

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Bel Air Motel

other names/site number Bel Air West

**2. Location**

street & number 4630 Lindell [N/A] not for publication

city or town St. Louis [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63108

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
 nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

*Mark A. Miles*

*MARCH 13, 2009*

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing.  
N/A

Number of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National  
Register.  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

DOMESTIC/ hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

DOMESTIC/ hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

MODERN MOVEMENT/  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

foundation CONCRETE  
walls CONCRETE  
GLASS  
roof RUBBER  
other BRICK

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

COMMERCE  
ARCHITECTURE

**Periods of Significance**

1957-1961

**Significant Dates**

1957  
1959  
1961

**Significant Person(s)**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

McCormick, Wilburn C.  
Russell, Mullgard, Schwartz and Van Hoefen

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bel Air Motel**  
**St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri**

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	738395	4280495			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Karen Bode Baxter, Timothy P. Maloney, Michael Allen

organization Karen Bode Baxter, Preservation Specialist and Landmarks Association of St. Louis  
 date December 22, 2008

street & number 5811 Delor telephone (314) 353-0593

city or town St. Louis state Missouri zip code 63109

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Roberts Hotels Houston NASA, LLC; Roberts Brothers Development, LLC; and Roberts Broadcasting Holdings of Utah, LLC c/o Steven C. Roberts and Michael V. Roberts

street & number 1408 N. Kingshighway telephone (314) 256-4690

city or town St. Louis state Missouri zip code 63113



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Description

#### Summary

Built in 1957, the Bel Air Motel is located just east of the intersection of Euclid, facing north onto Lindell Boulevard in the historic Central West End of St. Louis. Lindell Boulevard is a major arterial street that runs along the north side of Forest Park to Skinker Boulevard. Along the north side of the park as well as north of Lindell along Kingshighway, there are a number of historic private place developments, some of the city's premier historic mansions. From Kingshighway, the east side of Forest Park, a little more than one block west of the Bel Air Hotel, to Vandeventer (the west end of St. Louis University's campus), Lindell Boulevard is primarily a commercial street with a mixture of large, multistoried, office and apartment buildings, but it is also known for its concentration of historic hotels, including the Chase, Park Plaza, DeVille, and Bel Air hotels. The buildings are a mixture of those completed in the years associated with the historic development of the Central West End (primarily from the late 1890s through the 1920s), but one of the unique features of this section of Lindell is, that unlike other sections of the city, there was a resurgence of construction after World War II and there is also a concentration of distinctive mid-century modern designs, both in apartment and office buildings, with at least 20 in this 8 block stretch—the kinds of designs that were normally being built outside the city of St. Louis, especially in Clayton, the county seat for St. Louis County.

#### Exterior Features

Each of the Modernist designs along Lindell is decidedly different. The Bel Air Hotel is a three story building that is basically a U-shaped structure, with the interior of the U creating the courtyard that originally had a patio and swimming pool for guests. The shorter leg of the U parallels Lindell with the hotel lobby and restaurant area, connected to the L-shaped hallway with flanking guest rooms. The structure is flat roofed, with an expressed structural frame. Initially the north (front) leg of the U was only 2 stories tall, while the remaining structure was 3 stories tall, but less than 2 years after opening, a third floor was apparently added to the front section (permits are not exactly clear on where the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor was added, but comparison of permit information with room counts seems to indicate it was this section as does an early photograph found at the property). The structural beams now formed a horizontal break between the second and third floor as well as vertical columns dividing all three floors and on the façade it creates a repetitious pattern of similarly sized, rectangular framed bay openings, three high.

On the façade, there is a one story wing on the west end, which housed the kitchen/restaurant for the hotel. It does not have windows and its west end wall, like the hotel's other west end wall, is a brick veneer wall within the structural concrete frame. On the façade, this wing is divided into two structural bays by the concrete frame, and the inset masonry panels are sculpted in a three dimensional abstract, vertically wavy pattern, as is the adjacent first floor bay in the three story section of the hotel.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Description (continued)

Underground parking is configured below the south section of the building (in a basement level larger with an enlarged footprint), accessed through a prominent, concrete framed, entry west of the building that has a metal sculpture (artist unknown) positioned on top of the opening. Additional parking is provided along the east elevation and on the south, rear section of the building (as well as some covered parking in the middle of the rear elevation). The hotel has a narrow driveway with angled parking facing the street along the façade.

While that configuration of the parking and driveway has remained the same, when Best Western took over the hotel operation in the 1980s, they modified the hotel entrance canopy, which was originally a broad structural frame that did not encompass the driving lane. The modified canopy was a large, structural steel frame with a massive gabled roof that obscured the delicate appearance of the original design (at the same time they also repainted the concrete frame and window frames dark colors). As part of the current renovation, the original, white framing paint color has been restored and the massive roof on the canopy removed. Since the entry into the lobby had been modified as well, the current project is creating a much more transparent glass block entry (an appropriate material for this era building), but it will retain the steel frame to create a flat roofed drive-thru canopy that will blend with the original design in proportions and height.

The remaining elevations have panels of brick inset within each bay to form vertical bands of solid wall that appear to float within the lightly painted concrete frames and window bays. The concrete rectangular columns separate the walls into a series of window bays with a distinctly modern fenestration pattern of horizontally lighted, metal windows flanking equally sized plate glass windows, all with small hopper windows at the base of the four panels within each of the façade windows. On other elevations, the windows are paired horizontally lighted windows.

The rear leg of the U-shaped plan actually extends beyond both the east and west end of the front leg. Since this rear leg utilizes the brick inset panels, it contrasts with the grid-like treatment of the façade, forming a large backdrop across the rear of the property. The rear (south) wall of this three-story rear leg is a prominent element visible from Euclid since the property (even the rear parking area) is elevated high above the alley.

On the interior courtyard elevations of the front leg of the U, there are horizontal lighted window panels with sliding patio doors opening onto balconies. Along the base of the U, the courtyard elevation blends the brick panels with bands of patio doors and horizontal lighted window panels overlooking balconies. The courtyard elevation of the south leg of the U does not have a balcony and is treated like other elevations with alternating brick panels and paired, horizontal lighted window bays.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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## Narrative Description (continued)

### Interior Features

The interior of the hotel is divided into a series of guest rooms flanking a central hallway that runs along the base of the U and rear leg of the U on the first floor as well as down the center of the two upper floors of the front leg of the U. On the first floor of the front leg is the large hotel lobby area, still located in the position as it was originally, although the lobby has been remodeled several times, relocating the registration desk. The current plans will retain the position of the registration area at the east end of the lobby with a lounge/bar to the west of the entry. The old kitchen/restaurant area will be remodeled into another restaurant space. Interior ceiling heights have been retained, although parts of the lobby has had soffits created to identify the main registration area. Original wall finishes are also retained, including the painted and sculpted brick wall in the presidential suite. The doors and trim to the guest rooms were originally slab doors with minimal framing, a feature that has been retained. It appears that acoustical ceilings always were utilized in the hallways. Many of the windows are original, but where they have been replaced, they were made to match the original metal window frames. There are simple pipe rail staircases to the upper floors, one near the lobby and one at the southwest corner and another at the southeast corner. Room designs are simple, most retaining their original walls to separate the private bathrooms within each room. Some patio doors have been replaced over the year, but the configuration appears original.

### Alterations and Integrity Issues

The Bel Air Motel retains its original setting, surrounded by a mixture of the historic buildings of the Central West End. The associated parking areas and driveway, as well as the prominent entrance to the underground parking still frame the building and the recent work on the building as part of an historic rehabilitation has removed the cosmetic alterations and dark paint that obscured the Modern design elements, returning the concrete framing and windows to light, airy appearance. By eliminating the massive cross gabled roof over the canopy in the driveway and replacing it with a simple flat roof and exposing the steel structural frame, the canopy more appropriately blends with the grid-like framing of the historic façade. Since the lobby entry had been reframed and enclosed when it was used as a Best Western, it is being redesigned to be more transparent as well by utilizing a glass block wall (a more appropriate material in a 1950s design). Although the swimming pool was filled in, the patio and courtyard has been retained, including the original balconies facing the courtyard. On the interior, the hallways, room configurations are unaltered. Even the Minimalist design that utilized flat doors and a little trim remains intact, and the current rehabilitation project is restoring the configuration of the lobby, lounge, kitchen, and restaurant.

