

HISTORIC RESOURCES
INVENTORY AND EVALUATION REPORT
Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project
San Francisco, California

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SCFTA), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), proposes to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) improvements along a 2.2 mile stretch of Van Ness Avenue (including a one-block portion of South Van Ness Avenue) in San Francisco, from Mission Street at the south to North Point Street at the north. The proposed project would reconfigure the existing roadway cross section to provide for dedicated bus lanes and transit platforms between Mission and Lombard Streets, while upgrading pedestrian safety and urban design features, and will upgrade the OCS support poles/streetlight system (overhead wires and supporting trolley/light poles) between Market and North Point Streets. Left and right turn pocket locations would be adjusted to smooth traffic flow and reduce conflicts with transit.

SFCTA is the Lead Agency under CEQA while FTA is the lead agency under NEPA. JRP Historical Consulting, LLC (JRP) prepared this Historical Resources Inventory and Evaluation Report (HRIER) as part of the environmental compliance for the Project. The purpose of this document is to comply with applicable sections of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the implementing regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as these pertain to federally funded undertakings and their impacts on historic properties. The resources have also been evaluated in accordance with Section 15064.5(a)(2)-(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines using the criteria outlined in Section 5024.1 of the California Public Resources Code.

There are 27 individual built environment resources within the Architectural Area of Potential Effects (APE). In addition there are 3 multi-component historic period resources: the San Francisco Civic Center / Birthplace of the United Nations (War Memorial Complex) Historic District; the Van Ness Avenue corridor itself; and a trolley pole system that is located along both sides of Van Ness Avenue, between Market Street and North Point Street.

Of these 30 resources, three are historic properties that had previous standing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), or other formal designations. The San Francisco Civic Center Historic District is listed in the NRHP and the CRHR, and it is a National Historic Landmark (NHL) (Map Reference #3). After its initial NRHP listing in 1978, this district attained NHL status in 1987 when its importance as the Birthplace of the United Nations was identified. The actual birthplace is associated with one of the contributing elements of the district, the War Memorial Building, which is located in the APE and is part of the historic district property (Map Reference #3). The Masonic Temple at 11-35 Van Ness Avenue has been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP and is listed in the CRHR (Map Reference #4). Lastly, the Paige Motor Car Company Building at 1699 Van Ness Avenue is listed in the NRHP and CRHR (Map Reference #14). This HRIER included field checking of these listed properties, and provides updated information pertaining where applicable:

- San Francisco Civic Center Historic District / War Memorial Building; National Historic Landmark, and listed in NRHP and CRHR (Map Reference #3)
- 11-35 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #4); determined eligible
- 1699 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #14); listed in the NRHP and CRHR

The other resources within the APE for this project had no previous official status in the NRHP, the CRHR, or San Francisco Landmark list. Although two of the resources had been previously evaluated for the NRHP and the CRHR (1050-1066 Van Ness Avenue [Map Reference #9] and 2001 Van Ness Avenue [Map Reference #21]), neither has State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurrence and neither is listed in the most current Historic Property Data File for San Francisco County (May 27, 2009).

Several of the resources also have local designation status. The Civic Center is a designated San Francisco Historic District (Map Reference #3). San Francisco City Hall, a central component of the Civic Center district, is an individual San Francisco City Landmark (Landmark #21), as is the War Memorial building (Landmark #84). The Masonic Temple at 11-35 Van Ness Avenue is a San Francisco Category I (Significant) building (Map Reference #4).

Many of the resources in the APE have been addressed by previous local reconnaissance surveys and some are listed as “significant” or “contributory” buildings in San Francisco’s “Van Ness Avenue Area Plan.” The City’s guidance for such resources, *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin 16: “City and County of San Francisco Planning Department CEQA Review Procedures for Historic Resources,”* explains that neither the reconnaissance surveys, nor the area plan have been officially adopted as a local register for the purposes of CEQA. Therefore, resources previously considered by the surveys or area plan require further consultation and review, which is provided by this technical report and the accompanying evaluation forms. Evaluations conducted as part of this study are also consistent with *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin 5: “Landmark and Historic District Designation Procedures,”* which directs that historic properties be evaluated for local designation using the California OHP Recordation Manual (as per San Francisco Landmarks Board Resolution No. 527, June 7, 2000).

This HRIER concludes that the status of the three properties previously listed or determined eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR remains unchanged, as does their status as historical resources for the purpose of CEQA. Of the 27 other built environment resources, this HRIER concludes that four appear eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR and therefore appear to be historical resources for the purposes of CEQA. Those buildings are:

- 799 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #6)
- 945 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #8)
- 1320 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #12)
- 1946 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #20)

The remaining 23 resources within the APE do not appear eligible for listing in the NRHP or the CRHR and are not considered historical resources for the purposes of CEQA.

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1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

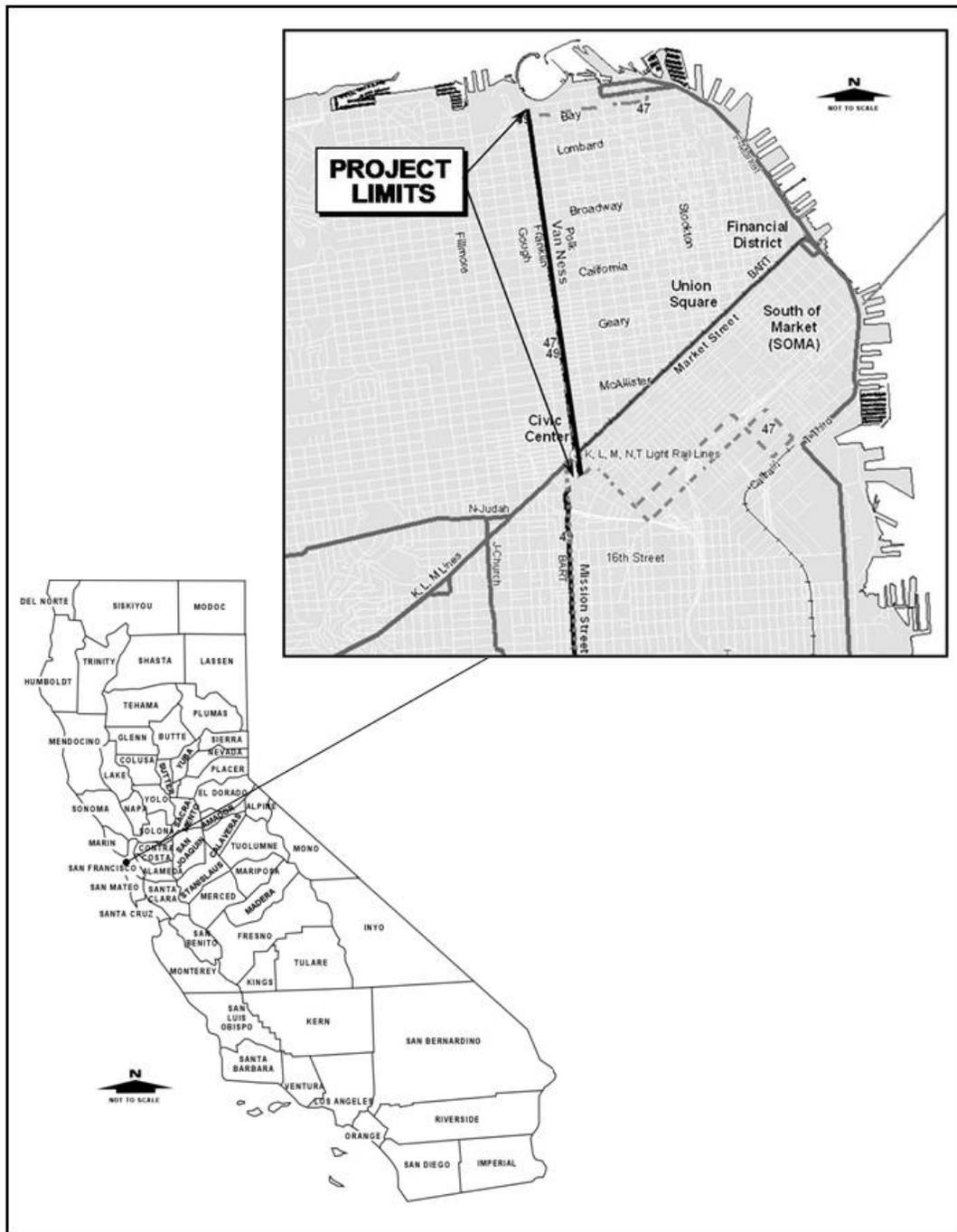
The SFCTA, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), proposes to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) improvements along Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco. Figure 1 provides a regional location map. Van Ness Avenue is one of San Francisco's key north-south arterials that is also designated as US 101, connecting freeway entrances and exits to the south of the City with Lombard Street and the Golden Gate Bridge that provide access north of the City. Van Ness Avenue is a bustling six-lane arterial that carries a mix of cars, trucks, transit, pedestrians and bicycles. The proposed BRT would be implemented along a 2.2 mile stretch of Van Ness Avenue (including a one-block portion of South Van Ness Avenue) in San Francisco, from Mission Street at the south to North Point Street at the north. Figure 2 provides a map showing the project alignment. Project improvements would be confined largely within the right-of-way along Van Ness Avenue.¹

As part of the environmental review process, four alternatives have been defined for the proposed Van Ness Avenue BRT Project, including one no-build alternative and three build alternatives. All of the build alternatives include the following elements: a lane dedicated to transit from Mission Street to Lombard Street (the transit lane in Alternative 2 would be traversable for turning and parking mixed traffic); higher capacity bus vehicles; level boarding from curb to bus; replacement of OCS support poles/streetlight system (overhead wires and supporting trolley/light poles) between Market and North Point Streets; sidewalk extension, or bulbs, at corners; pedestrian safety, landscaping and streetscape improvements and amenities; access and lighting improvements; high-quality stops/stations; proof of payment/all door boarding/fare prepayment; replacement of signal poles, and transportation system management (TSM) capabilities. These standard BRT features are described in greater detail below:

- *Dedicated bus lanes/BRT transitway.* BRT buses would operate in an exclusive, dedicated bus lane on the street surface. One mixed traffic lane in each direction would be dedicated to BRT vehicles only (the lane in Alternative 2 would allow shared use for right-turning traffic and parking vehicles). The bus lane would be distinguished from mixed traffic lanes by physical separation and/or colored pavement. To reduce conflicts with the bus lane, left turn opportunities for mixed traffic would be reduced in each direction and right-turn pockets would be introduced at some intersections. Bus lanes would accommodate both Muni and Golden Gate Transit vehicles,² and be available for use by emergency response vehicles.
- *Bus vehicle.* The design vehicle for BRT service would be a low-floor vehicle that offers increased passenger capacity over the existing Muni 47 and 49 line buses.
- *Level boarding.* The BRT build alternatives would provide level boarding from curb to bus a feature that is also included in the no-build alternative.

¹ Spot improvements, to mitigate adverse impacts on traffic operations off of Van Ness Avenue, could be proposed as part of the build alternatives.

² Golden Gate Transit vehicles currently operate along Van Ness Avenue, along with Muni bus lines 47 and 49.



Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project

Figure 1. Regional Project Location Map

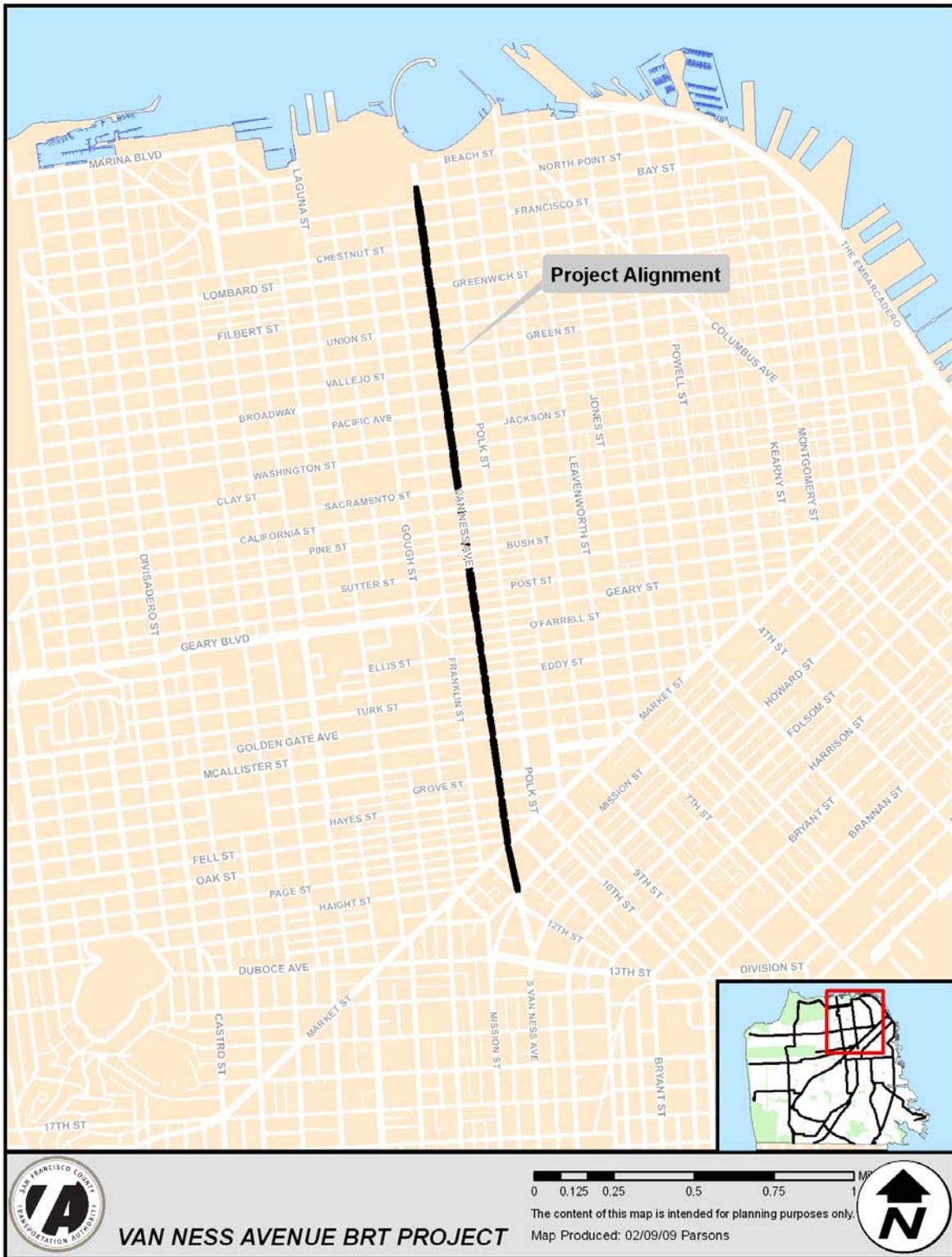


Figure 2. Project Alignment Map

- *High-quality stops/stations.* Each BRT build alternative would provide fewer stop locations than existing bus service, intended to reduce dwell time delays. Station platforms would be upgraded, providing larger shelters and improved wayfinding and information. Stops/stations would mostly be located on the far side of signalized intersections, as feasible, in order to take advantage of transit signal priority.
- *Streetscape improvements and amenities.* Each BRT build alternative would include pedestrian safety improvements (corner bulb-outs and median refuge upgrades), as well as enhanced landscaping. Other proposed amenities include pedestrian-scale sidewalk lighting, pedestrian countdown and audible signals at all BRT stations, and improved landscaping that also serves to buffer pedestrians and waiting passengers from motor vehicle traffic. Additional pedestrian design guidelines include:
 - No restrictions on pedestrian crossings at intersection legs;
 - Maximum of four lanes between pedestrian refuges;
 - Minimum four-foot wide pedestrian refuge, which extends through the crosswalk.
 - Upgrades to intersections as needed to comply with American Disability Act (ADA) standards
- *Proof of payment /all-door boarding / fare prepayment.* SFMTA expects to implement all-door boarding on Van Ness Avenue in the future, allowing passengers with proof of payment, such as a Fast Pass, to board through any door.
- *Transit signal priority.* The BRT build alternatives would include transit signal priority, a feature that is also included in the no-build alternative.
- *Replacement of signal poles.* The center lane running BRT alternatives (Alternatives 3 and 4) would require replacement of existing traffic signal poles at intersections to provide poles with mast arms.
- *OCS support pole/streetlight replacement.* The SFMTA, together with San Francisco Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) would replace the streetlights and trolley poles, which function as support poles for MUNI's OCS. This construction would be coordinated as part of the build alternatives, and would include removal of existing poles and light fixtures, and installation of new poles and light fixtures. In most cases, the new poles would be installed approximately three to five feet in the same longitudinal plane as the existing poles, designed to handle modern loads as required by the BRT, and modern lighting requirements as required by the PUC.

