</sup> "Del Webb's Kern City," sales brochure, 1963, on file at Kern County Library, vertical file.

1,450 and 2,000 square feet. Homes included carports, covered terraces, heating and air, and built in appliances, and had the option of a “leisure room.” Affordably priced between \$11,500 and \$17,500, buyers had a choice of 16 exterior designs. The price included the lot and all its improvements (paving, curbs, sidewalks, street lights), as well as a landscaped yard. Lots averaged 0.16-acre in size, and those bordering the golf course were available for an additional fee. The ‘turn-key’ apartments were available in the \$10,500 to \$15,500 range for one- or two-bedroom plans, each with enclosed patios and carports. All homes and apartments were designed and planned for minimal maintenance<sup>131</sup>



Figure 4-33. Swimming pool at Kern City, March 1962.<sup>132</sup>

Like its predecessor in Arizona, Kern City was an instant success. A few weeks after opening, Stockdale Development Corporation reported \$1.2 million in sales. To ensure continued sales, Stockdale Development launched a nationwide advertising campaign for Kern City in *Life Magazine* and *Reader's Digest*. By the end of 1961, the construction of homes was underway and the first were occupied by mid-February 1962. The “40,000-square-foot Ranch-style” Kern City Shopping Center, also designed by Eddy and Paynter, officially opened 2 months later and included a grocery, drugstore, nursery, laundromat, and barber shop. A post office was also located in the center and served the adjacent Stockdale Estates, which was underway at that time by Stockdale Development, as well as other developments in the surrounding areas. A bank, service station, restaurant, and five and dime variety store later opened at the center.<sup>133</sup> The

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<sup>131</sup> “55,000 Visit Kern City Over Week End,” *Bakersfield Californian*, October 9, 1961, 21; “First Unit of \$1 Million Kern City Shopping Center to Open April 12,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1962, I5; “Kern City Shop Center Opens Thursday,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 18, 1962, 33; “Units at Kern City Maintenance-Free,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1963, F10; Grace Kreiser, “\$10 Million Retirement Center Opened in Bakersfield District,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 1961, II.

<sup>132</sup> “Kern City,” *PG&E Progress*, March 1962, 3.

<sup>133</sup> “Kern City Homes to be Ready in Mid-February,” *Bakersfield Californian*, December 29, 1961, 16; “First Unit of \$1 Million Kern City Shopping Center to Open April 12,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1962, I5; “Kern City Shop Center Opens Thursday,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 18, 1962, 33; “Units at Kern City Maintenance-Free,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1963, F10. Rossmoor Leisure World, a retirement community in Seal Beach, Orange County, developed by Ross W. Cortese’s development company, opened a short time after Kern City,



championship golf course, designed by nationally known golf course architect Arthur Jack Snyder, was augmented with an additional nine holes by 1963.<sup>134</sup>



