



**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

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Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Darin J. Waters, Ph.D.

January 8, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap slreap@ncdot.gov
Historic Architecture Group
NC Department of Transportation

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *Renee Gledhill-Earley*
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Historic Structure Report: HS-2405AI: Install Traffic Signal with Pedestrian Signals and High Visibility Crosswalks and Connect to Raleigh Signal System at SR 3008 (Edenton Street) at Harrington Street in Wake County WBS No. 51307.1.1 PA No. 25-07-0031, ER 25-4108

Thank you for your December 16, 2025, memorandum transmitting the Historic Structures Survey Report (HSSR) for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report, accepted it as final, and offer the following comments.

We concur that the State Capitol Holiday Inn (originally Holiday Inn Downtown Raleigh; WA8030) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@dn-cr.nc.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT mpfurr@ncdot.gov

Historic Structure Survey Report

**Install Traffic Signal with Pedestrian Signals and High Visibility Crosswalks and
Connect to Raleigh Signal System at SR 3008 (Edenton St.) at Harrington St.**

Raleigh, Wake County

TIP No.: HS2405AI

WBS No.: 50977.1.36

PA Tracking No.: 25-07-0031

Prepared for:

Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Prepared by:

MdM Historical Consultants Inc.
Post Office Box 1399
Durham, NC 27702

December 4, 2025

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December 4, 2025

Cynthia de Miranda, Principal Investigator
MdM Historical Consultants Inc.

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Historic Architecture Team
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to install a traffic signal with pedestrian signals and high-visibility crosswalks and to connect to the Raleigh signal system at SR 3008 (Edenton Street) at Harrington Street in Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina. This project is subject to review under the *Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Transportation Projects* (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USACE/USFS 2020).

An NCDOT architectural historian defined an Area of Potential Effects (APE) and identified and assessed all resources of approximately fifty years of age or more within the APE for the above project. Following this initial review, NCDOT staff identified one resource within the APE that warranted an intensive evaluation of individual eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). NCDOT requested that MdM Historical Consultants, Inc., (MdM) evaluate the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030). NCDOT determined that no other property in the APE was worthy of further study and evaluation due to a lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

This eligibility study was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 60; 36 CFR Part 800; and *Historic Architecture Group Procedures and Work Products* (NCDOT 2015) and *Report Standards for Historic Structures Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina* (NCHPO 2021). This evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT, NCHPO, and the National Park Service.

From September to November 2025, MdM architectural historian and principal investigator Cynthia de Miranda conducted fieldwork and research necessary to evaluate the property. Ms. de Miranda prepared a written report with photographs of the resource and streetscapes; a historic context to evaluate the property; the evaluation of NRHP eligibility; and comparison to similar types of resources. The following table identifies the resource evaluated and summarizes the recommendations regarding its eligibility.

Property Name and Survey Site Number	Address and PIN	NRHP Eligibility Recommendation and Criteria
State Capitol Holiday Inn (originally Holiday Inn Downtown Raleigh) WA8030	320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27603 PIN: 1703595367	Recommended eligible under Criterion A in the area of Commerce

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY	1
I. Project Description	3
II. Project Location and Setting	4
III. Methodology	5
IV. Property Description and Evaluation	7
V. Bibliography	47



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View NNE.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View NE.

I. Project Description

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to install a traffic signal with pedestrian signals and high-visibility crosswalks and to connect to the Raleigh signal system at SR 3008 (Edenton Street) at Harrington Street in Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina. This project is subject to review under the *Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Transportation Projects* (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA/USACE/USFS 2020).

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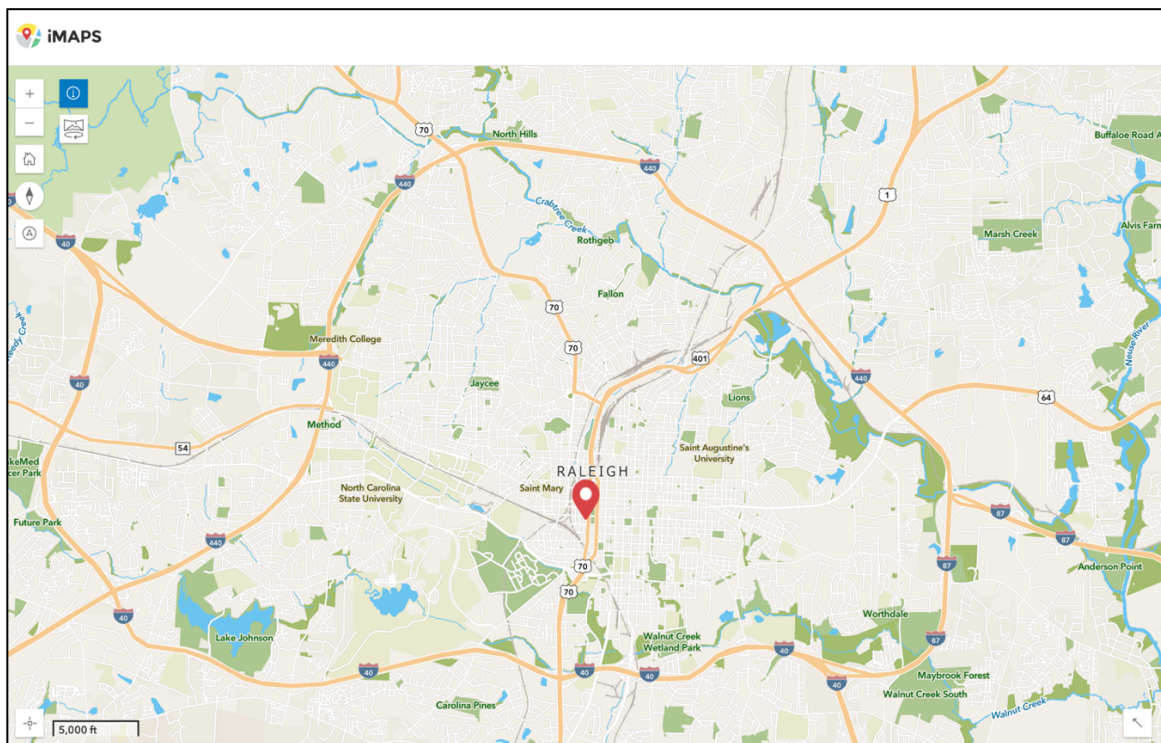
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II. Project Location and Setting

