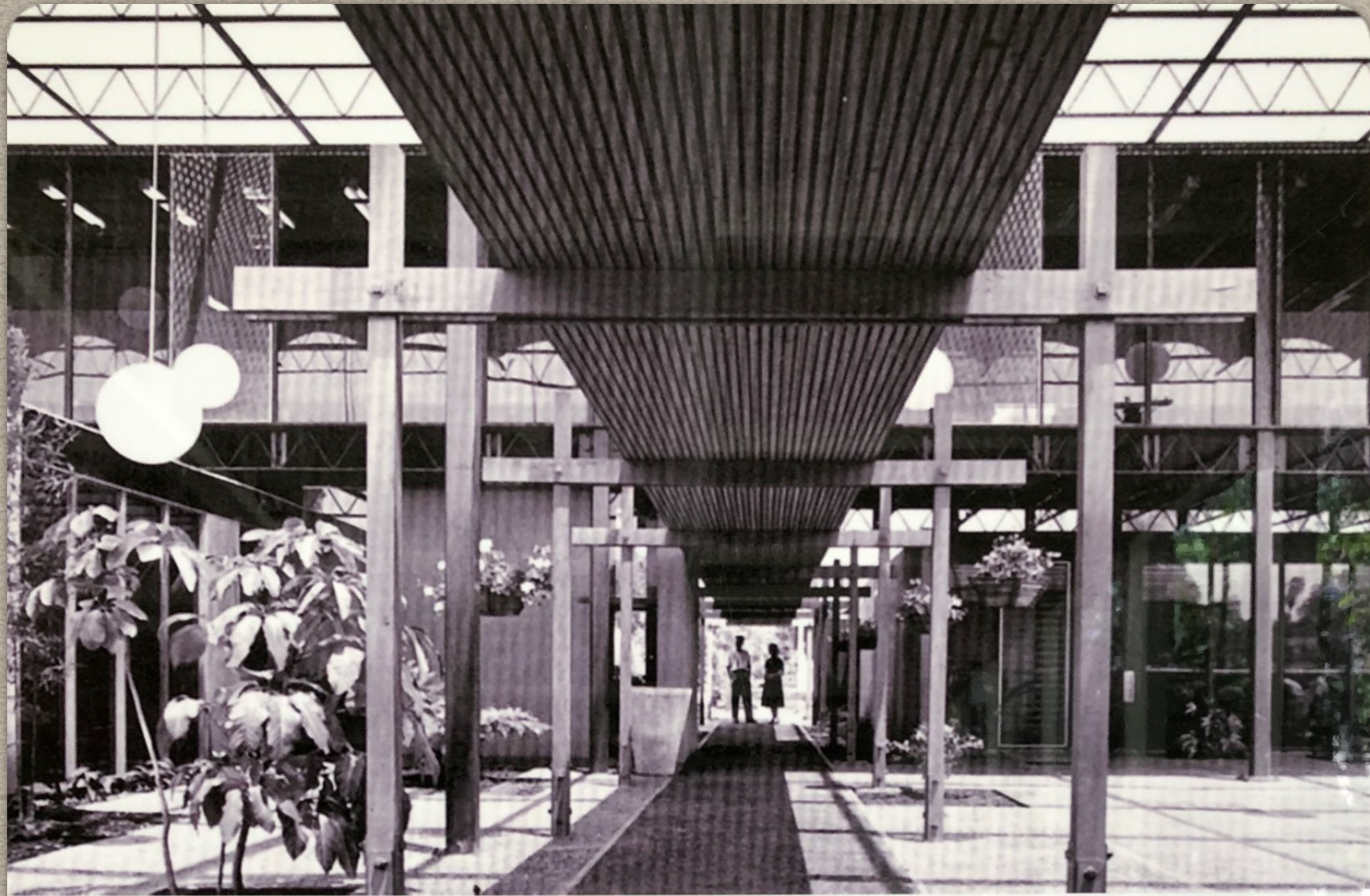


Marvin Rand, photographer. "Smith and Williams: Community Facilities Planning office (Pasadena, Calif.)," *UCSB ADC Omeka*, accessed August 21, 2021. <http://www.adc-exhibits.museum.ucsb.edu/items/show/548>.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLANNING OFFICE 1414 FAIR OAKS AVENUE - SOUTH PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

