



LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: Commercial Development, 1859-1980

Theme: Neighborhood Commercial Development, 1880-1980



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Department of City Planning
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PREFACE

This theme of Neighborhood Commercial Development is a component of Los Angeles' citywide historic context statement and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to this commercial category. Refer to HistoricPlacesLA.org for information on designated resources associated with this theme as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

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THEME INTRODUCTION

The theme of Neighborhood Commercial Development, examines individual resources and historic districts which housed neighborhood retail and professional services. Neighborhood commercial resources are those that contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. These resources evidence how neighborhood commercial building types and spatial layouts changed over time to accommodate different modes of transportation as well as prevailing planning and design trends in commercial development.

This historic context begins with an overview, and then, as sub-themes, looks at both neighborhood commercial settings and specific neighborhood commercial building types. There are four neighborhood commercial settings that are treated as sub-themes. The first and second of these take the form of commercial corridors, a linear arrangement of resources along a route of transport that served a neighborhood, and include Streetcar Commercial Development and Arterial Commercial Development. Both streetcar and arterial commercial development include individual buildings as well as historic districts. Both flourished from the 1880s to the mid-1950s. The difference between the two is their relationship to modes of transportation. Streetcar Commercial Development includes resources that lined routes served by rail transit. Arterial Commercial Development includes resources along traffic routes without streetcars. They relied instead on pedestrian, wagon, or automobile-borne clients.

The third setting treated as a sub-theme is that of the Neighborhood Downtown and/or Village. This includes historic districts which are significant as planned or evolved commercial communities that see themselves as separate from nearby commercial areas. Some of these downtowns/villages are linear and began as separated segments of streetcar or arterial commercial development. Others are nodal, oriented around a central point or cluster of streets. What differentiates them from streetcar and arterial development is the sense of separation, through geography, planning and/or self-recognition, from adjacent neighborhood commerce.

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The fourth setting is the Postwar Neighborhood Shopping Center. It can consist of a single resource or a grouping of resources. Its identity as a separate sub-theme lies in its rejection of the pre-war orientation of neighborhood commercial architecture toward the street, and its replacement by an orientation around a parking lot.

There are also a number of individual commercial building types discussed as sub-themes. These building types may be significant as individual resources and/or may be contributing resources to historic districts. They include neighborhood markets, banks, theaters, variety stores, and restaurants.

The neighborhood commercial “strip mall” is not included in this context, and is the subject of future research and analysis.¹ Downtown and regional commercial resources, such as those along Hollywood Boulevard and the Wilshire-Miracle mile, are also not included in this theme. These resources are distinct from neighborhood commercial resources in that they house functions that draw clientele from beyond a particular neighborhood. Downtown and regional commercial outlets offer goods, services, and/or an ambiance which cannot be found in a neighborhood commercial district.

Evaluation Considerations:

The Neighborhood Commercial Development theme may have some overlap with other SurveyLA themes as follows:

- Properties significant for their architectural quality may also be eligible under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context such as Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mid Century Modern, and other styles discussed in the narrative below.
- Auto-related commercial properties (which may be neighborhood oriented) are evaluated under the Commercial Development and the Automobile theme.
- Multi-family rental properties along streetcar lines are evaluate under the Streetcar Suburbanization theme and Multi-Family Residential Development theme of the Residential Development and Suburbanization context.
- Commercial properties associated with significant businesses and/or significant individuals are evaluated under the Commercial Identity and Commercial Merchants, Builders, and Leaders themes respectively.
- Neighborhood commercial types associated with ethnic/cultural groups are discussed in further detail in the ethnic/cultural contexts.
- Major motion picture theaters (movie palaces) are evaluated under the Entertainment Industry context.
- Neighborhood oriented hotels are evaluated under the Hotels theme of the Commercial Development context.

¹ Strip malls were not included in SurveyLA.

HISTORIC CONTEXT



*Los Angeles Street north from Arcadia Street, circa 1882
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

For its first thirty-five years under Anglo-American rule, Los Angeles was essentially a small town. Residents numbered 1610 in 1850. This increased to 4,385 by 1860, to 5,728 by 1870, and to 11,183 by 1880. There were no geographically separate neighborhoods with their own business districts. Commerce of all sorts concentrated around the Old Plaza and the newer business district to the south, and most residents lived within walking distance of this commercial core.²

Within this walking city, however, distinct neighborhoods emerged that were determined by the economic and ethnic composition of the residents. As the Anglo-American population moved south, the blocks around the Old Plaza were left to others. The district around the Plaza Church became home for Mexican Americans, while the section to the east and southeast, including North Los Angeles Street,

² Spencer Crump, *Ride the Big Red Cars: How the Trolleys Helped Build Southern California*, Fourth Edition (Corona del Mar CA: Trans-Anglo Books, 1970), 232-233.

became Chinatown. The retail businesses along these blocks were neighborhood businesses, in that they provided services for a distinct group living nearby.³



*Temple Street west from Bunker Hill, circa 1876
Probable commercial building in foreground
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

At the same time, along the edges of the walking city, there were settlements that combined scattered homes with an occasional commercial establishment. This establishment typically served as a sort of general store such as one would find in rural settlements of the day. The pattern of a single free-standing commercial building, sitting among dwellings, is one that survived well into the twentieth century.

The Streetcar Era, 1885-1920

The neighborhood as something spatially separate from the central city, complete with its own commercial district, was a product of the streetcar. The streetcar allowed residents to disperse and, in the process, seek shops and services closer to their new homes.

Los Angeles began developing public transit as early as 1874. A horse-drawn streetcar line began service that year along a two-and-one-half-mile route that went from the Plaza south along Main and Spring

³ The area to the east and southeast of the Plaza, including North Los Angeles Street, is specifically called out as “Chinatown” in the 1888 Sanborn Map.

Streets to Sixth. It was followed by a number of other short and unconnected routes. By 1876 a horse-drawn car line had been extended north along Spring Street (then known as San Fernando Road), across the Los Angeles River, and into Lincoln Heights (then known as East Los Angeles) along North Broadway (then known as Downey Avenue). By 1880 a second horse car line also crossed the river and ran along Aliso Avenue to serve Boyle Heights. But, before the population boom of the late 1880s, there was simply not enough demand to justify widespread construction of lines such as these.⁴

This changed with the influx of newcomers. In the decade between 1880 and 1890 Los Angeles grew from 11,183 to 50,395. The result was an increase in both the number and reach of the horse car lines, as well as the installation of cable cars and experiments with crude electrically-powered transit. By 1889, the lines to Lincoln Heights and Boyle Heights had been converted to cable cars, and a cable car line ran northwest along Temple Street to serve the newly opened subdivision of Angelino Heights. Additional cable cars ran south on Grand to Jefferson and west on Seventh Street to Alvarado. Experimental electric lines ran south on Maple to 32nd Street and west on Pico to Harvard.⁵

The creation of these early lines set a pattern that would be followed by the electric trolleys in the decades to come. Developers of horse and cable routes first built their lines into vacant land. They then subdivided the land into home sites. They understood that a neighborhood commercial district was necessary for a residential subdivision to be successful, and laid out narrow lots along the streets containing the car lines. These plots were marketed to investors who would build storefronts and business blocks.⁶

The oldest and most developed of these early neighborhoods was Lincoln Heights. It was within the original city limits of Los Angeles and had been subdivided in 1873. Most of the city's industry at this time was located adjacent to the rail lines along the banks of the Los Angeles River, and Lincoln Heights was well located to serve as a home for workers. By the late 1880s a neighborhood commercial district had been constructed around the corner of North Broadway and Truman Streets, and contained business buildings such as the Hayden Block. The district was later demolished to make way for the Golden State Freeway (Interstate 5).⁷

⁴ Scott L. Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 28; Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967 [1983]), 41; Lincoln Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), L.A. Office of Historic Resources; Robert Post, *Street Railways and the Growth of Los Angeles: Horse, Cable, Electric Lines* (San Marino CA: Golden West Books, 1989), 25, 32.

⁵ Crump, *Ride the Big Red Cars*, 232-233; Post, *Street Railways and the Growth of Los Angeles*, 58, 70, 89.

⁶ Crump, *Ride the Big Red Cars*, 35-36; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 85-86; Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 62-63.

⁷ Lincoln Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), L.A. Office of Historic Resources; 1888 Sanborn Map (Building is called Hayden Block on the Sanborn Map; later sources refer to it as the Haden Block).



North Broadway (Downey Avenue) in Lincoln Heights (East Los Angeles), circa 1939

The Hayden Block (two-story building at center-right) dated from the 1880s

(Los Angeles Public Library)

The growth that had begun with the boom of the 1880s continued for the next several decades. The population of 50,395 in 1890 increased to 102,479 in 1900 and to 319,198 in 1910. By 1920 it reached 576,673. The city accommodated these newcomers by spreading out from its historic walking-city limits, and creating new neighborhoods with their own commercial business districts.⁸

What made this spread possible was the development of an increasingly efficient streetcar network. Beginning in the mid-1890s the streetcar system experienced two changes that greatly extended its reach. The first was the perfection of an electrically-driven streetcar, making use of overhead wires that fed the car's motors through the use of a top-mounted pole, or trolley. As these electric cars, or trolleys as they were popularly known, became more dependable, they replaced the earlier horse-drawn and cable cars, and gave the city a device that allowed for faster and cleaner mass transit.⁹

The second change was the consolidation of the streetcar lines into a coordinated network. Through a number of changes in ownership, the various routes by 1911 had become two complementary companies. The narrow-gauge Los Angeles Railway extended into all parts of the city except for the northwest. The standard-gauge Pacific Electric, primarily an interurban system, served the northwest part of the city via Glendale Boulevard to Echo Park and via Sunset to Santa Monica and Hollywood

⁸ Crump, *Ride the Big Red Cars*, 232-233.

⁹ Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, 28-29.

Boulevards. The Los Angeles Railway, or LARY, carried almost ninety percent of the riders within the city limits. The Pacific Electric, or PE, transported the remainder.¹⁰

The growth of the streetcar network occurred rapidly. As early as 1893, new trolley lines extended toward the south on Central Avenue to Slauson and toward the southwest to Vermont and Exposition. By 1898, lines extended to the west along Seventh and Ninth Streets to Hoover, and on First to Alvarado. By 1900 they were joined by lines extending west along Washington Boulevard and First Street, and south along San Pedro and Main. The older lines that crossed the river were extended further east, and a new line introduced along what is today's Valley Road in Lincoln Heights.¹¹

By 1914 the development of the network was basically complete. The area within five miles of Downtown was covered with a web of streetcar routes. To the northeast a line provided service on North Figueroa Street (then Pasadena Avenue) to Highland Park. To the southeast the older First Avenue line was joined by a line on Cesar Chavez Avenue (then Brooklyn Avenue) to serve Brooklyn Heights. To the south, lines ran on Central Avenue to Manchester Boulevard, and on Broadway and Vermont Avenues to south of Imperial.¹²

On the west side, the West Adams line extended to La Brea, and the Washington, Pico, and Tenth Street lines to well past Crenshaw. The Third Street line reached as far as Highland. Important for the emergence of neighborhood commercial districts were the points where lines crossed. This was particularly true for the Vermont line, which extended from south of Imperial Highway to north of Melrose, and crossed all the important east-west lines of the LARY.¹³

There were, in addition, lines that served more distant sections. A LARY line extended north to Eagle Rock and southwest to Hyde Park and Hawthorne. The PE's service to Santa Monica extended its Westgate branch into Brentwood via San Vicente Boulevard, and the line to Hollywood crossed the Cahuenga Pass to reach Van Nuys and the San Fernando Valley. The Venice Short Line provided rapid access to the beach resort via what later became Venice Boulevard.¹⁴

The expansion of the streetcar network led to differentiation between neighborhood and Downtown commerce. The streetcar increased the distance between residential districts and the central city, and, at the same time, made access to the central city easier. The result was that major retailers, such as department stores, built large-scale establishments Downtown to serve the specialized needs of customers, while neighborhood stores increasingly limited their stock to everyday requirements and were content with smaller, less impressive, structures.¹⁵

¹⁰ Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, 31; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 92; 1937 *Route Map of the Los Angeles Railway*, in the Map Collection of the Los Angeles Public Library.

¹¹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 88; Post, *Street Railways*, 112, 142.

¹² Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, 170; 1937 *Route Map of the Los Angeles Railway*.

¹³ 1937 *Route Map of the Los Angeles Railway*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, 18-19.



*North Figueroa Street (Pasadena Avenue) in Highland Park, circa 1906
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The neighborhood shopping districts based on trolley service took on the look of small towns. North Figueroa Street, then known as Pasadena Avenue, in Highland Park was typical. Single story storefronts and two-story business blocks, with shops below and professional office above, lined the streetcar route like a Midwestern Main Street. Interspersed among the attached storefronts and business blocks were the occasional freestanding institutional building that predated the coming of the train. The trolley car dominated the street, with only the occasional wagon to add congestion.

There were, at the same time, a few residential areas that remained without transit. Much like the earlier fringes of the city, these areas had their own commercial centers, often consisting of no more than a crossroads market or general store. If there was more than one building, they typically assumed a linear pattern, similar to that found along the streetcar routes. This followed from the same kind of subdivision pattern of narrow business lots fronting on what the developer hoped would become a heavily trafficked boulevard.

The Period of Transition, 1920-1945

During the 1920s, Los Angeles became a city of metropolitan scale. Its population grew from 576,673 in 1920 to 1,238,048 in 1930. It managed further to increase its size during the economically difficult years of the 1930s, and numbered 1,504,277 residents in 1940.¹⁶

Serving this population by 1920 were at least ten outlying commercial districts, each containing eighty or more businesses. They ranged from the older close-in districts such as Lincoln Heights to the newer and more distant Van Nuys in the San Fernando Valley. Along South Broadway alone, between 42nd and 50th Streets, there were approximately 180 businesses, selling dry goods, jewelry, shoes, men's wear, hardware, plumbing supplies, paint and stationary.¹⁷

In addition to these major neighborhood centers there existed numerous smaller ones. The typical neighborhood commercial district of the 1920s contained between forty and sixty businesses. It continued the architectural pattern from the period before 1920, but with fewer multi-story blocks and more single-story storefront rows. Perhaps the most important change, in terms of tenants, was the growing prevalence of chains, particularly drug and grocery stores. During the 1920s these chains preferred renting space in storefront blocks, rather than construct their own iconic buildings. This would change.¹⁸

These neighborhood commercial districts were for the most part streetcar commercial development, products of the expansion of the trolley network in the pre-war years. By the end of the 1920s, however, they had begun to give way to business districts dependent instead upon the automobile. This early arterial development at first followed the pattern of corridor-like lines of shops and business blocks characteristic of streetcar development. By the late 1920s, however, different relationships to the street, in attempting to deal with the automobile, had emerged.

The automobile had become a common presence on the streets of Los Angeles as early as 1910. But it was in the decade after the First World War of 1917 and 1918 that car ownership in Los Angeles became the norm. At the same time, the trolley system began to decline as a means of transportation. Neither the Los Angeles Railway nor the Pacific Electric expanded its system significantly after 1913 and ridership per capita of both systems fell after the mid-1920s, once auto ownership became common.¹⁹

The increasing presence of the car after the First World War required Los Angeles to improve its street system. Before the war some major thoroughfares had been upgraded for auto use. These included

¹⁶ Crump, *Ride the Big Red Cars*, 232-233.

¹⁷ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 58-59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59, 63-64, 71-72.

¹⁹ Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, 40, 49, 54-55, 93. The growth of auto ownership can be seen in the decrease in the number of residents per car in Los Angeles. In 1915, there were 8.2 individuals per auto (as compared to 43.1 nationally). By 1920 there were 3.6 (13.1 nationally), by 1925 there were 1.8 (6.6 nationally) and by 1930 there were 1.5 (5.3 nationally).

arteries with streetcar service such as Central Avenue, Vermont Avenue, and Pico Boulevard. These routes were generally thirty to fifty feet wide and topped by some kind of firm surface.²⁰

But these improvements were soon overwhelmed by the increase in car ownership. In 1924 community leaders hired the firm of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted to prepare a survey of existing conditions and make recommendations for improvement. This study, entitled *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles*, covered what was then the extent of settlement. It reached to the south as far as Hyde Park and 110th Street, to the west as far as the city of Beverly Hills, and to the southwest as far as Culver City.²¹

The plan called for the improvement of arterial streets for through traffic. These arterials were to be widened and, where necessary, relocated to eliminate intersections through which they did not directly connect. The plan realistically identified these arterials to be those streets that were already being heavily used for automobile traffic, and thereby made implementation of its recommendations more likely. The City accepted the plan and during the next six years carried out many of its recommendations.²²

The improved arterials resulting from these improvements were designated as locations for commerce through the City's zoning power. The first comprehensive zoning ordinance, drafted in 1925, accepted the common corridor or linear arrangement. Both thoroughfares with streetcar service, such as Santa Monica Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, and arterials without trolley lines, such as Beverly Boulevard, were classified "C-Zone – Commercial-Business Uses." This led to an abundance of commercially-zoned land that permitted the spread of linear neighborhood shopping districts along streets served by the automobile alone.²³

During much of the 1920s, the architecture of the older streetcar and the newer auto-dominated arterial corridors was essentially the same. The most common form of building for both was the storefront. It consisted of neutral commercial space to be rented. A storefront building provided a location for retail purposes that could change over time, with each tenant adapting the space to fit the needs of the merchandise through minor interior alterations and exterior signs.²⁴

The neutral-space storefront building could be single- or multi-storied. Single-story buildings were typically called storefront blocks and consisted of rows of shops facing the street. Each storefront contained an entrance and a show window. Multi-storied buildings were known as business blocks and combined storefronts on the first floor with rental space above. This rental space generally consisted of

²⁰ Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 92-94.

²¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, Harlan Bartholomew and Charles Henry Cheney, *A Major Traffic Street Plan for Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Traffic Commission of the City and County of Los Angeles, 1924), *passim*.

²² *Ibid*.

²³ Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 254-257; Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 60, 63-64, 67.

