

About the District & the Walk

The Vista Larga Historic District on Albuquerque's East Mesa is bound by Indian School Road on the north, Hannett Drive and the UNM North Golf Course on the south, generally Columbia Drive, NE, on the east, and the golf course on the west. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and State Register of Cultural Properties in 2016, and is viewed as the first Mid-Century Modern historic district in New Mexico.

Within the district and the greater Vista Larga Addition is one of the best collections of mid-century residential architectural styles in the city. Low-slung Contemporary-style homes with flat and low-pitched roofs stand next to classic Ranches, and several exhibit elements of the International Style. Many homes were designed by architects, who also contributed mid-century takes on the Spanish-Pueblo and Territorial revival styles that are so ubiquitous in New Mexico. Established landscaping, mature and specimen trees, and curved streets follow the contours of sand hills and arroyos giving the neighborhood a parklike feel in the high desert.

This guide will give walkers and cyclists two routes to follow and include the two-mile open space trail around the golf course and incorporate the North Channel bike trail.

The Vista Larga HISTORIC DISTRICT

AN ALBUQUERQUE MID-CENTURY MODERN NEIGHBORHOOD

History: A Golf Course & Mid Century-Modern Neighborhood

Vista Larga is forever linked to the UNM North Golf Course. The neighborhood was platted in 1947, the first year the course hosted the \$10,000 Albuquerque Open Golf Tournament, which drew most of the nation's top pros including "Slammin' Sammy" Snead and Ben Hogan. The North Course Open Space Trail is popular with area residents; professional, college, and high school athletes; and commuters who walk to work at UNM. The course is played regularly and hosts several public events each year, drawing thousands of people to the trail and fairways.

The course was built in three phases beginning in 1942, the same year developer R.B. Waggoman envisioned a tony subdivision backing up to the course on 80 acres of land just to the east. He named it Vista Larga for its "long view" to the Sandia Mountains, and west to downtown, the Middle Rio Grande Valley, Three Sisters volcanic cinder cones, and the Escarpment. North Course at one time stretched from Route 66, or Central Avenue, to Indian School with 27 holes, the final and surviving nine being the section of the course bordered by Vista Larga and Indian School Road.

Identifying the Architecture

When walking the historic district and admiring the architecture, these style descriptions should prove helpful.



Contemporary

International Style. They are identified by flat roofs built flush to the outer walls and without coping. The International Style originated in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and was used in commercial and residential architecture in the U.S. by the mid-twentieth century. These homes have simplified forms, no decorative detailing at doors and windows, and often feature large window grouping and expanses of windowless walls. Many were built in brick or clad with stucco and modern materials. This style is the least common in Vista Larga and most of the district's International-style homes also exhibit elements of the Ranch.

International

Ranch

Ranch. Ranch homes were originally designed in the late 1930s and were modeled after California's Spanish haciendas. They have a distinct "long-and-low" look. Their floor plans uniquely separate public and private spaces, typically with a single hall and bedroom wing in an L or U-shape. They are usually one-story—often asymmetrically shaped—with a low-pitched, hipped roof with moderate to wide eaves. Large picture windows, sliding glass patio doors, attached carports or garages are unifying features. Most homes in Vista Larga are Ranch houses.

Contemporary. These homes have flat or low-pitched gabled roofs with wide overhangs, clerestory or high ribbon windows, broad chimneys and a window wall often found in the back of the home but sometimes in the front. Roof beams typically are exposed, especially at the gable, or just below the roofline. The exposed beams differentiate them from the International Style. There are many Contemporaries in Vista Larga, most include elements of the Ranch House.



Today the fairways are graced by mature cottonwoods and elms, and the rolling hills of the subdivision by 70-year-old pine and deciduous trees. They partially obscure some of Waggoman's long views, but picturesquely frame the mountains, river valley, and West Mesa. They've transformed the golf course into an oasis sometimes called Albuquerque's Central Park.

