

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 PropertyHistoric name: Casa Bonita ApartmentsOther names/site number: Casa Bonita Condominiums/Casa Bonita

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A**2. Location**Street & number: 7340-7350 N. Ridge BlvdCity or town: Chicago State: Illinois County: 60645Not 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 ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B X C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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

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

Category of Property

- Building(s) ☒
- ☐

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

District

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Cook, IL

County and State

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

0

buildings

1

0

sites

0

0

structures

0

0

objects

2

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Spanish Revival-Renaissance

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation-concrete

Walls- cream colored terra cotta, brick

Roof- terra cotta, modified bitumen

Other: windows-metal/steel, steps-stone/marble, sconces- metal/wrought iron

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Casa Bonita Apartments is a U-shaped courtyard building located at 7340-7350 North Ridge Boulevard in Chicago. Architects Alexander V. Capraro and Morris L. Komar designed the structure in an early 20th century expression of the Spanish Revival-Renaissance Architecture. The flat-roofed building rises three stories over a raised basement. Constructed of concrete and brick and completed in 1928, Casa Bonita is clad in cream-colored ashlar laid terra cotta with white, turquoise, and pale green terra ornate details including cherubs, flower motifs, faces, figures, animals, and medallions. The primary north, south and the setback east facades overlook a beautifully landscaped sunken courtyard that features an original reflecting pool. The building retains its original steel casement

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

windows, oak and glass entry doors, and many fine interior details such as terrazzo and patterned tilework. Casa Bonita was converted from rental to condominiums in the 1974. None of its 66 units were altered in the transition. Today, the historical courtyard building retains excellent integrity.

This nomination includes one contributing building and one contributing site (courtyard).

Narrative Description

SETTING AND SITE

The Casa Bonita Apartments is located at 7340-7350 N. Ridge Boulevard in Chicago's West Ridge community area (also known as West Rogers Park), a quiet residential neighborhood situated three blocks south of the Evanston border. N. Ridge Boulevard is tree-lined two-laned street with parking on each side. On its south side, Casa Bonita closely abuts another apartment structure. Directly along its north side, a walkway extends along the outer north façade to the rear of the building. On the other side of the north fenceline, a wide driveway stretches along the south end of the former St. Scholastica High School. The west side is a back alleyway.

Casa Bonita stands on the west side of the street. U-shaped in plan, the building is comprised of long north and south wings with the bottom of the U at the west end of the deep lot. Because N. Ridge Boulevard angles subtly to the southeast (looking south) near the courtyard entrance, the building's south wing is slightly longer than the north wing, and its outer east façade has two projections that follow the angle of the street. (The north wing is 303' deep and the south wing is 332' deep.)

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

The courtyard structure has four primary entryways—two on the north wing and two on the south wing. The building's 66 units are divided into ten tiers (eight front tiers with six apartments each, and two back tiers with nine apartments each.) The two sets of front doors lead from the sunken courtyard to a u-shaped lobby which is connected to all ten tiers on the ground floor. A tier staircase will then access groups of apartments. There are no other apartment connections on upper floors. All the apartments on the north and south wings have secondary exits that lead to rear courts and staircases. The units at the western end of the building (bottom of the U) have rear porches and staircases that lead to backyards and to the rear surface parking lot and alley.

Along N. Ridge Boulevard, a city sidewalk stretches north-south across the front of the building's primary outer east façades. A short perpendicular sidewalk crosses the parkway and extends westerly between the outer ends of the north and south wings. Aligning the center of the courtyard, this sidewalk leads to an opening flanked by matching white terra cotta balustrades that rise from a pale turquoise water table. Each balustrade has an outer post that is topped by an iron and art-glass light fixture. A matching terra cotta staircase curves out and descends via five curved concrete steps leading to the sunken courtyard. Shallow matching terra cotta planter urns sit atop a post at the outer end of each staircase rail.

Sunken Courtyard

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The sunken courtyard, which measures 40' x 176', features a Mediterranean Revival style landscape and is symmetrically laid out. The court has a center formal lawn divided into two panels by a short walkway. The center court is edged by a U-shaped outer walkway and planted beds of shrubs and flowers. The centerpiece of the longer western lawn panel is a reflecting pool. Constructed of concrete, the pool is essentially rectangular in plan with curved areas at its corners and at the center. In

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

the curved center area, an original white figurative Goddess sculpture with an urn that drips water from her shoulder, tops a circular base. Edged with natural-looking stone, this base serves as a planter. The outer east and west ends of the reflecting pool also serve as planters for various flowers and ground covers.

The courtyard currently includes trimmed trees and hedges, that reinforce the formality of the space. Perennial flowers, hydrangea shrubs, small areas of naturalistic limestone pavers, a pair of smaller concrete urns with plantings, and several lanterns enhance the outdoor court, which is maintained by the residents. Plans of the original landscaping have not been located.

On the far west end of the sunken courtyard, at the bottom of the U, the terra cotta-clad raised basement façade includes a fountain with a projecting rectangular outer basin and two engaged curved upper basins. Additional description is provided for these elements below.

EXTERIOR PRIMARY FACADES

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All the building's primary facades feature cream-colored ashlar-laid terra cotta with fanciful terra cotta details in white, turquoise, and pale green. The terra cotta was manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company (order 27153, year 1927). The building stands three stories over a raised basement that stands atop a continuous pale turquoise water table. The stature of apartment structure is heightened by various parapets and several square cupolas that rise above the roofline. At regular intervals, the parapet has shallow pitched stretches of red Spanish tile. The cupola roofs are clad in the same red tile. Original multipaned steel casement windows stretch across all facades.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

East Street (Outer) Facades

The street facades (outer east) of the north and south wings are similar though not identical to one another. Both facades are divided into five bays. However, the north wing's outer east façade has shallow projections and recessions, while the longer south wing's street façade features much deeper projections, allowing for larger interior spaces and the inclusion of additional windows on some of the bays. At the raised basement level, the innermost bay of each street facing façade features a shallow white terra cotta niche, with a lion head in relief beneath the keystone. At several of the other bays, rectangular window openings stand atop the water table and have elaborate white terra cotta surrounds.

A formed terra cotta belt course stretches across the facades (outer east) between the raised basement and first story levels. This continuous horizontal element serves as a sill for the tall first story windows. Above the belt course, the first through third stories of both street facades are embellished with ornate Spanish Revival style details. For example, each center bay is comprised of three tall steel casement windows flanked by engaged twisted columns. Above the columns, the third story window openings are each topped by an arched terra cotta hood. Beneath the third and second story windows, white terra cotta spandrels are each enlivened by a cartouche in the form of a shield with a Spanish cross. Because the south wing's outer east façade has deeper projections, the center bay includes single windows at the corner of the projection with matching twisted columns and decorative spandrels.

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A difference between the two street facades is that on the south wing, the fourth bay from the center courtyard is quite narrow and topped by a square cupola which has a trio of blind arches. In contrast, the fourth bay from the center of the north wing's outer façade is much wider and features trios of windows divided by Doric columns with X-shaped ornamentation and tall outer pilasters. The south side third story window is topped by elaborate ornamentation in relief with three foliate

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

shields divided by four vertical elements. This bay is topped by a Mission style parapet with a center medallion flanked by smaller foliate elements. The curved parapet is flanked by flat terra cotta posts with tall vertical terra cotta elements topped by finials. Intervals of the red Spanish tile pitched portions of the parapet stretch between the posts and cupola.

The innermost (adjacent to courtyard entry) street façade bays are identical to one another. Each has a tower-like structure and is topped by a square cupola with a corbelled cornice and red Spanish tile roof. Above the coping that separates the raised basement from the upper levels, an ornate surround forms a frame around the first through third story windows. This heavily ornamented frame is comprised of fanciful white terra cotta foliage, shields, lion heads, and other small details in relief. The spandrels are simple geometric shapes. Above the third story window, a round blind arch is filled with squares of pale green terra cotta. Each side of the top of the arch is decorated by a medallion with an engaged bust. The frame is topped by a frieze with a shield and wreath flanked by a pair of griffins. Above the frieze, the cupola's opening also has an elaborate terra cotta frame.

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North and South Courtyard Facades

The courtyard facing primary north and south facades are mirror images of one another. Each long façade is divided by a pattern of recessions and projections at regular intervals. Each of the street facades wrap around the corner and the decorative treatment of the tower-like ends are repeated at the easternmost portions of the north and south facades. From here, the inner courtyard facades extend west to the balustrades and sunken area. Each of these long primary facades is divided into bays by four narrow recessions. On each side, the two entryway vestibules are centered on the raised basement level of the longer bays between the first and second and third and fourth recessed bays.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

The four recessed areas provide space for interior staircases and hallway landings for each of the upper stories. In addition to allowing for side windows on the adjacent projecting bays, these recessed bays include windows at half levels between the raised basement and first story, first and second stories, and second and third stories. For the lower-level window, the molded belt course forms a label hood mold above the rectangular casement. The middle window is also a rectangular casement, while the upper window opening is a tall rectangle with a rounded arch top—the entire arched window filled with divided lights. The uppermost windows in the recessions are topped with ornate flat hood molds that have vertical corbels, and finial-like upper elements.

On the north wing's raised basement level, the entryways provide inner vestibules for 7350 N. Ridge Blvd. (front) and 7348 Ridge Blvd. (back). The south wing includes the entry vestibules for 7344 N. Ridge Blvd. (back) and 7340 N. Ridge Blvd. (front). Within the sunken courtyard at the raised basement level, each entryway features a pair of oak doors filled with divided glass lights and flanked by matching sidelights. The doors and sidelights are slightly set back. They have lavish terra cotta surrounds that include caryatid pilasters crowned by engaged Ionic volutes, and corbels with ram's heads, foliage, and shells. Above the corbels, a curved broken pediment has a fanciful cartouche flanked by wavelike ornamentation. On each side of the doorway, a large casement window stands above the turquoise water table. Each of these side windows is flanked by a pair of twisted columns and topped by a foliated hood mold.

