

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private (boundary increase area only); Private, Public-local, Public-federal (in previously-listed district).

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: District

In revised and expanded district

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
54	13	BUILDINGS
		SITES
		STRUCTURES
		OBJECTS
54	13	TOTAL

In boundary increase areas only

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
9	1	BUILDINGS
		SITES
		STRUCTURES
		OBJECTS
9	1	TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 31 extant contributing buildings listed as contributing within original boundaries

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: NA

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:
 COMMERCE/TRADE: business, professional, financial institution, restaurant
 DOMESTIC: hotel
 GOVERNMENT: city hall, post office, courthouse
 INDUSTRY: warehouse
 RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater
 RELIGION: church
 TRANSPORTATION: depot

CURRENT FUNCTIONS:
 COMMERCE/TRADE: business, office building, restaurant
 EDUCATION: library
 GOVERNMENT: municipal court
 RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium, museum, theater
 HEALTH CARE: clinic
 VACANT/NOT IN USE; WORK IN PROGRESS

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, Beaux Arts
 MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco, Art Moderne, New Formalism
 OTHER: one-part and two-part commercial block

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE, STONE, BRICK
 WALLS CONCRETE, WOOD, STONE, STUCCO, BRICK
 ROOF ASPHALT
 OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-17).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: NA

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture; Commerce

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: c.1890-1958 and 1962-1963 (not specified in original nomination)

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1901, 1912, 1963

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Emil Weil (New Orleans); A. Babin; Steinman, Steinman & Goldman; Stone & Pitts; Hedrick and Gottlieb; Tisdale and Stone (Nashville); A. N. Dawson

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-18 through 8-32).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-33).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 # Tex-347
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: Boundary increase area only: approximately 2.5 acres
Area 1: less than one acre
Area 2: two acres
Area 3: less than one acre
Revised district total: approximately 52.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES: Zone 15

Revised Boundary			Areas added to district		
	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>		<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	393684	3328291	Area 1.	394169	3328356
2.	393735	3328520			
3.	393959	3328569	Area 2.	394196	3328034
4.	394115	3328554			
5.	394483	3328137	Area 3.	394069	3328190
6.	394540	3327903			
7.	394452	3327827			
8.	394191	3327890			
9.	393806	3328068			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: (see continuation sheet 10-34)

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: (see continuation sheet 10-34)

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Anna Mod, consultant; Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission; with Penny Louisa Clark, Archivist, Tyrell Historical Library

ORGANIZATION: LFC, Inc.

DATE: January 23, 2008

STREET & NUMBER: 17314 SH 249, Suite 230

TELEPHONE: (713) 357-7522

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77064

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheets Map-35 and Map-36)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-37 and Photo-38)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: (On file with Texas Historical Commission)

STREET & NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE: Texas

TELEPHONE:

ZIP CODE:

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase)
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The purpose of this nomination amendment is to increase the boundary of the Beaumont Commercial District (NR 1978), extend the period of significance to 1958, include a second period of significance (1962-1963) to include an exceptionally significant building, and reconsider the contributing or noncontributing status of properties previously considered intrusive or compatible in the original nomination. All properties in the district have been reexamined to determine if any previously contributing buildings have undergone changes that adversely affect their status. The boundary increase includes three separate areas (Areas 1, 2 and 3) adjacent to the original boundary. These three areas contain nine contributing and one noncontributing properties. The buildings all relate to the commercial and/or institutional development of Beaumont and represent all extant historic properties located immediately adjacent to the original district.

The revised Beaumont Commercial District encompasses 67 individual buildings in the central business district, with buildings dating from the late 19th through mid- 20th centuries. The best of downtown Beaumont's historic commercial architecture is represented within the district boundaries. The earlier buildings are predominately load-bearing masonry, typically one or two stories in height, and represent a local economy generated by the successful timber and rice industries of the nineteenth century. There are several multi-story buildings, evidence of Beaumont's prosperity following early 20th century oil booms, when the city was jolted by the discovery of oil at Spindletop in 1901 and later by deep oil finds in 1925. The Hotel Beaumont (625 Orleans) and the Jefferson Theatre (345 Fannin) reveal considerable private investment in the boom city. Prominent architectural styles of the era are represented in the Art Deco style Kyle Building (215-81 Orleans) and the building at 495 Orleans. The Neoclassical style is also well represented in the Federal Building (200 Willow) and the City Hall and Auditorium (700 Pearl). High-rise structures constructed in the 1920s and 1930s are prominent landmarks and represent the international influence on the emerging city. These include the San Jacinto Building (595 Orleans), the Edson Hotel (301 Pearl) and the Goodhue Building (398 Pearl). The major postwar building in the original boundary is the exceptionally significant 1963 First Security National Bank (505 Orleans), the premier mid-century modern building in the city, designed by the Beaumont firm Pitts, Mebane and Phelps.

PROPERTIES ADDED THROUGH BOUNDARY INCREASE

Three distinct areas are being added to the district (one to the east and two to the west). Following Table 1, each property is described in detail. The Rotan-Mosle, Inc. building (A-46, at 485-499 Pearl) was mentioned in the 1978 National Register text yet did not appear on the historic district map, nor was the property owner identified on the list of owners.

Table 1 – Properties added the district in the 2006 the boundary increase

ID #	Address	DATE	Status	Area
A-46	485-499 Pearl	c.1930	C	1
06-009	790 Orleans	c. 1945	C	2
06-012	700 Orleans	1940	C	2
A-9	527 Forsythe	1923	C	2
06-028	648-690 Orleans	1940	NC	2
06-006	459 Fannin	1922	C	2
06-017	615-635 Park	c. 1940	C	2
08-018	651-653-657 Park	c. 1940	C	2
06-019	695 Park	c. 1925	C	2
06-001	465 Bowie	c. 1927	C	3

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Individual Properties to Be Added Through Boundary Increase

Area 1

Area 1 is the half block facing the 400 block of Pearl Street between Crockett and Bowie Streets.



A-46*
Rotan-Mosle, Inc., 1930s
485-499 Pearl
Contributing

The Rotan-Mosle, Inc. building was mentioned in the 1978 National Register text, however, the map of the historic district excluded the building, and its owner was not included on the list of property owners. The building is a stucco clad, three-story, two-part commercial block building with a two-story wing to the northwest along Pearl Street. The building retains its original 1/1 windows and its corner canopy supported with metal tie rods. The ground floor does not appear to be original to the building yet this

alteration, most likely dating to the 1940s or 50s, is now considered part of the history of the building. A recent rehabilitation reopened the multi-light transoms in the two-story wing and the adjacent northwestern-most bay of the three-story portion of the building. The three-story portion of the building is 2 x 3 bays and the wing is four bays. Rotan-Mosle, Inc. is typical of the early 20th century, two-part commercial block typology found in urban areas. The building retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling and association.

Area 2

Area 2 is comprised of the two blocks bounded by Fannin on the north; Park on the west; Wall on the south and includes the 600 and 700 blocks of Orleans. There is an additional half block included to the west of Park Street. There are seven (7) contributing properties and one (1) non-contributing property in Area 2.



06-009
Goodwill, c. 1945
790 Orleans
Contributing

The ca. 1945 Goodwill building is a one-story enframed window wall structure and exhibits stylistic elements of late Moderne and early modernism. The corner building has three bays on the east façade facing onto Orleans Street and has a one-story brick addition that extends westward along Wall Street (460 Wall Street). The building has a bark-faced, stretcher bond brick veneer and the retail storefront is covered with enameled porcelain panels. The neon sign is original. The retail façade is glass with a recessed entry with terrazzo flooring. There is a cast stone parapet cap. Beyond the first brick addition is a second, two-

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Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase)
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story brick-veneered warehouse from the 1950s or 60s. The Wall Street entrance is detailed with the same enameled panels.

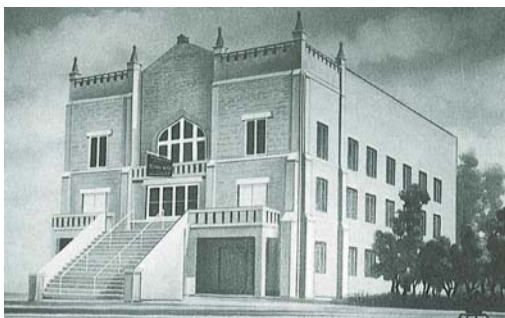


06-012

The White House, 1940
700 Orleans
Architect: Stone & Pitts, Beaumont
Contributing

The 1940 White House building, a former department store, is a high style example of the Streamline Moderne style. The four-story brick veneered building has a dramatic rounded corner detailed with three large fluted limestone spandrel panels that divide ribbon bands of windows on the third and fourth floors. The fenestration on floors two through four is two-over-two, horizontal light metal windows arranged in continuous bands either side

of the rounded corner. The two outermost corners of the building and the rounded corner rise slightly higher above the parapet; all three raised elements are detailed with a cast stone or limestone pie-crust-crimping detailing. Despite alterations to the ground floor storefront, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The municipal court currently uses the building.



A-9

Antioch Baptist Church, 1923
527 Forsythe
Contributing

Antioch Baptist Church is a symmetrical, two-story with raised basement, three-by-seven bay Revival style building with a flat roof with parapet. The main (north) façade is clad with buff colored brick and the sides and rear are stuccoed. The main three bay façade has a center gabled parapet flanked by two square towers that project slightly from the center bay. Decorative elements on the towers include crenellated brick molding, finials on top of the corner merlons and engaged buttresses. A cast stone belt course marks the floor divisions accented with impost blocks on the tower corners. The windows are wooden single light casement type in the two outer bays. The decorative center bay has grouped 1/1 wooden sash windows on the first floor topped with a cast stone lintel and a crenellated brick molding pattern. The second floor has a Tudor arch window with single light casement windows and transoms that follow the arch pattern. Above this central window are brick patterning and a cast stone acroterian at the gable peak. There is a full width porch at the first floor level with a brick balustrade that mimics the crenellation pattern at the cornice.



