

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Burke COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Morganton South QUAD

Historic Resources of Morganton

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Morganton Downtown Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Along sections of East Union, South Green,
N. Sterling, S. Sterling, King and Queen Streets

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Morganton

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

037

Burke

023

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER

Community house
art gallery

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership

STREET & NUMBER

NA

CITY, TOWN

STATE

NA

VICINITY OF

NA

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Burke County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

South Green Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Morganton

North Carolina 28655

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Suzanne Pickens Wylie

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Preservation Consultant

July 31, 1986

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

3301-T Park Road

(704) 527-1610

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Charlotte

North Carolina 28209

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

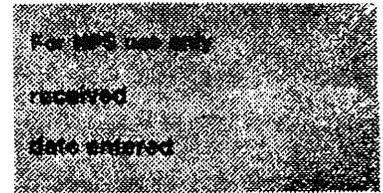
The Morganton Downtown Historic District located along sections of West Union, East Union, North Green, South Green, East Meeting, Bouchelle, Queen, King, North Sterling, and South Sterling streets is a largely intact collection of commercial, industrial, and governmental buildings. There are approximately seventy-one properties in the district, of which approximately sixty-three or eighty-nine percent are contributing. The contributing properties were constructed between ca. 1889 and ca. 1940 and illustrate the commercial development of Morganton during that time. In addition, the district contains a number of good examples of commercial architectural styles including commercial Italianate, Neo-Classical, and Art Deco. The district also contains the Old Burke County Courthouse (#68), renovated in 1903 in an eclectic Renaissance Revival and Neo-Classical form, and two buildings constructed by the WPA, the Morganton Post Office (#42) and the Morganton Community House (#41). Very few buildings have been constructed recently within the boundaries of the district and most of the historic properties retain sufficient integrity to illustrate the district's period of significance. A few of the historic buildings do have modern false fronts which obscure their character and a number of buildings were stuccoed ca. 1960. Most of the stuccoed buildings do retain their basic form and still contribute to the character of the district. Almost all of the retail levels have been completely altered with modern materials. However, this is characteristic of most historic commercial areas and has little effect on the overall integrity of the district.

The boundaries of the Morganton Downtown Historic District are determined in all directions by modern construction and parking lots. As the commercial district has expanded to meet Morganton's most recent wave of prosperity, it has eroded the older residential areas that ring the Central Business District and surrounded the historic commercial core with recent buildings and parking facilities.

The Morganton Downtown Historic District is located within the boundaries of the original street grid laid out in 1784. Traditionally, commercial establishments have been clustered around the public square with the courthouse as the centerpiece, and often the main drawing card. Early commercial buildings were log or frame and many served as residences as well. Although Morganton was the supply center for Burke County and much of the area to the west, its business establishments were few, and except for the period of the gold rush in the 1830s, were devoted mainly to basic necessities and agricultural implements. The Civil War devastated the economy of the town which precluded commercial development on a grand scale and it was not until the late 1870s and 1880s that business began to prosper. Certainly some new stores were built during the Reconstruction period on West Union and Sterling Street near its intersection with West Union. These buildings were all frame, as brick did not become readily available until the construction of Broughton Hospital, and later the School for the Deaf, created a huge demand for brick and local brickyards were established. The 1889 Piedmont Bank (#56) is the oldest remaining commercial building in the district and was one of, if not the, first constructed of brick.

A single event, the fire of December 1893, was largely responsible for the appearance of the district as it exists today. The fire began in the Hunt House (site of #9)

(See continuation sheet)

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Continuation sheet MDHD: Description Item number 7 Page 1

and spread rapidly through the frame buildings on West Union and Sterling Streets. New construction began immediately after the fire, guided by a city ordinance making brick construction mandatory.

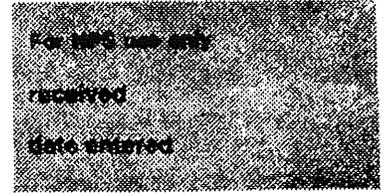
The result is illustrated today on both sides of the 100 block of West Union where the majority of the buildings were constructed in the years just after the fire. In general, these buildings are more highly ornamented than the buildings constructed after the turn-of-the-century and reflect the influence of the widely popular commercial Italianate style. Good examples include #s 10, 11, 12, 18, 23, and 28. Later buildings tend to conform to this block in scale, one-and-two stories high, but have more restrained ornamental brick-work as in #s 3, 36, and 37. Notable exceptions include #s 55, 57, and 58, the Neo-Classical Bank of Morganton (#29), and the eclectic Alva Theater (#47). The early 1930s brought the Depression and very little commercial construction. By 1935 however, Morganton as a whole had begun to recover and a number of small buildings were constructed on Sterling and East Union. In addition, the WPA constructed the Morganton Post Office (#42, ca. 1935) and the Morganton Community House (#41, ca. 1938) in the district.

