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OAKLAND

2014 OCT 30 PM 2:39

# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** HENRY L. GARDNER  
INTERIM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

**FROM:** Teresa Deloach Reed

**SUBJECT:** OFD Vegetation Inspection Audit 2011-12  
Follow-Up Report

**DATE:** October 23, 2014

City Administrator  
Approval

Date

10-29-14

**COUNCIL DISTRICT: 1, 4, 6, and 7**

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends acceptance of this Informational Report which is a follow-up to information presented by staff on April 29, 2014 concerning the November 19, 2013 Oakland Fire Department (OFD) Vegetation Inspection Audit.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff is presenting this report at the request of the Public Safety Committee to detail any outstanding issues associated with the seven recommendations made by the Office of the City Auditor. As detailed in the report presented on April 29<sup>th</sup>, staff has already implemented many of the suggestions made within the Auditor's report.

## OUTCOME

By implementing the recommendations outlined in the Auditor's report, the Fire Department will enhance the vegetation management services provided to Oakland residents, and improve its efficiency in conducting inspections.

## BACKGROUND

The Office of the City Auditor conducted a performance audit of the City's Vegetation Management Inspection process for the periods of Fiscal Years 2011/12 and 2012/13. The audit was all inclusive of activities associated with the vegetation management inspection program, such as inspection quality, processes, training, documentation and accounting functions. The audit concluded with seven recommendations which Fire Department staff has worked diligently to address. On April 29, 2014, staff presented to the Public Safety Committee a detailed report outlining OFD efforts to implement the recommendations. Since that time, staff has continued to

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carry out the recommendations which have resulted in more efficient and responsible implementation of the Vegetation Management program.

### ANALYSIS

As stated in the previous report, staff began taking steps to implement the Auditor's recommendations for improving the Vegetation Management Program immediately upon receiving the report. The following information is a demonstration of additional steps taken since the April 29, 2014 status report to the Committee, which detailed *all actions* taken with each recommendation. The following information only includes updates on recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

**Recommendation #1:** *Implement policies and procedures that include stronger supervision and quality control measures.*

An additional 45 hours of training was conducted with 18 company officers assigned to the 11 Fire Stations within the Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD). This training included both "in field" inspections and supervision of data entry into the records database. The additional training resolved issues of inaccurate and incomplete forms being submitted to the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Staff continues to audit data entry which has resulted in locating inspection forms within the One Step system that had not been assigned for inspections. Fire Prevention staff identified parcels that were not included in the original distribution of vegetation inspection forms to the engine companies. These were not included because the parcels (identified as residential parcel), were assigned by the database to Fire Prevention Bureau Inspectors in error. Those assignment errors have been corrected and saved in the One Step system.

Staff continues to meet with necessary City staff to address the addition of vegetation management performance standards to the annual appraisal report.

The Field Operations Inspection Program handbook was distributed to all stations at the conclusion of the training. This detailed handbook was designed to deliver step by step inspection guidance and inspection reporting procedures as a reference to both company officers and suppression staff. The handbook contains sample inspection reports and instructions for completion on each field of required information.

**Recommendation #3:** *How Training Is Improved*

Training has improved through direct interaction with all crews assigned to the Oakland hills stations by the FPB Vegetation Management Supervisor and FPB Inspectors. The Vegetation Management Unit has collectively spent over 50 hours in the field with suppression crews

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providing guidance and training on how to conduct inspections, identify violations and complete notices of violations.

FPB staff joined suppression crews in the field regularly, which was an additional 50 hours of time separate from the 45 hours the Vegetation Management Supervisor spent at stations with the company officers. The 50 hours was spent with crews from Stations 7, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28. In essence a total of 95 hours of additional practical training was spent with suppression staff during the inspection process.

**Recommendation #4** – *Increasing Inspection Staff to full-time or by adjusting the month's part-time inspection staff is working*

Council did not take action on hiring additional full time Fire Suppression District Inspectors. The three (3) Temporary Part Time (TPT) Fire Suppression District Inspectors were activated earlier this inspection season (2014 – 2015) with one (1) Inspector beginning in late May, one (1) in June and one (1) in July. This resulted in more timely inspections of vacant lot parcels and the inspection of City parcels sooner. As a result, TPT Inspectors were able to assist suppression crews in the field, draft, approve and implement roadside and vegetation removal contracts and begin enforcement inspections sooner. (Inspectors in the 2013-2014 season all began in August 2013.)

There were 1,045 non-compliant properties identified and re-inspected; invoices have been created and there is a potential for the collection of approximately \$300,000 in re-inspection fees and fines.

**Recommendation #5** – *Make adjustments to the non-compliant notification and abatement Process*

#### **2014 Inspection Stats**

- 1st round inspections currently have a completion percentage of 98.90% of 21,066 residential inspections assigned. The remaining 213 inspections are data entry corrections / errors.
- 2nd round inspections are 90.4% complete. Remaining inspections are in the Shepherd Canyon area and being conducted daily as the 30-day re-inspection dates arrive.
- An aerial survey was conducted by FPB Inspectors in late August and confirmed that defensible space zones have been established throughout the WPAD area (**Attachment**).

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The combination of FPB directed vegetation management roadside clearances along major egress routes; goat grazing in City open spaces; hand crew clearing of City parcels; and, private property owners creating defensible space as a result of improved engine company inspections, has reduced hazardous fuel loads adjacent to residential properties. These efforts have improved safety and increased the suppression crew's ability to swiftly attack any fire incidents.

- Non-compliant properties are now actively being inspected (3rd round) by FPB District Inspectors. Non-compliant properties are being abated via FPB 1010 General Purpose Fund monies designated for vegetation removal on hazardous privately owned parcels. The Fire Department and Vegetation Management Unit is a full 60 days ahead of achieving its inspection and vegetation management goals when compared to the 2013 season.

In the 2013 season, field inspection forms completed by the companies were forwarded by courier service to the Fire Prevention Bureau for TPT administrative staff to enter into the records data base. This staff person did not begin entering forms until August 2013 when they were hired, which resulted in a delay of notification to non-compliant property owners and scheduling of re-inspections by suppression staff. First round inspections were not completed until mid-October and re-inspections were done in November 2013.

In 2014, FPB staff changed this process by training company officers (as noted above) to enter completed inspection forms daily at their stations. This change in procedure made inspection results immediately available, to ensure timely notification to non-compliant parcel owners and allow for immediate re-scheduling of 2<sup>nd</sup> inspections. It also provides for accurate weekly statistics of each engine company's completed and remaining inspections. These statistics are then given to both the Battalion Chiefs and the Operations Chief to ensure vegetation inspections are continually conducted by firefighters with a goal of completion of all inspections within 45 days.

