

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Downtown Gastonia Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Main Avenue on the north, Broad Street on the east,
Second Avenue on the south, and Chester Street on the west. N/A not for publication

city or town Gastonia N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Gaston code 071 zip code 28052

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
 request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Brown SAFO
Signature of certifying official/Title

11/24/03
Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

Downtown Gastonia Historic District
Name of Property

Gaston, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
77	38	building
0	0	sites
0	3	structures
1	0	objects
78	41	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling, multiple dwelling
Commerce: business, financial inst., specialty store,
department store, restaurant, warehouse
Social: meeting hall
Government: city hall, fire station, post office,
Courthouse, correctional facility
Education: school, library
Religion: religious facility
Recreation and Culture: theater, auditorium

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: multiple dwelling
Commerce: business, specialty store, restaurant
Social: meeting hall
Government: city hall, correctional facility, fire station,
government office, post office
Education: school
Religion: religious facility
Recreation and Culture: auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival
Classical Revival
Italian Renaissance
Mission Revival
Bungalow/Craftsman
Moderne
International Style
Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls brick
stone: limestone
roof ceramic tile
other concrete
stucco

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Downtown Gastonia Historic District
Name of Property

Gaston, NC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

Education

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

c. 1890s-1954

Significant Dates

1910

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

White, Hugh E.

Milburn & Heister

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Downtown Gastonia Historic District
Name of Property

Gaston, NC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 46 acres

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 17 483800 3902150
Zone Easting Northing

3. 17 483400 3902000
Zone Easting Northing

2. 17 483775 3902000
Zone Easting Northing

4. 17 483400 3901875
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jeffrey Shrimpton

organization Historic Preservation Consulting date 9/24/2002

street & number 14 Beachcroft Road telephone (978) 281-0683

city or town Gloucester state MA zip code 01930

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name More than 50 owners

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503. NPS Form 10-900 OMB No.

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**Downtown Gastonia Historic District
Gastonia (Gaston County), North Carolina**

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Section 7: Narrative Description

The Downtown Gastonia Historic District is a cohesive collection of commercial, civic, institutional, and multi-unit residential buildings constructed primarily between the early 1890s and early 1950s within the central business district of Gastonia, North Carolina. Gastonia is located twenty-two miles due west of Charlotte in the rolling hills of the state's western Piedmont region. It is the seat of Gaston County and, with a 2000 population of 66,277, is the second largest city in the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill Metropolitan Statistical Area. Charlotte, by comparison, had a population of 540,828 in 2000.

The district encompasses portions of sixteen city blocks set within or around a rectangular street grid bounded by Main Avenue on the north, Broad Street on the east, Second Avenue on the south, and Chester Street on the west. Franklin Boulevard, the principal east-west highway through the city (U. S. 29/74), bisects the downtown street grid lengthwise, between Main and Second Avenues. Six north-south streets cross the downtown street grid, including, from east to west, Broad Street, Oakland Street, Marietta Street, South Street¹, York Street, and Chester Street. The topography at the north half of the district slopes gently downward from Main Avenue south to Franklin Boulevard, with a somewhat steeper decline in the south half of the district from Franklin to Second Avenue.

Seventy-seven buildings and one object contribute to the district's architectural and historic significance, including four that are listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places. Forty-one buildings and three structures do not contribute. Of the seventy-seven contributing buildings, fifty-nine were built for a commercial use, including professional offices, stores, cinemas, banks, and automobile-related buildings. Six contributing buildings have a civic function, including City Hall, the (former) county courthouse, the U. S. Post Office, a library, a school, and a war memorial hall. Five buildings, all in the Second Avenue area, are residential, including three relatively large apartment buildings and two single-family houses that were converted to multi-family use during the period of significance. Four contributing buildings are institutional, including two churches and two fraternal order clubhouses. One contributing building, the former Coca-Cola Bottling Plant on West Main Avenue, was built for an industrial use. Two small brick outbuildings, one behind 130 East Main Avenue and the other behind 148-156 South Street, also contribute, as does a small monument in front of Gaston County War Memorial Hall.

¹ South Street, like all north-south streets in downtown Gastonia, is designated officially as North South Street north of Main Avenue and South South Street south of Main Avenue. South South Street is a major thoroughfare that runs for more than a mile south from Main Avenue and is referred to locally as South Street, without the cumbersome directional indicator at the beginning. This nomination follows local practice and refers to South South Street as South Street. North South Street, which is only one-half block long north of Main Avenue, is referred to by its full name in the nomination.

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The entire district lies to the south of the Southern Railroad, with Main Avenue running along the southern edge of the railroad corridor. The district also lies to the west of the Northwestern Railroad, a feeder line that runs north-south along the middle of Broad Street to connect with the Southern. This area was part of the original settlement of Gastonia Station, which was founded in 1872 as a stop along the Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway (now the Southern), and which became an important crossroads when the Chester & Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railway (now the Northwestern) intersected the Atlanta & Charlotte in 1875. No buildings survive in the district from Gastonia's early railroad years in the 1870s or 1880s, but the present pattern of commercial development along Main Avenue and South Street, especially in the blocks adjacent to the intersection of those two streets, was established with the founding of the city.

The Southern Railroad historically was the central focus of Gastonia's downtown. The tracks ran between Main Avenue on the south and Airline Avenue on the north, the city's principal downtown commercial streets throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the second half of the twentieth century. The Armington, a fine early twentieth century hotel that catered to the railroad trade and which was demolished in the 1950s, faced south onto the tracks from Airline Avenue at the T-intersection of South Street. The Southern Railroad's passenger depot, which was demolished in the 1970s, was located on the south side of the tracks to the rear of the Main Avenue commercial buildings between Marietta and South Streets, and the railroad's freight depot, which also has been demolished, was located one block to the west between South and York Streets.

The downtown path of the railroad required many cumbersome and hazardous automobile crossings at grade as north-south streets intersected the tracks. To facilitate traffic flow and to provide for better automobile and pedestrian safety, the tracks were realigned in the early 1990s and were sunk below grade in a deep concrete-lined ravine just to the north of the original track bed. The realignment project obliterated much of Airline Avenue, and the few commercial buildings with a connection to the downtown historic district that remained north of the tracks were demolished. Concrete overpasses now carry traffic across the sunken tracks at Chester, York, Marietta, and Broad Streets, while South and Oakland Streets have been truncated at Main Avenue south of the tracks. Today, the Southern Railroad passes through downtown Gastonia without stopping and all properties in the district that were associated with the railroad have been lost, except for the Railway Express Office, which occupied one of three small storefronts in an unadorned one-story brick building (c. 1908) at 128-132 North Marietta Street. The concrete ravine of the Southern Railroad serves as an abrupt physical barrier just outside the northern boundary of the Downtown Gastonia Historic District, and a wide swathe of paved public parking marks the location of the original tracks behind the Main Avenue commercial buildings.

Contributing buildings within the district are situated primarily on the three east-west streets—Main Avenue, Franklin Boulevard, and Second Avenue—and South Street, which runs north-south. Each

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Gastonia (Gaston County), North Carolina

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of the east-west streets has a distinct character, while South Street reflects the whole range of building types and historic functions in downtown Gastonia and serves to tie the district together as a single unit. Of the three east-west streets, Main Avenue contains the historic downtown business district, highlighted by two skyscrapers (one seven stories tall and the other eight), a fine Classical Revival style bank, an Art Deco style Kress Department Store, and numerous other one-, two-, and three-story commercial buildings. Franklin Boulevard, which is the widest of the downtown streets, contains monumental civic and institutional buildings, including City Hall, two handsome churches, and a Modern design Eagles Club building from c. 1951. Second Avenue is a transitional street between the busy downtown and the quiet residential neighborhoods immediately to the south and contains a large neighborhood elementary school with spacious grounds, small-scale civic buildings, several apartment buildings and multi-family houses, and two automobile-related buildings with wide setbacks. South Street continues the Main Avenue commercial district for one block on the east side of the street, while the rest of the street is dominated by the former Gaston County Courthouse, a Masonic Temple, the monumental side elevations of City Hall and the Baptist Church, both of which front on Franklin Boulevard, and a large apartment building perched at the northwest corner of South Street and Second Avenue. The other north-south streets serve as little more than intersections within the historic district and contain only a few, if any, contributing buildings.

Main Avenue stretches for more than five blocks along the northern edge of the district, from Broad Street on the east to just beyond Chester Street on the west, and contains the vast majority of the downtown commercial buildings. The street is densely built primarily with abutting one-, two-, and three-story buildings, most with no setback from the sidewalk, and nearly all of the commercial buildings are constructed with brick bearing walls. Notable exceptions, however, are the two early twentieth century steel-frame skyscrapers which tower above the intersection at South Street. Many of the buildings, especially those built before the Great Depression, also exhibit handsome decorative elements, such as terra cotta or limestone ornamentation, corbelled brickwork, carved stone details, distinctive parapets, and wide cornices. There are no parks or public green spaces along Main Avenue, and landscaping is limited to a few curbside plots with shrubs, flowers, and small trees at the 100 and 200 blocks of West Main Avenue, as well as at the 100 block of South Street.

The intersection of West Main Avenue and South Street long has been considered the heart of Gastonia's business district and contains many of downtown's finest commercial buildings. The city's two skyscrapers dominate the intersection and create a distinctive skyline. The First National Bank Building (NRHP 1986) at 168-170 West Main Avenue, built in 1917, is seven stories tall. Its Classical Revival design is ornamented with a rusticated limestone facade at the rear entrance facing the Southern Railroad and subtle stone details such as carved faces, heavy window surrounds and triangular pediments, a wide cornice with large modillion blocks, and a tall balustrade at the

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roof. Across the street, the Third National Bank Building (NRHP 1986) at 195-197 West Main Avenue, built in 1923, and is eight stories tall. Also a Classical Revival design, this building is distinguished at the front entrance with a two-story arched stone surround ornamented with square stone rosettes and rope molding. The eighth floor is faced entirely with tan-colored terra cotta rosette panels and wide terra cotta surrounds at the windows, with an overhanging terra cotta parapet supported by a band of terra cotta brackets and ornamented with rosettes and geometric designs.

Elsewhere on the blocks around the intersection of West Main Avenue and South Street—the 100 and 200 blocks of West Main Avenue and the 100 block of South Street—are several lower scale buildings that also are architecturally distinguished. The Robinson-Gardner Building (NRHP 1999) at 173-175 West Main Avenue, which was constructed in 1899, is an exceptionally fine small commercial building and one of only four contributing buildings in the district to have survived from the nineteenth century. Built in the Renaissance Revival style, the building has paired center windows set within a tall brick arch at the second floor, with a terra cotta cartouche at the keystone and metal swags and garlands around the arch. A raised projecting cornice with paired scroll brackets tops the parapet. The Art Deco style Kress Department Store at 111 West Main Avenue, which was built in 1930, exhibits some of the exuberance that was a hallmark of the company's buildings throughout the country: brightly colored terra cotta panels with elaborate geometric designs and the distinctive company logo—"KRESS" spelled out on an arched line—set in a terra cotta panel at the center of the front elevation.

The Woolworth's Store at 147-155 West Main Avenue and the Ideal Moving Picture Theater at 161 West Main Avenue also stand out on this block, although both buildings have long been vacant and are in advanced stages of disrepair. Woolworth's is comprised of two abutting buildings dating from c. 1900-1910 that were combined internally c. 1940 to form a single store with two distinct facades and a unified storefront. At the east section of the Woolworth's building, the facade of the Leibowitz Department Store (c. 1910) is seven bays wide at the second story, with a distinctive arched window set within a projecting section of the facade in between two sets of three rectangular windows. The upper portion of the building is ornamented with corbelled brick and an overhanging metal cornice with heavy modillion blocks. The facade of the Long Brothers Hardware and Stoves Company (c. 1900) at the west section of Woolworth's is three bays wide. The second story is framed by brick pilasters that extend beyond the roofline, with a single finial capping the pilaster at the east side of the facade (the finial at the west side is missing). The pilasters support a plain frieze with a narrow cornice and small dentils at the roofline, above which rests a raised, projecting cornice with heavy modillion blocks and supported by long fluted brackets. To the west of Woolworth's, the Ideal Theater (c. 1912) is faced with tan pressed brick with heavy limestone surrounds at the wide second and third story window bays. A stepped parapet with limestone coping tops the building, under which is a corbelled brick cornice that follows the lines of the

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parapet. Cast iron lion heads set into the brick facade serve as anchors for the cables that support the mid-twentieth century marquee that overhangs the sidewalk.

The Frost Torrence Building at 201-209 West Main Avenue and the Love Building at 211-231 West Main Avenue, both of which date to the 1890s, anchor the southwest corner of West Main Avenue and South Street. The Frost Torrence Building is much altered but retains its arched brick hoodmolds above the second story windows and a simple bracketed cornice. The Love Building is notable for its eleven bay width, segmental-arched window openings, and a tall molded cornice supported by modillion blocks, under which the name of the building is boldly emblazoned on a long wooden plaque. The Citizens National Bank at 212 West Main Avenue stands across the street from the Love Building. Built c. 1906, this three-story building was redesigned in the Classical Revival style in 1924 by prominent local architect Hugh E. White. The building is faced with limestone and features a two-story arched front entrance flanked by fluted stone columns and topped with a wide stone cornice above the second story. A carved stone eagle stands with spread wings above the front doors within the stone arch. Two limestone-faced three-bay additions to the bank, one built in 1951 and the other in 1968, stand on either side of the original building, complementing White's design and maintaining the rhythm of the streetscape. West of Citizens National Bank, the Rankin Building at 234-238 West Main Avenue, which was constructed c. 1912, is altered at the west half of its ground floor and has had plate glass windows installed at its eight-bay second floor, but remains an important component of the streetscape because of its wide molded metal cornices above one storefront and at the parapet, limestone sills and headers at the second floor windows, arched brick panels above the windows, and triangular parapet with diamond-shaped tile inserts and stone coping. Farther down the block, extending east from York Street, three commercial buildings at 258-264 West Main Avenue, 278-282 West Main Avenue, and the Albion Grocery at 284-298 West Main Avenue, all of which date from c. 1908-1912, present an unbroken streetscape twenty-seven bays wide at the second stories, with original molded wood cornices with heavy dentils or fluted modillion blocks at the parapets.

South of Main Avenue, the east side of the 100 block of South Street was also a prime commercial location because of its proximity to the county courthouse and City Hall on the west side of the block. Hugh White designed the three-story Standard Hardware Company Building at 148-156 South Street (c. 1922), which features an original storefront with leaded glass transoms and upper stories dominated by multi-paned tripartite windows. The Webb Theater (c. 1930), also by White, stands farther down the block at 182-190 South Street. This fine movie theater, which presently houses city offices, boasts Moderne features such as two-story brick pilasters outlined in cast stone and topped by cast stone chevrons, with patterned brickwork and tile panels throughout the second and third story facades.

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Commercial buildings elsewhere on Main Avenue are somewhat more utilitarian than those near West Main Avenue and South Street, although there are notable exceptions. The Ragan Building at 110-128 East Main Avenue, constructed in 1912, has four storefronts and is sixteen bays wide, with segmental-arched window openings at the second floor and brick corbelling above the windows. Two buildings across East Main Avenue from the Ragan Building are fine examples of very small commercial buildings. The building at 111-113 East Main Avenue, constructed in the 1890s, is one story tall with two small storefronts. It is built with yellow wire-cut brick and is ornamented with a molded metal cornice and a stepped parapet with diamond-shaped tile inserts. The building also retains one of its original storefronts, which exhibits two multi-paned leaded glass transoms with operating center vents and an original brick skirt panel beneath the display window. The building at 123-125 East Main Avenue, constructed c. 1918, which is also one story tall with two small storefronts, has an elaborate cornice with dentil molding and long fluted brackets spanning both storefronts, with diamond shaped tiles set within brick circles above each storefront. The Winchester Garage at 245-255 East Main Avenue, which was built c. 1918 and converted to retail use in the 1920s, is nine bays wide with a yellow brick facade. The northeast corner of the building is angled, reflecting the former path of the Northwestern Railroad as it curved around the building from Broad Street to connect with the Southern Railroad north of Main Avenue. The building features three distinct storefronts, each with a molded metal cornice above, and a center arched opening at the ground floor that provides access to the second floor. The storefront at the angled corner of the building appears to be original to the 1920s and contains a pair of full-light arched wooden doors in the center.

Most of the remaining contributing buildings in the 100 and 200 blocks of East Main Avenue date from the 1940s and 1950s, when the area west of the Ragan Building began to convert from large wholesale warehouses that depended on the railroad to more conventional retail stores. The Western Auto Supplies Building at 140 East Main Avenue, built c. 1949, has a massive unadorned front facade at the second story, with four small windows set closely together at the center of the facade, but the building retains an original seven-bay storefront across the width of the ground floor, with a pair of wooden full-light doors and a transom at the center. The Dixie Home Stores Grocery at 160 East Main Avenue, the Recreation Inc. Bowling Alley at 212 East Main Avenue, and the Southern Supply Company Hardware Store at 258 East Main Avenue—free-standing brick buildings ornamented with nothing more than high parapets and wide storefronts—are surrounded with off-street paved parking areas that had become essential to post-World War II retailers. Across the street, the building at 201 East Main Avenue, another free-standing brick building, has a wide storefront surrounded by yellow and black enameled steel panels.

At the western end of Main Avenue, the 300 and 400 blocks also have fewer distinguished buildings, although the Kirby Building at 322 West Main Avenue is an outstanding exception. Constructed in 1922, the Kirby Building is handsomely detailed with a band of three transomed

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tripartite wood casement windows at the second story with a delicate limestone cornice above the windows. Full-height brick pilasters with limestone bases and quoins frame the building, each topped by an inset terra cotta panel with the building's date. Another commercial building of some note is the B. H. Parker Cotton Company Offices at 350 West Main Avenue (c. 1912). Although much altered at the storefront and second floor window bays, this building has a distinctive high triangular parapet in yellow brick topped by a limestone orb and coping, and the entire building is framed with heavy yellow brick pilasters with limestone capstones that extend above the parapet. The Kendrick-Riddle Wholesale Grocer at 402 West Main Avenue (c. 1922) anchors the far western end of the district and, despite its utilitarian function, features patterned brickwork at the front elevation, multi-paned windows set in pairs and triplets, and a stepped parapet with limestone coping.

The U. S. Post Office (301 West Main Avenue) is the only contributing building on Main Avenue that does not have a commercial function. Constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935, this classical-inspired building is highlighted by Art Deco flourishes such as tan-colored brick pilasters that rise to capital-like limestone blocks with sunburst motif and fluted stone panels set in between first and second story windows. The building has a narrow grassy setback at both Main Avenue and York Street. A fine WPA mural by North Carolina artist Francis Speight decorates the lobby. A large rear addition that extends south along York Street does not detract from the integrity of the original building along West Main Avenue. The York Medical Building, which is situated immediately to the south of the post office property at 155 South York Street, was built in 1938, after the construction of the post office encouraged commercial development along York Street. It is a small brick office building that features an arched limestone entrance in the center of its projecting front facade, with a tall stone parapet above.

South of Main Avenue, Franklin Boulevard extends for just one and one-half blocks within the historic district boundaries, but several of the district's most impressive civic and institutional buildings are located around the prominent South Street intersection. City Hall, built in 1926, stands at 240 West Franklin Boulevard at the northwest corner of the intersection of South Street. Designed by Hugh White, this handsome yellow brick Renaissance Revival building is thirteen bays wide and five bays deep. Its two-story, three-bay center entrance is faced with limestone and framed by four fluted Ionic stone pilasters, with a tall, narrow round-headed window set within a double stone arch and framed by a pair of small stone pilasters above the front door. Large, multi-light arched windows at the ground floor carry out the Italian Renaissance influence. A wide stone cornice and tall stone balustrade surround the flat roof. The building has a grassy setback from both Franklin Boulevard and South Street, which is planted with mature hardwood trees.

