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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: Main Library

Other names/site number: The Public Library Albuquerque and Bernalillo County

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 501 Copper Avenue NW

City or town: Albuquerque State: NM County: Bernalillo Zip Code: 87102

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

	<p><u>4/10/19</u></p>
<p>Dr. Jeff Pappas, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer</p>	
<p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></span></p>	

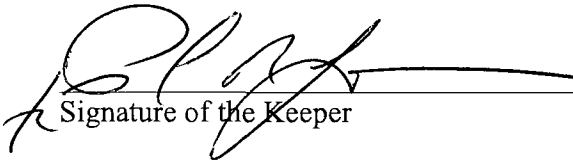
Doe-Kag-Wats  
Name of Property

Kitsap County, WA  
County and State

**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

6/13/2019  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Brutalism

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Main Library in Albuquerque was designed in the Brutalist style by George Pearl and completed in 1975. The three-story 104,577-square-foot library occupies the south half of the city block bounded by Copper and Tijeras avenues and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets in downtown Albuquerque. The library is built of poured-in-place post-tensioned concrete beams placed at thirty-six feet on center and horizontal floor slabs. The building is clad in tan-colored brick, with floor-to-ceiling tinted glass on most elevations. The irregular-shaped building is oriented east-to-west with large, open public spaces which can be reconfigured by moveable walls along tracks integrated into the system of coffered light modules. Service functions, such as stairs, and offices and meeting rooms are located along perimeter walls. Second-floor cantilevered projections house service functions and areas for reading. These projections are defining features of the design. The projection at the corner of Copper Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street shades the main entrance, which is also denoted by a bush-hammered concrete sign. Basement-level courts are located at each corner for outdoor reading, with the northwest court designed for truck deliveries. The landscape around the library is dedicated to Southwest plantings.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## Narrative Description

The Main Library appears on the exterior as a localized interpretation of the Brutalism in which important elements of the style are subverted by flexible interiors and integration of natural light. Designed by Albuquerque architect George Pearl of Stevens, Mallory, Pearl and Campbell Architects (SMPC), the library is two-story, polygon-shaped building features with small second-floor projections at the corners and larger projections on the sides. The bold, sculptural form is animated by the upper-level projections, which are clad in tan-colored brick, rather than formed rough-cast concrete, which is more typical of Brutalism. Here, brick is a part of the physical context of the neighborhood, and communicates in a language understood to passersby. The library is laid in running-bond brick with tinted mortar that creates an intense tan hue. Decorative brickwork in the form of a single course of headers is located along the parapet. “Main Library” is mounted on the east and twice on the south facade in black, cast-metal, pin-mounted sans-serif letters.<sup>1</sup>

The Brutalist style is distinguished by the cantilevered projections at the second floor. Projections include two, over-size windows to illuminate reading rooms on the east side of the floor with natural light. These two windows are the largest and are fixed in cantilevered projections on southeast corner and the northeast corner. The large five-light windows, which admit sharp, dramatic shafts of light in the morning, are seamlessly installed in a brick wall that extends continuously from the exterior to the interior. Second-floor projections are supported by cast-concrete, which forms the sills below and the lintels above the projections.

The second floor, because of its administrative functions features large areas of unpenetrated walls. This floor is not flooded with natural light like the first floor—natural light is limited to the projecting windows and augmented by the coffered-ceiling lights. Windows are set in smaller projections that include rectangular-shaped windows, which illuminate administrative areas to the north and south, and triangular-shaped projections formed by razor-sharp, acute angles on the northwest and southwest corners that also provide light to administrative areas. These west-end projections form razor-sharp, acute angles and include beveled sills. The windowless projection on the rear (west end) does not contain windows because it houses the ventilation equipment.

Windows set in cantilevered projections throughout the library include distinctive beveled-brick sills laid in soldier-course bond. The windows each have a beveled sill with a molded-brick course that provides a transition from the roughly seventy-degree angle of the bevel to the vertical wall below. These window sills have precedents (in concrete) in Brutalism, especially in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic regions. Distinctive window treatments are integral to Brutalism, with frequent use of fixed, concrete *brise soleil* (sun break), egg-crate-style windows,

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<sup>1</sup> Disorientation and dislocation are tenets of Brutalism. Signs, announcing either direction or function usually do not appear on Brutalist buildings. See the Yale School of Architecture in New Haven, Conn., and the Buffalo City Court Building in Buffalo, NY.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

and beveled sills. Beveled sills appear in Brutalist landmarks, including the Armstrong Rubber Headquarters in New Haven, Conn., the Robert C. Weaver Federal Building, headquarters of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C.; and Boston City Hall in Boston, Mass.

On the interior, the southeast and northeast projections include soldier-course brick sills that form a two-foot-wide bench for reading in natural light. The architect explained the importance of the windows for the patron:

The new building gives you different perspectives on the world and your place in the world. At one moment, you are part of the quiet intensity of intellectual work. At the next moment, as you step into the lounge area, you are figuratively thrust into through the giant windows into Albuquerque's busy urban scene. If you are on third floor, you can get a bird's eye view of the city's ever-changing skyline set dramatically against the New Mexico landscape. If you're on the main level, you have a more mundane and homey view of the auto and pedestrian traffic on the street.<sup>2</sup>

The entrance, sheltered by a projecting window, lies in deep shadow, a characteristic of Brutalism in which main or ceremonial entrances are avoided or obscured. The corner entrance is identified by a cast-concrete sign with a bush-hammer finish. Light plays across the entrance and the planes of the building, emphasizing its irregular-shaped volumes. In bright light the sun rakes across large expanses of brick, casting other areas in shadow. Diagonal shafts of light cut across exterior and pass through large expanses of glass to illuminate the interior. Shadows form continuously in the lower-level courts, which are situated below street level.

The architect explained the practical applications of shade wherein "the main volume is set so far back from the street, that large glass areas well protected from the sun by the overhanging upper level can reveal the most popular library elements to the passing public without the distractions of noise and sun."<sup>3</sup> Light and its play across rough-cast concrete walls was an essential characteristic of Brutalism, an idea which George Pearl embraced with his irregular-brick planes.

In 1971, as plans for the new library were underway, Pearl told city commissioners that the new library "will have more flexibility than any [other] we've seen."<sup>4</sup> When completed four years later, the architect explained:

In order to preserve the flexibility of the main volume of public space, these servant buildings had to project outside the central rectangle. The master volume was therefore forced back from the property lines. More of the site was

<sup>2</sup> S.M.P.C., *New Mexico Architecture* (September-October 1975): 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> "Architect Gives Commission Plans for Uncluttered Library Here," *Albuquerque Journal*, July 20, 1971.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

thus preserved for public space outside the building and the servant projections added interest to the building's massing. This configuration of large volumes setback back from the street as much as thirty feet gave us the opportunity of developing basement level courts around much of the building's periphery."<sup>5</sup>

Pearl's interior plan offered the greatest possible flexibility. The architect achieved this by utilizing a grid of reinforced-concrete columns that provided open floor plans. Flexibility is emphasized by the system of moveable wall systems that hang from tracks in the egg-crate-style coffered-ceiling lights. Brutalist buildings eliminated the flexible steel-and-concrete frame in favor of monumental concrete sculptural forms that served as the structural frame. Brutalist floor plans, cast in concrete, were immovable from the moment the building was completed.

The floor plan of the Main Library, in contrast, included large areas open to the public and administrative spaces on the first and second levels. Service functions, such as stairs, elevators, restrooms, meeting rooms, and offices, are located along perimeter walls. Meeting rooms include the original brightly colored wood-and-vinyl chairs. The first floor, which includes information and circulation desks, is mostly dedicated to reading tables, computer stations, and rows of book shelves. The walls are tan-colored brick with tinted mortar and brown vertical paneling. Bands of floor-to-ceiling windows at the east and west ends flood the first floor with natural life.

The second floor is larger than the first because of the increased floor space provided by projections on the north and south. This floor is divided between public and administrative spaces by a moveable wall. The public space includes special subjects, reading desks, and reading nooks in the east-end projecting windows, which are illuminated by bright shafts of light in the morning. The west side contains administrative functions, such as offices, conference room, staff lounge, and the acquisitions department. The interior is finished with tan-colored brick walls and brown vertical paneling. The egg-crate-style ceiling lights, as in the first floor, include tracks for sliding partition walls. Administrative areas include furniture original to the library dedication, including Eames Aluminum Group Executive Chairs, Eames Sofa Compact, Eames Tulip chairs and tables, and Eames Walnut Stools, manufactured by Herman Miller. The acquisitions department includes original steel desks and cabinets.

The lower level is divided among a children's section, a 300-seat community meeting room, a 217-seat auditorium, and space for book storage. This level includes entrances to three courts for out-of-doors reading. The courts, which are located at the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of the library, are set below street level and include plantings of native species. The courts are supported by cast-concrete retaining walls with a bush-hammer finish. Some walls rise above street level to form barrier walls along the sidewalk. These are topped with horizontal pipe rails. Most court walls rise only to street grade and are surmounted by a steel-picket fence, which cast dramatic shadows into the lower-level courts. The fourth service court, which is also

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<sup>5</sup> S.M.P.C., 18.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

formed by a cast-concrete retaining wall with a bush-hammer finish, is lined with a steel-picket fence. This court provides vehicle access to the library.

The Main Library, set back from the street on the east and south sides, is surrounded by a plaza laid in tan-colored concrete tiles laid in a grid with exposed aggregate. Openings in the plaza and planting boxes, as the architect intended, were planted with native species and deciduous trees. These are most apparent on the east and south sides with thick plantings of yucca, chamisa, native grasses, and pine trees. A sycamore tree is located on the northeast corner and locust trees are planted along most elevations. The courts are planted with pine and cedar trees, butterfly bushes, and native grasses.

The setting of the library includes early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial blocks and late-20<sup>th</sup> century low-rise buildings and tall-office buildings. The bold, sculptural form of the library stands apart from the surrounding buildings. Southeast of the main library is the Very Special Arts Garage, constructed in 1985, to serve library patrons. The five-story concrete parking structure permits views from the upper levels of the flat-roofed library against the flat West Mesa above and to the west.

In 2006, the main entrance was modified by Cherry/See/Reames Architects to include a tinted-glass entrance lobby. In 2010, the firm reconfigured the space to include a coffee shop. The interior, heavy-pipe frame supports anodized-aluminum frames and tinted windows. The triangular-shaped roofs of the additions rise above the first level against the brickwork on both sides of the main entrance. Later, a small steel bus shelter, a large ART bus shelter, and a steel sculpture were added to the library grounds.

The Main Library is a localized interpretation of Brutalist design, crafted for its particular site, its local climate, and its users, while still maintaining the bold forms and linear elements of Brutalism. The library features a prominent entrance on a central downtown block, provides accommodations to patrons beyond the tenets of Brutalism, and celebrates the New Mexico sun to invite readers inside and out of doors. In cladding the Main Library in brick, the architect sought a design that would welcome the public. Native plantings, expansive windows, warm interior spaces, and the open, flexible plan endeared the Main Library to public. Leroy Perkins, writing in the *Albuquerque Journal*, believed “the new library might be termed a work of art. The new addition to Albuquerque’s changing downtown stands in contrast to its sometimes bleak surroundings.”<sup>6</sup>

### Historic Integrity

The Main Library has had few significant alterations since its completion in 1975. The only major alteration to the building was the addition of an enclosed lobby in 2006 and 2010. Here, the dark-tinted glass and triangular-shaped roofs echo the original massing of the library to

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<sup>6</sup> Leroy Perkins, “Library Grand Opening to Spotlight Arts,” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 6, 1975.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

minimize the effect of the new construction. The Main Library retains all aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

- Main Library is counted as one contributing building.
- Albuquerque Public Library sign is counted as one contributing object.
- Landscape features are counted as one contributing site.
- Furniture purchased when the library was completed is counted one contributing object.
  
- Sculpture on the library grounds is counted as one noncontributing object.
- ART bus shelter is counted as one noncontributing structure.
- Metal-and-glass bus shelter on south side is counted as one noncontributing structure.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Politics/Government

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1975

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1975

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Pearl, George (architect)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Main Library is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because the library, designed by Albuquerque architect George Pearl and completed in 1975, is exceptionally significant as a localized interpretation of Brutalist design, crafted for its particular site, its local climate, and its users, while still maintaining the bold forms and linear elements of Brutalism. The library, with its projecting windows and beveled sills, maintains the grand scale and sculptural form associated with Brutalism. Pearl's design, unlike most Brutalist buildings, welcomes patrons with flexible floor plans filled with natural light and lower-level courts for reading amid native plantings in the bright New Mexico sun. The three levels include open interior plans with expanses of coffered-ceiling lights that support moveable partitions. The tan-brick exterior is repeated on the interior. The lower-level courts are formed of bush-hammered concrete, a popular Brutalist material. The site is surrounded by native plantings, as the architect intended. The Main Library is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the areas of community planning and development and politics/government because the library was a main component in the redevelopment of downtown Albuquerque as part of the city's urban renewal efforts in the 1960s and 1970s. The Main Library meets criteria consideration G because it achieved significance within the last fifty years and is of exceptional importance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Design of the Main Library

“Give us a building . . . which people will want to come see. Give us a friendly monument without domes or grand stairways . . . Give us as wide a range of reader environments as possible—open lounges, partially secluded carrels, closed study rooms, open courts sheltered from the noise and danger of the street.”<sup>7</sup> In 1975, Library Director Don Reichman, proud of his new library, reminisced on the demands he placed on his architect, George Pearl. The architect hewed closely to his clients wishes and the result is a library, the Main Library in downtown Albuquerque, which is exceptionally significant as a localized interpretation of Brutalist design, which caters to patrons with flexible floor plans illuminated with natural light and setbacks from the street to permit lower-level reading courts and gardens for native plantings. Its Brutalist scale and sculptural form belie an interior planned for the use of the public and library administration, and which sought to accommodate future changes in library technology, even if this could not be known during the planning of the library. Where many Brutalist buildings were perceived as antagonistic to by the public with cold concrete interiors, the Main Library was

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<sup>7</sup> Don Reichman quoted in S.M.P.C., 12.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

created as an educational refuge for visitors. Second-floor windows cantilevered above the first floor provide small, intimate reading nooks that flood the interior with natural light. Coffered-ceiling lights create the perceptions of low ceilings, which reduce the reading rooms to human scale, and promote feelings of comfort among patrons. The interior is finished with tan-brick, wood paneling, and wall-to-wall carpet. The architect surrounded the library on all sides with lower-level courts for patrons to read out of doors in warm weather.

In his design for the Main Library, George Pearl of the firm Stevens, Mallory, Pearl, and Campbell, focused on the needs of the public and the library administration, which obviated many of the problems that are characteristic of Brutalism. Rather than interior cast-concrete walls, Pearl designed a flexible system of moveable walls. Each floor is readily navigated with easy-to-locate stairs, elevators, and restrooms. Library functions, such as the circulation desk, reference desk, and the stacks, are intuitive to visitors. The interior finishes are not concrete, but tan-colored brick, wood paneling, and wall-to-wall carpet for a warm, inviting environment. And the architect included courts for patrons to read out of doors and enjoy the New Mexico sun. The Main Library is monumental, but its interior design transcends the problems of many buildings in the Brutalist style. In 1971, Don Reichman exclaimed to the city council:

Pearl has achieved what other libraries have been talking about,”—which is to put all the fixed elements out of the rectangular space which is called the library. The fixed structures are monumental spaces, which occupy floor space from bottom to top of the structure—‘like escalators, which go all the way up through the building. ‘Shafts’ also are monumental spaces, ‘like stairways, toilets, and other features which are old ideas in libraries and disrupt the changeability of the building. The fixed spaces and the ‘slave’ spaces which are devoted entirely to stairways, mechanical equipment and other fixed elements, will be on all four sides of the main building.<sup>8</sup>

The first public library in Albuquerque opened in 1901 and was housed in Perkins Hall, a building donated to the city by prominent residents Joshua and Sarah Raynolds with collections provided by local business leaders. After fire damaged this building in 1923, the main library was moved to a new Pueblo-Revival style building on the corner of Central Avenue and Edith Boulevard in 1925. In the decades following the Second World War, the city of Albuquerque experienced significant growth and development. To keep pace with this growth, the Albuquerque Public Library opened new branches in several newly built suburban neighborhoods, beginning with the Ernie Pyle Memorial Library in 1947, and followed by other satellite branches in the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1970, city officials recognized the need for a new downtown branch. City residents approved a general obligation bond to construct the Main Library on April 7, 1970; bonds were issued the

<sup>8</sup> “Architect Gives Commission Plans, July 20, 1971.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

next year.<sup>9</sup> The Main Library represents the leading edge of library science in the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Don Reichman, predicted that “everything which we are doing now, we will be doing differently in ten years. Give us a building that will not get in the way of our need to change.”<sup>10</sup> In response Pearl designed the largest public library in the state and few came close to its holdings. The only library in the state larger was Zimmerman Library on the campus of the University of New Mexico. On its opening day, the architect described the Main Library as “holding 200,000 books with room for another 100,000 volumes. The new library will serve as a central part of the New Mexico library system with books being loaned to communities throughout the state.”<sup>11</sup> The parameters of the design space for 500 patrons and 500,000 volumes. After visiting “twenty of the most conspicuous new libraries in the country,” the architects “talked to librarians, the architects, and library users about the good and the bad aspects of their libraries.”<sup>12</sup> The principal issue shared by these libraries, observed Don Reichman, was that “change in library media was rapid and omnipresent and that flexibility of interior space is the preeminent requirement for providing continuously adequate and creative library services.”<sup>13</sup> George Pearl believed that through modern libraries “everyone should be a Renaissance Man” and the library, in its role of providing information to the public, supported this goal. “We must get information to the people—the whole spectrum from technicians, to students to housewives.”<sup>14</sup>

The architects responded with secondary and administrative functions placed along the perimeter walls, leaving a block-long open, public space interrupted only by structural columns set at thirty-six feet on center. Many of the walls were designed to be moveable for greater flexibility. The coffered ceiling lights included tracts for the walls, air supply and return, and connections to electrical, telephone, and video systems. Flexibility provides patrons with the choice to read out-of-doors in one of three lower-level courts “sheltered from the noise and danger of the busy streets.” The fourth court is devoted to vehicular services, including bookmobiles. The building’s flexible design includes space for future growth in the lower level for collections and in the second floor for administrative functions. The architects provided for a future third floor with adequate structural support and stairs to the roof.

The Main Library succeeds because George Pearl created a localized interpretation of Brutalism that caters to the public with an easily identified corner entrance, open floor plans, lower-level courts for out of doors reading with the bright New Mexico sun. Brutalism is evident in its scale and sculptural form, with its second-floor projections and beveled window sills. The building was an immediate success with the public when it was completed in 1975. Cathy Robbins of

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<sup>9</sup> Ronald Rozelle, “The Main Library,” *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

<sup>10</sup> Don Reichman quoted in S.M.P.C., 12.

<sup>11</sup> “Library Opens Monday,” *Albuquerque Journal*, February 23, 1975

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “Don Reichman quoted in “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* (September-October 1975): 12.

<sup>14</sup> “New Downtown Library to Stimulate Renaissance,” *Albuquerque Journal*, December 1, 1974.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

Albuquerque Arts League asked, “Can a building make you feel good . . .? Albuquerque’s new library. . . makes me feel good. As I wandered around the three levels in March, I couldn’t help but silently compare the library to the Convention Center. The library is everything the Convention Center is not—human, warm, inviting.”<sup>15</sup> Robbins continued, “the Main Library has put Albuquerque in the big leagues of public buildings.”<sup>16</sup>

### Brutalism in New Mexico

Brutalist buildings in New Mexico were mostly built in two nodes that include downtown Albuquerque and the campus of the University of New Mexico. Most of these buildings subscribe to the basic tenants of the style. The downtown buildings were mostly built as part of the city’s urban renewal plan. These include the Albuquerque City Hall, designed by James Liberty first as an International Style building and later revised to include a heavy, modeled concrete frame. It was completed in 1968. The Albuquerque Police Department, designed by William Ellison and completed in 1972, contains a two-story horizontal concrete slab with concrete *brise soleil* (sun breaks) that severely limits visibility from inside the building. The Albuquerque Convention Center, designed by Max Flatow and completed in the 1970s is a monumental, 430-foot-long two-story windowless building constructed entirely of vertically scored concrete. The interior is defined by cavernous concrete spaces. The windowless west side forms a concrete wall along the east side of the Civic Plaza, also designed by Max Flatow. The Main Library is part this node of downtown Brutalist buildings.

The University of New Mexico has a significant concentration of Brutalist buildings. UNM and universities across the nation were adding new infrastructure in anticipation of increased enrollment as the Baby Boom generation reached college age. In 1966, New Mexico voters passed a bond issue for over \$42 million for new academic buildings, land purchases, and other campus improvements to the university system. At the main campus, architect George Pearl designed the Riebsomer Addition to Clark Hall in 1969. The addition appears as a windowless block of concrete with battered walls and exterior battered stairwells and cantilevered balconies. The Faculty Office and Classroom Building, completed in 1971, also designed by Pearl, is a fortress-like building with battered walls and cantilevered forms. The entrances are hidden behind deep shadows created by a ground-level arcade. The subterranean Physics Building, designed by the firm Pacheco and Graham and completed in 1971. The classrooms and labs are served by concrete light wells and stair towers that appear like coastal lookout towers constructed during the Second World War. The Farris Engineering Building, built in 1969, features a cantilevered third floor illuminated by vertical egg-crate windows.

The North Campus of UNM includes a complex of Brutalist-style health sciences buildings organized around a concrete plaza with concrete planters, walls, benches and other concrete

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<sup>15</sup> Cathy Robbins quoted in “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* (September-October 1975): 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

elements. These buildings include the Clinical and Translational Science Center, which appears as an abstraction of a Greek temple with tall vertical windows, which resemble columns, and a heavy concrete entablature. The Reginal Heber Fitz Hall, constructed in 1964, is a rectangular concrete block with concrete-framed windows across the front and rear and a windowless stair tower above the main entrance. The Health Sciences and Services Building, completed in 1971, is a concrete block with distinctive round stair towers. Woodward Hall, designed by W. C. Kruger and Associates in 1974, is an irregularly shaped concrete lecture hall and the College of Nursing and Pharmacy Building, a concrete block with brise soleil at the upper levels, was completed in 1975.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the New Mexico University System built Brutalist buildings on smaller campuses, such as the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell, New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, and Western New Mexico University in Silver City. These are mostly unremarkable examples of the style, designed and built with lower construction budgets than those built on the main campus.

Brutalist buildings were seldom constructed in smaller cities in New Mexico. The Manuel Lujan Sr. Building built in Santa Fe was designed by Ted Luna and completed in 1974. The Lujan Building was built to house mainframe computers for the state of New Mexico. The imposing building features battered walls finished with a bush hammer, vertical windows, and a foreboding portcullis-type entrance. In 1970, the city of Taos built a Courthouse and Administration Complex that comprised four buildings, administration, courthouse, detention, and health organized around a plaza. The one-story brick buildings, designed The Architects, Taos, are mostly windowless masses alleviated by entrances and windows framed by vertical piers. Among the most sophisticated Brutalist designs in New Mexico, the Courthouse and Administration Complexes was demolished in 2011.

### The Promise and Problems of Brutalism

The Main Library is a highly visible public building constructed in the *avant guard* Brutalist style. Brutalism emerged in the United Kingdom and France after the Second World War as a reaction to the delicate and uniform buildings of the International Style. Concrete is its central element because in the war-ravaged economies of Europe, poured-in-place concrete buildings were cheap to build. In Marseilles, Swiss architect Le Corbusier designed a massive, box-framed apartment block. Its solidity is part and parcel of its method of construction. Where the International Style emphasizes the steel frame that supports a glass curtain wall, Brutalist buildings have no separate structure. The cast-concrete walls are the frame of the building. Some Brutalist buildings are built of brick, but the rough concrete exterior is its defining characteristic. The term, Brutalism derives from the French *beton brut*, meaning raw concrete. Another popular treatment was hand hammering or bush hammering the concrete into corrugated razor-sharp edges.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

In the United States in the early 1960s and 1970s, Brutalism was promoted by a small group of mostly university architecture professors before the style was embraced by the public. Designed by Paul Rudolph, the Yale School of Architecture from 1963, with its soaring towers, is an early example of basic geometry and dramatic scale sometimes described as heroic or monumental. Cantilevered forms became a common feature of the style, as seen the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. Floor plans of Brutalist buildings were unique to each structure and were often expressed on the exterior, such as the façade of Boston City Hall.

