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## America's Finest Housing Crisis: Racialized Housing and Suburban Development

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### Digital USD Citation

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Vicenta Martinez Govea  
Dr. Shannon Starkey  
McNair 2020

## America's Finest Housing Crisis Racialized Housing & Suburban Development

Abstract - U.S. Government operations between 1940-1950 brought unprecedented direct and indirect employment opportunities to San Diego, exacerbating an already growing housing shortage. To accommodate the thousands of new defense workers, the government produced the largest defense housing project to date in the small neighborhood of Linda Vista. However, this opportunity and largesse was extended primarily to a select group of white working-class families who had access to defense jobs and, consequently, subsidized housing. Military presence in San Diego during World War II shaped the design of homes and exclusively allocated housing, as both shelter and financial instrument, to white working-class families through restrictive racial policy and practice at the start of WWII to create the ideal white-middle class citizen. Racial minorities were excluded by the federal government and unable to take advantage of plumbing or heating services offered by a house due to an absence of unit design at their disposal. Government presence but limited progressive intervention in the housing industry created the circumstances to maintain a housing crisis rather than fix the problem that disproportionately affected racial minorities. This instance is clear with the intersectionality of the military, private corporations, racial construction and housing development in Linda Vista that created a thriving suburbia for white families. Due to systemic and institutionalized racism, Linda Vista never would have been accessible to all due to racial segregation within private companies sanctioned by public officials. With heterogeneous facades and homogenous floor plans, Linda Vista Defense Housing produced white middle-class citizens out of wartime workers.

During World War II, migration to San Diego increased significantly and transformed the County. According to the US Census Bureau, San Diego County experienced an eight-five percent increase in population from 1940 to 1950, from approximately 289,348 to 535,967.<sup>1</sup> Military presence in San Diego played a large role in this change with an increase from 38,075 personnel at the start of World War II to 193,296 at its peak in 1944.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the military brought wartime defense workers to fill aircraft and shipbuilding industries to serve the war effort. Defense jobs continued to open up as the aircraft industry steadily grew and, in 1940, brought 1,500 aircraft workers to San Diego per week, increasing the number of defense workers in the County to 90,000.<sup>3</sup> By 1941, Consolidated Aircraft had become the largest local producer in the aircraft industry and employed over 17,000 men, 4% of whom were not from San Diego.<sup>4</sup> The migration introduced large numbers of racial minorities and immigrants to San Diego seeking jobs in wartime industries. Attracted by job opportunities, San Diego experienced a 284% increase of black residents over the same ten year period, from approximately 4,387 to 16,845. Similar

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<sup>1</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Population of California, by Counties*.

<sup>2</sup>Shragge, Abraham. "A New Federal City: San Diego During World War II;" U.S Bureau of the Census (1944); Eleventh Naval District (1939).

<sup>3</sup>Hearings Before The Select Committee Investigating The National Defense Migration. Part 12: San Diego Hearings, June 12th, 13th, and 14th, 1941, p. 4824. Hereafter designated as the Tolan Hearings.

<sup>4</sup>"Boomtown: San Diego," Life. The number of aircraft workers in San Diego would increase to 32,000 by 1942.

patterns were seen with an increase of immigrant workers that was credited to the Bracero Program which temporarily permitted wartime Mexican workers to enter the US.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile the number of native born whites increased by only sixteen percent while the number of foreign born whites decreased by fifteen percent between 1940 and 1950.<sup>6</sup> Over the course of ten years, the demographics of San Diego were diversified, transforming the economy, housing industry, and the County's blueprints for San Diego.

Although military presence brought economic prosperity and drastically increased the overall population of the once quiet town, San Diego's civic elite - businessmen, realtors, lawyers, and architects - envisioned a white middle-class suburb of San Diego and did not expect the large number of black and migrant workers that would arrive with the military and defense companies. Instead, a vision of a San Diego tourist attraction was imagined to grow alongside the suburbs from extensive military investment and the exclusion of racial minorities and the poor.<sup>7</sup> Employment opportunities were expected to attract a large white middle-class and defense workers and exclude non-whites. And they frequently did as private employers sought out white workers over black or brown employees and gave position priority to white men. Consolidate Aircraft did not employ black workers and created conditions that limited the opportunities available to black men in San Diego. As a result, black defense workers, just as black servicemen, were assigned unskilled positions, laborer and service worker, and considered only for janitor positions at Consolidate Aircraft. By 1959, black workers made up 8.7% of the unskilled occupational group and only 0.4% of professional and technical positions in the aircraft industry.<sup>8</sup> Racial and class segregation became a vital part in perpetuating San Diego as a white suburb

In 1956, the Fair Employment Practices Commission named San Diego one of the most segregated areas in the country and linked this to the discriminatory employment practices necessary to uphold the white suburban vision.<sup>9</sup> Segregation did not end with private employers, schools in San Diego maintained de facto segregation and did not serve black and Latino students at the same level as they did their white counterparts. By 1960, San Diego State College had only one hundred black students enrolled.<sup>10</sup> Similar discriminatory practices were encountered at the high school level and resulted in walkouts at Lincoln High School in 1969, and lawsuits against the San Diego public school district.<sup>11</sup> Segregation practices contributed to systems of discrimination within the private and public sectors in San Diego and spread. Discriminatory employment practices would lead to segregated housing based on

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<sup>5</sup>Harris, LeRoy. "The Other Side of the Freeway: A Survey of the Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego." The Bracero Program was enacted between 1942-1947 and continued again between 1952-1964.

<sup>6</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1940). *California Characteristics of the Population*, Table C44; U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Detailed Characteristics*, Table 53.

<sup>7</sup>Kilroy, Christine. "Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego's National Defense Projects."

<sup>8</sup>Northrup, Herbert R., Carl B. King, William H. Quay, Howard W. Risher, and Richard L. Rowan. "World War II: From Exclusion to Utilization." The president of Vultee Aircraft, a company that merged with Consolidated Aircraft in 1943, explained, "We will receive applications from both white and Negro workers. However, the Negroes will be considered only as janitors and in other similar capacities. While we are in complete sympathy with the Negro, it is against the company policy to employ them as mechanics or aircraft workers. We use none except white workers in the plant." In 1940, 0.2% of the total employees in the aircraft industry were non-white, this number increased to 1.6% in 1950 and 3.6% in 1960.

<sup>9</sup>Miller, Jim. "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America's Finest City;" *Union* 11/10/65.

<sup>10</sup>Showley, Roger M. *San Diego: Perfecting Paradise*.

<sup>11</sup>Keen, Harold. "De Facto Segregation in San Diego."

workers' racialized positions within private companies and their inability to live within communities.

Strict racial property restrictions limited housing options available to black and immigrant defense workers in order to achieve homogenous white communities parallel to wartime industries and the white military town. While homeowners were suspicious of and would not rent to people with accents, racial covenants restricted people of color from living North of the I-8 in San Diego and confined them within San Diego's southeast neighborhoods well into the late 1960's. Construction of major intersection I-8 in the early 1960's served to reinforce the racial dividing line that geographically kept minorities apart from white San Diegans in the early twentieth century. Figure 1 shows the I-8 that bisected San Diego, creating a racial dividing line between the growing barrios and the developing suburbs. Between 1888-1957, over two-thirds of deeds in San Diego had race restrictions prohibiting the sale of or rent of houses to black and Latino families in designated white neighborhoods.<sup>12</sup> The enforced racial clauses within home deeds prevented non-whites from purchasing or renting a home in large parts of San Diego and limited the housing options families of color had upon arrival to San Diego during wartimes. Similarly, areas without restrictive policy kept non-white residents from purchasing or renting a home through individual refusal from white owners to sell or rent to a racial minority.<sup>13</sup> This policy directly segregated housing options available to wartime workers of color who were already excluded from skilled positions within major private companies. This racial segregation limited the housing options available to racial minorities in San Diego and prevented families of color from acquiring property and participating in the American Dream of homeownership.

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<sup>12</sup>Harris, LeRoy. "The Other Side of the Freeway: A Survey of the Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego." Golden Hill residents took three black neighbors to court for living in a white community. Through the 1950's, homes in City Heights included clauses in deeds that read as follows: "this property shall not be sold, leased, rented or occupied by any person other than one of the Caucasian race." In 1961, a black engineer was denied purchase of a home in University City for being black.

<sup>13</sup>Guevarra, Rudy P. "The Devil Comes to San Diego: Race and Spatial Politics." Point Loma became the dividing line where white, Portuguese and other Europeans lived while Mexicans, Filipinos, and blacks were confined to the South Bay and southeast San Diego. Racial minorities were allowed to live within white neighborhoods in designated servant quarters.

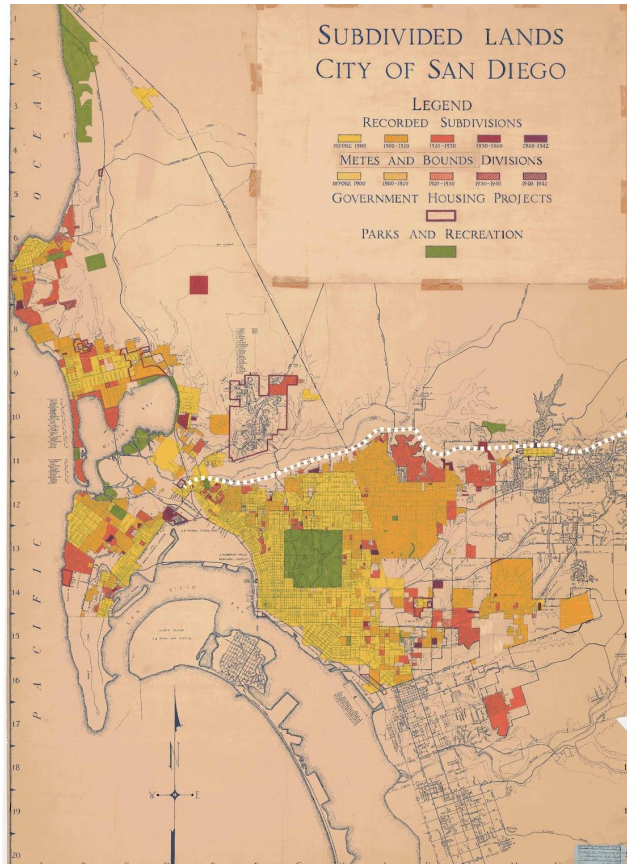


Figure 1. City of San Diego Historical Planning Maps, 1942 *Subdivided Lands*, Highlighting the I-8 Freeway

As early as the 1930's, the American Dream referred to a land in which life was better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for everyone according to their ability and achievements. Property ownership was a critical part of the American Dream. In addition to wealth, the American dream referred to a vision of social order where individuals could grow regardless of their past living conditions.<sup>14</sup> Extending the American Dream to everyone created a myth of inclusivity towards black and immigrant wartime workers. The myth, however, was largely unavailable to non-white residents in San Diego. Nonetheless, the idea of prosperity encouraged migrants to move to San Diego, a thriving military town, and current residents to move to suburban tracts to reach their full potential. Living south of the I-8, would equate to giving up and settling in a neighborhood with lower cost of housing rather than working towards the bigger and better homes in Northern suburban tracts that would offer the American Dream. By 1950, the median value of a house north of the I-8 was two to four times the value of houses south of the I-8.<sup>15</sup> Calculation of value was in part determined by the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) rating system, largely based on race, that valued areas within a city and declared neighborhoods eligible or ineligible for mortgage insurance.<sup>16</sup> However, race restrictions prohibited

<sup>14</sup>Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America*.

