NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: First City National Bank
Other name/site number: First City Main, First City Centre, One City Centre
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 1021 Main Street and 1101 Fannin Street
City or town: Houston State: Texas County: Harris
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (☑ 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 (☑ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
☐ national ☐ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

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

Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting or other official **Date**

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Financial Institution; TRANSPORTATION: Road Related (Vehicular); OTHER: Subterranean Tunnel

Current Functions: COMMERCE/Trade: Business; TRANSPORTATION: Road Related (Vehicular); OTHER: Subterranean Tunnel; VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MID-CENTURY MODERN NON-RESIDENTIAL; SKYSCRAPER

Principal Exterior Materials: GLASS, STONE, METAL, CONCRETE

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets xx)

8. Statement of Significance

National Register Criteria: Criterion C

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture (*local level of significance*)

Period of Significance: 1961

Significant Dates: 1961

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): N/A

Architect/Builder: Bunshaft, Gordon, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Architect); Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (Associate Architects); Cummins, Robert J. (Structural Engineer); Weidlinger, Paul (Structural Engineer); Jaros, Baum & Bolles (Mechanical Engineers); W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation (General Contractor)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-xx through 8-xx)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-xx)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
X preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on January 23, 2025 (Project # 48833)
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
___ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*, Austin)
___ Other state agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 2.235 acres
Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. 1021 Main Street
   Latitude: 29.756299°N Longitude: -95.364906°W

   1101 Fannin Street
2. Latitude: 29.755227°N Longitude: -95.364385°W

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary is comprised of two discontiguous legal parcels divided by an urban intersection. The First City National Bank and original parking garage make up a functionally related complex that was historically and is currently connected by an underground tunnel. The boundary includes all property totaling approximately 2.235 acres specifically the northwest parcel identified as LTS 1 THRU 12 & TR 13 BLK 136 SSBB (1.47 acres; Account # 0011360000001), the southeastern parcel identified as LTS 6 THRU 10 & TRS 11 & 12 BLK 254 SSBB (0.74 acres; Account # 0012420000003), and the historic tunnel (approximately 0.025 acres), Houston, Harris County, Texas as recorded in the Harris Appraisal District. Data accessed May 8, 2025 (Map 5).

Boundary Justification: The boundary consists of two discontiguous legal parcels containing all property historically associated with the First City National Bank, the original parking garage, and includes the historic connecting underground tunnel.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Amanda Coleman and Steph McDougal, senior consultants, and Melanie Caddel, consultant, with assistance from Anna Mod, director
Organization: Ryan, LLC
Street & number: 1233 West Loop South, 16th floor
City or Town: Houston State: Texas Zip Code: 77027
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Telephone: 346-385-3250
Date: June 20, 2025

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets)

Additional items (see continuation sheets)

Photographs (see continuation sheets)

Photograph Log

Name of Property: First City National Bank
City or Vicinity: Houston
County: Harris
State: Texas
Date: September 26th and December 2nd, 2024; January 15, 2025
Photographer: Amanda Coleman (Ryan, LLC), except where noted.

All photographs accurately depict property conditions. No changes nor significant deterioration has occurred since the photos were taken in September and December 2024 and January 2025.

Photo 1
Northwest (Main Street) and Southwest (Lamar Street) elevations
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0001

Photo 2
Exterior
Southwest (Lamar Street) and Southeast (Fannin Street) elevations
View north
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0002

Photo 3
Exterior
Southeast (Fannin Street) and Northeast (McKinney Street) elevations, showing attached non-historic garage in foreground
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0003

Photo 4
Northeast (McKinney Street) elevation, façade detail, operable side hinged windows for maintenance access visible in fourth bay from left
View south
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0004

Photo 5
Northwest (Main Street) entrance
View southeast
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0005

Photo 6
Southeast (Fannin Street) elevation, loading dock
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0006

Photo 7
One story hyphen connecting office tower and attached non-historic garage
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0007

Photo 8
Floor 1
Lamar Street entrance and storefront
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0008

Photo 9
Floor 1
Main Street entrance and storefront
View north
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0009

Photo 10
Floor 1
Lobby at hyphen connection
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0010

Photo 11
Floor 1
Basement escalators at left, low-rise elevator lobby with original core finishes
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0011

Photo 12
Floor 1
Mid-rise elevator lobby with original core finishes
View northeast
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0012

Photo 13
Floor 2
Elevator lobby with original core finishes
View northeast
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0013

Photo 14
Floor 3
Tenant office
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0014

Photo 15
Floor 9
Open tenant space, crossover from low-rise to mid-rise elevator lobby beyond
View southwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0015

Photo 16
Floor 10
Perimeter tenant offices
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0016

Photo 17
Floor 13
Perimeter tenant offices
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0017

Photo 18
Floor 14
Elevator lobby
View northeast
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0018

Photo 19
Floor 19
Typical corridor
View southeast
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0019

Photo 20
Floor 21
Open tenant space with perimeter offices
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0020

Photo 21
Floor 23
Elevator lobby
View north
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0021

Photo 22
Floor 24
Open tenant space with interior offices
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0022

Photo 23
Floor 25
Open tenant space
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0023

Photo 24
Floor 25
Open tenant space with partially exposed ceilings
View southwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0024

Photo 25
Floor 26
Typical corridor
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0025

Photo 26
Floor 29
Social deck
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0026

Photo 27
Floor 29
Typical exterior spandrel deck and column
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0027

Photo 28
Floor 29
Typical operable side hinged window and latch
View north
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0028

Photo 29
Basement
Lobby entrance to Lamar Tunnel
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0029

Photo 30
Lamar Tunnel
Lamar Tunnel node
View north
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0030

Photo 31
Northeast (Lamar Street) and Southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevations of original parking garage at 1101 Fannin Street
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0031

Photo 32
1101 Fannin Street garage interior
View west
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0032

Photo 33
1101 Fannin Street garage interior
First-floor elevator lobby with original materials
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0033

Photo 34
Photo of 1021 Main tower
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0034

Photo 35
Roof of hyphen between office tower and non-historic garage
View southwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0035

Photo 36
Entrance to hyphen from office tower lobby
View east
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0036

Photo 37
Hyphen interior between office tower and non-historic garage, Main Street side
View northwest
TX_HarrisCounty_FirstCityNationalBank_0036

Narrative Description

The 1961 First City National Bank is a Corporate Modern skyscraper in the center of downtown Houston, Texas. The historic functionally related complex includes a 32-story office tower, hyphen, and non-historic parking garage connected by an original subterranean tunnel to the original detached seven-story parking garage. The office tower, hyphen, and non-historic garage are located at 1021 Main Street and the original garage is located at 1101 Fannin Street. When First National Bank and City National Bank merged in 1956, it was determined that a larger modern office complex was needed to house the corporation. The original complex included the tower, the hyphen, a banking pavilion, and a motor-bank—all designed by Skidmore, Owings, & Merril (SOM) with Houston architects Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson—and the original freestanding parking garage designed solely by Wilson, Morris, Crain, & Anderson. The banking pavilion and motor bank were demolished in 1998, and the 1999 parking garage constructed in its place connects to the tower through both the above-ground hyphen and an underground lobby.

The rectangular office tower has a welded steel frame and rests above one public basement with a basement sublevel for mechanical/utilities. The tower is characterized by a uniform projecting white granite-clad exoskeletal structural grid, vertical and horizontal emphases, and a flat roof. The geometric exoskeletal frame shades a deeply inset, tinted Spandrelite glass window wall on all levels except at the street level and the three top floors. An original steel and glass curtain-wall hyphen connects the tower to the non-historic garage. The freestanding seven-story garage is rectangular with two sublevels. This garage's partially exposed, smooth concrete structure is infilled with character-defining recessed geometric concrete screen block on the upper floors. At the street level, spaces between structural columns are infilled with recessed marble panels and glazed storefronts for commercial spaces. The tower's largely open floor plan is mostly intact, as are many of the original windows, some green Verde Antique marble wall cladding, and some stainless steel window and door frames. Despite changes over the years, including replacement of the tower's original white marble cladding with compatible white granite in the early 2000s, and the loss of the banking pavilion and motor bank, the tower/hyphen, underground tunnel, and original garage remain contributing resources and retain a high degree of integrity.

Notes on Terminology

Several different terms have been used to describe buildings like the nominated property. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill described a projecting load-bearing structure as an *exoskeleton*, a mode of structural design where "the exposed structural system becomes the building's essential characteristic…The structure is both performative and efficient while also informing the architectural design."[1] Structural engineers use the term *skeleton structure* to describe a system in which all three loads (floor and roof gravity load, exterior wall gravity load, and lateral wind pressure) are "carried by the frame."[2] Carole Rifkind's *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (2001) uses the term *articulated frame,* and although most of her examples were primarily executed in steel, the early concrete example is both contemporaneous with and very similar to the nominated property. Rifkind notes that the articulated frame approach "portray(s) the structural bones" of a building and pushes the load-bearing structure to the exterior walls, to "produc(e) large expanses of column-free interior space."[3] The magazine *Progressive Architecture in 1963* referred to this method of design and construction as a *peristylar (double-walled) structure.* The resulting interior space with either reduced or no columns is referred to as *clear-span construction* by the Chicago Architecture Center. In this

[1] Christian Schittich, ed., *DETAIL Engineering 4: SOM Structural Engineering* (Munchen, Germany: DETAIL, 2016), 30.
[2] Donald Friedman, *The Structure of Skyscrapers in America, 1871-1900: Their History and Preservation* (Association for Preservation Technology, 2020), 69.
[3] Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (New York: Plume/Penguin, 2001), 279.

nomination, the authors have utilized all of these terms, not interchangeably but rather to clearly articulate the various concepts expressed at different points in the narrative description and statement of significance.

First City National Bank Complex

Location and Setting

The First City National Bank tower is located at 1021 Main Street in downtown Houston, Harris County, Texas. The original functionally related garage is located at 1101 Fannin Street. The First City National Bank complex is in the approximate center of the downtown area bounded by IH-45, IH-69, and Buffalo Bayou. It is located within the Central Business District. During the 1950s and 1960s, this part of downtown primarily contained a mix of office towers, aboveground parking, and surface parking. Today, the Central Business District is occupied by high-rise office and residential (apartment and condominium) buildings—some of which have been converted from historic office towers—and aboveground parking garages (Maps 1-7).

The First City National Bank office tower is immediately adjacent to the "Red Line" light rail line on Main Street, which connects downtown Houston to the Houston Museum District and Texas Medical Center to the southwest and NRG Stadium to the southwest. The office tower is four blocks southwest of Houston's Main Street Market Square Historic District (NRHP 1983, updated 1992). The setting has changed since the 1960s through the construction of newer buildings which has added increased density, but some historic buildings remain such as City National Bank Building across the street at 1001 McKinney (NRHP 2000).

The original First City National Bank complex included the tower, a banking pavilion (internally connected above and below ground to the hyphen), and a motor-bank—all designed by Skidmore, Owings, & Merril (SOM) with Houston architects Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (WMCA)—as well as the original parking garage designed solely by WMCA (Figures 2, 6-7, 9, 10, 19-20). The pavilion, a distinct low-rise Miesian-style transparent box of steel and glass, stood in direct contrast to the adjacent marble-clad exoskeletal office tower, and the hyphen served as its transitional gateway, architecturally and physically. After banking operations moved elsewhere, the banking pavilion and motor bank were demolished in 1998, and the non-historic parking garage, constructed in its place in 1999, connects to the tower through the aboveground hyphen and a basement lobby that also provides access to the low-rise elevator bank, escalator, and Lamar Tunnel node of the downtown tunnel network (Figures 47-48). As architectural historian Stephen Fox posits, "The two components were designed and perceived to be visually and spatially distinct. Demolition of the banking hall does not detract from the architectural singularity of the tower."[4]

The tower, hyphen, and non-historic garage occupy all of Block 136 (Lots 1-12 and Tract 13; 1021 Main Street) on the "South Side of Buffalo Bayou," a legal subdivision of the city. The office tower block is bounded by Lamar Street to the southwest, Fannin Street to the southeast, McKinney Street to the northeast, and Main Street to the northwest. The functionally related garage at 1101 Fannin Street is bounded by Dallas Street to the southwest, San Jacinto Street to the southeast, Lamar Street to the northeast, and Fannin Street to the northwest.

Block 136 contains a 32-story office tower (completed in 1961) on the southern half of the block, connected by a contemporaneous one-story hyphen to a non-historic six-story above-ground parking garage on the northern half of the

[4] Email correspondence between architectural historian Stephen Fox and former Texas National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith, regarding Determination of Eligibility for the subject property, May 2024.

block. The hyphen is slightly offset toward Main Street. Because of the seamless and complex internal connections, the office tower, hyphen, and non-historic garage addition are counted as one contributing resource.[5]

The buildings in this part of downtown are connected to a six-mile-long network of underground tunnels that links 95 city blocks and comprises a subterranean shopping mall and food court that is operational during regular business hours (Maps 8-9).[6] The First City National Bank office tower and underground garage connects to the Lamar Tunnel in this system at Lower Level 1 (LL1).[7] To the southeast, the tower is connected by a separate original tunnel (not part of the city system) leading to the original garage at 1101 Fannin Street's Lower Level 2 (LL2). That contributing tunnel runs diagonally under the intersection of Lamar and Fannin Streets. Lower Level 1 (LL1) of the original garage at 1101 Fannin Street connects directly to the Howell Corporation Building at 1111 Fannin Street. The 1981 Howell Corporation Building is not functionally related to the subject property and was not connected to the historic parking garage during the period of significance.

Site Overview

The site has been altered over the years, namely with the construction of the 1999 parking garage. First City National Bank's office tower/hyphen and attached 1990s parking garage are surrounded by a wide sidewalk on all sides. A covered bus stop is present to the side of the Lamar Street entrance; another entrance opens from the lobby to Main Street (Photo 5). The H-shaped configuration of the two buildings creates a small plaza on each side of the hyphen. The plaza facing Main Street is open to pedestrian traffic but is largely covered by a deep planting bed, with two ornamental trees and low specimen plants, that spans the face of the hyphen (Photo 10); this bed was an original part of the building design and retains its original configuration and granite border. The plaza facing Fannin Street is enclosed by a tall metal fence comprised of screened panels that allow visibility to/from the adjacent sidewalk (Photo 7). As no planting beds take up space on this side of the hyphen, it feels much larger than the other side. This plaza contains a single wooden picnic table and removeable planters that provide an outdoor gathering area for tenants.

Pedestrian doors provide access from the hyphen's plaza to the tower lobby and the aboveground parking garage via steps and a ramp. Vehicles enter the office tower's delivery/loading dock area from Fannin Street (Photo 6). The non-historic garage has two entry/exit access points on Fannin Street and exit points on McKinney Street.

The parking garage at 1101 Fannin Street (Photo 31) abuts the Howell Corporation Building at 1111 Fannin Street (built 1981). It has access points with curb cuts are located on all three street sides. Pedestrian access is only present from Lamar Street.

Exterior Office Tower/Hyphen

The First City National Bank tower is a 32-story high-rise clad in white granite over an articulated frame of structural steel (Photos 1-3, Figure 46). The tower was originally clad with white Vermont marble (composed largely of calcite), but in the early 2000s, that material began to fail and the marble was replaced in 2011 with compatible polished white granite.

[5] The 1999 garage is not a certified historic structure for the purposes of historic tax credits. Part 1 of Federal Historic Preservation Application, approved by NPS January 23, 2025.
[6] The tower/hyphen and original garage are the only two buildings that share a historic functional relationship; they are not historically related to any other building connected via the other tunnels.
[7] Houston's downtown tunnel system functions as an underground shopping mall and food court, allowing downtown workers to shop, eat, bank, and access other services in climate-controlled comfort. While the tunnel system began as early as the 1930s, the tunnel system as it exists today was not constructed until the 1970s. Real estate developer Gerald Hines, who built many buildings downtown in the 1970s, was largely responsible for developing the tunnel system. None of the resources in this nomination were originally connected to that system.

The building is nine bays wide and five bays deep; the narrow (99'-9½") elevations face Main Street and Fannin Street, while the wide elevations facing Lamar and McKinney Streets are 252' wide. The geometric exoskeletal frame shades a deeply inset tinted Spandrelite glass window wall on all levels except the three top mechanical floors, which have louvered metal panels to provide ventilation for the HVAC and mechanical systems. The resulting grid of solids and voids is visually distinctive, economical, and environmentally beneficial: the horizontal spandrel decks and vertical fins together minimize solar glare and heat gain inside the building to reduce the air-conditioning load. The original spandrel deck design by SOM (Photos 26-27) allows for window washer accessibility without scaffolding or extensive rigging, another cost-saving measure in terms of maintenance. The square vertical columns of the grid extend to the ground, and the original full-height ground-floor window wall is set back, creating an arcade along all elevations.

Three types of original window systems are present: full-height storefront window walls in the tower and hyphen, ribbons of six fixed windows in the upper levels of the tower, and "pivot" windows in the tower. All windows above the first floor are original. The storefront window-wall glass and other minor elements may have been updated over time; those in the hyphen are original. On each upper level except Floors 30-31, one operable, side-hinged "pivot" window (Photo 28) is present on each long elevation, offset from center; these are visually identifiable by their slightly wider frames (Photo 4). From the penthouse on Floor 29, an interior social lounge area with bar extends outside to a "social deck" (Photo 26) with metal and glass-panel balustrades via a full-height door at the pivot window location on the northeast side of the building.

The flat roof has a nearly nonexistent parapet, and metal railings surrounding the rooftop mechanical equipment limit pedestrian access to the center third of the roof, well away from the edge. A ramp leads to the slightly lower section where the cooling tower is located.

Like the tower lobby's storefronts, the hyphen curtain walls are original (Photos 7 and 10). The wide horizontal clerestory mullion (Photos 8-10) continues from the office tower into the hyphen and forms its roofline. The roof of the hyphen is flat and covered with tar and gravel (Photo 36). Part of the elevator build-out of the non-historic garage is inset into the central interior hyphen but does not interact with the original hyphen curtain walls.

Office Tower Interior

Each floor was designed around the central core, which contains elevators, staircases, restrooms, mechanical rooms, telephone and electrical closets, and janitorial closets. The use of exterior structural steel columns enabled large expanses of flexible or modular column-free interior space; on each level, rising from the second to thirty-second floor, only four interior columns (two on each short side) are present outside of the circulation core. Current conditions vary by floor.

The configuration of each floor is dependent upon the elevators that serve that level. Public elevators from the lobby are separated into three banks: low-rise serving Floors 2-9, intermediate serving Floors 9-20, and high-rise serving Floors 20- 29. Access to mechanical floors are provided by a service elevator that ascends only to the 30th floor; the 31st floor and roof are accessed by stair. Three public stairwells are located near the low-rise and high-rise elevator banks. All tenant floors can be accessed via the stairwells: Stair A accesses B-31, with transitions at floors 12 and 23 where the stair shifts within the building core to accommodate low and mid-rise elevators and winch rooms. Stair B accesses floors 2-31. Stair C accesses floors 1-29.

The hyphen, located northeast of the office tower, is currently vacant. The hyphen connects the office tower to an attached parking garage, built in 1999 on the northern half of the block and designed to be sympathetic to the rest of the complex.

First Floor Lobby

Window walls surrounding the lobby and hyphen (all at street level) are original (Photos 8-10). The interior lobby elevator bank walls are clad in original green Verde Antique marble, and the floors are mostly non-historic white stone panels (replacing original terrazzo) (Figure 14, Photo 12). Original louvered metal details, tucked between the ceiling and window wall, are extant on the southwest (Lamar Street) side in Bays 1-7 and on the northwest (Main Street) side. Elevator lobby ceilings have new rectangular wood-veneer drop-down panels with pendant lighting. The street-level elevator lobby has original circular red and green up-and-down indicators set into the green Verde Antique marble surrounds. Upper-level elevator banks retain original triangular indicators above individual elevator doors.

In the public lobby, escalators are located on the northeast (McKinney Street) side of the circulation core (Figure 21, 48, Photo 11); one provides access from the public lobby to the basement (aka Lower Level 1 or LL1) and the other from the lobby to the second floor. The escalators are original (Figure 15). The public lobby also contains low-rise, intermediate, and high-rise elevator lobbies. The low-rise elevator lobby is accessible from both the southwest (Lamar Street) and northeast (McKinney Street) sides. At the intermediate and high-rise elevator lobbies, partition walls of striped translucent glass have been installed on the northeast (McKinney Street) side, between the elevators and the escalator. Typical public elevator cabins have grey wall panels with green Verde Antique marble and metal accents, green Verde Antique marble floors, and small can lights overhead. Public stairs are located within the low-rise elevator bank and toward the southeast (Fannin Street) side of the high-rise elevator bank.

Hyphen

Above ground, the hyphen between the office tower and non-historic parking garage (Figures 10, 12-13, 48, Photo 10) is wider than it is long. Partition walls in the hyphen are a mixture of striped translucent glass and wood veneer. The hyphen contains two offices; the suite on the southeast (Fannin Street) side is half as large the one (northwest) toward Main Street. The recessed entry for the northwest (Main Street) suite contains several faux nonstructural columns wrapped in wood veneer. The office suites are bisected by a short hallway with clipped corners, which ends in paired polished-metal doors that lead to the 1999 parking garage. The northwest suite has been gutted, with only curtains along the Main Street window wall remaining (Photo 37). The southeast suite has contemporary finishes and some furnishings (Photo 36). Extant remnants of the original terrazzo flooring are visibile in the hyphen and ground-floor janitor's closet. The area below the hyphen is occupied by part of the 1990s garage underground (Figure 47).

Upper Floors

First City National Bank originally occupied Floors 2 and 3; both floors are currently unoccupied. The floor plan and office build-outs were previously altered on both of these floors for recent tenants. The original executive office layouts on the second and third floors are no longer extant, and original materials removed. On both floors, but especially the third floor, original small offices have been combined to create larger spaces or partition walls removed altogether to create open spaces. The first-floor escalator terminates at the second floor. Metal railings with clear glass partitions surround the escalator opening. The green Verde Antique marble wall cladding is continuous from the first-floor lobby to the second floor and also wraps around the second-floor central circulation core and elevator lobbies (Photo 13).

Floors 4-29 were planned with flexible open space on each floor that could be configured for tenants' needs; as a result, the build-outs of these floors have been altered at various times (Figures 22, 49-50, Photos 14-25). Extant original finishes include aluminum window frames, stainless steel door frames, and a stainless steel fire door on the circulation core in select areas of the basement and first floor and throughout most of the core on the second floor. The ventilation system, which is located along the exterior walls, is also original.

Subfloors

The basement level (Lower Level 1) includes a lobby where the escalator and elevators terminate. This lobby also provides below ground access to the 1999 parking garage and to the Lamar Tunnel, a spur of which connects to the 1101 Fannin Street garage (Photos 29 and 30). Floors in the escalator and elevator lobby on LL1 are covered in the same stone tile as the first-floor lobby. A feature wall next to the escalator is clad in green Verde Antique marble (also matching the first floor lobby), with simple rolled-rubber baseboards, and clear glass skirting surrounds the escalator well. The various basement spaces retain a mix of original glazed storefront systems with louvered transoms, aluminum doors, and partition walls.

1999 Non-Historic Garage Addition

On the exterior of the garage, metal louvers are used as cladding on the street level, while uniform rows of square metal screens are used on upper levels to obscure structural elements and mechanical equipment (Photo 3). This design repeats on all four elevations. Immediately inside the garage, the elevator lobby provides access to two elevators on one side and stairs to the underground garage on the other side. The lower levels of the garage connect to the office tower's basement lobby (LL1) and mechanical sublevels.

Pedestrian Tunnel Node

The contributing tunnel "node" between the tower and original detached garage pre-dates Houston's more extensive downtown tunnel network and was part of the original 1961 complex design. The underground tunnel simply allowed workers in the complex to travel through a covered walkway to a private drive-in access point in the lower levels of the garage, enabling the transport of valuable items with no visibility at the street level. The functionality and materials of the tunnel remain largely unchanged. Contemporary polished-metal wayfinding signs are located within the tunnel network at buildings and tunnel intersections. The office tower's basement (LL1) lobby (Map 5, Figure 6, Photo 30) provides access to the "Lamar Tunnel" portion of the downtown underground tunnel network and to the original tunnel "node" that runs diagonally and at a downward slope beneath the intersection of Fannin and Lamar Streets to the 1101 Fannin Street garage's LL2. At the garage's LL2 elevator lobby, the tunnel node entrance is a unique hexagon shape with curvilinear upper corners and angled sides, unlike the rectangular tunnels in the downtown network (Photo 29). In the tunnel node, materials include drop ceiling tile with a combination of inset can lights and full-ceiling-panel grille lighting, as seen in other parts of the complex.

1101 Fannin Street Garage

The original rectangular garage is seven stories above ground and includes a ground-floor commercial space and two below-ground sublevels (Figures 3-4, 6, 8, Photo 31).[8] Lower Level 1 (LL1) is used for drive-up unloading, storage, mechanicals, elevators, and the connection to tunnels. The neighboring 1981 Howell Corporation Building at 1111 Fannin Street, which occupies the southeastern portion of that block, is accessed at LL1. Lower Level 2 (LL2) is about the size of the elevator bank/lobby and provides access to the Lamar tunnel. The public elevator lobby on LL2 of the 1101 Fannin Street garage is clad in tan and grey panels, except for the east wall, which is clad in mirrored wall panels.

The garage is five bays wide on the Fannin and San Jacinto Street sides and nine bays wide on the Lamar Street elevation. Each bay is defined by exposed smooth concrete columns and are described here from left to right, corresponding to the street-facing elevation. All nine of the northeast (Lamar Street) elevation bays are symmetrical, while Bays 1 and 5 on the northwest (Fannin Street) and southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevations are narrower than

[8] The original drawings for the garage have not been located.

Bays 2, 3, and 4. Concrete beams are exposed between the first and second levels and visible roof line. Recessed geometric breeze-block screening is continuous between exposed concrete beams and columns above the first floor. A painted black metal fire escape is located within Bay 3 of the southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevation and leads to pedestrian openings on all six upper levels. The concrete structure is painted light grey, and the breeze block is dark grey or black. Painted black concrete lines the base of the building on all three street-facing sides. Most of the garage's essential character-defining features remain.

Fenestration is largely intact at street level. One vehicular exit and one entrance are located on each of the northwest, northeast, and southeast elevations. On the northwest (Fannin Street) and southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevations, other street-level bays contain recessed cream/grey marble panels. On the northeast (Lamar Street) elevation, Bays 1, 2, and 8 contain the same marble panels. Bay 4 contains a recessed glazed window wall. Bay 6 is partially open and leads to a deeply recessed entrance to the garage. Bay 9 provides pedestrian access to the elevator bank, also with a recessed entrance.

Inside the garage, the original plan and materials are largely intact (Figure 8, Photos 32-33). Stairs are concrete with painted CMU walls and metal railings. The elevator and its interior appear to be original. From the street level to the second level, an up-and-down circulating ramp is centrally located perpendicular to Lamar Street and can be accessed from all vehicular openings. While currently closed, the original circulation access to the lower level is extant, now located behind metal gates within the original vehicular openings on the northwest (Fannin Street) and southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevations. A central ramp circulates up (parallel to Fannin and San Jacinto Streets) and to the right toward Fannin Street. "Down" circulation ramps are located on the San Jacinto Street side. Stairs access each floor.

