

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nob Hill Business Center

other names/site number SR 991

2. Location

street & number 3500 Central Avenue SE

N/A not for publication

city or town Albuquerque

N/A vicinity

state New Mexico

code NM

county Bernalillo

code 001

zip code 87106

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

1-22-74
Date

[Signature]
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain.) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1946-1961

Significant Dates

1946-1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hesselden, Louis G.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

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National Park Service

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Section number 7 Page 1 County and State: Bernalillo, New Mexico

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

Built in 1946-1947, the Nob Hill Business Center is a neighborhood shopping center containing twenty-one business spaces of varying size in a one-story, flat-roofed, architecturally unified building designed in the Moderne style. It is located about three miles from the city center on the southwest corner of Carlisle Boulevard, the main road leading south to Kirtland Air Force Base, and Central Avenue, formerly the city's major east-west street and a section of the cross-country Route 66. The U-shaped building opens towards the north and surrounds three sides of a parking area that is reached from Central Avenue. It is of steel-frame and concrete-block construction with white-stuccoed walls, decorative red-brick courses, bands of brown terra cotta tile, and large expanses of plate-glass display windows that are separated by narrow aluminum bars. The entrances of all the business spaces are recessed and nearly all are lined with the same large, continuous windows. The six outer corners of the building are rounded and the two inner corners of the U are bowed outwards. Two pairs of decorative towers rise over the four corners of the U. In 1984 the Nob Hill Business Center underwent rehabilitation. It has not been significantly altered and well represents its historical and architectural associations.

DESCRIPTION

Located on Albuquerque's East Mesa in the University Heights Addition, the Center occupies three sides of the perimeter of a city block bordered by Central Avenue on the north, Carlisle Boulevard on the east, Amherst Drive on the west, and Silver Avenue on the south. Across Silver is an additional parking area for the Center which is not included in this nomination. Along Central Avenue, east and west of the Center is a commercial strip of small business blocks, drive-in facilities, and gas stations. North and south of Central are residential subdivisions built primarily during the 1930s and 1940s.

The plan of the building consists of a block of business spaces which extends across the entire south end of the lot from Carlisle to Amherst. Extending north from this block are the two arms of the U which are separated from it by breezeways (floor plan and Photo 15). At the center of the block are four spaces of varying size which face north onto the parking area. At

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the rear of most of these spaces are service entrances facing Silver Avenue (Photos 9 and 10). A breezeway entering the central parking area near the southeast corner of the inside of the U provides direct access to the Center from the parking lot across Silver Avenue. A row of five spaces opens from each end of the southern block onto the side streets, Carlisle and Amherst. Two corridors entered from Silver provide service entrances to these spaces.

The two arms of the U, which extend north to Central Avenue, are of unequal size in conformity with the trapezoidal shape of the lot created by the angle at which Central Avenue passes through the subdivisions that were platted around it. Each wing today contains two spaces facing Central; all four have corner doorways. In addition, the longer west arm contains two additional spaces facing east onto the parking area. The backs of these spaces contain service entrances which open onto Amherst (Photos 1 and 6).

The Center ascends towards the south up a rising slope from Central Avenue in three broad steps which are reflected in stepped roof lines and accented by the red brick courses which continue around all sides of the building except the central portion of the rear which contains service entrances (Photos 1, 6, 7, 9, and 10). The upper band of brick consisting of four courses runs just below the white-plastered cap of the parapet wall. Below this and separated by a white-plastered section is a single course of bricks and farther below is a third band of four decorative brick courses (Photo 16). Beneath these bricks and over the windows of those spaces opening onto the inside of the U or onto Central Avenue is a band of brown terra cotta tiles.

The same tiles are repeated below the windows on all entrance facades including those facing Amherst and Carlisle, (Photos 5, 8, 13, 14). On the rear, less decorated, service facade, the brown tiles are suggested at the base of the wall by a slightly projecting band of brown concrete (Photo 10). Individual store fronts and the broader expanses of store windows on Amherst and Carlisle are divided by narrow sections of white-plastered wall which rise to the level of the first brick courses and have the effect of shallow pilasters (Photos 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, and 14). Continuous, nonretractable, curved, blue awnings placed just above the windows and nine inches out from the wall shade the spaces which face Central and the inside of the U and those at the two back corners of the building (Photos 1, 4, 5, 6, and 9).

The six outer corners of the building are rounded and each contains a store entrance; at the two inner corners of the U the entrances bow outward (Photos 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, and 16). Above the inner corners rise two, tall, Art Deco, stepped towers which are stuccoed and have long, glass-brick

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windows on four sides (Photos 4, 11, 12, and 17). Two shorter octagonal cupolas with eight roughly square windows and small lanterns on top, mark the street corners of the inside of the U (Photos 3, 5, and 15).

The interiors have high ceilings from which are suspended gas heaters and florescent lights. There are mezzanines at the rear of all the spaces facing Central or the parking area except that at the southeast inner corner (#7 on the contemporary plan), which has been divided into two spaces. The mezzanines are used for different purposes according to the business occupying the space, such as restaurant seating or storage.

The original sign for the complex is still in place centered above the row of shops at the back of the U facing the parking area with the words "Nob Hill Business Center 3500 E. Central" outlined in neon (Photos 4 and 13). The "supermarket" sign is also original (Photos 5, 12, and 14).

ALTERATIONS

Before 1984 the building underwent few alterations. At an unknown date, the original wood-framed glass doors were replaced by similarly sized doors with aluminum frames.¹ The floor plan as designed contained a total of twenty-two numbered spaces.² When the spaces were leased, one of those facing Carlisle was divided into two sharing a single entrance (#4 and #5 on the 1951 plan). At an unknown date, separate entrances were built for these two spaces (Photo 8).

Two stores were made larger by incorporating adjoining spaces with the corresponding replacement of doorways with windows matching those already existing. As originally built four small narrow spaces faced north onto the parking area flanked by two larger spaces of equal size at the inner corners of the U. (See 1951 plan.) In the 1950s the supermarket, which occupied the west corner, absorbed two of the smaller spaces to the east. The two doors of these spaces were replaced with windows, creating the largest retail space in the complex (#10, #11, and #12 on the contemporary floor plan). By 1960 Stromberg's, the clothing store originally occupying space #21 (1951 map), absorbed the adjacent store fronts on the west (#22) and on the south (#20). The entrances of these spaces, which faced Central and the parking area, were replaced with windows, (Photo 14).

