Chapter Three: 1940 – 1949

The decade of the 1940s in Albuquerque was one of growth, albeit interrupted by the Second World War. The city's population in 1940 was 35,449 with most residents living within a mile or two of downtown. By 1950, the population had grown to 96,815 and ready to explode even more dramatically in the following decade. During the 1940s, the city limits were enlarged from eleven square miles to 48 square miles. Albuquerque annexed a large swath of land on East Mesa increasing its boundaries east from roughly San Pedro to Tramway and north from Gibson to Montgomery Blvd. Land west of river was also annexed, north of Central to approximately Indian School Rd. and east of Coors Blvd. to the Rio Grande (roughly centered around Pat Hurley Park).

Economic activity during the war years was centered on the AT&SF railroad as it moved men and materiel across the country. But their heyday was waning as diesel engines were introduced to replace the steam locomotive and the need for the large rail yards was fading. At the same time, Kirtland Army Air Field became a primary training base with thousands of men moving through the base during the decade. After the war, many of these men were assigned to Kirtland Air Force Base (created in 1947), or after discharge they decided to stay and live in







Sandia Base during the war.

the city. Finally, the creation of Sandia Base originally operating as an adjunct to the top-secret work at Los Alamos' Manhattan Project. After the war, it transitioned into operating as Sandia National Laboratories, which was demilitarized, and its operation taken over by the University of California in 1949. It would prove to be a major employer in the city.

At mid-century Albuquerque was poised to become one of the major cities in the Sunbelt region of the United States. The city was on a transcontinental railroad line, as well as two major cross-country automobile routes – U.S. Highways 66 and 85, which within twenty years would morph into Interstate Highways 40 and 25, respectively. The city also boasted of being on major airline routes.

Housing Development

The ever-growing demand for new housing that began in the late 1930s continued into the early 1940s. As seen in the chart below, the effects of the Second World War were not felt until

1940 \$2,335,930

1941 \$2,222,504

Decrease 4.85%

1942 \$817,781

Decrease 63.2%

\$454,700

Decrease 44.39%

\$552,613

Increase 21.53%

1942, with even more drastic cuts in 1943. Construction was severely curtailed due to material shortages, rationing, and priority given to construction of war-related buildings.

In the early '40s, the success of Parkland Hills in the Southeast Heights spurred a number of new subdivisions in that area, such Monterey

Hills just to west in the Hyder Park area. This subdivision was a replat of the Burton

Park Addition by Latif and Lucille Hyder and Salim Mama, both well-known developers in the Southeast Heights. Monterey Hills was an interesting development as it was divided into four "zones" each with a different square footage requirement and a different minimum building cost. Also, neighborhood approval was required of all building plans prior to construction.

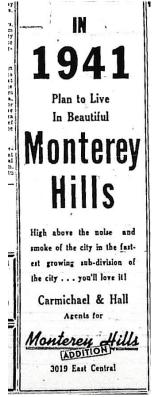
Numerous smaller subdivisions, such as Knob Heights, also began to appear even further south towards the Army Air Field, and the Mesa



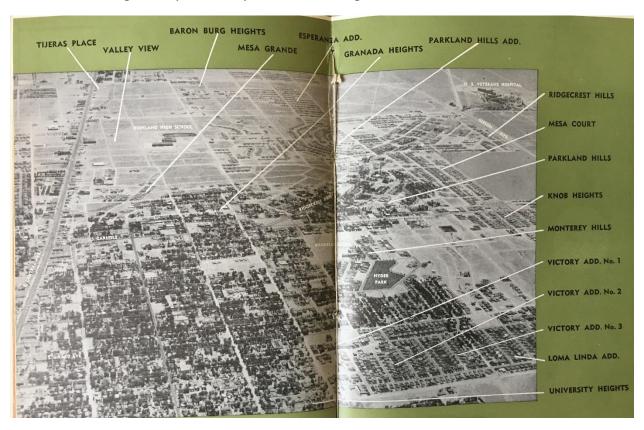
Grande subdivision extended housing further east. The VA hospital at the end of Ridgecrest Blvd. attracted new

housing developments, such as Mesa Court, Ridgecrest Hills, and the Keystone Addition. To the west of Girard Blvd., the three phases of the Victory

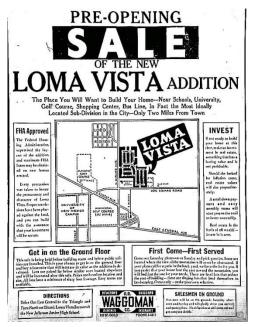
Addition added dozens of new homes to the Southeast Heights. And, of course, older subdivisions, such as Parkland Hills and University Heights, continued to infill their lots.