On the northwest corner of the roof (Level 7), a small penthouse contains elevator equipment and provides access to stairwells. The penthouse has curvilinear corners and is clad in concrete and small-format square tile. Roof stairs leading to the enclosed stairwell are concrete, with painted brick to the right when descending to the stairwell door.

Alterations

1998 – Original banking pavilion and original drive-through motor bank structure demolished. The lower-level vault was also removed.
1999 – Non-historic garage constructed in place of banking pavilion.
2002 – Confirmed failure of the original marble and backing clips on tower.
2011 – Exterior Vermont marble cladding on tower replaced with Mount Airy or Solar White polished granite (1¼ " thickness) which is more durable and weather-resistant and maintains the appearance of the original cladding.[9]

Other Changes to Tower Exterior

Sometime between 1998 and 2007, pedestrian openings at the street level were altered. Originally, the primary entry doors from Main Street and Lamar Street consisted of a sequence of two doors creating an entry vestible, for a total of six sets of paired doors. The exterior center pair were replaced with revolving doors, and the inner sequence and vestibule were removed. A new automatic sliding door was installed on the McKinney Street side, concurrent with all other code-compliant openings related to the 1999 garage. At some point on the first floor, some of the louvered metal panels below the metal connecting band atop the curtain wall were removed and replaced with glass, except for part of

[9] Engineering study by Gensler (Architects); Morey Project Development (Construction Managers); CDC Curtain Wall Design & Consulting Inc.; and Owner A.E.W. McCord L.P. #2. This is one of many examples of ca. 1950-1973 high-rise buildings where the marble cladding failed and its replacement was with an alternate and better performing material, see Landau, "Five Times Carrara Marble Cladding Has Failed," *Skyrise Cities*, April 19, 2016, https://skyrisecities.com/news/2016/04/five-times-carrara-marble-cladding-has-failed.20628.

Bay 2 on the McKinney elevation, which now consists of matte metal panels and fire doors. Other glass panels in the exterior window wall throughout the office tower and hyphen may have been replaced over time, although specific locations and dates are unknown. On the Lamar Street side of the 29th floor, the operable side-hinged window was removed and sensitively replaced with a full-height glazed door which provides access to the penthouse social deck, and a metal and glass-panel safety railing was also installed. Both the door and the railing are visually compatible with that the curtain wall.

1101 Fannin Street Garage

The original white vinyl coating on the exposed concrete frame appears to have been removed at an unknown date. Glazed storefronts facing Lamar Street have been replaced with more contemporary configurations, some with black solar film applied on the interior.

Evaluation of Integrity

The First City National Bank complex retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. While some exterior materials have been altered, the office tower's form—defined by its structure—is visibly the same as when it was completed in 1961. Alterations do not detract from the overall integrity of the building. The hyphen's character-defining curtain wall is intact and serves as a visual reminder of the connection to the former banking pavilion. The original subterranean tunnel retains its unique form and some of its original materials. The original garage at 1101 Fannin Street also displays a high degree of integrity, with few alterations.

Location and Setting

The resources within the First City National Bank complex (office tower with hyphen, tunnel, and original garage at 1101 Fannin Street) collectively remain in their original locations and maintain the same historic relationships to each other. The setting has been altered considerably by the construction of high-rise buildings in the downtown area in the 1970s. In 1960, the blocks to the southwest and southeast of the subject property were almost entirely covered by low-rise buildings and surface parking lots (Figure 43). The immediate area around the building has been altered somewhat by the construction of the Main Street light rail line adjacent to the subject property (outside the period of significance). While the setting has been compromised, it is still primarily comprised of commercial office buildings and parking garages, including the intact City National Bank Building at 1001 McKinney Avenue (NRHP 2000) located across the street from the subject property.

Design

The First City National Bank complex retains its distinctive design: in particular, the exoskeletal structure pioneered by Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM) with deeply inset windows, which illustrates the designers' response to the local climate and limitations of energy-efficient construction technology at that time. Integrity of design is also reflected in the intact steel frame, rectangular plan, vertical and horizontal emphasis, flat roof, and many original windows. This building also represents a period when office buildings were being constructed to provide large expanses of flexible open space for customization by tenants, before speculative development led architects to maximize every square foot of leasable space. Within the office tower, alterations have not impacted the original spatial planning; original circulation areas—stairwells, elevators, and escalators from the basement level to the second floor—are intact. The exterior of the hyphen and the interior and exterior of the original garage design are intact.

The overall design of the complex was compromised through the demolition of the banking pavilion and motor bank, and the construction of the new parking garage in its place. According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, "The two

components were designed and perceived to be visually and spatially distinct." Demolition of the banking pavilion and motor bank does not take away from the significance of the tower.[10] The original design is still partially intact visible in the presence of the original hyphen, underground tunnel, and freestanding 1101 Fannin garage.

Materials and Workmanship

While some exterior and interior materials have changed on the office tower, those alterations do not detract from the overall impact of the building's distinctive architecture and engineering. The stone on the exterior structure was selectively replaced to closely match the original marble, and as a result, the visual identity and carefully scaled proportions of the office tower exoskeleton were retained. Comparing a historic black-and-white photo to a black-and-white version of a similar present-day photograph (with the color desaturated but otherwise unaltered in exposure or contrast) confirms that the appearance of the granite, while not as soft or luminous as the marble, continues to convey the original design of the building. As architectural historian Stephen Fox stated, "The change in stone does not affect one's perception of the architectural design."[11]

The office tower's recessed first-floor storefronts and window walls are original, as are the upper-level ribbon windows in the split mullion style with grey tinted glass and black Spandrelite. Original neoprene window gaskets have deteriorated, however, and will need to be replaced. Original metal louvers in select locations of the first-floor storefronts, interior lobby, and upper-level mechanical floors are extant. The public basement, lobby at street level, and second floor retain the original green Verde Antique marble wall cladding on the circulation core, along with some original elevator indicator lights. Original materials and workmanship are also visible in the retention of some extant stainless steel windows and door frames. Original mechanical systems are mostly extant. The exterior materials and curtain wall of the hyphen are original, and some original terrazzo flooring remains.

The original garage at 1101 Fannin Street and original tunnel to 1021 Main Street retain a high degree of integrity and are largely intact. Both the interior and exterior design, materials, and workmanship of the garage at 1101 Fannin Street are mostly original, and the garage's character-defining features of exposed concrete structure, geometric concrete screen block, marble panels, rectangular form, fenestration pattern, and recessed window walls are original.

Feeling and Association

With all these aspects combined, the First City National Bank office tower/hyphen, historic tunnel, and original parking garage convey the feeling of a 1960s Corporate Modern office complex within a downtown context. The use of the exoskeletal/articulated frame exterior wall system on the office tower, glass and steel curtain walls on the hyphen, and concrete with breeze block exterior wall on the garage are all representative of a specific, limited period within the evolution of American commercial architecture and engineering.

The complex remains associated with Skidmore Owings Merrill and that firm's work across the United States (and internationally) between the mid-1950s and early 1970s. SOM lead designer Gordon Bunshaft's ongoing collaboration with engineer Paul Weidlinger (Weidlinger Associates) enabled the development of this particular method of structural expression; similar buildings are easily recognizable as belonging to a cohort of similar SOM projects constructed during that period. The complex is no longer associated with First City National Bank.

[10] Email correspondence between architectural historian Stephen Fox and former Texas National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith, regarding Determination of Eligibility for the subject property, May 2024.
[11] Email correspondence between Stephen Fox and Texas Historical Commission National Register coordinator Gregory Smith, May 2024.

Statement of Significance

The 1961 First City National Bank is a 32-story Corporate Modern skyscraper at 1021 Main Street and original seven-story parking garage at 1101 Fannin Street in Houston's Central Business District. When First National Bank and City National Bank merged in 1956, it was determined that a larger modern office complex was needed to house the corporation. Following the merger, First City National Bank selected architects Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM) to design a new office tower and banking pavilion with motor bank. The property currently includes the office tower with the historic hyphen that once connected to the banking pavilion (demolished with motor bank in 1998), an attached 1999 parking garage, and the original free-standing parking garage. Gordon Bunshaft, FAIA, a partner and lead designer in SOM's New York office, designed the office tower, hyphen, and pavilion in partnership with associate architects Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (WMCA) of Houston, who were responsible for the functionally related garage at 1101 Fannin Street, also built in 1961. First City National Bank was SOM's first project in downtown and it became the largest banking operation in Houston.

The complex is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance as one of the earliest buildings in the United States to employ the geometric masonry structural grid (aka *exoskeleton* or *articulated frame*) pioneered by Bunshaft with engineer Paul Weidlinger. The resulting design was so widely employed by multiple SOM offices during the 1960s that it became somewhat of a trademark for the firm. The exterior structure reduced or eliminated interior columns, creating more flexible open space. The tower was constructed during a brief transitional period in SOM's Corporate Modern architecture, between the Miesian early 1950s glass curtain-wall systems developed by Bunshaft for the Lever House in New York City and SOM's mid-1960s *tube-within-a-tube* approach to externally expressed structure, developed by Bruce Graham and engineer Fazlur Khan after computer-aided design (CAD) became available in 1965. The First City National Bank tower's window wall was deeply inset behind a structural-steel grid of columns and spandrel decks. It was built at the end of the era when corporations constructed buildings for their own use, before office buildings were primarily developed as investment properties to maximize leasable space. The original parking garage designed by Wilson Morris Crain and Anderson is also architecturally significant for its use of precast concrete screening as a major design element, a treatment which would become common in 1960s parking garage design. It is one of the few remaining post-war modern parking structures in downtown Houston designed by a prominent local architecture firm. The period of significance is 1961, the date of completion.

Development of the First City National Bank Complex

Established in 1866, First National Bank was Houston's first chartered bank. In 1904, architects Sanguinet and Staats designed the bank's headquarters, an eight-story sliver of a building with a 25-foot-wide frontage at 201 Main Street near its intersection with Franklin Street. Completed in 1905, it was the city's first steel-framed building, its first high rise office building, and the first tall building designed by Sanguinet and Staats architectural firm. An addition in 1909 tripled the width of the Main Street elevation. A small annex was added to the rear of the building in 1911, and a second rear addition in 1925 further expanded the building's footprint to Fannin, the cross street to the southeast. First National Bank owned and occupied that building until 1956, when it merged with City National Bank. The bank's original location, now known as Franklin Lofts, is extant and located within the Main Street/Market Square National Register Historic District. It was converted into residential condominiums in 2004 and the ground floor banking hall is an event venue.[12]

[12] Ron Bass, "First National Bank Building, Houston." *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020, tshaonline.org.

City National Bank was founded as the Guaranty Trust Company in 1924 by an attorney and judge, James Elkins Sr. After merging with Gulf State Bank in 1928, "City Bank" obtained a state charter; ten years later, it received a federal charter and became City National Bank.[13] The bank moved into the Gulf State Bank's offices in the Beatty-West Building (815-817 Main Street, demolished in 2007) after that merger and then into offices at Main and McKinney around 1930. Before the end of the 1930s, bank president Elkins engaged Houston architect Alfred C. Finn to design a new building that would reflect the bank's influence and prosperity. Although those plans were deferred during World War II, construction began in 1946, and the new City National Bank Building (NRHP 2000) opened in 1947 at 1001 McKinney Avenue (the corner of McKinney and Main Street; across the street to the northeast from the subject property).[14] Banking operations were housed at that building from 1947 until 1960.

After the public's trust in banks was damaged by the Great Depression, new building concepts commissioned by bank executives gradually shifted away from the monumental Classical Revival fortress of the early 1900s and toward modern constructions that prioritized service over the appearance of security.[15] These design concepts gained more widespread acceptance after World War II, when economic prosperity once again allowed for new construction, as evidenced by the Moderne-style City National Building at 1001 McKinney Street. Although finished in 1947, that building's design still relied on a heavy stone ornamented facade. The shift to Modern bank buildings in the International Style reflected those sentiments, and by the 1950s, bank executives had embraced open interiors, customer-friendly design, prefabricated materials, efficiency, and drive-up teller windows or kiosks that characterized Modern bank architecture. Numerous articles and advertisements in publications like *Banking: The Journal of the American Bankers Association* positioned Corporate Modern bank building design as the way of the future.[16] In 1954, the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company building in New York City was the first bank designed by SOM. Realized in the International Style, the building marked a turning point toward physical and metaphorical transparency and a customer-focused bank design (Figure 25).[17]

In 1956, City National Bank merged with First National Bank to become First City National Bank. Elkins remained president of the combined entity and sold the much smaller First National Bank building. In 1958, Elkins sold the City National Bank building to Gus Wortham, a former business partner, who also purchased the Electric Building (corner of Walker and Fannin Streets) and part of Kirby Theatre (911 Main Street) for $10 million to house John L. Wortham & Son Insurance (founded in 1915).[18] Elkins secured a site for First City National Bank's new complex at the corner of Main and McKinney Streets, displacing the Normadie Club and Restaurant, Jive-Hive Hi-Fi Music Shop, The Town Shop, Rupley Storage, Guaranty Federal Savings and Loan Association, and the Sam Houston Book Store.[19] The original freestanding garage site at 1101 Fannin Street was already used for surface parking in the late 1950s, as confirmed by historic aerial photographs.

Following the merger, First City National Bank became the largest banking operation in Houston and, even though the City National Bank Building was less than 10 years old, sought to occupy a new building that would represent

[13] Lila Knight, "City National Bank Building," National Register of Historic Places nomination, Texas Historical Commission, February 11, 2000.
[14] Knight, "City National Bank Building."
[15] Charles Belfoure, *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2005), 250.
[16] Carol J. Dyson and Anthony Rubano, "Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank," *Preserving the Recent Past 2*, Deborah Slaton and William G. Foulks (editors), (Washington, D.C.: Historic Preservation Education Foundation, 2000), 2.44–2-51.
[17] Belfoure, *Monuments to Money,* 248-251.
[18] Frank Cortese, "Cost To Be Near $25 Million," *Houston Chronicle*, July 13, 1958, 1.
[19] "Gus Wortham Is Worthy Insurance Man of Year," *Houston Post*, August 24, 1958, 95. Robert E. Connor, "Death Ended Plan for Main Skyscraper," *Houston Chronicle*, July 13, 1958, 35. Cortese, "Cost To Be Near $25 Million," 22. "Normandie Club Awaits New Quarters," *Houston Chronicle*, September 5, 1958, 19. "Guaranty Federal to Buy New Building Site," *Houston Chronicle*, July 13, 1958, 35. "Rupley to Open Monday At Main, McKinney Site," *Houston Post*, October 5, 1958, 31.

"progress" through cutting-edge Modern architecture.[20] Likely because of their reputation as designers of the innovative Lever House and Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company buildings in New York City (Figure 25), and their involvement in Medical Towers (1709 Dryden Street, NRHP 2016)(Figure 30) in Houston, the New York firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) was selected to serve as the primary architects, with Houston-based Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (WMCA) as associate architects. SOM partner Gordon Bunshaft drove the project forward with assistance from WMCA, local engineers, and contractors.[21] From SOM, Whitson Overcash was the senior designer, and Herbert Warrington was the job captain.[22] Bunshaft and team collaborated with New York engineer Paul Weidlinger (Weidlinger Associates) and Houston-based engineer Robert J. Cummins (Adams & Cummins). Jaros, Baum & Bolles (JB&B) of New York were the mechanical engineers for the office tower block. The general contractor, W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation, was well-known in Houston at the time for constructing buildings of similar scale, such as 500 Jefferson (NRHP 2019) and the Humble-Exxon Building (800 Bell Street, NRHP 2025). WMCA designed the garage at 1101 Fannin Street with engineer Robert J. Cummins and parking consultant Wilber Smith & Associates.[23]

First City National Bank requested that the overall design make a bold architectural statement and provide a street-level space for 75 tellers, 36 bank officers' desks, and six drive-in windows (Figures 1-20).[24] The bank also needed two floors in the office tower for executive offices. For upper floors, the company specified flexible or modular open floor plans (without multiple columns) that could be easily adapted to tenants' needs (Figures 21-22, 49-50). The design objectives for the complex were reflective of post-World War II and late 1950s sensibilities that catered to the customer with a retail mentality, enabled flexible space configurations for upper-level tenants, and provided vehicular access.[25] SOM and First City National Bank's plan for the complex included more welcoming modern conveniences, like long, open, spacious teller countertops without protective grilles; customer lounge areas, shops, and a cafeteria; and vehicle-friendly drive-in teller windows and ample parking. While some banks of that era chose to further emphasize their retail focus with large exterior signage, the design for First City National Bank in Houston instead focused on the architectural features and scale of the building to highlight the strength and prosperity of the company. Perhaps as a result, it appears that the building design stood alone as a signifier of corporate grandeur but was not part of advertising campaigns. Based on available images of First City National Bank's print advertising in the 1960s, the bank's marketing appears to have primarily showcased what its customers could do with loans from the bank; for example, corporate customers could build skyscrapers or expand their oil and gas interests, while individuals could use travelers checks to take exotic vacations.

The office tower was originally planned to include 37 aboveground stories over a five-story underground parking garage.[26] Due to Houston's shallow water table, propensity for flooding, and the cost of underground ventilation, that plan was scrapped.[27] An aboveground parking garage was subsequently planned to the southeast of the office tower, across the intersection of Fannin and Lamar Streets (Figures 3-4, 6). Cost considerations also reduced the height of the office tower to 29 floors for both banking offices and tenant space, plus three mechanical floors.[28] The site was cleared

[20] "First City National is Part of the Houston Picture," *Houston Post*, January 1, 1958, 142. "New Bank Building 'Expression of Faith,'" *Houston Post*, July 15, 1958, 18. City of Houston, "City National Bank Building," Landmark Designation Report, Archaeological & Historical Commission, May 6, 1996. Bass, "First National Bank Building, Houston."
[21] Dan Hardy, "First City National's Site," *Houston Post*, September 21, 1958, 41. "Gaping Holes Hasten Wrecking Project," *Houston Post*, October 30, 1958, 70.
[22] Nicholas Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 101.
[23] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," and "The Parking Garage," *Architectural Record* 129 (April 1961): 164.
[24] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," 156.
[25] Dyson and Rubano, 2-45.
[26] "First City National Bank May Reduce Size Of Proposed Skyscraper," *Houston Chronicle*, February 1, 1959, 11.
[27] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," 155-164.
[28] "First City National Bank May Reduce Size Of Proposed Skyscraper," *Houston Chronicle*, February 1, 1959, 11. "1st City Dedication Scheduled Monday," *Houston Post*, February 5, 1961, 83.

while SOM architects finalized plans for the new building, and a full-scale mockup of the recessed window wall was tested for resistance to wind and rain.[29] Construction of the structural steel framework for the office tower began in 1959.[30]

The Houston Chronicle celebrated the opening of the complex with a multi-page spread (Figure 5) on February 5, 1961, including a fact sheet about the materials used to construct the building:

- 10,250 tons of structural steel fabricated by Mosher Steel Company
- 2,256 gallons of paint to protect the structural steel during construction
- 68,000 tons of concrete
- 3.6 million pounds of Vermont marble, shipped to Houston by barge
- 7,896 windows with weatherproof neoprene gaskets by F. H. Maloney Company
- A 3600-ton natural gas-fueled steam turbine air-conditioning system, one of the first in Houston and one of the first in the US to be installed at the top of a building[31]
- Two 75,000-pound boilers and a third 35,000-pound boiler, which had to be lifted to the top of the building and lowered into the 31st floor for installation
- 3,300 square yards of woven carpet provided by a local company, Suniland Furniture

An airy Miesian glass-box banking pavilion for retail transactions was attached to the office tower via a "connecting link" (hyphen).[32] The original glass banking pavilion (no longer extant; Figures 2, 7, 9-10, 12, 18-20) reflected the influence of architect Ludwig von der Mies and his groundbreaking glass curtain-wall buildings, which SOM had employed in other banking pavilions in the 1950s.[33] The hyphen contained a central clerical space, divided by low glass partition walls, and access corridors lined both exterior curtain walls (Figures 6, 9-10). Both the banking pavilion and hyphen were enclosed by full-height glass curtain walls on exterior elevations, allowing the customer to see the grand open space from the street. A metal connecting band, at the hyphen's ceiling height, ran continuously through the first-floor exterior walls of the office tower, hyphen, and banking pavilion (Figures 10, 12-13).

The pavilion was referred to as the "banking room" in SOM drawings and the "lobby" in newspaper articles, as it was the primary space for retail banking customers entering the complex. The pavilion measured 120 feet by 162 feet, and its primary entrance was located on Main Street. At about 34 feet in height, to align with the third-floor ceiling height of the office tower, the pavilion's plate-glass curtain-wall panels were reportedly the largest ever manufactured in the United States at that time (Figures 2, 7, 9, 10).[34] Interior columns were clad in the same white Vermont marble as the exterior structure of the office tower. Long marble teller counters were built on the northeast (McKinney Street) side and in front of the hyphen's clerical space. Marble cladding on the interiors and exterior was one of the material luxuries that banks continued to use in Modern bank design, which otherwise took advantage of prefabricated materials.[35] The original banking pavilion ceiling was approximately 30 feet high and organized in a square grid pattern. Within each section of the grid, a recessed pyramidal shape in eye-catching perforated gold-anodized aluminum was lit with recessed can lighting. The illuminated ceiling in the banking pavilion was serviced by its own

[29] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," 159.
[30] "City's Largest Bank Moves To New Home," *Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961, 95.
[31] "Gas Cooling Is Trend in Homes and Big Buildings," *Houston Chronicle*, August 1, 1963. "Blue Flame of Natural Gas To Burn Bright in Golden '60s," *Houston Chronicle*, January 31, 1960.
[32] Stephen Fox, "Preserve Houston's Modern Landmarks," *Houston Chronicle*, February 22, 1998, 74. Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 246.
[33] Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture,* 270-271.
[34] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," 155-164.
[35] Belfoure, *Monuments to Money*, 249.

elevator, designed into the ceiling for maintenance of the air conditioning system and other utilities.[36] A circular well in the center of banking room floor contained escalators leading to the vault at the sub-street level and was surrounded by desks and lounge spaces (Figure 18). In a design scheme of angles, the circular escalator well was a dramatic futuristic feature in the banking pavilion. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, cylindrical and even more expressive shapes became popular for bank building interiors, utilizing dramatic open wells for staircases, escalators or circular teller rooms. Such experimentation with "futuristic" details was intended to convey the goal of progressive financial institutions to reference the space-age technology of the period.[37]

The sublevel vault beneath the pavilion could be accessed via the underground tunnel "node" from the lower level of the aboveground garage across the street. Safe deposit boxes from the previous bank location at 1001 McKinney Avenue were transferred from the garage on Fannin Street through the tunnel and into the vault below the pavilion. Half of the vault contained nine individual rooms with self-locking doors and three larger rooms that could accommodate small groups; the other half stored currency. The vault's door reportedly measured seven feet in diameter, weighed 100,000 pounds, and rotated on a 10,000-pound hinge.[38] The original tunnel was 13 feet high and nine feet wide and was designed to support 2,000,000 pounds from above.[39]

The complex opened for business on February 6, 1961.[40] First City National Bank originally occupied four portions of the complex: the banking pavilion with lower-level vault, the drive-in bank booths (service structures), the connecting link/hyphen, and four levels of the office tower. In the tower, executive offices were located on the second and third floors, a reception area was provided on the first level, and the lower/basement level contained an employee cafeteria. The drive-in service area was a separate structure that complemented the banking pavilion, with six angled teller booths (Figures 6, 7, 9). It was located on the Fannin Street side of the banking pavilion, and customers could conveniently drive through from McKinney Street.

Some of the original office-tower tenants (Figure 24) included oil and gas companies such as Plymouth Oil Company, Pure Oil Company, Signal Oil and Gas Company, and Texas Gas Exploration Corporation, as well as Tiffany & Company, British Overseas Airways Corporation, and the Ramada Club.

Upon its completion, the First City National Bank complex stood out among other buildings in Houston's downtown Central Business District because of its Corporate Modern design, height, and structural features. When it opened, it was the one of the tallest buildings in downtown Houston, along with the 1956 Bank of the Southwest (910 Travis, NRHP 1983), 1929 Gulf Building (712 Main Street, NRHP 1983), and the 1947 City National Bank Building (1001 McKinney, NRHP 2000). Only 10 downtown buildings were 18 or more stories tall in 1961; by 1970, that number had jumped to 22. In addition, the banking pavilion was fairly unusual. Other downtown banking buildings had been constructed before 1930 and incorporated both banking functions and offices in the same structure; these included the State National Bank (412 Main, NRHP 1982), Second National Bank (806 Main), Commercial National Bank (116-124 Main), and the First National Bank Building (201 Main).

The First City National Bank became a symbol of Houston's booming economy and expectations of the city's future progress.[41] In the 1970s and 1980s, First City National Bank expanded its physical presence in Houston to include the First City East Building (1111 Fannin Street, 1971), First City Tower (1001 Fannin Street, 1981), and First City

[36] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," 163.
[37] Dyson and Rubano, 2-45–2-49.
[38] "100,000-Pound Vault Door Balances on 5-Ton Hinge," *Houston Post*, February 5, 1961, 83.
[39] "Fact Sheet Tells Building Details," *Houston Chronicle,* February 5, 1961, 95.
[40] "City's Largest Bank Moves To New Home," 95.
[41] Kevin Alter, "SOM In Houston," *Cite* 40 (1997): 36, https://hdl.handle.net/1911/116355.