*History of the Designed Landscape - UCLAx Summer 2021
Clayton Daily*



The building at 1414 Fair Oaks Ave in South Pasadena was built for the offices of Community Facilities Planning, a loose professional association between the offices of architects Smith and Williams, who designed the building, Garrett Eckbo, who designed the landscape and courtyard for his landscape architecture firm Eckbo, Dean and Williams, and Eisner and Stewart, city planners (Chase). They were later joined by Selje and Bond, industrial designers (Smith and Williams: Community Facilities Planning Office). It was constructed as four separate buildings joined under a large aluminum lattice roof that covers the communal courtyard and plantings. This arrangement was meant to serve as a space for creative collaboration between the individual professional practices (Smith & Williams and the Fate of the 1414 Fair Oaks Building). Not only did it bring the "outside in" through the large floor to ceiling windows, but the shaded courtyard extended the "inside out" in perhaps the most bold and intentional form to date for the corporate setting, allowing the creative disciplines an inspiring but informal space to meet and collaborate. The designs of Community Planners included "nearly every classification of architectural work from a garden tea house to a complete city" according to architect Whitney Smith (Chase). Pierluigi Serraino in *Modernism Rediscovered* writes "The setting provided the firms with the opportunity for collaborative projects, while maintaining independent practice" (qtd. in Chase). Urban Designer John Chase says this building is "an example of cross-disciplinary professional practice that has rarely been equaled since" that "deserves to be better known as a temple of high modern design" (Chase).

Original photos, which are displayed in the building, show the now removed shaded central allée, which exhibits a Japanese influence in its wooden post and beam construction. The courtyard's fountain remains but has been filled in with large river rocks. Some of the large accent stones, reminiscent of Japanese Zen gardens have disappeared.



DESIGN ELEMENTS OF MODERNISM

Smith, Williams, and Eckbo were working with materials newly available after World War II such as tubular steel beams, posts, and lightweight aluminum mesh. Most of this material is produced in factories and can be cheaper than traditional construction. Most importantly they allow construction of buildings, shades, and garden elements in methods never before possible. As modernists, particularly post-war California Modernists, these architects did not allow themselves to be constrained by tradition and actively sought new solutions to the design of human spaces.

Smith and Williams, architects "Smith and Williams: Community Facilities Planning office (Pasadena, Calif.);" UCSB ADC Omeka, accessed August 21, 2021, <http://www.adc-exhibits.museum.ucsb.edu/items/show/548>.

