

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Elgin Downtown Commercial District

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bound by Division, Villa Center, Fulton and Grove

Streets \_\_\_\_\_

City or town: Elgin State: IL County: Kane

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

	<u>IL DSHPO</u>	<u>10-29-14</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>ILLINOIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION</u>		<u>AGENCY</u>
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title :**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government**

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

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**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) ☐  
District ☒  
Site ☐  
Structure ☐  
Object ☐

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>76</u>	<u>18</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>3</u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>76</u>	<u>21</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE  
SOCIAL  
DOMESTIC  
EDUCATION  
RELIGIOUS

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE  
SOCIAL  
DOMESTIC  
EDUCATION

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals

Modern Movement

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: Wood, Stone (Granite, Sandstone, Limestone), Terra Cotta, Stucco, Ceramic Tile, Glass, Synthetics (aluminum); Roof: Metal, Asphalt Shingle; Foundation: Limestone, Sandstone, Concrete, Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

*The majority of information contained in this application was prepared by Granacki Historic Consultants, 1105 W. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622, under contract to the City of Elgin Heritage Commission. Funding was provided by a Certified Local Government Grant administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and by the City of Elgin.*

Elgin's downtown is a traditional small central city business district with pockets of commercial buildings from the mid-19th century through the 20th century. The district is bound roughly by Division Street on the north, Center Street and Villa Court on the east, Fulton Street on the south, and Riverside Drive and Grove Avenue on the west. The boundaries of the historic district are based in part on a 2007 survey of *Architectural Resources in Downtown Elgin* prepared by Granacki Historic Consultants for the City of Elgin. The properties contained within the district boundary represent an intact commercial core area of downtown Elgin that dates back to the early years of Elgin's settlement history. The downtown has mixed uses, with governmental buildings typically at the northwest end and remnants of an industrial district that once lined the Fox River and northernmost boundary of the downtown. The nomination consists of seventy-six contributing buildings, eighteen non-contributing buildings, and three non-contributing sites (small parks). One individual property in the historic district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Elgin Tower Building at 100 E. Chicago Street, listed in 2002. The commercial

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buildings in downtown Elgin are principally no more than three stories in height. The majority of buildings are either of the One-Part or Two-Part Commercial Block building type, representing a range of architectural styles from the mid nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries. Overall, the district has good integrity for listing in the National Register.

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## Narrative Description

Elgin is in northeastern Illinois about thirty-five miles west of Chicago. The city, which is located in both Cook and Kane counties, has a population of over 110,000. The historic commercial area is located in the center of the city on both sides of the Fox River. Many of the buildings in the Elgin Downtown District, on the east side of the river, are densely clustered on small blocks, while others are mixed in with parking lots and structures. Compact and pedestrian-oriented, the core of storefronts that exist today on South Grove Street and East Chicago Street show the evolution of the historic downtown over time. General characteristics of the commercial core include a street wall of structures built up to the front and to the side property lines with party walls; sidewalks with street trees; curbs and gutters; streetscape improvements including brick pavers, benches, appropriate lighting, and disabled access ramps; and on-street parallel parking. A small number of narrow service alleys run behind properties, and landscaped municipal parking lots are found throughout the area. A couple of plazas and parks within the downtown, such as the historic site of Fountain Square (near Grove and Chicago), DuPage Court, and Carleton Rogers Park (east side of N. Spring Street between Highland and Division) serve as open space for formal or informal public gatherings.

The Downtown Historic District is situated in a grid street pattern, while other streets are oriented to the Fox River and railroad tracks. Midwestern towns of the mid to late 19th century often have either a linear configuration, where commercial buildings are lined up along a street or streets that parallel a major transportation route such as road, river, or railroad (in this case, the Fox River), or a T- or perpendicular configuration, where buildings are located on a street that intersects the transportation route. On the east side the downtown area originally was platted with streets oriented to the Fox River or oriented on an orthogonal grid. On the west side streets were platted on a grid oriented to the Fox River. On both sides of the Fox, plats had very narrow, long, rectangular lots suitable for lot-line-to-lot-line commercial structures.

The boundaries of the downtown are easy to discern. When the automobile became a significant force in the decades of the mid-20th century, many historic buildings were demolished for parking lots. A visually dominant city center renewal project from the 1960s is situated in the northwest part of downtown on the east side of the river and a casino development is located to the southwest. Center Street and Villa Court on the east side of the district were intended to be developed as the "main street" corridor in the original plat of Elgin. As the community grew and Fox River bridges and railroads were built, the downtown commercial area extended west to the Fox River.

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101 E CHICAGO ST	Freestanding		c. 1960	S	
152-154 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1875	C	
156 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1895	C	
158 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1902	C	
160 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1914	C	
161 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1925	NC	
162 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1927	C	
163-165 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1928	S	
163 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1930	C	
164 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1951	C	
167 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1960	C	
168 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1999	S	
201 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1875	S	
205 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	NC	
209 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1880	S	Hoag, Smith
213 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	C	
214 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	S	
215 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	C	
216 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	C	
217 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	C	
220 E CHICAGO ST	Freestanding		c. 1885	C	
221 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	S	
225 E CHICAGO ST	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1885	C	
176 E CHICAGO	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	C	
100 E CHICAGO	Two Part Vertical Block	Art Deco	c. 1929	S	
156 DIVISION ST	Hotel		c. 1893	C	
164 DIVISION ST	Two Part Vertical Block	Gothic Revival	c. 1928	S	Wolf, Sexton, Harper & Trueax
10 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1879	C	
109 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	S	
11 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1883	S	
14 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1879	C	
17 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	NC	
18-20 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1888	S	

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19 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1875	C	
1-9 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Neo-Traditional	c. 1999	NC	
20-24 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1875	C	
23 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1885	C	
51 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1875	C	
53-63 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1889	S	
8 DOUGLAS AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Neo-Traditional	c. 1875	S	
210 DUPAGE ST	One Part Commercial Block		c. 1940	NC	
214 1/2 DUPAGE ST	Industrial - loft		c. 1910	C	
214 1/2 B DUPAGE ST	Garage		c. 1930	NC	
212 1/2 DUPAGE ST	Garage		c. 1925	C	
212 DUPAGE ST	Flats		c. 1890	NC	
43 DUPAGE CT	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1892	S	Hoag, Smith
47 DUPAGE CT	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1889	C	
101 S GROVE AVE	One Part Commercial Block	Art Deco	c. 1930	S	
11 N GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	C	
15 N GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	C	
17 N GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Italianate	c. 1880	S	
21 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Vertical Block		c.1914	S	Turnbull, Gilbert
25 N GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	S	
31 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Art Deco	c. 1935	C	
32 S GROVE AVE	Apartments	Neo-Traditional	c. 2007	NC	
54 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1900	NC	
56 S GROVE AVE	One Part Commercial Block		c. 1960	NC	
59 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	C	
60 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	NC	
62 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1900	C	
65 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	C	
70 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1893	S	
71 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1885	C	
74 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1893	S	
75S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1890	C	
76 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1928	C	
66 S GROVE AVE	Two Part Commercial Block	Queen Anne	c. 1890	S	
113 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1890	NC	

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151 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1880	S	
160 E HIGHLAND AVE	Warehouse		c. 1910	NC	
162 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1910	NC	
164 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1910	C	
168 E HIGHLAND AVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1895	NC	
77 RIVERSIDE DR	Power Station	Classical Revival	c. 1908	C	
73 RIVERSIDE DRIVE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1928	C	
69 RIVERSIDE	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1893	S	
16 N SPRING ST	Freestanding	Contemporary	c. 1985	NC	
17 S SPRING ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1908	C	
18 S SPRING ST	Two Part Vertical Block		c. 1892	C	Abell, W. W.
21 S SPRING ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1951	C	
50 N SPRING ST	Library	Romanesque Revival	c. 1870	C	
51 S SPRING ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1908	C	
5 S SPRING ST	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1888	C	
60 S SPRING	One Part Commercial Block		c. 1929	C	
10 VILLA CT	Church	Gothic Revival/Arts and Crafts	c. 1873	C	
12 VILLA CT			c. 1880	C	
18 VILLA CT	Clubhouse	Tudor Revival	c. 1927	S	Morris, George
15 ZIEGLER CT	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1930	NC	
21 ZIEGLER CT	Two Part Commercial Block		c. 1930	NC	



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## 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.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE:  
ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1873-1964

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hoag, Smith

Wolf, Sexton, Harper & Trueax

Turnball, Gilbert

Tallmadge & Watson

Abell, W. W.

Morris, George

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Elgin Downtown Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for local significance for its associations with commercial and business development between 1873 and 1964 in Elgin, an industrial satellite city of Chicago. From early shops of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the arrival of department and chain stores in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this grouping of historic structures served as the first major business center of the community. It also was the transportation and government heart of the community. The district is eligible also under Criterion C for its architecture, with significant historic commercial structures in designs representing a 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century urban business district in a smaller Illinois city. The district has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

#### EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF ELGIN'S BUSINESS DISTRICT (1835-1850)

Straddling the Fox River, Elgin's historic central business district developed on both the east and the west banks of the river. Although much of the early development in Elgin occurred on the east side, the west-side lands became attractive to settlers following the construction of the first bridge across the River in 1837-38 and a dam across the river north of the bridge the following year. Initial European settlement in Elgin was by pioneering families mainly from New England. The east side of the River was settled by James T. Gifford, the founder of Elgin, and his brother Hezekiah, who came from upstate New York in 1835. Hezekiah built a cabin and established a farm near what is now St. Charles and Yarwood Streets. James had dreams of establishing a new town on the Fox River on a direct route between Chicago and Galena. He platted 21 blocks between the Fox River, Division Street, Chapel Street, and Prairie Street, with 66-foot-wide roads, except for Center, which he set aside for business development on a 99-foot-wide street.<sup>1</sup> It was within Gifford's plat that the downtown first rose. When the Giffords pushed for a road building program from Elgin to Meacham's Grove (Bloomington) in 1835 and 1836 and then an extended road westward to Belvidere, Elgin soon would see further development. Some of the earliest buildings were constructed to serve road travelers and local needs. Two store buildings were constructed on the east side of the Fox River in 1836. One was for Storrs & Bean at the northwest corner of Chicago and Center and is considered the town's first frame structure.<sup>2</sup> The other was the Raymond and Dexter store, opened on the southwest corner of DuPage and Villa Streets. Neither building remains.