The east and west sides of the buildings are symmetrical and paired, wooden sash 1/1 light windows with cast stone lintels and sills define each bay. The parapet has one step down between the third and fourth bay. There is a small, metal fire

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escape in the rear of the building on both elevations. The rear (south) elevation is also stuccoed and has an irregular placement of windows. All windows are wooden sash, 1/1 light with cast stone headers and sills. In the center of this façade is the outline of an arched, three-light transom window that has been filled in. Historically there was a center staircase leading to the first floor. This was altered after the congregation moved to their new building and the staircase was removed and a double aluminum framed door was installed with entry access to the raised basement. Photographs of two cornerstones (1896 and 1923) are included in the church history publication yet were not found during site reconnaissance.



06-028
Gus Mayer, b. 1940
648-690 Orleans
Non-contributing

Gus Mayer, a department store from the 1940s, has been unsympathetically altered from its original appearance. Many of the storefronts retain their original aluminum framed storefronts and recessed entry doors, yet the alterations have compromised the architectural integrity of the building. The building is currently known as the Orleans Antique Mall.



06-006
Boykin Building/Downtown Parking, 1922
459 Fannin
Contributing

The Boykin Building, now Slim's Garage, is a five-bay, two-story, reinforced concrete parking garage with an open first floor. The bays are defined by the concrete columnar structural system. At the parapet, the bays are divided by a single merlon projecting from the parapet. Below each of these crenels is the scupper and drainpipe in line with the structural column system. There are subtle gables in the parapet in the first and fifth bays.

There are four screened window openings in each bay on the second floor.

The parapet has a continuous raised brick detail with a raised brick panel below in each bay.



06-017
Fertita Building, c. 1940
615-635 Park
Contributing

The c. 1940 Fertita Building is a one-story, enframed window wall, Art Deco style building located on the corner of Park and Fannin Streets. The symmetrical building, designed by A. Babin, has three bays on Fannin Street, a curved corner bay, and seven bays on Park Street. Art Deco detailing includes

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the continuous cove molding at the cornice and the pink tiled structural columns that define the bays. The building is currently vacant.



06-018

Historic name unknown; c. 1940
651-653-657 Park
Contributing

This building, currently known as Volcano's, is a one-story, three bay, enframed window wall structure. The building has been altered yet still retains elements of the Moderne style including the pink tiled front surface, the window wall with large transom above (enclosed) and the lack of ornamentation on its symmetrical façade.



06-019

St. Augustine Building, c. 1925
695 Park
Contributing

The St. Augustine Building is a one-story, enframed window wall, reinforced masonry building on the corner of Park and Forsythe Streets. The building is symmetrical and has six bays facing Park and three facing Forsythe. A small compatible addition is the fourth bay on Forsythe. The red brick building is detailed with cast stone column bases, a cast stone beltcourse above the transom and a cast stone parapet cap. There are rectangular brick panels, flush with the building plane, in the each of the bays above the beltcourse.

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Area 3

Area 3 includes one building, the Coale Building, in the 400 block of Bowie. This is the only building on the south side of the street in this block. The Coale Building was slipcovered during the 1978 nomination and thus the south side of the street was excluded. The slipcover has been removed and the building rehabilitated utilizing the Investment Tax Credit program (2005-2006).



Before rehabilitation



After rehabilitation

06-001

Coale Building, c. 1927
465 Bowie
Contributing

The Coale building is a two-story, three-by-one bay, two-part commercial block with parapet and a built-up tar roof built between 1923 and 1931. The main façade faces northwest (north for the purpose of this report). The building had a modern slipcover until 2002 when the current owner removed it. The ground floor storefront, reconstructed during the recent rehabilitation, is typical three-part with base, large single paned window and multi-light transom windows above the canopy. Above the transoms are six-light fixed single-sash windows, four per bay. The second floor has six-over-six wooden double hung sash windows. Each side façade is a single bay with a solid brick wall. There are old painted advertisements on each side façade.

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RESURVEY OF DISTRICT, 2005-2006

In 2005, Texas Historical Commission staff and Historic Preservation Specialist Anna Mod conducted a walking survey of the Beaumont Commercial District in order to revise and update the National Register nomination and to determine any status change from “contributing” to “non-contributing” status or visa versa. The original National Register nomination lacked a complete inventory, identifying only those properties considered to be contributing resources. The district map indicated *contributing*, *compatible*, and *intrusive* buildings, and was used to supplement information not included in the text of the nomination.

All properties in the district were reexamined to determine if any previously contributing buildings have undergone changes that adversely effect their contributing status. In addition, several buildings not considered significant at the time of the original nomination (often due to a stricter interpretation of integrity) are noted as contributing to the district at this time. Some of the buildings noted as *compatible* in the original nomination were not originally considered to be contributing only because they not 50 years old. Such buildings which fall within the revised period of significance (through 1958, with a second period of significance of 1962-1963 to include the First Security National Bank Building) and retain a good degree of integrity are now noted as *contributing*. The existing numbering system from the 1978 National Register nomination and previous surveys was reused whenever found. This system begins with a letter followed by a number. All new entries from the 2005-2006 survey have a numbering system that begins with “06” followed by a number.

Table 2 – Summary of Properties in Revised and Expanded District

Quantity	Previous Status	Current Status
31	Contributing	Contributing
3	Contributing	Noncontributing
12	Compatible	Contributing
6	Compatible	Noncontributing
2	Intrusion	Contributing
1	Intrusion	Noncontributing
9	Not in Boundary	Contributing
1	Not in Boundary	Noncontributing
2	Not Yet Built	Noncontributing
(6)	Contributing	Demolished

Table 3 – Contributing Buildings Demolished since 1978

ID #	Address	Date	Building name
A-2	200 Bowie	c.1900	Plummer American Printing Company
A-34	501 Pearl	1890	Temperance Building
A-35	591 Pearl	n.d.	H.A Perlstein Building
A-37	595 Pearl	1907	Perlstein Building
A-42	800 Pearl	1927	La Salle (King Edward Hotel)
A-43	940 Pearl (990 Pearl)	n.d.	Heisig Building

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Change in status from “Non-contributing” to “Contributing”

The First Security National Bank is exceptionally significant, merits individual listing, and is the primary reason why a second period of significance is being added to the nomination.



06-032

First Security National Bank, 1963
505 Orleans
Contributing

The First Security National Bank, not mentioned in the original nomination, was submitted to the Texas Historical Commission and the National Park Service for evaluation as a federal tax credit project in 2006. In August 2006, the NPS approved Part 1 of the Investment Tax Credit application for the building, with the concurrence that the building would contribute to the district if the period of significance were extended to include the 1963.

The First Security National Bank building was designed by Beaumont architect Llewellyn W. Pitts of the firm Pitts Mebane & Phelps. The bank was founded in 1889 when Beaumont had a population of 3,200 citizens and its economy was based on lumber, railroads and cattle. The discovery of the nearby Spindletop oil field in 1901 overwhelmed the bank, and that same year the American National Bank was established and remained a competitor.

The building is a steel-framed structure with glass walls screened by a cast concrete sun screen designed by Herring Coe and accented with small marble chips and marble dust. Jonathan W. “Jack” Evans, of Evans-Monical, Inc. of Houston produced the interior design that included original artworks, woven wall hangings from Mexico and Japan, and imported furnishings and decorative arts from Sweden, Italy and Norway. When then Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnston visited Beaumont in September of 1963, he was photographed in front of the building. A Texas Historical Commission subject marker was placed in the ground floor entry lobby on November 7, 1966 noting its importance as the oldest bank between Houston and the Louisiana border. True to many financial institutions, the bank experienced a series of purchases and mergers and went under during the oil bust of the 1980s. The building was vacant between 1993 and 2006, but is undergoing rehabilitation is partially occupied. A more extensive history of the bank and the building is included in Section 8 of this nomination.

1963 First Security National Bank - Description

The First Security Bank building is located on the southeast corner of Orleans and Bowie in downtown Beaumont’s Central Business District. The setting is urban and the corner site is surrounded by sidewalks. The five-story Formalist style building is composed of the three classical building elements: base, shaft and capital, expressed in the modern idiom with *pilotis* with glass infill (base), a sculptural concrete screen (shaft) and a recessed clerestory with dramatic cantilevered roof overhang (capital). The marble clad *pilotis* define the bay arrangement on the ground floor. Floors two through four largely read as a mono-façade with regularly-spaced vertical aluminum structural members that support the textured concrete screen. The fifth floor clerestory is a running band of windows supported by aluminum framing with a

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projecting roof. There is an elevator penthouse set back from the edge of the roof as well as a full and partial sub-basement. The building was designed to be six stories and was changed to five during construction.

The building is reminiscent of the architectural detailing of Edward Durell Stone, architect of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., the United State Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair, the US Embassy in New Delhi, India and the "Lollipop Building" at 2 Columbus Circle in New York City, site of a recent mid-century modern preservation debate. The structure of the Beaumont building is two thousand tons of structural steel and the element most evocative of Stone's influence is the concrete grille or solar screen that shields the building from the harsh Texas sun. The screen is made of concrete with white Portland cement and marble dust added and was sculpted by Herring Coe, a well-respected regional sculptor.

Clear expressions of the Modern movement include the building siting which is inset from the dominant block face of the adjacent 15-story San Jacinto building and the typical urban pattern of the surrounding neighborhood. Other modern features include the materials, graphics and hardware and the sophisticated incorporation of the parking garage within the rectangular urban footprint.

Only the first floor base of the building is inset from the dominant block face. The building returns to meet the established setback of its neighbor on floors two through four with a cantilevered sculptural concrete screen that provides a sun shade to the floor-to-ceiling window walls behind. At the fifth floor (capital), there is a clerestory window wall deeply setback from the main building plane and protected by a dramatically cantilevered flat roof slab that juts out just short of realigning itself with the mid-section (concrete screen) of the building.

The east façade faces a surface parking lot and is primarily brick with concrete curbs and metal railings that give a glimpse of the parking garage ramps. On the eastern-most corner of the north façade are two driveways leading in and out of the incorporated multi-level parking garage. The south façade shares a party wall with the adjacent San Jacinto building. There are three flag poles at the eave that are hung perpendicular to the façade far above the main set of entry doors on Orleans.