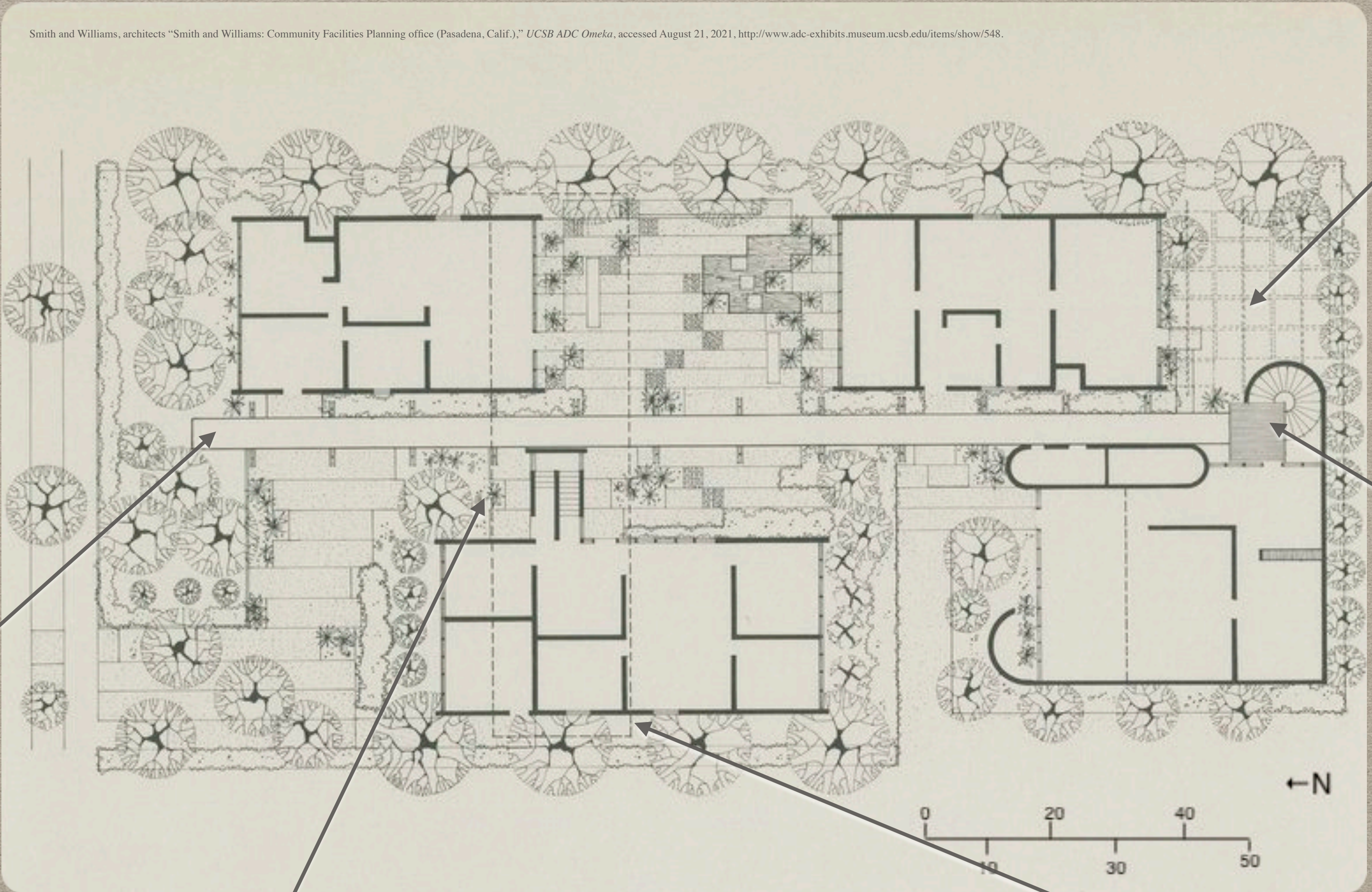
A pergola, simple and unadorned, constructed with steel and painted wood. It carries subtle hints of Japanese and American Arts and Crafts architecture.



Spiral staircase to second floor. Modern in its openness and simplicity. There are no unnecessary components and the design is unrestrained by tradition.



Buildings are arranged asymmetrically, with the detached second floor building (shown on plan with hidden lines) rotated off-axis.



Now removed central allée. While usually seen as a Renaissance, Baroque or Beaux Arts element, this shaded allée was placed slightly off center making it Modernist.



1958 SITE PLAN



The main entrance gate features a door with a simple grill design. While decorative and possibly custom made, the repeating pattern suggests mass produced off-the-shelf industrial products, a conscious material choice of many Modernists.



Today's view of main entrance looking south

It is the purpose behind this design which qualifies this building as a perfect example of Modern Architecture. The primary force is function over form in the drive to facilitate creative collaboration between offices. It is further exemplified in its use of newly available modern industrial materials, namely tubular steel construction and aluminum mesh, and its lack of decorative adornment. The axial grid is geometric, it lacks naturalistic forms, but they are arranged asymmetrically, with varying sizes and planes and the axis is off-center. It is also fully an example of California Modern in its goal of bringing the outside in and the inside out, a primary objective used to enhance the benefits of California's mediterranean climate.

