

Describe the present and original (it known) physical appearance

The Main Street Historic District in downtown Baton Rouge is a discrete more or less contiguous strip of party wall late nineteenth-early twentieth century commercial buildings. There are twelve buildings encompassing two-and-one-half blocks. Despite one intrusion and some alterations, the district retains its National Register eligibility.

The Main Street Historic District was selected for nomination from the recently completed Architectural and Historical Survey of Downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana as part of the State Historic Preservation Offices ongoing search for eligible properties in recently surveyed areas. The grouping has a mixed one and two story scale, but the overall height is impressive by modern standards because even the one story examples have high ceilings and parapets. The district is distinguished by the number of architectural styles in evidence, albeit in diluted form. Styles include Italianate, neo-classical, Renaissance Revival, Gothic and Modernistic, as well as "commercial vernacular." This gives the district a richness one would not find in modern construction. Most of the buildings are brick and most (60%) have second story spaces which are (or once were) apartments. All in all, the district represents a typical grouping which could have been found in any large southern town during the period.

#### Intrusions

There is only one intrusion -- a low characterless building which does not significantly interrupt the streetscape. Its presence does not diminish the district's status as Baton Rouge's only major historic commercial grouping.

#### Contributing Elements

Because the district is significant as a grouping of c.1890 to 1935 commercial buildings, any commercial building from that period which has not been altered beyond recognition is listed as a contributing element.

#### Integrity

The only integrity consideration in the district is the replacement of original shopfronts on all but two of the buildings (#s 3 and 9). Because most commercial buildings in the city have had their shopfronts replaced, the shopfront replacement in the district has not lowered its relative value as a commercial grouping. Also, most of the replacement work has been low-key and relatively unobtrusive.

#### Inventory

1. 1924, #442, Saltz Building. Two story, brick, vaguely Gothic commercial building with crenellated parapet, panels, and hood molds.
2. c.1920, #454-50.  
One story stucco and glazed brick commercial building with Baroque-looking shaped parapets.
3. c.1935, #460.  
One story buff brick Modernistic commercial building with horizontal bands of brick and carrara glass shopfront.
4. c.1890, #500 (built sometime between 1885 and 1891 Sanborn maps)  
Two story Italianate commercial building of masonry and rusticated stucco, Noteworthy for its decorative shallow arch window hoods and its elaborate cornice.
5. c.1912 (built sometime between 1911 and 1916 Sanborn maps)  
Two story brick commercial building with heavy corbel table,
6. c.1915, #544-6. (built sometime between 1911 and 1916 Sanborn maps)  
Two story brick neo-classical commercial building with a full arcade on the upper story encompassing a recessed balcony, Bays are marked with pilasters, and the whole arcade is surmounted by a full entablature and parapet.

7. Intrusion, #600-602.  
One story brick and stucco commercial building with no architectural character, c.1945.
8. c.1920, #618, Duggan Building. (built sometime between 1916 and 1923 Sanborn maps)  
Two story stucco commercial building in the Renaissance style with pantile roof and numerous teas relief panels showing brincade, urns, and other classical devices.
9. 1915, #624-26, Liberto Building.  
Two story brick commercial building with a shaped parapet and shallow arched fenestration. The building retains its original cantilever gallery upstairs and the original shopfront downstairs. It is noteworthy for its extensive use of beaded board and its gallery windows which are composed of numerous small panes (a Queen Anne Revival "carryover").
10. c.1925, #640.  
One story brick classical style commercial building with the suggestion of pilasters and a more or less full entablature.
11. c.1920, #654.  
Two story brick neo-classical commercial building featuring brick pilasters with papyrus and acanthus capitals, a full entablature, and the suggestion of a pediment shaped parapet.
12. c.1920, #660, (built sometime between 1916 and 1923 Sanborn maps)  
One story brick commercial building with brick panels, a cornice, and a parapet.

Significant dates           c.1890-c.1935  
Builder/Architect           N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

The Main Street Historic District is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is an important grouping of historic commercial buildings within the context of the City of Baton Rouge. The previously mentioned Baton Rouge survey has identified some 122 50+ year old structures in the central business district. Many of these have been badly altered and would be considered intrusions by the National Park Service. There are also numerous newer buildings as well as vacant lots where older commercial structures once stood. Unlike many other central business districts, downtown Baton Rouge remained prosperous after the Depression and into the 1950's and '60's. As a result, it suffered considerable alteration and demolition. The Main Street District is the only cohesive grouping of historic commercial buildings remaining in the city. Other areas contain older commercial buildings, sometimes in groups of two, three, or four, but they are scattered among newer buildings, badly altered historic buildings, and vacant lots. Thus the Main Street District is immensely important as a representative period townscape for the City of Baton Rouge.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Architectural and Historical Survey of Downtown Baton Rouge, Louisiana. July 1984. Prepared under the auspices of the Foundation for Historical Louisiana and the City of Baton Rouge-Parish of East Baton Rouge.

Sanborn Insurance Co. Maps, Baton Rouge, 1885, 1891, 1898, 1903, 1908, 1911, 1915, 1923.