

# SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

## LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: Commercial Development, 1859-1980

Theme: Hotels, 1870-1980



*Prepared for:*

City of Los Angeles  
Department of City Planning  
Office of Historic Resources



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## PREFACE

This theme of Hotels, 1870-1980 is a component of Los Angeles's historic context statement, and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to this commercial property type. Refer to [HistoricPlacesLA.org](http://HistoricPlacesLA.org) for information on designated resources associated with this theme as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

## CONTRIBUTOR

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## INTRODUCTION

The theme of Hotels examines the evolution of this commercial type from early places of lodging for travelers arriving by stage and passenger train in the 1870s, to the large-scale automobile-friendly hostelrys of the 1970s. The theme relates the evolution of the hotel to the transformation of Angeles from a compact walking city into a metropolis of differentiated districts, each with its demand for hotel types.

The theme divides hotel development into three chronological periods. The first includes the early years of the hotel, from 1870 until the mid-1890s. These were the years of a real estate boom in Los Angeles, brought about by the establishment of transcontinental passenger railroad service. It was during this boom that the hotel developed as a distinct building type. It used the common commercial form of masonry bearing wall and wood frame construction, and employed the architectural layout of the multi-story business block, with retail space on the ground floor and lodging rooms above.

The second period covers the years between 1895 and 1930. It was during this time that the hotel reached its greatest importance in the economic and social life of the city. It was able to employ new structural technologies, such steel and reinforced concrete framing, to create buildings of greater size and height. Innovations such as electric lighting and private baths with each room allowed these new buildings to offer amenities heretofore unimaginable.

This second period was also a time of spatial growth by means of, first, the electrically-powered streetcar and then the automobile. The spread of the city allowed for the emergence of distinct neighborhoods, each with a demand for hotels to meet its particular needs. Along with this spatial growth came increasing social and economic divisions. The result was the development of different hotel forms to meet the market for different income levels and for those groups segregated by ethnicity and race.

Hotel development between 1895 and 1930 includes the Downtown commercial hotel, which used structural and technological innovations to provide large and elaborate facilities for the better-off; the Downtown working-class (Single Room Occupancy or SRO) hotel, which used traditional masonry and wood frame construction to create modest lodging facilities; the neighborhood hotel, which provided facilities of various forms to fit the needs of specific outlying districts and/or groups; the apartment hotel, which combined hotel services with in-room dining and food preparation; and the suburban resort hotel, which featured a bucolic setting for leisure activities within the city limits.

The third period covers the years after the Second World War, from 1945 to 1980. Hotel construction all but ceased during the Great Depression and the war years. When it resumed in the late 1940s, the hotel of the 1920s was considered obsolete. It failed to accommodate the automobile and the suburban way of life. The post-war hotel is an adaptation to this auto-oriented culture, in both its initial form outside the old central business district, and then, by the 1970s, within Downtown.

#### **Evaluation Considerations:**

The theme of Hotels may overlap with other SurveyLA themes as follows:

- Hotels significant for their design quality may also be evaluated under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context.
- Hotels may also be significant for their association with noted architects, as the work of a master.
- Hotels may have significant signs, such as neon blade or rooftop signs, which may be contributing features to a property, but may also be individually significant under the Commercial Signs theme.
- Hotels with significant associations to the Entertainment Industry may be significant under themes within that context.
- Hotels associated with specific ethnic/cultural groups may also be evaluated under related themes in the ethnic/cultural contexts.
- Hotels may have some relationship to the Multi-Family Residential theme, with respect to the relationship of the apartment hotel to the apartment building



*North Main Street in the 1870s  
Historic Plaza at the upper far left, Pico House upper center-left  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

## **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The history of the hotel in Los Angeles is much like a three-act play. First came the early years, during which the hotel was established as a part of urban life. Second came the middle years, during which the hotel flourished in size and type, but showed signs of its limitations. Third came the late years of decline, followed by revival and redemption.

As it experienced these three stages of development, the city hotel came to serve two purposes. The first was the age-old provision of lodging for travelers, a function that goes back to the inn of ancient times. The second and more recent was that of community meeting place and symbol of success. The mature hotel, with its dining facilities and assembly spaces of monumental scale and opulent decor, allowed the city leadership to celebrate its achievements and show its importance.

### **The Early Years, 1870-1895**

The hotel as we know it first appeared in the United States in the 1830s. Prior to this, inns were modest affairs, often associated with taverns, or residential enterprises such as boarding houses. During the 1830s, in Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Washington, relatively monumental structures were built

that combined rooms for guests together with fashionable dining facilities and dedicated spaces for local events.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the first significant secular building in Los Angeles was such a hotel. The Pico House, on North Main Street facing the Plaza, was completed in 1870. (Plaza Park is L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 64). It was not, however, the city's first hotel. The Bella Union Hotel was created in 1858, with the addition of a second story to an existing adobe at 314 North Main Street. It provided lodging for passengers of the Butterfield stage route that started service to Los Angeles that year. Eventually a third story was added and the entire structure given an Italianate façade.<sup>2</sup>



*Bella Union Hotel in the 1870s  
314 North Main Street  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

These two early hotels were previews of what was to come. The hotel as a common type in Los Angeles was a product of transcontinental passenger rail service. The railroad first came in the 1870s, but its impact on hotel construction was not felt until the real estate boom of the 1880s. This boom made the

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<sup>1</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *History of Building Types* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 175-176.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 44.

hotel the most numerous of Downtown building types. In all its varieties, places of lodging came to make up about one-third of all the business district's structures.<sup>3</sup>

These early hotels resembled the business blocks of the day, with load-bearing masonry and wood frame construction. From two to five stories in height, they contained retail space on the ground floor and rooms to let above. Elevators were all but unknown and bathrooms shared. The similarities in structure among the hotels, office blocks, and open lofts of the day were such that the same building could relatively easily change use as the market demanded.

The story of these early hotels begins in 1876, when the Southern Pacific Railroad constructed a passenger depot next to its rail yards the north of the Plaza, in what is today's Los Angeles State Historic Park (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 82). Known as the River Station (San Pedro Railroad), it spread out along the northwest side of what is now North Spring Street, opposite the intersection with Sotello Street. The building combined passenger ticketing and waiting areas with a hotel and dining room. Across Spring Street, by 1888, there was a two-block commercial district that included the Southern Hotel, in the form of a business block with stores on the first floor.<sup>4</sup>

This River Station was connected to the Plaza and the emerging business district to its south by the Spring and Sixth Street Railroad. This horse car line began along north Broadway in today's Lincoln Heights, ran past the depot, and down Spring and North Main to the Plaza. At that point it shared tracks from the Plaza to Temple with the Main Street and Agricultural (now Exposition) Park horse car line. Passengers could continue on by a circuitous route to Sixth and Figueroa, or transfer to the Main Street horse car line to reach the newer business district.<sup>5</sup>

By the late 1880s, a number of hotels were scattered along the route served by the horse car lines. On North Main, between Virgin and College Streets, was the Santa Fe Hotel. North of the Plaza on Main was the Sepulveda House, and nearby, on Olvera Street, the Avila adobe (part of Plaza Park, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 64) served as a boarding house called the Hotel d'Italia Unita. Joining the Pico House and the Bella Union, now named the St. Charles, on Main between the Plaza and Temple were the Grand Central Hotel, the St. Elmo Hotel, the Hotel Oxford, and Plaza Hotel. This was the closest thing that Los Angeles had to a hotel row at that time.<sup>6</sup>

South of Temple, along Main and nearby Spring Streets, there were a number of larger establishments. On the east side of Main Street, just south of its intersection with Temple, was the United States Hotel.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles 1850-1930* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976 [1976]), 150; A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 116-117.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Herr, editor, *Landmark L.A.: Historic-Cultural Monuments of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: City of Los Angeles, 2002), 427; "Lost Train Depots of Los Angeles," [www.kcet.org/shows](http://www.kcet.org/shows); 1888 Sanborn Map.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Post, *Street Railways and the Growth of Los Angeles: Horse, Cable, Electric Lines* (San Marino: Golden West Books, 1989), 25.

<sup>6</sup> 1888 Sanborn Map.

On the southwest corner of First and Main stood the Natick House, and one block to the west, on the southwest corner of First and Spring Streets, was the Nadeau Hotel. Further south, on what was the edge of commercial development, was the Hotel Westminster.<sup>7</sup>



*Hotel Westminster, 1887, with the later addition at the left  
Fourth and Main Streets  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Standing on the northeast corner of Fourth and Main and built in 1887, the four-story Westminster typified the larger hotels of the late 1880s. Its style was Second Empire, complete with corner tower and mansard-topped bays. In form it was essentially a business block, with the first floor divided into hotel common spaces and retail storefronts.<sup>8</sup>

The hotel lobby occupied the corner, and the dining room filled the space in the center facing Main Street. Both the northern third of the first floor facing Main and the entire section of the rear, with a storefront facing Fourth Street, were occupied by the Milwaukee Furniture Company. The furniture factory itself occupied a smaller separate rear-lot building just to the north that was served by the alley to the east of the hotel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1888 Sanborn Map.

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Wallach, et al., *Historic Hotels of Los Angeles and Hollywood* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 28.

<sup>9</sup> 1888 Sanborn Map.



*Southern Pacific Arcade Station, 1888*  
*View looking east on Fifth Street from Central Avenue*  
*The Palm House is on the left, the Arcade Hotel is on the right*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

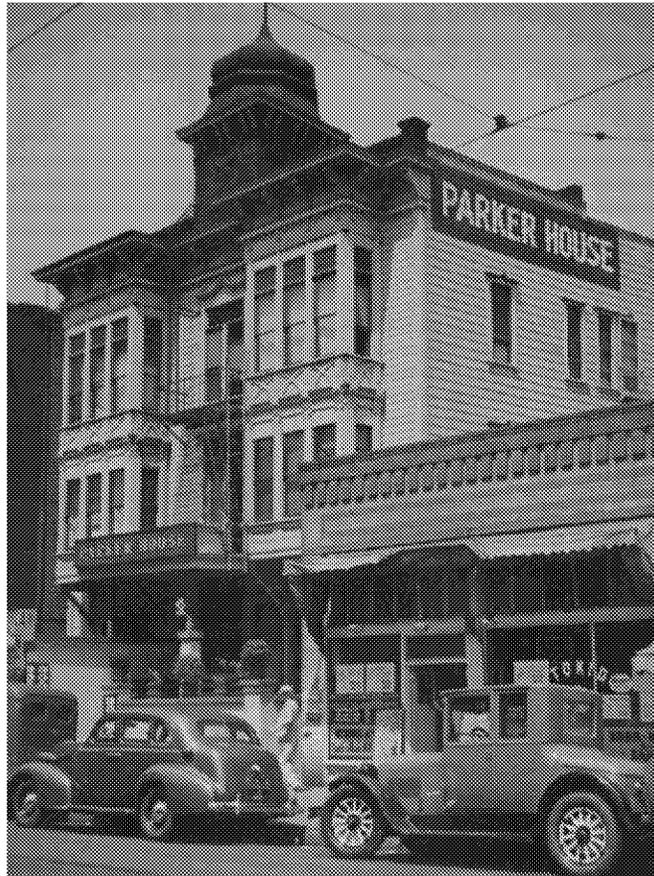
The location of the Westminster may have been determined by knowledge of what the Southern Pacific was about to do. Its River Station proved to be too remote, as the growth of Downtown extended to the south along Main Street from the Plaza. In 1888, a year after the completion of the Westminster, the Southern Pacific constructed a new depot just east of the intersection of Fifth Street and Central Avenue. This depot, known as the Arcade Station, was a large wood structure with a five-hundred-foot long train shed covered by an open-trussed roof ninety feet high.<sup>10</sup>

When the Arcade Station was completed in 1888, the land around it was agricultural with a few scattered light industrial buildings. By 1894, its entrance was flanked by two new Hotels, the Palm House on the north side of Fifth and the Arcade Hotel on the south. They were soon joined further to the west on Fifth Street by the Hotel Pullman between San Julian and San Pedro Streets, later renamed the Parker House, and the Somerset and Mather Hotels between Wall and Los Angeles Streets. Many, such as the Parker House, retained an almost suburban form in this still underdeveloped area, set back from the sidewalk on a raised terrace and using wood frame construction without masonry party walls.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Lost Train Depots of Los Angeles."

<sup>11</sup> 1888, 1894 and 1906 Sanborn Maps. The Arcade Station was replaced in 1914 with a new Southern Pacific depot called the Central Station. It was in the Beaux-Arts style and constructed of reinforced concrete and steel. It was placed directly in front of the old depot, on Central Avenue, requiring the demolition of the Palm House and



*Parker House in the 1930s  
407-409 East Fifth Street  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Main Street as well saw new construction after the opening of the Arcade Station. By 1894 Westminster had doubled in size with an extension to the north. Stretching south from the corner of Main and Fourth, were three new hotels: the Montrose, the New Denison and the Menlo. But the collapse of the real estate boom soon after the opening of the depot meant that the development of Fifth and Main as a dense hotel district would have to wait,<sup>12</sup>

Downtown Los Angeles was not the only area to see early hotel construction. The land boom of the 1880s encouraged speculators to lay out subdivisions, and a feature that many included was the site for a hotel. Most of the early subdivisions, such as Hollywood, failed before any such structure could be built. But some, particularly those well served by some sort of rail transit, survived and managed to complete their hotels.

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Arcade Hotels. Steven Gee, *Iconic Vision: John Parkinson, Architect of Los Angeles* (Santa Monica: Angle Press, 2013), 183; 1950 Sanborn Map.

<sup>12</sup> 1888 and 1894 Sanborn Maps.

Generally these successes were well outside the boundaries of Los Angeles, such as San Dimas in the San Gabriel Valley, and the hotel structures themselves reverted to different uses once the boom ended. But there were a few such neighborhoods within the city limits, like Boyle Heights with its streetcar line, which managed to get their own hotels constructed. Unlike the more suburban all-wood-frame hotels set back from the street, these in-town hostelries used the urban business block format.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Downtown Commercial Hotel, 1895-1930**

Construction in Los Angeles slowed markedly as the boom ended by the early 1890s. Once it resumed in the late 1890s, the hotel as a building type began to change. Architecturally, it incorporated both the advanced technology and more restrained Renaissance Revival styles of the office buildings of the day. In doing so, it was able to become larger and more technically advanced. Socially, it developed into a public area, available to all who could afford the cost, for the celebration of notable events.

