

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

AUG - 5 2016

630

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Regency House

Other names/site number: Royal Towers

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 2323 North Central Avenue

City or Town: Phoenix State: Arizona County: Maricopa

Not for Publication:  Vicinity: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  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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

	<u>7/28/16</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>AZ STATE PARKS/SHPO</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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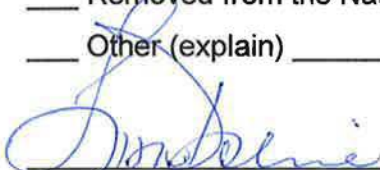
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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

9/20/14  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property

- Private
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Buildings
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	Buildings
_____	_____	Sites
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	Structures
_____	_____	Objects
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

MODERN MOVEMENT/Brutalism

Materials:

Principal exterior material of the property: CONCRETE

### Summary

The Regency House is located at 2323 North Central Avenue in Midtown Phoenix. It is a Brutalist design, twenty-one-story building housing 118 condominium apartments on twenty residential floors. It has a two-floor garage in the basement, six apartments per standard floor, and four penthouse apartments. The Regency House is constructed of smooth painted reinforced concrete piers and slabs, with exposed aggregate cast-formed concrete panels. The windows are primarily a combination of aluminum fixed and sliding that stretch from floor to ceiling, and arcadia doors that look out to cantilevered balconies. Designed by local architect George H. Schoneberger, Jr. the Regency House is a well-maintained example of a mid-century luxury residential high-rise with a high level of architectural integrity.

### Narrative Description

The Regency House is located at northeast corner of Central Avenue and Hoover Avenue, in the Midtown area of Phoenix, Arizona, approximately one and one-half miles north of downtown. The area around the tower is mixed-use, with commercial office buildings, single-family and multi-family residential properties, cultural institutions, and parks. Central Avenue is an arterial street, bisecting much of the city from the foothills of South Mountain to the foothills of North Mountain. Hoover Avenue is a subsidiary street, created for a small residential subdivision.

The property has an irregular shape, created by an assemblage of six residential lots, and the realignment of an alley. The combined lot size is 1.2 acres, about one third of which is open space with outdoor amenities including a pool area and covered fireplace. Mature landscaping, some of which is planted in exposed aggregate planters, surrounds the building. A small parking lot for guest use is located between the building and Central Avenue.

The building is set back seventy-five feet from Central Avenue and forty-five feet from Hoover Avenue. It has an irregular plan and is 177 feet long, sixty-nine feet wide, and 235 feet high. The foundation of the building is concrete with pan decks under the first garage level and first floor. The building design follows a utilitarian approach to construction that was popular in the 1950s and 1960s called Brutalism which emphasized unadorned, exposed surfaces and favored the use of cast-in-place concrete. The first floor is above the natural grade and has recessed entries. Floors above the first are steel reinforced concrete slabs supported by steel reinforced concrete piers. The slabs extend from the building to become balconies. The piers and balconies are smooth concrete, painted white, and offset by exposed aggregate in cast-formed panels with a

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continuous vertical pattern. The combination of smooth piers and patterned panels emphasizes the height of the building.

The main ingress to the building is via what the architect referred to as the “entrance canopy”—a detached reinforced concrete cantilevered porte cochère on the west side of the building. The porte cochère, which overhangs into the parking lot, is approximately twelve feet high, fifteen feet wide, and twenty-five feet long, and straddles a short flight of stairs on five-foot wide columns. Exposed aggregate planters flank the porte cochère and wrap the north, south, and west sides of the building, extending into the open space in the northeast corner and around the entrance of the garage between the ramp and Hoover Avenue.

A walkway leads from the stairs to the west entrance of the building via an exterior lobby in the northwest corner. The interior of the exterior lobby has coffered ceilings, and exterior walls of exposed aggregate in cast formed panels matching the exterior panels of the building. A ribbon of aluminum fixed and jalousie windows line the north side. Planters within the exterior lobby are also made of exposed aggregate concrete in a similar pattern to the exterior panels.

The building has two additional exterior lobbies located on the south side facing Hoover Avenue and on the north side facing the pool area. Entry to the south side exterior lobby is via stairs from the Hoover Street or a ramp installed after construction to provide greater accessibility to the building. A similar ramp from the pool area also provides greater access to the building from the north side via two entrances: a rear door to the main lobby and another to the library/gym. The two exterior lobbies also have coffered ceilings, similar to the one at the main entrance.

Accessible from the main exterior lobby is the entrance to a retail establishment. Originally designed as a resident manager’s apartment, the space was later converted to office/retail space. The entrance to the retail space includes a wood door with side light. The door and transom have vertical strips of wood matching the vertical pattern of the exterior.

The interior lobby is entered via wooden double doors, with vertical wood strips matching those of the retail space. The doors are mounted in a ribbon of aluminum fixed windows with a matched ribbon across the transom. This lobby space is the primary lobby for the building; a secondary interior lobby is accessible from the south exterior lobby entrance and is similar in design.

Within the primary lobby is a desk for greeting residents and visitors. Fixed windows face out from the north façade on the north side of the room. The walls have a tall, wood wainscot wrapping most of the room to a height of approximately nine feet, and above which are flat painted walls stretching to a fourteen-foot-high ceiling. This design creates the feeling of height within the interior space. To the south is the community space used for gatherings by the residents. This space was recently remodeled, primarily updating the furniture and carpeting. It has a wall clad in mirrors, a ribbon of windows facing north, and a self-contained kitchen space. The bar, which was redone in the remodel, has vertical wood embellishments designed to match the strips on the exterior entrance doors.

A corridor leading east from the lobby passes through the elevator lobby, which consists of two elevator bays opposite a utility and trash room—a similar configuration is found on every floor of the building. The ceiling of the elevator lobby is also coffered. A mirror and wood mailbox case creates an island beyond the elevator lobby, blocking the view of the first floor restrooms and carrying forth the tall wainscot that also wraps the secondary lobby. The secondary lobby leads to the two exterior lobbies and as well as a library/gym on the north side of the room. Initially planned as a smaller meeting room, then as a library, the space now houses exercise equipment though it retains the shelving—and requisite books—for which it was originally designed.

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Above the first floor are the residences. There are six apartments per floor, except on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor (there is no thirteenth floor) where there are four penthouses. The apartments are accessed via corridors that match the wood and mirror decorative pattern of the first floor space. The entrance to each apartment is a solid wood door and fixed sidelight with obscured glazing. The bedroom windows are combinations of aluminum fixed and sliding, stretching from the floor to the ceiling, and are separated from the balcony by the cast formed panels. The living room windows consist of floor-to-ceiling four-foot wide aluminum fixed widows with equally tall six-foot wide arcadia doors, separated by stucco-coated mullions.

There are three apartment configurations on the standard floors, referred to as types A, B, and C. The A- and C-type apartments have two bedrooms and two bathrooms, with a twenty-four-foot wide balcony. The B-type apartments are larger with three bedrooms, two baths, a family room, and two balconies: a forty-eight-foot wide balcony and a smaller eleven-foot wide balcony, located at the narrow end of the building.

There are two configurations of penthouses, though both have three bedrooms and two baths. One penthouse type has the forty-eight-foot wide balcony and the eleven-foot wide balcony, the latter extending another eleven feet under the roofline. The other penthouse has two twenty-three-foot balconies and, located under the roofline, an outdoor dining terrace. The dining terrace is open to the air via sixteen-inch openings in the aggregate panels. These openings carry over into the apartment with fixed floor to ceiling windows. The penthouse apartments are also taller than the standard apartments, hence the windows to the balcony are also taller requiring a transom ribbon of fixed windows.

The balconies, referred to as terraces in the original plans, are seven-foot extensions of the floor slabs with forty-inch high, smooth, precast concrete end walls. The end walls align with balustrades of fourteen gauge 3"x2" steel tubing with half-inch steel bars connected via a weld embedded in the end wall plates. The balustrade support posts are centered on the door mullions to reduce impairment of the view. Narrower versions of the balustrades are also used in the wall openings of the penthouse outdoor dining terraces.

The cantilever balconies, which shade the terrace of the floor below, were designed to give the sensation of floating on air. According to the architect, George H. Schoneberger, this was as much for function as it was for design, "We wanted to make sure the occupants would have an opportunity to not just be behind glass but actually within the atmosphere of the city of Phoenix. We worked hard to get that and then to carry over shading of the one below."<sup>1</sup> Extensions of the roof provide shade over the penthouse balconies with parapets of stucco on metal lath with bonded joints. The roof is built up and has a rooftop storage area with thirty-three residential storage lockers.

Located within the pool area are the pool house, covered fireplace, two cabanas, swimming pool, and hot tub. The pool house faces south and is a single story building, forty-two feet long and twelve feet wide. It is wood frame structure, clad in stucco, with a flat built up roof with parapet and rear scuppers. It contains pool supplies and a storage area at each end, with a double door entrance in the rear of the building. An open foyer, with fixed obscured glazed windows, flanks the entrance, leading to gender specific restrooms and showers.

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<sup>1</sup> "Regency House On Central Ave," *Building Phoenix*, 17 June 2011 (City of Phoenix, Development Services, 2011).

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Parallel to the pool house is the swimming pool, which is a rounded-edge irregular shape. Northwest of the pool is the hot tub, which was installed in the 1980s and is a non-contributing structure. The two cabanas are similar in design to the "entrance canopy." The concrete structures are twelve feet tall fifteen feet long, sixteen feet wide, with four-foot wide exposed aggregate stems with smooth streamlined arms.

In the southeast corner of the pool area is the covered fireplace. The structure is ten feet tall with four rectangular exposed aggregate concrete columns supporting a smooth concrete base, reveal, chimney, and cruciform roof. The pool house, cabanas, and fireplace are all original to the property. A pool fence was added to the perimeter of the area as a safety requirement and some of the plantings have changed, but little else is different from when the building was constructed.

### **Integrity**

Few changes have been made to the property since its construction. The ramps on the north and south sides of the property were installed after the period of significance to increase accessibility into the building. Exercise equipment replaced furniture as the library transitioned into a gym, and fencing around the pool area assured compliance with city and state laws. A few changes were made in the lobby and community areas, updating the furniture, and converting the resident manager's apartment into a retail space when that position was phased out. These modifications, which adapted the property to contemporary requirements and popular trends, had little impact to the integrity of the property and it continues to embody its association with the brief period of luxury residential high-rise development trends that occurred in Phoenix during the middle of the twentieth century.

