

# Historic Register Eligibility Evaluation of the Biltmore Addition(s) Neighborhood in Las Vegas, Nevada

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Prepared for:

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## Part 1: Historic Context

### Introduction

In August of 2020, Nevada Preservation Foundation received a Centennial grant from the Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial to conduct an in-depth survey of the Biltmore neighborhood and the research necessary to establish the neighborhood's significance and eligibility for a national, state, and/or local historic district register. This scope included: (a) A historic resource survey of the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood, including the Biltmore Addition, Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1, and Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2, (b) research on 8-12 notable Biltmore homeowners, (c) national and state register nominations (if applicable), (d) a local City of Las Vegas register nomination (if applicable), (e) a neighborhood campaign for listing the neighborhood on the local City of Las Vegas historic register (if applicable), and (f) printing expenses related to this campaign.

This scope was subsequently modified in August of 2021, after which Nevada Preservation Foundation retained contractors Michelle Larime and Olivia White for the following scope: (a) To conduct an in-depth survey of the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood and the research necessary to establish the neighborhood's significance and eligibility for a national, state, and/or local City of Las Vegas historic district register listing, (b) Architectural Resource Assessment ("ARA") forms to determine eligibility for nomination to national, state, and/or local registers, and (c) a review and update to previously researched historic contexts for the Biltmore neighborhood. This report satisfies these scope conditions.

### Biltmore Addition(s)

The study area is defined by the formal neighborhood boundaries of the Biltmore Addition, Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1, and Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2, collectively known as the Biltmore Addition(s) throughout this report. The Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood is wholly contained within the southeast quarter of Section 27 of Township 20 South, Range 61 East, as depicted on the Las Vegas (2018) 7.5' topographic quadrangle map (Figure 1). The boundaries for the neighborhood are roughly Washington Avenue and Bonanza Road to the north and south, and Las Vegas Blvd, and North 1st Street to the east and west. For a visual reference of the neighborhood, please see Appendix A. The survey area consists of 43.357 acres and includes a total of 179 parcels with historic age buildings and structures.

The Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood has a distinctive history and character that is defined by its development during World War II (WWII) in Las Vegas. Its physical setting, Minimal Traditional style of architecture, and defense-industry residents are indicative of subdivision development, architectural trends, and social attitudes during this time. At the time of its development, the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood was a white, working class, suburban neighborhood, built on what was considered the city edge in the early 1940s. Although the neighborhood's demographics have become more diverse over time, and the City of Las Vegas and the region have grown substantially around the neighborhood, the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood retains its historic suburban quality and its rich history is explicitly expressed in the neighborhood's well-preserved built environment.

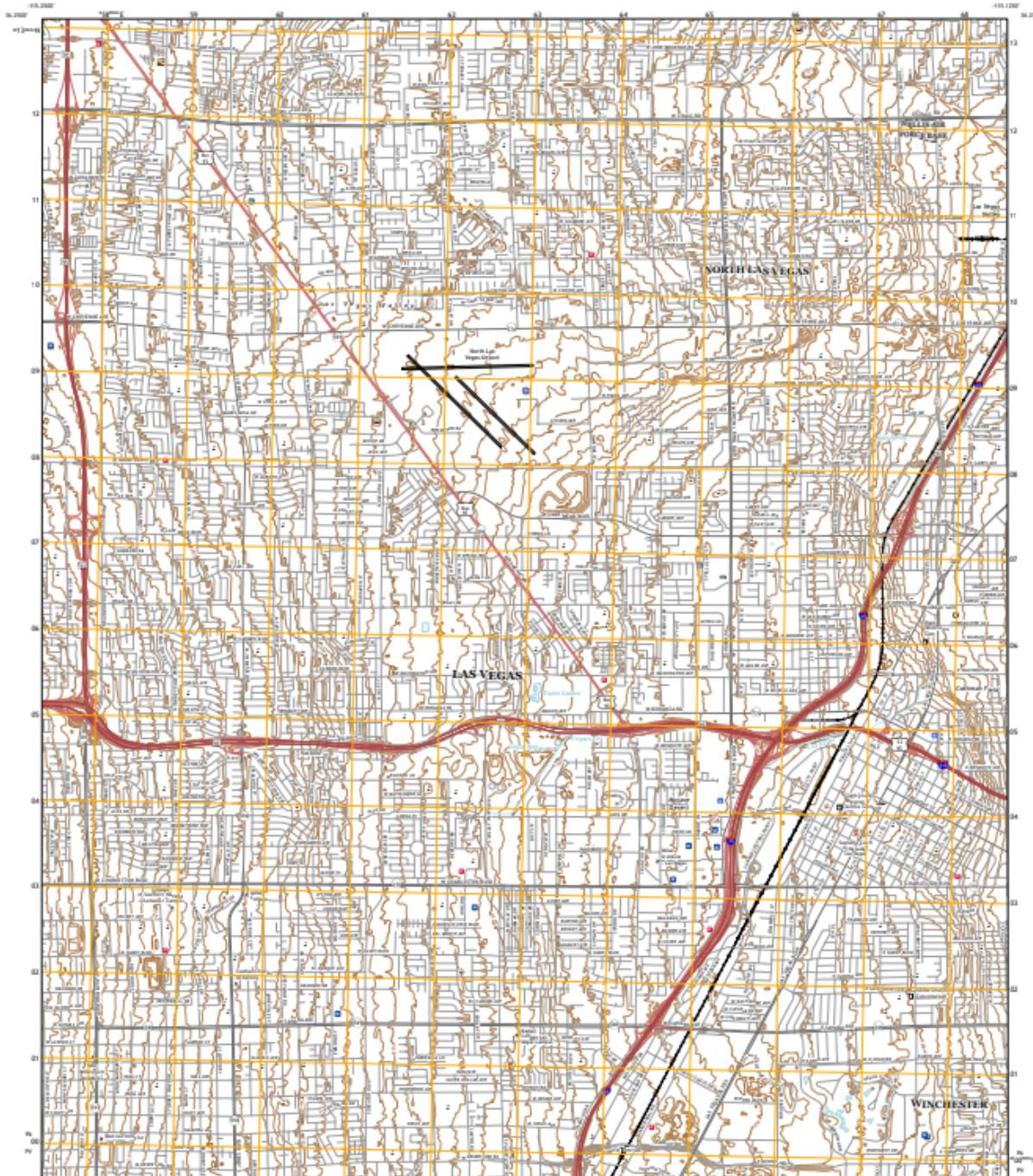


Figure 1: USGS 7.5 Map (Link to Map: [NV\\_Las\\_Vegas\\_NW\\_20210921\\_TM\\_geo.pdf](#))

## Historic Context

Prior to this study, the City of Las Vegas commissioned research on the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood, including the Biltmore Addition and the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1 and 2, as well as

World War II (WWII) era residential housing in Las Vegas. This previous research is primarily documented in two sources: *Biltmore Homes Historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, written by Courtney Mooney of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Preservation in 2003, and *World War II Era Residential Housing in Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada (1940-1945)*, written by Greta J. Rayle and Helana Ruter of Logan Simpson in 2015. Both reports are thoroughly documented, well-researched, and provide the context necessary to establish the importance of the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood and WWII era housing in Las Vegas. As such, these reports are heavily cited in the following context section of this report. It is not the intention of this research to duplicate past research, but rather to provide additional context where new information has been uncovered.

As established in Rayle and Ruter's (2015) historic context on WWII era housing in Las Vegas, there are three contexts to consider when discussing the importance of WWII era housing in Las Vegas:

- The growth of Las Vegas and WWII-era Subdivision Development;
- Racial Segregation and the Development of West Las Vegas during WWII; and
- Residential Architecture of Las Vegas during WWII

The following section of this document summarizes these contexts as they pertain to the Biltmore neighborhood and expands on previous research where additional information was found.

### **Historic Townsite Development of the City of Las Vegas**

Prior to the nineteenth century, the Las Vegas valley primarily served as a rest stop for early explorers, missionaries and travelers alike. The fertile meadows and natural springs of the valley attracted many indigenous people, the most well-known being the Paiute, a Native American tribe with roots in Nevada, Utah, Arizona and parts of California (Moehring and Green, 2005). The first non-native people to travel through the valley were Spanish missionaries who, looking to forge a route between New Mexico and California, made their way through Utah and what are now parts of Nevada. This early exploration established portions of what is now known as the Old Spanish Trail. Subsequent explorers altered this path, creating what would eventually become a Nevedan gateway to southern California (Moehring, 1989). Known as the Muddy Las Vegas Amargosa River route, the trail was not heavily traveled until after explorer John C. Fremont documented his trip through Las Vegas in 1844. Fremont was the first to record Las Vegas on an American map, naming it "The Meadows" in Spanish (Schumacher, 2015).

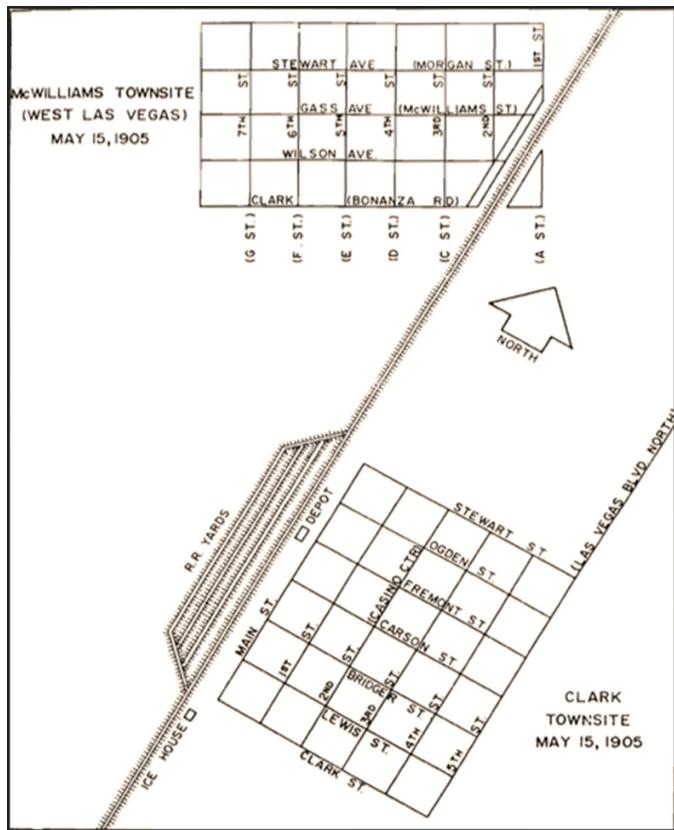
By 1854, the United States Congress established a monthly mail run from Salt Lake City to San Diego, passing through Las Vegas and San Bernardino, which allocated federal funds towards widening and grading the trail for travelers including troops, horses and freight wagons (Moehring, 1989). In 1855, Brigham Young sent a group of Mormon missionaries to Las Vegas to establish a mission and rest stop on the mail route. The settlement was part of Young's plan to extend the Mormon religion into the southwest region. The small fort offered a safe haven for traders and mail riders but, in 1857, the fort was abandoned by the missionaries due to difficulties with agriculture and the native people, who would frequently raid their fields and crops (Schumacher, 2015).

After briefly being occupied by a party of prospectors from California, Octavius Decatur Gass acquired what remained of the fort in 1865. Gass and his two partners rebuilt the original adobe building, which

was in shambles after being mostly abandoned for a number of years, and constructed another structure on the site where Gass eventually lived with his wife and family (Mooney, 2003a). He operated a successful cattle ranch for several years here and bought out his two partners in the 1870s (Moehring, 1989). The ranch, named "Los Vegas Rancho," or Las Vegas Ranch, became a rest stop for travelers along the mail route, where they could camp and obtain a decent meal for a nominal fee (Mooney, 2003a).

Gass eventually lost the ranch due to unpaid debt and it was acquired by Archibald Stewart (one of his debtors) and his wife Helen Stewart in 1881. The Stewarts moved their family to the ranch in 1882, but Archibald died soon after the acquisition. Helen Stewart stayed and continued to operate the ranch with her children for almost two decades, becoming the largest landowner in what was then Lincoln County. After learning of plans for a railroad, Helen sold the majority of her ranch to Montana Senator William Clark, retaining ownership of 160 acres where she continued to live as one of the first settlers of the city of Las Vegas.

Before selling her land, Helen Stewart had her ranch surveyed by civil engineer John T. McWilliams who, upon learning of the forthcoming railroad, purchased 80 acres of land adjacent to the Stewart ranch. Based on the rumors of the railroad, McWilliams surveyed and platted his land, naming it the "Townsite of Las Vegas" in 1904, and began to sell lots (Rayle and Ruter, 2013). At about the same time, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company, a subsidiary of the railroad, surveyed its own land and recorded this area as "Clark's Las Vegas Townsite" in 1905. Once the railroad was built, McWilliams townsite was located on the west side of the railroad tracks whereas Clark's townsite was on the east. Clark's townsite was aligned to the northeast-southwest line set by the railroad line which was shifted 27 degrees off north to allow for the straightest run of track through the flat valley (Hess, 1993). In contrast, McWilliam's townsite was aligned to the typical north-south line, providing less railroad frontage for the settlers who had already begun settling in McWilliams' townsite. Additionally, Clark's townsite was closer and more accessible to the train depot and, eventually, McWilliams' townsite began to decline. The McWilliams townsite was further doomed when, in September 1905, much of the townsite was destroyed by fire (Mooney, 2003a).



*Figure 2: Diagram showing relationship of McWilliams Townsite and Clark's Townsite to the railroad. (Las Vegas, 1994)*

Clark was an entrepreneur who not only had the funds to start a railroad, he recognized the growing market of Southern California and realized that Las Vegas was an ideal stopping point between Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. The previous trade and mail route between the two cities made the existing trail via the Las Vegas Valley the most cost-efficient route for the railroad. Clark also knew that Las Vegas provided enough water to not only sustain a town, but to service the locomotive industry as well (Moehring, 1989). Clark formed the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad in 1900.

Initially, Clark's townsite was located in Lincoln County, but due to the growth and development of the railroad town, Nevada's Legislature passed a bill in 1909 to create Clark County, with Las Vegas chosen as the county seat. With the addition of the railroad, Las Vegas continued to grow and the townsite incorporated into the City of Las Vegas in 1911. Fremont and Main Streets served as the town's main commercial arteries. The majority of Main Street, which ran parallel to the railroad tracks, consisted of businesses dedicated to the railroad. Fremont Street was the primary town center and the remaining blocks were Las Vegas' first, exclusive residential area. Development within Clark's townsite continued to flourish until 1921, when Clark sold his interest in the San Pedro, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City Railroad to the Union Pacific Railroad Company. Strikes by the union employees of the railroad eventually led to many of the services being relocated to Caliente, which stagnated the previously flourishing economy in Las Vegas (Moehring and Green, 2005). Simultaneously, the Las Vegas Land and Water Company refused

to make upgrades to the infrastructure of the city, which further hindered additional growth in the 1920's.

In an effort to combat this recession, Las Vegans turned to Tucson and Palm Springs for economic inspiration. A two-hour drive from Los Angeles, Palm Springs began developing into a resort city in the mid-1920s, which caught the eye of many Vegas entrepreneurs (Hess, 1993). The 1920s saw varying tourist destinations pop up in the valley, including a dude ranch for vacationers and prospective divorcees as well as a high class resort and man-made twin lakes for boat sports and swimming. In 1927, Las Vegas began development on its first golf course where the Westgate (formerly the Las Vegas Hilton) stands today (Moehring, 1989). While these efforts were unsuccessful in combating the city's economic recession, they marked the city's desire to expand their economy beyond a railroad town and towards tourism.