The ground floor of the building is composed of white marble clad steel *pilotis*, or free standing columns, on a regular grid with floor-to-ceiling aluminum framed glass wall infill. There is a continuous 5-inch running band of grey granite under the window walls, a detail typical of the Modern era that enhances the weightless and transparency of the glass wall. The pedestrian level is protected by a continuous projecting canopy that is the under story of the concrete screen.

Largely cast from molds, the concrete screen panels each measure approximately 9 feet x 5 feet, and also have some removable elements attached with adhesive. Continuous metal dowels run continuously through each panel and the vertical aluminum support framing and are anchored at the building corners. The screen design is very three-dimensional and sculptural and composed of a repetitive triangular shape with a deeply recessed center void with stylized florets on each projecting corner.

The main building entrance is on Orleans and consists of two sets of paired aluminum framed doors with a small narrow fixed window between them. The door set is flanked by large fixed aluminum framed glass panels evoking sidelights. Above the doors is a single light transom with the building name in Bank Gothic font.

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The building appears to be a symmetrical rectangle yet close inspection at the ground floor reveals a flexible design of the bays to accommodate changing use. A typical bay on the ground floor is divided into three aluminum framed glass panels per bay. Variations to this standard include four or eight panels, as well as secondary public and service doors. The parking garage, an urban necessity by the 1960s, is cleverly incorporated into the building with access from driveways on the eastern-most end of the Bowie façade. The trapezoidal-shaped parking attendant booth is aluminum framed and in-filled with clear and black glass.

The interior includes a sub-basement, basement, lobby, banking lobby, mezzanine deck, and office suites. The fifth floor originally housed the Trust Department and the Beaumont Club.

The ground floor lobby is primarily a transition space with several offices partitioned by aluminum framed glass walls and doors. There are two escalators that connect to the second floor main banking lobby, the main ceremonial space of the building. The banking lobby is a large and dramatic space with terrazzo floors, a 20-foot ceiling height and corresponding window walls. The lobby is open plan and receives natural light filtered by the exterior concrete screen. The banking teller stations are laminated wood grain wainscoting with a thick white marble. The ceiling has an elaborate continuous chandelier made up of small metal cards hung in a regular grid pattern. Alterations from the early and late 1970s partially obscured the expansive view out of both window walls yet the experience and volume of the space has not been diminished.

Originally the mezzanine was to overlook the banking lobby, however this was changed during the original construction and the space was reutilized for air handling equipment. The remaining upper floors are nondescript office use with period detailing and hardware, floor-to-ceiling windows and varying wood veneers. The fifth floor originally housed the Trust Department and the Beaumont club and has a higher ceiling than the typical office floors. Modern detailing such as aluminum air-conditioning floor grates and wooden wall panels are original, as are the wooden doors. The original furr downs are pushed back from the window walls and the ceiling is textured.

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Table 6 - Beaumont Commercial District Revised Inventory (2006)

ID #	Address	Address	date	1978 status	2006 Status	Historic Name	Style
06-001	465	Bowie	c. 1927	Not in HD	C	Coale Building	two-part commercial block
06-002	340	Bowie		Compatible	C	Hotel Sabine	
06-025	450	Bowie		Intrusion	NC	Chamber of Commerce	
06-003	320	College	c. 1890	Compatible	C	W. B. Landham [Langham] Estate Building No. 3	Italianate with alterations; two-part commercial block
06-004	330	College		Compatible	C		
A-67	609	Crockett		C	C	Santa Fe Warehouse	
A-64a	230	Crockett		C	NC		
A-64b	234-236	Crockett	c. 1900	C	C	Dixie Hotel (Fernon's Office Supply)	Italianate
A-64c	240-246	Crockett	c. 1900	C	C	Pay-less Beauty Supply	Classical Revival
A-64d	260	Crockett	c. 1900	C	C	Littlejohn Building (Mirror Shoe Shine)	Italianate
A-64e	290	Crockett	c. 1900	C	C	Wilson	Two part commercial block
A-64f	296	Crockett		C	C		
A-65	479	Crockett	c. 1890	C	NC	Night Building (Sundowner)	
A-69	714-780	Crockett	1940	C	C	Oil City Brass Works	Moderne
06-006	459	Fannin	1922	Not in HD	C	E. L. Boykin Building (Downtown Parking)	Two-part commercial block
A-4	345	Fannin	1927	C	C	Jefferson Theater	Renaissance Revival
A-9	527	Forsythe	1923	Not in HD	C	Antioch Baptist Church	
A-67	900	Laurel	1890, with alterations	C	C	Old Santa Fe Depot	
E-39	801	Laurel	c. 1910	C	C	Old Southern Pacific Warehouse	One part commercial block
06-007	730-732	Liberty	c. 1900	Compatible	C	Quality Café	One-story, vernacular
06-008	735	Liberty	c. 1928	Compatible	C	Shepherd's laundry	Two-part commercial block
06-026	500	Main		Not built	NC		
06-027	600	Main		Not built	NC		
A-54	417	Neches	1920	C	C	Stedman Fruit Co	
06-009	790	Orleans		Not in HD	C	Goodwill	
06-010	447	Orleans		C	C		
06-011	448	Orleans	1890; later remodel	Compatible	C	Bruce Irvine and Associates	

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ID #	Address	Address	date	1978 status	2006 Status	Historic Name	Style
06-012	700	Orleans	1940	Not in HD	C	The White House	Moderne
06-013	715	Orleans	1948	Compatible	C	Security State Bank & Trust	Moderne
06-014	905	Orleans		Compatible	C		
06-015	967	Orleans		Compatible	C		
06-016	985	Orleans	c. 1920	Compatible	C		
06-028	648-690	Orleans	1940	Not in HD	NC	Gus Mayer	Early modern, commercial
06-029	304-308	Orleans		Compatible	NC		
06-030	400	Orleans	1900, later remodel	Compatible	NC	The Star Store Inc./Beaumont Typewriter Supply	
06-031	450-460	Orleans		Not built	NC		
06-032	505	Orleans	1962	Intrusion	C	First Security National Bank	Modern
06-033	665	Orleans		Compatible	NC		
06-034	695	Orleans		Compatible	NC		
A-44	625	Orleans	1922	C	C	Hotel Beaumont	
A-45	595	Orleans	1921	C	C	San Jacinto Building	Two-part commercial block
A-46	495	Orleans	1936-37	C	C	First National Bank / Tonahill	Art Deco
A-46a	475-485	Orleans		C	C	First National Bank, addition/Tonahill	Art Deco
A-47	470	Orleans	c. 1925	C	C	Beaumont Savings and Loan	Neo Classical
A-48	441	Orleans	1893	C	C	New Rosemont Hotel	Italianate
A-49	336	Orleans	c. 1890	C	C	J.J. Nathan's	Neo Classical
A-50	215-281	Orleans	1933	C	C	Kyle Building	Art Deco
06-017	615-635	Park	c. 1940	Not in HD	C	Fertita Building	Moderne
06-018	651-653-657	Park		Not in HD	C		
06-019	695	Park	c. 1925	Not in HD	C	St. Augustine Building	Two-part commercial block
06-035	443	Park		C	NC	Tinkle's	
06-020	390	Park, asbestos	1915	C	C	Friedman Building	Two-part commercial block
06-021	390	Park, ste 100	1917	C	C	Hegle Building (Hegele)	Two-part commercial block
06-022	390	Park, ste 500	c. 1900	C	C	Downtown Spirits	Two-part commercial block
06-023	698	Pearl	1910; 1930s	Compatible	C	Neches Electric (Walgreen's)	Moderne
06-036	296	Pearl	c. 1890	Compatible	NC		
06-037	304	Pearl		Compatible	NC		
A-27	278	Pearl	c. 1900	C	C		Neo Classical
A-27a	268-270	Pearl	c. 1890	Compatible	C	Modern Methods Printing	

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ID #	Address	Address	date	1978 status	2006 Status	Historic Name	Style
A-29	301	Pearl	1928	C	C	Edson Hotel, also served as Gulf States Utilities headquarters 1955-1979	
A-28	341	Pearl	c. 1928	C	C	Harrel's News Building	Neo Classical
A-30	398	Pearl	1926	C	C	Goodhue Building	Gothic Revival skyscraper
A-32	488	Pearl	1903; 1926 addition	C	C	Gilbert Building	Two-part commercial block
A-39	695	Pearl	1903	C	C	First Baptist Church (Tyrell Public Library)	Romanesque Revival
A-41	700	Pearl	1928	C	C	City Hall and Auditorium	Neo Classical
A-46	485-499	Pearl	1930	Not in HD	C	Rotan-Mosle	Two-part commercial block
06-024	210-220	Willow	1940s	Intrusion	C		One-part commercial block
A-51	200	Willow	1933; 1961	C	C	U. S. Post Office and Federal Building	Neo Classical

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The Beaumont Commercial District encompasses the city's central business district and includes structures dating from the late 19th century to the early 1960s. The oldest buildings in the district represent the city's economic shift from a cattle and agricultural center to an important regional lumber and rice-milling center. There was a noticeable surge in construction in the 1910-1940s period when Beaumont prospered during two oil booms. Most of the buildings in the district are one- and two-part commercial, public, and social service structures and many unfortunately are vacant. The district was originally listed in the National Register in 1978 under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Industry and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance. The nomination amendment adds three areas that include nine (9) contributing buildings and one (1) non-contributing building. The period of significance for the district is extended to 1958 in order to incorporate post-World War II development and recognize that despite a slowdown in new construction, downtown remained vital as the economic center of the city. A second period of significance (1962-63), has been added to recognize the exceptional significance of the First Security National Bank, a large-scale New Formalist building featuring a distinctive perforated cast concrete screen, which meets Criteria Consideration G for its distinct design, for its role as the headquarters of the largest and most influential bank in postwar Beaumont, and for its association with public and private efforts to revitalize downtown in the early 1960s.