<sup>15</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 3.

<sup>16</sup>Jackson, Kenneth. "Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal: The Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration." The FHA rated neighborhoods through a series of letters and colors to determine their eligibility for mortgage insurance. First, Second, Third and Fourth corresponded with letters A, B, C, D, and colors



people of color from living anywhere but South of the I-8. Neglected housing units in these neighborhoods created deteriorating living conditions for non-white workers inhabiting these racially diverse southern communities.

Housing units in San Diego served as sites of service and architectural designs allocated different services or lack of hygiene facilities within a home. A worker's racial identity determined their status as workers, which further determined their access to housing and the plumbing or heating services offered by the design of each unit. Non-white wartime workers, restricted from suburban northern communities, were left to live in housing that lacked the ample services of a suburban home - including an indoor bathroom, running water, or central heating.<sup>17</sup> According to the 1940 US Census Bureau, one out of nine units in National City, a non-white community in southeast San Diego, lacked a private bathroom and one in fourteen were in need of major repairs. Numbers were significantly smaller in La Mesa, a developing suburb in northern San Diego, with only one in twenty-three units lacking private bathrooms and one in sixty-six units needing major improvements.<sup>18</sup> By 1950, areas of predominantly non-white residents were 13 times more likely to lack an indoor or private bathroom within a unit and 12 times more likely to lack running water compared to areas of predominantly white residents.<sup>19</sup> The architecture of homes within different neighborhoods granted residents with proper plumbing services and hygiene facilities while it denied others these basic necessities. While homes in predominantly white neighborhoods were designed to contain private bathrooms for tenants, homes in predominantly non-white neighborhoods were designed with the absence of such facilities. Yet both were equally classified as a variation of a housing unit due to the appearance of the unit facade which served to mask the interior. As theorized by Reyner Banham, a house became the mechanical services that were concealed by a shell.<sup>20</sup> In San Diego, the idea is reversed and the house becomes the facades rather than the mechanical services. A lack of amenities within San Diego's housing units in non-white communities resulted in insignificant shells that had no mechanical services to conceal. Instead walls were used to merely conceal the people within and the disparities amongst the housing. This gap in housing was further expanded due to San Diego's civic elite's focus on their plan of a white, military, suburbia to serve white families and neglect the needs of non-whites.

On top of racial housing practices that limited non-white wartime workers, San Diego's housing inventory - 100,245 housing units at the start of 1940 - was not prepared to house the thousands of migrants arriving each week.<sup>21</sup> As a result, to make the white suburban vision a possibility would require considerable effort on behalf of the County by first constructing the homes to house the thousands of workers that found themselves with a job, but without proper shelter. However, there was high risk to develop housing units during wartimes given there was no set timeline on when wartimes would end or how long after wartimes ended workers would remain in defense towns. Housing facilities were not seen

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green, blue yellow, red. Neighborhoods that were dense, mixed, or aging were undervalued- this included black neighborhoods that were rated as "D."

<sup>17</sup>Smith, Preston H. "Racial Democracy and the Case for Public Housing." In the 1940's Chicago, black families experienced a housing crisis due to their lower wages on top of restrictive covenants. Overcrowded conditions, lack of indoor bathrooms, no central heating, and rent exploitation created deteriorating slums with neglected and undesirable homes.

<sup>18</sup>US Census Bureau (1940), *Characteristics of Housing*, Table 5.

<sup>19</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 3.

<sup>20</sup>Banham, Reyner. "A Home is Not a House."

<sup>21</sup>US Census Bureau (1940), *California Characteristics of Housing*, Table 5.

as a priority during wartimes and an overflow of workers resulted in overcrowding and an insufficient production of housing.<sup>22</sup> Defense workers frequently camped in parking lots or found shelter in abandoned trolley carts in Presidio Hills due to a lack of housing units at their disposal (figures 2, 3). Both white and non-white defense workers living in overcrowded living quarters throughout the County created an impractical image, far from the ideal San Diego attraction of a tourist destination and pulling back the curtain on the American Dream. The reality of a lack of an attainable American Dream manifested itself best in the housing arrangements defense workers found themselves in San Diego and would prove to be unattainable to many who did not fit within the white racial category and would not be able to take advantage of growing opportunities due to racist policy and practices. Limited opportunities challenged the possibility of an attainable American Dream of homeownership within the suburbs of San Diego well into the 1960's regardless of change in government policy.



Figures 2+ 3. Defense Workers Living in Tents and Abandoned Trolley Carts. "Wartime Housing: An Exhibition in 10 Scenes."

To make equal housing accessible to all, the NAACP spent decades advocating for the removal of restrictive racial codes through activism campaigns. Even though the 1920 *Buchanan v. Warley* case outlawed racial zoning, the 1926 *Corrigan v. Buckley* case addressed racially restrictive covenants as permissible and it was not until 1948 that *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruled against the enforcement of racially restrictive clauses included in property deeds.<sup>23</sup> And it was not until 1962 that the Rumford Fair Housing Act outlawed housing discrimination based on race. And the effort to repeal the 1962 public policy was manifested across California, particularly by San Diego's Realty Board that worked to nullify the Act.<sup>24</sup> The battle persisted at the homefront as housing segregation was a vital part in maintaining San Diego's developing northern suburbs white and isolated from the diverse and working-class residents living South of I-8. This migration and development continued to be encouraged among white residents well

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<sup>22</sup>Hoagland, Henry. "Housing and National Defense."

<sup>23</sup>Woods, Louis Lee. "Almost "No Negro Veteran...Could Get a Loan": African Americans, the GI Bill, and the NAACP Campaign against Residential Segregation, 1917-1960." Racial zoning and restrictive covenants had linked race to property and prevented black families from becoming homeowners. As a result, the NAACP established the Veterans Affairs Department to challenge the racially discriminatory loan practices and racial housing segregation nationwide that prevented black veterans from accessing GI benefits that guaranteed mortgage loans.

<sup>24</sup>Harris, LeRoy. "The Other Side of the Freeway: A Survey of the Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego;" *San Diego Union*, August 8, 1964. p. 14.

into the late twentieth century with the bumper sticker “There Is No Life East of I-5.”<sup>25</sup> This slogan promoted white flight and encouraged white residents to migrate to northern suburban residential communities that were valued at higher rates. Although this slogan emerged in the later half of the twentieth century, it was a continuation of racial practices at the start of wartimes to limit non-white wartime workers and allow white workers to prosper. Nonetheless, in 1968, the Fair Housing Act expanded on previous rulings from NAACP efforts and prohibited the discrimination of sale, rental, and financing options of a house based on race.<sup>26</sup> Although deed restriction and racial covenants had been ruled against in the late 1940’s and were legally outlawed by the 1960’s, segregation in San Diego persisted through verbal enforcement throughout the twentieth century. Individual homeowner and community denial barred non-white from purchasing or living within northern neighborhoods and maintained communities racially homogeneous.<sup>27</sup>

The continual practice of overruled policy institutionalized racism and justified segregation as an economic problem that pointed at an inability to purchase rather than a prohibition to purchase. As a result of discriminatory practices, black and immigrant wartime workers in 1940 found they were unqualified to live within large parts of San Diego due to their racial or ethnic identity. Lack of government intervention within the growing housing segregation allowed practices to widen the gap and the continuation of deteriorating homes of thousands of marginalized individuals in San Diego. With a lack of unit design, these minority groups were left to live in abandoned trolley carts and uninhabitable conditions that San Diego’s civic elite preserved as deteriorating slums. Restricted workers were forced to live within such confinement due to the continual enforcement of racial restrictions.

Verbal enforcement of pre-existing, now outlawed, racial restrictions were fueled by the FHA’s Underwriting Manual which encouraged the usage of racial covenants by stating that “a change in social or racial occupancy generally contributes to instability and a decline in values” and such change would deem a neighborhood ineligible for mortgage insurance.<sup>28</sup> In this way, the FHA claimed that segregation would lead to stable communities. This stability became part of the American Dream narrative that families strived for and would be able to obtain in a white, homogenous suburban community. Segregation is fundamental to the American Dream of a suburban reality through implementations of racial policy. Consequently, after racially restrictive clauses within deeds were prohibited, the value of a property continued to be calculated based on an occupant’s race. Racism had become institutionalized by understanding racial segregation as a topic of segregated economic zones calculated based on racial identities. By spatially segregating people, areas within a city were deemed more valuable than others and qualified for mortgages while undervalued areas were unqualified.<sup>29</sup> Change in residents would alter the value of the built environment and question the eligibility for mortgage insurance.

The FHA was successful in promoting the segregation of people by releasing maps displaying the ratings of neighborhoods and their eligibility for mortgage insurance which often overlapped with racial breakdowns. Figure 4 displays a Home Owners Loan Corporation, precedent to the FHA, map of 1936

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<sup>25</sup>Miller, Jim. "Just Another Day in Paradise? An Episodic History of Rebellion and Repression in America’s Finest City."

<sup>26</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, *History of Fair Housing*.

<sup>27</sup>Harris, LeRoy. "The Other Side of the Freeway: A Survey of the Settlement Patterns of Negroes and Mexican Americans in San Diego"

<sup>28</sup>"Rating of Location." In *Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Valuation Procedure under Title II of the National Housing Act*.

<sup>29</sup>Harvey, David. "The Spaces of Utopia."



San Diego. The map displays southeast San Diego, a predominantly black and Latino community, rated as “D” and highly ineligible for FHA mortgage insurance. Meanwhile communities in northern San Diego, where the developing white suburban communities were located, received higher rates and thus qualified for mortgage insurance. This map shows the construction of race within San Diego as it displays larger areas ineligible for mortgage insurance, inhabited by non-whites, than areas eligible for mortgage insurance, inhabited by whites. When in fact, San Diego had a larger white population than non-white population. By 1940, San Diego County had approximately 224,299 native born whites, 24,605 foreign born whites, 4,327 blacks, and 3,137 pertaining to other races.<sup>30</sup> However, according to the HOLC and FHA rating system, the 1936 San Diego map reads that there would have been larger numbers of non-whites. This is a result of the large number of ethnic groups the white racial identity covered who were not treated as white, but were treated as non-white in the early twentieth century. Such is the example of Mexicans, who inhabited southeast San Diego and were white by law but did not experience the same mobility and opportunities as a white individual.<sup>31</sup> The construction of race manipulated people to selectively choose who would be part of San Diego’s white utopia. With a white utopian community vision in mind, racial restriction, and minimal housing units, the County was not prepared to take in such a large and diverse group of working-class families, let alone house them.

