Archaeological Monitoring of Dumpster Enclosure Footings at LA 1051, near City Hall, Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Administrative Summary

At the request of the City of Santa Fe, the Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) conducted archaeological monitoring of the excavation of footings for a new dumpster enclosure west of City Hall along Federal Place in downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico, on June 22 and 23, 2011. The dumpster enclosure is within the limits of LA 1051, a multicomponent archaeological site which underwent extensive excavation and monitoring between 2005 and 2008. Given the potential for the presence of human remains within this portion of LA 1051, archaeological monitoring of subsurface excavations was conducted.

Archaeological monitoring of the hand-excavated footings resulted in the recovery of a single disarticulated human long-bone fragment. The fragment was found in the upper 10 cm of redeposited modern fill immediately below the gravel and engineered fill that covers the dumpster enclosure location. No artifacts were found in association with the fragment, and it was determined to be isolated and not in place. The City of Santa Fe, the Pueblo of Tesuque, and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division were notified of the find. Following notification, removal of the skeletal fragment was authorized by all parties.

The skeletal element was reburied on November 15, 2011, according to procedures agreed to by the City of Santa Fe, the Pueblo of Tesuque, and the Cultural Properties Review Committee.

MNM Project No. 41.931
State of New Mexico General Permit NM-11-027-M
NMCRIS Activity No. 121216

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Introduction

At the request of the City of Santa Fe, the Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) conducted archaeological monitoring of the excavation of footings for a new dumpster enclosure west of City Hall along Federal Place in downtown Santa Fe, New Mexico on June 22 and 23, 2011 (Fig. 1). The dumpster enclosure is within the limits of LA 1051, a multicomponent archaeological site which was the subject of extensive excavation and monitoring between 2005 and 2008 (Lentz 2011; Lentz and Barbour 2010). Given the potential for the presence of human remains within this portion of LA 1051, archaeological monitoring of subsurface excavations was conducted.

The project area is in the unplatted lands of the City of Santa Fe Grant, NMPM, Santa Fe County; UTM Zone 13, E415115, N3949775; USGS 7.5′ Santa Fe quadrangle map, 1977 (Figs. 2 and 3).

Archaeological monitoring was conducted under the provisions of General Permit NM-08-027-M. A monitoring plan was submitted and approved by the Historic Preservation Division (HPD), Department of Cultural Affairs, before the project began. This report presents the results of the archaeological monitoring. For details concerning cultural history and previous archaeological work, the reader is referred to Lentz (2011) and Lentz and Barbour (2010).

