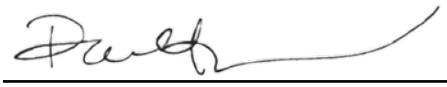
Supplementary Listing Record

NRIS Reference Number: SG100010555 Date Listed: July 26, 2024

Property Name: John Hancock Building

County: Jackson State: MO

This Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation



July 26, 2024

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:
This SLR is issued to amend the registration form and clarify the following items:

Architectural Classification (Section 7, page 2):
The nomination is hereby amended to strike/remove “International Style” from this classification; it is simply “Modern Movement.”

Narrative Description (Section 7) and Statement of Significance (Section 8):
The nomination is hereby amended to clarify that the John Hancock Building and its contributing garage with walkway are more correctly identified simply as being Modernist or of the Modern Movement—they are not examples of the International Style of architecture. The tapering members of the building’s exterior structural grid clearly and eloquently express the nature of the forces at work within it.

The MISSOURI SHPO was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

Historic name John Hancock Building

Other names/site number Plaza Centre Building; Plaza Corporate Centre

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 800 W. 47th Street | N/A | not for publication

City or town Kansas City | N/A | vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Jackson Code 095 Zip code 64112

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

___ national ___ statewide _X_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B _X_ C ___ D

Buck Ro DEPUTY SHPO 5-15-24

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ determined eligible for the National Register

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

John Hancock Building
Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

x	private
	public – Local
	public – State
	public – Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

x	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business
TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business
TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Glass
Concrete
roof: TPO over concrete
other:

X **NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

[X] **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1962

Significant Dates

1962

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill/Bunshaft, Gordon

Weidlinger, Paul (engineer)

Tanner-Linscott & Associations (assoc. architects)

Long Construction Company (general contractor)

W.E. Brown Associates (general contractor)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

__X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.36

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	39.042723 (Latitude:)	-94.596786 (Longitude:)	3	(Latitude:)	(Longitude:)
2	(Latitude:)	(Longitude:)	4	(Latitude:)	(Longitude:)

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda K. Loughlin/National Register Section Head and Elizabeth Rosin/CEO

organization Rosin Preservation LLC date December 2023, rev. February 2024

street & number 1712 Holmes St. telephone 816.472.4950

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

e-mail amanda@rosinpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5- or 15-minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **John Hancock Building**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, f-stop Photography**

Date Photographed: **October 2023**

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

01 of 20: South (primary) elevation, looking north.

02 of 20: South and east elevations of John Hancock Building and associated parking garage, looking NW.

03 of 20: West and south elevations, looking NE.

04 of 20: North and west elevations of John Hancock Building and associated parking garage, looking SE.

05 of 20: Looking SW at parking garage and John Hancock Building.

06 of 20: North elevation, looking SW from top of garage.

07 of 20: Partial north elevation and bridge, looking SE.

08 of 20: Detail of concrete structure and historic window wall, east side of north elevation, looking south.

09 of 20: Connection detail of concrete structure, first story of south elevation.

10 of 20: Planter and patio to east of building, looking NE.

11 of 20: Landscaping between the building and garage, looking WNW.

12 of 20: First floor lobby, looking N toward historic elevators.

13 of 20: Seventh floor, view NW at historic corridor configuration (typ. each floor).

14 of 20: Seventh floor, historic east stair, view N (typ. each floor).

15 of 20: Second floor, south half of floor, looking W.

16 of 20: Fourth floor, southeast office, looking SE at historic window wall (typ. each floor).

17 of 20. Basement level, air intake space below west podium area, looking west

18 of 20: Bridge interior (at fourth floor), looking NW.

19 of 20: Parking garage, fourth floor, looking NE from SW corner.

20 of 20: Parking garage, fourth floor, looking SW from east entrance.

Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Photo Key 1. Overall exteriors. Base map from Google Earth.

Photo Key 2. First floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

Photo Key 3. Second floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

Photo Key 4. Fourth floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

Photo Key 5. Seventh floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

Photo Key 6. Basement. Base plan: Sheet A-1 "Basement Plan," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

Photo Key 7. Parking Garage photos, taken on fourth floor. Base map from Google Earth.

Figure 1. Contextual map, showing the John Hancock Building within Kansas City (Source: Google).

Figure 2. Aerial site map from August 2022, showing the nominated boundary within a bold dashed line (Source: Google Earth).

Figure 3. Contextual photographs, showing the 1950 Unity Temple and parking garage to the southeast (top) and the circa 1981 office building, public park, and apartments to the south and southwest (bottom). Source: Finch, October 2023.

Figure 4. Snippet of the 1963 Sanborn, sheet 796, showing the office building and parking garage. Dashed line approximates the nominated boundary.

Figure 5. Historic south elevation, looking northwest in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 6. Historic south elevation, looking northeast in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 7. Looking north from the south sidewalk in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 8. Detail of the typical floor plan, showing the 3' square module and exterior dimensions. Source: Sheet A-3 "Second thru Seventh Floor Plan & Roof Plan," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

Figure 9. Detail of the articulated grid design. Drawings from SOM, published in "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," Progressive Architecture (September 1963): 135.

Figure 10. Inverted corner detail (northwest corner, first floor). Source: Finch, October 2023.

Figure 11. Detail of the north elevation, showing the louver, door, and walkway locations. Source: Sheet A-4 "Elevations," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

Figure 12. Plan of a typical floor in the John Hancock Building. The restroom and circulation core organize each floor, which were intended to be finished by tenants. Source: "Preview: 36," *Architecture & Engineering News* (November 1961): 84.

Figure 13. First floor, southwest corner office, looking SW. 1962. SOM Architect. Compare with Photo 16. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 14. Historic condition of first floor office area in west half of building, looking north. Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 131.

Figure 15. Examples of first floor commercial spaces, showing non-historic configurations and finishes. Top: West bank lobby, looking northeast; bottom: east lobby of doctor's office, looking south, 2024, author photos.

Figure 16. The non-historic stair between the first floor and basement, looking south, 2024, author photo.

Figure 17. Example of the non-historic finishes/configuration of basement doctor's office space, looking west, 2024, author photo.

Figure 18. Looking southwest along the north elevation of the building, showing the historic condition of the skywalk. Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," Progressive Architecture (September 1963): 133.

Figure 19. The 1952 Lever House, New York City, in 2012. SOM Architects. Source: By Beyond My Ken - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20535483

Figure 20. The 1963 BMA Tower in Kansas City, Missouri. SOM Architects. Source: Brad Finch, March 2002.

Figure 21. The 1977 City Center Square, 1100 Main Street, in 2008. SOM Architects. Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Center_Square#/media/File:City_Center_Square_Kansas_City_MO.jpg

Figure 22. Istanbul Hilton Hotel, designed by SOM, 1955. Source: Matti Blume, "Hilton Hotel Istabul,, 2019, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hilton,_Besiktas,_Istanbul_(P1100283).jpg (accessed 13 February 2024).

Figure 23. Banque Lambert, Brussels (1956-1964) in 1965. Ezra Stoller, photographer. Source: Adams, Gordon Bunshaft and SOM, 143.

Figure 24. Beinecke Rare Book Library (1959-1963), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Source: https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

Figure 25. The two John Hancock Buildings designed and built concurrently. At left is the New Orleans building (1959-1961); at right is the Kansas City building (1959-1962). Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," Progressive Architecture (September 1963): 130-133.

Figure 26. Construction photo, looking northeast (Source: Kansas City Star 10 September 1961: 84).

Figure 27. Construction photos from *Building Construction* (February 1962): 30-31.

Summary

The 1962 John Hancock Building (Hancock Building) is located at 800 West 47th Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The seven-story International Style building has a character-defining articulated exterior concrete structural frame attached to an aluminum curtain wall system. A flat roof caps the rectangular building with a flat-roofed elevator penthouse centered at the north. A historic glass handrail lines the edge of the roof. As a speculative office building, the tenants custom-designed their office suites, including finishes and configuration of space. These elements changed frequently over the years as tenant suites were refurbished. In circa 2006, the current projecting south entrance was constructed, and the entry vestibule and public lobby received new finishes. The alterations do not diminish the building's historic integrity.

The L-shaped property also includes a five-story concrete parking garage (1962) to the north of the office building, an enclosed bridge (1962, altered circa 2010) connecting the garage to the office building, and a driveway to the north of the building that provides auxiliary access to the first level of the garage. The garage and walkway constitute one contributing building to the nominated property. The bridge was historically an open structure with glass handrails matching those on the roof of the office building. Alterations in circa 2010 fully enclosed the walkway structure, updated finishes, and removed the original handrails.

Elaboration

SETTING & SITE

The John Hancock Building (Hancock Building) is located at the western edge of the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri (*Figure 1*). The L-shaped property sits prominently at the intersection of West 47th Street, Madison Avenue, and Roanoke Parkway (*Figure 2*). A circa 1963 parking garage and the circa 1950 Unity Temple sit to the southeast of the Hancock Building across West 47th Street (*Figure 3*). Due south of the building across West 47th Street sits a circa 1981 office tower and the public Cancer Survivors' Park (*Figure 3; partially visible in Photo 5*).[1] Mid-twentieth-century apartment buildings line the west side of Roanoke Parkway to the southwest of the Hancock Building, and a vacant lot sits across Madison Avenue to the west. The 1989 Hilton hotel sits to the east across Summit Street (*visible in Photos 1, 3, 4*).

[1] These improvements replaced surface parking that was in place when the Hancock Building was constructed, according to the 1963 Sanborn, sheet 796.

The rights-of-way form most of the nominated property: West 47th Street (south), Summit Street (east), and Madison Avenue (partial west) (*Figure 2*). A paved parking lot (outside the nominated boundaries) occupies the parcel to the northwest of the nominated L-shaped property (*Figures 2 & 4*).[2] A paved driveway (within the boundary) separates the west half of the Hancock Building and the south half of the parking garage from the lot. The south property line of the circa 1998 Hampton Inn to the north of the parking garage forms the east half of the north boundary of the nominated property (*visible in Photos 2 & 3*).

The grade of the property slopes down substantially from north to south and from east to west (*Photos 1, 2, 5*). A concrete sidewalk borders the nominated boundary along the east, south, and part of the west property lines (*Photos 1 to 5*). The seven-story Hancock Building sits atop a concrete-paved platform that surrounds the building on all sides described by the architects as a "podium" (*Figures 5 & 6; Photos 1 & 3*).[3] Along West 47th Street, two sets of steps lead to the podium from the south sidewalk: one set on the east side of the podium leads down from sidewalk (*Figure 7; Photos 2 & 10*) while at the center of the building, a set of wide steps leads up from the sidewalk (*Photo 1*). Alterations in circa 2006 retained the width of these centered south steps and added two marble-clad wingwalls with new handrails.[4] A precast concrete retaining wall lines the south, west, and part of the north sides of the podium; this wall is clad in non-historic granite panels (circa 2006), and a non-historic metal fence lines the top of the wall.[5] A historic precast concrete retaining wall/planter lines the entire east side of the property from West 47th Street to the north property line (*Figure 7; Photos 2, 5, 10*). A historic planting bed lines the south wall of the parking garage (*Figure 7; Photos 10 & 11*).

[2] This lot contained three apartment buildings in 1962.

[3] The 1960s architectural drawings on file with SOM note this as the podium.

[4] Building permit #CPBB-200713471, issued 21 June 2006, finalized 8 August 2007.

[5] Building permit #CPBB-200713471.

JOHN HANCOCK BUILDING (1962) – KEY CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

The Hancock Building is a reinforced concrete office building designed on a three-foot square module (*Figure 8*). The rectangular building measures 236' (east-west) by 75' (north-south) and rises seven full stories over a full basement (*Photos 1 to 6*). Thermoplastic polyolefin membrane (TPO) covers the flat roof of the building and its elevator penthouse. This penthouse occupies the center north of the roof and is minimally visible from ground level only from the north of the property, due to the grade (*Photos 1 to 5*). A historic metal and glass railing lines the perimeter of the roof.

The character-defining articulated exterior structural grid extends four-and-a-half feet from the historic aluminum curtain wall system on each of the four elevations (*Figure 9*).[6] The frame consists of precast, reinforced concrete crosses made from white quartz aggregate and white Portland cement (*Photo 8*). The white finish contrasts with the dark curtain wall behind it. Each cross weighs nine tons and measures twelve feet tall by eighteen feet wide.[7] The columns of each cross taper from sixteen inches square at the top and bottom to twenty-four inches square at the center. At ground level, the column feet splay out to three feet. The arms of the crosses (spandrel beams) remain a constant twenty-two inches square; their faces cant ¾" to the center from top and bottom (*Figure 9*). Each corner of the cross has a nine-inch radius. Inset boxes formed of black steel and aluminum accentuate the two-inch connection between the columns (*Photo 9; Figure 9*) while the spandrel beams are butt-grouted to create a continuous horizontal line along each story of each facade.[8] Dark membrane roofing covers the tops of the structure at each story between the grid and curtain wall (*Photo 8*).

The historic curtain wall behind the articulated grid follows the three-foot module. Clear-coated aluminum channels create inverted building corners at each story (*Figure 10*). Aluminum (clear coated) mullions, spaced every three feet, divide the twelve-foot-tall curtain wall system horizontally on each elevation. Each three-foot glass section includes a nine-foot fixed center pane of gray polished glass between historic Spandrelite panels at the top and bottom. These opaque

[6] This dimension is to the exterior face of the grid. There is two feet between the interior face and the curtain wall.

[7] "Preview: 36," *Architecture & Engineering News* (November 1961): 84.

[8] Aluminum alloy covers, with a black matte finish, hide the structural steel plates (see *Figure 9*).

charcoal-colored enameled glass panels were manufactured by the Pittsburg Plate Glass Company (PPG).[9]

SOUTH ELEVATION

The primary elevation faces south onto West 47th Street (*Photos 1 to 3*). The structural grid divides this symmetrical façade into thirteen bays east-west by seven bays tall. The main entrance fills the center bay on the first story. Although this is the historic entrance location, the current entry structure dates to circa 2006.[10] Black marble and gray granite clad this flat-roofed entry. A pair of non-historic glazed aluminum doors with sidelights leads into an airlock vestibule.