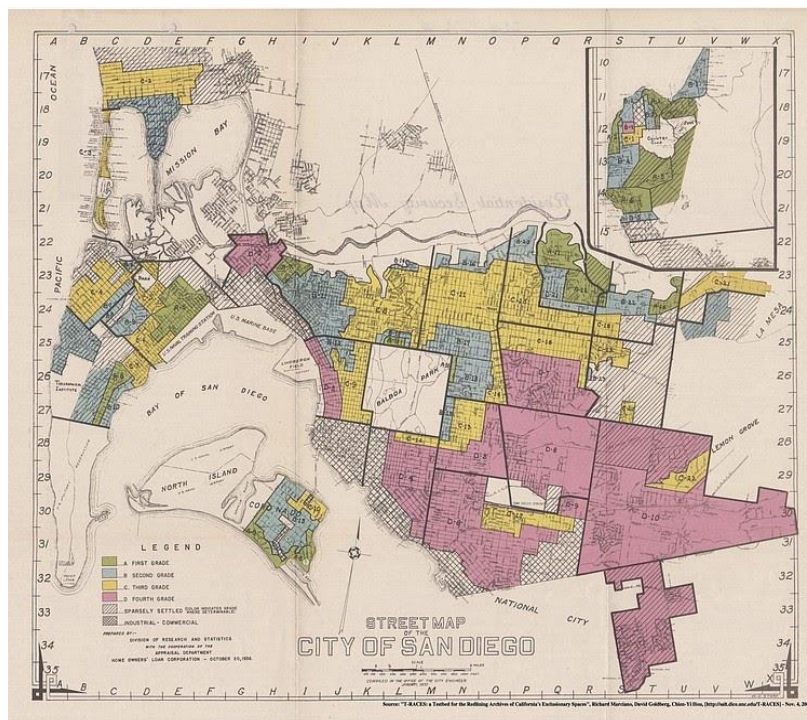


Figure 4. The National Archives, Home Owners Loan Corporation 1936 Map

At the same time, the Department of Defense (DoD) challenged racial segregation and under the 1940 Lanham act was able to construct affordable wartime housing for all defense workers and their

<sup>30</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1940). *California Characteristics of the Population*, Table C44.

<sup>31</sup>Guevarra, Rudy P. "The Devil Comes to San Diego: Race and Spatial Politics."

families struggling as a result of limited housing availability during wartimes.<sup>32</sup> The Lanham Act of 1940, also known as the Community Facilities Act, allocated for the construction of 700,000 units of public housing for defense workers. Housing construction took place with the help of the Public Building Administration (PBA), whose job was to construct, maintain, operate, and protect federal buildings. The PBA worked closely with architects and engineers to provide the planning for the residential projects to be constructed throughout the nation.<sup>33</sup> Open to all defense workers, wartime public housing confronted the social and spatial inequalities of the time that would otherwise segregate housing units by race.<sup>34</sup> In San Diego this distinctive project presented itself as the construction of the Linda Vista Defense Housing Project which, by policy, allowed black and Latino families to live within the planned community and escape southeast San Diego, regardless of racial covenants that would have kept racial minorities out of communities North of the I-8. Sitting on 1,240 acres, the Linda Vista project became the largest defense housing and low income project in the world when completed in 1941, eventually with a total of 5,400 units to house defense workers and their families.<sup>35</sup> Such a large project would become a solution to the wartime housing crisis and would provide racial minorities with the opportunity to access the same housing units as white families. However, even when an effort to address racist housing policies and practices was made by constructing housing, additional factors prevented desegregation. Workers who arrived to San Diego and worked in everyday civilian jobs, and were not employed by a wartime industry like defense workers working with private aircraft companies, did not meet the requirements to live within the Linda Vista Defense Housing project. Discriminatory employment practices denied large numbers of racial minorities from working within defense companies and as a result were employed as everyday civilian workers and unable to take advantage of housing opportunities. Everyday civilian workers continued to live in makeshift conditions similar to the trolley carts from Presidio Hills but, this time, within trailer parks.

Everyday civilian workers with two or less children were granted access to live in the trailers donated by the US government that were placed in Mission Valley (figure 5).<sup>36</sup> Although the slums of Mission Valley had large numbers of black residents prioritization of white tenants resulted in a significantly small black to white ratio of residents by 1950 at approximately one non-white per every eighteen white. However, this number was still significantly larger than the ratio of non-whites to whites living in the northern suburbs of La Jolla or Clairemont and was significant for being outside of southeast San Diego.<sup>37</sup> Living within Mission Valley, black tenants did not escape deteriorating housing conditions of southeast San Diego. The trailer park community was crowded together with trailers closely lined up against each other and connected with temporary gas meters. With limited space and plumbing services offered by each trailer, the community grounds were jammed with wash tubs and beds.<sup>38</sup> Better services

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<sup>32</sup>Martin, Pamela C Twiss and Jamez A. "Conventional and Military Public Housing for Families." Military public housing is owned and operated by the Department of Defense and financed through appropriation.

<sup>33</sup>The Living New Deal, *Public Buildings Administration (PBA) (1939)*. During its ten year life, 1939-1949 the PBA constructed residential housing during wartime as well as federal offices, hospitals, terminals, courthouses, and post offices.

<sup>34</sup>Parson, Don. "Homes for Heroes: Public Housing During World War II."

<sup>35</sup>Kilroy, Christine. "Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego's National Defense Projects."

<sup>36</sup>"Boomtown: San Diego," Life. Rent was \$7 a week and no more than two children were allowed per unit.

<sup>37</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 1

<sup>38</sup>Taylor, Frank. "Blitz Boom." Experienced with migrants camps, the Farm Security Administration brought in 1,500 trailers into San Diego to house families of wartime workers.

and amenities within each unit were necessary if they were to reinforce the ideals of San Diego's civic elite and their suburban vision. A lack of mechanical services and hygiene facilities was a move to exclude these working-class racial minorities from the normalized standard of living. The lack of mechanical services allocated to wartime workers also accounted for the identification of these workers as services themselves. Serving as janitors within wartime industries, these workers cleaned and were thus seen as capable of fending for their own needs without the added help of mechanical services from a housing unit. The wartime worker was merely there as a service, to serve San Diego's civic elite and help boost the economy for future white middle-class families to prosper within. Providing these everyday civilian workers with minimum shelter requirements, was a step to conserve their ability to continue the wartime effort and service to San Diego. The temporary conditions of the trailer unit and community represented the lack of a wartime worker within the future of San Diego in the long run. The disposability of the trailer units that served wartime workers deemed inhabitants equally disposable and unworthy of remaining in San Diego. The temporary status of trailer units was no different than the neglected housing in non-white communities in southeast San Diego in that both would result in deteriorating housing in need of major improvements.



Figure 5. Mission Valley Trailer Park "Boomtown: San Diego," Life

Similar to the non-white communities in southeast San Diego, housing within the trailer park community lacked basic services such as running water, private bathrooms, or central heating. By 1950, nearly one in fifteen homes in Mission Valley reported no private bathroom and nearly one in thirteen reported no heating.<sup>39</sup> Trailer inhabitants shared community bathrooms and laundry rooms and had limited access to private quarters.<sup>40</sup> The trailer housing offered limited and temporary plumbing services and hygiene facilities otherwise available in the developing northern homes, particularly in the defense community of Linda Vista. Figure 6 shows the 720 sq ft floor plan of a single-family detached unit within the Linda Vista Defense Housing community. The newly painted Linda Vista Defense Housing units were equipped with a private indoor bathroom and central heating within each unit. With two bedrooms,

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<sup>39</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 3

<sup>40</sup>"Boomtown: San Diego," Life.

each single-family unit was designed to serve a family of four. Ample living space and hygiene facilities within a detached single-family unit allowed privacy absent within Mission Valley's trailer units. Defense workers' living conditions were prioritized over everyday civilian workers' living arrangements who did not receive nearly half the services defense workers had access to in their new homes.

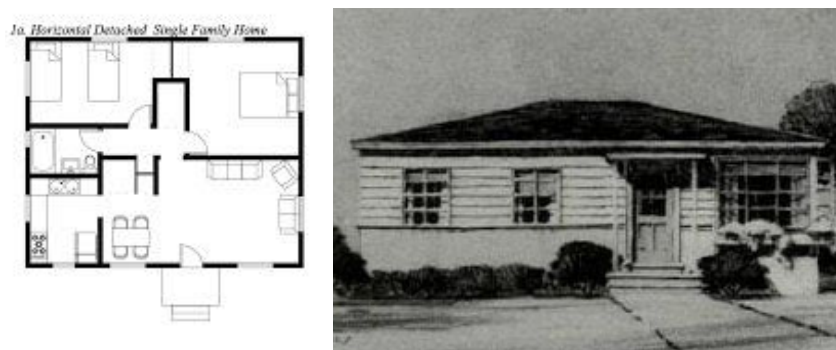


Figure 6. Linda Vista Defense Housing, Detached Single Family Home. Beeckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

Across the political spectrum it was recognized that the public housing program was vital to the productivity of defense workers and the promotion of wartime efforts.<sup>41</sup> As a result, defense housing throughout the nation were mass produced and constructed in a cheap and efficient way to meet high demands and offer temporary and affordable housing solutions during wartimes.<sup>42</sup> The assembly line technique was used to construct Linda Vista Defense Housing and followed 45 steps with most parts prefabricated. This efficient construction process allowed for the completion of the first 3,000 houses within 300 days at a maximum of 30 homes a day if enough parts were delivered to site for construction.<sup>43</sup> Mass housing production had begun in San Diego during wartimes and would continue well into the post war era to continue the development of the suburbs. Similarly, Levittown was mass manufactured in the postwar era, 1947, and followed an assembly line technique with 17,000 units completed by 1951 at the same rate of Linda Vista at 30 units a day. Complete with a commodified kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom, and unfinished basement for additions, Levitt homes mirrored Linda Vista units.<sup>44</sup> The planned community of Levittown proved that serviceable housing products could be mass produced and found within the comfort of a home. Although this same concept had been used within Linda Vista, it was not extended to the urban environment outside the home.

With an efficient assembly line technique, Linda Vista Defense Housing project was meticulously built in a vacuum by federal agencies who were unfamiliar with the site and, without consulting local officials, resulted in a project isolated from city life and lacked access to public services and adequate

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<sup>41</sup>Parson, Don. "Homes for Heroes: Public Housing During World War II." Conservatives and liberals alike saw the necessity in housing defense workers. As a result, the 1937 Housing Act was amended in 1940 to exempt defense workers from low-income housing requirements.

