

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

New Designation \_\_\_\_\_

Amendment of a previous designation  X

Please summarize any amendment(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Property name Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)

*If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.*

Address Multiple - see attached spreadsheet

Square and lot number(s) Multiple - see attached spreadsheet

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission  2C  U601

Date of construction  1830 - 1986  Date of major alteration(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Architect(s) /Architectural style(s) Various

Original use Commercial/Residential Present use Commercial

Property owner Multiple - see attached spreadsheet

Legal address of property owner Multiple - see attached spreadsheet

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) DC Preservation League

*If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.*

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 401 F Street, NW, Room 324, WDC 20001, 202.783.5144

Name and title of authorized representative Rebecca Miller, Executive Director

Signature of representative *Rebecca Miller* Date January 7, 2013

Name and telephone of author of application EHT Traceries - 202.393.1199

Date received *1/8/13*

H.P.O. staff *JTB*

*1/7-08*

#	Square	Parcel	Address	Current Name	Historic Name (designated)	Contributing	Ownership
1	404	817	800 I Street			No	American Public Health Assoc., 800 I Street, NW, WDC 20001-3710
2	404	816	801 9th Street NW			No	NSP Ventures Corporation, 750 N. Saint Paul Street, Suite 1660, Dallas, TX 75201-3264
3	404	0813	816-820 8th Street	Greater New Hope Baptist Church	Washington Hebrew Congregation	Yes	Greater New Hope Baptist Church, 816 8th Street, NW, WDC 2001-3724
4	404	0812	822 8th Street			Yes	Greater New Hope Baptist Church, 816 8th Street, NW, WDC 2001-3724
5	404	0811	8th Street (no # given)	Vacant Lot			Greater New Hope Baptist Church, 816 8th Street, NW, WDC 2001-3724
6	404	0031	800 8th Street	Hillel Foundation		No	Hillel, 800 8th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-3724
7	405	0016	802 H Street	Express Bus/Gift Shop		Yes	Wei L. Liu, 7505 Ben Avon Road, Bethesda, MD 20817-4703
8	428	0020	810 7th Street	DRI Building		No	Kan Am, 910 Seventh Street LP, C/O Kanam Grund, Messetrum, Frankfurt, DC 60308
9	453	0059	627-631 H Street	Vacant Lot			MR Gallery Square LLC, 1700 K Street, NW, Suite 600, WDC 20006-3816
10	453	0054	623-625 H Street	Vapiano Restaurant		Yes	Jemal's 632-625 H Street LLC, 702 H Street, NW, WDC 20001-3874
11	453	0830	619-621 H Street	Tony Cheng's/Mongolian Restaurant		Yes	Anthony C. Cheng, 1727 Stonbridge Road, Alexandria, VA 22304
12	453	0805	617 H Street	Ming's Restaurant		Yes	Six Seventeen H Street Associates c/o Dan, 616 Chischester Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20904
13	453	0803	611 H Street	Jackey Café		Yes	Lee On Dong Associates, 2421 Kaywood Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20905-6410
14	453	0802	609 H Street	Eat First Restaurant		Yes	San Tuey Bow Gee Moy, 6539 Jay Miller Drive, Falls Church, VA 22041-1134
15	453	0052	800 6th Street	Wah Luck House		Yes	Washington Chinatown Development Company c/o Aimco TTA MS 235, PO Box 111397, Carrollton, TX 75011-1397
16	454	0050	618-620 H Street	Chinatown Garden Restaurant	On Leong Chinese Merchants Association	Yes	618 Partnership, 618 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001-3732
17	454	0880	622 H Street	Tai Shan Chinese Restaurant		Yes	Buck Young Enterprises, Inc., 7004 Partridge Place, Hyattsville, MD 20782-1155
18	454	0046	736 6th Street	Pizza Bistro Med		Yes	Chin Inc., C/O Ruppert Real Estate Inc. 1017 7th Street NW, WDC 20001-3607
19	454	0046	740-42 6th Street	Burma Kaniaya Thai Cuisine/Urfā Tomato Kabob		Yes	Chin Inc., C/O Ruppert Real Estate Inc. 1017 7th Street NW, WDC 20001-3607
20	486	005	719 6th Street	German American Heritage Museum		Yes	United German-American Committee of the USA Inc., 719 6th Street, NW, WDC 20001-3703
21	486	009	717 6th Street	Bulletin Building	Bulletin Building	Yes	Jemals Rock LLC, 702 H Street, NW, WDC 20001-3874
22			Structure	Friendship Atrway		Yes	

Note: Properties highlighted in red are currently vacant, and were not included in contributing/non-contributing count



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: Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)

Other names/site number: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 600 & 800 blocks of H; 800 block of 8<sup>th</sup>; and 700 & 800 block of 6<sup>th</sup> streets, NW

City or town: Washington State: D.C. County: District of Columbia

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

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object



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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>16</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC – single dwelling/multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE – restaurant/business/professional/organizational/specialty store

RELIGION – religious facility/church-related residence

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC – multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE – restaurant/business/professional/specialty store

RELIGION – religious facility/church-related residence

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – Greek Revival/Exotic Revival

LATE VICTORIAN – Italianate/Eastlake

MODERN MOVEMENT – International Style/Art Deco

OTHER – Chinese Eclectic

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

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: Brick/Stone/Concrete

Walls: Brick/Stone/Stucco

Roof: Metal/Terra Cotta/Synthetic

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Downtown Historic District boundary increase is located along H Street between Sixth and Ninth streets, N.W., with additional properties facing either Sixth or Eighth streets. It includes portions of Squares 453, 454, 486, 404, 405, and 428. The expanded boundary impacts the northern extent of the existing historic district, enlarging its original footprint around the Seventh Street commercial corridor. Newly included buildings east of Seventh Street comprise a mix of nineteenth-century residential buildings converted in the twentieth century to become businesses and restaurants, as well as several purpose-built commercial buildings. In particular, the three-bay, three-story masonry row houses along H Street link the northern and eastern residential portions of the Downtown Historic District with the commercial and federal interests along Seventh and F streets. Their conversion in the twentieth century occurred in conjunction with the establishment of downtown's Chinatown. The character of these buildings relies on a blend of Chinese-inspired colors, architectural details, and applied formal elements, which contribute a lively and dynamic presence to the 600 Block of H Street. The western portion of the boundary increase, immediately west of Eighth Street, includes two additional residential-scale buildings, as well as a prominent religious building, the former Washington Hebrew Synagogue. The expanded boundaries incorporate fifteen contributing buildings and one contributing structure, the Chinatown Friendship Archway, as well as four non-contributing buildings.



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## Narrative Description

### Introduction

The Downtown Historic District is being expanded to include portions of Squares 453, 454, 486, 405, and 428, as well as the entirety of Square 404. This expansion will capture the historic residential and commercial structures—principally located along H Street—not included in the previous district’s boundaries. Additional survey and documentation relating to these resources, particularly the cultural and architectural factors influencing the development of Chinatown, have encouraged a greater contextual understanding of these resources, have strengthened their connection to the history of downtown, and have justified their inclusion in the expanded boundaries. Additionally, the boundary increase incorporates a former synagogue, which is an architectural and historical landmark in downtown. Included within the new boundaries are fifteen contributing buildings and one contributing structure, originally built (or substantially altered) between 1843 and 1986.<sup>1</sup> These buildings represent vernacular examples of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, as well as architecturally designed examples of Exotic Revival and Art Deco styles. A number of these buildings have been modified to support whimsical, Chinese-inspired decorative elements. These resources are significant for their association with the German and German-Jewish populations who built homes and established businesses around the Seventh Street commercial corridor; for their association with downtown’s Chinatown and its associated Chinese population; and for the historic context they provide for the residential, religious, and commercial buildings included within the original district’s boundaries.

### Square 454

The building located at 736 Sixth Street is a two-story, two-bay masonry row house with a gabled roof, set on a raised basement. On the southern side, its exposed gable end wall reveals a pair of engaged chimneys. The building was constructed in 1843, and was later altered with a stucco façade, bracketed Italianate cornice, and a commercial storefront on the basement story. It relates strongly in form and detail to the intact, four-unit row located between 744 and 750 Sixth Street, originally built as a five-unit scheme by J.C. McKeldon. These are small, two-story row houses set on raised basements. Each is two bays wide, with side-facing, gabled roofs and a single, gabled dormer. The row house located at 736 Sixth Street is separated from the northern row by the three-story commercial building located at 740 Sixth Street. With a flat roof, brick façade, and expansive glazing, this International-style building was constructed in 1958. Over the years, the buildings located at 736 and 740 Sixth Street have housed a mix of Chinese restaurants and businesses, and contribute to the boundary expansion for their participation in the development of Chinatown.

