Physical Description & Boundaries

The Eichler home designs emphasize privacy for the residents, with most fenestration placed on elevations that did not face the street. The houses all feature exposed post-and-beam construction, and usually floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall plate glass along the back wall (or on the side, in the case of those with side entrances) and clerestory windows at the front. The houses sit atop concrete slab foundations, feature two-car garages with garage doors oriented to the street, with fixed transom glass windows above and often spanning the entire front elevation.

Beginning at the northwest corner of 6280 South Land Park Drive’s parcel line the boundary follows the parcel line west. It then turns south and follows the parcel lines for 6298, 6300, and 6320 South Land Park Drive. The boundary follows the southern parcel line of 6320 South Land Park Drive until it meets South Land Park Drive and turns south along the drive’s western boundary.

A Brief Historic Context
Joseph Eichler (1900-1965) was an unlikely real estate developer. Searching for a new more meaningful career path, Eichler found himself enchanted by the experience of living, for a brief period, in a Hillsborough California house designed by internationally renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The design quality and attractive site planning features led Eichler to gradually formulate the business model for which he would become famous: building affordable, expressly modern homes, in the suburbs for middle class homebuyers, while offering attractive, architect-designed amenities for moderate prices.

In meeting the challenge of balancing design quality and affordability Eichler turned to Wright’s “Usonian” design concept. Usonian homes featured slab concrete foundations with radiant heating built in and modular floor plans with a relatively open plan concept allowing for a free flow between interior spaces.

In total, Eichler’s company, Eichler Homes (founded in 1947), constructed over 11,000 homes in Communities across California, including Palo Alto (where approximately 2,700 homes were built), Sunnyvale, San Mateo and the San Mateo Highlands, Marin, the Castro Valley, Pacific Palisades (Los Angeles), and the City of Orange (Orange County).

**Non-discrimination in Housing**

Eichler is notable in his support of the principle of fair housing at a time when federal lending practices, real estate associations and builder organizations embraced segregation. Builders resisted integrating their developments not simply because it made financial institutions more likely to fund their projects but also in the mistaken belief that selling to persons of color would devastate property values. A businessman to be sure, Eichler tested these assumptions and became one of the first builders of large-scale subdivisions to sell to persons of color. In 1958, he resigned from the National Association of Home Builders to protest the organization’s persistent support of racial restrictive practices and would go on to help in the crafting of California’s fair housing laws, advocating for fair housing practices before the U.S. Housing Commission.
In Sacramento, Eichler Homes, in partnership with Moss & Moss developers, completed 59 homes in the South Land Park Hills neighborhood (South Land Park Hills Unit No. 7). In recognition of Joseph Eichler’s noteworthy legacy as merchant builder during the mid-20th century, the importance of Sacramento’s Eichler Tract as a significant expression of Midcentury Modern architectural design, and Eichler’s innovative work in the real estate development, the City of Sacramento commissioned a citywide architectural/historical resources survey and included the Tract as part of the *Midcentury Modern in the City of Sacramento: Historic Context Statement and Final Survey Results* (2017).

**Eichler’s Sacramento Architectural Design Team**

For his South Land Park Hills Unit No. 7 housing development, Eichler chose architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons (Jones & Emmons) of Los Angeles. During their 18-year partnership Jones & Emmons became internationally known for their forward-looking, pragmatic designs; in particular, for the thoughtful responses to the build site and client needs showcased in their residential work. Eichler sought out Jones in 1950 after both Eichler’s and Jones’ work were honored in the same issue of *Architectural Forum* Magazine that year. The decision of the two firm to work together dates from that initial contact.¹ The Ladera Project (1952), a seven-unit single-family residential development in Portola Valley would be the first collaboration. Eichler would turn to Jones, and soon thereafter Jones & Emmons, on a number of projects scattered across both Southern and Northern California, including Pacific Palisades (Los Angeles), Orange, Portola Valley, Palo Alto, San Rafael and Sacramento. The firm ultimately designed approximately 5,000 of Eichler’s 11,000 California homes.

