

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Auto-oriented Commercial Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1957-1969 (Additional Documentation)

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

Auto-oriented Commercial Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1916-1956
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: Route 66 (Central Avenue) within the city limits of Albuquerque, NM

City or town: Albuquerque State: NM County: Bernalillo Zip Code: 87131

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B X C ___ D

<p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <hr/> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <hr/> <p>Title :</p>	<p>Date</p> <hr/> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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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

Auto-oriented Commercial Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico,
1957-1969 (Additional Documentation)

This is additional documentation addresses the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled, "Auto-oriented Commercial Development in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1916-1956," prepared by Chris Wilson and listed in the National Register in 1997. The purpose of this documentation is twofold:

- The additional documentation extends the period of significance from 1957 to 1969.
- The additional documentation expands the definition of Property Subtype H "Strip Center Buildings."

The Wilson MPDF has guided the registration of numerous historic properties in the National Register of Historic Places. However, its period of significance, which ends in 1956, has precluded the listing of many identified property types which otherwise meet the requirements for registration but were built between 1957 and 1969. This additional documentation extends the period of significance to support nominations for auto-related development in Albuquerque through the 1960s.

The Wilson MPDF defines the strip center building as a response to the increase in automobiles after the World War II when property owners constructed linear, L-, and U-shaped buildings with setbacks from the street to accommodate parking (Wilson, F-36, 37). This additional

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documentation expands the definition strip center buildings to include the elaboration of forms and styles that evolved from the basic one-story utilitarian commercial style during the late 1950s and 1960s.

The Historical Development of Albuquerque, 1916-1956

The thesis of the MPDF (E-22, 23) is that commercial development in Albuquerque developed along the city's major arterials. First it evolved along streets to the north and south of downtown, primarily 4th and 2nd streets. Second, development followed Central Avenue, the city's main east-west thoroughfare, which was later designated Route 66 when the highway was realigned through New Mexico in 1937. This commercial development was originally tied to tourism and interstate commercial traffic, such as tourist courts, gas stations, and cafes. However, as the city's population rapidly expanded following World War II, commercial development catered to local businesses. The property types that emerged reflect this local orientation (Wilson, E-26). Many of the property types are identified in the Route 66 historic context prepared by Michael Cassity in 2011. Wilson states in his MPDF (E-26) that a more complete study of local property types (e.g., commercial strip buildings and strip center buildings) would "await further assessment."

The Wilson MPDF makes clear that by the late 1930s new demographic trends began to appear on the city's East Mesa and that by the mid-1950s these trends reshaped the city's boundaries and its built environment. These trends were largely the result of increasing automobile use by Albuquerque residents. Prior to this time, Albuquerque's downtown commercial district was *the* place to shop, bank, and visit professional offices. Although residential subdivisions had been developing on the East Mesa (also referred to as "the Heights") as early as the 1920s, commercial development was generally limited to several small, scattered neighborhood grocery stores. For all other shopping needs, it was necessary to travel downtown, which was rapidly becoming more congested by the growing local population and the ever-increasing traffic on Route 66.

Following the war, however, there were several important economic developments that triggered population growth and subsequent "suburbanization" of the Heights. Albuquerque offered new employment opportunities at Kirtland Air Force Base and at the Sandia National Laboratories (Simmons 1982: 370). Other new employers included small manufacturing companies, whose numbers increased threefold from 1940 to 1951; many of these plants can be attributed to wartime manufacturing (Rabinowitz 1981: 11). The University of New Mexico experienced a tremendous increase in student enrollment after the war as servicemen utilized the GI Bill to further their education. Albuquerque also became known as "Little Washington" for its choice by many federal agencies to establish regional offices in the city (Rabinowitz 1979). These employment opportunities were bolstered by a national trend in the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in a general migration of families from older cities in the Northeast and Midwest to the Sun Belt states in the southern and western United States. As a result, the city's population grew exponentially from 35,449 in 1940 to 96,815 in 1950, and doubling to 201,189 in 1960.