An unusual number of relatively sophisticated Art Deco-inspired buildings, most designed by Wilson, North Carolina, architect Charles Benton, dot the district. The most outstanding include the Medical Building (#7), the Mimosa Theater (#65), 114 W. Union (#27), and the Tate Block (#54).

The 1806 map of Morganton shows long narrow lots, which appear to have been planned for commercial construction, facing the public square on Sterling and Green Streets. Since these two streets are twice as wide as the other streets originally laid out, it seems likely that the town commissioners intended them to be the major thoroughfares for Morganton and that residential construction was planned for side streets and for Green and Sterling away from the public square. This probable intention is further supported by the orientation of the 1837 Old Burke County Courthouse which has composed elevations facing Green and Sterling. For whatever reasons (possibly that the town did not expand as quickly as was expected and the few residents clustered their homes and combination homes and businesses around the public square), by the time of the Civil War commercial construction had centered in the 100 block of West Union Street. By the time of the fire of 1893, at least one substantial brick commercial building had been constructed on East Union across from the courthouse, the 1889 Piedmont Bank Building (MDHD #56), but the majority of commercial buildings remained on West Union. After the fire, owners rebuilt on the same lots, and the 1894 Sanborn map shows only small frame offices, probably for attorneys and county officials, on Sterling and Green. In spite of occasional remarks in the local newspaper that businesses should expand down Sterling because of its great width, Union Street remained the center of the business district. Eventually, Morganton's economic boom forced the construction of stores on Sterling but until the construction of the Caldwell Hotel in 1922, Green Street was never utilized for commercial construction on a large scale. Today the city's earliest remaining collection of commercial buildings, most ca. 1894, lines both sides of the 100 block of West Union. The block of E. Union across from the public square is an interesting mixture of styles ranging from the Piedmont Bank, the district's

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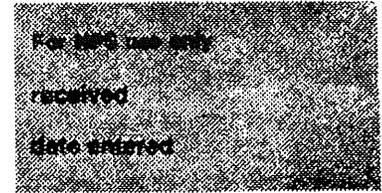
Continuation sheet MDHD: Description Item number 7 Page 2

oldest commercial building, to the Tate Block, a ca. 1940 Art Deco commercial block. The stores that line Sterling Street are for the most part simpler in and generally later in construction date, though there are a few small buildings that were constructed ca. 1894. Union Street between Green and Bouchelle Streets was developed during the early 1930s and contains small brick buildings that are perhaps the most intact in the district. The only historic building remaining on Green Street is the latest in the district, the ca. 1939 Art Deco style Mimosa Theater.

Implementation of the Main Street Program has enhanced the physical appearance of Morganton's commercial area and encouraged the continuously viable economic climate. The Morganton Downtown Historic District remains today as it has since the town's founding, the commercial center for a wide area and has suffered few, if any, ill effects from modern strip commercial centers or malls in neighboring towns.

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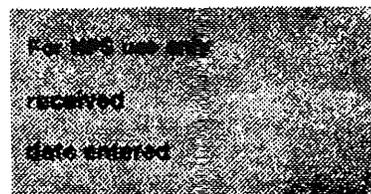
Continuation sheet MDHD: Inventory Item number 7 Page 3

