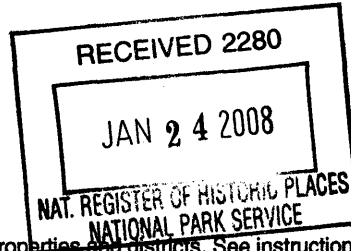


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



151

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fidelity National Building

other name/site number Park Harvey Center

2. Location

street & town 200 N. Harvey Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Oklahoma City vicinity N/A

3. state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109 zip code 73102

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Deakle 1-22-08
Signature of certifying official/Title SHPO Date

State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.

Edson H. Beall 3-6-08
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	Total	

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/trade: business

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: multiple dwelling

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement
International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Roof: other: Tar and Gravel
Walls: Aluminum
Walls: Steel
Foundation: Concrete

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1956-57

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sorey Hill and Sorey, Architects

Bass, G. E., Building Contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

- See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

UTM 14 634489E 3926073N (NAD83/WGS84)

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The 100' x 125' building is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Park Avenue with North Harvey Avenue. Parcel Number 2730-01-001-5272.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire building footprint.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10
Location Sketch Map

name/title Cathy Ambler, Ph.D., Preservation Consultant
organization _____ date December 2007
street & number 1129 E. 8th Street telephone 918 584 3566
city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74120

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

name/title Park Harvey Apartments, LLC
street & number 4228 N. Santa Fe Ave. telephone (405) 524-8484
city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73118

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

LOCATION AND SETTING

The Fidelity National Building, known today as the Park Harvey Center, was constructed in c.1956-57. It is located at the northeast corner of Park and North Harvey Avenues in downtown Oklahoma City. It is positioned strategically among many other high-rise and commercial buildings, and it is just east of the Oklahoma County Courthouse. The building was designed by Sorey Hill and Sorey, an architectural firm with a practice that extended over three distinct periods of twentieth century architecture: the Eclectic styles of the 1920s, the Art Deco of the 1930s, and the Modern movement of the post-World War II period.

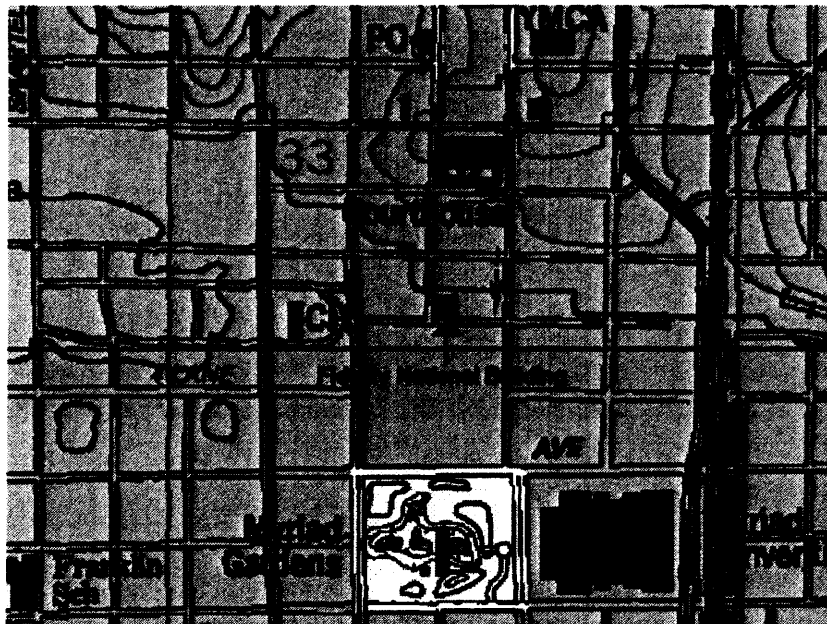


Figure 1. Fidelity National Building Location

DESCRIPTION

Exterior

The building footprint is a rectangular 100' x 125' eighteen-story International Style office building. The building has a basement, ground floor commercial space, sixteen floors of office space and a recessed mechanical eighteenth floor. Today the building is a multi-family dwelling with loft apartments. First designed as a 100' x 100' seventeen-story building, the plans were almost immediately revised to include the eighteenth story and a three-story, 25' x 100' addition to the east end of the building. The change was made when Fidelity National Bank and Trust became an early tenant.¹

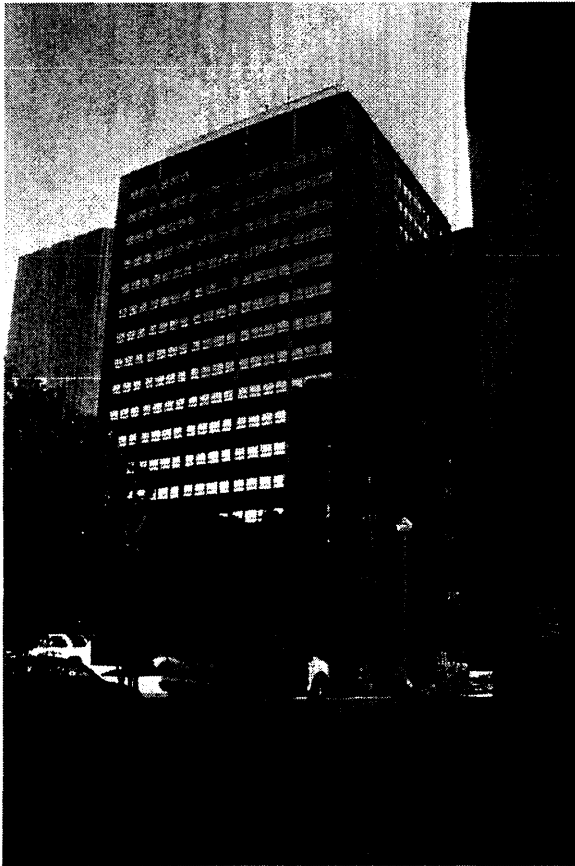
¹ The Oklahoman, May 30, 1956, 27. Original plans and similar newspaper articles confirm the building was constructed between 1956 and 1957.

