

**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM #2**

**CAHP-2024-000026**

**Applicant:** HOM Investments 6, LLC (owner) represented by Jessie Kintz (applicant).

**Location:** 740 18<sup>th</sup> Street (Sherman Hill Local Historic District).

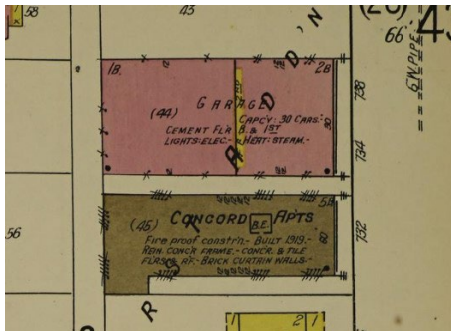
**Request:** Install a projecting sign on the front façade.

## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

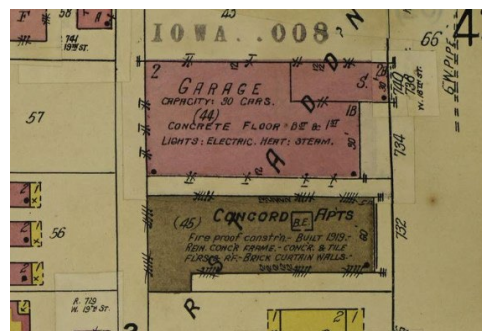
1. **Site Description:** The subject parcel is located on the west side of 18<sup>th</sup> Street near the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Center Street. According to the Polk County Assessor's webpage, it measures approximately 60 feet by 125 feet (7,500 square feet) in size, and contains a 2-story office and apartment. The site was formerly a parking garage used by the apartment building immediately south of the subject parcel and built circa 1919.

### 2. Sanborn Map:

1920



1950



3. **Relevant COA History:** On September 20, 2023, the Commission approved renovation of the building including waiver of screening the mechanical units on the condition of review and approval of the final design by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.

## II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (signs)

- Free standing signs and signs painted on brick are not permitted.
- Large areas of inappropriate and cluttered signage, including any roof mounted signage, should be removed. The zoning ordinance should be consulted for additional standards.

- c. The name of the business and the services it offers should be advertised in traditional locations: painted on the canvas awning, painted on the window glass or door glass, or mounted flush to the building façade in a panel above the awning or above the transom and should not cover up architectural details.
- d. Signage should be in one or more of the traditional locations and designed to be read by the pedestrian.
- e. New buildings should relate to surrounding buildings in the rhythm of window openings, cornice design, regulating lines, material and signage placement.

*The applicant is requesting to install a small projecting sign on the front façade just above the storefront window masonry details. The sign, as presented, appears to comply with all Chapter 135 Signage requirements. Staff visited the site, and identified marks and scarring in the mortar of the proposed location indicating a sign had previously existed in this location. However, staff was unable to locate any images of the building with signage installed in that location.*

*Staff believes that the sign, although projecting, does meet the size, location/placement, material, and pedestrian sizing guidelines. As such, staff supports the request. However, as the application does not adequately illustrate how the sign will affix to the building proper, staff would add the condition from U.S. Department of the Interior's Preservation Brief #25 "...Fittings should penetrate mortar joints rather than the brick" to protect the historic fabric and ensure safety of pedestrians.*

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions.

- 1. Attaching the sign to the building shall be completed in accordance with "Preservation Brief #25 – The Preservation of Historic Signs" as prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior – National Park Service.
- 2. Compliance with all applicable Building and Fire codes with issuance of a sign permit by the Permit and Development Center.

**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**AGENDA ITEM #3**

**CAHP-2024-000017**

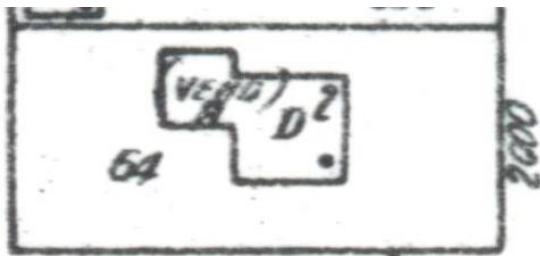
**Applicant:** Roger Thompson (owner).

**Location:** 2000 9<sup>th</sup> Street (River Bend Local Historic District).

**Requested Action:** Replacement of the front porch.

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. **Site Description:** The subject property is located on the west side of 9<sup>th</sup> Street at the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Lincoln Avenue. It measures 60 feet by 128 feet (7,680 square feet) and contains a 2-story house built circa 1921 according to the Polk County Assessor. A 24-foot by 24-foot detached garage was constructed in 1979.
2. **Sanborn Map:** The 1957 Sanborn map generally matches the existing footprint.



1957

3. **Relevant COA History:** None.

**II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING REHABILITATION**

1. **Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (porch and front walkway):**
  - a. Front porches should be restored or reconstructed if missing. The original porch should be reconstructed using the original roof style and pitch and the original design of posts, columns, brackets and balustrade.
  - b. Front porches should **not** be enclosed and the construction of a non-original second or third level deck or sun porch on the roof on a front porch is **not** permitted
  - c. If the original design cannot be determined, a porch should be built in a simple version of a style typical to the particular style of the house. An 1880 house, for example, may have a porch dating from 1910. This porch may be restored to either its 1880 appearance or its 1910 appearance.

- d. Construction of an elaborate design is **not** usually permitted unless documentation exists indicating that it is part of the original building.
- e. Enclosing a back or side porch may be acceptable when allowed by zoning law and in cases where it will not compromise overall architectural character, where it is along a side away from the street and well set back from the front, or located at the back.
- f. Any enclosure or screening should be built behind or between columns and posts and behind balusters in order to retain and keep visible the design elements. Enclosures more permanent than screen should include a large amount of glass window or door area to retain the quality of openness.
- g. Porches should be restored or rebuilt with posts or columns that are consistent with the style of the building.
- h. Undetailed, nominal 4x4 posts should **not** be used unless original to the structure.
- i. Porches should be rebuilt or repaired with the materials that are the same as the original.
- j. Wrought iron should **not** be used as a balustrade unless it had been used as an original design element on the building.
- k. Wrought iron used as handrails along steps should be of the original design or of a new simple design with vertical elements of a size and quality typical to rails used at the time the neighborhood was built.
- l. Precast concrete steps are **not** permitted in a historic district.
- m. Porch balustrades should be constructed with parts of the same size, height, detailing, and baluster spacing as the original.
- n. A balustrade should be retained at or restored to its historically correct height. Code requirements for a greater height should be satisfied with a 1-1½ diameter steel rod positioned horizontally above the original balustrade between columns or posts to bring total height to that required.
- o. Handrails required on porch steps, if not original, should be a simple round iron rail or similar to other balustrade elements on the porch.
- p. 4', 5' and 6' sidewalks should be subdivided into two equal widths.
- q. Stamped concrete is permitted when the proposed pattern is shown to be a recreation of an original pattern used in this area.
- r. Exposed aggregate should not be used because it is difficult to match and there is no evidence that this texture was historically used.

*The applicant is proposing to remove the existing front (east) facade porch and construct a new porch. The existing porch was constructed at an unknown date and does not appear to be original to the dwelling. It was constructed using brick and concrete and appears to be in a deteriorated condition. The proposed front porch would retain the same dimensions (9-foot by 12-foot) as the original porch and be constructed of brick and concrete. Three (3) concrete porch stairs on the south side of the porch would also be reconstructed. The existing porch has a half column located on the southeast corner of the front porch. The proposed porch would also include a reconstruction of this half column and a new handrail*



*system. The contractor has indicated the handrail system would be the Westbury handrail or similar. The applicant is additionally proposing to install a concrete front walkway from the porch stairs to the mailbox located on Lincoln Avenue. Staff is generally supportive of the request so long as any handrail system used is in substantial conformance to the proposed handrail system in the application, the use of either two columns located on the southeast corner and northeast corner of the proposed porch for symmetry or no columns, and a walkway design similar to the existing sidewalk on the western side of the house with a stair to accommodate the site's grade change.*

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. The handrail system shall be in substantial conformance to the example provided in the application.
2. The final porch design shall include either two columns at the eastern corners of the front edge of the porch or no columns.
3. The proposed walkway shall be designed to best accommodate the site's grade change.
4. Final design of the porch, stairs, handrails, and walkway as reviewed and approved by the Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
5. Compliance with the building code with issuance of all necessary permits by the City's Permit and Development Center.

**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**AGENDA ITEM #4**

**CAHP-2024-000023**

**Applicant:** Amy Letter and Brian Spears (owners).

**Location:** 846 19th Street. (Sherman Hill Historic District).

**Requested Action:** Install a 6-foot-tall wood privacy fence along the rear and street-sides of the property.

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

1. **Site Description:** The subject property measures 50 feet by 130 feet and contains a 2-story house built circa 1889 according to the Polk County Assessor.
2. **Sanborn Map:** The footprint shown on the 1901, 1920, and 1957 maps generally match the existing house footprint. A rear entry porch was added and a small shed at the rear of the property was removed between 1901 and 1920.
3. **Relevant COA History:** On March 21, 2018, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2018-5.30 to allow construction of a wood privacy fence.

On May 16, 2019, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2018-5.39 to allow replacement of the front porch sheathing as necessary and installation of new shingles, replacement of the front porch fascia and soffit as necessary, and construction of a wood privacy fence with an alternative design than was approved by COA 20-2018-5.30 consisting of 6-foot and 4-foot tall segments.

On June 19, 2019, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-20219-5.39 to allow construction of a 4-foot-tall ornamental fence provided that any gates incorporated in the fence matches the overall fence design, and that the fence step with any grade changes at intervals set by the length between posts.

**II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**1. Fence Design Guidelines (wood):**

- a. The rear yard fence, both open and solid, should be a maximum of six feet in height.
- b. A gate is recommended from an enclosed back yard to an alley or another back yard.
- c. A gate is recommended between two side yards when the fence runs the entire length of the front and back yard.

- d. The fence should step along a grade change at intervals set by the length between posts (rather than at variable lengths or with a continuously straight top edge).
- e. The post and rail side should be facing the homeowner's yard while the picket side should face the street, neighbor or alley.
- f. If the property owner desires two post and rail sides, this is acceptable. However, pickets should be placed "back-to-back" rather than alternating (board-on-board or "shadow-box").
- g. Posts are typically built with four equal sides with a base and a cap, and are slightly taller than the pickets. Six to 12 inch squares are common for a prominent post. The minimum width should be the height of the post in feet translated to the equivalent width in inches, e.g., if the post is four feet tall, the width should be at least four inches wide.
- h. Pickets should be 3/4 to one inch thick and one to six inches wide (if wider pickets are used, a pattern should be cut into the center of the boards to minimize the wide appearance).
- i. Most fences are made of three elements: post, rail and picket. The rail is typically the only horizontal element. The rails should be placed between or on the back side of the posts not the front.
- j. The pickets on fences in the front and side yards should be placed between the posts (not run continuously in front of the posts).
- k. The tops of most pickets should be cut to some design 'Dog-eared' fences are acceptable in rear yards only.
- l. Lattice can be used on the top of a fence to add height without the visual weight of a board fence.
- m. The spacing between posts should be approximately 4 to 14 feet, depending on the design.
- n. Posts are a very important visual part of a fence and should not be hidden by the pickets.
- o. The space between pickets should be approximately equal to the width of the picket in front and side yards.
- p. When privacy is a concern, the boards may be spaced closer together, however, it is encouraged to keep the height of the fence as low as possible and to provide at least the thickness of a board (3/4 to one inch) between the pickets.
- q. Board-on-board "shadow box" fences are not recommended for historic neighborhoods, (fences that have pickets that alternate on both sides of the rail, rather than "back-to-back"). See photo p. 2 "Finished Side."
- r. Adjacent fences that are on different properties should join.
- s. Painted fences are preferred to in the front and side yards. Stains and unpainted wood are not recommended in historic neighborhoods.

*The applicant's original request was presented and approved by COA 20-2018-5.30 at the March 21, 2018 Commission meeting with the condition that the fence shall have 4-inch by 4-inch posts that are exposed, step with grade changes at intervals set by the length between posts, include a cap element, and the pickets*

*have a flat top or other appropriate picket top design along the entire length of the fence.*

*Since that initial approval, the applicant has altered the design several times. In all cases, the design was approved, though the Conditions of Approval generally remained the same. In one design, the Commission approved a fence with the condition of a landscape plan reviewed and approved by staff. Due to the property being located on the southwest corner of the 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Crocker Street intersection to the south of the Smokey Row café, the north property line is highly visible.*

*The currently proposed fence is smaller in overall scope from previous requests. The applicant proposes a 6-foot-tall wood privacy fence with a flat top extending from the northwest (rear) corner of the home, extending north approximately 6-feet, then turning left 90 degrees and continuing approximately 29 feet to the west, then turning left 90 degrees and continuing approximately 49 feet across the rear of the property, where it will meet the neighbor's fence installed last year. The portion of the fence along the rear of the property would include a 4-foot gate, and separate the rear parking area from the yard. The applicant did not clarify if the proposed fence design would have exposed posts, or if the fence would step with grade changes, as previously conditioned. Rather, the applicant has indicated a desire to match the neighbor's fence to the extent possible.*

*Staff is generally supportive of installing a privacy fence in the rear yard, and is open to a more subdued design along the rear property line (west side of the property). However, due to the highly visible nature of the north property line and its adjacency to a public street (Crocker Street), Staff recommends the fence should feature a more traditional design in this area. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the fence with the previously approved conditions.*

## **II. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the request subject to the following conditions:

1. Any gate incorporated in the fence shall match the overall design of the fence.
2. The fence along the north property line shall have exposed posts or wood-covered metal posts as approved by staff.
3. The fence along Crocker Street shall step along grade changes at intervals set by the length between posts rather than at variable lengths or with a continuously straight top edge.
4. The fence shall be constructed in accordance with a fence permit as issued by the City's Permit and Development Center.

**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**Wednesday, May 15, 2024**

**AGENDA ITEM #5**

**CAHP-2024-000025**

**Applicant:** The Castle Apartments, LLC (owner) represented by Mila Schwarz (applicant).

**Location:** 743 19<sup>th</sup> Street (Sherman Hill Local Historic District).

**Requested Action:** A) Repair windows, jambs, and sills on west and south sides of the building.

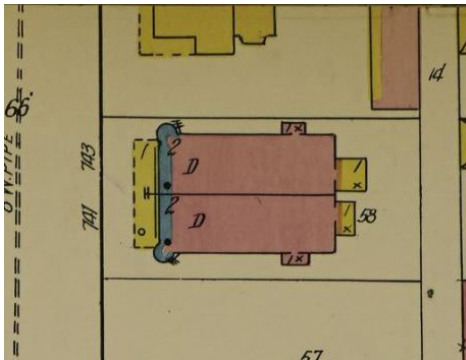
B) Replace thirteen (13) windows throughout the building.

C) Replace either the north fifteen (15) or the west fourteen (14) windows with new aluminum clad windows.

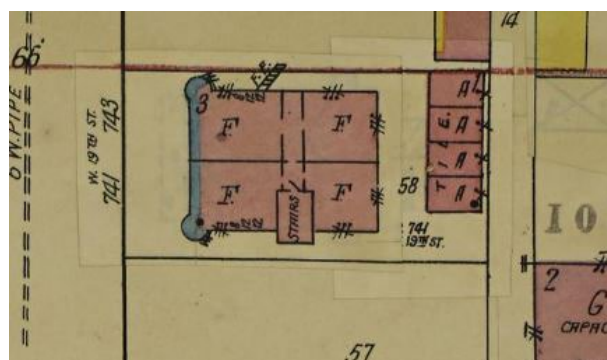
**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Site Description:** The subject property measures 90 feet by 117 feet and is located on the east side of 19<sup>th</sup> Street, approximately 115 feet south of the intersection of 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Center Street. The property contains a 3-story, 13-unit apartment building built circa 1890 according to the Polk County Assessor.
- Sanborn Maps:** The 1920 map indicates the site was originally constructed as a duplex. However, it underwent a significant renovation and was converted to apartments by the 1950 map.

1920



1950



- Relevant COA History:** On March 22, 2023, the Commission approved CAHP-2023-000008 to allow replacement windows, doors, and shingles replaced on the conditions that shingles be reviewed and approved by staff, that egress doors be replaced with wood doors, with the primary door to also include a window, and that all windows be retained and repaired as necessary unless staff determines that a window is beyond repair or is not original to the building. The window repairs also

included an allowance for sills and individual components of a window to be replaced with matching wood material.

On November 16, 2022, the Commission approved CAHP-2022-000101 to allow replacement of the fire egress stairwell. The approval was with the conditions that the stairwell is an all-metal design with guardrails of a simple metal or metal mesh design, and that final design be reviewed and approved by staff.

On September 19, 2012, the Commission approved COA 20-2013-5.10 allowing parking lot resurfacing improvements. On June 21, 2017, the Commission approved COA 20-2017-5.32 to construct a trash enclosure with conditions that the enclosure is brick or stone, has steel gates, and meets all other city standards.

## **II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (windows):**

- a. Existing windows should be retained, reconditioned and well maintained to be energy sound.
- b. Any replacement windows should duplicate the original window in type size, and material. The shape of the original window subdivisions should **not** be changed. New muntin bars and mullions should duplicate the original in size and profile shape.
- c. Windows with true divided lights should be used in places where this type of window was used originally. Snap in muntin bars should **not** be used.
- d. Canvas awnings should be used when necessary to provide solar shading, as done historically. Plastic or metal shutters or awnings should **not** be used.

*In 2023, the applicant proposed to replace all windows with wood-clad double hung windows of similar size. Staff worked with the applicant to visit the site and inspect the windows proposed for removal. The Commission determined it was appropriate to retain and repair windows as necessary unless staff determined a window to be non-historic or beyond repair. As such, the applicant worked with a local window restoration expert to determine the status of all windows in the building. Upon review, the expert determined that while the sills and jambs were the more pressing issue with all windows, only thirteen (13) windows could be deemed replaceable. According to the expert, the sills and jambs are the primary cause of the leaking and the degradation, and replacing those elements will provide the most effective improvements. Based on that information, staff recommends approval of the replacement jambs and sills with the condition that the sills match the existing sills in size and materials to the extent possible, and the jambs retain their original opening size to the extent possible.*

*The applicant has not yet provided staff with clarification on which windows are intended to be replaced. Therefore, staff requests clarification at the meeting from the applicant regarding how many and which windows would be replaced.*

*The applicant is proposing to replace any windows approved for replacement with an aluminum clad window which is the same window type proposed in the March 22, 2023 application. As such, staff retains their previous recommendation that should the Commission determine that any windows shall be replaced, then any replacement window used shall be an all-wood window product.*

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. Clarification from the applicant at the meeting regarding the total number of windows proposed to be replaced and the location on the dwelling facades of those windows.
2. Any replacement windows shall be an all-wood window product that matches the existing to the extent possible.
3. Replacement sills shall match the original in material and size to the extent possible.
4. Replacement jambs shall retain their original size to the extent possible.
5. Compliance with the building code with issuance of all necessary permits by the City's Permit and Development Center.



**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**AGENDA ITEM #6**

**CAHP-2024-000027**

**Applicant:** City of Des Moines (owner) represented by Anna Squier (Applicant).

**Location:** 1600 9<sup>th</sup> Street (River Bend Local Historic District).

**Requested Action:** A) Renewal of COA CAHP-2022-000078 to demolish the existing John R. Grubb Community YMCA building (1611 11<sup>th</sup> Street).

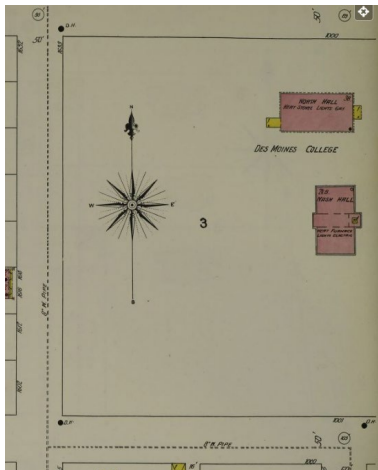
B) Construct the new 2-story, 36,637 square foot Reichardt Community Recreation Center (1600 9<sup>th</sup> Street).

## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

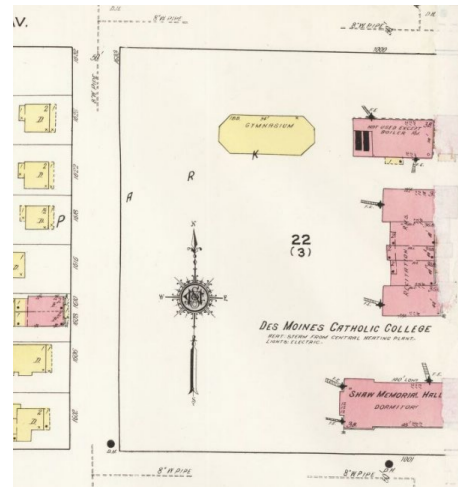
1. **Site Description:** The subject properties contain a 2-story 38,164 square foot building and surface parking. The former Dowling High School Gym was constructed in 1940, with other portions of the building constructed in 1997. The Polk County Assessor's site lists the gymnasium as remodeled in 2008. An open-air handball court was constructed in 1979.

### 2. Sanborn Maps:

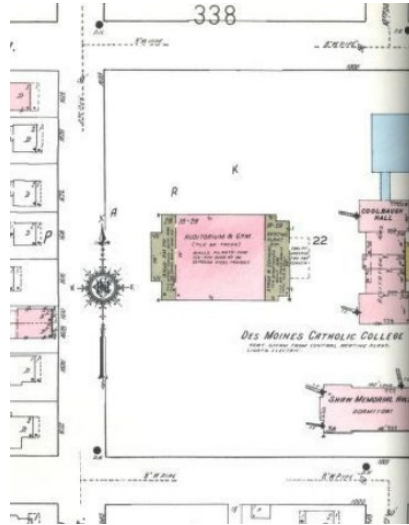
**1901:**



**1920:**



1957:



3. **Relevant COA History:** The subject property at 1611 11<sup>th</sup> Street is proposed to be part of a larger site redevelopment. The redevelopment would include the subject property, the 1000 block of Washington Avenue, the vacated Washington Avenue right-of-way between the 1000 block of Washington Avenue and 1611 11<sup>th</sup> Street, the property abutting the eastern property line of 1611 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and 1600 9<sup>th</sup> Street (also known as 915 College Avenue). The following COAs were reviewed for property at 915 College Avenue.

On September 20, 2017, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2018-9.14 allowing the construction of a 2-story office building and two 3-story apartment buildings.

On January 17, 2018, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2018-9.18 allowing the construction of a 2-story office building and associated site improvements.

## II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES (Commercial)

*The applicant is proposing to construct a new building. The following design guidelines are applicable.*

### 1. Street Relationships

#### a. The Storefront

- i. New commercial construction in historic districts should be pedestrian, rather than auto-oriented. New storefronts should

enhance the experience of the pedestrian by creating an inviting relationship with the street.

- ii. New commercial design should be contemporary but based on traditional storefront design typical to the original neighborhood and typical to its time period.
- iii. New storefronts should be set up to the sidewalk or public right-of-way and be flush with the front facade of neighboring buildings.

#### **b. Traditional Elements**

- i. New commercial buildings should incorporate the traditional elements of: 1) storefront with entry and large windows; 2) upper level facade with regularly spaced windows; and 3) cornice that cap the building.
- ii. Signage should be in one or more of the traditional locations (see illustrations below) and designed to be read by the pedestrian.
- iii. New buildings should relate to surrounding buildings in rhythm of window openings, cornice design, regulating lines, material and signage placement.
- iv. Canvas awnings should be used for weather protection and solar shading.

## **2. Forms**

#### **a. Massing**

- i. New commercial buildings should maintain the overall size, scale, height and vertical orientation of the traditional commercial building and of the other original commercial buildings in the district.
- ii. New commercial buildings which are much larger in scale should be subdivided into smaller vertically oriented sections which match the historic pattern.
- iii. Window and door location, size and proportions should relate to the context.
- iv. Mansard, hip and chalet style roofs are typically **not** appropriate in historic districts.
- v. New commercial buildings should adjoin another building or reinforce the street facade rather than be free standing and surrounded by parking. Any spacing from adjacent buildings should be similar to any historically established spacing.

## **3. Materials**

#### **a. Masonry and More**

- i. New commercial buildings should typically be brick with a glass storefront. Contemporary materials may be permitted if a good visual relationship is established with the context.

- ii. New brick should be similar in texture, size and color to the brick of original commercial buildings on the block and in the area.
- iii. Mirrored or dark glass and materials typically used in single family residential situations are not appropriate.
- iv. A relationship should be established to the major regulating lines of adjacent buildings such as cornice height, top of storefront and other subdivisions.

*The new North Side Community and Recreation Center, to be named the Reichardt Community Recreation Center to honor one of the major donors, is a 36,637 square foot, 2-story, new construction building that includes a gym, indoor pool, fitness areas, and community rooms. The surrounding site design will include an outdoor community lawn, native planting areas, futsal court, and new parking lot. The project program and design were developed over a span of 3 years and included an extensive public input period. The current construction budget is \$21.75 million and construction is planned to start summer of 2024, with the building opening in early 2026. The existing Grubb YMCA will be demolished after the new Reichardt Community Recreation Center is open (early 2026). The site phasing was intentionally planned to allow the Grubb YMCA to continue to operate while construction of the Reichardt Community Recreation Center occurs, allowing the neighborhood residents continued access to a community recreation center in this area. Once the new Reichardt Community Recreation Center is open and fully operational, then the demolition of the Grubb YMCA will occur.*

*The project site is approximately 4.5 acres and contains the existing Grubb YMCA building. The site is located north of College Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposed Reichardt Community Recreation Center will be located at the intersection of College Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street, with the primary pedestrian entrance facing west toward a community lawn and the proposed parking lot in the southwest corner of the site (along College Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street). The applicant has provided a location map in their submittal showing the context of the surrounding neighborhood, which includes mostly single-family residential structures. Immediately to the north of the site at the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Washington Avenue is a Department of Corrections facility.*

*The site design includes a community lawn to the west of the building, new parking lot in the location of the existing parking lot, native planting areas, and a futsal court to be located in the area of the demolished Grubb YMCA. To the north of the Grubb YMCA building future park developments are planned for Brian Melton Field (this area is outside the River Bend Local Historic District and is part of a future project phase). The vehicular entrance to the site is off College Avenue, and service access to the building is located off of 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the north*

*of the building, located between the Reichardt Community Recreation Center and the adjacent Department of Corrections Facility.*

*While it appears the building has two primary entrances, one on the west side facing the community lawn and the other on the 9<sup>th</sup> Street façade, the entrance on the 9<sup>th</sup> Street façade will be exit only for security purposes. A single point of entry for building security is critical to how this building is programmed and staffed. The exit only egress point at 9<sup>th</sup> Street is a 2-story glass feature and occurs at a recess in the wall plane of the building. Ideally this would also be an entrance for the community recreation center and provide street activation of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street façade, however, building security necessitates an exit-only operation. Efforts to activate the facades along College and 9<sup>th</sup> Street include changeable messaging and art panels on the façade and/or glazing at the College Avenue corner, as well as the location of gymnasium at the intersection of College Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street with repeating windows along the façade to provide views into the building, creating a more activated street presence. Views into the gymnasium continue around from the College Avenue façade into the 9<sup>th</sup> Street façade, providing a connection from the exterior into the activity of the interior. Native plantings between the building and sidewalk are planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building.*

*The building design works with the existing grade of the site, and is one-story on the west side and is two-stories on the east side (9<sup>th</sup> Street side). Façade materials include architectural precast panels with an integral color (warm red tone), metal wall panels (warm bronze tone), aluminum storefront / curtainwall insulated metal wall panels (dark bronze color), insulated glazing units (clear, low-e), and perforated and corrugated metal wall screening (30% transparency, warm tone to match precast and metal panels). There was a strong preference from the community for a warm color palette. The original design included architectural precast panels with a vertical texture, but was removed from the project due to budget constraints. This design will be included as a bid alternate for the project and included if the final bid pricing for the project is under the anticipated amount. A site context study considering materiality and scale of the adjacent neighborhood also informed the final material palette as well as the scale of the building.*

*While the existing Grubb YMCA/Dowling High School Gymnasium (1611 11<sup>th</sup> Street) is not a contributing structure to the West Ninth Streetcar Line National Historic District, the existing flagpole on site is a contributing structure. The design team originally planned to restore the flagpole and use it in the new design, keeping its original position on site. After investigation of the existing flagpole, the design team is concerned that its current state of deterioration will not allow an effective repair or will be cost prohibitive. The flagpole has significant rusting, pitting and thinning of the metal wall material, and removal to restore may result in buckling. Estimates for restoration are around \$20,000,*

*which the project budget cannot support. The design team proposes to remove the existing historic flagpole, salvage a portion of it for reuse, and install a new flagpole in the existing location. Interpretative signage with text and imagery that describes the history of the flagpole will be placed on site, and the salvaged historic flagpole will be incorporated into the project in another form, to be determined.*

*Staff is supportive of the overall design for the new Reichardt Community Recreation Center and for the historic flagpole design proposal, with the condition that the final design of the historic flagpole interpretative element be reviewed and approved by staff.*

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the following conditions:

1. Final design of historic flagpole interpretative element to be reviewed and approved by Planning and Urban Design Administrator.
2. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit & Development Center.

**CITY OF DES MOINES HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**  
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM #7**

**CAHP-2024-000029**

**Applicant:** Dan Reasoner (owner).

**Location:** 1808 Woodland Avenue (Sherman Hill Historic District).

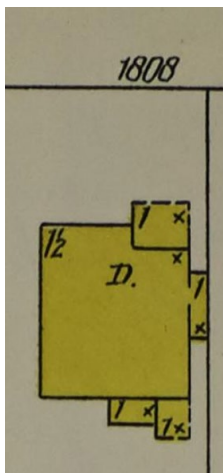
**Requested Action:** A) Remove metal siding and repair rotten siding on east facade.

B) Lift and repair sagging east façade stairwell bump-out.

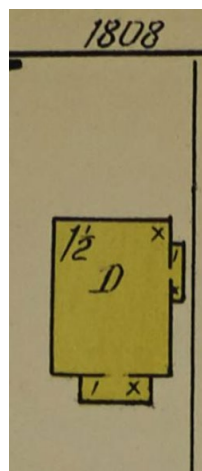
C) Construct an addition on the south (rear) façade of the home.

## I. GENERAL INFORMATION

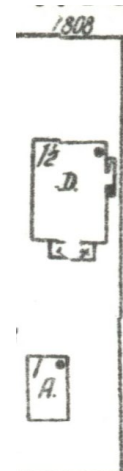
- Site Description:** The subject property measures 33 feet by 132 feet and is located on the south side of Woodland Avenue. It contains a 2-story single-family dwelling built circa 1898 according to the Polk County Assessor webpage and a 28 foot by 25 foot garage built in 2008. The garage is accessed from the adjoining alley. A 14.5 foot by 14.1 foot conservatory was approved and constructed over the garage in 2013.
- Sanborn Maps:** The 1901, 1920, and 1957 maps generally match the existing footprint.



1901



1920



1957

- Relevant COA History:** On August 18, 2021, the Commission approved COA 20-2022-5.03 allowing the replacement of three exterior windows with new wood windows.

On September 16, 2015, the Commission approved COA 20-2016-5.09 allowing the replacement of the conservatory structure roof and installation of gutters.

On August 21, 2013, the Commission conditionally approved COA 20-2014-5.07, allowing the construction of a conservatory in the rear yard.

On March 15, 2006, the Commission conditionally approved COA #20-2006-5.30 allowing construction of a garage in the rear yard. This Certificate was renewed by the Commission on August 15, 2007. The approved design for the garage and the wall consisted of concrete veneered with brick. The applicant found it cost prohibitive to construct the garage wall as approved. On May 21, 2008, the Commission granted an amendment to COA #20-2006-5.30 to revise the building materials for the garage.

## **II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **1. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (siding):**

- a. Artificial and cover-up siding should be removed and the original siding restored.
- b. Resurfacing the sides of a building with other than original materials such as stone or brick veneer, cedar shakes, asbestos and asphalt shingles, Masonite, aluminum, steel, vinyl or diagonal wood or wide board lap siding is not permitted.
- c. Gable ends, back porches, lean-tos and other small original structures should be resurfaced in material that is the same as the original material.
- d. Lap siding, wood shingles, brick or stucco matching the original in texture, size and material should be used when doing repair work.
- e. All original brackets, moldings, hoods, fancy cut shingles, and other trim elements should be retained or restored, or duplicated in the same materials as the original.
- f. Removal of exterior paint should be avoided unless absolutely necessary, with the exception of cleaning, light scraping and hand sanding as preparation for repainting.
- g. Any original architectural metals such as cast iron, steel, pressed tin, aluminum or zinc should be retained, cleaned and kept from deterioration.
- h. Where materials of the existing and of the addition come together, a recess can effectively separate the two.
- i. Additions should be set back from the wall plane of the existing structure so the shape of the original is clearly understood.
- j. Lap siding should be narrow wood boards or wood shingles. Masonite is an acceptable substitute for lap siding on additions that are not primary facades.
- k. Materials used should be the same as those available at the time the original building was built and should either match or be compatible with the original.

*The applicant is proposing to remove metal cover-up siding to expose the existing wood siding and to repair any deteriorated wood siding on the east façade as*



*needed. Staff is supportive of the request provided all siding matches existing in materials and design. Additionally, the applicant proposes to lift and repair the sagging staircase bump-out on the east façade. Staff is supportive of this request. This work is being performed as a part of the City of Des Moines Block Challenge Grant Program.*

## **2. Architectural Guidelines for Building Rehabilitation (addition):**

- a. When constructing a new addition minimal change should be made to the exterior of the existing original building and the overall integrity of the original design should be maintained.
- b. New stories which change the exterior profile of the building should not be added, except on flat roofed buildings where it does not adversely affect the overall integrity when viewed from the street and is set back from the wall plane on all sides so that it is clearly a new addition and subordinate to the original.
- c. Additions to historic buildings should have foundations that match the material of the original foundation, or are of concrete masonry units faced with brick.
- d. Brick used on new foundations should be either reclaimed old brick or new brick which matches in size, color, and texture the brick used on other original foundations in the neighborhood.
- e. The amount of foundation exposed should match that of the building being added to or be a minimum 12-18" in cases where appropriate.
- f. Where materials of the existing and of the addition come together, a recess can effectively separate the two.
- g. Additions should be set back from the wall plane of the existing structure so the shape of the original is clearly understood.
- h. Lap siding should be narrow wood boards or wood shingles. Masonite is an acceptable substitute for lap siding on additions that are not primary facades.
- i. Materials used should be the same as those available at the time the original building was built and should either match or be compatible with the original.
- j. Additions should not exceed the height or bulk of the original building
- k. Additions should have a floor-to- floor height the same as the original building.
- l. Additions should have a roof pitch compatible with the building proper.
- m. The roofs of additions should not interfere with the original roof form by changing its basic shape.
- n. The roof of an addition should be lower in height than the main roof of the existing buildings.
- o. Additions should be placed on the sides or at the backs of buildings and should be clearly defined as additions.
- p. The size and proportion of windows in the addition should be similar to those of the original building.
- q. Horizontal windows, small windows, and modern picture windows should not be used where vertically oriented and larger windows are used on the original.
- r. Large areas of unbroken exterior wall surface are not appropriate on additions.

- s. New decks, exit balconies and other non-original outdoor areas on either first level or above should be located at the back or side, be minimally visible from the street, should have no major impact on the original building and its character, and be designed with appropriate balustrade and compatible materials.
- t. Porch additions which are not a replacement of an original porch should not be constructed on the front of a building.

*The applicant is proposing a new addition on the south (rear) of the home. The addition would be approximately 10' long and match the width of the existing house, and include a basement level and extend up to the attic level. It would allow for a re-working of the floor plan to create improved flow in the house and provide studio space in the attic. A new stairwell in the addition along the south façade will connect from the basement up to the attic. A rooftop patio is planned for the southeast corner of the new addition.*

*The new addition is to the rear of the house and is minimally visible from the street, which aligns with the recommendations in the design guidelines. The design guidelines recommend that an addition be sufficiently differentiated from the original structure, either through a change in wall plane (a stepping in of the addition for example) or with a recess between old and new material. Staff is concerned that the proposed addition design does not substantially enough separate the existing structure from the proposed addition, but recognizes that the modernization of the interior layout and better livability of the home desired by the applicant makes it difficult to accomplish an addition that meets the recommendations in the design guidelines. The applicant's proposal for providing a visual separation between the existing structure and the proposed addition is to include a metal wrapped vertical window as a moment of separation, visible on the west façade. This vertical window element extends from near the ground plane up through the roofline and serves to separate existing and new.*

*The design of the addition is modern in nature, especially the rear façade which is minimally visible from the surrounding streets and is mostly glass with some metal panels. The applicant is also requesting to use aluminum clad wood windows in the new addition. The applicant is open to discussing how changes in materiality of the addition could further differentiate the existing structure from the proposed addition. Staff feels the Commission should discuss these design issues and proposed materiality in depth, and provide feedback that the applicant can use to finalize their design. Staff recommends continuation of this item after Commission feedback and discussion, allowing time for additional design work and material exploration based on Commission comments.*

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness, subject to the following conditions:

1. New siding shall be wood and match existing in materials and design.
2. Continuation of Item C (addition to the rear of the house) to the following month to allow time for the applicant to refine design details and material selections.
3. All construction shall be in accordance with all Building and Fire Codes, with issuance of any necessary permit by the City's Permit & Development Center.

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### **1. Name of Property**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

state iowa                      county Polk                      zip code 50309

## Date of Action

Financial Center Office Building

Polk, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
1	2	object
2	2	<b>Total</b>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ business

COMMERCE/TRADE/ financial institution

COMMERCE/TRADE/ professional

SOCIAL/ clubhouse

TRANSPORTATION/ road-related (vehicular)

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ business

COMMERCE/TRADE/ professional

TRANSPORTATION/ road-related (vehicular)

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ International Style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: GLASS

CONCRETE

roof: SYNTHETIC

other: METAL/ aluminum

BRICK

Financial Center Office Building

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

## Narrative Description

**Summary Paragraph** (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The Financial Center Office Building is located at 600-666 Walnut Street and at 207 Seventh Street in downtown Des Moines and stands as a twenty-five-story Modernist office skyscraper topped by a two-level penthouse, designed with a low-rise asymmetrical fenestrated podium base (two-story west wing, three-story east wing), undergirded by a two-level basement parking garage.<sup>1</sup> Extending more than a half-block, the complex constructed 1972 to 1974 is built to the southeast corner of Walnut Street and Seventh Street. The building occupies most of its site, which is bounded by Walnut Street to the north, Seventh Street to the west, Mulberry Street to the south, and pre-existing mid-rise masonry buildings to the east (Figure 3). The corporate International Style tower-on-podium is comprised of a twenty-three-story tower fully setback on three sides and topped with a setback elevator penthouse, arising from the two-story west wing; on the north façade, the west wing and tower continue in the same plane, recessed from the east wing (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> This configuration accentuates the building's nearly 350-foot-tall stature—designed as the city's tallest skyscraper and largest leased office building to be built in fifty years, featuring amenities including the city's first integrated underground parking garage, top-floor private business social club and restaurant, and a flexible floor plan for tenant buildout.<sup>3</sup> In 1970 Iowa-Des Moines National Bank publicly announced the office skyscraper project to supplant a 1924 office tower, and site preparations began in 1971. The developer and anchor banks announced detailed plans in 1972, and followed with ground-breaking and immediate construction. The east wing and underground parking garage were completed in 1973, and the west wing and tower were occupied in 1974. Completed as a shell-and-core development, the Financial Center exterior primarily features creamy white painted concrete, formed aluminum solar-shielding vertical fins, and a recessed Solarbronze-tinted insulated curtain wall system—energy-conserving design elements conceived by the nationally active project developer David H. Murdock Development Co. of Los Angeles, California, and executed by an experienced skyscraper design-engineer-build team led by architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co.<sup>4</sup> The north façade incorporates three primary entrances for the central shared lobby and two flanking banking halls, reflecting the Financial Center Office Building's status as the first joint real estate project in Iowa anchored by two competing financial institutions: The state's largest bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, initially occupied the west wing and seven floors of the tower; the city's largest home mortgage thrift, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, occupied the entire east wing.<sup>5</sup> The interior shell and core retains original basement parking garage levels; above-ground finished perimeter window walls; and

<sup>1</sup> Prosser: 1, 16, 17. Architectural historian Daniel Prosser's study of Los Angeles corporate high-rise buildings identified some podium-tower formats with fenestrated podium walls, and others with windowless (solid) podium walls; this study is particularly relevant due to the Los Angeles-based Financial Center project developer David H. Murdock Development Co., as is discussed further in Section 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Beck Bulletin*, "HCB Named Financial Center Contractor," August 1972. Although at first glance the tower's façade may appear to begin at the sidewalk level, the podium is differentiated from the tower by its size, structure, materials, and interior function. In 1972 the Financial Center Office Building developer, David H. Murdock, of Los Angeles-based David H. Murdock Development Company, described the project as "twenty-three stories centered atop a two-story base, for a total of twenty-five stories above ground level—plus a two-level parking garage below grade." The two-story base, also referred to as the west wing, was designed to adjoin the three-story east wing, with shared structure and circulation.

<sup>3</sup> The 1924 Equitable Tower stood as Des Moines's tallest building and largest leased office building until the Financial Center Office Building was completed in 1974. The Equitable remained the state's tallest building from 1924 until 1973, when a twenty-one-story skyscraper was completed in Cedar Rapids, superseded by the Financial Center, as is discussed further in Section 8.

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles-based David H. Murdock Development Co. assembled a nationally active design-build team, which oversaw the Financial Center shell and core. The team was based in Phoenix, where the developer was first headquartered: architect Russell McCaleb, AIA; structural engineer Walter E. Riley; mechanical engineer Herman Blum Consulting Engineers of Phoenix, and general contractor Henry C. Beck Company (Phoenix office). The above-grade detailing and construction of the east wing was by Des Moines-based architects Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local contractor Weitz Co. for Des Moines Savings and Loan Association in agreement with the David H. Murdock Development Co. and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, as is further discussed in Section 8.

<sup>5</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and successors occupied the Financial Center until 2019. Des Moines Savings and Loan Association and successors occupied the Financial Center east wing until 1993.

Financial Center Office Building

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

County and State

important shared core circulation and services, including the ground-floor entrance vestibules, central lobby, shared elevator banks and stairs, mechanical and related equipment on each floor for customized delivery, and an anticipated second-floor skywalk corridor.<sup>6</sup> The upper office floors were designed for flexible tenant use, built around the repeating circulation and service core consisting of elevator lobby with central corridor to egress stairs, restrooms, and mechanical rooms; the top floor originally contained a private business social club with restaurant.<sup>7</sup> The Financial Center's local significance is heavily weighted to its exterior, which retains its original design. The interior shell and core also remain largely as built, with tenant buildout and finishes updated over time as expected. The tower remains a highly visible landmark on the capital city's skyline, with the building retaining integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association.

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, and the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the resource in a **Statement of Integrity** with each aspect discussed in its own paragraph.)

### Financial Center Setting:

The Financial Center Office Building is located in Des Moines within the city's traditional downtown financial and retail center, which provides an urban setting with public sidewalks and alleys, city skywalk connectors crossing over streets linking buildings, and densely developed mid-rise and high-rise buildings with some surface parking lots and small open space parks (Figures 1-3). The Financial Center building occupies more than half a block, with its north-facing façade overlooking Walnut Street (Figure 3).<sup>8</sup> Walnut Street and Locust Street include the preponderance of downtown Des Moines's high-rise buildings of thirteen stories and above as well as mid-rise buildings of five to twelve stories, most erected during the twentieth century and constructed of brick and stone, glass and metal, and some concrete and glass. Within a block radius of the Financial Center stand some of the tallest buildings in the downtown and city, including the nineteen-story Gothic Revival masonry Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building (316 Sixth Avenue and 604 Locust Street, NRHP), the tallest in Iowa from 1924 until the Financial Center's 1973-1974 completion. More recent adjacent skyscrapers in the immediate vicinity reflect the Financial Center's success in its role as a downtown redevelopment catalyst. Setbacks are minimal, with many buildings constructed to their lot lines adjoining the public sidewalks and paved alleys. City-owned skywalk connectors cross over streets and link many of these buildings, providing enclosed pedestrian routes above streets via corridors within buildings and within exterior connectors. Current uses tend toward office, with some housing, hotels, and above-ground parking ramps, as well as limited retail on sidewalk and skywalk levels.

The Financial Center adjoins two early-twentieth-century masonry buildings to the east that historically housed banks: the 1907 eleven-story Fleming Building (218 Sixth Avenue, NRHP) designed by Chicago architect Daniel Burnham and the 1913 twelve-story Hippee Building (206 Sixth Avenue, NRHP), which the

<sup>6</sup> In Des Moines a network of public skywalks provide sheltered pedestrian pathways within buildings and attached exterior connectors. The Financial Center contains a public skywalk corridor that was anticipated during the building's construction. Initial downtown skywalk planning and federal grant funding application began during construction of the Financial Center. The anchor bank tenant Iowa-Des Moines National Bank played a key role in initiating the city's skywalk system, facilitating a prototype public skywalk connection (nonextant) between the 1971 J.C. Penney department store building (substantially remodeled) and then-new Fifth Avenue city parking garage (nonextant), as is further discussed in Section 8.

<sup>7</sup> The term "central core" is used to describe the circulation and service core, which is centrally located in all directions within the wider basement and podium levels to service both wings of the podium; within the narrower tower the core position is central within the north-south length of each floor plan and offset within east-west width. The Embassy Club operated at the top of the Financial Center until its 1990 relocation to the new tallest building in Iowa, the Principal Tower (now known as 801 Grand), after which the Financial Center's top floor was reconfigured for tenant office use.

<sup>8</sup> The original Fort Des Moines plat is oriented to the Des Moines River, which bisects the city, resulting in the blocks being rotated some 15 degrees from directional north. The typical square blocks are divided into quarter blocks by north-south and east-west alleys. For simplicity, all directionals use plan north.

Financial Center Office Building

Polk County, Iowa

Name of Property

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Des Moines Savings and Loan Association purchased and remodeled in the post-war era, prior to occupying the Financial Center east wing in 1973 (Figure 22). To the east one block is the 1932 former Iowa-Des Moines National Bank Building (520 Walnut Street, NRHP), constructed as an Art Deco skyscraper base and occupied until the bank's 1974 move into the Financial Center (the planned Art Deco tower was never built due to constraints of the Great Depression and World War II) (Figure 19). More recent adjacent skyscrapers include the 1986 twenty-five-story HUB Tower (699 Walnut Street), which stands across the street to the north and is about twenty feet shorter than the Financial Center (Figure 17). To the west is the 1997 nineteen-story Employers Mutual Companies (EMC) insurance office building (700 Walnut Street), which is adjacent to the 1971 ten-story EMC headquarters building (717 Mulberry Street) along Eighth Street. To the rear of the Financial Center, south across Mulberry Street, is a 2000 one-story Wells Fargo drive-through teller bank (115 Seventh Street) and a surface parking lot (Figure 2).

### Financial Center Site:

The Financial Center occupies more than half of a square city block and is mostly built to the property lines of the flat site (Figures 3-4). This site is integral to the Financial Center's local significance, as will be discussed further under the Statement of Significance. The fenestrated podium, comprised of west and east wings, has a mostly rectangular footprint extending to Walnut Street to the north, Seventh Street to the west, Mulberry Street to the south, and adjoining pre-existing buildings to the east. The west wing's north elevation is slightly recessed to create a shallow pedestrian plaza; two cantilevered canopies project into this plaza, sheltering entrances into the shared central lobby (central canopy) and former Iowa-Des Moines National Bank banking hall (west canopy). The east wing's north elevation features a two-story glazed entrance atrium with two sets of double entrance doors. The Walnut Street sidewalk is inset with granite stone pavers that continue for several blocks as part of a contemporary multi-block public streetscape.

The west wing's west elevation is built to the Seventh Street public concrete sidewalk, with a smaller cantilevered pedestrian canopy projecting over the sidewalk at the side entrance, and a wider cantilevered canopy near the southwest corner projecting over the parking garage entrance ramp. The west wing's south elevation is built to the Mulberry Street public concrete sidewalk, with the second story cantilevered over the recessed first story at the southeast corner; in this recessed area is the basement parking garage vehicular exit and a rear service court with concrete delivery dock shielded by a non-original fence. The east wing's three-story south elevation was built against a pre-existing adjoining building's rear one-story addition (Hippee Building) except for a one-story ell that projects south with shared egress doors and separate retail tenant loading doors adjacent to the rear service court. The east wing's east elevation is primarily built against another pre-existing building (Flynn Building) up to the second story, with a southeast rear egress stair opening to a narrow east-west partial alleyway; the third story is recessed on the east and north.

The concrete planters on the sidewalk and bollards near the northwest corner of the flat site are circa-2000s objects, with the bollards specifically added by the former bank tenant as a robbery deterrent. There are two midblock city skywalk connections, above Seventh Street on the west elevation and above Walnut Street on the north elevation, located roughly in the location of the historic alleys, connecting the Financial Center to adjoining buildings within the downtown public skywalk system, with interior connection through a public skywalk corridor. There are no integrity issues because the City of Des Moines skywalk system was planned during the Financial Center construction in response to the Financial Center project catalyzing interest in downtown redevelopment, which spurred additional new downtown construction and the creation of the planned downtown skywalk system.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> As is further discussed in Section 8, the Financial Center's investment in downtown immediately sparked interest in new redevelopment planning, which included a skywalk system. Construction of the skywalk system was delayed after state legislators blocked the City of Des Moines's use of federal grant funding.



Financial Center Office Building

Polk County, Iowa

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### Financial Center Structure and Exterior:

The Financial Center Office Building is a twenty-five-story building, plus elevator penthouse and two-story basement underground parking garage, designed with a low-rise asymmetrical podium (two-story west wing, three-story east wing) that visually and structurally supports the tower (Figure 5). The main elements of the building—underground parking garage, podium (west and east wings), and setback tower atop of the west wing—are all interconnected and interdependent, built on a shared, variable structural grid.

The building rises to a height of 346 feet at the elevator penthouse roof. The podium has extra-tall floor levels: the first story spans more than 21 feet and the second story is 13.5 feet tall. On the tower, floors three through twenty-three are 12.5 feet tall and the top two floors (twenty-four and twenty-five) are 13.5 feet tall. Behind the tower parapet, the flat roof level is nearly 325 feet above the sidewalk. The building footprint is primarily rectangular: The rectangular west wing measures some 122 wide east to west (fronting Walnut Street and backing to Mulberry Street), by 280 feet deep north to south (facing Seventh Street). The smaller east wing measures some 92 feet wide (Walnut Street) and 148 feet deep with atrium, plus rear projecting ell; the recessed third story has a smaller footprint. The tower, which starts at the third story, measures some 72 feet wide (east-west) by 183 feet deep (north-south).<sup>10</sup>

The atypical podium-tower configuration and exterior design reflect the Financial Center's status as Iowa's first commercial complex developed with, and for, two competing financial institutions. The complementary yet differentiated exteriors of the east wing and the west wing and tower reflected and identified the two individual financial institutions, as will be discussed further below. The office tower is deeply set back from the podium roof perimeters on three elevations and positioned continuous with the west wing's primary (north) elevation—both treatments highlighting the building's height and status as the city's tallest skyscraper when designed.<sup>11</sup> The building components are unified by a common exterior palette of materials and colors: creamy white painted concrete and aluminum, recessed PPG Solarbronze-tinted non-reflective glazing with bronze-finished aluminum frames, and limited brown brick at the rear of both the east and west wings. The solar-shielding fins and tinted nonreflective insulated glazing reduced glare and solar gain for tenant comfort and developer-owner operational energy savings.

The building contains several recessed elements, some discussed under the site description, which provide visual variety and functional performance—including ensuring that the setback tower would retain natural light and views as additional skyscrapers were built nearby. On the north elevation, the east wing projects forward to the public sidewalk while the west wing and tower are recessed in the same plane to create a small plaza over which two entrance canopies project. The tower, which begins at the third story, is differentiated by the solar fin materiality change from concrete at the podium level to formed aluminum at the tower level. On the west elevation, at the sidewalk level the recessed side entrance that steps up from the sidewalk provides shelter from weather. At the west wing roof level, the tower is deeply set back on the west and south, preserving views and natural light while also providing space for mechanical equipment at the south and access to the tower walls for cleaning and maintenance. On the rear south elevation at the sidewalk level, the southeast corner of the west wing is recessed to shelter the parking garage egress and the rear service court, and the east wing's entrance is recessed in alignment with the rear service court, where trash receptacles are stored. The tower's east elevation is set back from the east property line and adjoins the east wing's third story, which is recessed at the north and east to provide windows with adequate natural light. On top of the tower, the two-level elevator penthouse is recessed to provide space for mechanicals and maintenance.

<sup>10</sup> Polk County Assessor; Slingshot Architecture.

<sup>11</sup> Among other citations: *Building* magazine, October 1972, article notes the Financial Center Office Building under construction as the largest and tallest skyscraper in Iowa.

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The Financial Center rests on a reinforced concrete foundation that extends beneath the podium and includes additional square footage beneath the public sidewalks that was leased from the city. The two levels of underground parking incorporate large round concrete columns that tie into large concrete beams and additional steel beams. Fireproofed steel framing ties into cast-in-place concrete floor plates and beams supported by perimeter concrete columns. Minimal squared interior columns tie into the concrete elevator and stair shafts for maximum floor plan flexibility. The concrete perimeter structure on the west wing and tower includes steel anchors used to install the creamy white painted vertical fins and the recessed curtain wall (Figure 7).

The west wing, the tower, and portions of the east wing are primarily clad with tapered fins that project 1.5 feet from the curtain wall and are insulated. The fins shield the recessed Solarbronze tinted insulated curtain wall from solar gain and glare. The curtainwall is comprised of Twindow double-glazed windows (Solarbronze tinted glass on the exterior and clear glass on the interior) at the office levels and Solarbronze opaque insulated Spandrelite concealing the horizontal floor/ceiling lines and vertical column lines (Figure 6). The fins were installed first, anchored to the concrete floor levels and perimeter structural columns; then the curtain wall was installed from the interior.<sup>12</sup> At the podium level, the concrete fins arise from a painted curb and extend to broad eight-foot-tall precast concrete parapet walls. The parapet walls here and throughout are painted the same color as the fins, except for a dark colored recessed drip edge at the bottom of the parapet. On the tower's third story and above, the fins transition to formed embossed aluminum, painted a creamy white. At the corners of the west wing and tower, the fins attach at right angles and create the effect of notched corners (Figure 7).

#### *West wing:*

The podium's two-story west wing contains twenty-five bays across the north primary elevation, fifty-three bays across the west secondary elevation, twenty-eight bays across the rear south elevation, and twenty-six bays at the rear east elevation. On the north, wide cantilevered canopies mark the entrances to the central lobby and western banking hall. Each squared canopy shelters entrances with bronze-finished aluminum-framed storefront and clear glazed doors featuring original rectangular bronze pulls plus a revolving door, side lites, and transoms. On the west, there is a narrower cantilevered canopy sheltering a recessed side bank entrance with bronze, aluminum-framed storefront and clear glazed doors, side lites, and transom. This Seventh Street side entrance has finishes that continue materially into the vestibule interior: exterior travertine wall cladding, finished ceiling, and terrazzo stairs. At the south end of the west elevation, a broad cantilevered canopy marks the parking garage entrance, with some additional added parking signage. Entrance to the underground parking garage is provided through a wide metal garage door fronting Seventh Street. Wall materials between the concrete fins change here to brown brick at the first story, horizontal aluminum painted louvers at the mezzanine level, and Solarbronze tinted curtain wall at the second-story level. On the rear south elevation, the first-story wall between the concrete fins is clad in the same brown brick. At the second story, the brick is substituted with aluminum louvers that provide ventilation. The west wing's southeast corner is cantilevered over the recessed first story; a wide painted aluminum fascia outlines the cantilevered second-floor level, which is clad with recessed louvers between the formed aluminum fins. Beneath the cantilevered section, there is the east-facing parking garage exit and rear service court. The parking ramp exit has a wide garage door and there is a non-original parking attendant shelter of painted wood. The recessed service court has brick-clad walls, squared brick-clad columns, finished ceiling with can lights, and concrete loading dock with railing, located behind non-original privacy fencing. The flat roof of the west wing is covered with synthetic membrane, stone ballast, some pavers, and rooftop equipment. There are three flagpoles mounted to the back of the north parapet wall; two appear to be original. The roof is accessed from the rear pedestrian door integrated into the curtain wall at the third story of the tower.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Drendel, AIA, informant interview with principal of Slingshot Architecture, 2023.

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*East wing:*

The east wing exterior is complementary to but differentiated from the adjoining west wing and tower. The east wing design shares the architectural palette of recessed upper element, broad parapet walls, concrete vertical fins, and Solarbronze tinted curtain wall with bronze-finished aluminum frames. The façade treatment was designed to call attention to the Des Moines Savings and Loan entrance with its minimal linear temple-front appearance. The two-story vestibule has smooth painted concrete walls framing the recessed glazed wall, which consists of nonreflective bronze-tinted glass above, and clear glass below, all in bronze-finished aluminum frames. The entrance vestibule has two entrances, each with replacement double doors.<sup>13</sup> The vestibule projects three bays forward from the adjoining north elevation of the west wing and tower.<sup>14</sup> Behind the second-story broad concrete parapet, the third story of the east wing is set back on the north and east elevations. Punched windows of Solarbronze-tinted glazing on the north and a row of similar tinted windows on the east overlook the lower roof. At the rear south elevation, a short one-story brick ell contains a rear public pedestrian entrance into the shared rear egress corridor as well as receiving doors for the retail tenant. The upper floors are set back due to the location of a pre-existing building; the parapet continues, with concrete fins and Solarbronze tinted recessed curtain wall. The flat roofs of the east wing are covered with synthetic membrane, stone ballast, and equipment. The east wing roofs are accessed from the pedestrian door integrated into the fourth-story tower curtain wall; on the interior the access point is the fourth-floor elevator lobby window wall.

*Tower:*

The tower arises from the west wing and is fully fenestrated on all four elevations with recessed nonreflective bronze-tinted curtain wall. Depending on the angle of view, the rhythmic spacing of the projecting fins appear to change the exterior from vertical columns of creamy white and bronze, to all white. The recessed curtain wall grid varies in size per elevation. The fin and curtain wall design are very similar on all four elevations, with slightly different proportions on the east-west elevations as compared to the north-south elevations. The narrower north primary elevation spans fifteen bays and has no set back on the podium, while the rear south elevation also spans fifteen bays. The wider west and east side elevations span thirty-seven bays and are set back ten bays on the west and a similar distance on the east. There is limited variation of materials, which are employed rhythmically within the grid: Solarbronze-tinted insulated curtain wall glazing illuminates office spaces, Solarbronze insulated Spandrelite is installed at horizontal floor levels and vertical column lines. In addition, on the east elevation aluminum louvers insert within the curtain wall on each floor level, ventilating the main mechanical rooms located within the central core, south of the elevators. There are also two doors inserted within the curtain wall that allow access to the rooftops of the east and west wings, as noted above. The flat membrane tower roof is concealed behind creamy white painted broad concrete parapet walls, with the two-story, white-finished metal-clad elevator penthouse arising at the center with some equipment.

**Financial Center Interior:**

The Financial Center Office Building is a twenty-five-story skyscraper designed as a shell and core project to accommodate modern banking facilities for two institutions, with upper-level leasable Class A office space that could be flexibly configured to meet the changing needs of tenants. The interiors are arranged around a shared circulation and service core with common elevator lobbies, stair enclosures, restrooms, and mechanical spaces on most floors. The first floor contains four entrance vestibules, a central lobby with shared core elevators and stairs, and the east and west wing former banking halls (one used as a retail store, the other vacant), and rear egress corridor (Figures 8-9). The upper floors are dedicated to tenant offices, with some floors having multiple tenant office spaces opening from a central corridor, and other floors used by a single tenant (Figures 8-14). The west wing has a rear storage mezzanine and rear second floor mechanical space that holds key equipment; each upper floor has mechanical, electrical, and telecommunications rooms

<sup>13</sup> The original east wing south entrance doors were solid slab doors without safety lites.

<sup>14</sup> The east wing vestibule's two-story south wall aligns with the set-back of the exposed third story above. The atrium's glazed north wall features mullions that project in a fin-like manner.

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to provide tenants with customized configurations on each floor. The full basement has two levels of parking reached by ramps. The building contains fire suppression equipment and was the first high-rise building in Des Moines built to meet a new high-rise fire safety code enacted during the construction of the Financial Center, as is further addressed in Section 8.

The building retains its original shell and core plan with some original shell and core finishes, including travertine wall cladding used in entrances and the central lobby, original perimeter insulated window walls, finished columns, original elevators in elevator lobbies, three original egress stairs, and a two-story concrete parking garage. Each floor contains the perimeter shell, with repeating window wall treatment: the rhythmic placement of insulated windows grouped between perimeter columns and terminating at the ceiling level, with each grouping underscored by a continuous bronze-finished aluminum stool, and each bronze-finished aluminum-framed window framed by vertical gypsum wallboard corresponding to the location of the exterior fins. The balance of the building was designated for tenant-designed office space, which was anticipated to have changing configurations and finishes. Tenant offices primarily contain acoustical tile ceilings, painted gypsum wallboard walls, finished columns, and a mix of hard surface and carpet flooring.

As a multi-tenant office building, the Financial Center interior consists of public, semi-public, and private areas. The public spaces are the shared underground parking garage; four entrance vestibules; shared central lobby; basement- and podium-level core circulation (shared elevators, stairs, and central mail chute/mail collector); first-floor former banking halls (privately finished); and second-floor city skywalk corridor. The semi-public spaces include the tower core circulation on each upper floor including elevator lobbies, stairs, and corridors. The private areas include tenant offices and storage areas, and the building's equipment spaces.

#### *Shell and core circulation:*

The shell and core floor plans include a central circulation and service core that extends from basement parking garage to the top of the tower, with common elevator lobbies and stair enclosures, plus restrooms and mechanical rooms on most floors (Figures 8-13; 41-47). There are eight core elevators arranged in two inward-facing banks; elevator service extends from the P1 parking garage level up to the twenty-fifth floor (Figures 8-14). There are four transitional floors served by both elevator banks (all eight elevators): basement P1 (parking garage), first floor (central lobby), second floor (skywalk level), and thirteenth floor. The eastern bank of four inward-facing elevators serves the lower floors through thirteenth floor; the western bank of four inward-facing elevators is dedicated to the upper floors from thirteenth floor and above. This configuration provides shared elevator service to the east wing from P1 parking through third floor (the elevator lobbies open on both east and west sides). The elevator lobbies on fourth through thirteenth floors in the tower each have east-facing windows and a longer elevator lobby that opens only on the west to the central corridor (expressed or full corridor depending on tenant buildout). On these floors, gypsum wallboard covers the elevator shafts for the elevators dedicated to the floors above. Tower floors fourteen and above have shorter elevator lobbies that open on the east to additional leasable eastern perimeter office space and on the west to the central corridor (either a full corridor or an "expressed corridor" with only the east core wall, depending on tenant buildout).

There are also three primary egress stairs, each with painted finished walls, utilitarian metal stairs with metal railings, and slab stair doors. The north egress stair serves the entire building, first through twenty-fifth floors, plus the penthouse, and is located north of the central core elevators. The south egress stair serves the ninth through twenty-fifth floors and is located south of the elevators and restrooms/mechanical rooms. The rear egress stair serves floors one through nine and is located at the rear south wall of the tower. The second-floor elevator lobby is incorporated into the public skywalk corridor, with access to the north egress stair. Additional non-public stairs access the parking ramp and mezzanine.

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Beyond the shell and core, the building contains additional vertical circulation that was included in the shell and core structure but privately installed by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank in the west wing and tower. There is a pair of private bank tenant elevators that run from the P1 parking garage level through the eighth floor, mostly within small private elevator lobbies located across from the rear egress stair. There is an additional southwest bank tenant stair accessed from the west Seventh Street vestibule, with connection to the rear storage mezzanine, and second-floor tenant offices and a south sub corridor allocated for a future skywalk connection that was not built. The bank tenant originally installed escalators that were replaced at end of lifespan with a contemporary open stair with metal railing. The east wing has two egress stairs that were built out by the savings and loan. The north stair at the entrance vestibule was reconfigured for public skywalk access as part of the 1980s city skywalk system.

*Basement parking garage:*

The basement contains the original two floors of underground parking, with some 260 marked spaces. Vehicles enter the west concrete ramp from Seventh Street, and traffic then flows north. Vehicles exit via a separate concrete ramp that leads east and then onto Mulberry Street. The parking garage floors are labeled P1 (upper-level parking) and P2 (lower-level parking). The original parking garage at both levels is exposed concrete construction: poured concrete walls, floor plates, and ceiling, with large concrete beams and some additional steel beams that tie into large round columns. The central circulation core has painted concrete masonry unit walls. The elevator lobby at the P1 level is accessed from bronze-finished aluminum-framed glazed automatic doors on both the east and west ends. The minimally finished lobby interior has eight elevators total, with original painted metal cab doors and frames. The lobby has finished walls, a simple coffered ceiling, and a carpeted concrete floor. The egress stair is located to the north and extends up to the central lobby and down to the P2 parking level. To the south of the central core are the two private bank tenant elevators, which open directly into the parking garage without a lobby. On P2, the central core contains the elevator pits and the egress stair, plus storage. Elsewhere on both levels there are additional stairs that lead to the east wing and rear areas of the west wing and limited partitioned storage areas.

*First-floor:*

The first floor contains the shared central lobby with shared circulation, and banking halls in each wing (Figures 8-9, 41). Both wings retain their original entrance vestibules, shared central lobby, shell perimeter walls, perimeter and interior structural columns, and core circulation.

- *Central lobby:* The central lobby is located primarily within the west wing, and the vestibule is directly accessed from Walnut Street on the north (Figures 8-9, 42). The lobby also is accessible on the interior from the former west wing banking hall and from the east wing vestibule, former banking hall (now retail store), and rear egress corridor that exits south toward Mulberry Street. Overall the lobby retains many original finishes and features that present a high-quality professional appearance and continue the original function of providing shared circulation within the podium, tower, and basement parking garage via central core stairs, elevators, and twenty-five-story mail chute. The vestibule has original travertine stone-clad east and west walls, bronze-finished aluminum glazed storefront with doors, and terrazzo floor. The central lobby continues the travertine wall and column cladding and terrazzo floor, and has a taller ceiling that is primarily gypsum board with square coffers containing lighting. At the lobby center stands a feature wall that conceals two stairs and backs to the rear elevator banks. Large square travertine-clad columns bookend the wall, with wood paneling framing decorative tile. Travertine cladding continues on the sides of the stair enclosure/elevator bank, with the stair entrances each marked by a floor-to-ceiling vertical tall slab wood door topped by upper wood panel. The east door leads to the central core north egress stair, which serves the first floor through the penthouse. The west door leads down to the basement parking garage. At the rear south the eight elevators in two banks feature metal-framed double-height elevator doors—lower operable cab doors and fixed decorative upper doors that continue to the ceiling level—with a textured stone-like material. There are original wall-mounted metal sconces between the elevator cabs and the bronze-finished central mail chute

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with mail collector is located in the southwest corner. On the west wall there is a double-height glazed entrance into the west wing banking hall. At the east is a large square travertine-clad column with a contemporary, removable security guard desk backed with wood paneling; beyond this is an entrance to the east wing vestibule and an entry into the retail store (with roll-down security grate). There are some contemporary removable art panels installed on the east and west walls.

- *West wing banking hall and ancillary spaces:* The west wing first-floor former banking hall and supporting bank areas are located west and south of the central lobby (Figures 8, 42). This area was developed as a shell and core. The shell and core consists of two entrance vestibules, tall banking hall and adjoining open office, perimeter window walls, vaults, private tenant elevators, rear egress stair, and rear mezzanine. The exterior entrance from Walnut Street enters into a north vestibule, finished with travertine-clad side walls, bronze-finished aluminum storefront glazing with polished bronze door pulls, low finished ceiling, and carpet. There is a secondary exterior side entrance from Seventh Street into a small west vestibule, with travertine-clad walls, bronze-finished aluminum storefront glazing with polished bronze door pulls, tall acoustical tile ceiling, and rosewood-colored terrazzo floor. Perimeter north and west insulated window walls are taller than on upper floors and are similarly configured with bronze-finished aluminum-framed windows grouped between columns and unified with continuous stools; between windows, gypsum wallboard backs to exterior fins. There is a tall ceiling volume in the banking hall and adjoining open office area; large perimeter and interior columns provide structure and subdivision. On the east, the two concrete-lined vaults flank the two private tenant elevators, and the rear egress stair exits to the rear service court.

The original bank tenant designed and outfitted the interior, with successor banks updating the space through 2019. Although the banking hall finishes and configurations have changed over time, the banking hall retains the public lobby and teller functions, and the shell and core elements. The banking hall is subdivided into a north lobby area that opens to the central teller area.<sup>15</sup> The rear open office area is located behind the teller area and has doors opening into the west side vestibule. The banking hall and open office area are separated by partial-height clear storefront glazing and gypsum wallboard backing to the teller area; finishes are primarily carpet with some resilient flooring and ceramic tile, gypsum wallboard, and acoustical ceiling tile with HVAC located above, and there are contemporary suspended pendants. To the east of the teller area is an east corridor with entrances to the safety deposit vault and bank vault, deposit box viewing rooms, private tenant elevators, and rear egress stair that exits to the rear service court. The two vaults retain original heavy stainless-steel locking vault doors, and there are original safety deposit boxes in one; the elevators have stainless-steel frames and cab doors. There are additional lower-height rooms to the south, beneath the mezzanine. The ancillary spaces have contemporary office finishes of carpet and resilient floor tile, finished gypsum wallboard, acoustical ceiling tile, and wood and metal doors. South of the southeast vestibule is the southeast stair, which is open to the mezzanine and second-floor levels. Finishes include acoustical ceiling tile, travertine wall cladding, a travertine-clad slender column that continues to the second floor, finished gypsum wallboard, and carpet.

- *West wing mezzanine:* The rear mezzanine level is accessible from the southeast stair; it was a non-public area that housed tenant storage rooms and telecommunications equipment (Figure 43). It is finished with acoustical ceiling tile, painted gypsum wallboard, and carpet.

- *East wing banking hall and ancillary spaces:* The former banking hall in the east wing is located east of the central lobby (Figures 9, 42). This area was developed as a structural shell, and the savings and loan occupant designed and outfitted the interior. The shell consists of the two-story volume atrium, open plan banking hall with supporting areas, and shared rear egress corridor. Two sets of double doors from Walnut Street enter into the north vestibule. There is also a south public entrance from Mulberry Street that enters the rear corridor that leads to the central lobby, and a non-original set of rear loading doors for the retail tenant.

<sup>15</sup> The north lobby most recently served as a Wells Fargo museum, and early on hosted art displays.

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Within the vestibule are south doorways into the retail store (with glazed automatic doors) and the central lobby, plus an east doorway into the adjoining Fleming Building, added for skywalk access. The south wall contains interior windows—clerestory for the first-floor retail store and a ribbon of second-floor office windows—that draw in natural light. Original finishes and features in the vestibule include the tall ceiling with acoustical tile, two-story window wall with projecting bronze-finished mullions, travertine accent wall that continues into the former banking hall, rosewood-colored terrazzo floor with inset yellow Greek key pattern, plus additional neutral-colored terrazzo flooring at the retail store entrance.<sup>16</sup> Additional travertine clads the open staircase in the southwestern corner, which was reconfigured for public skywalk access to the second floor. The former banking hall also retains original features and some finishes: Original open plan with tall volume, squared columns, travertine accent wall, terrazzo flooring at the north entrance, and central lobby connection. Other finishes are contemporary: resilient flooring, painted gypsum wallboard, acoustical ceiling tile, and security mirrors on the columns. The removable furnishing counters and shelves arranged at the perimeter and aisles approximate the location where removable furnishing teller counters and banker desks were once located. At the rear of the store, in the former bank service area, is tenant storage and loading. The shared rear egress corridor south of the central lobby has finished gypsum wallboard walls and ceiling, some wood paneling, and carpet.

*Second floor:*

On the second floor, both wings primarily contain tenant office space, including the former Iowa-Des Moines National Bank executive suite in the west wing (Figures 10 and 44). The west wing also houses key mechanical and electrical equipment in the rear. The second floor is unified by the public skywalk corridor that spans both wings and incorporates the shared elevator lobby. The shell and core remain extant in both wings, with perimeter window walls, perimeter and interior structural columns, and circulation components. The window configuration on the exterior window walls here also repeats on the upper floors: arranged as groupings of windows between perimeter columns, with each bronze-finished aluminum-framed window installed to the ceiling level with a bronze-finished aluminum continuous stool, and gypsum wall board installed below the stool and between the windows, backing to the exterior fins. The office finishes except where noted are typical contemporary type: acoustical ceiling tile with integrated fluorescent-type lighting, finished gypsum wallboard, carpet, and wood doors with metal frames.

• *Public skywalk corridor:* The L-shaped skywalk corridor was built out in the early 1980s and runs north-south in the east wing to cross Walnut Street, and routes east-west through the west wing to cross Seventh Street. The city skywalk corridor has contemporary acoustical ceiling tile, finished gypsum wallboard walls, some glazed windows and entrances, and carpet. The west wing's central core elevator lobby is oriented east-west to serve both wings. The elevator lobby has a coffered ceiling of gypsum wallboard and acoustical tile, eight inward-facing elevators with original metal frames and cab doors, walls of gypsum wallboard and wood paneling, and carpeted floor, plus mail chute. The central core north egress stair located north of the elevators has a tall entrance door into the finished stair with painted metal open stairs with metal railing. There is a second egress stair in the east wing, which was reconfigured for skywalk access.

• *West wing second floor:* The west wing shell includes window walls on the north, west, and a small section of the east, and a south finished wall without windows that backs to the rear mechanical equipment space. There are perimeter columns and two north-south rows of interior columns. The executive suite occupies the front (north) end of the west wing, accessed through a doorway in the skywalk corridor. The suite is organized with a rectangular reception and administrative area at the center, and partitioned private offices at the perimeter window walls; there are perimeter columns and interior columns. The larger former president's office is located at the northeast corner; it has a coffered ceiling of gypsum wallboard and acoustical ceiling

<sup>16</sup> The Greek key pattern may reference a geometric design element on the exterior of the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association's building on Sixth Avenue, historically the Hippee Building and known as the Savings and Loan Building from the mid 1940s into the 1980s

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tile with recessed lighting, north window wall, wood wall paneling, and carpeting. There is a similarly appointed larger office or conference room at the southwest corner and additional smaller offices along the north wall. The reception and administrative area has a lower acoustical ceiling, wood wall paneling, and carpet. Overall finishes are contemporary, reflecting redecorating as the bank rebranded in the late twentieth century. Additional office space is located south of the skywalk corridor: some is open plan, and some is partitioned. The central service core differs here, with larger restrooms and no mechanical room. The circulation core includes the rear tenant elevators with stainless-steel metal elevator frames and cab doors, located within a small lobby; the rear egress stair opens into this tenant elevator lobby. Nearby is a small, abandoned file conveyor that originally extended first floor through fifth floor. In the southwest corner is the tenant stair that leads down to the mezzanine storage and first-floor west vestibule; to the south of the stair there is a sub corridor that was allocated for a future skywalk connection that was not built. The rear mechanical equipment includes a large cooling tower that continues to the third-story roof level.