1. Davis, "Nob Hill Business Center" (1983): 7:2.

2. Hesselden, Nob Hill Business Center. Floor Plan. January 30, 1946.

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In 1984 the Center, which had been allowed to deteriorate after its sale by the original owners, underwent a complete rehabilitation. The most pressing needs were a new roof and repairs to the electrical and mechanical systems. In addition, walls were patched and restored, broken terra cotta tiles repaired, and the supermarket sign fixed. The towers were restored and relamped. Few changes were made to the floor plan. One of the spaces (now #19), which had been absorbed by Stromberg's was separated again and the outside door onto the parking area restored. To provide access to the parking lot across Silver Avenue, a breezeway was created near the southeast inner corner reducing the size of corner space (now #7), which has more recently been divided in two with the consequent loss of the mezzanine. A new door from the parking area into space #20a was added by the present tenant, Scalo Northern Italian Grill.

The major decorative addition was a total of 850 linear feet of blue awnings installed over most store windows and doors. The shallow curve, which prevents water pooling, was created with bent tubes and specially cut fabrics. The awnings are secured above the store windows at the top of the brown tiles (where present) by³ specially designed steel anchors drilled into the joints between the tiles.

In the parking lot, a low wall capped with brick was added at the northwest corner to define an area for outdoor restaurant dining (Photo 5). Trees were planted around the central U and along the streets at the south (front) and east sides and to a much lesser degree along the west and south (rear) facades.

Because of increased rents necessitated by the rehabilitation, there was a complete turnover in tenancy and hence new signs except for that of the Center itself and the "supermarket" sign. Restaurants, specialty shops, and specialty services have replaced the more utilitarian stores, services, and professional offices that had previously occupied the building.

3. Mac Pherson, "Awning Installation" (1985): 7, 9.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

Conceived in 1945 and begun in 1946, the Nob Hill Business Center was Albuquerque's first shopping center and is one of the best preserved examples of its type nationally from the early postwar period. The Center represents the first attempt in Albuquerque to provide in one architecturally unified building under a single management spaces for separately owned businesses, with an on-site parking area that is an integral feature of the design of the complex and a mix of tenants intended to serve the immediate needs of the residents of outlying subdivisions. As such it was the first major step in the abandonment of the downtown that had been Albuquerque's railroad-era commercial center, and presaged the vast spread of shopping centers and office complexes which characterize the setting of Albuquerque business and professional activity today. More broadly, Nob Hill represents the post-war shopping center, which was a major force in shaping the growth of cities, especially in the West. Architecturally, it is an early example of a new form which was codified only in the 1950s, the shopping center, and is an unusual, relatively unaltered example of Moderne design in Albuquerque.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

History of the Shopping Center

The "shopping center," broadly defined as a centralized area where goods are exchanged and services provided, has long been an essential feature of the city. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially after the railroad and before the advent of the automobile, such centers were organized compactly around a main street and characterized by rows of store fronts placed near the street line often filling the whole lot or block. When two storied, these buildings typically contained retail space on the first floor and offices on the second. Because they were individually erected and independently owned, their architectural styles and the mix of specific businesses were unplanned and uncoordinated.

Unique to the twentieth century is the planned shopping center, which was made both possible and necessary by the automobile. This is more narrowly defined as "a group of commercial establishments planned, developed, and operated under a single ownership as a single unit, with off-street parking provided and related in location, size and type of store to the trade area it

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served."¹ In addition, these complexes were located at some distance from the city center at the edges of development and were either a single building or an architecturally related group of buildings. Three classes have been distinguished by size, type of business, and range of clientele: the neighborhood, community, and the regional shopping center. The neighborhood center, the category in which Nob Hill falls, consists of eight to twenty units, with a market and a drugstore as the principal tenants and other shops planned to meet the everyday needs of from three thousand to fifteen thousand shoppers who live nearby or pass frequently.²

As a result of the mass-produced car, introduced in 1913, cities began to decentralize in the 1920s, a process which continued in the 1930s and accelerated rapidly after World War II. For the first time automobiles provided large numbers of people with fast, flexible personal transportation, combining, as Liebs has noted, the speed and comfort of the train with the option³ to depart and stop at will afforded by transportation based on the horse.³ The automobile allowed people to live at some distance from their work places; as concentrations of population shifted from the center of the city so eventually did retailing.

In the 1920s a comprehensive program of road building was undertaken creating a national network of primary, hard-surfaced, two-lane highways which brought traffic through the middle of towns along the way. Road-side businesses supplying the needs of motorists sprang up at the edges of the towns through which they ran, such as cafes, gas stations, and motor courts, designed to provide drive-in access, as well as auto dealerships and repair shops.

At the same time, increased traffic created congestion in densely built central business districts that had not been designed for automobiles. An Atlanta merchant summed up the effect on Main Street in 1926, "Traffic got so congested that the only hope was to keep it going. Hundreds used to stop; now thousands pass."⁴ In response local downtown businesses as well as chain stores established branches in outlying areas. In the 1920s commercial strips were created with stores for the most part aligned along the street front with

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1. Wilkes, Encyclopedia of Architecture (1989): 406.
 2. Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center" (1992): 6. These categories were first defined in the 1950s and vary somewhat according to source.
 3. Liebs, Mainstreet to Miracle Mile (1985): 3-4
 4. Quoted by Liebs (1985): 9-10.

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parking at the rear. This arrangement shared with downtown the lack of coordination in the selection and placement of individual businesses and had the disadvantage of requiring many stops.

A partial precedent for the neighborhood shopping center, that is a planned group of stores designed to meet the needs of a particular community, is to be found in complexes built as part of up-scale housing developments such as the small, six-store, Park-Shop Center opened in 1907 at Roland Park, a residential development built near Baltimore in the 1890s. In the 1920s other small centers appeared as part of planned communities. A much larger example was the Country Club Plaza (1923) in Kansas City which contained over 100 retail stores and other services as part of a 5000 acre residential community.

Richard Longstreth, who has researched the history of the modern shopping center, has found a precedent for the form of a drive-in configuration of a group of businesses in the drive-in markets developed in southern California in the mid-1920s. Consisting of independently run businesses, each offering a different food product, in a coordinated complex, they provided a successful model of one-stop shopping and were, according to Longstreth, the first retail facilities not devoted specifically to the car (such as gas stations) to have their form and space determined by the convenience of the driver.

Longstreth has identified the Park and Shop, an L-shaped complex built around two sides of a large parking area in Washington, D.C. in 1930, as an early prototype for the neighborhood center. Its configuration, determined by the needs of the motorist, size, and range of tenants became a model for other centers in the Washington, D.C. area and beyond. Twenty-five drive-in neighborhood centers were constructed in the Washington area between 1935 and 1941 and a few in other parts of the country.

