



**JM Research and Consulting**  
Jennifer Mermilliod, M.A., Principal  
Architectural Historian | Historian | Preservation Planner

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 23, 2025  
**TO:** Scott Watson, Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Riverside  
**FROM:** Jen Mermilliod, JMRC  
**SUBJECT:** Riverside City Hall

JM Research & Consulting (JMRC) is pleased to submit a Cultural Resources Nomination Application for City Landmark for Riverside City Hall.

Prompted by increased demand for civic facilities in the post-World War II period, construction of a new City Hall was conceived in the 1960s to serve a growing Riverside population, which had skyrocketed from 46,764 in 1950 to over 140,000 in 1970. Having outgrown the old 1923 city hall, the scope of the new structure was planned to accommodate current needs and future growth, while its mass, styling, and siting, straddling Main Street at the southerly end of the Pedestrian Mall, was planned to impress. An initial design wholly within the stylistic tenets of Brutalism was tempered by the more traditional features and materials of New Formalism, which found greater favor with the community. With shared character-defining features like a flat roof, elevated podium, repetitive shapes, and use of plazas, the stark planes and asymmetry of Brutalism were brought into greater balance by stacking rather than offsetting the floor blocks and skinning the whole in a repeating arch curtain wall that echoed both the window voids in solid Brutalist walls and the perforated panels and screen walls of the New Formalism style.

An excellent and rare, high-style example of Brutalism and New Formalism in civic architecture, Riverside City Hall reflects the maturation of modernism in the local context by significant local architectural firm, Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann. Award-winning Swiss architect and head of the firm's design section, Kurt E. Steinmann may be credited with insisting arches were incorporated in the outer curtain wall design. And in master architect Herman Ruhnau's own words in August 1971, the design was meant to reflect "the city's heritage of grace, beauty, and the blending of old with new... [that] will stand in friendship with the County Courthouse and echo the flavor of the Mission Inn."

This monumental civic property and exceptional architectural achievement is deserving of historic recognition as a City Landmark on this occasion of the Golden Anniversary of its grand opening in 1975.

Best Regards,

Jennifer Mermilliod, Principal, JMRC



## **JM Research and Consulting**

**Jennifer Mermilliod, M.A., Principal**

Architectural Historian | Historian | Preservation Planner

### Statement of Qualifications

Jennifer Mermilliod, M.A., Principal Architectural Historian exceeds the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards as a Historian and Architectural Historian based on her Master of Arts degree in History with a Focus in Historic Preservation from the University of California, Riverside, and 25 years of professional work in southern California. She has extensive experience in the production and management of a variety of projects, including National Register and California Register nominations, local designations, large-scale surveys, and Section 106 and CEQA reviews. She has engaged in policy and preservation planning, project management, and oversight of restoration work, served as a consultant and expert witness, developed training and educational programs, and presented professionally on historic preservation and related topics. Ms. Mermilliod is fluent in regulatory compliance and proficient at applying eligibility criteria, analyzing project impacts, and developing successful design solutions, mitigation, and specifications. With project size ranging from a single property to thousands of parcels, Ms. Mermilliod works extensively throughout the region and is thoroughly familiar with the history and development of southern California.

## Cultural Resources Nomination Application

X City Landmark

\_\_\_\_\_ Structure of Merit

*Please check the Designation for which you are applying*

### IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: City Hall
2. Historic Name: Riverside City Hall
3. Street address: 3900 Main Street  
City Riverside State CA Zip 92522
4. Assessor Parcel number: 215-372-014
5. Present Legal Owner: City of Riverside  
City Riverside State CA Zip 92522
6. Present Use: City Hall
7. Original Use: City Hall

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Date form prepared: April 15, 2025

Preparer: Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

Sponsoring Organization (if any):