## **8. Statement of Significance**

### **Applicable National Register Criteria**

- 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**

- 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

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Areas of Significance

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1965-1966

Significant Dates

1965

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

George H. Schoneberger, Jr., AIA, Architect

Royal Engineering Company, Builder

Inland Engineering Company, Builder

**Summary Paragraph**

The Regency House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A, "Community Planning and Development" under the context of "Luxury Residential High-Rise Development in Midtown Phoenix, 1957-1966," for its association with the brief development of luxury residential high-rise buildings in the Phoenix Midtown corridor during the years 1957 through 1966. It is one of a small number of luxury towers built during the high-rise residential building boom of the 1960s. Originally designed by local architect George H. Schoneberger, Jr. as a luxury condominium tower, the Regency House opened as upscale rental apartments in 1966. The property is well preserved and maintains a high level of integrity.

**Luxury Residential High-Rise Development in Midtown Phoenix, 1957-1966.**

Prior to World War II, only five buildings in Phoenix could be described as high-rises.<sup>2</sup> Within the downtown area, there were the eleven-story Professional Building, eleven-story Phoenix Title and Trust Building, ten-story Luhrs Building, and thirteen-story Luhrs Tower. To the north of downtown was the fifteen-story Westward Ho. Though the skyline changed slightly with the advent of the First National Bank in 1954, the impetus for high-rise residential development began with the Phoenix Towers in 1957.

Prior to 1957, high-rise apartment living was not available in Phoenix, which was likely do to sociological and well as financial issues. Around the country, the development of high-rise apartments in established inner-city areas tended to be associated with gentrification and public housing rehabilitation—the luxury apartments of Chicago, Manhattan, and St. Louis respectively contrasting with the public housing projects of Robert Taylor Homes, Queensbridge Houses, and

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<sup>2</sup> Emporis Standards defines a high-rise building as a structure whose architectural height is between 35 and 100 meters (114.8 and 328 feet). Emporis also automatically lists a structure as a high-rise when it has a minimum of twelve floors and fewer than forty floors, whether or not the height is known. *Emporis Standards*. <http://www.emporis.com/building/standard/3/high-rise-building>. Accessed 2 May 2015.

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Pruitt-Igoe. Though long-term residency was available at the Westward Ho, and other multi-floor hotels within the city, apartments—purpose built, multi-family, residential buildings of greater than ten dwelling units—were typically no more than two-stories tall. The Phoenix Towers became the antecedent for this change in housing options and a contributor to its type of development in the burgeoning Midtown area of the city.

During the 1950s and into 1960s, the area known as Midtown Phoenix was bounded roughly by 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the east, 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the west, Van Buren Street on the south, and Camelback Road on the north.<sup>3</sup> Located directly north of the historic townsite and downtown city core, prior to World War II, the Midtown area was a mixture of residential subdivisions, open farmland, and large estates, with a smattering of businesses along Central Avenue directly north of the downtown. Both 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue are major arteries, a designation inherited from their alignments along the cadastral survey section lines. Central Avenue is an artery, albeit a prominent one, with an esteemed reputation dating to the 1890s.

During the two decades following World War II, Phoenix became the most prominent city in the American Southwest. Activation of several military installations during the war led to the establishment of defense-related industries, many of which stayed after the war's end. Defense workers and former military personnel were attracted by the midwinters and summers made tolerable by air conditioning, as well as the growing economic opportunities in the Phoenix metropolitan area, and contributed to the tripling of the population between 1940 and 1960. While other urban areas suffered from the fast-paced growth experienced in other vital cities around the country, Phoenix thrived economically from it.<sup>4</sup>

The vast open acreage of the surrounding area quickly led to residential development spreading out from the city core and its early residential subdivisions. Postwar development leapfrogged, with subdivisions growing larger and filling one-square mile sections once laid out for homesteaders and dedicated to agricultural pursuits. According to historian Philip VanderMeer, "While Phoenix builders produced affordable homes, their designs were often unimaginative, and the houses sat in isolated and auto-dependent subdivisions."<sup>5</sup> In response, developers created alternatives to the ubiquitous single-family Ranch-style home.

Building in the hinterlands led to other problems. Created with the founding of Phoenix in 1870, the original townsite evolved into the city's downtown and business core. Following the end of World War II, however, the downtown retail establishment began to decline. Parking became an issue due to space limitations and remedial efforts created expenses for both merchants and patrons. Traffic was another problem; the huge increase in population and lack of a suitable public transportation system created chronic congestion on downtown streets. A third problem, which

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<sup>3</sup> The City of Phoenix currently defines Midtown as between McDowell Road on the south and Indian School Road on the north. Historically, the geographical designation for Midtown was much broader and less defined. For example, in 1940 it was briefly referred to as Uptown. By 1950, the same area was called North Phoenix, a name still currently used for an area much further to the north of downtown. In the 1950s, Uptown then became associated with the area north of Midtown, in the area of Camelback Road, but without defined boundaries. The area defined by this nomination encompassed what was briefly referred to as Midtown as it was used during the period of significance.

<sup>4</sup> Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 136-142.

<sup>5</sup> Philip R. VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2010), 208.



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would eventually prove to be the greatest bane to the downtown merchants, was the establishment of new retail venues outside of the downtown area. Between 1948 and 1958, retail sales within the city's business core decreased by almost 50 percent as businesses left for better opportunities elsewhere in the Phoenix area.<sup>6</sup>

Augmenting this exodus from downtown was the 1950 announcement of plans by California developers Ralph and Albert Burgbacher and Albert Behrstock to build a combined residential and commercial development on 364 acres of dairy land due north of the downtown. Working under the name of Bella Vista Properties, Behrstock and the Burgbachers created an immense multi-use development area as part of their plans, which included seven hundred homes and three hundred apartment units.<sup>7</sup>

The new development, the largest at the time in Arizona's history, spurred both speculation and formally planned projects in what was then being called the "Midtown area." Even before the Phoenix Towers project broke ground, developers from out of state were following the lead of Bella Vista Properties, platting and planning residential projects in the city's Midtown. For example, in 1955, S. Jon Kreedman of Beverly Hills built the Park Central Lanai apartments and platted Park North subdivision two years later.<sup>8</sup>



Figure 1. Illustration of the Phoenix Towers. *Arizona Republic*, August 8, 1955.

The plans for the construction of the Phoenix Towers began in 1952 with a partnership between Burke Payne, a Phoenix realtor and the president of the Guaranty Bank, and Ralph Applegate, a

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-271.

<sup>7</sup> *Arizona Republic*, 1 March 1950, 2, 12 April 1950, 7, "Huge Block to be Built on Central," 7 May 1950, 1; "Record Development Planned at Phoenix," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 9 May 1950, 3. Bella Vista Properties platted five "North Park Central" residential subdivision units during the years 1950 through 1952.

<sup>8</sup> "More Apartments Planned by Builder for Huge Park Central Development," *Arizona Republic*, 18 March 1956, 5:16; "Park North," *Book of Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1956), 69:27.

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Chicago developer and executive with Casualty Mutual Insurance. The two planned the building of a thirteen-story luxury residential high-rise on property Payne owned on Central Avenue. Just south of the proposed high-rise, the city had recently completed construction of the new million-dollar library.<sup>9</sup>

By 1955, out of state investment came from vending machine magnate Arnold M. Johnson of Kansas City, prominent Chicago attorney J. Arthur Friedland, and the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company of Newark. Construction began on the Phoenix Towers (figure 1) in February 1957 and the partners formed a housing cooperative two months later. In September, the building was completed and Arizona's first luxury residential high-rise opened a sales office. Prior to opening, developers had already planned two more residential high-rise projects along Central Avenue.<sup>10</sup>

Located south—and later, just north—of the Phoenix Towers, the Desert Athletic Club (figure 2) was a ten-story apartment complex with “fifty bachelor apartments, fifty double rooms, twelve executive suites, a men’s grill, main dining room, and all athletic facilities including gymnasium, handball courts, men’s and women’s locker rooms, showers, steam and exercise room, and indoor and outdoor swimming pools.”<sup>11</sup>

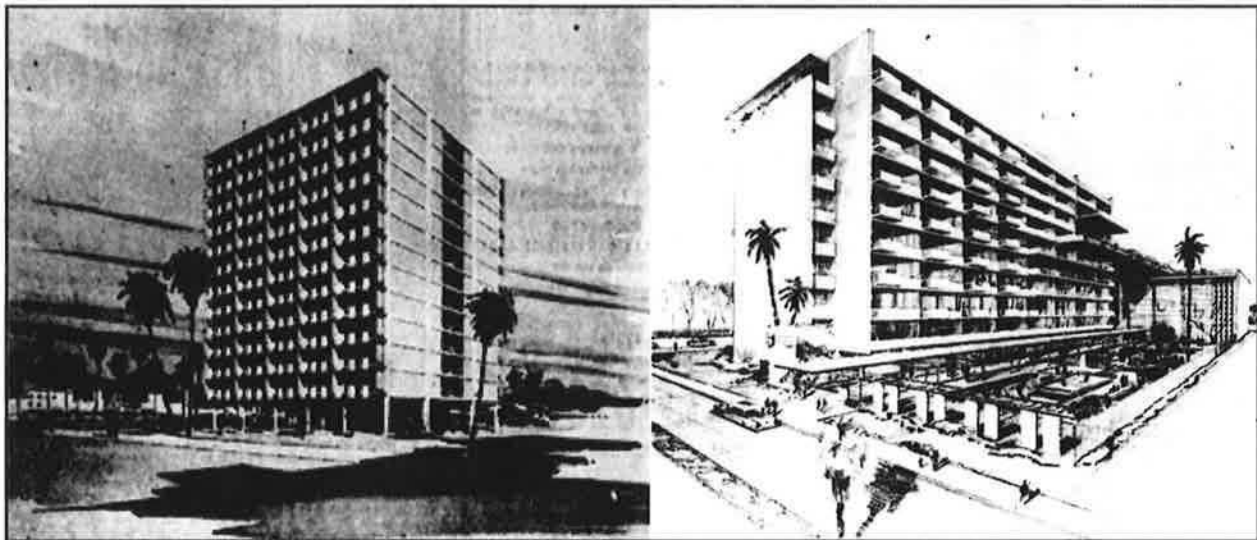


Figure 2. Illustrations of the Hampshire House (left) and Desert Athletic Club (right). *Arizona Republic*, June 6 and July 3, 1957, respectively.

The club was incorporated as a non-profit, directed by a group of distinguished local businessmen, and limited its membership to one thousand. Created for “men and their families,” the desert Athletic Club also allowed women to join, but with a restricted membership; they would

<sup>9</sup> Mark Pry, “Phoenix Towers,” *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (Tempe: Southwest Historical Services, 2007), 8.8. The library moved to the new Burton Barr Central Library in 1995 and the building is now anchored by the Phoenix Art Museum.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; “Construction of Phoenix Towers Nears,” *Arizona Republic*, 8 October 1955, 4.