²⁴ A good typology of commercial architecture is provided in Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide of American Commercial Architecture, Updated Edition* (Walnut Creek CA: Alta Mira Press, 1987 [2000]).

offices for professionals such as physicians, dentists, and lawyers, although it could also contain apartments or meeting space.²⁵

The single-story storefront block was more common, although along some of the more heavily trafficked routes and at intersections the multi-story business block could be found. The single-story form was particularly popular along the newer arterial shopping streets that had no streetcar lines and depended exclusively upon the automobile. It could contain as few as two units, but many had around six units and a few as many as ten.²⁶

The goal of the owner was to have a mix of tenants that would provide a steady income. Owners often used real estate brokers to find them. Ideally a drug or grocery store, often the outlet of a chain, would move in, as a means of attracting a steady flow of customers to make the rest of the spaces attractive. The neutral nature of the individual storefronts made them suitable for such a variety. Owners were willing to combine storefronts for tenants, such as chain grocery stores, which required larger spaces.²⁷

Construction after the First World War was almost universally of masonry. Brick and terra cotta were common, and employed in a pier-and-spandrel mode, which allowed for an open storefront. The style could be considered a sort of commercial vernacular, with the pier-and-spandrel structure providing a rhythm to the line of similar-sized storefronts. On to this were grafted ornamental details in a variety of styles. Inevitably, however, the signs of the merchants overwhelmed the architecture.²⁸

There were those buildings that, while working within the storefront and business block format, broke with the commercial vernacular. This was particularly the case in the newer, and often more prosperous, shopping districts which were dependent upon the automobile rather than the streetcar. More elegant forms and adventurous massing were employed. Early arterial commercial development along corridors such as Beverly Boulevard was in particular characterized by this development.

²⁵ Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 40-42; Longstreth, *Buildings of Main Street*, 16-17.

²⁶ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 62-64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.



*Shops, 1928
8151 Beverly Boulevard
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

At the same time, there were significant exceptions to the storefront and the business block in both streetcar- and automobile-oriented commercial corridors of the 1920s. They consisted of new building types created to stand out as monuments along the street wall. Two types in particular are notable. One was the neighborhood bank. The other was the neighborhood theater.

Before the First World War, both of these building types had for the most part been content to house themselves in traditional storefronts and business blocks. But during the 1920s, through the use of larger scale and more elaborate design, banks and theaters developed forms that stood as advertisements for themselves. At the same time, they respected the rules of the street, maintaining the wall without a break and simply becoming dramatic accent points along the linear path.

While the linear or corridor format continued to dominate, there were two innovations. The first consisted of experiments, in those arterial districts which were dependent on the automobile, to find some way to provide parking. Storefronts and business blocks began to separate themselves from each other and set themselves back from the street. This was particularly true in newer, better-off districts,

such as Pacific Palisades, which were far from existing neighborhood business districts and where it could safely be assumed that customers had easy access to cars.

The second was the emergence of the neighborhood downtown or village. This was the concept of a distinct commercial district separate from nearby business corridors. In some cases it was a product of an area's earlier existence as a separate city that consolidated with Los Angeles. In others, it was a matter of local businessmen branding what was a somewhat isolated linear arrangement as a distinct entity.

A neighborhood downtown or village could also be a product of advanced planning and ongoing design control by a developer. There are two examples of this from the late 1920s. One is Leimert Park, a middle-class residential community that contained a neighborhood commercial district with a streetcar stop. Its neighborhood businesses, including a market and a theater, were arranged around a central plaza complete with fountain (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 620.)

The other is Westwood Village, created as a commercial center for the newly-established UCLA campus. It differed from Leimert Park in two ways. First, it was totally dependent upon the automobile. Second, it had ambitions to become a regional destination for the well-off, as well as to serve the day-to-day needs of nearby residents.

Leimert Park and, especially, Westwood Village were both able to continue building commercial structures into the 1930s. But much of the rest of the city saw a dramatic decline in new construction during this decade. The period of the corridor-like streetcar and auto-based arterial commercial district, with its street wall of attached storefronts and no provision for parking, was essentially at an end. What took its place, once construction resumed toward the end of the 1930s, was a new form. This was the detached single-purpose commercial structure joined by its own highly visible parking lot. It was the grocery store which pioneered in recasting neighborhood commerce into this more automobile-friendly arrangement.

During the late 1920s, some upscale food emporia, such as the Chapman Park Market (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 386) experimented with rear parking screened from view by architectural devices. But that proved to be too limiting an approach. Instead the grocery store, soon to become the supermarket, followed the site plan put forth by the Sears Roebuck Store and Mail Order House of 1926-1927 at Olympic and Soto (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 788). By 1940 the free-standing supermarket, with its large scale, pylon sign, and adjacent parking lot with a direct entrance into the store, was a familiar sight in Los Angeles. This was the type that other businesses came to follow. Only in maintaining its front against the sidewalk did it retain a traditional relationship with the street.



*Opening of Ralphs Market, 1941
Exposition Boulevard and Crenshaw Avenue
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Triumph of the Automobile, 1945-1980

Widespread resumption of neighborhood commercial construction had to wait until the end of the Second World War in 1945. But the basis for it, the creation of the freeway system and the resulting opening of land for larger building plots, actually began before the war. The result, by the late 1940s, was the availability of ample space, particularly in the San Fernando Valley, to create new neighborhood commercial forms friendly to the automobile.

The 1930s saw a general halt to new subdivisions and street construction. Only toward the end of the decade did the infusion of federal funds for defense generate a resumption of growth. Much of this occurred, within the Los Angeles city limits, in the southwest areas around Westchester and the airfield that became Los Angeles International Airport. Arterials such as Sepulveda Boulevard were improved and acquired adjacent housing for defense workers. This was also the location of innovative neighborhood commercial construction in the immediate postwar period.²⁹

²⁹ Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), 143.

Significant for other parts of Los Angeles was the beginning of the freeway system. The Automobile Club of Southern California submitted a proposal for a network of expressways in the 1930s, and the idea was adopted by both the city and the state. By 1942 a segment of the Hollywood Freeway (U.S. 101), passing through the Cahuenga Pass, and the entire Arroyo Seco Parkway (California 110) to Pasadena had been completed. The two decades after the war, from 1943 to 1965, saw most of the original Auto Club plan carried out.³⁰

For the development of neighborhood commerce, the most important result of the freeway system was the opening of the San Fernando Valley. Its arterial streets, zoned “C-Zone – Commercial-Business Uses,” were now readily accessible. Widespread ownership of the passenger car and the relative scarcity of existing building stock made the San Fernando Valley the center for neighborhood commercial architecture in post-war Los Angeles.

Before 1940 the Valley had been overwhelmingly agricultural. The Los Angeles Aqueduct arrived in 1913 and the Valley was annexed to the city in 1915. But it was not commonly considered part of the metropolis. It had by the 1920s two commercial sections. One was Van Nuys Boulevard, which functioned much like a railroad suburb, with business clustered around its Pacific Electric stop. The other was Ventura Boulevard, which had been improved as a state highway and resembled an auto-oriented corridor of early arterial commercial development.³¹

At the same time, although sparsely settled at this time, the rest of Valley was laced with north-south and east-west roads. The *Comprehensive Report on the Master Plan of Highways* of 1941 specifically identified them. They included Ventura, Devonshire, Parenthood, and Vanowen, plus Victory and Burbank east of Sepulveda, as east-to-west routes. North-to-south routes included Topanga Canyon-Canoga, Reseda, Sepulveda, Van Nuys, Laurel Canyon, and Lankershim.³²

Because of this, once the freeway system reached the more distant parts of the Valley, a grid of arterial roadways, zoned commercial, was already in place. During the 1950s tracts of housing filled the still-vacant land west of Van Nuys and north of Ventura Boulevard. With the completion of the Ventura (U.S. 101), San Diego (Interstate 405), and Golden State (Interstate 5) Freeways in the 1960s, the valley reached maturity as the premier middle-class residential district of Los Angeles.³³

The result was a shift of commercial construction from the older Valley corridors, such as Van Nuys and Ventura Boulevards, and toward the larger plots of land available along the other arteries. By the mid-1960s this shift was pronounced enough to lead some experts to fear for the decline of the older areas. There was, they felt, simply too much land along the arterials zoned commercial, perhaps up to four

³⁰ Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 88;

³¹ Richard L. Preston, “The Changing Landscape of the San Fernando Valley Between 1930 and 1964,” in *The California Geographer*, Volume VI (1965), 61.

³² *A Comprehensive Report on the Master Plan of Highways for the Los Angeles County Regional Planning District – Volume I, The Plan and its Preparation* (Los Angeles: Regional Planning Commission, 1941), 31.

³³ Preston, “Changing Landscape,” 67.

times that needed by the number of residents. Yet it was precisely this abundance of commercial space, often in relatively large parcels at reasonable prices, which allowed for an auto-friendly neighborhood commercial architecture to develop.³⁴



*Storefronts, circa 1949
5027 Lankershim Boulevard, North Hollywood
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Three patterns dominated this new development in the Valley and, where space allowed, elsewhere in the city as well. All three were responses to accommodating the automobile. They all drew upon ideas that had been explored during the 1920s. But, because of the strength of tradition and existing land use patterns, as well as the collapse of the market for new commercial space in the early 1930s, these ideas did not have a chance to develop. The building boom in the years after the Second World War allowed these new approaches to become commonplace and supplant the older forms.

The first pattern was to maintain the tradition of attached storefronts, working as a group to create a street wall of continuous businesses, but provide parking in the rear. The shop fronts may have been modern in their use of current architectural forms, but fit with the historic pattern of both streetcar and auto-oriented arterial commercial development. At the same time, the rear parking was the first step toward the neighborhood shopping center.

The rear parking lot was familiar by the late 1920s. Bullocks Wilshire (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 56) had used it with great success in 1928, and it became the norm for elite department stores along

³⁴ Ibid., 65-72.

the Boulevard. But it required the assembly of land in arrangements not generally possible within the existing subdivisions laid out in the first decades of the twentieth century.



*Barker Brothers Branch Store, circa 1958
6505 Van Nuys Boulevard, Van Nuys
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The second pattern was to construct a large free-standing retail structure, specifically built for an individual retailer, which would maintain its traditional position along the street but would be set next to its own parking lot. The side parking lot was also an idea that dated from the late 1920s, and had its most prominent use in the supermarket of the 1930s. It became particularly prevalent in newer areas where space to spread was present and there was less of an existing storefront fabric to disrupt. The result was a rhythm of solid and void along the street. This rhythm became more pronounced as the scale of the buildings, and their adjoining parking lots, increased.³⁵

Free-standing structures were the norm for many of the retail and service chains that began constructing their own outlets after the war. Entities such as variety stores had previously been content to use rental space in storefronts and business blocks. But, with increasing prosperity and the example of the automobile-oriented roadside architecture of the pre-war period, the chains began to construct their own buildings. Taking from roadside architecture, they employed iconic design motives as large-scale advertisement.

³⁵ Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 76-126.



*Encino Shopping Center, circa 1961
4922 Balboa Boulevard, Encino
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The third innovative pattern was a rejection of the traditional relationship with the street entirely. Instead, the parking lot faced the street, in the pattern typical of highway architecture, and the commercial structure was positioned behind. It could take the form of a single structure built for a specific retailer, a collection of generic retail outlets built for rental, or more often, as the form developed, a combination of the two.

The typical form of this neighborhood shopping center had emerged by the mid-1950s. It was anchored by a supermarket, the design of which followed from the markets of the late 1930s. It was joined by series of smaller stores containing the retailers previously found in the storefronts of the streetcar and early neighborhood commercial developments. Surrounding these elements was the parking lot. Facing the street was a sign announcing the presence of the ensemble.

In the years that followed, a pattern developed which combined the neighborhood shopping center with the single-purpose stand-alone neighborhood commercial building. The neighborhood center, typically with a supermarket, was located at the rear of the parking lot. At the front, generally on the corners flanking the parking lot, were placed free-standing structures, such as branch banks or chain restaurants. These free-standing corner structures assumed a degree of architectural presence separate from the shopping center to the rear, using either more sophisticated architectural dress or the standard iconic design of the chain.

SUB-THEME: STREETCAR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1880-1934

The Streetcar Commercial Development sub-theme consists of buildings in a commercial corridor setting that are located along or near streetcar lines. It includes individual buildings as well as historic districts. Their defining characteristic is their relationship to a specific mode of transportation, the streetcar.

The period of significance begins in 1880, when creation of a streetcar system began. It ends in 1934, by which time the streetcar had been replaced by the automobile as the most common mode of transportation. During its period of greatest popularity, from 1900 to 1930, Los Angeles had one of the most extensive streetcar networks of any city in the county. There are relatively few intact examples of streetcar-oriented neighborhood commercial architecture left, particularly in concentrations dense enough to qualify as districts.

Streetcar commercial development is most commonly characterized by a dense fabric of attached retail buildings, with storefronts placed directly on the sidewalk. The significant characteristic is this pedestrian orientation, with no accommodation for the automobile. The most important architectural feature is the storefront. It commonly contains a show window, with a recessed entrance placed either to the side or in the center and flanked by windows.



*Early Mixed Use Building, 1908
7626 South Vermont Avenue, South Los Angeles
(SurveyLA)*

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

Making use of the storefront are a number of specific building types. They include the single-story storefront block, consisting of one or more storefronts, and the multi-story mixed-use building, consisting of a storefront or storefronts on the ground floor and offices, meeting space, or residential units above. Those containing offices or meeting spaces were commonly known as commercial or business blocks. Those with residential units, particularly single bay entities, were early versions of today's live/work buildings, with the upper floor often inhabited by the proprietor of the business below.

An example from before the First World War is the small two-story building from 1908 at 7626 South Vermont. This section of the city was part of the so-called Shoestring Annexation in 1906, and the existing line of what had been the Los Angeles Inter-Urban Railway had a right-of-way, down what became Vermont Avenue, to serve its terminal in San Pedro.³⁶

The resource contains retail space on the first floor and most likely residential space on the second. It was one of the first commercial buildings along the Vermont line in this neighborhood. By 1923 the surrounding blocks off Vermont were filled with dwellings. But the business-oriented Vermont corridor was still in the process of development. About half of the lots on the blocks to the north and south on both sides of Vermont around this resource contained commercial buildings.³⁷



*Early Storefront Block, 1909
2736 West Temple Street
(SurveyLA)*

³⁶ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; *Young's Los Angeles City Railway Directory, 1904*, at www.erha.org/youngs.

³⁷ 1923 Sanborn Map.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

A second early example is the single-story storefront building, from 1909, at 2736 West Temple Street. By 1904 the Temple streetcar line extended as far as the city limits at Hoover. By 1923 this storefront building had been joined by several other such structures to form a small neighborhood commercial district that extended along Temple from Benton Way to Occidental Boulevard.³⁸

A streetcar-oriented neighborhood commercial street, with much of its scale intact, is Cesar Chavez Avenue (previously Brooklyn Avenue) in Brooklyn Heights.³⁹ Brooklyn Heights is significant as a neighborhood providing a home for a large population of immigrants in the first decades of the twentieth century. The largest groups consisted of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, but it also included Mexicans, Russians, Japanese and African Americans.⁴⁰

The district began to develop as a business section at the turn of the century after the Brooklyn Avenue streetcar line was extended across the Los Angeles River. By the 1920s Brooklyn Avenue had emerged as the primary neighborhood commercial district for the area. While individual buildings may have lost most of their integrity and there is no intact architectural historic district, several still retain enough to serve as examples.⁴¹



*Storefront Block, 1926
2612-2614½ Cesar Chavez Avenue
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Typical of the single-story masonry storefront block is the three-bay building from 1926 at 2612-2614½ Cesar Chavez Avenue. While greatly altered, it still features the pier-and-spandrel structure typical of

³⁸ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; *Young's Los Angeles City Railway Directory, 1904*; 1923 Sanborn Map.

³⁹ The avenue itself (but not the adjacent buildings) between Cummings Street and Mott Street has been designated as the Brooklyn Avenue Neighborhood Corridor and is an L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument, No. 590.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Herr, editor, *Landmark L.A.: Historic-Cultural Monuments of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, 2002), 469; Historic Resources Survey Report, Boyle Heights Community Plan Area, SurveyLA; Intensive Historic Resources Survey, Adelante Eastside Redevelopment Area, 22-24.

⁴¹ Robert Post, *Street Railways and the Growth of Los Angeles*, 142.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

the masonry commercial vernacular, together with attached ornamental shield and finial elements in a vaguely Renaissance Revival mode. It also shows the use of transoms above the storefronts to gain additional light for the interiors, and illustrates the problem of signs obscuring the architecture.⁴²



*Commercial Block, 1928
Southeast Intersection of Cesar Chavez Avenue and St. Louis Street
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Typical of the multi-story business block is the building on the southeast corner of Cesar Chavez Avenue and St. Louis Street. Built in 1928 and also greatly altered, it shares the same somewhat vague Renaissance Revival detailing as the single-story storefront block. Notable are the divisions between the stone-faced first floor and the brick upper floor, and the parapet treatment with shallow pediments and urn finials. Also of note is the corner with its diagonal entry.⁴³

The commercial vernacular may have been the most common style during the 1920s, but both the storefront and the business block used other modes. Most popular was the Spanish Colonial Revival style. It was particularly useful for single-story storefront blocks. An example is the set of storefronts at 3301 West 54th Street. Built in 1929, this resource demonstrates the possibilities available for corner entrance storefronts, with the use of both the diagonal wall and a pavilion. This group has been determined by SurveyLA to be a contributing element to the 54th and Crenshaw Streetcar Historic District.⁴⁴

⁴² Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Historic Resources Survey Report, West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area for SurveyLA, 28.



Storefront Blocks, 1929
3301 West 54th Street, West Adams
(SurveyLA)

Multi-story business blocks often employed a more monumental Renaissance Revival style, similar to that used in the commercial structures being built in the Downtown business district during the 1920s. An example is the two-story Nicholas Priester Building from 1924. It is located on the northwest corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Vermont Avenue in Hollywood, along the Santa Monica line of the Pacific Electric's local service. The Priester Building is an elegant essay in a restrained Renaissance Revival, with uniformly arched show windows on the first floor, cleanly cut rectangular windows on the second, and a delicately scaled bracketed cornice.⁴⁵



Nicholas Priester Building, 1924
1109 North Vermont Avenue, Hollywood
(SurveyLA)

Also during the 1920s, designers were experimenting with non-historicist forms. An early manifestation of the Art Deco is the otherwise modestly-scaled mixed-use block at 1461 West Temple Street in

⁴⁵ Hollywood Community Plan Area, Individual Resources Report for SurveyLA.

Westlake, along the Temple streetcar line that by the 1920s continued on to Virgil and Fountain Avenues.⁴⁶



*Commercial Block, 1925
1461 West Temple Street, Westlake
(SurveyLA)*

Built in 1925, it is a simple two-bay storefront with apartments above. Its modest nature is evident from the side elevation. But the façade is a textbook example of the Art Deco. Particularly notable are the detailing around the recessed entrance to the second floor in the center of the façade, the repeated vertical engaged-column-like flat projections at the second level, and the pointed terminations in place of a traditional cornice.⁴⁷

A second notable resource that employed non-historicist forms is the Bell Commercial Block, at 1948-1958 West Colorado Boulevard in Eagle Rock (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 734). It is located along a streetcar line that dated from 1906. Constructed in 1929, the Bell Block is an interesting combination of Art Deco and Stripped Classical motives. Particularly significant is the corner pavilion with its diagonal entrance.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ 1937 Route Map of the Los Angeles Railway.

