

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: Villa del Rio Historic District

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: Bounded by River Ranch residential community to the north, Vactor Ranch residential community to the south, N. Sabino Canyon Road to the west, and residential subdivisions to the east

City or town: Tucson State: AZ County: Pima

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ X C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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>156</u>	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
___	_____	structures
___	_____	objects
<u>157</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/Multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Other

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood, stucco, clay tile

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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.)

Summary Paragraph

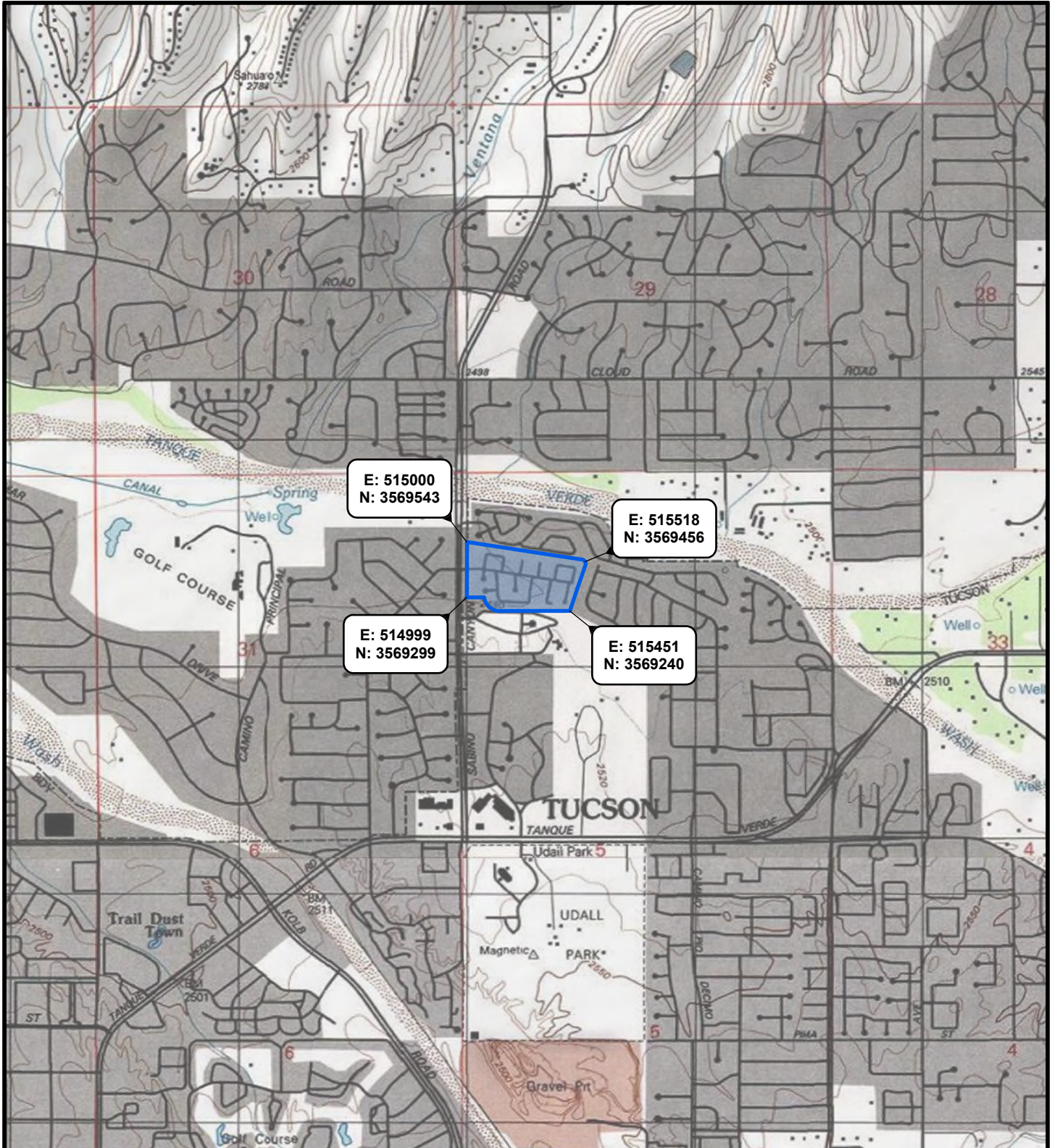
Constructed between 1973 and 1979,* the Villa del Rio Historic District is composed of 156 townhouses laid out in eight cluster arrangements. The district includes auxiliary structures and objects (pools, jacuzzi, library, changing rooms, tennis courts, and streetlamps, sculptures, guest parking, street signs, community wall signs, and mailboxes) all within a single designed landscape (site). The district is part of the Villa del Rio subdivision located south of Tanque Verde Creek and north of Pantano Wash on the east side of N. Sabino Canyon Road in Tucson, Pima County, Arizona.

The Villa del Rio Historic District is associated with the emergence of multi-family developments in the Catalina Foothills and represents the third and final multi-family housing project in Tucson designed by notable Mexican American architect, Barnaby “Bennie” Montague Gonzales and his lead designer, Robert Frankeberger. The district was designed during the height of Gonzales’s career, when his success allowed him to take on and train other promising architects, such as Robert Frankeberger, who helped design Villa del Rio. The district showcases Gonzales’s modernist aesthetic and continues to retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

*Note that this nomination does not claim exceptional importance under Criterion G

Narrative Description

The Villa del Rio is a townhouse community on 30.73 acres located at 3098 N. Sabino Canyon Road in Tucson, Pima County, in Section 32, Township 13 South, Range 15 East, as shown on the Sabino Canyon U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle. This multi-family complex is bounded by the River Ranch residential community to the north, Vactor Ranch residential community to the south, N. Sabino Canyon Road to the west, and residential subdivisions to the east (**Figure 1**). The complex consists of 156 townhouses arranged in clusters around circular roadways or short dead-end roads. Four clusters of buildings are situated on the north side of Camino del Rio (the main access road into the district), and an additional four clusters are situated south of Camino del Rio. The district has extensive greenbelt areas, and homes are constructed in the zero-lot line concept, providing maximum openness. The common areas consist of two pools and a jacuzzi with a library and changing rooms, two lighted tennis courts, sidewalks, 2.25 miles of walls, original street signs and mailboxes, concrete slabs for guest parking, two small pocket parks, and landscaped greenways situated between buildings (**Figure 2a and 2b**). The site layout and architecture of Villa del Rio reinforces the feeling of privacy and tranquility in a park-like setting achieved through lush grassy lawns, shady tree-lined streets, and a small village-like setting. Over the last 50 years, the district’s vegetation has continued to mature and as such the district stands out as a lush residential gem against the backdrop of the Sonoran Desert.



T13S, R15E, a Portion of Section 32,
Pima County, Arizona
Sabino Canyon USGS 7.5' Quadrangle
Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

Legend

 Villa del Rio



0 1,000 2,000
Feet

0 300 600
Meters

Figure 1. Project location

Villa Del Rio



Legend

- Parcels

Notes

Marking common area turf that has high potential to be removed

1:2,257

376.2 0 188.08 376.2 Feet



- Legend**
- Name
 - Streetlight
 - Single Mailbox
 - Multiple Mailboxes
 - Abandoned Mailbox
 - Wall Sign
 - Street Sign
 - ▭ Villa del Rio Boundary
 - ▨ Greenway
 - ▨ Guest Parking
 - Park
 - Walking Path
 - Year Built**
 - 1973
 - 1974
 - 1977
 - 1978
 - 1979

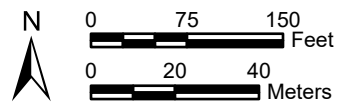


Image Sources: Maxar: 2/20/2024
 Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

VILLA DEL RIO
 NRHP Nomination

AERIAL OVERVIEW
 Figure 2

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Between 1972 and 1979, four different floor plans—Plans A, B, C, and D—were designed within the boundaries of the district. Each of the four floor plans includes a fireplace, a detached or attached two-car carport with an associated storage shed, vaulted ceilings, covered patios, and atriums. Further each plan has a rectangular footprint on a concrete pad, with a combination of a flat or shed-style roof, wood-framing sheathed in stucco painted Navajo White, a signature color associated with many of Bennie Gonzales’s designs. Although the four floor plans were conceived in 1972, not all were built as originally designed and some variation in the exterior appearance of the four floor plans exists.

No pure examples of Floor Plans C and D are present within Villa del Rio, but the basic interior amenities remain consistent with the original drawings. For example, the roof slope and location of fireplaces depicted in some of the original elevation renderings do not match existing conditions; in some cases, for example, the roof slope faces the opposite direction of that shown in the renderings, presumably to accommodate privacy, and is shifted depending on how each unit is sited within their lots (**Photographs 1–4**).

Plan A consists of a single-story, two-bedroom, two-bathroom home. The master bedroom has an adjoining dressing area with two walk-in closets and a bathroom with a shower. Other rooms include a spare bedroom, a bathroom with a tub, a living room, a dining room, a breakfast area, a kitchen, and a laundry room. The home has two atriums, one between the spare bedroom and the master bedroom dressing area and the other off the breakfast area. The patio extends along the short axis of the building, and the front entry is through a portico supported by three columns (**Figure 3**).

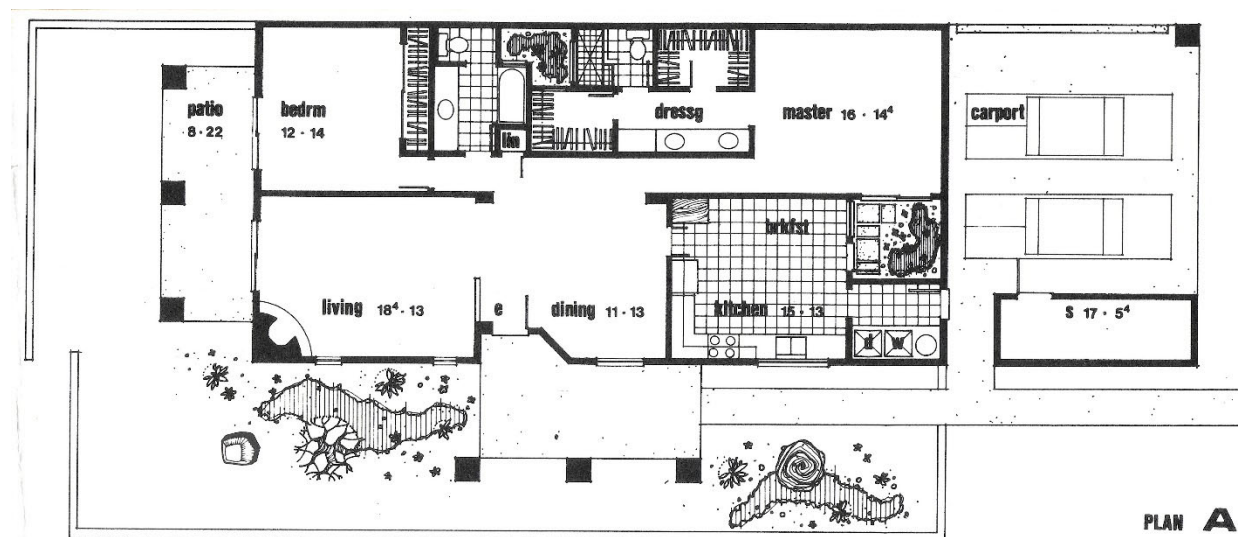


Figure 3. Floor plan A for Villa Del Rio for Phases II and III (illustrations provided by Villa del Rio [no plans for Phase I were found]).

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Photograph 1. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan A at 7360 E. Cascada Circle built in 1978. View facing southwest (WestLand Resources 2025 (AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_001))



Photograph 2. Typical two-story unit representative of Floor Plan C at 7166 E. Chorro Circle built in 1973. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_002])

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Photograph 3. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan B along Camino del Rio and E. Cascada Circle built in 1973. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_003])



Photograph 4. Overview looking down E. Chorro Circle and Camino del Rio showing Floor Plans A, C, and D (Plan D is to right of frame). View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_004])

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Plan B is a single-story, three-bedroom, two-bathroom home. The master bedroom has one walk-in closet with a dressing area that has a bathroom with a shower. Other rooms include a spare bedroom, study (or extra bedroom), bathroom with tub, dining room, living room, breakfast nook, kitchen, and laundry room. The building has two atriums; one located near the two bathrooms and the other off the breakfast nook. The patio is at the front corner, and entry is through a portico supported by three columns (**Figure 4**).