Address: 4076 Brockton Avenue, Suite 201

City, State and Zip: Riverside, CA 92501

Phone: (951) 233-6897

## DESCRIPTION

8. Legal property description: 3.08 ACRES M/L IN POR LOTS 1, 2, 3 MB 002/034 DAVIS SUB OF BLOCK 8 R6 AND BLK 9 RGE 7 MB 007/017 SB TOWN OF RIVERSIDE
- 
- Include approximate property size (in feet): Street Frontage 350 Depth 415
9. Architectural Style: Brutalism/New Formalism
10. Construction Date: Estimated \_\_\_\_\_ Factual 1975  
Source of Information: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessor's Records \_\_\_\_\_ Building Permit \_\_\_\_\_ Sanborn Map  
X Publications \_\_\_\_\_ Oral Interviews
11. Architect's Name: Ruhnau, Evans & Steinmann Builder's Name: Gust K. Newberg
12. Condition: X Excellent \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Fair \_\_\_\_\_ Deteriorated  
\_\_\_\_\_ No longer in existence
13. Alterations: See JMRC 2025 DPR Form 523L (Update), attached
- 
- 
- 
- 
14. Surroundings:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Open Land \_\_\_\_\_ Scattered Buildings X Densely Built-Up  
(across block) (same block) (vicinity)
15. Use type:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Residential \_\_\_\_\_ Industrial \_\_\_\_\_ Commercial X Civic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other
16. Is the structure on its original site?  
X Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Unknown  
If moved, approximate year \_\_\_\_\_
17. Related features and/or out-buildings: City Council Chambers; Mall Clock Tower and Pools with Christiansen-Teel Plaque; Japanese Stone Lantern, and site design plaza/landscaping;

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## SIGNIFICANCE

18. Historical Attributes:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government Building      | <input type="checkbox"/> Folk Art                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Family                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Building                | <input type="checkbox"/> Street Furniture                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Family                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Building                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ancillary Building               | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Depot                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Trees/Vegetation                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Motel                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Train                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Open Space                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Open Space                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Canal/Aqueduct                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm/Ranch                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Building                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Dam                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military Property                | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Utility Building             | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake/River/Reservoir                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CCC/WPA Structure                | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Minority Prop.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Structure            | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway/Trail                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Auditorium                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amusement Park                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman's Property                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Monument/Mural/Gravestone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Stadium                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mine                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center/Social Hall        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Building, 1-3 stories | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Building, over 3 stories |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                           |  |   |

19. Architectural Description

See JMRC 2025 DPR Form 523L (Update), attached

20. Statement of Significance

See JMRC 2025 DPR Form 523L (Update), attached

21. Bibliography

See JMRC 2025 DPR Form 523L (Update), attached

22. Photographs

See JMRC 2025 DPR Form 523L (Update), attached

23. Letter from property owner (if other than applicant)

Historic Photos (attached):

1. 1975 City Hall Design (1973)
2. 1973 City Hall Groundbreaking
3. 1974 City Hall Construction
4. 1974 City Hall Construction, courtesy Riverside Police Department Archives
5. 1975 City Hall Construction, courtesy Riverside Police Department Archives
6. 1975 City Hall Completed, photo credit: Bill Thomas

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI# \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 5 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Riverside City Hall

\* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

\*Date April 19, 2024

☐ Continuation

☒ Update

NRHP (CHR) Status Code: 3S

**\*P2. Location:**

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Riverside West Zip: 92522

**P3a. Description:**

Straddling the Riverside Pedestrian Mall on Main Street between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, Riverside City Hall (1975) is a seven-story plus basement civic building with breezeway-attached, semi-subterranean parking structure and detached City Council Chambers building. Designed in the Brutalism and New Formalism styles, the approximately 175,000 sq' rectangular plan main building is topped with a flat roof with an inset rooftop helipad. Steel post and beam construction supports double curtain walls - an inner glazed curtain wall and an outer concrete curtain wall veneered in brown Norman brick laid in running bond pattern and punctured by stacked rows of low, segmental arched openings creating covered balconies around each of the upper floors. Brick piers supporting the second story arches rest on cantilevered concrete beams, the ends of which are decorated with a modern-stylized imprint of the city logo. A three-story, rectangular flat-roofed mass projects asymmetrically from the 9<sup>th</sup> Street elevation. Open first and second story bays within the outer, brick curtain wall form a large covered breezeway across the Main Street plaza (dedicated Ron Loveridge Plaza in 2014) that shields an open-air, elevated walkway to the attached rectangular, brick-veneered, flat-roofed parking structure, which is also accessed by a pedestrian door at ground level and a vehicular drive on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The primary, metal-framed storefront entrance with a pair of automatic sliding glass doors faces Main Street within the covered breezeway and is accessed by a wide flight of concrete steps with added steel angle and cable railings. A glazed double pedestrian side entry doors is found on the 10<sup>th</sup> street side elevation, and a semi-subterranean loading dock entry is accessed from the alley that borders the property on the northwest. A freestanding City Council Chambers building is perched on an elevated westerly plaza bordered by a low wall with new metal and cable railing above a small, L-shaped surface parking lot. Rectangular in plan, a steeply-pitched, asymmetrical, three sided hipped roof clad in clay barrel tile and narrow eaves tops walls clad in matching Norman brick; horizontal venting fills half of the cutaway gable end facing City Hall, where a full-height, two-sided glazed metal curtain wall mass is inset from the easterly elevation; the Main Street-facing, automatic glazed sliding door entry is sheltered by a pitched metal awning that wraps the northerly elevation. The adjacent south plaza contains the Mall Clock Tower and Pools (1966/1975) a large water feature with a tall concrete spire bearing a clock and the Christiansen-Teel plaque (1971) that extends east along 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Japanese Stone Lantern is placed within a planter east of the clock tower. The site reflects much of the original landscaped paved plaza layout with original shape and placement of pathways, plazas, surface and elevated planters, low walls and monument sign, grassy knoll, and many mature original trees, including Brazilian pepper, jacaranda, sycamore, pine, and Mexican fan palm.

