

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Avenel Cooperative Housing Project

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 2839-2849 Avenel Street NA  not for publication

city or town Los Angeles NA  vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90039

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Steph D. Muhl DSHPD 12/19/04  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Robert Beall Signature of the Keeper  
Date of Action 2/27/05

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Domestic: multiple dwelling** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Domestic: multiple dwelling** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Modern** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **concrete** \_\_\_\_\_

roof **composition** \_\_\_\_\_

walls **cement plaster** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

other **textured glass** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Avenel Housing Association Project**

Name of Property

**Los Angeles County, CA**

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture**

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**Period of Significance**

**1947**

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**Significant Dates**

**1947**

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**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**NA**

**Cultural Affiliation**

**NA**

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**Architect/Builder**

**Ain, Gregory**

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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**Avenel Housing Association Project**

Name of Property

**Los Angeles County, CA**

County and State

**10. Geographical Data****Acreage of Property** less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	383100	3774900	3		
2				4		

 See continuation sheet.**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title **Gordon Olschlager, Architect**organization **Avenel Housing Association** datestreet & number **2847 1/2 Avenel Street** telephone **213.943.4684**city or town **Los Angeles** state **CA** zip code **90039****Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Avenel Housing Association**street & number **2847 1/2 Avenel Street** telephone **213.943.4684**city or town **Los Angeles** state **CA** zip code **90039****Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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City of Los Angeles,  
County of Los Angeles, California

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**Narrative Description**

The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project is an outstanding example of attached multi-family housing in Southern California built in the International Style. Master-architect Gregory Ain designed it in 1947 in the Silver Lake District of the City of Los Angeles on lots 32, 33 and the northerly one-half of lot 34, Block 10, of the Ivanhoe Tract. The property measures 120 feet by 240 feet and is approximately 1/2 acre. The property consists of two five-unit buildings on two sixty feet by two hundred and forty feet deep terraces with views of the surrounding hillsides. The buildings are wood framed structures with cement plaster exteriors, horizontal window bands and flat roofs. Each terrace has five one-story contiguous residential units arranged perpendicular to the street with the narrow end of the units facing onto Avenel Street. Ten garage stalls are provided off Avenel Street that tuck under the front units. The project embodies the principles of the International Style of Architecture. Characteristics of the style expressed in this development include an emphasis on horizontal lines and continuous interior spaces that open one into another rather than separated by rigid walls. It appears likely that Garrett Eckbo was associated with the original landscape design. The original landscape design included specimen trees along the walkway and in each rear yard. These include Carob, Pepper, Chinese Elm and Pittosporiums. Landscape beds were planted with an ivy ground cover and cup of gold vines cover the entrance trellises. The property generally appears as it was built with some minor plan and elevation changes that are fully described at the end of this section.

The Landscape Architect is listed in the book, A Guide to the Architecture of Southern California, as Bashford and Barlow. It is the opinion of Dr. Robert Winter, one of the authors of the book that this is probably not correct and that Garrett Eckbo was the Landscape Architect. The book California Gardens, by Winifred Starr Dobyens contains a biography of Katherine Bashford indicating that she retired from practice in 1943, 5 years before Avenel was built. The Gregory Ain Archives at the University of California Santa Barbara contain a planting plan for the Avenel Cooperative with the name Marjorie Horton. The archive also contains a New York Times article dated August 14, 1946, which states that Garret Eckbo was drawing up plans for the complex. Eckbo and Ain collaborated on several other projects including the Mar Vista Tract and an unbuilt housing development in Reseda, California. According to Dorothy Brant, one of the original owners, the Housing Association retained Garrett Eckbo as the Landscape Architect. The Eckbo archive at the University of California at Berkeley does not have a record of a landscape plan for The Avenel Cooperative.