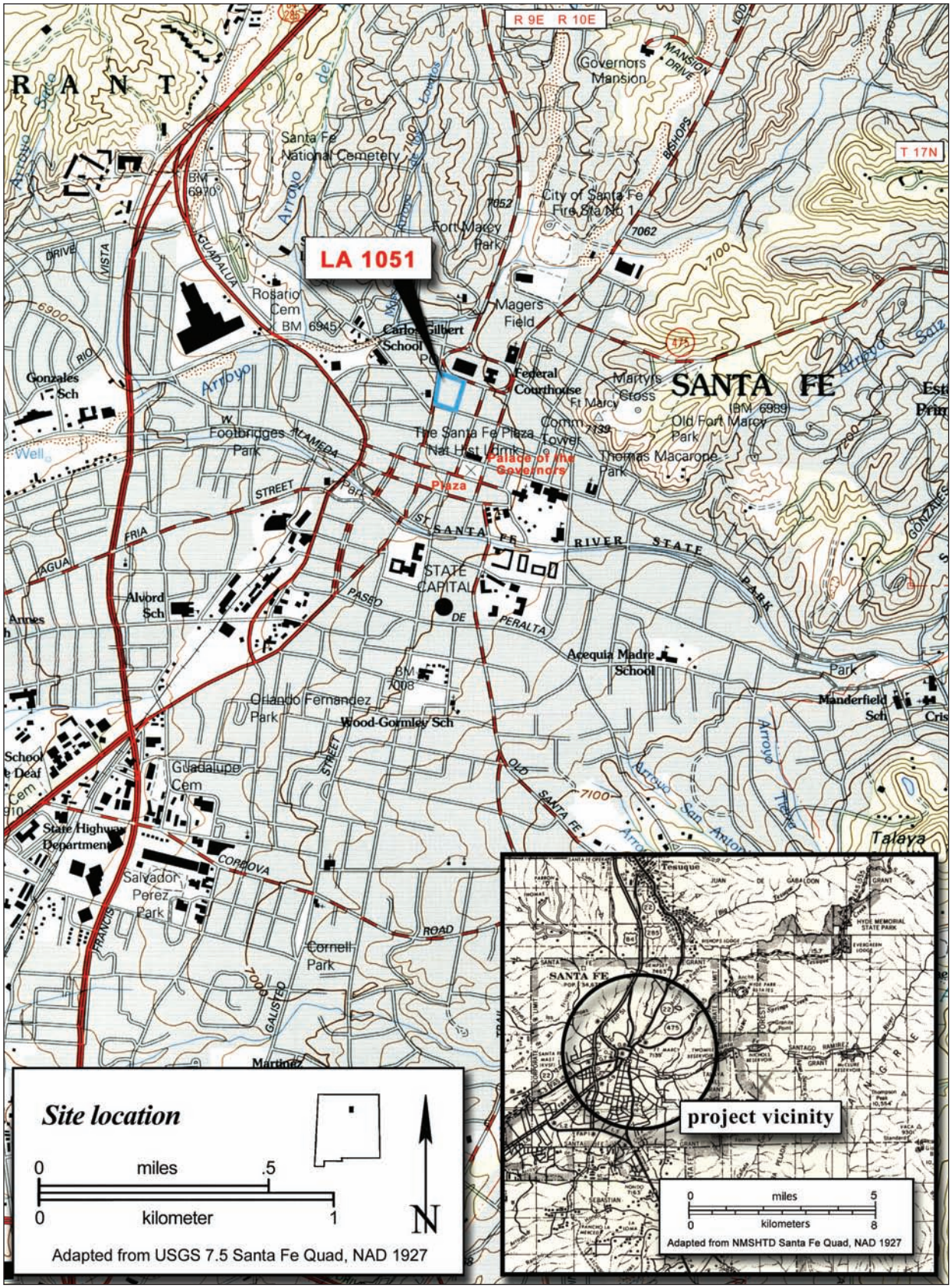

Figure 1. Project vicinity and site location.