Brutalism challenged the hegemony of the International Style and it represents a period of experimentation and risk-taking in American architecture. Brutalism embraced individual expression that catered to specific design programs, rather than the repetitive glass boxes of the International Style. In New Mexico, Brutalist buildings appear like those throughout the nation, with their solid, heavy, and monumental forms. The Manual Lujan, Sr. Building in Santa Fe features a low profile, battered walls, narrow windows, and port cullis-style entrance are reminiscent of 16th-century Spanish star forts.

Brutalism is not without its critics. Inveighing against the style, Prince Charles said, "You have to give this much to the Luftwaffe, when it knocked down our buildings, it didn't replace them with anything more offensive than rubble." Architecture critic Paul Goldberger said of the FBI headquarters, "This building turns its back on the city and substitutes for responsible architecture a pompous, empty monumentality that is, in the end, not so much a symbol as a symptom—a symptom of something wrong in government and just as wrong in architecture." The public came to dislike the concrete architecture of the 1960s and 1970s, which it regarded as stark, uninviting, intimidating, and antagonistic. Its emphasis on concrete, especially interior spaces, made the buildings cold, dank, and unpleasant places to work. Many Brutalist buildings were difficult to negotiate because of their complex floor plans. The Yale School of Architecture includes over thirty terraced floor levels, frustrating generations of architecture students.

### Urban Renewal in New Mexico

In New Mexico in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century two cities embraced urban renewal with very different results. The urban renewal effort in Albuquerque was large in scope, redeveloped downtown, and provided improved housing to poor city residents. Las Cruces was the first city to break ground, but its plan to demolish its entire historic downtown resulted in misgivings among city leaders and residents that remain unabated. The city's population increased after the Second World War from 4,000 in the 1920s to more than 29,000 in the 1960s. The city, as a mechanism to cope with its increased population, produced an urban renewal plan in 1954, the year the Fair Housing Act passed into law. The city implemented its plan between 1967 and 1973. The first phase of urban renewal included the noncontroversial construction of a new municipal building in 1967.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

By 1973, city leaders had implemented the demolition of the entire downtown and a large part of the adjacent Mesquite neighborhood.<sup>17</sup> Resident Sylvia Camuñez recalled "they took half the neighborhood and all of downtown. It was the heart of the city. There were residences and businesses. It seemed like it happened overnight. People were not made aware of it until it was too late. There were beautiful buildings and people walked downtown. Now it's just a hole in the wall."<sup>18</sup>

The city's plan for "revitalization" encompassed roughly fifteen city blocks and turned Main Street into a covered pedestrian mall. The city demolished seventy percent of its downtown buildings, more than 200 buildings in total. Main Street included 190 buildings, which were struggling but surviving businesses. Historic, cultural, and religious landmarks, such as St. Genevieve Catholic Church, built in 1859, fell to the wrecking ball. Three years after the completion of the pedestrian mall, the number of downtown businesses dropped to ninety. Large swaths were paved for new development, but investors were slow to build. By 2005 the number of businesses plummeted to ten. Urban renewal in Las Cruces included few grand public buildings, but is mostly remembered for the loss of the city's historic downtown demolitions.

The city of Albuquerque was late in implementing plans for urban renewal. Many cities accepted federal urban renewal funds for urban revitalization projects by the 1950s, but Albuquerque initially declined to seek these grants, in part, because local politicians and business owners resisted federal involvement in the city's development. Discussions among city councilors through the 1950s finally resulted in a plan that was implemented in the 1960s and 1970s, just as the urban renewal program being phased out in favor of the Community Development Block Grant Program in the mid-1970s. The delay likely enabled the city to avoid the pitfalls of other cities, which engaged in mass demolitions and inhumane housing for the poor.

Albuquerque approached urban renewal on two fronts: reshaping downtown with a new civic center and providing improved housing for the city's poor. In downtown, the city sought to reorient New Town with commercial development focused on Central Avenue, and a new civic center to the north, between Copper and Roma avenues. The downtown plan included Civic Plaza dedicated to open space, which few other cities had incorporated into their plans; a new city hall; police department convention center, and the demolition of blocks of so-called blighted buildings. The Main Library was commissioned in accordance with the 1968 Tijeras Urban Renewal Project. Urban renewal efforts in the United States from the late 1960s to early 1970s provided Albuquerque with \$20 million in federal funds to revive the downtown-central business district with modern public facilities. In 1971, the city issued bonds to finance and support the construction of the new downtown library.

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<sup>17</sup> Lisa Chamberlain, "Wanting the Old Main Street Back," *New York Times*, October 5, 2005.  
"https://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/12/realestate/wanting-the-old-main-street-back.html"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

New Town was the core of downtown Albuquerque. It was established after the arrival of the AT&SF Railway in 1880. For roughly eighty years downtown served as the residential, commercial, and civic center for most residents in Albuquerque. The rapid expansion in population following the Second World War led to a boom in residential construction on the undeveloped mesa east of the central business district. Residential neighborhoods sprang up in these outlying regions, and downtown maintained its status as the central district for shopping, dining, and business through the 1950s as seen in prominent hotels, department stores, and curio shops.<sup>19</sup> However, the shift in population to the East Mesa, combined with downtown's narrow streets, traffic congestion, and limited parking, drove many businesses to relocate to the suburbs by 1960.

The pattern of urban flight to the suburbs happened later in Albuquerque than in many Eastern cities, but the city's response to the deterioration of its downtown with a program of urban renewal was the same as elsewhere in the nation. Urban renewal was a practice established by the Federal Housing Act of 1949 to provide funding for the improvement of cities plagued with any number of undesirable conditions that fell under the blanket of "blight."<sup>20</sup> Max Boruff of the University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning explains:

Often blight was used to describe otherwise healthy urban neighborhoods inhabited by a single ethnic group; historic and dilapidated buildings whose owners were either uninterested in renovation or unable to secure funding to do so; heavy, poor, or inefficient traffic flow through central business districts; and nearly any other sociological or psychological issue that was affecting the urban area. A blunt instrument, "blight" provided ready justification for planners' redevelopment aspirations in the postwar period.<sup>21</sup>

By the early 1960s downtown Albuquerque was showing signs of deterioration as businesses followed the residential flight to the suburbs. High vacancy rates and neglect of the city's oldest buildings gave downtown a "blighted" appearance. In 1962, Albuquerque established the City Building Removal Team to address the issue of deteriorated buildings. The Team surveyed approximately ninety buildings and condemned thirty-one. By 1963, the city had demolished twenty-four downtown buildings.<sup>22</sup> Several casualties were local landmarks, which were demolished to make way for parking lots and new development.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Carleen Lazzell and Melissa Payne, *Historic Albuquerque: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Max Boruff, "Downtown Urban Renewal," *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> David E. Ferro, "An Overview: The History of Preservation Activity in Albuquerque, New Mexico" (University of Florida, 1976), <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00102020>.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

The close partnership between city boosters and the city commission had helped to drive the sprawling growth in the years immediately after the Second World War. The chamber of commerce pursued a strategy of annexation to include the emerging suburbs with the city's rapidly increasing boundaries. Albuquerque boosters had also embraced the construction of the Interstate highways that crisscrossed the city in the 1960s as another "big city" improvement. This decades-long partnership between business and government contributed to the pattern of Albuquerque's rapid suburban development and the resulting deterioration of the central business district. Disagreements over the management of Albuquerque's growth led to a reconfiguration of city government to include a mayor and city council structure in 1972, but the pro-growth partnership survived.<sup>24</sup> The tension between the allied local business owners and city government and the primarily Hispanic downtown residents reached a climax over the issue of urban renewal in the 1960s.

Local business owners funded a study of the downtown area in 1957, seeking to improve traffic congestion and access to the local businesses, which resulted in an unimplemented plan that would have accommodated high pedestrian traffic and displaced the traditionally Hispanic residential population in the Tijeras neighborhood.<sup>25</sup> With the continuing decline of downtown in the years that followed, the city commission established the Albuquerque Metropolitan Development Committee in 1964 to "study the issue of 'sprawlitis,' in relation to 'core' development."<sup>26</sup> The Committee published a plan for the redevelopment of downtown in 1966, but resistance from local businessmen prevented its implementation.

By 1968, despite these objections, and after considerable debate, the city finally received \$25 million in federal urban renewal funds for the "Tijeras Urban Renewal Project."<sup>27</sup> Criticism of the Tijeras plan led city planners to quickly rework their initial plans, creating a comprehensive plan in 1970 that focused on the renewal of the central business district. The city plan identified several goals, including the creation of Albuquerque as a leading metropolitan center, catering to pedestrians, developing a sense of place in the downtown region through the use of gateways, and "stimulate interaction between government and citizens to form a better functioning downtown."<sup>28</sup> Central to the plan was a large Civic Plaza "fronted by government and institutional buildings that would invite community interaction with city officials."<sup>29</sup> The first phase of the plan called for the construction of a new main library and parking garage and a pedestrian bridge to the Civic Plaza. This comprehensive plan reflects a modernist planning philosophy based on the goal of restoring the downtown to its former central role in commerce,

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<sup>23</sup> Lazzell and Payne, 64. Demolitions included the Hotel Franciscan (1923) and the Alvarado Hotel (1902), built by the Fred Harvey Company.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Farley Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994), 196.

<sup>25</sup> Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest, 1945-1965*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>28</sup> Boruff, "Downtown Urban Renewal."

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

government, finance, and residential activities.<sup>30</sup> A study by the city in 1972 elaborated on the 1970 plan, adding goals to encourage lifelong learning, promote tourism, and preserve culturally significant architecture.<sup>31</sup>

Improved housing for the poor was a major component of the Tijeras plan and the comprehensive plan of 1970. City officials initially targeted the historically Hispanic ethnic neighborhoods along the rail line for urban renewal, labeling them a slum.<sup>32</sup> The plan called for the city to acquire most residential buildings in the downtown neighborhoods of Martineztown, Barelás, and South Broadway and raze them for commercial development. The single-solution approach, which had failed in so many previous cities, was thwarted by residents in these Albuquerque neighborhoods. The city's late start in implementing its plans led to increased awareness of past failure in other cities and that the city had to take into account the views of neighborhood residents. These residents formed the Citizen Improvement Committee and successfully petitioned for a voice in the Urban Renewal Agency. Their resistance halted the widespread demolitions and resulted in the retention of most of the Hispanic neighborhoods.

The city, as a result continued to work to improve housing in Hispanic neighborhoods, but on a smaller scale. City officials worked house-by-house to provide assistance in repairing older houses and, with owner approval, demolishing houses in extremely poor condition and replacing them with new houses. The city building a dozen public housing communities on the East Mesa, where land was less expensive and residents were more likely to find jobs. Public houses built by the city mostly included neighborhoods of single-family houses and several low-rise apartment buildings. These houses and apartments succeeded because they were small-scale, fit into existing neighborhoods, and were located in an area that was experiencing a population boom where jobs and public transportation were available to residents.

### Successes and Failures of Urban Renewal in Albuquerque

Urban Renewal in Albuquerque was partially successful because the major components of the plan were implemented, including the Main Library, city hall, police department, convention center, and the Civic Plaza were built. Urban renewal in downtown Albuquerque was successful because it included public buildings that ensured residents would visit downtown. It also included major buildings, the convention center and Main Library, to support entertainment and education. Most of these buildings are organized around the Civic Plaza, a brick-laid city block of planters and benches, a fountain, and shade trees. The plaza offers a respite for city workers and a venue for shows and festivals for residents of the city and suburbs. Urban renewal did not revive the business sector in downtown, but it did provide alternative reasons for residents to venture to the Civic Center. The city also sought to provide improved housing for

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; Judy Mattivi Morley, *Historic Preservation and the Imagined West: Albuquerque, Denver, and Seattle* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Boruff.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 257.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

the poor that responded to the needs of the residents. City officials eventually came to understand the concerns of residents, who wanted improvements to existing houses and small-scale public houses throughout prosperous neighborhoods on the East Mesa. This strategy avoided the problems wrought other cities, which relocated thousands of residents in densely developed government homes.

Criteria Consideration G: Properties that achieved significance within the last fifty years

The Main Library in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico meets National Register Criteria Consideration G at the local level because the property has achieved significance within the past fifty years. The library is a localized interpretation of Brutalism, crafter for the particular site, embraces the bright New Mexico sun, and caters to the needs of the users with a flexible floor plan. The sculptural form welcomes patrons with large, open reading rooms and smaller, intimate nooks illuminated by shafts of bright light. The flexible interior includes moveable walls along tracks in the coffered ceiling lights. Lower-level courts permit reading out-of-doors among native plantings and bright sun and shadow. The library, a centerpiece of the city's urban renewal efforts in the 1970s, is a rare and exceptional example of Brutalism in New Mexico that retains its Brutalist form, but which introduces humanistic elements to the design and established the library as popular refuge for reading and educational activities.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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<http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/albuquerque-public-library/>

Smith, Dean P. Interview with authors. Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2017 October 6.

S.M.P.C., *New Mexico Architecture* (September-October 1975): 18-19.

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**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.72 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.086156 Longitude: -106.653127

2. Latitude: Longitude:

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary appears on the sketch map as a red line drawn to scale and corresponding with the point of latitude and longitude in Section 10.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary includes the intact property historically associated with the Main Library.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Katie Dix, Heidi Pierce, and Alex Rodriguez  
organization: University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning, Certificate Program in Historic Preservation and Regionalism  
street & number: 1 University of New Mexico  
city or town: Albuquerque state: NM zip code: 87131  
e-mail: N/A telephone: N/A  
date: December 2017

### State Historic Preservation Office

name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator  
organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division  
street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236  
city or town: Santa Fe state: New Mexico zip: 87501  
email: steven.moffson@state.nm.us telephone: 505.476.0444  
date: July 30, 2018

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Maps

1. Location Map
2. National Register Boundary Map

### Figures

Figure 1. Site Plan and Street Level Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 16.

Figure 2. Upper and Lower Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 17.

Figure 3. Section A-A (North-South), "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 15.

Figure 4. George Pearl, Albuquerque Public Library, ca. 1972. "Albuquerque Public Library: Bound sketch book preliminary sketches, diagrams and notes," Box 6, Folder 8, George Pearl Papers (MSS 782 BC), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

Figure 5. East and north sides, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

Figure 6. West and south sides, “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.

Figures 7. First floor (above) and second floor, *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 13

Figure 8. Downtown Albuquerque, 1940s.

Figure 9. Urban Renewal in Downtown Albuquerque.

Figure 10. “Central Avenue and Fourth Street Mall,” 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, *Downtown Plan* (Albuquerque: City of Albuquerque Planning Department, December 1970).

Figure 11. “Staging of Central Ave. Area,” 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, *Downtown Plan* (Albuquerque: City of Albuquerque Planning Department, December 1970).

Figure 12. Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, 1975. Max Boruff. “Downtown Urban Redevelopment.” *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

Figure 13. Civic Plaza (center), one block northeast of Main Library, with Convention Center (upper right), Albuquerque Inn (upper left), Plaza del Sol upper left corner), and City Hall (lower left), 1980s.

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Main Library  
City or Vicinity: Albuquerque  
County: Bernalillo State: NM  
Photographer: Harvey Kaplan  
Date Photographed: July 17, 2017

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

- 1 of 31. South and east sides, photographer facing northwest.
- 2 of 31. South side with glass entrance additions from Copper Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 31. Northeast corner from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing southwest.
- 4 of 31. North side with service court in foreground, photographer facing south east.
- 5 of 31. Rear (west) elevation with landscaping from 6<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing east.
- 6 of 31. South side with ART bus shelter, photographer facing north.
- 7 of 31. Southwest corner with court in foreground, photographer facing northeast.
- 8 of 31. Southwest corner, with court and landscaping, photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 31. Southwest court along Copper Avenue, photographer facing east.
- 10 of 31. Main entrance with entrance sign, photographer facing northwest.
- 11 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing northwest.
- 12 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing east.
- 13 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, offices and meeting rooms, photographer facing north.
- 14 of 31. Interior, first floor, meeting room with original furniture, photographer facing southwest.
- 15 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, circulation desk, photographer facing south.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

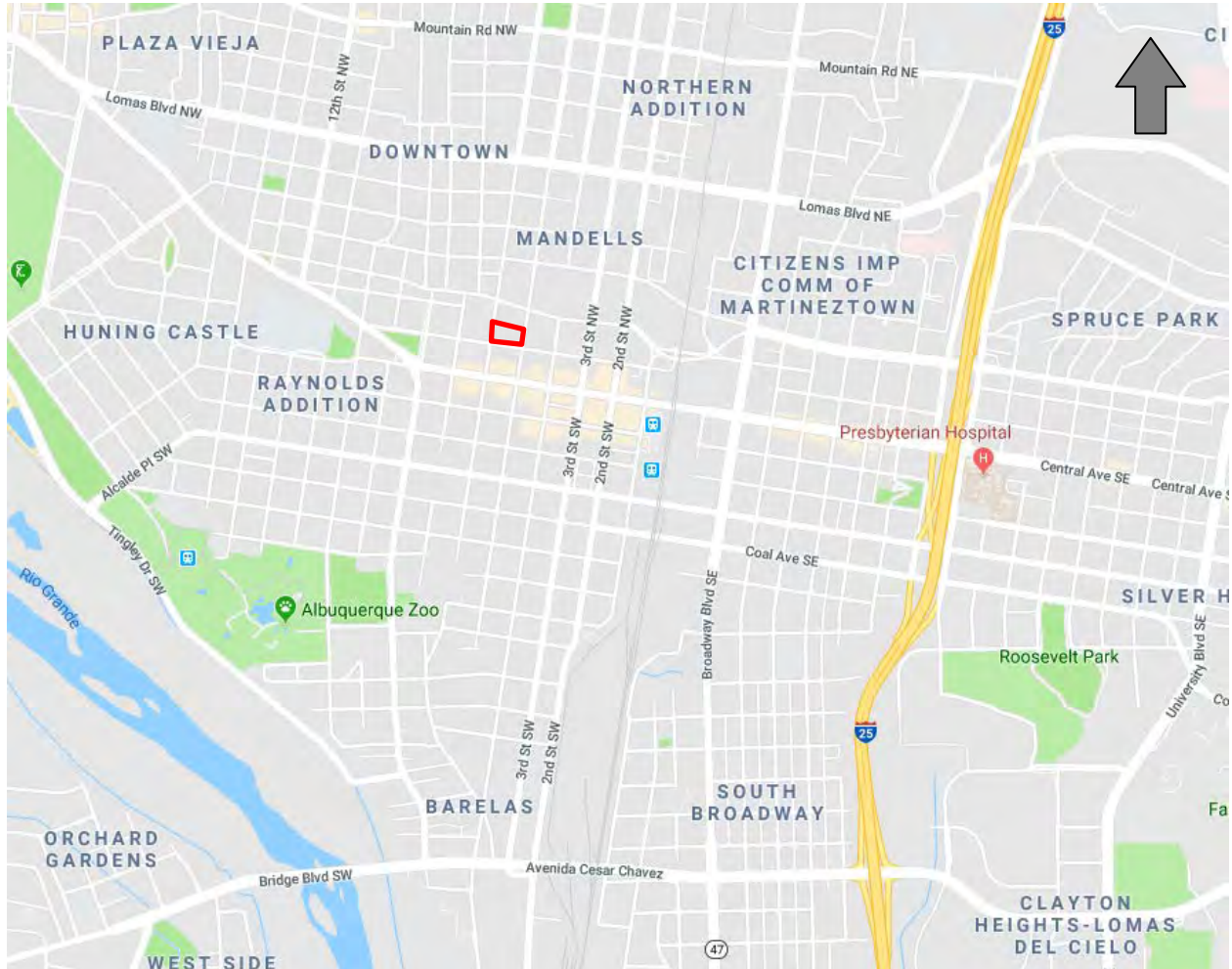
- 16 of 31. Interior, first floor, stairs to second floor, photographer facing west.
- 17 of 31. Interior, second floor, reading room, photographer facing north.
- 18 of 31. Interior, second floor, administrative offices with moveable walls, photographer facing northwest.
- 19 of 31. Interior, second floor, window above main entrance, photographer facing southeast.
- 20 of 31. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with original desks, photographer facing southwest.
- 21 of 31. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with projecting window and original chairs, photographer facing southwest.
- 22 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration with original furnishings, photographer facing southwest.
- 23 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration with moveable wall, photographer facing east.
- 24 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration, conference room, photographer facing east.
- 25 of 31. Interior, lower level, children's area, photographer facing south.
- 26 of 31. Interior, lower level, auditorium, photographer facing southeast.
- 27 of 31. Interior, lower level, meeting room, photographer facing west.
- 28 of 31. Lower level, northeast court, photographer facing north.
- 29 of 31. Lower level, southeast court, photographer facing east.
- 30 of 31. Lower level, southwest court, photographer facing southwest.
- 31 of 31. Lower level, northwest service court, photographer facing west.