Beaumont, Texas is located on the west bank of the Neches River on Interstate Highway 10 in the northeast part of Jefferson County. The city is 85 miles east of Houston and 25 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico. The city, along with neighboring Orange and Port Arthur, form the Golden Triangle, an important regional industrial area.¹

The town grew around the farm of Noah and Nancy Tevis, who settled on the riverbank in 1824. The Tevis' settlement, known as Tevis Bluff or the Neches River Settlement merged with nearby Santa Ana and became the Beaumont town site. The name Beaumont is thought to have been the maiden name of Henry Millard's wife, who, with partners Joseph Pulsifer and Thomas B. Huling began plans in 1835 for a town on land purchased from the Tevis'. The First Congress of the Republic of Texas made Beaumont the county seat of Jefferson County and a city charter was granted in 1838. Subsequent failed attempts at creating a municipal charter followed in 1840 and 1860. The current municipal government incorporation dates to 1881.²

In the early-to-mid 19th century, Beaumont's agricultural economy shifted from one based primarily based on cattle and cotton, to lumber and rice-milling enterprises. Several saw mills were located in town and the Neches River provided water transport prior to the arrival of the railroad. The Eastern Texas and the Texas and New Orleans railroads came to Beaumont in 1857 and the town briefly enjoyed the status of a transportation center with rail and river options. Business enterprise largely ceased during the Civil War and the city established a supply base for Confederate troops along the southeast Texas coast.³ Beaumont experienced two economic booms from 1871 to 1900 and the city was served by seven railroads shipping regionally grown rice and milled lumber. Population increased from 3,296 persons in 1890 to 9,427 before the turn of the century.⁴

The Spindletop oil gusher of 1901 transformed Jefferson County. Anthony Lucas discovered oil on January 10, 1901, and Beaumont became a boomtown with its population rapidly surging from 9,000 to 20,000. Farmland was quickly

¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. [BEAUMONT, TX]" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/hdb2.html> (accessed July 10, 2006).

² *Ibid.*

³ National Register Nomination, 1978.

⁴ *Handbook of Texas Online*, , s.v. "BEAUMONT, TX"

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converted into oil exploration fields. Three national oil companies – the Texas Company (Texaco), Gulf Oil Corporation (Chevron), and Humble Oil (Exxon) formed in Beaumont during the first year after Spindletop.⁵ The lumber industry continued to thrive since oil derricks, railroads and refineries had a voracious appetite for lumber. The growing county also supported an increase in agricultural production. Many new buildings, over 200 in the county, were built in 1901 and rice planting reached an all time high with almost 6,000 acres planted countywide. The discovery of oil at Spindletop had a profound impact on the city, the region, the state and the world. A gusher of its size and magnitude had never before been seen. Beaumont's economy shifted almost overnight and the discovery heralded the establishment of three major global oil exploration and refining companies: Texaco, Gulf and Exxon.

In 1908, the Port of Beaumont opened after the completion of a 15-mile-long, 9-foot-deep channel, extending between the Sabine and Neches Rivers, and between the mouth of the Neches to the Port Arthur Canal. In April 1916 the Beaumont and Orange navigation districts completed construction of a 25-foot channel and the creation of the Beaumont turning basin, providing deep-water access to the Gulf of Mexico.⁶ Beaumont's port continued to grow in response to the oil boom, and during WW II the city prospered with shipbuilding and oil refining, with major national firms such as Bethlehem Steel, Gulfport, Weaver, Burton, and Jones and Laughlin establishing sites in Jefferson County.⁷ In the post-war years, petrochemical refining and synthetic rubber production grew and then reached a plateau in the 1960s.

In 1925, Beaumont experienced a second oil boom, with the discovery of a new pool at Spindletop. Oil production remained high through the Great Depression, and into the 1970s, and was augmented by an increase in local sulphur production by the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company (Texasgulf). During the 1950s, salt-brine extraction became a lucrative oil-related business, with some fields in operation well into the 1990s.⁸ By 1930, the population of the county was over 133,000. During the depression, there were approximately 2,000 wells producing 1,000,000 barrels of oil annually. The county also had six of the largest regional petrochemical refineries, producing ten percent of all refined products nationwide.⁹ The city population grew from 94,014 in 1950 to 119,175 in 1960, and in 1963, Beaumont was the sixth-largest city in Texas. The population began to decline slightly in the 1960s and by 1970 was reduced to 115,919, perhaps reflecting the loss of jobs in the petrochemical sector due to the automation of processes.¹⁰

Beaumont's Postwar Economy and Suburbanization

While World War II spurred economic growth throughout Jefferson County, the postwar economy remained vibrant with a high employment rate. Between 1940 and 1950, the economy grew in many sectors, including petroleum and coal, metals, manufacturing, construction, retail trade, and government. The largest industrial employers by the mid-1950s were

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *An Evaluation of the Redevelopment Potential of the Central Business District for the Central City development Corporation.* (Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute, 1972), p.12.

⁷ The Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "JEFFERSON COUNTY" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS.dos3.html> (accessed July 15, 2006).

⁸ The Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "SPINDLETOP OILFIELD" <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS.dos3.html> (accessed July 15, 2006).

⁹ The History of Jefferson County, Texas. http://www.co.jefferson.tx.us/Historical_Commission/hist.htm. (accessed August 2006).

¹⁰ The Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "BEAUMONT, TX"

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Gulf States Utilities and Magnolia Petroleum (Mobil).¹¹ The Port of Beaumont, ranked 15th in tonnage in the United States in 1960, was the second busiest port in Texas. Jefferson County also remained vital in agriculture, producing over 12% of the state's rice crop, and serving as the home to three rice mills that processed rice from the region, which included several parishes in Louisiana.¹²

Due to the increased trend towards suburbanization, Beaumont's postwar boom favored new development in some parts of the city over others. Single-family house constructed grew dramatically in the postwar period, with 6537 units built between 1950 and 1958, compared with 302 commercial units and 107 industrial units built during the same period. Growth largely occurred in the north and west portions of the city, in neighborhoods developed on land recently annexed by the city. Due to increased automobile ownership, numerous residential neighborhoods developed far from the city center, while commercial development occurred along several major arteries connecting downtown with the suburbs. Industrial development continued to be located along the Neches River and existing canals and railroad lines, to the south and east of downtown.¹³ The proposed city ordinance cited in the 1960 comprehensive city plan identified four commercial districts (the CBD constituting one of the them), and three industrial districts.

Beaumont continued to grow both in population and geographic area during the postwar period, but by the late 1950s, demographic changes had begun to clearly affect the role of downtown. Before the war, downtown hosted a crucial commercial, institutional and governmental roles, with a diverse retail economy, a variety of commercial office tenants, industrial facilities, and numerous entertainment venues. Postwar suburbanization, however, reduced the role of downtown as a retail center of the Orange-Port Arthur-Beaumont industrial district (also known as the Sabine-Neches District, after the names of prominent rivers in the area). By 1960, the overall number of retail establishments had slightly diminished citywide, probably due to consolidation of smaller businesses and the emergence of regional and national chains, but all the new retail growth was in the new strip shopping centers far from downtown.

The 1960 comprehensive plan identified major arteries within the city, and noted that only two radial routes (Calder Avenue and College Street, both connecting downtown with outlying areas to the west) were the only continuous east-west arteries in the city, while 11th Street, over 1.5 miles west of downtown, served as the primary north-south artery. All of these streets were strip-zoned for commercial use, and it was along these streets and their points of intersections that much of the postwar commercial development occurred.¹⁴ The 1957 opening of the Gateway Shopping Center between the intersections of College Avenue (US 90) with I-10 and 11th Street marked the first major challenge to downtown's retail sector.

By 1972, retail sales in the CBD dropped 40% .¹⁵ The 68,000 square-foot White House department store at 700 Orleans was the closest thing to an anchor store for the CBD, but its small scale (in comparison to suburban stores) put it at a competitive disadvantage. A Beaumont institution since 1901, the White House remained a viable downtown retail

¹¹ Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *The Comprehensive City Plan*, prepared for the Beaumont City Planning and Zoning Commission (1960), p.6.

¹² *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.7.

¹³ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.12.

¹⁴ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.25.

¹⁵ Urban Land Institute. *Beaumont, Texas: An Evaluation of the Redevelopment Potential of the Central Business District* for the Central City Development Corporation (Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute), 1972. p. 28.

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business until the mid 1980s, but the store also operated a concurrent suburban location at the Gateway Shopping Center beginning in the late 1950s.

Business Tenant Composition in Downtown Beaumont, 1947-1972

Despite the decline of the CBD as Beaumont's primary retail venue, downtown supported a diverse economic base through the 1960s. It remained the location of foundries and warehouses and still served as the primary regional governmental, banking and professional center. The CBD served (and still serves) as the location of important city, county, state, and federal governmental offices, as well as the Port of Beaumont. The CBD also served as the home office of Gulf States Utilities Company, a major employer. The postwar economic boom in Beaumont, unlike that of larger cities such as Houston and Dallas, or smaller-sized cities with strong oil-based economies such as Midland, did not manifest itself with great changes to the city skyline in the 1950s. Instead, many companies in Beaumont chose to locate in existing building stock that had been built during previous booms. Most notably, in 1955 Gulf States Utilities Company renovated the Edson Hotel (at the time, Beaumont's tallest building) for use as its corporate headquarters, and remained at that address until it moved into a new – and taller - building in 1979. The company was formed in 1925 as a consolidation of dozens of smaller companies that supplied electricity, steam, water, ice, coal, manufactured and natural gas, and public transportation throughout the south-central United States. By 1930 the company served 120 communities and a population of 235,000 in a 30,000-square-mile area. In the 1940s the company worked with the Tennessee Valley Authority to provide hydropower, built new plants, supplied the petrochemical industry with power; and diversified into oil exploration, shipping, research and development, and worldwide oil trade. By 1975 the company served more than 400,000 customers in a 28,000-square-mile area stretching from southeast Texas to south Louisiana, and its headquarters' presence in downtown Beaumont lent credibility to the CBD's claim as a vital corporate and economic center.¹⁶

Through the 1950s, the composition of tenants in downtown Beaumont's commercial buildings reflected state trends. Agriculturally-based businesses indicate the continued success of cattle ranching and timber that were once the backbone of the state's economy. Added to that mix were many independent oil and gas concerns dominant in the regional economy since the 1901 discovery of oil at Spindletop. Beyond the agricultural and petroleum industries, downtown office tenants included physicians, dentists, insurance and real estate offices, brokerage firms, attorneys, accountants and architects, as well as service businesses such as watch and jewelry repair, sign painters, printers and exterminators. There were two radio stations located downtown as well as civic and non-profit organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Barbers Union, the Catholic Daughters, the Kiwanis Club, Dale Carnegie, the Lions Club, and the Scottish Rite Temple.

