

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
**Office of Archives and History**  
**Department of Cultural Resources**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Midtown Motor Lodge**

Kinston, Lenoir County, LR1558, Listed 12/27/2016

Nomination by Jamie Dail

Photographs by Jamie Dail, July/August 2016



Entrance wing



Courtyard view

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Midtown Motor Lodge

Other names/site number: Kinston Motor Lodge

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 501 North Heritage St.

City or town: Kinston State: NC County: Lenoir

Not For Publication:  N/A

Vicinity:  N/A

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national          statewide      X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

    A          B      X C          D

<p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p><u>North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources</u></p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

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

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic/ hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/not in use  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete Block

### Narrative Description

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

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### Summary Paragraph

The Midtown Motor Lodge, later known as the Kinston Motor Lodge, is a two-story “U” shaped modern style motel building, complete with central courtyard at the north end. Built in 1963, the Midtown Motor Lodge is located on the northeastern corner of North Heritage Street and West Peyton Avenue, situated in downtown Kinston, Lenoir County, North Carolina. Lenoir County has three incorporated municipalities with Kinston as the county seat. The motel is located on a rectangular 1.18 acre tract, less than a block north the commercial downtown, including the Kinston Commercial Historic District (NR, 1994) and the Queen-Gordon Streets Historic District (NR, 1989). The lot abuts the Mitchelltown Historic District (NR, 1989), a residential district to the west.

The motor lodge is set back to the north and east from North Heritage Street and West Peyton Avenue to allow for parking. An asphalt parking lot surrounds the northern, western, and southern sides of the building with an alley to the east. The property is accessed from West Peyton Avenue near the southwest corner of the lot, an alley that runs along the east side, and from North Heritage Street near the northwest corner of the lot. The parking lot typically features a central access drive, flanked on either side by a row of spaces with perpendicular lines. The north parking lot has one set of parking spaces, running along the north end of the courtyard. The lot features several rectangular-shaped grass landscape islands, generally located at the corners of the building and flanking the entrances and exits of the lot. A sidewalk and grassy median run along West Peyton Avenue and North Heritage Street. Located at the corner of North Heritage Street and West Peyton Avenue is a non-historic backlit sign approximately 20 feet high which reads “Kinston Motor Lodge.” This sign most likely replaced the original

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wooden colonial style sign in the 1980-1990s.<sup>1</sup> The current signage is in the same location as the original sign and does not impact the historic integrity of the motor lodge.

The motel is comprised of three semi-detached, rectangular, two-story wings, connected by breezeways to form a “U” shaped configuration with the central courtyard to the north. The east and west wings have a north-south orientation, while the south wing has an east-west orientation. All guest rooms within the three wings are accessed from the exterior. The south and west wings are organized with back-to-back rooms, while east wing is only one room deep, opening toward the courtyard. The east and west wings are six bays wide and the south wing is ten bays wide. A porte cochere projects from the western elevation of the west wing sheltering a lobby entrance.

The motel includes sixty-four guest rooms, a lobby, the Ram Neuse Room (likely a conference room named for its five-foot model of the Confederate Ram, which is non-extant), and care-takers quarters.<sup>2</sup> The character of the motor lodge is defined by curtain wall construction and geometric/linear design, along with decorative concrete block walls screening stairwells. Other significant features of the motel include a cantilevered balcony/walkway running continuously along nearly all elevations to provide access to the second story guest rooms and a kidney-shaped swimming pool located in the central courtyard space. Although the swimming pool has been infilled with dirt, the pool’s red brick edge remains exposed. A concrete sidewalk lines the motel and pool.

Since its construction, the Midtown Motor Lodge has undergone a few alterations, but the modifications have not extensively diminished its overall integrity, with no changes to the massing and few changes to the character defining features. The Midtown Motor Lodge retains most of its original floor plan and features with minimal alterations, making it an intact example of a mid-century curtain wall construction motor inn.

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## Narrative Description

### *Exterior*

The Midtown Motor Lodge is approximately 27,750 sq. ft. and generally consists of three semi-detached, two-story wings, connected by breezeways to form a “U” shaped configuration with the central courtyard to the north. The motel is a concrete block building with concrete slab floor and ceiling construction. A recessed open stairway is located on the north elevation of the west wing and the west elevation of the south wing. An additional set of straight-run concrete stairs is attached to the south elevation of the east wing providing access to the second floor rooms. All of the guest rooms within the three wings open to the exterior with the south and west wings organized with back-to-back rooms and the east wing only one room deep, opening toward the courtyard. The east and west wings are six bays wide, while the south wing is ten bays wide.

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<sup>1</sup> “Many Firms Played Roles in Building Motor Lodge,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, Aug. 17, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> “Midtown Motor Lodge Has 64 Rooms for Travellers,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, Aug. 17, 1963.

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The guest rooms in each wing are three bays wide with an offset, solid metal entry door and two bays of aluminum frame curtain walls. The two paired bays each feature three horizontal panels, set into floor to ceiling metal frame. Originally, the metal frame had all glass panels, but fiber-cement/particle board panels have been inserted above and below the large, central glass windows.<sup>3</sup> In the panel below the window of the central bays, there are through-the-wall air conditioner units. The solid panels and through-the-wall air conditioning units are a later change, likely dating to the 1980-1990s.