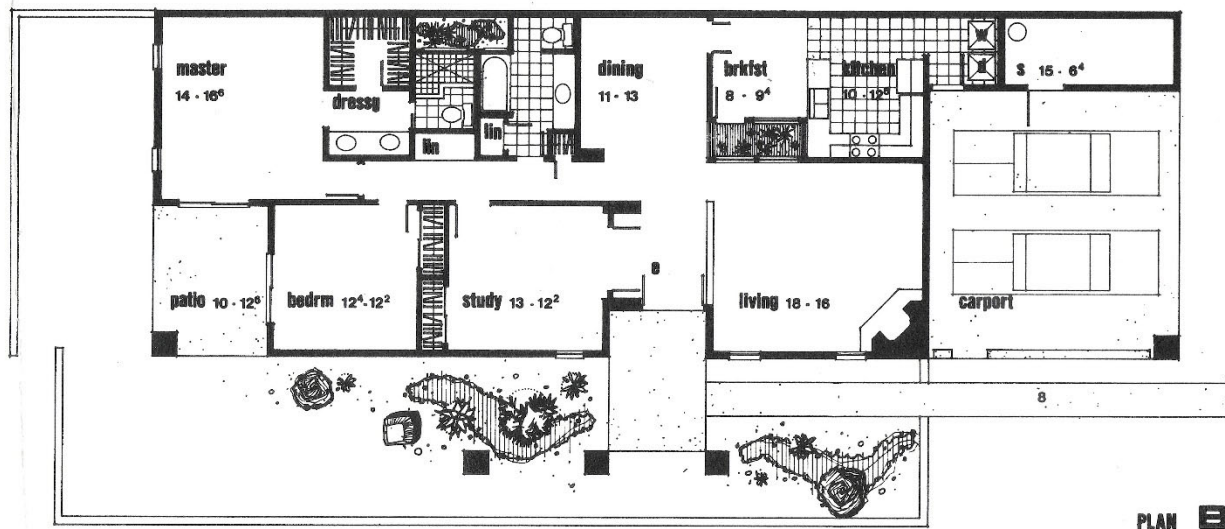


Figure 4. Floor plan B for Villa Del Rio for Phases II and III (illustrations provided by Villa del Rio [no plans for Phase I were found]).

Plan C is a multi-story, three-bedroom, two-bathroom home. The first floor includes the master bedroom, which has a walk-in closet and dressing area with a bathroom with a shower. Other rooms include a living room that shares a fireplace with the adjoining dining room, a kitchen, a breakfast area, a laundry room, a half-bathroom, and a family room. One atrium is located between the family room and the half-bathroom. The front entry is through a portico supported by four columns, and a patio is along the short axis of the building. The upper floor includes a full bathroom with a tub and two spare bedrooms, one with a walk-in closet, that share a balcony (**Figure 5**).

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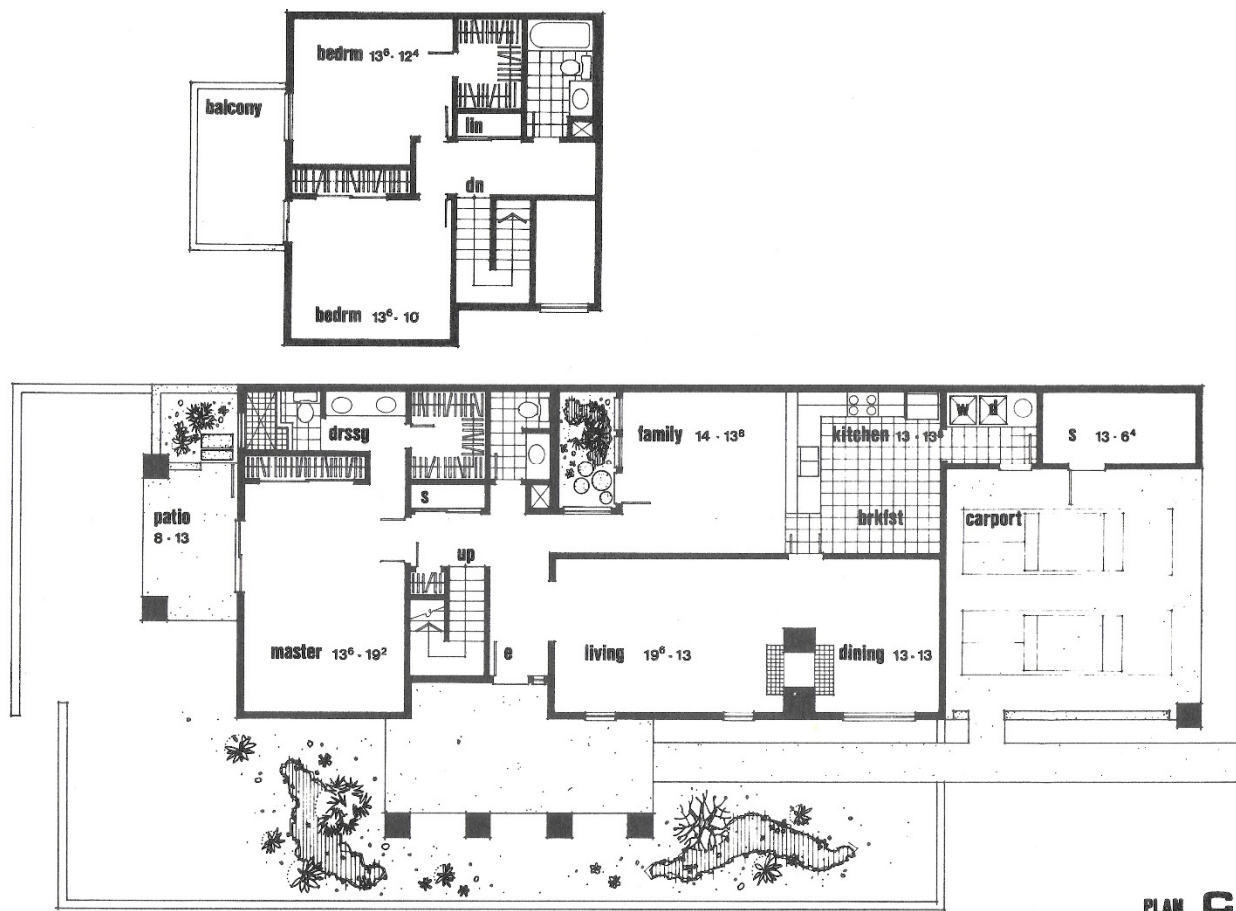


Figure 5. Floor plan C for Villa Del Rio for Phases II and III (illustrations provided by Villa del Rio [no plans for Phase I were found]).

Plan D is a multi-story, four-bedroom, three-bathroom home. The first floor includes two spare bedrooms, a living room that shares a fireplace with the family room, a dining room, a bathroom with a tub, a kitchen, a breakfast area, and a laundry room. The bedrooms share the patio located along the short axis. An atrium is located between the staircase and the family room. The front entry is through a portico supported by three columns. Upstairs is the master bedroom, which has a walk-in closet with a dressing area and a bathroom with a tub. A balcony extends off the master bedroom. A spare bedroom is located adjacent to a full bathroom with a tub (**Figure 6**).

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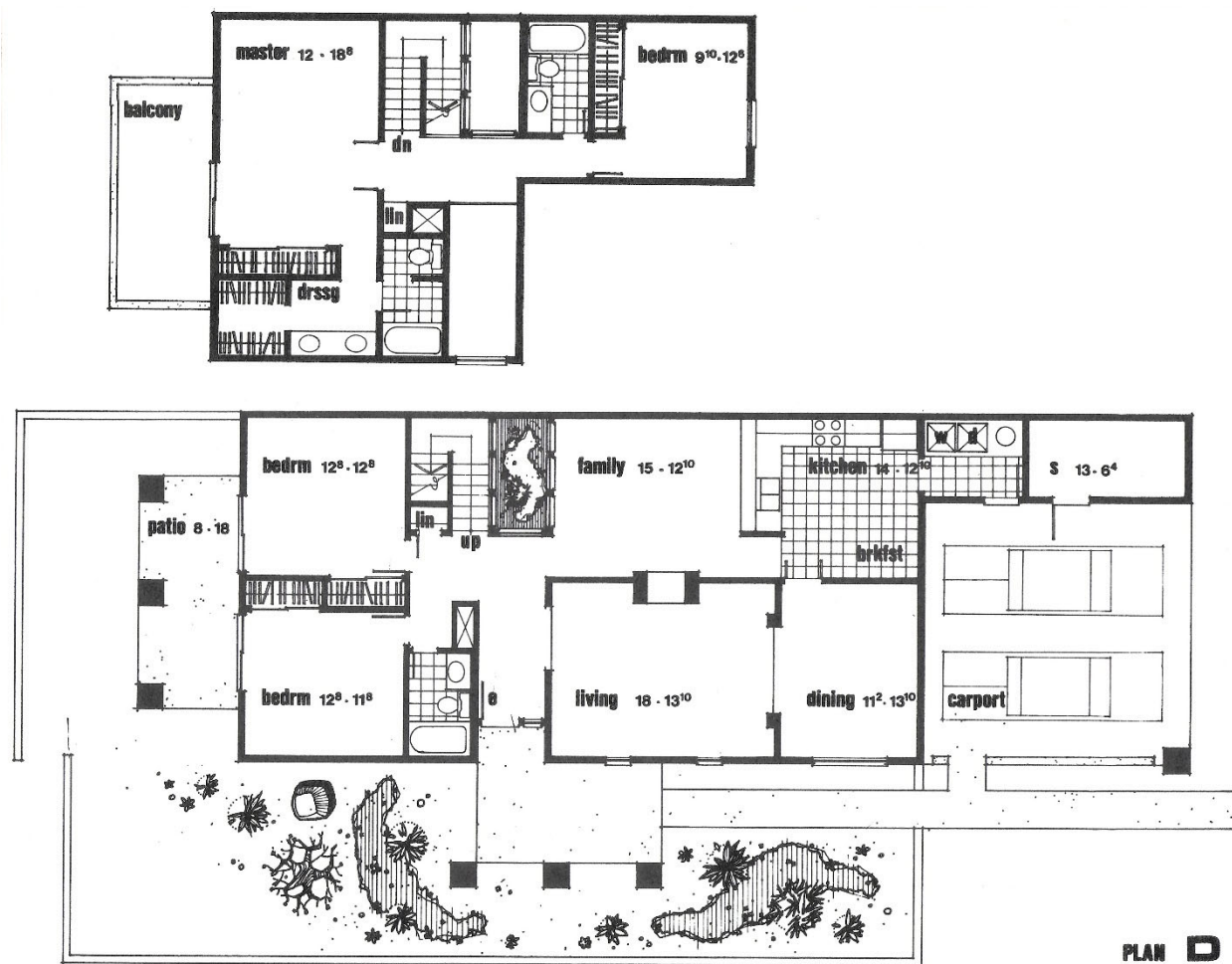


Figure 6. Floor plan D for Villa Del Rio for Phases II and III (illustrations provided by Villa del Rio [no plans for Phase I were found]).

In addition to residential dwellings, the community also has several amenities and auxiliary structures within its boundaries. Those include two pools, a jacuzzi, and pool houses (library and changing rooms), a tennis court, walking paths, pocket parks, and greenways, as well as smaller scale structures and objects such as park benches, sculptures, original street signs, monument signs, original mailboxes, and guest parking spaces. The layout and organization of these landscape features was part of the district's original design undertaken by architects Bennie Gonzales and Robert Frankeberger.

The pool, pool house, jacuzzi, and tennis courts are located on the south side of Camino del Rio, roughly near the center of the district. Similarly, a small pocket park with sculptures and walking paths are also located adjacent to the communal pool and tennis facilities. The pool and pool house have a moderate set-back from the street and are recessed behind a stuccoed wall and a pergola that runs east-west along the length of the primary façade (**Photograph 5**). A 6-foot wall surrounds the entirety of the pool except on portions of the west and east elevations where it ties into

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recreational buildings and changing rooms. The concrete block wall has a rough stucco coating interspersed with wrought iron railings and wood service gates throughout that allow pedestrian entrance. The main entry to the pool area is at the north end of complex via a breezeway between the north changing room (east side) and the library (west side). The single-story library has a square footprint with stuccoed wood frame walls topped with a steep shed roof covered with mission tiles sitting on a concrete slab foundation. A parapet follows the angle of the various roof forms, whether flat or sloping, along each elevation.