First round inspections began on May 24, 2014 and were approximately 75% complete by July 7<sup>th</sup> and 95% complete by August 8, 2014. At the time this report was written (September) staff had already begun conducting 3<sup>rd</sup> round compliance inspections which were not done in 2013 until November and December.

**Recommendation #6 - *Consideration of alternative collection methods***

After conversations with the Revenue Division personnel, their only process for collection is through small claims court which Revenue Division will handle for inspection fees not paid. For

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contract work, staff must file a lien, either perspective or priority. An account currently exists with the County for filing said liens.

**COORDINATION**

Staff coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney and Budget Office in preparing this report.

**COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

The Wildfire Prevention Assessment District (WPAD) currently funds three (3) Temporary Part-Time Administrative Positions (TPT) in the Vegetation Management Unit (VMU). The annual cost of one TPT's is approximately \$45,000, fully burdened.

The City's General Purpose Fund account is responsible for the fully burdened salaries of one (1) full-time Vegetation Management Supervisor (\$170,549), one (1) full-time Vegetation Management Inspector (\$125,613), and three (3) TPT Vegetation Management Inspectors (\$28,038 per inspector).

To increase to TPT staff  $(\$28,038) \times 3 = \mathbf{\$84,114}$  to FPT an additional expenditure from the City's general fund of  $(\$97,575 \times 3 = \mathbf{\$292,725})$  would be required annually.

**SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** There are no direct economic impacts associated with this report.

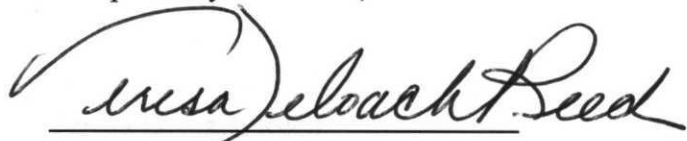
***Environmental:*** The management and enforcement strategy of the Oakland Fire Department produces considerably lesser fuel loads before the peak of the regional fire season.

***Social Equity:*** A fire safe and healthy environment benefits the entire City.

For questions concerning this report, please contact Vegetation Management Supervisor Vince Crudele , at (510) 238-7391.