**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.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



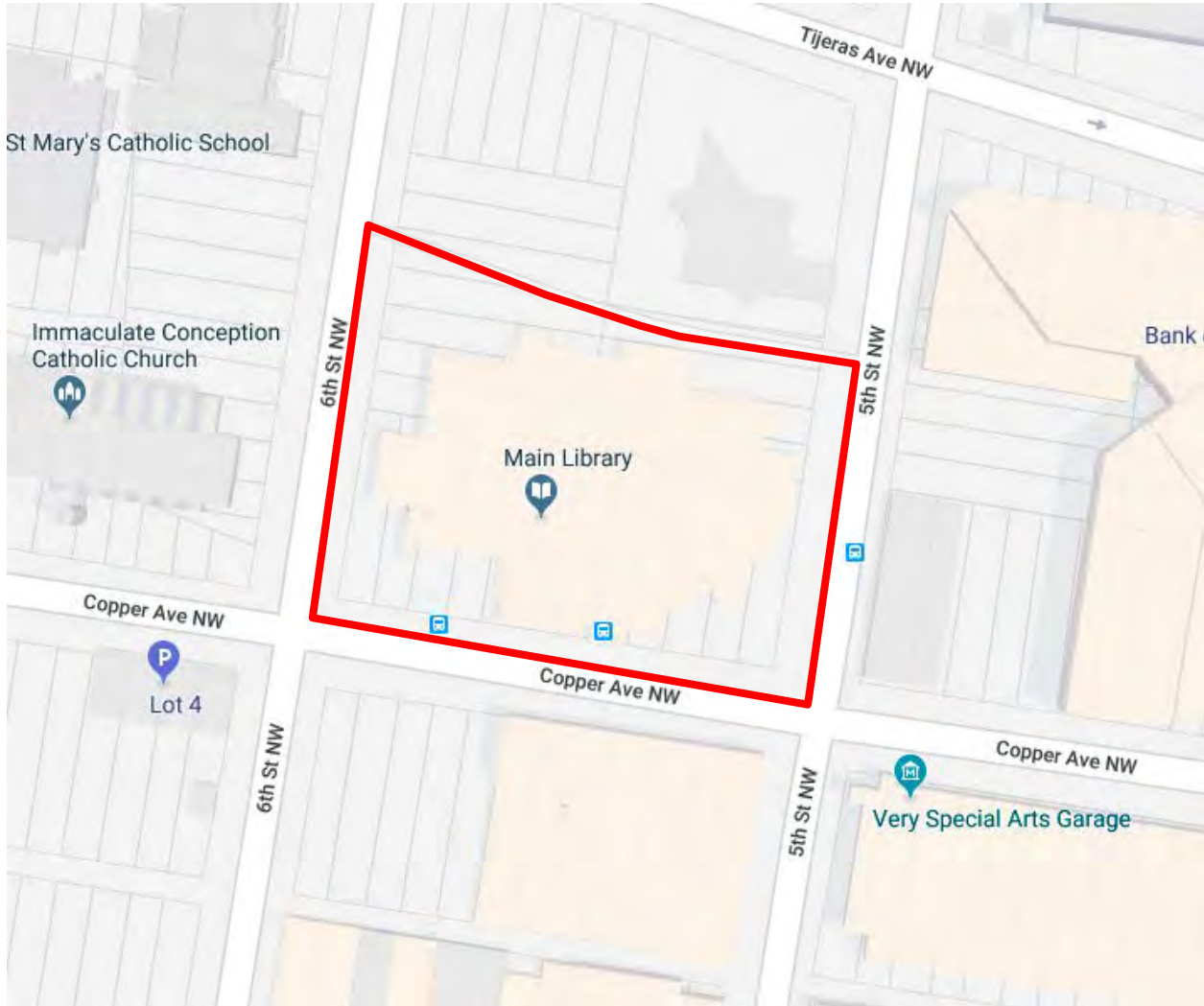
**Main Library**  
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Location of Property 


Approximate Scale: one inch = 2,300 feet

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



**Main Library**  
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

National Register boundary 

Approximate Scale: one inch = 100 feet

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

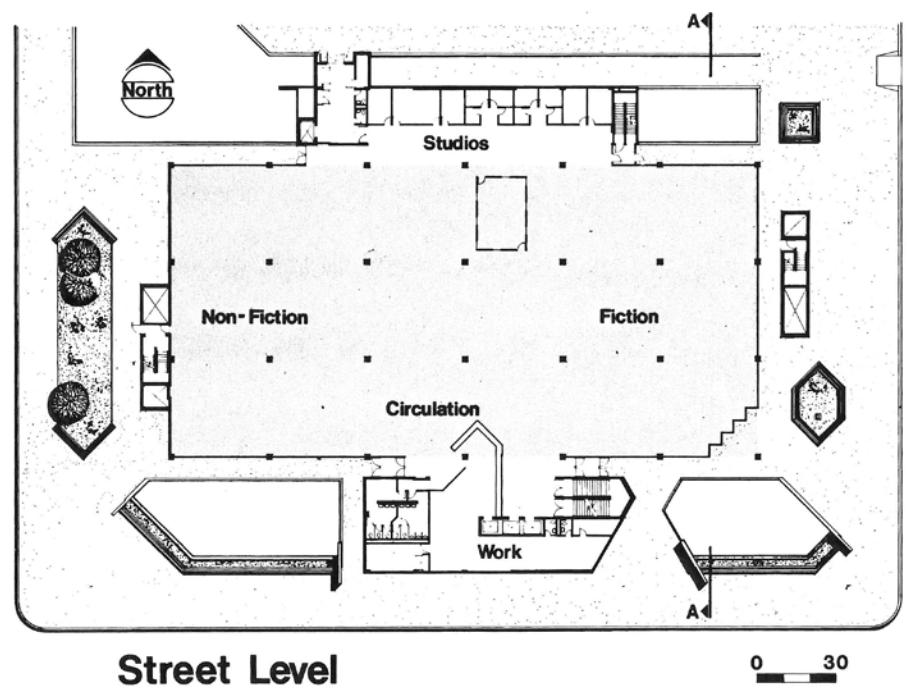
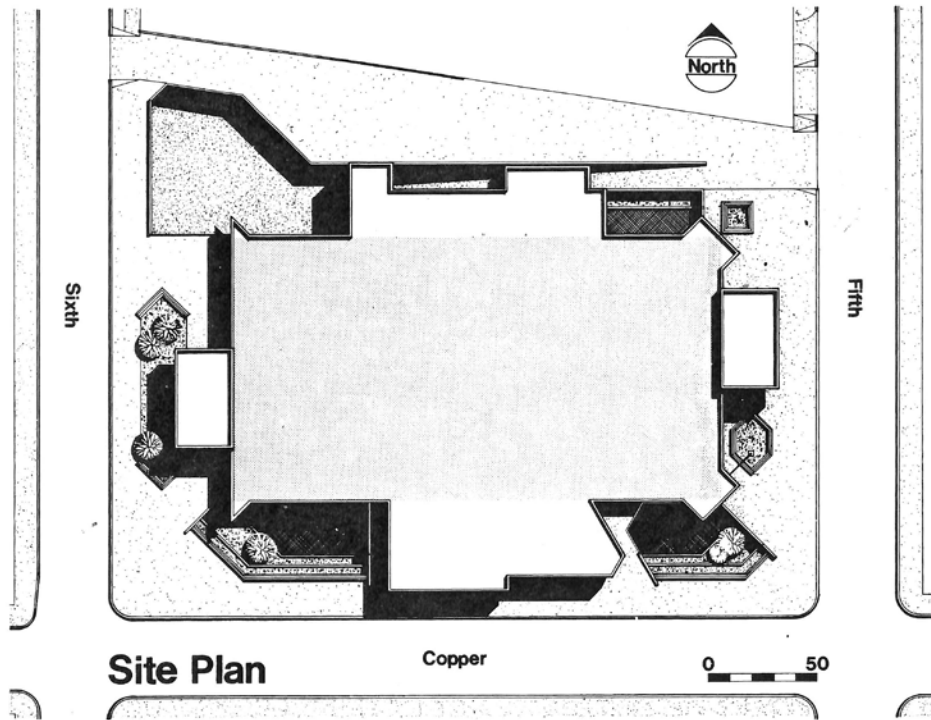
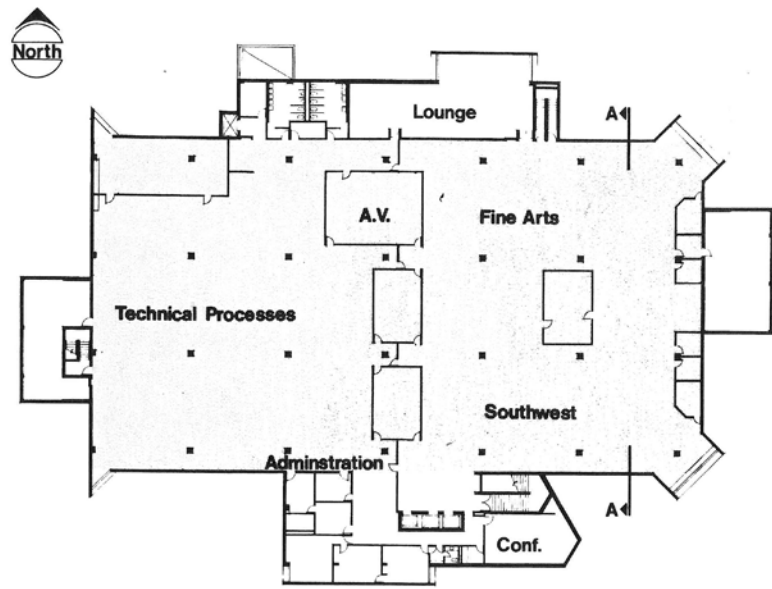


Figure 1. Site Plan and Street Level Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 16.

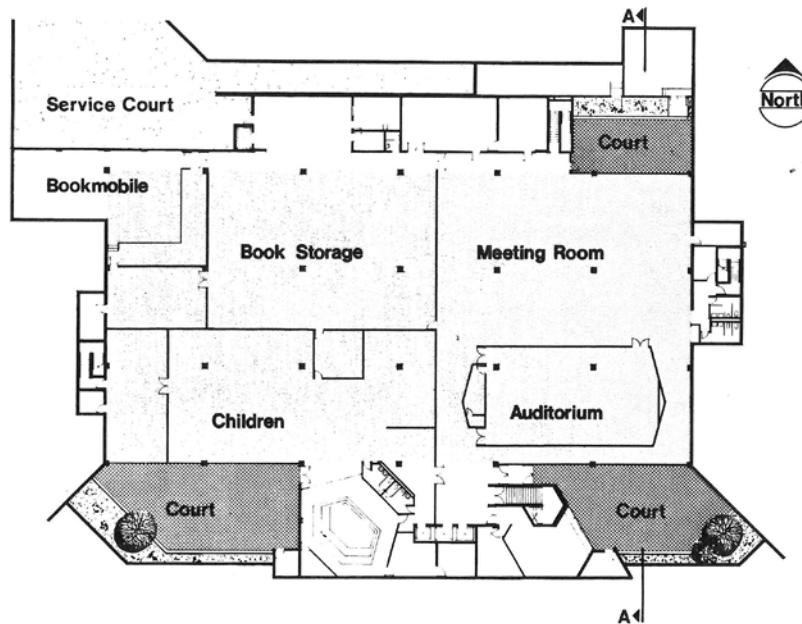


Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Upper Level



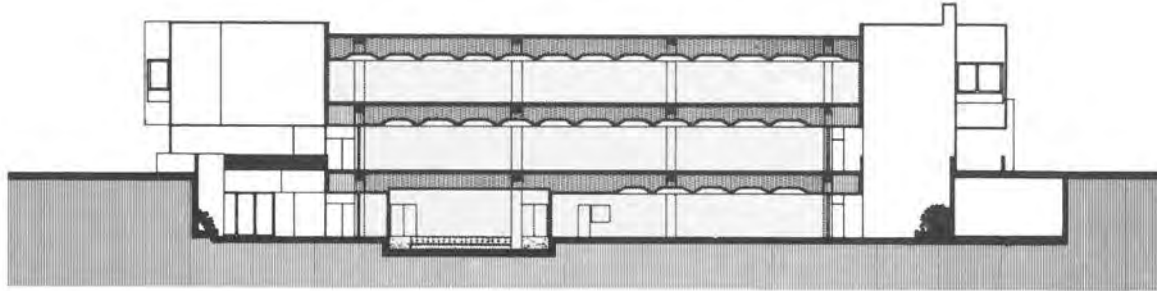
Lower Level



Figure 2. Upper and Lower Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 17.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



## Section A-A



Figure 3. Section A-A (North-South), “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 15.



Figure 4. George Pearl, Albuquerque Public Library, ca. 1972. “Albuquerque Public Library: Bound sketch book preliminary sketches, diagrams and notes,” Box 6, Folder 8, George Pearl Papers (MSS 782 BC), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

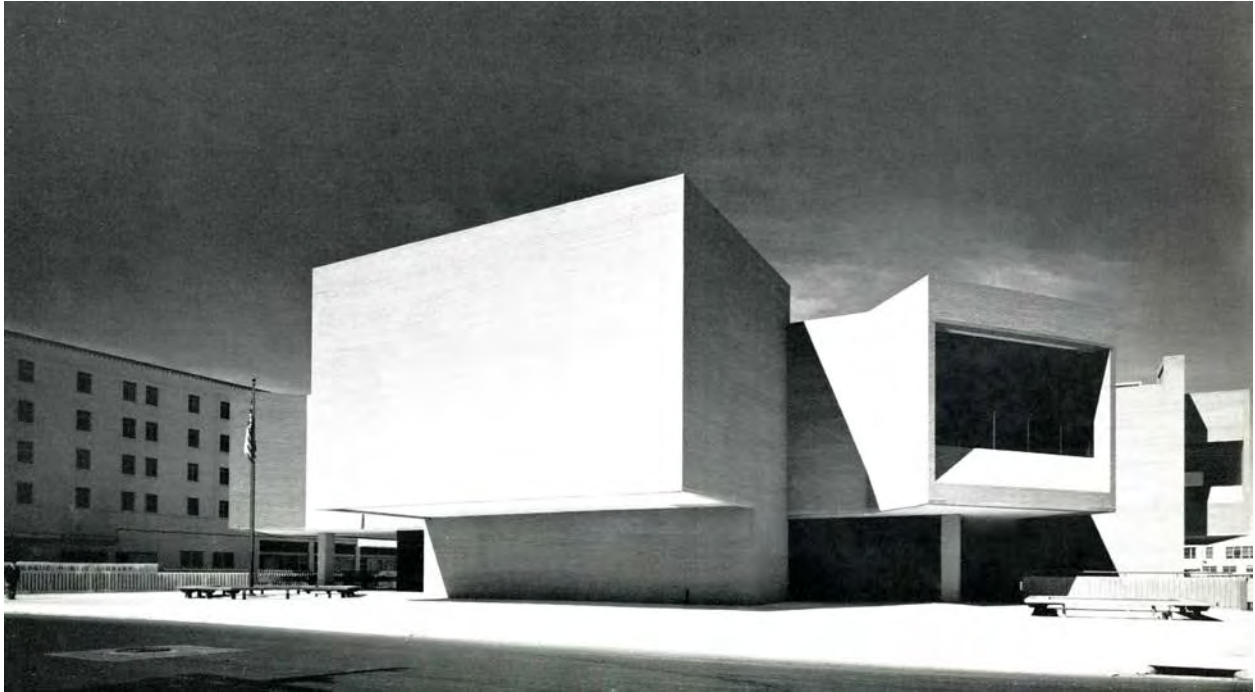


Figure 5. East and north sides, “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture 17* (September-October 1975): 14.

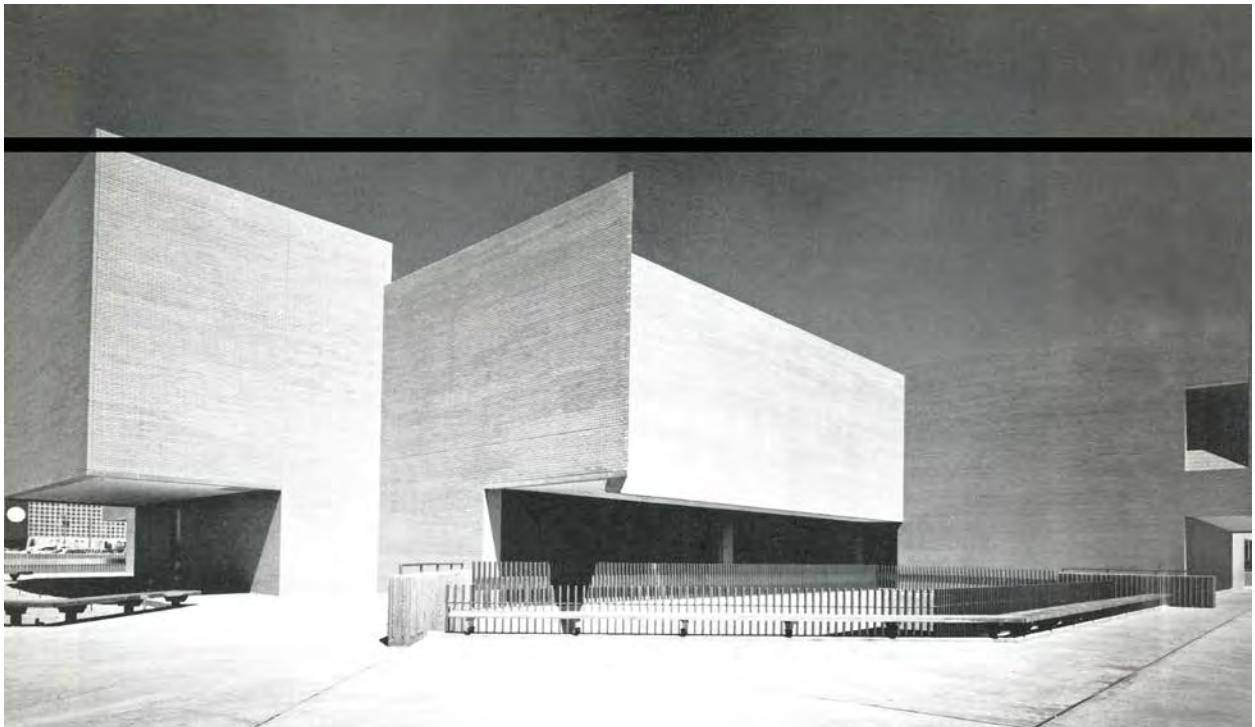


Figure 6. Rear and south side, “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture 17* (September-October 1975): 14.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Figures 7. First floor (above) and second floor, *New Mexico Architecture 17* (September-October 1975): 13.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Figure 8. Downtown Albuquerque, 1940s.



Figure 9. Urban Renewal in Downtown Albuquerque.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

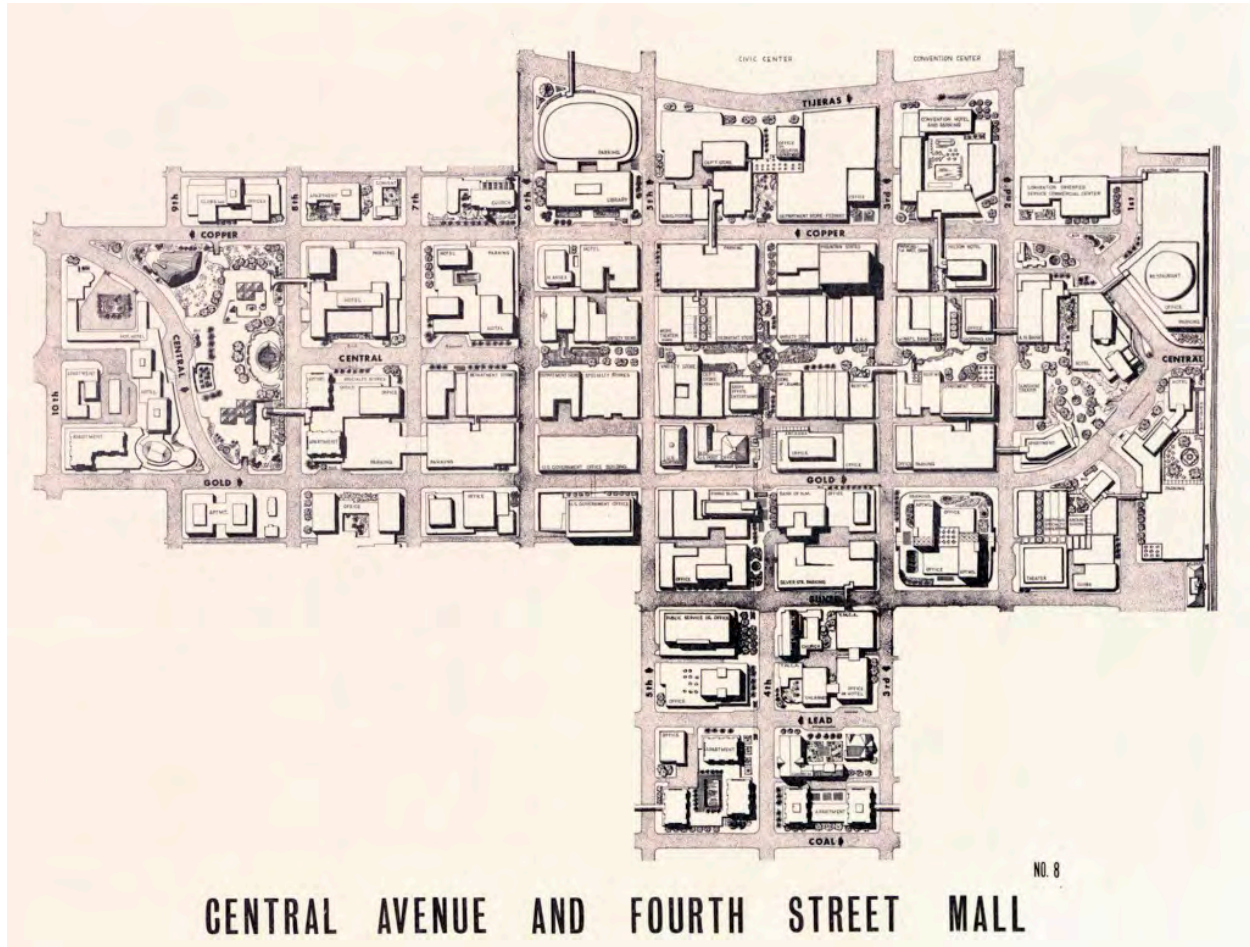


Figure 10. "Central Avenue and Fourth Street Mall," 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Downtown Plan (City of Albuquerque Planning Department, 1970).

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

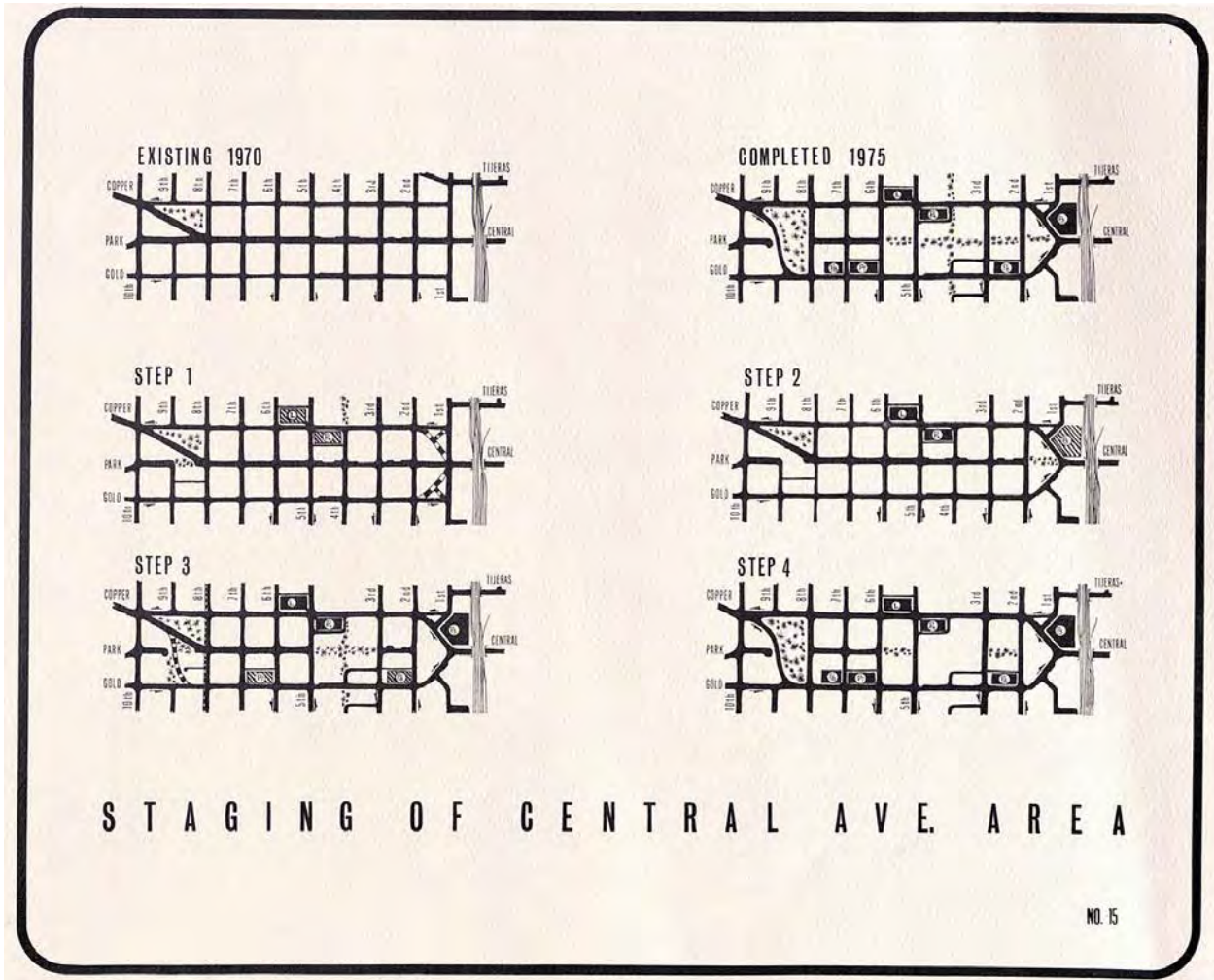


Figure 11. "Staging of Central Ave. Area," 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Downtown Plan (City of Albuquerque Planning Department, 1970).

