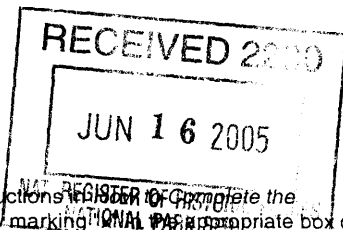


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions for completing the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking 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 Green Gables

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

2. Location

street & number Channing Ave, Ivy Ln., Greer Rd., Wildwood Ln. NA  not for publication

city or town Palo Alto NA  vicinity

state California code CA county Santa Clara code 085 zip code 94303

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.)

M. A. Waymich 15 JUN 2005  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]

7/23/05

Green Gables  
Name of Property

Santa Clara, California  
County and State

**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	
45	18	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
45	18	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**

None

**6. Function or Use**

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

Domestic/single family  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Domestic/single family  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

Other: Mid-Century Modern  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Modern Movement  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation **Concrete** slab on grade  
roof **2x6 Redwood tongue-in-groove with tar & gravel**  
above, Douglas fir exposed beams  
walls **Post and beam construction (visible), horizontal redwood siding, floor-to-ceiling plate glass** and sliding glass doors side and rear  
other **Brick** fireplaces, extensive overhangs  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**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.
- C 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.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1950  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
Architects: Steve Allen A.I.A. and Robert Anshen A.I.A.  
Builder: Eichler Homes, Inc.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Green Gables  
Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

Santa Clara, California  
County and State \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 17 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	577360	4144540	3	10	577580	4144460
2	10	577460	4144600	4	10	577500	4144400

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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Marty Arbunich (for revision submission)

organization Eichler Historic Quest Committee date 11/7/03 (original); 5/21/05 (revision)

street & number P. O. Box 22635 telephone (415) 668-0954

city or town San Francisco state CA zip code 94122

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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## Narrative Description – Green Gables

The neighborhood of Green Gables, today a catch-all name for a number of distinct neighborhoods, was annexed by the city of Palo Alto (Santa Clara County, California) shortly before World War II, but tract housing did not begin to appear there until the late 1940s. Developer Joseph Eichler was among the first merchant builders to develop the area, and he named his development after the larger neighborhood.

Built in 1950, the 63 homes in Eichler's Green Gables subdivision were originally all single-story, three bedrooms, one bath, residences designed in the mid-century modern style using slab-on-grade post and beam construction. The condition of the homes is remarkably good overall, with only five of the 63 nominated buildings having been excessively modified by a second-story addition, and three with changes to the exterior siding that are not in keeping with the original design. In all, 17 houses are classified as "non-contributing," with 46 being "contributing." The overall appearance of the district is essentially unchanged since it was built except for changes in landscaping over the past five decades.

Some changes to the exterior of the buildings have occurred, the most common being garage doors and front doors replaced with doors that differ in various ways from the original. Some garage doors are now of the rollup type, and front doors that were originally a plain slab of wood now sometimes have molding or inset windows. In some cases, carports have been converted to garages, or a carport was added to create parking spaces for two cars. Driveways may have been replaced with newer concrete or asphalt surfaces. Fencing was an option, and after five decades most of the original fencing has been replaced with a wide variety of fencing types.

The subdivision did originally have sidewalks, street lighting, and curbs, and they remain intact. The shape of the subdivision is irregular, the reason for this is unknown, nor is anything known about the surrounding housing developments except that in 1955-1956 a later Eichler subdivision was built on the east side of Green Gables.

The following description of the interior of the homes is based on the inspection of a single house, 1914 Channing Ave., which is still occupied by the original owners. They have verified the original condition of the interior of their home, and it closely matches photos taken when the house was new (it was the model home for the subdivision). No other interiors were inspected, and undoubtedly many of them have been modified from their original appearance. Because other homes were not inspected, this report cannot state when they may have been modified.

As in all Eichler-built homes from 1950 on, the homes in Green Gables employed a post-and-beam structure on a slab-on-grade foundation. Douglas fir tongue-in-groove planks comprised the roof, redwood plywood was used for interior paneling, and the exterior cladding was redwood tongue-in-groove. The post-and-beam system enabled the architects to design the dining, kitchen, and living areas as an open plan in a single rectangular space beneath a sixteen-foot free-span roof, with a centrally located kitchen and an open plan inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian designs. Radiant heating systems were standard, another Wright inspired feature.

The design emphasizes privacy for the residents, presenting a relatively blank facade to the street but employing extensive areas of floor-to-ceiling glass along the rear elevation to open up the house to the outdoor concrete patio area. Both the living room and the master bedroom look out onto the patio, with the three bedrooms aligned along one side (master bedroom to the rear) and the kitchen, dining, and living room area on the opposite side. From the living room, a wood-framed glass door opened out to the patio. The front entrance area was in the center, allowing quick access to the kitchen, living room, or bedroom hallway, and was placed well back from the street at the rear of the garage, further simplifying the front elevations.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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The living area was separated from the hallway by a head-high storage partition, with a fluted obscure glass screen resting on a built-in redwood cabinet and shelving unit. The partition did not extend to the ceiling, allowing for air circulation between the bedroom wing and living area. The kitchen had Formica plastic countertops and a pass-through "snack bar" connection to the dining area, above which are built-in redwood storage shelves.

In keeping with the modern style, the exteriors were clean and simple, essentially devoid of decoration. Siding was horizontally placed redwood boards, originally stained in earth-tone colors. The Green Gables exteriors no longer have their original stained surfaces, as over the years they have been painted. Garage doors were finished with matching siding so they blended into the overall design. Fireplaces were constructed of brick. Rooflines were flat or gently sloping: no peaked or gabled roofs were used. Extensive overhangs at the rear of the house provided shade in the summer but let in sunlight in winter. The 1-car garage or carport was placed at the front in keeping with the increasing reliance on automobiles as primary transportation. Each house included a concrete driveway from the street to the garage.

Living space averaged 1,100 sq. ft., and lots are six to seven thousand square feet in size. The houses had fenced yards at the rear and partway along the sides. Redwood fencing was optional (little of the original fencing remains today). No parks, common areas, pools, or non-residential buildings are located within the district. Backyards were not inspected. Therefore backyard buildings, structures, objects, and buildings have not been counted. The topography of the area is flat, and the district is surrounded by residences of more recent vintage, including, along the east side of Wildwood Lane, a later Eichler development constructed in 1955-1956 (not included in this nomination).

There were essentially only two plans offered, one with a single-car garage, one with a single-car carport. Copies of each of those plans appeared in the December 1950 issue of "Architectural Forum." They are shown below.