WEST ELEVATION

The west elevation faces, and sits above, Madison Avenue (*Photos 3 & 4*). The structural grid divides this elevation into four bays north-south by seven bays tall. A non-historic glazed anodized aluminum door with sidelights and transom fills the center of the south bay at the first story.

NORTH ELEVATION

The north elevation faces the parking garage and neighboring lot (*Photos 4 to 7*). Like the south elevation, the structural grid divides this façade into thirteen bays east-west by seven bays tall. At the first story, historic louvers replace the center glass between the Spandrelite panels of the curtain wall in the center bay (bay 7), the two west sections of bay 6, and the two east sections of bay 8 (*Figure 11*). At the same level, a pair of non-historic, glazed anodized aluminum doors fill the historic entry location in bay 6, and a pair of non-historic sliding doors replaced the historic doors in bay 8 (*Figure 11; Photo 7*). The enclosed bridge from the parking garage intersects the center of bay 6 at the fourth story.

[9] Spandrelite called out on the architectural drawings. PPG [Pittsburg Plate Glass Company], "Spandrelite," PPG Products 63, no. 4 (September-October 1955): 4-5.

[10] Building permit #CPBB-200713471.

EAST ELEVATION

The east elevation faces Summit Street, which partially hides the first story behind the retaining wall planter (*Photos 2 & 5*). The structural grid divides this elevation into four bays north-south by seven bays tall. The curtain wall does not have any doors or louvers.

INTERIOR

A historic circulation core organizes each of the seven floors in an inverted, T-shaped footprint at the center of the north wall (*Figure 12; Photo Keys 2 to 6*). Three centered elevators form the base of the T and face south (*Photo 12*). Men's and women's restrooms fill the stem of the T at the north wall with a mechanical shaft between the restrooms and elevators. Hallways on the east and west sides of the "stem" provide access to the restrooms and the flanking egress stairs (*Photos 13 & 14*). Electrical and telephone cabinets line these hallway walls (*Photo 13*). The historic stairs retain their historic metal railings (*Photo 14*). Tenant spaces wrap around this core (*Photos 15 & 16*) and a central double-loaded corridor on most floors. Concrete columns run the length of the floor, set on an interior grid of eighteen feet (east-west) by twenty-four feet (north-south) (*Photo Keys 2 to 5; Figure 12;* seen in *Photo 15*). The square columns reduce in size moving up through the building.

The south, primary entrance opens into the building's first floor lobby (*Photo Key 2; Photo 12*). Historic marble veneer covers the east wall and a portion of the west walls, but the remainder of the finishes in this space date to circa 2006. These include marble flooring and wainscoting, wood paneling on columns and elevator wall, and gypsum board ceilings. Offices with non-historic finishes and configurations flank the lobby on the west (bank) and east (doctor's office) (*Photo Key 2; Figure 15*), and a corridor to the east of the elevators connects the lobby to the north entrance (*Photo Key 2*). A non-historic stair (circa 2010) connects the first floor to the basement at the south center of the tenant space (*Photo Key 2; Figure 16*).

The tenant spaces vary in size and configuration on each of the upper floors (*Photo Keys 3 to 5*). Historic metal HVAC cabinets line the perimeter curtain walls on all floors (*Figures 13 & 14; Photos 15 & 16*). Finishes throughout the upper floors are non-historic and include dropped acoustical grids, carpet or tile flooring, painted gypsum board walls, and concrete (both unfinished and painted) floors and columns (*Photos 15 & 16*). The basement mostly contains mechanical and storage spaces for the building (*Photo Key 6; Photo 17*). Offices have been inserted into a portion of the south and east half of the basement level (*Photo Key 6; Figure 17*).

PARKING GARAGE & BRIDGE (1962) – CONTRIBUTING BUILDING

The utilitarian parking garage occupies the north half of the parcel (*Figure 2; Photos 2, 4, 5, 11; Photo Key 7*). Although constructed concurrent with the office building, the parking garage has an independent structural system.

Due to the steep grade, the northeast side of the garage is built into the hill. The reinforced concrete structure rises to a height of four stories, but due to its internal central ramp, there are ten levels of parking, with the top levels uncovered. Primary vehicular access to the structure is through two east entrances from Summit Street, the south entrance at level five and the north entrance at level eight (*Photo 5*). Secondary vehicular access occurs at the south end of the west elevation at level one (*Photo 4*). The reinforced structure has interior and perimeter columns and waffle slab decks (*Photos 18 & 19*). A switchback stair in the southwest corner of the garage provides pedestrian access between grade and the top level (*visible in Photo 18*). The stair was partially enclosed in 2010 when the walkway was altered (*Photo 18*). Non-historic aluminum storefront systems line all sides of the stair with a single door on the north end (*visible in Photo 4*). The simple utilitarian structure has a painted finish and no architectural distinction.

EAST ELEVATION

The primary entrance faces east onto Summit Street. Due to the grade, the north end of the structure is two stories tall and two stories at the south end (*Photos 2 & 5*). The perimeter columns divide the elevation into six open bays. Concrete wing walls with aluminum handrails flank the entry drives at the south and north ends of the elevation.

SOUTH ELEVATION

The four-story south elevation faces the Hancock Building (*Photo 11*). A single opening at the west end of ground level provides access to the parking garage stair, and the bridge connects to the top of the wall in the same location to provide pedestrian access to the top parking level from the fourth floor of the Hancock Building. No other openings pierce this wall.

WEST ELEVATION

The west elevation sits back from Madison Avenue and faces the adjacent parking lot (*Photo 4*). This four-story elevation appears to slant down to the north due to the ramp design. The perimeter columns divide the elevation into six mostly open bays. Non-historic aluminum-framed windows fill the openings of the south two bays except for the ground level of bay 6 where the vehicular access is located.

NORTH ELEVATION

The north wall of the garage acts as a retaining wall and is not exposed.

BRIDGE (1962, 2010)[11]

An enclosed bridge connects the garage to the office building (*Photos 6 & 7*). The bridge was historically an open structure with glass handrails matching those on the roof of the office building. Alterations in circa 2010 fully enclosed the walkway structure, updated finishes, and removed the original handrails.

The prestressed concrete structure has an independent structural system from the garage and office building. The bridge connects the fourth floor of the Hancock Building to the southwest corner of the top level of the parking garage. Constructed in 1962 as an open bridge, it was altered in 2010 to its current appearance (*Figure 18*). Clear-coated aluminum framed window walls line the east and west sides of the bridge. A flat roof covers the bridge. A pair of non-historic glazed aluminum doors within a historic opening at the south end provide access into the Hancock Building. The north end of the bridge remains open to the stairwell at the southwest corner of the garage (*Photo 18*). Finishes within the enclosed bridge include non-historic ceramic floor tile and a painted gypsum board ceiling.

INTEGRITY

The John Hancock Building retains its historic integrity. The International Style office building remains in its original location at the west edge of the Country Club Plaza. Despite its proximity to the Spanish Revival-styled shopping district, the architecture of the Hancock Building was

[11] Alterations per Building permit# CPBF-201020177, issued 5 January 2010, finalized 14 July 2010.

designed to stand apart from the established style of the area. Thus, the 1980s-1990s construction within the immediate environs of the Hancock Building does not detract from its historic setting.

The historic significance of the building is tied directly to its design, materials, and workmanship. Specifically, the exterior structural grid remains intact. Clearly communicating the historic finish of the reinforced concrete, it is one of the primary character-defining features of the building. Similarly, the historic aluminum curtain wall system remains largely unaltered with its dark glass and Spandrelite panels organized on the building's three-foot module. The dark color of the curtain wall highlights the structural frame as the designers intended. The non-historic entrance does not adversely affect the design. The projecting entrance fits within the concrete frame without overlapping component parts. The use of dark granite also highlights the lightness of the frame through its contrasting color, like with the historic curtain wall. Although non-historic, most other exterior doors fit within historic openings on secondary facades.

As a speculative office building, the design of the interior provided flexibility to future tenants. The circulation core at the north, center portion of each floor was the only constant. Office suites clustered around this core, creating double-loaded corridors of varying lengths and widths on each office floor, and tenants updated fixtures and finishes throughout the succeeding decades. The circulation core continues to organize each floor. Remaining historic interior features include metal railings within the two egress stairs and marble veneer on the walls of the main lobby. The building continues to communicate its historic association with and feelings as a mid-twentieth century office building through its retention of the structural frame and curtain wall.

Summary

The John Hancock Building (1962) at 800 West 47th Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion C in the areas of ARCHITECTURE. The building represents the "Work of a Master," as an excellent example of the collaboration between New York City-based Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and structural engineer Paul Weidlinger. Although SOM emphasized anonymity among its design teams, lead architects such as Gordon Bunshaft significantly influenced the character of the firm's portfolio in the years following World War II. SOM became one of the leading office building designers, especially after the opening of the 1952 International Style Lever House with its glass curtain wall exterior. Corporations hired SOM to produce high-end office buildings that would communicate their status as prestigious companies. The Boston-based John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company hired SOM in 1959 to design an office building for their growing agency in Kansas City, Missouri. The International Style building features a reinforced concrete articulated exterior structural frame attached to an aluminum curtain wall system. This character-defining structural system expanded upon the glass curtain wall box that became synonymous with International Style office buildings of the 1950s and 1960s. The structural system reduced the number of interior columns thus providing more leasable space. The use of exterior structural frames deemphasized the curtain wall that had become a ubiquitous feature of office buildings. Although articulated structural steel frames had been seen in the 1950s, SOM—specifically Bunshaft and Weidlinger—pioneered the articulated concrete frame with their first collaboration, Banque Lambert (1956-64), Brussels. The Kansas City John Hancock Building was one of the first buildings to use this structural system in the United States.[12] The Hancock Building is a significant example of the Bunshaft-Weidlinger collaboration, and it illustrates how the pair evolved their articulated concrete structural frame design between 1956 and 1966. Designed and constructed between 1959 and 1962, the Hancock Building's period of significance is 1962, the year it opened.

Elaboration

SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL (SOM)

Although not a founding member of the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), architect Gordon Bunshaft significantly influenced the aesthetic of the firm's brand in the three decades following World War II. To understand how Bunshaft operated within the firm, a brief introduction to SOM is necessary.

[12] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 126.

The establishment of the firm occurred in the 1930s. Founding partners Louis Skidmore and Nathaniel Owings met while both were involved with the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exhibition. They formed the company in 1936, maintaining offices in both New York and Chicago. The third partner, John Merrill, joined Skidmore and Owings in 1939. Architectural critic Henry Russell Hitchcock noted that from its earliest years SOM emphasized "anonymous production by teams of co-workers."[13] The results of this type of collaboration were "original, but trend-setting and formally brilliant solutions" to design problems, according to architectural historian Oswald Grube.[14] Despite the emphasis on design anonymity, the early 1950s witnessed the hiring of young architects, notably Gordon Bunshaft, who quickly became partners and significantly influenced the design aesthetic of the firm over the next three decades. Bunshaft biographers like Nicholas Adams note that, contrary to SOM's policy of anonymity, Bunshaft intentionally took credit for his work in writing, in media, and in books.

The German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the International Style of design greatly inspired the first generation of SOM partners, including Bunshaft. Mies, and thus SOM, championed architecture that architectural historian Vincent Scully described as "simplified, pure, clean, generalized, reasonable, abstract."[15] As historians like Christopher Woodward explained, SOM buildings exemplified the American interpretation of the International Style, which included an understanding of architecture as volume rather than mass; a design ordered by regularity rather than axial symmetry; and the absence of "arbitrarily applied decoration."[16] SOM, especially through the leadership of Gordon Bunshaft, redefined the American office tower as a distinct vertical slab, often enhanced by a secondary, low horizontal slab, both with a transparent outer skin that emphasized the building's structural elements. Historian Grube described the architects' adaptation of this basic formula as "undoctrinaire, but formally brilliant and…well-adapted to each client's functional requirements."[17] The design for Lever House in 1952, led by Gordon Bunshaft, catapulted the firm to the forefront of American architecture (*Figure 19*). The twenty-four-story

[13] Henry Russell Hitchcock, Introduction to *Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1950-1962*, by Ernst Danz (New York: Frederick Praeger, Publisher, 1963), 9.

[14] Oswald W. Grube, "Skidmore, Owings & Merrill," in *Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture*, gen. ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 307.

[15] Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 184.

[16] Christopher Woodward, *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill*, Library of Contemporary Architects (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 12.

[17] Grube, "Skidmore, Owings & Merrill," 306.

rectangular slab has a deep site setback to avoid the zoning requirements that buildings be stepped. A curtain wall of heat-absorbing glass clads the structural members of the tower.[18] The glass curtain wall became a staple of SOM's office designs over the next few decades.

Cranston Jones, a contemporary architecture editor of *Time* magazine, described SOM as "pre-eminently the Big Firm for Big Business, one that can deliver the whole package that architecture has become today."[19] That complete package might include architecture, engineering, interior design, landscaping, and cost estimating. Among the many notable SOM commissions are the town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, a community of 75,000 designed for the employees of the Manhattan project (early 1940s); the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs (1963); and the John Hancock Building (1969) and the Sears Tower (1973) in Chicago.

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, COMPARISONS

The 1962 John Hancock Building was the first of three buildings in Kansas City, Missouri, to highlight an exterior structural grid. Incidentally, all three were designed by SOM; although, Bunshaft only designed one. The nineteen-story BMA Tower at 700 Karnes Boulevard opened in 1963 (*Figure 20*).[20] The thirty-story City Center Square at 1100 Main Street opened in 1977 (*Figure 21*).[21] Both the Hancock Building and the BMA Tower feature exterior articulated structural frames attached to recessed curtain walls that enclose the building envelope. Bruce Graham, principal in charge of design in the firm's Chicago office, led the design of the BMA tower. Rather than concrete, the exterior framework at BMA is welded steel clad in white marble panels.[22] The relatively thin structural members of the exterior frameworks at both the Hancock Building and the BMA Tower provide a visual lightness, which is further emphasized by the dark curtain walls behind them. The structural similarity of the two buildings highlights the uniformity

[18] Hasan-Uddin Khan, *International Style: Modernist Architecture from 1925 to 1965* (New York, et al.: Taschen, 2001), 130.