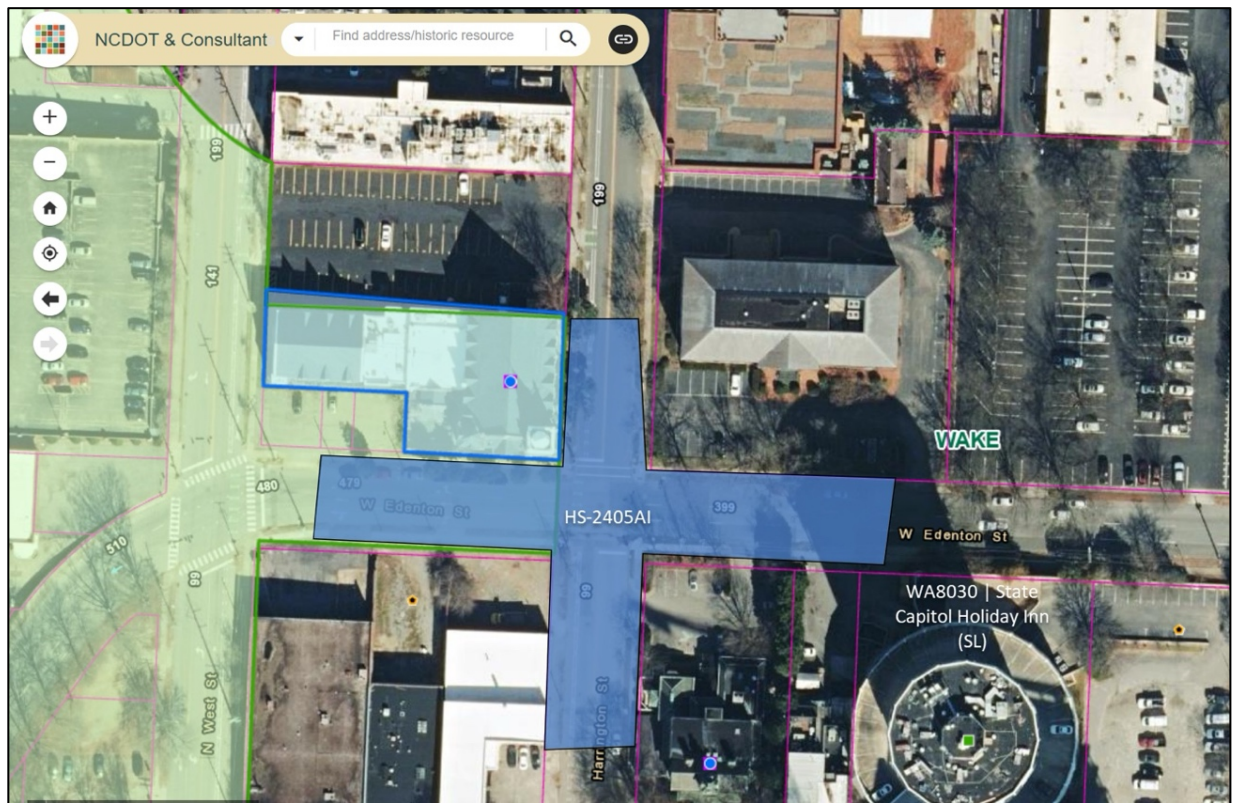
Description

The project APE centers on the downtown Raleigh intersection of SR 3008 (W. Edenton Street) and N. Harrington Street, including the roadways and the bordering rights-of-way. From the center point of the intersecting streets, the APE extends roughly 200' east and west and roughly 150' north and south. The State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), the subject of this report, stands southeast of the project area intersection. The easternmost end of the APE touches the northwest (rear) corner of the subject property's parcel.

The overall setting is urban and near the center of state government. The APE is half a city block west of the Capitol Area Historic District (WA0053,, NRHP 1970, NHL 1973). The district includes the nineteenth-century Greek Revival-style North Carolina State Capitol (WA0007, NRHP 1970), state office buildings, churches, designed open space, and dwellings. Buildings in that district date from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. To the west of the APE, commercial, office, and multi-family residential buildings dating from the twentieth and twenty-first century line Hillsborough Street.



General location of the project area, map created from Wake County iMaps



*Map showing APE (shaded in darker blue) including location of evaluated property in lower right.
Map prepared by NCDOT.*

III. Methodology

MdM project manager and architectural historian Cynthia de Miranda, who meets the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications for architectural history (36 CFR Part 61), conducted the fieldwork and research, analyzed the resource, and drafted this report from September to November 2025. As part of this effort, Ms. de Miranda conducted research at Perkins/Bostock Library at Duke University, including a keyword search at the digital database Readers Guide Retrospective, and at Davis Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She completed keyword searches of digitized issues of the *Raleigh News & Observer* at www.newspapers.com and other digitized North Carolina newspapers at www.digitalnc.org. She consulted Wake County deeds and plats online, GIS data from Wake County's land records website, and reviewed survey files at the NC Historic Preservation Office (NC HPO). She read through blogs and social media posts and comments relating to the building. Ms. de Miranda consulted a draft NRHP nomination for the building completed by Caitlin Herrnstadt of Heritage Consulting Group. The draft contained a brief history of the round, multi-story motel type developed by Holiday Inn. In developing the historical context for the building in this report, Ms. de Miranda also consulted the NRHP nominations for the various historic districts in downtown Raleigh's

commercial and government core and the MPDF and Addendum concerning post World War II and Modernist architecture in Raleigh.

Ms. de Miranda was not granted access to the building or its parcel, which is an active construction site. The interior and some exterior spaces were therefore inaccessible. Ms. de Miranda surveyed and photographed the building from surrounding streets and was given permission to use some photographs taken in 2024 and 2025 by Caitlin Herrnstadt during her preparation of a draft NRHP nomination for the property owner. Additionally, Ms. Herrnstadt's building description for the nomination was useful and is cited here. In conducting comparable property research, Ms. de Miranda also had restrictions to access, as motel managers declined to allow photography. In one case, earlier survey photographs were available with closer-up photography, but interior photographs are not available. All photos in this report not taken by the author are duly credited. Ms. de Miranda prepared this report pursuant to the above-referenced laws, regulations, and guidelines. The report is filed at NCDOT and available for review by the general public.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View of uppermost stories from east side.

IV. Property Description and Evaluation

Resource Name	State Capitol Holiday Inn (originally Holiday Inn Downtown Raleigh)
HPO Survey Site Number	WA8030
Location	320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County
PIN	1703595367
Construction Date	1969
Architect	Lundgren & Maurer, Austin, Texas
Recommendation	Recommended eligible under Criterion A in the area of Commerce



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View from the intersection of N. Dawson and W. Edenton Streets, looking southwest.

Setting

The State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) occupies the middle of a city block bounded by W. Edenton, N. Harrington, Hillsborough, and N. Dawson Streets in downtown Raleigh. This part of Edenton Street carries SR 3008. Two other buildings are on the same block. Both

stand west of the subject property and also front Hillsborough Street. The ca. 1887 Dodd-Hinsdale House (WA0011, NRHP 1972) is at the corner with N. Harrington Street. A single-story, mid-twentieth-century commercial building stands on a narrow parcel between the hotel and the house. It has been altered with the addition of a second story and rooftop dining for the restaurant housed in the building. Roughly the east quarter of the block, a separate parcel, is a parking lot and was a service station at the time the motel opened.



Overall setting around the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View from the south side of Hillsborough Street, looking northeast.



Buildings on the same block (and west of) the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View from south side of Hillsborough Street, looking north-northwest.



Vacant parcel/construction staging area at the east end of the same block occupied by the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View to northeast.



Overall setting around the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View from the southeast corner of Hillsborough Street and N. Dawson Street to northwest.

W. Edenton and N. Dawson Streets have been designated for one-way travel, westward and southward, respectively. N. Harrington Street has two lanes for north-south traffic along with parking along its east and west sides. Hillsborough Street accommodates eastward and westward travel with a middle lane allowing turns. There are also bicycle lanes in both directions and on-street parking along Hillsborough Street's north and south sides.

The multistory subject property is currently being remodeled and is surrounded by chain-link temporary construction fencing. The parking lot at the east end of the block is a staging area for construction. Access is limited during this time. The owner is in the process of nominating the building to the National Register of Historic Places and is remodeling with the goal of obtaining historic preservation tax credits.

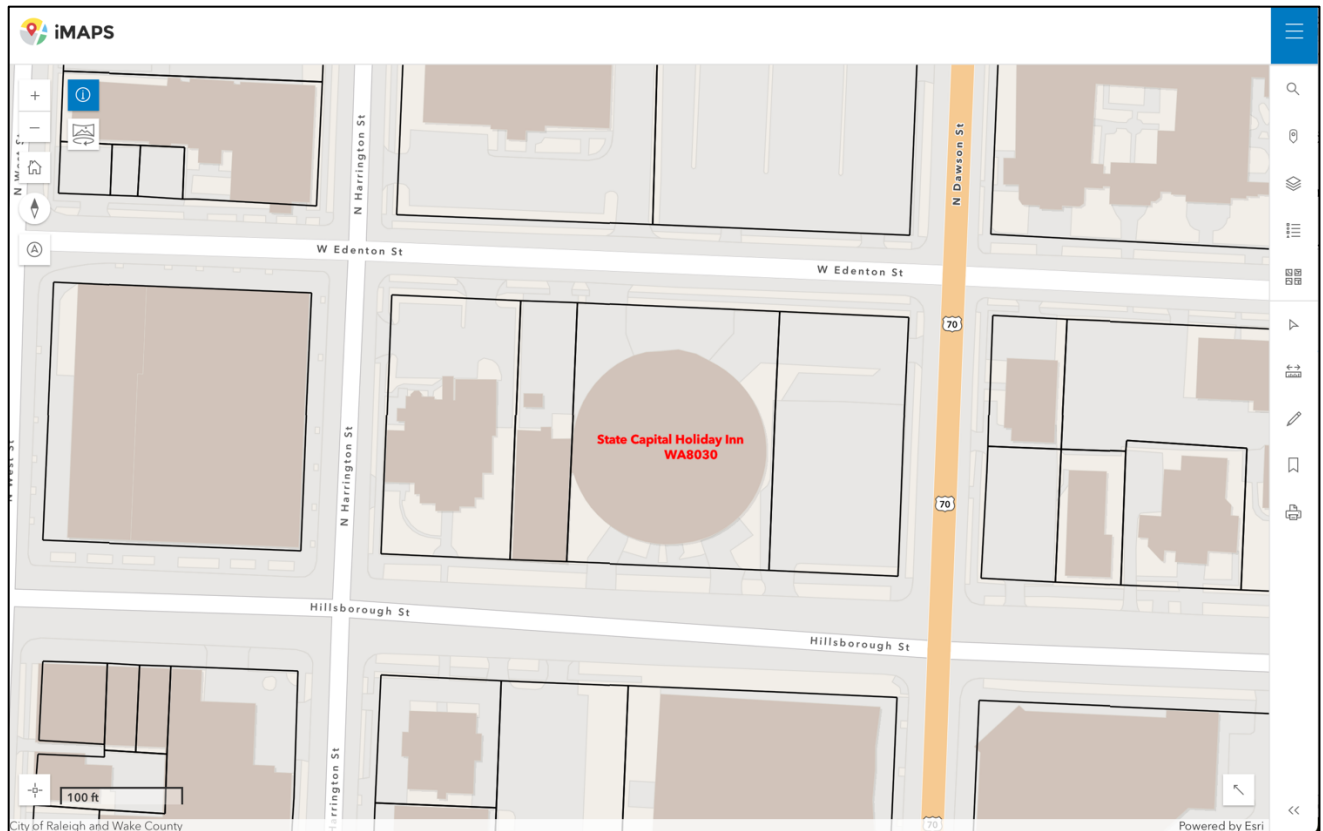
The building is well within the central business district and adjacent to the state government district. Several blocks west, the setting transitions to the campus of North Carolina State University and early twentieth-century suburban residential development.