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

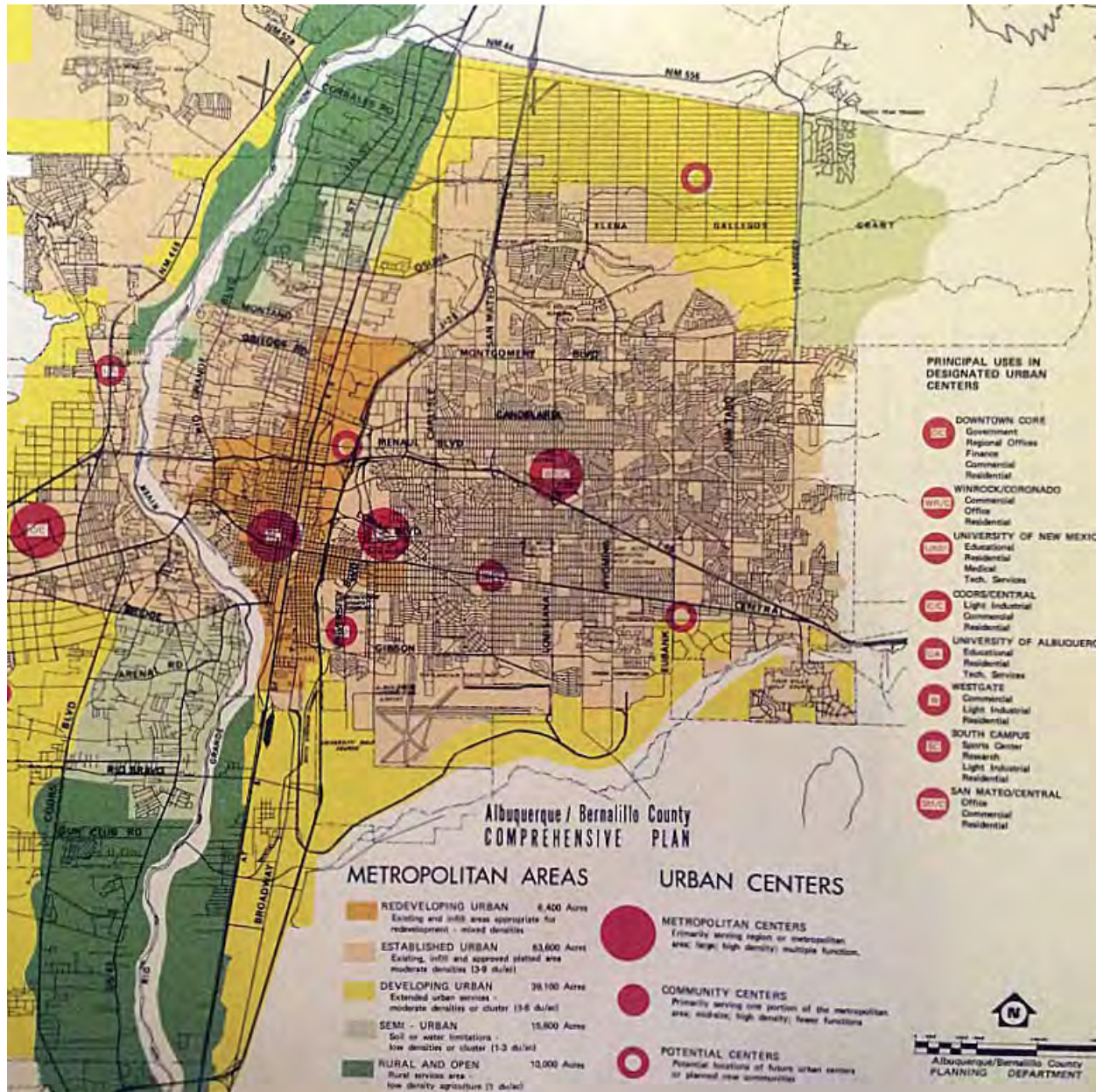


Figure 12. Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, 1975. Boruff, Max. "Downtown Urban Redevelopment." *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

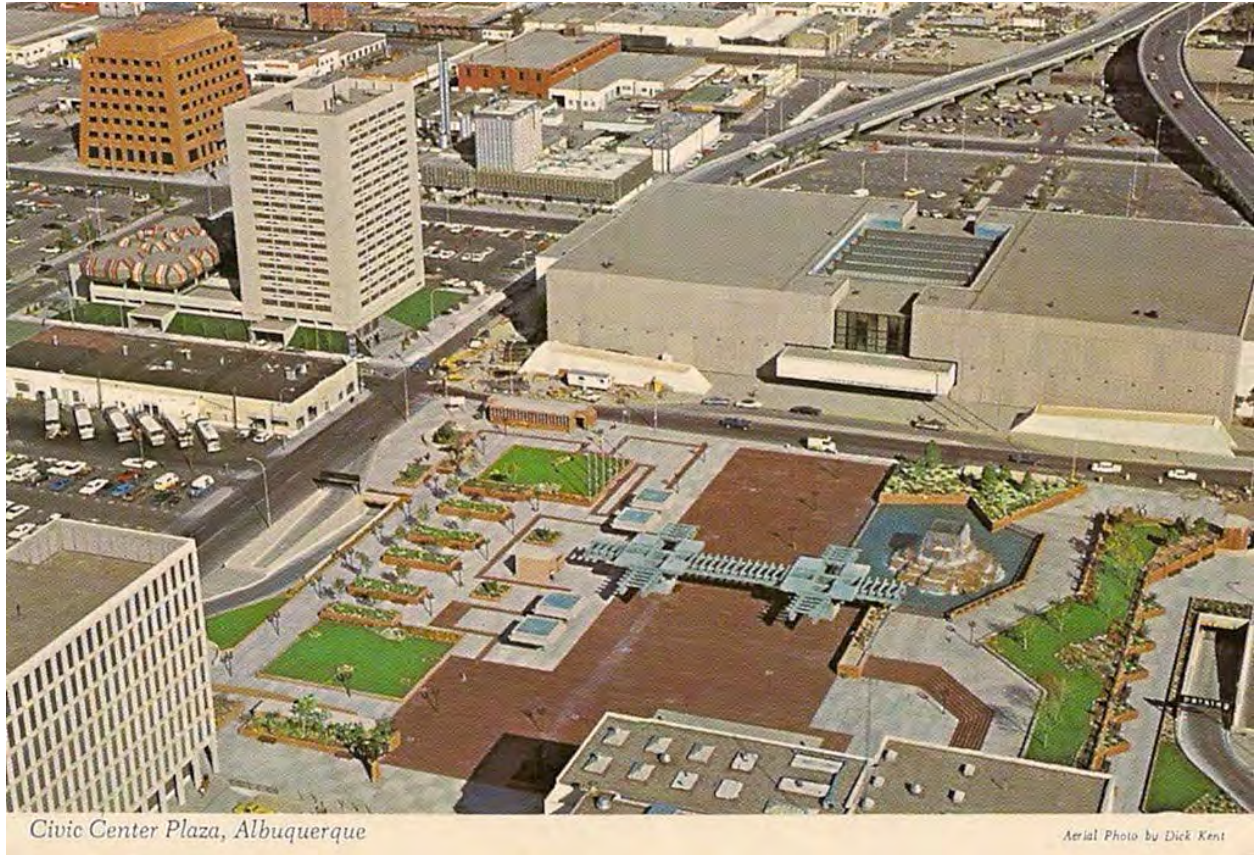


Figure 13. Civic Plaza (center), one block northeast of Main Library, with Convention Center (upper right), Albuquerque Inn (upper left), Plaza del Sol upper left corner, and City Hall (lower left), 1980s.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

## Photographs



1. South and east sides, photographer facing northwest.



2. South side with glass entrance additions from Copper Avenue, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



3. Northeast corner from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing southwest.



4. North side with service court in foreground, photographer facing south east.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



5. Rear (west) elevation with landscaping from 6<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing east.



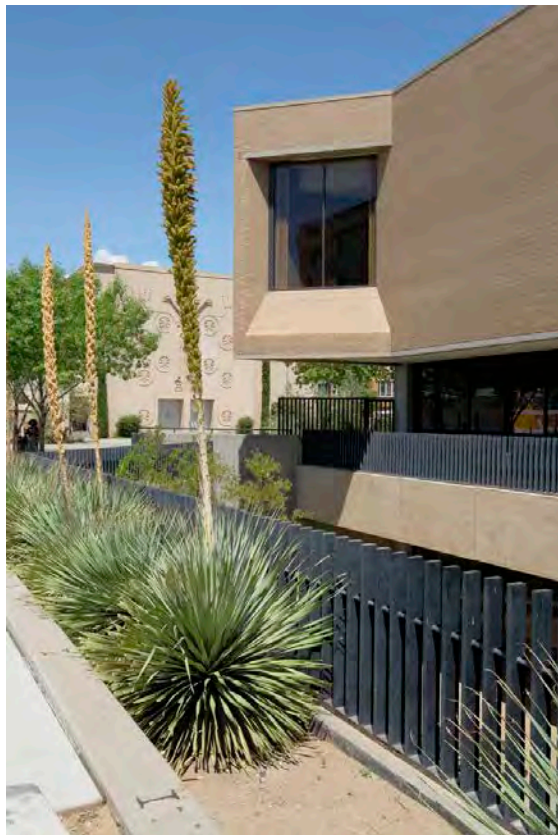
6. South side with ART bus shelter, photographer facing north.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



7. Southwest corner with court in foreground, photographer facing northeast.



8. Southwest corner, with court and landscaping, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



9. Southwest court along Copper Avenue, photographer facing east.



10. Main entrance with entrance sign, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



11. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing northwest.



12. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing east.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



13. Interior, first floor, reading room, offices and meeting rooms, photographer facing north.



14. Interior, first floor, meeting room with original furniture, photographer facing southwest.

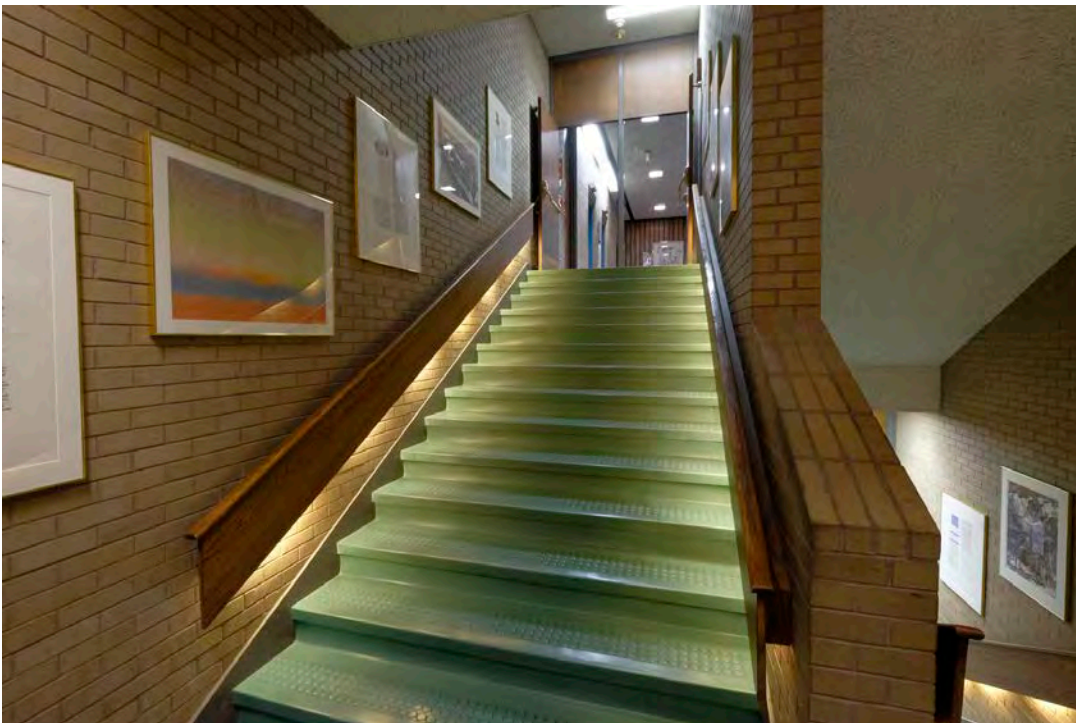


Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



15. Interior, first floor, reading room, circulation desk, photographer facing south.



16. Interior, first floor, stairs to second floor, photographer facing west.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



17. Interior, second floor, reading room, photographer facing north.



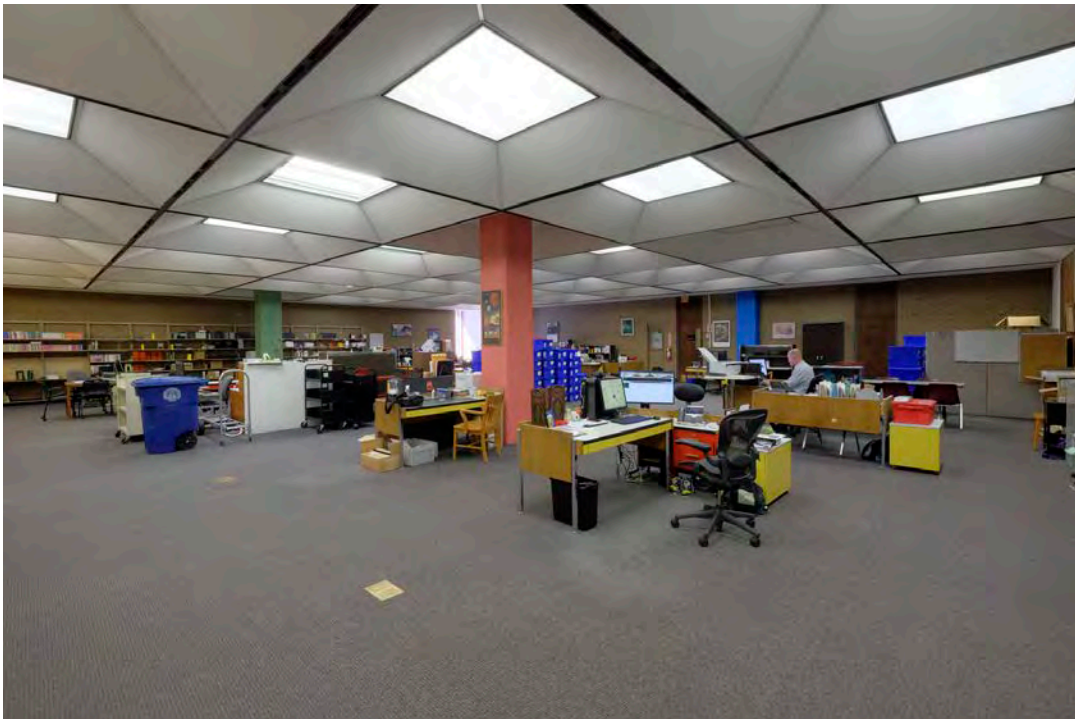
18. Interior, second floor, administrative offices with moveable walls, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



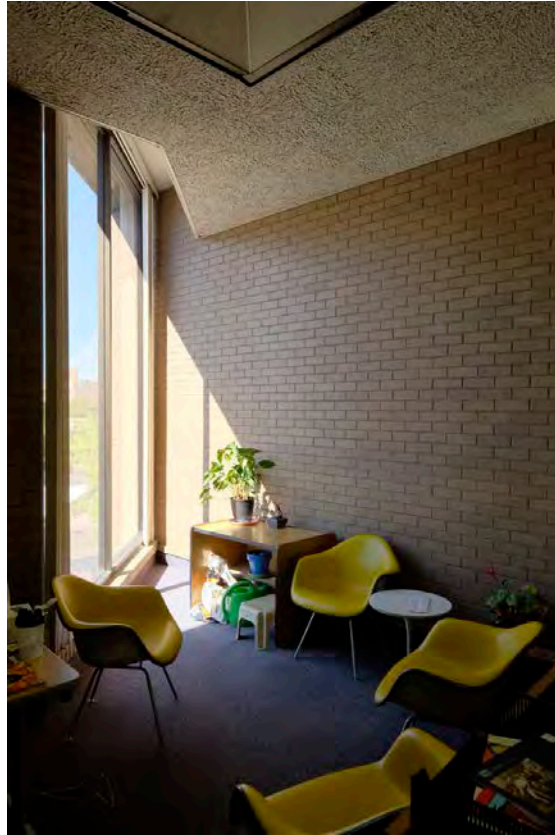
19. Interior, second floor, window above main entrance, photographer facing southeast.



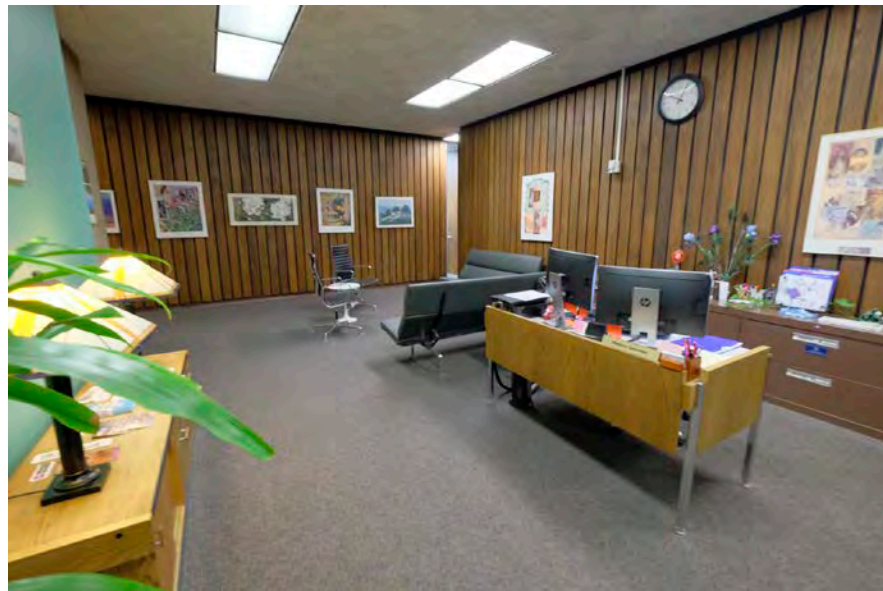
20. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with original desks, photographer facing southwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



21. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with projecting window and original chairs, photographer facing southwest.



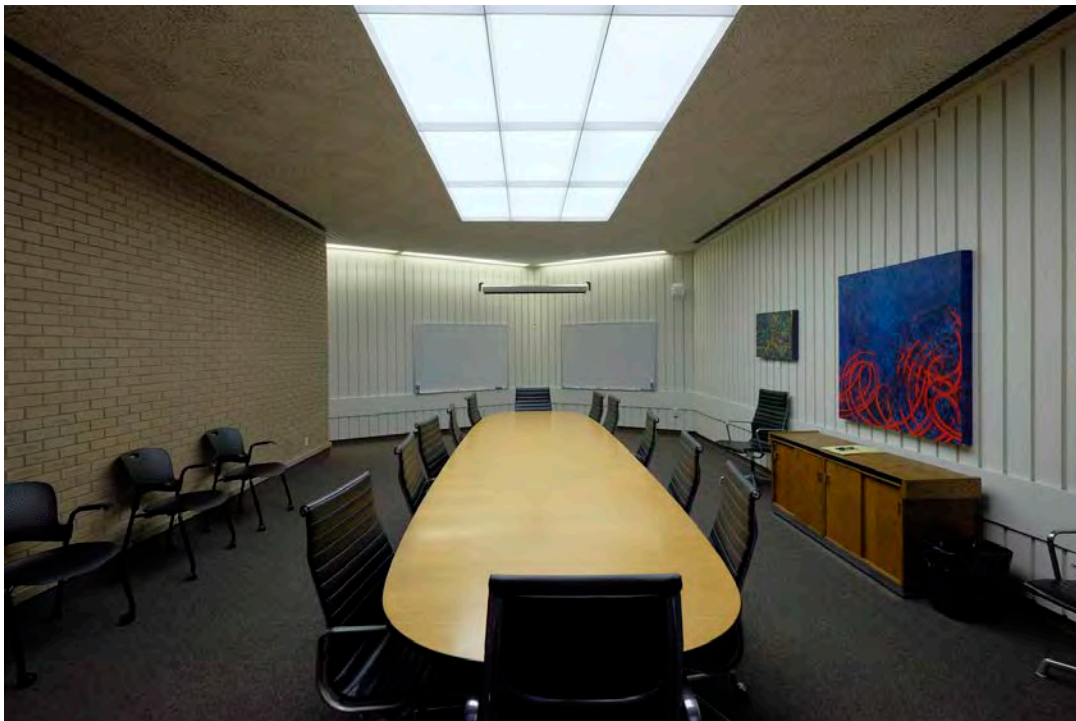
22. Interior, second floor, administration with original furnishings, photographer facing southwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



23. Interior, second floor, administration with moveable wall, photographer facing east.



24. Interior, second floor, administration, conference room, photographer facing east.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



25. Interior, lower level, children's area, photographer facing south.



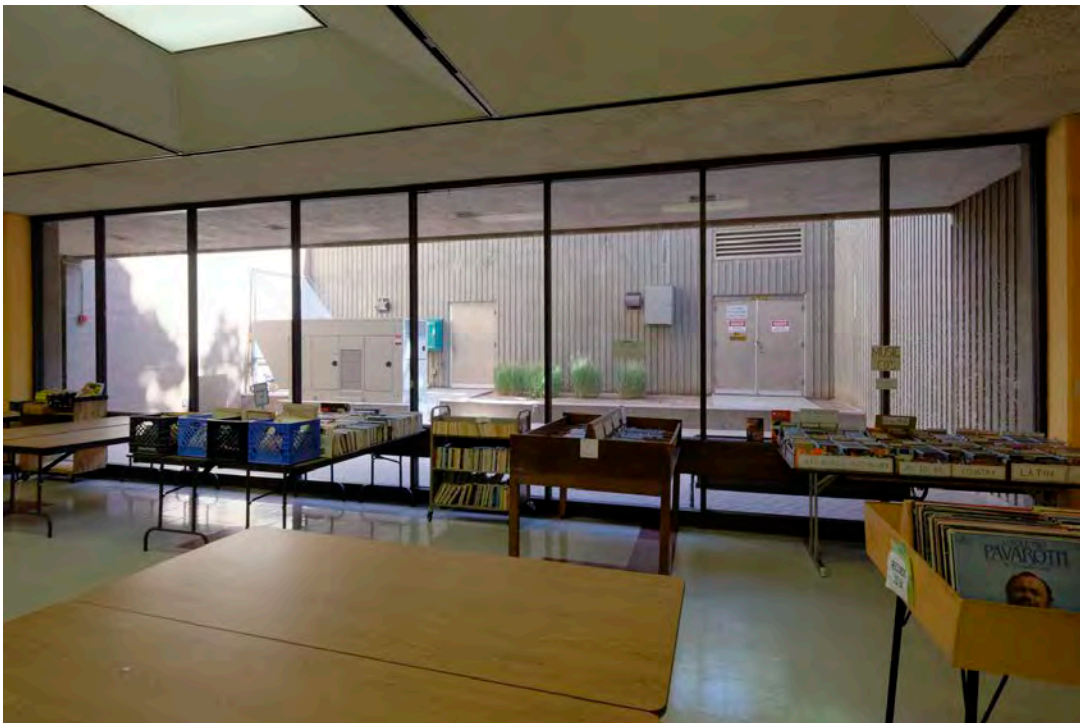
26. Interior, lower level, auditorium, photographer facing southeast.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



27. Interior, lower level, meeting room, photographer facing west.



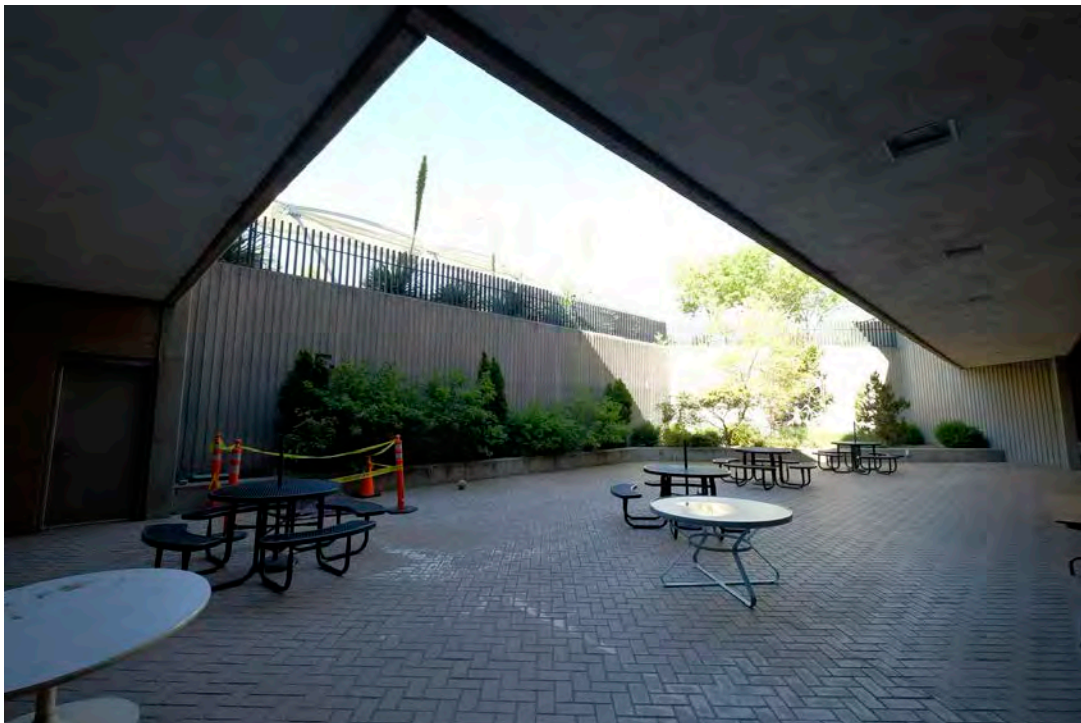
28. Lower level, northeast court, photographer facing north.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



29. Lower level, southeast court, photographer facing east.



301. Lower level, southwest court, photographer facing southwest.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



31. Lower level, northwest service court, photographer facing west.



MAIN LIBRARY

MAIN LIBRARY

5TH

COPPER



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PUBLIC LIBRARY

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MAIN LIBRARY  
100 COPPER BLVD

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MAIN LIBRARY  
501 COPPER  
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**MAIN LIBRARY**  
**501 COPPER NW**



# ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC LIBRARY

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
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LIBRARY CARDS

BOOK RETURN

RESTROOMS

MUSIC

CATALOG









LIBRARY CARDS



EXIT

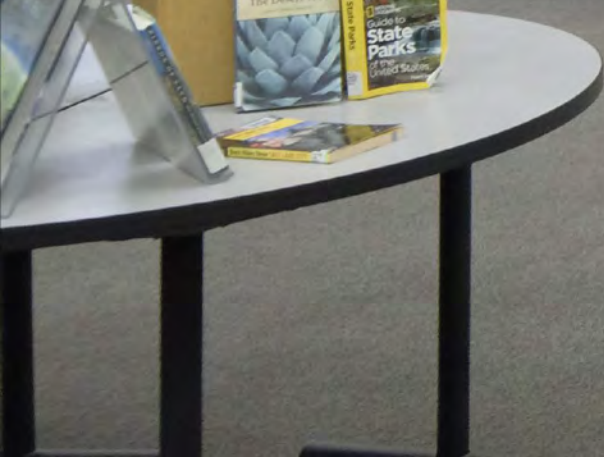
LIBRARY CARDS



BOOKSHOP  
Hours: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Monday - Friday  
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Saturday  
New  
Subscriptions Daily  
Lower Level

The Great Outdoors

The Desert Year  
A Guide to State Parks of the Grand Staircase











INFORMATION























NATURE & ECOLOGY

MILITARY HISTORY

ARCHAEOLOGY & ANTHRO.

