

EASTER HILL VILLAGE, BUILDING NO. 27  
Southwest corner of South Twenty-sixth Street & Corto Square  
Richmond  
Contra Costa  
California

HABS CA-2783-T  
CA-2783-T

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PACIFIC GREAT BASIN SUPPORT OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1111 Jackson Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

**Easter Hill Village, Building No. 27**  
**Southwest corner of South 26<sup>th</sup> Street & Corto Square**  
**Richmond**  
**Contra Costa County**  
**California**

**HABS No. CA-2783-T**

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**Location:** Southwest corner of South 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Corto Square

U.S.G.S. Richmond Quadrangle (7.5'), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: northwest corner 10.4197417.557557; northernmost point 10.4197464.557687; northeast corner 10.4197354.557875; southeast corner 10.4197235.557872; southwest corner 10.4197233.557673.

**Present owner:** Richmond Housing Authority

**Present use:** Demolished in 2004.

**Most recent use:** Public housing project (until late 2003)

**Significance:** Easter Hill Village has been determined eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. Easter Hill is eligible under Criterion A because of its local significance as part of the effort to address the critical Post-World War II housing shortage in City of Richmond. Easter Hill Village was the most significant public effort to provide affordable permanent housing for many families displaced by the demolition of temporary war housing. Easter Hill Village is eligible under Criterion C because it had significant influence on the design of multi-unit housing. Easter Hill Village was the first multi-unit residential development to combine the twin themes of the planned unit development with the individuation of units. The design was also unique for its time in the care given to integrating a multi-unit residential development to its site. Easter Hill Village also is an important design by master architects Donald Hardison and Vernon DeMars, and landscape architect Laurence Halprin. The design of Easter Hill Village had at least statewide, if not national significance and influence. The period of significance under Criteria A and C is 1953 to 1954. The boundary of the eligible resource is the boundaries of the original Easter Hill Village project except Buildings 2, 3, 4 and 6 that have lost their historic integrity.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History**

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

### **B. Historical Context**

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement**

Building 27 is one of forty-one surviving buildings in the Easter Hill Village complex. As originally built in 1953-1954, the complex consisted of forty-eight buildings that were similar in construction, finishing materials, and general architectural character. All buildings were one or two stories in height and consisted of one or more modules that were linked end-to-end. The buildings varied principally in the finish of their second stories and in the number of modules that they contained. (The basic modules are identified on original plans with a letter from A to E; variations indicated by a number suffix, and by the letter "R" for reverse plans.)

Building 27 consists of two modules, C-3R and D, linked end-to-end. The southern module, C-3R, is set back relative to the D module, creating a stepped footprint. There are two living units in each module, for a total of four units in this building.

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783, for a description of the elevation, plan, and architectural character of these modules, and of the Easter Hill complex as a whole.

### **B. Description of Exterior**

#### **1. Overall dimensions**

Building 27 is two stories in height and 78'-9" in length, from north to south. In its plan, Building 27 is divided into two modules. They are, from north to south, D and C-3R. Each of these modules is 26'-0" in depth and contains two living units. The C-3R module is 33'-0" in length, and is set back 6'-6" from the D module, which is 45'-9" in length.

#### **2. Foundations**

Building 27 has a reinforced concrete perimeter foundation.

### **3. Walls and structural system**

Like all buildings in Easter Hill Village, Building 27 is stud-framed in construction. Both modules are clad in stucco on the first story. The C-3R module is clad in horizontal wood siding in the second story, and the D module is clad in board-and-batten siding the second story. The second story overhangs the first story by sixteen inches in both the east and west elevations.

The main façade is along one of the long sides, that facing east. Entrances to two of the four units can be found in this façade. Another entrance is in the southernmost façade, and the fourth is in a one-story extension on the north side of the building. The rear of the building is in the other long façade, that facing west. Each of the four units has a back door on this side of the building.