\*P4. Resources Present: ☒ Building ☒ Structure ☒ Object

**P5a. Photo or Drawing:**



**P5b. Description of Photo:** City Hall Overview, view north

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI# \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2 of 5 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Riverside City Hall

\* Recorded by Jennifer Merrilliod, JMRC

\*Date April 19, 2024

☐ Continuation

☒ Update

**\*P8. Recorded by:**

JM Research & Consulting (JMRC)  
4076 Brockton Avenue, Ste. 201, Riverside, CA 92501

**\*P10. Survey Type:** Intensive-Level

**\*P11. Report Citation:** Merrilliod (JMRC) 2025. City of Riverside Landmark Designation Application: Riverside City Hall.

**B3. Original Use:** Institutional - Government/Civic

**B4. Present Use:** Institutional - Government/Civic

**\*B5. Architectural Style:** Brutalism/New Formalism

**\*B6. Construction History:**

1975 Original Construction

1975 Japanese Stone Lantern

1975 Mall Clock Tower (1966) & Pools Redesign with Christiansen-Teel Plaque (1971)

ca. 1980 Crepe myrtle and canary palms (4) flanking breezeway added

2003 Repair/restoration of the Mall Clock Tower & Pools (\$470K)

2006-08 Major (\$6.2M) remodel, including new in-kind metal-framed windows/entry with protective glass in same location for main entry and City Council Chambers, wall mounted signage, glass passageway at northwest parking lot, second floor circular windows changed, glass enclosure expansion on 1st floor NE elevation, aluminum/cable railings added (formerly wood plank), streetlights replaced, Bandstand removed and Ben Franklin stage added opposite, Mayor's Patio remodeled as Grier Pavilion (added brick columns and metal shade structure), major interior remodel

**\*B8. Related Features:** City Council Chambers, Mall Clock Tower and Pools with Christiansen-Teel Plaque, Japanese Stone Lantern, and site design plaza/landscaping

**B9a. Architect:** Ruhnau, Evans, & Steinmann

Project Architect: Walter P. Wild

**B9b. Builder:** Gust K. Newberg

Structural Engineer: Brandow & Johnston

Civil Engineer: J.F. Davidson & Associates

Landscape Architect: Eckbo, Dean, Austin, & Williams

Pools/Fountain: Eckbo, Dean, Austin, & Williams

**\*B10. Significance:**

**Applicable Criteria:** C/3

**Property Type:** city hall

Increased demand for civic facilities in the post-World War II period and significant new civic structures constructed in the 1960s such as the Riverside Main Library (1964; now the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture) and the Riverside Pedestrian Mall (1966) on Main Street, prompted the call for a new City Hall to serve a growing Riverside population, which had skyrocketed from 46,764 in 1950 to over 140,000 in 1970, one of the largest periods of growth in the city's history. Having outgrown its two-story plus basement quarters constructed in 1923 at 3612 Mission Inn Avenue, the size of new structure was planned to accommodate current needs and future growth, while its mass, styling, and siting, straddling Main Street at the southerly end of the Pedestrian Mall, was planned to impress in the Brutalism and New Formalism styles, both of which developed in the 1950s and were used from the 1950s-1970s in institutional and commercial design.

