

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary  
HRI #  
Trinomial  
**NRHP Status Code**

Other Listings  
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

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**\*Resource Name or #:** 109-117 C Street

**P1. Other Identifier:** Whitcombe Apartments

**\*P2. Location:**  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

**\*a. County** Yolo

**\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad**                      **Date**    **T** ; **R** ; **¼ of ¼ of Sec** ; **B.M.**

**c. Address:** 109-117 C Street    **City:** Davis    **Zip:** 95616

**d. UTM: Zone** ,                      **mE/**                      **mN**

**e. Other Locational Data:** APN 070-234-009

**\*P3a. Description:**

The subject property is located on the west side of C street, mid-block between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets. The 0.41-acre parcel includes three one-story residential apartment buildings with rectangular footprints. From south to north, these are addressed as 109, 113, and 117 C Street. The primary façades of the three buildings face the interior of the property and are located on either the north side (109 and 113) or south side (117) of each building. The secondary (east) façades front C Street. The buildings are of wood-frame construction, capped by gabled roofs covered with asphalt shingles, and clad in board-and-batten siding. Typical fenestration consists of sliding and fixed aluminum-sash windows and flush, wood pedestrian doors. Site features include paved driveways between the three buildings and along the west property line.

Each primary façade features four doors flanked by windows. A continuous, covered porch supported by wood posts extends the length of the façade, which terminates in an eave with exposed rafter tails at the roofline. At the west ends of 109 and 117 C Street, a one-story, gabled addition features one louvered door and terminates in an eave with a gutter and fascia at the roofline.

Each secondary façades feature a louvered vent below the gable and no other fenestration. The façades terminate in gabled rakes with wood fascia at the roofline.

Each building has two rear façades. The east-west rear façades feature eight windows, four of which include window-mounted air conditioning units, and the façades terminate in an eave with exposed rafter tails at the roofline. The west-facing rear façade of 113 C Street features two doors, and 109 and 117 C Street feature no fenestration. (Continued on page 3)

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP3. Multiple family property

**\*P4. Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)



**P5b. Description of Photo:** Primary (south) façade or 117 C Street, view facing northwest. March 7, 2024.

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:**

Historic                       Prehistoric     Both  
Between 1958 (building permit on file at the City of Davis) and ca. 1975 (*California Aggie*)

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**

Whitcombe C Street Apartments  
3500 Anderson Road  
Davis, CA 95616

**P8. Recorded by:**

Amy Langford, ESA  
2600 Capitol Avenue, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95816

**\*P9. Date Recorded:** March 7, 2024

**\*P10. Survey Type:** intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** none

**\*Attachments:**  NONE  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List):



\*P3a. Description: (Continued from page 1)



Driveway between 113 (left) and 117 C Street (right), view facing west. Source: ESA, 2024.



Secondary (east) façades of 109 (left), 113 (center), and 117 C Street (right). Source: ESA, 2024.



Typical rear (east-west) façade of 113 C Street, facing east. Source: ESA, 2024.



Rear driveway and rear (west) façades of 113 (foreground) and 109 C Street (background), facing south.  
Source: ESA, 2024.

**\*B10. Significance:** (Continued from page 2)

The following early history of the City of Davis is taken from the *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*.<sup>1</sup>

American settler Joseph Chiles bought a portion of the Rancho Laguna de Santos Calle, which he resold to his son-in-law Jerome Davis in 1854. Davis established a dairy and other ventures, and eventually his land holdings grew to 12,000 acres. After California became a state in 1850, other farmers, many of them German immigrants, began to settle in the area. Yolo County quickly became a prosperous farming region focused on grain, livestock and orchard crops.

In the 1860s, a group of five investors sometimes called the “Big Five” began planning a railroad routed through Davis’ ranch, and by 1868 the California Pacific Railroad had built its line to the area, laying out the three-way junction in its present location and alignment, where the Woodland branch line turned north from the main line. The railroad also constructed a depot, and laid out a town around it as a speculative investment.

The arrival of the railroad was a turning point, creating an economic impetus to found a town out of what had previously been a collection of scattered farms. The railroad’s investors laid out the town site adjacent to the depot, and by 1868 Davisville had about 400 residents. The railroad and new population spurred a brief building boom, but by the 1870s local growth had slowed. Davisville during the late nineteenth century was a farm village devoted to processing, storing, and shipping agricultural products. There was also industrial activity along the railroad tracks, some of which, like the lumber-yard, served the town in general. Most of the industry, however, was related to agriculture in one way or another, such as the Schmeiser manufacturing plant, on the east side of the railroad tracks with buildings on both sides of what is now Third street, which built almond hullers.

After the railroad provided an economic impetus for a town, commercial establishments quickly sprang up to serve local residents. In addition to the farming-related businesses that were the community’s *raison d’être*, blacksmiths, carpenters, livery stables, and wagon-makers established businesses. A post office and express office provided access to the world beyond Davis, and hotels, restaurants, saloons, and boarding houses catered to travelers. Retail businesses such as grocery stores, butchers, liquor stores, and clothing stores opened, as did a doctor’s office and shoe repair shop. With warehouses and industrial services concentrated along the railroad tracks, downtown was clustered between First and Third Streets on G Street, a block west of the depot and tracks. A shortlived weekly newspaper was founded in 1869, and the Davis Enterprise began publishing in 1897. In addition to all the commercial activity, local residents established an Odd Fellows Lodge and Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches.