Construction came to a halt during World War II when restrictions were placed on non war-related building. After the War accumulated demand for housing combined with a burgeoning population and increased levels of income produced enormous demand and a boom in speculative building. Most new development was by large-scale developers on tracts in outlying areas, leading

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5. Wilkes (1989): 407.
 6. Longstreth (1992): 14-15.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Longstreth (1992): 17; 31.

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to a vast population shift to the suburbs. It has been estimated that, while in 1929 60 percent of the population lived either on farms or in big cities, by 1955 60 percent lived in the suburbs and small towns.

An increase in automobile ownership (by 1945 90 percent of people in the United States traveled by car¹⁰) made suburban living possible and also exacerbated downtown traffic problems. Retailing followed housing to the outlying subdivisions and the planned neighborhood shopping center became the means for bringing a coordinated range of goods and services to instant new neighborhoods in configurations that would overcome the inconveniences of older downtown shopping districts. By the early 1950s shopping centers had appeared throughout the country. It is estimated that from 1945 to 1960 approximately 10,000 new centers were built in communities west of the Mississippi River.¹¹

As suburban areas grew so did the business centers which served them. From the neighborhood shopping center developed the community and then the regional center, ever larger complexes offering more choice and a greater range of services, which eventually eclipsed their more limited predecessors. In the 1950s large regional centers emerged as an equivalent to downtown supplying a wide range of goods, services, and even entertainment. The smaller centers that had led the way often could not compete and went into decline.

History of Albuquerque

By far New Mexico's most populous city and the largest in area, Albuquerque is located in the Middle Valley of the Rio Grande, the state's largest river. Terraces, the remnants of ancient floodplains, ascend from the river valley toward the east and west, and are known as the East and West Mesas. The East Mesa, also called the Heights, extends to the foot of the Sandia Mountains.

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9. Stedman, "The Rise of Shopping Centers" (1955): 11
 10. Wilkes (1989): 411.
 11. Simmons, Albuquerque (1982): 372.

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A Spanish settlement, named for the Duke of Alburquerque, the Viceroy of New Spain, was established around a plaza on the east side of the valley in 1706. The town remained centered around the plaza for the next nearly 175 years. By 1880, the year the railroad reached Albuquerque, the city's population was 2,325.

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway passed a little more than a mile east of the town plaza. New Albuquerque was platted in a typical grid pattern adjacent to the depot and rail yards. Streets parallel to Railroad Avenue (Central after 1907), the principal street running east and west, were given the names of minerals, Copper, Gold, Silver, Lead, and Coal. Those running north and south, parallel to and west of the tracks were numbered First through Sixteenth. A wide thoroughfare east of the tracks was called Broadway and four parallel streets were marked off further east named Arno, Edith, Walter, and High. Incorporated as a town in 1885 and redesignated a city in 1892, Albuquerque thrived as a railroad town. Its AT&SF shops were claimed to be the largest west of the Mississippi and most citizens¹² depended on the railroad for their livelihood either directly or indirectly. In 1892 the first building of the University of New Mexico (founded in 1889) was completed north of Central Avenue far up on the East Mesa, well beyond the limits of the town and just west of the future Nob Hill area. The original Spanish settlement, which became known as "Old Town," was not annexed to the city until 1949.

The population grew steadily through the remainder of the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Around 1900, the warm dry climate began to draw lung patients and soon tuberculosis was second only to the railroad as a source of income. The population which had grown to 3,785 by 1890, nearly doubled to 6,238 in¹³ 1900 for the first time surpassing that of the Territorial capital, Santa Fe. The town spread slowly eastward out Central. In 1906 University Heights, a residential subdivision, was platted west of Girard Boulevard on the south side of Central, across from the University of New Mexico, and just west of the area that would later be known as Nob Hill. By 1930 the city's population had increased to 26,570 and ten years later reached 35,449. In 1937 Central Avenue was designated Route 66, in a realignment of the road which changed the direction of this major route through Albuquerque from north-south to east-west and helped to strengthen the pull of businesses toward the eastern edge of town.

12. Simmons (1982): 275.

13. Luckingham, The Urban Southwest (1982): 29.

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World War II and the subsequent weapons development prompted by the Cold War led to the remarkable postwar expansion of Albuquerque and the accelerated movement of population out on the East Mesa. Established during the war at the southern edge of the city, Kirtland Air Force Base at the south end of Carlisle Boulevard and Sandia Base to the east became centers for postwar weapons development. Kirtland was the headquarters of the Air Force Special Weapons Center and the Navy's Special Weapons Facility. The Sandia Corporation, a laboratory set up at Sandia Base as a prime contractor to the Atomic Energy Commission for research and development in the ordinance phases of atomic weapons, was soon the largest private employer in the state. These military weapons facilities, in turn, spawned supporting industries such as electronics. The federal government also established regional offices for numerous agencies in Albuquerque giving the city the nickname, "Little Washington,"¹⁴ and by the mid-1950s had replaced the declining railroad as the leading contributor to the economy. In 1957 Kirtland Air Force Base and the Sandia Base, including the Sandia Corporation, employed approximately 30 percent of the city's labor force.¹⁵ By 1950 the population had more than doubled from the previous national census to 95,815 and ten years later doubled again to 201,189.¹⁶

After the War, with the loosening of wartime building restrictions, Albuquerque experienced a building boom unprecedented in the city's history, fueled first by pent-up need and then by the rapid increase in population resulting from federal expenditures. In the first six months of 1946, 400 new firms entered into business and a total of 154 business buildings were completed or under way.¹⁷ Building permits issued for the first four and a half months of 1946 totaled about 2.6 million compared with about 2.8 million for all of the previous year.¹⁸ Subdivisions sprang up so quickly that the Saturday Evening Post was prompted to remark in 1950, "New houses go up in batches of 50 to 300 at a time and transform barren mesas before you get back from lunch."¹⁹ The area of the city also grew dramatically through annexation. Comprising 11 square miles in 1945, five years later the city²⁰ limits encompassed 49. By 1973 the boundaries enclosed 82.2 square miles.

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14. Rabinowitz, "Growth Trends in the Albuquerque SMSA, 1940-1978" (1979): 63.
 15. Wood, "The Transformation of Albuquerque, 1945-1972," (1980): 97-98.
 16. Luckingham (1982): 86.
 17. Albuquerque Progress (August 1946): 3.
 18. Ibid. (June 1946): 2.
 19. Quoted by Simmons (1982): 372.
 20. Rabinowitz (1979): 65.