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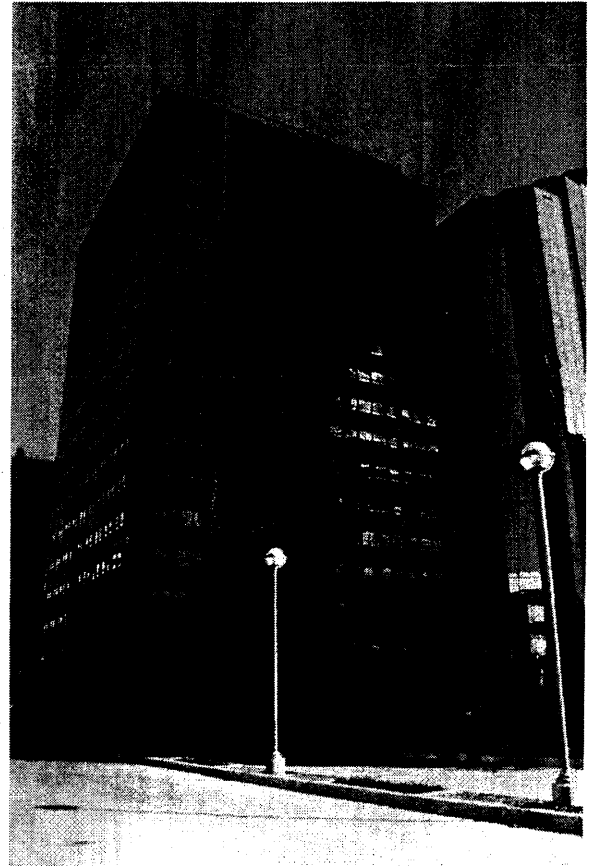
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fidelity National Building
West Façade, Looking NE



Fidelity National Building
South Façade, Looking N

The Fidelity National Building is a steel-frame and concrete structure with aluminum and enameled-steel cladding in three shades of brown. The grided façades have alternating rows of horizontal medium-brown enameled aluminum spandrels, and two-part aluminum awning windows.² The horizontality of the building is emphasized by a band of dark-brown enameled-aluminum panels at the seventeenth floor and just above the ground floor. This horizontality is balanced, however, by verticality that is created by continuous light-brown aluminum panels at the building façade corners, and four ribbons of light-brown aluminum panels which divide the building into five bays. Projecting mullions of faded-gold anodized aluminum also enhance the building's verticality and run from the second to the seventeenth floors.

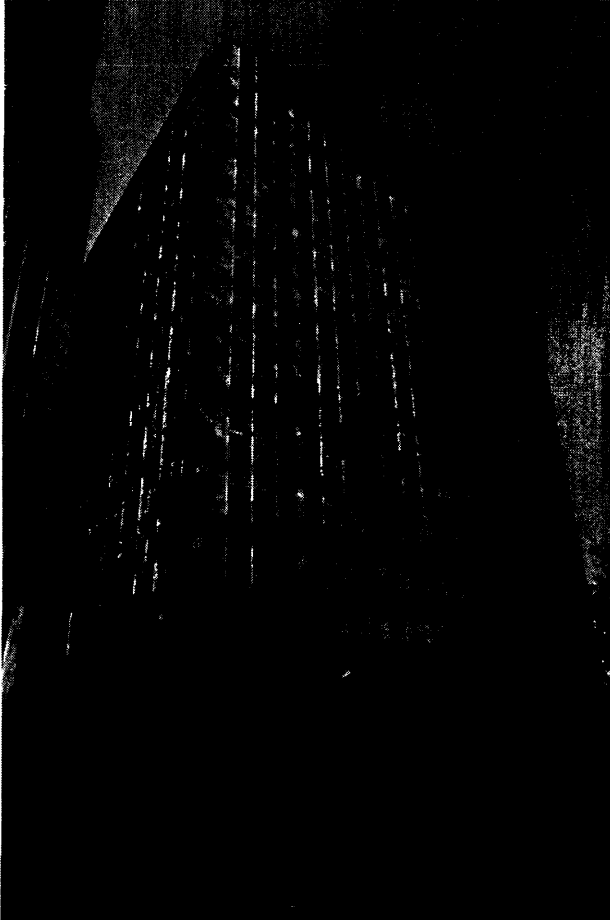
² The original plans called for the panels to be anodized aluminum, however, a later marketing sheet which describes the building, notes the used of enameled steel. This marketing sheet was framed and hanging in the Park Harvey Center leasing office.

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National Park Service

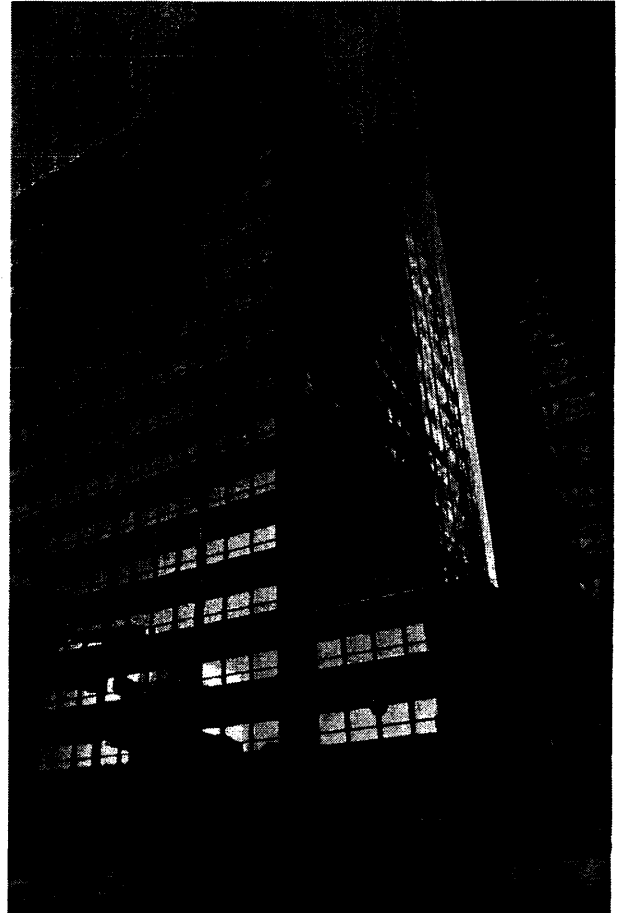
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fidelity National Building
North Façade, Looking SW