It wasn't until the "Reclamation Era" and the Boulder Canyon Progress Act that was passed in 1928 that Las Vegas' economy began to recover and experience another boom in growth and development. The Act funded the construction of a dam to regulate water from the Colorado River to Southern California. The site chosen for the dam was approximately 50 miles southeast of Las Vegas and Las Vegas served as the shipping point for materials and supplies for the project. Work on the massive construction project began in 1931 and an estimated \$19 million was invested into the local Las Vegas economy as a result (Moehring, 1989). In addition, Roosevelt's New Deal pledged even more millions into upgrading the city of Las Vegas with new streets, sewers, and other infrastructure improvements.

Tourism finally became a staple of the local economy as people came from all over the American West to see the construction of what was one of the largest engineering feats of the time. Concurrently, the Nevada legislature legalized gambling in 1931, leading to the development of casinos along Fremont Street. While other American West cities cracked down on illegal gambling, Las Vegas welcomed gamblers. In addition, the state also relaxed its divorce laws, shortening residency requirements from three months to only six weeks, further enhancing the growing tourism economy. The divorce of movie star Clark Gable brought national attention to the relaxed divorce laws and people came from all over wanting to be divorced "at the same place where Ria and Clark got theirs." (Moehring, p. 30, 1989)

The Biltmore Addition(s) are located just north of downtown Las Vegas, near the site of the Mormon Fort. This area, north and northwest of downtown, however, did not see much population growth or development until the onset of World War II (WWII) in the early 1940s. In 1911, Helen Stewart sold a small parcel of her land, north of the fort and bordered by Main Street on the east, to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs for use as a colony for the Las Vegas Paiutes (Mooney, 2003a). It is still in use today. Also in the area, the first ten-acre section of Woodlawn Cemetery was donated to the city by the Las Vegas Land and Water Company. It is bordered by Las Vegas Blvd. on its western edge and was designed by J.T. McWilliams in July of 1914 (Thomson, 2006). The Clark Avenue railroad underpass was constructed in 1936, located at the intersection of Bonanza Road and the Union Pacific railroad today, in order to better connect the African American community residing west of the railroad to the east side of Las Vegas (Mooney, 2003b). And, in 1939, "Helldorado Village," the headquarters of the annual Helldorado Days festival, was relocated near the intersection of Clark Ave (now Bonanza Rd.) and Las Vegas Blvd (Mooney,

2003a). But prior to the 1940s, the area near the Mormon Fort – and the future site of the Biltmore Additions – was still rural in character and at the edge of town.

### **World War II (WWII) and post-WWII Las Vegas**

The onset of World War II (WWII) brought even more federal money to Las Vegas in the way of defense development. The federal government, fearing an attack on the west coast, began building military bases and war industry plants. Military bases and military training installations became dominant features in the southwest, where the government could take advantage of the mild weather and large tracts of open land, much of which was owned by the federal government (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Seizing upon the opportunity afforded by the newly built Hoover Dam, which provided inexpensive power and water to a remote area, the federal government built Basic Magnesium, Inc. and the Las Vegas Army Air Force Gunnery School (Moehring and Green, 2005). Both opened in 1941 and the construction and operation of these military endeavors had an enormous effect on Las Vegas.

The federal government allocated more than 3.5 million acres for military land and established the Las Vegas Army Air Force Gunnery School to the north west of Las Vegas. The Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, as it was called, shuffled upwards of 4,000 students every six weeks through the program during the height of WWII (Moehring, 1989).

Mooney (2003a) writes:

In 1940 the United States Army Air Corps came to Las Vegas to determine whether the community airport could be used as a training facility. The existing airport was owned by Western Air Express who then sold the land to the city who in turn leased the land to the government. In 1941, the Las Vegas Army Air Force Gunnery School opened with nearly 2,000 men stationed at the airfield. Over the course of the war, the influx of workers, contractors, business and military personnel nearly doubled the population of Las Vegas which, in 1940, was 8,422. By 1943 approximately 8,000 servicemen were stationed at the airfield, rising to nearly 11,000 by 1946. The servicemen and workers for the related industries did much to boost the Las Vegas economy as they spent money on entertainment, casinos and bars. After the war ended, the city asked the government to make the airfield a permanent facility and commercial air traffic was moved to another facility, now McCarran Airport. In 1950 the air base became Nellis Air Force Base, named after William Harrell Nellis, a soldier from Las Vegas who was killed in WWII.

Simultaneously, Basic Magnesium, Inc., opened a factory to the southeast of Las Vegas in what is Henderson today. The factory quickly became one of the largest manufacturers of metallic magnesium, a key component in weapons manufacturing in the 1940s. The magnesium plant alone was responsible for growing Las Vegas' population by 15,000 people (Rayle and Ruter, 2013).

Mooney (2003a) further explains:

In 1941 Basic Magnesium Incorporated, a company that mined magnesium in Gabbs, Nevada for the production of military weapons, signed a contract with the federal government to construct

a processing plant in the Las Vegas valley halfway between Las Vegas and Boulder City. Again, the location was convenient due to the availability of water and power from Hoover Dam. By July of 1941 the plant was under construction, employing nearly 14,000 workers. Upon completion in 1943, the plant employed more than 6,000 workers. Most of the employees were housed in a newly constructed company town called Henderson, but were contributing to the Las Vegas economy in much the same way as the servicemen. Basic Magnesium closed in 1944, leaving as many as 13,000 employees to search for work elsewhere, many of whom moved into [or closer to the city] Las Vegas for this purpose.

Some estimates place the peak population in the Las Vegas area during WWII at more than 35,000 people (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

After the war, the gunnery school briefly closed. Fearing the loss of a large portion of its population, state and local officials worked with the federal government to establish a permanent military base on the gunnery site. The civilian airport on site was moved to what is today the Harry Reid International Airport and the air base was deeded to the federal government for one dollar (Mooney, 2003a). As a result, Nellis Air Force Base was opened in 1950.

Due to mounting tensions with Russia, the reopening of the air base led to the "Atomic Age" of Las Vegas, as a portion of the base was dedicated to the testing of nuclear bombs (Moehring and Green, 2005). Tourism advocates in Las Vegas took advantage of nuclear testing on the base, inviting tourists to stay and watch the blasts. All night parties with drink specials and other attractions exploited the test site blasts and "Atomic" became the word of the day for Las Vegas businesses in the early 1950s.

Due to these wartime industries and their expansion of service beyond WWII, Las Vegas experienced significant population growth beginning in the 1940s and for several decades following. This led to the need for increased housing development and, ultimately, a residential construction boom that occurred between the late 1940s and into the 1960s and beyond.

### **Residential Development**

The first residential subdivision in the Las Vegas valley was platted by Peter Buol in 1905, east of Clark's Las Vegas Townsite, just prior to Clark's land auction. Buol sold the lots just after the auction, capitalizing on the investor demand created by the railroad, creating the first residential district known as Buck's Addition (Rayle and Ruter, 2013). The subdivision extended the northeast-southwest grid of the townsite developed by Clark and is representative of early subdivision planning practices known as "horizontal development." This type of development sees an investor/developer purchase land, install basic utilities and minor infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks before the developer sells the land to buyers who would need to design and construct their own homes (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

Residential growth was slow in the early twentieth century, as most could not afford to construct their own homes. By 1930, the population of Las Vegas stood at just over 5,000 (Rayle and Ruter, 2013).

Federal spending on the Boulder Canyon Dam Project and other infrastructure improvements kept the city's population growing. Most early Las Vegas residents lived in worker's tent camps or in apartment buildings, although these were still few in number at this time.

Nationally, however, residential developers started considering alternatives for additional revenue through the direct construction of homes within their subdivisions, beginning in the 1920s.

A new era of community building soon dawned in which developers platted large subdivisions, made infrastructure improvements such as streets, sewer systems, and utilities, and collaborated with architects, landscape architects, and engineers to design houses, plan green space, and construct community schools and churches (Rayle and Ruter, p. 3, 2015).

This, coupled with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR) New Deal programs, which created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1935, significantly impacted the future of residential building on a national level, and set the standard for residential development today.

#### ***Federal Housing Administration (FHA)***

Beginning in the Great Depression, work for architects, home builders, and construction laborers slowed down. Additionally, many homeowners were unable to meet their mortgage debts and foreclosures substantially rose across the country (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Prior to FDR's presidency, President Herbert Hoover "worked with industry experts to explore policy changes at the federal level which would stimulate private lending." (Rayle and Ruter, p. 13, 2015) These policies were subsequently supported by FDR and incorporated into his New Deal legislation.

On June 27, 1934, the Roosevelt administration passed the National Housing Act (NHA). Its stated purpose was "to encourage improvement in housing standards and conditions and to provide a system of mutual mortgage insurance." (Rayle and Ruter, p. 5, 2015) Seeking ways to counteract the social and economic losses of the Depression, the NHA legislation established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). To restart the industry, the FHA offered loan insurance "to lenders on construction and purchase loans, as well as short term home improvement loans. The insurance was to provide the lender confidence that they would be able to recapture a significant portion of their investment if a borrower defaulted on his/her mortgage obligation." (Rayle and Ruter, p. 6, 2015)

Through this program, the agency sought to standardize lending requirements for residential construction. Title I of the NHA act provided insurance on home improvement loans whereas Title II of the act enabled the FHA to provide mortgage insurance for the construction of new single- and multi-family dwellings. Although no direct funding was provided under Title II, lenders were more willing to extend mortgage credit to new customers (developers, land owners, etc.) with a federal loan guarantee. The FHA was also able to offer "forward commitments" to builders of subdivisions, assuring developers that with approved subdivision planning, mortgage financing would be available to buyers of the homes they had constructed (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

In 1938, Congress amended Title II (Section 203) to include a "small-home" program to stimulate lending for moderately priced housing. The "small-home" program provided insurance on single-family residences up to a \$5,400 loan amount and a 90 percent loan-to-property value ratio on newly constructed housing, while the original Title II insurance continued to provide insurance on loan amounts up to \$16,000 at 80 percent loan-to-property value ratio.

Additionally, the new guidelines extended the maximum loan term to 25 years and relaxed credit

rating evaluations for borrowers. With the easing of these guidelines the amount of FHA insured loans, as a percentage of the total market, markedly increased. (Rayle and Ruter, p. 7, 2015)

It is well documented and understood that through these lending standards, the FHA became one of the single most important influences on the American housing market, particularly in the post-WWII era.

Additionally, the FHA also created standard guidelines for home construction and neighborhood development, in order to ensure sound economic investments by the agency. The FHA created a formal Land Planning Division to oversee this task. The precedent to these guidelines were again created under President Hoover's administration. Reports authored under President Hoover emphasized the importance of curvilinear street layouts, open space, and uniformity in housing lots and home setbacks (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Meanwhile, the Land Planning Division issued technical bulletins outlining "desirable standards." (McAlester, 2017) The standards promoted the adaptation of the subdivision to topography, adjustments of the circulation systems to local traffic needs, elimination of sharp corners and dangerous intersections, and the creation of long blocks which eliminated unnecessary streets. These standards resulted in the curvilinear over the rectangular grid and the creation of cul-de-sacs within residential development.

The FHA's regulations were premised on the belief that developers needed to look at their subdivisions as cohesive communities rather than simply individual lots for sale and development. This type of development required a more comprehensive and long-term approach to neighborhood planning that went beyond subdividing land and providing basic infrastructure, as had often been the case with many small-scale developers in the years before the Great Depression. With the prompting of the FHA, the concept of "community planning" began to take hold in the broader residential development market.

FHA oversight of subdivision planning was implemented at the state field office level. Consultants in the planning office were required to approve all development plans for raw, undeveloped land. The developer was able to get pre-commitments for guarantees of loan insurance for home buyers by submitting an application with the subdivision plan to a mortgage lender. The lender then forwarded the application to the state/local FHA office. Architects, landscape architects, and engineers served as in-house FHA consultants and could make recommendations for alterations to a submitted plan in order to achieve approval. Upon approval, the FHA set the appraised value of the homes within the subdivision and gave the mortgage lender notice that credit-eligible buyers could qualify for FHA insurance. FHA consultants also inspected homes upon their completion to ensure they met the agency's building requirements.

The FHA approval process inherently favored large-scale developers who had the staff to work through the necessary steps and could benefit from larger economies of scale. Urbanist Marc Weiss also notes that the FHA guidelines put second-rate developers "...out of business by imposing publicly advertised development standards and by denying mortgage insurance on properties located in subdivisions that failed to meet these standards." The FHA subdivision

planning principles became de facto industry standards so that even those builders who developed higher-end subdivisions, which exceeded the maximum allowable loan amounts to qualify for FHA insurance, followed them as a matter of practice.

As part of the drive to preserve the long term stability of the community—and in turn property values—the FHA also endorsed deed restrictions/covenants to restrict objectionable changes to properties as well as to prohibit “undesirable” residents which included persons of “lower classes” and those classified as minorities. The Home Owner’s Loan Corporation had previously established “residential security maps” for 239 locations in the U.S. in which areas of lower income and higher minority resident populations were coded red to indicate their “instability.” The FHA perpetuated this policy, which was later termed “redlining.” Borrowers living in these redlined areas were nearly universally unable to qualify for FHA-insured mortgages—which as time progressed—would create a de facto form of housing segregation. (Rayle and Ruter, p. 8, 2015)

The pervasiveness of automobile ownership as a necessity for suburban living was also codified with the FHA’s preferred standards. In order to achieve the desired community layout, developers would seek large plats of available land typically on the edges of town, where public transportation services were often not immediately available. Wider lot sizes were also endorsed to accommodate on-site parking and auto ownership.

#### ***Federally Funded Defense Housing Programs***

Although the FHA was initially successful in helping restart the American housing industry after the Depression, its efforts were small in scale and hampered by the onset of WWII. During WWII, the building industry again saw a major decline due to the rationing of materials. Residential subdivision was generally limited during the period between 1940 and 1945 due to lack of available funding and limited materials due to construction materials being reserved for military use as the federal government prioritized resources towards WWII. Western cities that had become centers of military development, such as Las Vegas, struggled with having sufficient housing for emigrants migrating to the valley for defense work. It is estimated that 8 million Americans, largely from rural states and older industrial areas, relocated to new areas of military production west of the Mississippi River during the war era (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

In response, a number of federal agencies were given funding to help provide housing in these defense areas. To facilitate this level of national housing development, the Council on National Defense created the office of Defense Housing Coordinator to coordinate between the various federal agencies involved in the development of housing for defense workers. “Before a community could be deemed in need of government funded housing, a survey was conducted to estimate the number of workers who were required to work in the military related industries; the existing number of vacant rooms/dwellings available for rent; and the capacity of the private industry to meet any gaps in housing.” (Rayle and Ruter, p. 9, 2015)

Early programs included the Lanham Act, which authorized government spending on the construction of rental housing – this housing was limited to enlisted men and defense industry workers and their families. Private developers and builders in the housing industry worried that housing constructed by the federal government would negatively impact the private housing industry. But the actual number of government constructed housing projects only represented 12 percent of the broader housing market. Nonetheless, private interest groups, such as the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, and private developers called upon the government to stimulate the private housing sector (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

President Roosevelt signed an amendment to the National Housing Act known as the Title VI measure, creating the Section 603 housing program. Title VI stipulated that the FHA would provide mortgage insurance for the construction of homes in locations that were deemed "critical defense areas." (Rayle and Ruter, 2013) In 1941, Las Vegas was declared as such.

