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Cathedral of Learning District Description

The Cathedral of Learning District is the core of what is known as the Oakland Civic Center, and includes the Cathedral of Learning, the Stephen Foster Memorial, Heinz Memorial Chapel, and the Log Cabin. The open space around the Cathedral is one of three main open spaces that are iconic to Oakland and Pitt. At a height of 535', the Cathedral is the central visual landmark and organizing element on the Pitt Campus. The Cathedral is also a symbolic marker of Pitt's presence and is visible throughout Oakland and many portions of the City, including Downtown.



Existing Aerial





Cathedral of Learning District Architectural Inventory

With the exception of the Log Cabin that was moved to the site in 1987, all of the buildings within the District were designed by Charles Klauder in the Gothic Revival style. They were built between 1937 and 1940. The Cathedral District is part of the Oakland Civic Center Historic District and all but the Log Cabin are contributing structures to the Schenley Farms National Historic District.

CODE	BUILDING NAME	GSF	STORIES	HEIGHT	YEAR BUILT	ADDITION	ARCHITECT	ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	MATERIALS	HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS	BROAD USE
424	Cathedral of Learning	631,816	42	535'	1937		Charles Klauder	Gothic Revival	Indiana limestone	A	Education
452	Heinz Chapel	19,110	1	200'	1939		Charles Klauder	Gothic Revival	Indiana limestone	A	Religious Assembly
488	Stephen Foster Memorial	32,980	2	75'	1937		Charles Klauder	Gothic Revival	Indiana limestone	A	Entertainment/Public Assembly
522	Log Cabin	2,819	1	20'	1987			n/a	Wood	B	Utility

- A Oakland Civic Center Historic District, Contributing Property to the Schenley Farms National Register Historic District
- B Oakland Civic Center Historic District, Schenley Farms National Register Historic District

University Owned Buildings



Cathedral of Learning

The Gothic Revival skyscraper that Pitt Chancellor John G. Bowman commissioned in 1921 inspired local industries to donate steel, cement, elevators, glass, plumbing, and heating elements. In addition to its magnificent three-story Commons Room at ground level, the 42-story Cathedral houses classrooms (including the internationally renowned Nationality Classrooms) academic and administrative offices, libraries, computer labs, a theater, a print shop, and a food court. A landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Cathedral is the fourth tallest educational building in the world after the University of Moscow's main building.



Heinz Memorial Chapel

The Heinz Memorial Chapel is a Gothic Revival with modified cruciform order structure designed by architect Charles Klauder, who also designed the Cathedral of Learning. The chapel's 23 exquisitely detailed stained-glass windows, designed by Charles J. Connick, depict 391 sacred and secular figures representing religion, history, medicine, science, and the arts. The 73-foot transept windows are among the tallest in the world and depict an equal number of women and men. All of the visible wood in the chapel, including its two 800-pound entrance doors, is oak. All of the wrought iron work, including lanterns, door fittings, stair railings, candlesticks, and alter cross, were created by Samuel Yellin, who also designed the metal work in the Cathedral of Learning. Open to campus religious groups of all denominations, as well as the public, Heinz Memorial Chapel is a popular site for religious and memorial services, concerts, guided tours, and weddings.



Log Cabin

The log cabin near the Cathedral of Learning is a symbolic gesture to Pitt's origins as a frontier academy of higher learning. Estimated to date from the 1820s or 1830s, the cabin was reconstructed on campus for the University's bicentennial in 1987. The Log Cabin is currently used for storage.



Stephen Foster Memorial

Designed by Charles Klauder to complement his Cathedral of Learning, the Foster Memorial is a tribute to Pittsburgh native Stephen Collins Foster (1826-1864), America's first professional songwriter, whose works include "Camptown Races" and "Oh Susanna." It was dedicated in 1937.

The Stephen Foster Memorial is home to most mainstage productions of the University's Department of Theatre Arts. The facility's 478-seat Charity Randall Theatre replicates features of the original Foster auditorium but is equipped with state-of-the-art technical, sound, and lighting capabilities for the University of Pittsburgh Repertory Theatre (a.k.a., Pitt Rep) and guest companies. Downstairs, the 151-seat Henry Heymann Theatre provides a more intimate setting. The Stephen Foster Memorial Museum houses an exhibit on Foster's life; adjacent to it is Pitt's Center for American Music, a special collections library that contains one of the nation's most significant collections of 19th-century American music.

Civic Realm Inventory

The open space around the Cathedral is characterized by lush landscaping, minimal topography and a mature tree canopy. It provides a welcome park like environment for the campus community as well as the surrounding neighborhoods.

The District is bounded by two major arterials - Fifth to the north and Forbes to the south. Existing symmetrical stone signs mark the corner gateways along S. Bellefield.

Perimeter curb sidewalks vary in width from 10' to 15'. An iron rail and stone bollards provides pedestrian protection along Fifth but the remaining sidewalks provide no separation from vehicular travel lanes. A hedge forms the boundary between the sidewalk and the open space preventing entry into the District except at designated paths. Pedestrian scale lanterns with Pitt branded banners line Bigelow and Forbes and continue along interior paths. Street lights provide the only perimeter lighting along Fifth and S. Bellefield. Designated bike lanes have been created along Forbes and Bigelow.

The western edge of the District along Bigelow is identified in the Campus Master Plan as a Low/Difficult Public Realm. Existing bus stop/shelters at Fifth and Bigelow, perimeter parking, and a bike lane create challenges for pedestrian movement. Proposed improvements illustrated in the Campus Plan include a landscape separation between pedestrian and vehicular circulation, a planted median, and a raised mid-block crosswalk.

Three of the four intersections that form the boundaries of the Cathedral District are identified as campus arrival points in the CMP:

- Fifth Ave and S. Bellefield Ave
- S. Bellefield Ave and Forbes Ave
- Forbes Ave and Bigelow Blvd

Improvements at these intersections should be based on recommendations identified in the General IMP Guidelines

Urban Design Guidelines

The open space surrounding the Cathedral should be maintained as the major green space on campus. There are no development sites within the Cathedral of Learning District.

