

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

NEW ORLEANS LOWER CBD BOUNDARY INCREASE/ADDL DOC

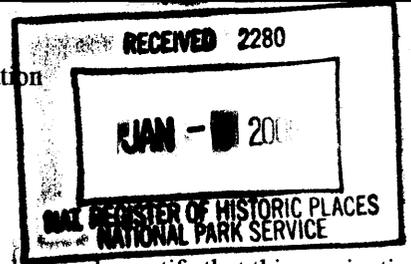
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36
110

- 1. New Orleans Lower Central Business District Boundary Increase/Additional Documentation
- 2. Increase too small to change location information
- 3. State/Federal Agency Certification



As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant statewide.

Jonathan Fricker
Jonathan Fricker,
LA Deputy SHPO
Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

1/4/06
Date

5. Number of Resources With Property

Boundary expansion adds 9 contributing buildings and 3 non-contributing bldgs.

Updating period of significance for existing district changes 4 buildings from non-contributing to contributing.

New contributing/non-contributing count for the district:

Contributing	259 buildings
Non-Contributing	31 buildings

15 buildings previously listed on Register (individual listings)

Part 7:

Architectural Classification: add International Style

New Orleans' Lower Central Business District was listed on the National Register in 1991, with the period of significance ending in 1941 (following the Register fifty year cutoff). This addendum will update the period of significance to 1956 (the present fifty year cutoff) and increase the boundaries to include twelve additional buildings, some of which are major expressions of 1950s architecture.

The staff of the Division of Historic Preservation had begun initial fieldwork for this project prior to Hurricane Katrina (August 29, 2005). The accompanying photos were taken in early November. Katrina caused wind-related damage to some of the Lower CBD's historic buildings, but all-in-all it was relatively minor. Any damage to the buildings covered in this update will be detailed below. (There are also a few instances of shopfronts that remain boarded over.)

The boundary expansion occurs in three places at the northern end of the district. It adds 9 contributing buildings and 3 non-contributing. Updating the period of significance for the existing district changes 4 buildings from non-contributing to contributing status.

Boundary Expansion:

For the most part, the buildings below were not included in the original boundaries because they were not considered historic at the time. However, #s1-3 below were clearly historic at the time of the 1991 listing. Why they were overlooked is unknown.

- 1) 231 North Rampart, contributing, circa 1850. Three story brick, party wall, Greek Revival double townhouse with galleried rear

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service wing. Details include a heavy denticular entablature, granite lintels, gabled parapets, and six-over-nine sliphead windows at the second story façade that originally stepped out onto balconies. Ground level conversion to commercial space is most likely an alteration. Upriver gabled parapet damaged during Hurricane Katrina. Rehabilitation in progress.