<sup>1</sup> Brunzell Historical, *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*, November 2015, pages 6–8.

With the tiny downtown located on G Street, residential development began around F Street just one more block to the west. Individual property owners built houses one at a time, and the availability of land meant that during the nineteenth century many blocks had only one or two houses set on large parcels. The gradual population growth of this area (ten residents a year) meant that residential construction proceeded at a measured pace. At the turn of the twentieth century, Davis did not have a single residential block that was completely built-out in the modern sense. The original town plat easily accommodated the gradual growth of the little town, and the only major subdivision was Rice's Addition in 1888, which was four small blocks along Rice Lane between the University campus and B Streets [three blocks west of the subject property].

The following excerpts are from the *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*.

World War II/Post-war Era (1940 – 1958) <sup>2</sup>

Davis was typical of communities across the United States in that support for the war effort was a collective priority during World War II. In addition to more common volunteer activities, local residents assisted with harvesting crops and unloading railroad cars. After the fall semester in 1942, classes were suspended at the University Farm because so many students (who were almost all male during this era) had enlisted in the military. Professors engaged in agricultural research, however, redoubled their efforts to expand food production. The University also donated a ten-acre parcel south of the Richards underpass for a community garden. In February 1943, the U.S. Army took over the entire campus, which it used as an advanced training facility for its Signal Corps. The Signal Corps returned the campus to the University in fall of 1944, and classes resumed in 1945. Despite the sacrifice and disruptions of wartime, Davis during World War II remained the quiet agricultural community it had been for many years.

*Transformation of the University Farm*

The end of World War II ushered in changes to California and its university system that would radically transform the little town of Davis. These changes began gradually in the second half of the 1940s, when returning veterans flooded the Davis campus after the war ended, more than quadrupling enrollment between 1946 and 1947. Over two-thirds of students had come directly from military service to the University. This abrupt spike in enrollment led to an on-campus housing crisis that quickly spilled over into the town. Without adequate dormitory or rental housing, students lived in basements, water towers, converted warehouses, and wherever else they could find space.

The G.I. Bill (officially the Serviceman's Readjustment Bill of 1944) made it possible for more people than ever to attend college, and the federal government was also increasing its support for University research during this period. Decisions made by the University Regents to increase investment in the Davis campus caused it to grow even more quickly than other campuses in the system. In 1945, before the war had even ended, the Regents appropriated \$2,700,000 to construct six new buildings on the Davis campus, including new Veterinary College, Plant Science, and Student Health buildings. The University was also in the process of buying 539 acres of farmland adjacent to the campus to prepare for future expansion. In 1951, the University established the College of Letters and Science, a first step toward becoming an institution with a broader focus. By 1956, enrollment had risen to 2,166 students, including over 600 women. This context of growth and new emphasis on education was reflected in the massive expansion of the University of California system in the 1950s.

*Residential Development*

After World War II, the U.S. population and economy grew at an unprecedented rate. The trends were not uniform nationwide, however, and growth was particularly rapid and strong in California. Hundreds of thousands of people who had relocated to California for military service and wartime work stayed after the war ended, and the state population continued to grow in the 1950s. The exponential growth of UC Davis intensified the broader trends of economic growth and pent-up housing demand after the war. These factors working together meant that the town footprint that had contained Davis's 2,500 prewar residents was woefully inadequate. And the population surge was coupled with factors that put home ownership within reach for millions more Americans than before the war: Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage insurance and G.I. Bill mortgage insurance for veterans. These federal policies, along with the relatively new tax deduction for mortgage interest, made home ownership attractive nationwide, and particularly so in a growing community like Davis.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pages 11-17.

Davis was attractive for housing construction because of its proximity to Sacramento, a lack of strict local controls on development, and the growth of the University. Without geographical barriers like major river systems or mountains, the little town was a developer's paradise. By 1943, Davis leaders had already realized that expansion and growth in California were inevitable after the war, and that Davis would also grow. Elected officials and city staff began planning for enlarging Davis' geographical footprint, developing new areas, and improving infrastructure. The Chamber of Commerce also recognized the challenges Davis was facing, and began planning for the postwar period. By 1944, the group was discussing the need for access roads and overpasses, more housing, and the potential benefits of annexing adjacent areas.

In 1945, Davis' city limits encompassed 220 acres, only marginally larger than the original 24-block Davisville that had been laid out in 1868. The Chamber of Commerce released results of a study of annexation that year. Projecting population growth in Davis resulting from growth of the state and the University, the committee strongly recommended annexation, warning that planning would prevent development on Davis's borders in what they called "a haphazard manner." The proposed annexation would nearly triple the size of the city limits, and include areas such as Robbins and Millers subdivisions adjacent to the University (where development had already begun) as well as portions of north and east Davis that remained primarily agricultural. The Chamber also recommended new sewer lines and the extension of West Eighth and K streets. In November 1945, Davis residents approved the annexation plan in an election.