[19] As quoted in William Graves, "'S.O.M.' is a Titan in U.S. Architecture," *The Kansas City Star* (11 February 1962): 10F.

[20] The BMA Tower was listed in the National Register in 2002 (NRIS #02000886) under Criterion C for its architectural style. See Elizabeth Rosin, "BMA Tower [Kansas City, Missouri]," National Register nomination (2002).

[21] George Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990*, rev. ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 167.

[22] The building was reclad with white neoparium (a synthetic glass product) in 1986 after the fasteners holding the marble panels failed.

of design across the entire SOM firm that historian Grube notes. The execution of the design differed with the principals in charge.

At City Center Square, built over a decade later, the expressed concrete structure becomes the building envelope with slightly recessed slits of glazing uniformly piercing the walls. Although the concrete framework is also light colored, the heaviness of the Late Modern structure overwhelms the building form, contrasting with the lightness of the structures seen at the Hancock Building and BMA Tower.

A TRUE COLLABORATION: GORDON BUNSHAFT & PAUL WEIDLINGER

Architect Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990) significantly shaped the work of SOM in the decades following World War II.[23] The architectural historian Stanford Anderson argued in 1988 that, contrary to SOM's preference of design anonymity, "much of international architectural production in these decades of feverish development cannot be understood without attention to Bunshaft."[24] Born in Buffalo, New York, Bunshaft studied architecture at MIT then traveled around Europe in 1935 before joining the New York SOM office in 1937. After a leave-of-absence during World War II, Bunshaft returned in 1947 and quickly rose to partner at SOM. He gained national prominence with the 1952 opening of Lever House (*Figure 19*), for which he was the partner in charge of design. With this position, Bunshaft directed the aesthetic of the firm, making decisions on designs and materials. The founding partners entrusted Bunshaft with defining the design aesthetic of the firm. Bunshaft held that position solely until 1960 when Bruce Graham was promoted to the same position in the Chicago office. Despite the policy of anonymity, the position that Bunshaft (and later Graham) held led to their attributions as designers of SOM's buildings. Bunshaft took that further by promoting himself, sometimes to the annoyance of his bosses. Bunshaft remained at SOM, in the New York office, until his retirement in 1979.[25]

Biographer Nicholas Adams notes that Bunshaft bristled at the SOM policy of not recognizing individual designers.[26] The firm advertised itself as one that designed by committee, purposefully not releasing the names of project designers. This philosophy promoted the SOM brand as an

[23] Khan, *International Style*, 130.

[24] As quoted in Khan, *International Style*, 130.

[25] Khan, *International Style*, 130; Nicholas Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction," *SOM Journal 9* (14 January 2015): n.p.

[26] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction."

architectural reflection of the corporate culture for whom they worked.[27] Adams quotes a blunt Bunshaft interviewed in a 1959 *Newsweek* magazine article, "There always has to be one dominant force, someone who comes up with the original design. … I'm in charge of design. The other partners also participate in designing, but by criticism."[28] These comments did not sit well with "the other partners." However, even Bunshaft's senior designer, Roger Radford, acknowledged that "really all the buildings of any consequence had his stamp."[29] Bunshaft had a reputation for being a strong leader and designer, but one who rarely acknowledged the contributions of his team members.

However, Bunshaft met his equal in structural engineer Paul Weidlinger, a team member Bunshaft had to acknowledge.[30] Unlike SOM's Chicago office, who employed structural engineers, the New York office did not, choosing to hire outside firms. Born in Budapest, Paul Weidlinger (1914-1999) immigrated to the United States in 1943.[31] He attended schools in what is now the Czech Republic and Switzerland but left Europe at the start of World War II to teach in Bolivia. In 1948, he started his own New York-based consulting business and quickly gained the attention of the era's most well-known architects, including Bunshaft.[32] According to Mathys Levy, who worked closely with Weidlinger, the engineer enjoyed complicated design problems because, as he said, "if a building is good and appropriate for its purpose, then I like to get involved."[33] Weidlinger promoted the use of reinforced concrete, which he believed "offered imaginative possibilities that could go beyond duplicating designs of riveted steel."[34] His reputation and his enthusiasm for concrete attracted Bunshaft.

After establishing the precedent of the steel-and-glass rectangular office building, Bunshaft began to more fully explore the possibilities of concrete. Nathaniel Owings hinted at SOM's shift in a January 1958 interview, saying "This firm is not stuck with the 'stainless-steel standard,' as our

[27] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction."

[28] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction."

[29] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction."

[30] Nicholas Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 125.

[31] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 125.

[32] Matthys P. Levy, "Paul Weidlinger," *National Academy of Engineering: Memorial Tributes*, Vol. 12 (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2008), 329-330.

[33] Levy, "Paul Weidlinger," 330.

[34] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 125.

competition calls it. We're interested in plasticity, and we're exploring every avenue to get it."[35] The use of concrete was practical in the wake of steel shortages caused by the Korean War (1950-1953) and what Adams notes as "curtain wall fatigue."[36] Owings was also inspired by the use of concrete seen in works by Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, and Marcel Breuer.[37] Bunshaft and SOM were not inexperienced in concrete structures, though. The New York Infirmary (1954) relied on a concrete skeletal system infilled with brick, and the exterior of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel (1955) remained exposed concrete due to the inexperience of local builders with steel construction (*Figure 22*).[38]

Bunshaft and Weidlinger collaborated on eleven buildings, including the John Hancock Building in Kansas City, that relied on a concrete structural system (*Table 1*). According to Bunshaft biographer Adams, the pair met each other as equals, creating designs that celebrated the structure and material. Adams notes that Weidlinger was unafraid of Bunshaft's strong opinions, meeting his stubbornness head-on.[39] Adams calls Weidlinger's contributions to Bunshaft designs "both practical (how to do something) and inspirational (what could be done)." [40] Leon Moed, who worked closely under Bunshaft in the late 1960s, told biographer Adams that in Weidlinger, Bunshaft found a real collaborator, something Adams notes, "the decisive Bunshaft had never needed before."[41] Weidlinger provided the structural discipline to Bunshaft's modern buildings. In his 2008 memorial tribute to Weidlinger, Mathys Levy recalled that the two "would discuss, argue, and negotiate the subtleties of particular designs, each pushing the other to the limit."[42] He shares the following anecdote about their first collaboration, the Banque Lambert in Brussels, Belgium (*Figure 23*):

> Gordon would take a fat pencil in hand, saying, "Now, don't lose your lunch," as he sketched a perfectly proportioned structure. "The column is too slender," Paul

[35] Adams, "Gordon Bunshaft: What Convinces is Conviction."

[36] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 124.

[37] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 124.

[38] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 124.

[39] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 125.

[40] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 125.

[41] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 126.

[42] Levy, "Paul Weidlinger," 330; Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 144.

would say, grab his own pencil, and overwrite Bunshaft's sketch, saying, "The beam could be shaped like this."[43]

Adams calls Banque Lambert one of the pair's masterpieces (*Figure 23*).[44] The rectangular, reinforced concrete building stands at a prominent corner in Brussels. Bunshaft and Weidlinger organized the nine-story mass into three vertical parts with base, shaft, and cornice. The one-story base houses the primary public banking rooms within a recessed glass curtain wall enclosure. Tapered concrete perimeter columns on the first story support the upper stories of the building. At Banque Lambert, a gridded exoskeleton of reinforced concrete crosses wraps the curtain wall of the main body of the building. These crosses would later be adapted for the Kansas City John Hancock Building. At Banque Lambert, the upper story is recessed from the main body of the building and a flat roof with deep overhang caps the building. Although the bank commissioned Bunshaft in 1956, the design was not finalized until 1959. It opened in 1964.[45]

Bunshaft considered the Beinecke Rare Book Library (*Figure 24*) at Yale University one of his best projects with Weidlinger. It is also one of SOM's most well-known buildings from the era.[46] The six-story building, which was commissioned in 1959, repeats the base and body seen at Banque Lambert. Squat tapered concrete columns at the rectangular building's four corners support the main mass of the building. The first story's dark glass curtain wall is substantially recessed, allowing the upper mass to visually float. A reinforced concrete grid, also with tapered structural members, wraps the box. Instead of a glass curtain wall, the grid frames individual panels of translucent marble to protect the building's invaluable contents from sunlight. The Beinecke Library was completed in 1963.

The pair collaborated on only eleven commissions between 1956 and 1966. By the end of the 1960s, Bunshaft—and therefore SOM—began to shift toward other materials, which may be the reason the two did not continue collaborating after the shift away from reinforced concrete.

[43] Levy, "Paul Weidlinger," 330.

[44] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 142.

[45] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 144.

[46] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 147.

Table 1. Collaborations by Gordon Bunshaft & Paul Weidlinger[47]			
Name of Building	Location	Years	Status
Banque Lambert	Brussels, Belgium	1956-64	Extant
John Hancock Building	New Orleans	1959-61	NRHP 2017
John Hancock Building	Kansas City	1959-62	Nominated
Beinecke Rare Book Library	New Haven, CT	1959-63	Extant
H.J. Heinz Administrative Center	Hayes Park, Middlesex, England	1959-65	Grade II* NHLE, 1995[48]
Emhart Manufacturing Company	*Bloomfield, CT*	*1960-62*	*Demo*
IBM Headquarters	Armonk, NY	1960-64	Extant
American Republic Life Building	Des Moines	1962-65	NRHP 2015
Great Southern Life Building	*Houston*	*1962-65*	*Demo*
Lincoln Center Library & Museum for the Performing Arts	New York City	1962-65	Extant
American Can Company	Greenwich, CT	1966-70	Extant

JOHN HANCOCK BUILDING – KANSAS CITY

The Banque Lambert and the Beinecke Rare Book Library illustrate Bunshaft and Weidlinger's signature design strategy. As Adams writes, they worked "in paired buildings, refining alternatives."[49] The design team adopted this same process for the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company, who hired SOM in 1959 to create new buildings for their agencies in New Orleans and Kansas City (*Figure 25*). The John Hancock company wanted high-style buildings that were also economical.[50] The buildings share the programmatic requirement that the first floors house offices for the agency and the six upper floors contain rentable commercial space.[51] Both also feature exterior structural grids that shelter curtain walls. The trade magazines *Architectural Record* and *Progressive Architecture* featured the two buildings together in 1961 and 1963,

[47] Compiled by authors and based on Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 125.

[48] The two buildings associated with this administrative center and former laboratory were listed on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) in 1995. The three-tiered list includes Grade I (highest), Grade II*, and Grade II tiers. According to Historic England, "Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*."

[49] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 129.

[50] "Preview: 36," 83.

[51] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126.

respectively, and Adams discusses both concurrently in his 2019 book on Gordon Bunshaft.[52] The specific design solutions differed based on site conditions and on the way in which Bunshaft and Weidlinger treated the exterior concrete structural system.[53] Although executed differently, the pair of Hancock buildings with their exterior articulated concrete grids were two of the first buildings in the United States to use this structural system and the first two designed by Bunshaft and Weidlinger.[54] The following narrative focuses on the Kansas City building in order to illuminate how Bunshaft and Weidlinger refined the alternative. In this case, the Kansas City building offers an alternative version of the New Orleans building.[55]

DESIGNING FOR THE JOHN HANCOCK INSURANCE COMPANY

Prior to 1962, the Boston-based John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company maintained office suites in multiple locations throughout the Kansas City area. The company announced plans for a new seven-story office building in a June 1960 issue of *The Kansas City Star*. The $3 million investment would allow the company to consolidate its workforce in a single location.[56] The president of the insurance company, Byron K. Elliott, explained that "the decision to build in Kansas City is based on rapid expansion of the insurance firm's operations here in recent years, and the company's 'continuing confidence in the future growth of the city as a key market place of the Missouri Valley.'"[57] Between 1950 and 1960, John Hancock's insurance coverage in Kansas and Missouri grew from $261 million to $571 million, and investments in the area more than doubled to over $168 million.[58]

[52] "Office Buildings for John Hancock," *Architectural Record* (August 1961): 12; "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126-135.

[53] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126.

[54] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126. The Hartford Building (1959-1961) in Chicago shares a similar articulated concrete structural system. Bruce Graham led the design of this building from the Chicago office. When the design process began in 1958, Bunshaft was still the only principal in charge of design for the company, echoing Roger Radford's observation that Bunshaft was involved in the design development.

[55] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 129.

[56] Fred Fitzsimmons, "Big Office Unit for Plaza Site," *Kansas City Star* (19 June 1960): 1A. This investment is equal to approximately $31 million in 2023.

[57] Fitzsimmons, "Big Office Unit for Plaza Site," 11A.

[58] Fitzsimmons, "Big Office Unit for Plaza Site," 11A.

The previous October, the company had announced plans to build a new seven-story office building in New Orleans.[59] Whereas the New Orleans building replaced a 1908 Carnegie library on the site, the L-shaped parcel purchased by the company in Kansas City's Country Club Plaza required only the removal of a gas station.[60] The George J. Shaw Hauling Company received a permit in late August 1960 to remove the station, and the Long Construction Company began excavating the site the same day. Demolition and excavation were complete two months later.[61]

Construction on the Kansas City building began soon after the site was cleared and excavated. The Long Construction Company received a permit to build the seven-story office building in late November 1960.[62] Notes on the permit indicate that the work was underway by January 30, 1961. Work on the site and the building continued smoothly throughout the following months. Site alterations, paving, and retaining walls were complete in late August 1961.[63]

A photo in an early September 1961 issue of the *Kansas City Star* shows the basement, first floor, and second floor had been completed and the first story of the grid was in process of installation (*Figure 26*).[64] The precast nature of the grid provided for simple and quick construction. After one story was erected, the floor slab was then poured in place and the process repeated.[65] The erection of the frame required a new approach, as there was no known precedent in the United States for this type of structure.[66] The alignment of the individual components and the holding of the alignment until the floor slabs cured proved to be the most complicated part of the process because there were no rigid connections between components. Furniture clamps held the butt jointed spandrel beams together.[67] Floor slabs were poured in three sections beginning with the center in

[59] Beth Jacob, "John Hancock Building [New Orleans, LA]," National Register nomination (2016): 8.