A one-story extension can be found at the north end of the building. This extension serves as the entrance for the northernmost unit and contains a bedroom for that unit.

The stucco surfaces are painted salmon-beige and the board-and-batten siding is painted brown. This coloring is not original.

### **4. Porches**

Each unit in this building possesses its own entrance porch. These consist of concrete decks raised several inches off the ground, and plain wooden railings supported by plain wooden posts. The porches measure about six feet by eight feet. Metal awnings cover each porch in the main façade. These porches, including railings and awnings, are non-original. In the one-story extension to the north, the porch is covered by an extension of the gabled roof, which is supported by wooden posts.

### **5. Openings**

All exterior doors are wooden hollow core doors, opening inward. Over each door is a security grille with dense metal screen that opens outward. Both the doors and the security grilles have deadbolt locks. These doors and grilles are non-original.

As is the case elsewhere in Easter Hill Village, all windows in this building are of three types: single windows measuring about three feet in width by four feet in height, paired windows measuring about seven feet in width by four feet in height, and bathroom windows measuring about three and one-half feet in width by two feet in height.

In the main (east) façade, fenestration in the second story is symmetrical, with a single window at each end and four paired windows between them. The first story is also symmetrical (not counting the one story extension to the north), with two doors in the center flanked by a paired window to either side, and two single windows at each end.

In the rear (west) façade, fenestration of the second story consists of a single window (at the south end), three paired windows, and two pairs of bathroom windows. The first story has a paired window (at the south end), three single windows, plus a back door adjacent to each of these four windows. The south façade is nearly symmetrical, with two single windows in the second story, two single windows flanking a door in the first story, and a vent in the gable. The north façade has a single window in each story and a vent in the gable. Finally, the one-story extension to the north has single windows in the north and east sides and a door in its east side.

## **6. Roof**

The roof is gabled, with extended eaves. There is a break in the roofline where the south module is set back from the northern one. The roof of the one-story extension is also gabled, and extends north beyond the wall plane to cover the porch. The eaves in this building have exposed rafters, the ends of which are hidden by metal gutters that run the length of each of the long facades.

## **C. Description of Interiors**

### **1. Floor plans**

#### **a. Basement**

Building 27 contains no basement.

#### **b. Apartment floor plans**

From south to north the module floor plans in Building 27 are as follows:

Module C-3R contains two townhouses, a three-bedroom unit on the left (south), and a two-bedroom unit on the right (north). The entrance door in each of these townhouses opens directly into the living room. In each townhouse the staircase to the second floor divides the first floor plan into two primary spaces - a living room in front, and a kitchen area in back. A rear door in the

kitchen opens out to the back yard. A storage room opens off of one side of the kitchen. In the second floor, the bedrooms and bathroom open to the landing at the top of the staircase. The bedrooms vary in size from about nine feet by eleven feet to eleven feet by twelve feet.

Module D includes two townhouses - a two-bedroom unit on the left (south) and a four-bedroom end unit on the right (north). The entrance to the two-bedroom unit opens directly into the living room. A stairway to the second floor divides the first floor plan into two primary spaces - the living room in front, and a kitchen area in back. A rear door in the kitchen opens out to the back yard. A storage room opens off of one side of the kitchen. In the second floor, the two bedrooms and bathroom open to the landing at the top of the stair. These bedrooms measure about nine feet by twelve feet and ten feet by twelve feet.

The entrance to the four-bedroom unit is set into the single-story gabled extension that is set back from the front façade. Turning right from the small entrance hall, one enters one of the unit's four bedrooms (also located in the extension). Turning left, one enters the two-story portion of the townhouse. Straight ahead is the stairway to the second floor, to the right is the kitchen with storage room, and to the left is the living room. In the second story, the landing at the top of the stairway opens into the three bedrooms on this floor and the bathroom. The bedrooms in this unit vary in size from about nine feet by eleven feet to eleven feet by twelve feet.

