

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

DRAFT

Historic name: Flamingo Hotel
 Other names/site number: Flamingo Resort, Restaurant, & Spa
 Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2777 Fourth Street
 City or town: Santa Rosa State: California County: Sonoma
 Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B C D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: hotel

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Mid-Century Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stone, glass, aluminum, steel, stucco

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Flamingo Hotel is located at 2777 Fourth Street in Santa Rosa, California. Designed by Las Vegas architect Homer Rissman for developer Hugh Coddling, the resort hotel was completed in 1957. Contributing resources include a conference center and four hotel wings attached by connecting hyphens arranged in a wheel spoke pattern around a central courtyard and swimming pool, all part of Rissman's original design pattern. The circular central courtyard measures approximately 270 feet in diameter. At its center is a circular area surfaced in flagstones that surrounds the original S-shaped swimming pool. The outer part of the courtyard is landscaped with trees, shrubs, and grass lawns crossed by flagstone-paved walkways that radiate out from the central pool area. An original sign, in the form of a tall, three-sided pylon topped by a stylized flamingo, is located at the southeast corner of the conference center. Metal letters with neon backlighting spell out Flamingo along the pylon. The original buildings are modernist in appearance and are characterized by low, horizontal massing, flat rooflines, and exteriors featuring a combination of glazed curtain wall, natural Utah sandstone cladding, and stucco. The one-story, curved, flat-roofed hyphens that connect the conference center with the four hotel wings feature glazed curtain-walled elevations. Noncontributing resources, all located at the

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north end of the property, include an altered pool equipment building and post-period of significance L-shaped hotel building and gazebo. The property retains all aspects of integrity.

Narrative Description

The 7.09-acre property is located in east Santa Rosa, north of Fourth Street at its intersection with Farmers Lane. Long Drive curves in an arc along the west side of the property and Farmers Lane forms part of the eastern site boundary. Also forming part of the eastern boundary is a shopping center at the terminus of Farmers Lane. To the north is a health club and spa constructed in 1989. A large parking lot extends to the south and east of the conference center and wedge-shaped parking lots are located between the conference center and hotel wings. The main entrance into the property, located at the south parking lot, is marked by a low, non-original curved cement and glass block wall that features round signage with the name of the resort. The site is landscaped with mature evergreen and hardwood trees, as well as shrubs and other plantings. Concrete walkways extend along the edges of the conference center and from the parking lots to the hotel wing entrances. To the south of the hotel property, across Fourth Street, is the Montgomery Village neighborhood, a large residential subdivision of early postwar Ranch-Style houses that was developed in 1950 by Hugh Coddling. Commercial shopping centers located east of the resort property, at the terminus of Farmers Lane, and on the south side of Fourth Street, were part of the Santa Rosa Plaza master plan envisioned by Coddling in 1956.

Contributing Resources

Conference Center and Hotel Wings (1957)

One Contributing Building

Conference Center - Exterior

The conference center is a one- and two-story, irregular plan building with a flat roof. The façade and main entrance face to the south, towards the intersection of Long Drive and Farmers Lane. The curved façade is bowed slightly to the south. A five-bay section in the eastern half of the façade is faced in uncoursed Utah sandstone and contains the primary entrance. The entrance is comprised of a set of double-leaf, aluminum-framed glass doors with sidelights. To the east of the entrance is a single window and two four-part ribbon windows filled by nine-light, wood, fixed-sash windows. The four-part windows are arranged to either side of a single-leaf, wood-framed, nine-light French door.

Sheltering the main entrance is a non-original curved, projecting, steel canopy added circa 2007. The words “Flamingo Resort, Restaurant & Spa” are spelled in free-standing enameled steel letters mounted on top of the canopy along its outer edge. The underside of the canopy features a recessed semi-elliptical skylight surrounded by small inset lighting fixtures. Supporting the canopy are four round steel posts, each featuring a pair of circular glass and metal fins near their top. Extending to the east and west of the main entrance are two additional, rectilinear, flat-roofed, steel and glass canopies that shelter the front sidewalk. These non-original side canopies replaced original canopies in approximately the same location. They are lower than the circular

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main entrance canopy and are supported by square steel posts topped by box-shaped frosted glass lighting fixtures.

To the west of the main entrance, a broad section of the façade is clad in painted stucco panels that form a multi-colored, geometric design. The panels are not original to the design and historic photographs indicate that this section of the façade originally featured a full-height glazed curtain wall. Likely modified to control lighting into the interior conference center, the original glass curtain wall may be encapsulated by the stucco panels on the exterior and new gypsum board walls on the interior. At the east end of this section is a service entrance consisting of a set of utilitarian double-leaf metal doors. At the west end is a secondary public entrance through a single-leaf, aluminum-famed glass door with side and transom lights. A sandstone wall that projects from the façade screens the secondary entrance on the east side. To the west of the entrance is a single-leaf metal service door set within a sandstone surround. This secondary entrance is covered by a flat metal roof that connects with the previously noted steel and glass canopy that runs to the west of the main entrance.

At the west end of the façade is an un-fenestrated, stucco and sandstone-clad projection that steps out beyond the face of the curve and contains mechanical equipment for the building. The flat roof of this section is slightly lower than the main block and features a single set-back from the façade. The flat roofs are concealed by low parapets capped by aluminum coping. Rising from the roof is a non-original three-sided, perforated, wood screen that conceals rooftop mechanical equipment. A single metal service door is located on the east elevation of the projection.

The west (side) elevation of the conference center faces onto a wedge-shaped parking area and contains back-of-house functions including storage and loading areas. The elevation is clad in stucco and is un-fenestrated. A two-bay projection topped by a flat roof near the center contains two service entrances. The single- and double-leaf battened wood doors are set within wide wooden surrounds. The north end of the west elevation is canted inward and is clad in sandstone at its junction with the west hyphen. High walls screen the west elevation to the north and south of the two-bay projection creating two small service courtyards with mechanical equipment and storage areas. The walls are comprised of vertical wood planks between regularly spaced square concrete posts faced in uncoursed field stone. Arched, battened wood gates providing access to the two service courtyards on either side of the projection.

The north (rear) elevation of the conference center faces onto the internal courtyard and pool area. The elevation is clad in stucco and sandstone. The central portion of the elevation is bowed, curving outward, and is clad in stucco with four regularly spaced square columns supporting a slight overhang. Between the square columns are full-height windows separated by thin aluminum mullions slightly recessed under the overhang. Full-height, double-leaf glass doors are interspersed along the north elevation. Secondary entrances comprised of double-leaf glass doors are located at either end where the bowed wall intersects with the orthogonal sandstone walls. To the north of the elevation is a recently added free-standing canopy that mirrors the curve of the elevation. The canopy consists of steel posts supporting roof of open wood slats.

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The east (side) elevation faces onto a wedge-shaped parking area and is clad in sandstone pierced by ribbon windows that are the same as those found on the façade, east of the main entrance. The ribbon windows are broken by four non-original nine-light, single-leaf French doors. A steel and glass canopy, identical to the canopies that shelter the front sidewalk, extends from the Flamingo sign at the southeast corner of the building along the full length of the east elevation. The canopy abuts the building and covers a narrow cement walkway. Like the west elevation, the east elevation is canted inwards at the hyphen junction. On the roof, set back from the east elevation, is a three-sided, non-original wood mechanical screen, much like the one found at the southwest corner of the building, but not perforated.

A steel and wood entry canopy/porte cochere was added in 2021 to the east hyphen near its junction with the conference center. This new entryway consists of an opening in the hyphen that is sheltered by a cantilevered, flat canopy with a wood ceiling and metal fascia. To either side of the entryway are tall screens formed of vertical wood slats.

Conference Center - Interior

When the resort originally opened, the one- and two-story conference center originally contained a lobby for the resort, a restaurant with kitchen, a large auditorium or ballroom, an open bar overlooking the pool and courtyard, as well as various offices and retail shops. The irregular shaped building consists of five main parts: a large-volume ballroom or auditorium at the center of the space; a two-story wing to the east of the ballroom containing lobbies and meeting spaces; a one-story wing to the west of the ballroom containing back-of-house spaces for the resort including a kitchen, mechanical equipment, offices, and laundry areas; and the one-story bar and restaurant to the north of the ballroom overlooking the pool and courtyard. The original interior configuration of rooms and hallways in the conference center is largely intact, although the interior has been extensively renovated multiple times since soon after construction. Within the conference center, public spaces are located on the first floor and non-public offices are located on the second.

The main lobby for the conference center is rectangular in plan and entered from the main entrance through a broad foyer. Both the foyer and lobby spaces have been completely remodeled and no historic or original finishes or features remain. A second lobby and reception area for the hotel is located at the northeast corner of the first floor adjacent to the new entrance and porte cochere located at the east hyphen. The ballroom is located to the west of the lobby and accessed by two sets of original paneled wood doors. The room is a semi-circular-shaped large-volume space that has been recently renovated. The stage is set into the curved north wall. Technically, the ballroom consists of two spaces, the Empire Room and the Flamingo Room, and can be divided by a retractable, accordion partition. The ballroom's walls are covered by full-height curtains, divided into bays by square, full-height pilasters. Flooring is covered in carpeting. The sheetrock ceiling incorporates curved recesses with both inset and suspended lighting fixtures. Kitchen and support spaces are located to the west of the ballroom off a service corridor.

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The lounge and restaurant are located in the north end of the conference center overlooking the central courtyard and pool. While the original configuration of these spaces remains intact, both spaces have been renovated over the years and contain no original finishes or features. The two spaces are accessed through the hotel lobby at the northeast corner of the building and from the exterior courtyard. The lounge, located directly north of the ballroom, is entered through two sets of double-leaf wood doors on the east and west sides of the space. The lounge does not contain any historic finishes or features. The restaurant, located directly north of the lounge, features a central bar along the south wall, wood flooring and gypsum board walls and ceilings. The north wall of this space is fully glazed and looks out onto the outdoor dining area and pool.

Hotel Wings (Buildings 100, 200, 300, and 400)- Exterior

Four original two-story rectangular hotel wings are situated around the central courtyard, connected to the conference center by one-story hyphens in a wheel-spoke configuration. Wedge-shaped parking lots divide each wing and provide guests easy parking access to their rooms. The Flamingo Hotel's four modernist hotel wings are consistent in design. The long, two-story hotel wings are largely rectangular in plan with recessed cutaways at the outer ends of the south-facing side elevations.

The side elevations of the wings are between seven and eight bays wide composed of a continuous metal and glass curtain walls at both stories. The buildings are topped by flat roofs with deep overhangs sheltering the side elevation curtain walls. Simple aluminum gutters are attached to the overhang fascia and connect to metal downspouts integrated in the curtain wall. Each curtain-walled bay contains a two-light, sliding-sash, aluminum window beneath a large upper fixed pane. The sliding windows replaced the original steel-sash awning windows in 1997 to match the historic configuration. Aluminum mullions and steel piers divide the windows horizontally and a row of aluminum spandrel panels are situated between the first and second stories. These metal elements are all painted a flat grey color. At the outer ends of the south-facing side elevations are recessed bays with fixed-sash aluminum windows arranged in a stepped fashion.

Indicative of the car-centric mid-century modern hotel design, the hotel guest rooms are accessible directly from the wedge-shaped parking lots that separate the wings as well as through the connecting hyphens. Each wing contains seven small breezeways at regular intervals (four on one side elevation and three on the opposite elevation) that provide access to two guest rooms at the first floor and another two at the second floor. At the first floor, these breezeways are accessed from the parking lot by concrete walkways that lead to a single-leaf glass door with side lights in a metal frame. At the second floor, the breezeways feature projecting trapezoidal-shaped balconies with metal and concrete panel railings at the second floor supported by square steel posts. Originally the central railings were clad in vertical wood paneling, later replaced with the extant concrete panels. The railings have been adapted with metal extensions to meet contemporary code requirements. Breezeways overlook the second-story exterior balconies placed at intervals along the side elevations. The balconies are supported by steel posts and feature steel railings and metal-paneled balustrades that angle outward. The posts flank first-story, side-elevation entrances consisting of single-leaf glass doors with side lights. Low stone

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walls matching those found at the conference center frame the concrete walkways that lead to each entrance on the south elevation of the two southernmost wings. Elsewhere, these entrances are accessed by simple concrete walkways with no curb or wall.

The curved hyphens intersect with the wings at the first story of the third structural bay from the courtyard end elevation. Exterior walls at this intersection are clad in sandstone that wraps around the end elevations at both stories on the courtyard side.

