NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1334

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. 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 Phoenix Towers

Other names / site number

2. Location

Street & number 2201 N. Central Avenue ☐ not for publication

City or town Phoenix ☐ vicinity

State Arizona Code AZ County Maricopa Code 013 Zip code 85004

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.)

James W. Garrison AZSHPO — 15 NOVEMBER 2007

Signature of certifying official / Title — Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS

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 commenting or other 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): _____

for Edson H. Beall — 1.2.08

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

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	
2		buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
2	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation concrete
walls concrete, concrete block
roof asphalt, synthetic, steel
other

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

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1957

Significant Dates
1957

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Ralph C. Harris (architect)
Del E. Webb Construction Co. (builder)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.1

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	12	400340	3703860	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name / Title Mark E. Pry

Organization Southwest Historical Services Date 10 November 2007

Street & number 315 E. Balboa Drive Telephone 480-968-2339

City or town Tempe State Arizona Zip code 85282-3750

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 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

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Phoenix Towers Cooperative Apartments

Street & number 2201 N. Central Avenue Telephone 602-253-5769

City or town Phoenix State Arizona Zip code 85004

Narrative Description

Summary

The Phoenix Towers is a high-rise apartment building constructed in 1957 at the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Monte Vista Road, about one-and-a-half miles north of downtown Phoenix. Built on an X-shaped plan with four wings, it has fourteen floors (twelve of which are devoted to the residences) plus an underground parking garage.

Designed by Chicago architect Ralph C. Harris in the Modern style, the tower's distinguishing design feature is its projecting concrete ledges, which not only serve as balcony floors and covers but also as awnings for the apartment windows. As is typical of Modern buildings, much of the tower's structure is expressed in its exterior: the ledges are extensions of the building's concrete slab floors, several of the vertical structural columns are visible, and the cast-in-place concrete columns and concrete block walls are unclad. The building's design has a strong planar quality, with the vertical thrust of the building itself contrasting dynamically with its horizontal ledges.

In addition to the tower, there is one dependent building—a pool house located on the eastern edge of the property—and one structure, a pair of cooling towers that is the property's sole noncontributing resource.

All three buildings are set on a 2.1-acre, square plot of land, with driveways and parking areas encircling the main tower. The grounds are xeriscaped, with decomposed granite and low-water plants and trees.

The Phoenix Towers has been very well maintained and its historical integrity is high. Other than the partial enclosure of the roof terrace, and the conversion of the original landscape from irrigated turf to xeriscape, there have been no significant changes made to the building's exterior in its fifty-year history.

Setting

The Phoenix Towers is located on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Monte Vista Road, one-and-a-half miles north of downtown Phoenix.

Central Avenue is a major artery leading to and from the downtown, and at this location it is a busy six-lane urban street with heavy commercial and commuter traffic. In both directions it is lined by mid-rise and high-rise office and residential buildings interspersed with the occasional strip shopping center. The dense, urban character of Central, which is unusual for Arizona, is somewhat counterbalanced by the landscaping along the street, which features mature desert trees and tall palm trees, as well as wide sidewalks.

Monte Vista Road, in contrast, is a narrow, quiet, and well-shaded street with mature vegetation. The buildings on Monte Vista nearest to Phoenix Towers are all commercial or institutional: the Heard Museum immediately to the east, a mid-rise office building and parking lot across the street to the south (which is currently occupied by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), and the University Club and its parking lot to the southeast. Otherwise Monte Vista is a residential street, with large single-family homes, and part of the Alvarado Historic District.

All of the property to the east and north of Phoenix Towers is occupied by the Heard Museum. Immediately to the east stands a large part of the Heard's complex of buildings. These Heard buildings, several of which are two storeys in height, are quite near the property line, which runs very close to the back wall of the pool house. Except immediately behind the pool house, the Heard is separated from the Towers property by a hedge and, in some places, a concrete block wall. To the north of the Towers, behind a tall hedge, lie the Heard's grassy, park-like front grounds, which buffer the Heard buildings from Central Avenue.

Since the construction of Phoenix Towers in 1957, this area has become substantially more urban. A string of high-rise buildings has been built along North Central Avenue, so that this stretch of the avenue now boasts a skyline competitive with that of the downtown. Central Avenue was widened and its landscaping redone in 1990 (taking a small part of the Phoenix Towers property in the process), and currently a light rail line is being constructed in the middle of the street, with a station to

be built just north of the Towers. Finally, the Heard Museum has grown considerably since the 1950s, undergoing major expansions in 1969, 1983, and 1999; the museum's square footage is now more than six times what it was when the Phoenix Towers was built.

However, two constants have softened the impact of these changes: the continued presence of palm trees along Central—an historic feature of the street that will be restored after light rail construction—and the proximity of the Alvarado Historic District, with its attendant mature vegetation. This older neighborhood, and others like it to the west of Central, serve as visual reminders of what the Central Avenue corridor was like at the time of Phoenix Towers' construction.

Grounds

The apartment building is situated in the middle of the property, which is square, with the swimming pool and pool house to the rear (east). In addition to these two contributing buildings, there is a pair of cooling towers in the northeast corner of the property that is considered a noncontributing structure and is concealed behind a tall chain-link fence and block wall.

A D-shaped front drive with an entrance and exit on Central Avenue is situated in front of the building, with the curved section of the drive providing access to a covered walkway that leads to the building's main entry. This drive also provides access to two ramps leading down to the underground parking garage; these are positioned immediately opposite the drive's entrance and exit on Central.

A service drive runs along the north and east sides of the property, connecting the front drive with the rear of the building; at the rear of the property this service drive has a single entrance/exit on Monte Vista.

The property has several parking areas. There are parallel parking spaces along the front and rear drives, a loading area behind the rear entrance, a parking lot with a single row of spaces on the north side, and a parking lot with a single row of spaces on the south side. The south parking lot, which can only be accessed from the rear service drive, is connected to the apartment building's front entry by a sidewalk that runs from the northwest corner of the lot around the front of the building.

The grounds are open to the public on the front, or west, side, but more or less enclosed on the remaining three sides. A low block wall and low metal fence (whose design matches the railings on the apartment landings and balconies) together enclose the southern perimeter of the property, along Monte Vista, with an electronically controlled vehicle gate providing access to the rear drive. An identical fence runs along the western perimeter of the south parking lot. On the north side, the grounds are bordered by a tall hedge and, toward the rear corner, the block wall that encloses the cooling towers. On the eastern perimeter, on either side of the pool house, the grounds are bordered by a tall hedge and, in places, a concrete block wall.

All of the grounds are xeriscaped. There is no turf, and the ground is covered with decomposed granite. The grounds are dotted with low-water and desert plants that include groundcovers, shrubs, vines, and trees such as mesquite, olive, palo verde, and palm.

Exterior of Phoenix Towers

The plan of the main building is an elongated X, oriented north-south, with two wings angling west from the central block and two wings angling east. The facade of the building is composed of the two west wings and the west side of the central block, and the rear elevation is composed of the two east wings and the east side of the central block. The front wings are a different size and configuration than the rear wings, so the building appears symmetrical when viewed from front and rear but asymmetrical when viewed from either side (that is, from north or south).

