# Historic Resources Survey Hacienda Motel and Farm House Motel Riverside

**Draft Final Report** 

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# 1.0 Executive Summary

The historic resources survey of the Hacienda Motel and the Farm House Motel on University Avenue in Riverside was completed from September to October 1998 by consultant team Lauren Weiss Bricker and Janet L. Tearnen. The purpose of the survey was to assess the historic/architectural significance of the properties and to use the findings to address planning concerns raised in the University Avenue Specific Plan (Gruen Associates, 1993).

Project methodology, as called for in the scope of work, included an intensive-level field survey, photographic documentation of the properties, research to determine construction dates and assess architectural quality and integrity, and preparation of an historic context statement. Identified properties were evaluated for significance according to the National Register of Historic Places Criteria, Title 20 of the Riverside Municipal Code, and for eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Results of the survey work were recorded on the appropriate State of California Historic Resources Inventory (DPR) forms. Recommendations for the treatment of the motor courts were developed based on their historic character and within the context of the City's goals and policies specified in the University Avenue Specific Plan. This included an evaluation of the applicability of re-use approaches used in communities with similar resources.

The Hacienda Motel (1948-53), historically called the La Casa Contenta Motel and Café, and the Farm House Motel (1953) were determined eligible for designation as local landmarks and for consideration for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. The Farm House Motel was also determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The University Avenue Specific Plan acknowledges that these motels are "some of the best remaining examples of University Avenue's motor court days [and] represent significant historic preservation opportunities along University Avenue that can markedly upgrade University Avenue's physical image." The Hacienda Motel and the Farm House Motel are currently occupied. The Farm House continues to function as a motor court. The Hacienda is operated under the management of Hacienda Home Care Services. Should alternative uses be required for the properties, it is recommended that those selected have the least impact on their architectural integrity and historic character including: assisted living for the elderly, low/moderate income housing, and artist studio space. Under all circumstances where physical changes are required, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and State Historical Building Code should be utilized in the design review process. It is also recommended that, in order to maintain the historic character of the motor courts, development surrounding the properties utilize design approaches which reduce the effects of height and mass in new construction.

# 2.0 The Project

### 2.1 Introduction

In September 1998, the City of Riverside Development Department awarded consultant team Lauren Weiss Bricker and Janet L. Tearnen the contract to complete a historic resources survey of the Hacienda Motel and the Farm House Motel located on University Avenue. The purpose of the survey was to assess the historic/architectural

significance of the properties and to use the findings to address planning concerns raised in the University Avenue Specific Plan (Gruen Associates, 1993). This survey was prepared according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning, Identification, Evaluation, and Registration of historic resources, and funded by the City of Riverside Development Department.

# 2.2 Scope of Work

Project methodology to complete the historic resources survey of the Hacienda and Farm House motels included:

- An intensive-level field survey of the properties including black and white photography of individual buildings and structures and context views.
- Building-specific research to determine construction dates and assess architectural quality and integrity;
- A reconnaissance survey of other motor courts within the area to provide a comparative basis for the evaluation of significance;
- Research and preparation of an historic context statement addressing the significance of the motels as a property type;
- Evaluation of significance according to the National Register Criteria, Title 20 of the Riverside Municipal Code, and for eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources;
- Recordation of survey results on the appropriate State of California Historic Resources Inventory (DPR) forms;
- Development of recommendations for the treatment of the motels based on their historic character and within the context of the City's goals and policies specified in the University Avenue Specific Plan, including an evaluation of the applicability of reuse approaches used in communities with similar resources.

This report documents methodology and findings of the historic resources survey.

# 2.3 Project Team

The project team to prepare the historic resources survey for the City of Riverside consisted of architectural historian Lauren Weiss Bricker, Ph.D. (as lead consultant), and historian Janet L. Tearnen, M.A. Dr. Bricker received her doctorate from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her area of specialization is the history of nineteenth and twentieth century American architecture. For sixteen years she has been engaged in the research and evaluation of resources throughout California. Ms. Tearnen received her master's degree in History from the University of California Riverside where she specialized in Historic Preservation within the Program in Historic Resources Management. She has been working as a private consultant in the Southern California area for over seven years.