Of the program, Mooney (p. 8, 2003a) writes:

Under the scope of Title VI, the FHA was permitted to finance construction of homes by private builders and contractors. Under normal circumstances, the FHA could finance only homes which were occupied by the owners. This system of financing [permitted] a builder to secure financing of as many houses as the builder [agreed to build]. In addition, a Title VI mortgage allowed the home buyer to purchase the home without a down payment, by paying equity payments over and above the rent until the equity payments amount to 10% of the purchase price, after which the buyer would discontinue the equity payments and pay only the amount of the FHA mortgage payments. The purchase price of the homes could not exceed \$4,000 for a single-family home.

Rayle and Ruter (p. 11, 2015) go on to describe the program as such:

The maximum allowable cost for Section 603 housing ranged from \$4,000 for a single-family dwelling to \$10,500 for a four-unit dwelling... In order to qualify for housing, defense workers were required to demonstrate that they earned less than \$3,000 annually. Similar to FHA Title II, Section 203 insurance on small homes, Title VI provided insurance on mortgages up to 90 percent of the value of the home, requiring the purchaser to make a 10 percent down payment. A subsequent modification came about through the Title VI guidelines which allowed buyers to make installment payments on the down payment amount over a 30-month period which eased the initial investment requirement.

Recognizing that many war workers would need to rent homes, rather than purchase them, Title VI insurance was also extended to mortgages on one- to four-family rental properties. The program also differed from Section 203 in that a builder or non-occupant owner could also qualify for the same 90 percent loan-to-value.

The program was not immediately successful. Following the United States' entry into WWII, the FHA shifted its focus to "stimulate that type of privately financed low-cost housing, particularly for rent, which can best meet the housing needs of war workers in the war industry centers." (Rayle and Ruter, p. 11, 2015) This was supported by the government's decision in September of 1941 to restrict

disbursement of building materials to designated critical defense areas, such as Las Vegas. Additionally, the materials were reserved for homes costing less than \$6,000 and in May 1942, Title VI was amended to increase the maximum loan amount for a single-family residence to \$5,400, which matched the FHA Title II small-home financing limits (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). In response to these changes, the construction of Title VI residential subdivisions substantially increased.

In October 1944, the Federal government removed restrictions on housing construction materials which set the stage for a dramatic increase in new housing construction. In order to purchase these homes, many buyers turned to conventional, non-FHA financing and veterans also took advantage of the new home loan programs established by the G.I. Bill. In 1946, Title VI was converted to a veteran's emergency housing program and the FHA was charged to "prescribe procedures for giving WWII veterans and hardship cases priority in the purchase or rental of Title VI housing." The following year, Title VI financing was also made available to veterans interested in permanent purchase of government-owned war housing. The FHA authority to issue insurance on mortgages for new construction under Section 603 expired in 1948 and FHA commitments under Section 608 expired in 1950. (Rayle and Ruter, p.13, 2015)

### Housing Shortage in Las Vegas

As defense industries drew large numbers of workers to the Las Vegas valley, the existing housing stock was not adequate both in quantity and quality to support incoming defense workers and their families.

Mooney (p. 8, 2003a) writes:

Before and especially during WWII, Las Vegas, much like the rest of the country, began to experience an increasingly alarming shortage of available housing for the incoming laborers, families of servicemen, and employees in the service industry, which was enjoying a resurgence in Las Vegas. Much like the Depression years, families were living in cars and hotel rooms, doubling up in accommodations, or partaking in the "share your home" programs, where families with extra rooms rented to those in need. Rent hiking reached scandalous proportions and tourists were being turned away as there were no available accommodations.

Rayle and Ruter (p. 24, 2015) go on to describe the local response to the situation:

In 1941, Rolla E. Clapp, chairman of the National Housing Research Organization, was hired to study and compile a report on the housing situation in Las Vegas. Clapp reported that there was an immediate shortage of 385 homes and a need to replace roughly 500 existing sub-standard homes. He underscored the urgency of Las Vegas' housing crisis, noting that for the 3,000 families anticipated to relocate for work at the newly constructed BMI, an additional 4,500 families would arrive in Las Vegas to support them in the service industry. Clapp predicted that the 1940 population of roughly 8,000 in Las Vegas would soon reach 13,000.

Clapp's report provided the critical data to bolster the general perception that Las Vegas was suffering from a critical housing shortage. Nevada Senator Berkeley L. Bunker reported in a June 16, 1941 article in the Las Vegas Review Journal that talks were ongoing with President

Roosevelt's defense housing coordinator Charles F. Palmer on the designation of Las Vegas as a critical defense area. Such designation, he observed, would allow the city to benefit from the recently passed FHA Title VI mortgage insurance program (Las Vegas Review Journal, 16 June 1941). One week following this article, the Las Vegas Review Journal announced Las Vegas's designation as a Title VI defense area. The article noted "the president's designation makes possible mass construction of FHA-financed homes, which will complement and not supplant the existing FHA facilities in the home financing field (Las Vegas Review Journal, 23 June 1941).

An article appearing in a December 1941 edition of the Las Vegas Review Journal demonstrates that the FHA had begun approving Title VI housing in Las Vegas noting that 647 applications for insurance commitments had been received totaling more than \$2,500,000 of potential new housing. FHA representative Harry Sheeline stated that of these applications 167 had been approved which would result in the construction of \$496,350 in new housing. The average cost of each home was listed as \$4,000 and it was reported that home construction was typically completed within three months (Las Vegas Review Journal, 20 December 1941:4). In January of the following year, the Las Vegas Review Journal reported that in Las Vegas "building permits show tremendous gain over 1940" (Las Vegas Review Journal, 3 January 1942:5).

As a result, a total of 17 residential subdivisions were platted between 1940 and 1949 in the Las Vegas area, reflecting the need for housing to supplement the population growth due to the defense-related industries. Even after the war was over, casino and resort growth in the downtown and Strip locations created another local source of employment and the population continued to rise in the Las Vegas valley. The population of the City of Las Vegas tripled between 1940 and 1950 to 24,624 (Rayle and Ruter 2013). In contrast to the earlier form of horizontal development, these subdivisions were among the first in Las Vegas to reflect a shift to "vertical" development, where the developer not only subdivided the land and created the infrastructure, but designed and constructed the homes as well (Rayle and Ruter, 2013). This method of development became the dominant form of residential home construction, exemplified by the housing boom of post WWII America, and continues to be so today.

#### **FHA-Influenced Subdivisions: The Biltmore Addition**

Four FHA-influenced subdivisions were constructed in Las Vegas during the WWII era. These neighborhoods include the Vega Verde Addition within the John S. Park Historic District (1941–1945; 1951); the Biltmore Addition (1941–1946); the Huntridge Neighborhood (1941–1946), and the Mayfair Homes Neighborhood (1941–mid-1950s) (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Three of these subdivisions, the Biltmore Addition, the Huntridge neighborhood, and the Mayfair Homes neighborhood received funding under Title VI and were specifically developed to house non-commissioned officers and civilian employees of the Las Vegas Bombing and Gunnery Range, as well as employees of Basic Magnesium, Inc., and their families.

Mooney (p. 8, 2003a) writes:

By 1951 the total personnel at Nellis had risen from 2,200 in 1949 to 4,800, including civilian employees. Under the Federal Housing Act, the federal government assumed responsibility for the construction of 400 houses on base for officers and enlisted men. In addition, approximately 1,100 units were built on base by private developers for military families, with the remaining personnel to live off base, many purchasing Biltmore Homes.

Basic Magnesium Incorporated [also] closed in 1944, resulting in a mass exodus of many of its employees. School enrollment fell by more than two-thirds, and more than half of the homes in surrounding Henderson became vacant. The local government scrambled to find several industrial firms to rent the vast complex. It was difficult to find a private buyer for the plant because the city of Henderson was included in the assets. Eventually, a new Basic Management Incorporated was created to manage the plant. The new company was made up of representatives from each tenant corporation. The government assumed non-interest mortgages and notes and advanced the corporation \$300,000 as a reserve fund. In 1948, the title was transferred to the state of Nevada for 24 million dollars and one dollar down. The plant remained open as tenants were found and the population of Henderson boomed with the sale of private lots. Many families returned to Las Vegas and Henderson to work for the air base and at the industrial plant, also finding homes within the Biltmore development.

Evidence of the FHA guidelines and desirable standards are evident in the design and layout of these subdivisions, with curvilinear streets, central circulation and long roads with limited access from major thoroughfares.

In December of 1941, the initial plat of the Biltmore subdivision, Biltmore Addition, was filed by Biltmore Homes, Inc., on property formerly owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. The irregularly-shaped subdivision consisted of 97 lots, bounded by North 1<sup>st</sup> Street on the west, the west side of Biltmore Drive on the east, Palm Lane on the north, and extending slightly below what was then Clark Avenue (today Bonanza Road) on the south, just north of the I-15 and I-95 interchange.

Rayle and Ruter (p. 59, 2015) find:

The lots were situated within six blocks that varied in size due to the subdivision's irregular shape. The lots also varied in size and shape, with the smallest lots located adjacent to street intersections and the largest lots located to the north of Biltmore Drive and along a cul-de-sac at the east end of N. First Street (see Figure 3). [The street layout and housing style was designed and approved according to FHA regulations, as this was a federally funded housing development. Streets within the subdivision [are] narrow and curvilinear. Housing setbacks [are] also curvilinear, with some lots exhibiting as much as 55 feet of setback and others having a setback of only 20 feet. A newspaper article describing the addition noted that the variation in setback was designed to "avoid the old time uniformity of house fronts." Additionally, a 5-foot-wide utility easement was present along the rear of each lot.

Construction of the majority of the first phase was completed in 1942.

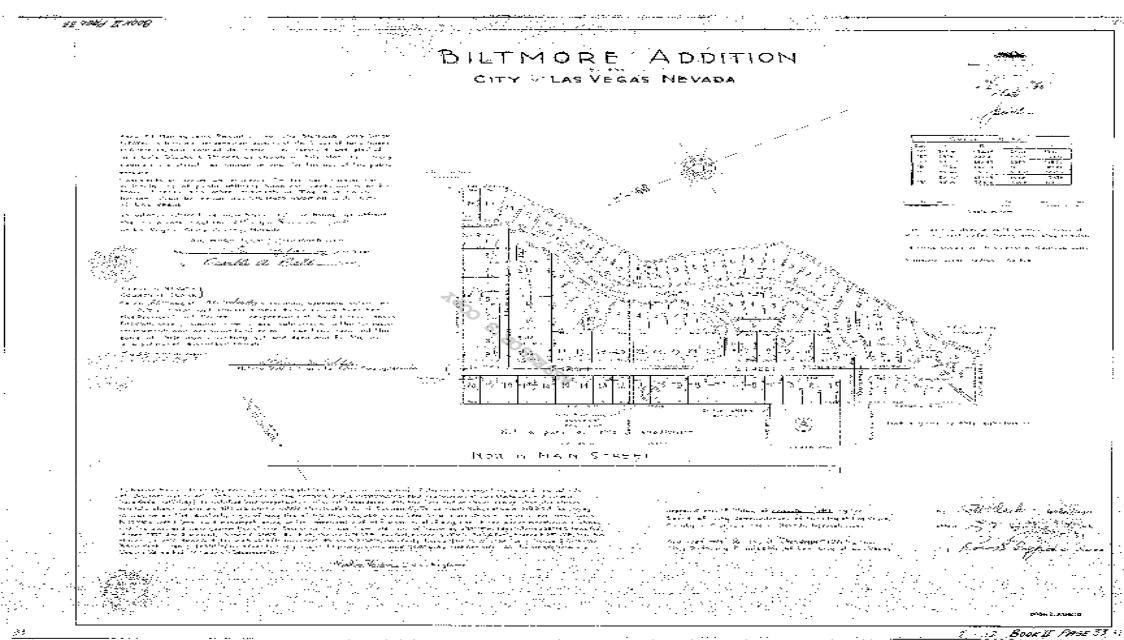


Figure 3: Historic Plat Map of Biltmore Addition

Despite following the FHA standards for neighborhood design, which were touted for their ability to create safe neighborhoods, safety was a concern for residents in the Biltmore subdivision. Starting in the mid-1940s, several Biltmore residents presented petitions to the city commission to request crosswalks, sidewalks and street lights (Mooney, 2003a). Lacking sidewalks, it was stated that the narrow, winding streets were responsible for many accidents involving children because they had to walk in the street, often after dark. Typically, the cost of the homes would have included these types of street improvements, however, due to the war, it was difficult to obtain materials and many WWII-era residential subdivisions in Las Vegas lacked these improvements, including the Huntridge and Mayfair Homes neighborhoods, indicating that these materials were difficult to obtain within the region.



Figure 4: 1942 Advertisement for Homes in the Biltmore Addition (Las Vegas Review Journal, 1942)

Homes planned for the Biltmore Addition were designed by Phoenix-based architect Orville A. Bell, who was also the secretary for Biltmore Homes, Inc. Rayle and Ruter (p. 59, 2015) write:

Prospective buyers could choose from 16 elevations designed by Bell, with the stipulation that their home had to be a different elevation than the ones adjacent to it. Although a 1942 newspaper advertisement for the original subdivision depicts a cottage style home with a central chimney, double hung, multi-lite windows, and a one-car attached garage, the majority of the homes within the addition were built in the FHA-prescribed Minimal Traditional architectural style (Figure 4). All of the homes were to be a single story with a shaded overhang, or service porch, and each was to contain two bedrooms and one bathroom. Additional rooms included a living room, dining room, and kitchen. Homes were advertised with a concrete tile exterior, but were predominantly constructed of concrete block with brick veneer.

In 1942, three consecutive annexations were filed to the original addition. All three of these annexations—known as Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1, 2, and 3—were filed by local businessmen Archie C. Grant, Al E. Cahlan, and E. W. Clark of Victory Homes, Inc. [All three of these men were extremely well known and powerfully connected local businessmen and politicians who were linked personally through various project collaborations and civic affairs (Mooney, 2003a).] Annex No. 1 was approved by the Board of Commissioners and city on March 4, 1942, and Annex No. 2 and 3 were both approved on May 4. Annex No. 1 included 43 lots—one of which was reserved for an elementary school (known today as the Biltmore Alternative School) (Figure 5). [The majority of the homes of Annex No. 1 were built in 1942 and 1943.] Annex No. 2 was slightly larger, with 55 lots located along N. Fourth Street, Bell Drive, and Bonanza Way (Figure 6). [The homes of Annex #2 were built primarily in 1942 and 1943, also similar in construction and design as the first two Biltmore phases.]

The largest of the plats, Annex No. 3, was situated between N. Fifth Street (now Las Vegas Boulevard), North Ninth Street, McWilliams Avenue, and Bonanza Road and consisted of 61 lots (Figure 7). Unlike the other three plats, the third plat had lots for commercial development and included plans for the construction of a hotel and shopping center (Mooney, 2003a).

Additionally, the lot on the corner of Bonanza Drive and N. Ninth Street was reserved for the construction of the North Ninth Street School. Homes within these later annexations were generally the same as those of the original tract, although the final phase of development also includes some homes built in the Ranch architectural style, which according to Mooney (p. 10, 2003a), “succeeded the Minimal Traditional as the most common WWII and post WWII suburban housing type and style.” Newspaper accounts also indicate that dwellings within Annex No. 3 were slightly more expensive, with the original price of at least 10 homes averaging between \$5,000 and \$6,000. This change in price was presumably due to inflation, as all of the buildings were constructed in 1954 (Mooney, 2003a).