Morganton Downtown Historic District

INVENTORY

Key: C - Contributing
N - Noncontributing
PL- Parking Lot

- C 1. 202 S. Sterling St. (Giles Motor Co.): ca. 1920; two-story, flat-roofed, brick, commercial building; slightly projecting center pavillion; symmetrical facade embellished with cartouches and a cornice center tablet with Adam-style swags with foliate designs; suspended canopy with foliated designs over a large central display window flanked by entry doors; interior features an open display area surrounded by an arcaded mezzanine and an ornate pressed-metal ceiling. Giles Motor Co, was originally the Burk Garage Co. begun by Ralph Waldo Pipkin and B. S. Gaither.
- PL 2. Parking Lot.
- C 3. 128 S. Sterling St.: ca. 1920; two-story, brick commercial building; six-over-six sash in upper story surmounted by recessed panels; retail level has been altered.
- C 4. 120-126 S. Sterling St.: ca. 1930; two-story, brick commercial building; plain cornice with recessed panels; twelve-over-six sash; retail levels virtually intact.
- C 5. 116-118 S. Sterling St. (Ervin Block): ca. 1938; two-story, brick commercial building; cornice with rounded modillions above recessed panels; six-over-six sash; recessed central entry flanked by plate-glass display windows.
- N 6. 114 S. Sterling St. (Ervin Building): ca. 1974; brick, Neo-Colonial commercial building.
- C 7. 110 S. Sterling St. (Medical Building): ca. 1940; two-story, stuccoed, masonry building; zigzag cornice above three hexagonal recessed panels; six-over-six sash separated by zigzag pilasters; street level features central carerra glass bay flanked by plate-glass windows above carerra glass foundation.
- N 8. 104 S. Sterling St. (Professional Building): ca. 1940; stuccoed, masonry building; recessed panels surmounted by plain molded cornice; street level completely bricked up with small modern sash and door.
- N 9. 101 W. Union St. (Wachovia Bank): ca. 1946; stuccoed masonry commercial building.

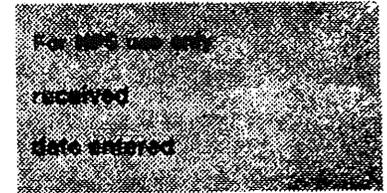
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- C 10. 111-113 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; second story features one-over-one sash surmounted by segmental arches with pendant ends, a row of arcaded corbelling, recessed panels, and a corbelled cornice; retail level has been completely altered.
- C 11. 115 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story brick commercial building; second story features three shuttered window openings surmounted by a recessed panel, a corbelled frieze, and corbelled cornice; the retail level has been completely altered.
- C 12. 117 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; second story features three two-over-two windows surmounted by connected segmental arches; cornice features a narrow recessed panel above a row of arcaded corbelling; retail level is completely altered.
- C 13. 119 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; second story features three four-over-four windows surmounted by connected segmental arches; other original features are obliterated by a ca. 1960 coat of stucco.
- C 14. 121-125 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; second story has four shuttered window openings surmounted by connected segmental arches; pilasters with corbelled caps define the two retail spaces; other original features have been obliterated by a ca. 1960 coat of stucco; retail levels have been completely altered.
- C 15. 129 W. Union St.: ca. 1925; one-story, brick commercial building; above the altered retail level is an intact recessed panel with corbelled dentilling; a wide plain frieze and a simple corbelled cornice.
- C 16. 131-141 W. Union St.: ca. 1920; four-unit, two-story, brick commercial building; each unit features three one-over-one windows, a recessed panel, corbelled frieze and corbelled cornice; the units are separated by panelled brick pilasters with stuccoed panels at intervals; all street levels have been completely altered.
- N 17. Mini Park with small kiosk.
- C 18. 136 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building clipped corner; corbelled cornice; flat pilasters delineating the bays; shuttered window openings surmounted by segmental arches; sawtooth stringcourse between stories; recessed panels.
- C 19. 134 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; one-story, brick commercial building with sawtooth stringcourse and simple cornice; originally served as the post office.
- C 20. 132 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; one-story, brick commercial building with sawtooth stringcourse and simple cornice.

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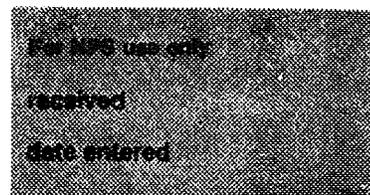