A continuous concrete balcony/walkway extends along all elevations of the building, except the north and east elevations of the east wing, to provide access to the second story guest rooms. The metal balcony railings are constructed with simple vertical bars. There are no visible means of support for either the balcony or the wide eaves, both of which cantilever outward from the building.

A porte cochere, projecting from the west elevation of the west wing, shelters the main lobby entrance. It is supported by four large square concrete posts and a solid brick wall forms the west end. The second story of the porte cochere has a solid concrete parapet wall.

The west wing contains both public and mechanical spaces on the first floor, with guest rooms on the second. The second floor of the west wing is comprised of six bays of individual guest rooms. The bays include back to back rooms with a single entry per unit from the west and east elevations. The first floor of the west elevation is primarily composed of concrete block, with a primary and secondary entrance. The primary entrance, located under the porte cochere, leads to the lobby. At the primary entrance, two single-light aluminum frame doors, with jalousie transoms above, flank a concrete pilaster and have adjacent aluminum frame fixed panels and windows, similar to the guest rooms. In some areas, glass has been replaced with fiber-cement/particle board panels. The secondary entrance, which leads to the Ram Neuse Room, features a single wood door with diamond shaped lite, flanked by single sidelights, both replaced with an opaque material. The transom above now has an air conditioning unit.

The north elevation of the west wing features solid concrete block walls, with a central two-story decorative, geometric design concrete screen block wall that covers a recessed open stairwell. On the first floor, there are two solid doors flanking the block wall, providing access to a storage space and the kitchen. Covering the east door is a shed roof porch with contemporary wood supports and baluster, likely added in the past decade. The south elevation of the west wing is primarily composed of concrete block, with metal double doors accessing a storage area on both the first and second floor. This elevation also features a breezeway connecting the west and south wing.

The south wing is not flush with the west side of the west wing, but is offset by approximately twenty-four feet from the west wall of the west wing to the west wall of the south wing. The south wing consists of ten bays of individual guest rooms located on the first and second floors. The bays include two back-to-back rooms with a single entry per unit from the

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<sup>3</sup> "Many Firms Played Roles in Building Motor Lodge," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

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north and south façades. Much like the north elevation of the west wing, the west elevation of the south wing features a central two-story geometric design concrete screen block wall that covers a recessed open stairwell. The walls of this elevation are solid concrete block. The south elevation of the south wing consists of ten bays of individual guest rooms located on the first and second floor.

The east elevation of the south wing features six bays of two-story decorative, geometric design concrete screen block wall, punctuated by concrete block piers, all of which screens a breezeway. This concrete block wall connects to the east wall of the east wing. The breezeway has been enclosed with plywood on the first floor, but remains open to the balcony on the second floor. The first and second floor on the east elevation of the south wing include a single metal door accessing a storage closet, which contains an access panel to the plumbing and mechanical chase on the first floor. This is shielded from exterior view by the concrete block breezeway.

The two-story concrete block wall on the east elevation of the south wing is flush with the east elevation of the east wing, forming a continuous wall. The east wing consist of six bays of individual guest rooms, one room deep, located on both the first and second floor with room access from only the west elevation. A set of straight-run concrete block stairs is attached to the south elevation, providing access to the second floor balcony. The east elevation of the east wing is a concrete block wall covered with stucco. This elevation also features twelve sliding windows (six on each floor) approximately two feet by two feet. These windows rhythmically correlate to each guest room along the elevation. The north elevation of the east wing is a solid wall with no penetrations.

The courtyard elevations for the south and east wings include a linear arrangement of guest rooms on both the first and second floor. The south wing comprised of ten bays, with the east wing including six. The east elevation of west wing, facing the courtyard, features two metal frame entrances, as well as a solid metal double door, leading to the boiler room on the south end. Toward the middle of the elevation is the lobby entrance from the courtyard. It includes aluminum frame double doors, flanked by single sidelights, with a four light transom above, two of them being jalousie windows. The second entrance, toward the north end of the wing, has been covered with a plywood panel on the interior and exterior, possibly still intact under the plywood, with a three bay transom above, two with jalousie windows, one covered with plywood with an air conditioning unit. Two, irregularly placed, one-over-one vinyl sash windows are located on either side of this entrance.

### *Interior*

The west wing contains the public and utility spaces on the lower level with individual guest rooms on the upper level. The first floor includes the main lobby, Ram Neuse Room, conference room, office and storage area, and laundry/boiler room. The first floor also includes two caretaker's residence units with a common kitchen located behind the main lobby space. These rooms are all placed along a double loaded corridor. The main lobby, accessed from the porte cochere, includes a check-in counter, office, and restroom. Located behind the check-in counter is the main gathering space, or the Ram Neuse Room, originally with a capacity for thirty-six



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guests, as well as a conference area. The floor of the lobby and conference room was originally terrazzo, while the Ram Neuse Room was wall-to-wall carpet.<sup>4</sup>

The check-in counter has been enclosed with counter-to-ceiling partition walls, likely dating to change of ownership in the 1980s-1990s. The lobby floor has been replaced with vinyl tile and a carpeted section extending into the check-in area. The Ram Neuse Room and conference space has been stripped of all original features, exposing the concrete floor with gypsum board on the walls. The care taker's residence has wall-to-wall carpet while the common kitchen has vinyl tile flooring. The kitchen has replacement cabinetry, countertops, and appliances. The laundry/boiler room is unfinished with block wall and concrete floor. The doors throughout this space are typically flush wood doors in the hallway, while the caretakers' rooms feature louvered bi-fold closet doors.