Both Ms. Tearnen and Dr. Bricker have extensive experience in the historic resources survey process and evaluating potential resources in accordance with local, state, and national criteria for evaluation. They have assessed significance of historic properties in numerous municipalities as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Federal Section 106 review processes. Recently completed projects for the City of Riverside include the *University Avenue Cultural Resources Survey and Analysis: Park to Ottawa Avenues* and the *Historic Resources Study for the Magnolia Redevelopment Project Area* (1998).

# 3.0 Project Location and Setting

The Hacienda Motel and the Farm House Motel are located on adjacent lots on the north side of University Avenue between Iowa and Cranford Avenues (Figure 1, Appendix A). This section of University Avenue (called Eighth Street until 1966) is east of the original city limits, which ended at Chicago Avenue, and was not annexed to the City until 1957. By that time, Eighth Street was a segment of State Highway 60 (395); it functioned as an important transportation link between the Los Angeles area and communities to the east and the desert and an access route to the newly completed University of California, Riverside. The area is developed primarily with offices, retail/commercial buildings, restaurants, and motels. The Weber House (1510 University Avenue), a City of Riverside Cultural Landmark, is also located within the area.

# 3.1 University Avenue Specific Plan

The motel are included within the University Avenue Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan was developed to address planning and redevelopment issues along the segment of University which extends from Park Avenue on the east to the I-60 Freeway on the west.

The motels are located within Subdistrict 3 of the Specific Plan (see Figure 1, Appendix A) which is identified as a "visitor commercial area and university-related use area." The existing land use and character of the Subdistrict is described in the plan as follows:

The Subdistrict consists of large structures on larger parcels, many of which are underutilized. Frontages generally vary from 125 to 250 feet. New structures are interspersed among the older structures. Concentrated close to the UCR and I-215 are the newer and larger developments including the Days Inn [Courtyard Marriott] and the Hampton Inn...Also in this Subdistrict are restaurants, office uses, banks, and service stations. Properties in this Subdistrict generally have more landscaping, particularly in the newer developments, between signage control and less billboard advertising than Subdistrict 1. There is, however, substantial room for improvement. (2-12)

# 4.0 Project Methodology

A complete list of all sources and contacts used throughout the survey project is located in Section 9.0

### 4.1 Pre-Field Research

The project team conducted pre-field research to determine if the properties had been previously surveyed and to identify other extant motor courts/motels located within the Riverside area to provide a basis of comparison for the evaluation of historic/architectural significance. Sources included the *City of Riverside Historic Resources Inventory Index* (1994), the *Historic Properties Directory for Riverside* (State Office of Historic Preservation, 1994), and Riverside city directories.

### 4.2 Fieldwork

The project team completed an intensive-level survey of the properties in September 1998 to:

- Assess architectural quality and integrity;
- Photograph all buildings and structures using black and white film, developed in 3½ x 5 inch format and as a PhotoCD;
- Develop a framework for establishing the historic context.

The project team also conducted a reconnaissance survey of the Riverside area motor courts/motels identified during the pre-field research to:

- Identify those which are still extant; and,
- Provide a basis of comparison for the assessment of historic/architectural significance of the Hacienda and Farm House motels.

# 4.3 Post-Field Research

Post-field research involved the review of a variety of primary and secondary source information. The objectives of the research were to provide dates of construction and alterations for the properties and to provide background information for the development of the context statement. Research locations and sources included:

- City of Riverside, Building and Safety Department (building permits)
- Riverside Municipal Library (vertical files, historical maps, city directories)
- Riverside County Assessor's Office (assessor's building records)

### 4.4 Contacts

The project team contacted Deborah Abele, Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Phoenix and Gary Meyer, Senior Planner for the City of Tempe, who provided information regarding preservation challenges and re-use alternatives for motor courts which have been successfully implemented in these cities.

### 5.0 Historic Context Statement

The Hacienda Motel and the Farm House Motel are located on University Avenue in the Eastside community of Riverside. The development of the Eastside began after the Gage Canal brought water to the eastern Riverside plain. In March 1882, Matthew Gage filed a claim for land under the Desert Irrigation Act which allowed him full title if he brought adequate irrigation to the area within three years. This square mile of barren land is located between what is now University Avenue, Le Conte Drive, Chicago Avenue, and Canyon Crest. According to historian Tom Patterson, "the new canal was one of the circumstances making possible the first town-lot addition to the original Riverside." (1) A number of subdivisions followed and by the early twentieth century there was substantial residential development along Eighth Street (now University Avenue).