On the facades' first through third stories, the treatment of each bay between the narrow recessions is identical. In the center of each of these longer bays, a niche-like recession stretches vertically to the top of the third story. These niches formerly held Moorish lamps. A small iron lantern is tucked at the bottom of this space above the belt course that separates the raised basement from the first story. At the raised basement level, either the entryway's center cartouche, or a curved decorative ledge

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

for plants crowned by bas relief figures with cherub faces and muscular adult bodies, is located directly beneath the lantern.

Each of the tall arched niche-like recessions has a narrow, spiraled frame that follows the arch on top. On each side of the arched recession, a flat white vertical stripe is topped by a more ornate finial-like element in relief. Flanking the niche-like recessions are trios of windows divided by twisted columns. The groupings feature a wider arrangement of casement windows in the center with a narrow casement window on each side. Each of the spandrels beneath the third and second story center window openings has a cartouche as its centerpiece. Above the third story window openings, an elaborate hood mold features an architrave with a Spanish Conquistador in a medallion, a corbelled frieze, and a curved pediment with a shield between two griffins. At the roofline, these longer bays have parapets with curves that echo the curved pediments of the hood molds. Tall finials stand at the outer ends of each of these longer bays.

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Rear East Courtyard Facades

The rear east courtyard façade, which is essentially the bottom of the U, has two tiers. At the raised basement level, the façade serves as the west end of the courtyard. From here, the façade rises to the top of the flat swimming pool roof. Then set back, at the far west end of the roof, the remainder of the façade rises from the first story to the roofline. The units in this connecting mass between the north and south wings face east over the pool roof and towards the courtyard.

At the raised basement level, the inner east façade has shallow recessions at its north and south ends. The entire façade is clad in matching cream-colored ashlar laid terra cotta, with the same formed terra cotta belt course as found elsewhere, as its cornice. The centerpiece is an engaged terra cotta fountain with a curved lower basin topped by bas reliefs that include a half daisy-like flower, a center swagged basin—and sitting on top of this

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

basin, a pair of cherubs who flank an upper urn. Curly ribbons stream from each cherub's outer shoulder.

At the base of this facade, a low outer projecting terra cotta wall stands on the same kind of pale turquoise water table as do all the other primary elevations. This wall forms a rectangular basin for a fountain that has a series of inner sprays. The center of this low terra cotta wall is slightly taller than the outer ends. Centered in the front, a foliated festoon flanks a face in sculptural relief with a headband and curly ribbons. Foliated coping stretches across the top of the entire low terra cotta wall.

This low wall is an original terra cotta element that was repurposed into a basin as part of a major pool roof replacement project of the early 1990s. Historically, this element (except for the water table) served as the parapet atop the raised basement of this inner east façade. In its original condition, on each side of this façade, a set of concrete steps led to a wrought iron gate on the roof over the pool. These staircases and gates originally allowed residents to have access to a putting green on the pool roof level.

To undertake the long-needed roof replacement project and to address a leak in an old pipe, the parapet had to be dismantled. Working with a firm called Building Systems and Materials Consultants, and Grove Masonry, the condominium board made some minor changes to build a new roof with structural integrity and to maximize security for the units with windows opening onto the pool roof. This project included the demolition of the exterior staircases that led to the pool roof; the roof replacement; the careful disassembly of the parapet and the development of the new rectangular lower basin utilizing the parapet as its outer wall. Because several original pieces of terra cotta were damaged or missing on the raised basement facade, the project included replicating some of the cream-colored terra cotta panels. The Superior Clay Corporation of Uhrichsville, Ohio created the matching terra cotta panels.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Set way back and rising from the west side of the roof over the swimming pool to the roofline, the upper level of the inner east façade mimics the projecting bays found on the north and south courtyard facing elevations. A tall arched niche-like recession stands in the center of this elevation with a lantern at its base. As found elsewhere, the arched recession has a narrow, spiraled frame and is flanked by flat white vertical stripes topped by a finial-like element in relief. On both sides of this, the façade features the same window treatment with a center trio of windows flanked by a narrow window on each side. All the decorative elements are repeated including the spandrels which each have a center cartouche, and the elaborate hood molds which are each topped with a curved pediment embellished by two griffins and a shield.

Above the center recession, a square cupola with an arched opening is topped by a hipped roof sheathed in red Spanish tile. The flat parapet beneath the cupola features a foliated festoon. On both sides of these center elements, the parapet treatment of the similar bays on the north and south courtyard are repeated—with curves that follow the lines of the curved pedimented hood molds, each flanked by a pair of tall finials.

Secondary Facades

The building's north façade abuts a long sidewalk and fenceline. (Black metal gates enclose this space at the front and rear of the structure.) At the east end, the cream-colored ashlar laid terra cotta cladding wraps the corner and extends across a wide bay to a deep narrow court. At the raised basement level, two tall casement windows and a door are topped by white terra cotta lintels. At the first through third stories of this bay, small casement windows are sandwiched between simple white terra cotta sills and lintels. The outer ends of this bay are decorated by a pair of engaged twisted columns with urn-like tops that stretch from the belt course at the top of the raised basement to just above the second story

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

windows. Above the third story, a long stretch of the pitched Spanish tile parapet is flanked by the cream-colored terra cotta parapet posts with urn finials as found elsewhere along the roofline.

Beyond the side court, the remainder of the long north façade is clad in variegated red façade brick. This façade stands on a matching pale turquoise water table. At regular intervals, there are openings at the raised basement level leading to rectangular courts and rear staircases. Window openings at the raised basement level have been filled with glass blocks. A matching formed terra cotta belt course stretches across the red brick raised basement level.

At each of the three upper levels, the casement windows have white terra cotta sills and lintels that match those of the terra cotta-clad bay to the east. Each of the open courts has a projecting spandrel beneath the second and third stories. Each features simple brickwork and is supported by a small pair of corbels. At the roofline, simple flat red brick portions of the parapet flank pitched stretches of red Spanish tile at regular intervals.

The building's south and west facades are constructed of common brick. Original steel casement windows stretch across the brick facades at the first through third stories. On the west façade, twelve enclosed rear porches with double hung windows are clad with artificial siding. The enclosed porches, and the rear exterior stairways were remodeled and repaired in the early 1990s. This project was led by architects Alexander Associates and The Porch People.

INTERIOR

Lobby and Residents' Shared Spaces

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Casa Bonita has remarkably intact historic interior spaces. At the raised basement level, these include the four entry vestibules between the outer and inner sets of doors. Each entry vestibule measures 3' x 5' and has patterned terrazzo flooring with a large welcome mat on the floor. Made of woven strips of black metal and each featuring a flat Casa Bonita sign, the welcome mats are original features. One is intact and three have been reconstructed.

The U-shaped lobby features original terrazzo flooring with geometric patterns in turquoise, sand, and brown. The walls are painted plaster and drywall with dark stained wood moldings. From the lobby, a corridor connects the north and south side of the building. This is a unique feature among court buildings in that it allows access to any unit from any entry vestibule, without going outside. The corridor has an original ceramic floor and wall with small tiles in various reddish brick shades. The windows on the west wall of the corridor overlook the swimming pool. The date of installation of these windows is unknown, but it appears to predate conversion to condominiums. Prior to these windows, the "wall" overlooking the pool was a chain fence, of the same composition and style as those seen in the entryways to the lobby.

The indoor swimming pool is 60' x 20'. The pool room's floor, walls, deck, and lower part of the interior walls have tilework that matches that of the corridor. There are two locker rooms with showers, steam room, and sauna, with pool access.

Apartment Interiors

Casa Bonita retains the original number, configuration, and interior layout of the units. Altogether the building has 30 one-bedroom, 30 two-bedroom, 3 three-bedroom, and 3 four-bedroom units. Each of the 66 units has an original decorative nonworking fireplace that features ornate details such as a pair of twisted Corinthian columns. Some of the larger

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

apartments have taller matching columns beneath arched openings between some of the rooms. Many apartments have original birch flooring in the kitchen and oak flooring in bedrooms, living rooms, and dining rooms. Many units also retain their original purple, and green tile finishes in the bathrooms. Original art glass windows remain in the terra cotta facing bathrooms of the easternmost units on both the north and south sides.

INTEGRITY

Casa Bonita possesses a very high level of historic integrity. When the building was converted into condominiums in 1974, the project was done in an extremely respectful manner. The project was undertaken by the Uptown Service Corporation, with restoration plans by Warner, Brejcha, Evans & Associates architects. All the original steel casement windows were retained, and the terra cotta and brick were carefully cleaned and tuckpointed. Original water lines were replaced with copper plumbing. Only minor alterations were undertaken such as the reuse of the raised basement parapet into a fountain basin (described above) and the opening of the west wall in the pool area with sliding glass doors that lead to an outdoor patio.

In the decades since the conversion of the building to condominiums, the owners have continued to carefully preserve the building. So far, many of the 996 original steel casement windows have been restored. Basement level windows (in storage areas, work areas and laundry rooms) have been replaced with glass block. In the early 1990's, the alterations accompanying the new pool roof were made (described above), as were the porch and exterior stairway alterations (also described above). In 2009, exterior stairs and landings were repaired or replaced in kind with wooden moldings to meet city safety regulations. The owners have a

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

landscape committee that lovingly plants, weeds, and tends to the sunken courtyard.

In 2025, two original Kewanee boilers were replaced.

The Casa Bonita Apartments stands in its original location and retains its historic setting. With only minimal changes, the building clearly conveys its historic appearance. It possesses integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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.)

☐

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

- ☐ 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

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Period of Significance

1928

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Capraro, Alexander V.