Alternative 1: No-Build Alternative/Baseline/Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

Alternative 1, the no-build alternative, would not include a BRT service. Alternative 1 considers projected demographic and land use characteristics in addition to proposed Transportation Systems Management (TSM) capabilities improvements expected to be implemented independent of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project by the near-term horizon year 2015, or long-range horizon year 2035. These transportation system improvements are planned to occur within the identified timeframes regardless of implementation of any proposed BRT build alternative. The transportation system improvements considered in Alternative 1 include the following:

- *SFgo (Traffic signal infrastructure for real time traffic management).* SFMTA plans to replace signal poles and install a new fiber optic traffic signal communications network on Van Ness

Avenue that will allow traffic conditions to be monitored and adjusted in real time to actively manage operations and delays. Most replaced signal poles at intersections will include mast arms. SFgo will also implement transit signal priority, a technique to speed up bus services at signalized intersections. Buses signal their impending arrival at the intersection to receive green lights.

- *Low-floor Buses.* SFMTA is gradually converting its fleet to low-floor buses which will provide relatively level boarding and alighting. Low-floor buses would not require passengers to climb steps to board or exit buses, helping to shorten dwell times, especially for passengers in wheelchairs.
- *Sidewalk/Street Lighting Improvements.* The Department of Public Works (DPW) plans sidewalk landscaping improvements along Van Ness Avenue as part of the Van Ness Avenue Enhancements Project. Proposed streetscape improvements include removal of sign clutter, enhanced existing bus stops and street furniture, installation of planter boxes, decorative paving, pedestrian scale lighting, and new landscaping along Van Ness Avenue between Mission and McAllister Streets. Although these measures do not affect transit operations directly, these programs will make stops more convenient, safer and attractive and thereby contribute to increased transit use.
- *NextMuni Real Time Passenger Information.* SFMTA is installing real-time bus arrival information displays (NextMuni) at major stops with shelters along Van Ness Avenue.
- *Pavement Resurfacing.* Caltrans prepared a draft Capital Preventative Maintenance Project Report in 2008 to address pavement rehabilitation on Van Ness Avenue between Golden Gate Avenue and Lombard Street. This project is included in the 2007 Ten-Year SHOPP Plan for 2011/2012 FY and is a candidate for the 2010 State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), but is not currently funded.
- *OCS support pole/streetlight replacement.* The SFMTA, together with DPW and the PUC, plans to replace the overhead wire catenary system and trolley/streetlights poles along Van Ness Avenue, which lack sufficient structural integrity to support existing and future loads. This effort may be implemented as a comprehensive replacement project, or as a phased maintenance program that would replace poles on a priority basis, with the most structurally compromised poles prioritized for replacement.

The aforementioned transportation system improvements are planned by local transportation agencies to occur by 2015, independent of the build alternatives proposed as part of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project.

Alternative 2: Curb Lane BRT with Parallel Parking

Alternative 2 is a build alternative that would provide a dedicated bus lane in the rightmost lane of Van Ness Avenue in both the northbound and southbound directions, from Mission Street to Lombard Street, next to the existing lane of parallel parking. The bus lanes, though distinguished by colored pavement, would be traversable for mixed traffic which would enter the bus lanes to parallel park in the curb lane or make a right turn. BRT stations would be located within the parking strip as extensions to the sidewalk, eliminating the need for buses to pull out of the bus lane to pick up passengers. Under this alternative, the OCS overhead wire and support pole system would be replaced and upgraded, along with the associated street lighting.

Alternative 2 includes the following features of BRT previously described: dedicated bus lanes, higher capacity bus vehicles, level boarding, high-quality stops/stations, streetscape improvements and amenities, proof of payment/all door boarding/fare prepayment, replacement

of signal poles, and TSM capabilities. In addition, Alternative 2 would include OCS/streetlight pole replacement and upgrade.

Alternative 3: Center Lane BRT with Right-Side Boarding/Dual Medians

Alternative 3 is a build alternative that would convert the existing landscaped median and portions of the two inside traffic lanes, both northbound and southbound, to dedicated bus lanes separated from mixed traffic by dual landscaped medians. The medians would be approximately four feet to nine feet wide in many locations. Station platforms would be located on the right-side median, allowing right-side boarding.

Alternative 3 includes the following features of BRT previously described: dedicated bus lanes, higher capacity bus vehicles, level boarding, high-quality stops/stations, streetscape improvements and amenities, proof of payment/all door boarding/fare prepayment, replacement of signal poles, and TSM capabilities. In addition, Alternative 3 would include OCS pole/street light replacement; additionally, this alternative would require replacement and upgrade of the existing OCS support and power delivery system, and relocation of the system to support a center lane operating BRT.

Alternative 4: Center Lane BRT with Left-Side Boarding/Center Median

Alternative 4 would convert the existing inside lane of mixed traffic in each direction into a dedicated bus lane operating adjacent to the existing landscaped median. Station platforms would be located on the single center median, requiring left-side passenger loading and unloading. Bus vehicles serving this route would need doors on the left and right sides of the vehicle to allow service to both the left-side BRT platforms and right-side stops.

Alternative 4 includes the following features of a BRT previously described in detail: dedicated bus lanes, higher capacity bus vehicles, level boarding, high-quality stops/stations, streetscape improvements and amenities, proof of payment/all door boarding/fare prepayment, replacement of signal poles, and TSM capabilities. In addition, Alternative 4 would include OCS pole/street light replacement; additionally, this alternative would require replacement and upgrade of the existing OCS support and power delivery system, and relocation of the system to support a center lane operating BRT.

1.1 Research and Field Methods

JRP Historical Consulting, LLC, (JRP) developed the “built environment,” or architectural Area of Potential Effects (APE) for this project in conjunction with SFCTA and their environmental consultant team. The APE map is provided in Appendix A. Consistent with general cultural resources management practices, the APE for the built environment encompasses areas that could be directly or indirectly affected by the project. The project will take place within the existing street right of way; therefore, direct effects are anticipated within the existing street and sidewalk area, while indirect effects could occur within specific areas adjacent to project activities that could cause a change in character or use of historic properties.

The architectural APE boundary is generally aligned with the outside edge of the sidewalks along both sides of Van Ness Avenue (current right of way line). The APE encompasses Van Ness Avenue and the sidewalks along both sides, and an area one parcel deep at those points where a side platform associated with a new BRT stop is proposed, as the construction of such a stop could potentially indirectly affect the immediately adjacent resource. In the case of the San Francisco Civic Center, the APE was drawn to encompass only those portions of the historic district directly fronting proposed side platforms, which includes City Hall and the War Memorial complex. In the evaluation, however, the two properties are studied within the context of their prominent role in the district.

Curb bulb-out pavement, removal of existing modern curb bulb pavement, the construction of center platforms, and the installation of light or overhead wire support poles are project actions considered to not pose an effect upon historic properties outside of the right-of-way because such construction would not cause a change in the character or setting of historic properties. Those resources located within the existing street right of way (the Van Ness Avenue corridor [Map Reference #1] and the Van Ness Trolley Poles [Map Reference #2]) are the only built environment resources surveyed that could experience either direct or indirect effects. The other resources surveyed are outside, but adjacent to the right of way boundary, and would only experience indirect effects if found to be eligible historic properties.

Once the architectural APE was established, JRP staff conducted background research on all built environment resources that were more than 45 years old or older at the time of review. JRP staff conducted a field survey of the area to account for all buildings, structures, and objects found within the project study area. This field reconnaissance helped determine which resources appeared to be more than 45 years of age and to confirm the current condition of properties already listed or determined eligible for listing on the NRHP and CRHR. Additional background research was done through First American Real Estate Solutions commercial database, municipal government records, and review of other historic archival documents, photographs, and plans to confirm dates of construction and building histories. JRP conducted field work in March and April of 2009.

The investigation of historic-era resources included research regarding the historic development context, as well as resource-specific research conducted in both archival and published records, and many secondary sources. Research was conducted at San Francisco Architectural Heritage; San Francisco Building Department; San Francisco City and County Public Utilities Commission; San Francisco Office of City Planning; California State Archives and Library; California Historical Society; Bancroft Library (UC Berkeley); Shields Library (UC Davis); Caltrans Headquarters in Sacramento; and Caltrans District 4 Office in Oakland. In addition, JRP reviewed the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) and conducted a records search for the project in February of 2009, the results of which are discussed in the Summary of Findings. Additionally, the Northwest Information Center provided an updated printing of the "Historic Property Datafile for San Francisco County," as of May 27, 2009. Researchers also reviewed the California Historical Landmarks and Points of Interest publications and updates, National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, as well as San Francisco landmarks and local register listings and historic preservation guidance and publications.

2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The historical development of San Francisco's Van Ness Avenue parallels the city's growth from a gold rush boom town to one of the west's major metropolitan areas. The avenue has been a hub of both residential and commercial development, and has been shaped by advances in transportation technology, as the primacy of horse drawn transportation ceded to private cable cars, Municipal Railway, and, ultimately, the automobile (Map Reference #1-2). As one of the city's primary corridors, as well as San Francisco's link to US Highway 101, Van Ness Avenue reflects the urban expansion of San Francisco and has continuously been redefined by San Francisco's shifting social, physical, and demographic patterns. The buildings in the study area reflect this diversity. The survey population includes early twentieth century residential flats as well as larger apartments and an apartment hotel constructed immediately following the 1906 Earthquake (Map Reference #9, #23-26, #27-29). Several buildings in the survey population reflect cultural and civic developments in the city, particularly the Civic Center Historic District and two major Masonic Temples (Map Reference #3-4, #12). In addition, numerous buildings in the study area reflect the increasingly commercial nature of the avenue (Map Reference #22). In particular, most of the buildings in the survey population relate to the early twentieth century development of Auto Row, with numerous showrooms, garages, and smaller repair facilities (Map Reference #5-8, #10-11, #13-21, #30).



Procession on Van Ness Avenue, n.d. Prior to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the avenue was primarily residential in nature. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

2.1 Creation and Early Development of Van Ness Avenue 1855-1906

In the era prior to Euro-American settlement, sand dunes and chaparral dominated what would become known as San Francisco's "Western Addition." Consisting of the area west of present-day Larkin Street, the area was surveyed and established under the 1855 Van Ness Ordinance and the subsequent 1858 Van Ness Survey. The Ordinance greatly increased the nascent city's size, and called for a host of civic improvements, including parks, squares, and schools.³ Van Ness Avenue was envisioned as a new commercial hub within the recently acquired land, and established as a north-south counterpart to the commercial corridor of Market Street. The avenue was thus surveyed to a width of 125 feet, nearly twice the width of other streets in the city. This scale was accomplished by taking nearly 29 feet from the block extending eastward from Polk Street and nearly 28 feet from the western block front from Franklin Street.⁴

Despite early hopes for commercial prominence, development along the grand boulevard was initially slow and the avenue remained little more than a dirt track running through undeveloped swaths of the city. Few purchasers could be found for the land when a public auction was held in 1859.⁵ In the 1860s the avenue fell under the gaze of noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who had been commissioned by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to develop a major urban park that would lend the burgeoning city of San Francisco the same stature as eastern cities such as New York with its Central Park. Rather than a large park, Olmsted envisioned a greenbelt that would center upon Van Ness Avenue, extending roughly from Duboce Park to Aquatic Park through the protected valley, with small naturalistic developments and enclaves along the way. The plan was rejected by city officials, who sought a more traditional park setting in the manner of Central Park; a desire which ultimately was expressed by the design of William Hammond Hall and John McLaren.⁶

Even after San Francisco's population began to skyrocket in the 1860s and 1870s, there was little demand for land so isolated from the city's downtown.⁷ The area's underdeveloped infrastructure may have contributed to the slow pace of settlement along Van Ness: it was not until the early 1870s that portions of Van Ness were macadamized or in some cases graded, and planking of sidewalks and corners only existed in isolated pockets.⁸ By 1872-1873, Van Ness was graded between Sutter and Post streets, Geary and Turk streets, and California and Pine streets. The boulevard was macadamized at the crossing with Fulton Street, at the crossing of McAllister Street, and at the crossing of Tyler Street. In general, street improvements occurred in segments, with grading, macadamizing, and sidewalk planking undertaken on a largely block-

³ Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1974) 11.

⁴ San Francisco Planning Department, "Van Ness Avenue Area Plan," unpublished (San Francisco, c.1989).

⁵ "Van Ness Avenue Area Plan" 1.

⁶ San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Municipal Reports 1867-68*, (San Francisco, California: John H. Carmany and Company, 1868), 560-564; Robert Cherny and William Issel, *San Francisco 1865-1932* (Berkeley, California: UC Berkeley Press, 1986) 102-116.

⁷ Anne Bloomfield, "The Real Estate Associates: A Land and Housing Developer of the 1870s in San Francisco," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. XXVII (1978), 15.

⁸ *San Francisco Municipal Report, 1872-1873*, 586, 589, and 595.

by-block basis. Well into the 1870s, much of Van Ness Avenue to Lombard Street was ungraded and there were but a few buildings located outside of the immediate periphery of Market Street.⁹

As the population of San Francisco soared from a mere 35,000 in 1852 to nearly 300,000 in 1890, however, a pressing need for additional housing drove residential demand into the Western Addition, including Van Ness Avenue. Speculative builders constructed middle and upper class residences, primarily of wood frame construction with prominent bays, cornices, and elaborate molded detailing in the popular Italianate and Queen Anne style. As the core of the city became increasingly urban, the corresponding sanitation and social concerns led many to seek housing at a remove from the central city, and Van Ness Avenue and its environs became increasingly populated. Although Van Ness itself did not have a dedicated cable car line in the nineteenth century, many lines traversed the area, both from east-to-west and north-to-south along portions of Polk Street, parallel and one block east of Van Ness.¹⁰



“Artistic Homes of California, Residence of Mr. R. P. Ashe, Van Ness Avenue and Washington Street,”
circa 1887. Exuberant revival architecture typified the large homes along the avenue during the nineteenth century. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

Interspersed among this relatively modest middle-class construction were a number of grand residences designed for the city’s elite. By the mid-1880s, the wide avenue had evolved into a bastion for many of San Francisco’s wealthiest, whose large homes typically occupied several lots on a block. A series of photographs taken in 1887, entitled *Artistic Homes of California*, depicts several grand mansions, all exuberantly designed in a variety of picturesque styles with

⁹ Sanborn Map Company, *Fire Insurance Maps for San Francisco, California* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1886, vol. 2 and 1893, vol. 4.)

