

## Downtown Burlington Commercial National Historic District



# Downtown Burlington Commercial Walking Tour

*Located from the riverfront to the 800 block of  
Jefferson St and between Columbia and Market Sts*

Named to the National Register of Historic Places in 2015, this comprehensive district consists of 108 key buildings that span more than a century of Burlington's commercial development. From the core of the original city near the riverfront and stretching west along Jefferson, the principal business street, these buildings represent Burlington's rise and prominence as a commercial center from the 1860s through the 1960s and beyond. Shaped by the topography of the Hawkeye Creek valley between the bluffs, the historic downtown is punctuated by a unique "steeplescape" that draws comparisons to European river cities. You'll find a wealth of architectural gems, from Italianate to High Victorian to Art Deco, unmatched by any city its size. In recent years, many buildings have been carefully restored, and additional restoration and redevelopment continues.



**Farmers & Merchants Bank & Trust**

**221 - 223 Jefferson** **1912**  
 Built as the Iowa State Savings bank, it was Burlington's tallest building. The bank closed in 1932, but the site's banking tradition continued when the Farmers and Merchants moved here.

**The Burlington Apartments**

**206 N 3rd St** **1911**  
 This fireproof building was built for Hotel Burlington. Rising seven stories high, it was the city's first tall building and each of its 125 rooms had running water and a telephone.

**Capitol Theater**

**211 N 3rd St** **1937**  
 Designed in an Art Deco style that flourished between the two world wars, the theater facade was constructed of terra cotta. After sitting empty for 37 years, the renovations in 2012 restored much of its former glory.

**Hedge Block**

**401 - 407 Jefferson** **1881**  
 This four-story, stone-fronted business block was built with four separate storefronts. Its Charles Dunham design is indicative of the highly ornamented style of the day.

**Buettner Furniture and Carpet Company**

**411 Jefferson** **1875, 1914**  
 The current classical appearance of the building dates back to a significant remodel that took place around 1914 for the Buettner Furniture and Carpet Company, a family-run business characterized as one of the most up-to-date businesses in the west.

**Lauer Building**

**423 Jefferson** **1867**  
 This two-story brick building was originally occupied by Hamm and Mathes Grocery store and has housed many businesses over the years, including a clothing store and the Robinson Drug Company.

**Central Fire Station**

**412 - 422 Valley St** **1907**  
 Originally described as "French Romanesque," this two-story brick building was built to house the Police and Fire Departments.

**Ella Carpenter Block**

**515 - 517 Jefferson** **1882**  
 The block was built by Ella Carpenter, the widow of a jeweler. The block has housed a variety of businesses over the years, including the Hawk-Eye Tin shop, a flour and feed store, and Mailandt Tailoring.

**Nancy Neafie Park**

**Jefferson & N 6th Streets** **1996**  
 This small "pocket park" was dedicated in memory of the first woman mayor of Burlington.

**Ganz Building**

**613 - 615 Jefferson** **1873**  
 The current structure was built by Andreas Ganz after the previous building was destroyed by a fire. For many years, a saloon or restaurant has operated in both storefronts.

**Joy Planing Mill**

**800 Jefferson** **1865**  
 The core of this building was built for a planing mill business using limestone that was quarried nearby. The Embalming and Burial Case Company once manufactured their "celebrated metallic caskets" in this building.

**Scotten Building**

**716 - 722 Jefferson** **1915**  
 This building's construction marked the development of the west section of Jefferson Street with additional improvements as well as street lighting.

**Nees-Rolf Building**

**700 - 702 Jefferson** **1904**  
 Nees operated his harness business in the 700 half of the building. In the 702 half, Rolf operated his flour and feed store business.

**Forney & Mellinger Block**

**512 & 522 Jefferson** **1883**  
 The two "bookend" buildings were built by James Forney and Samuel Mellinger. Both buildings had multiple uses, including an overall factory, sleeping rooms and usage by fraternal organizations.

**Gregg Building / Masonic Temple**

**420 - 422 Jefferson** **1884**  
 The building was designed by Burlington architect Charles A. Dunham. The upper floors housed numerous Masonic organizations over the years.

**John Boesch Company**

**412 - 418 Jefferson** **1906**  
 This building was built as an expansion of the John Boesch Company, who operated in the building to the west. The boot and shoe store of Hertzler & Boesch operated in the east storefront.

**Kresge Building**

**318 - 322 Jefferson** **1933**  
 The S.S. Kresge Company (now K-Mart) operated in the building until the early 1960s. Their \$40,000 investment was a testament to their faith in the city's future at a time of general cutbacks. This building was part of "Dime Store Row."

**Tama Building**

**300 - 304 Jefferson** **1896**  
 The building was built on the site of the old Barrett House, which was the most renowned hotel in this region. After spectacular fires, the Tama Building has been substantially rebuilt three times.

**J.S. Schramm Company**

**218 Jefferson** **1884**  
 The J.S. Schramm company initially started as a grocery and dry goods store by John S. Schramm. Andre Shoe Company owned and operated a shoe store and factory in this building before trading buildings with the Schramm Company in 1884.

**David Building**

**210 Jefferson** **1870**  
 John S. David purchased this land from the U.S. government in 1845 and built the present building 25 years later.

**John H. Witte & Sons Drug Store**

**206 - 208 Jefferson** **1885**  
 The Witte Drug Store was the largest pharmacy in Burlington. A large soda fountain and lunch counter made "Meet me at Witte's" a popular expression for generations.

**German American Savings Bank**

**200 - 204 Jefferson** **1874**  
 The German American Savings Bank operated until 1932, when the Depression forced it into receivership. Reorganized in 1933, the First National Bank remained on this site until 1974.

**Commercial Walking Map**

A digital tour is available at  
[GreaterBurlington.com/WalkingTours](http://GreaterBurlington.com/WalkingTours)