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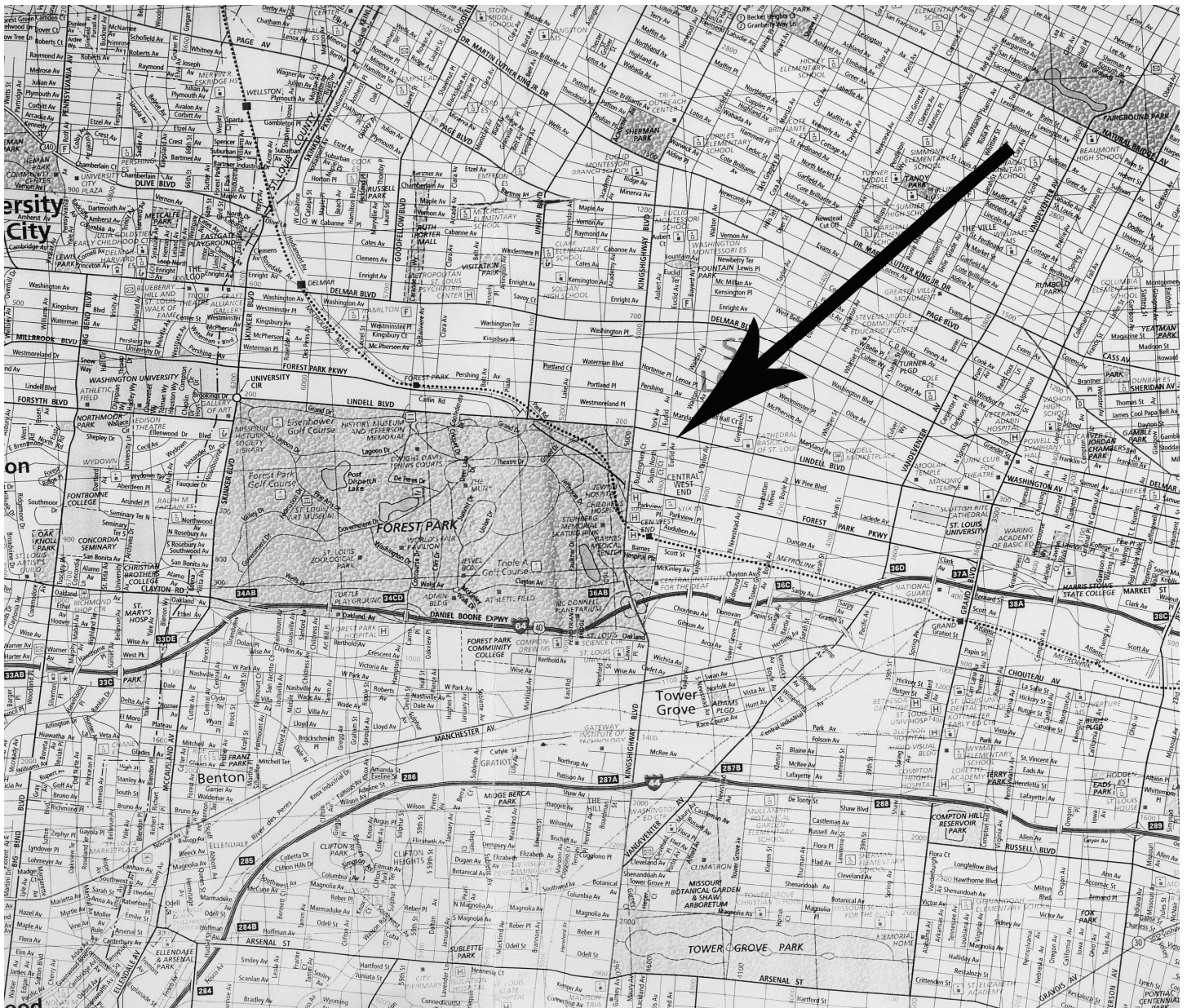
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Map of City of St. Louis, MO

Locating Property



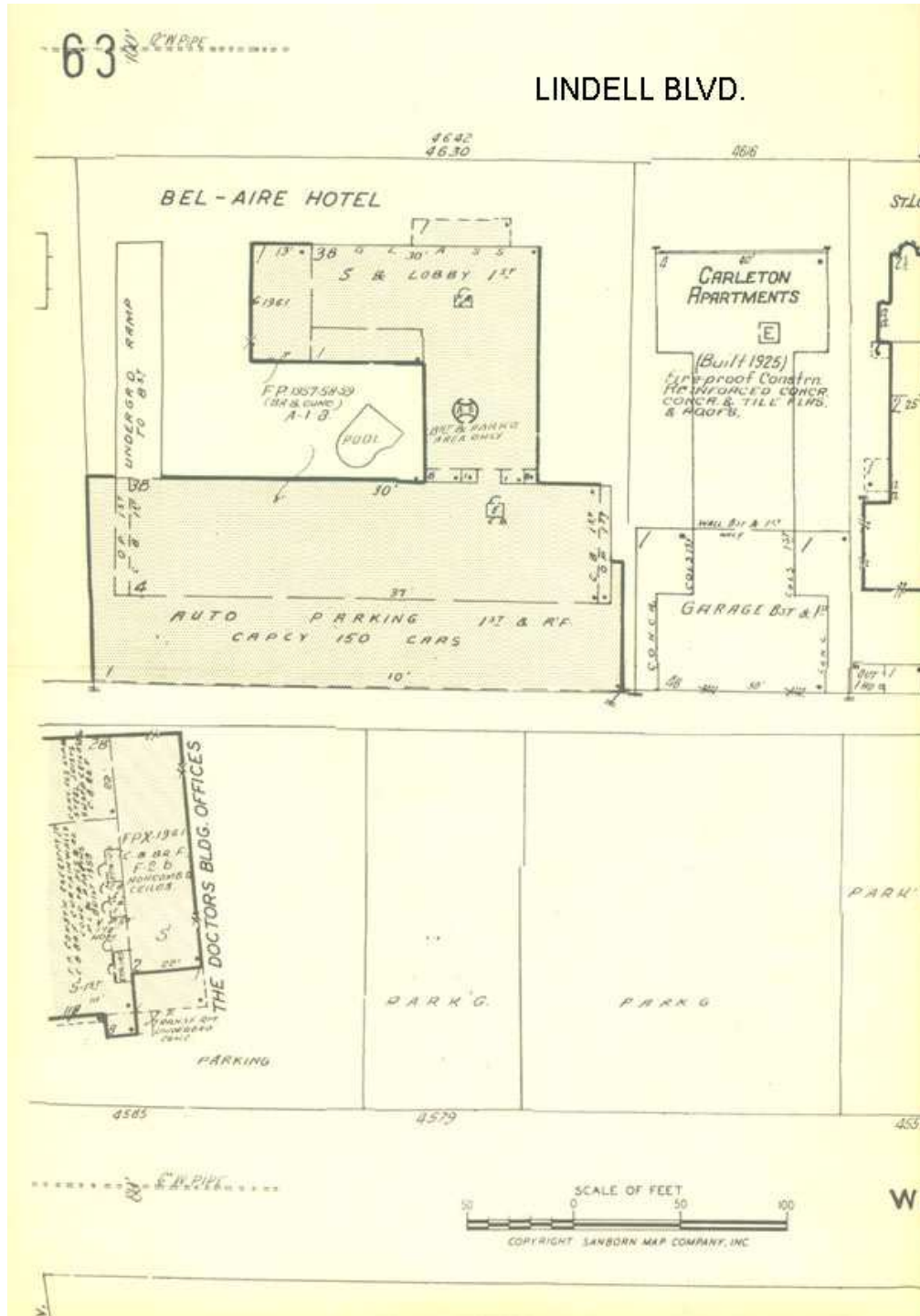
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Sanborn map locating property



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National Park Service

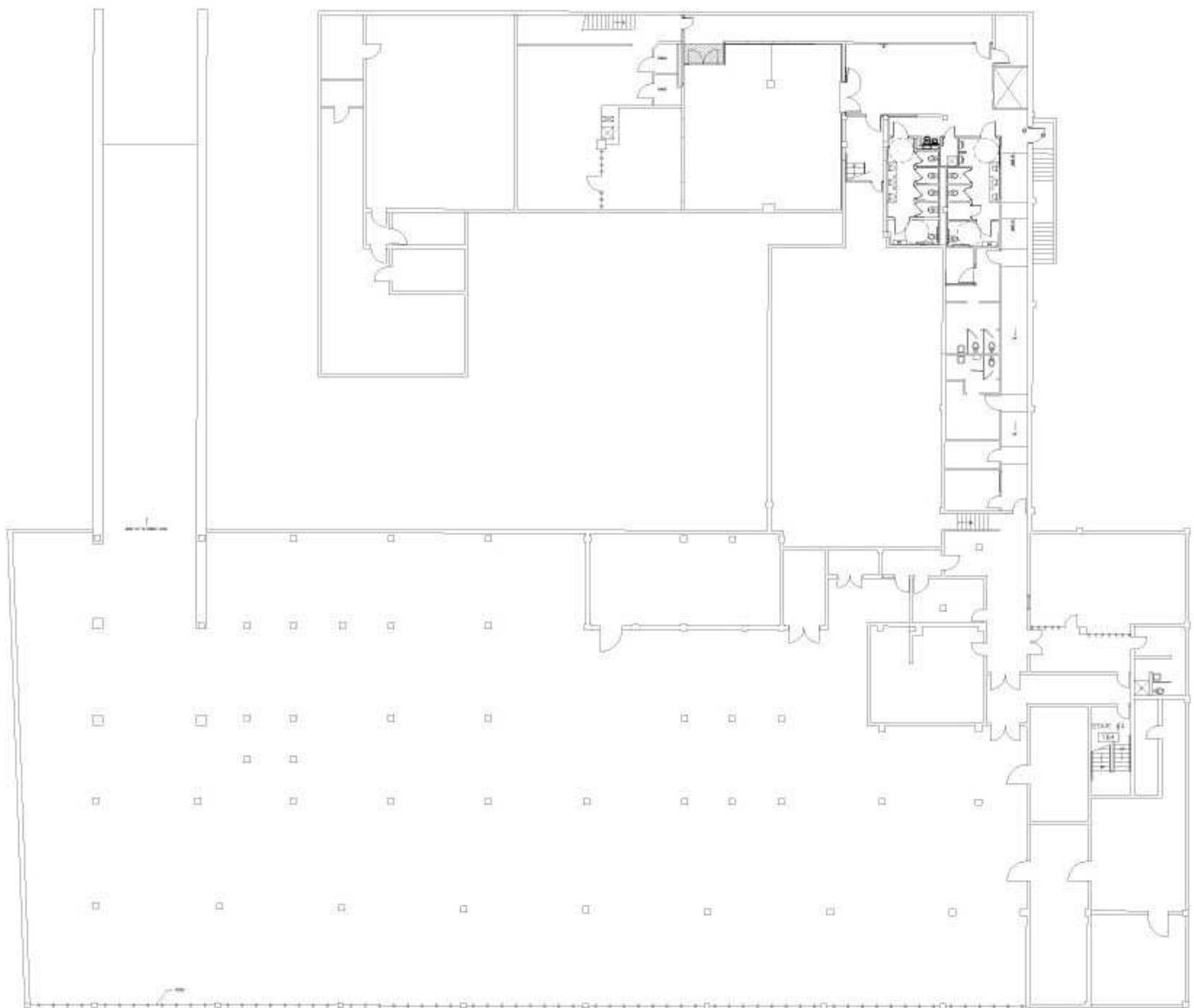
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Provided by Killeen Studio Architects 2008