Komar, Morris L.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Casa Bonita Apartments at 7340-7350 N Ridge Blvd in the West Ridge neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois fulfills criteria C for the National Register of Historic Places. Constructed in 1928, is an outstanding local example of Spanish Revival-Renaissance Architecture. Designed by Alexander V. Capraro, Illinois's first licensed Italian American architect, partnered with Morris L. Komar, Casa Bonita embodies the distinctive characteristic style through its symmetrical composition, cream-glazed terra cotta cladding, elaborate low-relief carvings, balustrades, square towers and courtyard. The building's artistry reflects the technical mastery of Chicago's nationally prominent terra cotta industry and high aesthetic values of the period.

Casa Bonita is a rare example of Spanish Revival-Renaissance architecture in the West Ridge neighborhood and one of the few remaining citywide. In 1995, Casa Bonita was ranked "ORANGE" denoting a property that possessed some architectural or historical association that made it potentially significant in the context of the surrounding community.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Casa Bonita has been consistently invited to participate in Open House Chicago since its inception in 2011. It retains a high degree of integrity in location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and stands as a distinguished and well-preserved representation of early 20th-century apartment architecture in Chicago. Casa Bonita was recently recognized as a “Spanish Revival treasure” by the *Chicago Sun Times*’ architecture critic Lee Bey.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Architectural Significance-Spanish Revival-Renaissance (Criterion C)

Casa Bonita is a Chicago courtyard building that exemplifies the Spanish Revival-Renaissance style, a highly ornamental variant of the broader Spanish Revival which also included Mission and Colonial movements popular in the United States during the 1920’s. The style is characterized by symmetrical composition, elaborate terra cotta ornamentation, and decorative references to Mediterranean architectural traditions. At Casa Bonita, these include cream-glazed terra cotta cladding, intricately molded arches and columns, arcaded cornices, curvilinear details, balustrades, towers, cupola and gardens. Together, these elements create a vivid and distinctive image of Mediterranean luxury.

Casa Bonita stands out and apart not only for its stylish ambition, but also for the sophistication and harmony of its proportions. The symmetrical façade is richly ornamented with sculpted spiral columns, carved medallions, spandrel panels, and corbelled cornices, demonstrating a high level of artistic refinement. The extensive use of glazed terra cotta reflects both the technical mastery of Chicago’s then nationally prominent terra cotta industry and the period’s emphasis on durable, fire-resistant materials capable of supporting intricate ornamental programs.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

The combination of ornamental richness, quality craftsmanship and disciplined composition elevates Casa Bonita as a **rare and distinguished example of a Spanish Revival-Renaissance style courtyard apartment building in Chicago**. The building is an exceptionally well-preserved example of the building type and style from the interwar era.

In summary, key character defining stand out features include:

- Cream-glazed terra cotta cladding with high relief ornamentation throughout
- A formally symmetrical, sunken courtyard
- Sculpted columns and medallions
- Arcaded cornices and balustrades
- A large interior swimming pool and architecturally distinctive interior spaces

Architects and Builder

Casa Bonita was designed by Alexander V. Capraro (1894-1956), Illinois's first licensed Italian American architect, in partnership with Morris L. Komar (1897-1953). Contemporary sources praised the design, noting its ornamental square towers and sunken garden, which lent the building an elite European character. The Selected Local Directory of Italians in Chicago described Casa Bonita as "one of the most beautiful buildings in the city of Chicago." Although Capraro and Komar designed additional commercial and residential buildings in West Ridge and beyond, Casa Bonita is the only extant example of their collaborative work that retains both architectural and historical integrity.

Developer Philip Banowitz invested approximately \$1,000,000 to construct the apartments, reflecting the prosperity of the late 1920s and the ambitions of Chicago's growing middle and upper-middle classes.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Upon completion, the building offered state-of-the-art amenities, including a putting green with water features and sand traps, a driving range, handball courts, a table tennis room, and a 60-foot indoor swimming pool—luxuries that reinforced its identity as a premier residential property.

Historical Context

Casa Bonita reflects broader patterns in early 20th-century residential development in Chicago. At a time when perceptions of apartment living were shifting, wealthier urban residents began to embrace high-quality apartments that combined modern conveniences with architectural distinction. The European-inspired “French Flat” model and the suburban-style courtyard apartment, which offered landscaped green spaces within dense neighborhoods, both influenced Casa Bonita’s design. With 66 units ranging in size from three to eight rooms, the building accommodated a range of residents. All apartments have large rooms, and the amenities such as private transportation services, indoor swimming pool, putting green and handball court could be shared by all, as was a prominent characteristic of court buildings of the era.

Courtyard apartment structures had become quite popular throughout Chicago by the 1920s. The building type provided residents with ample light and ventilation as well as a semi-private outdoor space that emulated the front yard of a single-family home. Floor plans allowed for units of different sizes and thus attracting tenants with varying budgets. Courtyard buildings could be designed in various styles, and they often reflected the major architectural trends of their era. As explained by the *Chicago Courtyard Apartment Buildings Multiple Property National Register Nomination Form*, the Spanish Revival style was considered quite fashionable for this building type. The nomination notes that the Casa Bonita “is a rare example of a courtyard building rendered entirely in terra cotta.”

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

After its completion in 1928, the Casa Bonita was quickly filled with upper-middle and middle-class professionals and businessmen and their families. United States Census records show that in 1930, the building's tenants included attorneys, dentists, accountants, brokers, salesmen, clerks, as well as business owners and managers. Most of these early residents were couples and families with children. While the majority were native-born Americans, there were some immigrants including tenants who had been born in Sweden, Germany, Hungary, and Canada. Several families had a live-in servant at that time.

Despite the economic challenges of the Great Depression, Casa Bonita maintained high occupancy. Census records of 1940, show that the residents had similar occupations to the previous decade. The tenants included an attorney, a dentist, an accountant, several brokers, and numerous business proprietors and managers, realtors, salesmen and at least one saleswomen. Residents also included a bank president, a vice president of a bank, secretary of a bank, a medical examiner, a hosiery jobber, and a telephone operator. At this time, four households had a live-in servant or nurse.

Although the property changed ownership multiple times, the building's occupancy remained stable. later owners deferred significant maintenance, which paradoxically preserved Casa Bonita's architectural integrity by avoiding unsympathetic alterations. In 1974 the Uptown Service Corporation purchased the building, modernized essential infrastructure, and converted it into condominiums, restoring its status as a desirable residential property. It is noteworthy that as of June 1974, 25 residents expressed interest in purchasing and 16 had made deposits, the latter including one purchaser who had lived in the building as a child. In 1977, Casa Bonita received a *City Beautiful Committee* award for enhancing Chicago's visual landscape through architecture and landscaping.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Regional and Comparative Context

The Spanish Revival-Renaissance style—including Mission, Colonial, and Renaissance variants—had a relatively brief but vigorous presence in Chicago between the 1910s and 1930s. According to the Chicago Landmarks Commission, the style was used for both residential and religious buildings, most notably in neighborhoods such as Beverly, Edison Park, and South Shore. More than half of Chicago’s Spanish Revival buildings identified in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey were constructed in the 1920s, with virtually no new examples after the 1930s. Within this regional context, Casa Bonita is significant as one of the very few surviving examples of the Spanish Renaissance Revival subtype in the city and the only identified example in the West Ridge neighborhood.

Although there are other examples of Spanish Revival multi-residential buildings, few were as ornate or remain as well-intact. Casa Bonita was a purpose-built courtyard apartment building, designed to bring the visual richness and romantic imagery of Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture into a domestic, residential setting.

While sharing the stylistic vocabulary of its larger counterparts—stucco or terra-cotta-clad façades, sculptural ornament, and symmetrical composition—Casa Bonita adapts these elements on a more intimate scale. Its U-shaped plan and central courtyard establish a residential environment that emphasizes procession, enclosure, and community while distinguishing itself through unusually high-style execution.

While Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture in Chicago is most often expressed through monumental hotels and commercial buildings—such as the Shoreland Hotel and the Spanish Baroque-influenced resources of the Uptown Square Landmark District—Casa Bonita distinguishes itself as a rare, architecturally unified residential application of the style. The

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

building translates the ornamental vocabulary of Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture into a mid-scale courtyard apartment building through disciplined massing, symmetrical façade composition, and extensive terra cotta articulation rather than vertical monumentality. Unlike Spanish Revival apartment buildings that appear as contributing elements within districts such as the Arlington-Deming Historic District, Casa Bonita functions as a singular architectural statement in which the style fully defines the building's form, spatial organization, and visual identity.

Integrity

As described in the previous section Casa Bonita retains an exceptional degree of integrity in location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Structural changes have been minimal and undertaken with attention to the original structure and style. Providentially, the building has survived with its integrity intact. (See Integrity Detail under Narrative- Section 7 Page 9.) The building is among a limited number of courtyard structures that also retain landscape integrity. As noted by the *Chicago Courtyard Apartment Buildings Multiple Property National Register Nomination Form*, the Casa Bonita is an excellent intact 1920s courtyard building that retains the original courtyard vision of its architects Alexander Capraro and Morris Komar.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

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Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

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Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

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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): _____

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one-acre

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: 42.0153 | Longitude: -87.6848 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

Lot 6 (except the East 7 feet thereof taken for widening of Ridge Avenue and except the South 70 feet thereof measured on the West line) in the County Clerk's Division of part of the Southwest Fractional $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Fractional Section 30 North of the Indian Boundary Line in Township 41 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian, Cook County, Illinois.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The above-described lot constitutes the property historically and currently associated with the Casa Bonita Apartment building at 7340 N. Ridge Blvd in Chicago.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Julia S. Bachrach, Amy Lloyd/Linda Bressler with research assistance by Loyola University Students: Ellen Bushong/Andrea Pacheco
organization: Julia Bachrach Consulting LLC/Casa Bonita
street & number: 7348 N Ridge Blvd
city or town: Chicago state: Illinois zip code: 60645
e-mail: amylloydart@gmail.com
telephone: Amy Lloyd 630-886-7465 /Linda Bressler 312-659-1739
date: September 20, 2026

Additional Documentation

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Photo Log

Photo 1

Name of Property: Casa Bonita

City: Chicago

County: Cook. State: Illinois

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: North wing's front street façade showing lion niche with extended curved shelf and address plate, and corner of the formed belt course above raised basement. Camera facing west at front of building.