- 2) 215 North Rampart, contributing. Early twentieth century, four story, stucco-over-brick commercial building. Classically derived (albeit low-key) details include three round head windows and an entablature with ornamental ventilators set within it. Retains almost all its original windows on the upper stories. Shopfront converted to provide for a garage (but columns retained).
- 3) 201 North Rampart, contributing. Early twentieth century, three story, stucco-over brick commercial building with pronounced Baroque-style terra-cotta detailing at the center of the first and second stories. Round head windows span the third story façade. Shopfront level replaced.
- 4) 141 South Rampart, non-contributing, modern skyscraper with a beige brick facing. (This building is between the existing district and the northwestern-most boundary expansion. It had to be taken to include four major historic 1950s buildings.)
- 5) 1111 Tulane Avenue, contributing. According to the book *New Orleans in the Fifties*, this eight-story commercial building was remodeled to its present appearance in 1950. However, it does not appear to be a remodeling job; its appearance is entirely in the late International Style. The 1954-55 city directory lists 1111 Tulane as the California Company Building. It is conservative in that the design is symmetrical. The main elevation, on Tulane Avenue, has a centrally placed entrance marked by deep red polished granite and a striking angular brushed aluminum frame around a system of glass doors. The aluminum windows are paired and set in bands of dark (gray) brick on each story. These are contrasted by bands of lighter brick (reddish brown) set between the stories. Each of the three exposed elevations is set off by a smooth limestone frame that encompasses the outermost "columns" of windows. The interior edge of the frames is marked by a subtle limestone coping. The building is free of ornament, being a study in rectilinearity and contrasting colors.
- 6) 212 Loyola, contributing, 1956, Herbert A. Benson, George J. Riehl, architects. The Saratoga Building is a fourteen story steel and concrete skyscraper faced in smooth beige brick with windows set in golden hued aluminum bands. The main elevation derives interest from a broad angle turn following a jog on Loyola Avenue, onto which the building fronts. There is a pronounced two-story base surmounted by a more slender twelve-story tower. The second story of the base is raised on piers and appears to float above the ground in the tradition of the International Style. The tower is raised above the base on similar piers. The piers themselves are faced in rose tinted polished granite. Windows in the upper story of the base are set off in a striking beige colored stone coping. When it was built, De Lesseps "Chep" Morrison (Mayor of New Orleans from 1946 to 1961) hailed the Saratoga Building as a "bright new symbol of what we are accomplishing – and that is new life, new growth and new service and beauty for the heart of New Orleans."
- 7) 219 Loyola, New Orleans Public Library, 1956-58, contributing, Curtis and Davis, Architects, with Goldstein, Parham and Labouisse, and Favrot, Reed, Mathes and Bergman. The entry for this building in *Buildings of Louisiana*, published by the Society of Architectural Historians, reads in part: "The three story library is a steel frame structure ... with two basement levels with foundations of reinforced concrete. With the exception of the west façade, the walls are entirely of glass, covered by an aluminum screen to shield the interior from glare but permit light to enter." The aluminum screen, the defining exterior feature, is black, with the walls below a grayish white. The design won an award from *Progressive Architecture Magazine* in 1956. The library is part of a larger civic center complex constructed between 1956 and 1961. This included a new City Hall and other governmental buildings set around an irregularly shaped park. While the City Hall is 50 years old (1956), the buildings between it and the library are not. Thus, only the library has been included in this particular submission.
- 8) 1315 Gravier, contributing, The Warwick (now Ramada Inn and Suites). *New Orleans in the Fifties* references this building as being "completed in the early 50s." A 1956 aerial photograph shows the building in place. Located on the same block as the above referenced library, the building formerly known as The Warwick is a twelve story crisply unadorned symmetrical building faced in brick. The windows at the center of the façade are grouped in three strong vertical "columns." Windows at the corners are set off in broad horizontal bands. (The overall effect is that of ribbon windows that turn the corner.) Originally, the windows were set off by sections of unpainted brick, which contrasted with the rest of the exterior, which was painted a light color. Today the previously unpainted brick sections accenting the windows have been painted, but it is in a contrasting color (so the design intent remains). The building is capped by a slightly raised parapet. The ground level has been remodeled for the present use (Ramada Inn and Suites).

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- 9) 210 O'Keefe, contributing, 1956, presently Quality Inn & Suites. A photograph dated July 29, 1957 shows this building as a completed work. Thus its design and construction must date from at least 1956. It is a nine-story office building located on a corner; hence there are two styled elevations. Its massing is what has been termed a "vertical slab." The design features a system of windows and aqua coated glass panels set in, and set off by, a brushed aluminum grid frame. The building has the sleek appearance much prized by high style mid-twentieth century architects. Exposed beams at the rooftop level form a distinctive open-work sculptural element. 210 O'Keefe sustained some wind damage during Hurricane Katrina (August 29, 2005). A few windows and aqua panels (mainly on the narrower Common St. elevation) were broken. Rehabilitation work is in progress.
- 10) Non-contributing parking garage that wraps around #9 above.
- 11) 925 Common, Shell Building, contributing, 1952, August Perez and Associates, architects. The Shell Building, individually listed on the Register, is a reinforced concrete fourteen story skyscraper faced in smooth limestone. Its footprint forms a "v" at the sharp intersection of Common Street and University Place. The abstract rectilinear design makes use of brushed aluminum ribbon windows and a system of stone ledges and vertical fins that are designed to shade the windows as the sun makes its way from the eastern sky to the southern sky into the western sky. The Common Street elevation first story is capped by a long limestone planter with a slanted front. This Wrightian touch is not within the International Style tradition, but it achieves concinnity with the overall design.
- 12) 155 Baronne, non-contributing. This modern six story building with a large footprint had to be taken to connect the district with two major 1950s landmarks, #s 9 and 11 above.