The (former) Gaston County Courthouse (NRHP 1979) stands immediately to the north of City Hall on a low rise overlooking South Street. The courthouse is a stately Classical Revival building

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constructed in 1910. A split staircase leads from South Street up to the main entrance at the center bay, which is sheltered by a three-story pedimented portico supported by a pair of brick Ionic columns, with a two-story arch-headed window above the front door. Projecting side pavilions are sheltered by porticos identical to that of the front elevation. A full entablature with dental molding and modillion blocks crowns the third story. Although still an imposing building, the courthouse has undergone several severe alterations that detract from its architectural integrity. In 1954, all of the original wooden windows were replaced with steel sash, including the monumental two-story arched windows at the front and side pavilions. Around the same time, an enormous three-story jailhouse addition was built onto the rear of the courthouse. The greater width and vast expanse of the addition not only overpowers the original structure, but it also destroyed the delicate symmetry of the courthouse by demolishing its rear pavilion. The county abandoned the courthouse in the early 1990s when it moved into a new Post-Modern courthouse north of the Southern Railroad on Long Avenue. In 1996, a fire burned out much of the second and third floors and destroyed the building's hipped roof. As of 2002, the building had been stabilized by the city and was slated for rehabilitation as city offices.

The First Baptist Church, at 201 West Franklin Boulevard, stands directly across Franklin Boulevard from City Hall. Built in 1922, this magnificent Mediterranean Revival style brick church features a two and one-half story arched front entrance faced with limestone, with a massive stone cross and rose window set within the arch. A tall bell tower with an octagonal lantern soars above the church's steeply gabled green tile roof. A large three-story rear school addition was built onto the church in 1965. The addition is well-designed and is placed downhill from the church on South Street. The (former) First Associated Reform Presbyterian Church, now St. Mark's Episcopal, at 258 West Franklin Boulevard at the northwest corner of the intersection of York Street, was built in 1918. Classical Revival in design, the building's two entrances, one facing Franklin and the other facing York, are sheltered by two-story pedimented porticos, each supported by four Doric columns. Stained glass windows are set into monumental arched openings at the sanctuary. Two smaller institutional buildings are also situated near the Franklin Boulevard-South Street intersection. The four-story brick Masonic Temple at 214 South Street, another steel-frame building constructed in 1923, is Classical Revival in design and has an arched entrance in limestone, with stone pilasters rising to a decorative stone entablature and molded cornice. The Eagles Club, at 160 West Franklin Boulevard, was built c. 1951 and is very indicative of its time period: a Modern style yellow brick box with no windows, and ornamented with a checkerboard pattern of projecting rectangular panels in the brick facades. An expanse of light tan colored brick with a multitude of cross shapes punched through the brick, extends to the flat roofline above the entrance.

Several important civic buildings are located on Second Avenue, one block south of Franklin Boulevard, along the southern boundary of the district. Central School at 119 East Second Avenue is a massive Classical Revival building constructed in 1914. The building is composed of a long

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center block flanked by a pair of projecting side wings. Four two-story Doric columns support a full entablature at the school's central portico at the top of a flight of tall stairs, with the front door surmounted by a fanlight. The school's 3.65 acre site, which contains an expansive lawn and mature trees, constitutes the only significant green space within the historic district.

Three smaller scale civic buildings are located in the 100 block of West Second Avenue. Two of these—Gaston County War Memorial Hall and the (former) Gaston County Public Library—were designed by Hugh White. Gaston County War Memorial Hall, built in 1928 at 113 West Second Avenue, is an unusual Mission-style stuccoed brick auditorium, two stories tall with an octagonal tower rising fortress-like above a five-sided one-story arcaded front porch. White's Gaston County Public Library, immediately to the west of Memorial Hall at 115 West Second Avenue, was built in 1930. More sedate than its neighbor, the one-story red brick Classical Revival library has a center arched entrance topped by a fanlight with an elliptical front portico supported by square columns. A heavy entablature with a molded cornice and dentils stretches across the front and side bays. Stone plaques above each window are inscribed with names of American and British literary figures. Gastonia Fire Station No. 1 at 117 West Second Avenue is the most recent public building to be constructed within the historic district. Built in 1954 in the International style, the fire station is a two-story brick block that is distinguished by a band of metal windows across the second story. Although the fire station's spare design is a departure from the more traditional early twentieth century revival styles of the county war memorial and public library, its massing and setback are complementary to its neighbors.

Much of the remainder of Second Avenue is dedicated to residential use, with a large apartment building standing on the northwestern corners of each of the three intersecting streets. While the Patterson Apartments, built in 1934 at 128 East Second Avenue at South Oakland Street, and the Darnell Apartments, built c. 1946 at 271-277 South Street at West Second Avenue are rather typical red brick Colonial Revival buildings, the Armstrong Hotel Apartments at 102 West Second Avenue at Marietta Street is a superb example of the Arts and Crafts style. Built in 1920 of yellow wire-cut brick, this expansive L-shaped apartment building achieves a great sense of movement and texture with multiple cross gables at its tall slate roof, wood shingled dormers, exposed rafters, numerous front porches, and dozens of 9/9 and 6/6 sash windows. Two single-family houses, both converted to multi-family use, also remain within the district at the intersection of East Second Avenue and Oakland Street, vestiges of an earlier time when houses surrounded Central School and lined Second Avenue. The R. E. Johnson House at 217 South Oakland Street, built c. 1918, has a triple-A massing with two side gables and a front cross gable at the center of the roof. The W. M. Severance House at 120 East Second Avenue was built c. 1928 in the Craftsman style, with wood shingles, a low-pitched standing seam metal roof with exposed rafters under the eaves, projecting bays, 6/1 windows, and a one-story front porch with a front gable roof supported by squat tapered brick columns.

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Two interesting automobile service buildings are located on East Second Avenue among the civic and residential buildings: Lewis Motors, an automobile sales and service business at #114, and the Duane and Gibson Esso Service Station at #108. Built c. 1947 and c. 1951 respectively, both buildings are in the sleek Moderne style that was popular in the automotive service industry in the immediate post-World War II years, using curvilinear design elements and stainless or enameled steel for architectural accents. The Esso station is an especially fine example of the type and appears to be in an excellent state of preservation.

Non-contributing buildings in the district include nineteen buildings that were constructed during the period of significance but which have had inappropriate facade treatments or have been substantially rebuilt, and nineteen buildings that were constructed after the period of significance. The vast majority of non-contributing buildings are commercial buildings along Main Avenue or South Street. Four of the non-contributing buildings, all of which were constructed after the period of significance, are rear outbuildings that do not front on a major street.

The north side of the 100 block of West Main Avenue, east of the First National Bank Building, contains two of the district's most intrusive non-contributing buildings: the Matthews-Belk Department Store at #128 and the Raylass Department Store at #100. The Matthews-Belk Store is a massive three-story block comprised of a large 1950s department store building that replaced the earlier Belk store at this site. A photograph from the late 1960s shows that the store had by that time been "wrapped" in a metal facade to create the impression of a single large modern store. The building, which is now vacant, was refaced with stone tile in the 1980s when it was converted first into a bank and then into the Gaston County Economic Development Office. It is not apparent whether the original brick facade remains behind the stone tile facade. Two vacant parcels, one at 146 West Main Avenue and the other at 158 West Main Avenue, which held Efir's Department Store and the Charles Store respectively in the 1940s, now separate the Matthews-Belk Building from the First National Bank skyscraper.

The Raylass Department Store, which stands east of the Matthews-Belk Store at the northwest corner of West Main Avenue and North Marietta Street, is the hulking remnant of the Craig & Wilson Carriage Company showroom and factory, which was constructed in 1899. The building is three stories tall, with a blank two-story stuccoed facade rising above a completely opaque ground floor storefront at Main Avenue. Tiny windows peer out from the stucco along North Marietta Street. Built in the High Victorian Gothic style, historic photographs and drawings show that the Craig & Wilson Carriage Company featured a tall center tower above the third floor, a wide arched entry, and elaborate fenestration along Main Avenue. The center tower was demolished prior to 1949 and the Main Avenue and Marietta Street facades were stuccoed c. 1954 to give the building its present appearance.

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Several other late nineteenth century and early twentieth century buildings in the 100 block of West Main Avenue and the 100 block of East Main Avenue are also noncontributing as a result of inappropriate facade treatments from the 1950s and 1960s. These include Smith's Drugs at 121 West Main Avenue, the Lyric Moving Picture Theater at 127 West Main Avenue, the Boyd and Wilson Meat Market at 177 West Main Avenue, and the Armstrong Furniture Company at 121 East Main Avenue, as well as three one-story single-storefront buildings at 105 West Main Avenue, 108 East Main Avenue, and 130 East Main Avenue. Another one-story commercial building at 239-243 East Main Avenue, which appears to have retained its original five-bay wooden storefront from c. 1930, has been obscured at its front elevation by aluminum siding. Two adjacent buildings on South Street from c. 1930, the three-story Gastonia Hardware Company at 164-172 and the four-story Austin-Johnson Furniture Company at 174-180, have been faced with metal cladding above their storefronts to create a single massive blank facade that stands as a major intrusion between the Standard Hardware Building and the Webb Theater and across the street from the (former) County Courthouse and City Hall. All of the noncontributing buildings listed above may have retained their original brick facades behind the inappropriate metal or stucco cladding.

Four brick buildings along Main Avenue have been refaced completely with modern brick facades, most likely in the 1960s or 1970s, and appear to have retained no historic material at their front elevations. These include a three-story office building at 246-256 West Main Avenue, which dates to c. 1908; a one-story commercial building at 358-360 West Main Avenue, which dates to c. 1915; a one-story commercial building at 117 East Main Avenue, which dates to the c. 1890s; and Ford's Seed and Plants at 231 East Main Avenue, which dates to c. 1922. Ford's is a family-owned business that has operated continuously from this location since the 1920s, and appears to be the oldest business in the historic district. The Griffin Building, which stands across the street at 242 East Main Avenue, was built in the late 1940s and appears to have been substantially rebuilt in the 1960s. It is a free-standing building, typical of post-World War II buildings at this end of the district, and has a distinctive rear elevation reflecting the former path of the Northwestern Railroad as it curved around the building from Broad Street to connect with the Southern Railroad north of Main Avenue. A historic photograph c. 1949 shows the building with a flat roof and storefronts along Main Avenue, but the building appears to have been refaced entirely in the early 1960s, at which time the storefronts were replaced with smaller plate glass picture windows, a hipped roof was added, and a stone panel inscribed with the present name of the building was inserted in the front facade.

Several buildings constructed in the 1950s through the early 1980s are scattered throughout the district. All are one or two stories tall and generally respect the setback that is common to their particular block. Few of these were built with any architectural pretension, although a trio of International and Post-Modern style two-story bank and office buildings at 245, 251, and 257 West Main Avenue, stand out as distinctly modern within the historic district. A small concrete block

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commercial building at 302-306 West Main Avenue, at the northwest corner of Main Avenue and York Street across from the U. S. Post Office, was built c. 1960 with a wide paved setback to provide off-street parking, an unusual setting for any building on West Main Avenue. The Magic Shine Car Wash, which was constructed in the mid-1990s at 110 South York Street at the southeast corner of the intersection with West Main Avenue, is a one-story brick suburban-style auto service building with a false mansard roof and a wide setback from South York Street. Although its architectural style is out of character with the surrounding historic district, the car wash is on a site that has held several generations of automobile service stations since the early 1920s.

One other non-contributing property is of note on Main Avenue. In the mid-1990s, the city converted a large parking lot across from the T-intersection of Oakland Street, between the 100 and 200 blocks of East Main Avenue, into a turnaround area for city buses, which includes the Bradley Station Commuter Bus Ticket Office and Bus Shelter. The site is nicely landscaped with small trees and shrubs and contains a well-designed open bus shelter with a hipped metal roof. A small free-standing brick building on the site serves as a ticket office for the local commuter bus from Gastonia to Charlotte. Set far back from Main Avenue and overlooking the Southern Railroad corridor, the ticket office has a high hipped metal roof with wide, overhanging bracketed eaves that suggests an old-time railroad station without mimicking any historic design.

At the south end of the district, Second Avenue has retained most of its historic character. One conspicuous exception is the rear addition onto the 1948 brick Gastonia Telephone Exchange Building, at 220 South Street, which serves as a major intrusion among its sedate surroundings. Built in the 1980s, the rear addition is a massive two-story block with a pebbled stucco facade that is out of character with the low-scale public and residential buildings that comprise most of West Second Avenue. An open six-story concrete tower stands behind the Telephone Exchange's rear addition and holds electronic equipment for cell phone transmission. The tower approaches the height of the skyscrapers on West Main Avenue and can be seen from throughout the historic district.

Despite these intrusions, the Downtown Gastonia Historic District remains a fine example of a historic urban business and government center from the 1890s through the early 1950s and has retained the integrity of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Inventory List

The inventory list is organized on a street-by-street basis. East-west streets are listed first, in the following order: East Main Avenue, West Main Avenue, West Franklin Boulevard, East Second Avenue, and West Second Avenue. North-south streets then follow: South York Street, North South Street, South Street, North Marietta Street, South Marietta Street, and South Oakland Street. On east-west streets, properties on the north side of the street are listed first in numerical order, followed by those on the south side. On north-south streets, properties on the west side of the street are listed first, followed by those on the east side. Properties are organized by block.

All buildings in the historic district have flat roofs unless otherwise indicated.

Designations in the Status column of the inventory list have the following meanings:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| C | = | Contributing Building |
| CO | = | Contributing Object |
| N | = | Noncontributing Building |
| NS | = | Noncontributing Structure |
| V | = | Vacant lot. |

A contributing building, site, structure, or object is defined in National Register Bulletin #16A *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (p. 16) as one that adds to the historic associations, historic architectural qualities, or archeological values for which a property is significant because: it was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period; or it independently meets the National Register criteria.

A non-contributing building, site, structure, or object is one that does not add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which a property is significant because: it was not present during the period of significance or does not relate to the documented significance of the property; due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes, it no longer possesses historic integrity or is not capable of yielding important information about the period; or it does not independently meet the National Register criteria.