National Bank Operations Building (1301 Fannin Street, 1983). Together, these buildings were referred to as the First City Financial Center.[42]

First City National Bank of Houston was a major subsidiary of the First City Bancorporation of Texas, Inc. (aka First City Bancorp), a holding company established in Waco, Texas, in 1950. In 1988, First City Bancorp, by then headquartered in Houston with 59 subsidiaries in both banking and non-banking sectors, "nearly collapsed … under the weight of billions of dollars in bad loans in the energy and real estate industries."[43] The bank was bailed out by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which contributed $960 million, and Chicago banker A. Robert Abboud, who raised another $500 million. Unfortunately, the investment group led by Abboud "inaccurately assessed the continuing losses from First City's loan portfolio … and compounded the problem with unwise lending of their own."[44] In 1992, First City Bancorp was officially closed, and its assets seized and liquidated by the FDIC.[45] First City National Bank subsequently declared bankruptcy, which took nearly 20 years to settle.[46]

Rick McCord of McCord Development acquired the building in 1998, and demolished the banking pavilion, lower-level vault, and drive-in service structures. Due to an increased need for parking, an above- and below-ground parking garage was designed to be sensitive to the complex. Completed in 1999, the new garage left the hyphen to the office tower in place and connects to the office tower through the hyphen and lower level. Currently, the First City National Bank office tower is mostly vacant.[47]

The First City National Bank office tower was originally clad with white Vermont marble (composed largely of calcite), but in the early 2000s, that material began to fail and fall to the sidewalk below. Following an engineering study, the marble was replaced in 2011 with polished white granite, which is more durable and weather-resistant while maintaining the appearance of the original cladding. This building is one of many examples of ca. 1950-1973 high-rise construction clad with marble that later failed and was replaced with a different type of marble, granite, structural glass, or aluminum panels. Others include:

- Business Men's Assurance Company Building (aka BMA Tower, now One Park Place, NRHP 2002), in Kansas City, Missouri. Completed in 1963, it was designed by SOM Chicago's Bruce Graham and closely modeled after the First City National Bank office tower. After BMA's original white marble cladding failed in 1985, that material was replaced with neoparium (brand name Neopariés®, by the Nippon Electrical Glass Company of Japan) crystallized glass ceramic panels in 1986 (Figure 29).[48]
- Humble-Exxon Building (now ExxonMobil Building, 800 Bell Street, NRHP 2025), Houston, completed in 1962 and put into service in 1963, was originally clad with Taconic white marble ("almost 100% pure calcite" from Vermont) which was replaced with aluminum panels on exterior columns.[49]

[42] "First City Kicks Off New Facility," *Houston Chronicle*, October 28, 1981, 37.
[43] Daniel Fisher, "FDIC Seizes First City Branches," *Houston Post*, October 31, 1992, 1. "FDIC Grants Final Approval to Assistance Plan for Subsidiaries of First City Bancorporation, Houston, Texas" *FDIC News Release,* Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, April 20, 1988, https://archive.fdic.gov/view/fdic/10710/fdic_10710_DS1.pdf.
[44] Fisher, "FDIC Seizes First City Branches," *Houston Post*, October 31, 1992, 21.
[45] Steven Greenhouse, "Company News: U.S. Closes First City Bancorp," *New York Times*, October 31, 1992.
[46] "First City Bankruptcy Nears Final Chapter 20 Years After Its Filing," *Dallas Morning News*, May 22, 2012, https://www.dallasnews.com/business/2012/05/22/first-city-bankruptcy-nears-final-chapter-20-years-after-its-filing/.
[47] Ralph Bivins, "Several Projects Ready To Spring Up Along Rice Avenue," *Houston Chronicle*, March 1, 1998, 10.
[48] "One Park Place," Case Studies, TGP Architectural website, https://www.tgpamerica.com/resources/design-ideas/case-studies/1/one-park-place. Elizabeth Rosin, "BMA Tower," National Register of Historic Places nomination, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, August 21, 2002.
[49] S.W. Stone, "Building Stones in the Humble Building," June 15, 1963, Exxon-Mobil Archive, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

- Standard Oil Building (now Aon Center), Chicago, designed by Edward Durrell Stone and completed in 1974. Carrara marble panels began failing almost immediately and were completely replaced with a Mount Airy white granite in the early 1990s.
- First Canadian Place, Toronto, designed by Edward Durrell Stone and completed in 1974. Carrara marble panels were replaced by laminated glass panels.
- La Grande Arche de la Défense, Paris, constructed 1985-1989. Carrara marble panels were replaced with white granite in 2016.
- Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, constructed 1967-1971. Carrara marble panels were replaced with a more durable marble in 1997-1999.
- The Metropolitan (now Chase Tower), Rochester, New York, was completed in 1973. Marble cladding was replaced with aluminum panels in 1982.

Original Parking Garage at 1101 Fannin Street

Designed by Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (WMCA), the freestanding parking garage at 1101 Fannin Street is differentiated from the office tower by its exposed concrete frame and charcoal grey concrete block screen (Figures 3-4). Character-defining features of the garage include Vermont white marble infill panels and recessed window walls at the street level. The pre-cast screen and exposed reinforced concrete structure of the garage uses a visual language similar to the office tower's solid-and-void recessed grey window walls and protruding structural grid.[50] The garage bears a striking resemblance to some of WMCA's residential projects, such as the Carter House (62 Briar Hollow Drive, 1960, NRHP 1980) and Style in Steel Townhouses (4156, 4158, and 4160 Meyerwood Drive, 1968), which also utilized projecting structural elements and recessed screens (Figures 40 and 41). However, the garage is unique for its large scale, massing, and distinctive geometric pre-cast screening material. The mid-century and later periods produced some exceptional parking garage structures in Houston, but the historic garage at 1101 Fannin Street is one of the few remaining modern parking structures in downtown Houston designed by a prominent local architecture firm. Another downtown parking garage of this period, part of the 1962 Humble-Exxon complex designed by Welton Becket & Associates (800 Bell Street and 1616 Milam Street, NRHP 2025), similarly utilized a metal screen that acted as more of an envelope.

While not the primary or obvious focal point of a corporate office complex, aboveground parking garages became architectural statements in their own right after World War II. Most parking garages of the era were constructed of concrete, due to code requirements for fireproof structures. New developments in precast and cast-in place concrete in the 1950s pushed garage design, allowing for long-span construction (with columns placed far apart for larger expanses of open space and more parking spaces) and erection techniques for large loads. The original garage at 1101 Fannin Street has long spans running the full length (long elevation) of the building from Fannin to San Jacinto Streets.[51] The original drawings for the garage have not been located to identify more specific details on exactly which type of concrete structural system WMCA and Cummins used.[52]

In 1940, architectural pre-cast concrete block screening was first employed by sculptor John Joseph Earley for the Evening Star Garage in Washington D.C. Earley had developed a patented technique (the Earley-Taylor system) for forming pre-cast concrete.[53] Screening became more prevalent in 1960s parking garages as a functional and aesthetically pleasing masking technique. At 1101 Fannin, the charcoal geometric screens from afar create a void

[50] "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," and "The Parking Garage," 155-164.
[51] McDonald. The Parking Garage, 144.
[52] Drawings could be available in the Wilson, Morris, Crane & Anderson archival boxes at the University of Texas, Austin's holdings at the Briscoe Center for American History (https://collections.briscoecenter.org/repositories/2/archival_objects/408755 and https://collections.briscoecenter.org/repositories/2/archival_objects/226162)
[53] McDonald, *The Parking Garage,* 200.

behind the projecting white exposed-concrete structure; and up close, the screen blocks' complex geometric pattern allows for subtle penetration of air and light. Other notable parking garages in Houston with distinctive architectural and engineering presence, but with a more typical concrete construction and no screening, include the Foley's garage (1110 Main Street, 1947) designed by Kenneth Franzheim, and the suburban Shamrock Hotel Garage (2151 West Holcombe Boulevard, 1949), designed by Wyatt C. Hedrick.[54]

WMCA employed perforated concrete screen walls in New Formalist designs throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. New Formalism introduced symmetrical ornamentation to Modern designs, often in the form of pierced concrete blocks that, when arranged *en masse*, created a decorative screen. In southern climates, this also functioned as a method for minimizing solar and heat gain within a building.[55] WMCA created similar masonry-screened façade designs for many buildings in Houston, including: the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation and Research Building (1959, 1333 Moursund Avenue, altered); Ralph Anderson Jr. house at 1638 Banks Street (1960); U.S. Post Office (aka POST Houston, 1962, 401 Franklin Street, NRHP 2017), Kelsey-Leary-Seybold Clinic Building (1963, 6624 Fannin Street, demolished), the Astrodome (1965), and Lovett Residential College at Rice University (1968).

Pedestrian Tunnel

This was the second underground tunnel in downtown Houston built to connect a parking garage to an office tower, the first being the tunnel between the Bank of the Southwest Building at 910 Travis Street and the garage at 1010 Travis. Earlier tunnels constructed in the 1930s had connected multiple buildings owned by the same person, so that employees could travel between those buildings easily in any weather, but they were not open to the public.[56]

The hexagonal shape of the tunnel from the garage's LL2 is different than the city's (rectangular) underground tunnel system (Photo 30). It is unclear which architectural and engineering firm(s) were responsible for the design of the original tunnel between the First City National Bank tower and the 1101 Fannin Street garage, but its existence is distinctly a downtown Houston phenomenon. Not connected to a subway or other mechanized underground transportation, the tunnel simply allowed workers in the complex to travel through a covered walkway to a private drive-in access point in the lower levels of the garage, enabling the transport of valuable items with no visibility at the street level.

Commercial Architecture by Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1951-1974

First City National Bank tower is an early and excellent example of the architectural style pioneered by architects Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM) and variously referred to as *exoskeletal* or *articulated frame*. The "peristyle of structural columns standing outside the curtain wall" became synonymous with SOM during the early 1960s.[57] Whether executed in concrete or steel, this design solution for commercial high-rises created flexible (eventually column-free) open spaces around a circulation core by moving the building's structure to exterior walls; the geometric structural grid often shaded deeply inset windows. After 1965, following the advent of computer-aided design, SOM developed its *tube-within-a-tube* design and engineering approach, which added structural bracing in the shape of an X to exterior walls, and the firm turned away from the geometric grid exemplified in the First City National Bank tower.

[54] Aaron Seward, "Ten Houston Parking Facilities: A Portfolio," *Texas Architect* (November-December 2018), https://magazine.texasarchitects.org/2018/11/01/ten-houston-parking-facilities-a-portfolio/.
[55] O'Rourke and Koush, *Home, Heat, Money, God*, 91-101.
[56] The buildings included Ross Sterling's Houston Post-Dispatch Building (609 Fannin) and Sterling Building (608 Fannin), connected via a tunnel beneath Fannin Street, and three theaters—the Travis (612 Travis), the Texan (812 Capitol), and the Uptown (811 Capitol)—owned by Will Horwitz, see "Downtown Houston Tunnel System," Atlas Obscura, quoting the *Houston Chronicle* and architectural historian Stephen Fox, https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/houston-tunnel-system-texas.
[57] "Evolution of the High-Rise Office Building," *Progressive Architecture*, September 1963, 180.

After the development and introduction of the *bundled tube* as utilized in the Willis/Sears Tower (completed in 1974), SOM pivoted into a truly new era of design at the firm. Because this date marks a significant shift for the firm away from the exoskeleton, a more detailed contextual history of SOM after this date is not included in this report.

SOM was founded in 1936 in Chicago by Louis Skidmore and Nathaniel Owings; John O. Merrill joined the firm in 1939. Skidmore established the firm's New York office in 1937, with associates Robert W. Cutler, J. Walter Severinghaus, William S. Brown, and Gordon Bunshaft, who emerged as the office leader.[58] Bunshaft became a firm partner in 1949 and created a design language for the firm's corporate projects.[59] That architectural identity nevertheless was flexible enough to allow Bunshaft to continue evolving as a designer throughout his career, often combining design elements from multiple Modern styles and subgenres.

SOM became one of the largest architecture firms in the United States and quickly developed a reputation for its Modern skyscrapers, corporate office designs, and other influential projects. A temporary office for the Manhattan Project was established in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in the early 1940s. Other offices later opened in San Francisco (1946), Portland, Oregon (1951), Washington, DC (1967), Boston (1971), Los Angeles (1974), Houston (1976), and Denver (1977).[60]

One of the most influential architects of the 20th century was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. A native of Germany, Mies began designing glass towers and pavilions there in the early 1920s. After emigrating to the United States in 1937, during the ascent of Hitler's Third Reich, Mies strove to create a universal design that could be easily adapted as needs changed, ideally "a single huge enclosed volume that could be subdivided by movable impermanent screens" or walls.[61] Mies' Lake Shore Drive Apartments in Chicago, twin towers of concrete construction with a steel and glass veneer, were completed in 1951 and "became the paradigm of aloof, anonymous freestanding glass boxes that began to appear in every American city, beginning with (Gordon) Bunshaft's Lever House and soon found in cities around the world. … Frigid hauteur, of course, was exactly what was wanted by corporate clients, and the glass box immediately became the symbol of American business."[62] Even when the building was not a glass box, Miesian elements often found their way into the design; for example, Miesian "prismatic" ground-floor lobbies lighten some heavier concrete buildings, such as the Harris County Family Law Center at 1115 Congress Street in Houston (Figure 39).[63]

After World War II, the decline of domestic manufacturing and rise of services industries led to the construction of high-rise office towers, accelerating in the 1960s and 1970s, to house the growing number of corporate employees and managers. Made possible by structural steel framing, these skyscrapers were "signposts in the sky"—a way to advertise a corporation's success, whether in downtowns or new suburban office parks.[64] Architectural firms and modern corporations positioned their buildings as a "bid for profit, power, and prestige, and (a building's) precise form has always addressed those triple imperatives. … In building high-design corporate office buildings, companies … not only enjoyed prestige and status but the reward of better tenants."[65] The expansion of American corporations provided architects the opportunity to design new headquarters and incorporate corporate ideas and ideals into these buildings and campuses at a time when Modern architectural expression was at its peak.[66] The success of Modern architecture

[58] Nicholas Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction," *SOM Journal* 9 (January 2015), https://www.som.com/news/gordon-bunshaft-what-convinces-is-conviction/. Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM,* 24.
[59] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft."
[60] Beth Jacob, "John Hancock Building," National Register of Historic Places nomination, Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, May 10, 2017, 11.
[61] Leeland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado, 2001), 416.
[62] Roth, *American Architecture*, 419.
[63] O'Rourke and Koush. *Home, Heat, Money, God*, 176.
[64] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 265-268.
[65] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 268.
[66] Yan, *Building Brands: Corporations and Modern Architecture,* 7, 8, 13.

convinced business leaders that modernism was not only aesthetically desirable but would also be cost effective and convey their forward looking corporate ideals.[67] These corporate values drove new building commissions, especially banks, to be designed in what would later be described as Corporate Modernism. Designed in various Modern styles, many of these seminal buildings (while not all high-rises) were designed by SOM, such as the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company building in Manhattan (1954, Figure 25) and the First National City Bank at Idlewild (JFK) Airport (1959) (Figure 26).[68]

During the second half of the 20th century, SOM pioneered and continued to explore structural engineering solutions for tall buildings.[69] The firm's purposeful collaboration between architects and engineers from the outset of a project resulted in a "clarity of structure."[70] Also referred to as *structural rationalism*, this approach prioritizes functional and structural forms as key design elements; SOM's work emphasized distinct geometric forms with little or no ornamentation, focusing on a single design idea while stripping away visual clutter. As a result:

> Structure is integrated, not as an afterthought but seamlessly into the design…the structure dominates the design and is revealed and integrated into the building's form often directly shaping it, in what can be called 'deep' structure… By pairing down the building to its structure, the latter is not only revealed but also with its arrays and repetitive patterning, essentially becomes one with the building. What results is a clarity of design and a successful integration of structure and form.[71]

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, SOM had explored reinforced concrete structures out of necessity, as a cost-saving solution to the steel shortages of that era; the firm later returned to an emphasis on steel structures. In 1951, Bunshaft and the SOM New York office completed Manhattan House, an International Style apartment complex constructed of reinforced concrete; it was one of the largest of its kind in New York City when it was built.[72] The following year, Bunshaft and team completed Lever House (constructed 1950-1952, NRHP 1983) in New York City, and architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe designed the Seagram Building with Phillip Johnson and Kahn & Jacobs (constructed 1954-1958, NRHP 2006). Together, these two projects established a standard vocabulary of glass-curtain-wall design with flush supporting structural grid, which SOM and others would employ nationwide.[73] During this period, Bunshaft was influenced by Mies, notably in SOM's design for Lever House, with its massing of floating rectangular volumes and intersecting planes.[74] Bunshaft and SOM employed the use of a prismatic glass curtain wall or glass box and embraced the adaptable, modular, or modernist "free plan."[75]

As the 1950s progressed, SOM began to experiment with projecting design elements and making visible the structure behind glass curtain walls, eventually leading to fully projecting and exposed exterior structures.[76] SOM also experimented with more dimensional structural elements, such as the concrete exoskeleton utilized in both the 1954 New York Infirmary and the 1955 Hilton Hotel in Istanbul, Turkey.[77] However the firm continued to produce glass

[67] Yan, *Building Brands: Corporations and Modern Architecture*. 76.
[68] Belfoure, *Monuments to Money,* 248 and 256.
[69] "Sky's the Limit: The Engineering of Architecture." Publication, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, April 7, 2017, https://www.som.com/publication/som-the-engineering-of-architecture/.
[70] Schittich, *SOM Structural Engineering*, 24.
[71] Schittich, *SOM Structural Engineering*, 28.
[72] Kim Velsey, "The Bloomingdale's of Apartment Buildings – Manhattan House Conversion Draws to a Close," *Observer*, December 9, 2015, https://observer.com/2015/12/the-bloomingdales-of-apartment-buildings-manhattan-house-conversion-draws-to-a-close/.
[73] Rifkind, *Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 270-271.
[74] Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780*, 259. O'Rourke and Koush, *Home, Heat, Money, God*, 280.
[75] O'Rourke and Koush, *Home, Heat, Money, God*, 281.
[76] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 12; "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* 44, no. 9 (1963): 126-135.
[77] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 124.

curtain-wall designs; for example, the Heinz Research Building's (Pittsburgh, 1956-1959) one-story lobby, with exposed fins, is similar in appearance to the First City National Bank's glass-walled hyphen.[78]

SOM began in the late 1950s to design buildings with an *articulated frame*, which "portray(s) the structural bones" of a building and pushes the load-bearing structure to the exterior walls, to "produc(e) large expanses of column-free interior space."[79] The firm's first building with a fully expressed *exoskeleton* exterior structure was the Inland Steel Building in Chicago (Figure 45), constructed in 1958. SOM Chicago architects Bruce Graham and Walter Netsch brought all of the building's structural steel support columns to the exterior, where they projected outward toward the street on the building's long elevations.[80] The resulting clear-span construction created open floor plans.[81] Once completed, the Inland Steel building housed SOM's offices in Chicago until 1980.[82] This building, along with the earlier concrete examples, set the stage for the First City National Bank Building, which married the concrete exoskeletal form with a welded-steel structure.

In New York, Gordon Bunshaft began to partner with structural engineer Paul Weidlinger (Weidlinger Associates) in the late 1950s. After World War II, SOM began hiring in-house engineers in its Chicago office, but its New York office continued to utilize engineers in New York and/or near individual project sites well into the 1960s.[83] For the subject property, this included Weidlinger, as well as Houston structural engineer Robert J. Cummins.[84] Bramlette McClelland of McClelland Engineers Inc. oversaw the soil studies and worked with Cummins, an expert on welded steel, on the foundation and structure.[85] Welded, rather than riveted, steel allowed for lightweight but extremely strong construction for high-rise buildings. Beams were bolted, and seams were fused together with a welded bead, increasing strength.[86] Welded steel was also more economical since riveted joints required more material and labor.[87] Cummins and the W.S. Bellows Construction Company had previously collaborated on the San Jacinto Monument near Houston. The First City National Bank complex was one of Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger's first collaborative projects in the United States. Weidlinger "raised structure from a superficial aspect of building to the grammar of architecture."[88] He influenced Bunshaft's work through his modern application of and experience in concrete construction, and was "the man who helped (Bunshaft) create an entirely new architecture out of concrete."[89] From that point on, Bunshaft's buildings gradually shifted toward more sculptural exposed structures and an increased exploration of concrete.[90]

Banque Lambert in Brussels, Belgium (1959-1965) had an overlapping period of design and construction with First City National Bank. The Banque Lambert is a mid-rise building with square tapered precast concrete segments joined by stainless steel hinges (Figure 27). The ground-floor window wall is recessed behind tapered structural columns. On upper floors, four interior columns are located on each side of the circulation core. The First City National Bank office

[78] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 92-94.
[79] Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture,* 279.
[80] "Sky's the Limit: The Engineering of Architecture."
[81] "Clear-Span Construction," *Architecture Encyclopedia*, Chicago Architecture Center, https://www.architecture.org/online-resources/architecture-encyclopedia/clear-span-construction.
[82] "Inland Steel," *Buildings of Chicago*, Chicago Architecture Center, https://www.architecture.org/online-resources/buildings-of-chicago/inland-steel.
[83] Schittich, *SOM Structural Engineering*, 18.
[84] McClelland, "Foundation Heave and Multistory Buildings."
[85] "New Office, Lab Building Planned," *Houston Chronicle*, January 20, 1959, 40.
[86] "Steady Hands Build a Skyscraper," *Kansas City Star,* May 8, 1962.
[87] Tony Solano, "Welding and the Birth of Modern Skyscrapers," *The Welders Blog*, November 27, 2024, https://weldingtablesandfixtures.com/blogs/the-welders-blog/.
[88] Mario Salvadori, "Teaching Structures to Architects," *Journal of Architectural Education (1947-1974)* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1958): 5, https://doi.org/10.2307/1424174.
[89] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft"; Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM,* 123.
[90] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 123.

tower has a similar structural plan, but with half as many interior columns outside the circulation core, despite being a much taller building (Figures 21-22).

A strikingly similar building, the 20-story Hartford Fire Insurance Building in Chicago, (Figure 44) was also designed and constructed concurrently (1959-1961) with the First City National Bank. Both buildings employ the same exoskeletal grid construction with an aluminum-framed window wall featuring five window units between each set of columns. Its concrete columns and spandrels were also faced with white stone (in this case, Minnesota granite), but the spandrel decks are more delicate and thickened slightly at the columns for additional structural reinforcement. The Chicago building rests on a base several feet above the sidewalk and featured an extended terrace on one side with a reflecting pool.[91] Bunshaft and Weidlinger's collaboration in concrete was explicitly expressed in other buildings such as the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University, completed in 1963, which infilled the granite grid with semi-translucent marble, and New York City's travertine and glass Solow Building in 1974.

In the American South, evolving construction technologies were used to combat heat and light in skyscrapers, both for cost savings and to reduce the air-conditioning load. Early skyscrapers relied on natural sunlight for interior lighting, before electricity became widely available, but solar and heat gain through uninsulated windows increased the cost of central air conditioning, once that became standard.[92] First City National Bank's deeply inset windows, shaded by projecting structural members, such as horizontal decks and vertical fins, functioned as both structural support and shading device.[93]

The geometric structural grid became the mark of SOM. "The iconic, visually distinct structural grid was like a logo that could be, and was, applied to any number of SOM's products."[94] However, because high-rise architecture evolved so quickly in the 1950s-1960s, the articulated frame only enjoyed a relatively short period of popularity, through the early 1970s.[95]

The introduction of computer-aided IBM Drafting System launched in 1965, SOM structural engineer Fazlur Khan and architect Bruce Graham began to develop innovative approaches to tall building design for a new era. "The concept (involves an) outer concrete tube consisting of closely spaced columns and tall spandrel beams and the inner concrete tub comprising shear walls that add stability surrounding the elevator and service core."[96] Chicago's 1966 DeWitt-Chestnut Apartment Building was the first to utilize that tube-within-a-tube approach.[97] In Houston, the 1968-1971 One Shell Plaza at 910 Louisiana Street (SOM) is an early example in pre-cast concrete (Figure 35).[98] It was the tallest reinforced concrete structure in the world upon its completion in 1971. Other products of this collaboration include the 100-story John Hancock Building in Chicago (1969) with the *braced tube* structural concept and again with the 108-story Sears Tower (aka Willis Tower, completed in 1973-1974) with the *bundled tube*.[99] By then, Gordon Bunshaft's design aesthetic no longer dominated SOM. Younger architects (some trained by Bunshaft) had become full partners

[91] Matthys P. Levy, "Paul Weidlinger 1914-1999," *Memorial Tributes: National Academy of Engineering* 12 (2008), https://www.nae.edu/51329/Memorial-Tributes-National-Academy-of-Engineering-Volume-12; Henry Russell Hitchcock and Ernst Danz, *SOM: The Architecture of Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962* (Frederick Praeger: New York, 1963), 172-173.
[92] Thomas Leslie, "Glass and Light: The Influence of Interior Illumination on the Chicago School," *Journal of Architectural Education* 58, no. 1 (2004): 19, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40480520.
[93] Stephen Fox, "Cullinan Hall: A Window on Modern Houston," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 54, no. 3 (2001): 164, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1425582.
[94] Reinhold Martin, "The Bunshaft Tapes: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of Architectural Education* 54, no. 2, November 2000, 83.
[95] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 279-280.
[96] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 288.
[97] "Dewitt Chestnut Apartments," Projects, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, https://www.som.com/projects/dewitt-chestnut-apartments/.
[98] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 288.
[99] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 11. "Sky's the Limit: The Engineering of Architecture."

and pursued their own ideas. "In the last eleven years of (Bunshaft's) working life, his designs had become bitterly contested; in the last eleven years of his full retirement (1979-1990) his ways had been swept aside."[100]

SOM continued and continues to explore new, innovative approaches to high-rise architecture and engineering to the present day. The firm combines architectural, planning, interior design, and engineering disciplines, with a portfolio of well-known buildings, often breaking their own height records and collecting numerous awards for their designs.[101] SOM is responsible for more than 10,000 projects completed in 50 countries and has received the American Institute of Architects Firm Award for excellence in design twice: in 1962 and 1996.[102]

Comparative Analysis

SOM Buildings with Exoskeletal Geometric Structural Grid Design, 1958-1972

In 1958, Bunshaft and Weidlinger (SOM New York) began designing the First City National Bank, the firm's first project in downtown Houston. It was completed in 1961.

SOM projects constructed with a similar *exoskeletal geometric structural grid* design include:

- John Hancock Building, Kansas City, Missouri (1959-1962), by Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger, SOM New York.[103]
- Hartford Fire Insurance Company Building, Chicago, Illinois (1959-1961), by Bruce Graham, SOM Chicago. This building uses a granite-clad reinforced-concrete exterior grid (Figure 44).[104]
- Business Men's Assurance Company Building (BMA Tower), Kansas City, Missouri (1959-1963), by Bruce Graham, SOM Chicago (NRHP 2002, Figure 29). Built on a large lot within a suburban campus, the BMA Tower was originally clad in white marble. While the structural frame continues unimpeded to the ground in a similar fashion, the first-floor space is much more deeply recessed and occupies a very small footprint.
- John Hancock Building, New Orleans, Louisiana (1960-1962, NRHP 2017, Figure 28). Utilizes more slender verticals (not clad in stone), and instead of the steel structure with concrete fireproofing utilized in First City National Bank, the mid-rise Hancock Building is concrete with cast-in-place waffle-slab concrete floors, a reinforced concrete elevator core, and a precast concrete frame.[105] The Hancock Building was engineered so that all interior structural supports on upper floors are located inside the circulation core, allowing for a completely open interior.
- One Chase Manhattan Plaza, New York City (1961), by Gordon Bunshaft, SOM New York. While this building utilizes a wide rectangular grid, the windows are flush with the horizontal members and both the columns and vertical metal "fin" mullions are placed in front of the primary wall plane. The result is a more prominent vertical emphasis, rather than a true grid.
- First National Bank of Fort Worth, Texas (ca. 1961, Figure 38).[106] The composition is similar to Lever House — an office tower set back on a lower plinth—while the exposed structural grid on the long walls is identical

[100] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM,* 240-241.
[101] Beau Peregoy, "12 Massive Projects by Legendary Architecture Firm SOM," *Architectural Digest*, July 4, 2016, https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/som-architecture.
[102] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 11.
[103] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 4, 12.
[104] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 12. "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126-135; Thomas W. Leslie, "Postwar Chicago skyscraper of the week: Hartford Insurance," *Architecture Farm,* blog, May 22, 2023, https://architecturefarm.wordpress.com/2023/05/22/postwar-chicago-skyscraper-of-the-week-hartford-insurance/.
[105] Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 129.
[106] "First on 7th," Fort Worth Architecture, https://www.fortwortharchitecture.com/500w7th.htm.

to the First City National Bank building in Houston; the end walls are solid.