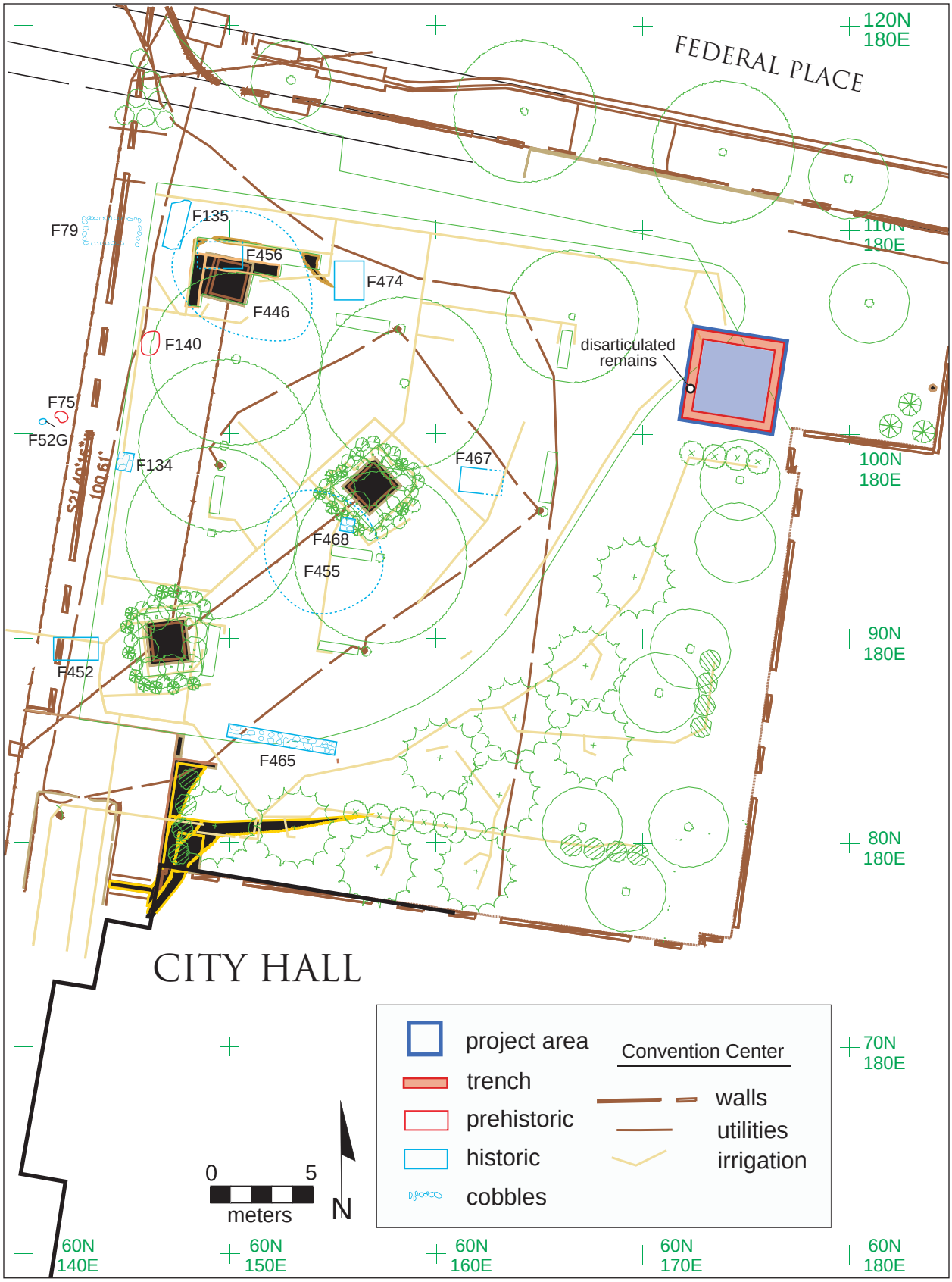

Figure 2. Plan of project area.