The overall pool complex has one complete wall with two aluminum sliding sash windows on the north elevation and two blind half-walls on the east and west elevations and an open south elevation, thus forming a bracket-shaped interior space. Extending east to west across the front of the south elevation within the interior of the pool area is a wood pergola sheathed in plywood, similar to that at the main entrance, part of which is attached to the building and mounted on stuccoed pillars. Within the library's interior, the walls and ceilings are stucco covered with a baseboard constructed of red fired brick. For ornamentation, short segments of brown concrete breeze block have been placed over the brick baseboard on the north elevation (**Photographs 6–7**).

There are two pools—a north pool and a south pool—and a jacuzzi. The north pool is located near the south and west elevations of the library (**see Photograph 6**). The pool is an in-ground L-shaped swimming pool with rounded corners, surrounded by a concrete deck. Shade is provided by the library and two stretched triangular shade sails. Associated with the north pool is a changing room. The changing room is a single-story building with stuccoed wood frame walls topped with a moderately pitched shed roof covered with mission tiles sitting on a rectangular concrete slab foundation. There are no windows. Two metal doors are present on the west elevation (women's and men's), and one set of double metal doors is present on the east elevation. On the south elevation is an open-air double shower. From the shower, a wood pergola mounted on stuccoed pillars runs south to the south pool area. Near the showers and east of the pergola is a small, square jacuzzi with rounded corners. A square shade sail stretched over the jacuzzi provides shade (**Photograph 9**).

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Photograph 5. Overview of north elevation of the pool complex along Camino del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_005])



Photograph 6. Overview of interior of the pool complex showing pergola into the north pool area and one of two changing rooms to the south. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_006])

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Photograph 7. Overview of interior of the library within the pool complex. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_007])



Photograph 8. Overview of the north pool and changing room within the pool complex. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_008])

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Photograph 9. Overview of the jacuzzi within the pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_009])

The south pool is an in-ground, boot-shaped swimming pool with rounded corners surrounded by a concrete deck (**Photograph 10**). Its associated changing room is a single-story building with stuccoed wood-framed walls topped with a moderately pitched shed roof with mission tiles on a rectangular concrete slab foundation. The only openings are on the south elevation where there is a single door with a wrought iron gate, two small rectangular clerestory windows, and two small rectangular vents. The vents are constructed of wood. The windows have a single fixed light in a wood frame. An additional wood pergola stretches across the south elevation, where it is attached to the changing room.

Immediately adjacent to the east of the pool complex is a tennis court. The facility has a rectangular plan with two interior courts on a painted hard court surface surrounded by 12-foot-high chain-link fencing and exterior flood lights (**Photograph 11**).

Throughout the district there are pocket parks, greenways, and hiking paths. As noted above, one pocket park is located west and adjacent to the pool complex (**Photograph 12**). It has a stair-step-shaped plan and includes a central winding concrete path, a grassy lawn, and a small circular seating area. The seating area has a central concrete block and stuccoed planter with an arc of concrete pavers and concrete benches around it, as well as two sculptures, including a concrete turtle and dolphin (**Photograph 13**). Within and along the edges of the park are non-native trees and plants, including sago and fan palms, ash, ornamental asparagus, and golden barrel cacti.

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Photograph 10. Overview of the south pool within the pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_010])



Photograph 11. Overview of the tennis courts. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_011])

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Photograph 12. Overview of pocket park behind pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_012])



Photograph 13. Dolphin sculpture in pocket park. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_013])

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Immediately across Camino del Rio is another pocket park with a triangular plan, also with a grassy lawn interspersed with undulating areas of xeriscape composed of gravels and large decorative boulders. Similarly, it includes seating areas, and concrete and stucco planters interspersed with non-native trees including olive, Aleppo pine, ash, and oleander bushes (**Photograph 14**).



Photograph 14. Overview of pocket park along Camino del Rio. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_014])

There are six greenways located throughout the district and characterized as linear areas composed of dirt pathways, cobble-lined irrigation swales, and both native and non-native trees situated behind and between the rear-facing elevations of the townhouse clusters that date between 1977 and 1978, located toward the eastern and northern portions of the district (**Photograph 15**; see **Figure 2b**).

In addition to these formal landscaped areas, the entire district is populated with tree-lined streets and grassy road verges along Camino del Rio. Smaller scale landscape features include three entry walls, nine streetlamps, 160 mailboxes (117 single mailboxes and 12 multiple mailbox groupings; 17 mailboxes have been abandoned and moved but the lamps remain), six guest parking areas, and 10 street signs.

Entrance into the district is east off North Sabino Canyon Road via Camino del Rio. At the entrance to the community there are three partial walls with the name of the community affixed to them. Two walls are located on each side of the road (north and south), and one is located a short distance to the east on an island in the middle of the road (**Photograph 16**).

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Photograph 15. Overview of greenway south of Camino del Rio. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_015])



Photograph 16. Entry monument sign for Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_016])

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Each street has its original street signs, and at night, Camino del Rio is still lit by its original streetlamps, eight that are double-globe and one that is single-globe (**Photograph 17–18**). Side roads are also lit by their original streetlamps that also function as mailboxes. Each mailbox is part of a single globe streetlamp with a mailbox mounted on a crossbeam. In some instances, one or more mailboxes have been removed from the lamppost and mounted on a metal bracket in a location that enables the letter carriers to deliver the mail from the mail truck instead of walking (**Photograph 19**).

Guest parking at Villa del Rio is provided along Camino del Rio with 12 pullouts of various sizes, and four formal guest parking areas that are indicated as guest parking by a small sign (**Photograph 20**). Three of the guest parking areas are concrete slabs, and one is located at the east end of Camino del Rio, represented as a wide paved area. Also present at the entrance and south of Camino del Rio is a large rectangular strip of undeveloped land that serves as a parking area for service vehicles and for overflow parking.



Photograph 17. Example of original street signage at Villa del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_017])

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Photograph 18. Detail of a typical two-globe streetlamp at Villa del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_018])



Photograph 19. Typical mailbox and lamp at each residence. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_019])

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Photograph 20. Example of guest parking at Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_020])

Character-defining Features of the District

The most striking character-defining feature of Villa del Rio is its lush landscape designed by Gonzales and Frankeberger, which is populated with over 250 varieties of plants and trees. Upon entry, visitors are greeted by a tree-lined central drive shaded by tall, mature trees, grassy lawns, and pedestrian walkways that together provide a striking contrast to most residential developments in Tucson. Plant and tree varieties include olive, ash, walnut, Texas mountain laurel, pistache, saguaro, hedgehog cactus, yucca, ocotillo, ornamental asparagus, oleander, Texas ranger, Aleppo pine, sago and fan palms, lantana, bird of paradise, agave, and trumpet flower. The architecture, too, serves as a modernist reference to Puebloan architecture. This is reinforced by layered boxy forms, square window openings, flat or low-pitched roofs with shed-style porch overhangs, exposed vigas or rafter ends, cluster arrangements, and courtyard walls, all of which are designed with flat expanses of square, rectangular, and sloped wall planes, little to no ornamentation, few fenestrations, and an overall clean, uncluttered aesthetic. Additionally, “Navajo White,” a signature color used by Bennie Gonzales in many of his designs, remains the color of all the buildings. Because the community continues to abide by deed restrictions reinforced by its Homeowner’s Association, nearly all the property’s original Modernist designs have been preserved in place, and the complex retains all aspects of integrity for NRHP designation. Moreover, the property readily conveys its historic association with Gonzales during a period in which Gonzales was a well-established Arizona architect and when multi-family residential complexes were gaining in popularity in Tucson’s Catalina Foothills.

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Integrity of Contributing Resources to the District

All of the residential and auxiliary resources within the Villa del Rio Historic District date between 1972 and 1979 and are recommended as contributing to the district (**Tables 1 and 2**). Although some of these resources fall outside the 50-year age criterion, those that post-date 1976 are part of the build-out of the district by the same architecture team and with the same design aesthetic based on plans conceived in 1972, with construction commencing in 1973. A Request for a Determination of Eligibility was submitted to the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 2021 by the Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation (Clinco 2021). The Arizona SHPO determined that the Villa del Rio Townhouses were eligible as a historic district once portions of the district had aged into eligibility. Because the district was built over a six-year period, some of the resources are less than 50 years of age. However, the first phase of construction occurred in 1973, and only constitutes a four-year difference, meaning these resources do not qualify under Criterion G, which only applies if the entirety of the property was built after the 50-year age criterion. Further, per National Register Bulletin 46, *Historic Residential Suburbs: Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places*,

Because subdivisions were typically constructed over a period of many years, it is not uncommon to encounter a subdivision where streets and utilities were laid out and home construction begun more than 50 years ago, but where construction continued into the recent past. As a general rule, when a neighborhood as a whole was laid out more than 50 years ago and the majority of homes and other resources are greater than 50 years of age, **a case for exceptional importance is not needed**. In such cases, the period of significance may be extended a reasonable length of time (e.g., five or six years) within the less-than-50-year period to recognize the contribution of resources that, although less-than- 50-years of age, are consistent with the neighborhood’s historic plan and character (2002:96)

Additionally, one of the major changes to residences within the district is the infill of carports, which was addressed in the 2021 report. As originally designed, none of the residential units had garages and, over time, most carports within the district were converted into garages. During their review, the Arizona SHPO reached out to architect Robert Frankeberger, the former Arizona SHPO architect who is credited with collaborating on the design for Villa del Rio when he was employed by Bennie Gonzales. Frankeberger noted that the only reason the complex had carports and not garages is that they were cheaper to construct and that Bennie’s carport design was not significant in and of itself (email correspondence between William Collins, NRHP Program Coordinator, Arizona SHPO, and Demion Clinco, June 4, 2021). As such, the Arizona SHPO concurred that the infill of carports did not constitute a loss of integrity. The following tables list all resources within the district.

Table 1. Resources within the Villa del Rio Historic District

Address	Year Built	Parcel Number	NRHP Status
7100 E Camino del Rio	1973	114460420	Contributor
7106 E Camino del Rio	1973	114460430	Contributor
7112 E Camino del Rio	1973	114460440	Contributor
7118 E Camino del Rio	1973	114460450	Contributor

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Table 1. Resources within the Villa del Rio Historic District

Address	Year Built	Parcel Number	NRHP Status
7124 E Onda Circle	1973	114460460	Contributor
7130 E Onda Circle	1973	114460470	Contributor
7136 E Onda Circle	1973	114460480	Contributor
7142 E Onda Circle	1973	114460490	Contributor
7148 E Onda Circle	1973	114460500	Contributor
7154 E Onda Circle	1973	114460510	Contributor
7160 E Onda Circle	1973	114460520	Contributor
7166 E Onda Circle	1973	114460530	Contributor
7172 E Onda Circle	1973	114460540	Contributor
7178 E Onda Circle	1973	114460550	Contributor
7184 E Onda Circle	1973	114460560	Contributor
7190 E Onda Circle	1973	114460570	Contributor
7196 E Onda Circle	1973	114460580	Contributor
7200 E Onda Circle	1973	114460590	Contributor
7206 E Onda Circle	1973	114460600	Contributor
7212 E Onda Circle	1973	114460610	Contributor
7218 E Onda Circle	1973	114460620	Contributor
7224 E Onda Circle	1973	114460630	Contributor
7230 E Onda Circle	1973	114460640	Contributor
7236 E Onda Circle	1973	114460650	Contributor
7242 E Onda Circle	1978	114460660	Contributor
7248 E Onda Circle	1978	114460670	Contributor
7254 E Onda Circle	1978	114460680	Contributor
7260 E Onda Circle	1978	114460690	Contributor
7266 E Onda Circle	1977	114460700	Contributor
7272 E Onda Circle	1977	114460710	Contributor
7278 E Onda Circle	1977	114460720	Contributor
7284 E Onda Circle	1977	114460730	Contributor
7290 E Onda Circle	1977	114460740	Contributor
7296 E Onda Circle	1979	114460750	Contributor
7279 E Onda Circle	1977	114460790	Contributor
7273 E Onda Circle	1977	114460800	Contributor
7267 E Onda Circle	1977	114460810	Contributor
7261 E Onda Circle	1977	114460820	Contributor
7225 E Onda Circle	1973	114460840	Contributor
7219 E Onda Circle	1973	114460850	Contributor
7213 E Onda Circle	1973	114460860	Contributor
7207 E Onda Circle	1973	114460870	Contributor
7201 E Onda Circle	1973	114460880	Contributor
7133 E Onda Circle	1973	114460890	Contributor
7131 E Onda Circle	1973	114460900	Contributor
7129 E Onda Circle	1973	114460910	Contributor
7127 E Onda Circle	1973	114460920	Contributor
7125 E Onda Circle	1973	114460930	Contributor