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<sup>1</sup> Dates of original construction were obtained from Downtown Survey forms prepared by Don’t Tear It Down (now known as the DC Preservation League) in 1979 and 1980. Buildings, structures, and major modifications to postdate the survey were researched from historic contemporary photographs and newspaper articles.



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Additionally, the building located at 736 Sixth Street strongly relates to its northern row house counterparts, and is suggestive of similar row houses that once lined the entirety of the 700 block of Sixth Street. It reinforces the residential character of the northeastern corner of Square 454, extending the pattern of development exhibited by the buildings at 744 to 750 Sixth Street, as well as by the Mary Surratt House. The Surratt House, located at 604 H Street, was built in 1843 as a single-family dwelling by Jonathan T. Walker, a carpenter who lived nearby on Massachusetts Avenue. Though larger, the Surratt House was built in a style similar to the buildings along Sixth Street. The building located at 750 Sixth Street, the northern end unit of the Sixth Street composition, also has street exposure on H Street. The gable end wall of the building, with its paired engaged chimneys, dominates the corner intersection, while its lower two-story, flat-roofed ell extends along H Street to the alley separating the building from the Surratt House. Together, these buildings represent a typical, pre-Civil War-era dwelling form: the two-to-three-bay, brick, gable-roofed row house.

Along the 600 block of H Street, the extant buildings more clearly portray the growth of Chinatown in the 1930s. The earliest example is 618-620 H Street, constructed between 1852 and 1853 as adjacent three-story, three-bay vernacular Italianate residences set on raised basements. Their exposed masonry facades originally featured Italianate details, including decorative window hoods and bracketed cornices. In 1932, these buildings were combined by the architect Marcus Hallett to become the On Leong Chinese Merchants Association.<sup>2</sup> On Leong was the first Chinese-associated institution to relocate to downtown after the residents of D.C.'s original Chinatown were forced to vacate to allow for the construction of the Federal Triangle. With the On Leong building, major façade alterations imparted a Chinese character to the building, reflective of its role in the Chinese community. These included two metal-tiled, pagoda-style roofs: a lower pent roof covering a glazed storefront, and an upper roof spanning between wide brick piers. Other elements in the composition include an array of Chinese characters and small balconies projecting from the third-story windows. The smaller building to the west, now operated as the Tai Shan Restaurant located at 622 H Street, was constructed about 1860 and retains its original form and scale. In 1939, the building was converted into a Chinese restaurant, and signage advertising the Chinese fare being served was added to the façade. It is possible that the metal tile cornice, similar to that on the On Leong, was added during that conversion. Circa 1964, its facade was covered with glazed tiles to impart a Chinese character. Laid in the tile pattern were a blue moon gate around the entrance and a black *paifang* gate motif around the second-story window, all set against a red background bordered in black. Both buildings contribute to the expanded boundaries, for their reflection of the growth and architectural character of Chinatown.

### Square 486

The buildings located at 717 and 719 Sixth Street are evocative of the comingled residential and commercial nature of downtown, and relate strongly in scale and architectural character to buildings further north along Sixth and H streets. The Hockemeyer House at 719 Sixth Street

<sup>2</sup> The On Leong Chinese Merchants Association has been individually designated to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites (September 26, 1996).



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was built by German immigrant and entrepreneur John Hockemeyer in 1888. This three-story, Italianate-style building is faced in pressed brick and sits on a raised basement. A prominent, half-round turret terminates the principal façade's southern corner. Other architectural details include repetitive bands of corbelled belt courses and a pedimented entry surround. In addition to being a venue for his various German and social clubs, Hockemeyer's residence also became a revenue source. In 1893, he added a two-story rear addition to his residence to create a banquet hall and assembly room. The two principal floors were used as a clubhouse for several social clubs and were also available to other organizations for special events, while the Hockemeyers lived on the third floor above. After vacating the building following Hockemeyer's death in 1899, his family rented the property to a number of social clubs, civic organizations, and minor labor unions.

Facing the Hockemeyer House across an alley to the north, the Bulletin Building is located at 717 Sixth Street.<sup>3</sup> Designed by the firm Rodier & Kundzin and completed in 1928, the Bulletin Building is a rare and intact example of an Art Deco industrial building within the District of Columbia. This three-story, three-bay building is faced in stone, its upper frieze highlighted with exquisitely carved relief panels. Designed by architect Gilbert LaCoste Rodier and carved by Charles Sullivan, these four frieze panels depict milestones in the printing industry, appropriate to the building's original tenant, the United Publishing Company, whose offices and printing works were housed in the 717 Sixth Street building. One of the company's signature publications, *The Bulletin*, lent the building its name. The building's interior receives ample daylight from its northern elevation, which is generously lined with metal casement windows. The building retained its association with the printing industry until the 1980s—even after *The Bulletin* was shuttered in 1956—and was recently converted to for use as a nightclub. It retains a high degree of physical integrity.

### Square 453

Compared to the demure, Greek Revival-style townhouses that once lined Sixth Street, the buildings constructed along the 600 block of H Street were larger and built over a greater historical span. While many have been modified with commercial storefronts on their lower stories, each building retains its integrity; as a streetscape, it retains a continuity of form and scale, which presents a general historical progression from the smaller, gabled row houses of the 1840s to the larger, more ornate row houses of the 1850s to 1870s.

Also along this block are located the greatest concentration of nineteenth-century buildings adapted to become the city's Chinatown. While the building stock is similar in style and type to the rest of the historic district, distinct signs of the area's cultural and ethnic character are clearly visible. Signs, symbols, and ornamentation of Chinese derivation appear on many of the commercial establishments in the area. A number of structures have undergone renovations that have obscured the original character of the building behind chinoiserie facades. These Chinese elements include signage, non-structural roofs and awnings, stone and tile veneers over the

<sup>3</sup> The Bulletin Building has been individually designated to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites (September 28, 2006) and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (November 12, 2008).



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original masonry facades, and vivid paint schemes. These changes synthesize the underlying row house form of these buildings with exuberant additions relating to the buildings' new uses and cultural affiliations. Several structures along the northern side of H Street exhibit these characteristics.

The buildings located at 609 and 611 H Street are a connected pair of three-story, three-bay brick row houses set on partially raised basements. The former was constructed in 1862, and the latter was built a decade later. As originally constructed, these buildings were Italianate houses with bracketed cornices, and both have been modified by the addition of first-story commercial storefronts. By the 1940s, both buildings had been converted to multi-family residences and Chinese-operated restaurants. Of the two, the building at 611 H Street is more visually intact to its nineteenth-century condition, as it retains its window hoods and cornice. That at 609 H Street has been altered with tile and PermaStone cladding, yet retains its original fenestration pattern and form. Divided from these buildings by a paved parking lot, the building at 617 H Street strongly resembles those at 611 and 609 H Street in both form and ornamentation. Constructed circa 1859 by dry goods store-operator William F. Shuster, this building also bears a first-story commercial storefront, yet it retains an Italianate entry surround and hood. From the 1890s onward, the building was owned by the Kattelman family, who presided over a jewelry store nearby, until it was purchased by a Chinese resident in 1935. As predominantly intact nineteenth-century row houses modified to support Chinese businesses and residents, these three buildings contribute to the significance of the expanded boundaries.

Immediately adjacent, the building located at 619-621 H Street was constructed in 1930 as an Art Deco-style, masonry-clad professional building to serve the D. Ballauf Manufacturing Company. In 1986, it was extensively altered to become Tony Cheng's Restaurant. Designed by Taiwanese architect Alfred H. Liu, who contributed several works to Chinatown during the 1980s, the remodeled façade features a polished-metal moon gate; a cascade of flared, tiled roofs; tiled stone cladding; an open stone balustrade; and a square tower engaged with the building's western side.<sup>4</sup> Like the On Leong building it faces across H Street, the redesigned façade of Tony Cheng's Restaurant exhibits an imaginative and comprehensive reconfiguration that completely obscures the character of the underlying building. For its contribution to the architectural character of Chinatown, the property is a contributing building to the expanded boundaries.