The main downtown multi-story buildings included the Gilbert Building at 330 Bowie (four stories), the Goodhue Building at 398 Pearl (12 stories); the San Jacinto Building at the northeast corner of Orleans and Fannin (15 stories) and the 1961 American National Bank Building at 490 Orleans at Bowie (12 stories, not in the historic district). Each of these buildings shared in the diverse make-up of tenants yet the American National Bank had more physicians and dentists than the other buildings, while the Edson Hotel housed the majority of the non-profit and civic groups, as well the headquarters of Gulf States Utilities from 1955 to 1979. Downtown office buildings enjoyed full occupancy through the mid-1950s, but by the end of the decade, however, tenant vacancies began to creep up.

¹⁶ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/dpg1.html> (accessed December 19, 2007).

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Proposed Solutions to the Decline of Downtown Beaumont

The 1960 comprehensive plan recognized the significance of a vibrant downtown district, not only as a location for business and commerce, but as a major source of tax revenue, and stressed that the city's economic future depended on a stable downtown. The report recognized the reliance on automobiles as a primary mode of transportation and stressed that the plan for downtown must provide adequate vehicular access through street improvements, railroad and rail yard removal, and an increase in off-street parking.¹⁷ An analysis of the downtown Beaumont parking situation, including a survey of downtown customer and employees, led the city planners to conclude that there was not adequate parking to satisfy the desires of shoppers and downtown workers.¹⁸ The comprehensive plan further identified the lack of adequate parking as an "extreme deficiency," and recommended a system of off-street parking, and a rearrangement of metered street parking. Their plan called for the construction of a dozen public parking garages on the periphery of the most heavily developed commercial section of downtown by 1980.¹⁹

The 1960 city plan acknowledged that downtown Beaumont was the "most traveled, viewed, walked, shopped, visited, and worked section in the city," and as the city's economic and cultural center, it merited special attention in the area of aesthetics.²⁰ The report identified numerous factors that lessened the appearance of the central business district, including the existence of unattractive poles, wires, lighting, blighted buildings, poorly-maintained streets, and busy signage. The report noted that the "maze of overhanging signs creates an indecipherable riot of colors and shapes," and reflected poorly on downtown in comparison with the "uncluttered" appearance of new shopping centers. The report further extolled the contemporary design and unified aesthetic of the suburban commercial shopping centers, which were typically set back from streets behind ample parking lots. The proposed solution included the elimination of overhanging (usually neon) signage in the CBD, the construction of new parking lots and garages, promotion of "clean up, fix up, paint up" campaigns, the immediate adoption of an urban renewal program, and the creation of an ordinance to regulate the appearance of buildings and industrial and storage facilities.²¹ These guidelines appear to have been taken into consideration in the design of the First Security Bank building of the early 1960s.

Postwar Banking in Beaumont and Reinvestment in the CBD

While retail, hotel, and general office development in downtown Beaumont slowed during the postwar period, local banks established new headquarters in the area, accounting for almost all of the large construction projects through the early 1960s. Beaumont boasted three major commercial banks in postwar period, and in the early 1960s two of these – First Security National and First Federal – competed to build the most modern headquarters in the CBD, while four new banks appeared in the new outlying suburban shopping centers, luring new customers with plenty of free parking and drive-through customer service windows. The first major downtown building of the this period was the 1948 Security State Bank and Trust Company (715 Orleans, property 06-103, contributing) at the southeast corner of Orleans and Forsythe streets, across from the 1940 White House department store. Designed by the Beaumont firm Stone and Pitts, the 2-story brick building features an asymmetrical façade and banded windows inspired by the International Style. Acknowledging the need to serve customers arriving by car, the bank featured an auto deposit window. Those customers who left their cars to

¹⁷ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.32.

¹⁸ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.49.

¹⁹ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, plate 32.

²⁰ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, p.90.

²¹ *The Comprehensive City Plan*, pp. 90-92

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do their banking inside were treated to an austere but tastefully modern banking lobby with wood-paneled walls and counters.

Despite the concentration of businesses and offices in downtown Beaumont after World War II, and its continued significance as the economic heart of the city, major construction in the CBD virtually stopped in the 1950s. By the early 1960s, however, Beaumont's two largest banks competed to build the largest and most modern downtown headquarters, leading the charge to keep downtown viable as business location. In 1962, the American National Bank opened their new downtown location, the American Center, at 510 Park and Bowie. Designed by Harrell & Hamilton of Dallas, the complex filled an entire block and consisted of three buildings: a 5-story bank, a 13-story office building (the Petroleum Building, leased to Sun Oil Co.), and a 2-level parking structure, all connected with covered walkways, and a small fountain plaza and open parking lot in the center. The complex – known collectively as American Center – was touted as the first all-new building in downtown Beaumont in 30 years, conveniently located “in the hub of the city's financial district within walking distance of every major bank, [the] courthouse and the port.”²² The bank building features a 2-story glass-walled based, with a banking lobby on the second floor. The second floor is surrounded on the exterior by an aluminum-framed sunscreen with vertical translucent marble panels, which filter light into the banking lobby. The complex is located outside of the original district boundary and is not being nominated at this time.

American Center's claim to being the first major development in the downtown area in thirty years was only partially accurate: while the complex was the first major project completed since the 1948 Security State & Trust building, construction of the rival First Security National Bank building was well underway when the American Center opened in 1962. By 1961 First Security Bank began to publicize its own plans for a modern headquarters in the heart of the business district, breaking ground in November of that year. Both banks placed full-page advertisements in the 1961 Beaumont city directory with large images of their yet-unbuilt headquarters.

Notable Buildings Within the Boundary Increase Area

Nine of the ten buildings added in the boundary increase areas contribute to the district's architectural and historical significance and expand the district to include more of the city's African-American businesses, specifically the Coale Building (06-001) and the 1923 African-American church, Antioch Baptist (A-9). In addition to these inclusions, the addition of buildings dating to the 1940s – Goodwill, (06-009), The White House (06-012), Gus Mayer (06-028), the Fertitia Building (06-017) and the adjacent building known as Volcano's (06-018) – evidence the growth of the city during this time and the adoption of architectural styles characteristic of the period, such as Art Moderne and early Modernism. The change in status of the First Security National Bank (06-032) from noncontributing to contributing evidences one of the last economic booms in the city's downtown commercial area. Subsequent development, typical of all American cities, is now along highways. This change in status also recognizes the growing interest and appreciation of mid-century modern architecture as part of the continued history of cities and towns.

The nine contributing buildings included in the boundary increase were built between 1910 and 1945, the Oil Boom years. These additional buildings include commercial buildings, a parking garage, a church and social service buildings.

²² Beaumont City Directory, Morrison and Fourmy Directory, 1970.

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(06-001) Coale Building

The Coale building is an early 20th-century commercial building in the heart of the historic African-American business district. The building is a good example of the early 20th-century two-part commercial block. In the late 19th-century, the northern half of Block 51 in downtown Beaumont where the Coale building is located, was residential and Sanborn maps show single-family frame dwellings on the site until 1902 when they were replaced with two-story frame commercial buildings. In 1904, the frame commercial buildings on the site of the present Coale building were clad in masonry or metal and early 20th century commercial tenants included barbers, clothes cleaners, saloons, restaurants, pool halls and tailors. City directories from 1909 through the early 1920s list the tenants as African-American. A Sanborn map from 1923 shows no building on the site and a new masonry structure, the current building, appears by 1931.

Ray Coale was born in Beaumont and attended Beaumont schools until he went into the Navy during WWI. Upon his return, he founded the Coale Lumber Company and operated the company for over 40 years. The lumber company was located at what is now MLK Blvd and Fannin. He also owned and operated Coale's Appliances. City directories confirm that the "Appliance/Refrigeration Department" of the Coale Lumber Company operated a showroom in the Coale building in the 1950s.

(A-9) The Antioch Baptist Church

The Antioch Baptist Church was built in 1923 and designed by local architect and Louisiana native, A. Babin. The congregation grew out of a group of worshipers that held services in the Jefferson County Courthouse prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1865. Led by Reverend A. Venerable, services were moved from the courthouse to a live oak tree and in 1868, the group organized the Liveoak Baptist Church. Eighty-five members withdrew in 1894 and organized Antioch Baptist Church. On December 29, 1894, Rev. Venerable and his congregants purchased lot 412, Block 57 at 527 Forsythe Street from Charles Charlton, Sr., a former slave, for \$500.00. In 1896, the first sanctuary was erected yet it was lost in a storm due to its poor construction.²³

In 1923-1934, the extant church building was constructed in phases as funds became available. The original cornerstone gives the construction date as A.D. 1923. A church history published by the congregants noted the phased construction. The architect was A. Babin, a Louisiana native who practiced locally. Babin is notable for his partnership with Fred C. Stone in the design of the 1931-32 Jefferson County Courthouse in Beaumont, a National Register of Historic Places listed property.

Exceptional Significance of the First Security National Bank Building

First Security National Bank, 1962-63
505 Orleans
Contributing, Exceptionally Significant

The First Security National Bank, not mentioned in the original National Register nomination despite its central location in the district, is exceptionally significant at the local level, and merits listing in the National Register as a contributing

²³ Antioch Missionary Baptist Church History. Beaumont: The Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, historical Research Committee, 1998, pages 1-6.