- *East wing second floor:* The east wing office area is accessed from the public skywalk corridor. It retains the original shell with the south window wall; the other perimeter walls are gypsum wallboard, with the north wall containing interior windows that overlook the entrance vestibule. There are two interior north-south rows of smaller squared columns, some used for partitioning. There are partitioned rooms at the perimeter with an open area at the rear. There is an egress stair and restrooms in the southeast corner. All spaces have contemporary office finishes of acoustical ceiling tile with integrated lighting, gypsum wallboard, carpet, and metal-framed wood doors.

*Third floor:*

The third floor contains the first level of the tower, originally occupied by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, and the top level of the east wing, originally occupied by Des Moines Savings and Loan Association (Figures 11 and 45). The floor plan is arranged around the central circulation and service core with the shared elevator lobby for the tower and east wing.

- *Tower:* The east-west oriented elevator lobby has a coffered ceiling (gypsum wallboard and acoustical tile), four inward-facing elevators with metal frames and cab doors, gypsum wallboard walls, and carpeted floor; on the east and west are contemporary wood-framed glazed double doors that open to the office spaces beyond. The remainder of the tower circulation and service core is typical: the central expressed corridor provides access to the north egress stair, mail chute, women's restroom, and sub corridor with men's restroom, main mechanical room that backs to the east wall, and electrical and other equipment closets. The rear egress stair is located directly south, across from the private tenant elevators. The shell retains the historic perimeter window walls, and finished perimeter and interior columns. There is an additional smaller tenant bank vault with stainless-steel vault door and frame along the east wall. All spaces have contemporary office finishes of acoustical ceiling tile with integrated lighting (some tiles removed), finished gypsum wallboard, carpet, and metal-framed wood doors.

- *East wing:* The third floor retains the original shell consisting of perimeter window walls on the north, east, and south, the rows of columns, and the north and rear southeast egress stairs. The tenant buildout on this floor is largely open plan, with some partitioned rooms on the west. The north and south window walls repeat the groupings of windows between columns, with bronze-finished aluminum framed windows with shared continuous sills. The east window wall has a different treatment: a row of punched windows, each deeply recessed into a frame of gypsum wallboard, which creates a vertical dimensional effect similar to the exterior fins. The contemporary tenant office finishes are typical: dropped acoustical tile ceiling with integrated lighting (ceiling tiles temporarily removed for access to repairs), gypsum wallboard, and carpet, with standard-height metal-framed wood doors.



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*Fourth floor through twenty-fifth floor:*

The tower's upper levels from fourth through twenty-fifth floors repeat a similar floor plan, arranged around the circulation and service core (Figures 12-13 and 46-47). The original core locations and continued function of the elevator lobbies, central corridors, and stairs on each floor collectively convey the historical circulation patterns within the building. These floors also retain historic shell perimeter window walls, and finished structural perimeter and interior columns. The circulation core on each floor contains an east-west elevator lobby with four elevators (except for thirteenth floor, which has eight elevators) and mail chute, and a north-south central corridor (or expressed corridor) with access to egress stairs, restrooms, and mechanical rooms/closets. Core elevator and egress stair configurations vary somewhat by floor, as noted above. Although the core finishes vary somewhat by floor, reflecting typical replacement of worn finishes and tenant decoration, the elevator lobbies on most floors continue to reflect the historic character, as do the egress stairs. The core elevator lobbies retain their original finished gypsum wallboard walls, metal elevator frames and cab doors, window ledge for floors four through thirteen, and continuous mail chute. Most elevator lobbies have a coffered ceiling, a mix of original and replacement ceilings of acoustical ceiling tile, gypsum wallboard, some with trim, and some with recessed lighting. The north-south central corridors have finished walls and acoustical tile ceilings. Corridor core doors vary in size and material, with some original wood-finish doors in dark painted metal frames extending floor to ceiling and others being standard height; historically the doors may have varied by floor, based on tenant buildout. The small core restrooms have a variety of finishes and fixtures, updated over time and some coordinated with tenant buildout; some retain painted gypsum wallboard ceilings with recessed lighting, ceramic tile floors with marble threshold, and painted gypsum wallboard walls with some ceramic tile. On each floor the mechanical room and electrical and related closets are located within a short east-west sub corridor, with mechanicals backing to the east wall and exterior louvers providing venting. These provide floor-by-floor controls for electrical, telecommunications, and heating and cooling.

Historically and now, some floors have multiple tenants and others have a single tenant; the original floor plan provided for flexibility with reconfiguring the leased space. On the original drawings, the core central corridors were drawn as "expressed corridors"—without west walls—leaving the entire floor plate beyond the circulation and service core for tenant buildout. The leasable space on each floor was designed to be flexibly reconfigured and redecorated, as on the lower floors. Some floors fully controlled by a single tenant, have semi-public access limited to the elevator lobby with locked security/smoke doors installed within the elevator lobby. Other floors have an accessible semi-public central corridor with multiple tenant offices with metal-framed doors in a variety of materials and sizes: floor-to-ceiling slab wood doors, partially or fully glazed doors, and some with side lites or window walls. Office partitions and finishes vary by floor: interiors generally have ceilings of suspended acoustical tiles with integrated lighting, finished gypsum wallboard and some glazed partitions, carpet and some resilient or hard surfacing flooring, and wood slab and glazed doors in metal frames. The private tenant buildout has changed over time to reflect updates in accessibility, technology, banking/office management, and design trends. Alterations in these private tenant areas continue to be made as needed. The anchor bank tenant leased a variety of office spaces through the years in the Financial Center until relocating in 2019. Several floors are vacant, and some vacant floors have tenant buildout partially or fully removed due to leasing interruptions during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

**Alterations**

The city connected the skywalk system to the Financial Center in the early 1980s, as part of a downtown public network that provides interior pedestrian passageway through buildings and connector hallways located above streets, primarily at second-floor levels. The skywalk link does not impair integrity, as the Financial Center was planned to accommodate future skywalk connectivity, with the skywalk system being one of several downtown civic projects catalyzed by the Financial Center's construction, as will be discussed further in the Statement of Significance.

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The site has a granite-paver public sidewalk, the second Walnut Street streetscape project; the first streetscape project in the 1980s removed the Financial Center's historic terrazzo paving, despite protests from the successor Financial Center owner and successor anchor banks.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately, original terrazzo paving remains within the east wing atrium and preserves the architect's original design intent. Bollards outside of the west wing bank entrance were installed some two decades ago to prevent bank robberies.

The exterior has been well maintained with limited changes. Pedestrian doors have been replaced, including the addition of revolving doors to reduce "stack effect." Damaged glass has been replaced where necessary. The central cantilevered canopy was remodeled in the 1990s with pillars, which have been removed and new ceiling with lighting installed. Removable signage has changed as tenants have changed.

The interior shell and shared circulation core remains much as it was when built, with changes generally related to finish wear and tear in high traffic areas. Physical threats including bank and pharmacy robberies required security enhancements; these changes were largely additive over time at the first-floor shared lobby: adding gypsum wallboard over interior glazing, adding doors, adding brighter lighting, and adding a removable guard desk with security camera monitors. These changes allowed the Financial Center to remain viable, especially in light of emerging robbery deterrence measures.

The retail banking halls and upper-level leasable office space were designed to accommodate change and have performed as planned. A retail pharmacy tenant repurposed the east wing banking hall as a store in 1994, retaining the large volume open plan, tall ceiling, columns, travertine entrance accent wall, and entrance flooring. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and its successors occupied the west wing and multiple upper offices, altering these spaces over the years to reflect changing banking practices and rebranding as Norwest Bank in 1983 and Wells Fargo via 1998 merger.<sup>18</sup> Over the years some office tenants that leased entire floors updated core finishes in keeping with their preferred finishes. Typical office finishes are carpet, some resilient and tile flooring, finished gypsum wallboard, and acoustical ceiling tiles. The twenty-fifth-floor dining club restaurant moved out in 1990 and the space was reconfigured for office use. These types of interior changes were anticipated in the original plan, allowed for the Financial Center's leasable space to remain viable, and do not compromise the shell and core.

### ***Statement of Integrity***

The twenty-five-story Financial Center Office Building plus underground parking garage retains the seven aspects of integrity, with few alterations on the exterior, for which it is locally significant. The complex clearly communicates its local commercial significance as the city's tallest skyscraper and largest leased office building built in downtown Des Moines in fifty years, beginning with the 1971 site preparations, 1972 construction start, and 1973 east wing completion and 1974 tower and west wing completion.<sup>19</sup> The Financial Center's local commercial importance is imbued in the skyscraper's striking skyline statement that advertised the two anchor banks and financial tenants and catalyzed additional downtown redevelopment with amenities such as underground parking and a top-floor private business club and restaurant. Additionally, the exterior design with its integrated solar controls for increased tenant comfort and decreased operational expenses was part of the developer's proprietary approach to leased office buildings. The Financial Center Office

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<sup>17</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "MTA, building owners debate sidewalk costs," August 1, 1985: 12. Protests were logged by the newer owner of the Financial Center and Midland Financial, successor to Des Moines Savings and Loan, regarding a uniform Walnut Street streetscape project that removed the original terrazzo sidewalks that ringed the building. The streetscape project also removed the integrated heating units that kept ice and snow from accumulating, plus the underlying waterproof membrane that protected the underground parking garage from water intrusion.

<sup>18</sup> As detailed in Section 8, the Minneapolis-based Banco holding company rebranded as Norwest Bank in 1983. In 1998 Norwest acquired California-based Wells Fargo; in this merger, the more well-known Wells Fargo name was selected, and the headquarters moved to California.

<sup>19</sup> The Financial Center Office Building superseded the 1924 Equitable Building as the tallest building in Des Moines.

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Building retains its character-defining design, features, materials, and spaces that comprise its unique appearance during the period of significance, 1972 through 1974.

In regard to *location* and *setting*, integrity is excellent. The Financial Center Office Building remains at its original half-block-plus location within the heart of the central business district. This site is a key aspect of its integrity: In 1970, community leaders held up this corner—then occupied by a long-vacant aging department store—as the symbol of post-interstate-freeway downtown’s demise. With the 1971 site clearance and 1972 Financial Center construction start, this site became imbued with new meaning as the Financial Center’s success demonstrated how downtown Des Moines could be redeveloped with privately financed, high-quality design. And as a locally groundbreaking project, the Financial Center set a new standard for office high-rise towers in downtown Des Moines that would influence development for the next two decades. The Financial Center remains at its original location, within the downtown high-rise district that includes historic early-twentieth-century financial buildings and a number of late-twentieth-century skyscrapers built following the Financial Center’s success.

The Financial Center shell and core *design* integrity is very good, clearly expressing the late modern Corporate International Style as designed by architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, with east wing detailing by Lynch, Payne, Bernabe and Champion. The Financial Center’s original massing, volume, materials, cantilevered and recessed aspects, and functional integrated solar controls continue to provide strong visuals. It is through its exterior that the Financial Center has wielded major impact on the city, providing a Modernist expression on the skyline visible from miles away that signaled new vitality and limitless potential within the central business district—a powerful visual demonstration of new possibilities for businesses and downtown that helped staunch the post-interstate-freeway commercial office exodus. The twenty-five-story skyscraper exterior remains nearly as built, with the tower arising atop the asymmetrical podium comprised of the two wings. The auto-centric design still includes an integrated underground parking garage with separate vehicular egresses. Inspired by Le Corbusier, solar gain continues to be modulated through the siting of the complex, dimensional shading fins, and recessed glare-reducing tinted curtain wall. The minor exterior changes (some replacement doors, city skywalk connectors) and change in the city sidewalk material do not diminish the integrity due to the complex’s overall size. In addition, the retention of the same terrazzo treatment within the east wing atrium flooring preserves aspects of the architect’s sidewalk intent. The skywalk concept originated during the Financial Center construction due to the project’s successful local impact, with the Financial Center owners and anchor tenant actively supporting the skywalk concept and planning for skywalk connectivity during construction. The complex also retains its interior shell and core plan plus exposed concrete parking garage—with many original finishes, features, and fixtures, as well as some replacement finishes due to wear and tear, and safety and security measures. The four ground floor entrance vestibules and central lobby with elevators remain in place, as do the two banking halls with double-height volume, open floor plan, and columns, perimeter walls, plus west wing bank vaults and secondary private bank elevator core through ninth floor and file conveyor system through fifth floor. On upper levels, the original plan of flexibly-configurable, open offices surrounding the off-set main circulation and service core remains substantially intact, with original perimeter walls, structural columns, and circulation core elevators, elevator lobbies, operational mail chute, and egress stair enclosures. Some floors have a central double-loaded corridor emanating from the main core, and others are largely open plan. Given that the Financial Center was developed as a multi-tenant building, changes to tenant partitions were expected and do not diminish its integrity, which largely rests on its exterior. Its interior adaptability allowed the Financial Center to remain viable and desirable in an increasingly crowded marketplace during the late twentieth century as additional high-rise offices were constructed following its success.

With regards to *materials*, the integrity of the shell and core is very good. The exterior remains nearly as built with original painted precast concrete and formed aluminum fins, solar bronze-tinted PPG Twindows and Spandrelite panels, precast concrete parapet walls, aluminum louvers, face brick, plus cantilevered canopies,

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which remain remarkably intact. The functional use of both vertical and horizontal lines through the fins, broad parapet walls, aluminum louvers, and subtle curtain wall patterns of tinted nonreflective solar bronze glass and spandrel panels emphasizes the volume without superfluous ornamentation. The interior shell and core retain many original materials, including twenty-five floors of perimeter drywall finished window walls with bronze-finished aluminum window frames and stools and finished columns. The four entrance vestibules and central lobby with elevators retain their original unifying palette of travertine (accent walls and clad columns) and terrazzo flooring, with some additional materials beneath additive security measures; the ground floor elevator lobby features original double-height textured elevator doors with indicator lights and large bronze mail collection box. The west banking hall also retains its vault space with two stainless-steel vault doors and private bank secondary elevator lobby with stainless-steel elevator surrounds. On upper floors, the main circulation and service core retains original finished walls, elevator surrounds and doors, elevator lobby shelves, some elevator lobby coved ceilings with recessed lighting, operational bronze mail chute, concrete stair enclosures with metal railings, and some floor-to-ceiling door openings with original metal-framed laminate doors with bronze hardware. Through the ninth floor there are rear private bank secondary elevator lobbies with replacement ceilings, concrete stair enclosures with concrete stairs and metal railings, plus a file conveyor system with stainless-steel doors through fifth floor. The offices typically feature office finishes of original or similar replacement painted drywall, acoustical ceiling tile, and carpet, with limited ceramic tile in restrooms and some vinyl floor tile elsewhere. The interior finishes in high traffic areas, particularly tenant areas, have seen typical replacements with like materials, which is to be expected in a multi-tenant building that is nearly fifty years old. As noted by the National Park Service bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, properties with strong exterior significance such as skyscrapers are defined by their exteriors, which showcase building technology, engineering, and architecture style regardless if the interiors are accessible or have seen typical updating over time.<sup>20</sup> The Financial Center's exterior clearly showcases architectural taste and building technologies of its time.

Considering *workmanship*, the Financial Center Office Building retains a very good level of integrity in this aspect, the legacy of the nationally active developer and design-engineer-build team that specialized in high rise office design and construction. The skyscraper reflects the building technologies and expertly installed materials that distinguish late modern Corporate International Style high rise properties. Starting at the foundation, the concrete foundation and structure were expertly engineered and constructed, with no cracking or settling visible in the two levels of the parking garage. Upon this stable foundation, the curtain walls were expertly installed, with Twindow bronze-tinted nonreflecting glazing and spandrel glass in place within bronze-finished aluminum framing, installed behind the precast concrete and formed aluminum fins. The rear of the complex includes carefully installed laid brick and aluminum louvers. While unfortunate that the city mandated removal of the terrazzo sidewalk, a section of terrazzo flooring remains intact within the east wing two-story atrium, showcasing the expert installation. The interiors include specialty materials including additional terrazzo and travertine wall and column cladding that speak to craftsmanship. The perimeter walls and central core retain original finished walls and finished columns that remain in excellent condition. The staircases retain concrete walls, stairs, and metal railings in excellent condition, attesting to those who skillfully erected them. What is important to note is that the project required careful coordination and leadership from the developer and his skilled construction team, given the involvement of a secondary Des Moines architecture firm and general contractor for the small east wing's above-ground buildout. The east and west wings, tower, and basement parking garage are all interdependent for underpinning concrete foundation, underground parking access, and circulation. All these factors demonstrate the planning and craftsmanship that built the Financial Center.

The integrity of *association* is excellent for the Financial Center Office Building, which is directly linked both to the local finance industry and to the downtown renaissance catalyzed by the Financial Center construction. The very site of the Financial Center complex is key to its association: In 1970 the site contained a long-

<sup>20</sup> NPS: 46.

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vacant masonry early-twentieth-century furniture store building previously owned by scores of fractional owners and was scorned by the daily newspaper and chamber of commerce as a symbol of Des Moines's downtown economic downturn in the post-interstate-freeway era. Removal of the department store building beginning in 1971 and the Financial Center's immediate construction start in 1972 as Des Moines's and Iowa's tallest building to be built since 1924 sparked a downtown development renaissance. The Financial Center created an immediate catalytic reaction that changed public opinion and the city's skyline—resulting in several civic projects launching and additional high-rise buildings planned for during the Financial Center's construction, 1972 to 1974. The original ownership, tenants, design-engineering-construction teams, and the wider community have continued to readily identify the Financial Center as significant to downtown Des Moines' late-twentieth-century commercial and architectural resurrection. The Financial Center remains associated with the financial institutions (and successors) that occupied the banking halls and upper-level office space, notably Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, and its successors Norwest Bank and Wells Fargo Bank.

Similarly, the integrity of *feeling* is very good. The twenty-five-story Financial Center Office Building continues to express the ownership team's optimism in the downtown Des Moines real estate market. The skyscraper reflects the nationally active Los Angeles-based David H. Murdock Development Co.'s commercial real estate experience erecting skyscrapers with leased high quality office space. In particular the exterior massing, design, and materials together continue to convey the Corporate International Style that made the Financial Center literally stand up and stand out from other office buildings in downtown Des Moines.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/INDUSTRY

### Period of Significance

1972-1974

### Significant Dates

1972

1973

1974

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

### Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

### Architect/Builder

McCaleb, Russell M. AIA

Henry C. Beck Construction Co.

Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler Architects

Lynch, Payne, Bernabe, Champion

Weitz Co.

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## Statement of Significance

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The twenty-five-story Financial Center Office Building, 606–666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street in Des Moines, Iowa, embodies exceptional local importance as “Des Moines’ first modern skyscraper,” completed in 1973 to 1974. Designed as the state’s tallest building and largest office building, the Financial Center is nominated to the National Register for its local significance under Criterion A for Commerce, for creating a new local model as a shell-and-core office complex tailored to financial-sector tenants. The project set a new local standard for high quality office high-rise construction with amenities not previously offered, including the city’s first integrated underground parking garage, flexible tenant buildout with floor-by-floor control of mechanical systems, plentiful natural light and views via insulated solar-tinted windows shielded by dimensional fins to reduce glare and heat gain, and a top-floor private business club with restaurant. In addition, the project—coordinated by the nationally active Los Angeles-based David H. Murdock Development Co. along with anchor tenant Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and large mortgage lender Des Moines Savings and Loan Association—was noted as the first collaborative real estate development in Iowa involving two competing financial institutions. From their new banking facilities, both institutions experienced record growth, and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank has remained the state’s largest bank. The Financial Center played a pivotal role in reinvigorating downtown redevelopment during an era of business loss following completion of the local interstate freeway routes. As the city’s most expensive office building to date, the \$21 million Financial Center demonstrated optimism in the relevance of the Des Moines central business district. The skyscraper project was first announced in 1970 to provide modern leasable office space, as called for in the city’s 1960s downtown redevelopment plan. Site preparations began in 1971 for removal of the large vacant Victorian-era department store building that had become a symbol of downtown’s demise. In 1972, the project developer detailed the Financial Center construction plans and immediately commenced site preparation and construction, which reactivated downtown redevelopment planning and new construction projects. Not only did the Financial Center influence subsequent office buildings, but during its construction, several downtown civic projects were initiated, including a performing arts center with gathering plaza and the public skywalk plan, which were championed by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank. The Financial Center’s period of significance is 1972 to 1974, spanning the 1972 detailed project announcement through the 1973 completion of the underground parking garage and east wing, and the 1974 opening of the west wing with tower.<sup>21</sup> The complex was listed as a City of Des Moines Landmark in 2020 in recognition of its local significance in catalyzing late-twentieth-century downtown redevelopment in the post-freeway era.

## Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

### Development in Downtown Des Moines, Iowa, 1840s-1970s: Background

Downtown Des Moines is accessed from the north by Interstate 235, which is part of the metropolitan interstate freeway system that opened in 1968.<sup>22</sup> The central business district by some measures begins at the north boundary of Park Street, extending south to the Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard arterial, west to Eighteenth Street, and east (crossing over the Des Moines River) to Pennsylvania Avenue (East Seventh Street). East of Pennsylvania Avenue is the state capitol complex. The financial heart of the central business district in the late twentieth century was primarily located along east-west Locust and Walnut streets,

<sup>21</sup> With the building substantially meeting the fifty-year threshold within the period of significance, Criterion G is not necessitated.

<sup>22</sup> The interstate system includes I-35 and I-80, which create a loop through the metropolitan area, with I-235 providing access in Des Moines. Park Street is the northern boundary for the downtown commercial business district as defined in the 1960 downtown redevelopment plan by Harland Bartholomew & Associates.

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concentrated between Fourth Street and Ninth Street, with some additional financial buildings to the north and west, and insurance headquarters primarily located north of Grand Avenue.

#### *Downtown Development in Des Moines in the 1840s through 1944*

After its early 1840s pioneer founding as a military fort, the riverside community of Des Moines grew quickly: it was platted in 1846, incorporated in 1851, and named the new state capital in 1855. The Financial Center Office Building site at the southeast corner of Walnut and Seventh streets was incorporated within the original 1846 Fort Des Moines plat, laid out in orientation to the Des Moines River, and thus rotated about fifteen degrees from cardinal north, with square blocks bisected by north-south and east-west alleys.<sup>23</sup> Rail lines converged in Des Moines beginning in the 1860s, facilitating distribution of goods before the auto age. Walnut Street, located near rail lines, developed as the premiere retailing street with banking facilities adjacent. Des Moines prided itself on its balanced economy, which in addition to strong retail and wholesale trades, also included strong insurance and finance sectors, wholesaling and jobbing, agricultural- and auto-related industries, and some manufacturing. Due in part to insurance-friendly state regulations, Des Moines became one of the world's insurance capitals to the benefit of the banking sector: Historically, the scores of insurance companies based in Des Moines used banks to hold and invest their insurance premiums.<sup>24</sup>

In Des Moines during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, businesses and real estate developers constructed taller retail buildings and office buildings, some with leasable space, clustered in the central business district. Advances in building and elevator technologies made taller buildings possible. The Financial Center site at Walnut and Seventh streets was historically occupied by one of the city's largest buildings: the nine-story 170,000-square-foot brick corner block Harris-Emery department store constructed in 1895 with later additions (nonextant; replaced by the Financial Center); it was known as the Davidson's Building after the home furnishings and department store purchased the building in 1927.<sup>25</sup> In 1923 the ten-story Insurance Exchange Building (505 Fifth Avenue at Grand Avenue) opened with leased office space targeted to insurance companies; an adjoining parking garage with interior access to the office building was built a few years later, providing attached covered parking, an unusual amenity in downtown Des Moines.<sup>26</sup>

The city's tallest building erected in the early twentieth century was the 1924 nineteen-story Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building (604 Locust Street; NRHP), built by the Des Moines-based firm (Figure 16). The impressive brick and stone Gothic Revival office tower, with nearly 200,000 square feet of space, advertised the insurance company's presence and importance in downtown Des Moines and beyond.<sup>27</sup> And it stood as city's tallest building and largest leased office building for fifty years, until it was superseded by the 500,000-plus-square-foot Financial Center in 1973-1974.<sup>28</sup> The last interwar general office building built in downtown Des Moines was the thirteen-story Des Moines Building (405 Sixth Avenue; NRHP), completed in 1931 with a stone-clad Art Deco design.

In 1932 the state's largest bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, constructed the city's last major interwar-era bank building, at the prominent corner of Walnut Street at Sixth Avenue (Figures 19-21). The Art Deco stone-clad bank (520 Walnut Street; NRHP) was designed as a five-story skyscraper base that could

<sup>23</sup> Union Historical Company; Polk County Assessor.

<sup>24</sup> Schwieder; U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>25</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Harris-Emery and Younkers Merge As Davidsons Expands," January 11, 1927: 1; *The Des Moines Register*, "Death Takes Davidson, 81," June 7, 1944: 11.

<sup>26</sup> *The Des Moines Sunday Register*, "George Peak, Builder and Owner of the Insurance Exchange Building," July 22, 1923: 10; *The Des Moines Register*, "New Garage to Have Entrance into Offices," December 25, 1927: 14.

<sup>27</sup> Wall: 93. As noted in historian Joseph Frazier Wall's *Policies and People* history of Equitable life insurance competitor Bankers Life: "No other company in the state had such a magnificently impressive advertising billboard [as Equitable]. Although the company occupied less than a one third of the building, it was still in the public's mind the 'Equitable Building.' Any insurance company that could spend that much on a building and occupy that much space must be as solid as Prudential's Rock of Gibraltar."

<sup>28</sup> The 1965 expansion of the Northwestern Bell telephone complex created the largest at the time office building in downtown Des Moines, but there was no leased office space in it.



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accommodate a future sixteen-story office tower (for a total of twenty-one stories) as the economy improved and demand for office space increased.<sup>29</sup> By the time construction supplies were available after World War II, architecture styles had changed, and the skyscraper tower was never built.<sup>30</sup> The 1940 streamlined Art Deco-style Bankers Life Company "home office," built during the late 1930s by the state's largest insurance company, established a new standard for corporate architecture in Des Moines. Declared by *Architectural Record* as "the building of the decade," it included amenities such as artwork and employee recreational facilities.<sup>31</sup> In contrast with the Equitable Building's inclusion of leasable tenant space, Bankers Life (now Principal Financial Group) dedicated its facility solely to space for the insurance firm—an approach that most companies in downtown Des Moines would continue into the post-war era.

#### *Downtown Development in Des Moines in the Post-war 1940s and 1950s*

Downtown Des Moines experienced business expansion in the post-war 1940s and early 1950s, boosted by its insurance and finance sectors.<sup>32</sup> The city gained 50,000 residents during the 1950s, with the 1960 U.S. Census recording the city's highest population count, 208,000 residents.<sup>33</sup> By the late 1940s, insurance companies and savings and loan associations were among the first to build new downtown buildings or substantially remodel facades, although post-war steel shortages impacted construction schedules.<sup>34</sup> The new construction (primarily low-rise buildings) and remodeling mostly favored Modernist architecture, reflective of trends within the financial and insurance sectors, and local preference.<sup>35</sup> Banking research in particular showed that consumers invested more in facilities that adapted Modernist architecture, which created a progressive image separate from traditional Classical bank architecture that many consumers associated with the 1920s farm crisis and 1930s Great Depression.<sup>36</sup> During the 1950s, the Des Moines insurance sector added \$10 million in new construction, mostly downtown; the largest new building of this era was the four-story stone-and-glass Modern Movement Central Life Insurance Company Headquarters (611 Fifth Avenue). Central Life offered limited leased open-plan office space with air conditioning, soundproofing, and automatic elevators.<sup>37</sup> However, no larger modern general office buildings with leasable space were built in Des Moines during this period. Some insurance companies and professional offices relocated outside of the downtown business district.<sup>38</sup> Reflecting the decentralization of businesses, the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce rebranded in 1955 as the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Steps Into the Sky," January 18, 1931: 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Iowa-Des Moines National Bank: Des Moines on Bancorporation Map," September 13, 1929: 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan Million-Dollar Building Here," November 3, 1937: 1; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, April 14, 1940: Bankers Life special section: 1; Wall 116a-117b.

<sup>32</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Rapid Growth Of Insurance Industry Here," September 12, 1955: 16; Schwieder: 243.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Census.

<sup>34</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Rapid Growth Of Insurance Industry Here," September 12, 1955: 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Artist's Drawings of \$450,000 Des Moines Art Center," November 22, 1945: 18; *Des Moines Tribune*, "3-Million Dorm for Drake U.," May 17, 1946: 1. In Des Moines, the shift away from Art Deco and Streamlined Moderne toward purer International Style began as World War II was ending with two nonprofit organizations hiring Finnish-born Modernist architect Eliel Saarinen; these nonprofits had strong board ties to downtown corporate leaders. The Edmundson Art Memorial Foundation announced in early 1945 that it had hired Saarinen to design the Des Moines Art Center. Eliel Saarinen and his son Eero continued their relationship with Des Moines on the campus of Drake University, where it was announced in 1946 that the firm would undertake campus planning and design of International Style residence halls and classroom buildings. Ben Weese and Mies van der Rohe were among other modernist architects who completed Drake University projects.

<sup>36</sup> Belfoure: 244-246; Dyson and Rubano: 1-2; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Is Building Design Coming of Age?" August 22, 1954: 8M. Belfoure notes the influence of *Banking* magazine's 1945 series on bank architecture, which called for banks to take a progressive, consumer-focused approach by eliminating the stone "fortress look" in favor of open facades with transparent glass, which fit well with the post-war International Style. Insurance companies, like banks, also had a strong incentive to use Modernistic architecture so as to separate themselves from the Great Depression era, when some insurance companies failed.

<sup>37</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register* magazine, "Downtown Des Moines," December 26, 1954: 9; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Call Building Outstanding," December 12, 1954: 6M; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Insurance Firms Here Put \$10 Million In New Buildings," January 4, 1959: Insurance Section GB 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Insurance Row Developing on Grand Avenue," November 22, 1950: A5.

<sup>39</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Greater Des Moines," January 4, 1955: 6.

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By the late 1950s, concern was growing about downtown Des Moines' future, in light of interstate freeway planning and suburban growth bypassing the central business district. The metropolitan interstate plans, first approved in 1957 with construction following, created a thirty-some-mile-long oval loop of east-west Interstate 80 and north-south Interstate 35, connecting suburban and exurban areas with a local route Interstate 235 that bisects the City of Des Moines north of downtown.<sup>40</sup> During this time, suburban retail and office competition increased, especially with the 1959 opening of the metro area's first major mall located near a suburban interstate exit.<sup>41</sup> In 1957, the city initiated its first urban renewal project, encompassing some 180 acres of commercial and residential properties north of downtown to the Interstate 235 corridor, on both sides of the Des Moines River; the slow-moving project displaced nearly 700 households and some businesses, and encountered a variety of delays.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Downtown Development in Des Moines in the 1960s and 1970s*

The Financial Center Office Building project arose during an era of limited large-scale downtown development as the Des Moines central business district experienced a sharp economic decline during the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>43</sup> The decade-long construction of the metropolitan interstate freeway route, which was completed in 1968, spurred unprecedented suburban growth and accelerated downtown business relocations to outlying areas.<sup>44</sup> The Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, with city input, attempted to prevent downtown losses through the city's first post-war comprehensive long-range central business district plan, approved in the early 1960s. Implementation of the plan was initially strong, but new construction slowed by 1964 until the 1972 detailed plan announcement and immediate construction start of the Financial Center Office Building.

In 1959 the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hired St. Louis-based planning firm Harlan Bartholomew and Associates and Chicago-based Real Estate Research Corp. to assess the central business district on both sides of the river and to deliver a redevelopment plan.<sup>45</sup> The 1960 "Bartholomew plan" studied the community, including surveying the nearly 800 buildings in the 500-acre historic central business district: only five percent of buildings rated new and seventeen percent in good condition. Key barriers to redevelopment included apathy about investing in downtown and difficulty assembling parcels given large holdings by absentee landlords and trusts.<sup>46</sup> The detailed twenty-year \$300-million blueprint for remaking downtown called for replacing or rehabilitating three-quarters of all buildings, creating pedestrian-only shopping areas, adding an outer ring of parking garages, connecting buildings and parking with skywalk-like pedestrian overpasses, establishing landscaped recreational spaces, and inserting new roads. For the west side of downtown, home to the retail and banking district, the plan prioritized a new pedestrian-only "center

<sup>40</sup> East-west Interstate 80 and north-south Interstate 35 duplex (overlap) for fifteen miles north and west of the city.

<sup>41</sup> Elbert: 60; *The Des Moines Register*, "De Puydt Rang Lawson's Doorbell – The Result: Park Fair," January 4, 1959. Merle Hay Mall was the first major mall in the metropolitan area. Park Fair was the first large-scale shopping center to open in Des Moines, located northeast of downtown in 1957.

<sup>42</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Project Site," April 8, 1958: 8; "River Hills – Then and Now: Mistakes But Progress, Too," undated clipping from Des Moines Public Library "urban renewal" clipping file; Henning and Beam: 101-102. In their history of Des Moines and Polk County, Henning and Beam write that the city's first urban renewal project was hampered in part by its large size. Clearance moved slowly, and the first parcels of land were sold in the early 1960s to private developers, with redevelopment stretching over years.

<sup>43</sup> Abbott: 118. Abbott notes that Initially the problems of central cities were viewed as "byproducts of exuberant suburban growth, which left outmoded cores in need of redevelopment and physical refurbishing."

<sup>44</sup> Henning and Beam: 99-101.

<sup>45</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Downtown's Needs Told By Experts," January 8, 1960: 1; Elbert 57-61, *Des Moines Tribune*, "Capitol Project Is Urged," February 21, 1961: 1. The chamber of commerce hired the planners in 1959. The Bartholomew firm had previously produced plans for the city in the 1920s and 1940s, and coordinated with the city, state highway department, and local architects for the 1960 plan. The state hired the Bartholomew group in 1961 to advise on planning for the capitol grounds abutting the smaller east side continuation of the central business district. Real Estate Research Group also worked with the city appraising urban renewal properties. Downtown area was defined as Park Street to the north, state capitol building to the east, railroad tracks to the south (approximately Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway location), and Eighteenth Street to the west.

<sup>46</sup> Elbert 2020: "Much of downtown real estate was tied up in a perpetual trust created in 1903 by real estate and insurance pioneer F.M. Hubbell. Hubbell died in 1930 but his trust did not expire until 1983, and until then many efforts were on hold because of the difficulty of developing or redeveloping property held by the trust. Elsewhere, ownership of many downtown locations had become fractionalized, making it difficult to obtain agreement among multiple owners."

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core" arranged as a few super blocks with a Rockefeller Center-type landscaped plaza with a skating rink and a new movie theater surrounded by mostly new high-rise office buildings, department stores, and a hotel; existing buildings in good condition were retained.<sup>47</sup> A new chamber entity was to assemble land for the new center core.<sup>48</sup> The plan eschewed federal urban renewal funding, instead relying on private investment for all but \$50 million in government projects including a new federal office building and city-county building. The planners called for timely implementation for the downtown to remain competitive.<sup>49</sup> The chamber approved the plan in 1961, with the city council approving a modified version (substituting an alternative east side plan), which was incorporated into a draft long-range plan; in 1963 the modified Bartholomew plan was adopted into the city's twenty-year *1980 General Plan for Des Moines* (Figure 23).<sup>50</sup>

The planners prioritized construction of new high-rise office buildings to address downtown's substantial shortage of modern, air-conditioned leased office space. The city's most recently constructed leased office buildings dated to the interwar era and lacked post-war amenities: the 1924 Equitable Building, still the state's tallest, and the 1931 Des Moines Building.<sup>51</sup> The lead researcher predicted a downtown market for nearly 600,000 square feet of modern leased space by 1965 and more than 2 million square feet of space needed by 1980. Large general office buildings were needed if the city wanted to attract new regional offices, which could provide additional shoppers to patronize downtown businesses. The west side central business district was the logical place to build denser office buildings, as the city's federally funded urban renewal projects along the interstate corridor north of downtown were too distant from the retail district and would only provide a small fraction of office space and housing needed for growth.<sup>52</sup>

During the Bartholomew plan development and approval process, 1959 to 1963, more than sixty downtown businesses initiated new construction or remodeled as part of a concerted effort to enact the plan's goals (Figure 23).<sup>53</sup> The chamber touted business starts and expansions, deflecting accounts that the city was

<sup>47</sup> The 1960 plan called for a nine-block central core area spanning Grand Avenue at the north to Mulberry Street at the south, Eighth street to the west, and Fifth Street to the east. The city reduced the central core area to a six-block area arranged as two super blocks by moving the north boundary to Locust Street, as adapted in 1963.

<sup>48</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "A \$300 Million Plan to Rebuild Downtown D.M.," December 5, 1960: 1; Elbert: 57-59. The new federal building and post office were constructed, but the city-county building failed to gain voter approval.

<sup>49</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "A \$300 Million Plan to Rebuild Downtown D.M.," December 5, 1960: 1; Elbert: 57-59. The newspaper quoted the report: "Without an efficient and attractive center, the city may linger on for a while but inevitably will yield its place to some other community that has a healthy and vigorous center. If a modern rebuilt business district is not provided, Des Moines will lose business and industry to its competitors — Kansas City, Cedar Rapids (Iowa), Omaha, Lincoln, and Minneapolis-St. Paul—all of which are moving rapidly to improve their central areas." Two key barriers to downtown redevelopment were identified: apathy about new downtown construction and difficulty assembling parcels given large holdings of land owned by absentee landlords and trusts.

<sup>50</sup> City of Des Moines, 1980 General Plan. Previously the nine-block pedestrian area arranged as three super blocks in the 1960 Bartholomew plan extended from Grand Avenue at the north to Mulberry Street at the south, and Fifth to Eighth streets on east and west. The 1963 amended plan revised the central core to six blocks, with two super blocks on either side of Walnut Street between Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street.

<sup>51</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "A \$300 Million Plan to Rebuild Downtown D.M.," December 5, 1960: 1; Elbert: 57-59. The planners considered the downtown area as Park Street to the north, state capitol building to the east, railroad tracks to the south (approximately Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway location), and Eighteenth Street to the west. Real Estate Research Group assessed 766 downtown buildings, finding forty-three percent needed considerable renovation, and thirty-five percent required demolition.

<sup>52</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Downtown's Future 'Bright,'" September 1, 1960: 1. Researchers found that only five percent of the nearly 800 downtown Des Moines buildings were new, and only seventeen percent were rated well maintained. All new larger office buildings built in the 500-acre downtown in the prior thirty years had been completed by utilities, publishers, banks, and insurance companies for their own uses. Real Estate Research Corp. president Richard Nelson shared the space needs figures in a late summer 1960 meeting with chamber of commerce officials. The city's urban renewal projects north of the historic central business district resulted in primarily low-rise buildings including smaller private office buildings, a few highway hotels, parking lots, and multi-family housing primarily aimed at low-income renters. Nelson encouraged building apartments along the river tailored for downtown office employees and their families.

<sup>53</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Downtown Projects of \$35 Million," June 28, 1961: 1. The projects included the Register and Tribune Co. refacing of its 1918 thirteen-story tower (715 Locust Street; NRHP) with an International Style curtain wall. *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Our Capital City" special advertising section, September 16, 1962: 3, included older office buildings within a "showcase of growth and expansion": 1924 Equitable building, 1940 Bankers Life headquarters, and 1954 Central Life headquarters. *The Des Moines Register*, "1963 Record in Loop Building: List 9 Major Projects for Des Moines," November 25, 1962: 13. A typical Chamber of

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“dying on the vine.”<sup>54</sup> Downtown’s most noted construction project of this era was announced in 1959 and completed in 1962: Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines (601 Grand Avenue; NRHP), a three-story steel-stone-glass bank and office set on a granite plaza designed by master modernist architect Mies van der Rohe; the project garnered national attention and set a high bar with amenities including custom furnishings, Modernist art, air conditioning, and some leased office space.<sup>55</sup> Three other notable downtown office buildings were announced during this era: In 1961 funding was secured for the new ten-story International Style federal building (210 Walnut Street; substantially remodeled), opened in 1967 on a full block.<sup>56</sup> In 1962 American Republic Insurance Co. committed to consolidating employees in a new eight-story concrete-and-glass headquarters (601 Sixth Avenue; NRHP), designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill’s (SOM) New York Office; in 1965 the building opened to public tours of its modern art collection.<sup>57</sup> Central National Bank announced in 1962 plans for an SOM-designed granite office tower—the city’s first sizable leased office building planned in the post-war era—proclaimed by the chamber of commerce as “the biggest shot in the arm in downtown Des Moines in a quarter-century.”<sup>58</sup> However, the bank later walked away from the expensive design, as detailed below.<sup>59</sup> Other downtown businesses invested in remodeling, including the two future Financial Center anchors: Iowa-Des Moines National Bank (1932 building, 520 Walnut Street; NRHP) and Des Moines Savings and Loan (1913 building also known as the Hippee Building, 217 Sixth Avenue; NRHP) (Figures 21-22).<sup>60</sup>

Between 1964 and 1971, new construction downtown slowed as costs rose, demand for space fell, and adherence to the Bartholomew plan drifted, leading to uneven development. Implementation of the plan’s super blocks was abandoned after a key downtown business built a parking ramp within the designated pedestrian-only center core.<sup>61</sup> On Walnut Street within the center core, a multi-story building lost to fire was replaced with a one-story building, to the consternation of leaders who sought higher density as called for in the Bartholomew plan.<sup>62</sup> Another eyesore on Walnut Street: vacant department store buildings, including the

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Commerce advertisement: *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Forward Des Moines: 10 projects starting downtown in 1963 or recently completed,” January 4, 1963: 42GA. Many of these noted local projects were initiated by companies whose leaders were past or future presidents of the Chamber of Commerce in the post-war era. (Elbert: 116-123, list of presidents of the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce and affiliated organizations.)

<sup>54</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Tells Signs of Growth in D.M. Outlook,” September 14, 1963.

<sup>55</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “More than Building – Work of Art,” November 26, 1962: Des Moines Public library clipping file; *Des Moines Sunday Register Picture* magazine, October 31, 1965.

<sup>56</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “New Federal Office Building,” May 12, 1967.

<sup>57</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Old Victoria Hotel To Be Torn Down,” April 29, 1962: Des Moines Public Library clipping file.

<sup>58</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Central National Building Plan,” June 18, 1962: 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Forward Des Moines: 10 projects starting downtown in 1963 or recently completed,” January 4, 1963: 42GA. *Des Moines Tribune*, “Central National Building Plan,” June 18, 1962: 1. This story stated the tower would be “at least ten stories”; by the 1963 Chamber story cited here, the building height had grown to sixteen stories.

<sup>60</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Iowa-Des Moines ‘Motor Bank,’” June 24, 1959: 34; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown Projects of \$35 Million,” June 28, 1961: 1; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Forward Des Moines: 10 projects starting downtown in 1963 or recently completed,” January 4, 1963: 42GA. The state’s largest bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank’s work included a 1959 rear drive-through “motor bank” with five teller lanes defined by mosaic-tiled swooping rounded arches; the grand opening made the front page of the newspaper, and the bank used the motor bank image as an advertising logo. The story announcing the project ran with a large photograph of the architectural model and noted that a 1959 change in state law allowed for the drive-through teller stations. Des Moines Savings and Loan Association completed more than \$1 million in building improvements by 1963 including a rear drive-through teller; the thrift used a stylized image of the unadorned back of the office tower with drive-through as its advertising logo.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Elbert: 59; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Begin Downtown Building Soon,” April 19, 1963: 15.; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown D.M.: Where is It Heading?” July 6, 1970: 1. Longtime Walnut Street retailer Younker’s department store lost a building to fire in 1962, located within the new superblock city core. The business sidestepped the plan, announcing in 1963 that it would build a seven-story “parkade” with ground-floor retail that exited on Seventh Street, one of the streets the Bartholomew plan identified for closure to create the pedestrian-only super blocks. In 1970, a city councilman identified the parkade ramp as one of the impediments to downtown redevelopment.

<sup>62</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown D.M.: Where is It Heading?” July 6, 1970: 1. City councilman and future mayor Richard E. Olson specifically identified the one-story Walgreens building, which was later redeveloped.

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former Sears department store and the 1895 nine-story Davidson department store (Financial Center future site), which closed in 1964 and remained mostly empty until demolition in 1971 (Figure 25).<sup>63</sup>

The three most substantial buildings erected between 1964 and 1971 followed the spirit of the Bartholomew plan, but were downsized and/or experienced lengthy development timelines.<sup>64</sup> The following details are included to highlight the reduced scale of these few downtown developments as compared to the substantially larger and more expensive Financial Center Office Building. After delay and redesign, the fourteen-story Central National Bank Building (317 Sixth Avenue) opened in 1967 as the first general leased office building constructed downtown since 1931.<sup>65</sup> Due to rising costs and slow pre-leasing, the bank abandoned the expensive 1962-1963 SOM design of a sixteen-story granite-clad tower.<sup>66</sup> The bank announced in 1964 it had paired with an out-of-state developer to erect a smaller, less expensive black aluminum Miesian-style tower with rear parking garage, and the bank became a tenant.<sup>67</sup> Also in 1967, EMC announced it would commit to remaining downtown by building a new headquarters, in contrast to other larger firms building suburban corporate campuses. However, the company scaled back, eliminating built-in parking and two floors of office space.<sup>68</sup> The concrete-and-glass headquarters (717 Eighth Street) opened in 1971 with eight occupied office floors and two upper levels of mechanical equipment.<sup>69</sup> Also in 1971, the three-story J.C. Penney store opened as downtown's first modern department store (store building 501 Walnut St., now 222 Fifth Avenue and substantially remodeled), which featured the city's first publicly accessible skywalk connection, spanning Fifth Avenue to a new 600-car city parking garage (skywalk and ramp nonextant) (Figure 26). Negotiations with the national retailer began in 1963, led by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank executive John Fitzgibbon and Register and Tribune publisher David Kruidenier. The \$5 million project, the first completed by a chamber development group, raised contributions from local businesses to purchase and demolish the former Sears store, and build a new leased store—a new model for downtown redevelopment that drew upon the Bartholomew plan.<sup>70</sup> “We kept at this because we felt that once we got this project going, it would inspire confidence in downtown and it would be easier to get other projects going,” said Fitzgibbon, who served as chamber president in 1970.<sup>71</sup>

Des Moines entered the 1970s with an uncertain future: The declining central business district had “wilted” from continuing businesses losses, lack of shoppers, rising inflation, higher downtown building costs, difficulties with land assembly, and lack of consensus about the Bartholomew plan.<sup>72</sup> The *Tribune* captured

<sup>63</sup> Elbert; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Merle Hay Plaza Formally Opens,” August 17, 1959. Sears, Roebuck & Co. built its own store at the mall and closed its downtown location. Montgomery Ward departed downtown in the early 1970s. Younkers opened stores as malls throughout the region but retained its downtown Des Moines store as its headquarters.

<sup>64</sup> Elbert 2020: The former *Des Moines Register* business editor in a column about 1970 in downtown Des Moines.

<sup>65</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Bank Building Set for Opening,” February 12, 1967: 12L; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Goal: Slow, Steady Change,” July 8, 1970: 37. An air of diminishment lingered as the bank publicized its struggles to complete the project and fill the building with tenants.

<sup>66</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Central National Building Plan,” June 18, 1962: 1; *Des Moines Tribune*, “New Building for Bank: ‘A Shaft of ... Granite,’” March 26, 1963: 11.

<sup>67</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Bank Plans D.M. Building of 14 Stories,” October 18, 1964.

<sup>68</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Employers Mutual Decides to Stay in Downtown D.M.,” January 25, 1967: 8; *Des Moines Tribune*, July 7, 1970: 13

<sup>69</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Be Our Guest This Afternoon at the Open House (EMC),” December 12, 1971: 18; Elbert: 60.

<sup>70</sup> Elbert: 60-62; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown Alive,” June 14, 1969: 6; “New Penney Store to Open Here Oct. 27, October 14, 1971: 3. The project site had previously been occupied by the former Sears, Roebuck & Co. department store, left vacant after Sears opened a new store at Merle Hay Mall.

<sup>71</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “A Vacant 9-Story Building: It stands as a focal point of business area’s ills,” July 7, 1970: 13; Elbert 2020.

<sup>72</sup> Elbert: 59; Elbert 2020; *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown D.M.: Where Is It Heading?” July 6, 1970: 1. *Des Moines Tribune*, “Downtown D.M.: Where Is It Heading?” July 6, 1970: 1. The newspaper interviewed fifteen business and civic leaders: “...downtown is not dead, but has wilted. It can be revived but this will require a tremendous local effort.” “Some business leaders believe downtown is in trouble—that it is becoming less of a retail center and more of an office center, that it failed to stimulate the redevelopment that is necessary to lure shopper’s money.... Some felt that since the 1962 opening of the Home Federal Savings and Loan building, designed by Mies van der Rohe, downtown’s future has been bright.” City council representative and future mayor Richard E. Olson called for retailers to invest in downtown stores, businesses to add entertainment and dining attractions, and parking located outside of

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the dismay and hopes for downtown in a three-part special section published in July 1970: The city was losing population to growing suburbs—down five percent from 1960 while the surrounding suburbs gained 42 percent in population. A 1970 Tribune Metro Poll revealed that one out of three adults did not shop downtown, and two out of three preferred shopping centers. Traffic and parking made conducting business difficult.<sup>73</sup> Safety and security issues, such as collapsing older buildings, vagrancy around vacant buildings, and the spring 1970 bombings of the downtown police station and downtown chamber of commerce building, had a chilling effect.<sup>74</sup> Downtown's greatest problem remained obsolete and deteriorating buildings within the core area: "The prime example of this problem—and a symbol of the difficulty in finding solutions to downtown problems—is the former home of the Davidson store (which closed six years ago)," the *Tribune* reported.<sup>75</sup> A story headlined "A Vacant 9-Story Building: It Stands as a Focal Point of Business Area's Ills," described the difficulty in acquiring the Davidson's Building for redevelopment due to separate ownership groups with some one hundred fractional owners. Although the Des Moines Savings and Loan diligently assembled ownership of the half block (future Financial Center site) by 1968, rising costs made high-rise development challenging (Figure 25).<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, in July 1970, TransAmerica Investment Group of Tulsa announced that it would move forward on a twenty-one-story skyscraper in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, downtown urban renewal area; the tallest-in-the-state project encountered some delays and was completed in 1973.<sup>77</sup>

The *Tribune's* special downtown series concluded with a story announcing four potential new construction projects by Des Moines financial institutions—the largest being a skyscraper proposed by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank. These announcements followed a development strategy of testing local interest through publicity of potential plans, as noted by architectural historian Carol Willis in *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*.<sup>78</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank announced a twenty-story-plus office skyscraper with a banking hall, potentially to be built on the site of its 1932 bank, with details to come.<sup>79</sup> Des Moines Savings and Loan officials stated interest in a low-rise commercial building on the Davidson Building site and in fall 1971, began clearance of the large masonry department store building.<sup>80</sup> Bankers Trust Co. expected to begin planning a half-block or larger project of unspecified height, for which it began site clearance in late 1971.<sup>81</sup> Valley National Bank considered a joint bank and corporate office project, possibly designed by a nationally active architect; this project did not move forward. However, the *Tribune* also interviewed the Central National Bank President B. C. Grangaard about his bank's struggles to build and lease its office tower. The banker predicted a slow pace for office development given the softened downtown economy: "Most people are not going to spend \$6 million or \$7 million on speculation in downtown Des Moines."<sup>82</sup>

the central core.

<sup>73</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Downtown D.M.: Where Is It Heading?" July 6, 1970: 1.

<sup>74</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Explosion Stuns Drake; \$250,000 Loss," June 29, 1970: 1.

<sup>75</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Downtown D.M.: Where Is It Heading?" July 6, 1970: 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "A Vacant 9-Story Building: It stands as a focal point of business area's ills," July 7, 1970: 13.

<sup>77</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan 20-Story Building in C.R.," March 3, 1970: 4; "Office Building Plan Advances," July 9, 1970: 3; *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, "Move into IE Tower Underway," February 11, 1973: 9D.

<sup>78</sup> Willis: 161-162.

<sup>79</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Goal: Slow, Steady Change," July 8, 1970: 37; Grangaard stated: "Every time I went to New York to see the architect, the price went up a half-million dollars. We had hired a professional rental agent here to try to rent space in the building. He was only able to rent about two floors over a one-and-a-half-year period, and this was to mostly captive tenants who do business with the bank. By the time the costs got up to \$6 million.... I started to get scared. We couldn't afford to have a drain on our earnings to carry a mausoleum."

<sup>80</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Goal: Slow, Steady Change," July 8, 1970: 37; *The Des Moines Register*, "Begin Razing Old D.M. Store," October 25, 1971: 4; *Des Moines Tribune*, "Seek Ok to Dynamite Davidson Building Here," December 2, 1971: 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Will Raze Chamberlain for Bank," December 9, 1971: 13.

<sup>82</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Goal: Slow, Steady Change," July 8, 1970: 37; Grangaard stated: "Every time I went to New York to see the architect, the price went up a half-million dollars. We had hired a professional rental agent here to try to rent space in the building. He was only able to rent about two floors over a one-and-a-half-year period, and this was to mostly captive tenants who do business with the bank. By the time the costs got up to \$6 million.... I started to get scared. We couldn't afford to have a drain on our earnings to carry a mausoleum."

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It is in this context that the \$21 million twenty-five-story-tall Financial Center project came to fruition as the first modern skyscraper of more than twenty stories in Des Moines. First announced in 1970, the official plans were detailed in summer 1972 with a pledge for immediate construction of the tallest building and largest leased office building to arise in Des Moines in fifty years, and the first joint cooperative project involving two competing financial institutions in Iowa. Coordinated by the Murdock Development Corp., the Financial Center combined the interests of two institutions into a greater whole, transforming the corner where the vacant Davidson store building was decried as a symbol of downtown's redevelopment failure. The Financial Center project strongly referenced key goals of the city's long-range downtown plan (Bartholomew plan) by providing high quality leasable office space in a dense skyscraper development at the city center, with ground floor retail banking halls, top-floor business club and restaurant, and integrated underground parking at the rear. The Financial Center's immediate start in summer 1972 set into motion renewed interest in downtown redevelopment announced in early December 1972 by new mayor Richard Olson, as will be further discussed below.<sup>83</sup> As noted by Elbert and other local historians, the Financial Center project was key to the 1970s modern rebirth of downtown Des Moines, creating a signature skyline statement of optimism.<sup>84</sup>

### **Financial Center Development and Construction**

The Financial Center Office Building was coordinated by Los Angeles-based developer David H. Murdock through Murdock Development Corp. as a \$21 million joint venture with anchor tenant Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and stakeholder Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. Nationally active, Murdock specialized in signature mid-rise and high-rise leased office tower projects generally with an anchor bank, utility, or insurance company. Murdock intentionally designed his projects to be the tallest or largest building in the vicinity, which provided marketing advantages that assisted with leasing. His portfolio included office building projects in the Southwest, California, and the Midwest, including Nebraska's tallest building, the 1970 twenty-story First National Bank tower with parking garage in downtown Lincoln.<sup>85</sup> In Phoenix, where he began as a post-war developer, Murdock adapted solar control approaches including use of fins, light colors, and tinted glazing to reduce heat gain and glare for tenant comfort and operational savings.

To ensure efficient, quality design and construction of the Financial Center Office Building shell and core, Murdock employed a nationally active specialized technical design-engineer-build team. The team members were based in Phoenix, where Murdock had begun his career, and led by architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co. (Phoenix office), with Herman Blum Consulting Engineers mechanical and electrical, Walter E. Riley structural engineer, and Guirey, Snrka, Arnold & Sprinkle associate architects. Murdock and his preferred team built a series of Modernistic mid-rise and high-rise office towers across the country, with the Financial Center Office Building in Des Moines as one of the tallest, if not the tallest, built by Murdock. The Financial Center became the seventeenth project completed for Murdock by the Beck general contracting firm.<sup>86</sup> The use of a specialty design-engineer-build team was not unique, but was unusual for the era, as noted in the 1975 *Office Building Design* compilation.<sup>87</sup>

With the Financial Center skyscraper, Murdock coordinated the expansion needs of two separate financial institutions. Murdock specialized in working with financial institutions. He drew on his own experience building nationally for numerous banks; starting his own large Phoenix bank as tenant for Phoenix's tallest skyscraper, the 1960 Guaranty Bank Building; and developing the 1964 Phoenix Financial Center, called the first U.S. "financial shopping center" by *Time* magazine (Figure 24).<sup>88</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank executive John

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<sup>83</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "New 'Image' for Downtown," December 5, 1972: 6.

<sup>84</sup> Elbert: 60.

<sup>85</sup> *The Lincoln Star*, "Bank Gives New Life to New Building," March 8, 1970: 11, 18.

<sup>86</sup> *Beck Bulletin*, "HCB Named Financial Center Contractor," August 1972. (Beck Group archives). The Madison Bank & Trust Tower in Madison, Wisconsin was the sixteenth project Beck completed for Murdock.

<sup>87</sup> Schmertz: 144. The book cites the unusual nature of an assembled team working together for efficient design of the Seattle First National Bank

<sup>88</sup> *Time*, "Finance: Shopping Center for Money," October 2, 1964. The article noted the Phoenix Financial Center as a new concept in

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Fitzgibbon, who joined the bank in 1960 and was promoted to president in 1969, was impressed with Murdock's Phoenix Financial Center, and recruited Murdock to build "the first modern tall building in Des Moines."<sup>89</sup> Murdock's preferred architect, Russell McCaleb, AIA, received his Iowa architectural registration in 1969, in preparation for the Des Moines project.<sup>90</sup> In 1970, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, the state's largest, announced plans to build a twenty-plus-story skyscraper on Walnut Street, with details to come. The bank's plans followed the 1960s and 1970s trend for large, prosperous banks to build downtown skyscraper office buildings, which allowed for consolidating employees, providing modern banking facilities for customers, and investing locally to anchor downtown central business districts, as noted by bank architectural historian Charles Belfoure in his study *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks*.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's neighbor across Sixth Avenue, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, also supported the downtown redevelopment plan and sought to expand its offices and parking. The savings and loan consolidated ownership of the future Financial Center site between Walnut and Mulberry streets along Seventh Street, located behind its existing building, by 1968.<sup>92</sup> Although the savings and loan announced new plans for low-rise commercial development, private negotiations with Murdock and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank led to creation of the much larger Financial Center skyscraper.

Preparation of the Financial Center site began in late 1971, with Des Moines Savings and Loan leading demolition of the vacant Davidson store building.<sup>93</sup> Using the former department store site allowed Iowa-Des Moines National Bank to keep its employees in place at the 1932 building while the Financial Center construction occurred one block west. And it allowed Des Moines Savings and Loan to affiliate with the state's tallest skyscraper project with underground parking. Des Moines Savings and Loan sold to Murdock the half block it had assembled at Walnut, Mulberry, and Seventh streets (former Davidson Building site and rear parking lot). Murdock in turn sold a smaller parcel directly east fronting Walnut Street to the savings and loan, which Murdock then leased the below-ground land for the parking garage with easements for shared circulation within the Financial Center Office Building. Additional agreements covered shared structural support and design approval of east wing buildout, with sign offs by Murdock and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank. Murdock also innovatively leased from the city underground space beneath adjoining public sidewalks to expand the basement parking garage footprint.<sup>94</sup>

In June 1972, Murdock announced the updated, detailed plans for the Financial Center Office Building, to be Iowa's tallest, largest building with construction to commence within the month. The project made the front page of the *Des Moines Tribune* and the news story was distributed nationally.<sup>95</sup> Murdock stated that the \$21 million twenty-five-story skyscraper complex, named "The Financial Center," would house the new home offices for the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, with additional leased office space for financial-related firms. City of Des Moines Mayor Richard Olson hailed the

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the United States, conceived and developed by Murdock, who brought together a bank, a savings and loan company, insurance and title agencies, and other such finance-related companies. "If shopping centers can sell everything from groceries to garden tools, why not create a similar center whose stock in trade is money? So reasoned David H. Murdock, a shrewd and restless Arizona real estate developer. As one of Arizona's leading millionaires, Murdock, 41, was in a position to answer his own question, and this week in Phoenix he opens the first financial shopping center in the U.S...." reported *Time*.

<sup>89</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Financial Center Expected to Be Sold," December 18, 1989: 3B: Business column written by business editor Rick Jost. Fitzgibbon had been working in Minneapolis for the Northwest Bancorporation holding company, before being promoted in 1960 to its Iowa-Des Moines National Bank. The Minneapolis bank was active with downtown renewal, and Fitzgibbon became active with implementing Des Moines' 1960 downtown plan.

<sup>90</sup> McCaleb Financial Center drawings with 1969 Iowa registration architectural stamp.

<sup>91</sup> Belfoure: 268-270.

<sup>92</sup> Abstract of Title.

<sup>93</sup> Demolition work was slowed by weather, the city's denial of dynamite permit, and the nine-story building's solid construction. *Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan: Raze, Rebuild On Davidson Site," July 2, 1971: 1; *Des Moines Tribune*, "Razing Lags, Anger Rises," February 3, 1972: 1.

<sup>94</sup> Abstract. As part of the Financial Center project, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank sold its former 1932 building to Murdock.

<sup>95</sup> The Associated Press carried the story, and other newspapers where Murdock had ties also reported on the project, as noted below.



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announcement as an indicator of “a firm faith by private enterprises in the future of downtown Des Moines.” Murdock described the 520,000 square foot skyscraper’s design as a twenty-three story tower atop a broader two-story base, or west wing, set back from the sidewalk to provide a small pedestrian gathering space on the corner of Walnut Street at Seventh Street, with east wing adjoining. The west wing and several floors of the tower were to be the new home for Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, with the east wing providing facilities for Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. Occupying more than half a block, the skyscraper design was described as a fireproof steel structural frame with concrete floors, structural columns, egress stair enclosures, and elevator shafts. Exterior walls were to be clad in dark bronze-tinted insulated Spandrelite and bronze-framed Solarbronze-tinted thermal pane windows recessed between vertical fins. Key spaces highlighted were the central lobby with access to both banking halls, first-floor banking, leased upper office space for tenant buildout, top-floor restaurant, and two levels of underground parking for 260 vehicles. Completion of the project was targeted for late 1973.<sup>96</sup>

The *Tribune* called attention to the Financial Center as “the first instance in Iowa of two major financial institutions participating in a joint construction project.” Iowa-Des Moines National Bank president John Fitzgibbon told the newspaper that the project would allow the bank to expand beyond its cramped 65,000-square foot 1932 building, as it had been planning for several years. The bank leased 110,000 square feet in the Financial Center building for its present needs, with the ability to add additional space in the future. Fitzgibbon said the new facility “will make a significant contribution to the Des Moines business community, as well as the state of Iowa.” Des Moines Savings and Loan president Richard L. Bryan said the new building would increase its office space by 34,000 square feet. Bryan told the newspaper: “Our goal in all of our planning has always been to provide facilities that would enhance the business climate of the ‘central core’ business district and aid all of the metropolitan community.” Murdock told the *Tribune*: “After putting together large commercial developments ... in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and California, I’m back in the Midwest, where I find the people are very progressive, and interested in measured change to help make their community better.”<sup>97</sup>

News of the Iowa’s new skyscraper and tallest building was published nationally. The Associated Press released the story with the architectural rendering, and articles ran in Iowa and nationally including Omaha, Nebraska; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Phoenix, Arizona, among others (Figure 27).<sup>98</sup> *Buildings* magazine featured the Financial Center news with an architectural rendering of the podium-tower configuration, noting the building was designed as the tallest building and largest office building in Iowa, with new home office for Iowa-Des Moines National Bank adjoined by the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association wing.<sup>99</sup> The David H. Murdock Corp. featured the Financial Center project in its business-to-business advertisements such as a full-page advertisement in *Commercial West* banking magazine (Figure 31).<sup>100</sup> General contractor Henry C. Beck publicized the project in its corporate client newsletter, running a lengthy article with images based on the *Tribune* story. Similarly, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank publicized the project through its newsletter, as did Des Moines Savings and Loan.<sup>101</sup>

Murdock delivered on his pledge that construction would start within thirty days, in contrast to prior downtown redevelopment projects that experienced lengthy delays. The Financial Center ground-breaking followed one month later in early July 1972, attended by some one hundred business and city representatives. Mayor

<sup>96</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Tallest in Iowa: Plan 25-Story D.M. Financial Center,” June 6, 1972: 1; “\$21 Million Financial Complex,” June 6, 1972: 20; *Beck Bulletin*, HCB Named Financial Center Contractor,” August 1972. (Beck Group archives).

<sup>97</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Tallest in Iowa: Plan 25-Story D.M. Financial Center,” June 6, 1972: 1; “\$21 Million Financial Complex,” June 6, 1972: 20; *Beck Bulletin*, HCB Named Financial Center Contractor,” August 1972. (Beck Group archives).

<sup>98</sup> *Omaha World Herald*, “Tower Planned in Des Moines,” June 7, 1972: 60; *Ames Daily Tribune*, “Plan \$21 million building in Des Moines,” June 6, 1972: 9; *Sioux City Journal*, “Plan 25-Story Building in Des Moines,” June 7, 1972: 24; *The Arizona Republic*, “Murdock to build in Iowa,” June 11, 1972: 14C; *The Lincoln Star*, “Murdock Firm to Construction Iowa Building,” June 18, 1972: 22.

<sup>99</sup> *Buildings*, “Tallest building in Iowa,” Vol. 66, Issue 10, October 1972.

<sup>100</sup> *Commercial West*: 33.

<sup>101</sup> *Bank Notes* Iowa-Des Moines National Bank newsletter, “Groundbreaking Ceremonies for Financial Center,” August 1972.

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Richard Olson presided at the ceremony, and the newspaper noted that he praised the project as “a continuation of confidence” that businessmen and retail merchants have in downtown Des Moines in rebuilding the city’s core area. The two major projects anchors, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Saving and Loan, participated in the ceremony (Figure 28). Bank president Fitzgibbon and savings and loan president Bryan stated that the Financial Center would be an asset for the downtown metropolitan area and the state of Iowa.<sup>102</sup>

General contractor Henry C. Beck Co. oversaw the project, working with mostly Iowa firms and trades workers. Bank president Fitzgibbon reported that the Financial Center building project delivered significant revenue to central Iowa by employing more than 250 people, with all but ten supervisors being Iowa residents, who together received more than \$2 million in wages. Some 100 local suppliers provided services and supplies valued at more than \$5 million.<sup>103</sup> Major subcontractors included excavation and demolition undertaken by J.C. White Co.; ready mix concrete supplied by White-Central Ready Mix.<sup>104</sup> The curtain wall was by Olden and Co. of Dallas, Texas. Otis Elevators supplied the central core elevators. Waldinger Corporation, Des Moines branch, had the contract for sheet metal.<sup>105</sup>

During summer 1972, Henry C. Beck Co. oversaw site preparations including demolition of the smaller Fleming Building Annex (606-610 Walnut Street, nonextant) and basement excavation work, with some seventy workers on site. The general contractor added windows into the site enclosure so that the public could watch the construction progress, which attracted crowds.<sup>106</sup> The two daily newspapers kept readers apprised of the downtown tower’s construction status with frequent photographs and news updates throughout construction (Figure 33, typical). Above-ground construction began in November 1972, aided by a giant crane (Figure 29).<sup>107</sup> Construction progressed generally without interruption in 1972, with 1973 bringing delays due to severe weather, two trade strikes, and the oil embargo that limited fuel.<sup>108</sup> Construction of the shell and core parking garage was completed by Henry C. Beck in 1973. By July 1973, one year into the project, the tower had reached fifteen stories out of its twenty-five story height, captured in a newspaper photograph.<sup>109</sup> The topping off ceremony occurred in early October 1973, with the *Tribune* featuring on its front page a photograph from the rooftop twenty five stories above ground; previously the final two beams had been signed by some 3,250 bank customers and supporters.<sup>110</sup> Henry C. Beck Co. completed construction of the Financial Center west wing shell and core in 1974 (Figure 14). In total, the new Financial Center was built with 28,000 yards of concrete delivered in 4,000 truckloads, 3,250 tons of reinforcing steel, 82,000 square feet of lumber, 12 tons of nails, and five acres of glass, as reported in *The Des Moines Register*.<sup>111</sup>

The above-ground buildout of the east wing was completed for Des Moines Savings and Loan Association by Weitz Co. in August 1973. The savings and loan advertised its new location in with a sketch of the 606 Walnut Street façade emphasizing its modern design, such advertisements announcing its new location titled “building our future and yours” (Figure 32).<sup>112</sup> The savings and loan hosted special grand-opening events and entertainment in spring 1974 in its atrium-like vestibule, contrasting traditional Iowa culture including handicrafts such as broom making with the “ultra-modern” Financial Center architecture.<sup>113</sup> The financial

<sup>102</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “25-Story Building Ceremonies,” July 11, 1972: 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “What Our New Home Means to All of Us: A Report from John R. Fitzgibbon, Iowa-Des Moines President,” January 4, 1974: 23Y.

<sup>104</sup> Beck Group archives, Henry C. Beck Co. General Contracting Job Information Sheet for Des Moines Financial Center, c. 1972.

<sup>105</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Move Deas to Marketing VP,” October 1, 1972: 10.

<sup>106</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Construction Workers in D.M. Draw Spectators,” September 18, 1972: 18.

<sup>107</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Ready to Rise in D.M.,” November 10, 1972: 6.

<sup>108</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Snow Cleanup Continues,” April 12, 1973: 3.

<sup>109</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Fifteen Stories High and Rising,” July 12, 1973: 3.

<sup>110</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Topping Out,” October 12, 1973: 1.

<sup>111</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “D.M. bank has new quarters,” April 28, 1974: 4-5.

<sup>112</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, Des Moines Savings and Loan ads, August 10, 1973: 9; January 17, 1974: 8.

<sup>113</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Amid the New: Amana Broom Maker at Work,” May 11, 1974: 7.

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institution also distributed a custom color publication about the new banking facilities to clients in spring 1974, highlighting the Financial Center and the savings and loan's amenities and staff (Figure 38).<sup>114</sup> The savings and loan reported its holdings had increased during construction of the building, demonstrating the monetary benefit that accrued to financial institutions that invested in building modern architectural banks.

Iowa-Des Moines National Bank provided a private preview of its Financial Center facilities in November 1973, hosting a Junior League fundraising event with David H. Murdock in attendance; guests were treated to dining in the bank vaults and tours of the bank's shell and core, as covered by press (Figure 34, Figure 35).<sup>115</sup> In April 1974, working around weather conditions, the bank moved twelve forty-four-foot-long moving vans of computer equipment and 200 of its employees during one weekend in April. The following weekend the bank relocated the rest of the 540 employees plus all 7,000 safety deposit boxes and vault holdings, including \$2 million in cash in steel boxes moved on the street and \$800 million in securities moved via a secret route. The move took months of preparation and more than 175 personnel. Moving the safety deposit boxes required multiple steps: Iron workers dismantled the framework around the boxes, a hole was cut in the sidewalk in front of the old bank's door, and forklifts carried loads of the boxes to pallets in the basement, which were then lifted by a crane onto forklifts on the street.<sup>116</sup> Employees marched down Walnut Street to the Financial Center carrying bags emblazoned with the word "YES," part of the bank's marketing campaign slogan: "The Yes Bank" (Figure 36).<sup>117</sup> The bank also produced golden miniature statues of the west wing and tower, with the name "Iowa-Des Moines National Bank" embossed, as a premium. And the bank marked the grand-opening with a publication that highlighted the bank's new facilities and departments with hand-sketched illustrations; the departments included a large trust department, executive offices, credit card division, computing, and employee dining rooms.<sup>118</sup> The bank occupied some 112,000 square feet of space initially through eighth floor (except not seventh floor), and later expanded into additional tower space plus the east wing office floors.<sup>119</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank president Fitzgibbon reported in early 1974 ahead of the bank's move that the Financial Center project reflected the bank's commitment to the community: "The impact of the new building in the form of revenue to the people of Des Moines and Central Iowa has been substantial." Iowa-Des Moines National Bank also announced in early 1974 that it saw immediate increases in loans and deposits during construction of the Financial Center, with loans up fifteen percent to \$265,450,000 and deposits reaching a new record of \$366 million in 1973, according Fitzgibbon, who in 1974 was promoted to chairman of the board.<sup>120</sup> The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank continued to use images of the Financial Center building in its advertising and marketing during the 1970s (Figure 36).

### **Financial Center Business Model as the "First Modern Skyscraper" in Des Moines**

The Financial Center Office Building's exceptional local significance as downtown Des Moines's "first modern skyscraper" rests in the new building technologies and design considerations that created desirable leasable office space and corporate branding for the Financial Center as a development project and for the two anchor financial institutions.<sup>121</sup> The Financial Center incorporates an energy-efficient shell and core designed to provide increased office tenant comfort and reduced developer-owner operational costs. The exterior design fused the energy conservation approaches with the Corporate International style popular for urban corporate skyscraper projects. The result created a building unlike others in downtown Des Moines in the early 1970s, where low-rise late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century masonry buildings predominated. The Financial Center stood apart not only for its height and size, designed as the city's tallest and largest building,

<sup>114</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Amid the New: Amana Broom Maker at Work," May 11, 1974: 7; Des Moines Savings and Loan.

<sup>115</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Junior League Benefit Takes Place," November 20, 1973: 10.

<sup>116</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "D.M. bank has new quarters," April 28, 1974: 4-5.

<sup>117</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank grand opening advertisement, May 20, 1974: 7.

<sup>118</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank.

<sup>119</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "D.M. bank has new quarters," April 28, 1974: 4-5.

<sup>120</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "D.M. Bank Tells Shift In Personnel," January 4, 1974: 9.

<sup>121</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Financial Center Expected to Be Sold," December 18, 1989: 3B: Business column written by business editor Rick Jost.

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but also offered a progressive modern appearance with creamy white solar-shading fins and broad parapet walls and bronze-tinted recessed curtain wall (Figures 16-18). As noted by architectural and urban historian Carol Willis in *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, corporate towers were built for their advertising value and rentability: "Unobstructed towers in prime areas offered well-lit office space and views that translated into high rents. Rather than interpreting corporate skyscrapers simply as representations of big business, we need to understand them as part of a marketplace where the space is for rent, and location and image have value."<sup>122</sup> Although the Corporate International Style came to be criticized as trite, buildings built in the style often showcase significant business history, as noted by architect Robert A.M. Stern: "[T]hese buildings are not only great examples of modern architecture but ones which are in a special category where architects, designers and their clients collaborated to establish new paradigms for American business. They are landmarks of the history of architecture and of the history of business."<sup>123</sup>

As Des Moines's first modern skyscraper, the Financial Center incorporated three features unique in downtown Des Moines: the first office high rise to include an integrated underground parking garage, incorporating space from the city under sidewalks to maximize parking space; the first high rise in the city built with full fire suppression; and the first office building built to accommodate the skywalk system. To maximize the underground parking garage, Murdock sought approval from the city council for an underground garage.<sup>124</sup> He then innovatively leased from the city additional square footage beneath adjoining public sidewalks to expand the parking footprint, in addition to vacating alleys.<sup>125</sup> The Financial Center became the first high-rise building in Des Moines built to meet the city's new fire sprinkler ordinance, initiated in 1972. The city's first high-rise fire prevention code required automatic water sprinkler systems in all new buildings above five stories tall; although the Financial Center was grandfathered under the old rules, Murdock volunteered to install fire sprinklers to meet the new code.<sup>126</sup> The Financial Center also was the first downtown office high rise designed to accommodate a public skywalk system. The building reserved space for a potential skywalk bridge connection at the rear of the building, and the developer and anchor tenants also signed agreements allowing for an interior skywalk corridor, anticipated as part of renewed downtown redevelopment planning announced by the mayor in late 1972 after the Financial Center project had begun, as discussed further below. As noted above, in 1971 the city's first publicly accessible skywalk connection opened between the new J.C. Penney department store building and new city garage, a project spearheaded by Fitzgibbon of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank through a private development group affiliated with the chamber of commerce. The bank's membership within the Minneapolis-based Northwest Bancorporation, which participated in urban revitalization projects through its large Minneapolis and St. Paul banks, provided access to information about the Twin Cities skywalk systems. After some delay, plans for the Des Moines skywalk system were publicized in 1974, with above-street connections linking key buildings including the Financial Center. Federal funding was received for the Des Moines skywalk project but blocked by the state legislature, leading to recalibration of the project in the 1980s. The Financial Center now has two public skywalk connections, which link to high-rise buildings completed during the late-twentieth-century downtown renaissance catalyzed by the Financial Center project.