Hotel construction after 1895 was encouraged by the opening of two additional passenger rail depots serving transcontinental routes. In 1893 the Santa Fe constructed an ornate passenger facility, known as the Le Grande Station, on the southeast corner of First Street and Santa Fe Avenue. It was built of brick masonry and featured an exotic Moorish design, complete with dome.<sup>14</sup>

The Santa Fe depot compensated for its somewhat remote location with good transit connections. There was an existing cable car line along First that began in Boyle Heights and continued west past the depot to intersect with Main and Spring before travelling south on Broadway. By 1893 a second line, this time electric, began in front of the Santa Fe depot and extended west on Second Street. By 1900 a third line, also electric, extended west from the depot along Third Street.<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1900s a third transcontinental depot was constructed along First Street, across the Los Angeles River from the Santa Fe. This was for the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad, which was popularly known as the Salt Lake Line and eventually became part of the Union Pacific system. By 1904 a streetcar route known as Depot Line connected the Salt Lake, the Santa Fe, and Southern Pacific stations to each other and to Main and Spring streets to the west.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the increasing demand from rail travelers, the Downtown commercial hotel after 1895 became a larger and more luxurious form. It served a variety of groups among the better off. Some of these hotels were distinctly luxurious establishments, others catered to businessmen, and still others marketed themselves as respectable family lodgings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Boyle Hotel," laconservancy.org; David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, Revised Edition (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 270-271, 457.

<sup>14</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 49; 1894 Sanborn Map.

<sup>15</sup> Post, *Street Railways*, 89, 112, 142.

<sup>16</sup> Young's 1904 Los Angeles City Railway Directory; 1906 Sanborn Map.

<sup>17</sup> Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 81-99.

Two technological developments allowed for the emergence of these large-scale commercial hotels. One development was the use of steel and concrete framing in place of the older load-bearing masonry and wood framing. The other was the inclusion of modern conveniences such as elevators—a necessity given the new heights – as well as electricity, telephones, central heat, and, by the time of the First World War, private baths in each room.<sup>18</sup>

Standards for safe buildings were first set forth in code form by the City of Los Angeles in 1899. By 1905 the code differentiated for the first time between various kinds of construction and limits related to each. Buildings with frames of either steel or reinforced concrete could rise to as high as 130 feet. In 1911 this was raised to 150 feet. The larger commercial hotels catering to a well-off clientele could afford the investment in steel or reinforced concrete. They also could afford the cost of elevators and other services needed for a larger building.<sup>19</sup>

A new approach to exterior design characterized the new hotels. The variety of the earlier Italianate, Second Empire, or Queen Anne styles was abandoned. Instead, a more sober Renaissance-Revival-based three-part division of the façade was used as means of dealing with increasing height. The exterior was divided into a base made up of the lower floor, a shaft of the uniformly windowed middle floors which could be extended upward as needed, and a top of the uppermost floors and a projecting cornice. This three-part façade composition characterized most commercial construction in Downtown Los Angeles in the early twentieth century, be it hotels, office buildings, or department stores, and gave them a degree of architectural uniformity.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, in contrast to this stylistic uniformity, there occurred a functional specialization of geographic districts within Downtown. This specialization was perhaps inevitable as the growing streetcar and interurban systems brought increasing numbers of people into the central business district. South Spring Street developed as a center of office structures, especially finance and banking. South Broadway emerged as a center for department stores and theaters. South Main, now joined by Fifth Street, built on its proximity to the depots to become the hotel district.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Molly W. Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829-1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 180-181; Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 124-125.

<sup>19</sup> Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 97-98.

<sup>20</sup> Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 99.

<sup>21</sup> Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 148; Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 99-106; Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 49.



*Downtown hotels along Fifth Street looking west from Los Angeles Street (one block east of Main)  
Baltimore Hotel, 1910 (left); Rosslyn Hotel Annex, 1923 (center); Hotel King Edward, 1905 (right)  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

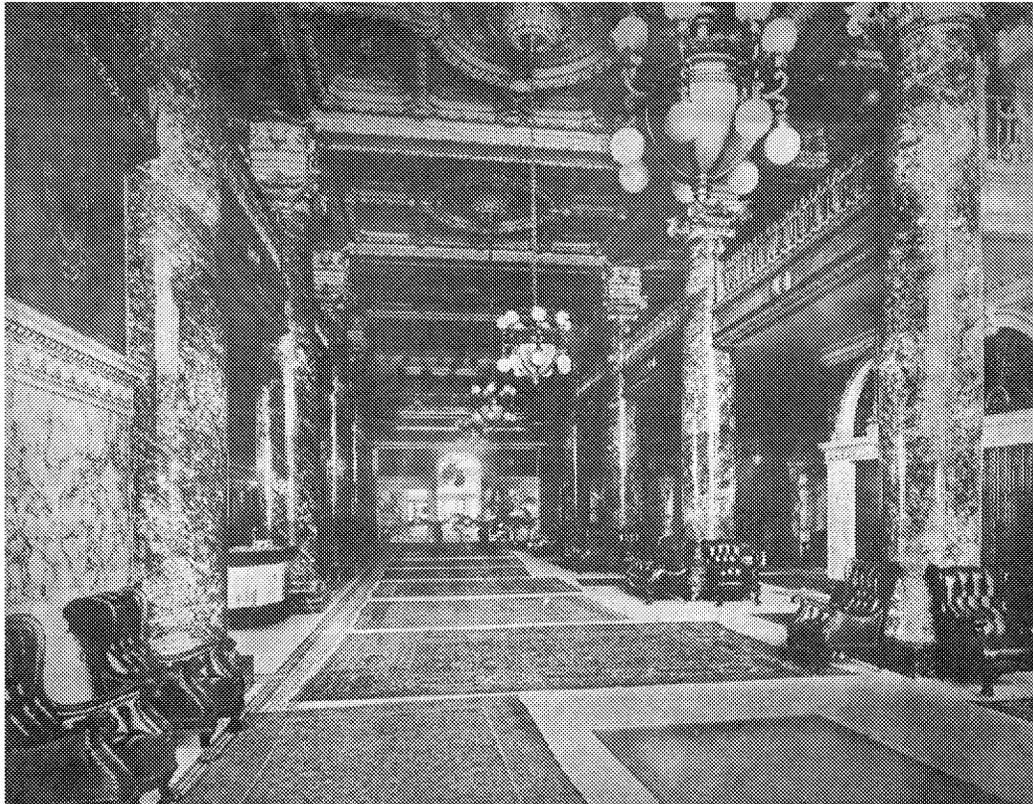
The new commercial hotels clustered around the intersection of Fifth and Main. (The area has been listed in the California Register as the Fifth Street-Main Street Commercial Historic District.) The first was the Van Nuys Hotel, located on the corner of Fourth and Main and constructed in 1896. (It is now known as the Barclay Hotel and is L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 288.) Others, such as the Hotel King Edward, the Alexandria Hotel, the Baltimore Hotel, and the Rosslyn joined the Van Nuys in the next twenty years to give the blocks around Fifth and Main a unique density of hotel space.<sup>22</sup>

The large commercial hotels not only provided housing for visitors. They also acted as settings for community social life. They included grand lobbies, extensive dining rooms, and opulent meeting spaces that could be rented for a variety of occasions. While some earlier hotels contained such spaces, they were limited by the relatively small size of the buildings and by the fact that entertaining in a public

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<sup>22</sup> The Fifth Street-Main Street Commercial Historic District was determined eligible for listing in the National Register in 2007, under Criterion C, as part of the Section 106 Review process. The period of significance is 1887-1923. It is listed in the California Register as a result of this process.

space rather than at home or a private institution, such as a church or social club, was relatively rare before 1900.<sup>23</sup>



*Lobby, Alexandria Hotel, 1906  
Fifth and Spring Streets  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The relationship between these hotels and the rail depots remained significant until the years of the First World War, 1917 and 1918. The streetcar lines connecting the three stations with the hotel district were heavily patronized, and the beginning of auto taxi service added another link. At least two of the hotels – the King Edward and the Rosslyn – ran their own autobus shuttle service that promised to meet every train. It was not until after the war, during the early 1920s, that widespread use of the automobile made this proximity to the stations less of an advantage.<sup>24</sup>

Despite their elegance and technical features, these new hotels were soon considered out of date. There was a pause in construction during the years of the First World War. By the time building resumed in the early 1920s a final feature had become standard in the better establishments. This was a private bath in each room, an innovation made economically practical as improvements in ventilation

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<sup>23</sup> Annabel Jane Wharton, *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 160.

<sup>24</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 86, 91.

allowed for windowless bathrooms. Hotels with shared facilities, regardless of their opulence, become second-class. Even the Alexandria, considered the most elegant in the city when it was completed in 1906, suffered from having only 200 baths for its 360 guest rooms.<sup>25</sup>

The lack of private baths was made worse by a shift in the location for fashionable commercial development. South Main Street was being left behind as the business district grew. In 1898 the center of the central business district was the intersection of Second and Spring Streets. By 1920 this had shifted south and west to Sixth and Hill Streets. By 1923 streetcar service along Main Street between Temple and Third had been eliminated. North Main Street cars traveling south from the old Plaza were diverted to Spring and Broadway, and trolleys traveling north on Main from south Los Angeles went only as far as Third.<sup>26</sup>

This shift to the west was symbolized by the emergence of Pershing Square as the closest thing Downtown had to a central public space. The square began in 1866 as a city park in a residential neighborhood. In 1910 this suburban park was transformed into an urban space with walkways and a central fountain. Eventually the name was changed to honor General John Pershing, commander of the American forces in Europe during World War I. It became the new center for fashionable hotel construction, as was made official by the completion in 1923 of the Biltmore Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 60), which replaced the Alexandria as Downtown's premier hostelry.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Working Class Alternative: Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs), 1900-1930**

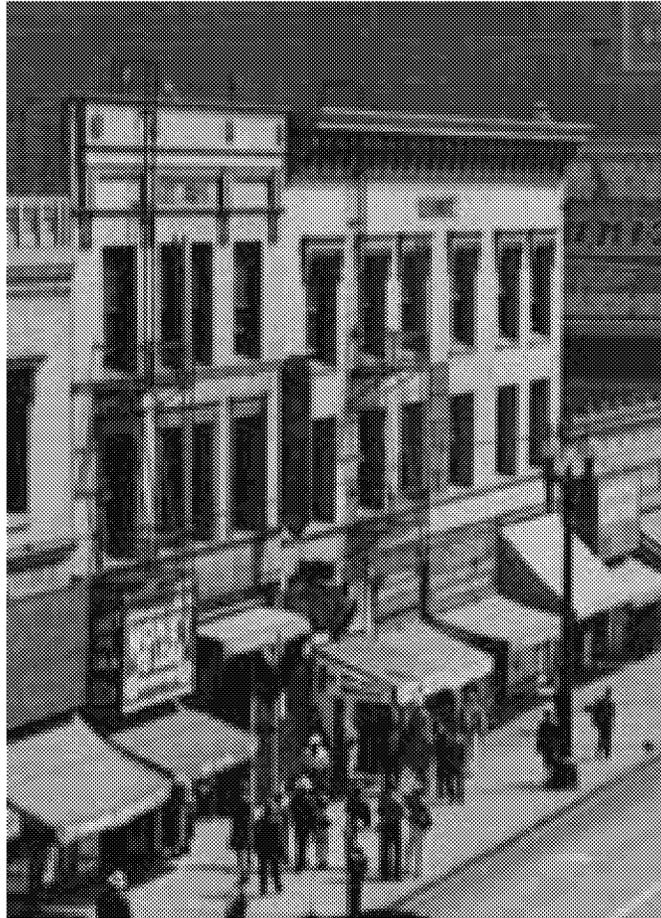
In contrast to the large commercial hotels were more modest facilities for the less well off. They are better known today as Single Room Occupancy, or SRO, hotels. The demand for these lodgings came in large part from single men attracted to unskilled jobs. They generally had no intention of settling permanently in Los Angeles and so sought a low-cost place of temporary or semi-permanent residence.

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<sup>25</sup> The first large-scale commercial hotel to include a private windowless bath with each room was Buffalo's Hotel Statler, built in 1907 and opened in January of 1908. The windowless bath became common thereafter as individual cities changed their codes to permit it. Cleveland's Hotel Statler in 1913 was the first large-scale hotel to place the windowless bath between the hall and the guest room, thereby creating an entry foyer for each room. This arrangement was published in the *Architectural Forum* of November 1917 and has since become standard. Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 205, 212; Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 85-86; Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 148; Jim Walker, *Los Angeles Railway Yellow Cars* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008). 39.

<sup>27</sup> Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 109-112.



*Hotel Roma, 1904 (left), and Hotel Leonide, 1905 (right)  
508 and 516 South Main Street  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

While some of these low-cost hotels were middle-class establishments from the 1880s that had fallen on hard times, many were purpose-built in the years between 1900 and 1930. Unlike the large-scale commercial hotels, they continued to use the less-expensive masonry and wood-frame construction. Three or four stories remained the typical height for these hotels without elevators. Some of the larger establishments had names, but many were simply identified as lodgings.

The working-class hotel was not unique in offering rooms by the week or the month. Historically all levels of hotels provided places of long-term residence before the evolution of the apartment building. This was seen as good for business in that it assured a dependable income. Until around 1960 a majority of hotels offered rooms by the week or month for permanent residents. Yet by the 1920s, with the development of the apartment house, hotel living was increasingly identified with these working-class establishments.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 1, 5-6; Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel*, 266-270.



*Second floor hallway, unnamed San Pedro Hotel, in the early 1940s  
Street visible to left down stairway, Office with sign to right of door, Toilet with sign on door  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The form of the purpose-built working class hotel followed the traditional business block of the late nineteenth century, with retail space on the ground floor. These retail spaces typically contained inexpensive cafes and bars patronized by the hotel's residents. A stairway provided access to the upper floors. Common spaces were generally non-existent. Narrow light wells provided ventilation to interior rooms. Bath and toilet rooms were shared.<sup>29</sup>

Low-cost hotels could be found both in Downtown and in working-class neighborhoods such as the port community of San Pedro. In Downtown, they were particularly concentrated on and around Fifth Street between Central and Main, where they filled the vacant lots around older establishments like the Palmer House. By 1906 perhaps half the buildings along this stretch of Fifth contained rooms for rent.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See the full discussion of this sub-theme below.