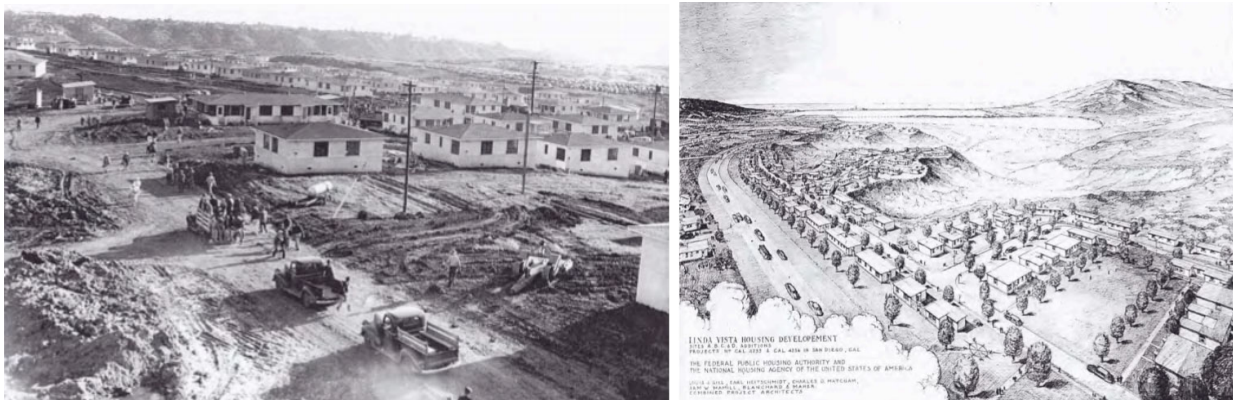
<sup>42</sup>Weimer, Arthur M. "Potential Effects of the Defense Program on Housing." Housing problems rise parallel to defense projects.

<sup>43</sup>Taschner, Mary. "Boomerang Boom: San Diego 1941-1942." Contractors McNail and Zoss Construction Companies worked under the Public Building Administration to develop Linda Vista Defense Housing after the County refused to act on the rising housing shortage.

<sup>44</sup>Starr, Kevin. "San Fernando: Homes and Happiness in Residential Subdivisions."



streets. This in return resulted in the construction of a pipeline, leased by the military, to provide sufficient access to water in 1947 and an additional pipeline gifted by the navy in 1951. Better roads to allow usage for automobiles funded with federal money.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, a commercial shopping center was constructed by the federal government to provide access to goods and services the defense community lacked. All funded by the federal government, the Tenant Activity Building was constructed in 1943 and served as the central recreational facility center for community members to host events and activities.<sup>46</sup> These additions to serve the residents of Linda Vista Defense Housing took years after the construction of the residential community was completed to plan and develop. However, unlike the Mission Valley trailer park residents, Linda Vista residents were being provided with additional services with the construction of permanent facilities to illustrate the permanence of the defense workers within the future of San Diego. Although this became the reality, the initial motives were not there as the lack of an urban environment outside the planned residential community of Linda Vista shows. Figure 7 shows the completed Linda Vista Defense Housing Project surrounded by dirt roads and lawns. However, Figure 8 shows the advertisements the DoD displayed to San Diegans, a project complete with roads, automobiles, and perfectly symmetrical trees and landscapes. Eager to make this representation a reality, Linda Vista residents would have to transform the built environment to fit the standards of the units and the developing northern communities.



Figures 7 + 8. *San Diego History Center, Photograph Archives.*

Although homes in Linda Vista Defense Housing Project were equipped with the basic services - running water, private bathroom, and central heating - the community as a whole was not prepared to sustain such a large population. The surrounding urban environment was no better off than undeveloped land in eastern parts of San Diego county with the lack of paved roads and limited access to water. The perfectly planned units were designed to frame an image parallel to one of the developing northern suburban communities in San Diego, when in fact, Linda Vista did not yet match the urban environment of other communities when first constructed. The community instead resembled a bedroom or commuter community. The construction of roads to and from workplaces allowed defense workers to commute as easily as suburbanites and had made Linda Vista Defense Housing an isolated suburban

<sup>45</sup>Shragge, Abraham. "A New Federal City: San Diego During World War II." By 1912, the Navy, Marines, and Army all acquired land in San Diego and by 1920, seven bases had been built.

<sup>46</sup>Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC, *Historical Resource Analysis (Technical) Report Linda Vista Housing Project Tenant Activity Building*, 2010.



residential community.

Designed by architect C.D Persina, the Linda Vista Defense units consisted of a single floor plan rearranged and repeated to create a community of detached single-family homes, duplexes, and multi-family housing units mirrored across each other. The first units consisted of 1,184 single family homes, 237 duplex, 178 multi-family townhomes to accommodate four families, and an additional 105 multi-family townhomes to accommodate up to six families.<sup>47</sup> Figure 9 shows the varying size single-family attached duplex units that were created to house defense families. Throughout the single and multi-family units there were a total of six different bedrooms distributed to create minor differences within an otherwise generic plan. The more bedrooms within a unit, the smaller the rooms and the less bedrooms within the unit, the larger the rooms. As a result, the number of bedrooms had minor effects on the square footage of a unit. This is seen by comparing unit 2, a one-bedroom home with 575 square feet to unit 1b, a three-bedroom home with 815 square feet. Attached single-family duplex 1a, 1b, and 2 show how units build off each other by rotating living spaces and combing areas to provide varying sized living quarters. By rearranging rooms, the DoD offered homes with one, two, and three bedrooms within the single and multi-family floor plans. Regardless of the number of bedrooms, all units had a single bathroom that remained consistent in size across all floor plans for efficiency. Based on the site, minor differences within living quarters were present. However, all units offered the same amount of plumbing and heating services, along with hygiene facilities and living arrangements. Difference was created with vertical and horizontal kitchen areas that in return elongated and narrowed units to alter facades.



Figure 9. Single Family Attached Duplex Unit Floor Plans. Linda Vista Defense Housing Plans. Beckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

<sup>47</sup>Beckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

To create visual difference, there were twenty-five different facade designs used throughout the planned community of Linda Vista. The usage of stucco with red wood sidings provided a variety in color and additional decoration to the otherwise consistent units.<sup>48</sup> Figure 10 displays four different facades that were achieved with the exact same detached single family floor plan by turning units vertically and horizontally. Further variation was created with changes in roofs and window placement. The DoD concealed the homogeneity they had created within the community through a series of decorative shells. The variation in facades was parallel to the claimed heterogeneity of the residents, when in fact, each unit had a similar floor plan and white defense worker living within the unit. The slight variation in floor plans and facades mirrored the single black tenant per every thirty-two white tenant by 1950 living in Linda Vista.<sup>49</sup> However the heterogeneity in facades was necessary in maintaining a utopian suburban home image outside military bases.

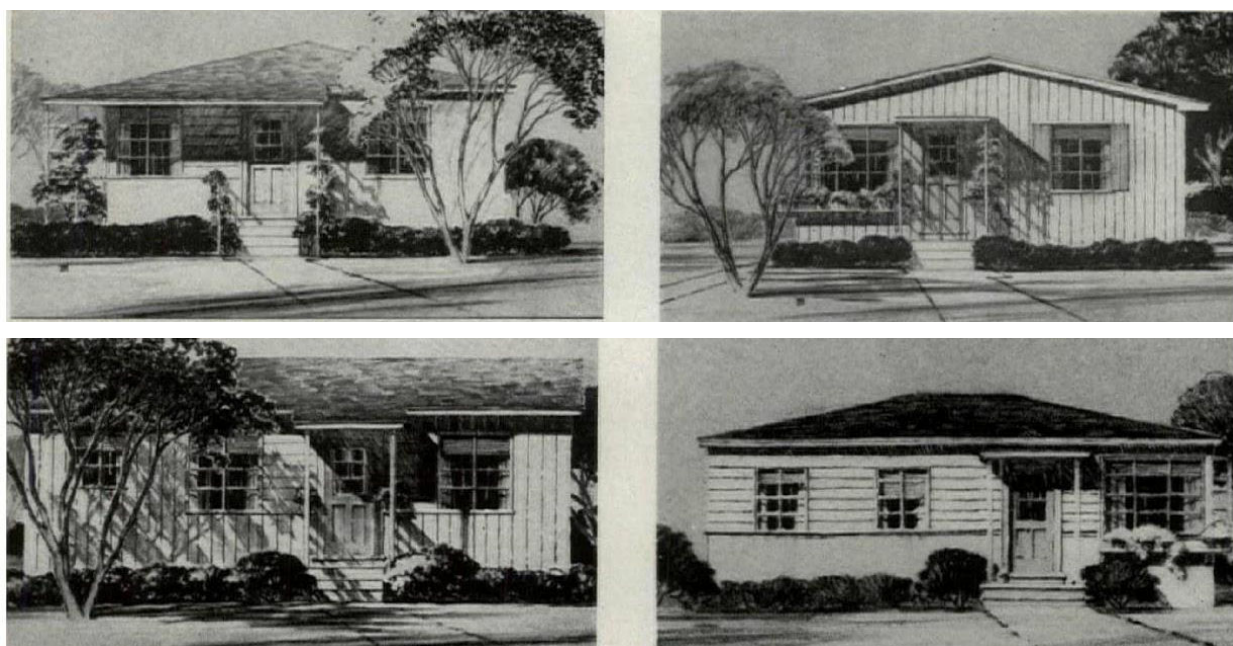


Figure 10. Single Family Detached Unit Facades. Linda Vista Defense Housing Plans. Beeckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

This military defense project differed from on base housing, such as Camp Callan in Torrey Pines, that consisted of a single floor plan and repeated facade to create the barrack housing for military personnel.<sup>50</sup> Figure 11 shows the consistency in the two-story housing units at Camp Callan and the lack of variation used within Linda Vista Defense Housing. Aesthetics outside military bases were vital as they aligned with San Diego's civic elite's vision of a white suburban town. By presenting a model shell of a suburban-like community, the DoD became part of the systematic effort to create an ideal community

<sup>48</sup>Beeckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

<sup>49</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 1.

<sup>50</sup>Schulman, Judy. "WWII Triggers Weapons Training Center." Camp Callan served to teach gunners how to fire long range weapons in the event of a Japanese attack from the West Coast. The land was leased from San Diego in 1940, declared surplus in 1945, and remaining buildings were sold as salvage to veterans and citizens who chose to stay in San Diego to build their homes.

for white middle-class working residents through the exclusion of racial minorities. From the start, the Linda Vista Defense Housing was part of a larger issue of exclusion given all permanent Lanham housing projects followed FHA design guidelines and required FHA approval to determine construction needs within each community.<sup>51</sup> Already incorporating a federal agency that supported the segregation of people to maintain value was an indicator that the DoD would be unable to challenge the racial injustices they sought to illuminate. As a result, Linda Vista became a thriving community for San Diego's white working-class members to grow by providing them with housing support not available to racial minorities in San Diego.