- Hartford Plaza North, Chicago, 1961 (SOM).
- Tennessee Gas Building Corporation Building, Houston, Texas at 1001 Louisiana Street (aka Tenneco, now Kinder Morgan, 1962-1963), by SOM San Francisco (Figure 35). In downtown Houston, Tenneco's projecting steel structure is clad in gray aluminum with fixed sunshades in bronze anodized aluminum, shading an inset curtain wall. [107] Its design returns to a Classical three-part organization with base, shaft, and penthouse.
- Chicago Civic Center (now Richard J. Daley Center), Chicago, 1963-1966 (C.F. Murphy Associates, SOM, and Loebl, Schlossman & Bennet with exposed Cor-Ten steel structure)[108]
- Great Southern Life Insurance Company Building, Houston, Texas (1964-1965, demolished 1997) SOM New York (Figure 31). Located at 3121 Buffalo Speedway in the Greenway Plaza area outside of downtown, the building's two long elevations utilized a rectangular grid with equal emphasis on columns and beams, while the short elevations presented a stronger horizontal emphasis, with columns only exposed at the corners.
- One Main Place, Dallas, Texas (1965-1968, NRHP 2015).[109] Where the grid employed for First City National Bank is comprised of horizontal rectangular openings, each surrounding a ribbon of five window panels, One Main Place utilizes a square grid with a single window in each opening.
- U.S. Steel Building or One Liberty Plaza (Place), New York City, 1972 (SOM New York)[110]

SOM Buildings in Houston

After World War II, Houston experienced rapid economic and physical growth. Mayor Oscar Holcombe embarked on a campaign of annexation that doubled the size of the city by 1950 and redoubled its size by 1956. While some taller buildings were completed in downtown Houston in the first half of the 20th century, the building boom responsible for today's downtown skyline did not take place until the 1960s, fueled by the ascent of the oil and gas industry.[111] During this period, companies with offices and headquarters in Houston used architecture to reflect the growing power and influence of the city.

The First City National Bank office tower served as an important precedent to later skyscrapers in downtown Houston and Dallas, where influential architects such as I. M. Pei and Phillip Johnson designed abstract, sculptural commercial architecture in the 1970s and 1980s. With money to be made, the rampant construction of office space in Houston continued unabated through the 1980s, before a real estate bust in the 1990s cooled the market.[112] The *articulated frame* left a noticeable impact on the Houston skyline but was mostly abandoned by the early 1970s as developers, rather than corporations, led the design and construction of high-rise office buildings, pushing every inch of leasable square footage to the curtain wall.[113]

[107] Ernst Danz and Henry Russell Hitchcock, *SOM: Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962 (*New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 208-211.
[108] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 122, 226-268.
[109] Gerald Moorhead et al., "Bank of America Center (First National Bank)," Buildings, Society of Architectural Historians *Archipedia*, https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/TX-02-FW23; "First on 7th."
[110] Matthys P. Levy, "Paul Weidlinger 1914-1999." Arthur Drexler and Axel Menges, *SOM: Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1963-1973* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2009), 132-139. Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture,* 266-268.
[111] David G. McComb, "A Comprehensive History of Houston: From Boomtown to Global City," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 1976, 2020. Tshaonline.org.
[112] Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, 266-268.
[113] Menges, *SOM.*

SOM worked nearly continuously in Houston from 1956-1983; the firm established an office in the city in 1976, managed by associate partner Richard Keating. The firm's presence in Houston was so ubiquitous that the city was nicknamed "SOM City."[114]

SOM's buildings in Houston, completion dates, and the SOM office primarily responsible for their designs include:

- Medical Towers at 1709 Dryden Road (now Westin Medical Towers), 1956 (NRHP 2016), SOM New York (Figure 30). For SOM's first project in Houston, Golemon & Rolfe were the architects of record, while SOM New York was engaged as design architects. Design began in 1953, and the project was completed in 1957. The tower was located within the Texas Medical Center's suburban campus, southwest of downtown Houston. Following the example of the Lever House's spatial format and cladding, Medical Towers relied on curtain walls without exposed structural elements.
- First City National Bank (nominated property, now One City Centre), 1961, SOM New York
- Tenneco Building at 1001 Louisiana Street (now Kinder Morgan), 1963, SOM San Francisco (Figure 35)
- Great Southern Life Insurance Building at 3121 Buffalo Speedway, 1965 (demolished), SOM New York (Figure 31)
- Ranger Building at 5333 Westheimer Road, 1971, SOM Chicago (Figure 42)
- Control Data Corp. Building at 2000 West Loop South, 1971 (demolished), SOM Chicago with Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (Figure 37)
- One Shell Plaza at 910 Louisiana Street, 1971, SOM Chicago (Figure 35)
- Two Shell Plaza at 811 Louisiana Street, 1972, SOM Chicago
- Stewart Title Building at 2200 West Loop, 1974, SOM Chicago
- Kaneb Building (now 5351 Westheimer Road), 1976, SOM Chicago (Figure 42)
- First International (Interfirst) Plaza (now 1100 Louisiana), 1979-1980, SOM San Francisco and Houston
- (Allied) Bank Tower (now Wells Fargo Plaza), 1980-1983, SOM San Francisco and Houston

Other buildings in Houston that may have been influenced by the design of First City National Bank include:

- Humble/Exxon Building, 800 Bell Street (1963, NRHP 2025) by Welton Becket & Associates
- Inwood Manor (apartments), 3711 San Felipe Road (1966, Figure 32), by Neuhaus & Taylor
- 3616 Richmond Building (1966, Figure 36), by Caudill Rowlett Scott
- River Oaks Bank and Trust Company Building, 2001 Kirby Drive (1970, Figure 32) by Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson

The Harris County Family Law Center at 1115 Congress (1969, Figure 39), by Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, appears to be influenced by both the First City National Bank Building and Great Southern Life Insurance Building in Houston and SOM's American Republic Insurance Co. Building (1965) in Des Moines, Iowa. The seven-story Law Center features a recessed first floor window walled lobby and cantilevered smooth exposed concrete frame.[115] The Harris County Administration Building, 1001 Preston Street, (1978) by Kenneth Bentsen Associates has a similar design.

The American General Building or Wortham Tower at 2727 Allen Parkway designed by Lloyd, Morgan & Jones was completed in 1965 and has an exposed, nonstructural pre-cast concrete grid that acts as a patterned-cage or *brise soleil*

[114] "SOM and First City National Bank," Clipping file, Houston History Research Center (HHRC), Houston Public Library. Ann Holmes, "SOM Architecture – Not Exactly A New Girl In Town," *Houston Chronicle*, July 17, 1977, 348-349.
[115] O'Rourke and Koush, *Home, Heat, Money, God*, 176.

with finer, more delicate dimensions (Figure 33).[116] A similar non-structural exterior grid clads the Johnson Space Center's Project Management Building (1965, Figure 34), by Albert E. Sheppard, and the Downtown Houston Post Office, Processing, and Distribution Center at 401 Franklin Street (1962, NRHP 2018, now POST Houston) by Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson.

The oil bust and economic downturn of the 1980s caused SOM to close its Houston office; the firm's Texas office is now in Austin.[117] The firm's most recent Houston project is on the Rice University campus: completed in 2023, the Ralph S. O'Connor Building for Engineering and Science is five stories in height and contains classrooms, laboratories, collaborative spaces, and a café. SOM is also working on a Master Plan for the Texas Medical Center in Houston.[118] SOM's continued presence in Houston is a reminder of how much the firm contributed to the development of the city and of its influence on Houston's architecture.

Architects and Engineers

Gordon Bunshaft, FAIA

Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990), the son of Jewish-Russian immigrants, was raised in Buffalo, New York. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), graduating in 1933 and earning a Master of Architecture in 1935. Bunshaft was awarded the Rotch Traveling Fellowship and traveled Europe from 1935 to 1936.[119] Upon returning to the United States, he worked for short periods at various New York architecture firms until joining at Skidmore & Owings' New York office in August 1937.[120] Excepting his military service in World War II, Bunshaft spent his entire 42-year career at the firm, retiring in 1979.[121]

Bunshaft reportedly had a hand in almost every major project at SOM during his tenure but was only credited as the lead on 38 buildings.[122] He was influenced by Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and others. Bunshaft was known in his early career for glass curtain-wall construction and later for his use of exposed structures of steel and concrete, with either rigid Brutalist elements or more Expressionist designs.[123] Eventually, he transitioned to even bolder Brutalist forms, such as the circular concrete *fortress* of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.[124] Bunshaft was also known for collaborations with artists such as Isamu Noguchi (One Chase Manhattan Plaza and others), Henry Moore, and Jean Dubuffet. Bunshaft retired from SOM in 1979 and was recognized with the international Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1988, "awarded each year to a living architect whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment."[125]

[116] Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide*, 106.
[117] Nancy Sarnoff, "Q&A – Designer draws on city culture – Architect who had a hand in some local landmarks is back in town," *Houston Chronicle*, October 10, 2015, 1.
[118] "Texas Medical Center Master Plan," Projects, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, https://www.som.com/projects/texas-medical-center-master-plan/.
[119] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 20-22.
[120] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 22.
[121] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft."
[122] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft."
[123] Krinsky, *Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill*, 129.
[124] Owen Hopkins, *The Brutalists: Brutalism's Best Architects* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2023), 69. "Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden," Projects, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, https://www.som.com/projects/joseph-h-hirshhorn-museum-and-sculpture-garden/.
[125] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 12.

Paul Weidlinger, Structural Engineer (New York)[126]

Paul Weidlinger (1914-1999) was born in Budapest, Hungary. He attended the Technical Institute in Brno, Czechoslovakia, and the Swiss Polytechnic Institute. After completing his studies in both architecture and engineering in 1937, he apprenticed with artist László Moholy-Nagy in London and eventually Le Corbusier in Paris. Both of those experiences influenced Weidlinger's distinct perspective on architecture and design.[127] With Le Corbusier, he gained experience working with concrete construction. Weidlinger moved to La Paz, Bolivia, at the start of World War II in Europe to escape persecution because of his Jewish ancestry.[128] He was a professor for four years at San Andres University in Bolivia and also designed dams and some of the first Modern era buildings utilizing concrete in La Paz.[129] After the war, he emigrated to the United States and worked for various companies before establishing his own consulting firm in 1948. Weidlinger's firm in New York City was engaged by major architects of the twentieth century such as Antonin Raymond, Marcel Breuer, Jose Lluis Wert, Walter Gropius, and Gordon Bunshaft of SOM.[130] Like Bunshaft, Weidlinger collaborated with artists such as Picasso, Dubuffet, and Noguchi, engineering structures for their installations in Chicago, New York, and Paris, including the Four Trees by Jean Dubuffet at One Chase Manhattan Plaza in New York City (1972).

Later in his professional career, Weidlinger developed expertise on the impacts of nuclear weapons and other types of attacks on buildings and structures. He became a major figure in this discipline and published on the effects of contemporary weapons, applied mechanics, and engineering. He was part of the National Academy of Engineering and received numerous awards and was recognized with the Frank P. Brown Medal of the Franklin Institute, the Ernest E. Howard Award, Moissieff Award, the J. James R. Croes Medal of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Engineering News Record Construction Industry Award. Weidlinger Associates Inc. merged into Thornton Tomasetti in 2015.[131]

Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson

Following Houston's economic recovery from the Great Depression, former Rice University School of Architecture classmates F. Talbott Wilson and Seth Irwin Morris founded their own architectural firm in 1938, with the federally funded Park Lane Apartments near Hermann Park as their first project.[132] When the firm reopened after the architects' return from service during WWII, Bluford W. Crain (University of Texas and Harvard University School of Architecture) joined the firm. The firm quickly built a reputation and began to secure larger commissions, including university housing at Rice University and the University of Texas at Austin, corporate headquarters, club designs, and commercial buildings. In 1953, Ralph Anderson Jr., also a Rice University alumnus, joined the firm to become Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (WMCA). After designing the First City National Bank, the firm partnered with SOM again in 1971 to design One Shell Plaza (910 Louisiana Street) and Two Shell Plaza (777 Walker Street) in 1972. One of WMCA's largest and most famous projects was the 1965 Astrodome (3 NRG Parkway, NRHP 2014), a multipurpose sports stadium and the first domed stadium in the world. The firm completed many successful projects before Morris left the firm to create S. I. Morris Associates.[133] WMCA's collaboration with SOM on First City National Bank

[126] Levy, "Paul Weidlinger 1914-1999."
[127] "László Moholy-Nagy," Guggenheim New York, https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/laszlo-moholy-nagy.
[128] *The Restless Hungarian*, directed by Tom Weidlinger.
[129] *The Restless Hungarian*, directed by Tom Weidlinger.
[130] Yasmin Sabina Khan, *Engineering Architecture: The Vision of Fazlur R. Khan* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2004), 77.
[131] "Weidlinger Associates and Thorton Tomasetti Merge, Solidifying Leadership in Engineering Innovation," *Business Wire*, September 8, 2015, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150908006118/en/Weidlinger-Associates-and-Thornton-Tomasetti-Merge-Solidifying-Leadership-in-Engineering-Innovation.
[132] "Wilson, Morris, Crain and Anderson," Architects, Houston Mod, https://www.houstonmod.org/architect/wilson-morris-crain-and-anderson/.
[133] Barry Moore, "Building A Houston Practice: The Career of S.I. Morris," *Cite* 43 (Winter 1999): 30-31, https://shorturl.at/7CtsA.

appears to have influenced the design of their subsequent buildings, such as the River Oaks Bank & Trust Company building (2001 Kirby Drive), and the Harris County Family Law Center (1115 Congress Street).

Robert J. Cummins, Structural Engineer (Houston)[134]

Robert James Cummins (1881-1960) was born in Ireland and received a Bachelor of Arts in 1900 from Queens College of the Royal University of Ireland, Galway. Cummins came to the United States in the early 1900s and worked as a city civil engineer and private consultant in Detroit, Michigan, until he moved to Houston and created the firm of Adams and Cummins in 1910. Cummins' career was defined by the development of Houston's port facilities at the Houston Ship Channel over a span of fifty years. He served on the Houston Port Commission and also helped to design ports in Brownsville and Corpus Christi, Freeport, Port Arthur, Beaumont, and Orange. He taught senior engineering courses at Rice University from 1918-1921. He was president of Texas' American Society of Civil Engineers in 1940. As a structural engineer for landmark buildings and structures, his most celebrated projects were the 1936 Texas Centennial San Jacinto Monument (architect Alfred C. Finn, 1936-1939). The San Jacinto Monument was his tallest structure (567 feet tall), and the Gulf Building at 712 Main Street (now the JPMorgan Chase Building) was his tallest building at 430 feet tall and the tallest in Houston between 1929-1962. When designing the San Jacinto Monument, foundation settlement became an issue with the stiff red clay soil. Working with architect Alfred C. Finn, Cummins created a plan for a 125-square-foot reinforced concrete mat to support the monument and prevent excessive foundation settlement.[135] This project secured his legacy in structural engineering, especially in Texas. He was also known for utilizing welded steel instead of riveting.[136] Cummins passed away in June 1960, before the First City National Bank was completed.[137] After his death, Texas Senator Robert Baker called the San Jacinto Monument and the First City National Bank "monuments to the engineering genius."[138]

Jaros, Baum & Bolles, Mechanical Engineers (New York)

Founded in 1915 by Alfred L Jaros Jr. and Albert L. Baum—and later joined by Frederick Bolles in 1932—Jaros, Baum & Bolles Consulting Engineers (JB&B) specialized in mechanical, electrical, and plumbing. JB&B were initially enlisted by SOM New York after World War II for building services, along with Weiskopf & Pickworth (structural engineers).[139] Eventually, engineering services became part of SOM's in-house team. JB&B is known for installing the first sprinkler system in a high-rise building (Chicago's Sears Tower) and for the first high-speed elevator in the original World Trade Center building (New York City).[140] The firm is still operating in 2025, with more than 100 years of experience in mechanical engineering for high-rise buildings.

[134] Uel Stephens, "Cummins, Robert James (1881-1960), *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2016, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/cummins-robert-james.
[135] Barbara Eaves, "Building a Memorial to Match the Battle," *Houston History Magazine* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 31-33, https://houstonhistorymagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/V4-N2-Eaves-Building-a-Memorial.pdf. Robert J. Cummins, "Design of the San Jacinto Memorial," Presentation abstract for the Construction and Structural Divisions of the American Society of Civil Engineers, San Antonio, Texas, April 22, 1937.
[136] Jerry R. Rogers, "The Outstanding Civil Engineering Career of Robert J. Cummins, P.E. No. 15, 1953 Houston Engineer of the Year," PowerPoint presentation for the ASCE Houston Branch & Houston Engineers Week, Houston, TX, February 16, 2016.
[137] "Famed Builder R. J. Cummins Dead at 79," *Houston Chronicle*, June 12, 1960, 1, 18.
[138] "Senate Honors R. J. Cummins," *Houston Chronicle*, January 31, 1961.
[139] Schittich, *SOM Structural Engineering*, 18.
[140] Wendy Ross, "The Rise-But Rarely the Fall-Of the Elevator," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 1995, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/1995/03/21/the-rise-but-rarely-the-fall-of-the-elevator/e4adcb4e-0e16-4dc4-9c78-a2739b4dd03b/.

General Contractor: W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation

The W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation was founded in Canada in 1914 and relocated to Kansas City, Kansas, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, before moving permanently to Houston in 1936. The move to Houston was prompted by their successful contract for the construction of the San Jacinto Monument in nearby La Porte. The monument was erected for the Texas Centennial and commemorated the Battle of San Jacinto; the battleground and monument are now a State Historic Site operated by the Texas Historical Commission.[141] The Houston-based structural engineer Robert J. Cummins partnered with Bellows on both the San Jacinto Monument and the First City National Bank complex. Bellows was also the general contractor for the Humble-Exxon Building (800 Bell) and 500 Jefferson, designed by Welton Becket & Associates. After the First City National Bank project, Bellows worked with SOM, WMCA, and the Cummins engineering firm (following the death of Robert J. Cummins) on the 1965 Great Southern Life Insurance Building (3121 Buffalo Speedway).[142] W.S. Bellows Construction continues to be a leader among Houston's general contractors and are responsible for the construction of significant Houston buildings including One Shell Plaza (910 Louisiana Street, SOM, 1971), the Wortham Theater Center at 501 Texas Avenue (1987), as well as many projects in the Texas Medical Center. The company was started by Warren Sylvanus Bellows, who was succeeded by his sons Warren, Jr., and George, and then by his grandson, Tom Bellows. Tom Bellows died unexpectedly in 2007 and his widow, Laura Bellows, is now President and Chair of the Board.[143]

Conclusion

The First City National Bank complex is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1961.

[141] Amanda Barry, Hanah Curry-Shearouse, and Anna Mod, "500 Jefferson Building," National Register of Historic Places nomination, Texas Historical Commission, January 29, 2019.
[142] "From Start to Finish."
[143] "History: W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation," W.S. Bellows Construction website, www.wsbellows.com/about/history.

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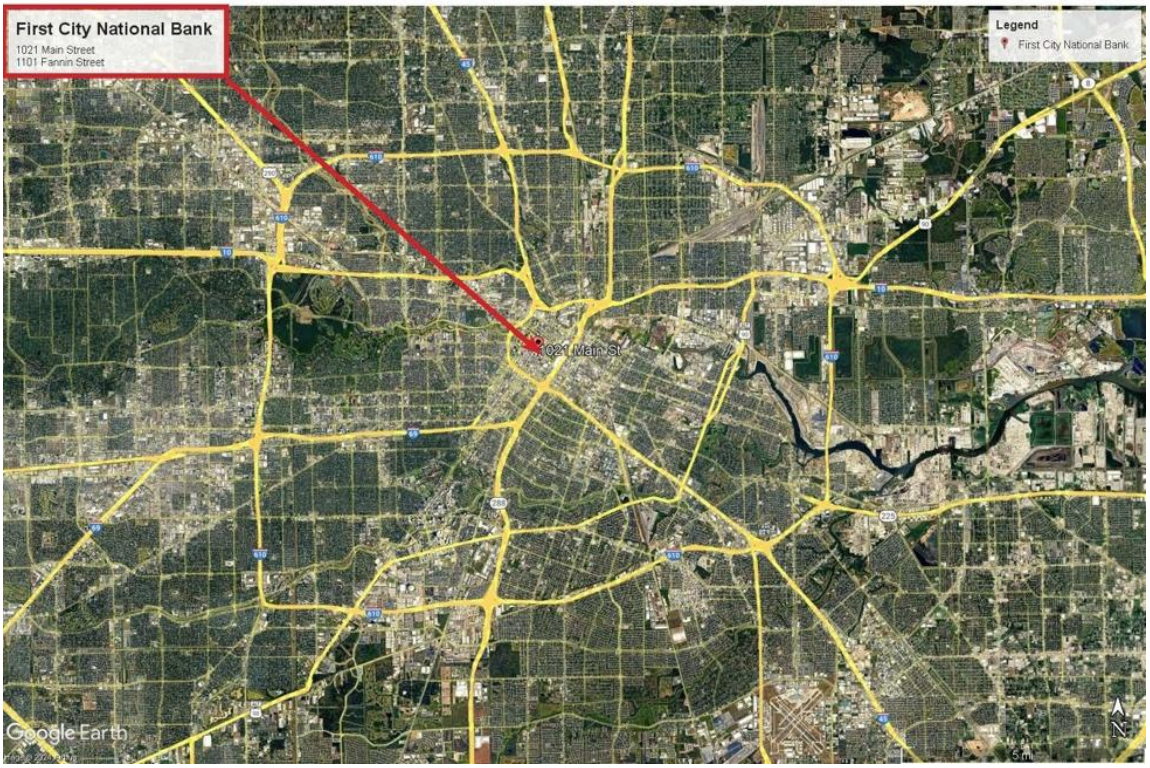
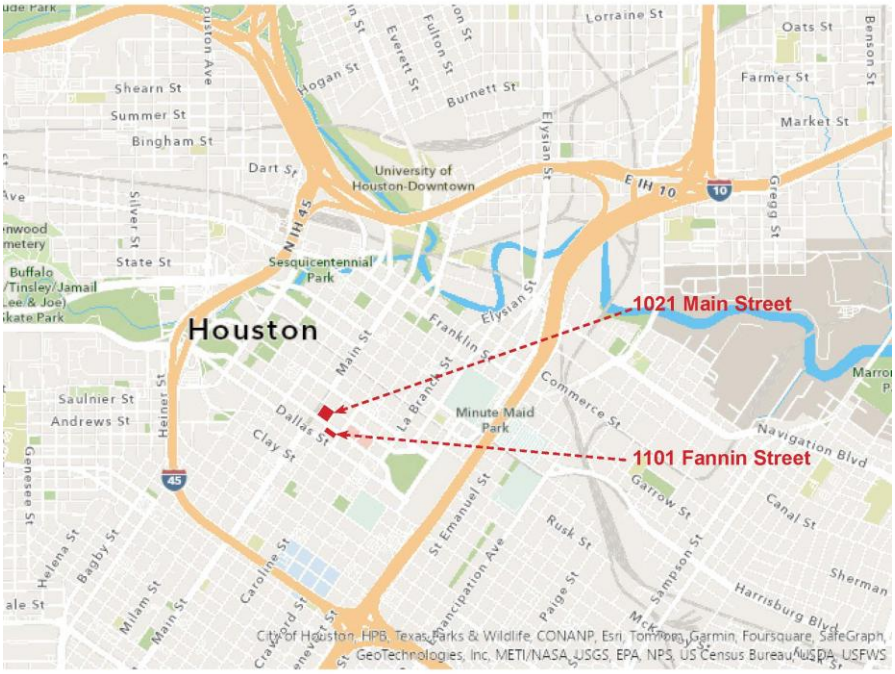
Maps

Map 1. Location of Harris County within the state of Texas, annotated by author

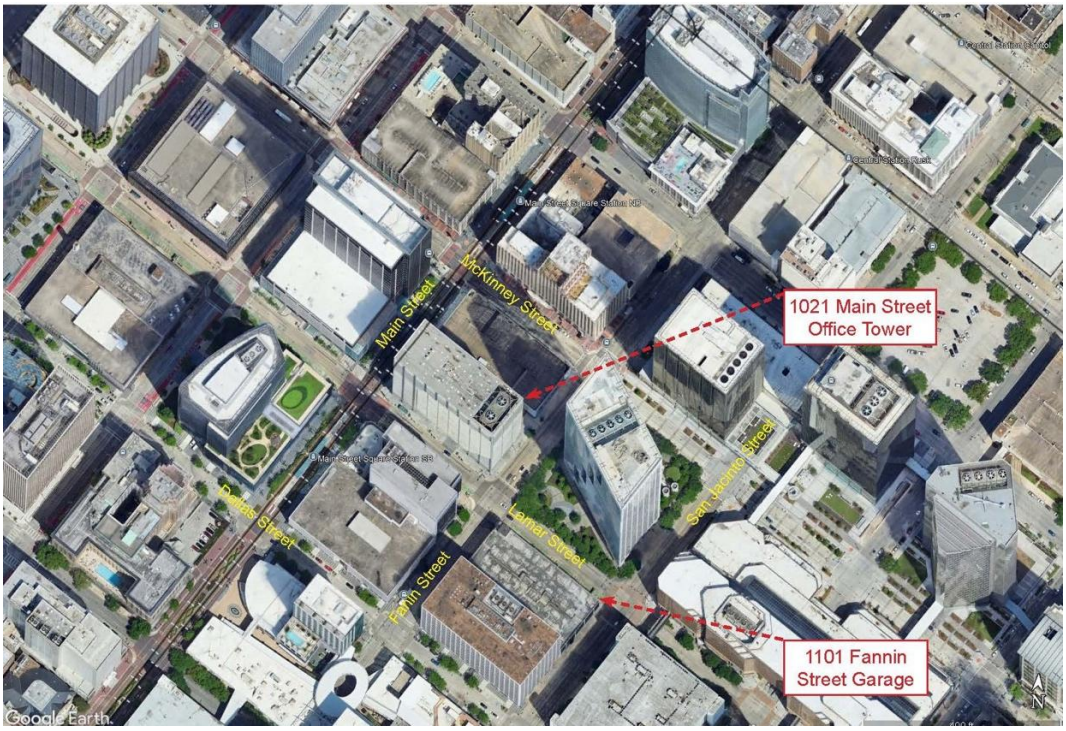
Map 2. Location of First City National Bank complex within the greater Houston area, satellite view (Google Earth Pro, annotated by author)



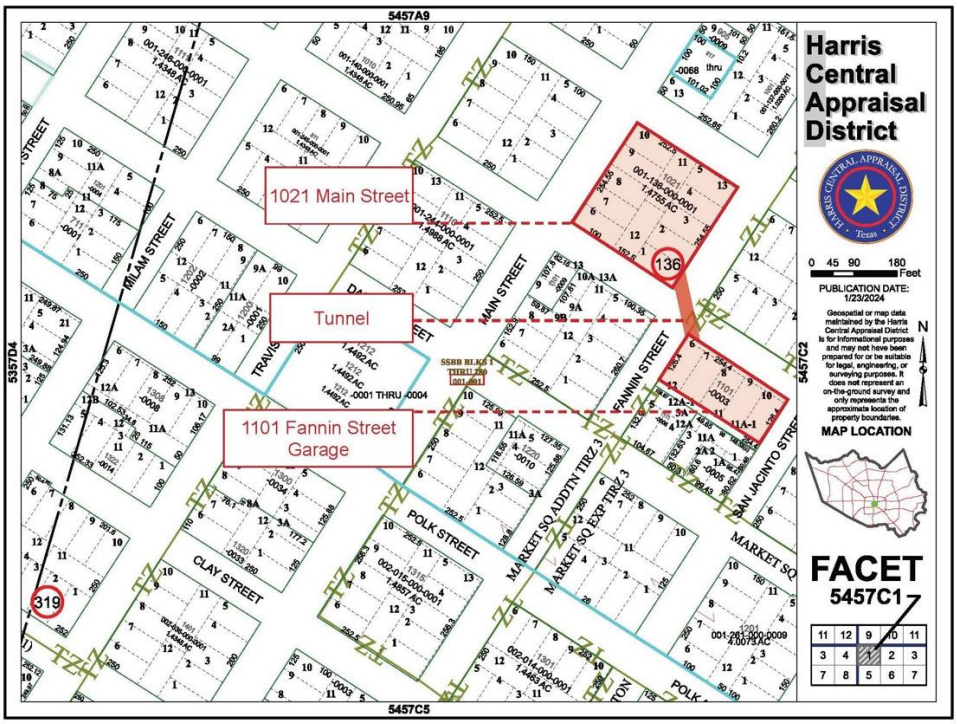
Map 3. Locations of the First City National Bank office tower (1021 Main Street) and contributing parking garage (1101 Fannin Street), in downtown Houston, Texas (Google Maps, annotated by author)