Landscaping is integral to the neighborhood. The ponderosa, piñon, and Arizona Cyprus used in much of the original landscaping are not native

Albuquerque's Mid-Century Modern Architects

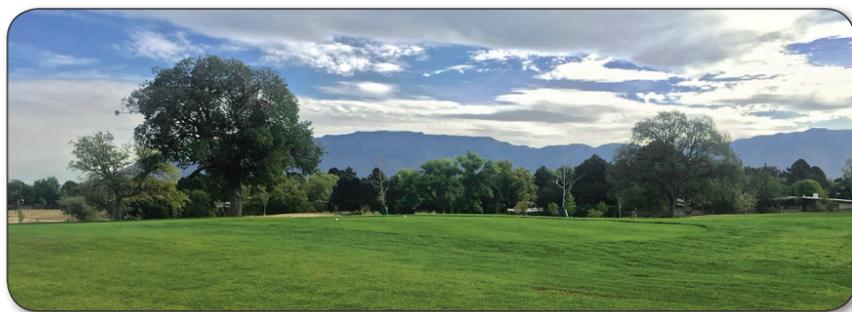
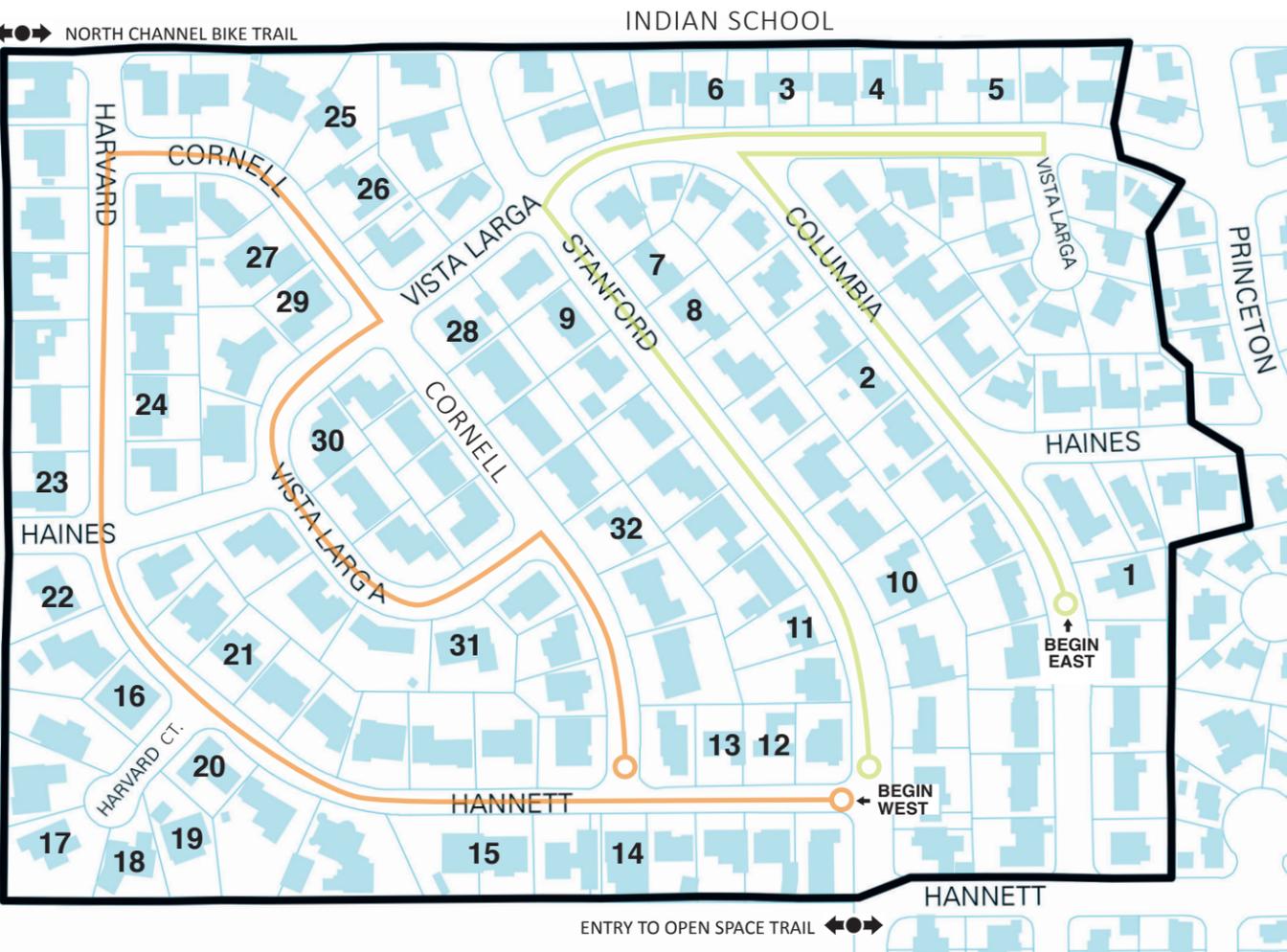
In 1947, there were only five architects in the city registered with the NM chapter of the American Institute of Architects. However, by the mid-1950s, the city's booming population resulted in a multitude of new residential and commercial building projects that created jobs for twenty-two new architects. Many of them were recent graduates from out-of-state schools who were eager to hone their newfound skills. These new architects, who designed for Vista Larga residents also designed some of the more prominent buildings in postwar Albuquerque, including: Max Flatow who designed the former First National Bank Tower East at Central and San Mateo and the Simms Building downtown; William Ellison architect for the former Kistler-Collister building - now Ace Hardware - at the corner of Lomas and San Mateo; and James Liberty who designed the City-County Office Building at Fifth and Marquette.

