

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Case Study House #20  
other names/site number Bass House

## 2. Location

street & number 2275 North Santa Rosa Avenue  not for publication  
city or town Altadena  vicinity  
state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 91001

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Case Study House #20  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

The Case Study House Program: 1945-1966

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

Domestic: Single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Domestic: Single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Concrete slab  
walls: Plaster or Floor-to-ceiling glass  
Composition over prefabricated plywood vaults; Barrel vaults with fixed-glass  
roof: inserts and stressed-skin panels; Flat  
Wood lath ceiling over interior courtyard  
other: and exterior walkways; Swimming pool  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Case Study House #20  
Name of Property

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County and State

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

In a departure from the use of steel frame construction, architects Buff, Straub and Hensman chose wood instead. Both the location of the house in the Pasadena area and the design preferences of the owners, Saul Bass, a noted graphic artist, and his biochemist wife, resulted in the introduction of sculptural forms in the residence. A barrel vaulted ceiling and a circular brick fireplace, plus the incorporation of a mature tree that penetrates the deep overhang, reinforce this idea. The dwelling exhibits a high level of integrity.

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### Narrative Description

The one-story Bass House was designed for industrial and graphic designer, Saul Bass, and his spouse, biochemist Dr. Ruth Bass. The residence was constructed on the site of an old estate in Altadena, California. The dwelling is of post-and-beam wood construction on a concrete slab foundation. It features a complex roof arrangement employing prefabricated plywood barrel vaults, flat stressed skin panels, and 12-inch hollow box beams that span 16 feet and form a series of 8-foot bays. The panels, vaults and box beams were trucked to the site and handled by forklift hoist, which made rapid erection possible. The vaults covering the central area of the house were positioned and initially secured in rapid succession. The vaults were custom-built for the job to the same 2-inch thickness as the panels, and were pressure-glued and bent into the required forms.

The plan is organized for casual living with a children's wing and an adult wing that includes a studio. A secondary entrance leads directly into the interior studio space. All primary rooms open onto courts and decks. An interior courtyard with obscure glass panels is visible from the front entrance and carport area. The house faces Santa Rosa Avenue, a residential street nicknamed "Christmas Tree Lane" in honor of the mature deodar cedars that line the street.

Posts, beams, and connecting plywood panels were constructed in Berkeley, California of Douglas fir plywood and brought to Altadena where workers awaited them. Straub recalled there was always the anxiety that they wouldn't mesh, but when they came they were a perfect fit.

The house differs from others previously designed by the firm in that there were no overhangs employed due to the numerous trees on the property and adjoining lots. In addition, the character of the space was very precise with tolerances of 1/8-inch that were considered exceptionally close for a wood house.

One important visual aspect of the house was the giant Italian pine tree. The architects used it as an umbrella. Unfortunately, as relates to integrity of setting, the tree had to be cut down in the 1980s because it had begun to displace the house and threatened the windows during windstorms. Regarding physical integrity, the restoration of the dwelling in the 1990s did not materially alter its design, workmanship, materials, location, feeling and association. As a result, the house continues to "maintain enough physical integrity to be readily identifiable as a contributor to the program."

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1958

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1958

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Buff, Straub and Hensman

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

1958. Date of construction.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Case Study House #20 (Bass House) meets the criteria established in the Registration Requirements outlined in the MPS cover document. The property meets Criterion A for its association with experimental modern housing in the postwar years under the auspices of John Entenza's *Arts & Architecture* magazine. The property is also significant under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of residential architecture associated with the Case Study House program. In addition, CSH #20 was designed by master architects Conrad Buff III, Calvin C. Straub, and Donald C. Hensman of the architectural firm Buff, Straub and Hensman. Therefore, the property qualifies for listing under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Bass House, Case Study House #20, was designed by Conrad Buff III, Calvin C. Straub, and Donald C. Hensman of the architectural firm Buff, Straub and Hensman.<sup>1</sup> The house was completed in 1958 and is one of the 25 dwellings constructed under the auspices of *Arts & Architecture* magazine's Case Study House program, which ran from 1945 until 1966. The importance of the house, its significance within the program, and the work of its three architects are thoroughly discussed within the historic context argument presented in the Multiple Property submission cover document. That historic context being: "The Case Study House program in California: 1945-1966." The house is a key example of the property type: "Single-family residences of the Case Study program," and the "wood-frame dwellings" subtype. The property meets National Register Criterion A for its association with experimental modern housing in the postwar years under the auspices of John Entenza's *Arts & Architecture* magazine.