The aerial photo shown below, which first appeared in *Albuquerque Progress* magazine in 1950, shows the housing density in the city's Southeast Heights.



A similar development pattern occurred in the Northeast Heights. The Monte Vista and College View Additions continued to infill, and new subdivisions were being created, particularly along



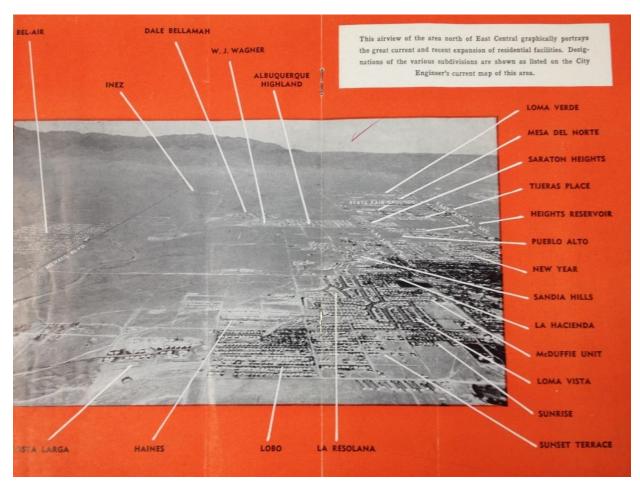
the north side of Las Lomas Rd. (now Lomas Blvd.) as it was extended to the fairgrounds. New housing along Girard Blvd. included the Lobo Addition, which consisted of gridded streets with modestly priced homes near the university, as well as more upscale developments, such as the neighboring Vista Larga Addition, which will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

While completing the infill of the College View Addition, Charles McDuffie moved north across Lomas and started work in the McDuffie Unit, located around Montclaire and Morningside, while the neighboring Loma Vista Addition, at the corner of Lomas and Girard, advertised its close proximity to schools, the university, a golf course (the former layout of the UNM golf course which

then extended into what is now UNM's Johnson Field, and a shopping center (the Nob Hill Business Center at Carlisle and Central).

Some new subdivisions in the late 1940s began to cater to employees at the new Air Force base and Sandia Labs. Dale Bellamah, a name almost synonymous with 1950s Northeast Heights development, platted his first addition east of the fairgrounds. Also, east of the fairgrounds was the Loma Verde Addition platted between Central and Lomas. The Inez subdivision, located in the area north of Indian School Rd. and east of Pennsylvania Ave., sat in the middle of scrubland. And the Bel Air subdivision sat alone south of Candelaria between Carlisle and San Mateo, and Menaul to the south.

Below is the aerial photo from *Albuquerque Progress* magazine that shows the subdivisions in the Northeast Heights that existed in 1950.



Outside of the tremendous growth in the Heights, subdivisions in other parts of the city were also being built. Some older subdivisions, such as the New Country Club Addition continued grow, while new, smaller subdivisions, such as the Watson Addition near Old Town, were being squeezed into empty blocks. Development also continued north along Fourth St. where several

developers were offering slightly larger lots to interest those buyers still looking for that "rural" experience.



This ad by realtor J. F. Ange recognized a buyer's preferences for either the Heights or the valley and had two offices to meet individual needs.





Leon Watson was a popular builder downtown, known for his Spanish-Pueblo Revival style homes, which are still desirable today.

Northeast Heights Commercial Development

Although this study focuses on housing development in the greater Albuquerque area, commercial development on the East Mesa in the late 1930s and particularly, the late 1940s resulted in the construction of new businesses <u>outside</u> of the traditional downtown shopping

Traffic congestion in downtown Albuquerque. Undated photo.

district. The rapid build-up of stores along Central Ave. east of Girard Blvd. to Morningside was a result of not only the realignment of U.S. Highway 66 which brought new service stations, motels, and cafes, but also pressure by residents of adjacent subdivisions to have grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retail outlets in their neighborhood so that they could avoid the ever-increasing traffic congestion and parking problems occurring downtown.