Local investors and landowners recorded six new subdivisions 1946 and 1948. Although all were small (one had only ten parcels) their number signaled a marked change from the period from 1930 to 1945, when only one new neighborhood was subdivided. The construction was clustered around the high school (currently City Hall), in the area northeast of Downtown, and adjacent to the University. Development in the immediate postwar period was in transition from the traditional gradual expansion of neighborhoods to the industrial-scale housing construction that became the norm in the later decades of the twentieth century. For the most part, these subdivisions followed the traditional pattern, although the rate was somewhat accelerated.

In fact, relatively few houses were actually constructed in the 1940s: most parcels in these neighborhoods were not developed until the early 1950s or later. This pattern was not unusual in California, despite the pent-up demand from decades of depression and war. Building materials, which had been diverted to the war effort for years, did not become available immediately after hostilities ended. After 1950, housing development in Davis accelerated markedly. Developers recorded 34 new subdivisions between 1950 and 1959, more than triple the number created in the previous two decades. The mostly contiguous new neighborhoods spread out to the north of old Downtown Davis and the University to its west, and in the area east of Downtown and the railroad tracks. By 1960, the developed footprint of Davis had roughly doubled, and a significant amount of infill construction had also occurred. 1950 marked a watershed in the type of neighborhoods developers built in Davis, as well as the pace of growth. 1950s subdivisions began exhibiting the long blocks, gently curving streets, loop streets, and cul-de-sacs that characterize post-war subdivisions throughout California. Although these features have their aesthetic roots in nineteenth-century suburbs, they did not begin to widely replace the traditional urban grid pattern until in the second half of the twentieth century. One reason for the increased popularity of suburban-style neighborhood layout was that the FHA, which controlled the flow of capital to developers, promoted these features. Probably more important, however, was the fact that in an increasingly automobile-dependent culture, this type of design was viewed by the public as a safety feature. Almost all Davis neighborhoods subdivided after 1950 share these features, as well as cost-saving rolled (rather than square) curbs. Most sidewalks lack planting strips and are situated immediately adjacent to the curbs, with city-owned street trees planted in the front yards by developers. Post-war Davis neighborhoods lack alleys, and every property is equipped with a garage or carport.

In addition to the shift in neighborhood design, during the 1950s developers began to utilize standardization and mass-production methods to building the houses. Although the construction of standardized tracts with identical (or very similar) houses would eventually lead to the construction of large subdivisions in Davis, the process when it began was very much in scale with the traditional local construction pattern, which was much more incremental.

The industrialization of housing construction and rise of merchant builders was a trend that began transforming the housing business nationwide even before the end of World War II. In contrast to old-fashioned subdividers, merchant builders acquired large areas of land, prepared streets and utilities, and then built and sold their houses. Inspired by wartime and consumer-goods factories, and responding to the extreme need for housing after the war, industrial-scale builders began constructing houses faster and cheaper than their small-scale competitors as early as the end of the 1940s in California's urban centers.

Although the trend was slower to develop in rural Davis, industrialized building was one of the most important factors in the Davis' transformation from a rural railroad junction town to an expanding "University City."

Although the residential landscape of Davis had begun to rapidly transform, city government and infrastructure grew much more slowly. New water mains, domestic wells, and sewer lines were constructed on a piecemeal basis as needed. Davis does not appear to have added new parks, libraries, or recreational facilities during this era. And city government remained headquartered Downtown in its 1938 WPA-built City Hall until 1981.

City officials attempted to both encourage and manage growth during the 1950s. A district map from 1953 shows a town divided into zones for commercial, industrial, single-family dwellings, two family dwellings, and multiple-family dwellings. Fraternities were limited to portions of only 6 blocks along Second and B Streets.<sup>25</sup> Both sides of the railroad tracks, as well as the area between Highway 80 and the tracks, were zoned industrial. These areas had housed activities associated with agricultural processing since the nineteenth century. Other businesses in the industrial zone, such as a lumber yard and breweries, had serviced local needs. Almost all commercial development was Downtown on Second, Third, and G streets, although during this period it began spilling over into formerly residential areas. A grocery store at the corner of Russell Boulevard and Anderson Road was the only neighborhood commercial development.

What is most striking about the 1953 map is that the majority of Davis is zoned for two- or multifamily housing. During the late 1940s, the Planning Commission had changed zoning of some subdivisions back and forth from single- to multiple-family. This indecision was apparently at least in part due to pressure from local builders. By the early 1950s, the only areas set aside for single family dwellings were the neighborhoods immediately north of the University, new tracts, and areas that had not yet been developed. All of Downtown-adjacent Old Davis was zoned for two families. Bowers Acres, the area of north-central Davis that had been laid out with extra-large lots in 1913, was zoned for apartments. Davis was still grappling with a housing shortage, and local leaders had decided that redeveloping Old Davis would be the best way to solve the problem. In March, 1955, Davis City Council instituted a six-month moratorium on new building, and requested Yolo County to do the same for the area around Davis. Davis leaders argued that the break from development would allow "orderly growth," with plans for constructing and financing new infrastructure.

#### Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971)<sup>3</sup>

Decades of sustained growth of the University, Davis' population, and its residential neighborhoods had begun to transform the town by the late 1950s. As noted above, the sleepy nineteenth-century farm town was being transformed into a more sophisticated "University City." By the late 1950s, local boosters were complaining that downtown was run-down and in need of redevelopment. Although some demolitions did occur, the biggest change Downtown was that the tiny commercial area began to engulf adjacent residential neighborhoods as it grew to accommodate Davis' expanding population. Commercial developments on Davis's periphery began towards the end of this era, with four grocery and retail developments constructed between 1966 and 1971.

In an echo of the 1945 efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, residents once again called for planned and managed growth at the end of the 1950s. The League of Women Voters released the results of a study in 1961 that recommended professional city planning, and adoption of a master plan and housing code to manage the growth already occurring. The study warned that a lack of planning could result in "potential slums," inappropriate division of houses into multiple units, and non-contiguous residential development that would threaten surrounding agricultural activity. The city released a revised General Plan later that same year. The Core Area Plan of 1961 expanded on the 1950s plans to redevelop the traditional neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown into a high density area, envisioning an urban transformation that included mega-block commercial development and high-rise apartment housing. The most highly urbanized concepts of the Core Area Plan never materialized, and planned growth during this period did not necessarily imply limiting development. A Davis Enterprise photographic essay from early 1966 illustrated the prevailing view of the period, arguing that what some termed "urban sprawl" was actually planned "perimeter growth." The newspaper explained that Davis' expansion outside its original boundaries on all sides was the result of a "carefully calculated policy ... to annex all perimeter land, in every direction," and that the town's "orderly growth" in all directions was a direct benefit of this policy.[...]

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pages 31-34.

### *Residential Development*

The continuing growth of the University intensified the population and residential expansion that had characterized the previous decade, and Davis grew rapidly in the 1960s. While the increased student population led to construction of apartments and duplexes, the growth of the academic and administrative staff was even more significant, as it brought new permanent residents to Davis. Fifty-six subdivisions were recorded between 1960 and 1969, many of which were double or triple the size of a typical subdivision from the immediate post-war period. The new neighborhoods required large tracts of land, and Davis began to grow beyond its original boundaries in all directions, crossing former de facto urban limits Highway 99 and Covell Boulevard. In 1969, Davis became the largest city in Yolo County. By 1970, it had 23,488 residents, and half of its workforce was employed in education. Population expansion led to growth in every aspect of local life, which was reflected in the city's primary and secondary education systems. Nine new local schools were constructed between 1952 and 1968. City services and infrastructure often lagged behind during this period, however. In 1965, for example, Davis still had only one traffic signal, on B Street near the High School (since 1981 City Hall).

Despite Davis' expansion in terms of housing, commercial activity, development of schools, and economic growth, the town took a hiatus from large annexations after the Chamber-led expansion in 1945. Additions to the size of the city were incremental and piecemeal in the 1950s. This did not slow development, and at least a dozen subdivisions were constructed outside city limits in the late 1950s. The pattern began to change after 1960, as developers continued to convert fields into subdivisions. Bruce Mace, a rancher with acreage east of Davis, broke ground on a new development at the end of 1959. El Macero Country Club and Golf Course was merely the initial stage of a large development that was to include hundreds of houses. Approximately three miles outside city limits, Davis leaders were afraid that it would become the nucleus of an adjacent competing city. Mace's plans spurred the Davis city council to undertake the largest annexation in city history. In 1966, Davis annexed 1.6 square miles of new territory south of Interstate 80 in order to head off uncontrolled development adjacent to town.

After 1965, public investment in infrastructure and amenities finally began to catch up with local residential growth with installation of the first local traffic light. Central Park was renovated the same year, major sewer lines were installed in new subdivisions north and west of Downtown, and new police and fire departments were completed. In 1967, Davis opened its new Community Park and public pool and purchased the Municipal Golf Course. In 1969, Davis voters approved new sewer facilities.

"Cluster Planning", which incorporated greenbelts into subdivisions, was an innovative form of development that began to take hold nationwide in the 1960s. It offered the environmental and quality-of-life benefits of increased open space, and allowed builders to avoid difficult terrain and save money by pouring less pavement. Cluster planning came to Davis in the mid-1960s. Like many development trends over the decades, more than one builder adopted the practice about the same time. By 1964, Alfred F. Smith was acquiring land in West Davis for his master-planned Stonegate development, which included a lake and golf course. In 1967, Gentry Development announced a 300-acre, 1400-house project that incorporated 19 acres of greenbelt and parks. Tom Gentry predicted that the open-space community would become a model for future development in Davis. Although Gentry had been developing in North Davis since 1965, he does not appear to have planned the greenbelt until the following year. Smith, though his planning was underway in the early 1960s, did not break ground until near the end of the decade. Although its origins in Davis cannot be credited to one developer, what is certain is that cluster planning had become *de rigueur* in locally by the last decades of the twentieth century.

### Progressive Visions, Managed Growth (1972 – 2015)<sup>4</sup>

Despite the new climate of ambivalence toward expansion and development, the breakneck pace of growth continued into the early 1970s. By 1972, UC Davis had 15,256 students and the town's population was 28,450. Residential development showed no signs of slowing down, with seventeen subdivisions recorded in 1970 and 1971.