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block East Main Avenue, north side					
1	C	102	c. 1941	2	Silverstein Department Store. Brick commercial building, 3 bays wide at Main, 6 bays deep at Marietta; molded limestone cornice and flat coping at front elevation, camelback coping at stepped parapet at Marietta; brick pier at corner allows entry into recessed storefront area from both streets; all second floor window openings contain plate glass panels, as do small square windows along Marietta; "Silverstein's" stenciled onto brick above corner pier at storefront. (Source of date: 1941 city directory.)
2	N	108	c. 1908, c. 1960s	1	Brick commercial building; 3 bays wide; front elevation above storefront obscured by c. 1960s aluminum facade treatment. (Source of date: 1908 Sanborn map.)
3	C	110-128	1912	2	Ragan Building. Architect: Louis H. Asbury, Charlotte. Brick commercial building, 16 bays wide; 4 storefronts, none original; flat parapet with limestone coping and corbelled brick cornice; 1/1 wood windows with segmental arch headings at second story; windows grouped within recessed panels with dentil-like brick corbelling at top of each panel. Built by local mill owner George W. Ragan. (Source of date: Brengle, p. 166.)
4	N	130	c. 1922, c. 1960s	1	Brick commercial building; three bays wide; front elevation above storefront obscured by c. 1960s aluminum facade treatment. Internally connected to 134 E. Main Ave. at some time after the historic period. (Source of date: 1922 Sanborn map.)
4a	C	130R	c. 1922	1	Brick storage building; two window openings flank front door at entrance at south elevation; side elevations each have 6 window openings and stepped parapet; limestone headers at all door and window openings; window openings infilled with brick. (Source of date: 1922 Sanborn map.)
5	C	134	c. 1949	1	Gaston Hardware Company. Brick commercial building; 3 bays wide; recessed storefront; stepped parapet with concrete coping. Internally connected to 130 and 140 E. Main Ave. after the historic period. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block East Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
6	C	140	c. 1949	2	Western Auto Supplies Store. Brick commercial building; seven bays wide; original full-light double wooden doors with transom at recessed center entry, flanked by wide display windows; second story presents a massive brick facade interrupted only by four small 1/1 wood sash set close together at center of elevation. Internally connected to 134 E. Main at some time after the historic period. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)
7	C	148-150	c. 1949	1	Brick commercial building; contains two 2-bay storefronts with recessed entries; stepped parapet at east elevation. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)
8	C	160	c. 1942	1	Dixie Home Stores Grocery. Brick commercial building, 7 bays wide; originally free-standing, but abutting building constructed at 166 E. Main in mid-1980s; presently used as theater by Methodist Church; high stepped parapets at front and rear elevations; bowstring truss roof; brick pilasters and infilled window openings at side elevations; recessed center entry at front elevation flanked by wide storefronts; display windows infilled with pressboard panels; non-original hipped metal awning spans full length of storefront. (Source of date: 1942 city directory.)
9	N	166	1985	1	Gastonia United Methodist District Office. Small brick office building abutting 160 W. Main; flat roof; narrow vertical window openings at front elevation; gable-roofed front stoop. (Source of date: 1995 city directory)
10	N	180	1994	1	Bradley Station Commuter Bus Ticket Office. Free-standing brick building with tall green metal hipped roof. Located at north end of Bradley Station Bus Shelter. (Source of date: sign at property erected by city.)
10a	NS	--	1994	1	Bradley Station Bus Shelter. Long J-shaped shelter situated next to circular bus turnaround and large parking lot at north end of Oakland St.; green metal hipped roof supported by single row of wooden posts. (Source of date: sign at property erected by city.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block East Main Avenue, north side					
11	V	202	--	--	Vacant lot.
12	C	212	c. 1947	1	Recreation Inc. Bowling Alley. Converted to sporting goods store 1960s. Brick commercial building; 5 bays wide; original stepped front parapet has been infilled with brick at corners to create a flat parapet; all original door and window openings appear to be intact: from east to west, first bay contains a pair of original glass block windows with concrete sills, second bay contains a full-light original wooden door; third bay contains a large display window with concrete sill; fourth bay contains another full-light wooden door; and fifth bay, which originally contained another pair of glass block windows (according to a c. 1949 aerial photo) now contains a large plate glass display window; south elevation was rebuilt with new brick after demolition of abutting building in early 1990s. (Source of date: 1947 city directory.)
13	V	220	--	--	Vacant lot.
14	N	232	c. 1949, c. 1970	1	Concrete block commercial building; deep setback from street; diagonal rear wall follows the line of the former railroad spur; false mansard roof, added c. 1970, obscures much of original front elevation. Originally used as auto glass shop, now used as annex by Ford's Seed and Plants. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)
15	N	242	c. 1949, c. 1960s	2	Griffin Building. Brick commercial building; 6 bays wide; diagonal rear elevation follows the former railroad spur. 1949 aerial photo of downtown Gastonia shows the building with a flat roof, stepped front parapet, and display windows at storefront; substantial alterations c. 1960s include hipped roof, infill of stepped front parapet, reduction in size of storefront display windows, insertion of plate glass panels at second floor windows. Building name inscribed in concrete panel near front roofline. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block East Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
16	N	250	1956	2	Rankin-Armstrong Furniture Company. Brick commercial building; 7 bays wide; free-standing; pattern brick at front elevation; band of display windows across wide storefront. Presently showroom for Kimbrell's Furniture. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map.)
16a	N	250R	c. 1970s	1	Large prefabricated metal storage building; gable roof; two freight bays with roll-up doors at south elevation. (Source of date: estimate.)
17	C	258	c. 1947	1	Southern Supply Company Hardware. Brick commercial building; stepped front parapet; center entrance with flanking display windows; formerly attached to a large, two-story gable-roofed warehouse at rear, which is shown on 1963 Sanborn map and has since been demolished. (Source of date: 1947 city directory.)
100 block East Main Avenue, south side					
18	C	101	c. 1951	1	Miles Cafeteria. Brick commercial building in continuous use by original occupant; painted brick; storefront at Main continues around corner for one bay onto Marietta; side entrance at 114 Marietta; tile coping at north and west parapets. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
19	C	105-109	c. 1951	1	Brick commercial building; painted brick; contains two narrow storefronts; #105 is connected internally to #101 E. Main; front parapet height and camelback coping match #101. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
20	C	111-113	c. 1893	1	Yellow brick commercial building; contains two narrow storefronts; stepped front parapet with limestone coping; red tile diamond shapes set into brick parapet; metal cornice with dentil molding spans both storefronts; storefront at #111 has been altered, but original storefront exists mostly intact at #113, including recessed entry, brick panel below display window, and multi-light leaded transoms with pivoting vents. Appears to have been a single commercial space before 1922. (Source of date: 1893 Sanborn map.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block East Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
21	N	117	c. 1893, c. 1960s	1	Brick commercial building, 3 bays wide. Front elevation altered with c. 1960s red brick facade. (Source: 1893 Sanborn map.)
22	N	121	c. 1893, c. 1960s	2	Armstrong Furniture Company. Brick commercial building; 3 bays wide; painted aluminum panels c. 1960s obscure front elevation. Original front facade above storefront appears to be intact behind false front. Original brick side elevations with stepped parapets and bricked-in window openings visible above abutting one-story buildings. (Source of date: 1893 Sanborn map.)
23	C	123-125	c. 1918	1	Commercial building; wire-cut yellow brick, contains two narrow storefronts, each 2 bays wide; elaborate cornice with dentil molding and long fluted brackets spans both storefronts; diamond shaped tiles set within brick circles above each storefront. (Source of date: 1918 city directory.)
200 block East Main Avenue, south side					
24	C	201	c. 1951	1	Free-standing brick commercial building; 7 bays wide; yellow enameled steel panels above storefront and at corner bays and black enameled steel panels below display windows; wide storefront with center entrance and flanking display windows; storefront continues around corner with single-bay display window overlooking Oakland St. at north elevation. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
25	C	225	c. 1949	1	Brick commercial building; painted brick; 2-bay display window at storefront; angled bay at northwest corner contains double-door front entrance; camelback coping at front and north elevation parapets; six double-hung sash windows at west elevation; concrete block addition at rear of west elevation. Built as a laundromat, now part of Ford's Seed and Plants. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block East Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
26	N	229-231	c. 1924, c. 1970s	1	Ford's Seed Store, now Ford's Seed and Plants. Brick commercial building, altered c. 1970 with new brick facade and concrete coping; 2 storefronts, each 3 bays wide. Ford's original brick building at #231 was single storefront; addition at #229 built c. 1970 on site of a small free-standing building that was occupied in the 1930s by Rice's Feed and Seed. Ford's also has expanded into the adjacent building at #225. (Source of date: 1924 city directory.)
27	C	237	c. 1924	1	Brick commercial building; 1 storefront; 3 bays wide; camelback coping; modern storefront. (Source of date: 1924 city directory.)
28	N	239-243	c. 1930 c. 1970s	1	Brick commercial building; 5 bays wide; recessed center entrance flanked by wood-framed, multi-light display windows; front elevation above storefront obscured by c. 1970s vinyl siding. (Source: 1930 city directory.)
29	C	245-255	c. 1918	2	Winchester Garage. Yellow brick commercial building; 9 bays wide; built as automobile parking garage, converted to retail in 1920s (Kirby's Music Store in 1930s, Getty's Hardware from 1950s); rooflines of #245 and #255 at different levels, but two sides share a center arched doorway to upper floor; two east bays of #245, set at angle from main elevation, contains recessed entry into retail space; next two bays contain display window for 245; recessed 4-bay storefront at #255; separate pressed metal cornices set above entrance and display window at #245 and storefront at #255; 1/1 wood sash at second floor windows at #255 and above center entrance; second floor windows at #245 boarded up; limestone coping at #255; brick coping at #245. (Source of date: 1918 city directory.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, north side					
30	N	100	1899, c. 1955	3	Craig & Wilson Carriage Company. Altered to present appearance mid-1950s while occupied by Raylass Department Store. Massive brick commercial building; primary elevations along Main and Marietta obscured by cementitious coating, three bays wide, recessed center bay; full-width storefront with display windows infilled with aluminum panels, with large spandrel glass panels above; small windows pierce cementitious coating at east elevation. Historic photos show original building was elaborate High Victorian Gothic-style commercial building with wide arched entry and large flanking transom display windows; large arched windows at third floor; broken pediments at parapets above two projecting front bays; and a tower (removed prior to 1949) above center bay. (source of date: plaque on front of building in historic photo; alterations shown in 1949 aerial photo of downtown Gastonia.)
31	C	110	1912, c. 1940s	2	Gastonia Moving Picture Theater. Converted to retail store by 1940s. Brick; 3 bays wide; 3 window openings at second floor, all covered by louvered shutters; entablature tops each window opening; inset arched panel with limestone keystone set above center bay at second floor; circular inset panels with limestone keystones above side bays; large cornice with modillion blocks below stepped parapet; wide segmental arch at center of parapet. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
32	N	128	1953, c. 1980s	3	Matthews-Belk Department Store, most recently Gaston County Economic Development Office. Massive office block with blank stone tile facade at upper stories; wide metal canopy above windows and entrance at street level; metal pilasters extend from canopy to overhanging eaves at roofline. Building comprised of a large brick-faced department store constructed by Matthews-Belk Company in 1953 and substantially enlarged in 1955, at which time original Belk's store from 1901 was demolished. Department store modernized in 1960s and faced with metal. Present facade treatment dates to c. 1980, after Matthews-Belk relocated to a suburban shopping center and building was renovated first as a bank and then as county offices. (Source of dates: 1963 Sanborn map; 1980 city directory.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
33	V	146	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of Efird's Department Store.
34	V	158	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of Charles Department Store.
35	C	168-170	1917	7	First National Bank Building, now Lawyer's Building (NRHP 1986). Architects: Wilson & Sompayrac, Columbia, SC; steel-frame Classical Revival skyscraper; pier and spandrel construction with limestone and tan brick veneer; 3 bays wide, 11-bays deep; originally, front (south) and rear elevations were identical, but limestone base at front has been obscured with pebbled stucco; rear elevation contains original rusticated limestone base with arched center entrance; all second story windows at front and rear elevations, and four at west elevation contain French doors set within heavy stone surrounds and bracketed triangular pediments; bracketed segmental arched pediments at center windows at south and north elevations; stone faces set into south and north facades at carved stone lintel courses between second story windows; tripartite windows at bays above second story, with brick frieze panels between each story; second story at west elevation has trio of large blind ovals of stone molding at center bays topped by massive third story stone balconies with carved balustrades and floral work; bays at west elevation contain paired windows interspersed with single sash; east elevation blank except for windows at center lightwell; heavy stone cornice with modillion blocks surrounds roofline at south, north, and west elevations; stone balustrade around entire flat roof. (Source of date: NRHP nomination.)
36	C	172	c. 1954	1	National Bank of Commerce Mortgage Office. 3 bays wide; concrete veneer at front elevation above storefront; high parapet; abuts First National Bank Building and used originally as annex by First National Bank's successor. (Source of date: 1954 city directory.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
37	C	174-198	c. 1942	1	Diana Shops. Brick commercial building; 1 story; 12 bays wide; front elevation above storefronts faced with Moderne-style cast stone panels with horizontal banding; 6 recessed storefronts, each 2 bays wide; two bowstring truss roofs supported by center brick bearing wall; South St. facade finished with yellow glazed brick. Name of building refers to one of the first retail occupants of the building. (Source of date: 1942 city directory.)
200 block West Main Avenue, north side					
38	C	200	c. 1951	2	LPT Building. Brick commercial building faced with concrete panels at 3-bay front along Main Ave.; brick veneer at east elevation along South St.; recessed storefront topped by flat metal canopy; letters "LPT" set in circular panel at top left corner of front elevation; second storefront at northeast corner along South St.; long band of steel windows at second floor along South St. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
39	C	212	1924, 1951, 1968, 1970s	3	Citizens National Bank. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Classical Revival. Presently houses county offices. Brick structure faced with limestone; polished granite base. Original block is 3 stories tall and 3 bays wide; first two stories capped by a band of dentilwork and wide molded cornice supported by 4 large fluted pilasters; two center pilasters flank main entrance, which is set in molded surround with bracketed cornice above doorway; cornice supports a large statue of an eagle with outstretched wings, set within a tall arch at the second story above the door; two bays flanking entrance also set in molded surrounds, with ornate Classical detailing on ornamental panels between first and second story windows; third story is topped by a simple cornice above a row of small 2/2 sash, with carved vertical limestone panels set between the windows; main block of original bank flanked by less ornate two-story annexes along Main Avenue; each annex is 3 bays wide with limestone facade and granite base; annex to east of main block built 1951, annex to west built 1968; a third annex, 2 stories tall and 3 bays wide, faced with yellow brick, built in 1970s west of 1968 annex. (source of date: Hood, p. H-63).

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200 block West Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
40	C	234-238	c. 1912	3	Rankin Building. Brick commercial building; 8 bays wide; first floor contains one storefront at east half of building; at west half of first floor, storefront has been replaced with concrete panels and a band of five display windows with opaque bottom panels topped by glass clerestory windows; eight window openings at second story, all infilled with plate glass panels; limestone sills and lintels at windows; wide molded metal cornices with heavy dentil blocks set above end bays and two center bays; second and third bays and sixth and seventh bays set beneath two-bay arched brick panels with high triangular parapet with limestone coping above; each triangular parapet has a terra cotta medallion set in the brick at the apex of the triangle. (Source: 1912 city directory.)
41	N	246-256	c. 1908, c. 1970s	3	Brick commercial building; three bays wide; c. 1970s brick and limestone facade on c. 1908 building; wide canopy with hipped standing seam metal roof at center entrance; at first floor, limestone panels and bands of display windows with opaque bottom panels and upper clerestory windows unify the first floor of this building with first floor alterations at #238 Main. (Source of date: 1908 Sanborn map.)
42	C	258-264	c. 1912	2	Brick commercial building; 6 bays wide; painted brick; two storefronts separated by a full-height brick pilaster; at second story, three windows with segmental arched headers over each storefront; window openings infilled with plate glass; wide molded cornice at roofline with fluted modillions at either end. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
43	C	278-282	c. 1912	2	Brick commercial building; 12 bays wide; three storefronts separated by full-height brick pilasters with rusticated bases; narrow molded cornice above storefronts; groups of four windows with limestone sills set within recessed panels above each storefront; window openings obscured by louvered shutters; narrow corbelled cornice above each group of windows; box cornice at roofline includes wide frieze with decorative medallions, heavy dentil work, and molded cornice. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)

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200 block West Main Avenue, north side (continued)					
44	C	284-298	c. 1908	2	Albion Grocery. Brick commercial building; 9 bays wide; 3 storefronts separated by full-height pilasters; storefronts infilled with brick and narrow window openings; cloth awning spans entire width of building at first floor; 3 window openings with stone sills and lentils above each storefront; all window openings contain 1/1 fixed pane sash; wide box cornice with heavy dentil at roofline. (Source of date: 1908 Sanborn map.)
300 block West Main Avenue, north side					
45	N	302-306	c. 1960	1	Small concrete block commercial building with stucco; 6 bays wide with rounded corner at southeast; 1963 Sanborn map shows original building was free-standing, 3 bays wide; 3 bay addition built after 1963; building now abuts 320 W. Main; wide setbacks from both W. Main and N. York (Source of date: 1960 city directory.)
46	C	320	1922	2	Kirby Building. Contractor: H. B. Pattilo, Gastonia. Brick commercial building; three bays wide; delicate limestone cornices above storefront and second story windows, and below parapet; band of transomed tripartite wood casement windows at second story; limestone-framed panels above and below windows; above center bay, within the limestone frame, is a terra cotta panel with the name "KIRBY" spelled out, flanked by terra cotta panels with swag designs; full-height brick pilasters with limestone bases and quoins frame the building, each topped by an inset terra cotta panel with the building's date. (Source of date: Brengle, p. 170).
47	C	322	c. 1908	1	B. H. Parker Cotton Warehouse. Commercial building; 3 bays wide; front elevation consists of yellow brick piers with limestone bases and capitals supporting a narrow molded limestone cornice; wide yellow brick frieze with terra cotta diamond shapes set above each pilaster extends above the lower cornice; molded metal cornice separates brick frieze from the high parapet. Part of Parker-King Ford Auto Sales and Service by 1930, according to the 1930 Sanborn map, at which time storefront may have been added. (Source of date: 1908, 1930 Sanborn map.)

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300 block West Main Avenue, north side					
48	N	334-336	1959	1	Brick commercial building; two storefronts, each 3 bays wide; concrete coping. (Source of date: printed on 1963 Sanborn map.)
49	C	342	c. 1912	2	Coca-Cola Bottling Plant. Brick commercial building with high parapet; stucco obscures entire front elevation but segmental-arched window openings with limestone sills are still visible; two storefronts. Part of Parker-King Ford Auto Sales and Service by 1922 (source: Sanborn map), at which time storefront may have been added. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
50	C	350	c. 1912	2	B. H. Parker Cotton Company Offices. Yellow brick commercial building; 3 bays wide; distinctive high triangular parapet topped by limestone orb; heavy brick pilasters with limestone capstones frame the building and extend above parapet; smaller pilasters extending to below parapet line separate the bays; second story bays infilled with red brick with small punched window openings; non-original storefront with metal canopy. Used as Blackwood Auto Repair Shop by 1915 (source: Sanborn map) and became main showroom for Parker-King Ford Auto Sales and Service by 1922. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
51	N	358-360	c. 1915, c. 1960s	2	Brick commercial building; c.1960s brick facade on c. 1915 building; four bays wide; two storefronts with metal canopy. (Source of date: 1915 Sanborn map.)
52	V	366	--	--	Vacant lot.
53	V	372	--	--	Vacant lot.

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400 block West Main Avenue, north side					
54	V	400	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of city's second Coca-Cola bottling plant.
55	C	402	c. 1922	2	Kendrick-Riddle Wholesale Grocer. Brick commercial building with three widely spaced window bays at the second story of the front elevation; two outer bays each contain tripartite 6/6 wooden sash windows and center bay contains a pair of 6/6 wooden sash windows three bays wide; first story contains tripartite 6/6 double-hung sash at west bay, two sets of double wooden doors in the center bay, and wide non-original roll-up metal freight door at east bay; wooden pent roof with tile shingles set above west and center bays at first story; high stepped parapet with concrete coping located at top of the front elevation; faded lettering painted on brick at front elevation spells out name of original occupant of building; large handicapped accessible ramp constructed of brick and concrete extends out from front doors to the edge of the property at Main Ave.; east elevation partially parged where another building once abutted. (Source of date: 1922 city directory.)
100 block West Main Avenue, south side					
56	C	101-103	c. 1936	1	Little Canary Cottage Restaurant. Brick commercial building, 2 storefronts, each 2 bays wide along W. Main. Extends 5 bays along Marietta St. At #101 at corner of Main and Marietta, pebbled stucco covers original brick facade but distinctive crenellated parapet has been retained. At #103, front facade above storefront obscured by asbestos shingles. (Source of date: 1936 city directory.)
57	N	105	c. 1936, c. 1960s	1	Brick commercial building; three bays wide; high flat parapet; brick facade above storefront obscured by tall aluminum panel. (Source of date: 1936 city directory.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
58	C	111	1930, 1957, 1963	2	S. H. Kress Variety Store. Architect: Edward F. Sibbert, Kress Company architect, New York. Art Deco style department store; 8 bays wide; tan brick veneer with terra cotta ornamentation; non-original storefront; second story contains two sets of four recessed steel industrial sash windows; brightly colored horizontal terra cotta panels with elaborate geometric designs top each window and tan-colored vertical terra cotta panels with simpler geometric designs are set beneath each window; multi-colored sawtooth band spans the front facade at the roofline; the distinctive company logo—"KRESS" set on an arched line—is set in a terra cotta panel at the center of the front elevation, with string line molding extending out from either side of the panel; after 1963, a third story was added onto the rear of the main block of the building and a two story brick ell was built on Marietta St. to connect to the main block at the rear; a third story was added onto the rear of the main block of the building and a two story brick ell was built on Marietta St. in 1957. (Source of date: Catherine W. Bishir, p. 489.)
59	N	121	c. 1900, c. 1960s	2	Smith's Drugstore. Brick commercial building in use by present commercial occupant since 1938; 4 bays wide; c. 1960s metal facade treatment obscures front elevation above storefront. (Source of date: 1904 Sanborn map.)
60	N	127	c. 1927, c. 1960s	2	Lyric Moving Picture Theater. Brick commercial building; 3 bays; converted to retail space 1950s. Aluminum panels c. 1960s obscure entire front elevation above storefront. Missing aluminum panels show that original brick facade is intact behind false front. (Source of date: 1927 city directory.)
61	V	133	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of Sweetlands Restaurant.

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100 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
62	C	141-143	c. 1904	2	Groves Building. Brick commercial building; tan brick; 3 bays wide; two storefronts; center doorway leads to second floor; storefront on east side and center doorway boarded up; recessed center entrance and spandrel glass panels around display windows at west storefront; windows at second story boarded up but appear to be tripartite windows above each storefront with a single window opening above center doorway; molded metal cornices intact above storefront and second story windows at west side of building, but missing from east side; stepped parapet with stone coping at west side, but has been removed from east side. (Source of date: 1904 Sanborn map.)
63	C	147-155	c. 1900, c. 1910, c. 1940	2	Woolworth's Store. Brick commercial building; 10 bays wide; two adjacent early 20 th century buildings interconnected c. 1940 to form single store; first 7 bays from east built c. 1910 as Leibowitz Dept. Store (became Woolworth's in 1927); three bays at west built c. 1900 as Long Brothers Hardware and Stoves; 1900 building connected internally to Woolworth's c. 1940; unified storefront with tan pressed brick lower panels and large display windows spans width of first story; at second story of 1910 facade, groups of three transomed double-hung windows set within recessed panels on either side of a single arched center window; corbelled brick cornices run below and above windows; overhanging molded cornice with modillion blocks spans the building at the roofline; at second story of 1900 facade, all three window bays have been infilled with brick to create a blank facade; second story of 1900 facade is framed by brick pilasters that extend beyond roofline; pilaster at east side is capped by a finial, while the finial is broken off at the west pilaster; pilasters support a plain frieze with a narrow cornice with small dentils at the roofline; above the cornice at the roofline rests a raised, projecting cornice with heavy modillion blocks and supported by long fluted brackets. (Source of dates: city directories and 1904 Sanborn map.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
64	C	161	c. 1912, c. 1950s	3	Ideal Moving Picture Theater. Tan pressed brick; 3 bays wide; mid-20 th c. theater entrance and marquee intact; 3 window bays with limestone surrounds at second and third stories; pairs of 1/1 wood sash at second story; elongated center bay at third story has tan brick infill; flanking bays boarded over; corbelled cornice at roofline follows stepped parapet; limestone coping with shallow stone gable detail at center; support cables for marquee anchored to front elevation through cast iron lion heads. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
65	C	169-171	c. 1912	2	Brick commercial building; 4 bays wide; recessed storefront; replacement sash at four window openings at second floor; brick sills and lintels at windows; rectangular brick panels with terra cotta corners set above windows; stepped parapet with stone coping. (Source of date: 1912 city directory.)
66	C	173-175	1899	2	Robinson-Gardner Building (NRHP 1999). First appears on 1904 Sanborn map. Brick commercial building; Renaissance Revival with Classical motifs; 3 bays wide; rusticated brick pilasters topped by metal cornice and triangular pediment flank storefront; additional molded cornice extends across entire first story between pilasters; 3 panels at second story separated by two decorative brick pilasters which support a plain frieze, above which rests a raised projecting cornice with paired scroll brackets and cresting; center panel at second story contains pair of 1/1 wood sash windows set in tall brick arch with terra cotta cartouche at keystone; pressed metal swags and garlands further ornament arch; single windows are set within the panels flanking the arch, with small arch-head louvered vents above each single window. (Source of date: NRHP nomination.)
67	N	177	c. 1900, c. 1960s	2	Boyd and Wilson Meat Market. 3 bays wide; c. 1960s stucco facade obscures front elevation above storefront. (Source of date: 1904 Sanborn map.)