Brutalism, from the French, beton brut, the concrete casting technique used by Le Corbusier in the Unite d'Habitation, Marseille, France (1952), sought to create massive monolithic structures and stretching the limits of how concrete could be shaped and was favored in post-WWII England for producing low cost, mass produced and pre-fabricated economical and sculptural buildings. New Formalism was developed as a reaction to Modernism's total rejection of historical precedent and the commonalities with classicism, such as emphases on structure and a uniform construction grid, a carefully organized hierarchy, and clarity of geometric form. A return to the meaningful symbolism of classical columns, arches, and symmetry with manmade materials replacing traditional stone in non-traditional ways like panelized forms and screens to achieve a modern monumentality.

Designed by Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann, the firm was well-familiar with the local architectural fabric and community preferences. Founded by title architect, Herman Ruhnau, he had first began practicing architecture in the 1930s. Ruhnau was born in Pasadena in 1912 and spent his childhood in Santa Barbara before moving to Riverside in 1929. He studied architecture at the University of Southern California, served as an architect for the U.S. Navy during World War II where he helped design the U.S. Naval Hospital in Norco, and opened a Riverside branch office

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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

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Riverside City Hall

\* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

\*Date April 19, 2024

☐ Continuation

☒ Update

for Heitschmidt and Matcham, a Los Angeles-based architecture firm, in 1945. Ruhnau's firm incorporated in 1952 and partners were reconfigured throughout the years. Assembled as Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann by 1965, Evans had joined the firm by 1950 and Steinmann by 1956. Thus, it was this partnership that designed the Riverside Pedestrian Mall along Main Street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets in 1966 and won the contract to design Riverside City Hall that same year. Riverside City Hall was one of two high profile commissions completed in Riverside, along with the Riverside County Administration Center.

While the project architect is listed as Walter P. Wild, his involvement is uncertain; however, the partners of the firm were clearly very involved in the design of Riverside City Hall. Award-winning Swiss architect and head of the firm's design section, Kurt E. Steinmann acted as spokesman for the project in the local press. Having designed in Switzerland and Italy, Steinmann was known locally for his Horizon Home designs and other notable works and would go on to be the president of the local chapter of the AIA. His son, Josef, asserts that it was upon Steinmann's insistence that arches were incorporated into the outer curtain wall design. An initial design wholly within the stylistic tenets of Brutalism was tempered by the features and materials of New Formalism, which found greater favor with the Riverside public. More than simply a late example of the style, Riverside City Hall reflects the maturation of modernism in the local context in the merging of design tenants of both the Brutalism and New Formalism styles, which shared several character-defining features such as flat roofs, elevated podiums, repetitive shapes, and use of plazas. The stark planes and asymmetry of Brutalism were brought into greater symmetry by stacking rather than offsetting the floor blocks and skinning the whole in a repeating arch curtain wall that echoed both the window voids in solid Brutalist walls and the perforated panels and screen walls of the New Formalism style. In his own words in August 1971, Herman Ruhnau acknowledged that the design was meant to reflect "the city's heritage of grace, beauty, and the blending of old with new... [that] will stand in friendship with the County Courthouse and echo the flavor of the Mission Inn." Ruhnau was recognized as a master architect in his own time. He became an AIA Fellow in 1974, was recognized as the dominant figure in Riverside architecture after WWII, and received the lifetime achievement award from the Inland Chapter of the AIA before his death in 2006. Ruhnau's firm, which designed many of Riverside's residential, commercial, institutional, and civic buildings, is still operational today as Ruhnau Ruhnau Clarke with son David as one of the principals and offices in Riverside and Carlsbad.