Bob Black began campaigning for a city council seat in 1971, as did Richard Holdstock and Joan Poulos. The three relative newcomers to Davis had similar platforms emphasizing low-income housing, consumer protection, and growth control. In 1972, assisted by a large turnout among UC Davis students who had recently received the right to vote, all three were elected to the City Council, wiping away its long-standing

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pages 49-54.



pro-development and conservative tendencies. The election of a younger and more progressive city council has often been seen as a turning-point in Davis history.

However, the actions of the Davis Planning Commission and public controversies surrounding development in 1971 demonstrate that the 1972 election was the formalization of a gradual transformation that had been brewing in Davis since the late 1960s. The new council instituted a massive program of soliciting community input. This era may have been the genesis of the citizen participation that is a Davis hallmark to this day. For the new general plan, eleven citizen subcommittees studied a variety of aspects of community life including housing, open space, and traffic, among others. In 1974, formation of an Ad Hoc Noise Committee brought the number of official civic study groups up to twelve.

The 1973 General Plan adopted two principals that would impact Davis for the next forty years: growth control and energy conservation. Although support for preserving agricultural land and limiting sprawl was fairly widespread in Davis by the 1970s, formal adoption of growth control was a somewhat radical move during this era, and Davis was only the second California municipality to limit development. In 1973, Davis altered its long-term plan to accommodate only "internally generated" development needs and to limit population to no more than 50,000 by 1990.

Under the new General Plan, North and West Davis were the preferred zones for new development (which formalized a practical policy that went back to at least 1971) and \$60 million worth of building permits were denied for south Davis in 1973. One of the means the city used to limit growth was adoption of an allocation process. Although the system was supposed to be based on objective criteria, it was administered by the City Council, and resulted in developers tailoring projects to the personal preferences of council members. There was widespread popular support for growth control, but of course the process also had its detractors. Developers were generally not thrilled about the City putting brakes on growth, and felt that the restrictions attempted to mandate intangibles that were difficult to incorporate into subdivisions. Many growth-control devices were tried or suggested during this period, and Davis began to develop a reputation for being a difficult place to build. For example, Davis city government began discussing an ordinance that would outlaw advertising Davis real estate in other areas because of fears that Davis would be overwhelmed by outsiders. In 1973, the Planning Commission refused to allow a minor change to a subdivision map until the developer agreed not to advertise in Sacramento. The Davis Planning Commission was attempting to prevent a practice that had been common among developers or residential subdivisions in Davis for two decades, leading to an article in the Sacramento Union headlined "Davis Tears Down the Welcome Sign."

The City expanded recreational and government facilities during this era in an effort to catch up with decades of population growth. Davis voters approved over \$1.5 million in bond measures in 1972. The money funded the creation of five new parks, a community pool in East Davis, and completion of the Veterans Memorial Complex. The original Downtown was no longer sufficient for government services. In 1980, a new post office opened at Pole Line Road and Fifth Street, and a DMV opened across the street two years later. And in 1981, the old Davis High School was retrofitted as a new City Hall. Although much larger than the old 1938 building, the Russell Boulevard location was still close to Downtown and the University.

Ironically, despite the attempt to slow development, 1973 was another record year for construction in Davis. In that year the city issued 1,178 building permits, allowing for construction of 452 apartments and almost 500 single-family dwellings, as well as car dealerships and office buildings. By this time, UC Davis's enrollment was up to 16,241, so expansion was inevitable. In 1977, yet another record was set when the City of Davis issued permits valued at \$23,826,000. This initial failure to stem the tide of development must be viewed in the context of the relationship between the City of Davis and the University: as long as UC Davis continued to expand, the city was more or less forced to grow along with it. The allocation process did eventually slow construction, but not until the end of the decade. Permits for single family dwellings, for example, fell from 386 in 1975 to only 90 in 1980. By this point, Davis was home to a population of 36,640. [...]

#### *Residential Development*

Although the pace of development sped up in the early 1970s and then slowed markedly near the end of the decade, the type of houses constructed over the decades that followed largely stayed within the template developed during the 1960s. Single-family dwellings with two-car garages remained the most popular type of housing, although developers also built duplexes, houses with shared walls, and apartment buildings. The average size of every type of buildings got larger over the decades, and apartment buildings in particular grew much bigger. Established developers like Walker-Donant, Stanley M. Davis, Streng Brothers, and John Simmons continued building housing

in Davis into the 1970s. Although new builders entered the scene, most of their developments stayed within the existing template of suburban housing construction in Davis.

The most significant change to domestic architecture in Davis during the 1970s was the enlargement of the typical house that stemmed from decades of prosperity. By 1972, the average single family home in Davis was roughly 1,900 square feet, more than double the size of a typical post-war tract house. More expensive houses, however could be 2,500 square feet or larger. The increase in living space came with a profusion of amenities developers offered to attract buyers. In 1954, Stanley Davis had promoted Davis Manor in newspaper ads touting built-in wardrobes, 1½ car garages, and a choice of colors. By the early 1970s, a typical development offered central heat, air conditioning, wall-to-wall carpeting, and a dishwasher. Some developers went so far as to offer continuous clean ovens, gas log lighters, and cultured marble vanities in tract houses. Two-car garages were by this time standard, and some houses had three-car garages.