Figure 11. Camp Callan Housing. *Historic California Posts, Camps, Stations and Airfields*, Military Museum

Unlike San Diego's southeast communities of color and Mission Valley's trailer park that required shells to conceal the lack of plumbing and heating services, Linda Vista Defense Housing required decorative shells not to conceal the excess appliances and plumbing services, but to conceal the white working-class, low-income residents within. Duplexes and townhomes created a visual of larger and richer housing units that fit the ultimate goal of wealth within the American Dream. Figure 12 displays a four-unit townhome plan, with three bedrooms within each unit, and the two different facades available to create distinction among the consistent townhomes. Figure 13 displays the addition of single-family units to the townhome to create a six-unit townhome while also changing the floor plan and offering two additional facades. Although there are two different townhomes derived from the stacking of single-family units, variations in facades give the appearance of four completely unique and large units. Variations within facades gave way to the idea of better and individual housing units, even though each offered the same plumbing services and hygiene facilities as the detached single-family units. These differences challenged the homogeneity of barrack and conventional affordable housing but were necessary to present a suburban community of white defense workers.

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<sup>51</sup>Veenstra, Theodore. "Defense Housing Policies and Progress."

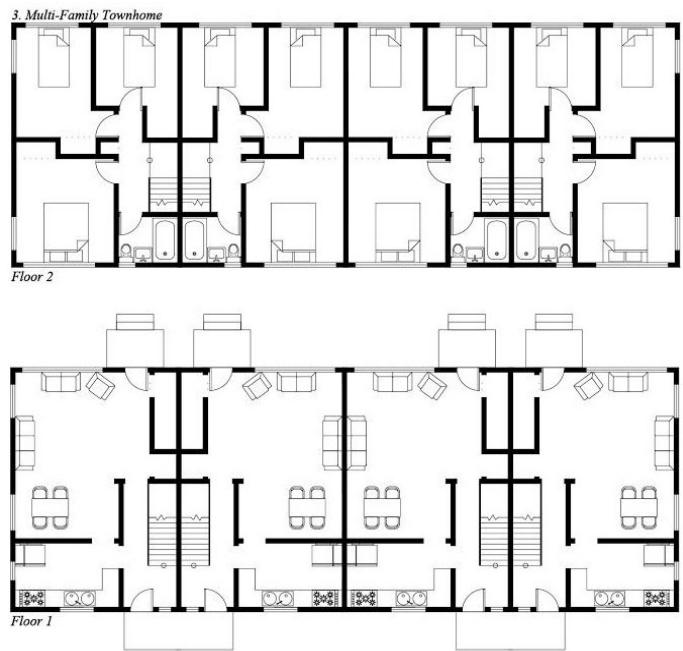
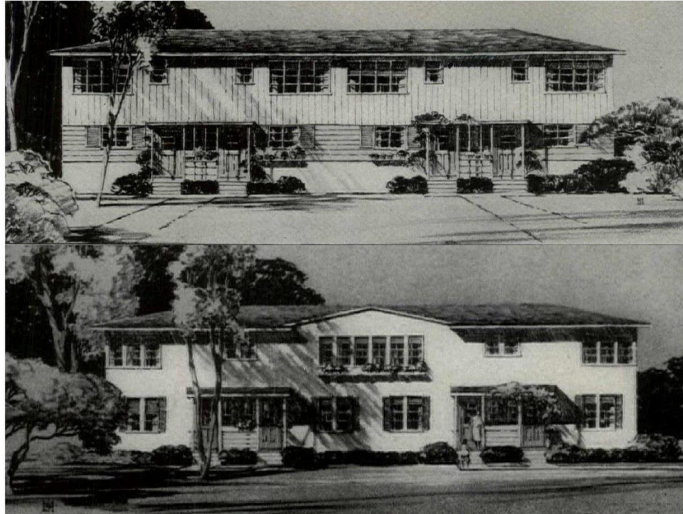


Figure 12. Four Unit Multi-Family Townhome. Linda Vista Defense Housing Plans. Beeckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."



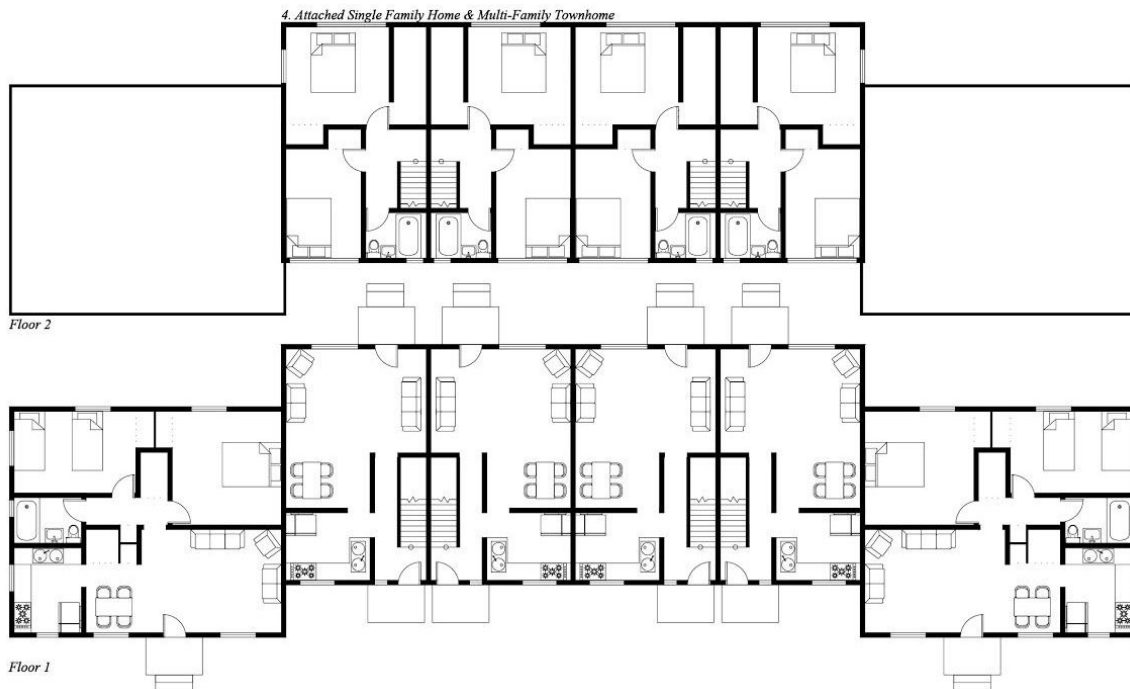
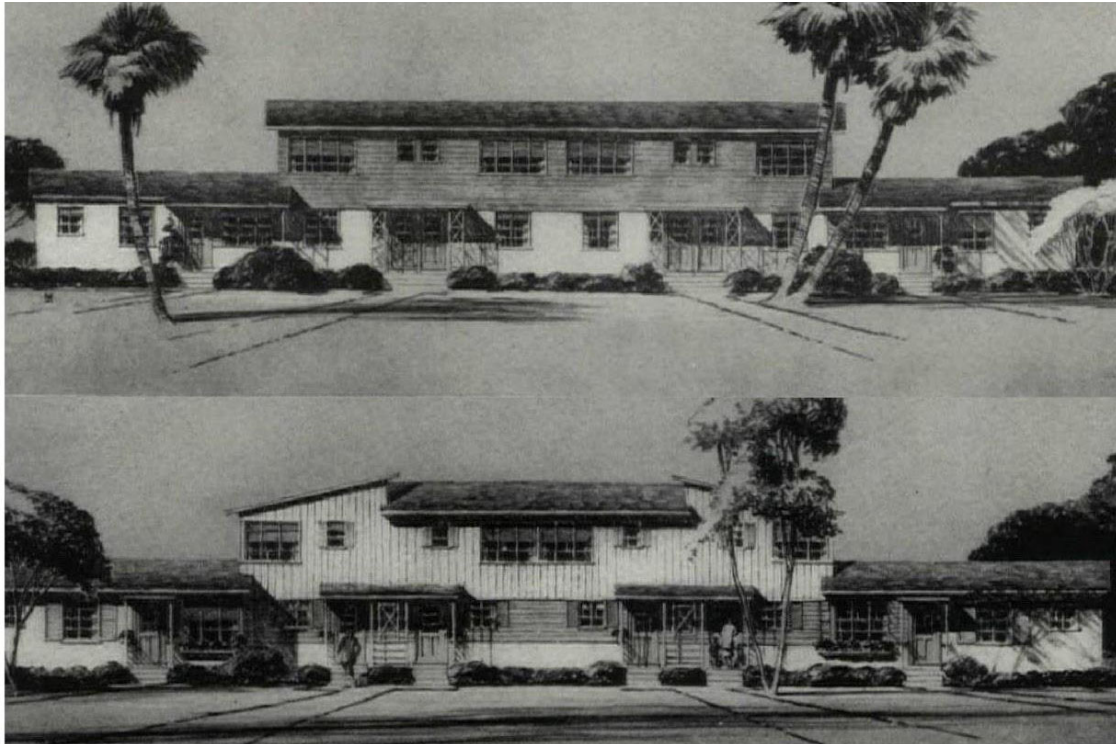


Figure 13. Six Unit Multi-Family Townhome. Linda Vista Defense Housing Plans. Beckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

By providing the white working-class tenants with household services and appliances, working-class families were raised to middle-class status. This was achieved by concealing the stigma of housework as dirty labor and incorporating house workers as members of a family rather than a servant.



By 1950, kitchen appliances and tools were designed to present white collar household labor through the help of additional household product services.<sup>52</sup> The ideal white middle-class citizen was being molded through the design of a one bathroom, two bedroom small home. The decorative facades of the defense units masked the working-class residents to portray them as middle-class citizens through a series of heterogeneous suburban-like homes. In doing so, the white working-class citizens were lifted into middle class citizenship and appeared incapable of being at the same lower status level as non-white workers. These tenants were being molded to fit into the white suburban vision San Diego's civic elite had in mind and become the future face of the city within the utopian community. However equal housing policy obscured the reality of the planned community by showcasing the DoD's efforts to challenge racial segregation by claiming to create a suburban community for non-white and white residents who would otherwise be denied access to these communities through a series of racial covenants.