Fidelity National Building
East Façade, Looking NW

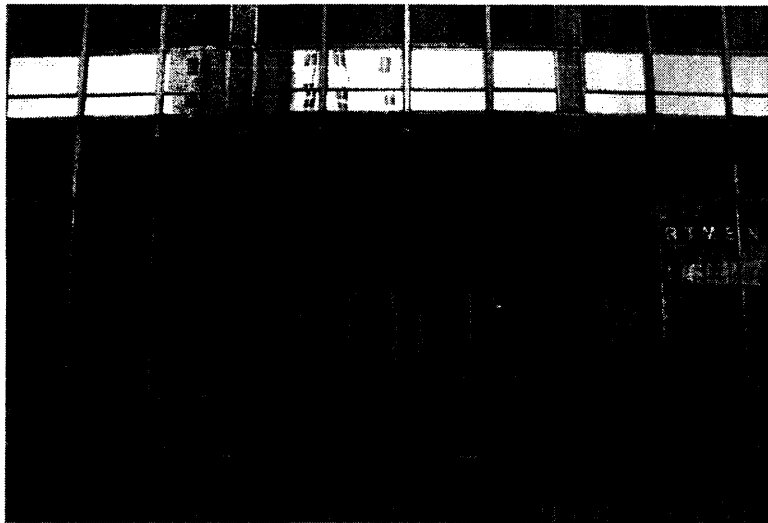
The west entry on North Harvey Avenue is the building address and primary entry. This entry is recessed and has two sets of paired aluminum-framed doors with side lights and over-door lights. The area above these doors is marked today with "Park Harvey Center" in raised metal letters.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fidelity National Building
West Façade Entry, Looking E

The commercial ground floor on the south façade also has a recessed entry which somewhat resembles the primary one. This south entry is composed of on set of paired aluminum-framed doors with side lights and a combination of glass and aluminum panels above. Both the west and south entries have brown anodized flat aluminum canopies. The south canopy is longer though, and extends east past the recessed entry area to include part of the three-story building façade. This canopy extension helps to merge the taller building visually with the shorter one.



South Façade with Canopy Extension, Looking NE.

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Continuation Sheet

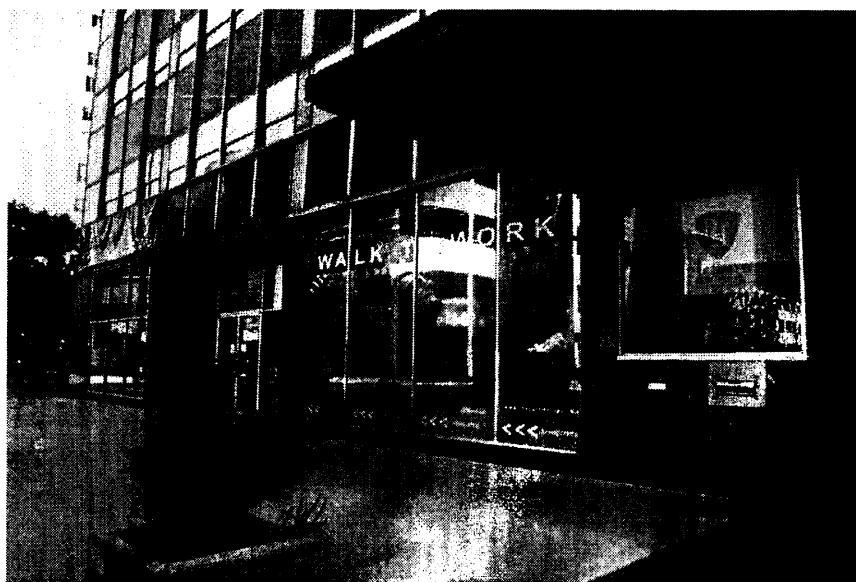
Section 7 Page 9

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Ground Floor West and South,
Looking NE

A smaller second entry is also on the Park Avenue south façade with a less projecting but a similar canopy to the others. This entry has paired aluminum-framed doors with glass panels above.



Added Entry under Small Canopy, Looking NW

The north façade ground floor is brown brick with no windows. Most west and south windows on this floor are framed by full-story panels of red-brown granite. The east façade abuts another building at the first three floors.

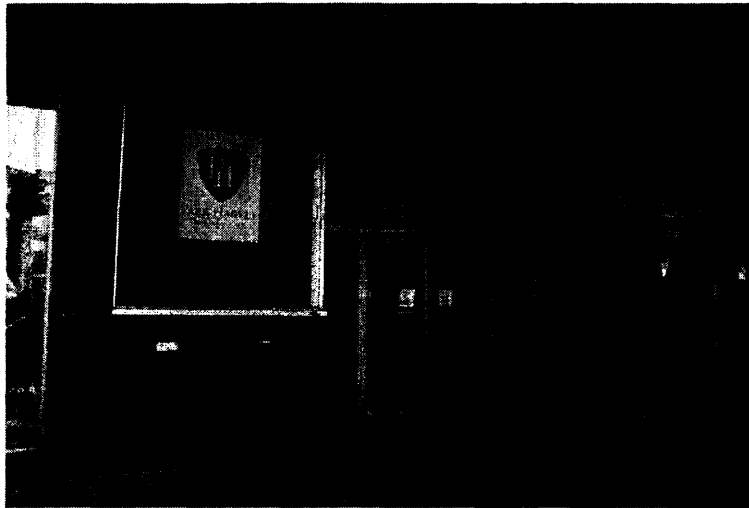
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 10

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

Fidelity National Bank was the first occupant of the basement, most of the ground floor and the second floor, and evidence of the bank remains at the original south façade entrance where there is a small granite writing surface, an envelope box, and a night deposit drop.



Fidelity National Building,
Bank Entrance with Writing Surface, Envelope Box and Night Deposit,
Looking N

Interior

The interior of the most of the building was modified prior to its conversion into lofts. Office spaces had been reconfigured and access halls had been redecorated. These changes were part of routine and expected adjustments to tenants needs. The International Style, with its practical approach to the use of space, encouraged the flexible use of interior spaces. The main lobby, however, remains representative of the construction period.