<sup>11</sup> “Phoenix Plans Athletic Club,” *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 3 July 1957, 11. Originally the location was just south of the Phoenix Towers. A month later, the club site was moved to just north of the Phoenix Towers. “Athletic Club Changes Site,” 3 August 1957, 3.

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have to be single or widowed and would only have dining and social privileges. The apartments would occupy the upper floor of the building, with the executive suites "designed to cater to visiting business officials."<sup>12</sup>

Lacking gender requirements, developers located the 1.5 million-dollar Hampshire House (figure 2) on a site three quarters of a mile north of downtown. It was a thirteen-story apartment-hotel with 168 oversized efficiencies. Planned by the Sands Hotel Company of Las Vegas, the new building would offer rentals by the day, week, or year. When asked by a member of the city board of adjustment what the rental rates would be for the luxury residential high-rise, project spokesman Arnold H. Becker replied that the rents "will be high"<sup>13</sup> "For the price you have to pay for Central (Avenue) frontage, you can't make money with just a four-story apartment," Becker said, defending the company's request for a variance. While city zoning allowed commercial development on the site, it also limited the building height to four stories or forty-eight feet.<sup>14</sup>

Commercial zoning along Central Avenue was relatively new and not without controversy. Prior to World War II, the stretch of street north of McDowell Road—a mile north of downtown—was home to a local "millionaire's row" consisting of a number of large estates and mansion homes. In December 1951, at the request of the local O'Malley Investment Company, the city began the process of rezoning the street north of McDowell Road for commercial use. According to city planning director John W. Beatty, "The time is coming, whether we like it or not, when Central Avenue will be a business thoroughfare."<sup>15</sup>

The existing zoning allowed for multiple-family dwellings, but O'Malley Investment, which was receiving funding from Standard Mortgage Company of New York, requested the change to allow retail businesses. At the time, the two firms were negotiating for land purchases and, according to a representative of the mortgage company, once the zoning change was approved, future development might include two apartment buildings and the home office of an eastern insurance company. The plan for the Phoenix Towers was announced six months later.<sup>16</sup>

Also planned for the Midtown area along Central Avenue was the Aleh'Zon Hotel, an eight-story building promoted as early as 1956 by an investment company, Arizona Opportunities Inc., and in "instruction classes" given by another investment company called Selected Securities. By 1958, though the Hampshire House and Desert Athletic Club had cleared the necessary zoning hurdles, the three projects appeared to be in financial limbo.<sup>17</sup>

The year 1957 saw a huge increase in the development of apartments in Phoenix with more than twenty under construction during the first half of the year, ranging from small two-story buildings to larger projects like the Phoenix Towers and the Villa del Coronado. However, a number of large projects, such as the aforementioned, were loudly heralded and then silently halted. The problem

<sup>12</sup> "Athletic Club To Be Built," *Arizona Republic*, 3 July 1957, 1.

<sup>13</sup> "Big Building Projects Set at Phoenix," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 6 June 1957, 17.

<sup>14</sup> "City Approves 13-Story, 168-Unit Apartment Hotel," *Arizona Republic*, 6 June 1957, 33.

<sup>15</sup> "Central Avenue Zone Plea Near," *Arizona Republic*, 15 December 1951, 8.

<sup>16</sup> "Central Avenue Rezoning Plan to Get Hearing," *Arizona Republic*, 19 December 1951, 1, "Charges Fly On Central Rezoning," 20 December 1951, 1, "13-Story Central Avenue Apartment Building Will Be Built," 6 June 1952, 1 and 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Casa Grande Dispatch*, 20 September 1956, 16; advertisement: "Invest in Amazing Arizona! The A.O.I. Way!" *Arizona Republic*, 30 September 1956, 12 and 8 March 1958, 16.

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with these developments appeared related to financing and an inability to acquire lease commitments by brokers. One high-rise promotor explained the financing problems to Henry Fuller, a real estate editor with the *Arizona Republic* newspaper, "We could get the money to build, but instead of the usual quart of blood, the lenders want two quarts."<sup>18</sup>

Towards the end of the decade, the high-rise development aspirations within the Midtown area leaned more towards more commercial buildings, such as the Mayer office complex, and a small number of high-end, high-rise hotels. At the southwest corner of the area, local developer Del Webb planned the three-million-dollar Continental Phoenix. Along Central Avenue, across from the Phoenix Towers, a coalition of investors from Washington D.C., Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, and Beverly Hills, proposed the four-million-dollar Hotel Oasis. To the north, on the former second location of the Desert Athletic Club, the owners of the Safari Hotel in Scottsdale, Bill Ritter and Ernest Uhlman planned the Capri Hotel.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 3. Illustration of the Coronet Apartment Hotel. *Modern Phoenix*, [www.modernphoenix.net](http://www.modernphoenix.net).

The Aleh'Zon finally broke ground in March 1958 after two years of incessant promotional chatter and a reduction in height to five stories. The James Stewart Company of New York handled the construction, building the first "wing" of the hotel for retail shops. A year later, the hotel plan had grown to its original height and promoters claimed to have lined up the 3.5 million dollars needed to take the project to completion. Its new name was the Charter House Aleh'Zon and it had stepped down from "luxury hotel" to "motor hotel" likely due to the consulting arrangement it had with the Boston-based Hotel Corporation of America. However, the Aleh'Zon never came to fruition, much to the chagrin of over three thousand Arizona investors. For almost three years, it

<sup>18</sup> "20 New Multi-Story Structures Boom Large Apartment Projects," *Arizona Republic*, 21 July 1957, 5.10 and "1957 Construction Refutes Pessimists," 29 December 1957, 5.8.

<sup>19</sup> "Building to Cover City Block," *Arizona Republic*, 8 November 1958, 1, "10-Story Hotel to be Built," 26 March 1959, 1, and "New Hotel to Go Up Here," 21 June 1959, 19.

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seemed as though Central Avenue might become a luxury apartment and hotel row, but by 1960 the only high-rise residential project completed was the Coronet Apartment Hotel (figure 3).<sup>20</sup>

The luxury apartment-hotel was not a new concept for Midtown Phoenix. The Vinton Manor on Central Avenue and the Country Club Apartment Hotel on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, both built in the late 1940s, were likely the first to offer the seasonal and annual leases necessary for earning the hybrid distinction. In the case of the ten-story Coronet Apartment Hotel and its coffee shop, barber and beauty parlors on the first floor and office space on the second, the seasonal-annual arrangement was short-lived and it soon dropped “apartment” from its name, eventually catering to motorists and becoming the Coronet Motor Hotel in the Ramada chain.<sup>21</sup>

In December 1961, the city created a special zoning category for high-rise buildings. The new category was known as an HR (High-Rise building) floating district that would conceivably be allowed anywhere in the city where current R5 (apartment-office), C1 (neighborhood commercial), C2 (intermediate commercial), C3 (general commercial), P1 (surface parking), and P2 (structure parking) existed. Still requiring council approval, the designation limited heights to twenty-five stories or 250 feet.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 4. Illustration of the Camelback Towers. *Arizona Republic*, April 7, 1963.

This was the first time the city addressed the issue of high-rise development, and none too soon. After a two-decade lull in high-rise construction in the city, beginning with the First National Bank building in 1954, there had been a total of seven high-rises built in the city, nine if the eight-story

<sup>20</sup> “City Approves 13-Story 168-Unit Apartment-Hotel,” 6 June 1957, 33, “Luxury Hotel,” *Arizona Republic*, 8 March 1958, 16, “Parking Underground at Projected Hotel,” 16 March 1958, 5.12, and “\$3 ½ Million Motor Hotel To Rise On N. Central,” 8 May 1959, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Advertisements, *Arizona Republic*, 31 October 1948, 2.14, 1 November 1961, 43, 8 February 1966, 38. The building was later converted to office use.

<sup>22</sup> “High-Rise Zoning Studied,” *Arizona Republic*, 12 December 1961, 27.

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Federal and Mayer-Central buildings were included. The city had a nine-story municipal building under construction and Del Webb was erecting a seventeen-story office building in Midtown. The county would soon follow the city's lead with a new nine-story courthouse. Also planned for future completion were high-rises for the Arizona Title, Valley National Bank, Western Savings, two sets of twin apartment towers, a twenty-eight story mixed-use building, the Camelback Towers housing cooperative, and the Executive Towers apartment-hotel.<sup>23</sup>

In 1958, New York developer Milton Saper purchased the Toney Belle Guest Ranch near Central Avenue and Camelback Road, four miles north of downtown, and within a year was promoting the development of the Camelback Towers (figure 4), a seventeen-story cooperative condominium building at what was then considered the northern-most edge of Midtown Phoenix. However, acquiring Federal Housing Authority (FHA) insurance for a cooperative project was a daunting task. The FHA had a 51 percent presale requirement that would be difficult to fulfill.<sup>24</sup>



Figure 5. Advertisement. *Arizona Republic*, May 26, 1963.

Saper was not new to the real estate industry. He had been involved in a number of subdivisions on Long Island and, soon after arriving in Phoenix, built the Shangri La Apartments in east Phoenix "...designed exclusively to be rented to elderly couples."<sup>25</sup> In June 1962, Saper and partners formed the Camelback Towers Construction Company and, with funding primarily from New York interests, began construction. By April 1963, models were available for showing and the

<sup>23</sup> "City Skyline Soars in Cinderella Style," *Arizona Republic*, 18 March 1962, 16-B.

<sup>24</sup> "FHA Insurance Sought for Co-Op Apartments," *Arizona Republic*, 28 February 1960, 5.22 and "25-Story Building Planned: Structure Must Get Variance," 26 January 1963, 1.

<sup>25</sup> "FHA Insurance Sought for Co-Op Apartments;" "Ground-Breaking Next Saturday for 157-Unit Project," *Arizona Republic*, 31 December 1960, 10.