The failed desegregation of San Diego is evidenced by the lack of non-white tenants within Linda Vista due to their unqualified status as workers and their inability to reside in the planned community. By 1950, there were approximately 13,092 white residents in Linda Vista and only 460 non-white, 400 of whom were black. These demographics aligned closer to northern communities with racial restrictions in La Jolla or Clairemont than they resembled a community of racial minorities within southeast San Diego or even servant quarters in La Jolla.<sup>53</sup> A domino effect had emerged from San Diego's civic elite's white suburban vision. Supported by the FHA's racially restrictive covenants in the early 20th century became a way to create stability and maintain property value. Discriminatory employment practices on behalf of private companies kept minorities from higher positions and the ability to accumulate wealth. As a result, when equitable housing opportunities rose, only select people were able to take advantage. What began as a vision had created systemic issues that resulted in continual segregated government housing and unequal disbursement of housing services to racial minorities. Due to systemic issues of inequality, the community of Linda Vista began to resemble the new suburbs in northern San Diego through selective policy by prioritizing white workers of higher status as did private defense industries and homeowners throughout San Diego. Linda Vista in particular served as an example of the model suburban-like communities the DoD was known for outside military bases. The failed desegregation of housing in 1940 would spark initiative by the DOD in 1960, once again by making an effort to now desegregate rental housing in civilian communities surrounding military housing. Although military towns agreed to the DoD's request due to their huge economic influence, these model communities outside military bases continued to prioritize members of higher ranks.<sup>54</sup> Racial and class tension continued to play a role in the creation of military housing and the overproduction of defense housing. The plentiful plumbing services and hygiene facilities available within each unit had been designed for the white, middle-class family.

Defense projects, as the majority of wartime housing, built under the Lanham Act of 1940, consisted of both temporary and permanent housing units and were to be disposed of after wartimes in the best interest of the public. To make most use out of housing, this policy was interpreted as the continual usage of once temporary defense housing as affordable public housing for low income

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<sup>52</sup>Harris, Dianne. "Built Ins and Closets: Status, Storage, and Display." The mid 1950's introduced ovens that were upright saving women the trouble of bending and getting bad posture.

<sup>53</sup>U.S Census Bureau (1950). *Statistics for Census Tracts, San Diego and Adjacent Area*, Table 1.

<sup>54</sup>Martin, Pamela C Twiss and Jamez A. "Conventional and Military Public Housing for Families."

community members.<sup>55</sup> In Linda Vista, the public interest that was accounted for when deciding how to handle the wartime housing, was that of the ruling white working class family who inhabited the units and benefited from the defense housing from the start. As a result, in 1945, Linda Vista Defense Housing was reclassified from temporary to permanent affordable public housing to be reused by returning veterans or civilians.<sup>56</sup> However, nationwide, temporary wartime housing was controversial due to occupancy of low income residents and potential black or minority tenants who were perceived to devalue surrounding homes and lead to an increase in vacancy rates within a neighborhood.<sup>57</sup> Thus when reclassified from wartime defense housing to public affordable housing managed under the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA), Linda Vista did not gain much support from community members. To push against public housing in San Diego, San Diego's civic elite formed the Civic Housing Committee (CHC) and challenged the FPHA by advocating for the privatization of Linda Vista public housing to be owned by private homeowners rather than managed by public housing authorities.<sup>58</sup> The transformation of Linda Vista Defense Housing into a suburban-like Public Housing community of white-middle class families had gained the support of San Diego's civic elite and now sought to preserve the community by carrying it into the post-war housing era. Already the Linda Vista community resembled the post-war northern suburban tracts found in Clairemont. Through privatization, the public housing would become an exclusively white suburban residential community to fit the standards of the ideal San Diego attraction.

In San Diego, Clairemont was one of the first suburbs to emerge after World War II and was quickly occupied by returning veterans or workers who chose to stay in San Diego after the war ended. In 1950, architects Harold Abrams, Benson Eschenbach, and George Wheeler designed the first 20 floor plans for the first 500 houses in Clairemont to be built along Morena Boulevard and constructed by Burgener-Tavares Construction.<sup>59</sup> The building of Clairemont took place between 1950-1960 under four major developers - Clairemont Company, Burgener-Tavares, Del Webb, and Cinderella Homes - and served as an early example of the master planning that gave rise to the white suburbs after World War II.<sup>60</sup> Developers were able to build with relatively low-risk due to high demand from defense workers and veterans aided in purchasing a home by the FHA and VA. This was particularly evident within Del Webb Construction Co. that advertised the buying power attainable with the VA that could provide larger units for less, as seen in Figure 14. Unit 11A by Del Webb Construction Co. is an example of the modern commodified suburban tract units in Clairemont that became appealing to the growing market due to

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<sup>55</sup>Veenstra, Theodore. "Defense Housing Policies and Progress." Rent was calculated at 20% of a family's total income.

<sup>56</sup>Kilroy, Christine. "Temporary Suburbs: The Lost Opportunity of San Diego's National Defense Projects."

<sup>57</sup>Fairbanks, Robert. "From World War II to the Housing Act of 1949: A Moratorium on Slum Clearance and Public Housing for Low-Income Citizens." Funding that would have gone to clearing of the slums was allocated for defense housing in 1940. Although this created controversy, defense projects in Dallas and Phoenix claimed success in creating better citizenship within black tenants.

<sup>58</sup>Reft, Ryan. "The Privatization of Military Family Housing in Linda Vista, 1944-1956." As public housing, Linda Vista was managed by the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) until 1947 and was then replaced and managed by the Public Housing Agency (PHA). The privatization of Linda Vista Defense Housing from 1954-1956, removed 5,200 affordable public housing units and decreased the number of low-income rental units in San Diego to 3,200.

<sup>59</sup>Crawford, Richard. "A Village within a City."

<sup>60</sup>The City of San Diego, San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement, 2007. Housing Construction in San Diego increased between 1948-1965 as veterans and defense workers settled in San Diego with the help of the government and began to participate in the American Dream of homeownership.

their built in storage services absent in the Linda Vista Defense Housing. Although the suburban homes in northern San Diego were more spacious than those within the planned community of Linda Vista, both provided the same plumbing and heating services, along with hygiene facilities. Even the large white demographic population within both locations mirrored each other. The PHA was the only thing that prevented Linda Vista from fully blending in with the rest of the northern suburban neighborhoods. As a result, the privatization of Linda Vista would create a white suburban-like Clairemont out of the public housing available to all white middle-class residents.

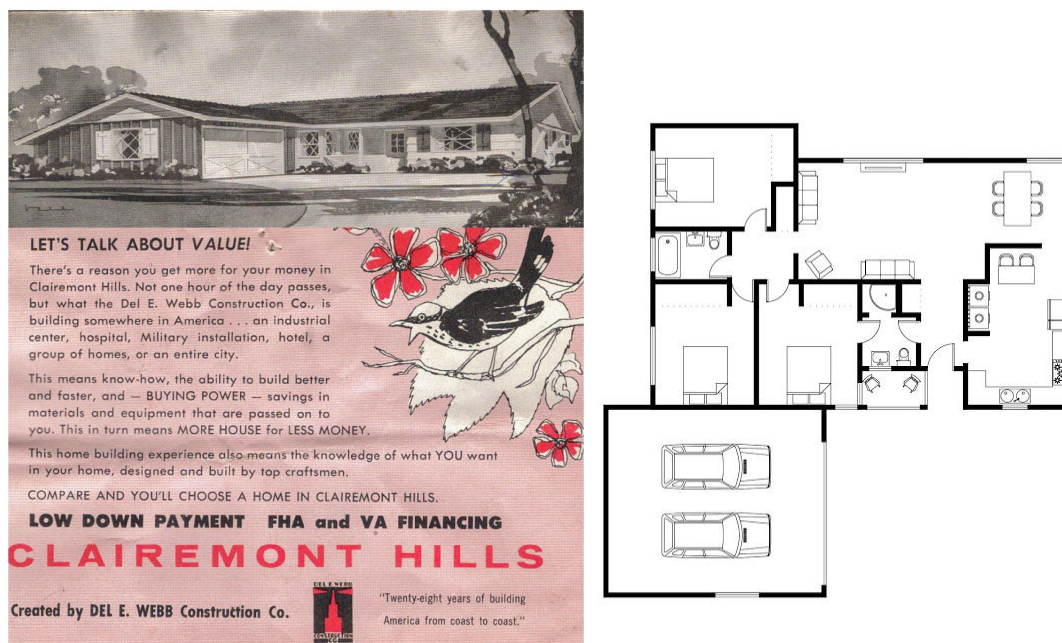


Figure 14. Post War Development in Clairemont. *Clairemont History*, Clairemont Community News,

The push against Linda Vista public housing resulted from the project's acceptance of tenants of any race that could tarnish the city's image and ruin the chances of ever becoming the tourist destination imagined during wartimes. Although many black and Latino tenants were not qualified to live within the community due to their employment status, there was no policy impeding any one race from applying, unlike other parts of the city that contained and enforced racial covenants. Needless to say, future developers learned from past planned communities and implemented practices Linda Vista had lacked to fully prevent the transformation of suburban communities into diverse neighborhoods. Similar mass developed communities, such as Levittown, implemented strict rules that prohibited the sale of homes to black families to maintain the homogeneity found in previous projects. In 1958, William Levitt announced that the new mass developed community would be for white purchasers only.<sup>61</sup> Dianne Harris elaborates on the goal to be white in a homogeneous community to create stability and security. The ordinary suburban post-war house produced middle-class whiteness even when income excluded large numbers of Americans identifying as white from the housing market.<sup>62</sup> In Linda Vista, lower income white workers were able to be included in the housing market and create the homogenous stability and

<sup>61</sup>"Third Levittown Gets Under Way," *The New York Times*, 6 June 1958.

<sup>62</sup>Harris Dianne. "The Ordinary Post War House."

security thanks to the construction of affordable housing specifically allocated to them. Achievement of this homogeneous community came with consistency in units and residents through racial restrictive practices rather than class exclusion to maintain value and eligibility for mortgages within a community. As a result of potential transformation of Linda Vista into a suburban slum, the CHC and select residents began the push to privatize the public housing and, as a result, restrict racial minorities from the ability to purchase and live within Linda Vista by continuing the verbal enforcement of racial covenants otherwise limited by government housing authorities.

An appealing idea to San Diego's Republican politicians, who continued to see the growth of San Diego through the creation of white suburbs, approved of the privatization of Linda Vista. Before Linda Vista public housing could be privatized and sold to private and individual homeowners, the community infrastructure and buildings had to be brought up to city code. Public funding was used to improve units to be purchased by private homeowners. Minor improvements to housing and streets were established by the San Diego Planning Department in 1948 to be met by the Public Housing Agency (PHA).<sup>63</sup> Reports pointed out the need to improve sidewalks and the removal of unpermitted sheds built by tenants. Unpermitted sheds had been built due to a lack of garages and storage space in the Linda Vista homes. Tenants in Linda Vista had grown comfortable in the public housing and had customized their homes by constructing sheds or garages. Persina designed standard garages for tenants to build if they wished to keep their cars covered and on their lots.<sup>64</sup> Although each unit had ample lawn and garden space for all tenants, front lawns pertaining to the multi-family townhomes were not divided into individual spaces per unit and led residents to fencing in their otherwise shared lawn space. The construction of a fence around a home was a step to provide privacy and security from the outside world that could threaten a family in any way. The absence of residential privacy was a prewar feature, associated with immigrant, ethnic, and lower-class lifestyles that Linda Vista residents sought to exclude. The need for fencing, privacy, and security was part of the post-war era designing for exclusion for the white middle-class family.<sup>65</sup> The tenants had created a post-war suburban community of Linda Vista by customizing their homes through additions and constructions. However, these customizations would have to be removed or re-approved for construction before the City of San Diego could allow for privatization.