Riverside City Hall has been minimally altered and retains an excellent degree of integrity. Following a shooting incident in 1998, a major \$6.25 million renovation in 2006-08 primarily by Holt Architecture saw modifications to Riverside City Hall and the Riverside Pedestrian Mall. Numerous but relatively minor, they included new in-kind metal-framed windows/entry with protective glass at the main entry and City Council Chambers, a first floor glass expansion and replacement of second floor circular windows on the northeast elevation, replacement of wood plank railings with aluminum/cable, and wall mounted signage. The Mayor's Patio was remodeled as the Grier Pavilion, which replaced green astroturf and an orange beam shade structure with brick columns and a metal shade structure. A major interior remodel was completed, and renovations to the pedestrian mall saw the Bandstand removed when 9th street was reopened to vehicular traffic, and the Ben Franklin stage was added opposite in what has been known since 2014 as Ron Loveridge Plaza within the breezeway. Contributing features include the detached City Council Chambers, Mall Clock Tower and Pools, Japanese Stone Lantern, and original landscaped paved plaza layout. The Mall Clock Tower (1966) was developed as part of the Riverside Pedestrian Mall, a common mid-century strategy to revitalize flailing urban downtown centers, and adorned with the memorial Christiansen-Teel Plaque (1971) honoring to slain Riverside police officers. The clock tower water fountain feature was retained and new pools designed, reorienting the water feature along 10<sup>th</sup> Street as part of the design of City Hall in 1975. The Japanese Stone Lantern, which is lit by an eternal flame, was gifted to the City of Riverside on the occasion of the grand opening of City Hall in 1975 by sister city, Sendai, Japan and is accompanied by a plaque that reads: "JAPANESE STONE LANTERN PRESENTED TO OUR SISTER CITY, RIVERSIDE. MAY OUR TIES OF FRIENDSHIP CONTINUE FOREVER. YOUR SENDAI FRIENDS, 1975."

Riverside City Hall is an excellent and rare, high-style example of the Brutalism style and New Formalism styles in civic architecture that reflects the maturation of modernism in the local context by significant local architectural firm, Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann. Previously found eligible for listing in the California Register and as a local Landmark (HRG 2013), JMRC resurveyed the now 50-year-old civic building. Relatively minimally altered, Riverside City Hall retains an excellent degree of integrity and reflects its time and place. The current study provides greater investigation into its design, identifying the influences of both Brutalism and New Formalism architectural styles, documents the full extent of the property, including related features, identifies the architectural firm as Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann as well as other important professionals, and expands previous findings. JMRC found that Riverside City Hall is eligible for designation as a City of Riverside Landmark as it embodies distinctive characteristics of the Brutalism and New Formalism styles (Criterion 3) and represents the work of notable architects, Ruhnau, Evans, and Steinmann as well as other design and creative professionals (Criterion 4). Further, Riverside City Hall now meets the minimum age threshold, and is found eligible, for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under the related Criterion C. Previously assigned a Cultural Historical Resources (CHR) Code of 3CS/5S3: *Appears eligible for CR as an individual property through survey evaluation/Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation*, the property has been reassigned a CHR Code of 3S: *Appears eligible for NR as an individual property through survey evaluation*.

**B11. Additional Resource Attributes:** HP26. Monument (Mall Clock Tower & Pools with Christiansen-Teel Plaque and Japanese Stone Lantern); HP29. Landscape Architecture (Plazas/Landscaping Layout)

**\*B12. References:**

City of Riverside. Records on file with the City of Riverside. Planning and Public Works Departments.  
1973-2019. Building Permits.



State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI# \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 4 of 5 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Riverside City Hall

\* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

\*Date April 19, 2024

☐ Continuation

☒ Update

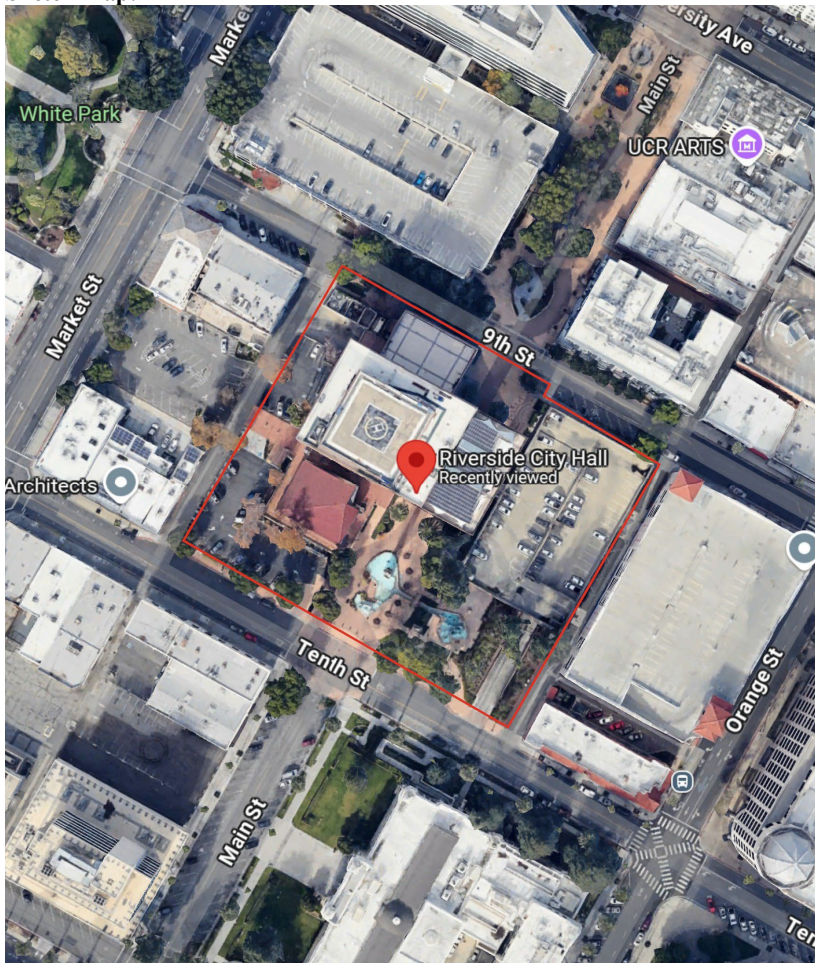
2009. Modernism Context Statement (Christopher A. Joseph & Associates)  
2013. Citywide Modernism Intensive Survey (Historic Resources Group).  
City of Riverside. 1975. "Introducing Your City Hall." Dedication Day Pamphlet/Guide. Riverside, Ca.  
Falcone, Philip. Historic Photos and Records, personal collection.  
Riverside Police Department. Historic Photos and Records, RPD Archives.  
Simpson, Norma, et al. 1976. *A Complete History of the Bicentennial Celebration in Riverside*. Riverside, Ca.  
Thomas, Bill. 1975. Riverside City Hall (photograph)  
*Riverside Daily Press*. 1962. "Three Ruhnau architects named partners in firm." 30-Apr, B2.  
*Riverside Daily Press*. 1971. "Council praises plans for new city hall." 18-Aug, B1.  
*The Daily Enterprise*. 1973. "Mall demolition." 7-Feb.  
*The Daily Enterprise*. 1973. "The changing look of downtown." 4-Oct.

**B13. Remarks:** Status change since 2013 Suvey: Now 50 years old, the property appears eligible for listing in the National Register - 3S

\*B14. Evaluator: Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

\*Date of Evaluation: April 19, 2025

**Sketch Map:**





State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_

HRI# \_\_\_\_\_

Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 5 of 5 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder)

Riverside City Hall

\* Recorded by Jennifer Mermilliod, JMRC

\*Date April 19, 2024

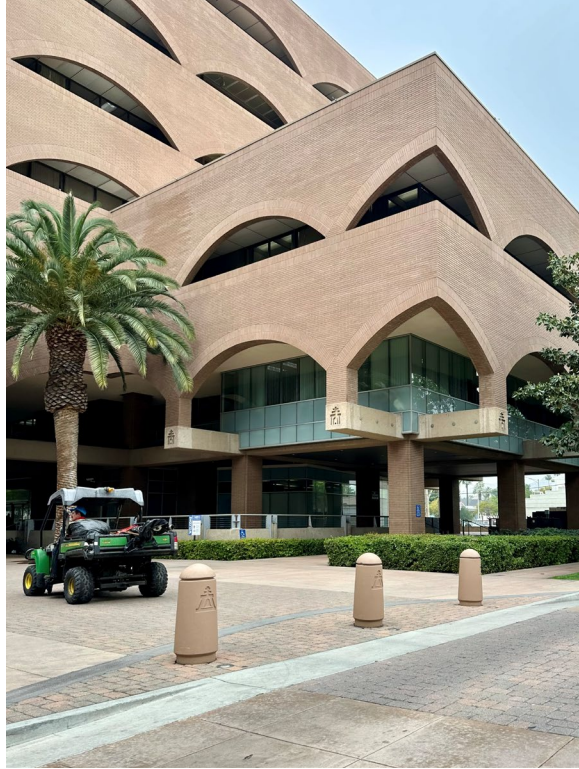
☐ Continuation

☒ Update

**P5b. Additional Photographs:**



City Council Chambers, view northwest



City Council 9<sup>th</sup> Street Elevation, view west



Mall Clock Tower & Pools, view north



Japanese Stone Lantern, view east



State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial  
NRHP Status Code 3CS, 5S3

