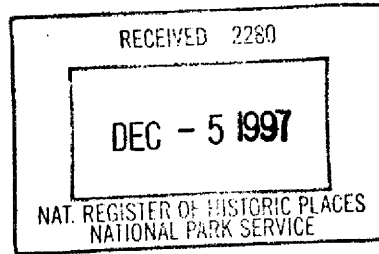


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



1609

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name CAPITOL AUTO COURTS  
other names/site number Boulevard Mo-tel

### 2. Location

street & number 1121 S. Capitol Boulevard N/A not for publication  
city or town Boise N/A vicinity  
state Idaho code ID county Ada code 001 zip code 83706

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

Susan Pargilly Dittel - Deputy SHPO 24 Nov 97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Idaho State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
   See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
   See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson W. Beall Jan 7, '98  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Capitol Auto Courts  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

### 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.)

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

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: hotel

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS: Tudor Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK, STUCCO

WOOD: weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other \_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Capitol Auto Courts  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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" on all that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

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

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Capitol Auto Courts  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

**UTM References**  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A	<u>1/1</u>	<u>5/6/3/7/5/0</u>	<u>4/8/2/8/3/0/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing			
C	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>	<u>/</u>

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jennifer Eng, Intern  
organization Idaho State Historic Preservation Office date September 9, 1997  
street & number 210 Main Street telephone (208) 334-3861  
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and/or properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
- **Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.
- **Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

name City of Boise, Community Development Department  
street & number 500 N. Capitol Boulevard telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

**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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Ada County, Idaho

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Capitol Auto Courts is a one-story, 52,237 square foot motel located on the west side of S. Capitol Boulevard near the corner of University Drive in downtown Boise, Idaho. Stylistically the Capitol Auto Courts exhibits characteristics of a simplified Tudor-style design and is an excellent example of mid-20th Century roadside architecture, having been built in 1938. The twenty-one unit motor court forms a wide, front-facing, integrated "U." The front elevation is laid up in fired brick in a stretcher bond with variant header design. Mortar joints are flush and slightly weathered. The side and rear elevations are covered in rough finished stucco, while the foundation is poured concrete. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles.

The roof is side-gabled and accentuated with a number of cross gables. Each gable-end is clad in weatherboard laid up in a chevron pattern. Gable eaves are highlighted by double neon tubes. The roof plain is also perforated by a number of gabled-roof dormers located above the entrance to each unit. There is a narrow open passage which connects the front of the property with the rear of the building. It is located in the center of the building between Units 10 and 11. A single, fired-brick chimney emerges from the roof at the rear of the building. Each unit entry has two concrete steps leading up to the door; each room has a single window. The windows are wood frame 8-over-8, double-hung sash. Unit doors are of the non-paneled solid variety.

The nominated property includes associated landscape features. Plantings include pine trees, mature bushes surrounding the facade of the building, and a large front lawn. The site also includes the original parking area located in front of the building which is accessed from the sides of the motel lot. The parking area is separated from Capitol Boulevard by a wide landscaped median strip which contains a neon and incandescent light sign. Behind the building there is a wide unlandscaped alley and yard.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Capitol Auto Courts, located at 1121 S. Capitol Boulevard in Boise, Idaho, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C. Under Criterion A, the Capitol Auto Courts is locally significant for its association with the development of Boise's first auto-oriented commercial strip which evolved along the Old Oregon Trail Highway/U.S. 30 in the 1930s. Under Criterion C, the Capitol Auto Courts embodies the architectural characteristics and design typical of the inexpensive motor court, a building type which emerged into popular use in the 1920s and 1930s.

#### Criterion A

The early part of the 20th Century saw an unprecedented increase in travel by ordinary Americans. This was generated by the wide-spread use of the automobile as an inexpensive means of travel. Prior to the automobile, travelers had to travel by train, boat or horse drawn carriage. Both boat and train travel were expensive and recreational travel was generally the preserve of the wealthy elite. Horse-drawn land travel was much less expensive. However, it was a tediously slow process, limiting travel to within a short radius of home. With the advent of Henry Ford's Model T in 1919, automobiles moved beyond being a luxury toy for the rich. During the 1920s and 30s, the middle classes were able to afford automobiles and, as such, given the opportunity for inexpensive recreational travel for the first time.

With this new, inexpensive means of travel also emerged a demand for improved highways, automotive services, and inexpensive accommodations. As America mobilized, an entirely new group of commercial enterprises grew up along the ever-expanding highway network. Gasoline stations, garages, roadhouses, diners, drive-in theaters and motor courts began to appear along principal highways all across the country.