*Setting around the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County.
View west along W. Edenton Street, looking southwest.*



*Setting around the State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030) at 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County.
View east along W. Edenton Street, looking southeast with view of wall behind subject property at center right.*



Site plan for State Capitol Holiday Inn, 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County.

Description

The nineteen-story State Capitol Holiday Inn, a Modernist-style urban motel, is instantly recognizable on the City of Raleigh skyline due to its multi-sided plan that reads as circular. The 1969 building features a poured-concrete structural system evident as verticals at the exterior. Organized like a classical column, the building comprises a base, a shaft, and a capital. The five stories of the base historically housed the lobby, flexible meeting space, a coffeeshop, and a parking deck; new uses will be similar or the same. The shaft housed guest rooms, and a restaurant and bar originally occupied the top floor. Again, the post-renovation will likely maintain this arrangement of functional uses. A small, one-story, flat-roofed wing at the north side of the base provided a covered loading dock with a rooftop swimming pool and sun deck. The roof-top amenities are no longer extant.

Since the building reads as circular, all sides have generally the same exterior treatment, with some differences at the ground level. Poured-concrete columns demarcate the thirty sections that form the perimeter of the base. A horizontal band defines the separation between the first and second floors and the fourth and fifth floors. This creates a grid with one-story-height openings at the ground floor and four-story-height openings above. These grids are variously left open or infilled with breezeblock, solid panels, or half-walls of concrete. A driveway from Hillsborough Street passes through one ground-floor opening to

a recessed drop-off area within the building's footprint for motel guests and their luggage. The entry also allows vehicular access to the circular-ramp parking garage. Another ground-floor opening to the west allows vehicles to loop through the south end of the base of the building and return to Hillsborough Street. Metal awnings have been added above the four southmost-facing bays. Set back from the south side of the building's footprint is a wall with plate-glass windows that formed the exterior wall of the reception lobby. The space within has been gutted as part of the current remodel. The three bays east of the vehicular entrance are open as well, their solid exterior wall panels apparently removed as part of the remodel.

Due to construction and restricted access, only the west and north elevations of the one-story, flat-roofed loading dock wing at the north side were visible during survey. The dock's west elevation features a vehicle opening at its south end, near the base of the motel. The space is temporarily enclosed with construction sheathing. A small square vent is high on the wall to the north of the opening. A concrete-sheathed stack with metal chimney cap is at the northwest corner of the projection. The north elevation is of concrete and lacks fenestration; it continues to the east as a wall bordering the sidewalk at the south side of W. Edenton Street. As the wall extends eastward, its top edge slopes downward so that the wall is only a few feet tall when it terminates near the corner of N. Dawson and W. Edenton Streets.

The thirteen-story shaft of the building features vertical concrete ribs which are actually the ends of concrete walls that form the divisions between wedge-shaped guest rooms and provide structure to the building. The walls extend from a corridor encircling the central core of the building, which holds the elevator shafts and stair wells. Precast concrete panels sheathe the building exterior, alternating with projecting window bays. The bays hold fixed plate-glass windows with HVAC vents below; they are an alteration that enclosed original cantilevered concrete balconies with metal handrails. Older images of the building suggest that bypass glass doors appear to have led from the rooms to the balconies. Despite the balcony enclosures, the exterior ends of the concrete walls remain visible as vertical ribs along the height of the guest room floors of the building. The original concrete balcony floors also remain, integrated into the projecting window bays but still visible.

The topmost floor projects on all sides beyond the shaft of the building, and the vertical ribs at the exterior of the shaft are continuous to support the extended floor and to act as mullions between the sets of window walls at each facet of the building. Some glazing units on the north side have been painted over; reportedly, this area served as the back-of-house space for the restaurant. The building has a flat roof with a small access room at its center.

The building interior was not accessible due to the renovation work currently underway. Ms. Herrnstadt's draft NRHP nomination for the building, prepared before the construction began, notes the following: the ground floor holds the lobby and four flexible event spaces; a fitness room, and operational spaces including offices, storage, and laundry facilities; parking is on floors two through five; floors six through nineteen hold guest rooms; and the

top floor includes a restaurant and its kitchen, a bar, and meeting rooms. The fifth-floor parking is actually the roof of the fourth floor, as the shaft of the building has a smaller diameter than the base. The most recent renovation prior to the current rehabilitation was in 2016. The seventh-floor room configurations have been slightly altered to create additional ADA-compliant guest rooms. The original circulation pattern and division of uses in the building remain, despite remodels. The original concrete deck and precast concrete walls and ceiling of the parking deck remain unsheathed, but no original finishes or architectural details remain at the upper floors of the building.¹



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View W from N. Dawson Street.

¹ Caitlin Herrnstadt, "State Capitol Holiday Inn," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (draft), 2024.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View SW from corner of N. Dawson and W. Edenton Streets.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View S from north end of parking lot on north side of W. Edenton Street.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View south from north end of parking lot on north side of W. Edenton Street.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View southeast from W. Edenton Street.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County, showing base at Hillsborough Street entrance, view northwest.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County, showing vehicular entry to building at Hillsborough Street side, view northwest. The awnings seen here have since been removed.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County, showing exterior wall of lobby at vehicular entrance to the building. View northwest.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Base at southeast curve of the building, showing breezeblock and solid panels.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Base at the north side of the building, showing loading dock wing.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Wall along the north side of the property, view to southwest.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View east-southeast along wall at the north property line.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View of guest room floors at the shaft section of the building, looking northwest.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. View of upper stories including projecting top floor, looking northwest.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Lobby interior in 2024, photo by Caitlin Herrnsstadt, Heritage Consulting Group.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Parking garage interior in 2024, photo by Caitlin Herrnsstadt, Heritage Consulting Group.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Guest room interior in 2024, photo by Caitlin Herrnsstadt, Heritage Consulting Group.



State Capitol Holiday Inn (WA8030), 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, Wake County. Top floor interior space in 2024, photo by Caitlin Herrnsstadt, Heritage Consulting Group

Original appearance

The window bays at the guest-room floors are the most notable change from construction. The guest rooms in the 13-story shaft originally had cantilevered concrete balconies with metal railings. Each section of balcony flooring served two guest rooms, divided by the concrete wall that extended from the central core and provided additional structure. Windows at the balconies were floor-to-ceiling and may have been bypass sliding doors in extruded aluminum frames. The balconies were enclosed into window bays between 1998 and 2007. The concrete balcony floors remain extant under the added elements enclosing the space into window bays.²

A rendering reproduced in a print advertisement announcing the property's opening shows something very close to the original appearance. Notable is that the cladding at the second through fourth floors of the base feature solid panels at the four southmost facing sections, flanked by at least five panels infilled with breezeblock. The four solid panels form a backdrop to a "Holiday Inn" sign rendered in the chain's iconic script and applied directly to the building. Most of the ground-floor spaces between columns are open, but at least two on the west side are infilled with solid panels. A small paved plaza with four trees is centered in front of the building and helps shape the drive way in and out of the structure. The plaza is not extant.

² Herrnsstadt, 7.8.



Ca. 1970 advertisement posted on Facebook by Raleigh Downtown, June 29, 2025.

Some descriptions of the original interior exist, but no photographs have been identified. The *News & Observer* reported on the “luxury” interior at the building’s opening, noting the “ground floor halls are of white vinyl with a broad brown and yellow racing stripe running down the middle.” The Drummer Boy coffee shop had a red, white, and blue décor. It is likely that no décor from the original opening remained after updates and remodels over the years, but the internal organization of wedge-shaped guest rooms accessed from a corridor encircling the elevator/stairwell core remains. The top story always lacked the concrete walls extending from the core seen in the lower stories and used interior columns

for support instead, allowing flexibility in the arrangement of interior space with non-loadbearing walls.