CSH #20 represents a departure from other Case Study houses of the late 1950s in that it was constructed of wood rather than steel and employs the use of plywood barrel vaults. In addition, the property represents the work of master architects Conrad Buff III, Calvin C. Straub, and Donald C. Hensman. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of residential architecture associated with the Case Study House program and is the work of master architects.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

<sup>1</sup> For a variety of reasons the Case Study House program's numbering system was inconsistent with different properties being given the same number. For instance, CSH #20 was assigned to Richard Neutra's Bailey House of 1947-48 and also to the Bass House of 1958.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in The Case Study House Program: 1945-1966 Multiple Property Documentation Form.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:
- Getty Research Institute Library: Julius Shulman photos
  - Los Angeles Central Library
  - Los Angeles Conservancy Library: Preservation Resources
  - University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Library
  - University of Southern California (USC)
  - Helen Topping Architecture & Fine Arts Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

(Follow similar guidelines for entering the lat/long coordinates as describe on page 55, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* for entering UTM references. For properties less than 10 acres, enter the lat/long coordinates for a point corresponding to the center of the property. For properties of 10 or more acres, enter three or more points that correspond to the vertices of a polygon drawn on the map. The polygon should approximately encompass the area to be registered. Add additional points below, if necessary.)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: N 34.184799 Longitude: W 118.138847

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

APN: 5839-006-017 TRACT # 24045 LOT 7

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Case Study House #20 and the boundaries of the property's APN number, and as shown on the County Tax Assessors Map.

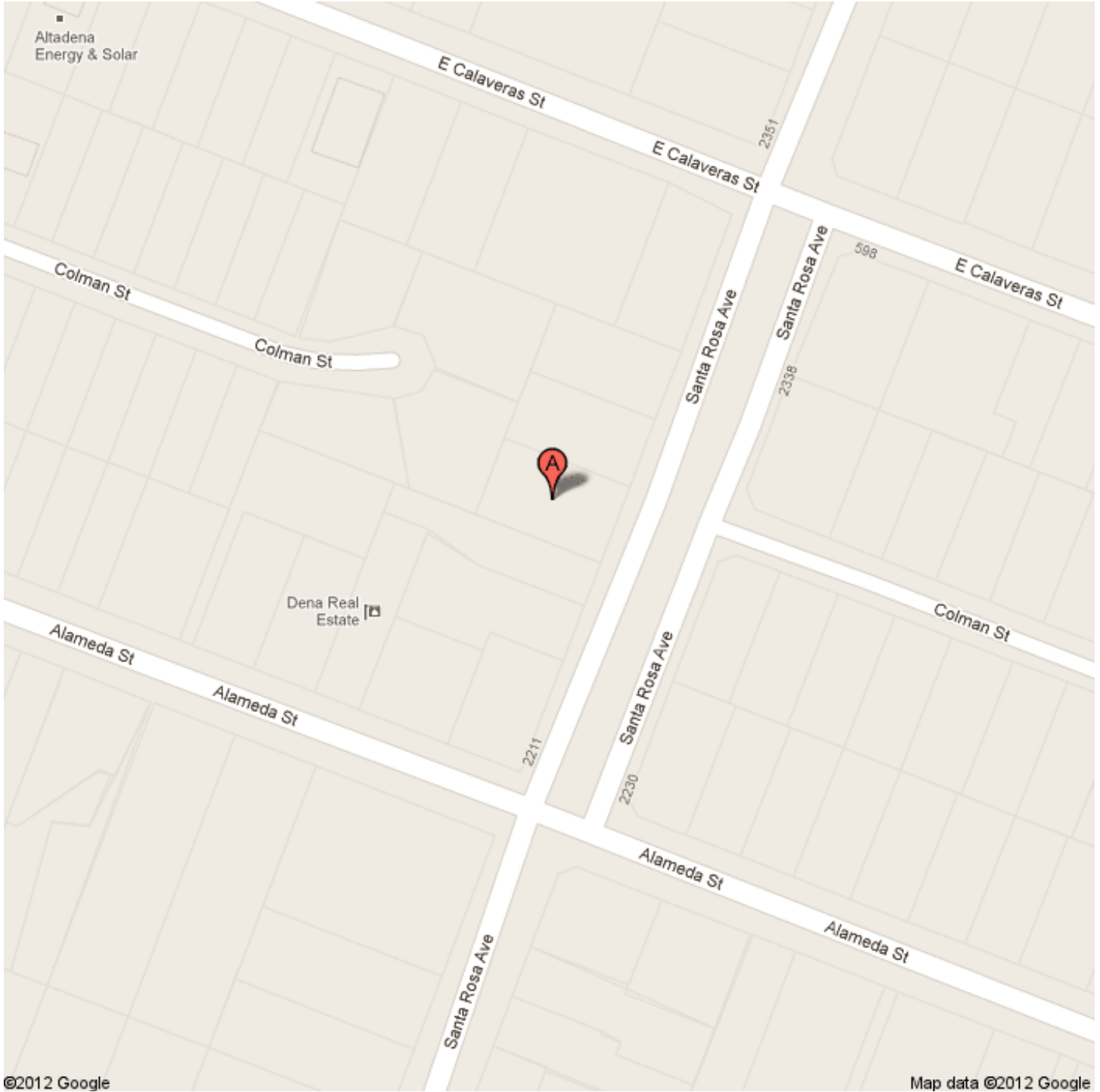
Case Study House #20  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California  
County and State