1 of 33

Photo 2

Name of Property: Casa Bonita

City: Chicago

County: Cook. State: Illinois

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: February 18, 2026

Description: Front east street façade of south wing. Shows roofline including parapets and square cupolas. Camera facing northwest at front of building.

2 of 33

Photo 3

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 18, 2025

Description: View of east street facades showing tower-like corners with square cupolas shallow niches. Camera facing west from N. Ridge Blvd.

3 of 33

Photo 4

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Outer corner of south wing, looking up towards square cupola. Heavily ornamented frame with foliage, shields, lion heads, are shown. Above the third story window, a round blind arch is filled with squares of pale green terra cotta. Camera facing southwest.

4 of 33

Photo 5

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Terra cotta balustrade with engaged light fixture adjacent to steps leading to sunken courtyard. Camera facing southwest.

5 of 33

Photo 6

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Original decorative urn on post at the end of railing entering the sunken courtyard. Note formal paths and detail at courtyard ground level beyond urn. Camera facing southwest.

6 of 33

Photo 7

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: View of curved staircase leading to courtyard, showing. terra cotta balustrade on turquoise water table, with lighting and urns. Camera facing east from courtyard.

7 of 33

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Photo 8

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Symmetrical sunken courtyard view from steps. Shows relationship between the landscape and the terra cotta-clad building façade. Camera facing west.

8 of 33

Photo 9

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 18, 2025

Description: Mid courtyard at reflecting pool/showing sculpture and gardens. Note division between raised basement and upper levels of facade. Camera facing southwest.

9 of 33

Photo 10

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 18, 2025

Description: View from mid courtyard with close-up of reflecting pool and water bearer statue. Shows gardens, side bed plantings, roses and pathways. Camera facing west.

10 of 33

Photo 11

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Courtyard facing west above pool roof to cupola parapets and finials at roof level. Camera facing northwest.

11 of 33

Photo 12

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: View of northeast entrance- One of four identical entryways from courtyard. Glass paned oak doors with matching sidelights. Northeast entrance. Camera facing North.

12 of 33

Photo 13

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Close-up view of terra cotta corbel and caryatid pilaster of door surround. This is from the northeast entrance. Camera facing North.

13 of 33

Photo 14

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Close-up view of center cartouche above doorway. Camera facing North.

14 of 33

Photo 15

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Close up view of cherub in relief over engaged shelf for plants at center of courtyard. Camera facing South.

15 of 33

Photo 16

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Description: View of south wing's courtyard façade upper stories, showing details of the long bay over front doorway including a niche-like recession that extends vertically to top of third story. The parapets, finials, low pitched red laid Spanish tile roof can be seen. Camera facing South.

16 of 33

Photo 17

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 12, 2025

Description: Close-up of third-story window hood mold features with a Spanish Conquistador in a medallion, a corbelled frieze, and a curved pediment with a shield between two griffins. Camera faces South from third floor.

17 of 33

Photo 18

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Close-up of first and second window trios separated by twisted columns and spandrels with shield elements. Camera facing Southwest.

18 of 33

Photo 19

Photographer: James Iska.

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Looking towards the bottom of the U from the courtyard facing towards the cupola Camera facing West.

19 of 33

Photo 20

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Date Photographed: September 21, 2025

Description: Close-up view of raised basement level at west end of the courtyard. This view shows the original parapet which was re-purposed into a lower basin with inner sprays. Camera facing West.

20 of

Photo 21

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: September 6, 2025

Description: Interview of indoor heated 60' x 20' pool showing original ceramic tile at pool floor, walls, deck and wainscoting around the walls. Camera facing Southwest.

21 of 33

Photo 22

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Description: Original terrazzo floor in main southeast corridor with wrought iron railings. Same terrazzo in vestibules. Camera ground floor facing East.

22 of 33

Photo 23

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: January 6, 2026

Description: Interior view looking towards vestibule, showing common hallway leading to all entrances and tiers. Camera facing Northwest.

23 of 33

Photo 24

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: January 6, 2026

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Description: View of ground level interior showing common hallway leading to all tiers, games room, laundry, pool and all amenities. Northwest tier staircase noted.

24 of 33

Photo 25

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Description: Interior view of Unit 1 B showing original nonworking fireplace with decorative elements. Camera facing East.

25 of 33

Photo 26

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Description: Interior view of Unit 1B showing main living room with fireplace, curved moldings, picture rails, original wood floors. Camera facing Southeast.

26 of 33

Photo 27

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Description: Interior view of Unit 1B showing main living room, original wood floors, columns and arched plaster opening between rooms. Camera facing west.

27 of 33

Photo 28

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Description: View of bathroom in Unit 1 B showing original 1920's purple and green tile and art-glass steel casement windows. Camera north.

28 of 33

Photo 29

Photographer: James Iska

Date Photographed: October 5, 2025

Description: View of bathroom in Unit 1 B showing original tile and window over bathtub Camera north.

29 of 33

Photo 30

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 2, 2026

Description: Interior outdoor stairwell at center of landing, Northwest tier. Camera facing North.

30 of 33

Photo 31

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 2, 2026

Description: Exterior north facade from N. Ridge Blvd. Camera facing West.

31 of 33

Photo 32

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 2, 2026

Description: Exterior west facade with renovated stairs and porch stack along alley street. Camera facing East.

32 of 33

Photo 33

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Photographer: Amy Lloyd

Date Photographed: September 2, 2026

Description: Exterior north facade abuts another apartment building.

Note porch west porch stack. Camera facing Northeast.

33 of 33

Photos

Photo 1



Photo 2

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 3

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 4

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 5

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 6

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Photo 7

Cook, IL

County and State



Photo 8

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 9

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 10

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 11

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Photo 12



Photo 13

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 14

Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments

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Photo 15

Cook, IL

County and State



Photo 16

Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 17

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 18

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Photo 19



Photo 20

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments

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Photo 21

Cook, IL

County and State



Photo 22

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 23

Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 24

Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



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Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



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Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



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Casa Bonita Apartments
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Cook, IL
County and State



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Casa Bonita Apartments
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County and State



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County and State

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Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

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Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Photo 31