The Financial Center Office Building also stands as the city's first energy-efficient skyscraper. Developer Murdock's focus on energy conservation in the 1960s and early 1970s ahead of the 1973 oil embargo is notable. As part of his proprietary development approach, Murdock used a nationally active high-rise design-

<sup>122</sup> Willis: 153.

<sup>123</sup> Architectural Resources Group: 156 quoting "Saving Corporate Modernism Exhibition and Symposium at Yale School of Architecture," Yale News, December 14, 2000. The author notes criticism of the style includes Paul Goldberger, "Why Modernist Architecture Lost Face," *The New York Times*, February 28, 1982.

<sup>124</sup> Abstract. As part of the Financial Center project, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank sold its former 1932 building to Murdock.

<sup>125</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Ask City to Vacate Alleys," June 9, 1972: 3S; "Sell City Parking Garage: Amendment Aids Financial Center," June 27, 1972: 3.

<sup>126</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Act to Boost Fire Safety," December 10, 1972: 10; *The Des Moines Register*, "Task for the Legislature," December 22, 1972: 16.

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build team to execute his projects, which ensured appropriate application of solar mitigation and other energy efficiency strategies specific to each project's region, site, and local codes. Murdock's interest in energy conservation stemmed from his experiences with building and owning properties in sunbaked Phoenix and other southwestern cities. In the post-war era, Phoenix was one of four regional cities scientifically studied by pioneering bioclimatic architects Aladar and Victor Olgyay, who demonstrated that energy conservation using modifications such as shading, tinted glazing, and insulation improved user experience and lowered operational costs. The Olgyays built upon Le Corbusier's climate-contextualized design experiments that included cantilevered features and fixed and movable fins and louvers.<sup>127</sup> In Victor Olgyay's 1963 book *Design With Climate*, he encouraged developers and architects to manage climate control and building performance through "location, latitude, and orientation," coupled with science-based findings on the performance and financial impact of building materials and architectural features.<sup>128</sup> For example, his studies of transmitted radiation on various types of glass and window shades revealed that medium-dark tinted glass reduced the impact of sun more than clear or gray plate glass, or coated glass.<sup>129</sup>

As designed by McCaleb, the Financial Center building incorporates energy-efficient design elements, beginning with the building's siting and orientation. McCaleb's design reduces solar gain by narrowing the width of the south elevation of the tower and positioning the parking ramp and mechanicals at the rear south end of the west wing, which has no windows, only brick and louvers. Creamy white-painted one-and-half-foot projecting solar shade fins of precast concrete and aluminum shade the recessed nonstructural heat-resistant bronze-tinted curtain wall with bronze-finished aluminum framing. McCaleb specified the curtain wall as PPG (Pittsburgh Paint and Glass) Solarbronze (the trademarked name), a warm-hued nonreflective glass that reduces glare and heat gain.<sup>130</sup> The windows that illuminate the offices are "Twindows"—the name reflecting the twinning of double-paned insulated glass: The exterior consists of one-fourth-inch nonreflective Solarbronze glass, and the interior of one-fourth-inch clear polished glass. The curtain wall at the column lines and floor levels features one-fourth-inch Harmony Solarbronze Spandrelite with insulation. The use of Twindows ensured tenant comfort and has avoided the problems that have plagued Corporate International Style projects built with single-pane annealed glass—drafts, condensation and ice inside windows, glare, and severe solar gain and loss, which has required use of films, curtains, auxiliary heating and cooling systems, and even replacement windows.<sup>131</sup>

McCaleb incorporated these energy conservation strategies into a "Corporate International Style" design. A variation of the late International Style, the Corporate International Style emerged in the post-war era as U.S. businesses sought to expand and differentiate in crowded marketplaces through architectural brand extension, as detailed in the "Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement," a portion of which focuses on the subcontext of Los Angeles post-war modernism, which is applicable due to developer Murdock's headquarters in Los Angeles.<sup>132</sup> The Corporate International Style was significant in the United States in the

<sup>127</sup> Barber, architectural historian, author of "Le Corbusier, the Brise-Soleil, and the Socio-Climate Project of Modern Architecture, 1929-1963." Olgyay (1963): 26; Harris and Housley: 1. The Olgyay brothers' 1957 book *Solar Control and Shading Devices* provided examples of buildings employing shading and other sun controls.

<sup>128</sup> Olgyay (1963): 62. *Design With Climate: Bioclimatic Approach to Architectural Regionalism* examined climate impacts and architectural opportunities for energy conservation within four U.S. metropolitan areas with different climates: Phoenix, Minneapolis, and New York/New Jersey, and Miami.

<sup>129</sup> Olgyay (1963): 63.

<sup>130</sup> Vitro Architectural Glass, producer of Solarbronze glass, invented by PPG. <Available online [www.vitroglazings.com](http://www.vitroglazings.com)>

<sup>131</sup> The 1962 Home Federal building originally contained floor-to-ceiling single-pane annealed glass windows; the building experienced solar heat/gain problems that negatively impacted occupants, prompting the former savings and loan to install film on the upper-level tinted windows, leaving unsightly horizontal lines where pieces of film overlapped; the glass was replaced in a historic tax credit rehabilitation, alleviating the problems. Two other Des Moines examples: The 1954 Central Life Insurance Co.'s headquarters building twice had its windows replaced to alleviate frosty, drafty metal windows and resulting intense solar gain and loss. The American Republic Insurance Co.'s headquarters building completed in 1965 had pivot-tilt windows that failed over time, and the building had only one thermostat, resulting in uneven temperatures throughout the building; these problems were alleviated in historic tax credit rehabilitation.

<sup>132</sup> Architectural Resources Group, "Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement Context: Architecture and Engineering Sub-

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era spanning 1945 through 1975, bookended by the conclusion of World War II and the end of the 1973-1974 oil embargo. This time period coincided with urban redevelopment efforts, and thus the style came to be associated with high-rise downtown buildings erected as part of downtown redevelopment projects.<sup>133</sup> The Corporate International Style proliferated across the United States, advanced by high-profile pioneering projects by architects including Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and the Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM) firm that provided architectural solutions to streamline client operations and forge new corporate branding.<sup>134</sup> Architectural clients and architects preferred the style for status-symbol skyscrapers and large-scale governmental buildings as a reflection of progressiveness, economic prosperity, and embrace of technology. The Corporate International Style is identified by distinctive features: "These include simple geometries and box-shaped forms; flat roofs, with or without parapets; taut wall surfaces; steel and concrete structural systems; and glass curtain walls comprising bands of flush-mounted metal windows and spandrel panels. Ground stories were typically double-height...."<sup>135</sup> Although some Corporate International Style buildings were stripped of ornament, others broke from the Miesian steel-and-glass box to incorporate different geometries and materials including brick to add visual interest.<sup>136</sup> Exterior sheathing evolved over time: "Metal and light blue were the fashion in the 1950s and early 1960s, dark metal (black or brown) and reflective glass later in the 1960s, and brilliant white sheathing, often concrete in the 1970s," as noted by architectural historian David Gebhard in a study of Minnesota architecture.<sup>137</sup>

McCaleb's design of the Financial Center Office Building produced a unique Corporate International exterior in downtown Des Moines, with an equally valuable interior shell and core, as the Bartholomew plan had encouraged.<sup>138</sup> The Financial Center exterior podium-tower design is comprised of rectilinear forms, articulated fenestration on both the podium and tower via the solar-shading vertical fins and recessed curtain wall, subtly expressed structure defined by the Solarbronze, Spandrelite at the horizontal floor lines and vertical column lines, taller ground floor, and flat roofs behind broad precast concrete parapet walls.<sup>139</sup> McCaleb's Financial Center design advertised Murdock's business of leasing and managing the Financial Center Office Building, with the building's height emphasized through the tower's location in plane with the west wing at the north façade. Murdock used images of the Financial Center in his development company's advertisements, which he targeted to banks (Figure 31). The Financial Center exterior design also advertised the two anchor financial institutions, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, underscored by the two ground-floor banking halls having differentiated podium exteriors, with

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Context: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980." (The lead author of the historic context, Architectural Resources Group, won a Docomomo Modernism in America Citation of Merit for the historic context.) Architectural historian Daniel Prosser, author of the Los Angeles citywide historic preservation subcontext "The Rise of Corporations and Corporate Types: High-Rise Corporate Office Buildings, 1945-1975," notes key amenities provided by modern high rise office buildings versus older office buildings. This historic context provides valuable insights given Murdock's corporate headquarters in Los Angeles, and located in one of the buildings surveyed by Prosser. Prosser provides a post-war era dating from 1945 end of World War II through 1975, end of the oil embargo. At time of the Financial Center project, David H. Murdock Development Co. was based in Los Angeles and operated from the 1962 sixteen-story marble-and-polished metal Occidental Petroleum Building clad as designed by architect Claud Beelman. Murdock later acquired the Occidental company as he branched out from real estate. And Murdock built his own Los Angeles office high rise with private club on the top floor, with exterior clad in brick manufactured by one of the companies he owned.

<sup>133</sup> Architectural Resources Group: 158.

<sup>134</sup> Architectural Resources Group 155-156.

<sup>135</sup> Architectural Resources Group 155.

<sup>136</sup> Architectural Resources Group 161-162.

<sup>137</sup> Gebhard 1977: 85

<sup>138</sup> Willis: 8: Architectural and urban historian Carol Willis, in *Form Follows Function: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago* uses "international" to describe skyscrapers built after 1950 and into the early 1980s, explaining that "[a]lthough evocative of the International Style aesthetics of steel, glass, spatial volumes, and structural expression, the term is not intended to be exclusively stylistic.... [I]nternational refers to the fact that advances in technology as well as changes in architectural ideology made tall buildings independent of their sites and essentially interchangeable from one city to another."

<sup>139</sup> Prosser 1-3, 41: He notes that Los Angeles developed many corporate high-rise buildings due to the city's booming post-war economy, zoning change that lifted height restrictions, dedicated architectural practitioners, and a strong corporate interest in branding through architecture. The style waned as construction slowed with the 1973 oil embargo and resulting mid 1970s economic recession.

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the wings having separate exterior entrances into the banking halls within.<sup>140</sup> Both the bank and savings and loan used images of the Financial Center in their advertising and as logos (Figures 32, 36). Des Moines Savings and Loan coordinated with Murdock and his design team on its detailing of the east wing exterior and interior, which employs McCaleb's palette of creamy white painted precast concrete elements and nonreflective bronze-tinted glazing on the exposed elevations and terrazzo and travertine on the interior.<sup>141</sup>

The Financial Center's interior shell and core include amenities that attracted companies to lease and retain office space. Some of these amenities were first outlined in the Bartholomew plan and were seldom found in older downtown office buildings.<sup>142</sup> The Financial Center's shell and core offered tenants large windows shielded from glare, with commanding views; open office plans with minimal columns; thick concrete floors and updated wiring to accommodate heavy computer and data processing equipment; central air conditioning and plentiful lighting (with each floor having its own mechanical system for customization); fast elevators; underground parking; and retail activity, built as ground-floor banking halls and top-floor private club with restaurant for networking and client meetings. The Financial Center's first-floor entrances and central lobby was finished with luxury materials including travertine stone wall cladding, terrazzo flooring, bronze-finished storefronts with custom door pulls, and "double-height" elevator and stair doors in the central lobby.

As designed, the Financial Center permitted extensive customization, allowing office tenants to finish their own buildout and the banks to finish their banking halls. This meant tenants could configure entire floors or smaller office spaces on multi-tenant floors, allowing for the implementation of individual corporate branding and identity within their leased spaces. Anchor tenant Iowa-Des Moines National Bank built out the two floors of the west wing and several lower tower floors as the new home of the bank, and later expanded into additional square footage within the building. Des Moines Savings and Loan built out the above-ground banking hall and upper executive offices of the east wing with the same architectural firm that completed the east wing exterior detailing. Murdock reserved the twenty-fifth floor for the private Embassy Club, which relocated from an older hotel; Murdock also provided a California-based consultant to assist with designing the private business networking club's restaurant and bar, which provided a convenient meeting place for Financial Center tenants to take clients and discuss business outside of the conference room (Figure 39).<sup>143</sup> Professional office tenants included numerous law firms, accounting firms, stock brokerage offices including Merrill Lynch, insurance offices, financial consultants and services, professional associations, and recruiting firms.

### **Financial Center Office Building and the "Modern Rebirth of Downtown"**

Across the country in the postwar era stretching 1945 to 1975, large banks in urban areas such as Iowa-Des Moines National Bank played a key role in downtown redevelopment. Bankers like John Fitzgibbon of Iowa-Des Moines National Bank creatively figured financing for projects, stringing together public and private funding.<sup>144</sup> Adding significance to the project, Los Angeles-based developer David H. Murdock brought extensive knowledge about financing as both a developer and bank founder who had worked with numerous

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<sup>140</sup> Prosser: 1, 3. Prosser's survey found both freestanding towers and tower-and-podium format high rises designed in the Corporate International Style; some of the podiums were solid and some were fenestrated. Regarding branding: "In the public mind the corporate high rise, to which a client attached its name, belonged to the client. But the reality was often more complicated. In a few cases, the corporation, on its own, financed, built, and occupied most, if not all, of the building. More typically a company worked with a developer or outside financier during construction, and later with a rental agent to find tenants for the leftover space it did not occupy. Also typical was the arrangement involving a developer who built the structure and a corporation which committed to lease a significant block of space. In return, the developer named the building after the leaseholder."

<sup>141</sup> McCaleb and Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe drawings.

<sup>142</sup> Prosser: 1-10, 41.

<sup>143</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Embassy Club Moves Up in the World," April 19, 1975: 16: Murdock often included a private club or restaurant on the top floor of his high-rise buildings. The Embassy Club relocated from the Hotel Fort Des Moines. In 1990, the club again relocated, to the new tallest building in Iowa, the Principal Tower/801 Grand.

<sup>144</sup> Schweikart: 177, 185: The author focuses on Phoenix as a case study and cites the role of David H. Murdock as both a banker and developer.

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financial institutions across the country. The success of the Financial Center concept brought forth renewed interest in downtown redevelopment planning, corporate involvement in building cultural resources, and additional new construction projects that transformed the central business district in the late twentieth century.

The 1972 announcement of the Financial Center Office Building as a record-breaking project in size and monetary investment in downtown Des Moines, with immediate construction start, catalyzed new downtown redevelopment planning and additional new civic and commercial construction projects.<sup>145</sup> The \$21 million Financial Center project was the highest dollar private downtown Des Moines office construction project and created the tallest building in Iowa to be built in fifty years—setting new local standards for investment. Construction of the Financial Center provided optimism and confidence in the future of downtown Des Moines in an era of unprecedented corporate flight from downtown to the suburbs, spurred in part by the 1968 completion of the metropolitan area's interstate freeway loop. More than twenty skyscrapers and high-rise buildings would follow in the late 1970s through early 1990s, influenced by the Financial Center (appendix table 1).<sup>146</sup>

The *Des Moines Tribune* in a 1972 editorial written about the Financial Center's project announcement, emphasized the immediate positive impact on downtown. The editorial also underscored the significance of the Financial Center's site, transforming the location of the vacant department store held up as a symbol of downtown's diminishment into the city's first modern skyscraper office building and Iowa's tallest building:

“New Life Downtown”

The tallest building in Iowa is going to rise from a site that has become something of a community embarrassment. The old Davidson Furniture Co. building was unoccupied for several years causing some businessmen to wonder about the vitality of the downtown core.

The old building has been torn down to make way for a \$21 million 25-story financial center on a half block along Seventh Street between Mulberry and Walnut. The new building will have offices for the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, and other tenants.

The building plans announced by a Los Angeles development firm, hardly reflect commercial stagnation. The empty furniture store was an unfortunate happening but it was not a symbol of decline. Two blocks east, at Fifth and Walnut, stands the new J.C. Penney store. Farther down Walnut is the new Federal Office Building. The new 10-story office building of the Employers Mutual Companies was opened a few months ago at Eighth and Mulberry. Those buildings went up in downtown sections which had taken on a down-at-the-heels appearance in recent years.

One block north of the planned financial center site, at Seventh and Locust, Bankers Trust Co. is tearing down two buildings, including the old Chamberlain Hotel, in preparation for a new office center, which may reach 20 stories.

At a time when urban planners and city fathers across the country are shaking their heads gloomily about the future of cities, downtown Des Moines is showing signs of new-found vigor. It is a happy prospect.<sup>147</sup>

The Financial Center was closely followed by the local press, with bi-weekly reporting and photographs documenting the project, providing the readership with positive views about downtown redevelopment.

The Financial Center—with its optimistic \$21 million investment, immediate construction start, and amenity-rich design that competed with suburban office developments—initiated a period of late-twentieth-century

<sup>145</sup> Among other histories, Elbert: 60. See also below for additional references.

<sup>146</sup> Elbert: 63; see Appendix Table 1 for listing of projects including those referenced by Elbert.

<sup>147</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “New Life Downtown,” editorial, June 8, 1972: 15.



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downtown Des Moines city planning and redevelopment focused on commerce and civic engagement. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and its chief executive officer Fitzgibbon provided leadership and vision that facilitated updating the city's outdated 1960-1961 Bartholomew plan and fundraising for new central business district resources. During the 1970s through 1990s, downtown Des Moines catapulted from deteriorating to desirable through construction of additional new office buildings, cultural resources, housing, gathering spaces, parking garages, and a skywalk system to connect key buildings.<sup>148</sup> Beginning in 1972, newly elected Mayor Richard Olson and chamber leaders began planning proposed city-led clearing of underused buildings near the riverfront, assembling land for public and private redevelopment on both sides of the river including a new convention center-hotel, building a new riverfront civic center with performing arts center and botanical center, and creating retail nodes including one on Walnut Street where the Financial Center was under construction (Figure 30).<sup>149</sup> This new plan included elements of the 1960-1961 Bartholomew plan, but with more flexibility and provision for the city to assemble land and drive the process. The new redevelopment plan was too late to use federal urban renewal funding—no new urban renewal projects were accepted after June 1973—so the city unveiled a \$22-million public bond referendum for fall 1973 to build a new performing arts theater, botanical center, and open green spaces to replace unsightly and unproductive old buildings.<sup>150</sup> These public projects were intended to spark privately funded developments, including an estimated \$9 million privately financed new hotel and convention center to be located near the performing arts center.<sup>151</sup> Financial Center developer David H. Murdock worked with local investors on an early plan to build the hotel near the new theater, drawing on his prior high-rise hotel development experience. “The long-awaited effort to revitalize downtown Des Moines is underway,” the *Tribune* reported in 1973, as voters were poised to decide on the referendum.<sup>152</sup> Although a majority of voters approved the referendum, the vote failed to reach the required sixty percent threshold. Unexpected county referendum items, opposition to public financing by some city council and business leaders, and competing interests in the hotel project contributed to the ballot defeat—and led to several years of delays in building the Civic Center / Nollen Plaza and Botanical Center. Additional funding approaches were considered, before business leaders Kruidenier and Fitzgibbon, who had supported the 1973 bond issue, took leadership roles in fundraising and organizing a nonprofit entity for constructing the Civic Center and downtown Nollen Plaza (Figure 40).<sup>153</sup> With nearly \$10 million in funds successfully raised, the Civic Center and public plaza, together occupying two square blocks, were opened by the end of the decade and hailed as critical elements toward the city's continuing redevelopment.<sup>154</sup> In sum, corporate support and leadership by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and others was instrumental to building the Civic Center and Botanical Center, and further catalyzed additional downtown development.<sup>155</sup> Retired *Des Moines Register* business editor Dave Elbert's history of the chamber of commerce credits Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and its president John Fitzgibbon with initiating two out of four key projects that propelled the modern rebirth of downtown Des Moines: the 1963-1971 J.C. Penney department store project led by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, as well as the Financial Center, joined by the 1971 EMC

<sup>148</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Pioneers Sparked Surge,” September 1, 1985: 1. “In the early 1970s, downtown was a lost cause. Among the downtown businessmen, the property owners, and some city officials, it was kind of felt it really couldn't be brought around. One of the main jobs early on was to develop a conceptual plan and strategy for downtown redevelopment,” recalled the city's former planning director Robert Mickle, reflecting on the leadership of the mayor (Olson) and key city officials, supported by business leaders John Fitzgibbon of Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and publisher David Kruidenier.

<sup>149</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Pioneers Sparked Surge,” September 1, 1985: 1. The Walnut Street pedestrian/transit corridor was implemented in the mid 1980s; the street has since reverted to full vehicular traffic.

<sup>150</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “These ‘Miracles’ Lesson for D.M. Revitalization,” one in a special report series titled A New Downtown? by columnist Gordon Gammack, August 20, 1973: 1, 5. The federal urban renewal program announced in January 1973 it would cease accepting new funding projects as of June 30, 1973. Congress restructured federal financial assistance to community development block grants.

<sup>151</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “Back Downtown Plaza Idea,” June 8, 1973: 3.

<sup>152</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “These ‘Miracles’ Lesson for D.M. Revitalization,” August 20, 1973: 1. The *Tribune* investigated urban revitalization insights from cities and experts across the nation for a 1973 multiple-day special report titled “A New Downtown?”

<sup>153</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “These ‘Miracles’ Lesson for D.M. Revitalization,” August 20, 1973: 1; “Theater Pledges Of \$6.2 Million,” May 29, 1975: 1; “Corporation Formed for Theater,” April 10, 1975: 3.

<sup>154</sup> Elbert: 62-63.

<sup>155</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “Sees Influx of Downtown Development,” August 1, 1975: 1.

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headquarters and the 1975 Ruan Center. Elbert highlights the J.C. Penney project, with Fitzgibbon's innovative fundraising approach, for its successful private-public model replicated in the 1970s and beyond for building civic redevelopment projects.<sup>156</sup>

In the meantime, another private office tower project was revealed in late December 1972 as a thirty-six-story-tall skyscraper, named the "Ruan Center" (666 Grand Avenue). Previously announced to be a shorter twenty-some-story building, the Ruan Center was quietly planned to be the city's and state's tallest building, a title retained from its 1975 completion until 1990 construction of the forty-four-story Principal Tower/801 Grand downtown office skyscraper two blocks west (Figures 16-18). Namesake John Ruan, president of trucking and transportation-oriented Ruan Companies and chairman of the third-largest bank in Des Moines, Bankers Trust, included many of the amenities offered in the Financial Center: a modern banking hall pavilion and bank offices, leased air-conditioned office space, underground parking, planned skywalk access, and an upper-floor private club with restaurant (the top floors were dedicated to mechanicals).<sup>157</sup> Together, the Financial Center and Ruan Center would provide downtown with more than one million square feet in new office space.<sup>158</sup>

In 1973 and 1974, Des Moines's two record-breaking skyscraper projects created a downtown "building boom" along Seventh Street that changed the city's skyline.<sup>159</sup> The Financial Center Office Building's record-setting investment, large square footage, and rich amenities that competed with new suburban office developments inspired more than twenty mid-rise and high-rise buildings in downtown from 1970 through 1990. The Financial Center influenced later downtown office projects, which incorporated key amenities featured in the Financial Center. Notably, underground parking was added to later projects including the Ruan Center, Principal Tower, and an office building for publisher Meredith Corporation.<sup>160</sup> Private clubs were added to the Ruan Center, Capital Square, and Principal Tower office buildings (Figure 18).<sup>161</sup> And corporate support for the skywalk system was strong, with the Ruan Center building a private extension to a city ramp, based on the 1971 J.C. Penney skywalk connector to another city ramp. The additional 1970s and 1980s projects that followed furthered the redevelopment spirit established by the Financial Center, with corporate owners and developers alike finding opportunities to add to the skyline. With the additional late-twentieth-century high-rise construction, the Financial Center now stands as the fourth tallest building in downtown Des Moines.<sup>162</sup>

The city officially proposed the skywalk system publicly in early 1974 during construction of the Financial Center, with the city studying the Minneapolis skywalk system's positive impact on businesses as well as federal funding.<sup>163</sup> In Des Moines, an early proposed route connected buildings along Walnut and Locust streets, including the Financial Center. Planning for the skywalk system had begun in Des Moines during work on the J.C. Penney department store project, championed by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, which had

<sup>156</sup> Elbert: 60-62.

<sup>157</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan a 36-Story Office-Bank Center in Downtown D.M." December 18, 1972: 3; "Ruan Center — A New D.M. Landmark," October 14, 1975: 26.

<sup>158</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "D.M. Office Space Shuffle," March 31, 1975: 1.

<sup>159</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Downtown D. M.'s Building Boom," September 7, 1973: 34. The city constructed a Seventh Street parking garage (nonextant) in the spirit of the Bartholomew plan's goal of providing parking outside of the central core.

<sup>160</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "City Council to Eye 'Same Old Problems' in '47," January 1, 1947: 3; *Des Moines Tribune*, "New D.M. Building To Be Designed by van der Rohe," March 2, 1959: 1; James 2017. Previously Des Moines leaders had considered the benefits of underground parking beginning in the immediate post-war era, as downtown vehicle congestion worsened; and although a municipal downtown underground parking ramp was proposed and previously architect Mies van der Rohe proposed underground parking in his initial 1959 design for the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines, the higher costs for underground construction and lower land prices (as compared to Mies van der Rohe's adopted city of Chicago) generally led to above-ground municipal ramps and surface parking lots as the norm.

<sup>161</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, Gordan Gammack column, July 1, 1974: 1.

<sup>162</sup> The four tallest buildings in Des Moines since 1990-1991 are: Principal Tower/ 801 Grand, Ruan Center, Marriott Hotel, and Financial Center Office Building.

<sup>163</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Proposes System of 'Skywalks' For Downtown Pedestrian Use," February 12, 1974: 3.

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access to information about the Minneapolis skywalk system through its Minneapolis-based bank holding company. As noted, the J.C. Penney store building built by a chamber-affiliated development group included the city's first publicly accessible skywalk connection, which ran over Fifth Avenue to connect to a public city parking garage. Skywalks provided a way to connect buildings and the people who used them, out of inclement Midwestern weather; in a time of rising indoor shopping malls. Although the city's early skywalk plan received federal funding in 1975, access to the funding was blocked. During the ensuing delay, the skywalk route was reconfigured and differently funded.<sup>164</sup> The skywalk buildout occurred primarily in the 1980s; by 1984, the city's skywalk consisted of twenty-one blocks of enclosed public passageways primarily installed at the second-story level in the central business core.<sup>165</sup> The Financial Center leaders' commitment to bringing skywalks to Des Moines is illustrated not only in the architectural design that laid out a sub corridor for a future skywalk connection at the rear of the building, but also in a later agreement between Murdock Development and the heads of the Financial Center financial institutions Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan.<sup>166</sup>

In 1982, a decade after the Financial Center's construction announcement, *The Des Moines Register* placed into perspective the importance of the Financial Center Office Building as new high-rise projects were underway: "Little more than a decade ago, Des Moines didn't have reason to worry about an office space glut. Except for the [1967] Central National Bank Building, little new office space had been built since World War II and civic leaders were worried about keeping downtown alive at all. But in the early 1970s, the 25-story Financial Center was completed, quickly followed by the 36-story Ruan Center.... [Appraiser Don] Johnson and others have a more optimistic view for downtown. 'You see, downtown is now the place to be,' he said. And with plans to expand city parking facilities plus the rapidly growing network of skywalks, Johnson says, the downtown market will continue to improve."<sup>167</sup> A 1983 feature about John Fitzgibbon, then retired, emphasized his role as one of the region's power brokers in building "the foundation of a new downtown from the rubble of a decaying central business district in the early 1970s," despite skepticism from some city council members and business leaders.<sup>168</sup> Within a decade of the Financial Center's construction start, the *Des Moines Register* reported in 1983 that downtown was a "flourishing office and retail center, blooming with new buildings and linked by skywalks." Fitzgibbon was credited building the city's first modern skyscraper, which spurred other office projects; initiating the downtown skywalk system beginning with the J.C. Penney store project; fundraising and building the Civic Center and plaza; and assisting with fundraising for additional downtown projects including the east side Botanical Center and historic restoration of the city's late-nineteenth-century riverfront library.<sup>169</sup> A 1984 Associated Press story highlighted downtown Des Moines' successful renaissance: An estimated \$450 million was spent on new private construction since 1974, when the Financial Center was completed. Additional public funds built parking garages and skywalks, and updated various public buildings. "The commitment of more than half a billion dollars has forged a new skyline, punctuated by the 36-story Ruan Center, the 33-story Marriott Hotel, and the 25-story Financial Center." The city reported thirteen new downtown office buildings completed since 1970, adding nearly 2.6 million square feet of office space, with additional office buildings under construction at time of publication.<sup>170</sup>

Local histories of Des Moines also credit the Financial Center project with initiating renewed downtown redevelopment that dramatically reshaped the central business district during the late twentieth century. "The impact of the civic developments in the 1970s was exemplified by the back-to-back announcement of two major skyscrapers for Des Moines," author Orin Dahl wrote in a history of Des Moines published in 1978. "In

<sup>164</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Downtown Skywalk," May 17, 1975: 6; "Money for Skywalk," March 5, 1976: 16; *Des Moines Tribune*, "All skywalk routes to be considered," January 20, 1978: 1.

<sup>165</sup> *Quad City Times*, "How Des Moines got moving," Associated Press article, July 15, 1984: 1E.

<sup>166</sup> Abstract.

<sup>167</sup> *Des Moines Register*, "Expansions help fill new D.M. offices," October 17, 1982: 52.

<sup>168</sup> *Des Moines Register*, "He planted seeds for blooming D.M.," May 26, 1983: 1T.

<sup>169</sup> *Des Moines Register*, "He planted seeds for blooming D.M.," May 26, 1983: 1T.

<sup>170</sup> *Quad City Times*, "How Des Moines got moving," Associated Press article, July 15, 1984: 1E.

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1972, the Financial Center—a 25-story, \$21 million facility—was announced. It would become the new home of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. Shortly thereafter, John Ruan announced a 36-story, \$26 million structure which would become the headquarters for the Bankers Trust Company. The construction of these two buildings solidified the downtown community and provided substantial office space for expanding business and professional interests. They also provided outstanding locations for two of the significant downtown clubs. The Embassy Club moved to the top of the Financial Center and the Des Moines Club took the top of the Ruan Center.”<sup>171</sup> In a history published nearly thirty-five years later, historians Barbara Beving Long Henning and Patricia Beam reaffirmed the importance of the Financial Center to downtown Des Moines redevelopment: “1972 was the bellwether year for change and marked the beginning of a long-sought renaissance of downtown. Announced in that year were plans to construct the 25-story Financial Center and the 36-story Ruan Center. The Civic Center, Botanical Center, and Convention Center also emerged from plans first announced in 1972.”<sup>172</sup>

### Key Businesses Involved in the Financial Center Office Building

The development and construction of the Financial Center Office Building involved several businesses. Developer David H. Murdock Development Co. coordinated the interests of the lead bank anchors, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. The developer also brought on board his preferred nationally active skyscraper design-engineer-build team for the shell and core project. Des Moines Savings and Loan Association brought on board a local architecture firm and general contractor to design and build the east wing above-ground buildout.

#### *David H. Murdock Development Co., developer David H. Murdock*

Midwestern-born developer David H. Murdock (b. 1923) began his career in post-war Phoenix building houses, before entering commercial real estate development. He founded the David H. Murdock Development Co. in 1954 and by 1957 began to specialize in bank and financial institution high-rise office buildings.<sup>173</sup> By 1961, *The Saturday Evening Post* profiled Murdock as “the most spectacular” of the new young millionaires of Phoenix for his ambitious real estate development in one of the fastest growing U.S. cities.<sup>174</sup> Review of period newspaper coverage shows Murdock’s portfolio in the 1960s and 1970s included mid- and high-rise buildings in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, California, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, Ohio, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., among other locations; some buildings he developed for clients, others he owned and managed. Murdock also started financial institutions and private business clubs located in his projects, and invested in companies located near his real estate investments.<sup>175</sup> He relocated to Los Angeles with his wife Gabrielle Murdock and children in the mid 1960s, retaining an office in Phoenix, and continued building his real estate and corporate empire.<sup>176</sup> *The Los Angeles Times* 1965 profile about Murdock noted: “He has won a national reputation in the field of high-rise commercial office building development with this approach: he assumes total responsibility for a project from initial approach through complete occupancy and management. His team of experts do the feasibility study and preliminary research, select the site, plan the architecture and structure, arrange both interim and long-range financing, supervise construction, and lease the space when built. After building high-rise office buildings for his own company, he now develops them for others, principally banks and financial institutions.”<sup>177</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Dahl: 159-161.

<sup>172</sup> Henning and Beam: 104.

<sup>173</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, “Phoenix Firms Cooperate In San Jose Structure,” January 30, 1963: 75.

<sup>174</sup> *The Saturday Evening Post*, “The New Millionaires of Phoenix,” September 30, 1961: 26-32; Reimer.

<sup>175</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, “From Dream to Reality: Phoenix Skyscraper New High in Murdock Career,” March 4, 1960: 20; *The El Paso Times*, “Plan 10-story Downtown Bank Tower,” May 20, 1962: 1; *Arizona Republic*, “Phoenix Firms Cooperate In San Jose Structure,” January 20, 1963: E5; *Arizona Republic*, “Financial Square Plan Wins Praise,” September 27, 1963: 2; “Center Dedication Ceremony,” September 26, 1964: Finance 12-B;

<sup>176</sup> Dotl and Schweikart: 185-186. Murdock’s move to California came after his investment in Arizona’s first full-fledged financial network unraveled in the early 1960s due to an employee embezzlement scheme that nearly bankrupted the developer.

<sup>177</sup> *The Los Angeles Times*, “David H. Murdock: He Builds, Owns, Leases Buildings,” July 25, 1965: J1 (Real Estate, Homes and Industry Section).

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A number of Murdock's projects garnered national attention, including his first skyscraper, the 1960 twenty-story Guaranty Bank Building (extant but exterior remodeled), Phoenix's tallest building, which was featured in Portland Cement Association advertisements nationally.<sup>178</sup> The Guaranty Bank Building featured Murdock's typical client mix—an anchor tenant bank, professional offices, and top-floor private social club and restaurant—but unique in that he co-founded both the bank and the Cloud Club, as noted in profiles by *Time* magazine, as one of the top 100 changemakers for his development prowess in Phoenix and beyond, and *The Los Angeles Times*, for his work in the West.<sup>179</sup> Murdock's most recognized project of the 1960s was the \$7 million 1964 Phoenix Financial Center (extant, with later expansion), which *Time* magazine in 1964 called "the first financial shopping center in the U.S.... Murdock has already installed a bank, a savings and loan company, an insurance agency, a title company, and a stockbroker, all of which have access to a Univac 1107 computer that will process their accounts. Murdock also hopes to have a finance company, a mortgage banking firm, a factoring company, and other financial services in the center, so that a typical "shopper" theoretically would be able to settle all his financial affairs on a single trip...."<sup>180</sup> *The Los Angeles Times* also reported on the project, designed by modernist architect Wenceslaus A. "W.A." Sarmiento of St. Louis, who incorporated prominent solar mitigation strategies for Murdock.<sup>181</sup> On the landscaped multiple-acre site, Sarmiento designed separate Google-style domed bank and savings and loan buildings, and a curved high-rise office building with metallic aluminum piers on the north and small scattered windows on the rear south to reduce heat gain and glare. In implementing these solar reduction strategies, the architect drew on his early experience as draftsman for celebrated Brazilian modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer—who himself had worked as a draftsman for Le Corbusier.<sup>182</sup> The Phoenix Financial Center project was completed by Henry C. Beck (Phoenix office) in 1964, with expansion of the office building occurring under a subsequent owner. The Phoenix Financial Center has been evaluated as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for exceptional commercial significance as a "pioneering financial center."<sup>183</sup>

Murdock began to work nationally in the 1960s, preferring downtown redevelopment sites. He completed a series of office high rises in California, including Orange County's tallest building in 1962, which he expanded in 1965, and San Jose's first post-war high rise office building in 1963, to which he added an adjoining tower in 1965, among other development projects.<sup>184</sup> Murdock moved his office to downtown Los Angeles in the mid 1960s, and located in the high-rise Occidental Petroleum Building (in the 1980s he acquired the Occidental Petroleum company as he branched out from real estate). Murdock entered the Midwestern market, building office high-rise projects and acquiring companies. He completed the tallest skyscraper in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1970, a large office building near the capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, and 1973-1974 Financial Center Office Building in Des Moines—Murdock's tallest skyscraper project at the time. Murdock incorporated successful aspects of the Phoenix Financial Center and subsequent high-rise projects to the Financial Center in Des Moines, including solar control strategies and his collaborative design-engineer-build team with McCaleb and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co. (Phoenix office). Murdock and his wife Gabrielle Murdock co-signed official paperwork for the Financial Center project.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>178</sup> For example: *The New Mexico Architect*, Portland Cement Association advertisement featuring David H. Murdock and his Guaranty Bank Building, March-April 1961: 2.

<sup>179</sup> *Time* magazine, "Real Estate: The Achievement Addict," June 9, 1961; *The Arizona Republic*, "From Dream to Reality: Phoenix Skyscraper New High in Murdock Career," March 4, 1960: 20; *The Los Angeles Times*, "David H. Murdock: He Builds, Owns, Leases Buildings," July 25, 1965: J1 (Real Estate, Homes and Industry Section).

<sup>180</sup> *Time*, "Finance: Shopping Center for Money," October 2, 1964; *The Los Angeles Times*, "Phoenix Acquires Financial Center," November 1, 1964: 1J.

<sup>181</sup> Sarmiento was an architect at Bank Building and Equipment Co. of America, Inc., of St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>182</sup> Reiner: Murdock had admired Sarmiento's 1958-1959 Glendale (California) Federal Savings headquarters building, which incorporated pivoting solar-powered exterior louvers as highlighted by the Olgyays.

<sup>183</sup> Reiner: Postwar Architecture Task Force of Greater Phoenix.

<sup>184</sup> *The Los Angeles Times*, "Phoenix Acquires Financial Center," November 1, 1964: 1J.

<sup>185</sup> Abstract; Lynch et al.

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Murdock used the Financial Center project in Des Moines to advertise his development company in the early 1970s, and he included the Financial Center Office Building in portfolios submitted while successfully winning city-initiated redevelopment projects across the country.<sup>186</sup> In the mid 1970s through early 1980s, Murdock successfully won bids to build office towers within urban redevelopment areas in Akron, Ohio, and Baltimore, Maryland; he developed a South Dakota office building for a Banco bank, and built a series of masonry projects in Nebraska including 1982 twin masonry office towers in downtown Omaha and a downtown masonry hotel in Lincoln—all built with brick from his Lincoln manufacturing plant. And he and his wife Gabrielle Murdock restored and decorated a historic hotel in Washington, D.C.<sup>187</sup> Murdock also invested in companies, including construction product-related manufacturing and distribution firms, often adjacent to his real estate projects.<sup>188</sup> Murdock sold the Des Moines Financial Center in the early 1980s to Pan American of New York, as he focused on new development projects and corporate acquisitions.<sup>189</sup> The Financial Center east and west wing/tower parcels have been under common ownership since 2001.<sup>190</sup>

On his many development projects, Murdock preferred to utilize a consistent design-engineer-build team to for streamlined, cost-efficient operations and timeframes.<sup>191</sup> In addition, as Murdock specialized in developing high-rise bank and financial-firm office buildings featuring regional solar-reduction strategies, his preferred team had the technical background to ensure successful execution.<sup>192</sup> The 1964 *Time* feature noted Murdock's approach to development: "David H. Murdock, a shrewd and restless Arizona real estate developer... When he wanted a bank tenant for one of his new buildings, Murdock went out and formed his own bank [Guaranty Bank].... To help manage his expanding empire, Murdock, who left school in the tenth grade, has drawn together a young, hard-driving team of college-trained experts in business and finance. His success formula is the developer's old reliable—tax-sheltered earnings, good credit, and luck. He depreciates his buildings as fast as he can, borrowing against the rising values of his property in the fast-growing Southwest." Henry C. Beck Co. opened a permanent Phoenix office in 1959 to oversee Murdock's Guaranty Bank skyscraper. After the 1961 death of Murdock's preferred architect, Phoenix-based Charles Polacek, Murdock briefly employed other architects prior to working with Phoenix-based architect Russell H. McCaleb, AIA, on a series of projects in the 1960s through 1970s. McCaleb often coordinated with Phoenix-based associated architects and engineers, along with the Henry C. Beck Co. Phoenix office, on Murdock's projects and others.

*Russell H. McCaleb, AIA, Financial Center architect*

Russell H. McCaleb, AIA (1930-2000), member of the Central Arizona AIA chapter, specialized in designing high-rise office buildings and worked nationally, with registrations in fifteen states and National Council of

<sup>186</sup> *The Akron Beacon Journal*, "Five Super Block Bidders Revealed," April 11, 1974: 1.

<sup>187</sup> *Sunday Journal and Star Capital* (Lincoln, Nebraska), "First National's New Home: Millionaire's Hunch Started City's Tallest Building," August 11, 1965: 1; *Lincoln Journal Star*, "First National's New Home: City's Tallest Office Building," August 11, 1968: B1; *Argus-Leader* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota), "Northwestern Bank To Open At Its New Location," January 31, 1975:3; *The Akron Beacon Journal*, "Superblock Dirt Goes Flying," October 15, 1974: 1 (The nineteen-story Ohio Edison Co. office tower was clad in brick with bronze colored double-glassed insulating windows and included electric heat and fire suppression.); *The Evening Sun* (Baltimore), "Board approves Murdock plan," July 29, 1981: C1.

<sup>188</sup> *The Lincoln Star*, "Financier involved in every aspect of hotel: Murdock's impact evident," editorial written about David H. Murdock's impact on Lincoln, Nebraska, January 22, 1984: 33. For example, in Nebraska he purchased the Yankee Hill Brick Manufacturing Co. (which supplied bricks for several of Murdock's Nebraska projects) and the regional distribution system for Ace Hardware.

<sup>189</sup> *Des Moines Register*, "New Mexico company buys Financial Center," June 27, 1996: 8S Business. Pan American sold the Financial Center in a grouping of properties to Trammel Crow of Texas in 1989, and in 1996 ownership changed to BGK Properties Inc. of Santa Fe, New Mexico, with subsequent ownership changes.

<sup>190</sup> Abstract.

<sup>191</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "Team Effort Whips Engineers' Problem," March 4, 1960: 21; *The Arizona Republic*, "Henry C. Beck Co. Team Tops Building Schedule," March 4, 1960: 22.

<sup>192</sup> For example, Murdock's 1961 high-rise Union Title Building in Phoenix, built by Henry C. Beck Co., included a solar tinted curtain wall and multi-zoned air-conditioning for tenant flexibility. *The Arizona Republic*, "13-Story Union Title Building Completed One Floor Per Week," July 4, 1961: 53.

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Architectural Registration Boards certification.<sup>193</sup> A native of Texas, he moved to Phoenix in 1961 to manage the largest architectural office in the city, founded by the late modernist architect Charles Polacek, Murdock's early architectural collaborator. After Polacek's death, Dallas architect Thomas E. Stanley purchased the Phoenix office in 1961 and employed McCaleb as the managing architect of the Phoenix office.<sup>194</sup> McCaleb formed his own Phoenix-based architecture firm, Russell McCaleb & Associates, in 1963, and officed in the Phoenix Financial Center, one of Murdock's development projects.<sup>195</sup> McCaleb's projects for Murdock and others in the 1960s through mid 1970s employed energy-efficient approaches including strategic siting to reduce southern exposure; light colored insulated projecting fins and piers to shade windows and deflect heat gain; insulated curtain walls with recessed double-glazed tinted glass to avoid drafts, glare, and heat gain; zoned heating and cooling; and electric-powered buildings (rather than burning natural gas or oil)—with each building tailored to fit the needs of the location, climate, and major tenant or owner. McCaleb also took a personal interest in solar mitigation, incorporating solutions to glare and heat in the mid-1960s Phoenix house with architectural studio that he designed for his family, as featured in *The Arizona Republic*.<sup>196</sup> McCaleb's projects for Murdock included a number of 1960s Arizona bank buildings and California high-rise projects designed with the Stanley office and his own firm, as well as the 1970 twenty-story-tall First National Bank Building in Lincoln, Nebraska; Madison, Wisconsin office building; Des Moines Financial Center; South Dakota Banco bank building; and consultation on the large masonry Akron, Ohio, office high rise. Most of these projects were built by the Henry C. Beck Co. Phoenix office, and included coordination with Phoenix-based engineering companies. In addition, a recent historical survey of Birmingham, Alabama, has identified a McCaleb and Henry C. Beck Co. high-rise as appearing individually eligible for the National Register: the 1976 eighteen-story First Alabama Bank defined by bronze-tinted glass and anodized aluminum as designed by architectural firm John Carl Warnecke & Associates, New York, in association with Russell McCaleb & Associates and Henry C. Beck Co. general contractor.<sup>197</sup>

*Henry C. Beck Co., Financial Center general contractor*

Henry C. Beck Co. was started in 1912 in Dallas, Texas. Active nationally and internationally, the firm came to specialize in constructing skyscrapers and other highly technical building projects including sports complexes and the 1961 Cape Canaveral launch complex. In 1939 the company opened an Atlanta office, which built the city's tallest skyscraper in 1955, the Fulton Bank Building, which attracted national recognition. Another important 1950s project for Henry C. Beck Co. was the National Animal Disease Laboratory in Ames, Iowa.<sup>198</sup> Henry C. Beck Co. opened a permanent Phoenix office in 1959 while building Murdock's first skyscraper project and Phoenix's tallest building, the twenty-story Guaranty Bank Building completed in 1960.<sup>199</sup> At the time of Murdock's 1965 San Jose, California, bank office high-rise project, built by Henry C. Beck Co., the general contracting firm was one of the ten largest builders nationwide.<sup>200</sup> The Henry C. Beck Co. Phoenix office built projects for Murdock in Arizona and nationally, with the collaboration producing at least seventeen buildings through the mid 1970s.<sup>201</sup> The Des Moines Financial Center appears to have been the largest and tallest of the Murdock projects.<sup>202</sup> Through its national offices, the Henry C. Beck Co. built numerous high rise buildings by major Modernist architects and firms across the United States, with National Register of Historic Places representation including the 1968-1971 South Central Bell Building (NRHP listed in 2020; period of significance extends 1968 to 1971) in Birmingham, Alabama, locally significant under Criterion A—Commerce

<sup>193</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "Russell (Rusty) Haeber McCaleb," obituary, March 15, 200: 10; Browker, Russell McCaleb listing.

<sup>194</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "Polacek Office Is Sold," March 19, 1961: 109. Architect Thomas E. Stanley of Dallas purchased the Polacek the firm.

<sup>195</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "Russell (Rusty) Haeber McCaleb," obituary, March 15, 200: 10; Browker, Russell McCaleb listing.

<sup>196</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "Home with a Green Heart," January 16, 1966: 1K.

<sup>197</sup> Schneider: 16.

<sup>198</sup> Beck Company.

<sup>199</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, "From Dream to Reality: Phoenix Skyscraper New High in Murdock Career," March 4, 1960: 20; "Henry C. Beck Co. Team Tops Building Schedule," March 4, 1960: 22.

<sup>200</sup> *Independent Press-Telegram*, "Start New Building in San Jose," January 10, 1965: R5.

<sup>201</sup> Beck Group.

<sup>202</sup> Beck Group.

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as the Modernist corporate headquarters for South Central Bell, a symbol of Birmingham's commercial rebirth following Civil Rights Movement violence and also locally significant under Criterion C—Architecture as an example of an International Style skyscraper reflecting national trends designed by architect Der Scutt from the New York firm Kahn and Jacobs and built by the Henry C. Beck Co. as the city's tallest building.<sup>203</sup> Other Henry C. Beck constructed office buildings on the National Register of Historic Places include the 1962-1964 Commerce Tower (NRHP 2014) in Kansas City, Missouri, locally significant under Criterion C—Architecture in part for its role as the tallest and largest office building locally when built by Henry C. Beck Co. In addition, a recent historical survey of Birmingham, Alabama, has identified two Henry C. Beck projects as appearing individually eligible for the National Register: the 1968-1971 twenty-eight-story reflective glass First National Bank designed by Welton Becket and Associates and built by Henry C. Beck Co. general contractor and the 1976 eighteen-story First Alabama Bank defined by bronze tinted glass and anodized aluminum as designed by architectural firm John Carl Warnecke & Associates, New York, in association with Russell McCaleb & Associates and Henry C. Beck Co. general contractor.<sup>204</sup> The Henry C. Beck Co. successor is The Beck Group.

*Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, Financial Center anchor tenant*

The Financial Center Office Building is strongly associated with its major tenant, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, which as the premier and largest bank in Iowa at the time of construction was a leading force for economic redevelopment in the city during the 1960s and 1970s, during which time period the Financial Center project was envisioned and built. As noted above, the Financial Center project played a critical role in reinvigorating downtown Des Moines redevelopment by providing a record-setting \$21 million investment in downtown to create high quality banking and office space that revived confidence in the relevance of the downtown Des Moines central business district. From its modern banking facilities, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank flourished and continued to expand as the largest bank in Iowa.

The bank began in 1868 and grew through a series of mergers. In 1929, the city's three largest banks—Iowa National Bank, Des Moines Savings Bank and Trust Company, and Des Moines National Bank—merged to form the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank.<sup>205</sup> The same year, ahead of the stock market crash, the newly merged bank affiliated with the Northwest Bancorporation ("Banco"), a Minneapolis-based multistate bank holding company.<sup>206</sup> The holding company provided specialized services as well as resources in times of economic hardship, allowing all 100-plus member banks in eight states to survive the Great Depression. Each member bank retained its structure and local decision-making, with local board of directors; Iowa-Des Moines National Bank was one of the top largest banks in the system, a position it retained through the decades.<sup>207</sup> Iowa-Des Moines National Bank built its 1932 five-story Art Deco facility (520 Walnut Street; NRHP) to combine the three merged bank offices; the bank building was constructed as a five-story skyscraper base that could be topped with a sixteen-story office tower in the future as economics and demand for office space increased.<sup>208</sup> As noted above, by the time construction supplies were available after World War II, architecture styles had changed and the skyscraper tower was never built. Instead, the bank remodeled its interior and in 1959 opened a rear drive-through "motor bank," promoted as a new modern face for the bank (Figure 21).

The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank played a key role in post-war downtown Des Moines redevelopment, supporting the 1960 Bartholomew plan and providing executive leadership to planning and fundraising for civic projects. With the 1960 arrival of bank executive John Fitzgibbon (1922-2008) from the Minneapolis headquarters of Banco (the bank holding company), the Iowa-Des Moines bank adapted a more public

<sup>203</sup> Slaughter and McNair.

<sup>204</sup> Schneider: 16.

<sup>205</sup> Dahl: 211-212; Pradarelli: 71-74.

<sup>206</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "Iowa-Des Moines National Bank: Des Moines on Bancorporation Map," September 13, 1929: 12.

<sup>207</sup> Pradarelli: 71-74; 279. The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank provided executive Harold Brenton as a director of Northwest Banco in the interwar era, one of a number of strong ties the Iowa bank had with the holding company.

<sup>208</sup> Pradarelli: 72.



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leadership stance on redevelopment—including bringing to fruition the Financial Center Office Building. Fitzgibbon, a Nebraska native, was promoted to bank president in 1969 and to chairman of the board in 1974. Newspaper polls ranked him as one of the most powerful business people in Iowa during the 1970s, and he was credited as “the driving force behind much of the renovation of downtown Des Moines.”<sup>209</sup> Fitzgibbon took visible positions on local civic issues, lent his expertise on complex financing stacks of private and public funds, and remained steadfast despite adversarial opposition from some city council members and business leaders who questioned the need for downtown improvements.<sup>210</sup> Among his many civic roles and board service, Fitzgibbon served as president of the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce in 1970 with additional years on the executive committee, co-leader of the chamber’s private redevelopment group that built the 1971 J.C. Penney department store building with the city’s first public skywalk link, vice president of the powerful chamber-affiliated Greater Des Moines Committee, and a leading skywalk system advocate.<sup>211</sup> Fitzgibbon publicly supported the 1973 city bond issue to build a new downtown civic theater, botanical center, and open green spaces. When the bond effort failed to garner the required sixty percent of the vote, Fitzgibbon led the \$9 million fundraising and project management for the Civic Center performing arts center and Nollen Plaza, and chaired the Civic Center board of trustees—even as the project endured several years of delays due to political clashes.<sup>212</sup> Completed in 1979, the Civic Center and Nollen Plaza projects were hailed as critical elements in the late-twentieth-century downtown Des Moines redevelopment.<sup>213</sup> Fitzgibbon’s influence on downtown Des Moines redevelopment was so significant that *The Des Moines Register* attributed him with the city’s late-twentieth-century downtown renaissance: “...From his power base, Fitzgibbon and other business leaders worked to build the foundation of a new downtown from the rubble of a decaying central business district in the early 1970s. [In 1983], in semi-retirement, Fitzgibbon is satisfied to observe the flourishing office and retail center blooming with new buildings and linked by skywalks, and from the perspective of having been among a small band of businessmen who decided fifteen years ago that downtown would die if not turned around.... In the process they launched a downtown renewal drive that since has generated tens of millions of dollars in new development....”<sup>214</sup>

From Iowa-Des Moines National Bank’s new headquarters in the Financial Center, the bank continued record growth under Fitzgibbon’s leadership until his retirement in 1979. During this era, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank remained the state’s largest bank, serving individuals, Iowa companies, and national firms with Iowa operations; performing export-import bank financing; operating a large trust division; opening branches in the metropolitan area as state law allowed; and brokering mergers with other Iowa banks.<sup>215</sup> In 1977, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank became the first of Iowa’s 600 banks to hold deposits of more than half a billion dollars (\$545 million).<sup>216</sup> In 1979, the bank’s total assets rose from \$843.7 million to \$879.8 million; loans increased from \$402.8 million to \$438.1 million; and interest income rose from \$48.4 million to \$65.5 million. Also during

<sup>209</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Power people and the boardroom maze,” October 10, 1976: 1F; *DSM* magazine, “Legacy,” March 2013: “John Fitzgibbon, a longtime CEO of Iowa-Des Moines National Bank (now Wells Fargo Bank), is often called the driving force behind much of the renovation of downtown Des Moines. He helped raise millions of dollars to build the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines and Nollen Plaza and spearheaded construction of the J.C. Penney building. He also served on the Iowa Board of Regents, the Capitol Planning Commission, and the Des Moines Airport Commission. H. Lynn Horak, retired chairman and CEO of Wells Fargo Bank in Iowa, calls Fitzgibbon one of the best leaders he has ever known. “When things needed to get done, everyone turned to John because he had the connections and the ability to not only organize people to come to a consensus about what needed to be done, but he also had the capability to get people to step up and make significant commitments,” Horak says.”

<sup>210</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “He planted seeds for blooming D.M.,” May 26, 1983: 1T; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Lee: New general leads Iowa-Des Moines,” February 24, 1980: 1F.

<sup>211</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Power people and the boardroom maze,” October 10, 1976: 1F; Elbert: 60-63. Fitzgibbon also lent support to the Botanical Center fundraising and served on the state capitol committee, both of which made improvements to the east side of the central business district. In addition, he served on Drake University board of trustees, Iowa regents.

<sup>212</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, “These ‘Miracles’ Lesson for D.M. Revitalization,” August 20, 1973: 1.

<sup>213</sup> Elbert: 62-63.

<sup>214</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “He planted seeds for blooming D.M.,” May 26, 1983: 1T.

<sup>215</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Lee: New general leads Iowa-Des Moines,” February 24, 1980: 1F. During the 1970s Iowa still limited bank branches to a bank’s home community.

<sup>216</sup> Dahl: 212.

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this era, Iowa-Des Moines bank was recognized as the second largest bank in the Northwest Bancorporation (Banco) holding company, out of more than eighty banks in seven states, behind only the flagship Minneapolis bank. In 1972 the state legislature officially “grandfathered” Banco as the only out-of-state bank holding company permitted to operate in Iowa.<sup>217</sup> The bank was recognized globally for its early adaptation to a computerized system.<sup>218</sup>

In 1983, as part of a system-wide rebranding of the bank chain as Norwest Bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank adopted the name Norwest Bank Des Moines N.A. At the time, Banco/Norwest Bank was the twentieth largest bank holding company in the United States.<sup>219</sup> Norwest Bank became one of the largest employers in the metropolitan Des Moines area with the addition of new mortgage and lending divisions. In 1998, Minnesota-based Norwest Bank acquired California-based Wells Fargo, and rebranded all units under the more widely known Wells Fargo name.<sup>220</sup> During the 2000s and 2010s, Wells Fargo built new facilities in downtown Des Moines and developed a 160-acre suburban campus, expanded and remodeled its Financial Center office space and banking hall, and created a Wells Fargo museum in a portion of the downtown bank’s lobby.<sup>221</sup> Wells Fargo vacated the Financial Center in 2019.

*Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, Financial Center anchor institution*

Des Moines Savings and Loan Association was founded in 1916 by eight businessmen to encourage home ownership through lending. The savings and loan provided loans to thousands of homeowners in the city and beyond. The bank moved to the Des Moines Building in 1938, then in 1945 purchased the Southern Surety Building (also known as the Hippee Building). During the 1950s and 1960s, the savings and loan purchased additional buildings for future downtown expansion, and opened branches outside of downtown as state law allowed. The institution supported downtown redevelopment plans and improved its older office building, while acquiring adjoining parcels for future expansion and parking (Figure 22). Banker Richard L. Bryan was elected president in 1967 and oversaw the savings and loan’s participation in the Financial Center Office Building. Des Moines Savings and Loan had secured purchase by 1968 of the former Davidson’s department store property from more than 100 fractional owners. Combined with earlier parcel purchases, the savings and loan secured a half a block of land from Walnut to Mulberry streets along Seventh Street for redevelopment as the Financial Center.

From its new banking hall and executive offices opened in 1973, Des Moines Savings and Loan entered wider consumer and commercial lending, breaking its former records. By the end of the 1970s, there were twelve branch offices and assets of nearly \$400 million.<sup>222</sup> In 1980 the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association merged and rebranded as Midland Financial Savings and Loan. During the savings and loan crisis, Central Life insurance company of Des Moines purchased the savings and loan in 1988 and re-established the institution as Midland Savings Bank.<sup>223</sup> In 1994 the former savings and loan retail banking hall was remodeled into a Walgreens store.<sup>224</sup>

*Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., and Weitz Co., east wing architects and general contractor*

The Financial Center east wing’s design for the above-ground three stories was completed for Des Moines Saving and Loan Association by local architects Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local contractor Weitz Co., with design sign off by David and Gabrielle Murdock and Iowa-Des Moines

<sup>217</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, “Lee: New general leads Iowa-Des Moines,” February 24, 1980: 1F.

<sup>218</sup> Iowa Business Hall of Fame, “John Fitzgibbon.”

<sup>219</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, “New name, new strategy for Dial, Northwest banks,” May 1, 1983: 1F. The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank’s official name was Norwest Bank Des Moines.

<sup>220</sup> Pradarelli: 279.

<sup>221</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Dahl: 201-202.

<sup>223</sup> Pridmore 1996: 166-170.

<sup>224</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, Walgreens grand opening advertisement, March 9, 1994: 7.

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National Bank.<sup>225</sup> The east wing employs the palette of precast concrete fins, broad precast concrete parapet walls, and bronze glazing established by the primary Financial Center project architect, Russell McCaleb for David H. Murdock Development Co. The resulting design is differentiated yet complimentary to the west wing and tower. The Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe firm was founded in 1970 as a successor to James Lynch and Associates. The architectural and engineering firm designed a number of commercial office projects in Iowa, including the circa 1971 pre-cast concrete IBM Building in Des Moines (located in the River Hills urban renewal area; extant status unknown) built by Weitz Co., and institutional projects.<sup>226</sup> The architectural and engineering firm officed from the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association's 1913 office building on Sixth Avenue and oversaw its post-war modernization. Principal architect James Lynch served in executive roles for the Iowa-AIA chapter during the 1960s. Other members of the firm were Harold L. Payne, AIA, James D. Champion, AIA, and Richard O. Bernabe, AIA; the firm was dissolved by the 1990s.<sup>227</sup>

The Weitz Co. was begun in Des Moines in 1855 by carpenter Charles Weitz. By the early 1970s, the firm was operated by the fourth generation of the Weitz family, with Fred W. Weitz as president. The company built many high-profile civic and commercial projects through the decades, including some smaller projects designed by Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc. In the 1970s the Weitz Co.'s downtown work included the 1971 EMC headquarters and 1979 Civic Center.<sup>228</sup> Fred W. Weitz was elected to the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association board of directors in 1975.<sup>229</sup> The Weitz company remains in business under successor ownership.

#### **Archaeological Statement:**

The Financial Center Office Building occupies nearly its full site, with sidewalk pavement serving as a roof for the two-story underground parking garage that extends beneath city sidewalks. The building site was deeply excavated using heavy equipment during construction of the building, in order to install the necessary structure for a skyscraper and subterranean parking. As such, the building and site has not been evaluated for archaeological potential.

#### **Conclusion:**

In summary, the Financial Center Office Building's exceptional local significance to Des Moines, Iowa, comes through its commercial impact as a shell-and-core corporate International Style office skyscraper designed with solar mitigation to meet the needs of late-twentieth-century financial businesses—including two anchor banks and project partners. The Financial Center also stands as Iowa's first cooperative real estate project completed by competing financial institutions. Its concept and design as the tallest building in Des Moines and largest general office building to be erected in the city since 1924 reflected the confidence of the David H. Murdock Co., Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association in downtown Des Moines in the post-interstate freeway era. The Financial Center's record project size and \$21 million investment directly catalyzed renewed downtown redevelopment planning during the skyscraper's construction. This community planning included substantial downtown civic projects such as the public skywalk system and performing arts center, and led to additional high-rise construction in the late twentieth century that transformed the central business district. The Financial Center Office Building remains a recognizable landmark on the downtown Des Moines skyline.

<sup>225</sup> Lynch et al.

<sup>226</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, "A New D.M. Building to House IBM," May 6, 1971: 8.

<sup>227</sup> *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "New Firm of Architects," June 28, 1970: Industry (92).

<sup>228</sup> Dahl, 233-234.

<sup>229</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, "Places and Faces," February 2, 1975: 9CC.

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# **Appendix:**

Table 1.

Major Downtown Des Moines Mid- and High-Rise Buildings and Civic Projects, 1970-1990

<i>Year completed</i>	<i>Original building name (new name), address (new address)</i>	<i>Building height and type</i>	<i>Approximate cost</i>	<i>Extant/non-extant status</i>
1971	EMC Insurance Companies Headquarters  717 Mulberry Street	Ten-story office building, project downsized with eight occupied floors and two mechanical levels.	\$6.5 million (reported in 1969)	Extant
1971	J.C. Penney department store and city's first public skywalk (Polk County Justice Center)  500 Walnut Street (222 Fifth Street)	Three-story department store with skywalk to city parking garage, built by a chamber-affiliated development group and leased to the retailer.	\$5 million	Extant store but substantially remodeled; skywalk connection non-extant.
1973-1974	Financial Center Office Building  606-666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street	Twenty-five story office building built with two banking halls, two-level underground parking garage, and top-floor private club. Exterior incorporates solar mitigation. Designed as tallest building in Iowa; noted as first modern skyscraper in Des Moines.	\$21 million	Extant
1975	Ruan Center  666 Grand Avenue	Thirty-six-story, 500,000-square-foot office building with two-story banking pavilion, underground parking, and plaza; top floors are mechanical. Designed as tallest building in the state.	\$26 million	Extant
1979	Des Moines Civic Center and Nollen Plaza (Cowles Commons)  221 Walnut Street and 313 Walnut Street	Performing arts center, which overlooks an adjacent landscaped public plaza across Third Street.	\$11 million (\$9 million private funds, \$2 million city contribution)	Extant; plaza has been substantially relandscaped
1979	Des Moines Botanical Center (Greater Des Moines Botanical Center)  909 Robert D. Ray Drive (E. First Street)	Geodesic-domed botanical garden.	\$3.5 million	Extant; grounds expanded.
1981	Marriott Hotel	Thirty-three-story hotel; floor levels are shorter	\$27 million	Extant

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	700 Grand Avenue	than other high-rise buildings.		
1981	Locust Mall (Partnership Building)  700 Locust Street	Multi-story parking ramp with commercial space (food court, leasable office/retail)	\$12 million	Extant
1981	Elsie Mason Manor  430 Grand Avenue	Seventeen-story senior low-income apartment building.	\$6.5 million	Extant
1982	Carrier Insurance Building (Two Ruan Center)  601 Locust Street	Fourteen-story office building, built for Ruan-owned trucking insurance company.	\$12 million	Extant
1983	Capitol Square  400 Locust Street	Eight-story 486,755-square-foot office building with central atrium designed by SOM; at opening including a bank and a private social club.	\$48 million	Extant
1982-1985	<i>Capitol Center I, II, and III</i>  <i>600, 500, and 400 E. Court Avenue</i>	<i>Low-rise suburban-style office buildings with parking lots; land reconfigured as superblock.</i>	<i>\$12 million</i>	<i>Extant</i>
1985	Polk County Convention Center Complex (YMCA)  501 Grand Avenue	Two-story convention center with glazed walls.	\$14 million	Extant; substantially remodeled and added onto for YMCA use.
1985	The Plaza  300 Walnut Street	Twenty-five-story condominium skyscraper, with underground parking, pool; Iowa's first high-rise condo project.	\$25 million	Extant
1986	Park Place (The Parker @ Seventh)  615 Park Street	Sixteen-story apartment high rise; including parking garage, terrace.	\$10 million	Extant
1986	HUB Tower and Kaleidoscope at the HUB  699 Walnut Street and 555 Walnut Street	Twenty-five-story high building arranged as seven-story base (retail mall) with eighteen-story office tower.	\$48 million	Extant tower; mall to the east demolished
1986	Walnut Street Transit Mall (Walnut Street)	Five-block pedestrian/bus transit zone designed with uniform streetscape including wider sidewalks with pavers, planters.	\$9 million	Transit mall use ended in 2012; street now used for two-way general traffic.
1986	Keck City Center (The ARAG Building)  500 Grand Avenue	Eight-story parking garage and commercial building; when opened, it featured a movie theater.	\$8.2 million	Extant, commercial building remodeled

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1986	Principal Corporate 2 655 Ninth Street	Eleven-story, 400,000-square-foot office building for Principal Financial Group; includes indoor parking.	\$42 million	Extant
1986	<i>East Grand Office Park</i> <i>100 and 200 E. Grand Avenue</i>	<i>Twin three-story suburban-style office buildings with parking lot behind; land reconfigured as a superblock.</i>	<i>\$10.3 million</i>	<i>Extant</i>
1987	Ligutti Tower 555 Fifth Avenue.	Multi-story parking garage with low-income senior apartments	\$6 million	Extant
1987	State of Iowa Historical Museum 600 E. Locust Street	Built as a museum with state offices and library.	\$27 million	Extant
1990	Principal Tower/801 Grand 801 Grand Avenue	Forty-four-story office building, designed by HOK as the tallest building in Iowa. Includes underground parking, three-story atrium, restaurants; opened with private Embassy Club.	\$80 million	Extant  (Embassy Club merged with Des Moines Club, located at Ruan Center)
1990	City parking garage (9 <sup>th</sup> and Locust ramp) 801 Locust Street	Multi-story ramp.	\$12.5 million	Extant
1990	Embassy Suites 101 E. Locust Street	Eight-story hotel with atrium and underground parking.	\$15 million	Extant
<p>Sources: Elbert, Polk County Assessor, <i>The Des Moines Register</i>, "He planted seeds for blooming D.M.," May 26, 1983: 1T. <i>Italicized projects are low-rise office projects that involved civic coordination.</i></p>				

Financial Center Office Building

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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*Newspaper and journal articles as cited in text, plus:*

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

_____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested	
_____ previously listed in the National Register	
_____ previously determined eligible by the National Register	
_____ designated a National Historic Landmark	
_____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey	<u>          #          </u>
_____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record	<u>          #          </u>
_____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey	<u>          #          </u>

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State Agency  
☐ Federal Agency  
☐ Local Government  
☐ University  
☒ Other

Name of repository: The Beck Group (successor to Henry C. Beck Co.) Archives  
Des Moines Public Library

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** \_\_\_\_\_

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Less than one.

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	41.350867	-93.372978	3	41.350591	-93.372973
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	41.350731	-93.372932	4	41.350551	-93.373149
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
5.	41.350794	-93.373241			
	Latitude	Longitude			

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Generally Lots 1-4 and west half of Lots 7-8, the N-S alley, and part of the E-W alley of Block 11, Original Plat of Fort Des Moines, along with certain easements, leases, and encroachments.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the nominated property include the parcels of land historically associated with the resource, the Financial Center Office Building.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Irsfeld James date revised 12/2023  
organization Jennifer James Communications telephone 515-250-7196  
street & number 4209 Kingman Blvd. email Jenjames123@gmail.com  
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50311

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Map**
- **Additional Items**
- **Floor Plans** (as applicable)
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources)

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- **Additional Documentation: Maps**

1. GIS Location Map (Google Earth)



Map 1: The Financial Center Office Building, 207 Seventh Street (and also 606-666 Walnut Street), showing the following coordinates (Google Earth Pro, 2022):

A 41.350867, -93.372978	B 41.350731, -93.372932
C 41.350646, -93.372999	D 41.350591, -93.372973
E 41.350551, -93.373149	F 41.350794, -93.373241



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## 2. Location Map



Map 2: Local Location Map: The Financial Center Office Building is outlined in black with an arrow pointing to the complex. (Google Earth Pro, 2022)

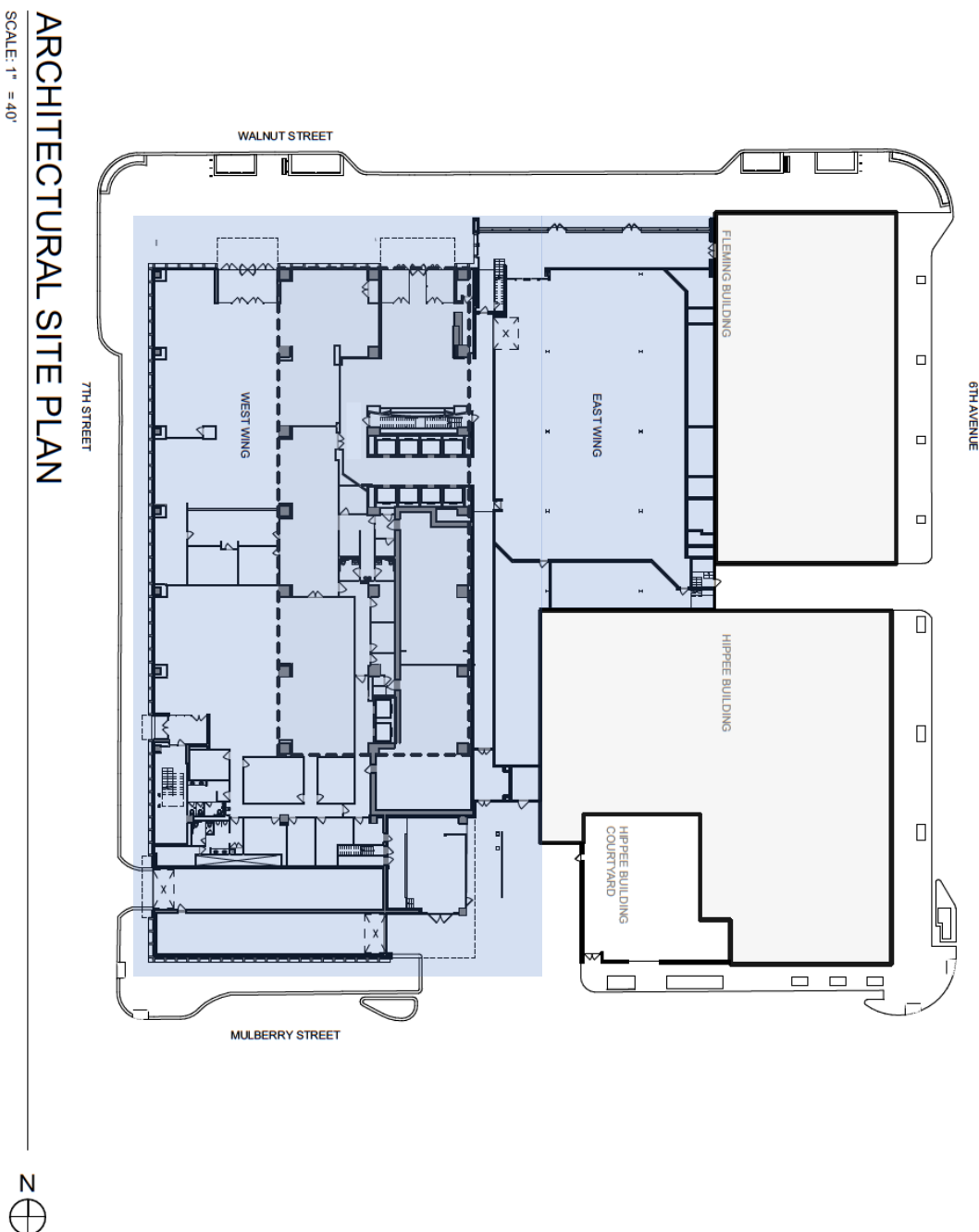
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### 3. Site Map



Map 3: The site plan shows the Financial Center Office Building shaded in blue: the west wing with upper center tower (extent indicated by dashed line), east wing, and underground parking garage that extends beneath the west and north sidewalk. (Slingshot Architecture, 2020)



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- **Additional Documentation: Figures**

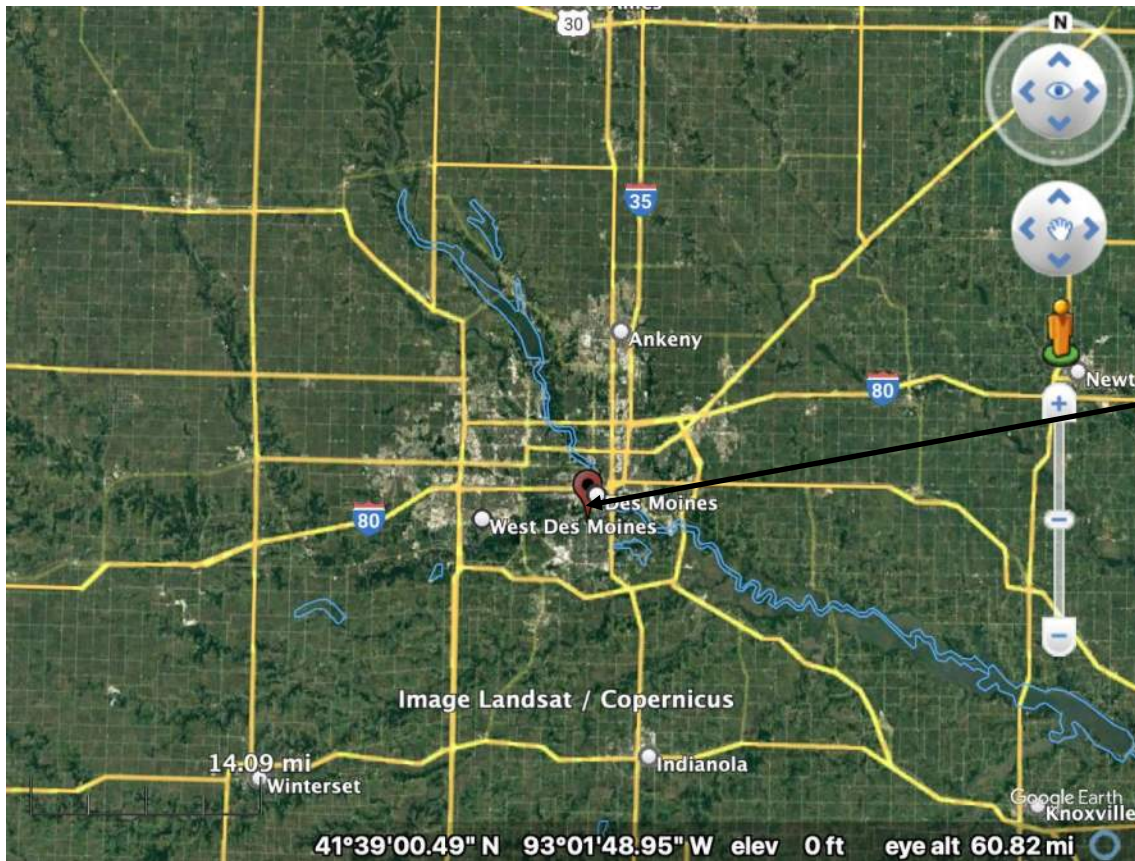


Figure 1. Location map showing the Financial Center Office Building (indicated by arrow) in the downtown Des Moines central business district, within central Iowa. North-south Interstate 35 and east-west Interstate 80 bypass downtown Des Moines. (Google Earth Pro, 2023).