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In 1946 the business life of Albuquerque was still strongly concentrated in the six block area west of the railroad bordered by Silver Avenue on the south and Tijeras on the north, with Central Avenue running through the middle. Here were located 24 of 25 office buildings in the city, 2 of 3 banks, 11 of 13 department stores, 7 of 9 other dry goods stores, and so on. In addition 62 out of 64 lawyers, 28 of 32 dentists, and 48 of 62 physicians had their offices here. Travel-related businesses had sprung up on Central at the outskirts of town. Foreshadowing future development, there was a small cluster of businesses and offices located east of the university, near the intersection of Central Avenue with Richmond Drive just within the west border of the Nob Hill area.²¹

In the postwar years population spread out over the East Mesa on either side of Central Avenue. In 1945 Robert B. Waggoman, a real estate developer, in partnership with the Stromberg brothers, proprietors of a leading downtown clothing store, formulated plans for Albuquerque's first shopping center to be located out on Central in the area called Nob Hill - the Nob Hill Business Center. Businesses proliferated along Central Avenue near far-flung subdivisions. Following the lead of Waggoman and Stromberg, builders began to include shopping centers in new housing developments. For example in 1949, a ten-store development was established in the Bel-air subdivision and in 1951 a 450-foot-long building was erected to serve the Hoffmantown community.²² The importance of downtown as a shopping area diminished correspondingly and was eventually supplanted altogether.

Albuquerque's shopping centers grew ever larger evolving into huge enclosed regional malls surrounded by vast parking lots and anchored by major retailers. The first of these was Winrock Center, built in 1961 followed by the Coronado Center in 1963. Access to these shopping areas from greater distances throughout the city and region was facilitated by the construction in the 1960s the Interstate Highways 25 and 40, the latter replacing Route 66. These major north-south and east-west routes across the state, which cross in Albuquerque, also served as expressways for local traffic. The smaller neighborhood shopping centers were supplanted by the new "downtowns" created by the regional malls; Central Avenue lost its primacy as the principal route through the city and as the location of major shopping outlets.

21. Statistics compiled from the Albuquerque City Directory, 1945-46 by Wood, (1980): 75.

22. Wood (1980): 176.

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Early Development in the Nob Hill Area

Located on the East Mesa, Nob Hill is a residential area of platted additions which extend both north and south of the narrow commercial strip along Central Avenue, formerly Route 66, within a rough square bordered by Lomas Boulevard on the north, Garfield Avenue and Zuni Road on the south, Washington Street on the east, and Girard Boulevard on the west. Carlisle Boulevard runs south through the approximate middle of the neighborhood to Kirtland Air Force Base located at the southern edge of the city.

The first subdivision in Nob Hill was an extension of the University Heights Addition platted east of Girard Boulevard in 1916 by Colonel D. K. B. Sellers and M. Ferguson. Sellers, who served a term as mayor, was a leading promoter of suburban additions during the first three decades of the century. He is credited with naming the Nob Hill neighborhood, having been reminded, it is said, of the Nob Hill district in San Francisco, by the steep incline up Carlisle south of Central, and finding this a name worthy of "the coming aristocratic section of Albuquerque, N. M." Next Granada Heights was platted in 1925, and the following year the Monte Vista, the College View, and Mankato Additions. The Mesa Grande Addition was platted in 1931 and the Broadmoor in 1945.²³

Although a substantial portion of the neighborhood was subdivided much earlier, Nob Hill grew dramatically with the influx of population brought by government activities after the War, particularly the military bases reached via Carlisle. Development on Central where it traverses Nob Hill (that is, between Girard and Washington) increased markedly after 1937, when Central was incorporated into Route 66, and after the War increased even more dramatically.

According to the listings in the Albuquerque City Directories, in 1930 there were just six addresses on Central within Nob Hill extending as far east as Morningside Drive: two shops, one service station, two private homes, and one vacant building. The number grew slowly and continued to be a mixture of homes and businesses with the addition of facilities for the traveling public. In 1933 the first auto court appeared; three years later there were three such establishments. The fourteen businesses on this stretch of Central in 1937 included three service stations, five facilities for overnight stays, a fire station, a cleaners, two groceries, and two private homes.

23. Szoka, Nob Hill Study (1985): 12.

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Two years later, in 1939, there were forty-four addresses, again with a mixture of businesses oriented toward the neighborhood and those for travelers: in the first category, a beauty salon, barber shop, bicycle shop, theater, two grocery stores, and various professional offices such as a dentist, osteopath, and more than one realtor; and in the second, five service stations, four auto courts, and an inn. In 1947, when the Nob Hill Business Center opened there were over 102 addresses on Central within the Nob Hill area.

HISTORY OF THE NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER

By his own account, Robert B. Waggoman²⁴ conceived the idea for a business center right after V-J day. He forecasted correctly that with the lifting of wartime building restrictions, there would be rapid expansion in the development of business and residential property and a strong demand for business locations in the Heights. The original plan for the project, to be financed by Waggoman and the Stromberg brothers, Jack and Bernard, was formulated in 1945 and announced in September of that year with construction to begin as soon as restrictions were lifted. Plans were drawn in January by the architect Louis G. Hesselden, and the following March Waggoman and Jack Stromberg applied for a building permit for a \$200,000 shopping center. By fall ground was broken and the Center was completed the following spring (1947).²⁵

The complex, which occupied a whole city block, was originally designed to accommodate a total of twenty-two spaces. As originally planned, five retail spaces opened onto Central Avenue, two at the end of the east arm of the U and three at the end of the west arm; two additional stores faced east onto the parking area from the west arm, and six from the top of the U. At the south end of the building, four spaces faced Carlisle, the side street on

24. Waggoman's name first appears in the Albuquerque City Directory in 1924. In the mid-1920's he was the business manager of the New Mexico State Tribune and later served as vice-president as well. He apparently left Albuquerque for a few years in the 1930s but reappears in the City Directory in 1937 as a real estate salesman and in 1939 as the manager of the Real Estate department of the Rio Grande Agency. Waggoman died in about 1970.

25. The Albuquerque Tribune (September 20, 1945). Albuquerque Progress (May 1946): 14; (October 1946): 10; (April 1947): 11. Albuquerque Journal (March 6, 1946).

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the east, and five Amherst on the west.²⁶ All of the spaces facing Central or the parking area had mezzanines. Rents were based on a percentage of sales, another²⁷ innovation for Albuquerque, although a more common arrangement in the East.²⁸ Parking for thirty cars was provided on the premises in addition to the spaces on the four surrounding streets. Waggoman's building was designed to offer a neighborhood alternative to the ever more congested downtown by bringing together in close proximity a significant number of businesses and offices and providing on-site parking.