The property also originally featured the iconic “Great Sign” with the “Holiday Inn” in white script on a green background and bordered by a yellow arrow lit with incandescent lights. Neon tubes lit up an orange column with yellow cap topped with a yellow star. The sign also included a marquee board that could post room rates and availability or hotel events. A ca. 1974 photograph of the base of the building shows a small, grassy area between the hotel and the Hillsborough Street sidewalk. The Great Sign stood at the east end of this area, its metal posts sunk into a concrete planter box. The sign was removed in 1987.³



PhC_295_7-025, Holiday Inn, 320 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh c. 1974. From the Mark Hubbard Photograph Collection, State Archives of NC.

History

The development of Raleigh in the period 1945-1975 is covered by the Multiple Property Documentation Form and Addendum, completed by M. Ruth Little in 2009 and 2018, respectively. The MPDFs chronicle Raleigh’s remarkable commercial, industrial, institutional, and population growth in the period and its effects on the physical size and development of the city. The booming economy of the post-war period, the establishment

³ “Is Raleigh’s circular Holiday Inn a historic landmark? Its owner thinks so,” *Raleigh News & Observer*, July 2, 2025, viewed November 11, 2025.

of the Research Triangle Park, and the expansion in availability of higher education fueled the growth of what had been, in Little's words, "a sleepy government and education center."⁴

In roughly the same period, the Holiday Inn motel chain grew exponentially. Starting from three motels in Memphis in 1952, born of bad lodging on a family vacation, company founder Kemmons Wilson quickly built the largest commercial provider of lodging in the world. In 1957, Holiday Inn went public. By the 1960s, it was chasing business travelers as well as vacationing families.⁵ Kemmons Wilson and partner Wallace E. Johnson were hailed for the chain of franchised motels and for creating an experience that would come to define both motel and hotel stays. "The motel reached its apotheosis in Holiday Inns," according to *The Times* of London, and the chain made "inexpensive luxury...absolutely predictable." The Holiday Inn chain dwarfed other lodging chains of the period, including Ramada, Howard Johnson's, Sheraton, and Marriott.⁶

Keith Jones of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, built Raleigh's first Holiday Inn (not extant) on Highway 1 about four miles north of downtown in the 1950s. By 1959, he'd sold it to Ben and Ruth Haigh of Raleigh, apparently along with the franchise rights for Wake County.⁷ Ben Haigh, a long-time county planning commissioner, actively managed the motel with his wife, catering to white patrons. Conformity with the company approach is apparent in newspaper coverage of the time. Haigh attended the National Association of Holiday Inns convention at Memphis in 1959.⁸ A July 11, 1962, advertisement urges those planning "for business meetings and sales conferences...[to] use the Facilities of the Holiday Inn US No. 1 North." The ad included an image of the "Great Sign" associated with Holiday Inn motels in the mid- to late-twentieth century.⁹ The Haigh's motel had a restaurant with musical entertainment for guests' and Raleigh residents' enjoyment, but they also advertised "Businessmen's Luncheons."¹⁰ When Ben Haigh announced expansion in 1961, adding 45 guest rooms to bring the total to 105, he noted that the interiors would be designed by the

⁴ M. Ruth Little, "Post-World War II and Modern Architecture in Raleigh, North Carolina, 1945-1965," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2009; and M. Ruth Little, "Post-World War II and Modern Architecture in Raleigh, North Carolina: Non-Residential Architecture, 1945-1967," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2018.

⁵ John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 262-265.

⁶ Kemmons Wilson and Robert Kerr, *Half Luck and Half Brains: The Kemmons Wilson Holiday Inn Story* (Nashville: Hambelton-Hill Publishing, 120-121; Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, 265.

⁷ "Haighs sued for \$251,361," *News & Observer*, July 15, 1959; "Holiday Inn breaks ground on 19-story building here," *News & Observer*, May 30, 1968. The Haighs had leased the property back to Jones. The lawsuit, and Jones's failure to pay rent, resulted in termination of the lease. The motel was eventually converted to a Holidome around 1980.

⁸ "Business Notes: Going to Convention," *News & Observer*, September 9, 1959.

⁹ "For Business Meetings and Sales Conferences" (advertisement), *News & Observer*, July 11, 1962.

¹⁰ "Holiday Inn Restaurant" (advertisement), *News & Observer*, July 8, 1960.

company's own Memphis-based design department. The new two-story building, however, was designed by Raleigh architect Raymond Sawyer.¹¹

In 1962, the Haighs received requests from the Raleigh Citizens Association to open the motel and restaurant to all, not just to whites. The Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) also sought a meeting. Both appeals were part of a statewide effort to desegregate public accommodations. Ben Haigh resisted, noting to the *News & Observer*, "I'm not going to desegregate my place. They'll probably pull a sit-in on me."¹² Public accommodation in Raleigh and across North Carolina integrated piecemeal in 1962 and 1963, with some business owners serving Black patrons as a result of meetings with CORE and others relenting after protests.¹³ The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race in public accommodation.

By the mid-1960s, Ben Haigh and Holiday Inn were looking for a downtown Raleigh location for a new motel. Haigh had assembled a parcel at the southeast corner of Blount and E. Jones Streets, in the middle of an area the state was intending to redevelop for government functions. Haigh's plan was to erect a six-story, flat-roofed motel with 250 rooms, two restaurants, a coffeeshop, a swimming pool, a gift shop, and a parking deck. The motel would occupy two-thirds of the block bounded by Jones, Blount, Edenton, and Wilmington streets. After Haigh rejected the state's offer to purchase the parcel, the state sued to condemn the land. The motel plans were in limbo for the next two years while the lawsuit played out.¹⁴

Haigh scrapped the original plan in 1966 when he was required to sell to the state.¹⁵ Later that year, he purchased the Woman's Club clubhouse (WA3843, not extant) parcel at 314 Hillsborough Street for the new motel.¹⁶ This parcel was substantially smaller than the earlier site, likely necessitating use of the cylindrical tower design recently developed for Holiday Inn by architects Lundgren & Maurer of Austin, Texas. Leonard Lundgren, a University of Texas-trained architect, first designed a circular high-rise motel after Kemmons Wilson requested it for a small site they found in Austin. According to Lundgren, Wilson said he had always wanted to build a round building. Indeed, Wilson's own book shows a photograph of him in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and revolving restaurants atop observation towers were becoming popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A 1964

¹¹ "Holiday Inn announces expansion," *News & Observer*, October 15, 1961.

¹² "Haigh to resist integration try," *News & Observer*, July 24, 1962.

¹³ "Step-up in integration drive set for 3 cities," *News & Observer*, August 12, 1962; "North Carolina spurs race gain," *New York Times*, October 11, 1962.

¹⁴ "Motel planned near State House, could snarl office complex plans," *News & Observer*, June 10, 1964; "Four prices put on motel land," *News & Observer*, November 3, 1965.

¹⁵ "State agrees to pay more in land case," *News & Observer*, June 23, 1966.

¹⁶ "Site for Motel: Woman's Club sold," *News & Observer*, September 21, 1966.

twelve-story, rectangular-footprint Holiday Inn opened in downtown Baltimore, capped with a circular top floor that held a rotating restaurant.¹⁷

Lundgren complied with Wilson's request for a round-tower motel building, and the Holiday Inn went up in Austin, Texas, in 1964. He designed more for Wilson-selected sites in Los Angeles, San Diego, Charleston, Acapulco, and Panama City. None of the towers are identical to each other, but they do share concrete construction, the base-shaft-capital arrangement, and a top story that projects over the shaft.¹⁸ Other circular Holiday Inn towers were built in Jefferson City, Denver, Long Beach, and elsewhere, for a total of at least two dozen.¹⁹ Some top floors rotated, some did not. A 2013 historic resource report for the Los Angeles tower found that at least 15 such towers built as Holiday Inn motels remained at that time.²⁰

Chaney & James, Dallas-based contractors who built the Austin round tower and had just completed another in Jefferson City, Missouri, were hired to build the Raleigh property. Early plans were for a 10- to 12-story tower with a revolving restaurant on the top floor. Eventually, the plan grew to 19 stories without the rotating top floor. As finalized, the building would have meeting space for 400 people and a coffee shop at the ground floor, four levels of parking for 266 cars, 208 guest rooms, and a dining room, lounge, and additional meeting space at the top floor. A loading dock at the back of the building would allow for large display materials for meetings—such as a car or a tractor, according to the newspaper—and a swimming pool and sun deck would top the structure. Construction alone would total \$2.5 million.²¹

At the May 1968 groundbreaking, Haigh bragged that the new 170-foot tower would be Raleigh's highest building above sea level. Thanks to the elevation at its small site, the new tower beat out the 220-foot, International Style BB&T bank building erected in 1964 on Fayetteville Street (WA4492, LL 2006, part of the Fayetteville Street Historic District, WA4309, NRHP 2008). While Haigh's earlier choice of location may have intended to make the most of government-related travel, the boast of the Holiday Inn being Raleigh's tallest building—and the views available from the top floor spaces—were clearly used as a draw for lodgers and events. The location on the west side of the State Capitol, the government

¹⁷ "Holiday Inn, Austin, Texas," at www.leonardlundgrenarchitect.com, viewed November 7, 2025; "Letter of Recommendation: Revolving Restaurants," *New York Times*, March 26, 2019; "You say you want a revolution?" Retro Baltimore blog, <https://retrobaltimore.tumblr.com/about>, viewed November 10, 2025.