In 1925 the City of Boise began the development of a new grand boulevard. This new road, soon named Capitol Boulevard, was designed in the City Beautiful tradition--featuring a wide right-of-way with a broad, landscaped, center median. Capitol Boulevard served to connect the Idaho State Capitol Building with the imposing new Union Pacific Railroad Depot. Work on the new boulevard continued until the beginning of the 1930s, culminating in 1931 with the opening of the Old Oregon Trail Memorial Bridge over the Boise River.

Capitol Boulevard immediately became the designated route for the Old Oregon Trail Highway (a major regional highway linking Portland, Oregon with the Lincoln Highway at Kemmerer, Wyoming) and of U.S. Route 30 (a major transcontinental highway running from Astoria, Oregon to Montauk, New York). As a direct result of these designations Capitol Boulevard became part of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

region's major east-west highway and the primary route for all auto travelers passing through Boise. City planners had envisioned Capitol Boulevard as a dignified grand boulevard lined with major cultural, governmental, and economic institutions. Designation as a through-highway route, however, created a far different landscape. Following its completion in 1931, Capitol Boulevard experienced rapid development as an automotive strip. During the 1930s motels, gas stations, garages, drive-in restaurants and roadhouses sprang up along the new road.

The Capitol Auto Courts were built in 1938 by Ben H. Ellis and were lauded as one of the most modern and up-to-date accommodations in the city. Ellis operated the motel until 1943. Following World War II, its name was changed to the Boulevard Mo-tel and was operated under that name until 1994 when the property was purchased by the City of Boise and converted into low-income housing. Much of the original 1930s automotive strip development on Capitol Boulevard has been either demolished or severely altered. Capitol Boulevard ceased to function as a major highway following the construction of Interstate 84 through Boise in the early 1960s. Urban renewal and rapid expansion of the Boise State University campus in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the loss of many 1930s roadside structures. The Capitol Auto Courts, however, remain as a testament to the early history of the Boulevard and as a reminder of Boise's automotive heritage.

### Criterion C

Motels and motor courts evolved in the 1920s and 1930s as an alternative to traditional hotels. Hotels were typically located in densely developed downtown commercial areas. They catered to the business traveler and the social elite, and as such were too expensive for many auto travelers. As people of moderate means began to use their cars for recreational travel, demand for inexpensive alternatives to traditional hotels increased tremendously.

Hotels were also inconvenient for motor-vehicle owners. Most traditional hotels had no place to store a vehicle while the owner stayed at the hotel. Although many hotels made accommodations for automobiles, hotels were still located inside congested areas of towns. This made the hotel difficult to reach during peak traffic hours. Thus, auto-tourist accommodations developed on the fringes of a town or city where adequate parking for the vehicles could be provided.

The first inexpensive auto-friendly accommodation was the tourist camp--what we would term today a campground. The tourist camps were, at their most basic, designated places to erect a tent or park an automobile. These camps were often built by local municipalities to prevent campers from arbitrarily picking a spot by the side of the road and pitching a tent. Municipal auto camps often became matters of civic pride and could be quite elaborate.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

The next innovation designed to meet the demand for inexpensive accommodations was the cabin camp. These cabin camps performed the same function as the auto camp, but they provided minimal shelter from the elements and more privacy than tourist camps. Cabin camps were arranged in a variety of patterns: row, row-on-row, L, crescent, and clustered. The cabin camps were generally standardized, and cabins tended to be a simple box built on a rectangular or square floor plan and capped with a simple gabled roof. The first known cabin camp was the Askins' Cottage Camp in Douglas, Arizona built in 1901.

A variation on the cabin camp was the cottage court. They were similar to cabin camps, although they could be used as year-round accommodations. Cottages were made to look like little suburban houses and were meant to attract middle-class travelers. The individual cottages usually featured more substantial construction methods and materials than cabins and often included full baths and heat. Both cabin and cottage camps might have a coffee shop, filling station, garage, and even some public spaces. They usually had a manager and space for an office and lodgings for the manager and family.

The motor court evolved out of the cabin and cottage camp form. The defining characteristic of the motor court was integrated or unitary construction rather than separate cabins or cottages. This allowed for greater efficiency in construction and in the provision of services such as electricity, heat, and plumbing. Most motor courts had fewer than twenty units and many retained the look of the separate cottage court through the use of architectural details like varied roof lines and irregular wall plains.

As auto-tourist accommodations grew in popularity during the late 1920s, the motor court quickly became a common sight along American highways. In 1926 the word "mo-tel," a contraction of the phrase "motor hotel," was used for the first time at The Milestone Mo-tel in San Luis Obispo, California. During the Great Depression of the 1930s motel and cabin camp construction was one of the few building sectors to experience a boom. The number of motels went from approximately 3,000 in 1928 to 9,848 in 1935. This number increased to a staggering 20,000 motels nationwide by 1946 and peaked in 1961, when the industry claimed 60,951 motels (see Jakle, The Motel in America, p20).