2275 North Santa Rosa Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001

Latitude: N 34.184799

Longitude: W 118.138847



Case Study House #20  
Name of Property

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Adrienne Biondo  
organization Los Angeles Conservancy Modern Committee date March 2009; Revised March 2013  
street & number 523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826 telephone 213-623-2489  
city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90014  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:	Case Study House #20
City	Altadena (unincorporated)
County	Los Angeles
State	CA
Name of Photographer	Larry Underhill
Date of Photographs	October 18, 2011
Location of Original Digital Files	Los Angeles Conservancy, 523 W 6 <sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014

CA\_Los Angeles County\_Case Study House 20\_0001.tif  
Southeast façade, camera facing Northwest

CA\_Los Angeles County\_Case Study House 20\_0002.tif  
Carport Entry, camera facing Northwest

CA\_Los Angeles County\_Case Study House 20\_0003.tif  
Southeast façade, camera facing Southwest

CA\_Los Angeles County\_Case Study House 20\_0004.tif  
Southeast façade, camera facing Northwest



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**Property Owner:**

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

name Marcus S Luk and Stephany C Turner  
street & number 2275 Santa Rosa Avenue telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Altadena state CA zip code 91001

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

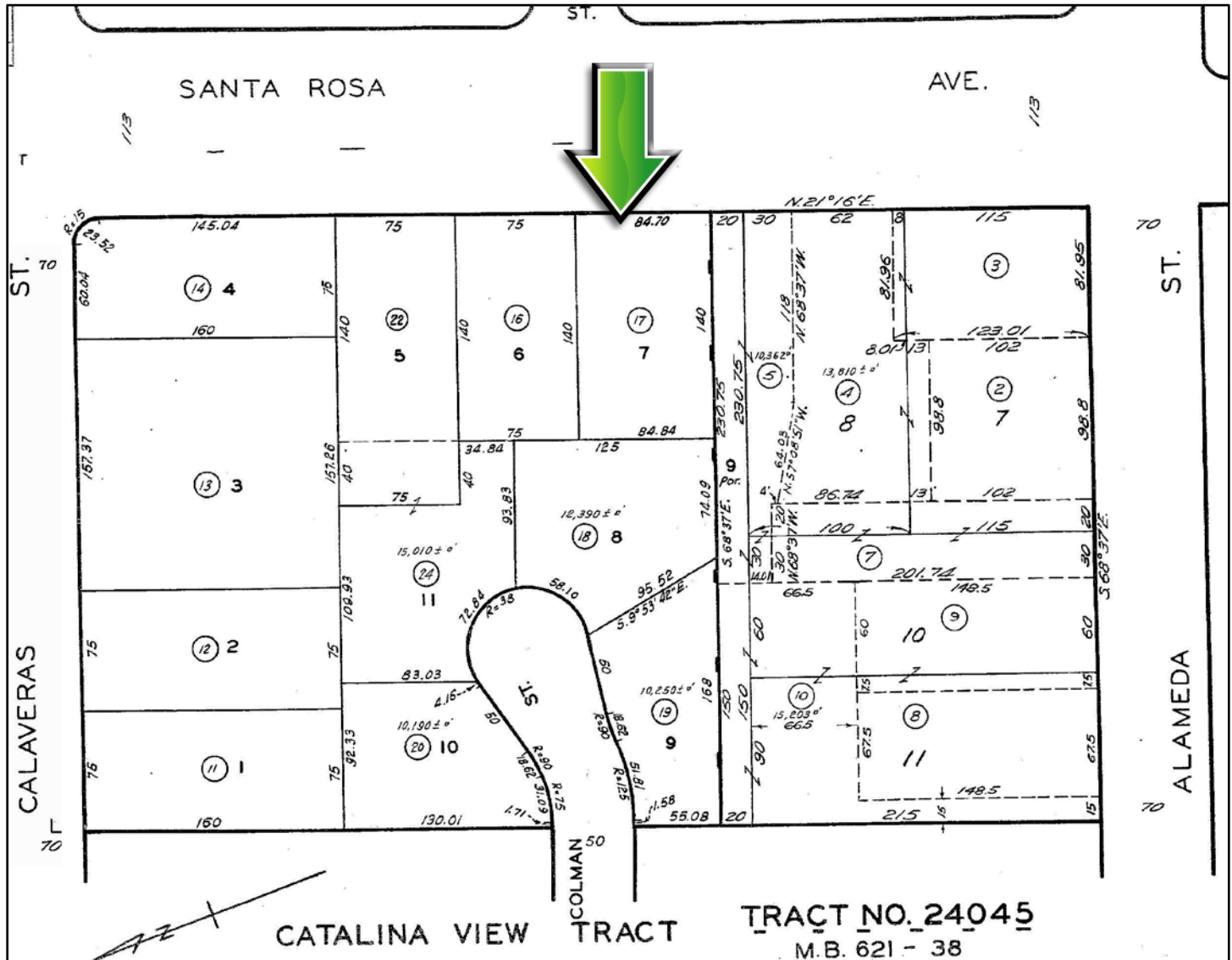
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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2275 Santa Rosa Avenue - APN: 5839-006-017

Scale: 1"=100'



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Figure 1. Julius Shulman Photograph, 1960



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Julius Shulman Photography Archive, Research Library at the Getty Research Institute.