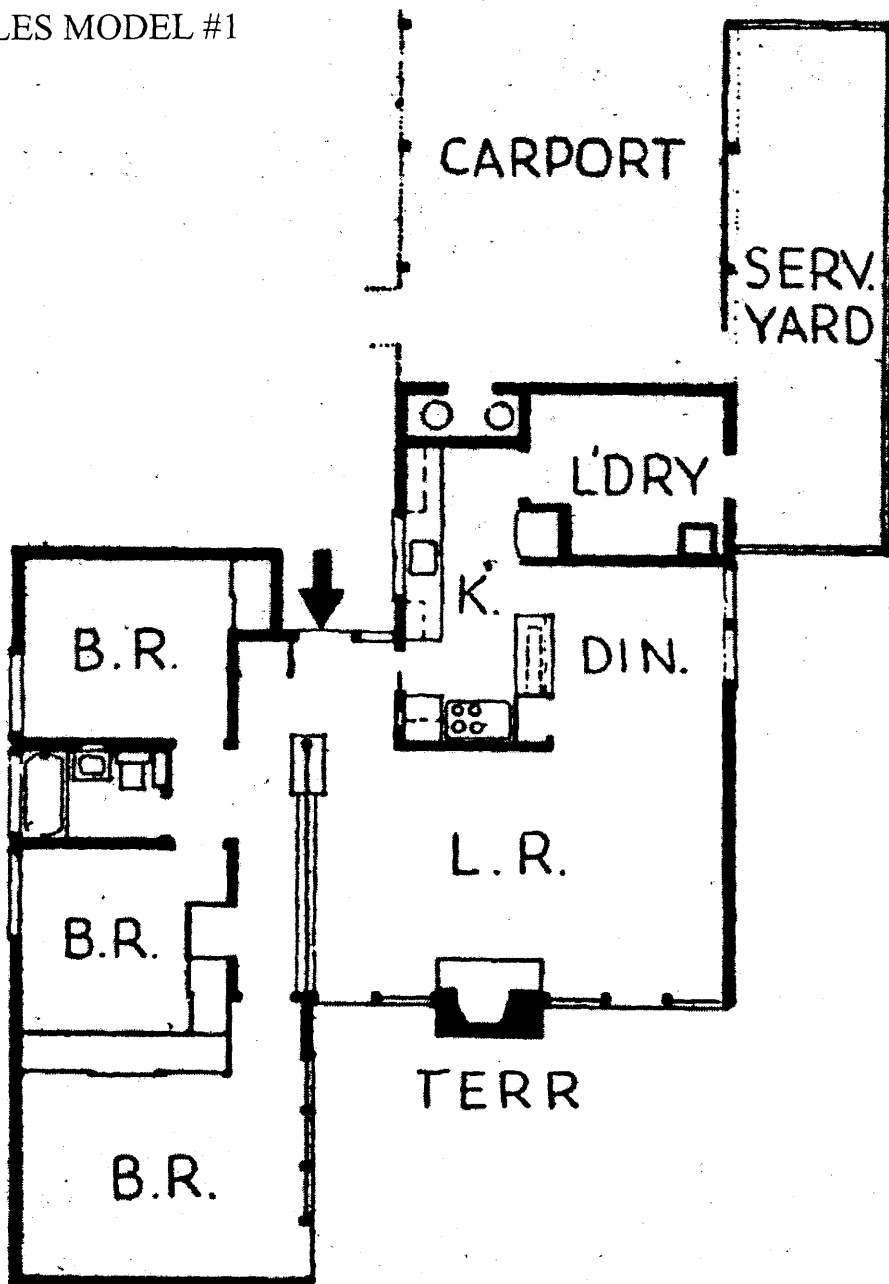
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

GREEN GABLES MODEL #1



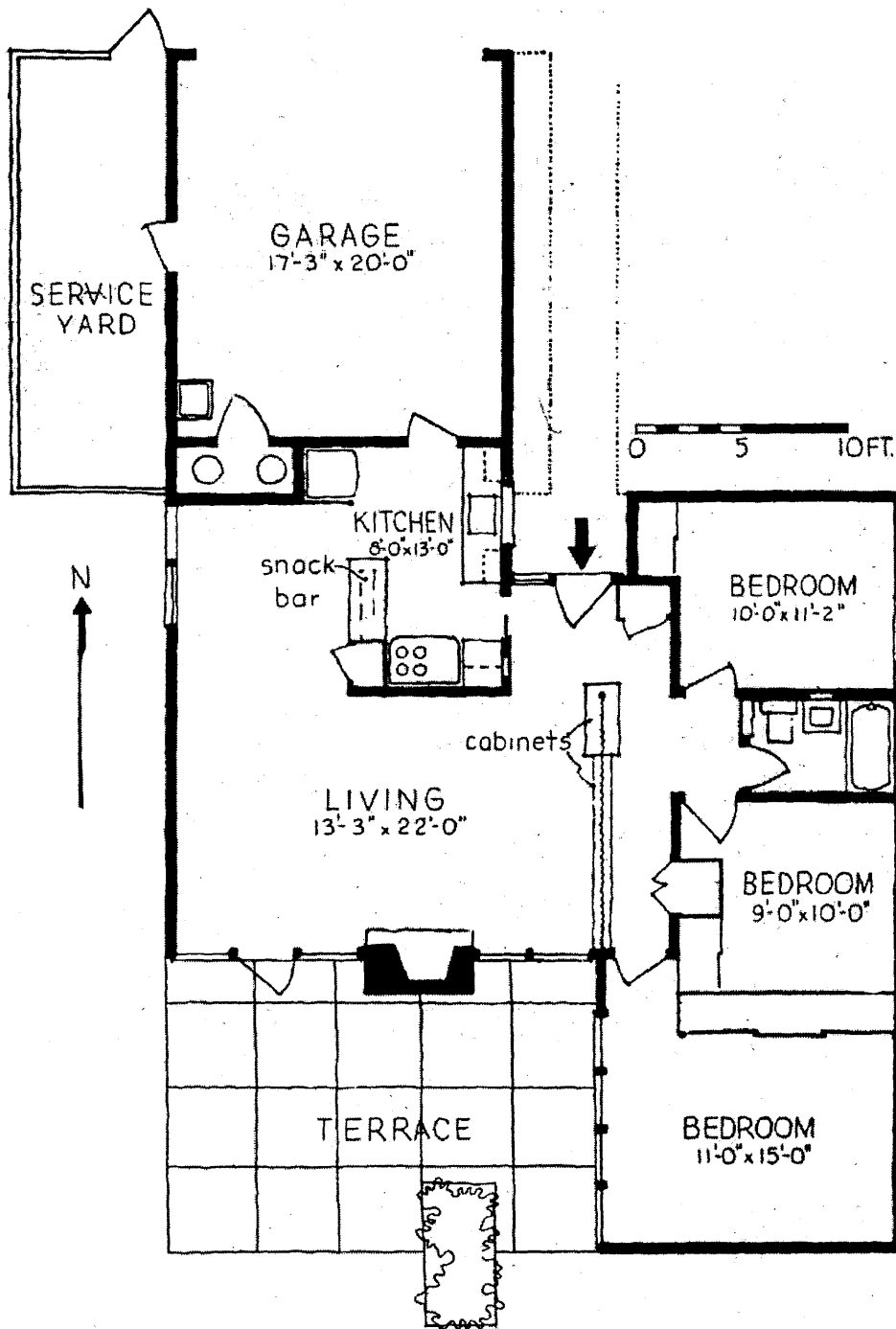
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