Counting the roof terrace, the building has fourteen stories: the ground floor, which is devoted to common areas (such as the lobby and mailroom) and maintenance and operations facilities; twelve residential floors; and the terrace, which originally was open but now is partially enclosed. A small, square utility room that sits

atop the roof terrace, and is only partially visible from the ground, is not counted as a floor.

The central block holds the elevators, stairways, and landings for each floor. The stairways are enclosed and therefore not visible from the exterior, but the front landings (which connect the passenger elevator with the apartment hallways) and the rear landings (which provide access to the freight elevator) are open to the air and visible from the exterior.

The front landings have concrete block interior walls and are partially enclosed on the facade side by brick dwarf walls set between the exposed concrete structural columns. The dwarf walls on floors 2 and 3 are topped by metal railings (whose design matches that on the apartment balconies), while those on floors 4 through 13 are open above, with flower beds on top. The rear landings are similar but take up only one-third of the central block's rear wall; the remaining two-thirds are taken up by the walls for the two stairwells—one on each side of the landings—which are enclosed by concrete block walls with clusters of square openings that serve as fresh-air vents.

The front wings, on the southwest and northwest, are simple rectangles. On these wings, the balconies for floors 2 through 7, which are located on the west end of each wing, each serve two apartments. The balconies for floors 8 through 13 are situated on the inside front corner of the wings and serve only one apartment. (This arrangement reflects the fact that apartments on the upper floors are larger than those on the lower floors.)

The rear, or southeast and northeast, wings are rectangles with incised outside corners. All of the balconies on the rear wings are in the same location for each floor: the incised corners. On the northeast wing, in the incised corner adjacent to the balconies, is a square chimney that rises from the ground to above the roof; built to serve a garbage incinerator, it is no longer used.

The most distinctive feature of the building's exterior is the concrete ledges that not only serve as the balcony floors/covers but also continue around the building to serve as awnings above most of the windows. These ledges are in fact cantilevered extensions of the building's concrete slab floors—a fact that is most apparent on the facade of the building, where the landing floors and ledges combine to form an uninterrupted line. The ledges are not continuous around the building, however, and there are gaps on the front wings at floors 8 through 13 and on the rear wings at all floors. Each ledge is subtly ornamented with an incised line on its underside that traces its perimeter.

The ledges are one of two features that reveal the building's structure; the other is the concrete columns visible on both sides of the central block and on the upper walls of the front wings. (The building's structural components can be clearly seen in the construction photograph included in the advertisement reproduced on page 19.) On the rest of the building, these structural columns are hidden behind walls of Superlite concrete masonry units (CMUs), which are painted light pink with flecks of gray and black.

The main entrance to the building is through the glass and red-brick lobby, which faces west and opens onto the curved front drive. The front wall of the lobby curves outward, and its roof is a concrete slab that overhangs the wall by several feet; like the balconies on the upper floors, it is a cantilevered extension of the concrete slab floor above. The door, which is aluminum-framed with tinted glass, is set in the middle of a window wall of tinted glass. There are secondary entrances on either side of the lobby leading directly to the security office (on the left, or north) and the mailroom (on the right). All three doors are connected outside by a shallow terrazzo terrace whose footprint matches that of the overhanging roof.

The cover for the walkway leading up to the lobby from the drive is a freestanding concrete slab supported by metal posts in eight clusters, each of which consists of a concrete base, three posts, and an ornamental grill at the top—the only true decoration on the exterior of the building. On the underside of the cover are three built-in light fixtures covered with large convex, opaque plastic lenses. The walkway itself is concrete, with a small bronze plaque near the curb that reads, "Del E. Webb Construction Co., 1957."

The rear entrance is a double metal door with square lights set in the middle of the central block's rear wall, which on the ground floor is unclad concrete block. Opening directly onto the rear loading and parking area, this entrance has no shelter or cover. There also are several service doors at various locations around the building on the ground floor—single steel doors with no lights—and a small, shed-roofed storage room attached to the east wall of the northeast wing.

With the exception of a handful of replacement windows, all of the windows are single-pane with aluminum frames. There are three kinds of windows: a small, single double-hung window (for bathrooms); pairs of double-hung windows (the most common); and fixed windows between a pair of double-hung windows (for living areas). Each window or set of windows has a pair of brackets used by window washers to attach their safety harnesses; these are barely visible from the ground on the lower-floor windows.

A few of the original windows have been replaced. There are three replacement windows on the north side of the northwest wing, at the third floor, and five on the south side of the southwest wing, on the sixth floor. The latter match the configuration of the original windows, but the former do not.

The balconies are open, with painted metal railings of a design that is repeated on the landing railings and roof terrace railings, as well as on the fencing around the grounds. The balconies on floors 2 through 7 of the front wings are shared by two apartments and therefore divided by vertical corrugated glass panels; the remaining balconies serve only one apartment and have no dividers. All of the balconies are open except for four that have been enclosed by tenants: on the thirteenth floor of the southwest wing, the twelfth floor of the northwest wing, and the sixth and ninth floors of the northeast wing. These enclosures, as viewed from the ground, are all more or less alike: a concrete block or brick dwarf wall topped by aluminum sliding windows, with the original metal railing left in place.

The roof terrace, which is only partially visible from the ground, is situated atop the central block and the front wings; the remainder of the flat, elastomeric-coated roof is open. Originally the terrace was open to the air, but now the sections atop the central block and the northwest wing are enclosed.

On the terrace level the rear two-thirds of the central block are fully enclosed, with concrete block walls. The front, or west, third was once open, with a concrete slab roof on square concrete columns sheltering a walkway enclosed by a brick dwarf wall and a metal railing. This walkway, which connects the elevators and stairs to the terraces, is now an interior hallway enclosed by aluminum window walls with single-pane tinted glass in the top half and opaque panels in the bottom half (though the dwarf wall and railing remain in place). At the south end, a single aluminum-frame glass door leads to the open terrace.

The open terrace, atop the southwest wing, has a corrugated steel roof resting on square concrete beams, which are themselves supported by square concrete columns. It is enclosed at the rear by a brick dwarf wall that extends from the south wall of the central block, and on the remaining three sides by a metal railing identical to that on the balconies.

The enclosed terrace, atop the northwest wing, was originally identical to the open terrace. Its railing and brick dwarf wall remain, as do the concrete columns and corrugated steel roof, but the terrace is now enclosed on all four sides by aluminum window walls with tinted glass. A heat pump and its attendant ductwork, which provide HVAC service for all of the interior spaces on this floor, sit atop the steel roof.

Interior of Phoenix Towers

Phoenix Towers comprises fourteen storeys, twelve of which are occupied by apartments. The remaining two storeys are the ground floor, which is devoted to common areas and maintenance and operations facilities, and the roof terrace, which is partially enclosed. In addition, there is an underground parking garage.

The front entrance lobby is the most visible public space on the ground floor. Its dominant feature is a terrazzo floor with a large blue thunderbird design, also

done in terrazzo, in the center. The walls on either side are paneled with blond wood, while the rear wall, adjacent to the main elevator, is covered with mirrored glass. The ceiling, which is plaster, has recessed lights, a single ceiling fan, and a round ventilation louver.

Two of the building's concrete structural columns are visible in the lobby, standing about five feet from the lobby's side walls. Each is clad with ornamental woodwork, at the base of which is an L-shaped banquette upholstered in maroon vinyl. One corner of each banquette obscures a small part of the thunderbird design built into the floor, suggesting that the banquettes were not part of Ralph Harris' original plan for the building (see below).