Buildings within existing boundaries that are now 50 years old (changing status from non-contributing to contributing) – see 2 attached detail maps for locations:

Dailey's, 1010 Canal. This is evidently an older three story building remodeled to its present façade appearance circa 1950. The location of two large windows on the second and third stories is still detectable in the present plain stucco facade. The design incorporates a striking one-and-a-half story streamlined neon sign proclaiming Dailey's and the address. This is set opposite two minimalist square windows.

Joy Theater, 1200 Canal, 1946, Favrot and Reed, architects. Occupying a corner on Canal, the Joy Theater makes a quite pronounced statement. Beige brick walls contrast with boldly formed white stuccoed elements at each corner and a white outward thrusting sign at the center. The wide pier-like elements at each corner are scored vertically and rise above the main parapet by a few inches. The strongest vertical thrust is the central sign. The sign has a sweeping curve at the top and rises a few feet above the parapet. Painted white, its shape is outlined and re-enforced with a dark red trim. The "Joy" letters are also painted red and the beige brick walls are set off by a red band. The original marquee was damaged during Hurricane Katrina. The sign received a small amount of damage. (The Joy, vacant for some time, presently bears a "for sale" sign.)

818 Gravier. Three story masonry building that received its present updated façade c.1950. Shopfront is of polished granite. Second and third stories fitted with beige textured panels with a metallic sheen. Windows on second and third stories are aluminum with four horizontal panels. A rectangle in a contrasting color outlines and sets off the system of window openings.

821 Gravier. Annex to National Bank of Commerce, 1956, Nolan, Norman & Nolan, architects. This mixed use skyscraper housed a "motor bank" on the lower level, four stories of parking garage, and twelve stories of office space. While built for the National Bank of Commerce, the office tower was leased by various entities (mainly petro-chemical and insurance companies). Subsequent to construction the fifth floor was converted from office to parking. Floors 6-10 were sensitively converted to parking in a 2003 rehabilitation project for re-use of the building as a Hilton Garden Inn. The building has a sleek modern exterior consisting of clear glass windows and blue aluminum panels set within, and set off by, a contrasting system of brushed aluminum vertical ribs.

Part 8:

New period of significance: 1830-1956

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Statement of Significance

The buildings from the period 1942 to 1956 in the expanded and updated Lower Central Business District Historic District make a significant contribution to the district's patrimony. Indeed, collectively they are of state significance in the area of architecture. They represent Louisiana's only collection of cultural resources exemplifying an important American architectural phenomenon of the 1940s and 50s -- the triumph of European Modernism on the corporate/institutional/urban scene. Other larger downtowns in the state simply do not have significant or concentrated architectural resources that date from this period. Generally speaking, the buildings in these other central business districts either represent the pre-World War II era or the immediate recent past (1970s and later).

Probably the overriding American urban architectural trend of the post-World War II era, through the 1950s, was the triumph of European Modernism. It was a boom that, on the whole, relaxed some of the rigors of Modernist ideology but embraced its architectural vocabulary. The European International Style, which had only a fledgling hold in this country before the war, emerged as the standard American way to be modern. Indeed, the International Style, in its various permutations, reshaped major downtowns and created a new image of the American city that would have international reach.

The 1950s American building boom was fueled by post-war recovery, prosperity and the resulting need for new buildings of all kinds. And, for a variety of reasons, it came to be dominated by the abstractions of what we now term the late International Style. Some have noted the influence of Walter Gropius, who became Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design in 1937. His many graduates of the 1930s and 40s read like a *Who's Who* of American architectural practice from the 1950s and beyond. Similarly, Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe became director of the architecture program of the Armour Institute in Chicago (later the Illinois Institute of Technology) in 1938 and had his own stream of dedicated graduates as well as a wide circle of professional influence. Others have noted widespread corporate patronage. Then, too, there were the efforts of the *Union Internationale des Architectes*, dubbed "one of the most influential propagators of modern architecture after the Second World War."