Back Patio View at a Vista Larga Home



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UNM North Golf Course with View of the Vista Larga Neighborhood and Sandia Mountains

These two tours of the district acquaint users with variations on mid-twentieth-century style, the work of 10 Albuquerque architects from the 1950s and 1960s, and provide a couple jumping off points to walk the open space around the golf course. As you walk through Vista Larga be sure to notice the landscaping and soak in the feel of a neighborhood where some families have spent two and even three generations.

Loop Tours of Vista Larga Historic District

Please respect the privacy of the people who live in the historic district. The walk can be accessed and left at any location, but be aware of parking restrictions in some locations.

The Eastern Loop

- 1** The first house on the tour is the last house built during the district's 20-year period of significance, a 1967 Contemporary at 1428 Columbia designed by Max Flatow.
- 2** Walk north a few doors to 1511 and you're at the first home built in the neighborhood, a 1948 Traditional Ranch.
- 3** Max Flatow designed the 1954 Contemporary at 2525 for a doctor whose family lived there for nearly 50 years.
- 4** 2611 Vista Larga is a 1960 Contemporary derived from styles made popular by California developer Joseph Eichler. Note the front-gabled roof, clerestories, exposed beams and asymmetrical facade, hallmarks of the style.



5 Lawrence Garcia designed the large, rectangular International-style home at 2619 Vista Larga in 1954 for himself and his wife. It had a Japanese garden with waterfalls likely designed by Sam Yonemoto who landscaped several properties in the neighborhood. As the street drops toward Princeton off to your right, you can follow the contours of an arroyo.



6 Heading west on Vista Larga, 2515 is a Contemporary Ranch. Built in 1953, its flat roof and ribbon windows identify it as a Contemporary but the brick planters, two-car garage, and long, low profile are Ranch hallmarks. Turn slightly right for one of the long views that early Vista Larga residents cherished.

Heading west on Vista Larga, turn south on Stanford. Spot the Little Free Library. Across the street are two homes by William Ellison, who designed at least six houses in the neighborhood.

7 The first is a New Mexico take on Contemporary. This 1955 home at 1528 Stanford has massive adobe walls that shoulder a low-pitched, exposed post-and-beam gravel-surfaced roof with a clerestory at the side gable. There are at least four other mid-centuries in the neighborhood employing adobe construction. Unusually thick stucco-clad walls provide a clue to spotting them.

8 The home next door, 1522, was built in 1954. Also a Contemporary, it has an unusual clerestory. Can you find it?

9 Angle northwest and look across the street at 1529 for another Contemporary with adobe and post-and-beam construction; its ponderosa pines and other landscaping were designed by Yonemoto.