[60] Jacob, "John Hancock Building," 8; Fitzsimmons, "Big Office Unit for Plaza Site," 11A.

[61] Permit #64012A to "Wreck 1 sty brick service station," issued to George J. Shaw Hauling Company on 22 August 1960, and the work was approved 19 October 1960. Permit #64013A for "General excavation" issued to Long Construction Company on 22 August 1960; the work was approved on 20 October 1960.

[62] Permit #19221 issued to Long Construction Company on 22 November 1960. Skidmore, Ownings & Merrill is listed on the permit as the architect.

[63] Permit #64934A issued to Long Construction Company on 22 November 1960; work approved 20 August 1961 according to notations on the permit.

[64] "Hancock Building Work Progresses," *Kansas City Star* (10 September 1961): 6D.

[65] "Preview: 36," 85.

[66] "Exposed Structural System Surrounds a Recessed Curtain Wall," *Building Construction* (February 1962): 30.

[67] "Exposed Structural System…," 30.

order for work on the elevator core to move along concurrent with the structural grid erection.[68] By the following January, the sixth story was taking shape.[69] The structure reached its full height by mid-April 1962 and was ready for occupants in July.[70]

The dedication of the building took place Thursday, September 20. Attending the ceremony were Byron K. Elliott, president of the John Hancock company, E. Taylor Chewning, a Hancock director, and John L. McRea, USN, ret., a Hancock vice-president, and Kansas City mayor H. Roe Bartle.[71] Building officials signed off on the building's completion in October 1962.[72]

THE ARTICULATED EXTERIOR CONCRETE STRUCTURAL GRID

At both New Orleans and Kansas City, the structural grid stood proud of the curtain walled building envelope, a design feature that *Progressive Architecture* called a "20th-Century development of major significance."[73] SOM saw the separation of the curtain wall from the structural frame as an aesthetic advantage, a departure from the box and thus a relief of curtain wall fatigue.[74] The articulated structural grid built upon the curtain wall of the 1950s, exemplifying the significant development *Progressive Architecture* noted.

The *Kansas City Star* reported in September 1962 that the distinctive structural members seen at the Hancock Building were the first of their kind to be seen in the Midwest.[75] Composed of 272

[68] "Exposed Structural System…," 30.

[69] Photograph in *Kansas City Star* (7 January 1962): 153.

[70] "Harris, Upham to Have a Plaza Unit," *Kansas City Star* (15 April 1962): 11E; "Unique John Hancock Building Is Set," *Kansas City Star* (1 July 1962): 100. The building was half leased by July 1962.

[71] "Debut for Hancock Space," *Kansas City Star* (16 September 1962): 9D.

[72] Notations on permit #19221.

[73] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 126.

[74] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 130. The use of the structural grid on a curtain wall system gives a nod to the Late Modern era of the 1970s that embraced repetition, exaggeration, and paradox (See Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), 285-292. Whereas the curtain walls of Late Modern office do not need to adhere to the floor-to-floor ratios of the interior, International Style curtain walls adhere to the structural rationale by overtly showing the floor-to-floor ratios. The Hancock Building remains an International Style office building, with its classic curtain wall system; the exterior structural grid complements the vertical dimensions of the structure, as each "box" of the grid communicates the general floor-to-floor height of each story.

[75] "Hancock Building Work Progresses," 6D.

precast structural units, the system includes five different precast concrete shapes: thirty-eight bases, one hundred eighty cross-shaped floor units (*Figure 27*), sixteen corner floor units, thirty-four roof units, and four corner roof units. The vertical structural members taper from sixteen to twenty-four inches square while the horizontal members remain a constant twenty-two inches in width. Together these structural units form six spandrel beams, thirty-four columns, and a roof line.[76] While the spandrel beams connect at butt joints, the tapered columns connect at carefully detailed pin joints that also resist lateral forces (*Figure 9*).[77]

The structural system provides the building with both visual interest and essential support. The tapered columns add aesthetic interest to the frame. However, Weidlinger designed the tapers "to correspond to the variation in bending moment from zero at the pin connection to maximum at the intersection of the cruciform unit," as reported by *Progressive Architecture*.[78] In other words, the tapers efficiently and aesthetically maximize the structural integrity of the frame. The inset connections between the tapered columns relieve the typical rectilinear appearance of office buildings.[79] Even the selected combination of quartz aggregate, quartz fines, sand, and cement that composed the concrete was chosen both for aesthetics and for structural stability.[80] To achieve the desired quality control, thirty test mixes preceded the final zero-slump formula required to reach the appropriate strength and finish.[81] The forms cured for four days in a climate-controlled Kansas City cave before being immersed in an acid bath to give the etched finish that revealed the sparkling quartz aggregate. The forms then cured another three days before being shipped to the site for installation.[82] Adams concludes the following about the grid at the Kansas City building:

> The play between surface and depth brought both texture and structure in individual concrete units, onto which light and shade added rippling, almost aqueous, effects. This was not merely a textural surface (for which all that was needed was an

[76] "Exposed Structural System…," 26.

[77] "Preview: 36," 84.

[78] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 127.

[79] "Exposed Structural System Surrounds a Recessed Curtain Wall," *Building Construction* (February 1962): 28.

[80] "Preview: 36," 85. The article notes that each cubic yard of concrete contains 658 pounds of white Portland cement, 2,050 pounds of Colorado milky white quartz, 1000 pounds of white silica sand, 29.75 gallons of water, and an admixture for workability.

[81] "Exposed Structural System…," 28.

[82] "Preview: 36," 85.

aggregate addition), but a structural concept. The corners are linking cruciforms that provide an elastic vertical at the edge.[83]

Writing in 1962, the trade magazine *Building Construction* praised the Hancock Building, saying the exposed structural grid "is unquestionably the outstanding feature" of the new building.[84] Although the grid is the most obvious component, the structural system also included interior concrete columns, load-bearing walls within the north-central circulation core, and integral floor slabs.[85] Because the John Hancock agency only occupied half of the first floor, the building program needed flexibility to accommodate a wide range of office users and sizes.[86] The exterior grid reduced the number of interior columns to twenty-four pairs per floor. The number and spacing of columns correspond to an organizing three-foot module developed by Bunshaft for this building (*Figures 8 & 12*). This module provided the greatest amount of flexibility in floor plan layout for tenants.[87] The module is repeated on the exterior through the spacing of the curtain wall mullions (*Photos 1, 6, 8*).[88]

The floor plates integrate into the structural system of the building. These concrete slabs cantilever approximately four-and-a-half feet from the curtain wall. This cantilever serves as a sunshade to reduce cooling costs in summer and as a walkway for window washers. The time and cost to erect the curtain wall between floor slabs was less than a wall system at the building edge.[89] The floor slabs were poured directly into the frame's spandrels, eliminating the need for bolts or other rigid connections.[90] As integrated members, the floor plates also provide lateral bracing to the building structure.

When comparing the two Hancock buildings, Adams called the Kansas City alternative "the cleaner if more reductive solution" of Bunshaft and Weidlinger's paired design concept. At New Orleans, the building grid does not extend to the base as it does in Kansas City. Like Banque

[83] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 130.

[84] "Exposed Structural System Surrounds a Recessed Curtain Wall," *Building Construction* (February 1962): 26.

[85] "Preview: 36," 84.

[86] "Preview: 36," 83.

[87] "Preview: 36," 83-84. See Photo Key Plans 2 to 5 to see how the current tenant layout corresponds with this.

[88] "Preview: 36," 84.

[89] "Exposed Structural System…," 29.

[90] "Exposed Structural System Surrounds a Recessed Curtain Wall," *Building Construction* (February 1962): 27.

Lambert and Beinecke Library, one story columns support the upper floors.[91] The grid, which covers the upper six stories, consists of twelve-foot column panels.[92] The bolted panel columns measure eight inches wide by thirty-six inches deep.[93] The horizontal sunshades are five inches high by thirty-six inches deep.[94] The spandrel beams received a veneer of precast panels with the quartz aggregate used in the other members.[95] This grid provides a more dominant visual effect than the cruciform grid in Kansas City.[96]

CONCLUSION

The John Hancock Building represents one of the few physical results of the collaboration between Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger. The articulated exterior concrete grid is both structural and sculptural. Instead of hiding the building structure behind curtain walls, the designers celebrated the concrete structural system. Weidlinger designed logical structural systems that complemented Bunshaft's architectural creativity. The results were buildings that broke away from the curtain walls that SOM (and Bunshaft) had initially championed with the Lever House. The curtain wall was an economical construction system, and it continued to be used widely throughout the country. The Hancock Building's articulated exterior structural grid deemphasizes the curtain wall, which became a secondary—though important—feature of the building envelope. The Hancock Building is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its association with the team of Gordon Bunshaft and Paul Weidlinger (Work of a Master).

[91] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 128.

[92] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 129.

[93] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 127.

[94] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 127.

[95] "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," 128.

[96] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 129.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated 1.36-acre parcel is described by the Jackson County, Missouri Assessor as follows: Bunker Hill subdivision, Block 16, all of lots 20-29 & vacated alley & lots 30 & 31 & E1/2 of vacated alley lying west of and adjacent & lots 32-36 (excluding the west 3.64'). The Hancock Building, enclosed bridge, and driveway occupy lots 20-29. The parking garage occupies lots 30-36.

The L-shaped parcel is bounded by the rights-of-way of Summit Street (east), West 47th Street (south), and Madison Street (west). The adjacent parking lot to the north of the John Hancock Building forms the west half of the north boundary and north portion of the west boundary. The adjacent property to the north of the parking garage forms the east half of the north boundary.

Sidewalks on the east, south, and west are outside the boundary and within the public rights-of-way.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated boundary includes all of the property historically and currently associated with the John Hancock Building.

Photo Key 1. Overall exteriors. Base map from Google Earth.

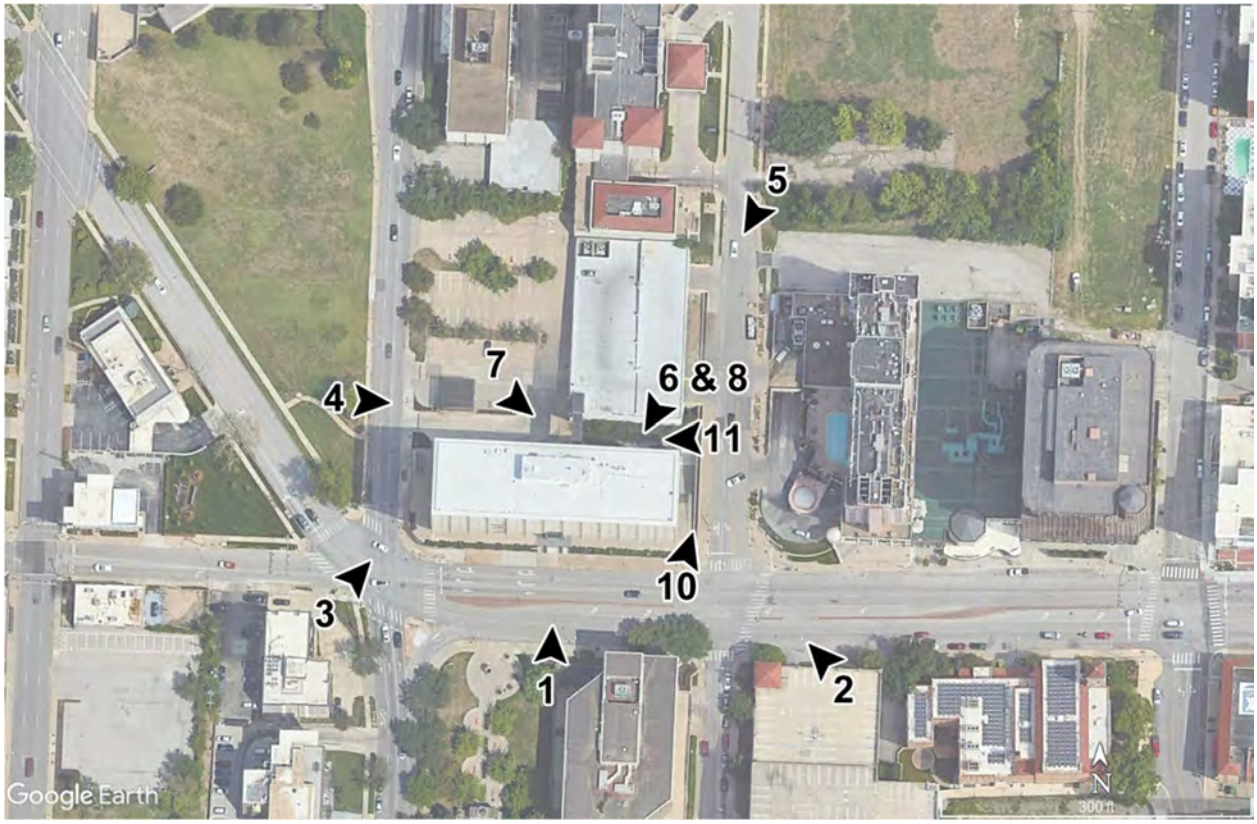


Photo Key 2. First floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale. Black numbers correspond to associated photos; red numbers correspond to figures.