To the left, or north, of the lobby is the security guards' room, which is accessed from the lobby by a doorway on the north wall. The guard room contains a desk, closed circuit television monitors, and other security apparatus. To the right, or south, of the lobby is the mailroom, which is accessed by a door on the south wall of the lobby. Two additional doors located in the rear corners of the lobby lead to hallways that provide access to the remainder of the ground floor and to the rear exit and freight elevator, which are situated at the rear of the central block.

The ground floor under the south wings is taken up almost entirely by storage facilities for residents (ceiling-height steel cages). At the end of the southeast wing is a small library, exercise room, and bathroom. According to the building's staff, these rooms were once the real estate sales office for Phoenix Towers.

The ground floor under the north wings is taken up by the building manager's office, an apartment in which the manager lives, restrooms for building employees, a maintenance shop, a "women's lounge" and bathroom that was formerly used by domestic workers as a break and lunch room, a lounge and break room for employees that is still used as such today, the boiler and chiller room, and a large laundry room for the use of residents.

As the building was originally designed, the lower six residential floors (floors 2 through 7) contained six apartments on each floor: two each in the southwest and northwest wings, and one each in the southeast and northeast wings. The remaining residential floors (8 through 13) each contained four apartments, with one apartment in each wing. This totaled sixty apartments, but over the years some apartments have been combined, so that today there are fifty-seven apartments.

Each residential floor is served by two interior hallways whose entry doors stand at the ends of the open-air elevator landings; these doors are stained-wood slab doors with a small vertical wood louver and a single narrow, vertical glass light. On each floor, one hallway provides access to the two north wings, the other to the two south wings. Originally these hallways were to be open to the air, like the landings, but concerns about windblown dust led Harris to enclose them. Responsibility for decorating and furnishing the hallways lies with the residents whose apartments open onto them, so every hallway has its own floor coverings and color scheme.

As originally designed, the apartments came in three configurations: five rooms encompassing 1,210 square feet, five-and-a-half rooms with 1,809 square feet, and six rooms totaling 2,357 square feet. The two smaller configurations have two bedrooms and two bathrooms, while the largest configuration has three bedrooms and three bathrooms. All apartments have a breakfast area, kitchen, hallway, and living-dining room. The kitchens as originally designed have built-in ovens and countertop ranges, dishwashers, garbage disposals, built-in refrigerators, and metal wall cabinets.

Over the years, many of the apartments have been remodeled (especially the kitchens). The interiors of the apartments were not examined as part of this National Register nomination project, so it is not known how many of the apartments retain their historic features and configurations. According to residents, most of the apartments have been remodeled to some extent, yet there are still a few that have yet to be changed.

The building's interior walls, on all floors, are constructed of steel and clad with plaster over steel lath. The door frames are steel as well.

Most of the features of the roof terrace have already been described, as they are properly speaking exterior features. The enclosed portion of the terrace, atop the northwest wing and the central block, is enclosed by aluminum window walls that have tinted single-pane glass in the upper half and opaque panels in the lower half. The window walls on the south and west exposures of the enclosed terrace are covered on the inside by full-length opaque, divided-light screens. The ceiling is a drop ceiling with removable panels, flush-mounted fluorescent lights, and HVAC ducts. The enclosure of the terrace appears to have been carried out in such a way that it could be reversed and the terrace restored to its original configuration, that is, open to the air. All of the original metal railings and brick knee walls, which can be seen on the unenclosed sections of the terrace, remain in place.

In the central block, adjacent to the elevator, is a two-room kitchen. The rear room of the kitchen has a stove and built-in cabinets that appear to be original to the building. The outer room, which has cabinets with countertops and a full-size refrigerator, appears to be of more recent construction.

The underground parking garage, which is constructed entirely of cast-in-place concrete, is U-shaped, with the entrance and exit ramps situated at the two ends of the U. Each ramp has a metal roll-up door that opens and closes automatically as vehicles enter and leave. The garage is an undivided space punctuated at regular intervals by round concrete structural columns, and by the elevator enclosure in the center of the building, and it is lit by bare fluorescent light fixtures attached to the ceiling. The garage is larger than the building itself, so that it extends outward beyond the tower's footprint.

Swimming Pool and Pool House

The freestanding pool house is a concrete-block structure whose exterior walls are painted the same color—pink flecked with gray and black—as the main building. The building is U-shaped, with the open end (which faces the main building) enclosed by a zigzag concrete-block wall capped with a single course of red bricks. The wall is decorated with openings filled with glass block, which are arrayed as a row of repeating diamonds. At each end of the wall is a pair of large ornamental metal gates that provide access to the swimming pool and pool house cabanas.

The roof is a low-pitch corrugated metal shed roof covered with roll asphalt. The metal roofing can be seen on the underside of the deep eaves. Along the perimeter of the pool courtyard, the roof extends outward from the pool house walls to serve as a shade canopy. Supported by round metal posts, the canopy's underside is the same corrugated metal visible on the eaves.

The pool courtyard is paved with concrete pool decking. There are no windows on the walls facing the pool, only doors; most of these are louvered wood accordion doors that, when opened, provide access to the cabanas, which are rented on a long-term basis and decorated by their "owners."

At the rear of the pool house, on the north wall, is a small flat-roof addition used for maintenance work and storage. Also on the exterior, along the north and south walls, are large funnel-shaped vents that provide ventilation for the underground garage. The windows on the exterior of the pool house, which are arranged in rows of four high on the north, south, and west walls, are aluminum sliders.

Noncontributing Structure

At the rear of the property, in the northeast corner, are the cooling towers for the building's heating and cooling system. These are screened from view by a tall concrete-block wall and chain-link fencing with plastic slats, and are counted as a single structure.

Changes Made to the Property

Very few changes have been made to Phoenix Towers over the years, and as a result its historical integrity is very high.

The most significant change was the partial enclosure of the roof terrace, which according to city building permit records was completed in September

1963. As noted above in the description of the building, the enclosure was carried out in such a manner as to preserve the terrace's original defining features: the flat corrugated metal roof, the metal railings, and the brick knee wall.

The impact of this alteration is not major, as the terrace is thirteen storeys above ground and therefore barely visible to passersby. The enclosure is also theoretically reversible, but Phoenix Towers residents almost certainly will not want to give up the air-conditioned space, given Phoenix's broiling summers.

Another change that appears to have been made to Ralph Harris' original plan was the addition of the woodwork and banquettes in the lobby. An architect's rendering of the lobby published in 1957 shows neither the ornamental woodwork and paneling nor the banquettes, and today the base of each banquette obscures a small portion of the thunderbird design—a clear indication that they were not part of the original building plan. However, residents who have lived at Phoenix Towers since its opening claim that the banquettes and woodwork have always been present, suggesting that the change was made at the time of construction or very shortly thereafter.

Several relatively minor changes have been made to the building's exterior by residents over the years. These include the enclosure of four balconies (out of forty-eight) and the replacement of two sets of windows. The dates of these changes are unknown.

Of the four balcony enclosures, two are visible from the front of the building, on the twelfth and thirteenth floors. Because the original metal railings were left intact on all of the enclosed balconies, the enclosures appear to be reversible. None of the window replacements are visible from the front of the building.