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building in the district. In August 2006, the NPS approved Part 1 of the Investment Tax Credit application for the building. The building is significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its association with renewed interest in establishing downtown Beaumont as a major regional banking center by the largest bank in the area, and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as an outstanding example of a modern multistory multifunctional office building utilizing perforated concrete screens on its major elevations. The building was designed by Beaumont architect Llewellyn W. Pitts of the firm Pitts, Mebane & Phelps, the most prominent architecture firm in Beaumont throughout the mid-twentieth century.

The building is a steel-framed structure with glass walls screened by a cast concrete sun screen designed by Herring Coe and accented with small marble chips and marble dust. Jonathan W. “Jack” Evans, of Evans-Monical, Inc. of Houston produced the interior design that included original artworks, woven wall hangings from Mexico and Japan, and imported furnishings and decorative arts from Sweden, Italy and Norway. When then-Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnston visited Beaumont in September of 1963, he was photographed in front of the building. A Texas Historical Commission subject marker was placed in the ground floor entry lobby on November 7, 1966 noting its importance as the oldest bank between Houston and the Louisiana border. True to most financial institutions, the bank experienced a series of purchases and mergers and went under during the oil bust of the 1980s. The building was vacant between 1993 and 2006, but portions of it are currently occupied by offices (including the Beaumont Main Street program), the banking floor is used for large meetings and events, while spaces on the upper floors await rehabilitation by the current owner.

History of the Bank and Construction of the 1962-63 Building²⁴

The bank was founded (as First National Bank) in 1889 when Beaumont had a population of 3,200 citizens and its economy was based on lumber, railroads and cattle. In May 1891, the bank directors purchased a central city lot at 341 Pearl Street for \$1,200. The discovery of the nearby Spindletop oil field in 1901 overwhelmed the bank, and that same year the American National Bank was established and remained a competitor. Beaumont was awash with oil speculators and developers, some of whom became very rich in the process. In 1919, the bank merged with the Gulf National bank and became First National Bank of Beaumont and located its offices in the Gilbert Building. The bank moved into the building at 495 Orleans in 1937 (property A-46, contributing). Through the 1940s, the First National Bank and American National Bank remained tough competitors, roughly equal in assets (\$40 million and \$38 million, respectively, in the late 1940s), with the smaller Security State Bank a distant third.

In 1952, John E. Gray became Executive Vice-President and Director of the bank, and under his direction, the bank grew enormously. In 1959, Gray became bank president, just as the bank began to undertake its most ambitious building project.²⁵ When American National Bank announced its plans for the American Center complex in 1959, First National Bank countered with its own expansion plans, confirming that that bank had taken options on a large parcel on the block immediately south of its current headquarters. In August 1961, First National announced a merger with Security State Bank, approved by the comptroller of the currency in October. A groundbreaking ceremony took place on November 2, 1961, with director Gray and Security Bank founder Otis Fuller lifting dirt from the site from a trash can. A press release published in the *Beaumont Enterprise* gushed:

²⁴ This section adapted from Penny Louisa Clark, “The Historical and Architectural Significance of the First Security National Bank,” Submitted as documentation for the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Application, Part 1, June 2006.

²⁵ Clark, pp. 8-9.

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This consolidation will provide Beaumont and the Sabine Neches area with a bank of size and capital strength commensurate with the requirements of this rapidly developing area. The union of these fine old Beaumont Banking institution will bring together a vast amount of proven bank experience which will enable the new bank to substantially increase its service to the community and the area.²⁶

The bank's 1961 annual report boasted that "this magnificent structure more than a year in planning will be an outstanding addition to the city of Beaumont. . . it will provide the finest banking facilities available anywhere."²⁷ In December of 1961 the bank announced the purchase of two properties adjacent to the San Jacinto Building. The construction would enable them to keep up with their competitor, the American National Bank. The 1962 annual report again extolled the new building, describing it as "a symbol of progress in the Beaumont area...it will be truly 'Enough Difference to make a Difference.' A Big Difference."²⁸

The bank constructed an enclosed twelve-by-six-foot press box at the construction site so onlookers could safely watch the building in progress. It featured two bleachers which could seat fifteen people behind a plate glass window. Two thousand tons of A-36 high strength steel fabricated by Orleans Material Company of New Orleans went into the framework, and upon its completion in June 1962, and construction workers marked the occasion by mounting a ceremonial tree to the top of the frame.

During the last phase of construction in early 1963, solar screens designed to shield the floors from excess sunlight were installed. Designed by Matchett Herring Coe, the screens were made of precast concrete composed of white cement and marble dust. Each section was treated with a water-proofing material which made it impervious to the effects of weather. Encasing the building between the second and fourth floors, each section was hoisted in place by a crane and attached to steel uprights by stainless steel bolts. The uprights were covered with silver anodized aluminum mullion covers containing neoprene strips. The screens, which cover the upper floors on the Bowie and Orleans street elevations were made up of 361 individually cast panels weighing over 2,000 pounds each.

The new building provided the bank with more than three times the floor space of their previous building. The north half was devoted to the banking lobby and offices, while the southern half held the drive-in bank and 37,000 square foot parking garage, with room for 130 vehicles. The ground floor of the motor bank featured five drive-in windows and a special security area for large commercial deposits. The Beaumont Club, the premier local business and social club, occupied 19,000 square feet of floor space on the fourth floor above the parking garage. Founded in 1922, the Beaumont Club provided meeting spaces, a private restaurant and bar for its members in the new building. The fifth floor housed the Community Room and the Golden Triangle Room, two rooms designed for meetings, and the Trust Department. The Community Room featured a huge aerial map of Jefferson County which covered one wall. The Golden Triangle Room displayed a large metal and plastic map of the Golden Triangle of East Texas, showing the location of cities and industries in the area.

The completion of the bank brought praise from the local press. Upon its completion, the *Beaumont Enterprise* reported that the "pride and satisfaction are justified. The building, sheathed on the street sides in a unique solar screen would be a credit to a city thrice the size of Beaumont. It is in every way a masterpiece of modern architecture."

²⁶ Clark, p. 2.

²⁷ "First Security National Bank of Beaumont, Annual Report, 1961." On file at the Tyrell Historical Library archives, Beaumont.

²⁸ "First Security National Bank of Beaumont, Annual Report, 1962." On file at the Tyrell Historical Library archives, Beaumont.

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The bank's interior was designed to illustrate the progressive thinking of the bank's leaders, and press releases noted that the new building was unlike banks of the past which featured "haughty and inaccessible bankers, iron grills around tellers, tin ceilings, and ceiling fans." Instead, the new bank featured open counters to make the customer feel "as if he were chatting with his next door neighbor across a back yard fence." The bank wished to present an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness. Bank president John E. Gray said, "We believe the bank is the heart of a community and as such it should be a place of warmth and efficiency."

Jonathan W. "Jack" Evans, president of Evans-Monical, Inc. of Houston was hired to design the decor of the new bank. Evans' design involved luxury goods imported from all parts of the globe, including included original paintings, wall hangings woven in Mexico and Japan, lamps with bases of teak, marble, and walnut, and ash trays imported from Sweden, Italy, and Norway. The safe deposit vault area had eggshell vinyl wall covering with accents of black, gold leaf and glistening stainless steel. The tables had white marble and oiled walnut tops and bases of stainless steel. The blue handwoven lower level lobby rug was imported from Puerto Rico. The first floor featured off-white vinyl wall coverings with teak and walnut paneling and off-white Venetian Terrazzo. The counter tops and columns were of the purest white marble. The counters and desks were of teak. The draperies, woven in Italy, were of natural linen net. The second floor featured walls paneled in teak. President John Gray's office featured cherry paneling, a teak desk and teak storage units.

One of the modern features of bank was its drive-in bank which provided protection against inclement weather. It included five teller windows, a night depository, and parking for commercial depositors. The bank boasted of a "self-parking system, unique among southeast Texas enables a customer to drive directly to a parking level near the floor where he has business and go directly to his appointment." An editorial in the *Beaumont Enterprise* proclaimed:

How banking has changed! It used to be a bare minimum of take-in-and-pay-out functions in a cell-block atmosphere of caged tellers...now it has become a department store operation -- a department store of financial service and spacious dimensions and elegant decor... I found space and airiness and marble and glass and escalator transport and quiet efficiency on its two main banking floors I found thick carpets, handsome drapes, modern art, furniture upholstered in warm hues, attractive customer lounges, and well appointed offices on three floors.

The editorial also praised the bank's use of modern art:

The presence of so many excellent pieces of modern art in the bank building it seems to me is a dual accomplishment—both for the bank and for the contemporary art form...Its an achievement for the newest in good art in that it has been accepted as a decorative motif for a conservative financial house...Its an achievement for the bank because it represents a progressive state of mind, a refusal to be fastened to the past, a recognition that we do indeed live in the 1960s, a willingness to blend cultural beauty with a cultural facility.

The *Beaumont Journal* praised the building as "gorgeous."

The bank proudly celebrated the opening of the luxurious new building with over two weeks of events. There were special private parties for the people who constructed the building, bank staff, directors, stockholders, media, farmers, and business and civic leaders. A group of twenty one women – bank employees dubbed the "Golden Girls" – gave tours, and

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lobby displays played up the new interest in modern design and related technologies. Lobby displays included experimental cars and a microwave oven. The bank gave every guest souvenirs, including a card with a brand new quarter attached and the message, "Welcome to Our Shiny New Quarters." The bank was officially opened to the public on June 22, 1963. President Gray gave the dedicatory statement, in which he expressed his faith in the future of Beaumont, explaining that "We have built this magnificent building because we believe in the future of Beaumont we believe in the future of Southeast Texas and we believe in the future of the bank."

Chorology of First Security National Bank, 1963-1993.²⁹

By the end of 1964, the bank had deposits in excess of one hundred million dollars, making it the first financial institution in Southeast Texas to achieve that milestone. The year also marked the beginning of an electronic data processing department, one of its kind in the southwestern United States. During the final months of 1964 First Security installed an NCR 315 computer.