Continuation sheet MDHD: Inventory Item number 7 Page 5

- C 21. 139 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; one-story, stuccoed masonry, commercial building.
- C 22. 128 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building with two-over-one sash and recessed panels; simple pilasters frame the building; building once owned by Philo Harbison and rented to Peter Newton for a grocery.
- C 23. 126 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; features five one-over-one sash windows surmounted by a row of corbelling, recessed panels and an elaborate corbelled cornice; retail level is completely altered.
- C 24. 124 W. Union St.: ca. 1900; one-story, brick commercial building with corbelled stringcourse, recessed panel and simple cornice; simple brick pilasters frame the building; the retail level is completely altered.
- C 25. 120 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; original features have been obliterated by a ca. 1960 coat of stucco; believed to be I. I. Davis' store, one of the first constructed after the 1893 fire.
- C 26. 116 W. Union St.: ca. 1940; two-story, stuccoed, masonry building, zigzag cornice, two paterae; three long narrow sash with glass block in the upper half and casement panes in the lower; designed by Wilson, NC architect Charles Benton; retail level completely altered.
- C 27. 114 W. Union St.: ca. 1940; two-story, stuccoed masonry commercial building; Art Deco influences; zigzag cornice; sash originally similar to #26; designed by Wilson, NC architect Charles Benton; retail level completely altered; massive sign obscures bottom third of upper story.
- C 28. 108 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; two-story, brick commercial building; upper story features elaborate brickwork including an arcaded corbel table with brick crosses in the recesses of the arcade, a corbelled architrave, and a corbelled cornice; windows are surmounted by segmental arches with corbelled ends and segmental pediments; a large round arch with corbelled ends surmounts the center window; retail level is completely altered; a large sign obscures a portion of the western end of the building.
- C 29. 106 W. Union St. (Bank of Morganton): ca. 1914; two-story, brick Classical Revival building; monumental pilasters frame the building and support a blank frieze, entablature, and heavy metal cornice with large modillions; a parapet with three concrete panels rises above the cornice line.
- C 30. 104 W. Union St.: ca. 1940; one-story, stuccoed masonry commercial building with Art Deco influences; features flat fluted pilasters with geometrical tops which support a false parapet with an interior border of brick shallow-incised foliate motifs flank the parapet.
- C 31. 102 W. Union St.: ca. 1894; small, one-story stuccoed masonry building; denticulated cornice.

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- C 32. 100 W. Union St.: ca. 1895; three-story, stuccoed brick commercial building; stone lintels and sills; building originally was not stuccoed and had an arcaded corner entrance with resticated stone arches in the manner of the Richardsonian Romanesque; originally houses the post office and masonic lodge, later the Burke Drug Co.

- C 33. 107 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1894; one-story, stuccoed brick commercial building with denticulated corbelled cornice.

- C 34. 109 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1894; one-story, stuccoed, brick commercial building; building is framed by brick pilasters with corbelled caps; recessed panels, denticulated corbelled cornice.

- C 35. 111 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1894; one-story, stuccoed, brick commercial building with recessed panel and denticulated corbelled cornice.

- C 36. 113 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1910; one-story, stuccoed, brick commercial building; corbelled cornice; corbel table; recessed panel; corbelled pendants define upper corners.

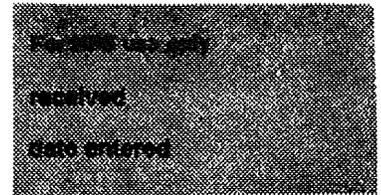
- C 37. 115 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1910; one-story, brick commercial building with corbelled cornice, corbelled pendants at the upper corners of framing pilaster.

- C 38. 203 Queen St.: ca. 1930; one-story, brick commercial building; brick pilasters support brick entablature.

- C 39. 105-111 Queen St.: ca. 1930; one-story, brick, five-unit commercial building; each unit has a recessed panel, a band of projecting bricks and a simple corbelled cornice; the unit at 105 has a false wooden facade; retail entrances are relatively intact and consist of a central entrance flanked by display windows.

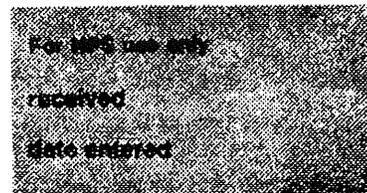
- N 40. Behind 105-111 Queen St.: modern warehouse built in several stages.

- C 41. 120 N. King St. (Morganton Community House): ca. 1938, 1980; one-story, brick H-shaped, gable-roofed building; octagonal cupola; shed-roofed porch supported by Roman Doric columns; four pedimented dormers; Georgian style door surrounded with a segmentally arched pediment and flanking reeded pilasters with composite capitals; built by the WPA as Morganton's Community House; one wing added in 1980 consistent with original design.