¹⁸ "Commercial Projects Overview," at www.leonardlundgrenarchitect.com, viewed November 7, 2025. These towers are listed on the firm's "partial project list" on Leonard Lundgren's website.

¹⁹ "Word for New Inn is plush," *News & Observer*, May 9, 1969; It has not been confirmed for this report whether Lundgren & Mauer were the architects for all the towers.

²⁰ "Holiday Inn, 170 N. Church Lane," Los Angeles Historic Resources Inventory, <https://hpla.lacity.org/report/2c00e986-d063-45dd-ac67-511e9a9e3c5c#:~:text=There%20are%20approximately%2015%20extant,and%20in%20Austin%2C%20Texas,> viewed November 10, 2025.

²¹ "Site for Motel: Woman's Club sold," *News & Observer*, September 21, 1966; "Holiday Inn breaks ground on 19-story building here," *News & Observer*, May 30, 1968.

complex, and the downtown commercial district had another advantage. It situated the motel between downtown and the growing North Carolina State University. North of the university was the well-established Cameron Village Shopping Center and west Raleigh neighborhoods. A few blocks south of the new site was the train station. Haigh himself mused about the effects of the site change at the groundbreaking: “We lost two years in the shuffle with the State and we lost a little money. But maybe it’s a good thing they took our land over there. Maybe we’re better off.”²²

The hotel’s new location was also directly across the street from another Memphis-based, national-chain motel, the Downtowner Motor Inn (not extant). Raleigh’s 1964 Downtowner had a Modernist design with multi-colored panels on street-facing elevations, balconied rooms with bypass glass doors, and a large sign with the motel’s name, a marquee, and light-up arrow and crown. Downtowner motels often located near established hotels to handle excess traffic during conventions and other busy times, and the Raleigh Downtowner may have been taking advantage of the several large hotels that stood a few blocks south, clustered near the train station.²³ To the west on Hillsborough Street, the 1962 Velvet Cloak Inn (not extant) was enjoying a good reputation as an in-town motor inn due to its many upscale amenities: a design by local architect Leif Valand emulating New Orleans architecture with a brick exterior and ironwork balconies; a heated pool enclosed in a glass atrium; a restaurant and nightclub; and even telephone extensions in the guestroom bathrooms.²⁴ A Shell service station was already under construction on the east portion of the Holiday Inn block, a convenience to the motorist-lodger and a common practice for Holiday Inn developments.²⁵ Without a doubt, the new location was situated to capture business.

Construction was meant to be complete by the middle of October 1969, but the work ran over.²⁶ The motel opened for business in late November, with rooms and some amenities available. The 24-hour, first-floor coffeeshop, Drummer Boy, was open and decorated in a red, white, and blue Americana motif. The outdoor swimming pool on the roof of the loading dock structure on the north side of the building was also complete. Meanwhile, finishing touches were underway at the top-floor restaurant, The Twelve Signs, including artwork depicting the namesake signs of the zodiac. A local reporter describing the new hotel emphasized its luxurious nature: the Maine lobster and Baked Alaska on the menu, the \$20 hotel rooms (about \$175 in 2025), and the whopping \$250-per-year membership fee for the Observatory Club bar at the top floor.²⁷ Haigh noted that he expected that the

²² Ibid.

²³ Karl Larson, “Downtown Motor Inn, Raleigh, N.C.,” November 14, 2014, Goodnight Raleigh Blog, www.goodnightraleigh.com, viewed October 30, 2025.

²⁴ Karl Larson, “The Velvet Cloak Inn,” April 17, 2015, Goodnight Raleigh Blog, www.goodnightraleigh.com, viewed October 30, 2025.

²⁵ “Holiday Inn Shell Service Station” (classified advertisement), *News & Observer*, June 3, 1968.

²⁶ “Holiday Inn wins settlement in suit,” *News & Observer*, October 30, 1971.

²⁷ “The word is luxury at new Holiday Inn,” *News & Observer*, November 28, 1969.

new motel would be popular for conventions, tourist and tour agencies, bridal events, and business and sales meetings.²⁸

The motel's opening celebration was the first weekend of April 1970. After a private, invite-only party on Saturday night, an open house welcomed the general public on Sunday afternoon. The line to enter extended along Hillsborough Street for about four hours. The *News & Observer* reported that hundreds came to see it, including local residents as well as curious eastern North Carolinians.²⁹ The new Holiday Inn held on to its title of tallest building in Raleigh for about eight years, until the 21-story Center Plaza (now One Progress Plaza) was erected at 411 Fayetteville Street in 1977. As late as 2021, the Holiday Inn was the tenth tallest in the city.³⁰

Newspaper coverage at the time indicates that the height of the building, its association with luxury and high-end dining, and the fact that some spaces remained accessible to those with tighter budgets made it an immediate destination in Raleigh and the wider region, particularly eastern North Carolina. Over the next few decades, the Holiday Inn remained a favored place for family celebrations, wedding receptions, NCSU fraternity formals, high school proms, and music acts. A multitude of Raleigh residents from the last quarter of the twentieth century have memories of being in the building.³¹

The earliest mentions of the motel in the local paper referred to it as the Downtown Holiday Inn or the Holiday Inn Downtown. Newspaper advertisements from the 1980s listed it as the "Holiday Inn, State Capitol," sometimes with the spelling as "Capital" for the city itself. For some years in the early twenty-first century, the property operated as a Clarion-branded hotel. It was again a Holiday Inn from 2012 through 2024.³² It is currently undergoing renovation and is scheduled to reopen as a Hotel Indigo.³³ The redevelopment team includes architect Earl Swensen & Associates; interior designer INC Architecture & Design; and general contractor John Moriarty & Associates.³⁴

Context: Mid-Twentieth Century Multi-story Motels in North Carolina's Piedmont Cities

The word "motel," a portmanteau of "motor" and "hotel," reveals a good bit about the building type's function and history. Motels evolved in the automobile era of the twentieth century from campgrounds and in reaction against hotels. Historian and geographers John

²⁸ "Word for New Inn is plush," *News & Observer*, May 9, 1969.

²⁹ "New Holiday Inn here is visited by hundreds," *News & Observer*, April 6, 1970.

³⁰ Here are the tallest buildings in downtown Raleigh," *News & Observer*, July 2, 2021, viewed October 15, 2025.

³¹ Raleigh Downtown, "Shine on Holiday Inn," Facebook post, June 3, 2025.

³² "Downtown Raleigh's Holiday Inn Hotel to make way for a luxury hotel project," *News & Observer*, February 12, 2022, viewed November 11, 2025.

³³ Caitlin Herrstadt, "State Capitol Holiday Inn," Draft National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 2024.

³⁴ "Is Raleigh's circular Holiday Inn a historic landmark? Its owner thinks so," *News & Observer*, July 2, 2025, viewed November 11, 2025.

A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers trace the evolution and catalog subtypes in their 1996 book *The Motel in America*. They chronicle how the motel type first diverged from the hotel and then morphed into a new iteration of it.