Attachment: WPAD Arial Photos

Respectfully submitted,

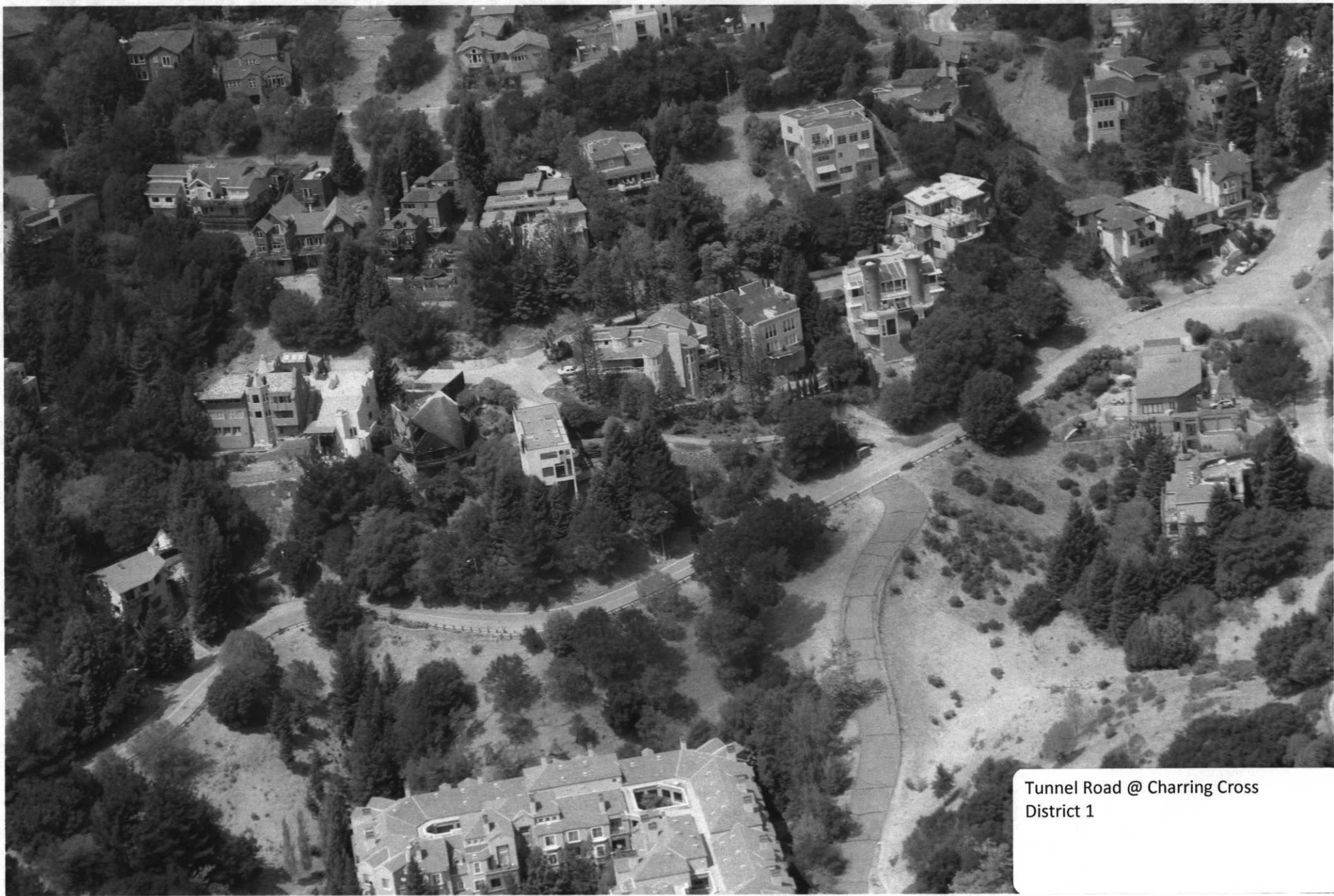


Teresa DeLoach Reed  
Fire Chief

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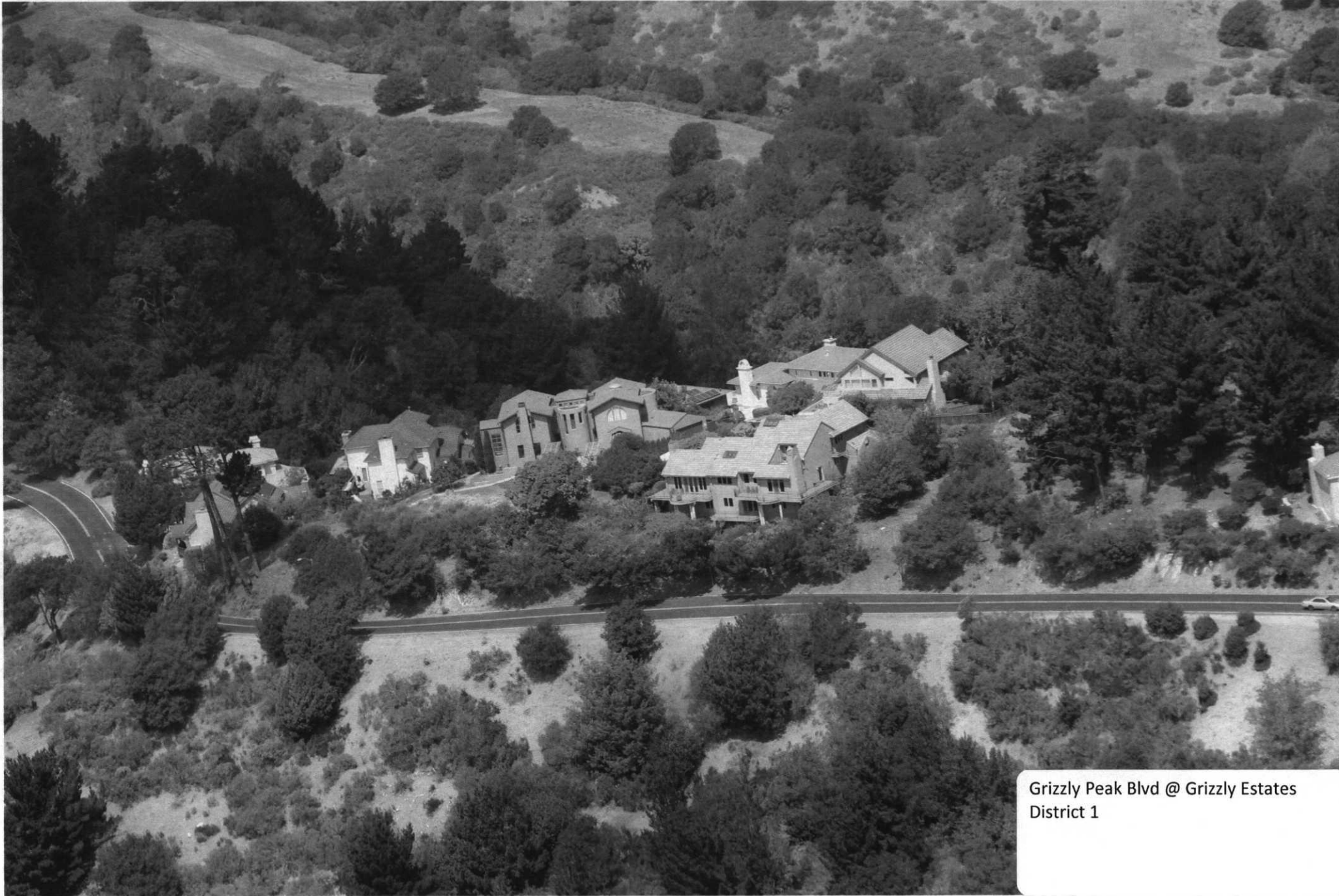


