

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic N/A

and or common Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District

2. Location

street & number Mellon Square Vicinity N/A not for publication

city, town Pittsburgh N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Allegheny code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (Multiple)

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Allegheny County Office Building

street & number Ross Street

city, town Pittsburgh state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pittsburgh North of the River/
Allegheny County Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

Bureau for Historic Preservation/
date 1979-1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site		
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed				

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District consists of the major concentration of prominent commercial and institutional historic buildings in Pittsburgh's central business district. With a few exceptions, the buildings date from the 1870s through the 1930s, and represent the period of Pittsburgh's greatest urban growth. Of the district's twenty-six contributing properties, twenty are individually significant (individually listed or eligible for individual listing), indicating the district's historical and architectural prominence. Four are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The district also includes six non-contributing buildings within its boundaries.

The Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District is located in the northeastern section of downtown Pittsburgh. The irregular but roughly triangular boundaries encompass numerous buildings facing Grant Street, a major downtown boulevard, and include significant portions of Fifth, Oliver, Sixth, and Seventh Avenues, Smithfield Street, and William Penn Place. The district loosely focuses on Mellon Square, a square block of public open space. Streetscapes display one major building after the other, including major skyscrapers, but the sense of high density development fluctuates upon proximity to Grant Street and a portion of Seventh Avenue which have a wide and open character, Mellon Square, and the churchyard of Trinity Cathedral on Sixth Avenue.

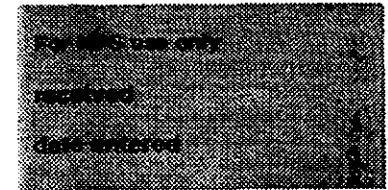
The district's open spaces are important both socially and urbanistically; but they also serve to heighten the district's visual drama and to showcase its architecture. The 360° view from Mellon Square, for instance, encompasses a broad sampling of downtown Pittsburgh architecture. The majority of the district's buildings are complementary in scale and prominence; each is assertive enough to hold its own among the others. Most of the buildings share a lightness and restraint which prevents them from being ponderous, despite their large sizes and close-set construction. They are primarily of light-hued stone and terra cotta; only occasionally of darker stone, red brick, or grayish metal. But despite their similarities, they contrast significantly in purpose, form, period, and style.

Aside from the late eighteenth century churchyard with its weathered stone markers, the district's oldest constructions are a cluster of tiny brick structures along Strawberry Way between Montour Way and William Penn Place. Built as housing in the mid-nineteenth century, these buildings now serve shops, offices, and a social club. They are chance survivors in the midst of later large-scale development which includes churches, another social club, banks, department stores, an arcade, and office buildings.

The present buildings of the district's four churches date from 1870 to 1925 and display four distinct modes of Gothic Revival design ranging from the fourteenth century Decorated Gothic of Trinity Cathedral, to the informal picturesque Gothic of First Lutheran, to the peculiarly flamboyant Gothic of First Presbyterian, to the veneer-like Gothic of Smithfield Congregational. The unique openwork aluminum spire of Smithfield Congregational ornaments the view from Mellon Square, while First Lutheran gives human scale to an overbuilt part of Grant Street. Trinity Cathedral and First Presbyterian flank the early churchyard and share a podium well above the Sixth Avenue street level.

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Continuation sheet

HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Across Sixth Avenue is the Duquesne Club. Here, a refined Romanesque facade of brown-stone complements and contrasts with the more exuberant Romanesque of the Granite Building, originally the German National Bank, next door. Both Victorian facades complement the stone churches opposite, creating an animated streetscape.

The district's other two banks are decidedly more dignified. Mellon Bank is a monumental Neo-Classical financial "temple," and the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland is a small but formal Art Deco pavilion. Neither, however, matches the austere New U.S. Post Office and Federal Courts Building for monumentality and formality. Though only eleven stories high, this massive building almost singlehandedly gives its part of Grant Street an urban canyon quality.

The district's single hotel, the William Penn Hotel, is a grand urban hotel of the 1910s and 1920s. It is a Renaissance Revival brick and terra cotta skyscraper, a block large, which acts to connect Grant Street and Mellon Square. The department stores--two present: Kaufmann's and Gimbels, and one former: McCreery's--are fairly typical early twentieth century urban structures, though undeniably impressive in their open terra cotta facades. Kaufmann's and Gimbels both have emphasized corners, with an ornate clock and a deeply recessed entry respectively. The Union Arcade of 1915 is less typical--office stories and a cross-shaped retail arcade with central rotunda within an elaborated Flemish Gothic shell--and also makes extensive use of terra cotta.