Other Listings  
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Page 1 of 4

\*Resource Name or #: Riverside City Hall

**P1. Other Identifier:**

\*P2. Location: ☐ Not for Publication ☒ Unrestricted

\*a. County: Riverside

and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Riverside East

Date: May 17, 2012

c. Address: 3900 Main Street

City: Riverside

Zip: 92507

e. Other Locational Data: APN 215-372-014-3

**\*P3a. Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

This property is located between 9<sup>th</sup> Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street at Main Street and contains a seven story institutional building over subterranean parking, originally constructed in 1975 as Riverside City Hall. The building is set back from the street with paved plazas, landscaping, and small surface parking lots. It is Brutalist in style with a rectangular plan and flat roof. It is of steel frame construction with double curtain walls: an inner glazed curtain wall and an outer curtain wall veneered in running bond Norman brick and perforated with stacked rows of segmental arched openings creating covered balconies around each of the upper floors. The brick piers supporting the second story arches rest on cantilevered concrete beams decorated with a stylized imprint of the city logo. There is a three story rectangular flat-roofed projection asymmetrically located on the north façade. The eastern bays of the ground and second stories of the main building are open, creating a large covered breezeway connecting the north and south plazas. The primary entrance is located in the covered breezeway, accessed by a wide flight of concrete steps with steel angle and cable railings. It consists of a pair of automatic sliding glass doors in an aluminum frame, with transoms and sidelights and flanked by two single fully glazed aluminum storefront doors. The City Council chamber is located in a freestanding building to the south. It is rectangular in plan with a steeply pitched, asymmetrical, three sided hipped roof clad in clay barrel tile. The walls are clad in Norman brick laid in a running bond. Fenestration consists of a glazed metal curtain wall wrapping the north and a portion of the east façades. The adjacent south plaza has a large water feature with a tall concrete spire bearing a clock. There is a landscaped area and a two-level freestanding parking structure, clad in brick, adjoining City Hall to the east.

**\*P3b. Resource Attributes:** HP14 – Government building

**\*P4. Resources Present:** ☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Element of District ☐ Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photo or Drawing (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



**P5b. Description of Photo:**  
(View, date, accession #) View  
looking Northeast (April 2013)

**\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources:** ☒ Historic  
☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both  
1975, building permit

**\*P7. Owner and Address:**

**\*P8. Recorded by:**  
Historic Resources Group  
12 S Fair Oaks Ave, Ste 200  
Pasadena, CA 91105

**\*P9. Date Recorded:**  
April 25, 2013

**\*P10. Survey Type:**  
Intensive

**\*P11. Report Citation:** (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.")

Christopher A. Joseph & Associates, *City of Riverside: Modernism Context Statement*, November 2009.

Historic Resources Group, *Citywide Modernism Intensive Survey*, September 2013.

**\*Attachments:** ☐ NONE ☐ Location Map ☐ Sketch Map ☒ Continuation Sheet ☒ Building, Structure, and Object Record  
☐ Archaeological Record ☐ District Record ☐ Linear Feature Record ☐ Milling Station Record ☐ Rock Art Record  
☐ Artifact Record ☐ Photograph Record ☐ Other (List):

DPR 523A (1/95)

\*Required information

## BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Page 2 of 4

\*NRHP Status Code 3CS, 5S3

\*Resource Name or # Riverside City Hall

**B1. Historic Name:** Riverside City Hall

**B2. Common Name:** Riverside City Hall

**B3. Original Use:** Public

**B4. Present Use:** Public

\***B5. Architectural Style:** Brutalist

\***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)  
Completed in 1975.