The remaining exterior changes were made to the landscape. the original turf was removed and the landscape xeriscaped (to prevent water from the sprinklers from seeping into the underground garage), and the putting green and shuffleboard court, both of which were located at the rear of the property, were removed.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Phoenix Towers is nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance under Criterion C. Designed by Ralph C. Harris, a Chicago architect, and constructed in 1957 by the Del E. Webb Construction Co., Phoenix Towers was the first high-rise residential building in Arizona. It also was the first high-rise building in Phoenix to be built outside of the downtown and arguably the first Modern high-rise to be built anywhere in Arizona.[1]

History of Phoenix Towers

The first proposal to build an apartment building at the site now occupied by the Phoenix Towers was made in 1952 by Burke Payne, a Phoenix realtor who owned the land. Previously the property had been the site of Casa Blanca, the residence of Dwight and Maie Heard, whose many achievements in the Salt River Valley included founding the Heard Museum, which now sits to the east and north of Phoenix Towers. After Maie Heard's death in 1951, the house fell vacant, was vandalized, and eventually was demolished in 1954. The property was vacant by the time Payne hired an architect to draw up plans for an apartment building on the site.

In planning his apartment building, Payne sought the assistance of Ralph Applegate, an executive with the Casualty Mutual Insurance Co. of Chicago and a real estate developer in that city. In June 1952, Applegate, who described himself as a "consultant" on the project, announced their plans to Chicago journalists: a thirteen-storey tower that would cost $2 million to build and contain fifty apartments priced from $27,500 to $33,000. The architect was not named, but presumably it was Ralph C. Harris, a Chicago designer who had worked with Applegate on other projects and had decades of experience as a designer of large apartment buildings.

Although nineteen apartments were reportedly sold that year, in fact work did not get underway until 1956. It was then that Roy Wayland, a Phoenix druggist and officer at the Valley National Bank, approached Payne and suggested that the two of them join Ted O'Malley, a noted Phoenix lumber dealer, in constructing a cooperative apartment building on Payne's lot, using the plans that Payne had already commissioned. O'Malley eventually dropped out of the investment group, it appears, but Wayland's bank agreed to help finance the project and Payne served on the cooperative's first board.[2]

Applegate continued to be involved, as well, and he brought in additional investors: Del E. Webb, owner of the regional construction firm of the same name and a co-owner of the New York Yankees; J. Arthur Friedlund, a Chicago attorney who was secretary and general counsel for the Yankees; and Arnold M. Johnson, vice chairman of the Automatic Canteen Company and owner of the Kansas City Athletics. Webb's company, the Del E. Webb Construction Co., would be in charge of the building's construction.

According to Applegate, his investment team intended the Phoenix apartment building to be the first phase of an ambitious plan to build similar cooperative apartment buildings in twenty "smaller cities" across the country. As Applegate explained to reporters, urban development in these cities was forcing housing construction farther away from the downtown, leading to a shortage of affordable housing that was close to established businesses and social activities. "The co-operative apartment idea is based on combining living advantages of home ownership with conveniences of an

[1] This depends on how one distinguishes between mid-rise and high-rise buildings. If the threshold is considered to be ten storeys, then Phoenix Towers was the first Modern high-rise to be built in the state, as discussed in more detail below, under the heading "Architectural Significance of Phoenix Towers."

[2] The primary source of information on the pre-construction history of the building is a reminiscence by a former Phoenix Towers board member, Colonel Ralph Wiltamuth, that was written in April 1977.

apartment, while eliminating problems of commuting long distances, often in heavy traffic," Applegate said.[3]

For Phoenix it was an unusual and ambitious project. The building would easily be the tallest and largest residential structure in the state, and it would have the city's first underground parking garage.[4] It also represented a major departure from Phoenix's prevailing pattern of low-density, sprawling development. At least one publication, the *New York Times*, saw this as a harbinger of things to come: "A trend to industrialization in America accounts in part for the construction of the building in a region where vertical growth is beginning to supplant horizontal development." Locally reporters for the state's largest newspaper, the *Arizona Republic*, called the building a "landmark" that indicated Phoenix was "growing up."[5]

As subsequent developments would prove, a shift from horizontal to vertical development would not take place in Phoenix for quite some time. Perhaps sensing that a high-rise building was a hard sell in this sprawling metropolitan area of ranch homes, Applegate and Harris emphasized the home-like qualities of apartments in the Phoenix Towers. The building's footprint was larger than usual for high-rises, Harris told reporters, reflecting the fact that land costs in Phoenix were still relatively low, and this allowed the construction of multiple wings. "'The structure's four wings are opened to take advantage of Arizona's outdoor living possibilities,'" he said, "'and to provide a maximum view of the surrounding mountain and desert beauty.'" Indeed, one reporter characterized the building as "a collection of modern air-conditioned ranch homes, grouped together in a vertical plane." Prospective residents also were assured of privacy (special sound-deadening materials and well-separated apartment entries) and access to the out-of-doors ("residents do not completely enter the building proper until they turn the latchkey in their own front door").[6]

The building permit for construction of Phoenix Towers was issued on 7 June 1956, and by February 1957 construction was well underway. By then the building was larger than the one first announced by Applegate five years earlier. It now contained fourteen storeys and sixty apartments, as well as the underground parking garage, which had not been in the original plan. Its construction cost had risen from $2 million to $3 million, with a corresponding increase in the offering prices of the apartments, which now ranged from $32,000 to $61,000. Nevertheless, two-thirds of the apartments had already been taken, with several of them going to investors and contractors.

Two months later, in April 1957, the Phoenix Towers Cooperative Apartments was incorporated and its first board elected, with positions going to Burke Payne, Louis McClennan, James Patrick, Ralph Wiltamuth, Colin Campbell, and A. W. Mitchel. By September 1957, the building was completed and a full-time sales office was being operated on the premises by Applegate Investment and Realty Co., which was the primary agent for apartment sales.

From the beginning, Applegate's pitch to buyers was that Phoenix Towers was a luxury apartment building, with perks for residents not normally found in Arizona—"Arizona's Finest Co-Operative Apartments," one of its advertisements read. There were doormen around the clock, a swimming pool with private cabanas, an automatic elevator direct from the garage to each floor of apartments, an open-air roof terrace that could be reserved for private functions, a putting green and shuffleboard court, a resident building engineer and gardener, and "servants' dressing and locker rooms."

The apartments came in three configurations: five-room and five-and-a-half–room apartments, each with two bathrooms and two bedrooms and ranging in size from 1,210 square feet to 1,809 square feet, and six-

[3] Applegate's announcement to the *New York Times* of this plan, in February 1957, is the only known discussion of it in print, and it is unknown whether apartment buildings were built in any of the other cities.

[4] It was the project's developers who claimed it was the first such garage in the Southwest.

[5] *New York Times*, 3 February 1957, p. 227; *Arizona Days and Ways Magazine,* 24 February 1957.

[6] *Arizona Days and Ways Magazine*, 24 February 1957.

room apartments with three bathrooms, three bedrooms, and 2,357 square feet of living space. Every apartment had a balcony—the smallest apartments shared balconies, with a glass privacy screen separating each half—as well as a breakfast area, reception hall, and combined living and dining room. Heating and cooling were individually controlled in each apartment, and the kitchens were equipped with "every convenience available," including built-in ovens and countertop ranges, dishwashers, garbage disposals, built-in refrigerators, and metal wall cabinets.