Although residential architecture was not transformed by big design ideas or new materials during this era as it had been immediately after the war, the increased size of new houses forced some stylistic changes. The most notable feature of 1970s houses was the re-introduction of the second story, which had begun to re-emerge in the late 1960s, as a popular feature. In the immediate postwar period, domestic architecture had emphasized horizontality, particularly in Ranch houses but also in Contemporary and Post-and-Beam styles. While many of the elements of Ranch design were retained in the newer houses, the horizontal emphasis was often abandoned for the extra square footage a second story could offer.

One exception to the continuity of residential development was the Village Homes subdivision in far west Davis. Village Homes was born out of the idealistic and progressive movement that altered the City Council in the early 1970s. Michael and Judy Corbett (who were founding members of the Greater Davis Planning and Research Group along with Bob Black) conceived of Village Homes as both an innovative community and a response to ecological problems caused by development. It featured passive and active solar heating for energy efficiency, had narrow streets without sidewalks to conserve land, and common green and agricultural areas around the houses. Despite initial resistance from city officials, the new City Council supported the development, and the Corbetts broke ground on the first Village Homes subdivision in 1975. The husband-and-wife team built five more Village Homes subdivisions in the late 1970s, ultimately attracting national and international attention for their innovative practices.

Cluster or greenbelt development, which had been pioneered in Davis by Gentry and Smith and taken to new heights with Village Homes, became the preferred form of development in Davis. In the late 1980s, landscape and urban design professor Mark Francis led a group that proposed a greenbelt around the entire city. Although, (like proponents of both the original Davis bike path and Village Homes), the idea initially met with resistance, the City Council eventually became strong backers. By 2007, Davis featured a nearly complete ring of greenbelt connected to off-street bike paths.

*Harry J. Whitcombe, Original Owner and Manager*

The subject property at 109-117 C Street was originally owned and managed by Harry J. Whitcombe (1915-87), who was a notable personage in the City of Davis. The following biography is from when Whitcombe was honored with the 1961 City of Davis Citizen of the Year Award (also known as "the Covell" and the City of Davis Community Award):

Whitcombe came to Davis in 1934 to begin his career as a beekeeper, attending school at Davis, though he had to transfer to UC Berkeley to graduate (1938) in Entomology. He married Marie in 1935 and when they built their home in 1952 at Oak and 8<sup>th</sup> [streets in Davis], it was on "the edge of town."

In the 1940s, he worked with Dr. [George H.] Vansell at the [UC Davis Agricultural] College doing research on bees. They discovered that when bees pollinated crops, the yields of those crops could improve [by] up to 40%.

In the early 1960s, he trained Peace Corps members on how to set up an apiary (bee farm) and when these members were sent to foreign countries around the world, he would ship bees to them on Pan Am World Airways.

He wrote a book, *Bees Are My Business* [(with John Scott Douglas, published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1955)], and had articles written about him in the 1944 [*Washington*] *Post* and in *Reader's Digest*.

Very active in Davis:

- He was Rotarian, active since the '40s;
- City Council 1954-58;
- Davis Police Commissioner;
- Boy Scouts executive committee;
- Davis Taxpayers Association, director;
- Chamber of Commerce, president (1960-61) when the Christmas street decoration program was initiated; also chaired a committee that headed up the organization of the Davis Housing Authority and the annexation of College Park and West Davis subdivisions;
- Citizens Committee for Public School, finance chair 2 [years];
- Governor's Committee on Youth, member;
- Davis House Authority: chairman for [approximately] 10 years;
- Planning and Recreation Commissions, member of both; [and]
- Flying Farmers of America, president (had a twin Cessna to transport bees to the Northern [United States] and Canada).<sup>5</sup>

Already a man about town by the time he built the Whitcombe Apartments beginning in 1958, Whitcombe became the president of the Davis Apartment Owners and Managers Association in 1969.<sup>6</sup> In 1974, the results of a citywide survey of apartments was published in the *California Aggie*. It paints a picture of the Whitcombe Apartments as "traditionally voted [...] among Davis' best [ complexes.] Tenants reported glowing comments on their relationship with the owner/manager [Harry J. Whitcombe. ...] Because of the age of the apartments, tenants have reported experiencing a few maintenance problems which are repaired promptly. The complex is occupied primarily by graduate or post-graduate students. [...] Whitcombe apartments are truly unique [among apartments in Davis because] 100% of the tenants would recommend the complex to a friend."<sup>7</sup> This overwhelmingly positive sentiment was echoed in the 1976 citywide survey of apartments when one of Whitcombe's tenants was quoted as saying, "This is without question the best apartment in which I have ever lived. Not so much because it is fancy, but it is well-built, adequately appointed, and excellently managed."<sup>8</sup>

Research does not indicate that Whitcombe ever lived at the subject property.