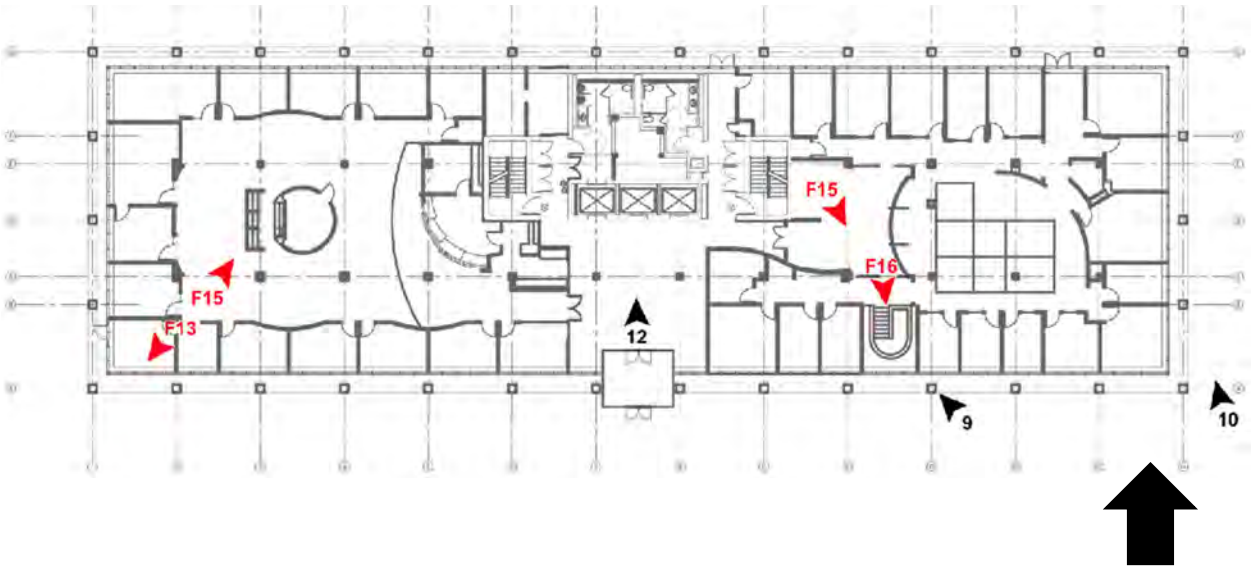


Photo Key 3. Second floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

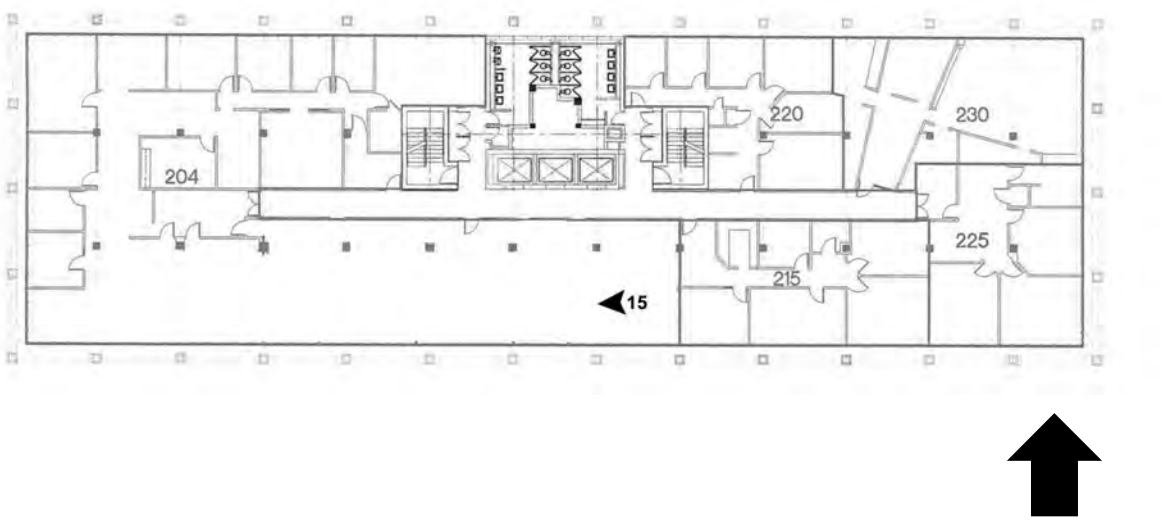


Photo Key 4. Fourth floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

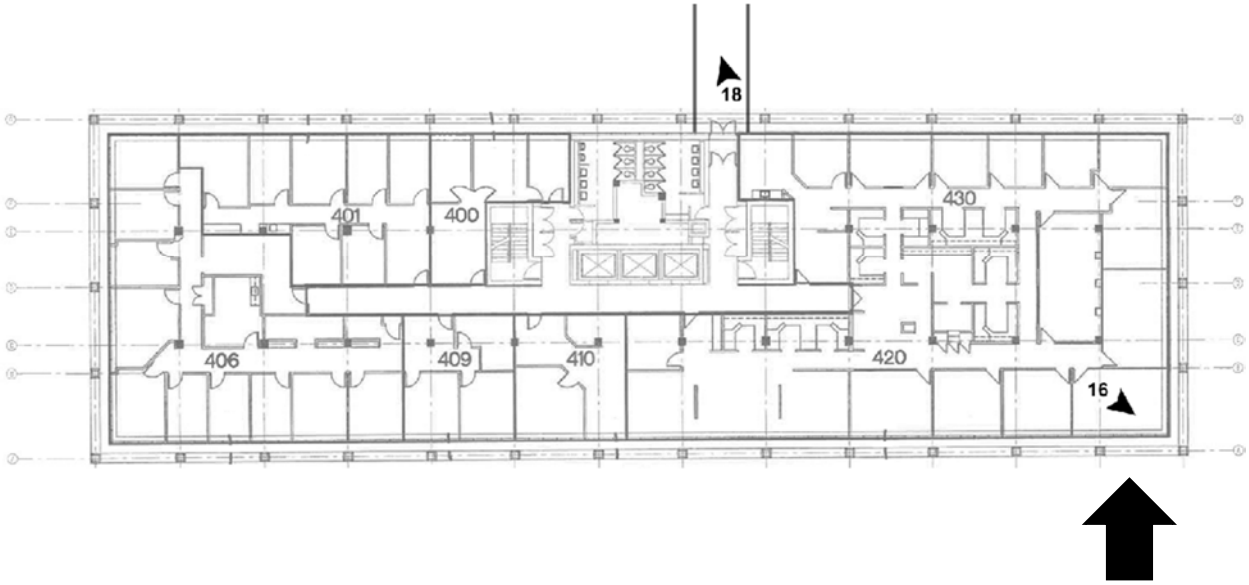


Photo Key 5. Seventh floor. Base map from owner represents current conditions. Not to scale.

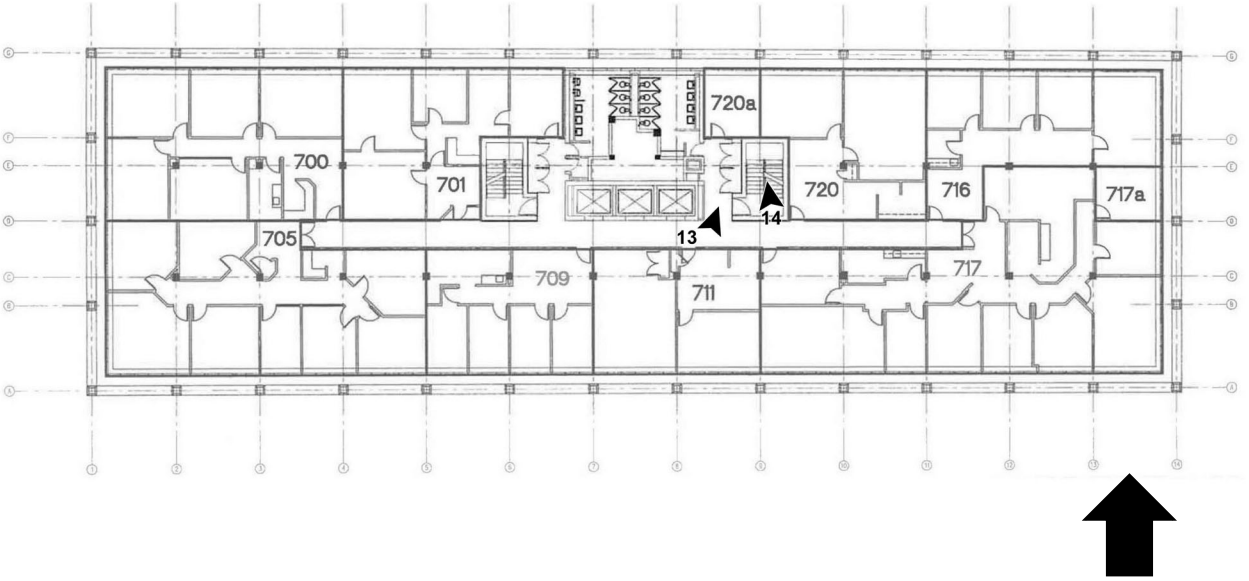


Photo Key 6. Basement. Base plan: Sheet A-1 "Basement Plan," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

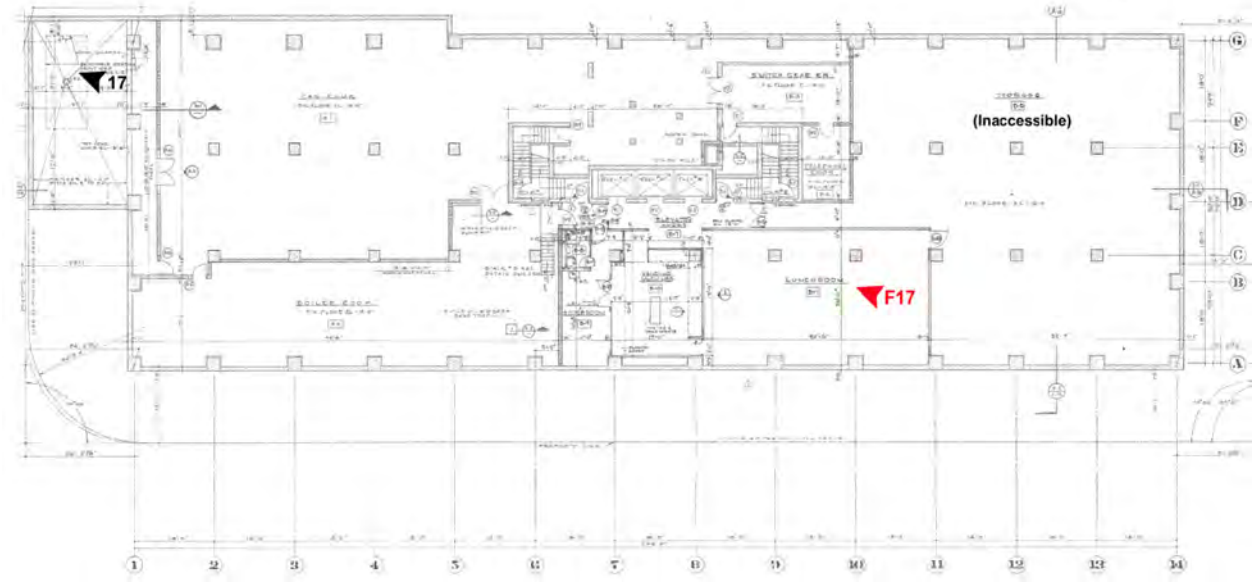


Photo Key 7. Parking Garage photos, taken on fourth floor. Base map from Google Earth.

Figure 1. Contextual map, showing the John Hancock Building within Kansas City (Source: Google).

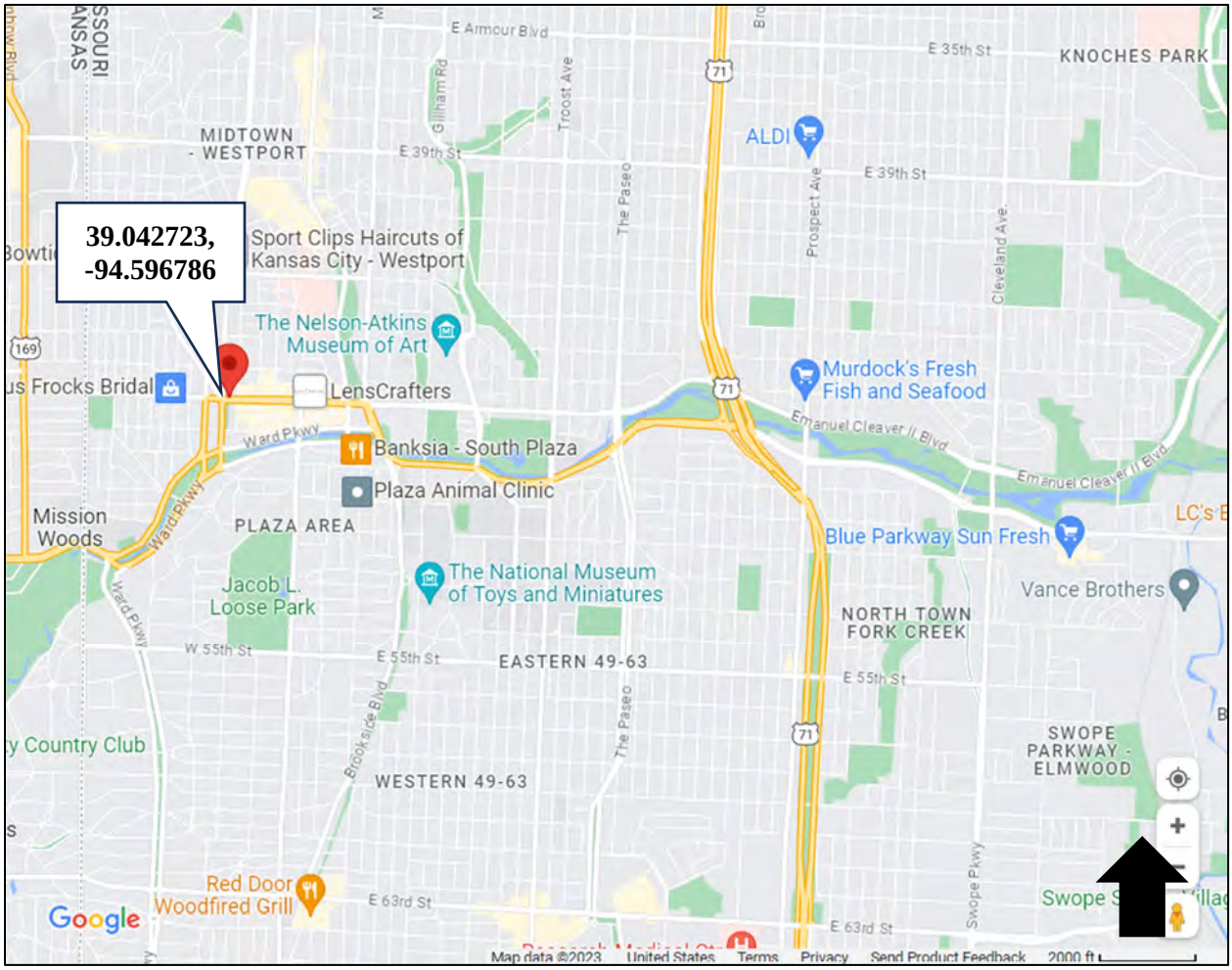


Figure 2. Aerial site map from August 2022, showing the nominated boundary within a bold dashed line (Source: Google Earth).