Skyline Blvd @ Old Tunnel Road  
District 1



Tunnel Road @ Charring Cross  
District 1





Grizzly Peak Blvd @ Grizzly Estates  
District 1



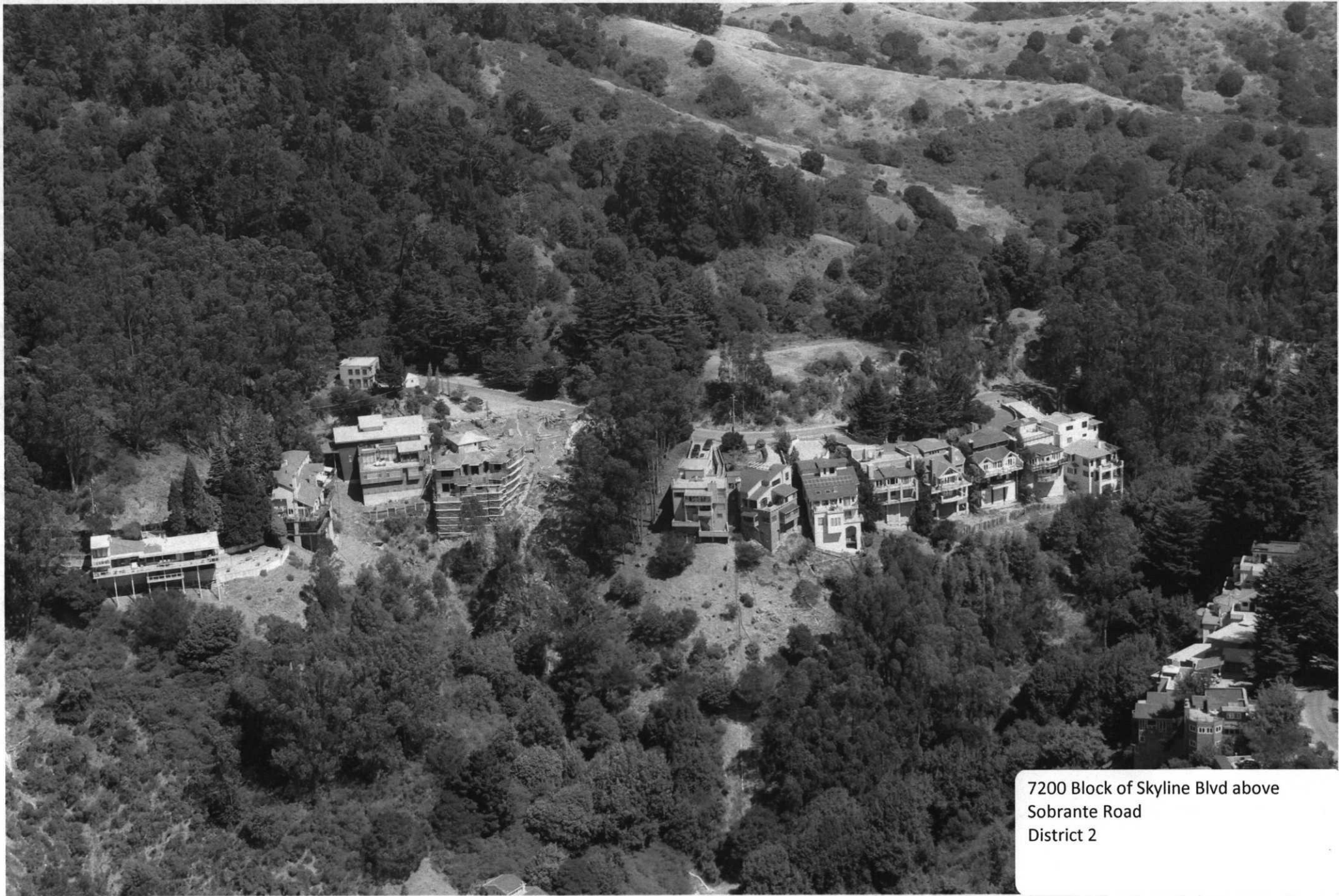


6000 Block Skyline Blvd  