#### *Subject Property*

The subject block first appears in Sanborn maps in 1907, at which time the subject property encompassed two parcels, one of which was vacant and the other was improved with a single-family dwelling and a shed. By 1953 (the date of the latest Sanborn map), the subject property had been improved with four single-family dwellings and three auto garages.

According to City of Davis records, the first of the three fourplexes within the subject property was constructed in 1958; however, research did not determine which of the three buildings was built first (**Table 1**). A building permit for the second fourplex was issued in 1962. There are no records for the construction of the third, southernmost building; a review of historic aerial photographs suggests that it was constructed sometime after 1970 and before 1975, the year the first mention of 109 C Street was published in the local newspaper.<sup>9</sup> By 1975, the so-called Whitcombe Apartments advertised 16 rental units, but this was almost certainly an error because each of the three buildings contain 4 units.<sup>10</sup> The only alterations for which permits are available are reroofing the north building in 1997 and reroofing the center building in 2000 (Table 1).

<sup>5</sup> Davis Community Awards, "Harry J. Whitcombe, 1961 (Covell)," 1961, accessed March 29, 2024, <http://www.daviscommunityawards.org/harry-j-whitcombe-covell-1961>.

<sup>6</sup> "Davis Housing Forum," *California Aggie*, October 29, 1969, page 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Whitcombe," *California Aggie*, March 8, 1974, page 22.

<sup>8</sup> "Whitcombe," *California Aggie*, April 7, 1976, page 16.

<sup>9</sup> "Rental Information," *California Aggie*, March 7, 1975, page 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



**1970 aerial photograph with the subject property outlined in red; only the two northernmost buildings are visible. North is up. Source: UC Santa Barbara FrameFinder.**

The original owners were Harry J. Whitcombe (1915-87) and his wife Marie Whitcombe (1908-2005) (Table 2).<sup>11</sup> The current owner took possession of the property at an unconfirmed date. As a rental property, there have presumably been numerous tenants since the three subject buildings were constructed, and a few of them are listed in Table 2.

**TABLE 1: BUILDING PERMITS**

| Date              | Permit Number        | Notes   |
|-------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1958              | 255                  | Construct a fourplex (unknown which of the 3 buildings)       |
| 1962              | illegible            | Construct a fourplex (unknown which of the 3 buildings)       |
| Unknown (1970-75) | n/a (historic photo) | Third fourplex constructed (unknown which of the 3 buildings) |
| 1997              | 97-5742              | Reroof the building at 113 C Street (the middle building)     |
| 2000              | 00-6373              | Reroof the building at 117 C Street (the north building)      |

**TABLE 2: OWNERS/OCCUPANTS**

| Year(s) of Occupation | Occupant(s)/Business   | Notes  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| ca. 1958-87           | Harry J. Whitcombe (owner)   | Listed on building permit 255<br>Listed on electrical permits 1969 (January 6, 1969) and 5978 (December 5, 1979) |
| 1970                  | Ann Hiller, Christa Ho, John M. Anton, Fred Munday (tenants at 113 C)<br>Dan Russell, Masaji Matsuzaki, Louise R. King, Louise Long (tenants at 117 C) | 1970 city directory  |
| ca. 1987 – 2005       | Marie Whitcombe (owner)  | Listed on building permit 97-5742  |
| 2004                  | Matthew Straub / Mobile Shine (tenant)   | Listed on zoning permit dated October 15, 2004   |
| 2019                  | Joaquin Fraga / Joaquin Fraga Consulting (tenant)  | Listed on zoning permit dated May 1, 2019  |
| unknown – present     | Whitcombe C Street Apartments (owner)  | Assessor data available at Parcel Quest, <a href="https://www.parcelquest.com">https://www.parcelquest.com</a> . |

<sup>11</sup> "Burial Search," *Davis Cemetery District and Arboretum*, accessed March 29, 2024, <https://davis.cemsites.com/burial-search-embedded/>.

Regulatory Framework

*National Register of Historic Places*

A property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) if it meets the National Register listing criteria at 36 CFR 60.4, as stated below:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and that:

- A) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, or
- B) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or
- C) Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or
- D) Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

*California Register of Historical Resources*

To be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) a historical resource must be significant under one or more of the following criteria:

- 1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
- 2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
- 3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
- 4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

*City of Davis Landmark Resource*

In addition to the National and California registers, the City of Davis provides for the additional designations of Landmark Resource and Merit Resource in their Historical Resources Management Zoning Code (40.23.060). To be eligible as a Landmark a resource must meet at least one of the four criteria at the local, state, or national level of significance and retain a high level of historic integrity.

- (1) Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns in the history of Davis, California, or the nation; or
- (2) Associated with the lives of significant persons in the history of Davis, California, or the nation; or
- (3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction; or that represents the work of a master designer; or that possesses high artistic values; or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (4) Has yielded or may likely yield archaeological or anthropological information important in the study of history, prehistory, or human culture.

The following factors must also be considered:

- (1) A resource moved from its original location may be designated a landmark if it is significant primarily for its architectural value or it is one of the most important surviving structures associated with an important person or historic event.
- (2) A birthplace or grave may be designated a landmark if it is that of a historical figure of outstanding importance within the history of Davis, the state or the nation and there are no other appropriate sites or resources directly associated with his or her life or achievements.
- (3) A reconstructed building may be designated a landmark if the reconstruction is historically accurate and is based on sound historical documentation, is executed in a suitable environment, and if no other original structure survives that has the same historical association.
- (4) A resource achieving significance within the past fifty years may be designated a landmark if the resource is of exceptional importance within the history of Davis, the state or the nation.