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100 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
68	N	181-189	c. 1956	2	Eagles Store. Brick commercial building; 6 bays wide. Glass display windows and two pairs of double doors at street level; aluminum sheeting at second story; built to replace original three-story brick Eagles Store (c. 1908), which burned in 1954. (Source of date: 1956 city directory.)
69	C	195-197	1923	8	Third National Bank, now Commercial Building (NRHP 1986). Architects: Milburn & Heister, Washington, DC; steel-frame Classical Revival skyscraper; limestone, brick, and terra cotta veneer at 4-bay north elevation at Main Ave. and 10-bay west elevation at South St.; two-story base faced with limestone, although street level obscured with metal panels; wide tripartite windows at second story; projecting front entrance with two-story arched stone surround elaborately ornamented with stone rosettes and rope molding; mock stone balcony set above arched; balcony ornamented with rosettes and molding and supported by four elongated stone brackets with heraldic shields; windows at stories 3-7 of primary elevations are paired 1/1 wood sash, with single windows at end bays; segmental arched windows at seventh story topped by terra cotta label molding; eighth story faced entirely in tan terra cotta rosette panels, with wide terra cotta surrounds at windows; projecting terra cotta parapet supported by terra cotta brackets; parapet consists of wide bands of repeating terra cotta panels with rosettes at bottom and geometric designs at top. (Source of date: NRHP nomination.)
200 block West Main Avenue, south side					
70	C	201-209	c. 1893	2	Frost Torrence Building. Brick commercial building; 5 bays wide at Main Ave; two storefronts, both altered; arch headed window openings at north and west elevations, with arched hood molds at north; arched heads infilled at north elevation and plate glass installed at opening; openings completely infilled with brick at west elevation; simple bracketed cornice ornaments the flat parapet. Sanborn map indicates an opera house on the second floor by 1904. (Source of date: 1893 Sanborn map.)

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200 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
71	C	211-231	c. 1893, c. 1908	2	Love Building. Brick commercial building with stucco; 11 bays wide; built in two distinct sections, with first 6 bays at east comprising the original 1893 building; 5 western bays, added 1906-1908, at which time the stucco was applied and the more elaborate cornice was added; 1906-1908 addition much longer at rear than original building; first floor altered, but second floor contains much of its original character; windows are set in a rhythm of single and paired segmental arch headed openings with inlaid hood molds; wood sash replaced with plate glass; a wide molded cornice supported by modillion blocks is set above a plain frieze; raised cornice set above central three window bays, a panel inscribed with "LOVE BUILDING" in wooden letters at entablature below the raised cornice. (Source of date: 1893, 1908 Sanborn maps.)
72	C	233	c. 1908	2	Brick commercial building; three bays wide; altered storefront with wide aluminum panel between storefront and second story windows; original brick elevation exposed above aluminum panel; limestone sills and brick lintels with limestone keystones; windows replaced with sliding aluminum sash; wide limestone stringcourse with egg-and-dart pattern and stone medallions set above windows; stone diamond shapes set in brick between stringcourse and flat stone parapet. (Source of date: 1908 Sanborn map.)
73	N	245	c. 1972	2	Gastonia Mutual Savings & Loan Association, now Gaston Federal Bank. Post-Modern; blank brick facade with stylized pilasters and cornice; two-story glass curtain wall at center entrance with projecting metal roof. (Source of date: 1972 city directory.)
74	N	251	c. 1959	2	First Federal Savings & Loan. International Style; glass curtain wall with wide bands of spandrel glass; narrow band of fixed pane windows spans width of second story; recessed entry at east half of first story, with blank brick panel at west half. (Source of date: construction date printed on 1963 Sanborn map).

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200 block West Main Avenue, south side (continued)					
75	N	257	1958, c. 1980s	2	1950s office building, altered c. 1980s with Post-Modern front and rear facades, including glass curtain walls at first and second stories, wide slanted canopy over entire first story, and large colored stucco panels in geometric shapes across entire parapet; two large arched louvered vents set among stucco panels above second story curtain wall. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map.)
76	C	269	c. 1918	2	Brick commercial building; 4 bays wide; painted brick; altered storefront; four 8/1 wood sash at second story; windows separated by brick piers; continuous limestone sill with stone brackets under windows; pent roof with wooden brackets spans second story windows; brick pilasters with rounded stone pediments frame the building and extend above parapet. (Source of date: 1918 city directory.)
77	N	275	c. 1972	1	Brick office building; 7 bays wide; flat brick facade; 6 long narrow windows with tinted glass at front. (Source of date: 1972 city directory.)
78	V	279			Vacant lot.
79	N	283-285	c. 1962	2	Brick commercial building with concrete panels at front elevation; 4 bays wide; band of metal framed windows at second floor; recessed storefront. (Source of date: 1962 city directory.)

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300 block West Main Avenue, south side					
80	C	301	1935, 1955	2	U. S. Post Office. Architects: Charles C. Hook and Walter W. Hook, Charlotte. Classical-inspired with Art Deco ornamentation; main block is seven bays wide and three bays deep; five-bay wide pavilion projects from the center of the front elevation and is flanked by a single bay on either side; limestone watercourse; full limestone basement exposed at west and south elevations; limestone steps lead up to center entrance, with iron lamp posts flanking the steps; wide limestone surround at entrance with 10-light wooden transom above double doors; first story windows at front elevation are paired 4/4 wood sash with square four-light transoms; single 6/6 wood sash with 6 light transoms are at side elevations; tan-colored brick pilasters separate the windows and rise to capital-like limestone blocks with sunburst motif; pilasters support a plain limestone frieze that extends the width of the five-bay projecting center section; "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" inscribed in stone frieze; fluted stone panels set in between first and second story windows; second story bays contain paired 4/4 wood sash without transoms at front and single 6/6 sash at sides; marble wainscoting and Art Deco pilasters distinguish the interior lobby, as does a WPA mural by North Carolina artist Francis Speight; original two-story, five bay rear ell extends off south elevation; rear ell has paired 6/6 wood sash, with 6-light transoms at the second story; a large one-story brick addition set on brick piers was built onto rear ell in 1955. (Source of date: cornerstone.)

100 block West Franklin Boulevard, north side

81	C	160	c. 1951	2	Eagles Club Aerie #2624. Modern; large yellow brick block without windows; south and east elevations consist of alternating recessed and projecting rectangular brick panels in large checkerboard pattern; entrance bay at south elevation has double glass doors with glass transom and sidelights, with an expanse of tan brick extending up to roofline above entrance; a multitude of punched cross shapes ornament the tan brick panel. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block West Franklin Boulevard, north side (continued)					
82	C	166	c. 1922	2	Brick commercial building, stuccoed; simple molded cornice at storefront; four 4/6 wood sash at second story; crenellated parapet with limestone coping; two brick stringcourses set above windows. (Source of date: 1922 Sanborn map.)
83	C	170	c. 1945	2	Public Service Company of North Carolina. Built as offices for gas company; Moderne; brick commercial building with cast stone facade; 3 bays; first and second stories recessed within a panel framed by fluted pilasters at either side and a plain frieze at the high parapet; original storefront with recessed center entrance, rounded corners at display windows; 3 tall narrow window openings at second story, each with 12-light steel-framed French doors with transoms above and small wrought iron balconies in front. (Source of date: 1945 city directory.)
84	C	176	c. 1927	2	Union Bus Station. Brick commercial building, used as bus station from 1942 through 1950s; painted brick; three bays wide; recessed storefront with center entrance and display windows; wide three-panel display window at second floor, flanked by two narrow windows infilled with concrete block; continuous concrete sill under second story windows; stepped parapet; glass block infill at openings along alley at west elevation. (Source of date: 1927 city directory.)
200 block West Franklin Boulevard, north side					
85	C	240	1926	2	City Hall. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Renaissance Revival. Tan brick with limestone; 13 bays wide, 5 bays deep; 3-bay center entrance faced with limestone and framed by four fluted Ionic stone pilasters; tall, at second story above center doorway, a narrow arch-headed window is set within a double stone arch and framed by pair of small stone pilasters; narrow stone balcony with a wrought iron balustrade and supported by a pair of stone scroll brackets is set below arched window; large arch-headed 10/10 windows at first story and rectangular 10/10 sash at second story; molded stone cornice at roofline; brick balustrade with stone balusters at roof; small 2-story, 3-bay brick block addition at west elevation originally housed fire department; narrow lawn along Franklin Blvd. and South St. (Source of date: Hood, p. H-59.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block West Franklin Boulevard, north side (continued)					
86	C	258	1918	2	(Former) First Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church, St. Mark's Episcopal Church since 1948. Builder: C. W. Spencer, Gastonia. Classical Revival. Composed of two gable-roofed blocks set in a large L; gabled front elevations, one facing south onto Franklin Blvd. and the other west onto York St., are sheltered by two-story pedimented porticos, each supported by four tall Doric columns; tall doorways within porticos with fan lights above; sanctuary in the York St. block is lighted by large, three-part, arch-headed stained glass windows; the Franklin block contains two stories of offices and classrooms and has rectangular windows; a dentilled cornice encircles the building; one-story brick classroom annex built onto north elevation in 1955; narrow lawn with mature hardwood trees along Franklin Blvd. and York St. (Source of date: Brengle, p.160.)
100 block West Franklin Boulevard, south side					
87	C	175	c. 1921	2	Williams and Weinberg Real Estate Building. Brick commercial building; 4 bays wide; corbelled brick cornice at roofline; modern storefront spanned by bullnose awning; four large window openings at second story now contain metal-framed fixed sash; presently used as city offices building. (Source of date: city directory and 1922 Sanborn map.)
88	V	191	--	--	Vacant lot.

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block West Franklin Boulevard, south side					
89	C	201	1922, 1965	2	First Baptist Church, now Unity Place. Architect: Willard G. Rogers, Charlotte. Mediterranean Revival. Red brick with limestone; massive cruciform-plan church with a pair of gabled, two-story wings projecting from south end of the building; four-story brick tower with octagonal stone lantern rises from east elevation; green tile at tall gable roof; front elevation dominated by monumental 2 ½ story arched stone entrance; two large, eight-panel wood doors within front arch are separated by stone pilaster with Corinthian capital; pilaster supports a stone cross set in front of a rose window; molded cornice above doors with frieze inscribed with "FIRST BAPTIST;" brick pilasters above arch head support an arched stone cornice, with tile set between pilasters; brick arcade at east elevation, with arch headed windows at second story; two-story arch headed windows at west elevation; corbelled stone cornice composed of repeated small arches; large three-story brick classroom annex with concrete foundation and trim built in 1965 at rear of church facing onto South St. (Source of date: Brengle, p.160.)
100 block East Second Avenue, north side					
90	C	108	c. 1951	1	Duane & Gibson Esso Service Station. Brick with stucco; Moderne; five bays wide; at corner office, original stainless steel-framed display windows with rounded corner and stainless steel panel above; flat canopy above office; two enclosed garage bays with original wooden roll-up doors at west elevation; open garage bay at east end of building; wide paved setbacks at Second Ave. and Marietta St. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
91	V	110	--	--	Vacant lot.

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block East Second Avenue, north side (continued)					
92	C	114	c. 1947	1	Lewis Motors. Built as automobile dealership, now auto repair shop. Moderne; brick-faced concrete block; front showroom projects from main body of building and consists of wide display windows above brick skirt panels set on the diagonal at either side of center entrance; tall pillars faced with enameled steel panels flank the double glass doors and transom at entrance; flat canopy with curvilinear corners projects out from diagonal display windows; high curvilinear parapet faced with enameled steel panels; showroom fronts two large rectangular brick-faced concrete-block garages with bowstring truss roofs; garages are set perpendicular to the front showroom, with garage openings facing west. (Source of date: 1947 city directory.)
93	C	120	c. 1928	2	W. M. Severance House. One of only two single-family residences in district; Craftsman style; side gable house faced with wood shingles; one-story front porch with front gable roof supported by squat tapered brick columns; bay windows at second story above front porch and at first story of east elevation; low-pitched standing seam metal roof with exposed rafters under eaves; 6/1 wood sash; exterior brick chimney at east elevation; two-family residence from c. 1945. Mr. Severance was owner of Severance Kelvinator Company in Gastonia. (Source of date: 1928 city directory.)
94	C	128	c. 1935	2	Patterson Apartments. Brick apartment building; Colonial Revival influence. 6/1 wood sash; composed of two gable-roof blocks set in a T; front block at Second Ave. is three bays wide and two bays deep; center entrance with double wooden doors sheltered by one-story gable-roof porch; paired windows flank front entrance bay at both stories and at side elevations; rear extension is five bays wide with paired and tripartite windows; one-story front gable porch at center entrance along Oakland St. (Source of date: 1935 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block East Second Avenue, south side					
95	C	119	1914	2	Central School. Architect: Luther D. Proffit, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Classical Revival. Massive two story brick school building with long center block flanked by pair of projecting side wings; 3.65 acre site with wide setback from E. Second Ave.; full basement at concrete base course; central portico, reached by a tall flight of stairs, has four massive Doric columns and two Doric pilasters that support a full entablature; front entrance surmounted by fanlight; originally had bands of 6 12/12 wood sash with 6-light transoms at first and second stories on either side of portico and at second story within portico; molded cornice above windows and dentil cornice at roofline; triangular stepped parapets at portico and side wings. Large auditorium addition at rear. Building designated a historic property by county ordinance, 1993. Renovated 2001 and reopened as Piedmont Community Charter School, at which time original multi-light wood windows were replaced. (Source of date: Brengle, p.157.)
95a	N	119R	1961	1	Central School Cafeteria. Concrete block construction with brick facade; free-standing building located at southeast corner of school property; metal windows; connected to school by covered walkway. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map)
100 block West Second Avenue, north side					
96	C	102	c. 1921	2	Armstrong Hotel Apartments, presently known as Marietta Street Apartments. Arts and Crafts style; yellow wire cut brick; large L-shaped apartment building at NW corner of Second and Marietta; gable roofs with multiple cross-gables; slate shingles; 2 ½ story section along Second Ave. contains small studio apartments with common exterior entrance; 2 story section along Marietta St. contains flats with private exterior entrances; exposed rafters under eaves at Second Ave. section; 9/9 and 6/6 wood sash. Built by Col. Charles B. Armstrong, owner of Armstrong Mills and a former mayor of Gastonia, as an investment property originally to house single female teachers working at the nearby Central School. (Source of date: 1921 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block West Second Avenue, north side (continued)					
96a	N	102R	c. 1965	1	One of three identical small single-unit cottages at rear of Armstrong Apartments; vertical wood siding; brick foundation; 6/6 wood windows; hipped roof with asphalt shingles. Alternate address 209 S. Marietta St. (Source of date: building not on 1963 Sanborn map; first appears in 1965 city directory.)
96b	N	102R	c. 1965	1	Rear cottage at Armstrong Hotel Apartments. Alternate address 211 S. Marietta St. See #96a for description.
96c	N	102R	c. 1965	1	Rear cottage at Armstrong Hotel Apartments. Alternate address 213 S. Marietta St. See #96a for description.
97	V	106	--	--	Vacant lot.
100 block West Second Avenue, south side					
98	V	107	--	--	Vacant lot.
99	N	111	c. 1930, c. 1980s	1	Brick office building with Post-Modern facade treatment. Originally housed Gastonia Woman's Club. (Source of date: 1930 city directory and 1930 Sanborn map.)
100	C	113	c. 1928	2	Gaston County War Memorial Hall. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Mission style. Brick with stucco; 2-story auditorium with front octagonal fortress-like tower rising above five-sided one-story arcaded porch; hipped metal roof at tower; narrow window openings in tower walls; decorative stringcourse at main block of building. (Source of date: Hood, p. H-60.)
100a	CO	--	1929	--	Free-standing rock-faced granite monument set in lawn at front of Memorial Hall. Four feet tall, 2 ½ feet wide, 1 foot deep on raised granite base. Rectangular bronze plaque set into front face of granite. Raised shield on plaque. Letters "US" at top of shield, encircled by "American Legion." Inscription on shield reads "To the memory of the men from Gaston County who died in the service of their country during the World War 1917-1918" followed by names of 23 men. Bottom of shield reads "Created by Gaston Post No. 23 American Legion 1929." Plaque above shield ornamented with a warship at left and a bi-plane at right. (Source of date: inscription on plaque)

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100 block West Second Avenue, south side					
101	C	115	1930, 1962	1	(former) Gaston County Public Library, presently used as police station. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Classical Revival. Brick with symmetrical five-bay facade; center arched entrance with fanlight; elliptical front portico with square columns; three window bays at either side elevation; 12/12 sash; heavy entablature across front and side bays and around front portico, with molded cornice and dentils; plaques above each window inscribed with names of American and British literary figures. Large rear addition constructed 1962. (Source of date: Hood, p. H-60.)
102	C	117	1954	2	Gastonia Fire Station No. 1. International style; brick block with roll-up garage doors at first floor and band of metal windows across second floor; 1 story ells flank the main block at either side. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map.)
100 block South York Street, west side					
103	C	155	c. 1938	2	York Medical Building, presently York Professional Building. Long, narrow two-story brick office building, reads as one story at street because of steep slope down from street at front of property; 5 bays wide; center three bays project slightly from main block; center entrance set within segmental stone arch surround; stone blocks at stepped front parapet. (Source of date: 1938 city directory.)
100 block South York Street, east side					
104	N	110	c. 1995	1	Magic Shine Car Wash. Brick suburban-style auto service building; false mansard roof; four service bays; wide setback off York St. Covered drive-through at front of building. North elevation fronts onto W. Main Ave. Site has contained a succession of auto service stations since c. 1922. (Source of date: 1995 city directory.)
105	V	136	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block North South Street, west side					
106	C	107	c. 1951	2	Piedmont Newsstand. Small brick commercial building; one bay wide; wide folding doors at first floor; wide boarded up display window at second floor. (Source of date: 1951 city directory.)
100 block South Street, west side					
107	V	129	--	--	Vacant lot.
108	V	135	--	--	Vacant lot.
109	V	139	--	--	Vacant lot.
110	V	145	--	--	Vacant lot.
111	C	151	1910, 1954	3	(Former) Gaston County Courthouse (NRHP: 1979, Courthouses of North Carolina Thematic Resource). Architects: Milburn & Heister, Washington, DC. Classical Revival. Tan brick with hipped roof; three bays wide; split staircase leads from South St. up to main entrance at center bay of east elevation; entrance bay sheltered by three-story pedimented portico supported by a pair of brick Ionic columns; limestone entablature is set over main door, with a two-story arch-headed window above entablature; projecting side pavilions, which originally contained entrances, are sheltered by porticos identical to that of the east elevation; full entablature with dental molding and modillion blocks crowns the third story; windows replaced during major 1954 renovations; massive three-story jail addition constructed at rear in 1954; entire complex vacant since new county courthouse opened on Long Ave. in early 1990s; Civil War monument that had stood in front of the courthouse was moved to the site of the new courthouse at that time; fire burned out much of the second and third floors and destroyed the roof in 1996. Presently the building is under renovation by the city of Gastonia. (Source of date: NRHP nomination.)
111a	C	151R	1954	1	Small brick utility building at rear parking lot behind courthouse; gable roof. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block South Street, west side					
112	C	271-277	c. 1946	3	Darnell Apartments. Large L-shaped brick apartment building at corner of Second and South; Georgian Revival; gable roof with asphalt shingles; 6/6 wood sash; louvered gabled eyebrow dormers. Alternate address: 202 W. Second Ave. (Source of date: 1946 city directory.)
112a	NS	271-277R	c. 1960s	NS	Rear carport, wood frame construction with shed roof; 8 open parking bays. (Source of date: estimate; does not appear on 1963 Sanborn map.)
100 block South Street, east side					
113	N	124	c. 1970	1	Brick commercial building; 7 bays; glass storefront across entire width of building; flat metal canopy spans storefront. (Source of date: 1970 city directory.)
114	V	142	--	--	Vacant lot. Site of c. 1900 City Hall, demolished late 1920s after present City Hall opened at 240 W. Franklin Blvd. Southern Hotel built c. 1930, demolished mid-1990s.
115	C	148-156	c. 1922	3	Standard Hardware Company. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Yellow brick commercial building; 3 three bays wide with tripartite windows recessed in panels at second and third stories; original storefront with recessed center entrance, copper skirt panels under display windows, and leaded glass transoms; molded cornice above storefront; wide wooden cornice with large wooden brackets below high parapet; limestone coping at parapet, with carved shield set in stone medallion at center of parapet; "STANDARD HARDWARE CO. WHOLESALE & RETAIL" stenciled onto north elevation. (Source of date: 1922 Sanborn map.)
115a	C	148R	c. 1940s	1	Brick storage building located behind 148 South St.; three freight bays at south elevation; hipped roof. (source: appears on 1949 aerial photo of downtown Gastonia but is not on 1930 Sanborn map.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block South Street, east side (continued)					
116	C	158-160	c. 1930	3	Brick commercial building; three bays wide; two narrow storefronts with center door for access to upper floors; wide window openings boarded up at second and third stories; stone sills; terra cotta blocks at lintels and at stepped parapet; limestone coping. (Source of date: 1930 city directory.)
117	N	164-172	c. 1930, c. 1970s	3	Gastonia Hardware Company. Brick commercial building; 5 bays wide; upper floors completely obscured by metal cladding, which carries over to building at #174-180 to present a unified facade on both buildings (Source of date: 1930 city directory.)
118	N	174-180	c. 1930, c. 1970s	4	Austin-Johnson Furniture Company. Brick commercial building; 5 bays wide; upper floors completely obscured by metal cladding, which carries over to building at #164-172 to create a unified facade on both buildings (Source of date: 1930 city directory.)
119	C	182-190	c. 1930	3	Webb Theater, presently used for city offices. Architect: Hugh White, Gastonia. Moderne. Patterned brickwork with cast stone ornament; three bays wide; each bay at second story contains a center 6/6 wood window flanked on either side by 4/4 windows; four two-story brick pilasters outlined in cast stone separate bays at first and second stories; third story faced with brick in a checkerboard pattern of alternating trios of stretcher brick laid either on their long side or their ends; trio of windows at center bay of third story, with paired 6/6 windows at two outer bays; stepped parapet with cast stone coping. (Source of date: 1930 city directory.)
120	N	192	c. 1961	2	P&M Building. Brick commercial building; 2 storefronts on South St. and 4 plate glass windows at second story; long south elevation at Franklin Blvd. has 2 storefronts at rear of building; wide expanse of projecting bricks at second story above Franklin Blvd. storefronts. (Source of date: 1961 city directory.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
200 block South Street, east side					
121	V	208	--	--	Vacant lot.
122	V	210	--	--	Vacant lot.
123	C	212	c. 1927	2	Red Front Dry Cleaners. Brick commercial building; 3 bays wide; stone surround at storefront; tripartite windows at outer bays of second story with single window at center; stone surrounds at second floor window bays; triangular parapet. (Source of date: 1927 city directory.)
124	C	214	1923	4	Masonic Temple. Architect: William H. Peeps, Charlotte. Classical Revival. Tan brick institutional building in continuous use by original occupant; three bays wide; plain stone cornice above first story; stone pilasters rise between bays from cornice at first story up to decorative frieze and cornice supported by stone brackets; tripartite windows in each bay, with horizontal stone panels in between second and third story window bays. (Source of date: cornerstone.)
125	C	220	1947, 1952, c. 1965, c. 1980	3	Gastonia Telephone Exchange. Large brick block; in continuous use by original occupant (now Bell South); five bays wide and originally four bays deep along Second Ave.; center three bays along South St. project slightly from main block of building; cast stone surrounds and entablatures at first story windows on two primary elevations; one bay addition at rear built 1952 and another five bay rear addition built c. 1965; 1952 and 1965 additions replicate massing and details of original building; massive rear addition facing Second Ave. built c. 1980 and serves as main entrance to entire building; pebbled stucco facade on rear addition. (Source of date: 1963 Sanborn map.)
126	NS	220R	c. 1980s	6	Bell South Tower. Six-story open concrete tower rises over rear of Telephone Exchange building; holds cellular telephone antennae. (Source of date: recollection of city official.)