Each of the units is rotated fifteen degrees from the lot line to take advantage of the afternoon sun at the suggestion of Serril Gerber, one of the original owners. On the exterior the massing of the buildings are arranged according to the distribution of interior volumes and punctuated by doors and windows where required by functions of the spaces inside. A flat roof with projecting

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overhangs that shade window and door openings characterizes the building exterior. The main façade features a grid window system that consists of fifteen panes of obscure glass above the upper right side of the garages. Painted wood clerestory and casement windows is a major design feature on the walkway facades while the south façade features floor to ceiling glass facing the view. Each unit has a unique curved wall that encloses a service yard adjacent to the front entry. The exterior walls were finished in dusty rose integral colored sand finished stucco.

The units are entered from a common open-air walkway on each terrace. The kitchen area is located to the right from the unit entry and is separated from the main living space with a doorway. This separation was not part of the original design and was added at the request of the Federal Housing Administration who provided the original financing. The floor plan of each unit is approximately one thousand square feet. The plan features two interior sliding walls that allow for the unit to be converted from a three bedroom to a two or one bedroom home. The open character of the plan continues with a sliding glass wall extending the living space onto an exterior terrace. The two rear bedrooms can be combined into a single master-suite with a sliding wall panel inserted into the corridor leading to the bedrooms.

Original interior finishes included gypsum wallboard with a 3/8 inch plaster veneer, plywood paneling, a triangular wood baseboard, vinyl composition tile on the floor, and four by eight foot celotex ceiling panels. The doors and windows are trimmed with a one-quarter round plaster molding. Clerestory windows on the north side provide light to the kitchen, entry hall, bathroom, and rear bedroom. The main living space features a three-panel glass window wall that extended the full length of the room. This feature allowed for the living space to be extended onto the exterior terrace and embodies one the unique features of this style in Southern California blurring the distinction between indoor and outdoor space.

The following changes have been made from the original building construction:

The original roof overhang has been altered on the terrace side of all by one unit to increase the unit floor area. The window wall location was moved out to the original overhang line and new overhangs were added that maintain the spirit of the original design and the relationship of indoor/outdoor space. Five units have incorporated updated kitchens with an open plan. The window units at the living space and bedrooms that face the view are not original in all but one unit. The original integral colored plaster has been painted a gray/green color, while the original white trim color has been maintained. Several window sashes on the walkway side have been replaced with new sashes to match the original. The party walls between units have sound insulation material added. The original four by eight foot celotex ceiling board has been replaced in six of the ten units due to deterioration with gypsum board panels. Six of the original specimen trees remain on the site. The ivy ground cover has been removed at most of the units and replaced with a variety of landscape treatments.

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The changes noted above are reversible and have not diminished the overall character of the plan, the building exterior, and the original 1947 plan remains in the spirit of Ain's design. In recent rehabilitation projects a service porch enclosure has been removed from six of the units restoring their original exterior appearance. All of the residents have a deep appreciation for project and the unique sense of community fostered by its architectural design. Refer to the attached site/floor plan for a graphic depiction of changes that have occurred to the floor plan:

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

All contemporary photographs were taken by Gordon A. Olschlager and the negatives are located at the Avenel Home Owners Association as follows:

Avenel Home Owners Association  
2847 ½ Avenel Street  
Los Angeles, California 90039  
323.662.4219

All Photographs were taken in February of 2004

Contemporary Photograph Description (refer to key map site/floor plan for locations of photo views):

1. Avenel Street Façade, view looking north, (negative number 2628-4A)
2. Window Wall Detail, view looking northeast, (negative number 2628-2A)
3. Entry Trellis Detail, view looking southwest, (negative number 2628-1A)
4. Walkway Façade, view looking north, (negative number 2628-6A)
5. Unit Entry Door, view looking west, (negative number 2628-14A)
6. Sliding Wall Detail, view looking southeast, (negative number 2628-13A)
7. Glass Wall Detail, view looking northwest, (negative number 2628-8A)

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project is significant under Criteria C because it is a major work of the Master Architect, Gregory Ain. The project is also important because it is unique among the attached multi-family developments in Southern California that exemplify all the characteristics of what became known as the International Style. Gregory Ain held a deep concern for building affordable housing that could embody the emerging principles of the modernist movement in architecture. His architectural practice was dominated by custom single-family home design. The Avenel Cooperative gave Ain the opportunity to fulfill his goal of affordable housing and resulted in a unique project in his career. It is also significant as a unique social experiment in a shared communal living experience fostered by the post war housing shortage in Southern California.