*City of Davis Merit Resource*

In addition to the National and California registers, the City of Davis provides for the additional designations of Landmark Resource and Merit Resource in their Historical Resources Management Zoning Code (40.23.060). To be eligible as a Merit Resource must meet at least one of the four criteria and retain a high level of historic integrity. The four criteria to qualify as a Merit Resource as nearly identical to those for a Landmark except that Merit Resources only consider local significance.

The following factors must also be considered:

- (1) A resource moved from its original location may be designated a merit resource if it is significant for its architectural value or if an understanding of the associated important person or historic event has not been impaired by the relocation.
- (2) A birthplace or grave may be designated a merit resource if it is that of an historical figure of outstanding importance within the history of Davis and there are no other appropriate sites or resources directly associated with his or her life or achievements.
- (3) A reconstructed building may be designated a merit resource if the reconstruction is historically accurate and is based on sound historical documentation, is executed in a suitable environment, and if no other original structure survives that has the same historical association.
- (4) A resource achieving significance within the past fifty years may be designated a merit resource if it is of exceptional importance within the history of Davis.

Even if a resource is not listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the California Register, the lead agency may consider the resource to be an "historical resource" for the purposes of CEQA provided that the lead agency determination is supported by substantial evidence (CEQA Guidelines 14 CCR 15064.5).

Evaluation

The subject property at 109-117 C Street was evaluated for potential historic significance under National Register Criteria A through D, California Register Criteria 1 through 4, Davis Landmark Criteria 1 through 4, and Davis Merit Resource Criteria 1 through 4. While the wording is slightly different for each of the four criteria for the National Register, California Register, Davis Landmark, and Davis Merit Resource eligibility, they each align to cover the same potential significance criterion. A/1/1/1 covers associations with significant historical events, B/2/2/2 covers significant people, C/3/3/3 covers significant architecture, and D/4/4/4 covers the information potential of a site.

A/1/1/1 - Events

The subject property falls into the World War II and Post-War (1940 – 1958), Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971), and Progressive Visions, Managed Growth (1972 – 2015) significance themes. Archival review indicates that 109-117 C Street was constructed in phases between 1958 and ca. 1975 in an area and time of gradual residential development after the establishment of the University Farm campus. It was built as three residential apartment buildings (each with 4 rental units), and it does not appear that there are any significant associations between 109-117 C Street and important events or patterns in history. It does not appear to rise above the typical associations with multi-family residential development or the contextual period of development. Therefore, it is recommended ineligible under Criteria A/1/1/1.

B/2/2/2 – Persons/Businesses

The subject property was historically owned and managed by Harry J. Whitcombe from ca. 1958 until his death in 1987. Whitcombe, who built the apartment complex, was a notable personage in Davis during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. He was an established and published scientist, a World War II Veteran, a civil servant who worked on multiple City of Davis commissions and committees, and a local businessman. However, the association of the subject property with Whitcombe appears unrelated to his productive life, which, according to his biography, appears to have occurred before 109-117 C Street was constructed. Furthermore, as a rental property, there have presumably been numerous short-term tenants; those whose names were identified during research do not appear to have been important in the history of Davis, California, or the nation. For these reasons, 109-117 C is recommended ineligible under Criteria B/2/2/2.

C/3/3/3 – Design/Engineering

According to building permits on file at the City of Davis, two of the buildings within the subject property (i.e., 113 and 117 C Street) were constructed in 1958 and 1962 as fourplexes of residential apartments. The third building (i.e., 109 C Street) was constructed ca. 1975 as a fourplex of residential apartments. Although constructed in phases, the three buildings are essentially identical and are simple, modest buildings that do not appear to embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Additionally, no design professionals are identified in available building records, and 109-

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\*Resource Name or # 109-117 C Street

\*Recorded by: Johanna Kahn, ESA

\*Date: March 2024

Continuation

Update

117 C Street does not appear to be the work of a master architect. For these reasons, 109-117 C Street is recommended ineligible under Criteria C/3/3/3.

D/4/4/4 – Information Potential

Criterion D/4/4/4 applies to properties that have the potential to inform important research questions about human history. According to National Register Bulletin 15, to qualify for listing, the property must “have or have had information to contribute to our understanding of human history or prehistory and the information must be considered important.” 109-117 C Street does not meet this criterion and is recommended ineligible under Criterion D/4/4/4.

Integrity

For a property to be eligible for listing on the National Register, California Register, or as Landmark or Merit resources per the City of Davis regulations it must meet one of the eligibility criteria discussed above as well as retain sufficient integrity. However, the subject property does not meet any of the eligibility criteria for significance; therefore, a discussion of integrity is not necessary.

Recommendation

ESA recommends 109-117 C Street ineligible for listing on the National Register or California Register or locally as a Davis Landmark or Merit Resource.

**\*B12. References:** (Continued from page 2)

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