<sup>30</sup> 1906 Sanborn Map. There are two recognized districts containing such buildings between Main and Central: the Fifth Street Single Room Occupancy Hotel Historic District and the Skid Row Single Room Occupancy Hotel Historic District. Both are discussed below in the sub-theme of Downtown Working-Class Hotels.

By the 1920s, the blocks around Fifth Street east of Main had become distinctly downscale. The use of auto taxis made proximity to the railroad depots less important for the business traveler and the middle-class tourist. Competition from newer establishments such as the Biltmore further to the west left stranded once respectable hostelrys such as the King Edward and the Hotel Baltimore. The line between the purpose-built working-class hotel and the obsolete middle-class commercial hotel became increasingly vague. Then, in the late 1930s, the move of all passenger service to the new Union Station left East Fifth Street cut off entirely from its original function as a convenient district for rail travelers.

There was a second Downtown area, now vanished, that once competed with Fifth and Main as a center for low-cost lodging. This was Bunker Hill, extending roughly from Hill to Figueroa and from Temple to Fifth. In the late nineteenth century it was developed as a center for upper class homes and saw the construction of a great number of wood-frame mansions. By the early 1900s these had mostly been converted to boarding houses, and were joined by both middle-class and working-class hotels. By the 1920s the area, like the Fifth-Main district, had also become distinctly downscale. Bunker Hill in its entirety was demolished as an urban renewal project after the Second World War.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Neighborhoods, 1895-1930**

While the hotel was primarily a center-city building type during its period of glory, it was also common in many neighborhoods. Here it took on a form that reflected the nature of that neighborhood. In doing so it illustrated a variety that went beyond that found in the central business district.

The most important neighborhood for hotel construction was Hollywood. It was in essence a second Downtown. Hollywood began as a separate city which had consolidated with Los Angeles in 1910 to form an upper-middle class residential district. But the establishment of several motion picture studios during the decade following consolidation transformed what had been a typical streetcar-oriented commercial strip along Hollywood Boulevard into a high density urban core.

By the early 1920s Hollywood was the largest commercial district outside of Downtown in the Los Angeles area. As such, it was a natural location for large commercial hotels. By the end of the 1920s it had many, including the Hollywood Plaza Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 665) and the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 545).<sup>32</sup>

The other neighborhood commercial districts required much less in the way of size or style. Instead, their hotels were generally middle-class versions of the working-class hotel. They employed the same business-block model of storefronts on the ground floor with rooms above. In many cases, the line between the middle-class and working-class neighborhood hotel was hard to determine.

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<sup>31</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 29-48.

<sup>32</sup> Historic Resources Survey of the Hollywood Redevelopment Project Area, 50-52. The twelve blocks of Hollywood Boulevard from Argyle to Cerrito are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment District.



*Ritz Hotel, 1923-1926*  
*726 North Avalon Boulevard, Wilmington*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Its amenities depended upon the social and economic level of the neighborhood. In better-off areas, such as the Wilshire district, the hotel contained a well-appointed lobby and dining room, an elevator, and baths with each room. In others, it was little more than a sprucely maintained working-class hotel, with perhaps one of the storefronts serving as a lobby.

There were, however, two unique types of neighborhood hotels in better-off residential areas. One was the resort hotel. It was a variation of the vacation hotel that had long been a common building type at beach and mountain holiday locations. The in-town resort hotel was intended to be a place of escape within a suburban setting. It contained its own picturesque landscape, with grounds that separated it from the surrounding city, and provided a place of play for its visitors.



*Ambassador Hotel, 1921 (Demolished)  
3400 Wilshire Boulevard  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In Los Angeles, the best known of these was the Ambassador Hotel, completed in 1921. It occupied a site of over twenty-three acres at 3400 Wilshire Boulevard, near the Miracle Mile shopping district. It was a sprawling structure designed by Myron Hunt, and contained a well-known nightclub, the Coconut Grove, along with expansive grounds. It also included parking, an increasingly important feature by the 1920s. Together with the Biltmore Downtown, the Ambassador was considered the city's premier hotel. It closed in 1989 and was subsequently demolished.<sup>33</sup>

The other type found in residential neighborhoods was the apartment hotel. This was a hybrid that combined the features of hotel living, from elegant common spaces to housekeeping, with some kind of dining and food preparation facility in the individual rooms. It was particularly popular in close-in better-off residential areas. The differences that divided the apartment hotel from the standard hotel on one hand and the furnished apartment building on the other were often difficult to determine, and many standard hotels provided apartment-hotel units.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Commentary to "Ambassador Hotel buildings" photograph (order number 00007053), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library; Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 96-97.

<sup>34</sup> See the sub-theme of Apartment Hotels below for a full discussion of these differences.



*Wilshire Boulevard apartment hotels near Lafayette Park  
The Town House, 1929 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 576), left;  
The Bryson, 1913 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 653) right in the distance;  
The Arcady, 1927 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1124), partial view, far right in the distance  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Finally, there were those hotels which were separated from others by the race or national origin of their clientele.<sup>35</sup> These were typically, but not always, in neighborhoods that were populated by the particular group served by the hotel. Generally they were workingmen's hotels located in small neighborhoods near places of employment. But occasionally they could be middle-class establishments for travelers excluded from Downtown hotels such as the African American community's Dunbar Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 131), built to provide upscale lodging and settings for major events.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on these see the ethnic/cultural contexts developed for SurveyLA at <http://preservation.lacity.org/historic-context>.

<sup>36</sup> Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 200.



*Cocktail Lounge and Grille, Dunbar Hotel, in the late 1940s  
Insert photo is of then-owner Harry Spates  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

### **Decline and Renewal, 1930-1980**

The decade of the 1930s was not kind to the hotel. Like a great deal of commercial real estate during the 1920s, hotels had been overbuilt and many faced financial difficulty. Most were individually owned, and investors had little in the way of resources to see them through hard times. Many went bankrupt.<sup>37</sup>

Downtown Los Angeles was particularly vulnerable. With its relatively high proportion of automobile ownership, the city had seen the decline of the central business district in relationship to outlying areas as early as the mid-1920s. Between 1923 and 1931 the population within ten miles of Downtown increased by fifty percent, but the number of people entering the central business district went up by only fifteen percent.<sup>38</sup>

The relocation of railroad passenger service to Union Station in the late 1930s was indicative of the declining importance of the Downtown hotel. Historically, the hotel was linked to the depot by a short walk, an easy streetcar trip, or a brief taxi ride. The more distant location of the new station, along with its provision for parking, illustrated the importance of the private automobile and the declining need for close-by lodging. Particularly hard-hit were the large hotels along East Fifth and South Main Streets.

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<sup>37</sup> Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 237-238.

<sup>38</sup> Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 153.

Some troubled establishments, in Los Angeles and elsewhere, were rescued by the newly emergent hotel chains. The best known of these was Hilton. Conrad Hilton began buying hotels in Texas as early as 1919, and by the 1930s became a significant presence nationally by purchasing distressed hotels built by others. The Hilton Hotel chain was incorporated in 1946, and one year later, in 1947, became the first hotel corporation to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. The company later bought the Hotel Statler Company and commonly became known as Statler Hilton.<sup>39</sup>



*Statler Hilton Hotel, 1952 (Demolished)  
Wilshire Boulevard and Figueroa Street  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In the years after the Second World War, Hilton went beyond buying existing properties and started to develop new Downtown hotels. One such endeavor was the Los Angeles Statler Hilton (later the Wilshire-Grand). Built in 1952, it was in a Mid-Century Modernist design. Its splayed-wing form, containing 1275 rooms, was typical of resort hotels at that time. Most significant was its inclusion of an auto-drop-off area that led to a 465-car underground garage. In this way it tried to adapt the traditional Downtown hotel to the auto age.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Wharton, *Building the Cold War*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 77; Wharton, *Building the Cold War*, 180-182.

Equally significant was its location. The Statler Hilton was placed well to the west of the older hotels, on Wilshire between Figueroa and the Harbor (110) Freeway. This provided easy automobile access and encouraged the later shift of development to the west of the earlier business district. (After a name change and some sixty years of service, the Statler Hilton was demolished to make way for a new hotel.)<sup>41</sup>

Aside from the Statler Hilton, hotel construction Downtown remained stagnant during the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, developers of luxury commercial hotels looked to upscale suburban districts. The goal was to accept the automobile as the basic mode of transport and to recreate the ambience of older business sections in a setting friendly to the passenger car. Along with office buildings and high-end shopping there would be hotels. The Century Plaza (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1060) in Century City was a product of such an approach.<sup>42</sup>

Efforts such as the Statler Hilton and the Century Plaza were rare. The hotel in its traditional form was rarely constructed in the first three decades following World War II. Instead, the motel was the model for lodging in Los Angeles. It combined accommodation of the automobile together with the relative availability of land in outlying neighborhoods. The motel also fit well with horizontal nature of Mid-Century Modernism as an architectural form. As with hotels, chains were particularly significant in spreading the motel as a lodging form.

In the process of becoming the dominant form, some chain motels took on aspects of the hotel. Often calling themselves motor inns, they became larger and more luxurious. Multiple stories in height, they included common spaces, such as restaurants, lounges, banquet halls, and meeting rooms. In the process of growing taller, they abandoned the older motel model of rooms opening directly onto parking spaces or exterior galleries. Instead they adopted the interior double-loaded corridor form of the hotel, and installed elevators accessed through a lobby. They become, in essence, traditional hotels surrounded by parking lots.<sup>43</sup>

A particular area of concentration for these hotels in parking lots was Los Angeles International Airport. Century Boulevard became a post-war version of Downtown's Fifth Street, with LAX taking the place of the Southern Pacific Depot. The north side of Century extending east from Sepulveda Boulevard to the 405 Freeway contained a line of hotels, mostly chains, set back from the street to provide parking.

By the 1970s, however, the focus on renewing Downtown generated interest in constructing traditional urban hotels, albeit with accommodation for the automobile. The pattern followed was that pioneered by the Statler Hilton of 1952. In new hotels a podium containing common spaces, set flush to the street,

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<sup>41</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 49.

<sup>42</sup> Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 257.

<sup>43</sup> John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 49.

was topped by multiple stories of rooms pulled back from the property line. Parking was provided in an underground or adjacent garage.<sup>44</sup>

These new hotels may have been dramatic additions to the skyline, but they were not kind to the street. They presented a closed face to pedestrians, with their podiums generally windowless. There was none of the concern found in such earlier hotels as the Biltmore for providing scale-giving elements such as openings and architectural ornament which made passers-by feel comfortable. Instead the concern of these hotels was to provide guests with a sense of security along with an interesting interior, either by being part of an enclosed mixed-use development including shopping, or by making their lobbies complex vertical spaces.<sup>45</sup>



*View south on Flower Street  
Concrete podium of the Bonaventure Hotel on the right  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

### Current Trends

The years since 1980 have seen developments that bode well for the Downtown hotel. There is construction of new large-scale commercial forms, particularly in districts where they are seen as a means of increasing convention business. Some significant historic buildings constructed for other uses

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<sup>44</sup> Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 257.

<sup>45</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 239-240, 243; Charles Moore, Peter Becker and Regula Campbell, *Los Angeles: The City Observed* (Santa Monica: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1998), 15-18.

have been converted into hotels. These include the United Artists Theater and Office Building from 1927 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 523), and the Superior Oil Building from 1955 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 686).

There is also restoration of older hotels. The Biltmore underwent a renovation in the mid-1970s and again in 1986. Other renewals, including many of the older establishments in the historic Main Street district, are proceeding as either updated hostelries or apartment conversions. There is even some restoration and new construction of low-cost facilities in the East Fifth Street district.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 244-245.

## **SUB-THEME: EARLY HOTELS, 1870-1895**

An early hotel is defined as a facility built between 1870 and 1895, during which time most hotels were similar in style, plan, and structure. They followed a standard form of urban commercial construction common in the later 1800s. It made use of masonry bearing and party walls – almost universally brick in Los Angeles – and wood frame floors, roofs and non-bearing wall partitions.

There were a few examples of all wood-frame structures (see for example the Parker House discussed in the Historic Context), but these were generally set back from the street and on lots that were wide enough to allow for non-party wall construction. They were essentially residential neighborhood forms that found themselves incorporated into an urban commercial setting.

The architectural styles of these hotels also resembled other commercial types. They employed Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne forms, which featured highly articulated façade elements. For Italianate this consisted of a typical gridded exterior of regular fenestration, full and partially arched door and window openings, pilasters, string courses, and a dominant cornice. For the Second Empire and Queen Anne, the façade was more three-dimensional, with bay windows, corner towers, and projections above the cornice line. The Queen Anne also allowed for more variation in the rhythm of the fenestration.

The typical early hotel ground floor plan called for a combination of common spaces and retail storefronts. The common spaces contained facilities for hotel residents, such as lobbies, parlors, and dining rooms. The storefronts opened to the street and were rented to independent businesses. The hotel rooms were above. Height was generally limited to three stories above the ground floor, as these early hotels predated widespread use of the passenger elevator.

Construction of hotels declined greatly by the early 1890s with the collapse of the real estate boom. When commercial development resumed toward the end of the 1890s, the hotel took on different architectural configurations. What had been a generally uniform type before 1895, regardless of size, location, or social-economic level, became differentiated among these categories.

Extant early hotels are rare. The oldest is the Pico House (facing Plaza Park, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 64), completed in 1870. The architect was Ezra Kysor, a prominent designer in early Anglo-American Los Angeles. The developer was Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of California. The Pico House is of standard brick masonry wall construction, but stuccoed and painted on the north and west sides to resemble light blue granite. Its design is a textbook example of the commercial Italianate.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 45.

The interior of the Pico House is arranged around a courtyard. The ground floor originally contained a lobby and office that faced Main Street, with a staircase that reached the upper levels. Storefronts for rent flanked this entrance. On the north side, facing the Plaza, was the dining room, accessible from both the lobby and the courtyard. On the east side of the courtyard, behind the dining room and with access to Sanchez Street, was the kitchen. The second and third floors opened onto galleries that overlooked the courtyard.<sup>48</sup>



*Pico House, 1869-1870  
Facing Plaza Park, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 64  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Pico House was significant for several reasons. It was the city's first three-story masonry commercial structure. It established, at least for the next few years, North Main Street as the city's premier commercial location. It provided a setting for social life as well as rooms for visitors that raised the status of Los Angeles above that of a frontier settlement.<sup>49</sup>

The Pico House, unfortunately, proved not to be an economic success for its developer. Pico, a significant landowner, went into debt to finance the structure and was not able to maintain the

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<sup>48</sup> 1888 Sanborn Map.