The Capitol Auto Courts is an excellent example of a pre-World War II motor court. The building exhibits all of the features typical of this property type. The building is an integrated 21-unit building. It features architectural elements reminiscent of the cottage camp, such as a series of projecting cross gables, a varied wall plain, and individual exterior unit entrances--all of which work to invoke the feeling of individual cottages. The broad U-shaped footprint of the building with an orientation toward a central landscaped area and parking lot are typical features of motor court design. The use of simplified Tudor styling, as evidenced by the gable siding, brick construction,



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

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and multi-paned windows, serves to convey a sense of domestic comfort--an important attribute in attracting passing travelers. The use of neon lighting--both to delineate the gable-ends of the main motel building and in the street-side sign--is also an element typically used by motor courts to attract the attention of a passing motorist.

### Conclusion

Capitol Auto Courts is a significant example of a roadside environment now receding from public view and memory. As such, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a representative survivor of Boise's automotive and roadside history. The Capitol Auto Courts is also significant as a well-preserved example of an historic architectural type: the motor court. As such, it is also worthy of inclusion in the National Register under Criterion C.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Belasco, Warren: Americans on the Road: From Auto Camp to Motel, 1910-1945. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979.

Boise Historic Preservation Commission: Proposed Capitol Boulevard Historic District nomination, unpublished manuscript, 1990.

"Boise will turn old motel into housing." *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho) May 4, 1994, C-1.

Jakle, John A., Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers: The Motel in America. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Margolies, John: Home Away From Home: Motels in America. New York: A Bulfinch Press Book; Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee: A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1992.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Name of Property Capitol Auto Courts  
County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

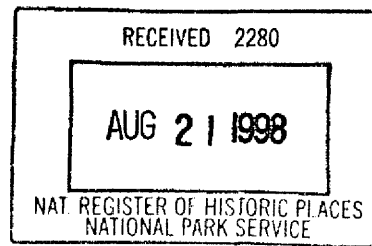
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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Lots 9-12 and Lots 21-34, Block 14, Boise City Park Subdivision, Boise, Ada County, Idaho

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The legal description above constitutes all of the property historically associated with the Capitol Auto Courts.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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### 1. Name of Property

historic name BOULEVARD MO-TEL

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

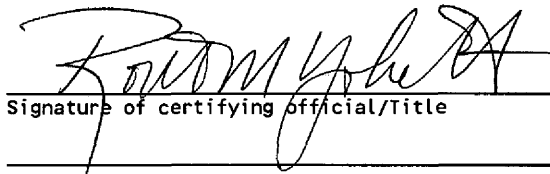
street & number 1121 S. Capitol Boulevard N/A not for publication

city or town Boise N/A vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Ada code 001 zip code 83706

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



8/10/98  
Date

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

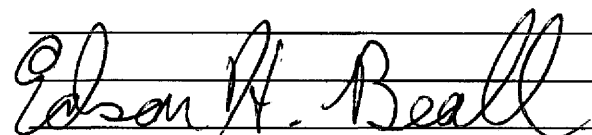
- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) Additional Documentation Accepted



Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



Boulevard Mo-tel  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

**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.)

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

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
REVIVALS: Tudor Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK, STUCCO  
WOOD: weatherboard  
roof ASPHALT  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Boulevard Mo-tel  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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.
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(Mark "x" on all that apply.)

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- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
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- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

#### Period of Significance

1940-1947

#### Significant Dates

1940

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

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

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#### Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Boulevard Mo-tel  
Name of Property

Boise, Ada County, Idaho  
City, County, and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

**UTM References**  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A	<u>1/1</u>	<u>5/6/3/7/5/0</u>	<u>4/8/2/8/3/0/0</u>	B	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>

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

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

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

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jennifer Eng, Intern  
organization Idaho State Historic Preservation Office date September 9, 1997  
street & number 210 Main Street telephone (208) 334-3861  
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and/or properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
- **Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.
- **Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

name City of Boise, Community Development Department  
street & number 500 N. Capitol Boulevard telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Name of Property Boulevard Mo-tel  
County and State Ada County, Idaho

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Boulevard Mo-tel is a one-story, 52,237 square foot motel structure located on the south side of Capitol Boulevard near the corner of University Drive in downtown Boise, Idaho. Stylistically the Boulevard Mo-tel exhibits characteristics of a simplified Tudor-style design and is an excellent example of mid-20th Century roadside architecture, having been built in 1938. The twenty-one unit motor court forms a wide, front-facing, integrated "U." The front elevation is laid up in fired brick in a stretcher bond with variant header design. Mortar joints are flush and slightly weathered. The side and rear elevation is covered in rough finished stucco, while the foundation is poured concrete. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles.