Roughly a year prior to their work in Sacramento, Jones & Emmons completed the Greenmeadow 1 & 2 Development in Palo Alto (1952-54) which consisted of 244 properties. Greenmeadow is now listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to South Land Park Hills No. 7 Development located here in Sacramento, Jones & Emmons created the master plan designs for the 540-unit Capehart Housing Development located at McClellan Air Force Base Family Housing. (1957-60) – an unusual instance of the U.S. military turning to a private architectural firm to design military housing. The development garnered the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) 1963 Honor Award for Residential Design.

During May 1955, the initial 59-home South Land Park Hills Unit No. 7 development was advertised in Sacramento newspapers as part of what Eichler intended as a 143-home tract. Advertisements listed three house models, each along South Land Park Drive, and up to six possible plans. However, only four house models were advertised in the sales brochure (Plan JE-89 was not built) so it is likely that the additional models being advertised were borrowed from prior Eichler developments. The four house model plans in the sales brochure are depicted below (note: house plans were often rotated, and garage access differs in many cases due to house siting on the lot).

A. Quincy Jones Discussing Eichler’s Home Designs with Ned Eichler

The design of Eichler Homes expresses a solution that simplifies living patterns in today’s complicated society. The houses have been designed so that a functional and easy living pattern carries throughout the house plan, then to the limits of the lot, and then a thoughtful arrangement of the house to another is carried throughout the community.

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2 Ambacher, Patricia and Mark Bowen. September 2017. South Land Park Unit No. 7 Eichler Historic District nomination. GEI Consultants, Inc., Rancho Cordova, California, with volunteer assistance from Melissa Montag.
**Period of Significance**

The district’s period of significance begins in 1955 and ends in 1956, the years the South Land Park Hills development was under construction.

**Boundaries & Location**

Beginning at the northwest corner of 6280 South Land Park Drive’s parcel line the boundary follows the parcel line west. It then turns south and follows the parcel lines for 6298, 6300, and 6320 South Land Park Drive. The boundary follows the southern parcel line of 6320 South Land Park Drive until it meets South Land Park Drive and turns south along the drive’s western boundary.

**Character-Defining Features**

The character-defining features are the essential physical elements from the period of significance that enable a historic district and its contributing resources to convey their collective historic identity and the historic district’s significance. They must be evident for a historic district and its contributing resources to retain their status on the Sacramento Register. A historic district and its contributing resources must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative example of a particular type, period, or method of construction, and these features must also retain a sufficient
degree of integrity. These distinctive physical traits commonly recur in property types, architectural styles, property landscapes, and streetscapes. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

**Form and Massing**

All Eichler homes in Sacramento (and the overwhelming majority of Eichler homes in other jurisdictions) were designed as one-story structures that are horizontal in their presentation to the street, and rectilinear in overall form. The rooflines reinforce this horizontality, as they are generally flat, nearly flat or feature extremely low-pitched gable roofs.

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**The Design Appeal of Eichler Homes, per Atomic Ranch Magazine**

*With large open spaces, walls of glass and windows, indoor-outdoor living, and in-floor radiant heating, Eichler emphasized the designs of the future and created optimism for all those who lived in or visited one of his homes. The neighborhoods that Eichler built were set on winding roads with picturesque landscape, where there was a sense of community and belonging.*

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**Roof Types**

Eichler homes feature low—pitched gable-front roofs (as in House Plan JE-85), very low-pitched nearly flat, or flat roofs without “parapets.” The eaves frequently project well out past the wall of the house for sun protection. This feature lends the roofline a floating quality. Original roofing materials consisted of “rolled roofing” (see glossary) or tar and gravel cladding. In some house plans the roof rafter ends project forward past the front wall plane of the house (as in some House Plan JE-84 examples).