⁴⁷ Westlake Community Plan Area, Individual Resources Report for SurveyLA.

⁴⁸ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.



*Bell Commercial Block, 1929
1948-1958 W. Colorado Blvd., Eagle Rock
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 734
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

In addition to individual resources, there are still extant a number of the once-common neighborhood commercial districts related to the streetcar. One is the small grouping on Sunset Boulevard in the southwestern part of Echo Park (identified as the Sunset Streetcar Mix-Use Commercial Historic District for SurveyLA). It consists of four properties along the west side of Sunset Boulevard, near its intersection with Innes Avenue, on the PE local line that carried trains to both Hollywood and Santa Monica Boulevards.

The four properties, 1282 to 1298 West Sunset Boulevard, are all brick masonry and built between 1924 and 1929. Two are commercial structures, the first single story and the second with an upper level. The other two are U-shaped apartment structures, open to the street, with commercial space on the first floors of the legs of the U facing Sunset.⁴⁹

Another grouping is located on the corner of San Vicente Boulevard and Gorman Avenue in Brentwood (identified as the San Vicente Boulevard Commercial Historic District for SurveyLA). It consists of three storefront structures, one including a second level of offices or apartments, in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. They were constructed in 1928 in a neighborhood served by the Westgate branch of the Santa Monica Pacific Electric Line that ran along San Vicente.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Silverlake-Echo Park-Elysian Valley Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

⁵⁰ Historic Districts, Planning Districts and Multi-Property Resources Report, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.



*Streetcar Commercial Buildings, 1928
11750 W San Vicente Boulevard Brentwood
(SurveyLA)*

Sub-Theme: Streetcar Commercial Development, 1880-1934

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. The defining characteristic of neighborhood resources associated with streetcar commercial development is their relationship to this specific mode of transportation.

Resources related to streetcar commercial development may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and/or Architecture. They illustrate how neighborhood commercial areas evolved throughout Los Angeles as a means of providing convenient access to and from the streetcar. Buildings reflect design and layout features to accommodate streetcar access as well as the architectural styles of the day. They illustrate how community life was conducted within a pedestrian setting based on proximity of residents to local business and public transportation. Some examples are also significant for their association with the earliest phases of commercial development in areas of the city. Streetcar-related commercial properties include individual buildings and historic districts, both of which are now rare.

Period of Significance: 1880-1934

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1880, when creation of a streetcar system began. It ends in 1934, by which time the streetcar had been supplanted by the automobile as the most common mode of transportation.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, specifically in areas served by streetcars. Examples have been found in South Los Angeles, Westlake, Boyle Heights, West Adams, Hollywood, Echo Park, Highland Park, and Eagle Rock. Very rare examples remain in the neighborhoods of west Los Angeles such as Brentwood.

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type:

Commercial/Retail:

- One-Story Building; One-Story Commercial Strip/Storefront Block
- Mixed-Use Building; Mixed-Use Commercial Strip/Commercial Block
- Commercial District

Property Type Description:

Streetcar commercial property types include the one-story retail building, consisting of one or more storefronts, and the multi-story mixed-use building, consisting of a storefront or storefronts on the ground floor and offices, meeting space, or residential units above. One-story buildings were often called storefront blocks while the multi-story mixed use buildings containing offices or meeting spaces were commonly known as commercial or business blocks. Those with residential units, particularly single bay entities, were early versions of today's live/work buildings, with the upper floor often inhabited by the proprietor of the business below. Buildings may be individual resources and/or contributing features of a historic district.

Property Type Significance:

See Summary Statement of Significant above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed/developed during the period of significance
- Located on or within two city blocks of a historic streetcar route
- Represents an important example of a one-story, mixed use, or intact grouping (historic district) of commercial properties oriented to streetcar or interurban service
- Demonstrates a lack of designed automobile accommodations
- Contains design and site layout features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial design and a pedestrian orientation as was typical of streetcar-dependent commercial development

Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- May accommodate one or multiple tenants
- Typically one to four stories in height
- Set to the sidewalk limit
- May be located on a prominent corner
- Lack of dedicated parking as part of the original design
- One or multiple storefronts which open directly to the sidewalk
- Storefronts with large display windows; may have awnings or arcades
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

- May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- For multi-story, mixed-Use Buildings:
 - Was historically used for both commercial and office/residential uses
 - Ground floor with storefronts and display windows
 - Ground floor exterior entrance to upper floor units
 - Fenestration on upper floor may be residential in character and remains intact
- For Streetcar Commercial Districts
 - Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
 - Linear grouping or a node (buildings on four corners at a major intersections) of one- to four-story commercial buildings set to the sidewalk limit as near the street as possible with large storefront display windows on the ground floor
 - Commercial uses may include retail, office, banking
 - May include some institutional buildings
 - Historically served as the commercial core of a neighborhood

Integrity Considerations: Individual Resources

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Feeling, and Association
- Window and storefront openings remain intact
- Applied decoration is mostly intact; some decoration may be missing
- Relationship to sidewalk is maintained
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use may have changed
- Storefront signage may have changed

Integrity Considerations: Historic Districts

- Historic districts as a whole should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, Materials, Setting, and Association
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed on contributing buildings
- Common and acceptable alterations to district contributors may be added parking, new signage, and some alterations to display window
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use(s) may have changed

SUB-THEME: ARTERIAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 1880-1950

The Arterial Commercial Development sub-theme consists of resources located in a commercial corridor setting, along a transportation artery which is not served by a streetcar line. It includes individual buildings as well as historic districts. Their defining characteristic is their relationship to a mode of transportation – on foot, by wagon, or especially by automobile.

The period of significance begins in 1880, when neighborhoods began to spread out from the central city. It ends in 1950, by which time the neighborhood shopping center had begun to take its place as a setting for automobile-oriented local commerce.

Much of arterial commercial development is characterized by the same dense fabric of attached retail buildings, with storefronts directly on the sidewalk, which is typical of streetcar commercial development. At the same time, because it served non-streetcar modes of transportation, arterial development has more variety. Earlier resources can be stand-alone buildings in residential neighborhoods, serving pedestrian customers. Later resources can break from the pattern of attached buildings sitting directly on the street, and instead provide for parking.



Commercial Building, 1904
6401 South Avalon Boulevard, Southeast Los Angeles
(SurveyLA)

Early examples are rare. One is a resource that dates from 1904 and is located at 6401 South Avalon Boulevard. At the time of construction, Avalon was known as South Park Avenue, and its streetcar line ended at Slauson, six blocks to the north. By 1923, once the line had been extended, this resource remained the only retail structure in the immediate area.⁵¹

⁵¹ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; *Young's Los Angeles City Railway Directory, 1904*, at www.erha.org/youngs; 1923 Sanborn Map.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

It very much resembles streetcar-related neighborhood commercial architecture of the same period. It is a modest, single-bay mixed-use block in the form of a corner store, complete with diagonal entry. Most likely it originally contained an apartment for the proprietor on the second floor. The storefront has lost its original configuration, but the sidewall retains the characteristic high windows of the corner store.



*Store, 1912
1259 North Las Palmas Avenue, Hollywood
(SurveyLA)*

A second early resource is on the southwest corner of Las Palmas and Fountain Avenues in Hollywood. It was built in 1912. Although only two blocks from the Highland Avenue streetcar line, it was separate from any sort of business district and, as late as 1919, was completely surrounded by homes. Its form, with a gabled roof, is essentially residential.⁵²

After 1920, widespread automobile ownership allowed for a great deal of arterial commercial development. Most resembled the streetcar-based arrangement of attached storefronts and business blocks set against the sidewalk. Most also used the same commercial vernacular architecture.

There was, however, some arterial commercial development that differed in the sense of being more adventurous in massing and more elaborate in detailing. Much of this development occurred on the boulevards which served well-off neighborhoods. Here the market justified a greater investment in architectural design, even if it meant a higher initial cost.

⁵² Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; 1919 Sanborn Map.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

Beverly Boulevard in the Wilshire District is one such corridor. Beverly maintained the linear arrangement of single-story storefronts and multi-story commercial blocks, but was able to develop a more elegant architectural look in keeping with the affluent nature of the nearby residents. (The blocks extending on the north side from Detroit Street to Stanley Avenue and on the south side from Formosa Avenue to Gardner Street have been identified in SurveyLA as the Beverly Boulevard Commercial Historic District.)⁵³

An example is the two-story commercial block from 1928 at 7385 West Beverly Boulevard. It took the Spanish Colonial Revival style and molded it into a composition that made the most of the corner site. A slightly indented octagonal form with hipped roof formed an entrance pavilion, complete with ornamental iron balconies at the second floor windows. The storefronts themselves featured segmented arches.⁵⁴



*Commercial, 1928
7385 West Beverly Boulevard, Wilshire
(SurveyLA)*

While most arterial commercial development followed the dense street wall arrangement common along business corridors, some took advantage of the freedom allowed by the car and explored different site plans. These experiments occurred primarily in newer and better off areas, where larger tracts of land were available and common access to a passenger car was assumed. This allowed for the building to detach itself from its neighbors and provide a bit a space for the automobile.

⁵³ Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Wilshire Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

⁵⁴ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

One such experiment, now somewhat altered, is the Pacific Palisades Business Block at 15300-15318 Sunset Boulevard. It dates from 1924 and was designed by Clifton Nourse. This building attempts to combine storefronts for neighborhood businesses with a picturesque profile and some accommodation for the automobile through diagonal parking in front and a driveway along the side. It is an L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument, No. 276.⁵⁵



Pacific Palisades Business Block, 1924

15300-15318 Sunset Blvd.

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 276

(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

Another Pacific Palisades example, more isolated and specifically designed to provide its community with basic needs, is the Castellamarre Community Center. It is located on the Pacific Coast Highway, north of Santa Monica, and dates from 1928. Castellamarre was an elite subdivision created in the mid-1920s, with strict architectural controls requiring all dwellings to be in the Mediterranean style. A unique feature was a bridge over the Pacific Coast Highway that allowed residents to access a private beach.⁵⁶

The Community Center was designed by architect Mark Daniel and was planned to include a grocery store, a drug store, and a café. It is particularly significant in that it is a preview of the Postwar Neighborhood Shopping Center. It stood alone, with a bit of parking in front, and was intended to provide for a number of basic needs in a single multi-store structure.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 443.

⁵⁶ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.

⁵⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1925, November 23, 1925, May 15, 1927, September 7, 1930.



*Castellamarre Community Center, 1928
17575 West Pacific Coast Highway
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Arterial commercial development as an architectural form for the most part ended with the Depression of the 1930s. Once construction resumed after the Second World War, patterns of neighborhood commercial construction took different forms, such as the free-standing single-purpose retail structure and the shopping center, similar to the Castellamarre resource.

At the same time, there were a few developers after 1930 who believed that the traditional pattern of attached storefronts flush with the street was still applicable, and that off street parking was necessary only for supermarkets. A late example of arterial commercial development is the block along Lankershim Boulevard from Tujunga Avenue to Collins Street in North Hollywood (identified as the Lankershim Commercial Corridor Historic District for SurveyLA). The storefronts, built between the late 1930s and the early 1950s and in the styles prevalent in those years, maintain a relationship to the street and to each other that is the same as that found much older neighborhoods.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 195; Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, North Hollywood-Valley Village Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

Sub-Theme: Arterial Commercial Development, 1880-1950

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Resources associated with arterial commercial development are characterized by their relationship to modes transportation other than the streetcar, in particular the automobile.

Resources related to arterial commercial development may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and/or Architecture. Commercially they illustrate how retailing and the provision of professional services was conducted within a neighborhood setting served by the automobile, but still based on the historic urban setting of the street. They also illustrate how community life was conducted within a commercial district that tried to accommodate the automobile, and thereby allowed for a degree of dispersal and lower density. Buildings reflect historic structural and stylistic elements characteristic of this building type, in particular the possibility of space set aside for parking. Buildings also reflect trends in commercial/store design and architectural styles from their period of construction. Some examples are also significant for their association with the earliest phases of commercial development in areas of the city; early examples are rare. Properties related to arterial commercial development include individual buildings and historic districts.

Period of Significance: 1880-1950

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1880, when neighborhoods begin to spread out from the central city. It ends in 1950; after World War II patterns of neighborhood commercial development took different forms, such as the free-standing single-purpose retail building and the shopping center.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, specifically in areas not served by streetcars, and generally in areas subdivided before 1950.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial/Retail:

- One-Story Building; One-Story Commercial Strip/Storefront Block
- Mixed-Use Building; Mixed-Use Commercial Strip/Business Block
- Commercial District

Property Type Description: Property sub-types include the single-story storefront block, consisting of one or more storefronts, and the multi-story mixed-use building, consisting of a storefront or storefronts on the ground floor and offices, meeting space, or residential units above. One-story buildings were often called storefront blocks while the multi-story mixed use buildings containing offices or meeting spaces were commonly known as commercial or business blocks. Those with residential units, particularly single bay entities, were early versions of today's live/work buildings, with the upper floor often inhabited by the proprietor of the business below. Buildings may be individual resources or contributing elements of a historic district.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed/developed during the period of significance
- Located on streets served by modes of transportation other than streetcars, in particular by automobiles

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Sited along corridors of transit without streetcar lines
- Contains features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial design
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life
- Examples may be set to the sidewalk or may have some accommodation for the automobile
- May accommodate one or multiple tenants
- Typically one to four stories in height

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

- May be located on a prominent corner
- Storefronts with large display windows; may have awnings or arcades
- For Multi-story, Mixed-Use Buildings:
 - Was historically used for both commercial and office/residential uses
 - Ground floor with storefronts and display windows
 - Ground floor exterior entrance to upper floor units
 - Fenestration on upper floor may be residential in character and remains intact
- For Commercial Districts
 - District as a whole retains most of the essential character features from the period of significance
 - District as a whole conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
 - Linear grouping with a significant concentration of one- to four-story commercial buildings which may be set to the sidewalk limit as near the street as possible
 - Buildings have large storefront display windows on the ground floor
 - Commercial uses may include retail, office, banking
 - May include some multi-family residential and institutional buildings
 - Historically served as the commercial core of a neighborhood

Integrity Considerations: Individual Resources

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Feeling, and Association
- Window and storefront openings remain intact
- Applied decoration is mostly intact; some decoration may be missing
- Relationship to sidewalk is maintained
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use may have changed
- Storefront signage may have changed

Integrity Considerations: Historic Districts

- Historic district as a whole should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, Materials, Setting, and Association
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed on contributing buildings
- Common and acceptable alterations to district contributors may be added parking, new signage, and some alterations to storefront windows
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use(s) may have changed

SUB-THEME: NEIGHBORHOOD DOWNTOWNS AND VILLAGES, 1909-1960

The Neighborhood Downtowns and Villages sub-theme relates specifically to groups of commercial buildings in a neighborhood which are identified and evaluated as potential historic districts. The basis for a distinct identity is a physical and/or planned separation from adjacent neighborhood business districts. It is in contrast to the corridor nature of both streetcar and arterial commercial development, both of which tend to be continuous along the length of the street upon which they front.

There were two ways in which a neighborhood downtown or village developed. The first was through evolution over time, during which local merchants united to give their commercial core a distinct identity. The second was a planned endeavor, which from its beginning was designed as a neighborhood downtown or village by its developer.

The earliest to evolve over time began as centers of business activity in what were once separate cities which consolidated with Los Angeles. An example is San Pedro. Because of its distance from central Los Angeles and its unique role as a port, San Pedro maintained a distinct sense of separateness after its consolidation in 1909. By means of its own streetcar system, which began service while San Pedro was independent, it sustained a concentrated neighborhood business district that by 1930 approached in scope that of a small city. It included the blocks of Sixth and Seventh Streets between Center Street and Pacific Avenue, and extended south on Pacific as far as Twelfth Street.⁵⁹

Another example of evolution over time in a remote location is Atwater Village. It is situated on the northeastern bank of the Los Angeles River, opposite Silverlake. Its first link to the rest of city was the Pacific Electric's line to Glendale. The line ran along a dedicated median strip down what became Glendale Boulevard, with stops at Glenhurst, Atwater, and Seneca Avenues. In the late 1920s an earlier wooden trestle crossing the Los Angeles River was replaced by the Glendale-Hyperion Bridge (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 164), thereby improving automobile access.⁶⁰

By 1930 an Atwater commercial district had emerged along both sides of Glendale Boulevard from the river northeast to the city limits. Perhaps half of the lots contained buildings. Business was especially concentrated along the southeast side of Glendale Boulevard, between Glenhurst and Larga Avenues. Here there were four markets, two drugstores, two restaurants, a bakery and a bank. Just behind this row of stores, on Larga, was the local branch of the Los Angeles Public Library.⁶¹

A less remote example is Los Feliz Village. Its southern end is the intersection of Vermont and Prospect, the point at which Hollywood Boulevard and its streetcar line passed as a diagonal toward the southeast. Beginning in the 1920s, Vermont Avenue for several blocks north of Prospect was developed as a neighborhood commercial district separate from Hollywood to the west. The economic strength of

⁵⁹ Historic Resources Survey Evaluation, San Pedro Commercial Area Redevelopment Area.

⁶⁰ Netty Carr, *et. al.*, *Atwater Village* (Charleston SC: Arcadia, 2011), 37; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 434.

⁶¹ 1930 Sanborn Map.

this district continued into the later years of the Depression, with many structures in the blocks further to the north dating from the late 1930s and early 1940s.⁶²



Los Feliz Village, circa 1930

*Aerial View, looking north, of Vermont (right of center) and Prospect
Hollywood Boulevard is the diagonal street continuing toward the lower right
Los Feliz Public School is center left, Barnsdall Park is lower left
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Providing the Village with an identity were the Los Feliz Public School and Barnsdall Park, site of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 12.) The symbolic entrance to the village, the northwest corner of Prospect and Vermont, was anchored by an impressively-designed bank building.

By 1950 Vermont north of Prospect contained an array of neighborhood services, including markets, theaters, drug stores, restaurants, bakeries, print shops and plumbing suppliers. Important in creating an image of a separate Los Feliz Village were symbolic gestures. One such gesture, common in the

⁶² Construction dates from Los Angeles County Assessor.

business districts of small towns, was Christmas decoration. The district's merchants cooperated to ornament the street as a device to draw customers.⁶³



*Vermont north from Prospect at Christmas, circa 1937
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In contrast to these evolving neighborhood downtowns were business districts that began as parts of planned communities. Two, dating from the late 1920s, are examples. The first is Leimert Park, a residential subdivision with a planned neighborhood commercial district, which was marketed as convenient to both auto-borne and streetcar customers.