The end elevations of each wing are faced in sandstone. The courtyard facing elevations feature sandstone walls pierced by aluminum, two-light, sliding-sash windows at both stories that are proud of the sandstone wall. The courtyard elevations also contain three slightly setback curtain-walled bays sheltered by a deep roof overhang. Set in the center bay of the ground-story curtain wall is a pair of sliding glass doors that provides access to the courtyard. Low metal fences surround the first-floor windows to provide privacy for hotel guests. The stone-clad, parking lot-facing end elevations are un-fenestrated. The side elevation of the setback cutaway is also clad in sandstone and features a series of tall, fixed windows in aluminum frames that extend to the roofline and step to correspond with the interior stairwell.

Hotel Wings – Interior

Each hotel wing contains thirty guest rooms spread across both levels along with a housekeeping rooms, storage closets, and office spaces. The interior floor plan is organized around a T-shaped double loaded corridor. Short corridors that run north to south align with the curved hyphens where they intersect with the wings. These short corridors feature flagstone floors that continue through the hyphens. An intersecting double-loaded corridor that runs in an east to west direction extends through the center of each wing and is lined by guest rooms. Two open stairwells are located on the east and west sides of each wing.

Each guest room is accessible in two ways: the first is through the internal double-loaded corridors; the second is through the small breezeways accessible from the parking lots. The original interior configuration of hotel wings and corridors remains largely intact with minor modifications including combination of rooms in Buildings 200 and 300 to create private meeting rooms. Many of the finishes within the corridors and finishes and fixtures in the guest rooms have been replaced over the years. Finishes in the corridors include carpeted flooring, gypsum board walls and ceilings with recessed and wall mounted light fixtures. Room entry doors consist of a mix of both original and non-original doors. Open stairwells and breezeways feature vertical wood paneling at the walls and carpeting at the floors.

Connecting Hyphens

Four one-story hyphens form a U-shape around the central courtyard and provide connections between the conference center and hotel wings. The four hyphens are curved in plan, following the outline of the central courtyard, and feature flat roofs with no overhang. The exterior walls of the hyphens consist of large, fixed glass panes in wood frames divided vertically, and into two horizontal rows, by wood mullions. Where the hyphens join with the conference center and hotel

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wings, they are clad in vertical wood siding. A single-leaf doorway is located at the center of each hyphen on both the parking lot and internal courtyard facing elevations.

On their interiors, the hyphen floors are surfaced in slate flagstones and are lined by gravel planting beds. The window bays of the glazed walls are divided vertically by tapered wood posts that tie into the exposed ceiling joists to form bents. Only the ends of the joists are visible behind a dropped ceiling that is curved and aligned with the walkway below.

Swimming Pool (1957) One Contributing Structure

The swimming pool is an original feature of the Flamingo Hotel. The Olympic-sized pool is S-shaped in outline and is divided into six swimming lanes. The edges of the pool are bordered by concrete coping and the area around the pool is surfaced in concrete pavers.

Flamingo Hotel Signage (1957) One Contributing Structure

Characteristic of resort hotels from this era is the distinctive signage that rises high above the property from the parking lot at the east end of the conference center. The three-sided, seventy-six-foot-tall, precast concrete pylon rises from a concrete base faced in sandstone. The word “Flamingo” appears in red raised metal lettering mounted to the southeast and southwest faces of the pylon. Topping the pylon is a red metal cylinder bearing the word “Hotel” in raised lettering around its circumference. Standing on top of the cylinder is a stylized seven-and-a-half-foot-tall metal flamingo. Both the flamingo and “Hotel” lettering are outlined in neon lights. The City of Santa Rosa designated the sign a local landmark in 1997.¹

Noncontributing Resources

Hotel Building (1997) One Noncontributing Building

A two-story, L-plan hotel building, built in 1997, is located at the north end of the resort property. The 1997 building is visually compatible with the original 1957 buildings and is clad in a combination of stucco and semi-coursed sandstone veneer. The building features a flat roof that overhangs at the eaves. Piercing the elevations are two-light, aluminum, sliding-sash windows. The primary entrance faces the pool area.

Maintenance Building (circa 1957-1993) One Noncontributing Building

A one-story L-shaped maintenance building is located to the northeast of the courtyard and pool. This building houses pool equipment and was developed in three phases between circa 1957 and 1993. Historic aerial photographs of the resort show a small, rectangular plan building on part of the footprint occupied by this building. By 1982, the building had expanded to the northeast with an addition. A second addition appears in a 1993 aerial, completing the L-plan. Representing

¹ City of Santa Rosa, Resolution No. 22990, File 96-0263, January 14, 1997.

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these multiple phases, the pool building's exterior elevations incorporate a combination of stucco cladding, sandstone veneer, and vertical wood siding interrupted by irregularly placed utilitarian doors. The flat roof has a slight overhang at the eaves.

Gazebo (circa 2005)

One Noncontributing Structure

Located between the pool building and the 1997 hotel building is a small frame gazebo that shelters a non-original hot tub. The gazebo is octagonal in plan with an asphalt shingle-clad hipped roof. Aerial imagery suggests that it was added sometime after 2005.

Integrity

The Flamingo Hotel retains sufficient integrity to convey its significant historical and architectural associations.

The building occupies its original property on the north side of Fourth Street and thus retains integrity of **location**. The hotel demonstrates integrity of **design** through the retention of the primary physical characteristics and design features that existed at the time of its completion including its form, plan, space, structure, and style. These include the hotel's overall wheel-spoke form, distinctive period signage, site design, sandstone cladding, and the intact nature of the hotel wings, hyphens, and courtyard. The circular courtyard with unusually shaped swimming pool, an important original design element, remains in its original configuration and has not been significantly altered. Likewise, the four hotel wings and connecting hyphens demonstrate a high degree of design integrity and based on historic photographs, appear essentially as they did at the time of the hotel's completion in 1957.

The 1997 hotel building exhibits compatibility with the wings and conference center through its low, flat-roofed form and use of sandstone and stucco cladding. Exterior alterations, including the addition of stucco cladding on the front façade of the conference center, the addition of a new entrance canopy at the southeast hyphen, and a new canopy structure on the north elevation of the conference center are largely additive, and do not detract from the original design intent established by Homer Rissman. The addition of the entrance canopy and the canopy structure at the conference are largely consistent with the architectural period of the building through their form, materials, textures, and detailing, yet are distinguishable as later additions. In addition, while many of the original interior finishes including the vinyl tile and carpeting have been replaced over the years, the replacement finishes have been consistent with the original and do not detract from the historic character of the property.

Original drawings held in the collections of the University of Las Vegas and Nevada and historic photographs held in the collections of the Sonoma County Public Library indicate that the principal interior spaces of the hotel's conference center, such as the ballroom, lounge, and restaurant, have maintained their original layout and basic character, despite changes to material finishes and furnishings. Overall, the Flamingo Hotel has retained the mid-century modern style

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to be recognizable as one of three known hotel designs by Homer Rissman based on the distinctive wheel-spoke design with central courtyard and swimming pool.

The property also retains integrity of **setting**. The property retains its original courtyard and pool, surrounding wedge-shaped parking lots that provided guests easy access to their hotel rooms, and mature evergreen trees and other vegetation planted as part of the resort's development. Despite the addition of the 1997 hotel building, the relationship between the buildings and open space so important to its original use have largely remain unchanged. While some **materials** have been added or altered, the main materials that define the character of the building, such as the stone cladding and glazed curtain walls that connect the interior with the exterior, remain. These materials, and features such as the well-preserved hyphen interiors, convey integrity of **workmanship**.

Intact elements such as the Flamingo sign, the modernist design of the conference center and hotel wings, original pool, and the atypical, radiating site layout collectively convey the **feeling** of a mid-century resort hotel and **association** with the growth of postwar Santa Rosa, the expansion of tourism in northern California, and the work of architect Homer Rissman.

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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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1957-1972

Significant Dates

1957

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rissman, Homer (architect)

Coding Enterprises (build/develop)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Flamingo Hotel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its association with Santa Rosa's broader postwar growth and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its Mid-Century Modern architectural style and the work of master architect Homer Rissman. The period of significance begins in 1957, the year the hotel opened, and closes in 1972, when in deteriorating condition, the hotel was sold, and the majority of the rooms were converted to rental apartments. A property with a period of significance ending within one year of fifty years ago does not need to satisfy Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The hotel was the first of its kind to be built in Sonoma County and northern California. This was a period when the city of Santa Rosa was redefining its image as a destination for tourism and conventions, enabled by the construction of the glamorous new hotel. Santa Rosa developer Hugh Coddling, one of the most active in postwar east Santa Rosa, helped transform the former area on the outskirts of the city into a new destination for locals and visitors alike. The hotel hosted conventions and conferences, provided meeting space for professional and civic organizations, and served as a venue for performances and banquets. At the time of its completion in 1957, the Flamingo was indicative of the growth of postwar tourism in California in an era during which new patterns of leisure were made possible by the prosperity of economic expansion, automobile ownership, and the development of new highways and tourism infrastructure. Developer Hugh Coddling and his associates sought to recreate what historians have termed the "entertainment tourism" phenomenon that emerged in Las Vegas after World War II.² The flash and glamour associated with the Flamingo signage, the Flamingo's celebrity performances, and the hotel's mid-century style were all indicative of the influence of Las Vegas on tourism and resort hotel development and programming during the 1950s.

Criterion C: Architecture

The unusual wheel-spoke design is one of only three known to have been designed by Rissman, which originally included the Las Vegas Hacienda (1956), Santa Rosa Flamingo (1957), and Palm Springs Riviera (1959). Only the Flamingo and Riviera have survived following the demolition of the Hacienda, which served as the prototype for the design. The Flamingo's rustic stone cladding, combined with its glazed curtain wall elevations, are characteristic of the new

² Hal K. Rothman, "Selling the Meaning of Place: Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Community Transformation in the Twentieth-Century American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (November 1996), 548.

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class of modern, glamorous mid-century resort hotels built in Las Vegas and California after World War II. At the time of its completion, the Flamingo stood apart from other hotels in the Santa Rosa area due to its modernist aesthetic, extensive use of glazing juxtaposed against its Utah sandstone cladding, functional indoor-outdoor spaces, use of curved surfaces, and its focus on accommodating the automobile. A Chicago native, Homer Rissman was an accomplished master architect, who studied under Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Chicago. Rissman designed major hotel and casino projects in Las Vegas, and was active in California as well, designing hotels for national and regional chains throughout the state. Rissman was honored posthumously in 2001 with a lifetime achievement award from the Nevada chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Historic Context

Economic Expansion and Tourism in Sonoma County

Tourism in Sonoma County began during the nineteenth century, a period when the county was sparsely settled, and its economy was based on logging, farming, and the nascent wine industry. Prior to the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railway in 1870, early tourists from the Bay Area endured a combination of ferries and coach rides to reach the Sonoma Valley. The railroad led to a boom in new resort development that continued into the early twentieth century. During this period, Santa Rosa, first incorporated in 1868, grew in size and population as a center of finance and county government. Beginning in 1915, the Redwood Highway served as the transportation spine of Sonoma County, servicing the county seat, Santa Rosa, and other principal towns.³ The Golden Gate bridge, opened in 1937, brought traffic and tourists to the Sonoma Valley and Russian River from San Francisco.⁴

Santa Rosa grew to become the largest town in the Napa Valley region by 1941, with a population of 13,000. Growth and population increased during World War II with an influx of military personnel and defense workers into the region. Soldiers were stationed at the Naval Auxiliary Landing Field on Sebastopol Road and the Army Air Corps training base at site of present-day Sonoma County Airport. Santa Rosa became a bedroom community for defense workers commuting to Vallejo, Sausalito, and Novato.⁵

After the war, economic growth continued, and Santa Rosa began to market itself as a destination for conventions and tourism. Soldiers stationed in Sonoma County returned after the war and settled in the region and purchased new houses in the subdivisions being developed on Santa Rosa's east and south sides.⁶ Hugh Coddling was one of the most active developers in Santa Rosa during the postwar period. Coddling was born in Oakland in 1917. His grandfather,

³ Marianne R. Hurley, "Sonoma County Historic Overview," <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Planning/Historic-Resources/Sonoma-County-Historic-Overview/> (accessed April 22, 2021).

⁴ Gaye LeBaron, "Small Farms, Small Towns – Before the War," *Press Democrat*, November 24, 1991, A2.

⁵ LeBaron, "Small Farms..."

