NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Commerce Trust Company Historic District

Other names/site number National Bank of Commerce Building; Commerce Tower

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number Bounded by East 9th Street, Walnut Street, East 10th Street and Main Street | N/A | not for publication

City or town Kansas City | N/A | vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Jackson Code 095 Zip code 64106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide _X_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: _X_ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Toni M. Prawl 09/16/15

Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ determined eligible for the National Register

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

X	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

	building(s)
X	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)
COMMERCE/ TRADE: business
COMMERCE/ TRADE: financial institution
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Sports Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)
COMMERCE/ TRADE: business
COMMERCE/ TRADE: financial institution
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: skyscraper
MODERN MOVEMENT
MODERN MOVEMENT: Miesian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: BRICK
See below
roof: ASPHALT
other: TERRA COTTA

X **NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

[X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

[ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] B removed from its original location.

[ ] C a birthplace or grave.

[ ] D a cemetery.

[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] F a commemorative property.

[ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1908-1965

Significant Dates

1908; 1941; 1964

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hunt, Jarvis/ Fuller, George A., Company (1908)

Keene & Simpson (1941)

Keene, Simpson and Murphy (1964)

BNIM Architects (1999)

[X] **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
_X_previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_X_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
_X_Other
Name of repository: **Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Missouri Public Library**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): __N/A_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.4 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
1	39.102919	-94.582553	3		
2			4		

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)
_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin; Rachel Nugent; Lauren Rieke
organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date June 2015
street & number 215 W. 18th Street, Suite 150 telephone 816-472-4950
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108
e-mail lauren@rosinpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Commerce Trust Company Historic District**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography**

Date Photographed: **October 2014, March 2015**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 13: Commerce Trust Company Historic District, southwest corner. View northeast. March 2015.
2 of 13: Commerce Garage, west elevation. View east. October 2014.
3 of 13: Commerce Garage and National Bank of Commerce Building, south elevations. View northeast. March 2015.
4 of 13: National Bank of Commerce Building, southeast corner. View northwest. March 2015.
5 of 13: Commerce Trust Company Historic District, northeast corner. View southwest. March 2015.
6 of 13: Commerce Trust Company Historic District, surrounding commercial context. View west. March 2015.
7 of 13: Commerce Trust Company Historic District, northwest corner. View southeast. March 2015.
8 of 13: Commerce Trust Company Historic District, surrounding commercial context. View south. March 2015.
9 of 13: Sunken garden and connecting wing. View east. March 2015.
10 of 13: Connecting wing, second floor. Escalator to third floor; door to Commerce Garage. View south. March 2015.
11 of 13: Connecting wing, third floor. Escalator to second floor; vestibule to Commerce Tower, National Bank of Commerce and Tower Garage. View northeast. March 2015.
12 of 13: Connecting wing, third floor. Entrance to National Bank of Commerce and Tower Garage. View southeast. March 2015.
13 of 13: Interconnecting wing, third floor. Entrance to National Bank of Commerce and Commerce Tower. View southwest. March 2015.

Figure Log:
Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1: Site Map. Source: Google Earth 2015.
Figure 2: Contextual Map. Source: ArcGIS 2013.
Figure 3: Photo Map, exterior.
Figure 4: Photo Map, building connection.
Figure 5: Site Plan of Contributing and Non-contributing Resources.
Figure 6: Diagram of building connections (1).
Figure 7: Diagram of building connections (2).
Figure 8: Historic Photo, National Bank of Commerce Building, 1928. Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
Figure 9: Sanborn Map, 1951.
Figure 10: Commerce Garage, sign for historic entrance to National Bank of Commerce Building. Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.

Figure 11: Commerce Garage, historic entrance to National Bank of Commerce Building. Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.
Figure 12: Location of parking facilities in downtown Kansas City, 1937. Dashed lines indicated facilities built before 1930; solid boxes indicate facilities built after 1930. Source: Kansas City Public Affairs: Downtown Parking, No. 731.
Figure 13: Historic Photo, Commerce Garage, 1941. Source: Wilborn and Associates, Photography, Kansas City, Missouri.
Figure 14: Commerce Garage, historic raised area for car wash. Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.
Figure 15: Historic Photo, Commerce Garage and National Bank of Commerce Building, c. 1952. Source: "Commerce Auto Bank," brochure. Vertical File, "Parking." Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
Figure 16: Plan of Commerce Auto Bank, c. 1952. Source: "Commerce Auto Bank," brochure. Vertical File, "Parking." Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
Figure 17: Historic photograph of Commerce Tower, c. 1965. Source: Wilborn and Associates, Photography, Kansas City, Missouri.
Figure 18: Historic bronze fountain in sunken garden, 2013. Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography.
Figure 19: Historic Commerce Garage rooftop athletic facilities, 2014. Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography.
Figure 20: Commerce Garage, fourth floor, view southwest. Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, October 2014.

MATERIALS (cont.)

walls: CONCRETE
GLASS
GRANITE
LIMESTONE
METAL

SUMMARY

The Commerce Trust Company Historic District (District) is located in the heart of downtown Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The District occupies one city block bounded by E. 9th Street on the north, Walnut Street on the east, E. 10th Street on the south, and Main Street on the west. Four buildings (one contributing, one non-contributing, and two previously-listed) and one previously-listed structure comprise the District (*Figures 3, 5*). Constructed between 1908 and 1999, the buildings connect directly to each other through intentionally-designed interior corridors. All are associated with the development of Commerce Trust Company, and each building in the District illustrates its respective era of construction. The National Bank of Commerce Building (1908) is a sixteen-story Beaux-Arts inspired three-part commercial building with brick cladding and terra cotta and granite ornament. Commerce Garage (1941, 1964) is a seven-story utilitarian Modern Movement parking garage clad with limestone and metal screens. Commerce Tower (1964) is a thirty-two story Miesian office tower with a concrete-clad steel structural system and glazed curtain walls. The previously listed structure is a sunken garden nominated in conjunction with Commerce Tower. Tower Garage (1999) is a seven-story steel and concrete parking garage with alternating columns of concrete panels and vertical metal screens on the exterior. Together the buildings form a cohesive District that illustrates the periodic, deliberate development of the Commerce Trust Company during the twentieth century. The District has experienced few changes since the period of significance and retains integrity. The period of significance begins in 1908 with the construction of the National Bank of Commerce Building and ends in 1965, the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have significance but no more specific date can be determined.

ELABORATION

SETTING

The District is located in the center of the downtown Kansas City urban core and is surrounded by mixed-use commercial, residential, and office buildings of various dates, forms, and styles (*Photos 6, 8*). It is near major transportation routes that create the downtown loop: Interstate 70 to the north and east; Interstate 35 to the north and west; and Interstate 670 to the south *(Figure 2)*. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority bus plaza occupies the corner lot immediately south and west of the District.

The District encompasses one city block bounded by E. 9th Street on the north, Walnut Street on the east, E. 10th Street on the south, and Main Street on the west (*Figure 1, 5*). The terrain slopes down sharply to the west. Public sidewalks line the perimeter of the District. Commerce Tower is set back approximately twenty-five feet from the sidewalk, fronted by a wide concrete plaza. All other buildings directly abut the public sidewalk. An alley runs north-south through the center of the District.

All four buildings connect at the center of the block through several historic passageways (*Figures 6, 7*). Due to the steeply sloping terrain of the District, the first story of the National Bank of Commerce Building and the Tower Garage are level with the third story of Commerce Tower and Commerce Garage (*Photos 3, 7*). The current connection is a slight modification of the historic connections. The five-story wing at the southeast corner of Commerce Tower is the primary component of the connection (*Photo 9*). A ramped corridor attached to the southwest corner of the wing accesses the second story of Commerce Garage

(*Photo 10, Figure 6*). An open escalator from the second story at the northwest corner of the wing connects to the first-story main lobby of Commerce Tower while doors on the north wall of the wing provide a direct connection to the offices within the tower (*Figure 6)*. Escalators from the second to the third story of the wing lead to an elevated corridor that spans the alley between Commerce Garage and National Bank of Commerce Building (*Photos 10, 11, Figure 7*). Historically, a skywalk spanned this alley when Commerce Garage was constructed to access the first story of National Bank of Commerce Building (*Figure 9*). The 1964 connector wing replaced this skywalk. An enclosed circulation core at the southwest corner of Tower Garage connects to the first story of the National Bank of Commerce Building and to the east side of the Commerce Tower wing, providing access to the third story of Commerce Tower (*Photos 12, 13, Figures 4, 7*).

Exterior skywalks connect the north side of Commerce Tower to the 811 Main Building across E. 9th Street (*Photo 7*) and the south side of the National Bank of Commerce Building to the non-historic Commerce Bank Building (1984) at 1000 Walnut across E. 10th Street (*Photo 3*). The skywalk at Commerce Tower was constructed concurrently with the building, but is not included in the individual nomination or the historic district nomination. Although it now connects with the District via a skywalk, the 811 Main Building was constructed in 1958 by a separate entity, and is not associated with the commercial development of Commerce Trust Company. The skywalk to the south was constructed concurrently with the building at 1000 Walnut in 1984. The non-historic skywalk extends southward from the historic corridor that spans the alley between National Bank of Commerce Building and Commerce Garage, to cross E. 10th Street. Although the building connects with the District and is associated with the Commerce Trust Company, these are separate buildings. The Commerce Bank Building at 1000 Walnut Street is less than fifty years old, and not enough time has passed to evaluate its architectural significance or to assess its impact on the commercial development of the Commerce Trust Company as a financial institution.

NATIONAL BANK OF COMMERCE BUILDING **NR Listed Building (#99000530)**
Jarvis Hunt (Architect) 1908
George A. Fuller & Company (Builder)

The National Bank of Commerce Building is a sixteen-story Beaux Arts style rectangular office building with a flat roof (*Photos 1, 3, 4, 5*). The primary (east) façade and south façade have a three-part vertical organization. Granite clads the three–story base and basement, stone clads the ten–story shaft and three–story capital. Both facades have the same ornament and cladding. Horizontal bands clad the end bays. A carved stone band defines the base of the capital beneath the fourteenth story. Continuous segmental arched stone frames surround each bay in the capital. An elaborate cornice with modillions and scrolled brackets caps the building.

Nine bays organize the east and west elevations; seven bays organize the south elevation; the north elevation is devoid of fenestration and ornament. On the east elevation, a recessed entrance fills three two-story arched openings in Bays 4-6. A granite balcony with heavy scrolled brackets spans the third story of these bays. A secondary entrance with an elaborate metal frame and canopy fills the first and second stories in Bay 9. Single windows fill the remaining bays on the first and second stories of each elevation. From the third through the sixteenth story, pairs of windows fill Bays 2-9 on the east elevation and Bays 2-6 on the south elevation. Single windows fill Bay 1 on the east elevation and Bays 1 and 7 on

the south elevation. The west elevation has a similar arrangement of pairs of windows in the center bays and single windows in the end bays. Except for the end bays, it is nearly devoid of ornament.

Openings in the west elevation at the first story access the corridor that spans the alley between this building and Commerce Garage. This corridor connects to the third story of the five-story wing at the southeast corner of Commerce Tower. The 1941 skywalk connecting the elevator lobby of National Bank of Commerce to the northeast corner of Commerce Garage was removed when the Commerce Tower connection was constructed.

The building was listed in the National Register and underwent a rehabilitation project using historic tax credits c. 1999. The scope of work focused primarily on the interior.

COMMERCE GARAGE **Contributing Building**
Keene & Simpson (Architect) 1941, 1964
Patti Construction Company (Builder)

The seven-story rectangular building rises from a concrete foundation *(Photo 1)*. The lot slopes sharply to the west, exposing the lower level on the west elevation. Commercial storefronts occupy the first story while the upper stories consist of six levels of parking with rooftop tennis courts and athletic facilities. The garage was constructed in two phases. The first five stories were constructed in 1941 and the top two stories and rooftop amenities were added in 1964 with the construction of Commerce Tower. The primary garage entrance faces south. The primary commercial storefront entrance faces west. A reinforced concrete structural grid defines the organization of the primary (south and west) elevations. Travertine and polished red granite panels clad the entire first story. Limestone panels cover the grid on the second through the fifth story. Metal screens clad the façade above.