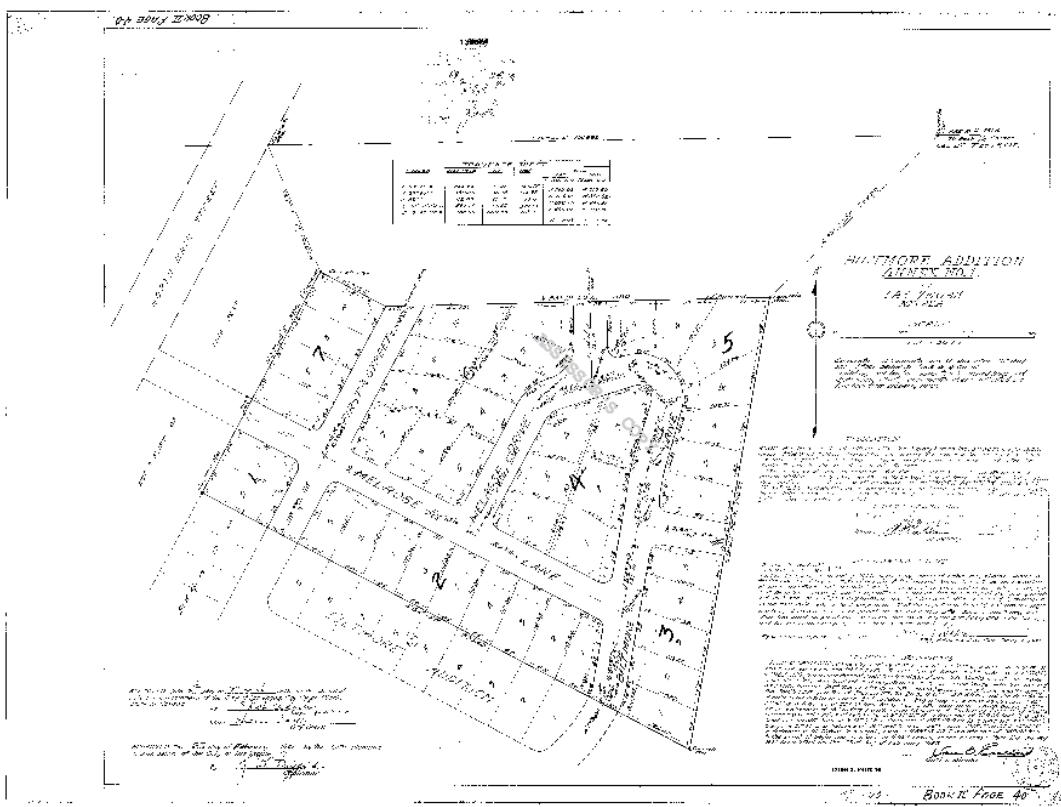


Figure 5: Historic Plat Map of Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1

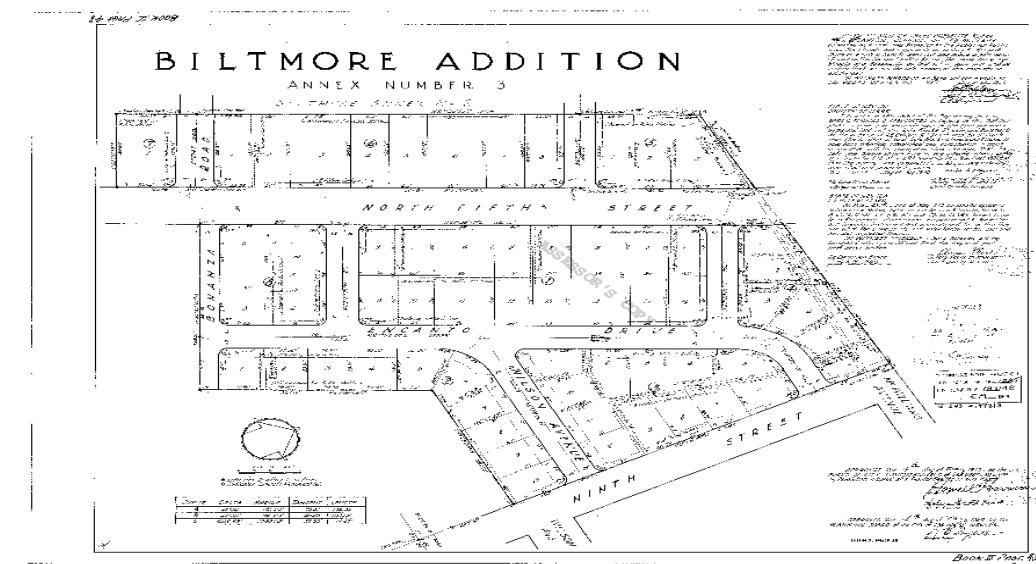
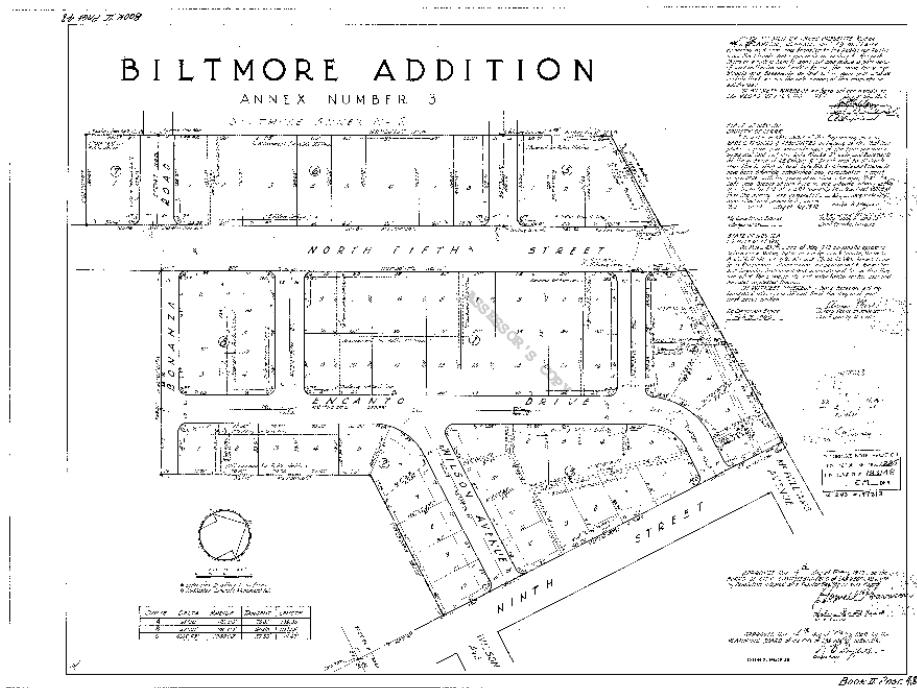


Figure 6: Historic Plat Map of Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2



*Figure 7: Historic Plat Map of Biltmore Annex No. 3*

## Social History

### African American History in Las Vegas

Although residential subdivisions built in the 1940s were built to house the influx of defense workers and their families, these subdivisions were restricted to white residents. Despite an increase of African American and Black residents in Las Vegas during this time, who also emigrated to Las Vegas for employment in the burgeoning defense industries, Black residents were subject to de facto segregation and suffered through inadequate housing and community conditions until integration began to take hold in the Las Vegas valley around 1972.

The African American population in Las Vegas was relatively small in the early 20th century. However, their population increased substantially beginning in the mid-20th century. Following the founding of Clark's Las Vegas Townsite in 1905, African Americans began migrating to Las Vegas to work for the newly established railroad. Records for the 1910 Federal census confirm that many African Americans worked as machinists or electricians, and that some owned or operated their own businesses (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). But at this time the African American population remained small, and by the end of 1910, only 40 of the townsite's 945 residents—or less than 1 percent of the total population—were African American (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

Perhaps due to the low population, housing and the public education system within the City of Las Vegas were not formally segregated in the early 20th century. Historian Claytee White notes that 12 people of

the population of 52 African Americans were property owners who lived in the downtown area. She also described relations among early racial groups as relatively harmonious during the 1920s. (Rayle and Ruter, 2015)

However, the development of the Hoover Dam in the 1930s shifted the dynamics of race relations within Las Vegas (Chattel 2015). None of the initial 4,000 men hired for the dam construction work were African American (White, 2004). In 1928, Black residents of Las Vegas formed a branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to advocate for employment at the dam. This resulted in 44 jobs being opened to African American residents, although this was only a small number when compared to the thousands of jobs that were available for white workers.

The incoming white dam workers also brought with them attitudes of race-based prejudice, which began to change the segregation practices within Las Vegas as these men sought segregated facilities for services and entertainment (White, 2004). Rayle and Ruter (p. 94, 2015) note that newspaper accounts "suggest that during the 1930s African Americans were forced to move outside the city limits to an area commonly known as the 'Westside,' which was the site of McWilliam's original Townsite of Las Vegas. Historians disagree on the factors behind this dislocation, but by the end of the 1930s, numerous Black-owned businesses had been established in the Westside area.

Rayle and Ruter (p. 95, 2015) note:

The redlining policies of the FHA during the 1930s further contributed to the pattern of African American occupancy within the Westside, as black home ownership prohibited developers from gaining FHA financing and caused them to restrict residency to white owners. In 1939, white residents also petitioned the city for zoning that would eliminate blacks from residing in certain parts of the Westside. The petitions were sent to the city attorney for legal determination, and were ruled in violation of the Fourteenth amendment of the Constitution. Despite this ruling, landlords and housing developers systematically refused to rent and sell to black residents.

In general, the living conditions on the west side of Las Vegas were poor. Accounts from residents living in the Westside community during this time report that most people rented enough land to have a small tent or shack and that cooking was accomplished on a communal-type stove with many families pooling their efforts to prepare food for their families (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). The city did not extend sewer services to the Westside until the 1950s (Mooney, 2003b). As a result, most structures lacked electricity and running water, and outhouses and communal toilets were common. Despite continued lobbying efforts on the part of African American residents of West Las Vegas to receive infrastructure improvements in the 1930s and 1940s, city leaders stated that the low property values of the Westside did not warrant city expenditures for improvements (White, 2004).

Despite these conditions, opportunities in the defense industries, both at the Las Vegas Air Gunnery Range and Basic Magnesium, Inc., kept the African American population growing within the Las Vegas Valley. Rayle and Ruter (p. 95, 2015) write:

On June 25, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 which, in part, proclaimed “there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin.” It further ordered that all government contracts with defense industries include anti-discrimination provisions. Between 1942 and 1944, the African American population of Las Vegas soared, largely due to the construction of Basic Magnesium, Inc. and the provisions of EO 8802... While EO 8802 stated that there would be no discrimination in government employment, these policies did not extend to housing... The FHA continued its policy of maintaining the color line when providing mortgage insurance during the war, justifying it along economic lines such as the stabilization of resale values.

As the Black population rose, housing conditions in the Westside grew increasingly intolerable. A newspaper article from December 16, 1942 notes that a health study was to be conducted with “West Las Vegas” due to unsanitary conditions (Las Vegas Review Journal).

As WWII came to an end, the poor living conditions on the Westside could no longer be excused by the lack of building materials and wartime housing shortages. The city decided that the best way to handle this public embarrassment was through mass slum clearance. Between September 1944 and April 1945, roughly 375 substandard shacks and cabins, and 50 privies were demolished or razed with no plans by the city for replacement. It is not clear where the residents of these houses relocated. It wasn’t until the construction of Marble Manor—an FHA-sponsored public housing project of 50 duplexes built on the southwest corner of Washington and H Street—that strides were made to improve living conditions for the city’s African American community. Three years later—in 1954—the Berkley Square subdivision was platted. This neighborhood, which was designed by prominent African American architect Paul R. Williams and named after one its financiers, Oakland civil rights activist Thomas L. Berkley, provided an additional 148 single-family homes; although, this was a considerably small number based on the city’s population of 16,000 black residents (Rayle and Ruter, p. 99, 2015).

#### *Clark Avenue Railroad Underpass*

Since the founding of Las Vegas in 1904, relations between the communities located on either side of the railroad was strained. On the west side of the tracks, McWilliams original Townsite of Las Vegas lost favor to Clark’s Las Vegas Townsite and the railroad created a physical barrier between the communities. Access between the two townsites was hindered by the dangers of crossing a railroad, which also slowed expanding water and sewer services, electric lighting and commercial trade (Mooney, 2003b). As the community became more and more segregated, the railroad served to create a physical boundary between the growing black and white communities.

The construction of the Clark Avenue Railroad Underpass at Clark Avenue (Bonanza Road today), just east of Main Street, was a civic attempt to ease some of this strained relationship, as well as a means to facilitate infrastructure improvement in the Westside community.

After becoming a subdivision of Las Vegas in 1916, residents in McWilliams' townsite began to demand water services from the city. It was repeatedly reported that conditions in McWilliams townsite were unsanitary due to the contaminated water supply from surface wells. Additionally, the community had no protection from fire as there were no water lines to provide for fire hydrants (Mooney, 2003b). It wasn't until the federal government announced their plans to build Hoover Dam that the city began to negotiate in earnest with residents living west of the railroad to bring city water to the community. Two new residential tracts, Valley View and the H.F.M.&M. Tracts had been platted just north of McWilliams townsite in the mid 1920s to prepare for families who would be coming to work on the dam and the increased development called for new infrastructure services, including water.

Following a meeting in 1927 between then Las Vegas Mayor Fred Hesse, City Attorney Frank Stevens, and a prominent developer and newsman named Al Cahlen, Steven's explained to the City Commission that they had the power to issue a bond to construct a municipal plant to provide water services to the Westside (Mooney, 2003b). The bond was finally issued in 1930, which, among other improvements, provided for the purchase of water-rich land west of the city. Although Mayor Hess convinced the Las Vegas Land and Water company to extend its water main to the Westside community, the majority of the project wasn't completed until the city received federal aid from the Roosevelt administration in the 1930s (Mooney, 2003b).

Other improvements such as paved roads and electric lighting were slow to expand to the Westside as well. Mooney (p. 15, 2003b) writes:

It is obvious that leaders in Las Vegas were reluctant to supply water and other basic services to Westside residents due to low land valuations, and the low-income population lacked the necessary political influence to make demands. The population of the Westside during that time was comprised of mainly low-income whites and some Chinese, Mexicans, and blacks who had come to the area to work for the railroad and the dam.

Conditions became increasingly worse as the Westside community grew. It wasn't until 1934 when the city of Las Vegas negotiated with the Civil Works Administration (CWA) to receive funding for improvements that the city began to invest in minimal improvements in the Westside, as well as throughout other parts of the city. As part of this improvement program, the city recognized that an easier and safer route across the railroad tracks was needed. The route chosen was at Clark Avenue, which was part of the Tonopah-Reno Highway and was a major link between the Westside and the city's downtown business district (Mooney, 2003b).

The underpass was completed in 1937 and it not only provided new, safe access across the railroad, but symbolized the opening up of the Westside community (Mooney, 2003b).

Las Vegas Mayor Leonard Arnett addressed the crowd at the opening celebration for the underpass, saying "a short time ago the ribbons of steel of the Union Pacific separated the Westside and the east side of town. Today that barrier has been removed thanks to President Roosevelt for his program in making this underpass possible, to the state officials for their foresight, and to the workman who constructed the project." (Mooney, p. 18, 2003b)

E. W. Clark, one of the men with Victory Homes, Inc., the corporation responsible for the platting and construction of homes within the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1, 2, and 3 of the Biltmore Addition, also spoke at the address.

Unfortunately, the project did not provide a catalyst for economic development in the Westside community, nor did it end the mounting racial prejudice that existed in the Las Vegas community at that time.