A major event in the bank's history took place on September 30, 1969 when the Security National Corporation was formed. The one-bank holding company was the first company of its type headquartered in Southeast Texas. The corporation would in time grow to include five banks in Southeast Texas and five in the Dallas area. In 1970 the bank installed a third computer, a NCR Century 200, which enabled the bank to offer an on-line billing system for a major industrial customer. In 1971 the bank merged into the First Security National Corporation, acquiring several banks in southeast Texas, Dallas, and Fort Worth. In December 1972, the Corporation's total resources exceeded two hundred million dollars for the first time.

The data processing division continued to grow, processing the financial records of thirty savings and loans with 400,000 accounts and combined assets of 1.2 billion dollars. In 1972 First Security's data processing department became First Security Financial Systems, Inc., a subsidiary of the corporation. In 1975 the Electronic Data Processing division had once again made substantial gains, providing services to 45 savings and loans in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana; 25 Texas banks, and 2 Texas credit unions. In January 1978, First Security National Bank became First Security National Bank of Beaumont, N.A. In October of that year, directors of First Security National Corporation and First City Bancorporation of Houston approved a proposed merger of the two corporations, with First Security to become a subsidiary of that corporation. The merger of First City Bancorporation and the First Security National Corporation made it the largest bank holding company in Texas.

In 1980 the bank announced plans to remodel the building at a cost \$700,000. They planned to refurbish and rearrange the bank's retail and commercial lending areas, and convert the old drive-in facilities to add 8000 square feet to the bank's first floor, which would enable the bank to move its installment loan facilities, tellers, and other consumer lending services to the first floor. In 1983, the First Security National Bank was renamed First City National Bank of Beaumont. Meanwhile, the parent company, First City Bancorporation of Texas encountered difficulties in the mid 1980s due to the crash the oil prices and real estate values in Houston, which would ultimately bring financial ruin to the entire corporation. In 1986 First City Bancorp reported a loss of \$232.4 million in the first quarter, a notable change from the previous year's first quarter when the corporation reported earnings of \$8.9 million. In May 1986, the First City Bankcorporation of Texas, Inc. sold the data processing center to Flserv Inc. of Milwaukee to raise badly needed cash. It had been the

²⁹ This section adapted from Penny Louisa Clark, "The Historical and Architectural Significance of the First Security National Bank," Submitted as documentation for the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Application, Part 1, June 2006.

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computer nerve center for 220 banks and thrifts in Texas and Louisiana., processing the checks and deposits of 2.2 million accounts along the Gulf Coast. Located in the underground levels of the bank it included eleven mainframe computers and 118 disk drives.

In October 1986 the City of Beaumont held the bank responsible for the loss of twenty million dollars in investments. The City contended that the Bank had failed to obtain the required two signatures of top city officials to release funds. The Bank and the City reached an agreement with the bank agreeing to pay the City a million dollars in damages. Unfortunately, economic woes of the corporation only mounted. The Corporation lost \$402 million dollars in 1986.

In September of 1987, the FDIC announced a plan to bail out First City Bancorporation with \$500 million in privately raised capital and a billion dollars from the FDIC. Control of First City would pass to a group of investors headed by A. Robert Abboud, a banking executive from Chicago. While depositors were insured, the shareholders would own only 2.5% of the company's common stock after the changeover. FDIC chair, L. William Seidman explained that "This is no bailout for the old shareholders or the old bank management. For their purposes the bank failed." In 1990, the bank changed its name to First City, Texas. Financial woes continued to plague the organization. In October 30th of 1992 the FDIC declared First City Bancorporation of Texas insolvent. It seized and renamed all of the holding company's banks. First City's seizure represented the largest bank failure in the United States in 1992 and the eighth largest ever. In January of 1993 late January of 1993 the FDIC accepted the bid from Texas Commerce Bancshares to buy five First City banks in Beaumont, Houston, Dallas, El Paso, and Midland for a combined \$346.8 million. The Justice Department received several complaints about Texas Commerce's take over of the New First City in Beaumont including the potential for layoffs and an unfair advantage in the marketplace. Acquisition of First City in Beaumont would give Texas Commerce 28.1 % of all deposits in Beaumont. The Justice Department ordered Texas Commerce to divest itself of two branches in Beaumont and a half million dollars in commercial loans. On February 24, 1993 Texas Commerce Bank officially acquired the New First City, Texas Beaumont bank. In March 1993 the Texas Commerce Bank announced that it would vacate the downtown building at 505 Orleans in May. Dan Hallmark, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Texas Commerce Bank, said that their bank at 510 Park could contain the banking operations previously housed at the former First City building. Hallmark said that "while no one wants to see vacant building in downtown Beaumont, I'm confident that the building won't be vacant long." The building, unfortunately, remained empty until 2006.

Architectural Significance of the First Security National Bank

The First Security National Bank Building is exceptionally significant at the local level and merits inclusion in the historic district as a contributing property for many reasons. Designed by one of the most prolific and important architects in Beaumont, the building is an outstanding example of the work of Llewellyn Pitts, and represent his highest achievement in Beaumont at the pinnacle of his career. The bank was Pitts' largest project in Beaumont while he headed the firm Pitts, Mebane and White, and is the most prominent example of mid-century modern design in the city.

New Formalist Architecture, of which the bank is a prime example, emerged in the 1960s in response to the rigid forms of modernism, and represented an effort to merge 20th century building technology with classical architectural tenets regarding building proportion and scale. The movement embraced the reintroduction of highly stylized classical columns and entablatures, and the use of colonnades as a compositional devices, but also took advantage of advancements in concrete technology which allowed the cost-effective use of umbrella shells, waffle slabs and folded plates. Nationwide, the style was applied mainly to large-scale banking institutions and public buildings, including auditoriums, libraries, and museums. Buildings designed in the style have a carefully-organized hierarchy of space, with an exterior emphasis on the

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construction grid of the building, in the form of single volume. Many examples have an exotic flavor with rich exterior wall surfaces of cast stone, concrete, and marble.

The First Security Bank building is a clear expression of these architectural ideals successfully placed into Beaumont's late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century urban core. Modernist buildings such as these were typically placed outside of urban centers where they took advantage of the availability of new and previously undeveloped land. Site improvements usually included formal landscaping and surface parking - spatially a clear break from the space restrictions and uniform block face of the urban core. The architects of First Security Bank carefully allowed the building its modernist expression, accommodated the post-war need for on-site parking and cleverly fit the building into the urban streetscape. The recessed ground floor allows for a suburban and expansive feel at the street level due to the wider sidewalk and the transparency of the glass window walls. This clear break from the existing block face is rectified at the second level as the building cantilevers back out to reunite itself with its predecessors.

The building is distinctive in many regards, from its innovative attached multi-story parking (meant to facilitate easy access by the increasing number of customers who arrived in their personal cars), to its carefully-planned layout that accommodated numerous functions within a rectangular plan. Most important, however, is that the building employs one of the most extensive installations of perforated concrete solar screens in the state of Texas. From the late 1950s through the mid-1960s, perforated concrete screens were commonly utilized throughout the U.S. as inexpensive means to shade glass curtain walls, but their use was most common in sunbelt states such as Texas. Architect Edward Durell Stone is the American architect most commonly associated with perforated concrete blocks, as he employed them in many of his major commissions, including the 1954 U.S. embassy in New Delhi and the AIA-award winning Stuart Company headquarters in Pasadena, California. The use of this material dramatically increased in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as evidenced by numerous examples in both articles and advertisements in national trade journals, such as *Concrete Products*, but also in regional architecture journals, including *Texas Architect*, published by the Texas Society of Architects. Many Texas companies offered a variety of 1-foot-square mass-produced blocks that could be laid in simple grids, with 2-dimensional designs generally restricted within the square. By the early 1960s, tapered blocks became more common, with angled or curved sidewalls.³⁰

The concrete screen on the First Security Bank Building, however, is distinguished from most installations of concrete solar screens because of the complexity and depth of the pattern, the size of panels, and the fact that the concrete panels were not mass-produced but designed by noted sculptor Herring Coe for use on only one building. Each cast concrete screen panel measures approximately 9 feet by 5 feet, and also have some removable elements attached to the back with adhesive. The screen design is very three-dimensional and sculptural and composed of a repetitive triangular shape with a deeply recessed center void with stylized florets on each projecting corner.

Sculptor Matchett Herring Coe (1907-1999) was born in Loeb (near present-day Lumberton), Texas and lived in the Beaumont area most of his life. He graduated from Lamar College, received additional training at the Cranbrook Academy. His works include the 1936 statue of Confederate hero Dick Dowling at Sabine Pass, Texas, commission by the State of Texas for the Texas Centennial commemoration, and the 1939 cenotaph memorial near the site of the New London, Texas school explosion, which killed nearly 300 students and teachers in 1937. Most of Beaumont's signature buildings of the 1930s were embellished by Coe's work, including the Jefferson County Courthouse, the Jack Brooks

³⁰ Anthony Rubano. "The Grille is Gone: The Rise and Fall of Screen Block," in *Preserving the Recent Past 2*, edited by Deborah Slaton and William G. Foulks. Historic Preservation Education Foundation, et al, 2000., pp 3-90 through 3-92.