<sup>49</sup> Moore, Becker, and Campbell, *Los Angeles: The City Observed*, 7.

payments. Within a decade he had lost possession. It became the National Hotel and subsequently went through several owners. As the city's center of business moved south, demand for its rooms declined. It became increasingly a low-cost accommodation until around 1930, when the city condemned use of the upper floors. The Pico House was saved and restored as part of the National Register Los Angeles Plaza Historic District (formerly known as El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park).<sup>50</sup>

A second extant example of an early hotel is the Boyle (Boyle Hotel-Cummings Block, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 891), completed in 1889. It stands at the intersection of North Boyle Avenue and First Street in Boyle Heights. By its location, the Boyle could be considered an early version of the neighborhood hotel. But its resemblance to the Downtown hotels of the period justifies its inclusion in the early hotel category.



*Boyle Hotel-Cummings Block, 1889*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 891*  
*(Los Angeles Conservancy)*

The architect was W. R. Norton and the developers were George Cummings and his wife Maria del Sacramento Lopez. She was the daughter of Francisco Lopez, one of the area's most prominent landowners. The hotel was constructed as an attraction to draw residents to the newly subdivided

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<sup>50</sup> Gleye, *Architecture of Los Angeles*, 46; 1894 Sanborn Map.

Boyle Heights. By 1889 a cable car had replaced an earlier horse car line along First Avenue, improving connections between Boyle Heights and Downtown.<sup>51</sup>

The hotel's site was located at an intersection of three streets – First, Boyle, and Pleasant – that provided a degree of visual prominence. The neighborhood business district at the time began about a block to the east, at the intersection of First and State. The hotel, at least during the early 1890s, remained a monumental presence surrounded by single-family homes. Its architecture made good use of its corner site.<sup>52</sup>

The Boyle was designed in a commercial version of the Queen Anne style, with Romanesque Revival elements. Most prominent is the corner tower, with its bell-shaped roof over an open belvedere. The interior arrangement originally included the same sort of common spaces as the larger Downtown hotels. The right side of the primary facade, facing Boyle, contained the lobby and the left side housed a parlor. To the rear of this was a dining room that extended the full width of the building. Behind that was the kitchen.<sup>53</sup>

Like the Pico House, the Boyle Hotel fell on difficult times. As early as 1894 the front portion was called the Cummings Block, while the rear, opening onto First Street, was known as the Hotel Mt. Pleasant. By 1906 the entire the ground floor facing both Boyle and First had been converted to storefronts, with a restaurant in the former lobby. A stairway providing access to the second floor was placed just behind the main entrance on Boyle. It appears that the upper floors of the Cummings Block portion served as offices, while the upper stories of the rear portion were simply identified as lodging.<sup>54</sup>

The building's condition deteriorated over the years. Finally, in 2012 it underwent an exterior restoration and interior renovation that consisted of its conversion to units of affordable housing (it was subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places). The three-street intersection has become known as Mariachi Plaza and serves as a significant cultural gathering place for the community.<sup>55</sup>

Indirectly related to early hotels is the Charnock Block/Pershing Hotel, located at the southeast corner of Fifth and Main Streets. Unlike the Pico House and the Boyle, the Charnock was not built originally as a hotel. It was constructed in 1889 as a business block in the bay-windowed Queen Anne style of the day. It was enlarged in 1907 with a simpler addition to the south facing Main Street. Both structures were later converted into a place of lodging known as the Pershing Hotel. Even though did not become a

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<sup>51</sup> "Boyle Hotel," laconservancy.org; Robert C. Post, *Street Railways and the Growth of Los Angeles: Horse, Cable, Electric Lines* (San Marino CA: Golden West Books, 1989), 89.

<sup>52</sup> 1894 Sanborn Map.

<sup>53</sup> "Boyle Hotel," laconservancy.org; 1894 Sanborn Map.

<sup>54</sup> 1894 and 1906 Sanborn Maps.

<sup>55</sup> Boyle Hotel," laconservancy.org.

hotel until after the period covered by this sub-type, it is significant as a rare remaining Downtown example of the architecture of the early hotels.<sup>56</sup>



*Charnock Block/Pershing Hotel, 1889; 1907 addition to the right  
Southeast Corner of Fifth and Main Streets  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

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<sup>56</sup> Historical notes to “Charnock Block/Pershing Hotel and Roma Hotel” photograph (order number 00111573), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library; 1906 Sanborn Map. The Charnock Block/Pershing Hotel has been identified as a contributing building to the Fifth Street-Main Street Commercial Historic District which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register in 2007 as part of the Section 106 review process.

## Evaluation Criteria for Early Hotels, 1870-1895

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of hotels that date from 1870 to 1895. They are buildings constructed for the purpose of lodging for transient and semi-permanent residents during the first period of the growth of Anglo-American Los Angeles, up until the end of the real estate boom of the late 1880s.

Early hotels may be significant in areas including Architecture, Commerce, Social History, and Community Planning and Development. Architecturally they illustrate the historic structural and stylistic elements characteristic of this building type, in particular the use of the commercial Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne styles, and the nature of masonry bearing wall and wood frame construction. Commercially they illustrate how hotels evolved as a commercial building type for providing rooms and services for residents and storefront spaces for retailers. These Hotels were also significant for the prominent role they played in the growth and development of early Los Angeles. Extant examples are extremely rare.

**Period of Significance:** 1870-1895

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1870, when the first major hotel is completed. It ends in 1895, by which time construction of new hotels has essentially ceased due to the collapse of the real estate boom of the late 1880s.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide, within the current boundaries of Los Angeles, specifically in areas historically in proximity to passenger rail depots and served by the early streetcar network.

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History, Community Planning and Development

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Type:** Commercial/Lodging – Hotel

**Property Type Description:** A place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes. Typically furnished, with housekeeping provided, and no cooking or dining facilities within the individual rooms.

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Constructed between 1870-1895
- Was historically designed for and used as a hotel
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect commercial design in general and hotel design in particular
- Demonstrates the prominence of the hotel in the growth and development of early Los Angeles

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1870-1895 period
  - Typically also significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Utilizes masonry bearing-wall and wood frame construction
- Historically sited near a passenger railroad depot and/or a streetcar line
- Associated with activities typical of economic and social life during the 1870-1895 period

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Feeling, Workmanship, Location, and Association
- Original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; due to their age and continued use, some original materials may have been removed or altered.

### **SUB-THEME: DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HOTELS, 1895-1930**

The Downtown commercial hotel is separated from other sub-themes by its size and its level of services and appointments. Through the use of steel and reinforced concrete frame construction it was able to reach heights that were eventually limited only by City regulations. Through the installation of elevators, electric lighting, and eventually baths in every room, it was able to offer amenities that were not available in older hotels. By its creation of common spaces characterized by ample size and luxurious furnishings, it gave citizens of the city suitable locations for private and public events.



*Van Nuys/Barclay Hotel, 1896-1897  
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 288  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The oldest extant example of these new commercial hotels is the Van Nuys (Van Nuys/Barclay Hotel, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 288). It is located in the traditional hotel district, on the northwest corner of Fourth and Main Streets. It was designed in 1896 by Octavius Morgan and J. A. Walls, the firm that would later become Morgan, Walls and Clements. The developer was Isaac Newton Van Nuys, a leading financier and founder of the community of Van Nuys.<sup>1</sup>

Architecturally, the Van Nuys is a transitional structure. At only six stories, it is not much taller than the hotels of the late 1880s. But its façade composition abandoned the elaborations of the Second Empire and Queen Anne styles, and instead followed the commercial version of the Renaissance Revival that had become common for tall Downtown buildings. The elevations facing Main and Fourth are divided

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<sup>1</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 444.

into a base, center, and top. The continuous pilasters that separate pairs of windows from the second through the sixth floor are a device common to the new commercial style that accentuates the vertical nature of the building's center portion.

The original first floor plan of the Van Nuys was an elaboration upon that of earlier hotels. But the size and elegance of the common spaces previewed what was to follow. The lobby at the corner of Main and Fourth Streets contained the registration desk and a monumental stairway. To the north and facing Main Street was the dining room. A new space not seen in the earlier hotels was the separate bar and grille, to the rear of the lobby and facing onto Fourth Street. (Some of the lobby ornament, including plasterwork, columns, and stained glass, is still in place.)<sup>2</sup>

There were thirty-two guest rooms on each of the five upper floors, providing a total of 160. They were served by sixty private and ten shared baths. A center light court provided ventilation for inside spaces and illumination for a glass ceiling in the lobby. The Van Nuys was the first hotel to feature electricity and telephone service to every room. Dating from before the era of modern fire alarm systems, the hotel employed night watchmen who patrolled the halls and were required to clock in at seven stations to guarantee that they made their rounds.<sup>3</sup>

Within a decade additional large establishments joined the Van Nuys in the hotel district. In 1905 the King Edward Hotel went up on the northwest corner of Fifth and Los Angeles Streets. It was also a six-story structure, designed by Parkinson and Bergstrom, and contained 150 rooms. John Parkinson was by then emerging as one of the most important architects in Los Angeles. In 1911 the Baltimore Hotel was constructed across the street on the southwest corner of Fifth and Los Angeles. The Baltimore was a similar six-story structure, designed by architect Arthur R. Kelley, and contained 215 rooms.<sup>4</sup>

These were joined in 1914 by the significantly taller Rosslyn Hotel, on the northwest corner of Fifth and Main, on the site of an earlier hotel by the same name. At twelve stories and 750 rooms, it was the first to explore the possibilities of height available with modern framing technology. As with the King Edward, its architect was John Parkinson.<sup>5</sup>

In 1923, the hotel constructed the Rosslyn Annex across the street, on the southwest corner of Main and Fifth. Also designed by Parkinson, it contained thirteen stories in a matching façade design. The Rosslyn and its Annex together contained 1,100 room and 800 baths (see page 11, view along Fifth Street looking west from Los Angeles Street). It shows the Baltimore Hotel, the Rosslyn Annex, and the Hotel King Edward.)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Barclay Hotel," laconservancy.org; 1906 Sanborn Map.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 86; Wallach, et.al, *Historic Hotels of Los Angeles and Hollywood* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 61, 64.

<sup>5</sup> "Rosslyn Hotel" and Rosslyn Hotel (Annex Apartments)," laconservancy.org; Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



*Alexandria Hotel, 1905*  
*Southwest corner of Fifth and Spring Streets*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Of the hotels built before the First World War, the Alexandria was the most elegant. Yet another design from the firm of Parkinson and Bergstrom, still it stands on the southwest corner of Fifth and Spring Streets, one block from the Rosslyn. The developers had in mind an establishment comparable to the Palace Hotel in San Francisco in its level of luxury and services.<sup>7</sup>

The Alexandria opened in 1905. The exterior is a rather somber essay in the Renaissance Revival, based on the common tri-partite division on base, center, and top. It could be mistaken for an office building or department store. Only the balustrade atop the cornice, with pagoda-like finials (since removed), provided any flair.<sup>8</sup>

The exuberance was saved for the interior. The lobby was particularly ornate, containing a series of sixty-foot tall columns that supported an elaborately decorated balcony (see photograph on page 12). Of these ornate public spaces, only the Palm Court meeting area has survived. This space is now an L. A. Historic-Cultural Monument, No. 80.<sup>9</sup>

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The King Edward, the Baltimore, and the Rosslyn and Rosslyn Annex are contributors to the Fifth Street-Main Street Commercial Historic District, which was evaluated in 2007 as part of the Section 106 review process and was determined eligible for the National Register.

<sup>7</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 84.

<sup>9</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 85.



*Palm Court, Alexandria Hotel*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 80*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In spite of its status as the premier hotel in the city, the Alexandria contained only 200 baths for its 360 guest rooms. Once the standard became a private bath with every room, it declined in reputation. By the late 1920s the Alexandria was in trouble and in 1932 went into bankruptcy. By the mid-1930s most of its furnishings, including carpeting, lighting fixtures, and sheets of gold leaf, had been sold to cover its debts.<sup>10</sup>

Unique among these examples from before the First World War is the Embassy Auditorium and Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 299), a mixed-use structure on Grand just north of Ninth. It combined a hotel together with offices and a large theater into a single entity. It was similar to other such mixed-use experiments as the Auditorium Building in Chicago, designed by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan and completed in 1889.

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<sup>10</sup> Gee, *Iconic Vision*, 85-90.



*Embassy Hotel and Auditorium, 1913*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 299*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Embassy was at the time of its construction in 1913 on the fringe of the business district. It was an investment of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church and designed by architect Thornton Fitzhugh in a monumental Beaux Arts style. Employing both steel and concrete, it is nine stories high and topped by a baroque dome. The auditorium accommodated 1,500, and was intended for church services as well as entertainment. There were 325 hotel rooms, intended for the use of men, as per the instructions of the church.<sup>11</sup>

Also completed in 1913 was one of the first major Downtown hotels to feature a bath with every room. This is the Hotel Stowell (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1029), located just to the north of the Alexandria at 416 South Spring Street. It was designed by architect Frederick Buckley Noonan. The Stowell is a twelve-story mid-block structure originally with 275 rooms, and features a combination of Gothic and Art Deco ornamentation. (It has been converted into the El Dorado Lofts.) The Stowell was one of the last of the large hotels to go up before construction paused during the war years.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 445; Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Data on Stowell from Historic-Cultural Monument plaque on the exterior and the historic sign currently exhibited in the lobby.



*Hotel Stowell, 1913*

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1029  
(L.A. Public Library)*

The successor to the Alexandria as the city's premier Downtown hotel was the Biltmore (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 60). It took advantage of the development of Pershing Square, and placed its primary façade on Olive Street at the intersection with Fifth. The Biltmore was designed in 1922 by Schultze and Weaver, the architects of New York's later Waldorf Astoria Hotel, and completed in 1923. At the time of its opening, with 1,500 rooms, it was the largest hotel west of Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

The Biltmore covered its steel frame with a modified Renaissance Revival dress in the traditional composition of base, shaft and top. It also made use of what had become by the early 1920s a standard hotel plan that contained a rectangular base or podium containing common spaces, and E-shaped upper levels that allowed for exterior exposure of all rooms. Its common spaces on two levels included a mix of Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical and Moorish styles.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> "Millennium Biltmore Hotel Los Angeles," [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org); Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 54-57.