But in a larger sense, from reviewing the history of the post-war period, one can also infer that by 1950 the old Art Deco mode was fading from fashion. The International Style was relatively new on the greater American scene, had a strong quasi-moral philosophy behind it (as Art Deco did not) and for a long time had no serious competition (at least not for large and/or tall buildings).

Aesthetes and critics of the day hailed the style's emergence. In 1958, *Look*'s architectural editor John Peter noted: "There is now a general body of theory and practice that constitutes a Modern style which is rapidly becoming as clearly defined as the Greek style or the Gothic style. . . . In almost every type of building - office, factory, bridge, dam, school, hospital - modern architecture. . . works. Only in the private family dwelling, where human needs are scaled to modest and even obsolete handicraft building methods, does modern architecture lag behind." "Architecture has now scraped itself clean of the encrustations of the past. It has advanced new purposes and new forms." In the same vein, Wolf von Eckardt offered in 1961, "Even those who still prefer 'traditional' at home accept 'modern' as the appropriate architecture for the schools of their children, their places of business, and - a little more reluctantly - for their churches and temples." The triumphal emergence was complete.

In a poetical sense, to a later generation Modernist post-war buildings came to symbolize their era, a period of growing corporate wealth and power and of American ascendancy. Writing in 1992, architectural historian Alan Gowans asserted that "Modern coincided with and came in great part to express the nation's rise to imperial superpower." Be that as it may, American Modernism surely did inspire imitation in other countries. In the decade or so after the 1950s, the gleaming curtain-wall downtown office block in cities like Chicago and New York inspired tall building project developments across the world in cities ranging from London to Singapore. For these projects, American downtowns projected to the world "the image of the modern city," as the Taschen guide to the International Style has noted so succinctly.

The New Orleans Context

The emergence of the American "modern city" in the New Orleans Central Business District was the centerpiece of a larger post-war building boom. One local commentator recounts that during these years "there was so much construction going on all around us." Indeed, 1952 has been hailed as the "second largest construction year in the city's history." A mid-1950s source refers to "the unprecedented demand in New Orleans for first-class office space." All this was fueled by a strong and expanding post-war

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economy. There was the prosperity of the petro-chemical industry, as symbolized by the construction, in 1952, of the Shell (Oil Company) Building on Common Street (NR). Surpassing oil was the meteoric rise of the city's port. In 1952, *Newsweek* declared, "The Port of New Orleans, in sixteenth place after the first world war, has moved into second place among the nation's shipping centers (after New York)." The following year another article noted eighty-nine public wharves with seven million feet of covered storage and berthing for two hundred deep-water vessels. By 1956 the value of commerce through the port had risen to over \$1.6 billion. During these years population rose as well -- up by 15% between 1940 and 1950. The much-ballyhooed goal of a million residents by 1960 was never realized.

9. Bibliography

Gowans, Alan. *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression*. HarperCollins, 1992.

Khan, Hasan-Uddin. *International Style: Modernist Architecture from 1925 to 1965*. Taschen, 1998.

Kingsley, Karen. *Buildings of Louisiana*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

New Orleans City Directories, mid-1950s.

Peter, John. *Masters of Modern Architecture*, George Braziller, Inc., 1963.

Photos, mid-1950s. Copies in NR file, LA Div of Historic Preservation.

Widmer, Mary Lou. *New Orleans in the '50s*. Pelican Publishing, 1991.

Wiseman, Carter. *Twentieth-Century Architecture: The Buildings and Their Makers*, W. W. Norton, 2000.