District 1

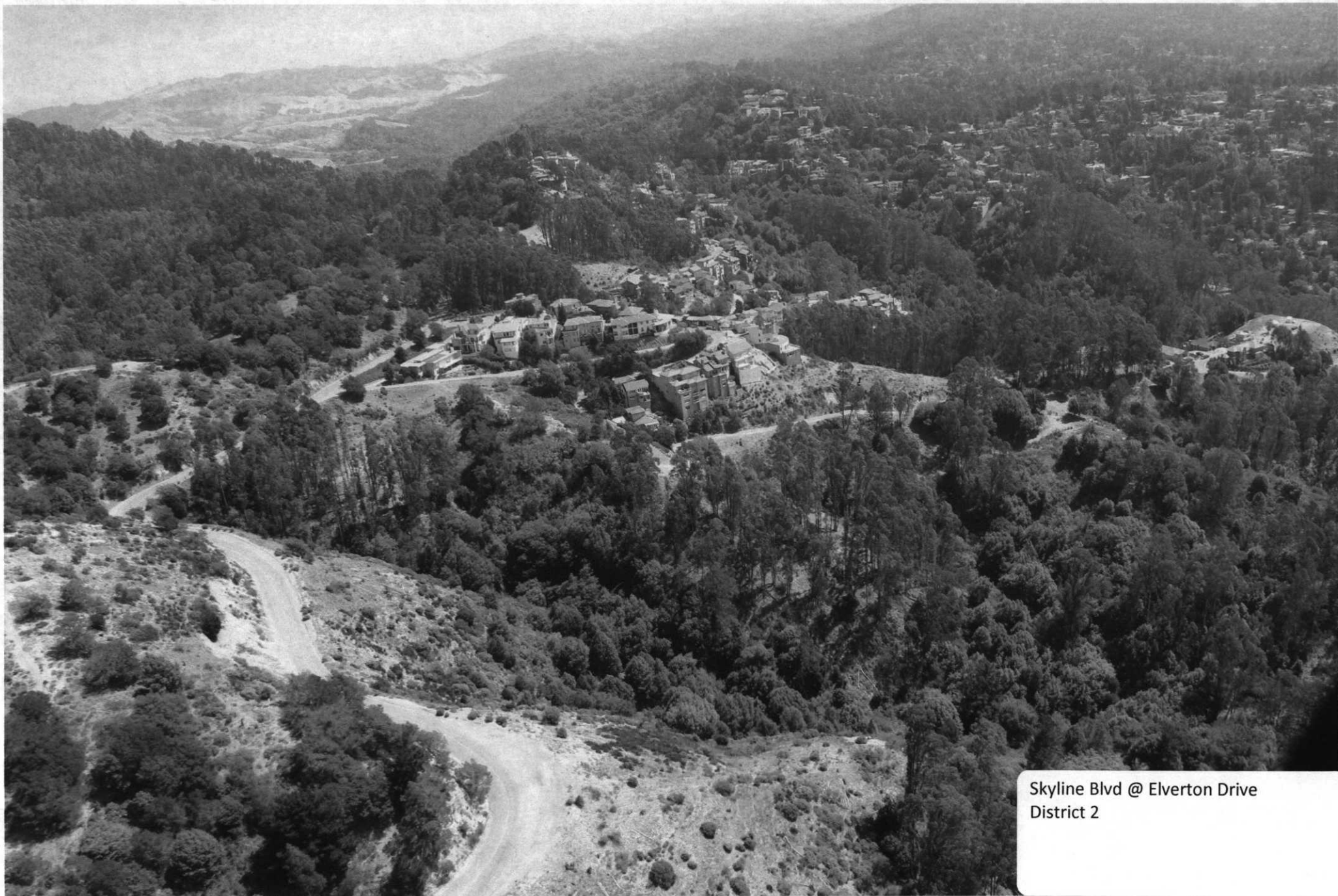


Shepherd Canyon – Ormindale Court  
District 2



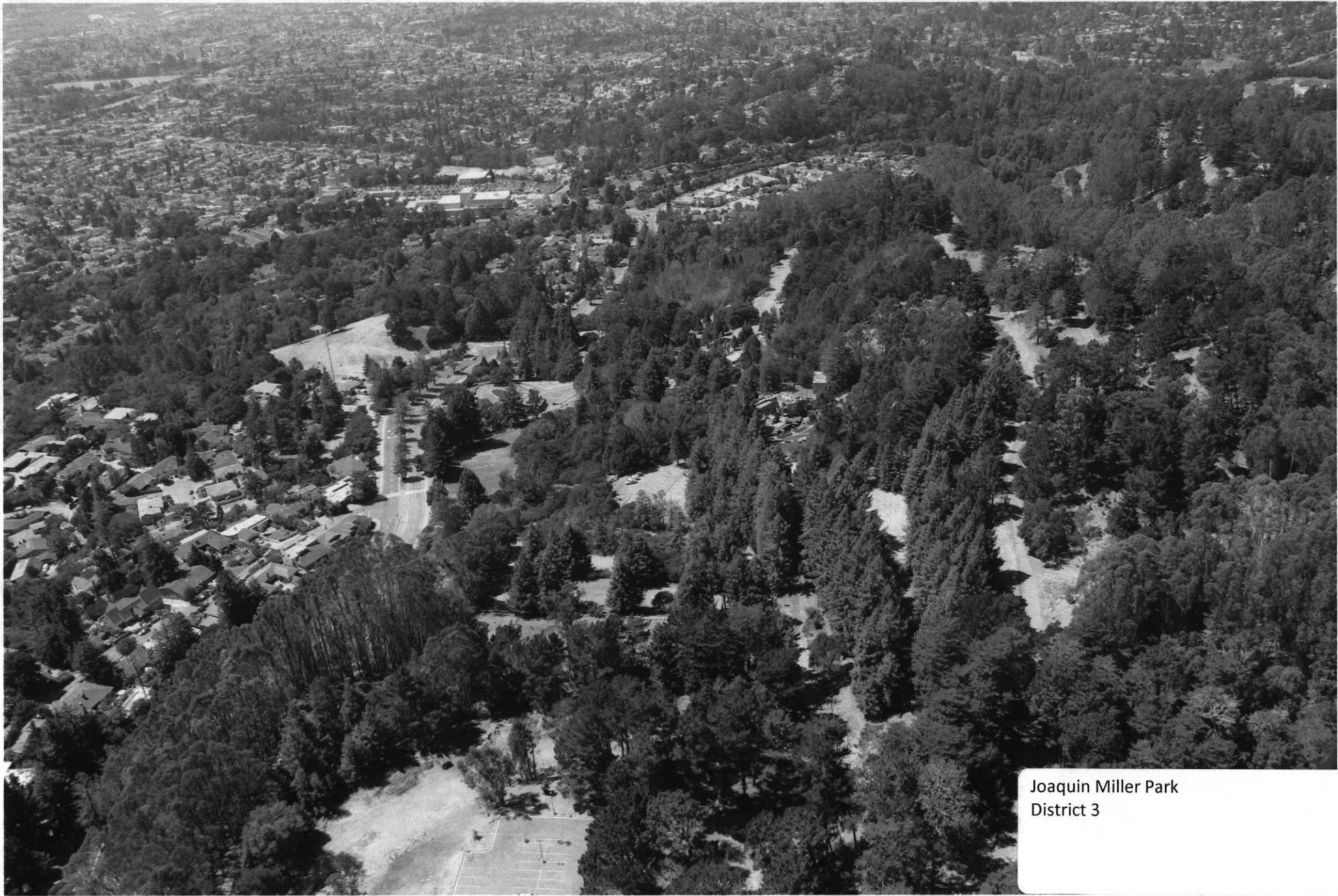


7200 Block of Skyline Blvd above  
Sobrante Road  
District 2