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Federal Building, and the First National Bank. His best known work is probably the statue of Dick Dowling at Sabine Pass. His public sculpture also includes building reliefs at Houston City Hall (with Raoul Josset), the Fondren Library at Rice University, Lamar University, and buildings at the Houston Zoo. Coe also designed the statue of the Texas Confederate Veteran at the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi. Herring Coe also created the statue of the Texas Confederate Veteran featured at the Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi. Coe exhibited works at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Coe's sculpture was largely representational, but his contribution the exterior of the First Security Bank Building – the building's most distinctive feature – demonstrates his talent in creating rich geometric forms.³¹

Architect Llewellyn William “Skeek” Pitts (1906-1967) was born in Uniontown, Alabama, and received a B.S. in Architecture at the Georgia School of Technology in 1927. In 1929 he joined Beaumont architect Fred C. Stone as a draftsman, and worked on major commissions including Beaumont's U.S. Post Office and Court House (at the north end of the district) and the Jefferson County Courthouse (NRHP 1982). In 1934, Pitts joined Stone in the firm Stone and Pitts, which quickly became the most prominent firm in the region. Projects completed in the 1930s demonstrated the firm's skill at producing modernistic designs, best exemplified in the Art Deco style City National Bank Building (just to north of the 1963 bank) and Greyhound Bus Terminal (demolished), but also moderne movie theaters in Beaumont, Kilgore, and Longview. Residences designed by firm during the 1930s – located most in an upper-class subdivision at the western edge of Beaumont – reflect more traditional revival styles popular at the time, including colonial and neoclassical.³² During World War II, the firm designed the Riverside Housing Project in Orange (demolished), built to house shipyard workers. Pitts served as a Lt. Commander C.E.C. in the US Naval Reserve from 1942 through 1945.³³

After the war, the firm of Stone & Pitts (and its successor firms) took on larger commercial, industrial and governmental projects, winning several awards in the process, and leaving its mark on downtown Beaumont and its immediate area, accounting for over two dozen original buildings and remodeling projects. Commercial and industrial projects from this period (through Pitts' death in 1967) utilized modern forms and materials, and included the White House Department Store, Rosenthal's Department Store (demolished), nineteen Coca-Cola bottling plants throughout the central United States, and numerous projects (mostly laboratories and office buildings) for petrochemical companies in southeast Texas, including ten buildings for Gulf Oil, two buildings for Mobil Oil, three buildings for Shell oil, and five separate projects for Texaco that included a 20-building research center. The firm also completed two college master plans, 37 buildings for five universities, numerous public school projects for seven independent school districts, and four banks.³⁴ Fred Stone retired in 1957, and the firm changed its name to Pitts, Mebane and Phelps. Aside from the First Security National Bank Building, the firm's other major commissions in the 1960s included the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City (with Brooks Barr Graeber & White of Austin), and the U.S. Department of Labor Building in Washington, DC.

Pitts was elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA in 1958. He served as president of the Texas State Society of Architects 1961, and director of the AIA's Texas Region from 1963 to 1966. He served as the governor-appointed chairman of the Architectural Advisory Committee to the Texas State Building Commission from 1959 to 1962. At the

³¹ New London School Explosion website, <http://www.nlse.org/coe.html>, (accessed January 10, 2008). See also <http://www.plakainc.com/coegallery001.html>.

³² Dorcy L.H. Walter, AIA Emeritus. “The Story of Stone & Pitts, Architects 1929-2003.” On file at the Tyrell Historical Library Archives, Beaumont.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. Walter's document includes a thorough project list, sorted by decade.

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local level, Pitts served as Director of the First Security National Bank, President of the Beaumont Country Club, Rotary Club, and a consultant to the Beaumont City Planning Commission.³⁵ Upon Pitts' death in 1967, the Texas Society of Architects named its highest award in his honor.

³⁵ "L.W. Pitts, World Renowned Architect Dies." *Beaumont Enterprise*, June 24, 1967; Biographical Sketch (1965) on file with the Texas Society of Architects, Austin.

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Boundary Description: The boundary increase area includes 3 small areas adjacent to and contiguous with the original historic district boundary. Area 1 includes all properties on the east side of the 400 block of Pearl between Crockett and Bowie. Area 2 includes the 600 block of Orleans and is bounded by Orleans (east), Fannin (north), Park (west) and Forsythe (south). Area 2 also includes the 700 block of Orleans and the half block directly to the west. The north boundary is Forsythe, the southern boundary is Wall and the east boundary is Orleans. The west boundary is the half block between Park (east) and Neches (west). Area 3 includes one building on the south side of the 400 block of Bowie.

Boundary Justification: The boundary increase area includes all eligible historically commercial or institutional buildings on the periphery of the original Beaumont Commercial District, as identified through a survey conducted by Texas Historical Commission staff and Anna Mod staff in 2005.

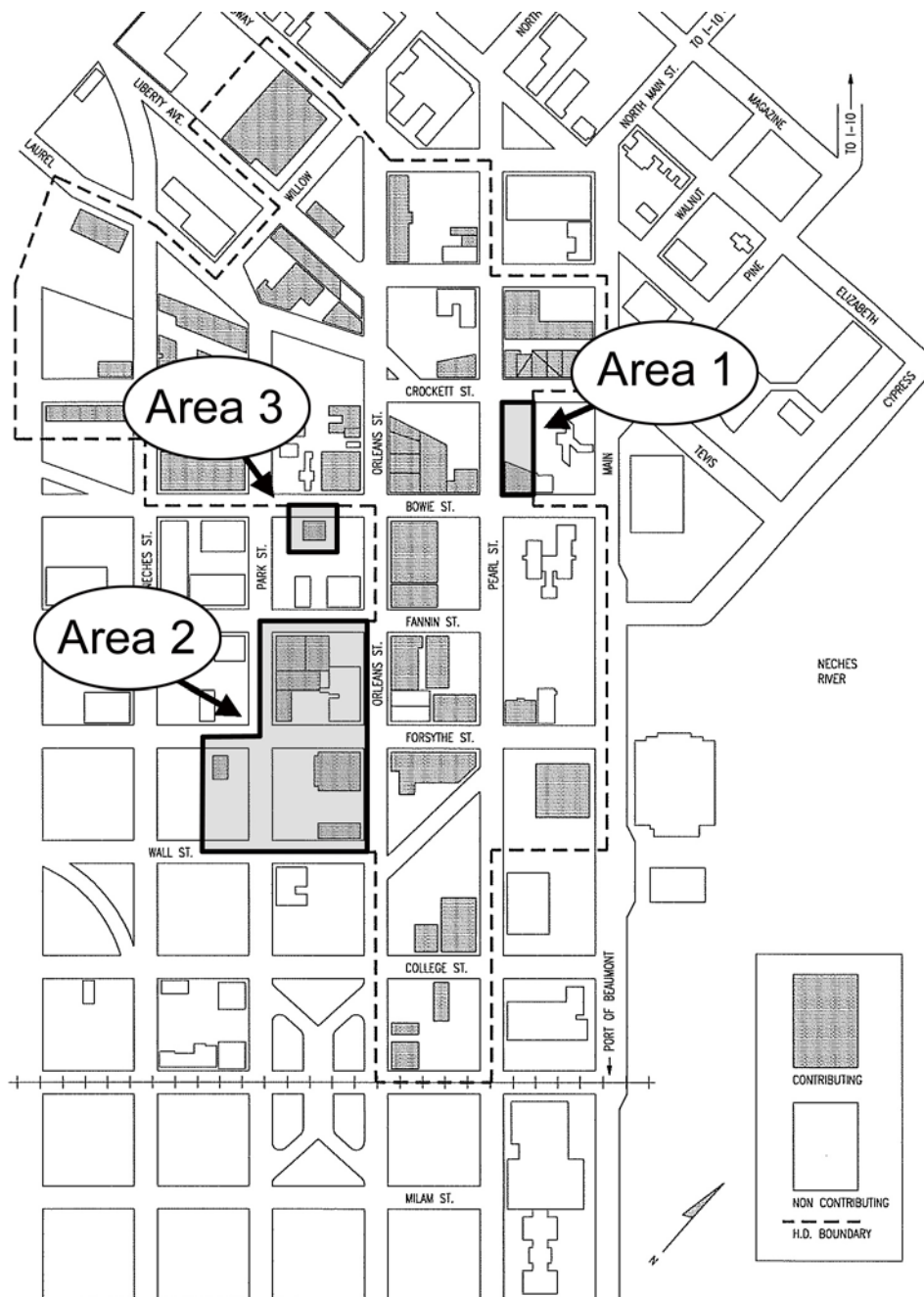
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Beaumont Commercial District Map, revised 2007, indicating areas added to district. No scale.



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SEE REVERSE:

Beaumont Commercial District Map, revised 2007.
No scale.

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Photographed by Anna Mod
February 2006

Crockett Street
From corner of Crockett and Pearl
Camera facing east
Photo 1

Old Southern Pacific Warehouse
801 Laurel
West facade
Camera facing east
Photo 8

Old Santa Fe Depot
900 Laurel
Camera facing south
Photo 2

Oil City Brass Works
714-780 Crockett
Southeast oblique
Camera facing northwest
Photo 9

Antioch Baptist Church
527 Forstyle
North facade
Camera facing south
Photo 3

Neches Electric (Walgreen's)
698 Pearl
Southeast oblique
Camera facing northwest
Photo 10

Gus Mayer
648-690 Orleans
Ease facade
Camera facing west
Photo 4

City Hall and Auditorium (Julia Rogers Theater for the
Performing Arts)
700 Pearl
West façade
Camera facing east
Photo 11

View north down Orleans
From Orleans and Forsythe Streets
Camera facing north
Photo 5

First Baptist Church (Tyrell Public Library)
695 Pearl
South and west facades, oblique
Camera facing north
Photo 12

St. Augustine Building
695 Park
West facade
Camera facing north
Photo 6

Art Museum of Southeast Texas
500 Main
East façade
Camera facing west
Photo 13

Kyle Building
215-281 Orleans
West facade
Camera facing north
Photo 7

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Beaumont Commercial District (Boundary and Period of Significance Increase)
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

The White House (now Municipal Court)
700 Orleans
North and east facades oblique
Camera facing south
Photo 14

400 and 500 blocks of Orleans
First National Bank (left foreground); First Security National
Bank, left middle ground) San Jacinto Building (left
background)
Camera facing south
Photo 16

Chamber of Commerce
450 Bowie
South façade
Camera facing north
Photo 15

Coale Building
465 Bowie
North façade oblique
Camera facing south
Photo 17

Digital Photographs

First Security National Bank Building (Property 06-032, Beaumont Commercial Historic District)
505 Orleans, Beaumont Jefferson County, Texas
Photographed by Gregory Smith
November 2007
Printed by Texas Historical Commission staff on HP Premium Plus photo paper with HP Vivera inks

Photo 1 of 4
West Oblique (northwest and southwest facades)
Camera facing east

Photo 2 of 4
Fourth floor exterior walkway
Camera facing southeast

Photo 3 of 4
Escalator to the banking hall, showing solar screen and ceiling treatment
Camera facing south

Photo 4 of 4
Northeast elevation, showing parking facility
Camera facing west