

P1. Other Identifier: APN 070-214-001

P8. Recorded by:
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***B10. Significance: Theme** Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971); **Area** Downtown Davis
Period of Significance 1971 **Property Type** Commercial **Applicable Criteria** n/a
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope.
Also address integrity.)

Historic Context

In 2015, the Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update was prepared to provide a framework for the evaluation of 20th century resources within the City of Davis. It provided an updated historic context statement focusing on the World War II and post-war periods, evaluation criteria, and significance themes. The significance themes include Native American, Spanish, and Mexican Era (prehistory – 1847); Pioneer and Railroad Era (1848 – 1904); University Farm and University of California Era (1905 – present); Early Twentieth Century and Depression Era (1905 – 1939); World War II and Post-War (1940 – 1958); Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971); and Progressive Visions, Managed Growth (1972 – 2015). The subject property at 300 E Street was originally constructed in 1971; therefore, it falls into the Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971); significance themes established in the 2015 historic context.

The following early history of the City of Davis is taken from the *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*.¹

American settler Joseph Chiles bought a portion of the Rancho Laguna de Santos Calle, which he resold to his son-in-law Jerome Davis in 1854. Davis established a dairy and other ventures, and eventually his land holdings grew to 12,000 acres. After California became a state in 1850, other farmers, many of them German immigrants, began to settle in the area. Yolo County quickly became a prosperous farming region focused on grain, livestock and orchard crops.

In the 1860s, a group of five investors sometimes called the “Big Five” began planning a railroad routed through Davis’ ranch, and by 1868 the California Pacific Railroad had built its line to the area, laying out the three-way junction in its present location and alignment, where the Woodland branch line turned north from the main line. The railroad also constructed a depot, and laid out a town around it as a speculative investment.

The arrival of the railroad was a turning point, creating an economic impetus to found a town out of what had previously been a collection of scattered farms. The railroad’s investors laid out the town site adjacent to the depot, and by 1868 Davisville had about 400 residents. The railroad and new population spurred a brief building boom, but by the 1870s local growth had slowed. Davisville during the late nineteenth century was a farm village devoted to processing, storing, and shipping agricultural products. There was also industrial activity along the railroad tracks, some of which, like the lumber-yard, served the town in general. Most of the industry, however, was related to agriculture in one way or another, such as the Schmeiser manufacturing plant, on the east side of the railroad tracks with buildings on both sides of what is now Third street, which built almond hullers.

After the railroad provided an economic impetus for a town, commercial establishments quickly sprang up to serve local residents. In addition to the farming-related businesses that were the community’s raison d’etre, blacksmiths, carpenters, livery stables, and wagon-makers established businesses. A post office and express office provided access to the world beyond Davis, and hotels, restaurants, saloons, and boarding houses catered to travelers. Retail businesses such as grocery stores, butchers, liquor stores, and clothing stores opened, as did a doctor’s office and shoe repair shop. With warehouses and industrial services concentrated along the railroad tracks, downtown was clustered between First and Third Streets on G Street, a block west of the depot and tracks. A shortlived weekly newspaper was founded in 1869, and the Davis Enterprise began publishing in 1897. In addition to all the commercial activity, local residents established an Odd Fellows Lodge and Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches.

With the tiny downtown located on G Street, residential development began around F Street just one more block to the west. Individual property owners built houses one at a time, and the availability of land meant that during the nineteenth century many blocks had only one or two houses set on large parcels. The

¹ Brunzell Historical. *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*. November 2015.

gradual population growth of this area (ten residents a year) meant that residential construction proceeded at a measured pace. At the turn of the twentieth century, Davis did not have a single residential block that was completely built-out in the modern sense. The original town plat easily accommodated the gradual growth of the little town, and the only major subdivision was Rice's Addition in 1888, which was four small blocks along Rice Lane between the University campus and B Streets.

The following excerpt is from the *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*.

Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971)²

Decades of sustained growth of the University, Davis' population, and its residential neighborhoods had begun to transform the town by the late 1950s. As noted above, the sleepy nineteenth-century farm town was being transformed into a more sophisticated "University City." By the late 1950s, local boosters were complaining that downtown was run-down and in need of redevelopment. Although some demolitions did occur, the biggest change Downtown was that the tiny commercial area began to engulf adjacent residential neighborhoods as it grew to accommodate Davis' expanding population. Commercial developments on Davis's periphery began towards the end of this era, with four grocery and retail developments constructed between 1966 and 1971.

In an echo of the 1945 efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, residents once again called for planned and managed growth at the end of the 1950s. The League of Women Voters released the results of a study in 1961 that recommended professional city planning, and adoption of a master plan and housing code to manage the growth already occurring. The study warned that a lack of planning could result in "potential slums," inappropriate division of houses into multiple units, and non-contiguous residential development that would threaten surrounding agricultural activity. The city released a revised General Plan later that same year. The Core Area Plan of 1961 expanded on the 1950s plans to redevelop the traditional neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown into a high density area, envisioning an urban transformation that included mega-block commercial development and high-rise apartment housing. The most highly urbanized concepts of the Core Area Plan never materialized, and planned growth during this period did not necessarily imply limiting development. A Davis Enterprise photographic essay from early 1966 illustrated the prevailing view of the period, arguing that what some termed "urban sprawl" was actually planned "perimeter growth." The newspaper explained that Davis' expansion outside its original boundaries on all sides was the result of a "carefully calculated policy ... to annex all perimeter land, in every direction," and that the town's "orderly growth" in all directions was a direct benefit of this policy.[...]

Commercial Properties

Commercial development was no longer limited to Downtown, and was robust all over Davis. Downtown continued to grow as residential properties were converted to commercial use and older buildings demolished and replaced. Meanwhile, subdivision developers were building strip-type shopping centers to serve neighborhood retail needs. And land near the freeway, even in the remote southern portion of Davis, was becoming attractive to business owners who wanted space to construct a corporate headquarters or a land-intensive venture like a car dealership. Although function was emphasized for the strip-type development, Downtown and freeway adjacent commercial structures from the era were often ambitious, architect-designed buildings. Architect designed commercial buildings included strong examples of established styles, such as Silvio Barovetto's New Formalist Intercoast Insurance Building. Other architects during the period combined elements of various modernist styles to create unique buildings like the Downtown Wells Fargo Bank, designed by Gordon Stafford in 1965.

Residential Development

The continuing growth of the University intensified the population and residential expansion that had characterized the previous decade, and Davis grew rapidly in the 1960s. While the increased student population led to construction of apartments and duplexes, the growth of the academic and administrative staff was even more significant, as it brought new permanent residents to Davis. Fifty-six subdivisions were recorded between 1960 and 1969, many of which were double or triple the size of a typical subdivision from the immediate post-war period. The new neighborhoods required large tracts of land, and Davis began to grow beyond its original boundaries in all directions, crossing former de facto urban limits Highway 99 and Covell Boulevard. In 1969, Davis became the largest city in Yolo County. By 1970, it had 23,488 residents,

² Brunzell Historical, *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*, 2015, page 31.

and half of its workforce was employed in education. Population expansion led to growth in every aspect of local life, which was reflected in the city's primary and secondary education systems. Nine new local schools were constructed between 1952 and 1968. City services and infrastructure often lagged behind during this period, however. In 1965, for example, Davis still had only one traffic signal, on B Street near the High School (since 1981 City Hall).

Despite Davis' expansion in terms of housing, commercial activity, development of schools, and economic growth, the town took a hiatus from large annexations after the Chamber-led expansion in 1945. Additions to the size of the city were incremental and piecemeal in the 1950s. This did not slow development, and at least a dozen subdivisions were constructed outside city limits in the late 1950s. The pattern began to change after 1960, as developers continued to convert fields into subdivisions. Bruce Mace, a rancher with acreage east of Davis, broke ground on a new development at the end of 1959. El Macero Country Club and Golf Course was merely the initial stage of a large development that was to include hundreds of houses. Approximately three miles outside city limits, Davis leaders were afraid that it would become the nucleus of an adjacent competing city. Mace's plans spurred the Davis city council to undertake the largest annexation in city history. In 1966, Davis annexed 1.6 square miles of new territory south of Interstate 80 in order to head off uncontrolled development adjacent to town.