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<u>List No.</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Street No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>No. of Stories</u>	<u>Description</u>
100 block North Marietta Street, east side					
126	C	128-132	c. 1908	1	Railroad Express Office. Brick commercial building; three narrow two-bay storefronts with recessed entries; one unit originally contained the Railroad Express Office; flat brick parapet above storefronts; stepped parapets at side elevations; aluminum siding on #132 at north end, with bull nose canopy above storefront. (Source of date: 1908 Sanborn map.)
100 block South Marietta Street, west side					
127	C	101-113	c. 1949	1	Concrete block commercial building with brick facing; four storefronts, each three bays wide; flat parapet with cast stone coping. (Source of date: 1949 city directory.)
200 block South Oakland Street, west side					
128	C	217	c. 1918	2	R. E. Johnson House. One of two single-family residences in district; converted to 2-family by 1930 and 4-family by 1940; triple-A massing; asphalt shingle siding; first floor below street level; two front porches to either side of center gable; paired 6/1 windows at front; two-story bay window at north elevation; asphalt shingles on gable roof; standing seam metal shed roofs at front porches. Mr. Johnson was manager of M. T. Parham Company General Merchandiser at 107 E. Main Ave. in Gastonia. (Source of date: 1918 city directory.)

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<u>Architect/Builder</u>	<u>Office Location</u>	<u>Building in District</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Inventory #</u>
Louis H. Asbury	Charlotte	Ragan Building	1912	3
Charles C. and Walter W. Hook	Charlotte	U.S. Post Office	1935	80
Milburn & Heister	Washington, DC	Gaston County Courthouse	1910	111
		Third National Bank	1917	69
H. B. Pattilo (builder)	Gastonia	Kirby Building	1922	46
William H. Peeps	Charlotte	Masonic Temple	1923	124
Luther D. Proffit	Spartanburg, SC	Central School	1914	95
Willard G. Rogers	Charlotte	First Baptist Church	1922	89
Edward F. Sibbert	New York, NY	S.H. Kress Variety Store	1930	58
C. W. Spencer (builder)	Gastonia	First Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church	1918	86
Hugh E. White	Gastonia	Standard Hardware Building	c. 1922	115
		Citizens National Bank	1923	69
		Gastonia City Hall	1926	85
		Gaston County War Memorial	c. 1928	100
		Gaston County Public Library	1930	101
		Webb Theater	c. 1930	119
Wilson & Sompayrac	Columbia, SC	First National Bank	1917	35

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Section 8: Statement of Significance

The Downtown Gastonia Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of commerce, government, and education. The district is also significant under Criterion C for architecture. The period of significance for the district begins c. 1890s, the earliest decade for which documentation is available to establish approximate construction dates for the district's oldest buildings, and continues to 1954. During that period, but especially from the early 1890s through the mid-1930s, Gastonia developed a resplendent downtown that reflected the city's emergence as the preeminent cotton textile manufacturing center in the western Piedmont. Other towns and cities in Gaston County, such as Belmont, Cherryville, and Bessemer City, also experienced industrial growth during this period, but none to the extent of Gastonia. Local businessmen and entrepreneurs had established eleven steam-powered cotton mill complexes within the Gastonia city limits by 1906, and another twenty-seven during and immediately following the boom years of World War I. The city's population soared with the influx of labor: from 1,033 in 1890 to more than 5,700 in 1910 and over 17,000 in 1930. A county referendum in 1909 recognized the city's new-found stature and approved the relocation of the county seat to Gastonia in 1911, further enhancing the city's prestige.

The great prosperity and civic pride that accompanied the city's explosive growth resulted in the construction of grand civic buildings, a fine school, handsome churches, and a five-block commercial district along Main Avenue and South Street that boasted two skyscrapers and a number of fine retail stores, cinemas, banks, and office buildings. The earliest surviving commercial buildings in the district from the 1890s into the early 1910s are well-designed one- and two-story brick buildings that are simply ornamented with arch-headed windows and rich cornices. The construction of the Classical Revival courthouse on South Street in 1910, however, seems to have introduced a new sophistication to the city's architecture. More than a dozen buildings were constructed in the district during the 1910s up through the mid-1930s which invoked the latest, most popular architectural trends, including Classical Revival, Italian Renaissance Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Mission, and even Art Deco. Architects from surrounding cities, such as Charlotte, Columbia, and Spartanburg, South Carolina, and as far away as Washington, D. C., were hired to work in Gastonia, but eventually the city was of a size to support its own professional architect, Hugh Edward White. Working in Gastonia from 1921 until the early 1930s, White designed six of the finest buildings in the district, including City Hall, the Gaston County War Memorial Hall, the (former) Gaston County Public Library, Citizens National Bank, the Standard Hardware Building, and Webb Theater.

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The period of significance for the district has been extended to 1954, which is forty-nine years before the present, in order to include the Gastonia Fire Station No. 1 as a contributing building. The fire station is the last substantial public building to be constructed within the historic district and thus continues the historic trend under Criterion A of locating essential government services in the city's traditional downtown area. It is also a locally significant example of the International Style of architecture and is integral to the district's significance under Criterion C.

Historical Background/Commerce, Government, and Education Contexts

The most widely known event in the history of Gastonia, North Carolina, and one of the most significant events in all of U.S. labor history, was the strike at the city's enormous Loray Mill, west of downtown. Here, in 1929, Communist activists rallied the strikers to hold out for a few basic rights against the Manville-Jenckes Company of Providence, Rhode Island, owners of the mill since 1920. Strikers' demands included a minimum weekly wage of twenty dollars, equal pay for women, and the right to organize. When violence ensued at one standoff between the strikers and city police, the police chief was killed. Although the Loray Mill strike and subsequent murder trial are tangential to the development of downtown Gastonia—the mill economy was already in serious decline before the Great Depression and a judge ordered the trial to be held in Charlotte—the strike created a sensation, and journalists from across the country descended upon Gastonia. Mary Heaton Vorse, writing for *Harper's Monthly*, eloquently described Gastonia's downtown and the monumental impact that the mills had on the city's development.

Thirty years ago Gastonia was a hamlet on the crossroads. It gives the impression of having sprung out of the earth fully equipped. There is a new city hall, a new courthouse, a new county jail, all fine buildings. On an elevation stands a splendid new high school. There is a great orthopedic hospital, where miracles are performed on children and where ninety per cent of the work is done free. The only public building lacking is a library, and this lack, one feels sure, will soon be remedied by Gastonia's public-spirited citizens. There are new churches and residences everywhere. The city is completely surrounded by fine new mills, of which I was told that the Loray in West Gastonia is the largest. Few if any of these mills are over thirty years old. It is they which have supported the prosperity of the town and its well-to-do people. The mills created

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Gastonia, the city of spindles. It is handsome, prosperous, thriving.
(Vorse, p. 704)

Vorse captured the essence of Gastonia as it stood in 1929. Not only had the city grown exponentially with the prosperity of the textile industry, but, in less than sixty years since its founding as a railroad crossroads, had achieved a measure of sophistication and urbanization that was illustrated by its fine architecture, the wide array of merchants and other businesses situated in the downtown commercial district, and the dedication of local government to providing its citizens with quality schools, a library that would be built in 1930, and other services from its fine civic buildings. Gastonia had indeed sprung from nothing in the 1870s, but it had grown into a sizeable and very modern city.

The Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway Company created the settlement of Gastonia Station in 1872 in the heart of Gaston County as a stop on the first leg of the company's new railroad. Gaston County commissioners in Dallas, the county seat five miles to the north, had refused to allow the railroad to pass through their town, citing the smoke and noise as undesirable. Three years later, in 1875, the Chester & Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railway intersected the Atlanta & Charlotte at Gastonia Station, providing that small town with an important railroad crossroads in the center of the county, and setting the stage for Gastonia's astonishing industrial growth before the turn of the twentieth century. (Brengele, pp. 115, 148.)

Prior to the coming of the railroad, small subsistence farms producing corn, oats, cattle, and hogs for local consumption occupied the area around Gastonia, but poor soils and distant markets limited farmers in their production. Large-scale farms producing cotton or tobacco met with little success. Despite the region's poor economy, population continued to increase. The state legislature created Gaston County in 1846 from a division of Lincoln County, and named the new county for a prominent state jurist, Judge William Gaston. The next year, Dallas was incorporated as the county seat. (Brengele, p. 3.)

The Gaston County textile industry began to develop shortly after the formation of the county. The area's many fast-moving rivers and streams and its relatively large supply of labor from the gainless local agricultural economy made Gaston County well-suited to the industry. The county's first cotton mill was founded in 1848 when an old brick-making factory at Mountain Island was replaced by a water-powered cotton mill on the Catawba River near Mount Holly. Two years later the Lineberger brothers built the Woodlawn Mill on the South Fork River. The Stowe family built a third mill in 1853 on the South Fork near present-day Cramerton. The absence of railroad transportation for widespread distribution limited Gaston County's early textile industry to the production of cotton yarn solely for domestic weaving in the surrounding

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counties of North and South Carolina, yet the mills thrived and placed Gaston County at fourth place in textile production in the state, behind Cumberland, Alamance, and Randolph, in the years prior to the Civil War. (Brengele, p. 6; Cope and Wellman, p.104 ; Williams, p. 56.) The Charlotte-Atlanta Post Road provided the only means of long distance transportation to and from Gaston County in the 1850s, and horse- or mule-drawn wagons were the only way of moving goods and crops overland. In 1860, the county's first railroad, the Wilmington, Charlotte & Rutherford line, ran northwest out of Charlotte through Mount Holly, made a wide loop north through Lincoln County, and then passed southwest through Cherryville on its way west to Rutherford County. All rail construction came to a halt during the Civil War, yet a dearth of adequate rail links between the South's major cities led Confederate strategists to determine that a line between Richmond and Atlanta, by way of Greensboro and Charlotte, was a priority. Significant military action by-passed Gaston County during the war, although the war certainly took its toll. Hundreds of men and boys left the county to serve under General Lee in the Army of Northern Virginia or under General Joseph Johnston in the Army of Tennessee, and the farm economy was left in shambles. The county's three cotton mills ceased all production during the war, and one of them was burned by General George Stoneman's Union cavalry in 1865. Numerous Confederate veterans are buried at Gastonia's Oakwood Cemetery, two blocks southwest of the downtown historic district. (Lefler and Newsome, 486; Ragan, 43.)

Recovery in Gaston County began with the resumption of railroad construction in the early 1870s. The Atlanta & Charlotte Air Line Railway, running east-west across the center of the county, was completed in 1873, and the Chester & Lenoir, running north-south, was completed in 1875, with Gastonia Station strategically located at the crossroads. The town of Gastonia, with a population of 236, was incorporated in 1877, and consisted of one square mile of land surrounding the railroad junction. A small business district sprang up along both sides of the Air Line Railway tracks, on Main Street (Main Avenue by 1915) to the south and Airline Street to the north, with commercial activity centered around the railroad depot at South Street near Main. By the mid-1880s, downtown Gastonia had two hotels, the Falls House on Airline Street and the Central Hotel on Main Street between South and Marietta, as well as several general stores, groceries, and livery stables. Industry also developed near the railroad, such as a door and sash factory, a rolling mill, and a marble cutting shop. More significantly, Gastonia also became an important agricultural distribution center, especially for raw cotton from South Carolina, and several cotton warehouses were built along the tracks. George Washington Ragan, who was to become one of Gastonia's most prosperous industrialists and financiers, opened his first general store and cotton warehouse at the northeast corner of Main and Marietta Streets in 1880, and then in 1885 built Gastonia's first brick commercial building at the northwest corner of that intersection. Ragan's brick building was demolished in 1899 to make way for construction of the Craig & Wilson Carriage Works, which still stands at that location, although in a much altered

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form. Other cotton merchants on Main Street in the 1880s included Grier Love, J.H. Craig, A.M. Smyre, M.L. Mauney, and Holland & Wilson, all of whom would prosper greatly in the upcoming textile boom of the 1890s. Gastonia's population was estimated at 550 in 1887 and the *Gastonia Gazette* in 1888 called for construction of 500 new houses to meet the demands of the growing population. (Brengele, 139; Ragan 86-96.)

The year 1887 was the beginning of industrial expansion in Gastonia. Local entrepreneurs John H. Craig and Laban L. Jenkins founded the town's first bank, the Craig & Jenkins Banking Company, with the intent of financing a textile mill in the town. A few months later, those men, in partnership with other local businessmen like Grier Love, G.W. Ragan, and Thomas Wilson, established the Gastonia Cotton Manufacturing Company, the town's first cotton mill and the first steam-operated mill in the county. Steam power, made possible by the burgeoning coal mining industry in the southern Appalachian Mountains and by the increasing ability of railroads to distribute the coal, freed the textile industry from the geographical constraints of water power. Mills could develop in towns like Gastonia that lacked access to principal rivers, but instead could provide railroad transportation, a steady supply of labor, and capital. George A. Gray, an experienced superintendent from the Woodlawn Mill, joined the group to run the new Gastonia mill. The original one-story brick mill building, which burned in 1927, stood on Ratchford Avenue at Broad Street, two blocks north of the railroad. The "old mill" as it became known, employed from 80 to 150 persons and produced cotton yarn on 3,000 spindles, expanding to 6,000 by 1890. A second mill, containing 120 looms for weaving cloth, was built next to the first mill in 1891 and is still standing. Only a handful of the original houses in the surrounding mill village are extant. (Ragan, 98-100; Ayers, p. 111; Brengele, p. 171.)

Ten more mill complexes, all surrounded by sprawling communities of workers' housing, were established in Gastonia over the next twenty years. These included Trenton Mills and Modena Mills (both 1893), Avon Mills (1896), Ozark Mills and Arlington Mills (both 1899), Loray Mill (1900), Gray Manufacturing Company (1904), Clara-Dunn-Armstrong Manufacturing Company (1905), and Flint Manufacturing Company and Holland Manufacturing Company (both 1906). Remarkably, all of Gastonia's early mills were financed with local capital and were owned by groups of local businessmen. Loray Mill, at the time of its construction, was the largest mill in the South, with 50,000 spindles for spinning cotton yarn; upon its expansion in 1921 by the Manville-Jenckes Company of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Loray Mill became the largest cotton mill in the country with 108,000 spindles. (Cope and Wellman, p. 228-243; Brengele, p. 180.)

Gastonia's industrial expansion in the 1890s through the first decade of the 1900s brought with it all of the trappings of a prosperous city with a successful economy. Population more than quadrupled from 1,033 in 1890 to 4,610 in 1900, and continued to grow, although at a less

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astounding rate, to 5,759 by 1910. The area within the Downtown Gastonia Historic District developed quickly during this period. Residential construction boomed, and Franklin Street (Franklin Boulevard after 1915), one block south of Main Street, became the most fashionable neighborhood in Gastonia. Mill owners and downtown merchants built stately mansions, primarily in the Queen Anne style, along Franklin Street between Broad and Chester Streets, as well as on York Street south of West Main Street. Five churches, all in the Gothic Revival style with tall brick steeples, were built around the Main Street commercial district, including Holy Trinity Lutheran Church on York Street, the First Presbyterian Church on Marietta Street, the Main Street Methodist Church near Oakland Street, the First Associated Reform Presbyterian Church at Franklin Boulevard and York Street, and the First Baptist Church at Marietta and Long Streets north of the railroad tracks. All of these early downtown churches have since been demolished as their congregations expanded and moved into larger facilities around the city. Gastonia built its first town hall in 1899 on South Street, just south of Main Avenue, and continued to use this small Renaissance Revival building for municipal offices until the present City Hall was built on West Franklin Boulevard in 1926, at which time the original building was demolished. In 1900, a bond issue was approved to pay for electric street lights, a municipal water works and sewage system, and the town's first public school system. As a result of the bond issue, the town took over operation of Oakland High School at the corner of South Oakland Street and East Second Avenue in 1901. This school, which the town renamed Central School, had been built in 1896 with funds provided by local textile magnate George Gray and had been run by the Methodist Episcopal Church. (Cope and Wellman, pp. 140-141; Bishir, p. 66.)

Main Avenue evolved from the haphazard collection of primarily wood-framed commercial, industrial, and residential buildings that existed in the 1880s to a fashionable street of handsome brick department stores, shops, motion picture theaters, banks, and office buildings by about 1912. The 1893 Sanborn Map Company map, the earliest map available showing the development of the city, shows that numerous brick buildings already had begun to appear on Main Avenue between Oakland Street on the east and York Street on the west. Surviving from this early period are the **Frost Torrence Drug Store (#70)** at the southwest corner of Main and South, the neighboring **Love Building (#71)**, the **Armstrong Furniture Company (#22)**, which is now non-contributing because of an inappropriate, but possibly reversible, facade treatment, and a one-story commercial building at **111-113 East Main Avenue (#20)** that retains one of its original storefronts. Many businesses constructed new buildings on Main Avenue during the 1890s and 1900s, and the commercial district soon stretched for three blocks along both sides of Main Avenue from just west of Oakland Street to York Street, and then for another block west to Chester on the north side of Main. North of the railroad tracks, several fine buildings also were constructed on Airline Avenue during this period. The elegant Armington Hotel, with its tall

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white columns and two-story front porch, replaced the Falls House in 1909 at the T-intersection of South Street.