Soon after the Gifford family's arrival, New Hampshire resident Joseph Kimball claimed land on the west side of the Fox River for himself. Although Joseph died of cholera while traveling east to bring family members to Illinois, his two sons, Samuel and William Currier Kimball, settled in Elgin in the late 1830s. Both brothers purchased land west of the river in 1843 and 1844. In 1845 William established a store at the northwest corner of N. State and Kimball Street and the Waverly flour mill, which took advantage of available water power at the west-side mill race.<sup>3</sup> By the 1840s Elgin had three public houses, six stores, four blacksmith shops, and two wagon shops.<sup>4</sup> Regrettably, no buildings in the downtown area remain from this early time period.

#### THE RAILROAD AND 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN ELGIN (1850-1900)

The arrival of the railroad by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Elgin encouraged growth and development for the community as a whole. The railroad offered a second transportation alternative to the plank roads, particularly for local farm products. The first railroad line through Elgin was the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, built to connect Chicago to the lead mines at Galena. Upon completion to Elgin in 1849-50, a railroad station was constructed on the west side of Elgin on S.

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Crystal Street near the Chicago Street Bridge.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the opening of the railroad west of the river led many to believe that the west side would overtake the east and become the center of the city. In their 1908 History of Kane County, Illinois, Vol. I, R. Waite and Frank W. Joslyn quote from an unknown writer:

Elgin, like other Fox River villages in the county, is divided by the stream, and each of its sections is striving for the ascendant. . . . [The placement of the depot on the west side] will transfer much of the business of the place from the east to the west side of the stream. A natural consequence of the location of the depot is an increase in the value of village lots on the west side.<sup>6</sup>

Although this west-side boom never materialized, the establishment of the railroad depot did spur some development there. Soon after the railroad came William Kimball built the Waverly House in 1852-53 for travelers at what is now the southwest corner of N. State Street and W. Highland Avenue. It was demolished in 1917.<sup>7</sup> However, the Waverly House Stable remains at 219 W. Highland Avenue. This cobblestone building is the sole reminder in the downtown of this early era in Elgin.

Another railroad line, the Fox River Valley Railroad, was constructed on the east side of the Fox River in 1854 and led from Elgin to the pine lumber region near Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.<sup>8</sup> By 1856 an east-side depot was established adjacent to the tracks at North Street. Businesses and hotels sprang up here, including the Kimball House, built in 1856 at the northeast corner of Douglas Avenue and North Street. When the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad and Fox River Valley Railroad were merged into the Chicago and North Western Railway, the west-side tracks became known in Elgin as the "High North Western" and the east-side tracks, "the Low North Western."

Further railroad expansion in Elgin came with the opening of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, first known as the St. Paul and later as the Milwaukee Road. This line operated through Elgin via tracks along the west bank of the river and connected Midwestern farmers and passengers with Chicago. Service began to Elgin in 1873 as the Chicago and Pacific Railroad.<sup>9</sup> Currently, the Metra-Milwaukee District operates commuter service from Big Timber through Elgin to Chicago along the former Milwaukee Road tracks.

The arrival of the railroads also led to a rise in population of Elgin and further economic growth. With prosperity from the railroad came industries that used rail transport and businesses that served the local community. Along the railroad tracks were industries that made heavy use of the railroad for freight service, including Elgin's grain and dairy industries. At this time two of Elgin's most important industries arrived. In 1866 the National Watch Company built its first permanent brick factory building on a 35-acre site along the Fox River south of downtown. Also, inventor Gail Borden established his milk plant in Elgin in 1865. Both are no longer standing. Numerous jobs were created, causing an influx of factory workers to Elgin. By 1860 Elgin had a population of 2,797 and was incorporated four years later.<sup>10</sup>

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As industrial development increased, the town grew, and developers in Elgin continued to subdivide land, attracting more residents and small-scale businesses to the town. Soon a concentration of stores and businesses clustered east of the river in what became the center of Elgin's commerce, Market Square. Here, farmers brought produce, wood, and livestock to trade. Market Square, centered upon E. Chicago Street, Grove (River), and Douglas Avenues, later became known as Fountain Square when an iron fountain and horse-watering tank were installed upon this triangular parcel. According to E. C. Alft, the fountain was removed in 1903.

Around Fountain Square in the railroad era were Elgin's most important businesses and professional offices, as revealed in the 1875-76 Elgin Business Directory. Shops included boot and shoe retailers, carpet dealers, cigar and tobacco, confectioners, bakers, drug stores, dry goods, furniture dealers, groceries, hardware, jewelry, and meat markets. One could find most services, including barbers and hairdressers, blacksmiths and horseshoers, booksetters and stationers, shoemakers, and tailors. Also found in this thriving city were professional offices including accountants, dentists, insurance agents, newspapers, architects, and lawyers. Elgin's financial needs were served by four banks: Elgin City Banking Company (Savings Bank), Home National Bank, Home Bank (Savings), and First National Bank. Travelers and boarders in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century could find rest in Elgin at numerous hotels, including the Chicago House, City Hotel, Kimball House, National House, Washington House, Waverly House, and Western House. Today, the Second Empire-style Western House Hotel at 17-19 N. State Street is the only hotel building remaining from this era of downtown development in Elgin. The building, which is covered in an artificial material resembling stone, is located on the west side of the river outside of the district boundaries.

To meet the needs of thirsty travelers and Elgin residents, taverns and saloons also were found in the historic downtown. The Klinger Saloon Building, constructed in 1885 at 25-27 North Grove Avenue, brought patrons in through its corner entry. Originally the Moritz Klinger Saloon, it later became the wholesale and retail outlet of the Pabst Brewing Company until 1914, when prohibition laws were established in Elgin Township.

Within the greater downtown area, including both sides of the river, a total of 56 buildings from 1860 through 1900 represent the early decades of construction in the downtown. Most are found in the district because during the mid- to late 19th century, Elgin's central business district was focused on the east side of the river while commercial development on Elgin's west side was limited. The businesses on the west side took advantage of land in close proximity to the west-side mill race, the railroads, and near main roads such as W. Chicago Street (first known as Bridge) since it was a main crossing point across the Fox River.

Buildings constructed in the 1870s and 1880s shared a similar historic character and represented typical commercial development during the railroad era in Elgin. Mostly two- and three-story masonry commercial blocks, the buildings featured fashionable styles of the Victorian era such as Italianate and Queen Anne found in cornices, windows, and trim. Most were businesses

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operated by individuals and families, with stores on the first floor and sometimes living quarters above. Fires had been so pervasive within the heart of the commercial district in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that fire limits were established and enforced. Within those limits, as noted on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of the day, no frame buildings were to be constructed. The boundaries were roughly south of Kimball, north of Prairie, and east of Villa on the east side and south of Mountain and north of Locust on the west side. Even today, frame commercial buildings are scarcely found in the downtown.

A fine concentration of commercial buildings representing this era remains on Douglas Avenue between Chicago Street and Highland Avenue. Here one finds the Kohn-Schramm Building at 11-15 Douglas Avenue, built in 1883 and once housing a drug store, and a confectionery and ice cream parlor run by the Schramm brothers and later by Louis Blum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also in this cohesive row of buildings is 8 Douglas Avenue, built c. 1875, the Eleanor Champion Building at 10-12 Douglas from 1879, and 19-21 Douglas, built c. 1875, that housed Brenner's men's clothing store for over a century. These buildings and buildings across the street all share a similar vintage. Another concentration is found in the 100 block of E. Chicago Street.

With an influx of new residents during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious needs were filled in new houses of worship. One of these religious structures is in the district: the 1873 Gothic Revival-style Old School Presbyterian Church at 10 Villa Court. The Elgin Presbyterian Church was organized on May 14, 1855 as the Reformed Presbyterian Church. By 1867 the church became the Old School Presbyterian Church and built its first house of worship at the corner of Chicago and Villa in July 1872. Unfortunately for the congregation, five months later, the new church burned. The rebuilt church, constructed in 1873, still stands today on Villa Street. The Presbyterians remained in the building until 1886 when the building was sold to the German Catholic parish of St. Joseph, which occupied the church until 1902.<sup>11</sup> The property currently is occupied by the Knights of Columbus.

Booming population in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century ushered in an era of extensive city improvements and the emergence of public utilities. Government buildings constructed in the central business district included a City Hall near Fountain Square, built in 1869 with additions in 1873 at River and DuPage. This building no longer stands. Bridges were rebuilt at Chicago Street in 1869 and built at National Street in 1870. The city's first public utility, Elgin Gas Light Company, was constructed in 1871 along the west bank of the Fox River between Chicago and River streets. The plant continued operation (in various forms) until 1915.<sup>12</sup> Electricity arrived in Elgin in 1883, with city-wide service provided beginning in 1885 by the Elgin Incandescent Light Company.<sup>13</sup> Telephone service also was established in 1881 when the Chicago Telephone Company was allowed to erect and maintain pole lines within the city. No utilities buildings remain from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The only extant building associated with this era of governmental building is the Gail Borden Library. Formerly housed in a storefront building on Chicago Street, the library was established in 1894 at 50 N. Spring Street in the former 1870s residence of David Scofield. This

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Romanesque Revival-style building was purchased in 1892 by Alfred B. Church and Samuel M. Church, and two wings were added under the direction of Elgin architect W. W. Abell. Gail Borden Library was named in memory of their stepfather.

Transportation-related businesses, such as liverys and carriage works, also appeared in Elgin's downtown during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Liverys provided horse-drawn transport vehicles for hire, offering late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Elgin residents an alternative to walking long distances, particularly to work or to downtown. Horse-drawn street cars began in Elgin in November 1878, operated by Bruce Payne, a railway postal service clerk. The first line ran on Grove Street between the Elgin National Watch Company and Fountain Square and was extended in 1880 and 1886.<sup>14</sup> Wealthier residents who could afford their own carriages utilized carriage works businesses that stored and repaired private horse-drawn vehicles. Of the three buildings associated with livery and carriage works from this era, Branford's Livery, ca. 1890, at 214 E. Chicago Street is the only one located in the district. The other two are 212 W. Chicago Street from ca. 1895, on the west side of the river, and the Elgin Storage and Transfer Company, 1899 at 166 Symphony Way (formerly North Street), just north of the district.