#### ***Black Biltmore***

On June 22, 1942, Robert Lee “Bob” Brooks, opened Las Vegas’ second resort hotel, The Nevada Biltmore, at 614 Main Street on the corner of Main Street and Clark Ave (now Bonanza Road), near the site of the newly constructed Clark Avenue underpass and just west of the emerging Biltmore Addition neighborhood. Brooks brought the Polynesian theme that made him famous with his Seven Seas nightclub in Hollywood to the Nevada Biltmore, which included a hotel, casino, and 32 detached bungalows. Through a series of leasing the hotel to various managers, and in 1943, leasing the casino to another corporation, Brooks ultimately sold the property in November of 1944 to G.E. Kinsey.

Upon announcing the sale of the Nevada Biltmore to Kinsey on November 14, 1944, W. H. Grunwald, representing the Kinseys, told reporters, “We intend to make the Nevada Biltmore a real part of the City of Las Vegas and make it a place where the people of the community can meet and enjoy wholesome entertainment and good food.” Grunwald added, “...as soon as the government restrictions are eased so we can get material, we expect to make improvements at the hotel. We intend to have the Nevada Biltmore take its place alongside the other fine establishments which this community well can boast.” (Stoldal, 2018) Due to wartime restrictions on building materials to outfit the hotel as Kinsey had planned, as well as gas rationing that limited the availability of locals and visitors to access the hotel, the Nevada Biltmore struggled to draw in the crowds needed to garner a profit, and in 1946, 18 months after purchasing the Nevada Biltmore from Brooks, Kinsey sold the Nevada Biltmore to Horace Heidt, a nationally famous band leader (Stoldal, 2018).

In early 1949, the Texas-Nevada corporation (with Texas oilman Homer W. Snowden introduced as the President of the newly-formed group), the new owner of the financially troubled Nevada Biltmore, sought to provide service to the African American community, locals and tourists, who were without access to any of the other hotels and casinos in Las Vegas due to Jim Crow-era practices. The story of the brief and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to convert the Nevada Biltmore into a resort for African Americans was documented in a series of articles published by the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

On May 8, 1949, the Las Vegas Review-Journal wrote,

The future status of the Nevada Biltmore hotel burst into the local spotlight yesterday when some 200 property owners in the Biltmore and Tiffendale additions stormed the chambers of the Las Vegas city commission to ask questions and offer comments.” The word had gotten around that Homer Snowden of Dallas, Texas, who recently purchased the property, intended either to operate it as a Negro resort or turn it over to others who had that plan in mind.

P.A. Clark, leader of the group, said he had talked to Snowden on the telephone and that he would neither affirm or deny the intent. He did discuss the probable manner in which the property would be operated under those circumstances...and even indicated if residents of the Biltmore district wanted to sell out, their holdings would be purchased.

Following the meeting with the city commissioners, the property owners of the Biltmore, Tiffendale and North Main street sections, adjourned to the auditorium where an organizational meeting was held.

P. A. Clark acted as chairman and Mrs. Victor Giasson acted as secretary. During the meeting, a committee of eight was formed with a view toward ‘protecting the property values’ of the areas affected”....Howard Cannon accepted the post of legal advisor [to] work with the committee on the legal questions involved in the program.

Cannon was resident and owner of 715 Bell Drive in the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2 from 1946-1983, which may have signaled his interest in keeping the Biltmore neighborhood segregated. Cannon was a lawyer, military pilot, and politician. He served three terms as Las Vegas City Attorney before his election to the U.S. Senate in 1958. Cannon was instrumental in the passage of the Southern Nevada Water Project Act (1965), a critical expansion of the pipeline system that supplies water from the Colorado River to the Las Vegas Valley. Cannon also played a major role in transforming Nellis Air Force Base into a fighter weapons training school. (Stout, 2002).

“Cannon pointed out the restrictive covenants in the various deeds to the property and said that if a court fight was necessary, it would be carried all the way to the United States supreme court for final decision” (Stout, 2002). [Restrictive covenants in real property deeds that prohibited the sale of property to non-whites were held unconstitutional the prior year by the United States Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), which might explain why Cannon’s argument was not raised in subsequent proceedings].

“Mayor E. W. Cragin told the Biltmore property owners that they could expect the full support of the city commission in their effort to protect the value of their homes.” (Las Vegas Review-Journal, 8 May 1949)

The Las Vegas Review Journal on May 22, 1949 reported,

A committee of property owners from the Biltmore and Tiffendale districts protesting the issuance of a gambling and liquor license to Stanley D. Hunter... went home passively last night when the commission allowed Hunter to withdraw his application for the license and submit a new one signed by all stock holders in the new Texas-Nevada corporation.

P. A. Clark, spokesman for the eight committee members, told the commissioners that the Biltmore and Tiffendale property owners were protesting the issuance of the hotel’s gambling and liquor licenses as “detrimental” to the two residential districts....

Clark said that his committee was protesting the licenses as "public nuisance" rather than protesting the possibility that the hotel may be converted into a Negro resort hotel.

On May 25, 1949, the Las Vegas Review-Journal announced, "The Las Vegas Board of Realtors today issued a statement concerning the proposed sale or lease of the Nevada Biltmore Hotel."

The statement read in part,

any use at this time of the Biltmore hotel property as a Negro club or resort hotel would be very much more harmful to the immediate area and to the planned economy of the entire city than it would be beneficial to the Negro populace of the community....The realtors have long felt the need for a decent Negro district in this city and expressed them as unanimously in support of an aggressive program of continued improvement of conditions for the West Side area and encouragement of earliest possible development of decent club, restaurant and hotel facilities for the Negro populace, tourists and visitors.

On June 14, 1949, the Las Vegas Review-Journal wrote,

Immediate conversion of the Nevada Biltmore Hotel into an all-Negro resort was announced today by Stanley D. Hunter, owner, who revealed that he had purchased the hotel and property in an outright sale yesterday. "The Nevada Biltmore is open to Negro local and tourist trade now," Hunter said. "All personnel will be Negroes as soon as they can be obtained.

Conversion of the Nevada Biltmore marked the opening of the first resort hotel of its type in the nation.

On June 17, 1949, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that band leader Horace Heidt was foreclosing on his \$180,000 mortgage on the property following a default of payment on June 1st. Heidt's representative denied that the foreclosure was related to the hotel's conversion to an "all-Negro resort." The article noted that who actually owned the Biltmore was not clear, as the Texas-Nevada corporation was still listed as the legal owner; however, Heidt's representatives repeatedly noted that the band leader had no intention of running the hotel again, he simply wanted the remainder of the sale price for the property, a figure around \$180,000.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal wrote on June 21, 1949 that approximately 100 residents of the Westside attended a meeting called by NAACP president Woodrow Wilson to discuss the Biltmore, and an invitation extended to Mayor Cragin. "The assembly was told on behalf of the city board, none of whose members were able to attend, that liquor and gaming licenses had been revoked in line with established policy." The city represented that the revocations occurred because the gaming license was held by a former owner with no interest in the property and a liquor license could not be granted to Stanley Hunter as he was not qualified. The residents were scheduled to meet with the city commission the following day.

Less than a month after the commission meeting, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported, "...the hotel continues to operate without gaming or liquor licenses, with Negro guests permitted to bring their own liquor bottles for drinks in the dining room." (13 July 1949)

The Las Vegas Review Journal wrote on July 19, 1949,

the ill-fated operation of the Nevada Biltmore hotel as a colored resort for the past five weeks ended abruptly today, as the place was ordered closed by Homer W. Snowden, a stockholder of the Texas-Nevada corporation, which has attempted to operate the hostelry since May 1, 1949... For the past several weeks, the Biltmore has attempted to operate without gaming or liquor licenses, which were revoked by the city after the Texas-Nevada corporation took over...

By the time new applications were filed..., the city board of commissioners already had adopted a resolution against issuing further licenses.

On July 21, 1949, the Las Vegas Review-Journal wrote,

Snowden's "last hope," a deal to sell the Biltmore to a syndicate of wealthy Negro entertainers, collapsed when the city of Las Vegas remained firm in its refusal to grant the hotel liquor and gambling licenses, and when Heidt refused to drop the foreclosure action without payment of five defaulted mortgage installments.

Civil rights leader Woodrow Wilson's account diverges from the reported coverage, placing events during a later time the hotel was renamed the Shamrock. (No other supporting evidence was found to suggest that that attempt to convert the resort did not take place in 1949.)

I was president of the NAACP during the Horace Heidt-Shamrock Hotel episode. The Horace Heidt organization purchased the Shamrock Hotel and was going to make it an interracial hotel. And the people of the local area, the immediate area around the Shamrock Hotel, which was at the Intersection of Bonanza and Main Street, protested to the City Commission at the time. A group of approximately 250 or 300 Blacks followed me down. We marched on City Hall to give support to the Horace Heidt organization because we felt that this was needed to show the support that this community would give to an inter-racial hotel. In the real early days here we had total discrimination in all the establishments in uptown Las Vegas and the small Strip area. We had only one or two hotels on the Strip at that time. So we were defeated when the City Commission voted to deny Horace Heidt a license to operate the hotel. It was a really sad situation for the Black community because that would have put Blacks in positions of authority, management, and the like. It would have helped to raise the economic status of the community, by having people make the type of money that executives and sub-executives make in the hotel industry. So, that was a setback in the community, but we continued to work. (Wilson, 1975).

In 1949, County Commissioner Clem Malone and a group of others purchased the Nevada Biltmore and changed the name to the Shamrock Hotel. Unfortunately, the hotel did not end up a lucky bet for Malone who was charged with taking bribes as a county commissioner in 1950, and then failed in his bid for governor of Nevada the same year. He then lost his seat on the county commission in 1951. Malone filed for bankruptcy after losing his stake in the Shamrock Hotel in 1954, and the property eventually

ended up as Shamrock Furniture before being demolished to make way for a shopping center in 1960 (Stoldol, 2018).

Almost six years later, the Moulin Rouge would open on the Westside, the first integrated resort in Las Vegas, and the lessons learned through the attempt to make the Nevada Biltmore an exclusive African American resort property likely helped navigate the political waters of the day.

### **Residential Architectural, Minimal Traditional**

Beginning in the 1930s, national trends in residential architecture began to transition into what is now known as the Modern period, which is associated with architectural trends that occurred in mass between the 1940s and 1960s (generally) in America. The Minimal Traditional style represents the earliest of the Modern architectural expressions. The style dominated residential design for much of the 1940s and was the preferred style of architecture for FHA-approved subdivisions during the WWII era, although the style pre-dates WWII and remained popular into the 1950s (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). It is the dominant style of WWII era housing in Las Vegas.

Prior to WWII, residential architecture primarily featured the Period Revival style of architecture, including a number of subsets such as the Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Cape Cod Revival. Regional varieties of this style can be seen in Las Vegas in the Las Vegas High School Neighborhood District and John S. Park Historic District. The Craftsman style, which gave birth to the Bungalow, also emerged as one of the most popular styles of the early 20th century. Early housing in Las Vegas for railroad workers, known locally as railroad cottages, were built in the bungalow style. Most of this housing has since been demolished or removed and few examples of this housing exist regionally, although a handful of well-preserved examples can be seen at Boomtown in the Springs Preserve.

The Minimal Traditional style of architecture emerged out of this popular Bungalow style. The Bungalow had little detail when compared to earlier residential housing of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a rejection of late 19th century Victorian ornateness and the rectangular-shaped form was more utilitarian in nature. By using local materials and compressed footprints, which resulted in open floor plans that combined domestic functions into a single great room, the Bungalow style reduced construction costs and became a popular and affordable housing option for many middle class Americans (Faragher, 2001). Bungalows were typically one- to one-and-a-half stories tall, with the ground floor raised above grade, and incorporated spacious, covered front porches and gabled roofs with wide eave overhangs (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). With roots in Southern California, the style was well-suited to the sunny, desert climate of the southwest. The wide porches, overhanging eaves, and slated attic vents all helped to reduce temperatures during the hot summer months.

The Bungalow came to represent an idealized vision of informal domestic life through its accessibility for the burgeoning middle class in growing American cities and it was adapted into numerous other styles of residential architecture, particularly influencing the Modern period in America (Craig, 2015). With the standardization of housing introduced by the FHA, first during the Great Depression, and the material restrictions during WWII years, the Minimal Traditional style of architecture emerged as an even less adorned, modest type of residential architecture. Borrowing from aspects of both Period Revivals and

the Bungalow, the style synthesized ornate revivalist and modern styles into an efficient and cohesive whole that could harmonize within existing residential neighborhoods (Staehli, 1987). Minimal Traditionals were typically one-story homes with medium pitched roofs, gabled or hipped roofs, and little to no eave overhang. The rectangular-shaped houses were generally small with limited detailing and were characterized by a simplicity of form, materials, and detail (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

In the mid-1930s, contemporary design journals began publishing architect-designed plans for affordable, small-scale homes and, following the National Housing Act of 1934, the FHA recognized the need for modest, affordable housing which could be constructed throughout the country. The FHA also began producing technical bulletins with specific plans that developers as well as individuals could use (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

The chief reference guide put forth by the FHA technical division was *Principles of Planning Small Houses*, first released in 1936 and reissued throughout the 1940s. The house plans presented in the Bulletin recognized the primacy of maintaining functional space within a small home. Along these lines, the bulletin also advised builders to consider the placement and orientation of the home on the lot to achieve optimum ambient temperature, natural light, and views. The square-shaped home, for example, was touted as preferable over irregular forms, as uniform squares allowed for conservation of materials. Additionally, the bulletin called for simple, lower-pitched roof lines which emphasized the horizontal mass of the dwelling. In a foreshadowing of the ranch style yet to be popularized, the bulletin noted ‘exterior proportions are also improved by setting the house as low on the ground as possible.’ The bulletin also specifically stated that ‘simplicity in exterior design gives the small house the appearance of maximum size. The fewer different materials used on the exterior the better the appearance usually will be.’ Despite exhortations for simplicity, the bulletin suggested varying the materials between houses as well as varying building orientation on the lots in an effort to promote heterogeneity in subdivisions (Figure 8). Ultimately, it was the “small-home” guidelines developed by the FHA that fostered the development of the “Minimal Traditional” style home with its small, rectangular-shaped form, low to medium pitched roofs, and uniform wall materials. (Rayle and Ruter, p. 100, 2015)

Other terms for these homes included “small houses,” “Depression-era cottages,” “War Years cottages,” “Victory cottages,” “economical small houses,” “FHA houses,” and “FHA smalls.” (McAlester, 2017)



Figure 8: FHA's depiction of how to achieve variation among small houses through varying material selection and building orientation (Image taken from Federal Housing Administration 1940a) (Rayle and Ruter, 2015)

With the onset of WWII, the ability for developers to obtain construction materials became increasingly more difficult. Opportunities to vary facades through different material use became more limited and building facades became more standardized (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Private home construction also ceased during WWII years, which reduced architectural variety in emerging residential neighborhoods as well. In 1942, the War Production Board (WPB) issued a directive which formally restricted the distribution of construction materials in the housing industry and both private and public housing developers were required to submit preference ratings for materials distribution, which were limited to areas considered essential to the war effort (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). While the WPB called for all construction to be of the cheapest, temporary character, the FHA continued to stress the importance of sound structural quality as a requirement of houses that would receive FHA-insured mortgages. In this respect, the FHA and WPB collaborated with developers in critical defense areas in order to assist with community and architectural planning in areas where housing was needed for defense workers and their families. "As the war progressed, the Minimal Traditional type continued to play a significant role in the architecture promoted by the FHA, and its modest size and detailing conveniently conformed to WPB standards." (Rayle and Ruter, p. 102, 2015)

Residential architecture in Las Vegas largely followed national trends, adopting both the Bungalow and Period Revival styles in the early 20th century. As the city entered the Great Depression and WWII, FHA involvement in residential development saw these earlier styles replaced by the Minimal Traditional style. Variants of this style in Las Vegas included adaptations of the Cape Cod Revival, whose stylistic elements can be seen in Biltmore, Huntridge, and Mayfair (Mooney, 2003a).