The building's distinctiveness was increased by the fact that it was operated as a cooperative, an ownership arrangement that was almost unheard of in Phoenix during the 1950s. Indeed, cooperatives are still uncommon in Arizona, and today the Phoenix Towers is one of only a handful in the state.

The property is owned by the Phoenix Towers Cooperative Apartments, Inc., a nonprofit corporation in which every resident holds shares. It is managed by a board of residents that hires and supervises the building's staff, which includes a building manager, security personnel, and maintenance workers. Operation and maintenance costs are met by charging monthly fees to residents based on their apartments' square footage. In 1961 the fees ranged from $212 to $416, while in 2006 they ranged from $625 to $1,208. Improvements and major maintenance projects are financed through periodic special assessments on each apartment, and these additional charges, like the monthly fees, are based on apartment size.

Residents at the Phoenix Towers do not own their apartments but instead own shares in the cooperative, with the number of shares dependent on the size of the apartment. When an apartment changes owners, what is actually sold is not the apartment itself but a fractional ownership interest in the cooperative, which entitles its owner to a ninety-nine–year lease on the apartment. In practice, though, residents are considered to be owners of their apartments, and they are free to make improvements to the interiors, which may range from simple remodeling projects to combining multiple apartments into a single unit. Residents also are eligible to serve on the board, which is composed solely of residents.

Ralph C. Harris

Ralph Harris was a Chicago architect who had a long and successful career, primarily as a designer of apartments and hotels but also, for a time, as the chief architect of the Illinois Highway Department.

Nothing is known of Harris' early years, but his career as an architect was occasionally documented in Chicago newspapers. He was graduated from the University of Illinois in 1910, after which he worked as a "student architect" in Chicago. During the First World War he served as a captain in the 108th Army Engineers, returning afterward to Chicago to resume his architectural work. By 1919 he was sufficiently well established in the profession to be elected secretary of the Illinois Society of Architects, a position he held for the next eight years.

In 1922 Harris entered into a partnership with Byron H. Jillson. This arrangement lasted for two years, and upon dissolution of the partnership in 1924, Harris resumed his solo practice in downtown Chicago, working out of an office in the State-Lake Building.

In 1934 Harris became the chief architect of the Illinois Highway Department, where he was responsible for designing offices, maintenance buildings, and other departmental facilities. He held that position for ten years, during which he lived and worked in Springfield. While he was in Springfield, he married Margaret Ladage (in 1942) and was again was elected an officer of the Illinois Society of Architects (in 1939), serving at least one term as vice president. In 1944 he was elected secretary of the Society, and that year he also returned to private practice, opening an office in downtown Chicago.

In 1959, two years after completing Phoenix Towers, Harris and his wife Margaret moved to Phoenix to take up residence in one of the Towers apartments. A year later, in 1960, he retired. How long the Harrises lived at Phoenix Towers is unknown, but they eventually

moved to Scottsdale, where they were living when Ralph Harris died on 11 June 1966.

During his forty-three-year–career Harris designed a wide variety of buildings: single-family homes, vacation homes, commercial and government buildings, hotels, and low-rise and high-rise apartment buildings. With the apparent lone exception of Phoenix Towers, all of Harris' work as an architect in private practice was undertaken in the Chicago metropolitan area or for Chicago clients.

Harris worked in a variety of styles that reflected the prevailing architectural norms of the day, so that his designs ranged from Classical Revival buildings erected during the 1920s to Modern buildings completed in the 1950s.

His best-known building in Chicago is the Aquitania, a fifteen-storey apartment building located at 5000 Marine Drive in Uptown, on the city's near North Side. Completed in 1923, it was listed on the National Register in 2002 and is described in the nomination as an example of Classical Revival architecture with an Art Moderne lobby (another source has described it as Beaux Arts–influenced, with an Art Deco lobby).

Harris also designed the Tokyo Hotel, a fifteen-storey building at 19 E. Ohio Street, on the northern edge of Chicago's downtown. Clad with red brick and ornamented with terra cotta on its uppermost floor, the Tokyo Hotel was first known as the Antone Hotel and was completed in 1927. A third surviving Harris design from this period is Canterbury Court, a seventeen-storey apartment building at 1220 N. State Parkway that was completed in 1928. Documentation of these buildings is scarce, but photographs of the Tokyo Hotel and Canterbury Court buildings also show Classical Revival and Art Deco influences.

Harris' postwar buildings, which also are poorly documented, appear to have been much sparer in their design, with Art Deco and Modern influences most apparent. In 1946 he designed a three-storey apartment building in Evanston, Illinois, at the northwest corner of Hinman Avenue and Grove Street, that was clad in red brick with Art Deco–style stone and terra cotta trim. Six years later, in 1952, he designed two other Evanston apartment buildings: a seven-storey building at 1508 Hinman Avenue, which was constructed of concrete with brick and stone facing, and a four-storey building, the Ridge-Mulford Apartments, on Ridge Avenue.

His most noteworthy postwar design in Chicago, at least in relation to his work on Phoenix Towers, was done for a fifteen-storey apartment building at 1350 N. Astor Place, on Chicago's Gold Coast. Completed in 1950, with Ralph Applegate as one of its developers, the building had several features in common with Phoenix Towers: cantilevered balconies, double-hung aluminum windows, individual climate control in the apartments, metal kitchen cabinets, and an underground parking garage. An unprepossessing building designed in the Modern style, it (like the Phoenix Towers) made use of a non-rectangular plan with wings to allow more balconies and windows.

Del E. Webb Construction Co.

Del Webb was a construction magnate whose long career as a builder began in Arizona in the late 1920s and continued for nearly half a century. Perhaps best known in Arizona for his Sun City development, Webb's construction company built a wide variety of projects for government, industrial, and business clients in Arizona, California, and many other states across the country.

Webb's primary interest in his early years, however, was baseball. He grew up in Fresno, California, where he was born in 1899 and where his father owned a sand and gravel company. After dropping out of high school to play semipro baseball, he supported himself by working as an itinerant carpenter for California businesses that sponsored baseball teams. His playing career ended when he contracted typhoid fever in 1927, and to speed his recovery he moved to Arizona, where by 1928 he was working again, both as a wage-earning carpenter during the week and as an independent contractor on weekends.

In 1929, the year Webb set up his own construction company, he was asked to take over supervision of a grocery store building project on which he had been

working as a carpenter when the contractor walked off the job. That led to additional work for the Bayless grocery chain, and within a decade Webb was well enough established as a contractor to be winning jobs in both Arizona and California. By the late 1930s, Webb had completed several high-profile projects in Arizona: the construction workers' camp at Bartlett Dam (1936), the Newberry's store in downtown Phoenix (1938), and the Phelps Dodge Mercantile Co. store in Bisbee (1939). His "breakthrough" job, according to his biographer, came in 1938, when he was selected as the builder of an addition to the Arizona state capitol.

It was the Second World War that catapulted Webb and his company into national prominence, as he completed a series of large-scale construction projects for the federal government. These included two air bases in the Phoenix area, Luke Field and Williams Field (both in 1941); the Japanese-American relocation camp near Parker (1942); and multiple buildings at Fort Huachuca in southern Arizona (throughout the early 1940s). In 1944 he opened a permanent office in Los Angeles—his company always was headquartered in Phoenix—and a year later, in 1945, he became a co-owner of the New York Yankees, a position he would retain for the next twenty years and which garnered him considerable national publicity.