Second floor steel post and beam construction



Detail of aluminum mesh shade from north side main entrance



View from central courtyard looking south

The courtyard encapsulates all of Eckbo's theoretical ideas of the mid to late 1950's. Here he was able to showcase his belief in the use of new materials and new ideas for how 20th century humans should live in relation to the natural world. "Eckbo was critical of past thinking, not so much for its role in earlier times, as for the way older landscapes exerted their influence on twentieth-century conditions - conditions obviously, greatly altered" (Treib & Imbert 83). He believed in the supremacy of the "why" over the traditional "how", and that this was the only ethical basis for contemporary landscape design (Treib & Imbert 83). He was incorporating these theories into all of his design work, whether it be residential gardens, corporate settings, or civic planning and the relationships of people and the natural environment. During this time he was advocating for a broad perspective to unify the visions traditionally held by the individual design professions (Treib & Imbert 83). The scale and scope of this project mirrors his residential work of the period, and, in fact, many of the central ideas were developed concurrently. During the same period he was designing the "ALCOA Forecast Garden" which was to incorporate novel outdoor uses for aluminum, manufactured by ALCOA (Aluminum Company of America) (Treib & Imbert 84-92). This was actually his own garden in his backyard of Wonderland Park, a housing development in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles, master planned by Eckbo. He was interested with the idea central to California Modernists of bringing the "outside in" and expanding it to bringing the "inside out" (Treib & Imbert 84-92). His residential projects as well as his own home garden were furthering this idea but his practice's office building perhaps achieves this idea to its fullest. The lines between inside and outside almost completely disappear at 1414 Fair Oaks with the lush plantings, the shallow pool, the dense shade and the low hanging globe lanterns. You could likely convince yourself, depending on which details you are viewing, that you are either completely inside or out from the same point in space.

CENTRAL COURTYARD AND FOUNTAIN

(ENLARGED AREA STUDY)