After 1965, public investment in infrastructure and amenities finally began to catch up with local residential growth with installation of the first local traffic light. Central Park was renovated the same year, major sewer lines were installed in new subdivisions north and west of Downtown, and new police and fire departments were completed. In 1967, Davis opened its new Community Park and public pool and purchased the Municipal Golf Course. In 1969, Davis voters approved new sewer facilities.

"Cluster Planning", which incorporated greenbelts into subdivisions, was an innovative form of development that began to take hold nationwide in the 1960s. It offered the environmental and quality-of-life benefits of increased open space, and allowed builders to avoid difficult terrain and save money by pouring less pavement. Cluster planning came to Davis in the mid-1960s. Like many development trends over the decades, more than one builder adopted the practice about the same time. By 1964, Alfred F. Smith was acquiring land in West Davis for his master-planned Stonegate development, which included a lake and golf course. In 1967, Gentry Development announced a 300-acre, 1400-house project that incorporated 19 acres of greenbelt and parks. Tom Gentry predicted that the open-space community would become a model for future development in Davis. Although Gentry had been developing in North Davis since 1965, he does not appear to have planned the greenbelt until the following year. Smith, though his planning was underway in the early 1960s, did not break ground until near the end of the decade. Although its origins in Davis cannot be credited to one developer, what is certain is that cluster planning had become de rigeur in locally by the last decades of the twentieth century.

Davis Builders and Developers

More large-scale regional builders also came to Davis starting in the 1960s. Walker Donant, for example, built University Farms No. 3 in 1960. Although the company was new to Davis, they had been constructing housing in Sacramento since at least 1949. The firm built a few hundred houses in Davis over the next fifteen years, just a fraction of what it was building in the Sacramento area during that period. The Stanley M. Davis Organization had hit its stride Davis by the 1960s, developing hundreds of houses east of Downtown along with its partners. Most of the local subdividers from the immediate post-war period had constructed one or two subdivisions and then left real estate development. John Simmons, however, had gained momentum and by the late 1950s was recording three new subdivisions most years. Simmons remained an important Davis developer through the 1970s. Davis local John Whitcombe, who constructed his first house in 1959, was a newer entrant to the residential housing market. By 1970, he was an important local builder. In the 1960s, he built houses before moving on to apartment construction in the 1970s, becoming a pioneer in energy efficient construction techniques.

The Streng Brothers probably influenced the aesthetics of the Davis housing market more than any other developers during this period. They entered the Davis market in 1962 with the first of their Ivy Town subdivisions. Bill and Jim Streng, along with their architect Carter Sparks, were responsible for breaking the dominance of Tract Ranch style in the residential landscape of Davis. In the late 1950s, Streng Brothers had taken over an uncle's development company and inherited its architectural plans, which were for Tract Ranch houses. After teaming up with Sparks, however, the Strengs began offering Post-and-Beam designs.

Although the Strengs and Sparks were in many respects opposites in terms of temperament and philosophy, their differences allowed them to complement one another's strengths. The Strengs have described Sparks as the creative genius and give him credit for pushing them to use building practices normally associated with custom designs, such as finishing the rear elevation with the same materials and details as the main façade. Although Sparks insisted on more expensive fixtures at times, Post-and-Beam construction saved money on materials. But the artistic Sparks, who built about 50 custom houses as well as commercial and institutional buildings, could never have designed so many houses without the practical and business-minded Strengs. Bill had been educated as an accountant, and the brothers kept an eye on the bottom line, pushed Sparks to meet deadlines, and reined in some of his excesses. The Strenge Brothers operation never had a money-losing year.[...]