Existing Basement Floor Plan



BASEMENT PLAN



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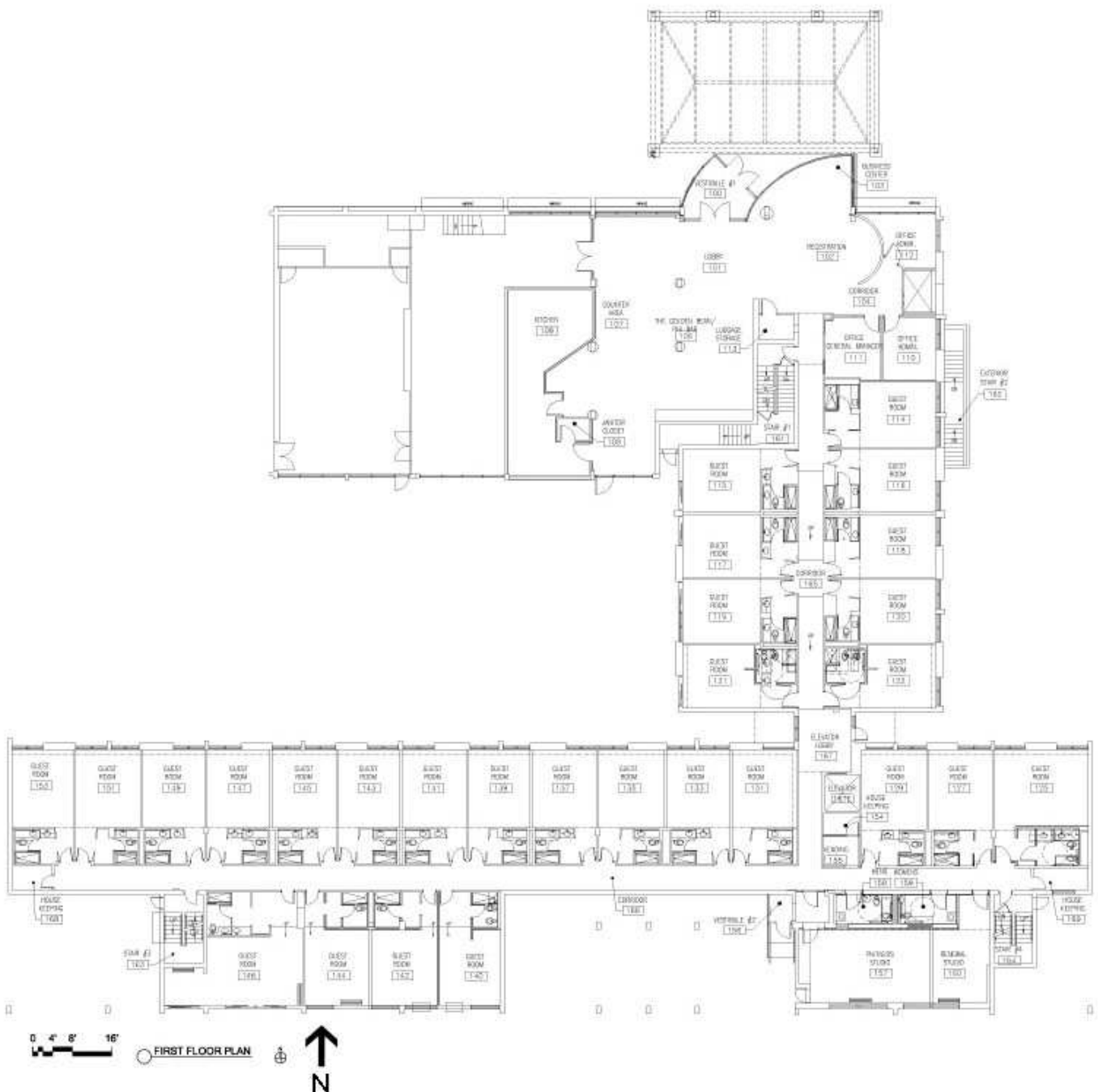
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Provided by Killeen Studio Architects 2008

Existing First Floor Plan





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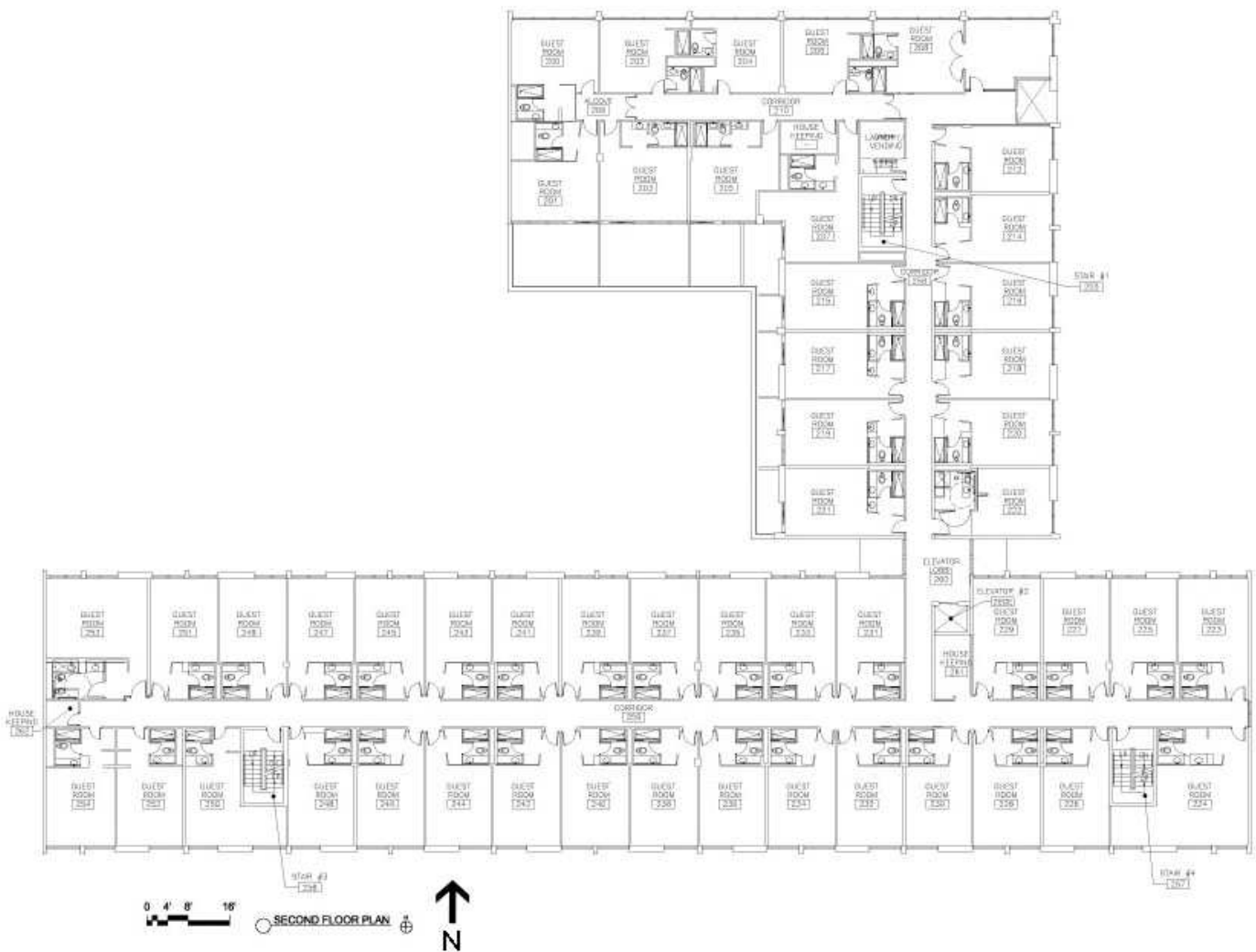
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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Provided by Killeen Studio Architects 2008