Minimal Traditional type houses draw characteristics from period revival as well as bungalow styles. These single-story homes are box-like and can take either rectangular or L-shapes; although rectangular-shape is predominant. The low-pitched roofs are of the gable or hip variety with virtually no eave overhang. A small front porch is typically present along the main façade. The walls of the buildings were generally brick and at the time of their completion, could be painted or unpainted. There is typically no decorative detailing along the façade. The use of steel-casement windows was common but wood frame windows can also be found.

Minimal Traditional Cape Cod variant residences can be seen in the form of rectangular-shaped buildings with horizontal, symmetrical facades, steep, side-gabled roofs, and a central gabled front porch. The porch gable may also include a classical pediment. The rectangular-shaped multi-lite windows also frequently include decorative shutters. The walls are either brick or have clapboard siding and an interior brick chimney is nearly always present. (Rayle and Ruter, 2015)

Following WWII, the Minimal Traditional style eventually lost favor to Ranch style homes, perhaps the most popular and well known style of the Modern period. Mooney (2003a) states:

The Ranch style traces its origins to the 1930s, when several internationally-renowned modernist architects were designing highly technical, low, spare houses in Southern California. It also drew inspiration from Spanish Colonial forms of the American southwest, with influences of later Craftsman and Prairie designs. The “rambling” Ranch style was well suited to the sprawling suburban subdivisions and the more casual lifestyle of the postwar era, reflecting a consumer preference for a larger, more open and informal floor plan. This style is typically one story with a U- or L-shaped plan, and generally recognized by a low roof pitch with an emphasis on horizontality, represented by wide eave overhangs and in more modern examples, horizontal window proportions.

Rayle and Ruter, (p. 103, 2015), go on to describe Ranch style homes in Las Vegas. They write:

Early Ranch style homes in Las Vegas shared many characteristics of the Minimal Traditional architectural style including one-story massing and horizontality, but favored L-shapes with projecting front gables. The rooflines became lower in pitch and incorporated wider overhanging eaves. Large picture windows were incorporated into the front elevation and entry doors were typically located under porches. The carport, and later garage, became a prominent feature of the home. These features were often incorporated under the existing roofline which further added to the horizontal expanse of the front facade. The placement of the carport also allowed for economically feasible conversions to rooms for additional space. Over the next two decades, Ranch style homes expanded in size and incorporated more elaborate detailing and multiple building materials. While hesitating to create an official definition of Ranch style architecture, Clifford May stated ‘most of us describe any one-story house with a low, close-to-the-ground silhouette as a ranch house. When a long, wide porch is added to this form, almost everyone accepts the name. And when wings are added and the house seems to ramble all over the site, the name is established beyond dispute.’

### **Additive Growth**

As the Ranch style gained popularity over the Minimal Traditional, it was not uncommon to see these earlier homes incorporate additions and alterations that mimicked the Ranch style - or later styles - of architecture. Early residential subdivisions often experience periods of growth and change. This is particularly true in WWII era neighborhoods that exhibit the Minimal Traditional style of architecture, which was designed in a way that easily allowed for expansion and alterations to the home. Architectural historians term this phenomenon “additive growth,” which is defined by the “owner occupant’s desire to improve domestic circumstances through remodeling and enlargement rather than relocation.”

(Guettinger, Cottrell-Crawford, Levstik, and McKinney, 2021)

Another fundamental feature of the Biltmore Addition(s)’s built environment is the way in which its residents have modified and updated their residences over time, incorporating new trends in design and building materials into the neighborhood fabric. Common additions and alterations in the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood include the construction of free-standing or attached carports and garages and the construction of additional living space onto the sides or rear of the home. Additionally, the replacement or covering up of historic materials is not uncommon, primarily through the replacement of doors and windows and the addition of exterior siding materials.

### **Biltmore Addition, Architects, Builders, Developers, and Corporations**

Rayle and Ruter’s *World War II Era Housing in Las Vegas* (p. 104, 2015) historic context provides additional information on the architect and developers of the Biltmore Addition and Biltmore Additions Annexes No. 1, 2, and 3.

#### **A. E. Tiffany and Orville Albert Bell (Biltmore Homes, Inc.)**

A. E. Tiffany and Orville A. Bell were affiliated with Biltmore Homes, Inc., the corporation responsible for platting the first (1941) phase of the Biltmore Addition. At the time of the neighborhood’s platting, Tiffany was the corporation’s vice president and Bell was listed as its secretary. While no information on Biltmore Homes, Inc.’s association with Las Vegas was discovered, historic newspaper accounts suggest that a corporation of the same name was constructing subdivisions in Long Beach, California during the late 1940s and early 1950s. It is unclear, however, if the two corporations are affiliated.

Interestingly, A. E. Tiffany and Orville Bell also appear to have been newcomers to the Las Vegas real estate scene when they platted the Biltmore Addition in 1941. While little evidence exists to suggest that either of the men were associated with the development and/or construction of additional subdivisions in Las Vegas, archival research indicates that both were prolific in the Phoenix, Arizona real estate market as early as the 1920s. In 1925, A. E. Tiffany and his brother Herb C. Tiffany, Sr. formed the Tiffany Construction Company.

Orville Bell was an engineer as well as a prominent Phoenix architect. Bell was born in Blaine, Maine to Israel G. and Alberta L. Bell on November 30, 1904. He eventually relocated to Athens, Ohio, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in Architectural Engineering from Ohio State

University in 1927. In 1930, Bell moved to Phoenix and teamed with Vere Olney Wallingford to form the architectural and engineering firm of Wallingford & Bell.

During his time in Phoenix, Bell designed a number of important Depression era public buildings, including the Arizona National Guard Armory, Phoenix High School, the Publix Market (1930), and the west wing addition to the State Capitol Building (1939). He also designed single-family residences in at least two Phoenix neighborhoods—the North Encanto (1939–1956) and Encanto-Palmcroft (1927–1942) subdivisions—both of which are listed in the NRHP. Bell was closely affiliated with the FHA, and was purportedly the first architect to file an application for an FHA-insured mortgage after establishment of the Arizona office in 1934. Additionally, his residential designs—perhaps most notably the Nuckles House (1938), a one-story Pueblo Revival style residence within the Encanto-Palmcroft neighborhood—was widely publicized by the FHA in Phoenix newspapers during the mid- to late 1930s. One of the streets within the addition is named Encanto, possibly as homage to the Phoenix neighborhoods, and the name of the addition proper may pay tribute to the famed Arizona Biltmore Hotel—which was designed by Albert Chase McArthur in 1929, with the assistance of Frank Lloyd Wright.

#### ***Tiffendale Tract***

The first reference to the Tiffendale Tract appeared in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* in 1943. The last mention of the development was in 1955. The names Tiffendale and Tiffany Lane might derive from A. E. Tiffany, vice-president of Biltmore Homes, the corporation that platted the first phase of the Biltmore addition in 1941 (Rayle and Ruter, 2015).

Specifically, Tiffendale might be an alternative title for Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2. The City of Las Vegas seems to have treated Biltmore and Tiffendale as separate but related neighborhoods. Classified ads for the Tiffendale Tract list addresses that either are or could be in Annex No. 2. Clark County Assessor. (Assessor's Parcels, Clark County Nevada, book T20S, 27 June 2022)

The land that became the Tiffendale Tract had been owned previously by the Las Vegas Land and Water Company. A storm sewer built in the 1930s emptied into the area when it was still unused land. The *Las Vegas Review Journal* noted in 1941,

The city board was informed by City Manager Charles McCall that something had to be done with the storm sewer which, when built, emptied into unused land but now flows into one of the newer sub-divisions of the city. The storm sewer, built back in the early 1930s, was carried from Fifth street down to a point north of the present city racetrack which, at the time was far enough out of the city as not to bother anyone. However, now that the city has grown, the sewer empties into the Tiffendale tract..." (December 7)

The classified ads for the Tiffendale Tract are consistent with its history as a neighborhood designed to house defense workers and military. During World War II, owners advertised rooms to let and goods for sale. One ad listed the occupant as a staff sergeant. After the war ended,

owners began selling their houses, sometimes listing homes for immediate occupancy. Multiple ads state that the home for sale had existing F. H. A. financing, which was restricted during the war to designated defense industry locations such as Las Vegas.

TWO bedroom **Tiffendale** home newly redecorated. Fully equipped with prewar furniture, rugs and drapes. Excellent condition, hardwood floors, lawn, fruit, shade trees, shrubs, trellis shelter and arbor. Many extras. \$7,300 cash. Balance \$3,600. Low F. H. A. payments. Immediate possession. Call 2614. m27-a3

Figure 9: Tiffendale Home Listing in Classified Section (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 1946)

**A. P. Maynard, Albert "Al" E. Cahlan, Archie C. Grant, and E. W. Clark (Victory Homes, Inc.)**

These four men were associated with Victory Homes, Inc., the corporation responsible for the platting and construction of homes within Annex Nos. 1, 2, and 3 of the Biltmore Addition. At the time of the first plat's filing, A. P. Maynard was the corporation's president and A. E. Cahlan was secretary. The archival research effort did not yield any information on A. P. Maynard. His name appears on the plat for the first annexation only, which suggests that he may have stepped down or was replaced as the company's president between the filing of Annex Nos. 1 and 2.

The remaining men—Clark, Cahlan, and Grant—were, according to Mooney, “extremely well known and powerfully connected local businessmen and politicians who were linked personally through various project collaborations and civic affairs.” Perhaps the most well-known of these men was E. W. Clark, a pioneer resident and prominent political and community leader (Figure 10). Clark’s importance to the city of Las Vegas was recently summarized in a *Las Vegas Review-Journal* article, which stated:

The power structure of Las Vegas in the ‘30s was headed by Ed W. Clark. Ed Clark was to Vegas what George Wingfield was to Reno. He controlled most of the economy of the community through his banking facilities.

The article went on to state that Ed was responsible for appointing members of the city and county commission and other powerful bodies within the state. Ed was born to Jacob C. and Julia Clark in San Jose, California in 1877. Ed’s father passed away soon after his birth, and Ed’s mother moved the family to the silver town of Pioche where she operated a boarding house for miners. Ed helped his mother with her business until the age of 17, at which point he started his own cattle business in northern Lincoln County. As Pioche was without a railroad siding, Clark also went into the freighting business, eventually forming a partnership with Charles C. Ronnow of Panaca. Together, under the name of Ed W. Clark Forwarding Company, the men transported

freight from the end of the Union Pacific Railroad in Milford, Utah to the mining communities of southern Nevada. The men eventually migrated to Caliente, where Clark continued to operate his freighting company and served a brief stint as the town's postmaster.



*Figure 10: Photo of Ed Clark, date unknown (Las Vegas Review Journal, n.d.)*

When the railroad came to Las Vegas, Clark and Ronnow moved their business to a wood-frame building within the newly-formed Clark Townsite. The men changed the name of the company to Clark County Wholesale and diversified their business to provide food and other items to miners in addition to hauling freight. In 1906, Clark was elected treasurer of Lincoln County. One of his first acts as treasurer was to shift the county deposits from Pioche to the First State Bank in Las Vegas, a move which helped him become the bank's director in 1909. He went on to become president of the bank in 1926 following the retirement of partners John S. Park and J. Ross Clark. He held this position until 1937, when he sold the bank to the First National Bank of Nevada. Clark also advocated for the formation of Clark County and was promptly elected its treasurer when the county was established in 1909. He went on to become the president of Consolidated Power & Telephone Company, the city's first power and telephone company, and like other prominent Las Vegans, he was also instrumental in the construction of Hoover Dam. In addition to serving 25 years on the interstate commission that ultimately persuaded Congress to build the dam, he is credited with conceiving the amendments that gave Nevada shares of the power and water that it provided. He also served as Nevada delegate for the Democratic National

Convention in 1936 and 1944, and was a member of the Democratic National Committee for the state of Nevada in 1939.

Interestingly, Clark never married and had no descendants. He lived with Ronnow and his wife next to their business on Main and Clark Streets until his death in April 1946. Numerous buildings and structures named after Clark are present in Las Vegas today. Among them is Nevada Energy's Ed W. Clark Generating Station (1954)—the state's oldest steam-powered generating plant—and the Ed W. Clark High School (1965). The school, which is located at 4291 Pennwood Avenue, is the only high school in Clark County to be named after a person.

Second-generation native Nevadan "Al" E. Cahlan was an influential journalist, politician, and community activist. Cahlan was born in Reno in 1899 and remained there until graduating from the University of Nevada with a degree in electrical engineering. He was employed as an engineer for the Nevada State Highway Department for several years after graduation, before moving to Las Vegas in 1921, where he taught math and science at Las Vegas High School. He continued to work summers with the highway department, and in 1922, moved to Elko where he worked for them full-time. While in Elko, Cahlan met newspaper publisher Frank Garside, who eventually purchased the Clark County Review and hired Cahlan to manage it. Upon accepting the management job, Cahlan returned to Las Vegas, where he became acquainted with Ed W. Clark and together, the men are credited with controlling the political scene in Las Vegas during the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, the men were so close that Cahlan's brother John often referred to Al as Clark's lieutenant. Cahlan used his affiliation with the newspaper to promote community events and voice his opinions on Nevada civil issues. He was made a partner of the newspaper in 1928 and in that year was responsible for convincing the Clark County commissioners that election officials should remain present at voting locations until all the votes were counted, which resulted in the news room having early access to election results. The following year, Garside and Cahlan bought out the Las Vegas Age, a competing publication, and the name of the newspaper was changed to the Evening Review Journal.

Between 1930 and 1960, Cahlan published a popular but controversial daily editorial-page column entitled "From Where I Sit," which was later mocked by founder of the Las Vegas Sun, Herman "Hank" Greenspun, in his daily publication "From Where I Stand." He also sold advertisements. In 1949, the newspaper was purchased by Donald Reynolds, with the agreement that either he or Cahlan (who remained managing director) could buy the other one out. Between 1926 and 1960, he transformed a 300-circulation weekly into a daily with 27,000 subscribers, the largest in the state. Reynolds exercised his option and bought out Cahlan on December 11, 1960. Cahlan remained active in politics and business, variously serving as a representative in the Nevada Assembly, a chairman of the state central committee and on the Las Vegas Planning Commission, as well as service as a committeeman for the Democratic National Committee.

He is often most remembered for his role on the Colorado River Commission where he lobbied for Nevada to purchase the Basic Magnesium Plant following its closure in 1944. He also

collaborated with U.S. Senator Pat McCarren in drafting legislation for Federal Aviation Administration air mail contracts. He also wrote numerous articles on the city's history and his early memories of the city, before passing away from complications resulting from a stroke in 1968.

Archie C. Grant was the first University of Nevada regent from Southern Nevada and was one of the strongest voices for the creation of the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). He was born in Ely, Minnesota in 1896. He attended college, married, and began his career as a businessman in Minnesota, but a 1947 Las Vegas Review-Journal article called him a "transplanted native son" of Las Vegas. He came to Las Vegas in 1928 and purchased a Ford dealership, which he managed for 27 years before selling it in 1955. He was also involved in management of the Bank of Nevada from 1953 until his death in 1974. He was a member of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce in the early 1930s, eventually becoming the board's president. At the same time, he worked with Nevada legislators who were writing new laws for legalized gambling and was credited with helping shape that legislation. Profits he made from real estate purchases allowed him the free time to become more involved in politics. He ran for governor in 1934, losing in a six-way democratic primary. He ran again in 1954, losing again. In between his gubernatorial bids, he served a term in the Nevada Assembly and one in the state Senate. He became chairman of the Las Vegas Housing Authority when it was created in 1947 and served in that position for 20 years. After the war, Grant turned his attention to the town of Basic (known today as Henderson).