10. Because increase is small, UTMs will not change; hence new USGS map is not being submitted.

Acreage added: approx 5 acres

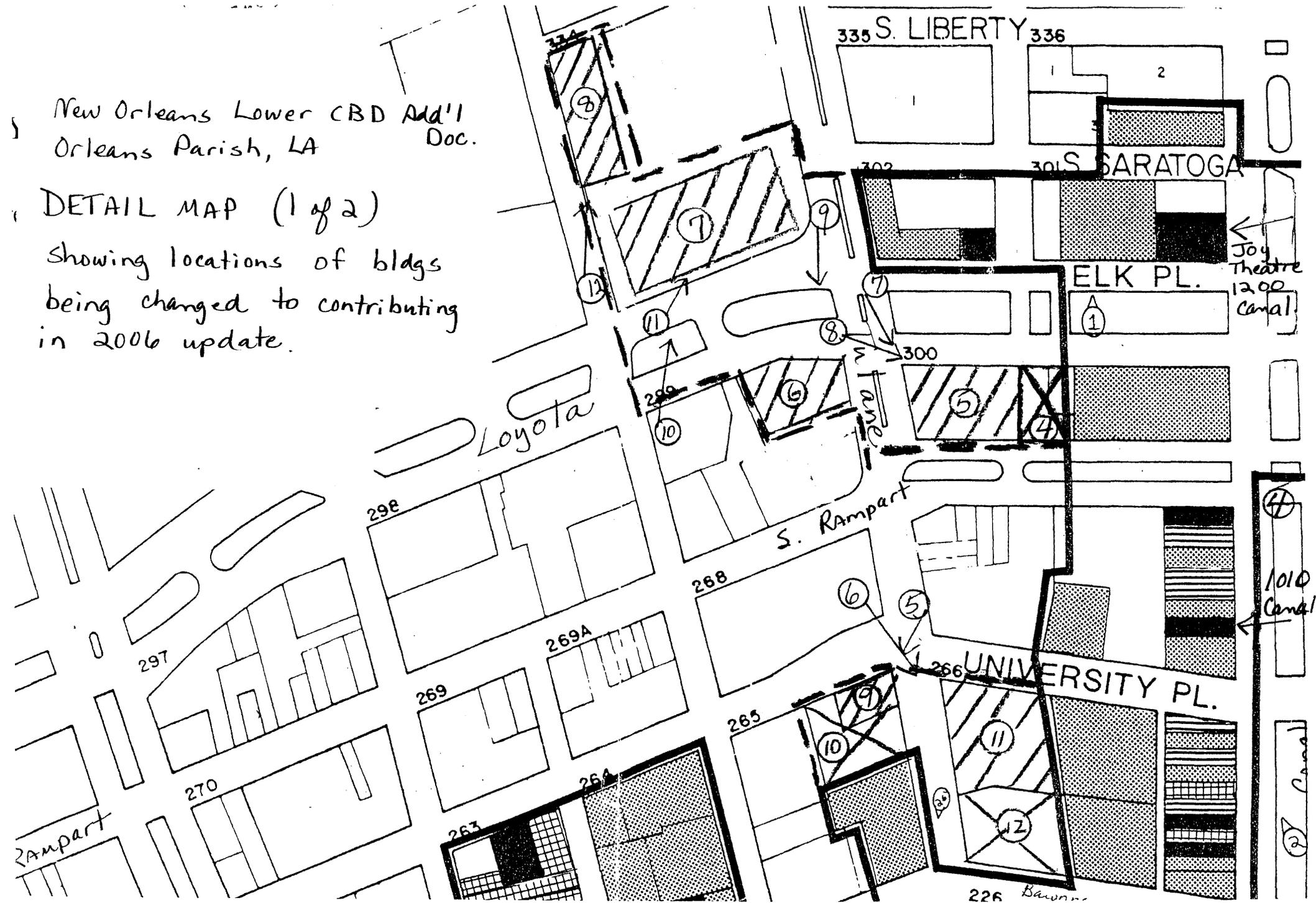
Description: See attached map.