⁶ LeBaron, "Small Farms;" Gaye LeBaron, "First Came War, Then Came People in Our Big Change," *Press Democrat*, December 8, 1991, A2.

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who settled in Petaluma, was the first family member to become involved in real estate; he formed the Real Estate Association of Petaluma. Both his grandfather and father were successful businessmen. After serving as a carpenter in World War II, Hugh Coddling came home to Santa Rosa and used his savings of \$400 to buy a lot and build a house, his first enterprise. In 1948, he completed the Town and Country shopping center, located at Franklin Avenue and Terrace Way. In 1950, he established Coddling Enterprises, and began work on Montgomery Village, a 97-acre residential subdivision and shopping center.⁷ Montgomery Village, located just to the south of the Flamingo Hotel, was annexed to the city in 1955, increasing Santa Rosa's population to 31,000. Prior to this annexation, the city limits had ended at Brookwood Avenue. In 1956, the state Division of Highways completed U.S. 101 north of San Francisco to Santa Rosa. Postwar public investments included a new city hall complex, county courthouse, jail, central library, and post office. These improvements communicated an image of the city as modern and progressive, and a sense of optimism radiated among local businessmen and the Chamber of Commerce.⁸

By 1957, when the Flamingo Hotel was developed, Santa Rosa had a population of 32,500, with 56,800 living in the greater metropolitan area.⁹ Tourism had grown to become one of the county's major economic catalysts and was heavily promoted by organizations such as the nonprofit Redwood Empire Association, established during the 1920s to promote the counties of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon. In 1957 tourism generated approximately \$25 million in revenues, and along with agriculture and manufacturing, was one of the principal sectors of the local economy.¹⁰ Tourists were drawn to the area's mild climate, beautiful scenery, and attractions such as wineries. At the time, Santa Rosa only had two aging downtown hotels, both of which were constructed soon after the destruction caused by the 1906 earthquake. The Santa Rosa Hotel, originally constructed as the Overton, burned in 1937 and had been rebuilt. The other hotel, the Occidental, had not been upgraded since its opening soon after the earthquake. In addition, there was a 50-room motel, the El Rancho, on highway 101.¹¹ Originally built in 1949, and expanded in 1955, the El Rancho (demolished) featured a restaurant, lounge, and banquet hall. With competition increasing to provide new, state-of-the-art facilities for tourists, unimproved areas on the periphery of the city, such as the former orchard property on which the Flamingo was built, were acquired by developers as the city grew and expanded economically, in part the result of increased postwar tourism in the Napa Valley region.

Postwar Leisure, Mobility, and the Motel

The "motor hotel," or motel, emerged from earlier precedents as an architectural and cultural phenomenon in America during the postwar period, reflecting new patterns of leisure and consumption made possible by economic prosperity, increased automobile ownership, and the expansion of the tourism industry. Prior to World War I, downtown hotels were typically oriented to streetcar lines and were accessible by taxi, and few made accommodations for

⁷ "Montgomery Village Development Tied to the Story of Hugh B. Coddling," *Press Democrat*, October 21, 1956, 5.

⁸ JRP Historical Consulting Services, *Roadway Bridges of California: 1936 to 1959*, historic context prepared for the California Department of Transportation, January 2003, 21.

⁹ R. L. Polk, *Polk's Santa Rosa City Directory* (San Francisco: R. L. Polk, 1957).

¹⁰ "Supervisors to Whittle at Road Budget Tomorrow," *Press Democrat*, August 25, 1957, 8A.

¹¹ Gaye LeBaron, "Going on 40, the Big Bird is Now a Classic," *Press Democrat*, June 2, 1996, 2.

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motorists. Resort hotels, located in scenic mountain or coastal areas, were primarily accessible to upper class train travelers. An increase in hotel construction occurred during the 1920s, and towns and cities subsidized hotel construction. New, impressive hotels were seen as a civic as well as private sector improvement, needed to ensure economic progress. They provided full range of comforts and amenities, from spacious dining rooms to lounges and coffee shops. These establishments primarily catered to the needs of traveling businessmen, rather than vacationing families. Some hotels of this period featured automobile entrances and garages but they remained largely located within the congested central business districts of larger towns and cities. The high price of land in these locations translated into smaller room sizes and expensive rates.¹²

The highway travelers of the 1920s to 1940s tended to avoid big hotels in congested downtown settings, which lacked adequate parking. Seeing opportunity, entrepreneurs across the country developed cabin courts, motor courts, and motor inns, all precursors to the postwar motel. Cabin courts featured small cabins or cottages, sometimes with garages, arranged around a circulation drive. In motor courts or inns, room units were integrated under a single roofline and buildings featured long, continuous porches or balconies. Facilities sometimes included restaurants and coffee shops. Motor courts were often U-shaped complexes oriented towards a central courtyard. Architecturally, they ranged from Tudor to Colonial Revival in style, and western or Spanish Revival themes, expressed through adobe or stone-clad hacienda-like buildings, were especially popular. This period also saw the rise of trade groups, such as the American Tourist Court Association, and guidebooks to motor courts published by AAA and others. While the hotel industry suffered during the Depression, motor courts and inns thrived as Americans continued to vacation by automobile.¹³

After World War II, these motor courts and inns became increasingly known as motor hotels or motels and became more sophisticated in design. The U-shaped courtyard configuration remained prevalent, along with linear and L-plans, but with better landscaping and swimming pools. Large, distinctive signage also began to emerge. This iconographic signage, which often featured neon lights, served as a visual cue to driving travelers and provided a vertical dimension to the low modernist form of early motels. While the early postwar period saw a rise in the number of small-scale, family-owned and operated motels, by the 1950s, corporate chains with systematized operations became the preference of the traveling public. Over time, motel prototypes surfaced, which were standardized further through the influence of franchise corporations. The growth of the motel industry was documented in journals such as *American Builder*, and motel plans were published in *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*. Rustic and western themes remained popular, alongside a more modernist aesthetic. Motel furnishings also became relatively standardized and air conditioning became a fixture and important amenity. Like the hotels of earlier eras, larger, high-status motor hotels, such as the

¹² John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 25-26.

¹³ Jakle et al., 36-45, 90-94; Mary Ann Beecher, "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," in *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, ed. Jan Jennings (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 116.

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Santa Rosa Flamingo, placed emphasis on public amenities and spaces, in addition to providing modern, stylish accommodations. An early postcard for the Flamingo referred to it as:

Northern California's most beautiful motor hotel. 160 luxurious rooms and suites fashioned around an Olympic-size pool. Famous for outstanding food facilities. Banquet and meeting rooms for 10-1,000 people. Children's playground, horseback trail rides, and 18-hole golf course at hand.¹⁴

The children's playground was located at the north end of the hotel grounds, in the area where the noncontributing pool house, 1997 hotel building, and gazebo were built. The trails and golf course were not part of the development but were located nearby in the vicinity.

Many plush motor hotels were constructed during the 1950s, particularly in popular vacation areas and at the intersection of major transportation nodes. Motel construction continued into the 1960s, and by 1964 there were approximately 61,000 in the U.S., representing small mom and pop outfits as well as regional and national chains.¹⁵

Several factors contributed to the postwar expansion of the tourist industry. Setting the stage were growth in population and employment, technological innovations such as air conditioning, and the emergence of a middle-class that valued leisure, after the hardships of the war years, with the discretionary income to spend on travel.¹⁶ The automobile, particularly the increase in automobile ownership and infrastructure development after World War II, was another principal technological and cultural driver of motel and resort development in America. Cars became universally affordable after the war and were increasingly integrated into popular culture.¹⁷ During the 1950s, auto-tourism was bolstered by the development of the Interstate Highway System. Regionalism, and the exoticism of visiting different areas of the country, formed part of the mid-twentieth-century romanticism of automobile touring. To cater to travelers, entrepreneurs created roadside attractions that ranged from replica pioneer villages in the Midwest, to alligator farms in Florida, to Native American teepees and villages in the Southwest. The architecture and signage of roadside attractions, souvenir stands, and motels all functioned as visual cues for travelers in search of novelty and excitement.¹⁸

In California, tourism was initially dictated by railroad and streetcar magnates, who created early networks of attractions and hospitality services, while promoting the state as a tourist destination through mass media and support for writers, artists, and photographers. California's tourism and motion picture industries grew significantly during the first half of the twentieth century, and tourism boomed in the state during the 1920s with increased automobile usage, situating

¹⁴ "Flamingo Hotel," undated postcard, Gillick Printing, Inc., Berkeley, California.

¹⁵ Jakle et al., 23, 45-47; Beecher, 115-16.

¹⁶ Hal K. Rothman, "Selling the Meaning of Place: Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Community Transformation in the Twentieth-Century American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (November 1996): 548.

¹⁷ E. L. Widmer, "The Automobile, Rock and Roll, and Democracy," in *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, ed. Jan Jennings (Ames: Iowa State University Press), 82-85.

¹⁸ John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *Motoring: The Highway Experience in America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 115-18.

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California as one of the country's chief vacation destinations. The state's lawmakers helped support tourism through expenditures for highway development, which was accompanied by considerable development of related tourist infrastructure such as gasoline stations, motor courts, and restaurants. After World War II, increased public funding for tourism development in California imparted new authority and prominence to an industry that had been previously coordinated within the private sector. Federal investment in infrastructure coincided with economic and population expansion, and repressed demand for travel and recreation, to fuel massive postwar growth in the tourism and travel industries within the state. In this environment, developers and their political allies advocated for new hotels, theme parks, and convention centers, and used tools such as zoning changes and subsidies such as federal grants and redevelopment bonds to transform older landscapes into new attractions. Santa Rosa's proximity to celebrated tourist destinations, such as northern California's coastal redwood forests or Napa Valley winemaking district, aligned with the agendas of local convention and visitors' bureaus to drive area tourism.¹⁹

As western tourism evolved during the twentieth century from an exclusive pursuit of society's elite into a postwar industry providing leisure to the expanding middle class, a new form of tourism appeared, which historian Hal Rothman has termed entertainment tourism. The city of Las Vegas, Nevada became one of the leading tourist destinations in the western U.S. after World War II and had a powerful influence on the tourism and hospitality industries. With postwar improvements in highway and air travel, the city became one of the first in the west to create a national form of entertainment tourism. Some of the first glamorous, resort motor hotels were developed during the 1940s along the Las Vegas strip, an area situated at the time on the edge of the city. One of the earliest resorts built on the strip was the El Rancho, developed in 1941 by California real estate investor Thomas Hull. Designed by Los Angeles architect Wayne McAllister, the El Rancho featured a rustic casino and restaurant, the Opera House Showroom, retail shops, landscaped gardens, and a large swimming pool.

The extension of gambling beyond the city limits, and the desire to appeal to a wealthy clientele led east coast mobsters Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel to develop the Las Vegas Flamingo Hotel. The Flamingo, which opened on the strip in 1946, established a new standard for Las Vegas hotels, combining the opulence of Monte Carlo and the ambiance of Miami Beach with the architectural modernism of Los Angeles. The hotel exhibited a roughly U-shaped plan with low modernist massing, roof overhang, and a combination of stone cladding and glazed curtain walls. The air-conditioned Las Vegas Flamingo featured 105 luxurious rooms, landscaped grounds complete with a waterfall, and a large staff in formal attire. The hotel served as a venue for leading national entertainers such as Jimmy Durante and Abbott and Costello. The Las Vegas Flamingo, and the many subsequent establishments it influenced, such as the Santa Rosa Flamingo, provided the middle class with a luxury vacation experience, which Rothman has

¹⁹ Susan G. Davis, "Landscapes of Imagination: Tourism in Southern California," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (May 1999): 173-75, 180; Gerald D. Nash, "Stages of California's Economic Growth, 1870-1970: An Interpretation," *California Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 319-20, 323.