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- C 42. 216 N. Sterling St. (Morganton Post Office): ca. 1935; one-story brick Neo-Classical building; projecting center pavillion and pedimented entry surround with full entablature and fluted pilasters; corbelled cornice; round and rectangular recessed panels; sixteen-oversixteen light windows some surrounded by quoining, constructed by the WPA.
- C 43. 214 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1940; plain, one-story, brick commercial building with a parapet roofline.
- C 44. 210 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1935; one-story, brick commercial building with decorative brickwork in simple patterns.
- C 45. 208 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1935; one-story, brick commercial building.
- C 46. 204 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1935; one-story, brick commercial building with a band of decorative brickwork and tile.
- C 47. 200 N. Sterling St. (Alva Theater): ca. 1929; two-story, brick, eclectic movie theater; flat parapeted roof; projecting central bay topped by a pantile roof supported by large wooden brackets; three inset cartouches featuring theatrical and musical symbols; cornice is a blind arcade of small corbelled brick arches; street level has an infilled entry flanked by terracotta window surrounds with spiral pilasters and broken pediments; a metal marquee is suspended above the entry; interior is decorated in the atmospheric mode of theater decoration featuring false back-lit windows, balconies and monumental pilasters framing the stage.
- C 48. 138-140 N. Sterling: ca. 1920; one-story, two unit, brick commercial building; above retail levels are recessed panels and a simple corbelled cornice; panelled pilasters define the units.
- C 49. 132 N. Sterling: ca. 1920; one-story, brick commercial building with recessed panels and corbelled, dentilled cornice.
- C 50. 122-126 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1900; two-story, stuccoed masonry commercial building; upper floor details obliterated by ca. 1960 coat of stucco; below stucco is a band of carrera glass; street levels completely altered.
- C 51. 116 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1910; one-story, stuccoed, masonry building; brick detailing at cornice line obscured by ca. 1960 coat of stucco; new aluminum sash; retail level completely altered.
- C 52. 114 N. Sterling St.: ca. 1920; two-story, stuccoed, brick commercial building with two one-over-one sash windows.

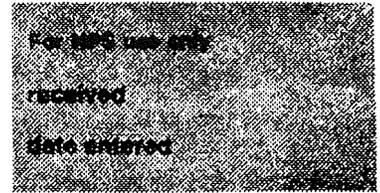
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- N 53. 110 N. Sterling St.: building completely obscured by a modern corrugated metal facade.
- C 54. 100 N. Sterling St. (Tate Block): ca. 1940; two-story, stuccoed masonry, Art Deco commercial building; corner section features plain fluted pilasters, fluted panels below very narrow openings with stuccoed panels above casement sash; flanking sections have horizontal scoring; street level features fluted stuccoed walls and a corner entrance; there is a patterned band of structural glass between the stories; designed by Charles Benton.
- C 55. 103-111 E. Union St.: ca. 1915; two-story, two-unit, brick commercial building; dentilled, corbelled cornice; left unit has three bays with one-over-one sash with concrete lintels and sills surmounted by a recessed panel; right unit is similar with five bays and two recessed panels; pilasters with recessed panels frame the building and separate the unit.
- C 56. 117 E. Union St. (A) (Piedmont Bank): ca. 1889; two-story brick commercial building; corbelled cornice with segmental pediment; recessed panel, double row of corbelling below; -entral segmental arched tripartite window with stone sill; retail level altered with perma-stone and plate-glass display windows.
- C 57. 117 E. Union St. (B): ca. 1915; two-story brick commercial building ornamentation similar to #55; four bays with stone sills.
- C 58. 117 E. Union St. (C): ca. 1915; ornamentation similar to #s 55 and 57; two units with three bays each.
- N 59. 100 N. Green St. (NCNB): ca. 1980; modern bank building.
- C 60. 203 E. Union St.: ca. 1935; two-story, brick, commercial building; low, stepped parapet wall with projecting end stacks; recessed frieze panels; ornamentation of yellow brick; new sash and entrance installed ca. 1986.
- C 61. 205 E. Union St.: ca. 1935; two-story, brick commercial building; recessed panels below each of three casement-sashed bays; single recessed panel above windows; stepped parapet roofline; retail level completely altered.
- C 62. 207 ^{E.} W. Union St.: ca. 1935; two-story, brick commercial building; two units wide each with two bays of paired sash; recessed panels below sash, single recessed panel above; stepped-parapet roofline; retail level relatively intact with side entrances with transoms and large display windows.
- C 63. 211 E. Union St.: ca. 1935; one-story, brick commercial building; flat roof with a hooded-gable parapet; single recessed panel extends the width of the facade; panelled pilasters frame the building and separate the three bays; retail level relatively intact with side entries and large glass display windows.