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Address	Year Built	Parcel Number	NRHP Status
7123 E Onda Circle	1973	11446094A	Contributor
7121 E Onda Circle	1973	114460950	Contributor
7119 E Onda Circle	1973	114460960	Contributor
7101 E Chorro Circle	1973	114460970	Contributor
7105 E Chorro Circle	1973	114460980	Contributor
7109 E Chorro Circle	1973	114460990	Contributor
7113 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461000	Contributor
7117 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461010	Contributor
7121 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461020	Contributor
7125 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461030	Contributor
7129 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461040	Contributor
7133 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461050	Contributor
7137 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461060	Contributor
7141 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461070	Contributor
7145 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461080	Contributor
7149 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461090	Contributor
7153 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461100	Contributor
7157 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461110	Contributor
7161 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461120	Contributor
7165 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461130	Contributor
7169 E Chorro Circle	1973	114461140	Contributor
7166 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461150	Contributor
7162 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461160	Contributor
7158 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461170	Contributor
7112 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461180	Contributor
7108 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461190	Contributor
7104 E Chorro Circle	1974	114461200	Contributor
3001 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461210	Contributor
3009 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461220	Contributor
3017 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461230	Contributor
3025 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461240	Contributor
3033 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461250	Contributor
3041 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461260	Contributor
3042 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461270	Contributor
3034 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461280	Contributor
3026 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461290	Contributor
3018 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461300	Contributor
3010 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461310	Contributor
3002 N Placita Chorro	1977	114461320	Contributor
3003 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461330	Contributor
3011 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461340	Contributor
3019 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461350	Contributor
3027 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461360	Contributor
3035 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461370	Contributor

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Address	Year Built	Parcel Number	NRHP Status
3043 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461380	Contributor
3040 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461390	Contributor
3032 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461400	Contributor
3024 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461410	Contributor
3016 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461420	Contributor
3008 N Placita Fuente	1978	114461430	Contributor
3000 N Placita Fuente	1977	114461440	Contributor
7301 E Cascada Circle	1977	114461450	Contributor
7305 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461460	Contributor
7309 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461470	Contributor
7313 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461480	Contributor
7317 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461490	Contributor
7321 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461500	Contributor
7325 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461510	Contributor
7329 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461520	Contributor
7333 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461530	Contributor
7337 E Cascada Circle	1979	114461540	Contributor
7341 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461550	Contributor
7345 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461560	Contributor
7349 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461570	Contributor
7353 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461580	Contributor
7357 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461590	Contributor
7361 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461600	Contributor
7365 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461610	Contributor
7369 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461620	Contributor
7368 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461630	Contributor
7364 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461640	Contributor
7360 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461650	Contributor
7356 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461660	Contributor
7314 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461670	Contributor
7310 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461680	Contributor
7306 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461690	Contributor
7302 E Cascada Circle	1978	114461700	Contributor
2957 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461710	Contributor
2949 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461720	Contributor
2941 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461730	Contributor
2933 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461740	Contributor
2925 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461750	Contributor
2917 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461760	Contributor
2909 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461770	Contributor
2901 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461780	Contributor
2902 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461790	Contributor
2910 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461800	Contributor
2918 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461810	Contributor

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Table 1. Resources within the Villa del Rio Historic District

Address	Year Built	Parcel Number	NRHP Status
2926 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461820	Contributor
2934 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461830	Contributor
2942 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461840	Contributor
2950 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461850	Contributor
2958 N Placita Nueva	1978	114461860	Contributor
2949 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461900	Contributor
2941 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461910	Contributor
2933 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461920	Contributor
2925 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461930	Contributor
2917 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461940	Contributor
2909 N Cascada Circle	1978	114461950	Contributor
2901 N Cascada Circle	1979	114461960	Contributor
2902 N Cascada Circle	1979	114461970	Contributor
2910 N Cascada Circle	1979	114461980	Contributor
2918 N Cascada Circle	1979	114461990	Contributor
2926 N Cascada Circle	1979	114462000	Contributor
2934 N Cascada Circle	1979	114462010	Contributor
2942 N Cascada Circle	1979	114462020	Contributor
2950 N Cascada Circle	1979	114462030	Contributor

Table 2. Auxiliary Structures and Objects with the Villa del Rio Landscape/Site*

Address	Structure/Object	Age	NRHP Status
Camino del Rio and E Camino del Rio	Streetlamp (single bulb)	1973	Contributor
7201 Onda Circle Camino del Rio and Chorro Circle Camino del Rio at pool Camino del Rio and Placita Chorro Camino del Rio and E Onda Circle at tennis court Camino del Rio and Placita Fuente Camino del Rio and East Cascada Circle Camino del Rio and E Cascade Circle	Streetlamps*	1973	Contributor
Southwest corner of Camino del Rio and E Onda Circle	Tennis courts	1973	Contributor
Southwest corner of Camino del Rio and E Onda Circle, west side of tennis courts	Swimming pools, clubhouse, jacuzzi	1973	Contributor
Camino del Rio and N Sabino Canyon Camino del Rio and E Onida Circle	Guest parking	1973	Contributor

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Table 2. Auxiliary Structures and Objects with the Villa del Rio Landscape/Site*

Address	Structure/Object	Age	NRHP Status
E Onida Circle Camino del Rio and Cascada Circle			
North and South of Camino de Rio, east of Onida Circle	Greenways	1973–1978	Contributor
Camino del Rio and Chorro Circle Camino del Rio south of the pool complex	Pocket park (2)	1973	Contributor
North and south along Camino del Rio at each intersection	Street signs	1973	Contributor

*All lamps contain double bulbs unless specified otherwise.

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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.)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1973–1979

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

B. Gonzales (Architect/Landscape Architect)

R. Frankeberger (Architect)

Ponderosa Homes (Builder)

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.)

Villa Del Rio Historic District is recommended eligible for listing at the local level of significance under Criterion A, *Community Planning and Development*, for the district’s association with joint home ownership following the enactment of the National Housing Act in 1961 and for its shared association with the “Garden Apartment” design concept following World War II. The district is also eligible under Criterion C, *Architecture*, for its association with Phoenix-based Mexican-American architect Barnaby “Bennie” Montague Gonzales. The district represents one of four of his surviving Tucson projects, as well as the last multi-family community he designed, and one of two remaining multi-family communities designed by Gonzales in Tucson. The Villa del Rio Historic District expresses a genre of work that was developed by the Bennie Gonzales architecture team to thoughtfully integrate architecture and landscape into a cohesive design plan. The district’s period of significance is 1973–1979 and denotes the years in which the district was constructed (please note this nomination does not claim exceptional importance under Criterion G).

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

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

Developmental History of Villa Del Rio

The small housing community of Villa del Rio in eastern Tucson is located on what was once the Hacienda Moltacqua Racetrack (aka Moltacqua Turf Club), built in 1940 by Robinson Carr (Bob) Locke (Peachin 2013; Samuels 2011; Tyler 2003). Prior to this, Locke operated the Moltacqua Horse Farm in Phoenix, where he and other racing fans raced their horse in leveled alfalfa fields out by Indian Road (Arizona Daily Star [ADS] 25 February 1939:25; ADS 28 March 1943:15; Tucson Daily Citizen [TDC] 7 November 1942:4). The Moltacqua racetrack once comprised a ½-mile racetrack and infield, numerous barns and corrals, a bunkhouse for employees, tack rooms, an office, and Locke's private home—the Hacienda Moltacqua, where he lived with his wife (TDC 21 February 1941:4) (**Figure 7**). The first World Championship Quarter Horse Speed Trials were held at Moltacqua in 1941. The winner of that race was Clabber, owned by A. A. Nichols of Gilbert, Arizona (Kirchner 2011). In addition to horse racing, steeplechases (ADS 9 February 1942:5) and sulky races were also held at the property (ADS 28 March 1943:3; Kirchner 2011; Peachin 2013). In March 1943, Locke sold the 200-acre property to Van Hatch Grant, who, with his family of eight, turned the once popular racetrack into a cotton farm. The Moltacqua track officials, Melville Haskell, Clancy Wollard, and J. R. Jelks promised a new track would be constructed as soon as a suitable location could be found, eventually opening the Rillito Racetrack in midtown Tucson (ADS 28 March 1943:3, 28 March 1943:15; Kirchner 2011; Peachin 2013; Tyler 2003). The last races at Moltacqua were run on April 25, 1943 (TDC 24 April 1943:4).

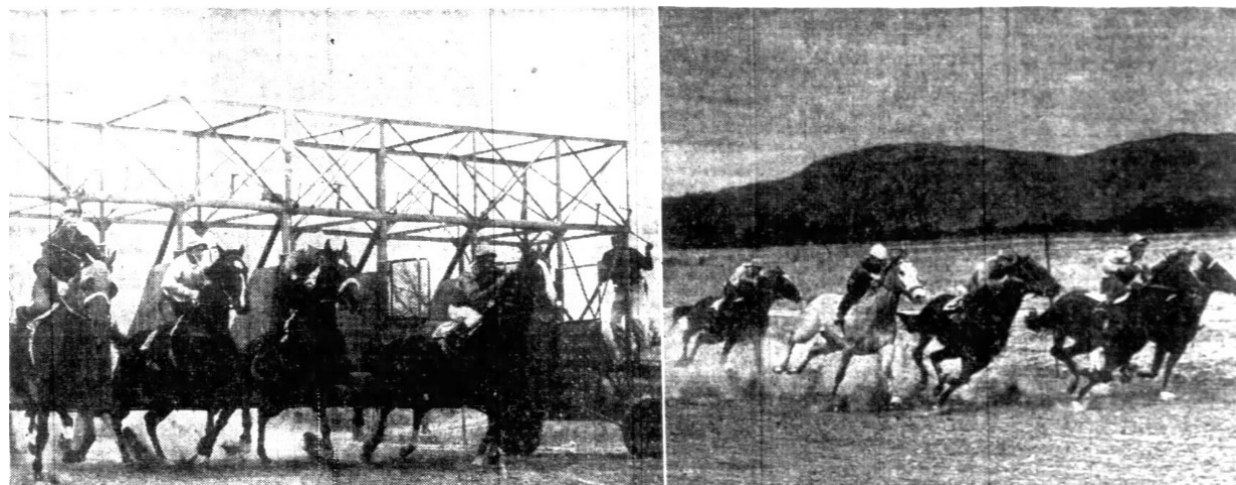


Figure 7. Quarter-horse race at Moltacqua Track (TDC 14 February 1942:4)

The property was sold once again at the end of 1945 to Marvin Kratter, who turned the property into a dude ranch called Rancho del Rio (Peachin 2013; Ritter 1945; Samuels 2011) (**Figure 8**). The ranch operated seasonally from Thanksgiving to May 1, thus avoiding the scorching Tucson summers (U.S. Department of Energy 2015; Tyler 2003). During the off-season, the ranch provided entertainment for the locals, including opening the swimming pool to the public, holding outings and

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picnics, conducting summer camps for children, and hosting rodeos and other events (The Arizona Post (AZP) 18 April 1947:3, 16 May 1947:10, 18 March 1949:4; TDC 8 November 1947:4). At least one movie, *Tucson*, was partially filmed at the Rancho del Rio (TDC 16 October 1947:22).

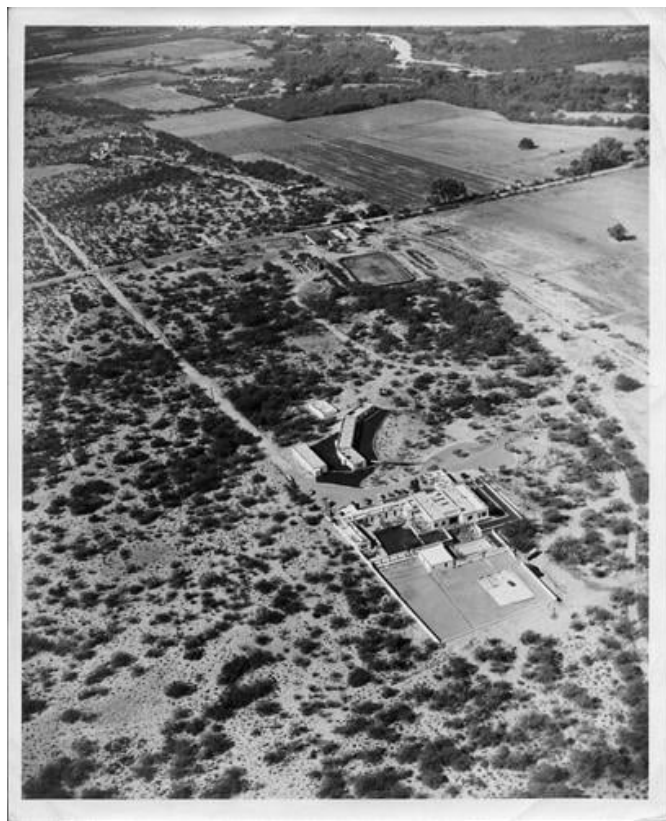


Figure 8. Rancho del Rio, ca 1950 (Peachin 2013)

In 1949, the ranch ran into financial difficulties, forcing Kratter and his wife, Lillian, to file for bankruptcy. The property was eventually sold to Ray and Mary Woods (AZP 4 November 1955:2). Kratter and his wife moved to New York City in 1955, where Kratter started a real estate investment company that was worth several million dollars in 1962 (James 1962) (**Figure 9**).