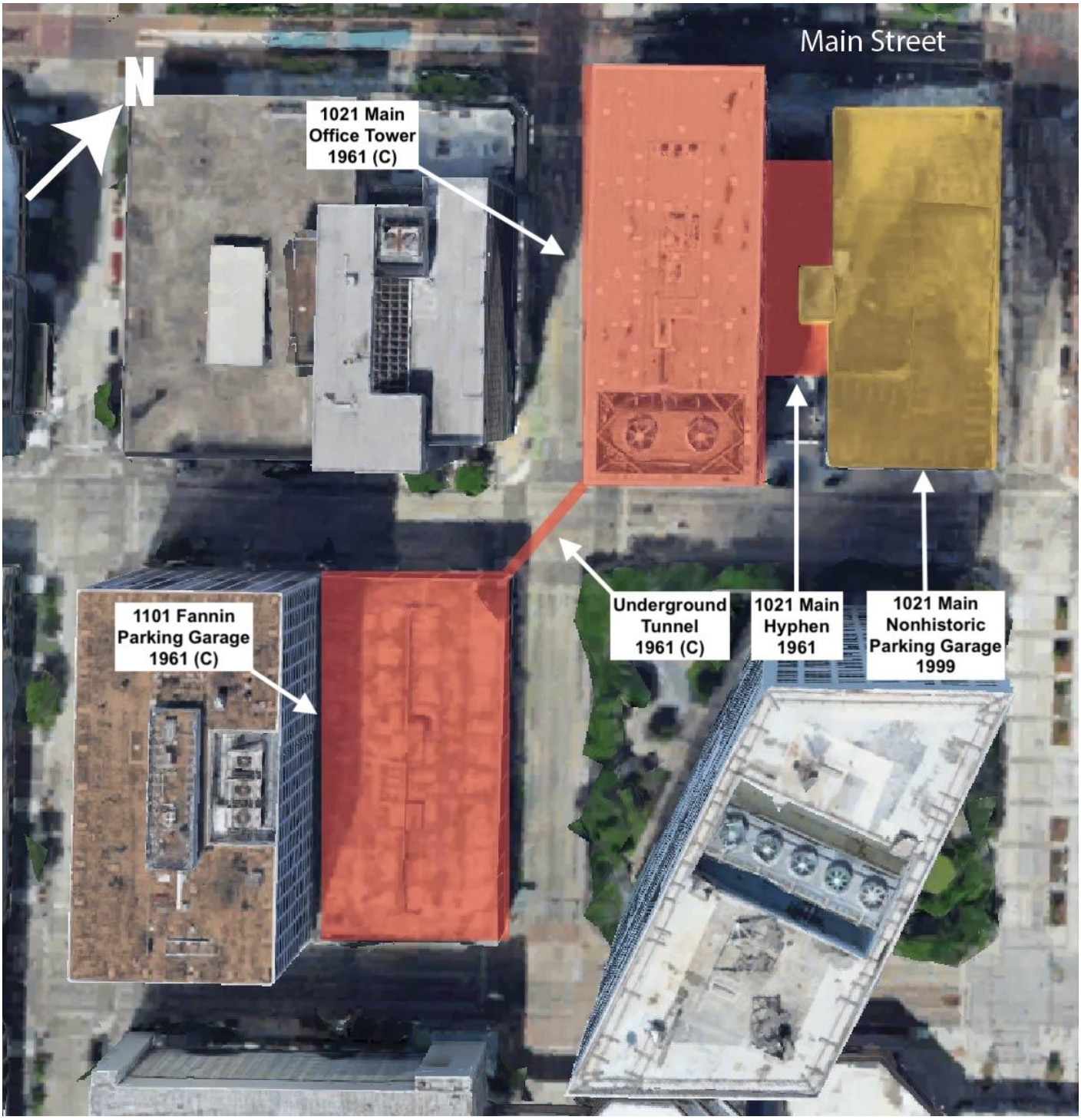
Map 4. Satellite view of 1021 Main Street office tower and 1101 Fannin Street original detached parking garage (Google Earth Pro, annotated by author)



Map 5. Parcel map showing locations of office tower, connecting tunnel, and contributing garage (Harris County Appraisal District, annotated by author)



Map 6. Google Earth Map, showing overview of contributing resources within boundary that make up complex, July 1, 2025. 1999 garage is a non-historic addition built in place of former banking pavilion.

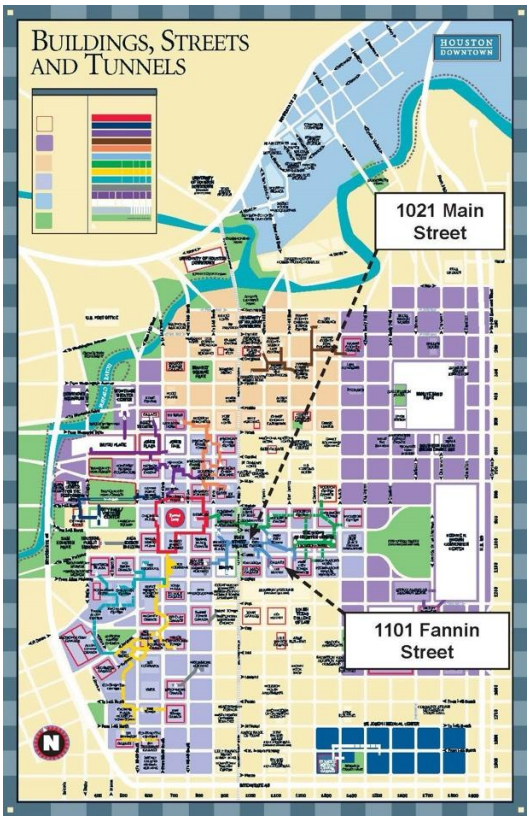


Map 7. Google Earth Map, accessed May 8, 2025.

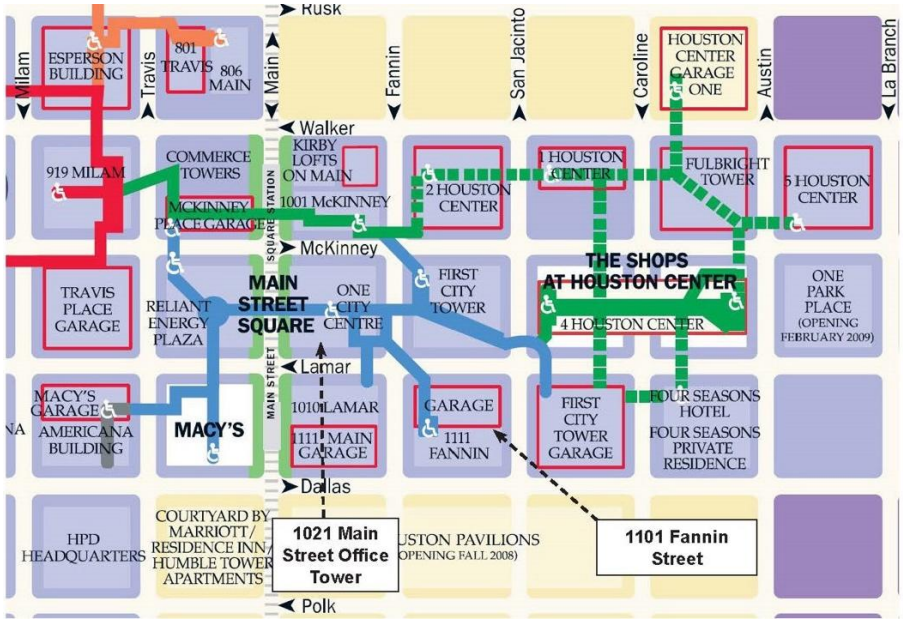
1. 1021 Main Street
   Latitude: 29.756299°N Longitude: -95.364906°W

2. 1101 Fannin Street
   Latitude: 29.755227°N Longitude: -95.364385°W

Map 8. Houston's underground tunnel system (City of Houston, annotated by author)



Map 9. Excerpt of above map, showing tunnels around the First City National Bank complex (City of Houston, annotated by author)



Figures

Figure 1. First City National Bank Office Tower Construction (*SOM NEWS* no. 38, August 15, 1960, page 2)

Figure 2. First City National Bank, Office Tower, and Banking Pavilion (demolished) (Ezra Stoller, *Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1962-1962*, page 152)

Figure 3. Parking Garage at 1101 Fannin Street (Harper Leiper Studios, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," *Architectural Record*, April 1961, page 164)

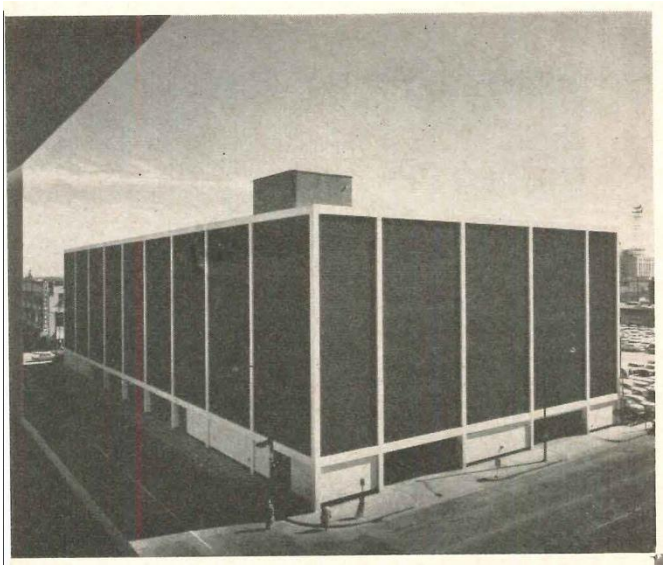


Figure 4. Parking Garage at 1101 Fannin Street (Harper Leiper Studios, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural *Record*, April 1961, page 164)

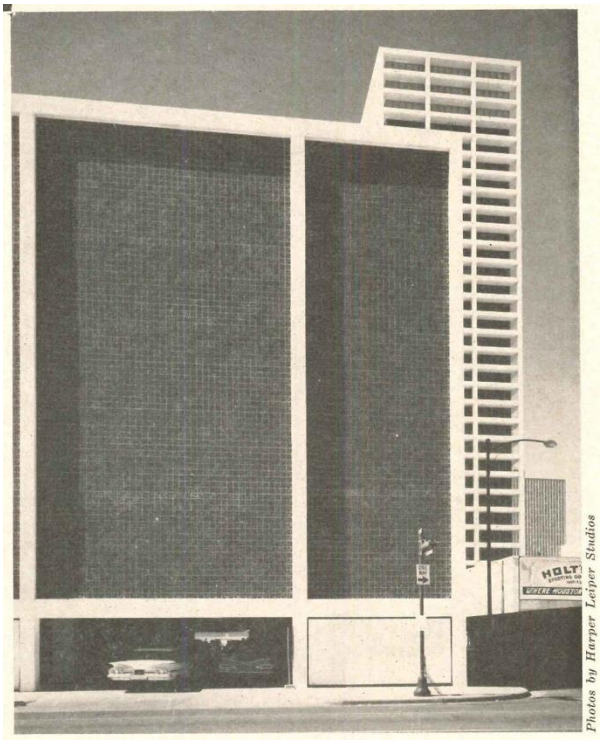


Figure 5. "First City National Bank Section," *Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961, 1

Houston's Family Newspaper

THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

HOUSTON, TEXAS, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1961

SECTION 11 First City Nat'l Bank Section

NEW HOME OF THE FIRST CITY NATIONAL BANK OPENS MONDAY

City's Largest Bank Moves To New Home

First City National Dedication Monday

First City National Bank, Houston's largest, will be opened officially Monday following dedication of the marble and glass headquarters building at 8:40 a.m.

Judge James A. Elkins, senior board chairman, will walk to the door of the new banking lobby and turn the key, officially signaling the opening of business. The new quarters in the 1000 block of Main include one of the largest banking floors in the nation and three floors of the adjoining office tower.

A Huge Job

Preparation for opening day kept officials busy last week. It took four moving companies to accomplish the transfer of bank equipment, personnel and facilities from the old building to the new. Moving got under way at the close of business Friday and continued nonstop until every bank department was ready for business in new quarters at 9 a.m. Monday.

Occupancy of the new buildings comes just 13 months after the steel framework for the office tower of 32 stories was begun in 1959. The First City National's garage building on the present site had to be demolished before construction could get under way.

A new garage, with space for 800 cars, diagonally across the Fannin and Lamar intersection, was constructed and put into operation in September, 1960.

Although a fairly recent addition to the Houston skyline, the former First City National Bank Bldg. already had been outgrown when plans were announced in 1958 for the new bank quarters. The bank's former building has been sold to Texas Eastern Transmission Corp.

Tall Flagpoles

The 116-foot flagpoles which Monday will fly the standards of Texas and the United States are believed to be the largest stainless steel flagpoles in the world. They stand at the Main St. entrance.

The 120x162-foot banking lobby has no interior columns and is walled by 25-foot-high panels of plate glass, the largest ever manufactured in this country. Its ceiling appears as one giant lighting fixture, although there are more than 900 separate lighting units.

Drive-in banking facilities, with six teller windows, are east of the banking floor. Customers will enter on McKinney Ave. and exit on Fannin. A night deposit window also is provided.

Window walls in the tower are recessed five feet from the structural columns, making each floor a sunshade for the window below it and effectively reducing air conditioning requirements by blocking out much direct sunlight.

Air Coolers at Top

Three banks of automatic elevators serve the tower's 29 office floors and its basement level. A tunnel from the First City National Bank Garage runs through this basement level and continues below McKinney to the former bank building across the street.

The office tower is the first building in Houston and one of the first in the country to have its gas air conditioning and heating system installed at the top of the building.

The building was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York architectural firm. Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson were Houston consulting architects and W. S. Bellows Construction Corp. was general contractor.

The bank's senior officers include J. A. Elkins, Sr., senior chairman of the board; W. A. Kirkland, board chairman; S. Marcus Greer, vice-chairman; F. M. Law, consultation chairman, and J. A. Elkins, Jr., president.

Fact Sheet Tells Building Details

OFFICE TOWER: First City National is 32 stories; 410 feet high.

BANKING HOUSE: Lobby is 120 by 162 feet deep; 32-foot ceiling. Two planter boxes located in the lobby are four feet wide and 60 feet long; center area is carpeted.

WINDOWS: 35 feet high; largest plate glass panels ever manufactured in the United States.

DRIVE-IN FACILITIES: Six banking windows; enter on McKinney, exit on Fannin St.

GARAGE: Seven stories; storage space for 800 cars; tunnels connect the garage with the new bank building and the former bank building.

VAULT: Size is 40 by 96 feet; walls 26 inches thick reinforced concrete and steel. Door to vault is seven feet in diameter and weighs 100,000 pounds (50 tons); the hinge alone weighs five tons. There are 14,835 safety deposit boxes stored in the vault.

ELEVATORS: 14 passenger elevators, travel at 1000 feet per minute; fastest in Houston. One freight elevator.

HEATING AND COOLING: Equipment is located on top two floors. The heat transfer equipment and air handlers are in the basement. Both heating and cooling operations use gas.

FLAGPOLES: Two located in front of banking house on Main St.; 100 feet tall; believed to be the largest stainless steel flagpoles in the world.

TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT: Special, custom-made switchboard, equipped with 30 incoming lines and 25 outdial lines. The board is connected to 460 separate stations within the bank.

DEPOSITS: Total deposits of the bank on Dec. 31, 1960, were $708,197,062.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEPARTMENT: Oldest such department in Texas; has 1100 correspondents in foreign countries.

STEEL: 10,250 tons of structural steel.

CONCRETE: 34,000 cubic yards; weighs about 68,000 tons.

MARBLE: Total weight is 3.6 million pounds; quarried in Vermont and shipped to Houston by barge.

PAINT: 2256 gallons of paint were required to protect the structural steel during construction. . . . Most of the paint was covered in the final stages of construction and will not be visible.

TUNNELS: A tunnel connects new bank, former bank and the garage. The tunnel is 13 feet high and nine feet wide. It is designed to support a weight of two million pounds.

ARCHITECTS: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York.

CONSULTING ARCHITECTS: Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, Houston.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: W. S. Bellows Construction Corp., Houston.

You'll Feel You're Walking on Air Inside Spacious Banking Lobby

Customers entering the First City National's new lobby may have the feeling they're walking on air.

Per light, airy space surrounds them, sweeping without obstruction throughout the 120 by 162 lobby, extending from the carpet under their feet to the light-flooded ceiling 34 feet bove their heads.

There are no interior columns in the lobby and no large obstructions to vision. Its walls are giant panels of plate glass, each measuring 35 feet high from the sidewalk to the roof. They are the largest plate-glass panels ever manufactured in the United States, possibly in the world.

Perhaps the most dramatic feature of this unusual banking house is its ceiling, which is literally flooded with light. The entire ceiling is covered with gold anodized aluminum lighting fixtures, 912 in all, each a little over four feet square. The effect is a sea of light softly diffused throughout the lobby interior.

The ceiling also conceals the banking floor's air conditioning equipment, wiring and duct work.

In the ceiling also is a telescoping elevator concealed above two of the large lighting fixtures. Should any equipment in the ceiling need attention, the elevator is lowered to the floor and hoisted up to the ceiling again with the workmen.

The teller counters are made of black granite, set off by bands of polished stainless steel. Italian Cremo marble is used for the counter tops.

The northeast and west walls are covered by floor-to-ceiling drapes of a loosely woven beige fabric. The drapes are motor operated. Along the east wall hangs a handsome overdrapery of natural colored silk.

Two long planting boxes, each 4 feet wide and 60 feet long, and a 15-foot tree in the center of the lobby add a touch of greenery.

Through a circular opening in the building's center, escalators lead down to the bank's safe deposit area and the vault.

Two 116-foot flagpoles stand guard near the banking lobby's Main St. entrance. The huge poles are believed to be the largest stainless steel flag standards in the world.

HUGE BANKING LOBBY—The lobby of First City National Bank is free of columns or other obstructions. In the center of the floor are escalators to the massive vault and the customers safety deposit area. The ceiling of the banking lobby is 32 feet high.

Window Wall Recessed 5 Feet From Columns to Provide Shade

The 32-story First City National Bank tower is designed with its window wall recessed 5 feet from the structural columns. This arrangement makes each floor a sunshade for the windows below it. This reduces air-conditioning requirements by blocking out a large portion of the direct sunlight.

This overhang, in combination with the gray-tinted glass used throughout the building, also reduces sky glare in the offices, all of which are located on the outside of the building.

Window washers will find this design simplifies their job by providing a ready-made ledge on which to work.

The gray-tinted glass also gives a cool, uniform appearance to the whole structure. The window glass is set in aluminum frames and between glass and frame are neoprene gaskets which exert force on the frame and glass to hold the windows in place.

Marble Used

The use of marble facing for the exterior supporting columns and frame is a departure from current trends favoring the use of aluminum or glass for the facade.

The office tower is connected with the First City Bank garage, located diagonally across the street, by an underground tunnel which runs through the tower's basement and continues under McKinney Ave. to the bank's former building.

Three banks of automatic elevators in the center of the tower serve this basement level. Since the structure's exterior columns provide its support, no columns within the ground-floor area obstruct vision from the central elevator core to the window walls.

All Offices Outside

All offices in the First City National Tower are outside offices.

Doors on the office tower street level entrance are 10 feet high and 4½ feet wide, with hinges specially designed to accommodate their weight.

The tower is the first building in Houston and one of the first in the nation to have its air conditioning — utilizing gas for both heating and cooling—installed at the top of the building. The system uses 3600 tons of gas air conditioning equipment. Steam turbines drive the equipment's compressors and steam from three gas-operated boilers provides heating for the building and power for the turbines.

Six Windows For Motoring Public

First City National's large drive-in facilities are just east of the banking house lobby.

Motoring customers will enter on McKinney, drive to any of six banking windows and then exit on Fannin.

Banking windows will be open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Friday.

Tellers will receive deposits, cash checks, handle withdrawals from savings accounts and accept installment loan payments.

Figure 6. Original Complex Site Plan, 1961 ("Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 156)

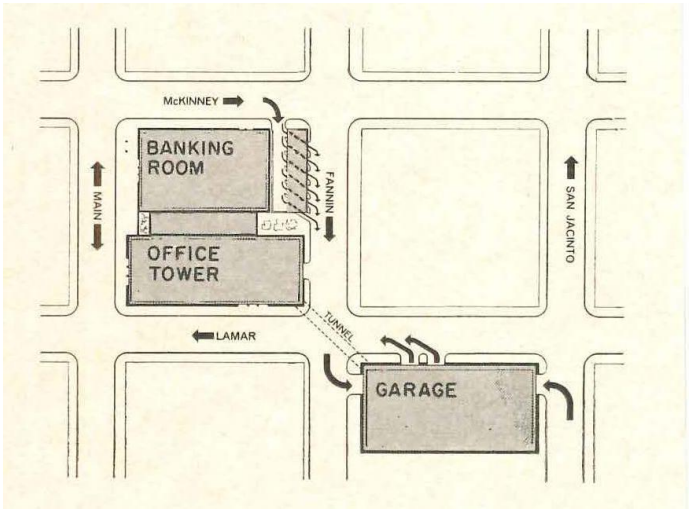


Figure 7. Floor plans: (top) typical upper level of tower and (bottom) ground floor and site plan for banking pavilion (demolished) (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 157)

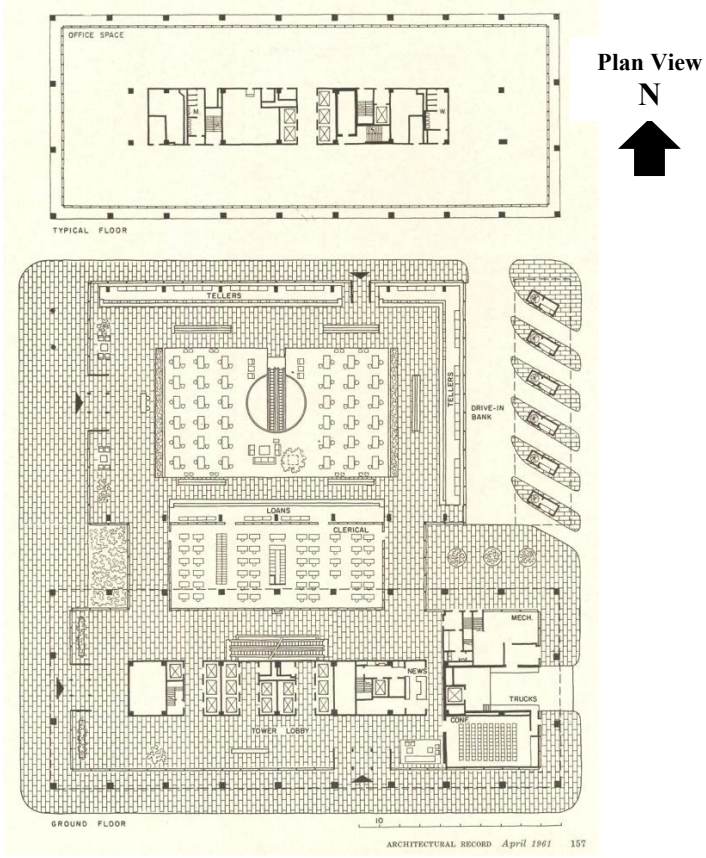


Figure 8. Site plan and ground-level floor plan, Parking Garage at 1101 Fannin Street (Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson in "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 164)

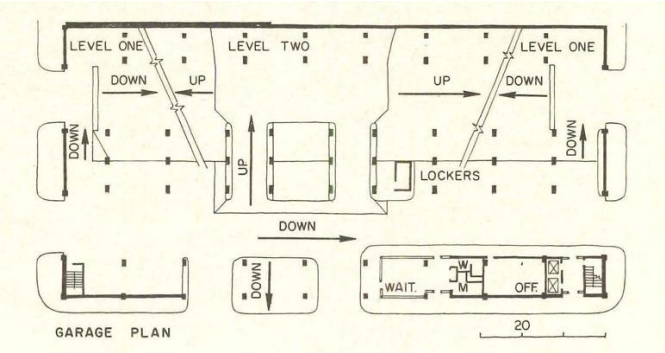


Figure 9. Banking pavilion, motor bank (both demolished), and hyphen, southwest corner (Ezra Stoller, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 156)

Figure 10. Banking pavilion (demolished) and hyphen, east side (Ezra Stoller, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 156)

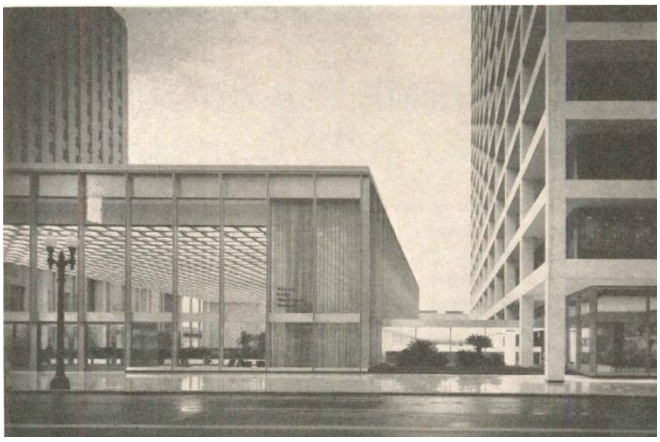


Figure 11. Photograph and section of curtain wall (Ezra Stoller, photographer, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 159)

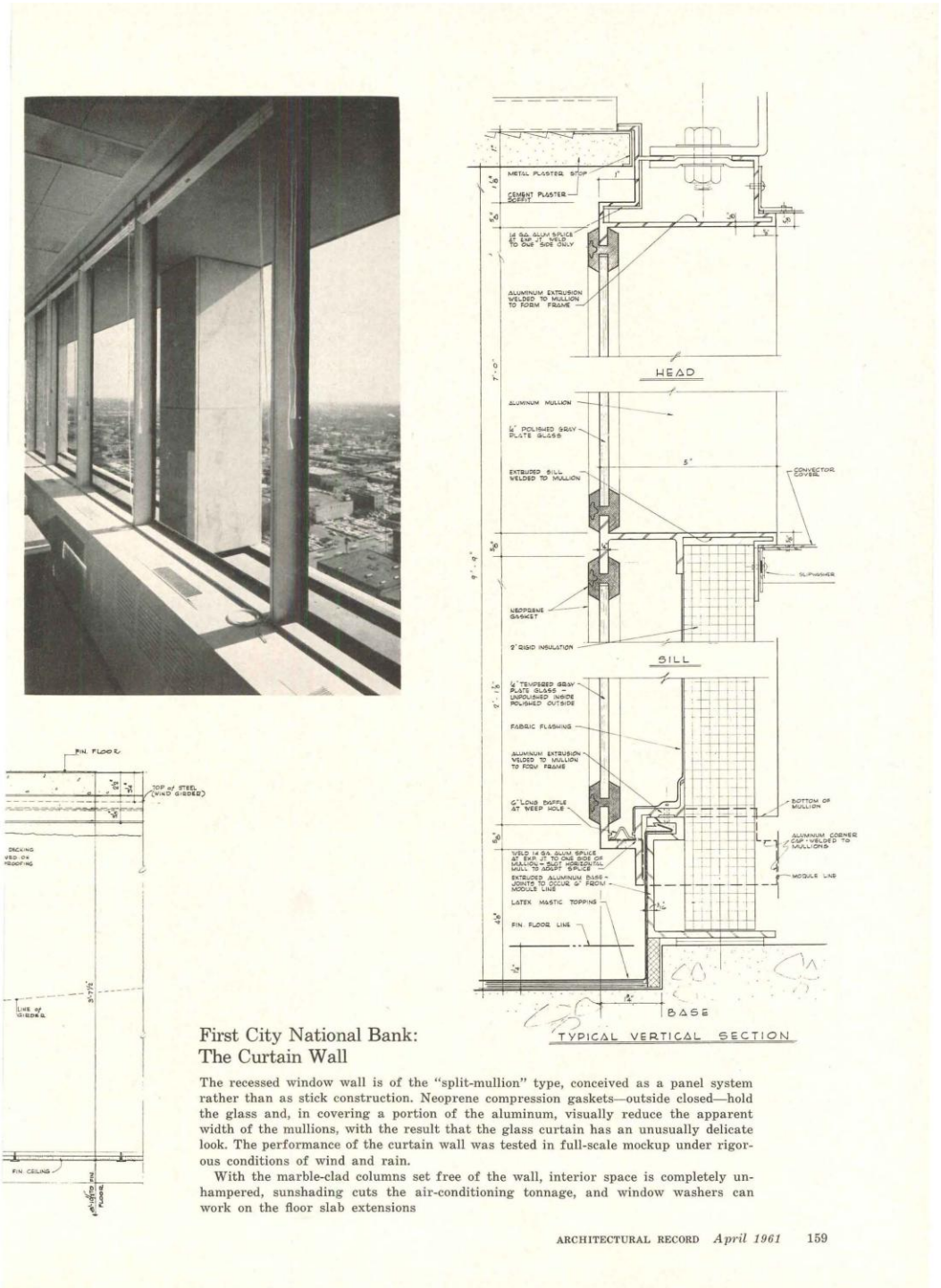


Figure 12. View from banking pavilion (demolished) to tower through hyphen (Ezra Stoller, SOM NEWS 41, June 15, 1961, cover)

Figure 13. View from office tower lobby through hyphen with banking pavilion (demolished) in the background, undated (Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive/Esto Photographics Inc.)