While commercial and governmental uses were concentrated around Fountain Square, 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial uses in the downtown were found in pockets along the Fox River on River Street north of Chicago or adjacent to the Chicago and North Western railroad tracks north of Division Street. However, no 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial buildings remain in the downtown area.

#### THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY IN ELGIN (1900-1945)

With the arrival of the 20th century, the business district was not only expanding, but reinventing itself. New types of retailing, recreational opportunities, the arrival of the automobile, and even a tornado in 1920 all shaped Elgin's downtown development in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further improvements in transportation significantly affected downtown development. When the electric streetcar arrived via the Elgin City Railway Company in July 1890, public transportation greatly improved mobility for all Elgin residents. Horse-drawn modes of transit were often slow, and paying riders welcomed the arrival of quicker electric trolley and street car service. The first tracks transported Elginites starting from Lords Park, Elgin's first large public park, donated to the City by philanthropists George P. and Mary E. Lord in 1893. George P. Lord oversaw the establishment of multiple developments, including two lagoons, a pavilion, trails, numerous animal pits, an electrically lighted bandstand, and the Forest Ave Shelter house. For a number of years, the park was home to skating and cycling events, and today Lords Park continues to be one of the City's most important recreational sites. From Lords Park the original tracks' route continued to downtown's Fountain Square. In the following year the company expanded to operate 13 miles of track with 15 motor cars and opened a barn with four tracks on the west side of South Grove Avenue.<sup>15</sup> For the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this form of transit was one of the principal modes for traveling to and from downtown. On the east side routes to and from downtown were via Douglas Avenue, Chicago Street, and River Street (Grove). The west side was served by the Elgin City Railway Company across the Chicago Street Bridge, connecting

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with State Street and Highland Avenue. The Elgin City Railway Company was consolidated in 1901 into the electric interurban line, the Aurora, Elgin, and Fox River Electric Railway.<sup>16</sup> It was operated by the Aurora, Elgin, and Chicago Third Rail line by 1906. Interurbans brought in additional shoppers from outside the city of Elgin to the downtown, adding to its continued prosperity. With the advent of the automobile and increasing personal mobility, all streetcar service ceased operation in Elgin in 1934, and the trolley line was abandoned in 1935.<sup>17</sup> Bus service supplanted the Fox River interurban on what became known as the Aurora-Elgin City Lines, Inc. Today, Pace Bus Service operates Route 548 along West Highland Avenue. One building remains in the Downtown Survey Area that is associated with the Aurora, Elgin and Chicago. The electric substation, located at 77 Riverside Drive (outside of the district), was constructed in 1908.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the central business district continued to be focused on the east side of the river, particularly in the area between Highland, Grove, Spring, and Prairie. Downtown commerce continued to include retailers and service-oriented businesses such as dry goods stores, tailors, drug stores, furniture stores, bakeries, butchers, and hardware stores. Most of these businesses continued to be individual or family-run operations in two-story, single-storefront buildings, with living quarters, offices, or often storage on the second floor. However, Elgin also began to reveal its large-city status with prominent buildings for department stores and financial institutions. Department stores such as George M. Peck Company, Joseph Speiss Company, Ackemann Brothers, and Swan's all opened new or larger stores during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Elgin's downtown. The department store offered numerous products and services to consumers all under one roof, threatening the profitability of smaller stores operated by traditional merchants. Chicago's grand Marshall Field & Company, which opened its downtown State Street store in 1902, considerably influenced the development of locally owned department stores in cities across the country including Elgin. Today, the Henrietta Building at 51 S. Spring Street, built in 1908, and the Ackemann Brothers Building at 168 E. Highland Avenue from 1895 represent this new era of consumerism. The Henrietta Block, named for first owner Peter Buritt's second wife, is tied strongly to department store history. First housing Swan's Department Store upon its completion in 1908, it continued to house a department store even after Swan's closed in 1938. The Henrietta then was leased to Sears, Roebuck & Company, which occupied the building until 1980, when it moved to Spring Hill Mall in West Dundee.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the department store, a new kind of retailing to rival the existing individual or family-run stores was established by the 1920s. Arriving in small-town business districts across the country were grocery, drug, and variety chain stores such as Kresge's, Woolworth's, National Tea, A&P, Jewel Tea, Walgreens, and Ben Franklin. Often these chain stores and developers constructed one-story buildings with multiple storefronts, occupying one space and leasing out the remaining stores. This type of multi-storefront building can be seen in the One-Part Commercial Block at 60 S. Spring Street built in 1929. With three storefronts, it once housed the A & P. Other chain stores occupied existing buildings in the downtown, including Walgreens, which opened its drug store in March 1937 in the first floor of the Home Banks Building (Elgin Tower Building) at 100



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E. Chicago Street. They occupied this space until 1957.<sup>19</sup> F. W. Woolworth's was located in the Burritt Building at 21-29 S. Grove Avenue until 1983, while S. S. Kresge's was across the street at 32-34 S. Grove Avenue.

As a prosperous industrial city, Elgin had had commercial banking since shortly after the passage of the National Bank Act in 1863. At that time the First National Bank of Elgin and Home National Bank opened in the city's central business district in 1865 and 1872, respectively. However, when financial institutions experienced tremendous growth in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their success was reflected in new headquarters constructed in downtown. The most prominent building constructed for a financial institution during this era was for Home National Bank. After outgrowing its building at Grove Avenue, Douglas Avenue, and Chicago Street, this bank built Elgin's first skyscraper. Known as the Home Bank Building or Elgin Tower Building, it was constructed between March 1925 and May 1929 at 100 E. Chicago Street. From an Art Deco design by St. Louis architect Wilbert G. Knoebel, a 15-story, 168-foot-tall, substantially constructed limestone and granite building rose in the heart of Elgin.<sup>20</sup>

Downtown was an ideal location for professional offices and continued to be through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Soon higher-end office space was constructed to house the numerous doctors, lawyers, dentists, and other professionals in Elgin. No other building symbolizes the status of urban offices in Elgin better than the eight-story Professional Building, located at 164 Division Street. Built in 1928 by the Professional Building Corporation, a group of investors that included department store merchant C. F. Ackemann, this Gothic Revival-style building of concrete and brick soared over existing downtown buildings in a premier location. It was just east of the new Hotel Fox (built 1925) and across the street from the Ackemann Department Store.

As the heart of the community, downtown Elgin also provided a home for social interaction through fraternal, social, and service organizations. Local lodges and chapters of national fraternal organizations, with ritual and regalia, such as the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (founded 1852), Ancient Order of Workmen, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Knights of Pythias, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (chartered 1902), Order of Owls, and the Fraternal Order of Eagles all met in Elgin's downtown. Ethnic organizations that preserved cultural traditions such as the Turnverein-German Benevolent Society (Turners), religious-based organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Salvation Army, and the Young Men's Christian Association, and social clubs like the Riverside also were found in Elgin's downtown in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These clubs and organizations of many sizes and purposes offered camaraderie and a sense of community for Elgin residents. Typically, they met in the upper floors of existing downtown buildings, or when successful, constructed or owned their own headquarters or meeting halls. Buildings associated with these social clubs and organizations still stand in the district. They include the Presbyterian Church, home to the Knights of Columbus; the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge, built ca. 1875 at 152-154 E. Chicago Street; and the Tyrrell Block at 209-211 E. Chicago Street, a Queen Anne-style commercial block built in 1887 that through its history housed the Masonic Temple, the Fraternal Order of Eagles, and the Order of Owls. Organizations that constructed their own

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buildings include the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, which built 18-20 Villa Court in 1927 from designs by architect George E. Morris; and the Salvation Army Building at 101-103 S. Grove Avenue, an Art Deco-style civic building constructed by the organization in 1930.

In 1903 another type of club was organized, the Elgin Motor Club, to promote motoring and good roads in Elgin. Efforts by the Elgin Motor Club combined with the popularity of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century local event, the Elgin Automobile Road Race, increased popularity of the automobile for Elgin residents. The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century evolution from horse-drawn transportation to the automobile shaped the further development of the downtown. As motoring grew from a hobby for the wealthy to a more popular mode of transport, the last livery stable closed in downtown in 1918,<sup>21</sup> and automobile-related businesses opened in Elgin. Desiring to be close to downtown, owners of automobile dealerships and garages in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century constructed their businesses on available land on the fringes of the downtown core. At one time, an “automobile row” of dealer salesrooms and garages was located on S. Grove Avenue. Early gas stations, such as Standard Oil Company, were located on corners adjacent to major concrete roads paved in the 1920s. The paving of important roads such as the Lake Street Road (U.S. Route 20), State Route 25, State Route 31, and State Route 58 was a result of a state highway improvement program begun with the Tice Bill in 1913 and enlarged significantly by the ratification of state bond issues in 1918 (routes 25 and 31) and 1924 (route 58). Running along the west side of the Fox River was State Route 31 (State Street), an early road known as the Fox River Trail that linked Elgin, the Northern Illinois Hospital for the Insane, Clintonville (now South Elgin), and other Fox River towns on the west bank. By 1917 Route 31 was paved in concrete by the State of Illinois.<sup>22</sup> However, the road was not fully completed at this time because certain communities, like South Elgin, could not afford the village share at the time it opened. The road was opened to South Elgin in 1921 and reached Dundee in 1922.<sup>23</sup> Along the east side of the Fox River was State Route 25, completed toward Dundee in August 1929. The Lake Street Road or U.S. Route 20, which ran from Chicago to Elgin, was concrete paved by 1923.<sup>24</sup> Before a bypass was built in 1960, U.S. 20 ran along Villa Street, over the Chicago Street Bridge, and onto Highland Avenue through Elgin’s downtown.

Today, the buildings associated with automobile dealerships are gone, and the only historic gas station, built ca. 1940, in the downtown area is located north of the district at 168 Center Street, adjacent to the former U.S. Route 20. Yet, numerous garages from this era are located within the downtown, three of which are located within the district: 221 DuPage Street (ca. 1925); 212 ½ DuPage Street (ca. 1925); 210 W. Chicago Street (1929).