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National Park Service

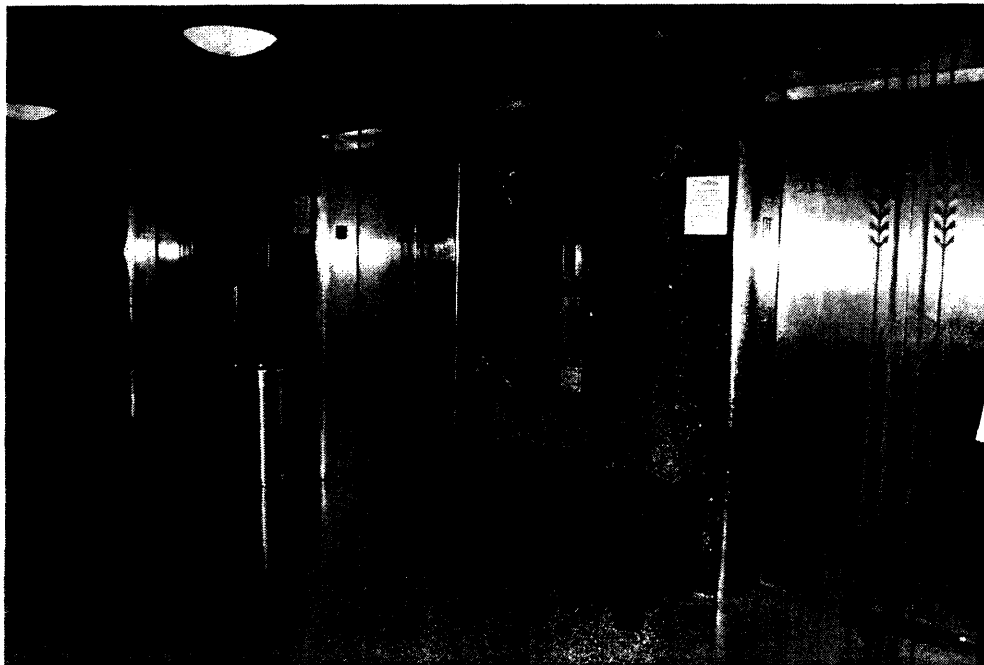
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 11

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Lobby Area with Marble Walls,
and Terrazzo Floor, Looking N



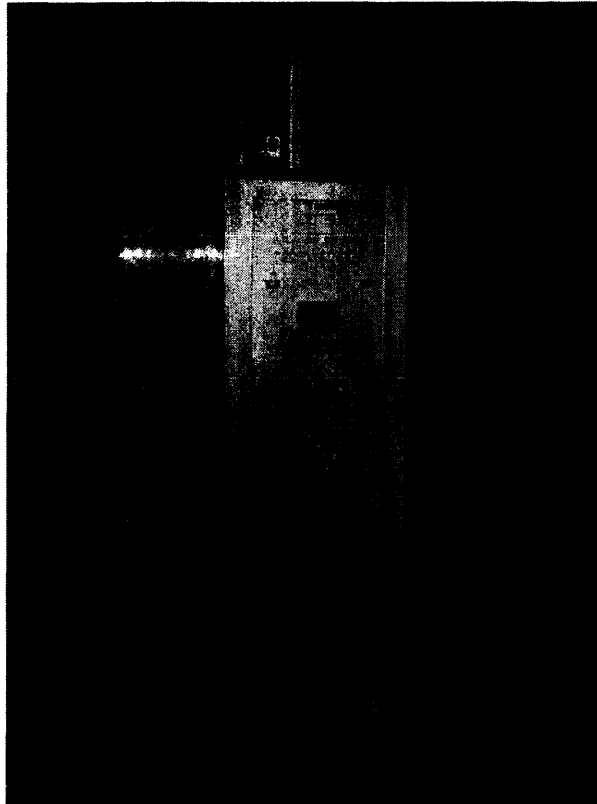
Lobby Area Elevators, Marble Walls and
Terrazzo Floor, Looking NE

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 12

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Lobby Mail Drop Collection Point
Looking E

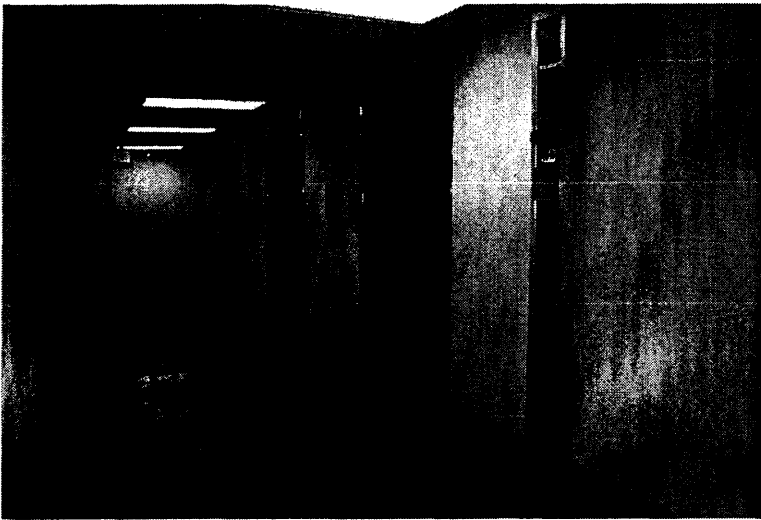
The interior core of the building is surrounded by access halls to the outer offices, and contains the elevator shafts, stairs, mechanical equipment space and restrooms.

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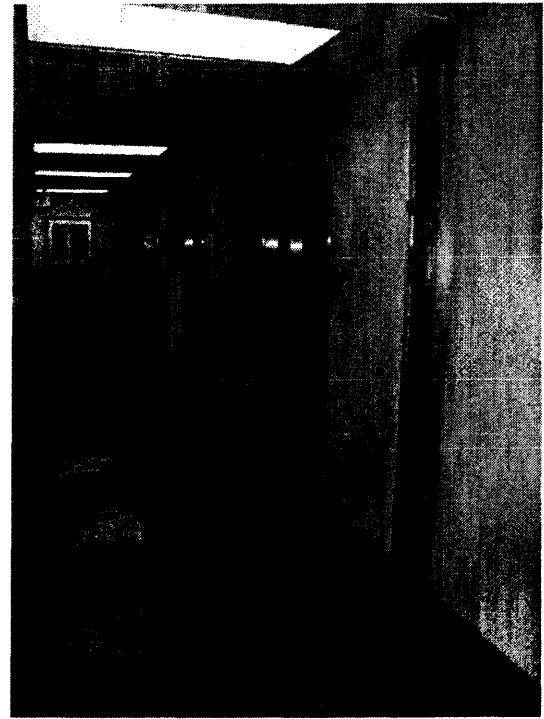
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fifth Floor Elevators, Mail Drop,
Looking N