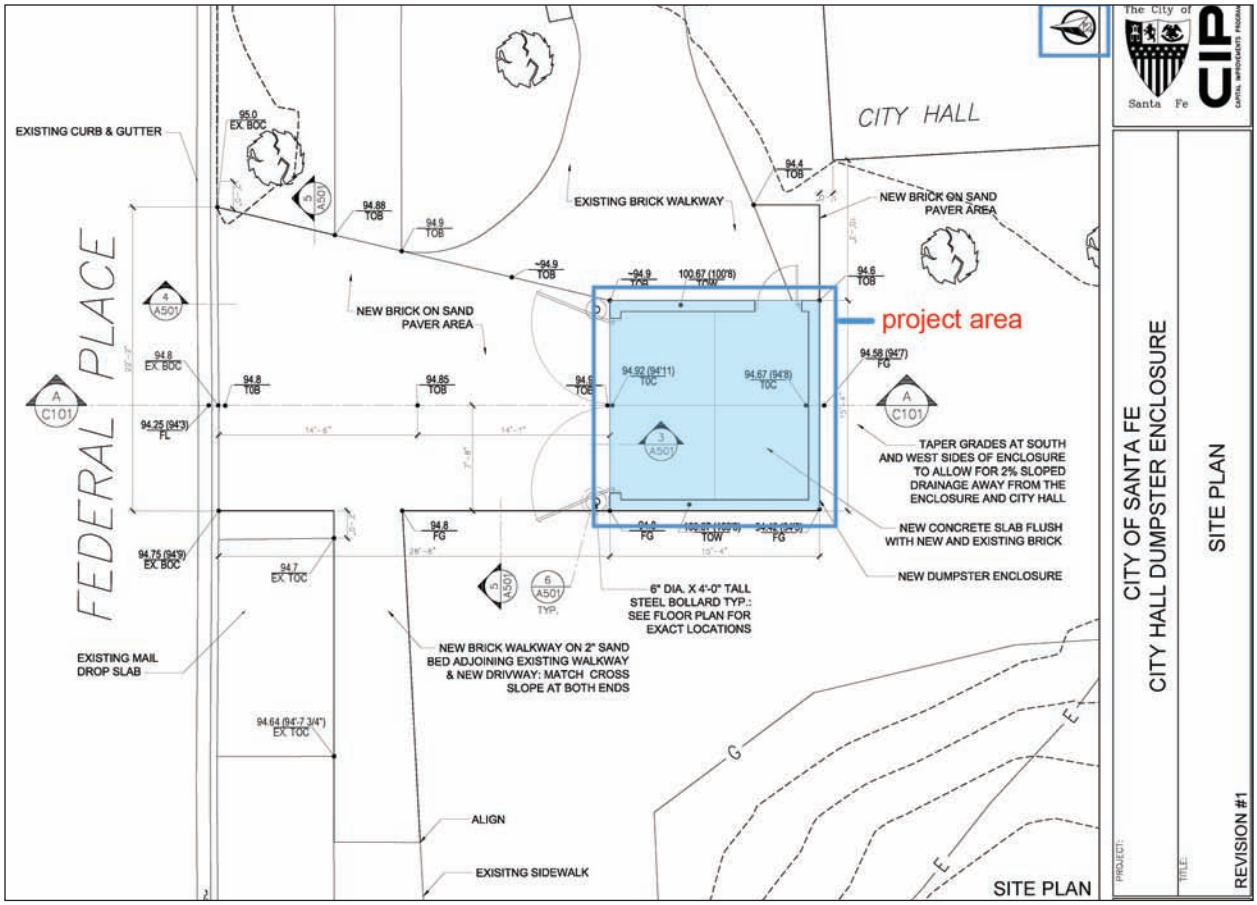

Figure 3. Engineering plan of project area.

Monitoring Methods and Results

Monitoring Methods

A crew of four City of Santa Fe workers hand excavated four trenches 4.80 m long and 48–50 cm wide (Fig. 4). The trenches averaged 50 cm deep with the exception of the north trench, which averaged 28 cm in the middle and 54 cm in the corners, since the trench was not excavated to the standard depth of the others. As the crew excavated the trenches, the fill was carefully examined by OAS archaeologist Richard Montoya for any cultural resources. When artifacts were encountered, the fill and context were observed for any possible features. All observed artifacts were recovered from mixed deposits and were left on site, but were subjected to an abbreviated in-field analysis. Once the excavations stopped, the trench walls were cleaned so that the stratigraphic sequence could be defined. The stratigraphic sequence visible in the trench walls was described, mapped, and photographed.

The dumpster enclosure footing was linked to the LA 1051 grid system and vertical control. The footings were between 101–105N and 173–176E and between 9.88 and 10.38 m below datum.

When a disarticulated skeletal element was uncovered, it was photographed, mapped, and notes were taken on its location in the trench and the surrounding fill. Once all the appropriate parties were contacted, it was placed in a bag with the location information and placed in secure storage in City Hall.

Monitoring Results

Archaeological monitoring of the footing trenches indicated a highly disturbed area of continuous redeposited fill used to level the area. Five strata were observed in the trench walls. Artifacts recovered from excavations were mixed with modern refuse (plastic, concrete, asphalt, etc.).