GREEN GABLES MODEL #2



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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The Eichler 'Historic Quest' committee members walked the streets of Green Gables subdivision to evaluate each house. Points were entered onto the spreadsheet if a house has been altered from its original appearance. Some of the items on the checklist were a single point value, while for others two or three point values could be selected. Higher point values indicated a more severe change. The points for each house were totaled and entered on the spreadsheet. A total of 12 points or more classified the house as "non-contributing"; 11 points or less classified the house as "contributing."

*Example 1:* a house had shingles applied to half of the front elevation (not original siding material) but not including the garage, and the garage door had been converted to a metal rollup door (original doors were faced with the same siding as the house). This justified a penalty of 8 points for the siding change and 8 points for the garage door change for a total of 16, which made it "non-contributing".

*Example 2:* a house had a small section of brick applied to the front elevation (4 points), a small window added on the front (4 points) and a traditional-style carriage lamp by the front door (2 points) for a total of 10. The house was classified as "contributing".

*Example 3:* a house had a six foot high atrium cover added that was clearly visible from the street (8 points) and the front door had been changed to a traditional style with applied molding and inset glass (4 points) for a total of 12 points, making it "non-contributing".

On the spreadsheets, each house was marked as either "Contributing" or "Non-contributing" and the total numbers for each page were entered into the "Total Contributing" and "Total Non-contributing" boxes at the bottom. The number of "Contributing" and "Non-contributing" houses for the entire subdivision was calculated as well as the percentages.

## SUBDIVISION EVALUATION CRITERIA

### 1. OVERALL (PROPORTIONS OF THE HOUSE)

**Contributing:** Single story, horizontal emphasis, solid planar surfaces contrasting with large panes of glass (though typically not on the front elevation), post-and-beam construction, and simple forms and details. Fencing, when original, is integrated with the front elevation.

**Non-contributing:**

- Second-story (unless original)
- Room additions that significantly alter the front elevation.
- Additions such as false pillars and beams with no purpose other than decoration.

### 2. ROOF

**Contributing:** Flat, shallow pitch, or combination of flat and central gable roof, often with extensive overhangs, with exposed beams that are squared-off and unornamented.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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**Non-contributing:**

- Readily visible air conditioning or heating ducts
- Atrium covers that significantly alter the roofline
- Large and obtrusive satellite dishes
- Noticeable changes of pitch to the original roofline
- Modified beam shapes, for example beams cut so they are not rectangular

3. FRONT ELEVATION & TRIM

**Contributing:** Siding is consistent with the general modernist design and incorporates vertical or horizontal lines in the original orientation. Some homes originally had concrete block walls occupying part of the front elevation. Exterior lighting is consistent with modernist principles.

**Non-contributing:**

- Any siding without lines consistent with that used in the subdivision
- Shingles
- Stucco
- Plaster
- Brick
- Aluminum and vinyl siding
- Applied exterior trim in non-modernist style
- Exterior lights that are obtrusive and not consistent with modernist principles

4. DOORS & WINDOWS

**Contributing:** Garage doors use the same siding and finish as the rest of the house. Front doors are flat and unadorned. The use of clear glass is minimized along the front elevation.

**Non-contributing:**

- Conventional ranch-style or aluminum roll-up garage doors
- Any pattern other than lines that match the original siding
- Windows inset in the garage door
- Entry features not integrated with roofline
- Front door with applied decoration
- Added street-facing windows inconsistent with the original style of the house
- Carport glass changed to something other than simple translucent (uncolored)
- Window trim that clashes with the design

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

### List of Street Addresses and Changes

Address	Street	Contributing?	Notes on any front elevation changes
1917	Channing Ave	Yes	Siding change, added window
1929	Channing Ave	Yes	Incompatible front yard fencing
1941	Channing Ave	No	Second story addition
1953	Channing Ave	Yes	Some applied trim and an added window
1965	Channing Ave	No	Replacement windows
1977	Channing Ave	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1914	Channing Ave	Yes	Added carport
1926	Channing Ave	Yes	Front door changed
1938	Channing Ave	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1950	Channing Ave	Yes	Exterior light added, added window
1962	Channing Ave	Yes	Exterior light added
1974	Channing Ave	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1986	Channing Ave	No	Second story addition
1990	Channing Ave	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1996	Channing Ave	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1919	Ivy Lane	Yes	Added window and changed front door
1933	Ivy Lane	No	Second story addition
1947	Ivy Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
1961	Ivy Lane	Yes	Incompatible front yard fencing
1975	Ivy Lane	No	Shingled exterior walls
1916	Ivy Lane	No	Extensive additions, modified entry, changed front door
1930	Ivy Lane	Yes	Added window
1944	Ivy Lane	Yes	Added window
1958	Ivy Lane	No	Second story addition
1972	Ivy Lane	No	Shingled exterior walls
693	Greer Road	Yes	Overall good intergrity
675	Greer Road	Yes	Changed garage door
657	Greer Road	Yes	Overall good intergrity
637	Greer Road	Yes	Changed siding and garage door
623	Greer Road	No	Second story addition
609	Greer Road	Yes	Overall good intergrity
587	Greer Road	No	Second story addition
571	Greer Road	No	Added brick exterior, changed garage door
559	Greer Road	No	Changed garage door, several added windows
543	Greer Road	Yes	Added exterior lights, changed garage door and front door
531	Greer Road	No	Slumpstone siding and front yard wall
517	Greer Road	Yes	Changed front door
501	Greer Road	Yes	Overall good integrity

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8 Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