Second Floor Elevators, Mail Drop,
Looking N

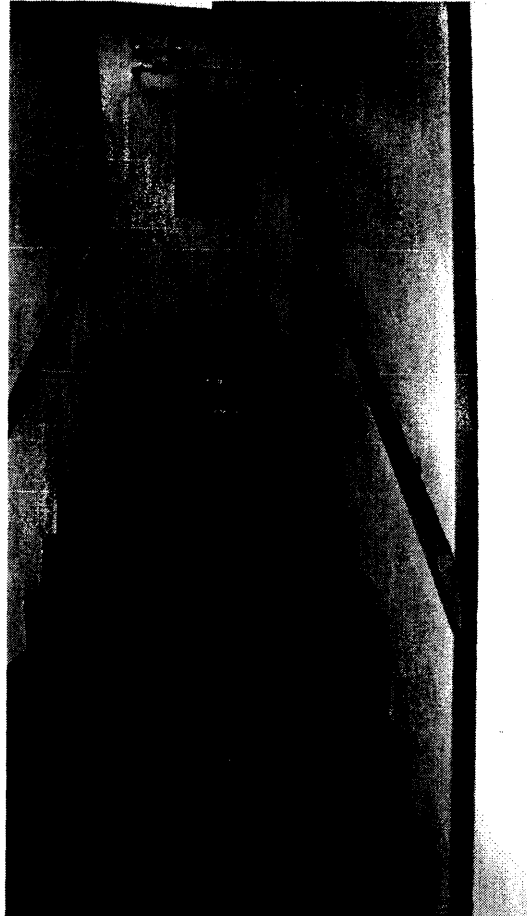
Core stairwells provide the building's fire escape. The original fire suppression system is located at the landings between floors. Most stairwell steps are asphalt tile rather than ceramic tile.

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Continuation Sheet

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Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fire System Between
Second and Third Floors, Looking S

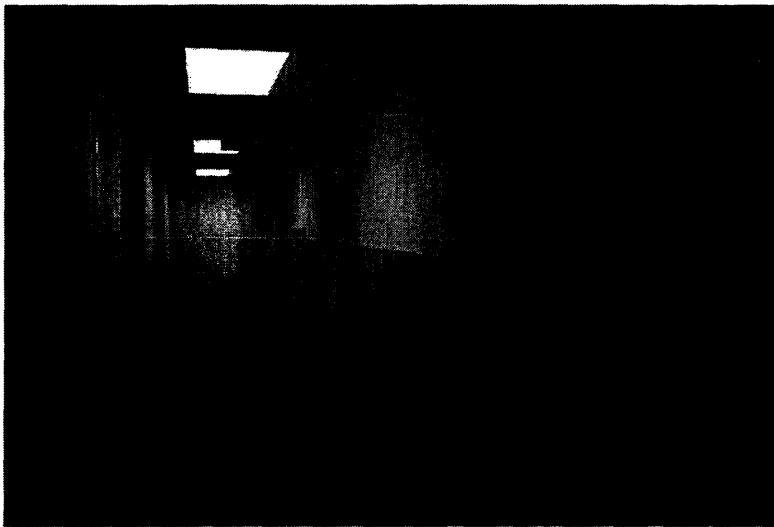
Hallways which provide access to the loft apartments are like those shown in Photo39. Some floors originally had marble wainscot.

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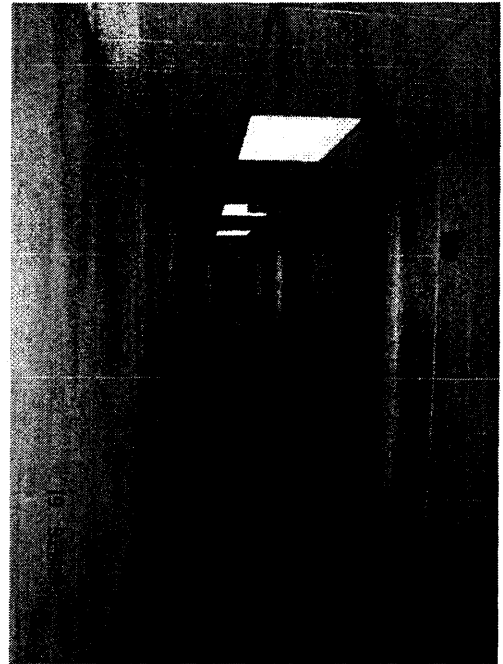
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 15

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK



Fifteenth Floor North Hall,
Looking E



Second Floor South Hall,
Looking E

Doors to mechanical equipment also remain in the center core on each floor.



Fifth Floor East Hall, Doors to Mechanical Equipment,
Looking NW

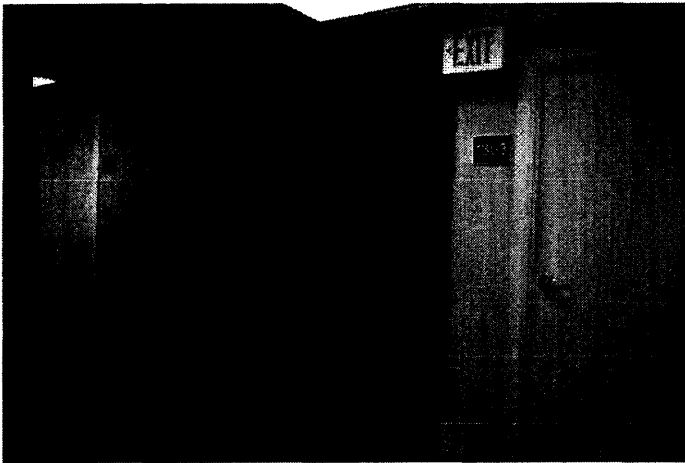
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

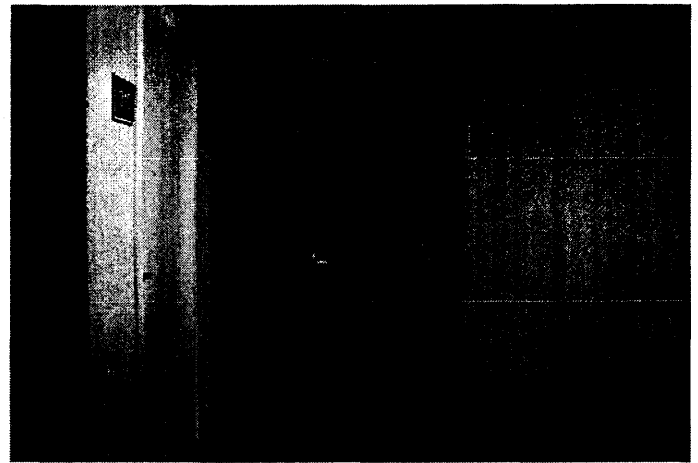
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Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

Original office doors that survived over the years were also maintained during the loft conversion.