### *Guest Rooms*

The Midtown Motor Lodge contains a total of sixty-four guest rooms, twenty-six on the first floor and thirty-eight on the second floor, all entered from exterior doors. The typical guest room is one rectangular bay, containing a closet and bathroom at the rear of the room. The majority of the rooms are 250-260 square feet with the smallest rooms, located by the stairwells, at 220 square feet. The 250-260 square foot rooms originally offered two double beds with the remaining rooms furnished with one double bed.<sup>5</sup> Newspaper articles state that the typical room had plaster walls and ceiling with wall to wall carpet and matching bed spreads and drapes. Bathrooms are located at the rear of the guest rooms and generally include a vanity sink, toilet, and shower with tub, finished with ceramic tile.<sup>6</sup>

While the layout of the rooms remain unchanged, some finishes have been altered. The current finishes in a typical room consist of carpeted floors with gypsum board walls. Originally, the walls were plaster. The typical bathroom has linoleum tile floors with ceramic tile showers with tub. The vanities have Formica countertops, many of which have water damage causing warping. Two rooms have had exploratory demolition to the wall between the sleeping and bathroom area, as well as bare concrete walls and floors (tub remains).

### Pool – 1963, non-contributing structure

The wings of the motel surround an open courtyard of mown lawn that once contained a working kidney shaped swimming pool as its primary feature. While the pool edge, made of red brick, remains visible, the pool itself has been filled with dirt, most likely dating to the 1980s-1990s alterations.

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<sup>4</sup> "Midtown Motor Lodge Has 64 Rooms for Travellers," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1963

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

**Significant Dates**  
1963

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

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A

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

**Architect/Builder**  
Dubose, George, contractor

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

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

Locally significant under Criterion C for architecture, the 1963 Midtown Motor Lodge, located in downtown Kinston, is an intact example of the motor inn building type utilizing curtain wall construction. The Midtown Motor Lodge is a “U” shaped, two-story, concrete block, aluminum, and glass building comprised of three wings with balconies/walkways and exterior access to rooms. As the traditional downtown hotel model became outdated with the rise of automobile travel after World War I, several types of alternative lodging developed. One of these types, the motor inn, first appeared in the 1950s and was built as a more upscale, automobile-friendly alternative to the downtown hotel. As travelers came to and through Kinston, the Midtown Motor Lodge served as modern accommodations for them and their cars. The Midtown Motor Lodge is also distinctive in its use of curtain wall construction. Both stylistic and functional in nature, curtain wall construction is characterized by large window walls, or panels, typically glass or steel, set into a metal frame. A widely popular stylistic treatment during the post-World War II era, it is made possible by advancements in building technology, allowing for a separation of the building’s structural system from the often pre-fabricated window wall component. The Midtown Motor Lodge’s period of significance is 1963, coinciding with the date of construction.

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

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

As early as 1895, Kinston’s economy was driven by tobacco production and the railroad. In addition to its status as the Lenoir County seat, the textile industry and carriage manufacturing were lesser sources of economic vitality for the city.<sup>7</sup> In the 1950s and 60s, manufacturing jobs became more prevalent than agricultural jobs in Kinston. At this time, the E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company Dacron Fiber Plant was constructed seven miles east of Kinston. By the 1970s, the plant employed over 3,600 people, producing a new type of synthetic fiber, Dacron polyester.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1950s, Kinston saw its largest growth period since the 1890s. With this growth came a desire to revitalize the early-twentieth-century buildings in Kinston’s downtown corridor with updated storefronts and the addition of popular building materials of the time, particularly metal and glass.<sup>9</sup> Kinston was reinventing itself as a more modern city by bolstering downtown appeal as industries moved their warehouses out of the city center to the country, where there was space to build more modern facilities.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> M. Ruth Little, *Coastal Plain and Fancy: The Historic Architecture of Lenoir County and Kinston, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem: Jostens Printing & Publishing, 1998), 128.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

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Kinston followed the national trend of providing modern motel lodging to travelers. By 1964, there were at least 61,000 motels in the country.<sup>11</sup> This can be attributed to new highways and road improvements greatly changing the way people traveled by car to towns and cities across the country. The expansion of the highway system supplied much faster and safer routes for tourists aiming to minimize their travel time between destinations.<sup>12</sup> Typically, the transient guest would seek out accommodations near a major interchange or junction of highways due to the ease of entering and leaving during their travel. The city of Kinston is a crossroads for US Route 70 and State Route 11, two highly traveled roads in North Carolina. US Route 70 runs generally east to west and is a popular route for travelers to and from the coast. State Route 11 generally runs through the eastern part of North Carolina from Virginia to South Carolina. Naturally, Kinston was a good stopping point for travelers along these routes.