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referred to as a “distillation of postwar California culture,” that shaped national popular culture and the expectations of the traveling public.²⁰

Construction of the Santa Rosa Flamingo Hotel

The Santa Rosa Flamingo was developed by Coddington Enterprises, led by Hugh B. Coddington, one of the largest developers during Santa Rosa’s postwar expansion. Plans for the Flamingo, first announced on October 6, 1955, called for a 300-room wheel-spoke plan motor hotel with lavish convention facilities and a heated swimming pool. The proposed hotel was to be located on a 22-acre site, north of Sonoma Highway near Farmers Lane, which at the time contained a large nursery and orchard. Strongly backed by the Chamber of Commerce, the Flamingo was poised to double the number of “first class” rooms in Santa Rosa and offered an attractive location for conventions. Hugh Coddington and H. J. Stockman, general manager of Coddington Enterprises, subsequently traveled to Las Vegas over New Year’s weekend, 1956, to discuss the project with architect Homer Rissman. By January 1956, preliminary plans for the hotel had been completed and Coddington Enterprises was in the final stages of arranging financing for the project. Rissman based the design of the proposed hotel on his design for the Lady Luck Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas (later renamed the Hacienda) built in 1956.²¹

In May 1956, the Santa Rosa Planning Commission approved a plot plan for the development. By this stage, Coddington Enterprises had expanded the plans for the complex to include a 120,000 square-foot shopping center and professional office building on lots adjacent to the proposed resort, and the commission extended an earlier permit to include eight acres of land to the west of the site. The hotel site, situated in an area zoned for community development, had also been shifted to the west to accommodate a future extension of Farmers Lane and development along Alice Street, to the east. In presenting the plan before the commission, Theron L. Hedgpeth, a Santa Rosa industrialist and one of the project’s principal early backers, stated that the hotel would be “something of which our community will be proud.”²²

By July 1956, plans for the development had been completed and construction of the hotel was underway. The \$2 million hotel, at that time called the Santa Rosa Inn, represented the first phase of the larger \$6 million Santa Rosa Plaza project, undertaken by the newly formed Garden Development Corp., consisting of Coddington Enterprises, Theron Hedgpeth, and Richard Berkson of Encino, California. H. J. Stockman was vice president and general manager of the new company, which formally announced the development plans at a press conference held in San Francisco on July 17, 1956. The owners had obtained building permits from the city the week before the press conference, and work had begun on two of the hotel wings. The Santa Rosa Inn was described at the press conference as being the “first of its kind in California.” The design for the air-conditioned hotel featured banquet facilities for 975 people, conference and meeting rooms, two cocktail lounges, a private membership “Cabana Club,” lobby shops, a “microwave kitchen,” and other modern conveniences. Operating the new Santa Rosa Inn would be Frank Hofe, president of National Motels, Inc. and owner of large hotels in California and the Las

²⁰ Rothman, 548-52.

²¹ “Work Will Begin on Super Hotel,” *Press Democrat*, January 4, 1956, 17.

²² “Santa Rosa Inn Plot Plan Gets Approval,” *Press Democrat*, May 25, 1956,

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Vegas Hacienda designed by Rissman. The Garden Development Corp. targeted the growing Santa Rosa area as the heart of northern California's emerging "vacationland," made possible by transportation and civic improvements.²³

Construction of the complex was approximately thirty-five percent complete by September 1956. The first hotel wing was nearing completion, the swimming pool had been excavated, and site work was underway for a \$600,000 supermarket nearby, the first of forty stores planned for the shopping center component. Contractor Skylark Nursery had also begun extensive landscaping of the 30-acre site, which involved the transplanting of around 6,000 trees and shrubs.²⁴

In February 1957, Hedgpeth and Stockman announced that they had signed a new agreement with Flamingo Motor Hotels to operate the hotel. The announcement came following the death of Frank Hofeus in September 1956. The Flamingo Group signed a 25-year lease to operate the hotel as the Santa Rosa Flamingo. The hotel was to be the fourteenth in the company's Flamingo chain, which stretched from Chicago to the west coast. Construction of the four hotel wings was nearing completion at this time and architectural plans for the interior of the main building's restaurant, coffee shop, and cocktail lounges were being finalized. The Flamingo group was among the fastest growing hotel and resort chains in the country. Among its properties were Flamingo resorts in Flagstaff, Tucson, and Phoenix, Arizona, as well as San Antonio and McAllen Texas; the Sahara and Town House resorts in Phoenix; the Town House in Chicago; and the Bagdad Inn in Las Vegas.

Under construction at the time were additional Flamingo resorts in Hollywood, the Los Angeles airport, Blythe, California, and new outlets in Arizona and New Mexico along U.S. Route 66. These facilities largely reflected the motor court typology, with U or L-shaped plans, rather than the innovative design developed by Rissman for the Santa Rosa Flamingo. In addition, the company planned an expansion into Washington and Oregon, part of Flamingo Motor Hotels' overall strategy to operate units along the "Sunshine Route" from Chicago to the west coast. The company's directors included New York Yankees owner Dell E. Webb and partners in some of the firm's ventures included celebrities such as actor and comedian George Gobel, who performed at the Santa Rosa Flamingo shortly after its opening.²⁵

On May 9, 1957, the Santa Rosa Planning Commission unanimously approved the seventy-six-foot-tall sign at the hotel's southwest corner. The original design approved at this time included the seven-and a-half-foot-tall rotating flamingo at its top.²⁶ Also in May, the Vikon Tile, Carpet and Linoleum Company of Santa Rosa began laying the hotel's staggering 8,000 yards (four miles) of carpet and 20,000 feet of vinyl tile flooring.²⁷

²³ "Santa Rosa Plaza Start Announced by Backers," *Press Democrat*, July 17, 1956, 1.

²⁴ "May Opening Promised for New Santa Rosa Inn," *Press Democrat*, September 16, 1956.

²⁵ "Flamingo Motor Hotel Chain Signs to Operate Plush Santa Rosa Inn," *Press Democrat*, February 22, 1957, 1.

²⁶ "Flamingo Hotel Sign Gets Planner Approval," *Press Democrat*, May 10, 1957, 8.

²⁷ "Flamingo Hotel Job Under Way," *Press Democrat*, May 12, 1957, 44.

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The Santa Rosa Flamingo opened on June 15, 1957 with a benefit fundraiser dubbed the “Golden Deed Ball.” The event was held to benefit a local cerebral palsy charity and featured appearances by the television and film stars Art Baker, Venetia Stevenson, and Charles Coburn. The formal ball, with music provided by an eight-piece orchestra, was attended by about 900. The event was broadcast live by Santa Rosa radio station KSRO, as well as by a San Francisco television station.²⁸ Local newspaper columnist Roby Gemmell wrote at the time that “never has there been such a collection of mink, diamonds, chiffon, satin, and lace together in one place in Santa Rosa before.”²⁹ The ball attendees and hotel guests enjoyed the newly opened Gold Coast Room (bar and supper club) and the Garden Room (main dining room). Other amenities at the resort hotel included the coffee shop, swimming pool, and the Empire Room—a 700-seat banquet hall/conference center. Only two of the hotel wings had been furnished at the time of opening, due to shipping delays. In addition, the neon-lit, rotating flamingo, while approved, had not yet been installed on top of the hotel’s pylon sign.³⁰

Later History

Upon opening, the Flamingo functioned not only as a resort for visiting tourists but as a central element of the local Santa Rosa community. Soon after the hotel’s opening, the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce moved from its downtown offices into new offices on the second floor of the Flamingo’s conference center. The Flamingo also housed local radio station KSRO. The building hosted large conventions, such as the 1958 Beef Council Convention and the 1959 State Builder’s Exchange conference. The Flamingo was also known locally for its celebrity sightings. In 1962, Ronald Reagan spoke at the hotel in support of Mel Larson, who was seeking election to the State Senate. The actress Jayne Mansfield made several appearances at the Flamingo during the late 1950s in support of local charity causes.³¹

During the early 1960s, Hedgpeth and Stockman sold the Flamingo to Chicago businessman James Harvey. Harvey hired James Philips to manage the Flamingo. Under Philips, the Flamingo “went Hollywood,” hosting the “Hi-Fever Follies,” a local variety show that raised money for Memorial Hospital, and a dinner theater series with plays such as “Guys and Dolls,” the “Fantasticks,” and “Bye, Bye, Birdie.” Charity balls featuring Hollywood film and television stars continued as well. The hotel changed owners several times during the mid-1960s, and by the late 1960s it had acquired a “tarnished” image due to deferred maintenance of the building and grounds.³²

In 1972, real estate investors Ted Smith and Pat Maltby took over operation of the Flamingo. At the time, the hotel was in a deteriorated state and was struggling financially. The new owners converted 105 of the hotel’s 140 units to rental apartments, with the remaining thirty-five reserved for weekend and overnight guests. The new complex was rebranded as “Flamingo Living,” a concept described by Jan Lankford, program coordinator, as “expensive private

²⁸ “Flamingo Hotel Opens with Big Show June 15,” *Press Democrat*, May 5, 1957, 12A.

²⁹ Gaye LeBaron, “Going on 40, the Big Bird is Now a Classic,” *Press Democrat*, June 2, 1996, 2.

³⁰ “SR’s Big Golden Deed Ball Was a Success,” *Press Democrat*, June 17, 1957, 2.

³¹ Painter, 35.

³² LeBaron, “Going on 40...”

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residential club living.” The main building’s meeting rooms continued to be used for conventions and by local civic and fraternal groups.³³

In 1978, German real estate investor Werner Ehret purchased the Flamingo and undertook a \$1 million renovation of the hotel. Werner Ehret struggled to make the hotel financially profitable, and sold it to his son, banker Pierre Ehret, in 1988. Pierre Ehret renovated the hotel’s lobby and upgraded the building’s power and mechanical systems. He also undertook a restoration of the Flamingo sign. In 1989, Ehret also constructed the Montecito Heights Health Club located on the adjacent parcel to the north of the hotel.³⁴ Other renovations and alterations undertaken by Ehret include: addition of stucco panels on the conference center façade (circa 1990s); replacement of original steel-sash windows with aluminum windows designed to fit within existing openings and to be consistent with the original design (1997); renovation of the hotel’s interior spaces and replacement of finishes (2006); addition of metal canopy at the conference center entrance and replacement of the original curved canopy along the façade in the original location (2006); and additional upgrades to interior finishes (2015).³⁵

In 2019, the resort was acquired by Flamingo Bavarian LLC. At the time of nomination, the property is undergoing a rehabilitation that includes removal and replacement of non-original finishes and features, rehabilitation of the courtyard and pool, renovation of the hotel and conference center lobbies, and the addition of a new hotel entrance. Overall, the rehabilitation has been carefully planned to be sympathetic to the original design and appropriate in character, material, and detailing.³⁶ A Historic Preservation Certification Application is under review.

Comparable Properties

The Flamingo is the only mid-century resort motor hotel to have survived in the greater Santa Rosa area. The El Rancho Tropicana Motel, completed in 1949, promoted itself as the “Finest Deluxe Hotel-Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge in the Redwood Empire.”³⁷ As the owners, Emma and Andrew Vanderschoot, acquired acreage, they expanded the business with a new restaurant, bar, and convention facilities. Along with the Flamingo, the El Rancho was one of the few hotels north of San Francisco that could accommodate groups of 500 or more. It hosted regular meetings of various community groups and was the site of wedding receptions, concerts, fundraisers, and other special events. In 1963, the Vanderschoots signed a contract with the Oakland Raiders professional football team, who used the motel as their training camp. To accommodate the team, the Vanderschoots constructed a 2,500 square-foot training facility with practice fields and expanded the hotel’s capacity to 135 rooms.³⁸ By the 1990s, the motel had

³³ “A New Concept at Flamingo,” *Press Democrat*, March 19, 1972, 22.

³⁴ Miriam Silver, “New Life, Look for Flamingo,” *Press Democrat*, August 7, 1990, E1.

³⁵ Painter, 35-36.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; William M. Parry, “Flamingo Resort Hotel Historic Project Review,” undated document prepared for the Santa Rosa Department of Planning and Economic Development by Artisan-Architecture.

³⁷ “Display Advertisement,” *The Press Democrat*, January 1, 1965:24.

³⁸ Painter, 37; Rich Mellott, “Raiders of the Lost Cause,” *Press Democrat*, July 23, 1982, C1.