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Continuation sheet

MDHD: Inventory

Item number 7

Page 10

Resources Count

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Buildings	63	7	70
Sites		1	1
	<u>63</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>71</u>

8 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL _____ STATE X LOCAL

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1837-ca. 1940 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Various

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

See continuation sheet

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

See continuation sheet

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For NPS use only
received
date entered

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Morganton Downtown Historic District is located along sections of West Union, East Union, North Green, South Green, East Meeting, Bouchelle, Queen, King, North Sterling, and South Sterling streets in the center of Morganton. This area has always been the commercial core of the town as businesses grouped themselves about the public square and along Sterling and Union streets. The district contains Morganton's historic collection of commercial buildings and also includes several governmental buildings and two small industrial buildings. The majority of the properties were constructed between ca. 1889 and ca. 1940, but the district also contains the ca. 1837 Old Burke County Courthouse (# 68, NR). In addition, the downtown district is located in the largest intact portion of Morganton's original (1787) grid plan which included the present public square and Sterling and Green streets which retain their original width. The boundaries were established to exclude concentrations of modern construction or modern parking lots and to exclude older properties so altered that they were unable to illustrate their period of significance. Some modern construction has taken place within the boundaries of the district; however, it is for the most part, of a similar scale and similar materials and does not compromise the integrity of the district as a whole. Most of the storefronts of the buildings have been altered, but this is typical of most historic commercial districts and does not infringe on the integrity of the district. The district is significant as the reflection of the prosperity of the Morganton business community between ca. 1889 and ca. 1940 and as the main commercial district for the entire county during that time. It is also significant architecturally as a fine collection of small-town commercial architecture executed in commercial Italianate, Neo-Classical, and Art Deco styles.

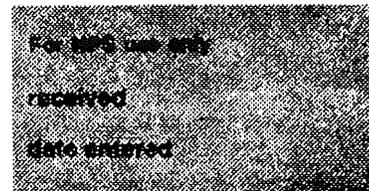
The district is significant in the area of Law and Politics and Government as the location of the Old Burke County Courthouse, the center of law and order for Burke County from 1837 to 1976 as well as for the presence of two WPA constructed public buildings, the Morganton Post Office and the Morganton Community House. The district is important in Community Planning because it contains the most intact section of the original Morganton plan.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Morganton Downtown Historic District is significant as the reflection of the prosperity of the Morganton business community between ca. 1889 to ca. 1940. During this time the business community grew within the area that had traditionally been the commercial area and constructed buildings of varied styles but of similar scale and materials. The district is significant in Law and Politics and Government as the location of the Old Burke County Courthouse, used as the active courthouse from 1837 until 1976. The Courthouse has been associated with many prominent lawyers during that time as well as the summer sessions of the North Carolina Supreme Court held in Morganton from 1847 to ca. 1861. The district is also important in community Planning because it contains the largest intact section of Morganton's original plan as specified in the act creating the Morgan Judicial District in 1787.

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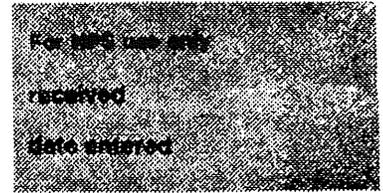
- C. The Morganton Downtown Historic District is significant architecturally as a fine collection of modest commercial buildings constructed in the commercial Italianate, Neo-Classical, and Art Deco styles. In addition, the district contains the ca. 1837 Old Burke County Courthouse, renovated in 1903 by Frank Milburn in the Neo-Classical style, and the Morganton Post Office and the Morganton Community House, both excellent examples of WPA projects.

CRITERIA EXCEPTION

- G. Although the majority of the properties in the district are over fifty years old, the period of significance of the district extends up to 1940, four years past the usual cut-off date of 1936, and the ten properties constructed between ca. 1936 and ca. 1940 should be considered contributing. All of the properties in this category are either examples of Art Deco design and have significance in the architectural history of Morganton or were constructed by the WPA and illustrate the work of Depression-era federal relief programs. The year 1940 can also be seen as a dividing line for the district because properties in the area constructed after 1940 bear little resemblance to the historic properties stylistically, while the Art Deco and WPA buildings are similar in scale and siting.