Address	Street	Contributing?	Notes on any front elevation changes
611	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
619	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
627	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Rear addition
635	Wildwood Lane	No	Second story addition, brick façade added
643	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
651	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
610	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Shingles added to front walls
618	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Siding change
626	Wildwood Lane	No	Complete tear-down and rebuilt in a different style
634.	Wildwood Lane	No	Complete tear-down and rebuilt in a different style
642	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Incompatible front yard fencing
650	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door
658	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door
666	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
674	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
682	Wildwood Lane	No	Added windows
690	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
698	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Overall good intergrity
786	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Added exterior trim
774	Wildwood Lane	No	Altered roofline, changed siding, front door, added windows
762	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door
750	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed siding
738	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door
726	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door
714	Wildwood Lane	Yes	Changed garage door

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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Narrative Statement of Significance – Green Gables

The Green Gables subdivision, built by Eichler Homes in 1950 in Palo Alto, California, is architecturally significant in the context of post-World War II residential development. It is a well-preserved example of Mid-Century modern design applied to one of the early tract housing developments built by developer Joseph Eichler. 1950 was a watershed year for Eichler, as it was the first time he built homes using designs by the architectural firm of Robert Anshen and Steve Allen, and at a time when few merchant builders employed architects. These early Eichler homes employed modern designs that elevated the homes above typical, entry-level builder prototypes. From his company's offices based in Palo Alto over the next 15 years, Eichler went on to become the leading California developer in the modern style with a national reputation for quality construction targeted at middle-income families. Anshen and Allen became a growing firm whose fame soon spread internationally, though they continued to design for Eichler Homes throughout the 1950s.

Joe Eichler's penchant for modern design was deeply rooted in his psyche, but it was not until the second half of his life that he revealed his feelings and fully developed his interest in it. Born in New York City in 1900 to an Austrian-Jewish father and a German-Jewish mother, he was raised amid traditional circumstances. Although his family was politically liberal (they were devoted supporters of Franklin Roosevelt), Eichler's interest in Modern design emerged gradually. At first he showed a desire for the material advantages of modernity—dressing elegantly although conservatively (Eichler's model for clothing styles, according to his son Ned, was Fred Astaire) and later, encouraged by his wife Lillian's mutual enthusiasm, he became captivated by modern architecture.

When Joe met Lillian, he found a kindred spirit who was perhaps more demonstrative than he in embracing modern life. Their relationship eventually helped fuel Joe's confidence in his own creative pursuits. Lillian was also a product of traditional European heritage, a first-generation American, the daughter of Polish Jews. However, she took after her somewhat rebellious mother, who had been so eager for liberation from the constraints of her culture that soon after her arrival in New York she had taken off the wig that she wore according to religious tradition and, in a dramatic act of defiance, threw it into the Hudson River. Joe and Lillian's marriage was an unusual one for European Jews. Not only were their nationalities different, but Lillian's family was wealthy while Joe's was not—a reversal of the commonly expected roles of Eastern and Western European Jewish backgrounds. Ned would eventually write that the couple's common bond was “a zealous commitment to modernity.”

Eichler's education was pragmatic. A business degree from New York University and a career start on Wall Street helped prepare Joe for a mainstream career. A competitive man by nature and cultivated in the tough-minded atmosphere of America's financial capital, he was primed for business yet found his early career as a financial officer in his wife's family business dissatisfying. Some of Joe's reticence for this work may have been inherited. Ned pointed out that his own grandparents did not conform to the stereotypical German-Jewish immigrants and were not ambitious about wealth. Joe's father owned a small toy store in Manhattan but apparently was happiest when he was playing his violin. It was Joe's in-laws who succeeded on a grand scale, building a large and successful wholesale food business called Nye and Nisson, Inc.

In 1925, Joe and Lillian Eichler moved to the Bay Area, where the company was the largest independent butter-and-egg wholesaler in the region. Joe assumed the position of chief financial officer for their business on the West Coast. For 20 years Eichler excelled in his job, and the family that eventually included two sons, Richard and Edward, or “Ned,” thrived, despite the nationwide depression and the approaching World War II. Eichler, however, harbored a

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

repressed resentment for his work; its predictability and the requirement to work for others undermined his sense of personal fulfillment.

Then, in 1943, Eichler spotted a rare opportunity for his family when he rented one of Frank Lloyd Wright's so-called Usonians in Hillsborough, the Bazett residence. Two years of living in the Bazett House may very well have loosened Joe Eichler's spirit enough to allow him to feel his own internal stirrings for creative self-expression. "I began to dream," he said, "of building homes for sale that would incorporate some of the same advantages I enjoyed in my own house." Eichler learned by this experience what others have since concluded—that Frank Lloyd Wright's genius for design often achieved its most profound effect in his small residences, where his singular attention to function and detail were so complete and so deftly handled as to transform everyday life into art. Wright's attention to the intimacies of everyday life sprung from his strongly populist philosophy, and he designed his Usonians specifically for middle-class homeowners. As the architectural writer Herbert Muschamp said, "Frank Lloyd Wright was a Mr. Everybody. . . . He was a genius of the conventional, a supreme artist of everyday living. . . ." Eichler said, "I admired Wright's rich design, with its wooden walls and beamed ceiling, and I asked myself if such houses could be built for ordinary people." Joe and Lillian Eichler left the house as "devotees of contemporary architecture."

Eichler's early homebuilding efforts took place shortly after the close of World War II in 1945, when some ten million veterans returned home from overseas. These servicemen and women began building families that would require new housing on an unprecedented scale. Among the regions with the greatest need was California, where the population grew at a greater rate than any other state. Many veterans had shipped out of California ports, and upon their return elected to stay in the state. Add to this an influx of new residents that moved west because California offered one of the strongest postwar economies in the nation. A great many independent builders sought to capitalize on the early postwar need for new housing. While their production soon fulfilled the basic requirements for new families, these builders rarely utilized innovative designs. Eichler's company was an exception, responding to the challenges with ingenuity and style.

Eichler began his development career cautiously, pursuing mostly conventional techniques, while schooling himself in the home-building business. In 1947, Eichler launched a company providing prefabricated homes to owners who purchased their own lots. Even these tentative first steps, however, reflected Eichler's modern taste. The "pre-fabs" he chose featured a contemporary look, with rectangular massing and long bands of windows. Over the next two years, his operation expanded to the building of small housing tracts. In 1949, Eichler hired a draftsman who produced more stylish but less overtly modern designs for two new subdivisions, in Palo Alto and Menlo Park. Eichler explained later that he put off a wholehearted plunge into original architectural designs until he acquired sufficient "experience and know-how" to manage a process that involved top-flight architects and full-fledged modern building techniques. Within a few years, Eichler became a merchant builder by the classic definition, his company functioning to oversee every aspect of selling housing to consumers without middle men. This included land acquisition and development, construction, financing, and marketing. One obvious element that separated him from the rest of the pack was his choice of product: architect-designed modern houses.