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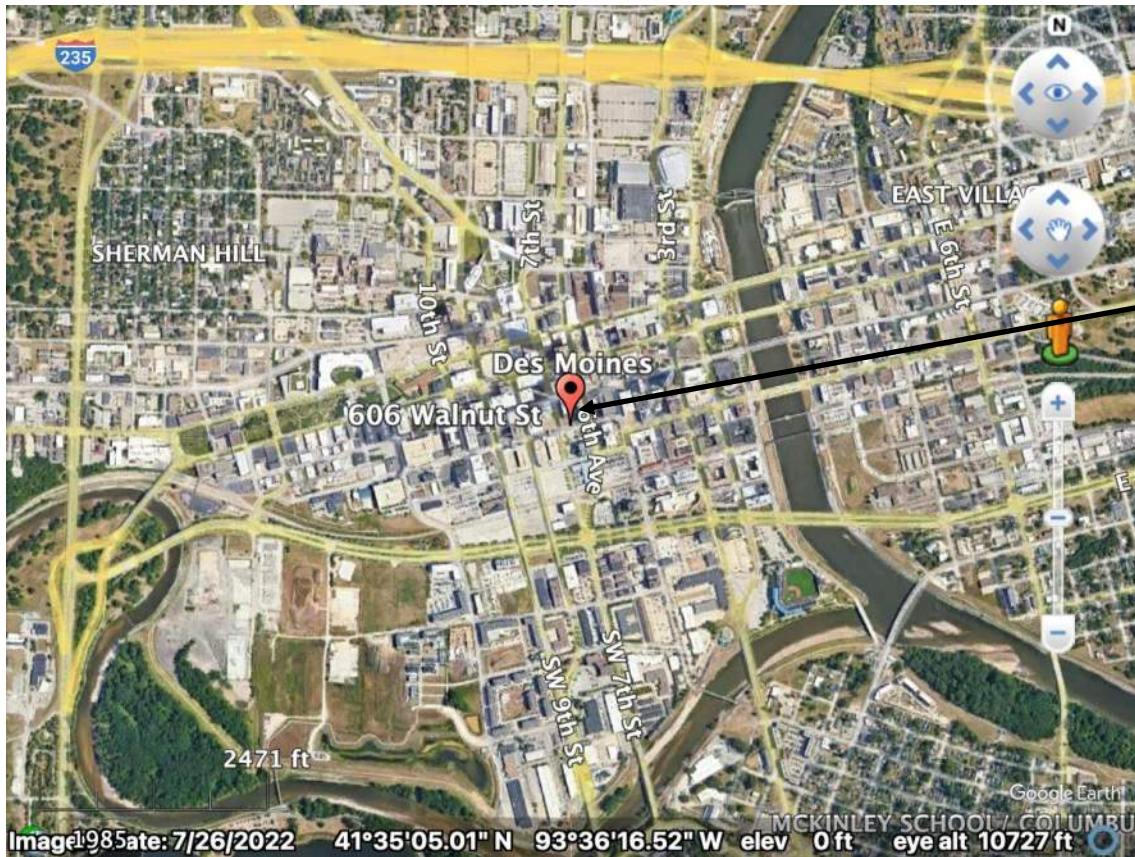


Figure 2. Contextual map showing the Financial Center Office Building (indicated by arrow) in the heart of the downtown Des Moines central business district, which is bisected by the Des Moines River into west and east sides. Interstate 235 runs north of downtown. (Google Earth Pro, 2023).



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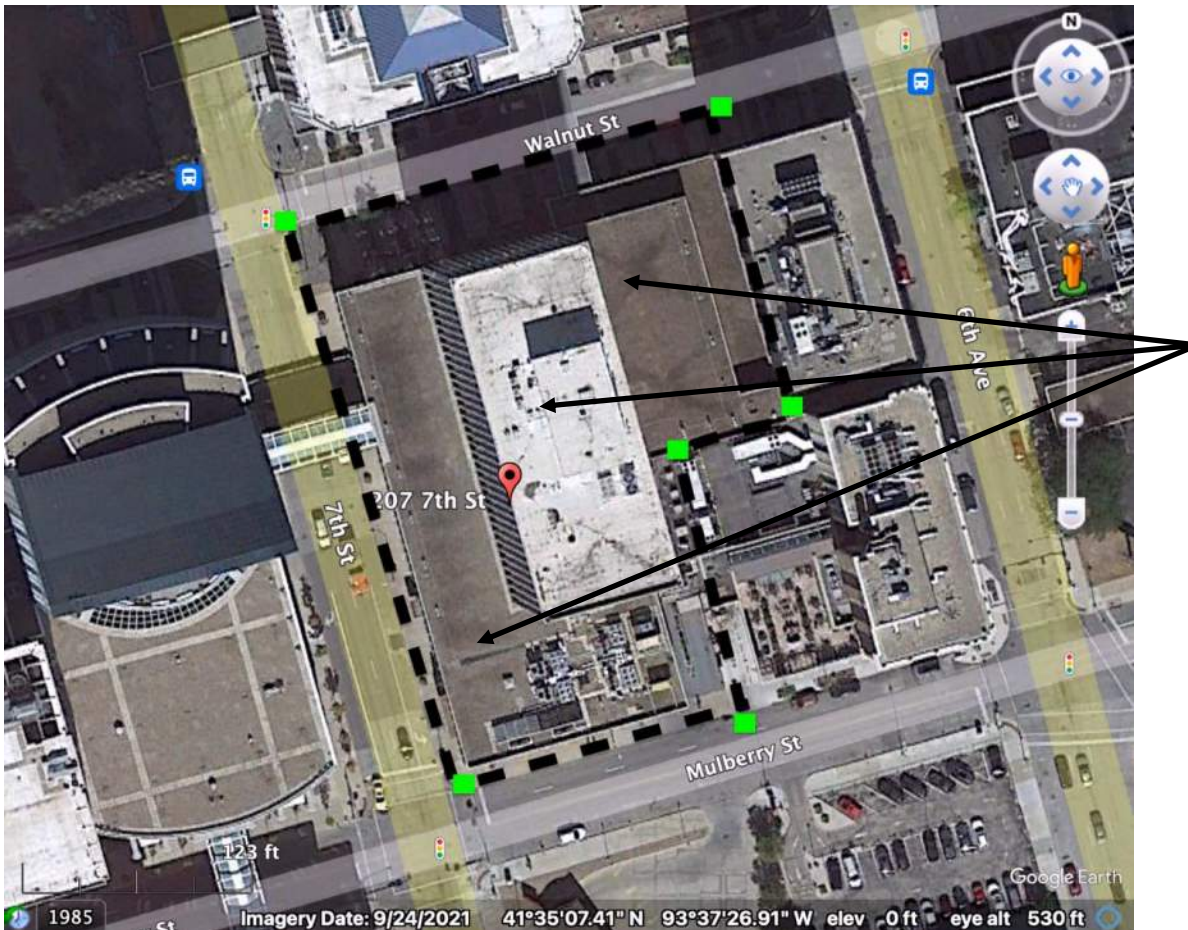


Figure 3. Aerial view of the Financial Center Office Building, with podium east wing (top arrow), tower (center arrow), and podium west wing (lowest arrow). A dotted line with green corner markers indicates the extent of the property line, extending to public sidewalks, under which the parking garage extends. (Google Earth Pro, 2022).

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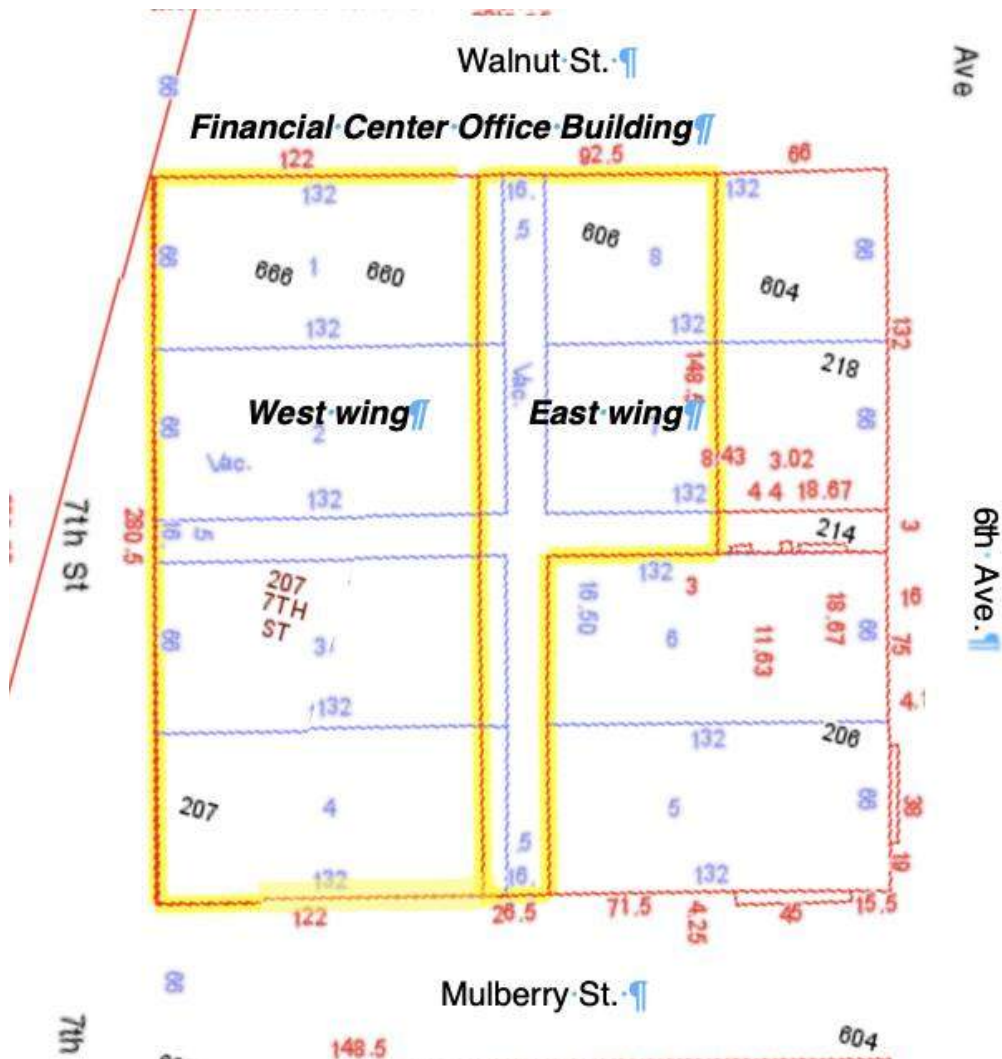


Figure 4. The Financial Center Office Building property line is outlined in yellow in this rotated view of a parcel map: At the left is the west wing with tower, addressed 666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street; at the right is the east wing, addressed 606 Walnut Street. Original lots and alleys of Block 11 of the Fort Des Moines plat are outlined in blue. (Polk County Assessor maps 2023, rotated with street names added).

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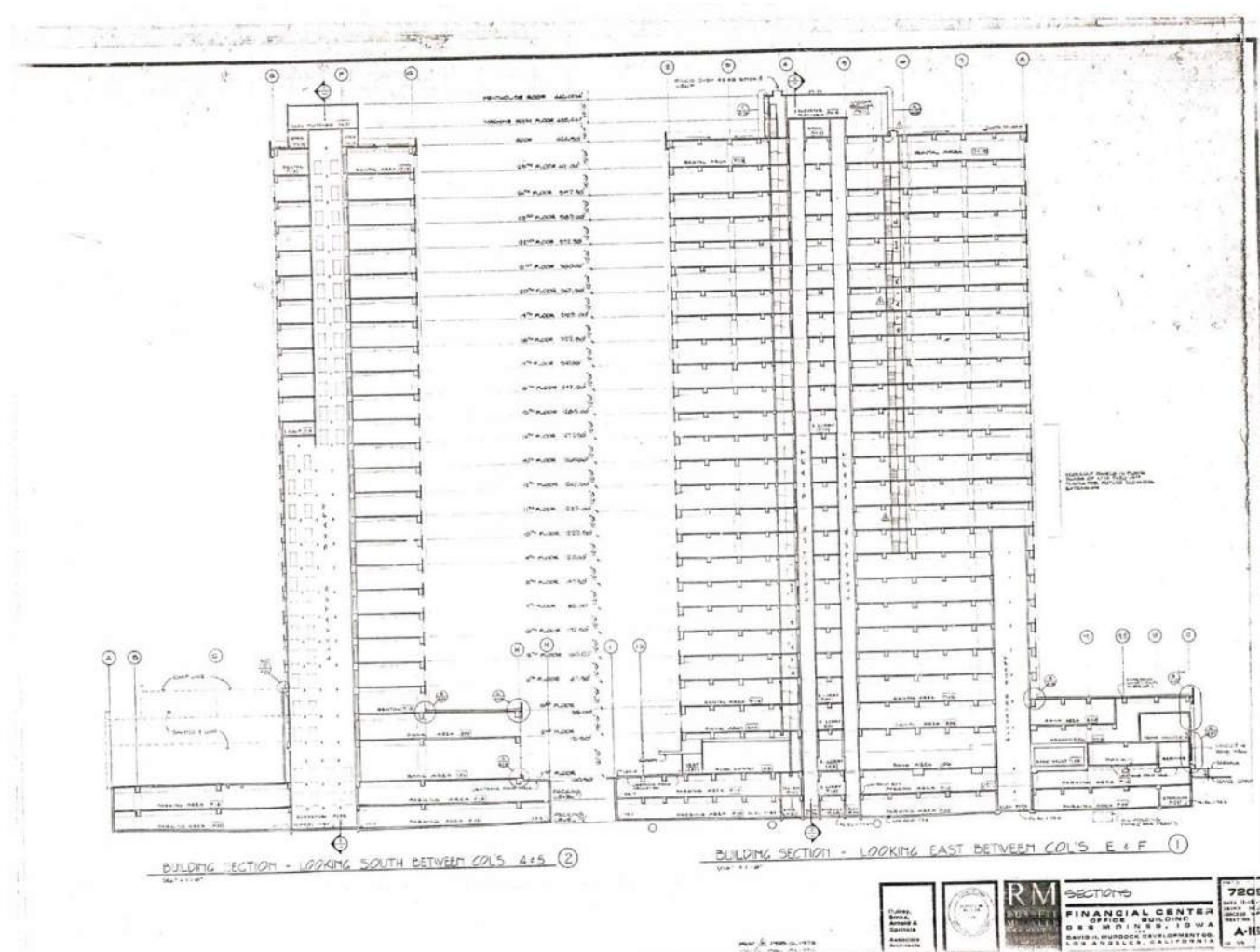


Figure 5. Historic drawings of Financial Center building sections looking south and east, revision dated February 1973. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).



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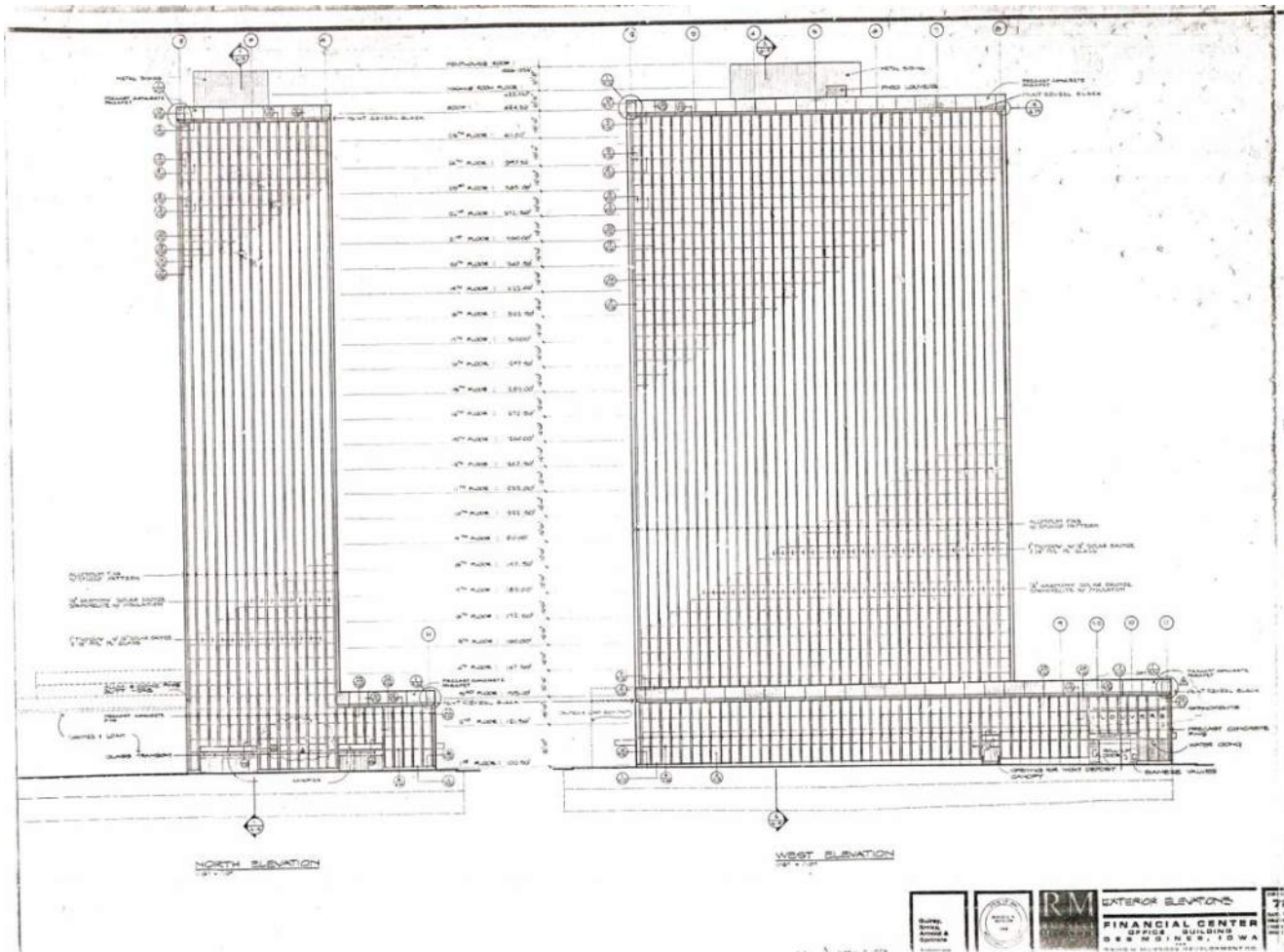


Figure 6. Historic drawings of Financial Center north and west elevation curtain walls with solar-shielding fins, scan of drawing cuts off date. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Smka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).

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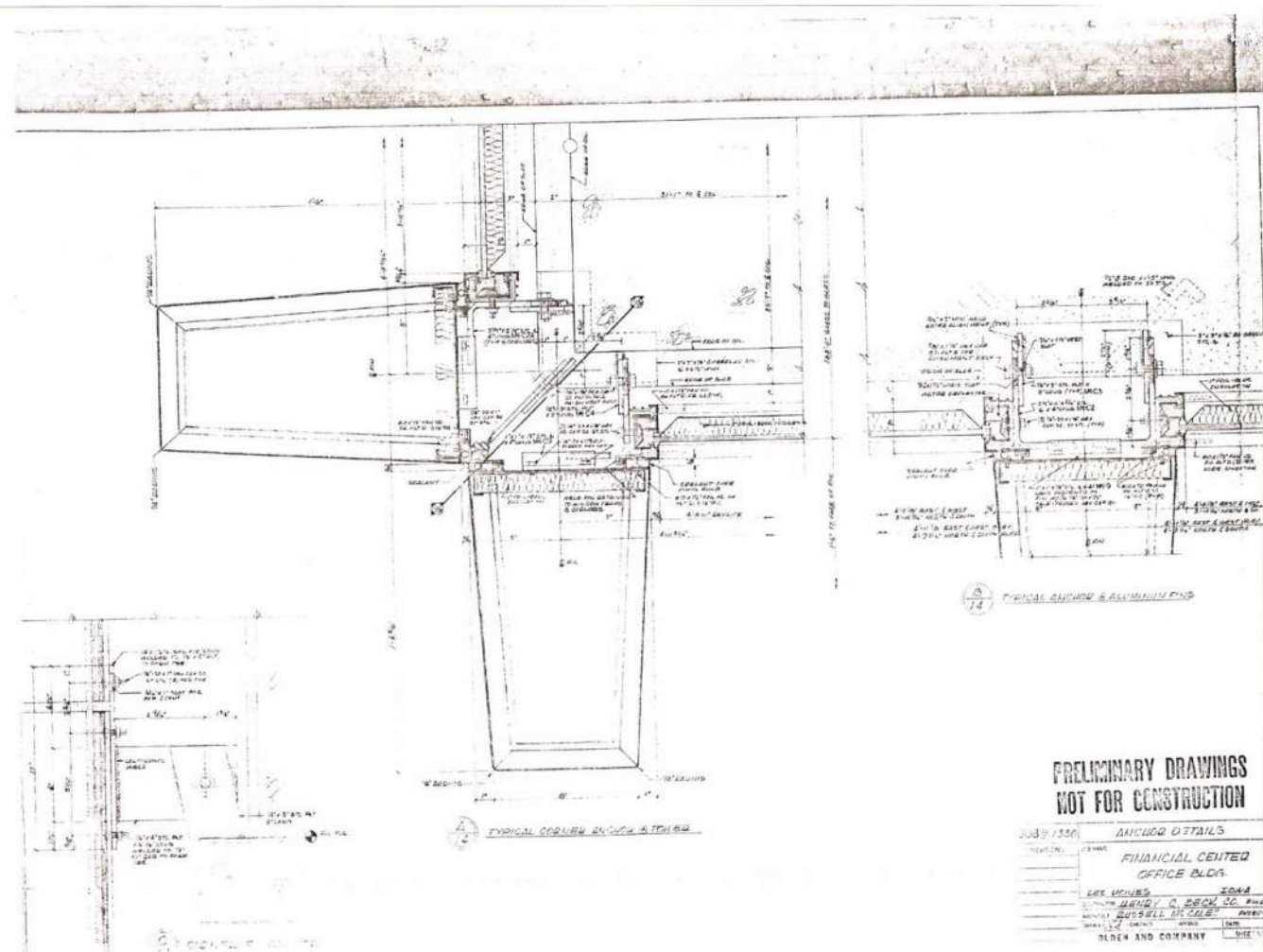


Figure 7. Historic drawing of Financial Center typical anchor detail for fins and curtain wall at corner of tower, undated. (Financial Center drawings, Russell McCaleb architect, Olden and Company curtain wall).

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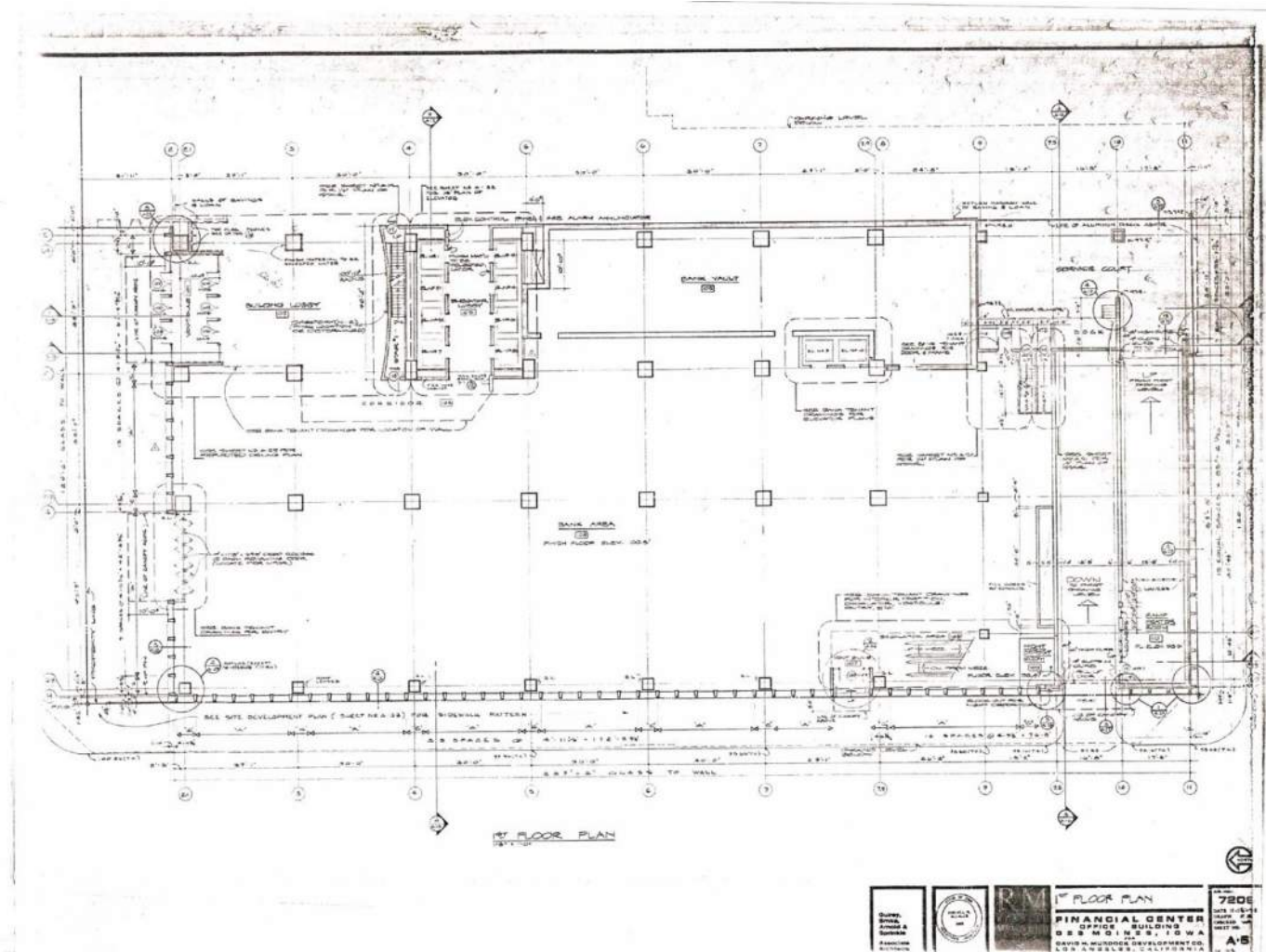


Figure 8. Historic drawing of Financial Center first-floor west wing shell and core plan, oriented with plan north at left, dated 1972. The shell and core included the shared central lobby and elevators at upper left of plan and rear parking garage entrance and exit; the balance of the plan was private tenant space for Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, including the banking hall. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).



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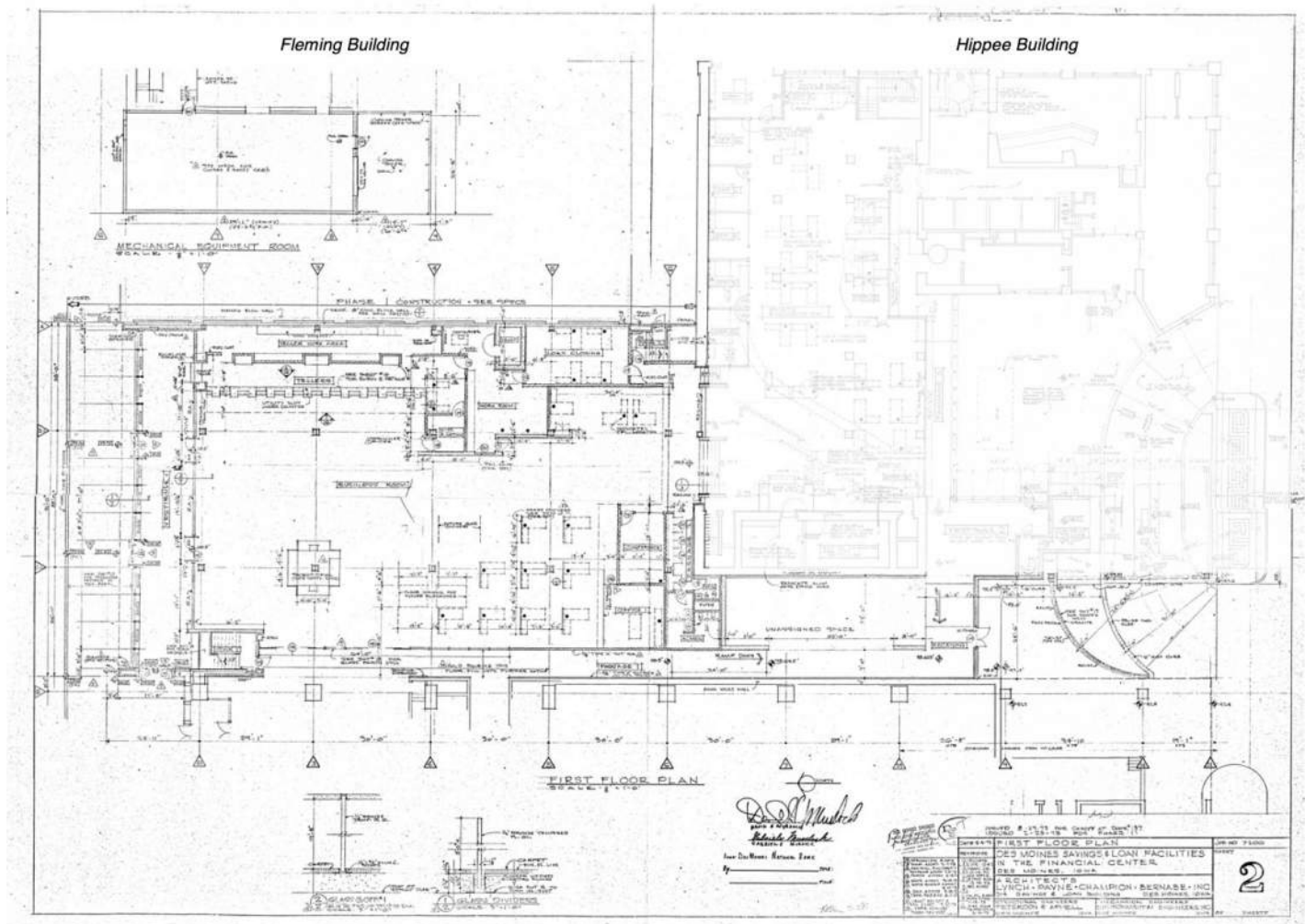


Figure 9. Historic drawing of Financial Center Office Building east wing first-floor plan, oriented with plan north at left, revised 1973. The drawing shows the east wing vestibule, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association banking hall, eastern extent of the shared central lobby, and shared rear east egress corridor. Inset near the top is a mechanical room plan. This drawing is the only surviving east wing drawing page and includes signature signoffs by the developers and both banks. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., with labels added 2023).

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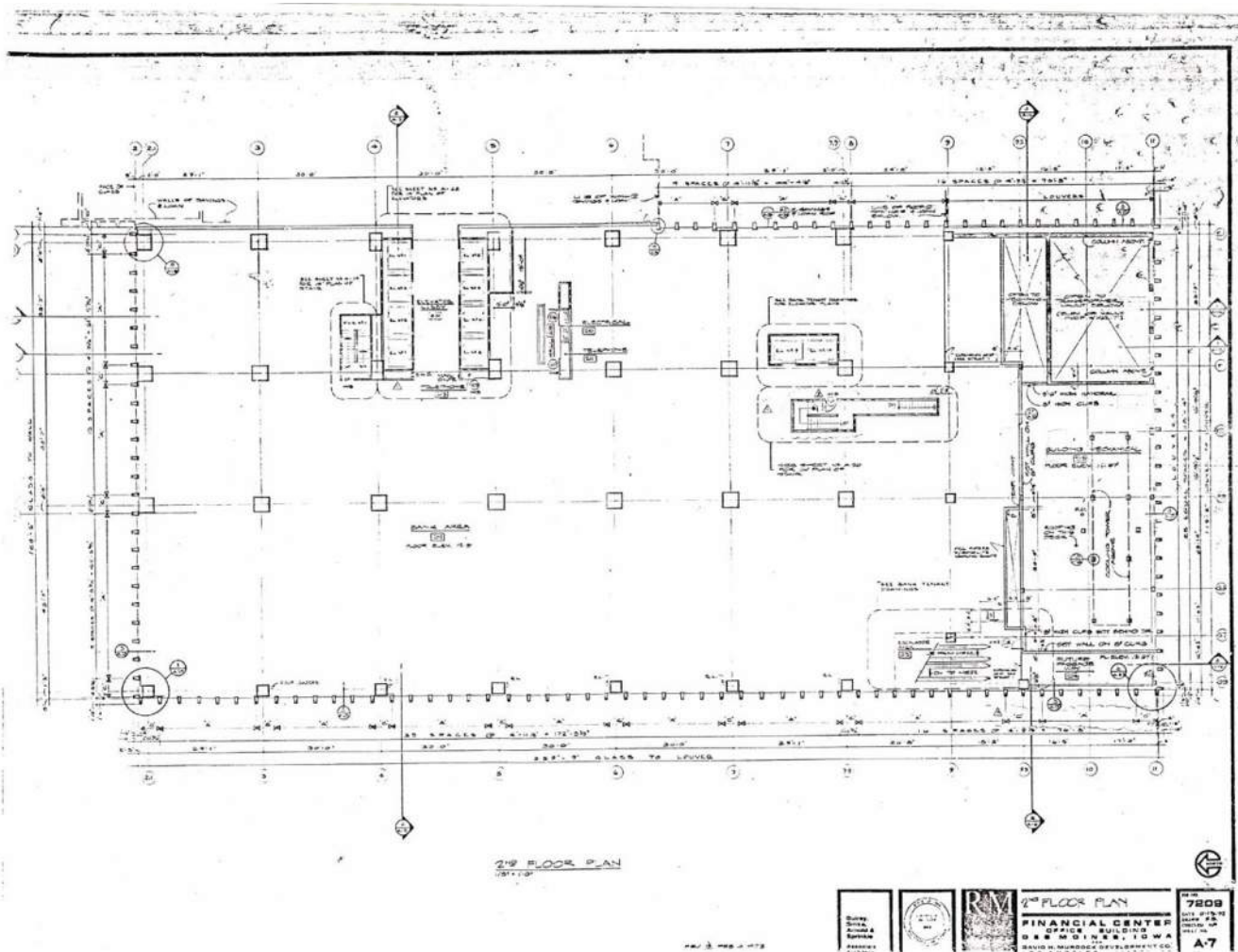
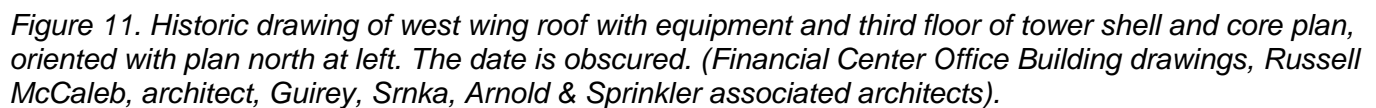


Figure 10. Historic drawing of west wing second-floor shell and core plan, oriented with plan north at left. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).

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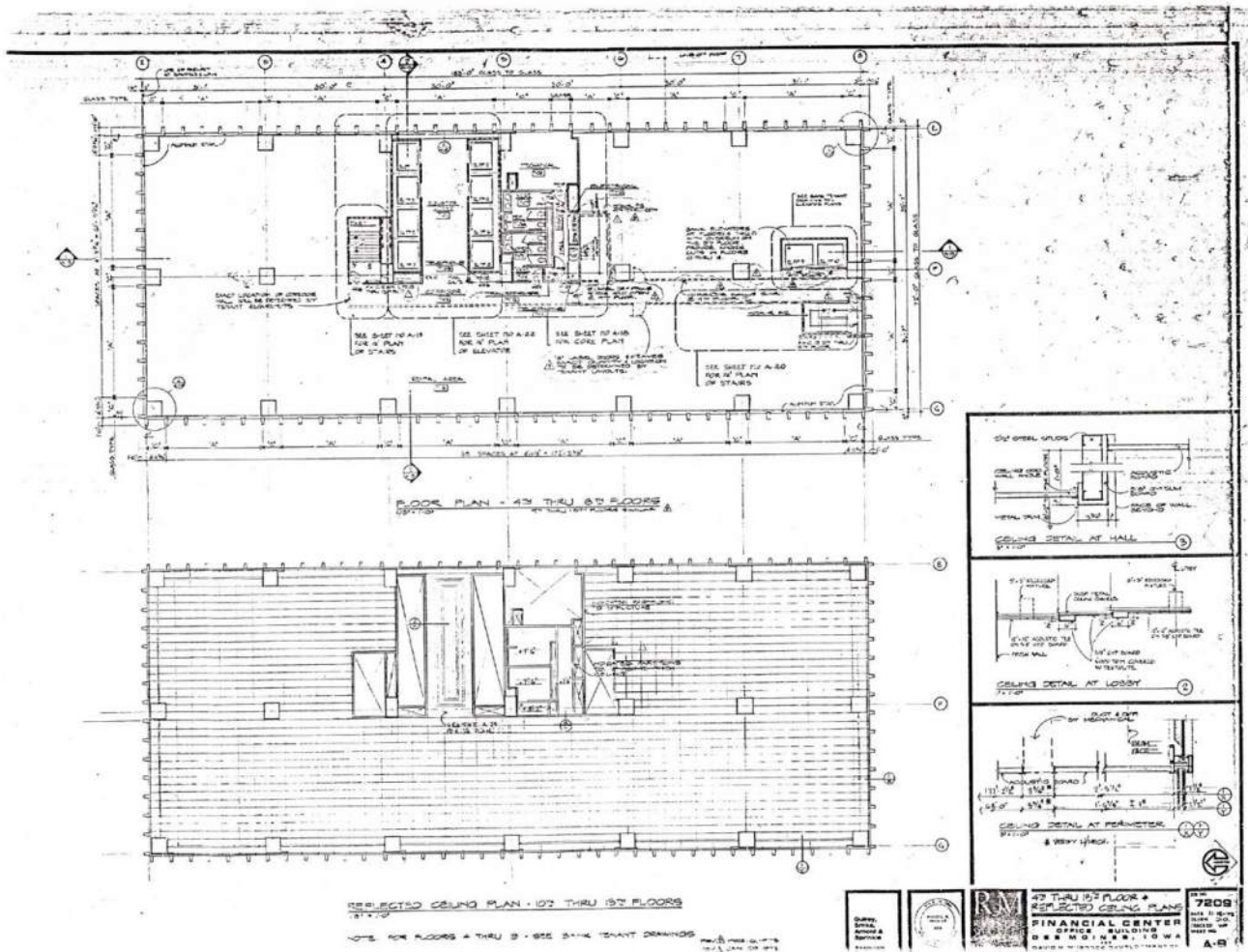


Figure 12. Historic drawings of typical tower floor shell and core plans for fourth through thirteenth floors, oriented with plan north at left. The floor plan is labeled fourth through eighth floors; the reflected ceiling plan is labeled tenth through thirteenth floors. Revised drawings dated 1973. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).



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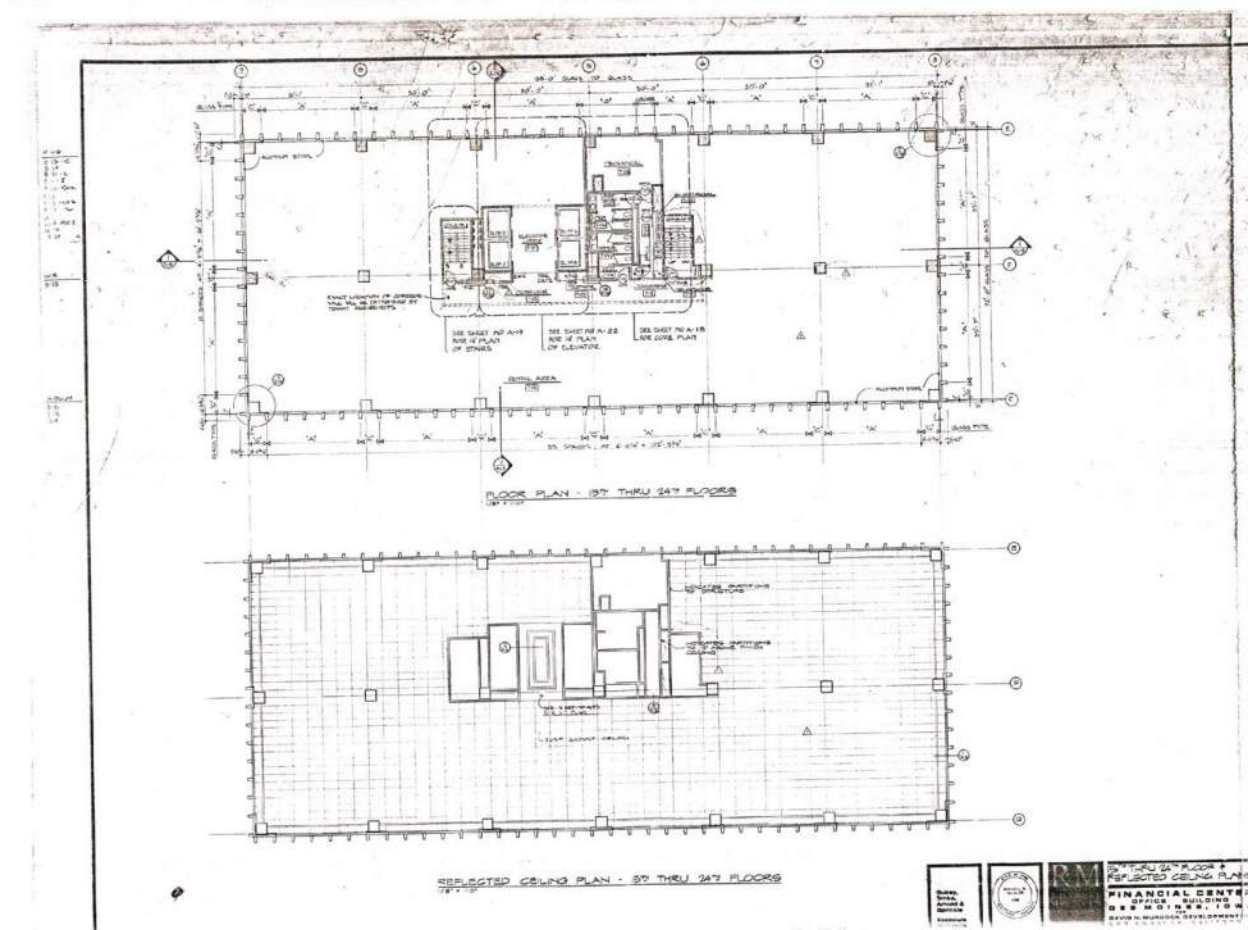


Figure 13. Historic drawings of typical tower floor shell and core plans for fourteenth floor and above, oriented with plan north at left. Undated; bottom of sheet is cut off. (Financial Center Office Building drawings, Russell McCaleb, architect, Guirey, Srnka, Arnold & Sprinkler associated architects).

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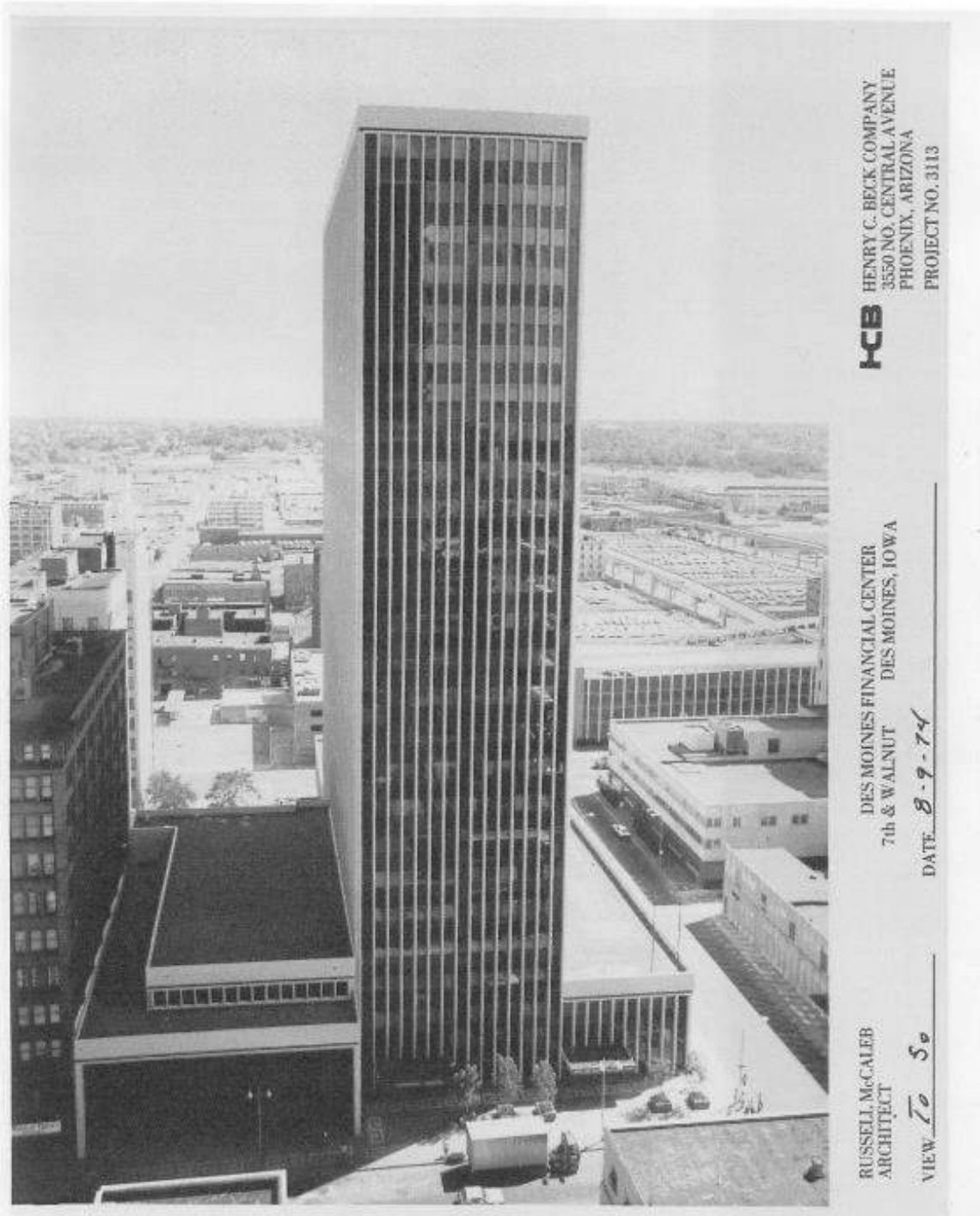


Figure 14. Historic photograph showing the Financial Center's north façade, looking south across Walnut Street, taken August 1974 by Henry C. Beck Co. (Beck Group archives).

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**IOWA'S TALLEST BUILDING . . . Des Moines  
Financial Center . . . nears completion in this photo  
taken January 9, 1974.**

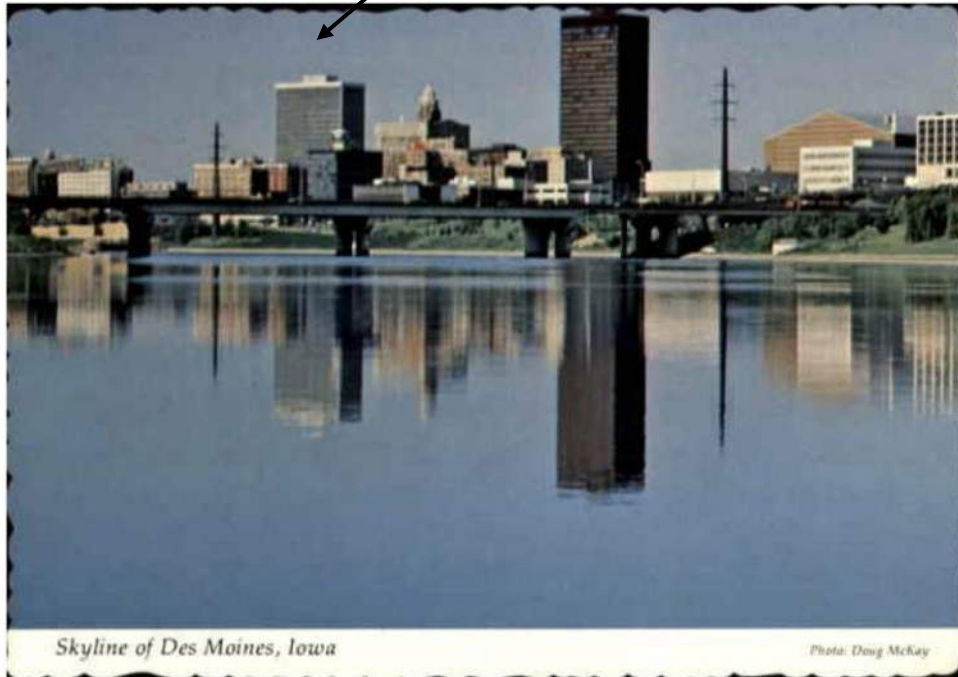
*Figure 15. Historic photograph showing the nearly completed Financial Center looking southwest from approximately Seventh Street; the image was featured in the January 1974 Henry C. Beck Co. corporate newsletter, captioned as "Iowa's Tallest Building, Des Moines Financial Center nears completion in this photo taken January 9, 1974." (Beck Group archives, Beck Bulletin, "Financial Center Nears Completion," February-March 1974).*

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*Figure 16. Historic postcard photograph, c. mid 1970s, showing the Des Moines downtown skyline looking southwest across the Des Moines River, with the Financial Center (arrow) distinct from other commercial buildings; the other tall buildings are the 1924 Equitable Building at center and 1975 rusted Ruan Center tower to the north (right). (CardCow).*

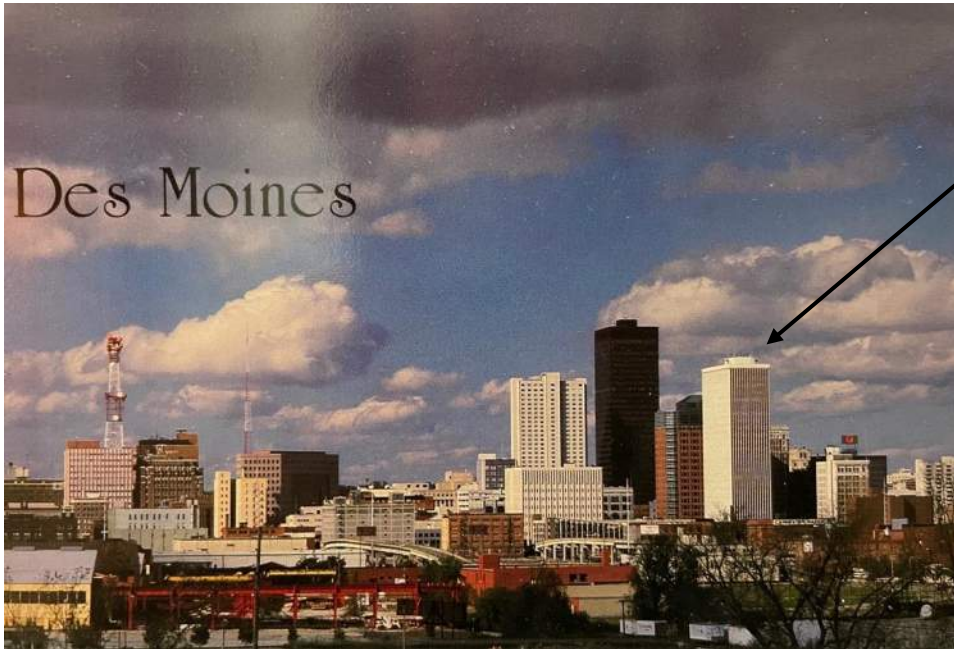


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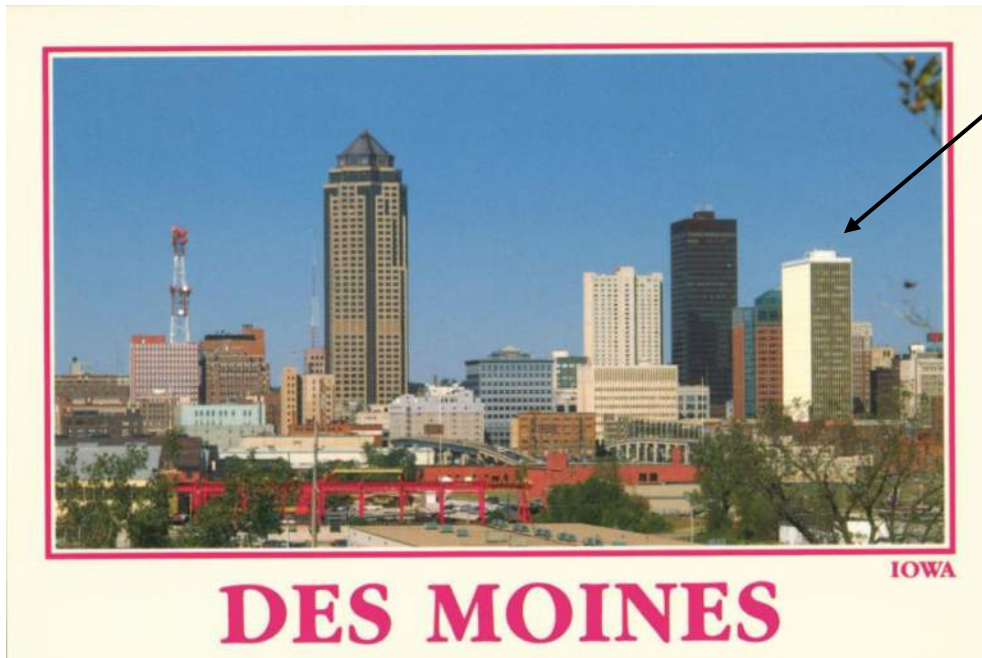
*Figure 17. Historic postcard photograph, c. mid 1980s, showing the Des Moines downtown skyline looking north; the Financial Center (arrow) remains architecturally distinct from other commercial buildings; other tall buildings include the 1986 brick-and-green Hub Tower behind, 1975 Ruan Center tower beyond to the north, and 1981 concrete Marriott Hotel building to the left. (Author's collection).*

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*Figure 18. Historic postcard photograph, c. 1990s, showing the Des Moines downtown skyline looking north, with the Financial Center(arrow) remaining a standout as compared to other commercial buildings; the other tallest buildings include the brick-and-green Hub Tower behind, Ruan Center tower beyond to the north, concrete Marriott Hotel building to the left, and the forty-four-story 1990-1991 Principal Tower/801 Grand, the state's tallest building to the west (left). (Author's collection).*

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Figure 19 and Figure 20. Left, historic drawing, c. 1931, of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's 1930s twenty-one-story skyscraper office tower plan; the dotted line indicates the five-story skyscraper base that the bank completed in 1932, with upper tower to be added later. Right, historic drawing, c. 1931, of the 1932 Iowa-Des Moines National Bank Building, 520 Walnut Street. (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, "Contract Let for Bank Building," January 18, 1931: 1; *Des Moines Sunday Register*, "A New Home For An Old Institution" (advertisement), July 17, 1932: 8X).

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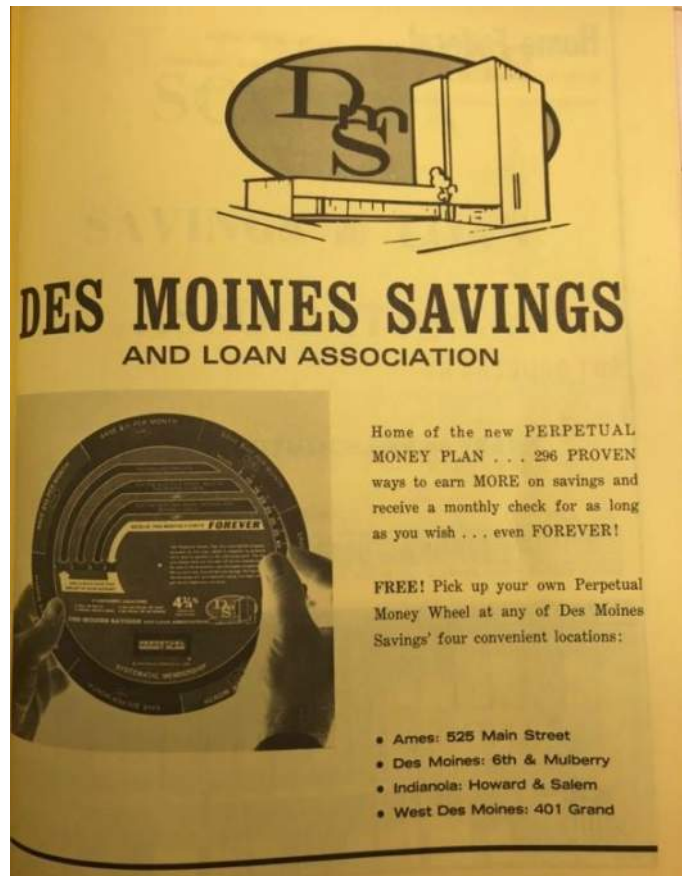
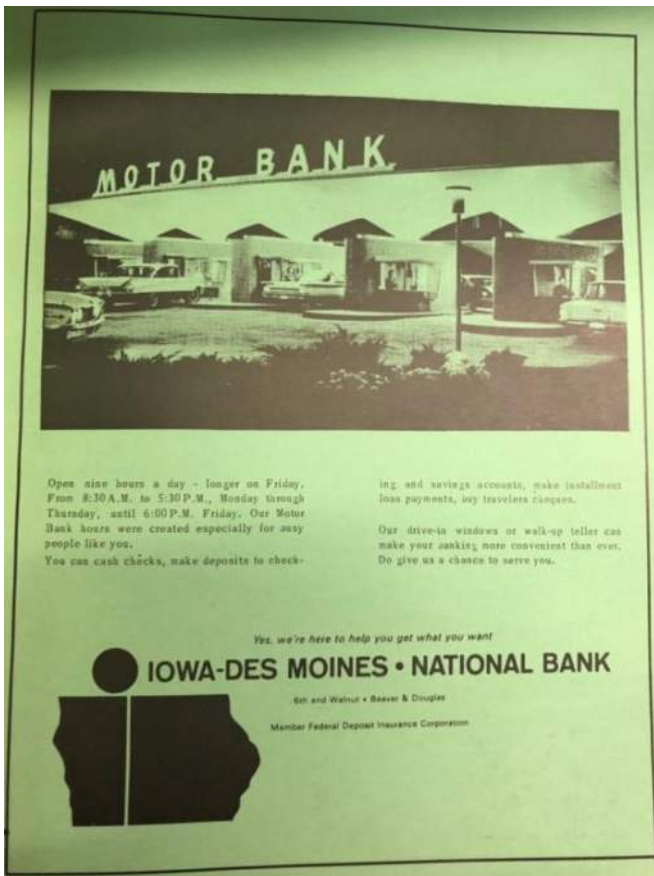


Figure 21 and Figure 22. Left, historic photograph showing the 1959 Iowa-Des Moines National Bank rear "motor bank" built behind its 1932 bank building. Right, historic illustration, c. 1963, showing the 1963 Des Moines Savings and Loan Association rear drive-through teller window added as part of a modernization of its 1913 office building (right). (City directory, 1963, left, 1965 right)



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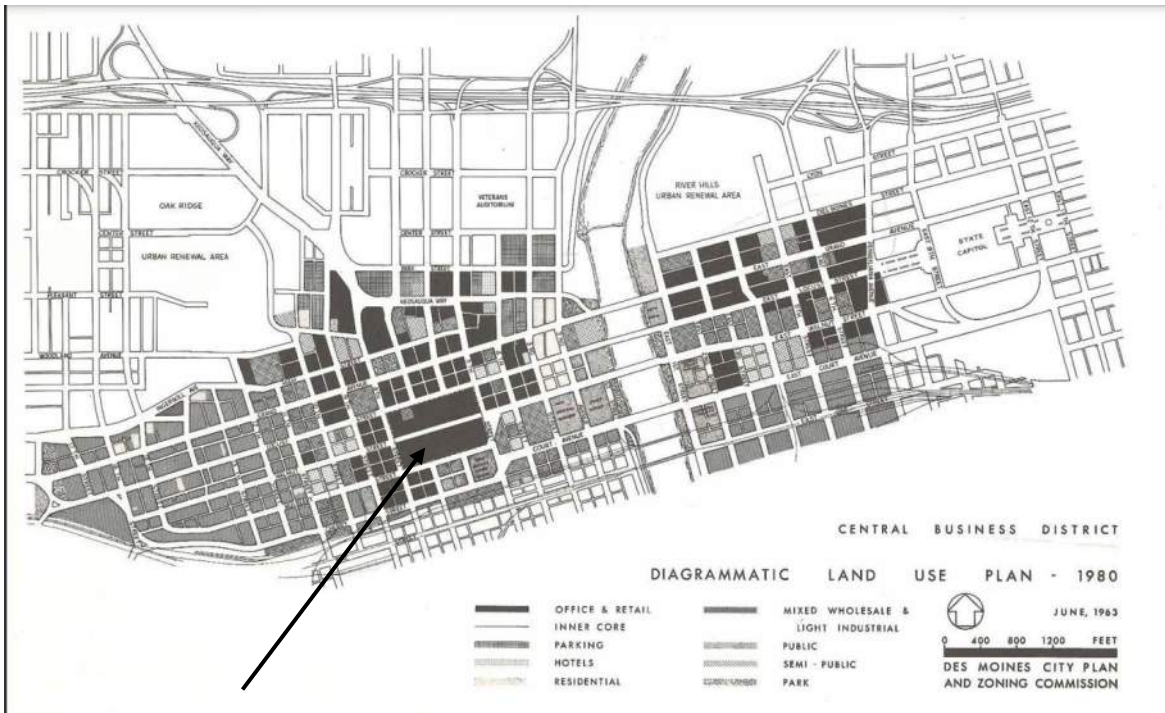


Figure 23. Historic map, 1963, of the final central business district redevelopment plan adopted into the city's 1980 long-range plan; it featured a modified Bartholomew plan for the west side of downtown, with two pedestrian/transit-only super blocks (arrow points to future Financial Center location) centered on Walnut Street, to feature new high-rise office buildings, retail, and entertainment venues. (City of Des Moines 1963: 49).

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*Figure 24. Photograph of David H. Murdock Development Co.'s 1964 Phoenix Financial Center office building with 1968 upper-floor addition, and one of the two banking rotunda buildings. (Courtesy of Greg Wattier, 2020).*

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Figure 25. Historic photograph, 1970, of vacant Davidson department store, the future site of the Financial Center Office Building, looking southeast at the corner of Walnut and Seventh streets. (Des Moines Tribune, "A Vacant 9-Story Building," July 7, 1970: 13).

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Figure 26. Historic photograph, 1971, looking southwest from Fifth Avenue at the city's first new department store built in decades, J.C. Penney store (500 Walnut St.), featuring the city's first public skywalk connection (arrow). The 1932 Iowa-Des Moines National Bank Building adjoins at the far right. (Des Moines Tribune, "New Penney Store to Open Here Oct. 27," October 14, 1971: 3).



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Above is an artist's conception of the proposed \$21-million, 25-story financial center at the corner of Walnut (foreground) and Seventh Streets. The west wing (right) and seven floors of the tower would be occupied by new offices of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank. The east wing (left) would provide additional office space for the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association.

*Figure 27. Historic illustration, circa 1971-1972, of the Financial Center Office Building, which was distributed and published nationally. (Des Moines Tribune, "\$21 Million Financial Complex," June 6, 1972: 1, 20; other citations include Buildings journal, "News: Tallest building in Iowa," October 1972).*

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Figure 28. Historic photograph, 1972, of the Financial Center Office Building groundbreaking, featuring, left to right: Iowa-Des Moines National Bank president John Fitzgibbon, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association president Richard L. Bryan, Des Moines Mayor Richard Olson, and Financial Center developer David H. Murdock; the 1924 Equitable Building, the city's tallest building stands in the background. (Des Moines Tribune, July 11, 1972: 3).

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Figure 29. Historic photograph, November 1972, showing construction status of the Financial Center underground parking ramp and structure, view looking south from across Walnut Street. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Financial Center files).

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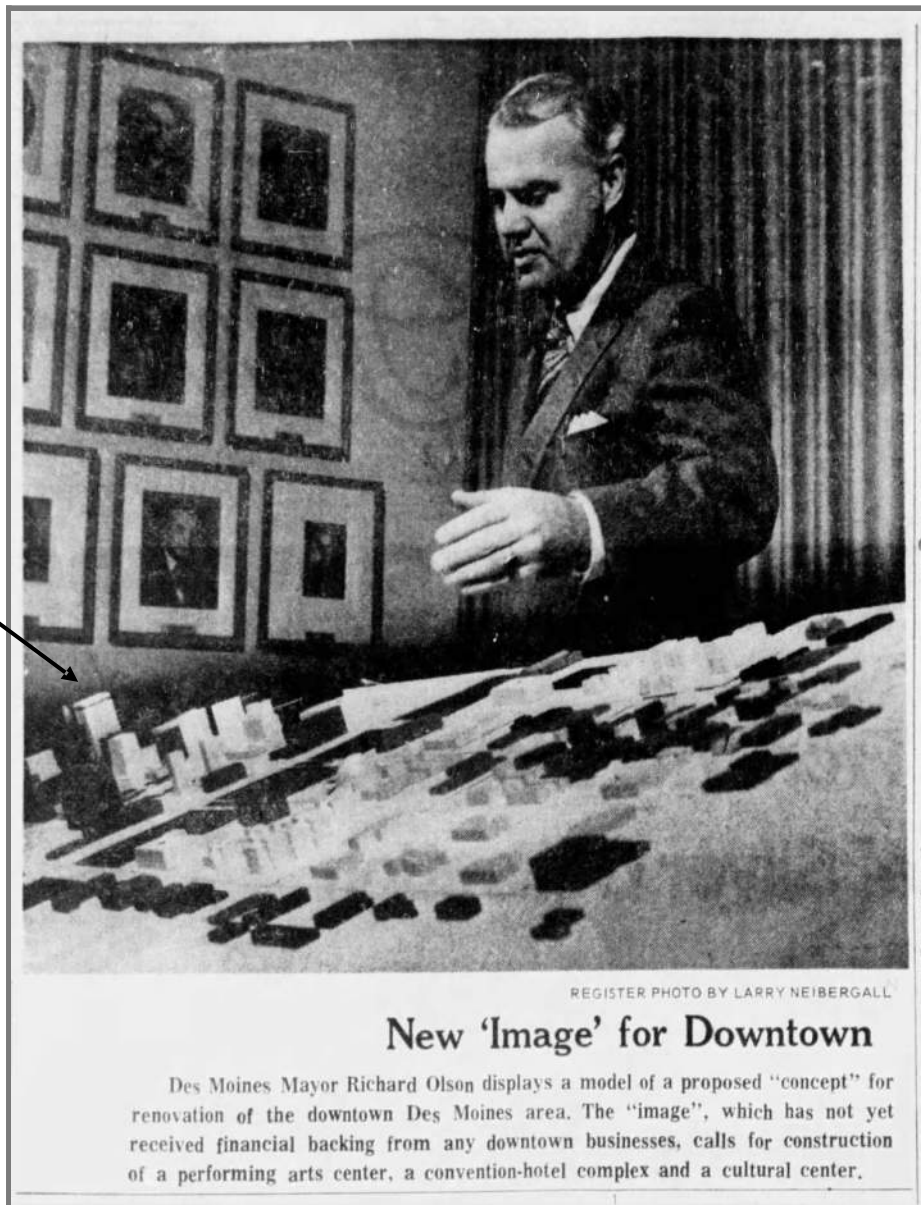


Figure 30. Historic photograph, 1972, showing Des Moines Mayor Richard Olson with a downtown central business district redevelopment model that includes the Financial Center Office Building (arrow) shown on the west side of the river (left side of photograph). (The Des Moines Register, "New 'Image' for Downtown," December 5, 1972: 6).

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Figure 31, Historic illustration, c. 1971-1972, showing the Financial Center featured in an advertisement for David H. Murdock Development Co.; also featured were illustrations of a twenty-story First National Bank Building in Lincoln, Nebraska, and ten-story United Bank Tower in Madison, Wisconsin. (Commercial West, "Some of our Midwestern Projects," David H. Murdock Development Co. advertisement featuring the Financial Center, February 17, 1973: 33, among others).

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Figure 32. Historic illustration, c. 1973, showing the Financial Center's east wing, used by the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association in its marketing and advertising materials. (Des Moines Tribune, ad, August 10, 1973: 9).



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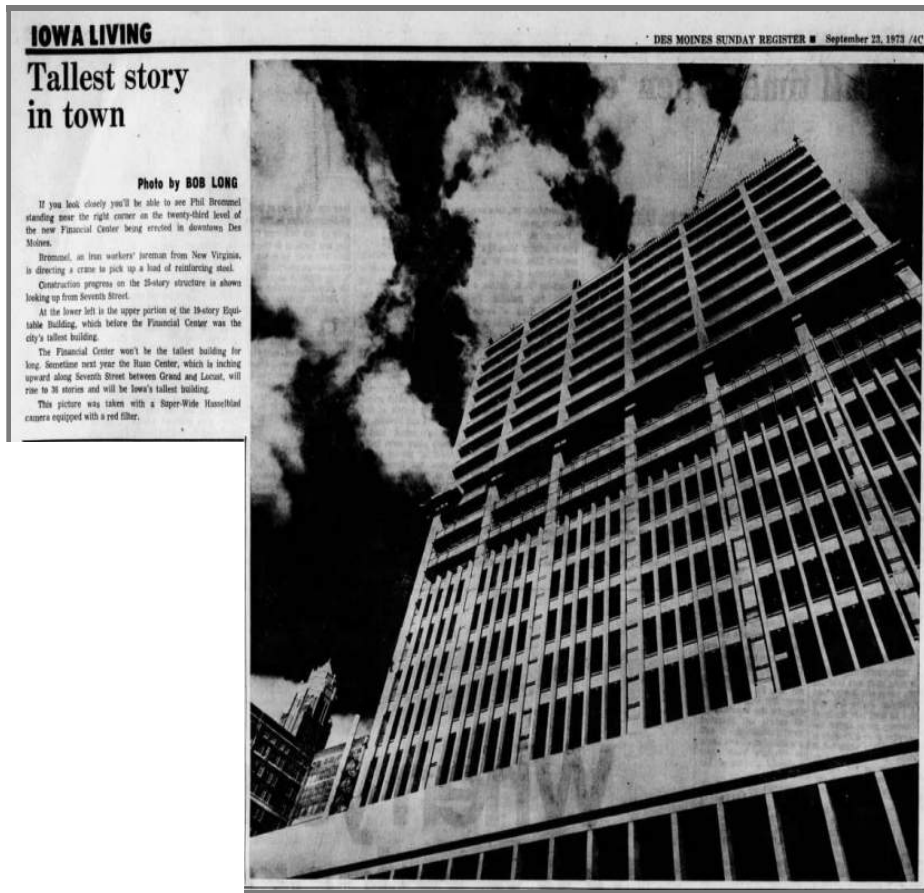


Figure 33. Historic photograph, 1973, showing the west elevation of the Financial Center, one of numerous typical newspaper project update photos published in local newspapers documenting the historic office tower's construction. (Des Moines Tribune, "Tallest Story in Town," September 7, 1973: 34).

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*Figure 34. Historic photograph, 1973, shows a rare interior view of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank shell and core, with developer David H. Murdock and organizers of a Junior League fundraising event co-hosted by Murdock and the bank. The bank generally used illustrations rather than photographs as a safety and security measure. (Des Moines Tribune, "This Is the Ballroom?" September 8, 1973: 9).*

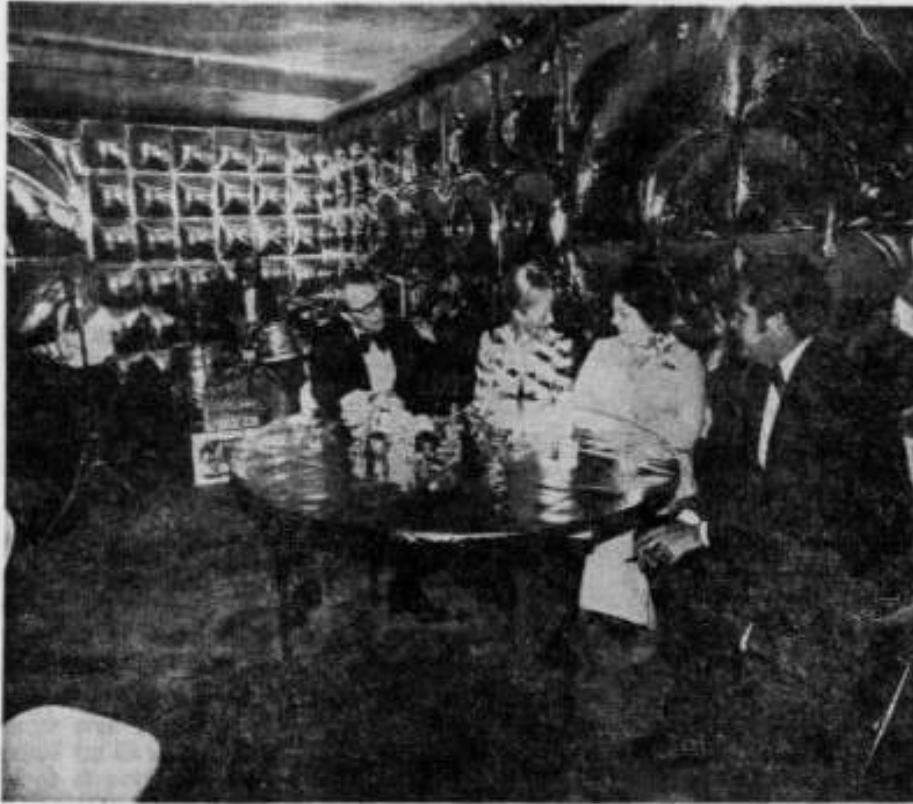


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Inside the bank vault, guests, from left, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Kilpper and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Krane, are entertained by the Helen Gale Trio.