During the postwar years, the Del E. Webb Construction Co. undertook an increasing variety of projects not only in Arizona and California but across the country, in locations as diverse as Oregon, Florida, Texas, Missouri, and Washington, D.C. His noteworthy Arizona projects during the late 1940s and 1950s included the Hanny's clothing store in downtown Phoenix (1947), the Hughes Aircraft Co. plant in Tucson (1951), the Veterans Administration hospital in Phoenix (1951), St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix (1952), and the First National Bank Building in Phoenix (1955).

In 1948 Webb built his first large housing development: Pueblo Gardens, a 700-unit development in Tucson near 36th Street and Campbell Avenue. Five years later he built the town of San Manuel, Arizona, for Phelps Dodge, the copper mining company. Webb's company also became a major builder of hotels, including the Flamingo Hotel and Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas (1946 and 1951, respectively). After building two motels in Phoenix, the Flamingo (1954) and Sahara (1955), Webb entered the hospitality industry as an operator, setting up the Hiway House motel chain, which eventually comprised nine properties in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. He also was a major investor in the Ramada Inn chain, which opened its first motel in Flagstaff, Arizona, in 1954.

Exactly when Webb became involved in the Phoenix Towers project is not clear; most likely it was around 1956, when Ralph Harris was preparing his final plans for the building. Webb was not only the building's contractor but also an investor. In addition to putting his own money into the venture, Webb brought two of his baseball associates into the project: J. Arthur Friedlund, the general counsel for the Yankees, and Arnold M. Johnson, owner of the Kansas City Athletics. For a time following the building's completion, Webb maintained an apartment at Phoenix Towers.

In 1960, three years after building Phoenix Towers, the Del E. Webb Construction Co. was converted into a public corporation, the Del E. Webb Corporation, and listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Its major projects in Phoenix during the late 1950s and 1960s included Chris-Town Mall, completed in 1961 and the first fully enclosed and air-conditioned mall east of the Rocky Mountains, and the Rosenzweig Center, a complex of three high-rise buildings at Central Avenue and Clarendon Avenue that played a major role in creating Phoenix's "second skyline" on North Central Avenue. The three buildings were completed between 1962 and 1967, and one—the Del Webb Building—became the new headquarters for Webb's company.

It was also during the 1960s that Webb built Sun City, the retirement community located northwest of Phoenix. After setting up a new company, the Del E. Webb Development Co., to manage the project, sales began in 1960. The idea of building a full-service housing development solely for retirees (or "active adults," as they were called) was a novel one, and its

prospects were uncertain, even to the normally confident Webb. However, it turned out to be hugely popular, and Sun City eventually grew to substantial size, with more than 38,000 residents in 2000. The success of Sun City spawned similar Webb ventures not only in Arizona (Sun City West, adjacent to Sun City, and Sun City Vistoso, outside Tucson) but across the country, and it led the way in the development of an entirely new sector in the housing industry, namely, active-adult communities.

Del Webb retired from active management of the firm in 1973, though he remained chairman of its board. A year later, in 1974, he died in Rochester, Minnesota, where he had been admitted to the Mayo Clinic for surgery. His company continued after his death, focusing increasingly on residential developments and on the hospitality industry, building and managing both casinos and hotels. In 2001, more than seventy years after its founding as a one-man construction company, the Del E. Webb Corporation became a division of Pulte Homes.

Architectural Significance of Phoenix Towers

Phoenix Towers exhibits the basic design characteristics of a Modern building: it has almost no overt decoration (the lone exception being the ornaments atop the columns of the front walkway cover); its predominant exterior features—walls, windows, and doors—are constructed of modern industrial materials (cast-in-place concrete, concrete block, and aluminum); and the underlying structure of the building is expressed in the exterior, that is, in the concrete ledges/balconies and concrete columns. Furthermore, planar surfaces are featured prominently in its design, and they are employed in a way that produces a dynamic tension between the horizontal lines of the ledges/balconies and the vertical thrust of the building, which is accentuated by the large vertical expanses of blank wall situated at the end of each wing.

Primarily because of the ledges/balconies and the expression of the underlying structure, Phoenix Towers represents a variation of Modernism that has been called "articulated frame" or "patterned Modern."[7] The former refers to buildings in which the slab floors and structural columns become exterior design features, while the latter refers more broadly to buildings that not only reveal their underlying structure but do so using materials or design features that add texture or pattern. By exposing structural components such as beams and columns, and then by creating geometric patterns with them, designers are able to create forms that transcend mere functionality to become subtly decorative.

Articulated or patterned Modern designs were most common during the 1960s and 1970s, but the design trend they represented—a search for alternatives to the International Style's emphasis on unadorned cubes and planes—was already well underway by the late 1950s, when Phoenix Towers was built. It is clear from what is known of Harris' portfolio that he was not a confirmed Modernist but an adaptable designer whose work reflected the prevailing architectural norms. In a letter to the editor of a Chicago newspaper in 1952, around the time that plans for Phoenix Towers were first announced, Harris wrote, "I do not believe that glass walls with an exposed skeleton of steel make for architecturally attractive buildings. This severe geometric utilitarian style may be very acceptable for industrial or commercial work, but I believe that apartment buildings, being residential buildings, should have some residential character."[8]

And so it would have been natural for Harris to design a building like Phoenix Towers that was fundamentally Modernist yet declined to embrace the austerity found in designs by such Modern luminaries as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (whom Harris almost certainly knew from Chicago). By the late 1950s there was considerable ferment in Modern architecture, and it

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[7] "Articulated modern" is borrowed from Carole Rifkind (*A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*) and "patterned modern" is taken from *Phoenix Commercial Architecture, 1945-1975: A Preliminary Architectural Context*.

[8] "Glass Walls Have Disadvantages," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 December 1952, p. 7.

was during this period that such variations on Modernism as Expressionism and Formalism emerged, opening up Modernism to a range of substyles and design approaches that would only broaden in later years.

In the end, the true architectural significance of Phoenix Towers rests largely on its "pioneer" status among postwar high-rise buildings in Arizona. It was the first residential high-rise in the state, the first high-rise in Phoenix outside of the downtown, and arguably the first Modern high-rise of any type to be built in Arizona.

Until Phoenix Towers' completion in 1957, all of the high-rise buildings built in Phoenix and Tucson—there was none in any other Arizona city—were either office buildings or hotels. For a few years after its construction, Phoenix Towers remained the only high-rise residential building in Phoenix. Then, in 1962, the Executive Towers was built at 201 W. Clarendon Lane in Phoenix, north of Park Central Mall. Four years later, in 1964, the Regency House Apartments was erected at Central Avenue and Encanto Boulevard, just a few blocks north of Phoenix Towers.

For some time, these three buildings were the only residential high-rises in Phoenix. By 1987 they had been joined by a fourth, the Embassy (a converted hotel at 4th Avenue and McKinley Street), yet altogether these four buildings accounted for only a handful of the city's housing units. As late as 1996 residential high-rises comprised fewer than 1,500 residences in all of the Phoenix metropolitan area—about one-tenth of one percent of the housing units in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Phoenix Towers also was the first high-rise building of any type to be built on North Central Avenue, which today now boasts a "second skyline" rivaling that of downtown Phoenix. While it is probably an exaggeration to say that the success of Phoenix Towers triggered the development of high-rise buildings on North Central, it is certainly true that it was the first such building to be constructed outside of the downtown and that, within a decade, others followed. Those built in the 1960s included not only the aforementioned Executive Towers, Regency Apartments, and Rosenzweig Center, but also the Financial Center, at 3447 N. Central Avenue, which was erected in 1968 and raised to its current height in 1972.