South Elevation

The concrete structural grid creates five bays across the south elevation *(Photo 3)*. Bays 1 and 4 are narrower than Bays 2, 3, and 5. The grade rises sharply from west to east, shortening the visible wall of the first story. The west half of Bay 1 is open at the first story to accommodate the recessed west facade. The square concrete column at the corner is clad in red granite panels. Travertine panels, unbroken by fenestration, clad Bays 2 and 3. A band of granite panels spans the top of Bays 1-3. A former secondary entrance to the commercial space fills Bay 4 and rises slightly into the second story. Granite panels frame the recessed entrance. An opaque panel set in an aluminum frame fills the doorway. An aluminum-framed signboard pierces the granite frame east of the entrance. A large illuminated sign extends the length of the bay above the entrance. Bay 5 is below grade at this level.

The concrete structural grid creates five irregular bays. Original limestone panels clad the beams between each level and the columns at the east and west ends of the elevation. Three limestone bands ornament the corner columns at the second, third, and fourth stories. The concrete is exposed on the intermediate columns. Concrete and metal rails span the base of each bay. The rails are comprised of two continuous concrete bands supported by vertical metal posts, visible on the exterior. The remainder of each bay is open. The former entrance to the commercial space rises slightly into the second story of Bay 4. Opaque panels fill the top portion of this bay above the entrance. The main garage entrance fills all of Bay 5 at the second story. The columns on each side of this bay have rounded corners. They have limestone cladding

with three limestone bands and red granite bases. An extremely recessed metal overhead door accesses the garage.

A dense metal screen with regularly spaced vertical supports clads the sixth and seventh stories and continues above the roofline.

West Elevation

The concrete grid creates five bays across the west elevation *(Photo 2)*. Bays 1, 2 and 5 are narrower than Bays 3 and 4. The first story is at grade across the entire elevation. The façade of the first story is recessed from the rest of the elevation. The square concrete columns continue down from above, sheltering the sidewalk in front of the façade. Red granite panels clad the columns and the beam above. Aluminum framed storefront windows set on red granite knee walls fill each bay. The recessed entrance at the center of Bay 4 has paired automatic sliding aluminum doors with sidelights and a transom. Travertine panels are extant at the north end of Bay 3 and in the section immediately north of the entrance.

Bays 2-5 on the second through fifth stories of this elevation are similar to the south elevation. Limestone panels clad all of Bay 1. The same grouping of three limestone bands adorns the columns at each floor on each side of this bay. A slightly recessed vertical band of glass block, rising from the second to the fourth story, pierces the center of the bay. Above the glass block is a limestone panel with carved horizontal lines, broken by a solid central square. The limestone cladding ends abruptly above this panel, leaving a narrow space between the top of this bay and the sixth story. Bays 2-5 have the same open concrete frame with limestone spandrels and concrete rails.

The same metal screen as the south elevation clads the sixth and seventh stories and rises above the roofline on the west elevation.

North Elevation

Corrugated metal panels clad the upper stories of the north elevation (*Photo 9*). The exposed stone foundation of the basement level is integrated visually with the adjacent sunken garden (a structure previously listed as part of the Commerce Tower nomination). A five-story wing from the adjacent Commerce Tower connects to the east side of this elevation.

East Elevation

Limestone panels with a red granite base clad the east elevation at the second story (on grade). The upper stories abut the extended floor plate of the adjacent Commerce Trust Company building on the east.

A ramped enclosure at the northeast corner of the second story (first level of parking) connects to the south end of the five-story connector wing of Commerce Tower. The narrow pedestrian door at the third story (second level of parking) that historically accessed a skywalk that connected to the first story of National Bank of Commerce was infilled with brick when the skywalk was removed and the Commerce Tower connector constructed in 1964 *(Figure 11)*.

Interior and Roof

The interior of the garage features concrete floors, square concrete piers, and exposed brick and clay tile walls. A circulation core at the north end of the building provides pedestrian and vehicular access to all parking levels. A semi-circular ramp curves around the dual concrete stairwells and accesses each level (*Figure 20*). Parking stalls line the south, east, and west perimeter walls and form a center aisle. The historic circulation pattern, designed to facilitate access to the Auto Bank and encourage an orderly progression to the upper levels of parking, requires vehicles to drive on the left side of the path. Although an enclosed attendant's booth replaced the Auto Bank, installed in 1952 and removed at a later unknown date, the new enclosure occupies roughly the same location as the Auto Bank and requires that historic circulation pattern to be maintained. The space adjacent to the circulation core on floors two, three, and four was historically reserved for providing services such as fueling or washing the vehicle. The raised concrete platforms with sloped ends are extant on the second and fourth floors *(Figure 14)*.

A rooftop athletic facility was installed in 1964 in conjunction with the construction of Commerce Tower. The concrete floor of the rooftop athletic facility has a rubber coating to provide some cushion for users. While two tennis courts with painted lines occupy the majority of the space, one of the tennis courts is used as a basketball court and lines at the perimeter delineate a running track. The stair tower entrance from Commerce Garage and the entrance to National Bank of Commerce are historic access points (*Figure 19*).

COMMERCE TOWER **NR Listed Building (#14000141)**
Keene, Simpson & Murphy 1964

Commerce Tower is a thirty-two-story Miesian style office tower *(Photos 1, 5, 7, 8)*. A five-story wing, clad in concrete panels, projects from the south elevation of the tower *(Photo 9)*. It connects to Commerce Garage and the National Bank of Commerce Building. On the north elevation, a concrete-clad vestibule on a one-story granite block base connects to the skywalk. The rectangular tower has a concrete foundation and a flat roof. A concrete-clad steel structural grid creates seven bays on the east and west elevations and three bays on the north and south elevation. The first and second stories are slightly recessed from the façade. Red granite panels with aluminum-frame storefronts fill the first and second stories. Concrete panels clad the third story. Five narrow recessed openings, aligned with the fenestration above, pierce each panel. From the third story through the parapet, two narrow concrete mullions further divide each bay. Columns are held back from the ends of each elevation, creating open corners. Three-part aluminum frame windows fill each bay from the fourth through the thirtieth story. Metal screens clad the top two stories. On the north elevation, a boxed window projects from the center bay on the thirtieth story. No exterior alterations have occurred since the building was listed in the National Register in 2014.

SUNKEN GARDEN (COMMERCE TOWER) **NR Listed Structure (#14000141)**
1964

A sunken garden, a contributing structure included in the individual nomination for Commerce Tower, occupies an area on the west side of the District *(Photo 9).* It is enclosed by Commerce Tower on the north, the connecting wing on the east and Commerce Garage on the south. U-shaped concrete stairs

descend into the garden from the public sidewalk on the west. A geometric configuration of brick and concrete sidewalks, and landscaped areas fills the remaining portions of the garden floor. An original bronze fountain by renowned artist George Tsutakawa, surrounded by a raised concrete platform with stone aggregate, occupies the southeast corner of the space *(Figure 18*).

TOWER GARAGE **Non-Contributing Building**
BNIM Architects 1999

The seven-story sloped-floor parking garage has a concrete foundation and a flat roof (*Photos 5, 6*). Due to the slope of the grade and the garage, six levels are above grade at the Walnut Street entrance at the southeast corner while two levels are below grade, or at grade at the northwest corner of the building. A concrete structural grid creates six bays on the north elevation and eleven bays on the east and west elevations. Vertical concrete panels clad the exterior columns of the concrete structural grid. A geometric arrangement of raised and recessed concrete bars ornaments the columns. Screens of vertical cables clad the open space between the columns. Simple square concrete railings cap the bars at the seventh story. Dark-stained concrete panels, with scored horizontal lines clad the lower levels as the site slopes down from east to west. Narrow square concrete columns support a flat roof that rises above the top of the wall plane. A circulation tower rises in the northeast corner of the building.

On the north elevation, aluminum frame windows clad the open space in Bay 1. Between Bays 3 and 4, the wide square column base is exposed at the center of the concrete panel from the first to the second story. At the top story, the exposed column rises above the façade to support the roof, creating a large opening at the top story. An entrance with a narrow square concrete canopy pierces the wall between Bays 5 and 6. An open, rolling metal screen covers the entrance.

On the east elevation, wide square column bases are exposed at the center of each concrete panel from the first to the second story. At the top story, the exposed columns rise above the façade to support the open roof. Open garage entrances fill Bays 1, 2, 4, and 5 at the first story. Round concrete columns are exposed between Bays 1 and 2, and Bays 4 and 5. Square concrete canopies span the first story of these bays. Concrete planters project from the openings in Bays 3 and 7-10 at ground level. Aluminum frame windows clad the open space in Bay 11. A slightly recessed pedestrian entrance with a glazed aluminum frame door pierces this bay, north of the windows.

The south elevation abuts the adjacent National Bank of Commerce Building.

The west elevation faces the alley and has more utilitarian finishes. The lower levels are fully exposed. Bay 1 and the top story have the same concrete cladding and finishes as the north and east elevations. Bays 2-11 are more utilitarian with simple beige CMU cladding and the same vertical cables in the openings.

The circulation core at the southwest corner of the building accesses the east side of the second story of the Commerce Tower connector wing and the north end of the first-story corridor spanning the alley on the west side of National Bank of Commerce (*Figure 7, Photos 12, 13*).

INTEGRITY

The Commerce Trust Company Historic District has experienced few alterations since the period of significance (1908-1965). Constructed in multiple phases, it retains all aspects of integrity and clearly communicates its historic functions and its historic association with Commerce Trust Company. Still in its original location and setting in the central business district of downtown Kansas City, Missouri, the District is a deliberately designed unified complex that occupies a full city block among the surrounding high-rise commercial buildings of various dates and styles. Connections among the nominated buildings were established during the construction of each subsequent building. The design, materials, and workmanship of the District remain intact, representing the changing aesthetics and functional trends that characterized each period of construction. The Beaux Arts style National Bank of Commerce Building (1908) has a three-part façade organization that illustrates trends in skyscraper design from the early-twentieth century. Commerce Garage (1941, 1964), characterized by a façade-organizing structural grid, mesh-screen cladding, first floor commercial space, and simple geometric ornament, represents the stripped down aesthetic of the Streamlined Modern movement as applied to a utilitarian structure. Its historic modifications reflect the influences of the Modern Movement aesthetic introduced to the District with the construction of Commerce Tower. The building retains its multiple historic functions, including retail, parking, and recreation facilities, although the athletic facilities are currently used in a way that reflects contemporary athletic preferences. The minor changes necessary to accommodate these uses do not impact the integrity of the building. Commerce Tower (1964) is an excellent example of Miesian design, including its placement on the lot surrounded by a wide entrance plaza and adjacent sunken courtyard and its use of fenestration and curtainwall framing to emphasize the verticality of the building. Tower Garage (1999), though constructed outside the period of significance, clearly communicates its intended function while presenting a scale and façade that are compatible with the surrounding office buildings. Strong vertical elements diminish the horizontality of the long, relatively low building.

Alterations to the District are minimal and do not compromise its overall integrity. They are limited to the construction of Tower Garage, a non-contributing building that is compatible with the contributing and previously listed resources in the District in function, architectural form, and context, and alterations to the façade of Commerce Garage, which include the removal of some exterior limestone cladding and windows to comply with the ventilation requirements in updated building codes. While the Auto Bank features, such as the drive-through and walk-up teller windows added to the second story of Commerce Garage in 1952, were removed at an unknown date to restore much of the building's original parking configuration and to increase parking capacity, the historic traffic pattern around the Auto Bank and ramping system remain unchanged. The original raised concrete platforms designated for servicing cars are intact on two of the three floors on which they were constructed. The masonry opening that historically connected to the skywalk that led to National Bank of Commerce as well as the historic signage identifying this connection are extant. The masonry opening was infilled when the Commerce Tower connector wing was constructed in 1964. Other alterations include the installation of replacement windows on the upper stories of National Bank of Commerce Building in 2002 in conjunction with a historic tax credit rehabilitation that also restored interior spaces and finishes. These alterations were necessary to the continued functionality of the District. All of the buildings retain their historic functions, and the District clearly communicates associations with the Commerce Trust Company, specifically feelings about and associations with the evolution of the company as the largest bank in Kansas City and its impact on the commercial development of downtown Kansas City.