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Riverside (1908; rev.1951) and City building permits indicate that the predominant land-use of Eighth Street remained residential until the early 1950s. By this time it was a segment of State Highway 60 (395), which ran from Mission Boulevard east through downtown along Eighth Street, and functioned as an important transportation link between the Los Angeles area and communities to the east and the desert.(2) The traffic along Eighth Street east of downtown was intensified with the completion of the University of California, Riverside in the mid-50s. By the late 1950s the section of Eighth Street immediately west of Iowa Avenue had been widened and functioned as a terminus of State Highway 60 until the segment from Eighth Street to Blaine Street was completed. This situation funneled the increased highway traffic along Eighth Street and, from a marketing perspective, the north side of the street became the "right" or preferred side to locate auto-dependent businesses.

By the late 1950s, the impact of motorized consumers traveling along State Route 60 began to be reflected in the built environment along Eighth Street. A number of single-family residences were converted to multi-family units and/or commercial use, although the majority were replaced with restaurants, motels, car washes, and service stations that served the travelers visiting the area. These changes of use were officially recognized on the City's Zoning Map of 1956 in which the area immediately west of Chicago Avenue (then the eastern city boundary) and Eighth Street was zoned C-3 "General Commercial Zone," and C-4 "Automobile Service Station Zone."(3) Though the Hacienda and Farm House motels were outside the city boundaries (until the annexation in February 1957) it is probable that similar land-use patterns were evident along the stretch of Eighth Street that connected with State Route 60.

The re-alignment of State Route 60, so that it by-passed Eighth Street, was completed in the early sixties. Though motels and other auto-related buildings continued to be constructed along Eighth Street (renamed University Avenue in 1966), after this time the loss of direct contact from motorists began to be evidenced on the local economy. This financial decline continued through the 1970s and 80s. From that time to the present, the

redevelopment of the downtown area and the expansion of the University of California, Riverside campus have provided impetus for the revitalization of University Avenue.

Among the auto-related buildings constructed while Eighth Street was a segment of State Route 60 are the Hacienda Motel (1948-53), originally La Casa Contenta Motel and Café, and the Farm House Motel (1953). While each establishment chose to call itself a "motel," reflecting post-war marketing trends of the tourism industry, as works of architecture they can be characterized as "motor courts." The origins of the motor court date back to the formulation of the "auto court," a building type that emerged in the 1920s in response to the impact of the automobile on the American middle class. (4) With the improvement and expansion of the nation's highway (and eventually interstate) systems, travelers on vacation began to prefer the car over the train. At first accommodations for the traveler were provided in auto camps with spaces for tents to be set up next to the vehicles, or the more traditional urban and resort hotels. Then more permanent auto courts began to be constructed along the auto-accessible edges of cities. These consisted of rows of detached small dwelling units — essentially simple geometric boxes, square, or rectangular in plan with a simple gable roof.

The form and design of the units varied depending on the approach that was taken to attract motoring visitors, e.g., cottages, cabins, wigwams. The units were arranged in various configurations: parallel rows, an "L" plan, a narrow or wide "U" plan, a crescent, etc.(5) The configuration selected depended on the location of the court from the road. Also, many of the courts were planned with expansion in mind, so that the rear portions of the site were not developed immediately. Guests parked their cars in front of the individual unit or in carports located adjacent to the unit. A bathroom in each unit was not an original feature of the auto court (initially, a centrally located building provided the necessary accommodations) however they soon became standard. Early auto courts regularly included kitchens or kitchenettes within the units, but by World War II they had largely disappeared due to low demand and the cost they added to a project. Pools, recreation rooms, and other communal facilities were usually sited for easy access to all rental units. The manager's office and residence was placed near the front of the property. Occasionally a service station or restaurant was developed as part of the complex.

One distinction made been motor courts and auto courts is that the rental units are united under a single roof line. This trend becomes more prevalent in the post-war period, along with a tendency to provide parking in long continuous spaces in front of the units or to discretely place the car to the rear of the units. These features become standard in the larger-scale or chain-operated motel of the 1950s and 60s. The post-war period witnessed a boom in the construction of motor courts or motels. This was due to several factors: the general decentralization of cities, increased car ownership, the federal interstate highway program begun in 1956; and the image of the motel business as having a higher cash flow than most other types of real estate investment.(6)

### Notes:

- 1. Tom Patterson, *A Colony for California*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Riverside Museum Associates: Riverside, CA., 1996).
- 2. Pocket Renie Atlas of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (Los Angeles: Renie Map Service, 1960).