The roof is side-gabled and accentuated with a number of cross gables. Each gable-end is clad in weatherboard laid up in a chevron pattern. Gable eaves are highlighted by double neon tubes. The roof plain is also perforated by a number of gabled-roof dormers located above the entrance to each unit. There is a narrow open passage which connects the front of the property with the rear building. It is located in the center of the building between Units 10 and 11. A single, fired-brick chimney emerges from the roof at the rear of the building. Each unit entry has two concrete steps leading up to the door; each room has a single window. The windows are wood frame 8-over-8, double-hung sash. Unit doors are of the non-paneled solid variety.

The nominated property includes associated landscaping which features pine trees, mature bushes surrounding the facade of the building, and a large front lawn. The site also includes the original parking area located in front of the building. The parking area is accessed from the sides of the motel lot and is separated from Capitol Boulevard by a wide landscaped median strip which contains a neon and incandescent light sign. Behind the building there is a wide alley access and behind that is an eight-foot tall wooden fence.



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County and State Boise, Ada County, Idaho

### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Boulevard Mo-tel, located at 1121 Capitol Boulevard in Boise, Idaho, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C. Under Criterion A, the Boulevard Mo-tel is locally significant for its association with the development of Boise's first auto-oriented commercial strip which evolved along the Old Oregon Trail Highway/U.S. 30 in the 1930s. Under Criterion C, the Boulevard Mo-tel embodies the architectural characteristics and design typical of the inexpensive motor court, a building type which emerged into popular use in the 1920s and 1930s.

#### Criterion A

The early part of the 20th Century saw an unprecedented increase in travel by ordinary Americans. This was generated by the wide-spread use of the automobile as an inexpensive means of travel. Prior to the automobile, travelers had to travel by train, boat or horse drawn carriage. Both boat and train travel were expensive and recreational travel was generally the preserve of the wealthy elite. Horse-drawn land travel was much less expensive. However, it was a tediously slow process, limiting travel to within a short radius of home. With the advent of Henry Ford's Model T in 1919, automobiles moved beyond being a luxury toy for the rich. During the 1920s and 30s, the middle classes were able to afford automobiles and, as such, given the opportunity for inexpensive recreational travel for the first time. (Jakle 17)

With this new, inexpensive means of travel also emerged a demand for improved highways, automotive services, and inexpensive accommodations. As America mobilized, an entirely new group of commercial enterprises grew up along the ever-expanding highway network. Gasoline stations, garages, roadhouses, diners, drive-in theaters and motor courts began to multiply along principal highways all across the country. (Jakle 18)

In 1925 the City of Boise began the development of a new grand boulevard. This new road, soon named Capitol Boulevard, was designed in the City Beautiful tradition featuring a wide right-of-way with a broad, landscaped, center median. Capitol Boulevard served to connect the Idaho State Capitol Building with the imposing new Union Pacific Railroad Depot. Work on the new boulevard continued until the beginning of the 1930s, culminating with the opening of the Old Oregon Trail Memorial Bridge over the Boise River in 1931.

Capitol Boulevard immediately became the designated route for the Old Oregon Trail Highway (a major regional highway linking Portland, Oregon with the Lincoln Highway at Kemmerer, Wyoming) and of U.S. Route 30 (a major transcontinental highway running from Astoria, Oregon to Montauk, New York). As a direct result of these designations Capitol Boulevard quickly became

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the region's major east-west highway and the primary route for all auto travelers passing through Boise. City planners had envisioned Capitol Boulevard as a dignified grand boulevard lined with major cultural, governmental, and economic institutions. Designation as a through-highway route, however, created a far different landscape. Following its completion in 1931, Capitol Boulevard experienced rapid development as an automotive strip. During the following decade, gas stations, garages, drive-in restaurants and roadhouses sprang up along the new road. (Boise HPC 4)

The Boulevard Mo-tel was built in 1940 by T.S. Davison and was lauded as one of the most modern and up-to-date accommodations in the city. Following World War II the motel was operated by Norman and Florence Whittington and was one of the first "Best Western" referral affiliates in Idaho. In 1994 the property was purchased by the City of Boise and converted into low-income housing. Much of the original pre-war automotive strip development on Capitol Boulevard has been either demolished or severely altered. Capitol Boulevard ceased to function as a major highway following the construction of Interstate 84 through Boise in the early 1960s. Urban renewal and rapid expansion of the Boise State University campus in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the loss of many early roadside structures. The Boulevard Mo-tel, however, remains as a testament to the early history of the Boulevard and as a reminder of Boise's automotive heritage.

