



Cathedral Square

Historic District Plan

Physical Description & Boundaries

The Cathedral Square Historic District is located at the heart of Sacramento’s original street grid, as laid out in 1848, and comprises a portion the city’s historic central business district. The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, completed in 1889, serves as the visual and symbolic anchor of the district. The surrounding properties are characterized by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial and civic buildings that reflect the area’s identity as a fashionable shopping and entertainment center. The district’s properties are situated around the intersection of K and 11th streets and are roughly bounded by 12th Street to the east, Jazz Alley to the north, 10th Street to the west, and L Street to the south.



Figure 122. The spire of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament is the focal point of the district.



Figure 123. The former Weinstock Lubin department store (right) is across from the cathedral on K Street.



Figure 124. A view looking west along K Street from 11th Street, showing the range of architectural styles in the district, including the Italian Renaissance and Prairie styles.



Figure 125. The former Medico-Dental Building (left) and Senator Hotel (center) face Capitol Park and form the southern end of the district.

Brief Historic Context

K Street has been one of the most heavily trafficked business corridors in all of Sacramento since the city was platted.¹ During the Gold Rush, argonauts arrived by riverboat at the western terminus of K Street where the city met the Sacramento River.² While neighboring J Street established itself as the primary route leading to the gold fields in the foothills of the Sierras, K Street was associated with California's fledgling stagecoach network.³ For this reason, K Street had a running start to becoming the commercial core of the city.

Businesses and homes rapidly spread eastward during the early years of settlement, but expansion was not without its obstacles. The crippling floods of 1861 and 1862, which left much of Sacramento underwater, convinced city officials to prioritize improved public infrastructure. Moving more-or-less west to east over the course of a decade, streets were raised to the level of Plaza Park (now Cesar Chavez Park), the highest point within the developed portion of the street grid.⁴ The elevated streetscape resulted in hollow sidewalks, sections of which are confirmed to be intact at 1013 K Street.⁵

The evolution of the city's streetcar system also played an important role in molding K Street into a powerful commercial force during the late nineteenth century. Sacramento's first mule-drawn streetcar line, started circa 1858, travelled from the intersection of Front and K streets to the Sacramento Valley Railroad depot



Figure 126. View of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and Capitol building looking south along 11th Street (1926). Source: California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

at 3rd and R streets. The enterprise was short-lived, for its tracks were destroyed by the flood of 1861.⁶ The first permanent streetcar did not appear until Sacramento's downtown streets had been raised. The City Street Railway was established on August 20, 1870.⁷ Its course began at the Central Pacific Railroad depot on Front Street and followed K Street eastward to the intersection of 9th Street where it proceeded north to H Street. This route solidified K Street's status as Sacramento's "Main Street."

K Street also attracted civic and institutional development. In 1889, the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament was constructed at the intersection of K and 11th streets. Reverend Patrick Manogue,

a native of Ireland, was appointed Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Sacramento in 1886.⁸ His personal ambition was to build a cathedral modeled after the Holy Trinity church of Paris.⁹ Its site and design were deliberately chosen to compliment the Capitol building, located one block to the south.¹⁰ San Francisco architect Bryan J. Clinch was selected for the project.¹¹ The massive basilica-form structure features an imposing central tower, rounded arch entrances and windows, and a broad dome atop the nave. Being the second tallest building in the city after the Capitol at that time, the grand church represented not only a triumph for local Catholics, but a symbol of civic pride for all Sacramentans.¹²

By 1895, the area was still a patchwork of multi-family dwellings and small commercial structures. Not surprisingly, the supremacy of the horse-drawn travel was visible within the district. The majority of businesses, particularly those at the intersections of 11th and K streets, were related to the sale or repair of carriages and wagons.¹³ To the east of 11th Street, the district was occupied by the cathedral, the Christian Brothers School, and residences.¹⁴ As the focus of Sacramento's retail and entertainment activity

8 Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, *Old Sacramento and Downtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 76.

9 Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 70.

10 *Ibid.*, 70.

11 John E. Boll, "The Bishop Builds His Cathedral: Bishop Patrick Manogue," *Sacramento Diocesan Archives* vol. 2, no. 36, 2, https://www.scd.org/sites/default/files/2017-06/Vol_2_No_36_The_Bishop_Builds_his_Cathedral_Bishop_Patrick_Manogue.pdf.

12 Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 76.

13 Sanborn Map Company, *Sacramento, California* [map], sheets 14a and 15, 1895.

14 *Ibid.*

1 Page & Turnbull, "Raised Streets & Hollow Sidewalks," (survey report, Sacramento, CA, 2009), 7.

2 William Burg, *Sacramento's K Street: Where Our City Was Born* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 18.

3 *Ibid.*, 19-20.

4 Page & Turnbull, "Raised Streets & Hollow Sidewalks," (survey report, Sacramento, CA, 2009), 12-13.

5 *Ibid.*, 25.