It is clear from articles in newspaper publications from the year it was constructed that the Midtown Motor Lodge was built specifically for modern travelers to and through Kinston by way of automobile. Newspaper headings such as “Midtown Motor Lodge has 64 rooms for travelers” and “approved by AAA,” are hints that it was built with automobile travelers in mind.<sup>13</sup> The location for the motor lodge was selected “because of the convenience of such a location to the commercial traveler, tourists, and other visitors to the city.”<sup>14</sup>

Believed to have been design by Kinston architect John J. Rowland, the 1963 Midtown Motor Lodge was constructed by George Dubose of Dubose Real Estate Company for Oscar Green, part owner, who was conducting business as Kinston Downtown Hotel Inc.<sup>15</sup> The motor lodge opened the week of August 11, 1963 and was originally owned by a corporation of ten stockholders with representatives from each stockholder serving on the board of directors. The stockholders consisted of a number of Kinston firms and organizations who played a key role in the building project.<sup>16</sup> Roger R. Huff Jr. managed the day-to-day operation of the motor lodge.<sup>17</sup>

The Midtown Motor Lodge was promoted at its grand opening with advertisements detailing fixtures and amenities such as wall-to-wall carpet, room phones, a TV in every room, the Ram Neuse room, a lounge/dance floor/meeting space, and a swimming pool, all supplied by local vendors.<sup>18</sup> A typical room at the Midtown Motor Lodge had two double beds with matching bed spreads and drapes, room-controlled air conditioning, as well as a bathroom finished in ceramic tile.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 45.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>13</sup> “Midtown Motor Lodge Has 64 Rooms for Travellers,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Skip Green, phone call to author, February 25, 2016. Skip Green is the son of Oscar Green, original part owner to the Midtown Motor Lodge

<sup>16</sup> “Many Firms Played Roles in Building Motor Lodge,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>17</sup> “Motor Lodge Corporation,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>18</sup> “Midtown Motor Lodge Has 64 Rooms for Travellers,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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According to the 1963 Hills Kinston City Directory, at the time of its construction, the Midtown Motor Lodge was one of three motels in the Kinston area. The Kinstonian Motel was located on Hwy 70, while the Cadillac Motel was located on New Bern Rd.<sup>20</sup> It is not known what these motels looked like and they are no longer extant.

In 1970, the Midtown Motor Lodge was sold by the original corporation, Kinston Downtown Hotel, Inc., to Hospitality IV, Ltd who owned the property from 1970-1974. In 1974 the property was transferred to the Kinston Motor Lodge, Ltd and renamed the Kinston Motor Lodge, under whose ownership it remained until 1979. From 1979 until 2014 the property continued to change ownership every few years, mainly owned by individuals until the current owner purchased the property in 2014.

It was during the 1970s-1990s that the motel went into disrepair. Oral history from local residents indicated that the motel's decline paralleled the loss of the tobacco and shirt industries in Kinston. During the 1970-1980s the neighboring city of Greenville began to see substantial growth with the expansion of East Carolina University. Around the late 1970s a new Holiday Inn was constructed on Highway 70, becoming the new popular place for lodging in town, leading to a decline in guests for the Midtown Motor Lodge. Several local residents claim that following the construction of the Holiday Inn, businesses began suggesting to their out-of-town visitors to avoid motels with exterior access and suggested the new hotel. The city of Kinston continued to decline with the downsizing of DuPont and from the early 1980s to 2014. The motor lodge became known for its long-term rentals and low prices.<sup>21</sup> The current owner intends to rehabilitate the motel, updating it for today's travelers, continuing the legacy of the Midtown Motor Lodge.

## ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

### *Motor Inns as a Motel Type*

The evolution of hotel and motel design is closely linked with the advancement in transportation modes. Into the early 1900s, hotels monopolized the lodging industry. Generally located in or near downtown, hotels were easily accessible by foot, carriage, streetcar, or some other mode of transportation from local train stations. Hotels were seen as a status symbol for the town in which they were built, representative of economic success. Not only did they provide comfortable lodging for visitors, they provided communities with gathering spaces such as ballrooms, dining rooms, and coffee shops.<sup>22</sup>

While it was not the first hotel in Kinston, the National Register-listed, ca. 1927-28 Hotel Kinston, at 503 North Queen Street, is an important example of 1920s hotel design. Located less than one block away from the Midtown Motor Lodge in Kinston's downtown core, the

<sup>20</sup> *Hills Kinston (Lenoir County, N.C.) City Directory 1963* (Richmond: Hill Directory Company, 1963).

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Barbara Dail, electrical engineer at DuPont in Kinston, NC from 1979-1994.

<sup>22</sup> Jakle et al., *The Motel in America*, 23-26.

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monumental Art Deco and Moorish style Hotel Kinston was Kinston's first skyscraper and remains the tallest building in the city. During the 1920s, "community leaders began to recognize the need for a larger, more modern and more centrally located hotel than was then available in the town."<sup>23</sup> Their solution was the Hotel Kinston. In addition to 100 guest rooms, the hotel's ground floor contained several stores, a coffee shop, and a ballroom. This ballroom served as an integral social gathering space for Kinston into the early 1960s. By the 1960s, however, the Hotel Kinston was converted for use as low-income housing and, later, senior citizen housing.<sup>24</sup>

The location of downtown hotels quickly became problematic with the advent of the automobile age. As the automobile gained popularity in the 1920s, hotels did their best to accommodate visitors and their cars with the addition of automobile entrances and parking spaces, but congested traffic downtown continued to make travel to these hotels a hassle. Additionally, rooms were increasingly more expensive for smaller accommodations due to their location on expensive lots in urban centers.<sup>25</sup>