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become dilapidated, and the business was struggling. In 1993, the owners closed the motel, and it was demolished the following year.³⁹

The Los Robles Lodge opened in 1962 on Cleveland Avenue. The 105-room motel featured a 3,000 square foot banquet room that could hold 300 people, as well as a restaurant, coffee shop, and lounge. The Los Robles also hosted local events and fundraisers. The owner, Claus Neumann, was a German immigrant who sought to bring a European style resort to Sonoma County. The hotel closed in 1994 and in 2010, the property was redeveloped. With the loss of the El Rancho Tropicana and Los Robles Lodge, the Flamingo is the only surviving postwar motor hotel with convention/banqueting facilities in Santa Rosa.⁴⁰

Architect Homer Rissman (1927-2001)

Rissman was born in Chicago. He attended the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago and graduated with a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1946. At the time, the IIT architecture program was headed by famed German modernist and former Bauhaus director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Rissman established his own practice in 1949 and his early work included designs for modernist townhouses in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood. Rissman moved to California in 1954, and prepared interior designs for the remodeling of the Wilton Hotel in Long Beach, California for James Efston, head of Chicago contractor Efstonbuilt, Inc. From his base of operations in Santa Monica, Rissman designed modernist roadside restaurants and motels throughout southern California.⁴¹

In 1954, Efston retained Homer Rissman to design the Lady Luck hotel and casino in Las Vegas. Efston encountered financial and regulatory difficulties during construction, and the complex opened in 1956 under new ownership as the Hacienda. With his design for the Las Vegas Hacienda, Homer Rissman established the wheel-spoke prototype that he later used for the Flamingo Santa Rosa. The new design consisted of a main building (containing the lobby, restaurant, and casino) and six hotel wings, all connected by curved, enclosed hyphens and arrayed around a central courtyard and swimming pool. A major selling point, the climate-controlled hyphens allowed guests to walk in air-conditioned comfort from the main building to the various hotel wings. The Hacienda also featured pylon-style signage similar to that of the Santa Rosa Flamingo. The Hacienda typified the luxurious hotels developed in Las Vegas after 1946 to attract the postwar tourist, and its modernist aesthetic departed from the historicist western themes of the city's earlier generation of tourist establishments. Homer Rissman utilized this distinctive wheel-spoke plan for the Las Vegas Hacienda (1956), the Santa Rosa Flamingo (1957), and the Palm Springs Riviera (1959). Of these, only the Flamingo and Riviera have survived, the Hacienda having been demolished in 1996.⁴²

³⁹ James W. Sweeny and Miriam Silver, "Owners to Close, Demolish El Rancho," *Press Democrat*, July 30, 1993, B1.

⁴⁰ Painter, 37-38.

⁴¹ University of Nevada Las Vegas Libraries, Dreaming the Skyline, "Homer Rissman," <http://digital.library.unlv.edu/skyline/architect/homer-rissman> (accessed April 23, 2021); Mary Manning and Ed Koch, "Rissman, Architect of Strip Hotels, Dies of Cancer at 74," *Las Vegas Sun*, October 4, 2001.

⁴² Diane J. Painter, *The Flamingo Hotel, Historic Resource Evaluation*, prepared for The Flamingo Bavarian, July 2019, 41-43.

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The Palm Springs Riviera featured six hotel wings, containing 250 rooms, and a main building with dining room, lounge, coffee shop, and retail. At the time of its opening in 1959, the *Los Angeles Times* referred to the Palm Springs Riviera as one of the largest and most complete resort hotels in the country. All of its lobby and dining areas feature curtain walled elevations that look out onto the central courtyard and pool area and the San Jacinto Mountains. Like the Las Vegas Hacienda and Santa Rosa Flamingo, curved glazed hyphens provided connections between the various wings. The Riviera has undergone extensive exterior and interior renovations in recent years and later additions are evident.⁴³

Rissman's prototype wheel-spoke design for the three hotels reflects what architectural historian Alan Hess has described as the postwar evolution of Las Vegas resort architecture. This evolution was characterized by "motels in a sumptuous and sophisticated modern style" influenced by the 1946 Las Vegas Flamingo developed by Lansky and Siegel. This period (1946-1957), which Hess has termed the "third phase" of Las Vegas architecture, combined the vernacular western motel, with its stone and stucco cladding, with the International-Style derived modernism emerging from Los Angeles, to create an influential regional style.⁴⁴

In 1961, Homer Rissman partnered with his older brother, architect Marshall W. Rissman, to form the firm Rissman & Rissman Associates, with offices in Pacific Palisades, California and Las Vegas.⁴⁵ Marshall Rissman was a 1944 graduate of the IIT architecture school and a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).⁴⁶ Rissman & Rissman Associates specialized in motel design and established long-term business relationships with regional and national chains. The firm designed motel prototypes for Holiday Inn during the 1960s which were developed in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Monica, California and Las Vegas.⁴⁷

Rissman & Rissman Associates were especially active in Las Vegas during the 1960s and 70s and contributed to the city's emerging identity as a destination for entertainment tourism. For developer and gaming pioneer Jay Sarno, the Rissmans designed the Circus Circus Hotel and Casino in 1968. The firm also designed additions and oversaw major renovations for many resort hotels and casinos in Las Vegas. These projects included the Tropicana, Dunes, Bonanza, Frontier, Tally Ho, and Silver Slipper. Rissman & Rissman Associates were retained as architects for the extensive renovation and redevelopment of the original 1940s Las Vegas Flamingo Hotel built by Lansky and Siegel, which involved the replacement of most of the buildings and the construction of matching pink glass and concrete towers. Other work in Las Vegas, away from the strip, included designs for luxury apartment towers, such as the 29-story Regency Towers (1971), where Homer Rissman and his wife Alice lived.⁴⁸ Homer and Alice

⁴³ Painter, 43.

⁴⁴ Alan Hess, *Viva Las Vegas: After-Hours Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 10, 38-40.

⁴⁵ American Institute of Architects, Application for Corporate Membership, "Homer A. Rissman," September 11, 1974.

⁴⁶ John F. Gane and George S. Koyl, eds. *American Architect's Directory*, 3rd ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 766.

⁴⁷ UNLV, Dreaming the Skyline, "Homer Rissman."

⁴⁸ UNLV, Dreaming the Skyline, "Homer Rissman"; Manning and Koch, "Rissman, Architect of Strip Hotels ..."

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Rissman were advocates for historic preservation in Nevada, and worked to help save several of the state's historic abandoned mining towns.⁴⁹

Homer Rissman joined the AIA in 1974.⁵⁰ Upon his death in 2001, he was honored posthumously by the Nevada AIA with a Lifetime Achievement Award. At the time, executive director Randy Lavigne stated that Rissman had “played a very important role in the history of Las Vegas” through his many contributions to the city’s unique built environment.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Manning and Koch, “Rissman, Architect of Strip Hotels ...”

⁵⁰ American Institute of Architects, Application for Corporate Membership, “Homer A. Rissman,” September 11, 1974.

⁵¹ Manning and Koch, “Rissman, Architect of Strip Hotels ...”

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Widmer, E. L. "The Automobile, Rock and Roll, and Democracy." In *Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture*, edited by Jan Jennings, 82-94. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: University of Nevada Las Vegas

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.09

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.451642 Longitude: -122.688597

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

The boundaries of the 7.09-acre property include all of Parcel 181-190-007 (6.39 acres) and 0.7 acres of Parcel 181-180-005.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This 7.09-acre property, historically associated with the hotel, contains the original hotel and supporting resources.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Gentry, Senior Architectural Historian and Sarah Vonesh, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist

organization: EHT Traceries, Inc.

street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001

e-mail: john.gentry@traceries.com

telephone: (202) 393-1199

date: April 2021; Revised June 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Flamingo Hotel
City or Vicinity: Santa Rosa
County: Sonoma
State: California
Photographer: Taylor Townsend and Sang Kim
Date Photographed: April 28, 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 22 Main entrance and sign, looking northeast
- 2 of 22 Front façade, looking north
- 3 of 22 Front façade, looking northwest
- 4 of 22 Front façade and east elevation, looking northwest
- 5 of 22 East elevation, looking south
- 6 of 22 East hyphen and new entrance canopy, looking northwest
- 7 of 22 North elevation at restaurant entrances, looking southwest, with Wing 300 in background
- 8 of 22 West elevation, looking east
- 9 of 22 Southeast hyphen at connection with Wing 100, looking east
- 10 of 22 Southwest hyphen interior at connection with conference center, looking southeast
- 11 of 22 Wing 100, side elevation, looking northwest
- 12 of 22 Wing 100, parking lot end elevation, looking northwest

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- 13 of 22 Wing 200, courtyard-facing elevation, looking east
- 14 of 22 Wing 200, side elevation, looking west
- 15 of 22 Wing 300, side elevation, showing recessed end bay, looking north
- NOTE No photo of Wing 400 is included as the four hotel wings (Wings 100-400) are all identical in design
- 16 of 22 Pool and central courtyard, looking west
- 17 of 22 Pool, central courtyard, and conference center, looking southeast
- 18 of 22 Pool equipment building, looking southwest
- 19 of 22 Ballroom, rehabilitated May 2021, looking north toward stage
- 20 of 22 Hotel lobby, rehabilitated May 2021, looking southwest from east hyphen entrance
- 21 of 22 Restaurant and bar, rehabilitated May 2021, looking northeast toward the courtyard
- 22 of 22 Hotel room interior (Wing 300), rehabilitated May 2021, looking southwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Flamingo Hotel
Name of Property