The building located at 623-625 H Street—separated from the adjacent building by a small alley—is similar in scale, with two upper stories covered in stucco set above a stone-and-glass storefront. It features a continuous cornice and six-bay fenestration pattern above, with a commercial storefront below. The building was constructed circa 1869 as two separate masonry buildings, but it has served as a connected unit throughout most of its history. In the twentieth century, a number of alterations were made, including several rear additions and the Art Deco-style, limestone commercial storefront, which was added in 1945. In addition to multi-family residences and various businesses, it has housed an automobile showroom, garage, and repair shop. The building currently houses a restaurant, and—like those at 619-621 H Street—is

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<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Forgey, "The Promise of Chinatown," *Washington Post*, August 6, 1988.



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indicative of changing patterns of use and architectural identity in downtown's Chinatown, and is a contributing property to the district.

The Wah Luck House, located at 800 Sixth Street, is a ten-story apartment building constructed in 1982. Designed by architect Alfred H. Liu, the building is clad in brick and concrete aggregate panels. Its design incorporates streamlined chinoiserie elements, including a cantilevered roof slab with an inverted flare profile and paneled concrete balcony railings with Chinese decorative motifs. Facing these balcony railings are exterior walls clad in vivid red stucco. The building's nine upper stories visually rest on a plinth formed by a projecting first story, lined with solid brick walls and raised planting beds. The building's principal entrance—located at the center of the elevation facing Sixth Street—bears the shape of a shallow circular arch, and is echoed in the building's interior, revealing an enclosed rear garden visible from the street. The height and mass of the Wah Luck House anchors the eastern edge of this block of Chinatown. For its architectural design, visual presence, and continuing role in the preservation of Chinatown's ethnic character, the building contributes to the significance of the expanded boundaries.

The Friendship Archway, a massive *paifang*-style archway constructed in 1986, is located on H Street facing the intersection of Seventh. *Paifang*-style arches are elaborate, highly decorated structures common in Chinese cities and American Chinatowns; they are intended to mark a significant transition or ceremonial passage. Framing the western edge of the 600 block of H Street, the Friendship Archway heralds the advent of Chinese-operated businesses, restaurants, and cultural institutions predominantly located east of Seventh Street, and concentrated along Sixth, H, and I streets. Also designed by Alfred H. Liu, the exuberantly detailed arch features three tiers of hipped roofs with deeply flared, upturned eaves; dragon fixtures both painted and sculpted, a brilliant array of gold, mahogany, and jewel tones; and squat stone bases. The arch's monumental span is supported by a concealed steel beam. The completion of the arch marks the end date of the expanded boundaries' period of significance, and it is a contributing structure to the district.

### *Alley Buildings in Square 453*

The interior alleys of Square 453 are collectively known as Essex Court and represent the largest and most historically intact collection of alley buildings in the Downtown Historic District. The buildings along the northern side of the court (those connected to properties facing I Street) were included in the original district's boundaries. The buildings described below are attached to or associated with properties facing H Street, which contribute to the significance of the expanded boundaries. Together, these structures create a complete alley ensemble.

The alley buildings connected to the properties facing the 600 Block of H Street exhibit a great diversity in size, architectural treatment, and use. The building at the rear of 609 H Street is a slender, two-story, flat-roofed building constructed of exposed CMU blocks. Directly adjacent, the alley building at the rear of 611 H Street is a two-story, stucco-clad structure with a shed roof. Once a freestanding unit, this building is now connected to the adjoining row house via a single-story, brick-clad hyphen. The building extending to the rear of 617 H Street is a low-



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slung, stucco-clad structure without windows. On its rear elevation, the building's only opening appears to have been a garage door, but is now mostly enclosed in CMU blocks. Each of the buildings supports mechanical equipment and metal ventilation ducts. All appear to have been extensively modified from their original condition, and do not retain historic integrity.

The building attached to the rear of Tony Cheng's Restaurant (619-621 H Street) is greater in scale. Clad in brick, the building is three stories in height, with engaged penthouses that extend for another full story. Built in 1910, this building predates the attached structure facing H Street, and it was originally used as a machine shop. This building too has been extensively modified, but retains much of its original fenestration pattern and character as an early-twentieth-century industrial building. Similarly, the building located at the rear of 623-625 H Street has retained its industrial character. Built as a three-story, three-bay automobile garage, the building was supported on a reinforced concrete frame with brick infill. Constructed circa 1923, the building acted as a functional extension to that facing H Street, which at the time was also being used as a parking garage.

### **Square 405**

In Square 405, a single property is located within the expanded boundaries. Built in 1870 as one of a group of four three-story, three-bay row houses, the building at 802 H Street also features a side-facing gabled roof concealed behind a parapet wall. Like the formerly residential buildings to the east, this structure has been modified with a first-story, glazed storefront, yet it retains its masonry cladding and bracketed, Italianate cornice. While it stands alone, this building retains its historic integrity as a nineteenth-century row house, and terminates the string of residences along H Street, referring northward to the buildings facing Eighth Street.

### **Square 404**

The former Washington Hebrew Congregation, now the Greater New Hope Baptist Church, (816-822 Eighth Street) visually dominates the 800 block of Eighth Street.<sup>5</sup> It was once the largest building on Square 404, but since the late 1980s has been surrounded by a trio of modern office buildings, which form a U around the building, framing it to the north and south. The building now occupied by Greater New Hope Church was originally designed to house the Washington Hebrew Synagogue, by architects Stutz & Pease (1897). The monochromatic quality of this building's sandstone façade belies its finer architectural details, particularly the lance-like corbelling along the roof parapet; the large stained glass window at its center surrounded by bas-relief carvings; and its outer engaged belfries. Immediately adjacent to the Greater New Hope Church is 822 Eighth Street, a building whose history has been linked to the church and synagogue since 1928, when it was purchased by the Hebrew Congregation. This painted brick row house, constructed in 1875-1876, has a typical Victorian Italianate form—a side-hall plan with a pedimented, projecting bay flanked by a subordinate entry porch—yet its architectural features are more closely aligned with the Eastlake Movement: sharply angular

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<sup>5</sup> The Washington Hebrew Congregation was individually listed to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites on November 8, 1964.



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cornice brackets, squared window hood molds, a free classic Ionic portico and porch, and incised wood details.

### **Square 428**

The northwestern corner of Square 428 includes a portion of 810 Seventh Street (completed in 1991 and commonly known as the DRI Building). It is a non-contributing building of greater scale than its surroundings. However, as the residue of the square was included in the original historic district's boundaries, this portion is being included to adjust the boundary currently running through a new building.

### **Integrity**

The buildings within the expanded boundaries have for the most part been altered, but in many cases it is their alteration throughout history that contributes to their significance. Alterations undertaken on the buildings fall into two main categories: conversion of residential buildings to commercial use (realized through the addition of first-story commercial storefronts, modification of interior spaces, and rear building additions) and stylistic alterations related to the growth of Chinatown. The majority of these modifications were conducted during the period of significance (1830-1940, and extending to 1986 for those properties meeting Chinatown's areas of significance), and thus contributes to the narrative history downtown's development. For example, the On Leong Chinese Merchants Association building was extensively modified in 1932 during its conversion from a pair of nineteenth-century row houses. The addition of its eclectic, Chinese-inspired façade exemplifies the cultural and physical shift underway in Chinatown during this period. Other examples, like the addition of signage, paint schemes, and applied decorative elements on several former row houses on the northern side of H Street, do not interfere with the building's basic form and material character.

As they are located in close proximity to the properties contributing to the original Downtown Historic District, the properties within the expanded boundaries exhibit integrity of both location and setting. Despite the alterations listed above, the character-defining features of each building are largely retained, including building form and fenestration, roof shape, cladding, and decorative architectural elements (most notably their Italianate window hoods and cornices). The presence of these elements contributes to a high level of design integrity, and extends to a moderate degree of integrity of workmanship and materials. The integrity of association is similarly high for these buildings. As they represent vital transition areas within downtown—the residential areas along H and I streets and the commercial corridor along Seventh Street, as well as between Chinatown and its periphery—these areas provide potent associative links that help to convey the historical development of downtown.