SUMMARY

The Commerce Trust Company Historic District (District) in Jackson County, Kansas City, Missouri, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. It is locally significant in the area of COMMERCE. The District is unique within the urban core as an expansive, unified complex of deliberately connected buildings that occupies an entire city block in the financial center of downtown Kansas City. The District includes two previously listed buildings, the National Bank of Commerce Building (1908) and Commerce Tower (1964), and one previously listed structure, a sunken garden (1964). The two remaining buildings located on the block, Commerce Garage (1941) and Tower Garage (1999), directly connect to the listed buildings via interior corridors. Together, the buildings form a unified complex that illustrates the commercial development of Commerce Trust Company during the first half of the twentieth century. While two of the buildings in the District are already listed, this nomination has been written to convey new information that demonstrates the significance of the entire Commerce Trust Company complex. Founded in 1865 as the Kansas City Savings Association, Commerce Trust Company quickly grew to become Kansas City's leading bank. Development of the District, the largest banking complex in Kansas City's urban core, showcases the continued growth and impact of the bank on downtown Kansas City. The National Bank of Commerce Building (1908) was constructed as the company merged with other local financial institutions to become the largest bank in the city. With increasing use of the automobile in the mid-twentieth century, Commerce Garage (1941) enhanced the viability of the bank and was one of the earliest parking garages in the city constructed specifically for a bank. The largest private office building in the state at the time of construction, Commerce Tower (1964) demonstrates a nationwide trend for high-rise office towers and showcases the bank's dedication to downtown revitalization. It likewise necessitated a two-story addition to Commerce Garage in 1964 to provide additional parking for customers and employees. The non-contributing Tower Garage (1999) illustrates the continued impact of the automobile as more parking was needed to serve the bank in the dense downtown setting. Growing and expanding to enhance the viability of the bank, the District is significant as a reflection of Commerce Trust Company's substantial commercial impact on Kansas City and its legacy as a highly successful financial institution. As the leading financial institution in the city throughout its history, Commerce Trust Company has been committed to operating within and supporting the central business district with a variety of services and amenities. Capital from Commerce Trust Company perpetually supported the growth of numerous businesses that contributed to the overall economic development of Kansas City. The period of significance begins in 1908 with the construction of the National Bank of Commerce Building and ends in 1965, the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have significance but no more specific date can be determined.

ELABORATION

Recently conducted research has uncovered that the significance of the Commerce Trust Company can be more readily conveyed by analyzing it as a unified complex. This nomination will add information to the record that has not been discussed in the individual nominations for Commerce Tower and the National Bank of Commerce Building. The National Bank of Commerce Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, nominated under Criteria A and C for Commerce and Architecture with a period

of significance ending in 1949[1]. Commerce Tower was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2014, nominated under Criterion C for Architecture with a period of significance ending in 1964. This nomination for the larger historic district justifies significance through 1965 under Criterion A for Commerce. An amendment to either individual nomination was not suitable due to the interconnected nature of the resources. This nomination presents the argument for the significance of the entire district as a unified assemblage of buildings associated with the Commerce Trust Company.

COMMERCE TRUST COMPANY

Kansas City's financial institutions grew with the city's development as a regional transportation, manufacturing, and industrial center in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Several banks were founded in the mid- to late-1800s including the First National Bank (1865), the Kansas City Stock Yards Bank (1884), and the Fidelity Trust Company (1899), among others. Commerce Trust Company began in 1865 when a group of individuals formed the Kansas City Savings Association. The bank grew steadily in the early years of operation. In 1882, President W.S. Woods reorganized the institution as the National Bank of Commerce. The bank continued to develop, and in 1906 Woods established the Commerce Trust Company as a separate institution. In 1908, he erected a new building at the northwest corner of 10th and Walnut Streets to house both institutions *(Figure 8)*. Designed by prominent Chicago architect Jarvis Hunt, the sixteen-story Beaux Arts building had brick cladding with granite and terra cotta details. The National Bank of Commerce Building was one of three skyscrapers erected that year, instantly becoming a prominent feature on the Kansas City skyline. Although housed in the same building, both of Woods' companies developed independently until 1921 when they merged to form the Commerce Trust Company, with a total capital of $6 million and deposits totaling $80,000,000.[2] The substantial total assets of Commerce Trust Company contrasted greatly with the assets of all of the other area banks, which advertised total capital averaging between $100,000 and $300,000, and total deposits of $7,000,000 or less.[3] In addition to the primary banking facility and associated executive offices for the Commerce companies, the upper floors of the building provided leasable office space for insurance companies, investment companies, and lawyers.

As was common during this era of wild economic cycles, financial institutions that sought to project an image of stability and security constructed new buildings to reassure existing customers and attract new patrons. Both large and small banks in Kansas City established headquarters in the downtown financial center, an area bounded by Grand Boulevard, 9th Street, Baltimore Street and 10th Street. The National Bank of Commerce Building is an early component situated at the heart of this financial core. Within these boundaries, First National Bank constructed a small, yet monumental three-story Neoclassical style edifice at W. 10th and Baltimore streets in 1904; New England Bank erected a fourteen-story Classical Revival building in 1907 at 21 W. 10th Street; Fidelity Trust Company erected a thirty-five story Art Deco building opposite the National Bank of Commerce at 911 Walnut Street in 1930-1932.[4] Other banks constructed buildings of similar styles and slightly smaller scale among these larger institutions or in areas

[1] Cydney Millstein. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "National Bank of Commerce Building." 1999.
[2] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped a city grow," (Kansas City: Commerce Bank of Kansas City, 1975), 9-10. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[3] *Kansas City Missouri City Directory and Business Catalog*, 1921, Gate City Directory Company. Ancestry.com (accessed 7 May 2015).
[4] All of these buildings are extant. The First National Bank Building and New England Bank Building were listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the West 9th Street- Baltimore Avenue Historic District (1976) and Boundary Increase I (2002), respectively. The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

just south of the financial district along Grand Boulevard, such as Gate City National Bank.[5] The Federal Reserve Bank constructed a twenty-one-story tower at 925 Grand Boulevard in 1921 as one of the twelve buildings constructed nationwide for the Federal Reserve system, solidifying the area as an important financial center serving the economic needs of individuals, local companies, and national corporations.[6] The Reserve Bank Organization Committee selected Kansas City to serve as the location for the 10th District bank, based on its central location, its status as a regional wholesale distribution center, and the crucial fact that Kansas City banks already served a territory roughly equivalent to the Federal Reserve's boundaries of the 10th District.[7] As the designated bank for the 10th District, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City required substantial financial support from member banks in the area, including the Commerce Trust Company. In turn, the Federal Reserve Bank provided safeguards for member banks, such as available cash reserves and the authority to issue currency.[8]

Like Commerce Trust Company, many of the city's other financial institutions expanded their facilities with additions and alterations, as needed to reflect mergers, to update the company image, or to increase amenities. The development of one company, Traders National Bank, closely parallels Commerce Trust Company, both in the evolution of the financial institution and its physical footprint, although the assets of Traders National Bank were substantially less than those of Commerce Trust Company. Founded in 1900 as Traders National Bank of Kansas City, the company merged with Gate City National Bank in 1930, and moved into the six-story Neoclassical building erected by Gate City National Bank in 1920. Traders National Bank erected a parking garage with an integrated Auto Bank for its customers in 1956, fifteen years after Commerce Trust Company constructed a garage, and a Modern Movement office tower in 1962 that directly connected to the garage. When the 1962 tower was complete, Traders National Bank moved all of its operations to the new facility and sold the older building. There are no physical connections between the 1920 building and the 1956/1962 garage and office building. The pneumatic tubes that historically connected the auto bank to a teller in the 1920 building have been removed.

Commerce Trust Company thrived during the 1920s under the direction of William Thornton Kemper, Sr. and, subsequently, his son, James M. Kemper, Sr. Ever innovative in its approach to business, Commerce Trust Company initiated several new programs, such as the Women's Department that instructed women on financial matters and helped them become familiar with banking. While there are no definitive statistics on how many individuals utilized this service, it was designed to provide an inviting environment where women could feel comfortable asking questions in an otherwise male-dominated industry. Commerce Trust Company also instituted the nation's first 24-hour transit department. Hailed by other banks, this innovative system processed checks one to three days faster than before and reduced check fraud. Decreasing the processing time prevented dishonest individuals from opening accounts at different banks and writing checks for more than the amount in any account.[9] Under the direction of the Kempers, Commerce Trust Company became the first business in Kansas City to purchase a metered mail machine in 1922 allowing the company to process mail even faster. Through its lending, the bank supported the overall development in Kansas City during this decade. Financial backing from Commerce

[5] Gate City National Bank Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.
[6] The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.
[7] "Kansas City's Argument for a Reserve Bank," *The Kansas Citian* (January 1914): 12-13.
[8] Jerome Thralls, "The New Bank's Value: Its Purposes, Procedure and its Relations to the Public and the Banks," *The Kansas Citian* (April 1914): 82-83.
[9] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped a city grow," 10.

Trust Company enabled J.C. Nichols to develop the Country Club Plaza commercial district and an extensive network of residential subdivisions.

Commerce Trust Company remained strong through the Great Depression. By 1933 it held $90 million in deposits and emerged from the lean years as Kansas City's largest bank.[10] Over the following decades, Commerce Trust Company provided capital or financial advice to numerous major businesses in Kansas City, the inevitable result of being the local bank with the greatest total resources.[11] Commerce Trust Company offered correspondence services to customers in smaller communities outside of Kansas City where the local bank was not equipped to handle large transactions or business loans. The size and stability of Commerce Trust Company as well as its innovative systems helped to grow its customer base and to promote the company's policies and procedures designed to accommodate a wide variety of financial needs.

Celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1940, Commerce Trust Company held $184 million in deposits and $196 million in total resources. Newspapers such as *The Kansas City Star* described Commerce Trust Company as Kansas City's largest bank and as the largest bank in the southwest region of the nation. It had five hundred employees with thirty-four executive staff members, including a female officer.[12] It held over $12 million in capital, surplus, and undivided profits in 1941. By comparison, Traders Gate City National Bank had a capital and surplus of only $650,000, and City National Bank and Trust Company, operating from 18th Street and Grand Avenue, had only $35 million in total resources.[13] The success of the bank and the prominence of the building on the Kansas City skyline maintained the popularity of the building as a desirable office location for tenants. In addition to housing the main banking lobby and executive offices, the leased portion of the National Bank of Commerce Building remained near full occupancy, with a predominance of lawyers, as well as real estate agencies, physicians, and life insurance companies.[14]

At a time when new suburban retail and commercial centers offered customers an abundance of free parking, adequate parking facilities became an important factor in maintaining commercially viable downtown districts.[15] The blocks immediately south of the National Bank of Commerce Building contained some of the city's largest department stores.[16] Operating from its prominent downtown location within the financial and retail center, Commerce Trust Company became active in downtown revitalization during the 1940s. The bank's first major investment in its own property during this decade was the construction of a new parking garage. Not only did this offer convenient parking for bank customers and employees of offices within the building, but it supported the redevelopment of the area. The construction of new parking facilities, such as Commerce Garage, was a common component of downtown revitalization efforts across the country. Commerce Garage provided long-term parking for employees working in the surrounding

[10] Ibid, 11.
[11] Ibid, 13.
[12] No title, *Kansas City Star,* November 20, 1940. Mounted Newspaper Clippings, 1900-1949 "Banks-Commerce Trust Co.," Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[13] Polk's Kansas City City Directory, 1941. Ancestry.com, (accessed 21 April 2015).
[14] Polk's Kansas City City Directory, 1940. Microfilm, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[15] Kelley, Robert K. "Parking Problem," *Kansas City Star,* December 7, 1941. Mounted Newspaper Clippings, 1900-1949 "Parking Problem," Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[16] Polk's Kansas City City Directory, 1941.

office buildings and short-term parking for patrons of nearby businesses, contributing to the effort of downtown businesses to compete with suburban developments.