WORLD WAR II COMMANDERS



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CD'S

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JAZZ-BLUES

JAZZ-BLUES

30s 40s 50s

COUNTRY

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National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Resubmission

Property Name: Main Library

Multiple Name:

State & County: NEW MEXICO, Bernalillo

Date Received: 4/29/2019      Date of Pending List:      Date of 16th Day:      Date of 45th Day: 6/13/2019      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: RS100003217

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      6/13/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Main Library is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture, Community Planning & Development and Politics/Government. Built in 1975 as a central piece of the city's significant urban renewal efforts, the library is an exceptional local example of mid-twentieth century Brutalist design. Architect George Pearl crafted an exemplary model of modern library planning and programmatic design packaged in a distinctive local interpretation of Brutalist design that fit its particular site, the local climate and its public users.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer Paul Lusignan      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229      Date 6/13/2019

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION**

BATAAN MEMORIAL BUILDING  
407 GALISTEO STREET, SUITE 236  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501  
PHONE (505) 827-6320 FAX (505) 827-6338



October 16, 2018

Joy Beasley  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Room 3316  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination Main Library in Bernalillo County, New Mexico to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- Disk with digital photo images
- Physical signature page
- Sketch map(s)/attachment(s) in hard copy
- Correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do  do not  constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations: Criterion Consideration G

Sincerely,

Steven Moffson  
State and National Register Coordinator  
Enclosures

563217

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: Main Library  
Other names/site number: The Public Library Albuquerque and Bernalillo County  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 501 Copper Avenue NW  
City or town: Albuquerque State: NM County: Bernalillo Zip Code: 87102  
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     X statewide     local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A     B     X C     D

Returned

	<u>10/23/18</u>
Dr. Jeff Pappas, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer	
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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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

---

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Returned

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Returned

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: library  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Brutalism

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

The Main Library in Albuquerque was designed in the Brutalist style by George Pearl of Stevens, Mallory, Pearl and Campbell Architects (SMPC) and completed in 1975. The three-story 104,577-square-foot library occupies the south half of the city block bounded by Copper and Tijeras avenues and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets in downtown Albuquerque. The library is built of concrete-floor slabs supported by a grid of concrete columns placed at thirty-six feet on center. The building is clad in brown brick, with floor-to-ceiling tinted glass on most elevations. The building is an east-to-west-oriented rectangle with large, open public spaces which can be reconfigured by moveable walls along tracks integrated into the system of coffered light modules. Offices, meeting rooms, and stairs are located along perimeter walls. Second-floor cantilevered projections house service functions. These projections are defining features of the design. The projection at the corner of Copper Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street shades the main entrance, which is also denoted by a bush-hammered concrete sign. Basement-level courts are located at each corner for outdoor reading, with the northwest court designed for truck deliveries. Space around the library that is dedicated to Southwest plantings. The interior is organized around the

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

open public spaces, which are dominated by the system of coffered lights. The walls are brown brick and brown vertical paneling, and many original furnishings remain in public and administrative spaces.

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## Narrative Description

The Main Library was designed by the Albuquerque architect George Pearl in the Brutalist style and completed in 1975. The library occupies the south half of the city block bounded by Copper and Tijeras avenues and 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets in downtown Albuquerque, one block north of the Central Avenue, the city's principal commercial street. The library was a central component of the 1970 comprehensive plan for urban renewal that includes the Albuquerque Police Department, Albuquerque City Hall, Albuquerque Convention Center, and Civic Plaza.

The Main Library is a three-level concrete-framed building with concrete-floor slabs supported by a grid of concrete columns placed at thirty-six feet on center. The building, which is clad in brown brick, is rectangle-shaped, oriented east to west, with cantilevered projections on each elevation. The grand scale and bold massing are characteristic of the Brutalist style. The main entrance is located at the corner of Copper Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street in the shade of a cantilevered projection. A bush-hammered concrete sign affects patrons to the entrance.

The library's three floors feature flexible plans with moveable walls that allow for large, open public spaces. The walls slide along tracks that are integrated into the system of coffered light modules. Second-floor cantilevered projections house service functions. Offices, meeting rooms, and stairs are located along perimeter walls. The building encloses 104,577 square feet on mostly open floors that provide space for the public, administration, and the growing collection.

The first floor is mostly open public space with the circulation desk, stairs, elevators, and bathrooms located along the south wall and offices and meeting rooms situated along the north wall. This floor, which includes space for reading, computers, and stacks, is characterized by the egg-crate appearance of the coffered ceiling lights. The second floor is equally divided between public and administrative spaces by a moveable wall. Large cantilevered projections on each side contain ventilation equipment, administrative offices, and the staff lounge. Small cantilevers at the northeast and southeast corners serve as reading nooks.

The lower level is divided among a meeting room, a children's section, an auditorium, and space for book storage. This level includes three courts for out-of-doors reading. The courts, which are located at the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of the library, are set below street level and are sheltered from the noise and "danger of the street." A fourth service court provides vehicle access to the library.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

The interior finishes include brown-brick perimeter walls and interior wall panels of brown vertical boards. Some these panels are moveable. The concrete-slab floors are carpeted. Many of the original furnishings remain, including brightly colored wood-and-vinyl chairs on the first floor and throughout the public spaces of the library. Administrative areas include Eames Aluminum Group Executive Chairs, Eames Sofa Compact, Eames Tulip chairs and tables, and Eames Walnut Stools, manufactured by Herman Miller. The acquisitions department includes original steel desks and cabinets.

The library grounds, as the architect intended, were planted with native plants and deciduous trees. These are most apparent on the south side with thick plantings of yucca, chamisa, native grasses, and pine trees. A sycamore tree is located on the northeast corner and locust trees are planted along most elevations. The courts are planted with pine and cedar trees, butterfly bushes, and native grasses.

In 2006, the main entrance was modified by Cherry/See/Reames Architects to include a tinted-glass entrance lobby. In 2010, the firm reconfigured the space to include a coffee shop.<sup>1</sup> Later, a small, steel bus shelter, a large ART bus shelter with a canvas canopy, and a tall, steel sculpture were added to the library grounds.

Returned

#### Contributing and Non-Contributing Resources

Main Library is counted as one contributing building.  
Albuquerque Public Library sign is counted as one contributing object.  
Landscape features are counted as one contributing site.  
Furniture purchased when the library was completed is counted one contributing object.

Sculpture on the library grounds is counted as one noncontributing object.  
ART bus shelter is counted as one noncontributing structure.  
Metal-and-glass bus shelter on south side is counted as one noncontributing structure.

---

<sup>1</sup> William A. Dodge, "A Survey of Albuquerque's Mid-Century Modernist Architectural Resources." (City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2013).

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Returned

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Politics/Government

Education

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1975

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1975

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Pearl, George (architect)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Returned

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because the library, designed by Albuquerque architect George Pearl of the firm Stevens, Mallory, Pearl, and Campbell, is an excellent example of Brutalism, a style of architecture popular in the 1960s and 1970s that emphasized monumental forms built of brick and especially concrete. The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the areas of community planning and development and politics/government because the library was a central component of urban renewal plans in Albuquerque in the 1960s and 1970s that reshaped downtown to include Civic Plaza, a new city hall, police department, convention center, and the demolition of blocks of so-called blighted buildings. The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the area of education because it incorporates late-20<sup>th</sup>-century scientific principles of library design and because it represents the city's commitment to public educational institutions in response to the population boom in the decades after the Second World War. The Main Library meets criteria consideration G because it achieved significance within the last fifty years and is of exceptional importance.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture because the library, designed by Albuquerque architect George Pearl of the firm Stevens, Mallory, Pearl, and Campbell, is an excellent example of Brutalism, a style of architecture popular in the 1960s and 1970s that emphasized monumental forms built of brick and especially concrete. The rectangular-shaped building is punctuated by second-floor cantilevered projections and surrounded on all side by lower-level courts. Its large size, grand scale, and sculptural form belies an interior planned around the needs of the public and library administration, with open floor plans, moveable walls, and clearly located library functions. Where many buildings of this style feature cold concrete interiors, the Main Library is finished with brown brick, brown-wood paneling, and wall-to-wall carpet.

The Main Library is located in one of only two small concentrations of Brutalist buildings in the state. These Brutalist nodes include downtown Albuquerque and the campus of the University of New Mexico. Downtown includes: Albuquerque City Hall, designed by James Liberty and completed in 1968; Albuquerque Police Department, designed by William Ellison and completed in 1972; the Albuquerque Convention Center, completed in the 1960s; and the Main Library.

The University of New Mexico has a significant concentration of Brutalist buildings. UNM and universities across the nation were adding new infrastructure in anticipation of increased in

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

enrollment as the Baby Boom generation reached college age. In 1966, New Mexico voters passed a bond issue for over \$42 million for new academic buildings, land purchases, and other campus improvements for the university system. At UNM, George Pearl designed the Faculty Office and Classroom Building in 1971 as a fortress-like building with battered walls and cantilevered forms. Brutalist buildings on campus also include the Physics Building, designed by the firm Pacheco and Graham and completed in 1971; the Psychology Building completed in 1972; and the Farris Engineering Building, built in 1969. Smaller cities built one or more examples of the style, including Santa Fe with the Manuel Lujan Sr. Building built in 1974, and Taos, with the Courthouse and Administration Complex built in 1970.

### The Public Library System in Albuquerque

The first public library in Albuquerque opened in 1901 and was housed in Perkins Hall, a building donated to the city by prominent residents Joshua and Sarah Reynolds with collections provided by local business leaders.<sup>2</sup> After fire damaged this building in 1923, the main library was moved to a new Pueblo-Revival style building on the corner of Central Avenue and Edith Boulevard in 1925. In the decades following the Second World War, the city of Albuquerque experienced significant growth and development. Although manufacturing jobs in Albuquerque lagged behind other western cities, Kirtland Air Base and Sandia Lab continued to grow and employ thousands of residents. Effective booster campaigns promoting the clean air, pleasant climate, rugged beauty, and cultural attractions of New Mexico continued to draw people to Albuquerque throughout the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. The remarkable pace of residential development in the city led to the rapid expansion of city services, including new roads, hospitals, public transportation, recreation, schools, and libraries. To keep pace with this growth, the Albuquerque Public Library opened new branches in several newly built suburban neighborhoods, beginning with the Ernie Pyle Memorial Library in 1947, and followed by other satellite branches in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1970, city officials recognized the need for a new downtown branch and issued bonds in 1971 for construction of the Main Library.<sup>3</sup>

### The Promise and Problems of Brutalism

The Main Library is a highly visible public building constructed in the *avant guard* Brutalist style. Brutalism emerged in the United Kingdom and France after the Second World War as a reaction to the delicate and uniform buildings of the International Style. Concrete is its central element because in the war-ravaged economies of Europe, poured-in-place concrete buildings were cheap to build. In Marseilles, Swiss architect Le Corbusier designed a massive, box-framed apartment block. Its solidity is part and parcel of its method of construction. Where the

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Rozelle, "The Main Library," *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

International Style emphasizes the steel frame that supports a glass curtain wall, Brutalist buildings have no separate structure. The cast-concrete walls are the frame of the building. Some Brutalist buildings are built of brick, but the rough concrete exterior is its defining characteristic. The term, Brutalism derives from the French *beton brut*, meaning raw concrete. Another popular treatment was hand hammering or bush hammering the concrete into corrugated razor-sharp edges.

In the United States in the early 1960s and 1970s, Brutalism was promoted by a small group of mostly university architecture professors before the style was embraced by the public. Designed by Paul Rudolph, the Yale School of Architecture from 1963, with its soaring towers, is an early example of basic geometry and dramatic scale sometimes described as heroic or monumental. Cantilevered forms became a common feature of the style, as seen the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. Floor plans of Brutalist buildings were unique to each structure and were often expressed on the exterior, such as the façade of Boston City Hall.

Brutalism challenged the hegemony of the International Style and it represents a period of experimentation and risk-taking in American architecture. Brutalism embraced individual expression that catered to specific design programs, rather than the repetitive glass boxes of the International Style. In New Mexico, Brutalist buildings appear like those throughout the nation, with their solid, heavy, and monumental forms. The Manual Lujan, Sr. Building in Santa Fe was features a low profile, battered walls, narrow windows, and port cullis-style entrance are reminiscent of 16th-century Spanish star forts.

Brutalism is not without its critics. Inveighing against the style, Prince Charles said, "You have to give this much to the Luftwaffe, when it knocked down our buildings, it didn't replace them with anything more offensive than rubble." Architecture critic Paul Goldberger said of the FBI headquarters, "This building turns its back on the city and substitutes for responsible architecture a pompous, empty monumentality that is, in the end, not so much a symbol as a symptom—a symptom of something wrong in government and just as wrong in architecture." The public came to dislike the concrete architecture of the 1960s and 1970s, which it regarded as stark, uninviting, intimidating, and antagonistic. Its emphasis on concrete, especially interior spaces, made the buildings cold, dank, and unpleasant places to work.

Many Brutalist buildings were difficult to negotiate because of their complex floor plans. The Yale School of Architecture includes over thirty terraced floor levels, frustrating generations of architecture students. And Brutalist buildings do not usually include ceremonial entrances, but instead the entries are subordinate to the plan. That is, they are often located in unlikely places, resulting in frustrated visitors. The Yale school entrance is discretely tucked away in shadowy cleft on the front of the building and Boston City Hall is entered through a series of brick barricades. The rare architect, such as Louis I. Kahn, designed monumental forms in concrete, but used scale, materials, and light to create warm and inviting interior spaces.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

### Design of the Main Library

In his design for the Main Library, George Pearl focused on the needs of the library administration and the public, which obviated many of the problems that are characteristic of Brutalism. Rather than interior cast-concrete walls, Pearl designed a system of moveable walls for flexibility. Each floor is readily navigated with large, open public spaces and easy-to-locate stairs and elevators. Library functions, such as the circulation desk, reference desk, and the stacks, are obvious and intuitive to visitors. The interior finishes are not concrete, but brown brick, wood paneling, and wall-to-wall carpet for a warm, inviting environment. And the architect included courts for patrons to enjoy the New Mexico sun and read in the out-of-doors. The Main Library is a monumental, but its interior design transcends the problems of most, and the most famous, buildings built in the Brutalist style.

The architect, George Pearl, spent his career in Albuquerque blending modernism and traditional New Mexico architecture. Pearl arrived from Texas in 1949 and quickly embraced the state's building traditions and culture. He spent his forty-year career as the principal designer for Stevens Mallory Pearl & Campbell, now known as SMPC Architects. Among his early designs was the Albuquerque Civic Auditorium in 1957 in which he used a sand hill to form the massive poured-in-place concrete dome. Later projects include the National Radio Astronomy Observatory on the New Mexico Tech campus in Socorro, Simms Fine Arts Center and theater at Albuquerque Academy. His Brutalist buildings include the college of business on the campus of Eastern New Mexico University in Portales and the Faculty Office and Classroom Building on the campus of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.<sup>4</sup>

### Main Library and Urban Renewal in Albuquerque

The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the areas of community planning and development and politics/government because the library was a central component of urban renewal plans in Albuquerque in the 1960s and 1970s, which reshaped downtown to include Civic Plaza, a new city hall, police department, convention center, and the demolition of blocks of so-called blighted buildings. The Main Library was commissioned in accordance with the 1968 Tijeras Urban Renewal Project. Urban renewal efforts in the United States from the late 1960s to early 1970s provided Albuquerque with \$20 million in federal funds to revive the downtown-central business district with modern public facilities. In 1971, the city issued bonds to finance and support the construction of the new downtown library.

The Main Library was to be completed as part of the first phase in a series of urban renewal projects to revitalize the city's flagging downtown. Albuquerque's downtown core was the heart of New Town, established after the arrival of the AT&SF Railway in 1880. For roughly eighty years downtown served as the residential, commercial, and civic center for most residents in

<sup>4</sup> Katie Burford, "Architect Left Indelible Mark on Landscape of State," *Albuquerque Journal*, 18 August 2003.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

Albuquerque. The rapid expansion in population following the Second World War led to a boom in residential construction on the undeveloped mesas to the northeast and west of the central business district. Residential neighborhoods sprang up in these outlying regions, and downtown maintained its status as the central district for shopping, dining, and conducting business through the 1950s as seen in prominent hotels, department stores, and curio shops.<sup>5</sup> However, the shift in population to the surrounding mesas, combined with downtown's narrow streets, traffic congestion, and limited parking drove many city businesses to relocate to the suburbs by 1960.

The pattern of urban flight to the suburbs happened later in Albuquerque than in many Eastern cities, but the city's response to the deterioration of its downtown with a program of urban renewal was the same as elsewhere in the nation. Urban renewal was a practice established by the Federal Housing Act of 1949 to provide funding for the improvement of cities plagued with any number of undesirable conditions that fell under the blanket of "blight."<sup>6</sup> Max Boruff of the University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning explains:

Often blight was used to describe otherwise healthy urban neighborhoods inhabited by a single ethnic group; historic and dilapidated buildings whose owners were either uninterested in renovation or unable to secure funding to do so; heavy, poor, or inefficient traffic flow through central business districts; and nearly any other sociological or psychological issue that was affecting the urban area. A blunt instrument, "blight" provided ready justification for planners' redevelopment aspirations in the postwar period.<sup>7</sup>

By the early 1960s downtown Albuquerque was showing signs of deterioration as businesses followed the residential flight to the suburbs. High vacancy rates and neglect of the city's oldest buildings gave downtown a "blighted" appearance. In 1962, Albuquerque established the City Building Removal Team to address the issue of deteriorated buildings. The Team surveyed approximately ninety buildings and condemned thirty-one. By 1963, the city had demolished twenty-four downtown buildings.<sup>8</sup> Several casualties were local landmarks, which were demolished to make way for parking lots and new development.<sup>9</sup>

The close partnership between city boosters and the city commission had helped to drive the sprawling growth in the years immediately after the Second World War. The chamber of

<sup>5</sup> Carleen Lazzell and Melissa Payne, *Historic Albuquerque: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Max Boruff, "Downtown Urban Renewal," *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Ferro, "An Overview: The History of Preservation Activity in Albuquerque, New Mexico" (University of Florida, 1976), <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00102020>.

<sup>9</sup> Lazzell and Payne, 64. Demolitions included the Hotel Franciscan (1923) and the Alvarado Hotel (1902), built by the Fred Harvey Company.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

commerce pursued a strategy of annexation to include the emerging suburbs with the city's rapidly increasing boundaries. Albuquerque boosters had also embraced the construction of the Interstate highways that crisscrossed the city in the 1960s as another "big city" improvement. This decades-long partnership between business and government contributed to the pattern of Albuquerque's rapid suburban development and the resulting deterioration of the central business district. Disagreements over the management of Albuquerque's growth led to a reconfiguration of city government to include a mayor and city council structure in 1972, but the pro-growth partnership survived.<sup>10</sup> The tension between the allied local business owners and city government and the primarily Hispanic downtown residents reached a climax over the issue of urban renewal in the 1960s.

Local business owners funded a study of the downtown area in 1957, seeking to improve traffic congestion and access to the local businesses, which resulted in an unimplemented plan that would have accommodated high pedestrian traffic and displaced the traditionally Hispanic residential population in the Tijeras neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> With the continuing decline of downtown in the years that followed, the city commission established the Albuquerque Metropolitan Development Committee in 1964 to "study the issue of 'sprawlitis,' in relation to 'core' development."<sup>12</sup> The Committee published a plan for the redevelopment of downtown in 1966, but resistance from local businessmen prevented its implementation.

Many cities accepted federal urban renewal funds for urban revitalization projects by the 1950s, but Albuquerque initially declined to seek these grants, in part because local politicians and business owners resisted federal involvement in the city's development. By 1968, despite these objections, and after considerable debate, the city finally received \$25 million in federal urban renewal funds for the "Tijeras Urban Renewal Project."<sup>13</sup> In Albuquerque, city officials targeted the historically Hispanic ethnic neighborhood of Tijeras for urban renewal, labeling it a slum.<sup>14</sup> The plan called for the city to acquire most residential buildings in the downtown Tijeras neighborhood and raze them for commercial development. In response to this plan, residents of Tijeras formed the Citizen Improvement Committee and successfully petitioned for a voice in the Urban Renewal Agency. Their resistance altered plans for downtown and resulted in the retention of most of the Tijeras neighborhood.

Criticism of the Tijeras plan led city planners to quickly rework their initial plans, creating a comprehensive plan in 1970 that focused on the renewal of the central business district. The city plan identified several goals, including the creation of Albuquerque as a leading metropolitan center, catering to pedestrians, developing a sense of place in the downtown region through the use of gateways, and "stimulate interaction between government and citizens to form a better

<sup>10</sup> Michael Farley Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest, 1945-1965* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994), 196.

<sup>11</sup> Logan, *Fighting Sprawl and City Hall: Resistance to Urban Growth in the Southwest, 1945-1965*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

functioning downtown.”<sup>15</sup> Central to the plan was a large Civic Plaza “fronted by government and institutional buildings that would invite community interaction with city officials.”<sup>16</sup> The first phase of the plan called for the construction of a new main library and parking garage and a pedestrian bridge to the Civic Plaza. This comprehensive plan reflects a modernist planning philosophy based on the goal of restoring the downtown to its former central role in commerce, government, finance, and residential activities.<sup>17</sup> A study by the city in 1972 elaborated on the 1970 plan, adding goals to encourage lifelong learning, promote tourism, and preserve culturally significant architecture.<sup>18</sup>

Many aspects of the 1970 comprehensive plan were not realized, but the Main Library, city hall, police department, convention center, and the Civic Plaza were built. In preparation for the remaining projects outlined in the 1970 plan, the city demolished many buildings in the downtown corridor, including half-a-dozen local landmarks. When these projects failed to get implemented, downtown was left with even less potential to entice businesses and residents to return.