#### POST-WORLD WAR II ERA IN THE DOWNTOWN SURVEY AREA (1945-PRESENT)

Although the district has retained the established historic cluster of commercial buildings in the heart of the community, the changing habits of both the shopper and the merchant following World War II produced a new kind of retailing. Small, pedestrian-oriented, historic commercial centers were considered overcrowded, and as people became more dependent upon the automobile, limited available parking could not meet demand. Retailers of the post-World War

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II era were looking for larger, modern spaces to incorporate wider aisles, larger displays, and deeper shelves. Increased automobile usage and new trends in consumerism were not the only forces that caused a decline in downtown commerce. When combined with a weakening industrial base in Elgin, these forces significantly led to the decline of downtown business during the post-World War II era. Elgin's largest employer and signature industry, the Elgin National Watch Company, began to feel the effects of competition in the late 1950s and closed in 1965 after a series of employee layoffs and decreasing profitability. A new plant with cheaper labor was constructed in North Carolina.

Throughout the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the City of Elgin made attempts to solve issues in downtown. To alleviate parking concerns, the city began with the installation of curbside meters in 1942 to increase turnover in the congested downtown. This action was followed by the establishment of an off-street, city-owned parking lot on Prairie Street in 1952.<sup>25</sup> Some downtown merchants remodeled their existing stores through modernization efforts. Despite these efforts, historic commercial districts soon were supplanted by auto-oriented shopping centers that could meet modern retailing needs. Business owners and developers began purchasing properties outside the periphery of downtown, chiefly along Elgin's major state roads, to create new strip shopping centers that provided challenges for the downtown's continued viability. One of the first was the Town & Country Plaza, built on McLean Boulevard in 1957, followed by the Wing Park Shopping Center in 1959. Additional competition to the downtown business district came from a new type of retailing—the regional shopping mall. The Meadowdale Shopping Center opened in Carpentersville in 1957. Conveniently situated along Illinois Route 25, it offered 7,000 parking spaces and over 50 stores.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the U.S. Route 20 bypass was opened in 1960, re-routing automobile traffic to the south end of Elgin and away from the city center. It is understandable why downtown business vacancies increased by 40 percent between 1957 and 1962.<sup>27</sup>

In the next decade the mammoth Woodfield Mall in nearby Schaumburg and the all-encompassing Spring Hill Mall in West Dundee siphoned shoppers from Elgin when completed in 1971 and 1979.<sup>28</sup> Department stores such as Sears, Roebuck & Company, J. C. Penney & Company, and Joseph Speiss Company all relocated from downtown Elgin to Spring Hill in the 1980s, and new strip malls including Clock Tower Plaza, Tyler Creek Plaza, and Fox River Plaza were opened. At this time, vacancies were at an all-time high in Elgin's once-bustling central business district.

To counter downtown decline and alleviate parking concerns in the post-World War II era, the City of Elgin seized upon an opportunity to create a new city civic center during the 1960s. Seed money came from the estate of Hattie (Pease) Hemmens, who passed away in 1957, leaving over a million dollars for a new project to be administered by the city. By combining the Hemmens estate monies with bond issues and state and federal funds, including \$5.6 million in federal urban renewal funds, the City of Elgin cleared and built a new civic center upon a triangular, 25-acre site located in the northwest part of the downtown. Along the Fox River between North Street, Douglas, and Highland Avenue, 50 to 55 buildings were demolished and numerous

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families and businesses were relocated. Upon the site, a United States Post Office (built 1965-66), the Second District Appellate Court (1965-66), Elgin City Hall (built 1966-67), the second Gail Borden Library (built 1967-68), and Hemmens Auditorium (completed 1969) were constructed and parking facilities were added. The opening of the over \$12 million City Center urban renewal project visually changed the face of the downtown and the riverfront in hopes of stimulating private investment.<sup>29</sup>

Fortunately, despite changes in retailing, the City of Elgin continued to invest in its downtown through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. City-funded streetscape improvements included the Fountain Square Plaza Mall at DuPage and Grove, a pedestrian mall constructed in 1975 and 1976. Placed at the north entrance was an enlarged fountain. The south entrance had the old city hall clock, and included in the design was an entertainment area and landscaping such as brick pavers and newly planted trees. Later considered to be a failed concept, the pedestrian mall was removed in 1994 with the reopening of South Grove Avenue. Further city investments included a new city parking deck at 200 E. Chicago Street in 1980 and one at 243-247 Fulton Street around 2005. Also improved was a new bus terminal, constructed in 1985 at 102-106 W. Chicago Street, a new police station at 151 Douglas Avenue in 1996, and the recent Kimball Street Bridge and corridor project to the north of downtown.

Downtown Elgin has been rejuvenated in recent years through the use of rehabilitation incentives and the arrival of institutions, lofts, and restaurants to keep many storefronts occupied. One such arrival was Elgin Community College, which opened its Fountain Square Campus in the historically significant Henrietta Block at 51 S. Spring Street. When Elgin was approved by the State of Illinois as a riverboat gambling site in 1993, The Grand Victoria Casino was opened south of the historic downtown core in October 1994. Organization, promotion, and revitalization of the downtown area were boosted with the founding of the Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin (DNA) in 1998. As a National Main Street Community and an Illinois Main Street Community, the DNA is “a coalition that represents the interests of the individuals and organizations with a presence in downtown Elgin.” The Association's purpose is to foster a center of activity and ensure economic stability for the heart of Elgin through historic preservation, communication, education, promotion, and economic revitalization.<sup>30</sup>

## COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE ELGIN DOWNTOWN SURVEY AREA

As would be expected in the central business district of a city, the majority of buildings in the district are commercial buildings. The commercial building, as a distinct architectural form, did not develop until the 19th century, even though trading centers and market halls have been around since antiquity. From the end of the 19th century until the age of the automobile, most commercial buildings in the United States looked alike, although there might have been slight regional differences. Commercial buildings were typically joined by side party walls, with the commercial business on the first floor and offices or residences above. The commercial building, as a form, almost always fits on its entire lot and is built to the sidewalk. Within Elgin's historic commercial core, the evolution from single-storefront buildings, providing space to an individual

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retailer, to multiple-storefront buildings that provided space to a series of tenants, such as chain-store grocers, variety stores, and druggists, is apparent. Also shown is the growth and prosperity of an industrial satellite city, reflected in its early-20<sup>th</sup>-century tall, vertical blocks that rise from the heart of the downtown. Finally, a collection of buildings built for particular uses such as banks, gas stations, and public buildings are also represented in the district.

Historic commercial buildings characteristically have a storefront on the first floor that has often been remodeled due to changes in architectural fashion, marketing, and technology through the years. Historic storefront configurations usually follow a three-part system of bulkhead at the base, display window, and transom above. Historic display windows are often flush or recessed, with single panes and some sort of subdivision. Entry doors are usually centrally placed, off-center, or at the corner and can be either flush or recessed. Historic storefront materials are generally limited to wood or metal, with supporting columns and piers. Decorative storefront elements include molded cornices, column capitals, brackets, canopies, ceramic tile entries, and fascia boards. When a commercial building has more than one story, the entry door to the upper stories of the building is also integrated into the design of the storefront. The upper stories of a commercial building usually reflect some high-style elements, notably found at the cornice, in window treatments, or as applied ornament.

There is limited scholarly work that classifies the various types of commercial buildings that have been constructed in American business districts in the last 150 years. In *The Buildings of Main Street*, one of the few sources, Richard Longstreth has developed a classification system for historic commercial structures built within compact business districts prior to the 1950s. His system uses building mass as the determining factor. He classifies most commercial structures under four stories tall as either One- or Two-Part Commercial Blocks regardless of apparent architectural stylistic elements. The distinction between the two classifications is in whether there is a strong horizontal cornice, stringcourse, or other architectural feature that visually divides the facade into one or two stacked horizontal bands. A One-Part Commercial Block is almost always one story, while a Two-Part Commercial Block may be two or more stories tall. Most historic commercial buildings fall into one or the other of these two classifications. Generally these types were built before 1950, but occasionally a contemporary commercial structure may be built on an infill parcel on a traditional commercial street. Whether or not they share party walls with the adjacent building, generally only the front of a Commercial Block has any architectural detailing. The building is located at the front lot line, along a public sidewalk, and has display windows facing that sidewalk. There are usually no display windows, public entrances, or architectural treatment on the side facades, although occasionally a larger Commercial Block, located on a corner, may have part or the entire side facade treated similarly to the front.

Longstreth classifies newer, commercial structures that sit apart from surrounding buildings as Freestanding, or Drive-in. This survey classifies all commercial building first by massing types defined by Longstreth and second by the architectural stylistic features.

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The historic commercial buildings in the Elgin downtown are almost entirely masonry (stone or brick) due to fire limits implemented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The integrity of many of the older structures in Elgin is generally good, although some upper stories have been altered with window replacement, downsizing, infill, and overall material replacement. Changes to buildings are often limited to the first-floor storefront, with material and configuration alterations to meet design trends. Such alterations are a common occurrence in small-scale commercial districts. Nevertheless, distinctive elaborate cornices and handsome window surrounds on many of the buildings give the district a sweeping historic character that is visually appealing. Many of the commercial buildings have been rehabilitated in recent decades due to the efforts of community leaders, local history groups, the Elgin Heritage Commission, and the City of Elgin, and to the offering of economic incentives for restoration and rehabilitation.

The commercial buildings in downtown Elgin are principally no more than three stories in height. The majority of buildings are either of the One-Part or Two-Part Commercial Block types in 25-foot widths (considered here as one unit), based on a typical lot size. Some of the buildings are one unit wide, while others are in 25-foot multiples that extend no more than four units wide. This unit of measure gives the historic commercial area a sense of visual rhythm. The basic rhythm is also related to early construction practices in which the most efficient single span of a wood joist was 22 feet. The width of a typical storefront mirrored this span and has become a universal proportion in commercial areas across America.<sup>31</sup>

The earliest buildings in the district are in the Fountain Square area and are mainly substantially built, two-story, Two-Part Commercial Block types dating from c. 1875 forward. As with many modest small-scale commercial buildings, architectural detailing consists of applied stylistic ornament reflecting the fashion of its period of construction. The earliest buildings in the district have Italianate bracket and cornice details, followed by those at the end of the Victorian era with Queen Anne influences in their projecting bay windows.