Each bedroom in the building has its own closet. In the C-3R module, a coat closet can be found on the first floor of each unit, beneath the staircase, and a linen closet is on the second floor of each unit, near the stairway landing and adjacent to the bathroom. In the D module, a linen closet is found in the kitchen, adjacent to the door from the hallway.

## **2. Flooring**

Floors are covered with non-original twelve-inch vinyl tiles.

## **3. Wall and ceiling finish**

Interior walls and ceilings are finished with gypsum board. The walls have been repainted so that they are textured. Exposed ceiling beams can be found in the living rooms and kitchens. These have been painted to match the ceilings.

**4. Openings and trim**

Plain wood trim two inches in width surround each window and door opening. Baseboards are plastic, and three inches in height.

**5. Doors to bedroom and linen closets, storage rooms**

All bedrooms originally had open closets, while linen closets had wood paneled doors. Storage rooms were open. All of these spaces are now closed with hollow-core doors.

**6. Kitchen fixtures**

The kitchens in all units have been remodeled in the last twenty years. Each kitchen originally had pine cabinets with open shelving. The original cabinets were replaced with wooden cabinets with hinged doors, Formica counters, and aluminum sinks. These cabinets are left with a natural finish. The stoves are also not original, and the refrigerators have been removed.

**7. Bathroom fixtures**

All bathroom fixtures in Easter Hill Village – toilets, sinks, showers, and cabinets -- are recent replacement fixtures. The units were originally built with bathtubs but no showers.

**8. Lighting and heating fixtures**

The heating in each unit originally consisted of wall heaters that have been removed. New, larger gas wall heaters have been installed in the living rooms. Fluorescent lighting is in each kitchen, and incandescent lights are in the living room and bedrooms.

**D. Site**

**1. General setting and orientation**

Building 27 is at the southwest corner of Corto Square and South 26<sup>th</sup> Street. Its main façade faces the former of these streets. A six-unit building, Building 28, is located directly to the south. A walkway runs between these buildings and leads west down the hill toward Hinkley court. Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783 for more on the general setting at Easter Hill Village.

## **2. Historic landscape**

See the "Narrative" report, CA-2783.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

#### **A. Original Architectural Drawings**

The original 1953 Easter Hill Village plans and specifications are on file at the architectural firm of Hardison, Komatsu, Ivelich & Tucker, 538 Ninth Street, Suite 240, Oakland, CA 94607.

#### **B. Interviews**

Hardison, Donald. Personal communication with Marjorie Dobkin. January 2003.  
\_\_\_\_\_. Personal communication with Ward Hill and William Kostura.  
October 2003.

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783, for more interviews.