*Biltmore Hotel, 1922-1923*

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 60  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Biltmore's ability to remain the dominant Downtown hotel through the 1960s was due to the number and variety of these common spaces. A double-height lobby extended east to west from the Olive Street entrance toward a monumental stairway. This stairway led to a wide and ornate Galleria which continued the length of the building north to south and served the meeting rooms on the second floor. The common spaces originally included the Crystal Ballroom which could hold 700 people, a 14,000 square foot entertainment space called the Biltmore Bowl, and the 1700-seat Biltmore Theater.<sup>15</sup>

By the late-1920s, the Biltmore had been joined by other hotels to the west of the traditional hotel district at Fifth and Main. These included Milner Hotel on Flower south of Eighth Street, also completed in 1923, and the Mayflower Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 286) on Grand south of Fifth, built in 1927. Designed by Charles F. Whittlesey, the Mayflower is a twelve-story building in a Spanish-Moorish variation on the standard tripartite composition. It contained at the time of construction 348 rooms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 53.



*Mayflower Hotel, 1927*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural No. No. 286*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

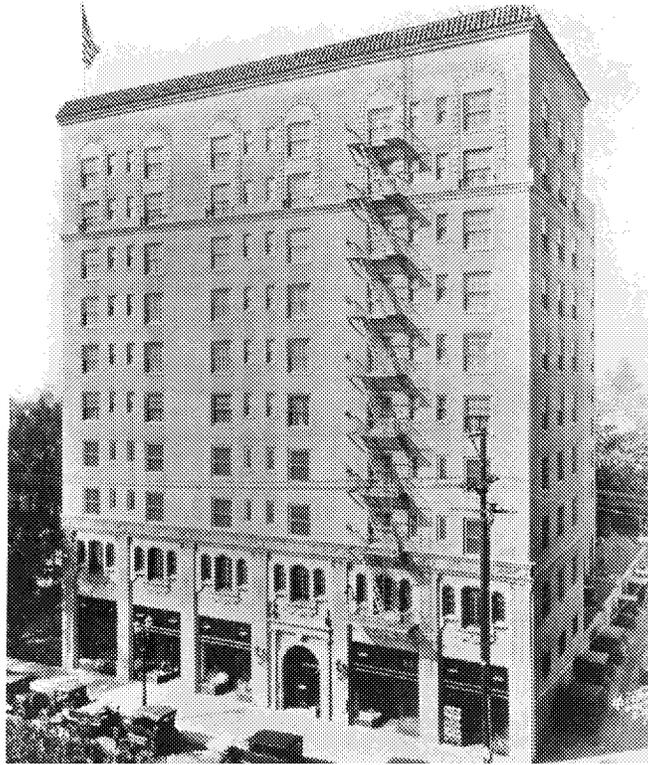
In spite of this construction to the west, some investors still considered South Main Street to be a profitable hotel location. They believed that, given passenger rail traffic, a need existed for respectable but affordable lodging closer to the depots. This resulted in a number of large structures with less elegant common spaces and rooms without private baths.

The construction of the Rosslyn Annex in 1923 was a product of this belief. So too was the construction of the Hotel Cecil. It was built in 1924 on Main Street south of Sixth. Its relatively low floor to floor heights permitted a building of fourteen stories. The Cecil featured common rooms and elevators. But of its 700 rooms, only 200 had full private baths. Two hundred more had private toilets while the remaining 300 had neither.<sup>17</sup>

Two additional large commercial hotels outside Downtown Los Angeles deserve attention. They are located in Hollywood. Although technically only one of many neighborhoods, Hollywood had developed by the early 1920s into a second Downtown, with an appropriately dense commercial fabric. Its hotels are best considered in the Downtown, rather than the neighborhood, sub-theme.

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<sup>17</sup> See advertisement on side of hotel in "Hotel Cecil street scene" photograph (order number 00007205), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.



*Hollywood Plaza Hotel, 1924*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 665*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The first is the Hollywood Plaza Hotel of 1924, at the corner of Hollywood and Vine (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 665). The Plaza is a ten-story structure of 198 rooms designed by architectural firm of Walker and Eisen. It is relatively sedate design best now known for its rooftop neon sign. It can be considered a Spanish-Revival variation on the standard Renaissance Revival formula of base, shaft and top. A particularly character-defining element was the original Spanish-tile pent roof in place of a traditional cornice or parapet.<sup>18</sup>

The second and more glamorous is the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel of 1926, on the corner of Hollywood and Orange, one block west of Highland (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 545). Designed by architect H. B. Traver, its link to the entertainment industry was typified by its list of investors, which included Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Marcus Lowe, and Louis B. Meyer, and its selection as the site for the first Academy Awards ceremony in 1929. In design it is similar to the Biltmore, with a podium of common spaces filling the lot, and an upper portion, this time T-shaped, configured to provide each room with good light and ventilation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 475. One source has described its rooms as “apartment style.” See Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 125.

<sup>19</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 465.



*Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, 1926*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 545*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

## Evaluation Criteria for Downtown Commercial Hotels, 1895-1930

<b>Summary Statement of Significance:</b>	<p>Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of commercial hotels in Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood that date from 1895 to 1930. These are hotels constructed to provide lodging and public spaces in the central business districts for a middle- and upper-income clientele. Typically they are large buildings designed using the most current building technologies and architectural styles of the day.</p> <p>Downtown commercial hotels may be significant in areas including Architecture, Commerce, and Social History. They illustrate the evolution of the Downtown hotel as a commercial building type and are generally excellent examples of architectural styles of the period and designed by noted architects. They also show how the hotel evolved as a business type employing the latest technology and marketing techniques to attract a patronage. Significant examples played a prominent role in local commerce and were often the center of social activities.</p>
<b>Period of Significance:</b>	1895-1930
<b>Period of Significance Justification:</b>	The period of significance begins in 1895 with the resumption of construction after the collapse of the real estate boom of the late 1880s. It ends in 1930, when construction essentially ceased with the coming of the Great Depression.
<b>Geographic Location:</b>	Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, the two districts that functioned as central business districts during the period of significance.
<b>Areas of Significance:</b>	Architecture, Commerce, Social History
<b>Criteria:</b>	NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3
<b>Associated Property Type:</b>	Commercial/Lodging – Hotel
<b>Property Type Description:</b>	Place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes. Typically furnished, with housekeeping provided, and no cooking or dining facilities within the individual rooms.

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1895-1930
- Was historically designed for and used as a hotel
- Located In the central business districts of Downtown and Hollywood
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect commercial design in general and large-scale commercial hotel design in particular
- Contains link to social and economic life of the central business district

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features of the type from the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging
- Provided dining and meeting spaces for public functions
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1895-1930 period
  - Typically also significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Sited on a constricted urban lot, with primary dependence upon public transportation
- Associated with activities of the surrounding economic and social elite and middle classes

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Location, and Association
- Should retain overall integrity in massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; some original materials may have been removed or altered

## **SUB-THEME: DOWNTOWN WORKING-CLASS HOTELS, 1900-1930**

The Downtown working class hotel is defined as a place of lodging for those of modest incomes. The current name for these establishments is the Single Room Occupancy, or SRO, hotel. It consisted originally of small rooms with neither private baths nor in-room food preparation facilities. Over time some evolved to allow for light food preparation in the rooms and/or shared kitchens.

The working class or SRO hotel can be found in three architectural forms. The first includes structures converted from other building types, such as mansions made into rooming houses. The second form consists of middle-class hotels that became obsolete, because of location and/or lack of modern amenities such as private baths with each room. There are numerous such establishments, built in the 1910s and 1920s, which fit the architectural specifications of the large-scale commercial hotel.

This sub-theme does not include either of these two forms. Instead, it looks at the third form, which consists of hotels purpose-built for lower-income tenants. By the early 1900s the need for facilities constructed specifically to house transients of modest means, generally men, had become pressing. The working class hotel, or what one historian refers to as the Downtown rooming house, was seen at that time as an attractive real estate investment.<sup>1</sup>

These low-cost hotels typically used traditional masonry bearing wall and wood frame construction. They were between two and five stories high, without elevators, and generally, but not always, contained storefronts on their first floors. The buildings filled their entire lots and used narrow light wells to provide ventilation to inside spaces. Rooms were small but generally had their own sinks. Toilets and bathtubs were at a ratio of one to every five or six rooms in the larger hotels, and one per floor in the smaller.<sup>2</sup>

The working class hotel also made do with minimal common spaces. It dispensed with lounges and dining rooms. Instead, the ground floor storefronts often contained independently operated low-cost cafes and bars. Hotel residents ascended a set of stairs from the street that led to a small reception area. Some hotels went so far as to do without this minimal common space, and simply designated one of the small rooms to serve as the office.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of their modest purpose, many of these buildings had relatively elegant facades. The Renaissance Revival, with its composition formula of base, center and top, fit well with the program of retail space below and lodging above. A projecting cornice or ornamented parapet provided the top. The use of brick masonry in imaginative ways, occasionally with stone trim, gave these modest structures dignity and sense of permanence.

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<sup>1</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 97.

<sup>2</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 97-101; 1906 and 1923 Sanborn Maps.

<sup>3</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 97-101.

The sub-theme of the purpose-built Downtown working class hotel is restricted to the central business district, and in particular, the eastern portion of Downtown. There are similar hotels in the neighborhoods. (Some are related to employment opportunities in outlying districts, such as the harbor-related jobs in San Pedro and Wilmington. Others are related to the development of separate facilities for racial and ethnic groups. These neighborhood facilities are examined under the sub-theme of neighborhood hotels.)

SRO hotels were an important housing type Downtown and provided low-cost accommodations to transient laborers, many of whom were employed by the railroad companies whose terminals and facilities were located nearby. Development patterns in the eastern part of Downtown can be traced to the late nineteenth century and paralleled the development of railroad stations and infrastructure nearby. The construction of rail lines to Los Angeles bolstered the market for local agriculture, which by nature is seasonal and accompanied by influxes of seasonal workers. The railroad itself also contributed to the transient nature of the area's population, as train crews would lay over between assignments and displaced migrants from elsewhere in the United States would "ride the rails" to Los Angeles seeking work. Between the 1900 and the 1930s, many SRO hotels were developed to serve this population. Hundreds of these hotels were located in the vicinity (what is now known as Skid Row) because of its proximity to the rail lines, with a particular concentration along Fifth Street.

After World War II, SRO hotels fell into disrepair as the central city east area became a focal point of homelessness and destitution. Many were demolished in the 1960s and 1970s as they did not meet the fire and safety codes and owners found it easier and cheaper to demolish the buildings rather than invest in their rehabilitation.

The Downtown working class hotel is best considered within a historic district setting. Two districts have been identified. One is the Fifth Street Single Room Occupancy Hotel District identified through SurveyLA. It encompasses three blocks along the north side of East Fifth Street from Crocker Street to Gladys Avenue. It contains ten properties, of which seven contribute to its significance.<sup>4</sup>

The other is the Skid Row Single Room Occupancy Hotel Historic District (listed in the California Register).<sup>5</sup> It includes resources clustered around the intersection of Fifth and Wall Streets. It consists of parcels along the east side of Wall Street extending south from Fifth, on the west side of San Julian Street that back up to the parcels on Wall Street, and parcels on Fifth between Wall and San Julian.

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<sup>4</sup> Central City Community Plan Area, "Historic Districts, Planning District, and Multi-Property Resources Report" for SurveyLA.

<sup>5</sup> The Skid Row Single Room Occupancy Hotel Historic District was formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register in 2008 through the federal Section 106 Review process (revised 2014). It is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources as a result of this process.



*SRO Hotel, 1906*  
*719-725 East Fifth Street*  
*(SurveyLA)*

An example from the Fifth Street SRO District is 719-725 East Fifth Street, one and one-half blocks west of the historic location of the Southern Pacific Station at Fifth and Central. It dates from 1906, and illustrates the standard form of retail below and hotel space above. The Sanborn Map of that year notes that it is under construction and is to contain three retail outlets on the ground floor and two floors of lodging above. No hotel name is given on either the 1906 or the 1950 Sanborn Maps. The building is designed in a well-proportioned Renaissance Revival style, complete with cornice still in place. While apparently a solid block in form, a light well on west elevation gives the structure a shallow U shape and provides ventilation to the inside rooms.



*Hotel Iwaki, 1911*  
*617-623 East Fifth Street*  
*(SurveyLA)*

Somewhat larger is the building at 617-623 East Fifth Street, also in the Fifth Street SRO Hotel Historic District. At one point in its life it was known as the Hotel Iwaki and contained fifty rooms. It uses a number of light wells on both its east and west elevations to provide ventilation to interior rooms. Its façade also employs the three-part division of the Renaissance Revival, but in a more abstract form. Notable are the setback spandrel panels between the windows on the upper floors to create continuous pilaster-like vertical piers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map.



*Palmer House, 1909  
538 South Wall Street  
(SurveyLA)*

A variation on the standard form is the Palmer House, from 1909. It is located at 538 South Wall Street in the Skid Row SRO Hotel Historic District. Situated off the commercial thoroughfare of Fifth Street, it contains no retail space. Instead, it is entirely lodging. It is T-shaped in form, with long, narrow setbacks on both sides behind the front rooms which form the facade. The rear rooms open off a single corridor that extends from front to rear and are ventilated by these setbacks. The facade is in a relatively lively Renaissance Revival form, complete with rusticated first floor. (The fence-like structure above the parapet is not original.)

Construction of these purpose-built working-class hotels appears to have declined in the years after the First World War, and came to a halt during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Conversion of older middle-class hotels into SROs, in what by then had become a less than desirable neighborhood, met the demand for such quarters in the decades that followed. It has not been until recent years that new facilities fitting this sub-theme are again being constructed.

## Evaluation Criteria for Downtown Working Class/SRO Hotels, 1900-1930

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of purpose built working-class hotels built in the eastern part of Downtown Los Angeles from 1900 to 1930. They are known currently as Single Room Occupancy, or SRO hotels. Historically SRO hotels included shared kitchens and bathrooms with rooms available to rent by the week or month.

Downtown working-class (SRO) hotels may be significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, and/or social history. They represent an important housing type developed in this area of the city that provided low-cost accommodations to transient laborers. Development patterns in central city east can be traced to the late nineteenth century and paralleled the development of railroad stations and infrastructure nearby. SRO hotels, as a grouping or historic district, may also contain significant examples of architecture styles from the period. This once common property type has become increasingly rare.

**Period of Significance:** 1900-1930

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1900 as the demand for this form leads investors to begin construction. It ends in 1930, when construction ceased during the Great Depression.