Leimert Park consisted of over two hundred acres east of Crenshaw Boulevard and south of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (then Santa Barbara Avenue). Walter Leimert, a developer who had experience in Oakland and Piedmont, bought the land in 1927. Through it ran the LARY line serving Hyde Park and Hawthorne. Its route from Downtown was west along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, then southwest along a diagonal which is now Leimert Boulevard, and then south on Crenshaw.⁶⁴

The subdivision was intended for middle-class residents and included apartment as well as single-family homes. The neighborhood commercial district was positioned at the point where the streetcar line crossed from Leimert Boulevard to Crenshaw. At this point there was a landscaped plaza (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 620), around which were located Leimert Park's businesses. By the early 1930s, the district contained a market, delicatessen, beauty parlor, and drug store. It also had a bank and a

⁶³ 1950 Sanborn Map.

⁶⁴ Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 15.

motion picture theater. (The Plaza and associated commercial area is located within the SurveyLA Leimert Park Historic District, which also includes single and multi-family residential development.)⁶⁵



Leimert Plaza

*L.A. Historic Cultural Monument No. 620
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

Leimert Park advertised itself as convenient to Downtown via both streetcar and automobile. The single-family houses had garages and the apartment buildings parking in the rear. The commercial district layout followed traditional linear storefront form, as Leimert sold lots to outside investors who then erected the buildings. There were, however, a few innovative enterprises that occupied several lots in buildings set back in L or U-shaped layouts to allow for parking.⁶⁶

A second planned neighborhood downtown from the late 1920s was Westwood Village. It differed from Leimert Park in two ways. First, it was totally auto-dependent. There was no streetcar or interurban service. Second, it combined neighborhood shops with businesses drawing from a larger customer pool. Alongside grocery and drug stores were branches of downtown department and specialty stores.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 471; Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 17; 1929 Sanborn Map (updated in 1950).

⁶⁶ Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 211; 1929 Sanborn Map (updated in 1950).

⁶⁷ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 159-160, 167-168.



*Aerial View of Westwood Village, circa 1936
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In spite of its dependence on the automobile, Westwood took a traditional approach to dealing with parking. It was laid out as a standard neighborhood shopping district with stores set directly on the street. Its developer assumed that parallel and, in some locations diagonal, parking along these streets would be sufficient. This quickly proved not to be the case. Individual merchants initially made use of adjacent vacant lots for parking. But by the late 1930s, as the vacant lots began to fill with structures, the parking problem only became worse.⁶⁸

These two planned neighborhood downtowns were among the few districts that saw continued commercial construction during the Depression years of the 1930s. In Westwood the storefronts fit into the Mediterranean forms dictated by the district's planning board. In Leimert Park the storefronts took on a greater degree of variety, but still tried to main a sense of architectural distinction.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 160-165, 174.

⁶⁹ See, for instance, the row of storefronts along the 4300 block of Crenshaw Boulevard shown in "Shops on Crenshaw in Leimert Park," (order number 00100850), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library. Built in 1937 they employed a Colonial Revival style mode, complete with multi-paned bay windows. The buildings still exist but have been extensively altered.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

The concept of a neighborhood downtown or village again became popular after the Second World War. This was particularly true in newer and more affluent areas on the West Side and in the San Fernando Valley. In these locations there was less existing commercial fabric to contend with and a greater potential for drawing upon a market with a large discretionary income. These new endeavors also tried to deal with issue of parking which proved to be a problem in earlier villages such as Westwood.

An example of a postwar neighborhood downtown that tried to fit itself into a traditionally subdivided setting is Tujunga Village in Studio City (identified as the Tujunga Village Commercial Historic District for SurveyLA). It includes the block of Tujunga Avenue that extends north of Woodbridge Street. The area was subdivided in 1926 and 1927, but most of the commercial structures date from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s. Stores followed the traditional arrangement of the solid street wall with show windows. But they did not extend, as in the past, to the full depth of the lot. This allowed for customer parking in the rear, albeit rather tight.⁷⁰

Other postwar neighborhood downtowns drew from the examples of early shopping centers in dealing with the problem of parking. There is, in fact, a good deal of overlap in the evolutions of the postwar neighborhood downtown and the neighborhood shopping center. What characterizes the neighborhood downtown or village is its continued focus on the street as the primary shaping element. Stores face onto a public thoroughfare and the relationship to parking remains secondary.

An example of a neighborhood downtown or village that took parking into account is found in Pacific Palisades. This is the one-block length of Swarthmore Avenue, between Sunset Boulevard and Monument Street in Pacific Palisades (identified as the Swarthmore Avenue Commercial Historic District for SurveyLA). The storefronts line Swarthmore Avenue in the traditional manner, and were constructed between 1950 and 1958 in the modernist styles typical of the period. There is, however, a large parking lot located behind the south row of stores that serves them all. The ensemble was possible because the district was not subdivided until 1950 and buildings were under a single ownership.⁷¹

A second nearby example comes closer to combining the street-oriented neighborhood downtown with the neighborhood shopping center. This is Brentwood Village, located near the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Barrington Avenue. The district is anchored by a 1939 Spanish Colonial Revival style service station (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 387) but it is primarily a product of the postwar years.⁷²

Most of the shops face Barrington Court, which consists of a pair of public streets that loop in horseshoe-shaped fashion and include a row of diagonal parking in their centers. There are also stores

⁷⁰ Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

⁷¹ Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

⁷² Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 452.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

that, in shopping-center fashion, face a pedestrian walk. Extant buildings date primarily from the 1950s. The center is identified as the Brentwood Village Commercial Planning District by SurveyLA.⁷³



*Brentwood Village, 1940-1960s
Sunset Boulevard and South Barrington Avenue
(SurveyLA)*

⁷³ Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

Sub-Theme: Neighborhood Downtowns and Villages, 1909-1960

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Neighborhood downtowns and villages are historic districts that served as commercial centers for neighborhoods. Through geography, planning, and/or self-recognition, they maintain a separateness and distinct identity associated with the neighborhood in which they are located.

Neighborhood downtowns and villages may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and/or Architecture. Some illustrate concepts in commercial planning and development, while others illustrate the evolution of a neighborhood downtown commercial core over time. Buildings within neighborhood downtowns and villages may reflect trends in commercial/store design and architectural styles from their period of construction. Commercial districts which retain historic integrity are now rare.

Period of Significance: 1909-1960

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1909, when San Pedro and Wilmington, having existing commercial districts, consolidated with Los Angeles. It ends in 1960, by which time the neighborhood shopping center had supplanted the neighborhood downtown/village as a center of local commercial life.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial District – Neighborhood/Village Commercial Center

Property Type Description: Significant grouping of intact small-scale commercial buildings which form a historic district and are identified with a specific

neighborhood. The district may be linear or encompass several blocks

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was developed primarily during the period of significance
- Includes a substantial concentration of intact, small-scale buildings which forms the commercial center for a neighborhood

Character Defining /Associative Features:

- District as a whole retains most of the essential character features from the period of significance
- District as a whole conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
- Contains design and site layout features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial design
- Sited with similar buildings in a manner that separates them from other neighborhood business districts, by geography, planning controls, self-recognition, and/or other means of identity
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life
- May include commercial, multi-family residential, and institutional property types
- May be linear and located along a single street or encompass several blocks
- May include some buildings constructed outside the period of significance
- Individual buildings of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1909-1960 period
- May include buildings of individual significance
- May have some buildings significant within themes relating to streetcar and auto-related commercial development and the context of Pre-Annexation Communities of Los Angeles

Integrity Aspects

- Historic district as a whole should retain integrity of Location, Design, Feeling, Materials, Setting, and Association
- Some original materials may have been altered or removed on contributing buildings
- Common and acceptable alterations to district contributors may be added parking, new signage, and some alterations to storefront windows
- Original use(s) may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

SUB-THEME: POSTWAR NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING CENTERS, 1936-1965

The postwar neighborhood shopping center sub-theme consists of individual buildings or groups of buildings adjacent to or surrounded by parking. The defining element is the relationship of the building entrance to the parking lot. Stores in shopping centers have their primary public entrances facing the parking lot, instead of the street.

The neighborhood shopping center was a response to the presence of the automobile. The concept had been explored before the Second World War, but never carried to its logical conclusion. It required the near-universal use of the car for shopping, together with the availability of large plots of land in newer areas such as the San Fernando Valley, for it to become the norm.

The first neighborhood shopping centers were transitional in their layout. They combined a traditional arrangement of storefronts along the public street together with customer parking in the rear. Rear parking was an idea that had proven its worth in the late 1920s, with the example of Bullocks Wilshire (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 56). But it was restricted primarily to luxury shopping districts like the Miracle Mile.

As the market for commercial property began to improve during the late 1930s, a few developers made attempts to employ the concept of rear parking for neighborhood shopping districts. The earliest known example is the block-long strip from 8701 to 8765 on South Broadway, portions of which are still extant if greatly altered. Built between 1936 and 1939, it contained a mix that included a supermarket, two variety stores, and two drugstores. All the stores opened directly onto Broadway, with its streetcar line. But they also opened onto a rear parking lot. Customers parking in the lot crossed the service alley and entered the backs of stores.⁷⁴

In 1941 the Los Angeles Department of City Planning presented a scheme for an ideal neighborhood shopping district that tried to standardize the South Broadway prototype and make it more efficient. It called for a three-block long strip of shops, with stores fronting on the street and parking in the rear. Traffic was to be diverted to one-way peripheral streets on either side serving the parking lots.⁷⁵

One transitional development that followed these recommendations was the Westchester business center. It was created to serve a residential community built to house defense workers, and was planned for Sepulveda Boulevard from Manchester to 96th Street. Ground was broken in August 1942. The commercial core was substantially completed by 1947. Stores were set flush to the street and parking placed in the rear. The original site plan called for streets, labeled Sepulveda East Way and Sepulveda West Way, to flank Sepulveda Boulevard and to serve the rear parking lots.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 188-193; SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement: Variety Stores (Draft), 2012.

⁷⁵ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 197.

⁷⁶ Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 143.

By the end of the war the district contained a supermarket and several smaller stores. In the late 1940s, however, what began as a neighborhood shopping strip with rear parking after the war evolved into a regional center. Nonetheless, fragments of the original neighborhood shopping center remain, particularly along a stretch of South La Tijera Boulevard, between Sepulveda Eastway and West 87th Street. It is identified as the Westchester Triangle Commercial Historic District by SurveyLA.⁷⁷

In 1952 the Los Angeles City Planning Commission advocated the widespread creation of auto-oriented neighborhood business district with shopping centers, and provided general guidelines. The distance between neighborhood shopping centers should be about one-half to one mile. The preferred ratio of building area to parking was 1:3. Buffer areas, consisting of apartments, government buildings and religious structures, should separate these neighborhood business districts from single-family homes.⁷⁸

An example that fit these recommendations, from the early 1950s, is the commercial center of Panorama City in the San Fernando Valley. Panorama City was advertised as a “City in Itself.” The initial phase was planned to contain three thousand housing units, built by Kaiser Community Homes. The development was to provide all services, including its own schools, religious institutions, and a commercial center. Unlike earlier developments, which advertised their convenience to Downtown, Panorama City was marketed as being close to employment centers in the San Fernando Valley.⁷⁹

The site plan for Panorama City placed the neighborhood commercial district along Van Nuys Boulevard as it extended north from Roscoe Boulevard and then curved to the west to intersect with Vesper Avenue. This recognized the existing importance of Van Nuys Boulevard as a shopping corridor. Like the earlier Westchester layout, stores faced directly onto Van Nuys Boulevard in the traditional manner, and had parking in the rear.⁸⁰

During its early years, the Panorama City business district functioned as “a typical neighborhood commercial development, designed and constructed for local residents.”⁸¹ A grocery store, the Panorama City Market, opened in 1952, and a theater and service station soon followed. By 1955, there were reportedly forty-two retail outlets, including five restaurants and a bowling alley, all served by parking in the rear. However, the coming of a department store, a branch of the Broadway, began its transformation into a regional shopping center.⁸²

⁷⁷ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 238-247; Historic Districts, Planning Districts, and Multi-Property Resources Report, Westchester-Playa Del Ray Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

⁷⁸ Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *Accomplishments 1952*.

⁷⁹ Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 187, 211.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 197, 199, 200.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 205-206.



Aerial View of Panorama City, circa 1960
Original neighborhood-scale buildings with rear parking to the right
(Los Angeles Public Library)

As popular as it was immediately after the war, the transitional approach of Westchester and Panorama City, with its allegiance to the street, was not the direction taken. Instead the neighborhood shopping center adopted the approach first seen in the roadside architecture of the 1920s, with the parking lot placed in front of the building. As early as 1927 the Los Angeles Board of City Planning accepted the roadside arrangement and put forth a “Suggested Treatment for Local Business Centers,” in which rows of storefronts had diagonal parking in front, separate from the street.⁸³

In 1932 the *Architectural Record* presented a theoretical discussion of the ideal neighborhood shopping center. It presented five possible layouts of rows of storefronts. The first was linear, with diagonal parking in front along the street. The second layout was also linear, but set the storefronts back from the street and placed a parking lot in front. The third was a U-form, with parking in the enclosed space. The fourth and fifth were L-forms, one on a corner with equal legs and the other in mid-block with a long leg perpendicular to the street and a short parallel leg in the rear.⁸⁴

In 1947 the Los Angeles City Planning Commission made note of the shift away from the street, and toward the parking lot, in describing the need to create auto-friendly neighborhood shopping districts. “Main store entrances are generally being designed to face the parking compound, rather than the

⁸³ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 155.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 151-153.

street sides. The design and character of the building itself is gradually replacing display windows as magnets to attract the patronage of the automobile trade”⁸⁵



*Plaza Arcade, 1951-1952
6651 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, North Hollywood
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The earliest examples of postwar neighborhood centers, fronting on parking lots, took the simple linear form. They were essentially rows of storefronts set back from the street. An example is what was originally called the Plaza Arcade Shopping Center. It is located at 6651 Laurel Canyon Boulevard in North Hollywood. The buildings were constructed in 1951 and 1952, and have parking both in front and in back. The original stores included a Thriftymart supermarket and a Thrifty Drugs outlet. The two end stores have been altered, and a Ralphs now serves as the center’s supermarket. But the center portion of the linear arrangement, with its pylon sign, is intact.⁸⁶

By the early 1950s these centers had become common enough to warrant architectural study. This was done by Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro in their book *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation*. Published in 1951, it presented general principles of design and followed with a series of examples.⁸⁷

The authors began with a definition. A neighborhood shopping center was an entity that served a minimum of 750 households. It contained a supermarket, drug store, and smaller retailers such as a dry

⁸⁵ Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *Accomplishments 1947*.

⁸⁶ Construction dates from Los Angeles County Assessor.

⁸⁷ Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro, *Shopping Centers: Design and Operation* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Company, 1951), *passim*.

cleaner, a barber and beauty parlor, a shoe repairer and perhaps a variety store.⁸⁸ “Each tenant will have been selected by the owner of the center to fit into a pre-ordained pattern of merchandising. Together this group of tenants will be able to supply all of a shopper’s day-to-day needs.”⁸⁹

Provision for parking was essential. Baker and Funaro assumed one parking spot, or 300 square feet, for each customer. The result was that the parking area generally exceeded the building area by the L.A. Planning Commission’s recommended ratio of three to one. The design of the building itself was shaped by its relation to the parking lot. Several shapes on the site were presented.⁹⁰

The need to treat the shopping center as a single architectural entity, rather than a row of storefronts facing a parking lot, was the theme of the book. The front walkway separating the lot from the shops should be sheltered by a single long canopy. Mounted to the fascia of the canopy, or on the face of the wall above, were to be the names of the individual stores. Individual logos and typefaces may be justified for the larger tenants such as the supermarket and the drugstore. For the smaller stores, the size and placement of the signs should be uniform.⁹¹

The Baldwin Hills Shopping Center, on the west side of La Brea Avenue just south of Rodeo Road, was illustrated by Baker and Funaro in *Shopping Centers* as a model. It was built to serve the needs of the adjacent Baldwin Hills Village, constructed in the early 1940s as a pioneer garden apartment complex (L.A. Historic Cultural Monument No. 174). The architect of the shopping center was Robert Alexander. While greatly altered architecturally, the site plan remains generally intact.⁹²

Built in stages between 1948 and 1953, the center is linear. It contains diagonal parking in front, separated from La Brea by a curb, and a parking lot in the rear. There is an open passageway that leads from the rear parking lot, between the two rows of buildings, to the front. As originally planned, according to Baker and Funaro, this passageway was a plaza that continued to the west to connect with the Baldwin Hills Village residential area. The original plan called for a supermarket on the northern end and, in a separate structure, a theater on the south.⁹³

A proposed neighborhood shopping center for Sunland illustrates the evolution of design by the mid-1950s. It was presented in 1954 for a site on Foothill Boulevard. It was somewhat traditional, in that the supermarket was not fully integrated architecturally and followed designs from the 1930s with its separate pylon sign. But the design of the stores, with their continuous canopy and discrete signage, fit

⁸⁸ Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers*, 10.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4, 38-39.

⁹¹ Ibid., 64-67, 70-73.

⁹² Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers*, 52; Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 435.

⁹³ Baker and Funaro, *Shopping Centers*, 52; Construction dates from Los Angeles County Assessor.

Baker and Funaro's requirements. Of interest is the pedestrian space that connects the front and rear of the shopping block.⁹⁴



*Proposed Neighborhood Shopping Center, 1954
To be located at 8300 block of Foothill Boulevard, Sunland
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Later neighborhood shopping centers followed the pattern shown in the 1954 prototype. They were characterized by more architectural unity, at least for the blocks of small shops. The supermarket, following a particular corporate form, continued to be a free-standing, or at least architecturally distinct, element.

An example of this from the early 1960s can be found in Chatsworth. This is the Mason Avenue Shopping Center, located the west side of Mason just south of Lassen Street. It is a variation of the linear form, with parking to the front and a service alley at the rear. It was constructed in two stages. The storefront block to the north and the supermarket were built in 1960. The storefront block in the south, attached to the supermarket, was completed one year later, in 1961.⁹⁵

The Mason Avenue Shopping Center was one of three neighborhood commercial centers that served a Chatsworth residential district in the early 1960s which had until recently been ranch pastureland. The supermarket was a Safeway. Storefronts included a barbershop, a barbeque, a bakery, and a travel agency. The northern block of stores has been seriously altered, and the market has been converted to non-retail uses. But the overall grouping, and in particular the form and roof detailing of the market building, have been preserved.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Commentary to "Proposed New Shopping Center" (order number 00032406), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

⁹⁵ Construction dates from Los Angeles County Assessor.

⁹⁶ Commentary to "Mason Avenue Shopping Center, Chatsworth," (Order Number 00066979), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.