Multi-family Housing

The apartment building, which had been present in Davis since the late 1940s, began to emerge as an important building type during the period of explosive growth. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, most Davis apartment buildings were still no more than two stories. Typically, they had between five and twenty units. By this time, apartment buildings were fully accepted as a respectable housing type, particularly for students, and developers did not usually bother offering the range of amenities used to promote early examples. Cal Davis Apartments at 340 Ninth Street, a two-story, twelve-unit building is a typical example. With an L-shaped plan, exterior entrances to each unit, large surface parking lot and little exterior ornamentation, the building was constructed to offer practical and affordable housing. As the 1960s progressed, Davis developers began constructing more apartment buildings than previously, and the average multi-family building began to grow progressively larger. The pace of apartment development is illustrated by one builder's statistics: Robert C. Powell constructed about 4,000 apartment units between 1961 and 1972. By the mid-1970s, Davis had about 60 apartment buildings. Whereas older apartments were often infill projects, after 1965 whole streets could be filled with multi-building apartment complexes. Many of these buildings occupied most or all of one- to three-acre parcels, and were sometimes starkly pragmatic buildings. The large, flat-roofed apartment building at 515 Sycamore Lane, constructed in 1965 and surrounded by multi-family housing, is a typical example.

At the start of the 1970s, developers introduced a new residential building type to Davis: condominiums or "Townhouse homes." Stanley M. Davis began selling Covell Commons (one- and two-story units with shared walls set in a greenbelt) in 1971. Marketing stressed the opportunity for home ownership without the responsibilities of maintenance or yard work. In an echo of developers' promotion of Davis's first apartment units two decades earlier, the Woodland Daily Democrat praised the development as "the utmost in luxury living combined with leisure." Like apartments, the townhouse became a lasting fixture of Davis residential neighborhoods.

Subject Property

The property at 300 E Street originally housed the Bank of California and opened on May 15, 1971. The building is a one story flat-roofed reinforced concrete building which is sheathed with brick veneer. A rectangular roof supported by a grid of piers shelters the somewhat smaller, and irregularly shaped building, creating sheltered setbacks and walkways with planting areas. The fenestration is fixed panels set in metal frames. Stylistically the building is a somewhat softened interpretation of International Modernism. Later alterations include an extension for a walk-up teller window in 1977, but since the same brick was used, the addition is not intrusive. The building was designed by Richard Marshall and Chester Bolles of San Francisco. This is a well-proportioned example of the type, and the play of void and solid created by the setback of the building proper from the structural screen promotes considerable sculptural interest for an essential simple building. Low key in its imagery, the building fits unobtrusively into a collection of related buildings which give a visual coherence to the Davis downtown area.