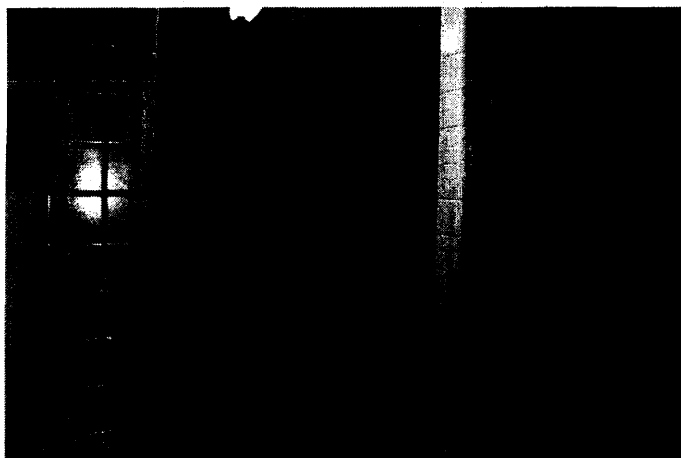


Thirteenth Floor, Original Doors
Along Side New Ones, South Hall Looking SE



Third Floor, Original Doors North Hall
Along Side New Ones, Looking W

The building's restrooms were located at the stair landings between every floor. The facilities have been removed and they are being used for storage. Men's and women's restrooms alternated between floors .



Women's Restroom Between Floors
Fifteen and Sixteen, Looking S



Men's Restroom Between Floors
Thirteen and Fourteen, Looking S

Considering the interior's modified condition prior to loft conversion, important aspects of the public spaces have been retained while the building has been successfully transformed into desirable living space.

The Fidelity National Building is an excellent example of the International Style which is characterized by horizontal and vertical planes, an emphasis on volume rather than a particular exterior style, a rejection of historical references and ornamentation, and a denial of a traditional sense of a dominant façade. It is a style

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 17

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

suited to the modern materials used, steel, aluminum and concrete, and post-World War II engineering and construction techniques.

ALTERATIONS

Most of the ground floor exterior is original, with the exception of new full-height divided windows at the southwest corner which replaced damaged ones. The building plans were revised almost immediately after being drawn to include the three-story addition with a ground level drive-through bank teller. This early modification to the main office building differs slightly in appearance with only dark brown aluminum spandrels. A second entry was also added on the Park Avenue south facade c. 1958.

New building construction to the north of the Fidelity National Building closed Couch Drive, c. 1981, and ended access to the drive-through bank. A men's clothing store has now replaced the drive-through and the store façade has an aluminum-framed entry and full-height window wall that is similar to others in ground floor façades. In 2006, the building interior office spaces were renovated as part of a federal tax credit project.

CONDITION

The building is in good condition.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 18

Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

SUMMARY

The Fidelity National Building (c. 1956-57) is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as the best example of an International Style building in Oklahoma City. It was one of the largest office buildings constructed in the post-World War II era, and those who had faith in the future of the city's downtown believed the style conveyed their confidence in its future sustainability. Faced with the emergence of retail flight to suburban areas which began in the 1950s, downtown promoters and banks constructed new buildings and building additions in the International Style which they believed would visually maintain the downtown core as a significant and modern-day location for business. Contemporary with the construction of other significant International Style buildings in cities such as New York, the Oklahoma City architectural firm of Sorey Hill and Sorey demonstrated its knowledge and acceptance of a style that embraced the vision of a more modern world after World War II. Planned with amenities such as air-conditioning and high-speed elevators, the Fidelity National Building is the best and earliest of the International Style in a stand-alone high-rise building in Oklahoma City.

BACKGROUND

Oklahoma City was first settled in 1889, and by the time Oklahoma was admitted to the Union in 1907, the city was the population center and commercial hub of the new state, as well as the state capital. The community had become a major regional commercial center, railway hub and had several large meat packing plants. Oil was discovered in the city proper in 1928, and the influx of oil money within the community greatly accelerated the city's growth and the construction of many high-rise and significant buildings in the city core. Even during the Great Depression some residents who had made money during this early oil boom escaped serious financial difficulties, but the majority of Oklahomans did not.

Reflective of both hard times and World War II's building materials shortage, the Oklahoma City central business district experienced little new construction for most of the 1930s and the 1940s.³ While the city prepared for new construction after the war by writing a new comprehensive city plan, land use and zoning code (July 1949), Oklahoma City began to experience a post-World War II business exodus from the heart of the community into the suburbs, as other cities experienced elsewhere. Years of neglect, sustained by the Depression and war, had created cities with evident urban blight. Many downtown business lots were small and owned by second- and third-generation landlords who lived elsewhere and who spent little time or money keeping up their properties.⁴

During the war years when there were gasoline shortages, most people relied on streetcars for transportation, but this changed with the return of good times. Store customers returned to using their automobiles and there was little parking in the downtown, a problem the city had experienced even in the 1920s and 1930s. The city tried several ways to affect the demand for parking by putting in parking meters, for example, but they only angered most shoppers. In 1955, the city tried to manage traffic congestion by turning some streets into one-

³ One businessman, Earl Marcus, observed that little construction had taken place since the days of the oil boom which began in the 1920s. "Businessmen Show Faith in Future," The Oklahoman, October 25, 1959.

⁴ Lackmeyer, Steve and Jack Money, OKC, Second Time Around, Oklahoma City, OK: Full Circle Press, 2006, 5.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

way thoroughfares. Regardless of these attempts, parking and traffic problems discouraged easy automobile access to shopping and businesses.⁵

In 1953, Sears Roebuck and Company became the first major retailer to move its main store out of the downtown area in order to provide the sought-after convenient parking.⁶ It confirmed a growing apprehension that the city core might lose its vitality. Such apprehension was only heightened when a suburban shopping mall, Penn Square Shopping Center, broke ground five years later. It opened in 1959, with one of the largest Montgomery Ward stores in the nation, and space for forty-eight retail stores. The mall marked the beginning of a stream of new shopping centers that would move commerce further from downtown. By 1962, fifty-three downtown retailers had closed their doors and moved to the suburbs.⁷

Although a migration of businesses to suburbia had begun, some new construction and business expansions in the downtown did take place in the early 1950s, while boosters and businessmen continued to promote the downtown area heavily. For example, a new YMCA building, also designed by Sorey Hill and Sorey, was built in 1952. Though no longer extant, the architects introduced certain elements of the International Style in this horizontal building which were a startling departure from the more customary Neoclassical, Italian Renaissance, and Art Deco styles of most downtown buildings.⁸



YMCA Building⁹

Businessmen were considering constructing a downtown mall as a possible solution to the flight of retail merchants, although some architects, such as Lee Sorey (who helped organize the Oklahoma City Downtown Association) argued that better parking, mass transportation, store modernization, better merchandizing and more downtown promotions would be better options to undertake than jumping into plans for a mall.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Woods, Pendleton. Historic Oklahoma County: An Illustrated History, (Oklahoma City/County Historical Society, San Antonio, TX: Lammert Publications, Inc., 2002), 46.