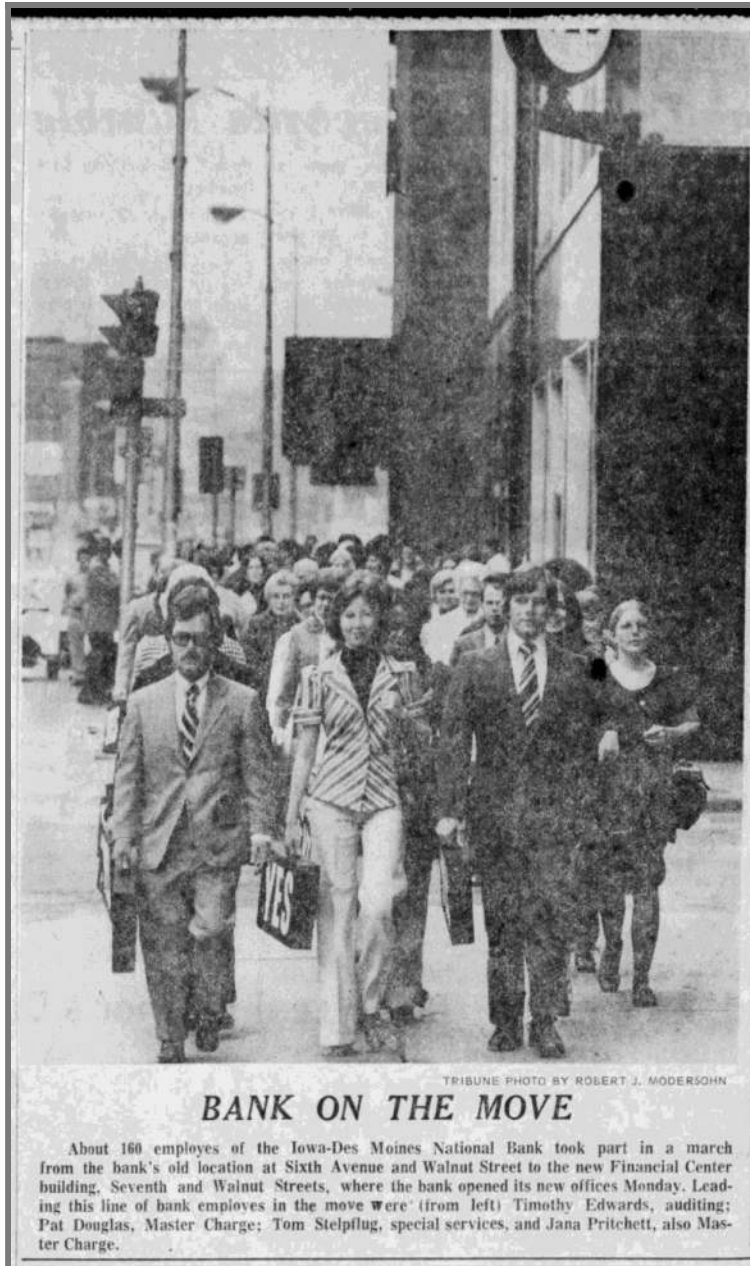
*Figure 35. Historic photograph, 1973, shows a rare interior view of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, with attendees at a Junior League fundraising event dining in one of the bank vaults. The bank generally used illustrations rather than photographs as a safety and security measure. (Des Moines Tribune, "Junior League Benefit Takes Place," November 20, 1973: 10).*

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*Figure 36. Historic photograph, 1974, showing Iowa-Des Moines National Bank employees marching one block west to new quarters at the Financial Center. This was one in a series of exterior photographs documenting the bank's move. No photographs were published showing the bank's interiors, a safety measure for robbery prevention. (Des Moines Sunday Register, "D.M. bank has new quarters," April 28, 1974).*

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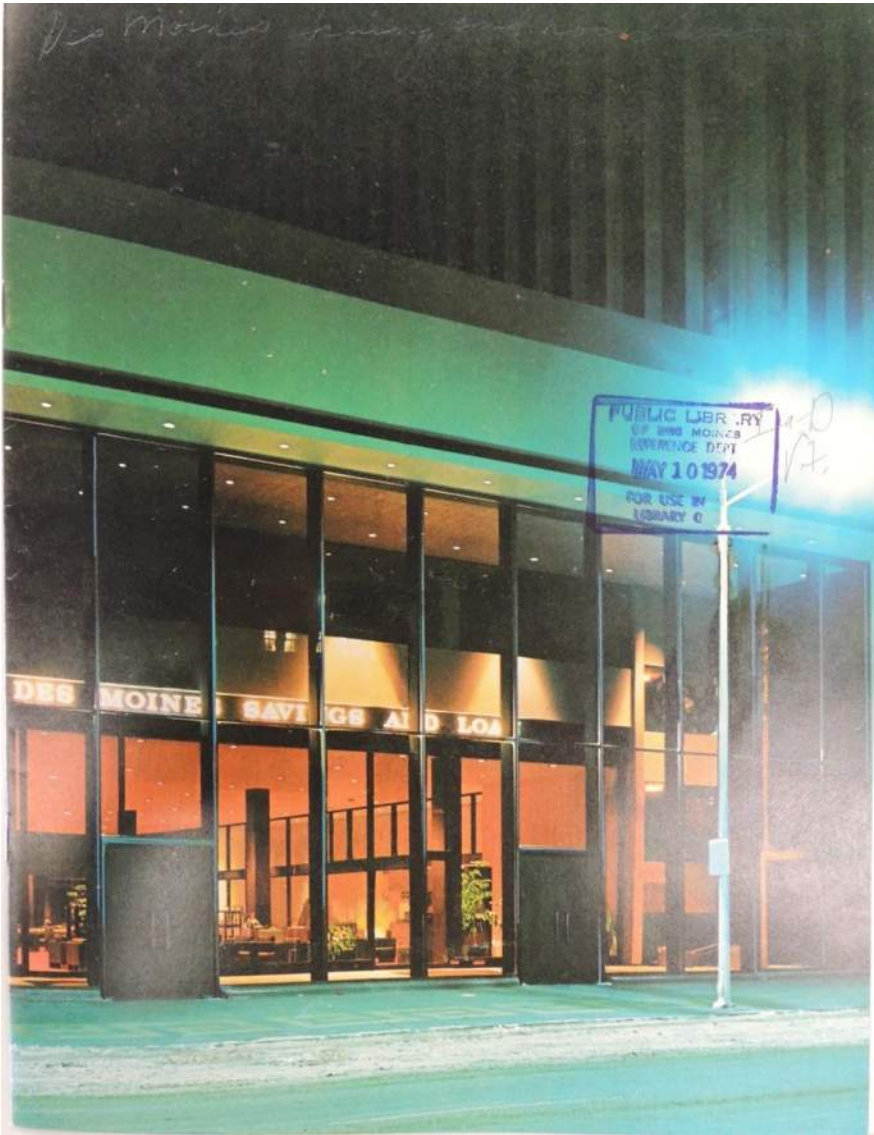
Figure 37. Historic illustration published in 1974 as an advertisement announcing the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's move into the Financial Center. This was one in a series of grand-opening advertisements that featured employees as well as stylized sketches of the building. (Des Moines Tribune, April 29, 1974: 8, 18).

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*Figure 38. Historic photograph, 1974, showing the Financial Center's east wing façade and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association banking hall within, looking southwest from Walnut Street. (Des Moines Savings and Loan publication, 1974, courtesy of Des Moines Public Library).*

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Figure 39. Historic photograph, 1975, showing a corner of the Financial Center's twenty-fifth-floor Embassy Club dining room. (Des Moines Tribune, "The Embassy Club Moves Ups In the World," April 19, 1975: 16).

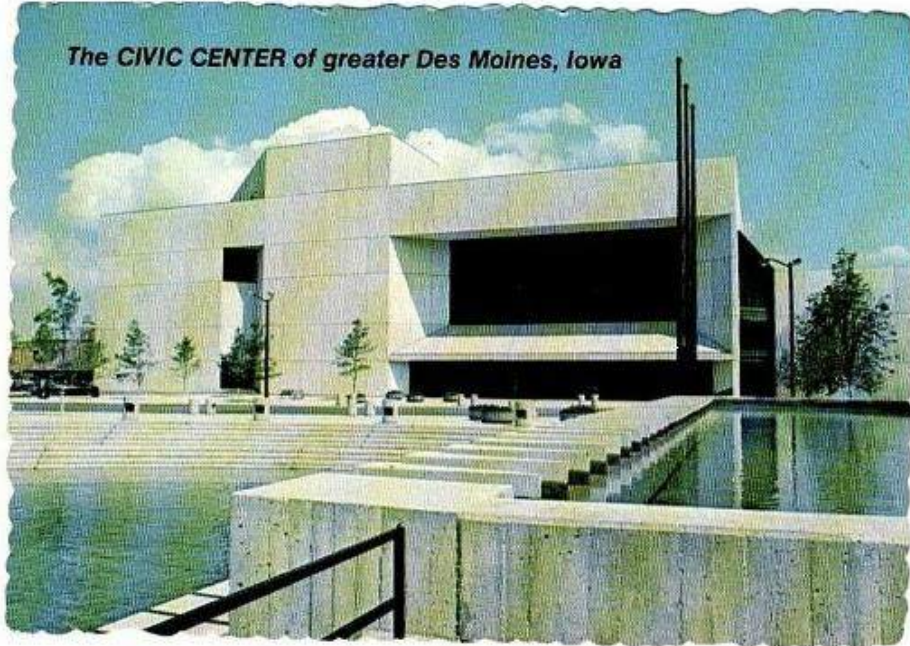


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*Figure 40. Historic postcard photograph, c. 1979, showing the Nollen Plaza looking east toward the Civic Center performing arts center. (eBay).*

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### Photo Location Maps

Site Plan and Exterior Photo Location Map, and First Floor Plan and Photo Location Map

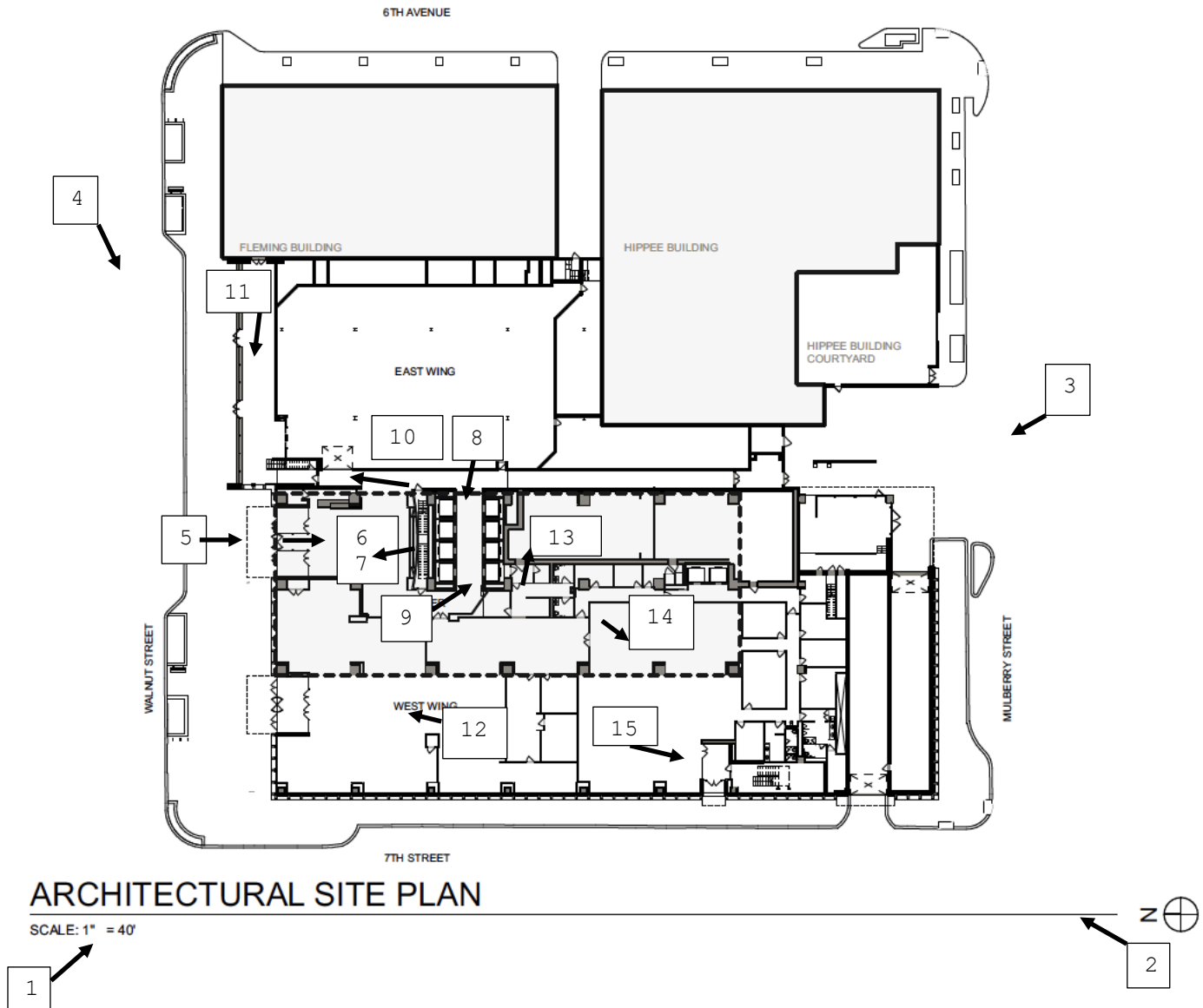


Figure 41. Site Plan and Photo Location Map showing the first floor of the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

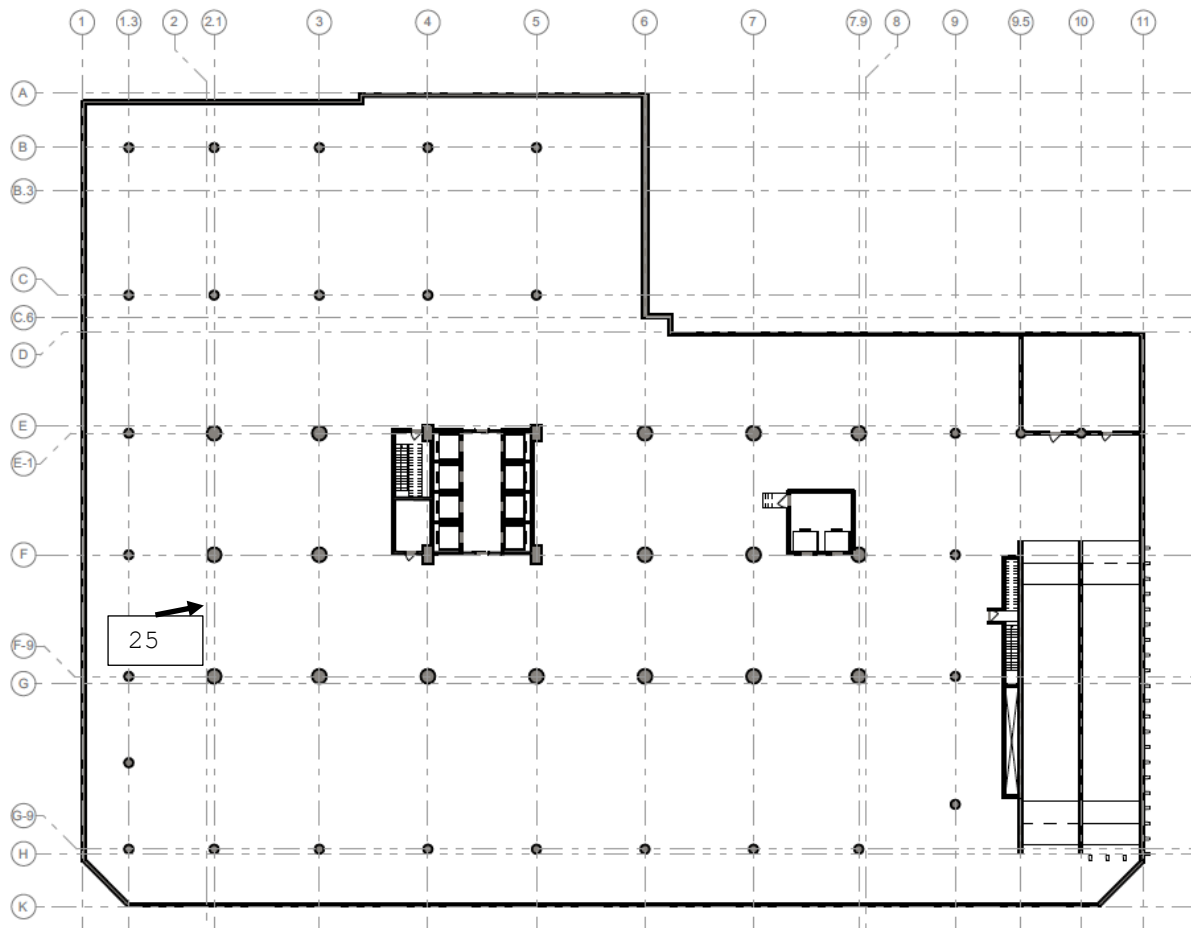
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# Basement Plan and Photo Location Map



## FLOOR PLAN - BASEMENT PARKING

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"

NOTE: PARKING LEVEL 2 SIMILAR (NO ELEVATOR ACCESS)



Figure 42. Photo Location Map showing P1 level of the underground parking garage in the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).



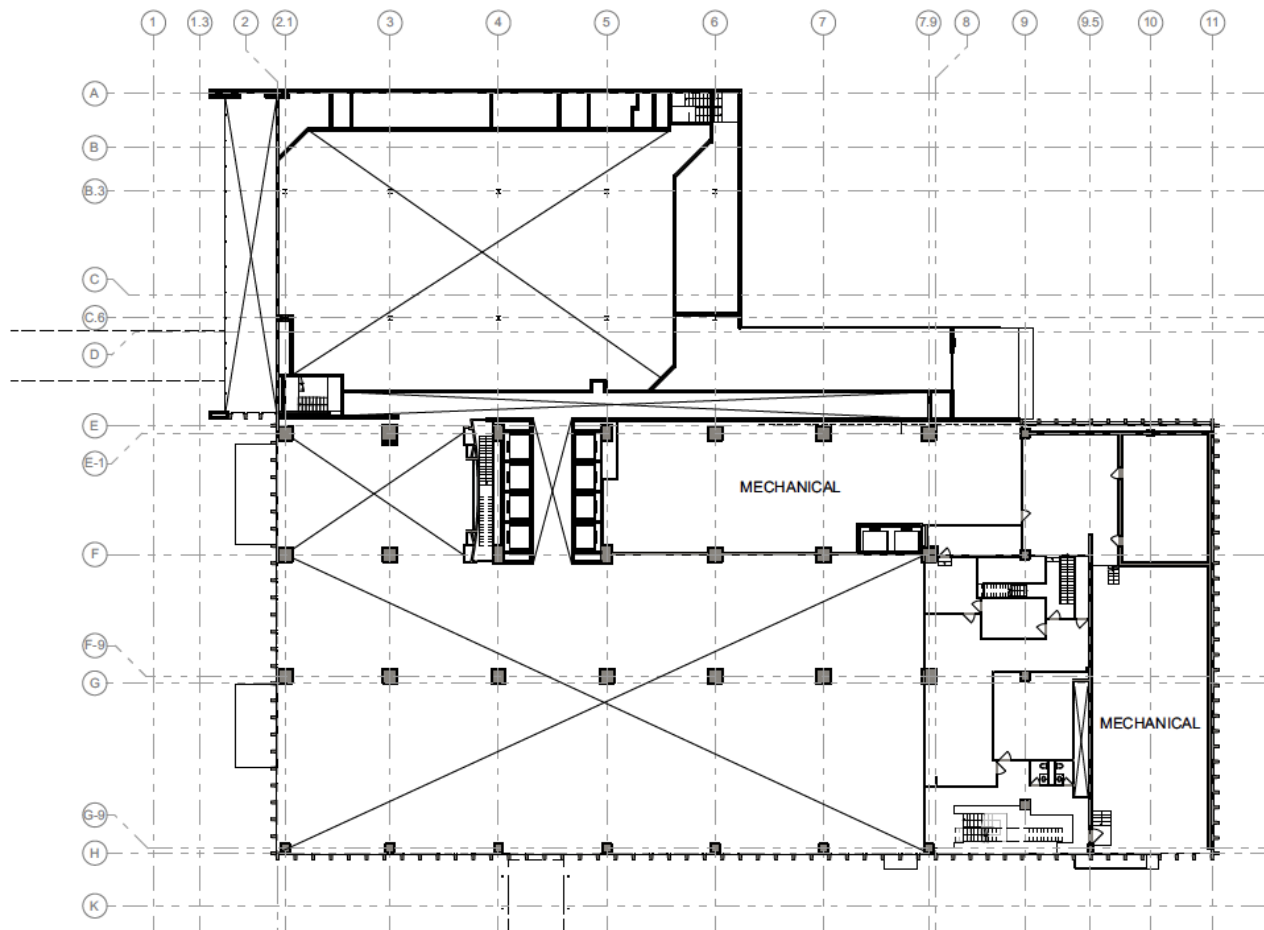
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### Mezzanine Floor Plan



### FLOOR PLAN - MEZZANINE

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"



Figure 43. Photo Location Map showing the mezzanine level of the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

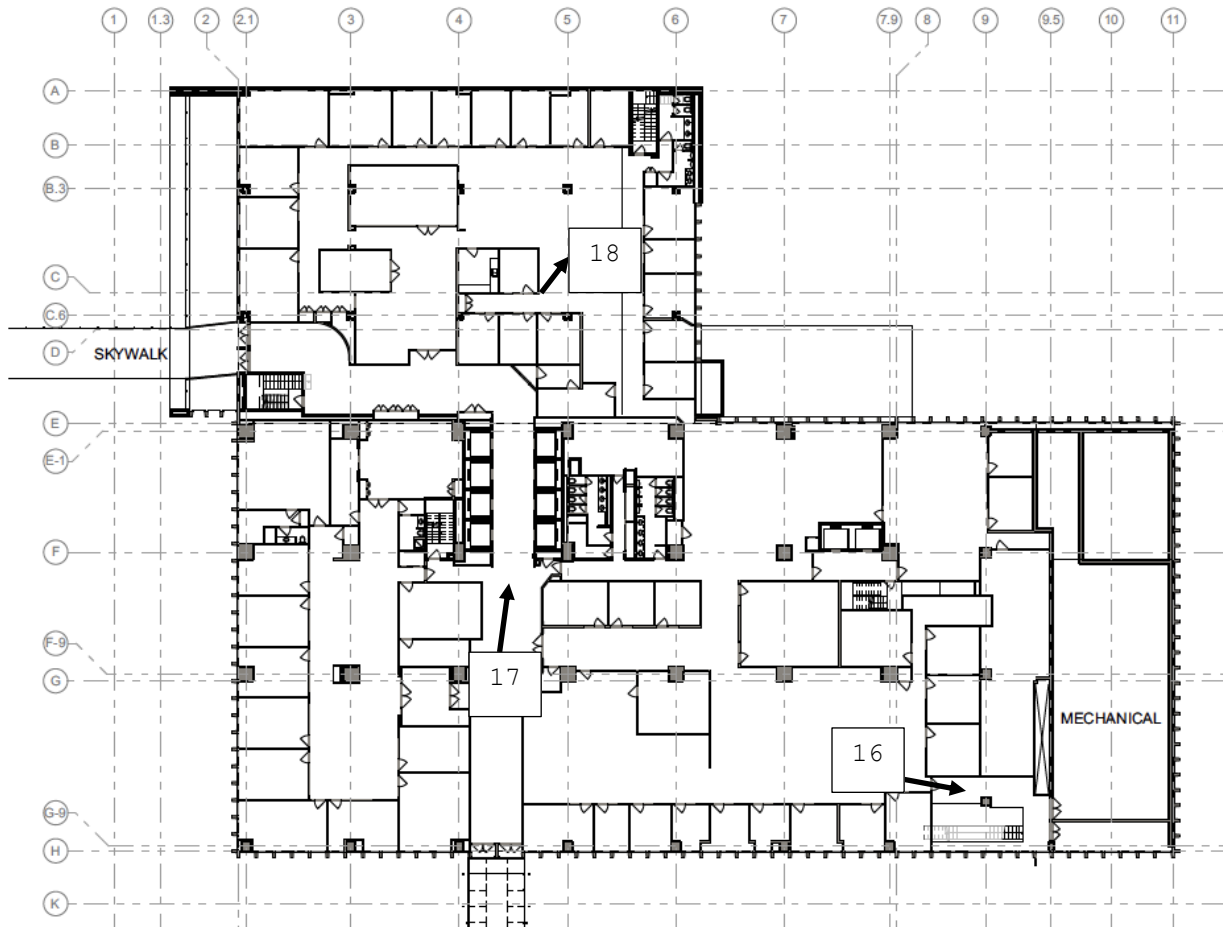
Financial Center Office Building

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Second Floor Plan and Photo Location Map



FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 2

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"



Figure 44. Photo Location Map showing the second floor of the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

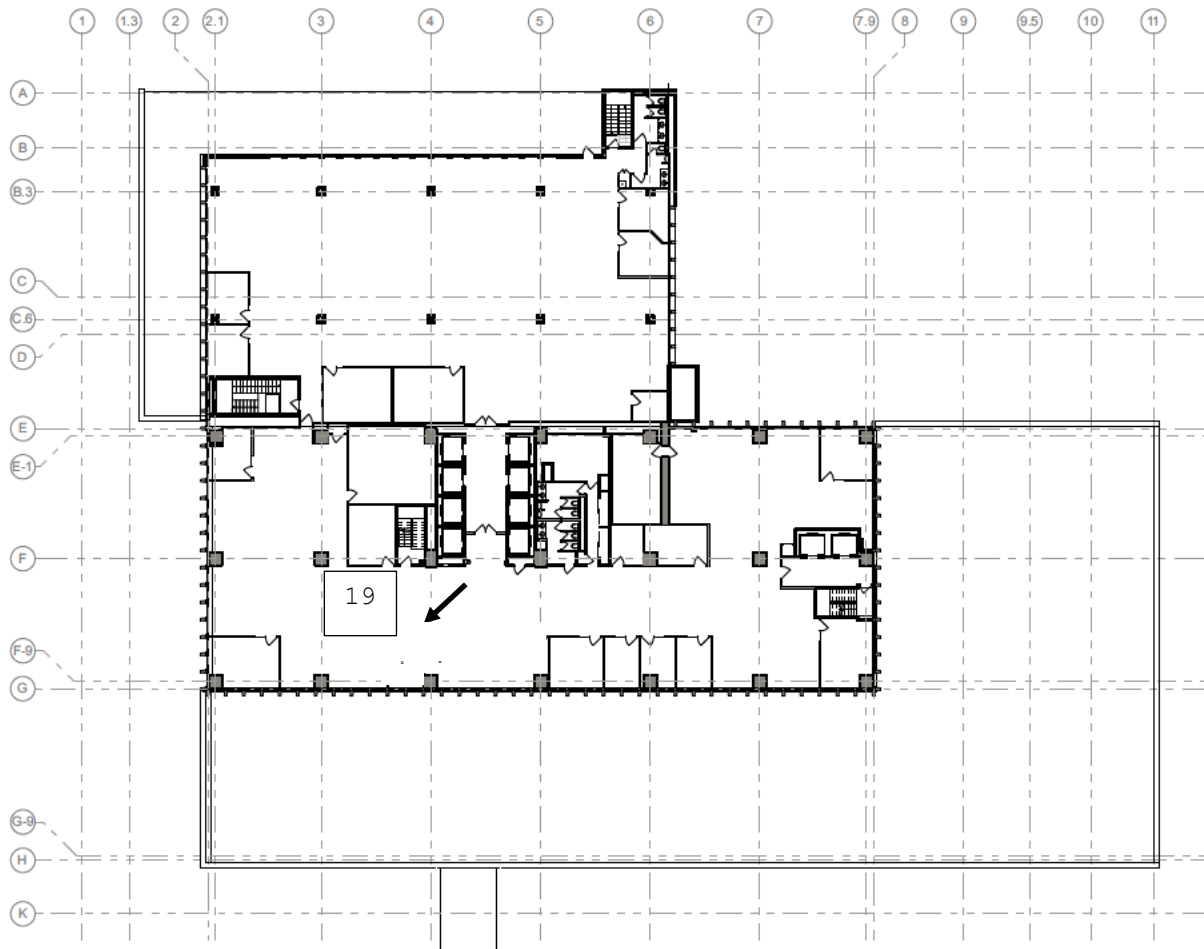
Financial Center Office Building

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Third Floor Plan and Photo Location Map



FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 3

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"



Figure 45. Photo Location Map showing the third floor of the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

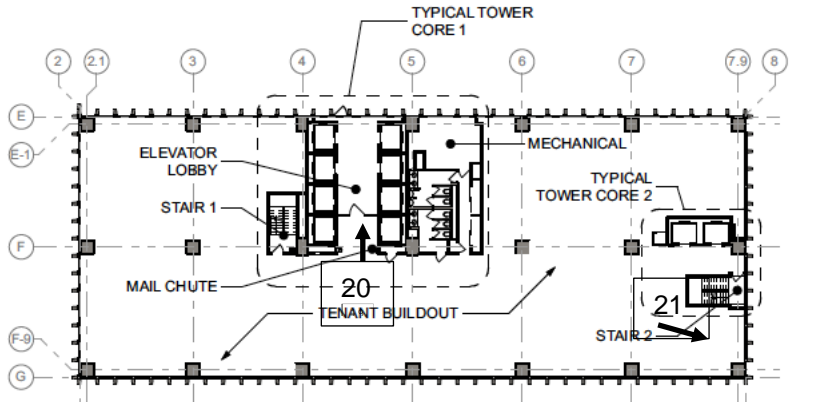
Financial Center Office Building

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Fourth – Ninth Floor Typical Shell and Core Plan and Photo Location Map



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 4-9

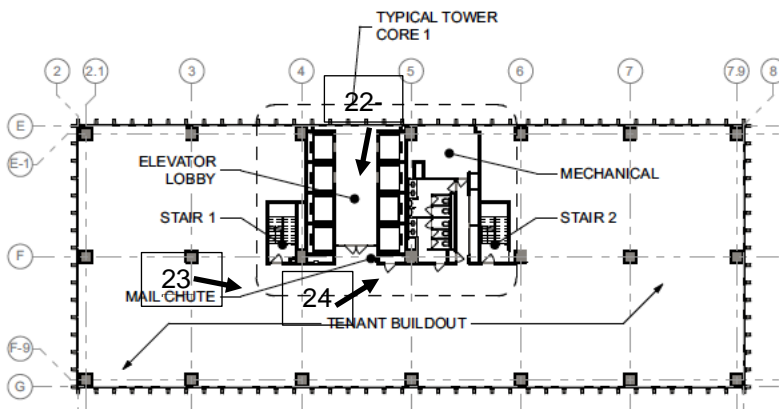
SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"

NOTE: STAIR 2 TRANSITIONS AT LEVEL 9



Figure 46. Photo Location Map showing the shell and core of floors four through nine in the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

Tenth – Twenty-fifth Floor Typical Shell and Core Plan and Photo Location Map



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 10-25

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"

NOTE: STAIR 2 TRANSITIONS AT LEVEL 9



Figure 47. Photo Location Map showing the shell and core of floors ten through twenty-five of the Financial Center Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa. (Slingshot Architecture).

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### Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs under separate cover. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and does not need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

<b>Name of Property:</b>	<b>Financial Center Office Building</b>		
<b>City or Vicinity:</b>	<b>Des Moines</b>		
<b>County:</b>	<b>Polk</b>	<b>State:</b>	<b>Iowa</b>
<b>Photographer:</b>	<b>Jennifer Irsfeld James</b>		
<b>Dates Photographed:</b>	<b>Spring and Fall 2022</b>		

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0001, north façade and west elevations of west wing and tower, looking southeast from Walnut Street.

Photo 2 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0002, west and south elevations looking northeast from Mulberry Street.

Photo 3 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0003, south and east elevations looking northwest from Mulberry Street.

Photo 4 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0004, north facade of east wing and east elevation of tower, looking southwest from Walnut Street.

Photo 5 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0005, central entrance on north facade looking south from Mulberry Street sidewalk.

Photo 6 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0006, central lobby looking south.

Photo 7 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0007, central lobby looking north.

Photo 8 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0008, central lobby elevator banks looking west.

Photo 9 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0009, central lobby mail collector and elevator doors, looking southeast.

Photo 10 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0010, central lobby entrances to east wing vestibule and former banking hall, looking north.

Photo 11 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0011, east wing entrance vestibule looking west.

Photo 12 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0012, west wing former banking hall Walnut Street vestibule and lobby, looking north.

Photo 13 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0013, west wing safety deposit vault, looking east.

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Photo 14 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0014, west wing former banking office, looking southwest.

Photo 15 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0014, west wing Seventh Street vestibule, looking southwest.

Photo 15 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0015, west wing Seventh Street vestibule, looking southwest.

Photo 16 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0016, west wing second floor southeast tenant stair, looking southwest.

Photo 17 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0017, second floor central elevator lobby within skywalk corridor, looking east.

Photo 18 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0018, second floor east wing typical offices, looking southeast.

Photo 19 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0019, third floor tower typical perimeter window wall with columns, looking northwest.

Photo 20 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0020, ninth floor tower typical lower-floor elevator lobby with windows, looking east.

Photo 21 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0021, ninth floor tower typical corner office with column, looking southwest.

Photo 22 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0022, thirteenth floor tower transitional elevator lobby with eight cabs, looking west.

Photo 23 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0023, seventeenth floor tower typical central corridor, looking south.

Photo 24 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0024, twenty-first floor tower typical upper-level elevator lobby and central corridor, looking southeast.

Photo 25 of 25: IA\_Polk\_Financial Center\_0025, P1 underground parking garage typical view, looking southeast toward elevator lobby.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Ruan Center & Carriers Building

other names/site number Ruan Center Complex (preferred); Two Ruan

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

street & number 666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street

☐

not for publication

city or town Des Moines

☐

vicinity

state Iowa

county Polk

zip code 50309

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:   national   statewide xlocal

Applicable National Register Criteria:   A xB xC   D

Signature of certifying official/Title: State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historic Preservation Office of Iowa

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

  entered in the National Register

  determined eligible for the National Register

  determined not eligible for the National Register

  removed from the National Register

  other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



Ruan Center Complex  
Name of Property

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## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
1	0	site
0	0	structure
2	0	object
5	0	<b>Total</b>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Steel

roof: Synthetics: Rubber

other:

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### Narrative Description

**Summary Paragraph** (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The Ruan Center Complex<sup>1</sup> (RCC) is a locally significant commercial office complex developed between 1975 and 1981 by transportation magnate, real estate developer, and downtown booster, John Ruan. Located at 666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street in Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, the Ruan Center Complex occupies three quarters of a city block in the Central Business District. The setting has a strong urban commercial character representative of the architectural primacy of Iowa's capital, where most of Iowa's tallest buildings form the downtown skyline. The Tower, the iconic focal point of the RCC, claimed the distinction of being Iowa's tallest building from 1975 to 1991. The property consists of three distinct building forms that are immediately identifiable by their taut, russet-colored steel and glass skins (Figure 3). The original Ruan Center consists of the Tower and the Pavilion, both constructed in 1975. The Tower, standing at 460 feet (thirty-six stories) tall is now Iowa's second tallest building and is visible from any perspective for miles away. The Pavilion is a 32-foot tall (single above grade story) double-height glass cube framed by unadorned, flat-plate COR-TEN columns and projecting fascia. Constructed in 1981, the Carriers Building, known as Two Ruan at 187 feet (fourteen stories) tall matches the height and volumetrics of the older, neighboring high-rises, while continuing the modern aesthetic of the Ruan Center in its simplified massing, unembellished detailing and distinguishing use of COR-TEN cladding at the spandrels. Each of the buildings included in the complex has two street-fronting elevations. Architect R. Kenneth Kendall of the Des Moines-based firm Kendall, Griffith, Russell and Artiaga designed the complex. When combined, the steel-framed structures are 745,803 gross square feet in area with 663,441 of finished, usable area (Polk County Assessor's Office). In addition to the two buildings, notable site elements include the railed plaza/plinth, a grouping of three flagpoles, and a monument sign, which contribute to the significance of the complex. The leased interior floors have undergone repeated tenant improvements, nevertheless the complex retains a high degree of integrity of the exterior, of the vertical circulation cores and the distinctive first floor lobbies are the source of its architectural significance. Contributing resources include Ruan Center, Pavilion and Ruan Two, the surrounding plaza, the monument sign, and the three flagpoles.

<sup>1</sup> The Ruan Center Complex is neither a historic name nor a commonly used name for the properties contributing to this nomination. The original Ruan Center, comprised of the Tower and Pavilion, is used both historically and commonly for the property at 666 Grand Ave. Two Ruan is the commonly used name for the property at 601 Locust St., while the Carriers Building is the historic name.

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**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the property in a **Statement of Integrity**, and any future plans for the property under the subheading **Future Plans**.)

## SETTING

The Ruan Center Complex (RCC) is situated on a river terrace west of the Des Moines River within the Central Business District (Figures 1-3). Locust Street to the south and Grand Avenue to the north are east-west major commercial corridors flanking the buildings, while 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the east and 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the west are primary arterials running north-south. The complex shares the block with the Liberty Building (418 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue; NRHP 2010) occupying the northeast corner of the block. Directly north across Grand Avenue is the former Home Federal Savings and Loan Association Building (601 Grand Avenue; NRHP 2017) and a three-story mixed-use office and retail building completed in 2019 (665 Grand Avenue). To the west of the Ruan Center Complex is the thirty-three-story Marriot Hotel (700 Grand Avenue); south of the complex across Locust Street are the Flynn-Griffin Building, (319 7<sup>th</sup> Street; NRHP 2016), a two-story office building, and the Equitable Building (604 Locust; NRHP 2015). East across 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue is the Des Moines Building (405 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue; NRHP 2013) and a parking garage.

## SITE

As originally built, the Ruan Center Complex (RCC) occupies three quarters of a prominent block that consists of Lots 3, 4, 5 & 6 in Block B of Commissioners Addition. The nominated boundary follows the property boundary as the structures are built to the face of the property line at grade and extend to the curb line at the below-grade levels. On the north side of the property, the plaza is flush with the adjacent concrete sidewalk. The plaza remains at a single datum as the street and sidewalk grade fall away to the south, creating a raised plinth of gray granite that rises as much as 4 feet above the sidewalk level on the south-facing frontage of the Pavilion. The Ruan Center and Two Ruan are connected at the second and first floors, and at the underground parking levels. At the lower level, the buildings are connected by a common driveway accessed on the north side of RCC at Grand Avenue. An exit corridor runs north and south along the west elevation of the first story of Two Ruan. The corridor runs west and follows the exterior wall of the Pavilion and then turns north along the exterior wall of the hyphen between the Pavilion and Ruan Center. The corridor allows access to the Pavilion and Ruan Center from Two Ruan.

The towers are recognizable as being of the late Modern Movement in their composition and owing their design primarily to the International Style. The high-rise buildings lack traditional ornamentation and are organized, proportioned, and detailed according to identifiable principles of modern design. The buildings' rectilinear forms are defined by the two primary materials used on their exteriors: COR-TEN (weathering steel) and glass

**Ruan Center Complex**

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curtainwall, broken only by the horizontal and vertical reveal pattern that denote the junctions of the repeating wall panels (Figure 6). The Ruan Center's Tower is rectangular in plan with a fenestration pattern of separate single lite windows set into a prefabricated COR-TEN modular wall panel. Two Ruan is nearly square in plan with continuous bands of ribbon windows separated by spandrels of COR-TEN. The significantly smaller Pavilion differs both in its predominate use of glass and sparing use of weathering steel in its composition.

Local architect R. Kenneth Kendall (1920-2009) of the firm Kendall, Griffith, Russell and Artiaga designed the buildings and site features. The complex reads as a purposeful and cohesive whole whose component parts serve related but distinct programmatic functions. The architect's use of a limited palette of materials and forms yields an uncommonly consistent and purposeful design applied on a grand scale in a dense environment of high-rise buildings. When viewed from the southwest, the viewer's eye climbs in stages from grade to Pavilion to Two Ruan to the full height of the Tower. All roofs are flat and covered by a roofing membrane with the rooftop mechanical penthouses on the towers not visible to the public from the immediate surrounds. At street level, each of the repeating window patterns at the upper levels gives way to double height COR-TEN clad columns with corresponding storefront glazing inset six feet from the outside face of the column.

The downtown skywalk system has direct or indirect second floor bridge connections to the immediately adjacent properties in all cardinal directions. Interior skywalk paths are continued in each tower or in the adjacent alley. The Ruan Center has two levels below grade. The level immediately below grade (Lower Level 1) houses the building management office, the money vault, and some parking. The deepest level (Lower Level 2) consists primarily of parking. The underground parking levels are reached via a ramp located to the east of the Tower on Grand Avenue. The single parking level below Two Ruan is accessed by the same ramp to the east of the Tower. Alleyways bisect the block, separating the complex from the adjacent Liberty Building to the east of the Tower and to the north of Two Ruan. Discussion of skywalks and bridges within the nominated boundary are discussed below.

**THE RUAN CENTER— 666 GRAND AVENUE (1 CONTRIBUTING BUILDING)**

The Tower and the Pavilion make up the one contributing building known as Ruan Center. The Tower is a thirty-six-story skyscraper with two double-height floors that are counted as four floors. Rectangular in plan, the structural footprint consists of three bays arrayed east and west and five bays north and south. The resulting tower profile is notably slender, emphasizing the building's verticality when viewed from the north or south (Figure 4). The floor plan measures 131 feet in length (north-south) and 89 feet in width (east-west). The structural system is straight forward, with sixteen wide flange steel columns, wide flange beams, and concrete/steel composite floors supporting each level. The vertical circulation core walls (containing stairs, elevators, and mechanical shafts) are comprised of load bearing concrete block located in the center bay of those running east-west. The tower is supported by twenty-four 43-foot-long concrete caissons that go down 90 feet below the street grade. Concrete caps are on top of each caisson. Steel columns support the structure above grade

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and floors are concrete; pan-cast two-way slabs at parking levels and topping of concrete over composite metal decking at upper floors. All internal structural steelwork is fireproofed with spray-applied fireproofing.

In the Ruan Center, which includes both the Tower and the Pavilion, the below-grade stories provide access to convenient parking and serve to connect the complex. The ground and second stories make use of double story columns that define an at-grade pedestrian arcade whose visual extension into the building's interior is defined by a 27 feet10 inches glazed aluminum curtain wall and the flat plaster ceiling that continues from the building perimeter to the travertine wrapped core at the second floor. The first-floor lobby is enclosed by sixty-eight glass lites on the east, north, and west sides of the building. The glazed public entrance is located beneath a canopy spanning the second and third northern most bays of the west elevation. The canopy extends to the curb. The northern most bay of the second floor of the Tower is given over to the Des Moines skywalk system for which the Ruan Center was a catalyst. Tall mechanical louvers clearly identify that the third and fourth floors house the building's lowest levels of mechanical equipment. Repeating modular COR-TEN panels (Figure 6) that extend from the fifth floor to the thirty-third floor denote the office spaces behind them. The building's subtle, but clearly distinguishable "attic" starts at the thirty-fourth floor, where the fenestration pattern changes from distinct framed openings within a panel to a continuous band of glazing. The thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth floors repeat the louvered openings from the third and fourth floors and are capped by a solid COR-TEN parapet.

The building was designed to use column voids as chases to run piping and conduit vertically along perimeter walls. The structural steel skeleton allows both for an open-plan interior and an exterior envelope of a light-weight curtain wall (Figure 59). The curtain wall, composed of 5/16inch COR-TEN sections, comprises the entirety of the building shell, along with matching corner column coverings. Single-lite rectangular windows, evenly spaced six or seven to a structural bay and organized about the bay center line, define the basic repeated exterior unit. The windows have simple rubber gasket mounts and all joints within an individual panel, vertical or horizontal, are welded and ground smooth creating a modular building component. The steel framing employs moment connections between columns and girders with K-bracing centered on the lower six floors to provide lateral stability. Figures 4 & 5 show how vertical lines are created at the building corners by leaving reveals between the bay curtain walls and the corners. These vertical reveals serve a dual-purpose as guide tracks for the exterior maintenance basket.

Levels identified as three and four as well as thirty-five and thirty-six are nearly double-height in volume with 20-foot floor-to-floor dimensions. The mechanical equipment that fills the third-floor volume serves the low-rise portion (floors five through twenty-one) of the building while the high-rise portion (floors twenty-two through thirty-four) is served by the mechanical equipment located on floor thirty-five. These levels have louvered rectangular panels on their exteriors which align vertically with the overall fenestration pattern. These panels are taller than the typical glazing unit given the larger floor-to-floor dimensions. The uppermost east bay of the north elevation houses the cooling tower that rests on the thirty-fifth floor. This area is uncovered and open to the sky above. The relatively small penthouse is COR-TEN surfaced and is adorned with a broad range of small-scale

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cellular antennae and several satellite dishes, none of which are visible from the ground. Apart from the cooling tower and the window washing equipment, there are no notable features at the roof.

The north elevation has three structural bays with a vertical cadence based on the two lowermost glazed stories which are recessed six feet behind the face of the perimeter columns, creating a covered pedestrian gallery. The gallery is defined at grade by the change in walking surface from the typical concrete of the city sidewalk to the gray granite of the plaza/plinth. The plaza is open and unobstructed apart from the free-standing columns. At the base of the columns a COR-TEN grate approximately six inches wide captures any rust that runs down the building's face. A skywalk bridge infills the westernmost second floor bay.

The Pavilion obscures the south elevation of the Tower at the ground level and largely so across the second story. The second floor is glazed and similarly recessed behind the perimeter columns. Above that point, the exterior mirrors the north wall in every respect.<sup>2</sup>

The west façade is broader with five bays that measure 112 feet in width (Figure 5). The west façade repeats the design elements of the north façade with several differences. The plaza differs in that it rises in elevation and is fronted full length with low-level planters or walls, with interruptions at the entrance. The upper floors differ in that the west skywalk bridge infills the northernmost second story bay and a broad square-cut canopy extends over the two double lobby entrances. The canopy covers two bays and reduces the height of those bays as it is aligned with the structure of the second floor. As a result, the wall is a continuous band of lites with bronze anodized aluminum panels only at the floor spandrel.

The east elevation is less visible across its lowest levels. The two-lane basement parking ramp adjoins the perimeter columns, and the lower two floors are treated the same as the other frontages apart from incorporating an open loading dock to the south of the ramp. An alley parallels the ramp to the east and a section of the skywalk that infills the northernmost second story bay, exits the building to the east, crosses the ramp entrance, and runs above the alleyway, turning to the east at the midpoint of the block. The upper stories match the west wall in every respect. The wall panels on the northernmost two and a half bays on the upper two levels cover an open-air cooling tower area.

Two underground levels (Lower Level 1 and Lower Level 2) extend beyond the perimeter of the structural column system under the sidewalks to the north and west by half a bay and under the full length of the ramp to the east. The lowest level (Figure 7) is an open parking area. The core passenger elevators do not extend to this level, but instead the floor is served by the north end stairs, a freight elevator, and a south end passenger elevator. The Lower Level 2 parking garage level is open plan with a honeycomb beamed concrete ceiling and exposed columns and perimeter concrete walls. These areas extend southward under the Pavilion. Traffic enters the parking garage at Grand Avenue between the Tower and the Hyatt Place. The next underground level, Lower

<sup>2</sup>Additional description of the single-story south end hyphen is included within the text describing the Pavilion.

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Level 1 (Figures 7 & 8) immediately below grade contains the twin elevator banks and lobbies, stairs, and restrooms. The elevator and stair core continues up through the entire tower. This level has a wrap-around hall surrounding the services core with conference rooms, offices, and a banking vault located around the hall. Travertine covers the core walls. An escalator links Lower Level 1 to the main lobby on the ground floor.

The first-floor lobby is open to the west of the building core (Figure 9). Exterior lobby walls on the north and west are fully glassed with dark bronze anodized aluminum framing. The main entrance on the west elevation of Ruan Center is distinguished by two revolving doors flanked on either side by single light aluminum doors. The north elevation also has a single revolving door flanked to the east by one single light aluminum door. The defining characteristic of the lobby is the use of travertine stone on all its walls and the continuation of the gray granite floors of the exterior plaza. Ceiling heights are 15 feet 8 inches. The east bay of this level is infilled with offices and the loading dock. The building service core, from north to south consists of a stairway, a double bank of six passenger elevators with intervening lobby and west entrance, all of which reach to the twenty-first floor. In addition is a second double bank of six elevators (five passenger elevators that service the upper floors and an east-fronting freight elevator on the southeast end of this grouping), again with a lobby, paired bathrooms egressed from the east and west second stairwell, and the escalators. The escalators are located to the south of the central elevator core. The north half goes to lower level one and the south set runs to the second floor where it terminates. A single passenger elevator (linking the lower levels through the second floor) is southeast of the escalators, set across a hall.

The footprint of the second floor is typical of all the office floors above (Figure 10), except for the inset glazed wall that defines the perimeter. The service core infills nearly three full bays in the plan center, the whole being offset northwards so that the open office space to the north is just two-thirds of a bay in depth, while that to the south increases by that same third. This level is built out as banking offices. The northern two thirds of a bay across the full width of the building serves as an open interior skywalk connection, erected in 1974 while the tower construction was well underway. Figure 10 does not show its external connection east across the parking ramp and onwards. This office level is distinctive because it is ringed by curtainwall divided into fifty glass lites.

Floors five through thirty-four are identical in footprint and each consists of structurally open leasable office space that wraps the service core. Floor-to-floor heights are 12 feet on all office levels. Figures 11 & 12 depict representative floors. The main difference is that the north elevator bank terminates on floor twenty-one, so there is slightly more office space above that point.

The building's tenants have selected varying interior finishes across the office floors throughout the history of the building. Many of the building's tenants lease space on multiple adjacent floors. The upper floor interiors that retain potential for original historic finishes are the thirty-second, which houses the Ruan Company, and the thirty-fourth floor, which houses the Des Moines Embassy Club. The thirty-second floor's entrance/reception areas have travertine marble covered walls and some tile flooring, along with some original partitions and trim



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work. The club area consists of dining and recreational spaces. The elevator lobbies retain their original doors and finishes, including silver-gold exteriors. Egress stairwells retain their original unadorned round steel railings and concrete block walls. There are no monumental public stairways in the building. A few original silver-gold finished elevator doors survive. Apart from the lobby lower level and the elevator/stair core, no originally leased office finishes remain due to repeated tenant improvements.

John Ruan's personal office retains a high amount of integrity (Figures 13a & 13b). Located along the south elevation of the thirty-second floor, Ruan's executive suite contains a conference room, private bathroom, and kitchen. The spacious corner office still holds the personal effects of John Ruan and the Ruan Family including furniture, a family portrait, and monogramed towels. The floors are covered with a low pile carpet and the ceiling are Acoustic Ceiling Tiles (ACT) with can lights. The walls are covered in dark paneled wood and rooms are separated by wood slab pocket doors.

THE PAVILION

The Pavilion stands 32 feet above grade from the street and is set above stacked underground parking levels. Like the two office buildings, it is clad in COR-TEN (Figure 14), but its perimeter consists solely of clad columns and a double height aluminum-framed glass curtain wall inset six feet from the outside face of those columns. This treatment follows the design for the base of the Tower. The Pavilion is joined the Tower to the north and eastward to Two Ruan by one-story glass hyphens. What appears as a two-story massing from the exterior is a single, double-height interior volume. There are no elevators or stairs within the Pavilion. The building has nine structural bays and is rectangular in plan with the same bay dimensions as the Tower. The Pavilion is linked to the Tower by a single-story glass and COR-TEN hyphen (as seen in Figure 14a) and through the open interior floor plan. The link to Two Ruan is less seamless as it must navigate the change in grade between the buildings with short flights of stairs. The Pavilion's first story rises separate from the Tower to the north or Two Ruan to the east. The Pavilion is void of any mechanical equipment, however the hyphen to the Tower (north) supports small roof top mechanical units not visible from street level. The west and south building facades are identical. This same composition originally applied to the east elevation, now visually obstructed by the east one-story link to Two Ruan.

The interior is an open-plan, double height space within the footprint of the Pavilion (Figures 9 & 10). The north one-story link has a central service core with travertine clad walls. Interior drywall partitions close off the original openings to the Tower lobby that were on either side of the original service core and teller's counter. The original clerestory window above the service counter remains above the connecting hyphen. Two north-south running walls dating from the 1994 remodel are flanked by contemporary systems furniture. The floor is covered by carpet covering the original gray granite flooring. The ceiling and can light fixtures remain unaltered in their original form.

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## **TWO RUAN (1981) – 601 LOCUST STREET (1 CONTRIBUTING BUILDING)**

Two Ruan, the second building and final volume of the Ruan Center Complex, has a larger rectangular floor plate than the Tower and rises to a height of 14 stories, roughly a third the height of the Tower. It consists of five structural bays in width and four in depth. The interior bay widths on each frontage are 30 feet while the outer ones are 28 feet east to west, and 29 feet 4 inches north and south.

Two Ruan continues the use of COR-TEN as the primary cladding material. Here the glazing changes to a continuous ribbon window running from building corner to building corner. These glass bands separate the broader bands of weathering steel to create a taut exterior skin stretched around the building's simple, platonic form. Like the original tower, columns are free standing at grade, but unlike at the Ruan Center, the columns engage the exterior wall at the second floor. The inset glazed curtainwall at the base is only a single story in height at Two Ruan creating a covered pedestrian arcade similar to the Tower.

The mechanical penthouse occupies much of the flat rooftop area and is set within a continuous raised concrete curb. The penthouse is clad in a painted steel panel closely approximating the dark bronze color of the anodized aluminum framing at the strip windows. Given its shorter stature there are no towers or antennae on the penthouse. With the building mechanicals confined to the rooftop penthouse, the cause for differentiated fenestration pattern of the Tower is eliminated. The continuous ribbon windows removed the corner column covers employed at the Ruan Center Tower. Here the glazing abuts at each corner and the solid COR-TEN panels are suspended between the strip windows.

The entry for Two Ruan is located on the south and has its own address separate from Ruan Center (601 Locust Street). The centered, recessed entrance is capped by a small square-cut canopy. A single revolving door at the main entrance is flanked on either side by two single light aluminum doors. The plaza apron surrounding Two Ruan is flush with the sidewalk along Locust Street. On the east side, along 5<sup>th</sup> Street, three granite planters run between columns to accommodate the rising grade to the north and to provide a clear edge to the plaza's perimeter.

The foundation uses the same caisson system as the Ruan Center with each steel column riding atop a concrete filled caisson that penetrates the bedrock as deep as 20 feet. Each caisson is topped with a 4-foot-high square support cap.

The south facade has a centered recessed entrance covered by a cantilever canopy. The building exterior is organized five bays wide, the outer bays being slightly wider (Figure 16). The COR-TEN wall panels are arranged in continuous bands lacking obvious vertical separations except at the column lines. The intervening bronzed glass bands, five lites to a bay, obscure the columns within. The sills of window bands are set at desk

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height above the floor. A deeper spandrel of COR-TEN was added to create an unadorned parapet of a modestly greater dimension than that found at typical floor levels. The penthouse, aligned with the building's core and occupying six structural bays, is not visible from the surrounding sidewalks. The south skywalk bridge infills the westernmost second story bay (note that Figure 16 does not show the skywalk in the original elevation drawing).

The east elevation has no entries, is four bays in width, and follows the mullion pattern found on the south elevation. Moving north, the granite plaza steps down slightly from the sidewalk due to the rising northward grade. A brown brick veneer is used across the northernmost bay as the building turns into the alley. Otherwise, the grade-level is framed with a dark bronze aluminum-framed storefront wall comprised of eight glass lites per bay.

The north elevation adjoins the still-functioning (vacated) alleyway for its full length. The first-floor north wall is solidly veneered with a brown brick, the only interruptions being vent panels, an angled overhead door, and pedestrian entries that are off centered to the west by one bay on the plan. Above the second-level skywalk, the building exterior follows the same lines and features of the south elevation.

The west elevation abuts the former east alley line and the single-story hyphen link to the Pavilion. Above that level the four-bay wide facade follows the same lines and features of the south elevation.

The single, lower level combines parking and some support and storage areas that intrude north and south beneath the alleyway and sidewalks. Its plan is open and extends through a northwest corner gate to the west where it joins with the same parking level as Lower Level 1 under the rest of the complex. A range of mechanical spaces also on Lower Level 1 extend northward under the alleyway and the parking level similarly extends eastward and southward under the sidewalk levels.

Like Ruan Center, the building has a central service core that contains a double bank of elevators flanked on either side by bathrooms and stairways (Figures 17 & 18). Entering the lobby from Locust Street, the walls are clad with a wood veneer. The floors are largely covered with a low pile carpet, but uncovered areas reveal the same gray granite flooring in Ruan Center and the Pavilion. The ceiling is ACT with can lights. The elevator lobby is also clad in a wood veneer with a carpet floor. A drywall cloud is suspended from the lobby ceiling, which is internally lit. Flanking the entrance lobby to the east and west are conference and wellness rooms, an auditorium, offices, and locker rooms. The auditorium, just west of the service core has a slope floor with fixed seating and a stage. North of the service core is a two-story atrium with a stair leading to the third story. The atrium and stair were likely added after the period of significance and is therefore non-historic.

The upper floors, similar to Ruan Center, have been renovated many times over the years based on tenant needs. Beyond the service core, each floor has little historic integrity. Upper floors have a combination of non-historic

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materials including tile, carpet, and Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT). Ceilings in the elevator lobbies are typically drywall, while the office space contained ACT with can lights. The rooftop mechanical penthouse is utilitarian with painted metal walls and ceiling and the interior service core clad in painted concrete block. The penthouse has florescent lighting suspended from the ceiling. Floor to floor elevations are 10 feet on the lower level to grade, 18 feet 8 inches from grade to the second floor, 13 feet from second to third, and 11 feet 6 inches on the remaining upper floors.

### **CONTRIBUTING OBJECTS AND SITE (1975, 1981)**

There are two contributing objects and one contributing site on the Ruan Center property. A set of three flagpoles located near the southeast corner of the Pavilion comprises one contributing object (Figure 15a). The other is a monument sign located at the southwest corner of the plaza (Figure 15b). Both contributing objects date to 1975, while the plaza (contributing site) was modified in 1981 with the construction of the link to Two Ruan.

The gray granite-clad plaza defines the perimeter of the 1975 Ruan Center to the north, west, and south. On the north side the plaza is simply at grade with no projecting or elevated features. On the other frontages the plaza level remains constantly aligned with the first floor. The plaza elevation remains constant as the street/sidewalk drops away toward the south, establishing a raised plinth on which the Pavilion rests 4 feet above the Locust Street public sidewalk. The plinth/plaza is ringed by a continuous stone planter matching the gray granite of the plaza. The planter is 30 inches tall and sits on a recessed base at either end of individual planters that creates a six-inch horizontal space between the top of the plaza and the bottom of the planter. The planter is placed just beyond the outside face of the building columns along the west side of the complex parallel to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. On the south along Locust Street, the planter is roughly 10'-6" from the outside face of the pavilion's columns and follows the rise of the monumental stair to form the stairs' cheek walls. This barrier is interrupted by the west entries and the south steps. It stops where it abuts the westernmost column of Two Ruan and is not employed along the south frontage of Two Ruan.

The set of three flag poles occur at the backside of the planter at the southeast corner of the Pavilion and are approximately 60 feet in height with dark bronze anodized shafts and are capped by round brass balls. The monument sign (1981), located on the southwest corner of the Pavilion, matches the dimension (36 inches x 36 inches) and material of the building's columns and is inscribed on all sides with the words "Bankers Trust."

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### **SKYWALKS/SKYBRIDGES (1974, 1981) – OUTSIDE NOMINATED BOUNDARY AND NOT COUNTED**

The skywalks adjacent to the complex are clad in dark bronze aluminum to closely match the Ruan Center's exterior while eliminating the possibility of the COR-TEN cladding dripping rust onto any cars below. While the skywalk bridges are an important component of the city's master plan during the development of the Ruan Center, they are not considered part of this nomination and therefore do not have a contributing or noncontributing status. Skywalk system connections were being developed even as the RCC was being constructed.

Within Two Ruan a north/south section of the skywalk occupies the westernmost bay on the interior (Figure 19) and an exterior east/west segment was built on the north in 1981 as the building was completed. A stairway was added in the northwest part of the plan to further link ground level and the skywalk. Much of the first and second floors are tenant spaces, filled with retail and service providers associated with the downtown skywalk system. From the third floor upwards, the layouts are designed as office space. Given the broader building footprint, the spaces to the south and north of the core are nearly two bays wide, obstructed only by columns.

The south Locust Street bridge was installed in September 1983, but was planned as a part of the larger sky walk design. The downtown skywalk system is incorporated into the second floor of the Tower and Two Ruan with bridges to the north (Grand Avenue, 1975), and west (Locust Street, 1984).

### **ALTERATIONS SINCE THE END OF THE PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **RUAN CENTER**

The Tower has been free from major alterations with three notable exceptions. The first alteration speaks to the impact of this property as part of Des Moines' urban renewal. The nearly completed building incorporated the north skywalk bridge to a parking ramp in mid-November 1974, a west bridge link in 1980 to the Marriott Hotel, and an internal skywalk section across the north bay when the skywalk system was expanded eastward and south to and through Two Ruan in 1981. These skywalks do not impact the integrity of the property because they were anticipated in the initial design.

The next change involved tenant buildouts, as indicated by building permits. The building opened in stages so the process of filling out the leased floors was an on-going and continuous one. From the Ruan Center's inception, the variety and mutability of its tenants has been dynamic. The county assessor's office lists building permits with varied levels of detail. A total of 173 permits are listed for the Tower between 1988 and the present. The years with the highest number of permits are 2019 (fourteen permits), 2012 and 2018 (twelve permits), and 2020 (eleven permits). An impressive \$2,180,372 in permits were pulled between 1996 to 2000.

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Floors eight and thirty-two were remodeled in 1996, the former floor being gutted and rebuilt. The Des Moines Embassy Club, located on the thirty-fourth floor, spent \$2.3 million on a remodel in 1992.<sup>3</sup> Yet another remodel was completed within the last decade to remove walls that divided the space and relocate the bar from the perimeter to an interior location.

The third major alteration to the Ruan Center occurred in 1994. A demising wall was installed between the Tower and the Pavilion when the Pavilion became executive office space.<sup>4</sup> One minor exterior alteration, executed in COR-TEN, was the welding of corner light string mounts, running from the ground floor to the roof. These light tabs had a superficial impact to the integrity of the building's envelope, but a proportionally large impact on the Des Moines skyline through 1990 when the use of color-themed string lights ceased.<sup>5</sup>

The most substantial Ruan Center modification took place in early 1994 when Bankers Trust moved its public banking lobby and services to the second story skywalk level and transformed the Pavilion into executive office space, closing off its Locust Street entrances and the former lobby from the main lobby by the addition of interior walls. The \$2 million dollar renovation also transformed what had been an employees' upper-level escalator into a public one, facilitating travel from the skywalk level to the ground floor elevator lobbies. The architect for the changes was Cal Lewis of Herbert, Lewis, Kruse, Blunck (HLKB) Architects.<sup>6</sup>

TWO RUAN

As was the case with the Ruan Center, little of the original interior remains apparent in the building from floors three to fourteen. Two Ruan followed a similar tenant improvement model as seen at the typical office floors for the Ruan Center. The Polk County Assessor has fifty-six work permits for Two Ruan between 1988 and the present. The most numerous were in 2001 (eleven permits) and 2018 (seven permits).

**STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY**

The Ruan Center Complex retains a high degree of integrity across the seven integrity standards. The buildings' structure, steel cladding, and fenestration are well-preserved examples of the innovative use of novel material employing design principles popular in architecture's Modern Movement. Key interior finishes, the travertine-clad walls, interior wall treatments, monumental spaces, and the Pavilion ceiling have not been altered. Floorplans, apart from tenant build-out on upper floors, retain their defining service cores. The mechanical equipment has been modernized over time. Building profiles including the respective penthouses on the two

<sup>3</sup> The Des Moines Register, January 1, 1993

<sup>4</sup> Polk County, Iowa, Assessor property card.

<sup>5</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune*, November 18, 1974; November 15, 1980

<sup>6</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune*, November 18, 1974.

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towers and window-washing appurtenances remain. The connecting plaza also survives intact, including the grand plaza stair from the Locust Street sidewalk.

The property retains excellent integrity of location as the complex of buildings remains in its original location and interrelationship of the resources remains between one other and the adjacent buildings.

Ruan Center Complex retains excellent integrity of design. This aspect of integrity is based substantially upon the massing, form, and detailing of the plaza and the three building volumes, particularly in their retention of their COR-TEN cladding, the glassed building bases, the two original objects, and the parking ramp entrance. On the interior, the integrity of design is measured upon the retention of the public lobby and circulation spaces including the Pavilion, the core service components (stairs, elevators, restrooms), the Tower escalator running from Lower Level 1 to the second floor, the lower banking and parking levels, and the full extent of the travertine marble wall finishes and granite floor surfaces in these public areas. The open plan, regardless of evolving tenant modifications, is a defining characteristic of the type, era, and use for which the building was constructed.

The property retains excellent integrity of setting. This is embodied in the completely extant commercial downtown surroundings, most of which John Ruan directly helped to develop. Fundamentally, the building grade, dropping noticeably north to south, survives. Except for the original Grand Avenue parking garage (replaced and shifted west, but retaining the Grand Avenue skywalk bridge link), all the nearby buildings that predated the construction of the subject buildings remain intact and recognizable. The skywalk system similarly survives, and all direct linkages are bronze-toned in coordination with the COR-TEN clad structures.

The excellent material integrity is represented first and foremost by the COR-TEN building claddings, the original fenestration glass, the interior ornamental travertine wall treatments and the granite floors and plaza surfaces. Structural steel and concrete, elevator, stair and bathroom concrete block enclosures, and a substantial range of the buildings' systems remain.

Similarly, the excellent integrity of workmanship is due to the COR-TEN cladding. The same workmanship is embodied in the building structure and in the integration of HVAC components with the structural system. Finally, the interior finishes, floors, and travertine walls are representative of the highest quality of workmanship.

Integrity of feeling is perhaps the strongest aspect of integrity for this property, which remains excellent. Any visitor scanning the downtown profile would be drawn to the visual dominance, the prideful architectural exuberance of this COR-TEN complex. Any longer-term city resident associates this iconic symbol with the process of redefining Des Moines downtown. Despite its own architectural distinction, this complex is still architecturally integrated, functionally via the skywalk system and contextually by its proximity to the buildings that influenced it and vice versa.

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Ruan Center Complex retains excellent integrity of association as the intact complex envisioned and built by John Ruan. The previous six integrity standards demonstrate the buildings to be sufficiently intact to convey the relationship of the complex to the rest of downtown Des Moines. The buildings stand tall and provide views to this iconic tower for miles around. Despite repeated remodeling of upper floors, the complex hums with the same multi-tenant activity that makes downtown “the place where the action is.”



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

### Period of Significance

1975-1981

### Significant Dates

1975

1981

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Ruan, John

### Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Kendall, Griffith, Russell and Artiaga

Neumann Brothers Construction Company

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### Statement of Significance

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Des Moines, Iowa's Ruan Center Complex (RCC) (1975, 1981) is locally significant under Criterion B for its direct and sustained association with developer and businessman John Ruan and his contributions in Community Planning and Development.. His office remains intact on the thirty-second floor of Ruan Center and retains a high degree of integrity. The RCC is also locally significant under Criterion C for its modern design and architecture. Due to its age, the complex also meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G for properties that are less than 50 years old for its connection with John Ruan and his impact on Des Moines.

John Ruan (1914-2010) altered the commercial building profile of downtown Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, and contributed to a functional and architectural downtown resurgence with the construction of the Ruan Center Complex, that has continued up to the present day. More than other city promoters and developers, who were his peers, Ruan left an indelible architectural imprint on the city by building a series of monumental buildings within a single downtown block. His actions, embodied in the RCC (1975,1981), make this property exceptionally significant under Criterion B, while the complex is also eligible under Criterion C for its architecture and association with the community planning & development of downtown Des Moines, meeting Criteria Consideration G. Architecturally the buildings are of high artistic value and reflect the willingness of the era's architects to embrace emerging industrial products and technologies to create building forms distinct from the past. The application of the then-novel COR-TEN weathering steel with its distinctive purposeful surface oxidation and coloration represents one of the largest uses of that product still in existence. The result of the use of this character-defining material is a visually commanding edifice. The original Ruan Tower was the tallest building in the state for fourteen years (1975-1991), and it redefined the downtown Des Moines skyline. Functionally, the buildings led the way to re-establishing the city's central business district into one that included open plazas, an elevated skywalk system and public amenities that included convention facilities and a civic performance venue. The components of the Ruan Center Complex fully retain their historic integrity and continue to represent their shared design and building-type features. The period of significance is 1975 to 1981. This period of significance encompasses the construction of the three building volumes.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

**(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions:** For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

### CRITERION CONSIDERATION G

The Ruan Center Complex (RCC) (1975,1981) meets Criterion Consideration G for its connection to local developer John Ruan who significantly impacted the city of Des Moines, Iowa. The RCC is the best

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representative example of Ruan's influence on the design and development of downtown Des Moines in the 1970s and early 1980s. Ruan constructed the RCC in a time of nationwide urban renewal efforts when local leaders championed the return of people and investment to city centers. Traditional central business districts such as the one in Des Moines grew stagnant from decades of suburbanization that occurred throughout the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. "Progress" and "modernity" came wrapped in the utilitarian, industrial aesthetic of the International Style seen at Ruan Center Complex. It was within this period that John Ruan, acting in the capacity of a real estate developer with a distinct vision for Des Moines, created a landmark complex of buildings that changed the economic trajectory of Iowa's capital city. Constructed within the past fifty years, the RCC meets Criterion Consideration G because it best represents Ruan's influence on downtown Des Moines, as the realization of this complex significantly impacted the architectural and developmental trends seen in downtown.

**CRITERION B: JOHN RUAN**

The Ruan Center Complex (RCC) is the best representative of Ruan's achievements as a real estate developer and booster of the Des Moines Central Business District. Ruan's contribution to downtown Des Moines stands out architecturally against the other buildings to which he focused his attention and resources. RCC serves as a prominent landmark of his work to redevelop downtown and make it a thriving place of commerce and activity. While a significant portion of Ruan's career was the forty years spent establishing and expanding his namesake trucking company, his greatest impact on his community came during his time in real estate development and with the construction of the Ruan Center Complex.

John Ruan (1914-2010) is "one of Iowa's most powerful businessmen who built a national trucking company and led the redevelopment of downtown Des Moines."<sup>7</sup> His mythic rise in trucking, from a gravel-hauling truck during the Great Depression to an ever-evolving constellation of companies all of which revolved around trucking, led *The Des Moines Register* to describe him as a "Des Moines Titan" in its 2010 obituary.<sup>8</sup> Ruan built the nation's largest transporter of petroleum products post World War II, the dominant Ruan Transport Corporation, and acquired the G.I. Taxi Company in 1948<sup>9</sup> and Avis Rent-A-Car franchise in 1954.<sup>10</sup>

He was a technical and organizational innovator who focused solely on his business pursuits until the mid-1960s, by which time he had developed the financial resources and political and business connections with which he could make a broader contribution.<sup>11</sup> His philanthropic efforts included support for finding a cure for multiple sclerosis, a disease that took the life of his daughter and afflicted his wife. He donated \$2 million in the late

<sup>7</sup> "Des Moines Businessman John Ruan Dies at 96," *The Muscatine Journal* (15 February 2010): A8.

<sup>8</sup> "D.M. Titan Dies at 96," *The Des Moines Register* (14 February 2010): 5.

<sup>9</sup> "Firm Becomes Ruan Cab Co.," *The Des Moines Register* (27 Feb 1948): 3.

<sup>10</sup> "3 New Cars for Airport Service," *The Des Moines Register* (10 Jan 1954): 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Carroll Daily Times* (15 February 2010): np; *The Des Moines Register* (14 February 2010): np.

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1980s to establish the Ruan Neurological Center at Mercy Medical Center which treats patients with multiple sclerosis and other neurological disorders.<sup>12</sup> In 1983 he proposed an idea to Kraft Foods to sponsor the World Food Prize which honors individuals who in some way helped improve the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world. Kraft followed through from 1987 through 1990, when Ruan stepped in to establish a foundation to assume sponsorship of the World Food Prize and move its home to Des Moines. In 1997 he contributed \$10 million to permanently endow the prize, ensuring it would remain in Des Moines. For his philanthropy and contributions to the community he received the Iowa Award in 2001 and a statue at the World Food Prize Hall.<sup>13</sup>

Ruan had a strong work ethic that led him to gain political and economic power. His early career focused on trucking but even this endeavor was leavened with innovation. He was the first in the Midwest to use tandem axle tankers and tractors, he introduced the concept of off-hour truck delivery and created the first all-aluminum petroleum (1956) and cement (1961) fleets. On the safety side he promoted the use of steel wire radial tires, safer front bumpers and developed and implemented a comprehensive safety training program for his drivers. His trucking empire grew over time with a complex mix of acquisitions and divestments. Postwar, he expanded into truck leasing and was the first to offer tandem axle units for lease. The transportation of petroleum became dominant with the multi-state expansion that led Ruan to finally acquire a central office. Ruan's business interests expanded to trucking insurance and brokerage with the acquisition of Bankers Trust in 1964. During the Farm Crisis of the 1980s, unemployment topped at eight percent, farmland values fell by more than 60 percent, and thirty-eight Iowa banks closed.<sup>14</sup> Bankers Trust verged on closure, too. The bank was a major lender to rural banks, which had failed. Ruan put Bankers Trust on the path of consistent profitability in the early 1990s and made it a leading state financial power.<sup>15</sup> His banking platform precipitated the construction of the Ruan Center, a new home for Bankers Trust. In 1972, Ruan announced his plans for a thirty-six-story tower, the present Ruan Center. Ruan's broadening interests and investment in downtown Des Moines escalated and led to a focused vision of a redefined Des Moines downtown to one that integrated Iowa into international trade and worldwide food deficit. His final goal was to "turn Des Moines into the agricultural capital of the world."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the Ruan Center, Mr. Ruan played a key role in the Marriott Hotel complex and the former Des Moines Convention Center (now the Iowa Events Center). The Marriott Hotel was constructed for the City Center Development Corporation, of which John Ruan served as President. The Des Moines Convention Center was first proposed by Ruan in 1981. He actively sought public support and funding for the project. The downtown skywalk system is also attributed to Ruan along with the parking structure north of the Ruan Center. The 1976 *Des Moines Register* reviewed the most powerful community builders in the city, naming Ruan at the

<sup>12</sup> Ruan Companies, "About," <https://www.ruan.com/about-ruan/our-founder>.

<sup>13</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (16 February 2010):

<sup>14</sup> "Iowa Politics Insider," *The Des Moines Register* (8 February 2010): 8.

<sup>15</sup> "John Ruan: 1914-2010," *The Des Moines Register* (15 February 2010): 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ottumwa Courier* (27 March 1993): np.