¹⁰ San Francisco Planning Department, “Van Ness Avenue Area Plan”; Anne Bloomfield, Bloomfield, “The Real Estate Associates,” 17.

French Second Empire, Italianate, and Exotic Eclectic styling. Although most residences; from flats to mansions, were of wood frame construction, the largest were of stone construction. Perhaps the most grand was the Claus Spreckels Mansion at the corner of Van Ness and Clay Street, home to the founder of the Spreckels Sugar Company.¹¹ The four-story stone residence exhibited Romanesque and Chateausque stylings and was noted at the time as one of the most costly private residences ever built in the city.¹² Built by prominent San Francisco architects the Reid Brothers; the building's mansard roof, projecting bays, and smooth, light-toned stone massing held an imposing presence along Van Ness and represented the extraordinary wealth of the young city.¹³



**“Claus Spreckels Mansion on Van Ness Avenue between Clay and Sacramento Streets,” n.d., but after 1915.
Van Ness Avenue was a popular location for the mansions of the city’s elite.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection .**

Although the avenue was home to many of the city’s elite, a striking number of diverse uses flanked the corridor, particularly within its upper reaches. The Fort Mason military reservation was located at the northern terminus of the avenue, on the west side of Van Ness, while the Fontana Company Canned Fruit Warehouse, the Pioneer Woolen Factory, and the Spring Valley Water Company’s Black Point Pumping House stood on the east side at its northern terminus. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, a large greenhouse occupied nearly the entire block between Lombard Street and Chestnut Street along the avenue. Civic and public buildings occupied the middle stretches of Van Ness, transitioning from the residential blocks in the north

¹¹ San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection, “Ruins of the Claus Spreckels residence at Van Ness Avenue and Clay Street,” black & white photographic print, 1906.

¹² “Growth of San Francisco Since 1890,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 2, 1898.

¹³ The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, “*Artistic Homes of California*,” Call number: BANC PIC 1905.02960—PIC, [Image 2, 8, 9, 11].

to the busier central city. Saint Mary's Cathedral filled the corner at O' Farrell Street. Saint Ignatius Church and College stood at Grove Street, established by Jesuits who had arrived in California to minister to gold miners. The Mercantile Library filled the entire block between Golden Gate and Elm avenues. The extreme southern portion of the avenue was also home to an array of functions, with an animal feed and sale yard at the northeastern corner of Market Street and Van Ness Avenue and other business and clubs radiating throughout the southern blocks of the avenue.¹⁴



“Saint Ignatius Church, Hayes Street and Van Ness Avenue,” 1880. Several large institutional buildings displaying various classical revival styles also lined the southern portion of the avenue.

San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

By the turn of the twentieth century Van Ness Avenue stood at far remove from the blowing dunes of the 1858 survey. With the highest echelon of residential wealth bracketed at either end with churches, schools, and industry, the avenue was one of the city's most prominent. San Francisco had expanded up and around the avenue, absorbing vast tracts of land and promoting urban expansion through infrastructural improvement and corresponding speculation. Much of this urban expansion was driven by the private sector, with private horse car and cable car interests servicing adjacent streets, private residential developers constructing the flats, and the city's wealthiest building urban enclaves. Civic sponsored improvements largely focused upon grading, paving, cisterns, sewers, and gas lamps, all of which occurred in a largely piecemeal manner. San Francisco Municipal Reports and Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors from the time period contain little reference to the avenue outside of basic infrastructural accounting. The sole exception to this was an 1896 ordinance by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors declaring Van Ness Avenue to be an official city “Boulevard.” The Board passed the ordinance

¹⁴ Sanborn Map Company, Fire Insurance Maps for San Francisco, California (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1899, vol. 1 and 1899 vol. 3.)

in response to a petition from the Van Ness Avenue Improvement Club, and the measure largely served to forbid heavy traffic upon the avenue. Although the Club also sought civic-sponsored trees, shrubs, and plantings in the median and along the sidewalks, historical photographs of the avenue and municipal records indicate that the planting did not occur.¹⁵ Thus, while the original wide survey of the avenue and the “Boulevard” declaration expressed a continued civic desire for a distinct thoroughfare, the development of the corridor largely occurred within the chaotic context of rampant late-nineteenth century with little or no holistic civic design intent.

2.2 The Earthquake of 1906: From Fire Break to Commercial Hub



“Effects of the Earthquake on Van Ness Avenue,” 1906. Much of Van Ness was devastated by the quake and subsequent fire, particularly the southern reaches of the street. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

The substantial width of Van Ness Avenue proved significant both during and after the Earthquake of 1906. Within fifteen minutes of the shocks, scores of fires caused by lanterns, boilers, gas mains, electrical wires, and damaged chimneys broke out across the city. On Van Ness Avenue, a 30-inch gas main running under the street burst, reportedly sending bituminous pavement flying high into the air. Although the scope and ferocity of the conflagration across the city was unprecedented, San Francisco’s Fire Chief, Dennis Sullivan, had laid the foundation for establishing Van Ness Avenue as a fire line even before the earthquake. In the wake of Baltimore’s disastrous 1904 fire, the chief had established that the wide expanse of Van Ness Avenue or Market Street as firebreaks in the event of a citywide outbreak. Although Sullivan was mortally injured during the quake, his vision ultimately came to fruition. Because Market

¹⁵ “Designs for the City’s Building,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1896; “Developing the Outside Districts,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 13, 1896.

Street was consumed by fires on both sides, Van Ness remained the most viable alternative for fire fighters.¹⁶

Volunteers, city fire fighters, and troops under the leadership of General Frederick Funston took a consolidated stand along Van Ness Avenue. The fire primarily burned up to the east side of the avenue, with only the lower portions near Market in flames on both sides. To prevent the fire from spreading, undamaged buildings along the east side were blasted by the army, reducing mansions to smoldering piles. The desperate measures proved effective, and the fire was stopped on April 20th, having jumped the width of the avenue in only isolated areas.

Although much of the avenue lay in ruins, in comparison to the ravaged Market Street corridor Van Ness emerged from the four day inferno relatively intact. The western side of Van Ness and the upper northeastern portion of the thoroughfare near present-day Fort Mason and the Aquatic Park remained untouched by the fire. San Francisco landmark, St. Brigid's Catholic Church, standing at the intersection of Van Ness and Broadway, survived the disaster virtually unscathed, with only a small scattering of debris falling from the building during the quake.¹⁷



**Earthquake Damage Along Van Ness Avenue at Vallejo Street,” 1906. While there was much damage along the avenue, a number of the buildings remained structurally sound.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

¹⁶ Stephen Tobriner, *Bracing For Disaster: Earthquake-Resistant Architecture and Engineering in San Francisco 1838-1933* (Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 2006) 136-138.

¹⁷ San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection, “St. Brigid’s Church, on Van Ness Ave., after the 1906 earthquake,” black & white photographic print, 1906; 1899 Sanborn Insurance Map, vol. 3, 262; Tobriner, *Bracing for Disaster*, 142-146.

Thus, while portions of Van Ness were consumed, much of it escaped severe damage and was immediately targeted for new residential and commercial development as the city quickly sought to rebuild. The area was the center of a speculative boom in the weeks and months following the disaster, as businesses sought temporary quarters and commercial interests sought profits from a frenzy of leasing activity.¹⁸ Between 1906 and 1909, a striking number of residents and businesses moved to Van Ness Avenue and along with Fillmore Street to the west, Van Ness became San Francisco's premier commercial and economic hub, supplanting the devastated areas of downtown. Only weeks after the earthquake, the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that Van Ness was, "now a livelier avenue than ever before in its history," and extolled the rapid construction of numerous temporary buildings and requisition of damaged mansions for commerce. Even at this early date, a slew of the city's preeminent commercial establishments were opening doors on Van Ness, including the famed Emporium department store, as well as City of Paris, and the White House. Rather than building new quarters many of the stores occupied abandoned mansions, with the City of Paris filling the Hobart Mansion, a commodious Queen Anne located on the prominent corner of Van Ness and Washington Street.¹⁹



“Rebuilt Emporium Department Store at Post Street and Van Ness Avenue,” 1906.
A wave of commercial construction sprang up along Van Ness soon after the 1906 disaster.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

In addition to a burgeoning retail trade, Van Ness also became a central entertainment venue for the dislocated city. The Van Ness Theater was erected at Van Ness and Grove in 1907 and was one of the city's most prized entertainment venues until its demolition in 1910.²⁰ Other more

¹⁸ “Speculation Stops in Buying Real Property,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 27, 1909.

¹⁹ Online Archive of California Photograph Collection, Bancroft Library Photograph Collection “Temp Quarters, Hobart Res. - Van Ness and Washington. City of Paris Dry Goods Company,” 1906; “Retailers Leasing on Van Ness Avenue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1906.

²⁰ “Van Ness Theater is Soon to be a Memory,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 27, 1910.

prosaic uses also clambered to the area, including Eddie Graney's blacksmith shop and Samuels Lace House, both of whom rapidly established quarters following the earthquake.²¹ In addition to the commercial influx, numerous refugee shacks for those made homeless by the disaster sprouted along Van Ness and its surrounding streets, often causing consternation amongst surrounding property owners.²²



“One Year After. Van Ness North from Sutter Street,” 1907. Van Ness Avenue was quickly reshaped by commerce in the years following the disaster. California Room, California State Library.

Notable infrastructure improvements accompanied the wave of commercial and new residential settlement along the avenue. The intensive reconstruction following the earthquake highlighted the need for uniform paving, which had only existed in isolated pockets and was a mixture of cobble, stone, and macadam prior to the earthquake. This varied paving material was damaged by the earthquake, and observers noted that parts of the avenue were, “cut up like a country road, the dust being very deep and horses having to strain to pull loads over it.”²³ Asphalt paving occurred in segments, with portions paved by an assortment of contractors on a block-by-block basis. By 1911 the paving of Van Ness was largely complete. By 1910, contracts had also been completed for reinforced concrete fire cisterns along the avenue, located underground at the Van Ness intersections of Golden Gate Avenue, Washington Street, Octavia Street, Laguna Street, and Market Street. Improvements in the 1910s also included the extension of underground sewer lines and telephone conduit up the avenue, as the increased business and residential population required these increasingly standard metropolitan amenities.²⁴ Although Van Ness Avenue was a locus of redevelopment and infrastructural improvement, the changes done on the avenue mirrored developments occurring all over the city, as officials oversaw a massive rebuilding campaign that included the extension of grading, paving and sidewalk work, street lights, rail lines, sewers, and telephone conduits.

²¹ “Van Ness Now a Busy Street,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3, 1906.

²² Journal of Proceedings of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors 1907, 454.

²³ “Van Ness Now a Busy Street,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3, 1906.

²⁴ *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1910-1911*, 821; *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1911-1912*, 984 and 990.

The emergence of Van Ness Avenue as a central economic and social hub was short-lived. Much of the commercial development along the avenue was considered a temporary expedient, and as conditions in the traditional business and retail core of the city improved, many businesses flooded back to newly constructed or repaired quarters. The illustrious City of Paris, with its silk finery and French wines, departed from the Hobart mansion in 1909, returning to its repaired Union Square Beaux Arts building. The local press commented on the exodus, noting that “although for a time it was believed the retail district would remain permanently in the Western Addition,” the force of the “Downtown Movement” proved too great.²⁵ In several short years, the identity of Van Ness Avenue had been dramatically uprooted and changed again, leaving a broad avenue in flux. “What Van Ness may become in the future can probably not be imagined,” wrote the *San Francisco Chronicle* echoing a widespread sentiment, “it has been deserted by retail trade and will not regain any of it in the near future.”²⁶

2.3 Forward San Francisco: Connecting the San Francisco Civic Center and Panama-Pacific International Exposition

In the autumn of 1911, “Sunny Jim” Rolph swept the San Francisco mayoral election with the campaign slogan “Forward San Francisco.” A noted businessman and Vice-President of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company, Rolph promoted a number of major infrastructural developments including the water system, Municipal Railway, bridges, tunnels, and major civic construction. Foremost in this array of improvements was a new Civic Center and City Hall, as well as a venue for a world’s fair—The Panama-Pacific Exposition. The projects were located in two large tracts of prime land, one near the southern base of Van Ness and the other near its northern terminus, and were at the center of major urban redevelopment schemes that would occupy San Francisco for the large part of the decade. As the corridor that connected the two, Van Ness became a vital link that served to physically, and aesthetically, connect the two major civic undertakings.

City leaders were contemplating massive civic expansion within the area surrounding City Hall even before the destruction wrought by the earthquake. In 1904, the Society for the Improvement and Adornment of San Francisco invited prominent landscape architect Daniel H. Burnham to draw sweeping plans for the city. Embedded in this plan was a design for an expanded Civic Center that would be a monumental focal point surrounded by radiating boulevards extending across the city. Although these grandiose plans were approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors before the earthquake, in the aftermath of the disaster the lofty ambitions of the Burnham Plan fell before the immediate necessity of rebuilding. With city leaders, merchants, and citizens focused upon the basic infrastructure of redevelopment, the drive for beautification underpinning the massive Burnham scheme eroded.²⁷

²⁵ “Expansion of Retail Business an Example of City’s Enterprise,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 17, 1909.

²⁶ “The Future of Van Ness Avenue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 30, 1909.

²⁷ William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley, California: UC Berkeley Press, 1986) 110.



**“City Hall in Ruins after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire,” 1906.
The devastation of the earthquake and fire spurred a renewed drive for a new Civic Center.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Despite the dismissal of the Burnham Plan, however, the need for a new City Hall remained, and by the time of Mayor Rolph’s election, the redevelopment of City Hall and the Civic Center were at the forefront of municipal affairs. The City solicited proposals for development and received sixty proposals in 1912. The winning plan was that of architect B.J.S. Cahill, who had long served as an architectural advisor to the city, and advocated redevelopment on the same site as the old City Hall rather than the Market Street location proposed by Burnham. The Mayor formed an advisory commission composed of John Galen Howard, Frederick W. Meyer, and John Reid, Jr., and voters approved an \$8.8 million bond in 1912. The final design consisted of a central plaza bounded by City Hall to the west, the State Building to the north, the Public Library and Opera House to the east, and the Exposition Auditorium to the south. Additionally, corner lots between the buildings were designed to contain secondary civic functions including a Health Building, a Fire and Police Building, and a Power House. Narrow portions of land fronting the complex were reserved for arcades and peristyles.²⁸

With only three years remaining until the Panama-Pacific Exposition, construction of the new Civic Center was rushed toward completion. Mass excitement over the construction of the Panama Canal and the celebratory honor of hosting the Panama-Pacific Exposition spurred development, as leaders and citizens sought a grand civic identity that to match the monumental design of the exposition.²⁹ Despite the urgency generated by the pressure of hosting such an

²⁸ United States Department of the Interior, “National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, San Francisco Civic Center,” October 10, 1978.