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building was completed in 1964, but as apartments and not as a cooperative as originally planned.<sup>26</sup>

While Saper was trying to get his co-op condo tower project started, in May 1961, the City of Phoenix approved the development of the Executive Towers (figure 5), a twenty-two-story apartment-hotel located at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Clarendon Street, almost three miles north of downtown. The Dru-Colachis Development Company acquired the land just west of Central Avenue in 1960 and hired Alan A. Dailey and Associates to design the four-million-dollar development. The Executive Towers contained studio, one, two, and three bedroom apartments with a restaurant, beauty parlor, and barbershop on the first floor. The project also included a four-story parking garage.<sup>27</sup>

Incorporated in 1958, Dru-Colachis Development was a relatively new company and had completed only one project—an office building—before undertaking the Executive Towers. Though delayed by a labor strike, the construction was completed in August 1963 and the apartment-hotel opened in 1964, a couple of months before the Camelback Towers.<sup>28</sup>

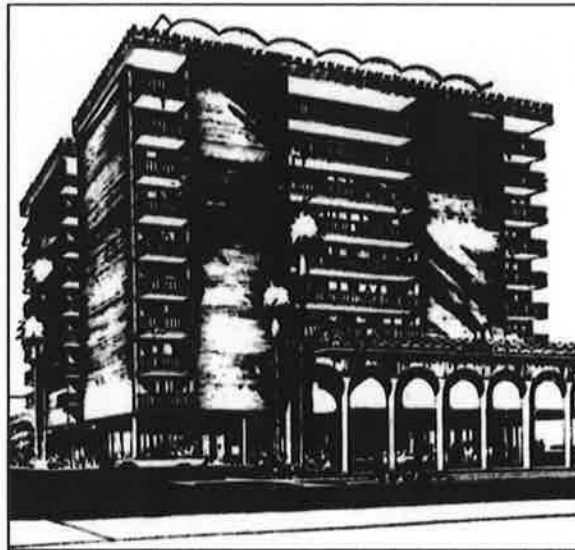


Figure 6. Illustration of Embassy Square Apartments. *Arizona Republic*, July 22, 1962.

In the summer of 1962, just north of downtown on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Joseph P. Schwan planned the eleven-story Embassy Square Apartments (figure 6). Schwan, along with fellow Chicagoans

<sup>26</sup> "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1962), Docket 4189:121-128 and "Warranty Deed," (1959), Docket 2978:193-194; "Apartments Planned," *Arizona Republic*, 23 January 1960, 17, "FHA Insurance Sought for Co-Op Apartments," 28 February 1960, 5.22, "Western Savings Office Building Sold; New Structure is Planned," 31 March 1960, 55, and "A Prestige Address . . .," 7 April 1963, 4-B.

<sup>27</sup> "3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Land Costs \$300,000," *Arizona Republic*, 31 January 1960, 5.23 and "City Okays 22-Story Building," 18 May 1961, 21; "Phoenix to get 22-Story Hotel," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 18 May 1961, 18.

<sup>28</sup> "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1958), Docket 2661:144-152; "Plans Drawn for Offices," *Arizona Republic*, 4 October 1959, 5.25, "West Osborn Offices Near Completion," 11 December 1960, 20-E, "City Okays Building of 22-Stories," 15 June 1961, 21, "Skyscraping Apartment Going Up," *Arizona Republic*, 8 April 1962, 1, "First Tenants," 11 August 1963, 4-E, "Dru-Colachis Firm to Manage Building," *Arizona Republic*, 30 June 1966, 53.

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Martin B. Rubinoff and Meyer Schlechter, began developing multi-family housing in Arizona as early as 1960. Work started on the apartment-hotel project in November 1963 and was completed the following August, offering daily, weekly, and monthly leasing options.<sup>29</sup>

In April 1963, the Phoenix City Council approved a large three-tower apartment project. The developer, A. B. Robbs, Jr., planned two nineteen-story buildings and one twenty-five-story building on an eleven-acre site four miles from downtown Phoenix (on the north side of Osborn Road between approximately 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets). The twenty-million-dollar project included two luxury residential towers with rental rates ranging from two hundred to two thousand dollars per month. A. B. Robbs, Jr., apparently had the funding lined up; he was on the board of directors for Home Savings and Loan Association and the Guaranty Bank, and managed a trust that represented fifty New York savings institutions and banks and five Arizona life insurance companies. However, the three-tower project never broke ground as planned.<sup>30</sup>

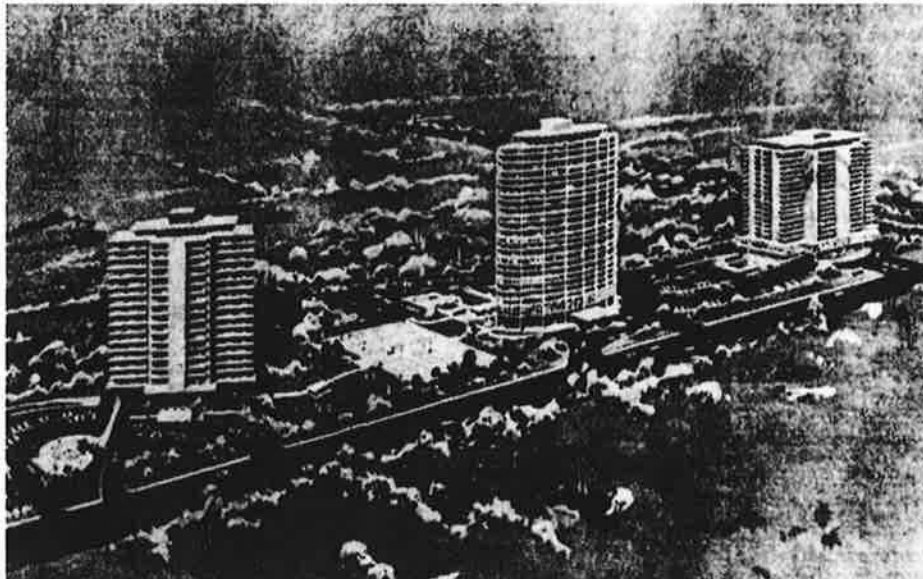


Figure 7. Illustration of A. B. Robbs, Jr. Trust's proposed three tower project. *Arizona Republic*, April 17, 1963.

The Robbs Trust project may have been derailed by a glut of multi-family housing on the market. According to real estate editor Henry Fuller, too many apartments were built in Phoenix during 1963. Citing the Valley National Bank's *Arizona Progress* business review, Fuller noted that in 1960, apartments were 13 percent of the total housing. In 1963, that number was 50 percent. The market needed to catch up with the development. Looking at the construction of Midtown luxury

<sup>29</sup> "Development Corporation Organized," *Arizona Republic*, 23 October 1960, 26-E, "11-Story Rental Planned At Fourth Ave., McKinley," 22 July 1962, E-25, "High-Rise Apartments Started," 10 November 1963, E.1, and classified advertisements, 16 August 1964, 8 and 12 September 1964, 8.

<sup>30</sup> "\$20 Million Apartments Planned Here," *Arizona Republic*, 28 February 1963, 1, "City Approves \$20 Million Osborn Road Apartments," 17 April 1963, 17, 10 March 1963, B-19, and 24 March 1963, E-5; "Phoenix Project," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 17 April 1963, 10. The record are unclear as to the intended use of the third tower.



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residential high-rises, Fuller prophesized, "Midtown Phoenix, along Central, may well fill up with apartments of this type over the next 10 years."<sup>31</sup>

Countering Fuller's opinion was a 1963 survey conducted by Action-Arizona, a company sponsored by the local savings and loan industry. According to the survey, midrange apartments renting monthly were having occupancy problems. Older complexes with annual leases, however, were at 90 percent occupancy. Hence, the newer complexes were accepting weekly rates and competing with hotels and motels. Luxury apartments appeared to be doing well with a clientele of winter seasonal residents, executives, and retired couples. This condominium type of ownership was also popular for semi-retired people in the higher income brackets who desired ownership without maintenance.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the Royal Towers luxury condominiums, which were started in December 1963 and completed as the Regency House apartments in September 1965, no other luxury high-rise apartments or condominiums were forth coming. In 1969, Park Central Development Corporation considered building a twenty-story apartment building as part of a three-tower development, but never made it beyond the consultation stage.<sup>33</sup>

Two years later, the Robbs Trust Osborn triple tower project was renewed, but the city planning and zoning department requested that it be scaled down since it did not meet the new Central Phoenix Plan; the development was outside of the corridor for high-rises (7<sup>th</sup> Street to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue).<sup>34</sup> The plan, created in 1969, sought to contain high-rise development to within the Midtown corridor until the area was sufficiently filled out. According to then planning director John W. Beatty, "The report points out that premature development of prestige areas outside of central Phoenix would undermine existing investment in the corridor and discourage development downtown. This would create conditions of instability and wide-spread duplications of public capital improvements."<sup>35</sup> In 1971, the council approved three sixteen-story buildings for the site, but they were never erected. Decades later, after repetitive changes in zoning and designs, only one residential high-rise was constructed.<sup>36</sup>

In 1969, the city council approved the construction of a seventeen-story, low-cost apartment building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, three miles north of downtown. The Fellowship Towers was sponsored by the Arizona Odd Fellows with funding support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. When completed in 1972, the building was the last residential high-rise erected in Phoenix until over a decade later.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "Too Much Building?" *Arizona Republic*, 29 December 1963, E1.

<sup>32</sup> "\$200-\$300-Month Rentals Slow to Fill, Survey Says," *Arizona Republic*, 10 November 1963, E.1.

<sup>33</sup> "Park Central project in preliminary stage," *Arizona Republic*, 8 January 1969,

<sup>34</sup> "Planning Board Postpones High-Rise Zoning Decision," *Arizona Republic*, 14 January 1971, 28.

<sup>35</sup> "High-rise denied outside central area," *Arizona Republic*, 9 April 1969, 1.

<sup>36</sup> "High-rise zoning is approved for site outside city 'Corridor,'" *Arizona Republic*, 3 June 1971, 25; "2 office mid-rises rejected," 17 July 1986, A15.

<sup>37</sup> "Retirees apartment approved," *Arizona Republic*, 6 March 1969, A-9, "Fellowship Towers nearly built," 6 February 1972, 2K.

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### Developmental History of the Regency House

In 1958, Theodore E. Nelson, Jr. (Ted Nelson) and brothers Jack and Donald Hart, who were partners in the Royal Packing Company, a lettuce distributor in Salinas, California, began a series of land acquisitions in the Salt River Valley. Intending to move the company's center of operations to Arizona, the trio acquired open desert and farmland for development. In the process, they also acquired a number of properties along Central Avenue and created the Royal Land Company to manage these properties. In January 1960, the Royal Land Company, under the leadership of Ted Nelson, moved into one of the properties, a remodeled house at 2323 North Central Avenue.<sup>38</sup>

Within two months of the moving into the former residence, Royal Land announced that it would be developing the property. By the end of the year, they intended to complete a four-story multiuse building with retail on the first floor and offices on the remaining three. The company's plans also included a second office building to be built at a later date (figure 8). The total cost for the project was estimated at three million dollars.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 8. The original office complex planned by Royal Land Company on the current site of the Regency House. *Arizona Republic*, March 13, 1960.

By the summer of 1960, Royal Land Company had yet to break ground on its new building and, instead, was sharing space at 2323 North Central Avenue with an insurance company, renting out

<sup>38</sup> "Certificate of Limited Partnership" (Phoenix: MCRO, 1959), Docket 3002:108-123, 3051:483-495, 3094:11-21, 3102:449-459, and (1962), Docket 4000:51-56; "Partnership Agreement" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1959), Records, 195900001469, 19590002133 19590002158; "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1959), Docket 3058:572-580; "Royal Land Moves to N. Central," *Arizona Republic*, 3 January 1960, 18.