Figure 14. Interior office tower lobby: low-rise elevator bank, undated (Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive/Esto Photographics Inc.)

Figure 15. Office tower, second floor lobby, undated (Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive/Esto Photographics Inc.)

Figure 16. Second-floor executive offices with original finishes, undated (Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive/Esto Photographics Inc.)

Figure 17. Office tower upper-floor windows, undated (Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive/Esto Photographics Inc.)

Figure 18. Banking Pavilion (demolished), interior views (Ezra Stoller, "Tripartite Scheme for Bank, Office Building, and Garage," Architectural Record, April 1961, page 160)

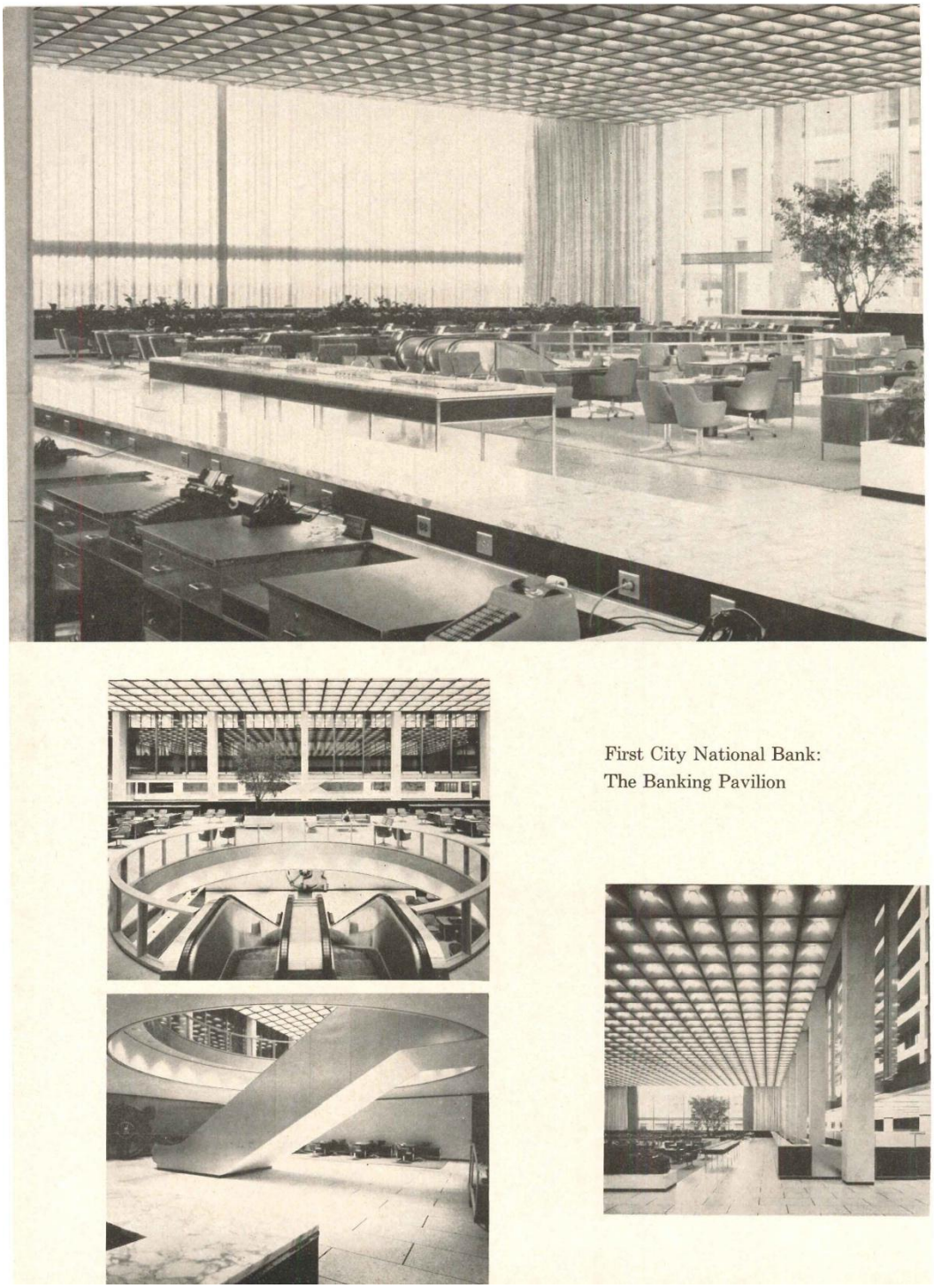


Figure 19. West, east, and north elevations of tower and banking pavilion (demolished), Sheet A-39 (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1959, courtesy of property owner)

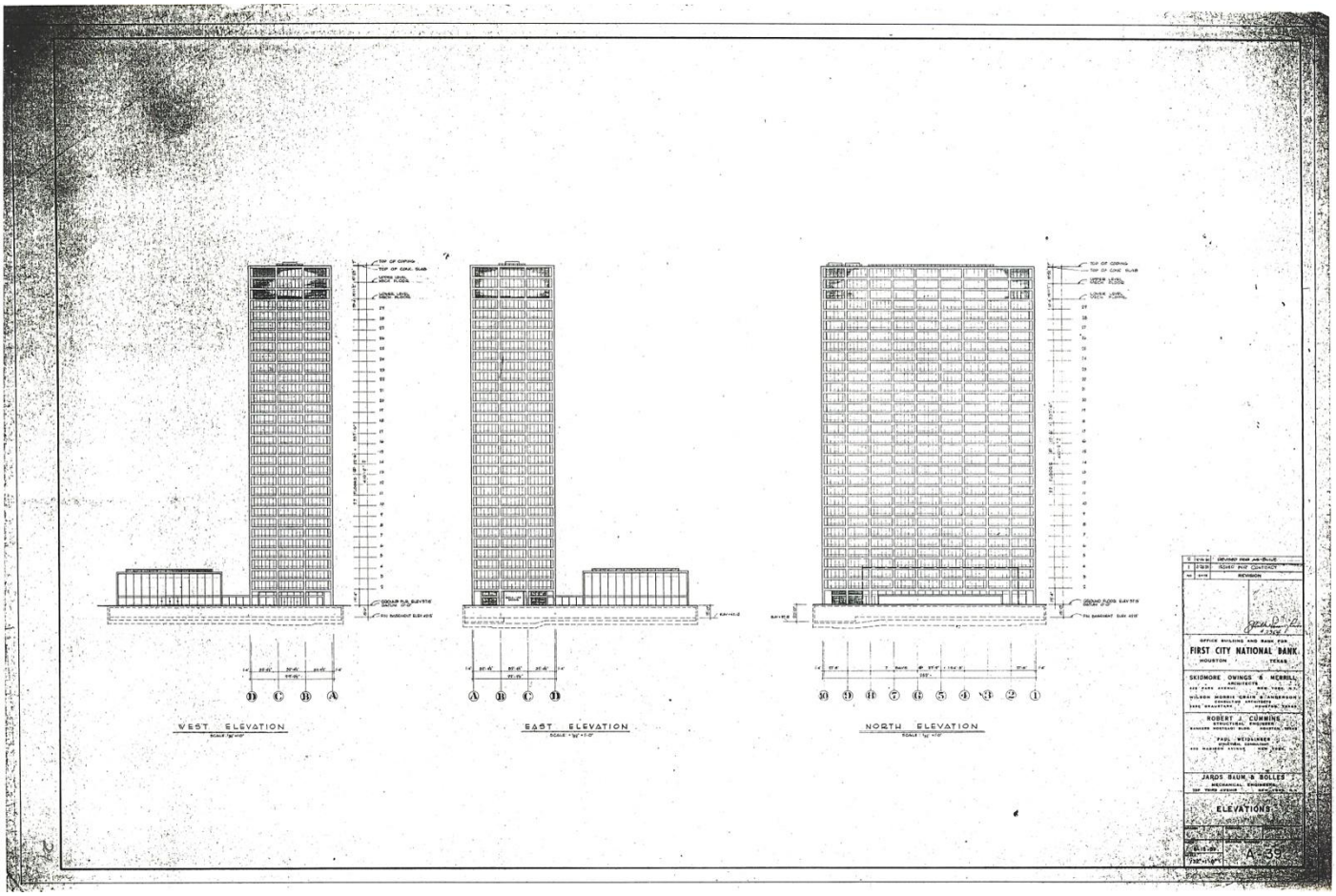


Figure 20. Cross section, longitudinal, and south elevations of tower, Sheet A-38 (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1959, courtesy of property owner)

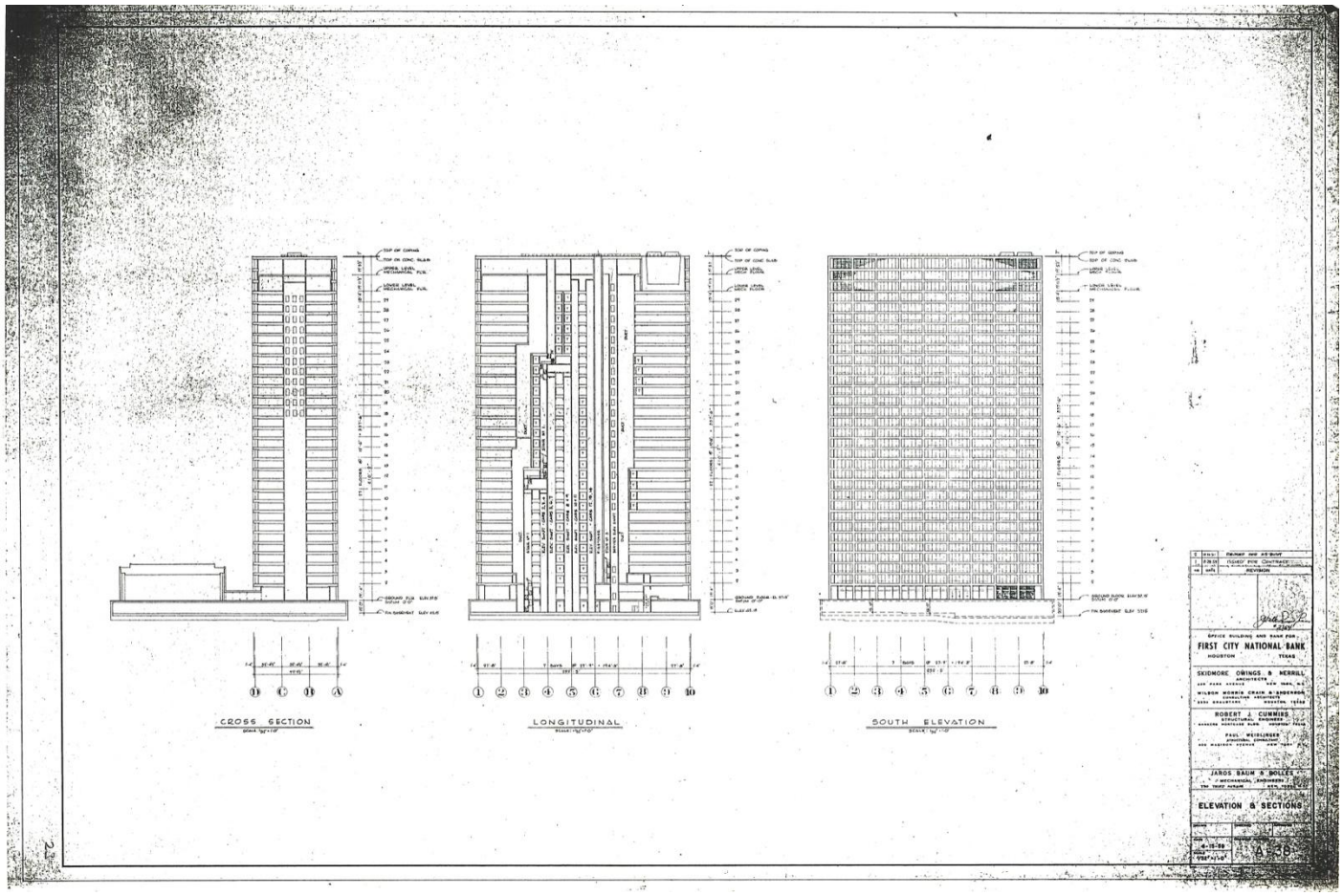


Figure 21. Ground floor plan of tower (South), Sheet A-3 (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1959, courtesy of property owner)

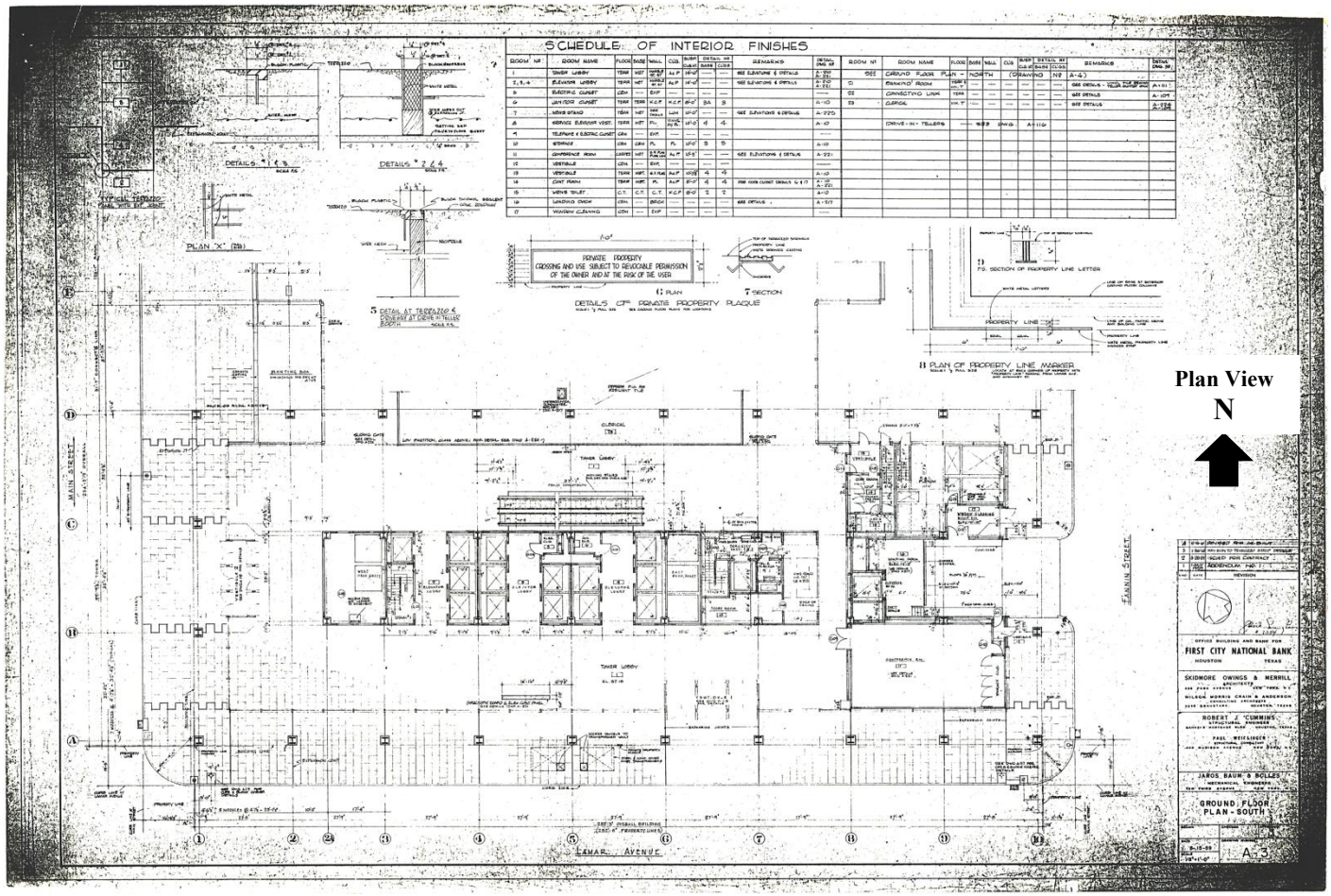


Figure 22. Typical floor plan of tower, floors 24-29, Sheet A-29 (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1959, courtesy of property owner)

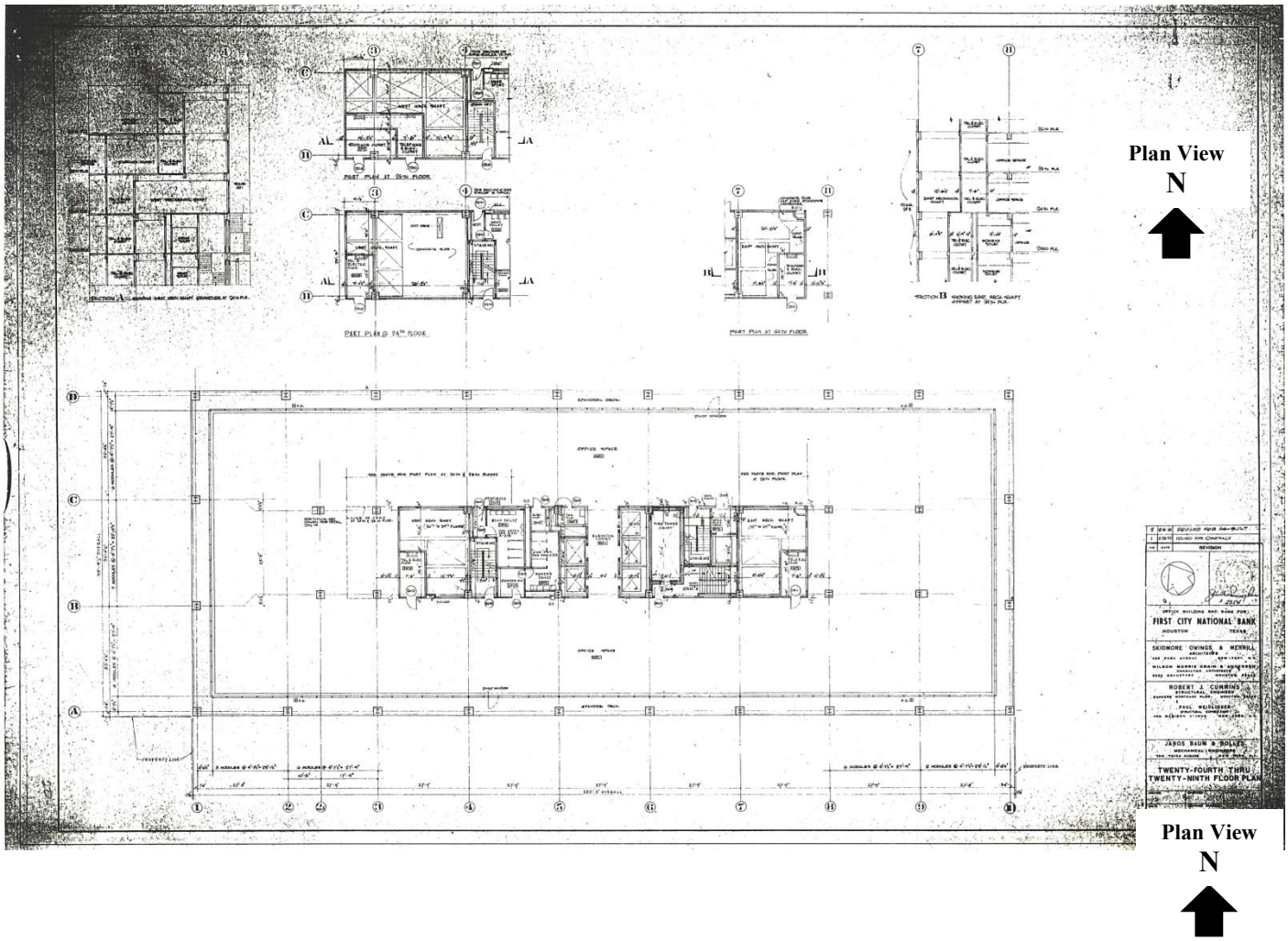


Figure 23. Roof plan of tower, Sheet A-37 (Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1959, courtesy of property owner)

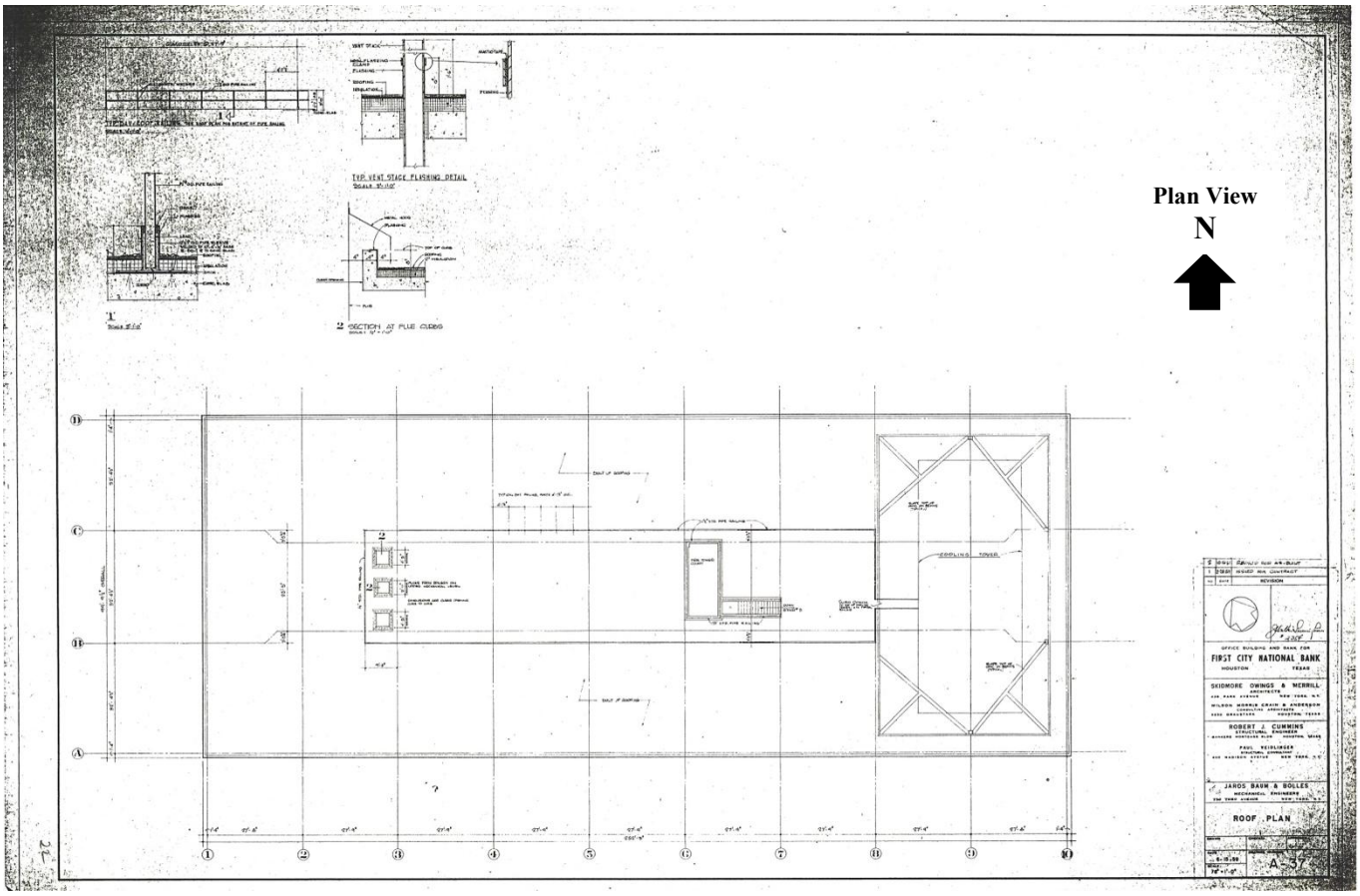


Figure 24. Known Tenants of Office Tower, 1961-1962

Known Tenants of 1021 Main Street Office Tower 1961-1962			
Floor	Suite	Name	Source
Basement		Barber Shop – Waymon "Slim" Womack	Architectural Plans A-303
Basement		Cafeteria for bank employees	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Basement		First City National Bank offices	*Houston Post*, February 2, 1961
Ground Floor		Lobby	Architectural Plans A-3
Second Floor		First City National Bank offices	Architectural Plans A-7
Third Floor		First City National Bank offices	Architectural Plans A-8
Fourth Floor	401	Walston & Co. Inc.	*Houston Chronicle*, March 28, 1961
Fifth Floor	503	Gaylord Stickle Company	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Sixth Floor	606	Signal Oil and Gas Company	*Houston Chronicle*, April 14, 1962
Seventh Floor	707	Sheffield, Garrett & Carter	*Houston Chronicle*, February 4, 1962
Seventh Floor	716	Bank of Montreal	*Houston Chronicle*, December 12, 1962
Eighth Floor	3300 Sq. Ft	Tiffany & Co.	*Houston Chronicle*, July 19, 1963
Ninth Floor	900	Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc.	*Houston Chronicle*, May 2, 1961
Ninth Floor	901	Rauscher, Pierce & Co., Inc.	*Houston Chronicle*, April 2, 1961
Tenth Floor	1003	J. Ed Hill, Inc.	*Houston Chronicle*, October 4, 1961
Eleventh Floor	1111	Texas Gas Exploration Corporation	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Twelfth Floor			
Thirteenth Floor			
Fourteenth Floor			
Fifteenth Floor	Full floor	Plymouth Oil Co.	*Houston Chronicle*, March 19, 1961
Sixteenth Floor	Partial floor	Plymouth Oil Co.	*Houston Chronicle*, March 19, 1961
Sixteenth Floor	Partial Floor	Southern Producing Division and Foreign Division of The Pure Oil Company	*Houston Chronicle*, November 18, 1962
Seventeenth Floor	1704	Highway Frontiers of America	*Houston Chronicle*, February 12, 1961
Seventeenth Floor	1707	Piney Point Petroleums	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Eighteenth Floor	1825	Y. Frank Jungman Relators	*Houston Post*, December 3, 1961
Nineteenth Floor	1905	Oliver & West, Inc.	*Houston Chronicle*, July 2, 1961
Twentieth Floor	2000	British Overseas Airways Corporation	*Houston Post*, February 20, 1961
Twenty-First Floor	Full floor	Vinson, Elkins, Weems and Searls	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Twenty-Second Floor	Full floor	Vinson, Elkins, Weems and Searls	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Twenty-Third Floor	2309	Vandervoort & Co./Douglas Ford & Co.	*Houston Chronicle*, February 5, 1961
Twenty-Fourth Floor			
Twenty-Fifth Floor			
Twenty-Sixth Floor			
Twenty-Seventh Floor			
Twenty-Eighth Floor			
Twenty-Ninth Floor		Ramada Club	*Houston Chronicle*, June 18, 1961
Thirtieth Floor		Mechanical	Architectural Plans A-35
Thirty-First Floor		Mechanical	Architectural Plans A-36