²⁹ Rand Richards, *Historic San Francisco: A Concise History and Guide* (San Francisco: Heritage House Publishers, 1991) 194-195; United States Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, San Francisco Civic Center, October 10, 1978.

extravaganza, however, much of the construction was incomplete at the time of the Exposition, and the Civic Center was dotted with wood signs depicting where the buildings were to be. Only the Exposition Auditorium, Power House, and Central Plaza were completed by the opening day. Ultimately, the creation of the Civic Center would take more than twenty years. City Hall was completed in 1916 – a decade after the original’s destruction. In 1922, the City acquired and began development of the War Memorial complex, but another decade passed before the War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building were finished. Some thirty years after the 1906 disaster, the War Memorial Court – located on what had been Fulton Street – was completed according to landscape architect Thomas Church’s vision.³⁰



**“City Hall at Night,” n.d., seen through War Memorial.
Construction of the Civic Center complex was a crowning achievement of the rebuilding process.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Construction of the Panama Pacific International Exposition at the northern end of Van Ness Avenue was far more rapid. The Exposition filled 635 acres, extending from Van Ness Avenue to the Presidio. With a five-acre reproduction of the Panama Canal, a “central city” filled with exhibition palaces, lush landscaping and verdant grottos, drill fields, livestock exhibits, amusement concessions, and unparalleled electrical illumination, the Exposition proved a dizzying design feat that was accomplished to acclaim in only six years.

³⁰ Bridget M. Maley, “Historic Resources Evaluation Report: Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project, City of San Francisco, California,” California Department of Transportation District 4, Prepared for City and County of San Francisco, Department of Public Works, March 2007, 7.



**“Italian Towers at Night, Panama Pacific Exposition,” 1915.
The exposition was a showcase for the architectural prowess of the recovered city.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Many of the nation’s most prestigious firms were represented at the Exposition, with Mckim, Mead, and White designing the Court of the Universe, Thomas Hastings creating a 43-story Tower of Jewels, and Bernard Maybeck conceiving his ancient ruin-inspired Palace of Fine Arts. Other more prosaic marvels lured the crowds, with a 65 acre playland called “The Zone” filling several blocks between Van Ness Avenue and Laguna Street at the Exposition’s eastern edge. The recognition the event brought the newly rebuilt city was profound, with attendance at the Exposition breaking all records. At the fair’s end nearly 19 million had visited the site.³¹

The Exposition was largely built in the ephemeral plaster manner of world’s fairs, and was dismantled soon after closing. The massive amounts of fill that created the site from the Bay, however, largely formed the present-day Marina District.³² Only a few structures remained after the closing, with ultimately only the Palace of Fine Arts and a few street alignments serving as the only surviving reminders of the Exposition. The infrastructure needed to move people to the site also proved an important legacy of the event, particularly along Van Ness Avenue. As the corridor that connected much of the visiting and local population of the city to the exposition as well as the most prominent linkage between the permanent City Beautiful edifices of the Civic Center and the transient beauty of the Panama-Pacific, Van Ness Avenue played a prominent role. The city pushed to complete the second line of its new Municipal Railway up the avenue in time to carry throngs of visitors to and from the site.

³¹ Sarah Lau and Robert Lieber, *The Last Great World’s Fair: San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition 1915*. (San Francisco, California: Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, 2004) 34, 50.

³² Lau and Lieber, *The Last Great World’s Fair*, 34, 50, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Palace of Fine Arts,” 2004.



“Palace of the Fine Arts at the Panama Pacific Exposition,” 1915. The building became a lasting symbol of the grandeur of the Exposition. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.



“Guests Waiting to Enter the Panama Pacific Exposition,” on Van Ness Avenue, 1915. The Exposition occurred simultaneously with ambitious expansion in municipal transportation. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

The drive for municipal rail fortuitously coincided with the planning of the Exposition. The motivations behind city sponsored rail service stemmed from a broader demand for progressive civic reform, efficiency, and urban consolidation. Prior to the city’s foray into rail service, San Francisco was served by ten private companies, with cable cars criss-crossing the city. In the social and political climate steeped in the Progressive Movement of the early twentieth century, this complicated network of for-profit ventures was derided as corrupt and regressive. The first

Municipal Railway line was completed on Geary Street in 1912 to great fanfare. A crowd of 50,000 gathered to commemorate the opening as Mayor Rolph proclaimed that the line was, “but the nucleus of a mighty system of streetcar lines which [would] someday encompass the entire city.”³³

The next phase of the new system was the track installed along the length of Van Ness from the Civic Center to the Exposition grounds. Although several of the early, private cable car lines ran in the vicinity of the street, none traversed its length, and this transportation void presented a major threat to the success of the Exposition. In a 1913 report, City Engineer M.M. O’Shaughnessy predicted that during days of maximum attendance it would be necessary to transport up to 60,000 people per hour on rail, a staggering number that far outstripped the city’s capacity. Work began on the Van Ness track April 6, 1914, and was finished in less than five months, with the tracks and electrical work completed by August 15. In return for their haste, the city granted the contractors, The Mahoney Brothers, a bonus of \$15,000.³⁴ The track was flanked by 259 trolley poles to support the overhead wires that powered the cars (Map Reference #2). The columns of the poles were composed of reinforced concrete, with a slender, tapered square form, a decorative finial, and cast iron footings with a modest foliated design and square base. The poles were initially erected without attached streetlights, but the city ultimately found the resources to install light fixtures and by the time of the Exposition’s opening, pairs of electric streetlights were hung on each trolley pole, making Van Ness Avenue the “best lit thoroughfare in the city.”³⁵

The substantial infrastructural improvements advanced by the mandate of the Exposition were lucrative for the business community and merchants of Van Ness, as well as for the general economic recovery of the city. Further, the overflowing crowds of people travelling to and from the Exposition and the accompanying festivities and parades brought attention and business to the avenue itself. The Van Ness Avenue Improvement Association, successor to the Van Ness Avenue Improvement Club, was an ardent supporter of the railroad extension because its members saw it as vital to ensure they benefitted from the Exposition. Unlike the aesthetic aims of the nineteenth century club, who primarily sought boulevard status and civic-sponsored greenery, the twentieth century association was focused upon stimulating business activity, opening and improvement of streets, sewers, railways, and gas mains. This increasingly pragmatic philosophy reflects Van Ness’s transition from an upper-class residential corridor to an increasingly busy commercial thoroughfare. Seeking, “factories, foundries, workshops, warehouses, banks, and stores of all kinds,” the civic leaders of the Van Ness Avenue Improvement Association utilized the excitement over the Exposition as a means to highlight the avenue’s dynamic business potential.³⁶ Thus, even while the avenue connected the palaces of the Exposition with the as-yet incomplete civic palaces of government, it was increasingly becoming

³³ Anthony Perles, *The People’s Railway: The History of the Municipal Railway of San Francisco*. (Glendale, California: Interurban Press, 1981), 27.

³⁴ James Rolph Papers 1911-1930. California Historical Society, MS 1818, Box 67, Folder 4; Perles, *The People’s Railway*, 38.

³⁵ “Hundreds of Lights on Van Ness Avenue,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 20, 1915.

³⁶ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Van Ness Avenue Improvement Association*, (San Francisco, California: Pernau Publishing Company, December 1912), 3-4. A pamphlet housed at UC Berkeley Bancroft Library.

less of a city beautiful boulevard and more of a busy and diverse business and transportation corridor.

2.4 The Age of the Automobile: Auto Row and the Rise of Auto Culture Along Van Ness Avenue

Following the exodus of post-earthquake retail establishments and during the frenzied planning of the Exposition, another transition was also rapidly shaping Van Ness Avenue. The mixed use character of the avenue persisted, with residences predominating in the upper reaches, and commercial and industrial institutions dominating its middle and lower reaches, but increasingly the avenue came to be defined by a burgeoning sector in both the economy and psyche of America: the automobile. The nascent auto industry and its array of support sectors including sales, repair, and manufacturing found an ideal home in the spaces left by the vacating retail sector along Van Ness. Close to the urban core, yet endowed with more land and more moderate lot and rent prices, the Van Ness corridor quickly became one of the west's largest Auto Rows. The industry first appeared in the vicinity of Market Street, but scores of auto related businesses traveled steadily north, flanking the broad Van Ness Avenue from Market to the San Francisco Bay. By 1920, grand showrooms such as the Paige Motor Company Building accompanied scores of more modest salesrooms, garages, and repair shops (Map Reference #14).



**“Graham-Paige Company of Northern California Factory Branch at 1665 Van Ness Avenue,”1929.
The row became an architectural stage set for the automobile.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Emerging as a captivating modern marvel in the close of the nineteenth century, the automobile quickly became a potent symbol of the democratizing capability of industrial development in the twentieth century. In its earliest years, auto excursions were the domain of only the most privileged; monarchs in Europe or American leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt, but by the second decade of the twentieth century, cotton farmers in the San Joaquin Valley were driving

the machines across their fields. In 1900, the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted with pride that there were, “fully fifty of the machines in and about the city,” and just eleven years later, the city was awash in automobiles, with an official count conducted along Van Ness Avenue documenting the passage of nearly 2500 cars over the course of only several hours.³⁷ The rampant growth in automobile use in San Francisco mirrored trends across the country. Although only one percent of the population owned a car in 1910, by 1930 the number had grown to a full sixty percent, with cities like San Francisco acting as critical sales outlets for trade in the west. Along with New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, San Francisco proved one of the most prominent distribution centers for the growing auto industry.³⁸ With California leading the country in automobile sales and ownership throughout the 1910s and 1920s, the state proved a ready market for the increasingly standardized and reliable automobiles shipped largely from the middle-western industrial belt.



“Don Lee Automobile Dealership at Van Ness Avenue and O’Farrell Street,” 1928. The monumentality of the buildings symbolized the ascendancy of the auto in American culture. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

The exponentially growing consumer market was accompanied by an equally explosive rise in the number of automobile manufacturing, sales, and service operations. A list compiled by the American Automobile Association in the late 1920s estimated that from 1900 onward more than 3000 makes of cars and trucks were produced by upward of 1500 identifiable companies. By the close of World War I many had shuttered, and by the 1930s most were gone, pushed out of a

³⁷ “Outlook for the Autos,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 7, 1900.

³⁸ Sally H. Clarke. *Trust and Power: Consumers, the Modern Corporation, and the Making of the United States Automobile Market* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

maturing industry increasingly defined by consolidation and mass production.³⁹ As an early Auto Row, Van Ness Avenue housed hundreds of these firms throughout the 1910s and 1920s, with Hudsons and Hupmobiles, Cole Aeros and Cadillacs filling glassy showrooms. As a burgeoning sales corridor, the avenue became a nexus between the productive capacities of the automotive industry and the American consumer. In many senses, the showrooms were a face for the increasingly powerful auto industry, and the array of buildings erected represented an evolving conception of the automobile's central role in the city, state, and nation.⁴⁰

This evolution was remarkably rapid. Although Auto Row developed in the wake of the 1906 upheaval, the city's first automobile club had already moved to Van Ness Avenue and Golden Gate Avenue in 1900, converting the city's oldest library, the Mercantile Library, into an auto showroom. The press noted that the "ancient and modern tomes and the bookworms will make way for the new fangled vehicle as meekly as the horses are expected to disappear from the stables."⁴¹ This forecast proved prescient, and within several years Van Ness was home to a remarkably diversified array of auto salesrooms, repair shops, and assembly rooms. Initially, many of the shops and display rooms were housed in small wood frame buildings, however as the clout of the industry grew, and the importance of branding escalated in a competitive market, larger auto palaces quickly sprung up along the avenue.

Throughout the 1910s, 1920s, and to a lesser degree the 1930s, large corner lots along the avenue were developed as automobile showrooms and smaller frontages in between were filled with modest repair shops and used car sales facilities. Undeveloped lots doubled as open air car lots, with bright banners and signs. At the eastern corner of Van Ness and Market Street, the White Garage boasted an auto show room, supplied auto and motorcycle parts, and offered repairs (Map Reference #5). The intersection of Van Ness Avenue and O'Farrell Street was an anchor for the district, with the Weeks and Day designed Don Lee Building; the Earl C. Anthony Packard Showroom, designed by Bernard Maybeck in 1926; and a 1937 Art Moderne Chevrolet showroom designed by John E. Dinwiddie (Map Reference #8). At the southwest corner of Sacramento Street and Van Ness, the Paige Motor Car Company housed Max Arnold's "high grade automobiles," with the building doubling in size to accommodate increased business in 1924 (Map Reference #14). In the northern stretches of the Row, several looming dealerships designed by engineering firm Macdonald and Kahn expressed a factory-like form reminiscent of the major auto plants of the Midwest (Map Reference #13, 15, 20, 21).

³⁹ John B. Rae, *The American Automobile* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) 18.

⁴⁰ Peter J. Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990) 13, 96-97.

⁴¹ "To Shelter Automobiles," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 31, 1900.



“Used Car Dealership at Van Ness Avenue and Sacramento Street,” 1929, (Map Reference #15). Construction firm Macdonald & Kahn designed a number of factory-like dealerships with little of the stylistic embellishments of their neighbors. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

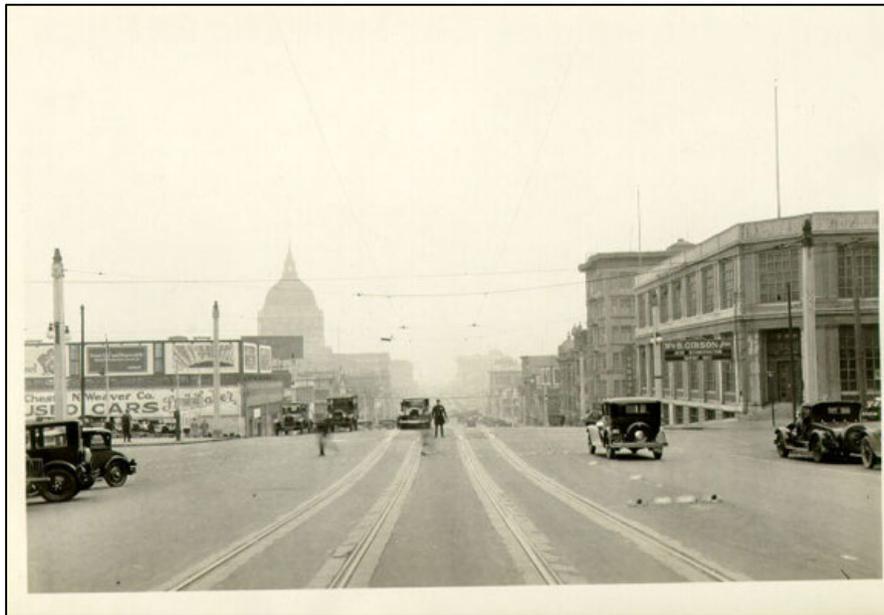
Numerous other auto shops lined the street, specializing in everything from upholstery to wood working for the ornate fleet of new autos flooding the growing California market. As the wares within the showrooms evolved, so too did the architectural styling of their surrounds, and the Van Ness corridor became defined by the breakneck commercial developments of the industry. The three decades were characterized by remarkably different architectural forms, from simple brick garages to classical pilasters and sweeping Art Moderne curves. Beginning in the 1920s, bright neon signs filled the streetscape, with rooftop billboards and bright signs framing the buildings.

With the mass market for cars only newly established and shrouded in a still-vibrant modern allure, this industry radiated an aura of excitement and grandeur that has largely faded today. In the 1920s, celebrations such as “Open Roads Week,” drew thousands to Van Ness Avenue, drawn by festivities marking “the call of the open road.” The Nash dealer filled his showroom at Van Ness Avenue and California Street with hundreds of pine and redwood trees brought from Mendocino County, transforming it into a rustic campsite with trails and tents. At the Willys Overland Pacific Company, a miner cooking flapjacks over a fire “lent a touch of reality,” to the auto affair.⁴² This breed of theatrical showmanship reflected the immense cultural importance that the automobile had attained in only two decades. Far more than a simple mode of transport, the car had come to represent a host of modern aspirations and cultural desires. This “epitome of possessions,” had a profound impact upon development both in the Bay area and the state and

⁴² “Open Road Week Draws Crowd To Row,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 26, 1921.

country as a whole.⁴³ As the “open roads” celebrated by the early industry ceded to dense networks of automotive-based settlement, the auto became central in conceptions of twentieth century life. Throughout this transition, the buildings on Van Ness Avenue became a veritable stage-set for the advancement of the automobile.