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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.)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage

Commerce

Social History

Religion

**Period of Significance**

1830-1986

**Significant Dates**

1830, 1862, 1932, 1986

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Stutz & Pease

W. Syme

Marcus T. Hallett

Alfred H. Liu

Rodier & Kundzin

**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 Downtown Historic District was added to District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites in 1984 and was listed to National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The boundaries of the district are now being expanded to include additional properties whose history is closely associated with that of the district. Since the area's initial survey and designation, new research and an increased historical perspective have highlighted the significance of these properties and their strong contextual ties to the district's narrative history and significance. The expanded boundaries meet National Register Criteria A and C, and will augment three specific subcategories of the district's original statement of significance: residential development along H Street, the development of ethnically affiliated religious institutions downtown, and the growth and development of Chinatown. These subcategories illustrate vital components of the downtown's social history: its architectural development throughout the period of significance, its symbiotic residential and commercial nature, and its evolving ethnic heritage.

To comprehensively relate the development of Chinatown, the period of significance is being expanded to 1986. The date was determined by the completion of the Friendship Archway,



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which capped a series of revitalization efforts for downtown, and which today is the neighborhood's most resonant cultural symbol. This expanded period of significance applies only to those properties within the expanded boundaries directly affected by the growth and development of Chinatown, as revealed through the areas of architecture, ethnic heritage, and social history. Of the fifteen contributing resources within the expanded boundaries, four were built or substantially modified within the past fifty years, and therefore activate Criteria Consideration G. These three buildings and one structure represent a minority of the resources within the expanded boundaries, as well as within the original historic district. They are an integral part of the historic district, and it is not therefore necessary to prove exceptional individual importance, as outlined in the Criteria Consideration guidelines for historic districts.

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

The existing Downtown Historic District National Register nomination form contains a comprehensive history of the development of the neighborhood. The following provides additional historic context for the buildings within the expanded boundaries, particularly relating to the foundation and growth of Chinatown.

### **Seventh Street Commercial Corridor**

With a central location along the city's principal nineteenth-century trade route, Seventh Street developed as one of the most important thoroughfares of early Washington. It was the first street paved by the city, and in 1862 was chosen as the path of the city's first horse-drawn streetcar system. Center Market, opened in 1801 at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street, provided a southern anchor for the corridor. Federal investment in the 1830s—particularly the construction of the Patent Office and General Post Office buildings (both begun in 1836, with later additions)—drew not only laborers and tradesmen, but also the professional classes, to the area. In 1862, the opening of Northern Liberty Market at Mount Vernon Square complemented the Center Market (reconstructed and expanded in 1880), and fostered commercial growth further north, particularly above G Street.<sup>6</sup>

After the Civil War, the character of buildings along Seventh Street evolved both in use and form. Prior to this, commercial establishments closely resembled their residential counterparts; it was not uncommon for a single merchant to inhabit both a building's first-story commercial storefront and its residential quarters above. As these blocks developed more intensively, buildings grew larger and more commercial in nature; soon, large department stores, dry goods businesses, and furniture stores dominated the street. Additionally, the area developed a strong German presence offering the merchants, craftsmen, and architects ample opportunities for work. St. Mary's Catholic Church at Fifth and H streets anchored the German community, offering both spiritual guidance and a community social outlet. The German presence was reflected in

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<sup>6</sup> D.C. Landmark Application. *Peter Grogan Company Building*, Washington, D.C.



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the names of the original jewelers, dry goods retailers, grocers, confectioners, and furniture merchants along these blocks: Gasch, Schmedtie, Sievers, Schmeir, Behren, and Eberly among them. By the turn of the century, a preponderance of furniture dealers occupied the 800 and 900 blocks of Seventh Street (between G and I streets), establishing a furniture row that survived well into the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

While not located on Seventh Street, the Bulletin Building at 717 Sixth Street illustrates the sustained commercial activity of downtown into the twentieth century. Constructed in 1928 to house the offices and printing works of the United Publishing Company, the Art Deco-style building served a dual commercial and industrial role, while its scale and architectural treatment were designed to exist in harmony with the residential character of Sixth Street. The building is significant for its early and intact Art Deco design, for its contribution to the commercial activity of downtown in the mid-twentieth century, and for its individual associations with the local printing and media industries.

#### *Seventh Street's Residential Counterpart*

The residential history of downtown is inseparable from its commercial and institutional growth; although the latter factors now predominate, their character and history are most clearly revealed through an understanding of the populations that made their homes downtown. As buildings along Seventh Street grew larger and more dedicated to stores and offices, a residential district became distilled in the areas to the north and east, particularly along H, I, and Sixth streets. Prior to the Civil War, these buildings were smaller, single-family, masonry row houses. The building located at 736 Sixth Street (1843, with later alterations), as well as the formerly residential block located at 744-750 Sixth Street (1844), is representative of the modest, Greek Revival-style houses built during this era.

From the 1860s to the 1890s, houses in the neighborhood grew larger and more architecturally ornate. Reflecting the growth of the Seventh Street corridor, this area became similarly dense and diverse, albeit residential, in character. The 600 block of H Street exemplified this trend, developing with three-story, three-bay, Italianate townhouses. Immigrant groups such as Germans and German-Jews who arrived during this post-war period, and whose livelihoods depended on Seventh Street, found homes in this section of downtown. John Hockemeyer, who constructed the turreted, Italianate building at 719 Sixth Street (1888, addition 1893), is emblematic of this trend: not only did he reside in the building, but he also made it available for use by civic and social clubs, some of which supported German cultural interests. In addition to German-speaking, Protestant and Catholic churches, a number of synagogues were established to provide social and religious services for the large Jewish community.

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<sup>7</sup> D.C. Landmark Application. *Peter Grogan Company Building*, Washington, D.C.



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## H Street Architectural Significance

The northern area of the Downtown Historic District, centering on H and I streets between Fifth and Ninth streets, developed as a residential district intrinsically linked to commercial activities, and was indicative of the intensively mixed-use character of early downtown. Extant building fabric reveals the longstanding presence of a residential periphery downtown. Indeed, many of the district's oldest structures are to be found in this category, reflecting the largest concentration of pre-Civil War buildings between Capitol Hill and Georgetown. These residential buildings present a textbook of the Washington vernacular row house, from gable-roofed, two-bay houses; to three-bay, flat-roofed flat-fronted, houses; to pressed-brick, bay-fronted houses. As they contribute to the downtown's architectural character, they represent the panoply of residential building styles whose history spans nearly the entire period of significance of the district.

After the Civil War, residential downtown extended west and north, with the houses increasing in size and level of ornamentation. Dates of construction for the larger residences located along H and I streets trended toward the second half of the nineteenth century, and exhibited a greater diversity of architectural styles—predominantly Italianate, with select examples of Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival—which meshed with the contemporary commercial development along Seventh Street. Buildings along the 600 block of H Street exhibit this pattern. Extant residential buildings along this block were constructed between 1843 (the Surratt House at 604 H Street) and 1872 (the building at 611 H Street). Apart from the Surratt House, these buildings featured three full stories above partially exposed basements, three bays, and bracketed Italianate cornices. Despite the span of years—and later alterations to these properties—this vocabulary created a harmony of architectural expression which is today unequalled in the remainder of the Downtown Historic District.

Further, these buildings represent the most central link between the Seventh Street commercial corridor and the residential streets to its north and east. Properties being incorporated into the expanded boundaries include a number of Italianate-style row houses that retain a high degree of integrity. These, along with 736 Sixth Street (the oldest standing residential structure on the 700 block of Sixth Street), strengthen the historical context of the Mary Surratt House grouping and other clusters, and their inclusion will provide an uninterrupted link along the H Street residential corridor, uniting these related and significant groupings. The 700 block of H Street continues the pattern of development, presenting buildings of larger size, later vintage, and greater architectural ornamentation. The building located at the western end of the expanded boundaries, 802 H Street, frames the western terminus of the H Street residential corridor.

The rapid commercial development during this period altered the balance of residential and commercial uses that had prevailed at mid-century. Development shifted westward along F and G streets, with larger stores and greatly increased density. It was in this area that a "downtown"—a neighborhood which served as the commercial hub for the entire city—developed. This shift materialized in the construction of larger buildings scaled for the new commercial activities. However, other, existing buildings were left standing, and modified with first-story commercial storefronts or subdivided to support multi-family use. This was certainly



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the case within the 600-800 blocks of H Street, in which many of the buildings were replaced or modified to support changing uses, representative of a pattern that continued into the twentieth century.