Gregory Ain was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on March 28, 1908. His family moved to Southern California in 1911. He graduated from USC with a degree in architecture in 1927 and set out on a career that was shaped by the socialist political philosophy of his father and was affected by the prolonged economic depression of the formative years of his life. He apprenticed with Richard Neutra and Rudolf M. Schindler. Working with two of American's nationally renowned architects strongly affected his approach to design.

From Nuetra he derived his predilection for imagery that was meant to be read as modern and from Schindler the use of inexpensive building materials such as plywood. He spent his entire career concentrating on housing with an intense desire to create low cost practical designs utilizing prefabrication. He built almost exclusively for the emerging dominant middle class of the Twentieth Century. Ain's contribution to housing design was recognized in 1950 by the invitation of Philip Johnson, FAIA, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, to build an exhibit house in the museum courtyard. He is now considered one of the seminal residential architects working in Los Angeles in the Mid-century Modern period. He has been recognized for his contribution to housing typologies that make efficient use of space, have open flexible living areas, and clean function design that characterize the Mid-century Modern aesthetics.

The term International Style was first used in 1932 at an exhibit held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City organized by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. This exhibit was held to recognize the influence of the Germany's Bauhaus on contemporary design by its founders Mies Van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. Unlike classical styles of architecture and design, which could be identified by specific ornamental details and features, the International Style derived it aesthetic appearance by expressing in plan and elevation the functional and

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program requirements of the project. The structural system was often expressed as part of the architectural design. The use of ornamentation was avoided in favor of clearly expressing the materials used in construction in often-innovative ways. Notable examples of International Style multi-family housing in Southern California include; The Manola Court Apartments, 1926-1928, Rudolph Schindler, The Landfair Apartments, 1937, Richard Neutra, The Strathmore Apartments, 1937, Richard Neutra, The Dunsmuir Flats, 1937, by Gregory Ain. The Falk Apartments, 1938 by Rudolph Schindler, The Bubeshko Apartments, 1938, by Rudolph Schindler, The Kelton Apartments, 1942, by Richard Neutra, The Elkay Apartments, 1948, by Richard Neutra, and the Courtyard Apartments, 1952, by Craig Ellwood.

The Village Green Housing Project in Baldwin Hills by Reginald Johnson, known for his period revival work, is another noted example of the modern movement in multi-family residential design. Johnson interpreted modernism in a way that was not a complete departure, as in Ain's work, from conventional design. In this project Johnson blended International Style elements such as planar walls with punched window openings and hip roof forms.

The Avenel Cooperative stands out among these projects because it was not a commercial real estate project where the developer maximized the number of units allowed on the site. It is a particularly interesting example of the International Style because of its unique site and floor plan layout. Ten families approached Gregory Ain with a site they acquired and a program to suit their need for affordable housing. This opportunity allowed Ain to incorporate unique design features not found in these other multi-housing projects. The fact that it was only ten units allowed for single story construction and a unique saw tooth floor plan created by rotating the units 15 degrees to the lot line and staggering them. Other unique features include single loaded open air corridors, natural light and ventilation on both sides of each unit, significant terraces with prime views of the surrounding hillsides, and sliding interior partitions allowing for flexibility in the plan. Unlike the other multi-family projects mentioned above, which relied on the machine aesthetic utilizing large expanses of steel framed curtain wall glass, the Avenel Cooperative was built using conventional wood frame construction to achieve its affordability.

The Avenel Cooperative Housing Project is an excellent example of the application of the principles of "The International Style" to residential architecture in Southern California. The balmy climate of Southern California contributed to a unique aspect of the International Style specific to Los Angeles by allowing the extension of interior living areas to an at grade exterior terrace blurring the distinction between indoor and outdoor space.