10 Heading south, 1428 is a Contemporary by James Liberty. First built in 1952, subsequent additions by other architects incorporate flat, shed and low-pitched roof forms into a unified home set off with a windowless brick wall and clerestories.

11 The Ranch at 1427 Stanford has smooth stucco walls, rounded corners and a flat roof, hallmarks of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style found throughout New Mexico. The home's wide ashlar-faced chimney, big picture windows, and wrought-iron porch supports are classic Ranch.

Turn west from Stanford onto Hannett Avenue to access the western loop of the tour or continue walking south to enter the two-mile open space trail around the golf course.

The Western Loop

12 Head west from Stanford to Hannett and stop at 2409. Garland Bryan designed this Contemporary as his family home in 1953. Its classic post-and-beam construction and clean lines are set-off by a xeriscaped landscape.

13 The Contemporary next door had a massive stucco wall. Might this be one of the five homes identified in Vista Larga with adobe construction?

14 & 15 Follow Hannett west taking note of the Territorial Revival Ranch at 2316, and note the Ranch Rambler at 2300 with a shake-shingle-roof. In a few steps, you're on Harvard Drive. Walk 3 doors down and face onto Harvard Court, a cul-de-sac, and admire this cluster of Contemporary houses. Take the opportunity to compare mid-century architectural styles—nearly unaltered from when they were built—and admire the mature landscaping that has filled in over the last 65 years. **16** 1501 was designed by James Liberty; **17** 1502 by Robert Carlton Walters; **18 & 19** 1504 and 1508, Richard Wright; **20** 1514, Lawrence Garcia; and across the street at **21** 1418 Harvard Drive, Arthur Miller.

22 At the corner of Harvard and Haines Avenue, 1513, is a Ranch built in 1961. The foundation plantings- classic to the era- and mature landscaping have been updated with xeriscaping. Behind the house, Haines ends and there is a second entrance to the walking trail. Stop here to see the dramatic "long view" to the west.

23 & 24 Continue north on Harvard Drive noting 1601 and 1606, two nice Ranches. Then turn right onto Cornell Drive.



25 & 26 Climb the hill and spot the houses at 1610 and 1606

Cornell. They are built low in simplified forms mostly with minimal overhangs and no ornamentation. These Ranches are designed in the International Style and clad in brick, stucco, and modern materials often used on this type of home. Brick, locally produced, was especially popular in Albuquerque.

27 Across the street, 1605 has stunning masonry, ashlar stone, and an interior courtyard.

28 Walk up the street past the corner to 1518 Cornell. This Contemporary with brick detailing was designed by Lawrence Garcia in 1955; the roofline of the unattached carport appears to follow the plane of the home's low-sloped roof.

Take a right on Vista Larga. This horseshoe-shaped stretch of road slopes down a curve and heads west and south from Cornell. Most of the houses are Ramblers- elongated Ranches designed to conform to the curves and corners of the street.

29 1601 Cornell was designed by Bill Shelton and wraps the corner with two street facades. A broad chimney caps the hip-box roof.

30 At 2300 is a Rambler designed to conform to the street curve. What classic Ranch features do you recognize? Keep walking west and south to spot more Ramblers that wrap irregular lots or step back in keeping with the street curves and corners. Many have elaborate hip-boxed roofs and luxuriant landscaping.

31 & 32 As you round the curve you'll find a good example of a Storybook Ranch at 2207 Vista Larga. A more whimsical take on mid-century style, this home's gambrel roof and decorative shutters are in direct contrast to the International up the hill at 1418 Cornell designed by James Liberty.



Turn Right to Hannett. You've reached the end of the tour. Imagine Vista Larga when it was largely completed in the late 1950s. Long views over the mesa to the cinder cones and beyond to Mount Taylor were common. Kids found fossils on the sand hills, played outdoors after dark, and moms kept an eye on them from kitchen windows. Indian School was a dirt road and the golf course stretched to Central Avenue. A lot has changed, but much of the fabric of the neighborhood and its strong sense of community are the same.

Additional information about historic preservation in New Mexico and Vista Larga's history: NM Historic Preservation Division: www.nmhistoricpreservation.org; City of Albuquerque Historic Preservation Planner: Leslie Naji Inajiri@cabq.gov.

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