<sup>39</sup> "N. Central Plans Disclosed," *Arizona Republic*, 13 March 1960, 7.26.

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apartments in the Midtown corridor, and trying to sell its undeveloped land northwest of Phoenix. However, in November, Nelson announced again that construction would begin on the four-story building by December 20. The building would be called the Petroleum Building, indicating that oil companies would be leasing out the offices. The new plans also called for the second building, which would be ten-stories—two stories higher than originally planned—to be built at a later date.<sup>40</sup>

At the end of the 1960, the company had sold a million dollars of its undeveloped holdings north and northwest of Phoenix and, in January 1961, began construction on a new building for its offices at 4800 North Central Avenue, just south of the intersection of Central Avenue and Camelback Road, almost adjacent to the future site of the Camelback Towers. The plans for this new building called for a single-story, north wing of a future four-story building. Royal Land Company needed the new space and, once moved, could begin construction at 2323 North Central Avenue.<sup>41</sup>

While their new offices were under construction, Royal Land started building two more projects on Central Avenue. In April, shortly after moving to their new offices, the company broke ground on the new Arizona Economic Security Building near the state capitol, a store in Mesa, and a third building on Central Avenue. By the end of the 1961, the company completed two of its three Central Avenue buildings and started another project at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Camelback Road, though it still had not begun any work at 2323 North Central Avenue.<sup>42</sup>

As it entered 1962, the Royal Land Company increased the pace of its building construction. In February, it sold one of its Central Avenue properties for a sizeable profit and began work on a post office branch and an office building in east Phoenix. After completing the office building on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, it purchased the adjacent property and began construction of another office building. Around the same time, the company began work on a dental office and an apartment complex.<sup>43</sup>

By May, the Royal Land Company had become something of a phenomenon in Phoenix real estate development. According to Ted Nelson in a May 13 interview with the *Arizona Republic*, the change from lettuce packing to commercial and residential property development was unintended. In the process of purchasing land for their packing operation, the Royal Packing Company acquired land that was unsuitable for growing lettuce, such as the properties along Central Avenue. The partners formed Royal Land Company to sell their unwanted and undeveloped properties, but soon discovered that people preferred buildings. Nelson explained, "Then we decided we could build the buildings just as well as having someone else do it. Now we are

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<sup>40</sup> *Arizona Republic*, 30 August 1960, 33 and 11 September 1960, 15, "Work Begins on New Office Building," 11 November 1960, 18.

<sup>41</sup> "Sales near \$1 Million," *Arizona Republic*, 1 January 1961, 16-E, "Footings in for Offices on Central," 15 January 1961, 31-E;

<sup>42</sup> "Central Ave. Job Started," *Arizona Republic*, 29 January 1961, E-27, "Phoenix Mansion Built in 1914 to be Razed to Clear Business Site," 19 February 1961, E-29; "Work Starts this Week on Four-Story Building," 5 March 1961, 30-G, "Royal Land Moves into New Offices," 23 April 1961, G-29, "Southwest Sets a Branch Opening," 28 April 1961, 31. "Fuller Builds Store in Mesa" and "West Jefferson," 28 May 1961, 28-E, "North Central," 20 August 1961, 28-E, "Royal Land builds on N. Central," 24 September 1961, 16-E, "Central and Coronado," 22 October 1961, E-31, and "Camelback Office Job Underway," 29 October 1961, E-29.

<sup>43</sup> "Central Ave. Office Building Sold" and "East McDowell Post Office Footings In," *Arizona Republic*, 18 February 1962, 30-E, "Lot Bought for Offices," 4 March 1962, E-29, "Packers Become Construction Men," 13 May 1962, E-21.

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building on other people's land because they want us to develop it for them or they come to us with land and want us to erect a building on it to fit their needs."<sup>44</sup>

Between January 1961, when the partners started construction of their building at 4800 North Central Avenue, and Nelson's interview with the *Arizona Republic*, Royal Land Company had acquired nineteen buildings, many of which it built and managed through a subsidiary, Royal Management. By 1962, the parent company was erecting a building a month and had become one of the largest building owners on Central Avenue. Nelson also prophesized a trend of people moving back to the center of the city. "Phoenix has been a lot like Los Angeles, spread and scattered. Now the time has come to fill in." He further noted that the city planners were starting to see the need for high-rises, and not just for offices but also for residences. "Mainly offices, but the more people there are working in the central area, the more reason for people to live nearby."<sup>45</sup>

While one of the first projects promoted by the Royal Land Company was their four-story and eight-to-ten-story building on the company's lot at 2323 North Central Avenue, by the fall of 1962 and after the successful construction of twenty-plus properties, the lot remained bare. It appeared that this would soon change in October 1962 when the company received zoning approval for a seventeen-story luxury apartment building on the site.<sup>46</sup>

In anticipation of city approval, a week earlier Ted Nelson and Jack Hart, along with Julius "Bud" Twist, Alfred F. Lustbader, Thomas Tobin, and Samuel H. Landy, formed a new company called Royal Engineering. Twist had a background in construction, Lustbader was in real estate, and Tobin and Landy were attorneys, the latter with experience in office building development in Jersey City, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Houston, and Los Angeles.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of 1962, Royal Land Company and its subsidiaries were part of a larger, newly created Royal Properties, which continued the company's success. Upon completion of the Royal Riviera apartments, Royal Properties returned to the planning commission in January 1963 with another high-rise project: a twenty-five-story apartment complex called the Century House to be located at Central Avenue and Monte Vista Road, just south of the Phoenix Towers. The new development would contain one hundred apartments, four apartments per floor with each having square footage larger than the average home; it would also have an underground parking garage for two-hundred cars. The new residential high-rise was a joint project with the National General Corporation of Los Angeles. According to the company, the financing was in place and construction was scheduled to begin in two months.<sup>48</sup>

The following month, the company sold one property on Central and one of its farm tracts south of the city. It then purchased an office building, a three-hundred-acre ranch west of the city, and

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<sup>44</sup> "Packers Become Construction Men."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> "Retirement Development Zoning Plea Again Denied," *Arizona Republic*, 10 October 1962, 10, "City Zoning Board Okays 2 Projects," 26 October 1962, 21.

<sup>47</sup> "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1962), Docket 4328:518-526; "Applications for Contractors Licenses," *Arizona Weekly Gazette*, 20 April 1965, A.17; "Landy Joins Royal Firms," *Arizona Republic*, 30 September 1962, G-19, "Tobin, Thomas F.," 19 February 1962, B8, "Equity Life Assurance Building Sold," 17 February 1963, 4-E.

<sup>48</sup> "Developers State Financing Assured," *Arizona Republic*, 9 January 1963, 13, "Too Much Building?" *Arizona Republic*, 29 December 1963, E.1, and "Apartment to Rise in Phoenix," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 25 April 1963, 23.

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partnered with a local lumber company on the development of an industrial park. Royal Properties also began work on two medical office complexes, one in north Phoenix and another in Scottsdale.<sup>49</sup>

In March 1963, though it had yet to begin construction on the Century House, Royal Properties announced the construction of a second residential high-rise to be located on its 2323 North Central property. The building would be named Royal Towers and be twenty-one stories tall—four stories higher than originally planned. Like the Century House, the new project was being developed as a partnership between Royal Properties and another entity, Charles E. Winslow, a local residential developer. Together, Winslow, Ted Nelson, and the Hart brothers formed the Royal Towers Company to oversee the development of the project.<sup>50</sup>

Though ground was yet to be broken on either the Royal Towers or the Century House, Royal Properties returned to the city planning department in September 1963 and received approval to build a third high-rise. In this instance, the city approved a joint use building, thirty stories tall, at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Monroe Street in downtown Phoenix. The top fourteen floors would contain 143 apartments, including luxury penthouses; the bottom sixteen floors would be dedicated to office space. Parking would be in a nearby one-thousand-car parking garage built expressly for the new building. George H. Schoneberger, Jr., who was also the architect for the Royal Towers, would work on this project, as well.<sup>51</sup>

The downtown venture would create the tallest building in the state and Donald Mackay, the executive director of the Downtown Development Corporation, believed the project to be an impetus to the rejuvenation of the downtown. "What's lacking in downtown Phoenix," Mackay said, "is people. They (the high-rise buildings) are the answer to problems of the downtown area."<sup>52</sup>

The Royal Towers was to be a condominium, a relatively new property ownership construct in Arizona at the time. Condominium designation required covenants, as did the three-million-dollar mortgage with Valley National Bank. During the months of September and October, the Royal Towers Company created its covenants, conditions, and restrictions, homeowner association charter, legal descriptions, and the rights of homeownership including the ownership of pets (one, either a dog, cat or bird).<sup>53</sup> By December 1963, Royal Engineering was preparing the site for what was to become "the state's largest condominium project."<sup>54</sup>

In January 1964, in an interview with the *Arizona Republic*, Royal Engineering president Bud Twist noted thirteen projects concurrently underway by his company, including the Royal Towers, the Century House, and the as-of-then unnamed downtown apartment-office complex. Two months

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<sup>49</sup> "Industrial Park Project Joined," *Arizona Republic*, 7 October 1962, E-23, "Royal Starts Scottsdale Medical Job," 4 November 1962, E-7, "Four Office Buildings Under Way," 18 November 1962, 2-E, "Third Street Offices Sold at \$250,000," 9 December 1962, 4-E, "300-Acre Ranch Sold," 3 February 1963, 6-E., "Royal Riviera," advertisement, 10 February 1963, 12-E, and "Equitable Life Assurance Building is Sold," 17 February 1963, 4-E.

<sup>50</sup> "Assignment of Limited Partnership Agreement" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1963), Docket 4413:63-64 and "Quit-Claim Deed" Docket 4750:207-208.

<sup>51</sup> "30-Story Building OKd at Phoenix," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 12 September 1963, 46.

<sup>52</sup> "Zoning Group Oks 30-Story Building," *Arizona Republic*, 11 September 1963, 1.

<sup>53</sup> "Royal Towers Company: Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1963), Docket 4750:215-360 and "Realty Mortgage," Docket 4750:361-365.

<sup>54</sup> "Apartments Planned by Royal," *Arizona Republic*, 22 December 1963, 2E.