Figure 4-34. The Kern City Shopping Center, April 1962.<sup>135</sup>

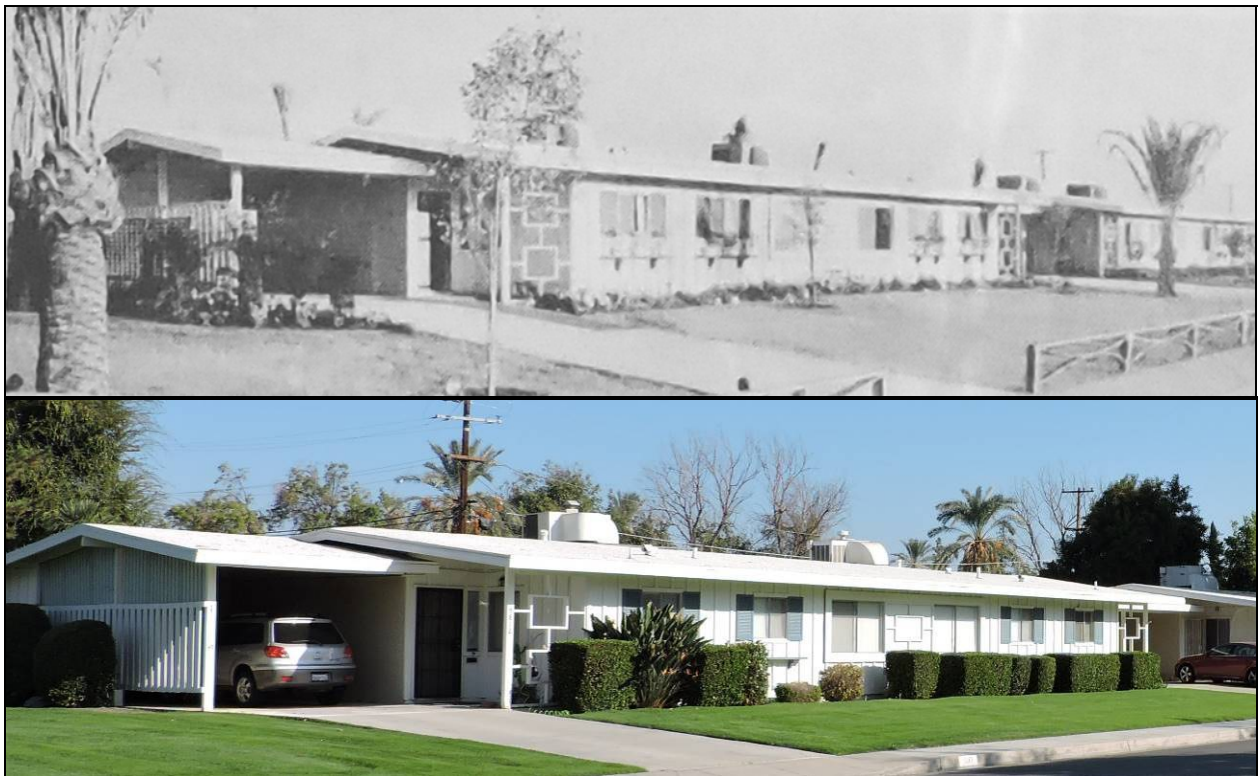


Figure 4-35. Cooperative apartments at Kern City, March 1962 (top) and in 2017 (bottom).<sup>136</sup>

with residents over age 52 first moving into cooperative apartments beginning in June 1962. *Long Beach Independent Press-Telegram*, March 11, June 9, 1962.

<sup>134</sup> "Kern City Begins to Mushroom Here," *Bakersfield Californian*, September 27, 1961, 34; "Golf is a Must in Webb's Retirement Cities," *Golfdom*, June 1962, 24; "Kern City Prepares to Greet First of 4,000 New Residents," *Bakersfield Californian*, October 13, 1961, 25.

<sup>135</sup> Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, April 26, 1962, 30.

<sup>136</sup> "Kern City," *PG&E Progress*, March 1962, 3.

By August 1964, 468 homes and apartments had been completed at Kern City.<sup>137</sup> Sales brochures from the previous year depicted 18 different house models, all Ranch-style houses, some with tempered Rustic and Storybook architectural details, that homebuyers could choose from. The home design options had traditional names like the Coronado, Cromwell, and Monticello. Home prices were on the rise, both regionally and nationwide, resulting in an entry-level home, like the Meadowgrove, priced at \$12,000, while the higher-end homes, like the Norfolk were priced at \$17,500 (**Figure 4-36**). Carports and garages (either one- or two-car) were additional costs, as was air conditioning and any lot that adjoined the fairway.<sup>138</sup>



**Figure 4-36. Artist renditions of Kern City's Meadowgrove (top) and Norfolk (bottom) homes, 1963.**

House sales in California fell dramatically in 1964. One newspaper article noted that in Los Angeles, there was a surplus of new homes on the market. At Kern City, only around 50 homes had been constructed since the same time the previous year. Del Webb's vice president noted that there was no definitive schedule for the completion of Kern City and that building would continue as demand warranted.<sup>139</sup>

Development of Kern City continued at a steady pace during late 1960s and early 1970s, even after, in mid-1967, Kern City announced a change to its program—it now would allow custom homes to be individually built. The “minimum-care homes” that Kern City was noted for would

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<sup>137</sup> Jim M. Milligan, “California . . . Home of City Builders,” *Mueller Record*, December 1964, 14.

<sup>138</sup> “Del Webb's Kern City,” sales brochure, 1963, on file at Kern County Library, vertical file.