The oldest office building in the district is the Park Building of c. 1896 in the early skyscraper Commercial Style, distinguished by a sculptured frieze beneath the cornice. The Frick and Henry W. Oliver Buildings, similar early twentieth century office buildings, are Neo-Classical slab skyscrapers with spacious formal lobbies. The third generation of large office buildings consists of the thirty-five and forty-four story Koppers and Gulf Buildings which face each other at Seventh Avenue and Grant Street. These 1930s skyscrapers have setbacks, distinctive terminations, and Art Deco exterior and interior detailing.

A number of modern office buildings are non-contributing elements of the district. But one skyscraper of Pittsburgh's Renaissance era, the Alcoa Building of 1950-53, is significant. Although less than fifty years old, this structure is distinguished by its elegant design and its distinctive use of aluminum as a building material. Mellon Square, another product of the Renaissance era, dates only from 1955, but is a contributing element of the district. It is an excellent example of 1950s period design, and complements the surrounding buildings, in particular serving as an apt forecourt for the Alcoa Building.

Aside from three greatly altered non-contributing structures, and significant alterations of the Park Building and former McCreery's department store, exterior modifications have been minimal throughout the district. Many historic interiors also remain ranging from church naves to hotel public rooms to skyscraper lobbies. And despite alteration, the remaining arcade space and rotunda of the Union Arcade continue as one of Pittsburgh's most dramatic interiors.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1850-1935 **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District is significant as the foremost concentration of major late nineteenth and early twentieth century institutional and commercial buildings in Pittsburgh's central business district. Here are church, social club, bank, government, hotel, retail, and office buildings of pivotal importance to Pittsburgh's historic development and current health. The buildings represent important Pittsburgh persons, institutions, businesses, and corporations. They represent the work of important architects and possess significant architectural qualities. Many of the district's elements are of national, state, and local significance.

The district's origins date to the early years of development in the Pittsburgh region. The sites of three of the district's four churches--Trinity Cathedral, First Presbyterian, Smithfield Congregational--can be traced to land grants from the Penn family. Trinity's plot was first used as a burial ground, and the churchyard which survives adjacent to the Cathedral is one of Pittsburgh's oldest historic sites, with some graves dating from the late eighteenth century. The three early congregations are still the dominant religious institutions of downtown Pittsburgh.

Through the mid-nineteenth century, area land use was substantially residential. A tiny cluster of c. 1850 two- and three-story brick buildings remains within the district to represent this era.

The majority of the district, however, reflects the enormous changes which occurred in land use, density of development, and architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to Pittsburgh's rapid industrialization and urban growth. The existing churches all built anew during this period; and a proliferation of other new structures gradually displaced residential uses and determined the character of Pittsburgh's central business district.

One of the district's first new arrivals was the prestigious Duquesne Club, which located on Sixth Avenue in the 1870s. Generations of Pittsburgh financiers, merchants, and industrialists followed. They established themselves within the district, became successful businessmen, acted as pivotal agents of change, and likely joined the Duquesne Club.

The district acquired a number of banks, ranging from the German National Bank, which served a local ethnic population, to the Federal Reserve Bank of national scope. But it was Thomas Mellon, and his sons Andrew W. and Richard Beatty Mellon and grandson Richard King Mellon, who made banking a dominant Pittsburgh enterprise. T. Mellon & Sons, which opened a Smithfield Street office in 1870, grew to become Mellon Bank, the renowned banking concern which today has a major banking house and owns two other buildings in the Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District. The Mellon's considerable philanthropy is also represented in the district in Mellon Square, built with funds from Mellon foundations.

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Many small dry goods stores and other retail businesses located within the district. A few became long-standing Pittsburgh institutions, and a few grew into department stores. McCreery's and Kaufmann & Baer's built large early twentieth century terra cotta department store buildings in the district before going out of business. Kaufmann's department store located in the district in 1878 and soon became a major retail emporium. In later years, Edgar J. Kaufmann established the store's identity as Pittsburgh's premier retailer, and became a civic leader and noted patron of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Late nineteenth century industrial growth led to a great increase in blue-collar employment in the Pittsburgh region; but it also directly or indirectly created white-collar jobs-- jobs in industrial management, law, finance, and other fields. Office buildings were erected and raised to unprecedented heights, conclusively marking Pittsburgh's "downtown." And it was the industrialists themselves who were in the forefront of office building development for both speculative and corporate purposes.