- 3. "Ordinance Number 2438 and Official Zoning Map to Accompany Ordinance Number 2438," *Riverside Daily Press*, 6 November 1956, 7-11.
- 4. Warren James Belasco, Americans on the Road: from Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945 (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1979).
- 5. John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 37 and 38.
  6. Ibid., 45.

# 6.0 Research Results

Pre-field review of the City's *Historic Resources Inventory Index* and the *Historic Properties Directory for Riverside* (State Office of Historic Preservation) indicated that neither of the properties had been previously surveyed.

A review of city directories identified a number of motor courts in the Riverside area constructed prior to 1960. The majority were located within three areas:

- University Avenue (east of Commerce Street)
- Magnolia Avenue (scattered from the 6200 block to the 11000 block)
- Mission Boulevard (5000-6000 blocks an unincorporated area of Riverside County)

During the reconnaissance survey two extant pre-1960 motels were identified: the 18-unit Sierra Six Motel (historically called the Ambler Motel ) at 10920 Magnolia and the Castle Court at 6842 Magnolia. The Sierra Six (ca. 1950) is an undistinguished example of a motor court in Riverside. The Castle Court (1928) is an excellent example of an early motor court in the City, and was identified as part of the Historic Resources Study for the Magnolia Center Redevelopment Project Area (Tearnen and Bricker, 1998). Motor courts also remain at 5464, 5887, and 6038 Mission Boulevard. However, these are outside the Riverside city limits.

# 7.0 Findings

Following the fieldwork and research, the project team evaluated the surveyed resources for historic/architectural significance according to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Title 20 of the Riverside Municipal Code (local significance), and for eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.

Each property was assigned a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Status Code. The codes were developed by the State Office of Historic Preservation and are standardized throughout the state. The Historic Resources Inventory forms were prepared from the historic resources database which was developed by the City. A Primary Record (DPR-523A) and Building Structure Object Record (DPR-523B) was prepared for each property. The original forms were submitted to the City of Riverside Development Department. Copies of the forms, which include a description of each property and discussion of their significance, are reproduced in Appendix B.

### 7.1 Hacienda Motel

The Hacienda Motel (originally called the La Casa Contenta Hotel and Café) was constructed during the period 1948-53 and is significant as a good example of a motor court in the City of Riverside. It is recommended for designation as a local landmark under Chapter 20.21.010 of Title 20, because it, "(c) embodies distinctive characteristic of a type, and (i) reflects significant geographical patterns including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth." The property was assigned an NRHP Status Code of 5S1," is separately listed or designated under an existing local ordinance, or is eligible for such listing or designation.

As a property determined eligible for designation as a local landmark, it is also eligible for consideration for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. However, it is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because it does not meet criteria consideration G which requires properties less that fifty years old to be of exceptional importance.

### 7.2 Farm House Motel

The Farm House Motel was constructed in 1953 and is significant as an excellent example of a motor court in the City of Riverside and retains a high degree of integrity. It is recommended for designation as a local landmark under Chapter 20.20.010 of Title 20 because it, "(c) embodies distinctive characteristic of a type and style, and (i) reflects significant geographical patterns including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth." The property is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, at the local level, under Criterion C, "it embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and style," and Criteria Consideration G, "it is less than fifty years old and is of exceptional importance." The property was assigned an NRHP Status Code of 3S," appears eligible for separate listing in the National Register.

As a property determined eligible for designation as a local landmark and for listing in the National Register, the Farm House Motel is also eligible for consideration for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.

# 7.3 Summary of Project Contacts

Deborah Abele, Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Phoenix, provided information regarding preservation problems the City has encountered in their attempts to preserve the area's motor courts. Aggressive property maintenance standards in the city have resulted in the demolition of a number of motor courts, and many have been lost within the last ten years to redevelopment projects. Problems with re-use have included the inability to adapt the buildings to meet ADA disability requirements for office, retail, and related uses (particularly with regard to entrances and bathrooms). Finally, the "sleazy" character image of many of the city's motor courts has been difficult to reverse.