When Eichler eventually built his first subdivision of architecturally designed homes, observers perceived the results as daring. Even the architectural press that had been touting the advantages of modernism for middle-class American homes since before the end of the war seemed surprised with Eichler's boldness. Architectural Forum, the most elite of the nation's professional journals during the postwar, in 1950 called architects Anshen and Allen's first Eichler subdivision a "gamble in modern."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

Robert Allen's first design for Eichler Homes, designated the AA-1, went on the market in early 1950. Located in the city of Sunnyvale, beyond the usual San Francisco commute, where land was relatively inexpensive, these first prototypes were small and formally simple, but they provided a remarkable degree of commodity in the under \$10,000 price range. The home-buying public embraced them enthusiastically; all fifty-one houses were sold within two weeks (the name of this subdivision is unknown, it was not Green Gables, which is in Palo Alto).

Spurred on by this success, Eichler commissioned Anshen and Allen to design five additional subdivisions in 1950, again using variations of the AA-1 prototype. One of these was the Green Gables development, which comprised 62 houses that went on sale that May. Of the six subdivisions Eichler built in 1950, the Green Gables development was selected for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places because based on a careful survey it is clearly the best preserved and has the most historic integrity.

The Green Gables tract is typical of the houses Eichler built during 1950. Their cutting edge design featured combination flat and pitched shed roofs and post-and-beam construction that enabled the architects to design the dining, kitchen, and living areas as an open plan in a single rectangular space beneath a sixteen-foot free-span roof, with a centrally located kitchen. The open plan was likely inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian designs, as Anshen and Allen, like other modernist architects of the day, were strongly influenced by Wright's work. Radiant heating systems were standard, another Wright inspired feature.

The design emphasizes privacy for the residents, presenting a relatively blank facade to the street but employing extensive areas of floor-to-ceiling glass along the rear elevation to open up the house to the outdoor concrete patio area. The living area was separated from the hallway by a head-high storage partition, with a fluted obscure glass screen resting on a built-in redwood cabinet and shelving unit. The partition did not extend to the ceiling, allowing for air circulation between the bedroom wing and living area. The kitchen had Formica plastic countertops and a pass-through "snack bar" connection to the dining area, above which are built-in redwood storage shelves.

In keeping with the modern style, the exteriors were clean and simple, essentially devoid of decoration. Siding was horizontally placed redwood boards, originally stained in earth-tone colors. Garage doors were finished with matching siding so they blended into the overall design.

Eichler's architecturally designed subdivisions, with their unabashedly modernist features, resulted in widespread critical acclaim. When Eichler built his first subdivision of architecturally designed homes, observers perceived his efforts as daring. Even the professional journals of the architectural press that had been touting the advantages of modernism for middle-class American homes since before the end of the war seemed surprised with Eichler's boldness.

*Architectural Forum*, the most elite of the nation's professional journals during the postwar, in April 1950 called architects Anshen and Allen's first Eichler Homes subdivision a "gamble in modern." Five Eichler subdivisions (Green Gables, El Centro Gardens, Greer Park, and Leland Manor in Palo Alto, and Atherwood in Redwood City according to Susan Hall Harrison, see bibliography) were collectively named "Subdivision of the Year" in the December 1950 issue of *Architectural Forum*, a national magazine for the architectural profession (no other subdivisions were so honored in that year). The Green Gables homes were also the subject of a feature article in the November 1950 issue of *House Beautiful*, a popular national shelter magazine, which described them as "Making a little go a long way".

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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*Arts + Architecture*, the premier west coast trade journal devoted to modern design and distributed internationally, published several features on Eichler Homes in the early 1950s. Notable was a pair of articles featuring the Ladera subdivision in Portola Valley, designed by Jones and Emmons. The first, in 1950, described the designs. Then, in the November 1951 issue, an article documented the completed first phase of the development, citing the “enormous value of real cooperation between the architect and builder.” It concluded that the results assured a “better way of living at a much more reasonable cost.”

Popular “shelter magazines” aimed at the consumer market also featured Eichler Homes during the 1950s. *House and Home*, published by McGraw Hill, who also produced *Architecture Record*, the establishment architectural journal, became a consistent supporter of Eichler Homes. The magazine’s editor, Perry Prentice, an influential advocate for improved residential design who hosted numerous symposia at the annual conventions for the American Institute of Architects and the National Association of Homebuilders, later came to champion Eichler’s work.

As his business became established, Eichler defined an individualistic approach that in many ways challenged conventional practice. Not infrequently, building and planning authorities withheld support for his designs. The Federal Housing Authority, set up to ensure home mortgages, made it possible for families just entering the middle class to afford homes in Eichler’s price range. However, the agency imposed a number of restrictive design guidelines that compromised the assistance they could give. As architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright described it, “FHA evaluators were instructed to lower the rating score of houses with conspicuously modern designs because they were not considered to be a good investment. An agency pamphlet expressed doubt whether the modern style of flat roofs and plain asymmetrical facades would prove to be more than a fad.” When this policy threatened to exclude the market for Eichler Homes, Eichler, with company co-founder James San Jule as his negotiating partner, went to Washington to lobby the FHA for changes to their guidelines. Apart from overcoming the objections of the authorities, Eichler’s company would need to appeal to buyers largely unfamiliar with modern architecture. The pure, modern look of his homes limited market appeal. Despite these obstacles, Eichler embraced modern design, appealing to the authorities when necessary and marketing aggressively.

Working with architects set Eichler apart from most builders. Most builders in the postwar, needing to control the designs for economic and aesthetic reasons, preferred not to hire architectural firms as independent consultants. Further, according to Gwendolyn Wright, “most architects looked down on the average builder’s aesthetic taste, as well as his cost controls; and they scorned the cautious, conservative Federal Housing Association (FHA) design guidelines as well.” For these reasons, as well as the limited market appeal of modernist residential architecture, Eichler’s first developments with Anshen and Allen designed homes were considered a gamble.

Generally home builders preferred to control design themselves. East Coast-based Levitt and Sons, the most successful of the postwar merchant builders, was a more typical example of merchant builder practice. Despite their company’s large-scale production, the family members directed much of the design work themselves. William Levitt acted as spokesman and president, while his brother Alfred helped develop the house plans and their father Abraham oversaw the landscape design. One of the Bay Area’s most successful homebuilders during the early postwar was Earl Smith, who built 2,700 moderately priced new homes in over 14 different Bay Area cities. Similar to the Levitt’s in-house process, Smith designed the homes himself.