\***B7. Moved?** ☒ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown **Date:**

**Original Location:**

\***B8. Related Features:**

**B9a. Architect:** Herman Ruhnau

**b. Builder:**

\***B10. Significance: Theme:** Modern Architecture & Architects of Modernism

**Area:** Downtown Riverside

**Period of Significance:** 1975

**Property Type:** Public

**Applicable Criteria:** 3/c,d

Riverside City Hall at 3500 Main Street is an excellent and rare example of Brutalist civic architecture in downtown Riverside. It was designed by significant local architect Herman Ruhnau (1912-2007). A new City Hall was constructed in response to an increased demand for civic facilities in Riverside in the post-World War II period; in particular, Riverside had significant new civic structures constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, many of which were designed by Herman Ruhnau. The City had outgrown its original City Hall, constructed in 1923 at 3612 Mission Street; "Old City Hall" is currently used as an office building.

Brutalism developed during the 1950s in response to the International Style of architecture. International Style buildings often had a light and skeletal appearance created by the extensive use of steel structures with glass curtain walls. Brutalism was about creating massive monolithic structures and stretching the limits of how concrete could be shaped. More properly known as "New Brutalism" during its heyday, the name was derived from *beton brut*, the concrete casting technique used by Le Corbusier in the Unite d'Habitation, Marseille, France (1952). The English architects Peter and Alison Smithson were its key proponents to whom Brutalism was more of an ethic than an aesthetic. In post World War II England, the Smithsons sought to exploit the low cost of mass produced and pre-fabricated materials to create economical and sculptural buildings. Other figures in the movement included Erno Goldfinger, Louis Kahn, Kenzo Tange, and Paul Rudolph. Riverside City Hall exhibits significant character-defining features of the style, including repetitive shapes, windows as voids in otherwise solid volumes, and a raised plaza. It is a late example of the style, and therefore brick is used as the primary exterior material instead of concrete.

*See Continuation Sheet.*

**B11. Additional Resource Attributes:**

\***B12. References:**

*See Continuation Sheet.*

**B13. Remarks:**

\***B14. Evaluator:** Christine Lazzaretto

\***Date of Evaluation:** April 25, 2013

(This space reserved for official comments.)



*Significance Statement Continued.*

Herman Ruhnau was born September 1, 1912 in Pasadena. He spent his childhood in Santa Barbara, and then moved to Riverside in 1929. He studied architecture at the University of Southern California. He was an architect for the U.S. Navy during the World War II and helped design the U.S. Naval Hospital in Norco. In 1946, he opened a Riverside branch office for Heitschmidt and Matcham, a Los Angeles-based architecture firm. In 1950, Ruhnau founded his own firm. Much of his work is in Riverside, and includes homes, banks and other commercial buildings, and numerous government facilities. In 1975, he completed two high-profile commissions in Riverside, the Riverside City Hall and the Riverside County Administration Center. In 1979, a newspaper called Ruhnau the dominant figure in Riverside architecture after World War II. He also designed farm labor housing and County fairground buildings in Indio. He became an AIA Fellow in 1974. Before his death in 2006, Ruhnau received the lifetime achievement award from the Inland Chapter of the AIA. Ruhnau's firm is still operational today as Ruhnau Ruhnau Clarke, and his son David is one of the principals. The firm has offices in Riverside and Carlsbad.

Riverside City Hall retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. It appears eligible for listing in the California Register at the local level of significance, and as a local landmark. It is eligible under the Modern Architecture theme as an excellent and rare example of Brutalist civic architecture in Riverside. It is eligible under the Architects of Modernism theme as the work of significant local architect Herman Ruhnau; it is one of several civic commissions he received during the 1960s and 1970s. It does not meet National Register Criterion Consideration G of "exceptional importance" required for properties that are less than fifty years old, and therefore it does not appear eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at this time.

*References.*

City of Riverside Building Permits.

*City of Riverside Modernism Context Statement*, prepared for the City of Riverside by Christopher A. Joseph & Associates, Los Angeles, CA, November 2009.

County of Riverside Property Information Center.

"Herman Ruhnau, AIA," Raincross Square, July 5, 2006. Website:

[http://www.raincrosssquare.com/mt/2006/07/news\\_herman\\_ruhnau\\_aia.php](http://www.raincrosssquare.com/mt/2006/07/news_herman_ruhnau_aia.php). Accessed May 1, 2013.

Riverside County Land Information System (LIS).





Detail of Entry (April 2013)



View looking Southwest (April 2013)



The original design for the Riverside City Hall, left, was changed by adding arches, below.