*Mason Avenue Shopping Center, circa 1964
9733-9835 Mason Avenue, Chatsworth
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Sub-Theme: Postwar Neighborhood Shopping Centers, 1936-1965

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Postwar neighborhood shopping centers are generally groups of buildings, serving as a single entity, adjacent to or surrounded by parking. The defining element of the type is its relationship to the parking lot.

Resources related to postwar neighborhood shopping centers may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Community Planning and Development, and/or Architecture. They illustrate the evolution of the neighborhood shopping center as a type based on the supremacy of and dependence on the automobile, and focused on the parking lot rather than the street. Postwar shopping center also reflect city planning concepts of the postwar period, and in particular suburban development, relating to location, site plan, and building placement for commercial centers within a neighborhood. They may also be good to excellent examples of architectural styles of the day. Intact examples of postwar neighborhood shopping centers are now rare.

Period of Significance: 1936-1965

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1936, when the earliest known groups of non-elite neighborhood stores with rear parking were constructed. It ends in 1965, by which time the neighborhood shopping center as a mature form had evolved.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, particularly in the San Fernando Valley

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Community Planning and Development, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type/subtype: Commercial District – Shopping Center (Neighborhood)

Property Type Description: A building or group of buildings constructed around a parking lot, rather than at the street, and featuring a point of entry to the retail spaces from the lot.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Constructed during the period of significance
- Arranged around the parking lot rather than the public street
- Contains design and site layout features that reflect trends in postwar neighborhood commercial planning and design

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- May also be significant under a theme within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Features a site plan that locates the primary entrance off the parking lot rather than on the public street
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Location, Feeling, and Association
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use(s) may have changed
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may have been altered, removed, or replaced

SUB-THEME: MARKETS, 1910-1975

The markets sub-theme consists of buildings constructed to sell food in a residential setting. It ranges from the small neighborhood corner grocery store, the origins of which date from the nineteenth century, to the large-scale supermarket surrounded by its own parking lot, which emerged in the late 1930s and reached maturity as a building type by the mid-1970s

Until the twentieth century, retailing food was a dual system. One part consisted of the central market in a downtown setting. The central market occupied a large building or set of buildings which housed multiple stalls containing separate vendors for particular items. These establishments, commonly called public markets, could be either owned by the city or privately owned. In either case, each of the stall proprietors paid rent to the owner. The still extant Grand Central Market in Downtown (outside the scope of Neighborhood Commercial Development is a good example.⁹⁷

The other part of the dual system was the neighborhood grocery store. It was essentially an urban version of the rural general store. Here, in a relatively small space, were to be found packaged goods, sometime along with produce. In the age before refrigeration, meat or dairy products were rarely sold. These neighborhood markets were based on service by clerks, with most merchandise located behind the counter. Only the produce was in placed front of the counter for the customer to examine.⁹⁸



Bob's Market, 1910
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 215
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

⁹⁷ James M. Mayo, *The American Grocery Store* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 43-44.

⁹⁸ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 43-44.

The neighborhood grocery store was typically a small shopping space with a storeroom behind. It was generally in a residential area and accessible by foot. The first examples were detached structures, often located on the corner of two relatively heavily trafficked streets. Later, as neighborhoods developed, groceries were found in storefront buildings, occupying one or more bays of rental space. By the late 1920s, some of the larger ones dispensed with the front wall of the storefront and opened the interior to the sidewalk.⁹⁹

An early example of a neighborhood grocery is Bob's Market, at 1234 Bellevue Avenue in Echo Park (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 215). It sits one block from Sunset Boulevard, which carried the PE streetcar line that continued on to Hollywood. The surrounding neighborhood is Angelino Heights, one of the first streetcar-based suburban communities to the northwest of Downtown. (Bob's Market is a contributing feature to the Angelino Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.) Built in 1910, it is a traditional storefront structure of two bays. Of note is the Oriental-influenced detailing.¹⁰⁰

During the 1920s, a number of alternatives to the neighborhood storefront grocery store became popular. One was a version of the central or public market. Almost always constructed by private investors, these enterprises consisted of single open retail space, much larger than the neighborhood grocery store. Like their downtown progenitors, they contained individual stalls rented to vendors who sold a variety of products.¹⁰¹

There are two resources that resemble these privately-owned neighborhood public markets. One, a well-known landmark from the 1930s, is Farmers Market (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 543). A later version is the Brentwood Country Mart, on 26th Street just south of San Vicente. Built in 1948, it was originally twenty-six concessions arranged around outdoor courts and surrounded by a parking lot.¹⁰²

A second alternative to the storefront grocery in the 1920s was the drive-in market.¹⁰³ This mode of vending was similar to the neighborhood public market, with individual stalls rented out to sellers of different products. However, the individual stalls were arranged in a long, shallow building opening onto a parking lot. Each of the stalls had direct access to what was often an open front. The result was a structure which greatly resembled the post-war neighborhood shopping center.¹⁰⁴

The form of the drive-in market drew from the gasoline super-stations of the day. As with the superstation, the drive-in could be elaborate or simple in its architecture. It was particularly popular in

⁹⁹ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 117, 123.

¹⁰⁰ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 439.

¹⁰¹ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 11-13.

¹⁰² Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 465; Historic Resources Survey Report, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area for SurveyLA; 1926/1950 Sanborn Map.

¹⁰³ Similar auto-oriented architecture is discussed in the theme of Commercial Development and the Automobile, 1910-1980.

¹⁰⁴ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 37.

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outlying areas, where space was available at a reasonable price. The planned community of Leimert Park included a drive-in. This was the Mesa Vernon Market, built in 1928 and located on the corner of Crenshaw Boulevard and Leimert Place. Only a fragment, the easternmost wing, remains, at 3423 West 43rd Street (the current name for Leimert Place.)¹⁰⁵



*Mesa Vernon Drive-In Market, 1928
Crenshaw Boulevard and Leimert Place, Leimert Park
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The end of the 1920s saw yet another variation on the neighborhood grocery store. This was the larger establishment that incorporated features appealing to an upscale clientele. It was often an elegantly designed free-standing structure located in a less built-up area, and included side or rear parking, previewing the later supermarket. A notable early example was the Chapman Park Market in the Wilshire district (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 386), dating from 1929.¹⁰⁶

A more monumental example was Hattem's Shopping Center at 8021-8035 South Vermont Avenue. Opened in 1931, it was built by Isadore Hattem and designed by architect Walter Roland Hagedohm. The interior, like its exterior, was relatively opulent. The arrangement was a transition from the traditional public market to the open-shelf layout of the modern supermarket. It most resembled the ground floor of a department store, with a grid of rectangular island-like counters and a clerk behind each. The building still stands.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 123; Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 37, 68-69, 73-74, 105-110; 1929/1950 Sanborn Map.

¹⁰⁶ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 452.

¹⁰⁷ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 98-101. For the arrangement of the interior, see two photos entitled "Hattem's Market interior" and commentaries (order numbers 00066452 and 00066487), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.



*Hattem's Shopping Center, 1930-1931
8021-8035 South Vermont Avenue
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Variations like the neighborhood public market, the drive-in, and the up-scale establishment with parking all contributed ideas that led to the supermarket. But the most important innovation was the shift to self-service. The concept of a space of open shelves, with the entrance controlled by a turnstile and the exit by an attendant at a cash register, first appeared around 1916. It became increasingly common during the 1920s.¹⁰⁸

Making use of these innovations was the neighborhood grocery chain store. The typical approach used by the chain was to rent a number of adjacent storefront bays and combine them. There was no unique architectural design that differentiated the grocery from surrounding stores. The corporate sign was the sole identifying element. This way, if the location proved not to be profitable, the branch could close with little investment lost.¹⁰⁹

Initially, the chains offered only groceries and produce. But they soon added dairy and meat as refrigeration became available. Most were self-service, with only the meat counter being staffed in the traditional manner. Many also offered a more efficient home delivery service, based on the increasing residential ownership of telephones, as the chain could support a fleet of trucks supplied from a central warehouse.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 118-120.

¹⁰⁹ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 123; Longstreth, *Drive-In*, 97; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 77-80.

¹¹⁰ Liebs, *From Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 118, 121-123; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 77-80.

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There were two chains that were particularly active in Los Angeles during the 1920s. One was Young's Market Company. It operated from a central headquarters at 1610 West Seventh Street (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 113). Built in 1924, this structure housed an elegant market on the first floor and offices above. It also operated forty-six small outlets throughout the region, specializing in meats, coffee, and baked goods.¹¹¹

The other significant chain was Ralph's. Founded in 1873, with a store at Sixth and Spring Streets, the company began city-wide delivery in 1896 and opened its first branch at Pico and Normandie in 1911. It had eight more by the mid-twenties. Most of these early branches were in rented storefronts. In 1928 it began self-service and eliminated home delivery.¹¹²



*Ralphs Westwood (now Bratskeller/Egyptian Theatre), 1929
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 360
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

By the late 1920s, Ralphs was building structures of its own, often of large scale and in ornate historic dress. An example is its Westwood store, now the Bratskeller/Egyptian Theater (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 360.) It was constructed in 1929 and designed to fit into the architectural requirements of Westwood.¹¹³

The large grocery store, based on self-service and constructed by the chain for its own use, led to the development of the supermarket of the mid-1930s. Two consumer products aided this evolution. One was the increasingly widespread ownership of electrically-powered home refrigerators, which allowed customers to purchase more items during a single visit. In 1926 there were 205,000 households nationwide with refrigerators. By 1930 this had increased to 1,996,000.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 430; Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 97-98.

¹¹² Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 86-87.

¹¹³ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 450; Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 85-90.

¹¹⁴ Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 118, 133.

The other innovation was widespread ownership of automobiles. This provided a convenient means of transporting the larger number of items purchased. But it also meant that parking was required. The drive-ins tried to serve the car-borne customer, and elite outlets such as the Chapman Park Market and Hattem's Shopping Center had lots. But it required the pause in construction during the first half of the 1930s to bring about the transition to a more economically feasible form.

The term supermarket had become common by the mid-1930s. It was generally understood to refer to a large-scale enterprise, generally but not always a chain, which sold all types of food items: groceries, produce, dairy, and meats. It was self-service. Most important, it provided adequate parking.¹¹⁵

Architecturally, the supermarket of the late 1930s was more traditional than the drive-in. Its front was directly on the sidewalk, in the form typical of storefronts. The parking lot was to the side or in the rear. What differentiated it from its 1920s predecessors was its greater scale. It was closer to the public markets than to the neighborhood chain grocery of the 1920s. As such it was more typically found in outlying areas where large plots of land were available.¹¹⁶

Ralph's was a pioneer in supermarket design. The company began constructing supermarkets in 1935. It worked with architect Stiles Clements to create an iconic new look. The style chosen was the Streamlined Moderne. Particularly notable was the incorporation of the pylon sign at the corner. The front, and perhaps a portion of the side facing the parking lot, featured expanses of glass that took the place of the open front that some neighborhood groceries featured. A Ralph's from 1941 is illustrated in the Historical Context.¹¹⁷

Other chains in Los Angeles followed the pattern set by Ralph's. Young's called its supermarkets Thriftymart to differentiate them from its older stores. Safeway was slower to move toward the supermarket, but by 1937 was constructing a chain of somewhat smaller outlets, all with a standardized design, and all with a side parking lot. Von's followed a similar pattern, with a standard design much like that of Ralph's.¹¹⁸

By the end of the 1930s the supermarket, characterized by self-service, a wide range of items, and an adjacent parking lot, had become the standard form that would last, with relatively minor changes, up through the present day. Technological improvements such as fluorescent lighting and air conditioning joined the architectural changes to complete the form. A final element contributing to its success was the invention of the four-wheeled shopping cart in 1937.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 125-126; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 117.

¹¹⁶ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 80-81, 119-120.

¹¹⁷ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 129-130; Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 116-118.

¹¹⁸ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 104-105, 115.

¹¹⁹ Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 148.

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Intact examples of 1930s supermarkets are rare. A resource that contains many of the architectural features is building that once housed the Garden Basket Number 2, built in 1935. It is located at 1231 South Pacific Avenue in San Pedro. Significant are the pylon sign, the relatively large glass front, and the detailing that is actually more Art Deco than Streamlined Moderne.¹²⁰



*Garden Basket Number 2, 1935
1231 South Pacific Avenue, San Pedro
(SurveyLA)*

In the postwar period, the supermarket gave up its Streamlined Moderne dress for a more functional Mid-Century Modern look. The essential box that contained the store fit well with rectangular forms of expressed structure. Extensive use of plate glass became even more common. An early example the postwar supermarket is the M&M Market, from 1950. It is located at 12905 Moorpark Street in Studio City. It retains the pre-war site layout of a side parking lot.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Historic Resources Survey Report, San Pedro Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

¹²¹ Historic Resources Survey Report, Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area for SurveyLA; Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 130; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 168-169.



*M&M Market, 1950
12905 Moorpark Street, Studio City
(SurveyLA)*

The most important change in the postwar period was the incorporation of the supermarket into the neighborhood shopping center. By 1955 a bit over half, fifty-three percent, of supermarkets were part of these centers. The supermarkets in centers were generally more restrained in their design than the stand-alone outlets. Shopping centers with supermarkets from the 1950s and early 1960s are illustrated in the Postwar Neighborhood Shopping Center sub-theme.¹²²

Stores not in shopping centers became larger and retreated from the sidewalk. Side parking gave way to large lots placed in front. Detached signs along the street took the place of the attached pylon sign. Given the distance from the road, some building experimented with more exuberant Googie-like forms as a means of calling attention to themselves.¹²³

One example is the Von's (formerly Safeway) at 17380 Sunset Boulevard in Pacific Palisades. It was patterned after a prototype developed by the noted Bay Area architectural firm of Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons. Built in 1968, it features a dramatic free-form roof.¹²⁴

¹²² Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 163, 167-169

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

¹²⁴ Historic Resources Survey Report, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.



*Safeway (now Vons), 1968
17380 Sunset Boulevard, Pacific Palisades
(SurveyLA)*

Another, from 1972, is a Hughes Market, now a Ralph's. It is located at 12842 Ventura Boulevard in Studio City. It was designed by Lester Paley, and features a projecting slab roof that bends down to the ground on each end, framing a full-height wall of glass.¹²⁵



*Hughes Market (now Ralph's), 1972
12842 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City
(SurveyLA)*

¹²⁵ Historic Resources Survey Report, Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

There was by the mid-1960s a reaction against flamboyant design. In 1969 the *Progressive Grocer Magazine* published a set of guidelines and examples to be followed. The goal was “blending the store’s design with the community, reflecting the area’s heritage.”¹²⁶ This was to be done through the use of non-industrial materials, such as stone and wood shingles, to give the store “a more earthy and more permanent look.”¹²⁷ The result would be a “very necessary homelike touch” that would provide a “more friendly and inviting appearance.”¹²⁸ Also recommended was patterning the architecture after the traditions of the region, with Spanish-style tile roofs for the entrance canopies of stores in Southern California.¹²⁹

In general, the supermarkets of the 1970s became more subdued. Solid walls replaced glass as energy became a concern. Roofs became simpler. As markets became larger it was more difficult to achieve clear spans using gables and arched trusses. Low-sloped roofs with interior columns and exterior parapets became the norm. The building was often reduced to a simple box with a canopied entrance and a large corporate logo attached to the front façade.¹³⁰

The 1970s also saw two alternatives to the traditional supermarket emerge. One was the “warehouse supermarket.” This was the logical outgrowth of the trends that led to the development of the supermarket in the 1930s. It consisted of even larger outlets, with lower prices, from which all architectural flourishes were eliminated.¹³¹

The other was the emergence of the chain convenience store. It ranged from 1000 to 4000 square feet in size and provided parking for five to fifteen cars. As supermarkets became larger and fewer, companies such as 7-11 filled a market niche that had previously been the province of the neighborhood grocery store. Like its predecessor, the convenience store limited itself to packaged goods, along with dairy and other items such as soft drinks in a cooler.¹³²

¹²⁶ Leonard E. Daykin, editor, *Progressive Grocer’s Outstanding New Supermarkets* (New York: Progressive Grocer Magazine, 1969), 2.

¹²⁷ Daykin, *Progressive Grocer’s Outstanding New Supermarkets*, 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

¹³⁰ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 134; Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 196, 216-217.

¹³¹ Mayo, *American Grocery Store*, 212-213.

¹³² Ibid., 205-207.

Sub-Theme: Markets, 1910-1975

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Neighborhood markets are individual buildings selling food items; they range from the small-scale business to the modern supermarket.

Neighborhood markets may be significant in the areas of Commerce and/or Architecture. They illustrate the evolution of the neighborhood market as a building type, from its origins as a small storefront grocery store to the modern supermarket set back from the street behind its parking lot. They also illustrate how changes in transportation altered neighborhood commercial life, as the streetcar was replaced by the automobile as the dominant means of transport and the idea of one-stop shopping for a larger quantity of goods was made possible. Some markets, particularly supermarkets, may also be excellent examples of architectural styles. Supermarket chain stores may reflect prototype or corporate designs associated with noted architects.

Very early markets may be significant examples of the earliest neighborhood commercial development in areas of the city and are now rare. Intact Post WWII supermarkets are also now rare.

Period of Significance: 1910-1975

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1910, the date of the earliest known neighborhood market in Los Angeles, and ends in 1975, by which time the supermarket had reached a mature form.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial-Retail – Neighborhood Market
Commercial-Retail – Supermarket

Property Type Description: Neighborhood Market: A commercial type vending food items, typically small in scale and oriented toward pedestrian patronage from surrounding residential development.

Supermarket: A commercial type vending food items, typically larger in scale and oriented toward customers arriving by car.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- For neighborhood markets, features pedestrian orientation
- For supermarkets, features automobile orientation, including parking
- Contains design features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial design

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1910-1975 period
 - May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context (particularly supermarkets)
- May reflect prototype or corporate designs associated with particular supermarket chains
- May be associated with noted architects/designers
- Features site plans that locate the primary entrance off the sidewalk for neighborhood markets and off a parking lot for supermarkets
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Location, Feeling, and Association
- Original use may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Should maintain if possible original relationship to the street and to neighboring structures
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may have been altered, removed, or replaced

SUB-THEME: BANKS, 1900-1980

The bank sub-theme consists of buildings constructed to provide banking services in a neighborhood setting. It ranges from the pedestrian-oriented independently-owned corner banks of the early 1900s to the free-standing automobile-oriented suburban branch banks of the 1970s.

Included are individual purpose-built bank structures in neighborhoods. Not included are resources from Downtown Los Angeles, or from regional business districts such as Hollywood Boulevard or Wilshire Boulevard-Miracle Mile. Also not included are postwar mid-rise commercial structures that combined banking space on the ground floor and office space above. This type is covered in the Postwar Modernism theme and the Rise of Corporations and Corporate Types theme.