Existing Second Floor Plan





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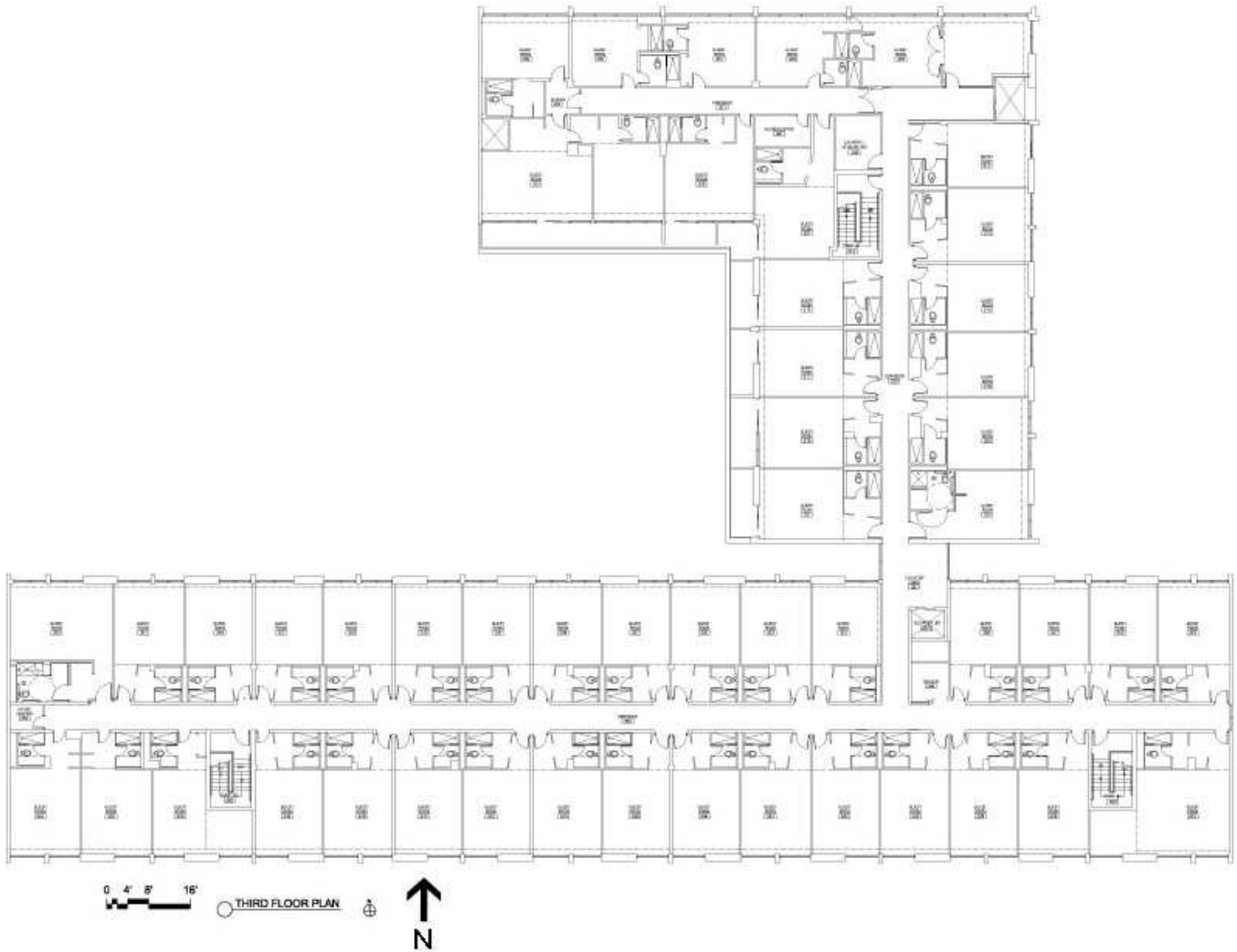
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Provided by Killeen Studio Architects 2008

Existing Third Floor Plan



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Roberts Companies

Postcard view ca. 1961





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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Roberts Companies

Postcard view ca. 1968





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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Roberts Companies

Postcard view ca. 1959





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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

Courtesy of Roberts Companies

Postcard view ca. 1959



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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Summary

The Bel Air Motel at 4360 Lindell Boulevard in St. Louis [Independent City], MO, is a significant representative of the changes occurring in commercial design in mid-twentieth century St. Louis. It is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under, Criterion A: Commerce. When its building permits were issued in late 1957, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* heralded it as the first hotel to be constructed in the city in twenty-seven years and as the city's first "resort-styled motor hotel."<sup>1</sup> Its construction is also representative of the city's mid-century commercial growth and revitalization along Lindell Boulevard, a major artery connecting the city's downtown and the Central West End with the burgeoning and affluent suburb of Clayton. The Bel Air Motel is associated with St. Louis hotelier and philanthropist, Norman K. Probst as the first of his numerous hotel ventures and as the best representation of his successful career in hotel development. The Bel Air Motel is also eligible under Criterion C: Architecture as an excellent example of early motor hotel design and for its mid-century Modern design, a stylistic trend that was becoming popular and is especially prevalent along this stretch of Lindell. Built in three stages between 1957 and 1961, which is identified as its period of significance, the completed edifice continues to be used as a motel today and its tenure as the Bel Air extended to the early 1980s when ownership transferred to the Best Western Motel chain. Because the final addition, the small one-story restaurant expansion was finished in 1961, less than fifty years ago, Criterion G is identified with this property, although most of the building's design was finished by 1959 and the restaurant expansion was both a continuation of the original design as well as an integral part of the function and significance of a "resort-styled motor hotel" by providing ample room for the full-service restaurant (Henrici's was recruited from Chicago with this expansion).

#### Building History

Constructed by Westlake Construction Company according to the designs of Wilburn C. McCormick, the Bel Air Motel was first completed in 1958 with 150 guest rooms.<sup>2</sup> A third story was added across the front in 1959 bringing the total of guest rooms to 198. The addition continued the basic design of the original two stories and was designed by the prominent architectural firm Russell Mullgard, Schwartz and Van Hoefen.<sup>3</sup> There is also a small one-story addition that extended the restaurant, finishing the complex in 1961.<sup>4</sup> The Bel Air Motel had drive-up check-in and was constructed with 175 parking spaces, both on the surface and in an underground garage, demonstrating the growing importance of the automobile in American society as people began to travel more by car. When the Bel-Air Motel was completed, the developer Norman K. Probst was almost unable to get an occupancy permit for the building. Initially, the inspector rejected the permit because there were no standards to apply to the inspection, until the head of the department, Joseph Sesteric, decided on what now seems an obvious solution, to simply use the hotel regulations and apply them to the motel.<sup>5</sup> The motel was the first of its kind in the city and was modeled on new luxury resorts in the West Indies, South America, and a number of western states.<sup>6</sup>

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Bel Air Motel was renamed the Bel Air West after the construction of the Bel Air East in downtown St. Louis and both were jointly listed as the Bel Air Luxury Motels in the city directories. By 1968 the company had changed its name to the Bel Air Luxury Motor Inns, but the buildings remained the Bel Air West and East. By 1976 the downtown location became the Bel Air Hilton. By the early 1980s, the Bel Air West's building had become a Best Western Inn at the Park.<sup>7</sup> Although the Bel Air East is still extant, located at the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Washington Avenue, it has been radically remodeled, with new wall cladding, a new entrance and an addition extending to the very top floor of the hotel. In contrast, the original Bel Air Motel has had only minimal structural alterations, with a change to the entryway and a remodeled lobby and bar area. It still has the basic appearance as it did after the third story was completed in 1959, and the one-story restaurant expansion in 1961.

### Architects

Wilburn C. McCormick, who designed the Bel Air Motel, was a St. Louis based architect who lived in Webster Groves. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1942 and registered as an architect in Missouri in 1956.<sup>8</sup> Registrations in twenty nine states followed. He joined the AIA in 1979. Although few of his designs have been discovered, he did design the Midwest Savings and Loan Building in the Minneapolis/ St. Paul area.<sup>9</sup> McCormick, known as "Chugger" to his friends, worked for Design, Inc. after he became a registered architect.<sup>10</sup> By 1961 he was an architect for the Bank Building and Equipment Corporation and remained at the position until 1975, when he became the A & E Manager for the same company. By 1979 he had a new position with that firm, working as the chief architect of commercial design.<sup>11</sup>

The firm responsible for the 1959 addition, Russell, Mullgardt & Schwarz & Van Hoefen could trace its roots to H.H. Richardson's successor firm, Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge added St. Louisan John Lawrence Mauran as a partner in 1897. Mauran handled only St. Louis work, and within three years spun the St. Louis office into his own firm, Mauran, Russell & Garden. Ernest J. Russell and Edward G. Garden were draftsman working for Mauran.<sup>12</sup> Together, the three men had a prolific output of important St. Louis buildings, including the Raquet Club (1906) and Second Baptist Church (1907). Garden left in 1909, and in 1911, William DeForest Crowell became a partner. Mauran, Russell and Crowell designed many major buildings, including the Railway Exchange Building (1913) and the Missouri Pacific Building (1924). In 1930, W. Oscar Mullgardt became a partner, and in 1933 John Mauran died. As Russell, Crowell and Mullgardt, the firm designed the U.S. Court House (1934) and the Soldier's Memorial (1938). Arthur F. Schwarz worked for the firm for many years before becoming partner in 1947, followed by Hari Van Hoefen in 1950.<sup>13</sup> As Russell, Mullgardt, Schwarz & Van Hoefen, the firm continued as one of St. Louis' most renowned firms. The addition to the Bel Air Motel fell between two other of their Modern Movement projects on Lindell: the Engineers Club at 4359 Lindell Boulevard (1958) and the Optimists' Club (1962, 1977). By 1962, the firm's name was shortened to Schwarz & Van Hoefen. Eventually, the firm became the Kuhlmann Design Group, which remains in business.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

## **St. Louis Commercial Development Patterns**

During the early twentieth century through the early post-World War II years, St. Louis' population was centered around the downtown area, as was almost all of the major business occurring in St. Louis. After World War II, St. Louis, like many American cities, began to see an important shift in its demographics. More people were moving to the suburbs and away from the city center. Part of this shift was due to the increasing demand for housing as returning soldiers took advantage of new government home-buying programs for veterans. The shift was also aided by the increasing importance of the automobile in American society. Prior to the development and widespread use of the automobile, it was impractical for most people to live very far from their place of employment. At the end of the 1800s and the start of the 1900s, most people could not afford to move to the suburbs and spend the time and money commuting by train or electric trolley.<sup>14</sup> There were only a few suburbs in the areas surrounding St. Louis but many more began to develop in the 1950s. The new suburbs and communities around St. Louis offered better housing and amenities that people had been leaving cities to gain, such as more open land and larger houses, and escape from some of the problems associated with urban living, such as crime, crowding pollution and disease.