⁷ Lackmeyer and Money, *ibid.*, 6. Also see Historic Oklahoma County: An Illustrated History, *ibid.*, 49.

⁸ Brown, Jennifer L. Journal Record, June 13, 2001. Also see Sorey, *ibid.*, 368. The building was demolished after receiving damage from the 1995 Murrah Office Building bombing.

⁹ <http://members.cox.net/reconokc/bomb/>. The photo is of the building after bombing and shows some damage to the building.

¹⁰ Campbell, Gene. "Downtown Mall is Discouraged." The Oklahoman, December 5, 1959. Also see Tom Sorey, Jr., "Sorey Hill and Sorey: Architects with a Civic Conscience," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 71, #4, 1993, 368.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Fidelity National Building
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, OK

Regardless of Sorey's call for the use of these alternatives, major stores such as John A. Browns and Rothschilds, and even cultural and entertainment activities, migrated to the suburbs.¹¹

An impulse for the early use of the International Style in the downtown was motivated by changes taking place in the banking business.¹² Banks were not only changing the way they did business after World War II, but they also wanted to change their image from "the pretentious dimly lit interiors that characterized the nation's banks at the turn of the century ...", into something more customer friendly. Banks wanted to replace old closed and formal gridded partitions with open and accessible counters. The goal was to bring the bank and customer into a more friendly business relationship.¹³ After the building of the Midtown-Manhattan branch of the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company in New York City, c. 1953-54, the building's innovative design, by architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill, captured the notice of banks nationwide. Many of the new International Style bank building additions in downtown Oklahoma City were directly the result of the desire to meet these new banking demands for modern space.



Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, New York City, 5th Avenue and 43rd Street¹⁴
Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Architects

The Fidelity National Building was not originally planned as a bank, however. It just happened to be opportune timing that the Sorey Hill and Sorey office building was in the final design stages at a time when Fidelity National Bank was looking for a new "modern" character which the planned International Style building could provide.¹⁵ The Fidelity National Building was constructed by builder-investor Sylvanus G. Felix, an attorney,

¹¹ Sorey, *ibid.*, 361, 367-69.

¹² "Businessmen Show Faith in Future," *ibid.*

¹³ Dyson, Carol and Anthony Rubano. "Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank." *Preserving the Recent Past 2*. (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 2000), 2-46.

¹⁴ <http://www.nyc-architecture.com/MID/MID066.htm>

¹⁵ *The Oklahoman*, November 25, 1956, and "Fidelity Bank Building is Sold to City Buyers," *The Oklahoman*, January 3, 1957. The article notes that the building the bank was moving from was "modeled after an Italian palace in Venice." This would not be the desired image for new post-World War II banking trends. Although the building was renamed for the bank and provided the bank with obvious name recognition and the most modern architecture to accompany a desired up-to-date image, the list of 1958 tenants were mostly related to the oil business. They included Sinclair Oil and Gas, Continental Oil Company, Passtex Petroleum, Pan Am Petroleum Company, and the host of necessary and supportive lawyers, accountants, and other oil-related businesses that accompany such large companies. From *Polk's Oklahoma City Phone Directory*. Dallas, TX: R. L. Polk and Company, 1958.

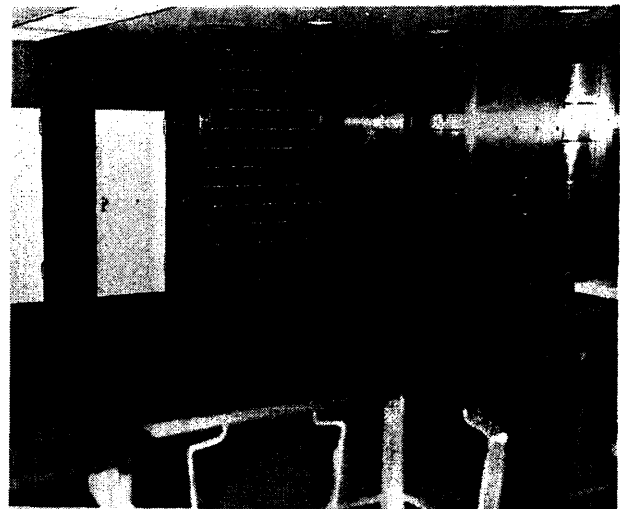
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Fidelity National Building
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co-owner and developer of several business and residential areas in Oklahoma City. An avid downtown booster, Felix believed in the future growth of the central downtown area and that the International Style skyscraper would trigger a great construction period of expansion and development of Oklahoma City.¹⁶ The final plans for the building were modified when Fidelity National Bank became a major tenant, and the building was named for the bank.¹⁷ The builder hired was G. E. Bass of Jackson, Mississippi, and other initial leases went to other Felix firms.

The bank designed its interior spaces in the building to accommodate a new customer/bank relationship. While the bank's original interior is no longer extant as shown in these historic photos below, the banking lobby provided the sought-after open space, obvious and customer-ready service desks, open and accessible teller windows, and a bright interior. The original vault area sparkled with marble and aluminum.



Fidelity National Building, Fidelity National Bank, c. 1957¹⁸

The building's construction started at the same time (1956) that the First National Bank began construction on an International Style thirteen-story addition to its c. 1931 Art Deco building. Both Sorey Hill and Sorey designs, the Fidelity National Building maintained a significantly bolder and more vital image as a stand-alone building than the First National Bank's addition.

¹⁶ The Oklahoman, December 2, 1955.