<sup>139</sup> Ennis, “Housing Colonies Booming on Coast,” R1.



still be developed. By the late 1960s, single-family homes were priced between \$15,000 and \$24,700, while apartments were in the \$13,000 to \$16,000 range.<sup>140</sup>



Figure 4-37. Aerial photograph of Kern City, May 1967.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>140</sup> "Kern City Has New Program, *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1967, N21; "Home is Where You Like It," *Tenneco Magazine*, Winter 1968, 22-25.

<sup>141</sup> Western Aerial Contractors, Inc., Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-1967 5HH-277, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, May 16, 1967.



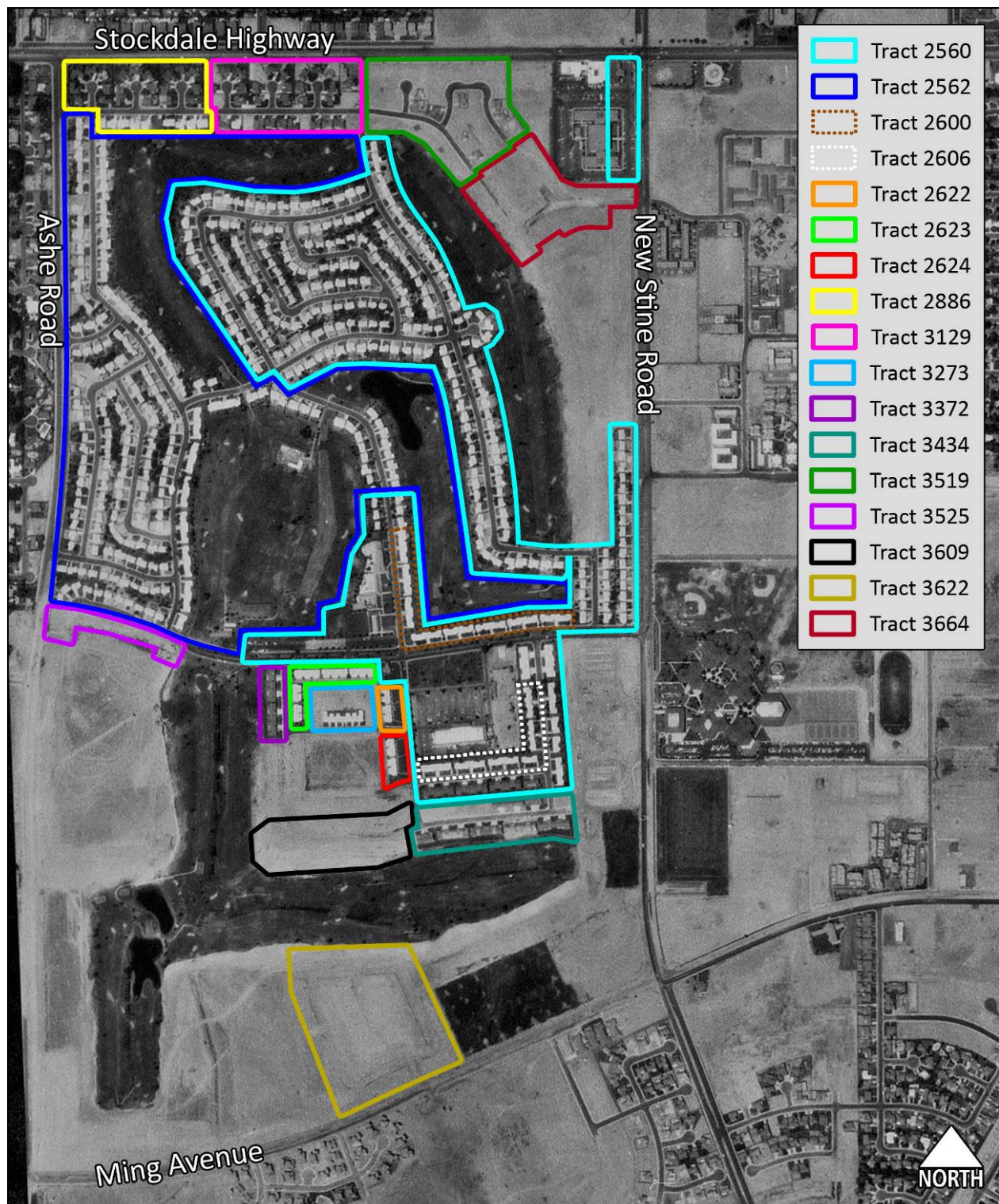


Figure 4-38. Aerial photograph of Kern City, September 1972.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Cartwright Aerial Surveys, Aerial Photography Kern County, CAS-3390-41, September 11, 1972.