Photo 32

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Photo 33

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

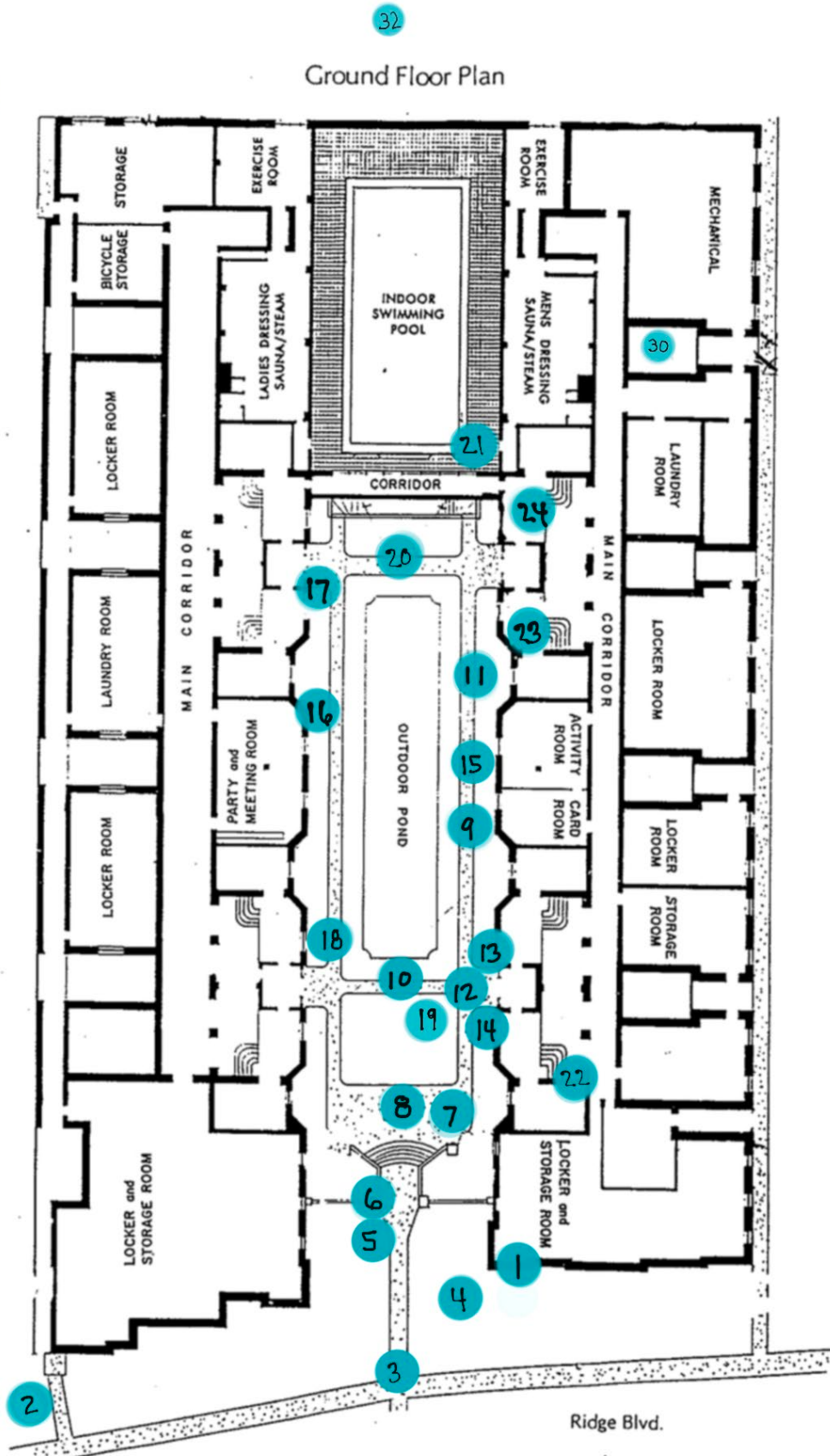


Figures

Casa Bonita Photo Key Map; Ground Floor Plan

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

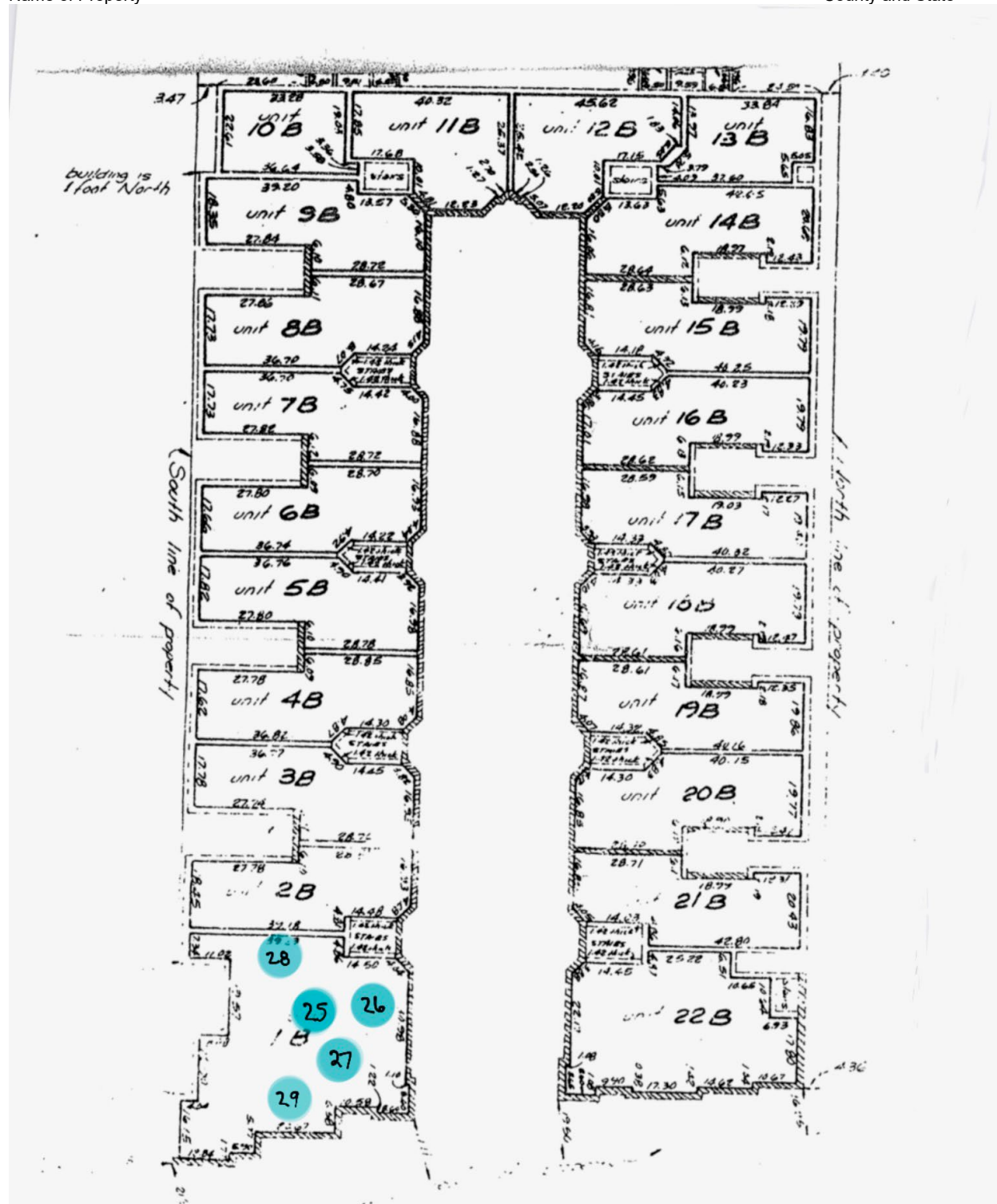
Casa Bonita Photo Key Map; Apartment Level 2 Plan (Key for Photos of interior space, 25-29)

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State



Figures

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Figure 1: Roof building permit copy, builder Philip Banowitz dated August 16, 1928. Architects Capraro and Komar.

Sub Recommended	Time Extended	Have Complied	Withdrawn
PLATE No.	USE DISTRICT	VOLUME DISTRICT	SPECIAL USE
9	apt	2	
Date AUG - 1928			
Water App. 4859	Permit No. B 19532	File No. 171607	
Owner Philip Banowitz	Address 7642		
Location 7340-52 Ridge Av.			
Arch. G. V. Capraro & M. L. Komar	A. W. Anderson		
No. of Stories 3	Frame Brick	Not Area	166 X 332 X 40
Violation None			
Report 12-5-27 Port joints set O'Laughlin 2/15/28 completed floor test ok.			
Revised 4/11/28 Plastering OK 4/15/28 from Banowitz			
Cost 350000 P. 330 W. 107° Final Report 6/14/28 Banowitz Inspector			
Sub Recommended	Time Extended	Have Complied	Withdrawn

Figure 2: Plat of Survey Casa Bonita

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

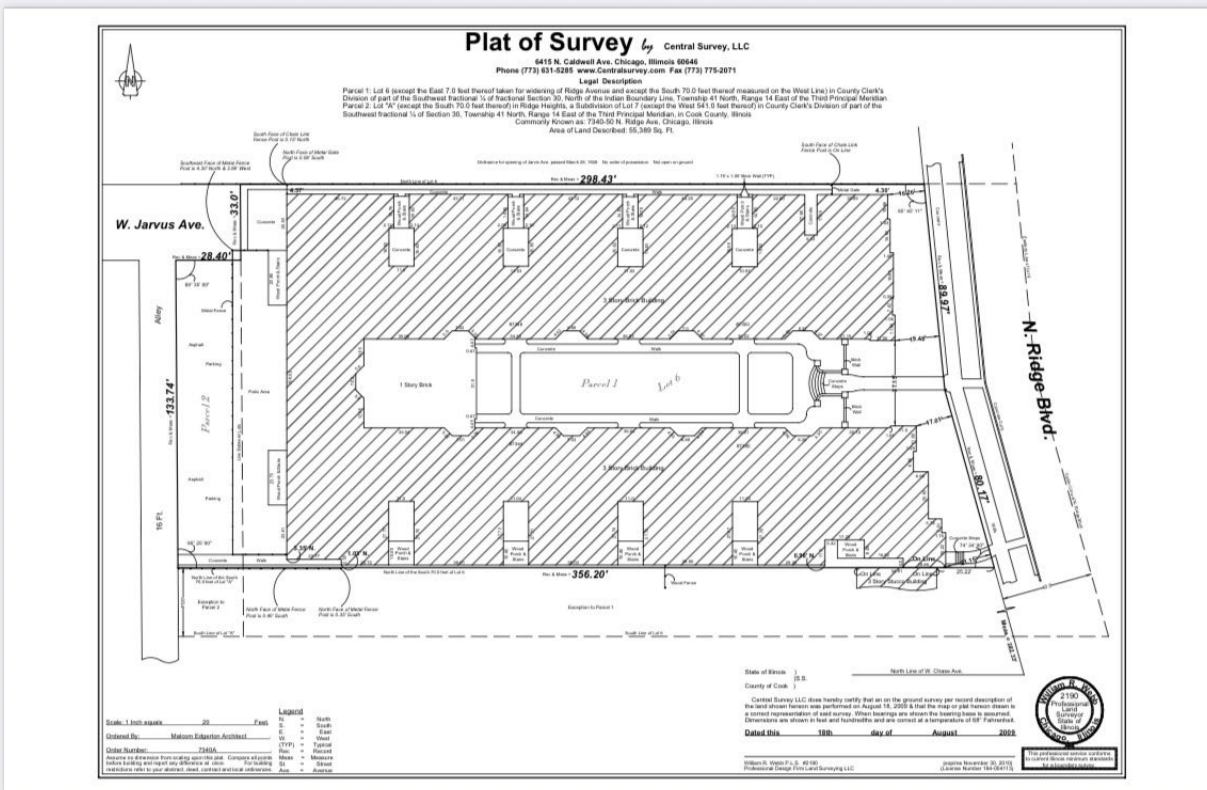


Figure 3: Certified Survey Plat English Basement level. Dated April 1974 at the time of the condominium conversion.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