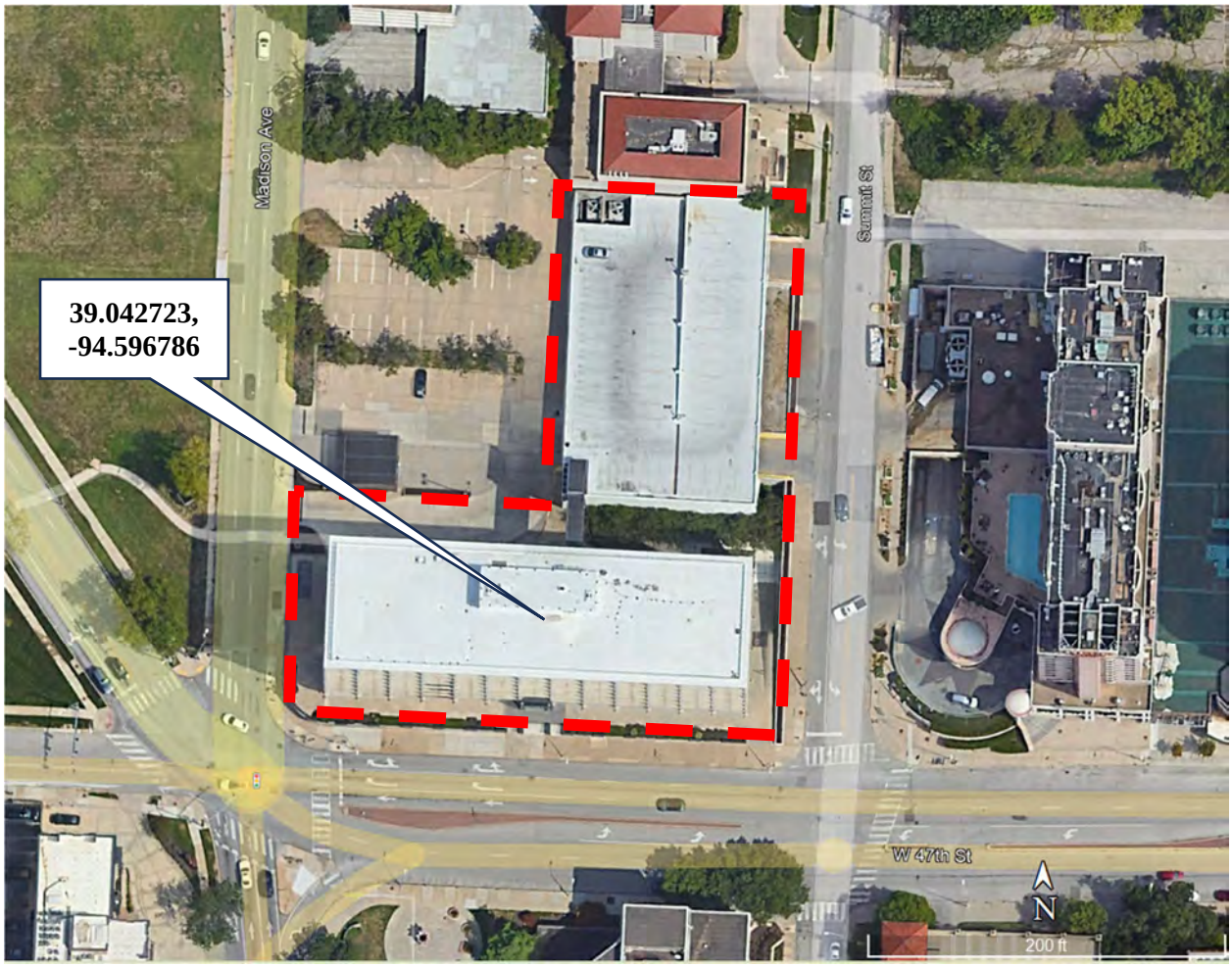


Figure 3. Contextual photographs, showing the 1950 Unity Temple and parking garage to the southeast (top) and the circa 1981 office building, public park, and apartments to the south and southwest (bottom). Source: Finch, October 2023.

Figure 4. Snippet of the 1963 Sanborn, sheet 796, showing the office building and parking garage. Dashed line approximates the nominated boundary.

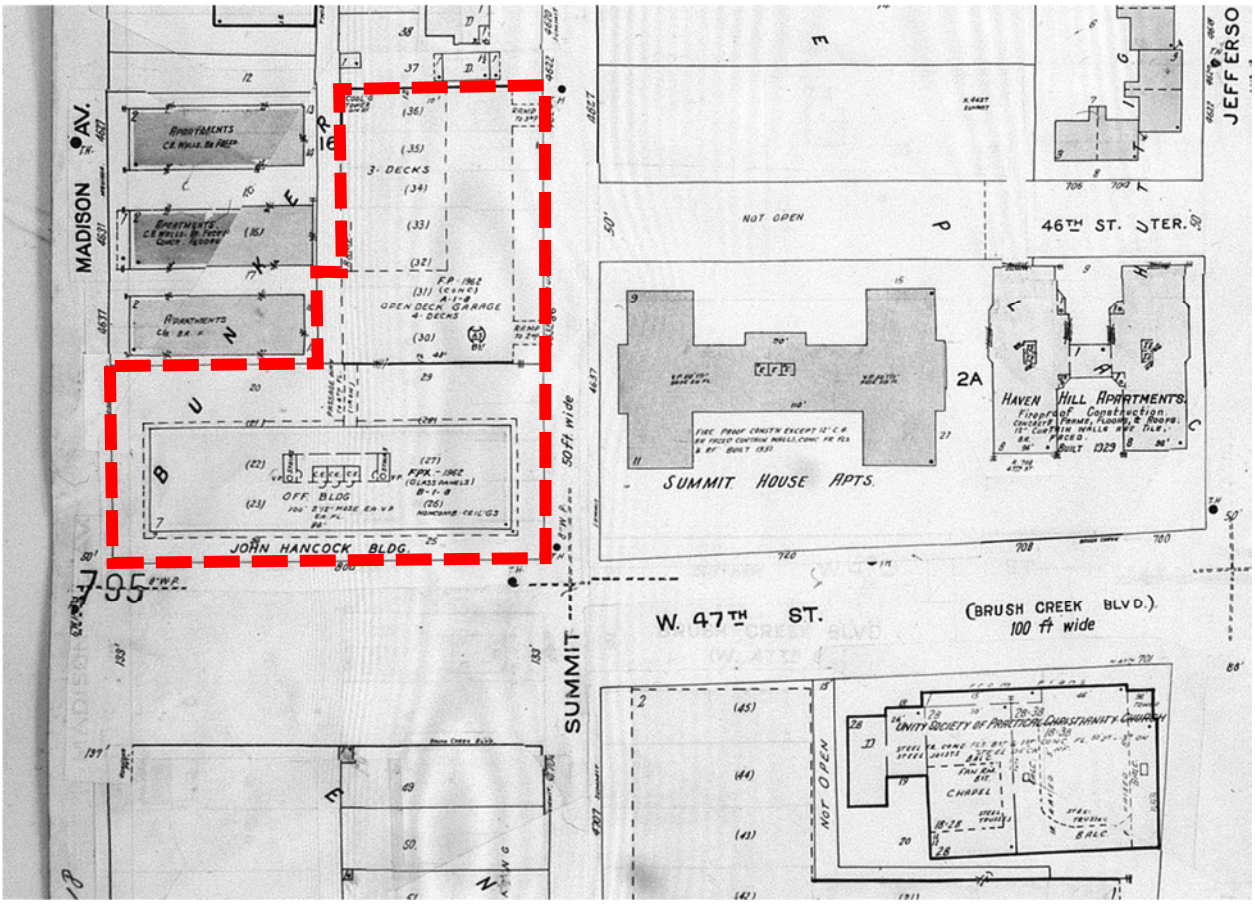


Figure 5. Historic south elevation, looking northwest in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 6. Historic south elevation, looking northeast in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 7. Looking north from the south sidewalk in 1962. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago.

Figure 8. Detail of the typical floor plan, showing the three-foot square module and exterior dimensions. Source: Sheet A-3 "Second thru Seventh Floor Plan & Roof Plan," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

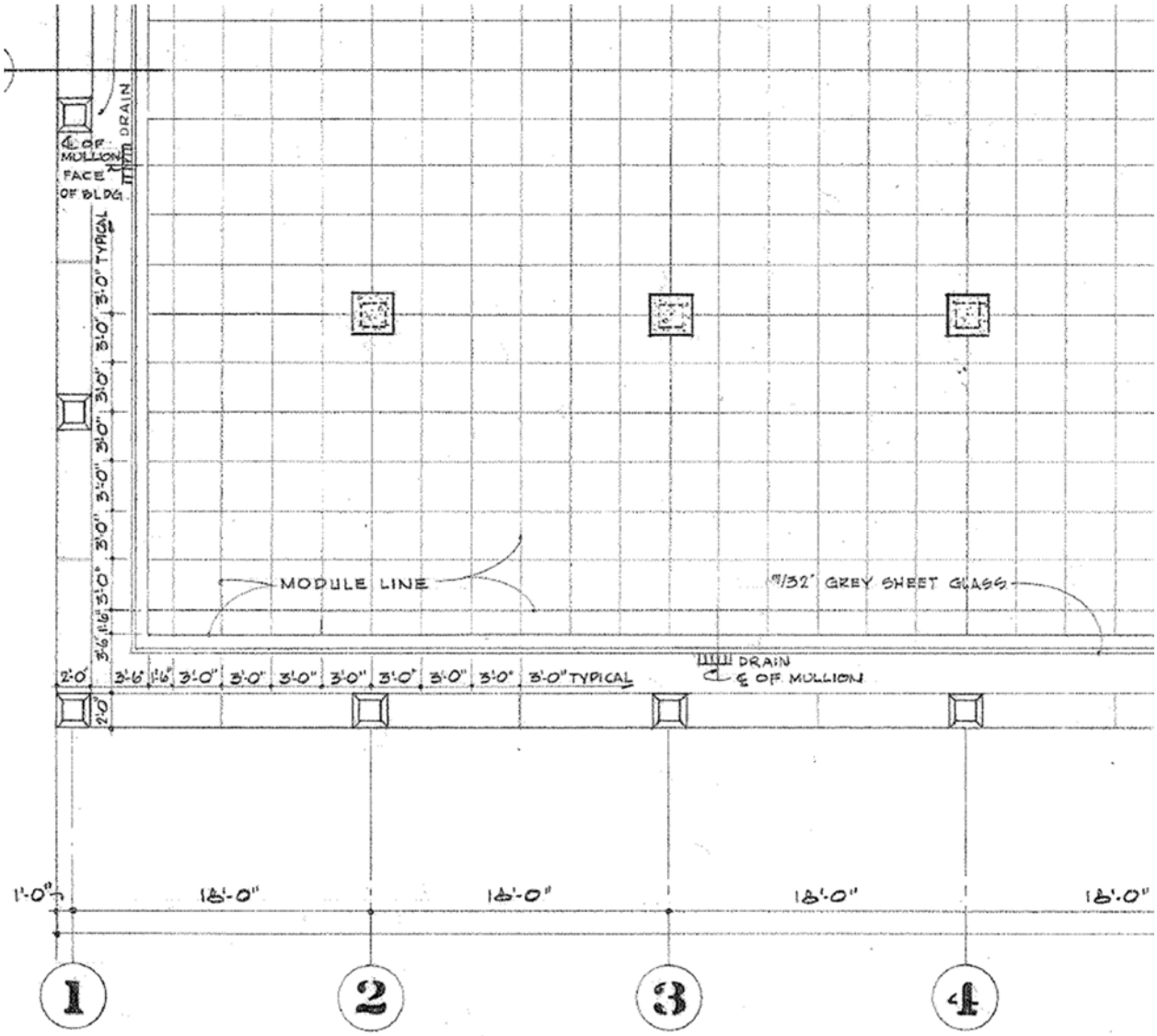


Figure 9. Detail of the articulated grid design. Drawings from SOM, published in "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM." *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 135.