Many downtown business owners were also owners of or investors in local textile mills and were able to reinvest their textile profits into their downtown stores during this period. The **Love Building (#71)**, for instance, was expanded to almost double its size in 1908 by Grier Love's son, John Love, at which time a tall parapet with a wide cornice was added to the front facade. Grier Love was an original investor in the Gastonia Cotton Manufacturing Company and he and his son were major investors in the enormous Loray Mill. Frost Torrence also was an investor in the Loray Mill, and soon after that mill began operating, Torrence opened the town's first opera house at the second floor of his drug store building in 1904. Charles Armstrong, too, was a textile entrepreneur, and owned the huge three mill complex known as the Clara-Dunn-Armstrong Manufacturing Company located a few blocks south of downtown. (Ragan, pp. 126-136; Cope and Wellman, pp. 229-243.)

Other textile mill owners soon followed with their own downtown investments. John Craig and Laban Jenkins became so successful as bankers and industrialists that they shut down the private firm of Craig & Jenkins Banking Company, which they operated out of their homes, and opened the First National Bank of Gastonia in partnership with George W. Ragan in 1890. The bank was located in the 100 block of West Main, but has since been demolished. John Craig, who also owned a carriage factory and livery stable with Thomas Wilson, built the magnificent **Craig & Wilson Carriage Works (#30)** in 1899 at the northwest corner of West Main and Marietta. Designed in the High Victorian Gothic style, this massive three-story building was for many years the tallest and grandest building in Gastonia. Although the building survives, it has been severely altered and no longer contributes to the significance of the historic district. (Ragan, pp. 126-136.)

Burke H. Parker, another wealthy textile investor, built a cotton warehouse in the 300 block of West Main Avenue c. 1912 and then opened the city's first Ford automobile dealership in the building in 1930. Several downtown commercial buildings were constructed by wealthy mill owners simply as speculative investments rather than for use as their own businesses. These include the **Groves Building (#62)** at 141-143 West Main Avenue from c. 1904, the **Rankin Office Building (#40)** at 234-238 West Main Avenue from c. 1912, and the **Ragan Building (#3)** at 110-128 East Main Avenue, also from c. 1912. Ragan also owned the first filling station on Main Avenue, located at the southeast corner of York Street, now the site of a car wash chain. Wiley T. Rankin, owner of the Rankin Building and part owner of numerous mills, ran a real estate firm with Charles B. Armstrong, another wealthy mill owner. Their firm built the Realty Building, Gastonia's first steel-frame office building, at 219 West Main Avenue in 1909. The

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Realty Building, which was demolished in the 1950s, was five stories tall and held the City Hospital from 1911 until 1929, when the hospital moved to a new facility on North Highland Street.

Several other downtown businesses also opened on Main Avenue during this period. The 100 block contained the Robinson Brothers Shoe Company, Leibowitz's Department Store, and Long Brothers' Stoves and Hardware, as well as the **Groves Building (#62)**. **Woolworth's (#63)** moved into Leibowitz's in 1927 and then expanded into the adjacent Long Brothers building in 1940. Two early movie theaters, the **Ideal (#64)** and the **Gastonia (#31)** opened in this block c. 1912, and the **Lyric Theater (#60)** opened in 1927. The north side of the block contained several fine department stores, all of which have been demolished, including Belk's from 1901, Efrid's from 1910, and Schneider's from 1911. The **Albion Grocery (#44)** opened at the corner of West Main Avenue and North York Street c. 1912, and an A&P market occupied part of the Ragan Building on East Main Avenue around the same time. **Citizens National Bank (#39)**, Gastonia's second chartered bank, opened in 1905 at 212 West Main Avenue across from the Love Building. Gastonia's first **Coca-Cola Bottling Plant (#49)** opened in 1907 at 342 West Main Street. The bottling plant moved out in the late 1910s, at which time the building became an auto repair shop, and eventually part of the Parker-Burke Ford Dealership. A 1930s Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, ornamented with Art Deco flourishes and with the company name set in terra cotta, stands at the west end of Main Avenue about eight blocks west of the downtown historic district.

By 1909, it was clear that Gastonia was by far the most prosperous and most populous town in the county, with its eleven mills, two railroads, a large and fashionable commercial district, and more than 5,000 residents. Gastonia far outdistanced nearby Dallas, which had only three textile mills and about 500 residents, and Gastonia's more influential residents began to propose moving the county seat to Gastonia in the late 1890s. Special county referenda held in 1897 and 1902, however, defeated early proposals. The state legislature called another referendum in 1909. Gastonia's business leaders and merchants had pledged the sum of \$43,000 for a new courthouse and jail, if the county seat were to be moved. Dallas supporters managed to raise pledges of only \$21,000 to improve the existing 1875 Greek Revival courthouse if the county seat were to remain in their town. On August 5, 1909, 5,281 county residents voted on the referendum, the largest number of voters ever to turn out in the history of the county. Gastonia finally was approved as the new county seat by a small but decisive majority of 629 votes. (Cope and Wellman, 150)

The Gaston County Courthouse was the first public building in Gastonia built on a grand scale with formal architectural design. The architectural firm of Milburn & Heister of Washington,

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D. C., which had designed more than 250 buildings throughout the South in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, was retained in 1909 to design the new Gaston County Courthouse. The firm designed a large, stately courthouse in the Classical Revival style, that befit Gastonia's position as the modern and prosperous seat of Gaston County and which stands in stark contrast to the much smaller Greek Revival courthouse that was left behind in Dallas. Main design features of the new courthouse were its identical three-story pedimented porticos on each of its four sides, with each portico supported by tall brick columns with Ionic capitals, and a full entablature with dentil molding and modillion blocks crowns set beneath the hipped tile roof. The courthouse was built on a slight rise on the west side of South Street one-half block south of Main, across from the small 1899 town hall, which officially became the Gastonia City Hall in 1910 when the municipal charter was changed to provide Gastonia with a city form of government. Sponsors of the new courthouse reputedly chose the South Street site to avoid the higher property values along Main Avenue. Construction on the new courthouse was completed in 1910 and the transfer of the courts, jail, offices, and records from Dallas to the City of Gastonia began on January 1, 1911. (Bregle, p. 163; Cope and Wellman, p. 152.)

Shortly after the courthouse opened in 1911, the Piedmont & Northern Electric Railroad (P&N) began service between Charlotte and Gastonia, further enhancing the status of the new county seat. This interurban line provided Gastonia's businessmen, industrialists, and consumers with easier access to the markets, financial institutions, and retail centers in Charlotte. It also allowed professional and blue-collar workers alike an opportunity to live in the more sedate environs of Gastonia while commuting to the more diverse job markets in Charlotte, a trend that has continued into the twenty-first century, more than fifty years after the P&N ceased operation. The P&N tracks ran down the center of Franklin Street and, in 1914, a Mission-style railroad station was built on East Main Avenue just east of Broad Street. By the 1920s, commercial buildings were being constructed along the tracks, interspersed among the stately mansions on Franklin Street. A few of these, such as the buildings at **166, 175, and 176 West Franklin Boulevard (#82, #83, and #84 respectively)**, just to the east of the intersection with South Street, have retained a connection to the downtown historic district and are included as contributing buildings. The 1922 Sanborn map shows that several of the large houses along Franklin Boulevard had by that time been converted into commercial use as well.

Further improvements to downtown came in 1914 with construction of the new **Central School (#95)** on East Second Avenue. After the town assumed operation of Oakland High School from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1901, it had no plans to build a new school, but rather expected to continue to use the existing five-year old building for many years to come. At the time, Central School, as the building was called after it became a public school, was not considered to be a part of downtown Gastonia, as it was located in a residential neighborhood

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two blocks south of Main Avenue. The school provided classes in grades one through ten for all white students in the town. Another building in the Pleasant Ridge neighborhood, northwest of downtown, was purchased at the same time to provide elementary education to African American students. The Pleasant Ridge AME Zion Church sponsored the first preparatory high school for African-American youths beginning in 1895. Central School added the eleventh grade in 1911 and the twelfth grade in 1912, in which year five girls and two boys graduated from high school. After only one more year of use as a public school, the Central School building burned in the late spring of 1913, after classes had been dismissed for the year. Only the brick walls were left standing and all records, books, furniture, and equipment were lost in the blaze. The loss was estimated at \$40,000, with only \$17,000 of insurance coverage. (Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission; Cope and Wellman, p. 144.)

Classes dispersed to various homes and storefronts during the 1913-1914 school year. A new school was planned for the Second Avenue site and a bond issue was passed to provide \$50,000 for its construction. Luther D. Proffit was retained by the city to design plans for the new school. The *Gastonia Gazette* noted in an article published on June 9, 1914, that Proffit was a "prominent and promising young architect of Spartanburg, South Carolina." In that same article the *Gazette* reported that many influential citizens and parents had attended a recent town meeting and had spoken passionately in favor of bigger and better schools in Gastonia. An education expert from the University of North Carolina proclaimed that Proffit's plans were the "best he knew of in the state" and added that Gastonia was the first local school system to call upon the university for help in planning its school system. (Gaston County Historic Preservation Commission)

Proffit designed a stately new school building in the Classical Revival style. The building stretches prominently across a substantial rise overlooking Second Avenue. It is situated on a 3.65 acre site that was planted with flowering trees and an expansive lawn that provided the students with ample space for sports and other outdoor activities. The two and one-half story brick building is dominated by a central portico whose four massive Doric columns support a full entablature, with a large fanlight mounted over the main entrance. The building's long center section, with its banks of multi-paned transomed windows, is flanked by a pair of projecting side wings. A large auditorium was attached to the rear of the building as part of the original design. The building opened for the beginning of the 1914-1915 school year. It is the first public school constructed by the town for use in the local school system. Like its predecessor, the new Central School provided classes in grades one through twelve for all white students in the city. The school was fully integrated in the 1960s. In 1924, the upper grades moved to the new Gastonia High School (NRHP 1983) on Seventh Avenue, at which time the older school became known as Central Elementary. (Brengele, 157.)

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Across the street from Central School, at the northwest corner of West Second Avenue and South Marietta Street, stands a large L-shaped apartment building originally known as the **Armstrong Hotel Apartments (#96)**. This building was constructed primarily as an investment property by Charles B. Armstrong, one of the city's wealthiest businessman and real estate developers, and who also owned the Clara-Dunn-Armstrong mill complex. Armstrong, who happened to be president of the local school board at the time, allowed for part of the building to provide convenient and inexpensive housing for unmarried female teachers working at Central School. The Armstrong Hotel Apartments, now known as the Marietta Street Apartments, is a superb example of the Craftsman style and is telling evidence of the care and quality that was being placed into all real estate development throughout the downtown area in the years around World War I. Armstrong and his family would go on to develop additional housing outside of the historic district at Armstrong Circle and Armstrong Park Drive in the 1920s and was a partner in the fashionable Armington Hotel.

When Central School opened in 1914, World War I had just begun in Europe, which created an even greater boom for Gaston County's textile industry than had been experienced at the turn of the century. With the loss of so much labor to the military, Europe's textile factories could not produce enough fabric to meet the demands of war, and the Allies looked to the United States to fill that need. Mills in the county began to operate on a twenty-four hour schedule, and some products reputedly were sold on contract before the cotton was planted or the mills were built. Twenty-seven new mills were established in Gastonia during and immediately following World War I: eight new mills were established in 1916, four more in 1917, three in 1918, seven in 1919, three in 1920, one in 1921, and one in 1922. While some of the capital for expansion came from Charlotte and other regional cities, and even from the giant textile companies in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, many of the new textile mills remained in local hands. By 1919, Gaston County had more cotton mills than any other county in the nation, and more active spindles than all except three counties in New England: Essex and Bristol Counties in Massachusetts and Providence County in Rhode Island. A study completed by the University of North Carolina in 1919 listed ninety mills in Gaston County owned by seventy-seven corporations. Gaston County's mills operated 1,012,690 spindles, employed 21,000 people (including resident dependents), and had \$27.5 million in capital stock. These years brought unprecedented prosperity to the city, which lasted throughout most of the 1920s. (Cope and Wellman, p. 161; Glass, 57-59.)

The most tangible evidence of this new prosperity can be seen in the extravagant new construction, both public and private, that took place in the Downtown Gastonia Historic District and elsewhere in the city in the late 1910s through 1930. The Federal government, recognizing

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Gastonia's growing status as a major city, built a fine new post office at the northwest corner of West Main and South Street in 1915. Two stories tall and approximately 100 feet long, the Gastonia Post Office was built in the Classical Revival style with massive brick pillars, giving it an air of strength and authority associated with the Federal government. The 1915 Post Office stood for only two decades, and was demolished in 1935 upon the opening of the WPA-constructed **U. S. Post Office (#80)** less than two blocks away on West Main Avenue at York Street.

Two years later, in 1917, the owners of the First National Bank—John Craig and Laban Jenkins—chose to locate their firm's new building, a seven-story tall steel frame skyscraper, on a vacant lot immediately to the east of the new post office. Having outgrown their original bank building that was located a few doors to the east, and rich with the profits from financing several of the city's new textile mills, the bank's owners proclaimed their prosperity by erecting the tallest building ever to have been built in Gaston County. The *Gastonia Gazette* declared, upon announcing plans for the new skyscraper on March 10, 1916, that "it will stand as a credit not only to the bank and to the city, but to the state as well." The bank retained the prominent Columbia, South Carolina, architectural firm of Wilson & Sompayrac, who designed a tan brick Classical Revival tower with Chicago-style windows that was richly ornamented with stone arched entrances, window surrounds, carved faces, cornice, and balustrade on the south, west, and north facades. The east facade was left mostly blank, with the apparent expectation that another skyscraper someday would be built on the adjacent lot. (*Gastonia Gazette*, March 10, 1916; Hanchett and Schuchman, NRHP nomination)

A new bank—the Third National Bank—formed in the city in 1923. The **Third National Bank (#69)** was the first bank in the city whose owners and executives were not directly involved with the textile industry. In an apparent attempt to upstage the old-guard owners of their competitors at the First National Bank, the Third National Bank immediately announced plans to build an eight-story skyscraper across the street from the post office at the southeast corner of West Main and South Street. The bank retained the services of Milburn & Heister of Washington, D.C., who already were well known in Gastonia because of their design for the Gaston County Courthouse in 1910. The resulting Classical Revival style skyscraper was an exuberant red brick tower with a two-story stone base and a top story completely faced with tan terra cotta rosette panels and a wide overhanging terra cotta cornice.

The **Citizens National Bank (#39)**, the second oldest bank in the city, underwent a major renovation in 1924, possibly in response to the new skyscrapers built one block to the east by its competitors. The bank retained local architect Hugh White, who most recently had designed the handsome Standard Hardware Company building on South Street and the Gastonia High School,

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both in 1922. White's Classical Revival facade for the old Citizens National Bank Building included limestone cladding, a two-story arched entrance, and a stone eagle set within the arch above the front door. Other handsomely designed commercial buildings in the Main Avenue/South Street commercial district constructed before the onset of the Great Depression include the **Kirby Building (#46)**, Hugh White's **Webb Theater (#119)**, and the **S. H. Kress Variety Store (#58)**, designed in the Art Deco style by Kress Company architect Edward F. Sibbert.

Local churches and the Masons also reaped the benefits of Gastonia's prosperity and were able to erect grand new buildings as well. The **First Associated Reform Presbyterian Church (#86)** had been located at the northeast corner of York Street and Franklin Boulevard since c. 1900 and had outgrown its small Gothic Revival sanctuary. The congregation chose to remain at that location and to replace its existing building in 1918 with a much larger Classical Revival church with grand pedimented porticos facing both York Street and Franklin Boulevard. The congregation eventually outgrew this building as well, and moved in 1948 to a new church on S. Chester Street at Second Avenue within the stylish residential neighborhood that has since become known as the York-Chester district. St. Mark's Episcopal Church has occupied the building since 1948.

The **First Baptist Church (#89)**, which had occupied a small church on Long Avenue north of the railroad since 1885, relocated to Franklin Avenue in the early 1920s. The Baptist denomination had grown much stronger in Gastonia since the turn of the century, especially with the influx of mill workers from the countryside. The First Baptist Church itself had become the largest and most affluent congregation among the Baptists and attracted primarily upper middle-class families, who had previously attended the more influential Presbyterian and Lutheran churches. The prosperity of the period allowed the Baptists to assert their new found affluence and to plan a large new church at the southwest corner of Franklin Boulevard and South Street. Designed by Willard G. Rogers of Charlotte, the First Baptist Church is a magnificent eclectic example of the Mediterranean Revival style with Italian and Spanish influences. The church is distinguished by a soaring green tile gabled roof, tall bell tower, and two and one-half story arched stone entry. (Ramsey, p. 8/1)

The construction of the First Baptist Church, with the Gaston County Courthouse and the new First Associated Reform Presbyterian Church nearby, made the intersection of Franklin Boulevard and South Street one of the most prominent in the downtown area. The Masons, who had owned and occupied a three-story brick building on Airline Avenue since 1901, followed the Baptists to the Franklin Boulevard-South Street area in 1923. Following current architectural trends in the city, the Masons built a four-story steel-frame Classical Revival tower on South

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Street, half a block south of Franklin. The **Masonic Temple (#124)** on South Street is dedicated solely to the functions of the organization, unlike the old temple on Airline Avenue, which had commercial space to lease on the ground floor to produce income for the Masons.

In 1926, the city of Gastonia, having outgrown the original town hall on South Street, commissioned Hugh White to design a new **City Hall (#85)**. White had recently designed the Collegiate Gothic style Gastonia High School (NRHP 1983) for the city, which was built in 1922 on Seventh Avenue (now Garrison Boulevard), six blocks south of downtown. The city chose the northwest corner of Franklin Boulevard to build its fine new Renaissance Revival style City Hall and its firehouse annex. White would go on to build two more civic buildings within the downtown historic district—the **Gaston County War Memorial Hall (#100)** in 1928 and the **(former) Gaston County Public Library (#101)** in 1930—extending the downtown area to Second Avenue.

Despite the unprecedented growth of the textile industry in North Carolina after World War I and impressive technological advances in mill design and machinery during the 1920s, the financial condition of the industry was not promising by the late 1920s. Economists considered textiles an ailing industry even before the stock market crash of 1929. Competition was intense among the many independent mills in the Piedmont, and resulted in overproduction. Manufacturers strove to cut production costs by reducing their work forces and by assigning more machines to fewer workers. Labor strife like the 1929 Loray Mill strike in Gastonia often resulted in a restoration of original pay levels but prevented wages from rising competitively with other industries. Other problems with the industry included a concentration by southern mills on “coarse goods,” such as denims and gingham, which had a low profit margin, rather than “fine goods,” such as velvets and muslins, as were produced in northern mills. In Gaston County, one out of two mill workers was unemployed by 1930 and average salaries dropped from \$721 in 1929 to \$690 in 1930. Several mills in the county went out of business and many more began to operate part time. Gastonia’s population continued to increase during the 1930s, but only at a fraction of the frantic pace of the 1910s and 1920s—from 17,000 in 1930 to just over 20,000 in 1940. (Glass, pp. 60-63)

Several key downtown buildings were completed by 1930—the Kress Store on West Main Avenue, four buildings on South Street, including the Webb Theater, and the Public Library on West Second Avenue—but new construction came to a standstill during the worst years of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Federal assistance programs brought some relief to downtown Gastonia. The **Patterson Apartments (#94)** at East Second Avenue was completed in 1935 with one of the first Federal Housing Administration loan guarantees in the city, according to a notice in the *Gastonia Gazette* on January 15, 1935. More significantly, the Works Progress

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Administration (WPA) built a new **U. S. Post Office (#80)** on West Main Avenue at York Street, despite the fact that the existing post office was only twenty years old at the time. The new post office replaced the grand mansion of Charles Armstrong and began the commercial development of York Street between Main and Second, which had formerly been the location of many fine residences. Besides giving jobs to local construction workers and other laborers, the WPA also hired Windsor, North Carolina, artist Francis Speight (1896-1989) to paint a mural in the lobby of the post office. The fine Classical Revival post office with its Art Deco motifs, which was designed by Charles and Walter Hook of Charlotte, was the last monumental building to be constructed in the downtown historic district. The WPA also built a new regional headquarters for the Boy Scouts in 1939 at the southeast corner of West Third Avenue and South Street, which is located one block south of the downtown historic district within the York-Chester neighborhood.