The Nob Hill Center was in both scale and style by far the most ambitious private building project of its time and the largest commercial construction project in Albuquerque since the completion of the Hilton Hotel in 1938. As evidenced by Albuquerque Progress (a publication of the Albuquerque National Bank that reported on building and business activity in the city featuring photographs of new construction and lists of building permits) the next largest project then under construction was a store building with four-units strung out along the street line.

The Center was also by far the most architecturally distinguished; other contemporary business buildings were generally boxy, utilitarian structures. In contrast, Hesselden's design employs modernistic rounded outside corners which are echoed in the outwardly bowed store entrances at the inner corners of the U. The horizontal emphasis of the style is enhanced by a projecting parapet cap, brick courses, and bands of brown tile. The tall, angular, stepped towers at the inner corners, are suggestive of the Art Deco.

Slow to be accepted and not fully rented for several years, the Center was first dubbed "Waggoman's Folly." According to Waggoman, after an article with a drawing of the proposed building appeared in the newspaper, 50 prospective tenants expressed interest. However, none of the 50 actually took space and the Center initially lacked the grocery and drug stores necessary to attract other businesses. The 1947 City Directory lists as tenants only the Stromberg clothing store, a beauty salon, two laundries, and Waggoman's realty office. The turning point came when Cliff Rhodes came from Roy, New Mexico and rented the grocery unit. Once his store opened in September of 1947, other businesses followed. The Center became so successful that additional

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26. Hesselden. Nob Hill Business Center. Floor Plan. January 30, 1946.
27. Albuquerque Journal (March 2, 1952).
28. The Albuquerque Tribune (September 20, 1945).

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parking was acquired at the back of the building across Silver Street.²⁹ In 1951 it was one of the centers described in Baker and Funaro's book on shopping centers.³⁰

By 1949 the Center was occupied nearly to capacity. The early stores represented a range of goods and services directed at the daily needs of the surrounding community. Businesses in the spaces facing Central and the on-site parking area included a grocery store, a drug store, Stromberg men's store, a women's specialty shop, a children's department store, a Ben Franklin 5 and 10 cent store, a shoe store, book store, stationary store, paint store, gift shop, and a bakery. At the side of the building facing Amherst, there were the beauty salon, a dressmaker, and the offices of a dentist, realty company, and an oil company; facing Carlisle there were a laundry, a barber, an accountant's office and the Waggoman Company. In another year a shoe repair shop would be added.³¹

The Center remained stable for many years with a number of long-term tenants. In the 1950s two stores needed more space: the grocery in the southwest inner corner of the U expanded into the two spaces on the east facing the parking lot; Stromberg's, which initially occupied the space at the northeast corner of the west arm of the U, eventually expanded into the spaces directly to the south and west of the original store.

However, just as Nob Hill and other neighborhood centers had drawn businesses away from the downtown shopping area, so ever larger shopping centers eventually rendered Nob Hill obsolete. In 1961 the Strombergs opened a store in Winrock Center. In the mid 1970s they closed both the Nob Hill branch and their original downtown store and opened an anchor store (since closed) at the newly built Montgomery Plaza.³² The Nob Hill Center, which was sold by the original owners, went into a period of decline in the 1970s.

A group of investors led by Jack Pickel purchased the Center in 1983. Rents were raised to pay the costs of rehabilitation and most of the tenants vacated. The project, designed by architect Van Gilbert, was completed in January of 1985 with Klinger Constructors, Inc. in charge of construction. Few substantive changes were made to the building. A breezeway was added extending through the building from the parking lot to Silver Street. A door

29. Albuquerque Journal (March 2, 1952).

30. Baker and Funaro, Shopping Centers Design and Operation (1951): 126-127

31. Albuquerque City Directory, 1949, 1950.

32. Gretchen Stromberg interview.

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was restored on the west facade facing the parking lot and another door added just to the north for the convenience of the tenant. On the interior all spaces have retained their original mezzanines except that on the southeast inner corner of the U (present #7), which has been divided into two spaces. Unobtrusive, custom-designed, blue awnings were added to provide shade and weather protection. Special anchoring techniques were used to allow daylight into the building through the windows as well as to preserve the unique brown tiling on the facade.³³

Today the Center contains two restaurants and an ice cream and coffee shop together with a mix of specialty shops and services, including a coop supermarket and an herb store; a book store, import shop, video rental, hair salon, tanning salon, framing shop, two women's clothing boutiques, and a western wear shop. The only office is that of the Albuquerque branch of the American Institute of Architects.

According to the present owner, the Center has taken a number of years to stabilize. It has now become the catalyst for the revitalization of this section of Central Avenue which has maintained most of flavor of the older street development with businesses on or near the street line rather than set back behind broad expanses of parking lots. This encourages walking from the nearby neighborhoods and Nob Hill remains one of few walking neighborhoods in Albuquerque.

The Nob Hill Business Center was entered in the State Register of Cultural Properties in 1984.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The Modernistic Styles

The Moderne Style (also called Streamlined Moderne) and the Art Deco, nationally popular from the 1920s into the 1940s, were related early expressions of the twentieth century modern movement which were sometimes used in combination. Both sought to suggest the contemporary and shared a complete rejection of the historical precedent, which had dominated nineteenth-century design. The Moderne, which was used in New Mexico from about 1930 to 1950,³⁴ was characterized by a horizontal emphasis and a

33. Mac Pherson, "Awning Installation" (1985): 7, 9.

34. University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning. New Mexico Historic Building Inventory Manual (1980): VI-57.

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streamlined appearance created by flat roofs, roof ledges and horizontal banding, rounded corners, and smooth, usually stuccoed surfaces. High-tech materials such as glass bricks and stainless steel contributed to the modern feeling. Influenced by the streamlined industrial design of ships, airplanes, and automobiles, the Moderne style was deemed particularly appropriate for roadside commercial architecture. Art Deco design, used sparingly in New Mexico from about 1930 until 1945, was characterized by an angular, vertical emphasis, stepped facades, and low relief stylized decoration; and was elsewhere most notably a style applied to skyscrapers which terminated in setbacks. In New Mexico, Art Deco influence is most often found in vertical piers projecting over flat roof lines or, as in the Nob Hill Center, angular towers which imitate the setbacks of skyscrapers.³⁵ After World War II both styles were eclipsed by the International style, which eschewed not only historical precedent but ornamentation altogether.