Motels grew out of the need for more convenient lodging for travelers and their automobiles. While there are several sub-types of motels, they are all united by the idea of convenience to roadways and space to accommodate the automobile.<sup>26</sup> The word "motel" was formed as a contraction of the words "motor" and "hotel." The word is now used as a general description for any sort of lodging that accommodates automobiles in their design.<sup>27</sup> Alternatives to the downtown hotel model began with "auto camps," which were essentially camp grounds, and "tourist homes," which were private homes that had rooms for rent nightly. Not long after came "cabin camps" and more substantially built "cottage courts," both of which were comprised of some configuration of nearly identical, individual small buildings. This model became costly and inefficient to build and thus, the "motor court" model was developed.<sup>28</sup>

The "motor court" type motel incorporated individual room units under a single roof line. They were general one story buildings "organized around large courtyards rendered as informal outdoor 'hobbies.'"<sup>29</sup> This design often included a swimming pool, which soon became a popular landscape feature. For these designs, the parking was located on the exterior of the U-shape, accommodating rooms with both a front and back door.<sup>30</sup>

Motor inn type motels developed in the 1950s as larger, more upscale versions of the roadside motor court. Unlike motor courts, however, the motor inns were typically found close to city centers, as modern alternatives to the outdated turn-of-the-century hotel design. They were typically two to three stories in height and configured around a central courtyard. Much

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<sup>23</sup> Allison H. Black, *Hotel Kinston National Register Nomination, Lenoir County, North Carolina*, (Raleigh: North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, 1989), Section 8, Pages 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jakle et al. *The Motel in America*, 23-26.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 23-44.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 23-44.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 45.

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like motor courts, motor inns typically featured a swimming pool and landscaping in the courtyard. However, motor inns featured larger indoor common spaces such lobbies, dining rooms with adjacent cocktail lounges, banquet and meetings rooms. These common spaces were much like those found in the older hotel model, but updated for the modern traveler. Motor inns typically included 150-300 guest rooms, while the motor court design only typically had 50-60 rooms. Guest rooms were often larger, containing two double beds, a night table with telephone, and multiple chairs. They were air-conditioned and almost always included a television set. Many motor inns were laid out where rooms were placed back to back, with utilities down a center core to cut costs.<sup>31</sup> The Midtown Motor Lodge features all components commonly found in motor inn type motels, including the massing, landscaping, décor, and indoor gathering spaces, such as the Ram Neuse room, and adjacent conference room.

### *Modernism and Curtain Wall Construction*

The Midtown Motor Lodge's architectural style is in keeping with the principals of Modernism. Modernism is an overarching term including several subtypes of architectural trends that developed around the mid-twentieth century. The modernist movement is based on a rejection of historical styles and ornamentation, utilizing advanced building technologies and materials in the design of rational and functional architecture.<sup>32</sup>

The Midtown Motor Lodge exhibits elements of modern architecture through curtain wall construction. Curtain wall construction both refers to the building's architectural style, as well as method of construction. It became a widely popular stylistic treatment during the post-World War II era and was often seen in commercial and institutional buildings at this time. The style and mode of construction is identifiable by curtain walls, also known as window walls, which are comprised of rows of spandrel panels, set into non-structural metal framing, which spans the area of a wall. This is made possible through the separation of the building's structural system from the often pre-fabricated window wall component. The building's structural system is typically composed of masonry or steel frame.<sup>33</sup>

The grid of metal framing for the spandrel panels was most commonly constructed of aluminum, which was readily available and replaced the use of steel in the post-war era. Aluminum was easy to obtain and relatively cheap since, after the war, aluminum plants no longer needed to supply the war efforts. The use of prefabricated metal components allowed for more efficient construction process and became a more economical design solution.<sup>34</sup>

Curtain wall construction gained popularity during the 1950s and 1960s as building technologies advanced the use of large window systems. While spandrel panels could be made of metal, they were often made of glass. The greater expanses of glass were made possible by new

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>32</sup> Diana J. Painter, "Montana Post World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory" (Helena: Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, December 2010), <http://www.mhs.mt.gov/portals/11/shpo/docs/montana%20mid-century%20survey%20report.pdf>, 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 35.



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methods of glass manufacturing. Larger areas of glass allow more light into the room, as well as greater flexibility within the interior spaces.<sup>35</sup> This is evident in the large curtain wall-type window systems found in each individual motel room of the Midtown Motor Lodge, where “glass walls and modern furnishing give the rooms spaciousness with plenty of light.”<sup>36</sup> In addition to creating a distinctive look with grids of fixed spandrels, there was no need for operable windows with the advancement of internal heating and cooling systems.<sup>37</sup>

Curtain walls in the Midtown Motor Lodge are divided by concrete slab floors and ceilings, and concrete block outer walls, materials commonly used in motor inns as a way to keep sound from traveling between floors and increase fire safety.<sup>38</sup> George DuBose Jr. of DuBose Construction Co., who built the motor lodge, acknowledged that a primary issue with motel buildings was sound control.<sup>39</sup> Concrete products and air space in-between were used to overcome this problem in the Midtown Motor Lodge.