The most prominent of the new buildings were developed within the boundaries of the Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District. Here the Carnegie Building--Pittsburgh's first steel-framed building--was built in 1893-95 as a memorial to Thomas M. Carnegie, a prominent industrialist and brother of Andrew Carnegie. The Carnegie Building has been demolished; Pittsburgh's oldest surviving steel-framed building is the Park Building of 1896, built by lesser-known steel industrialists D. E. and W. G. Park.

Here also was located the quadruple legacy of leading steel magnate Henry Clay Frick. The twenty-one story Frick Building of 1901 was the first of the giant slab skyscrapers in Pittsburgh. A powerful design with a steel frame wrapped in a severe Neo-Classical masonry exterior, the Frick Building eminently reflected the spirit of the time. It was promoted as the "World's Finest Office Building," and Frick himself occupied an office from which he could look out over surrounding blocks. Apparently, what he saw were opportunities for real estate development and architectural grandeur, for Frick went on to add the Frick Building Annex, develop retail and office space in the Union Arcade of 1915-17, and build the William Penn Hotel. Frick thus left his considerable mark with major buildings on three adjacent Grant Street properties.

The last of the steel industrialists' major constructions was the Henry W. Oliver Building, built by Oliver's estate in a manner similar to the Frick Building in 1908-10. Later office buildings were without dominant personal identities--as were many of a new generation of industrialists. The Koppers Building of 1927-29 and Gulf Building of 1929-32, for instance, were erected by and for corporate parents and named accordingly. The tall tower forms--the Gulf Building was the city's tallest building for many years--and the distinctive terminations which topped them--a chateau-like pavilion with copper roof at Koppers, a stepped pyramid with neon weather beacon in the corporate orange and blue at Gulf--fostered corporate identification.

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The district's modern office buildings also follow the corporate model. The Alcoa Building was built by a corporate parent which promoted its product by fabricating as much of its building as possible of aluminum. (The non-contributing U.S. Steel Building of 1951 also makes extensive use of the corporate product: steel.)

Pittsburgh's late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban growth resulted in clients who had architectural projects of scale and sophistication and had the will and ability to attract nationally prominent architects to complete them. Thus it was that George B. Post, deeply involved in early skyscraper design in New York, came to Pittsburgh to design the Park Building and its unusual frieze of crouching telamones. The prominent Chicago firm of D. H. Burnham & Company included four district buildings--Frick Building and Annex, Henry W. Oliver Building, and McCreery's Department Store--among its multiple Pittsburgh commissions. The Frick and Oliver Buildings are extremely polished designs which demonstrate mastery of both Neo-Classical styling and office building form and construction. Burnham's successor firm, Graham, Anderson, Probst & White of Chicago, contributed the Koppers Building.

The highly respected New York firm of Trowbridge and Livingston, perhaps best known for New York's Bankers' Trust Building, completed three major commissions in the district--Mellon Bank, Gulf Building, New U.S. Post Office and Federal Courts Building. And Harrison & Abramovitz, also of New York, were responsible for the Alcoa Building and a number of other Pittsburgh commissions both in and out of the district.

Years earlier, two of the churches attracted architects from other cities--Gordon Lloyd of Detroit at Trinity Cathedral and the somewhat better known T. P. Chandler of Philadelphia at First Presbyterian. But most of the district's architects who could not claim national significance were of substantial local importance.

Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, which, sans Longfellow, became Pittsburgh's most esteemed turn-of-the-century firm, began work in the district early in The Duquesne Club of 1889 and 1902. Frederick J. Osterling, a Pittsburgh architect of equal prominence, contributed an early (1890) part of the Bell Telephone Company Building, and a later tour-de-force in the Union Arcade, his firm's most distinguished work, replete with terra cotta ornamentation. Benno Janssen, with partners Abbott and later Cocken, attained his accustomed level of tasteful Eclecticism at the William Penn Hotel and Kaufmann's department store. Henry Hornbostel, with many important commissions including the main campus of Carnegie-Mellon University to his credit, contributed the district's most original work: Smithfield Congregational Church. It is faced in thin stone panels with inset Gothic tracery, and is topped by an openwork aluminum spire which represents the first (1926) major architectural use of aluminum.