**Geographic Location:** Downtown Los Angeles, specifically in the eastern part of Downtown and historically close to the construction of railroad stations and related infrastructure. (Note: similar buildings outside of Downtown are discussed in the Neighborhood Hotel section.)

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Type:** Commercial/Lodging – Hotel  
Commercial District (Hotel District)

**Property Type Description:** Place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; typically furnished, with housekeeping provided.

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1900-1930
- Was historically designed for and used as a hotel
- Located Downtown In the eastern portion of the central business district
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect commercial design in general and affordable hotel design in particular
- Contains link to social and economic life of the transient, working-class, generally male individual

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging in a low-cost facility
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1900-1930 period
  - May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Sited on a constricted urban lot, close to railroad depots and/or public transportation and surrounded by similar hotels and other low-cost facilities such as bars and restaurants
- Primarily accommodated single male workers of modest income

**Integrity Considerations**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Feeling, Location, and Association
- Should retain overall massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; some original materials may have been removed or altered

### **SUB-THEME: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HOTELS, 1895-1930**

The neighborhood hotel is defined by its location, rather than its architectural form. It is a product of the spatial dispersion and socio-economic diversification of Los Angeles during the early years of the twentieth century. The electric streetcar and interurban allowed the city to spread beyond a compact arrangement of central business district and close-in residential areas. With this spread came the creation of specialized neighborhoods, each requiring hotel accommodations catering to its needs.

This process began with the appearance of the electric trolley in the mid-1890s. It ended in 1930, with halt to new commercial construction during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Once the building of new lodging facilities resumed after the war, widespread ownership of the automobile had made the neighborhood hotel obsolete. The neighborhood motel took its place.

Three kinds of neighborhoods are examined in this sub-theme. The first is the middle-class residential neighborhood, distant enough from the central business district to require some form of hotel accommodation for transient and long-term tenants who wished to stay in that neighborhood. The second is the economically specialized neighborhood, which required hotels that responded to its particular needs. The third is the neighborhood defined by the ethnic or racial composition of its population. The hotels in these neighborhoods were for those excluded from hotels elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

An example in a middle-class residential district is the Hotel Normandie (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1013), completed in 1928. It is located on the southwest corner of Normandie Avenue and Sixth Street, one block north of Wilshire Boulevard in the city' mid-Wilshire District. During the 1920s, this district developed as a middle- and upper-middle class neighborhood, with a mixture of single-family homes and apartments. A block east of the hotel is the historically significant Chapman Park Market (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 386), built a year after the Normandie in 1929.<sup>8</sup>

The neighborhood around the Normandie remained primarily residential well into the postwar years. As late as 1950, the blocks to the north and south of Sixth, between Fifth and Wilshire, were still generally single family. Sixth Street, to the east and west of the hotel, had some commercial uses interspersed among the older single-family homes. These included an office building one block to the west and the Chapman Park Garage directly to the east. There were also several nearby lots still vacant.<sup>9</sup>

The Hotel Normandie was designed by the architectural firm of Walker and Eisen. The two street facades present a solid block-like composition in the Spanish Colonia Revival style, albeit in brick rather than stucco. A bracketed pent roof of Spanish tiles takes the place of a cornice. The Normandie was planned for 100 rooms, with storefronts and common spaces on the ground floor. The retail outlets face Sixth Street. The entrance to the hotel opens onto Normandie through three arches. Arranged

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<sup>7</sup> Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 200.

<sup>8</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 452. Construction date of the Hotel Normandie is from the Los Angeles County Assessor.

<sup>9</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map.

along the south side are the lobby and dining room. The plan of the upper floors is U-shaped, open to the south. After falling on hard times, the Normandie has been recently restored.<sup>10</sup>



*Hotel Normandie, 1928*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1013*  
*(Los Angeles Conservancy)*

The second kind of neighborhood is that with a distinct economic function and a social life revolving around that function. Exemplary are the two harbor communities of San Pedro and Wilmington. They were both originally independent cities. By the time of their consolidation with Los Angeles in 1909, they had both taken on a character shaped by their maritime economies.

This character, typified by a great number of single men, particularly sailors and itinerant dockworkers, provided a demand for hotels. Most were modest and fit the form of the Downtown working class hotel. Others were more middle class, including the Cabrillo Hotel, at 615-619 Centre Street in San Pedro. Built in 1923, it consists of a podium containing a lobby in one corner and a set of storefronts. Above are two stories of rooms, arranged an E-pattern of three wings, similar to the Biltmore Hotel Downtown, but with space between the wings reduced to a narrow airshaft of a few feet.<sup>11</sup>

The most prominent of the harbor district's establishments is the Don Hotel, located on the northeast corner of Avalon and I Streets in Wilmington. Opened in July of 1929, the Don was designed to be the

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<sup>10</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1925, January 7, 2012; 1950 Sanborn Map.

<sup>11</sup> Construction date is from the Los Angeles County Assessor. Some sources give it as 1920, but the 1921 Sanborn Map shows the lot as vacant.

area's best hotel. Its intended clientele consisted of visitors waiting to take the ferry to Catalina Island, which departed from a nearby dock. The Don was planned to contain 136 rooms, each with private bath.<sup>12</sup>



*The Don Hotel, 1929*  
*Northeast Corner of Avalon and I Streets, Wilmington*  
*(SurveyLA)*

The original design called for an elaborate roofline at the corner, with finials and scrollwork in a Spanish Colonial Revival style. But the final product is more sober. The large sign on the roof is the dominant architectural element. The common rooms originally included a lobby and restaurant, as well as retail space on the ground floor. The rooms above the ground floor are arranged in an L-pattern, creating a large light court in the rear.<sup>13</sup>

The third kind of neighborhood is made up of a particular ethnic or racial community. An example is the small business district that served members of the Chinese community who worked in the City Market, east of Downtown. The district was located across from the market on San Pedro Street. The west side of San Pedro between Ninth and Tenth Streets contained a compact commercial district within a mixed residential and industrial area. This business district had a number of stores and restaurants, as well as at one time a Chinese noodle factory.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1929.

<sup>13</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1929; 1950 Sanborn Map.

<sup>14</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map.

Part of this commercial district was the still extant Market Hotel at 964-966 South San Pedro Street. It was constructed in 1914 to plans by architect Anton Reif. It takes the form of the purpose-built working-class hotel, with two storefronts on either side of a stairway that provides access to the rooms above. Its so-called dumbbell floor plan, similar to tenements in New York, allowed for narrow light courts on either side to provide ventilation to interior rooms should multi-story buildings go up next door.<sup>15</sup>



*Market Hotel, 1914  
964-966 South San Pedro Street  
(SurveyLA)*

There are three examples of neighborhood hotels associated with the African American community. The first is the Canadian Hotel (now the American Hotel) on the corner of Traction and Hewitt Streets. The hotel is located east of Alameda and south of Third Street, in an area that was convenient to all three historic railroad depots. The Canadian was intended to provide lodging for African Americans, many of whom worked as Pullman car porters. Built in 1905 and enlarged in 1909, it was designed by architects Morgan and Walls. It gained its historic name from the fact that its first manager was born in Canada. By 1909 it was known as the Palace Hotel.<sup>16</sup>

The original section of hotel is a square four-story block located on the corner, with a central light well that provides ventilation to interior spaces. It contained ten rooms on each floor, with shared bathrooms. Before the addition, the ground floor of the hotel contained three bays facing Traction. The

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<sup>15</sup> Construction information from SurveyLA data, Central City Community Plan Area.

<sup>16</sup> "American Hotel," laconservancy.org; Central City North Community Plan Area, "Individual Resources Report," SurveyLA.

corner bay housed the office. In the central bay was the dining room. The third bay had a restaurant, presumably open to non-guests, and the kitchen behind. After the rear addition along Hewitt was completed, more than doubling the hotel's size, the three front bays became storefronts and an enlarged lobby and restaurant moved to the ground floor of the new space.<sup>17</sup>



*Canadian Hotel, 1905-1909  
Corner of Hewitt and Traction Streets  
(SurveyLA)*

At the time of construction, there were two other hostelries to the northwest on Traction Street (then known as Stephenson Avenue). Next to the Canadian was a building simply identified as lodging. It contained two retail outlets on its first floor, one of which sold groceries. Next to that was the Eureka Hotel, with its own dining room and kitchen. There was yet another place of lodging a block to the west of this cluster, at the corner of Alameda and Third. The remainder of the neighborhood was a mixture of residential and industrial uses. There was a local school, the Hewett Street Public, less than two blocks north of the Canadian.<sup>18</sup>

The second resource linked to the African American community is the Tokio Hotel, also known as the Booker T. Washington Building. It was designed by architect Alfred Priest and dates from 1914. It is located at 1013 South Central Avenue, two blocks south of the Central Market. Its form is similar to the Canadian Hotel, although it appears never to have had common spaces. It was more like the Market

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<sup>17</sup> "American Hotel," laconservancy.org; 1906 and 1950 Sanborn Maps.

<sup>18</sup> 1906 Sanborn Map.

Hotel in its limited facilities, with four (now three) retail spaces on the ground floor and two floors of lodging above.<sup>19</sup>



*Tokio Hotel/Booker T. Washington Building, 1914  
1013 South Central Avenue  
(SurveyLA)*

Central Avenue had long been the commercial spine of the city's African American community. As late as 1950, the blocks around the Tokio were still functioning as a neighborhood. The area was predominantly residential. Only the well-known Coca-Cola Bottling Plant (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 138) and a scattered number of small industrial establishments intruded.<sup>20</sup>

A commercial district serving this neighborhood remained intact in 1950 along Central Avenue from Olympic to Pico. Just north of the hotel was a movie house. Other retail establishments along this stretch of Central included restaurants, drugstores, a laundry, a brewery and a storefront church. Located among the nearby homes were the Tabernacle Baptist Church and an Apostolic Assembly identified on the Sanborn Map as "Colored."<sup>21</sup>

Further south on Central Avenue is the third, and most significant, of the hotels built for the African American community. This is the Dunbar Hotel, first known as the Somerville Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 131). It is located on the corner of South Central Avenue and East 42<sup>nd</sup> Place, and was constructed by Doctor John Somerville in 1928. He intended it as a facility for the first west coast convention of the NAACP.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Data from SurveyLA, Central City Community Plan Area.

<sup>20</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> "Dunbar Hotel," laconservancy.org.



*Dunbar Hotel/Somerville Hotel, 1928*  
*Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 131*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

In the early 1920s this stretch of Central Avenue was emerging as the city's dominant African American business and entertainment district. On the site of the future hotel there was already a small storefront block containing three retail outlets. To the south on Central there was a series of stores, restaurants and two movie houses. By 1950 both sides of Central Avenue were solidly built up, with stores, markets, restaurants, movie houses, and dance halls.<sup>23</sup>

The Dunbar provided for its community the same kind of public meeting spaces, albeit as a smaller scale, as found in Downtown hotels such as the Biltmore. The ground floor contained a generous lobby, dining room, and areas that later became entertainment venues. (A view of the Cocktail Lounge and Grille from the late 1940s is shown on page 20 of the Historic Context.) According to a postcard from 1938 the Dunbar contained 115 rooms and 75 baths. It has recently been rehabilitated.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 1922 and 1950 Sanborn Maps.

<sup>24</sup> "Dunbar Hotel," [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

### Evaluation Criteria for Neighborhood Hotels, 1895-1930

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of neighborhood hotels. They are defined by their location, specifically in established neighborhoods outside the central business districts of Downtown and Hollywood. Historically, these hotels provided a place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; they were typically furnished, with housekeeping provided, and no cooking or dining facilities within the individual rooms.

Neighborhood hotels may be significant in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, Social History and/or Ethnic History. These hotels may include significant examples of architectural styles from the period, and may be designed by noted architects. They typically catered to both middle- and working-class clientele and responded to the social and economic needs of a particular neighborhood to provide lodging for workers, visitors, tourists, and others. Some served as the focal point of early neighborhood commercial centers. Neighborhood hotels also include those located in ethnic enclaves whose populations had been excluded from lodging elsewhere and are significant for these associations. Neighborhood hotels are becoming increasingly rare.

**Period of Significance:** 1895-1930

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1895 with the development of mass-transit based outlying neighborhoods and ends in 1930, when construction ceased with the coming of the Great Depression.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide outside Downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, specifically in neighborhoods that flourished between 1895 and 1930.

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History, Ethnic History  
Note: For ethnic associations see also the Ethnic/Cultural themes developed for the Citywide Historic Context Statement

**Criteria:** NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

<b>Associated Property Type:</b>	Commercial/Lodging – Hotel
<b>Property Type Description:</b>	Place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; typically furnished, with housekeeping provided, and no cooking or dining facilities within the individual rooms.
<b>Property Type Significance:</b>	See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1895-1930
- Was historically designed for and used as a hotel
- Located In a neighborhood beyond the central business districts of Downtown and Hollywood, particularly those with a strong identity and/or particular needs
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect the varieties of neighborhood hotel design from the period of significance
- Contains link to social and economic life of the surrounding neighborhood

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging
- Served the needs of a particular neighborhood, defined geographically, functionally and/or ethnically/racially
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1895-1930 period
  - May also be significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Associated with activities of the identifying neighborhood

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Feeling, Location, and Association
- Should retain overall massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; Some original materials may have been removed or altered, particularly for rare and/or early examples, or those significant in the areas of social/ethnic history
- Setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed

## **SUB-THEME: APARTMENT HOTELS, 1900-1930**

The definition of an apartment, or residential, hotel is vague. It falls somewhere between that of the conventional hotel, which provides no facility for dining or food preparation in the unit, and the furnished apartment building, in which units have full kitchens. For this purpose, it is defined as a hotel containing a room, or more commonly a suite of rooms, which includes facilities for dining and some form of food preparation. Like a standard hotel, and unlike the furnished apartment house, it also provides traditional hotel common spaces and services such as housekeeping.

The sub-theme restricts itself to resources that were constructed originally as apartment hotels. This was a form that began tentatively around 1900, was popular during the 1910s and 1920s, and died out with the coming of the Great Depression in the 1930s. The sub-theme does not include SRO hotels that evolved over time to allow for some form of food preparation in the room. Nor does it include later motels and motor inns which include rooms with kitchenettes.