Trench Fill

A total of four trenches (north, south, east, and west) were excavated for the foundation of the dumpster enclosure. The trenches were all 4.80 m long and 48–50 cm wide. They averaged 50 cm deep with the exception of the north trench, which averaged 28 cm in the middle and 54 cm in the corners. The fill removed from these excavations was similar in all trenches: a low-frequency mixture of prehistoric and historic artifacts and modern refuse. No artifacts were collected from this disturbed content, just noted and counted. Most of the fill appeared to be redeposited and was used to level this area at different times, with the exception of Stratum 3, which appeared to be a natural arroyo deposit (Table 1).

East Trench

The East Trench (Fig. 5) had a maximum depth of 54 cm and a minimum depth of 38 cm and was represented by Strata 1, 2, and 3 (Table 1). Stratum 1, the uppermost stratum, had a maximum thickness of 6 cm. Stratum 2 had a maximum thickness of 38 cm and was 6 cm below the ground surface. Stratum 3 was 14 cm thick and 34 cm below ground surface; it continued to an unknown depth below the base of the trench. All three strata were continuous throughout the trench. The trench fill yielded a mixture of artifacts and modern refuse indicating that the fill was redeposited and disturbed.

South Trench

The South Trench had a maximum depth of 56 cm and a minimum depth of 40 cm and was represented by Strata 1, 2, 3, and 5 (Table 1). Stratum 1 had a maximum thickness of 5 cm and was the uppermost stratum. Stratum 2 had a maximum thickness of 16 cm and was 18 cm below ground surface. Stratum 3 was 13 cm thick and 30 cm below ground surface; it continued to an unknown depth below the base of the trench. Stratum 5 appeared in pockets, had a maximum thickness of 8 cm, and was 11 cm below ground surface. All the strata with the exception of Stratum 5 were continuous throughout the trench. The trench fill yielded a mixture of artifacts and modern refuse, indicating that the fill was redeposited and disturbed.

Figure 4. Excavated trenches.

Figure 5. East trench profile.

Table 1. Strata descriptions

Stratum	Description	Location	Thickness	Summary
1	10YR 6/6 brownish yellow. Semiconsolidated silty, sandy loam with inclusions of abundant gravels.	top of ground surface to 6 cm below ground surface	4–6 cm	Redeposited base course used to level the area.
2	5/2 grayish brown. Consolidated, silty, sandy loam with inclusions of common gravels, concrete, plastic, asphalt, bone, glass, metal, and ceramics.	6 cm below ground surface	22–38 cm	Redeposited base course used to level the area.
3	10YR 6/3 pale brown. Consolidated to compacted silty, sandy alluvial fill with inclusions of abundant gravels and sand.	34 cm below ground surface to base of trench	unknown, continues below base of trench	Natural arroyo alluvial deposit.
4	10YR 5/3 brown. Semiconsolidated coarse sand.	10 cm below ground surface	4–14 cm	Redeposited base course used to level the area.
5	10YR 5/4 yellowish brown. Consolidated, compacted, silty, sandy loam with inclusions of abundant gravels	16 cm below ground surface	4–8 cm	Redeposited base course used to level the area.

North Trench

The North Trench had a maximum depth of 54 cm and a minimum depth of 28 cm and was represented by Strata 2, 5, and 3 (Table 1). Only the east and west corners were excavated to the maximum depth, while the remainder of the trench was excavated to the minimum depth. Stratum 2 had a maximum thickness of 13 cm and was the uppermost stratum. Stratum 5 had a maximum thickness of 8 cm and was 15 cm below ground surface. Stratum 2 was present again below Stratum 5 with a maximum thickness of 20 cm; it was 26 cm below ground surface. Stratum 3 was 46 cm below ground surface and continued to an unknown depth below the base of the trench. All three strata were continuous throughout the trench. The trench fill yielded a mixture of artifacts and modern refuse, indicating that the fill was redeposited and disturbed.