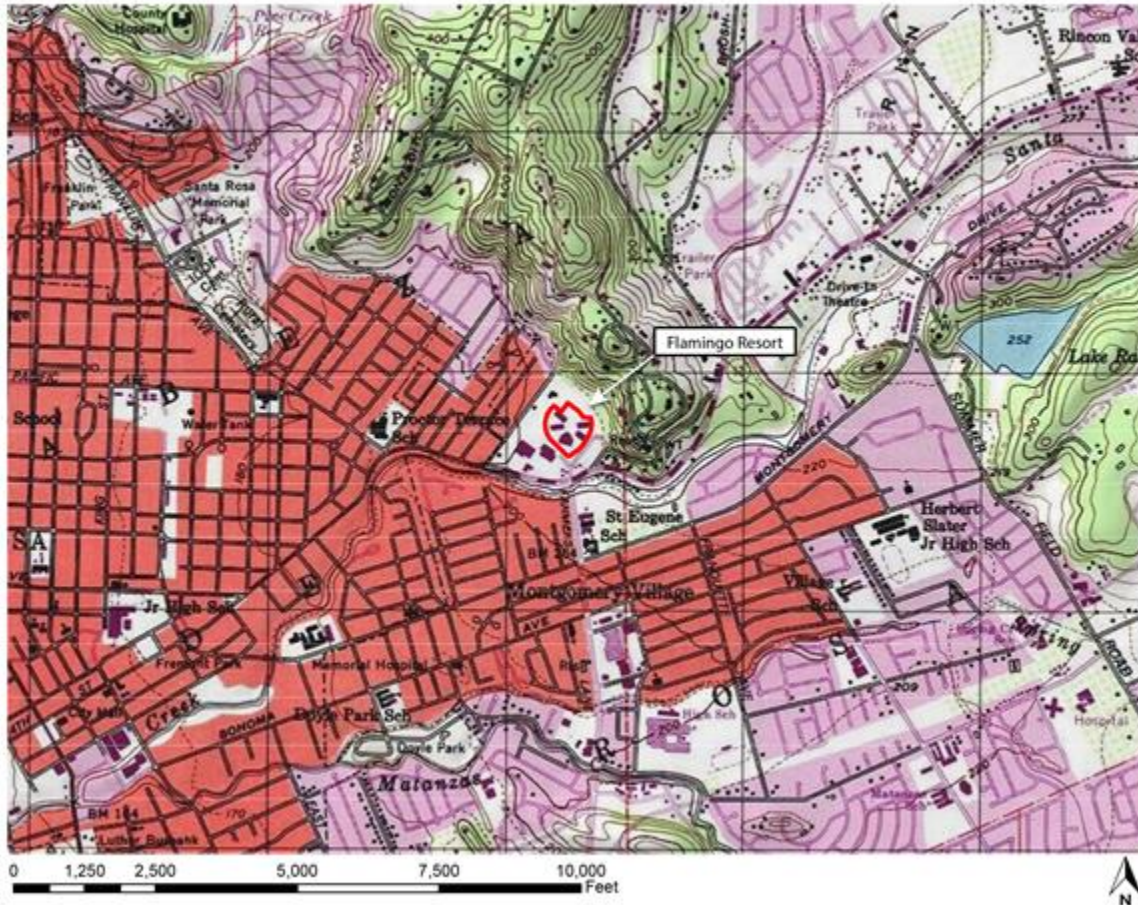
Sonoma, California
County and State

Location Map

Latitude: 38.451642

Longitude: -122.688597

Flamingo Resort - 2777 4th Street, Santa Rosa, CA

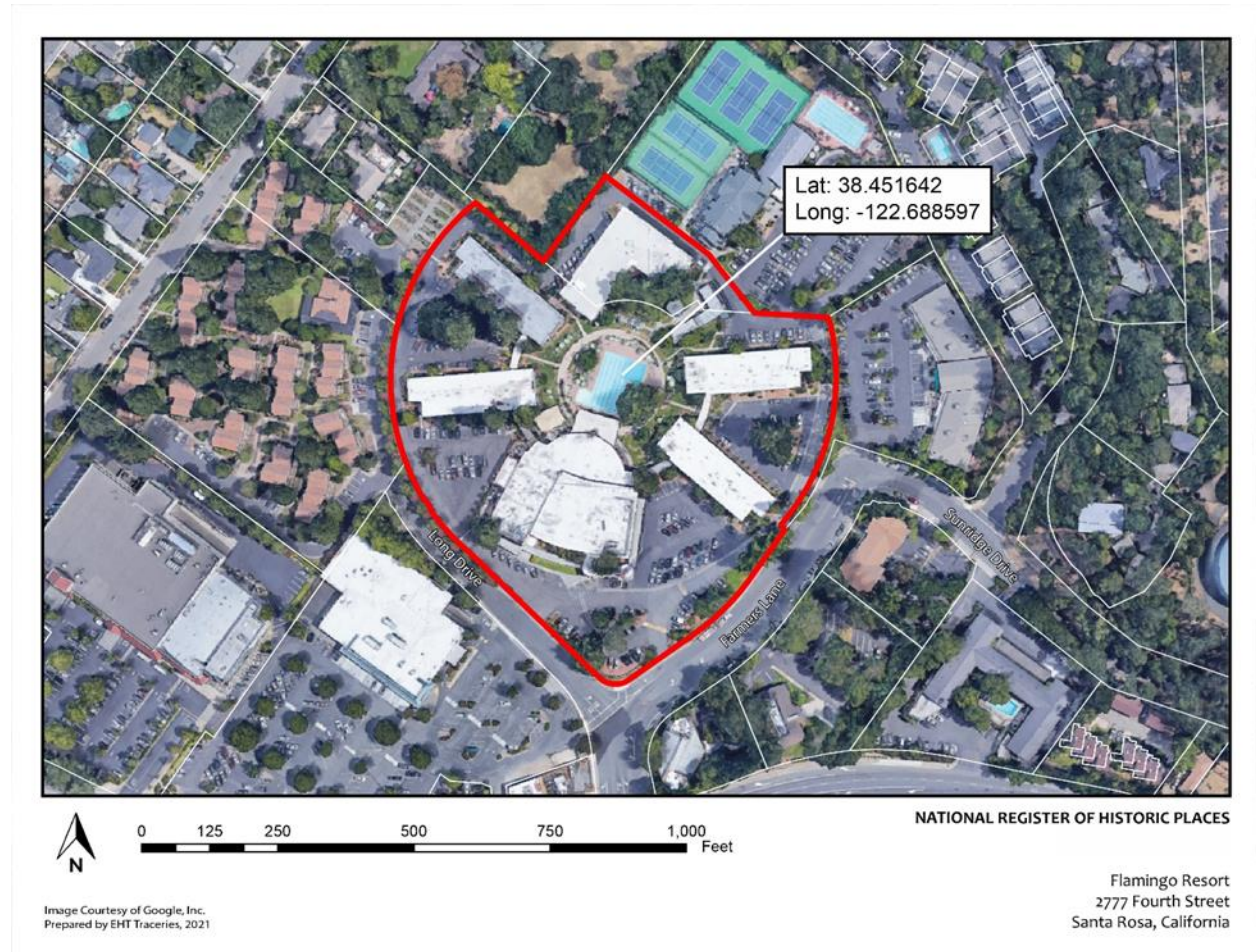


Locator map at 1:24,000 scale
Source: USGS

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Boundary Map



Source: Google

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Sketch Map/Photo Key 1 of 3—Exterior

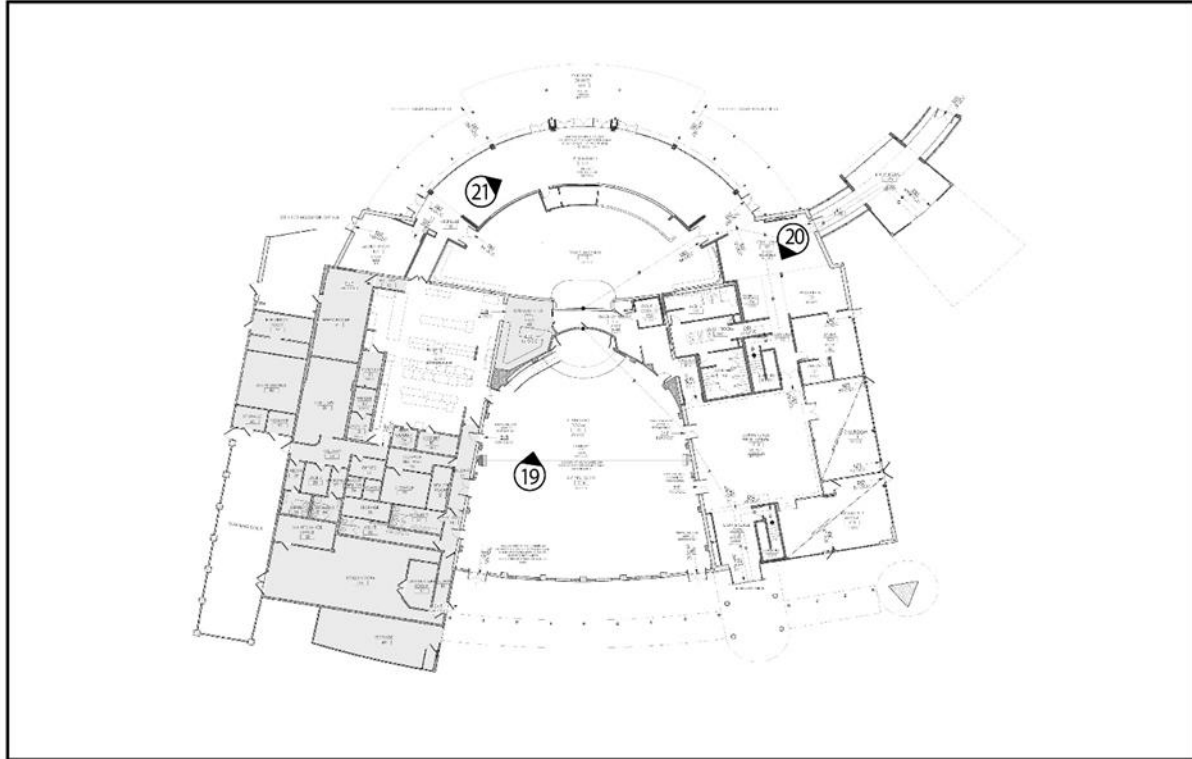


Source: Google

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Sketch Map/Photo Key 2 of 3—Interior, Conference Center, First Floor



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INTERIOR PHOTO KEY - CONFERENCE CENTER, LEVEL 1

Drawing by Weddle Gilmore black rock studio/BARarchitects, 2020
Photo Key prepared by EHT Traceries, 2021

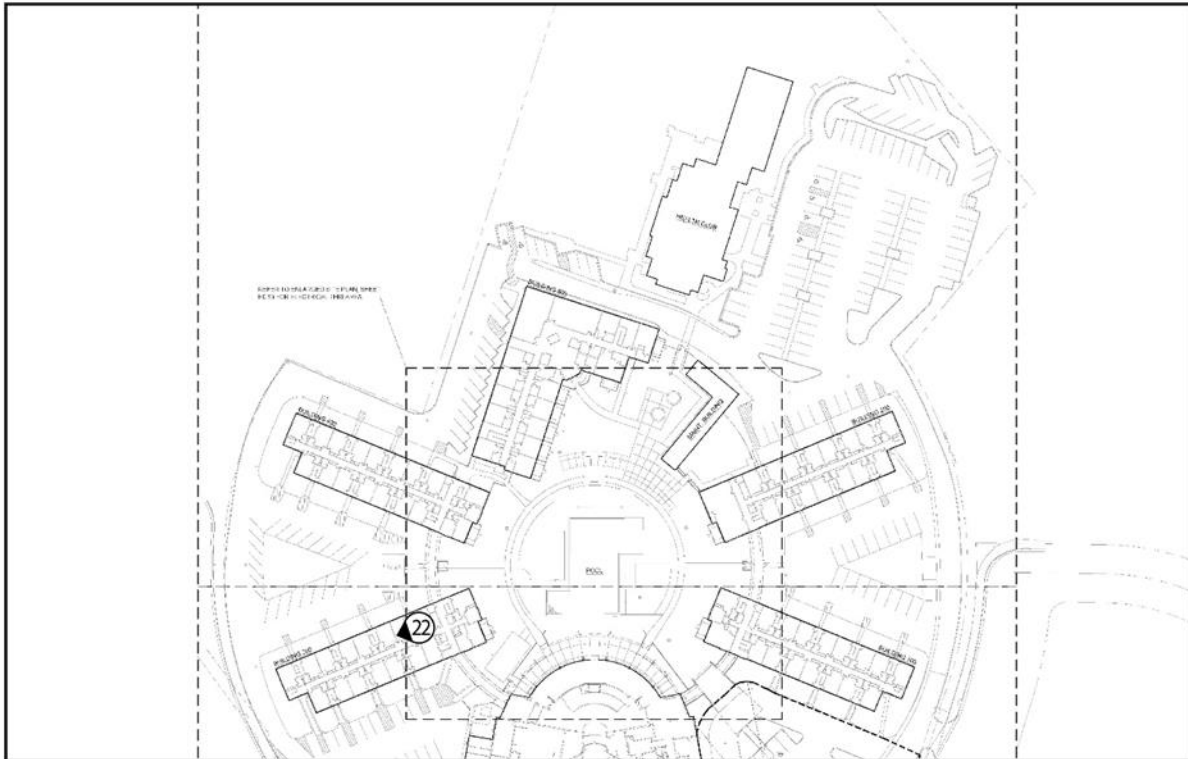
Flamingo Resort
2777 Fourth Street
Santa Rosa, California

Source: Weddle Gilmore black rock studio/BARarchitects

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Sketch Map/Photo Key 3 of 3—Interior, Guest Wing 300



0 20 40 80 120 200 Feet

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INTERIOR PHOTO KEY - GUEST ROOMS

Drawing by Weddle Gilmore black rock studio/BAR architects, 2020
Photo Key prepared by EHT Traceries, 2021

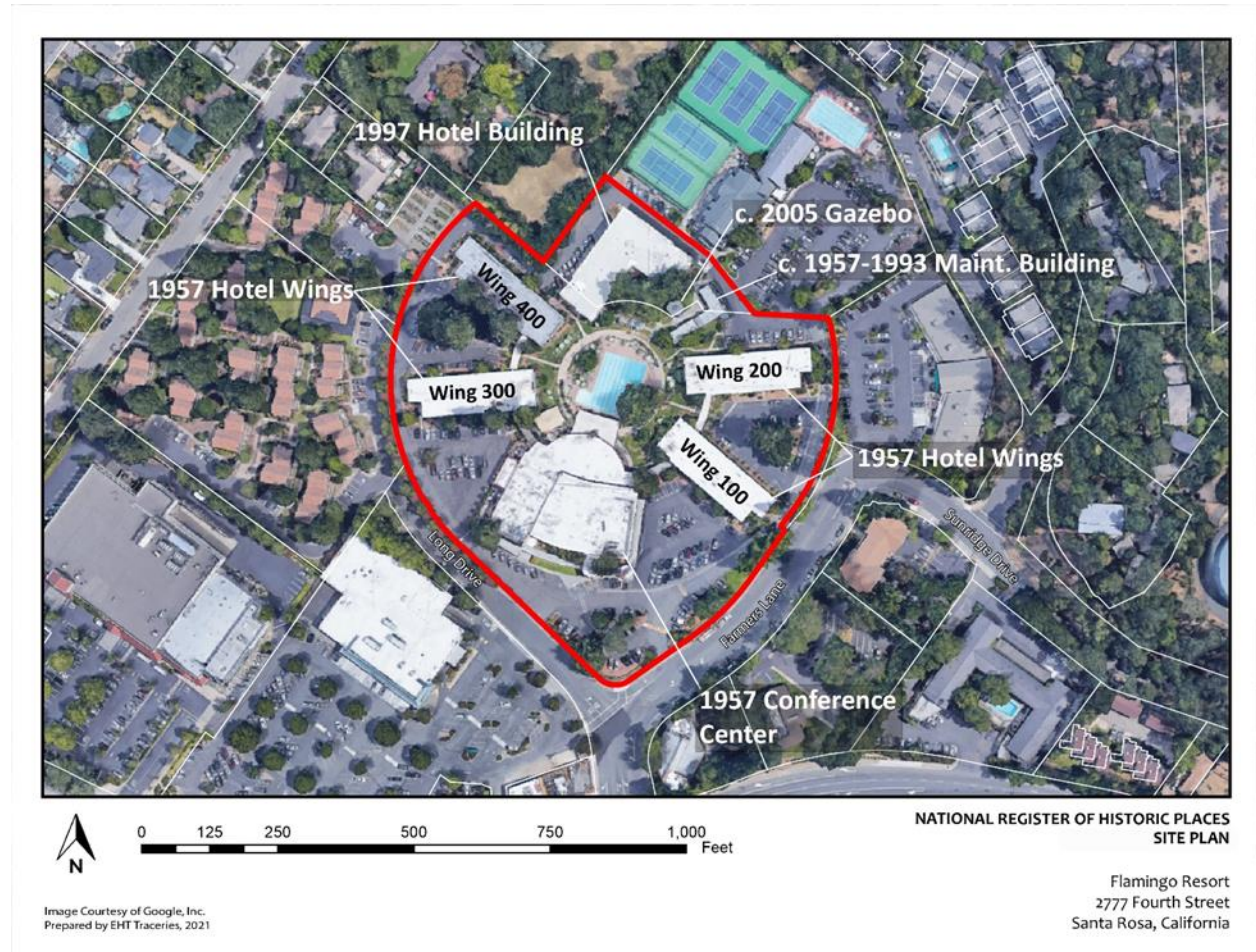
Flamingo Resort
2777 Fourth Street
Santa Rosa, California