Although it had a greater number of parking facilities than many cities, Kansas City, Missouri was not immune to the parking concerns that plagued the nation in the early twentieth-century. A special study conducted in 1930 analyzed downtown traffic and parking facilities. It determined that, with 6,969 garage spaces, the city offered adequate parking facilities near where most business activity occurred, although the report recommended providing parking within or immediately adjacent to office or retail buildings to improve convenience.[17] The relationship between Commerce Garage and the Commerce Trust Company is an excellent illustration of this proximal relationship. A skywalk on the second level of parking that connected with the first floor of the National Bank of Commerce provided a direct connection between the two buildings *(Figures 9-11)*.

By 1937, the number of parking facilities (garages and surface lots) in downtown Kansas City had expanded by forty-one percent since the 1930 study, offering off-street parking for 21,000 cars.[18] This was an adequate number of spaces to accommodate the daily flow of traffic, even during peak times. During the seven-year interval, four garages closed and eight were constructed, bringing the total number of garaged parking spaces to 8,286.[19] A map from this period shows that while there was ample parking at the perimeter of the downtown, it was largely absent from the central core near Main and 10th streets *(Figure 12)*.

By 1941 there were 135 parking lots and garages in downtown.[20] These facilities could accommodate 15,000 vehicles. An article from 1942 noted that workers drove approximately 50,000 cars into downtown each day, while shoppers brought in another 20,000 vehicles daily.[21] The construction of Commerce Garage in 1941 added 210 parking spaces in the heart of downtown and offered Commerce Trust Company customers a direct, convenient connection to the adjacent bank. The central location of the garage was also ideal for short-term parkers patronizing retail shops and businesses in the surrounding blocks.

A site adjacent to their headquarters at 10th and Walnut streets was a logical location for a new parking structure that would be easily accessible to bank customers and office workers. Before construction could begin, it was necessary to demolish a group of two- to four-story brick commercial buildings on the site. Commerce Trust Company commissioned the renowned Kansas City architectural firm of Keene and Simpson to design the parking garage. Patti Construction Company began work in 1940 and completed the building ten months later in 1941 *(Figure 13)*.[22] The cost of construction was $350,000.[23] Construction of Commerce Garage ended just as the nation's increased involvement in World War II instigated a ban on the use of construction materials, such as steel, for non-military projects.

[17] The Albert Russel Erskine Bureau, "Traffic Control Plan for Kansas City," (Kansas City, Missouri: Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City, 1930), 145, 171.
[18] Civic Research Institute, Kansas City Public Affairs: Downtown Parking, No. 731, (July 1, 1937).
[19] Civic Research Institute, Kansas City Public Affairs: More on Parking Facilities, No. 732, (July 8, 1937).
[20] Kelley.
[21] T.J. Seburn, "Kansas City Parking Meters," in American City, (March 1942), 84. On file at the Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[22] Lon Fanald, "Kansas City Bank Builds Parking Garage," The Bankers Magazine December 1941, 476.
[23] "Banks, Commerce Trust Co.- Commerce Garage," Kansas City Star, January 4, 1930. Mounted Newspaper Clippings, 1900-1949, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Multiple commercial spaces housed a variety of businesses, including a loan company, a dress shop, and a pharmacy on the west street level of the garage. The upper four floors contained parking and automobile-related services, such as a car wash *(Figure 14)*. A garage operator supervised the daily management of the parking garage and collected payments from the patrons.[24] There was also an office space and a restroom for the attendant along the south wall of the first parking level. Although most of these secondary services are no longer offered, physical evidence of them is extant on two of the three floors on which they were constructed. When the garage opened, Commerce Trust Company was one of only a handful of banks in the United States to have constructed a parking garage for its customers.[25] It connected to the main banking lobby and elevator lobby of the National Bank of Commerce Building, located across the alley to the east, via an enclosed ramp at the northeast corner of the third floor (second level of parking). The infilled entrance is still extant on the east wall of the garage, along with painted signage designed to direct patrons to the bank (*Figures 9-11*). Commerce Garage offered free parking for twenty minutes to individuals conducting bank business, with paid parking available after that time and to the general public.

After World War II, Commerce Trust Company continued to develop its innovative approach to bank management. It became the first bank in Kansas City to promote women to management positions when it named Emma Hall Assistant Vice President in 1945.[26] As president, James Kemper, Sr. initiated substantial improvements to his company's central offices, leading the charge of private investment in downtown property and reinforcing the company's dedication to the downtown economy.[27] The company renovated the lobby of the National Bank of Commerce Building in 1949. Businesses leasing offices on the upper floors still included many law firms, accountants, and life insurance companies.[28] In 1955, the year James Kemper Jr. was elected president of Commerce Trust Company, the bank installed Kansas City's first escalator.[29]

In addition to enhancing the physical development of downtown Kansas City with substantial investments in its own properties and through its financial backing of projects undertaken by others developers, Commerce Trust Company provided critical economic support to several large, Kansas City-based companies that enabled them to grow into internationally prominent businesses. With a $5,000 loan from Commerce Trust Company in 1950, former salesman Ewing M. Kauffman started a pharmaceutical company that produced calcium tablets from oyster shells. Kauffman grew Marion Laboratories from a home-based basement operation into one of the nation's leading pharmaceutical companies. In 1993, the year prior to its merger with Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Marion Laboratories earned $930 million.[30] Trans World Airlines (TWA) relocated its headquarters from New York City to Kansas City in 1931, becoming the city's largest employer at the time. Critical to the growth of the airline in the late 1940s was the development of an airplane overhaul base in Platte County, north of Kansas City, on the site of what is

[24] Fanald, 476.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped the city grow," 17.
[27] The Downtown Committee was later known as the Downtown Redevelopment Corporation.
[28] Polk's Kansas City City Directory, 1950. Microfilm, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[29] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped the city grow," 14-15.
[30] "Marion Merrell Dow, Inc. History," *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol. 9 (St. James Press, 1994). http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/marion-merrell-dow-inc-history/ (accessed 7 May 2015).

now Kansas City International Airport. When East Coast investing firms refused to fund the project, Commerce Trust Company stepped in with financial backing.[31] The bank also provided Richard Bloch with both capital and financial advice for the expansion of his income tax service company in the 1950s.[32] That company, H&R Block, quickly became the nation's largest tax preparation firm. Numerous Kansas City entrepreneurs benefitted similarly from the financial support given by Commerce Trust Company throughout the period of significance.

The Commerce Trust Company again improved its facilities in the 1950s. Sanborn Maps show that by 1951 a three-story elevated wing had been constructed across the alley between the National Bank of Commerce Building and Commerce Garage.[33] The south façade of this wing incorporated decorative elements similar to those on the façade of the garage *(Figure 15)*. In addition to parking in the garage, beginning in 1952 patrons could avail themselves of banking services from the comfort of their car inside Commerce Garage (*Figures 15, 16)*. The Auto Bank, constructed that year on the first parking level, offered, according to a Commerce Trust Company promotional brochure, "the fastest, smoothest, most convenient drive-in service known to modern banking."[34] It had two teller windows that could handle simple drive-up operations, such as deposits, and a small lobby for simple transactions with walk-up customers.[35] The plan focused on moving customers quickly and easily through their transactions. Alternatively, a line of designated parking spaces at this level gave drivers the option of parking their vehicles and walking into the Auto Bank lobby for transactions at one of three teller windows. Construction of the Auto Bank illustrates a popular national trend that reflected the increased popularity of the automobile after World War II.[36] Filling stations were added to the garage around 1959, another amenity that illustrates how the company was attuned to the prevalent auto culture and intent on providing services above and beyond what other banks could provide.

In 1957, Commerce Trust Company was Kansas City's largest bank with over $36 million in capital, surplus and undivided profits.[37] In addition to serving as president of Commerce Trust Company, James Kemper, Jr. was active in the Downtown Council.[38] Independent of Commerce Trust Company, the Downtown Council supported construction of one motel and two office buildings north of the Commerce property in the late 1950s.[39] Continuing his focus on downtown revitalization, Kemper hoped that a new building for Commerce Trust Company would attract large companies with a national presence to Kansas City. Around 1958, the Board of Directors of Commerce Trust Company conceived of a modern office tower as a way to promote their bank as well as the city. With capital funds over $47 million and $500 million in total resources in 1960, Commerce Trust Company was in a prime position to lead by example

[31] "New bank follows a rich history of growth," Kansas City Life Downtown, August 6, 1986, page 5. Mounted newspaper clippings, 1975-1995, "Banks-Kansas City-Commerce Bank."
[32] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped the city grow," 18-19.
[33] The purpose of this space is unclear. Openings in the west elevation of the National Bank of Commerce Building accessed the wing at each of the first three stories but there is no clear, visible connection to the garage at any story.
[34] "Commerce Auto Bank," brochure. Vertical File- Parking. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.
[35] These were removed at an unknown date.
[36] Homer L. Williams, *Building Type Basics for Banks and Financial Institutions*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 33.
[37] Polk's Kansas City City Directory, 1957. Ancestry.com, (accessed 21 April 2015).
[38] "Commerce Bank: The story of a bank that helped the city grow," 14.
[39] The Prom Motor Hotel at 6th and Main Street is no longer extant. The two office buildings, 811 Main Street, constructed in 1958 for AT&T Corporation, and Walnut Tower in the 700 block of Walnut Street are extant.

and construct a signature high-rise office tower.[40] Office space in the new building would reflect the modern banking program of the company. The thirty-two-story tower replaced a six-story commercial building and an eight-story parking garage to create over 540,000 square feet of office space in the heart of downtown. Commerce Trust Company wanted its new headquarters to be more than just an office building; it was a showcase for the latest innovations in technology, design, and functionality that would, according to Commerce Trust Company promotional literature, sustain its place as "the middle west's most distinguished office address."[41]

In 1960, Board Chairman James M. Kemper, Sr. again enlisted the services of architects Keene, Simpson and Murphy to design the new company headquarters. It was important to Commerce Trust Company that local firms were engaged to design their project. In addition to the architects, others involved included structural engineers Pfuhl & Stevson and Alfred Masterson and mechanical engineer W.L. Cassell.[42] Completed in 1964, Commerce Tower was another landmark on the Kansas City skyline (*Figure 17*). The Miesian style office tower featured a thirty-two story rectangular slab organized by a concrete structural grid, with banded glazing. Commerce Trust Company moved its headquarters from the National Bank of Commerce Building to the first five floors of Commerce Tower while retaining the formal banking lobby of the 1908 building for its historic function. The remaining floors of the tower were utilized as leasable office space organized around a unique system of moveable partitions and twelve elevators designed to regulate vertical circulation within the building. Commerce Trust Company commissioned artwork from several internationally famous artists, including a bronze sculpture for the sunken garden by George Tsutakawa and a large stoneware mural for the lobby by Swedish artist Carl Harry Stalhane, to enhance the design of the building and promote the prestige of the company (*Figure 18*). The first tenants moved into Commerce Tower in late 1964. By the following spring, eighty-two percent of the building's 542,800 square feet was leased, with another five percent pending.[43] A variety of large and small businesses leased office space in the building, including Aetna Casualty & Surety Company, the British Consulate, and Acme Reporting Company. [44]

One design feature of Commerce Tower was its connection to the adjacent parking facilities and the National Bank of Commerce Building. Promotional materials from the period highlight the five-story wing that acted as a link between Commerce Tower, National Bank of Commerce Building, and Commerce Garage. This "hub" at the core of the District became the main point of entry to each building, as described in Section 7. It likewise altered circulation patterns around the District. Individuals no longer had to use the primary entrances of National Bank of Commerce Building or Commerce Tower, but they could park in Commerce Garage, and walk directly to their destination without stepping foot outside.[45] The promotional literature also emphasized the building's close proximity to other downtown parking facilities that could be accessed via sheltered connections, such as skywalk and tunnels.[46]

[40] Elizabeth, Rosin, Rachel Nugent and Lauren Rieke, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Commerce Tower," (Kansas City, 2013), 11-12.
[41] *Commerce Towers: In the Heart of Kansas City's Financial District*, (Kansas City, Missouri: Commerce Trust Company). Missouri Valley Special Collections, Vertical File "Buildings- Commerce Tower."
[42] Rosin, et. al, 12.
[43] Rosin, et. al, 13-14.
[44] "Space in Tower is 80 Per Cent Rented," *Kansas City Star*, March 21, 1965. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Vertical File "Buildings- Commerce Towers."
[45] David, Wilkinson, "How Talent on the National Scale Was Recruited to Create Tower," *Kansas City Star*, March 21, 1965. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Mounted Newspaper Clippings, 1950-1970, "Commerce Tower."
[46] *Welcome to Commerce Tower*, (Kansas City: Commerce Trust Company, 1964).