Downtown commercial development resumed in the late 1930s, but at a much smaller scale and slower pace than before the Great Depression. The **Little Canary Cottage Restaurant (#56)**, a small building with a distinctive crenellated parapet, was constructed in 1936 at the long-vacant lot at the southwest corner of West Main and Marietta Street next to the Kress Store. The **York Medical Building (#103)** was constructed in 1938 on York Street south of Main Avenue after the construction of the new post office began to encourage commercial development along York Street. A one-story commercial building with six storefronts, each surmounted by a cast stone facade in the Moderne style, was built in 1940 at the northeast corner of West Main Avenue and South Street to replace the recently demolished U. S. Post Office. Local residents continue to refer to this building as the **Diana Shops (#37)** in reference to a popular dress shop that occupied one of the building's commercial spaces for many years. **Woolworth's (#63)**, which had occupied the old Leibowitz Department Store at 147 West Main Avenue since 1927, enlarged its operations in 1940 by expanding into the former Long Brothers Hardware and Stoves building, which stood immediately to the west of the Leibowitz store. Finally, just before construction activity halted at the onset of World War II, the **Dixie Home Stores Grocery (#8)**, which would become Winn-Dixie, opened as Gastonia's first supermarket at 160 East Main Avenue in 1942. Unlike most retail stores in downtown Gastonia, the Dixie Home Stores Grocery was a free-standing structure and was surrounded by a paved area for off-street parking.

Gastonia's textile industry boomed during World War II and helped to lift the city out of the Great Depression. Unlike World War I, however, World War II did not bring about a surge of new mill construction, but instead brought full employment, around-the-clock production, increased wages, modernized equipment, and huge profits. Downtown remained static during the war, however, with no new construction until 1945. After the war, a few new retail businesses built stores along Main Avenue, especially in the 100 and 200 blocks of East Main Avenue. This

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area, especially east of Oakland Street, had served primarily as a wholesale district before World War II, and had contained warehouses for cotton, feed and seed, groceries, and coal. New businesses included **Western Auto Supplies (#6)**, **Recreation Inc. Bowling Alley (#12)**, and **Miles Cafeteria (#18)**, as well as three new hardware stores and a new laundromat. Like the Dixie Home Stores Grocery, many of these new commercial buildings east of Oakland Street provided off-street parking for their patrons, a service that had become increasingly more important after the war.

Nearly all other construction within the historic district during the immediate post-war years was concentrated on Franklin Boulevard and Second Avenue, away from the Main Avenue commercial area. A few public utilities and institutions constructed new facilities within downtown Gastonia after the war, although none of these was on the monumental scale seen before the 1930s. The **Public Service Company of North Carolina (#83)**, which provided natural gas to the area's homes and businesses, built new offices on Franklin Boulevard in 1945. The **Eagles Club (#81)**, which had established its aerie #2624 in Gastonia in 1949, had occupied one of the few remaining grand mansions on West Franklin Boulevard near Marietta Street. In 1951, the club moved into a starkly modern styled building at 160 West Franklin, next to its former clubhouse. The **Gastonia Telephone Exchange (#125)** moved out of its small facility on Marietta Street, just south of West Main, and relocated to a new three-story building on South Street at the northeast corner of West Second in 1948. The city also built **Gastonia Fire Station No. 1 (#102)** on West Second Avenue at the southeast corner of South Street, across the street from the telephone exchange. Built in 1954, the fire station continued the trend, begun in the late 1920s with construction of the County War Memorial Hall and the public library, of using the south side of West Second Avenue as a site for small-scale civic buildings. The fire station is a fine local example of the International Style and is the last major public building to be constructed in the downtown area south of the Southern Railroad tracks.

Other construction within the historic district in the post-war years includes the **Darnell Apartments (#112)**, which had been constructed in 1946 on the lot across the street from the telephone exchange at the northwest corner of South Street and West Second. Along with the Patterson Apartments at the northwest corner of Oakland Street and the Armstrong Hotel Apartments at the northwest corner of Marietta Street, the Darnell Apartments was the third and final apartment building to have been constructed on Second Avenue during the period of significance. Two automobile service buildings on East Second Avenue—**Lewis Motors (#92)**, an automobile sales and service business built c. 1947, and the **Duane and Gibson Esso Service Station (#90)** from 1951—were the first and only commercial buildings constructed on Second Avenue during the period of significance. These sleek Moderne-style buildings with their curvilinear design elements and stainless or enameled steel accents are somewhat out of

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character with their non-commercial surroundings—the Classical Revival Central School and Patterson Apartments, the Arts and Crafts style Armstrong Hotel Apartments, and the Craftsman style W. M. Severance House—but they represent excellent local examples of their style and property type.

Despite the resumption of new construction at the edges of the historic district in the immediate post-war years, suburbanization and highway development gradually began to draw businesses and institutions away from downtown Gastonia, as those trends did in almost every other central business district in the nation throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. The city's population had grown slowly but steadily during the 1940s, reaching 23,000 by 1950. In the 1950s, however, the city began a period of aggressive annexation, which increased the area within the corporation limits from twelve square miles at the end of World War II to 43.5 square miles today. By 1960, population had increased by more than 60% to 37,000, and by 1970 another 27% to 47,000. The city's 2000 population stood at over 66,000. As population shifted away from the center of the city, many downtown businesses and institutions followed to the new suburban neighborhoods and the shopping centers at the outer highways.

Churches were among the first institutions to relocate outside of the downtown area. Two major downtown churches which dated from the turn of the twentieth century—Holy Trinity Lutheran on South York Street at West Main Avenue and First Presbyterian on South Marietta Street between East Main and East Franklin Boulevard—were demolished in the late 1940s when their growing congregations chose to build new churches away from the downtown area. The sites for both of these churches have been used as parking lots since their demolition. A third church from that period—Main Street Methodist at East Main Avenue and South Oakland Street—also was demolished, but its congregation chose to remain downtown and to build a large new church in 1954 on its existing property. The First United Methodist Church, located on East Franklin Boulevard at South Oakland Street, is a handsome Colonial Revival building with a tall steeple that serves as a highly visible landmark on the eastern approach to downtown. A wide parking lot and a large community building constructed by the church in the 1990s front onto East Main Avenue, however, and serve to disconnect the Methodist church from the Downtown Gastonia Historic District.

In 1949, the P&N Electric Railroad curtailed service between Gastonia and Charlotte as growing dependence on the automobile as a means of long distance transportation made the interurban rail service unprofitable. Tracks were removed from Franklin Boulevard and the street was widened to create U. S. Highway 29/74, now the main east-west highway through Gastonia. The few remaining grand mansions that had lined the street from the early days of the century subsequently were demolished, and none survives today. With the exception of the First United

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Methodist Church, parking lots and strip development predominate on Franklin Boulevard outside of the one and one-half blocks of the street that are within the boundaries of the historic district. A few commercial buildings dating from the early twentieth century remain on Franklin Boulevard in the proximity of the downtown historic district, but these have lost their connection to the historic district as a result of surrounding post-war demolition and new construction. Most notable of these early twentieth century buildings is the Hugh White-designed Moore & Stewart Store and Warehouse at 121-127 East Franklin Boulevard near the southeast corner of South Marietta Street.

Main Avenue continued to serve as the city's principal retail, financial, and entertainment center throughout the 1950s. The **Matthews-Belk Department Store (#32)**, for instance, constructed a large new department store in the 100 block of West Main in 1953-1955. The 1950s, however, also saw the loss of three major buildings in the downtown area. The three-story Eagles Building at 181-189 West Main Avenue, which had been occupied by the Eagles Store since the first decade of the twentieth century, burned and collapsed in 1954 and was replaced by a non-descript two story building on the same site in 1956. The five-story Realty Building was demolished c. 1958 and was replaced with a new bank building. Finally, the elegant Armington Hotel on Airline Avenue, which faced the Southern Railroad tracks and had accommodated railroad travelers since 1909, was demolished in 1959 as a result of the steady decrease in passenger railroad service since the end of World War II. Also during the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, property owners of numerous commercial buildings along Main Avenue and South Street covered their early twentieth century brick facades with false metal or stucco facades to provide those buildings with a more contemporary appearance. Most obvious among these is the three-story **Craig & Wilson Carriage Works (#30)** at 100 West Main Avenue, whose lavish High Victorian Gothic facade, including window openings, was covered with stucco in the mid-1950s by the Raylass Department Store. Ten other commercial buildings in the historic district also remain covered with false facades. Although each of these eleven buildings is counted as a non-contributing property within the historic district, all appear to have the potential to be restored to contributing status if the false facades are removed and substantially intact brick elevations are uncovered. One building that had been covered with a false metal facade since the 1960s—the **Albion Grocery (#44)** at 284-298 West Main Avenue—is counted as a contributing building after the metal facade was removed in the late 1990s and the original brick elevation was uncovered and rehabilitated.

The completion of Interstate-85 across the northern limits of Gastonia in 1963 encouraged further commercial development outside of the historic central business district. Large shopping centers, mega-malls, and super stores were built along the approaches to the interstate highway throughout the remaining decades of the twentieth century, greatly boosting the local economy

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by establishing Gastonia as a major regional retail center. By the 1980s, every downtown department store, supermarket, and cinema had relocated outside of the downtown historic district. While several banks remain in the downtown area, most are located in large buildings of recent construction, all with copious amounts off-street parking, along Franklin Boulevard outside of the historic district. One bank remains on Main Avenue, but occupies a building dating from the late 1950s. Several civic institutions also moved out of the historic district in the last quarter of the twentieth century, as the demands of the ever-expanding population required larger and more modern facilities. These include the Gaston County Public Library, Central School, and the Gaston County Courthouse. The county built an enormous new courthouse and office complex on Long Avenue two blocks north of the historic district in the early 1990s, at which time the historic courthouse on South Street was abandoned. Fire severely damaged the vacant historic courthouse in 1996, but the city is presently rehabilitating the building for use as an office annex behind City Hall.

Concurrently with the development of the courthouse complex north of the downtown historic district, the Southern Railroad realigned the railroad corridor that had passed through Gastonia since the city's founding in the 1870s. The railroad had curtailed passenger service in the 1960s and had demolished its large Mission-style railroad station in the 1970s. To facilitate traffic flow and to provide for better automobile and pedestrian safety, the tracks were sunk below grade in a deep concrete-lined ravine just to the north of the original track bed. Concrete overpasses now carry traffic across the sunken tracks at Chester, York, Marietta, and Broad Streets, while South and Oakland Streets have been truncated at Main Avenue south of the tracks. The realignment project obliterated Airline Avenue north of the tracks, which had been a part of Gastonia's central business district since the nineteenth century. The few commercial buildings with a connection to the downtown historic district that remained north of the tracks were demolished, limiting the Downtown Gastonia Historic District to its present area south of the tracks. Today, the deep concrete ravine of the Southern Railroad tracks is situated about 225 feet to the north of the Main Avenue commercial buildings, and retains no historic connection to downtown Gastonia.

In the first years of the twenty-first century, historic commercial buildings in downtown Gastonia are occupied primarily by small, independent retail businesses or professional offices, such as attorneys and insurance agencies. The city of Gastonia also occupies several contributing historic buildings in the district. Besides City Hall, these include the (former) Gaston County Public Library, which is used as a police station, and the Webb Theater on South Street and the Williams and Weinberg Real Estate Building on Franklin Boulevard, both of which are used as office annexes for City Hall. The city fire department continues to use the 1954 Fire Station No. 1 on West Second Avenue. The Citizens National Bank on Main Avenue is occupied by Gaston

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County offices. Unfortunately, numerous key contributing buildings in the district also have been mostly or completely vacant for at least a decade. Besides the county courthouse, these include the city's two skyscrapers—the First National Bank Building and the Third National Bank Building—as well as the Woolworth's Store, the Ideal Theater, the Groves Building, the Kress Store, and the Standard Hardware Building, all of which are in the heart of the district in the 100 block of West Main Avenue or the 100 block of South Street. The Armstrong Hotel Apartments on West Second Avenue also has been vacant since the early 1990s.

There have been several important preservation efforts in recent years, however, that bring great hope to the future of the downtown historic district. In 1998, the Daniel J. Stowe Foundation saved the magnificent First Baptist Church across from City Hall from demolition and sold the building to the St. Stephens AME Zion Church for use both as a church and as a community arts center. The Robinson-Gardner Building (NRHP 1999), one of the few surviving nineteenth century commercial buildings on Main Avenue, was meticulously rehabilitated using the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit in 1999. Central School, which was vacated by the public school district in the late 1990s, was reopened as Piedmont Community Charter School in 2001. Also in 2001, the city stabilized the burned out county courthouse and has developed plans for the building's rehabilitation into city offices. And most recently, the Gastonia Downtown Development Corporation is working with property owners and local businessmen to revitalize the 100 block of West Main Avenue by bringing commercial and residential development back to the heart of the downtown commercial district.

Architectural Context

The new industrial wealth brought to Gastonia by the growth of the cotton textile industry from the 1890s through the 1920s enabled the city to transform itself from a quiet railroad village into a major urban center. Architecture within the Downtown Gastonia Historic District is indicative of the city's prosperity and prestige during this period. A cohesive central business district developed on Main Avenue along the Southern Railroad tracks from c. 1893 until c. 1912, with handsome, yet simply ornamented brick commercial buildings completely replacing the haphazard collection of wood-framed buildings that had sprung up during the city's early settlement years in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1910, with the construction of the Classical Revival Gaston County Courthouse on South Street, Gastonia entered a period of architectural maturity that continued through the great industrial prosperity of World War I, and even as late as 1935 with construction of the WPA's Art Deco-influenced U.S. Post Office on Main Avenue. During this quarter century, architects and skilled builders, attuned to the latest national trends, designed high-style civic, commercial, and church buildings within the Downtown Gastonia Historic

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District that further enhanced the city's sense of sophistication and success. Hugh White, the city's only resident architect at the time, designed several of his finest buildings in the district during the 1920s and early 1930s. Construction resumed in downtown Gastonia in the post-World War II years of the late 1940s and early 1950s, although at a much slower and more modest pace. Nonetheless, several important architectural trends of the post-war period are evident in the district, including the Modern design of the Eagles Club on West Franklin Boulevard, the International Style of the Gastonia Fire Station No. 1 on West Second Avenue, and the Art Moderne automobile service buildings in the 100 block of East Second Avenue.

The earliest commercial buildings on Main Avenue that contribute to the significance of the historic district date from the 1890s into the early-1910s, when the central business district extended along both sides of Main from Oakland Street on the east to York Street on the west, and then continued along the north side of Main from York to Chester. The growing prosperity of the textile industry saw many new businesses moving into downtown Gastonia and also saw local mill owners reinvesting their profits into fine office buildings within the commercial district. All contributing buildings from this period along Main Avenue are one- or two-stories tall with brick facades. They are conservatively ornamented with arch-headed windows, brick corbelling, rich cornices, or high parapets, but do not yet exhibit the lavish architectural details that would characterize downtown Gastonia in the mid-to-late-1910s through the mid-1930s.

Only four contributing buildings survive from the 1890s. The **Robinson-Gardner Building (#66)**, originally the Robinson Brothers Shoe Company, at 173-175 West Main, is the finest of these, and arguably the finest commercial building in the district constructed before World War I that contributes to the district. Built in 1899 with Renaissance Revival and Classical features, the building has paired center windows set within a tall brick arch at the second floor, with a terra cotta cartouche at the keystone and metal swags and garlands around the arch. Rusticated brick pilasters at the ground floor frame the storefront. Two additional brick pilasters topped with terra cotta capitals at the second floor frame the center arch and support a raised projecting cornice with paired scroll brackets above the parapet. The Robinson-Gardner building was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, at which time it was rehabilitated by its owners.

Other 1890s buildings include the **Frost Torrence Building (#70)** at 201-209 West Main Avenue and the adjacent **Love Building (#71)** at 211-231 West Main Avenue, which extend west on Main from the major downtown intersection of South Street. Footprints for both buildings appear on the 1893 Sanborn map. The Frost Torrence Building is much altered but retains its arched brick hoodmolds above the second story windows and a simple bracketed cornice. The Love Building was constructed in two segments: the first six bays at the east were

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in place by 1893 and the five bays at the west by 1908. In its final 1908 incarnation, the Love Building is notable for its eleven segmental arched window openings, and a tall molded cornice supported by modillion blocks. The cornice is segmented and the center section is set on a raised parapet, under which the name of the building is boldly emblazoned on a long wooden plaque. The final 1890s building, located at **111-113 East Main (#20)**, is one story tall with two small storefronts. It is built with yellow wire-cut brick and is ornamented with a molded metal cornice and a stepped parapet with diamond-shaped tile inserts. The building also retains one of its original storefronts, which consists of two multi-paned leaded glass transoms with operating center vents and an original brick skirt panel beneath the display window. One other prominent building on Main Avenue that was constructed in 1899—the **Craig & Wilson Carriage Company (#30)** at 100 West Main at Marietta Street—has lost its historic integrity and no longer contributes to the historic district. Originally designed in the elaborate High Victorian Gothic style with a tall center tower, this massive three-story commercial block was substantially altered in the 1940s and 1950s. Its tower was demolished and its two primary elevations along Main Avenue and Marietta Street were stuccoed, giving the building its present appearance and creating a major intrusion into the heart of the downtown commercial area.

Numerous fine commercial buildings were added to the streetscape during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, and many of these survive as contributing buildings. The 100 block of West Main became the heart of the retail and entertainment district and, with the exception of the three-story Craig & Wilson building, both sides of the street were lined with two story department stores, specialty shops, and cinemas. The north side of the block has lost almost all vestiges of its historic character from this period, but the south side, which also contains the Robinson-Gardner Building, is more intact.

The Long Brothers Hardware and Stoves Store and the Leibowitz Department Store are two adjacent buildings that were combined internally c. 1940 to form the **Woolworth's Store (#63)** at 147-155 West Main, but have retained their two distinct facades over a unified storefront. The Long Brothers Building from c. 1900, the earlier of the two facades at the west section of Woolworth's, features a raised, projecting cornice with heavy modillion blocks and supported by long fluted brackets. The Leibowitz Department Store from c. 1910 is ornamented with corbelled brick and an overhanging metal cornice. To the west of Woolworth's, the **Ideal Theater (#64)**, which dates from c. 1912 is faced with tan pressed brick with heavy limestone surrounds at the wide second and third story window bays. A stepped parapet with limestone coping tops the building, under which is a corbelled brick cornice that follows the lines of the parapet. Cast iron lions heads set into the brick facade serve as anchors for the cables that support the mid-twentieth century marquee that overhangs the sidewalk. Across the street, another early cinema, the **Gastonia Moving Picture Theater (#31)** at 110 West Main, is the only contributing pre-

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World War I building to have survived on the north side of the block. This pressed brick facade has arched and circular panels inset above its three windows and has a tall segmental parapet with heavy modillion blocks at the cornice. Farther west on Main, the **Rankin Building** at 234-238 West Main also exhibits a distinctive segmental parapet, with a wide molded metal cornice with heavy modillion blocks below. Extending east from York Street, three commercial buildings at **258-264 West Main (#42)**, **278-282 West Main (#43)**, and the **Albion Grocery (#44)** at 284-298 West Main, all of which date from c. 1908-1912, present an unbroken streetscape 27 bays wide at the second stories, with original molded wood cornices with heavy dentils or fluted modillion blocks at the parapets.

The **Ragan Building (#3)** at 110-128 East Main Avenue is the only commercial building on Main Avenue constructed before World War I for which an architect is documented. Built by local industrialist and entrepreneur George Washington Ragan, the building was designed by Louis Asbury (1877-1975) of Charlotte, who also had several residential and church commissions in Gastonia outside of the downtown historic district, the most prominent of which is the 1922 Gothic Revival-style Lutheran Chapel Church on North New Hope Road. Asbury, who studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is said to be the first Charlotte native to have completed professional training as an architect. His career spanned more than five decades and he is perhaps best known for his designs for Charlotte's First National Bank Building (1915) and the Mecklenburg County Courthouse (1928), also in Charlotte. The Ragan Building is two stories tall and sixteen bays wide and is distinguished by segmental arched window openings at the second floor and delicate dentil-like brick corbelling above the windows, with a corbelled cornice running the length of the facade at the parapet. (Huffman.)