**Exterior Cladding Materials**

Exterior smooth or sanded plywood sheeting made from Redwood or Fir veneers with a unique scored pattern of ¼” vertical grooves set on 2” centers (commonly nicknamed “Eichler Ply”) is the most common cladding material seen on house exteriors. In some homes a “stacked bond” concrete masonry block wingwall forms (see glossary) part of the front façade architectural treatment, extending the home’s architecture out into the landscape to enclose a terrace and screen the home’s entrance (as in House Plan JE-85). Brick, stucco and wood shingles commonly used in other local house designs during the 1950s are not found on Eichler homes.
Window Treatments

There are very limited window openings on the home’s front façade, in deference to privacy. Long narrow or triangular-shaped clerestory windows placed high on the wall directly engaging the roofline (for privacy reasons) are typical. By contrast, large expanses of glass – floor-to-ceiling plate glass, with vertical wood divisions, and sliding glass doors – can be found on the rear or sides of homes, opening generous views to backyard spaces and/or terraces. This helps create a strong sense of connection between indoors and outdoors.

Entry Doors

Eichler homes feature solid, smooth wood front entry doors, frequently accessed from an inset atrium (Fairmeadows and JE-83 House Plans), or placed on the house’s side out of view the main entrance (JE-14, JE-84, and JE-85 House Plans). Fully glazed anodized aluminum sliding doors set within full-height window walls provide access to and from terraces/backyard spaces and help tie the home interior to private outdoor spaces.

Garages

The garages are one of the most visible elements of the front façade of Eichler homes. However, they are always fully integrated into the body of the house and its roof form to give the home a seamless architectural presence when viewed from the street. A large majority of Sacramento’s Eichler homes feature two-car garages with paired door bays, separated by a thin vertical wooden division. Scored plywood appears to have been the most common garage door cladding material in the original house designs.

Landscape and Streetscape Characteristics

Eichler subdivisions in Sacramento and elsewhere were typically laid out with curvilinear street patterns, rather than in typical city grid layouts, and with homes having a consistent front yard setback from the street they face to create a consistent building line up and down the street. Paved driveways lead directly to the garage, with walkways branching off from them leading to the house entrance – some of which face the street directly while entrances on many other homes are accessed from the side of the home through enclosed courtyard or terrace spaces fenced from view from the street. The subdivision’s landscape elements were planned to create a communal sense of shared public space across lot lines in front yards. Front yard landscape treatments originally featured one or two specimen trees, grass turf, and low shrubs that permit unencumbered front yard views up and down the street. More recently, homeowners have substituted “xeriscape” or low-water-using groundcover and low retaining walls that preserve the sightlines across front yards in ways which sympathetically update the original landscaping concept (e.g., 6425 South Land Park Drive).
Design Features

Rectangular Three-Bedroom/Two-Bath Floor Plan with an Especially Long Street-facing Facade; Low-pitched, Nearly Flat Floating Roofline with Exposed Rafter Ends; All-purpose Room (marked “AP” on house plans) at Front Wall Line; Paired and Single Vertically Aligned Windows Adjacent to the Slightly Inset Front Door; Garage Forms End Bay

House Plan JE-85 is the most common of the five identified house plans in the Sacramento’s Eichler Subdivision, with 18 known homes. With eight known homes each, House Plans JE-84 and JE-83 are the next most prevalent home type. There are 10 known examples of House Plan JE-14 and only three known examples of the Fairmeadows House Plan. These are found at 6441 and 6465 Fordham Way and 6320 South Land Park Drive.

Interior Design Features

Eichler Homes employed open floor plan concepts that were ahead of their time. Rather than being walled off from one another as was the case in more traditional house plans, the kitchen, dining area, living room and an all-purpose room were interconnected visually and arranged so that these spaces looked out into—and were directly accessible through large floor-to-ceiling expanses of plate glass and sliding glass doors—to backyard spaces and terraces.
Heating, Plumbing and Other Mechanical Systems

Radiant floor heating systems that were embedded into the house’s concrete slab foundation, along with much of the plumbing, were characteristic of Eichler homes. Houses were not originally designed with modern ducted air conditioning, or with much insulation, and relied upon passive solar and the placement of windows and terrace sliding doors for cross ventilation to aid in cooling or warming the interior as needed. These passive systems were supported by “Coolair air-cooling systems” also known as “swamp coolers” which were self contained roof-mounted cooling units. The embedding of plumbing and heating systems in the concrete slab, the limited insulation, and flat or nearly flat roof forms with little or no attic space poses challenges in installing insulation and in retrofitting the heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC) systems in these homes. Preservation design guidance in making such improvements is recommended. The Eichler Network can be a great resource for how to sensitively approach and complete HVAC retrofit projects of this sort.