Kern City had 875 homes occupied by approximately 1,200 residents by 1973, but the community fell dramatically short of its originally anticipated population of 4,000. Citing declining revenue, the Kern City Shopping Center closed in that fall. To replace the retail center, which was also used by its other nearby subdivisions like Park Stockdale and Stockdale Estates, Stockdale Development built a new shopping center at California and Stockdale Highway and the Kern High School District took over the former shopping center buildings. The former shopping center has since been substantially remodeled.<sup>143</sup> Stockdale Development filled in the remaining portions of the Kern City development during the next decade. Much of the southern half of the original tract boundaries, which the City of Bakersfield annexed in 1969, were eventually built as traditional residential subdivisions and not part of the adult community. The remaining portion of Kern City was eventually annexed by the City in 1983.



**Figure 4-39. View of Sundial Avenue looking northwest from Pebble Beach Drive.**

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<sup>143</sup> “Few Complain Over Loss of Center,” *Bakersfield Californian*, June 2, 1973, 11-12.





**Figure 4-40. Typical streetscape views in Kern City.**



**Figure 4-41. Typical early residences in Kern City.**



Figure 4-42. Typical later residences in Kern City.



Figure 4-43. Typical cooperative apartments in Kern City.

#### 4.2.2 Westfair Park

Westfair Park was a small residential tract developed by Fairway Development and Land Company in southwest Bakersfield. Bordered by Wilson Road to the north, Planz Road to the south, and Hughes Lane to the east, the 80-acre subdivision included four tracts (Tracts 2335, 2438, 2521, and 2843) that were subdivided between 1960 and 1963. Located in an already annexed section of Bakersfield, the \$1.5 million investment was announced in early spring 1960 by Forrest A. Cassady, president of Fairway Development. The subdivision was laid out with a linear street pattern, with standard-size residential lots ranging in size between 0.15 and 0.19 acre. Interior cul-de-sacs were included on the north and south ends of the development. Homes in Westfair Park are various Ranch types, many built in the Rustic, Storybook, or Asiatic substyles.<sup>144</sup>

The initial phase of the Westfair Park development was a 100-lot tract fronting Wilson Road. The infrastructure (e.g., streets, curbs, sidewalks) was in place and early construction of some homes underway by April 1960. Along with Fairway Development, several other local builders constructed homes in the subdivision. The most notable was J.L. Dandy Company, which had purchased 40 of the lots by that time. Fairway and Dandy each had five available models for

<sup>144</sup> “100-Home Subdivision Set for Southwest Area,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 11, 1960, 25.



sale, each with distinct floorplans with prices beginning at \$14,500, or about \$120,000 in 2018 dollars.<sup>145</sup>



Figure 4-44. Aerial photograph of Westfair Park showing construction in June 1961.<sup>146</sup>

By late 1961, Westfair was advertised in newspapers offering custom-quality homes with diverse styles for “tract prices”—\$14,500 to \$18,000. All homes had either three or four bedrooms and two baths. Available Dandy homes were 1,250- to 1,500-square-foot Ranch or Contemporary houses, with service porches and fireplaces. Perhaps to lure in prospective buyers, Dandy was selling three of its homes at reduced pricing, and FHA, Cal Vet, and conventional loans were accepted. Al Shutz Construction Company also built several homes in the southern half of the development where an advertisement described one example, priced at \$16,950, as having wall-to-wall carpeting and an oversized garage (Figure 4-45).<sup>147</sup> J.F. Smith Corporation, another builder working on the project, constructed two-story homes in Westfair. Marketed by Ralph Smith to growing families, they had four bedrooms and encompassed upwards of 1,800 square feet for the affordable price of \$18,000. Other one-story Smith homes were offered around the same price.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> “100-Home Subdivision Set for Southwest Area,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 11, 1960, 25; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 3, 1961, 37.