An impressive breadth of architects designed buildings along the Row, reflecting both the importance of design within the auto industry and the dynamism of early twentieth century architecture. The buildings of Auto Row reflected the work of an eclectic array of both prominent and obscure architects, some steeped in the Beaux-Arts Classicism of the nineteenth century and some at the vanguard of twentieth century industrial design. Some of the earliest buildings along the Row were designed by classically trained architects including George Adrian Applegarth, whose Beaux Arts training was reflected in his design for the White Garage at the corner of Van Ness Avenue and Market (Map Reference #5). In 1916, Willis Polk was commissioned to design a garage for the Wallace Estate Company at 799 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #6).



“Van Ness Avenue at Eddy Street,” 1929 (Map Reference #6 at right), City Hall dome in the distance. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

His design for the garage followed closely on the triumph of his role as supervising architect for the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition, a veritable showcase for refined, yet fanciful, classical design.⁴⁴ With elegant classical ornamentation and a clean aesthetic, the building was more a temple than a garage, and stands as a monument to both Polk’s considerable talent and

⁴³ Henri Lefebvre introduced the conception of the “epitome of possessions,” in his seminal work *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. The conception is also referenced in: Clay McShane, *Down The Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 126-148.

⁴⁴ “Passing of Willis Polk, Architect and Master Builder,” *The Architect and Engineer*, Volume 78, Number 3, September 1924, 108-109.

the growing importance of auto related architecture.⁴⁵ In the early 1920s, the engineering firm of Macdonald and Kahn designed a number of buildings on the Row, all striking in their factory-like aesthetic (Map Reference #13, #15, #20, #21). With broad and open plans and little traditional ornamentation, the simplicity of the buildings clearly indicated the design relationship between the car and the factory, limiting embellishment in favor of transparent functionality.⁴⁶ Although construction on the Row had virtually ceased during the 1930s, architect John Dinwiddie's 1937 design for the Ernest Ingold Chevrolet was an exuberant Moderne reminder of the resiliency of the auto industry, with streamlined curves that were reminiscent of the autos of the time and expressive of sophisticated architectural theories (Map Reference #8). All of the diverse design from the period expresses a complex relationship between architectural form and the changing face of the auto industry, and although much of the Auto Row buildings stock has been transformed and adapted for other commercial use, major elements remain.



“Representatives of Ernest Ingold Chevrolet Dealership posing with Chief of Police William J. Quinn and City Purchasing Agent T.A. Brooks in front of a group of cars sold to the San Francisco Police Department,” 1937, (Map Reference #8). San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

As the popularity and ubiquity of the automobile grew, new requirements and pressures also altered the roadway of Van Ness itself. It was one of the busiest roads in the city, with scores of pedestrians, cars, and a rail line, and was soon at the center of growing concerns over transportation safety and standardization. Gruesome accidents involving car wrecks, pedestrian fatalities, and street car injuries regularly filled newspapers, and authorities increasingly sought standardized traffic signaling mechanisms and speed enforcement. In 1915, the city began

⁴⁵ “Building for the American Auto Painting Company,” *The Architect and Engineer*, Volume 50, Number 1, October 1917, 28, accessed online at <http://books.google.com>, April 25, 2009.

⁴⁶ “An Automobile Sales building,” *The American Architect*. (New York, Volume CXIV, No. 2228, September 4, 1918) 301-302.

experimenting with small multi-colored lanterns at the street corner. By 1921, painted white curbing, motorcycle police, and red lights at some intersections were simultaneously implemented to curtail growing numbers of traffic hazards and accidents.⁴⁷

When the long-awaited span of the Golden Gate Bridge united San Francisco with the Marin headlands to the north, Van Ness' central arterial identity was sealed. Previously, travelers on the Sausalito Ferry had used the avenue to reach the ferry slips west of Fort Mason, however the construction of the bridge, and the Bay Bridge before it, ushered in the modern era of connectivity in the previously geographically isolated northern peninsula. As a component of Highway 101, Van Ness Avenue and Lombard Street became integral auto corridors that supported growing local and regional commercial, commuter, and recreational travel. Aware of the surge of traffic that would accompany the bridge completion, the San Francisco Department of Public Works, in conjunction with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), widened the roadway in 1936, narrowing the broad sidewalks to 16 feet on both sides of Van Ness. To accomplish the widening, all of the trolley poles were moved back from the roadway, a process which required many of the adjacent property owners to relinquish basements under the original sidewalks and to build new basement walls under the new narrower sidewalks. Accompanying the widening, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission undertook the relighting of the poles, affixing a single tear-drop luminaire to each following the move in 1936. The uniform lighting standards replaced the small electric lights from the Exposition era, which had largely been considered a temporary expedient for the occasion, and many of which had already been taken out of service.

In addition to the changes along Van Ness, the area of South of Market was reconfigured in the years before the completion of the bridge, with the South Van Ness extension connecting Van Ness to the southern portion of the city. Transportation planners had long criticized the abrupt termination of Van Ness at Market, stating that the "blind" street caused a central bottleneck. Carved from existing city blocks to cross Mission and overlay southbound Howard, the "Van Ness Avenue Extension" was completed in the early 1930s; a vital connection between the Peninsula and the North Bay eventually opened by the bridge several years later.⁴⁸

Thus, with the widened traffic lanes, modernized lighting fixtures, and increased through-traffic generated by the bridge, Van Ness Avenue continued to evolve as a city boulevard. Speaking to the Board of Supervisors in 1936, Mayor Angelo Rossi praised the changes, stating that they, "convert[ed] the historic San Francisco boulevard into a thoroughfare second only to Market Street in importance, property values and beauty."⁴⁹ This evaluation represented yet another recasting of Van Ness Avenue, from a staid residential boulevard, to a local commercial corridor,

⁴⁷ "New Traffic Signal System To Be Tried," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 21, 1915; "Supervisors Join in War on Speeding," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 21, 1921.

⁴⁸ Bion J. Arnold, *Report on Transportation Facilitation, City of San Francisco*; City and County of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Electric Power Bureau Contract No. 19: For Street Lighting Construction on Van Ness Avenue, October 1936, Archival Records on File at San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

⁴⁹ City and County of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Electric Power Bureau Contract No. 19: For Street Lighting Construction on Van Ness Avenue, October 1936, Archival Records on File at San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; *Proceedings of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, 1936*. 555, 604-605; "Supervisors Have Economy Streak," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 7, 1915.

and ultimately to a busy segment of a growing network of city and state roads connecting the Bay area to the state and region beyond.



“South Van Ness Avenue Extension between Mission and Howard Streets,” 1931. During this time period, city officials sought to strengthen and expand the transportation arteries of the city. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

This recasting posed significant transportation planning dilemmas throughout the mid-twentieth century. As both a prominent city thoroughfare and a portion of the preeminent north-south Route 101, Van Ness Avenue became central in highway development conflicts between citizens and transportation planners. Beginning in 1940, the state embarked upon ambitious highway development plans in the Bay area, most notably with the massive expansion and modernization of the Bayshore Highway in the South Bay. Route 101 was transformed into a modern freeway system along the Peninsula, and the urban portion of the road in San Francisco increasingly came to be viewed as a congested chink in the new system. In 1952, initial construction on the Central Freeway was promoted by the California Division of Highways (now Caltrans) as a rational solution to the bottleneck created by the path of Route 101 through the city. The freeway was planned to extend from the Bayshore Freeway to the approach to the Golden Gate Bridge, cutting a swath through the city and resting largely on elevated piers. In 1955, slightly under a mile of the route was constructed, from Thirteenth Street to Mission Street. In 1959 the second unit was opened, from Mission to Turk Street, several blocks west of the Civic Center.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ “District IV Freeways make Great Strides,” *California Highways and Public Works*, March-April 1955. 1-7; “US 101 in San Francisco,” *California Highways and Public Works*, March April 1955. 20-21.

Accompanying the explosion in post-war highway planning was a disinvestment and disavowal of the city's streetcar system. Across the city, rail lines were converted for use by motor buses. The coaches ran on electric wires, which were often strung on the original trolley poles. The H Line, running up Van Ness since the 1915 Exposition, was abandoned in March of 1950, replaced by motor coach service. The tracks were quickly removed, with a median replacing the rail and the buses strung to the original concrete poles.⁵¹



“Track Removal on Van Ness Avenue at Vallejo Street,” 1952. Tracks were removed across the city (and the country in general), as urban centers moved away from municipal street rail to busses and passenger vehicles. San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

As the state poured millions of dollars into highway modernization, including the construction on the Central Freeway and its sister roadway the Embarcadero Freeway, simmering citizen protest over road construction in San Francisco exploded into a full-scale “Freeway Revolt.” Local anger at the seeming indifference of transportation planners to the condensed architectural fabric of the city left the San Francisco Board of Supervisors torn between appeasing the local constituency and realizing statewide transportation goals. Mirroring other urban protests such as that against the Robert Moses led freeway plans in New York City, San Franciscans railed against neighborhood destruction caused by rampant road construction. Ultimately successful, the furor led to a 1959 vote in which the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to terminate construction on most freeways throughout the city. Work on both the Central Freeway and the Embarcadero Freeway halted, and the massive corridors remained incomplete stubs that fell far short of their intended terminus. As a result of this controversy, the congested urban corridor of Van Ness Avenue retained the mantle of US Route 101. In contrast to the 1955 depictions of a freeway connecting US Route 101 to the Golden Gate Bridge, Caltrans reports in 1961 were strikingly modest, stating that, “construction and design activities, except for landscaping and

⁵¹ Perles, *The People's Railway*, 180.

minor projects, are confined at present.” The yearly report noted instead that, “bids were opened for resurfacing Van Ness Avenue,” and once again it was San Francisco’s answer to Route 101.⁵²

Paradoxically, as highway construction transformed much of California and millions of automobiles filled the multi-lane roads, the fortunes of Auto Row fell into decline. The freeways, ribboning from the urban core to the sprawling periphery, allowed rampant population dispersal and commercial interconnectivity. An auto showroom on Van Ness Avenue, with high rent and land values, and compressed space, often proved no match for the cheap rents, convenient parking, and proximity of surrounding suburban dealers.



**“Building at Van Ness Avenue and Post Street Being Torn Down,” (was an auto showroom).
The midcentury period was a time of attrition for the declining fortunes of automobile row.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Further, as the romance and mystique of the automobile ceded to a comfortable familiarity and utilitarian ubiquity, the palaces of the earlier era seemed increasingly anachronistic and outdated. By the 1950s, and escalating through the 1960s and 1970s, auto dealers left Van Ness Avenue. Old showrooms stood vacant or were filled with bakeries, restaurants, laundromats, movie theaters, even gymnasiums. Although some prominent dealers remained, with several sales rooms remaining today, the cohesive strip of diverse architectural palaces eroded and Van Ness Avenue once again assumed a new urban character. A targeted plan developed by the San Francisco Planning Department in the late 1980s acknowledged the transitional challenges facing the avenue, citing the need for an increased mixed-use and residential character as well as the necessity of creative adaptation of many of the distinctive auto showrooms along the avenue. The plan also encouraged the planting of trees and greenery along the street and in the median, an echo of the boulevard plans of the late nineteenth century.⁵³

⁵²Walton Bean, *California: An Interpretive History*. (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1968) 529; Genevieve Giuliano and Susan Hanson, *The Geography of Urban Transportation*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004) 400; “Bay Area Freeways,” *California Highways and Public Works*, May-June 1961. 1-9.

⁵³ San Francisco Planning Department, “Van Ness Avenue Area Plan.”



**“Heald College School of Architecture at Sutter Street,” 1964. One of many former auto showrooms and other related buildings that were converted to a wide array of uses.
San Francisco Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.**

Thus from the 1858 survey to today’s mixed use avenue, a number of distinctive epochs have shaped Van Ness Avenue: residential settlement accompanying the tumultuous nineteenth century San Francisco population boom, the profound impact of the dislocation of the 1906 Earthquake and the ensuing commercial rush, the infrastructural mandate and progressive City Beautiful aims of the Panama-Pacific Exposition and Civic Center, and the rise and hegemony of both the automobile and the modern highway in city and regional life. Throughout these periods the avenue has served as a constantly evolving corridor, altered successively to suit the urban aims and motivations of the period. The avenue bears layers from each period, with several pre-earthquake residences in its upper portions, trolley poles from the Exposition era, prominent showrooms, as well as modern residential high-rises. These layers indicate a successive reconceptualization of the corridor that has allowed it to remain a viable and dynamic component of San Francisco’s street system.

3 DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES

The architectural APE for the built environment includes 27 individual historic period resources and 3 multi-component historic period resources. All of these built environment resources are located within the 2.2 mile Van Ness Avenue corridor between Mission Street and North Point Street, and relate to a number of historic contexts that have shaped the study area. The 30 resources can be classified according to five distinct resource types, all of which are discussed separately below: Infrastructure, Civic, Social/Fraternal, Commercial, and Residential.

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	Resource Type
1	Van Ness Avenue Corridor	1858-on going	Infrastructure
2	Van Ness Avenue Trolley Poles	1914, 1936,	Infrastructure
3	Civic Center Historic District / War Memorial Complex / Birthplace of UN	1915-1970s	Civic / Government
4	11-35 Van Ness Avenue	1913	Social / Fraternal
5	30 Van Ness Avenue	1908	Commercial / Auto Row
6	799 Van Ness Avenue	1916, 1925	Commercial / Auto Row
7	800 Van Ness Avenue	1920	Commercial / Auto Row
8	945-999 Van Ness Avenue	1937	Commercial / Auto Row
9	1050-1066 Van Ness Avenue	1908	Residential
10	1233 Van Ness Avenue	1913	Commercial / Auto Row
11	1243 Van Ness Avenue	1913	Commercial / Auto Row
12	1320 Van Ness Avenue	1911	Social / Fraternal
13	1625 Van Ness Avenue	1919	Commercial / Auto Row
14	1699 Van Ness Avenue	1919	Commercial / Auto Row
15	1776 Sacramento Street	1919	Commercial / Auto Row
16	1730 Van Ness Avenue	1919	Commercial / Auto Row
17	1920 Van Ness Avenue	1918	Commercial / Auto Row
18	1930 Van Ness Avenue	1922	Commercial / Auto Row
19	1940 Van Ness Avenue	1921	Commercial / Auto Row
20	1946 Van Ness Avenue	1920	Commercial / Auto Row
21	2001 Van Ness Avenue	1920	Commercial / Auto Row
22	2027 Van Ness Avenue	1936	Commercial
23	2400 Van Ness Avenue	1907	Residential
24	2418 Van Ness Avenue	1909	Residential
25	2420-2424 Van Ness Avenue	1914	Residential
26	2430 Van Ness Avenue	1925	Residential
27	2501 Van Ness Avenue	1906	Residential
28	2509-2515 Van Ness Avenue	1901	Residential
29	2517-2521 Van Ness Avenue	1902	Residential
30	2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue	1942, 1952, 1962	Commercial

3.1 Infrastructural Resource Type

A number of infrastructural elements are found within the Architectural APE, including the roadway of Van Ness Avenue itself and accompanying street features including sidewalks, medians, fire hydrants, traffic signal devices, signage, and vegetation (Map Reference #1). In addition, infrastructural elements of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (MUNI) transit system line the roadway, including bus shelters, support poles, and associated wiring for the Overhead Contact System (OCS). The roadway was initially established under the Van Ness Survey of 1858 and currently contains six vehicle traffic lanes and wide concrete sidewalks along each side (**photograph 3.1.A**). In addition to being a major city street, Van Ness Avenue is part of US Route 101, which runs from Los Angeles to Olympia, Washington. The US 101 alignment within the APE runs along South Van Ness from Mission Street northward to meet Van Ness at Market Street, and continues along Van Ness Avenue until turning west toward the Golden Gate Bridge at Lombard Street. A portion of this route is actually on South Van Ness Avenue, which is the Van Ness extension south of Market Street completed in the early 1930s as a means of relieving congestion and better connecting the northern and southern portions of the city. The road is the same width as Van Ness Avenue, with similar accompanying street features (**photograph 3.1.B**).