The Woods took over in 1955. One of their first advertisements for the guest ranch stated that the ranch was “more beautiful than ever!” and that fine cuisine and fine horses could be had in a top western atmosphere (AZP 4 November 1955:2). However, Wood’s ownership of Rancho del Rio was short-lived. By August 1956, the property had changed hands once again, this time being taken over by Jud Kane (AZP 31 August 1956:13, 9 October 1956a:9) (**Figure 10**). Jud’s sister Alma Kane Vactor helped Jud manage the ranch by overseeing the ranch’s food service (Peachin 2013; Tyler 2003). The ranch offered “the perfect setting for a ranch vacation. The utmost in food, service, riding and relaxation...” (AZP 9 October 1956b:9). At that time, movie stars often frequented the ranch, notably including Paul Newman, Lee Remick, Lee Marvin, and Rosemary Clooney (Peachin 2013).

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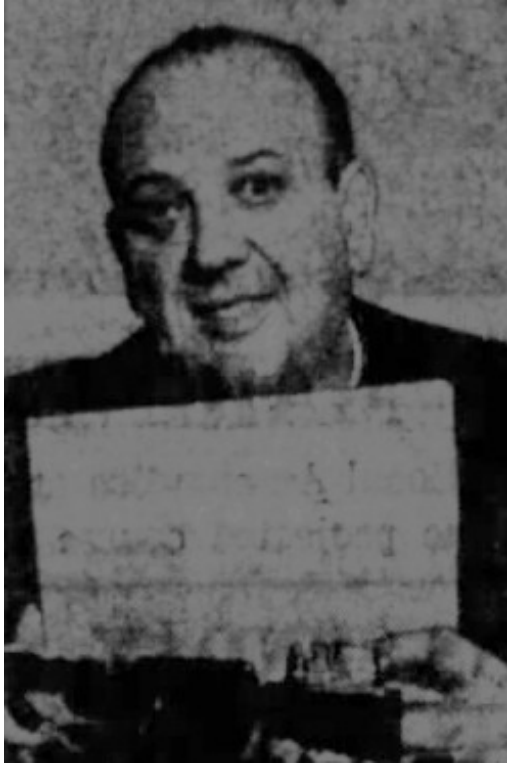


Figure 9. Marvin Kratter (TDC 27 August 1962:2)



Figure 10. Jud Kane with new chef Michel Marrose at Rancho del Rio (AZP 26 October 1956a:9)

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By 1965, the Kane's interest in running a ranch had waned, and this lack of interest, coupled with the difficulties of keeping the ranch financially afloat, prompted the Kanes to abandon the guest ranch concept and focus on being restaurateurs. The Tack Room opened on January 27, 1965, becoming the first restaurant in Arizona to offer fine dining and eventually becoming known as a top-tier restaurant and receiving numerous awards for its exquisite service and haute cuisine. For example, in 1973, the Tack Room became the first Arizona restaurant to receive a Four-Star rating from the Mobil Travel Guide. In 1977, the restaurant received its first Five-Star rating from the Mobil Travel Guide. The year 1996 marked the eighth year in a row that the Tack Room received the American Automobile Association Five-Diamond award (Peachin 2013; Tyler 2003).

The sign for the Tack Room, a well-known icon throughout Tucson, was a giant cowboy boot, the brainchild of Alma's son Drew Vactor, who got the idea from the Rancho del Rio's logo, which was a cowboy boot perched on a mountain. In 1976, Drew Vactor hired artist Michael Kautza to design and sculpt the boot. The two-piece hollow mold was erected at the east edge of Sabino Canyon Road, where it was filled with concrete and letters were added. In 1983, Sabino Canyon Road was widened, and the boot had to be moved, approximately 40 feet east and 40 feet north—a move that cost almost twice as much as it cost to make the boot in the first place (Peachin 2013).

In 1996, the grounds surrounding the restaurant were bought by ContraVest who built a residential community of over 100 single-family homes along the southern edge of Villa del Rio that became known as Vactor Ranch (Peachin 2013; Samuel 2011; Tyler 2003). The restaurant continued to operate within the confines of the residential community. In 2000, the restaurant was sold to Bob McMahon's Metro Restaurants who spent over \$1 million renovating the building but preserving its historical past. Unfortunately, the new trend of the time was toward casual dining, and the Tack Room to close its doors in 2003 (Peachin 2013; Tyler 2003). Although the restaurant was eventually razed to make room for more houses, the remains can still be seen at the entrance to the Vactor Ranch community (Pittenger 2012).

In 1972, Ponderosa Homes, a division of Kaiser Aetna, bought 100 acres of Rancho del Rio, 35 acres of which would become the luxury townhouse community of Villa del Rio (Samuels 2011; TDC 28 September 1972:4). Phase I construction began in 1973, with 56 homes constructed, followed by an additional 10 homes in 1974. Phase II began with 28 homes built in 1977; 56 homes were built in 1978 and 10 in 1979. In all, 156 homes are constructed at Villa del Rio (see **Table 1**). Common areas included a clubhouse with two pools and a jacuzzi, two lighted tennis courts, 2 miles of sidewalks, landscaped greenways, 2.25 miles of walls, five concrete parking slabs for guests, one dirt parking area for guests, and over 250 trees and other plants. The developer maintained the common areas until September 30, 1978, at which time the responsibility was turned over to the Homeowners Association (Samuels 2011).

Four floor plans were available at Villa del Rio: Plans A, B, C, and D (**Figure 11**; see **Figures 3-6**). Homes constructed during Phase I had a detached carport, vaulted ceilings, multiple patios, atriums, and were plumbed for natural gas. Homes constructed during Phase II had attached carports and interiors that differed from the earlier phase. Plan A homes were single-story homes with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Plan B homes were also a single-story homes but with three bedrooms

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and two bathrooms. Plans C and D were multi-storied homes. Plan C had three bedrooms and two bathrooms, and Plan D had four bedrooms and three bathrooms. All Phase II and III homes were wired for electricity after the City of Tucson put a moratorium on gas appliances in 1979. In 1977, prices ranged from \$56,990 for Plan A to \$68,990 for Plan D, and by 1978, all the available homes were sold (Samuels 2011).

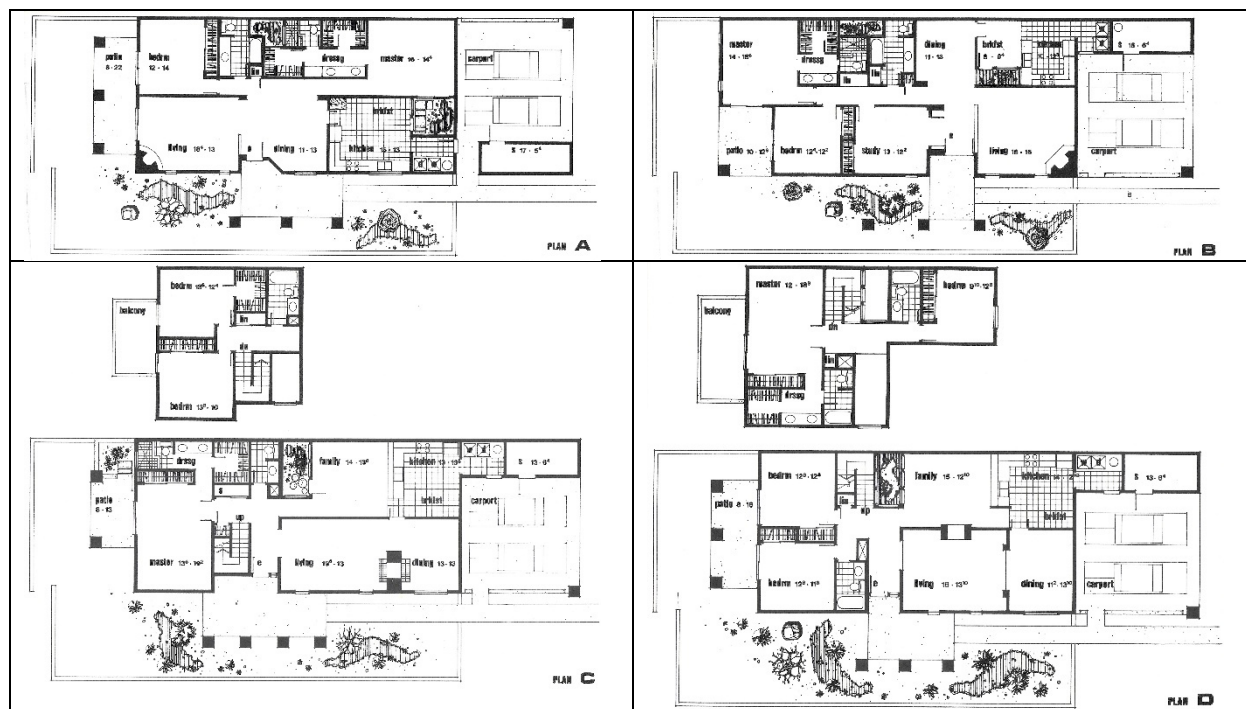


Figure 11. Floor plans A, B, C, and D for Villa Del Rio for Phases II and III (illustrations provided by Villa del Rio [no plans for Phase I were found])

In 1974, Ponderosa Homes was embroiled in a lawsuit that accused the company of pocketing part of the salaries paid to the suppliers and contractors who were hired to construct Villa del Rio. The lawsuit, brought by Cortez Development Corporation (Cortez), charged that Ponderosa Homes failed to pay to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) taxes withheld from salaries, thus causing the IRS to investigate Cortez, which resulted in damaging the company's reputation and having a negative effect on its credit rating and stock interest (TDC 14 June 1974:60).

In 1978, Bellamah Corporation of New Mexico bought out Ponderosa Homes for \$11 million. The buyout included Villa del Rio and Shadow Hills, located in the neighboring foothills. The sale of their Arizona properties shifted the focus of Ponderosa Homes to its California-based market (ADS 6 August 1978:34).

Late Twentieth-century Multi-family Developments in Tucson

Starting in Europe in the eighteenth century, townhouses functioned as the city dwellings of noblemen or wealthy families that owned multiple residences. Over the years, the meaning behind

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this housing type has changed. Townhouses are no longer reserved for wealthy families or are exclusive to urban settings. Moreover, multiple related types of multi-family developments exist, including row houses (which are differentiated from townhouses because they line the street in a row, whereas townhouses can be grouped in different layouts), cooperatives, apartments, and condominiums. The oldest of these housing forms are apartments, followed by housing cooperatives, townhouses, row houses, and finally, condominiums (although there is an argument that condominiums can trace their roots to ancient Rome [Natelson 1987]).

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, townhouses in Europe and in the Americas were typically two-story dwellings with narrow, rectangular, or L-shaped floor plans located in urban areas. Construction materials and architectural style varied by location, but they all generally shared similar attributes, including building heights of two stories or taller, at least one or more walls shared with a neighboring unit, uniformity of appearance, and small set-backs from the street with front and/or back lawns (Herman 2005).