In cities and small towns, late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century hotels populated congested business districts, often concentrating near train depots. They catered to businessmen, traveling salesmen, and others who arrived in town mostly by train. Early motorists, however, often eschewed hotels. Some spent a night in tourist homes: private houses that took in traveling boarders for short stays, often located where the car could be easily parked. Others camped wherever they found it convenient, including on private property. Municipalities sought to control these makeshift accommodations and began to set up designated auto campgrounds, or auto camps, the progenitor of the motel. Tourist hotels, more popular in eastern states, and auto camps, more common in the American west, evolved into other early iterations of the motel: first cabin camps and then cottage courts. Cabin camps upgraded the auto camp with simple free-standing guest cabins, replacing the motorist's own tent and maintaining a lodger's parking spot by the cabin door. Cottage courts were a further upgrade with larger, winterized cottages organized in the same layout as the cabin camps. Owners of tourist homes, if they had the land, might add cabins or cottages to increase the number of rooms they could rent. Lodging for motorists typically located a few miles outside of the congested business district. The properties stayed near highways and where open space allowed for convenient parking for automobiles along with lodging for motorists. In this period, motor-travel lodging was changing so quickly that industry advice warned operators not to build too solid a structure lest the building itself outlast its desirability.³⁵

The changes in the motel type followed shifts in society. Beginning at midcentury, Americans undertook leisure travel by car in greater numbers than ever before and a new motel subtype emerged. Motor courts replaced aging cottage courts, consolidating the multiple small guest units into a single building. Often rendered in one long, low building, motor courts most often feature rectangular plans, L-plans, or U-plans. Buildings were generally arranged to overlook a courtyard and/or swimming pool oriented away from the road way. Parking spaces line the opposite sides of the buildings, preserving the ability to park right at the door to the guest room. Guest rooms often spanned the depth of the building, opening also to the courtyard. Some motor courts featured a coffee shop for convenience. Despite the more robust construction, the average life span of a motel remained brief: in the 1960s, it was just shy of a decade. The single-story motor court is likely the subtype most of us conjure when we imagine a motel.³⁶

By the middle of the twentieth century, central business districts were becoming less congested as the expanding suburbs drew people and activity out of traditional downtowns. Highways, however, still passed through the city center. This presented an

³⁵ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, 15-47.

³⁶ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, 43-47.

opportunity for motels to finally locate in the center city. The new motel types that did so are classed by Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers as motor inns and highway hotels. They are, by merit of their size, location, and status, the most comparable motel types to the subject property.

Motor inns and highway hotels have many features in common. Both are multi-story buildings that are substantially larger than motor courts. Both were situated in downtown redevelopment areas, near airports, or at new highway interchanges, rather than simply along a highway. Rooms were more sophisticated and luxurious than the simple motor courts and offered amenities comparable to traditional hotels, including meeting rooms, banquet halls, restaurants, and bars. Motor inns, however, retained the typical floor plans of the motor court, increasing in height to a few stories. Even larger were highway hotels, taller buildings with more compact footprints, often cruciform or round. Their ground floors contained public spaces or meeting rooms, while towers held guest rooms. Some highway hotels comprised a small complex, with banquet rooms and meeting spaces in accompanying low-rise buildings, as at motor inns. Additionally, with the evolution to the larger, more luxurious, and high-rise highway hotel, the line between motel and hotel blurs substantially.³⁷ Due to commonalities between these two motel subtypes, their common differences from other subtypes, and the relative rarity of surviving examples in Raleigh, this report includes a comparative review of both highway hotels and motor inns.

The State Capitol Holiday Inn cleanly fits the highway hotel model as defined by Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers. The building stands on the redeveloped downtown site of the Woman's Club of Raleigh (WA3843, not extant), a Mediterranean-style building that overlooked Hillsborough Street from about 1915 into the 1960s.³⁸ The Holiday Inn's nineteen stories rise from a basically circular footprint on a relatively small parcel. Like midcentury motels catering to families on holiday road trips, the State Capitol Holiday Inn offered convenient on-site parking, a coffee shop, and a swimming pool for those on holiday. Like the older hotels, its top-floor fine dining restaurant was open to guests on holiday, business travelers, and local residents. The property fronted Hillsborough Street, which had carried US Highway 1 through the west half of the city until construction of the Raleigh Beltline created a bypass in the early 1960s.³⁹ Hillsborough Street still carried US Highway 1 Business and NC Highway 54 at the time of the building's construction and opening.⁴⁰ A Shell service station stood next door.

Raleigh has no other intact examples of a highway hotel from this period. The former Howard Johnson's at 4100 Glenwood Avenue was erected in 1973 but has been heavily altered in a recent remodel. Glenwood Avenue carries U.S. Highway 70 through Raleigh, and the building stands northwest of a cloverleaf where the Raleigh Beltline (now

³⁷ Jakle, Sculle, and Rogers, 49-52.

³⁸ "Club History," The Woman's Club of Raleigh website, www.womansclubofraleigh.org, October 30, 2025.

³⁹ Little, MPDF addendum, 7-8.

⁴⁰ Robert Mortell, "Route History for US 1 in North Carolina," www.roadandrailpictures.com, 2013-2025, and "N.C. 54," www.vahighways.com, updated May 20, 2008, both accessed October 30, 2025.

designated Interstate 440) crossed the highway. Good examples of motor inns in and near the commercial district, including the Downtowner Motor Inn on the 300 block of Hillsborough Street and the Velvet Cloak Inn at 1505 Hillsborough Street, do not survive. Surviving motels in and around downtown are the smaller, one- and two-story motor court type. Most have been substantially altered. A relatively intact motor court of the mid-twentieth century is Dob's Motel at 1403 S. Wilmington Street, built in 1956 with concrete-block and metal casement windows.⁴¹

Farther down S. Wilmington Street, the 1974 Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) does remain. The motor inn, at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, stands at the juncture of Highway 70 with Highway 401. By 1979, it was part of the Best Western chain; it is now a Motel 6. The property comprises a three-story Modernist guestroom building with single-story office/lobby and a swimming pool. The three-story, flat-roofed, T-plan, concrete-framed guestroom building has interior corridors and continuous concrete balconies with metal rails. Some concrete structure is visible at the exterior, mainly in the cantilevered beams that support the balconies and the overhang of the flat roof. The ends of the interior corridors lack exterior walls and are finished instead with Modernist-style screens of vertical members, later covered with plexiglass. Exterior walls are stuccoed; a 2018 survey notes that the original exterior finish was brick. The single-story, gabled office/lobby building stands immediately southwest. Its broad front gable is supported by exposed beams and faces the parking lot to the south. At the center of the façade, a large section of floor-to-ceiling glazing is framed in extruded aluminum and holds double-leaf doors. While this fenestration appears to be original, much of the rest of the building has been altered. The exterior brick is covered with stucco and the lobby interior has been gutted, now floored with tile and devoid of furnishings. The reception desk to the right is completely enclosed behind what appears to be bulletproof glass. Fenestration at the back of the building, the opposite gable wall, allows a view of the swimming pool and the guestroom building. The courtyard swimming pool is covered and not currently in use.

⁴¹ Olde Raleigh, "Dobs's Motel (present-day King's Motel)," Facebook, February 10, 2023.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view to north.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view to north.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view to north east, showing courtyard between three-story building and single-story office.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view of single-story office. Photograph by Jenny Harper from 2018 survey.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view across pool looking toward office. Photograph by Jenny Harper from 2018 survey.



Happy Inn Motel (WA8119) at 3901 S. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, view of swimming pool. Photograph by Jenny Harper from 2018 survey.

The property's amenities are modest as far as motor inns go, and this motel appears to lean more to the roots of the motor courts than to the higher-end accommodation of the Velvet Cloak Inn and the State Capitol Holiday Inn. This is likely a function of its location slightly beyond the commercial business district. The motel opened in the summer of 1974, the first Happy Inn franchised motel in Raleigh. Construction ran \$1.6 million, and the newspaper repeated an owner's assertion that the inns décor was "plush" but that the room rates would be in line with "budget motels." The associated restaurant was a Waffle House, convenient but hardly high-end.⁴²

The Happy Inn Motel overall has only modest architectural flourish, and the added stucco exterior and alterations to the small office and lobby have reduced the integrity of the complex. The stucco covers original brick and enables a contrasting red-and-white color scheme that is part of Motel 6 corporate branding. The hotel management declined a request to photograph, but some photographs were made during a recent survey and are included here, as noted in the captions.

Two motor inns in other Piedmont commercial districts in Durham and Wilson more favorably compare to the State Capitol Holiday Inn: the Jack Tar Motel in Durham and the Urbanna Inn in Wilson. Both motels had upscale amenities and downtown locations that recalled older hotels and had more in common with highway hotels than with the more modest motor inns like Raleigh's Best Western South or the other surviving motor courts near Raleigh's downtown.