The project's unique plan can also be attributed to the collaboration between the ten families that pooled their resources to purchase a building site in Los Angeles in 1946. The ten families created the Avenel Housing Association, a California Corporation, in May of 1946. The original participants included: Carl and Dorothy Brant, Howland and Leona Chamberlin, Emerson and

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Helen Daggett, Fred and Davida Franchi, Serril and Lillian Gerber, Mathew and Ruth Richman, Joseph and Sarah Ruja, Max and Rita Lawrence, Grant and Elizabeth Mickelson and Fred Graff. Each of the ten families received 2500 shares in the Avenel Housing Association. The complex remained a cooperative form of ownership until 1991 when it was converted to a condominium ownership. The communal relationship of the individual owners and the project design has facilitated a unique sense of community while maintaining privacy for each homeowner not found in the typical suburban tract house or multi-family developments. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) program Title 608, guaranteed the loan with The First Security National Bank of Los Angeles. The participation of the FHA helped make this endeavor a truly affordable housing project. This FHA program was discontinued in 1949 forever ending the opportunity for small ventures like Avenel in favor of larger commercial developments.

The project has been recognized for its unique contribution to American middle class housing in numerous architectural journals and national publications. It was photographed at the time of its completion by the renowned architectural photographer Julius Shulman.

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**Geographical Data**

**Boundary Description**

Ivanhoe Tract P.M. 149-4-5, Block 10, Lot Numbers 32, 33, and North ½ of Lot 34, City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, California

**Boundary Justification**

The property boundary is that which has always been associated with the property.

5434 26  
SHEET 1

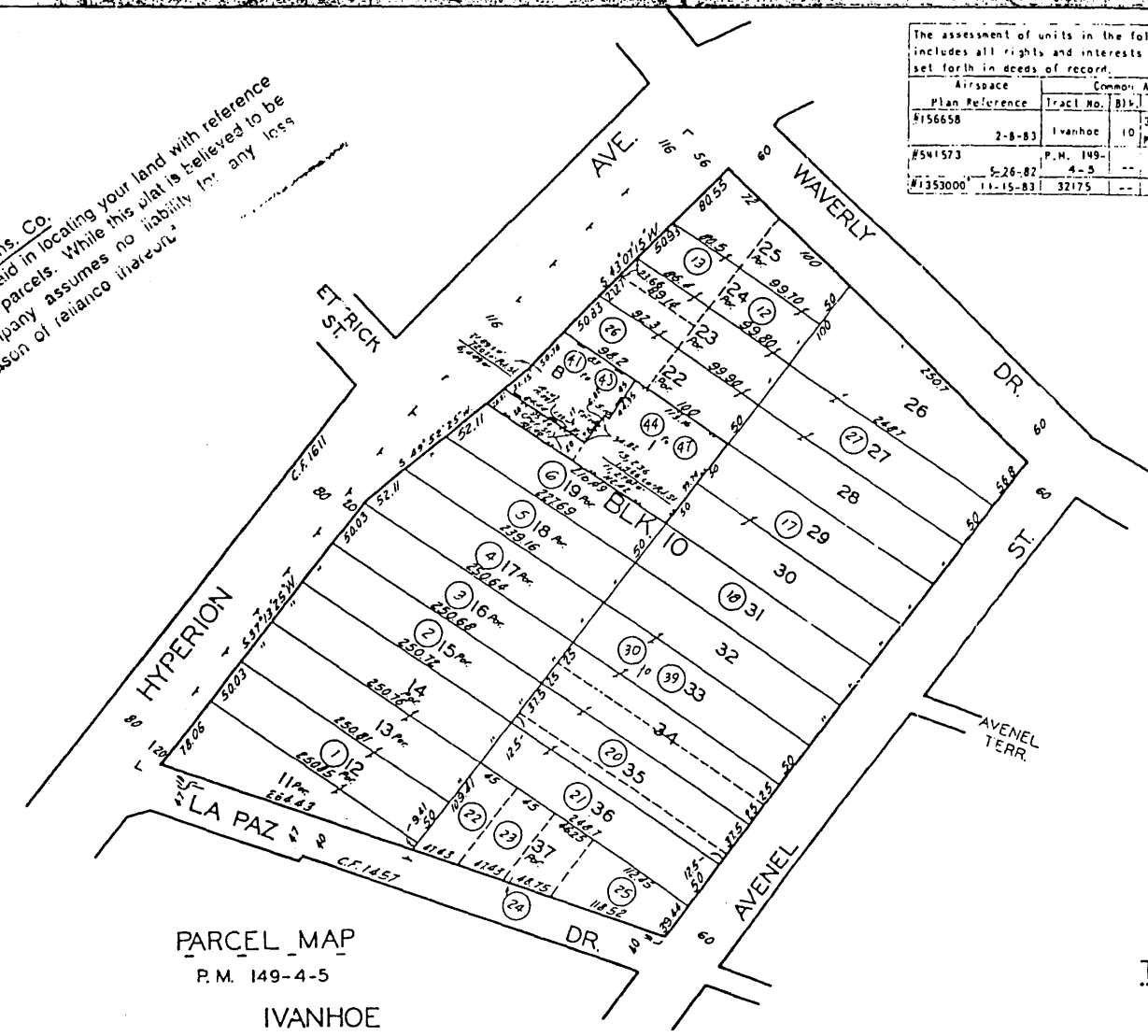
SCALE 1" = 100'