West Trench

The West Trench (Fig. 6) had a maximum depth of 52 cm and a minimum depth of 48 cm and was represented by Strata 2, 3, 4, and 5 (Table 1). Stratum 2 had a maximum thickness of 42 cm and was the uppermost stratum. A disarticulated skeletal element was within Stratum 2, 10 cm below ground surface. Also within Stratum 2, Strata 4 and 5 were visible, indicating different depositional episodes. Stratum 4 had a maximum thickness of 14 cm and was 12 cm below ground surface. Stratum 4 discontinued 2.80 m to the north, where Stratum 5 began. Stratum 5 was discontinuous, had a maximum thickness of 8 cm, and was 18 cm below ground surface; it was present on the southern and northern portions of the trench and not present in the middle of the trench. Stratum 3 was 40 cm below ground surface and continued to an unknown depth below the base of the trench. All strata except Stratum 5 were continuous throughout the trench. The trench fill yielded a mixture of artifacts and modern refuse, indicating that the fill was redeposited and disturbed.

Artifacts

Artifacts consisted of two saw-cut animal bones, two Biscuit ware ceramics, three pieces of window glass, four pieces of clear bottle glass, five rusted nails, and two floor tiles.

Disarticulated Remains

A single fragment of a human long bone was encountered in the west trench (103N/173E) 10 cm below ground surface in modern deposits above the existing tree-root line (Fig. 2). No other skeletal elements or artifacts were associated with the long bone. It is a mid and distal shaft of a right femur from a mature adult of unknown sex. The femur fragment measured 27.5 cm long. At the midpoint it measured 2.9 cm from right to left and 2.6 cm from front to back. The intact portion of the bone was in good condition. No pathologies were observed.

Figure 6. West trench profile.

Summary and Recommendations

Archaeological monitoring was conducted over a two-day period in conjunction with the excavation of four hand-dug trenches for a dumpster enclosure within the limits of LA 1051. In conformance with 4.10.17 NMAC, *Standards for Monitoring*, an archaeological monitoring plan was submitted to and approved by HPD in advance of the activity. Provisions for addressing disarticulated human remains were included in the plan.

Trench excavations revealed a highly disturbed area of continuous redeposited fill that had been used to level the area over the years. Mixed deposits were indicated by the co-occurrence of modern, prehistoric, and historic artifacts within all stratigraphic levels. Of the five stratigraphic layers recorded, only Stratum 3, a natural alluvial deposit, appeared to be intact. During previous investigations at LA 1051, subsurface features were excavated, and human burials were found within this natural deposit. No artifacts were recovered from intact strata. A disarticulated human femur fragment was found within the upper 10 cm of a modern fill layer. Broken at both ends, this element was likely redeposited multiple times during the construction of the Santa Fe Community Convention Center; it was recovered from an area where several human burials and disarticulated remains were documented during excavation and subsequent monitoring. However, the bone fragment cannot be confidently associated with a particular prehistoric component or occupation area given the disturbed context.

Based on the results of archaeological monitoring, OAS recommended clearance for the dumpster enclosure project. The New Mexico Historic Preservation Division concurred, and the work proceeded as scheduled. Given the likelihood that almost any excavation within this portion of LA 1051 may encounter human remains, archaeological monitoring is recommended for any future ground removal excavations in this area that will penetrate more than 30 cm below the base of the engineered fill covering this portion of the site.

The recovered disarticulated femur fragment was placed in secure storage within City Hall. Final disposition of the fragment will coincide with interment of an assemblage of human remains recovered during the final stages of monitoring for the Santa Fe Community Convention Center project in 2008. Final disposition will follow procedures previously agreed to by the City of Santa Fe, the Pueblo of Tesuque, and the Cultural Properties Review Committee in December 2005. It is expected that these remains will be reinterred in fall of 2011.

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2010 *Settlers and Soldiers: The Historic Component at El Pueblo de Santa Fe (LA 1051).* Archaeology Notes 410. Office of Archaeological Studies, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.

Appendix 1: Site Location Information

The project area is unplatted land of the City of Santa Fe Grant in Santa Fe County, NMPM; UTM Zone 13, E415115, N3949775; USGS 7.5′ Santa Fe quadrangle map, 1977.