LOUIS G. HESSELDEN (1895-1978)³⁶

The architect of the Nob Hill Center, Louis Gilbert Hesselden, was born in Wendel, Oklahoma, but grew up and received his early education in Albuquerque. He earned the degree of Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1927 where he studied Beaux Arts design under Paul Philippe Cret in whose office he subsequently worked as a draftsman. Among the projects Hesselden worked on while with the Cret office was the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library in Washington, D. C.

In 1932 Hesselden returned to Albuquerque to set up his own practice. As the sole architect for the city's school system for many years, he was responsible for nine elementary schools, two junior high schools, and a high school, as well as several major additions. His designs feature stuccoed walls, decorative brick, and sloping tiled roofs. During the building boom that followed World War II, Hesselden designed a number of commercial buildings using new forms and materials taken from the Moderne Style, such as rounded massing, tile banding, glass brick, and banded windows.

35. Ibid. VI-53.

36. Pratt, Directory of Historic New Mexico Architects (1988): 44-46; Bergman, "The Fate of Architectural Theory in Albuquerque, New Mexico" (1978): 368-372; Bergman, "Louis Hesselden, A.I.A." (1978): 8-9.

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SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION A

Richard Longstreth, the scholar who has researched the history of the modern shopping center has characterized its importance thus,

The shopping center has, of course, become a ubiquitous component of the American landscape, profoundly influencing patterns of development, purchasing habits, and social routines. One would be hard-pressed to think of an architectural response to a given set of functions which has changed to a greater extent and at so fast a pace during the twentieth century, or to think of a new building form, save the skyscraper, which has had a greater impact on the character of the nation over the past one hundred years.³⁷

During the 1930s the drive-in, neighborhood shopping center evolved from multiple precedents including complexes provided as amenities of planned residential subdivisions for the well-to-do and the California drive-in market. By the end of the decade their utility had been demonstrated as an efficient means of bringing a range goods and services to people living at a distance from traditional centers of trade. Nevertheless, before the War only a limited number had been built and the majority of these on the east coast. In the postwar years they became a standard feature of the vast migration away from the inner city.

One of first and certainly the most ambitious of the projects built in Albuquerque at the very beginning of the building boom precipitated by the end of World War II, the Nob Hill Business Center was the first retail center and the first drive-in shopping center in Albuquerque or the state of New Mexico. The Strombergs were the first downtown retail merchants to open a "suburban" branch store. Although not immediately accepted, five years later the Center "was studied by persons from all over the country as a model of a successful enterprise of its type."³⁸

So began the movement away from the downtown business center and the vast spread of housing developments and businesses often combined in coordinated centers which has characterized the development of Albuquerque and Western cities in general. The shopping center itself evolved nationally from the neighborhood form represented by Nob Hill to ever larger complexes, in both size and scope, culminating in Minneapolis' enormous Mall of America opened in

37. Longstreth (1992): 6.

38. Albuquerque Journal (March 2, 1952).

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1992, which with 4.2 million square feet of floor space is "the largest fully enclosed combination retail and family entertainment complex in the United States."³⁹

The Period of Significance for the Nob Hill Business Center extends from 1946, the year construction began, to 1961 the opening year of Winrock Center, Albuquerque's first large regional mall of the type which led to the decline of the Nob Hill Center.

SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERION C

The Nob Hill Business Center is significant as a rare, relatively unaltered, example of the drive-in neighborhood shopping center, a new building type, extensively used only after World War II, which combined the set-back form of other auto-related businesses, such as gas stations and motels, with the concentrated retailing of the city block.

Hesselden's design for the Center introduced a new level of architectural style to the utilitarian structures along outlying Central Avenue. The building remains an unusual, relatively unaltered example of the Modernistic style in New Mexico.

EXCEPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE UNDER CRITERIA CONSIDERATION G

The shopping center is a wholly modern, American building-type which has only recently been studied systematically by architectural historians. With only limited precedents in the earlier part of the century, the drive-in, neighborhood center did not proliferate until after World War II. As a building type, the shopping center was not officially codified until the 1950s.⁴⁰

Having arisen in response to a rapidly changing technological culture and having played a major role in the radical change in living patterns made possible by the automobile, the neighborhood center has itself been rendered obsolete by the same continuing rapid pace of technological advance. Furthermore, by its nature, roadside architecture has been regarded as utilitarian and expendable; and until recently beneath aesthetic or scholarly regard. For these reasons, many of the earliest examples of the type risk

39. Guterson, "Enclosed. Encyclopedic. Endured" (1993): 49.

40. Wilkes (1989): 406.

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loss before reaching the age of fifty. Therefore, in order to preserve a first and relatively unaltered example, it is appropriate that an exception be made to the 50-year criterion for significance.

Although less than 50 years old, the Nob Hill Business Center has achieved exceptional significance, both for its state of preservation and as the first building of its kind in Albuquerque and in the state of New Mexico. The architectural historian, Chester Liebs, inspected the property in 1981 while working on his study of the development of roadside architecture, Main Street to Miracle Mile. He evaluated its significance as follows, "In my opinion the Nob Hill shopping center is nationally significant as an extremely well-preserved example of an early post-war shopping complex which served as a prototype for the modern shopping center. The complex still retains its original streamline-moderne architectural detailing, neon identification, interior store lighting, and other features. It is one of the best examples of its type that I have found to date."⁴¹

41. Liebs to Dewitt, letter, October 13, 1981.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 56, University Heights Addition.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The historic property, a U-shaped building surrounding three sides of a parking area, occupies this entire block.

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CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER

Information common to all contemporary photographs.

1. Nob Hill Business Center
2. Bernalillo County, New Mexico
3. Corinne P. Sze
4. May 30, 1993
5. Historic Preservation Division. Office of Cultural Affairs. Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Information on individual contemporary photographs.

6. West and partial north facades. Camera facing southeast.
7. Photo #1

6. Partial north and partial east facades from northeast corner of east arm of U. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #2

6. Partial north facade and partial east facade of west arm of U. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #3

6. Parking area, partial north facade, and partial east facade of west arm of U. Camera facing south.
7. Photo #4

6. Northeast corner of west arm of U. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #5

6. Partial west facade. Camera facing southeast.
7. Photo #6

6. Partial east facade. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #7

6. Partial east facade. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #8

6. Partial south facade. Camera facing northeast.
7. Photo #9

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6. Partial south facade. Camera facing northwest.
7. Photo #10

6. Detail, tower and southeast inner corner of U. Camera facing southeast.
7. Photo #11

6. Detail, tower and southwest inner corner. Camera facing southwest.
7. Photo #12

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER

Information common to all historic photographs.