The Jack Tar Motel and Parking Deck (DH3342), is a contributing property in the Downtown Durham Historic District (DH1692, NRHP 1977, AD 2012). The four-story, Modernist-style hotel was erected on Corcoran Street in the heart of downtown Durham in 1962, replacing early twentieth-century commercial buildings. The motel features recessed ground-floor storefronts with stone exteriors and kneewalls, plate-glass windows, and glazed metal-framed doors. The cantilevered upper stories are clad in glass-and-steel curtain walls with blue spandrel panels and clear plate-glass windows. The north and south ends of the building rise three stories above the ground floor. The central section of the façade, however, comprises only one story above the ground floor. This arrangement allows a rooftop courtyard and swimming pool with a backdrop of balconied guest rooms in classic motel fashion. At the ground floor, the center section of the façade holds two open bays flanked by storefronts. The bays allow ingress to and egress from the parking deck that is part of the building. A secondary exit to the north is at E. Chapel Hill Street. The north and south walls of the parking deck integrate with the rest of the building with the continued use of the curtain wall fabrication and the blue spandrel panels. This parking deck screening method is similar to the breeze block panels at the State Capitol Holiday Inn, despite their differing Modernist expressions.

⁴² "Happy Inns Opens Monday," *News & Observer*, July 4, 1974.



Jack Tar Motel (DH3342) on Corcoran Street in the Downtown Durham Historic District (DH1692), view to northeast.



Jack Tar Motel (DH3342) on Corcoran Street in the Downtown Durham Historic District (DH1692), view to west showing storefronts at Parrish Street elevation with parking deck levels above.



Jack Tar Motel (DH3342) on Corcoran Street in the Downtown Durham Historic District (DH1692), view to southeast showing E. Chapel Hill Street elevation with parking garage levels at left.

Durham's downtown motel was erected by the owners of the Washington Duke Hotel (DH0049, not extant), the city's 1924 Neoclassical Revival-style tower that occupied an entire city block. The hotel owners wanted to capitalize on the rise in popularity of the motel trend. Initially called the Washington Duke Motel, the name was changed to the Jack Tar within a year of opening, as investors sold both the old hotel and the new motel to a lodging chain of the same name. The motel originally had an L-plan footprint that included the rooftop pool with large deck and the parking garage at the back. An addition in 1966 created the balanced façade that spans the entire Corcoran Street block face between E. Chapel Hill and W. Parrish Streets today. A bridge matching the Modernist style of the motel linked an upper story of the new addition to the old hotel across Corcoran Street. The Washington Duke Hotel was destroyed in the mid-1970s, but the Jack Tar Motel was rehabilitated in 2017 using historic preservation tax credits. The process resulted in a functionally updated building that retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity, both as a representation of lodging trends of the mid-twentieth century and as a mid-twentieth-century Modernist building. It operates again as a downtown motel with lobby, bar, parking deck, meeting rooms, gym, and rooftop pool. Restaurants operate in the storefront spaces at the ground floor.⁴³

⁴³ Cynthia de Miranda, "Downtown Durham Historic District Additional Documentation," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2012, 7.26; "Project Profile: Jack Tar Hotel Building," <https://www.monarchprivate.com/impact-investing-projects/view/jack-tar-hotel-building/>, viewed online

Built around the same time as the Jack Tar, the Urbanna Inn (WL2381) in Wilson, Wilson County, at 501 Nash Street is now known as the Heart of Wilson Motor Inn. It stands north of the Wilson Central Business-Tobacco Warehouse Historic District (WL0442, NRHP 1984) on a block between the Broad/Kenan Streets Historic District (WL1143, NRHP 1988) and the Old Wilson Historic District (WL0007, NRHP 1984). The property is a complex of four guest-room buildings, a restaurant/lobby with added banquet space, a courtyard formed by the arrangement of buildings, and parking lots surrounding them. The buildings are brick-clad and likely of concrete-block construction. Guest-room buildings are two stories tall and rectangular-plan with exterior corridors at the parking sides and, originally, bypass glass doors at the courtyard sides. Three are gable roofed and one is flat-roofed. Exterior stairs are beneath the roof at the narrow ends of buildings. Some are screened with pierced-brick walls. At the north end of one of the gabled guestroom buildings is a two-story, flat-roofed section with a blind wall fronting Nash Street. This wall acts as a signboard for the motel, holding a back-lit, script-style sign that spells out "Heart of Wilson." The restaurant and lobby were housed in a single-story, gable-roofed building with modest Modernist detailing in the form of exposed roof beams. Today, they rest on plain, rectangular columns and are encased in sheathing. A vinyl, six-over-six sash window has been inserted into what was originally a blind section of brick wall at the facade. The restaurant/lobby building formed the northeast end of the courtyard, which originally included a kidney-shaped swimming pool. The flat-roofed addition at the back of the restaurant/lobby building dates to 1966 and was built with a glass wall with view of the pool and brick-clad side walls to match existing buildings.

The motor inn was expanded in 1966 and at least once more after that. It has been remodeled multiple times. Throughout the complex, windows and bypass glass doors have been replaced with smaller vinyl double-hung or fixed sash. Infill material makes up the difference, keeping the original opening intact in the brickwork. The flat-roofed guestroom building appears to not be in use, as a number of the guestroom exterior doors have been boarded up. Some or all of the gabled guest-room buildings may have originally been flat-roofed. The two guestroom buildings closest to the restaurant/lobby building; the two-story, flat-roofed building with the signboard wall; the gabled restaurant/lobby building (excluding its flat-roofed addition); and the swimming pool may have constituted the original motel complex. It was designed by local architect B. Atwood Skinner.

November 12, 2025. The manager of the hotel did not allow photographs on the property, but interior and rooftop images are plentiful on the internet and at the hotel's website.



Urbanna Inn/Heart of Wilson Motor Inn (WL2381), 501 Nash Street West, Wilson, Wilson County, view northwest.



Ca. 1962 photograph of Rib Room proprietor Carl Hinson. Photograph by Bill Hinson, courtesy of the William and Ruby Hinson Photo Archive, www.hinsonarchive.com.



Urbanna Inn/Heart of Wilson Motor Inn (WL2381), 501 Nash Street West, Wilson, Wilson County, view south.



Urbanna Inn/Heart of Wilson Motor Inn (WL2381) addition, 501 Nash Street West, Wilson, Wilson County, view north at Broad Street West.

The motel opened in the summer of 1963, and the owners hosted a weekend-long open house to familiarize the motel to Wilson residents. The local paper called it “Wilson’s first downtown motel,” a proclamation that illustrates the popularity of the trend. In addition to the fifty-two motel rooms available at opening, the Urbanna Inn offered in-room air conditioning and televisions, the courtyard with pool, meeting rooms, and a restaurant. The motor inn immediately became a place for Wilsonians to hold meetings and celebrations. The local paper described that the “entrance to the restaurant will be over a small pool containing a lighted fountain and waterfall.” Original brick at the exterior was referred to as “old brick” and the restaurant décor included exposed wood beams and wood ceilings.⁴⁴

The name changed to the Heart of Wilson in 1965. For decades, the motor inn was constantly mentioned in the local newspaper as the location of a multitude of community events. New owners in 1965 announced plans for a flat-roofed addition at the back eave wall of the gabled restaurant/lobby space, allowing for banquets and meetings. Dubbed the Crown Room, the addition was complete by late 1966. Even before construction started, the owners contemplated future expansion with forty-eight more units and still more banquet space.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the dining facility, the Rib Room, remained a “swanky, upscale restaurant” into the 1980s, according to the paper, popular with local and visiting politicians, including President Carter. There was, at some point, also a tavern onsite. The *Wilson Daily Times* referred to the motor inn as a community landmark and noted in 2005 that it was “once considered one of the gems of the city.”⁴⁶ After a period of decline and despite a 2002 remodel, the motel closed in 2005. The property changed hands, and new owners remodeled, intending to combine some of the seventy-two hotel rooms into apartments, and reopened. It is still in operation, renting both motel rooms and apartments.⁴⁷

The complex is basically intact and recognizable as a motor inn consistent with the lodging trends of the 1960s. It has been significantly expanded from initial construction, although some expansion occurred very soon after the motel first opened. Some integrity is compromised by replacement of original windows and exterior doors, alterations to window openings, the loss of the swimming pool, and the possible change in roof type on some buildings. Interiors were not accessible during survey, but the motel buildings are known to have been updated multiple times. The 2002 remodel touched all 72 guestrooms, intending to market to the extended-stay guests. Photographs at the hotel’s website show that guestrooms feature generic finishes and furnishings. Easily discernable are replacement doors, replacement countertops, and infill where smaller sash windows replaced plate-glass glazing. A 2005 photo of the motel in the local paper shows that a

⁴⁴ “New Urbanna Inn Motel,” *Wilson Daily Times*, July 12, 1963.

⁴⁵ “Anthony buys an interest in motel in city,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 14, 1965; “Motor Inn will add a convention center,” *Wilson Daily Times*, September 2, 1966.