The privatization process of Linda Vista public housing was halted due to the continual housing shortage and the need for additional low income units in San Diego. To make room for qualified, low-income tenants, a series of evictions in 1952 took place to remove high income residents living within public housing. The evictions ended in 1953 with an increase in rent to meet Linda Vista tenant's higher income levels.<sup>66</sup> The successful end to the evictions was made possible through petitions by the CHC, military wives, Republican politicians, and members of the local Kiwanis Club who continued to advocate for privatization.<sup>67</sup> Tenants who had been evicted, with their higher incomes, would be able to finance a home outside of Linda Vista. Those tenants who did remain in the public housing would now have to pay market value prices; this made the public housing units no different than a neighboring community. And tenants unable to cover the increased rent were forced to move out of the community

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<sup>63</sup>San Diego City Planning Commission, "Interim Report on Disposal of Linda Vista Housing," 5 November, 1948.

<sup>64</sup>Beeckman, Donald S. Cameron and Gerard. "Linda Vista America's Largest Defense Housing Project."

<sup>65</sup>Harris, Dianne. "Private Worlds: The Spatial Contours of Exclusion and Privilege."

<sup>66</sup>"Eviction Program halted," Linda Vista Reflector, 15 October 1953. Evictions initiated to comply with PHA low income requirements.

<sup>67</sup>"A Petition to Repeal Public Law 139," Linda Vista Reflector, July 17, 1952, 1.



and rent elsewhere while keeping a safe haven for the now middle-class families in Linda Vista by removing the marginalized groups. However, non-white tenants forced to move out would be displaced and have limited buying options due to the strict racially restrictive housing practices throughout San Diego County. The CHC protected the white middle-class residents that would be forced to move out of the public housing to make way for low-income workers. Privatizing Linda Vista to market value prices was not only an issue of racial segregation, class segregation was now upheld because the desired white middle-class family had been achieved after a decade of completing the Linda Vista Defense Housing project. Determining who would be able to stay, move into the suburban community, or be forced to move into southeast San Diego enforced restrictive practices. The vision of a privatized Linda Vista CHC members aimed for was parallel to the overall white-middle class suburban vision San Diego's civic elite had for the whole County. Through private employers, public leaders, and government policy, institutionalized racism had restricted families of color from every angle and allocated housing and services to white middle-class families.

Push against evictions from the CHC eventually led to the privatization of Linda Vista public housing in 1954 and allowed current tenants the option to purchase their homes.<sup>68</sup> The PHA prioritized veteran occupants over civilians to purchase homes and, in Linda Vista, sold 3,000 houses to individual occupants.<sup>69</sup> By City resolution, remaining temporary units were to be demolished or moved off site by the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHAF) or, if applicable, by new private property owners.<sup>70</sup> This privatization or demolition of public housing was an effort in clearing the slums through the 1949 Urban Development Act and the 1954 Urban Renewal Act which sought to eliminate low-income housing and, with it, people of color. New development would raise the status and value of a site to make room for new units and residents.<sup>71</sup> Ridding a site of people of color would make properties eligible for FHA mortgage insurance and in return make room for new homes to be occupied by white homeowners rather than non-white tenants. Such transformation would reinforce the suburban community Linda Vista had become to raise the status of residents to middle-class citizens. In the growing post war era, living in a single family suburban home served as a way to lift a family into middle-class citizenship, but it came at a greater price for black families who had limited access to federal loans and received higher interest rates under conventional mortgages to purchase a home.<sup>72</sup> With federal intervention, white families prospered in the post war era in ways non-white families could not.

The Veterans Administration (VA) established the 1944 GI bill to help 16 million returning veterans back into civilian life through job opportunities, loans for businesses, low interest home loans, and educational benefits. But black veterans could not take advantage of the GI benefits due to systemic racism that began with disproportionate discharge and continued with denials of loans, prohibition from

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<sup>68</sup>Reft, Ryan. "The Privatization of Military Family Housing in Linda Vista, 1944-1956." The Civic Housing Committee was composed of Republic San Diegans seeking to rid San Diego of public housing.

<sup>69</sup>"Liquidating Emergency Housing Program." In *Annual Report United States*. The PHA subdivided war housing to reach the greatest number of individual purchasers. Otherwise, the PHA offered housing to veteran organizations or private investors.

<sup>70</sup>City of San Diego, Resolution No. 11580, 22 December 1953. City of San Diego, Resolution No. 116852, 2 February 1954.

<sup>71</sup>Biles, Roger. "Public Housing and the Postwar Renaissance." Under the Taft Ellender Wagner Housing Act of 1949, 810,000 public housing units were expected to be built by 1953, but were instead completed by 1972; clearing the slums was a priority and low income housing came second.

<sup>72</sup>Hyman, Louis. "Postwar Consumer Credit: Borrowing for Prosperity."



attending college, and allocation of unskilled employment.<sup>73</sup> Although there were 1.1 million black veterans, only 30,000 benefited from the 3,914,535 mortgages the VA guaranteed by 1945.<sup>74</sup> This disproportionate disbursement in GI benefits directly impacted black veterans in Linda Vista who did not qualify for a GI loan to purchase their home in Linda Vista after being privatized. On top of federal loan denials, white veterans were prioritized over black veterans in purchasing the newly privatized, post-war Linda Vista housing in the effort to transform Linda Vista into one of San Diego's northern developing white suburbs. The large and new market of eligible buyers with readily available loans was white and the needs of non-whites, who did not have the same access to loans, were easily ignored.<sup>75</sup> As in the wartime construction of defense housing, post-war builders engaged in mass producing houses for white veterans in the new white suburbs, as they were the ones allowed to live in neighborhoods eligible for mortgage insurance, based on the FHA's rating system.<sup>76</sup> In San Diego, this was seen as Linda Vista's white defense workers and veterans saved enough money from living within the low income housing project to purchase a home in the developing suburban neighborhood of Clairemont. As an interim place, Linda Vista served to transform white workers into white middle-class citizens equipped to live within the developing suburbs. Their racial identity provided them with this opportunity to raise their class status and continue on the road to the American Dream. Already the construction of a suburban-like built environment had transformed these workers, further federal financial aid increased their prosperity after their time at the utopian project.

With VA benefits, millions of white families went from working to middle class status.<sup>77</sup> This is evident within white Linda Vista tenants who were able to purchase their home within the neighborhood after it was privatized or who were one of hundreds who were able to leave public housing and finance a single family suburban home in Clairemont. However, the privatization of Linda Vista Public Housing left marginalized groups of low-income tenants unable to finance their homes and forced them to move out of the neighborhood. These low income families of color who could only afford Linda Vista's low rent assured they would only stay in public housing until they could afford market value houses.<sup>78</sup> Linda Vista served as an interim place until a family could save enough money for the down payment for a home in the new suburbs of San Diego within Clairemont's neighborhoods and other northern communities. Privatizing Linda Vista cut the American Dream short for families who were ineligible for federal mortgage insurance or conventional loans based on their race or income and thus would not be able to purchase their home. Meanwhile white veterans living in Linda Vista would be able to finance their homes through the help of the FHA and VA benefits.

Homeownership amongst returning white veterans increased with the help of low interest rates

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<sup>73</sup>Sacks, Karen Brodtkin. "The GI Bill: Whites Only Need Apply." Black soldiers were disproportionately discharged at 39% versus 21% for their white counterparts in 1946 and thus ineligible for any VA benefits.

<sup>74</sup>Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ending 30 June 1955 (Washington, DC, 1956), 248

<sup>75</sup>Jacobs, James. "The Housing Industry Reinvented." Using FHA guidelines, builders displayed their model homes in constructed communities during National Home Week and The Parade of Homes between 1948-1954 to attract returning veterans and their guaranteed VA benefits.

<sup>76</sup>Jackson, Kenneth. "Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal: The Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration."

<sup>77</sup>Adams, Michael. "Who Didn't Use the G.I. Bill? Notes on a Lingering Question." Taking advantage of educational benefits and job opportunities, white men benefited the most from the GI bill compared to women or black soldiers.

<sup>78</sup>Reft, Ryan. "The Metropolitan Military: Navy Families and Housing in the American Sunbelt 1941-2000."

available to them at 9% under the VA and 17% under the FHA, both lower than conventional mortgages available to black veterans.<sup>79</sup> As Figure 15 shows, the FHA encouraged builders to construct houses for returning prospective homeowner veterans by guaranteeing loan and mortgage insurance. Construction companies began to mass develop risk-free thanks to FHA and VA loans available to prospective veteran homeowners in Clairemont. With similar collective appraisal standards, the FHA and VA worked to move white middle-class families out of the growing slums of public housing or ethnic, non-white, communities by providing them with low interest loan insurance and securing them a spot in the suburbs.<sup>80</sup> In addition to construction, customizations and remodeling of homes could be financed with the help of FHA loans. Given additional sheds and garages of Linda Vista's defense units were removed upon privatization, increased availability of federal loans in the 1950's would have given new homeowners the opportunity to expand on their homes. The first home within the Linda Vista Public Housing community to be sold was a duplex, and like many of the surrounding units, was renovated as early as 1953 to meet the standards of surrounding suburban tracts.<sup>81</sup> Purchased by a navy veteran, the first homeowner explained how improvements of the area were just begging.<sup>82</sup> Linda Vista was the start of the white utopian vision that had been imagined during wartimes and was able to transform itself in the post war era. Construction and privatization of Linda Vista created the opportunity for the larger San Diego area to begin the creation of the white suburban vision with continual federal aid and racial exclusions to prevent slum-like conditions that were created as a result of an overflow of people and lack of adequate housing during wartimes.

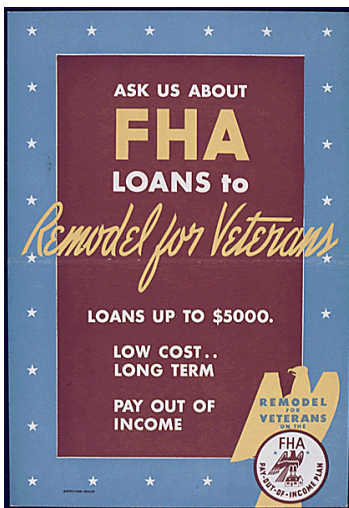


Figure 15. The National Archives, World War II Poster No. 514242

Recent wartimes had left veterans and workers yearning for the promised post war house- and

<sup>79</sup>Fetter, Daniel K. "How Do Mortgage Subsidies Affect Home Ownership? Evidence from the Mid-Century GI Bills." Overall homeownership increased from 44% to 62% between 1940-1960 and was aided by the FHA and VA. Homeownership increased from 27% to 53% for men 18 years and older.