Fidelity National Title Ins. Co.  
This plat is for your aid in locating your land with reference to streets and other parcels. While this plat is believed to be correct, the Company assumes no liability for any loss occurring by reason of reliance thereon.

The assessment of units in the following Airspace Plans, includes all rights and interests in the common areas as set forth in deeds of record.

Airspace Plan Reference	Common Area			Subdivision of Airspace
	Tract No.	Blk.	Lots	
#156658	Ivanhoe	10	32, 33	Co-op Sheet 2
#541573	P.M. 149-	4-5	8	Condo Sheet 2
#1353000	11-15-83	32175	1	Kondo Sheet 3

REVISED  
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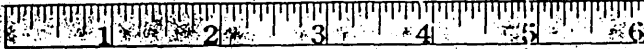


PARCEL MAP  
P.M. 149-4-5  
IVANHOE  
M.R. 17-65-68

CONDOMINIUM  
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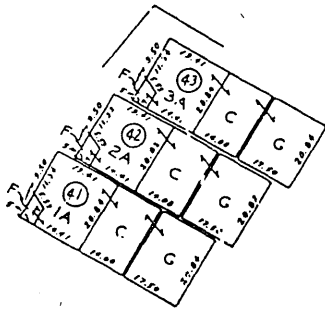
FOR PREV. ASSMT. SEE  
5434-26

ASSESSOR'S MAP

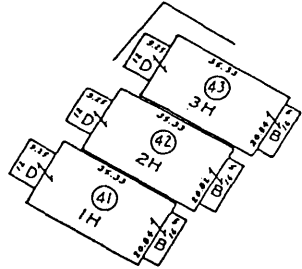


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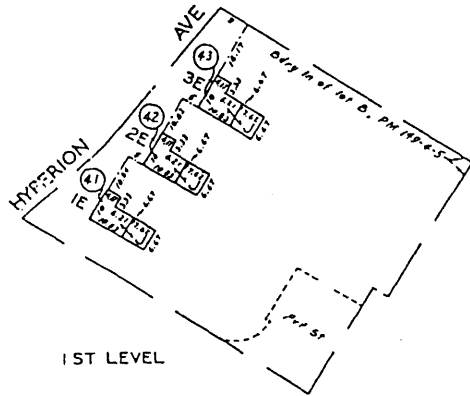
5434 26  
SHEET 2  
SCALE 1"=30' & 40'