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These trends did not stop in 1956, and the commercial, manufacturing, and public sectors continued to grow during the late 1950s and 1960s. Nationwide companies, such as GTE Lenkurt (telecommunications), General Electric (jet engine division), and Levi Strauss, opened small manufacturing plants in the city. As a result, the city's population had grown to 243,751 by 1970, and its areal size had increased dramatically (Table 1).

Decade	Size (sq. miles)	Population
1950	48	96,815
1960	61	201,503
1970	82	243,751

The city's geographic expansion eastward on the Heights and its ever-increasing population growth following the war is reflected in the city's built environment. Before the war downtown Albuquerque supported major retailers, such as Sears, J. C. Penney's, Woolworth's, and popular local businesses, such as Paris Shoes, Kistler-Collister Department Store, and Stromberg's Mens Store, movie theaters, automobile dealerships, banks, and professional offices. These businesses, located commercial blocks first constructed in the late 19th century, lined both sides of Central Avenue between 1st and 8th streets, while other businesses were found on adjacent Gold and Copper avenues. This changed in the late 1930s when the first automobile commercial district, Nob Hill, was developed along Central Avenue east of the university. This development was spurred on not only by the realignment of Route 66, but also the construction of new institutions on the East Mesa, including the Veteran's Administration Hospital, built in 1931, the state fairgrounds, constructed in 1938, and the numerous platting of subdivisions on the Heights, such as Ridgecrest, Parkland Hills, Monte Vista, and College View. Charles Biebel (1986: 6, Table 1) notes that more than 300 subdivisions were platted between 1900 and 1940.

Extension of the Period of Significance, 1957-1969

This revised period of significance captures the eight property types described in the Wilson MPDF that continued to be built after 1956. These include the commercial strip building, commercial/residence hybrid building, tourist courts and motels, gas stations, service garages and auto dealership, supermarket, drive-in restaurants, and strip center building. The expanded period of significance embraces later forms and styles of architecture that emerged in Albuquerque in the late 1950s and 1960s. The revised period of significance captures these property types and creates a logical end date for this additional documentation.

In addition, the extension of the period of significance to 1969 reflects major demographic shifts in the city's metropolitan area that took place in the 1960s, including less expensive land costs, which resulted in a dramatic population increase on the Heights. New housing developments,

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such as Westgate Heights, Volcano Cliffs, Taylor Ranch, Paradise Hills, and the soon-to-be independent city of Rio Rancho, resulted in major geographical shifts in the city's expansion.

Expanding the Definition of the Property Subtype H "Strip Center Buildings"

The new Nob Hill district is distinguished by commercial strip buildings, described in the Wilson MPDF as Utilitarian Commercial style buildings (E-7). These buildings, often constructed in two-unit pairs are characterized as one-story buildings with large display windows, recessed entryways, and space below the parapet for wall signs. This property type was a variation on the 19th-century commercial block, but without the second story. Although the onset of World War II curtailed new construction in the city, after the war development in Nob Hill flourished. The Nob Hill Business Center (NR file #991) was the city's first "strip center," constructed in 1946 at the corner of Central Avenue and Carlisle Boulevard. It offered residents an opportunity to shop at retail stores located in a U-shaped shopping plaza with off-street parking in front of the stores. The center included a supermarket, a drug store, a "five and dime" store, a bakery, and a branch of Stromberg's Men's Store. Within a few years, several blocks of small, one-story buildings lined Central Avenue from University Avenue to Carlisle Boulevard.

This new pattern of commercial development in Nob Hill was soon copied along the city's other major boulevards: Lomas and Menaul (east-west arterials), Carlisle, San Mateo, San Pedro, and Wyoming (north-south arterials). By the mid-1950s the one-story commercial strips of Utilitarian Commercial buildings were replaced by business strip centers, with larger and larger parking lots. These included Bel-Air Shopping Center, Carlisle Village Center, Hoffmantown Shopping Center, Arrowhead Plaza, and Fair West Shopping Center. These business strip centers usually featured a national chain supermarket, drug store, along with a variety of small, local businesses. Large downtown banks began opening stand-alone branch banks with "drive-thru" windows along these major thoroughfares. This pattern of retail development in the Heights reached its zenith in the early 1960s with the construction of Winrock and Coronado shopping malls, which offered dozens of stores and acres of parking.