## **Chinatown<sup>8</sup>**

### *Chinese Immigration to America*

The history of D.C.'s Chinatown is closely aligned with the story of Chinese immigration into the United States—a story characterized by discrimination and a search for assimilation into American society. Beginning in the 1850s, thousands fled economic hardship in China to seek opportunities made available through westward expansion during the California Gold Rush. As the Gold Rush came to an end, many chose to stay in the country and found work as laborers in California and other western states. Chinese immigrants were initially valued as a cheap source of labor, but following the 1870s economic depression work became scarce and Chinese people became the scapegoats of lost job opportunities. Negative sentiments escalated into the congressional passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which aimed to restrict the Chinese from immigrating, owning property, and becoming citizens. Ending in 1924, this Act was periodically renewed and expanded. Not until 1943 did Chinese Americans regain the right to become naturalized citizens. In response to these hostilities, and seeking cultural familiarity, Chinese immigrants settled in close-knit urban enclaves. These “Chinatowns” accommodated separate societies where immigrants could speak their language, could celebrate their culture, where economic opportunity existed, and where they could achieve a stable living.

### *D.C.'s First Chinatown*

The first Chinese immigrant to Washington arrived in 1851. By 1884, the first Chinatown in Washington existed on Pennsylvania Avenue, near 4½ Street, NW, with approximately one-hundred residents, mostly men, in a dozen or so buildings. Chinese exclusion laws forbade Chinese women from entering the country. This deprived many Chinese immigrants of the right to marriage and family, and caused early Chinatowns to become bachelor societies.<sup>9</sup> However, by 1898 Chinatown continued to expand to include parts of Third Street, and by 1903, it was bustling with drugstores, restaurants, barbershops, tailor shops, and mercantile establishments, including twenty-seven laundries.

### *A New Chinatown*

Chinatown rapidly expanded until 1929, when the development of the Federal Triangle forcibly removed the entire population. The undertaking obliged nearly 400 Chinese residents and numerous businesses to seek out a new home in the face of resistance and opposition from white

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from “Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Plan,” District of Columbia Office of Planning, Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, October 2009.

<sup>9</sup> By 1882, there was an average of 2,107 Chinese men to every Chinese woman in the United States.



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residents. Despite this major setback, Chinese residents and businesses, led by the On Leong Chinese Merchants Association, formed a new Chinatown in 1931 between Fifth and Seventh streets, NW. At this new location, they sought to reestablish their businesses and culture. Chinatown continued to grow, and by 1936 around 800 people (including thirty-two families) resided in Chinatown. They established Chinese schools, clubs, and entertainment facilities. Chinatown also had a number of community organizations as well as civic and merchant associations. Following World War II, Congress passed a series of laws that started the path to normalizing Chinese immigration. In the post-war period, Chinese women legally immigrated for the first time. During this time, Chinatown continued to flourish with the establishment of new community organizations. The Chinese lobbied for equal rights during Civil Rights movement, which resulted in the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, effectively removing the ban on Asian immigration. By 1970, there were about 3,000 Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese living in Chinatown.

### *Urban Renewal in Chinatown*

However, by the mid-1960s a decline in the Chinese population in Chinatown had begun. Several factors, including higher crime rates, rising taxes, and a deteriorating business climate, influenced this change. Many Chinese residents, seeking both a higher standard and lower cost of living, moved to the suburbs. The 1968 riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. devastated parts of the city and hastened this trend. While the riots did not directly impact Chinatown, business there precipitously dropped off in their aftermath. In response to these events, the government began planning for urban renewal projects in and around Downtown Washington. As a result, Chinatown was threatened for a second time by urban renewal. In conjunction with the development of Washington Metro transit system, much of Seventh Street between H and F streets was demolished to build the Gallery Place station.<sup>10</sup> The District of Columbia government finalized its development plans for a convention center to be built in the heart of Chinatown at Seventh and H streets. Uniting to protest this displacement, Chinatown residents succeeded in moving the convention center two blocks west to Ninth and H streets (completed in 1982, no longer extant). Despite these efforts, by 1978 Chinatown's population had dwindled to fewer than 600 residents, and only twenty Chinese laundries were left among the original 153 in the D.C. area.

### *Chinatown Rebuilds*

Many initiatives were undertaken during the 1980s to revive the cultural identity of Chinatown. Completed in 1982, the Wah Luck House at the northwestern corner of Sixth and H streets provided 153 affordable housing units for Chinese seniors displaced by the construction of the old convention center. Funding was secured through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the land was donated by the D.C. government. In 1984, the establishment of the Downtown Historic District resulted in the designation of approximately half of the historic structures within the boundaries of Chinatown. The most important initiative to define

<sup>10</sup> The station opened in 1976 and was renamed Gallery Place-Chinatown in 1986.



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Chinatown as a cultural destination was the construction of the Friendship Archway in 1986. This 48-foot-high, 75-foot-wide structure was the nation's largest Chinese archway and established a gateway into Chinatown at Seventh and H streets. Following the Archway was the creation of the Chinatown design guidelines, intended to protect and promote Chinese-inspired architecture in Chinatown, as well as the formation of the Chinatown Steering Committee, to review and provide guidance for Chinatown's redevelopment. In addition to building-specific recommendations, the design guidelines advocated for the implementation of themed streetscape elements, such as lighting, street furniture, and signage. For those resources directly relating to the history and significance of Chinatown, the expansion of the period of significance to 1986 is vital to capturing their role in its development.

### *Architectural Significance*

The properties along the 600 block of H Street represent the origin of Chinese-American inhabitation of the neighborhood, as well as the larger downtown. Chinatown's growth in downtown during the 1930s is illustrative of a continuous pattern of changing demographics in the area, as established ethnic groups gave way to new ones. Many of the nineteenth-century buildings along this block were modified to support Chinese-centric businesses and restaurants. The most notable of these is the On Leong Chinese Merchants Association (618-620 H Street), two former row houses rehabilitated in 1932 to house a civic and social institution. The building is architecturally significant as the first in Chinatown to employ Chinese decorative elements. Architect Marcus Hallet's combination of the two Italianate-style row houses synthesized traditional chinoiserie features with a classically inspired, symmetrical geometry, resulting in a remarkably cohesive façade. The conversion of this building inspired similar treatments throughout Chinatown.<sup>11</sup> Directly adjacent, the Tai Shan Chinese Restaurant located at 622 H Street employs glazed tiles to apply pattern and depth to an otherwise flat façade. This building was converted to its present appearance circa 1964.

In the 1980s, Taiwanese architect Alfred H. Liu contributed three designs to Chinatown: the Wah Luck House (1982), the Friendship Archway (1986), and the renovation of Tony Cheng's Restaurant (1986). Each design is unique in its scale and purpose, and for each Liu chose an original and imaginative treatment. The Wah Luck House, located at 800 Sixth Street, threads subtle chinoiserie elements through an otherwise Modernist apartment tower. For Tony Cheng's restaurant located at 623-625 H Street—converted from a 1930s Art Deco-style commercial building—Liu concealed the original façade behind stone tiles, and added depth with boldly projecting roofs and an engaged tower. For the Friendship Archway, Liu manipulated the traditional *paifang* wood structure with the integration of a steel beam, which enabled the columns to support their remarkably long span. Otherwise, he employed traditional Chinese forms and symbols, and collaborated with Chinese craftsmen for the erection of the structure.

Several additional properties along this block still house Chinese residents and businesses, yet they retain the basic form and appearance of Italianate-style row houses. Typical examples of

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<sup>11</sup> D.C. Landmark Application, Chinese Merchants Association Building (On Leong Tong), Washington, D.C.



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applied features include commercial signs, Chinese characters, and vibrant paint schemes. This dual nature allows them to convey their historical associations both with Washington's Chinatown and with the earlier generation of inhabitants who worked and resided there.