The prevalence of masonry construction reflects not only the building restrictions but also the improving economic status of the community. Commercial-style buildings, with prevalent ornamental brickwork friezes, were constructed in the 1890s and first decades of the 20th century. With the arrival of the 20th century there was a steady increase in brick multiple storefront buildings. Some of these early-20th-century buildings show the onset of historic revival styles, such as Colonial Revival and Renaissance Revival, and the introduction of terra cotta ornament to facades. Lastly, one sees the influence of the automobile on the pedestrian-oriented district with the arrival of Freestanding and Drive-in structures.

## ONE-PART COMMERCIAL BLOCK

One-story commercial buildings are almost always One-Part Commercial Blocks. Two or more-story Commercial Blocks may be classified as One-Part Commercial Blocks if the facade can be read as a single design element, with no projecting cornice or other strong horizontal design element dividing the first floor from the upper floors. They can have one or more storefronts

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built to the sidewalk. Nine commercial buildings in the survey area have been classified as One-Part Commercial Blocks. In Elgin's downtown, this type was a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, built between 1910 and 1960. Historic One-Part Commercial Blocks can lack a great degree of integrity if they have been altered, since it is common to change the storefront details, configuration, and display windows of retail commercial structures. When commercial structures are two or more stories, an older historic character is often still evident on the upper floors. However, when the building is only one story, changing the first-floor storefront means substantially altering the entire front facade.

One significant and four contributing examples of the One-Part Commercial Block are found in the survey area. A typical example of the One-Part Commercial Block is the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company Building at 60 S. Spring Street. With a three-bay façade, this 1929 building features a common multiple storefront configuration, typical of 20<sup>th</sup>-century examples of this commercial type. As is common in 20<sup>th</sup>-century masonry commercial buildings, a short brick parapet wall with decorative panels adds interest to the top of the Spring Street building. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when found in traditional downtowns, the One-Part Commercial Block features numerous storefronts. With increased automobile use by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the One-Part Commercial block evolved into a strip of economically built storefronts with a parking lot at the front, known as the Strip Mall.

Elgin's most significant example of the One-Part Commercial Block is the 1930 Salvation Army Building found at 101-103 South Grove Avenue. Although two stories, the building's main three- and 11-bay principal facades can be read as a single design element, since there is no strong horizontal feature dividing the first floor from the upper floor. This would be expected in a building designed in the Art Deco style, known for its soaring vertical elements. The Salvation Army Building is an exceptional example of Art Deco architecture, with an intricate, faceted stone parapet and entry surround. Also of note are the historic metal windows, and decorative detailing including faceted pilasters between bays, corner entry designs, vertically fluted spandrel panels between first- and second-story windows, and chevron motifs and inset triangular panels above first-story windows. This building was the home of the Salvation Army until 1972, when a new building was opened on Douglas Avenue.

## TWO-PART COMMERCIAL BLOCK

According to Longstreth, the Two-Part Commercial Block is considered the most common type of commercial building in America. Found principally in small and moderate-sized communities between the 1850s and 1950s, the building is always a two- to four-story building characterized by a horizontal division into two clearly separated zones. These zones reflect differences of use on the interior, with the ground-floor level possessing public places such as a store or lobby and the upper stories having the more private spaces of the building, including offices, living spaces, or a meeting hall. The upper stories often reflect domestic high-style architecture in ornamentation.

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Most of the architecturally significant Two-Part Commercial Blocks in the district were built the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and feature elements of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles. Italianate-style commercial buildings are characterized by a projecting cornice with paired brackets and tall, arched upper-story windows, frequently with window hoods. The Italianate-style Two-Part Commercial Block at 22-24 Douglas Avenue and the Volstorff Meat Market Building at 17 N. Grove Avenue are two fine examples from the period. The building at 22-24 Douglas Avenue is one of the earliest commercial buildings in the district, built around 1875. Of note is the building's round arch windows with keystones and handsome pedimented wood cornice. The Volstorff Meat Market Building, built c. 1880, features hallmark elements of the Italianate style in its decorative projecting wood cornice and frieze with paired scroll brackets, and 2/2 wood double-hung windows with segmental arches and label molds. This single-storefront example still features a recessed central entry store configuration at the ground floor.

A number of distinguished Queen Anne-style Two-Part Commercial Blocks are found within the district. The Queen Anne style is characterized by asymmetry and irregularity in form, with a variety of surface materials and textures. In commercial buildings, the style is usually evidenced by applied stylistic ornament, corner towers, and projecting bay windows on the upper floors. One of the best examples with projecting bay windows is the Webster Building, constructed around 1890 at 66 S. Grove Avenue. Two second-story, three-sided metal bays dominate the front façade, which is capped with an ornate metal cornice with scrolled brackets and paneled frieze. The Tyrrell Block, located at 209-211 E. Chicago Street, is an impressive brick and stone commercial block built in 1886-87. Local architect Smith Hoag (b.1838 – d. 1916) designed the building with an elaborate Queen Anne-style metal cornice and frieze with central gable, bays topped with segmental brick arches, and a polychromatic and corbelled central arch. This Two-Part Commercial Block was erected for local physician and surgeon Pierce Tyrrell, and is historically associated as a dance hall and a meeting place for Elgin's social and fraternal organizations including the Masons, Elgin City Club, Eagles, and Owls. According to Mike Alft, businesses housed in the Tyrell Block over the years included the Western Card Company, James A. Palmer Undertakers, and Muettert's Bakery. Another Two-Part Commercial Block with applied Queen Anne detailing is the J. W. Ranstead Building, constructed in 1892 at 43 DuPage Court. Built for owner Judge John W. Ranstead and designed by architect Smith Hoag, it was home to law offices for more than 70 years. An elaborate cornice with central pediment, polychrome masonry, and window bays that project from both the front and side facades distinguish this architecturally significant design.

A restoration in 2002 occurred at the McBride Building, 53-63 Douglas Avenue, unveiling an impressive Queen Anne-style facade that was hidden behind metal "modernizing" sheathing installed in 1970. The 1889 McBride Building is a handsome, yet massive, five-bay commercial block of brick, terra cotta, and stone. An elaborate cornice and three-sided oriel bays are prominent features on the front façade. The block was built at a cost of \$30,000 for David McBride and Thomas McBride, Jr., brothers who dealt in coal and building materials. The mason was Andrew Magnus, with carpentry by Will Long and Dwyre Hibbard. When first constructed, the Elgin Daily Courier reported in December 1889 that the McBride Block contained five stores



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on the first floor, 10 large office rooms and a hall on the second floor, and eight office rooms and a large hall on the upper story. Interior finishes were of oak with maple floors, and improved with gas pipes, electric wiring, and steam heat. Alft reports that a fire took place early in the building's history. Although decorative parapets and an end chimney from the original design no longer exist, the building does successfully reflect its style and period. The building's unusual irregular shape comes from the Chicago and North Western Railroad Tracks that ran on an angle to the rear of this building.

Two-Part Commercial Blocks from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reflect the arrival of historic revival styles that became popular choices after the end of the Victorian era. One example of the period is the A.E.&C. Railroad Substation at 101 N. Spring Street. The building is a handsome, one-story plus basement brick structure featuring a series of large arched openings, a central stepped brick parapet, and multi-light windows.

Other buildings combine elements from the Victorian and historic eclectic eras, such as the Leitner Brothers Building at 201-203 E. Chicago Street. Built in 1904, this handsome commercial block commands a strong presence on a corner lot. It features a Queen Anne-style rounded corner tower with conical roof while exhibiting classical elements such as stone flat lintels over windows and storefronts and stone piers. A similar combination of elements is found in the commercial building at 168-172 E. Chicago Street, built in 1902, with classically styled second-floor window surrounds and a Queen Anne-style metal cornice with brackets and foliated ornament.

## VERTICAL BLOCK

Elgin, as a self-sustaining industrial city, displays examples of buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that soar from downtown streets and display the city's elevated prosperity. These tall commercial structures, ranging from five to 15 stories in Elgin, are classified as Vertical Blocks. As with One- and Two-Part Commercial Blocks, these may or may not have recognizable stylistic elements applied to the facades. These buildings were a direct result of technological improvements in building construction and changes in local regulations that allowed for taller buildings. In Elgin, the first Vertical Blocks were no more than five stories tall. Yet, with the possibilities of steel frame construction, the soaring, isolated building was now achievable. Sometimes the building, set apart from its neighbors, was erected quickly and plainly, with the only concern being to maximize profits. However, when handled by skillful designers, the taller building could provide visual delight and appeal within a community. There are four examples of the Vertical Block in the district, all built within a very short time period between 1892 and 1928.

Two types of Vertical Blocks are found in Elgin: the Two-Part Vertical Block and the Three-Part Vertical Block. The Two-Part Vertical Block consists of two major zones. The lower zone is made up of the first one or two stories of the building, and serves as a visual base for the upper zone. Composed of two or more upper stories, the upper zone is treated as a unified whole, with

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pilasters or engaged columns often added for further vertical emphasis. Similarly, the Three-Part Vertical Block has a lower zone that serves as a base at the lower floors, but it has a mid-zone of floors with similarly patterned windows and a distinctive upper zone that is usually one to three stories in height. The Three-Part Vertical Block is a type based on a concept first introduced by Louis Sullivan in 1896 in *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered* to address the problems of aesthetics. Sullivan advocated that an architect should allow a tall building to express its rising verticality, but introduce horizontal divisions to the façade based on the divisions of a classical column: base (the lower stories of the building), shaft (uninterrupted series of window tiers), and capital (the crown of the uppermost stories of the building). The first few stories of a tall building were designed as a base, where the front entry was emphasized and architectural features such as columns, pilasters, arched entries, and groupings of windows could be grasped on a human scale. The floors of the base would often hold the public spaces of the building such as the lobby and elevator bays. Above this base the tower soared, frequently stressing its verticality, and housing the office units of the building. Above the tower's shaft, there might be some visual closure at the top, either with an actual cornice if in a classical style, or perhaps a different design treatment for the top floor windows in a contemporary-style structure.