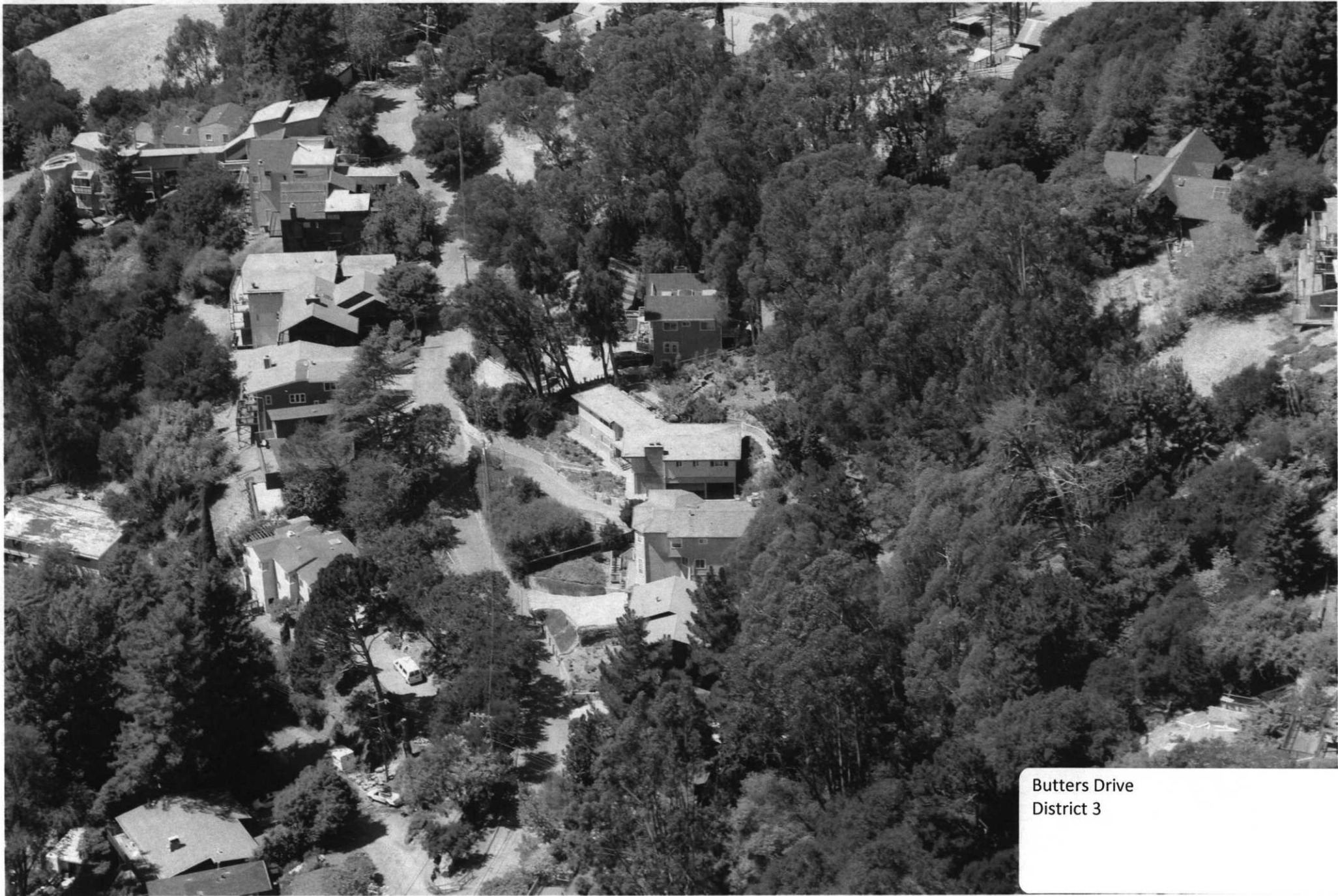


Skyline Blvd @ Elverton Drive  
District 2



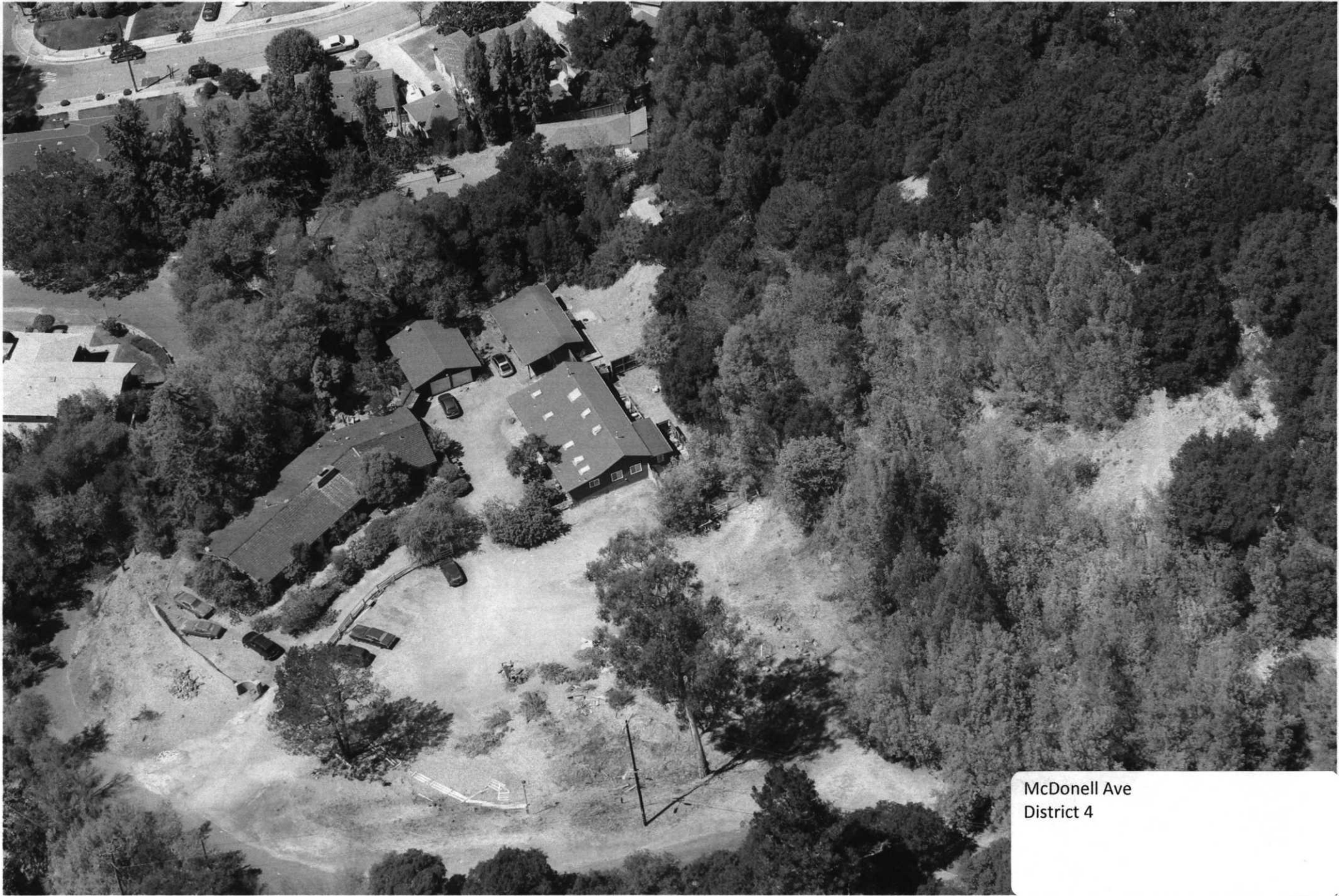


Joaquin Miller Park  
District 3



Butters Drive  
District 3





McDonnell Ave  
District 4