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top. Ruan led the field because he had self-earned wealth, was willing to use it to obtain his goals, and had both independence and a bulldozer-like determination. In 1976, the *Des Moines Register* reported on the top twenty-five most powerful people in Des Moines as selected through a special panel. John Ruan, who was selected as the most powerful, was described as having respect for his self-earned success and his “diverse business empire” with his personal ownership of many of his companies. His personal characteristics were summarized as being “single-minded and determined,” “aggressive and intimidating,” and one who enjoyed “the marionette-like manipulation of people.”<sup>17</sup> A more balanced yet baffling summation read, “tough, but soft-hearted; well-liked, but feared; egotistical, but modest.” Future *Register* editor James Flansburg was famously quoted in his early 1978 response to the question of what would best speed up downtown revitalization. Flansburg suggested “three more John Ruans.”<sup>18</sup>

Key to Ruan’s success as a developer and community booster was his personal downtown vision centered upon a contiguous three blocks in the city center. His fellow movers and shakers, such as David Kruidenier, the owner of the *Des Moines Register* and Tribune Company, and Richard Olson, the President of Bankers Life (no connection to Bankers Trust), could raise funds and leverage their respective empires (print journalism, banking), but they lacked his focus and, in the end, his sheer longevity.<sup>19</sup> When the local newspaper repeated their review of top community builders in 1990, Ruan ranked second, while most of his 1976 contemporaries (20 of 25) failed to make the list, reinforcing Ruan’s unique ability to remain a driving force in downtown development for such a long period of time. The article noted, “Here’s a guy in the senior years of his life, and he still has a 20-year plan.”<sup>20</sup> The *Register* honored Ruan with successive laudatory articles, titled “Ruan’s keys to success: Hard work, good friends”<sup>21</sup> and “The hard-driving power that makes Ruan run.”<sup>22</sup>

A short list of Ruan’s most closely comparable contemporaries in 1976 would include *Des Moines Register* & Tribune publisher and president, David Kruidiner, as well as banker John Fitzgibbons. Each of them was a successful and ambitious businessman, and community leader who actively influenced Des Moines’ built environment, an impact felt to this day. In 1976, they are identified as Des Moines’ top three most powerful men.

Des Moines’ third most powerful man in 1976 was John R. Fitzgibbon, president of the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank (currently Wells Fargo). Fitzgibbon’s notable contributions to the downtown skyline and landscape include the Financial Center and the Des Moines Civic Center (now Des Moines Performing Arts). Fitzgibbon’s early commitment to lease seven floors of the 25-story Financial Center tower proposed by

<sup>17</sup> “Profiles of the Top 25,” *The Des Moines Register* (3 October 1976): 6.

<sup>18</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (9 January 1978): np.

<sup>19</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, (14 January 1990): np.

<sup>20</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (14 January 1990): np.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Garson, “Ruan’s Keys to Success,” *The Des Moines Register* (8 October 1976): 1.

<sup>22</sup> Wendell Cochran, “The Hard-Driving Power That Makes Ruan Run,” *The Des Moines Register* (4 March 1984): np.

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California-based developer David H. Murdock Development Co. (dba David and Gabrielle) assured that project would be successfully financed and constructed.

Kruidiner was identified as the second most powerful man in Des Moines at this time. Together, Fitzgibbon and Kruidiner are credited with raising the \$9 million dollars necessary for the construction of the downtown Civic Center when a public bond issue failed to be passed by popular vote. The Des Moines Civic Center itself is a very good example of late modern architectural design and city planning as well as a being a good example of the type of public/private investments that have supported and sustained the growth of Des Moines' downtown in the last 50 years, but that doesn't diminish the impact of Ruan's vocal support to consolidate investment downtown for the benefit of the Greater Des Moines area.

#### RUAN CENTER REPRESENTS JOHN RUAN'S SUCCESS

Beyond the Ruan Center Complex there are four properties that warrant comparison as being representative of Ruan's productive life. These include his first centralized corporate office at 303 Keosauqua Way (now 303 Watson Powell Jr Way) his family home, the Marriot Hotel, and the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates (NRHP 1977).<sup>23</sup>

The Ruan Center, in its earliest stages, marked John Ruan's first direct involvement in real estate development, apart from associated operation and administrative building needs from his previous forty years building his transportation empire. It was John Ruan's acquisition of controlling ownership in the Bankers Trust Company, the city's third largest bank, in 1965 that eventually led to the Ruan Center. As a result of the bank's financial troubles, Ruan had to be recruited, leading to his demand for majority ownership and full control. First, he stabilized the bank by completely reorganizing corporate management structures, extending hours, and establishing suburban and downtown satellite banks. The Ruan Center was built as a result of the bank's financial success under Ruan's leadership. The bank physically outgrew its space in the Equitable/Bankers Trust Building following a doubling of assets between 1967 and 1972. The Ruan Center could easily have been named for the primary tenant it was designed for instead of its developer, but according to some accounts the name Ruan resulted from the architect's label for the plans.<sup>24</sup> It was through acquisitions and successes like Bankers Trust that led Ruan to build up resources and vital political and business contacts.<sup>25</sup>

Ruan did not have a centralized corporate office until he acquired 303 Keosauqua Way, the former Standard Oil Company division headquarters, in 1962. After purchasing, Ruan had the building remodeled and enlarged. That building still stands and externally retains its appearance from the days John Ruan occupied the building (Figure

<sup>23</sup> Constructed in 1903 as the Des Moines Public Library, the building was first individually listed in the NRHP in 1977 and again in 1988 as a contributing building to the Civic Center Historic District.

<sup>24</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune*, June 24, 1962, December 18, 1972.

<sup>25</sup> William B. Friedrichs, *In For The Long Haul: The Life of John Ruan* (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003): 106-08.

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21). The building may arguably represent the later years of Ruan's success in the trucking industry, but little to none of the interior remains intact from the thirteen years between 1962 and 1975 when this property served as the Ruan Company's central office. Ruan's family home, at 23 34<sup>th</sup> Street, in the South of Grand neighborhood, is a comparatively modest brick colonial that does not represent the breadth or depth of Ruan's impact on community or industry (Figure 22).

The development of the Marriot Hotel followed the construction of the original Ruan Center and preceded the construction of Two Ruan. Construction was completed in 1981 directly west of the Ruan Center (Figure 23). The hotel was built to support the activity of the Des Moines Civic Center and provided an early opportunity for expansion of the Des Moines skywalk system. This 33-story hotel is presently Iowa's third tallest building. Like many Des Moines high-rises of the era, exterior pre-cast concrete panels wrap the building's concrete frame. While modern in design, this building does not share the demonstrable design sensibilities and principles of the buildings that comprise the RCC.

John Ruan is associated with the rehabilitation of the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates (Figure 24). This adaptive reuse of the city's first library, originally constructed in 1903, demonstrates Ruan's continuing efforts to draw investment into downtown Des Moines. The property was published on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 for its Beaux Arts, Neo-Palladian Architecture.

JOHN RUAN'S IMPACT ON DOWNTOWN DES MOINES DEVELOPMENT

Ruan's premier building projects were the Ruan Center (1975) which was Iowa's tallest building for fifteen years, and its neighbor, the Two Ruan office building (1981). These buildings were instrumental in rebuilding and revitalizing downtown Des Moines, a trend that has continued largely unabated to the present day. Ruan increasingly focused his resources and energy on developing other key pieces of his "cohesive planning" theory. The concept, according to Ruan, "integrated office facilities with hotels, department stores, shops, restaurants theaters, and offers parking garages interlaced with skyways that pedestrianize the city's central business district." Ruan's theory made downtown the action-center of the capital city where all downtown components, including housing, were integrated to make the downtown the place "where the action is."<sup>26</sup> Iowa governor Robert Ray observed "John Ruan is the father of the renaissance of Des Moines."<sup>27</sup>

What had been the well accepted domain of retail, service, and office use in downtown Des Moines was fast changing during the 1950s and 1960s. The new downtown mix envisioned by Ruan included public venues, parking structures, public plazas, downtown residences, and enclosed "skyways" with associated retail services. All this met the needs of a downtown culture that did not encourage the population to return from downtown to the outlying suburbs after 5 p.m, a trend seen in downtowns across in this time period. There were also new

<sup>26</sup> "The New Breed of Office Buildings," *The Gaffney Ledger* (13 April 1977): 25.

<sup>27</sup> "D.M. Titan Dies at 96," 5.

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developmental resources and players, far outstripping the private investment that had called the shots previously.<sup>28</sup>

Ruan's projects may have appeared as individual ventures, but he was making decisions based on his larger vision for downtown. The Ruan Center Complex, on the surface, met the needs of Ruan's expanding companies and tenants and provided an opportunity for the unification of several entities in one building. His Marriott Hotel was leverage for a convention center that was more broadly based for the larger Des Moines community than the Ruan Center Complex. His concept of a World Trade Center in Des Moines was envisioned as a centralized facility to showcase Iowa's products and services to potential national and international buyer and was promoted as a benefit to the entire state. Ruan believed the proposed project, for which he sought state funding, Ruan believed, would allow Iowa to compete aggressively in the world marketplace. A 1977 interview explains his comprehensive vision which he called "cohesive planning." The interviewer, James Woodward, wrote his planning concept "integrates office facilities with hotels, department stores, shops, restaurants, theaters – and offers parking garages interfaced with skywalks that pedestrianize the city's central business district much like an outlying shopping center." Woodward quoted Ruan directly, adding "This complex re-establishes faith in the old principle that the major market center should be in a city's downtown area so it can be used and enjoyed by the whole city, not just a peripheral neighborhood." Ruan was acting as an early urban planner in the private sector, making decisions to help downtown Des Moines grow.<sup>29</sup> Illustrative of Ruan's keen interest in development of Des Moines' Central Business District was a scaled model of the downtown his team built and housed prominently near his office, and that was updated as downtown grew and changed over time.<sup>30</sup>

Ruan's comprehensive vision was executed as a master developer would on a large site. John Ruan's site, however, was downtown Des Moines. He often made contiguous and coordinated improvements and relied on his own financial resources to avoid being constrained by others. His individual approach to development may seem counterproductive, but it led to visible results in the changing skyline of downtown. Ruan's independence of action is best represented by his response, when his Two Ruan plans were seen by the city of Des Moines to threaten pre-existing developmental priorities. He countered by stating the project was designed and funded by himself and was filling a need for additional space from his current Ruan Center tenants. He ensured the project would not strain the downtown and would improve connectivity by constructing a parking ramp to the north and the downtown's third "skyway" bridge to link his building with the ramp. Ruan's support for the broader skywalk system was integral to his vision of an interlinked downtown. While his initial "private skyway" accessed additional parking for the Ruan Center, skywalk linkages would become essential with each of his successive

<sup>28</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (11 February 1973): np, the skywalks and the parking garages were means of reducing street level congestion. Street corner pedestrian traffic was a major component of this congestion. While climatically comfortable they also enhanced second floor building values. The addition of a million square feet of new office space in the Financial Center and Ruan Center towers would add \$40 million in property subject to being taxed, considerably supplementing public funds for downtown improvements (Ibid., August 8, 1973).

<sup>29</sup> *The Santa Barbara News-Press* (13 March 1977): np.

<sup>30</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (4 March 1984): np.



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projects. It is worth noting that Ruan's contemporary high-rise competitor, the Financial Center, was not connected to the skywalk system until the mid-eighties.<sup>31</sup>

Ruan's approach to development translated into his revaluation of the downtown itself. The most expensive quarter blocks in the city were to the south, closer to the county courthouse, but Ruan began his development focus on the current Ruan block, where the original Bankers Trust was located (specifically on the site of Two Ruan). He added a quarter block to what was the largest piece of downtown land controlled by one entity and would build upon it. His projects also elevated the commercial importance of Seventh Street and challenged that of Sixth Avenue, the banking street. The *Register* took note of "three massive building projects" ascending on Seventh (The Financial Center, the Ruan Center and the parking garage that straddled Seventh north of Grand Avenue) in early August 1973 and termed it a "building boom on Seventh Street." Ruan would add the Marriott Hotel to that mix.<sup>32</sup>

Ruan's individual approach to downtown planning may have resulted in part from the collapse of the city's 1925 Bartholomew plan. A new 1973 comprehensive plan envisioned a theater, hotel-convention center, and a parking garage, but the \$22 million bond issue was defeated. Developer James Hubbell III credited the completion of the Financial Center and the Ruan Center with sparking a broader "interest in downtown redevelopment." Hubbell saw the next breakthrough with the successful raising of \$9.6 million in private funds to build the Civic Center (finished in 1975). Des Moines had a below-average contribution level on the part of the corporate community. This meant that the key to downtown revitalization was to motivate private funds to invest in improvements. Walter Walsh, public relations director for Bankers Life Insurance Company, observed that the Des Moines advantage was that with its numerous major resident corporations, it was "a home-owned town, not a branch office town."<sup>33</sup>

According to Hubbell, Ruan took his model of downtown investment through local private funding and cajoled forty companies to invest in the Marriott Hotel project which started as a "hotel-theater-convention center." Ruan controlled 60 percent of the hotel's stock with the City Center Corporation (Ruan as president) owned the building. Ruan saw the need to build a hotel to support the Civic Center and felt the ideal location was immediately west of the Ruan Center, "where the action was" downtown. Architect Kendall designed a twenty-story hotel on that site and the idea went public in October 1976. Hubbell noted, "Nobody had thought in those big of terms before." Complicating the design was the public parking garage planned to the south and links into the growing skywalk system (Figure 30). They also found competition from a second garage and hotel site in May 1977. Ruan won out however, raising the hotel to thirty stories in early 1978 and securing the Marriott hotel

<sup>31</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune* (20 December 1972): np & (2 August 1973): np.

<sup>32</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (4 August 1973): np. Ruan first looked at an even more contiguous location for his convention hotel on the Liberty Building location, but it was owned by out-of-state interest so was not readily available. He even briefly considered removing the old Bankers Trust building to the south of the Liberty building to assemble sufficient space for a hotel (*ibid.*, March 6, 1974).

<sup>33</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune* (14 August 1981): np.

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chain to brand and manage the building, which broke ground during October 1977. The final hotel rose to a height of thirty-three stories and was connected to its adjacent parking ramp through a skywalk link that also bridged east to the Ruan Center. It opened in January 1981 with a final cost of \$31 million.<sup>34</sup> In early 1984 William Knapp, another rising star in downtown improvement said, “I would hesitate to think what kind of city we’d have if it wasn’t for John Ruan. Without those (Ruan and Marriott), we wouldn’t be worrying about skywalks and apartments being downtown. The [Capital] Square wouldn’t be there. He’s been the seed to make everything happen that has been downtown.”<sup>35</sup>

Following the hotel construction, Ruan decided the only way to get community action on a new convention center was to have his architect design it and find a site. As with his other visions, this one built on the city’s dominant role as a banking and insurance city. Even as the Two Ruan was being topped off, Ruan began pushing his ideas in late March 1981. The proposal for a convention center was close to his core properties, and it was an odd design, narrow and stretched over two blocks. The design was not accepted but the site was, leading to the eventual construction of the convention center at 501 Grand.<sup>36</sup> By August 1982 architects were planning the center that would be built on Ruan’s preferred location (though north of Grand Avenue). Having forced the issue favorably, Ruan turned unsuccessfully to developing an associated parking ramp to be located on the block to the east of the Ruan Center.<sup>37</sup>

Ruan’s next vision was a Des Moines world trade center (Figure 31), an idea that developed in the fall of 1982. Kansas City and Minneapolis were also looking at comparable institutions to bolster statewide economies. The proposed location was the Bankers Trust drive-in bank that was west of the convention center. Ruan envisioned a skyscraper, comparable in size to the Ruan Center, that would house a hotel, exhibit space, and companies engaged in overseas trading of state products and services Kenneth Kendall designed the building, but it was never built—a result of hard times and the need for (ultimately unavailable) substantial state public funding.

James M. Woodward interviewed Ruan in early 1977 after the completion of Ruan Center and wrote a syndicated article titled “A new breed of office buildings.” The new building transcended mere office space by embracing “cohesive planning” a concept that tied a landmark building into social amenities and drew people back downtown. Woodward’s piece is the closest documentation to Ruan’s personal feelings about his buildings. Ruan favored using the downtown core as the “major market” location rather than relying on “fragmented planning.” Centrality of activity translated to everyone using and profiting instead of “just a peripheral neighborhood.” The

<sup>34</sup> Friedrichs, *In for the Long Haul*, 131-43; *The Des Moines Register* (21 January 1981): np; *The Des Moines Tribune* (14 April 1978): np.

<sup>35</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (4 March 1984): np.

<sup>36</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (25 March 1981): np; (2 June 1981): np; & (9 June 1981): np.

<sup>37</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (24 March 1981): np; *The Des Moines Register* (7 August 1982): np; *The Des Moines Tribune* (12 September 1978): np; January 31, March 27, September 5, 1980; March 4, 1982. The Polk County Convention Center site was formerly occupied by the landmark Paramount Theater (1923) that was imploded in October 1979 by William Knapp for Ruan, as an alternate location for the Marriott Hotel if the preferred site fell through.

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article also implied that Ruan felt his skill was winning friends and referenced the 1976 AIA architectural excellence award. The writer admitted that the building “was not always as highly acclaimed as it is today.” He then quoted Ruan, writing “Buildings are akin to man. At times during their formative stage the configuration and coloration of construction are not necessarily favorable to the beholder. Often it is premature to pass judgement on man, buildings or cities before they have matured to where they may perform their useful purpose.” Woodward closed by adding “Ruan’s philosophical words have proved to be true in the case of his dream building. It’s now generally recognized as an outstanding achievement in the new era of “people oriented” commercial development.”<sup>38</sup>

### CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### Development of the Des Moines Skyline

The Ruan Center Complex’s claim to significance under Criterion C can be established for its position on the hierarchy of the Des Moines skyline and its innovative use of an emerging building material within the well-established aesthetic of the International Style. It is the excellent and enduring product of a talented, regional architect and his ambitious, visionary client intent on putting their hometown on the map for outstanding architecture.

The development of Des Moines’ downtown and skyline mirrors that of many other American cities across the nation. It is the result of capital investments that follow the repeating cycle of economic expansion and contraction and influenced by the predominant use of the automobile for transportation throughout the twentieth century.

The history of the Des Moines skyline begins in 1886 with the completion of the Iowa State Capitol, whose dome stands at 275 feet. The Van Ginkle/Observatory Building was the first skyscraper in Des Moines (Figure 32). Completed in 1893, it was billed as “the tallest building between Chicago and San Francisco.” It was a nine story, 197-foot-tall brick office building designed by Des Moines architect Charles Edward Eastman. The observatory building was located at 400 Locust Street for forty-four years until it was demolished.<sup>39</sup>

In 1891, preceding construction of the Observatory Building, the Equitable Life Insurance Company, more commonly known as Bankers Trust Building was constructed at 605 Locust Street. As originally designed by the Boston-based architecture firm Andrews, Jacques and Rantoul, the building was eight stories of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture rendered in gray granite, red brick, and terra cotta. In 1911, the Des Moines-based architecture firm of Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson increased the height of the building with a four-

<sup>38</sup> The Ruan Scrapbooks include this article that appeared in the *Santa Barbara News Press* on March 13, 1977. It appeared elsewhere but this source included a nighttime image of the Ruan Center.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph J Korom, Jr., [\*The American Skyscraper, 1850-1940\*](#) Boston: Branden Publishing Company, 2008), 141-143.

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story addition. This building was briefly listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 22, 1976, but was subsequently removed due to a procedural error at the request of John Ruan to the National Park Service. The error arose when the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office failed to notify the owner of the Bankers Trust Building of the National Register nomination until after the state review committee considered the nomination. The building was removed from the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and subsequently demolished in 1980 to make way for the construction of Two Ruan (Figure 66b).<sup>40</sup>

In the first and second decades of the twentieth century, the Des Moines Central Business District was beginning to be filled with a number of prominent buildings that continue to shape the skyline today. In the ten years between 1909 and 1919, six skyscrapers in excess of ten stories and 140 feet were constructed. All six are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

When completed in 1924, the Equitable Building (NRHP 2015), located immediately south of the Equitable/Bankers Trust building at the southwest corner of 5th and Locust became Iowa's tallest building (Figure 33). The nineteen-story building, standing at 318 feet tall held this distinction for the next forty-eight years, ten years longer than the State Capitol. Owing to the great depression, only one skyscraper was constructed in Des Moines following the completion of the Equitable Building in the 1930s. The construction of Principal Financials eight story, 131-foot-tall Headquarters Building at 711 High Street, completed in 1940, was a notable exception to the decreasing interest in downtown commercial development through the mid-1950s.

Following the war, the nationwide trend toward suburbanization that began in the 1920's began to pick up greater momentum toward the mid-twentieth century. In 1956, Congress passed the Federal-Aid Highway Act to fund the interstate highway system. The 41,000-mile system was designed to reach every city with a population of more than 100,000. Des Moines benefited from this national trend. By 1950, the population of Polk County, Iowa had increased to 224,920, a 14.9 percent increase from the 1940 census.<sup>41</sup> The following year, grading for I-35 began in the western suburbs. By the end of the decade, on August 17, 1959, Merle Hay Mall, Des Moines' first regional shopping mall, opened its doors for business.

While post-war commercial construction slowed in the Central Business District, both the Veteran's Auditorium, completed in 1955 and downtown YMCA building (non-extant) completed in 1957 represented significant investment in Des Moines' urban core.

The 1960s saw similarly modest improvements and expansion of the Des Moines Skyline, despite a 17.9 percent increase in population (266,350) since 1950. While these downtown additions may not have shaped the skyline as earlier high-rises did, they were influential for their increasingly familiar modern aesthetic. In 1962 the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association Building (NRHP 2017) was completed on the block immediately north

<sup>40</sup> Diane, Graham, "Bankers Trust Building Off Historic List," *The Des Moines Register* (9 November 1979): 14.

<sup>41</sup> US Decennial Census, 1950.

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of what would eventually become the Ruan Center Complex (Figure 35). This building was the first building in the downtown core to employ the International Style, it was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, a pioneer of a modern, unadorned architecture based on an explicit framework of structural order balanced against the implicit freedom of unobstructed space. The three-story building occupied a half-block and was centered within an open granite-clad plaza. The glazed bank lobby area was inset beneath the black-steel and glass upper levels. The granite plaza, interior travertine walls, and the inset first level were design treatments repeated at the Ruan Center.

In 1965 the American Republic Insurance Company Building (NRHP 2015) was completed at 601 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Figure 36). Watson Powell Jr., President, CEO and Chairman of the Board, brought internationally renowned Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) from New York City to design his company's headquarters. SOM partner, William S. Brown identified their approach to modern building design by saying, "Our firm is interested in simplicity of form, as much as possible. We are trying to relieve buildings from the use of 'cosmetics'—the feeling of necessity to decorate or 'window-dress' a building in order to make it beautiful."<sup>42</sup>

The fourteen-story Central National Bank and Trust Building (317 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 1965-66) represents the first commercial high-rise building to be added to the downtown skyline since 1940. The building is located diagonally from Two Ruan on the southeast corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Locust streets. Its reinforced concrete frame is clad in black aluminum and glass. Like both the Financial Center and the Ruan Center to follow, it has a two-story banking pavilion adjacent to the tower. The lobby is lined with the same travertine marble that can be found at Home Federal and the Ruan Center. Then-mayor Charles Iles termed it "a symbol of a new era" and its promoters termed it the city's "newest and most modern" office building having "autotronic elevators" and central and peripheral air conditioning. An adjacent parking garage was part of the complex. Epstein and Sons of Chicago were the architects. They sought to create "an open feeling" and a "unity of appearance." with their building design.<sup>43</sup>

These key buildings set the contextual stage for the planning and construction of the Ruan Center. *Register* writer, George Shane, reviewed these architectural improvements in early 1967 under the title "Our Changing Skyline: How Downtown Des Moines is Looking Up." His positive review, combined with his opinion that the city was regarded as "a conglomeration of blighted areas," included this positive summation of local design talent. He wrote "A majority of the architects here, some of whom are now middle-aged, show in their work that

<sup>42</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune* (29 April 29, 1962): np; March 15, 28, December 19, 1963. This building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 22, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (8 September 1963), np; January 10, February 17, 1965; May 10, 1966; *The Des Moines Tribune*, June 26, October 25, 1965; May 27, June 29, 1966. It is now the Bank of America.

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they have come to embrace the principles of Contemporary Architecture. Influences of Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and the Saarinens are seen all over town. This, we think is for the good.”<sup>44</sup>

Following the completion of the Financial Center in 1973 and Ruan Center in 1975, downtown Des Moines saw a dramatic and sustained increase in high-rise and large-scale construction that include the following buildings:

- 1981 - Marriot Hotel (365’ high/33 stories) 700 Grand Ave
- 1981 - Elsie Manor (170’ high/17 stories) 430 Grand Ave
- 1983 - Capitol Square (107’ high/8 stories) 400 Locust St.
- 1985 - Plaza Building (340’ high/25 stories) 300 Walnut
- 1985 - Polk County Convention Complex (Civic Amenity)
- 1986 - Hub Tower (325’ high/25 stories) 555 Walnut St
- 1986 - Principal #5 (144’ high/11 stories) 650 8th St.
- 1986 - Park Place Apartments (164’ high/16 stories) 615 Park St.
- 1987 - Ligutti Tower Apartments (204’ high/21 stories) 555 5th Ave
- 1988 - Wells Fargo Financial Tower (131’ high/11 stories) 206 8th St.
- 1991 - 801 Grand (630’ high/45 stories) 801 Grand Ave
- 1997 - EMC Insurance Building (325’ high/19 stories) 700 Walnut St

MODERN MOVEMENT IN ARCHITECTURE

Cyril M. Harris defines Modernism as “a loosely applied term, used since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for buildings, in any number of styles, in which emphasis in design is placed on functionalism, rationalism, and up-to-date methods of construction; in contrast with architectural styles based on historical precedents and traditional ways of building.”<sup>45</sup> In the United States, the pent-up demand created by shortages and restrictions put in place to support the war effort gave way to a booming construction industry beginning in the 1940s. Alongside the development of suburban neighborhoods came the need for more office and commercial space to meet the rising demand for consumer goods. This led to the boom in urban towers, each one trying to compete with its predecessors in terms of height, scale, and design. As a solution, Modernism emerged to innovate and reimagine how to live, work, and interact. The style retreated from the fanciful designs of the past to not only distinguish the new towers from the old, but to express in an honest way how the building functioned. This new period of design was freed from the heavy masonry structure of the past by engineering advances that built on technology developed during the War.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (12 February 1967): np.

<sup>45</sup> Cyril Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: WW Norton Company, 1998), 217.

<sup>46</sup> Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980), 277.

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The modern design of the Ruan Center follows the well-established approach to tall-building organization espoused by Proto-modernist, Louis H. Sullivan in his 1896 essay *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered*, quoted below:

The practical conditions are, broadly speaking, these:

Wanted-1st, a story below-ground, containing boilers, engines of various sorts, etc.,-in short, the plant for power, heating, lighting, etc. 2nd, a ground floor, so called, devoted to stores, banks, or other establishments requiring large area, ample spacing, ample light, and great freedom of access. 3rd, a second story readily accessible by stairways, this space usually in large subdivisions, with corresponding liberality in structural spacing and expanse of glass and breadth of external openings. 4th, above this an indefinite number of stories of offices piled tier upon tier, one tier just like another tier, one office just like all the other offices, -an office being similar to a cell in a honey-comb, merely a compartment, nothing more. 5th and last, at the top of this pile is placed a space or story that, as related to the life and usefulness of the structure, is purely physiological in its nature, namely, the attic. In this the circulatory system completes itself and makes its grand turn, ascending and descending. The space is filled with tanks, pipes, valves, sheaves, and mechanical et cetera that supplement and complement the force originating plant hidden below-ground in the cellar. Finally, or at the beginning rather, there must be on the ground floor a main aperture or entrance common to all the occupants or patrons of the building.<sup>47</sup>

The thirty-six story Ruan Tower exemplifies many of the conditions expressed by Sullivan. The ground floor is spacious and flooded with light and is the main entrance to the Tower. A bank was a previous tenant on the ground floor. The second floor is composed of commercial tenant spaces and is accessed by an escalator and stairways. The upper floors are a repeated plan with a central core of stairs and a bank of elevators with interior buildouts to suit the tenant. Lastly, the building's "circulatory system" as described by Sullivan runs to course through the entire building through the central service core.

The Ruan Complex exemplifies one type of modern movement architecture above all others – the International Style. The International Style eschewed any nonessential ornamentation and encouraged the use of industrial materials to prioritize light-filled interior space that relied on structural steel framing in lieu of masonry to provide open, free-flowing spaces.<sup>48</sup> Starting in the 1920's, this style was popularly adopted for office towers and high rises between the 1940s and 1970s. These buildings used concrete, glass, and steel and often relied on

<sup>47</sup> Louis Sullivan, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," *Lippincott's Magazine* (March 1896): 403-404.

<sup>48</sup> Harris, *American Architecture*, 40, 182.

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structural elements to provide visual interest. Curtainwall glazing and ribbon windows were defining elements of the style. The architecture of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (March 27, 1886– August 17, 1969) and LeCorbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 6 October 1887 – 27 August 1965) exemplified the style.

The Ruan Center (1975) was completed near the end of the period when the glass box, also known as the “Miesian glass box,” served as the symbol of American business.<sup>49</sup> A classic example is Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building in New York, designed in 1954 and completed in 1958. The upper stories of the RCC high-rises follow a similar construction, but with two distinctively different results. On the Tower, flat steel panels are suspended from the slab edge in typical curtainwall fashion, but the fenestration pattern follows an almost masonry-like rhythm that would be more familiarly found on one of Sullivan’s masonry-clad skyscrapers. At Two Ruan, Corbusian ribbon windows are suspended between weathering steel spandrels with any reference to the building’s structural framing minimized in all but the building’s base.

The Tower was designed at the end of the International Style era at a time when Post-Modern architecture was being widely adopted. This style evolved in line with the philosophical shift toward embracing the complexities and contradictions in American culture in building forms rather than Modern’s orderly, idealized purity of form. Post-Modernism sought to incorporate historical elements, color, and traditional materials to large scale buildings. One of the most famous post-modern buildings is Michael Graves Portland Building (1982) which has symbolic elements on its monumental facades.

### THE RUAN TEAM

This large and complex design and construction effort was the product of a diverse and young design team. The selection process is unknown, but for many of these firms, including all the local ones, this was their first major construction effort. Almost all the firms are in business today and some even gained an international reputation. The architects were challenged to work at a scale that far exceeded their experience, so the role of several engineering firms was of critical importance. The design team included:

Architects, Kendall Griffith Russell and Artiaga, Des Moines  
Structural Engineers, Vanderlinden & Dennis, Des Moines  
Structural Engineers, Rittweger & Tokay, Inc., Rock Ridge, Illinois  
Mechanical Engineer, Paul A. Walters, Des Moines  
Environmental Engineers, Environmental Systems Designs, Chicago<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper and Rowe Publishers, 1980), page 284.

<sup>50</sup> Known associates with the firm were Carlyle S. Thomas (1899-1970) who was with Kendell-Griffith 1965-70; Peter J. Kauzlarich who was made an associate in 1972 and Carl Versteeg who joined it in 1976, Pella Chronicle, May 19, 1976, Des Moines *Register*, February 5, 1970 and January 30, 1972.



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Contractors, Neumann Brothers Construction Company

When John Ruan purchased his first corporate headquarters building in 1962 (the Standard Oil Company division headquarters, 1941-42, extant, (Figure 37) he needed an architect to design a substantial face-lift (Figure 37). Ruan liked the remodeling of the Iowa Power and Light Company office building (9<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets, 1949-50, non-extant Figure 38) which led him to the local architect Robert Kenneth Kendall. The building was refaced with some or all the following materials: tile, marble, or terrazzo. The Iowa Power and Light Company building is of interest due to its very early modern-style and it was the first Des Moines commercial building to have its gas-heating plant on the penthouse level.<sup>51</sup>

Gerald I. Griffith and Robert Kenneth Kendall became partners in late May 1962, and they partnered with George Russell and Jesus M. Artiaga in late January 1972. John Ruan favored this firm early on, despite Bankers Trust's (the primary building tenant) preference for Brooks-Borg. Bankers Trust used Brooks-Borg on the 1961 bank addition that was taken down for the Carriers Building (aka Two Ruan). By 1970 Kendall-Griffith were designing the successive Bankers Trust drive-in banks. The architects became tenants in the new Ruan Center and would design Two Ruan, the Marriott Hotel, the Convention Center (not built) and The World Trade Center (not built), as well as several parking garages.<sup>52</sup>

Two Des Moines buildings have special pertinence relative to the subject property. The two-story office building, constructed in 1966 at 1321 Walnut Street, is attributed to Kendall and used an upper-level COR-TEN curtain wall system (Figure 40). The lightweight system allowed for a broad recessed corner entryway and a recessed covered way on the west and north frontages. This same overhang unfortunately allowed the rusty wall drainage to fall directly on parked cars.

Figure 39 depicts the largest known design that was built by Kendall-Griffith that followed the completion of the Ruan Center Complex. The Methodist Medical Plaza, while not clad in COR-TEN, very much echoed the design lines of Two Ruan with its uninterrupted window bands and its dark brick exterior (Figure 41). A substantial and incremental comparable design was a new wing for Iowa Lutheran Hospital (Figure 42). It started out as a four-story base in 1963 and four more stories were added in 1971.<sup>53</sup>

Robert Kenneth Kendall (1920-2009) was born in Altoona, Iowa and graduated from Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Iowa State University). During World War II he served in photo intelligence. He was notable as a landscape architect and simultaneously was licensed in Iowa in architecture, engineering, and landscaping. He worked fifteen years for Brooks-Borg Architects in Des Moines and his subsequent firms frequently worked together particularly in parking ramp design. One of his last major works

<sup>51</sup> *The Des Moines Tribune* (1 September 1949): np & (28 June 1961): np; Friedrichs, *In for the Long Haul*, 104-105.

<sup>52</sup> *Des Moines Register*, May 27, 1962, January 30, 1972. *Des Moines Register*, April 26, 1959; February 13, 1966.

<sup>53</sup> *Des Moines Register*, June 12, 1963; *Des Moines Tribune*, March 27, 1965, July 7, 1969, September 9, 1971.

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under Brooks-Borg was the remodeling of Iowa Power and Light Company's headquarters at 823 Walnut in 1961. His most notable early design was 3660 Grand, one of the first city designs to be known by its address. Prior to partnering with Griffith, he designed banks, schools, hospital additions and corporate and collegiate buildings. He is credited by multiple sources as being the lead designer on the original Ruan Center. Kendall received numerous landscaping awards and all of the company designs focused extensively on landscaping and on the provision of plazas and open areas.<sup>54</sup>

Gerald I. Griffith (1910-1999) was born in Waterloo, Iowa and graduated from Iowa State University, prior to relocating to Des Moines in 1939. Griffith was also an artist and was involved in the Stone City Art Colony. He designed churches, church schools and additions and several Iowa State campus buildings prior to 1962. His most notable works were the Farmer's Reinsurance Building (1954, 1957) which gained two upper stories covered with a shot-sawn limestone veneer.

George William Russell (1920- ) was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa and graduated from Iowa State University in 1943. He worked six years for Smith, Powell and Morgridge of Los Angeles, school designers. He next position was as chief draftsman for Tinsley, Higgins, Lighter and Lyon in Des Moines and went out on his own in August 1955 prior to partnering with James A. Lynch in September 1958. He joined Kendall-Griffith in 1966.<sup>55</sup> His notable designs include the Ingersoll Medical Clinic and the Ingersoll Office Building, both in 1957 (Figures 43 & 44).

Jesus M. Artiaga (1928-2005) was born in the Philippines and graduated from the University of Santo Tomas at Manila in 1949. He came to the United States in 1962 and began as an intern with the U. S. State Department architectural program where he attended the University of Michigan. He joined the firm of Warren Holmes (1954-56), Brooks-Borg (1956-62) and Kendall-Griffith (1963-unknown) where he was made an associate in 1966 and a full partner in the enlarged firm in 1972.<sup>56</sup>

It is probable that Vanderlinden & Dennis, based in Des Moines, served as construction supervisors for the out-of-town structural engineers. Frank B. Dennis (1929-2017) was born in Nebraska and was a graduate of the University of Nebraska. Charles W. Vanderlinden (1928-1993) served on the Des Moines City Council 1967-71 and played a key role in establishing the Des Moines Metro Solid Waste Agency. He won more than one hundred engineering awards and also worked on the Botanical Center, many hospitals, and correctional facilities. He moved to Florida in 1982 and worked there for the engineering firm Hansen Lind Meyer.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Des Moines Register*, October 29, 1961, April 16, 2009, *Des Moines Tribune*, October 8, 1969.

<sup>55</sup> *Des Moines Register*, August 14, 1955; September 7, 1958: John F Gane, ed. *American Architects Directory*, 3d Edition 1970 (New York: R. R. Bowker LLC, 1970), 789.

<sup>56</sup> *Gane, American Architects Directory*, 29, *Des Moines Register*, January 2, 1966, November 19, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> *Des Moines Register*, April 7, 1963, November 17, 1970, March 5, 1993.

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William Rittweger and Mehmet N. Tokay partnered in 1966 to form Rittweger & Tokay, Inc. of Rock Ridge, Illinois. Tokay (1921-1986) was born in Turkey and earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Illinois-Urbana in 1943. Rittweger appears to have died in 1973 while the Ruan Center was underway. This firm would have designed the actual tower-pavilion steel structure.

Orrington Plaza (1969), One Rotary Center (1977) and Millennium Park Plaza (1982) are high-rise examples that bookend the firm's work with the Ruan Center (Figure 45). All three designs were built atop underground parking levels. Orrington Plaza is rated as twenty-two stories and is at 1603 Orrington Avenue in Evanston, Illinois. It featured floor-to ceiling windows and while not COR-TEN, covered its lines, and the coloration is quite like the Ruan Center. One Rotary Center (associated with Rotary International) is at 1560 Sherman Street, also in Evanston. The Millennium Park Plaza, at 151 Michigan Avenue, is a residential tower in Chicago (Figure 45).

Paul A. Walters (1927-2004) of Des Moines designed and supervised the assemblage of building mechanicals. He is referenced as being in business as early as November 1956.<sup>58</sup> He is most noted for designing the mechanicals for the present Des Moines International Concourse (1971), but also worked on the Armory, City Hall, and Roosevelt High School—all in Des Moines.

Environmental Systems Designs (ESD) of Chicago were the Environmental Engineers on the Ruan Center. Hem Chander Gupta (1932-2017) first worked with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in Chicago, starting in 1954 and most notably worked on the Inland Steel Building (1956, 30 West Monroe Street, Chicago). He became chief engineer with Perkins and Will prior to founding ESD in 1967 and his firm designed and installed (certainly aided by Paul Walters on the local level) the building computerized mechanical controls in the Ruan Center. ESD is Chicago's largest MEP consulting firm and is associated worldwide with the construction of the tallest buildings.<sup>59</sup>

The company in charge of the overall construction process was Neumann Brothers Construction Company. Arthur H. Neumann of Des Moines established the company in 1912 which has grown today as Neumann Brothers Construction into one of the largest Iowa general construction companies. The firm is responsible for a good portion of the Des Moines skyline. It built all of the buildings central to this document under contract with John Ruan (Ruan Center, Two Ruan, and the Marriott Hotel, the original parking garage that was linked to the Ruan Center by a skywalk) and several notable earlier buildings including the Des Moines National Bank Building (1930) and the notable Mies van der Rohe designed American Republic Insurance Company building (1962). *Mid-West Contractor* celebrated this company's role in building the Ruan Center under the title "A. H.

<sup>58</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, November 28, 1956, November 13, 1961, June 16, 1962, April 25, 1966, May 10, 1973; *Des Moines Register*, May 16, 1962, June 27, 1966, April 9, 1967, June 3, 1969, June 4, 1971, January 19, 1975, March 20, 2000, May 28, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 2017; <https://www.esdglobal.com/news/article/987-hem-gupta-passes-away-esd-founder-remembered-for-integrity-kindness>.

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Neumann & Bros., Inc, Build's Iowa's Tallest." The firm also built many other parking garages and much of the skywalk.<sup>60</sup>

The COR-TEN for the buildings was provided by the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company. They had an established capacity to weld COR-TEN using an "automatic girth seam welding machine." The machine could handle thicknesses from a quarter to three-quarter inches. The company assembled four 180-foot high circular coal silos, measuring 70 feet in diameter for the Inland Steel Company's coal mine at Sesser, Illinois. These silos, formerly built of concrete, were the largest in the country. How the silos were transported from fabricator to the site is not determined.<sup>61</sup>

Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company was organized in 1892 as the Des Moines Bridge and Iron Company and appears to have some franchised relation with the U. S. Steel Company in Pittsburgh. It adopted this title in 1916 and remained in business, after 1980 as Pittsburg-DM or Pitt-DM until it was bought out in 2003. Its most notable clients were the Gateway Arch in St. Louis (1963-65) and the World Trade Center in New York City (1966-1973).<sup>62</sup>

While the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company provided and prepared the steel, the Venetian Iron Works did the actual panel fabrication. *Mid-West Contractor* reported "The unpainted plate wall of the 440-foot tower is being fabricated from 1,600 tons of United States Steel COR-TEN by Venetian Iron Works of Des Moines. The firm was established as Venetian Ornamental Iron by the Italian-born Louis Besardelli in 1922 to produce ornamental ironwork for stairs, porches, lanterns, and its products were used in the Cass County Courthouse at Atlantic and in the Saint Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines. In 1958 Mario Zenti incorporated the firm and turned increasingly to quality steel fabrication for power plants and water works. Major contracts by the company included the Martin Marietta Aluminum Plant in Goldendale, Washington, the Trident Vertical Missile building in Bangor, Washington; the Ford Motor Company plant in Cleveland, Ohio; the United States Army Black Powder Plant in Charlesberg, Indiana; the TVA Nuclear Station in Hartville, Tennessee; and the Ruan Center in Des Moines, Iowa. Large projects completed by 1971 included nuclear power plants located near Chicago and at Brownsville and Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, anti-ballistic missile bases in North Dakota and Montana, a water pollution control plant in Cedar Rapids, a fine art building at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, and a basic science building for Drake University in Des Moines. The firm established a new plant at 5281 Northeast 17<sup>th</sup> Street in Des Moines where the steelwork for the Ruan Center was prepared for installation. That plant survives today and is occupied by the Ryerson Steel Company. The firm was renamed Central Western Fabricators, Inc., in 1987.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> "A.H. Neumann & Bros., Inc, Buildings Tallest," *Mid-West Contractor* (31 July 1974): 16-18; *The Des Moines Tribune*, July 3, 1974.

<sup>61</sup> *The Des Moines Register*, December 11, 1966.

<sup>62</sup> Pencak, *Historic Pennsylvania* (San Antonio, Texas: Historic Publishing Network, 2008), page 49-50.

<sup>63</sup> <http://centralwestern.net/default.asp?page=Central%20Western%20History>, *Des Moines Register*, January 10, 1971; A.H.

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### THE INNOVATION OF COR-TEN

COR-TEN, or weathering steel, is created by adding nickel and chromium to steel to produce a stronger (tensile strength), lighter steel product that forms its own self-protecting rust coating that over the course of time turns a uniform brown color. The name COR-TEN comes from an amalgamation of the words corrosion and tensile. It was developed and patented in the 1930s by the U.S. Steel Corporation for the production of railroad coal wagons. Despite the initial higher costs than typical steel plate, COR-TEN was marketed as a cost-saving material for its ability to reduce lifecycle costs associated with maintenance. By the 1960s the material was becoming popular as a material for public sculpture and bridge construction. According to a report published in 1989 by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, over two thousand U.S. bridges have used weathering steel in their construction since the mid-1960s.<sup>64</sup>

The use of COR-TEN in building construction had not been considered until architect Eero Saarinen chanced upon the material in the early 1960s and determined to use it in the design of the John Deere Company World Headquarters (1964) in Moline, Illinois, a four-story office building. In a bucolic setting Saarinen believed that COR-TEN's weathered look would reflect the down-to-earth nature of John Deere's business, while the modern building design would reflect the company's commitment to new technologies (Figure 46).

In Des Moines, the future architect of the Ruan Center Complex, R. Kenneth Kendall, first experimented with COR-TEN as a building material in 1965. Kendall utilized the material on the two-story Fridley Theater Corporate Office at 1321 Walnut Street. While it is natural to assume that Kendall's first-hand experience with weathering steel influenced the choice of COR-TEN as the principal material of the RCC, John Ruan was

aware of the material in his own right. Ruan was among those invited to attend the June 4-5, 1964, grand opening of the Deere Administrative Center and was sent copies of the events brochure and a hard-copy compendium of the comments made by Deere officials. The brochure included these comments by the late architect Eero Saarinen about his use of COR-TEN in his Moline design:

Having decided to use steel in the Deere buildings, we wanted to make a steel building that was *really* a steel building (most so-called steel buildings seem to me to be more glass buildings than steel buildings, really not one thing or the other). We sought for an appropriate material—economical, maintenance-free, bold in character, dark in color. We located a certain high-tensile steel which has a peculiar characteristic: If this steel is left unpainted, a rust coating forms which becomes a protective layer over the steel. This rust

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Neumann & Bros....," *Mid-West Contractor*, 16-18.

<sup>64</sup> NCHRP 314 "Guidelines for the Use of Weathering Steel in Bridges" Shefadia Associates, Inc. Consulting Engineers. June 1989.

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coating—which does not develop beyond a certain point—is a cinnamon-brown color which makes a beautiful dark surface on the steel. With our exposed structural system, we could use the marvelous material to its full advantage.<sup>65</sup>

The Ruan Center was among the earliest buildings to use COR-TEN as a primary cladding material at such a grand scale. *Northwestern Banker* magazine proclaimed the Ruan Center to be the state's tallest building in January 1974 and the tallest COR-TEN-clad building west of the Mississippi River. John Ruan was quoted saying that the cladding “provides a maintenance-free and lastingly beautiful exterior.”<sup>66</sup> This was a rare, documented statement on his part regarding the building's exterior finish.

Between the opening of the Deere Headquarters in 1964 and by 1983, when Two Ruan was placed in service, a handful of large-scale projects were clad with COR-TEN:

Building	Location	Architect	Date	Size
Richard J. Daley Center	55 W. Randolph St. Chicago, IL	CF Murphy & Associates (Jacques Brownson)	1965	40 floors at 645 feet
Ford Foundation Building	321 East 42nd Street, New York, NY	Roche & Dinkeloo (Kevin Roche)	1968	12 floors at 174 feet
Time-Life Building	541 North Fairbanks Court, Chicago, IL	Harry Weese & Associates (Harry Weese)	1969	30 floors at 404 feet
US Steel Tower	600 Grant Street, Pittsburg, PA	Harrison, Abramovitz & Abbe	1971	64 floors at 841 feet
Knights of Columbus Headquarters	One Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT	Roche & Dinkeloo (Kevin Roche)	1972	23 floors at 320 feet
Omni Arena	100 Techwood Drive, Atlanta, GA	Thompson, Ventuletti, Stainbeck & Associates	1972 - 1997	Civic Arena w/ 15,278 seats
Uris Hall at Cornell University	109 Tower Rd, Ithaca, NY	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Bunschaft)	1972	4 Floors at unknown height
New Haven Coliseum	275 S Orange St., New Haven CT	Roche & Dinkeloo (Kevin Roche)	1972 - 2007	Civic Arena w/ 11,457 seats
Annenburg Building at Mt. Sinai Hospital	1468 Madison Ave, New York, NY	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill	1974	26 floors at 436 feet

COR-TEN's use as a building material was not without criticism. In Ithaca, New York, just one year after the Uris Building was placed in service at Cornell University in 1972, maintenance staff reported that the year-old building cost about 81 cents per square foot to maintain compared to the 15 cents per square foot of a typical university building. It turned out that Ithaca lacked sufficient air-borne pollutants to oxidize the surface of the COR-TEN sufficiently to stabilize the surface in the anticipated time frame. The result required the maintenance

<sup>65</sup> Friedrichs, *In it for the Long Haul*, 120; *Des Moines Tribune*, April 14, 1967; “Challenge to an architect,” William A. Hewitt to Ruan, February 8, 1965, Ruan Corporate Scrapbooks.

<sup>66</sup> *Northwestern Banker*, January 1976 (Ruan Scrapbooks).

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staff to quickly remove the rusty run-off from the buildings large sheets of glass before they became permanently stained. Similarly, the paving surrounding the U.S. Steel Building bears an orangish tint.<sup>67</sup>

These emerging issues around the oxidation process might provide insight on why U.S. Steel took special pains to explain the nature of COR-TEN when it prepared a structural report on the Ruan Center in January 1974 noting:

To most Des Moines observers, however, it will be a new experience. Initially, the exterior wall's appearance will be almost identical to the grey color and texture of bare carbon steel sheets. This condition changes quite rapidly. And, as the COR-TEN continues to be exposed to the wet and dry cycles of weather, a tightly adherent protective-oxide coating is formed. In its early stages, the corrosion-resistant patina has a russet color. However, it gradually deepens to an attractive dark early shade over a period of approximately two to four years.

The Des Moines *Sunday Register* highlighted the John Deere Company World Headquarters in Moline, Illinois with an extensive photo series in late 1978, noting that it and the Ruan Center shared the same use of COR-TEN.<sup>68</sup>

For all its initial promise, the use of COR-TEN was never widely embraced. The 1973 oil crisis, the move toward Post Modern architecture and the requirement for fastidious detailing and water-management likely contributed to its limited use. In Iowa, Des Moines-based Charles Herbert & Associates used COR-TEN on the four-story Brenton Financial Center at the corner of E. 1st Ave. and 2nd St. NE in 1976. By 1983, U.S. Steel was paying to replace the rust-pitted, lowest panels of the exterior with painted steel panels. Both the Omni Coliseum in Atlanta and the New Haven Veterans Memorial Coliseum were demolished after only 25 and 35 years in service. Recently, new formulations of weathering steel have become available, and a number of award-winning buildings, churches and bridges have utilized it within the state.<sup>69</sup>

MEDIA ATTENTION FOR AN ICON

COR-TEN does not reach its final form for many years and the scale and form of this building were a problem. First and foremost, the building has to finish itself through a weathering and oxidation process that can take as long as eight years. The Ruan Center's architectural worthiness was made more complex because of its scale and

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Olmstead, "Old Rusty Design Hikes Upkeep Costs," *The Cornell Daily Sun* (2 October 1973): 1.

<sup>68</sup> Randy Evans, "An Inside View of Deere Building: 'It's Like Working at a Picnic Table'" *The Des Moines Sunday Register* (5 November 1978):235.

<sup>69</sup> *The Des Moines Register* (18 October 1983): np.

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due to its technological innovations. The honest consideration of the resulting dichotomy in the public and professional response is fundamental to understanding changing modern architectural tastes.

The *Northwestern Banker* issued a progress report on the building construction in January 1974 by which time the twenty-eighth floor had been reached and the Ruan Center was the state's tallest building (Figure 47). It was also the tallest COR-TEN-clad building west of the Mississippi River.<sup>70</sup>

The reception of the completed Ruan Center varied widely depending on the type of publication. The banking magazines focused on Bankers Trust (primary tenant of the Tower) and the contractor's magazines focused on A. H. Neumann & Brothers, the general contractor, but praised the developer for the use of local talent and materials. *Mid-West Contractor* (Figure 48) praised the skyscraper, noting:

The Ruan Center in downtown Des Moines lends itself to superlatives – its tower is the tallest building in the state, its tenants will enjoy probably the most secure structure in town and, compared to its peers in the four-state area, it will be the safest. These “bests” go far beyond minimum building code requirements and reflect the selectivity and attention to safety detail that may be a requisite for future high rise construction...Care in planning and execution has been the common thread tying in the on-schedule, on-budget progress the project is making.<sup>71</sup>

Contemporaneous praise came in *Northwestern Banker* (November 1975) (Figures 68 & 69), *Modern Bulk Transporter* (December 1975) and *The Iowan* (Spring 1976). The banking journal quoted Thomas L. Wright, Bankers Trust president as saying, “The dedication should help nail the lid on an outmoded theory that a bank building should look and function like a strongbox for the cash it holds.” The pavilion naturally was the article's focal point and “the openness of the main bank entrance may seem strikingly contemporary” noting its three walls of glass and north wall of travertine. Functional attention was paid to the fifth-floor bank computer facilities and the first lower-level placement of bank vaults, safety deposit boxes, and conference rooms. The maintenance free feature of the COR-TEN cladding was cited as was the promise of “a dark earth-brown color” within seven years. The trucking magazine led off by saying the building complex was “a model for future high-rise construction in terms of safety, security, building maintenance and energy conservation.” The COR-TEN covering was praised as being self-sealing and an asset for fire-proofing and energy-savings. Otherwise, the building review focused on “sophisticated computer [management] systems” with emphasis being paid to the elevators, internal communications, the sprinkler system, and a standby electric generator.

U.S. Steel was eager to promote the new buildings and its use of COR-TEN. Despite the eight-year timeframe to fully develop the coating, the company waited a mere four years to present the building in its matured

<sup>70</sup> *Northwestern Banker* (January 1974): np.

<sup>71</sup> “A.H. Neumann & Bros...,” *Mid-West Contractor*, 16-18.



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coloration and to laud its technological advantages along with its choice of exterior cladding material. The unified plate and structural wall simplified fabrication and perimeter or module columns opened the interior space and approximated a center-core design. As for COR-TEN, the company did add a disclaimer in a brochure that addressed “suggestions, limitations and precautions” for its use. Otherwise, the Ruan Center had chosen COR-TEN “for its resistance to atmospheric corrosion when its exterior surfaces are boldly exposed to the weather, and for its minimal maintenance needs.”<sup>72</sup>

*Register* writer Susan Cara surveyed the changing downtown in 1983 and noted that the Ruan Center “now is as much a symbol of downtown Des Moines as is the Travelers Insurance Company’s neon umbrella or Claes Oldenberg’s steel one.” She added “in addition, the skyline now features the 25-story Financial Center, opened in 1974, and the 14-story Carriers Building, which opened last year.”<sup>73</sup>

The Ruan and Financial Center buildings dominated the skyline through the mid-1980s but the era of flat-roofed squared off towers was over. *Register* critic Blair Kamin castigated buildings such as these as not “scraping” the sky but rather “hitting it like a brick” with their lack of crowning features apart from a penthouse housing mechanicals. Other local high rise buildings constructed at this time, such as the Hub Tower, were playing with massing and sporting capping components.<sup>74</sup> The Principal Building, built after the Ruan, used square corners and had a pointed copper hat. Once completed, area architects praised it and even Kenneth Kendall rated it “a fine addition for the skyline of Des Moines.”<sup>75</sup>

That same fall David Elbert, also with the *Register*, polled the populace as to their preferred iconic Des Moines buildings. The Ruan Center readily took first place in the ugliest building category, garnering 28 percent of the votes. Elbert remarked that seven of the most popular Des Moines buildings post-dated the groundbreaking for the Ruan Center in 1973.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, it was lauded by seven percent as being the best looking, which put it in third place after Capital Square and the Iowa State Capitol. Elbert mused about the legacy of the buildings, noting:

Since the Ruan Center was completed in 1975, it has suffered a number of appellations, few of which are much prettier than the tower’s orangish-brown oxidized sheets of Cor-Ten steel, which long ago prompted many downtown workers to drop the [first] “t” from Bankers Trust, the Ruan business that occupies the tower’s ground floor.

<sup>72</sup> *AIA Journal* (November 1979): 9. In 2004 a select panel of critics included the Ruan Center Complex in a roster of the fifty best Iowa buildings by the Iowa AIA in 2004, rising to top five for its decade.

<sup>73</sup> *Des Moines Register* (24 April 1983): np.

<sup>74</sup> *Des Moines Register*, July 6, 1985.

<sup>75</sup> *Burlington Hawk Eye*, December 6, 1987; *Des Moines Register*, October 14, 1990.

<sup>76</sup> *Des Moines Register*, November 29, 1985.

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Nonetheless, it is something of an irony that the skyscraper that helped spawn downtown redevelopment a decade ago is today so widely reviled.

Architect Kendall embodied his design lessons from the Ruan buildings a decade later when he prepared a conceptual design for Ruan's Des Moines World Trade Center in 1985 (never built). Similar in height and massing, the new work replaced glass and metal framing with any solid-appearing alternative (see Figure 43). The *Register's* Blair Kamin termed the design "another architectural mediocrity" one that better suited the Dallas skyline of anywhere-U.S.A. Blair referenced the architect's previous work for Ruan at the Ruan Center a "rust-colored 33-story high-rise...followed that with the equally rusty, chunky Carriers building."<sup>77</sup>

*Register* writer Eliot Nusbaum was more charitable than many critics when he summarized the downtown's experiments with "the hard-edged, sparsely detailed cube..." Ruan's tower was the last of and "the primary home-grown example" of two important buildings, both designed by out-of-town architects, the American Federal Savings and Loan Building (1962) and the American Republic Insurance Company building (1965). The first anti-box design, the Civic Center (1979) was still conceptually square, but with parts of the square cut away. Subsequently a flood of other downtown building designs more aggressively experimented with irregular massings.<sup>78</sup>

CONSTRUCTING THE RUAN CENTER COMPLEX – THE TOWER

Block B, Commissioner's Addition, City of Des Moines was well built up when the Ruan Center was first envisioned. Only the twelve-story Liberty Building (1923, 418 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, NRHP 2009), on the northeast quarter of the block, remains extant. The twelve-story Bankers Trust Building (1891, 1911, 601 Locust Street) occupied the southeast quarter, and a 1961 six-story bank addition adjoined it to the west were demolished to build Two Ruan. The eleven-story Chamberlain Hotel (1903, 1915, 617-25 Locust Street, 407-11 Seventh Street) and the five story Odd Fellows Hall (615 Locust Street) occupied the southwest corner and were demolished to build the Pavilion. The northwest quarter block had been cleared in 1960.

The Ruan Center began with architect Robert Kendall preparing very preliminary building plans, money being no limitation, since no scale or location had been established. The L shape building site was determined by the ability to acquire land. The Bankers Building Corporation had long owned the southeast quarter of the block. The same entity added the southwest quarter (lots three and four) between late December 1969 and May 1972 with the adjacent alleyways being vacated by the city in late 1972. Finally, the northwest quarter (lots five and six), were acquired by Ruan by means of court and quit claim deeds obtained between November 1969 and early January 1970.

<sup>77</sup> *Des Moines Register*, June 9, 1985. It didn't impress Kamin that the design envisioned a skywalk leading west into the American Federal Building.

<sup>78</sup> *Des Moines Register*, March 12, 1995.

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In 1970, Bankers Trust closed the deal on the middle quarter of the block and John Ruan passed ownership of the north quarter lot to Bankers Building Corporation. With the consolidation of ownership, Bankers Building Corporation held what the *Des Moines Register* described as “the largest contiguous parcel of downtown property owned and controlled by one firm.” Substantial buildings require comparable sites, but it wasn’t until late October 1971 that even the most general corporate intention was revealed to build “a major downtown office development.” Plans, in the formative stages, were being shaped by three parties—the Ruan companies, Bankers Trust, and Blue Cross-Blue Shield.<sup>79</sup>

As planning progressed, Ruan sent his architect to Chicago to secure a solid proposal and cost estimate. A bid was received for a reinforced concrete building even though tall buildings usually used steel. Architect Kendall detoured to see Saarinen’s John Deere Headquarters building with its COR-TEN cladding and returned, championing the material and suggesting Ruan secure a cost estimate for its use. Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company and Arthur H. Neumann and Brothers Construction Company came up with considerably low bids that pleased John Ruan. Ruan offered Neumann the general construction contract with the condition that it would become a tenant in the new building and switch its banking to Bankers Trust, and documents were finalized.<sup>80</sup>

Ruan progressed quickly, getting tenant agreements and seeking to compete and surpass other buildings in height, which provided further impetus to vacate and demolish properties. By December 1971, Ruan filled 80 percent of the new office building that ranged from twenty-seven to thirty-five stories high. The Equitable Building, directly south of and fronting the 1891/1911 Bankers Trust Building was the state’s tallest building at nineteen stories. Bankers Trust official statements at this point located the tower on the southwest quarter of the block and not where it was to finally land. That quarter-block was covered with buildings but McMartens and Associates of Omaha, Nebraska, found drilling points where test borings could be sent down. The hotel and Odd Fellows building tenants were given until May 1 to vacate. Newspaper coverage noted the planned twenty-one-story Cedar Rapids building, so tallest building status was up in the air even as the developers enlarged the building envelope conservatively as they added confirmed tenants. The work on the Cedar Rapids skyscraper contender would stall out for a full year giving Ruan the advantage it needed.<sup>81</sup>

The J. C. White Excavation Company set to work in early May to raze the Odd Fellows and then the hotel buildings. Despite the difficulties encountered in taking down the Davidson Department Store building (over six months at the time of first demolition), time estimates to finish this demolition work were less than two and a

<sup>79</sup> “Eye Downtown Office Complex,” *The Des Moines Tribune* (26 October 1971): 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, December 18, 1972.

<sup>81</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, December 9, 1971; *Des Moines Register*, December 12, 1971. The Cedar Rapids tower contender suffered a year’s delay but was finished as planned in 1972 and is now the Alliant Tower, 21 stories high and located at 200 First Street Southeast.

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half months and completed in just thirty-nine days.<sup>82</sup> The Davidson site, two blocks to the south on Seventh Street south of Walnut Street, was the site of another competitor to Ruan's presumed goal of the state's tallest office building. The June 6<sup>th</sup> announcement announced a July 11 groundbreaking for the Financial Center, a twenty-five-story office building by the David H. Murdock Development Company of Los Angeles. Curiously, the planned building would match the massing and functions of the future Ruan Center, with underground parking, a top-level private club, an adjacent two-story banking lobby, and the requisite narrow rectangular tower.<sup>83</sup>

Ruan and Bankers Trust were content to patiently find tenants and finalize building plans through the remainder of 1972, which delayed the start of construction. Several multi-fatality high-rise fires occurred prior to the construction of Ruan Center that resulted in a city mandate for building-wide automatic sprinkler systems.<sup>84</sup> The Ruan Center would have these while the Financial Center, already under construction, was exempt but opted to include a sprinkler system. The building plan for Ruan Center was finalized in mid-December. The tower would be thirty-six stories with a two-story bank pavilion to the south and a quarter-block plaza on the southeast quarter of the block. Underground parking would have a 160-car capacity (but most building tenants would use nearby public ramps) and the three already-identified tenant firms would account for twenty-five of the thirty-six floors. The new Ruan Center Corporation was formed to own and oversee the complex. Apart from the architects, contractors were not named, but a promise was made to use local building firms for the construction of Ruan Center. The architects had only been formally contracted in late December.<sup>85</sup>

The general contractor, Arthur H. Neumann Brothers, Inc. of Des Moines was identified publicly by March 15, 1973, when the formal ground-breaking ceremony took place. As 225 spectators watched, the gold-shovel diggers, headed by Iowa Governor Robert Ray, turned the first earth.<sup>86</sup>

A rapid construction period of only two-years began on March 15, 1973 with the ground-breaking and progressed with the first base plate setting on June 7, the topping out on March 15, 1974, and the building enclosure shortly after. The basement excavation was twenty-five feet below grade with the caissons extending an additional 68 feet, twenty of those feet into bedrock. The twenty-four circular concrete-filled caissons were filled with 6,000psi concrete and measured 5 foot 7 inches in diameter (Figure 56). The caisson shafts were 43 feet long and capped

<sup>82</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, May 10, June 30, 1972.

<sup>83</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, June 6, 1972; *Des Moines Register*, February 3, 1972. The Financial Center differed from its competitor because it was a cookie cutter development, which is to say one of twenty nearly identical buildings that used the same architect and builder so as to reduce construction costs. Their claim was that their square foot costs were a mere quarter of the Ruan costs. The point, however, was that their building was not as warmly embraced by the locals because it was perceived as an out-of-town project, (*Des Moines Tribune*, June 4, 1975).

<sup>84</sup> *Des Moines Register*, December 10, 1972 "Act to Boost Fire Safety," 10.

<sup>85</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, December 18, 1972; *Des Moines Register*, December 19, 1972; *Oskaloosa Daily Herald*, December 28, 1972; Friedrichs, *In it for the Long Haul*, 121.

<sup>86</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, March 15, 1973.

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with a 6-foot square, 2-inch thick concrete cap (Figure 57). The building underground extended under the city sidewalk to the street curb.<sup>87</sup>

*Mid-West Contractor* provided the following construction details: The two lower levels required a thirty-foot deep basement excavation and a perimeter timber retaining wall braced with A-bracing. All building steel was ordered in March 1972 with initial delivery beginning in June 1973. A twenty-two-ton tower crane with a 90-foot boom was used and in mid-October 1973, a tenth-floor monorail was installed around the perimeter so that the curtain wall panels could be positioned and installed. Wall panels were being mass-produced, which sped up the building enclosing. Each panel had four points of support and the vertical wing channels (guides for the window washing system) were sealed with neoprene gaskets. Energy savings came from the limited window area (33 percent of each panel) “as opposed to other contemporary structures that have virtually all glass walls” and bronze solar reflecting glass, along with “extensive...thermal insulation.”<sup>88</sup>

The magazine depicted all primary mechanical systems on the second-third floor. The building design was “as fireproof as any high rise, core-type rigid frame building can be.” The sprinkler system, mineral based fireproofing, and the highest level of fire resistance standards made the building safe. A Honeywell computerized management system controlled and monitored all systems. Stairwells had two-way communication. In the event of a fire, all elevators automatically went to ground level and all stairway doors were unlocked from all directions. Originally the roof was intended to support a heliport and the window washing scaffold could be used to carry emergency personnel and occupants to the roof, taking advantage of resident emergency communication links. Ruan likely got the heliport idea directly from U.S. Steel’s sixty-four-story headquarters building in Pittsburgh (1971), also COR-TEN clad.<sup>89</sup>

The U.S. Steel Company prepared a promotional structural report for the Ruan Center describing the building construction and materials in some detail. Its contents built upon and updated the structural information that was publicized at the topping out ceremony in mid-March 1974. The steel framing consumed 4,700 tons of steel, being half ASTM A36 (girders) and half ASTM A572 (all columns) and A588 (beams). COR-TEN weighed approximately 1,600 tons. Steel reinforcing rods totaled 470 tons. Concrete measured out at 16,000 cubic yards. The granite plaza and podium walls consumed 33,000 square feet of stone. Interior travertine stone measured 19,000 square feet and ceramic tile 50,000 square feet. Some 77,000 square feet of glass was used. Design loads were 30 pounds per square foot for the roof, 50 for floors and 100 for corridors. The steel framing was protected against lateral loads by moment column and beam connections (shop welded connection plates with field bolting) and K-bracing centered on the lowermost six stories. Floors were poured to a depth of 3.25 inches using a light-

<sup>87</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, March 22, 1973; *Des Moines Register*, March 22, 1973.

<sup>88</sup> “A.H. Neumann & Bros...,” *Mid-West Contractor*, 16-18; *Kittanning-Simpson-Leader-Times*, March 25, 1971 (Pennsylvania)

<sup>89</sup> “Structural Report;” Typed handout titled “Ruan Center Topping Out Ceremonies, 15 March 1974,” (Ruan Scrapbooks, both items).

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weight concrete fill on a three-inch metal decking. Decking beams were coped into the girders to simplify assemblage.<sup>90</sup>

By mid-November the steelwork was up to floor fourteen and the crane was making upward adjustments as needed, six floors at a time. By the end of December enough lower-level floors were enclosed allowing work to continue when temperatures dropped below ten degrees. That was the case in early January but at only three degrees a dozen men were still lifting materials to floor 28.<sup>91</sup>

The Financial Center bested the state height record at an unspecified time in September/October 1973 and was topped out the first week of November. The *Register* warned on September 23, 1973, that “it won’t be the tallest building for long, sometime next year the Ruan Center, which is inching upward along Seventh Street, between Grand and Locust, will rise to 36 stories and will be the tallest building.”

Steel framing reached floor thirty-one by early February 1974. The first reports of a “yellowish” tint on the COR-TEN cladding came two weeks later (with the first joke about “Bankers Rust”) as did curious reports of loud clanging noises from the tower. The noise turned out to be the metal decking being wind-whipped prior to being covered with concrete floors. Building gas mains were put in at the end of the month and briefly closed off Seventh Street.<sup>92</sup>

The Ruan Center had its structural topping out on March 15. That date was precisely one year from the ground-breaking. The final, white-painted beam was inscribed by “several thousand” city residents and the governor and other state politicians joined the celebration, complete with the release of 1,000 helium filled balloons (Figure 61). The ironworkers struggled against a 23 to 43-mile-an-hour wind with a wind chill of 20 degrees while the celebrants remained behind protective glass on floor thirty-four. The first COR-TEN installations were underway and were up to floor eleven, but the south Pavilion was not yet started, at least above ground.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the milestone, progress slowed due to a statewide steelworkers’ strike, which started on April 30 and continued through May. In addition, three weeks of heavy rain also hampered progress. Work was resumed on a limited basis on June 18 to allow the scattered workforce to return.<sup>94</sup> By September, work had returned to normal with around the clock construction shifts as insulation and fireproofing work proceeded. The parking lot to the north of the Ruan Center was finished by mid-January 1975.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; Structural report

<sup>91</sup> Des Moines *Tribune*, August 28, December 20, 31, 1973; January 8, 1974; Des Moines *Register*, September 13, November 14, 1973, July 28, 1974.

<sup>92</sup> Des Moines *Register*, February 10, 22, 1974; Des Moines *Tribune*, February 28, 1974.

<sup>93</sup> Des Moines *Tribune*, March 15, 1974; Des Moines *Register*, March 16, 17, 1974.

<sup>94</sup> Creston *News Advertiser*, May 1, 1974; Des Moines *Tribune*, May 28, June 18, 1974.

<sup>95</sup> Des Moines *Tribune*, September 16, November 22, 1974; January 13, 1975.

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A national petroleum supply-fueled energy crisis gripped the nation following an October 1973-March 1974 OPEC oil embargo. Trane Company 40,000-pound heat pumps were being put in place on the second and third floors in late October 1974. The *Register* observed that “the heat pump employs a new principle which, proponents say, will allow large commercial buildings to be heated without making direct use of heating fuels in short supply.” The energy crisis persisted and in January 1975, the *Register* surveyed the new commercial building alternatives for heat savings, all of which involved heat pumps and closed loop systems. The Ruan Center’s engineer Paul Walters described how warmer air in the interior core would be cooled while cooler peripheral temperatures would be warmed. A computer would determine when exterior air could be brought in, and its humidity adjusted.<sup>96</sup>

A second-floor skywalk system was proposed for downtown as early as 1960 and Ruan intended to build the third privately funded “skyway” bridge to link a public parking garage planned immediately to the north across Grand Avenue. The skyway plan was thrown into doubt in mid-1973 when some advocated an underground garage capped with a public plaza. Such a garage was considerably more expensive to build but was weather-proof and hidden from view. The above ground garage prevailed and the elevated skyway was installed according to original plans in November 1974.<sup>97</sup>

Blue Cross and Blue Shield occupied its administrative floor twenty-one starting March 15, 1975, filling up two floors each weekend until its dozen floors were in operation. The initial move-in date was two years after the Ruan Center’s ground-breaking and one year after the tower’s topping out. The low-rise passenger elevators were functioning, and all floors had been poured. By month’s end the Ruan Center was 90 percent leased while the Financial Center was at 82 percent. Together the two new office towers had added over one million square feet of office space in a downtown market that, as of 1973, had a total of 3.2 million square feet. The *Tribune* used the term “economic obsolescence” to describe the diminished market for pre-existing office space in the downtown.<sup>98</sup>

The *Register* published a series of construction photos taken over the course of the new tower’s ascension, all under the caption “Gosh! A Des Moines skyline!” which underscored the fact that the Ruan Center had redefined the downtown skyline. The accompanying article tabulated the 36 floors, 14 elevators, 4 escalators, 577 underground parking spaces as well as “emergency [diesel] generators, sprinkler systems and rusts.” Figure 63 clearly depicts the early appearance of the developing rust and states public comment on its appearance was already well underway. A completed interior was “a few months” away and by June 25 there were many floors

<sup>96</sup> *Des Moines Register*, October 20, 1974; January 19, 1975.

<sup>97</sup> *Des Moines Register*, June 3, 1973; November 18, 1974.

<sup>98</sup> *Des Moines Register*, March 15, 1975; *Des Moines Tribune*, May 24, 1974.

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of windows to be washed, but the suspended basket got stuck for several hours and its occupants photographed for the newspaper.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to height, the Ruan and Financial Center were competing for tenants. The Financial Center announced the attic-level men's club, the Embassy Club, in mid-July 1973, while Ruan had secured the Des Moines Club for the top-level tenant. The Des Moines Club, formed in 1909, was the city's premier private club; its membership was restricted to 775 and its initiation fee was the highest. *Tribune* columnist Walt Shotwell wrote in November 1980 that the club "is by far the most posh and prestigious, symbolic of the city's 'old guard.'" Ruan's securing the club as a tenant was the societal coup. The move was an immense success and for the first time the club's history had a substantial waiting list. Shotwell wrote, "Still, the Des Moines Club is almost like a throne on the thirty-third and thirty-fourth floors of the Ruan Center. Especially at night, you get a sense of power looking down at the city, as if its lights are blinking for you." Today, Ruan's building continues to house the only high-rise private club in the city.<sup>100</sup>

The high-rise location of these two men's clubs was not accepted by all its members, however, who were accustomed to more modest and lower-level abodes with less expensive leases. The Embassy Club initially balked at going into the Financial Center and the Des Moines Club, while originally voting to join the Ruan Center occupation in July 1974, would wind up in district court when a stubborn minority revolted. Despite the legal tangle, the Des Moines Club began hiring dining room staff in early October by those "trying to get up in the world [as] The Des Moines Club soon moves to plush new quarters..."<sup>101</sup>

Another primary tenant of Ruan Center was a Chamber of Commerce "briefing center" that opened on floor thirty-three. It was a mini-city promotional venue complete with new technologies. The 1,200-1,600 square feet came rent free and remained in the building for many years. Another symbolic, but purely practical achievement was the installation of a twenty-foot-tall rooftop transmission tower for an eight-county emergency communications system. This service ended in September 1996.<sup>102</sup> Ruan, also envisioning a "buffeteria" with a 300-person capacity, seemingly a hint that he was at least considering a quasi-public opportunity to enjoy his tower and its view. By January 1974 Ruan Center was solidly ahead of the Financial Center in leasing, claiming 70 percent, twenty more than the Financial Center. Both projects planned only to finish leased floors, which

<sup>99</sup> *Des Moines Register*, June 1, 25, 27, 1975.

<sup>100</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, November 3, 1980. The Embassy Club dated to 1937 and the Bohemian Club, the lair for lawyers and politicians, was formed in 1951. The East Side downtown had its club and there were several golfing country clubs. The Embassy Club relocated to 801 Grand but consolidated with the Des Moines Club in 2002 in the Ruan Center as the Des Moines Embassy Club.

<sup>101</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, July 1, 17, 1974; January 8, March 7, September 14, October 7, 1975; *Des Moines Register*, October 7, 1975. The Des Moines and Embassy clubs consolidated in 2002 after the latter club briefly occupied the upper floors of 801 Grand.

<sup>102</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, July 3, 1974; November 4, 1975. This system would be broadened to include fire and police communications and during the 1993 floods, Ruan Center manager Archie Brooks would famously and briefly shut down the system when the water works shut down his water supply. The mutual misunderstanding was resolved after seven hours (*Des Moines Register*, July 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, November 3, 1993; July 23, 1996).