This migration from the city center was also occurring in business. Clayton, the county seat of St. Louis County, the small municipality with little more than the courthouse grew into a second central business district for the St. Louis area. Many businesses relocated from the city into the county, especially professional offices and corporate headquarters. Clayton's business expansion was further fueled by the migration of the people who worked for and purchased goods and services from these businesses.<sup>15</sup> This shift saw St. Louis County grow tremendously following World War II, both economically and in population.

This demographic shift was part of a building boom that occurred throughout the St. Louis region, but this growth and development also occurred in the city of St. Louis, including the redevelopment of the riverfront. Although the most prominent examples of this development after World War II were the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and the Busch Stadium development just to the south, even more of the development occurred outside the central downtown business area.<sup>16</sup> While Clayton and other inner-ring suburbs saw a great deal of growth,<sup>17</sup> this demographic shift also created opportunity within the city of St. Louis, especially along arterial streets that connected the city to the suburbs, such as the corridor of businesses along Lindell, the major artery connecting the central business district in downtown St. Louis with Clayton.

The Bel Air Motel demonstrates this shift well because it was the first hotel built in St. Louis in almost thirty years. The location chosen was not downtown but rather to the west, located between downtown and Clayton so that both were easily accessible. Its placement between the two locations near Forest Park (which basically forms the boundary of the city with Clayton) combined with its luxury accommodations made it an ideal motel for businessmen that were likely to be meeting with people downtown and in Clayton.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Bel Air Motel also demonstrates the changing demographics in the United States in a different way—it is a motel, not a hotel. The Bel Air Motel was designed for people driving to their destination, with 175 parking spaces for the guests of the 150 rooms (198 by 1959) in the motel.<sup>18</sup> Motels, unlike the hotels they competed with, were oriented towards highways and major roads, attracting people as they drove into a city, as opposed to hotels that were traditionally in the central business district. The fact that the Bel Air Motel is on a major arterial street and between the two main business areas in the St. Louis metropolitan area demonstrates the patterns of development in St. Louis as people moved to the suburbs and the role the automobile played in this demographic shift.

#### Motels in St. Louis

Construction of the Bel Air Motel renewed construction of lodging in the city of St. Louis while introducing a hotel form new to the city, the motel. St. Louis' last new hotel was the nearby Park Plaza Hotel (1930), a soaring, elegant Art Deco hotel built on the cusp of the Great Depression. However, another hotel built before the Depression was more indicative of future trends than the Park Plaza. In 1928, Texas developer and automobile travel enthusiast Percy Tyrell opened the Robert E. Lee Hotel at 205 N. 18th Street (NR listed 2/07/2007) in downtown St. Louis, designed by Kansas City architect Alonzo Gentry.<sup>19</sup> While the 14-story Renaissance Revival hotel was stylistically similar to its contemporaries, it introduced to St. Louis the chain economy hotel. Tyrell's Robert E. Lee chain grew to include hotels in San Antonio, Laredo, Kansas City as well as St. Louis. These were fairly traditional urban hotels in exterior appearance, but not internally.

All bearing the same name, the hotels impressed a singular identity upon business travelers in the then-strong St. Louis-Texas trade region.<sup>20</sup> The St. Louis Lee hotel's 221 rooms were small but luxurious, and the hotel had but one coffee shop-style restaurant to serve its guests. There were no bars, lounges, ball rooms or other spaces found in large St. Louis hotels up to this time. The Lee simply offered affordable, quality rooms for business travelers who could forego other frills. The hotel also stood across the street from a major parking garage, making it a more convenient stop for the motorist,<sup>21</sup> although it was still located in the downtown area rather than prominently visible along an automobile thoroughfare. It would become a victim of the Great Depression, closing in 1935 and by the time that the local economy had improved enough to support additional hotels, development had shifted further west and toward the convenience of motels, like the Bel Air Motel on Lindell.

Three years before the Robert E. Lee Hotel opened in St. Louis, the Milestone opened in San Luis Obispo. Designed by Los Angeles Architect Arthur Hieneman, the Milestone sat on a well-traveled road outside of urbanized areas. Rather than consisting of a single building, the Milestone was comprised of several two-room bungalows with attached garages. A restaurant

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### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

occupied one building. Hieneman called this form of lodging the "motel," shortening the phrase "motor hotel."<sup>22</sup> The form was replicated many times in the next few years, although the Depression slowed construction and the American tourism industry. Motels of this type, usually called "motor courts," tended to consist of separate or connected units arranged around a courtyard with a single restaurant or bar serving the guests. The earliest motels were located exclusively on highways or roads outside of major cities and near major attractions.

As the federal government designated more roads as United States Highways and made improvements that encouraged more automobile-based tourism, streets inside of cities began to receive more interstate traffic. In the St. Louis area, motels built before 1957 were located in St. Louis County where there was not yet dense development. The prevalent early motel form was the one-story motor court. This form required large tracts. One of the most famous of the early motor courts in the region was the Streamline Moderne Coral Court Motel (NR listed 4/25/1989, non-extant) on Watson Road, built in 1941 and designed by Adolph Struebig. No longer extant, the Coral Court's multiple curvilinear, coral-colored glazed, clay tile buildings included attached garages for all units. This feature was common in the motor courts that developed between 1930-1960 on Watson Road (U.S. 66). After World War II, developers in cities began building motels of greater density that combined the courtyard form with the density of the urban economy hotels built by Tyrell and others; these tended to be called "motor lodges." As motel historians Andrew and Jenny Wood write,

Before long, small-time motor courts were rendered obsolete by chains like Holiday Inn that began to blur the distinction between motels and hotels. Single story structures gave way to double and triple deckers.<sup>23</sup>

Motels sprung up to accommodate the demand for plentiful and affordable lodging. Another shift in the motel industry that followed Tyrell's lead was the rise of national chains. In 1946, M.K. Guertin founded the Best Western chain and in 1952 Kemmons Wilson founded the Holiday Inn chain; others followed, including the famous Howard Johnson's.<sup>24</sup> The chains preferred larger buildings in which units were connected and faced shared surface parking. Like the motor courts, the motor lodges of the 1950s and 1960s required large lots and mostly were constructed on the periphery of the urban areas. The motels are epitomized by a Howard Johnson built on Lindbergh Boulevard in suburban south county in 1957 (at the same time as the Bel Air Motel): 40 units in three one-story buildings surrounding a separate restaurant building, with an overall low density.<sup>25</sup>

In St. Louis, the Bel Air introduced the motel form to the city, starting a building boom that lasted through 1970. St. Louis County already had several motels of the court and lodge varieties, especially along Watson Road, which was part of Route 66. The 1959 *Polk's City Directory* shows only one listing in the city limits under "Motels and Auto Courts"--the Bel Air. By 1971, there were 16 listed in the city. Most had been built after 1962. Six were located downtown, four in the Central West End, one in Midtown, one in south city, one west of the Central West End and three in north city. Most had 100 rooms or more, but one was as small as

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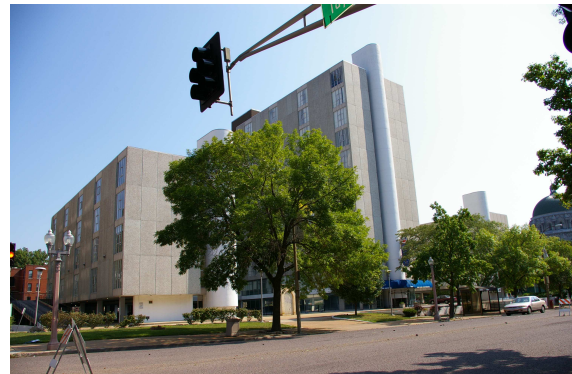
Bel Air Motel  
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### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

22 rooms. Six were owned and operated by national chains. Almost all were designed in the Modern Movement style.<sup>26</sup>

The Bel Air would hold its place among the motels built after its opening due to its configuration as a luxury motor hotel. Many motels were designed for economy, just like the early Robert E. Lee Hotel. However, some motels attempted to distinguish themselves with special amenities and services in keeping with a more traditional urban hotel approach. A 1961 article entitled "Building Boom in Motor Hotels" lays out the characteristics of local "luxury" motels: good furniture in the rooms, real art and antiques in lobby, a heated pool, a full-service restaurant and bar, meeting and conference rooms, king size beds and fridge in all rooms. The restaurants might have a South Pacific or Polynesian theme, like Trader Vic's at the Bel Air East. The Bel Air provided all of these, true to Probstein's vision. The article mentions the DeVille as its only city example, but the Bel Air and Bel Air East were certainly its predecessors as high-end motels marketed to businessmen rather than casual tourists. Besides the DeVille, later motels in the city were strictly economy motels.<sup>27</sup> Immediately following the Bel Air came the Diplomat at 433 N. Kingshighway (non-extant). The building permit dates to September 16, 1959, with Hausner & Macsnai of Chicago as architects in consultation with Joseph R. Passoneau of St. Louis. The 180-room, three-story Modern motel occupied the site of the old Kingsway Hotel, which was demolished for the project. The Diplomat, located a few blocks northwest of the Bel Air, demonstrated not only the immediate influence of the new motel but also the demand for lodging in the Central West End that had begun in the 1920s. As Clayton lured more businesses out of downtown, the Central West End became a convenient midway point for business travelers.