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later, the anticipated completion date of the condominiums was the spring of 1965 and work had begun on the downtown mixed-use building. However, there was no comment made about the Century House, which may have been shelved due to an apparent glut of apartments on the real estate market.<sup>55</sup>

The Royal Towers had its own difficulties. Shortly after that start of construction, Royal Properties was beginning to have financial problems, including numerous lawsuits and mechanic liens filed for failure to pay for products and services. In an apparent remedy attempt, the parent company began selling off properties and mortgaging others. It also created new companies and acquired others including American National Bank of Wyoming.<sup>56</sup>

By mid-February 1965, the construction of the Royal Towers appeared to be almost complete. The following month, Royal Engineering halted construction over a contract dispute, what Ted Nelson referred to as a "corporate family squabble." As part of the resolution, the Royal Engineering was phased out and replaced with Inland Engineering Company, which was similarly managed. While the work continued, in the spring of 1965 Valley National Bank gave a \$648,000 extension to the loan to complete the building by July 15.<sup>57</sup>

Royal Properties continued to sell off assets, including the American National Bank, but the company and its subsidiaries' legal problems continued. In August, Mark Cockrill, owner of fifty shares of Royal Properties stock, filed a civil suit against the company requesting that it be placed in a receivership. Cockrill's complaint charged the company with mismanaging funds. According to his attorney, Otto Linsenmeyer, ten million dollars were unaccounted, the funds misappropriated or redirected in such a way that it impaired the financial position of the company. The case listed seven corporations, a partnership, two joint businesses, and twenty-seven corporate officers and directors as defendants. The complaint also cited over twenty lawsuits—mostly foreclosures—pending in Maricopa County in which Royal Properties was a defendant. Stock prices the previous month dropped from six dollars a share to seventy-eight cents.<sup>58</sup>

The Royal Towers received its certificate of occupancy on September 28, 1965, but the building was not ready to be opened to the public. By March 1966, perhaps at the request of its mortgage holder Valley National Bank, Royal Properties and its subsidiaries transferred ownership of the Royal Towers to the Page Real Estate Company, a subsidiary of the Page Land and Cattle Company, which had a long history in the acquisition and disposition of property around Arizona. The company hired the Dru-Colachis Development Company (figure 8) to complete the building by

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<sup>55</sup> "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1962), Docket 4866:201-208; "13 Projects Listed by Royal Firm," *Arizona Republic*, 19 January 1964, 4-E and "July Groundbreaking Set for 30-Story Skyscraper," 22 March 1964, 2-E.

<sup>56</sup> "Notice and Claim of Lien" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1964), Docket 4915:494-496; Record 1964-0008347; "Local Firm Acquired by Phoenix Company," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, 12 February 1964, 17; "Firm Here to Buy Bank in Wyoming," *Arizona Republic*, 3 April 1964, 4-C.

<sup>57</sup> "Topoff," *Arizona Republic*, 18 February 1965, 12; "Construction to Resume," *Phoenix Gazette*, 29 March 1965, 48 and "Royal Towers Bank Loan Extended," *Phoenix Gazette*, 26 April 1965, 53.

<sup>58</sup> "Court Denies Suit to Stop Assets Sale," *Phoenix Gazette*, 1 April 1965, 9; "Meeting Called for Bank Stockholders," 2 April 1965, 41, and "Ownership Changes," 1 June 1965, A15; "Laborer and Material Man's Lien," Record number 19650000362 (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1965); *Lis Pendens* (1965), Docket 5570:367-368; "Stockholder Asks Receivership for Firms of Royal Properties," *Arizona Republic*, 4 August 1965, 17.

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September 1, 1966. Page Real Estate, under the name Regency House, Incorporated, also withdrew the horizontal property regime, ending the condominium status of the property.<sup>59</sup>



Figure 8. Stanley J. Dru (left) and James Colachis (right) of Dru-Colachis Development Company. The Regency House is on the background. *Arizona Republic*, June 30, 1966.

Dru-Colachis Development completed the Regency House, and on September 1, its first occupant, Frances G. Blazer, moved into her sixth floor apartment. By the end of September, eleven more families had moved into the building. No longer a condominium, the new apartments still possessed such luxury amenities as a twenty-four-hour doorman and guard, library, lounge, and valet.<sup>60</sup> According to James Colachis, "The continued growth of Phoenix has brought about the need for another luxury high-rise building like the Executive Towers ... the steady advance of the uptown financial district and upcoming development downtown make the Regency House's location a key spot."<sup>61</sup>

While the Regency House may have fulfilled a need for another luxury high-rise, it was the last to do so. In 1965, a year before acquiring the Regency House, Dru-Colachis Development was planning the Imperial Towers, a slightly less expensive apartment building adjacent to the Executive Towers. Alan A. Daily, the architect of record for the Executive Towers, designed the

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<sup>59</sup> "Articles of Incorporation" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1965), Docket 5527:466-467. "Warranty Deed" Docket 5966:222-223 and 227-228; "Quit Claim" (Phoenix: MCRO, 1966), Docket 5966:229-230-238; "Certificate of Amendment" (Phoenix: MCRO, 1966), Docket 6131:528-530. "Declaration of Withdrawal" (Phoenix: MCRO, 1966), Docket 6159:336-338. "Dru-Colachis Firm to Manage Building," *Arizona Republic*, 30 June 1966, 53.

<sup>60</sup> "Floor to Manage Regency House," *Arizona Republic*, 7 August 1966, B-19 and "She Opened the House," 25 September 1966, E.1.

<sup>61</sup> "She Opened the House," *Arizona Republic*, 25 September 1966, E.1.

Regency House

Maricopa County, Arizona

Name of Property

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building, Mardian Construction was contracted to build it, and the company received a building permit from the city. However, the Imperial Towers never came to fruition.<sup>62</sup>

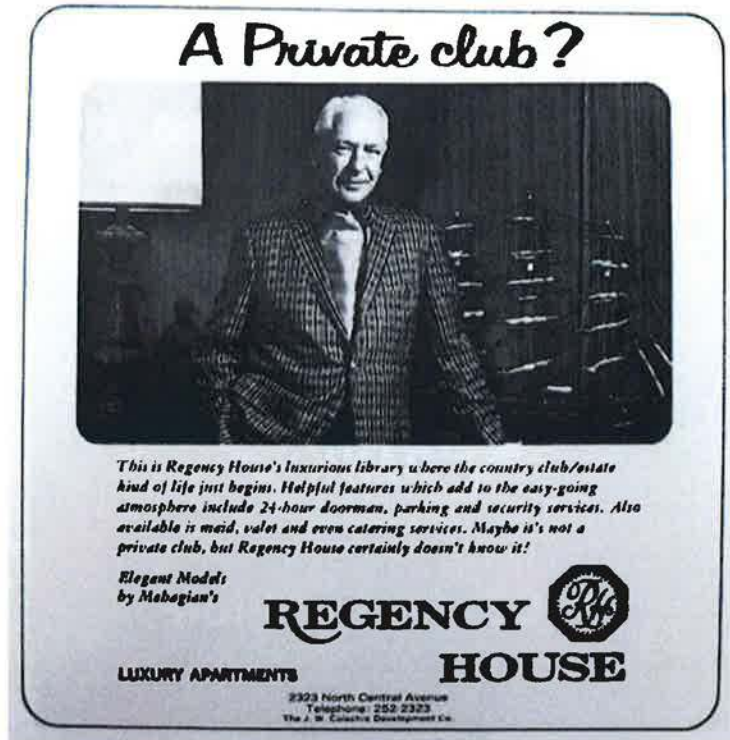


Figure 9. Extracted from Regency House brochure ca. 1966. Courtesy of the Regency House.

In the fall of 1967, after managing the Regency House apartments for a little over a year, J. W. Colachis Development (Dru had left the partnership) bought the property. The building remained a rental property until 1980. A year earlier, Colachis began the process of creating a condominium, filing a new horizontal regime and covenants. By 1980, condominiums were ready for sale. On March 21, 1980 a few of the first purchasers filed their special warranty deeds, including Frances G. Blazer, who was also the first resident in the building.<sup>63</sup>

Though the ownership of the Regency House converted from rental apartments to condominiums—as initially planned for the property when it was the Royal Towers—very little else changed after the high-rise's construction. Many of the residents, such as Frances G. Blazer, remained during the transition and it is likely that the continuity in residency is more than partially responsible for the community efforts to preserve building.

<sup>62</sup> "Construction Activities in Phoenix, Maricopa County," *Arizona Weekly Gazette*, 16 March 1965, B.8. "Proposed Apartment Building," *Phoenix Gazette*, 30 March 1965, 16, "Building Permit at \$3.2 Million," 29 March 1965, 17.

<sup>63</sup> "Regency Building is Sold," *Arizona Republic*, 5 November 1967, F.1; "Declaration of Horizontal Property Regime and of Covenants, Conditions, and restrictions for Regency House" (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1979), Docket 14026:190-222; "Special Warranty Deed" (1980), Docket 14306:917-918.



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Unlike the Phoenix Towers, there are no enclosed balconies at the Regency House, nor has it received additions such as the Executive Towers or a substantial remodeling such as the Coronet Apartment Hotel, which is now a glass encased office building. The only noticeable changes to the Regency House property are the addition of ramps on the north and south sides of the property to improve building accessibility, the conversion of the library into a gym, the addition of a hot tub, and fencing around the pool area to assure compliance with city and state laws.