Source: Weddle Gilmore black rock studio/BARarchitects

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Site Plan

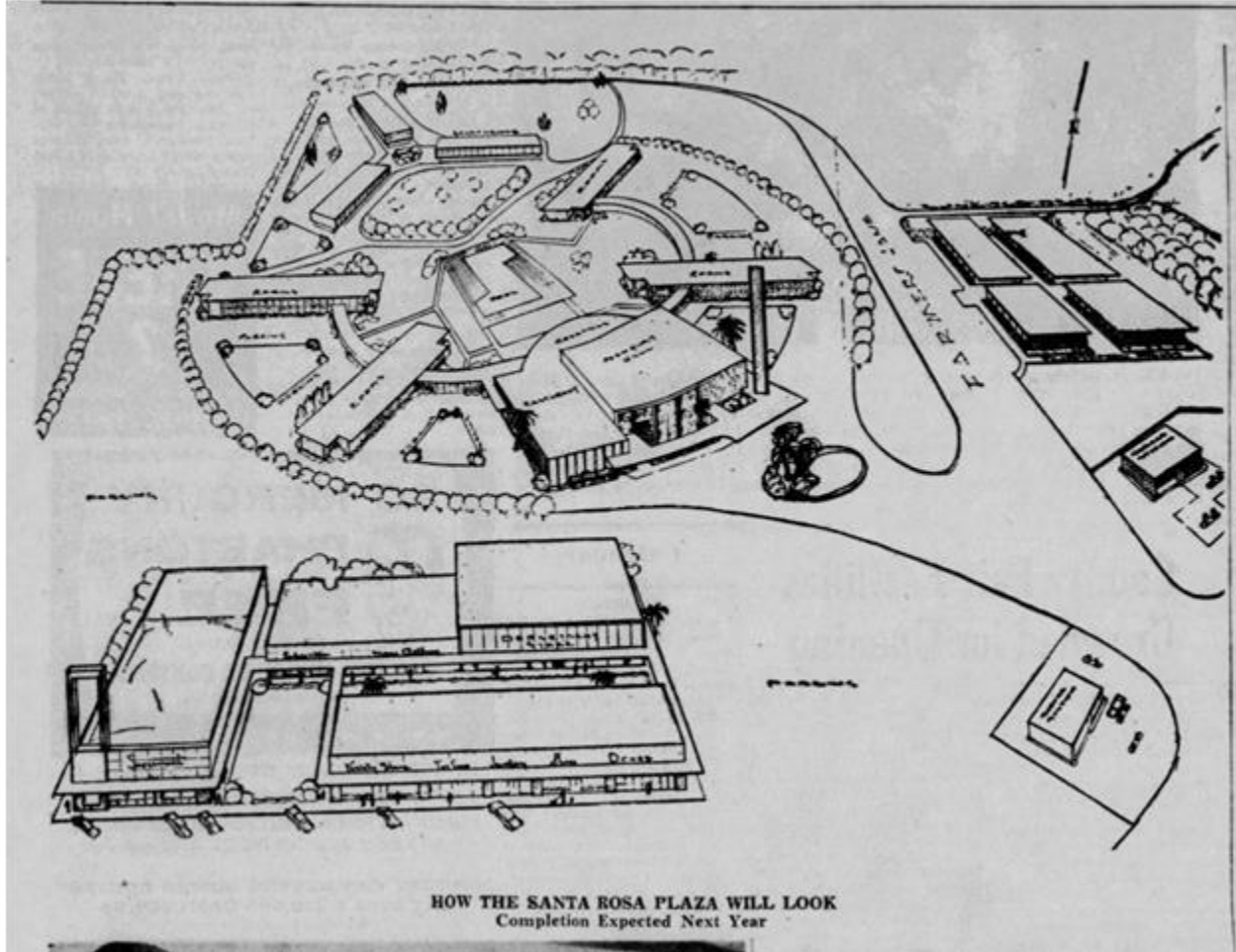


Source: Google

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Figure 1 Master plan, circa 1956, for the Santa Rosa Plaza, as the development was initially referred to (*Press Democrat*, July 17, 1956)



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Figure 2 The Flamingo under construction, 1956 (*Press Democrat*, September 16, 1956)

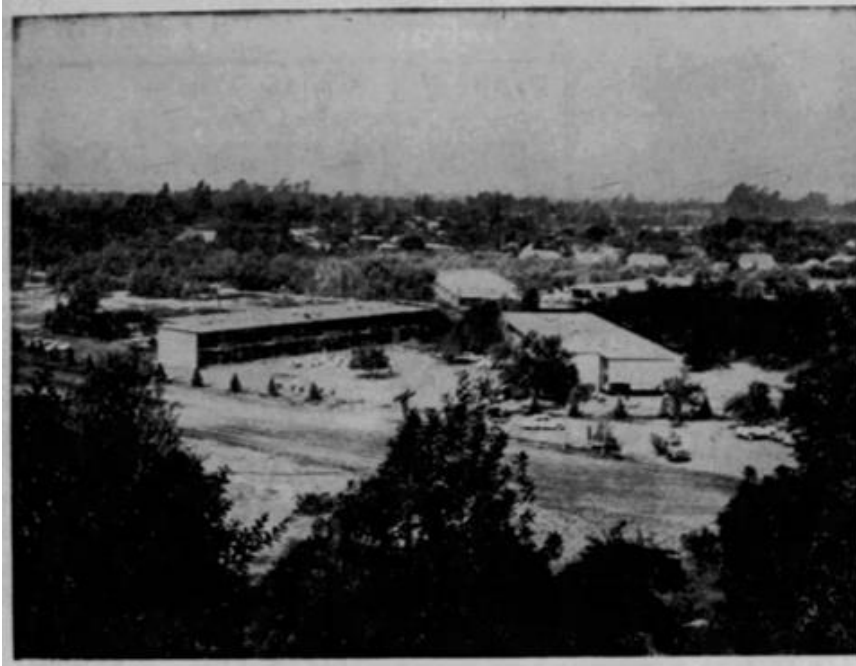


Figure 3 The newly opened Flamingo, 1957 (*Press Democrat*, June 17, 1957)



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Figure 4 Display advertisement (*Press Democrat*, June 19, 1957)

Now Open

the new, dazzling Santa Rosa
FLAMINGO
GARDEN HOTEL

For Food and Fun

Garden Room
A glass-enclosed garden spot at pool-side . . . a beautiful dining room for lunch and dinner.

Coffee Corner
Delightful, modern coffee shop serving really good food at popular prices . . . 3 meals a day.

Gold Coast Room
Luxurious comfort in this fine bar, cocktail lounge and Supper Club . . . open daily from noon.

Piano Bar
Small, intimate relaxing spot featuring the music you like from seven to twelve each evening.

THREE BEAUTIFUL BANQUET ROOMS
Empire Room Kityhawk Room Lulu Belle Room
Capacities from 20 to 1000 persons
Preparation and service of all food and drink under the management of the former operators of the famous Lulu Belle of Phoenix

For Relaxation and Recreation

160 delightful rooms and suites in four luxurious wings . . . all connected to the administration building by landscaped, enclosed corridors.

More than an acre of outdoor lounging area . . . all landscaped and well supplied with comfortable garden furniture . . . and all surrounding the Flamingo Olympic-size swimming pool. Complete Hotel Service.

100% AIR CONDITIONED

Santa Rosa
FLAMINGO

FOURTH STREET AT FARMERS LANE • Liberty 5-6310

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Figure 5 Gold Coast Room, 1957 (Sonoma County Public Library)



Figure 6 Empire Room, 1958 (Sonoma County Public Library)



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Figure 7 Flamingo courtyard and hotel wings at outdoor event, 1958 (Sonoma County Library)



Figure 8 Conference center façade, original canopy, and sign, 1958 (Sonoma County Library)



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Figure 9 Aerial view, 1959 (Sonoma County Library)

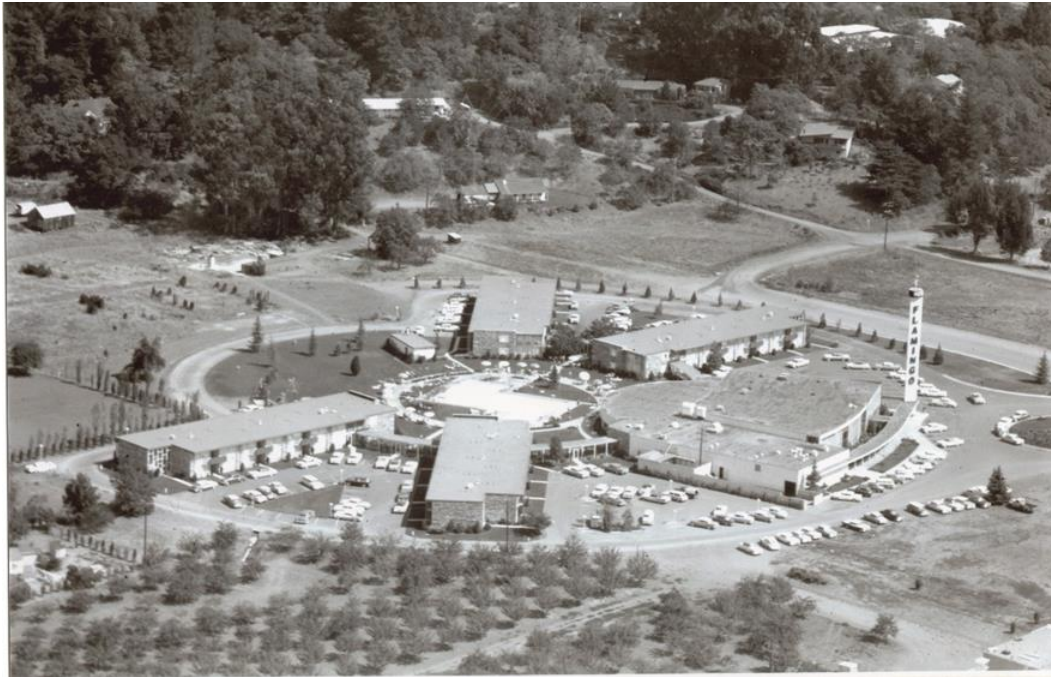


Figure 10 Front façade, 1959 (Sonoma County Library)