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Historical

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Morganton Downtown Historic District is significant as an intact collection of commercial, governmental, and industrial buildings constructed between ca. 1837 and ca. 1940. The buildings include the Old Burke County Courthouse (NR), the Old County Jail, the Morganton Post Office, the Community House, commercial buildings, two movie theaters, and two small industrial buildings that are significant in the governmental and commercial history of Morganton. This collection of buildings also illustrates Morganton's development and its periods of greatest prosperity and is, as well, a fine collection of small town commercial architecture. The buildings were constructed in a number of nationally popular styles including Commercial Italianate, Classical Revival, and Art Deco.

From the time of Morganton's founding, its position as the court town for the county and the judicial district has been central to its status as the supply center for the surrounding area. As the only substantial settlement on the edge of the frontier, and because it was the court town, Morganton was often the last provision stop for those traveling west. When settlers in the rural areas of the county and district came to Morganton for court days, it was natural that they should take the opportunity to stock up on supplies. Following a pattern seen in most courthouse towns of whatever size, one that was recognized by the town commissioners when the town was platted, commercial establishments clustered on the streets around and near the courthouse.¹¹⁰

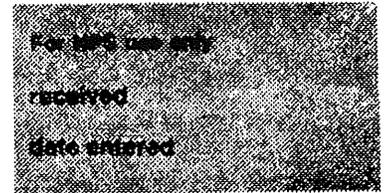
The commercial area was never extensive until the postbellum period and did not begin to thrive until the 1880s. Most of the earliest commercial buildings were frame. Much of the present appearance of the commercial area dates from after 1893 when a fire swept through the frame buildings on West Union and Sterling Streets. A flurry of building activity followed the fire, governed by a new city ordinance requiring all new commercial buildings to be brick with metal roofs. The earliest building in the district is the Old Piedmont Bank (ca. 1889) on East Union which was far enough away to escape the flames. The Bank was founded by the Morganton Land and Improvement Company who had their offices on the second floor. Later buildings from the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s line Sterling and East Union Streets.¹¹¹

Significant businesses that have been located within the district include the Bank of Morganton, Morganton Hardware Company, associated with the Claywell and McGimpsey families and one of the earliest concerns still in business, Cox's Department Store, the Davis Brothers' Store, Peter Newton's grocery and general merchandise store, the Lazarus Brothers' Store, still in business outside the district, the Burke Drug Company, John Tull's drugstore, and the Alva and Mimosa Theaters. Also located in the district are the 1935 WPA constructed Post Office and the Community House also constructed by the WPA.

The Morganton Downtown Historic District contains a number of architecturally significant commercial buildings. The largest concentration is located on both sides of the 100 block of West Union. Almost all of these buildings were constructed shortly after the 1893 fire and although their storefronts have been altered, their upper floors are virtually intact. Other significant buildings include the eclectic Alva Theater, the classical Old Piedmont Bank, the Art Deco Mimosa Theater, and the classical Giles Motor Company.

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The collection of Art Deco commercial buildings found in the district is unusually large for a town the size of Morganton and illustrates Morganton's relatively rapid recovery from the effects of the Depression. The presence of the style also indicates a certain amount of sophistication on the part of the residents who ventured to use this modern style. Although all of the buildings in this category are less than fifty years old, their importance to the history of Morganton's development, their interesting designs, and their place as an integral part of the Central Business District's historic fabric make them sufficiently significant to be considered contributing. The Morganton Community House, constructed ca. 1938 by the WPA, is also less than fifty years old. Because of its importance as one of a number of federal relief agency projects constructed in Morganton and because it is a fine example of Georgian Revival architecture, it too should be considered contributing.

(For footnotes see Cover Form, Item number 9.)

See continuation sheet

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Cover Form, Section 9

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 15 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 7	4 3, 8 0, 2, 5	3, 9 5, 5 8, 4, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1, 7	4 3, 7 7, 1, 5	3, 9 5, 5 6, 2, 0

E. 17/437600/3955960

F. 17/437890/3955970

B	1, 7	4 3, 7 9, 7, 0	3, 9 5, 5 5, 8, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	1, 7	4 3, 7 6, 1, 0	3, 9 5, 5 7, 0, 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Morganton Downtown Historic District is shown as the red line on the accompanying map entitled "City of Morganton: Central Business District" drawn on a scale of 100 feet to the inch. The boundary includes the largest concentration of historically and architecturally significant and intact properties in the area and excludes surrounding modern and thematically unrelated construction.