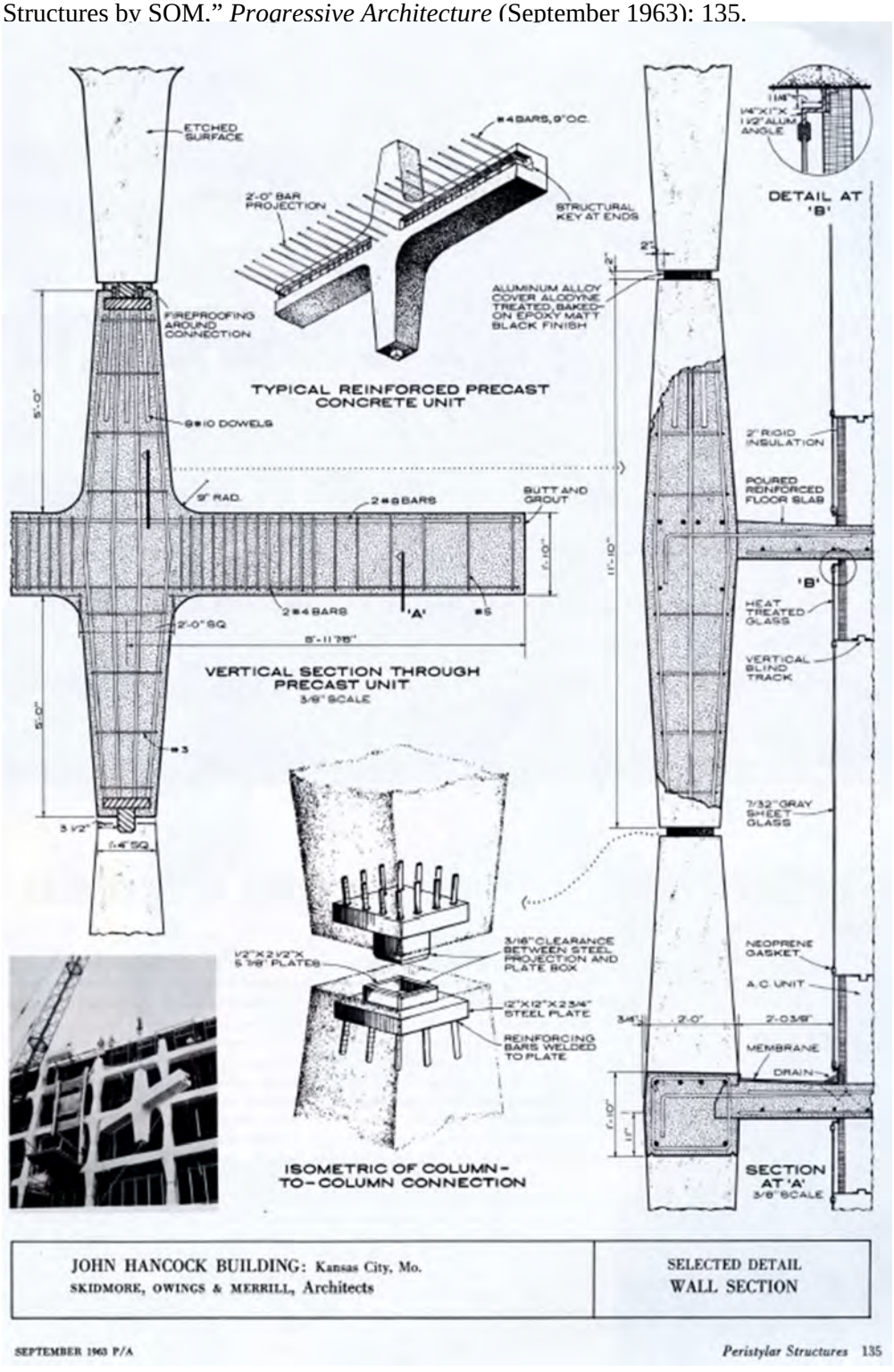


Figure 10. Inverted corner detail (northwest corner, first floor). Source: Finch, October 2023.

Figure 11. Detail of the north elevation, showing the louver, door, and walkway locations. Source: Sheet A-4 "Elevations," SOM architect, 1960, drawing ©SOM.

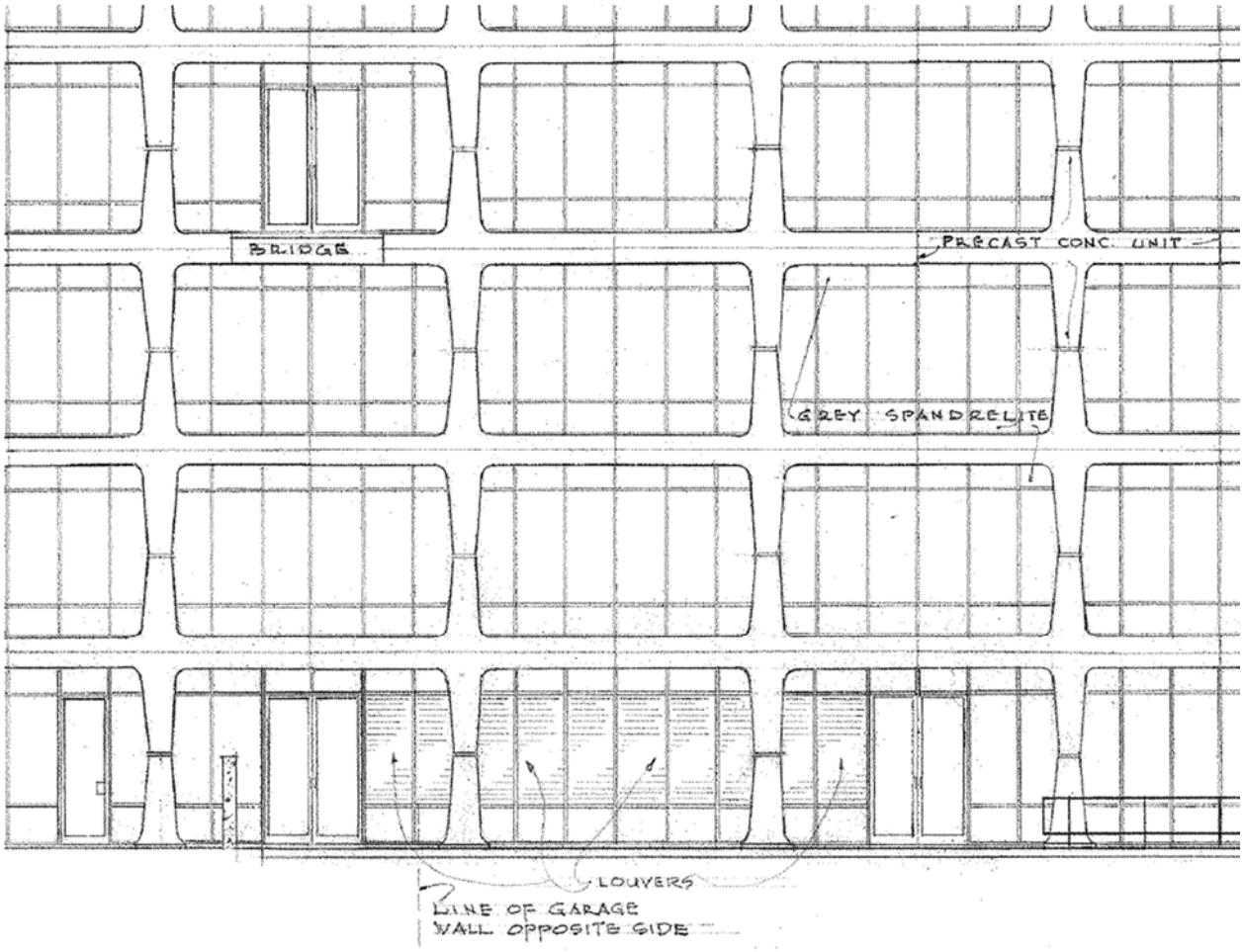


Figure 12. Plan of a typical floor in the John Hancock Building. The restroom and circulation core organize each floor, which were intended to be finished by tenants. Source: "Preview: 36," *Architecture & Engineering News* (November 1961): 84.

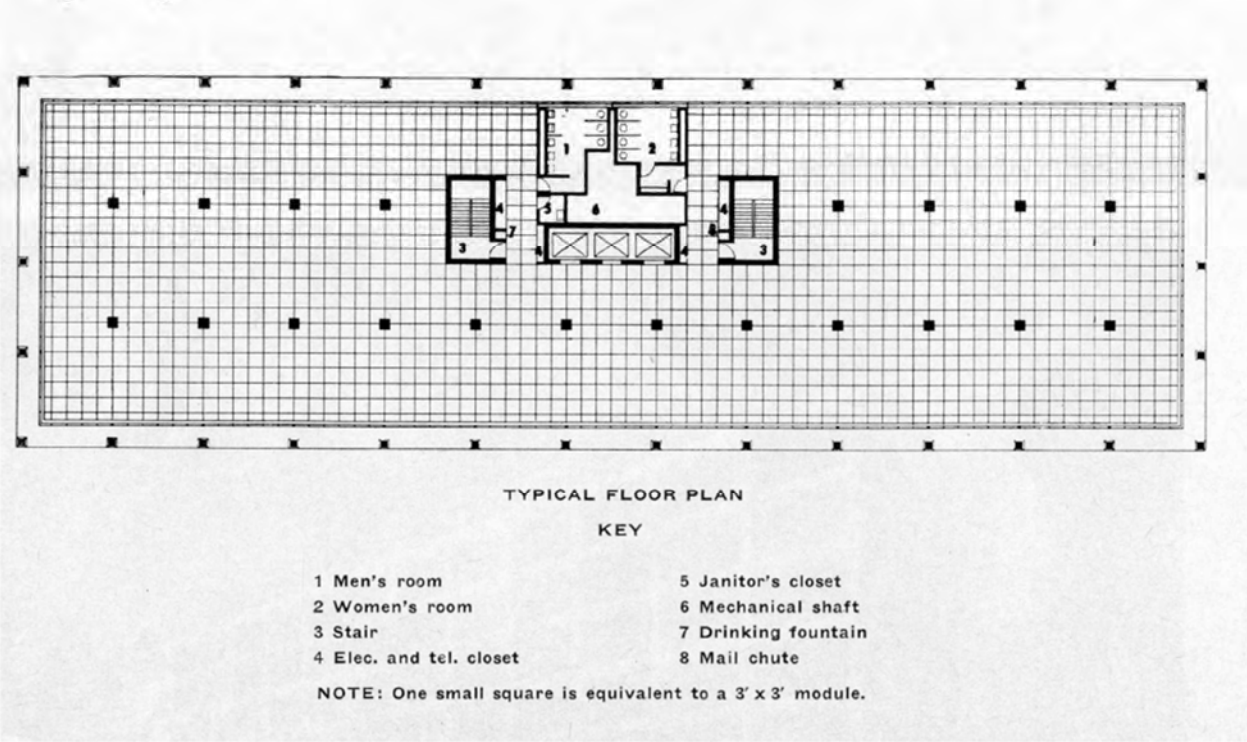


Figure 13. First floor, southwest corner office, looking SW. Top photo: 1962. SOM Architect. Compare with Photo 16. Source: Ezra Stoller, photographer. ©Ezra Stoller | Esto, used with permission from SOM Library, Records and Information Services, Chicago. Bottom photo: 2024. Author photo.

Figure 14. Historic condition of first floor office area in west half of building, looking north. Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 131.

Figure 15. Examples of first floor commercial spaces, showing non-historic configurations and finishes. Top: West bank lobby, looking northeast; bottom: east lobby of doctor's office, looking south, 2024, author photos.

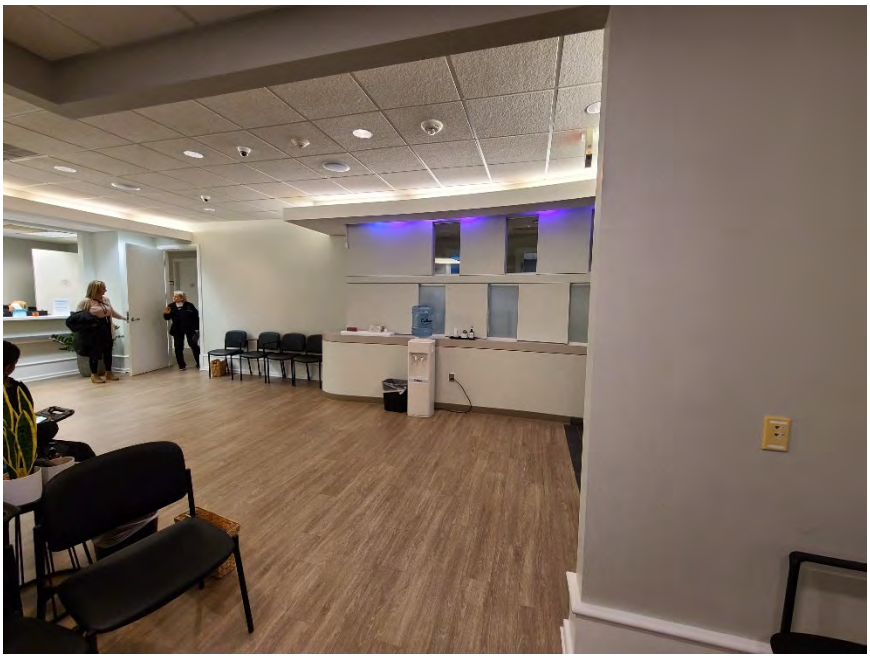


Figure 16. The non-historic stair between the first floor and basement, looking south, 2024, photo by author.

Figure 17. Example of the non-historic finishes/configuration of basement doctor's office space, looking west, 2024, author photo.

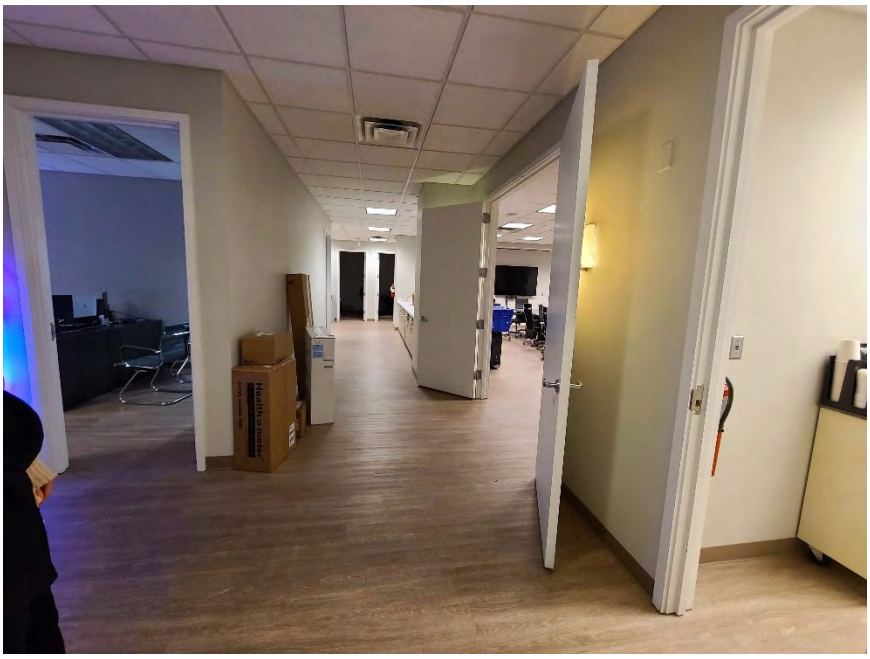


Figure 18. Looking southwest along the north elevation of the building, showing the historic condition of the skywalk. Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 133.

Figure 19. The 1952 Lever House, New York City, in 2012. SOM Architects. Source: By Beyond My Ken - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20535483

Figure 20. The 1963 BMA Tower in Kansas City, Missouri. SOM Architects. Source: Brad Finch, March 2002.