12000 Block Campus Drive  
District 4

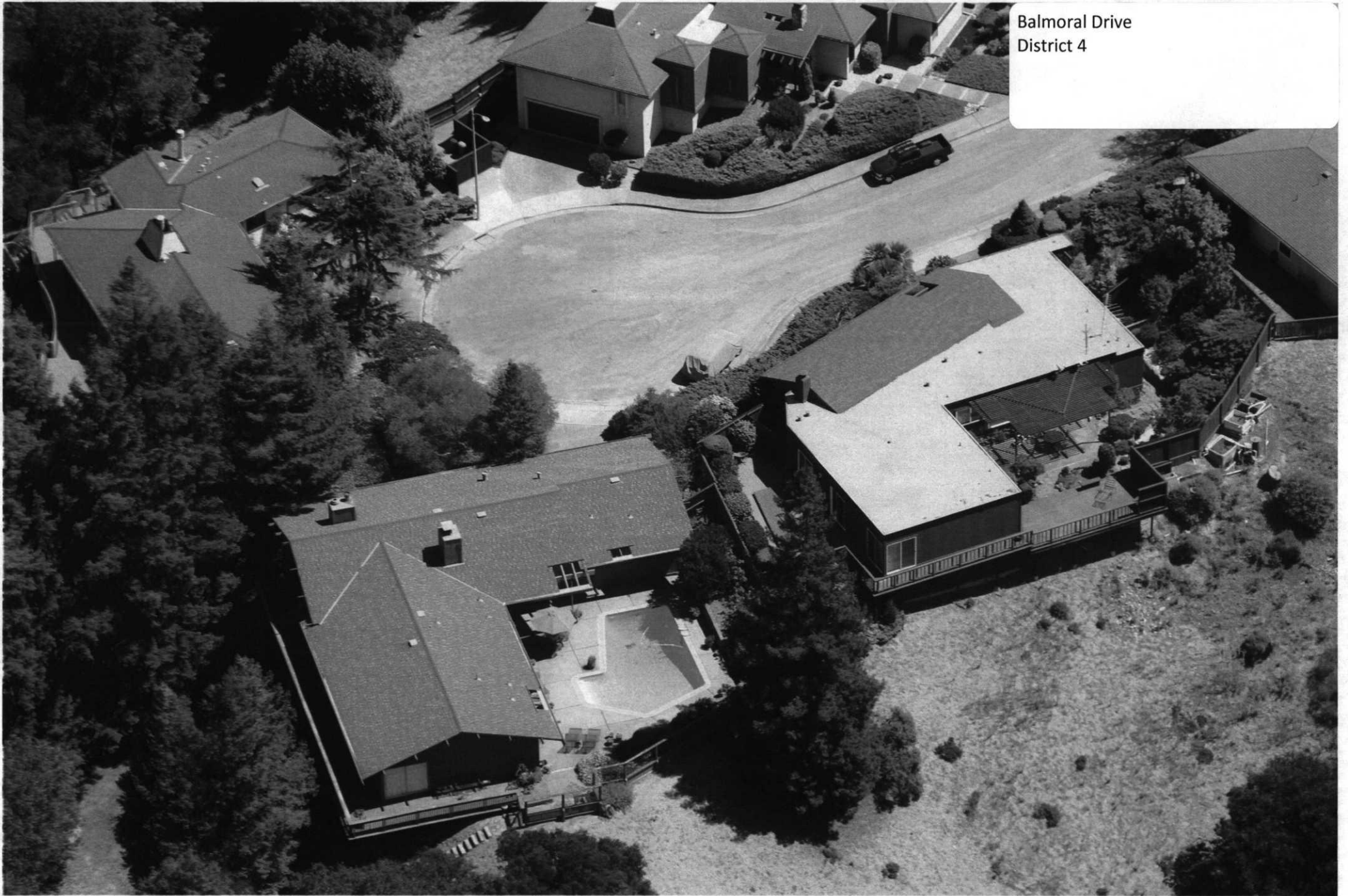




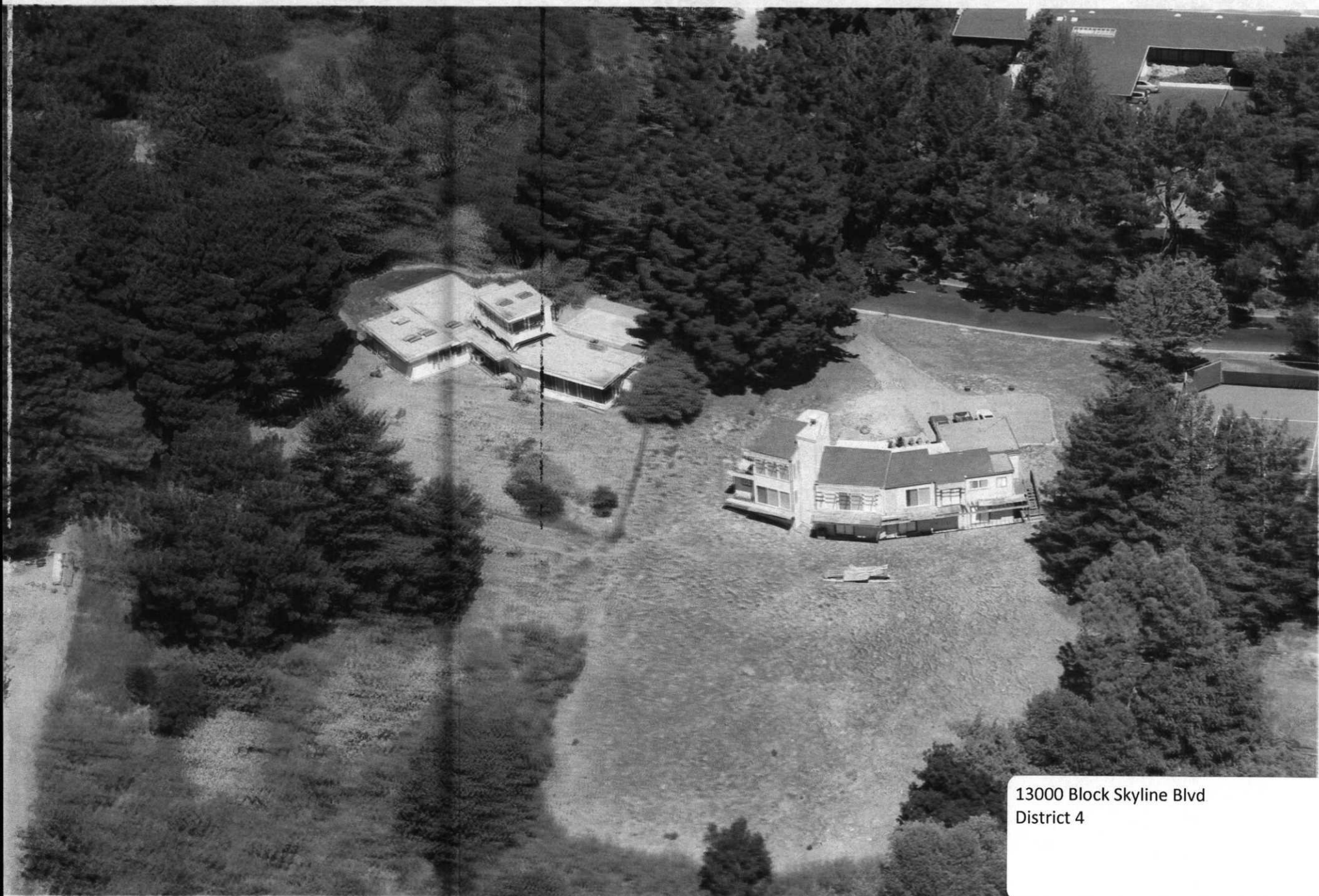
6000 Block Ridgemont Drive  
District 4



Balmoral Drive  
District 4