Parking at Commerce Garage remained an amenity significant to the functionality of the Commerce Trust Company complex. To further improve access to parking within its growing banking district, the Commerce Trust Company commissioned Keene, Simpson and Murphy to design a two-story addition to the parking garage. The added levels nearly doubled its capacity from 210 vehicles to 400 vehicles. The proximity of these additional spaces to the new office tower, coupled with the auto service amenities provided on the lower levels, illustrated the commitment of Commerce Trust Company to investing in its downtown property to support its commercial function. Other modifications, including re-cladding the first-story storefronts in red marble panels and wrapping the two added stories of the garage in a metal screen evocative of the screen at the top levels of Commerce Tower, visually tied the two buildings together to communicate the property's new status as a unified commercial complex.

The expanded garage was also designed to offer additional amenities to tenants in the tower. The Tower Tennis Club, comprised initially of a group of sixty downtown businessmen, developed the roof of the garage with two full-sized tennis courts and associated landscaping. The members had access to a new locker room constructed specifically for their use in the adjacent Commerce Trust Company building.[47] Architects extended the mesh screen twelve feet above the roof level in order to block any errant tennis balls from flying into the street. Lights were installed for night games.[48]

Commerce Trust Company expanded in the latter half of the 1960s. After becoming chairman of the company in 1964, James Kemper, Jr. took steps to organize Commerce Bancshares, Inc. in 1966. The new holding company, a separate entity from Commerce Trust Company, could acquire other Missouri banks as affiliates, bypassing Missouri's ban on branch banking. This impacted banking across the state by bringing modern banking concepts, such as trust services, to new towns. In 1967, Commerce Trust Company was the third largest bank in the state with over $500 million in resources.[49]

The company prospered through many changes in the following decades. P.V. Miller was elected bank president in 1976. Warren Weaver became president in 1983. Offices in Commerce Tower and the National Bank of Commerce Building remained at nearly full occupancy during the 1970s and 1980s. A number of lawyers, insurance agencies and real estate companies occupied the building, including the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the US. Several Kansas City banks, including Commerce Trust Company, merged into the Commerce Bank of Kansas City in 1983. Commerce Bancshares continued to operate as a separate holding company for over thirty banks.[50] In 1984, Commerce Bank of Kansas City, working with Tower Properties, a separate entity established by the bank to operate as its developer and leasing agent, constructed an office tower and banking headquarters south of the District across E. 10th Street at 1000 Walnut.[51] While Commerce Bank of Kansas City vacated the existing headquarters in Commerce Tower, it retained the main banking lobby in the National Bank of Commerce Building for its

[47] "Tennis Six Floors Up," Kansas City Star, July 4, 1965, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Mounted Newspaper Clippings, 1950-1970, "Commerce Towers."
[48] Ibid.
[49] Timothy William Hubbard, and Lewis E. Davids, *Banking in mid-America: a history of Missouri's banks*, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1969), 87, 151.
[50] Ben B. Schifman, "Commerce Bancshares Slips On Decline in Interest Income," *Kansas City Times*, April 20, 1976, page 15. Mounted newspaper clippings, 1975-1995, "Banks-Kansas City-Commerce Bank."
[51] This building is less than fifty years old and although it is associated with the historic context of the District, not enough time has passed to evaluate its impact on the development of Commerce Trust Company.

historic purpose. Vacancy rates at the Tower increased when the bank moved from the building. When completed in 1986, the Commerce Bank Building connected to the National Bank of Commerce Building via a skywalk over East 10th Street attached to the historic three-story wing above the alley. In 1986, the Commerce Bank of Kansas City held nearly $5 billion in assets.[52]

By the late 1990s, the District was again in need of additional parking facilities. Tower Properties constructed a parking garage at the northeast corner of the District in 1999. The seven-story parking garage, designed by BNIM Architects, adjoined Commerce Tower and the National Bank of Commerce building at the connecting wing. It directly accessed the National Bank of Commerce on the south elevation of the garage. The construction of the garage completed the development of the District, a distinct block of buildings with direct connections that supported the development of Commerce Trust Company.

Today the banking complex of Commerce Trust Company includes the National Bank of Commerce Building, Commerce Bank Building, Tower Garage, and the 811 Main Building. The 811 Main Building was constructed in 1958 and first utilized by AT&T. The association with Commerce Trust Company began in the mid-1990s. The development of the District and its modern expansion into adjacent blocks illustrates the stability and success of the Commerce Trust Company as a leading financial institution in the city and its willingness to continue to invest in its downtown property.

Conclusion

The Commerce Trust Company Historic District is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for COMMERCE. The two office buildings and connected parking garages illustrate the development of Kansas City's leading financial institution as it created spaces that could appropriately accommodate and represent this status. The District is a unique example of a large, unified complex of connected buildings in the city's urban core. During its history, Commerce Trust Company, now operating as Commerce Bank of Kansas City, has consistently ranked as one of the largest banks in Kansas City and the state of Missouri. Financial backing offered by the bank contributed to the commercial development of the downtown core and supported businesses throughout Kansas City during the period of significance. The company also developed innovative services for Kansas City such as the Women's Program, the transit department, the Auto Bank, and recreational facilities for employees. The District illustrates the growth of Commerce Trust Company as it expanded its facilities in its downtown location. It constructed the distinct complex of buildings to support its financial services and provide patrons and employees with direct access to parking. Rather than move to the suburbs, as many companies did during this period, Commerce Trust Company remained committed to its downtown location in the heart of Kansas City, Missouri.

[52] "New bank follows a rich history of growth," Kansas City Life Downtown, August 6, 1986, page 5. Mounted newspaper clippings, 1975-1995, "Banks-Commerce Bancshares."

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Verbal Boundary Description

The District is bounded by East 9th Street on the north, Walnut Street on the east, East 10th Street on the south and Main Street on the west in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Boundary Justification

The District boundaries encompass four buildings and one structure that are associated with Commerce Trust Company and directly connect to each other via historic internal corridors. Exterior skywalks connect the north side of Commerce Tower to the 811 Main Building and the south side of the National Bank of Commerce Building to the 1984 Commerce Bank Building at 1000 Walnut. Similar skywalks are located throughout downtown Kansas City. As is common with other nominations, two buildings connected via a skywalk are regarded as separate buildings. The 811 Main Building was constructed in 1958 by a separate entity and was not associated with Commerce Trust Company during the period of significance, though Commerce Trust Company did utilize the building at a later date. The Commerce Bank Building is less than fifty years old. Although both are now associated with Commerce Trust Company, this is a modern affiliation. Not enough time has passed to assess the impact of either building on the commercial development of Commerce Trust Company. Thus, the National Register boundary excludes the skywalks and the buildings at 811 Main Street and 1000 Walnut Street while retaining the buildings originally and historically associated with the commercial development of the Commerce Trust Company.

Figure 1: Site Map, district boundary shown in white. *Source: Google Earth 2015.*

Figure 2: Contextual Map. *Source: ArcGIS 2013.*

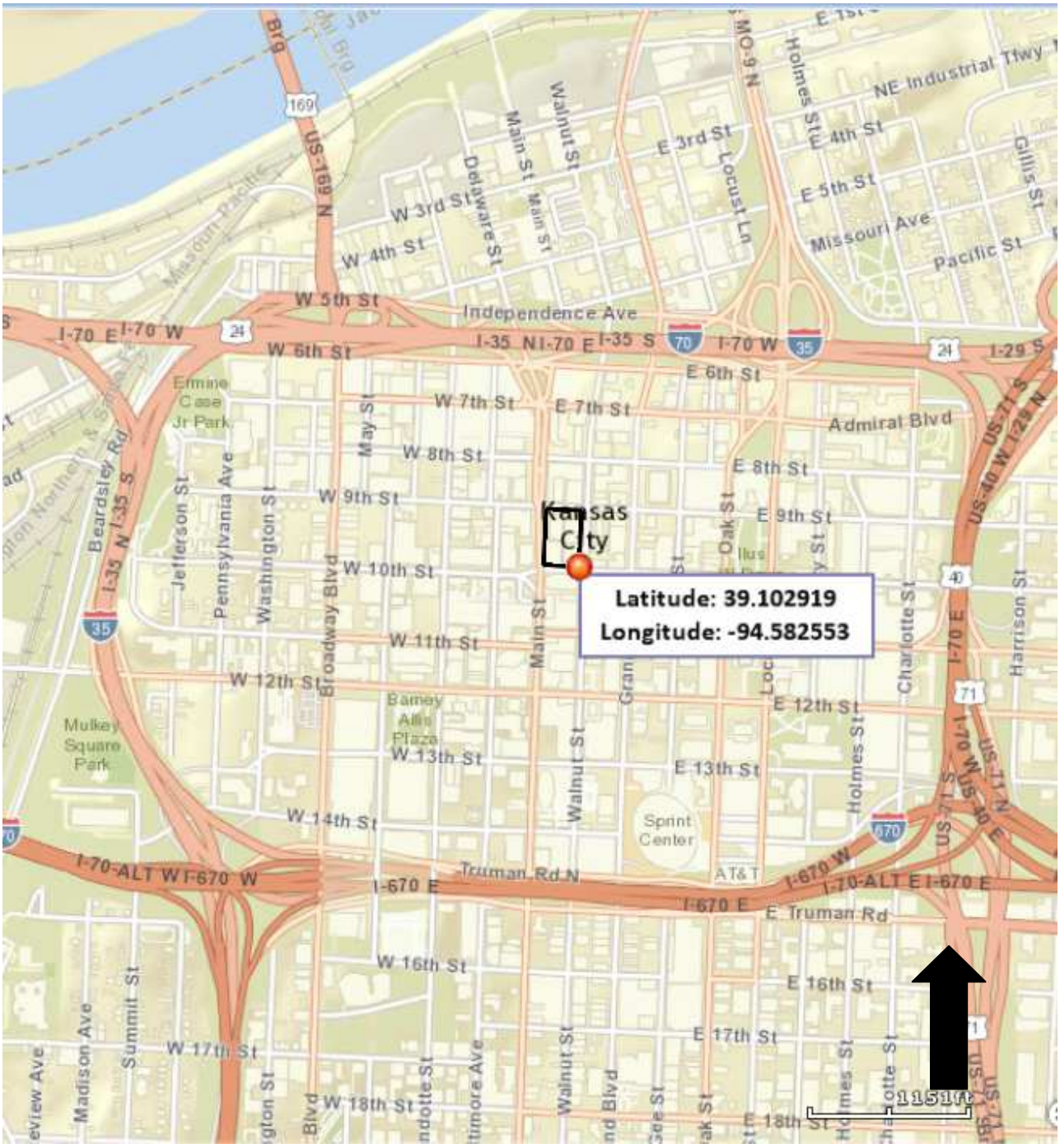

Figure 3: Photo Map, exterior.