<sup>146</sup> Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys, Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-1961 2bb-128, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, June 10, 1961.

<sup>147</sup> “100-Home Subdivision Set for Southwest Area,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 11, 1960, 25; Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 3, 1961, 37.

<sup>148</sup> Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, November 4, 1961, 6.

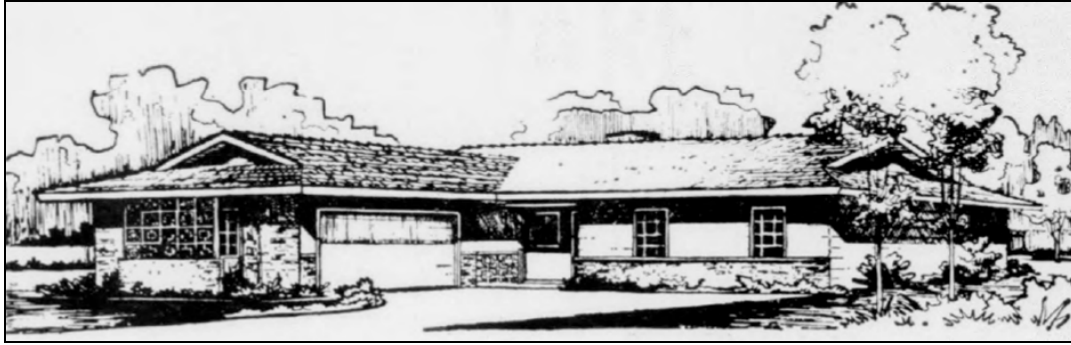


Figure 4-45. Example of a Westfair Park residence constructed by Al Schultz Construction Company in 1961.<sup>149</sup>



Figure 4-46. A two-story house in Westfair Park built by J. F. Smith Corporation.



Figure 4-47. Westfair Park nearing completion in 1967.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Advertisement, *Bakersfield Californian*, October 3, 1961, 37.





**Figure 4-48. Typical view of streetscapes in Tract 2521 of Westfair Park.**



**Figure 4-49. Typical view of streetscapes in Tract 2335 of Westfair Park.**



**Figure 4-50. Examples of different house types in Westfair Park.**

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<sup>150</sup> Western Aerial Contractors, Inc., Aerial Photography Kern County, Flight ABL-1967 5HH-278, flown for the US Department of Agriculture, Commodity Stabilization Service, May 16, 1967.



Figure 4-51. Examples of an Asiatic-style Ranch house and two-story residence in Westfair Park.

### 4.3 Late Postwar Years, 1968-1973

#### 4.3.1 Quailwood

The Quailwood subdivision is comprised of a dozen or so residential tracts subdivided and developed in the 1970s and early 1980s by Stockdale Development Corporation (Section 3.4.4.8) as part of the company's 6,000-acre city planned along Stockdale Highway southwest of central Bakersfield. Bordered to the south by Stockdale Highway and the north by the Kern River and Carrier Canal, the approximately 275-acre development includes land roughly between Partridge Avenue and Coffee Road. By the time the first tract (Tract 3614) in Quailwood was subdivided in early 1973, Stockdale Development was advertising the general “Stockdale” project as a community comprised of multiple “villages,” each representing a common shared lifestyle for its residents. Kern City (as discussed in Section 3.2.1) was the first of Stockdale Development’s villages developed in the early 1960s, but it also included nearby Stockdale Estates, Park Stockdale, West Park, and Sagepoint, all of which were built or under development by 1972. A master-planned community built on land previously zoned for agriculture, Quailwood was intended to provide satellite housing for Cal State Bakersfield, which was sited along the south side of Stockdale Highway, diagonally across from the new development. Quailwood was designed to include 1,600 single-family residences, fourplexes, and apartments, as well as a park, three schools, and a shopping center. The developers and City planners anticipated a population of approximately 4,000 residents when fully built out.<sup>151</sup>

The development area had already been annexed by the City of Bakersfield between 1969 and 1972, but zoning of a portion was deferred because some residents in Stockdale Estates objected to the density of the development, some citing the purported high vacancy rate of existing apartment buildings in the area. Initial plans for Quailwood called for the development to include 392 residences, 524 fourplex units, and 638 multi-family units when fully built out.<sup>152</sup> The first tract was subdivided and recorded at the County in early 1973. Located on the easternmost border of the overall development, it included 44 lots for single-family residences, roughly

<sup>151</sup> “Debate Ends in Delay in Tract Zoning,” *Bakersfield California*, December 5, 1972, 9-10; “Stockdale Growth Continues,” *Bakersfield California*, September 2, 1973, 15A.