### **Washington Hebrew Congregation and Synagogue**

In 1852, a small Jewish community formed the first synagogue in the city, the Washington Hebrew Congregation. They initially met in members' homes, and in 1863 bought the church building of the Methodist Episcopal Church, located on Eighth Street between H and I streets, and immediately renovated it for their own use. The Hebrew Congregation occupied their building until the pressures of a growing congregation caused a new synagogue to be designed and erected on the same site. This was completed in 1897 by architects Stutz & Pease, and took the form of a much larger and grandiose edifice. In addition to a stone façade, the building featured a handsomely detailed interior; monumentally scaled stained glass windows; and two towering, engaged belfries with domed roofs that were removed circa 1970.<sup>12</sup> Its architectural style and physical prominence were intended to distinguish and reflect the Jewish community itself.<sup>13</sup>

The congregation remained in the building until the 1950s, when it was sold to the predominantly African American Greater New Hope Baptist Congregation, reflecting a twentieth-century demographic shift in downtown, as well as much of the District of Columbia. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, African American populations became a cultural force in downtown, patronizing downtown businesses and establishing urban religious congregations, some of which exist today.<sup>14</sup> The former Washington Hebrew Synagogue (816-820 Eighth Street) was among these; it and its accessory residential building (822 Eighth Street) may be counted among the religious buildings of the district whose inclusion is vital to this narrative.

The juxtaposition of the architecturally refined temple and its vernacular counterpart to the north present a microcosm of the architectural character of greater downtown. The religious buildings located within downtown greatly diversify the architectural vocabulary and physical appearance of its streets. Unlike residential or commercial buildings, churches and synagogues more intimately reflect the values and beliefs of their inhabitants, which have continuously evolved throughout the history of downtown. As can be seen on the façade of the former Washington Hebrew Synagogue, its changing religious affiliations are writ upon its surface, with the signage and religious iconography of the building having changed to support new uses.

These two properties are significant for social and religious associations with the Washington Hebrew Congregation, as well as the broader history of Jewish and German-Jewish settlement of

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<sup>12</sup> The booklet *Downtown Urban Renewal Area Landmarks, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1970) includes a photograph showing the domes being removed.

<sup>13</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, *Towards a "National Shrine": A Centennial History of Washington Hebrew Congregation 1855-1955* (Williamsburg, VA: The College of William and Mary, 2005), 21-22.

<sup>14</sup> Justin Spivey, "The Washington Hebrew Temple." Unpublished student paper, The George Washington University, November 1997.



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downtown in the nineteenth century. The former synagogue is architecturally significant as a unique example of an Exotic Revival style, suited to the particularities of site and use. The adjacent building at 822 Eighth Street is architecturally significant as an intact, representative example of the Eastlake style.

### Essex Court

Connected to the newly included properties facing the 600 Block of H Street are several alley buildings. Officially titled Essex Court, the alley located within Square 453 contains the greatest collection of historic alley buildings within the Downtown Historic District. As the expanded boundaries now incorporate the entirety of the square, Essex Court represents the largest and most physically intact alley assemblage within the district. While the alley buildings on the northern side of the court were included within the boundaries of the original historic district, this nomination includes an expanded historic context and statement of significance for all of the resources facing the court.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the rapid growth of Washington placed a strain on the city's developed areas easily linked by pedestrian traffic. The establishment of streetcar lines would ease some of this congestion, but these would not appear until the 1860s. To alleviate the housing and property shortage, parcels were subdivided and freestanding dwellings were erected at the rear of lots, facing internal alleys. The generous size of many of Washington's squares made them conducive to subdivision. For especially large blocks, the common pattern was three internal alleys—varying in width from ten to forty feet—that formed an H-shaped configuration. As these internal streets had no direct ingress and were accessible only through narrow openings to the street, they became known as “blind” or “hidden” alleys.<sup>15</sup> Essex Court on Square 453, lacking the outer flanges, featured a single internal street accessed by a narrow alley, forming a cross pattern. In the nineteenth century, a mix of freestanding stables, carriages houses, and dwellings populated Essex Court, and were separated from the street-facing dwellings or commercial buildings by enclosed yards.

As early as the 1830s, wood-frame dwellings were built within Essex Court. By the 1880s, several brick dwellings had been erected, some of which replaced the earlier frame structures. The ethnic makeup of the residents of Essex Court was fluid throughout the nineteenth century. The area was inhabited by non-foreign-born, non-black residents in the 1850s, and hosted several African American families by the 1880s. At the turn of the century, it was composed of a mix of African American and Arabian residents. By the 1920s, diversity had increased to include white, black, and foreign-born households. In conjunction with the development of Chinatown, Chinese American residents inhabited the alley beginning in the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> By the 1880s, two-story dwellings—both brick and wood-frame—lined the northern side of the court nearly in its

<sup>15</sup> James Bochert, “The Rise and Fall of Washington's Inhabited Alleys: 1852-1972,” in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1971-1972*, edited by Francis Coleman Rosenberger (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1973), 267-268.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara J. Little and Nancy J. Kassner, “Archaeology in the alleys of Washington, DC,” in *The Archaeology of Urban Landscapes*, edited by Alan Mayne and Tim Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 58-60.



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entirety. On the southern side, brick dwellings were scattered along the western half, while the eastern half was dotted with two-story masonry carriage houses.<sup>17</sup> As the city's population continued to swell in the late nineteenth century, alley dwellings were characterized by overcrowding, lack of access to municipal utility services, and unsanitary living conditions. For these reasons, social reform movements active from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s sought to eradicate these substandard living conditions and their associated buildings. Limited examples of earlier stables and carriage houses and later alley dwellings may still be found, scattered throughout the city.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the dense commercial character of the area surrounding Square 453, Essex Court presented itself as an ideal location for warehouse, parking, and light industrial buildings to be developed; therefore, many of its smaller-scale buildings (detached houses, stables, garages, etc.) were replaced by larger warehouses and surface lots. For example, the brick dwellings located at the rear of 623-625 H Street were, circa 1923, replaced by a large, reinforced concrete automobile garage, which serviced the street-facing building. In 1910, the masonry garage or carriage house at the rear of 621 H Street was replaced with a three-story, brick-clad machine shop. The buildings currently situated on 609 and 611 H Street are potentially the same as those masonry garages or carriage houses that existed in the late nineteenth century, though they have been extensively modified to support new uses.

A similar history characterized development on the northern side of the court. The nearly uninterrupted row of two-story masonry dwellings that existed in the late nineteenth century was gradually taken down or replaced by garages or larger warehouses. The private garage at the rear of 620 I Street was constructed in 1916; it currently functions as an automobile repair shop. Directly adjacent, the two-story masonry building at the rear of 618 I Street was constructed in 1912 to house a woodworking shop. By the 1920s, it was being used as an automobile garage. A sign placed over the rear garage bay identifies it as a former warehouse for the Washington Rice Company, whose main offices faced I Street. The five-story brick and concrete warehouse building at the rear of 616 I Street was constructed in 1921, and features an engaged elevator penthouse that extends for another full story. All three buildings retain a moderate to high degree of integrity, with extant, original masonry, fenestration patterns, and in some cases windows. Between the 1920s and 1960s, all of the remaining alley dwellings on the northern side of Essex Court had been replaced by surface parking lots.

## Conclusion

The expanded boundaries incorporate a number of significant properties whose period of construction and cultural affiliations span the breadth of downtown itself, including both pre- and post-Civil War residential buildings, twentieth-century commercial buildings, a late-nineteenth-

<sup>17</sup> Information gathered from *Insurance Maps of Washington* (New York: Sanborn Map Publishing Company, 1888-1960), various sheets.

<sup>18</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District, Washington, D.C., National Register #90001734.



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century synagogue, a diverse collection of alley-facing buildings, and resources associated with downtown's Chinatown neighborhood. These new properties provide additional context for the residential portions of downtown to the north and east, and represent an important physical link between these areas and the commercial interests located on F and Seventh streets. For those properties identifying with Chinatown's areas of significance, the expanded period of significance to 1986 allows for the inclusion of several resources vital to the understanding of the development and continuity of that neighborhood.

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Spivey, Justin. "The Washington Hebrew Temple." Unpublished student paper, The George Washington University, November 1997.



Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)  
Name of Property

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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):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 5.5 acres

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: 38.900804° | Longitude: -77.023966° |
| 2. Latitude: 38.900473° | Longitude: -77.019833° |
| 3. Latitude: 38.899293° | Longitude: -77.020052° |
| 4. Latitude: 38.899755° | Longitude: -77.023972° |

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**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

Properties being included within the expanded boundaries are located on Squares 404, 405, 428, 453, 454, and 486. H Street, between Sixth and Ninth streets, forms the core of the boundary increase; most of the contributing buildings face this street, with additional properties facing either Sixth or Eighth streets. The expanded boundaries may be separated into portions lying east and west of Seventh Street, N.W. On the east, the newly included area fills the void formed by the original boundaries, incorporating those resources formerly excluded. With the exception of the Wah Luck House, which is located at 800 Sixth Street, all of these properties have addresses along the 600 block of H Street. The only expansion of the footprint in this portion occurs along Sixth Street, where it is expanded to the south to incorporate 636-642, 617, and 619 Sixth Street. On the western portion, the new boundary extends the northwestern corner of the district to the intersection of Eighth and I streets. Here, it turns south on Eighth Street; beginning at 822 Eighth Street, it includes the properties on the west side of Eighth, then crosses H Street to include a notch south of H Street that incorporates 802 H Street and the vacant lot to its east. From here, the boundary moves east across Eighth Street to meet the existing boundaries.

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

The expanded boundaries of the Downtown Historic District provide additional context for those properties currently contributing to the significance of the historic district, as well as for several individually designated structures whose history is strongly connected to that of downtown development. These properties are specifically related to the growth of downtown's residential and Chinatown sectors, and their inclusion within the district will reinforce the physical and contextual ties of residential streets to their federal and commercial counterparts. Certain elements of the eastern portion of the district, especially the Mary Surratt House grouping (which includes the Surratt House itself and its adjoining properties to the west and south), currently possess only tenuous visual links to the northern



Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)

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and western portions of the district; the new district boundaries will regularize and reinforce that connection.

Further, the expanded boundaries of the Downtown Historic District will serve to fortify the historic context of several factors essential to the neighborhood's history. Specifically, these contexts include: the growth and evolution of religious institutions downtown as exhibited by the former Washington Hebrew Synagogue and its adjacent residential property; the H Street residential corridor and its correlation to the commercial activity lining Seventh Street; and the history of alley buildings demonstrated by the development of Essex Court, the Downtown Historic District's only intact alley. Not only will these expanded boundaries recognize the significance of the properties to be included, but they will also reinforce the physical and historical context of the existing contributing properties.

Finally, the expanded boundaries reflect a reassessment of the portion of the historic district in the Chinatown neighborhood. The expanded boundaries along H Street better encompass the area historically developed as the Chinatown portion of downtown, and will help to recognize the significance of the Chinese community as an important contributor to the business and residential history of the area. This greater understanding is based on new and existing research, including: the Downtown Survey (1979-80), additional information about buildings in and outside the current district boundaries, and National Register listings since the creation of the historic district. It also responds specifically to the recommendation of the Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Plan (adopted by the Council of the District of Columbia on December 15, 2009), to "revise historic designation to reflect the historic significance of the Chinese American settlement in the 1930s to present."



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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: William Marzella, Historic Preservation Planner

organization: EHT Traceries, Inc.

street & number: 1121 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

city or town: Washington state: D.C. zip code: 20001

e-mail: bill.marzella@traceries.com

telephone: (202) 393-1199

date: January 2013

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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.)

Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)

Washington, D.C.

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### Photographs

Name of Property:	Downtown Historic District (boundary increase)
City or Vicinity:	Washington, D.C.
Photographer:	EHT Tracerics, Inc.
Date Photographed:	November and December 2012
Location of Original Digital Files:	DC Historic Preservation Office
Number of Photographs	18

Photo #0001: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0001.tif  
736 (left) and 740 (right) Sixth Street; camera facing west

Photo #0002: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0002.tif  
Mary Surratt House grouping at southwestern corner of Sixth and H Street, including 736 and 740 Sixth Street at left; camera facing southwest

Photo #0003: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0003.tif  
800 Sixth Street (Wah Luck House); camera facing northwest

Photo #0004: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0004.tif  
609 (right) and 611 (left) H Street; camera facing north

Photo #0005: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0005.tif  
Alley buildings at 609 (left) and 611 (right) H Street; camera facing southeast

Photo #0006: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0006.tif  
617 (right) and 619-621 (left) H Street; camera facing north

Photo #0007: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0007.tif  
Alley building at 619-621 H Street; camera facing southeast

Photo #0008: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0008.tif  
623-625 H Street; camera facing north

Photo #0009: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0009.tif  
Alley building at 623-625 H Street; camera facing southwest

Photo #0010: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0010.tif  
H Street streetscape, north side of 600 block; camera facing northwest

Photo #0011: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0011.tif  
618-620 (On Leong Chinese Merchants Association, left) and 622 (right) H Street; camera facing south



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Photo #0012: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0012.tif  
Friendship Archway, Seventh and H streets; camera facing east

Photo #0013: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0013.tif  
802 H Street; camera facing south

Photo #0014: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0014.tif  
616-620 (former Washington Hebrew Synagogue, left) and 622 H Street (right); camera facing northwest

Photo #0015: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0015.tif  
616-620 (former Washington Hebrew Synagogue, left) and 622 H Street (right); camera facing southwest

Photo #0016: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0016.tif  
622 H Street; camera facing west

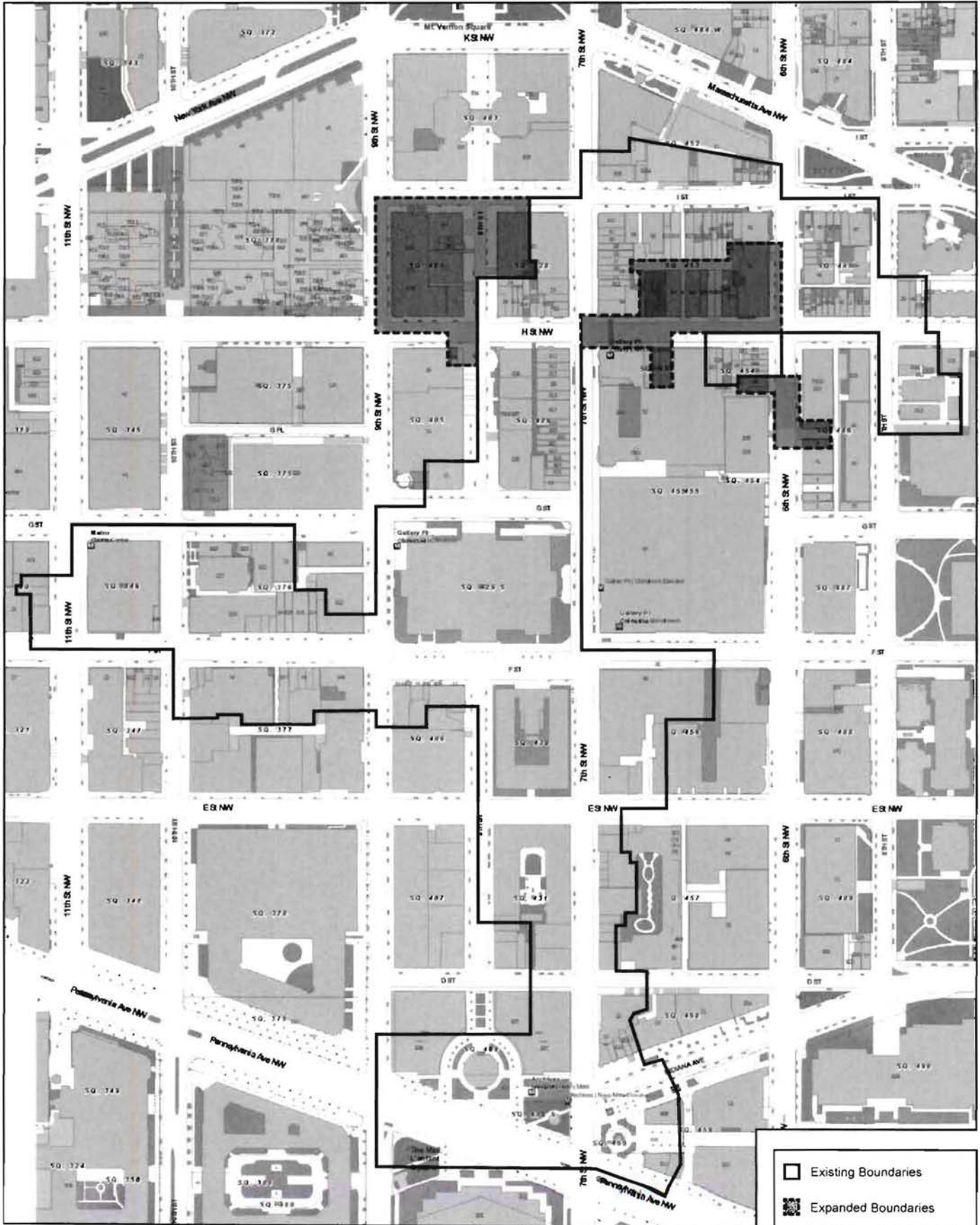
Photo #0017: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0017.tif  
Eighth Street streetscape at I Street; camera facing south