The curtain wall architecture style was fairly common among motor inn type buildings. In fact, the national motel chain, Holiday Inn, created a new motel design in 1958 that has striking similarities to the independently owned Midtown Motor Lodge. In addition to the similar form and amenities found in motor inns at this time, the Holiday Inn design had exterior walls almost entirely composed of glass, which cut construction costs, allowed for more light into motel rooms, and gave the motel a bright, modern appearance.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the elements of curtain wall construction, the Midtown Motor Lodge features several design elements and building technologies generally found in mid-century modern buildings. These include concrete screen block, emphasis on horizontal and vertical planes, low horizontal massing, flat roofs and broad roof overhangs, and use of modern materials, including steel columns and concrete block as a finished material. The use of glass window walls is a common feature of modernist buildings. It creates a connection between the building site and building itself, bringing the landscape into the building. Specifically at the Midtown Motor Lodge, large glass curtain wall systems allowed for a visual connection between the courtyard and swimming pool area from the majority of the guest rooms and to the automobiles from others.

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<sup>35</sup> Painter, “Montana Post World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory,” 35.

<sup>36</sup> “Midtown Motor Lodge,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Artifacts Consulting, Inc., *Washington State Commercial Architecture Commercial Architecture Context Statement 1940-1975*, for Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), (March 2016), 83.

<sup>38</sup> Jakle et al., *The Motel in America*, 269.

<sup>39</sup> “Construction Eliminates Sound for Midtown Lodge,” *Kinston Daily Free Press*, August 17, 1963.

<sup>40</sup> Jakle et al., *The Motel in America*, 269.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Painter, Diana J. "Montana Post World War II Architectural Survey and Inventory." Helena:  
Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society. December 2010.  
<http://www.mhs.mt.gov/portals/11/shpo/docs/montana%20mid-century%20survey%20report.pdf>.

Interviews with Skip Green, son of Oscar Green, original part owner to the Midtown Motor Lodge and Barbara Dail, electrical engineer at DuPont in Kinston from 1979-1994.

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** LR1558

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 1.18 acres

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 265050 | Northing: 3905520 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

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

The Midtown Motor Lodge is located at the northeast corner of West Peyton Avenue and North Herritage Street, tax parcel #11541.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination property is the Midtown Motor Lodge's current tax parcel, as shown on the GIS aerial map. This is the acreage historically associated with the building.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jamie Dail  
organization: Dunn & Dalton Architects  
street & number: 401 North Herritage Street  
city or town: Kinston state: NC zip code: 28501  
e-mail Jamie@dunndalton.com  
telephone: 252-527-1523  
date: February, 2016

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

### Photographs

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

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Midtown Motor Lodge

City or Vicinity: Kinston

Midtown Motor Lodge

Name of Property

Lenoir, NC

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County: Lenoir

State: North Carolina

Photographer: Jamie Dail

Date Photographed: January 2016

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

Photo 1: Overall view of west elevation, note porte cochere, view northeast.

Photo 2: South elevation of the south wing with typical curtainwall frame configuration, view northeast.

Photo 3: South elevation of south wing and east elevation of east wing, note concrete block screen wall, view northwest.

Photo 4: Courtyard, view south.

Photo 5: West elevation of the east wing, view east.

Photo 6: North elevation of the south wing, view south.

Photo 7: East elevation of the west wing, note brick of infilled pool, view west.

Photo 8: North elevation of the west wing, view southwest.

Photo 9: West elevation of the west wing, under the porte cochere. Note entrance to the main lobby and Ram Neuse room, view northeast.

Photo 10: View of the second floor east breezeway looking south with detail of concrete block screen wall.

Photo 11: Facing north, view of interior lobby check-in counter.

Photo 12: Facing northeast, view of interior lobby.

Photo 13: View of caretaker's apartment, note louvered wooden closet doors.

Photo 14: Facing north, view of Ram Neuse Room/conference space.

Photo 15: View of curtain wall frame configuration from inside guest room, typical.