<sup>152</sup> “Debate Ends in Delay in Tract Zoning,” *Bakersfield California*, December 5, 1972, 9-10.



ranging in size between 0.18 and 0.20-acre fronting Partridge Avenue and Chukkar Lane. Most of the homes in this initial tract were complete by the beginning of 1975. A similar-sized and adjacent tract was subdivided to the west in 1974, but construction of this area was not initiated until 1975. Overall, the Quailwood subdivision streets were laid out in a linear fashion, with secondary roads ending in cul-de-sacs. Lots were mostly 110-foot-deep rectangular with frontages between 60 and 80 feet wide. Quailwood Park, adjacent to a site for a future school, formed the focal point of the development. Development of the community continued westward, with the last tract subdivided in 1983. Multi-family housing was sited in the southwestern portion of the development and was built after 1975.<sup>153</sup>

Advertisements for Quailwood promoted it as an all-inclusive neighborhood with spacious lots, proximity to Cal State Bakersfield, new public schools, parks, and a shopping center. Homes were constructed by local builders Gannon Construction and Stewart & Wattenbarger. Like many of the homes in other Stockdale Development subdivisions, Quailwood homes were largely one-story, Ranch-style residences with a combination of siding mostly consisting of concrete block and board-and-batten or stucco siding. Houses were generally built with attached, two-car garages that were prominently placed on the main façade. Homes in the later phases of the development were derivative of the previous phases (and other homes being built in Stockdale around the same time); however, the lots backing up to the Kern River, along Saddleback Drive, which included larger 1-acre lots, were developed with custom-built residences beginning in 1975 and were also zoned for the minimum number of horses.<sup>154</sup>



Figure 4-52. Development of Quailwood in January 1975.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Aerial Photography Kern County, 8M-832-2848, January 31, 1975.

<sup>154</sup> Advertisement, *Bakersfield California*, December 28, 1975, 45; "Patriots Park Funds are Allocated," *Bakersfield California*, June 16, 1973, 11; Advertisement, *Bakersfield California*, August 21, 1977, 8.

<sup>155</sup> Aerial Photography Kern County, 8M-832-2848, January 31, 1975.



Figure 4-53. Development of Quailwood in 1981.<sup>156</sup>



Figure 4-54. Typical streetscape view in Tract 3641 of Quailwood.

<sup>156</sup> Aerial Photography Kern County, IR-81-2244, May 1, 1981.





**Figure 4-55. Examples of homes built along Partridge Avenue and Chukkar Lane between 1974 and 1975 in the first two tracts of Quailwood.**



**Figure 4-56. Examples of homes built along Pheasant Avenue and Chukkar Lane between 1974 and 1975 in the first two tracts of Quailwood.**

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## 5. CONCLUSION

That the emergence of large-scale residential tract housing development in cities and suburbs was a common feature of the landscape throughout much of California and the U.S. in the post-World War II period makes it no less extraordinary chapter in the history of the state and nation, not to mention individual communities. When examined from a historical perspective, there is no question that postwar subdivisions were a defining aspect of the era. The enduring dream of owning a freestanding, single-family house, setback on a landscaped yard with lawn, became reality for millions of Americans in the postwar period whose parents likely had much more limited housing possibilities available to them.

This historical review and research focus on the key postwar housing subdivisions in and around Bakersfield, from the period between the late 1940s and early 1970s, reveals it to largely reflect what was happening elsewhere in the housing industry in many areas of California and certain parts of the nation, including echoing its architectural forms and styles. This study used and expanded upon the themes and broad contexts identified in Caltrans' pioneering *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation* (2011), using the study as a broad lens through which to take a comprehensive and detailed look at the important postwar single-family residential developments built on a mass-scale within the City of Bakersfield and immediately adjacent areas. It should be noted that while JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, was tasked with selecting key postwar tract developments, the scope of the present study did not extend to formally evaluating these developments using the eligibility criteria of either the National Register or California Register to determine their significance, and nor did the current study involve assessing whether these tracts possessed the necessary integrity required of historic properties and districts.