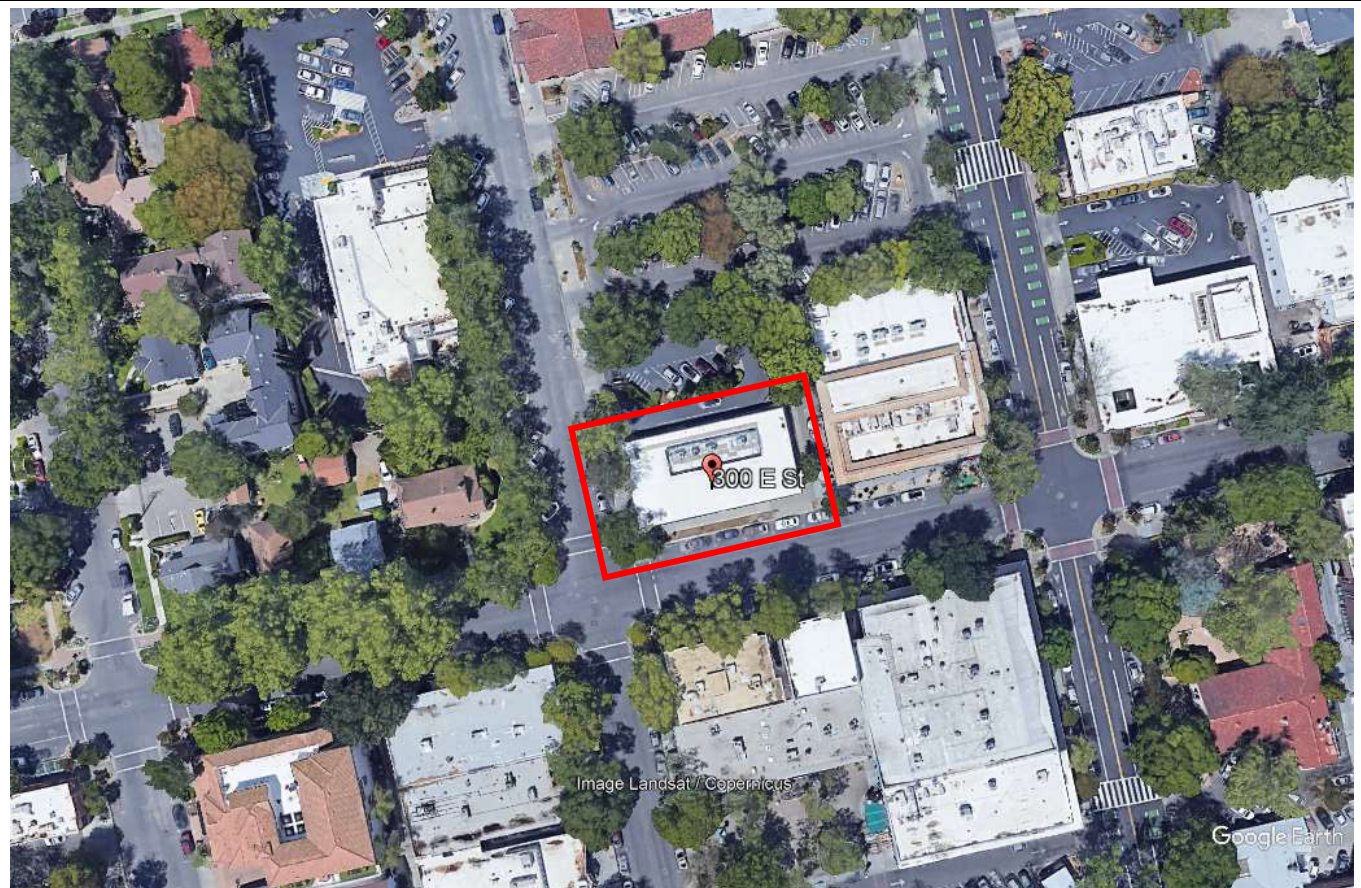


Figure 1 – Current Aerial, Subject Property in red (Google Earth 6/12/2023)



Figure 2 – Current Street view (Google Earth 6/12/2023)

Regulatory Framework

National Register of Historic Places

A property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) if it meets the National Register listing criteria at 36 CFR 60.4, as stated below:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and that:

- A) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, or
- B) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past, or
- C) Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or
- D) Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

California Register of Historical Resources

To be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) a historical resource must be significant under one or more of the following criteria:

- 1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
- 2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

City of Davis Landmark Resource

In addition to the National and California registers, the City of Davis provides for the additional designations of Landmark Resource and Merit Resource in their Historical Resources Management Zoning Code (40.23.060). To be eligible as a Landmark a resource must meet at least one of the four criteria at the local, state, or national level of significance and retain a high level of historic integrity.

- (1) Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns in the history of Davis, California, or the nation; or
- (2) Associated with the lives of significant persons in the history of Davis, California, or the nation; or
- (3) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, architectural style or method of construction; or that represents the work of a master designer; or that possesses high artistic values; or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (4) Has yielded or may likely yield archaeological or anthropological information important in the study of history, prehistory, or human culture.

The following factors must also be considered:

- (1) A resource moved from its original location may be designated a landmark if it is significant primarily for its architectural value or it is one of the most important surviving structures associated with an important person or historic event.
- (2) A birthplace or grave may be designated a landmark if it is that of a historical figure of outstanding importance within the history of Davis, the state or the nation and there are no other appropriate sites or resources directly associated with his or her life or achievements.
- (3) A reconstructed building may be designated a landmark if the reconstruction is historically accurate and is based on sound historical documentation, is executed in a suitable environment, and if no other original structure survives that has the same historical association.
- (4) A resource achieving significance within the past fifty years may be designated a landmark if the resource is of exceptional importance within the history of Davis, the state or the nation.