This trend began to shift by the mid-1950s. The market for new homes softened after 1953, and competition among builders for more demanding buyers led some to commission architects to raise the standards of their products. Mackay Homes was one Bay Area company that began to employ architects, including for a brief period Anshen

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

and Allen. Mackay, however, exhibited the typical builder's concerns about modern aesthetics, and hedged on their designs, building homes that were contemporary in plan, but clad on the outside in more familiar vernacular styles. Eichler's work remained distinctive among Bay Area builders for his consistent use of modern aesthetics

Eichler's architects brought knowledge of modern building techniques and their skills with California Modern design. Robert Anshen, of the San Francisco-based firm of Anshen and Allen, had worked for the National Housing Authority in Vallejo during the War. In 1945, realizing the need for inexpensive, quick-to-build houses, he drew upon his experiences to write a series of papers proposing much-needed home building industry reforms.

The style of the Eichler homes is endemically Californian. The look may seem in some ways almost generically 1950s, but that is partly because during the postwar the fashion in residential architecture often resembled work originated in California. California modernism was a social and aesthetic movement that derived ideas and practices from the modern movement in Europe. Many of the innovators of postwar American residential design, particularly designs suited to moderate-income buyers, were California architects. William Wurster, a Dean of the College of Environmental Design at U.C. Berkeley, Joseph Esherick, John Funk, Gordon Drake, and many other lesser-known practitioners constituted a loose-knit but consistent school of designers that helped define a Californian aesthetic. This style emphasized modest-scaled homes with informal open plans and indoor-outdoor relationships, and often employed post-and-beam structures and natural finished wood inside and out.

Eichler and his architects brought California modernism to a middle-class mass market. Eichler initially looked to Anshen and Allen for a construction system that would be efficient to build but inherently flexible enough to provide opportunities for individual designs. Anshen recommended employing post-and-beam construction, which had the twin benefits of speedy erection time and plan flexibility. The Eichler architects' design strategy of post-and-beam structure and exposed redwood or mahogany-veneer plywood panels was a simple one that, nonetheless, imbued their mass-produced product with a custom-designed feeling.

Architects overcame difficulties that Eichler Homes encountered as a result of their desire for innovation. Hiring architects proved valuable in terms of construction and cost efficiencies. Anshen and Allen planned the buildings on a four-foot module, and their clearly delineated drawings simplified Eichler's materials purchasing and construction management. Before working with the architects, Eichler recalled in a December 1950 interview in *Architectural Forum* that "we were always running into bugs . . . we'd have to revise as we went along"; this caused costly delays. Further, the architects standardized the building components. A kit-of-parts system, similar in some ways to Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian concept, enabled multiple variations of the same basic plan. This strategy gave Eichler Homes a competitive edge in the market because the company was able to provide greater variety than other developers at comparable cost.

Eichler's contributions to merchant building in the 1950s reflect his singular philosophy. Politically liberal, Eichler embraced modernity as much because of its social agenda as for its aesthetic, a feeling he shared with his wife Lillian. Their son Edward would recall that his parents common bond was "a zealous commitment to modernity." Eichler's introduction to modern architecture was through a very personal experience. Between 1943 and 1945, prior to his career as a builder, Eichler and his family rented one of Frank Lloyd Wright's so-called Usonians in Hillsborough, California, the Bazett residence. Two years of living in the house inspired the future developer. "I began to dream," he said, "of building homes for sale that would incorporate some of the same advantages I enjoyed in my own house." "I admired Wright's rich design, with its wooden walls and beamed ceiling," said Eichler, "and I asked myself if such houses could be built for ordinary people." Joe and Lillian left the house as "devotees of contemporary architecture."

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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To Eichler, homebuilding was a deeply personal affair, and in effect a form of creative self-expression. Much as an artist would do, Eichler invested himself in his projects with a consuming passion. He was convinced that, just as he had emerged from a traditional middle-class background to fulfill his own ambitions to experience a truly modern way of life, others, likewise, yearned to share in the opportunity modernity had to offer. Eichler was also the most prominent homebuilder in the country during the 1950s to practice a nondiscrimination policy. This policy distinguished Eichler from nearly all his contemporaries. William Levitt, for example was complicit with racial discrimination. In the Bay Area, industry leaders were outspokenly biased as well.

Eichler's continued work until the mid-sixties left a legacy of design integrity, and set new standards for developer housing, which remain unparalleled in the history of American building. By 1954, when his highly praised Greenmeadow development of Palo Alto was underway, Eichler Homes' headquarters in Palo Alto – which would be home to 3,000 Eichler homes over the next 20 years – served as the hub of its peninsula operation. By the mid-1950s, the company had built approximately 1,800 modern houses on the peninsula, and the popular press regularly acknowledged Eichler's achievements. A year after Greenmeadow, Eichler made a big step, expanding his operation away from his peninsula hub, into Marin county (the Terra Linda development of San Rafael), the East Bay (Rancho San Miguel in Walnut Creek), and even Sacramento (South Land Park). In all, by 1974, he would build nearly 11,000 tract houses and hundreds of custom homes in scores of developments in 32 Northern and Southern California towns.

In 1961, Eichler Homes became a public stock company, and that changed things for Joe Eichler. He disliked being beholden to the stockholders. Having to put sales goals ahead of his intuitive schemes and continual tinkering with designs frustrated Eichler's creative ambitions and contributed to a brooding dissatisfaction. Loath to have any control wrested from him, he was skeptical of financial advisors and mistrustful of those who counseled for more cautious strategies for the company. Eichler resisted even his own son Ned's counsel when he pleaded with his father to take fewer risks. Eventually, Eichler's continual quest to pursue progressive ideas overwhelmed the company's ability to remain profitable. Construction in the urban core of San Francisco was more expensive, and conditions far more complicated, than those the company had faced in the suburbs. Several of Eichler Homes' urban projects were in transitional neighborhoods in which Eichler gambled that his developments could turn conditions around. In addition, Eichler made what some saw as fundamental marketing mistakes. While the suburban projects continued to do well, the difficulties with the urban projects began to jeopardize the operations as a whole, and Eichler Homes began to lose money. In 1966, Eichler's company was taken over when two southern California investors bought a controlling share of the company's stock, perhaps not realizing that the firm's worth was almost completely depleted from the over-ambitious projects of the by-then glamorous, but doomed, Eichler Homes.

Eichler continued to build housing with a series of reincarnations of his original company until his death in 1974. However, none of these subsequent efforts matched the earlier projects in their enthusiasm for new design ideas or social aspirations. It was Eichler's work during the period from 1950 until the mid-sixties that left a legacy of design integrity and set new standards for developer housing which remain unparalleled in the history of American building.