#### The Science of Libraries in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The Main Library is significant at the state level under National Register Criterion A in the area of education because it represents the leading edge of library science in the third quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The parameters of the design space for 500 patrons and 500,000 volumes. After visiting “twenty of the most conspicuous new libraries in the country,” the architects “talked to librarians, the architects, and library users about the good and the bad aspects of their libraries.” The principal issue shared by these libraries was that “change in library media was rapid and omnipresent and that flexibility of interior space is the preeminent requirement for providing continuously adequate and creative library services.”<sup>19</sup>

The architects responded with secondary and administrative functions placed along the perimeter walls, leaving a block-long open, public space interrupted only by structural columns set at thirty-six feet on center. Many of the walls were designed to be moveable for greater flexibility. The coffered ceiling lights included tracts for the walls, air supply and return, and connections to electrical, telephone, and video systems. Flexibility provides patrons with the choice to read out-of-doors in one of three lower-level courts “sheltered from the noise and danger of the busy streets.” The fourth court is devoted to vehicular services, including bookmobiles. The building’s flexible design includes space for future growth in the lower level for collections and

<sup>15</sup> Boruff, “Downtown Urban Renewal.”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Judy Mattivi Morley, *Historic Preservation and the Imagined West: Albuquerque, Denver, and Seattle* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Boruff.

<sup>19</sup> “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* (September-October 1975): 12.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

in the second floor for administrative functions. The architects provided for a future third floor with adequate structural support and stairs to the roof, which are now concealed.<sup>20</sup>

Criteria Consideration G: Properties that achieved significance within the last fifty years

The Main Library in Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico meets National Register Criteria Consideration G because the property has achieved significance within the past fifty years. The library is an exceptional example of the Late Modern architectural style known as Brutalism. The bold, monumental forms constructed of brick and concrete were sensitively incorporated into a modern library with flexible, open floor plans to accommodate a variety of educational functions and lower-level courts to permit reading out-of-doors. The library, a centerpiece of the city's urban renewal efforts in the 1970s, is a rare example of Brutalism in New Mexico. It is located in one of only two small concentrations of Brutalist buildings in the state. These Brutalist nodes include downtown Albuquerque and the campus of the University of New Mexico and total roughly a dozen Brutalist buildings.

Returned

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Burford, Katie. "Architect Left Indelible Mark on Landscape of State." *Albuquerque Journal*. 18 August 2003.

Boruff, Max. "Downtown Urban Renewal." *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d.  
<http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

"The Downtown Plan." City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1970.

Dodge, William A. "A Survey of Albuquerque's Mid-Century Modernist Architectural Resources." City of Albuquerque Planning Department. Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2013.

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"Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 12-19.

"George Pearl, Albuquerque Public Library, ca. 1972," Albuquerque Public Library: Bound sketch book preliminary sketches, diagrams and notes, Box 6, Folder 8, George Pearl Papers (MSS 782 BC), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Rozelle, Ronald. "Albuquerque Public Library." *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d.  
<http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/albuquerque-public-library/>

Smith, Dean P. Interview with authors. Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2017 October 6.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

Returned

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 1.72 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.086156 | Longitude: -106.653127 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary appears on the sketch map as a red line drawn to scale and corresponding with the point of latitude and longitude in Section 10.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary includes the intact property historically associated with the Main Library.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Katie Dix, Heidi Pierce, and Alex Rodriguez  
organization: University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning, Certificate Program in Historic Preservation and Regionalism  
street & number: 1 University of New Mexico  
city or town: Albuquerque state: NM zip code: 87131  
e-mail: N/A telephone: N/A  
date: December 2017

**State Historic Preservation Office**

name/title: Steven Moffson, State and National Register Coordinator  
organization: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division  
street & number: 407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236  
city or town: Santa Fe state: New Mexico zip: 87501  
email: steven.moffson@state.nm.us telephone: 505.476.04444  
date: July 30, 2018

Returned

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

## Maps

1. Location Map
2. National Register Boundary Map

## Figures

Figure 1. Site Plan and Street Level Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 16.

Figure 2. Upper and Lower Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 17.

Figure 3. Section A-A (North-South), "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 15.

Figure 4. George Pearl, Albuquerque Public Library, ca. 1972. "Albuquerque Public Library: Bound sketch book preliminary sketches, diagrams and notes," Box 6, Folder 8, George Pearl Papers (MSS 782 BC), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

Figure 5. East and north sides, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.

Figure 6. West and south sides, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.

Figures 7. First floor (above) and second floor, *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 13

Figure 8. Downtown Albuquerque, 1940s.

Figure 9. Urban Renewal in Downtown Albuquerque.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

Figure 10. "Central Avenue and Fourth Street Mall," 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, *Downtown Plan* (Albuquerque: City of Albuquerque Planning Department, December 1970).

Figure 11. "Staging of Central Ave. Area," 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, *Downtown Plan* (Albuquerque: City of Albuquerque Planning Department, December 1970).

Figure 12. Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, 1975. Max Boruff. "Downtown Urban Redevelopment." *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

Figure 13. Civic Plaza (center), one block northeast of Main Library, with Convention Center (upper right), Albuquerque Inn (upper left), Plaza del Sol upper left corner), and City Hall (lower left), 1980s.

Returned

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Main Library

City or Vicinity: Albuquerque

County: Bernalillo State: NM

Photographer: Harvey Kaplan

Date Photographed: July 17, 2017



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

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

- 1 of 31. South and east sides, photographer facing northwest.
- 2 of 31. South side with glass entrance additions from Copper Avenue, photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 31. Northeast corner from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing southwest.
- 4 of 31. North side with service court in foreground, photographer facing south east.
- 5 of 31. Rear (west) elevation with landscaping from 6<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing east.
- 6 of 31. South side with ART bus shelter, photographer facing north.
- 7 of 31. Southwest corner with court in foreground, photographer facing northeast.
- 8 of 31. Southwest corner, with court and landscaping, photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 31. Southwest court along Copper Avenue, photographer facing east.
- 10 of 31. Main entrance with entrance sign, photographer facing northwest.
- 11 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing northwest.
- 12 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing east.
- 13 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, offices and meeting rooms, photographer facing north.
- 14 of 31. Interior, first floor, meeting room with original furniture, photographer facing southwest.
- 15 of 31. Interior, first floor, reading room, circulation desk, photographer facing south.
- 16 of 31. Interior, first floor, stairs to second floor, photographer facing west.
- 17 of 31. Interior, second floor, reading room, photographer facing north.
- 18 of 31. Interior, second floor, administrative offices with moveable walls, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

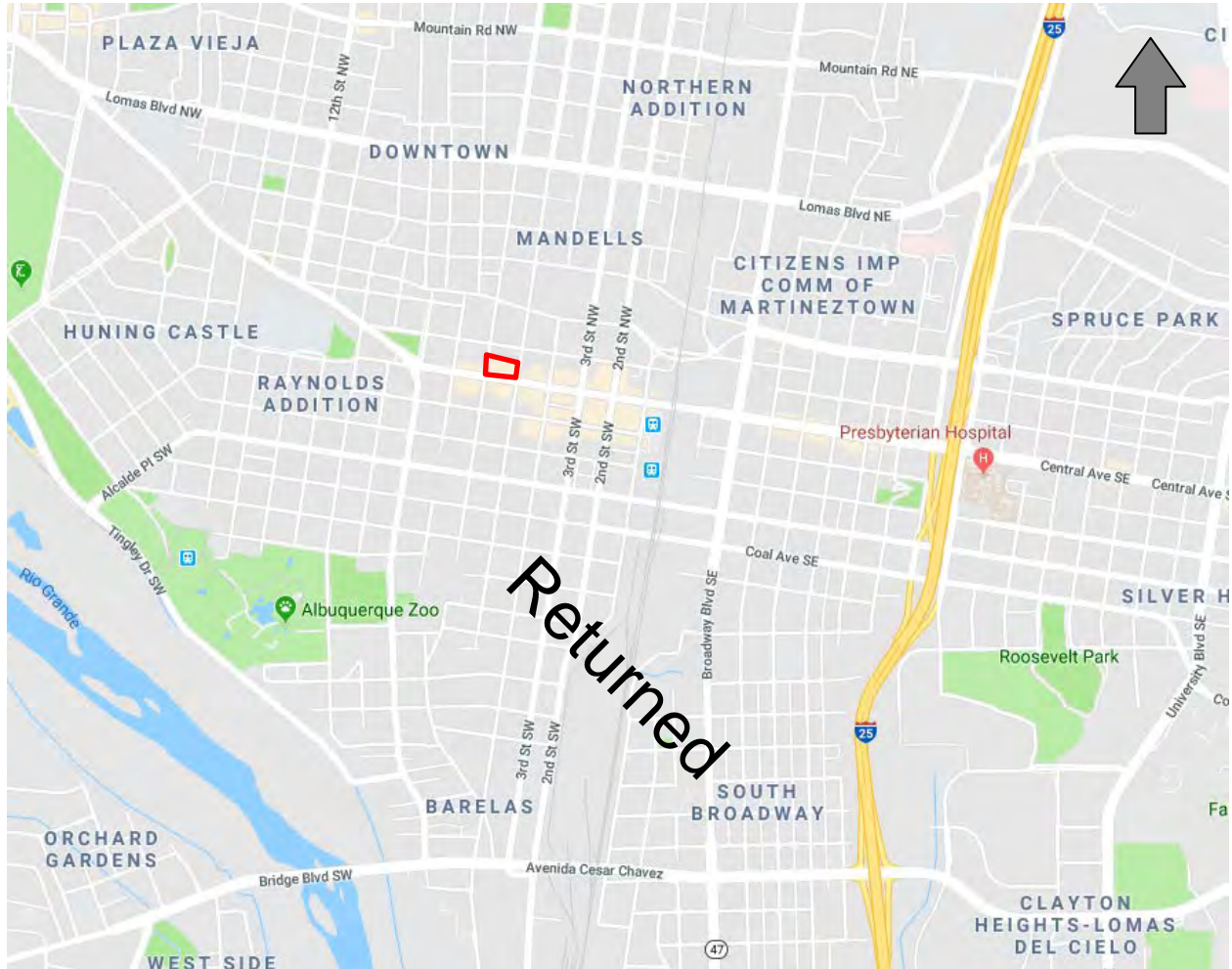
- 19 of 31. Interior, second floor, window above main entrance, photographer facing southeast.
- 20 of 31. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with original desks, photographer facing southwest.
- 21 of 31. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with projecting window and original chairs, photographer facing southwest.
- 22 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration with original furnishings, photographer facing southwest.
- 23 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration with moveable wall, photographer facing east.
- 24 of 31. Interior, second floor, administration, conference room, photographer facing east.
- 25 of 31. Interior, lower level, children's area, photographer facing south.
- 26 of 31. Interior, lower level, auditorium, photographer facing southeast.
- 27 of 31. Interior, lower level, meeting room, photographer facing west.
- 28 of 31. Lower level, northeast court, photographer facing north.
- 29 of 31. Lower level, southeast court, photographer facing east.
- 30 of 31. Lower level, southwest court, photographer facing southwest.
- 31 of 31. Lower level, northwest service court, photographer facing west.

**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.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



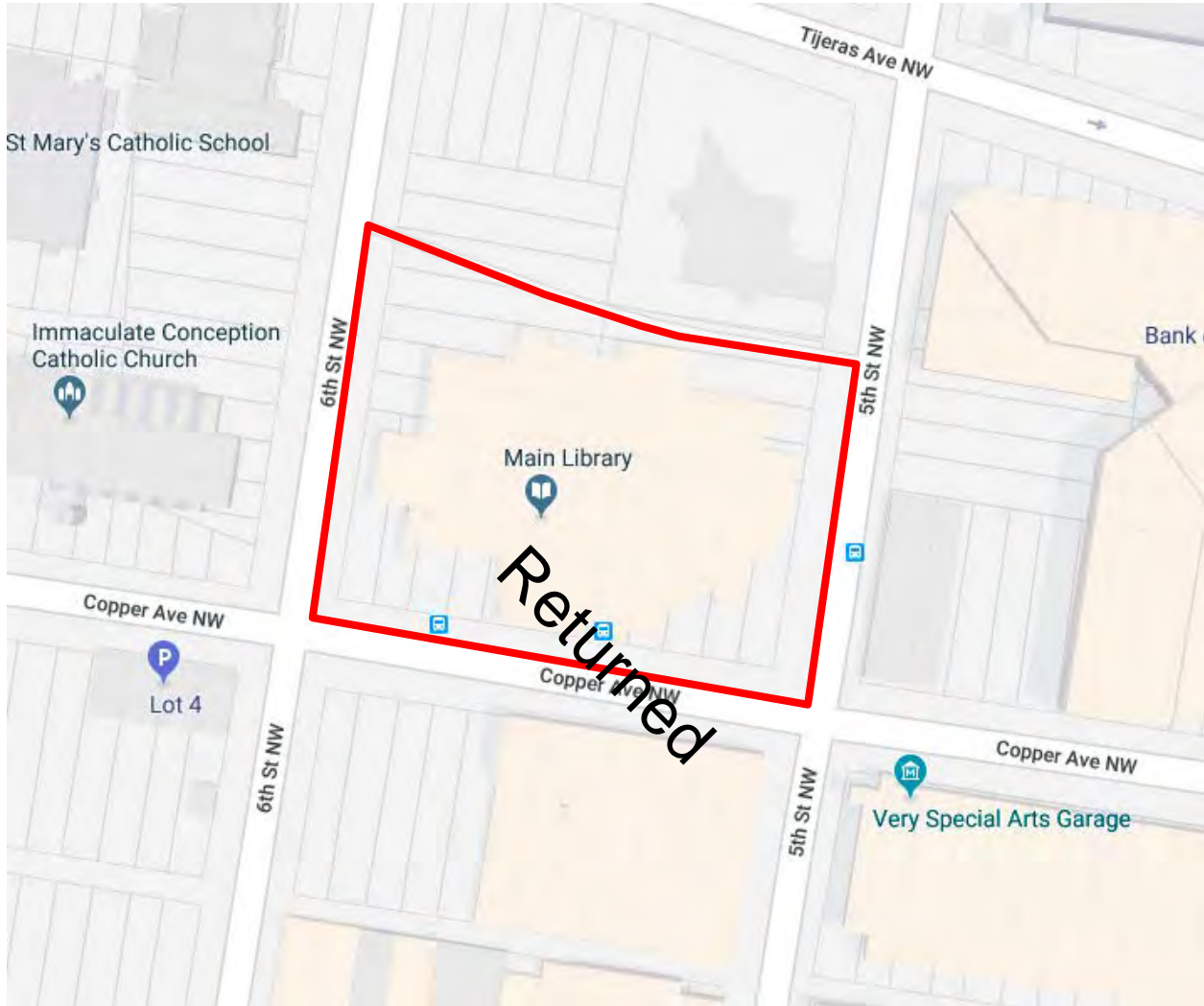
Main Library  
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Location of Property 


Approximate Scale: one inch = 2,300 feet

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Main Library  
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

National Register boundary 

Approximate Scale: one inch = 100 feet

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

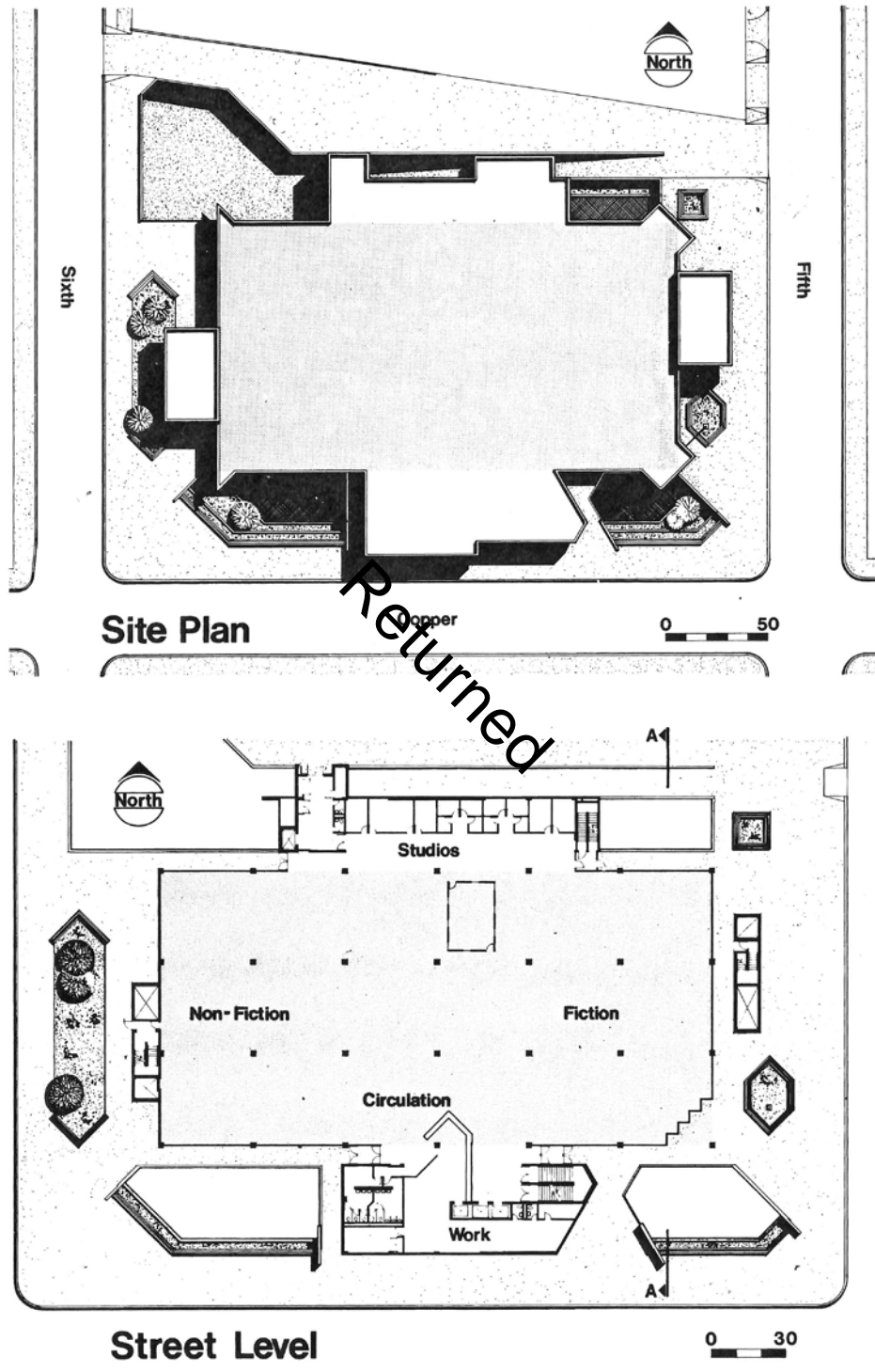
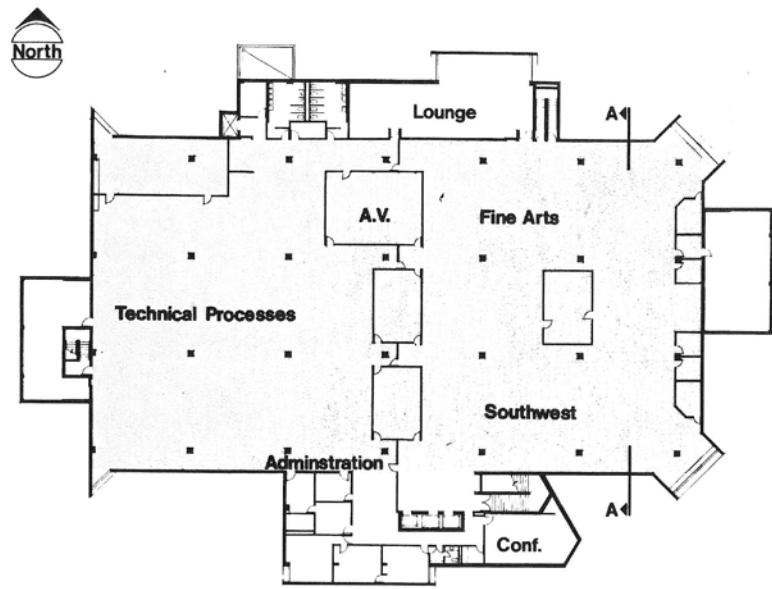


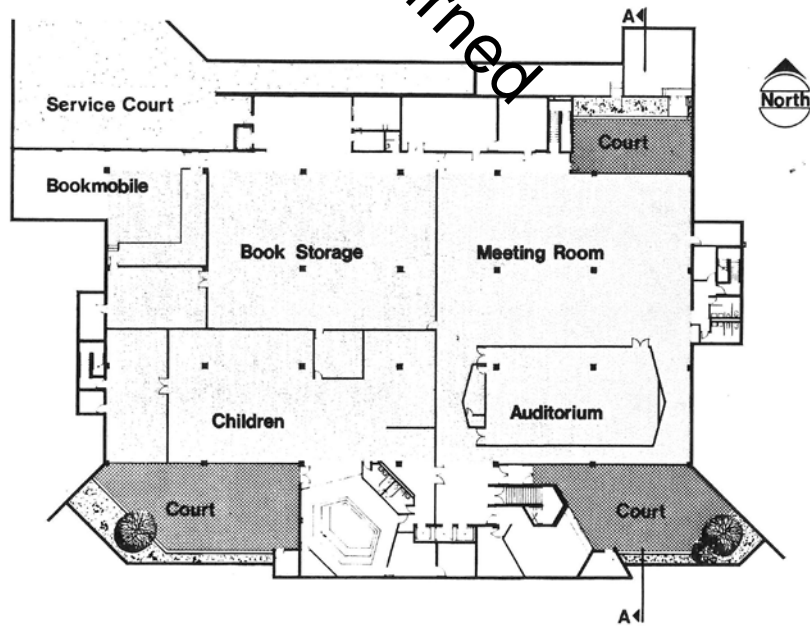
Figure 1. Site Plan and Street Level Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 16.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Upper Level **Returned** 0 30

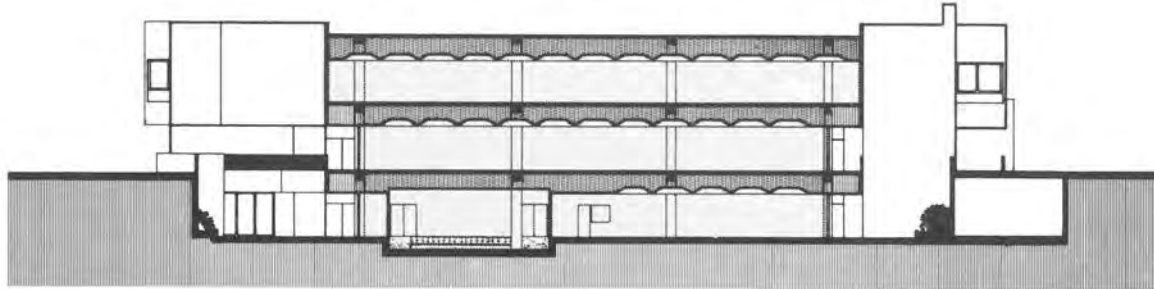


Lower Level 0 30

Figure 2. Upper and Lower Plans, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 17.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



### Section A-A



Figure 3. Section A-A (North-South), “Albuquerque Public Library.” *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 15.