In Tucson, the earliest multi-family dwelling type was the Sonoran Rowhouse. The development of a distinctive Sonoran architectural typology in the post-colonization period drew from both Spanish colonial and indigenous traditions informed by climatic demands and material availability. This blend resulted in a vernacular expression that was uniquely suited to the culture, customs, and environment of the upper Sonoran region (Crouch and Mundigo 1982). As Spanish colonizers pushed north from Mexico City, they brought with them their own architectural legacy. Like indigenous cultures, the Spanish also utilized a form of adobe technology in the construction of permanent buildings. The form of these buildings and the cities they comprised were governed by a series of royal ordinances that attempted to standardize urban forms in New Spain's colonial settlements, known as the "Laws of the Indies" (Messina 2005) Based upon classical antecedents, the "Laws" stipulated a number of standards for *pueblos* (towns) from their siting and configuration to architecture and public buildings. According to these edicts, buildings throughout New Spain should be located along streets which radiate outwards orthogonally from a central plaza to create an orderly street grid. These streets should be narrow in hot environments to reduce passive exposure to the sun. Individual houses should maintain large yards and corrals for "health and cleanliness." They should also "try so far as possible to have the buildings all of one type for the sake of the beauty of the town." While adherence to the Laws was substantially weaker in remote frontier communities removed from Mexico City, these laws nonetheless informed the development of the colonial built environment and formed a shared benchmark for Spanish architectural tradition in the New World (Crouch and Mundigo 1982). The earliest of these buildings were single-story boxes with adobe block walls sometimes covered in mud stucco. These simple adobe boxes formed a basic unit of construction and were usually built flush against the street edge with shared party walls. This created a unified street-facing facade which was characteristically austere with few openings, hand-hewn mesquite lintels, and minimal trimwork. Entries were filled with wood plank doors set back into the wall, while windows were unglazed and covered by iron grills called *rejas*. As additional units lined urban blocks, safe communal courtyards were created within, most of which contained an outdoor kitchen behind each dwelling, as well as communal trees, a well, an outhouse, or a ramada (Nequette and Jeffery 2002).

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By the twentieth century, however, townhouses became more prevalent in suburban areas and were being designed to look similar to detached or semi-detached houses, partly in response to housing shortages and the need for rent control following the first and second world wars (Kerr 1963). At that time, townhouses became less expensive, were designed so that they could be “stacked,” were typically grouped in units of two, and, in warmer climates, began to be built as single-story structures.

The passage on June 10, 1961, of Section 234 of the *National Housing Act* laid the groundwork for the development of joint home ownership and gave rise to the advent of condominiums in the United States (Kerr 1963). The statute is often referred to as the condominium statute, or *Horizontal Property Act* (HPA). It was made possible starting in the late 1950s when banking interests in Puerto Rico appealed to the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to insure mortgage loans on condominium apartments (the United States did not adopt the “condo” as a housing concept until after the passage of the 1961 Act). The purpose of Section 234 was “to provide an additional means of increasing supply of privately-owned dwelling units where, under the laws of the State in which the property is located, real property title and ownership are established with respect to a one-family unit which is part of a multi-family structure.” Prior to passage of the Act, the FHA could not insure mortgages on communally owned property. Moreover, apart from Puerto Rico, no condominiums had been built in the United States before 1961.

Following the passage of this legislation, real estate and mortgage investors in the United States took notice. The first states to adopt the HPA were Hawaii and Arkansas (each state has specific laws on horizontal property). A year later, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia adopted the HPA. In 1963, an additional 31 states followed suit (Kerr 1963). Even before the passage of the Act, multi-family developments were growing in popularity. Between 1955 and 1961, multi-family housing increased from 8.4 percent to 26.3 percent of all housing in the United States. At the same time single-family housing during this period fell by 37 percent (Kerr 1963).

The passage of the 1961 Act, however, also resulted in a surge of condominium development, which was a new housing concept in relation to its predecessors (apartments, cooperatives, and townhouses). In the first half of 1963, 40 percent of new housing projects contained two or more housing units (Kerr 1963).

Although townhouses and condominiums share similar attributes, they are considerably different housing types. With condominiums, the homeowners own only the interior of their units, while all other areas of the property belong to the homeowner’s association. In a townhouse community, by contrast, the homeowners own both the interior and exterior, including the roof, lawn, and driveway, but not the common areas. Furthermore, condominiums can refer to a variety of styles, whereas townhouses are designed to be in either a contiguous row of units or in clusters, typically share at least one wall with another unit, and are often more than one story in height. These distinctions were blurred in Arizona, where the joint ownership concepts associated with both cooperative housing and condominiums are manifested in local townhouse developments.

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In Tucson, townhouses constructed during the 1960s were fashioned after condominiums. The main difference lay in how the common areas were shared. Historically, all aspects of home ownership applied to townhouses. The owner was responsible for the exterior, interior, and any common areas immediately associated with that individual unit (Avila 1968). After the passage of the 1961 Act, however, townhouse developments borrowed from cooperative housing and condominium developments the idea that shared areas were paid for by communally organized associations. Dues were paid to the association, and monthly fees were used to finance the maintenance of common areas. Until passage of the HPA, legal rubric for the management of common areas had not been developed.

Overall, the local Tucson economy in the early to mid-1960s was sluggish, and few new housing projects were undertaken during this period. The City's first condominium development was Desert Shadows (although many other developments claim the same honor; Desert Shadows is no longer extant and no early advertisements have been found), and the first Townhouse development was Rolling Hills, both of which were constructed in 1962 immediately after Arizona adopted the HPA statute (City of Tucson 2019) (Figure 12).

Figure 12. *Arizona Daily Star*, 14 February 1965 advertisement for the Rolling Hills Townhomes.

The peak of multi-family construction occurred from 1966 through the first half of 1967 (Avila 1968). The following year, the most significant piece of federal housing legislation, the *Housing and Urban Development Act* of 1968, was signed into law by President Johnson. The act's intention was construction and rehabilitation of 26 million housing units, millions of which would

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be designated for low-to-moderate income families. The act expanded federal funding for public housing and hiring private developers to construct affordable housing units.

By the 1970s, suburban development had slowed in response to both a sluggish economy and the lack of available land near urban centers. As a result, new housing models gained popularity during this decade and included an increase in master planned communities, condominiums, and federally subsidized public housing (Chou 2020). While projects that had started in the early 1960s were completed, significantly fewer were constructed by the next decade. Villa del Rio, on the other hand, survived a lull in housing construction during the late 1960s and early 1970s and was later built out before 1980 when multi-family dwellings were once again on the rise.

Villa del Rio also shares many similarities with the garden apartment concept, including being advertised as “garden homes” in 1975 (ADS 16 November 1975). The concept was a notable shift in housing design, particularly in temperate climates, in the post–World War II era. The concept was shaped by a desire to incorporate landscape design in new housing by offering shared open spaces and communal areas as amenities and to create more livable and inviting spaces in areas where urban density was increasing. Typically, garden apartments in Tucson included lush landscaping that created an oasis-like setting in contrast with the sparse desert backdrop. Typical plant palettes included grassy lawns, broadleaf trees, and shrubs. These plants were often non-native Mediterranean species that could adapt to the desert environment (such as the Aleppo pines present within Villa del Rio). Further, they were often situated around courtyard groupings or a large open expanse shared with other units, coupled with amenities such as swimming pools or other recreational facilities (Evans 2022). Notable examples of early Tucson garden apartments include Luna Vista Apartments (1946), Los Nidos Apartments (1947), Los Patios Apartments (1948), and Terra Alta Apartments (1948) (**Figure 13**). Most of these reflected the influence of Modern architecture or the Ranch style, and all but the Terra Alta Apartments were designed by well-known Tucson architects, including Cecil Moore, Gorden Luepke, and Green and Friedman.

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Figure 13. Terra Alta Apartments, Tucson. Image courtesy of Chris Evans (2021).

While the garden apartment concept was more popular in the 1950s, its applicability expanded to condominium and townhouse communities during the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1970s, townhouses were increasingly popular as a lower cost housing model; however, they also provided a larger home than an apartment and were especially attractive to retirees. As part of this transition from garden apartments to “garden townhouses,” automobiles were incorporated into the design, particularly to accommodate senior citizens with mobility issues. The carport and garage were now included in the design and reduced the need to walk to a parking lot (Evans 2022). Additionally, the size of units grew from one-story to two-story residences, and balconies, patios, and porches were added. Because individual townhouses had their own amenities such as their own parking areas, versus shared communal amenities, common areas were reduced and large internal courtyard spaces shrank in favor of upgrading interiors of individual units and adding private courtyards.

An example of a comparable garden townhouse community from this later period is the NRHP-listed Orchard River Garden Park Townhomes (Orchard River) located in Tucson and built between 1972 and 1974 (Evans 2022). Orchard River is an outstanding example of a garden apartment in Tucson and an example of Critical Regionalism and Planar sub-types of the Modern Movement in architecture. One of the character-defining features of the complex is the landscape which integrates numerous pecan trees from a pecan orchard that existed prior to the construction of Orchard River. Similar to Villa del Rio, the complex’s architect Robert J. Swaim integrated his design with the landscape in mind. The complex features courtyard spaces intermixed with parallel

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walls of slump block masonry (**Figure 14**). Orchard River is distinctly modernist in design and feeling compared to Villa del Rio which blends modernism with old world references rooted in Gonzales's Mexican heritage (see Section 8 description of the work of Bennie Gonzales).



Figure 14. View of one of the entry courtyards at Orchard River, Tucson. Image courtesy of Annie Nequette (2021).

Similarly, Gonzales designed two other multi-family townhouse complexes during the late 1960s and early 1970s that pre-date Villa del Rio and served as inspiration for Villa del Rio's design, including Casa del Northern in Phoenix built between 1966 and 1968 and Casitas de Castilian in Tucson built between 1966 and 1974. Both present clean modernist lines with references to Mexican haciendas, with buildings surrounded by lush grassy lawns and mediterranean plantings (both properties are listed in the NRHP [Murray 2022 and Levstik 2021]).

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Figure 15. Overview of Unit 8 within Casa del Northern in Phoenix. Image courtesy of Vincent Murray (2022).

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Figure 16. An example of a 1968 unit at Casitas de Castilian, Tucson. Image courtesy of Jennifer Levstik (2021).

While Villa del Rio is located within Tucson’s Catalina Foothills, it was not the first townhouse community developed in this area. The first townhouse development was the Catalina Townhouses (1966–1967), and the first condominium development was the Catalina Foothills Condominiums, which began as apartments but was later converted to condominiums to take advantage of the new law (1963). Both complexes were developed by John W. Murphey with his wife Helen G. Murphey, who owned and developed more than 7,000 acres of land in Tucson’s Catalina Foothills, and were designed by architect Wørner Baz, with landscape design by Taro Akutagawa (Levstik 2015 and 2020; City of Tucson 2019 [Figure 17]). Catalina Foothills Estates Apartments and Catalina Townhouses were a physical expression of the Murphey’s vision for the foothills. The Murphey’s had deed restrictions on their property that required utilization of the surrounding native landscape, low slung buildings to not obstruct the views of the mountains, and a design palette that referenced both indigenous and Mexican design elements. Villa del Rio also utilized some of the same planning devices of its predecessors and the Murphey’s architects, such as the garden apartment concept and construction of luxury dwellings designed by a noted architect, also of Mexican ancestry (Levstik 2015).

Additionally, Villa del Rio is representational of the design shift towards the preference of many of Tucson’s wealthier residents—most of whom resided in the foothills—that wanted modern luxuries but with old world charm that referenced Tucson’s cultural past; a past that architects like Juan Wørner Baz and Bennie Gonzales understood well. While both shared similarities, Baz’s

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style, what he coined as Colonial Modern, was more referential to the tastes of his benefactors, the Murphey's, while Gonzales played with modernist forms in unique ways that defied definition as a single recognizable architectural style.



Figure 17. Detail view of landscaping with statues and housing unit in background, Catalina Foothills Estates Apartments, Tucson. Image courtesy of Jennifer Levstik (2015).

When construction began in October of 1972, the project consisted of a projected 400 homes with prices starting at \$45,000, which was commensurate with the cost of a modestly priced single-family home in the foothills. As noted in the local press, the residential development was to be built in three phases, would have an extensive “green belt,” zero lot lines, a recreation complex with swimming pool and clubhouse, and homes placed to achieve “maximum openness and usability of lot space” (ADS 12 October 1972). Although Villa del Rio ultimately was more modest in scale than what was projected at the start of 1972, what the community lost in density it made up for with exclusivity. Based on advertisements in the local newspaper, words like “discerning,” “choosey,” and “hard to please” frequently appeared in early advertisements for Villa del Rio, coupled with suggestions that the community was ideal for “fussy people, who are accustomed only to the best” (Figures 18 and 19). These early marketing campaigns made Villa del Rio synonymous with luxury. Over the next four years, marketing of Villa del Rio shifted focus to the unique design feature of no shared or common walls between residences, which was (and is) a typical attribute of townhouse design. Later advertisements (1977–1979) also began to tout the energy efficiency of newly constructed units, noting that the new models had an “energy-efficient total insulation package.” While it was never clear what that energy efficient package entailed, it

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is evident that the environmental movement that was gaining momentum across the United States in the 1970s was also reflected in the design and marketing of Villa del Rio.