6 William Burg, 44.

7 *Ibid.*, 44.



Figure 127. The Weinstock, Lubin & Co. department store decorated for Christmas (1935). Source: California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

moved eastward from the waterfront, shops and frame houses were replaced by larger commercial structures. By the turn of the century, the epicenter of Sacramento's commercial activity was shifting away from the "wholesale district" of the West End to more

desirable locations near the Capitol.¹⁵

Financial prosperity and patriotism during World War I combined to redefine the built fabric of downtown Sacramento during the first three decades of the twentieth century. By 1915, the wagon shops had disappeared from the district, carriage houses on alleys had been converted to automobile garages, and standalone houses were few and far between.¹⁶ Three industries dominated the area during this era of growth: hotels, department stores, and theaters.¹⁷ Because of their proximity to state offices, lodgings such as the Howe Apartments, the Hotel Regis, and the Senator provided a "rendezvous for legislators."¹⁸ It was commonplace for government representatives to make semi-permanent homes in the hotels adjacent to the Capitol grounds during legislative sessions.¹⁹ Likewise, the Weinstock, Lubin & Co. department store (constructed on the site of the Christian Brothers School at 1130 K Street) and the Empress Theatre (later known as the Hippodrome and Crest Theatre) designated this section of K Street as Sacramento's fashionable shopping and entertainment destination for the masses.

In keeping with the area's heightened sense of refinement and expounding off the highly-stylized Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, the buildings constructed during this early twentieth-century

¹⁵ Annette Kassis, *Weinstock's: Sacramento's Finest Department Store* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 69.

¹⁶ Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], sheets 27, 28, 37, and 38, 1915.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "New Dry Agent is Most Active," *Madera Tribune* (Madera, CA), October 27, 1924, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=MT19241027.2.20&srpos=3&e=-----192-en--20--1--txt-txIN-%22Hotel+Senator%22+Sacramento-----1>.

¹⁹ Burg, 54.



Figure 128. The Hippodrome reopened as the Crest Theatre in 1949 (1949). Source: Special Collections of the Sacramento Public Library.

period took inspiration from the latest trends and famous European examples. The design of Weinstock's, for instance, was based on the well-known Parisian department store Le Printemps.²⁰ The exterior's terracotta and marble tile cladding, ornamental medallions, abundant display windows, and impressive central vault entrance contribute to

²⁰ Kassis, 71.

the building's stately presence at the corner of K and 12th streets.

Over the next fifty years, the area underwent several dramatic transformations in the face of economic downturns, world wars, and the ubiquitous flight to the suburbs. The Great Depression put a pause on Sacramento's building boom. Though activity never completely ceased, retailers were forced to recast their business strategies for a cost-conscious market. Department stores directed their focus away from European finery towards American products, brands, and popular culture.²¹ K Street establishments gradually recovered, and sales returned to their pre-Depression average by the mid-1930s.²² Defense-related industries tied to World War II stimulated the local economy during the following decade, and the postwar period brought renewed commercial spending to downtown.²³

During the mid-twentieth century, migration to newer residential neighborhoods, increased automobile ownership, and the construction of suburban malls and theaters led to a creeping decline in urban commercial activity. By 1947, the city's extensive streetcar network was fully dismantled.²⁴ Seeking to compete with new entertainment venues opening in suburban developments, the Hippodrome Theater was renovated to include modern amenities, such as air conditioning, and reopened as the Crest Theatre in 1949. The Crest was one of the last theaters to open on K Street and one of the last to remain in

operation.²⁵

In 1955, K and L streets were converted into one-way thoroughfares, connecting the Tower Bridge to U.S. Route 40.²⁶ Finally in 1968, Interstates 5 and 80 were completed through downtown Sacramento and resulted in the diversion of automobile traffic away from the city to outlying areas.²⁷

Concerns regarding the future of Sacramento's downtown led to a series of redevelopment projects during the 1960s and 1970s. The K Street pedestrian mall, constructed in 1969 between 7th Street and 13th Street, rendered the district closed to automobile traffic, entirely. The reimagined landscape sought to attract visitors with walkable outdoor spaces, public art, and a wide selection of shops and restaurants. In the manner of the bygone streetcars, the Sacramento Regional Transit Light Rail was installed on K Street in 1987.²⁸ Though the area has never fully regained its prominence as the regional commercial center of the Sacramento Valley, the area's many offices, shops, and entertainment venues cater to the individuals who live, work, and visit downtown.

21 Ibid., 81.

22 Ibid., 81.

23 Ibid., 90-91.

24 William Burg, *Sacramento's Streetcars* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 8.

25 Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, 103.

26 William Burg, *Sacramento's K Street: Where Our City Was Born* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 117.

27 Ibid., 137.

28 Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, *Sacramento's Midtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 99.