Figure 4. George Pearl, Albuquerque Public Library, ca. 1972. “Albuquerque Public Library: Bound sketch book preliminary sketches, diagrams and notes,” Box 6, Folder 8, George Pearl Papers (MSS 782 BC), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

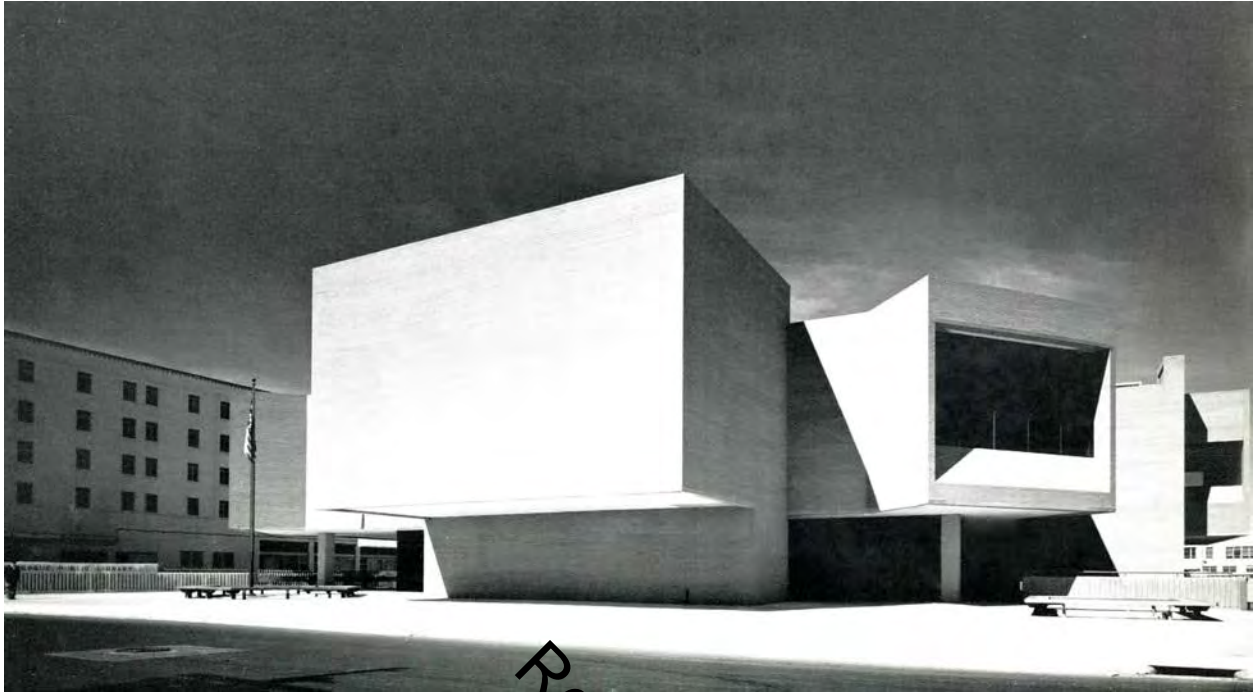


Figure 5. East and north sides, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.

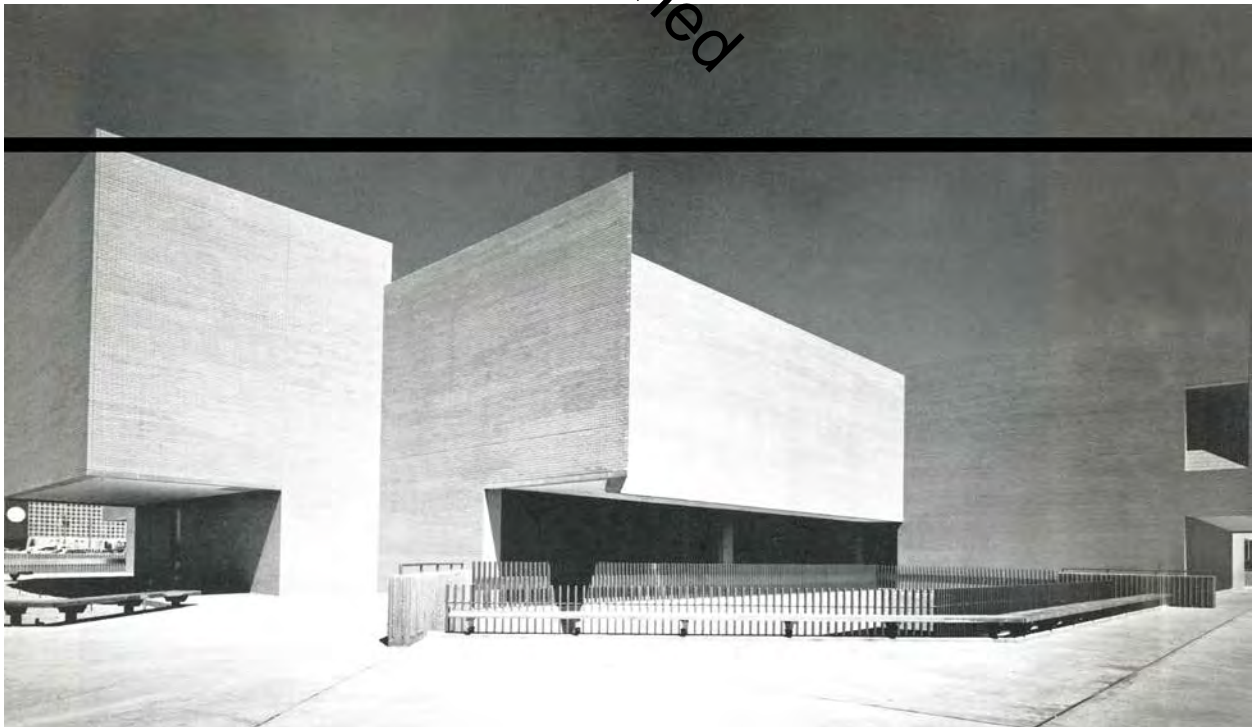


Figure 6. Rear and south side, "Albuquerque Public Library." *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 14.



Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Figures 7. First floor (above) and second floor, *New Mexico Architecture* 17 (September-October 1975): 13.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Figure 8. Downtown Albuquerque, 1940s.



Figure 9. Urban Renewal in Downtown Albuquerque.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

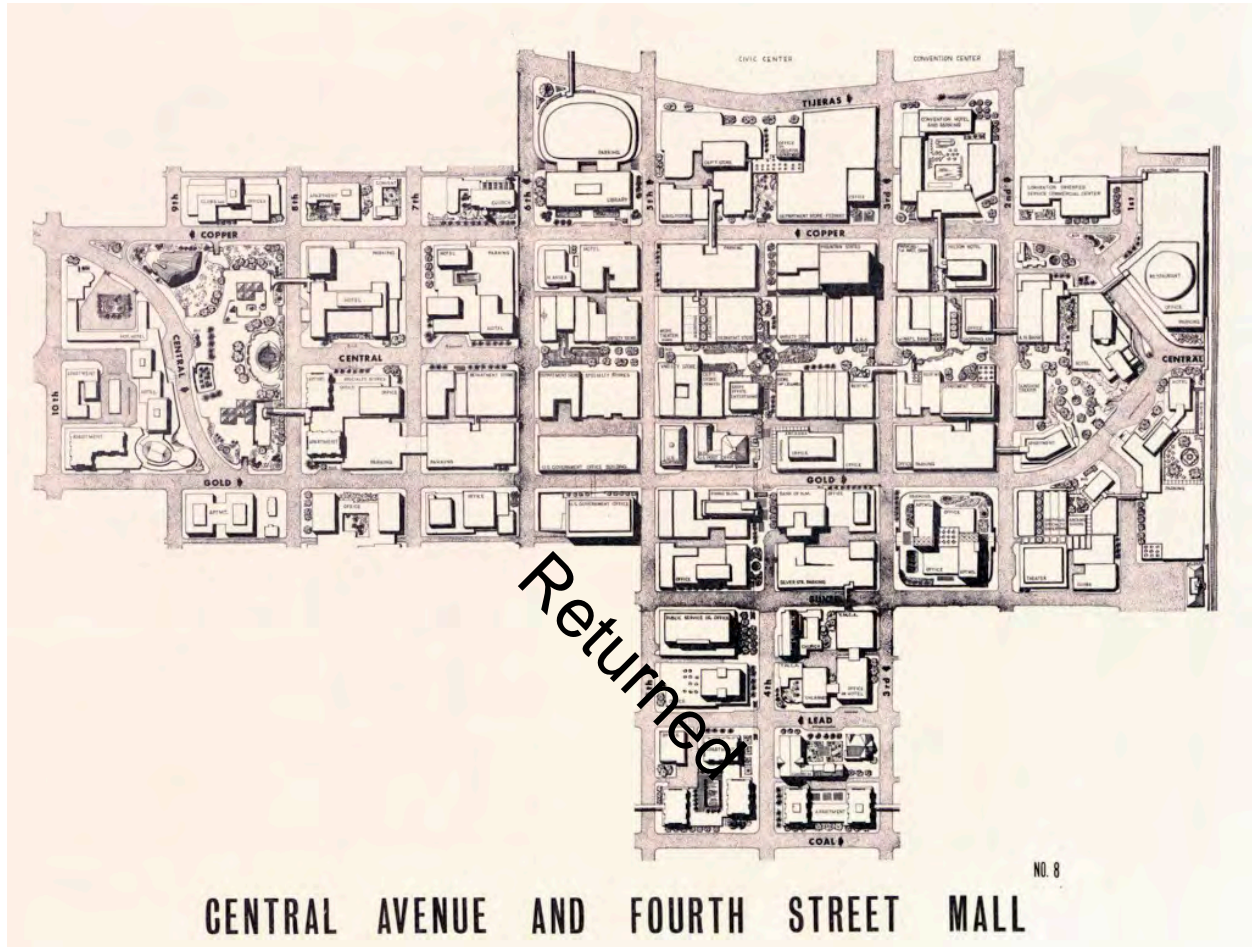


Figure 10. “Central Avenue and Fourth Street Mall,” 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Downtown Plan (City of Albuquerque Planning Department, 1970).

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

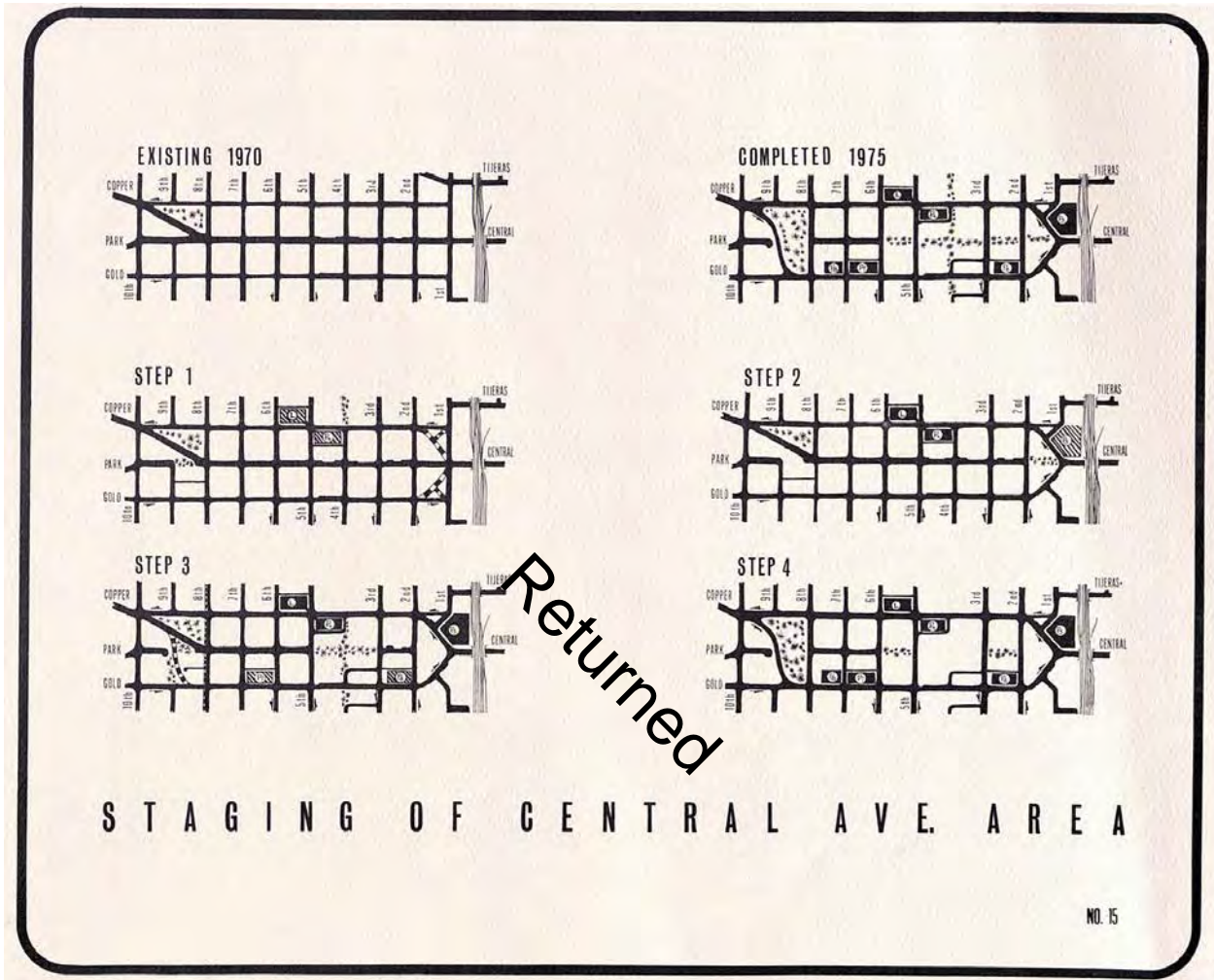


Figure 11. "Staging of Central Ave. Area," 1970. City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Downtown Plan (City of Albuquerque Planning Department, 1970).

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



Figure 12. Albuquerque/Bernalillo Comprehensive Plan, 1975. Boruff, Max. "Downtown Urban Redevelopment." *Albuquerque Modernism: A Guide to Mid-Century Architecture in Albuquerque, New Mexico*, n.d. <http://albuquerquemodernism.unm.edu/wp/downtown-urban-redevelopment/>

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

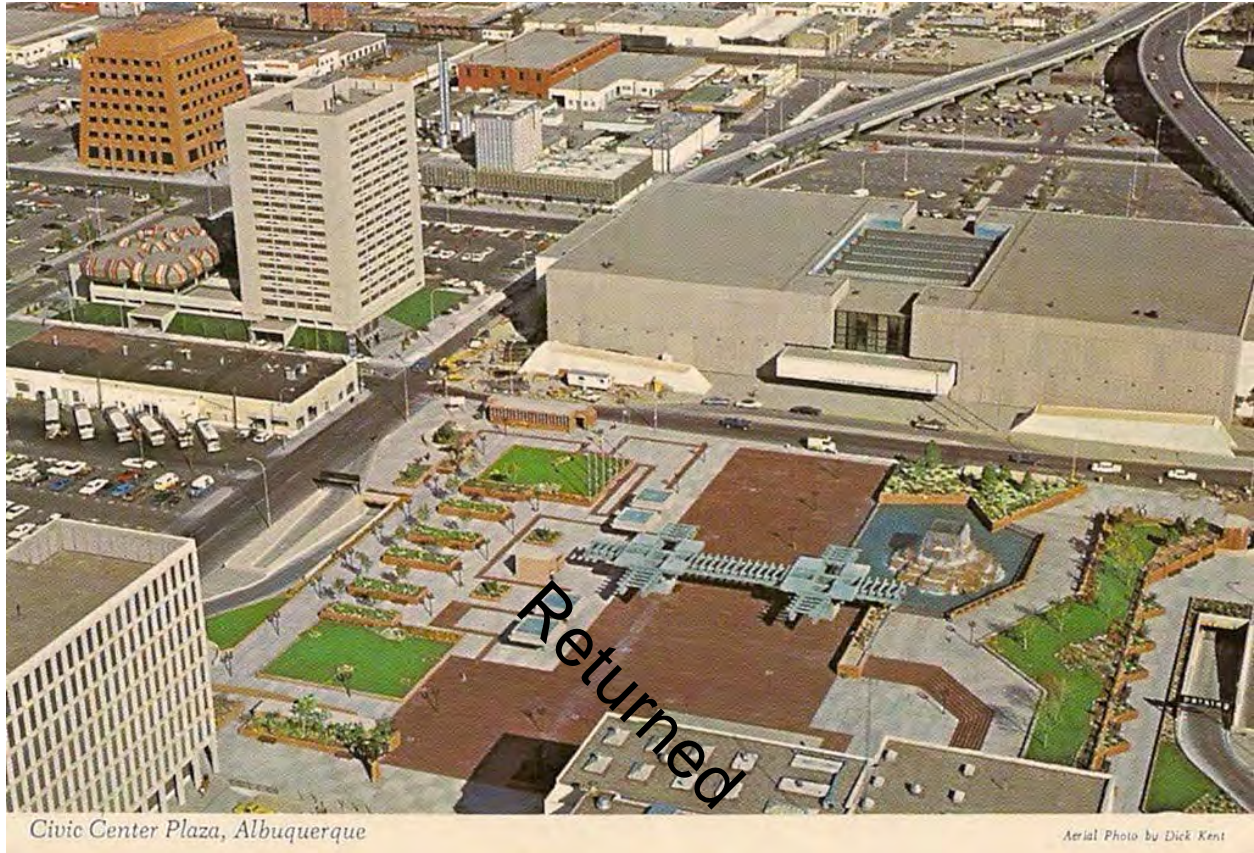


Figure 13. Civic Plaza (center), one block northeast of Main Library, with Convention Center (upper right), Albuquerque Inn (upper left), Plaza del Sol upper left corner), and City Hall (lower left), 1980s.

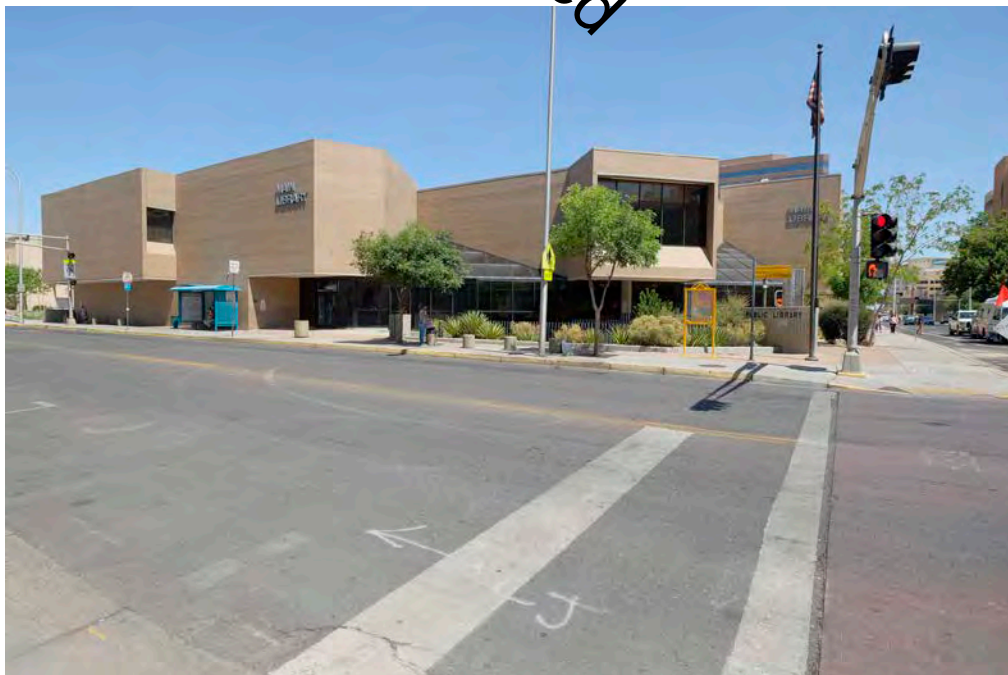
Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State

## Photographs



1. South and east sides, photographer facing northwest.



2. South side with glass entrance additions from Copper Avenue, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



3. Northeast corner from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing southwest.



4. North side with service court in foreground, photographer facing south east.

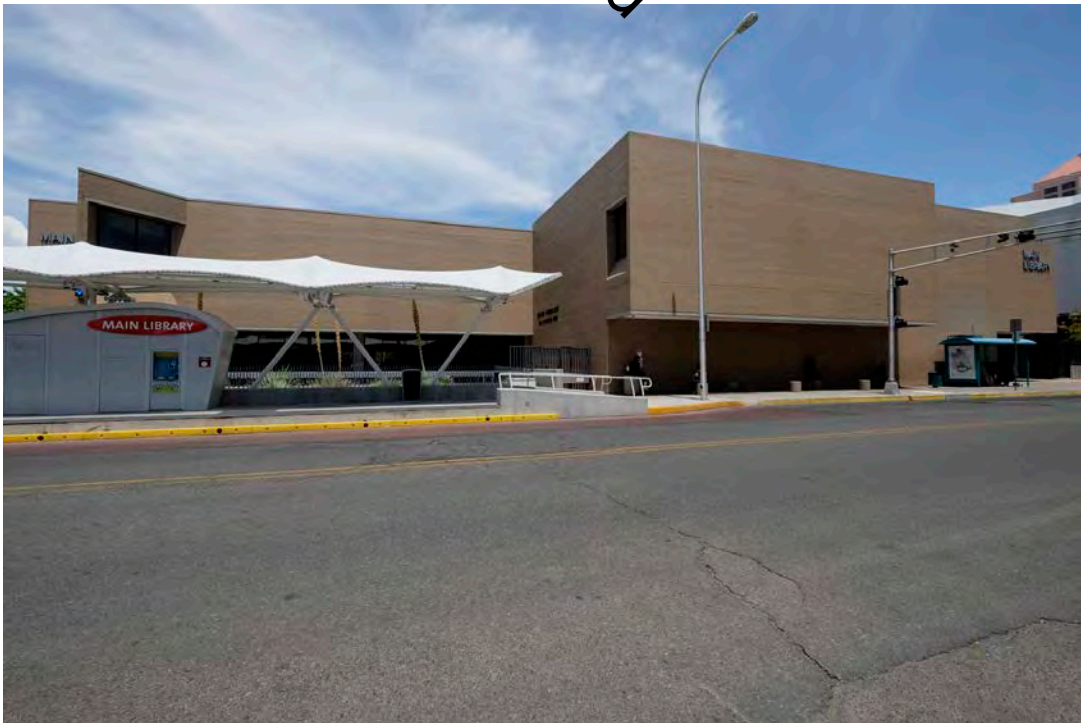


Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



5. Rear (west) elevation with landscaping from 6<sup>th</sup> Street, photographer facing east.



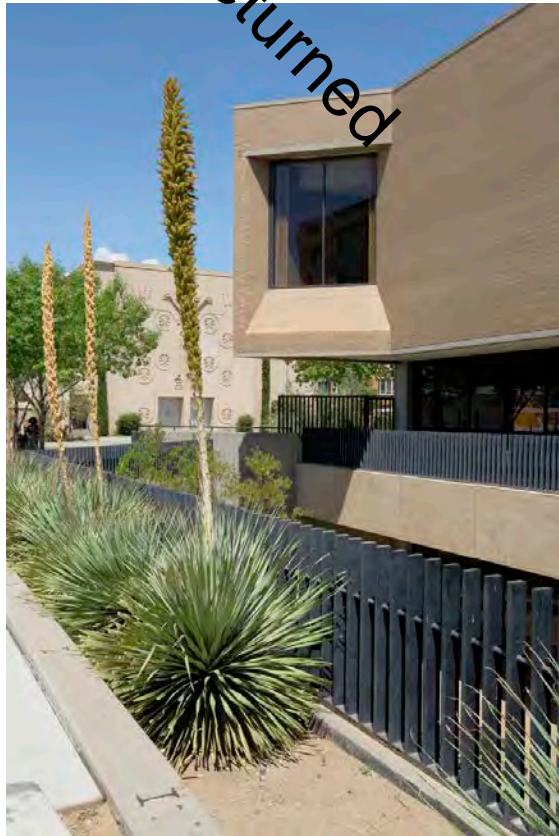
6. South side with ART bus shelter, photographer facing north.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



7. Southwest corner with courtyard in foreground, photographer facing northeast.



8. Southwest corner, with courtyard and landscaping, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



9. Southwest court along Copper Avenue, photographer facing east.



10. Main entrance with entrance sign, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



11. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing northwest.