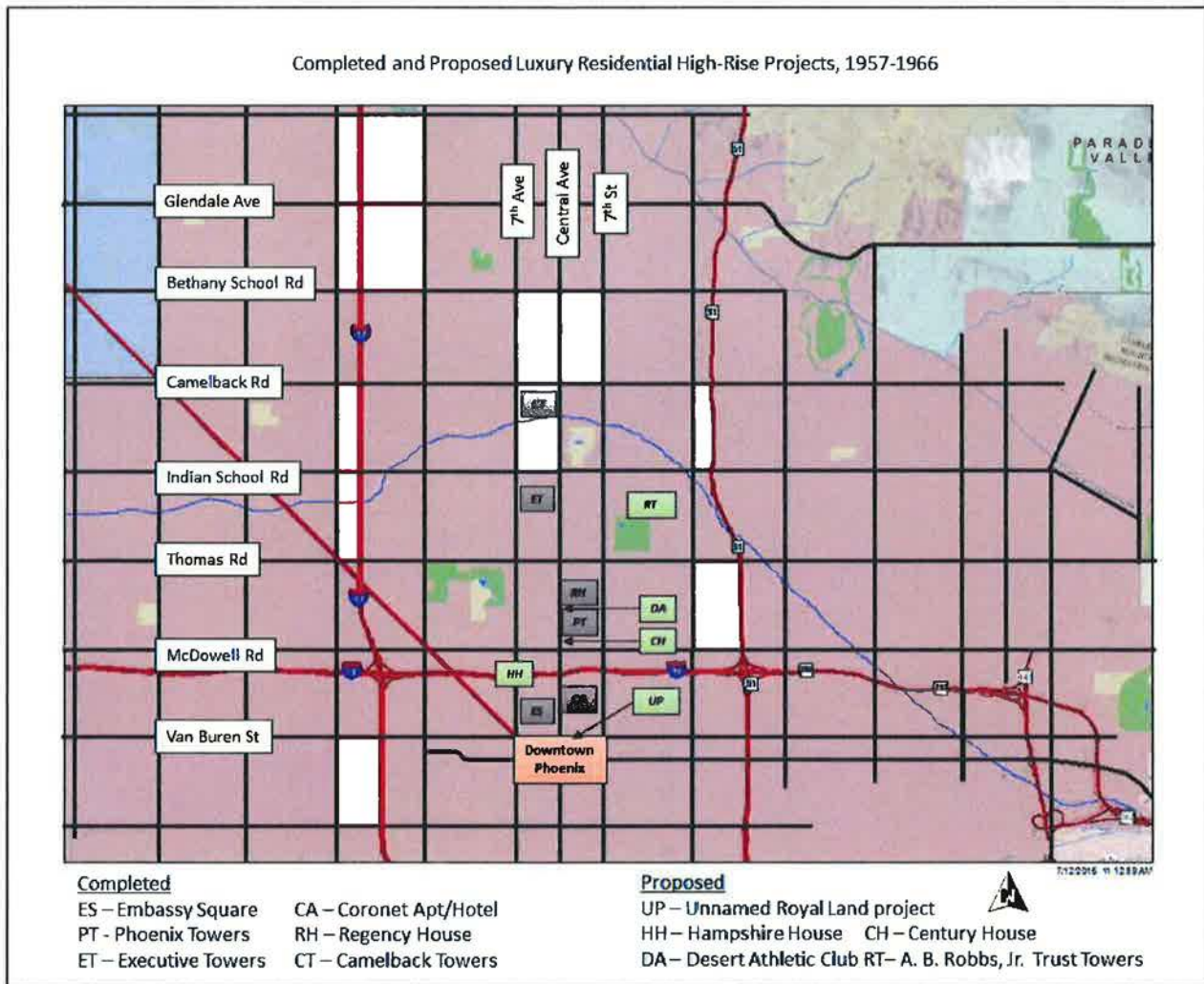


Figure 10. Completed and Proposed Residential High-Rise Projects, 1957-1966. Maricopa County Assessor's Office, edited by Vincent Murray.

These modifications, which updated the Regency House to popular trends and contemporary zoning requirements, had very little impact on its integrity. After five decades, the property continues to convey its association with the brief period of luxury residential high-rise development that took place in Midtown Phoenix during the years 1957 through 1966. During that period, developers proposed over a dozen plans for luxury residential high-rises, though only six were built (figure 10). The Regency House represents this ephemeral, albeit intensive, effort to offer a then nascent form of luxury housing in Midtown Phoenix.

Regency House

Maricopa County, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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*Arizona Republic* (Phoenix).

*Arizona Weekly Gazette* (Phoenix).

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Regency House

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Name of Property

County and State

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"Regency House: Horizontal Property Regime," *Book of Maps*. Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1979, 217:40.1-24.

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*Tucson Daily Citizen*.

"Warranty Deed." Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office 1959. Docket 2978:193-194.

Philip R. VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2010.

Regency House Maricopa County, Arizona  
Name of Property County and State

"Warranty Deed" Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office 1965. Docket 5966:222-223 and 227-228.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Latitude: 33.473739 Longitude: 112.073105

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The legal boundary description of the property incorporates lots from the Ashland Place Amended plat as recorded with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office on March 11, 1921. Specifically, the property consists of Lots 35, 36, the fifteen-foot right-of-way between Lot 36 and Lots 37 and 38 formerly used as an alley, 39, 40, 41, and the western thirty-four feet of Lot 42.<sup>64</sup>

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the property is that as described in the Regency House Horizontal Property Regime as recorded with Maricopa County Recorder's Office on November 13, 1979. The regime is a publication of a declaration creating the condominium.

<sup>64</sup> "Ashland Place Amended," *Book of Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1921), 10:15; "Regency House: Horizontal Property Regime," (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1979), 217:40.1-24.

Regency House Maricopa County, Arizona  
Name of Property County and State

**11. Form Prepared By:**

Name/Title: Vincent S. Murray, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arizona Historical Research

Street & Number: 1155 East Bishop Drive

City or Town: Tempe State: Arizona Zip Code: 85282

Email: vince@azhistory.net

Telephone: (480) 829-0267

Date: July 17, 2016

Regency House

Maricopa County, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

### Photograph Log

#### Photo Log

Name of Property: Regency House

City or Vicinity: Phoenix

County: Maricopa County

State: Arizona

Photographer: Dick Ely

Date Photographed: April 18, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Southwest corner, facing northeast.
2. South façade, facing north.
3. Southeast corner, facing north-northwest.
4. North façade (lower portion) and accessibility ramp from pool area, facing west.
5. Pool house, facing north.
6. Fireplace, facing north.
7. Pool cabanas, facing west.
8. Northwest corner, facing east-southeast.
9. Front façade and detached portico, facing east.
10. Entrance into main exterior lobby, facing north.
11. Exterior lobby, facing east-northeast.
12. Retail establishment, facing south.
13. Main lobby entrance, facing east-southeast.
14. Main lobby, facing north.
15. Main lobby entrance (from inside) facing northwest.
16. Elevator corridor, facing east.
17. Elevator corridor ceiling, facing east.
18. Secondary lobby, facing west-northwest.
19. Hoover Avenue entrance from exterior lobby, facing west-northwest.
20. Library/Gym, facing east-southeast.
21. Community room, facing east.
22. Typical residential floor (sixteenth floor in this photo), facing west.
23. Typical elevator bays (sixteenth floor in this photo), west-northwest.
24. Typical utility room entrance (sixteenth floor in this photo), facing west-south west.
25. Typical apartment entrance, facing southwest.

Regency House  
Name of Property

Maricopa County, Arizona  
County and State

Maps

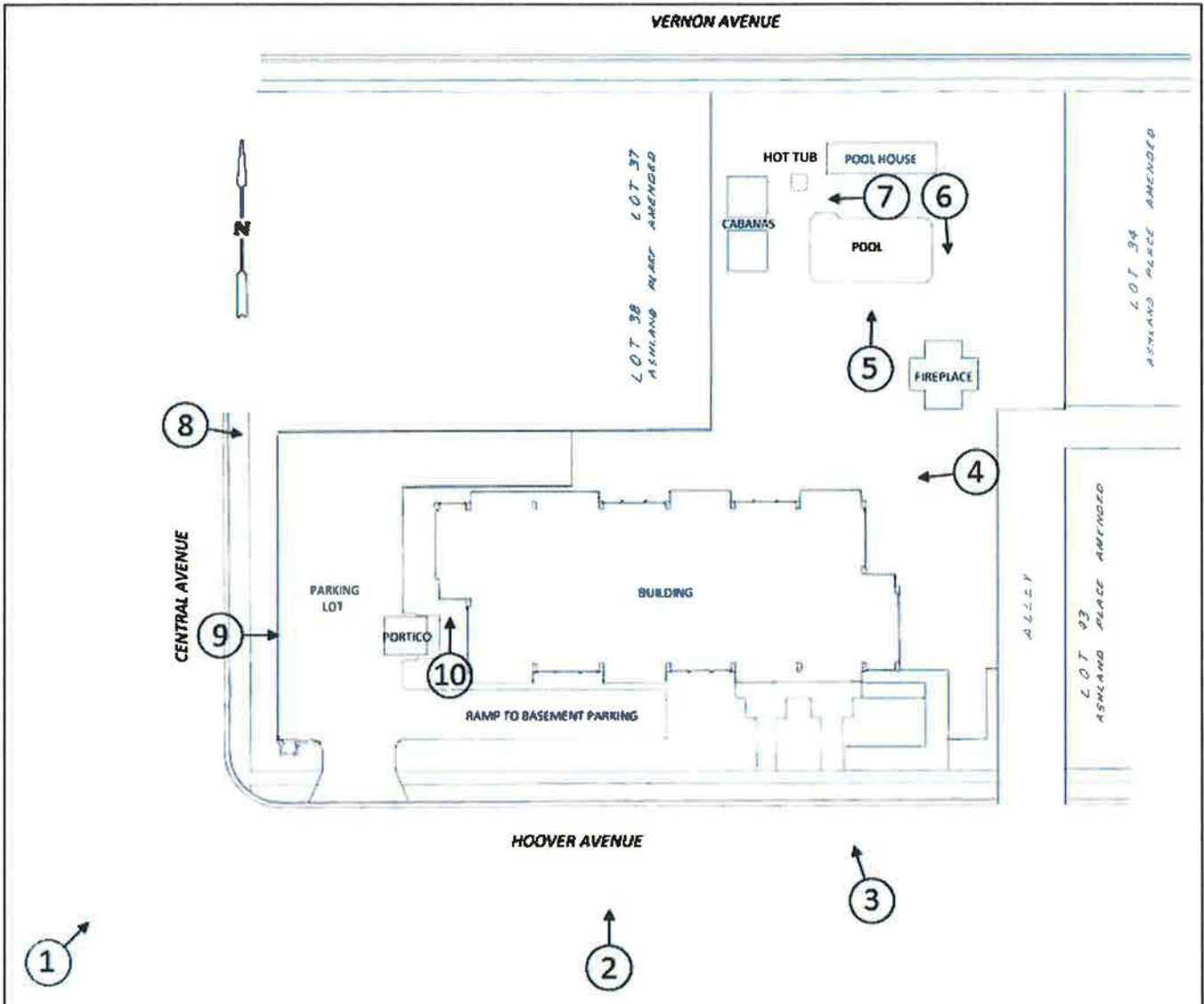


Figure 1. Based on "Exhibit 'A'" from the Horizontal Property Regime for The Regency House by Evans, Kuhn, and Associates, 15 May 1979. Edited by Vincent Murray.