Also not included are banks located in buildings originally built for a different use. This category includes two designated resources. The first is the Crocker Bank (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 298), which was originally a clothing store. The second is the Westwood Branch of the Bank of American (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 364), which was originally the headquarters of the Janss Development Company.

Neighborhood banking in the early 1900s was different from what exists currently. Branch banks were rare. Even in states such as California, which allowed branch banking, the standard was the independently-owned bank serving residents of the surrounding community. These banks were typically created by local merchants to provide for their needs.¹³³

Most early neighborhood banks simply occupied storefronts in business blocks that they themselves constructed as investments. A few, however, wished to make more of an architectural statement. It generally took the form of a separate building placed on a corner to allow for maximum visibility. The scale of the architectural elements was enlarged to emphasize the monumental nature of the bank and stress its importance as a neighborhood institution. Most important was the corner entry. It was typically placed on a diagonal and offered an opportunity for elaboration.¹³⁴

An example is the Federal Bank Building in Lincoln Heights (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 396). It dates from 1910 and was designed by the architectural firm of Neher & Skilling. By 1920 the area was a densely built-up business district, containing a number of facilities for servicing automobiles as well as the typical neighborhood stores.¹³⁵

The bank building itself is a prime example of the Classical Revival style. It is relatively modest in size. But it employs the elements of classicism, in particular the dome at the corner entrance, to give it a

¹³³ Charles Belfoure, *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), 117.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 106-110, 151-152.

¹³⁵ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 453; 1920 Sanborn Map.

sense of monumentality that differentiates it from its neighbors. Its location at 2201 North Broadway is a point at which the street makes a bend, thereby giving the building prominence to those approaching from the west.



Federal Bank Building, 1910
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 396
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

The corner entrance form continued into the 1920s. A late example is the Arroyo Seco Bank (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 492). It dates from 1926 and is located on the northwest corner of Figueroa and York In Highland Park. This was the point at which the Figueroa streetcar line split, with one leg continuing north on Figueroa and the other branching to the west on York. The bank was designed by architectural firm of Austin & Ashley in the Renaissance Revival style.¹³⁶



Arroyo Seco Bank, 1926
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 492
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

¹³⁶ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 461.

By the early 1920s the nature of neighborhood banking began to change. There were two innovations. The first was the extension of banking services, such as checking accounts and personal loans, to the general public. The second was the growing popularity of the branch bank.¹³⁷

Important in both of these innovations was the Bank of America. Founded in 1904 as the Bank of Italy in San Francisco by A. P. Giannini, it was a pioneer at both creating branches and extending banking services to the public. The first branch was in San Jose, when it took control of a failed bank. By 1925 it had 98 offices in 65 cities. Almost all were existing small banks that had failed, rather than new outlets. The Bank of Italy was renamed the Bank of America in 1930.¹³⁸

By the end of the 1920s the neighborhood bank building had adopted a general form that resembled a small classical temple. It was well suited to the typical business district corner lot. The short façade fit the narrow frontage and the longer side elevation was aligned to the deeper dimension of the site. The entrance moved from the corner to the center of the narrow façade, and windows on the long side elevation provided natural light to the interior.¹³⁹

Inside a standard floor plan also emerged. It was based on a banking hall on axis with the entry. On one side were tellers' cages, and on the other were desks for loan officers. At the end of the axis, facing the entrance, was the vault with a symbolically monumental door. This layout was so successful that it continued into the postwar years, as the architecture evolved toward modernism.¹⁴⁰

The form, in its simplest, was a single-story trabeated or pedimented temple. But variations were present, including two-story modes, that allowed for office space above, and regionalized forms that permitted sloped roofs and materials other than stone. By the late 1920s, a stripped Classicism, typical of PWA Moderne, had become common.¹⁴¹

A good example of the single-story form is the Security Trust and Savings Bank in San Pedro. It dates from 1928 and is located at 639-643 South Pacific Avenue. The architectural design has been attributed to Alfred F. Priest. It is located in the business district that developed in San Pedro after consolidation in 1909. The earlier district, located along the waterfront, had been replaced by a newer business district served by the local streetcar network. Pacific Avenue along the blocks surrounding the bank was the center of this district.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 7.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 192-193.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 127-128, 180.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 136, 144.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 186-189, 214-222.

¹⁴² Historic Resources Survey Report, San Pedro Commercial Area Redevelopment Area for SurveyLA.



*Security Trust and Savings Bank, 1928
639-643 South Pacific Avenue, San Pedro
(SurveyLA)*

Two variations on the temple form are designated resources, and both are in Highland Park. The first is the Security Trust and Savings Bank (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 575). It dates from 1923 and was designed by the prominent Los Angeles architectural firm of John and David Parkinson. It is located at 5601 North Figueroa, on the streetcar line several blocks south of the Arroyo Seco Bank. It is in a Renaissance Revival style, which allows for the inclusion of a second floor.¹⁴³



*Security Trust and Savings Bank, 1923
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 575
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

¹⁴³ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 468. It appears to have been a standard design for the branches of the Security Bank. See the photograph entitled “Lankershim Boulevard” in North Hollywood from 1962 (order number 00110758), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library. It shows what looks to be an identical building on the intersection with Weddington Street.

The other Highland Park example is the York Boulevard State Bank, now the Bank of America, and adjacent storefronts (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 581). It dates from 1929 and was designed by architect Carl J. Wey. It is located at 5057-5061 York Boulevard, along the York extension of the Figueroa streetcar line. It is a simplified Mediterranean Revival style, with segmented arches in place of more sober trabeated openings.¹⁴⁴



*York Boulevard State Bank (now Bank of America and Storefronts, 1929
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 581
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

Construction of new neighborhood banks for the most part ceased during the Depression years of the 1930s. Instead, the number of commercial banks throughout the country decreased from 24,504 in June of 1929 to 14,440 by the end of 1933. But there were a number of changes, experimented with during the 1930s, that were to effect bank design once construction resumed after the Second World War. The bad reputation that banks had gained, correctly or not, as being responsible for collapse of the economy led bankers to cultivate an image of openness and customer friendliness, rather than monumentality and stability.¹⁴⁵

This new view could be seen in the interiors of those few banks that were remodeled in the late 1930s. Simpler forms and lighter colors replaced darker and heavier materials. Fluorescent lighting and, in some cases, air conditioning were introduced to make interiors brighter and more comfortable. Most important as a symbol was the abolition of the teller's cage, separated from the customer by an elaborate metal grille. In its place were installed plate glass dividers, with some adventurous banks eliminating the barrier altogether.¹⁴⁶

This attitude was the new standard by the end of the Second World War. *Banking Magazine* in 1945 published articles with titles such as "Planning a Bank to Make Friends." In this journal and others the

¹⁴⁴ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 468.

¹⁴⁵ Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 233.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 235, 240-243.

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stress was, as one historian has noted, on the need for “open, friendly, warm and unimposing” buildings with “no more columns, grilles and cages.” Instead, banks should have large windows that “show satisfied customers comfortably conducting their banking in a colorful, well-lit modern interior.”¹⁴⁷ The result was what this same historian has called “fish bowl banks.”¹⁴⁸

At least as important as apparent openness was the acceptance of the automobile. Parking had been provided for some branches in better-off neighborhoods, but it was not until the 1950s that a lot for customers’ cars was seen as a requirement. Occasionally branches were placed in neighborhood shopping centers, either as a free-standing structure or as a unit of the center itself. Most symbolic was the drive-up window, also a requirement by the mid 1950s. It could be either attached to the main building or placed on an island in the center of the parking lot.¹⁴⁹

A Mid-Century Modern version of the temple form was the common architectural approach. An example is the Bank of Tokyo, at 3501 West Jefferson Boulevard in West Adams. It dates from 1955 and served south Crenshaw and Jefferson Park’s Japanese-American community.¹⁵⁰



*Bank of Tokyo, 1955
3501 West Jefferson Boulevard, West Adams
(SurveyLA)*

But there were variations. One was a Googie-like use of free forms, usually in reinforced concrete. A rare example is the one-time Great Western Savings Bank, at 8201 North Van Nuys Boulevard in

¹⁴⁷ Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 244-245.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 251-253.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 170-171, 258-259, 261-264, 267.

¹⁵⁰ Historic Resources Survey Report, West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

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Panorama City. It dates from 1957 and was designed by W. A. Sarmiento. It is located two block south of the original Panorama City neighborhood commercial district.¹⁵¹



*Great Western Savings Bank, 1957
8201 North Van Nuys Boulevard, Panorama City
(SurveyLA)*

Another variation was to adapt a classicizing New Formalism. This approach worked well with the internal arrangement that still followed the temple form. It could be an updated version of the Classical Revival style. Or it could use the heavier forms of 1970s Brutalism.¹⁵² The point was to indicate, as one historian has noted, that banking was still “a serious business.”¹⁵³



*Lytton Savings and Loan (now Chase), 1965
6630 North Randi Avenue, Canoga Park
(SurveyLA)*

¹⁵¹ Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 253; Individual Resources Report, Mission Hills-Panorama City-North Hills Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

¹⁵² Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 257-259.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 257.

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An example of a Brutalist version of the New Formalism is the Lytton Savings and Loan (now Chase), at 6630 North Randi Avenue in Canoga Park. It dates from 1965. A classically symmetrical arrangement is employed, but the elements have been rendered as heavy structural forms. Of note is the continued presence of the glass front.¹⁵⁴



*Bank of America, 1967
6551 North Van Nuys Boulevard, Van Nuys
(SurveyLA)*

An example of a lighter and more elegant simplified classicism is the Bank of America branch at 6551 North Van Nuys Boulevard in Van Nuys. It dates from 1967 and was designed by the historically significant African American architect Paul R. Williams. It is located north of the original streetcar-based Van Nuys business district. Of particular note is the exterior mosaic by Millard Sheets.¹⁵⁵

Millard Sheets was an important figure in the design and decoration of banks in the postwar period. He believed in the integration of architecture and surface ornament that was part of the Beaux Arts tradition. He trained as an artist and worked primarily in mosaics and stained glass. He also served as a designer and associated with architects to create a number of important buildings in the New Formalist style, including the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple on Wilshire Boulevard.¹⁵⁶

Sheets was best known for his work with the Home Savings and Loan Association, for which he provided designs and decorations for over forty branches. An example is the Home Savings (now Chase) branch

¹⁵⁴ Historic Resources Survey Report, Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

¹⁵⁵ Historic Resources Survey Report, Van Nuys-North Sherman Oaks Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

¹⁵⁶ "Millard Sheets, Architectural Designer," L. A. Conservancy website, www.laconservancy.org.

SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement

Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

at 6589 Foothill Boulevard in Tujunga. It dates from 1978 and the architect of record is Frank Homolka. It shows how Home Savings, using a Sheets-inspired formalism, gave its branches a brand identity. This approach employed a return to the closed temple form of the 1920s, but enlarged in scale to fit the detached suburban setting.¹⁵⁷



*Home Savings (now Chase), 1978
6589 Foothill Boulevard, Tujunga
(SurveyLA)*

¹⁵⁷ Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 260, 302-303; Historic Resources Survey Report, Sunland-Tujunga-Lake View Terrace-Shadow Hills-East La Tuna Community Plan Area for SurveyLA. The mural may be by Millard Sheets, but the Historic Resources Survey Report does not note this.

Sub-Theme: Banks, 1900-1980

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contained purveyors of goods and services that satisfied the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of neighborhood institutions providing banking services. Over the decades, banks have been designed and strategically sited within neighborhoods to serve as focal points

Neighborhood banks may be significant in the areas of commerce and/or architecture. They illustrate the evolution of the neighborhood bank as a building type, from the corner-oriented forms from before the First World War, through the axial temple forms of the 1920s, to the open modernist forms of the postwar period. Commercially they illustrate the changing character of neighborhood banking in the twentieth century, from its initially limited service to local businesses, through the rise of branch banking in the 1920s, to the stress on transparency as a public relations device in the postwar period. Bank may also be excellent examples of architectural styles of the day and designed by noted architects.

Period of Significance: 1900-1980

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1900, corresponding to the date of the earliest known neighborhood banks in Los Angeles, and ends in 1980, the end date for SurveyLA.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial-Finance – Bank/Savings & Loan

Property Type Description: Commercial building type housing facilities for the provision of banking services to the residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Was historically designed and used as a bank building

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Contains features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial and bank design from its period of construction
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1900-1980 period
 - May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Typically associated with noted architects/designers
- May reflect corporate designs associated with particular banking institutions
- Characterized by pedestrian-oriented position on the street in the pre-World War II period
- Characterized by auto-friendly site planning and facilities in the post-World War II period
- Features architectural and site-planning elements to emphasize their perceived importance
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Location, Feeling, and Association
- Should maintain if possible original relationship to the street and to neighboring structures
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may have been altered, removed, or replaced, particularly in early examples
- Use may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

SUB-THEME: THEATERS, 1915-1965

The theater sub-theme consists of buildings constructed to show motion pictures and, in some cases, live entertainment, in a neighborhood setting. Included are individual purpose-built theater structures in neighborhood business districts. Not included are the Movie Palaces from Downtown Los Angeles, or from regional commercial districts such as Hollywood Boulevard or Wilshire Boulevard-Miracle Mile.¹⁵⁸

Motion pictures began to be shown commercially around 1900. Downtown they were typically shown in large theaters as parts of vaudeville programs. But the early neighborhood theater was a much simpler affair. An exhibitor rented a storefront, covered the front windows, hung a sheet on the back wall, and filled the retail space with benches or folding chairs. A box just inside the entrance served as a ticket stand.¹⁵⁹

The first neighborhood building type specifically identified as a movie theater was the Nickelodeon. It was common for about a decade, from 1905 to 1914. The Nickelodeon was a variation on the basic storefront. The interior typically measured about twenty feet wide and eighty feet long, a size that could be accommodated within a rented retail space. The entrance and show window were removed, and a new recessed entrance constructed. An enclosed ticket, or box, office was placed in front within the recess.¹⁶⁰

An early movie house existed in Eagle Rock in a building that still stands. It is unclear as to whether it was a storefront or a Nickelodeon. The building is the Old Mason's Hall, at 5052-5064 Eagle Rock Boulevard. It is a business block with two storefronts, separated by a stairway that leads to a lodge hall space above. In 1916 the storefront to the right housed "moving pictures," while the storefront to the left served as the city hall for the then-independent Eagle Rock. By 1930 both spaces had reverted to stores, and a purpose-built movie theater, no longer extant, had been built on the adjacent lot to the north.¹⁶¹

The Nickelodeon had many limitations, but the most serious was safety. There were seldom adequate exits for the number of customers. Nor was there any sort of fire-resistant separation between the audience and the projection machinery, a grave danger given the flammable nature of the nitrate film used at that time. Once building codes became common and the particular problems presented by the Nickelodeon known, they declined in popularity.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Movie palaces are discussed in the "Entertainment Industry" context.

¹⁵⁹ Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theater*, Starring S. Charles Lee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5-6, 22.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 24, 26-27.

¹⁶¹ Eric Warren, *Eagle Rock* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 114; 1916 Sanborn Map for Eagle Rock City; 1930 Sanborn Map.

¹⁶² Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 27-28.

During the 1920s, as movie attendance doubled from forty to eighty million per week nationwide, the motion picture theater was recognized as a specific building type separate from theaters containing live entertainment. The difference was the elimination of the deep stage and rear service space. In its place was a screen attached directly to the rear wall, and perhaps a small stage in front. The wide and shallow, slightly arched arrangement of seats, typical of theaters with live performers, was replaced by a narrower and deeper arrangement. Finally, the need was recognized for a projection room separated from the auditorium by fire-resistant material.¹⁶³

There was also the evolution of the neighborhood theater as a separate type. Typically they were smaller in size and simpler in design than the Downtown movie palaces. The Los Angeles building code of the 1920s permitted motion picture theaters to be housed in wood or masonry buildings, with wood roof structures, if they seated fewer than 900 and had no stage or balcony. The common neighborhood theater fit these specifications. However, in a few larger theaters, designed to house live entertainment as well as movies, a stage and balcony were provided, and the structure upgraded to meet more stringent code regulations.¹⁶⁴

The business of motion picture distribution and exhibition encouraged the development of the neighborhood theater. By the time of the First World War, in 1917 and 1918, the differentiation between a first-run and a secondary showing had been accepted. First-run theaters were the movie palaces Downtown, while the neighborhood theaters exhibited a film once its drawing power had decreased.¹⁶⁵

Construction of neighborhood theaters was also encouraged by a three-level ownership pattern that developed. First were the theaters owned by the studios. Second were the theater chains, not affiliated with the studios. These were often remnants of the old vaudeville circuits. Third were the independent theater owners. These were defined as entrepreneurs who owned fewer than four theaters. While some of the larger neighborhood theaters were studio owned, most of the smaller ones were the property of independents.¹⁶⁶

An example of an early neighborhood theater, relatively small in size and with the wood truss roof allowed by the building code, is the Vista Theater, at 4473 Sunset Boulevard in Los Feliz. It was constructed in 1923 and originally known as Bard's Hollywood Theatre. The architect was Lewis A. Smith. It appears to have had no balcony or stage when built.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 3-4, 51.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 53, 55

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 54.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 72-73.

¹⁶⁷ Commentary on Vista Theater photograph (order number 00015504), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library; Historic Resources Survey Report, Hollywood Community Plan Area for SurveyLA; 1919/1950 Sanborn Map.



*Vista Theatre, 1923
4473 Sunset Boulevard, Los Feliz
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

There were some neighborhoods which investors thought could support larger theaters, complete with balconies and stages. Two forms were popular. One was the incorporation of the theater into a standard business block. The entrance was a recessed portal in place of a storefront. Surrounding this were storefronts on either side and office space above. The lobby filled the space otherwise occupied by a store, and the large auditorium sat behind the office block. Only the sign and the marquee differentiated the building from those around it.

An example of this form is the Highland Theatre Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 549). It is located on North Figueroa, along which the streetcar ran that served Highland Park. It was built in 1924 and designed by architect L. A. Smith, who had done the Vista. Other examples of theaters incorporated into business blocks are the El Portal in North Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 573), also designed by L. A. Smith and completed in 1926, and the Westlake on South Alvarado (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 546), designed by Richard D. Bates and completed in 1925.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 465, 468; 1920-1950 Sanborn Map; Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.