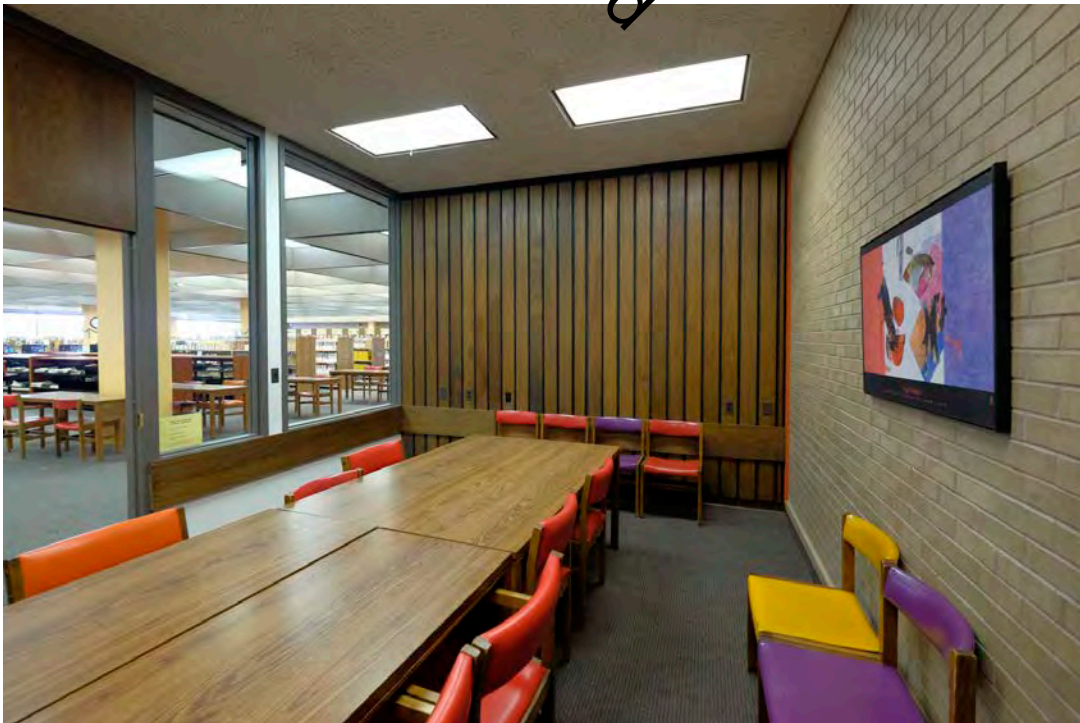
12. Interior, first floor, reading room, photographer facing east.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



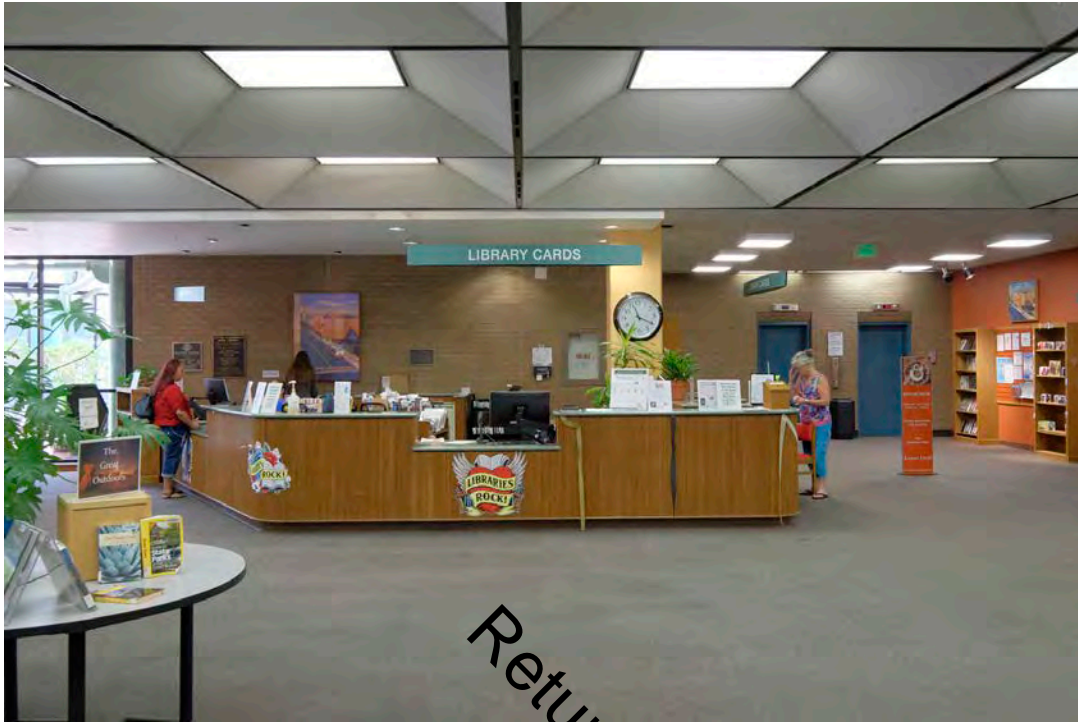
13. Interior, first floor, reading room, offices and meeting rooms, photographer facing north.



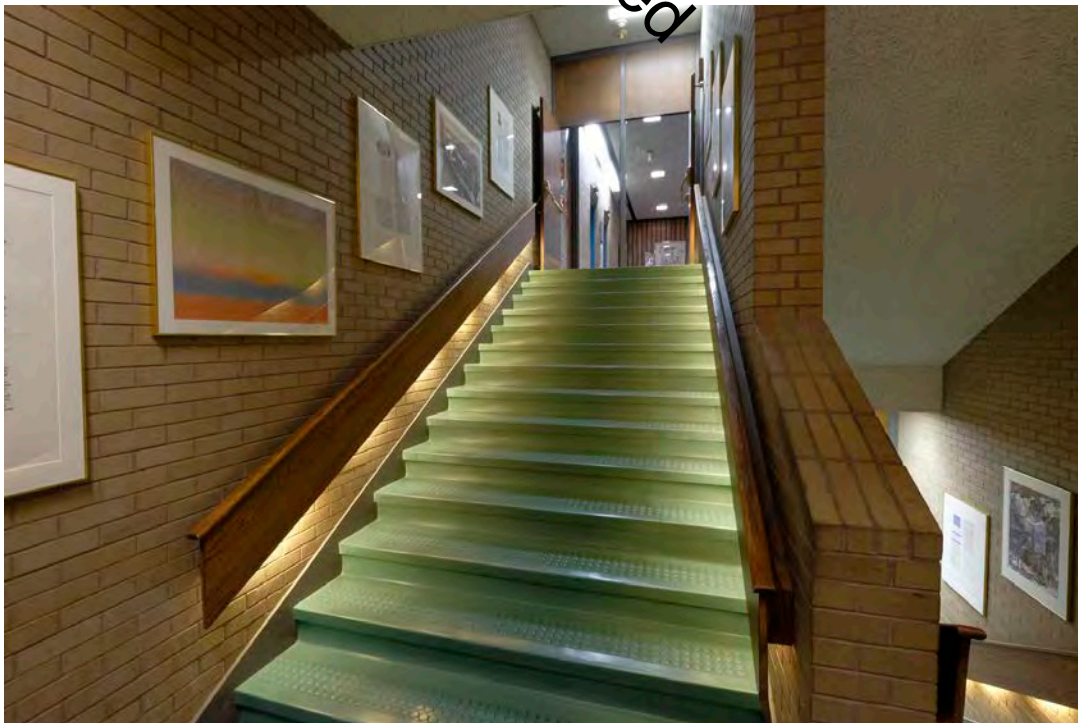
14. Interior, first floor, meeting room with original furniture, photographer facing southwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



15. Interior, first floor, reading room, circulation desk, photographer facing south.



16. Interior, first floor, stairs to second floor, photographer facing west.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



17. Interior, second floor, reading room, photographer facing north.



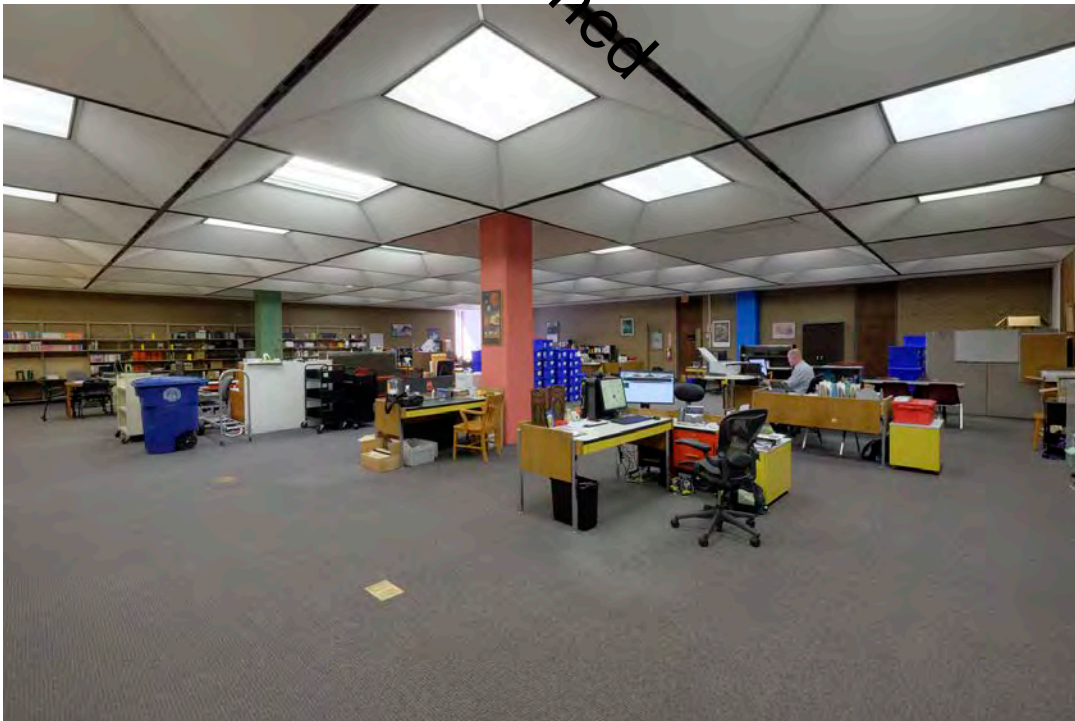
18. Interior, second floor, administrative offices with moveable walls, photographer facing northwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



19. Interior, second floor, window above main entrance, photographer facing southeast.

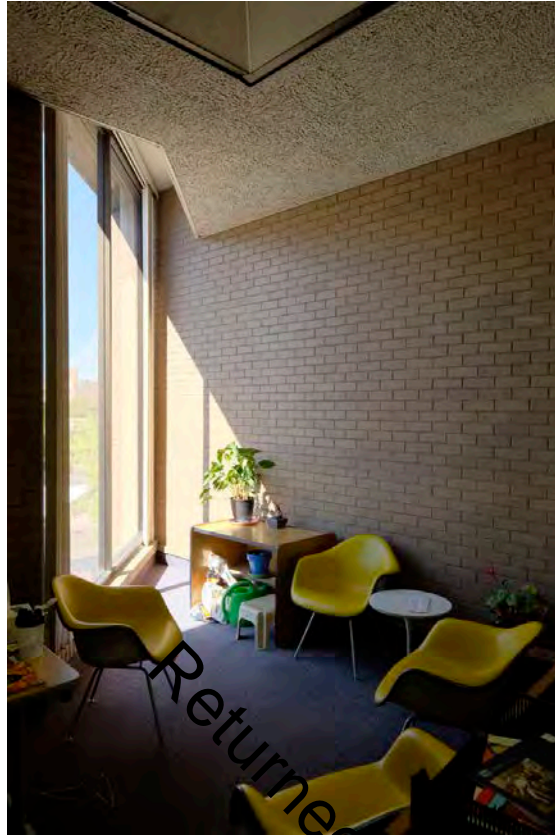


20. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with original desks, photographer facing southwest.

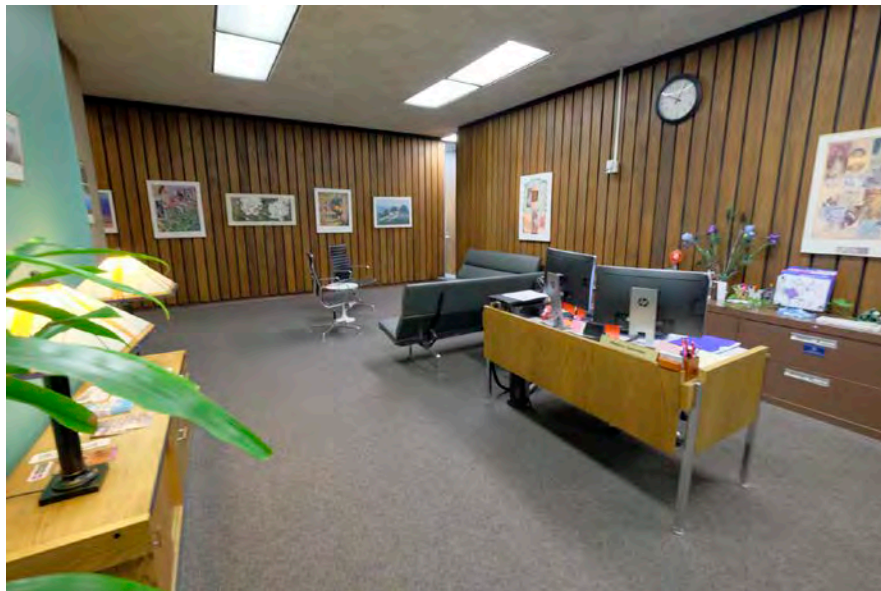


Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



21. Interior, second floor, acquisitions department with projecting window and original chairs, photographer facing southwest.



22. Interior, second floor, administration with original furnishings, photographer facing southwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



23. Interior, second floor, administration with moveable wall, photographer facing east.



24. Interior, second floor, administration, conference room, photographer facing east.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



25. Interior, lower level, children's area, photographer facing south.



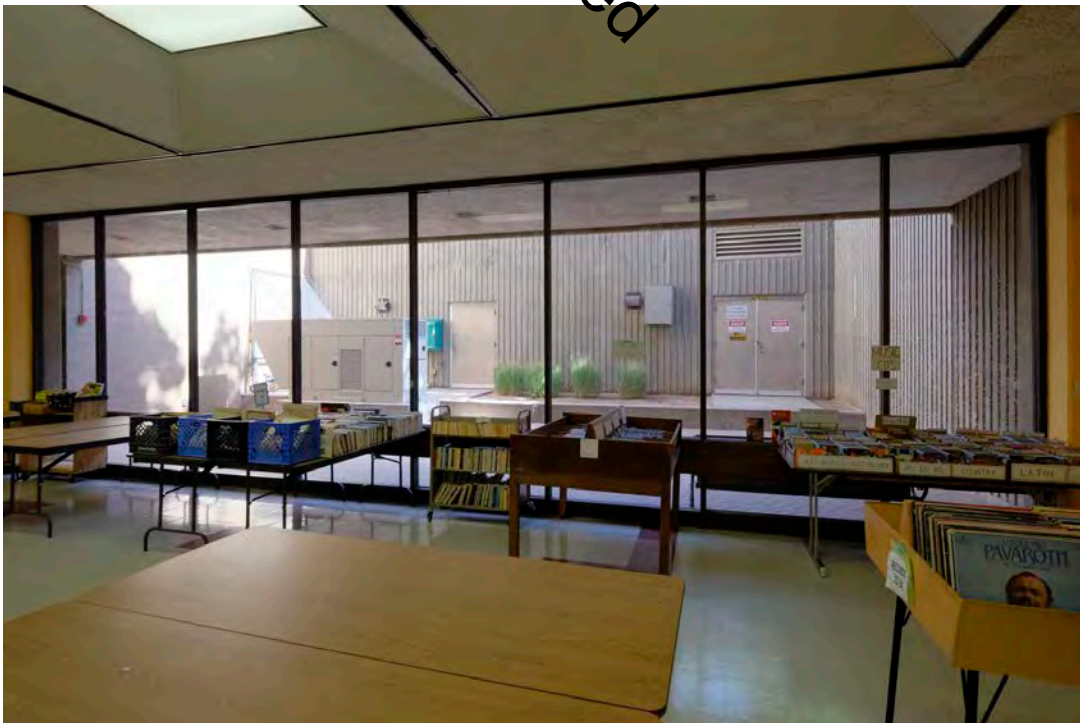
26. Interior, lower level, auditorium, photographer facing southeast.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



27. Interior, lower level, meeting room, photographer facing west.



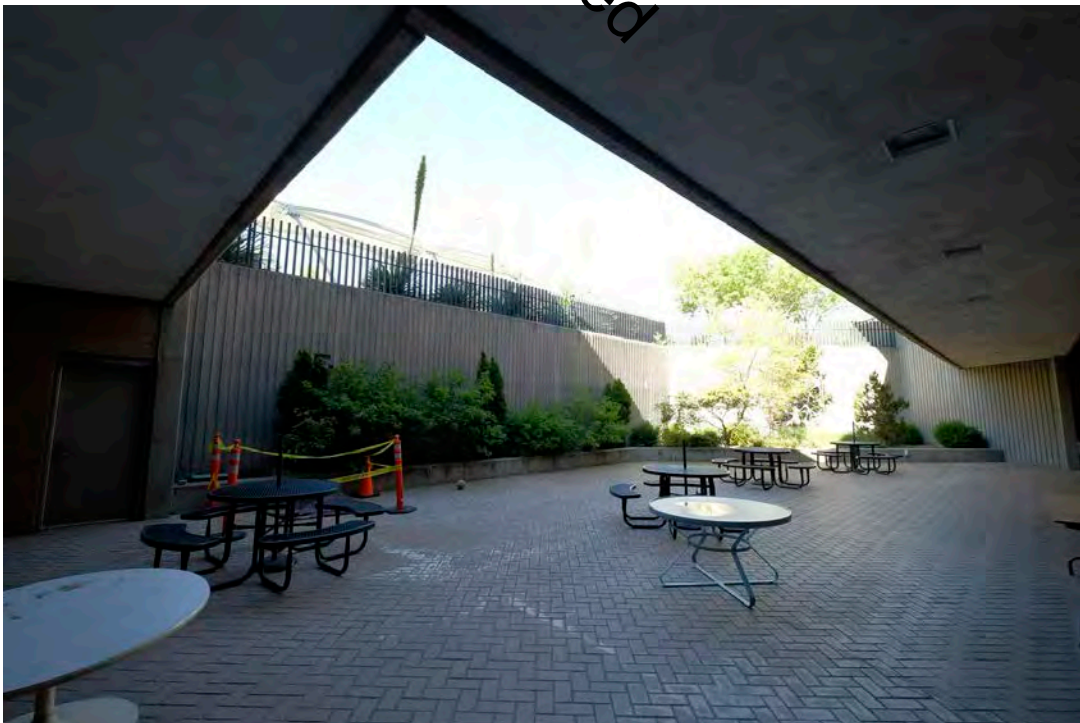
28. Lower level, northeast court, photographer facing north.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



29. Lower level, southeast court, photographer facing east.



301. Lower level, southwest court, photographer facing southwest.

Main Library  
Name of Property

Bernalillo, New Mexico  
County and State



31. Lower level, northwest service court, photographer facing west.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Main Library

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: NEW MEXICO, Bernalillo

Date Received: 10/30/2018      Date of Pending List: 11/16/2018      Date of 16th Day: 11/30/2018      Date of 45th Day: 12/14/2018      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100003217

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

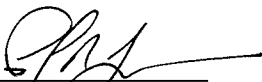
- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal           | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver           | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |  |

Accept       Return       Reject      12/14/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: **See Attached Comments**

The nomination is being returned for substantive reasons. There are minor questions regarding the physical description of the building. In addition, the current nomination falls short in providing sufficient context and justification for a statewide level of significance and meeting the exceptional standards for Criteria Consideration G.

Recommendation/ Criteria: RETURN

Reviewer Paul Lusignan  Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229 Date 12/14/2018

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : Yes    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

# MAIN LIBRARY

## Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, NM

### National Register Review Comments – Return

---

The nomination is being returned for substantive reasons. There are minor questions regarding physical description of the building. In addition, the current nomination falls short in providing sufficient context and justification for a statewide level of significance and meeting the exceptional standards for Criteria Consideration G.

#### Description/Integrity

The building description could be expanded to provide a better sense of the distinctive characteristics of the design, particularly as these may reflect the architect's unique (exceptional?) approach to modifying (or lessening) the more dominant characteristics of typical Brutalist design. To call the building "rectangular" is a bit of a misnomer as the angular projections and sharp lines really dominate the visual character of the exterior design. While the body of the public interior may be characterized as rectangular, from the outside the building is anything but parallel lines. Among the details in particular worth noting in our estimation are the beveled window openings featuring soldier course sills with extremely thin horizontal headers—a detail repeated at the roofline cornice and above the cantilevered spaces, and all rather untypical of the concrete Brutalist traditions.

On the upper floors, the large expanses of blank walls relieved only by the isolated windows and sharp angular corners and projections are character defining, as are the crisp lines formed on those planes by the bright Arizona sun. This same play of bright light (second floor) and shadow (ground floor) is also I'm sure a design element thoughtfully conceived and not just to shade pedestrian users. It might be interesting to read about contemporary descriptions of the building when it was newly completed or from the words of the architect, if available. [The photos provided in the *New Mexico Architecture* No.17 article clearly emphasize the light and shade aspects of the Brutalist design.] The decorative wood picket fencing surrounding the basement light wells is another noteworthy detail, which in themselves add another light/shadow element.

Footnote number 1 on page 6 has no reference in the text.

Here, as in other NM nominations, rather than repeating already outlined features and elements in both the summary and the body of the text, the nomination should look to expand on specific details and elements. In particular, this should be done with an eye to supporting the statement of significance and justifications for "exceptional" significance.

#### Significance

The current narrative does not appear to adequately justify a state level of significance for the library under most of the identified themes and areas of significance. The more appropriate level appears to be local. Largely this is a reflection of the relative lack of broader statewide context and comparative analysis for most of the themes. Depending on the fact that Albuquerque is the state's largest city and likely offered the most significant examples is not sufficient particularly in light of the need to justify Criteria Consideration G.



The strongest argument appears to be made under Criterion C architecture, where at least some attempt is made to provide a comparative context for other examples of the style across the state. I'm not sure that there is sufficient justification for this particular design as being among the best, however, as would be expected for justifying Criteria Consideration G and exceptional significance. Again contemporary evaluations may be useful here, or evidence that rather than just identifying this building as "an" example of Brutalist design, it really is seen by scholars as among the best. The discussion of the building's significance under Criterion A Education, as an exemplary example of modern library planning and programmatic design could perhaps better serve to augment the architectural significance of the building, in this way keeping the Educational significance of the building as a local educational institution in the community at the local level as is perhaps more appropriate.

The current justification for architectural significance in many ways conflicts with the narrative discussion of Brutalist design. The nomination attempts to make the case for the building as an exemplary example of Brutalist design, when in fact it is perhaps much more of a highly individualistic interpretation of the style. The narrative goes on at length describing the common features of American Brutalism, then notes how the Pearl design deviates from most of these character-defining aspects (concrete versus brick, confusing plan versus straightforward library, pedestrian unfriendly versus welcoming, cold concrete versus brown wood paneling, etc). It seems to me that Pearl's design is exceptional, if anything, as a localized interpretation of Brutalist design, a building crafted for its particular site, the local climate and its users, while still maintaining the bold forms and linear elements of Brutalism. I think the nomination could benefit from a more thought out justification for the building's exceptional significance under Architecture.

Significance for Politics/Government and Community Planning and Development under Criterion A and the themes of urban planning provide a solid basis for significance, but only at the local level. Unless there is more evidence provided of urban renewal activities elsewhere in the state in order to afford readers an understanding of the statewide context, this library is really just a manifestation of local urban planning and design efforts. Better justifying exceptional significance (Criteria Consideration G) should also be done by discussing the overall impacts of the urban renewal efforts on the city—physically, economically, socially, etc. Right now we understand the library was a result of urban renewal efforts, but not necessarily why those efforts should be categorized as exceptional in light of twentieth century Albuquerque.

The concluding statement justifying Criteria Consideration G could also be strengthened. At this point it outlines why the building is significant, but never really points to, or emphasizes, why this rises to the level of exceptional importance.

As nominations push the envelope of the recent past, the first submissions will have to provide very strong and clear contextual discussions and comparative analysis until such time as there is a body of comparable listings.

If you have specific questions regarding these comments please contact my office at 202-354-2229 or [paul\\_lusignan@nps.gov](mailto:paul_lusignan@nps.gov).



Paul Lusignan, Historian  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

BATAAN MEMORIAL BUILDING  
407 GALISTEO STREET, SUITE 236  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501  
PHONE (505) 827-6320 FAX (505) 827-6338



March 15, 2019

Keeper of the National Register  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

To whom it may concern:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination Main Library in Bernalillo County, New Mexico to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- Disk with digital photo images
- Physical signature page
- Sketch map(s)/attachment(s) in hard copy
- Correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do  do not  constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations: This is a returned nomination, which has been revised according to the comments in the return letter. Property Meets Criteria Considerations G.

Sincerely,

Steven Moffson  
State and National Register Coordinator  
Enclosures