#### **C. Bibliography**

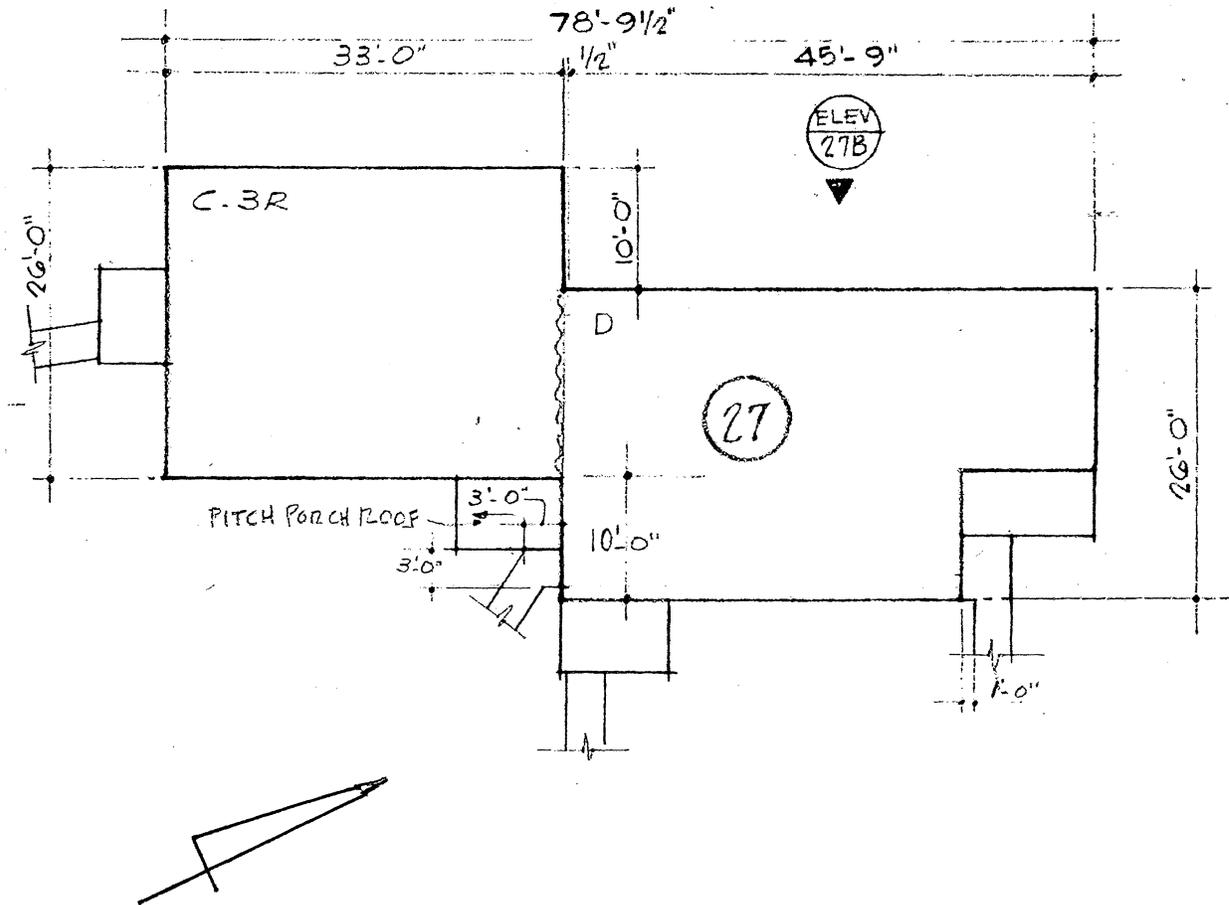
Please see the "Narrative" report, CA-2783.

### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

The Historic American Building Survey documentation was undertaken as a mitigation measure as per the Memorandum of Agreement between the Richmond Housing Authority and the California State Office of Historic Preservation. The City of Richmond Housing Authority as part of the Hope VI Revelopment Project demolished forty-one (237 units) buildings of the existing forty-five buildings in the Easter Hill Village complex (including removing existing landscape features) in May 2004 for the construction of 219 new multi-family rental-housing units, thirty for-sale detached houses, and fourteen for-sale town-homes would be developed. On a vacant site just east of Easter Hill Village, an additional forty for-sale detached houses would be developed. A total of 303 new housing units will be constructed as part of this project.

The documentation was prepared during the period of October 2003 to July 2004. The narrative report is a collaboration of three individuals: Historian Marjorie Dobkin prepared the sections on social history regarding Richmond during and after World War II and on Easter Hill Village and the section on the history of the Easter Hill Village design; Landscape historian Denise Bradley prepared the description and historic background sections on the Easter Hill Village landscape design and the biographical material on landscape architect Lawrence Halprin; Architectural historian Ward Hill prepared the sections on the Modern Movement in architecture, the Bay Region Tradition and the general historical background of the City of Richmond. Architectural historian

William Kostura prepared the Outline Format reports on the forty-one individual Easter Hill Village buildings (original building numbers 8 to 48) demolished for the project.



Sketch plan for Building No. 27, showing the arrangement of modules. For module plans, please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.