Pittsburgh's "Renaissance" era of the 1950s was a time when public and private forces joined to renew large portions of downtown Pittsburgh. Much of the Renaissance construction took place outside the Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District. But the Alcoa Building and Mellon Square, located at the heart of the district, are the

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two most significant individual monuments of the widely-acclaimed Renaissance, and were pivotal to its success. In fact, while the land clearance and new construction principles of the Renaissance might today be questioned rather than praised for their impact on pre-existing structures, the Alcoa Building and Mellon Square remain as unquestionably positive contributions to downtown Pittsburgh.

The Alcoa Building is notable for its innovative use of aluminum. When built, it was the lightest skyscraper of its scale ever constructed and the first skyscraper with an aluminum curtain wall. Many of the building's mechanical systems and finishes also make use of aluminum. The building has received international attention for its construction technology. Mellon Square is the most architectonic of its generation of parking garage/public square projects (e.g. Union Square, San Francisco) which brought a new and functional form of open space to dense urban sites in American cities. It was a product of Mellon, Alcoa, U.S. Steel, and City interests. Together, the Alcoa Building and Mellon Square form an ensemble of high-quality early 1950s design, and represent a celebrated era of Pittsburgh's urban development. Pittsburgh's prominent men and corporations again took the initiative during this era, and together with Mayor David Lawrence attained an almost mythic stature. Their notable accomplishments, though relatively recent, deserve to be contributing elements of the Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District as much as the notable accomplishments of their predecessors.

The Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District then, is a district of independent physical statements which share a significance to the historical development of Pittsburgh and a boldness of architectural conception. The district and its component parts remain crucial to Pittsburgh's institutional and commercial well-being and the stability of its characteristic physical environment.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Allegheny County Survey.

Aluminum on the Skyline. Pittsburgh: Aluminum Company of America, n.d.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 26

Quadrangle name Pittsburgh East

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	17	5	8	15	0	12	0	4	4	7	6	7	1	2	5
Zone	Easting				Northing										

B

1	17	5	8	14	8	1	0	4	4	7	6	8	1	0	1
Zone	Easting				Northing										

C

1	17	5	8	14	8	0	0	4	4	7	7	0	1	3	1
Zone	Easting				Northing										

D

1	17	5	8	14	9	1	0	4	4	7	7	1	6	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

E

1	17	5	8	15	0	8	0	4	4	7	7	2	1	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

F

1	17	5	8	15	3	0	5	4	4	7	7	2	7	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

G

1	17	5	8	15	3	6	5	4	4	7	7	2	1	3	1
Zone	Easting				Northing										

H

1	17	5	8	15	2	1	0	4	4	7	7	0	9	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation Sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

state	code	county	code
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martin Aurand; Director, Preservation Research

organization Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation date 6/12/85

450 The Landmarks Building

street & number One Station Square

telephone 412/471-5808

city or town Pittsburgh

state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Dr. Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Mauro, John. "Magnificent Square in the Triangle," Charette, XXXV:12, December, 1955, pp. 13-16, 31.

Van Trump, James D. Life and Architecture in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1983.