To meet this demand, Col. D. K. B. Sellers, developer of University Heights in 1916, started to promote a commercial district along Central Ave. from Girard Blvd. east to Carlisle. Sellers

called this strip "Nob Hill" because the rising sand hills on Carlisle, south of Central, reminded him of the Nob Hill district in San Francisco. Following the opening of Highway 66, a busines activity picked up and by 1939 there approximately 40 businesses, including the Lobo Theater, that catered to residents in the Heights as well as travelers passing through town.



D. K. B. Sellers stands next to a sign advertising his proposed new commercial district. His vision was eventually fulfilled as Nob Hill is now a popular neighborhood for shopping and restaurants.

In 1946, local developer R. B. Waggoman, who developed the nearby Vista Larga Addition, partnered with the Stromberg brothers (of the well-known Albuquerque clothing chain), hired well-known architect Louis G. Hesselden to design a new form of commercial building – the strip shopping center. Waggoman picked the southwest corner of Central and Carlisle to build his U-shaped shopping center that covered one city block and could accommodate 22 commercial spaces – the Nob Hill Business Cener. In addition, the shopping center had the capacity to park automobiles on site – a feature found nowhere else in New Mexico.



Nob Hill Business Center

Hesselden designed the building in a Streamline Moderne style that emphasized horizontality but added sculptured Art Deco towers that brought added attention to the building. The building's U-shape allowed for off-street automobile parking directly in front of the store the shopper wished to visit. Additional off-street parking was available at the rear of the building on Silver Ave.

While interest in the shopping center started slowly, by the early 1950s it was the model for other larger developers who now began to include strip shopping centers in their design plans. Thus, the Bel Air subdivision built a strip shopping center in 1949, followed in the '50s by the Hoffmantown Center at Wyoming and Menaul, and the Princess Jeanne Shopping Center at Eubank and Constitution among many others. The neighborhood strip shopping center now attracted businesses traditionally located downtown so that they offered all the conveniences of having one's favorite store nearby your new Heights home without the hassles of driving downtown, which was now increasingly farther away from residential housing.

Housing Styles in the 1940s

There were no new architectural styles introduced during the 1940s, although some earlier style, such Southwest Vernacular, were dropping out of favor, while some styles, for example Streamline Moderne, lingered late into the decade. The Ranch House continued to evolve in its styling (see Chapter 4), while favorites such as the Mediterranean and Territorial styles remained popular. Other Modernistic styles, such as the Contemporary, were beginning to appear in small numbers. We will look at this style in more detail in the next chapter.



Late 1940s Ranch House in Parkland Hills. *Albuquerque Progress* magazine photo.



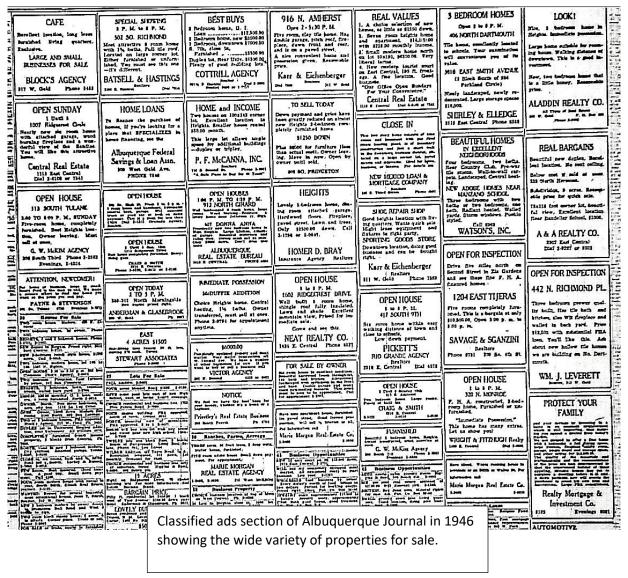


Two Streamline Moderne style homes constructed in 1947-48 on Ridgecrest Blvd. in Parkland Hills. *Albuquerque Progress* magazine photo.

An ad in the Albuquerque Journal from 1939 showing a new house built in the Modernist style. Note the flat roof, corner window, and carport. This style will become a popular seller in the 1950s.

Housing Market

By the late 1940s, the city's population was growing fast, and housing shortages were common. Now that the war restrictions on home and commercial building had been rescinded, the real estate market was expanding with the new suburbs being planned or undergoing construction in the Heights almost every month. In addition, residents living in older homes now began to consider moving to the new homes being constructed in the Heights and elsewhere, thus opening up the resale market.



What would happen to this post-war boom in population and building construction as we turned the decade? Chapter 4 will give us insight into Albuquerque's housing development in the "Fabulous '50s."