The year 1910 was a pivotal year for Gastonia politics when the county seat finally moved to the city after a hotly contested referendum in 1909. The construction of the (former) **Gaston County Courthouse (#111)** on South Street also marked the beginning of a new era of monumental architecture in Gastonia's downtown that continued for the next twenty-five years. The three-story, tan brick Classical Revival courthouse was designed by the Washington, D.C., firm of Milburn & Heister, who designed more than 250 buildings throughout the South in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The building was constructed originally with identical three-story pedimented porticos on each of its four sides, with each portico supported by tall brick columns with Ionic capitals. A full entablature with dentil molding and modillion blocks crowns the third story beneath the hipped roof. A two-story arch-headed window opening rises above the main entrance at South Street. In 1954, all windows were replaced with new metal windows and an enormous jail addition was added onto the rear of the building, compromising the original symmetry of its design. The Gaston County Courthouse is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places.

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Central School (#95), 201 East Second Avenue at the far southeastern corner of the historic district, followed the county courthouse in 1914 as the next major civic building to be constructed in the city. Luther D. Proffit, whom the *Gastonia Gazette* described as a “prominent and promising young architect of Spartanburg, South Carolina” designed the new school in the Colonial Revival style. This two and one half story brick building has a long center section flanked by a pair of projecting side wings. The main entrance, surmounted by a fanlight, is sheltered by a central portico whose four massive Doric columns support a full entablature. Long banks of transomed windows at the first and second stories flank the central portico. Central School housed all grades until 1922, when the Gastonia High School was built on Seventh Avenue (now Garrison Boulevard) several blocks to the south of the downtown historic district. Vacant for many years, Central School reopened as a charter school in 2001.

Monumental architecture made its first appearance in the Main Avenue commercial district in 1917, at the beginning of the city’s second major textile boom during World War I. The **First National Bank of Gastonia (#35)**, which had played a major role in financing Gastonia’s industrial expansion since the 1890s, made a bold statement as to its own and the city’s success by commissioning the city’s first skyscraper at 168-170 West Main near the pivotal intersection with South Street. Seven stories tall, this Classical Revival steel-frame building was designed by Wilson and Sompayrac of Columbia, South Carolina. The building’s first story was originally faced in rusticated limestone on both the south facade facing Main Avenue and the north facade facing the railroad, with an elegant arched entry in each of the facades. The Main Avenue side has since been covered with a pebbled stucco, while the entrance at the north facade retains its original appearance. The upper stories are faced with a tan brick veneer and rise to a wide stone cornice with heavy modillion blocks and a stone balustrade at the roof. Vertical bands of Chicago-style windows are recessed within the tall brick piers at the north, west, and south elevations, emphasizing the height of the building. Arch-headed windows cap the building at the seventh floor. The most elaborate ornamentation is found at the second story at the south and north facades, where French doors are recessed behind wrought iron balustrades and beneath alternating triangular and segmental pediments. Carved stone faces are set into stone lintel courses between the French doors.

The city reached such a height of prosperity during the war years that a second steel-frame skyscraper was constructed across the street from the First National Bank Building in 1923 by its competitor, the **Third National Bank of Gastonia (#69)**. Milburn & Heister, architects of the Gaston County Courthouse in 1910, returned to Gastonia to design the Third National Bank Building. Located at the southeast corner of Main and South, the building is eight stories tall, with a two-story stone base, a five-story brick shaft, and an elaborate capital at the eighth floor

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faced entirely in tan-colored terra cotta rosette panels below a terra cotta cornice. A richly detailed two-story arched stone entrance is set into the building's base at Main Avenue. Both the First National Bank and the Third National Bank were listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Hugh E. White (1869-1939), a South Carolina architect who had relocated to Gastonia in the late 1910s, became the central figure in the city's architecture in the 1920s. In partnership with Charles J. Streeter and Carroll W. Chamberlain, White formed the firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain in Gastonia in 1921, and worked on his own after the demise of the firm in 1927. According to the National Register multiple property documentation on the architect's work (NRHP 2001), White and his partners had a "sure knowledge of prevailing patterns in American architectural practice and produced a significant group of buildings which echoed these nationally popular styles, while meeting the requirements of a regional clientele." The firm secured its reputation in the city with the stunning Collegiate Gothic design of the Gastonia High School (NRHP 1983), which was constructed in 1922-1924 on Garrison Boulevard. White also was an accomplished residential architect and designed a number of the finest houses in Gastonia in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the York-Chester neighborhood. His residential work is primarily in the Colonial Revival style, but he designed superb examples in the Renaissance Revival and Tudor Revival styles as well.

White took on six major commissions within the downtown historic district from c. 1922 until c. 1930. The first of these was the **Standard Hardware Company Building (#115)** on South Street across from the courthouse. This classically inspired commercial building with its tan pressed brick facade is dominated by wide bands of multi-paned tripartite windows set between tall brick piers at the second and third stories. White's next commission in the downtown historic district was in 1924 for a major renovation of the **Citizens National Bank (#39)**, Gastonia's second oldest bank, which had occupied a two-story brick building at 212 West Main since its founding in 1905. Possibly in response to the extravagant new skyscrapers of its competitors, the First and Third National Banks, Citizens National Bank allowed White to remove the brick facade of the original building and to replace it with a sophisticated Classical Revival facade. White re-faced the building with limestone blocks and created a two-story arched front entrance flanked by fluted stone columns and topped with a wide stone cornice above the second story. A carved stone eagle stands with spread wings above the front doors within the stone arch. A third floor also was added. Two limestone-faced three-bay additions, one built in 195 and the other in 1968, stand on either side of the original building, complementing White's design and maintaining the rhythm of the streetscape. White would go on to design one other downtown commercial building, the Art Deco **Webb Theater (#119)** on South Street c. 1930, which exhibits an expert use of pattern brick and tile at its front elevation.

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Hugh White also designed several civic buildings within the downtown historic district, the most significant of which is **City Hall (#85)** at the northwest corner of Franklin Boulevard and South Street. Following the completion of the impressive Gastonia High School, White and his firm were hired to design City Hall as their next municipal commission. Completed in 1926, this handsome yellow brick Renaissance Revival building stretches for thirteen bays along Franklin Boulevard, the principal east-west highway through the city. Its two-story, three-bay center entrance is faced with limestone and framed by four fluted Ionic stone pilasters, with a tall, narrow round-headed window set within a double stone arch and framed by a pair of small stone pilasters above the front door. Large, multi-light arched windows at the ground floor carry out the Italian influence. A wide stone cornice and tall stone balustrade encircle the flat roof. White undertook two additional civic buildings in the district in 1928-1930: the Mission Revival **Gaston County War Memorial Hall (#100)** and the Colonial Revival (former) **Gaston County Public Library (#101)**, both on Second Avenue. Memorial Hall's unusual design includes an octagonal tower that rises above a five-sided arcaded front porch.

Two other downtown commercial buildings with high-style design elements are also of note from this period. The **Kirby Building (#46)** at 320 West Main is also classically influenced like White's Standard Hardware Building and uses a wide band of multi-paned transomed tripartite windows as the focus of its front facade. The building is framed by full height pilasters with limestone quoins. Designed and constructed by local contractor H.B. Pattilo, the building uses terra cotta accents to great advantage as inset panels with the buildings name and date, as well as at the delicate cornice above the windows. The **S. H. Kress Variety Store (#58)** at 111 West Main is the last stylistically sophisticated commercial building to be constructed on Main Avenue during the period of significance. Edward Sibbert, the Kress Company architect, designed the building at his New York office in 1930 and employed Art Deco design elements that were such a hallmark of his work for the company. The wide second story features a tan brick veneer with terra cotta ornamentation and contains two sets of four recessed steel industrial sash windows. Brightly colored horizontal terra cotta panels with elaborate geometric designs top each window and tan-colored vertical terra cotta panels with simpler geometric designs are set beneath each window. A multi-colored sawtooth band spans the front facade at the roofline and the distinctive company logo—"KRESS" set on an arched line—is set in a terra cotta panel at the center of the front elevation. Although not as well conceived as Sibbert's design for the much larger Kress store in Greensboro, the Gastonia Kress adds a welcome sense of color and exuberance to the Main Avenue streetscape.

Church architecture in Gastonia had followed the conservative Gothic Revival tradition at the turn of the century. Five such churches stood in the area of the downtown historic district until

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they were demolished in the 1940s and 1950s when their congregations either moved to the suburbs, as the First Presbyterian Church and the Lutheran Church did, or when the congregation rebuilt a much larger church on the same site, as the First Methodist Church did in 1954. Only two churches survive within the downtown historic district, the Classical Revival-style (former) **First Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church (#86)** at the northeast corner of Franklin Boulevard and Main Avenue, and the Mediterranean Revival-style First Baptist Church at the southwest corner of Franklin Boulevard and South Street, directly across from City Hall. The First Associated Reformed Presbyterian Church was built in 1918 and became St. Mark's Episcopal Church in 1948, when the Presbyterians moved to the suburbs. The church is composed of two gable-roofed blocks set in a large L, with each end of the L sheltered by two-story pedimented porticos supported by four tall Doric columns. The magnificent **First Baptist Church (#89)**, which was built in 1922 and is now known as Unity Place, features a two and one-half story arched front entrance faced with limestone, with a massive stone cross and rose window set within the arch. A tall bell tower with an octagonal lantern soars above the church's steeply gabled green tile roof. Willard G. Rogers of Charlotte designed the First Baptist Church. Across from the First Baptist Church on South Street, the **Masonic Temple (#124)** also stands as an example of monumental institutional architecture. Taking its cue from the Main Avenue skyscrapers, the Masonic Temple is a four-story steel-frame structure built in 1923. The building's Classical Revival design features an arched entrance in limestone, with stone pilasters rising to a decorative stone entablature and molded cornice. William H. Peeps of Charlotte designed the Masonic Temple.

The last monumental building to be constructed in the district was the **U. S. Post Office (#80)** on West Main Avenue at York Street. Designed by the firm of Cook & Cook in Charlotte, the building was built by the Works Progress Administration in 1935. Typical of WPA construction, the post office has a basic Classical Revival design with Art Deco flourishes, such as sunburst motifs above the brick pilasters at the front facade. Marble wainscoting and Art Deco pilasters distinguish the building's main lobby, which is highlighted by a fine WPA mural by North Carolina artist Francis Speight.

Commercial and civic construction resumed in downtown Gastonia in the years immediately following World War II. Four buildings from the period provide the district with good local examples of popular styles which were in vogue in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These include two automobile service buildings on East Second Avenue—**Lewis Motors (#92)** an automobile sales and service business at #114, and the **Duane and Gibson Esso Service Station (#90)** at #110. Both buildings are in the sleek Moderne style that was popular in the automotive industry in the immediate post-World War II years and use curvilinear design elements and stainless or enameled steel for architectural accents. The **Eagles Club (#81)**, at 160 West Franklin

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Boulevard, is a rare example of Modern design in Gastonia, with its massive industrial-looking cubist shape and its windowless brick facades. The **Gastonia Fire Station No. 1 (#102)**, built in 1954, was designed in the International Style and is a two-story brick box that displays a band of steel-framed windows across its second story.

Although the Downtown Gastonia Historic District is primarily significant for its position as the commercial, civic, and institutional center of the city, and for the architecture that developed to support those functions, several multi-unit residential buildings—three apartment buildings and two multi-family houses—also stand in the district along Second Avenue. The **Armstrong Hotel Apartments (#96)** at 102 West Second Avenue at Marietta Street is a superb example of the Arts and Crafts style, which was fast becoming one of the most popular styles for residential architecture in the city. Many outstanding examples of Craftsman style bungalows are located in the York-Chester residential neighborhood just a few blocks to the southwest of the downtown historic district. Built in 1920 of yellow wire-cut brick, the Armstrong Hotel Apartments is an expansive L-shaped residential building that achieves a great sense of movement and texture with multiple cross gables at its tall slate roof, wood shingled dormers, exposed rafters, numerous front porches, and dozens of 9/9 and 6/6 sash windows. The **W. M. Severance House (#93)** at 120 East Second Avenue, built c. 1928, provides another very good example of the Craftsman style. The **R. E. Johnson House (#128)**, located around the corner at 217 South Oakland Street, is built with the more traditional triple-A massing with two side gables and a front cross gable at the center of the roof. While this style is fairly common throughout the city and the county as a whole, it is an unusual survivor in the downtown area. The other two large-scale apartment buildings on Second Avenue—the **Patterson Apartments (#94)**, built in 1934 at 128 East Second Avenue at South Oakland Street, and the **Darnell Apartments (#112)**, built c. 1946 at 271-277 South Street at West Second Avenue—are rather typical red brick gable-roofed Colonial Revival buildings.

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UTM References:

5.	17 Zone	483625 Easting	3901875 Northing
6.	17 Zone	483625 Easting	3901675 Northing
7.	17 Zone	483275 Easting	3901675 Northing
8.	17 Zone	483275 Easting	3901775 Northing
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10.	17 Zone	483200 Easting	3901950 Northing
11.	17 Zone	483100 Easting	3901950 Northing
12.	17 Zone	483100 Easting	3902000 Northing
13.	17 Zone	482975 Easting	3902000 Northing
14.	17 Zone	482975 Easting	3902075 Northing
15.	17 Zone	482925 Easting	3902075 Northing
16.	17 Zone	482925 Easting	3902150 Northing

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the Downtown Gastonia Historic District are delineated by the bold line on the accompanying City of Gastonia tax map drawn to a scale of 1"=200'.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Downtown Gastonia Historic District encompass the greatest concentration of pre-1954 contributing resources associated with the development of the city's central business district south of the Southern Railroad corridor. The northern boundary of the district is limited by the Southern Railroad corridor itself, which was altered substantially in the early 1990s. The Southern Railroad historically was the central focus of Gastonia's downtown, with tracks running at grade between Main Avenue on the south and Airline Avenue on the north, the city's principal downtown commercial streets throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the second half of the twentieth century. To facilitate traffic flow and to provide for better automobile and pedestrian safety, the tracks were sunk below grade in a deep concrete-lined ravine just to the north of the original track bed. The realignment project obliterated much of Airline Avenue, and the few commercial buildings with a connection to the downtown historic district that remained north of the tracks were demolished. Concrete overpasses now carry traffic across the sunken tracks at Chester, York, Marietta, and Broad Streets, while South and Oakland Streets have been truncated at Main Avenue south of the tracks. Subsequently, the county redeveloped the land immediately to the north of the railroad corridor and constructed a large new Post-Modern-style courthouse complex on Long Avenue.

Second Avenue marks the southern boundary of the historic district and is the southern limit of commercial, institutional, and civic construction in the downtown area during the period of significance. Large residential neighborhoods, such as the York-Chester district and a neighborhood comprised of housing associated with Clara-Dunn-Armstrong Manufacturing Company, extend south beyond Second Avenue. The jagged east and west boundaries of the district, especially at Franklin Boulevard, are indicative of substantial demolition and intensive commercial redevelopment after the period of significance.

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Photographs

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Gaston County, North Carolina

Date of photographs: December 2001.

Photographer: Jeffrey Shrimpton
Historic Preservation Consulting
14 Beachcroft Road
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 281-0683

Original negatives filed with the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

- A. Citizens National Bank, 212 West Main Avenue (foreground), and First National Bank, 168-170 West Main Avenue (background). View facing northeast.
- B. U. S. Post Office, 301 West Main Avenue. View facing southwest.
- C. 300 block West Main Avenue, north side. View facing northeast.
- D. 200 block West Main Avenue, south side (foreground), and Third National Bank, 195-197 West Main Avenue (background). View facing southeast.
- E. 100 block West Main Avenue, south side. View facing southeast.
- F. S. H. Kress Variety Store, 111 West Main Avenue. View facing south.
- G. 111-113 East Main Avenue. View facing south.
- H. 245-255 East Main Avenue. View facing southwest.
- I. City Hall, 240 West Franklin Boulevard (foreground), and (former) Gaston County Courthouse, 151 South Street (background). View facing northwest.
- J. First Baptist Church, 201 West Franklin Boulevard. View facing southwest.

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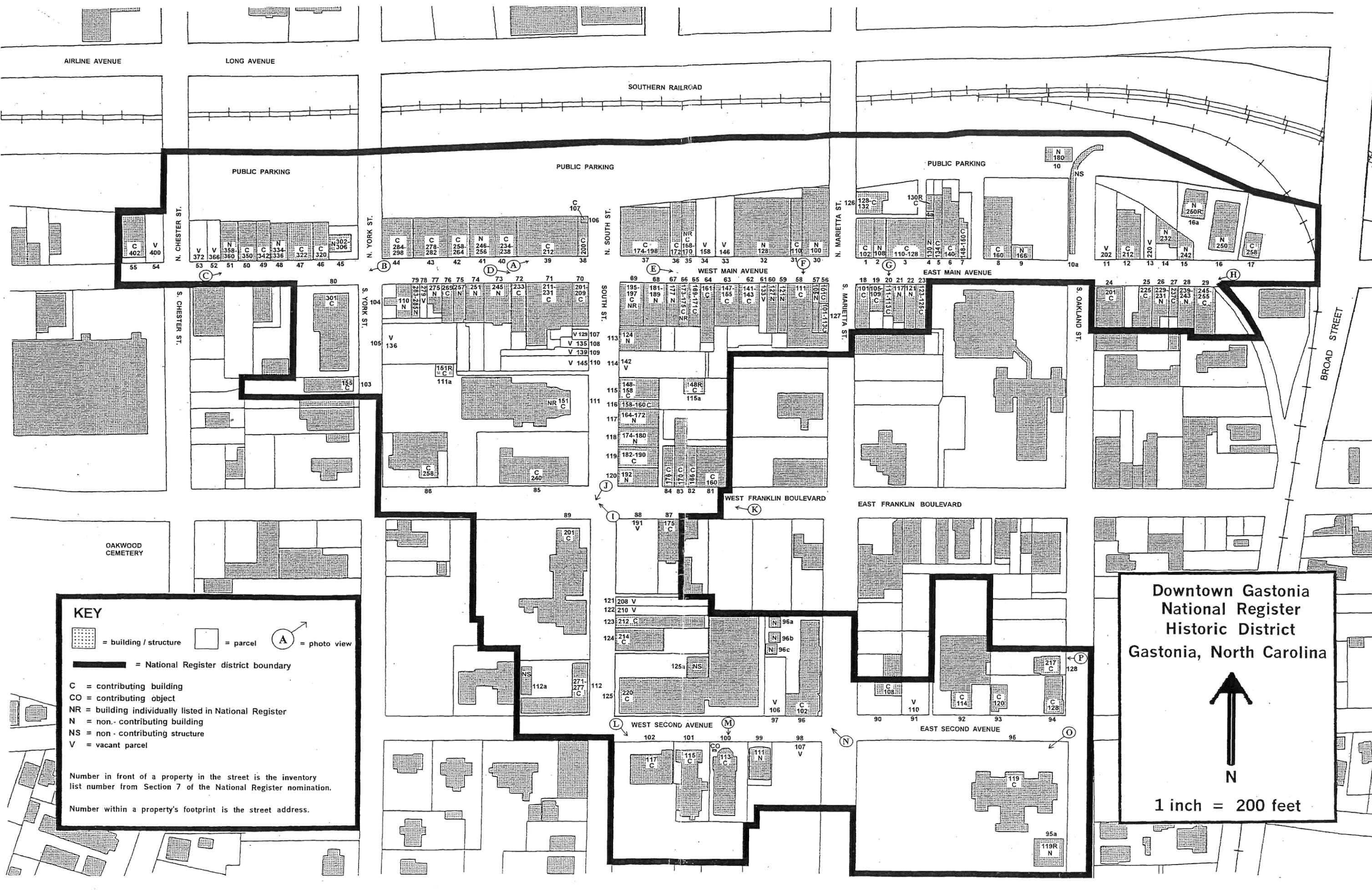
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- K. 100 block West Franklin Boulevard, north side. View facing northwest.
- L. Gastonia Fire Station No. 1, 117 West Second Avenue. View facing southeast.
- M. Gaston County War Memorial Hall, 113 West Second Avenue. View facing south.
- N. Armstrong Hotel Apartments, 102 West Second Avenue. View facing northwest.
- O. Central School, 119 West Second Avenue. View facing southwest.
- P. R. E. Johnson House, 117 South Oakland Street. View facing southwest.





KEY

= building / structure
 = parcel
 = photo view

= National Register district boundary

C = contributing building
 CO = contributing object
 NR = building individually listed in National Register
 N = non-contributing building
 NS = non-contributing structure
 V = vacant parcel

Number in front of a property in the street is the inventory list number from Section 7 of the National Register nomination.
 Number within a property's footprint is the street address.

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N

1 inch = 200 feet