Ms. Abele indicated that the City encourages the continued use of the motor courts as motels whenever feasible. Options for re-use, which have been successfully implemented in the City of Phoenix include:

- Assisted living for the elderly (central care provider on site)
- Low/moderate income housing
- Artist studio space

According to Gary Meyer, Senior Planner for the City of Tempe, the city's motor courts are used primarily as tourist motels (mostly during the winter months) and as low/moderate income weekly rental units. The City is currently implementing a redevelopment plan for Apache Boulevard, a 2.5 mile area west of the University of Arizona. A number of motor courts are located within the redevelopment area and have recently been evaluated as part of a historic resources survey. The City will address issues relating to the preservation of the properties on a case by case basis. Mr. Meyer has sent a copy of the redevelopment plan and the historic resources survey for use by the City of Riverside.

## 8.0 Recommendations: Assessment of Re-Use Potential

# 8.1 Summary of Specific Plan Goals and Policies: Subdistrict 3

The project scope called for the development of recommendations for the treatment of the buildings based on their historic character and within the context of the City's goals and policies as specified in the University Avenue Specific Plan. The overall vision of the Plan is to revitalize University Avenue to become an active, lively, visually attractive thoroughfare. The vision for Subdistrict 3 is specifically to:

...continue the current trend of a mix of visitor-serving retail commercial, restaurants, offices and University-related facilities and larger structures fronting on a tree-lined University Avenue. Streetscape improvements and design standards and guidelines will contribute to improving the architectural and landscaping environment. The pedestrian environment is to be improved by the addition of palms, shade trees and street furniture as part of a widened sidewalk along University Avenue. A landscaped median with thematic accent trees will help reduce the perceived width of the street. The pedestrian connection to UCR for the area is planned to be reduced by the elimination of the free right-turn portion of the on-ramp to I-215 and the construction of a land bridge over I-215 from UCR to the University lands south of University Avenue. In order to reinforce the intended pedestrian environment, new structures will be encourage to have an architectural style that draws from Riverside's heritage.(4-13)

The following excepts from the Specific Plan relate to standards, design guidelines, and implementation recommendations for Subdistrict 3:

### Design Guidelines

Section 8.3.3, Site Design and Planning: Existing site conditions, such as mature trees, natural drainage courses, and historic structures shall be incorporated into a project on any site.

Section 8.4.3, Architectural Character/Building Design: The architecture in Subdistrict 3 is envisioned to be taller than in Subdistrict 1 and 2, and this district is intended to be a more intense visitor oriented area with hotel, motel, office, and retail uses remote from existing single family development. Flat roof with decorative cornices or trellises in addition to sloping terra cotta tile roofs on the low structures are appropriate. Buildings with over three stories shall be terraced to reduce the building mass. The treatment of ground floor frontages along University Avenue to encourage pedestrian activity is especially important as this is the area closest to UCR. The Weber House, a Cultural Heritage Landmark at 1510 University Avenue needs to be protected and respected as a vital part of this Subdistrict.

### Implementation

Section 9.2.4, Motor Court Era: Some of the best remaining examples of University Avenue's motor court days can be found in the area between Cranford and Iowa Avenues. Here, two properties in particular remain reminiscent of the tourist-serving era when University was the "state highway through town." The Hacienda and Farm House motels represent a style of commercial architecture that has been successfully preserved in other communities, such as Phoenix, while being adaptively reused for contemporary purposes. Together with the Weber House, on the south side of University Avenue in this area, these motor-court-era examples represent significant additional historic preservation opportunities along University Avenue that can markedly upgrade University Avenue's physical image.

### 8.2 Recommendations

The Hacienda Motel and Farm House Motel are currently occupied. The Farm House continues to function as a motor court. The Hacienda is operated under the management of Hacienda Home Care Services. Should alternative uses be required for the properties, it is recommended that those selected have the least impact on the architectural integrity and historic character. Based on the experience in Phoenix, general alternatives that appear to meet these needs include: assisted living for the elderly, low/moderate income housing, and artist studio space. Under all circumstances where physical changes are required, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and State Historical Building Code should be utilized in the design review process.

It is also recommended that, in order to maintain the historic character of the motor courts, development surrounding the properties utilize design approaches that reduce the effects of height and mass in new construction.

### 9.0 Sources and Contacts

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### Contacts:

Abele, Deborah

Historic Preservation Officer, City of Phoenix, Arizona

Meyer, Gary Senior Planner, City of Tempe, Arizona