Highland Theater, 1924

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 549

(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

The second form taken by the larger neighborhood theater was to imitate the Downtown movie palace in its presence on the street. This was particularly true of the neighborhood theaters built by the studios. The elevation became an architectural event. The theater occupied the full façade, and used enlarged scale and exotic detailing to make it stand apart from the surroundings. The sign and the marquee were particularly elaborate.¹⁶⁹

An example of this is the Warner Grand Theater in San Pedro (Juarez Theater, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 251). It opened in January of 1931, making it one of the last of the era's theaters, and was designed by architect B. Marcus Priteca. San Pedro, with its port, had a relatively large neighborhood commercial district, served by its own streetcar network, and was sufficiently distant from Downtown Los Angeles to be seen as able to support such an investment.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 9-10.

¹⁷⁰ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 441.



*Warner Theater, 1930-1931
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 251
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Of particular significant for social history is the Lincoln Theatre (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 744, listed in the National Register). Located at 2300 South Central Avenue, it was the primary neighborhood theater for the African American community. It was built in 1926-1927 and designed by John Paxton Perine, who was also responsible for the Roosevelt Theater in Hawthorne, the Fox Redondo, and San Bernardino's California Theater. It was large structure, complete with balcony and a stage for live performances. It was built of what was considered at the time "fireproof" construction, consisting of reinforced concrete walls and a roof supported by steel trusses.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Lincoln Theater, Los Angeles Conservancy Website, www.laconservancy.org; 1922/1950 Sanborn Map.



Lincoln Theatre, 1926-1927
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 744
(Los Angeles Public Library)

The two planned neighborhoods of the late 1920s, Leimert Park and Westwood, both had theaters constructed in the early 1930s. The two were similar in that they were designed to stand out as neighborhood landmarks through the use of towers. The Fox Village in Westwood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 362) was completed in 1931 and the Leimert Theater in 1932.¹⁷²

Westwood during the 1930s became a center for theaters. This fit into its goal of serving as a regional as well as a neighborhood commercial district. The Fox Village was joined by the Fox Bruin Theater (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 362), designed by S. Charles Lee in 1937 and located across the street. Lee was responsible for the Tower and the Los Angeles Theaters, two Downtown movie palaces, but by the mid-1930s had exchanged historicism for modernist forms. In 1940 the Crest Theatre (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument 919) was completed. It was located a bit outside the Village, one block south of Wilshire on Westwood Boulevard.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 450; Construction date for Leimert Theatre from Los Angeles County Assessor.

¹⁷³ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 450; Construction date for Crest Theatre from Los Angeles County Assessor.



Fox Village, Westwood, 1931
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 362
(Los Angeles Public Library)

The Depression Years of the 1930s were difficult for the Downtown movie palaces. But, as movie attendance began to pick up after a decline during the worst years of the early thirties, the neighborhood theater became the primary place of attendance. It was smaller, simpler in design, and less expensive to maintain and manage.¹⁷⁴

By the late 1930s a standard form had emerged. These so-called neighborhood houses were single-story halls with sloped floors that sat between 800 and 1200. They included the latest improvements in acoustics and often were air-conditioned. Stylistically they used the Streamlined Moderne and other forms fashionable at the time, with signs and marquees becoming even more dominant than they had been in the 1920s. Where room permitted, they included parking lots.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 91.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 88, 91-97, 108-109.



La Reina, 1938

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 290
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

Two examples are designated resources. One is the El Rey Theater in the Wilshire district (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 520). It dates from 1936 and was designed by Clifford Balch. The other is the La Reina Theater in Sherman Oaks (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 290). It was designed by S. Charles Lee, architect of the Fox Bruin. Built in 1937-1938, the La Reina illustrates his use of the vertical sign, dominant marquee, and innovative lighting. The theater sat 875 and used a wood truss roof typical of the smaller theaters of the early 1920s.¹⁷⁶

Neighborhood theater design in the years immediately following the Second World War followed the patterns of the late 1930s. A few continued with streamlining, but took the style to expressionistic extremes. One of the most elaborate is the Loyola Theater (L.A. Historic-Cultural Resource Number 259). It dates from 1948 and was designed by Clarence J. Smale. It is part of the Westchester business center, located along Sepulveda just south of Manchester, which pioneered in the use of rear parking in the development of the neighborhood shopping center.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 445, 463; Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 100; 1919/1955 Sanborn Map.

¹⁷⁷ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 442.



Loyola Theater, 1948

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 259
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

Most of the postwar theaters were less elaborate. The Streamlined Moderne gave way to straighter, simpler lines under the influence of the International Style. An example of a postwar theater in a more subdued form is the Reseda Theater, at 18441-18447 West Sherman Way. It was designed by S. Charles Lee and was a part of the Reseda commercial district.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Individual Resources Report, Reseda-West Van Nuys Community Plan Area for SurveyLA; Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 147-153.



Reseda Theater, 1948
18441-18447 West Sherman Way in Reseda
(SurveyLA)

But the neighborhood theater was an endangered species. Two events occurred that would cause it to decline. One was the 1948 Supreme Court decision which separated the studios from their theater chains. This led to higher ticket prices and fewer movies to show, as well as a halt to new theater construction by the studios and the need to sell off the ones that they owned. The second event was the development was television. Between 1947 and 1957 movie attendance fell by half, as ninety percent of households obtained TV sets.¹⁷⁹

The first reaction of the studios was to produce movies that would provide an experience that could not be equaled by television. This occasionally demanded new theater forms. These tended to be larger and more expensive, thereby reversing the trend toward small neighborhood theaters. At the same time, because of the need to provide for parking, they tended to be in outlying locations. The result blurred the old division between Downtown and neighborhood movie houses.¹⁸⁰

An example is the Pacific Cinerama Dome Theatre and Marquee (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 659). It was constructed in 1963 and is located on Sunset Boulevard, between Cahuenga and Vine, south of the historic Hollywood Boulevard theater district. It was designed by architect Welton Becket and constructed in 1963. At the time it was considered the only concrete geodesic dome ever built.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 163.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 166.

¹⁸¹ Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 474.



Pacific Cinerama Dome Theatre and Marquee, 1963

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 659

(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

Eventually the neighborhood single-screen theater evolved into the shopping-center multiplex. The idea of a theater as part of a neighborhood shopping center dated from the early postwar years. An early example is the single-screen theater that was included in the Baldwin Hills Shopping Center, as described in the Neighborhood Shopping Center sub-theme. The first two- and three-screen theaters appeared in the early 1960s. Theater chains soon took the form further, with AMC creating multiplexes of four screens in 1966 and six-screens in 1969. Eventually single free-standing structures, either surrounded by their own parking or part of a shopping center, contained as many as eighteen screens.¹⁸²

The architecture of these auto-oriented multiplexes was utilitarian. One historian has described their designers as using as a “shopping mall-shoe box approach.”¹⁸³ The marquee and most ornament vanished. Facades were blank except for back-lit signs announcing the films being shown. The most distinguishing architectural feature was the corporate sign of the chain owning the multiplex, often detached and placed along the road in shopping-center fashion.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Valentine, *Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 181-183.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 181-183.

Sub-Theme: Theaters, 1915-1965

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contain purveyors of goods and services that satisfy the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Neighborhood theaters were common in business districts throughout Los Angeles and played a central role, both physically and socially, in commercial life.

Neighborhood theaters may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Entertainment, and/or Architecture. They illustrate the evolution of the neighborhood theater as a building type – from the early purpose-built theaters of the 1920s, incorporated as monumental structures into the traditional street wall; to the smaller theaters of the 1930s, which utilized the modernist designs of the period; to the postwar theaters, which made use of Mid-century Modernism and fully accommodated the passenger car. Neighborhood theaters also illustrate the role the theater played in neighborhood social life both as an venue for entertainment and as a visual focal point of commercial centers. Theatre buildings may also be good to excellent examples of architectural styles and layouts of the day and were often designed by noted architects. Intact examples are becoming increasingly rare.

Period of Significance: 1915-1965

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1915, the neighborhood theater emerged as a distinct building type. It ends in 1965, with the emergence of the multiplex theater.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, excluding Downtown and the commercial core of Hollywood

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Entertainment, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial-Entertainment – Theatre, Motion Picture

Property Type Description: A commercial type containing some form of auditorium for the presentation of motion pictures in the setting the of a neighborhood commercial center.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Was originally built as a live performance/vaudeville theater or a motion picture theater

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Prominently located in the commercial core of a neighborhood business district, often on a corner
- Designed to fit into the scale of the surrounding commercial buildings
- Features architectural and site-planning elements to emphasize their perceived importance in the neighborhood
- May also be significant under a theme within the Architecture and Engineering context
- May be associated with noted architects/designers
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life
- Marquee may be a significant character defining feature

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Locations, Setting, Feeling, and Association
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may be altered, removed, or replaced, particularly in early examples
- Use may have changed (common for theaters)
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

SUB-THEME: VARIETY STORES, 1920-1960

The variety store sub-theme consists of buildings constructed to house branches of chain variety stores in a neighborhood setting. The variety store was a particular form of retail outlet, the name of which describes its merchandise. It was in essence a sort of discount department store. Its purpose was to sell a number of household items at low prices. It was originally called a five and ten cents store, in that items cost no more than a dime. More commonly, it was simply referred to as the dime store.¹⁸⁵

Typical items carried included traditional notions, such as clothes-making and sewing goods, as well as toys, glassware, stationary, toiletries, bins of food such as nuts and candies, and seasonal items such as Christmas ornaments. Stores later added clothing and shoes. They presented the merchandise on tables and flat counters, and customers were able to handle and examine the items. The larger stores also had soda fountains or lunch counters.

From their beginning, variety stores were chains. The ability to sell a great number of items at low prices came from wholesale buying in bulk. The first store was opened by F. W. Woolworth in 1879. Other chains followed, including J. J. Newberry, W. T. Grand, S. G. Kress, and S. S. Kresge. The first variety stores were limited to central business districts. Woolworth's had stores in Downtown Los Angeles by 1912, and the others soon followed.¹⁸⁶

It was during the 1920s that variety stores began opening branches in neighborhood commercial districts. The common pattern was to place a store in an existing district that had already proven its ability to provide a customer base. By the mid-1920s there were at least eight branches of the various chains outside of Downtown in San Pedro, Boyle Heights, South Central, Hollywood, and Vermont/Western neighborhoods.¹⁸⁷

These early branches were typically small. The loft-like spaces created by combining rented storefronts together suited the table-oriented mode of presenting the merchandise. The defining exterior architectural feature was the sign. All of the chains adopted a common sign form, begun by Woolworth's. It consisted of serif lettering on a red background that simply stated the name of the store, complete with initials. Woolworth's was "F. W. Woolworth Co. 5 & 10 Cent Store." Later, when prices of items could no longer be kept that low, the sign added 15 or 25 Cents. Eventually it was simply shortened to "F. W. Woolworth Co.," "J. J. Newberry Co." and the like.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Not included are variety stores in Downtown Los Angeles, or in regional commercial districts such as Hollywood Boulevard or Wilshire Boulevard-Miracle Mile. They are discussed in the SurveyLA Citywide Historic Context Statement, Commercial Development: Variety Stores theme (Draft), 2012. The draft was unpublished at the time the Neighborhood Commercial Development this theme was in development.

¹⁸⁶ Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 43; Bernice L. Thomas, *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores: The Kress Legacy* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸⁸ Richard Longstreth, *The American Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 109; Thomas, *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores*, 5-7, 9.

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Variety stores were one of the few retail forms that did comparatively well during the 1930s. Because of the low price of the merchandise, many customers who would previously have shopped in more fashionable department and specialty stores instead patronized the dime store. It was during the 1930s that the variety stores dropped their ten-cent limit and began carrying inexpensive clothing and similar items.¹⁸⁹

During the 1930's, Woolworth's doubled to 24 stores, Kress grew slightly to nine stores, and Newberry's, the third chain to arrive in the region, passed Kress in numbers, with 15 stores. New neighborhoods served by variety stores included West Adams, Mid-Wilshire, South Vermont, South Crenshaw, and Highland Park. The growth in outlying stores during this decade was dramatic; Woolworth's went from nine to 21, and Newberry's grew from only one to 13.¹⁹⁰ In all, the number of outlying stores in the three largest chains grew from 18 to 41 in this decade.

This popularity led to the increase in number of branches, as well as the remodeling and enlarging of the Downtown stores. In 1930 the city had eighteen Kress, Woolworth, and Newberry stores outside of Downtown. By 1940 this number had increased to forty one.¹⁹¹



*F. W. Woolworth Company, circa 1938
5436 Crenshaw Boulevard, Hyde Park
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

¹⁸⁹ Longstreth, *American Department Store Transformed*, 34-35.

¹⁹⁰ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 189.

¹⁹¹ Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 171.

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Few intact examples of 1930s variety stores remain in Los Angeles. One example is the building housing the F. W. Woolworth branch in Hyde Park. The store was located at 5436 Crenshaw Boulevard, in a storefront block that dates from 1930. Crenshaw at this point provided both streetcar service and diagonal parking. The sign is in the standard form, but has added 15 Cents to the earlier five and ten. The architecture of the storefront blocks was an extension of the upscale character of Leimert Park immediately to the north. The building, although altered (particularly at the storefront level), still stands.¹⁹²



Kress Building, 1939
630 South Pacific Avenue, San Pedro
(SurveyLA)

Another example from the 1930s is the Kress Building in San Pedro. There were a few neighborhoods which were large enough to receive a more monumental branch store. San Pedro, with its small-city-like business district, was one of these. It was here that S. G. Kress constructed a purpose-built corner store, at 630 South Pacific Avenue, in 1938-1939. S. G. Kress was known for constructing and owning its own outlets, and employing Streamlined Moderne imagery. The architect is said to have been Edward F. Sibbart. The building is in essence a two-story business block in the tradition of neighborhood commercial districts, but its form is a distinct advertisement for its primary resident.¹⁹³

In addition to building new branches, the variety store chains responded to their relative prosperity during the Depression by becoming larger. Stores built after 1935 grew to encompass 7,000 to 10,000

¹⁹² Commentary on “Crenshaw shops, Hyde Park” photograph (order number 00100874), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library; Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.

¹⁹³ Longstreth, *The Drive In*, 174-176; Thomas, *America’s 5 & 10 Cent Stores*, *passim*; Historic Resources Survey, San Pedro Commercial Area Redevelopment Area, 139.

square feet, typically on a single floor. At the same time, they still tended to group themselves with other stores, rather than build free-standing structures. As one historian has noted, “In setting and appearance, they suggested an updated version of conventional Main Street emporia more than they resembled the supermarket.”¹⁹⁴

There are two such larger variety stores, some remnants of which still exist. The first was part of a block of stores constructed on the west side of South Broadway, between 87th and 88th Streets, between 1936 and 1939. This cluster was significant for its inclusion of a rear parking lot, thereby making it a predecessor of the post-war neighborhood shopping center. The storefronts included a supermarket, two drugstores, and two variety stores, a Woolworth’s, and a Newberry’s. The building housing the Newberry’s, at 8715 South Broadway, although greatly altered, still stands.¹⁹⁵

The second of these larger outlets was part of a group of large storefronts that extended south from Rodeo Drive in the west side of Crenshaw Boulevard. Built in 1940-1941, the group included a Newberry’s alongside a J. C. Penney’s and a Karl’s Shoe Store. Like the group on South Broadway, a parking lot in the rear was provided. A portion of this group has survived, at 3651-3677 Crenshaw Boulevard. The most significant is the corner building, which has been attributed to Stiles Clements.¹⁹⁶

The years immediately after the Second World War saw the continued construction of large, single-story neighborhood variety stores. This pattern continued until the mid-1950s. One of the most significant, in size and design, was a Newberry’s located in the Westchester Business Center, at 8801 Sepulveda Boulevard. It opened in 1953, and was a prime example of the large post-war store all on one floor.¹⁹⁷

It also broke with the older sign form. Its sign still consisted of “J. J. Newberry Co.” spelled out in traditional serif font, but the letters were larger and attached directly to the façade over the flat canopy extending to shade the expansive glass front. The corner entry was marked by a change in wall treatment and a blade sign that simply said “Newberry’s.” The building has been demolished to make way for a shopping center.¹⁹⁸

Similar in form was the Newberry’s branch at 12169 Ventura Boulevard in Studio City. The building dates from 1947. Parking was provided in the rear. The storefront is a good example of late forties modernism, with the rounded lines of the earlier streamlining replaced with more rectangular forms. The pylon sign simply stated “Newberry’s” in san-serif font, but returned to the “5-10-25¢” line of the older signs. Also significant was the arrow pointing to “free parking” in the rear. The building still stands. It has been altered, but the pylon remains.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 172.

¹⁹⁵ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 188-193.

¹⁹⁶ Individual Resources Report, West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area for SurveyLA; Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 194-195.

¹⁹⁷ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 171, 173-174.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁹⁹ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; 1919/1955 Sanborn Map.



Newberry's, circa 1962
(Store apparently vacant with ghost of pylon lettering remaining)
12169 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City
(Los Angeles Public Library)

By the mid-fifties the variety store accepted the shopping center as the best place for new outlets. Chain store theory of the day promoted the idea of the local shopping center as having a supermarket, a drug store, and a variety store. In the process, however, the neighborhood variety store lost its individual architectural identity. The supermarket, and perhaps the drugstore, were placed on the ends of the center, and might have their own pylons or specialized graphics. But the variety store, relegated to a central position, became simply one of a row of uniform storefronts.²⁰⁰

Along with this loss of architectural identity came a loss of purpose. By the mid-1950s the dime store was associated in the public mind with a bargain-basement atmosphere set in a declining pedestrian-

²⁰⁰ Godfrey M. Lebhar, *Chain Stores in America, 1859-1962* Third Edition (New York: Chain Store Publishing Corporation, 1963), 353; Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 176, 178.

based business district. Other store types, such as the supermarket and the drugstore, began carrying the same items. Fast-food outlets cut into the lunch-counter business.²⁰¹

The result was that the variety store evolved into the large-scale suburban discount outlet. Woolworth's and Kresge's were the pioneers. There were three Kresge-created K-Marts by 1962, and Woolworth's followed with Woolco the next year. Eventually larger establishments such as Walmart and Target became the modern-day equivalents of the dime store.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 176; Thomas, *America's 5 and 10 Cent Store*, 168.

²⁰² Lebharr, *Chain Stores in America*, 359-361.

Sub-Theme: Variety Stores, 1920-1960

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contain purveyors of goods and services that satisfy the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are neighborhood variety stores.

Neighborhood variety stores may be significant in the areas of Commerce and/or Architecture. Commercially they illustrate how the chain variety store evolved from a Downtown to neighborhood-based form of retail business. They illustrate the evolution of the variety store as a building type, from the standard storefront in the 1920s, to a stand-alone building with dominant identifying signage and provision for parking. The stores are also typically significant for their association with regional or national chains and represent good to excellent examples of architectural styles from their period of construction. Intact variety stores are becoming increasingly rare. Most extant examples have significant alterations and do not retain integrity.