This report presents historical information and details on Greater Bakersfield area postwar housing tracts, including providing the results of research conducted on important individuals in the industry and the most prominent architectural styles, nowhere else previously compiled in a single study. The report is intended to serve both as an interesting chapter in local history for a general reading audience and as a useful background and reference for future local historic preservation surveys or cultural resources surveys. Several examples of postwar tract development themes that were broadly defined in the Caltrans contextual study cited above were also found to be represented at the local level within Bakersfield, among them, for example, a subdivision reflecting a preassembled off-site house construction method, another a pioneering residential housing development specifically developed for older Americans, and in general, the evolving trends in Mid-Century residential architecture and design, and including for a short while, the incorporation of fallout shelters at some private residential properties during the height of the Cold War.

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## **7. PREPARERS' QUALIFICATIONS**

Rebecca Meta Bunse (M.A., History–Public History, California State University, Sacramento) meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards for both historian and architectural historian. Ms. Bunse, who is a partner at JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, has more than 28 years of experience as a consulting historian on a wide variety of historical research and cultural resource management projects. She has conducted research and field evaluation for historic architectural surveys and cultural resources management projects throughout California. She served as the project manager for this project, directing JRP project historians, and coordinating with Parsons cultural resources staff.

Toni Webb (B.F.A., Historic Preservation, Savannah College of Art & Design) has more than 18 years of experience in public history and historic preservation. She meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards for architectural historian. She has conducted research and field evaluation for historic architectural surveys throughout California. Ms. Webb served as the lead architectural historian for this project, conducting and directing research, reconnaissance survey, and report preparation.

Cheryl Brookshear (M.S., Historic Preservation, University of Pennsylvania) assisted with field reconnaissance and research for this project. Ms. Brookshear is an architectural historian with JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, with 10 years of experience. Ms. Brookshear qualifies as an architectural historian under the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (as defined in 36 CFR Part 61).

Additional JRP technical staff and research assistants who assisted in research, fieldwork, and preparation of the report and illustrations include Rebecca Flores (GIS Technician II) and Shelby Kendrick (M.A., History–Public History, California State University, Sacramento).



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## **Appendix**

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## Appendix A

### Key Postwar Tracts Considered for This Study

1. Westchester\* (subdivided 1945/built out 1948-ca. 1964)
2. Gannon Gardens Nos. 1 & 2\* (subdivided 1949-1950/built out 1950)
3. Hillcrest (subdivided 1948-58/built out 1948-ca. 1955)
4. Rancho Vista\* (subdivided 1950/built out 1950-ca. 1956)
5. Washington Park (subdivided 1949/ built out 1950-ca. 1951)
6. College Heights\* (subdivided 1953-1956/built out 1953-ca. 1959)
7. Planz Park\* (subdivided 1950-1953/built out 1951-1954)
8. Stockdale Manor (subdivided 1954-1955/built out 1955-ca. 1957)
9. Benton Park (subdivided 1955-1957/built out 1955-ca. 1957)
10. Westfair Park\* (subdivided 1960-1964/built out 1960-1966)
11. Kern City\* (subdivided 1961-1978/built out 1962-ca. 1978)
12. Lou Mar Village (subdivided 1961/built out 1961-1964)
13. Stockdale Estates (subdivided 1961-1972/built out 1962-ca. 1968)
14. Westhaven (subdivided 1963-1966/built out 1965-ca. 1970)
15. Oldham's West Park (subdivided 1968-1969/built out 1968-1972)
16. Watenbarger Tract (subdivided 1972-1974/built out 1972-1975)
17. Pinon Springs Village (subdivide 1972-1974/built out 1972-1976)
18. Quailwood\* (subdivided 1973-1978/built out 1974-ca. 1985)

*\* Asterisk indicates the eight postwar housing developments ultimately selected as subjects of this study.*

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