The concept of hotels with some units having small kitchens took hold in the early 1900s. First referred to as buffet kitchens, they generally consisted of a full-sized sink, an icebox or refrigerator and at least a double hot plate and a warming oven, if not a full cooking stove. The common layout by the 1920s called for what was then labeled a kitchenette space of perhaps six by eight feet, separated from a dining space of the same size by partial-height casework.<sup>25</sup>

Buildings specifically advertised as apartment hotels began appearing in the years before the First World War. These hotels were commonly large structures, averaging 100 units of 2.7 rooms each. The units were rented completely furnished, including pots, pans, dishes and cutlery. These large apartment hotels were typically located outside of the central business districts in upscale residential neighborhoods, often along tree-lined boulevards or facing parks. Their neighbors were generally large apartment houses, commercial hotels, and retail establishments marketing to the carriage trade.<sup>26</sup>

Such a location in Los Angeles is area around Lafayette Park in the Westlake district. There are three apartment hotels here, all L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments, which illustrate the form. They are the Bryson (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 653), the Arcady (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1124), and the Town House (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 576).<sup>27</sup>

The Bryson, located at 2701 Wilshire Boulevard, one-half block east of the park, was constructed in 1912 and opened in early 1913. It was the first major multi-story building in what was up until that time a low-scale residential neighborhood. It stood alone for almost a decade, as construction fell off during the years of the First World War. Not until the opening the Ambassador Hotel in 1921, and the

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<sup>25</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 84-86.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 81.

subsequent development of the Miracle Mile, did the district began to develop its identity as a setting for upscale commerce.<sup>28</sup>



*The Bryson, 1912-1913*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 653*  
*(Los Angeles Conservancy)*

The Bryson was designed by architects Frederick Noonan and Charles H. Kyson. Its façade is composed in the traditional Beaux Arts mode of base, shaft and top. Its U-shaped plan opens to Wilshire Boulevard, from which it is set back and fronted by a lawn and landscaping. Unlike the typical Downtown hotel, it was meant to be a freestanding structure with all sides visible from a distance. The four elevations are finished in the same decorated manner, so as not to create the appearance, common to Downtown buildings, of an ornate façade and utilitarian sides and rear.<sup>29</sup>

The Bryson contained 96 apartments. Each of the units had a kitchen as well as a bath. Kitchens included china and silver services. Living rooms featured hideaway beds and could double as sleeping rooms. Other amenities included dressing rooms with cedar closets. On the top floor were ornate common spaces, including a ballroom, and glass-enclosed loggias from which tenants could view the park and Wilshire Boulevard.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "The Bryson," [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org); Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 474.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> "The Bryson," [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

The Bryson managed to hold its own as a residential hotel through the twenties. At some point it added a garage for forty cars to its rear, accessible from Rampart Boulevard. But after the war its status began to decline. It has since been restored and now provides low-income housing.<sup>31</sup>



*Arcady Apartment Hotel, 1927*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1124*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The second example, the Arcady, is located across Rampart Boulevard from the Bryson on the northeast corner of Rampart and Wilshire. It was designed by architectural firm of Walker and Eisen and completed in 1927. This twelve-story apartment hotel, also in the Beaux Arts style, originally contained two floors of public spaces and ten floors of rooms and suites. The original plan called for 396 rooms, divided into two-, three- and four-room suites.<sup>32</sup>

The Arcady's U-shaped form is similar to the earlier Bryson, but its orientation is more urban. Rather than being set back from Wilshire, it was placed directly on the sidewalk. Its courtyard faces Rampart rather than Wilshire, thereby allowing for five storefronts on the ground floor along Wilshire. (The courtyard has since been closed off at the street level and the main entrance moved to Wilshire.)<sup>33</sup>

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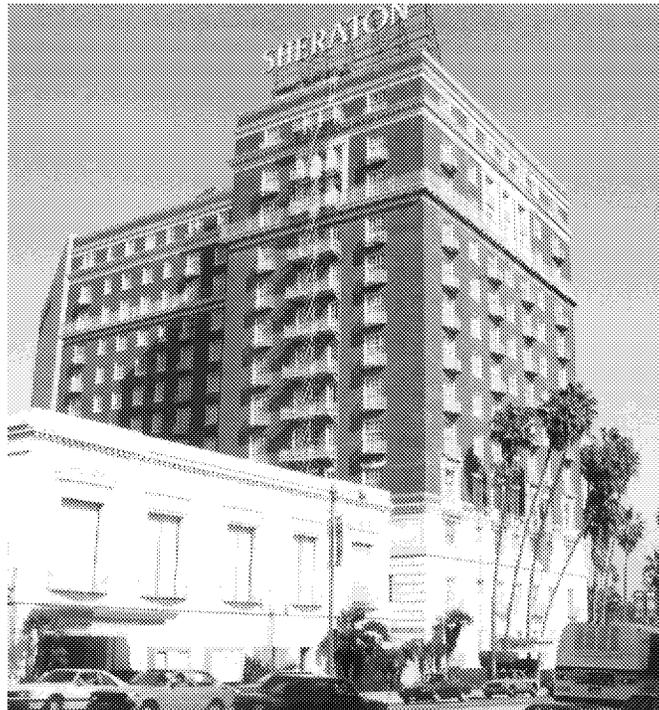
<sup>31</sup> The Bryson," laconservancy.org; 1950 Sanborn Map.

<sup>32</sup> L.A. Department of City Planning Recommendation Report, Historic-Cultural Monument Application for Arcady Apartments, 2015; "Wilshire Royale," laconservancy.org.

<sup>33</sup> L.A. Department of City Planning Recommendation Report, Historic-Cultural Monument Application for Arcady Apartments, 2015.

Services in the Arcady resembled those of an elite commercial hotel. An advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1928 promised a setting with “all work being taken care of by a thoroughly-trained crew of maids, butlers, housemen, pages, valets, laundresses and porters.” For those preferring not to cook, meals were delivered from the ground-floor kitchen.<sup>34</sup>

As with the Bryson, the Arcady underwent changes after the Second World War. It has served as a Howard Johnson’s Hotel and as a home for the elderly. Most recently it was renovated into the Wilshire Royale Hotel.<sup>35</sup>



*Town House, 1929*

*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 576  
(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

The third example, the Town House, is located on the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Commonwealth Avenue, directly across from Lafayette Park. It was designed by architect Norman W. Alpaugh and opened in September of 1929, just before the stock market crash that preceded the onset of the Depression. As with the Bryson, at some point it constructed a garage, this time underground, which could hold 150 cars.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> “Wilshire Royale,” [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

<sup>36</sup> Herr, *Landmark L.A.*, 468; “The Town House,” [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org); 1950 Sanborn Map.

The Town House is a prime example of the restrained Beaux Arts style, in the sober brick which characterized elite hotels such as the Biltmore. For its thirteen stories it used the standard tripartite façade division into base, center and top. It was developed by oilman Edward Doheny and was advertised as “Southern California’s most distinguished address”.<sup>37</sup>

The Town House had economic problems functioning as an apartment hotel during the early years of the Depression. It converted to operating as a conventional hotel in 1937, and tried to refashion itself by opening a nightclub named the Zebra Room, with an interior designed by Wayne McAllister. It was subsequently purchased by Conrad Hilton in 1942, and then sold to the Sheraton chain. It finally closed in 1993 and later reopened as low-income housing.<sup>38</sup>



*Chateau Marmont, 1928*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No.151*  
*(L.A. Office of Historic Resources)*

Hollywood is another neighborhood in which apartment hotels were construction during the 1920s. The best known of these, because of its link to the entertainment industry, is the Chateau Marmont (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 151). It is located on the western edge of Hollywood, at Marmont Lane and Sunset Boulevard. The Chateau Marmont was designed by architect Arnold A. Weitzman and built in 1928.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “The Town House,” laconservancy.org.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 166; Herr, *Landmark LA*, 433; Moore, Becker, and Campbell, *Los Angeles: The City Observed*, 178. Sources vary as to the date of construction. The date given here is from the Los Angeles County Assessor.

The Marmont It is a seven-story, L-shaped design of reinforced concrete in a French-Norman Revival style. It was initially intended to be an apartment building. But it was decided soon after its completion to convert it to apartment hotel use. Later, Spanish Colonial Revival style cottages and Mid-Century Modern bungalows were added to the grounds.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to Westlake and Hollywood, Venice contains many apartment hotels. This building type was one of several short-term rental forms – from bungalows and boarding houses to tent colonies – that were built to house vacationing families. Most went up during Venice’s years as an independent city, from 1904 through 1925. After consolidation in 1925, there was little in the way of new hotel construction.

One resource built after consolidation, however, appears to fit the category of apartment hotel. This is the Breeze Hotel, at the intersection of Breeze Avenue and Ocean Front Walk. Completed in 1930, it is a four-story brick structure of industrial-style simplicity, with protruding piers and recessed spandrels as its primary architectural feature.



*Breeze Hotel, 1930*  
*Breeze Avenue and Ocean Front Walk, Venice*  
*(SurveyLA)*

It is uncertain as to whether the Breeze was originally intended as an apartment hotel. But this use is likely given the tradition of such buildings in Venice, and its probability is supported by the 1950 Sanborn Map, which notes that the Breeze contains 30 apartments. Unlike the more elaborate apartment hotels, it also appears to have had no notable common spaces, apart from a possible roof

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<sup>40</sup> “The Chateau Marmont Is Ready for Its Close-UP,” *New York Times*, December 5, 2010.

deck. In its lack of amenities it fits the tradition of smaller apartment hotels in Venice. It is currently a contemporary version of the apartment hotel, with units containing cooking facilities.<sup>41</sup>

Construction of large-scale apartment hotels stopped with the coming of the Great Depression and did not resume after the Second World War. As with the Downtown commercial hotel, the apartment hotel was not well suited to the automobile. Once construction resumed after the war, the motel with kitchenette units took its place.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 1950 Sanborn Map.

<sup>42</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 264.

## Evaluation Criteria for Apartment Hotels, 1900-1930

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of apartment hotels, sometimes referred to as residential hotels. An apartment hotel is a hotel containing a room, or more commonly a suite of rooms, in which dining and some form of food preparation is provided for. As with a standard hotel, and unlike the furnished apartment building, it provides traditional hotel facilities such as common spaces and services such as housekeeping. This sub-theme focuses on resources that were constructed originally as apartment or residential hotels. (The sub-theme does not include SRO hotels that evolved over time to allow for some form of food preparation in the room. Nor does it include later motels and motor inns, which included rooms with kitchenettes.)

Residential hotels may be significant in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, and/or Social History. They illustrate the evolution of the apartment hotel as an increasingly larger and more specialized commercial building type to provide for a market of usually well-off urbanites, which had no desire to create permanent households. These hotels are generally excellent examples of architectural styles of the period and designed by noted architects. They also evidence an increasingly sophisticated Los Angeles with a growing population which preferred the services of hotel life together with certain private-dwelling amenities such as food preparation. Some apartment hotels, particularly in the Hollywood area, may have significant associations with the entertainment industry.

**Period of Significance:** 1900-1930

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1900 with the incorporation of limited in-room dining and kitchen facilities in the commercial hotels of the era, and ends in 1930, with the coming of the Great Depression and the collapse of the market for new apartment hotels.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide, in particular Westlake, Hollywood, and Venice

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History  
Note: See also the Entertainment Industry context for properties with this association.

**Criteria:** NR: A/C CR: 1/3 Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Type:** Commercial/Lodging – Apartment Hotel

**Property Type Description:** Place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; typically furnished with housekeeping provided and with limited facilities for in-room dining and food preparation.

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1900-1930
- Was historically designed and used as an apartment hotel
- Located In dense residential districts, commonly near other hotels and apartment buildings
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect commercial design in general and apartment hotel design in particular
- Contains link to social and economic life associated with a well-off, semi-transient population

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features form the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging in units permitting limited dining/food preparation
- Sited in a generally dense district of commercial, residential, and/or other lodging forms
- Associated with activities of generally well-off semi-transient individuals
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1900-1930 period
  - Typically also significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- May be designed by a noted architect
- May also be significant under themes within the Entertainment Industry context

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship. Feeling, Location, and Association
- Should retain overall massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; Some original materials may have been removed or altered
- Setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed

### **SUB-THEME: SUBURBAN RESORT HOTELS, 1895-1980**

The suburban resort hotel is product of the concept of leisure. It is a form of lodging which stresses escape and pleasure, rather than efficiency and convenience. It does this by separating itself from its surroundings through abundant space and picturesque landscaping in a suburban setting.<sup>43</sup>

The suburban resort hotel is different from a hotel in a resort neighborhood. Hotels in resort neighborhoods rely upon the amenities of the neighborhood. They do not supply their own amusements. Examples of hotels in resort neighborhoods are those of Venice. They contain lodging in the same manner as conventional hotels. They do not provide their own landscaping or activities. In contrast, the suburban resort hotel is self-contained and does not rely on its neighborhood. Its own grounds provide the amusements.

The suburban resort hotel appeared in the mid-1890s. It was initially a product of the extension of streetcar routes, which placed once-remote sites within easy reach of city dwellers. It evolved in the years after the First World War to accommodate the increasingly common ownership of automobiles. By the late 1920s this widespread use of the passenger car proved a challenge, as places of amusement outside the city were now easily accessible. Nonetheless, the ability of the suburban resort hotel to adapt to the automobile age allowed it to remain a viable form into the years after the Second World War.<sup>44</sup>

Extant early suburban resort hotels are rare. There is, however, one good example still standing. This is the Mount Washington Hotel (Mount Washington Hotel/Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 845). It dates from 1909-1910 and is located at 3846-3880 San Rafael Avenue in the Mount Washington neighborhood overlooking Highland Park. The elevation of Mount Washington, at 940 feet, is high enough to provide for a scenic vista over the surrounding area.

The neighborhood was outside the city limits of Los Angeles at the time of the hotel's completion, but was annexed within two years. The hotel was part of a subdivision of single-family-home lots. To assure easy access for streetcar riders, the developers built an inclined railway that ran from the trolley stop at Avenue 43 and Marmion Way to the site of the hotel.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, automobile owners were provided for by means of the newly constructed Mount Washington Drive. The drive connected Marmion Way with San Rafael Avenue, the primary street for the subdivision. The avenue ran about a mile along the ridge-like summit of the mountain, with side

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<sup>43</sup> Wharton, *Building the Cold War*, 164-167.

<sup>44</sup> Groth, *Living Downtown*, 80-82.