In 1961, New Orleans' DeVille chain entered the St. Louis market in close proximity to the successful Bel Air. Opening in 1963 at 4483 Lindell Boulevard, the striking, E-shaped DeVille Motor Hotel rose to 11 stories in its center section. The DeVille boasted 226 rooms and 180 parking spaces as well as a swimming pool. Of all of the motels built after the Bel Air, the DeVille was the most architecturally unique. Its curvilinear concrete forms were the sophisticated design work of Charles Colbert, a renowned New Orleans architect and modernist who would later serve as Dean of the Columbia University School of Architecture.<sup>28</sup>



4483 Lindell Blvd.

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In the next nine years, other developers adapted the motel to sites in the city. The 22-room Ebony at 3622 Page (1963) and the 60-room Carousel at 3930 N. Kingshighway were small one-story motor courts in north St. Louis. Downtown, the existing Warwick Hotel at 15th and Locust built an adjacent 3-story, 58-room motel in 1964, while the Lennox (built in 1929) at 823 Washington attempted to re-brand itself as the Ben Franklin Motor Hotel with the 1965 addition of a parking garage. Besides the Bel Air East, downtown saw the 9-story, 203-room Downtowner (1962) at 1133 Washington adapted to a high-density location. Many of the new motels were built on sites cleared for urban renewal, including that of the large, 11-story, 250-room Holiday Inn Downtown at 2211 Market Street and the 103-room 2-story Travelodge at 3420 Lindell, both built in 1964. The largest motel built outside of the central corridor was the five-story, 103-room Congress (1964), designed by William B. Ittner, Jr. and Lester C. Haeckel and located at 6543 Chippewa on the city leg of Route 66. In 1970, the striking high-rise Rodeway at 2600 Market Street downtown was the last of the motels built in the city during this period.<sup>29</sup> Of these, those reporting construction budgets over \$1 million included the tallest: the DeVille, the Downtowner and the Holiday Inn Downtown.<sup>30</sup> Most were built rather economically, of widely-available materials like brick, aluminum, concrete and glass. The architects responsible for these designs are not well-known, usually not from St. Louis due to the motel chain connections. Charles Colbert is the exception to the architectural pedigree of the motels.

Today, of the 16 motels listed in the 1971 city directory, seven remain standing. When the Bel Air re-opens after its renovation, it will join the Bel Air East, Carousel and Ebony as the only ones still operating as motels. Several of the 7 extant motels are altered to states that do not resemble their historic appearance: the Bel Air East and the Downtowner have been completely re-clad; the Holiday Inn Downtown has had a new pitched roof placed over its flat roof; the Carousel and Ebony have had numerous alterations to window opening size; the Congress was retrofitted for senior housing with major room configuration changes as well as a prominent elevator shaft addition built in 2008.<sup>31</sup> The only remaining motels from the city's peak years of construction retaining sufficient architectural integrity to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are the nominated Bel Air and the former DeVille Motor Hotel one block east on Lindell Boulevard. The few motels constructed in the city since the Rodeway have been low-rise buildings of little architectural merit.

## Modern Movement Architecture on Lindell Boulevard

Prior to World War II, downtown St. Louis had seen notable construction of modern buildings in the Art Deco, Art Moderne and even International styles. However, construction of new downtown buildings slowed during the Great Depression, and was completely halted during World War II. Postwar, as the city's fortunes declined with financing and demand for new modern office buildings low, downtown property owners opted to modernize older buildings to demonstrate continued interest in improving downtown. Many nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings were treated with applied Modern Movement facades, widely known as "slip covers," including the Mercantile Library and its associated adjacent buildings (1952-1956), the



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Comparisons of major alterations to two extant mid-century hotels



Bel Air East 1964  
Photo found on Ebay



Bel Air East 2008  
Photo taken by Sheila Findall



Downtowner 1999



Downtowner 2008

Photos taken by Rob Powers, Built St. Louis

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### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Farm & Home Saving and Loan Association Building (1955, NR listed, 10/29/08) and the Dorsa Building (1946). According to Julie LaMouria in her National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Farm and Home Savings and Loan Association Building, “[b]etween 1933 and 1955, \$22.4 million was spent on construction downtown, with sixty percent concentrated on alteration of existing structures.”<sup>32</sup> After World War II, new construction downtown was slow. Major post-war buildings included the Ford Apartments at 1405 Pine Street (1948, NR listed 1/26/2005), the Seven-Up Building at 1300 Delmar Boulevard (1950, NR listed 2/24/2004) and the Thomas Jefferson Building (1958) at 14 S. Fourth Street.<sup>33</sup> South of downtown, the Nooter Corporation completed a two-story headquarters building in 1959 (NR listed, 5/16/2008), but there was little new construction downtown until the 1960s with the large civic center project and a number of other projects, including the Mansion House Towers, which included a hotel and were just a block from the Bel Air Downtown. Instead, in the years after the war, businesses ranging from insurance agencies to banks eyed parcels outside of the aging downtown.

The Modern Movement flourished in Clayton and the rest of St. Louis County, where large plots of land were very affordable and sites did not have to be cleared of old buildings. Much of the city of St. Louis’ new Modern architecture was residential in nature and small in scale. The few large projects came through federally-funded housing projects, institutional expansion and urban renewal projects.

Still, between 1945 and 1977 a distinguished concentration of Modern commercial, club and apartment buildings developed without subsidy on Lindell Boulevard west of Grand Avenue to Kingshighway. The map below identifies the extant examples of Modern design along Lindell with asterisks (\*), which were identified in a windshield survey completed by Karen Bode Baxter in preparation for this nomination. The following chart lists them by address with their construction history, which was compiled by Michael Allen from research in the city’s building permit files and the published permit records in the *St. Louis Daily Record*.

Map of Mid-Century Modern Buildings on Lindell



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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

## Mid-Century Modern Buildings on Lindell Boulevard Between Grand and Kingshighway

(Italics denotes demolished structure)

Address	Date	Architect (If Known)	Type of Building
3650 Lindell	1959	Leo Daly and Associates (San Francisco)	Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University
3750 Lindell	1956		2-story commercial building
3765 Lindell	1963		Re-cladding of face of Odd Fellows Hall
3800 Lindell	1959	Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum	Three-story office building, International Business Machines
3860 Lindell	1946	Schmidt & Paolinelli	3-story office building; Order of Railroad Telegraphers
3912 Lindell	1952	Gray & Auer	2-story office building
3914 Lindell	1962	Curtis & Davis (New Orleans)	Playboy Club
3917 Lindell	1976	Sarmiento Architects	AAA of Missouri Headquarters
3920 Lindell	1937		2-story commercial building
3926 Lindell	1962		Conversion and re-cladding of two-story home into commercial space
3940 Lindell	1960		Conversion of home into 2-story office building
3948 Lindell	1968		2-story office building
3960 Lindell	1954	Murphy & Mackey	2-story office building

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4020 Lindell	1954	Louis Malin	Continental Apartments
4026 Lindell	1966		American Red Cross Building
4100 Lindell	1956	Hellmuth, Obata & Kassebaum	Sperry-Rand Corporation Building
4060 Lindell		Rathmann, Koelle & Carroll	
4108 Lindell	1960		Alterations and re-cladding of 2-story medical clinic
4158 Lindell	1948		1-story office building
4218 Lindell	1962	<i>John David Sweeney</i>	<i>Motion picture theater</i>
4236 Lindell	1957	Shapiro & Tisdale	3-story office building
4251 Lindell	1941		2-story service station
4331 Lindell	1955	Burton-Wirth & Theodore	2-story lodge hall, Knights of Columbus
4359 Lindell	1958	Russell, Mullgardt, Schwartz & Van Hoefen	Engineers Club
4400 Lindell	1965	A.K. Salkowitz (New York)	Towne House Condominiums
4445 Lindell	1961	W.A. Sarmiento	Archdiocesan Chancery
4482 Lindell	1964	Tommerich & Wood	Jackson Arms Apartments
4483 Lindell	1963	Colbert, Lowery, Hess & Bouderaux (New Orleans)	DeVille Motor Hotel
4494 Lindell	1962, 1977	Schwartz & Van Hoefen	Optimists Club
4501 Lindell	1963	Hellmuth Obata & Kassabaum	Lindell Terrace Condominiums
4630 Lindell	1958, 1959	Wilburn McCormick; Russell, Mullgardt, Schwartz & Van Hoefen	Bel-Air Motel
4625 Lindell	1971	Wedemeyer, Cernik & Corrubia	7-story office building, City Bank
4643 Lindell	1967		American Heart Association of Missouri Headquarters



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### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

These joined an earlier two-story streamline commercial building at 3920 Lindell (1937) and a two-story Art Moderne service station building at 4251 Lindell (1941). The resulting streetscape on Lindell is unparalleled in the city for the variety and quality of Modern Movement architecture, as well as the concentration of commercial buildings from that period. Other commercial districts developing at the time produced less consistent Modern architecture on a smaller scale; none had so many of the architectural profession's most astute modernists represented. While downtown struggled, this district attracted new businesses and residents with stunning new streamlined buildings, most of which were built to accommodate the new automobile. In this period, contractors finished 34 new buildings and re-clad 2 others on Lindell between Grand and Kingshighway. Of these buildings, 32 were in the Modern Movement, and 4 in the Colonial Revival style.<sup>34</sup> These buildings joined (and often replaced) the stately older multi-story homes, apartment buildings and hotels on Lindell, creating a streetscape that balances the existing, mostly residential buildings in their revival styles with the new Modern ones, mostly commercial. While building permits show that much of the new construction entailed demolition of existing buildings, two permits (3926 and 3940 Lindell) show conversion of revival-style residences into sleek modern office buildings. Although demolition added to development costs, wide, tree-lined Lindell was one of the city's most fashionable streets. That Lindell led toward downtown Clayton made the location even more desirable a site for offices and motels.