Criterion C: Architecture

By 1979, a total of 156 residential units had been constructed, each offering a variety of amenities such as quarry tile entries, marble tubs, showers and vanities, covered patios and privacy walls, “luminous kitchen ceilings,” built-in kitchen cabinetry and appliances, atriums, vaulted ceilings, formal dining areas with separate breakfast areas, and acres of lush landscaping, along with park-like recreation areas. By 1977, all proposed future units had sold out. and by 1978 and 1979, unit prices ranged from \$56,900 to \$69,000—a marked increase in cost per square foot from the 1973 units (Samuels 2011).

Archival sources reveal varying opinions on the architectural style of Villa del Rio. For example, in a 1974 home and garden section of the Tucson Citizen, the townhouses are described as “contemporary territorial,” while newspaper advertisements describe “homes of intriguing Spanish design” (Tucson Citizen 25 July 1974; ADS 27 May 1973) and more recent reports describe the complex as “postmodern desert design” (Clinco 2021). Gonzales’s style often cannot be easily defined; his work has always been deeply rooted in indigenous and Mexican materials and forms but approached with a modernist lens. At Villa del Rio, aspects of all the styles (or forms) mentioned above are apparent. The community’s layered boxy forms, square window openings, and flat or low-pitched roofs with shed-style porch overhangs—all of which are designed with flat expanses of square, rectangular, and sloped wall planes; little to no ornamentation; few fenestrations; and an overall clean, uncluttered aesthetic—reference Gonzales’s modernist aesthetic, while exposed vigas and rafter ends, cluster arrangements, courtyard walls, and clay roof tiles are a homage to Arizona’s indigenous and Mexican history.

Apart from the clay roof tiles, Villa del Rio is more referential to Arizona and New Mexico’s indigenous Puebloan communities. The boxy layered or stacked appearance with few fenestrations, flat or sloped roof forms, and cluster arrangements are a modern reference to a Pueblo as seen on the Hopi Mesas in Arizona or in Taos, New Mexico. Further, the use of Gonzales’s signature “Navajo White” paint color is another homage to the state’s indigenous communities (even if the Navajo did not build Pueblos). While parsing out the exact style or terminology to describe Gonzales’s work at Villa del Rio may be up for interpretation, what is abundantly clear is that his name was used to sell Villa del Rio. Every advertisement proudly attributed the project to him in hopes of increasing sales (ADS 16 November 1975) (**Figures 20–21a–e**).

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GRAND OPENING

The Colorful Life is here.

Green — lush park areas with beautifully landscaped paths and lagoons connecting every home with a neighborhood recreation center.

Yellow — Arizona's golden sun giving color to the clean white Spanish textured stucco. And all the golden sunsets and goodness of life at Villa del Rio.

Orange — the sunsets... flowers... warmth and glow from the fireplace of a conversation pit — an atmosphere of easy sociability.

Blue — inviting centers of sparkling swimming pools... the watchless care of Arizona skies... the serenity of desert living.

Purple — shadows... the evening hours... and changing colors of surrounding majestic mountains.

Red — Spanish life of the Villa del Rio homes, all distinctively designed by Benito Gonzalez — one of Arizona's leading architects.

Villa del Rio makes other places seem drab.

And now it can all be yours. The colorful life. Homes of intriguing Spanish design. Quarry tile entries. Marble shower and tub walls and marble vanity tops. Covered patios and private patio walls. Luminous kitchen ceilings. Kitchen built-ins and appliances. Carpeting. Plenty of storage and closet space. So much, you must see for yourself.

See it all — inside and out. Acres of landscaped parks free of maintenance. Paseo walkways. Recreation centers at every turn. Swimming pools. The famous Tack Room Resort and future Tennis Club just across the way. And all just 20 minutes from downtown Tucson.

Come see the colorful life we promised you!

2910 N. Salinas Canyon Road
from \$39,900 — proudly presented by Ponderosa Homes,
division of **KAISER** PIMA

VILLA DEL RIO

Figure 18. 1973 Advertisement for Villa del Rio. ADS 27 May 1973.

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**ARE YOU
HARD TO
PLEASE?**

Villa del Rio was designed for fussy people, people who are accustomed to only the finest.

So, if only a magnificent two, three, or four-bedroom home will tickle your fancy, you'll fancy a Villa del Rio home.

If nothing less than breathtaking viewsites, rambling paseos, fabulous landscaping and green belts, plus outstanding recreational facilities, is your cup of tea, Villa del Rio is your brand of living.

If you enjoy playing tennis, entertaining friends on your private patio, swimming, or just plain relaxing, Villa del Rio puts it all together for you.

For those who are satisfied with something less, there's a great selection elsewhere. But, for those who want the greatest lifestyle in Arizona, there's only one answer: Villa del Rio.

Sabino Canyon Road.
Phone (602) 886-0374

VILLA DEL RIO
by PONDEROSA HOMES



From \$45,000



7.75% Annual Percentage Rate available to qualified buyers.

Figure 19. 1974 Advertisement for Villa del Rio. ADS 10 February 1974.

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Figure 20. 1975 Advertisement of Villa del Rio. ADS 16 November 1975.

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Figures 21a–e. Villa del Rio construction overviews, overview of pool house pergola, and interior shots of residential units shortly after initial construction in 1973. Above six images courtesy of Robert Frankeberger and the Arizona SHPO.

The Architecture of Bennie Gonzales (1924—2008)

Barnaby Montague Gonzales was born in Phoenix, Arizona, on June 11, 1924 (Housley 2018) (**Figure 22**). He called his heritage “Arizona Pot Pouri.” His father, Francisco Gonzales, was German/Native American/Mexican; his mother, Guadalupe Montague, was French/Irish/Mexican (Arizona Highways [AH] 1975:35). His early childhood was spent on a family farm south of Phoenix’s downtown in the presence of family members who were involved in construction trades. At the age of eight, following the death of his father, his family relocated near relatives in east Phoenix, an area he described as a “Mexican Town,” where “all the adobe workers, bricklayers and plasterers lived” (Haver 2021). Gonzales’s uncle, Santiago L. (S. L.) Cahill, ran an adobe brick factory and would regularly take his young nephew to construction sites. The architect credits this experience for igniting an early appreciation for architecture and building processes (Lorig 1996:5). In an interview about his architectural legacy and influences, Gonzales remarked: “... I still like adobe. I think it's my favorite... I was making mud pies with the workers when they were making the adobes. So, it was a natural inherited deal and a lot of it came from my uncle's talks with me about what architects should do... A lot of that stuck with me” (Lorig 1996: 21). His uncle worked as a contractor and contributed to the construction of several iconic Phoenix landmarks, including the Heard Museum, Paradise Inn, Camelback Inn, and the Arizona Biltmore (Haver 2021). Cahill was a mentor for Gonzales, encouraging him to go into architectural practice and frequently bringing him to job sites (AH 1975:35; Haver 2021). During one of these visits, Gonzales helped pour concrete into wooden forms for the

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construction of the Arizona Biltmore, which was designed by the McArthur Brothers, who were mentored by Frank Lloyd Wright (Lorig 1996:7).



Figure 22. Portrait of Bennie Gonzales at his home. Image courtesy of Modern Phoenix.

After graduating from Phoenix Union High School, Gonzales enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard in 1942, at which time the recruiter reportedly convinced him to permanently change his name to “Bennie” (Haver 2021; Housley 2018). Upon his return home to Phoenix after service in 1946, Gonzales enrolled at the Industrial Arts program at Arizona State University (ASU) and graduated from the new architecture program in 1954 (ADS 15 April 1959:6; Labriola 2020; Lorig 1996:5). Gonzales credits ASU professor William Ensign and noted regional architect James Elmore, who was director of the school at the time of accreditation, as early mentors (Lorig 1996:5). During his time at ASU, Gonzales also worked as a firefighter in Phoenix, an experience which he said taught him about the flammable nature of wood in contrast to the fire-resistant characteristics of adobe and concrete blocks (Lorig 1996:24).

The year after graduation in 1955, Gonzales went to Mexico City on a scholarship to pursue post-graduate architectural studies at the University of Mexico, an experience which would greatly

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impact his design philosophy. During his year of studies, he was exposed to the architecture of Mexican pueblos and Maya and Aztec ruins (Lorig 1996:21). Describing the experience, Gonzales stated, “I’ve been influenced... by Mexican pueblos or Mexican ruins... because their nomenclature was pretty much what we still do today; only the Aztecs did it better” (Lorig 1996:21). According to Gonzales, his perception of architecture before traveling had always been from the eyes of a builder; he also said that: “the Mexican architect was a lot looser than the American architect, who was bound by all of the building codes. The Mexican architect was considered more of an artist than a builder-type of a person” (Wooley 1997).

Gonzales’s time in Mexico came at a pivotal point in both his early career and the country’s burgeoning modernist architectural movement of the late 1950s and 1960s, a movement emphatically embraced in Mexico City by early practitioners Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier (Fraser 2000). Outside of Mexico, European and American architects sought to create a new architectural style that would reflect modern society. During the early twentieth century, rapid technological change, including advancements in industrial design and structural engineering, resulted in buildings designed to follow function and free of superfluous ornamentation. This principle formed the basis of what would later be known as Modernist or International-style architecture. These concepts manifested themselves in glass curtain walls, steel columns, low-pitched roofs, smooth wall surfaces, flat projecting planes, and lack of decoration. While steel was a popular material in the Modern Movement, in Mexico, steel was expensive, not readily available, and required a skilled workforce. As such, Mexican architects chose masonry and concrete for their modernist designs. The result was often minimalist buildings that were massive in scale, or “heavy,” while simultaneously incorporating landscape and water features to soften their appearance. Further, Mexico’s Modernist Movement saw the use of bright colors; projecting planes; concrete domes, or “thin shells;” and the use of graphic imagery referencing their pre-Hispanic past. Undoubtedly these factors had an influence on Gonzales’s future designs and are readily visible not only within Villa del Rio but in the architectural designs he created throughout his career.

Upon returning to Phoenix from Mexico City in 1956, Gonzales worked as an apprentice for Blaine Drake and launched his career as an architect and builder (Housley 2018). Notably, Drake had served as an apprentice for Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, Wisconsin, and established an international reputation for his work and advocacy for energy-efficient design (Housley 2020). Gonzales credits his association with Drake for informing his interest in designing within the constraints of the environment (Lorig 1996:6). Gonzales found success working on small-scale residential and commercial projects in the Phoenix metro area, and by 1958, he was able to establish his own architectural practice, officially incorporating in 1960 under the name Bennie M. Gonzales Associates Incorporated, or BGA (Housley 2018).

The work that helped launch his reputation for regional-modernist sensibilities was the Nogales Public Library, for which he won an American Institute of Architects (AIA) First Honor Award in 1963. The building utilized Aztec White-washed adobe brick with arcs and wide angles to create the feeling of spaciousness. The library is an early example of what would come to be recognized as Gonzales’s style, utilizing forms and components of traditional indigenous and Mexican adobe

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structures within a modernist visual lexicon. As his biographer Johanna Haver (2021) put it, Gonzales became known for manipulating “unusual masses and dimensions into functional structures” (Haver 2021).

Over time, Gonzales developed a reputation for a judicious use of building materials “based on their durability, accessibility and appropriateness to their environment” (Housley 2018). Light-colored paint, for example, is an asset in the arid Southwest because of its utility in reflecting solar radiation. Gonzales regularly employed a custom off-white paint, Aztec White, as the wash on his block buildings (Lorig 1996:24). Aztec White is a lighter version of Navajo White, which was also used by Gonzales; however, according to interviews with Gonzales, Navajo White originates from work on Los Quatros Condominiums in Scottsdale (Lorig 1996:25; Patterson 1981), while Aztec White possesses a lighter tone and was first used on the Scottsdale Civic Center (Lorig 1996:25). He described the two paint colors thusly:

I just happened to be walking by [Los Quatros Condominiums] and there was a piece of old newspaper that had yellowed. I asked [the clients and contractor], ‘How about this color?’ ...The manager of the paint company said, ‘This is yellow. It’s not like you can go into Wal-Mart and get it. What are we going to call this color?’ I said, ‘Let’s call it Navajo White.’ That’s how that color came to be. When we painted the Scottsdale Civic Center, we used an off-white color and one of the guys said, ‘Are we going to use Navajo White here?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘This is a lighter white.’ He said, ‘What do you want to call it, how about Aztec White?’ That’s the name that stuck with that one” (Lorig 1996:25).