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presumably meant cast concrete floors and other shell finishes.<sup>103</sup> Former Iowa governor Robert Ray, head of major tenant Blue Cross and Blue Shield, offered his assessment of the building, observing in early 1993 that “I can tell you from personal experience that John Ruan’s center is not a bad place to have an office.”<sup>104</sup>

Once the Ruan Center was complete and substantially occupied, Bankers Trust held successive weekend open house events on October 19 and 26. A self-deprecatory theme was “beneath the rust there’s a brand-new trust.” Drawings for major prizes drew “thousands” hoping to win a canoe, beef, tires, and an Amana “radarange” oven. The Des Moines Club members sought to join in the celebration but had to do so without alcohol as they were waiting for a new liquor license needed as a result of the move.<sup>105</sup>

CONSTRUCTING THE RUAN CENTER COMPLEX – TWO RUAN

While working on the Marriott Hotel project, Ruan had set the stage for clearing the southeast quarter of his Ruan Center block, initially to create an open plaza, but in the end to build the 14-story Two Ruan (also known as the Carriers Building). With Bankers Trust now ensconced happily in its new quarters, the Bankers Trust Building and its 1961 modern style annex were no longer needed. The bank’s intention to raze it for the public open plaza had been known for years but when the time came, calls for preserving the building led to postponement and winterization in 1975. In the meantime, the Ruan Center Corporation successfully sued to lower the assessed value for the new buildings from \$22.2 million to \$16.4 million. The property with the Equitable Life Insurance Company Building was reduced from \$1.8 million to \$100,000.<sup>106</sup>

The Ruan Corporation attempted to find a buyer for the Bankers Trust Building. There were no takers for the old building and its owners cut their losses by shutting off utilities and reducing insurance costs. By early November 1979 the decision was made for demolition of the Bankers Trust Building. The Minnesota Lumber and Wrecking Company started to take down the annex in early January and by late February, the bank building was largely down as well.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Des Moines Register*, July 11, September 23, October 6, 1973; *Des Moines Tribune*, January 10, 1974. The 1975 World Almanac recorded both buildings in their tallest buildings list (*Des Moines Register*, December 8, 1974).

<sup>104</sup> *Des Moines Register*, January 29, 1993.

<sup>105</sup> *Des Moines Register*, October 30, 1975; *Des Moines Tribune*, October 14, 1975; *Northwestern Banker*, November 1975.

<sup>106</sup> *Des Moines Register*, August 1, December 2, 1975; April 23, May 1, June 17, August 16, 1976; HABS-HAER Documentation, 1979. The revised 1981 assessment for the Ruan Center, \$28.9 million, was also challenged in district court in mid-1981. A new assessment approach for the Carriers Building reflected actual construction costs (\$980,000) to date as of January 1, 1981 and that assessment wasn’t challenged (*Des Moines Tribune*, June 17, July 27, 1981). Another sign of a doomed landmark was the refusal of its owners to install interior elevator safety doors due to the cost (*ibid.*, September 25, 1973).

<sup>107</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, January 3, 15, February 25, 1980. The bank building was listed on the National Register in April 1976 but the owners claimed that it was listed without their prior notification due to a faulty address. That listing was overturned in early November 1979 and relieved the owner from tax penalties for demolishing a listed building.

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Early rumors of a new fourteen to fifteen-story office building on the Ruan Center site began on November 3 and were confirmed just three days later by Ruan's announcement of a twelve-story building with 200,000 square feet of office space to be linked to Ruan Center via the Liberty Building skywalk (yet to be built). He first noted the new building exterior would be "similar" to that used on the Ruan Center. To quell concerns that his building would undercut another such downtown project, the redevelopment of the site of the former Montgomery Ward, and in the face of a saturated market for offices, he noted the new building would house the headquarters of the Carriers Insurance Company and provide expansion space for other Ruan Center tenants. He also stressed that his project was a different type than the redevelopment of the Montgomery Ward block because it was privately funded and not dependent on public financial assistance (although he added that if a state revitalization law made special tax breaks or low interest bonds available, that would be appreciated).<sup>108</sup>

The construction cost was \$12 million, half paid for by the Carriers Insurance Company and the rest by a mortgage carried by the National Electrical Contractors Association Benefit Trust Fund. The insurance company would occupy the top floor of the fourteen-story building in late 1982, departing its Ruan Center quarters. The new tower would be separately owned from the Ruan Center.<sup>109</sup>

By mid-January, the proposed building was to be called the "Carriers Insurance Building"<sup>110</sup> (it is called Two Ruan for the purposes of this document) and would have ground-level links to the Ruan Center given that Bankers Trust would likely use some first-floor space. One key difference between the center and this addition was that the second tower was designed to incorporate the developing skywalk system into its second-floor function and design. The Ruan Center allocated perimeter space along its north end for part of the skyway, but it never developed small food and service shops along the skywalk. The natural fit between the skywalk and commerce slowly became obvious, and in early January 1981 Ruan began searching for "a big national eating establishment."<sup>111</sup> Two Ruan early on had such uses as a medical clinic and smaller eateries along its western second floor level where the skywalk passed across its plan. Some 14,500 square feet of second floor space was allocated to skywalk retail.

Two Ruan did not receive the press attention that was awarded the Ruan Center. Ruan biographer, William B. Friedrichs, simply notes that it went up "without much fanfare." Kendall, Griffith, Russell, and Artiaga were the architects and Neumann Brothers the general contractors. The building permit was secured on March 31, 1980, and initial plans were developed during May and June. Final contractor's plans were ready on March 16, 1981.

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<sup>108</sup> Des Moines *Register*, January 29, October 20, November 3, 6, 9, 1979, Des Moines *Tribune*, June 7, November 2, December 27, 1979. The state law went into effect on July 1, 1979 too early for the Carriers building. Ruan would make a strong but unsuccessful push to convince the city to support an amending bill that would backdate his project and allow for tax breaks (Des Moines *Tribune*, April 22, 1981).

<sup>109</sup> Des Moines *Tribune*, January 8, 1982.

<sup>110</sup> Diana Graham, "Des Moines Builds for Future," *The Des Moines Register* (11 January 1981): 124.

<sup>111</sup> Des Moines *Tribune*, January 8, 13, March 4, 1981; Des Moines *Register*, September 27, 1982. By April 1982 the *Register* was noting how the skywalk system was generating second story retail (ibid., April 18, 1982).

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By early February the steelwork was up to the twelfth floor. Instead of a formal ceremony, Ruan invited a few guests who gathered on March 24 on the second floor to sign the final piece of steel. The group included the governor, mayor, and head of the chamber of commerce. Building occupancy was targeted for October 1, 1981.<sup>112</sup>

The growing skywalk system interfered with the Two Ruan progress. In early May the city stalled on approving developing plans for the building because plans for a southern bridge across Locust Street were missing. Another building element, termed “The Link” (the single-story infill in the south alley between the Pavilion and Two Ruan), was under separate contract and effectively a leased space as part of Two Ruan. The second skywalk problem was indirectly tied to the new building. The east alley to the north of Two Ruan was to be infilled with a skywalk structure but there were two issues. First, the logical design would completely cover the alley which made for a very wide structure with a clearance too low by half a foot. Ruan wanted the city to cover the cost and lower the alley grade six inches since the Two Ruan plans were altered at the request of the city. Second, the owners of the Liberty Building declined to sign a 40-year upkeep protocol and Ruan did not want to sign for the other entity’s obligation. In the end Liberty did sign and the city picked up the costs of alley alterations.<sup>113</sup>

While the project was nearing completion by October 18, the projected October 1981 completion date was not achieved partially due to a June steel worker strike and delays coinciding with the skywalk system. A December 10 report had “many tenants” moved in and by April 1, 1982, the building was “virtually completed.” Given that the building was partially occupied in 1981 that year is used as its in-service date. As of late September 1977, the building reached 90 percent leased. Two full floors were occupied by Attorneys Office Management, Inc. a franchise that leased small-scale suites to seventy-five lawyers, providing a centralized law library with phone and reception area services.<sup>114</sup>

The south Locust Street skyway bridge was finally opened in mid-November 1983 and provided the westernmost of three links to the south part of the skywalk system. The skywalk obstruction of the state capitol view east along Locust Street was a contentious issue so it helped that the Ruan Center could play a key role in extending the downtown skywalk system southward. With the completion of this key link the *Register* noted “all the high-rise buildings in the central downtown are now hooked into the system of elevated and enclosed bridges and corridors.”<sup>115</sup>

While the Ruan Center was built during an energy crisis, Two Ruan was built in the face of a national recession (July 1981-November 1982). The Carriers Insurance Company was in financial trouble before the recession hit

<sup>112</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, February 3, March 4, 17, 1981; Friedrichs, *In it for the Long Haul*, 147-148.

<sup>113</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, June 24, October 27, 1981; *Des Moines Register*, October 18, 1981.

<sup>114</sup> *Des Moines Tribune*, October 18, December 10, 1981; April 1, 1982; *Des Moines Register*, March 27, September 27, December 18, 1982.

<sup>115</sup> *Des Moines Register*, November 17, 1983.

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but its deteriorating exposure forced Bankers Trust and other Ruan holdings to pump enormous funds into the insurance company, considerably weakening the entire Ruan financial empire. Carriers eventually became insolvent on January 16, 1986, and its namesake building became Two Ruan in March 1986. Beginning in early October 1987 the Ruan Center became the Ruan Center Complex, officially including both towers and the Pavilion.<sup>116</sup>

In early December 1987 the Principal Financial Group (formerly Bankers Life) announced building plans that would end the Tower's status as the tallest state building in Iowa. Construction began in July 1988 of a \$80 million 44-story office building. The developers had not set out to exceed the Ruan Center but claimed it reflected their estimate on the growing local office needs.<sup>117</sup> The honor of being the state's tallest building was awarded to 801 Grand on January 22, 1991, with the topping out of its frame. The new record was 630 feet, with the Ruan tower 180 feet shorter, the Alliant Tower in Cedar Rapids held third place (380 feet) and the Financial Center was fourth (345 feet). The Ruan Center Complex had enjoyed its record for fifteen years.<sup>118</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Ruan Center Complex is locally significant under Criterion B for its association with John Ruan and his influence in community planning and redevelopment of downtown Des Moines and under Criterion C for its architectural expression (Architecture). John Ruan was a man with a vision. He saw a struggling downtown, one that had attempted to restart through several moderately scaled modern buildings and made it his mission to see it thrive. He took the experience gained from forty years in the trucking industry and the small-scale renovation and expansion of his first corporate office and scaled it up to meet the demands of downtown. His initial concept, the Ruan Center, stood tall as a beacon of progress in downtown Des Moines, seen from miles away. He built upon his success with the Marriott Hotel project, and the design for a new convention center that inspired the public to finally support its construction, all while making plans to expand the successful Ruan site with yet another COR-TEN building. Not all his projects came to fruition, but that did not stop Ruan from continuing with his own master plan for a thriving downtown. In the end, Ruan was lauded as a civic and philanthropic figure, known for his commitment to Des Moines, and more specifically to its downtown. His legacy lives on in the foundations he funded, the company he built, and significantly, in the Ruan Center Complex that forms the iconic heart of Des Moines. Mr. Ruan and the Ruan Center Complex impacted the development and aesthetic of downtown Des Moines.

<sup>116</sup> *Des Moines Register*, March 18, 1984; November 14, 17, 1985; March 1, 1986; January 17, October 5, 1987.

<sup>117</sup> *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, December 6, 1987.

<sup>118</sup> *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, January 21, 1991.

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## ARCHEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

No archeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
-

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- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State Agency  
☐ Federal Agency  
☐ Local Government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A



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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.27

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	41.507280	-93.626140	2		
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
3			4		
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The unified parcel includes two parts. The west two-thirds of the whole includes Lots 4-6, Block B, Commissioner's Addition, excluding the north ten feet of Lot 3 and the vacated west alleyway 16.5 feet in width. The eastern one-third of the unified parcel includes Lots 1-2 of the same block, excluding the north 10 feet of Lot 1, and including the vacated south alleyway, 16.5 feet in width. The boundary excludes any skywalk bridges or segments that do not pass through the subject buildings. It includes basement level intrusions under sidewalks and alleys.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property includes the building, site, and objects that are directly and historically associated with the significance claims that are made in this document.

## 11. Form Prepared By

2021, rev. March

name/title Jim Jacobson & Steve King (RDG); revised by Ryan Reed date 2024

organization Rosin Preservation, LLC telephone 816-472-4950

street & number 1712 Holmes Street email ryan@rosinpreservation.com

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

## Additional Documentation

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### Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property:

Ruan Center Complex

City or Vicinity:

Des Moines

County:

Polk

State:

Iowa

Photographer:

Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography

Date Photographed:

June 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 90: Ruan Tower, Pavilion and Ruan Two, looking northeast.

Photo 2 of 90: Ruan Two, looking north.

Photo 3 of 90: Ruan Two, looking northwest.

Photo 4 of 90: Ruan Two, looking west.

Photo 5 of 90: Ruan Two, looking southwest.

Photo 6 of 90: Ruan Tower, looking southwest.

Photo 7 of 90: Ruan Tower parking garage entrance, looking south.

Photo 8 of 90: Ruan Tower, looking southeast.

Photo 9 of 90: Ruan Tower, looking southeast.

Photo 10 of 90: Ruan Tower and Pavilion, looking south.

Photo 11 of 90: Ruan Tower, looking east.

Photo 12 of 90: Ruan Tower, Pavilion and Ruan Two, looking east.

Photo 13 of 90: Ruan Tower, Pavilion and Ruan Two, looking northeast.

Photo 14 of 90: Pavilion, looking east.

Photo 15 of 90: Detail of monument sign at Pavilion, looking east.

Photo 16 of 90: Detail of stairs at Pavilion, looking east.

Photo 17 of 90: Detail of plaza at Pavilion, looking west.

Photo 18 of 90: Detail of plaza at Pavilion, looking west.

Photo 19 of 90: Detail of entrance at Ruan Two, looking east.

Photo 20 of 90: Alley at Ruan Two, looking west.

Photo 21 of 90: Alley at Ruan Two, looking east.

Photo 22 of 90: Ruan Tower, looking northwest.

Photo 23 of 90: Ruan Tower parking garage entrance looking north.

Photo 24 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking northwest.

Photo 25 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking northeast.

Photo 26 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking northeast.

Photo 27 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking southeast.

Photo 28 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking east.

Photo 29 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking west.

Photo 30 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking southwest.

Photo 31 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking southwest.

Photo 32 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking southwest.

Photo 33 of 90: Ruan Tower first floor, looking north.

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Photo 34 of 90: Pavilion first floor, looking southwest.  
Photo 35 of 90: Pavilion first floor, looking northwest.  
Photo 36 of 90: Pavilion first floor, looking northeast.  
Photo 37 of 90: Pavilion first floor, looking southeast.  
Photo 38 of 90: Pavilion first floor, looking southeast.  
Photo 39 of 90: Pavilion mezzanine, looking northwest.  
Photo 40 of 90: Corridor between Ruan Tower and Ruan Two, looking northwest.  
Photo 41 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking south.  
Photo 42 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking north.  
Photo 43 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking east.  
Photo 44 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking west.  
Photo 45 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking northwest.  
Photo 46 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking northeast.  
Photo 47 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking west.  
Photo 48 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking northeast.  
Photo 49 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking southwest.  
Photo 50 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking south.  
Photo 51 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking west.  
Photo 52 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking northwest.  
Photo 53 of 90: Ruan Two first floor, looking south.  
Photo 54 of 90: Ruan Two first floor corridor to Ruan Tower, looking north.  
Photo 55 of 90: Ruan Two first floor corridor to Ruan Tower, looking south.  
Photo 56 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor lobby of Ruan Company looking east.  
Photo 57 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor lobby of Ruan Company looking southwest.  
Photo 58 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor lobby of Ruan Company looking northeast.  
Photo 59 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor conference room of Ruan Company looking northeast.  
Photo 60 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company, looking east.  
Photo 61 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, John Ruan Office, looking east.  
Photo 62 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, John Ruan Office, looking west.  
Photo 63 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, John Ruan Office, looking north.  
Photo 64 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, John Ruan Office, looking west.  
Photo 65 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, John Ruan Office, looking east.  
Photo 66 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company lobby, looking west.  
Photo 67 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company, looking northwest.  
Photo 68 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company, looking southwest.  
Photo 69 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company, looking southeast.  
Photo 70 of 90: Ruan Tower thirty-second floor, Ruan Company, looking northeast.  
Photo 71 of 90: Ruan Two third floor, looking west.  
Photo 72 of 90: Ruan Two third floor, looking west.  
Photo 73 of 90: Ruan Two third floor, looking northeast.  
Photo 74 of 90: Ruan Two third floor lobby, looking south.  
Photo 75 of 90: Ruan Two third floor cafeteria, looking southwest.  
Photo 76 of 90: Ruan Two third floor cafeteria, looking north.  
Photo 77 of 90: Ruan Two third floor cafeteria, looking south.  
Photo 78 of 90: Ruan Two third floor cafeteria, looking east.  
Photo 79 of 90: Ruan Two third floor kitchen, looking east.  
Photo 80 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, parking garage driveway, looking north.  
Photo 81 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, parking garage driveway, looking south.  
Photo 82 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, parking garage, looking northeast.  
Photo 83 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, parking garage, looking southwest.

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Photo 84 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, parking garage driveway, looking northwest.

Photo 85 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, corridor, looking south.

Photo 86 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, escalator, looking west.

Photo 87 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, central core, looking north.

Photo 88 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, central core, looking south.

Photo 89 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, central core, looking south.

Photo 90 of 90: Ruan Tower lower level one, central core, looking north.

Ruan Center Complex

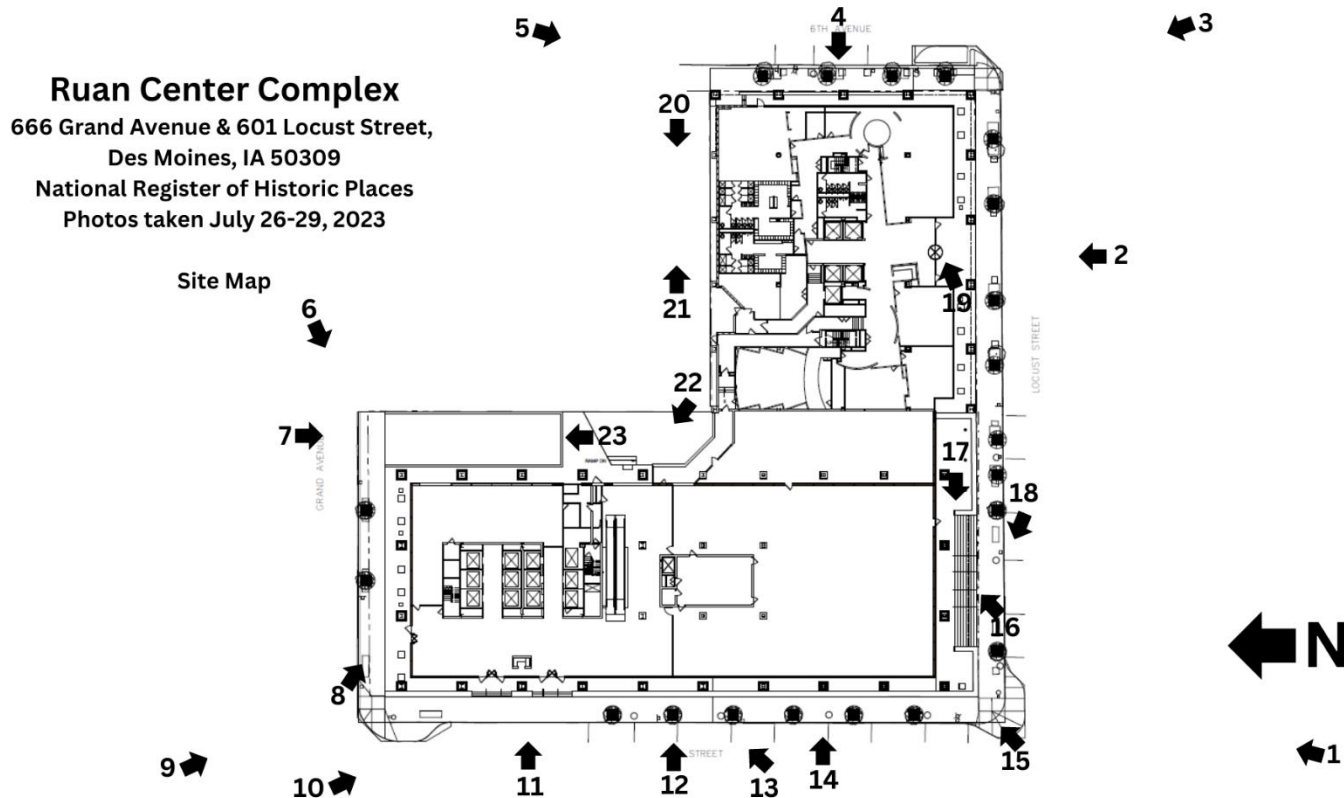
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa

County and State

**Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

**Photo Map 1:** Exterior and site photo map.



Ruan Center Complex

Polk County, Iowa

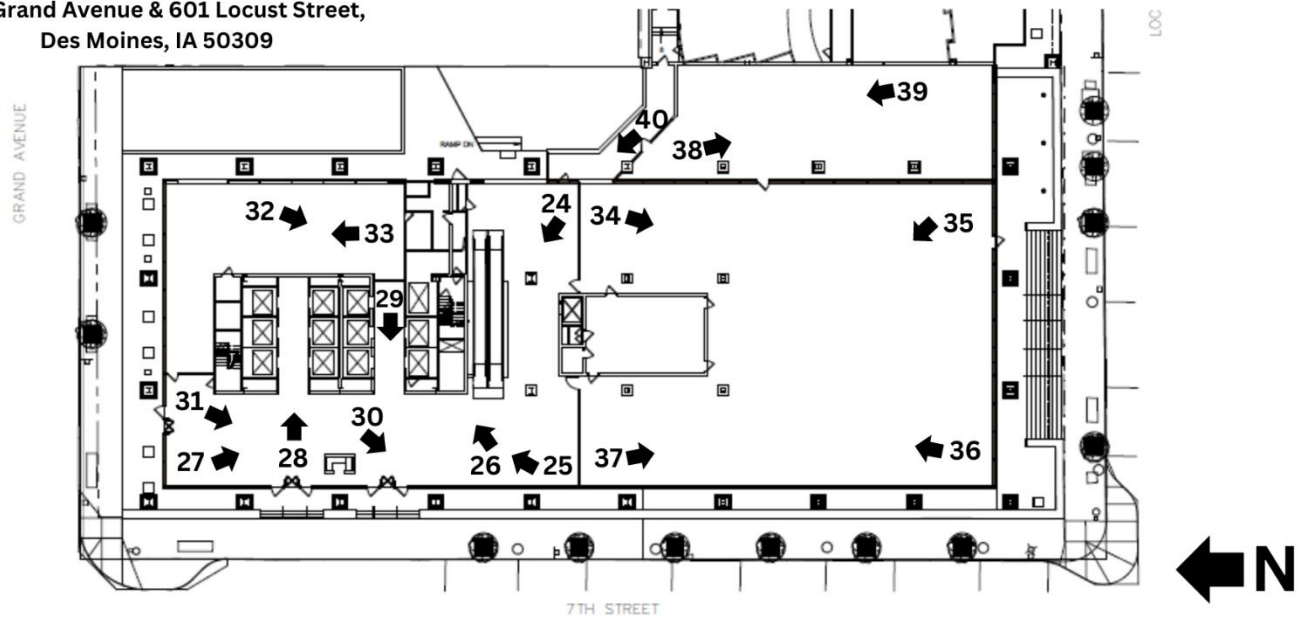
Name of Property

County and State

**Photo Map 2.** First floor, The Tower/Pavilion (Ruan Center) photos.

**Ruan Center Complex**

666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street,  
Des Moines, IA 50309



National Register of Historic Places  
Photos taken July 26-29, 2023  
Ruan Tower & Pavilion - First Floor

Ruan Center Complex

Name of Property

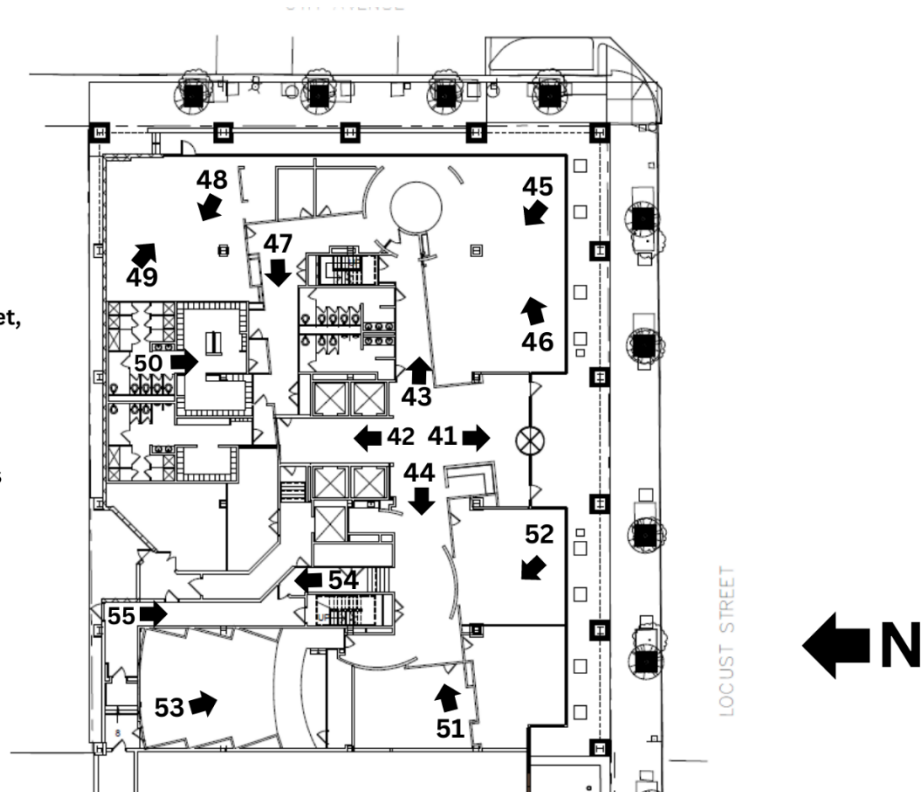
Polk County, Iowa

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**Photo Map 3.** First floor, Ruan Two photos.

**Ruan Center Complex**  
666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street,  
Des Moines, IA 50309

National Register of Historic Places  
Photos taken July 26-29, 2023  
Ruan Two - First Floor



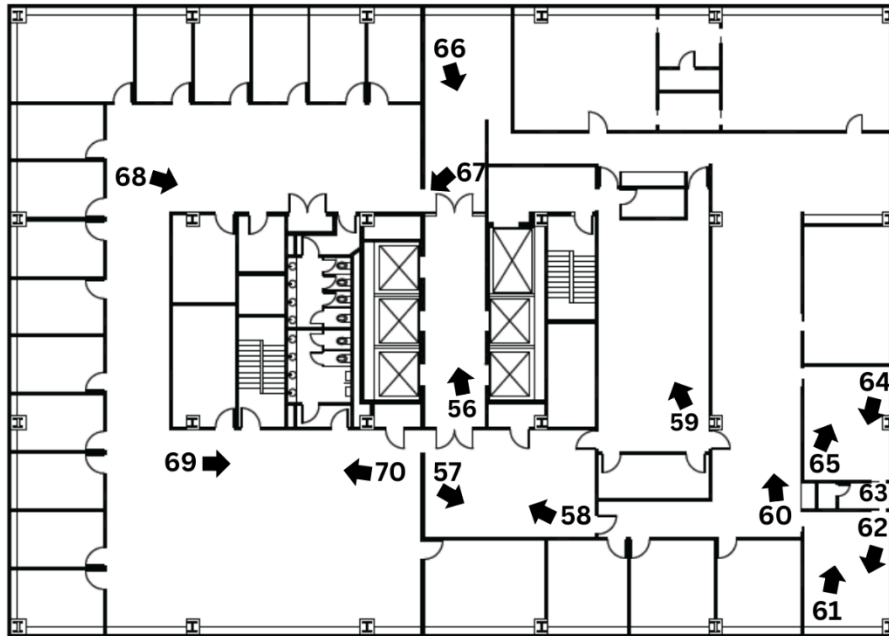
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**Photo Map 4.** Thirty-second floor, Ruan Tower photos.



**Ruan Center Complex**  
666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street,  
Des Moines, IA 50309

National Register of Historic Places  
Photos taken July 26-29, 2023  
Ruan Tower - Thirty-Second Floor  
John Ruan Office





Ruan Center Complex

Name of Property

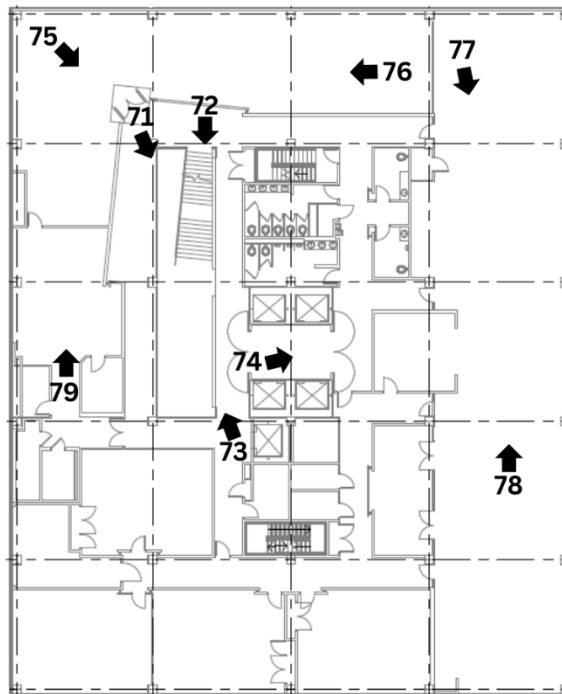
Polk County, Iowa

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**Photo Map 5.** Third floor, Ruan Tower photos.

**Ruan Center Complex**  
666 Grand Avenue & 601 Locust Street,  
Des Moines, IA 50309

National Register of Historic Places  
Photos taken July 26-29, 2023  
Ruan Two - Third Floor



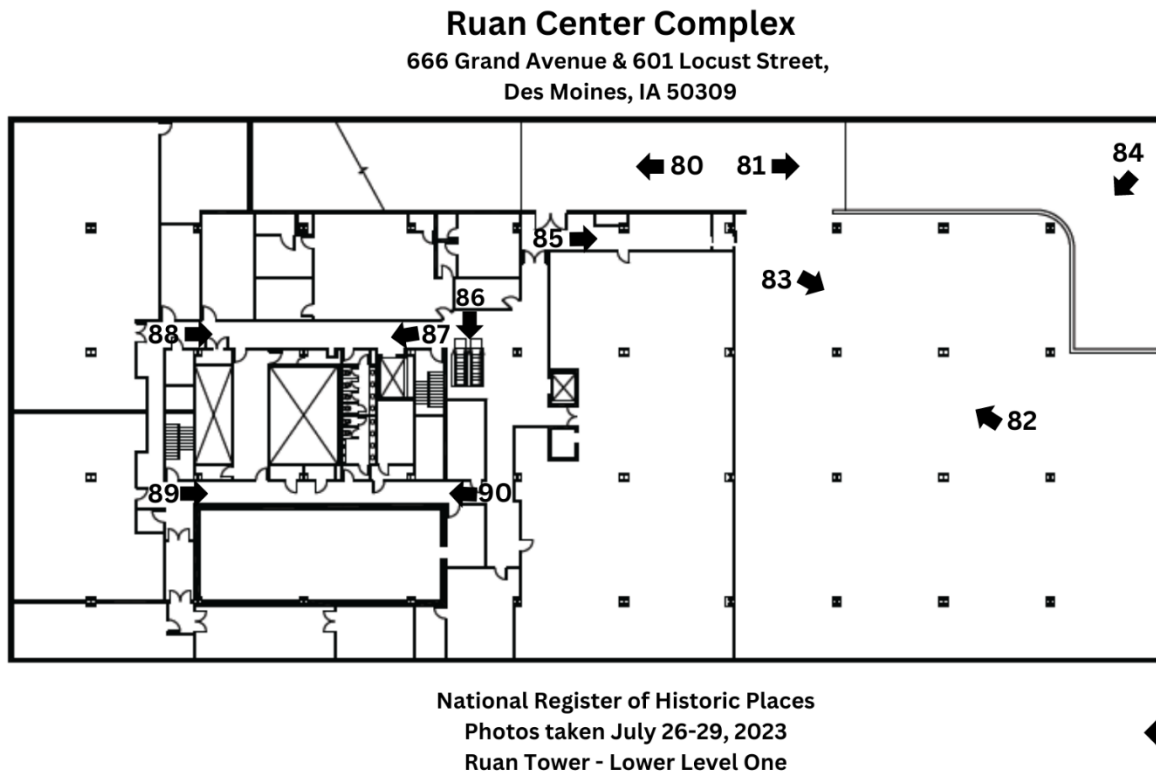
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**Photo Map 6.** Lower level one, Ruan Tower photos.



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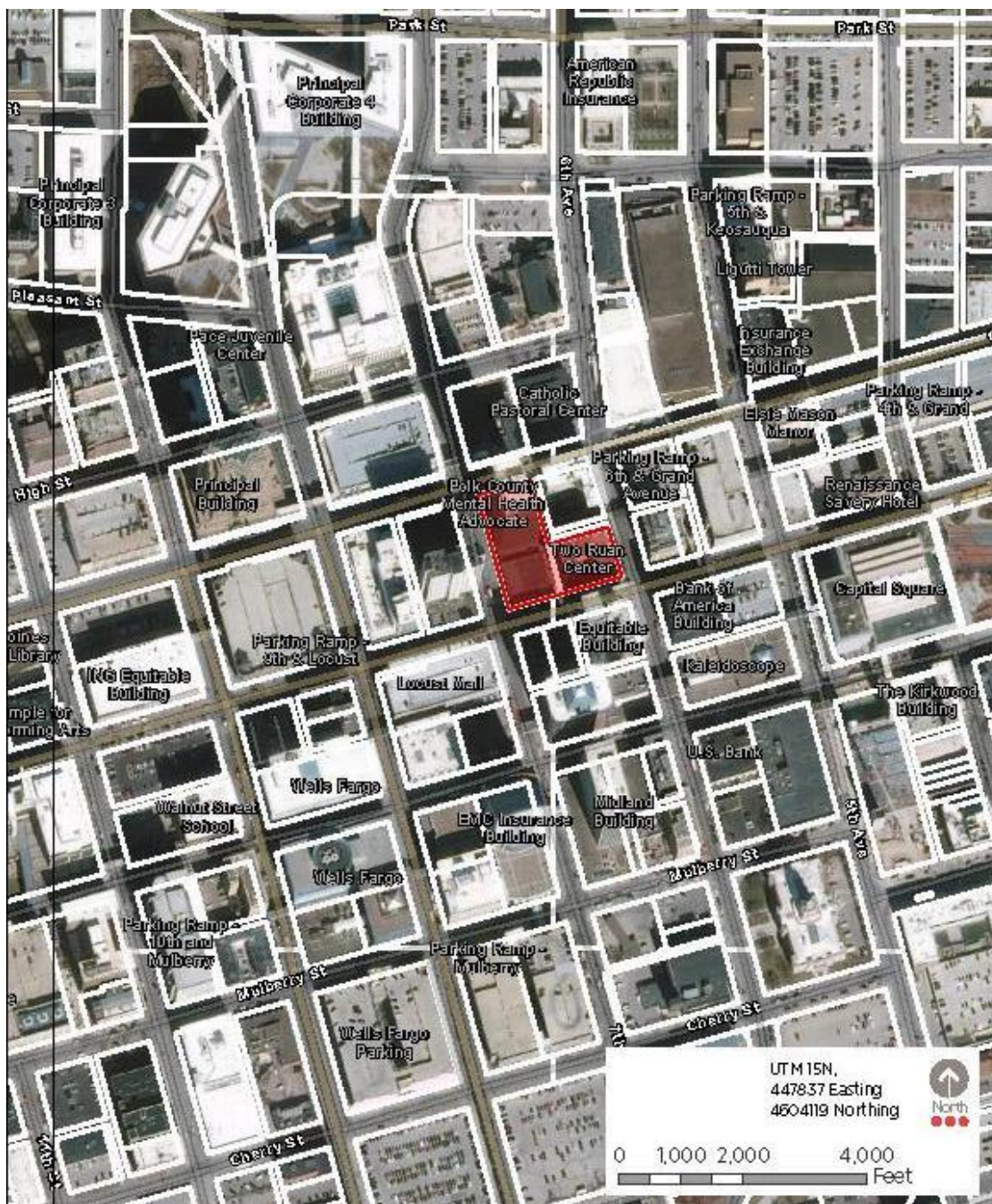


Figure 1: Building downtown context map (RDG Planning & Design. Google Maps-base map, 2020).



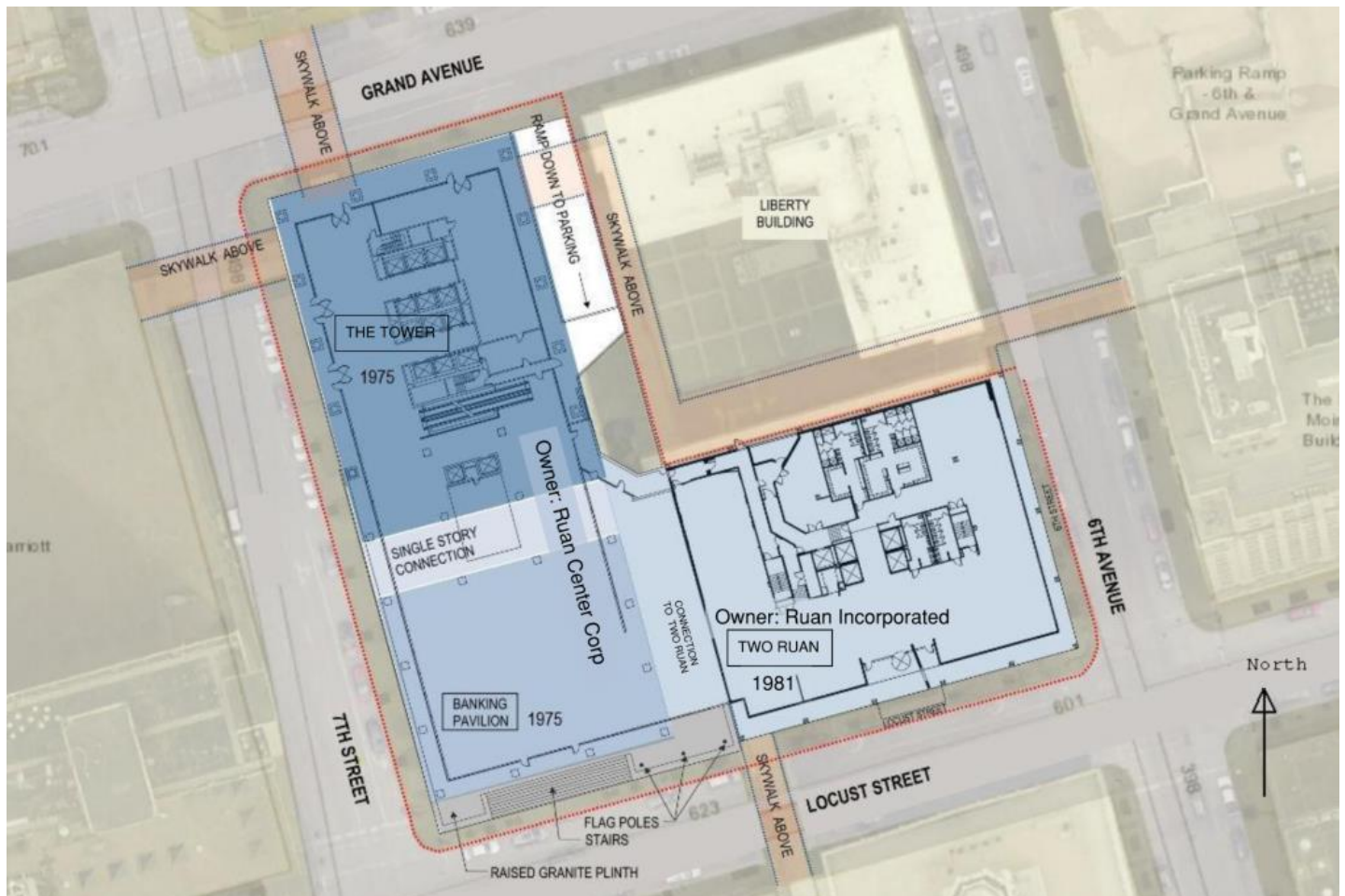


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**Figure 3:** Site plan identifying the three buildings, the site/plaza and the south-end flagpole set. The basement levels continue under the sidewalks to the north, west, south and east. The red line traces the listing boundary while the blue line shows the primary wall plane.

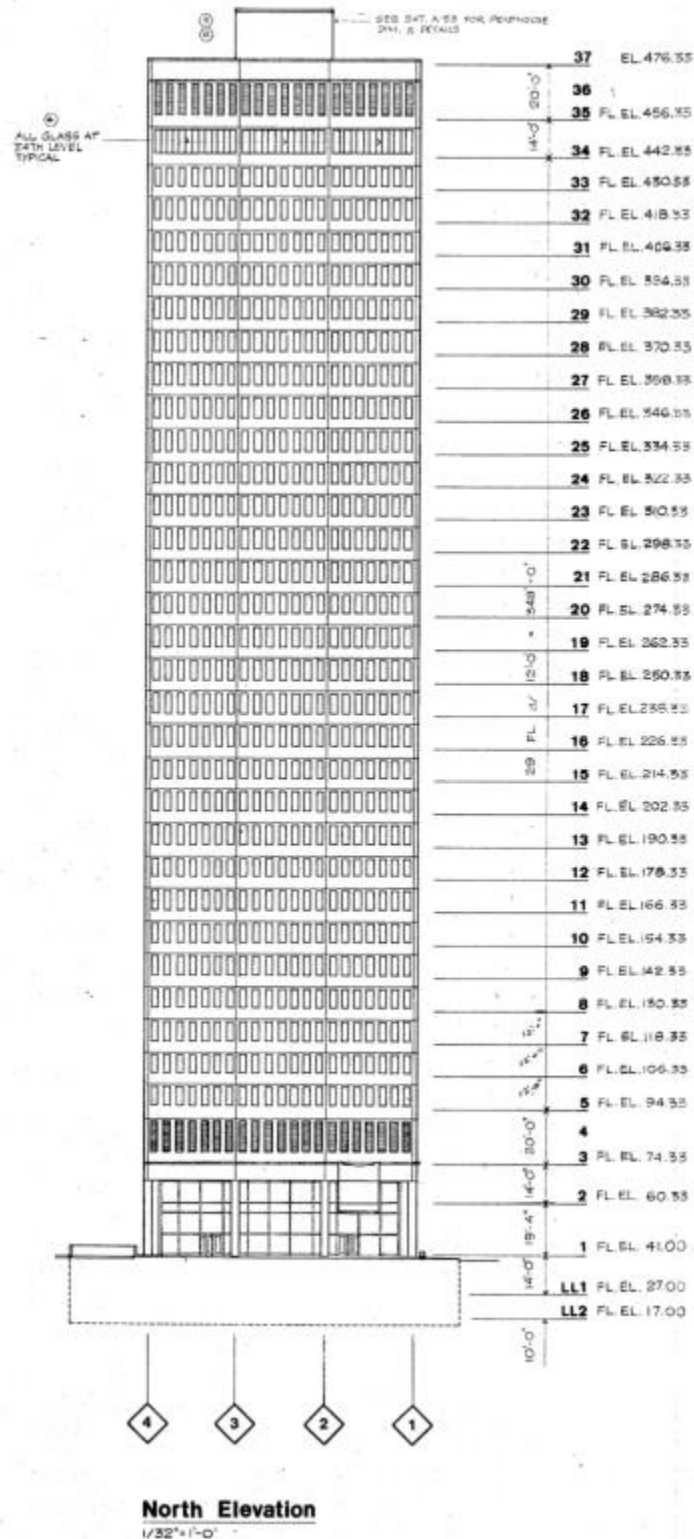
(RDG Planning & Design, 2020, annotated with north arrow Google Maps-base map).

Ruan Center Complex

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**Figure 4:** The Tower north elevation

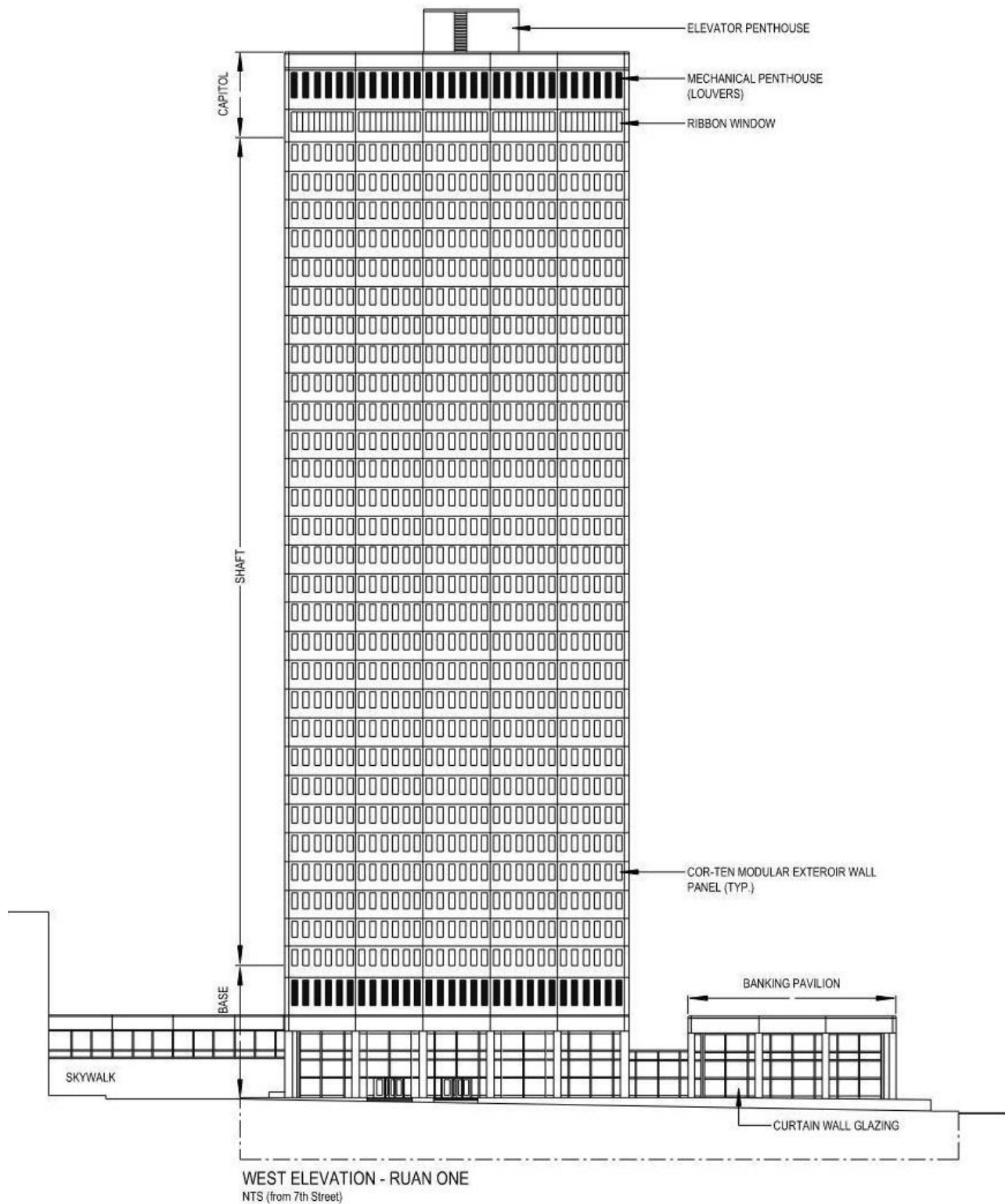
(skywalks are excluded, original drawing A17 by Kendall Griffith Russell Artiaga March 1973).

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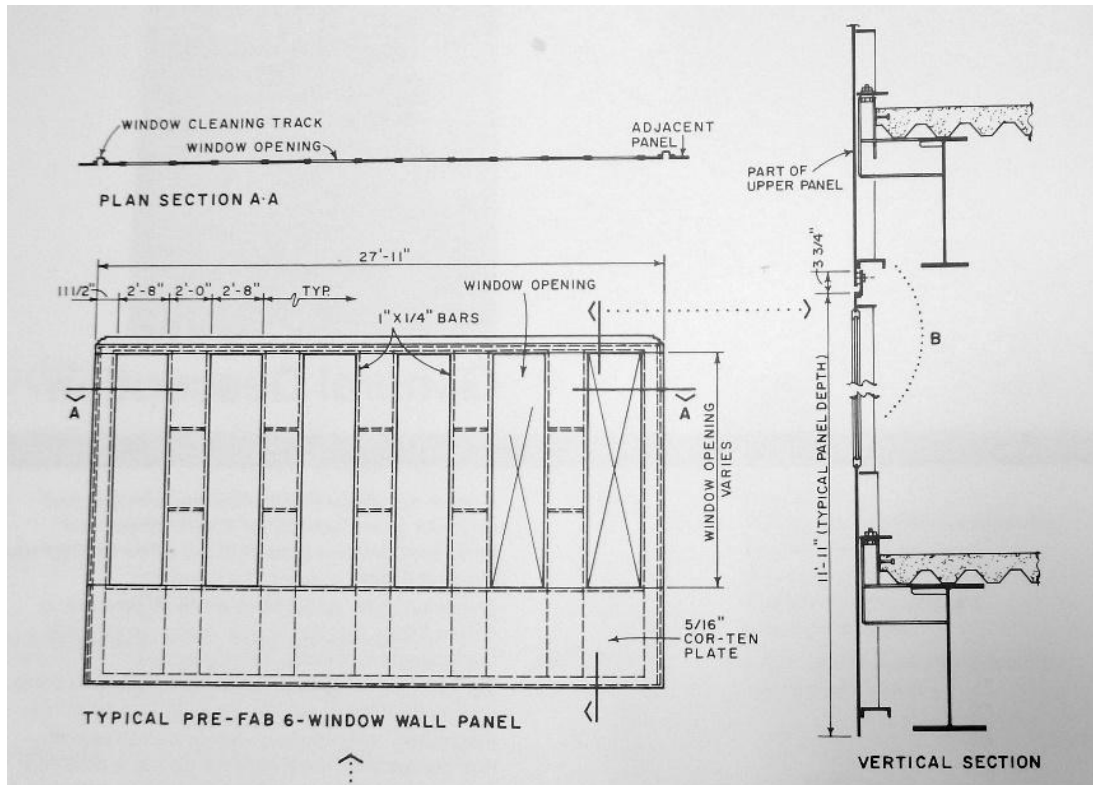
**Figure 5:** Ruan Center (The Tower and Pavilion) west elevations  
(recreated from original drawings by RDG, 2020)

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**Figure 6:** Left, standard short, prefabricated curtain wall panel  
(Structural Report. "Ruan Company Archives").

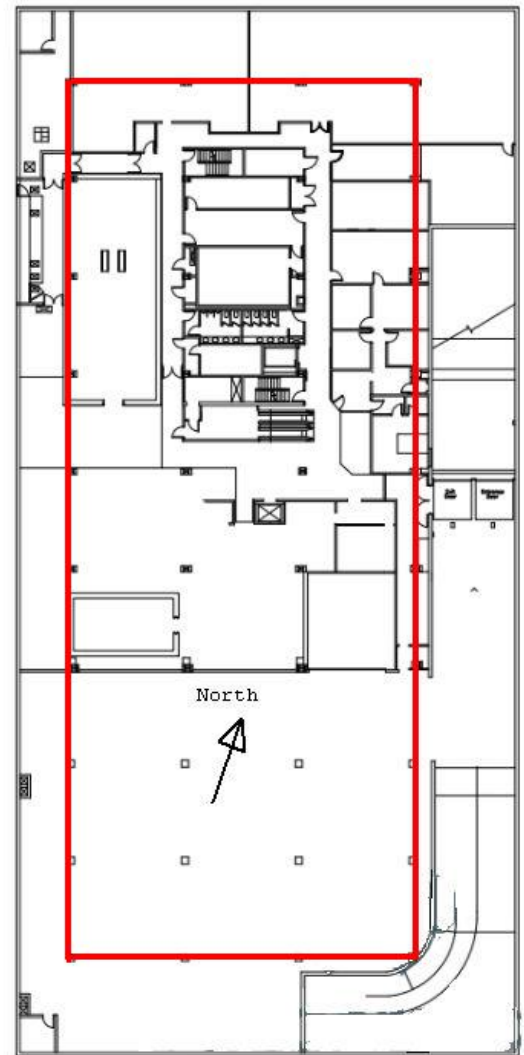
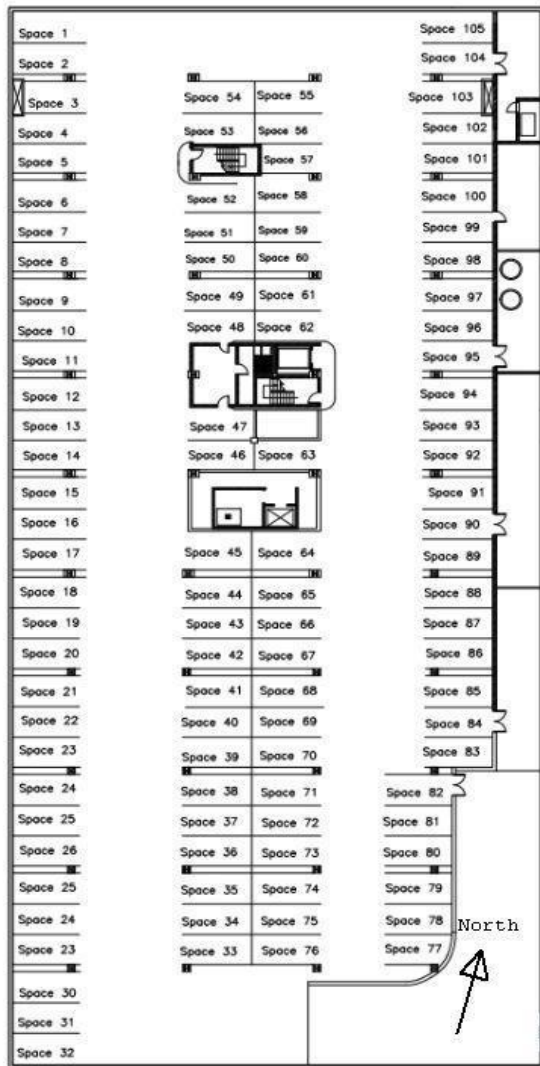


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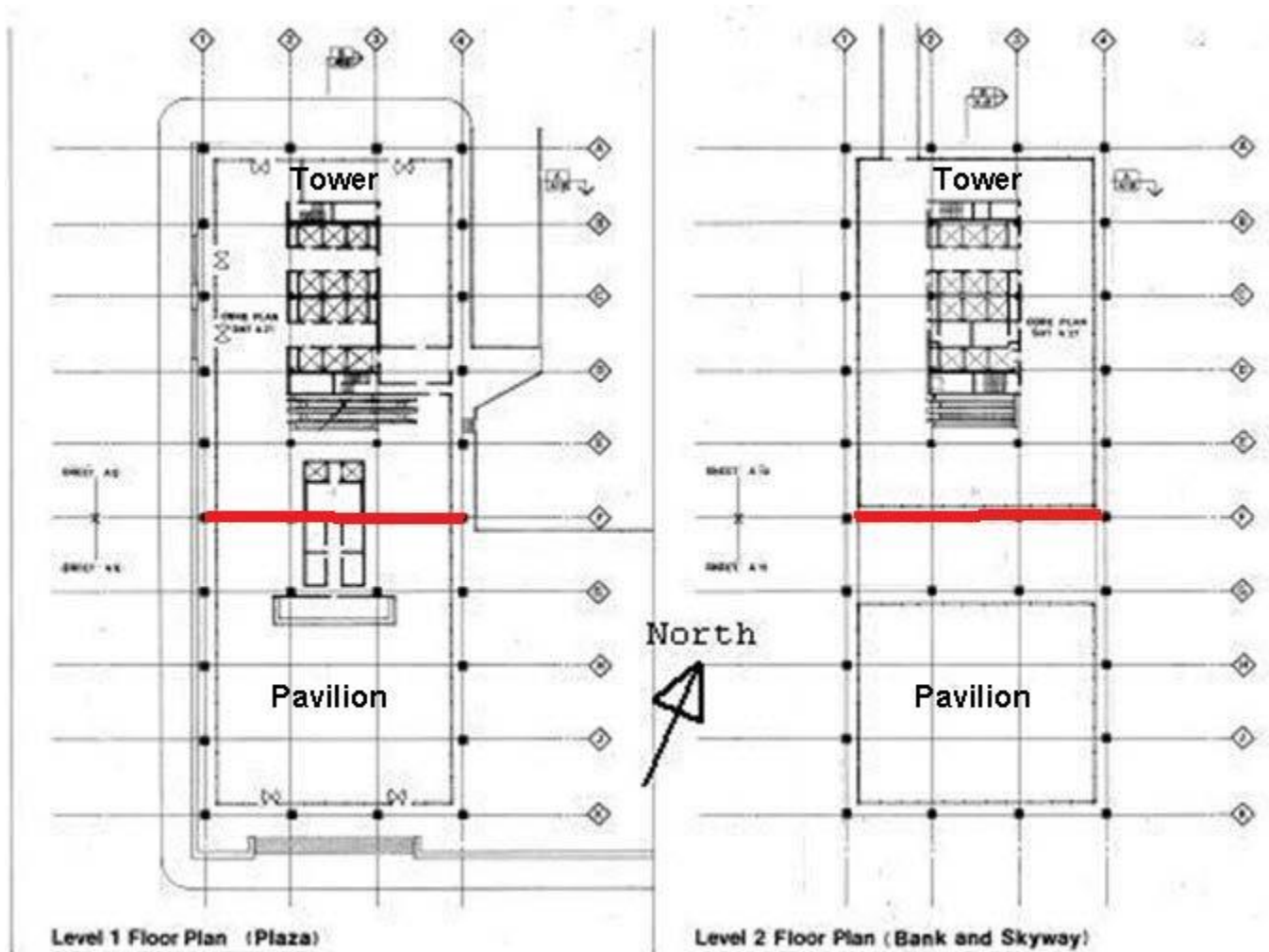
**Figures 7 (Left) & Figure 8 (Right):** Left, Current plan, Lower Level 2 (note east side rooms under garage ramp), The Tower Center. Right, Current plan, Lower Level 1, Ruan Center (Tower and the Pavilion). The red rectangle denotes the perimeter columns and upper tower wall planes. (Courtesy of Transwestern)

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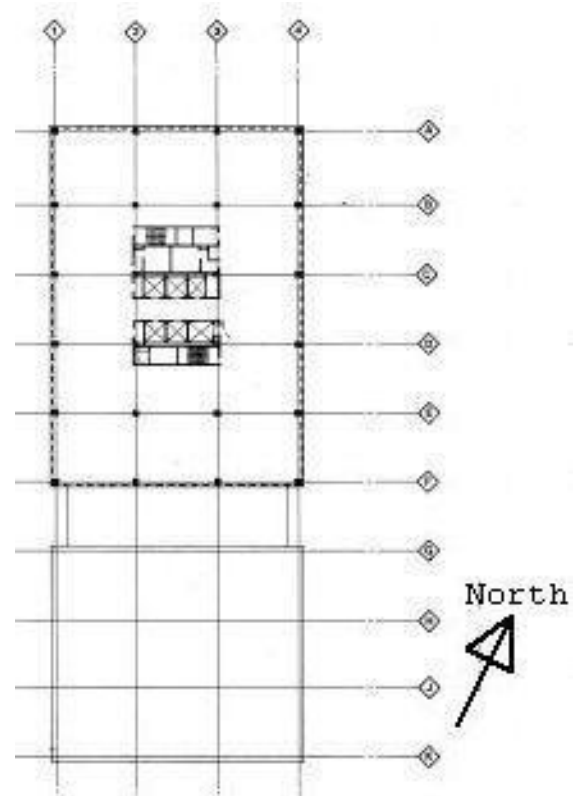
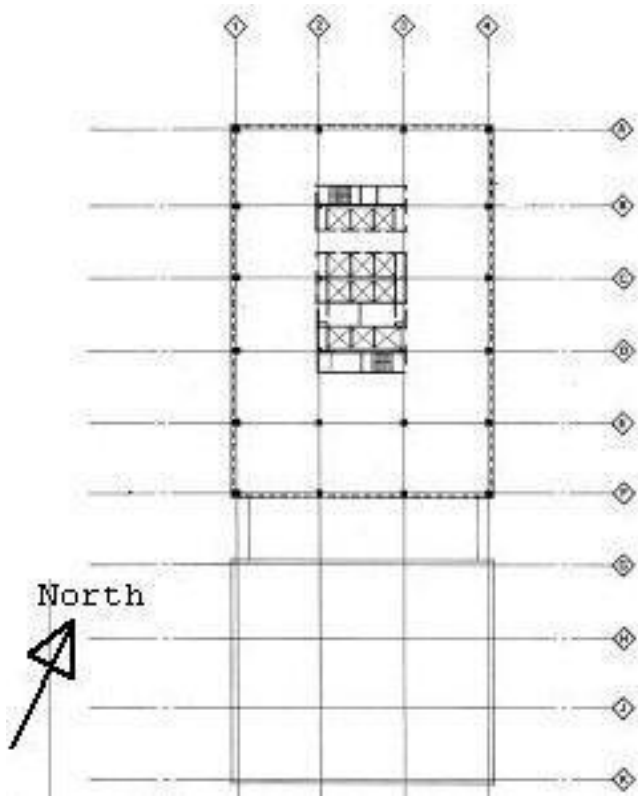
**Figures 9 (Left) & 10 (Right):** Original lobby and second floor plans (Original plans, annotated with directional arrow).

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**Figures 11 (Left) & 12 (Right):** Left, core from the fifth to the twenty-first floors; right, core above that level.  
(Original plans, annotated with directional arrow)

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**Figures 13a & 13b:** Photographs of John Ruan office in thirty-second floor of Ruan Tower.



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**Figures 14a (Left) & 14b (Right):** One-story links between the Pavilion and the Tower (left) and Two Ruan (right). Photos looking south and east respectively. (Photos by James E. Jacobsen, June 25, 2020).

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**Figure 15a:** Monument Sign at southwest corner of plaza. (Photos by James E. Jacobsen, June 25, 2020)



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**Figure 15b:** Set of three flagpoles (right) Photos looking north and east respectively. (Photos by James E. Jacobsen, June 25, 2020)

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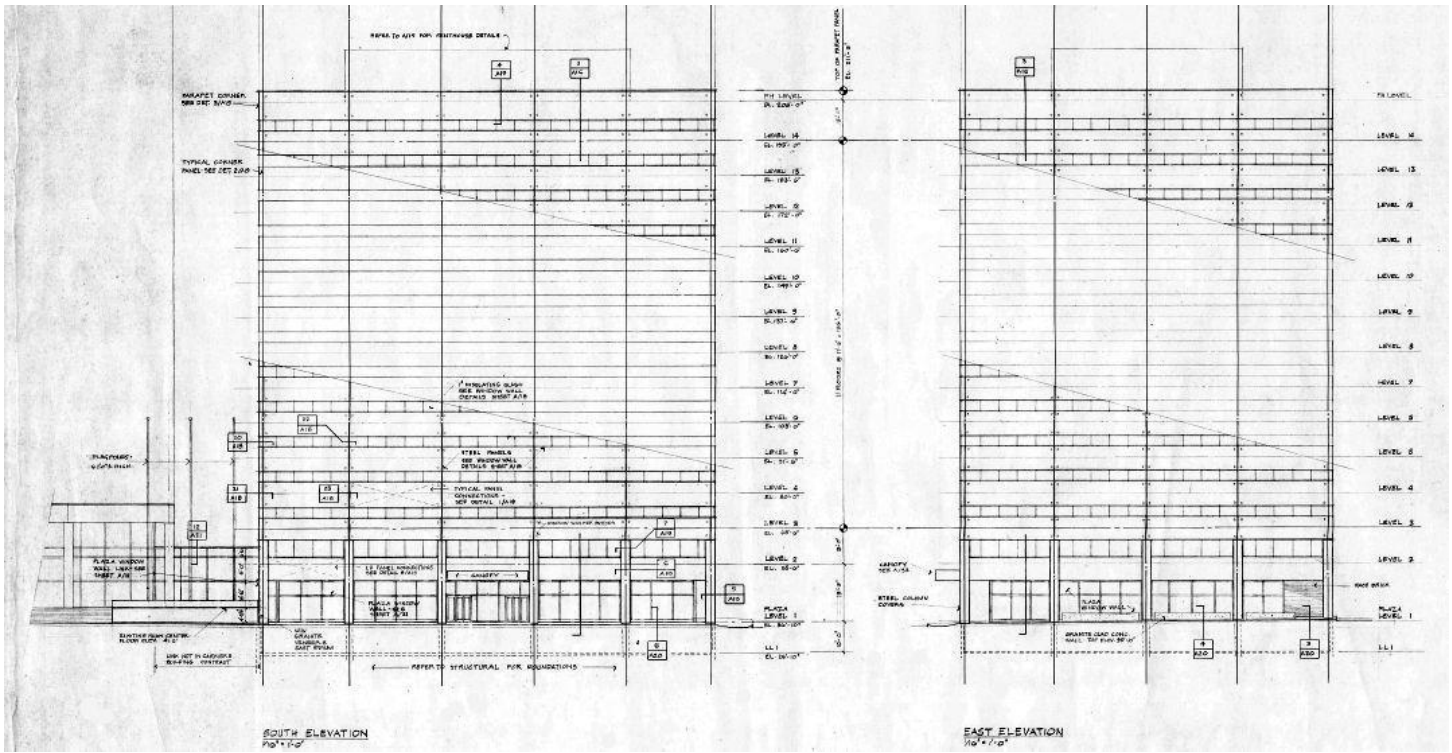


Figure 16: Two Ruan, south (left) and east (right) elevations (original plans).

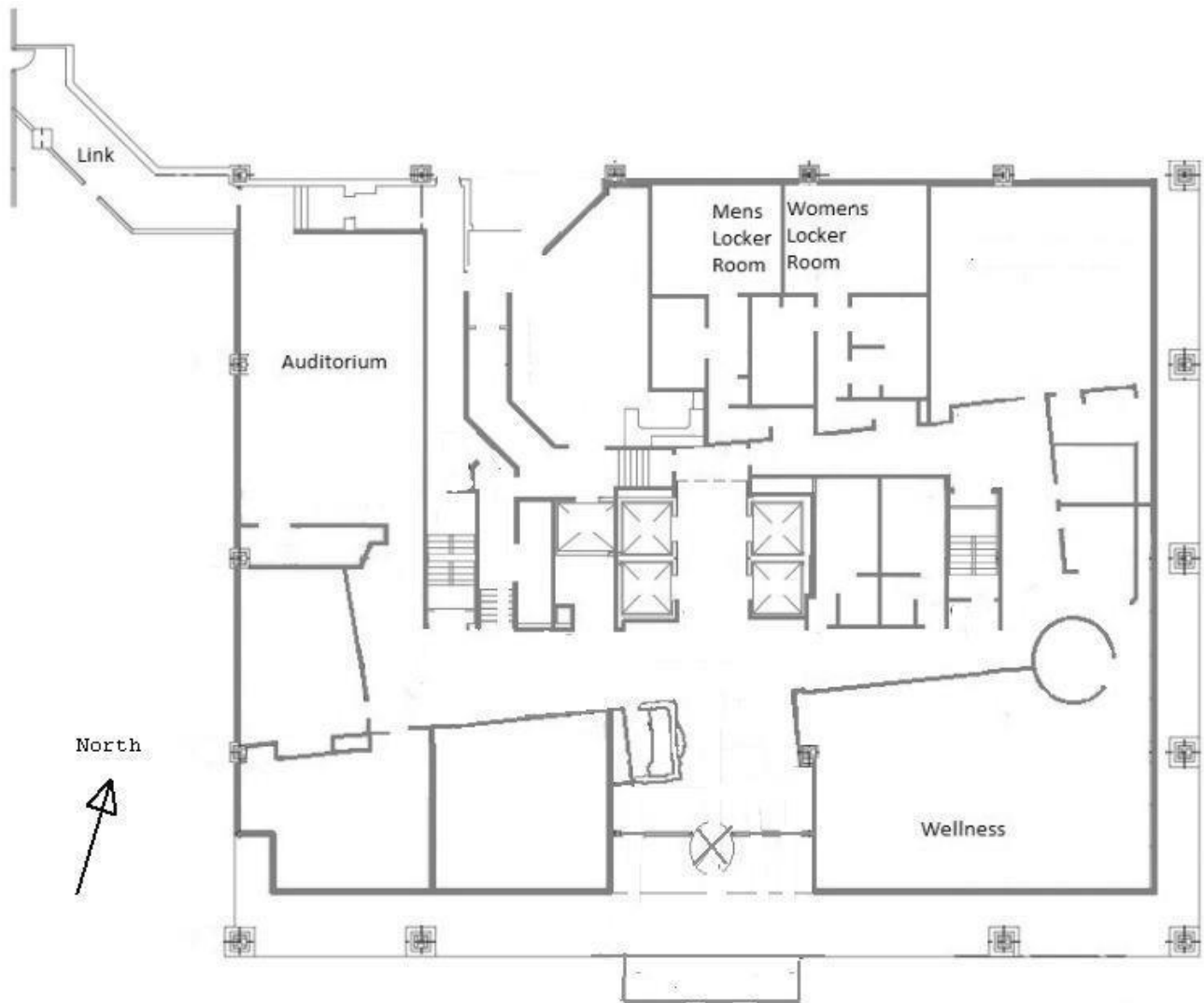


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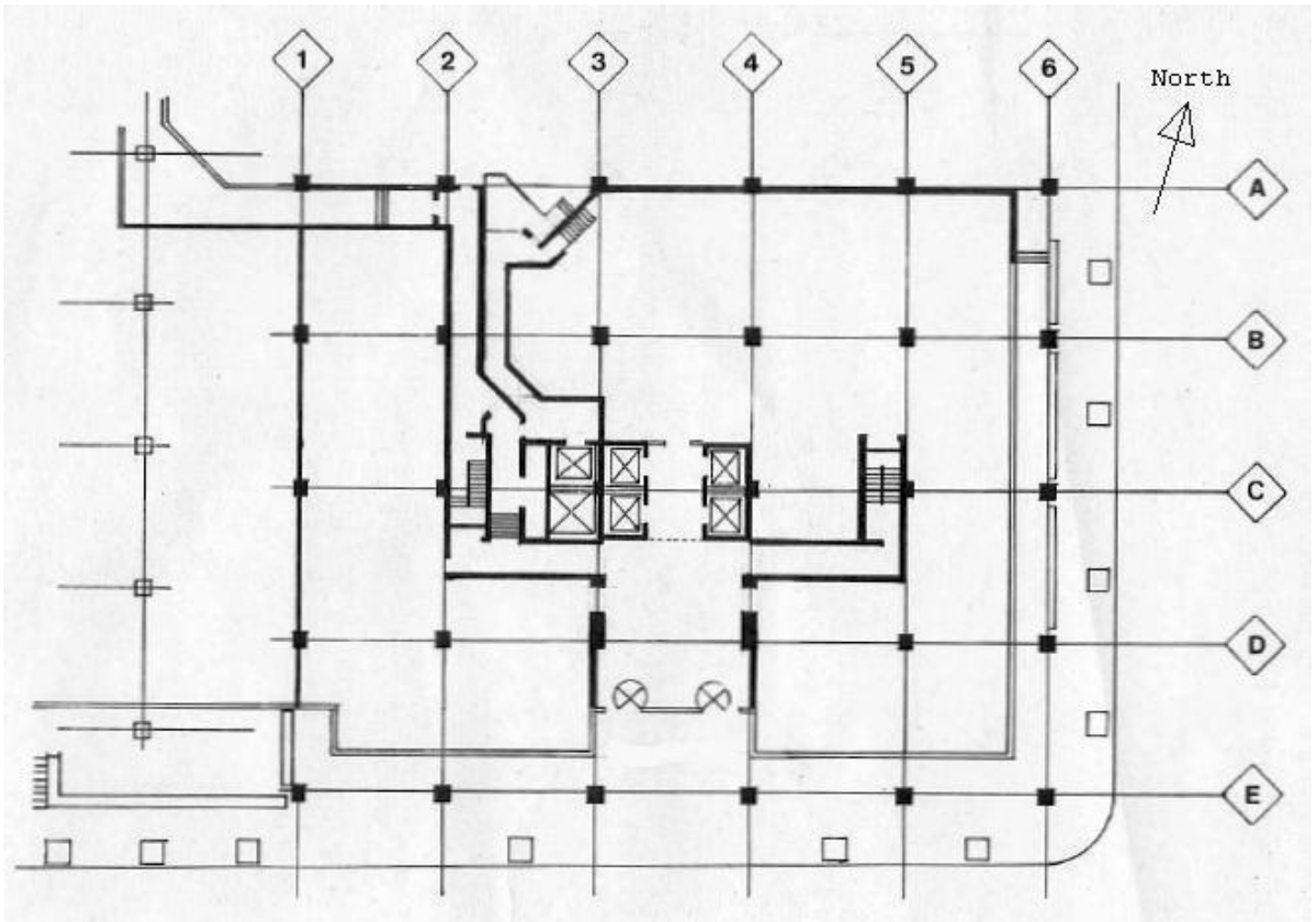
**Figure 17:** Current Two Ruan first floor plan with link to the Tower (courtesy of Transwestern, annotated with directional arrow and removal of fire route notations).

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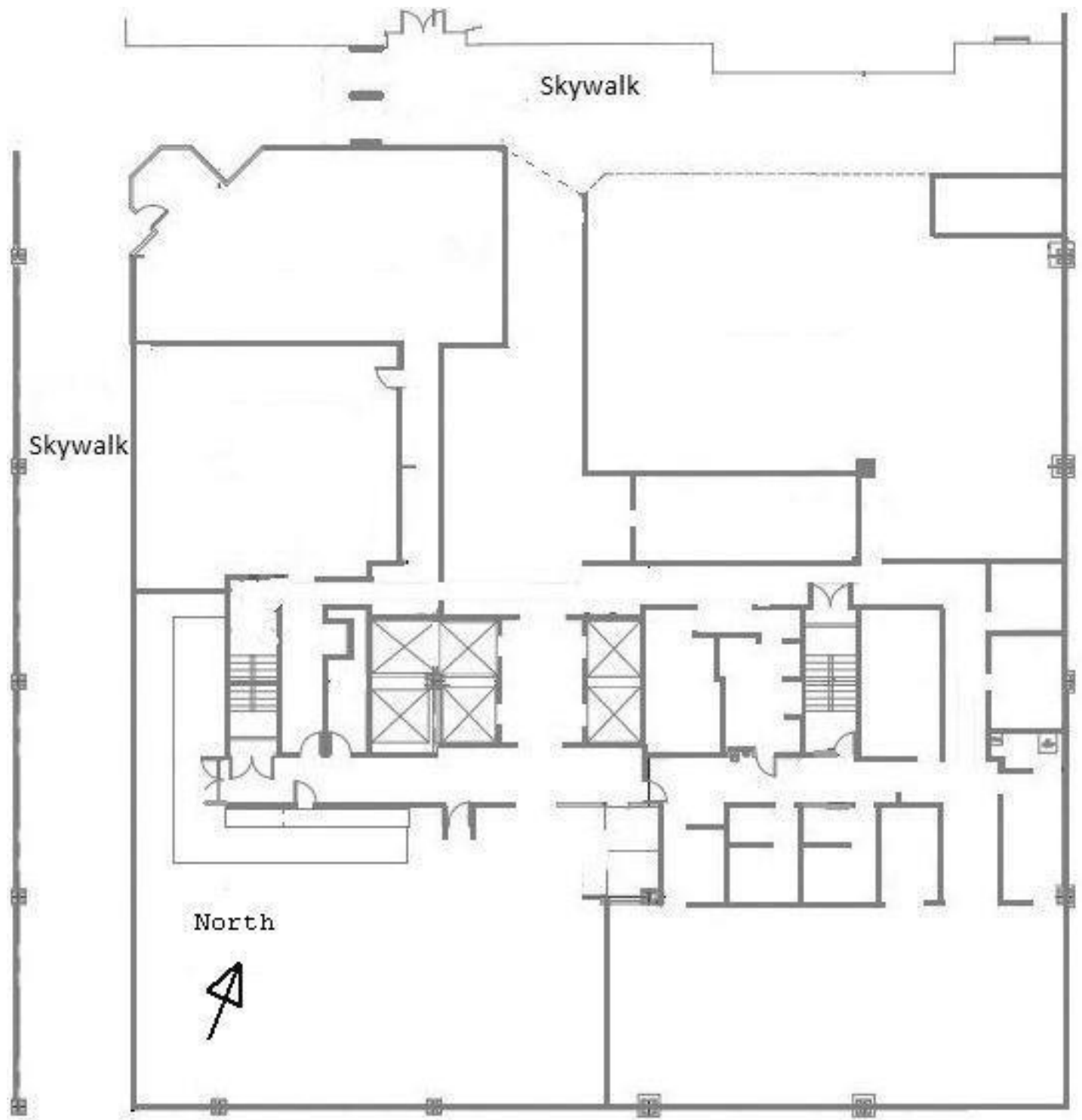
**Figure 18:** Original plan layout of the first-floor plan of Two (courtesy of Transwestern annotated with arrow)

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**Figure 19:** Current Two Ruan second floor layout showing skywalk links (courtesy of Transwestern, annotated with arrow and removal of fire route notations).