1. Nob Hill Business Center
2. Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Information on individual historic photographs.

3. Steven Borbas
4. November 1983
5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
6. Partial north facade. Camera facing south.
7. Photo #13

3. Steven Borbas
4. November 1983
5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
6. Partial north facade and partial east facade of west arm of U. Camera facing south.
7. Photo #14

3. Steven Borbas
4. November 1983
5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
6. East side breezeway. Camera facing east.
7. Photo #15

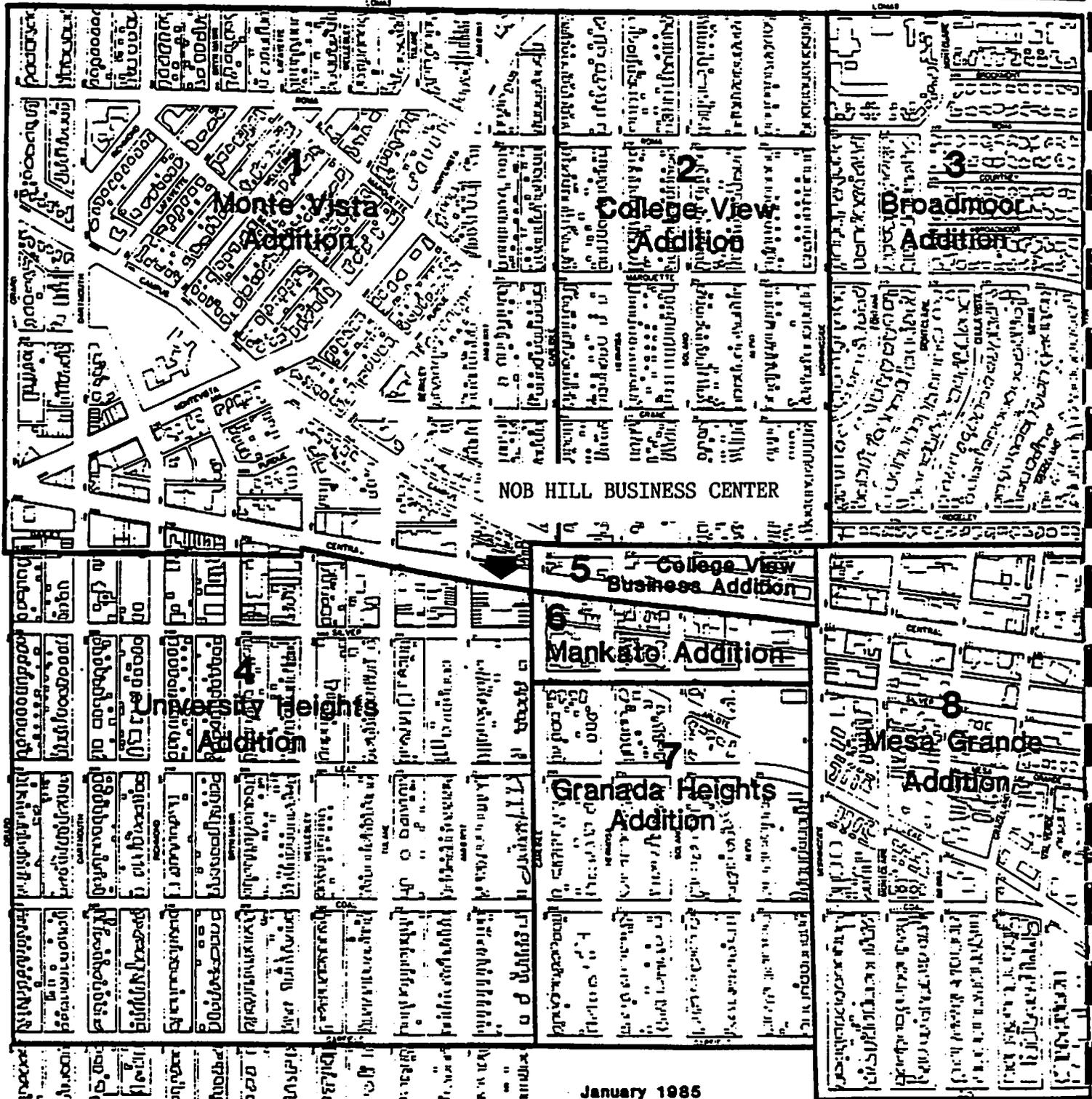
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3. Steven Borbas
 4. November 1983
 5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
 6. Detail, brick courses. Camera facing northwest.
 7. Photo #16
-
3. Steven Borbas
 4. November 1983
 5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
 6. Detail, tower over back inner corner.
 7. Photo #17
-
3. Steven Borbas
 4. November 1983
 5. Albuquerque Preservation Planning, Community & Economic Development Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico.
 6. Detail, cupola over front inner corner.
 7. Photo #18
-
3. Unknown
 4. c. 1950
 5. Unknown
 6. Parking area, partial north facade, west facade of east arm of U, and east facade of west arm of U. Camera facing south.
 7. Photo #19



January 1985

BOUNDARIES OF PLATTED ADDITIONS IN NOB HILL

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Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro
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Scale: 1" = 50'
0 20 40 60 ft.