Street features along the Van Ness corridor include scored concrete sidewalks, approximately fifteen feet in width, on both sides of the street, as well as concrete medians of varying widths in the center of the roadway. Both sidewalks are punctuated by various types of infrastructure, including trolley poles (Map Reference #2), modern light standards, fire hydrants, call boxes, traffic signals, signage, bus shelters, benches, and other elements. The concrete medians partially paved and also hold a number of street features, including traffic signals, signage, and landscaping. All of the ancillary features date from various points in the twentieth century and later. Some of the fire hydrants date from the early 1900s; however, most of the street features including traffic signals and signs are from the modern period (**photograph 3.1.C, 3.1.D, 3.1.E**).

In addition to the infrastructure relating to the Van Ness Avenue transportation corridor, the APE includes a network of trolley poles that are the sole remaining infrastructural element of an early twentieth century Municipal Railway line once located on Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #2). Originally consisting of 259 poles, the system was constructed in 1914-1915 to support the overhead power supply wires for the electric streetcar system. Although the tracks were removed from Van Ness Avenue in the early 1950s, the poles now are incorporated in the Overhead Contact System (OCS) for the MUNI bus system and also hold a number of modern infrastructural elements added to them over time. Many of the poles have been altered through the installation of signage and electronic traffic lights. The trolley poles also serve as street lights, and have a spiraling bracket and pendant luminaire light. This lighting system was affixed to the poles in 1936; however, nearly all of the pendant lights are replacements from the modern period.

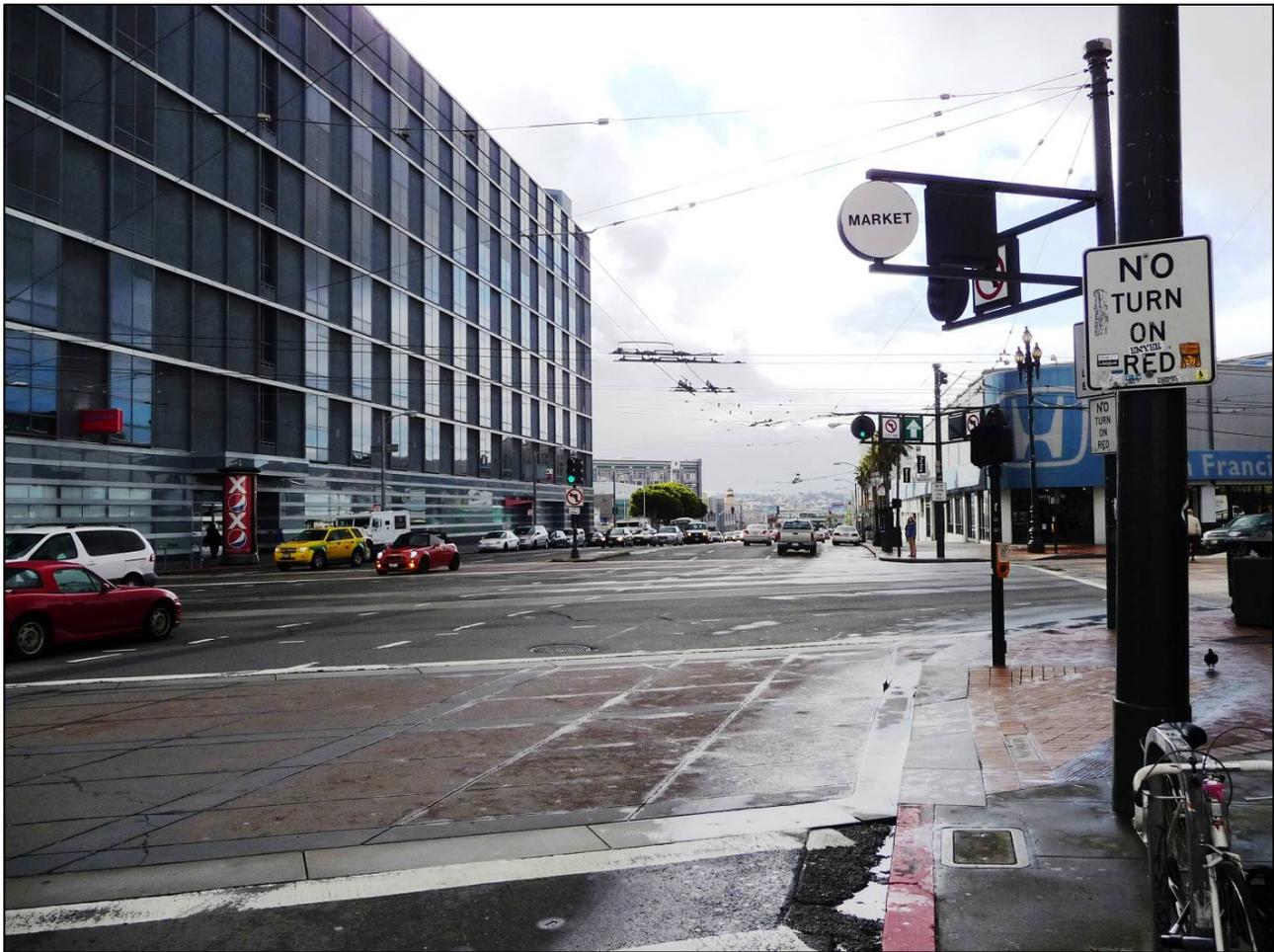
All of the original poles are constructed of reinforced concrete, with decorative cast iron finials and bases. The finial features a tapered square crown cradled by abacus and medallions terminating in volute detailing and the base is square with foliated detailing. While all of the finials are original, the bases are a mixture of original cast iron and replacement fiberglass castings that replicate the original. On the original bases, one side consists of a removable cast iron door, allowing access to the mechanical equipment within. The door is stamped "Joshua

Hendy Iron Works S.F. CA”, a Bay area foundry commissioned to make the base. Several of the doors are stamped “Steiger and Kerr Stove and Foundry Company S.F. CAL.” Most likely these doors were early replacements for the original Hendy products. The replacement fiberglass bases do not have access doors and do not bear a maker’s mark.

The overall integrity of the poles is quite poor. Many of the shafts are spalling and deteriorated. Although over one-half of the bases are modern replacement fiber glass replicas, many of the original and new bases are highly damaged and deteriorated. The cast iron bases exhibit substantial corrosion, and many are missing conduit access doors. The fiberglass replicas are also chipped and broken, pushed askew from the base, and often missing major portions or fasteners. Further, although the poles run from Market Street to North Point Street, the uniform aesthetic of the network has been diminished by the insertion of modern support poles and the removal of 33 of the original poles. Throughout the entire avenue, modern poles have been introduced to support MUNI wires, traffic signals, and other infrastructural elements, often directly abutting the concrete poles. These insertions greatly alter the visual cohesiveness of the network (**see photograph 3.1.E**).



**Photograph 3.1.A: Van Ness Avenue, facing north from Market Street, 3/10/2009.
The busy avenue contains six vehicle traffic lanes.**



Photograph 3.1.B: South Van Ness Avenue, facing south from Market Street, 3/10/2009. South Van Ness Avenue was created in the early 1930s to extend the main thoroughfare southward from Market Street.



Photograph 3.1.C: Van Ness Avenue, facing east at Green Street, 3/10/2009. The avenue contains various types of street feature and civic infrastructure, some dating to the early twentieth century.



Photograph 3.1.D: Van Ness Avenue, facing north at Bay Street, 3/10/2009. The avenue also has modern street furniture, such as a number of MUNI bus shelters.



Photograph 3.1.E: Van Ness Avenue, facing north at Greenwich Street, 3/10/2009. A network of trolley poles lines the avenue from Market Street to North Point Street.

3.2 Civic Resource Type

The southern portion of the Architectural APE is surrounded by the San Francisco Civic Center, which is a NHL, listed on the NRHP, and is a locally designated historic district (Map Reference #3). The District is an assemblage of monumental buildings around a central open space, with additional buildings extending the axis. Construction on the monumental buildings of the Civic Center began in the early 1910s and continued through the early 1930s with the completion of the Opera House and the War Memorial buildings on the west side of Van Ness Avenue. Some lesser buildings and non-contributing buildings date from both before and after these dates. The architectural design of the Civic Center is derived from the Beaux Arts City Beautiful tradition, and the major buildings are primarily Classical in design with heavy proportional massing, light colored granite and terra cotta, and rich ornamentation.

Van Ness Avenue crosses through the District between City Hall and the War Memorial / Opera Hall buildings. Architect Arthur Browne, Jr. designed these monumental edifices. City Hall stands to the east of the avenue and was completed in 1915. The building is rectangular in plan, with a steel frame clad in gray granite. The architectural design of the building includes a prominent central dome sheathed in copper, rhythmic Doric colonnades, and a richly sculpted pediment depicting a female “San Francisco.” The building is slightly recessed on the lot, with a landscaped buffer separating it from the Van Ness Avenue corridor (**photograph 3.2.A**).

The War Memorial stands on the western side of the Avenue, and consists of two monumental buildings (the other is the Opera Hall) and a formal Memorial Court. The complex was completed in 1932, and is also in the Classical style. The two buildings are very similar in design. Both are of steel frame construction and clad in gray granite and terra cotta with a leaded copper mansard roof. The plans of both are generally rectangular, with rusticated bases, Doric columns, and regularly placed archways that break the massing of the building. The Memorial Court stands between the two buildings, and is enclosed by blue and gold ornamental iron fencing. The court features a central lawn encircled by sidewalk lined with box hedges, sycamore trees, and decorative iron lamps. In contrast to City Hall, the War Memorial has very little formal buffer separating it from the Van Ness corridor, with only a wide concrete sidewalk (**photograph 3.2.B**).

The portions of Van Ness Avenue that cross through the Civic Center are largely no different than the remainder of the avenue. The traffic lanes, medians, light standards, trolley poles, and street features remain the same, with the sole difference being that the trolley poles are painted gold at their bases.



Photograph 3.2.A: City Hall, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. Van Ness Avenue, between McAllister and Grove streets, crosses through the San Francisco Civic Center National Historic Landmark District.



Photograph 3.2.B: War Memorial Complex, facing southwest from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. The War Memorial Complex flanks the west side of Van Ness, with little formal buffer or landscaping separating it from the roadway.

3.3 Social and Fraternal Resource Type

A number of social, religious, and fraternal buildings line Van Ness Avenue. As a prominent city street, first as a largely residential corridor and subsequently as an increasingly commercial thoroughfare, Van Ness Avenue was home to a number of high profile social buildings. Only two such buildings appear in this Architectural APE, both of which are early twentieth century Masonic Buildings (Map Reference #4 and #12). Both are characterized by a grand scale that fills an entire Van Ness block-front, and both are designed in exuberant Revival styles that reflect the historicist associations of the Masonic architectural form.

11-35 Van Ness Avenue stands between Oak and Hickory Street in the southern portion of the Architectural APE. The building was completed in 1913 and designed by Bliss and Faville. Clad in granite, marble, and terra cotta, the building is rectangular in form and solid in its massing. With an Italian Gothic design interspersed with Romanesque arches and a prominent machicolated cornice, the building is a design amalgamation of various historic periods, a design intent that is a common feature of the Masonic Temple. The building is no longer houses the Masons, and much of the Masonic ornamentation was removed in an early 1980s rehabilitation. Additionally, the street level portions of the building have been altered by successive commercial insertions (**photograph 3.3.A**).

1320 Van Ness Avenue stands between Sutter Street and Fern Street. Completed in 1911, the building was designed by the firm of O'Brien and Werner, who went on to design most of the early twentieth century Masonic temples in the state of California. The building was constructed for the Scottish Rite Order of the Masons, and is designed in the likeness of the Strozzi Palace in Florence, Italy. The steel frame concrete building rests on a smooth granite base. A simple dentil stringcourse separates this from the upper stories of the building, which are dominated by seven two-story arched window insertions. The smooth facing of these upper stories is given texture by orderly columns of anchors that project slightly from the smooth surface, yielding a beaded like surface. The fourth story of the building is demarcated by a narrow course of windows, separated by eight embossed panels with a rosette motif. The elaborate galvanized iron cornice flows virtually uninterrupted from this window course, with a highly ornate entablature. With a foliated fleur-de-lis band, slim dentils, egg and dart molding, scroll brackets, and a terminating course of bears and foliated wreaths, the cornice provides a rich and emphatic anchor that unites the disparate elements of the facade. Like 11-35 Van Ness Avenue, the building is no longer in use by the Masons; however, it has very few evident physical alterations (**photograph 3.3.B**).



Photograph 3.3.A: 11-35 Van Ness Avenue, facing northwest from Van Ness Avenue and Market Street, 3/10/2009. The former Masonic Temple has been converted to office functions but remains prominent at the corner of Market Street.



Photograph 3.3.B: 1320 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue and Sutter Street, 3/10/2009. The former Scottish Rite Masonic Temple holds a theater and retains many of its original features.

3.4 Commercial Resource Type

The Architectural APE is characterized by a diverse array of commercial construction, primarily dating from the immediate years following the Earthquake of 1906 to the late 1930s. Within this commercial subset, the single most common type are those related to the development of Auto Row. Sixteen of the 30 resources in the Architectural APE were constructed as automobile sales and service related facilities. The buildings were constructed between 1908 and the late 1930s, as rampant market growth in the automobile industry produced a strikingly dense and diverse urban building stock that centered upon Van Ness Avenue. This commercial development required an array of buildings, from grand showrooms to humble garages, however the hierarchical diversity was bound by a singular association with the promotion of the automobile.

This automotive association resulted in a marked commonality of functional form. Most of the larger auto buildings were of reinforced concrete construction; however, some of the smaller buildings were of wood-framed masonry construction. Auto related buildings typically had very large floor to ceiling display windows with light framing members, to allow maximum views of display areas from the street. The buildings generally had retail entries on the primary Van Ness elevation and garage entries on the secondary streets that provided auto access to the upper portions of the building. Within the building, floor plans were typically very open, accommodating large showrooms at the first level and service areas on the upper stories. Most of the secondary garage entrances led to ramps that led to the upper levels, and many of the buildings had freight elevators as well as rooftop parking areas.