Regency House  
Name of Property

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County and State

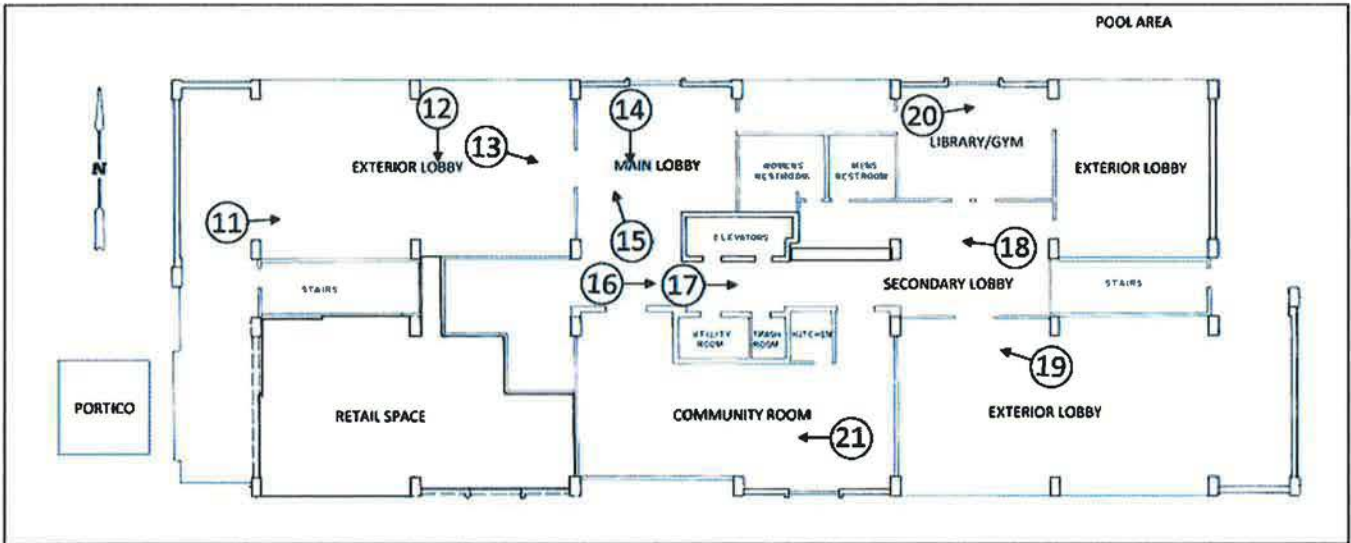


Figure 2. Based on "Exhibit 'A'" from *the Horizontal Property Regime for The Regency House* by Evans, Kuhn, and Associates, 15 May 1979. Edited by Vincent Murray.

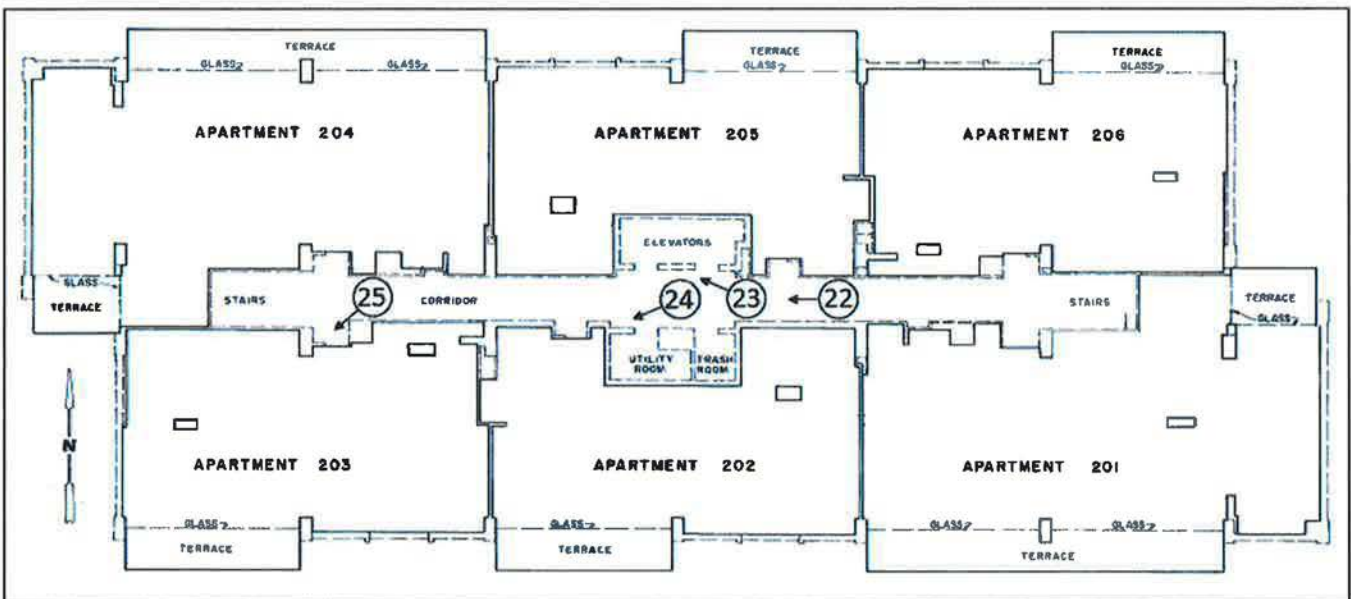


Figure 3. Based on "Exhibit 'A'" from *the Horizontal Property Regime for The Regency House* by Evans, Kuhn, and Associates, 15 May 1979. Edited by Vincent Murray.



Regency House  
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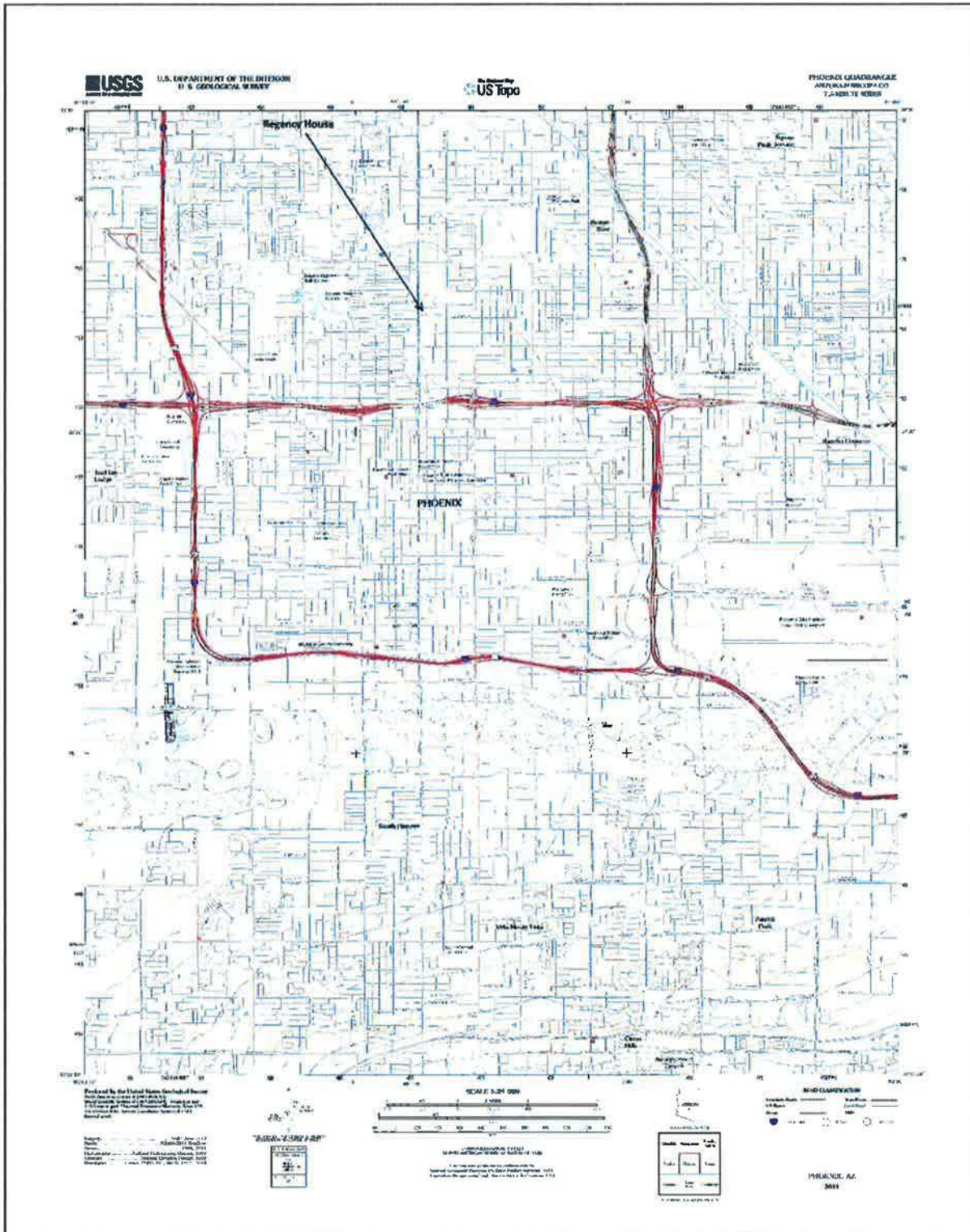


Figure 4. USGS Map Phoenix Quadrangle 7.5x7.5, 2011. Arrow points to property.

Regency House  
Name of Property

Maricopa County, Arizona  
County and State



Figure 5. Arrow points to property. Aerial map from Maricopa County Assessor's Office. Latitude: 33.473739 Longitude: 112.073105 from Bing.

**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 100 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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CAUTION  
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REGENCY ON CENTRAL

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REGENCY ON CENTRAL





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DODG & BORN









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THE EXTINGUISHER  
HOSE CABINET









EXIT

16





16



6





11007

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Regency House  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARIZONA, Maricopa

DATE RECEIVED: 8/05/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/02/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/19/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/20/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000630

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 9/20/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Comm. plan + dev - high rise development in  
1965-1966  
Phoenix  
house*

RECOM./CRITERIA A

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE [Signature]

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 9/20/16

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

RECEIVED 2280

AUG - 5 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

**ARIZONA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO)  
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
TRANSMITTAL FORM  
\*\*FEDERAL EXPRESS\*\***

**DATE: July 28, 2016**

**TO:**

**J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005-5905**

**FROM:**

**Vivia Strang, CPM  
AZ State Parks  
National Register Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1100 West Washington Street  
Phoenix AZ 85007**

**National Register Nominations:**

**Beaver Creek School, Rimrock, Yavapai, AZ  
Regency House, Phoenix, Maricopa, AZ**

**Accompanying documentation is enclosed, as required. Should you have any questions or concerns please contact me at [vstrang@azstateparks.gov](mailto:vstrang@azstateparks.gov) or 602.542.4662.**



Deline, Lisa &lt;lisa\_deline@nps.gov&gt;

---

**RE: Regency House nomination - Maricopa Co.**

1 message

---

**wcollins@azstateparks.gov** <wcollins@azstateparks.gov>

Fri, Sep 16, 2016 at 11:19 AM

To: "Deline, Lisa" &lt;lisa\_deline@nps.gov&gt;

Cc: Vivia Strang &lt;vstrang@azstateparks.gov&gt;

I checked with the preparer to confirm his count. In

Section 7, Page 6. "Northwest of the pool is the hot tub, which was installed in the 1980s and is a non-contributing structure." The contributors are: the building, two pool cabanas, swimming pool, pool house, and fireplace. The pool house would be the second building in the count and the others the four structures.

Does this clarify?

Bill Collins