<sup>45</sup> "Mt. Washington: Its Hotel and Inclined Railway," Electrical Railway Historical Association, [www.erha.org](http://www.erha.org). While Marmion Way was part of the Highland Park Annexation of 1895, the area of Mount Washington along San Rafael Avenue was part of the Arroyo Seco Annexation of 1912.

streets containing building lots. A reservoir was constructed to serve the development, with water pumped from a spring along the Santa Fe tracks at Avenue 41.<sup>46</sup>

The railway and access road were completed in 1909. The hotel opened in early 1910. It was in the Mission Revival Style and designed by the firm of Meyer and Holler, working through the Milwaukee Building Company. The hotel provided lounge and dining areas, but contained only eighteen rooms, each with a private bath. The grounds were intended to offer tennis and walking paths, as well as a viewing platform overlooking Highland Park.<sup>47</sup>



*Mount Washington Hotel, 1909-1910*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 845*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The enterprise did not live up to expectations. The incline railway experienced constant maintenance problems and ceased operating in 1919. The hotel also faced difficulties. It was too small to compete with similar suburban resort hotels in nearby Pasadena. As early as 1914 the owners were seeking an operator to run the hotel under lease. By 1922 it had become a military school and in 1923 a private hospital. In 1925 the property was purchased by the Self-Realization Fellowship.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "Mt. Washington: Its Hotel and Incline Railway," Electrical Railway Historical Association, [www.erha.org](http://www.erha.org).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> "Mt. Washington: Its Hotel and Incline Railway," Electrical Railway Historical Association, [www.erha.org](http://www.erha.org).

The best known of the suburban resort hotels from the 1920s was the Ambassador, discussed in the Historic Context section above. Completed in 1921, it was a transition from the earlier streetcar-oriented hotels like the Mount Washington, with its inclined railway, to the post-World War II automobile-oriented suburban resort establishment. The architectural form of the original Ambassador building, a single large sprawling structure with a picturesque profile, was typical of the earlier resort hotels. But, from its beginning, the Ambassador was dependent upon an automobile-born clientele and contained adequate parking on its grounds.<sup>49</sup>

An example of a post-World War II suburban resort hotel is the Hotel Bel Air, opened in 1946. It is located at 701 Stone Canyon Road, on a site of over nine acres within an upscale single-family residential district. The original structures were built in 1925 as sales offices and horse stables by Alphonzo Bell, the developer of Bel Air. The property was purchased in 1946 by an entrepreneur who hired architect Burton Schutt to remodel the existing buildings and add 62 new rooms to create a hotel.<sup>50</sup>

The Bel Air abandoned the model of a single monumental structure like the Mount Washington and the Ambassador. Instead, the original layout consisted of one- and two-story buildings in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, arranged around lush landscaping, courtyards, and ponds. The buildings were clad in distinctive pink-colored stucco, featuring arched openings and clay-tile roofs. The Bel Air was considered by a prominent architectural critic in the early 1950s to be a good example of the post-war resort hotel. It was praised for its small scale and informality within a landscape setting and for its layout of separate bungalows combined with a low-key main building housing the common spaces.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Wallach, *Historic Hotels*, 97.

<sup>50</sup> The information on the Hotel Bel Air is from SurveyLA findings for the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Community Plan Area.

<sup>51</sup> John Wellborn Root, "Hotels and Apartment Hotels," in *Form and Function of Twentieth Century Architecture*, Volume III, edited by Talbot Hamlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 125-126.

## Evaluation Criteria for Suburban Resort Hotels, 1895-1980

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of suburban resort hotels. These are hotels that provide a unique setting and/or set of activities that set them apart from other hotel sub-themes. They stressed leisure in a picturesque setting rather than efficiency in a convenient location.

Resources related to suburban resort hotels are significant in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, and Social History. Architecturally they illustrate the evolution of the suburban resort hotel as a commercial type that used architectural styles and layouts appropriate to leisure. Commercially they show how the hotel evolved as a business type to serve a market seeking a leisure experience within a suburban setting. They also illustrate how an urban population, using the transport of the day – first trolley and then the passenger car – sought close-in locations for leisure that provided lodging. There are few extant examples of suburban resort hotels in Los Angeles.

**Period of Significance:** 1895-1980

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1895, with the extension of the street railway system that makes previously isolated sites accessible, and ends in 1980, the end date for SurveyLA.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide, within picturesque suburban areas

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Type:** Commercial/Lodging – Hotel

**Property Type Description:** Place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; typically furnished, with housekeeping provided, and no cooking or dining facilities within the individual rooms

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1895-1980
- Was historically designed for and used as a resort hotel
- Located In a suburban setting, with extensive landscaping and/or activity space
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect commercial design in general and hotel design in particular
- Contains link to leisure activities of the surrounding communities

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character defining features form the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1895-1980 period
  - typically also significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Sited on an expansive space, with landscaping and/or provision for outdoor activities
- Associated with leisure activities and/or significant landscape features

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Location, and Association
- Should retain overall massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; Some original materials may have been removed or altered, particularly for rare and/or early examples
- Surrounding (adjacent) setting may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Resource should maintain association with significant landscape features

### SUB-THEME: POST-WAR HOTELS, 1945-1980

New hotel construction was negligible during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Once it resumed after 1945 the hotel adapted itself to the automobile. It continued to provide accommodation for travelers and public spaces for community events. But parking now became a primary concern.

The sub-theme of post-war hotels differentiates between the hotel and the motel. The post-war hotel is defined as an entity that, unlike the motel, maintains a separation between parking and building. It retains the relatively compact form of a single large structure that typified the pre-war hotel. It is multi-story in height, giving it a relatively monumental presence, particularly in a suburban setting. Rooms are accessed off an interior hall entered by way of a lobby. There are also common spaces such as meeting rooms, restaurants and bars, accessible from a lobby.

Except for the now-demolished Statler-Hilton of 1952, no large-scale hotels were built in the central business district until the 1970s. Instead, the focus of post-war hotel construction became elite suburban business districts, some created as completely new entities. The hotel was seen as an anchor for these alternative business centers placed close to upscale residential neighborhoods. What differentiated these new districts from Downtown was their ability to accommodate the automobile.



*Proposal for Century City, 1958 (view looking south)  
Welton Becket and Associates, Planner  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The most significant of these alternate centers was Century City on the West Side. Until the late 1950s the location had been the back lot of Twentieth-Century Fox Film Studios. Century City was to be bounded by Santa Monica Boulevard on the north and Pico Boulevard to the south. Its eastern and western boundaries are streets now named Century Park East and West.<sup>52</sup>

The project developed a bit differently than shown in the planner's model, apparently to facilitate traffic flow. Olympic Boulevard remained a major east-west thoroughfare, dividing the site in two. A wide thoroughfare, the Avenue of the Stars, was added that extended the entire length north to south. But the idea of high-rises surrounded by open space remained, as did the intention of placing a hotel at its center.



*Century Plaza Hotel, 1966*  
*L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1060*  
*(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The hotel is the Century Plaza, designed by Minoru Yamasaki and opened in 1966 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1060). Its style and relationship to its setting combine Mid-Century Modernism with the New Formalism. Its crescent form is symmetrical and its composition follows the tradition of a base, center and top. It sits on a slight rise and closes an axial vista in the classical manner. Since its opening it has served as the social center for the city's West Side. (It is currently undergoing renovation.)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Commentary to "Century City project, aerial" photograph (order number 00042845), Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

<sup>53</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 161-162; Moore, Becker, and Campbell, *Los Angeles: The City Observed*, 211-212.

Individual projects such as the Century Plaza were rare. Chains became the prevalent developers of hotel-like hostleries during the post-war period. Most were designed in the chain's identifying architectural style. Since suburban roadside locations were generally selected, open parking lots characterized these developments. The presence of the parking lot, together with the corporate uniformity of the architecture, limited the impact of the building's form. Instead, as with much of suburban commercial design, the sign became the dominant visual element.



*Holiday Inn (Hotel Angeleno), 1970  
170 North Church Lane, Brentwood  
(SurveyLA)*

Notable among hotel chain architecture is the experiment that Holiday Inn conducted with the use of the high-rise cylinder. The company constructed approximately fifteen of these. One such example remains in Los Angeles. It is now the Hotel Angeleno, located at 170 North Church Lane in Brentwood, at this point where Sunset Boulevard accesses the 405 Freeway. It was built as a Holiday Inn in 1970 to a design by architects Lundgren and Maurer. It is sixteen floors in height, with common spaces on the top floor offering views in all directions. Rooms feature balconies. A parking lot is to the north.<sup>54</sup>

By 1970 there was renewed interest in the construction of Downtown hotels. The scheme generally followed was one of self-containment. Security was a general concern during the period, and it was commonly believed that only hotels that restricted their interaction, perceived as well as actual, with the surrounding streets would draw a clientele. Contained within the hotel complex was on-site

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<sup>54</sup> Data from SurveyLA for the Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Area.

parking. Visitors could arrive by car and directly enter the hotel, a concept pioneered by the Statler-Hilton in 1952.

One of the first of these new Downtown hotels, the Hyatt Regency of 1972-1973, was part of a mixed-use project called the Broadway Plaza (now the MCI Plaza). Designed by Charles Luckman and Associates, it is located on the southwest corner of Flower and Seventh Streets. It combines a hotel tower, complete with revolving restaurant on top, together with a similar office tower, and a base consisting of an atrium-like Galleria and a department store.<sup>55</sup>



*Bonaventure Hotel, 1976  
Flower to Figueroa and Fourth to Fifth Streets  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

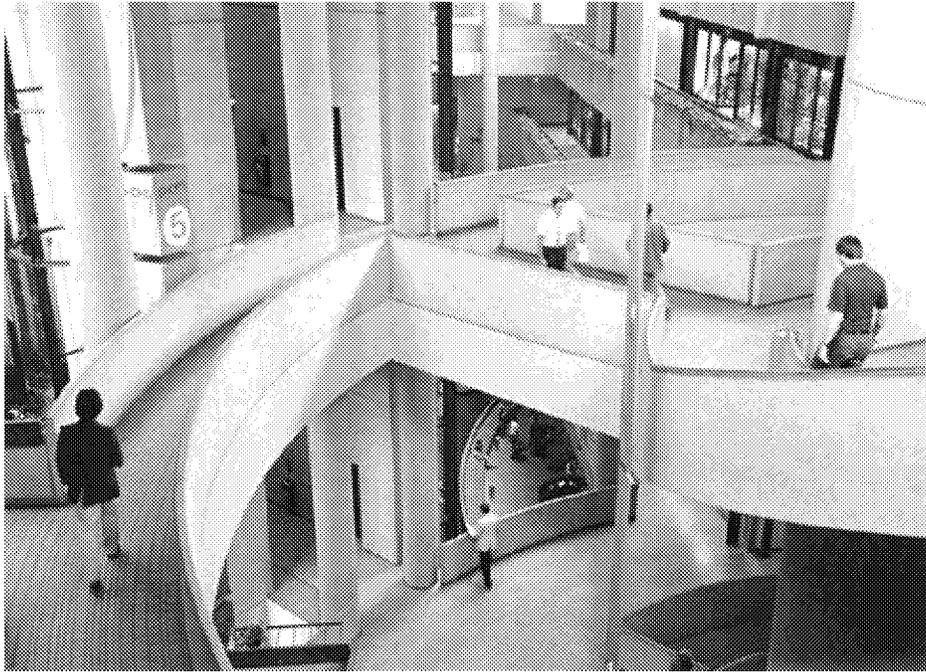
This pattern of separation from the street was apparent as well in the most significant of the new hotels. This was the Bonaventure (now the Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites.) The thirty-five story Bonaventure was completed in 1976. The exterior consists of a six-story concrete podium on top of which are placed a set of cylindrical towers. The podium occupies the entire block encompassed by Flower, Fourth, Figueroa, and Fifth.

The Bonaventure follows a design formula that its architect, John Portman, found successful in other cities. The interior contains a dramatic seven-story-high atrium. The cylindrical forms of the towers create a set of interlocking circular interior spaces crossed by bridges. The exterior was as dramatic as

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<sup>55</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 243.

the interior. But it did not relate well to street-level pedestrians. In partial response to this criticism, an entrance was added to Flower Street in the mid-1980s.<sup>56</sup>



*Bonaventure Hotel, Interior  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

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<sup>56</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 239-240.

## Evaluation Criteria for Post-War Hotels, 1945-1980

**Summary Statement of Significance:** Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are examples of post-war hotels. Post-war hotels accommodate the passenger car but maintain a separation between parking and building, thereby differentiating themselves from motels. They consist of relatively compact single structures, multi-story in height. Rooms are accessed off an interior hall entered by way of a lobby. There are common spaces such as meeting rooms, restaurants, and bars, accessible from a lobby.

Post-war hotels may be significant in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, and/or Social History. They illustrate show how the hotel evolved as a commercial type that accommodated the automobile and was dominated by the chain as a business model. They are typically excellent examples of their associated architectural styles, and were designed by noted architects. Some post-war hotels also have important associations with the history of Los Angeles during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as the location of important events and for accommodating distinguished clientele.

**Period of Significance:** 1945-1980

**Period of Significance Justification:** The period of significance begins in 1945 with the resumption of construction after the end of the Second World War, and ends in 1980 the end date for SurveyLA.

**Geographic Location:** Citywide, particularly in Downtown and upscale neighborhood business districts

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture, Commerce, Social History

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Type:** Commercial/Lodging – Hotel

**Property Type Description:** A place of lodging for temporary or semi-permanent purposes; furnished with housekeeping provided.

**Property Type Significance:** See Summary Statement of Significance above.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed between 1945-1980
- Was historically designed for and used as a hotel
- Located on a site that is automobile accessible and provides some means of housing the car
- Contains architectural and site layout features that reflect hotel design in general and post-war auto-oriented design in particular
- Contains link to social and economic life of an auto-borne generally elite and middle class clientele

**Character Defining/Associative Features:**

- Retains the essential character defining features from the period of significance
- Provided temporary or semi-permanent lodging
- Provided dining and meeting spaces for public functions
- Of a style or mixture of styles typical of the 1945-1980 period
  - Typically also significant under themes within the Architecture and Engineering context
- Site design allows for automobile access and storage
- Associated with activities of the surrounding economic and social elite and middle classes

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, Location and Association
- Should retain overall massing; original massing should not be obscured by additions or demolished sections
- Architectural integrity should include maintenance of original materials as much as possible; Some original materials may have been removed or altered, particularly for rare and/or early examples
- Original use may have changed
- Surrounding (adjacent) setting may have changed

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