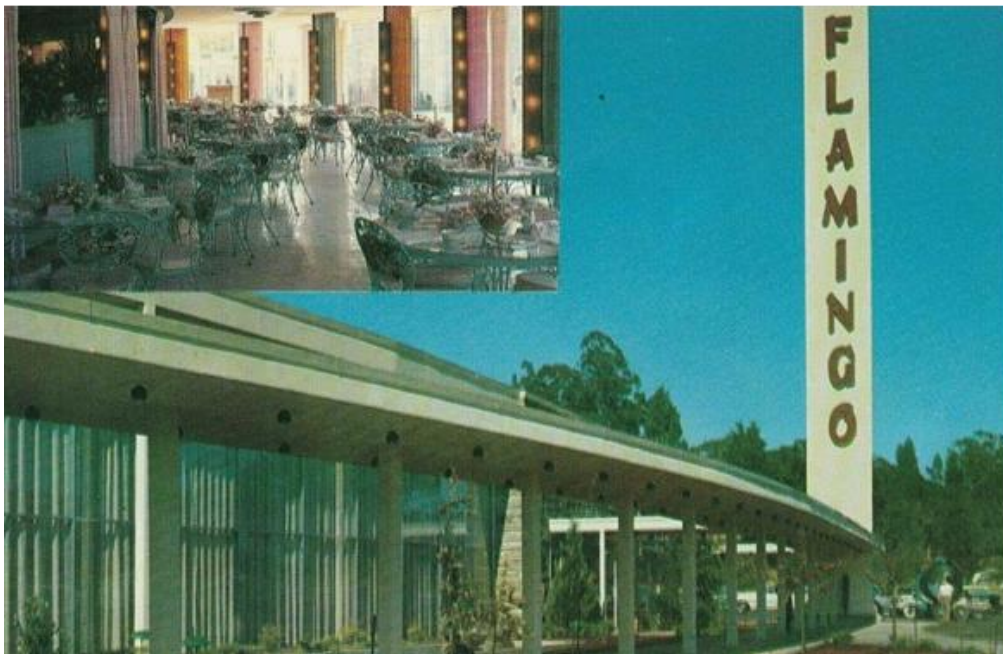
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Figure 11 Lobby, 1959 (Sonoma County Public Library)



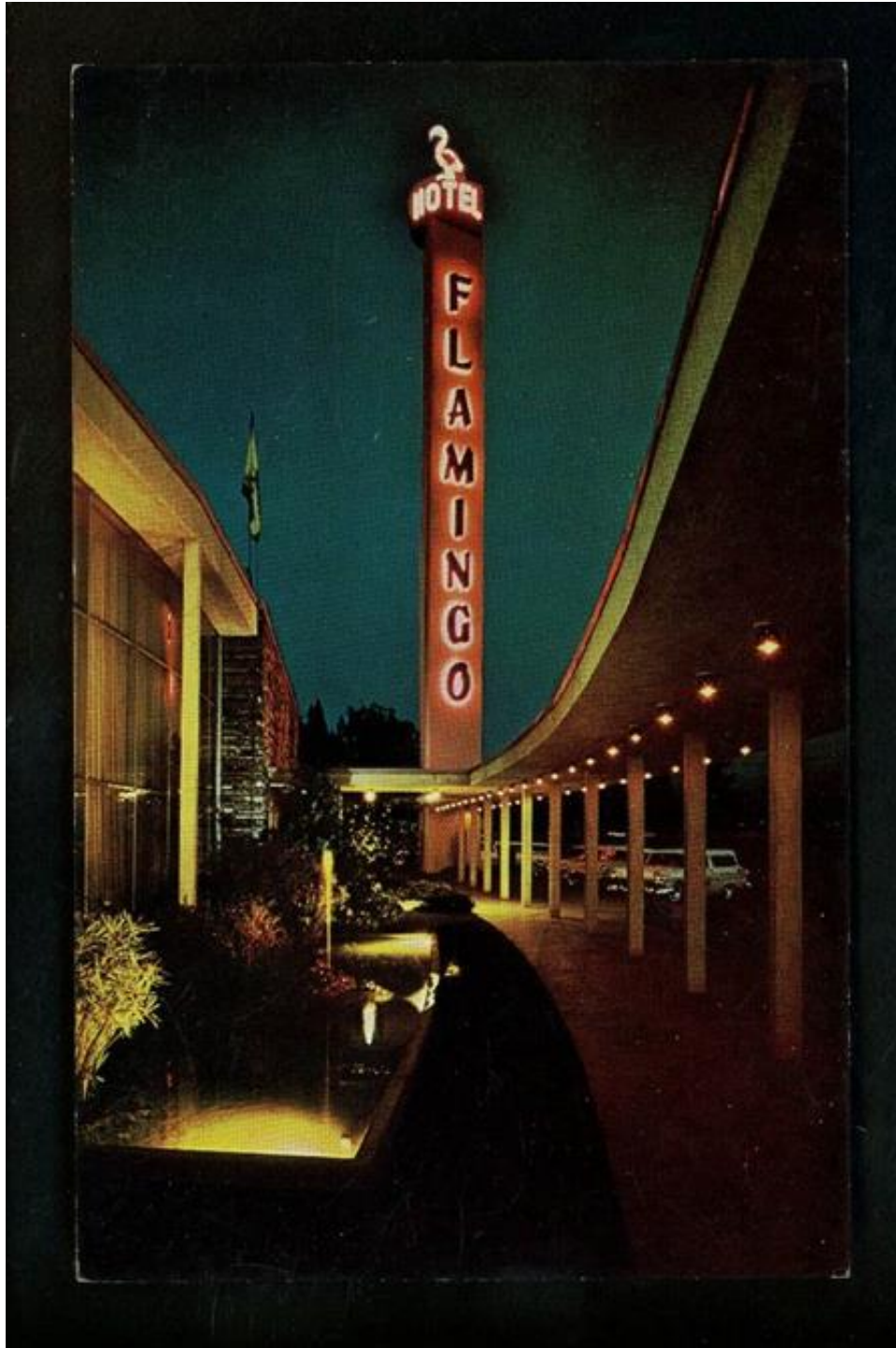
Figure 12 Undated postcard, late 1950s (Ebay)



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Figure 13 Undated postcard, late 1950s (Ebay)



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Figure 14 Jayne Mansfield at the Flamingo, 1960 (*North Bay Business Journal*)



Figure 15 Mel Larson and Ronald Reagan, 1962 (Sonoma County Public Library)



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Figure 16 Promotional site plan, 1965 (Gaye LeBaron Collection, Sonoma State University)

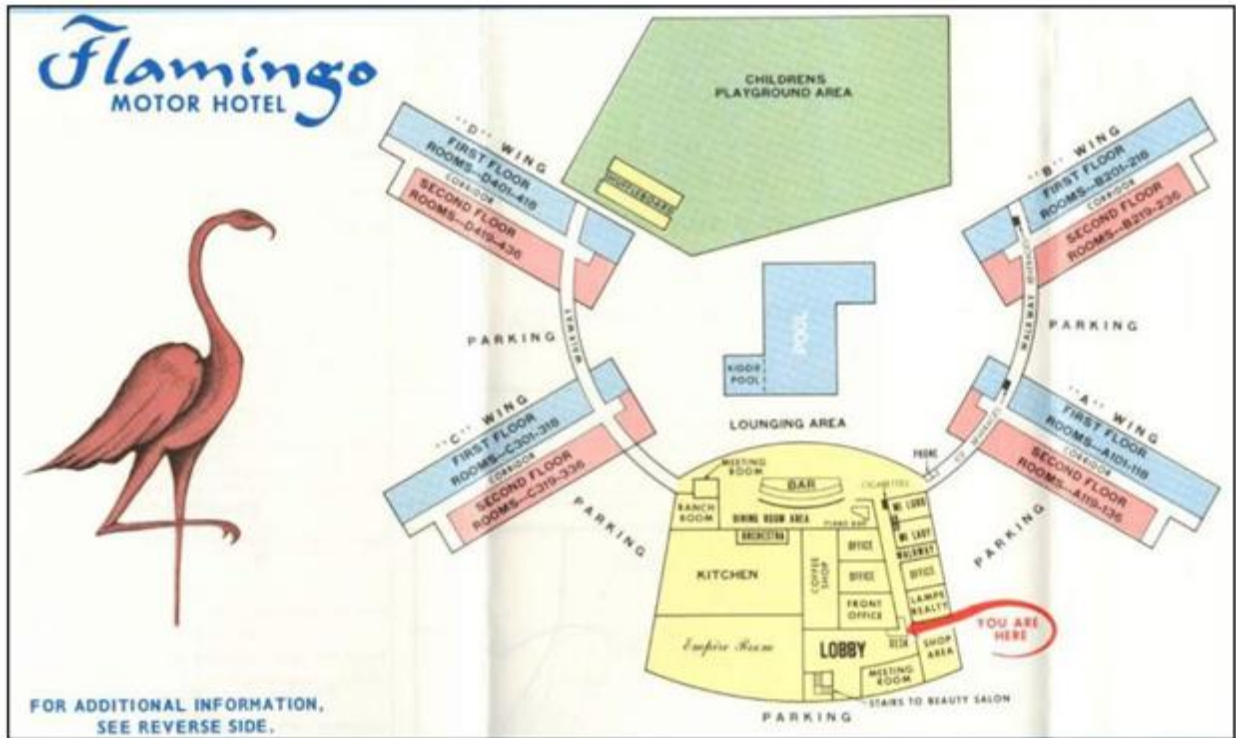


Figure 17 Undated match book cover (Pinterest)



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Photo 1 Main entrance and sign, looking northeast



Photo 2 Front façade, looking north



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Photo 3 Front façade, looking northwest



Photo 4 Front façade and east elevation, looking northwest



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Photo 5 East elevation, looking south



Photo 6 East hyphen and new entrance canopy, looking northwest



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Photo 7 North elevation at restaurant entrances, looking southwest, with Wing 300 in background



Photo 8 West elevation, looking east



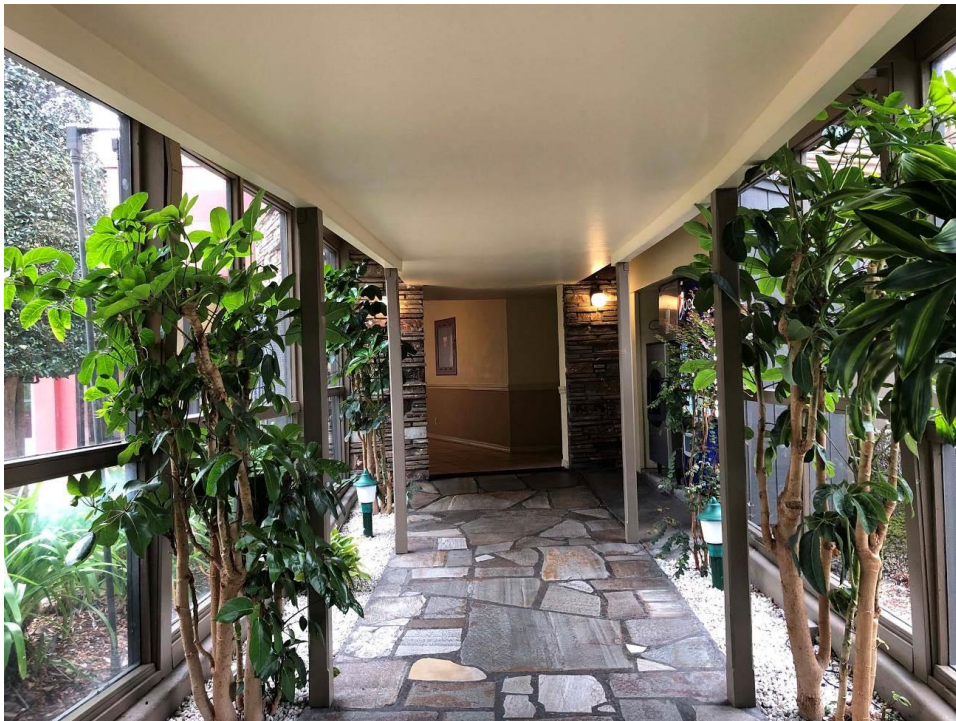
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Photo 9 Southeast hyphen at connection with Wing 100, looking east



Photo 10 Southwest hyphen interior at connection with Conference Center, looking southeast



Flamingo Hotel
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Photo 11 Wing 100, side elevation, looking northwest



Photo 12 Wing 100, parking lot end elevation, looking northwest



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Photo 13 Wing 200, courtyard-facing elevation, looking east



Photo 14 Wing 200, side elevation, looking west



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Photo 15 Wing 300, side elevation, showing recessed end bay, looking north



Photo 16 Pool and central courtyard, looking west



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Photo 17 Pool, central courtyard, and conference center, looking southeast



Photo 18 Pool equipment building, looking southwest



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Photo 19 Ballroom, rehabilitated May 2021, looking north toward stage



Photo 20 Hotel lobby, rehabilitated May 2021, looking southwest from east hyphen entrance



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Photo 21 Restaurant and bar, rehabilitated May 2021, looking northeast toward the courtyard



Photo 22 Hotel room interior (Wing 300), rehabilitated May 2021, looking southwest