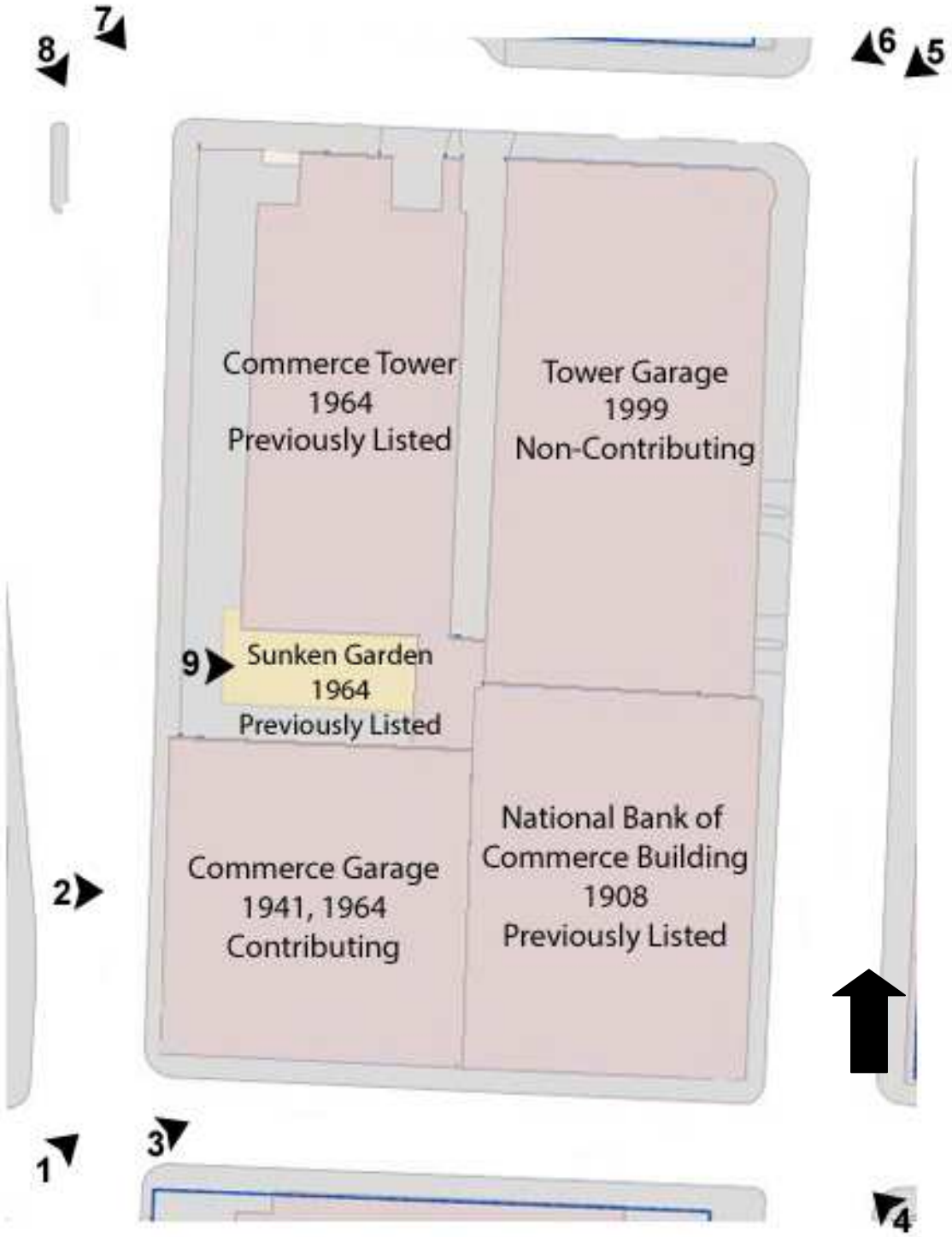

Figure 4: Photo Map, connecting wing.

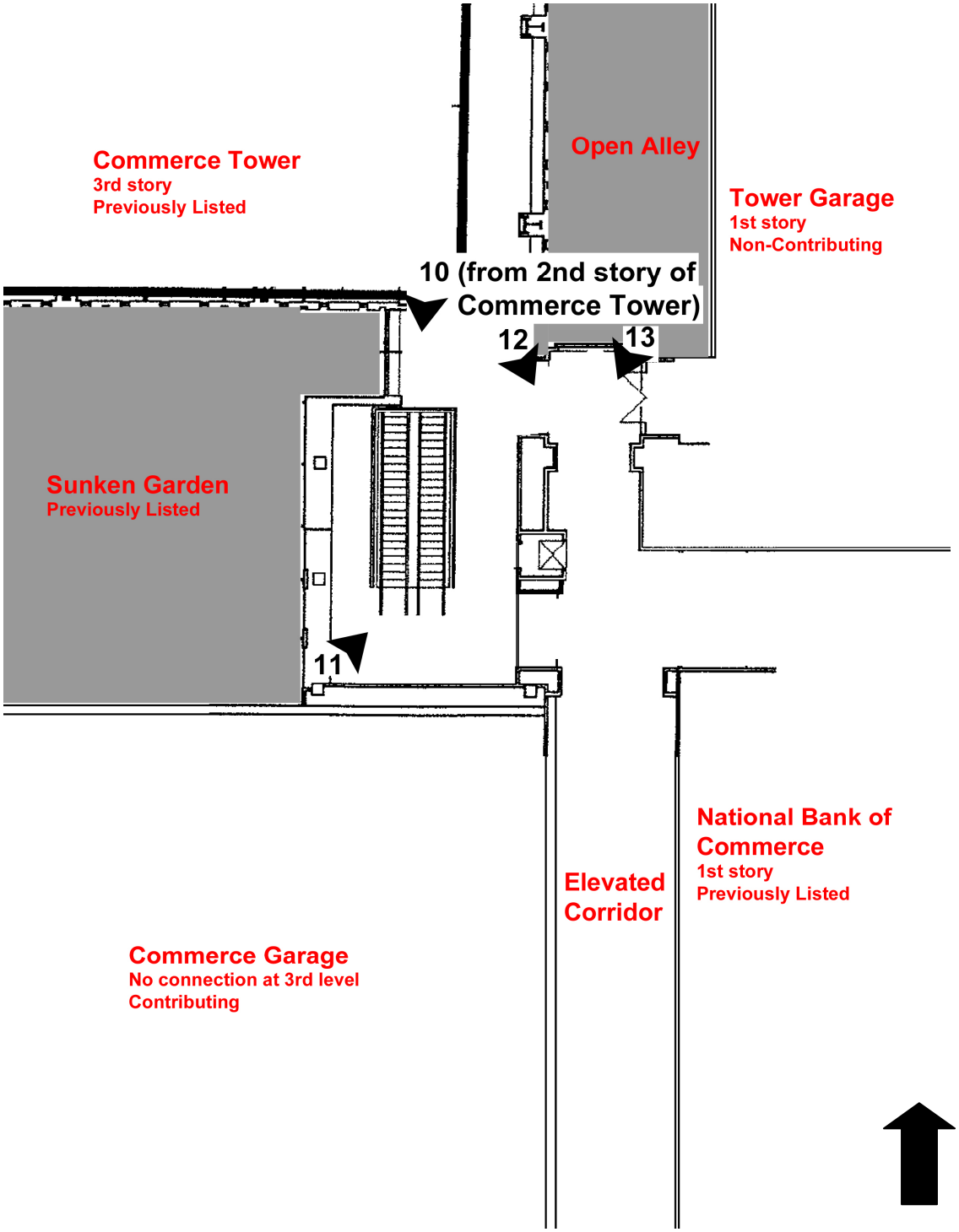

Figure 5: Site Plan of Contributing and Non-contributing Resources.

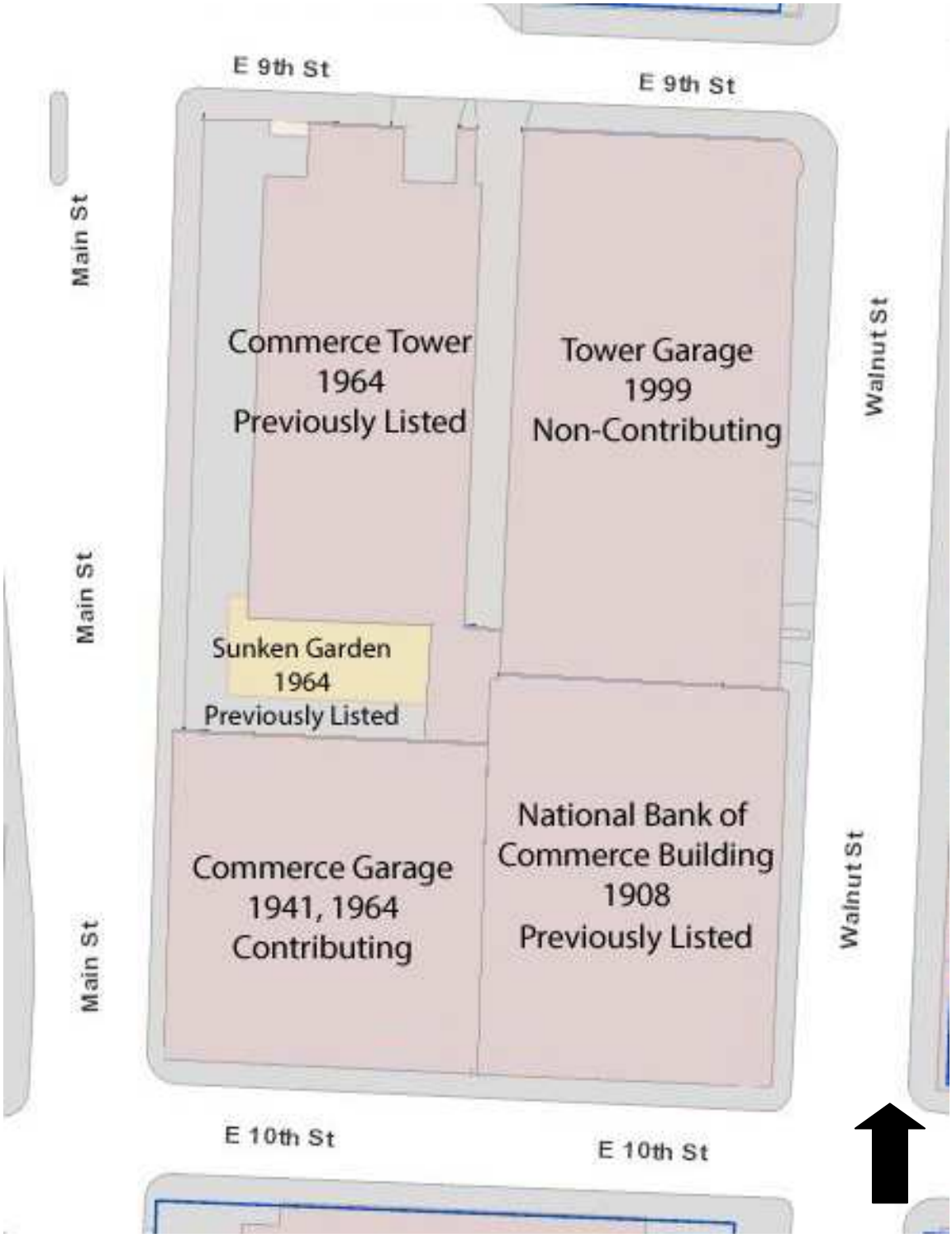

Figure 6: Diagram of building connections (1).