Finally, Phoenix Towers was, at the time of its construction, the tallest Modern building built in Phoenix, and it was the first building in Phoenix above ten storeys to be designed in the Modern style. Prior to its construction, the tallest Modern building in Phoenix had been the Home Office of the First National Bank of Arizona, at 411 N. Central Avenue, which was completed in 1955 (and also built by the Del E. Webb Construction Co.). At the time, the First National Bank Building was easily the largest Modern building in the city (and therefore the state), but whether it should be considered a high-rise is a matter of debate, for the building is only nine storeys in height (not counting the square block that sits atop the building) and is more horizontal than vertical in appearance.[9]

Regardless of Phoenix Towers' exact priority among Modern buildings in Arizona, though, it remains a significant building—a residential high-rise built at a time when virtually all of the residential development in Arizona was low-density and suburban in character. Only now, fifty years later, is the trend toward urban living that Phoenix Towers' developers sought to initiate gaining momentum in Phoenix and its surrounding communities.

[9] There is no generally accepted definition of a high-rise building, and some definitions include buildings with only seven storeys. The Emporis web directory of architecture categorizes the First National Bank Building as a low-rise building.

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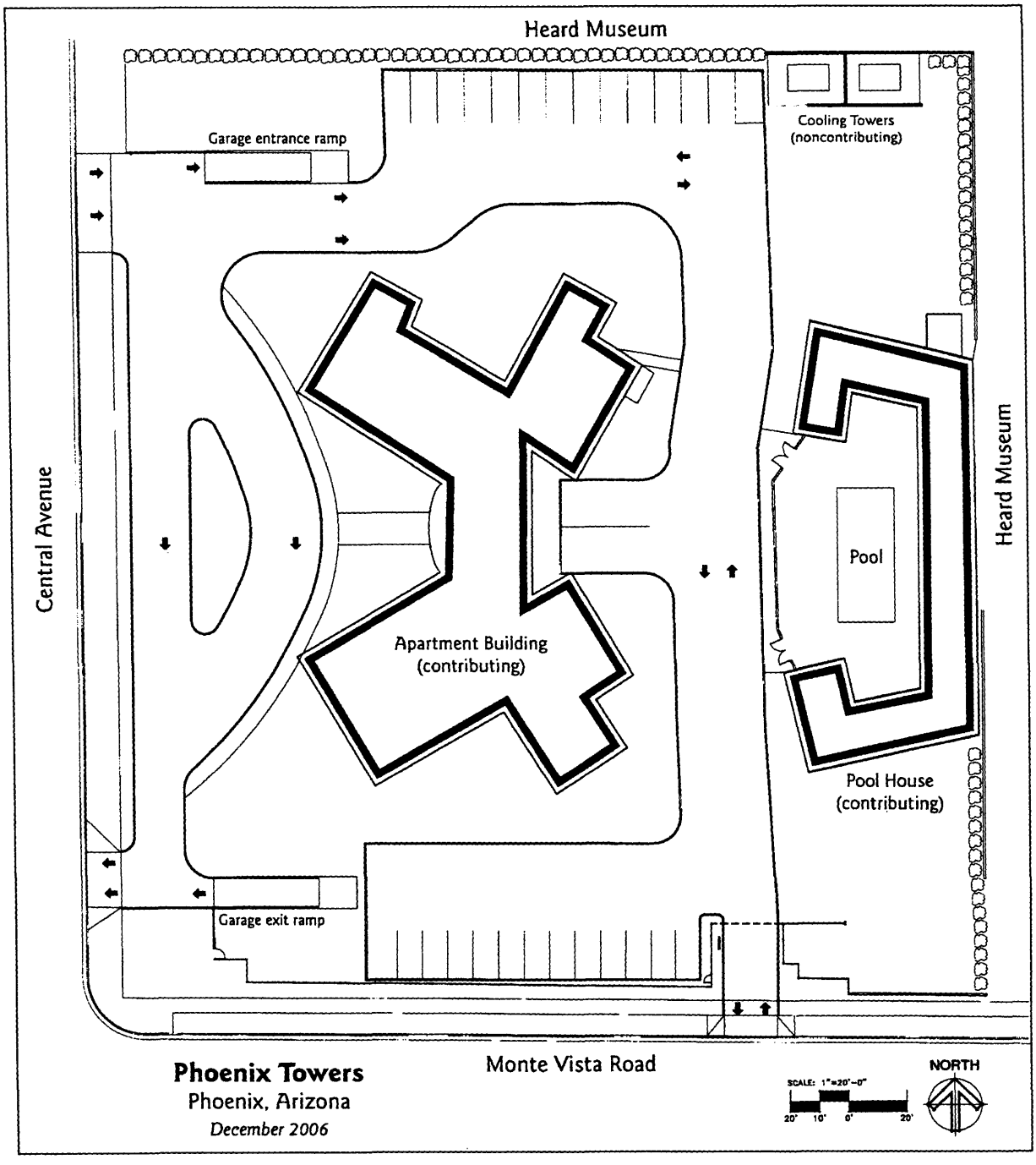
Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property forms a square that is bounded on the west by Central Avenue, on the south by Monte Vista Road, and on the east and north by the grounds of the adjacent Heard Museum.

Boundary Justification

This boundary encloses the historic property as it was developed and constructed in 1957.