Additionally, Gonzales frequently used adobe brick, or “Superlite,” concrete block in his buildings, which further served to keep interiors cool during the intense heat of summer (Lorig 1996:24). Other signatures of Gonzales’s work are open floor plans and the absence of 90-degree angles. According to colleague and Scottsdale architect David Ortega, “he favored much wider angles that opened up space” (Nolan 2008). Wide, arched windows and tapered columns are also a characteristic feature in his work and were used to give an optical lift to his block structures (Housley 2018).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, BGA designed many municipal buildings in Scottsdale and worked on a multitude of residences, churches, and public buildings throughout Arizona. Notable projects include the Scottsdale Civic Center, Cotton Hotel in Phoenix, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Paradise Valley, and a large-scale renovation of the Heard Museum in Phoenix. Gonzales received broad acclaim for his impact on Arizona architecture and became a Fellow of the AIA in 1976 (Housley 2018).

Before retiring in 1985, Gonzales’s firm took the national stage with their work on the Woodlands Visitor Center in Texas and internationally with projects such as the Los Sabalos Condominium and Hotel Complex in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico (Housley 2018). He retired in 1985 after winning over 100 architectural and design awards and moved to Nogales, Arizona. After a lengthy illness, he died on November 20, 2008, in the company of family (ADS 2008).

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Robert Russell Frankeberger, Architect (1937–2023)

Robert Russell Frankeberger was an American architect born on July 20, 1937, in Freeport, Illinois, to Russell Earl Frankeberger and Genevieve Evans (**Figure 23**). Following his birth, the family moved to the Dakotas and eventually to Phoenix, Arizona, in 1943. He attended North High School in Phoenix and graduated from ASU's School of Architecture in 1961 with a bachelor's degree in architecture. After graduating from college, he joined the military, serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1961 to 1962. He was stationed in Germany where he obtained a rank of sergeant (The Arizona Republic [AR] 2024; Prabook 2021).



Figure 23. Portrait of Robert Frankeberger (AR 21 December 1975:5).

After serving his country, Frankeberger obtained work as a draftsman at Ralph Haver, Architect in Phoenix. He worked there from 1962 to 1964. In 1964, he moved over to Defial and Miller, Architects (Phoenix) where he worked until 1965, at which point he obtained employment as a draftsman and designer at BGA, which later became Gonzales Associates, Inc. On September 1, 1967, Frankeberger married Jean Marshall Ross, a native of Manchester, England, who had come to America in response to the United States' call for nurses in 1963. They had two daughters, Nicole Jean and Lisa Jane (AR 2021, 2024; Prabook 2021).

By 1969, Frankeberger was the principal architect at Gonzales Associates, Inc. It was during his tenure at Gonzales Associates, Inc., that he became involved with the Villa del Rio residential

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project (Prabook 2021). According to an interview with Frankeberger, while at a restaurant with Gonzales, Gonzales was inspired to sketch out his plans for Villa del Rio on a napkin; upon completion of the sketch, he passed the napkin across the table to Frankeberger who was tasked with creating the necessary architectural drawings (email correspondence between William Collins, NRHP Program Coordinator, Arizona SHPO, and Demion Clinco, June 4, 2021). It is highly probable that this event occurred at Durant's, the legendary Phoenix restaurant at which Frankeberger had his own booth (AR 2024).

In 1973, Frankeberger opened his own architectural firm, Frankeberger and Associates, Inc. (Prabook 2021). In 1975 he designed the First National Bank of Arizona in Carefree, Arizona. It was for this building he coined the term "Mexican Colonial." The building was designed with basic Tuscan columns that Mexican colonists once used extensively (AR 6 July 1975:K14). Frankeberger was also selected to be the chief advisor for the Heritage Square Project in Phoenix. This project was conceived in the early 1970s, when urban renewal threatened to destroy the Rosson house, an 1895 Queen Ann Victorian for which Phoenix mayor John Driggs had a particular fondness. A \$200,000 Housing and Urban Development grant allowed Phoenix to save the Rosson house, as well as nine other buildings: five bungalows, two carriage houses, a duplex, and a machine shop. Heritage Square opened on May 4, 1980, and is the last remnant of the original Phoenix townsite platted in 1870. In 1996, the square expanded with the addition of the Arizona Science Center and thus became the Heritage and Science Park (Towne 2013). In his role as advisor, Frankeberger designed a 22,800-square-foot pavilion, known as the Lath House, intended to anchor the northeast corner of the property and to provide a public space where income-producing activities could occur (Vinson n.d.). Frankenberg won an AIA National Honor Award for the Lath House in 1982 (AR 2024; Patterson 1982; Vinson n.d.).

In 1987 he won the AIA Western Mountain Region Award for Excellence in Architecture for his renovations of the Trinity Church in Phoenix (Patterson 1987). A year later, in 1988, he received AIA's Excellence in Architecture awards for his renovation work on Trinity Episcopal Church in Phoenix and for his ecologically sensitive Red Mountain Ranch Visitor's Center in Mesa, Arizona (Historical League, Inc. 1997).

Frankeberger was a member of the AIA's urban design committee from 1978; the president of the Professional Advisory Council, College of Architecture, Arizona State University from 1982; and the director of the Rosson House-Heritage Square Foundation from 1980. He was also listed as a notable architect in Marquis' Who's Who (Prabook 2021) and worked at the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (AR 2024) as the state architect between 1995 and 2017. Frankeberger died December 18, 2023.

While Frankeberger was only involved in one of Gonzales's projects in Tucson, Villa del Rio represents one of four projects completed by Gonzales in the city during his career. The project also represents a shift in Gonzales's career, when his work and influence were spreading beyond the geography of the Phoenix metropolitan area and onto a broader southwestern stage. Gonzales's other Tucson works include the William D. Bakrows residence in Forty Niners Country Club Estates (1968 [not accessible for photographs; gated community]), Casitas de Castilian

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Condominiums (1966–1974 [listed in the NRHP in 2022], see **Figure 16**), St. Pius X Catholic Church (1972 (**Figure 24**), and La Quinta Apartments (1972 [demolished]). The Villa del Rio townhouse project represents both the last Tucson project completed by Gonzales and one of two remaining multi-family communities he designed in Tucson. Moreover, Villa del Rio represents a well-preserved example of post-war multi-family housing trends in Tucson.



Figure 24. Overview of main entrance at St. Pius X Church, Tucson. Image courtesy of <https://stpiusxtucson.org>.

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Villa del Rio Historic District
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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): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 30.73

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 12 | Easting: 51500 | Northing: 3569543 |
| 2. Zone: 12 | Easting: 514999 | Northing: 3569299 |
| 3. Zone: 12 | Easting: 515518 | Northing: 3569456 |
| 4. Zone: 12 | Easting: 515451 | Northing: 3569240 |

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

The Villa del Rio community is located along North Sabino Canyon Road, Tucson, Pima County, Arizona. The district is in Section 32, Township 13 South, Range 15 East, as shown on the Sabino Canyon USGS 7.5' topographic quadrangle. As the community's name implies, it is part of the Villa del Rio subdivision Lots 1 to 148 (1972) and Villa del Rio subdivision Lots 151 to 164 (1977). The community is bounded by the River Ranch subdivision on the north, the Vactor Ranch subdivision to the south, N. Sabino Canyon Road to the west, and an unknown subdivision to the east (see **Figure 1**)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the entire Villa del Rio subdivision as platted in 1972 and 1977 and all buildings, structures, and landscape features located within the boundaries as designed by Bennie Gonzales.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jennifer Levstik (Architectural Historian) and Grant Fahrni (Historian)

organization: WestLand Resources

street & number: 4001 East Paradise Falls Drive

city or town: Tucson state: Arizona zip code: 85712

e-mail jlevstik@westlandresources.com

telephone: 520-206-9585

date: December 1, 2025; Revised February 10, 2026

Villa del Rio Historic District
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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: Villa del Rio Historic District

City or Vicinity: Tucson

County: Pima

State: Arizona

Photographer: Grant Fahrni

Date Photographed: March 12, 2025

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

(20 photographs)

Photograph 1. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan A at 7360 E.Cascada Circle built in 1978. View facing southwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_001])

Photograph 2. Typical two-story unit representative of Floor Plan C at 7166 E. Chorro Circle built in 1973. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_002])

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Photograph 3. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan B along Camino del Rio and E. Cascada Circle built in 1973. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025

[AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_003])

Photograph 4. Overview looking down E. Chorro Circle and Camino del Rio showing Floor Plans A, C, and D (Plan D is to right of frame). View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025

[AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_004])

Photograph 5. Overview of north elevation of the pool complex along Camino del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_005])

Photograph 6. Overview of interior of the pool complex showing pergola into the north pool area and one of two changing rooms to the south. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_006])

Photograph 7. Overview of interior of the library within the pool complex. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_007])

Photograph 8. Overview of the north pool and changing room within the pool complex. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_008])

Photograph 9. Overview of the jacuzzi within the pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_009])

Photograph 10. Overview of the south pool within the pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_010])

Photograph 11. Overview of the tennis courts. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_011])

Photograph 12. Overview of pocket park behind pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_012])

Photograph 13. Dolphin sculpture in pocket park. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_013])

Photograph 14. Overview of pocket park along Camino del Rio. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_014])

Photograph 15. Overview of greenway south of Camino del Rio. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_015])

Photograph 16. Entry monument sign for Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_016])

Photograph 17. Example of original street signage at Villa del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_017])

Photograph 18. Detail of a typical two-globe streetlamp at Villa del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_018])

Photograph 19. Typical mailbox and lamp per each residence. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_019])

Photograph 20. Example of guest parking at Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_020])



- Legend**
- Name
- Streetlight
 - Single Mailbox
 - Multiple Mailboxes
 - Abandoned Mailbox
 - Wall Sign
 - Street Sign
 - ▭ Villa del Rio Boundary
 - ▨ Greenway
 - ▨ Guest Parking
 - ▨ Park
 - ▨ Walking Path
- Year Built
- 1973
 - 1974
 - 1977
 - 1978
 - 1979

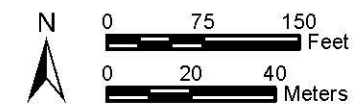


Image Sources: Maxar: 2/20/2024
 Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 12N

VILLA DEL RIO NRHP Nomination

AERIAL OVERVIEW

Figure 2

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 1. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan A at 7360 E. Casada Circle built in 1978. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_001])

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 2. Typical two-story unit representative of Floor Plan C at 7166 E. Chorro Circle built in 1973. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_002])

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Photograph 3. Typical one-story unit representative of Floor Plan B along Camino del Rio and E. Cascada Circle built in 1973. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_003])

Villa del Rio Historic District
Name of Property

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Photograph 4. Overview looking down E. Chorro Circle and Camino del Rio showing Floor Plans A, C, and D (Plan D is to right of frame). View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_004])

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Photograph 5. Overview of north elevation of the pool complex along Camino del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_005])

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Photograph 6. Overview of interior of the pool complex showing pergola into the north pool area and one of two changing rooms to the south. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_006])

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Photograph 7. Overview of interior of the recreation room within the pool complex. View facing northwest (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_007])

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Photograph 8. Overview of the north pool and changing room within the pool complex. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_008])

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Photograph 9. Overview of the jacuzzi within the pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_009])

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Photograph 10. Overview of the south pool within the pool complex. View facing north
(WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_010])

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Photograph 11. Overview of the tennis courts. View facing southeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_011])

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 12. Overview of pocket park behind pool complex. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_012])

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 13. Dolphin sculpture in pocket park. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_013])

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Photograph 14. Overview of pocket park along Camino del Rio. View facing northeast (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_014])

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 15. Overview of greenway south of Camino del Rio. View facing south (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_015])

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Photograph 16. Entry monument sign for Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_016])

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Photograph 17. Example of original street signage at Villa del Rio. View facing north
(WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_017])

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Photograph 18. Detail of a typical two-globe streetlamp at Villa del Rio. View facing north (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_018])

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Photograph 19. Typical mailbox and lamp per each residence. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_019])

Villa del Rio Historic District
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Photograph 20. Example of guest parking at Villa del Rio. View facing east (WestLand Resources 2025 [AZ_PimaCounty_VilladelRio_020])