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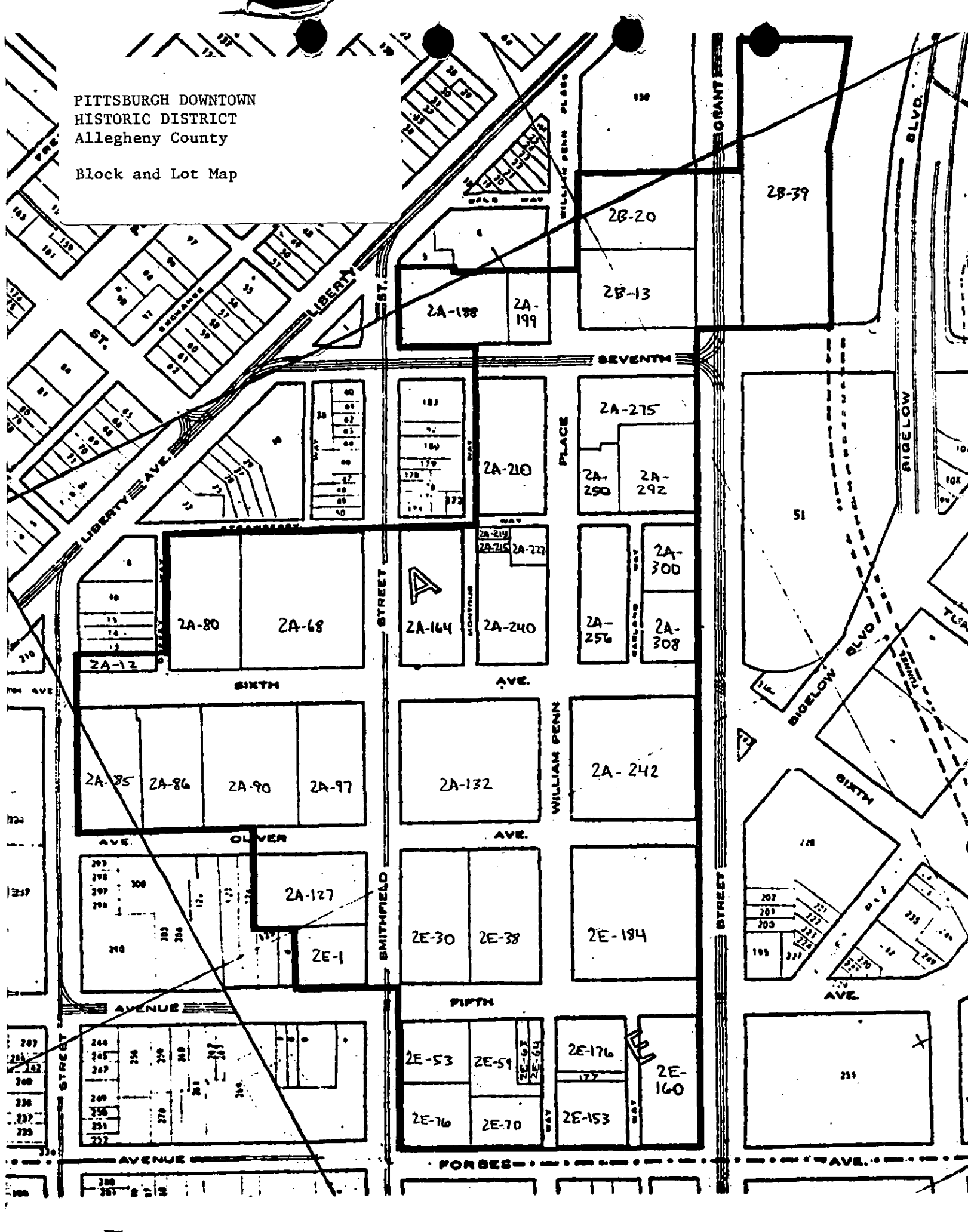
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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at a point at the north corner of Forbes Avenue and Grant Street, the boundary proceeds northwest to Smithfield Street. Turning northeast, it proceeds to a point at the east corner of Smithfield Street and Fifth Avenue, then turns northwest along Fifth Avenue to the northwest property line of block and lot 2E-1 where it turns northeast, northwest, and then northeast around 2A-1 and 127 and proceeds to a point on the northeast side of Oliver Avenue. There it turns northwest to Wood Street, proceeds northeast to the northeast property line of 2A-12, and southeast to the southeast side of Cherry Way where it turns northeast to Strawberry Way. Here it turns southeast and proceeds to a point at the south corner of Strawberry and Montour Ways. From here it proceeds northeast to a point on the northeast side of Seventh Avenue, and turns northwest, northeast, and southeast along the property lines of 24-188 and 199, continuing to a point on the southeast side of William Penn Place. Here it turns northeast to the northeast property line of 2B-20, then proceeds southeast to a point on the southeast side of Grant Street. From here it continues northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest along the property line of 2B-39 to a point at the north corner of Grant Street and Seventh Avenue. Here it turns southwest and proceeds to the point of origin.

The boundaries include the major institutional and commercial historic buildings which are concentrated in a core area of downtown Pittsburgh, and a minimum of non-contributing structures. Areas adjacent to the district feature consistently modern construction, or much smaller scale development of uneven quality which does not share the prominence and enduring significance of the district's properties. There are two adjacent areas of architectural and historical interest: buildings which face Liberty Avenue relate more directly to the proposed Penn/Liberty Historic District; government buildings surrounding the National Historic Landmark Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail are themselves a unified grouping.

PITTSBURGH DOWNTOWN
HISTORIC DISTRICT
Allegheny County
Block and Lot Map



A	E585020	N4476725
B	E584880	N4476800
C	E584800	N4477030
D	E584920	N4477160
E	E585080	N4477220
F	E585305	N4477270
G	E585365	N4477230
H	E585280	N4477090

PITTSBURGH CENTRAL DOWNTOWN
 HISTORIC DISTRICT
 Allegheny County
 Pittsburgh, East Quadrangle
 Zone 17

