Before Regina was first incorporated as a town in 1883, town business was conducted wherever space could be found. This usually meant that the townspeople gathered in tents, churches, or stores.

By 1886, Regina had its first town hall (right: d. 1906), located at the northeast corner of 11th Avenue and Scarth Street. Befitting the young and as yet undeveloped town, the Town Hall filled a variety of important roles, including police station and school, and housed public banqueting and meeting rooms as well as the town's fire engine.

As the town grew, many of its buildings were constructed in and around 11th Avenue. With South Railway Street housing the majority of Regina's shops and maintaining its status as the "business district", the 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue corridor became home to many municipal and religious buildings.

Knox Presbyterian Church was constructed directly across from the town hall in 1885 (left, top: c. 1900), the third church to grace that section of 11th Avenue. The first dedicated fire hall, the Central Fire Hall (left, bottom: c. 1910), was built adjacent to the town hall in 1894, while a home at 11th Avenue and McIntyre Street served as Regina's first hospital. In 1906, construction began on the Scarth Street post office.

The area around 11th Avenue also served as a financial hub. In 1901, the Bank of Montreal—which had the first bank in Regina and the first chartered bank west of Winnipeg—chose 11th Avenue for a new building. The Union Bank, Northern Bank, Bank of Ottawa and many others began to appear in the area.

The 11th Avenue corridor didn't only cater to life's serious pursuits, though. Early on, the area became home to several hotels, such as the King's Hotel, and would remain the destination of choice for travellers until the 1970s. Beginning in the early 20th century, several theatres opened, including the Edison Electric Family Moving Picture Theatre, Regina's first moving picture theatre. The Market Square building, a public meeting space often used for special occasions, was constructed at 11th Avenue and Osler Street in 1908.

In 1911, as part of their efforts to develop Regina into a capital at the pinnacle of modernity, city council voted to construct the Regina Municipal Railway (RMR). When it came time to choose between South Railway and 11th Avenue for the downtown line, Mayor R.H. Williams was able to sway the group toward choosing 11th Avenue. Not coincidentally, he was also the owner of a large department store on that street (background c. 1915). Thus, the main RMR line passed directly in front of his store as well as ensured that the importance of 11th Avenue to Regina citizens would continue to grow. As the 20th century progressed, the amenities found on 11th Avenue and the convenience of the RMR ensured that the corridor would remain one of Regina's prime declipations.

Carrier Foundation, 2002

## Photos courtesy City of Regina Archives

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