City of Davis Merit Resource

In addition to the National and California registers, the City of Davis provides for the additional designations of Landmark Resource and Merit Resource in their Historical Resources Management Zoning Code (40.23.060). To be eligible as a Merit Resource must meet at least one of the four criteria and retain a high level of historic integrity. The four criteria to qualify as a Merit Resource as nearly identical to those for a Landmark except that Merit Resources only consider local significance.

The following factors must also be considered:

- (1) A resource moved from its original location may be designated a merit resource if it is significant for its architectural value or if an understanding of the associated important person or historic event has not been impaired by the relocation.
- (2) A birthplace or grave may be designated a merit resource if it is that of a historical figure of outstanding importance within the history of Davis and there are no other appropriate sites or resources directly associated with his or her life or achievements.
- (3) A reconstructed building may be designated a merit resource if the reconstruction is historically accurate and is based on sound historical documentation, is executed in a suitable environment, and if no other original structure survives that has the same historical association.
- (4) A resource achieving significance within the past fifty years may be designated a merit resource if it is of exceptional importance within the history of Davis.

Even if a resource is not listed in, or determined eligible for listing in, the California Register, the lead agency may consider the resource to be a "historical resource" for the purposes of CEQA provided that the lead agency determination is supported by substantial evidence (CEQA Guidelines 14 CCR 15064.5).

Evaluation

The subject property at 300 E Street was recorded in 1980 and 2015; however, the previous efforts did not include complete evaluations for the National Register, California Register, or locally as a Davis Landmark or Davis Merit Resource. The following is an evaluation for potential historic significance under National Register Criteria A through D, California Register Criteria 1 through 4, Davis Landmark Criteria 1 through 4, and Davis Merit Resource Criteria 1 through 4. While the wording is slightly different for each of the four criteria for the National Register, California Register, Davis Landmark, and Davis Merit Resource eligibility, they each align to cover the same potential significance criterion. A/1/1/1 covers associations with significant historical events, B/2/2/2 covers significant people, C/3/3/3 covers significant architecture, and D/4/4/4 covers the information potential of a site.

A/1/1/1 - Events

The subject property falls into the Explosive Growth (1959 – 1971) significance theme. Archival review indicates that 300 E Street was constructed in 1971 as a bank to support the continued residential growth of Davis. It was built as a typical bank building, and it does not appear that there are any significant associations between 300 E Street and important events or patterns in history. It does not appear to rise above the typical associations with the contextual period of development. Therefore, it is recommended ineligible under Criteria A/1/1/1.

B/2/2/2 – Persons/Businesses

Archival review also does not indicate that there are any significant associations between 300 E Street and significant persons or businesses. As research does not indicate that 300 E Street is significantly associated with the productive life of any significant person or business, it is recommended ineligible under Criteria B/2/2/2.

C/3/3/3 – Design/Engineering

As noted in previous inventories in 1980 and 2015, the subject property at 300 E Street was constructed as a bank building in the International Modern style, a common architectural style for bank buildings of this time. 300 E Street does not contain any unique architectural features, nor is it an exceptional example of its type. The building was designed by Richard Marshall and Chester Bolles and built by Murchedson of Sacramento, none of whom are especially notable in their craft or rise to the level of master architect. For these reasons, 300 E Street is recommended ineligible under Criteria C/3/3/3.

D/4/4/4 – Information Potential

Criterion D/4/4/4 applies to properties that have the potential to inform important research questions about human history. According to National Register Bulletin 15, to qualify for listing, the property must “have or have had information to contribute to our understanding of human history or prehistory and the information must be considered important.” 300 E Street does not meet this criterion and therefore is recommended ineligible under Criteria D/4/4/4.

Integrity

For a property to be eligible for listing in the National Register, California Register, or as Landmark or Merit resources per the City of Davis regulations it must meet one of the eligibility criteria discussed above as well as retain sufficient integrity. However, the subject property does not meet any of the eligibility criteria for significance; therefore, a discussion of integrity is not necessary.

Recommendation

ESA recommends 300 E Street ineligible for listing in the National Register, California Register or locally as a Davis Landmark or Merit Resource.

***B12. References:**

Brunzell Historical. Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update. 2015.

Yolo County Assessor's Parcel Data. ParcelQuest.com. Accessed November 8, 2022.