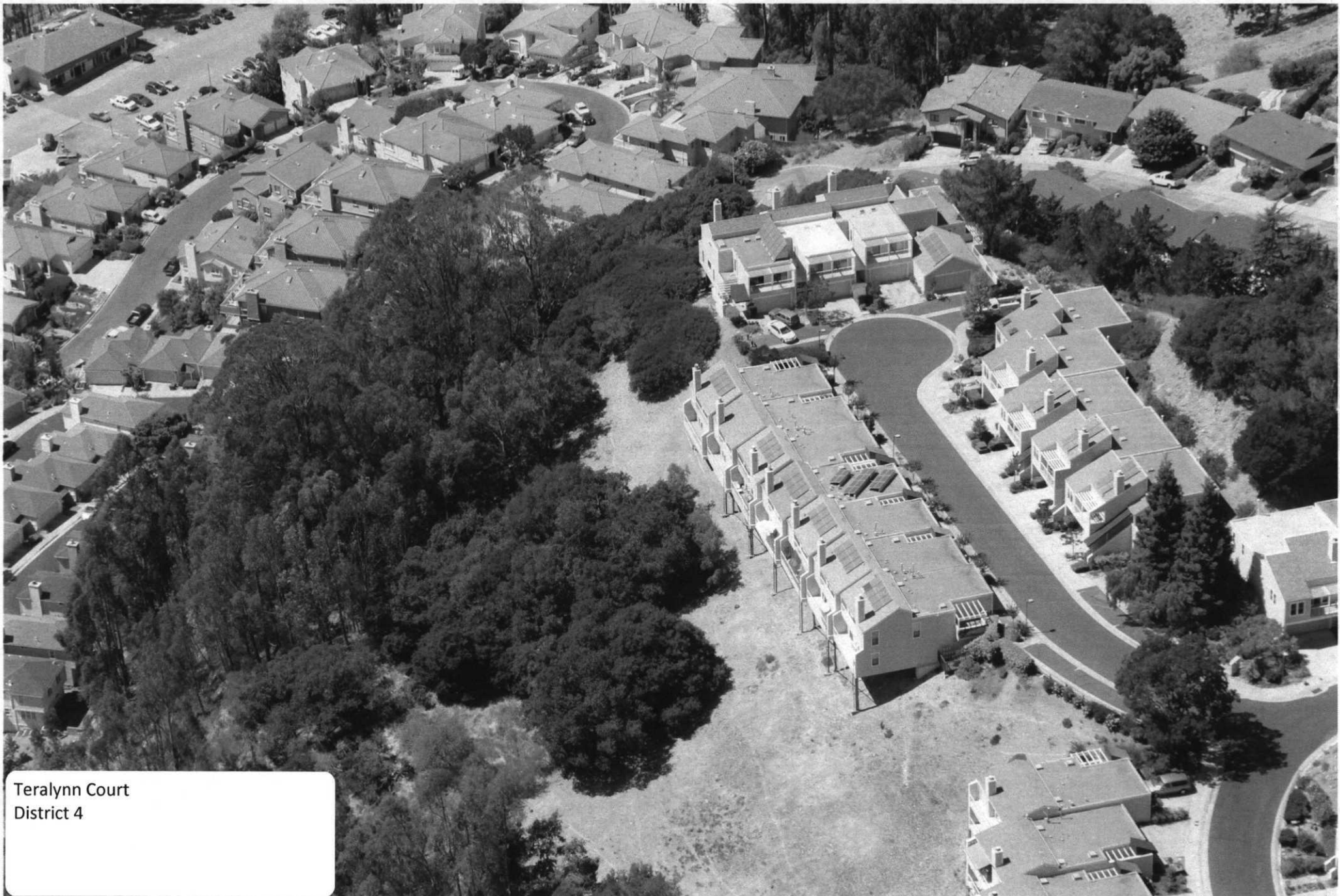






13000 Block Skyline Blvd  
District 4





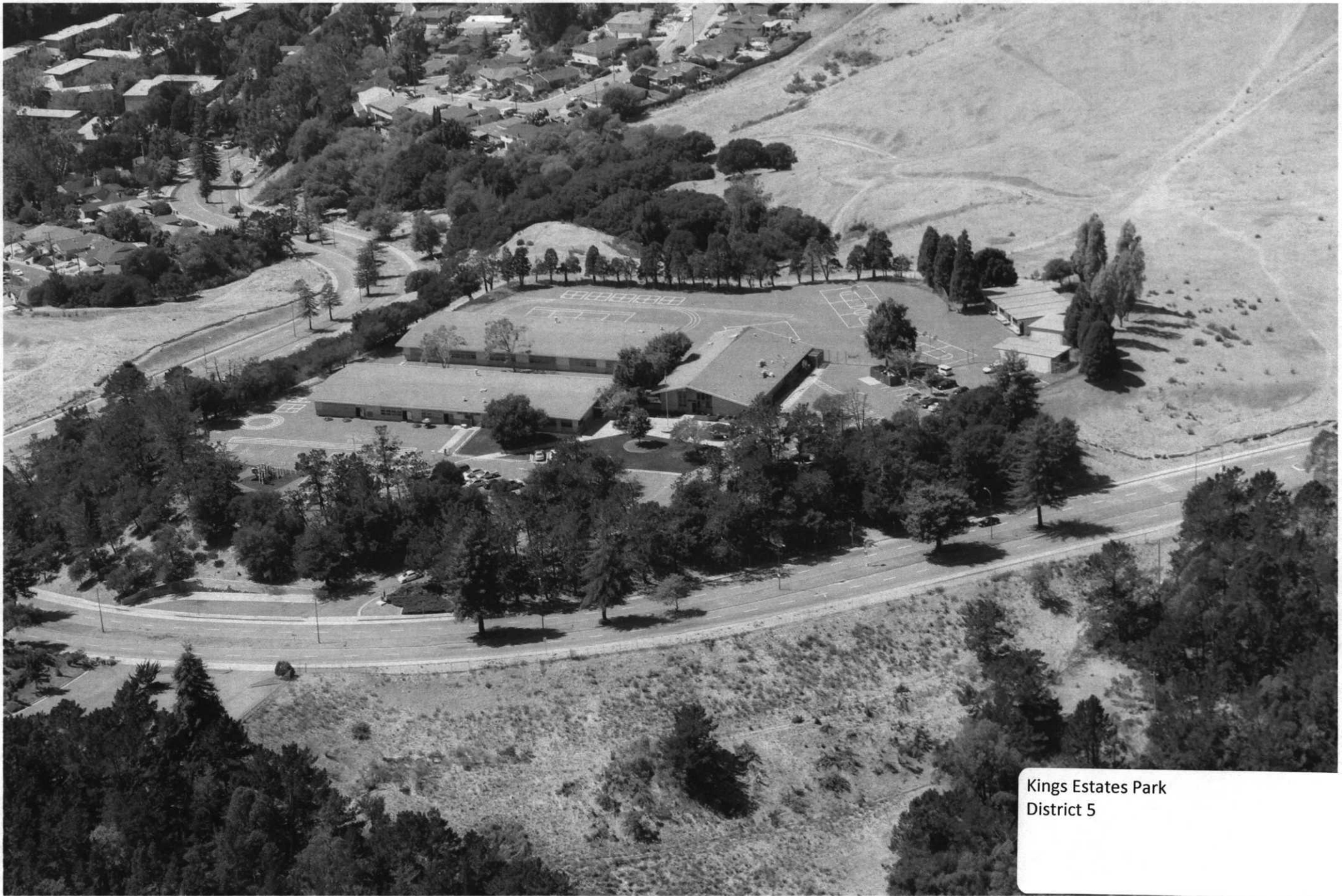
Teralynn Court  
District 4



Highway 580 @ Fontaine  
District 5







Kings Estates Park  
District 5