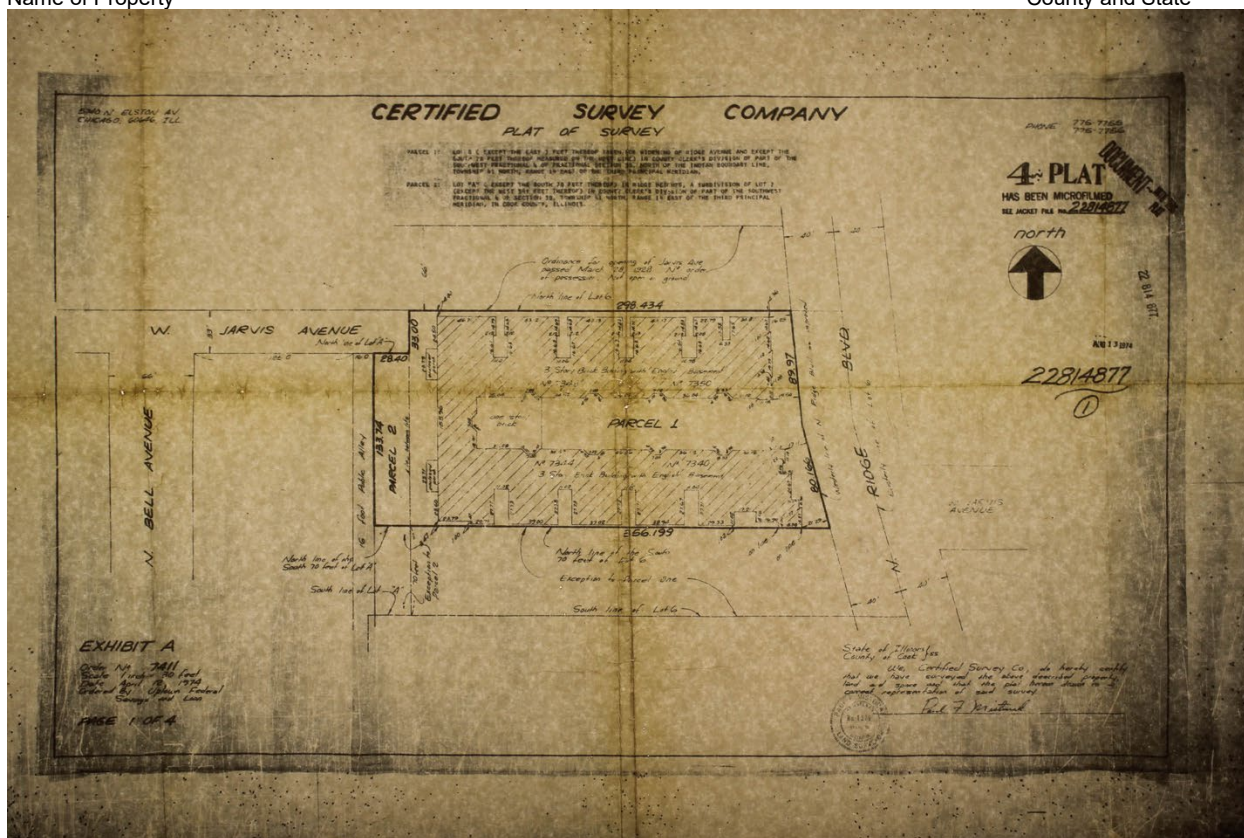
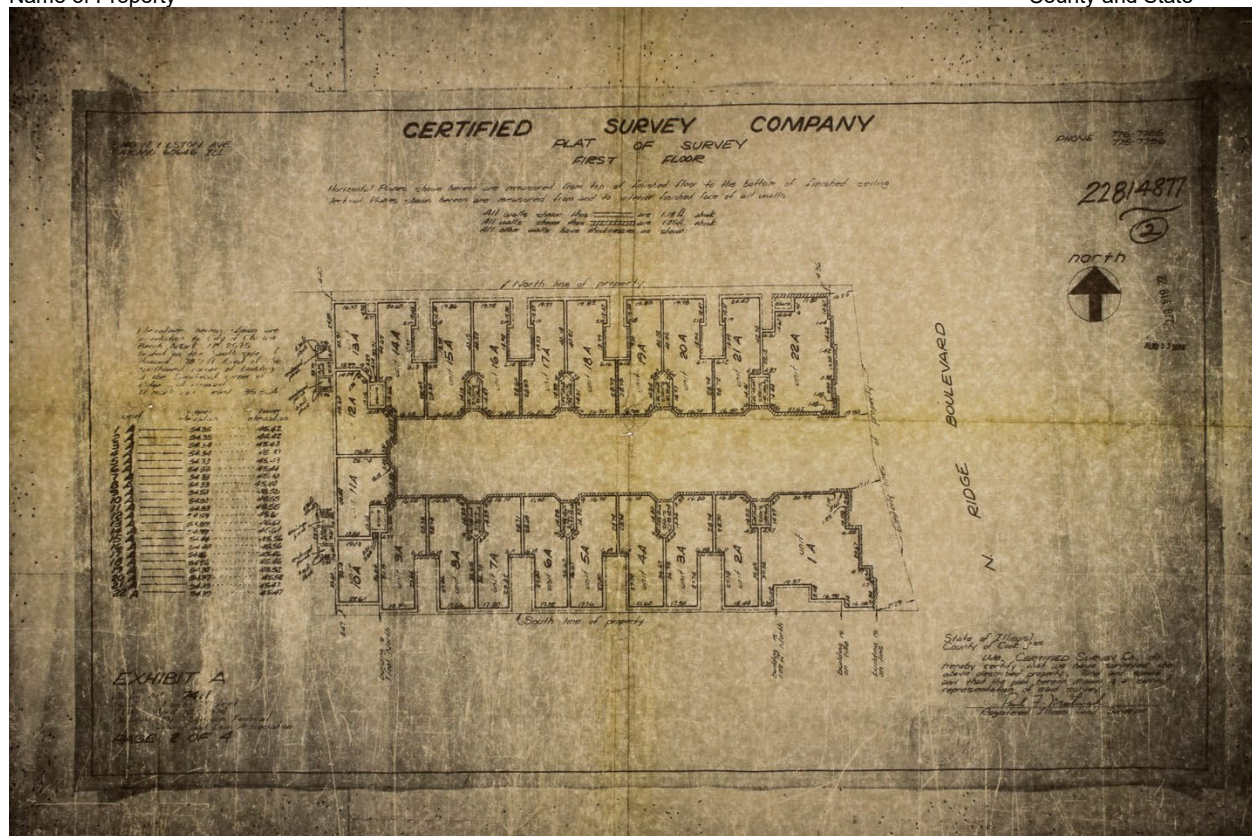


Figure 4: Certified Survey Plat- First Floor. Dated April 1974 at the time of the condominium conversion.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



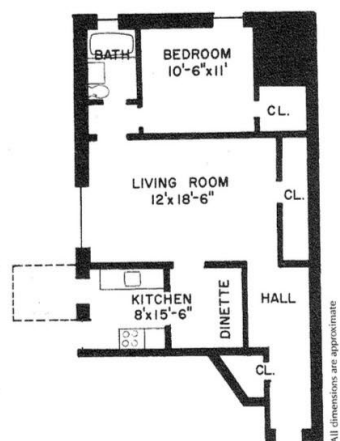
Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

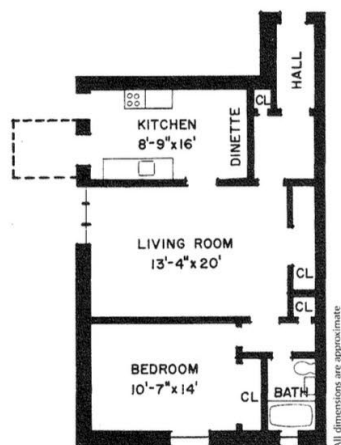
3 rooms in the Casa. 690 Square Feet



Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



3 rooms in the Casa. 760 Square Feet



Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



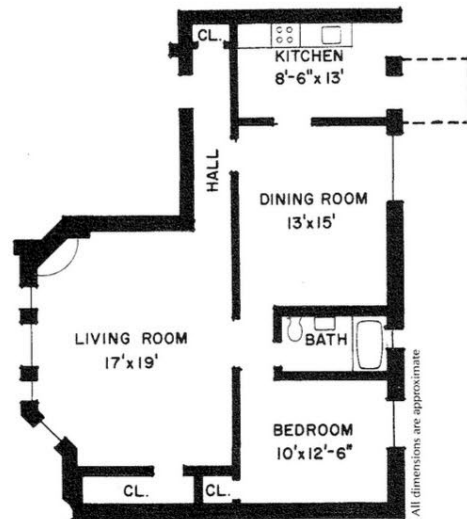
Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

4 rooms in the Casa. 950 Square Feet

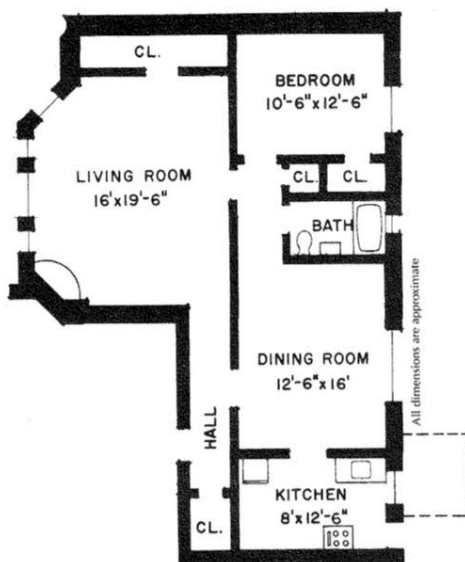


Casa Bonita

Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



4 rooms in the Casa. 975 Square Feet



Casa Bonita

Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



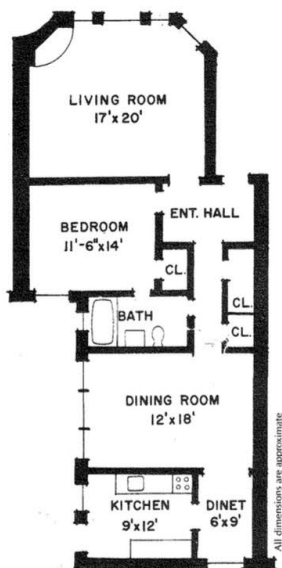
Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