In 1952, Grant ran successfully for the office of University of Nevada regent, which put him in the position to advocate for the creation of UNLV. Despite resistance, he helped procure land for a campus and his continued efforts contributed to the UNLV's opening in 1953 (Taylor 2014).

## **PART II: Biltmore Addition(s) Historic Resource Survey and Historic Register Eligibility Evaluation**

### **Physical Setting**

Today, the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood covers approximately 43.357 acres within the downtown area of the City of Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. Once situated at the city's edge, the neighborhood is less than a mile from the city's downtown historic core, but has been physically separated from this urban center since the construction of Interstate 515 in the late 1960s. The interstate runs parallel with the south edge of the neighborhood, just south of Bonanza Road, preventing the northward growth of the city's downtown historic core. The Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood is also physically separated from the city on the west by both the Union Pacific railroad tracks and the later construction of Interstate 15. The boundaries of the neighborhood have remained fairly consistent over time, though commercial development has steadily encroached on the neighborhood at its edges, especially near its adjacent commercial corridors. The neighborhood is also historically separated into halves by a flood channel,

with the Biltmore Addition and Annex No. 1 located on the west and Annex No. 2 and No. 3 located on the east (Figure 11).

The Biltmore Addition Annex No. 3 was not included in this research. Located on the east side of Las Vegas Blvd,' previous research by Mooney (2003a) recorded that many single-family homes within Annex No. 3 have been converted to multi-family housing or replaced by commercial development. Mooney observes that:

These homes lack consistency of style, as some are built in the later Ranch style which followed the Minimal Traditional as an immensely popular style for suburban housing developments all over the United States, but unfortunately these Biltmore homes have been separated from their original historic context by the later construction of large apartment and commercial buildings on the site of demolished Biltmore homes along North Las Vegas Boulevard, essentially cutting the existing homes off from the earlier Biltmore additions.

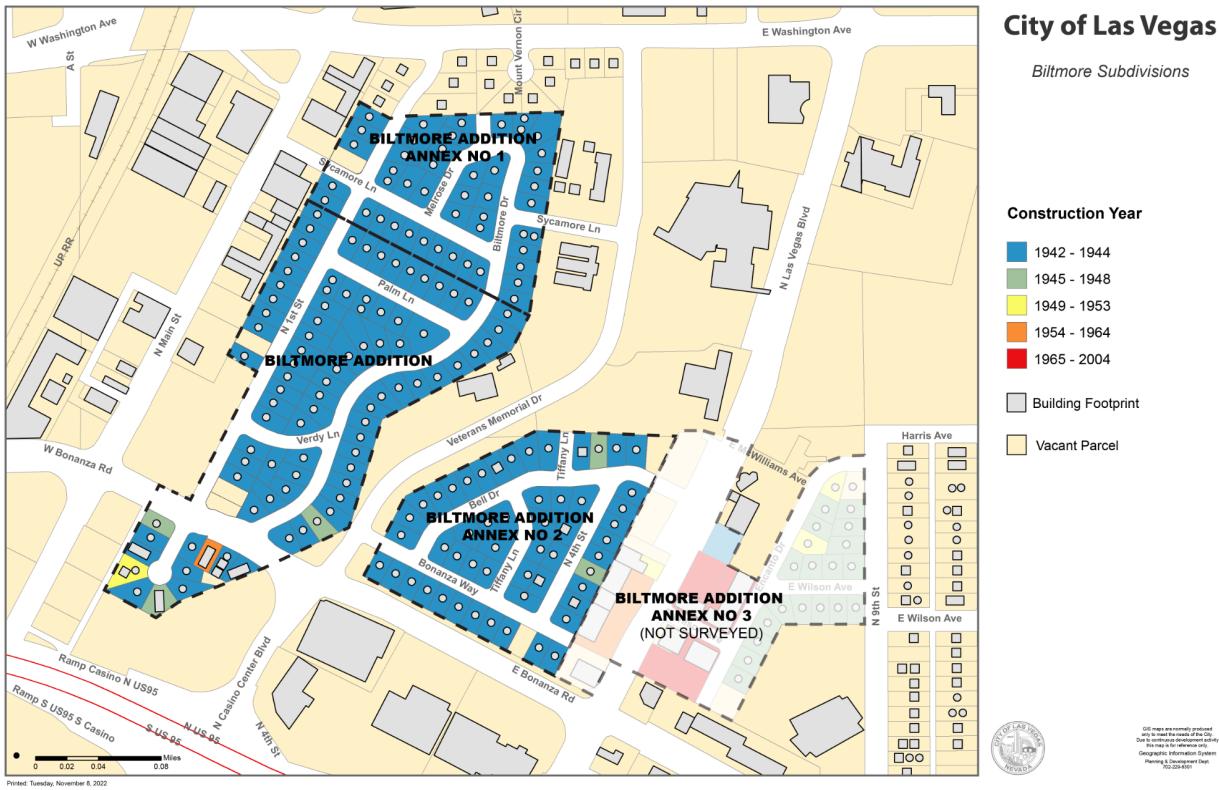
The removal of more than half of the original homes built within the Biltmore Addition Annex #3 has seriously compromised the original boundaries of this portion of the subdivision. Because these properties have been removed from their historic context, the sense of association with a historic time and place has been lost.

In their historic resource inventory of WWII era housing in Las Vegas, Rayle and Ruter further document the following:

According to Mooney, many single-family homes within Annex No. 3 have been converted to multi-family housing. Additionally, aerial photography suggests that all of the original buildings on Block 1 of Annex #3 were demolished sometime between 1973 and 1983. An apartment complex and parking lot is situated on the southern half of the block, and the Neon Museum is located on the northern half.

For this reason, the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 3 was not included in this research.

Figure 11 shows the surveyed portion of the Biltmore Additions neighborhood. This area is the focus of the remainder of this report.



*Figure 11: Surveyed area include the Biltmore Addition, Biltmore Addition Annex No 1, and Biltmore Addition Annex No. 3. Biltmore Addition Annex No. 3 was not included in this survey report. (Large map is available in Appendix A.)*

The surveyed Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood contains 185 parcels, of which 179 contain historic age structures. Six (6) parcels are vacant, 176 are zoned low density residential (R-1), and 9 are zoned for commercial use. Construction years of the residential buildings range from 1941-1947, with the majority of construction taking place between 1941-1943.

The subdivision remains much the same as it did during the historic period (Figure 11). Aerial photographs confirm that residential construction within the addition was largely completed by 1950, with additional commercial development occurring along N. Main Street, N. Las Vegas Boulevard, and E. Bonanza Road between 1950 and 1965 (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). The majority of change to the built environment has occurred on N. 1st Street, where a substantial number of lots on the southwest corner near Bonanza Road were razed and replaced by a commercial warehouse development. Aerial photographs suggest buildings on all of these lots were razed between 1994 and 1999 (Rayle and Ruter, 2015). Additionally, four of the vacant lots are located on N. 1st Street, with more commercial development planned for the southeast corner at Bonanza Rd. Only one and two lots are vacant within the annexes No. 1 and 2, respectively. The majority of the residential parcels contain single-family residences, but the survey found that several have been converted to low-density multi-family units, such as duplexes and triplexes. These findings were sometimes confirmed by assessor's records, but

many on-site observations did not match the assessor's land use designations. These discrepancies are noted in the accompanying ARA forms.

## Methods

A comprehensive field survey was conducted by Michelle Larime and Olivia White between the months of June and August 2022. The field survey was completed block by block throughout the survey area boundaries. Site observations as well as information obtained by the Clark County Assessor's Office and Google Imagery (2009-2022) was used to determine if each property retained a significant level of historic integrity to qualify either as an individually eligible or contributing property to a possible historic district. Building observations note architectural style, architectural details, and modifications made to each property. Digital photographs were taken for each property and were captured in jpeg format. Results of the survey are recorded using the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office's Architectural Resource Assessment (ARA) forms, complete with determinations about whether or not each property retained representation of the historic context.

Previous Nevada Preservation Foundation staff surveyed the neighborhood between November 2020 and February 2021. In some instances, the data and photographs collected during this earlier survey were used on the ARA forms. However, all of the 186 properties located in the Biltmore Addition and Biltmore Addition Annexes No. 1 and 2 were re-visited during the latter survey dates by Larime and White, ensuring that all of the ARA forms reflect the current condition of the neighborhood. Information retained from the earlier survey was only used if no changes had occurred between the first and second visit to the property.

The focus of the survey was two-fold: to determine whether or not the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood could be eligible as a district for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and, if not, if it could be eligible as a district for inclusion on the local City of Las Vegas Register of Historic Places. Integrity was evaluated using the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Historic Register of Places (NHRP): location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A detailed explanation of how these aspects were evaluated can be found in the next section. Generally, in evaluating properties for individual eligibility, design was the primary area of focus, followed by materials and workmanship. In order to evaluate whether or not the property remained true to the original architecture, special attention was paid to the massing and architectural details of the street facing facade of the property. Individually eligible properties were recommended only when these qualities were observed to be preserved with very little to no modification.

In evaluating the contributing status of eligible properties to a potential historic district however, equal weight was given to all of the seven aspects of integrity and in many cases the feeling and association of the property contributed heavily toward its contributing status. Many of the residences have had modifications made, which is expected for properties that are now over fifty years in age. Contributing status was determined by whether or not modifications to the property enhanced or compromised the original character of the architecture. The modifications range in scope from new additions and carports to new windows and exterior siding materials. All of these types of modifications can have some effect on the original integrity of the residence. However, in many cases the modifications that were made did

not appear to have an adverse effect on the historic integrity of the property. In this way, feeling and association were just as important in evaluating the integrity of a contributing property. In general, if the original massing, “small house” footprint of the residence, and service porch of the property was left intact, then despite alterations to building materials and workmanship, the property could be considered a contributor. Living additions, garages and carports could also be considered a contributor if they did not overwhelm the massing or footprint of the original “box” house. Common replacement materials that were accepted in evaluating integrity were wood and aluminum siding, stone or brick veneer, and aluminum and vinyl window replacements.

Larime served as the sole author of the accompanying report. As previously stated, the City of Las Vegas commissioned research on the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood, including the Biltmore Addition and the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1 and 2, as well as World War II (WWII) era residential housing in Las Vegas. This previous research is primarily documented in two sources: *Biltmore Homes Historic Resource Survey and Inventory*, written by Courtney Mooney of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Preservation in 2003, and *World War II Era Residential Housing in Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada (1940-1945)*, written by Greta J. Rayle and Helana Ruter of Logan Simpson in 2015. Both reports are thoroughly documented, well-researched, and provide the context necessary to establish the importance of the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood and WWII era housing in Las Vegas. As such, these reports are heavily cited in the accompanying report.

Secondary to these reports, additional archival research was conducted as necessary to further define the historical context of the surveyed area. The research included visits to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Lied Library and Special Collections and an online review of the *Las Vegas Review Journal* archives. Several additional hard copy and online resources were also consulted.

### **Biltmore Addition(s) Eligibility Framework**

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) represents the nation’s official list of properties and districts that are worthy of preservation. The National Park Service (NPS) oversees this list, making the final determination as to whether or not properties and districts are considered eligible for inclusion on the NRHP. NPS Bulletin 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, provides guidance for individuals who wish to evaluate the eligibility of a property for the NRHP. Additionally, the National Register Bulletin *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places* provides the most comprehensive framework for assessing the eligibility requirements for listing residential housing (Ames and McClelland, 2002). This bulletin states that residential subdivisions, “as collections of domiciles linked through association with comprehensive planning efforts and/or architectural design render themselves particularly amenable to NRHP evaluation under the ‘district’ property type (Rayle and Ruter, p. 116, 2015). There may also be instances in which individual single-family or multi-family dwellings will be individually eligible for listing.

In order to be eligible for listing in the NRHP, buildings, structures, sites, objects and/or districts must possess significance under one of the four established criteria:

- Criterion A: association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;

- Criterion B: association with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- Criterion C: embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, representation of the work of a master, possessing high artistic values, or representing a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction; or
- Criterion D: has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to an understanding of prehistory or history.

In order to be eligible for listing, the subject property must also be able to convey its significance through retention of its key character-defining elements. Integrity is determined through the evaluation of seven key variables: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. These variables are weighted differently for different property types and criteria of significance.

#### **Period of significance 1940-1950**

The historic context presented by Rayle and Ruter (2015) provides a general framework for assessing these seven aspects of integrity for determining the eligibility of residential housing in Las Vegas during WWII. Rayle and Ruter establish a period of significance beginning with the year 1940, when the U.S. began to redirect industrial production for materials and munitions stockpiling, a decision that had tremendous impact on the production of domestic housing. The end date for the period of significance, 1950, marks the end date of the majority of construction within the Biltmore Addition(s) subdivision.

This period of significance is an important benchmark for evaluating the integrity of properties located within the Biltmore Addition(s) survey area. Resources that are determined to be eligible must retain the key character defining features that were acquired during this period of significance. Modifications and alterations occurring after the period of significance should be evaluated in terms of their impact on the property's ability to convey these character defining features. As such, properties in the Biltmore Addition(s) subdivision were evaluated using the framework below.

### Evaluation criteria for properties located in Biltmore Bungalows

<b>National Register aspects of integrity</b>	<b>Qualifications and characteristics for Biltmore Bungalow properties</b>
Location: place where the historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred	<p>Significance is linked to the subdivision development.</p> <p>All Biltmore properties will retain their integrity of location.</p>
Design: combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property	<p>In order to retain significance, the residence must retain its features of design that are consistent with Minimal Traditional types:</p> <p>Minimal Traditional design elements of Biltmore properties include: rectangular “box” plan, medium pitch side-gable roof, little to no overhang, shallow porch along front façade w/ roof overhang and minimal post support, casement or sash-style windows, minimal door surround, and minimal ornamentation</p> <p>Some properties may have characteristics associated with period revivals such as minimal colonial-style door surrounds</p> <p>Some properties may possess qualities of the Minimal Traditional Cape Cod variant such as a central gabled front porch (may include a classical pediment), multi-lite windows, and decorative shutters</p> <p>Additions should not overwhelm the historic scale and proportion of the side gable, “box” structure.</p>
Setting: physical environment of a historic property or the character of the place in which the property played its historical role.	<p>Residences largely derive their significance from association with a broader district.</p> <p>Most Biltmore properties will retain their integrity of setting: Residence is located within subdivision or district, structure is set back from roadway, large open space in front of structure (front yard), relationship to roadway &amp; historic street patterns and neighborhood layout (curvilinear streets and curvilinear setbacks), and lack of sidewalk improvements.</p>
Workmanship: physical evidence of the crafts of a particular cultural or people during any given period in history.	<p>Biltmore properties are generally characterized as mass produced, using lower grade product (wood frame, stucco exterior) and therefore have a low degree of workmanship.</p> <p>Period building techniques can be seen through the use of a visible attic vent at gable, visible crawl space vents beneath finished floor height, metal casement or wood sash windows, porch support and detailing (if present), shallow roof overhang over porch, and decorative elements such as door surrounds and window shutters.</p>

Materials: key exterior materials dating from the period of historic significance.	Biltmore materials include: concrete clock, brick veneer, and wood frame with stucco exterior, concrete porch slab, metal and wood sash windows, composite shingle roof, wood or metal porch detailing (if present)
Feeling: property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time	<p>Feeling is an intangible quality derived from the cumulative effect of setting, design, materials, and workmanship.</p> <p>Properties are eligible if the physical features of the property convey the qualities of "small house" design, including rectangular "box" plan, medium pitch side-gable roof, little to no overhang, shallow porch along front façade w/ roof overhang and minimal post support, and minimal ornamentation.</p>
Association: direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property	<p>Property must maintain its original function or association as a single-family residence.</p> <p>Properties converted into multi-family dwelling units may be eligible if the property still presents itself as a "small house," single family residence.</p>

### Eligibility Evaluation

Given the Biltmore Bungalow's development under the National Housing Act (NHA) Title VI neighborhood program during World War II to house non-commissioned officers and civilian employees of the military industry in Las Vegas and Henderson, NV, and for its architectural features following the FHA's architectural guidelines fostering the development of the "Minimal Traditional" style home, the properties in the Biltmore subdivisions were evaluated under the themes of community planning and development and architecture for Criterion A as well for their ability to convey the architectural characteristics of the Minimal Traditional style under Criterion C for a potential NRHP Historic District. Properties were also evaluated for individual eligibility under Criterion C. The criteria for individually eligible properties, contributing properties, and ineligible properties to a potential historic district to the National Register are described below.

