



Image Credit:  
Brad Angelini

# Canterbury Lodge Apartments

214 North Thayer Street

**ARCHITECT:**  
Ted Smith, 1962

*David Lewis*

This 1962 eight-unit apartment building is yet another wonderful example of mid-century architecture in Ann Arbor. The simple design incorporates several typical modernist features: clean lines; a functionalist, rectangular geometry; an explicit circulation system; large windows; and a utilitarian massing. Given the modernist tendencies of the structure, the old-world tone of the building's name, Canterbury Lodge, comes off as somewhat ironic.

The building provides a pleasing rhythm of strong, solid brick walls interrupted by ground-to-roof painted wood and glass "infill" panels. There are also some non-original windows placed within the originally unpenetrated brick walls at the rear of the building.

The building is organized in the shape of a capital H in plan. There are two separate stairwells zoned centrally in the building, one stair in the front and one in the back. The stairwells are open to the front and rear of the building. All of the apartments open directly into one stairwell or the other; the basement flats open to both stairwells. The open hallway connecting the front and back stairs at the basement, provides access to the parking lot behind the building. A

short section of gabled skylight provides drama at the top of the front stairwell as well as protection from rain and snow while allowing daylight to pour into the well. It is also a welcome departure from the boxy massing of the building. The original design had a skylight at both front and rear stairwells—either the rear skylight was not built per the plans, or it was removed at some point.

The building is three stories plus a basement level. There are two apartment units in the basement (flats), two units on the first floor (flats), and four two-story units on the second floor (one in each corner) with internal private stairs to access the third floor. The double-floor unit is a common feature for apartment buildings without elevators, an arrangement devised so that no one needs to climb too many stairs to reach their front door. Each unit (except for the basement level) has at least one balcony that projects from the primary volume of the building. These elements articulate the front and rear facades while providing private outdoor space, an indoor-outdoor connection for the residents. In another mid-century touch, each apartment entry door is painted a bright primary color. ●