<sup>80</sup>Jackson, Kenneth. "Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: The First Quarter-Century of Government Intervention in the Housing Market."

<sup>81</sup>Linda Vista Community Planning Area, Residential Neighborhoods, City of San Diego Community and Economic Development

<sup>82</sup>"Harold Langston Buys First Linda Vista Home," *Linda Vista Clairemont Press*, 28 October, 1954

they were ready to finance their dreams. After wartimes, the American Dream of homeownership was further exemplified by the idea of better, richer, and accumulation of material goods.<sup>83</sup> Although Linda Vista Defense Housing had met the demands of defense workers - providing housing with ample plumbing services and hygiene facilities - it did not meet the post war demands of a better and bigger house. Small builders were unable to deliver the dream house veterans were shown during wartimes due to limited building materials; after the war, builders began to customize homes for veterans.<sup>84</sup> Small builders were successful in meeting the high demands by mass producing units using platform framing and delivering a commodified home to veterans in the post war era.<sup>85</sup> The new San Diego post war houses were extended to the white defense workers and veterans that had been aided in the pre-war era through loan approvals. The denial of loans to black veterans after the war derived from the same reason the rest of the black community was barred from living within white neighborhoods - to prevent the new suburbs from becoming a black and Latino community like Logan Heights.<sup>86</sup> Deemed unstable and undervalued by federal agencies, segregation became a necessity to preserve white homogeneity and was achieved by continuously moving white families out of non-white residential areas. Failed wartime efforts to desegregate communities were forgotten after the war when lynching and anti-black riots broke out in 1946.<sup>87</sup> Housing segregation increased to make space for the returning veterans who pursued the American Dream of homeownership, now further away from non-white communities.

As a result of discriminatory loan practices, only 1/3 of black families were homeowners compared to 2/3 for their white counterparts.<sup>88</sup> Denial of loans and inaccessibility to low interest rates prevented black families from moving into the suburbs and continued the pre-war segregation that was implicitly established in Linda Vista Defense Housing and Mission Valley Trailer Park Community. As a result of limited available finances to black families, the developing suburbs began to reinforce whiteness and purchasing a home served as a way for an individual to define their racial identity as white. Although denial of loans to black individuals was blamed on lower income, higher earning blacks compared to white individuals proved loan denial was based on their racial identity. Only 3.3% of housing units constructed in the 1950's in Southern California were made available to non-whites and this was a step to preserve the homogeneity within a community of the traditional post war house.<sup>89</sup> Denial of loans excluded black families from the American Dream of homeownership. Meanwhile, the rest of white middle-class Americans were able to finance their American Dream through borrowing. As incomes steadily rose between 1945-70, middle-class suburbanites continued to finance their homes, cars, and consumer goods through loans while black residents did not have access to this growing prosperity.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Calder, Lendol Glen. "Credit, Consumer Culture, and the American Dream."

<sup>84</sup>Mennel, Timothy. "'Miracle House Hoop-La: Corporate Rhetoric and the Construction of the Postwar American House.'" The prefabricated Home Ola by the Corporation of Chicago was designed to meet the demands of GI's and would become an archetype.

<sup>85</sup>Monteyne, David. "Framing the American Dream."

<sup>86</sup>Guevarra, Rudy P. "The Devil Comes to San Diego: Race and Spatial Politics." Logan Heights and National City were San Diego's Barrios and known as the residential section for blacks, Mexicans, and Asians of the city. These sections of San Diego were referred to as slum-like with poor, over-crowded, and undervalued housing.

<sup>87</sup>Sacks, Karen Brodtkin. "The GI Bill: Whites Only Need Apply."

<sup>88</sup>Hyman, Louis. "Postwar Consumer Credit: Borrowing for Prosperity." In the postwar era, black families were twice as likely to borrow than white families but less likely to have savings even though both borrowed the same amount.

<sup>89</sup>Harris Dianne. "The Ordinary Post War House." Between 1932-1964 the FHA and VA financed \$120 billion in housing and less than 2% was available to non-white families.

<sup>90</sup>Hyman, Louis. "An Introduction to the History of Debt."

Credit was seen as a right within the suburban material culture however, in urban ghettos, retailers continued to collect payment door to door well into the 1960's and led to exploitation and inaccessibility to the same low and secure loans available within the suburbs. To end racist practices, computerized credit was implemented by congress in the 1970's to provide fair credit to all. However, discrimination persisted by allocation of higher interest rates to people based on the name of the applicant or their residence within a suburb or a ghetto.<sup>91</sup> The suburban home became a social marker that determined an individual's opportunities and limited the success of black families. The difference between white and non-white's accessibility to different forms of credits created different abilities to accumulate wealth, save money, and participate in the bigger and richer American ideal. This became an additional factor that impeded black families from prospering during and after wartimes. As a result, identities were revealed through the type of home and home products purchased, or the lack thereof. Recent immigrants were able to purchase and reinforce their identity as a white middle-class American who had the mobility and purchasing power.<sup>92</sup> This placed foreign born white immigrants above native born black residents who may have had the wealth accumulated to purchase a home but were denied loans to purchase in the suburbs. Exclusively available loans for non-whites in the ghettos of southeast San Diego began to frame a narrative of blacks and Latinos tied to deteriorating housing units. Likewise, trailer parks were identified with housing everyday civilian workers who were disposable while suburban tracts in Linda Vista were identified with housing white defense workers or veterans who were of middle-class status.

Prohibited from the suburbs due to racial practices and policy, black families in San Diego were excluded from the prosperity available through employment, loans, and homeownership. Limited to urban housing in southeast San Diego, non-white residents resided in neglected shelter that needed major improvements while new development thrived in northern neighborhoods. A significant change, never before seen, in demographics after 1940 in San Diego created conditions that exemplified the housing gap. In 1940, Linda Vista served as an example of how government presence but lack of intervention created systemic issues of racial inequality to maintain a housing crisis in San Diego. In wartime, the house served as a site of service offering residents plumbing, heating, and hygiene facilities to ease their way of living. A lack of mechanical services and design within southeast San Diego and Mission Valley Trailer Park Units allocated to racial minorities emphasized a lower-class worker's disposability and status as a service to San Diego's economy. An excess in mechanical services and amenities within Linda Vista Defense Housing, provided by the military, created a facade to transform white workers into ideal white middle class citizens to populate San Diego's growing suburbs. A transformed community, white workers outgrew the service house and sought investment in larger and more expensive house through the continual help of federal agencies.<sup>93</sup> Families who had accumulated enough wealth in Linda Vista were able to leave the model 575 square foot units of Linda Vista and to purchase the customizable 1,800 square foot home in Clairemont without ever having to have passed through trailer housing due to their white racial status. The new suburban homes in Clairemont grew attractive as they had built in garages and more rooms than did the homes within Linda Vista's community. The planning and construction of a full community with commodified and serviceable homes grew appealing given it required less work from prospective homeowners. Racial restrictions in

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<sup>91</sup>Hyman, Louis. "Legitimizing the Credit Infrastructure: Race, Gender, and Credit Access."

<sup>92</sup>Harris, Dianne. "Household Goods: Purchasing and Consuming Identity."

<sup>93</sup>Massey, Jonathan. "Risk and Regulation in the Financial Architecture of the American House."



the postwar era upheld the prewar policy that had kept communities homogeneous. Federal agencies and private employers worked to uphold San Diego's civic elite's white suburban vision by financing white worker's tickets into the middle-class suburbia of the postwar house by keeping them apart from families of color in San Diego. Through racial exclusion, unit design, and privatization, Linda Vista began to represent the ideal post war suburban community that would be duplicated by future developers.

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## Reflective Essay

This paper was completed as part of my McNair 2020 research and interest in housing and race.

To narrow my research interests, I first set a goal to build a literature review focused on the relationships between housing and race. That is, scholarly work that discussed both issues separately and conjointly. Familiar with the field, my mentor sent me a list of 10 articles and chapters to read through first. I expanded on this list by also searching up footnotes and reading the work referenced in the text.

To access full text, I first referenced the USD catalogue because of how robust and rich of literature it is. When an article was not available, I followed by searching within the Circuit and then World Cat. However, the Circuit and World Cat were extremely limited and restricted this year due to COVID. My next step would be a reliable google search or cross referencing a digital library- such as JSTOR- just in case I had missed it the first time. Finally, I resorted to USD Interlibrary Loan. They helped me access books from other Universities and ebooks from databases that had restricted access.

Building a literature review proved to be extremely helpful in not only getting familiar with the literature within my field of study, but also helping me pose questions and develop my argument.

Once I had a clear understanding of where my interests were and what my research question was, searching became much more specific. I no longer searched up foot noted material or key words of *housing* and *race*. I now searched up work relevant to *1941 Linda Vista Defense Housing* and primary source information that I knew would strengthen my argument and research.

For example I relied heavily on floor plans and property deeds from the 1940's that, I argued, racialized housing. Such primary sources were difficult to access because they are not scholarly sources that can otherwise be found in libraries or online databases. And being from the 1940's added to the layers of barriers to access these plans and deeds.

However, because my work was centered in San Diego, I first referenced the City of San Diego's History Center to locate plans and deeds. I also referenced the City of San Diego services that keeps physical copies of plans and deeds archived in City buildings Downtown. This was the most difficult part of my research, locating primary source information pertaining to 1940 San Diego. However, I was able to meet with USD architecture librarian specialists to locate some of this information. This also led to sending emails to other Historical Societies in San Diego and searching within the US National Archives website to access information for my research.

I made sure that all my sources were reliable before referencing them in my work. For example, I steered away from magazines, newspaper articles, and blogs and relied instead on scholarly articles or books to reinforce my research. However, as mentioned above, I did reference floor plans, property deeds, and other primary sources that are not scholarly to strengthen my argument. When in doubt, I did run sources by my mentor and USD architecture librarian specialist to make sure information was reliable.

At last I had compiled a complete literature review with primary and secondary sources that helped me build my case and complete a paper from an Architecture and Ethnic Studies lense. As my writing progressed, my mentor would advise where additional research could strengthen my paper. We met twice a week to discuss my progress in reading, writing, and improvements needed.

One of the last research searches I conducted for this paper was with the US Census Bureau for information on Linda Vista and San Diego in the 1940's and 1950's. Like other primary sources, this was difficult to locate because of how specific the site (Linda Vista and San Diego) was and how far back in history I was looking (1940). Nonetheless, this data strengthened my case and I was able to pull together an analysis that reinforced the way floor plans and property deeds racialized housing in Linda Vista, San Diego.

In all, I built off public discourse within Architecture and Ethnic Studies, and introduced an argument to be made for the *1941 Linda Vista Defense Housing*. My favorite part of this research experience was learning and reading about topics that interested me.