Construction Systems

Eichler homes are of what is termed “Post and Beam” construction. This method of construction uses a concrete slab foundation, combined with vertical wooden posts and horizontal wooden members to form a framework that carries both roof and floor structural loads. This method was favored because it made tract housing quicker to build, allowed for greater flexibility in arranging the interior spaces and made large window walls on the terrace/backyard side of the homes possible.

HOUSE PLAN JE-83 Example
Design Features: U-shaped (typically) Four-Bedroom/Two-Bath Floor Plan; Flat or Nearly Flat Roofline; Small Entry Atrium with Entrance Doorway Inset to Atrium Back Wall; Paired Window Openings on Front House Wall Adjacent to the Entry Atrium; Paired Garage Door Bays (with vertical board door cladding)
**Design Features:** H-shaped (typically) Four-Bedroom/Two-Bath Floor Plan; Low-pitched Floating Roofline; All-purpose Room is at Front Wall Line; Garage Forms End Bay; Privacy Windows (“clerestory”) High on the Walls Hugging the Roofline, with Extended Rafter Ends

**HOUSE PLAN JE-85 Example**
6449 South Land Park Drive

**Design Features**: U-shaped Three-Bedroom/Two-Bath Floor Plan (typically); Low-pitched Gable-front Roofline; Entry Occurs Along the Side of the House Out of View; a Single, Vertically Aligned Window on Front House Wall Faces the Street, With an Exposed Concrete Block Masonry Wingwall Extending Off It to the Side; Single or Double Garage Door Bay (originally with vertical board door cladding); Clerestory Windows High on the Wall Under Roofline Slope

**HOUSE PLAN JE-14 Example**
Design Features: T-shaped (typically) Three-Bedroom/Two-Bath Floor Plan; Low-pitched, Nearly Flat Floating Roofline with Exposed Rafter Ends; All-purpose Room (marked “AP” on house plans) at Front Wall Line; Paired and Single Vertically Aligned Windows Adjacent to the Slightly Inset Front Door; Garage Forms End Bay That Projects Forward from House’s Front Wall Line

HOUSE PLAN “Fairmeadows” Example
Historic District Plan
City of Sacramento
6416 Fordham Way Masonry Wingwall

**Design Features:** In House Plan JE-85, a concrete masonry block wingwall screens side yard terrace areas and entrances from the street. As a best practice, replace deteriorated fencing with textures and styles that use compatible materials to the adjacent house. The use of a straight horizontal top caps and visual “fence planes” are encouraged.

**District-Specific Standards & Criteria**

The objective standards are intended to accommodate change—yet also help safeguard a contributing resource’s distinctive form, historic character, and relationship to its historic district. The objective standards identified below reflect on areas of each Eichler home in the district where improvements will be subject to design review and approval by City Planning and Preservation staff (building permit requirements are a separate topic and not discussed here).

Improvements that are not subject to City Staff review but are encouraged to reflect the aspirational criteria, stated above, would include:

- Any interior improvement
- Detached accessory structures, like sheds or gazebos provided they meet the standard code requirements
- Solar panel installations or repairs
- Most mechanical equipment replacement or repairs
- Repairs or installation of pools or hot tubs
- Re-painting your home, including repairs associated with painting, including minor like-for-like trim or siding repairs
- Some window replacements
- Re-roofing your home, including gutter replacement
- In-kind repair or replacement of your HVAC system
- Building or replacing a fence as allowed with the standard code requirements
- New landscaping
- New hardscaping
- Underground utilities
- Maintenance to existing features of your home
**Design Principle:** Preserve and enhance original Eichler design aesthetic while allowing for modernization and new construction to create a welcoming residential neighborhood.

**Rationale:** The South Land Park Hills Historic District is one of the City’s best examples of Mid Century Modern residential architecture. Minimal infill has taken place in the historic district, preserving the cohesive pattern of Eichler-designed California Ranch homes from the Mid-Century period. This collection of historic architectural styles deserves recognition and preservation.