Buildings range from two-story commercial buildings like the office building at 3912 Lindell (1952) to large apartment buildings like the Towne House at 4400 Lindell (1964). The stylistic range of the Modern Movement buildings is equally broad, including the Art Moderne Order of Railroad Telegraphers Building at 3860 Lindell (1945) to the neo-Brutalist City Bank Building at 4625 Lindell (1971). The concentration includes very significant buildings to the development of Modern Movement architecture in St. Louis. Three of these buildings even achieved early recognition through inclusion in the 1967 edition of George McCue's *The Building Art in St. Louis*. Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum's (HOK) Lindell Terrace apartment building at 4501 Lindell (1963) demonstrates an almost classical restraint of form and decoration, while the firm's earlier International Business Machines Building at 3800 Lindell (1959) echoes the influence of Edward Durrell Stone with its set back first floor and concrete block screen on the upper two floors. HOK designed a third building on Lindell, the Sperry-Rand Corporation Building at 4100 Lindell (1956). The long, low one-story Engineers Club at 4359 Lindell (1959) plays with geometric forms as well as horizontal orientation. In addition to these three buildings, there are two round buildings by the eccentric modernist W.A. Sarmiento that demonstrate keen originality: the exuberant Archdiocesan Chancery (1961) at 4445 Lindell, where the round form is accentuated through extruded, stylized columns and metal grilles, and the AAA Building at 3917 Lindell (1976), which exhibits the characteristics of the New Formalism. Another exceptional, Googie-tinged building, reminiscent of that style's bright, vibrant and pop-culture influenced imagery of the 1950s and 1960s, is the Optimists Club at 4494 Lindell (1962, 1977), designed by Schwartz & Van Hoefen, a successor to Russell Mullgard Schwartz & Van Hoefen, who also designed the 1959 third floor addition on the Bel Air.

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3800 Lindell



3860 Lindell



3914 Lindell



3917 Lindell



3920 Lindell



3960 Lindell



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4251 Lindell



4482 Lindell



4359 Lindell



4501 Lindell



4445 Lindell

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

The Modern Movement context on Lindell remains mostly intact. The demolition of a large movie theater at 4218 Lindell (1963) in the 1990s has been the biggest change. While Modern Movement buildings in other parts of the Central West End have been demolished at an alarming pace in the last twenty years, Lindell's resources have avoided rapid loss. Historically, the unique Mid-Century Modern grouping on Lindell is by far the city's most significant Modern commercial development. Lindell's resources outshine those on commercial thoroughfares like Hampton Avenue, which developed almost exclusively after World War II. The development of Mid-Century Modern architecture on Lindell Boulevard precedes major downtown urban renewal projects that also used the style (including the iconic Gateway Arch and Busch Stadium (demolished for the current Busch Stadium)). Lindell's modern buildings demonstrate that St. Louis after World War II was a city deftly remaking itself through bold modern buildings. The Bel Air Motel's striking Modern Design at the western end is a significant component in this development along Lindell. The Bel Air was the first Modern Movement building built on Lindell west of Newstead Avenue. The Bel Air was designed in a streamlined, minimal style that is much different than its Modern Movement neighbors across Lindell, the American Heart Association Building (1968) and the old City Bank Building (1971). By the time those buildings were built, the Modern building boom on Lindell was ending. In contrast, the Bel Air is part of the early postwar Modern Movement boom on Lindell, and the aspirations of developers to transform the entire commercial connection between downtown St. Louis and downtown Clayton. Today, the Bel Air anchors the western end of the Lindell Modern Movement district, serving as a gateway to a very unique collection of postwar buildings.

### **Norman K. Probstein**

The Bel Air Motel was developed by hotelier Norman K. Probstein and is the best example of a building connected to Probstein's life and his contributions to the city of St. Louis. Probstein was the nephew of two other St. Louis hoteliers, Nat and Sam Koplars, who developed and owned the Park Plaza Hotel, The St. Louis Theater (now Powell Symphony Hall) and KPLR, an independent television station. Norman Probstein was born in St. Louis in 1921.<sup>35</sup> After serving on Eisenhower's staff during World War II, in 1948 Probstein's undertook his first major development, the Crest Theater in Affton, an unincorporated neighborhood in St. Louis County. After selling the Crest Theater, Probstein began developing hotels. His first major hotel venture was the Bel Air Motel on Lindell, finished in 1958. The motel utilized a distinctly modern design and a modern concept--it was the city's first motel. The Bel Air was also the first hotel or motel constructed in St. Louis since Probstein's uncles completed the Park Plaza Hotel in 1930.

While still finishing the Bel Air Motel on Lindell, in 1960 Probstein expanded his business, forming a partnership with Morton D. May of the May Department Stores. Calling this business venture the Madesco Investment Corporation, Probstein worked with Morton May until May's death in 1983. In 1964 Probstein and May opened a second Bel Air Motel, the high rise Bel Air East, at the northeast corner of Fourth and Washington Avenue in downtown St. Louis, and by that year the company was named the Bel Air Luxury Motels.<sup>36</sup> Probstein also used his position

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

as a hotel impresario to open Henrici's Restaurant in the Bel Air West, a new location for the famous Chicago restaurant. Probstein also opened a Trader Vic's restaurant in the Bel Air East, the first of the San Francisco restaurants to open in St. Louis.

Probstein was listed as the president of the restaurant in city directories in the 1970s, before he was once again listed as the president of the Bel Air West in 1980.<sup>37</sup> He was also an active owner who was regularly involved with the day to day operations of the Bel Air West, as evidenced by his personal decision to promote a desk clerk, Lucy O'Toole, from her position to assistant manager within nine months of starting her job at the company. She was later promoted by Probstein to be the manager of the Sheraton Bel Air in St. Petersburg, Florida.<sup>38</sup> Probstein also operated: the Holiday Inn West in Bridgeton near the Lambert Airport, the Holiday Inn Riverfront located downtown, the Coachman's Inn, which had been located even further west at Ballas and U. S. Highway 40 in St. Louis County and is non-extant, and the Sheraton Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida.<sup>39</sup>

Probstein was also indirectly involved in another major St. Louis hotel development, the Holiday Inn that was to occupy the Mansion House (completed in 1966), on Fourth Street downtown. This major competitive development with three towers was less than a block south from the Bel Air East and built with a mortgage from the Housing and Urban Development agency. Probstein and the owner of the Rodeway Inn, another downtown hotel, filed a suit against the owners and the Housing and Urban Development Agency characterizing a 1972 agreement that modified the terms of the mortgage as deceptive and fraudulent.<sup>40</sup> This agreement modified the original payment plan to a more forgiving debt schedule.<sup>41</sup> Even at the time the agreement was made, there were HUD officials who saw it as a sweetheart deal for wealthy owners (including Henry Ford II and a number of executives for IT&T) using the money-losing project as a massive tax shelter. One of the HUD employees who worked on the agreement even went to work for the company almost immediately after the deal was concluded, creating further suspicion. Economic forecasts also showed that the restructuring would still only work if the Holiday Inn made at least \$1.5 million a year and if the residential towers also increased revenue.<sup>42</sup> Maurice B. Frank, the property manager, was a "recovery expert" who also had five other HUD projects in receivership.<sup>43</sup> Despite the new payment agreement only a few initial payments were ever made to HUD, amounting to a total of about \$600,000 on the \$36 million owed. Despite the lack of payment, HUD refused to step in and enforce the agreement. This agreement also allowed for the development of the Holiday Inn in the south tower because it was supposed to make the deal profitable.<sup>44</sup> Despite all of the changes to the original mortgage, with such generous provisions for the developers, the project was still a failure, declaring bankruptcy in 1977, in violation of the 1972 agreement.<sup>45</sup>

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## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Probstein's suit argued that the lack of payment constituted fraud on the part of the developers. It further argued that the addition of the Holiday Inn, which was not originally part of the project, benefited the developers of the Mansion House and was in violation of the original mortgage agreement. Probstein became involved in large part not because of the residential development but rather the conversion of one of the towers into a Holiday Inn. Probstein argued that this potentially criminal arrangement was detrimental to other downtown hotels, especially the Bel Air East and the Rodeway Inn, the two hotels closet to the new development.<sup>46</sup> The case was eventually settled out of court and Probstein later owned the Holiday Inn Riverfront, although he was not involved in the development of the building.<sup>47</sup>

With his financial success in the hotel business, Probstein became an important member of the St. Louis business community. He opened a sports bar in 1974 with the St. Louis football Cardinals tight end Jackie Smith, called Jackie's Place.<sup>48</sup> Although the restaurant closed in the early 1980s, it was later re-opened as Sportsman's Park, run by Probstein's son Jim.<sup>49</sup>

Besides his extensive work in the hotel and restaurant business, Probstein was also a respected philanthropist. Probstein founded the Norman K. Probstein Award for Meritorious Contributions to Oncology at the Washington University School of Medicine, the Norman K. Probstein Oncology Lecture, the Endowment for the Holocaust Education Fund, and the Endowment Fund for Special Projects.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Probstein also founded the Norman K. Probstein Charitable Foundation, Inc.<sup>51</sup> Yet another of Probstein's charitable donations was a two million dollar gift to Forest Park Forever. This gift was to refurbish and redesign the Dwight D. Eisenhower Golf Course in Forest Park, first constructed in 1913. The redesign, done by Hale Irwin, took the former eighteen-hole course and the nine-hole course and made three separate nine-hole courses arranged so that any combination of the three can be used to play an eighteen-hole round. The redevelopment also included a new clubhouse and Probstein's personal brain-child: a Youth Learning Center to offer lessons to children ages seven to seventeen. The new complex is now known as the Norman K. Probstein Community Gold Course and Youth Learning Center in Forest Park.<sup>52</sup> Probstein lived in an apartment at 265 Union into the 1960s before he moved to St. Louis County. He died in 2001 of Alzheimer's disease.<sup>53</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Work Gets Under Way On Resort-Styled Motor Hotel, Lindell at Euclid," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 16 June, 1957, 1E.