An impressive example of the Vertical Block in Elgin is the city's tallest building at 15 stories: the Home Bank Building, known commonly as the Elgin Tower Building. This three-sided vertical tower of reinforced concrete is flanked by two-story wings extending north along Grove and Douglas. The tower rises highest in the middle, giving the building a stepped appearance. The stone and brick building was designed in the Art Deco style by St. Louis architect Wilbert G. Knoebel. A permit was issued for the construction of the \$800,000 building in 1925, and the building was completed by 1929 at 100 E. Chicago Street. Built to house two related financial institutions, the Home National Bank and Home Trust and Savings Bank, it also was occupied by other offices and professionals. The building was designated a local landmark in 1998 and listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 for its associations with the development of commerce and business in downtown Elgin and as one of the city's finest examples of Art Deco architecture. Besides its verticality, notable Art Deco elements include exterior carved stonework and foliated and stylized ornamentation including numerous eagles, zigzag trim, and panels. The division of the tall building is not as clearly defined in the Home Bank Building, yet it has a visually strong lower zone or base (floors one to two).

Another fine 20<sup>th</sup>-century Vertical Block is found in the Peter Burritt Building, built in 1914 at 21-29 S. Grove Avenue. This five-story, six-bay-wide building, designed by local architect Gilbert Turnbull, is graced with three-sided window bays that rise four stories, light pink glazed brick cladding on the front façade, terra cotta panels with cartouches and wreaths above the fifth story, and a terra cotta panel within a segmental arch that is inscribed with the name "Peter Burritt Building." The Burritt Building is a fine example of a Two-Part Vertical block, with a strong base of storefronts distinguished from the uniformly patterned four floors, or shaft, above. Although the building is capped with terra cotta ornament above the fifth story, no horizontal element definitively divides the top from the stories below.

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The Professional Building at 164 Division Street is another tall Vertical Block built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This 1928 building of cast stone is architecturally significant as a fine example of the Gothic Revival style as applied in commercial architecture. The finely detailed Gothic Revival style was chosen for the Professional Building when trends in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were toward literal interpretations of historic architecture. Gothic Revival architecture first made its way into office building design in 19<sup>th</sup>-century urban America and provided inspiration for schools, universities, clubs, and funeral homes into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Notable Gothic Revival elements include rich cast stone ornament as found in its canopied aedicules at the second floor above the entry; crockets; and a horizontal band of blind trefoil arches with tracery. Although the Professional Building was initially designed as a 10-story building with a three-story central tower in 1926, the Chicago architectural and engineering firm of Wolf, Sexton, Harper, and Trueax scaled back the design. As a Vertical Block, the top of the building or capital is not as clearly distinguished as the other divisions, mainly because the architects wished to continue the soaring verticality of the structure by extending the stone piers found between the windows up the entire height of the facade. This was a design approach common in the 1920s to show the lofty heights of a building that reached toward the sky. Another reason that the capital is not as prominent is that a central two-story tower with crockets that once pierced the top center of the building has been removed.

The fourth example is the Spurling Block located at 18 – 22 Spring Street. It was built in 1892 but remodeled extensively in 1957 and renamed the Elgin Commerce Building.

#### ENFRAMED WINDOW WALL

Another type of commercial building that is not as common, but is typically used for retail stores, is the Enframed Window Wall. Usually one story in height, they can also be multi-story, and tend to be more than one bay wide. These early to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial buildings have large, grouped display windows at the center enframed with a wide and often continuous border. The surrounding border is often simple, with a limited amount of ornament. The window section can be multistory, but is usually smaller in width when on a taller building.

There is one example of this type found at 30 DuPage Court. The Healy Building, built in 1941, is one of the few remaining commercial buildings in the downtown from the period between the World Wars. A central, recessed window bay with grouped three-light windows is framed with a wide concrete panel surround. Fashionable Art Moderne elements such as a metal cantilevered entry canopy, rounded corners at the first-floor entry, and engraved name panel with modern lettering genuinely reflect the stylistic trends of this era.

#### MID-20TH-CENTURY COMMERCIAL TYPES

The automobile caused a dramatic change in commercial building types found in America's small commercial centers. Longstreth's typology does not work well with buildings constructed

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at mid-century, as he states in his epilogue.<sup>32</sup> Many of the commercial buildings constructed after that time are “freestanding.” They are situated typically on larger parcels, usually not adjacent to any other buildings, and with parking in front, on the sides, or even surrounding the building. Entrances are oriented in a way to accommodate the automobile passenger. Longstreth suggests the terms Freestanding, Strip Mall, and Drive-in for some of these types. A good example of a Freestanding commercial building in the district is the Union National Bank & Trust Company of Elgin Building located at 101 E. Chicago Street. Built in 1960, it is a fine example of a mid-century modern bank building with clean lines, full-height windows along the front façade, and a cantilevered canopy over its front entry.

### TRANSPORTATION-RELATED BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN ELGIN

The history and architecture of Elgin are tied to its transportation routes, with railroads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a system of roads and highways in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The only remaining historic building associated with railroad transportation in the district is the Aurora, Elgin and Chicago (A.E. & C.) Railroad Substation. Built in 1908 at 77 Riverside Drive, this Classical Revival–style utility building served an electric interurban line that began in 1901, reaching downtown Chicago by 1905.<sup>33</sup> The A.E. & C. Railroad tracks, which ran along the east bank of the Fox River on Riverside Drive, terminated just to the south of Chicago Street at the Elgin Opera House, where tickets could be purchased. Using an overhead system of transferring current, power for this electric line was distributed through transformer stations such as the one found at 77 Riverside Drive.

When powerhouses were designed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, attention was frequently given to architectural expression based on historic stylistic precedent. This may have followed the trend within municipal utility plants to create attractive structures that reflected favorably on the status of the community. Arguments in the architectural press at the time debated the merits of modern, utilitarian design vs. eclectic architectural styles. It is not at all unusual to find powerhouse designs that employ classical architectural elements such as round-arched windows and doors with multi-light configurations, stone cornices and stringcourses, tiled hipped roofs, and other features. The tall ceiling height often required for the operating room and the boiler room was conducive to the design of tall, dramatic windows. The A.E. & C. Railroad Substation is a handsome, one-story plus basement brick structure featuring a series of large arched openings, a central stepped brick parapet, and multi-light windows. It clearly displays classical stylistic features wrapped around its functional interior space. In 1922, the railroad was reorganized as the Chicago, Aurora, and Elgin and the east-bank tracks were eventually abandoned.

With the growing popularity of the automobile and a major road-building campaign in the 1920s, building types serving automobile traffic and sales, such as the commercial garage, the gasoline station, and automobile showrooms, emerged along America’s expanding network of roads and highways. Structures such as automobile bridges also began to appear.

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The commercial garage is a building type in use throughout cities for automobile storage and repair. In earlier years, garage keepers agreed to keep and maintain an automobile in a garage and sometimes provided a driver. Later, with the advent of the residential garage next to one's own home, the garage business centered on auto repair. The garage also may be found within industrial complexes and used for other types of vehicle or machinery storage and/or repair. The early to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century garage is a one-story, rectangular structure with no internal columns. The exterior, load-bearing masonry walls support a series of steel roof trusses (often Bowstring) topped by a compass roof with a shallow, curved pitch. There are entry doors for vehicles at one or both ends. In some cases there may be skylights of some type or a monitor atop the roof to provide more natural light and ventilation. Only one garage at 221 DuPage Street, is located in the district.

### RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Although the Downtown Survey Area was developed principally as a commercial area, these commercial buildings often had dwellings on their upper floors. In addition to this type of housing, the Downtown Survey Area includes several multi-family and hotel residential buildings. One of the earliest multi-family building types in Elgin is the flat building. In this housing type, flats or apartment units are typically stacked one or two per floor. In Elgin, it is common to see two-story flats containing four units. The Flats at 212-214 DuPage Street are in the district. Another multi-family type is the Hotel. Hotels were prevalent in downtown Elgin early in the city's history. The Hotel Fox, built 1925 at 156 Division Street is located in the district.

### INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

Since the district boundaries were drawn with the intent to focus on the commercial core of Elgin, only one religious property was included in the district: the former Old School Presbyterian Church, an 1873 Gothic Revival at 10 Villa Court. Another type of institutional building is the clubhouse, built for the functions of a private social club or organization. The Elks Lodge 737 Clubhouse Building at 18-20 Villa Court, built in 1927, is architecturally significant as a fine local example of the Tudor Revival style, with multiple steeply pitched gables, segmental arched openings, decorative half timbering, and stone detailing. Inside were a dining room, meeting room, and lounge to serve the needs of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge 737, chartered in Elgin in 1902. The interior was rehabbed in 2004 for use as offices. The well-executed design for the Elks, built at a cost of \$100,000, was the work of Elgin architect George E. Morris, who had his office in the Sherwin Building, formerly at the northwest corner of E. Chicago Street and Spring Street.