**Additions & Accessory Buildings for Contributing Resources**

Buildings constructed decades earlier often require design changes, including room additions in some cases, and accessory buildings, to accommodate today’s criteria for comfort and convenience. Design guidelines for historic districts allow such changes to occur in ways that accommodate reasonable changes while also preserving key design features that most account for the property’s significance. Projects proposed for a contributing resource in Sacramento’s historic districts may involve the construction of additions and accessory buildings. Additions shall be planned sensitively in order to have a minimal impact on the historic district’s character-defining features.

**Additions**

- The addition must maintain the historic visual features and mass of the building. The Streetscape in the Eichler Tract is expressed through the prevailing front yard setback pattern and the open sight lines across property lines up and down the street and changes to these features shall not be made.
- Do not obscure, alter, or demolish character-defining features on the primary façade in order to accommodate new additions.
- Make alterations and additions in areas that are not visible from the public right-of-way and not on primary façades.
- Set back side additions clearly from the primary façade to distinguish the addition from the historic building; however, utilize exterior siding materials and window treatments that echo that seen on other contributing Eichler homes.
- The solid-to-void pattern of an addition shall be the same as that of the contributing resource.
- Use a change of plane to differentiate an addition from the historic building.
- Two-story additions to Eichler homes are prohibited unless they are made to the rear of the home and sited such that they cannot be seen from the public right-of-way.
Detached Secondary Dwelling Units, Garages, & Storage Structures (Accessory Buildings)

This section addresses detached secondary dwelling units, accessory buildings, and infill projects (does not apply to existing accessory buildings).

- Locate detached secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings at the rear of the property. The new structure shall be smaller in scale in regard to the primary residential building, so as to preserve the status of the primary building as a contributing resource to the historic district.
- New accessory buildings and secondary dwelling units shall not align wall openings with adjacent buildings.

New (Infill) Construction & Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources

This section provides objective standards and criteria for construction of infill development for residential and mixed-use projects.

Setbacks, Setting, Location, & Site Layout

Alterations to existing buildings and new construction must be within the ranges of the existing setbacks and site layout of the historic district in which it is located.

- Do not visually block the primary front façade of a contributing resource.
- Avoid placing window openings that allow views from new construction into adjacent existing residential structures.
- Use landscaping or screening features to provide privacy of semi-private outdoor spaces.
- Orient the primary facades and entries of new construction to the primary street.
- Corner parcels should match the existing site placement pattern of adjacent properties.
- Allowable encroachments into the front yard setback zone include sidewalks and driveways of flat gray concrete construction and retaining walls and planter boxes less than 30 inches in height of gray concrete or wood construction, so long as existing sight lines
across front yard property lines (shared communal visual space that characterize Eichler home subdivisions site planning) are kept open and individual homes can be fully and clearly seen from the public-right-of-way street.

- New construction shall have a garage door oriented toward the street.
- New construction shall be no more than 1-story tall.
- New construction shall be wider than it is tall.

**Building Massing, Scale, & Form**

Buildings that reflect the massing, scale, and form of the historic built fabric reinforce and enhance the visual continuity and quality of the historic districts.

- A new building that is larger in mass than surrounding contributing resources shall break up its mass into smaller components or modules.
- Portions of new buildings that are taller than adjacent contributing resources in the district should be placed at the rear of the structure such that they cannot be seen from the public-right-of-way.

**Architectural Character**

- The Midcentury Modern architectural style of the homes within the South Land Park Hills Unit No. 7 Historic District is one of the key physical attributes that contribute to the visual character and appealing quality of the area. New designs should respect and respond to the Midcentury Modern historic design context within the historic district.
- Design new buildings with passive cooling features.
- Utilize the adjacent building datum lines of contributing Eichler homes for design of new construction scale and features.
**Windows & Doors**

Windows and doors are primary features that help to define the connection between the street and the building, as well as depth, scale and rhythm of a building. These openings provide articulation and transparency to a façade.