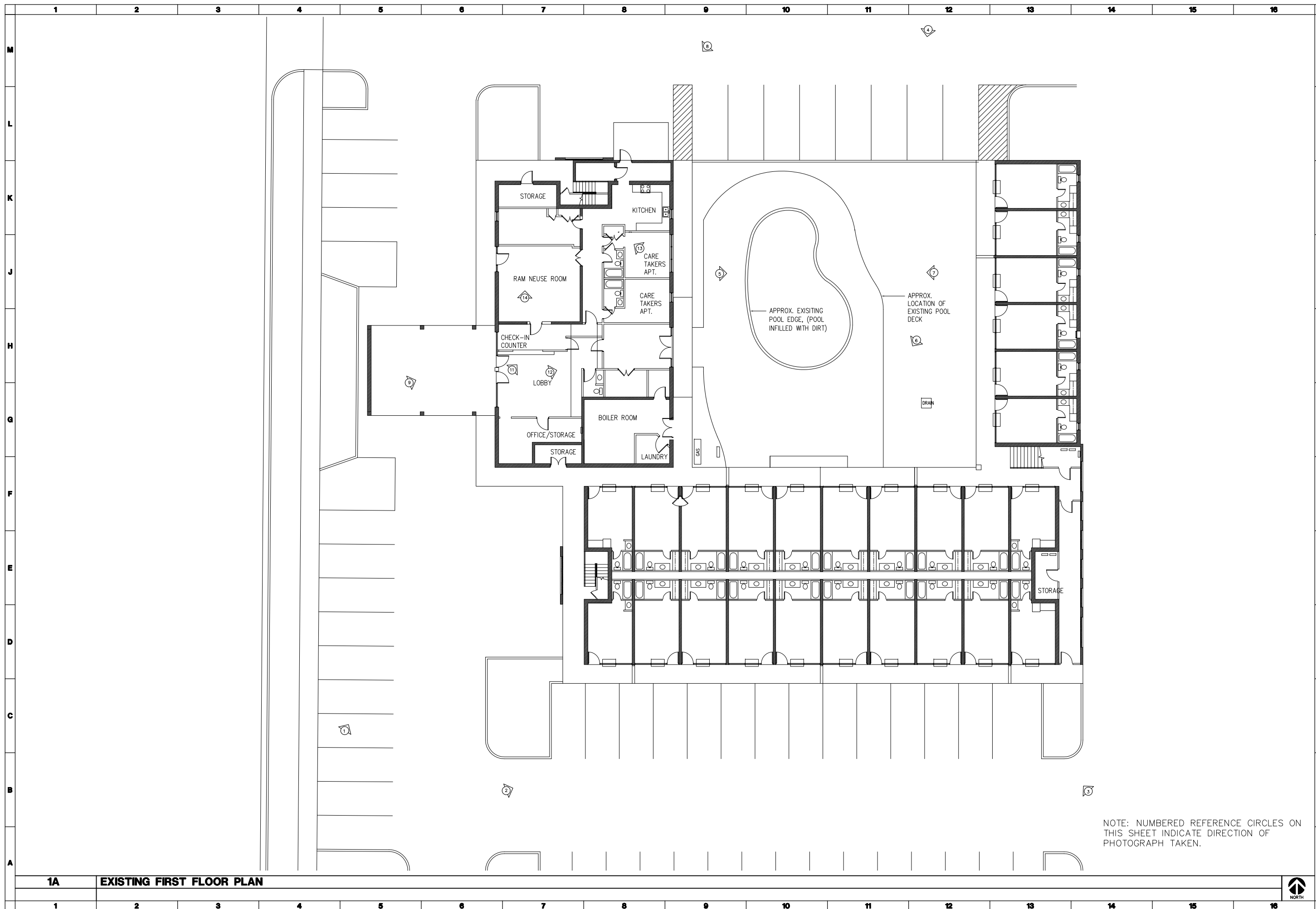
Photo 16: View of typical guest room bathroom.

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



NOTE: NUMBERED REFERENCE CIRCLES ON THIS SHEET INDICATE DIRECTION OF PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN.

**1A** EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

**MIDTOWN MOTOR LODGE  
501 N. HERRITAGE ST  
KINSTON, NORTH CAROLINA**

401 North Heritage Street  
Kinston, North Carolina 28501  
252-527-1523 252-527-0049 fax

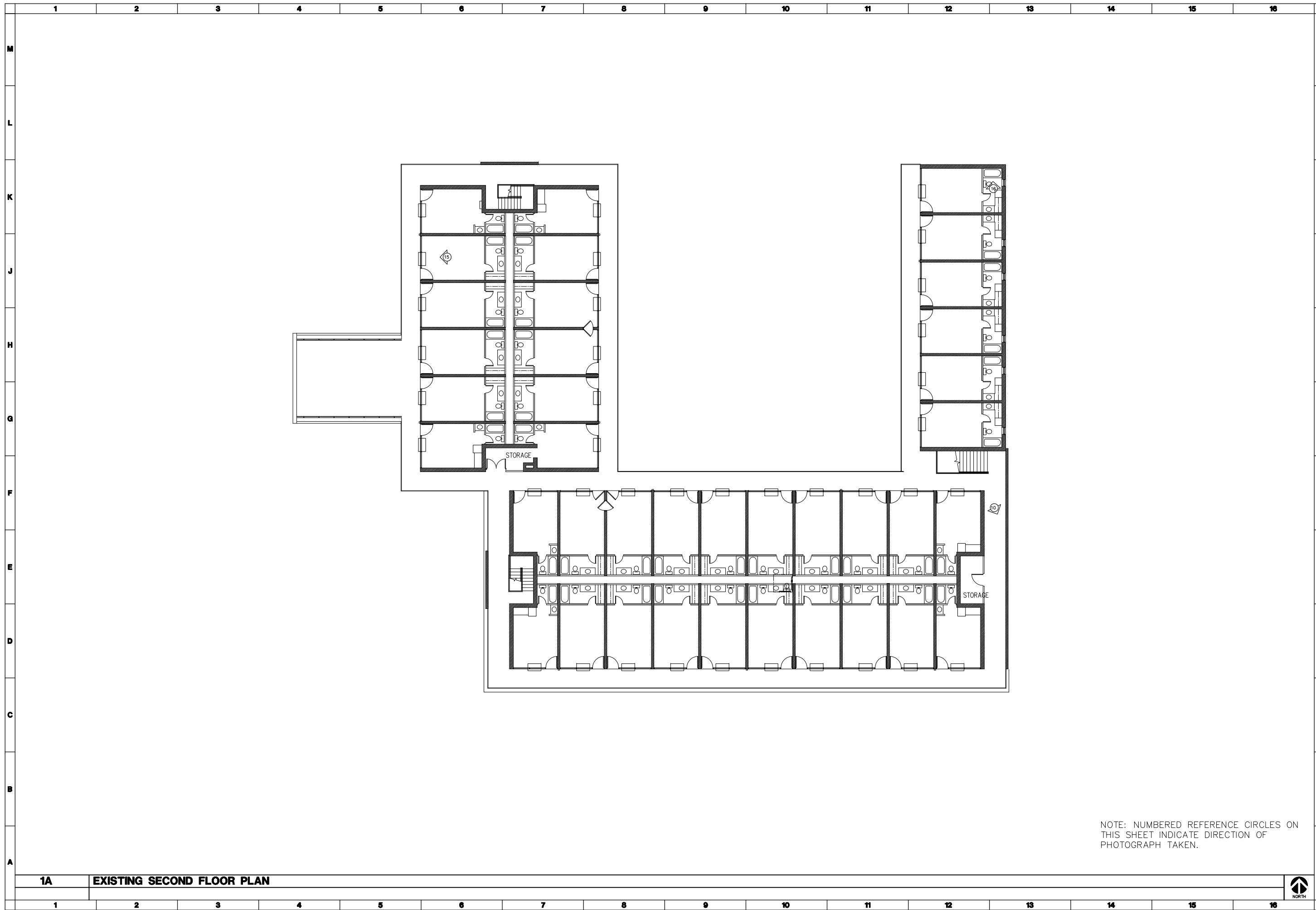
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**MIDTOWN MOTOR LODGE  
501 N. HERRITAGE ST  
KINSTON, NORTH CAROLINA**