Period of Significance: 1920-1960

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1920 when the variety chains began creating neighborhood branch outlets. It ends in 1960 when the neighborhood chain variety store was no longer a distinct building type.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, except Downtown and the commercial core of Hollywood

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial-Retail – Variety (Chain) Store
(e.g. J.J. Newberry's, S.H. Kress Co., Woolworth's)

Property Type Description: A commercial type housing a neighborhood retail outlet owned by a variety store chain, the purpose of which was selling a great diversity of inexpensive items in a setting that allowed for open display and customer handling of the merchandise.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Was historically designed and used as a variety store for a significant regional or national chain
- Of a scale and architectural character of mass merchandising chain-owned retail outlets for inexpensive items

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- May also be significant under a theme within the Architecture and Engineering context
- May be associated with noted architects/designers
- Contains features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial store design from its period of construction
- May reflect corporate designs associated with particular chains, particularly with regard to signage
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Location, Feeling, and Association
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may be altered, removed, or replaced
 - Intact signage preferred
- Site layout should retain original relationship to the street and to adjacent structures
- Use may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

SUB-THEME: RESTAURANTS, 1880-1980

The restaurant sub-theme consists of neighborhood resources purpose built to house food service establishments. The neighborhood restaurant catered to locals, and was not dependent upon a patronage drawn from other neighborhoods. As such, it reflected the economic level and, oftentimes the ethnically-based tastes, of the neighborhood. Many of Los Angeles neighborhood restaurants are also evaluated under the Commercial Identify theme as the founding or long-term location of well-known, and often iconic, establishments. Restaurants are also important property types discussed in each of the ethnic-cultural themes separately developed as part of the citywide historic context statement.



Little Joe's Restaurant and Grocery, circa 1939

900 North Broadway

(Los Angeles Public Library)

The neighborhood restaurant as a distinct business emerged in the decades after the Civil War. It began as an offshoot of a tavern, hotel, or grocery store. An example of this was the well-known Little Joe's Restaurant, which once stood at 900 North Broadway. The building housing Little Joe's was originally

the Grand View Hotel. It contained two storefronts on its ground floor in the early 1900s. On the right was a retail space while on the left was a dining room and kitchen, most likely for hotel guests.²⁰³

The Grand View Hotel was located on the northeast corner of Broadway (then Buena Vista) and College. This was the border between a residential district, to the south and west, and an industrial district to the northeast. The Los Angeles Railway Line that served Highland Park ran along Broadway. (The neighborhood eventually became New Chinatown with the relocation of the Chinese community as part of the construction of Union Station in the 1930s.)²⁰⁴

In the late 1920s the retail space on the right was taken over by John Gadeschi and Joe Vivalda for their Italian-American Grocery Company. The two acquired the restaurant space to the left in the early 1930s, supposedly because construction workers building New Chinatown stopped at the store for a quick meal and disrupted the grocery business. The name Little Joe's is said to have been given to both the store and the restaurant in the late 1930s. (Little Joes evolved into a large destination restaurant before it closed in 1998. The structure no longer stands.)²⁰⁵

A more direct predecessor of the neighborhood restaurant was the luncheonette. It evolved from the soda fountains of the late 1800s. The luncheonette provided counter service, with perhaps a small kitchen in the rear, and served light meals. Some were parts of drugstores or variety stores, while others were independent businesses.²⁰⁶

By the early 1900s the luncheonette had developed into the neighborhood café. The café was a form that could be found both on the main streets of small towns and in neighborhood business districts which functioned very much like small towns. Between 1910 and 1940 the local café served as a social gathering place for the neighborhood. It fit into the standard storefront found in the streetcar-based neighborhood commercial district. It consisted of a long, narrow space, with a counter along one side, tables or booths along the other, and the kitchen in the rear.²⁰⁷

Typical of the inter-war period were the cafés to be found in the Fish Harbor district of San Pedro. This was a section of the port community, officially known as East San Pedro, which occupied the western tip of Terminal Island across the bay from San Pedro proper. The area around Fish Harbor was the site of a historically significant Japanese-American community, whose members were involved in the fishing industry. In February of 1942 all civilians were required to evacuate Terminal Island and members of the Japanese community were sent to internment camps.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ John A Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 21; 1906 Sanborn Map.

²⁰⁴ *Young's Los Angeles City Railway Directory, 1904*, www.erha.org/youngs; 1906 Sanborn Map.

²⁰⁵ Commentaries on photographs "Italian American Grocery Co" (Order Number 00005130) and "Little Joe's Restaurant, exterior view" (Order Number 00005129), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

²⁰⁶ Jakle and Sculle, *Fast Food*, 25-29.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

²⁰⁸ "Terminal Island Japanese Memorial," www.sanpedro.com.



*Cafés, circa 1935
Fish Harbor Business District, San Pedro
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The term café was extremely flexible and applied to restaurants that have achieved historic significance for specialized reasons. One of these is the Idle Hour Café in North Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 977). It was originally a tavern and is significant as an example of Programmatic Architecture, discussed in the theme of Commercial Development and the Automobile. Another is the Venice West Café (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 979). Its significance relates to its role as a performing arts venue and center of social life for the Beat Generation.

Besides the café, by the 1920s there were two other neighborhood restaurant types. One was the tea room. It was an upscale, more respectable version of the café. The café was often seen as a primarily masculine environment, while the tea room catered to women. The menu consisted of lighter items, the prices were higher, and the surroundings more sedate. Tea room owners were often women, and the setting was typically domestic, with converted dwellings instead of storefronts providing quarters.²⁰⁹

An example of a neighborhood tea room is Lady Effie's Tea Parlor (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 764). It is located at 453 East Adams Boulevard in Southeast Los Angeles. It occupied a dwelling built in 1901 and remodeled in 1907. Adams was an upper-middle class neighborhood in the early 1900s and the Boulevard was lined with single-family homes of a scale similar to that which later housed the Tea Parlor, although this dwelling seems to have been the largest along the block. A streetcar line ran on

²⁰⁹ Jakle and Sculle, *Fast Food*, 41-42.

Maple Avenue one-half block to the east. There were by the 1950s several bungalow courts and apartment buildings, and a corner drug store stood at the intersection of Adams and Maple, one-half block to the east. This resource is significant for African American social history.²¹⁰



Lady Effie's Tea Parlor, 1901/1907
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 764
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

The second alternative to the café was what historians have called the destination restaurant. This was a facility that provided a special experience as well as food. Atmosphere and design were stressed. Menus were more elaborate and prices higher. Unlike the café and tearoom, alcohol was typically available, surreptitiously during Prohibition and openly afterward.²¹¹

The destination restaurant was rare in a neighborhood setting. It was typically found Downtown, particularly as parts of hotels, along specialized business strips, such as Hollywood Boulevard and the Miracle Mile, or in resorts such as Venice. But certain residential neighborhoods could support one. An example from the 1920s is the La Fonda Restaurant (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 268). It is

²¹⁰ Construction and remodeling dates from Los Angeles County Assessor; *Young's Los Angeles City Railway Directory, 1904*; 1923 and 1950 Sanborn Maps; *1937 Route Map of the Los Angeles Railway*, in the Map Collection of the Los Angeles Public Library.

²¹¹ Jakle and Sculle, *Fast Food*, 49.

located at 2501-2511 Wilshire Boulevard in the Westlake district, and was designed by the architectural firm of Morgan, Walls and Clements.²¹²



La Fonda Restaurant, 1926
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 268
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

Dating from 1926, the La Fonda was opened when Westlake was evolving from a neighborhood of single-family homes into one of apartments and institutions, able to support an upscale destination restaurant. On the block to the west of the La Fonda were the Los Angeles Art Association and the Otis Art Institute. Diagonally across the intersection of Wilshire and Carondelet was the Park-Wilshire, an apartment building of 174 units completed in 1923.²¹³

Neighborhood destination restaurants continued to be built up until the beginning of the Second World War. An example is the Los Feliz Brown Derby Restaurant (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 843). It is located at 4500 West Los Feliz Boulevard and dates from 1942. It is a branch of the more famous hat-shaped restaurant of the same name, but shares only the circular form. Its style is late Streamlined Moderne, reflecting its projected image of elegant dining. It is located on the southwest corner of Los Feliz and Hillhurst, at the point where the commercial district along Hillhurst to the south ends and the upper-class residential district of Los Feliz begins. Of significance is that, unlike the earlier La Fonda, it provided parking.²¹⁴

²¹² Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 443.

²¹³ 1923 Sanborn Map.

²¹⁴ 1909/1950 Sanborn Map.



*Los Feliz Brown Derby Restaurant, 1942
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 843
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

After the Second World War, the storefront-based neighborhood café was replaced by the auto-oriented coffee shop. These were free-standing structures, with their own parking lots, which reflected the shift toward neighborhood commerce based on widespread ownership of the automobile. Like the café, the coffee shop combined counter service with table and booth service, and like the café, generally did not serve alcohol. Some identified themselves as family restaurants, with less space for the counter and with the table and booth service in a separate space.²¹⁵

The post-war coffee shop in Los Angeles was often in Googie style. The name of the style stems from its first use in a coffee shop of that name designed in the late 1940s. (This relationship is explored fully in the Googie sub-theme under the theme of Postwar Modernism.) Many of the coffee shops were parts of chains. As such, certain features, in particular the signs, were standardized Googie forms.²¹⁶

Examples include Johnnie's Coffee Shop (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1045) and Norm's Coffee Shop (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1090), both in the Wilshire District. Norm's, located at 470 North La Cienega Boulevard, dates from 1956.²¹⁷ La Cienega in the decade after the Second World War was an auto-oriented neighborhood strip that served the then single-family home neighborhoods in the surrounding blocks, including what was still unincorporated West Hollywood. Norm's is typical in both its use of Googie architecture and in its provision for parking. Its sign was a standard design feature found at other Norm's branches.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Jakle and Sculle, *Fast Food*, 50-51.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

²¹⁷ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor.

²¹⁸ Construction date from Los Angeles County Assessor; 1912/1950 Sanborn Map.



Norm's Coffee Shop, 1956

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1090

(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)

Many of the Norm's outlets were designed by the architectural firm of Louis Armét and Eldon Davis. Armét and Davis opened their office in 1947 and soon became a premier source of Google commercial architecture. Their work included many of the Bob's Big Boy restaurants, as well as numerous supermarkets, bowling alleys, and other commercial forms. Perhaps their best-known creation after Norm's was their work for Denney's. This chain used Googie as a means of giving identity to their family restaurants, particularly through the use of a dominant and dramatic roof form.²¹⁹

A final type of neighborhood restaurant is the food stand. These are small structures based on walk-up window service. Some provide outdoor seating, while others include a drive-up window.²²⁰ A few were individually owned. Surviving examples are rare and include the Munch Box (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 750) at 21532 Devonshire Street in Chatsworth. It dates from 1958, when this part of the San Fernando Valley was still generally undeveloped. Other examples include the early 1946 Marty's (originally Red's) Hamburger Stand at 10558 W. Pico Blvd., and the 1965 Tip Top Hamburgers at 8634 N. Woodman Ave.

²¹⁹ Allen Hess, *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), 71-72.

²²⁰ Jakle and Sculle, *Fast Food*, 42-45.



The Munch Box, 1958

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 750

(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)



Tip Top Hamburgers, 1965

8634 N. Woodman Ave

(SurveyLA)

Others were parts of chains. An example is the original walk up/drive-thru Der Wienerschnitzel in Wilmington (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1046). Fast food pioneer John Galardi opened this

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Context: Commercial Development/Neighborhood Commercial Development

first Der Wienerschnitzel restaurant in 1961 at 1362 Gulf Avenue. The restaurant has been in continuous operation since it opened and is substantially intact. Since 1961, the Wienerschnitzel chain has grown to include 351 locations nationwide. This company went on to evolve from a walk-up into a drive-thru chain with a distinct A-frame design (starting in 1962) for its branches.²²¹



*The original Der Wienerschnitzel, 1961
Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1046
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

A smaller local chain that maintained its walk-character is Cupid's Hot Dogs. Established in the San Fernando Valley in 1946 by Richard and Bernice Walsh, it historically had three branches – in North Hollywood, Van Nuys, and Canoga Park. Cupid's Hot Dogs is still owned by the same family that created it, now in its third generation. One of the original outlets, from 1961, it is located at 20030 Van Owen Street in Canoga Park. Its modest architecture resembles a hip-roofed stucco ranch bungalow. But its diagonal placement on the corner site is significant, as is its free-standing heart-shaped sign.²²²

²²¹ The origins and forms of the drive-thru are considered under the theme of "Commercial Development and the Automobile."

²²² Cupid's was originally called Walsh's Hot Dogs, Cupid's Hot Dogs Website, www.cupidshotdogs.net; Individual Resources Survey Report, Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills Community Plan Area for SurveyLA.

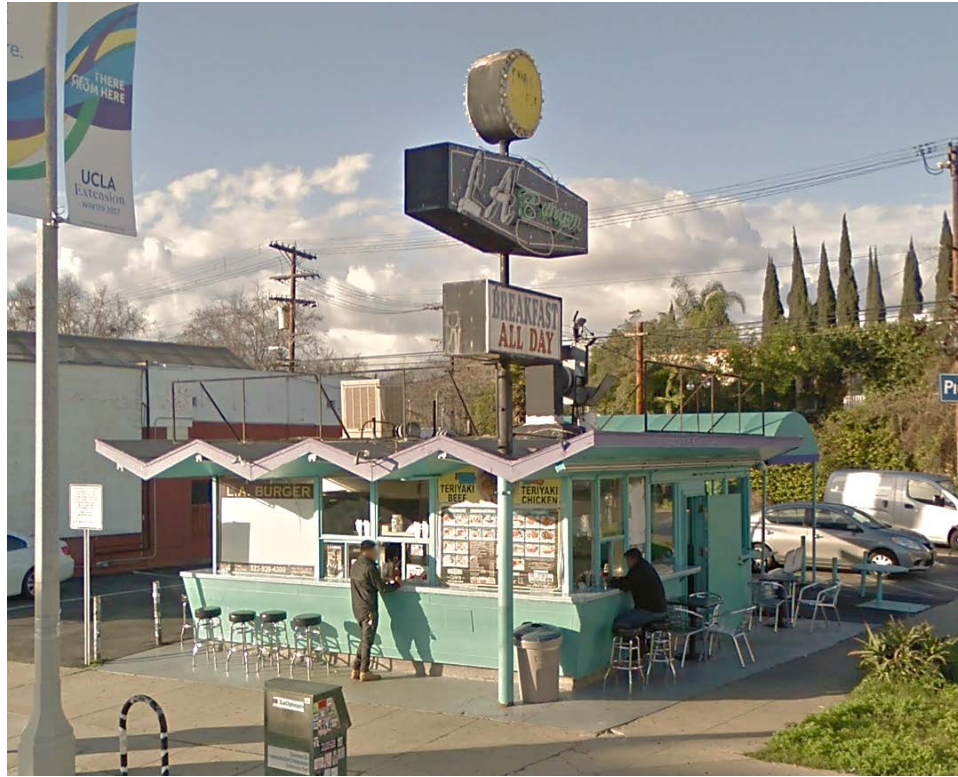


Cupids Hot Dogs, 1961
20030 W. Vanowen Street, SurveyLA

The Foster's Freeze chain was founded in 1946 in Inglewood, California by George Foster. The chain was originally known for its soft serve ice cream, but expanded to include hamburgers and other fast food items. Only three example have been identified in Los Angeles. The two most intact identified for SurveyLA include the 1949 stand at 2870 N. Fletcher Drive. and the 1962 stand at 4967 N. Eagle Rock Blvd., both in northeast Los Angeles.

The Orange Julius chain was established by Julius Freed and Bill Hamlin in 1926. Known more recently for their shopping mall locations, the first Orange Julius was a walk-up stand on South Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles. By 1929, there were over 100 Orange Julius locations and, by 1967, over 700 locations existed in outdoor stands and shopping malls in the United States and internationally. An extant example of an walk-up stand dates to 1964 and is located at 6001 W. Pico Blvd. It was designed in a simplified Googie style by the architecture firm Armét and Davis. Although simple in design, it's most prominent Googie feature is the folded plate roof. Today there are no Orange Julius locations operating in the city of Los Angeles. This example is a rare remaining example of the company's walk up stands.²²³

²²³ There appear to be only two extant examples in Los Angeles and this is the most intact of the two.



*Orange Julius Walk-up Stand, 1965 (now vacant)
6001 W. Pico Blvd.
(Google Maps Streetview)*

Sub-Theme: Restaurants, 1880-1980

Summary Statement of Significance: Neighborhood commercial resources are those which contain purveyors of goods and services that satisfy the everyday needs of nearby residents. Convenience of location was more important than range or quality of the goods or services offered. Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of neighborhood restaurants.

Neighborhood restaurants may be significant in the areas of Commerce, Social History, and/or Architecture. They illustrate the evolution of the neighborhood restaurant into a variety of building types, from the café and the luncheonette, often housed in rented storefront spaces, into the free-standing tea room, destination restaurant, coffee shop, and walk-up food stand. They also illustrate how the neighborhood restaurant often functioned as important and well-known places to gather and socialize, reinforcing a sense of neighborhood identity. These restaurants may be associated with local, regional, and/or national chains and reflect prototype/corporate designs which may be significant examples of architectural styles and designed by noted architects. Neighborhood restaurants are also often significant under the Commercial Identity theme.

Period of Significance: 1880-1980

Period of Significance Justification: The period of significance begins in 1880, when the extension of the streetcar system led to the creation of spatially separate neighborhoods, with individual commercial districts, and ends in 1980, the end date established for SurveyLA.

Geographic Location: Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles

Areas of Significance: Commerce, Social History, Architecture

Criteria: NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

Associated Property Type: Commercial-Food – Restaurant
Commercial-Food – Walk-Up Stand

Property Type Description: Restaurant: A provider of food in an indoor, sit-down setting

Walk-Up Stand: A provider of food without provision for indoor sitting, and with service via a window

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Was historically designed and used as a restaurant
- Of a scale and architectural character typical of neighborhood eating establishments
- Contains architectural features that reflect trends in neighborhood commercial design

Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Features architectural and site-planning elements typical of neighborhood restaurants in both a pedestrian-oriented storefront form and an auto-oriented freestanding form
- May reflect prototype/corporate designs associated with particular restaurant chains
- May be associated with noted architect/designers
- May have prominent signage
- Associated with activities typical of neighborhood economic and social life

Integrity Considerations

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Location, Association, and Feeling
- Should maintain if possible original relationship to the street and to neighboring structures
- Architectural integrity should be intact, retaining original massing, significant features, and identifying details
 - Some original materials may have been altered, removed, or replaced, particularly in earlier examples
- Use may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

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