### CONCLUSION

For over 150 years, Elgin's downtown has been the historic heart of the community. It is a retail and municipal center, a locus for civic meeting and events, a place for informal gatherings, and a transportation hub. Elgin's downtown represents an image and identity for this urban community to residents and outsiders alike that is clearly linked to its architectural and historic significance

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as a potential historic district. With this survey, the Elgin Heritage Commission can further promote the preservation and rehabilitation of its architecturally and historically significant structures.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☒ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ☐ Approximately 17 acres \_\_\_\_\_

Longitude: -88.285408°

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.039288° | Longitude: -88.285578° |
| 2. Latitude: 42.039288° | Longitude: -88.281072° |
| 3. Latitude: 42.035029° | Longitude: -88.281072° |
| 4. Latitude: 42.035029° | Longitude: -88.283519° |
| 5. Latitude: 42.039288° | Longitude: -88.285408° |

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:**

THAT PART OF THE WEST ½ OF SECTION 13 AND THE EAST HALF OF SECTION 14, TOWNSHIP 41 NORTH, RANGE 8 EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: COMMENCING AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 1 IN BLOCK 2 OF NEWTON S. DEXTER'S ADDITION FOR THE POINT OF BEGINNING; THENCE EAST ALONG THE NORTH LINE OF LOTS 1, 2 AND 3 IN NEWTON S. DEXTER'S ADDITION TO THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF LOT 3; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE EAST LINE EXTENDED OF LOT 3 TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 3 IN BLOCK 17 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT, WHICH IS A POINT ALONG THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF DIVISION STREET; THENCE EAST ALONG THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SPRING STREET; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SPRING STREET TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST CHICAGO STREET; THENCE EAST ALONG THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST CHICAGO STREET TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE WEST LINE EXTENDED SOUTH OF LOT 8 IN BLOCK 10 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT; THENCE NORTH ALONG THE EXTENDED WEST LINE TO THE NORTH LINE OF LOT 8 IN BLOCK 10 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT; THENCE EAST ALONG THE NORTH LINE OF LOTS 8, 9 AND 10 IN BLOCK 10 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF CENTER STREET; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF CENTER STREET, AND THE WEST RIGHT OF WAY LINE EXTENDED OF VILLA COURT AND THE EAST LINE OF LOTS 3 AND 12 IN BLOCK 12 OF THE ORIGINAL TOWN OF ELGIN TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF FULTON STREET; THENCE WEST ALONG THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF FULTON STREET TO A POINT THAT IS 97.6 FEET EAST OF THE INTERSECTION OF SAID NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE AND THE EAST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SPRING STREET; THENCE SOUTH 110 FEET; THENCE EAST 97.6 FEET TO A POINT ON THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SOUTH GROVE AVENUE; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY, 66 FEET, ALONG A LINE THAT IS PERPENDICULAR TO SAID EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE WESTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SOUTH GROVE AVENUE; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG SAID WESTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SOUTH GROVE AVENUE TO THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF LOT 12 IN BLOCK 21 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT OF ELGIN; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY ALONG THE SOUTHERLY LINE OF SAID LOT 12 TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF RIVERSIDE DRIVE TO A POINT THAT IS 44 FEET SOUTHERLY OF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LOT F IN HARVEY AND AMMICK'S ADDITION; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG A LINE THAT IS 44 FEET SOUTHERLY OF AND PARALLEL TO THE SOUTHERLY LINE OF HARVEY AND AMMICK'S ADDITION TO A POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF SOUTH GROVE AVENUE; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG SAID EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE TO A POINT ALONG THE WESTERLY LINE OF LOT 5 IN BLOCK 15 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT OF ELGIN, THAT IS 4 FEET SOUTH OF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 4 IN M.C. TOWN'S RESUBDIVISION OF LOT 5 IN BLOCK 15 OF J.T. GIFFORD'S PLAT OF ELGIN; THENCE NORTH ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID M.C. TOWN'S RESUBDIVISION TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION OF THE EAST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF DOUGLAS AVENUE WITH THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST CHICAGO STREET; THENCE WEST ALONG THE NORTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST CHICAGO STREET TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF NORTH GROVE AVENUE; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG THE EASTERLY RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF NORTH GROVE AVENUE TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST

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HIGHLAND AVENUE; THENCE EAST ALONG THE SOUTH RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF EAST CHICAGO STREET TO THE POINT OF INTERSECTION WITH THE EAST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF DOUGLAS AVENUE; THENCE NORTH ALONG THE EAST RIGHT OF WAY LINE OF DOUGLAS AVENUE TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. PROPERTY LOCATED IN ELGIN TOWNSHIP, KANE COUNTY, ELGIN, ILLINOIS.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

*The boundaries for the Elgin Downtown Historic District include the most significant concentration of the city's historic commercial structures. District boundaries were drawn to minimize the number of non-contributing resources, as well as to exclude structures outside the period and areas of significance.*

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**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title: Tom Armstrong, Chairman, Design Committee  
Organization: Downtown Neighborhood Association of Elgin  
Street & number: 2 Douglas Ave.  
City or town: Elgin state: IL zip code: 60120  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: (847) 488-1456  
Date: 9-16-14

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

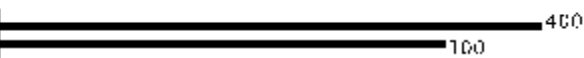
Kane County, IL  
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Elgin Commercial Historic District

Google earth

feet  
meters

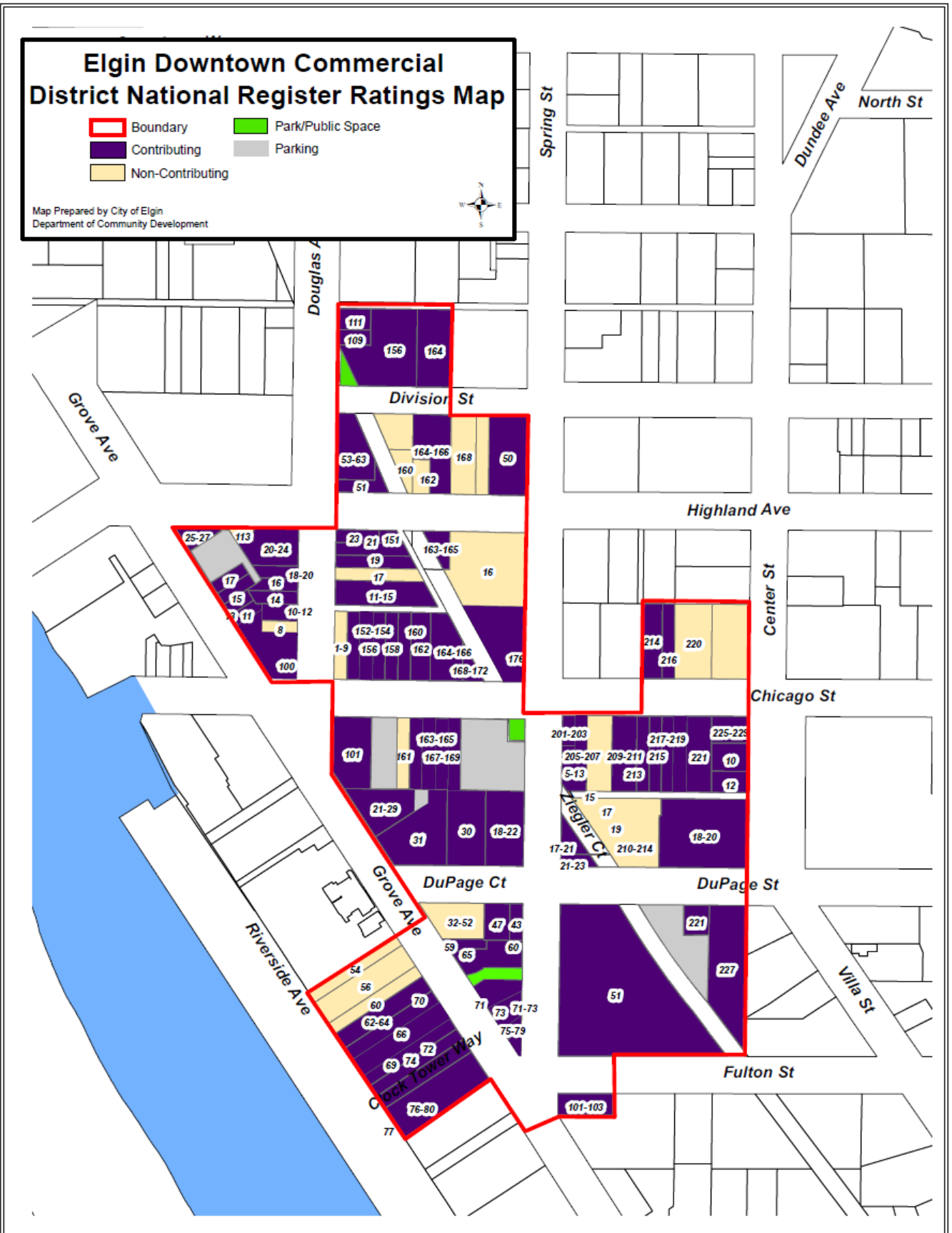


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2. Latitude: 42.039288°
3. Latitude: 42.035029°
4. Latitude: 42.035029°
5. Latitude: 42.039288°

- Longitude: -88.285578°
- Longitude: -88.281072°
- Longitude: -88.281072°
- Longitude: -88.283519
- Longitude: -88.285408°

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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## Photographs

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Elgin Downtown District  
City or Vicinity: Elgin  
County: Kane  
State: IL  
Name of Photographer: Thomas J. Armstrong  
Date of Photographs: June 11, 2014  
Location of Original Digital Files: 10 N. Spring Street, Elgin, IL 60120

Photo #1 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0001)  
156 Division Street, West façade, camera facing east

Photo #2 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0002)  
111 Douglas Avenue, West façade (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing northeast

Photo #3 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0003)  
53-63 Douglas Avenue, West façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing southeast

Photo #4 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0004)  
1-23 Block of Douglas Avenue, East facades, camera facing southeast

Photo #5 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0005)  
25-27 N. Grove Avenue, East façade (right) and point (left), camera facing southeast

Photo #6 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0006)  
9-17 N. Grove Avenue, East facades, camera facing southeast

Photo #7 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0007)  
23-25 S. Grove Avenue, East façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing southeast

Photo #8 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0008)  
51 S. Grove Avenue, East façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing southeast

Photo #9 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0009)  
59-63 S. Grove Avenue, East façade, camera facing east

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Photo #10 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0010)  
67-79 S. Grove Avenue, East facades, camera facing southeast

Photo #11 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0011)  
79 S. Grove Avenue, East facades (left) and point (right), camera facing north

Photo #12 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_00012)  
101 S. Grove Avenue, East façade, camera facing east

Photo #13 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0013)  
77 Riverside Drive, West façade (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing northeast

Photo #14 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0014)  
68-72 S. Grove Avenue, West façade, camera facing west

Photo #15 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0015)  
66 S. Grove Avenue, West façade, camera facing west

Photo #16 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0016)  
30 DuPage Court, South façade, camera facing northeast

Photo #17 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0017)  
51 S. Spring Street, East façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing southeast

Photo #18 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0018)  
43 S. Spring Street, North façade (right) and west elevation (left), camera facing southwest

Photo #19 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0019)  
40 DuPage Court, South façade (left) and west elevation (right), camera facing northwest

Photo #20 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0020)  
18 Villa Court, West façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing northwest

Photo #21 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0021)  
214-216 E. Chicago Street, South façade, camera facing north