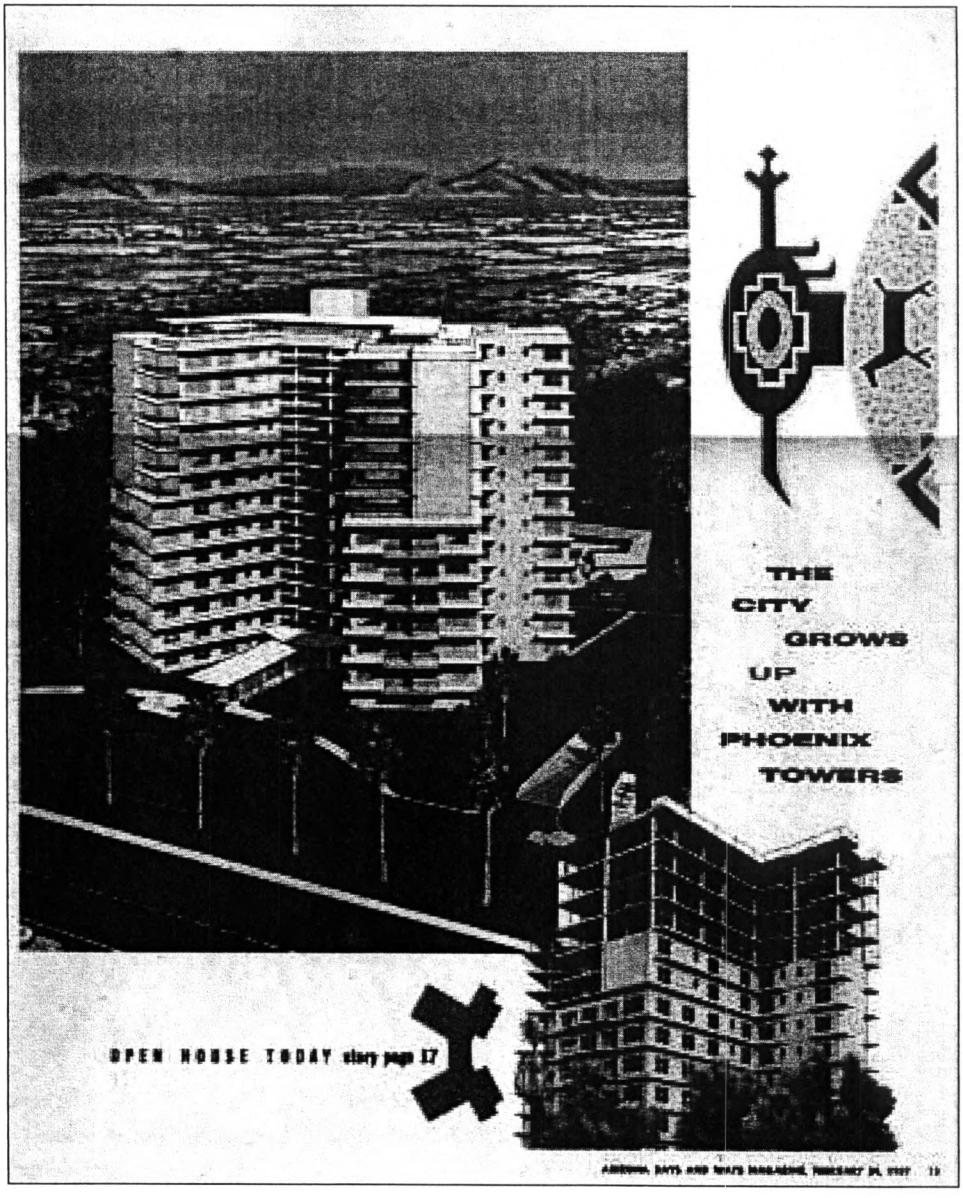
Site Plan


Heard Museum
Garage entrance ramp
Cooling Towers
(noncontributing)
Central Avenue
Pool
Heard Museum
Apartment Building
(contributing)
Pool House
(contributing)
Garage exit ramp
Monte Vista Road
NORTH
SCALE: 1"=20'-0"
20' 10' 0' 20'
Phoenix Towers
Phoenix, Arizona
December 2006

Historical Images

Advertisement

Reproduction of the first page of a nineteen-page section on Phoenix Towers in the 24 February 1957 issue of *Arizona Days and Ways Magazine*.

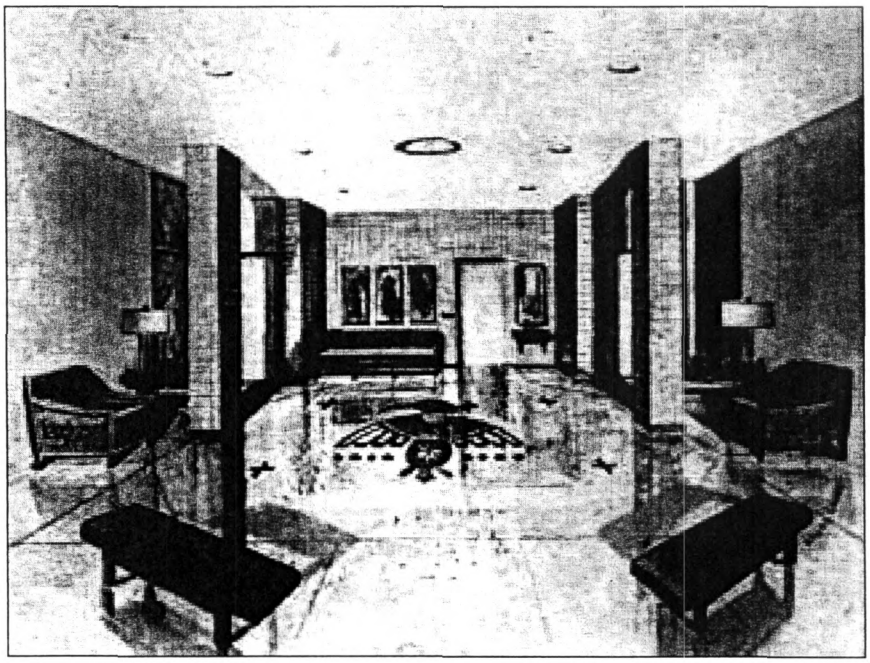


Advertisement

From the special section in the 24 February 1957 issue of *Arizona Days and Ways Magazine*.

Architect's Rendering

This drawing, from the special section in the 24 February 1957 issue of *Arizona Days and Ways Magazine*, shows the lobby as it was originally envisioned by the architect. The contrasts with the lobby as it exists today are striking: the two structural columns are covered only with tile, there are no built-in banquettes, the full thunderbird design on the floor is visible, there does not appear to be any wood paneling on the walls, and the rear wall is not covered with mirrors. Whether the present-day design of this room was executed at the time of construction or afterwards is not known. What is known is that Ralph Harris made several changes to his design in response to suggestions and complaints by purchasers of apartments, so it is possible that he was involved in the redesign of the lobby.



Photograph

This view of the lobby floor, taken in September 2006, shows the mosaic thunderbird in the terrazzo floor.

Photograph

This view of downtown Phoenix, looking north, was taken in November 1957. The tall building at the upper left of the photograph is Phoenix Towers, which at the time was the only high-rise building outside of the downtown and the tallest Modern high-rise in Phoenix (Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin, *Phoenix, 1870-1970, in Photographs* [Phoenix: Arizona Photographic Associates, 1970], page 173).

Postcard

This postcard, dated 1961, shows the building no more than four years after its construction. When this photograph was taken, the roof terrace on the northwest wing (one corner of which is barely visible) had not yet been enclosed.

Photograph

This view of Phoenix Towers from the southwest was taken in May 1970, when the properties on the other side of Central Avenue and Monte Vista Road were vacant and before the Heard Museum had expanded onto the vacant property that can be glimpsed north of the Towers (Arizona State University Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Arizona Collection, Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Photographs, CP MCL 98258-7).

List of Photographs

For all images

Property:	Phoenix Towers
Photographer:	Mark E. Pry
Date taken:	21 September 2006
Location of negatives:	Phoenix Towers Cooperative Apartments, Inc.

No. 1 : The tower viewed from the southwest, across Central Avenue. Three of the tower's four wings are visible, as is the front entrance, which can be seen at the middle left of the photograph.

No. 2 : The tower viewed from the southeast, from Monte Vista Road. This shows the tower's two rear wings, as well as the rear parking lot and its entrance off Monte Vista.

No. 3 : The front entrance, as seen from the west.

No. 4 : The pool house and swimming pool viewed from above (the east). The large buildings behind the pool house are part of the Heard Museum complex.

No. 5 : The roof terrace, looking west from atop the southwest wing of the building (the original, unenclosed section of the terrace) toward the northwest wing and central block (the enclosed sections).

No. 6 : The tower and grounds viewed from the northwest, across Central Avenue. The warning signs on the street are related to the light rail construction in progress along Central.