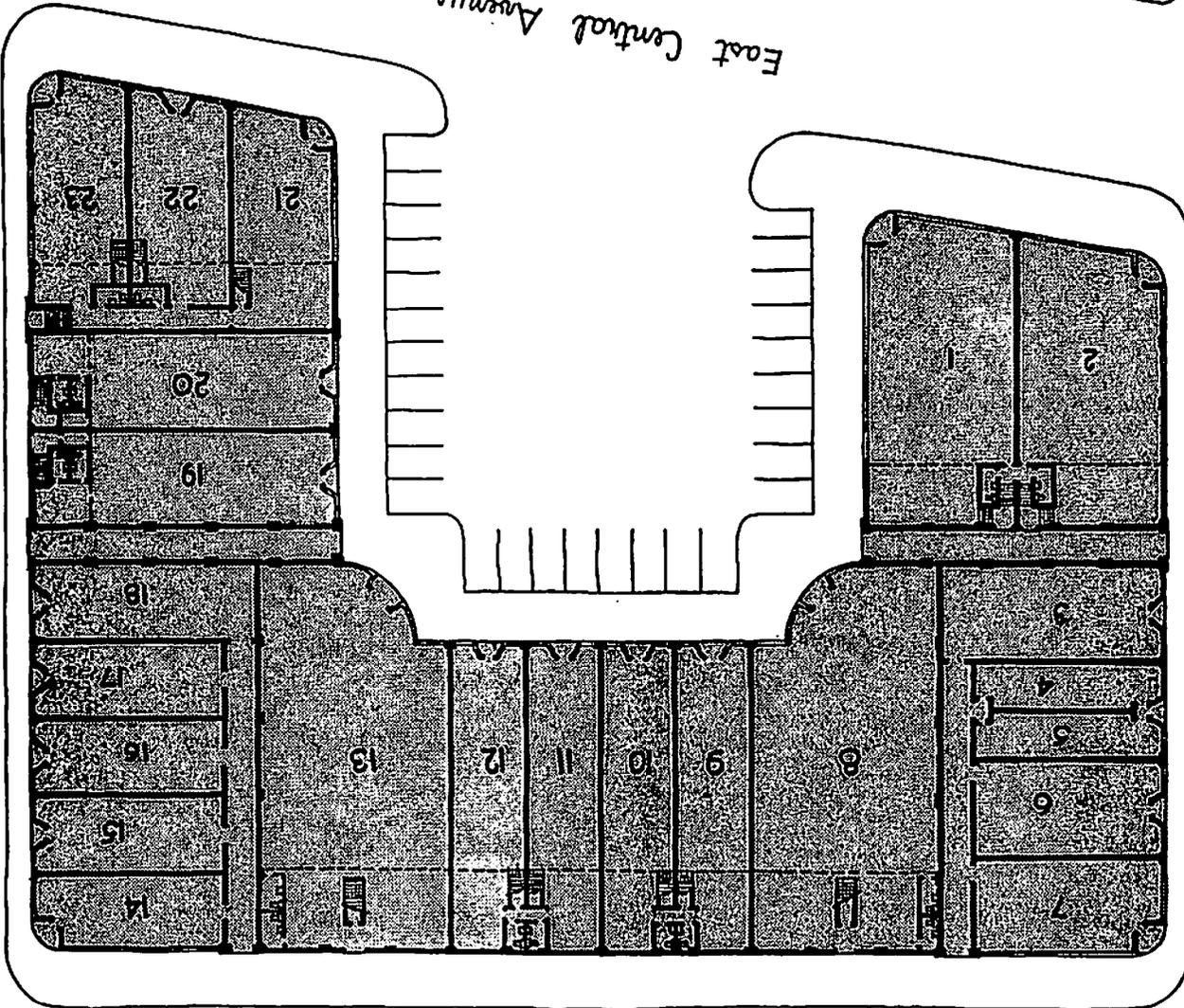


South Amherst Avenue

South Carlisle Avenue

East Central Avenue

East Silver Avenue

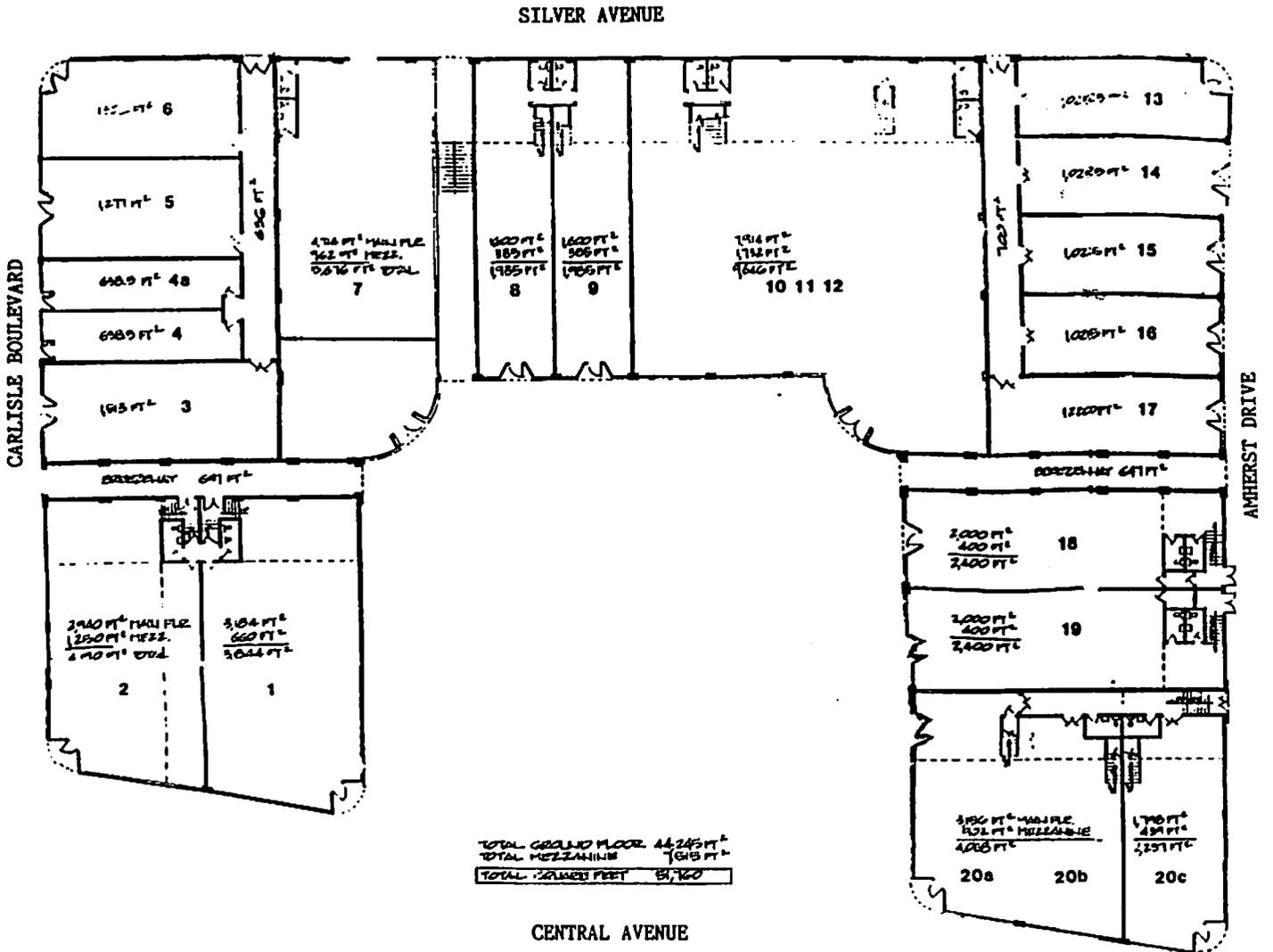


NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER
Albuquerque, New Mexico

1951

NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER
Albuquerque, New Mexico

PRESENT FLOOR PLAN



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GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



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