Photo #22 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0022)  
221-227 E. Chicago Street, North facades, camera facing southeast

Photo #23 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0023)  
213 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south



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Photo #24 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0024)  
209-211 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south

Photo #25 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0025)  
201-203 E. Chicago Street, North façade (left) and west elevation (right), camera facing southeast

Photo #26 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0026)  
167-169 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south

Photo #27 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0027)  
163-165 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south

Photo #28 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0028)  
161 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south

Photo #29 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0029)  
101 E. Chicago Street, North façade, camera facing south

Photo #30 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0030)  
8-24 Douglas Avenue, East facades, camera facing northwest

Photo #31 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0031)  
24 Douglas Avenue, East façade, camera facing west

Photo #32 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0032)  
17 Douglas Avenue, West façade, camera facing east

Photo #33 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0033)  
158-164 E. Chicago Street, South facades, camera facing northeast

Photo #34 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0034)  
100 Block, E. Chicago Street, South facades, camera facing northwest

Photo #35 (IL\_KaneCounty\_DowntownElginCommercialHistoricDistrict\_0035)  
50 N. Spring Street, West façade (right) and north elevation (left), camera facing northwest

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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## PHOTO KEY

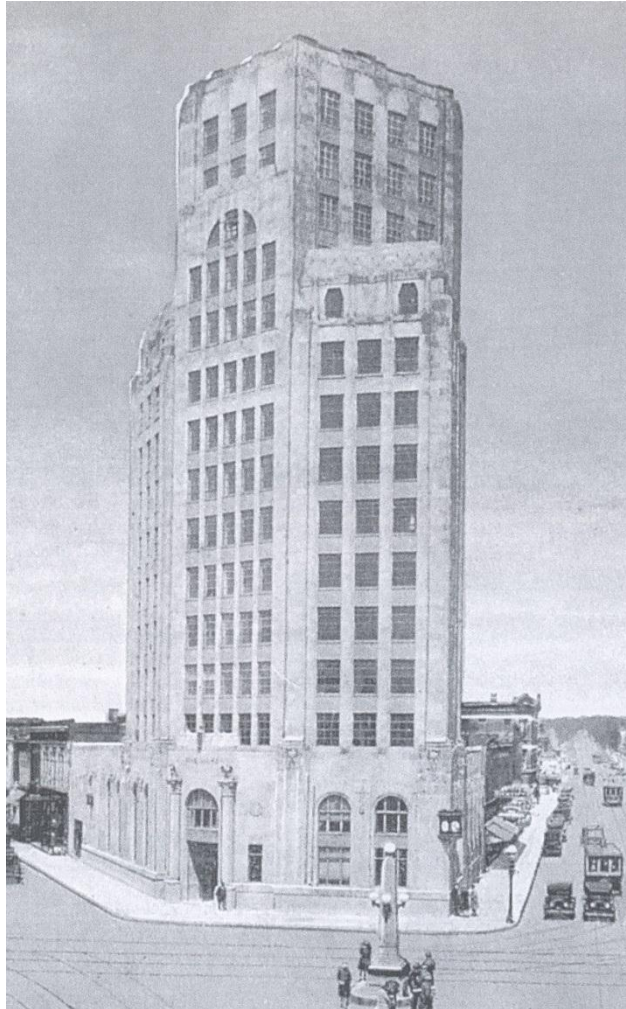


xx → PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER / CAMERA DIRECTION

## Historic Photographs

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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100 E. Chicago Street

[From page 113 of IMAGES OF AMERICA: ELGIN, ILLINOIS (Jim & Wynette Edwards)]



Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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201-203 E. Chicago Street

[From page 86 of OLD ELGIN: A PICTORIAL HISTORY (E. C. Alft)]



18 Villa Court

[From page 44 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS: WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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156 Division Street

[From page 42 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS: WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]



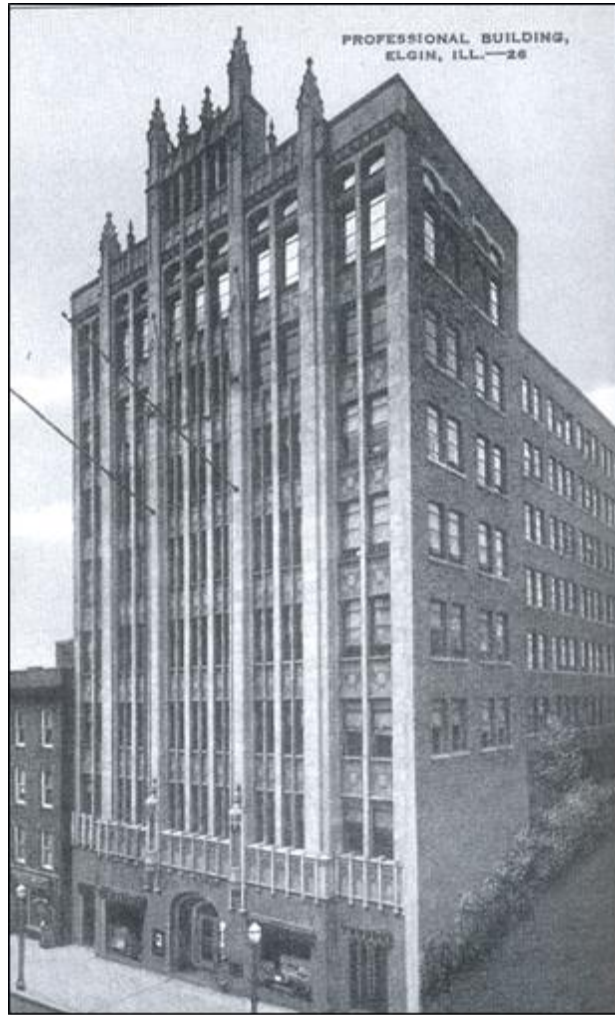
168 E. Highland Avenue

[From ELGIN: KNOWN THE WORLD OVER (1914)]



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Name of Property

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164 Division Street

[From page 46 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS; WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

Kane County, IL  
County and State



50 N. Spring Street

[From page 90 of OLD ELGIN: A PICTORIAL HISTORY (E. C. Alft)]

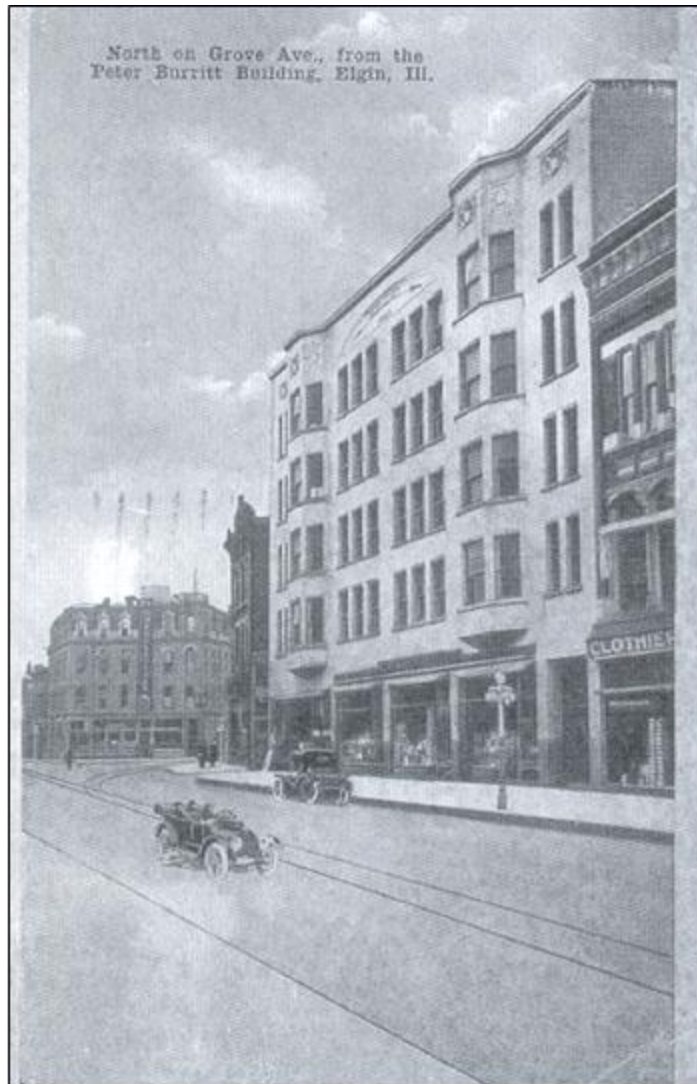


51 S. Spring Street

[From page 47 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS: WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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21-29 S. Grove Avenue

[From page 42 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS: WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]



Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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25-27 N. Grove Avenue

[From page 47 of ELGIN, ILLINOIS: WISH YOU WERE HERE (William E. Bennett)]



221 E. Chicago Street  
[Source: Unknown]

Elgin Downtown Commercial District  
Name of Property

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**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. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alft, E. C. *Elgin: An American History, 1835-1985*, 1984, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Alft, E. C. *Old Elgin: A Pictorial History*, 1991, pp. 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Joslyn & Joslyn. *History of Kane County, Ill.*, Vol. I, 1908, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> Alft, *Old Elgin: A Pictorial History*, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Alft, E. C. *Elgin: Days Gone By*, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Alft, *Old Elgin: A Pictorial History*, p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> *The Presbyterian Church in Elgin, 1853-1917* and Gahan, *History of St. Mary's Parish*, 1903, p. 52, 54.

<sup>12</sup> Alft, *Old Elgin: A Pictorial History*, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Aurora 'N' Elgin*, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Alft, *Old Elgin: A Pictorial History*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>18</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 315.

<sup>19</sup> "Elgin Tower Building." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002., p. 10-11

<sup>20</sup> National Register of Historic Places Application, Elgin Tower.

<sup>21</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 217.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 288.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* and p. 313.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 289-291, and "Elgin will get 5.6 million for a Civic Center," *Chicago Tribune*, March 27, 1964, p. A4.

<sup>30</sup> Downtown Neighborhood Association web site. Web pages visited at <http://www.downtownelgin.com> on July 24, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Jackson, Mike, "Storefronts on Main Street: an Architectural History," p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, 1987, pp. 126-131.

<sup>33</sup> Alft, *Elgin: An American History*, p. 154.