#### Biltmore properties **individually eligible**:

- Criterion A: Built within the period of significance and retains integrity; Individually eligible properties are excellent examples of a style or type and must retain integrity of location, design, setting, association, and feeling.
  - Generally, Biltmore properties would not be individually eligible under Criterion A as the significance of the building is tied to their association with subdivision growth.
  - If a property is individually eligible under Criterion C (see below), then it will also qualify under Criterion A.
- Criterion C: Built within the period of significance and retains integrity. Individually eligible properties are "excellent examples" of a style or type and must retain integrity of location,

design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association; Alterations are minimal and the historic massing and footprint is retained.

- An “excellent example” would be a residence that has remained virtually unchanged from the time of its initial construction and possesses *all* of the character-defining features of its architectural style, with particular emphasis on integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.
- Must contain *all* 7 aspects of integrity:
  - Design: Residence *must* retain the following historic design features: historic footprint and massing (“box” plan), side-gable roof, shallow porch with roof overhang, and metal casement or wood sash windows
    - Additions are acceptable if their construction is within the period of significance and the addition passes the “excellent example” test as well (possesses high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship)
    - Additions outside of the period of significance are acceptable if the massing is subordinate to the original structure and otherwise in conformance with the Secretary of Interior standards (does not create a false sense of history)
    - If building is a Cape Cod variant, must retain *most* of its decorative features (where applicable) including front gable porch, classical pediment, and decorative shutters.
  - Materials: Residence must retain key historic exterior materials (where applicable), including concrete block, brick veneer, stucco siding, and composite roof materials.
  - Workmanship: Residence must retain *most* of its qualities associated with period technology and techniques, including visible attic vent at gable, visible crawl space vents beneath finished floor height, multi-lite metal casement or wood sash windows, porch support and detailing (if present), shallow roof overhang over porch, and decorative elements such as door surrounds and window shutters.
  - Location and Setting: All surveyed properties retain their integrity of location within the Biltmore subdivision and most, if not all, retain their integrity of setting.
  - Feeling and association: Properties that meet the “excellent example” test, emphasizing integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, will, by nature, retain integrity of feeling and association as well.

Biltmore properties **eligible as a contributing** property:

- Criterion A: Property built within the period of significance and retains a majority of its historic integrity; Contributing properties are good examples of a style or type, but are not as

well-preserved as individually eligible properties; Retains integrity of location, setting, association, and feeling. (Eligible primarily for historical, rather than architectural reasons.)

- Generally, the significance of Biltmore properties is tied to their association with subdivision growth. Properties found to be contributing under Criterion A possess are significant due to their association with World War II residential development in Las Vegas.
- If a property is contributing under Criterion C (see below), then it will also qualify under Criterion A.
- Criterion C: Built within the period of significance and retains a majority of its historic integrity; Contributing properties are good examples of a style or type and retain many aspects related to integrity of design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association; May possess minor alterations or additions provided additions do not detract and alterations may be reversible.
  - Generally, significance of these properties derives from their linkage as contributing buildings in the Biltmore subdivision (districts) and not for their individual architectural merit.
  - Must contain *some* elements from *a majority* of the 7 aspects of integrity:
    - Design: Residence *must* retain the following historic design features: historic footprint and massing ("box" plan), side-gable roof, shallow porch with roof overhang
      - Additions are acceptable if their construction is within the period of significance and/or massing is subordinate to the original structure and otherwise in conformance with the Secretary of Interior standards (does not create a false sense of history)
      - Window replacements are acceptable provided building retains integrity of feeling and association
    - Materials: Residence retains key historic exterior materials (where applicable), including concrete block, brick veneer, stucco siding, and composite roof materials. Siding is acceptable provided there are few alterations to other materials.
      - An absence of one material such as exterior does not disqualify a property as contributing, provided property retains feeling and association.
    - Workmanship: Residence retains some qualities associated with period technology and techniques, including visible attic vent at gable, visible crawl space vents beneath finished floor height, multi-lite metal casement or wood sash windows, porch support and detailing (if present), shallow roof overhang over porch, and decorative elements such as door surrounds and window shutters.
      - An absence of integrity of workmanship does not disqualify a property as contributing

- Location and Setting: All surveyed properties retain their integrity of location within the Biltmore subdivision and most, if not all, retain their integrity of setting.
- Feeling and association: Generally, properties retain the feeling and association of a Minimal Traditional single-family residence.

Biltmore properties are considered **ineligible** if:

- Built within the period of significance but no longer retains integrity due to loss of integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association due to major alterations or additions
- Property no longer shares the characteristics and qualities (feeling/association) of the historic district.
- Properties built outside of the period of significance are considered ineligible.
- Inappropriate applications of ornamentation, sheathing, or siding render the property ineligible.
- Cumulative effects due to subtle alterations and changes over time, such as inclusion of modern materials, and other incremental changes that impact the overall character (feeling and association) of the building render the property ineligible.
- Conversion to commercial use render the property ineligible.
- Multi-family conversions outside of the period of significance render the property ineligible.

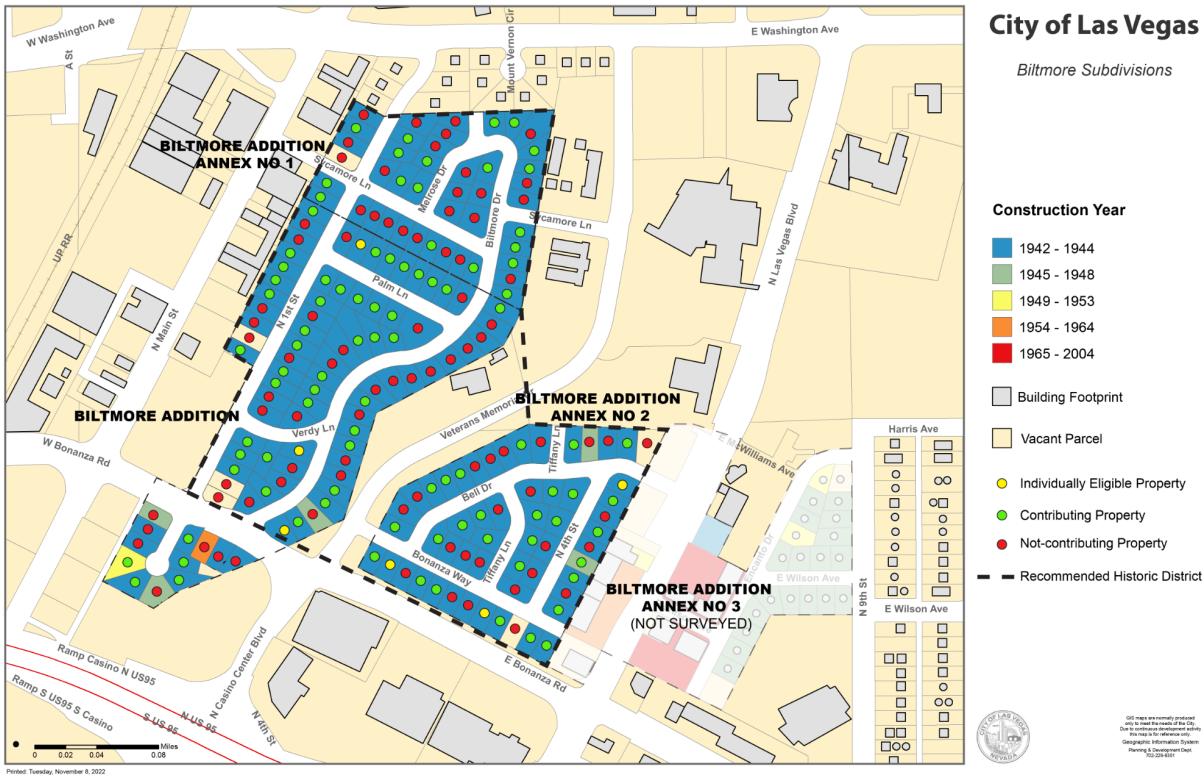
Past research on the Biltmore subdivision has concluded the neighborhood does indeed have the potential to be historically significant. Previous research focused on the significance of individual properties but made recommendations for considering the subdivision as a whole for national district eligibility. Thus, the focus of the survey was to determine if the Biltmore Addition(s) subdivision would qualify for NRHP and/or local City of Las Vegas historic district.

## **Findings**

A total of 179 structures were observed and recorded during the survey of the Biltmore Adition(s) subdivision. Of these buildings, 170 are residential properties and 9 have been rezoned and converted into commercial properties.

The six commercial properties are located along the south side of Bonanza Road, near the intersection of N 1st Street, and also along N 1st Street just north of Bonanza Rd. Six (6) properties are recommended for individual eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and 98 properties are eligible as contributing to a historic district for listing with NRHP (Figure 12). An additional 12 properties were also found to be eligible for a local City of Las Vegas historic district.

These findings show that a majority of the homes within the Biltmore Addition, and Biltmore Addition Annexes No. 1 and No. 2 were found to be eligible for a district listing on the National, State, and local City of Las Vegas Register of Historic places. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the properties in the Biltmore Addition(s) are eligible for a National and/or State historic district listing and sixty percent (60%) are eligible for a local City of Las Vegas district listing.



*Figure 12: Map of individually eligible, contributing, and not-contributing properties. (Large map is available in Appendix C.)*

It's recommended, however, that the cul-de-sac and commercial properties located on the south side Bonanza Road be excluded from a historic district nomination. While this area retains some well-preserved single-family homes, the majority of properties in this area have been converted into commercial or multi-family uses and this part of the neighborhood lacks consistency with the remaining residential district. If this area is excluded, the recommended historic district would contain 173 parcels, with a total of 93, or 54%, being eligible as individual or contributing properties.

### Residential Buildings

All of the 179 residential properties surveyed are Minimal Traditional style homes, which was a common architectural style during the WWII era of residential development. Although no building permits were located, the Clark County Assessor records shows that all of the residences were built between the years of 1940-1947, with the vast majority of construction taking place between 1940-1943. The Minimal Traditional style of housing dominated the domestic type of architecture in America from 1935 through 1950 (McAlester and McAlester, 2004). These old homes remain quite popular today.

According to Rayle and Ruter (p. 117, 2015),

The Minimal Traditional architectural style became common in the 1930s, in part due to the FHA's development of technical bulletins outlining guidelines for the construction of modest

affordable housing. These homes proliferated during WWII as the ability of developers to acquire construction materials became restricted, resulting in a uniformity of materials and a standardization of styles. The Ranch architectural style developed contemporaneously and gradually replaced the Minimal Traditional type as its elongated floorplan readily lent itself to the growing needs of larger families. Use of these particular styles continued into the post-war era as their simplicity and uniformity allowed for expedient and large-scale production. By utilizing prefabricated building materials and streamlined assembly methods for home construction, crews could work efficiently and quickly, thereby keeping the costs of the finished homes low. This allowed lower to moderate-income families, as well as veterans returning from WWII, to purchase homes in the developments.

Homes constructed in the Minimal Traditional type were typically rectangular with simple, low to intermediate-pitched hipped or side-gabled rooflines, and were of brick, concrete block, or wood frame construction with stucco sheathing and wood frame, double hung sash windows. Most of the homes contained five or six rooms and were between 800 and 900 square feet in size, although larger models were available in certain developments.

The residential properties within the Biltmore Addition(s) vary in construction type, with most homes in the Biltmore Addition being constructed of masonry block with a brick veneer, while the majority of homes in the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1 and No. 2 are generally wood frame construction with a stucco finish. All the homes have composite asphalt roofs. Window types also vary, with the majority of homes in the Biltmore Addition having multi-lite casement windows and the majority of homes in the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 2 having single- or double-hung wood windows. Homes in the Biltmore Addition Annex No. 1 have a mix of both window types. The majority of homes have a side gable roof, although a small number have hipped roofs. All of the homes have a shallow service porch element; the roof detail over the porch varies. The homes are also built in the Cape Cod/Cottage Style, a type of Minimal Traditional style, but the level of detail of this style varies throughout the subdivision. Many homes retain their wooden shutters and minimal colonial door surrounds, evidence of this Cape Cod style.

### **Threats**

Observations made during the survey find that the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood today retains its distinctive history and character that is defined by its development during World War II (WWII) in Las Vegas, although challenges for the preservation of this neighborhood character do exist. Today, the neighborhood consists largely of single-family residences as it did when it was developed but many have been converted to multi-family housing, primarily in the form of duplexes, triplexes, and four plexes. Some of this is documented through formal zone changes with the County Assessor, but site observations found that many of the observed multi-family residences have not been recorded as such with the Assessor. These changes have not, thus far, significantly changed the character of the neighborhood, but as housing affordability and availability continue to be a concern in the Las Vegas region, property owners may seek to make more drastic changes in order to capitalize on the current housing shortage.

The condition of the majority of the homes is moderate to poor, with many of the homes fairly dilapidated. Much of the original landscaping is gone, and several driveways and fences are in desperate need of repair. However, there are indications that the neighborhood is currently experiencing a revival. During the time of this survey (2020-2022), several properties have been updated and improved. Several of these improvement projects, however, saw properties lose their historic materials, most notably windows. As property conditions continue to improve, the neighborhood risks losing its historic character if too many historic features and materials are lost within this process.

Additionally, much of the neighborhood still lacks sidewalks and street lighting, continuing to be a major safety concern, but infrastructure improvements may compromise the neighborhood's integrity of subdivision development if care is not taken to keep these qualities intact.

### **Additional Research**

There may be additional evidence that justifies extending the period of significance beyond 1950. Site observations suggest that several of the modifications made to these homes may have occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, making them historic features in their own right. Specifically, housing within the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood may have seen additions and/or been converted to duplexes and triplexes to accommodate growing housing and tourism needs in the years beyond 1950. More context is needed in order to understand if these modifications may contribute to an extended period of significance for the neighborhood.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

Observations made during this survey find that the Biltmore Addition(s) neighborhood today retains its distinctive history and character that is defined by its development during World War II (WWII) in Las Vegas. The Biltmore Addition(s) subdivision, specifically the Biltmore Addition and the Biltmore Addition Annexes No. 1 and No. 2, contain great historic value as it is representative of WWII era, "defense city" residential development in the City of Las Vegas. Furthermore, the neighborhood retains a majority of contributing eligible properties for inclusion on the NRHP and the local City of Las Vegas historic register as a historic district.

Recommendations include refining the historic district boundary to exclude properties on the south side of Bonanza Road, and conducting neighborhood outreach to determine whether or not residents and property owners will support a historic district list at the national, state, and/or city level.

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