The volunteer Eichler 'Historic Quest' committee selected the Green Gables development for this submission after an involved evaluation process. Based on the extensive Eichler Homes records maintained by the Eichler Network, the committee identified and located all of the Eichler Homes subdivisions and many of the custom Eichler houses built between 1950 (the first architect designs) and 1959. Homes built in 1960 or later were not considered for nomination, as it was felt that they were built too recently. All the homes surveyed were located in the Bay Area of

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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Northern California, except for one subdivision in Sacramento. The Eichler Homes context study ("Statement of Significance") was written drawing on material from the book by committee members Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunich. The study provided a basis for the research and discussions that followed, as described below.

The committee developed a set of evaluation criteria based on the distinctive features of the mid-century modern architectural style employed by Eichler Homes as described in the "Statement of Significance" and following the guidelines specified in Criterion C. The following categories were considered for incorporation into the criteria: overall proportions (as viewed from the street or other public areas), roofline, exposed beams, exterior siding and trim, garage door, entry area and front door, windows (including atrium/carport wall glass), ornamentation (such as exterior lights, house numbers, etc.), paint color, landscaping and fencing. All were included in the final criteria that were used for the survey except for paint color and landscaping.

Teams consisting of two committee members each were assigned to do preliminary surveys of the subdivisions and the best-known custom homes. Without evaluating each home in detail, they noted the overall condition of the structures and the boundaries of the subdivisions, including street names. They were then ranked as to which of three categories they fell under: "Strong candidate for contributing," "Maybe contributing, should reappraise," and "Non-contributing." Meeting as a group, the committee created a "short list" of nine subdivisions and two custom homes that were felt to be possible candidates for nomination to the National Register.

At that point, the committee as a whole toured the short-listed candidates. The candidates were again evaluated for their state of architectural preservation, historic integrity, social significance, and how well they represented the Eichler style. It was decided that, while all the candidates on the short list had the potential to be accepted to the National Register, the committee lacked the resources to develop the documentation to nominate all eleven. Green Gables was one of two final subdivision candidates selected by the committee.

With the candidates determined, procedures were developed for detailed, house-by-house surveys of the subdivisions. Maps covering the areas of each subdivision were acquired from county or city agencies. Spreadsheet templates were then created of the subdivision evaluation criteria. Working from the maps, committee members entered street names and house numbers in the spreadsheet template printouts.

The boundaries of the subdivisions were readily determined by relying on the distinctive architectural style of Eichler homes. In some cases, non-Eichler residences would be found next to or across the street from Eichler houses, and that indicated the boundary of the subdivision.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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Conversation with Betty Frank, 1999

Conversation with Elaine Bachelder, 1998

Conversation with Scott Coates, 1998

Conversations with Elaine K. Sewell Jones, 1996-2001

Conversations with Ned Eichler, 1998-2001.

Conversations with Jean and Steven Aronson (Green Gables homeowners since 1950), 2002

Joan Ockman lecture given at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, November 1995.

JoAnne Stewart Wetzel interview with Steve Allen appendix to Anshen and Allen: Their Contribution to the Development of the Eichler House, 1980.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

Green Gables, Santa Clara County, California

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**Verbal Boundary Description – Green Gables**

The Green Gables subdivision, built in 1950, consists of 63 homes located at 1914 – 1996 Channing Avenue, 501 – 693 Greer Road (odd numbers only), 1916 - 1975 Ivy Lane, and 611 – 651 (odd) 610 – 786 (even) Wildwood Lane in Palo Alto, California, near the Embarcadero exit off the 101 freeway. The subdivision is surrounded by other homes built at different times, and there is no sharp demarcation between Green Gables and the surrounding community. The attached district map delineates the Green Gables subdivision boundaries as described above.

**Boundary Justification**

Based on a survey of the neighborhood, the boundaries described above include all the homes built by Eichler in 1950. A later addition along the other side of Wildwood Lane and extending into Channing Ave., Sandalwood Ct. and Edgewood Dr., was built in the mid-50's and is not included in this nomination as the homes were built separately and are based on different floor plans and architecture.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number      Page   1               Santa Clara County, CA

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Green Gables Photographs

Information common to all photos:

1. Green Gables
2. Santa Clara County, CA
3. Barry Brisco
4. Jan. 25, 2003
5. Barry Brisco, 1547 Tarrytown St., San Mateo, CA 94402

6. West, living room showing exposed beam ceiling, redwood wall paneling, exterior wall of glass.

7. #1

6. East, showing brick fireplace, obscure glass partition between hallway and living area.

7. #2

6. East, showing dining area and kitchen with breakfast bar.

7. #3

6. South, bedroom showing mahogany paneling, wall of glass looking out onto rear patio.

7. #4

6. Southwest, hallway with original built-in bookcases and obscure glass partition.

7. #5

6. South, 1914 Channing Ave., contributing

7. #6

6. South, 1938 Channing Ave., contributing

7. #7

6. South, 1962 Channing Ave., contributing

7. #8

6. North, 1965 Channing Ave., non-contributing

7. #9

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Page 2

\_\_\_ Santa Clara County, CA

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6. North, 1977 Channing Ave., contributing