4 rooms in the Casa. 1075 Square Feet

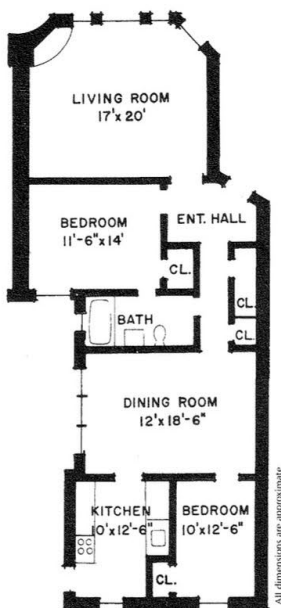


Casa Bonita

Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



5 rooms in the Casa. 1200 Square Feet



Casa Bonita

Condominium Sales Office
7348 N. Ridge Blvd.
Two blocks north of Touhy
Chicago, Illinois 60645
(312) 743-7450



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Casa Bonita
7340 N. Ridge Avenue

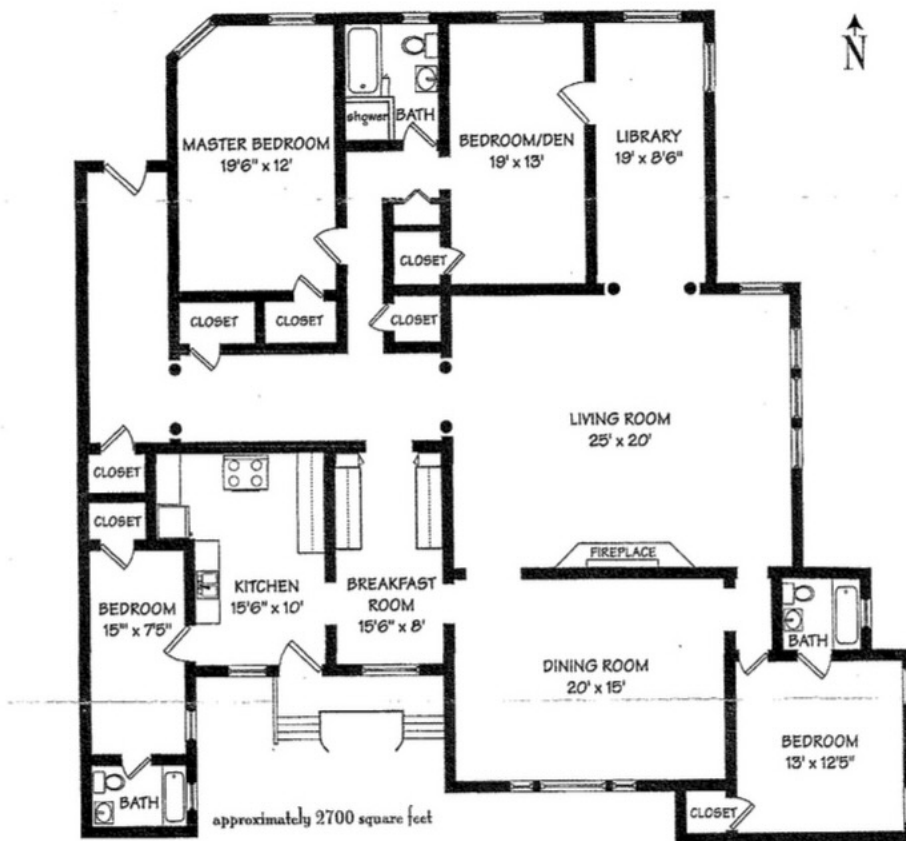


Figure 6: Older floor plan naming butler's pantry, maids room and 8 room apartment layouts

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

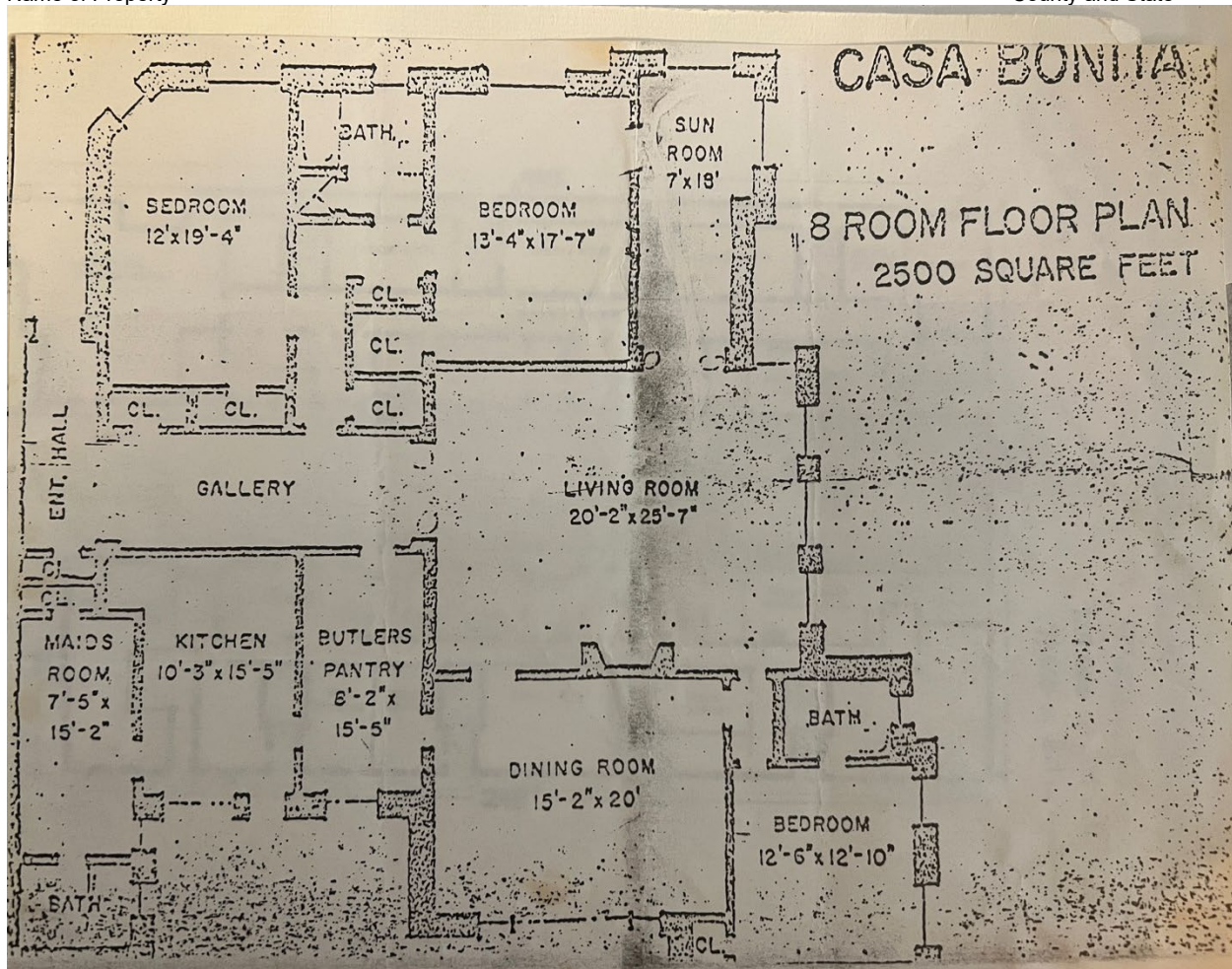
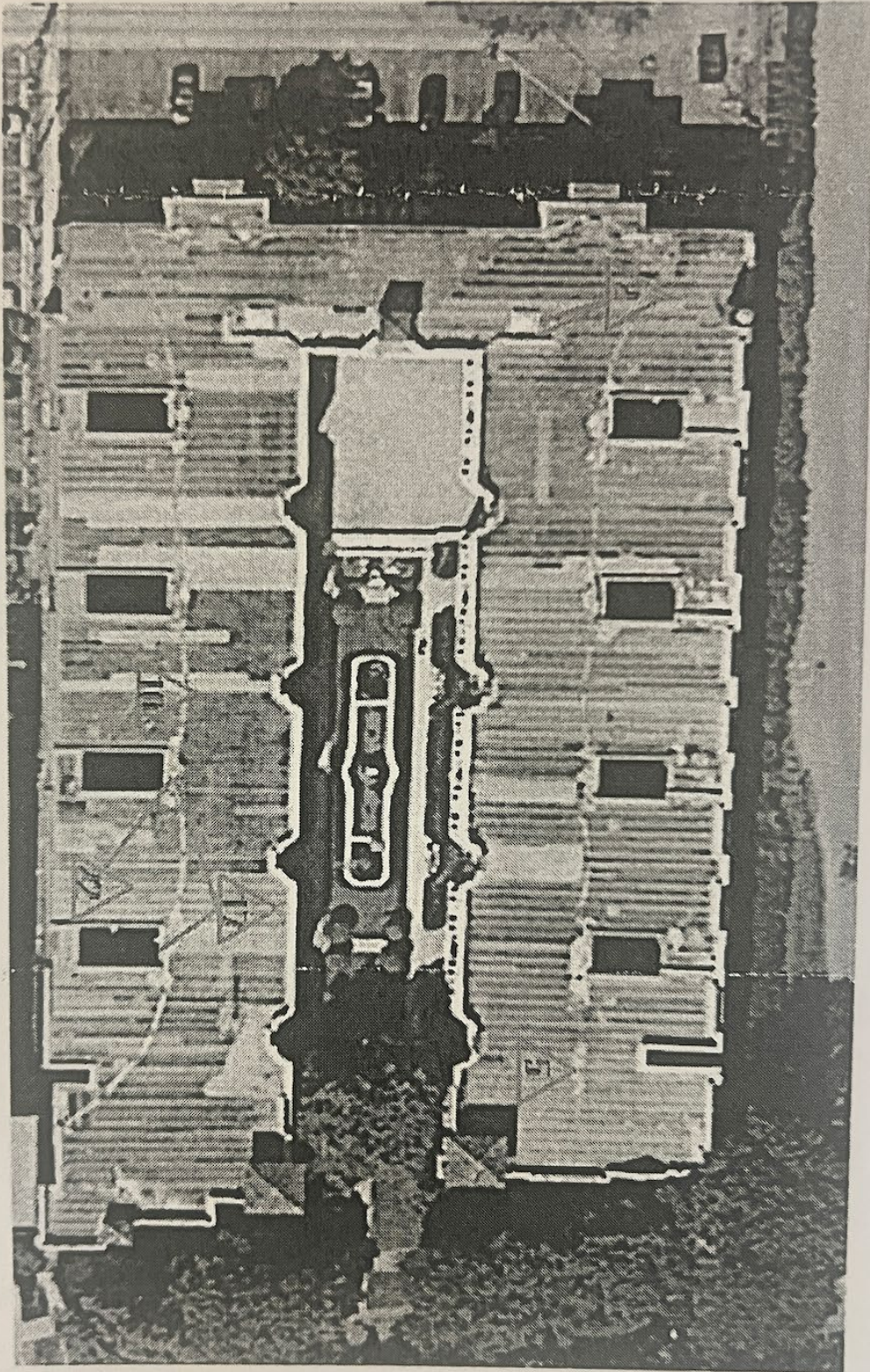


Figure 7: Old aerial view of Casa Bonita showing longer South wing of courtyard building.