Figure 25. SOM's first bank building: Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, New York built in 1954, view from the corner of Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street, SOM – NY office, (*Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962*, page 44)

Figure 26. First National City Bank, New York International Airport (Idlewilde/JFK) built in 1959, SOM – NY office, (*Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962*, page 122)

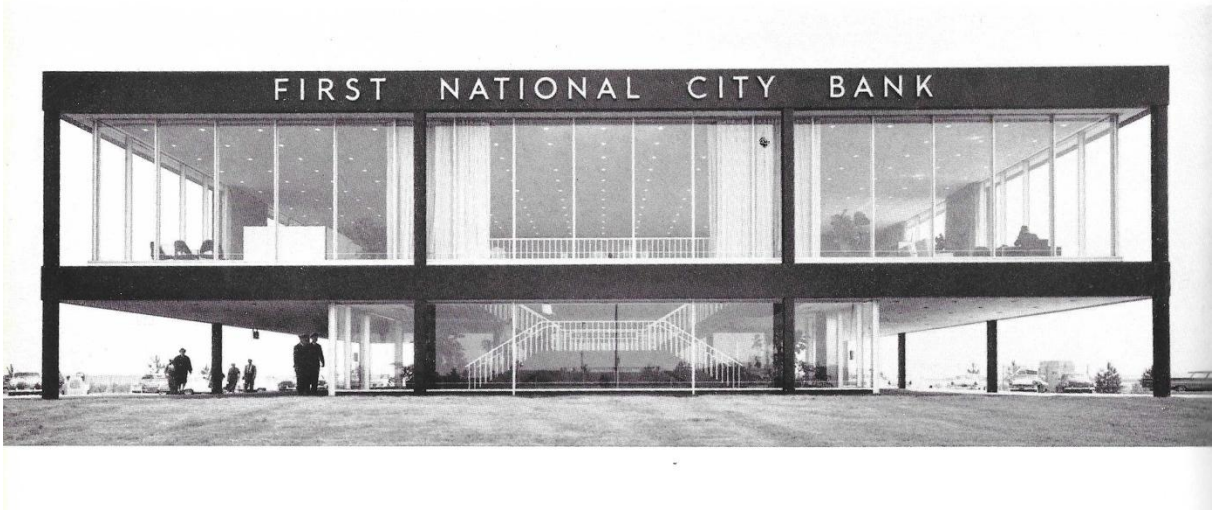


Figure 27. Banque Lambert, Brussels, Belgium (view of model from west) – SOM – NY office, Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger (Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962, 193)

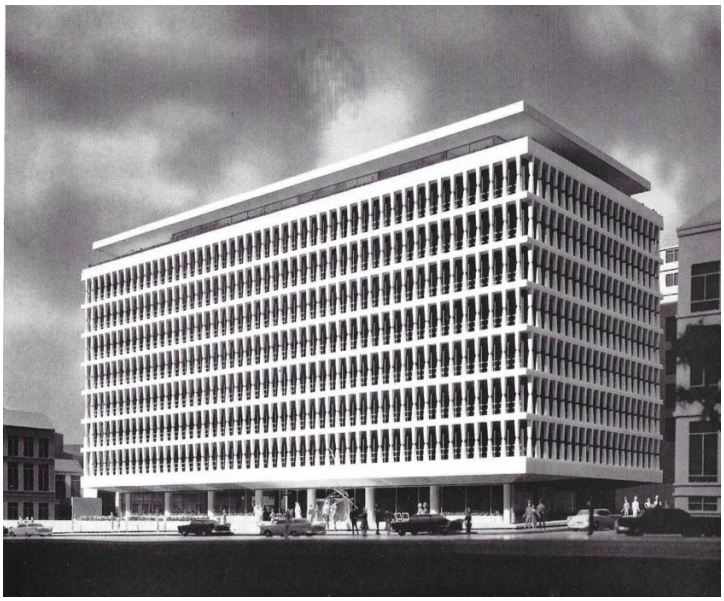


Figure 28. John Hancock Building (John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company), New Orleans, Louisiana– SOM – NY office, Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger (Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962, 185)

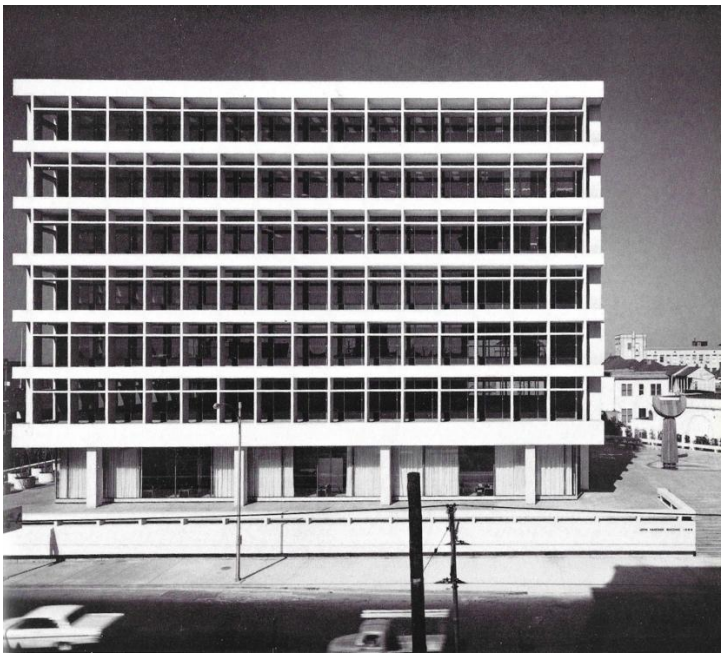


Figure 29. BMA Tower (Business Men's Assurance Company Building, now One Park Place, SOM Chicago). Kansas City, Missouri, completed 1963; marble replaced with neoparium crystallized glass ceramic panels in 1986 (Brad Finch, "BMA Tower," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, March 2002, Photo 2)

Figure 30. Medical Towers, Skidmore Owings & Merrill (New York office), ca. 1960 (Houston Public Library, HMRC – MSS0287-M-112, extracted from "Medical Towers," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Figure 42)

Figure 31. Great Southern Life Insurance Company Building, Houston, Texas, Skidmore Owings & Merrill New York Office with Weidlinger (Great Southern Life Insurance Company, n.d., Highrise Tower Card Deck, https://www.houstonarchitecture.com/topic/47283-great-southern-life-insurance-company-at-3121-buffalo-spdwy/.)

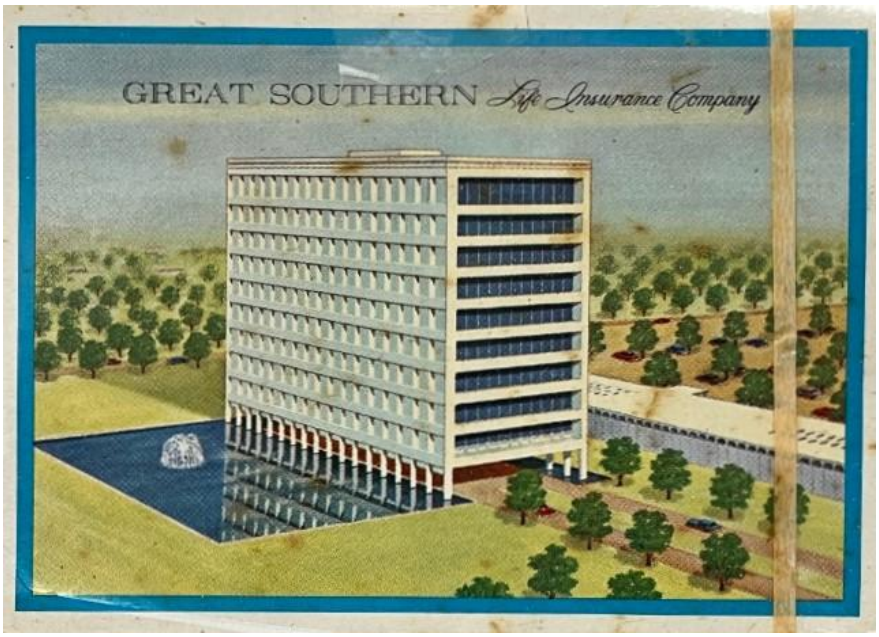
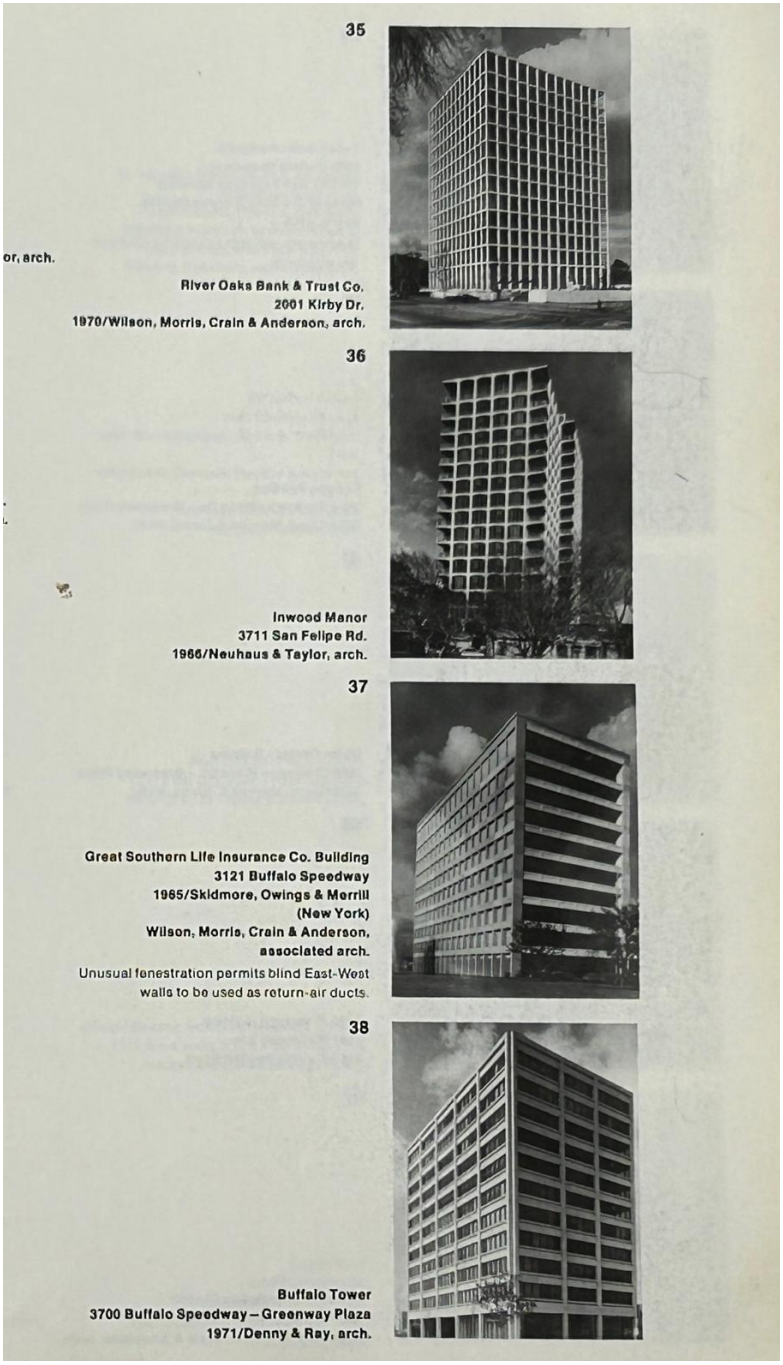


Figure 32. Excerpt from Houston: An Architectural Guide, page 92: (in descending order) River Oaks Bank & Trust Co., extant; Inwood Manor, extant; Great Southern Life Insurance Co. Building, demolished; and Buffalo Tower, extant but not sensitively reclad (Paul Hester and William Lukes, ca. 1972)



35

or, arch.

River Oaks Bank & Trust Co.
2001 Kirby Dr.
1970/Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, arch.

36

Inwood Manor
3711 San Felipe Rd.
1966/Neuhaus & Taylor, arch.

37

Great Southern Life Insurance Co. Building
3121 Buffalo Speedway
1965/Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
(New York)
Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson,
associated arch.
Unusual fenestration permits blind East-West walls to be used as return-air ducts.

38

Buffalo Tower
3700 Buffalo Speedway – Greenway Plaza
1971/Denny & Ray, arch.

Figure 33. American General Building aka Wortham Tower, Houston; Lloyd, Moran, and Jones, built 1965, as it appeared in 2025 (LoopNet.com)

Figure 34. Johnson Space Center, Project Management Building, Albert E. Sheppard, architect; as it appeared when completed in April 1965 (NASA, https://www.nasa.gov/centers-and-facilities/johnson/building-on-a-mission-the-project-management-building-home-to-the-centers-directors/)

Figure 35. Houston Skyline with SOM buildings One Shell Plaza, Tenneco, and partial view of First City National Bank, ca. 1972 (Paul Hester and William Lukes, Houston: An Architectural Guide, page 10)

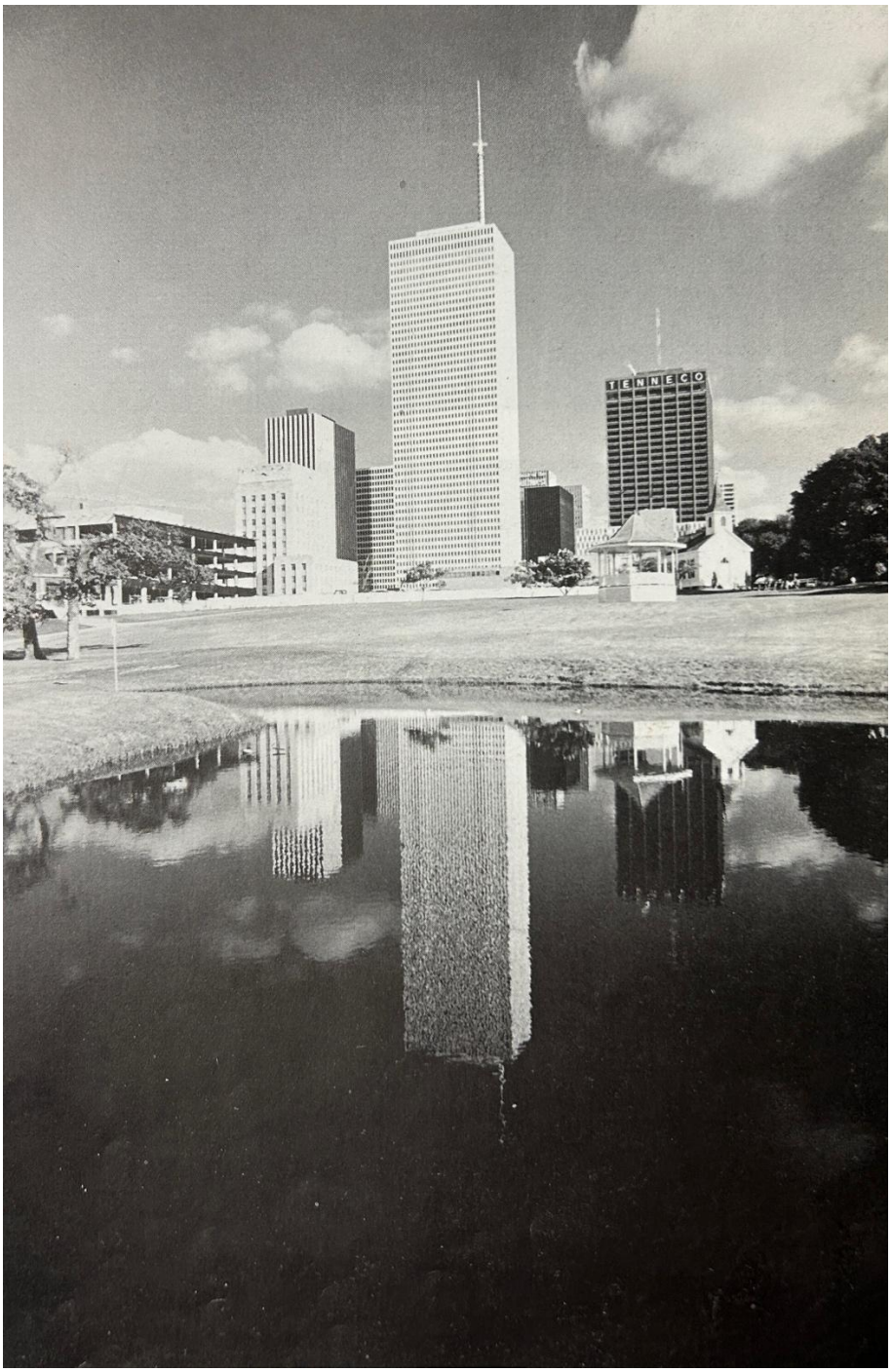


Figure 36. 3616 Richmond Building, Houston, Caudill Rowlett Scott (built 1966), as it appeared ca. 1972, extant (Paul Hester and William Lukes, Houston: An Architectural Guide)

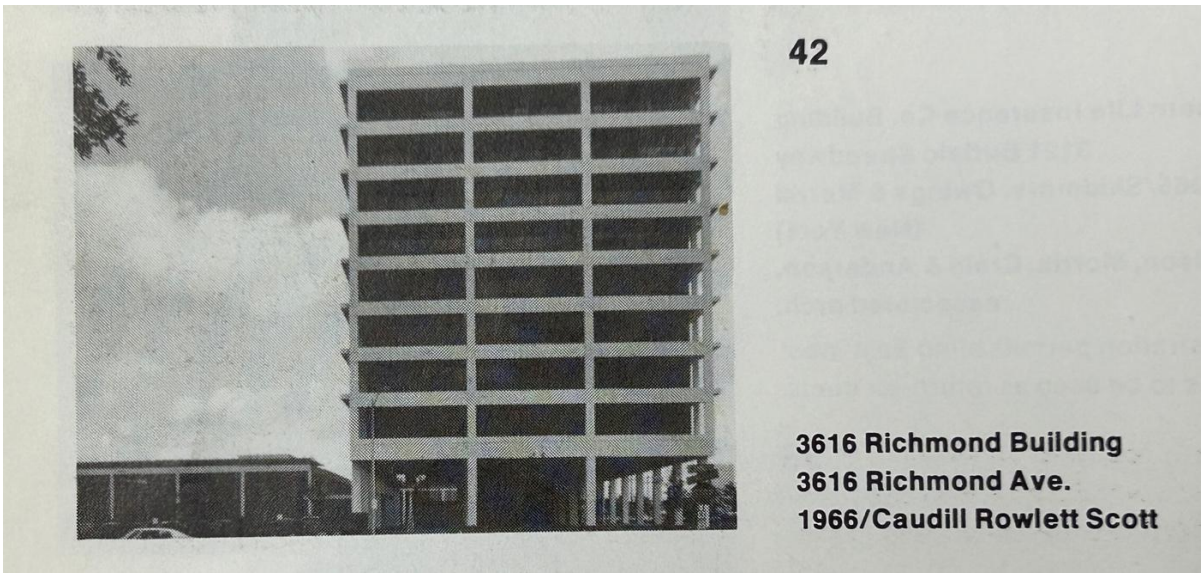


Figure 37. Control Data Corp. Building, Houston, SOM (Chicago) and Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson (built 1971), as it appeared ca. 1972, now demolished (Paul Hester and William Lukes, Houston: An Architectural Guide)

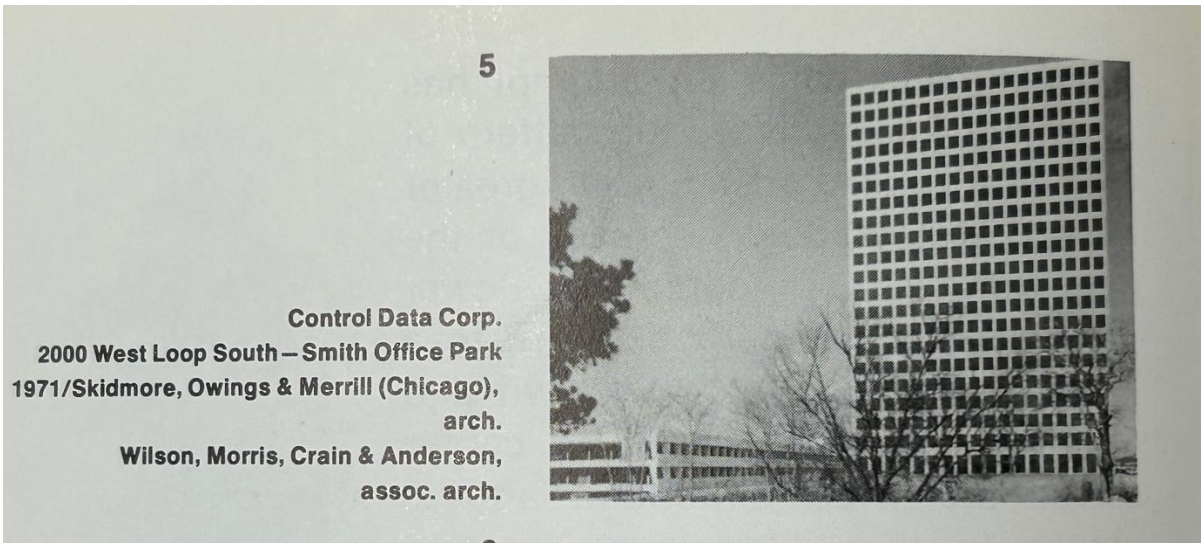


Figure 38. First National Bank of Fort Worth (ca. 1961), Skidmore Owings & Merrill (New York Office), (John Roberts, undated, for "First on 7th" Fort Worth Architecture)

Figure 39. Harris County Family Law Center Building, Houston; Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, built 1969 (Ben Koush, Home, Heat, Money, God: Texas and Modern Architecture, page 183)

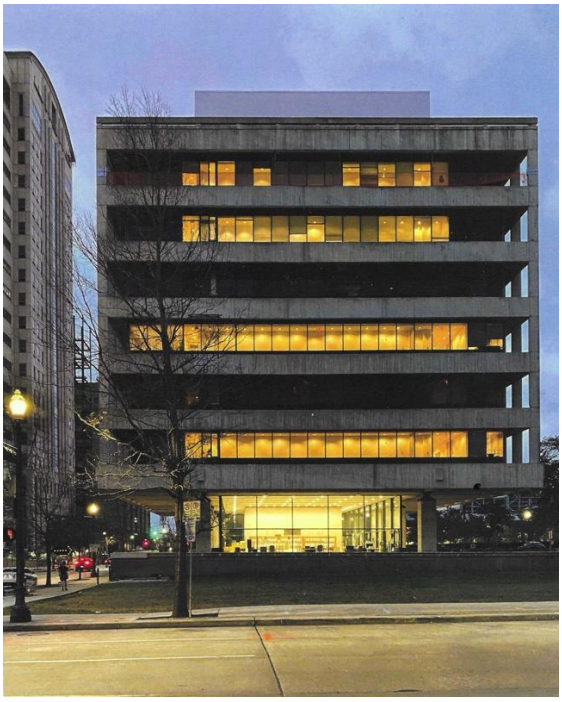


Figure 40. Carter House (62 Briar Hollow Drive), Houston; Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, built 1960 (Houston Mod)

Figure 41. Style in Steel Townhouses, Houston; Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, Built 1968 (Architectural Digest 26, no. 1, pages 22-33)

Figure 42. Two Houston buildings by SOM-Chicago and Wilson, Morris, Crane & Anderson: (right) Ranger Insurance Co. Building, built 1971), and (left) Kaneb Building, built 1976, both extant, photo ca. 1999 (Gerald Moorhead, FAIA, and Yolita Schmidt, Houston Architectural Guide 2nd ed., page 245)

Figure 43. 1960 view of downtown Houston, with the First City National Bank Building under construction at the center of the frame (A. J. Nystrom & Co.)

Figure 44. Hartford Fire Insurance Building, Chicago SOM 1961 (from *SOM: Architecture of Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962*, 170)

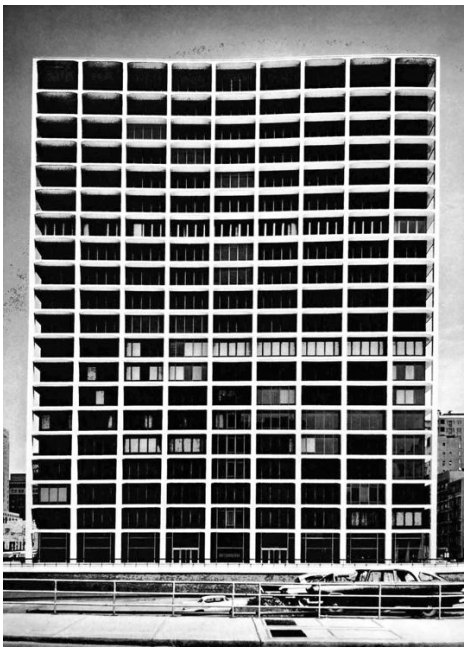


Figure 45. Inland Steel Building, Chicago, SOM 1958 (from *SOM: Architecture of Skidmore Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962*, 74)

Figure 46. Photo of 1021 Main tower, view northwest, *LoopNet.com*.

Figure 47. Basement plan of tower and area beneath above ground hyphen with entrance to 1990s parking garage, 2010 (reflects current plan).