### Criterion C

Motels and motor courts evolved in the 1920s and 1930s as an alternative to traditional hotels. Hotels were typically located in densely developed downtown commercial areas. They catered to the business traveler and the social elite, and as such were too expensive for many auto travelers. As people of moderate means began to use their cars for recreational travel, demand for inexpensive alternatives to traditional hotels increased tremendously.

Hotels were also inconvenient for motor-vehicle owners. Most traditional hotels had no place to store a vehicle while the owner stayed at the hotel. Although many hotels made accommodations for automobiles, hotels were still located inside congested areas of towns. This made the hotel difficult to reach during peak traffic hours. Thus, auto-tourist accommodations developed on the fringes of a town or city where adequate parking for the vehicles could be provided. (Margolis 14)

The first inexpensive auto-friendly accommodation was an auto camp--what we would term today a campground. The tourist camps were, at their most basic, designated places to erect a tent or park an automobile. These camps were often built by local municipalities to prevent campers from arbitrarily picking a spot by the side of the road and pitching a tent. Municipal auto camps often became matters of civic pride and could be quite elaborate. (Margolis 19)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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The next innovation designed to meet the demand for inexpensive accommodations was the cabin camp. These cabin camps performed the same function as the auto camp, but they provided minimal shelter from the elements and more privacy than tourist camps. Cabin camps were arranged in a variety of patterns: row, row-on-row, L, crescent, and clustered. The cabin camps were generally standardized, and cabins tended to be a simple box built on a rectangular or square floor plan and capped with a simple gabled roof. The first known cabin camp was the Askins' Cottage Camp in Douglas, Arizona built in 1901 (Jakle 38).

A variation on the cabin camp was the cottage court. They were similar to cabin camps, although they could be used as year-round accommodations. Cottages were made to look like little suburban houses and were meant to attract middle-class travelers. The individual cottages usually featured more substantial construction methods and materials than cabins and often included full baths and heat. Both cabin and cottage camps might have a coffee shop, filling station, garage, and even some public spaces. They usually had a manager and space for an office and lodgings for the manager and their family. (Jakle 43)

The motor court evolved out of the cabin and cottage camp form. The defining characteristic of the motor court was integrated or unitary construction rather than separate cabins or cottages. This allowed for greater efficiency in construction and in the provision of services such as electricity, heat, and plumbing. Most motor courts had fewer than twenty units and many retained the look of the separate cottage court through the use of architectural details like varied roof lines and irregular wall plains. (Jakle 44)

As auto-tourist accommodations grew in popularity during the late 1920s, the motor court quickly became a common sight along American highways. In 1926 the word "mo-tel," a contraction of the phrase "motor hotel," was used for the first time at The Milestone Mo-tel in San Luis Obispo, California. During the Great Depression of the 1930s motel and cabin camp construction was one of the few building sectors to experience a boom. The number of motels went from approximately 3,000 in 1928 to 9,848 in 1935. This number increased to a staggering 20,000 motels nationwide by 1946 and peaked in 1961, when the industry claimed 60,951 motels (Jakle 20).

The Boulevard Mo-tel is an excellent example of a pre-World War II motor court. The building exhibits all of the features typical of this property type. The building is an integrated 21-unit building. It features architectural elements reminiscent of the cottage camp, such as a series of projecting cross gables, a varied wall plain, and individual exterior unit entrances--all of which work to invoke the feeling of individual cottages. The broad U-shaped footprint of the building with an orientation toward a central landscaped area and parking lot are typical features of motor court design. The use of simplified Tudor styling, as evidenced by the gable siding, brick construction, and multi-paned windows, serves to convey a sense of domestic comfort--an important attribute in

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attracting passing travelers. The use of neon lighting--both to delineate the gable-ends of the main motel building and in the street-side sign--is also an element typically used by motor courts to attract the attention of a passing motorist.

### Conclusion

Boulevard Mo-tel is a significant example of a roadside environment now receding from public view and memory. As such, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a representative survivor of Boise's automotive and roadside history. The Boulevard Mo-tel is also significant as a well-preserved example of an historic architectural type: the motor court. As such, it is also worthy of inclusion in the National Register under Criterion C.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Lots 9-12 and Lots 21-34, Block 14, Boise City Park Subdivision, Boise, Ada County, Idaho

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The legal description above constitutes all of the property historically associated with the Boulevard Mo-tel.