The three most active Auto Row decades from about 1910 through the 1930s were characterized by remarkably different architectural forms, from simple brick garages to auto palaces with classical pilasters, sweeping Art Moderne curves, and factory-like massing. The survey population includes a wide range of these forms. A number of the buildings are simple single-story storefront, with one large room and prominent street windows (**photograph 3.4.A**). These buildings were filled with lesser dealers and service facilities. Although they are quite modest in scale, most bore some architectural embellishment, typically in the form of a Classical cornice or pilasters. The rest of the auto buildings were more prominent in scale, with multiple stories and pronounced architectural ornamentation. These “auto palaces” were dealerships largely built in the late 1910s and 1920s, with only one built in the late 1930s. Many occupied large corner lots that maximized street frontage and offered multiple access points for pedestrians and autos. The height of the buildings varies, however most were between two and five stories, with vertical differentiation between sales and service. The architectural styles of these larger facilities varied widely, and reflected changing consumer taste as well as changing architectural persuasions. Generally, the earliest buildings were of a more Classical form and later construction exhibited significant advances in modern industrially influenced architecture, as well as Moderne embellishments (**photograph 3.4.B, 3.4.C, 3.4.D, 3.4.E**).

Very few of the auto related buildings in the Architectural APE remain in auto use. Some are vacant and many are occupied by unrelated commercial uses. The decline of Auto Row began in the 1930s and successive waves of major storefront alterations have destroyed many of the original Auto Row features. The most common alteration is the removal and infill of the glass storefront and total reconfiguration of the entry level. This reconfiguration often includes the

infill of secondary garage entries. Above the street level, however, many of the original features remain intact (**photograph 3.4.F**).

In addition to the auto related resources that have been converted to general commercial uses, the Architectural APE also includes resources that were built as generalized commercial spaces. One, 2027 Van Ness Avenue, was built in the 1930s, and the other, 2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue, was built in the 1950s (Map Reference #22, #30). Both are extremely modest in scale, with little architectural ornamentation. 2027 Van Ness was built as a Safeway store and has modest Art Deco detailing and 2525-2545 Van Ness was built as an office building with minimal International Style detailing. Both are quite altered, with new storefront infill (**photograph 3.4.G and 3.4.H**).



Photograph 3.4.A: 1940 Van Ness Avenue, facing east From Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. A number of the former auto buildings were originally utilitarian in nature and have been substantially altered since their original construction.



Photograph 3.4.B: 1699 Van Ness Avenue, facing southwest from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009799. The Paige Auto building exemplifies the architectural aspirations of the row.



Photograph 3.4.C: 799 Van Ness Avenue, facing northwest from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. The monumentality of this garage belies its original prosaic automobile-related function.



Photograph 3.4.D: 1946 Van Ness Avenue, facing southeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. This 1920s dealership was designed with a factory-like aesthetic that marked a change from the earlier auto “palaces.”



Photograph 3.4.E: 945-999 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. This building was the last major automobile showroom built on Van Ness Avenue.



Photograph 3.4.F: 800 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. Many former automotive buildings have been altered by successive changes at the storefronts and other elevations.



Photograph 3.4.G: 2027 Van Ness Avenue, facing west from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. Only a small number of commercial buildings along Van Ness were not built for auto use. This building was a Safeway grocery.



Photograph 3.4.H: 2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue, facing west from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. This midcentury office building has been altered at the storefront and through other changes to the rear.

3.5 Residential Resource Type

Prior to the 1906 earthquake and fire, much of Van Ness Avenue was characterized by residential construction, with wood frame apartment flats, large exuberant Queen Anne residences, and a number of prominent mansions. Although the avenue transitioned to an increasingly commercial corridor following the disaster, a number of residential dwellings survived the earthquake and a dozens of small flats and increasingly large apartments were built in the years that followed, particularly in the northern reaches of the avenue that were less commercially intensive. Reflecting the increasingly commercial tenor, however, many of the residences were converted to partial commercial use, with the ground floor altered to house a number of retail functions. The Architectural APE includes eight residential resources, representing the full diversity of residential construction from the historic period.

The earliest three buildings date from the years immediately before the earthquake and are located in the northern portion of the Architectural APE (Map Reference #27-29). The three buildings are similar in form, with wood frame construction, wood or stucco siding, prominent bays, and long narrow plans that fill the entire lot. The buildings were all developed as residential flats, with three levels of apartments. Originally, the design of the buildings reflected the eclectic ornamentation of the period, with molded details including pilasters, swags, Flemish dormers, and emphatic cornices. To varying degrees, these original details have all been altered. These alterations range from rooftop additions to the total removal of all defining architectural features. Additionally, one of the buildings (2501 Van Ness Avenue) was raised a level in the 1920s to accommodate commercial use (**photograph 3.5.A, 3.5.B**).

The other residential buildings in the Architectural APE date to the spate of construction that followed the earthquake, and are almost entirely located in the northern portion of the Architectural APE. Three of the buildings are very similar to those constructed immediately before the disaster and reflect the same basic massing, design, and materials (Map Reference #24-26). One is similar but far larger, designed to hold an increased number of smaller apartments rather than several residential flats. This apartment building is on a prominent corner lot, maximizing the light and air necessary for intensive residential development. This type has also have been thoroughly stripped of all original ornamentation and re-sided (Map Reference #23 and #27) (**photograph 3.5.C, 3.5.D**).

The only residential resource located in the southern portion of the Architectural APE is a prominent apartment hotel constructed in 1909 by architectural firm Cunningham and Politeo (Map Reference #9). The building is of steel frame and concrete construction and is rectangular plan with recessed light courts that break the massing of the building into separated sections, each suggesting an individual building. Five stories in height, the building is crowned by an emphatic over-scaled cornice supported by equally grandiose ornate brackets. The ground floor of the building has been heavily altered by modern commercial insertions, and little of the original architectural aesthetic of the street level remains (**photograph 3.5.E**).



Photograph 3.5.A: 2501 Van Ness Avenue, facing northwest from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. This early twentieth century apartment building has been stripped of all original architectural detailing and ornamentation.



Photograph 3.5.B: 2517-2521 Van Ness Avenue, facing west from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. A number of buildings, including this three story apartment building, retain original details.



Photograph 3.5.C: 2418, 2420-24, 2430 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. Post earthquake flats construction was often similar to the styles popular for residential buildings before the disaster.



Photograph 3.5.D: 2400 Van Ness Avenue, facing northeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. Many of the post-earthquake apartment buildings have also been stripped of detailing.



Photograph 3.5.E: 1050-1066 Van Ness Avenue, facing southeast from Van Ness Avenue, 3/10/2009. This three bay building was designed as an apartment hotel.

4 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

JRP prepared this HRIER as part of the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project to comply with applicable sections of the NHPA and the implementing regulations of the ACHP. The built environment resources have also been evaluated in accordance with Section 15064.5(a)(2)-(3) of the CEQA Guidelines using the criteria outlined in Section 5024.1 of the California Public Resources Code.

4.1 Properties Determined to Appear Eligible for NRHP and CRHR Listing through this Evaluation

This study has concluded that four properties evaluated as part of this project appear to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources: 799 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #6), 945-999 Van Ness (Map Reference #8), 1320 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #12), and 1946 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #20). All four properties are commercial/auto row type resources.

799 Van Ness Avenue is a two story automobile garage designed by Willis Polk. The building was constructed in 1916 as a single-story garage and in 1925 a story was added, also by the Willis Polk firm. As a prominent example of the development of San Francisco's early twentieth century Auto Row that retains a high degree of architectural integrity, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion A (CRHR Criterion 1), at the local level for its significant associations with the development of automobile culture and Auto Row in San Francisco. Additionally, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion C (CRHR Criterion 3) as a significant example of a type, period, and method of construction, and the work of a master. The building melded a sophisticated Neoclassical design with pragmatic industrial requirements, with neither element compromised. The reinforced concrete frame was subsumed by the cascading industrial windows, in many senses a modest precursor for the architectural milestone of Polk's later Hallidie Building. This orderly and generous arrangement of industrial windows, flanking all exposed elevations, lent adequate light for operation and served as a monumental span along the avenue. The chamfered edges of the building broke the building's blocky mass, while providing coherent access for both customer and automobile. With broad open floors characterizing both the 1916 and 1925 construction, the program of the building was simple and straightforward, accommodating auto functions spanning from the 1910s to the 1990s. While the design of the building did not "pretend" to be anything but a garage, it celebrated, and even elevated, the very nature of a garage and reflected the elevated status attained by the auto in the early years of the twentieth century. The period of significance encompasses its period of construction between 1917 and 1925.

945-999 Van Ness Avenue is a two story Art Moderne automobile showroom building designed by John Dinwiddie in 1937. As the last major auto showroom developed on San Francisco's Auto Row, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion A (CRHR Criterion 1) at the local level for its significant associations with the development of automobile culture and Auto Row in San Francisco. Additionally, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion C (CRHR Criterion 3) as a significant example of a type, period, and method of construction, and the work of a master. Filling the last major vacant lot along Van Ness, the curvilinear form of the Ernest Ingold Showroom was an emphatic affirmation of the preeminence of the automobile in early twentieth century America and the critical role of advanced architectural expression in

the early development of America's automobile industry. Standing adjacent to Bernard Maybeck's exuberant Packard Showroom, the striking design of the Art Moderne Chevrolet building represented both continuity in the architectural aspirations of Auto Row, and a great stride forward in cohesive modern design. Even at a time when the automobile was increasingly providing means toward greater commercial and residential suburbanization, the building represented the continued, although waning, importance of the urban Auto Row. The building also expressed the resiliency of the auto industry following the travails and dislocation of the Depression. Its design incorporated significant lessons gleaned from the challenge, namely the paramount importance of service as well as sales. Unlike many of the earlier auto buildings along the row, which boasted commodious and elegant showrooms with far less attention given to the functional attributes of service, the leading concept for the Dinwiddie design was related to holistic service attributes. As a salesman, Ingold was chastened by the Depression, and although the building seemed grand in its Moderne design and scale it was built with an advanced appreciation of the tenuous nature of the industry. Rather than focusing solely upon the gleaming metal of the newest car, the building supported and promoted the steady, simple maintenance that kept the old car running. With its clean design and impressive scale, the building represented an integrated service and sales awareness of the maturing industry and did so with architectural aplomb. The building retains a high degree of integrity and its period of significance is the construction date, 1937.

1320 Van Ness Avenue is a four-story steel frame and concrete Renaissance Revival Scottish Rite Temple designed in 1911 by the architectural firm O'Brien and Werner. As one of the first major temples built for the Scottish Rite Masons in California, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion A (CRHR Criterion 1) at the regional level for its significant associations with the development of fraternal organizations statewide. Additionally, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion C (CRHR Criterion 3) as a significant example of a type, period, and method of construction, and the work of a master. The palazzo style building is a significant design by architect Carl Werner that is representative of important symbolic and functional aspects of Masonic architecture and was the first of many Masonic buildings designed by Werner. As an organization steeped in historical associations, Scottish Rite buildings spoke a diverse revivalist architectural language, with Islamic, Moorish, Renaissance, Gothic, and even Colonial overtones. The buildings themselves served as stage-sets for the rituals of the body, with theaters, iconography, and precise spatial orders written into the building's form. The construction of 1320 Van Ness Avenue reflects the intimate union between ritual and the built form. The completion of the Temple was the first major commission undertaken by Werner for the Scottish Rite, and as such provided an important aesthetic model for subsequent work. The construction also elevated architectural expectations for the Scottish Rite and the Masons in general. As quasi-public buildings, Masonic Temples had a complex mandate to both house the internal functions of the group and project a suitable public façade. *The Architect and Engineer* noted this mandate, stating that, "probably no building outside of those generally recognized as of a public character calls for more critical inspection than the Masonic Temple." Prior to Werner's commissions, the article continued, "the Masonic bodies had not appreciated the fact that better architecture and better buildings are desired, in fact expected, from them."⁵⁴ With the construction of 1320 Van Ness Avenue, the Scottish Rite began an important building campaign

⁵⁴ "Some California Masonic Temples," *The Architect & Engineer of California*, 49.

the produced notable buildings across the state. The building retains a high degree of integrity and has a period of significance encompassing its construction, 1909-1911.

1946 Van Ness Avenue is a three story reinforced concrete Oakland Motor Auto Company showroom designed and built by engineering firm Alan Macdonald and Felix Kahn in 1920. As a prominent auto showroom developed on San Francisco's Auto Row, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion A (CRHR Criterion 1) at the local level for its significant associations with the development of automobile culture and Auto Row in San Francisco. Additionally, the building appears eligible under NRHP Criterion C (CRHR Criterion 3) as a significant example of a type, period, and method of construction, and the work of a master. Macdonald and Kahn, who were better known for their reinforced concrete bridge spans, towering dams, and concrete tankers; designed the building with a sophisticated industrial treatment that was an emphatic affirmation of the revolutionary cultural effect of the automobile. Requiring new social, economic, and structural models of operation, the rapid development of the car created an unprecedented opportunity for the melding of architecture and industry in the public realm. The building at 1946 Van Ness Avenue is a sophisticated representation of this fusion. Both Kahn and Macdonald were noted innovators in the burgeoning field of reinforced concrete, and, perhaps more than any other western firm, extended these innovations with rapid surety to a broad swath of modern construction outlets. The auto showroom at 1946 Van Ness Avenue stands as an important representative of their work and retains a high degree of integrity from the historic period. Unlike many of the high-profile showrooms along the avenue, such as the Don Lee Building or the Paige Auto Building, the industrial simplicity of 1946 Van Ness Avenue bore little of the classical detailing of the traditional early twentieth century form. With its orderly grid, massive scale, and straightforward function, the building stood as a veritable factory in the city. The building was reflective of the design of major automobile plants, such as those designed in Michigan for the Ford Company by Felix Kahn's brother, Albert. The building was one of several designed by the firm along the Row in the early 1920s, and stands as the best example of their advanced interpretation of commercial industrial architecture (see Map Reference #13, #15,#21). The building retains a high degree of integrity and its period of significance is the construction date, 1920.

4.2 Properties Determined Not to Appear Eligible for NRHP and CRHR Listing through this Evaluation

The remaining 23 previously unevaluated resources surveyed and evaluated as part of this study do not appear eligible for listing in either the NRHP or the CRHR. The majority of the resources do not meet the criteria for listing because of a lack of significance; however, those few that do possess potential significance have all experienced substantial compromises in their integrity from the historic period and do not appear eligible for listing because of these extensive alterations and changes over time. Each resource type is discussed in turn below.

Non-Eligible Infrastructural Resource Type

Infrastructural elements in the Architectural APE include the Van Ness Avenue transportation corridor (plus one block of South Van Ness Avenue), as well as the Van Ness Avenue trolley poles (Map Reference #1 and #2). Neither appears eligible for listing in either the NRHP or the CRHR. As a corridor, Van Ness Avenue is the product of successive development eras and it does not retain integrity to any one period. Instead, it illustrates overlapping layers of urban

infrastructural change. The features of the roadway itself (paving, curbing, medians, and planting), as well as the plethora of street furniture (traffic signals, signage, bus shelters, and various utility features) have all changed over time. Municipal Railway tracks were installed in the center of the road for about 40 years, and were then removed and replaced with medians. Similarly, the visual and functional character of the buildings lining the avenue have changed greatly over time, with residential development ceding to commercial, and this in-turn giving way of late to modern high-rise residential. Both as a transportation corridor and a developmental center, Van Ness Avenue is indicative of general alteration, adaptation, and change. This identity lacks both significance and integrity and the roadway corridor does not appear to meet the criteria for listing in either the NRHP or the CRHR under any of the criteria of significance.