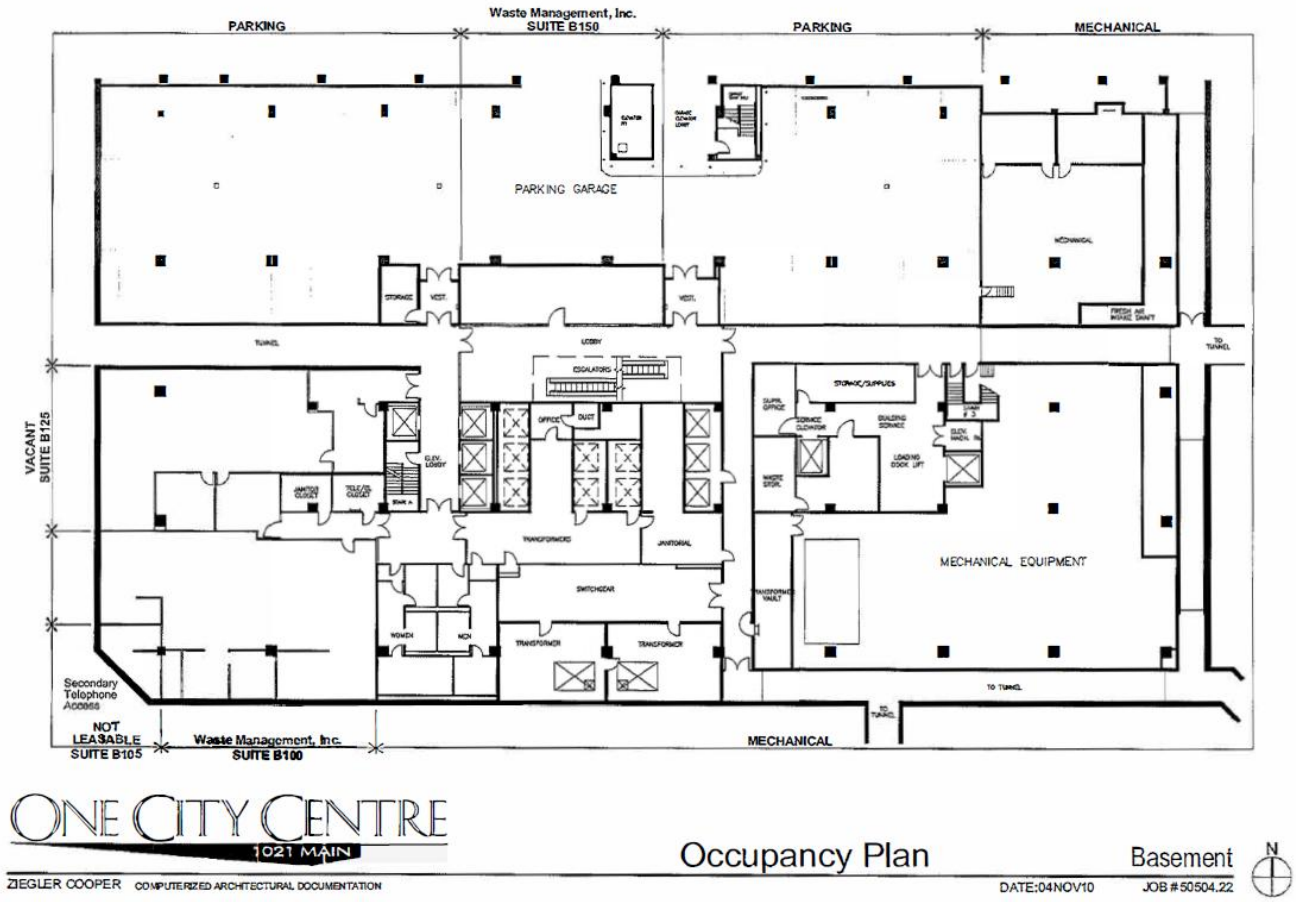


Figure 48. First floor plan of tower and above ground hyphen, 2010 (reflects current plan).

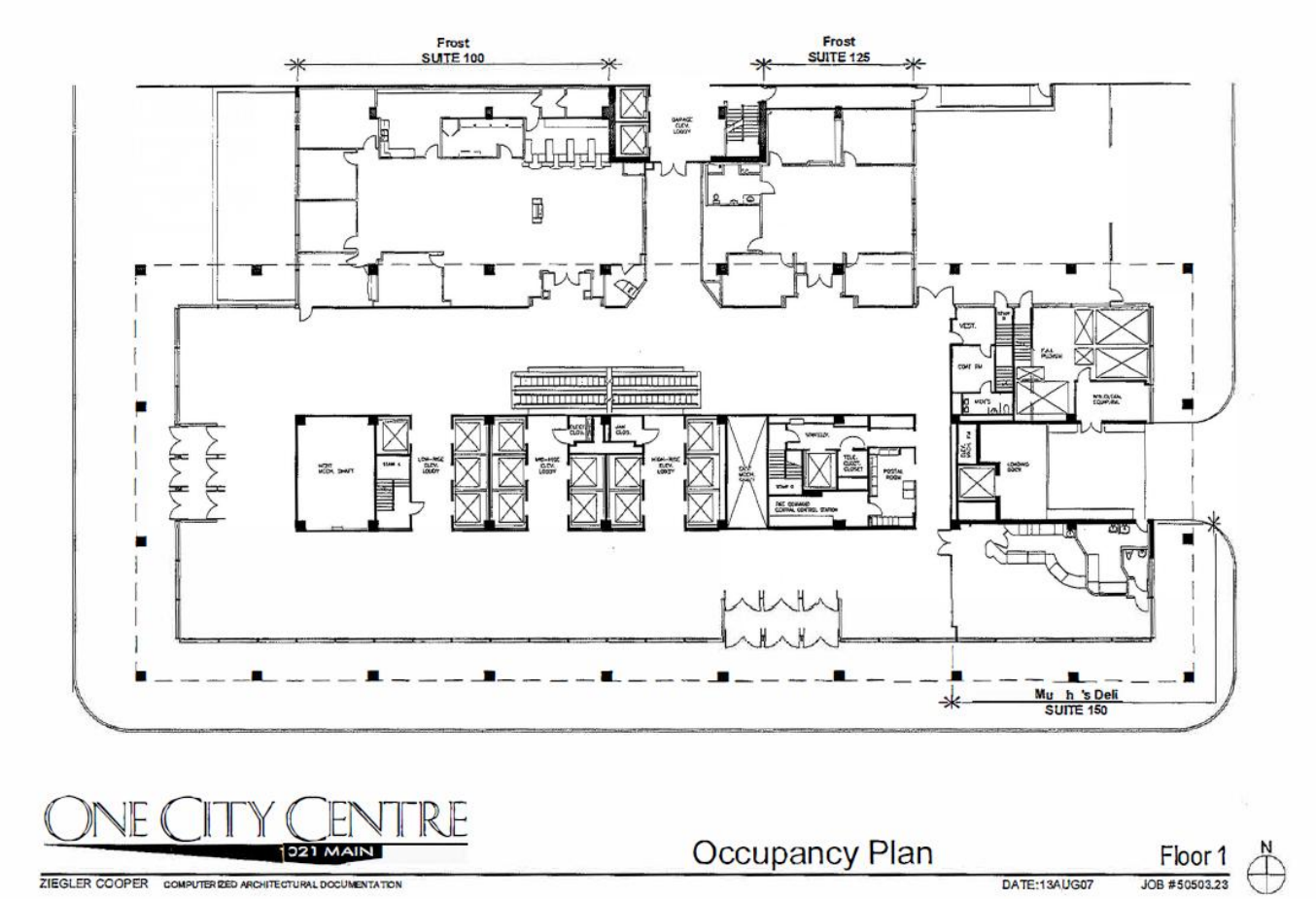


Figure 49. Plan floor 9 in tower (reflects current plan).

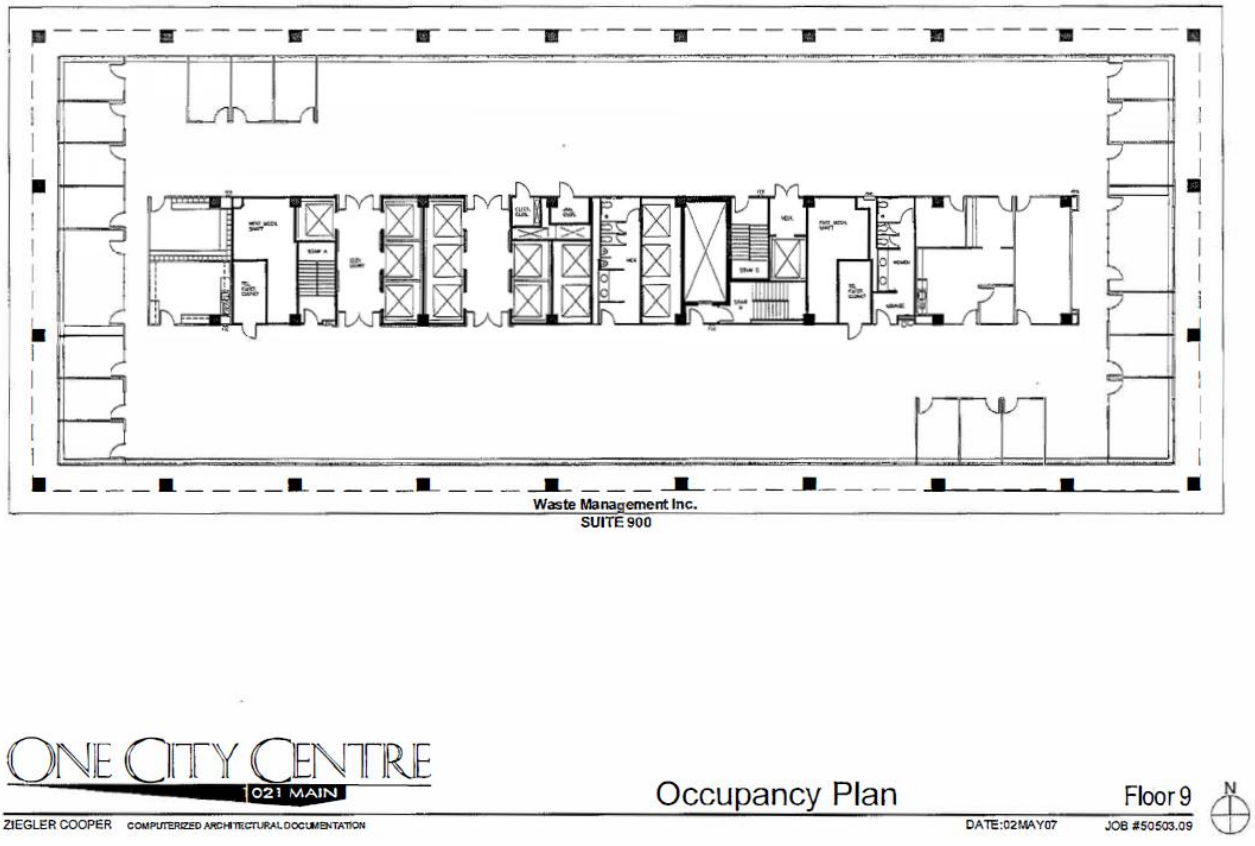
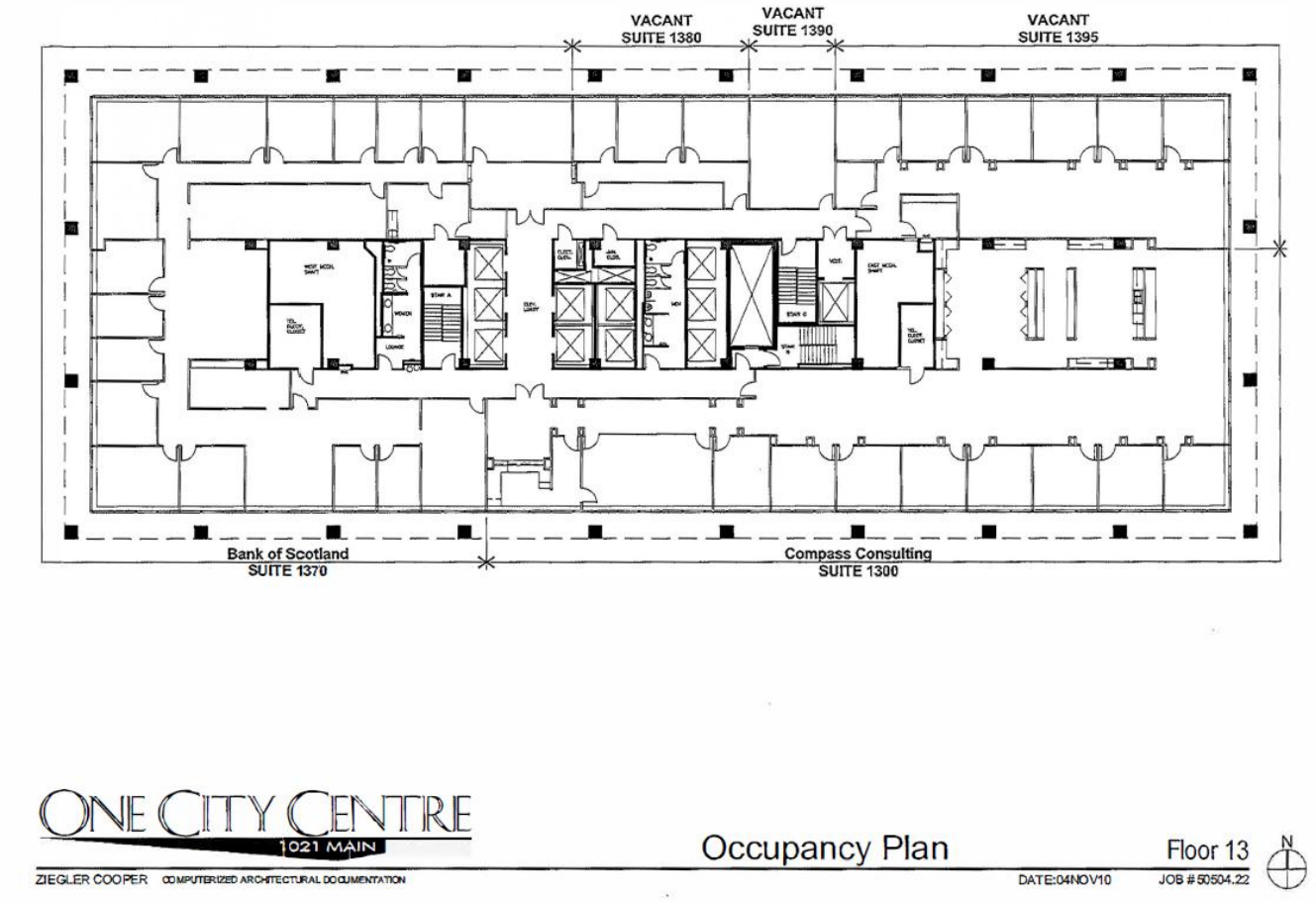


Figure 50. Plan floor 13 in tower (reflects current plan).



Photographs

Photo 1. Northwest (Main Street) and Southwest (Lamar Street) elevations, view east

Photo 2. Southwest (Lamar Street) and Southeast (Fannin Street) elevations, view north

Photo 3. Southeast (Fannin Street) and Northeast (McKinney Street) elevations, showing attached non-historic garage in foreground, view west

Photo 4. Northeast (McKinney Street) elevation, façade detail, operable side hinged windows for maintenance access visible in fourth bay from left, view south

Photo 5. Northwest (Main Street) entrance, view southeast

Photo 6. Southeast (Fannin Street) elevation, loading dock, view northwest

Photo 7. One story hyphen connecting office tower and attached non-historic garage, view west

Photo 8. Floor 1, Lamar Street entrance and storefront, view west

Photo 9. Floor 1, Main Street entrance and storefront, view north

Photo 10. Floor 1, lobby at hyphen connection, view east

Photo 11. Floor 1, basement escalators at left, low-rise elevator lobby with original core finishes, view northwest

Photo 12. Floor 1, mid-rise elevator lobby with original core finishes, view northeast

Photo 13. Floor 2, elevator lobby with original core finishes, view northeast

Photo 14. Floor 3, tenant office, view northwest

Photo 15. Floor 9, open tenant space, crossover from low-rise to mid-rise elevator lobby beyond, view southwest

Photo 16. Floor 10, perimeter tenant offices, view west

Photo 17. Floor 13, perimeter tenant offices, view east

Photo 18. Floor 14, elevator lobby, view northeast

Photo 19. Floor 19, typical corridor, view southeast

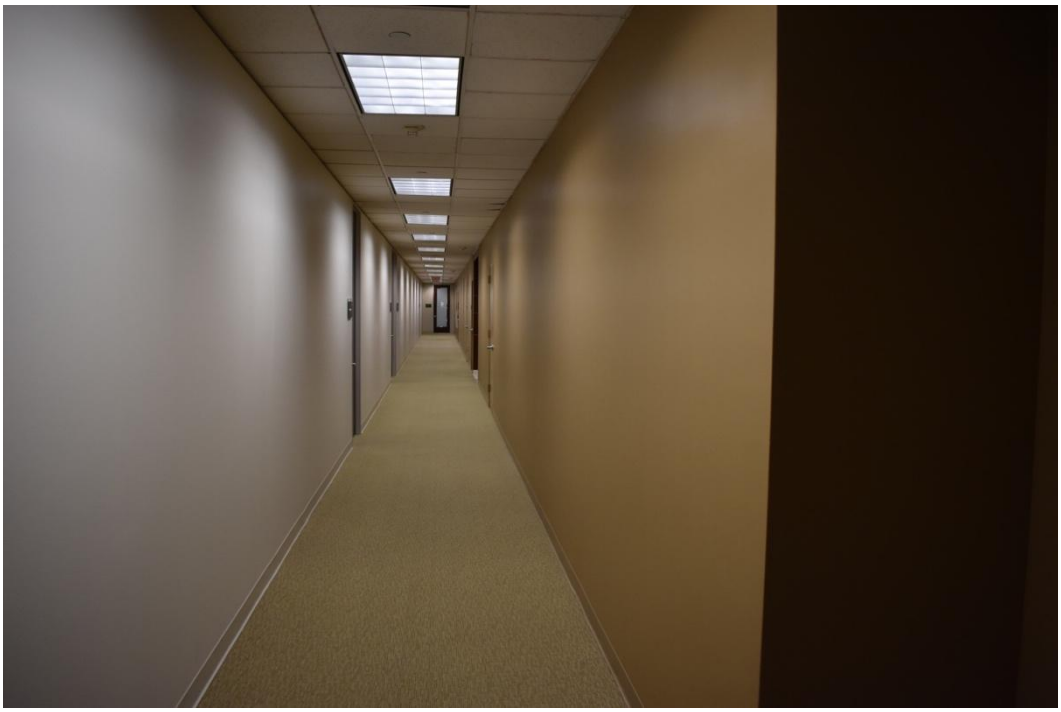


Photo 20. Floor 21, open tenant space with perimeter offices, view west

Photo 21. Floor 23, elevator lobby, view north

Photo 22. Floor 24, open tenant space with interior offices, view east

Photo 23. Floor 25, open tenant space, view east

Photo 24. Floor 25, open tenant space with partially exposed ceilings, view southwest

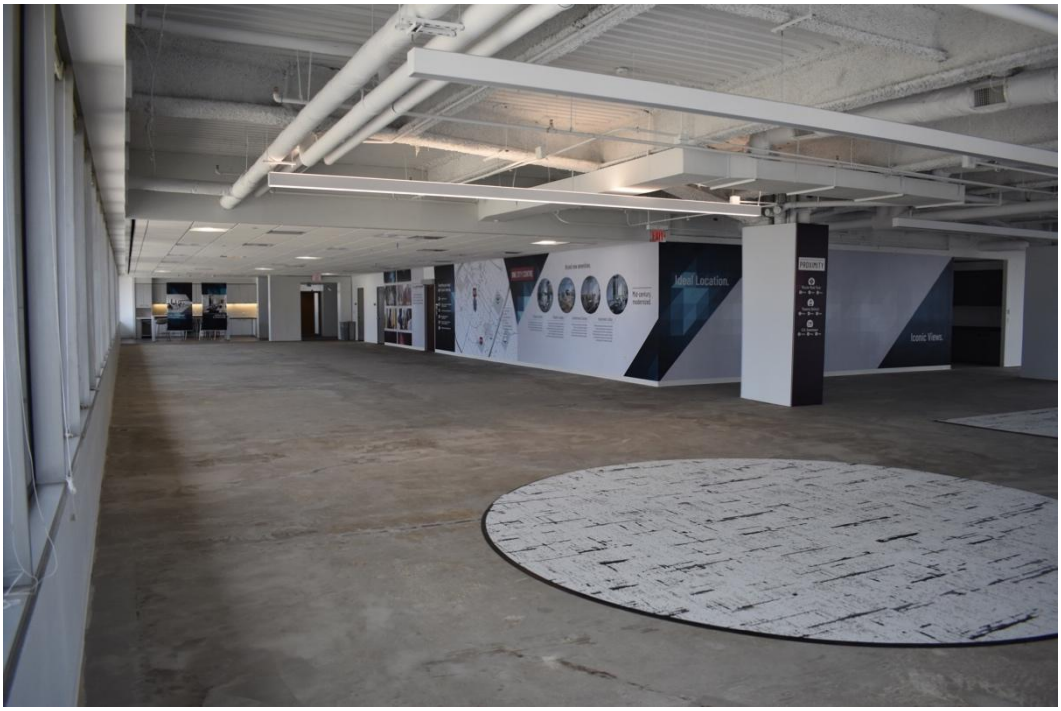


Photo 25. Floor 26, typical corridor, view northwest

Photo 26. Floor 29, social deck, view northwest

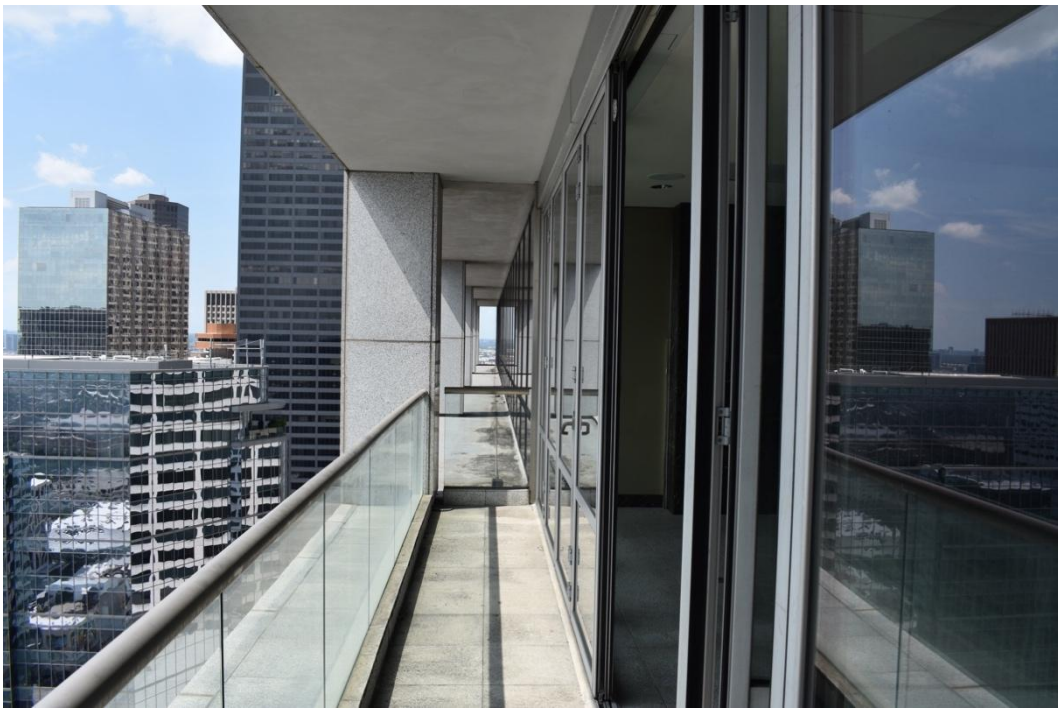


Photo 27. Floor 29, typical exterior spandrel deck and column, view east

Photo 28. Floor 29, typical operable side hinged window and latch, view north

Photo 29. Basement, lobby entrance to Lamar Tunnel, view east

Photo 30. Lamar Tunnel, Lamar Tunnel node, view north

Photo 31. Northeast (Lamar Street) and Southeast (San Jacinto Street) elevations of original parking garage at 1101 Fannin Street, view west

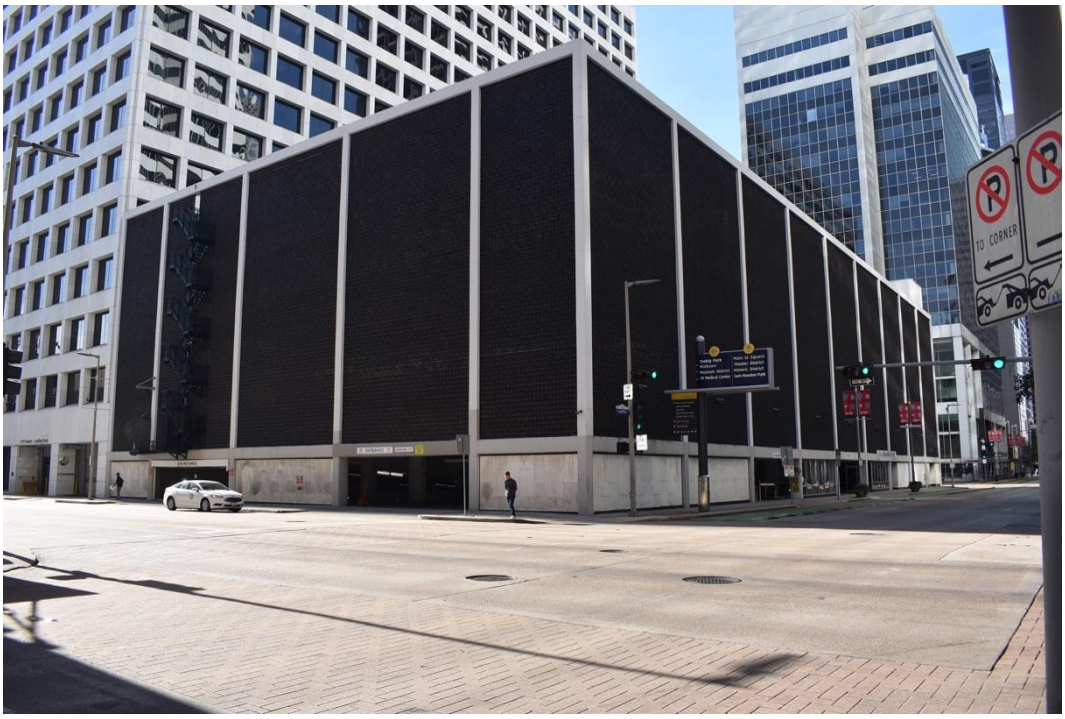


Photo 32. 1101 Fannin Street garage interior, view west

Photo 33. 1101 Fannin Street garage interior, first-floor elevator lobby with original materials

Photo 34. Photo of 1021 Main tower, view northwest

Photo 35. Roof of hyphen between office tower and non-historic garage, view southwest

Photo 36. Entrance to hyphen from office tower lobby, view east

Photo 37. Hyphen interior between office tower and non-historic garage, Main Street side, view northwest