2ND LEVEL



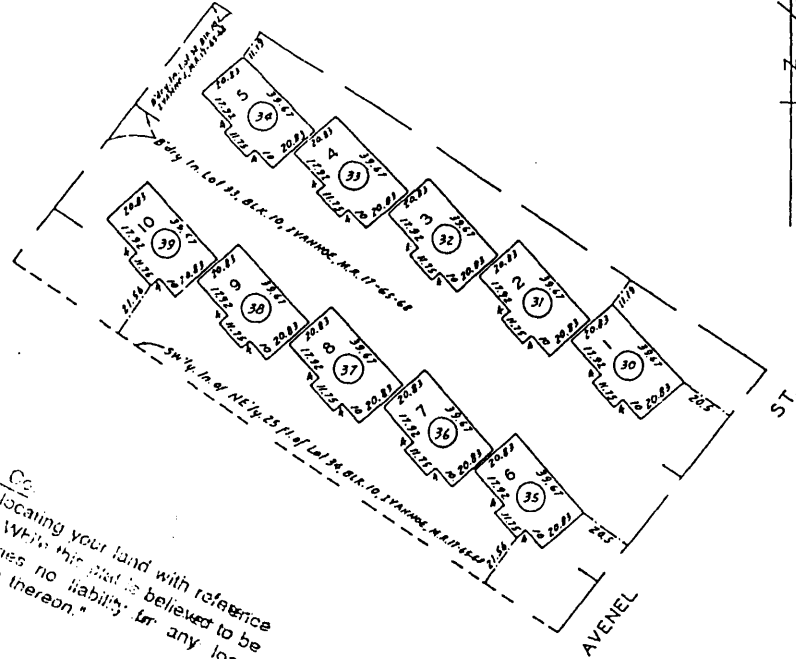
3RD LEVEL



1ST LEVEL

SCALE 1"=30'

SUBDIVISION OF AIRSPACE  
CONDOMINIUM P.M. 149-4-5  
*For common area see sheet 1.*



SCALE 1"=40'

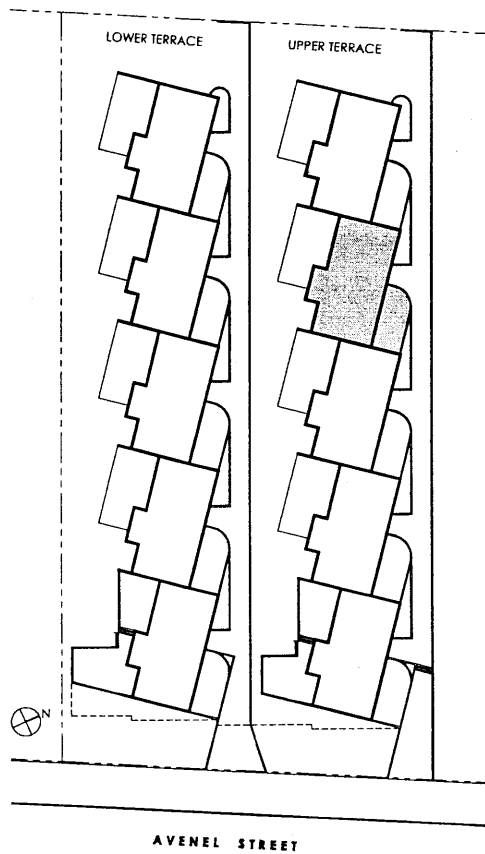
Fidelity National Title Inc. Co.  
This plat is for your aid in locating your land with reference to streets and other parcels. While this plat is believed to be correct, the Company assumes no liability for any loss occurring by reason of reliance thereon.

AVENEL HOUSING ASSOCIATES INC. (CO-OP)  
SUBDIVISION OF AIRSPACE IVANHOE  
*For common area see sheet 1.*

AVENEL  
COOPERATIVE  
HOUSING  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

SITE PLAN

The original Avenel Cooperative Housing site plan is illustrated on the left. The site is terraced to the southwest with five units on each level. The parking is provided off Avenel Street in garages that tucked under the front units. The image below is at the main entrance to a unit. The entry featured a thin canopy below clerestory windows that provided northern light to the unit.





AVENEL  
COOPERATIVE  
HOUSING  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

TYPICAL UNIT FLOOR PLAN

The floor plan of each unit is one thousand square feet. The plan featured two interior sliding walls illustrated in the image on the left that allowed for the unit to be converted from a one bedroom to a two or three bedroom home. The image below illustrates the open character of the plan with a sliding glass wall that extended the living space onto the exterior terrace.