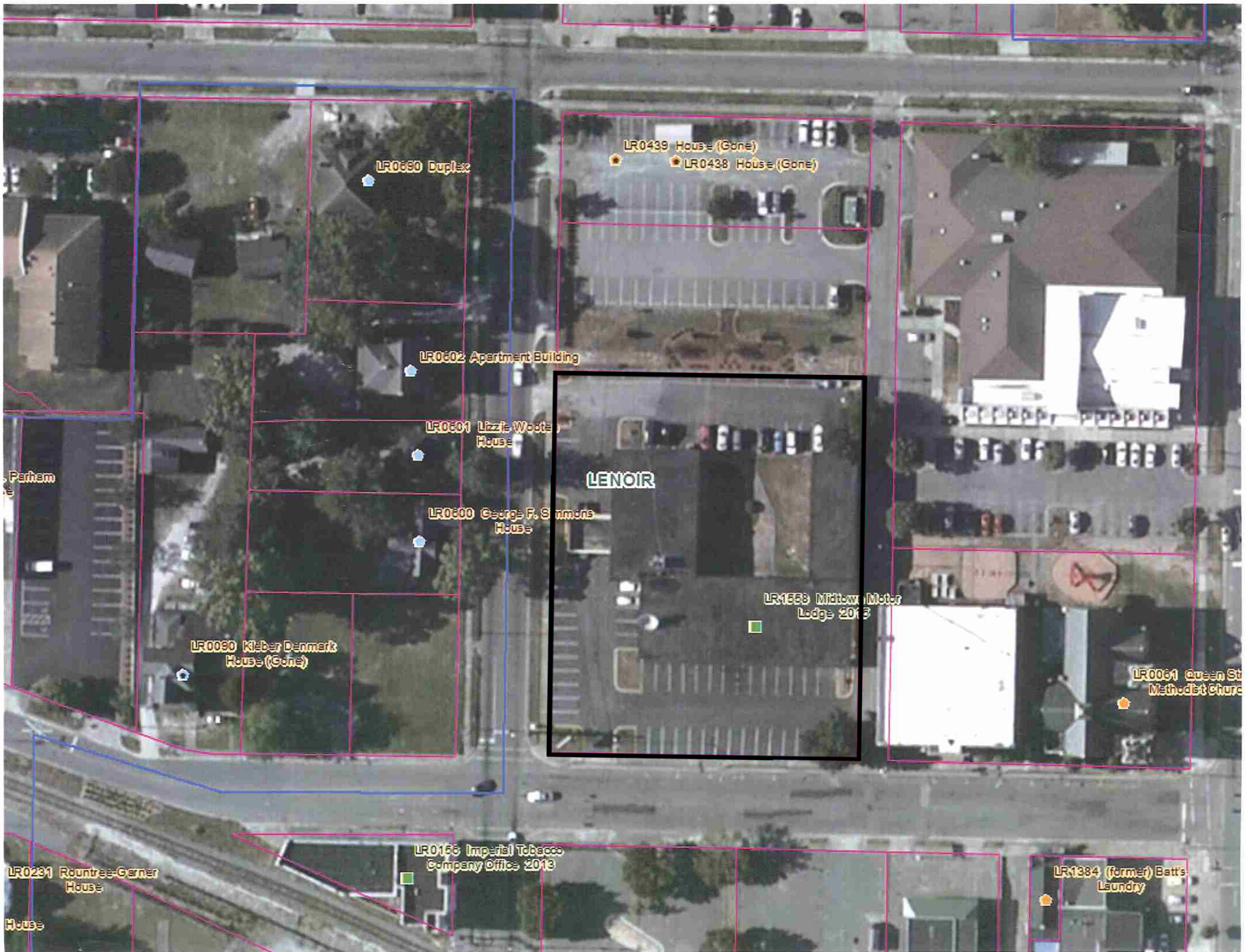
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