Photo #0018: DC\_Downtown HD Boundary Exp\_0018.tif  
719 (left) and 717 (The Bulletin Building, right) Sixth Street; camera facing east

**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.).

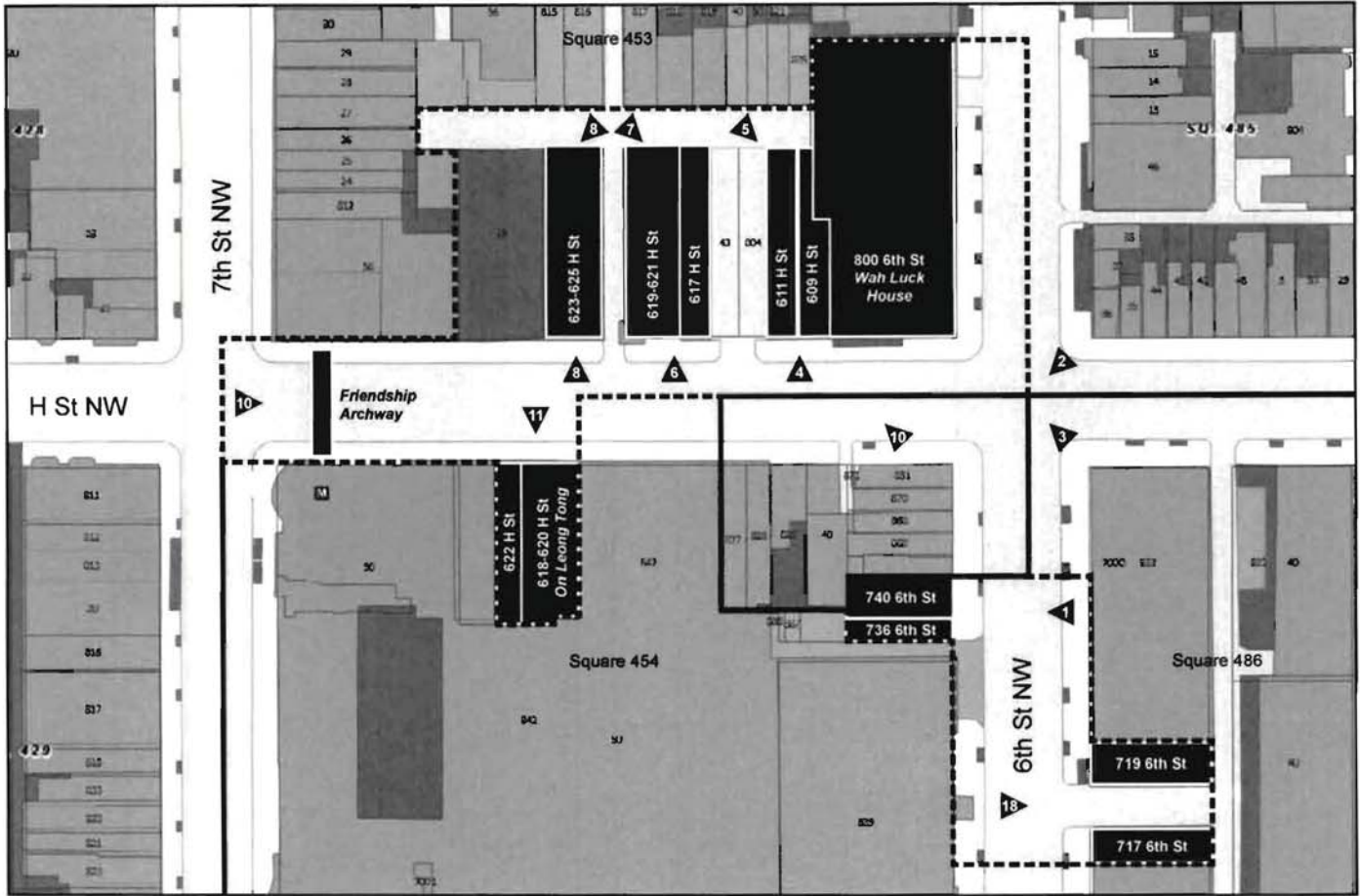
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Downtown Historic District**  
Existing & Expanded Boundaries

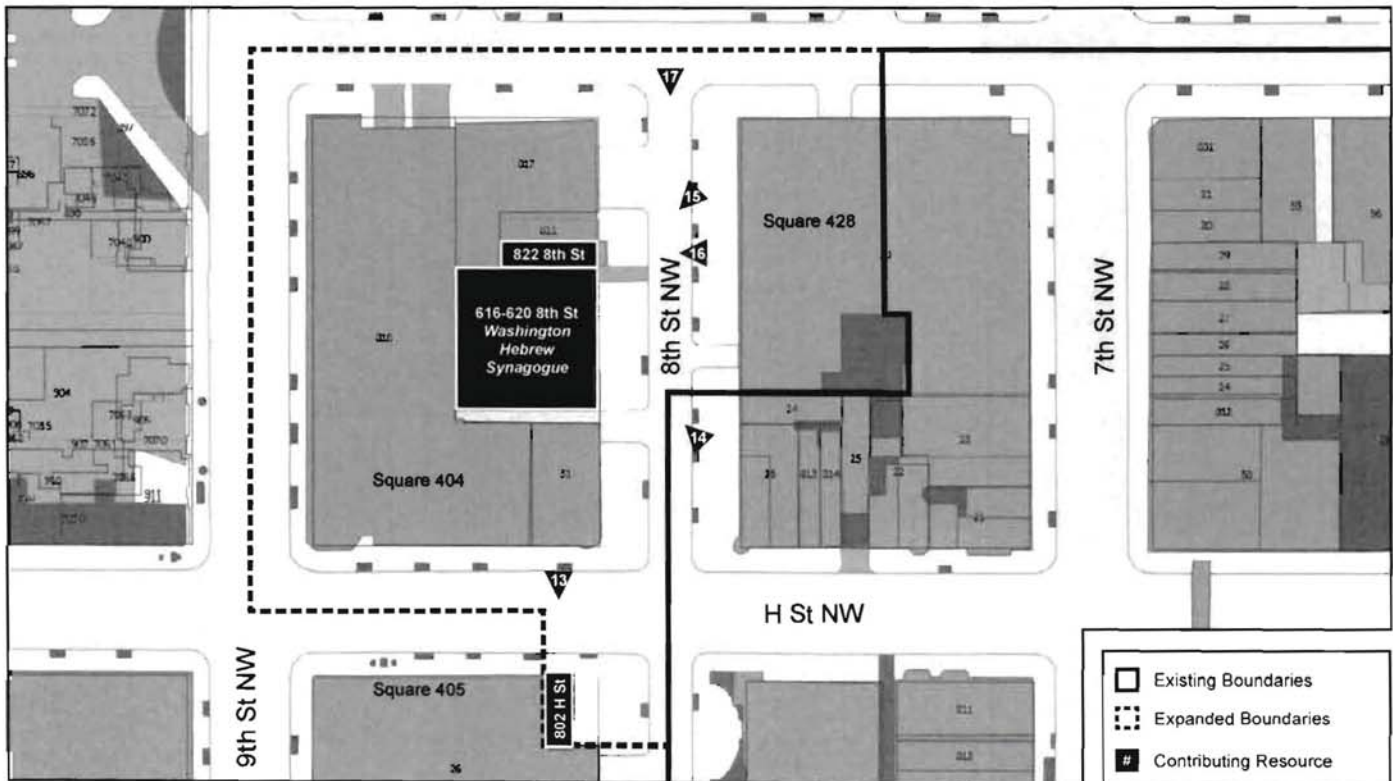




**Downtown Historic District**  
 Contributing Properties & Photograph Log



Squares 453, 454, & 486



Squares 404, 405, & 428

	Existing Boundaries
	Expanded Boundaries
	Contributing Resource

**Downtown Historic District**  
 USGS Topographic Map  
 Washington West, 7.5 Minute Scale, 1965