<sup>2</sup> City of St. Louis Division of Building and Inspection, "Building Permits," City Hall, St. Louis, MO; "Building News/ Building Permits," *St. Louis Daily Record*, 6 February, 1957:8; 11 June 1957:14; 23 July 1957:8; 9 August 1957:8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; *St. Louis Daily Record*, 12 September, 1959:8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; *St. Louis Daily Record*, 18 February 1961:8.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

<sup>7</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Mercantile Library, *Globe-Democrat* Clippings Files, "O'Toole, Lucy," 19 September, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> "Work Gets Under Way On Resort-Styled Motor Hotel, Lindell at Euclid," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 16 June, 1957, 1E.

<sup>7</sup> *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directories*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1967-1968, 1968, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976-77.

<sup>8</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, AIA, Wilburn C. McCormick AIA Application, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "McCormick, Wilburn 'Chugger,'" *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 10 April 2008, B7.

<sup>11</sup> *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directories*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1956, 1958, 1959); *Gould's St. Louis County (Missouri) Directories*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1961, 1963, 1967, 1970, 1975, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> Carolyn H. Toft, "John Lawrence Mauran, FAIA (1866-1933)." [http://www.landmarks-stl.org/architects/bio/john\\_lawrence\\_mauran/](http://www.landmarks-stl.org/architects/bio/john_lawrence_mauran/) Accessed December 22, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Mauran, Russell and Garden (clippings file). Landmarks Association of St. Louis.

<sup>14</sup> James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998), 446.

<sup>15</sup> Primm, 478.

<sup>16</sup> Primm, 456-57.

<sup>17</sup> Primm, 478.

<sup>18</sup> "Work Gets Under Way on Resort-Styled Motor Hotel, Lindell at Euclid."

<sup>19</sup> Michael Allen, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form -- Nomination Form: Robert E. Lee Hotel*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Allen, Field Survey of Extant Motels in the City of St. Louis, 14 October 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Anne Goodman, "The Very First Motel," [website] <http://savvytraveler.publicradio.org/show/features/2000/20000728/motel.shtml>> Accessed 9 October 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew and Jenny Wood, Motel Americana. < [website] <http://www.motelamericana.com>> Accessed 9 October 2008.

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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

<sup>24</sup> Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 185.

<sup>25</sup> "Johnson Motor Lodge's Opening Here Tomorrow," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 June 1957.

<sup>26</sup> These figures are based on analysis of *Polk's City Directory* for the years 1958 through 1971 as well as the *St. Louis Daily Record* for the same period.

<sup>27</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. I, 158-161.

<sup>28</sup> Lindsey Derrington, "Recoup DeVille Motor Hotel: No Need to Demolish Historic Building," *The Vital Voice*, 23 April 2008.

<sup>29</sup> These figures are based on analysis of building permit records, the *St. Louis Daily Record* and the 1964 Sanborn fire insurance map.

<sup>30</sup> City of St. Louis, Division of Building and Inspection, "Building Permits;" *St. Louis Daily Record*.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Allen, Field Survey of Extant Motels in the City of St. Louis, 14 October 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Julia Ann LaMouria, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form -- Nomination Form: Farm & Home Savings and Loan Association*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Central Business District East Survey Map, Landmarks Association, 1978-97.

<sup>34</sup> City of St. Louis, Division of Building and Inspection, "Building Permits"; *St. Louis Daily Record*.

<sup>35</sup> Bethany Prange, "Norman Probstein, Developer and Benefactor," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 24 January, 2001, B4.

<sup>36</sup> *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directories*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1963, 1964, 1965).

<sup>37</sup> *Gould's St. Louis (Missouri) City Directories*, (St. Louis: Polk-Gould Directory Co., 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976-77, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Mercantile Library, *Globe-Democrat* Clippings Files, "O'Toole, Lucy," 19 September, 1972.

<sup>39</sup> Prange.



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Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

<sup>40</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. I, 83; St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. II, 22.

<sup>41</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis General Clippings," Vol. 20, 18; St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. I, 83.

<sup>42</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. II, 44.

<sup>43</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. II, 44.

<sup>44</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. I, 83; St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. II, 22.

<sup>45</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis General Clippings," Vol. 20, 18.

<sup>46</sup> St. Louis, Missouri, Missouri Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, "St. Louis Hotels, Taverns, Restaurants," Vol. II, 22.

<sup>47</sup> Prange.

<sup>48</sup> Prange.

<sup>49</sup> "Sportman's Park, Back in the Family" *Ladue News* [Website], 17 July 2008, [http://www.laduenews.com/articles/2008/07/17/living/special\\_features/doc487fb4ddac587271128218.txt](http://www.laduenews.com/articles/2008/07/17/living/special_features/doc487fb4ddac587271128218.txt), accessed 15 October, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Jewish Federation of St. Louis Report to the Community, [online document] <http://stlouis.ujcfedweb.org/getfile.asp?id=20632>, accessed 15 October, 2008; Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine, "Bulletin" [website] <http://bulletinoftheschoolofmedicine.wustl.edu/medpa/bulletin.nsf/WV/A0AC5A07FA07DB7F86256E6A00599E90?OpenDocument>, accessed 15 October, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Implu Corporation [website] <http://www.implu.com/nonprofit/431676961> accessed on 15 October, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Forest Park Advisory Board Annual Report 2000., "Renovation of Forest Park Gold Course" [online document] <http://stlouis.missouri.org/government/docs/forestpark/golf.htm> accessed 15 October, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Prange.

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National Park Service

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St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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- \_\_\_\_\_. St. Louis Public Library, Central Branch. Fine Arts Department, Vertical Files: St. Louis Architects: Russel, Earnest J.
- \_\_\_\_\_. St. Louis Public Library, Central Branch. Fine Arts Department, Vertical Files: St. Louis Architects: Russel, Mullgart, Schwartz and Ban Hoeffner.
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St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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"Work Gets Under Way on Resort-Styled Motor Hotel, Lindell at Euclid." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 June 1957.

## Verbal Boundary Description

All of Lots 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and the Northeastern triangular part of Lot 20 of John Baker's Subdivision of Block 51 of Peter Lindell's Second Addition and oin Block 3893 of the City of St. Louis, having an aggregate frontage of 261 feet 8 inches on the South line of Lindell Boulevard by a depth Southwardly of 246 feet 4-1/2 inches along the East line of said property and of 246 feet 6-1/2 inches along the West line of said property to an alley, having an aggregated width thereon of 250 feet; bounded West by a property now or formerly of f. B. Ver Steeg and East by Lot 14 of said block and Subdivision.

## Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description. Except for public sidewalks and the parking lot, the building occupies entire lot.



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**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

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**Bel Air Motel**  
**St. Louis (Independent City), MO**

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**Photo Log**

Photographer: Sheila Findall  
December 2008

Negatives with Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

Photo #1: Exterior, looking south at north facade

Photo #2: Exterior, looking southwest at north facade and east elevation

Photo #3: Exterior, looking southeast at north facade and west elevation

Photo #4: Exterior, looking southeast at parking garage entry and courtyard

Photo #5: Exterior, looking northeast into courtyard

Photo #6: Exterior, looking southeast into courtyard

Photo #7: Exterior, looking northeast at south and west elevations

Photo #8: Interior, first floor, looking east from the northwest end of the lobby

Photo #9: Interior, first floor, looking west from the east end of the south hall

Photo #10: Interior, first floor, looking southeast from the northwest corner of room 120

Photo #11: Interior, lower level, looking southeast from the northwest end of the garage



Bel Air Motel  
 St. Louis Ind. City,  
 Missouri,  
 15/738395/4280445

17°30' 1736 737 MANCHESTER 14 MI. INTERIOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA - 1993 739000m E. 90°15' 38°17'30" 4279000m N. 4 MI. TO INTERSTATE 70

1 MILE

**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



CLAYTON, MO.  
 38090-F3-TF-024

1954  
 REVISED 1993  
 DMA 7961 III NE-SERIES V879

ISBN 0-607-27702-5

9 780607 277029

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1988-90 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1993. Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours. Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas.



Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), mo  
Photo No. 1





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 2





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 3





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), Mo  
Photo No. 4





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 5





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 6





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 7





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), Mo  
Photo No. 8



1301 Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 9





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), Mo  
Photo No. 10





Bel Air Motel  
St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
Photo No. 11

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 09000253

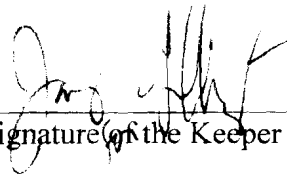
Date Listed: 5/01/2009

Property Name: Bell Air Motel

County: St. Louis (Independent City)

State: MO

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

5/1/2009  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

### Section 8: Criteria Considerations

The motel was constructed in three parts, the largest two in 1957 and 1959. A small kitchen addition was added in 1961. This addition is of a scale small enough that it need not meet the exceptional importance criterion.

Therefore, Criteria Consideration G is hereby deleted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
The Missouri State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

### **DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**