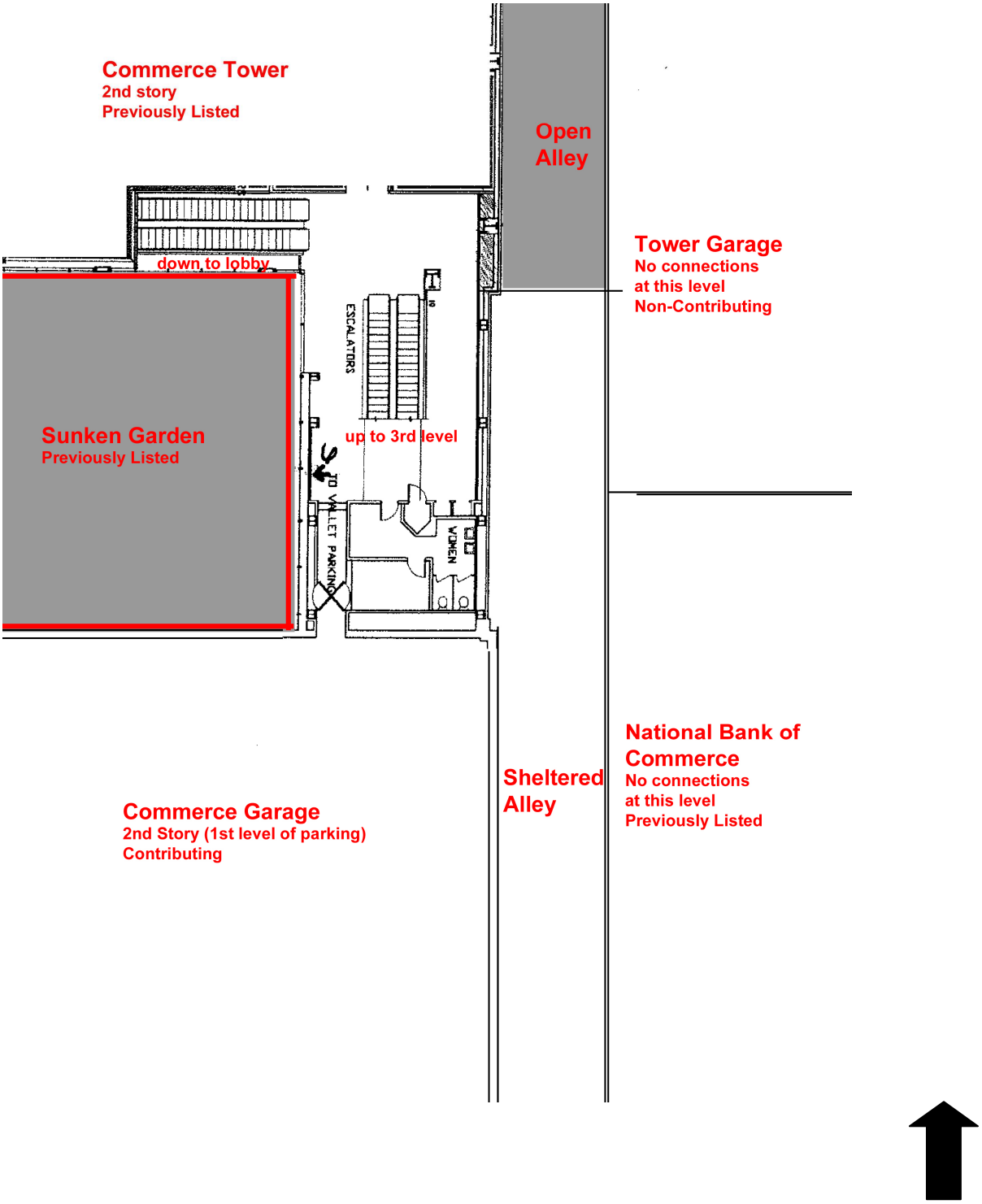

Figure 7: Diagram of building connections (2).

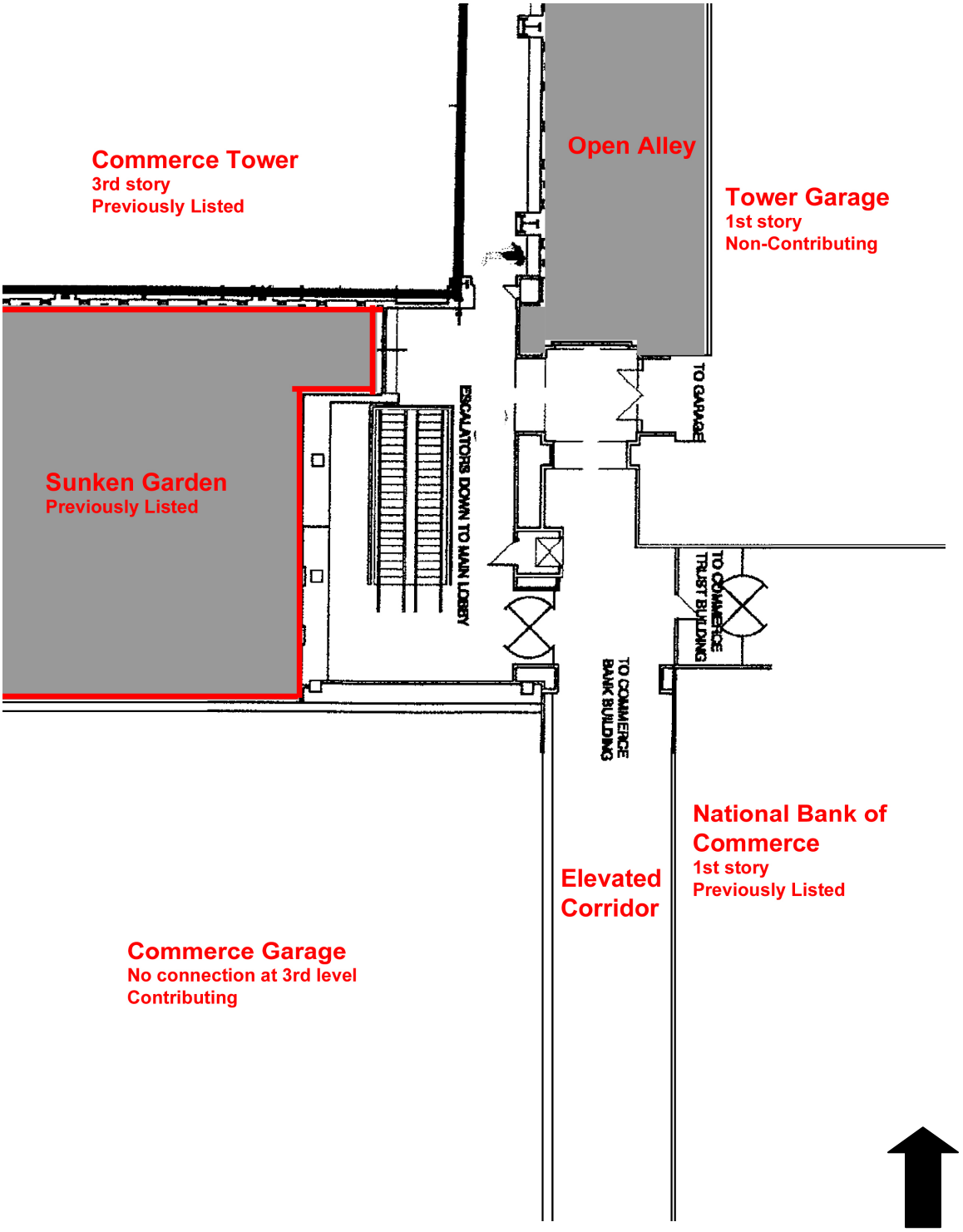

Figure 8: Historic Photo, National Bank of Commerce Building, 1928. *Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.*

Figure 9: Sanborn Fire and Insurance Map, 1951.

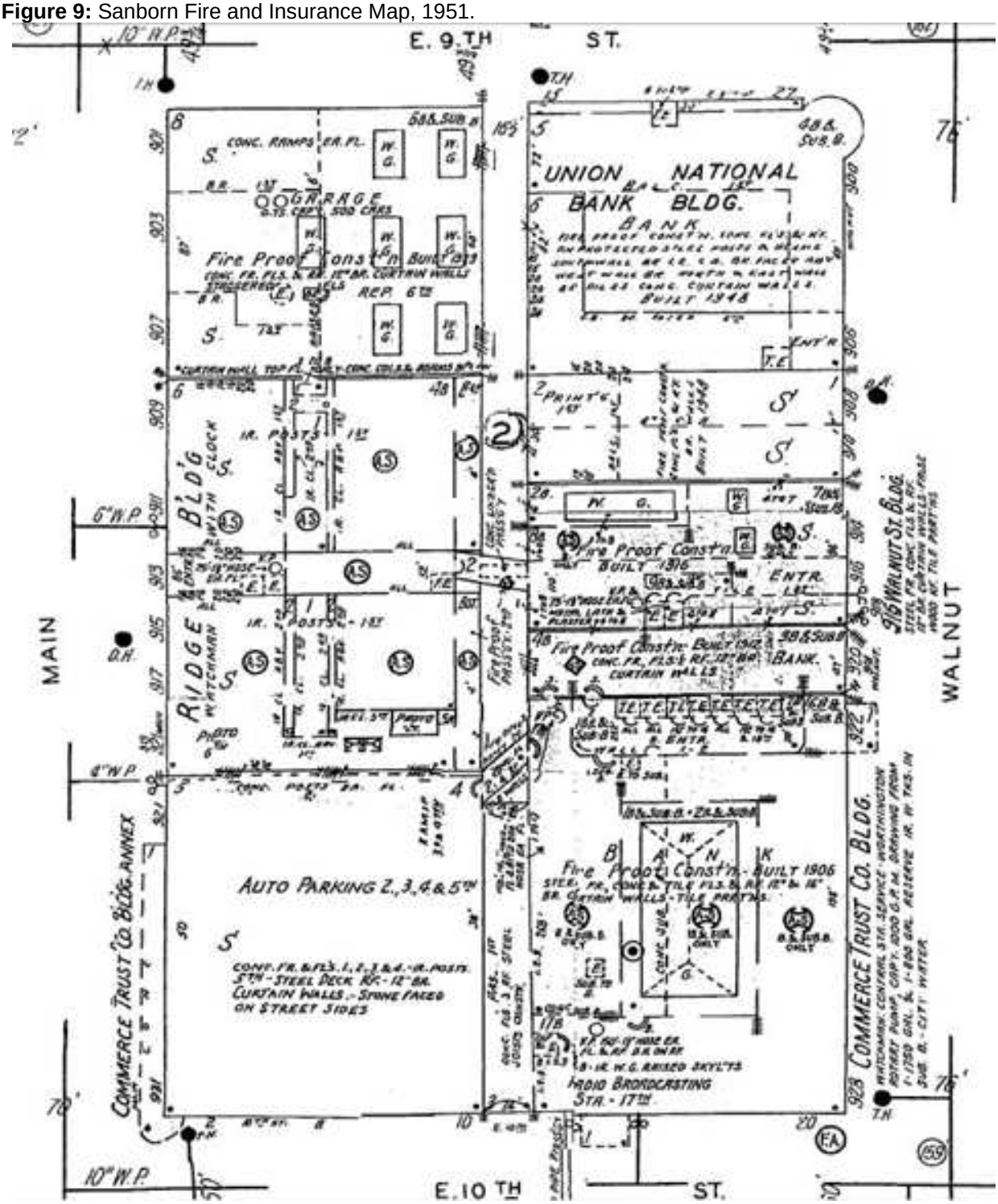

Figure 10: Commerce Garage, sign for historic entrance to National Bank of Commerce Building. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.*

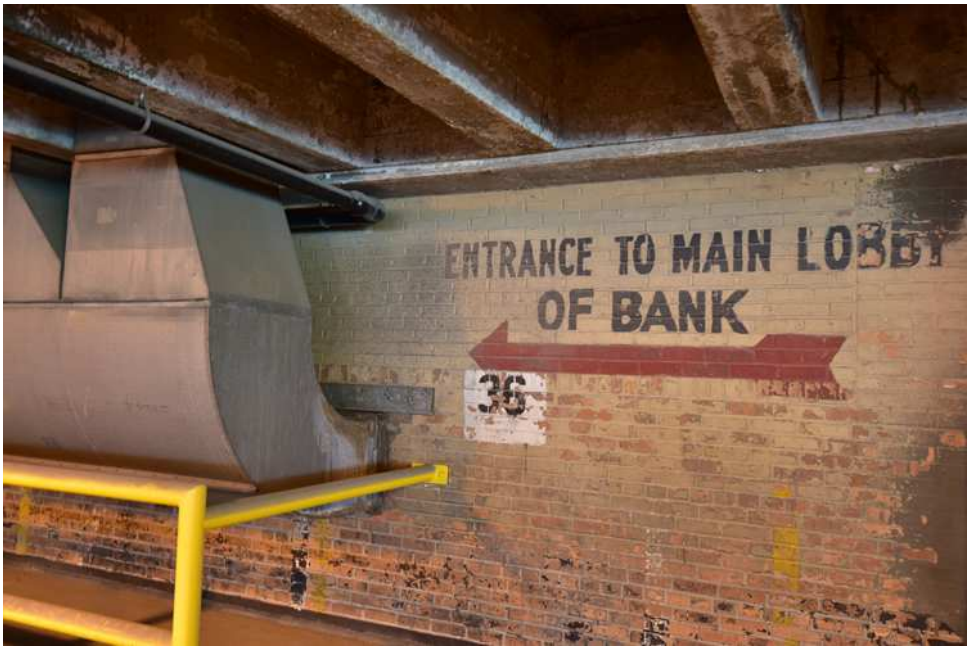

Figure 11: Commerce Garage, historic entrance to National Bank of Commerce Building. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.*