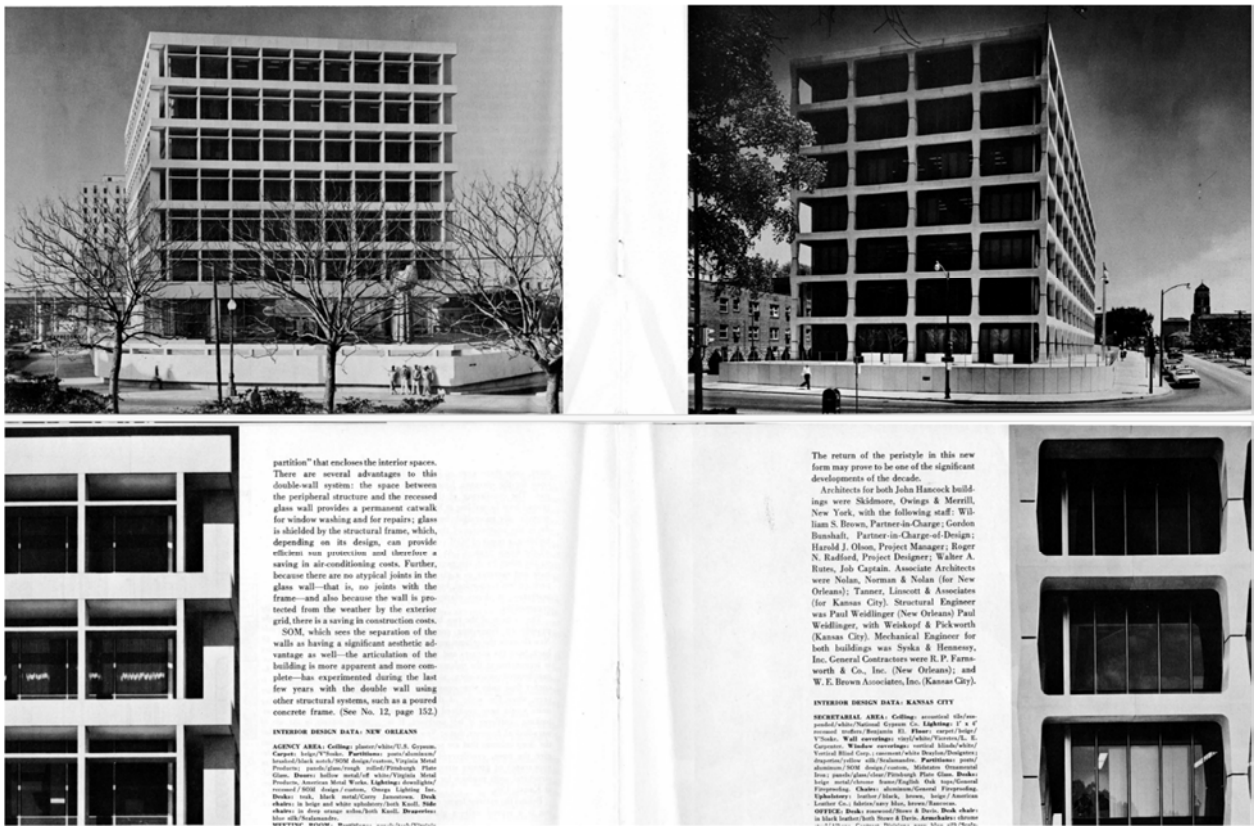
Figure 21. The 1977 City Center Square, 1100 Main Street, in 2008. SOM Architects. Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Center_Square#/media/File:City_Center_Square_Kansas_City_MO.jpg

Figure 22. Istanbul Hilton Hotel, designed by SOM, 1955. Source: Matti Blume, "Hilton Hotel Istabul,, 2019, Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hilton,_Besiktas,_Istanbul_(P1100283).jpg

Figure 23. Banque Lambert, Brussels (1956-1964) in 1965. Ezra Stoller, photographer. Source: Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 143.

Figure 24. Beinecke Rare Book Library (1959-1963), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Source: https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

Figure 25. The two John Hancock Buildings designed and built concurrently. At left is the New Orleans building (1959-1961); at right is the Kansas City building (1959-1962). Source: "Peristylar Precast Structures by SOM," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1963): 130-133.



partition" that encloses the interior spaces. There are several advantages to this double-wall system: the space between the peripheral structure and the recessed glass wall provides a permanent catwalk for window washing and for repairs; glass is shielded by the structural frame, which, depending on its design, can provide efficient sun protection and therefore a saving in air-conditioning costs. Further, because there are no atypical joints in the glass wall—that is, no joints with the frame—and also because the wall is protected from the weather by the exterior grid, there is a saving in construction costs.

SOM, which sees the separation of the walls as having a significant aesthetic advantage as well—the articulation of the building is more apparent and more complete—has experimented during the last few years with the double wall using other structural systems, such as a poured concrete frame. (See No. 12, page 152.)

INTERIOR DESIGN DATA: NEW ORLEANS

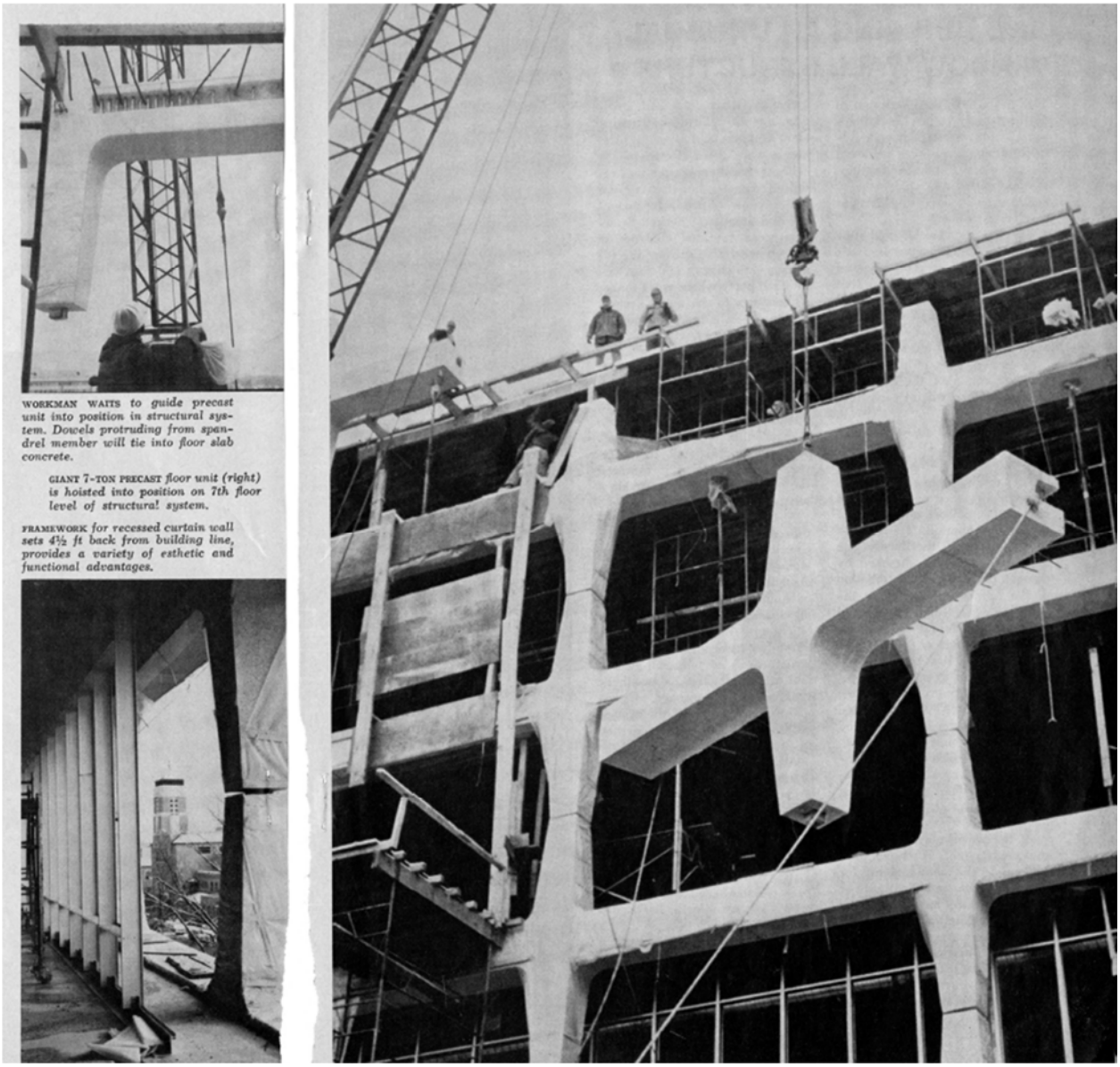
The return of the peristyle in this new form may prove to be one of the significant developments of the decade.

Architects for both John Hancock buildings were Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York, with the following staff: William S. Brown, Partner-in-Charge; Gordon Bunshaft, Partner-in-Charge-of-Design; Harold J. Olson, Project Manager; Roger N. Radford, Project Designer; Walter A. Rutes, Job Captain. Associate Architects were Nolan, Norman & Nolan (for New Orleans); Tanner, Linscott & Associates (for Kansas City). Structural Engineer was Paul Weidlinger (New Orleans) Paul Weidlinger, with Weiskopf & Pickworth (Kansas City). Mechanical Engineer for both buildings was Syska & Hennessy, Inc. General Contractors were R. P. Farnsworth & Co., Inc. (New Orleans); and W. E. Brown Associates, Inc. (Kansas City).

INTERIOR DESIGN DATA: KANSAS CITY

Figure 26. Construction photo, looking northeast (Source: *Kansas City Star* 10 September 1961: 84).

Figure 27. Construction photos from *Building Construction* (February 1962): 30-31.



WORKMAN WAITS to guide precast unit into position in structural system. Dowels protruding from spandrel member will tie into floor slab concrete.

GIANT 7-TON PRECAST floor unit (right) is hoisted into position on 7th floor level of structural system.

FRAMEWORK for recessed curtain wall sets 4½ ft back from building line, provides a variety of esthetic and functional advantages.


800
ilton

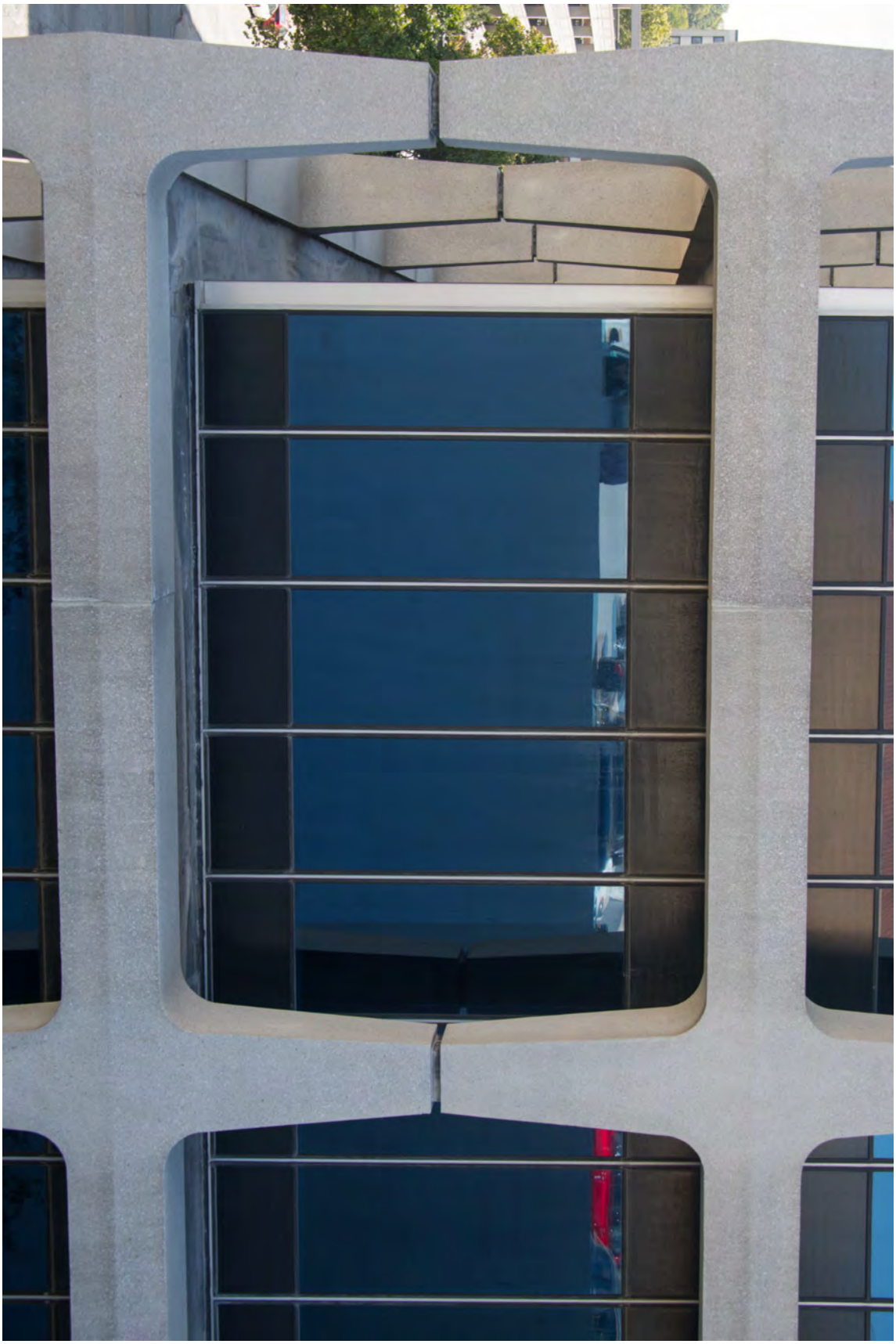

Hilton


BMO
PLAZA CORPORATE
CENTRE


Hilton


STOP


PLAZA CORPORATE CENTRE
NO PARKING




Hilton


PLAZA CORPORATE CENTRE


EXIT
ELECTRICAL