This additional documentation expands the definition of Property Subtype H - Strip Center Buildings in the Wilson MPDF. Wilson's reliance on the Utilitarian Commercial style was sufficient through 1956. However, as Wilson suggests (F-37), by the mid-1950s architects were in a "period of transition and experimentation" including buildings of this property type. The Wilson MPDF notes that White's Department Store at 4616 Central Avenue, constructed in 1957 with a glass-curtain wall at the street's edge and provided a large parking lot at the rear of the store. This store and the strip center block to the east, built in 1955, featured a J.C. Penney's and The Lerner Shops (women's fashion), marked the first exodus from downtown of major department stores.

The design of White's Department Store, together with the building at 4516 Central Avenue (originally K&B Radio and Appliances) marked the beginning of the Modern Movement in the Heights. These buildings were often designed by architects and followed architectural principals associated with the International Style: basic geometric forms, lack of ornament, and an

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emphasis on modern materials and construction practices as seen in glass-curtain walls, unadorned wall surfaces, steel supports, and cantilevered elements. These free-standing buildings demonstrated a simplification of form and the absence of applied decoration, encapsulated in the dictum of Mies van der Rohe: “less is more.” Architects Judith H. Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, believe modern architecture “combines functionalism with aesthetic ideals that reject historical precepts and styles” (Robinson 2003:12).

Modern strip center buildings continued to follow the basic tenant described in the Wilson MPDF, such as a location along a major arterial, orientation toward the street, large areas of glazing, prominent signage, and expansive parking lots. However, the new strip center buildings often exceeded one-story. The Citizen’s Savings & Loan Building at 605 Central Avenue, is two-story International Style bank and office building with its second story cantilevered over the first story on all four sides (see photos). The First National Bank Tower (now Bank of the West), located at 5301 Central Avenue, soars seventeen stories for a total of 213 feet. Constructed in 1963, the tower was the first and only skyscraper built in the Heights. Important mid-20th-century modern strip center buildings are identified in Table 2 (see photos).

Address	Date of Construction	Original Business Name	Architects
4616 Central SE	1957	White’s Department Store	Flatow & Moore
4516 Central SE	1957	K&B’s Radio & Appliances	unknown
4401 Central NE	1959	Albuquerque National Bank	W.C. Kruger & Associates
605 San Mateo NE	1960	Citizen’s Savings & Loan	unknown
1100 San Mateo NE	1960	Kistler-Collister Store	William E. Ellison
525 San Pedro NE	1963	Prince Hall Square	unknown
5301 Central NE	1963	First National Bank Tower	Flatow & Moore
5921 Lomas NE	1968	Office Building	William McConnell

Conclusion

The Chris Wilson MPDF explains the history and development of the Route 66 corridor in Albuquerque from 1916 to 1956. It established building subtypes that continue to be recognized even as they evolved to reflect the popular tastes and changing design aesthetics after 1956. This additional documentation builds on Wilson’s careful study of architecture associated with Route 66 to include the established building types from 1957 to 1969. The property Subtype H, Business Strip Center, evolved into new forms that are not described in the existing MPDF. This additional documentation expands the definition of subtype H to include free-standing, multi-story, International Style strip center buildings. National Register nominations generated from this MPDF and its additional documentation will reflect the continued development along Route 66 and its importance as a principal transportation artery through the city of Albuquerque.

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Mid-20th-Century Strip Center Buildings in Albuquerque



4616 Central Ave. SE



4516 Central Ave. SE



4401 Central NE



605 San Mateo NE

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525 San Pedro NE



5821 Lomas NE



1100 San Mateo NE



5301 Central NE

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