- Incorporate window and door datum lines that are consistent with those of adjacent contributing Eichler resources, consistent with solid wall-to-void ratios.
- Retain and rehabilitate or retrofit existing Eichler Midcentury Modern sash or install replica sash, retaining the same dimensions and thin style sash frame. If creating additional window openings Use proportions, depth, and materiality at window and door openings that are consistent with the adjacent contributing Eichler resources.
- If the door is visible from the public-right-of-way flat wood slab doors typical of Midcentury Style Eichler homes should be utilized.
- Retain original, vertical-groove-clad garage sheathing and repair if feasible or utilize a plain flat-surface door type in cases where retention and repair of the existing garage door is infeasible.

**House Mechanical Systems**

- While it is not always feasible to entirely hide mechanical systems, their placement should be planned so to minimize visibility from the public realm.
- Solar panels shall be installed on secondary roof areas rather than on street-facing roof areas and shall be installed parallel with the roof slope. Solar panel framing and conduits shall be painted the color of the roof cladding to minimize their visibility.

**Site Features and Landscaping**

Site features, streetscape, and landscaping are critical components in forming the character of a historic district. Everything from the overall streetscape, street pattern, and relationships between buildings and open spaces, and the front yards to the public sphere of streets, sidewalks, and parks, contribute to the historic district’s character and sense of place.

**Fencing and Screening**
Fences are a character-defining feature of many of Sacramento’s historic districts, particularly those that are primarily residential in nature. The use of fences created a clear, visual delineation in the broader neighborhood streetscape between the public realm of the sidewalk and street and the private realm of an individual property. Most were designed to be transparent in nature were low in height.

- When visible from the public right-of-way, preserve and maintain historic fences and site walls that enclose side yards.
- Replace only portions of historic fences or site walls that have deteriorated beyond repair, replicating historic fencing materials and designs if feasible. When replication is not feasible utilize vertically aligned smooth board sheathing with a cap to finish off the top of the fence run.
- Place fences and screening features to maintain the visual progression from public to private spaces.
- Side fences or walls may be taller than those located in front of a property, but taller portions shall be set back behind the front plane of the building.

**Landscape and Planting**

Landscape design is an important feature that ties together the built environment of Sacramento’s historic districts. It affects the pedestrian experience in front of all types of properties, creates or softens the public-private transition between the street and individual properties, and enhances the character of a historic district’s overall streetscape.

- When documented as being significant and character-defining, preserve and maintain existing historic landscape features and planting/paving patterns.
- Do not alter a property’s historic lot grade.
- Preserve protected trees.

**Lighting**

Lighting is important for public safety and for the security of a property, facilitates the movement of people and creates an attractive and inviting atmosphere.
• Preserve and restore historic lighting fixtures.
• Repair, rather than replace damaged historic exterior lighting fixtures. If necessary, replace only parts of historic light fixtures are deteriorated beyond repair. If beyond repair install replica Midcentury Modern style fixtures.
• New lighting fixtures shall not block or obscure character-defining features.
• Use only fully shielded exterior light fixtures that emit no light upward and do not allow light trespass off the property.
• When installing Light Emitting Diode (LED) light fixtures and bulbs, select “warm- white” or filtered LEDs to minimize blue light emission.

**Driveways and Parking**

Mid Century Modern architecture developed during a time when the automobile was becoming the primary means of personal transportation in the United States. The automobile is central to the design of Eichler-designed residences. Garages are pushed forward with large expansive driveways that can be utilized by at least two vehicles at a time.

• Paved parking pads and driveways in the front setback shall comply with City code.
• Utilize smooth gray concrete when expanding driveways or for the construction of new driveways.

**Utilities**

Utilities are essential to modern-day living but can visually interrupt the character and cohesiveness of a historic district when they are prevalent.

• Do not place above-ground power transformers along primary streets and locate on secondary streets when feasible.

**Glossary of Terminology**

Bay
Board and Batten

Clerestory Windows

Concrete Masonry Unit

Contributing Resources vs Non-Contributing Resources

Datum Line

Historic Context Statement

Modular Floor Plans

Post-and-beam Construction

Rolled Roofing

Stacked Bond
Smooth-finish Concrete

T-1-11 Siding

Usonian

Wingwalls

Xeriscape