The Van Ness Avenue Trolley Poles as a single property illustrate potential significance under Criterion A (Criterion 1) and Criterion C (Criterion 3); however, a lack of overall integrity undermines the poles' ability to convey that potential significance. The concrete poles, and the associated cast iron bases and decorative finials, date from 1914 and are associated with both the overall development of the Municipal Railway and the targeted infrastructural preparation for the Panama Pacific International Exposition. The brackets and lighting fixtures were added in 1936, in preparation for the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge. As a linkage between the Exposition grounds, the newly reconstructed Civic Center, and commercial Market Street corridor, the network of trolley poles reflected a carefully honed design sensibility that conveyed the City Beautiful and Beaux-Arts ideals undergirding the development projects.

Although the poles do possess these potentially significant attributes for the 1914 era under Criteria A and C (Criteria 1 and 3), as a group they display a marked loss of physical integrity that undercuts their ability to convey significance. The major changes to the streetcar system of which they were a part, and the overall deterioration, infill, and widespread replacement of major design features of the remaining poles, undermines their integrity. These alterations critically diminish the seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Without possessing essential integrity, the poles cannot convey their potential historical associations, within either the 1914 or 1936 potential periods of significance.

The design, materials, workmanship, association, feeling, and setting of the poles were substantially degraded when the streetcar system that they originally served was completely removed in the early 1950s. Furthermore, many individual poles are missing and many more have lost character-defining features, such as bases, or the integrity of the shaft was compromised through insertion of modern traffic signals, utility conduits, and signage. The replacement of over one-half of the bases of the original poles along the entire length of the avenue and the addition of numerous modern poles alongside the original poles profoundly diminishes the poles' ability to convey integrity of workmanship and materials (see DPR 523 MR#2 for map of poles and further data on pole integrity). The replacement of the 1914 light fixtures with 1936 fixtures also diminished integrity of original design, materials, and workmanship. Although the poles do retain some integrity of feeling and association, much of this association is not from the historic period, but instead derived from replicated modern materials. According to the National Register, the retention of feeling and association alone is

never sufficient to support eligibility of a resource for the National Register, particularly when much of this association and feeling is maintained by historic re-creation.⁵⁵ In addition to their inability to convey significance as an individual property, the poles, both individually and collectively, do not possess any potential to be considered as a historic property.

Non-Eligible Civic Resource Type

None of the previously unevaluated buildings in the Architectural APE are of the Civic Resource Type. The San Francisco Civic Center Historic District is a NHL that is listed in the NRHP and the CRHR. The district is also recognized at the local level and is a San Francisco registered historic district (see previous section regarding eligible resources).

Non-Eligible Social / Fraternal Resource Type

Two of the buildings in the Architectural APE are classified within the Social/Fraternal Resource Type. The first, 11-35 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #4) has previously been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP and the CRHR and a field survey of this building confirmed that status remains valid. The second, 1320 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #12) has been found to appear eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR as a result of this survey and evaluation (see previous section regarding eligible resources).

Non-Eligible Commercial / Auto Row Resource Type

A total of 18 buildings in the Architectural APE are included in the Commercial Resource Type. Of these 18, three have been determined by this evaluation to appear eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR (see discussion in previous section). The remaining fifteen commercial buildings do not appear eligible for listing in either the NRHP or the CRHR because of both a lack of significance and integrity. Although several of the Auto Row related buildings have potential significance for their local associations with the development of automobile culture and Auto Row in San Francisco (Criterion A or 1) and as significant examples of a type, period, and method of construction, and the work of a master (Criterion C or 3), all exhibit a substantial loss of integrity that precludes eligibility for either the NRHP or the CRHR.

Most of the Auto Row buildings in the Architectural APE are modest and generalized facilities that do not convey direct associations with significant themes of development in both the American auto industry or the development of Van Ness' Auto Row (Criterion A or 1). While the buildings housed a number of auto related functions, as tire salesrooms, repair shops, and used car dealerships, many of the buildings were standardized speculative ventures undertaken when Van Ness' Auto Row was well-established and the foundation of the American auto industry well-developed. The buildings were generally related to the San Francisco auto industry for a brief period of time, but were subsequently devoted to an array of generic commercial uses that greatly diminished their physical integrity and hold no direct associations to significant local, state, or national events or developments.

⁵⁵ United States Department of the Interior, National Register Bulletin: How To Apply The National Register Criteria For Evaluation, 1995, online at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb15.pdf>, April 15, 2009.

Similarly, the buildings are not associated with any historically significant individuals (Criterion B or 2). The various auto firms that occupied the buildings were only small components of an increasingly vast industry supply chain that included manufacturers, suppliers, and dealers and spreading across the country. There is no documentation of direct association with any individuals important in these various fields of endeavor. Further, the buildings do not demonstrate distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, but rather illustrate a well-established design sensibility that includes allusions to classical detailing and basic functional requirements (Criterion C or 3). While indicative of the urban development of San Francisco's Auto Row, the buildings are not exemplars. The architects were relatively modest figures, with diverse design practices that included an array of residential and commercial construction. In rare instances buildings themselves can serve as sources of important information about historic construction materials or technologies, but this type of commercial construction is otherwise well documented and the building does not appear to be a principal source of information in this regard (Criterion D or 4).

In addition to failing to meet any of the criteria for listing on the NRHP or the CRHR, the buildings display a marked loss of integrity that severs them from even a basic association within the Auto Row related context. Years of commercial entryway insertions and reconfigurations at the ground level have eroded the buildings' functional forms. While some do retain many original features at the second level, including cornices and original industrial windows, these features do not impart any specific associations with Auto Row and are not able on their own to convey potential architectural significance. As mentioned in the previous section, several of the Auto Row buildings do appear to possess potential significance, however major losses to integrity undercut this potential significance for the other auto related buildings: 30 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #5), 1625 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #13), 1776 Sacramento (Map Reference #15), and 2001 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #21).

Only two of the buildings within the commercial resource type were built as generalized facilities and are not related to the Auto Row context: 2027 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #22), and 2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue (Map Reference #30). Neither of these resources appears to meet any of the criteria for listing in the NRHP or the CRHR. As modest and evolving commercial resources, the buildings do not have direct associations with the significant events or trends that have shaped local, state, or national history (Criteria A and 1). With one an office building and the other a grocery franchise, both were devoted to relatively prosaic uses that lack significance. The buildings are not associated with any individuals significant in local, state, or national history (Criteria B and 2). Commercial tenants, including basic retail establishments and medical and real estate professionals, were standard representatives of the mixed commercial character of the avenue. The buildings are not the work of a master, nor do they demonstrate distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. Rather, they illustrate a well-established commercial design sensibility that included basic architectural allusions and ornamentation (Criteria C and 3). Both buildings' construction and design are not noteworthy within the context of mid-century commercial development. In rare instances buildings themselves can serve as sources of important information about historic construction materials or technologies, but this type of commercial construction is otherwise well documented and does not appear to be a principal source of information in this regard (Criteria D and 4). In addition to failing to meet any of the criteria for listing on the NRHP or the CRHR, both

buildings display a marked loss of integrity. Years of commercial entryway insertions and reconfigurations at the ground level have eroded their original form.

Non-Eligible Residential Resource Type

The Architectural APE includes 8 residential resources, none of which appear eligible for listing in the NRHP or the CRHR because of both a lack of significance and a lack of integrity. The buildings are standard early twentieth century apartment buildings and residential flats, and do not demonstrate direct associations with significant themes of urban development at the local, state, or national level (Criteria A and 1). The buildings are representative of hundreds constructed across the city, and are neither illustrative nor important representatives of significant themes in residential construction, urban residential conditions, or San Francisco development either before or after the Earthquake of 1906. Rather, the buildings are unremarkable representatives of general city development patterns. The partial transition to ground floor retail functions in most is also a typical theme in mixed neighborhoods like Van Ness Avenue, and is not a significant characteristic within the context of commercial development in the city.

Similarly, the buildings are not associated with any individuals significant in local, state, or national history (Criteria B and 2). The apartments were constructed for a middle-class market, with census records attesting to professional, white-collar class of residents in the buildings and the surrounding neighborhood. The census depicts a renting pool that was largely American born, with many born in California. Further, each census period reflects an almost complete turnover in tenants. With very few names repeating throughout the period, it would appear that the apartments and flats were a relatively short term solution for mobile urban dwellers who went on to purchase or rent elsewhere.

The buildings do not demonstrate distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, but rather illustrate a basic residential design sensibility (Criteria C and 3). The construction is a common place example of the traditional middle-income residential development of the period, which included exuberant ornamentation in the form of bay windows, molding, emphatic cornices, and eclectic detailing. In rare instances buildings themselves can serve as sources of important information about historic construction materials or technologies, but this type of residential construction is common and otherwise well documented and does not appear to be a principal source of information in this regard (Criteria D and 4). In addition to failing to meet any of the criteria for listing on the NRHP or the CRHR, the buildings display substantial losses of integrity within their historic context. Many were entirely stripped of all of original ornamentation, including the cornice and wood trim and ornamentation. Most have new windows and altered stucco siding. The ground floor levels of most have been highly altered by modern commercial insertions, greatly undermining the original design. These attributes were hallmarks of the period's architectural design, and their loss has diminished the ability of the buildings in the residential resource type to convey any significance in relation to early twentieth century residential development in San Francisco.

4.3 Historic Status Tables

Table 1. Properties Listed in the National Register

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
3	San Francisco Civic Center Historic District <i>aka</i>	1912-1936	1D (01/01/1978)
	United Nations Birth Place / War Memorial Building <i>aka</i>	1931	1D (1/1/1978) 1CL (5/13/1985) 2S2 (8/1/1996)
	United Nations Birth Place / San Francisco Civic Center Historic District National Historic Landmark (City Hall and War Memorial in APE)	1945	Designated 2/27/1987
14	1699 Van Ness Avenue	1919	2S3

Table 2. Properties Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
4	11-35 Van Ness Avenue (Masonic Temple)	1913	2S2

Table 3. Properties Previously Determined Not Eligible for the National Register

None

Table 4. Properties Determined Eligible for the National Register as a Result of the Current Study

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
6	799 Van Ness Avenue	1916, 1925	3S
8	945-999 Van Ness Avenue (Ernest Ingold Chevrolet)	1937	3S
12	1320 Van Ness Avenue (Scottish Rite Temple)	1911	3S
20	1946 Van Ness Avenue	1920	3S

Table 5. Resources that are Historical Resources for the Purposes of CEQA

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
3	Civic Center Historic District United Nations Birth Place / War Memorial (City Hall and War Memorial in APE)	1912-1936	1D (1/1/1978) 1CL (5/13/1985) NHL (1987) 2S2 (8/1/1996)
4	11-35 Van Ness Avenue (Masonic Temple)	1913	2S2
14	1699 Van Ness Avenue	1919	2S3
6	799 Van Ness Avenue	1916, 1925	3S
8	945-999 Van Ness Avenue (Ernest Ingold Chevrolet)	1937	3S
12	1320 Van Ness Avenue (Scottish Rite Temple)	1911	3S
20	1946 Van Ness Avenue	1920	3S

Table 6. Properties Determined Not Eligible for the National Register as a Result of the Current Study

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
1	Van Ness Avenue and northern most block of South Van Ness Avenue	1858-ongoing	6L
2	Van Ness Avenue Trolley Poles	1914, 1936	6L
5	30 Van Ness Avenue	1908	6Z
7	800 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6L
9	1050-1066 Van Ness Avenue	1908	6L
10	1233 Van Ness Avenue	1913	6Z
11	1243 Van Ness Avenue	1913	6Z
13	1625 Van Ness Avenue	1919	6L
15	1776 Sacramento Street	1919	6Z
16	1730 Van Ness Avenue	1919	6Z
17	1920 Van Ness Avenue	1918	6Z
18	1930 Van Ness Avenue	1922	6Z
19	1940 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6Z
21	2001 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6Z
22	2027 Van Ness Avenue	1936	6Z
23	2400 Van Ness Avenue	1907	6Z
24	2418 Van Ness Avenue	1909	6L
25	2420-2424 Van Ness Avenue	1914	6L
26	2430 Van Ness Avenue	1925	6Z
27	2501 Van Ness Avenue	1906	6Z
28	2509-2515 Van Ness Avenue	1902	6Z
29	2517-2521 Van Ness Avenue	1902	6L
30	2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue	1942	6Z

Table 7. Resources that are Not Historical Resources under CEQA per CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 because they do Not meet the California Register Criteria outlined in PRC §5024.1

Map Reference No.	Name	Year Built	OHP Status Code
1	Van Ness Avenue and northern most block of South Van Ness Avenue	1858-ongoing	6L
2	Van Ness Avenue Trolley Poles	1914, 1936	6L
5	30 Van Ness Avenue	1908	6Z
7	800 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6L
9	1050-1066 Van Ness Avenue	1908	6L
10	1233 Van Ness Avenue	1913	6Z
11	1243 Van Ness Avenue	1913	6Z
13	1625 Van Ness Avenue	1919	6L
15	1776 Sacramento Street	1919	6Z
16	1730 Van Ness Avenue	1919	6Z
17	1920 Van Ness Avenue	1918	6Z
18	1930 Van Ness Avenue	1922	6Z
19	1940 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6Z
21	2001 Van Ness Avenue	1920	6Z
22	2027 Van Ness Avenue	1936	6Z
23	2400 Van Ness Avenue	1907	6Z
24	2418 Van Ness Avenue	1909	6L
25	2420-2424 Van Ness Avenue	1914	6L
26	2430 Van Ness Avenue	1925	6Z
27	2501 Van Ness Avenue	1906	6Z
28	2509-2515 Van Ness Avenue	1902	6Z
29	2517-2521 Van Ness Avenue	1902	6L
30	2525-2545 Van Ness Avenue	1942	6Z

In addition to the official status designations listed above, a number of resources in the Architectural APE have been rated in local reconnaissance surveys and some are listed as significant or contributory buildings in San Francisco’s Van Ness Avenue Area Plan. According to *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin 16: City and County of San Francisco Planning Department CEQA Review Procedures for Historic Resources*, these types of previous ratings do not qualify as an adopted local register for the purposes of CEQA, and require further consultation and review. This further review is provided by this technical report and the accompanying evaluation forms. For the complete local review history of all of the surveyed resources, refer to their original State of California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 Forms in Appendix B.

As part of local agency coordination, an advance draft of this report was provided to the City of San Francisco Planning Department for comment. The OHP Status Codes for eight of the studied properties were assigned status code “6L” (which recognizes that a resource may merit special consideration in local planning) to reflect the department’s concerns and suggestions.

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5.1 Preparers' Qualifications

This project was conducted under the general direction of Rebecca M. Bunse (M.A. in Public History, California State University, Sacramento), a partner at JRP with more than nineteen years experience conducting these types of studies. Ms. Bunse consulted on the development of the APE, provided overall project direction and guidance, conducted fieldwork, and reviewed and edited the report. Based on her level of experience and education, Ms. Bunse qualifies as a historian/architectural historian under the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (as defined in 36 CFR Part 61).

JRP architectural historian Polly S. Allen was the lead historian for this project. Ms. Allen prepared the contextual statement and evaluations, as well as conducted fieldwork, and prepared the DPR forms. Ms. Allen received a M.S. in Historic Preservation from Columbia University and has over three years of experience in public history and historic preservation. Based on her level of experience and education, Ms. Allen qualifies as an architectural historian under the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (as defined in 36 CFR Part 61).

Rebecca Flores prepared the graphics and formatted the report and DPR forms. Research Assistant Greg Rainka assisted in the field work and documentation. Intern Chandra Miller assisted in research.