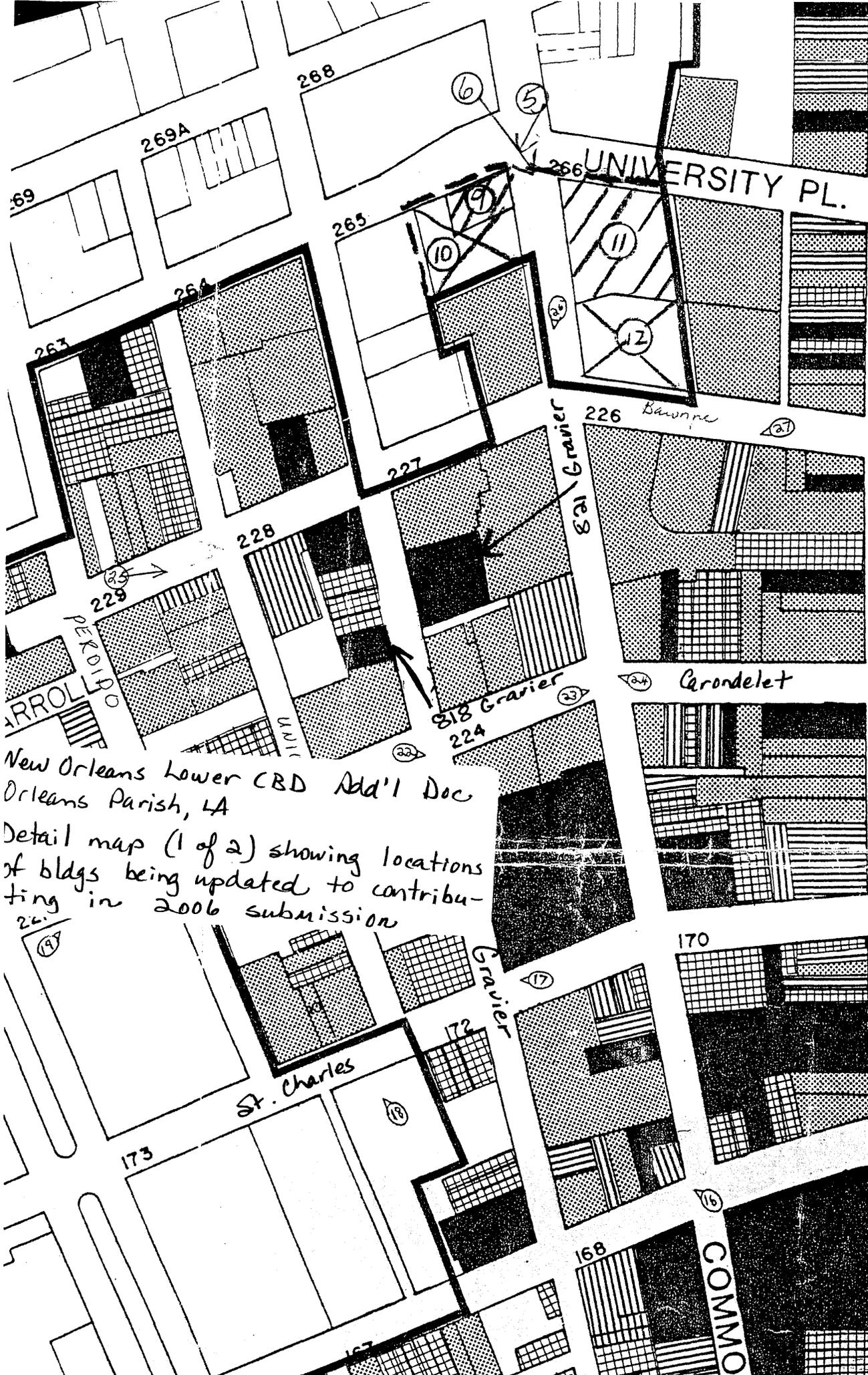
Justification: Boundary now reflects current 50 year cutoff (1956), as justified in narrative. As explained in narrative, for this 2006 update, 3 modern buildings had to be taken to include major contributing buildings. (The district overall has a very low 10% non-contributing rate.) Boundaries are irregular along the southern side to exclude non-historic buildings.

New Orleans Lower CBD Add'l
Orleans Parish, LA Doc.

DETAIL MAP (1 of 2)

Showing locations of bldgs
being changed to contributing
in 2006 update.





New Orleans Lower CBD Add'l Doc
 Orleans Parish, LA
 Detail map (1 of 2) showing locations
 of bldgs being updated to contribu-
 ting in 2006 submission

2
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594
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567 DA
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566 BO
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534 RC
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533 X
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532 CH
531 DO
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