Figure 12: Location of parking facilities in downtown Kansas City, 1937. Dashed lines indicated facilities built before 1930; solid boxes indicate facilities built after 1930; Commerce Trust Company Historic District outline in the center. *Source: Kansas City Public Affairs: Downtown Parking, No. 731.*

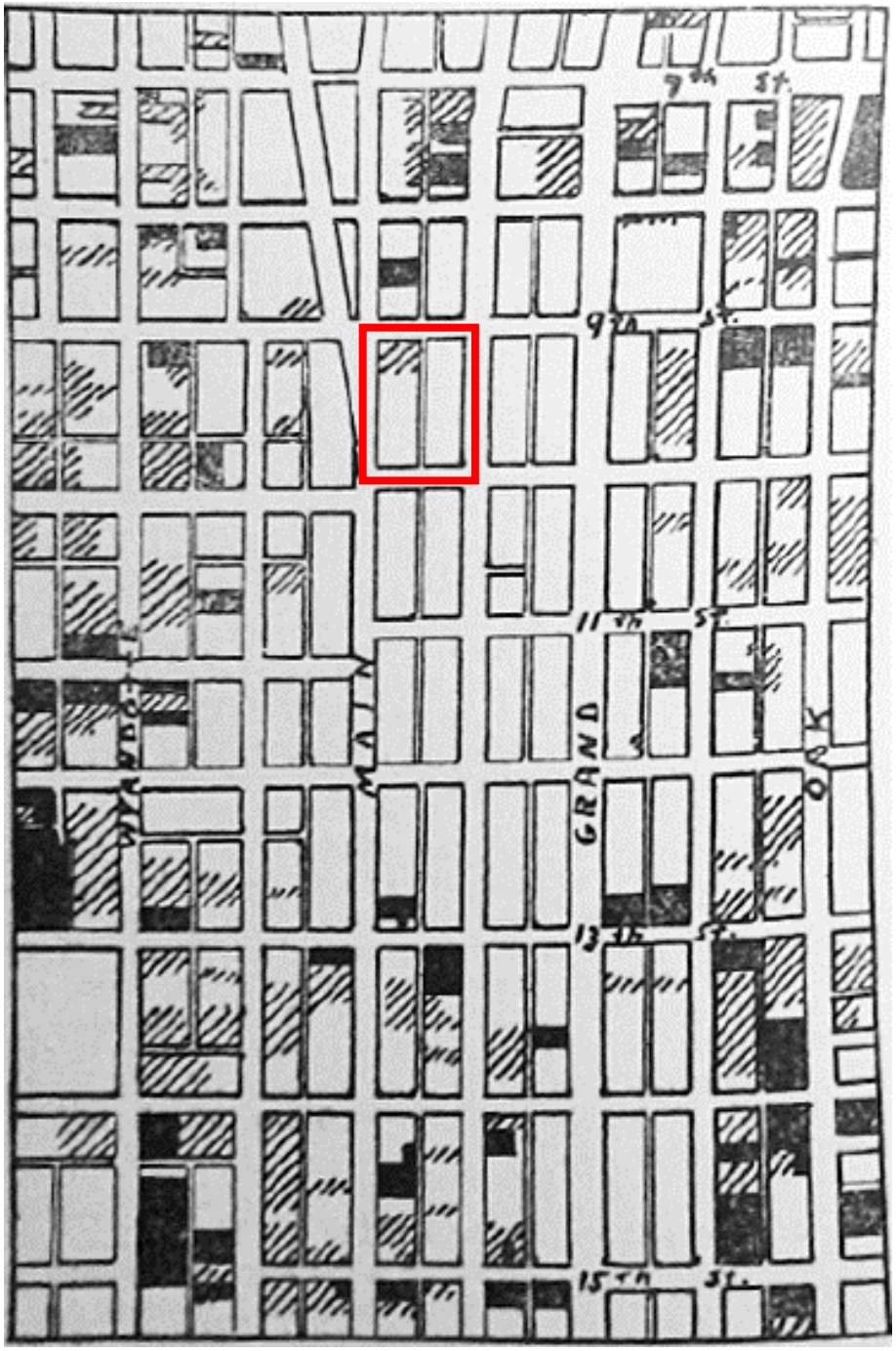

Figure 13: Historic Photo, Commerce Garage, 1941. *Source: Wilborn and Associates, Photography, Kansas City, Missouri.*

Figure 14: Commerce Garage, historic raised area for car wash. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, March 2015.*

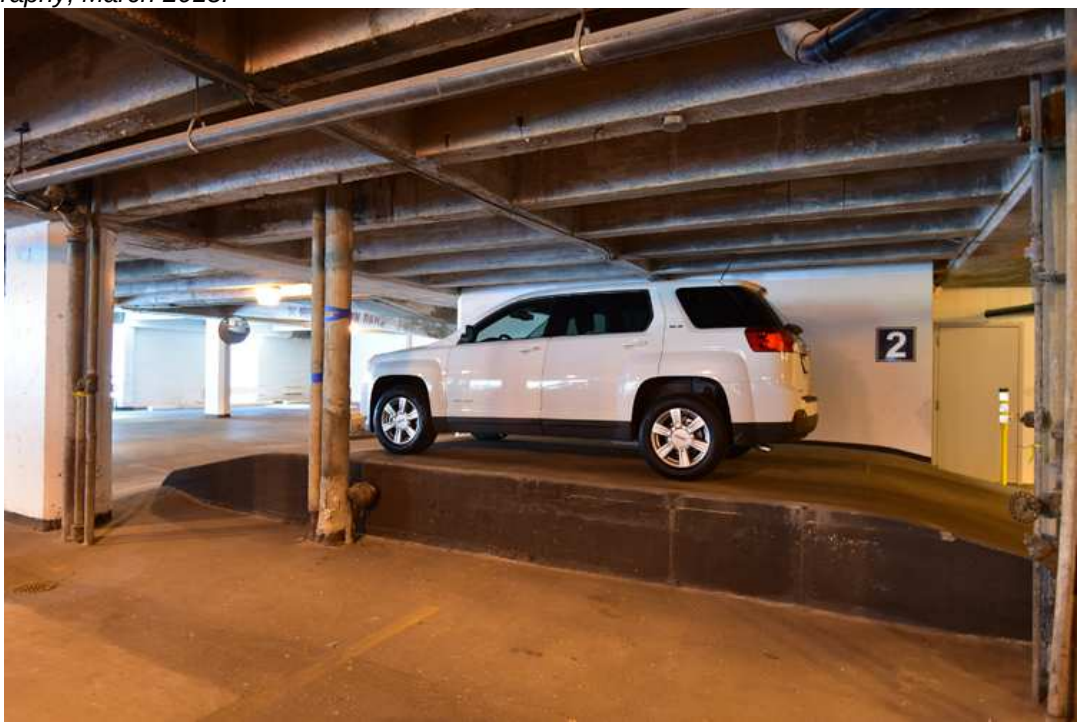

Figure 15: Historic Photo, Commerce Garage and National Bank of Commerce Building, c. 1952. *Source: "Commerce Auto Bank," brochure. Vertical File, "Parking." Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.*

Figure 16: Plan of Commerce Auto Bank, c. 1952. *Source: "Commerce Auto Bank," brochure. Vertical File, "Parking." Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.*

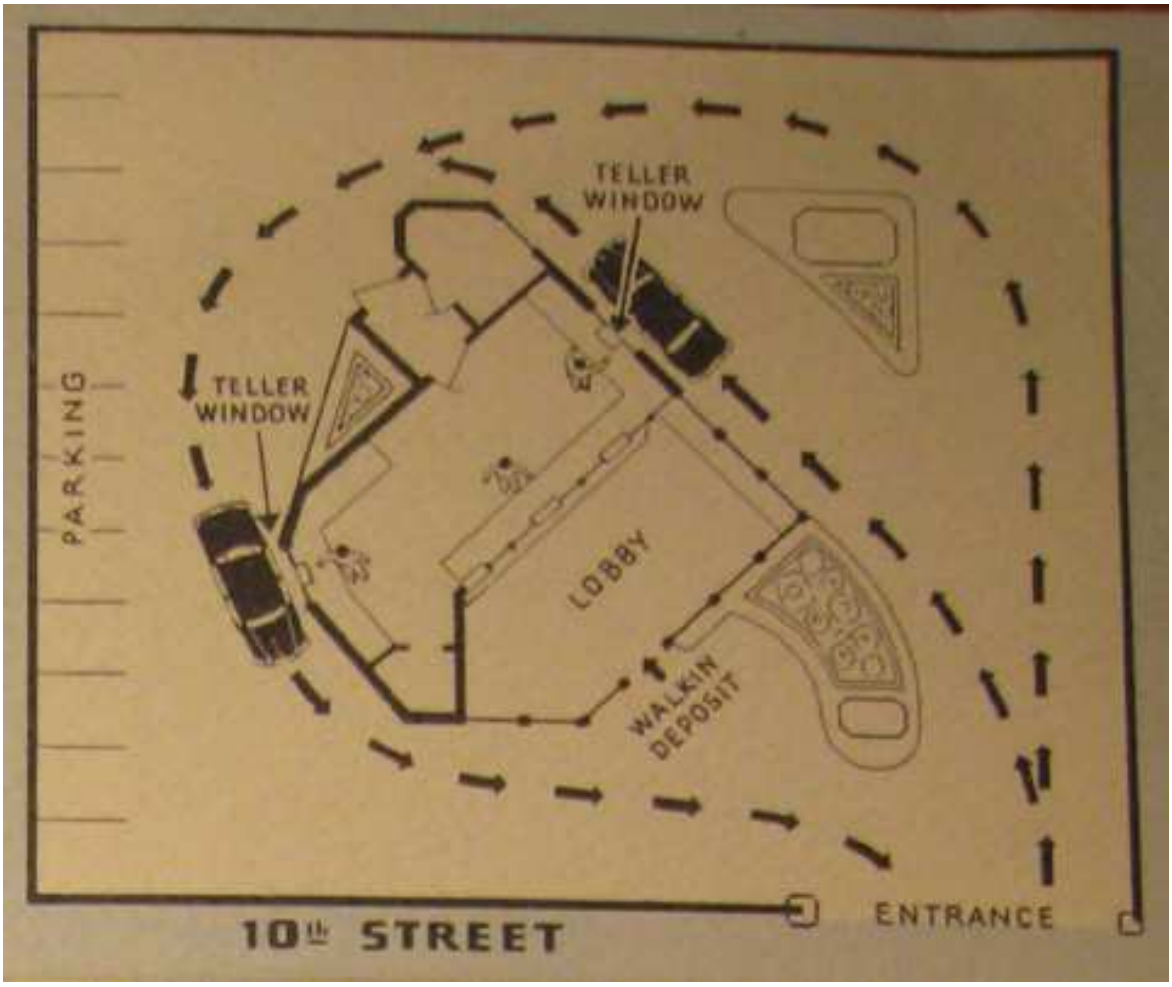

Figure 17: Historic photograph of Commerce Tower, c. 1965. *Source: Wilborn and Associates, Photography, Kansas City, Missouri.*

Figure 18: Historic bronze fountain in sunken garden, 2013. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography.*

Figure 19: Historic Commerce Garage rooftop athletic facilities, 2014. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography.*

Figure 20: Commerce Garage, fourth floor, view southwest. *Source: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, October 2014.*

Main St
CVS/pharmacy

CVS pharmacy
health
beauty
liquor
food
beverage
pharmacy
photo
liquor
OPEN
P
TENTH ST
GARAGE
ROAD
WORK

CVS/pharmacy
KISSICK

71 PROSPECT/
COMMERCE
TRUST COMPANY

9th St
Walnut St

9th St
Walnut St

Main St
9th St

9th St
W 9TH

NEO

COMMERCE
TRUST BUILDING
WALNUT STREET
LOBBY
COMMERCE GARAGE

Tower Garage
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