⁴⁶ “Crown Room Opened in local motor inn,” *Wilson Daily Times*, December 3, 1966; “City cuts power to Heart of Wilson,” *Wilson Daily Times*, February 7, 2005.

⁴⁷ “Heart of Wilson reopens,” *Wilson Daily Times*, August 20, 2005; “Heart of Wilson is part of a pattern,” *Wilson Daily Times*, February 10, 2005.

large, flat-roofed awning with plain fascia and porte cochere, no longer extant, had been added in front of the Rib Room, replacing an earlier porte cochere.

The motor inn and the highway hotel, the two closely related subtypes of the motel property type discussed here, represent the latest and most upscale version of the motel and illustrate the maturation of the development trend. Of the examples examined here, the State Capitol Holiday Inn is an excellent iteration of the highway hotel, the subtype that most blurred the distinction between motel and hotel. Its construction in Raleigh in 1969 reflects the evolution and maturation of the motel type, lodging trends in Raleigh and across the state, and the continuation of development attention to the downtown core despite the effect of expanding suburbs on commerce in the center city. The Jack Tar Motel, already a contributing building in the Downtown Durham Historic District, is an impressively intact example of a closely related subtype, the motor inn. With their restaurants and other amenities, such upscale downtown motels served travelers as well as local residents and quickly became fixtures in community life.

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

Applying the Seven Aspects of Integrity

The State Capitol Holiday Inn remains in its original location on Hillsborough Street in downtown Raleigh and therefore retains integrity of location. The overall urban setting is consistent with the construction date of the building, consisting of neighboring buildings employed in commercial, office, and institutional uses. While the buildings themselves have changed over time, the setting still reflects the overall street pattern and central business district function of the area. The integrity of setting is therefore intact. The building's essential and highly recognizable design features include its cylindrical form, its base-shaft-capital arrangement of exterior articulation, its exposed concrete structural elements, and the breeze-block-walled parking deck at the base. While interior finishes have changed, the organization of space and use of those spaces has remained consistent. Its integrity of design is therefore intact. The integrity of materials and workmanship is likewise intact with the retention of concrete screens built onsite of prefabricated blocks; concrete sheathing panels fit together with tidy lines of grout; poured-in-place concrete structural elements in the parking deck at the exterior upper floors; poured-in-place concrete balconies; and curtain-wall glazing at the top floor. After the rehabilitation, the building will remain in use as a downtown highway motel with on-site parking and meeting and dining amenities, preserving its integrity of feeling and association.

Criterion A

The State Capitol Holiday Inn appears to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. To be eligible under Criterion A, the property must retain integrity and be associated with a specific event marking an important moment in American history or a pattern of events or historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development

of a community, state, or nation. Furthermore, the property must have existed at the time and be documented to be associated with the events. Finally, the property's specific association must be important as well.

The State Capitol Holiday Inn reflects a significant pattern in twentieth-century American history in the area of Commerce as a reflection of changes in the ways people traveled, vacationed, and sought lodging. It also reflects a development trend that brought motels back into city centers, particularly during a period when suburban development commonly drew commerce toward local shopping centers and regional malls.

Criterion B

The State Capitol Holiday Inn does not appear to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B. For a property to be eligible for significance under Criterion B, it must retain integrity and be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past and be associated with a person's productive life, reflecting the period when that person achieved significance.

No significant individuals associated with the history of the building have been identified. Ben Haigh operated and developed Holiday Inns in Raleigh and served on the Wake County Board of Commissioners and in other civic roles locally, but his work does not appear to have made a significant contribution to Raleigh or Wake County history.

Criterion C

The State Capitol Holiday Inn does not appear to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C. For a property to be eligible under this criterion, it must retain a high degree of integrity and either embody distinct characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, possess high artistic value, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Architecturally, the building exhibits the Brutalist mode of the Modernist style in its expressed concrete frame and other midcentury Modernist motifs in its breezeblock screens at the parking level and glass curtain-walls at the top floor. However, enclosure of the original guestroom balconies, apparently a reversible alteration, has compromised the architectural integrity to limit its eligibility under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

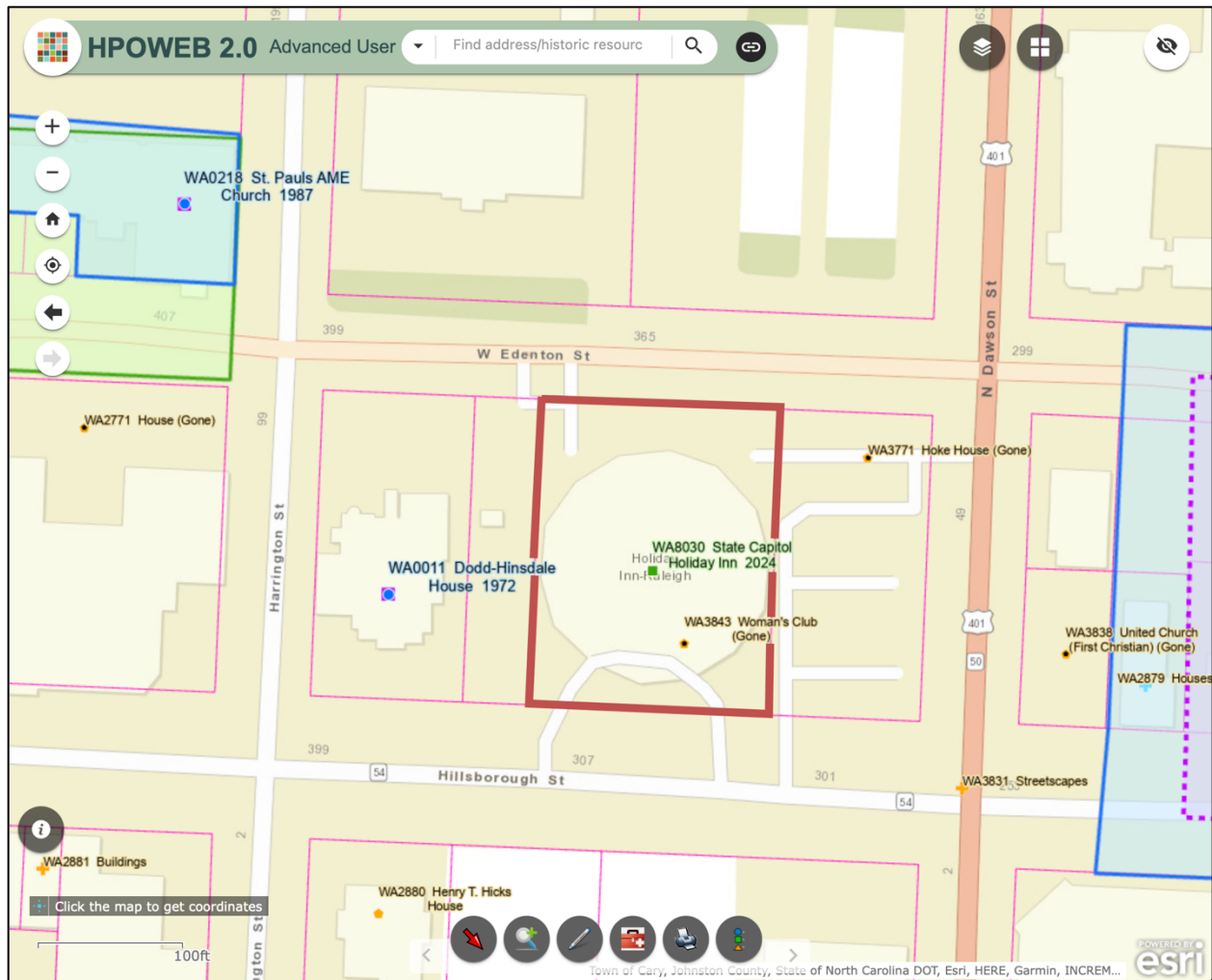
Criterion D

The State Capitol Holiday Inn does not appear to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion D. For a property to be eligible under Criterion D, it must have or have had information that contributes to our understanding of human history or prehistory and the information must be considered important.

The State Capitol Holiday Inn is not likely to yield any new information not obtainable through above-ground resources.

Proposed National Register of Historic Places Boundary

The proposed NRHP boundary includes all of tract 1703595367 shown on the following map. The boundary contains the subject property and the majority of its original parcel. (The original parcel included the driveway from N. Dawson Street to the loading dock, but the parcel was altered in 2016.) The boundary terminates on the interior edge of the NCDOT rights-of-way for Hillsborough Street and W. Edenton Street.



Proposed NRHP Boundary map, created from HPO Web by the author.

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