



**Preliminary Assessment
Of Historic Significance of East Trade St. Buildings
Potentially Affected By The New Uptown Arena**



Statement of Purpose. The report is a preliminary assessment of the historic significance of the remaining older buildings in the 400 block of East Trade St. for purposes of determining whether any or all of the aforesaid buildings might meet the statutory standards of "special significance" required for historic landmarks.

Properties To Be Evaluated. This report evaluates four adjoining buildings. They are:



401 East Trade St.



405 East Trade St.



409 East Trade St.



411 East Trade St.

Assessment Of Significance. The four adjoining brick commercial buildings located on the north side of the 400 block of East Trade Street

are perhaps collectively the most intact and significant streetscape of early twentieth-century neighborhood stores that remains in the city's historically urban core. The buildings, 401, 405, 409, and 411 East Trade, date from the years just before World War One.

The makeup of the 400 block of East Trade Street changed drastically in the second decade of the 20th century. The Sanborn Insurance Company Maps show that the block bordered by Trade, Brevard, Fifth, and Caldwell Streets, was entirely residential in 1911. The closest commercial presence appears to have been a small brick grocery store that operated from at least 1895 on the opposite corner of Brevard and Trade. In 1913 the City Directory still lists no commercial addresses on the block. By 1918, however, the Carolina Pharmacy and C. A. Ross, grocer, occupied 401 East Trade, then known as East Avenue. Blair Brothers & Co., druggists, and the Earthquake Carpet Cleaning Co. occupied what is now 405 East Trade. Bashlin's Auto Tire Shop occupied 409 East Trade, and Piedmont Creamery Co. occupied 411 East Trade. Other businesses shared the block along what was then East Avenue, but none of these other early 20th century buildings survives. In 1918 a Standard Oil Company service station sat on the corner formed with North Caldwell Street, and by 1920 Allison Brothers, vulcanizers and Barnett Photograph Co., were also located in the block.

The building at 401 East Trade St. is historically significant in part because a hotel occupied the top two floors of the building with its entrance being on North Brevard St. Small hotels were once an important part of the built environment of regional trading centers such as Charlotte. Salesmen would flock to this community from throughout the two Carolinas and the nation in the early 1900s, visiting the many distribution warehouses and textile mills in the city. Operating under various names, the hotel at the corner of East Trade St. and North Brevard St. was conveniently located only one block from a major railroad line. It is the only local surviving example of a hotel building of this scale in Charlotte.

The most significant building architecturally in the block is the one presently located at 405 East Trade St. Constructed in 1914, it originally had two apartments upstairs and two stores on the street level. The earliest tenants were Blair Brothers and Co., druggist, and W. H. Boss Pianos and Organs. The architects were Franklin Gordon and L. L. Hunter, who were partners in Hunter and Gordon from 1909 until 1917. The only other known extant structures in Charlotte designed by

the firm are the 1911 Carnegie Library Building at Biddle Institute, now Johnson C. Smith University, the E. C. Marshall House in Myers Park, and the Chalmers Memorial A.R.P. Church on South Boulevard.



1911 Carnegie Library, designed by the firm of Hunter and Gordon



E. C. Marshall House by Hunter and Gordon



Chalmers Memorial A.R.P. Church by Hunter and Gordon. The steeple was never erected.

Each architect did design significant extant buildings in Charlotte on his own. Hunter was the architect of the George Stephens House on Harvard Place and the Hawley House on Elizabeth Avenue, which was destroyed in 1990. Gordon designed the Earle Sumner Draper House and Mercy Hospital on East Fifth St. [Click here to see photographs of these buildings designed by Hunter and by Gordon.](#)



401 and 405 East Trade Street

According to a 1914 building permit, Hunter and Gordon designed the building at 405 East Trade for R. K. Blair, perhaps one of the Blair Brothers. J. A. Hilton was listed as the contractor. The permit describes modern (for 1914) building materials, such as steel girders and a composition-gravel roof.

The style of 405 East Trade reflects the retail building's intended use. While Hunter and Gordon incorporated elements of the classical style into their design for the Carnegie Library and Chalmers Memorial A.R.P. Church to signify tradition and cultural continuity, the design for 405 East Trade is more exuberant. It appears that the building was fashioned to be eye-catching, and modern. Among the two-story building's notable architectural details is the use of decorative pendants hanging from the building's metal cornice. Below, a second decorative horizontal metal band accentuates the separation of the ground floor retail space and the second floor, which housed two apartments. Lightly colored bricks of various hues were utilized on the front of the building. The window openings for the second floor are recessed and accentuated by decorative brick panels featuring a diamond design. The colorful brickwork found on 405 East Trade demonstrates the popularity of that material in the early 1900s. The firm of Hunter and Gordon also chose light colored bricks for the Carnegie Library at Biddle Institute; and architect C. C. Hook used the same material in 1924 in the construction of the William Henry Belk House, located on Hawthorne Lane.



All four of the adjoining commercial buildings on East Trade Street are of brick construction. Along East Trade Street, 401 and 409, like 405, feature decorative brickwork, and accentuating horizontal bands of contrasting materials. These were the public faces of the buildings. These facades needed to be attractive and inviting to customers. The rears of the buildings are purely utilitarian. These elevations feature plain red brick walls and simple segmental-arched windows. 411 East Trade, the smallest of the buildings, appears to have been recently rehabilitated; and it appears that new materials have been used to construct the facade.

A historical design feature of the four commercial buildings is the narrowness of their storefronts. Originally 401 East Trade and 405 East Trade both incorporated into their facades two narrow storefronts as well as a central entrance that likely led to the upstairs residences. Historically, proximity to the Square and to busy streets determined the value of retail real estate, and the narrowness of these commercial buildings is a result of many of Charlotte's businesses squeezing up as close as possible to the center of the city.



Two views of the crowded East Trade Street

As the automobile became more popular in Charlotte, businesses, along with neighborhoods, moved farther and farther from the city's center. Narrow storefronts increasingly gave way to more expansive facades.

Tenants of the four commercial buildings have changed frequently over the years. The longest operating business appears to have been the Carolina Pharmacy, which replaced Webb Brothers Drugs at 401 East Avenue (now Trade) in 1917, and was still listed at that address in 1969.



A colorized photo of Charlotte from 1935 - The four commercial buildings discussed here may be visible along Trade Street in the lower right-hand corner of the picture

Findings. The evidence suggests that only two of the buildings might qualify for designation as historic landmarks -- 401 East Trade St. because of its associative history and 405 East Trade St. because of its architectural significance. Neither 409 East Trade St. nor 411 East Trade St. has the requisite physical integrity to meet the requirements for historic landmark status.

As a group the buildings provide the only evidence that East Trade St. was once a thriving street level business district. Accordingly, the buildings might qualify collectively for designation as a local historic district.