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**Figure 20:** The building team; John Ruan (seated), Robert J. Sterling (left) and Thomas L. Wright, Bankers Trust, board chairman and vice president respectively (*Northwestern Banker*, November 1975)

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**Figure 21:** Ruan's first corporate offices, 303 Keosauqua Way (now Watson Powell Jr. Parkway), looking northeast (Polk County Assessor 2017 photo, accessed February 25, 2021).



**Figure 22:** Ruan's family home, 23 34<sup>th</sup> Street, looking northwest. (Polk County Assessor, 2017 photo, accessed February 2021)



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**Figure 23:** Marriott Hotel, 700 Grand Avenue, looking southeast.  
([www.catchdesmoines.com/listing/des-moines-marriott-downtown/109](http://www.catchdesmoines.com/listing/des-moines-marriott-downtown/109), accessed February 25, 2021)



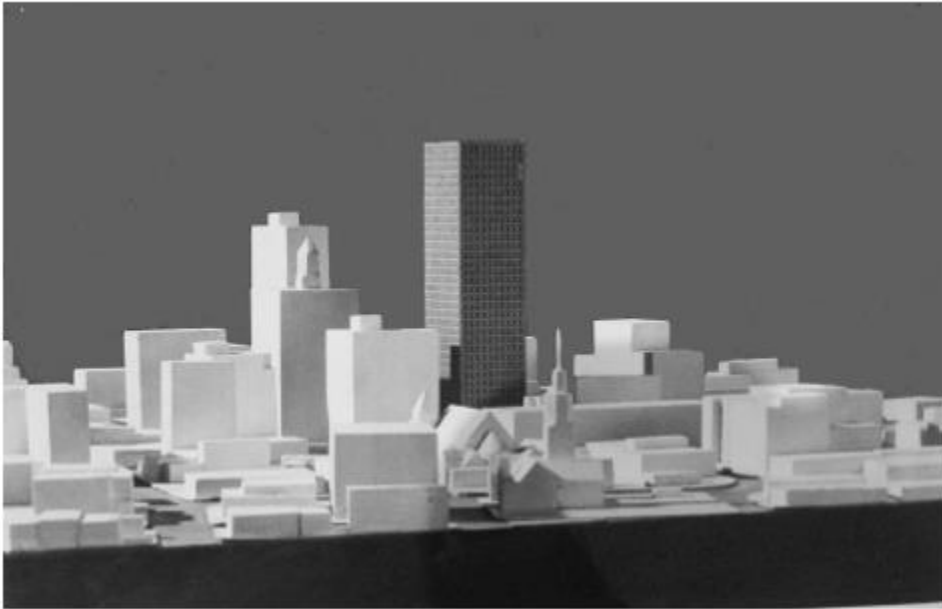
**Figure 24:** World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, 100 Locust Street, looking northeast.  
([rdgusa.com/projects/the-world-food-prize-hall-of-laureates](http://rdgusa.com/projects/the-world-food-prize-hall-of-laureates), accessed February 25, 2021)

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**Figure 25:** Left, the downtown model (Ruan Company Scrapbook), right, John Ruan with his evolving downtown model centered on his new tower (*Des Moines Register*, June 1, 1975)

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**Figure 26:** John Ruan and the Ruan Center (*Contrails Magazine*, February 1977, Ruan Scrapbooks).

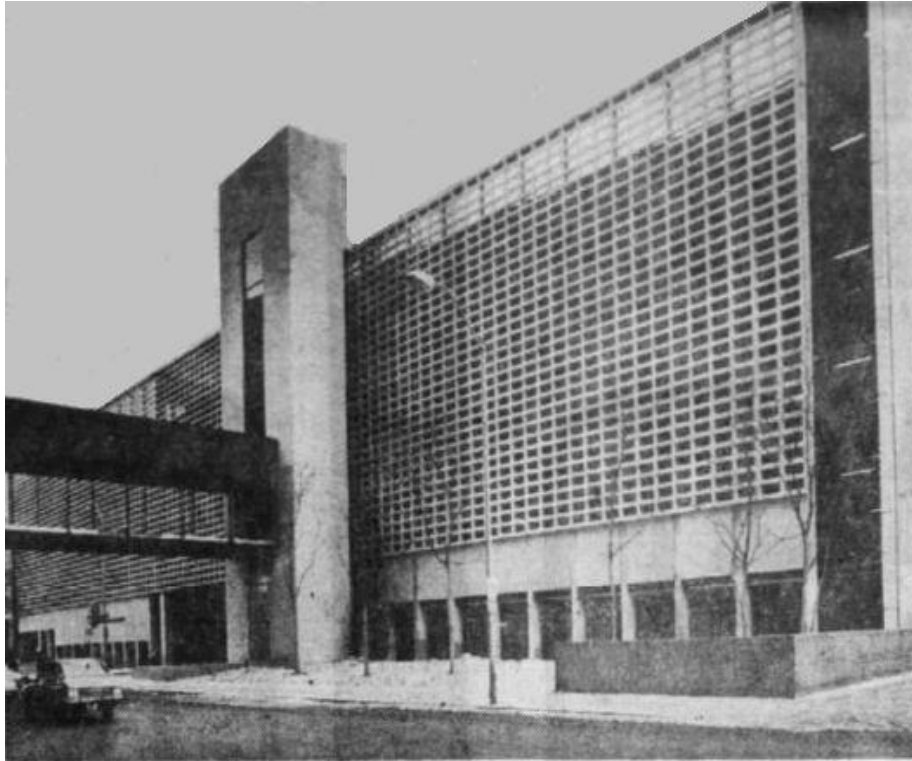


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**Figure 27:** Parking garage and skyway north of the Ruan Center, looking northwest (Des Moines Tribune, January 13, 1975).



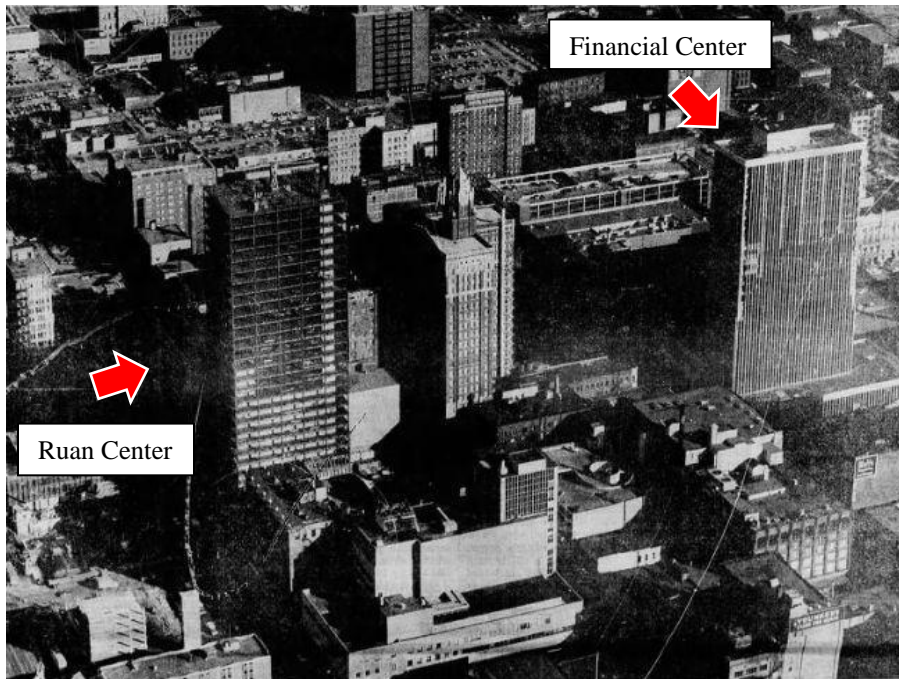
**Figure 28:** John Ruan and grandchildren, looking east, 1974 (note steel forms for concrete floors and the vertical column splices) (Ruan Scrapbooks)

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**Figure 29:** Aerial view of the core downtown, titled “The Loop’s tablets of concrete and steel,” looking southeast ( Financial Center right, Ruan Center left of center) (Des Moines *Register*, February 10, 1974)<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 30:** The west skywalk, Ruan Center to the new Marriott Hotel, is framed, looking southwest (Des Moines *Tribune*, November 15, 1980)

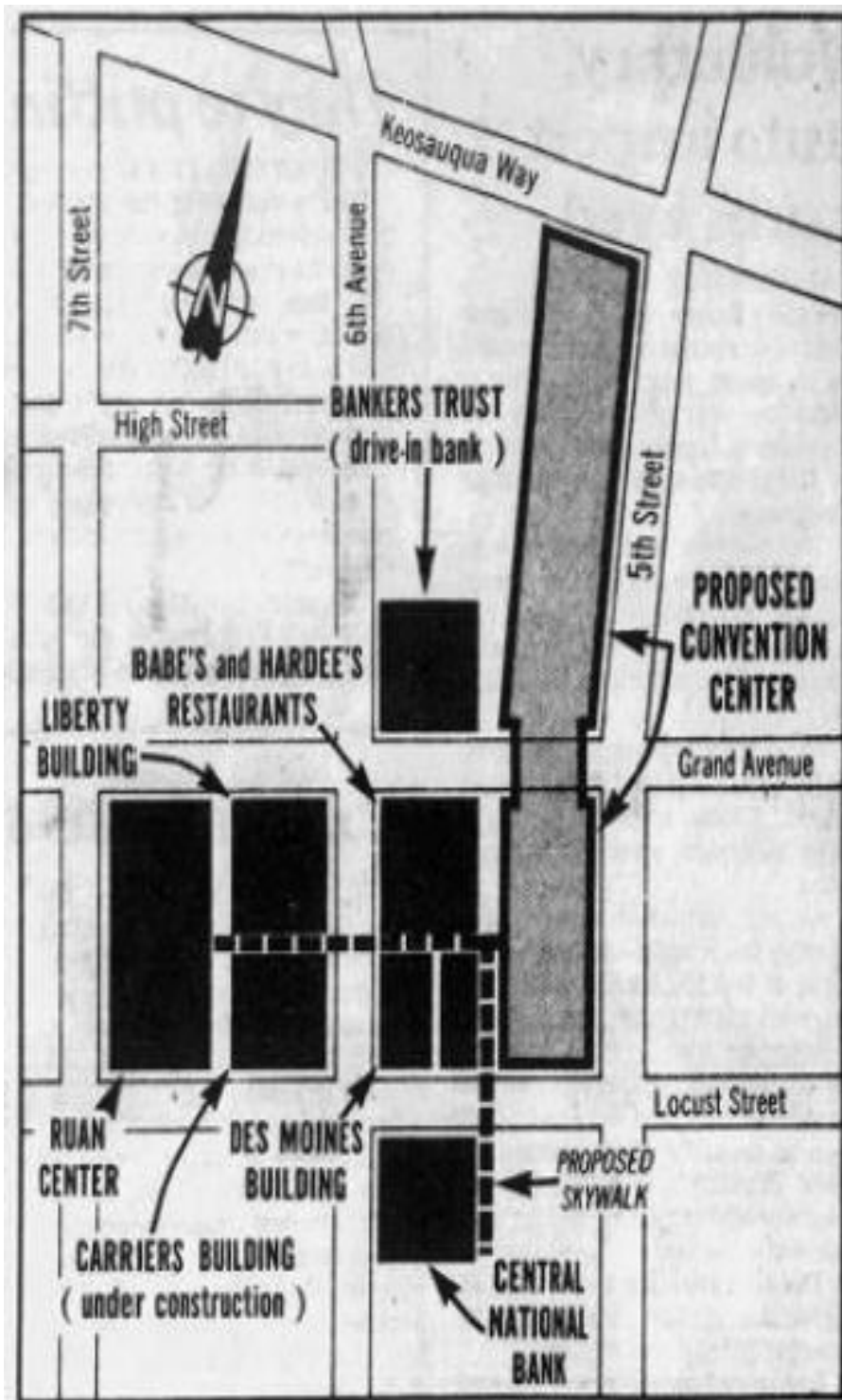
<sup>119</sup> The vertical pattern seen in the southwest corner of the tower is the temporary elevator. The Ruan Center was to the thirty-first floor by February 10, 1974

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**Figure 31:** Ruan's convention center location (Des Moines Register, March 25, 1981)

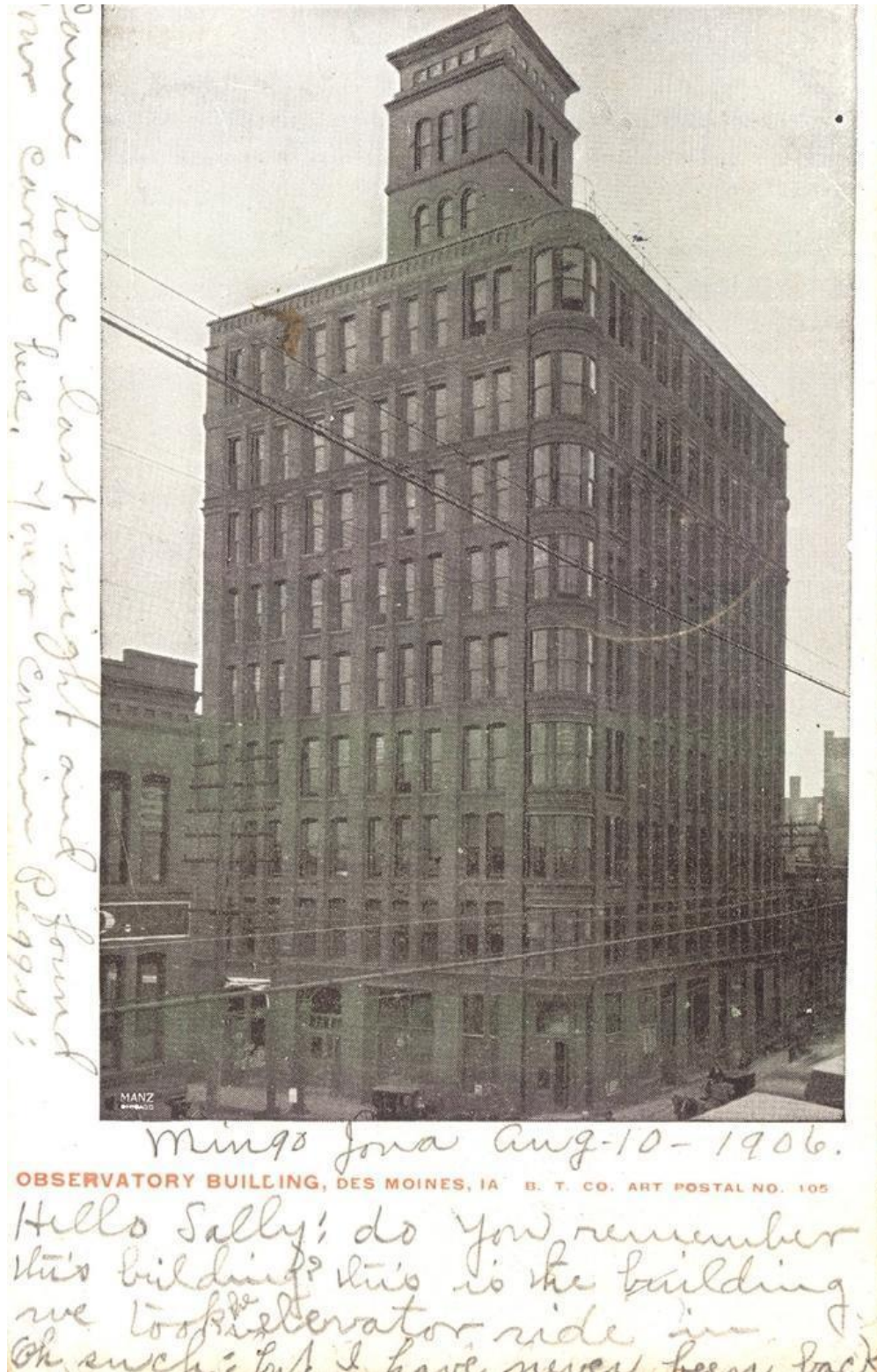


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**Figure 32:** Observatory Building

([https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora\\_webform/retrieve\\_form/1934660/nojs?pid=grinnell:16137&destination=islandora/object/grinnell:16137](https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora_webform/retrieve_form/1934660/nojs?pid=grinnell:16137&destination=islandora/object/grinnell:16137), accessed February 25, 2021)

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**Figure 33:** Equitable Life Insurance Company Building (<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ia0064/>, Hans Museeig, photographer, 1979, accessed February 25, 2021)

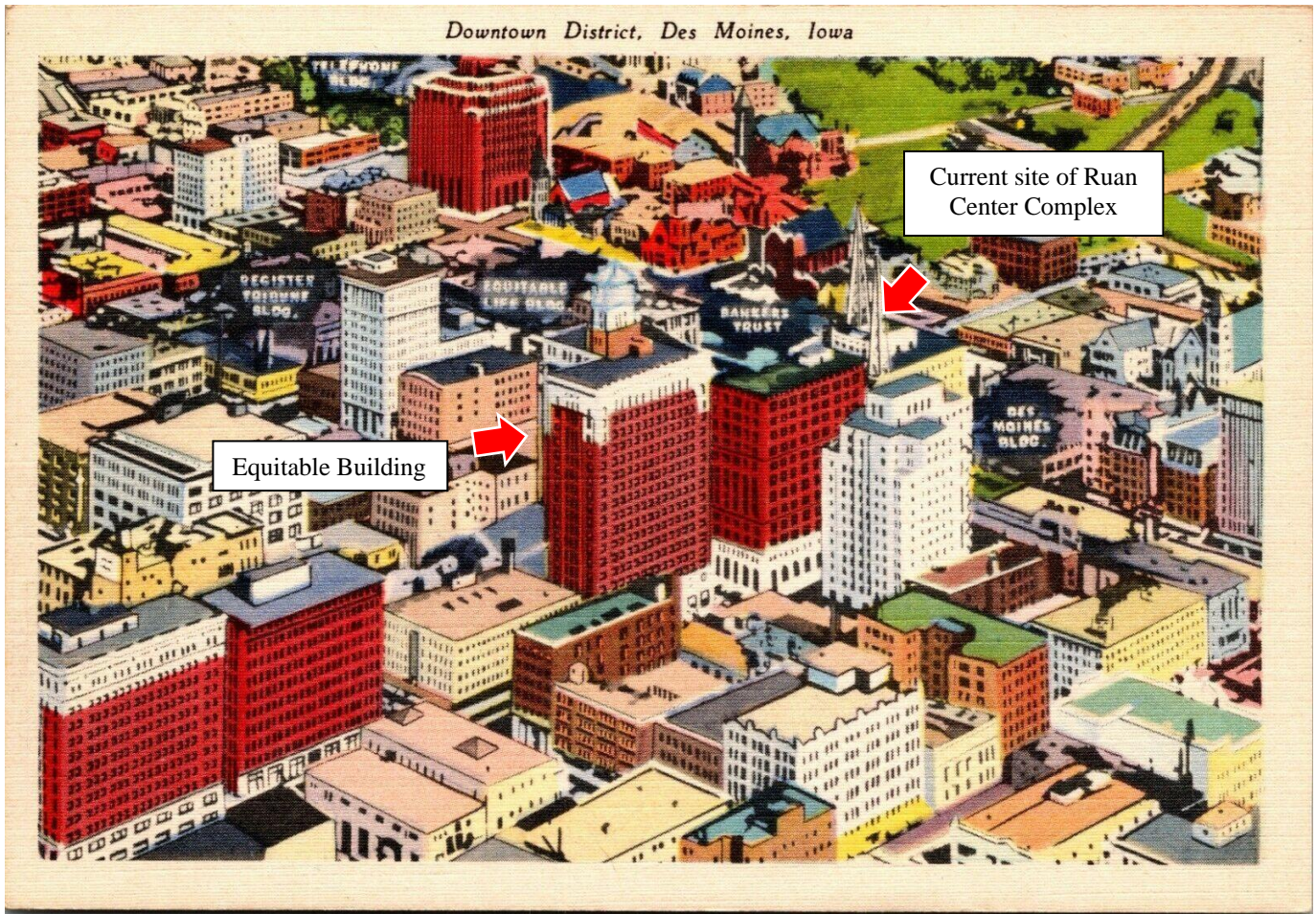


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**Figure 34:** Aerial view of the core of downtown west side high-rises, ca. 1940. By this time, skyscrapers had clustered both along Locust Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south of Locust (lower left) ([www.pinterest.com/pin/485755097800073913/visual-search/?x=15&y=10&w=470&h=298&cropSource=6](http://www.pinterest.com/pin/485755097800073913/visual-search/?x=15&y=10&w=470&h=298&cropSource=6), accessed February 25, 2021)

Ruan Center Complex

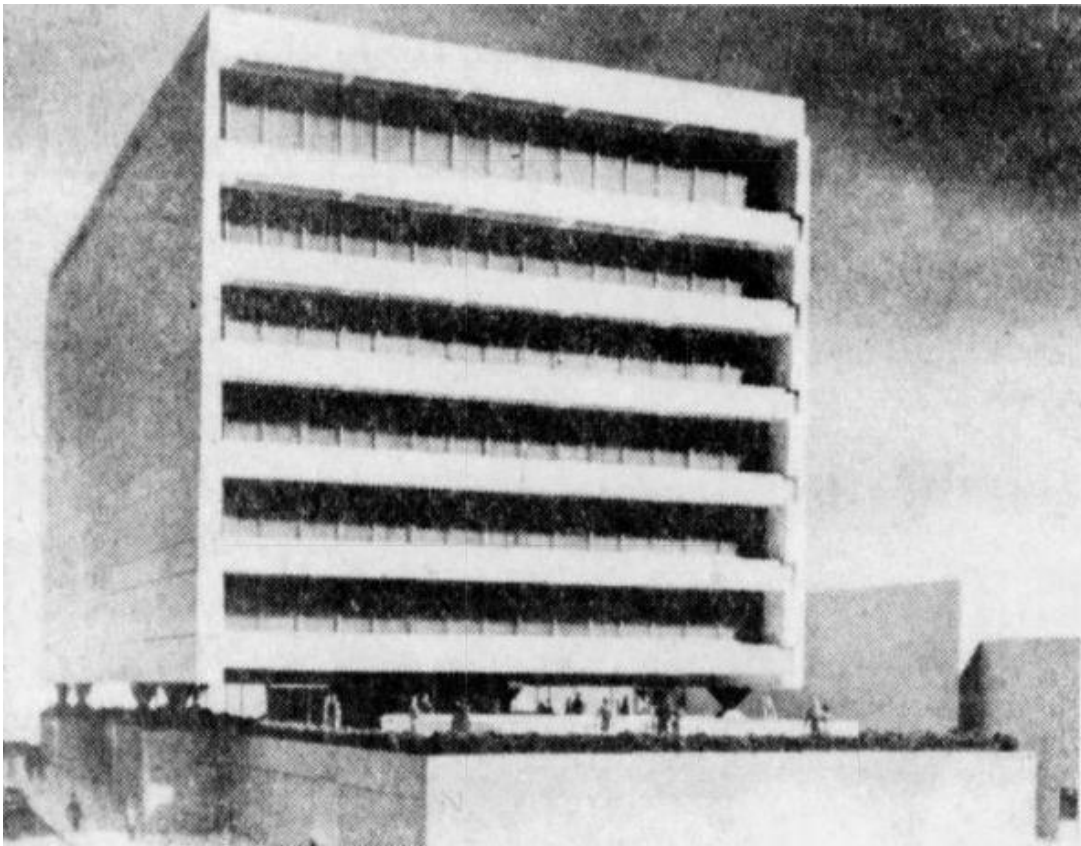
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**Figure 35:** Architect's sketch, the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association Building (Des Moines Register, December 28, 1961)



**Figure 36:** The American Republic Insurance Company Headquarters, looking northwest (Des Moines Register, January 10, 1965)



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**Figure 37:** Left, Standard Oil Company Office Building, 303 Keosauqua Way, looking northwest (Des Moines Register, July 19, 1942); right, the same building remodeled for Ruan's corporate offices, 303 Keosauqua Way (now Watson Powell Jr. Parkway), looking northeast (Polk County web.assess.co.polk.ia.us/cgi-bin/web/tt/infoqry.cgi?tt=card/card&dp=03000242001000, accessed February 25, 2021)



**Figure 38:** Iowa Power and Light Company Building, Brooks-Borg, architects (BBS Architects Engineers [www.bbsae.com/our-firm/timeline/#1940](http://www.bbsae.com/our-firm/timeline/#1940), accessed March 9, 2021)



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**Figure 39:** Drive-in bank for Bankers Trust, looking northwest (non-extant) (Des Moines Register, February 21, 1971); right, World Trade Center (not built) (Ruan Scrapbooks)



**Figure 40:** 1321 Walnut Street, looking north  
(<https://www.google.com/maps/place/1321+Walnut+St,+Des+Moines,+IA>, accessed March 9, 2021)



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**Figure 41:** Methodist Medical Plaza, 1212 Pleasant Street, 1977 (Des Moines Register, November 16, 1977)



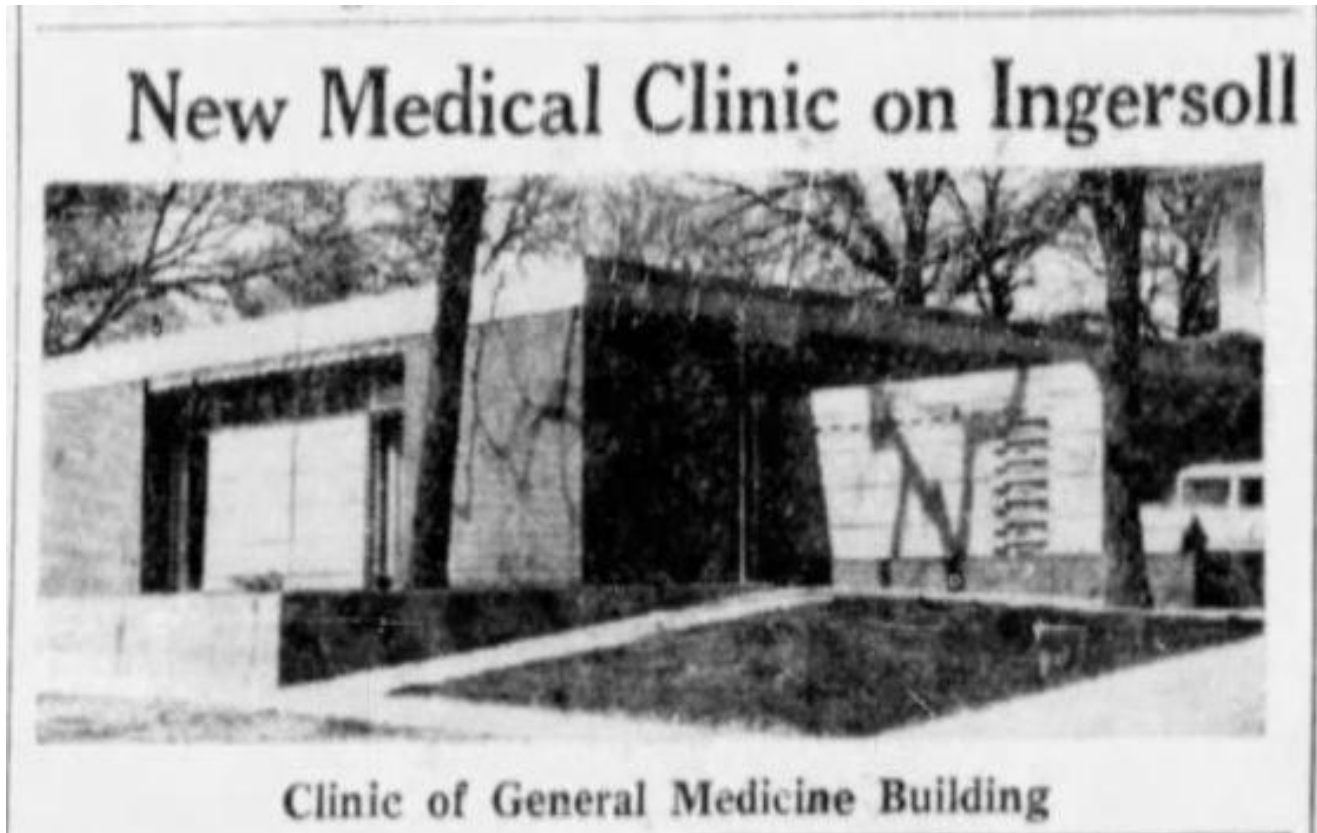
**Figure 42:** Left, Iowa Lutheran Hospital (Des Moines Tribune, September 4, 1971). Right, Iowa Lutheran Hospital, 2021 (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/1227+Pennsylvania+Ave,+Des+Moines,+IA>, accessed March 9, 2021)

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**Figure 43:** Russell designed Ingersoll Medical Clinic, 4001 Ingersoll Avenue  
(Des Moines Register, July 28, 1957)



**Figure 44:** Russell designed office building, 3101 Ingersoll Avenue, looking north on the right and northwest on the left (<https://www.google.com/maps/place/3101+Ingersoll+Ave,+Des+Moines,+IA>, accessed March 9, 2021)



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**Figure 45:** Left to right, Orrington Plaza (1969), One Rotary Center (1977) and Millennium Park Plaza (1982) (The Skyscraper Center. <https://www.skyscrapercenter.com/buildings>, accessed June 22,2020)



**Figure 46:** John Deere and Company Administrative Center, 1964, Moline, Illinois, 2019  
(Photo by Gabriel Jody, Morgan, William, “Deere & Company Administrative Center Exemplifies “A Quiet Revolution,” AIA Journal, February 1, 2019)

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**Figure 47:** Left, cover of January 1973 Northwestern Banker, Right, The Ruan Center is featured in the company magazine, January-February 1973. (Ruan Scrapbooks)

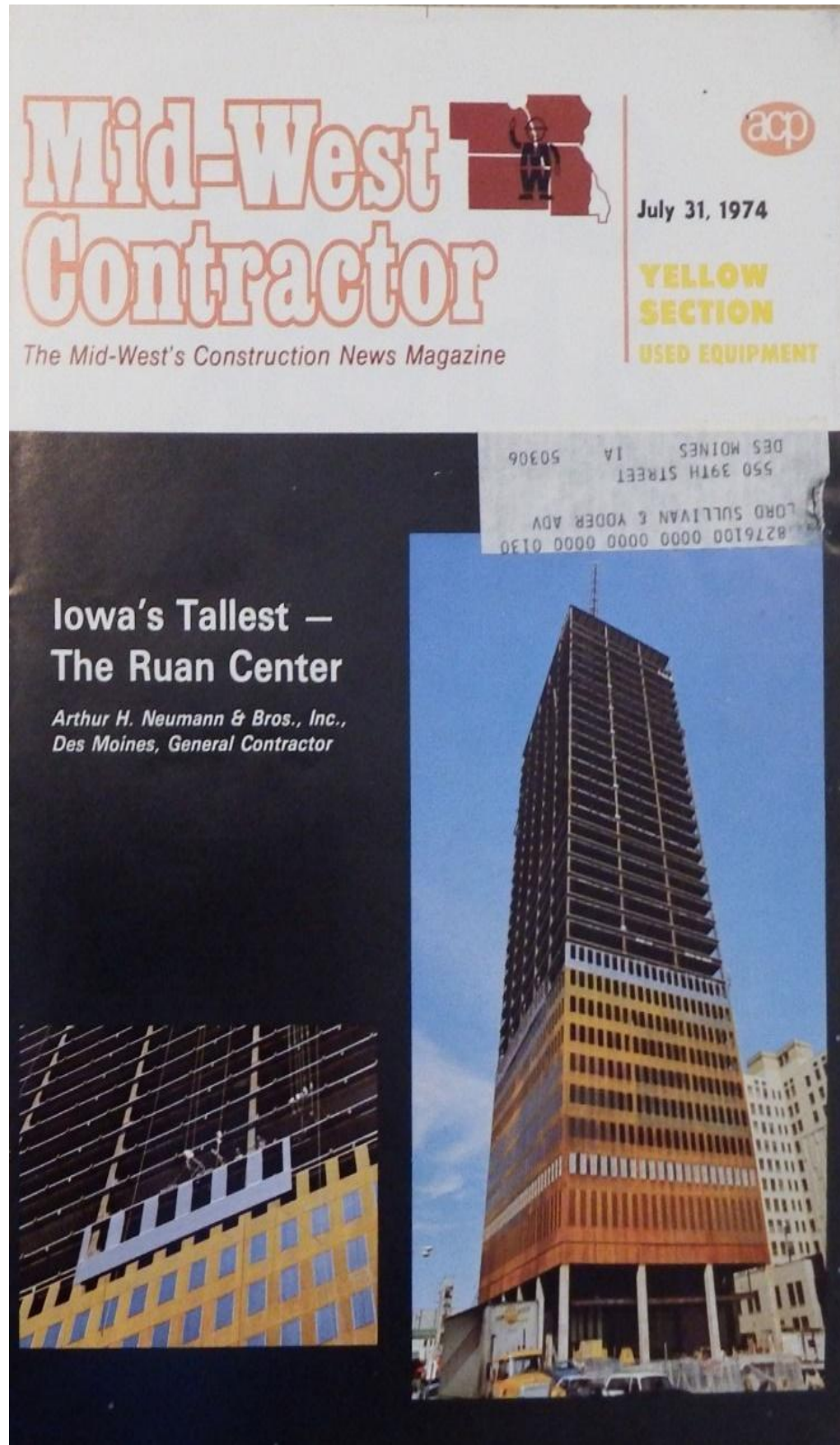


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**Figure 48:** The cover images nicely document the range of exterior colors that developed as the rust coating developed (Mid-West Contractor, July 31, 1974)

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**Figure 49:** Dominating the downtown profile, looking west (Cover, Des Moines 1975-76 budget, “Performance Goals and Objectives, 1974-1976”) (Ruan Scrapbooks)



**Figure 50:** Iowa’s tallest building, looking southeast (Cover image from The Iowan, Spring 1976)



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## Iowa's tallest building features steel plate-wall system.

### SINGLE UNITS INTEGRATE INTERIOR & EXTERIOR WALL!

The Ruan Center is the tallest building in Iowa—a 30-story office tower and banking pavilion located in the heart of downtown Des Moines.

A highly innovative feature distinguishes the Ruan Center: a steel plate wall system in which the plate wall and the structural wall are joined together into single units. Now, both parts of the wall can be fabricated and erected in one piece.

As an extension of the structure's grid design, the exterior is a system of interlocking one-bay wall panels with window openings. These panels were fabricated to full-story height in two bay sizes—32' 8" (with 7 window openings) and 28' 0" (with 6 window openings). The panels have 5/16" USS COR-TEN Steel plates on the outside, with painted carbon steel bar stiffeners and cover plates on the inside, forming an exterior-interior window wall.

USS COR-TEN high-strength, low-alloy steel was chosen for its resistance to atmospheric corrosion when its exterior surfaces are boldly exposed to the weather, and for its minimal maintenance needs.

The Ruan Center frame required 4,700 tons of structural steel. 1,600 tons of USS COR-TEN steel plate was used for the exterior walls. Columns were located on module lines to permit a large degree of office layout flexibility. This resulted in an interior layout that is virtually column-free and approximates a center-core design.

Structural design simplicity in a modular scheme offered yet another dividend: erection at great speed. The high-rise was completed in less than two years.

This handsome building is evidence of how modern structural steels, especially exposed USS

COR-TEN steels, allow architects and engineers every opportunity to be original and innovative.

Before developing any architectural applications for USS COR-TEN steels, the designer should review the suggestions, limitations and precautions contained in the USS publication, "USS COR-TEN High-Strength Low-Alloy Steel for Architectural Applications" (ADUSS 88-6659-02).

For copies of this book, as well as our Building Report and our Design Detail Sheets on the Ruan Center, call your U.S. Steel Construction Services Representative or write to United States Steel, P.O. Box 86 (CH24), Pittsburgh, Pa. 15230.

USS and COR-TEN are registered trademarks.

Owner: Ruan Center Corporation,  
Des Moines, Iowa.  
Architects: Kendall Griffith Russell  
Arling, Inc., Des Moines, Iowa.  
Structural Engineers: Vander Linden  
& Associates, Des Moines, Iowa.  
Rietzger & Tokay, Inc.,  
Peek Ridge, Illinois.  
General Contractors: Neumann Brothers, Inc.,  
Des Moines, Iowa.  
Structural Steel Fabricator and Erector:  
Pittsburgh Des Moines Steel Co.,  
Des Moines, Iowa.  
Curtain Wall Fabricator: Venetian Iron  
Works, Inc., Des Moines, Iowa.



**United States Steel**

Circle 136 on information card

AIA JOURNAL, JULY 1979 '9

**Figure 51:** Photo and U. S. Steel endorsement (*AIA Journal*, November 1979, p. 9)

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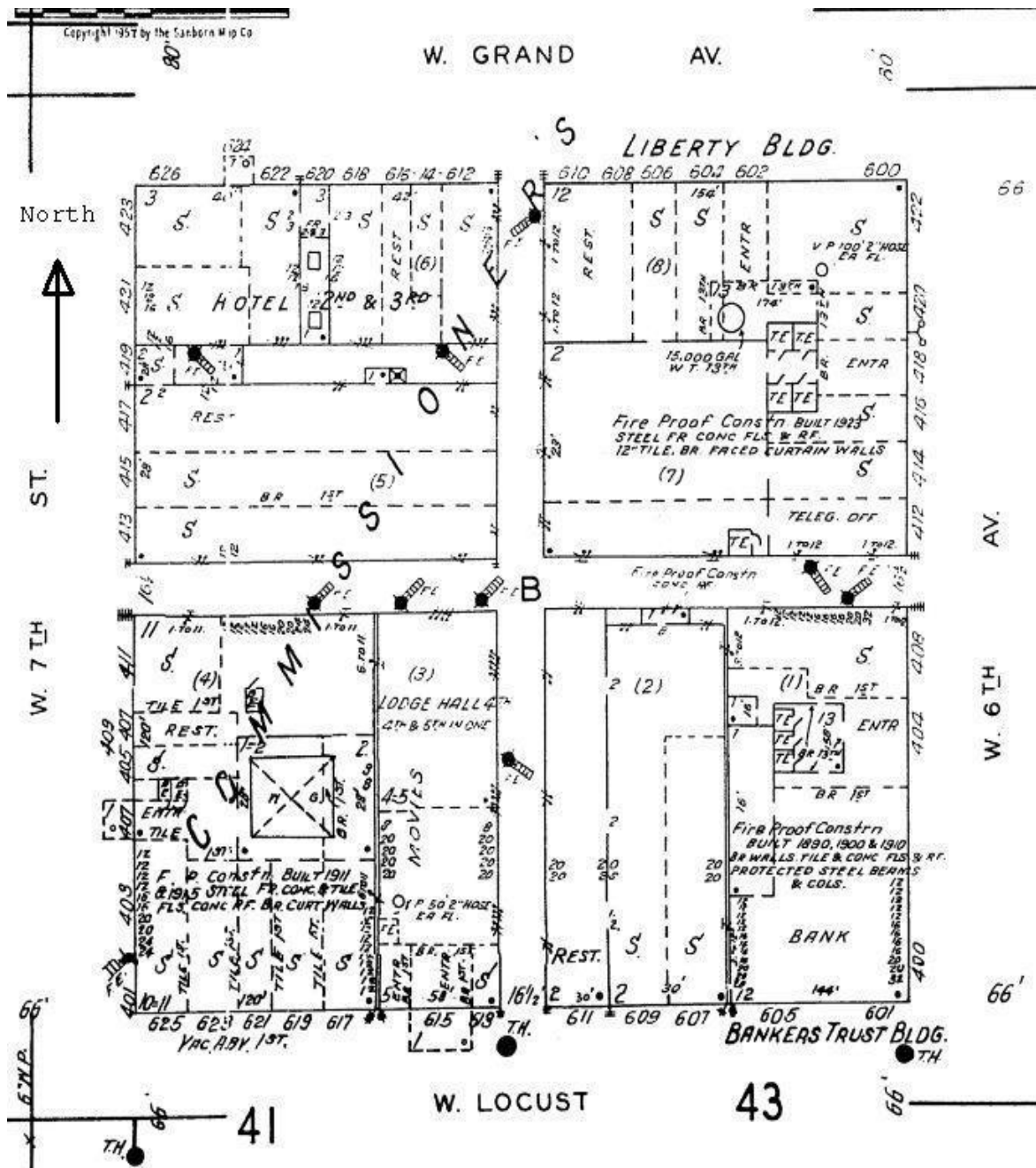


Figure 52: Detail from the 1957 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map

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**Figure 53:** Nearly cleared hotel-Odd Fellows quarter block (note hotel boiler and parking lot to north),

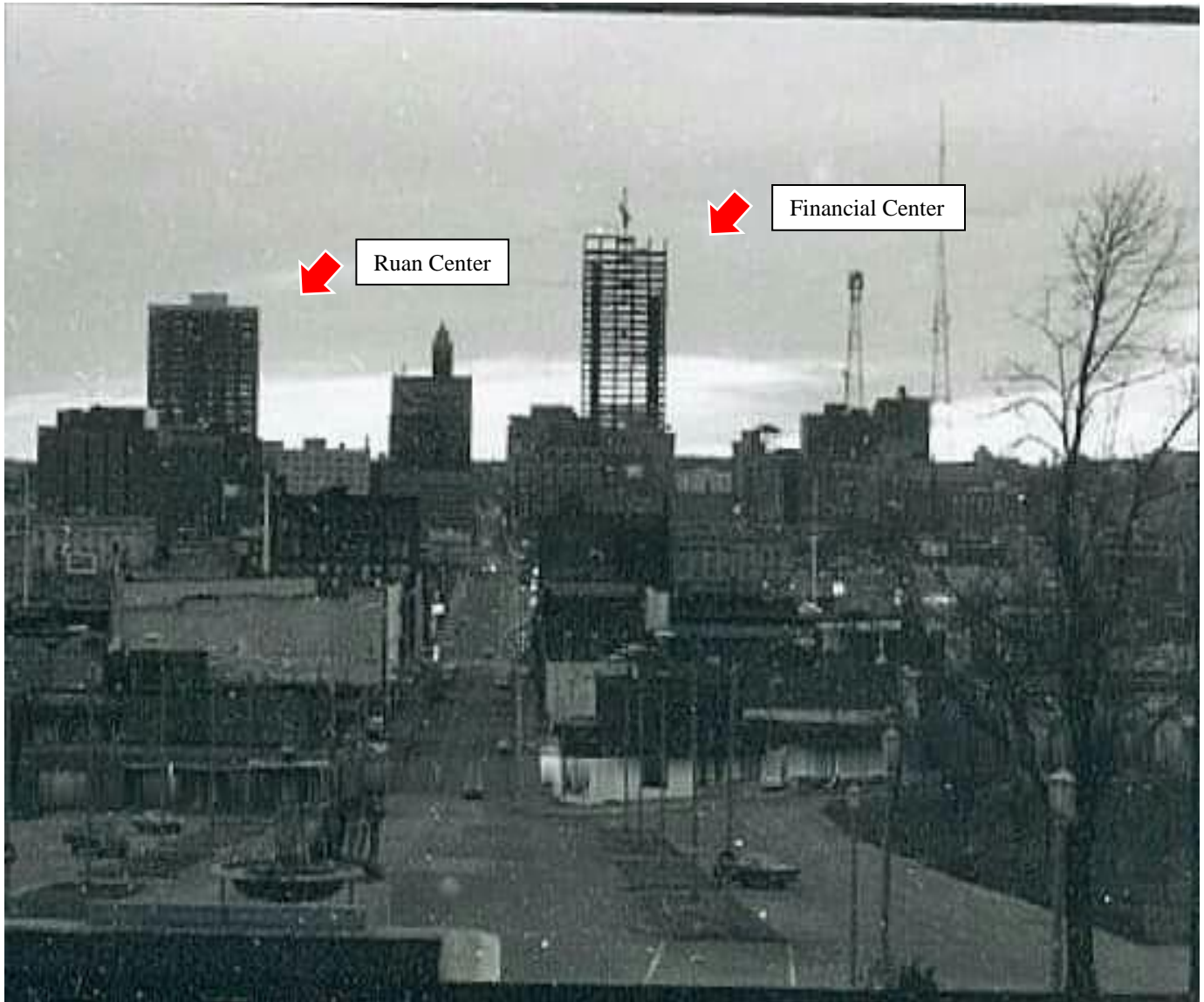


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**Figure 54:** Dueling high-rises, the Ruan Center, left, the Financial Center, right, looking west, 1973.  
(Kenosha [Wisconsin] News, January 24, 1975)

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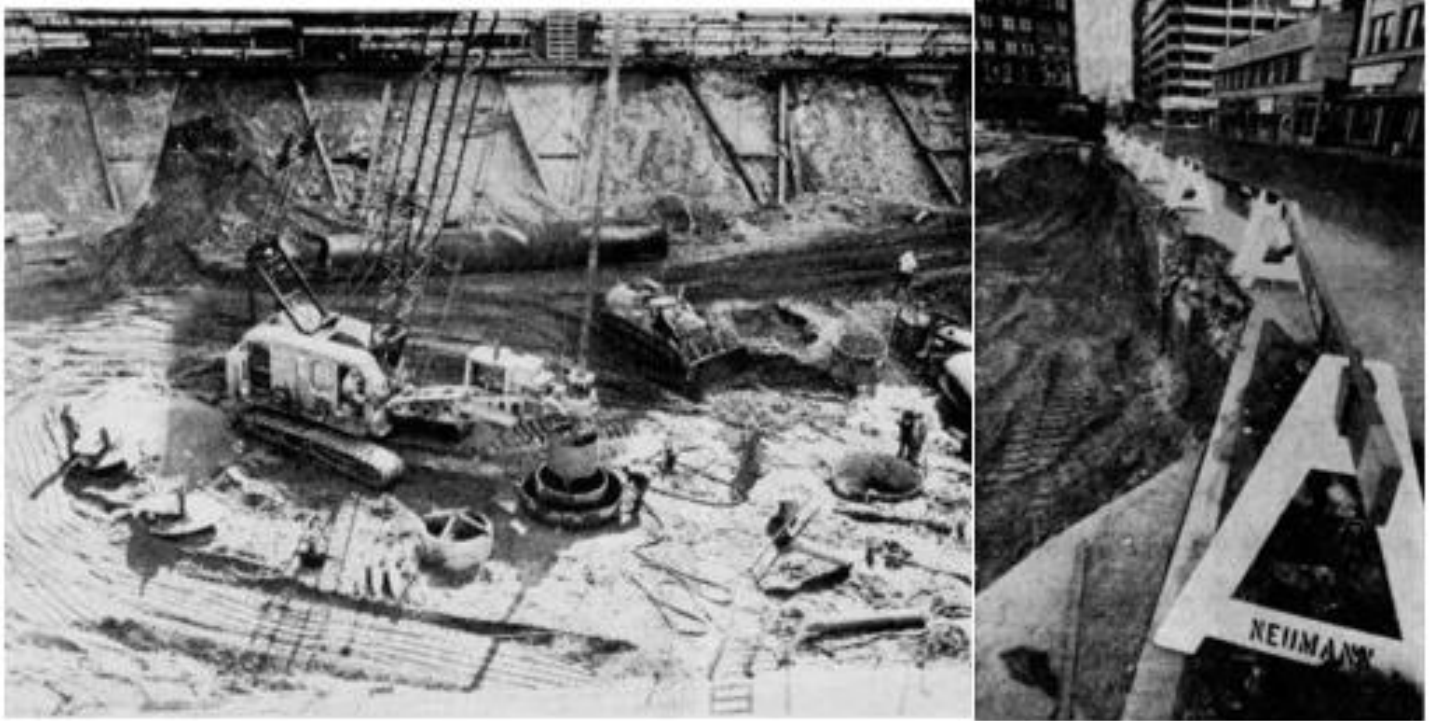
**Figure 55:** Architect's sketch of the complex and plaza, looking northwest  
(Des Moines *Tribune*, January 19, 1973)

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**Figure 56:** Left, caisson excavation work (Creston News Advertiser, June 15, 1973); right, “sawhorse” safety barricade, looking south on Seventh (Des Moines *Tribune*, March 22, 1973)

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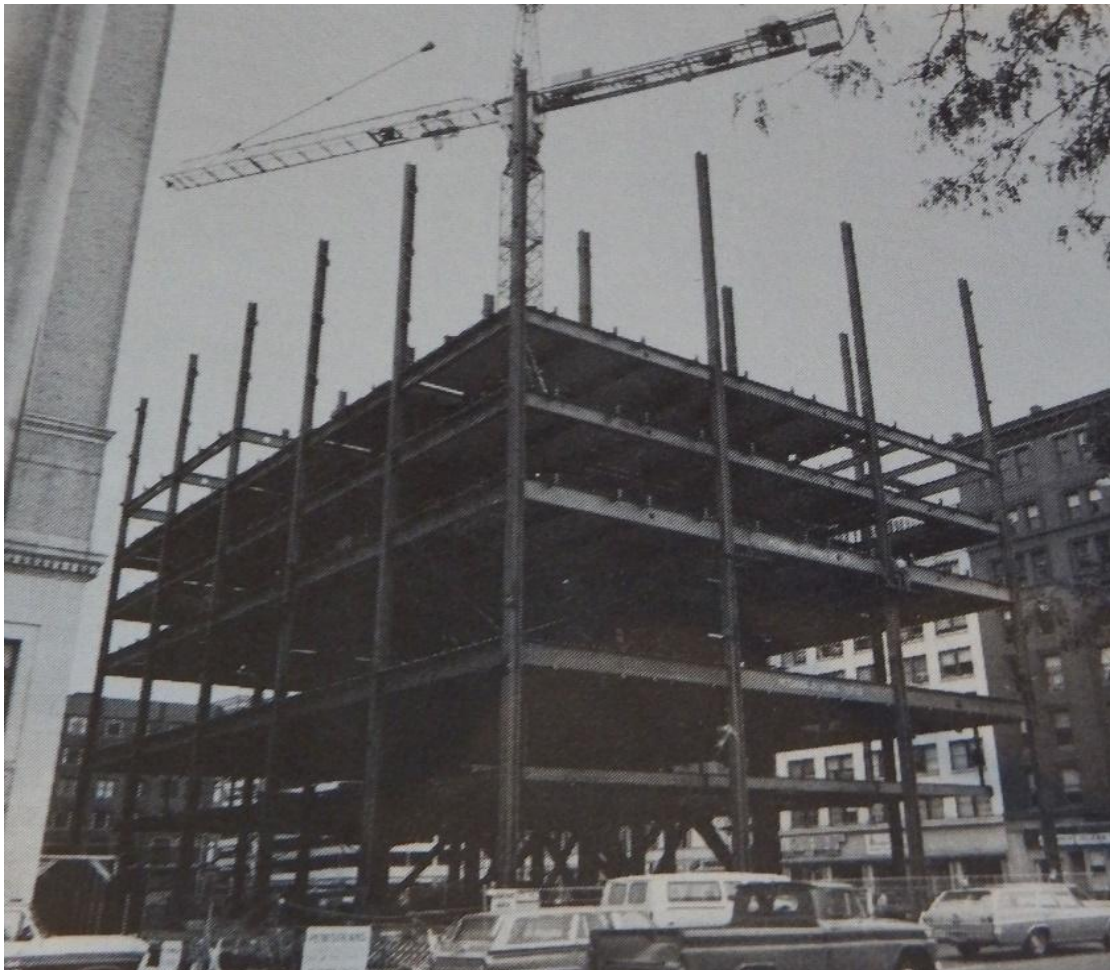
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**Figure 57:** Left, completed excavation, initial steel framing, looking north, right, A-bracing of shoring walls, both ca.mid-1973 (*Mid-West Contractor*, July 31, 1974)



**Figure 58:** Early framing stage, looking southwest (Liberty Building is at the left) (*Mid-West Contractor*, July 31, 1974)



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**Figure 59:** Construction progress, looking north showing temporary southwest corner elevator.  
(Structural Report “Ruan Archives”)<sup>120</sup>

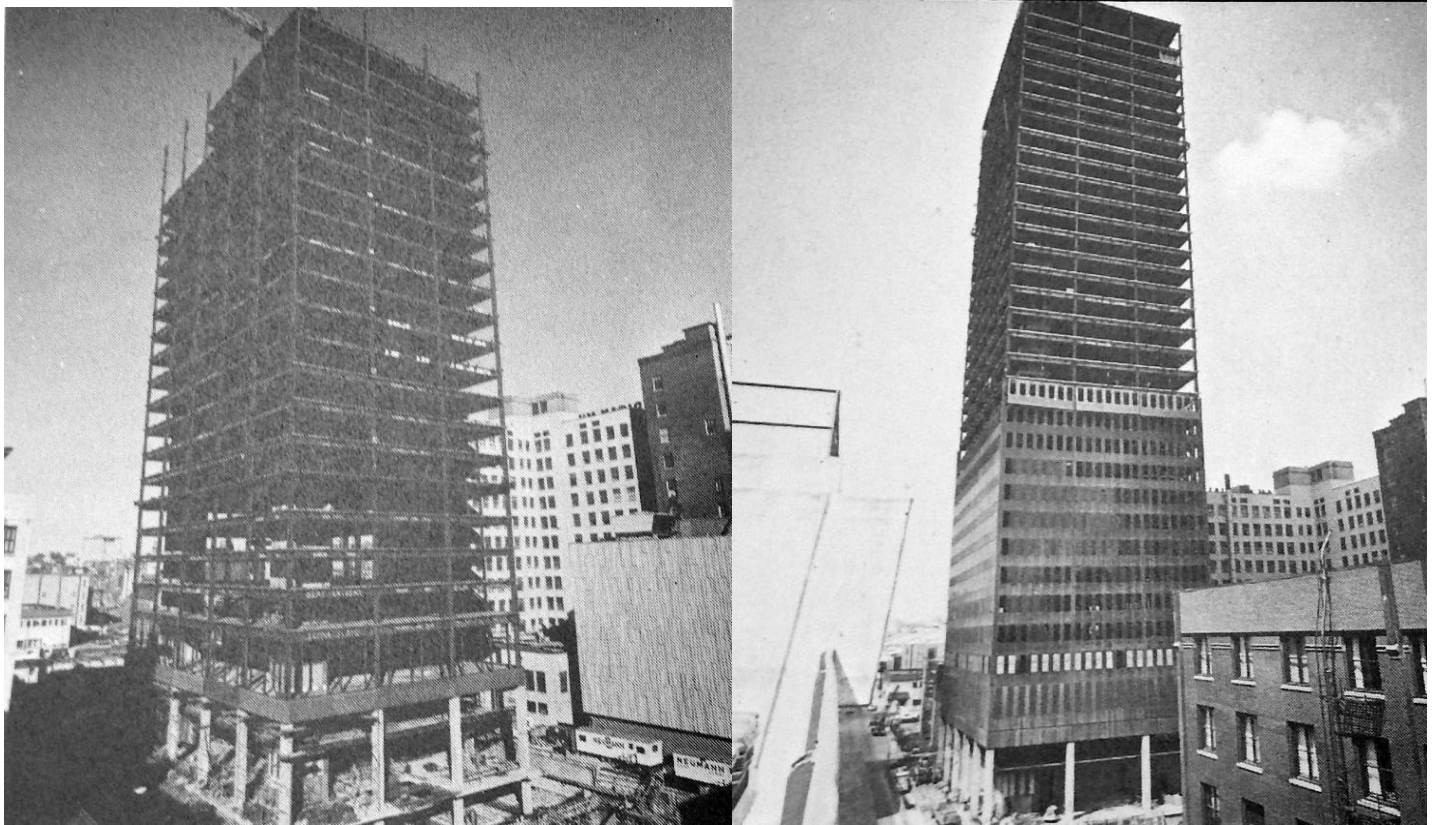
<sup>120</sup> There were two temporary elevators with one for freight in the northwest corner and a passenger elevator in the southwest corner. Both were later removed.

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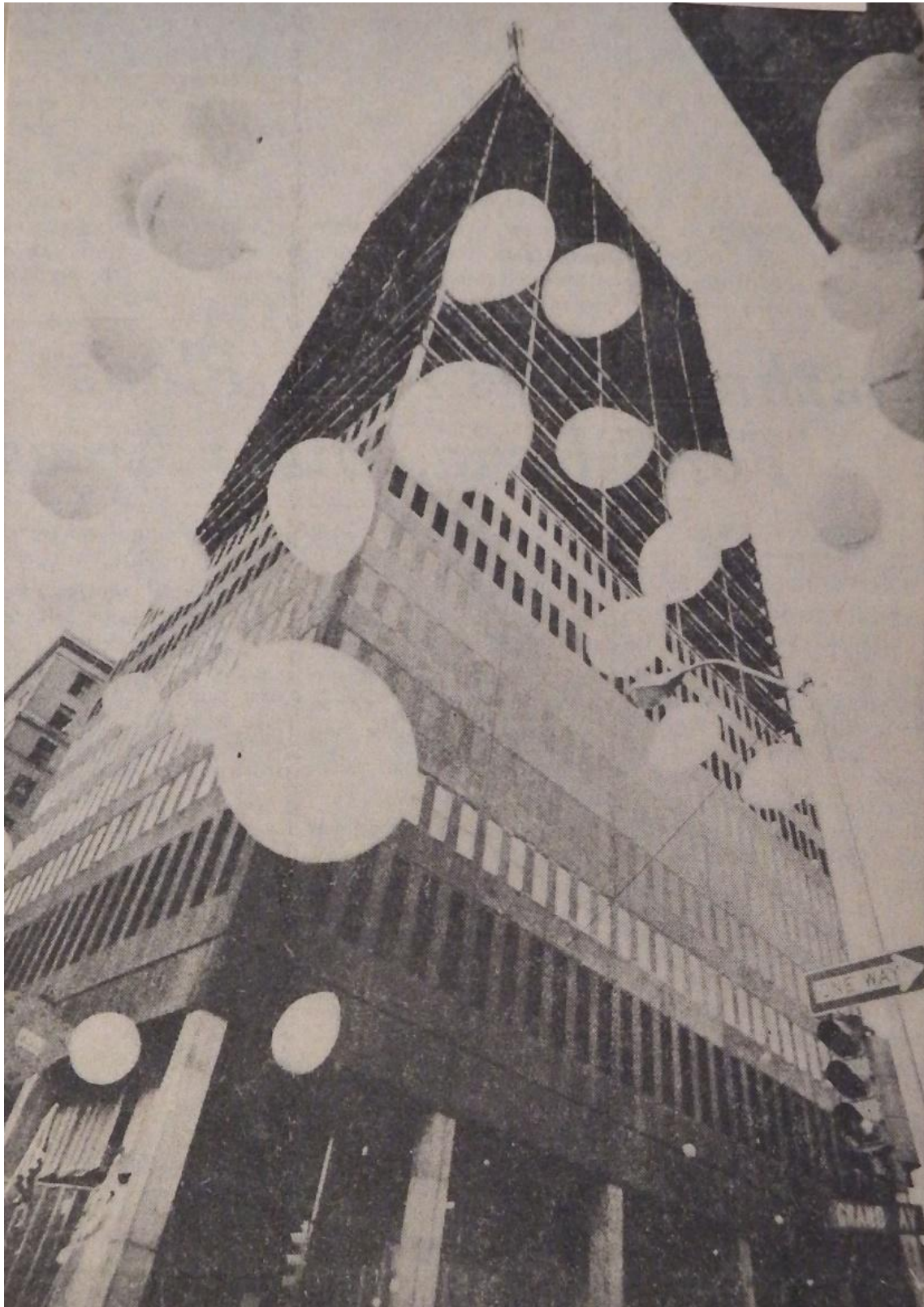
**Figure 60:** Construction progress photos; left, looking north; right, looking north with cladding to 15 floors  
(Structural Report "Ruan Archives")

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**Figure 61:** Ground-level balloon release at topping-off  
(*Des Moines Register*, March 16, 1974)

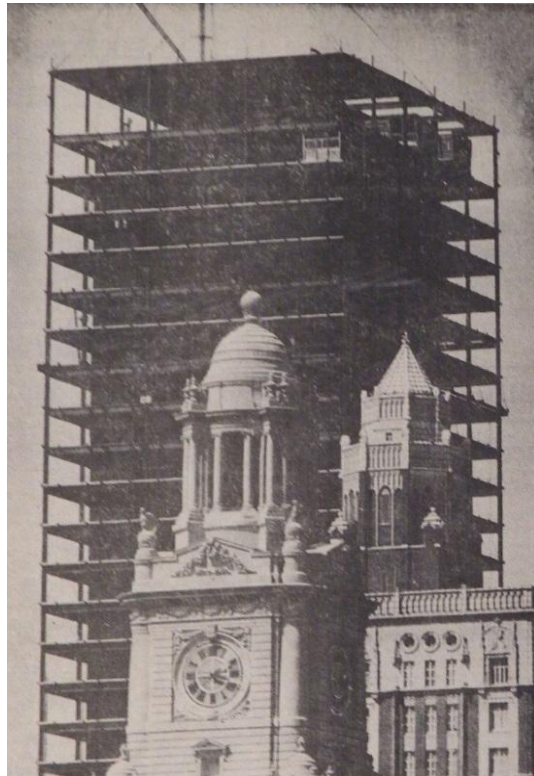


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**Figure 62:** The new viewed across the old (Polk County Courthouse and Equitable Building, looking northwest  
(*Des Mines Register*, April 10, 1974)



**Figure 63:** Gray steel panels begin to rust to yellow, orange, brown.  
(*Mid-West Contractor*, July 31, 1974)

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**Figure 64:** Left, note mounts for wall panels, right, temporary window coverings (Structural Report)



**Figure 65:** A wall panel is raised to the fourteenth floor, looking southeast (Structural Report)



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**Figure 66a:** Left, aerial view looking northeast. **Figure 66b:** Right, lifting a top floor louvered curtain wall panel, looking north (note the temporary freight elevator inset in the southwest corner)  
(Des Moines *Register*, June 1, 1975)



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**Figure 67:** Earlier construction view looking northeast (Des Moines *Register*, June 1, 1975)

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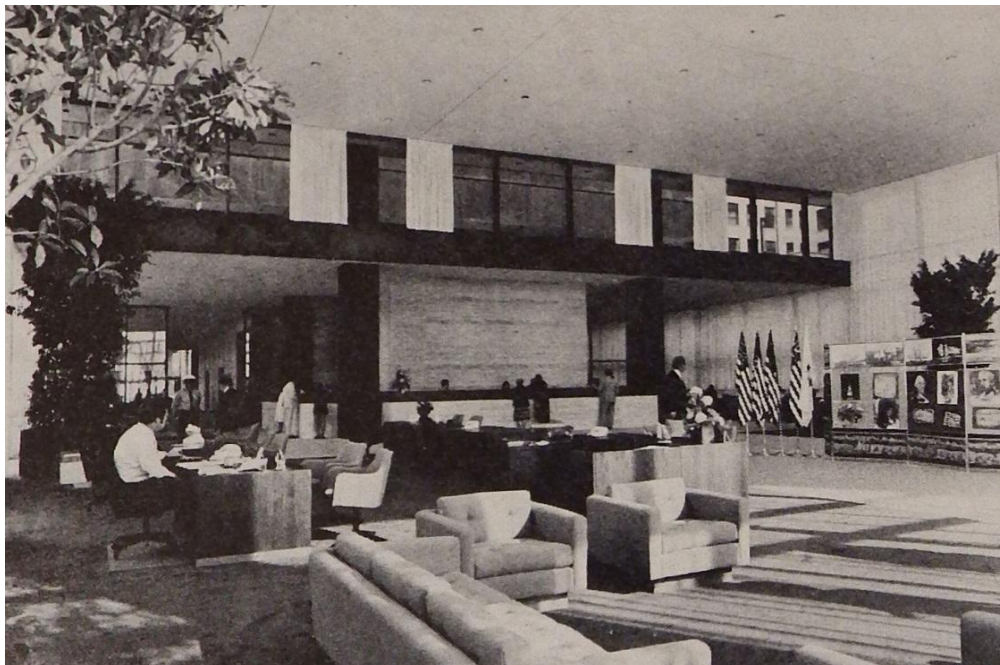
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**Figure 68:** The completed bank pavilion, looking northeast, October 1975  
(*Northwestern Banker*, November 1975)



**Figure 69:** The completed bank lobby interior, looking northeast, October 1975  
(*Northwestern Banker*, November 1975)



Ruan Center Complex

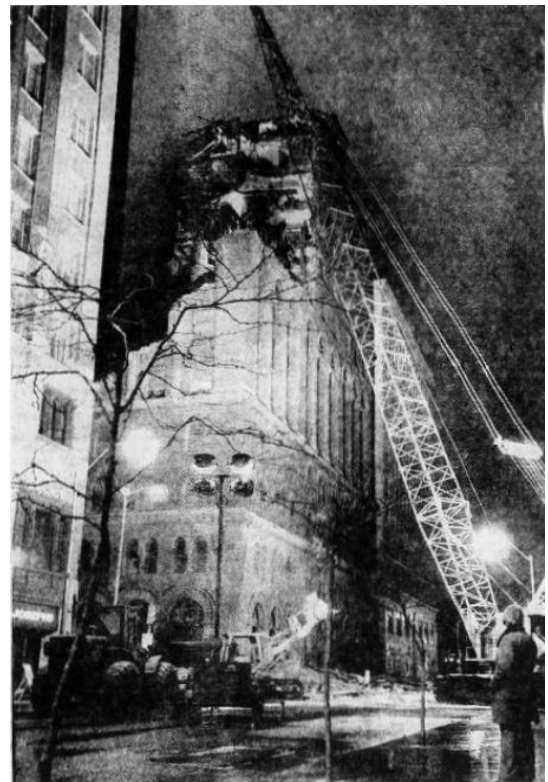
Name of Property

Polk County, Iowa

County and State



**Figure 70:** Des Moines Club dining room with a brick fireplace, looking northeast.  
(Des Moines *Tribune*, November 3, 1980)



**Figure 71a:** Left, half a plaza and a retained building, a student's proposal.  
(Des Moines *Tribune*, April 23, 1976);

**Figure 71b:** Right, demolition photo looking northwest (ibid., February 25, 1980)

Ruan Center Complex

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**WHY ISN'T YOUR BUSINESS LOCATED IN A SMART LOCATION?**

**The Ruan Center Complex**

It makes a lot of sense to office in downtown Des Moines nowadays. Particularly if your business is located here in central Iowa.

Because downtown Des Moines is where most of the action takes place. It's where business and government mingle. Where big deals are made.

If you're looking for a smart location in the time-honored center of the Des Moines financial district, consider a move to the Ruan Center Complex. There's space available in Des Moines, Iowa right now.

Whether you require an entire 17,000 square-foot floor, or a single executive suite, the Ruan Center Complex has many advantages for you.

It's a smart building. When you move into Two Ruan Center, you're moving into a building that's computer, telecommunications, and people ready. We offer database links and telex transfer — our advanced systems and services are the very latest and the best.

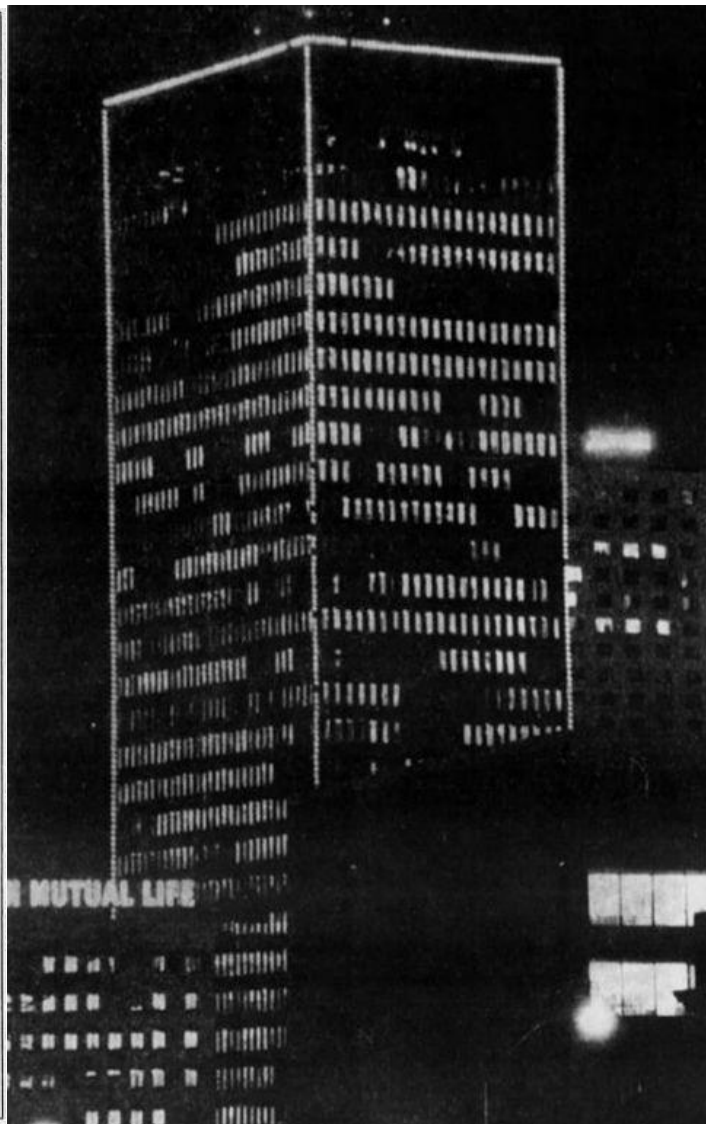
A smart building helps contain costs. Our computer-controlled, quick-response heating and cooling systems provide comfortable, productive working conditions. It knows how to collect and save heat to use later when it's needed, and when to turn the air conditioning on. All of this saves you money! The same computer monitors 24-hour a day security, plus fire and life safety systems.

We're ideally located in the economic hub of Iowa with many of the state's largest companies, financial institutions and insurance companies within sky-walking distance.

There is everything an employer or an employee could want at the Ruan Center Complex — ample parking with thousands of available spaces, some of Iowa's best restaurants, shopping, entertainment, exclusive clubs and the popular Court Avenue district... all just a short stroll away.

For more information call our leasing office at 245-3790.

**The Ruan Center Complex**



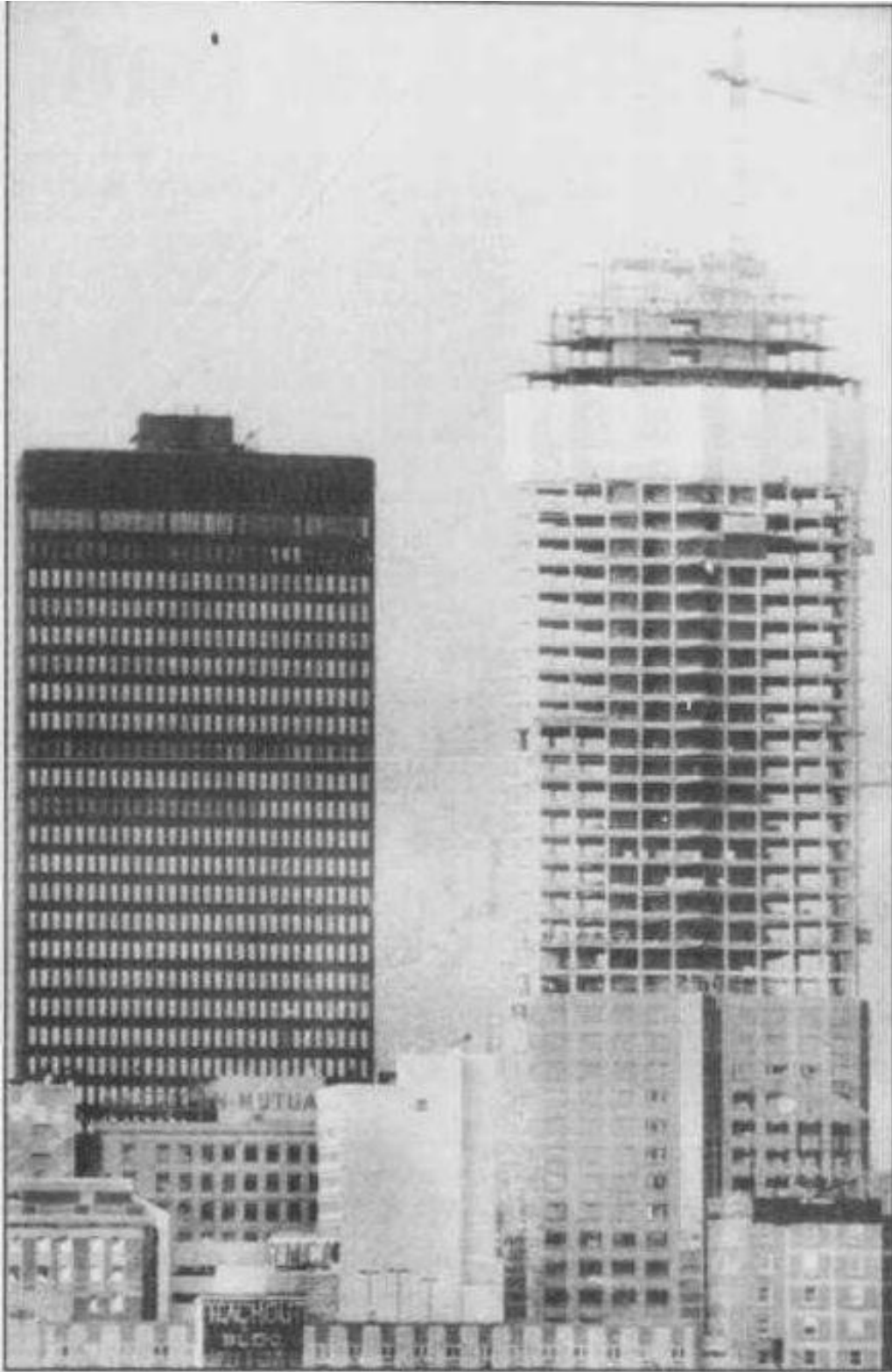
**Figure 72a:** The Ruan Center Complex, left, first reference (*Des Moines Register*, November 2, 1987); **Figure 72b:** Right, the light-outlined tower, looking southwest (*Des Moines Register*, December 14, 1990)

Ruan Center Complex

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**Figure 73:** The Ruan Center (left) is finally superseded by 801 Grand (right), looking west.  
(Cedar Rapids *Gazette*, January 21, 1991)