Fountain now filled with river stone



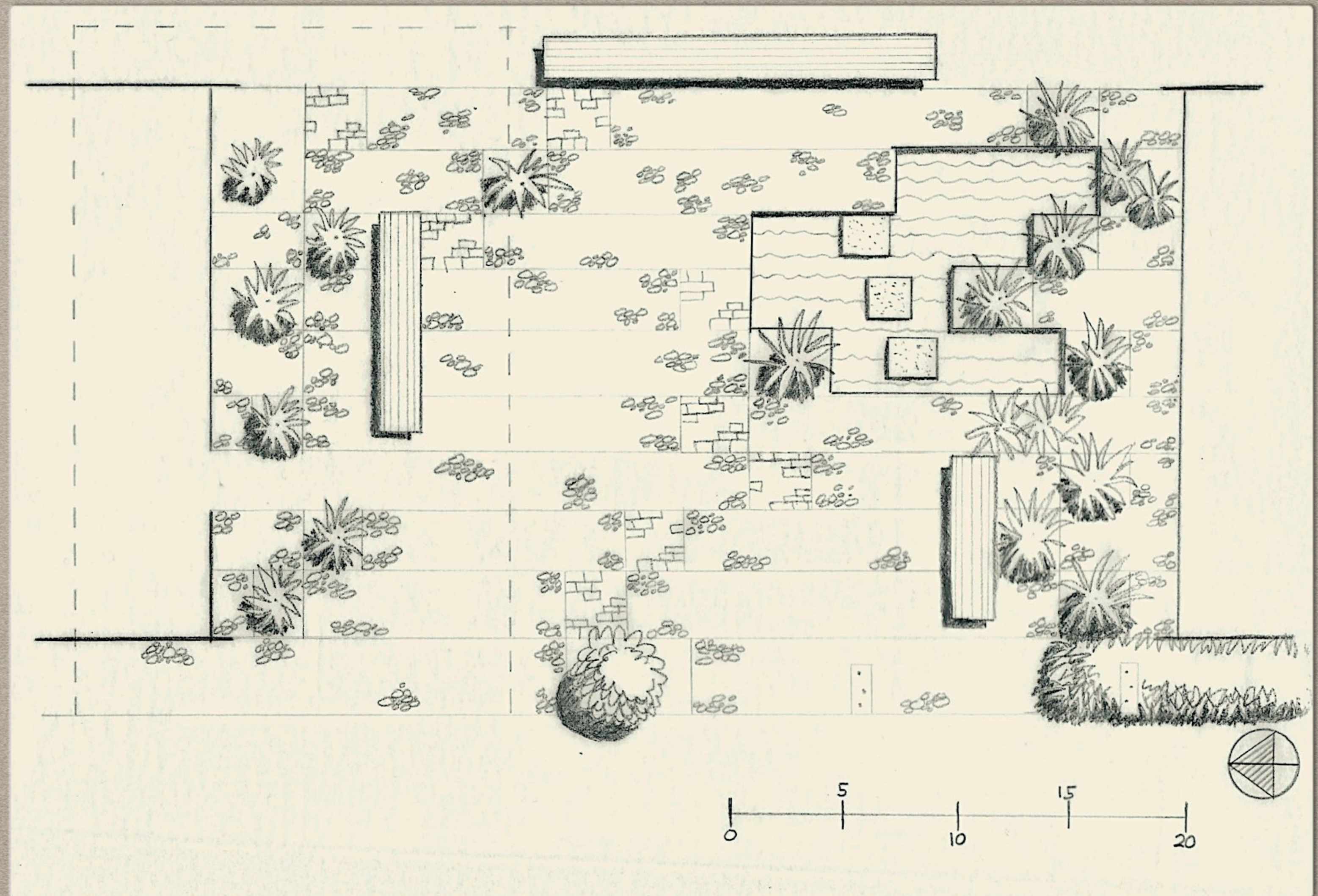
Center of complex looking northeast



River cobble pavers and shade loving plants show an Asian influence

"While the architects used glass to bring the *outside in*, Eckbo artfully employs the metal lattice roof and light fixtures to carry the *interior outside*, therein elegantly highlighting the fundamental co-constitution of interior and exterior space. The courtyard's design continues this motif. Concrete tiles mirror the lattice roof above to connect the otherwise disparate structures. The smooth and textured tiling, intermixed with brickwork, creates a seemingly haphazard path that is reminiscent of the changing organic matter planted throughout. Planters are created by removing concrete blocks that stand in negative relation to their concrete-tile surround, binding the organic to the inorganic, while at the same time retaining their inherently oppositional character as pole and antipode. It is this interactive antinomy that characterizes the whole of The Community Facilities Planners Building and is representative of their collaborative work, their vision for Los Angeles, and of midcentury design more generally."

C. Kaye Rawlings - Artillery Magazine March 3, 2020



CENTRAL COURTYARD AND FOUNTAIN

ENLARGED AREA PLAN

DETAIL - SUSPENDED GLOBE LIGHTS

It is easy to argue that the aluminum roof shade is the single most influential aspect of Eckbo's garden design at 1414 Fair Oaks. After all it makes possible the very planting design that is employed, which is a palette of shade loving plants protected from the sun. It is the enclosure that creates the outdoor indoor space, transforming it from a standard courtyard to an actual outdoor room. Perhaps it is the correct argument. However, I would suppose that the entire design would be much less effective without the pendant globe lights that are found throughout the building, within and without the courtyard. They are suspended low and enter a visitor's field of vision without even glancing to the sky. Their design is an interior style. Often you could easily be fooled that you are in fact inside a lush interior atrium when visiting this building. I suspect it is the globe lights that complete the illusion, particularly if you were to visit when dusk arrives early in the winter.



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