7. #10

6. West, 690 Wildwood, contributing

7. #11

6. South, 1958 Ivy, non-contributing

7. #12

6. East, 623 Greer, non-contributing

7. #13

6. East, 531 Greer, non-contributing

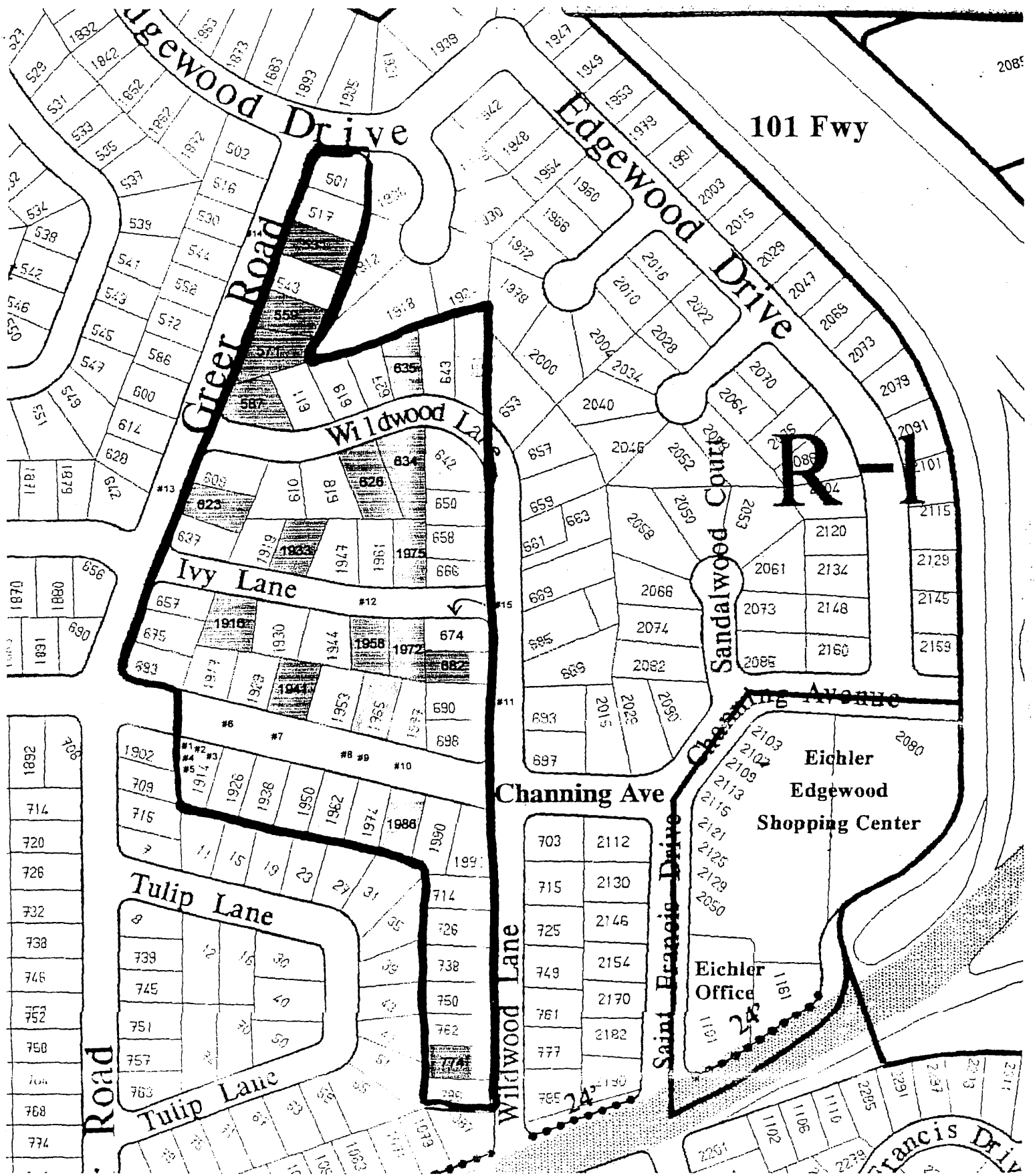
7. #14

**674**

6. Southwest, ~~674~~ Wildwood, contributing

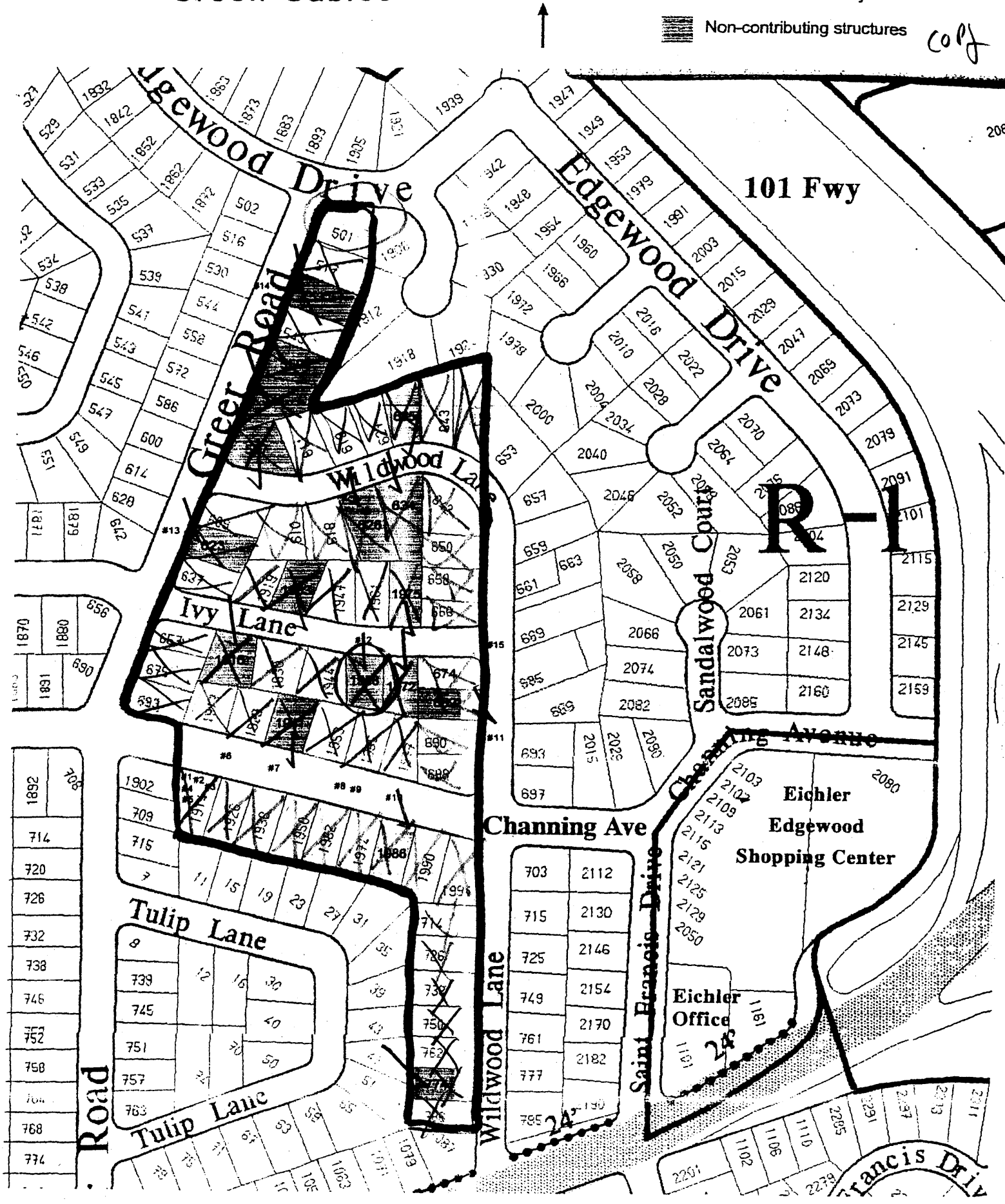
7. #15

Non-contributing structures



Palo Alto, CA  
Santa Clara County

copy



Palo Alto, CA  
 Santa Clara County



1. Green Gables

7. South Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables
2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Sables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



690

1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Cables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



623

1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables

2. Santa Clara County, CA



1. Green Gables
2. Santa Clara County, CA