Significance

The Cathedral Square Historic District was designated for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources by the City Preservation Commission in 1985 in Ordinance #85-076.

The following table provides a current evaluation of significance under the requirements and considers the factors based on the above historic district context and the 2018 historic district survey. Additionally, this historic district relates to the Railroad Context Statement and World War II, Transportation, and Redevelopment Context Statement of the city’s General Plan Technical Background Report.

B. Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
1. Requirements	
(a)	The Cathedral Square Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The Cathedral Square Historic District meets requirement (b)(i) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area that possesses “a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified by: (A) past events or (B) aesthetically by plan or physical development.”</p> <p>The Cathedral Square Historic District preserves a variety of high-style examples of commercial and civic/institutional architecture that characterized Sacramento’s downtown area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The buildings were constructed along K Street, historically Sacramento’s primary commercial and entertainment thoroughfare, between two of the city’s most prominent landmarks: the State Capitol building and the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. The commercial buildings in the district echo the grandeur and prestige of these buildings in their scale, massing, and use of materials. The combination of shared features further enhances the unity of the overall composition of buildings. They also present a representative grouping of many of the most popular architectural styles for commercial, civic, and institutional buildings from the 1890s to 1940s, including Italian Renaissance, Beaux Arts, Prairie, and Art Deco.</p>
(b)(ii)	<p>The Cathedral Square Historic District meets requirement (b)(ii) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area “associated with an event, person, or period significant or important to city history.”</p> <p>The Cathedral Square Historic District is significant for its association with the history of Sacramento’s commercial development for over more than one-hundred years. The commercial roots of K Street, the primary thoroughfare of the district, extend as far back as the city’s early settlement during the mid-nineteenth century. Extant hollow sidewalks in the district preserve a key moment in the city’s early history when the streets in the downtown business district were raised to protect the city against periodic floods. The city’s newfound stability allowed it to grow outward at a rapid pace. The surviving mix of buildings within the Cathedral Square Historic District reflect not only K Street’s development into Sacramento’s premier cultural, retail, and entertainment corridor, but also Sacramento’s emergence as a major metropolitan city during the first half of the twentieth century.</p>

Period of Significance: 1868-1949

The period of significance for the Cathedral Square Historic District begins with the raising of the district’s streets in 1868 and ends with the reconfiguration of the Hippodrome as the Crest Theatre in 1949.²⁹ The Crest represents one of the last theaters to open on K Street, as urban venues found it increasingly difficult to compete with their suburban counterparts. The Crest also serves as an architectural bookend for the district, exhibiting many characteristic features of the Art Deco and Late Moderne styles.

Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Commercial
- Civic/Institutional
- Residential

Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Italian Renaissance
- Beaux Arts
- Prairie
- Art Deco
- Streamline Moderne

²⁹ Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, *Old Sacramento and Downtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 103.

B. Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts

1. Requirements

(c)	The Cathedral Square Historic District meets requirement (c) for listing on the Sacramento Register as it aligns with the goals and purposes of historic preservation in Sacramento, as well as the city’s other goals and policies. Per the Sacramento City Code, the preservation of the district enhances the “city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability, and urban character.”
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(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts

2. Factors to be considered

(a)	Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The Cathedral Square Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.
(b)	Factor (2)(b) states that “the collective historic value of the buildings and structures in a historic district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building or structure.” The Cathedral Square Historic District meets this factor because its buildings and structures represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose collective historic value is greater when taken as a whole.

Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mix of civic, commercial, and residential buildings • Historically commercial and recreational buildings primarily situated along K Street • Hotels and apartments located on 11th and L streets
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertically-oriented Two- and Three-Part Block commercial buildings on L Street facing the Capitol grounds • Horizontally-oriented Two- and Three-Part Block commercial buildings on the primary K Street thoroughfare • Symmetrical facades • Central placement of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament within the district
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominately brick, stone, terracotta, or stucco • Decorative cladding on primary façade(s) and raw, exposed cladding, usually brick or concrete block, on side or rear facades
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominately flat rooflines, often with a straight-line parapet or broad overhanging eaves and ornamented soffits • Domed roofs of the cathedral • Red clay tiles on some roof overhangs
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide, recessed entrances facing K and L streets • Smaller entrance porticos facing numbered streets
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large shopfront display windows, some topped with bands of multi-lite transoms • Wood-frame casement and double-hung sash windows on upper stories

Element	Character of Historic District
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Revival details, including fluted columns and pilasters, balustrades, dentils, pedimented window hoods, circular medallions, cartouches, and niches • Italian Renaissance details, including widely overhanging eaves supported by decorative brackets, round arches above doors or porches, entrances accented by small classical columns or pilasters, and rusticated first stories • Decorative exterior sculpture work • Abstracted botanical details incorporated into friezes, column capitals, brackets, and framing around vestibules, doors, and windows • Prairie and Art Deco geometric patterns and vertical motifs • Neon signs and marquees above primary entrances and at building corners • Lighted metal awnings and canopies at the street level • Ghost signs on exposed brick surfaces
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal or no property landscaping
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rows of young deciduous trees planted in parking strips and planter boxes lining the sidewalks • Minimal or no setback • Unobstructed views of the Capitol looking south on 11th Street • Extant hollow sidewalks and sunken alleyways dating to the street raising campaigns of the 1860s

Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the Cathedral Square Historic District.