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State



Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Figure 8: West Porch documentation of changes from brick to wood/paneling on west façade.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

ALEXANDER & ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS

7340/7348 N. Ridge, Chicago



Photo #1 - NW



Photo #2 - SW

Unit A - North Stairs

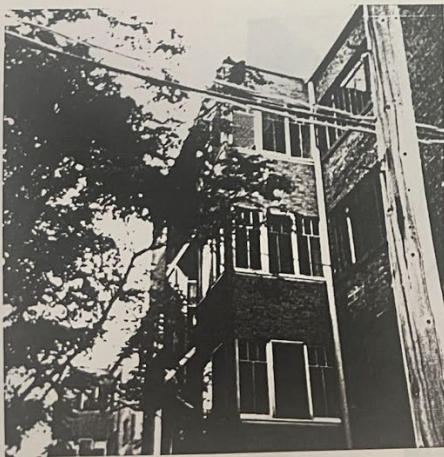


Photo #3 - SW

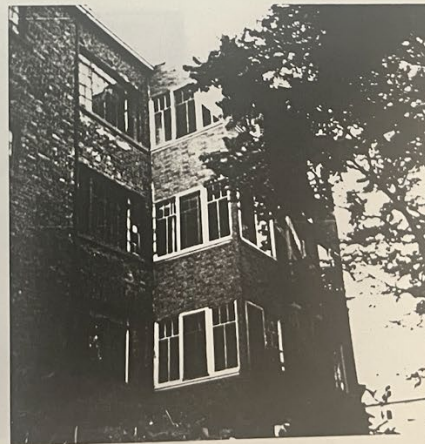


Photo #4 - NW

Unit B - South Stairs

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Figure 9: Early Casa Bonita Flyer.



Figure 10: Casa Bonita in the News

Casa Bonita Apartments

Name of Property

Cook, IL

County and State

Roaring '20s units go condo

Casa Bonita born again

By Don
DeBat



The landscaped central courtyard features a reflecting pool and statue.

The Casa Bonita — a Roaring Twenties vintage apartment building designed in the tradition of a Spanish palace — is being reborn as a posh condominium in Rogers Park.

The 68-unit building at 7348 N. Ridge Blvd. is undergoing a \$900,000 renovation program conducted by the new owner, Uptown Service Corp.

The development corporation subsidiary of Uptown Federal Savings & Loan Assn., purchased the building earlier this year for about \$930,000 from a real estate investment trust, the Daily News learned.

Uptown Service Corp. has asked the Chicago Commission on Historical and Architectural Landmarks to grant landmark status to the structure.

THE CASA BONITA is a

perfect example of the era when Mediterranean opulence influenced American architectural design," noted James B. Cain, president of Uptown Federal. "It is a luxury building that reflects the way of life in the 1920s."

The Casa Bonita's original developer, Chicago businessman Phillip Banovitz, reportedly spent \$1 million in 1928 to create what was then heralded as one of the most elegant apartment buildings on the North Side.

Architect William Capraro, who later planned the Italian Pavilion at the World's Fair, was commissioned to pattern the building after a grand Spanish-style estate.

Touring the property, one wonders if Banovitz and Capraro drew inspirations for the

design from the Moorish-style interior of the Aragon Ballroom, completed on the North Side in 1926, at the zenith of the jazz age.

The three-story Casa Bonita is faced with sculptured white terra cotta. Gargoyles and figurines in bas relief adorn the exterior.

Apartments in the U-shaped building overlook a sunken courtyard garden that's big enough to host Wayne King's orchestra and a ballroom dance floor. The court was lushly landscaped and tropical fish swim in reflecting pools.

Recreation facilities incorporated in the building nearly a half century ago rival those of a modern luxury condominium.

"There was a miniature golf

Turn to Page 36, Column 1

Casa Bonita Apartments
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

Uptown district gets a facelift from namesake

Chicago Tribune (1963-Current file); Feb 15, 1975; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune
pg. N_A11

Uptown district gets a facelift from namesake

RESTORING apartment buildings is a noble ambition, but one frequently forgotten after the costs have been tallied. Fortunately for the Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, Uptown Federal Savings and Loan Association has found it a profitable venture.

A subsidiary of Uptown Federal, the Uptown Service Corporation, has purchased three old buildings, which, altho structurally sound, were breaking down mechanically. Cold radiators, no hot water, and outdated electrical systems left these buildings vulnerable in a competitive renting market.

Converting them to condominium apartments was Uptown's plan for breathing new life into the neighborhood, making a profit, and encouraging other people to make improvements.

FEDERAL legislation passed in 1965 enables federal saving and loan associations to form subsidiary corporations, limited in the amount of the association's assets they can use, for housing-related projects.

According to George Kochis, condominium conversion manager for Uptown, a marketability study is his first concern in the consideration of any conversion prospect. An analysis of the building's condition is made to determine the soundness of the structural and mechanical elements. Cost estimates for repairs and improve-

ments are gathered and studied.

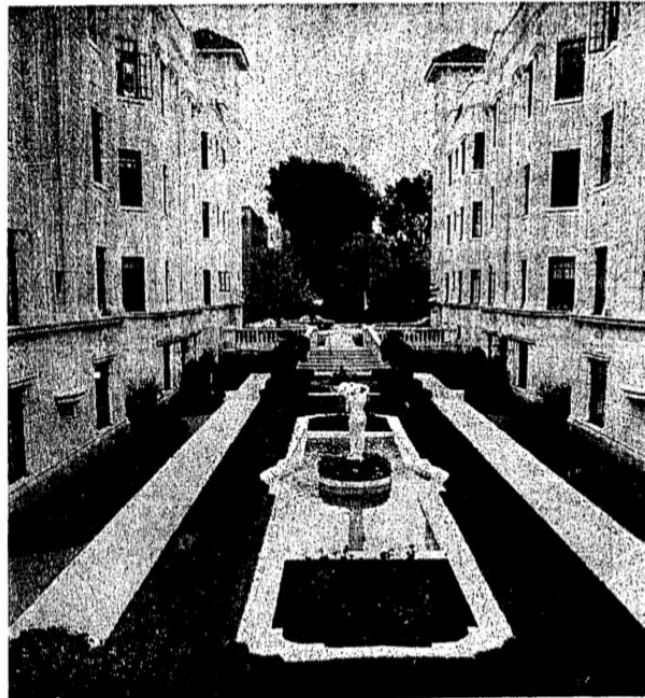
"This is the hardest part to assess," he said, "because you never know what you're going to get into once you break thru a wall."

Uptown Service Corporation's first two projects, six-flat conversions on Margate Terrace and Ainslie Street, have provided apartments offering 1,800 or more square feet of space and priced in the \$20,000 to \$40,000 range. A few units still are for sale in those projects.

ALTHO NOTABLE because they provide reasonable cost housing, these projects pale in comparison to the aesthetic appeal of Uptown's third venture, the restoration of a 66-unit building called Casa Bonita at 7348 Ridge Blvd.

Built in 1928 at a reputed cost of \$1 million, Casa Bonita was considered the height of luxury at the time. A private bus took residents downtown for shopping. A 60-foot long indoor swimming pool, indoor golf driving range, putting green, and handball courts rival many of the amenities offered in luxury developments today.

When Uptown Service Corporation bought the building, residents of 20 units elected to buy rather than move. Despite the extensive renovation planned, Uptown didn't encourage its tenants



Flowers, shrubs, and a reflective pond add to the charm of Casa Bonita, a condominium apartment conversion completed at 7348 Ridge Blvd. by the Uptown Service Corporation, a subsidiary of Uptown Federal Savings and Loan Association.

to move out of the building.

"Some firms have mistakenly done this, losing the rents they could get during the renovation," said Kochis.

ALL THE hot water lines were replaced with copper plumbing, new hot water heaters were installed, the electrical service was updated, sidewalks were resurfaced, the rear parking space paved, and the exterior was tuckpointed and steam cleaned. Glass sliding doors were added to the

swimming pool area to offer poolside sunning. To date 42 of the units have been sold. The ones remaining range in price from \$20,500 to \$39,500.

Uptown also is involved in Rescorp (Renewal Effort Service Corporation) and NHS (Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago), along with other savings and loan institutions in other urban renewal projects.

James Cain, president of Uptown Federal, said Uptown is looking for a 12-flat

in the Uptown, Lakeview, or Edgewater neighborhoods for another condominium conversion, "or a series of six flats."

And what has the institution learned after the dust has settled and the mortar dried? "Nothing surprised us about any of these projects," said Cain, "because we've been in the business of financing for many years."

Well, he did admit, one thing was disappointing—that costs couldn't be cut more.

Casa Bonita Apartments

Cook, IL

Name of Property

County and State

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