To view the statuses of individual properties as contributing or non-contributing resources to the historic district, refer to the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources.



Figure 129. Map of the Cathedral Square Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.

District-Specific Standards & Criteria

Design Principle

Maintain and preserve the historic character of the district while integrating new development and uses that enhance K Street's role as part of Sacramento's premier, historic cultural, retail, and entertainment corridor.

Rationale

The Cathedral Square Historic District contains a concentration of grand commercial and institutional buildings that reflect K Street's historic role as Sacramento's commercial and cultural center from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The spires of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and Capitol building form visual focal points to the north and south and influence the scale and grandeur of the contributing buildings in the historic district, many of which were designed in the Renaissance Revival style.

In addition to the Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts in Section 1, the following district-specific standards and criteria apply when planning a project in the Cathedral Square Historic District.

1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Avoid filling in or obstructing historic window or door openings.
- 1.2 Re-open historic window and door openings that have been filled in.
 - Use compatible new window and door materials, types, and forms.



Figure 130. Decorative exterior ornamentation contributes to the textures and visual richness of the district.



Figure 131. Some contributing buildings contain significant public spaces that should be maintained and preserved.

2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Minimize the effect of additions on symmetrical building facades or compositions.
 - Where rooftop additions are desired, consider using step backs in order to maintain the existing street façade height of adjacent contributing buildings.
- 2.2 Design additions such that the primacy of the Capitol building and Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento is maintained.
- 2.3 Use durable, high-quality materials that are compatible with the materials of adjacent contributing buildings in the district such as brick, stone, terracotta, or stucco.

3. New (Infill) Construction & Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources

- 3.1 Preserve the historic pattern of siting new buildings with a zero-lot-line setback from the street.
- 3.2 Design new buildings such that the primacy of the Capitol building and Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento is maintained.
- 3.3 Step down taller buildings to maintain the existing street façade height of adjacent contributing buildings,

- 3.4 Align windows, doors, and variations in façade treatments to the extent feasible with that of adjacent contributing buildings in order to maintain the pattern of Two- and Three-Part Block buildings in the district.
 - When not possible, utilize the average datum lines of contributing properties.
 - Refer to definition of Two-Part and Three-Part Commercial Block buildings in Appendix C.
- 3.5 Use materials that are compatible with the materials of contributing buildings in the district, such as brick, stone, terracotta, or stucco.



Figure 132. The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacramento is the visual centerpiece of the district.



Figure 133. Wide overhanging eaves are a common feature of many contributing buildings in the district.

- 3.6 Consider the use of overhanging eaves that are compatible in scale and proportion to adjacent contributing buildings.
- 3.7 Consider incorporating a base, shaft, and crown into the design of new infill development. Consider providing one or more wide, recessed entry that faces the primary street as the primary entrance of the new building.

4. Site Features & Landscaping

- 4.1 Avoid site features or landscaping that obstruct views of the Capitol and Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.
- 4.2 Maintain, preserve, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic lighting and signage features.
- 4.3 Use signage methods, materials, and proportions that are reflective of those of historic signage used on contributing properties within the district.
- 4.4 Preserve and enhance the pedestrian-only siting and landscaping of 11th Street.

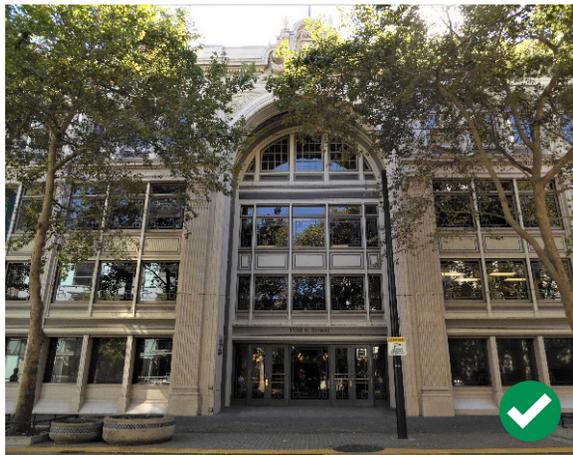


Figure 134. Recessed entries provide a historic precedent for the design and placement of building entrances.



Figure 135. Historic signage, including a number of ghost signs, contribute to the character of the district.