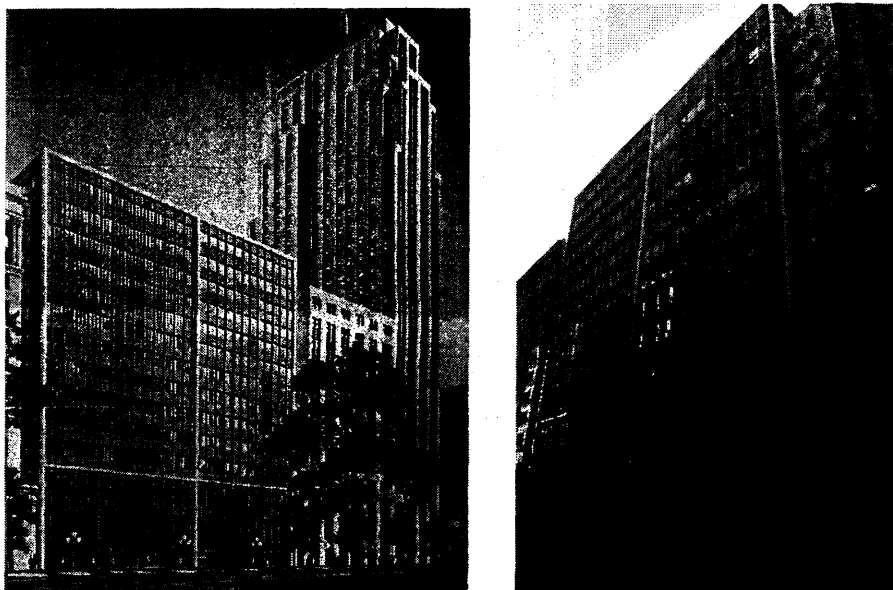
¹⁷ The Richardson Building was demolished to gain space for the new three story addition. The Oklahoman, May 30, 1956.

¹⁸ The photos are copies from the Fidelity National Bank scrapbook, provided by John R. Calhoun, AICP, Planner II, Planning Dept., City of Oklahoma City in November 2005. Also see "Businessmen Show Faith in Future," The Oklahoman, October 25, 1959.

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First National Bank Addition c. 1956-57 (left in drawing),
First National Bank Addition, 120 Park Ave., Looking ESE

Another bank in Oklahoma City followed with its version of an International Style banking facility – the Liberty National Bank (the Petroleum Club Building) built in c. 1957, but this sixteen-story building was a combination of a fourteen floor parking garage, and two floors of office space with the ground floor used for drive-up bank windows. A skywalk connected the building to the older Liberty National Bank Building (originally Ramsey Tower) across the street.

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Petroleum Club Building, c. 1957, 120 Robert S. Kerr Ave.¹⁹
Looking NW and NE along Couch Dr.

The process of defining what kind of place the downtown would become after World War II was not resolved, however, by the construction of a new International Style building or building additions. Eventually Urban Renewal came to Oklahoma City, as well as a new city plan designed by I.M. Pei, and with these elements, the demolition of much of the older community core occurred as many smaller early buildings of wood, brick and stone were replaced with buildings constructed of concrete, steel and glass.

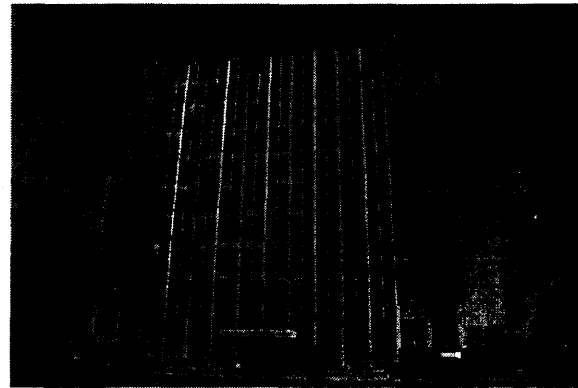
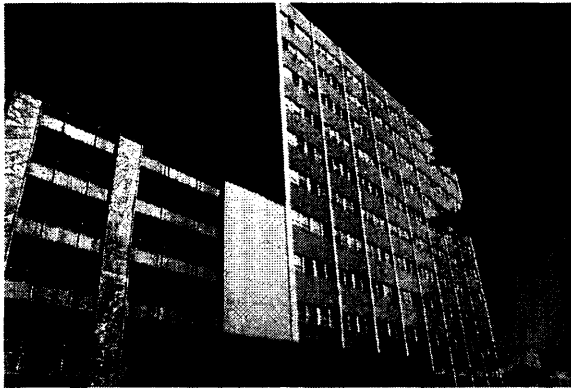
The early use of the International Style in Oklahoma City did leave an architectural record, however. The buildings with Miesian-like attributes that remain from the late 1950s era are: the Sorey Hill and Sorey Fidelity National Building, the Sorey Hill and Sorey addition to the First National Center, and the Petroleum Club Building (mostly parking garage). The only non-bank building using elements of the International Style is the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company building (now the Department of Environmental Quality) and it has fewer modern attributes than the Fidelity National Building. The Fidelity National Building in comparison to others remains the best example of the International Style in a stand alone office building in the city.

¹⁹ The Oklahoman, October 27, 1957. The building was called such because the Petroleum Club occupied the 15th floor and the Magnolia Petroleum Company occupied the 16th floor.

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Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., 707 N. Robinson,
Looking NE and W

The “International Style” is the American term applied to Bauhaus architecture which began Germany prior to World War II. The Bauhaus School was Germany's most important and avant-garde art and design school. Begun in 1919, many Bauhaus instructors left Germany when the Nazis forced the school to close in 1933. By the end of the war, many of Europe's most famous architectural practitioners had immigrated to the United States. There were three directors of the Bauhaus before it closed: Walter Gropius (1919-1927), Hannes Meyer (1928-1930) and Mies van der Rohe (1930-1933). During the years under Gropius (1919-1927), he and his partner Adolf Meyer merged the output of Gropius's architectural office with school. Thus, the output of Bauhaus in these years is the output of Gropius: the Sommerfeld house in Berlin, the Otte house in Berlin, the Auerbach house in Jena, and the competition design for the Chicago Tribune Tower, which brought the school attention. The 1926 Bauhaus building in Dessau is also attributed to Gropius.

In the two years under the Swiss Communist architect Hannes Meyer, the architectural focus shifted away from aesthetics and towards functionality. But there were major commissions: one by the city of Dessau for five tightly designed "Laubenganghäuser" (apartment buildings with balcony access), which are still in use today, and another for the headquarters of the Federal School of the German Trade Unions (ADGB) in Bernau bei Berlin. Meyer's approach was to research users' needs and the scientifically develop a design solution.

When director, Mies van der Rohe rejected Meyer's politics, his supporters, and his architectural approach. As opposed to Gropius's “study of essentials”, and Meyer's research into user requirements, Mies advocated a “spatial implementation of intellectual decisions”, which effectively meant he adopted his own aesthetics.²⁰

In the United States, the most influential of these Bauhaus directors were Gropius and van der Rohe. Initially Gropius was probably the more influential, but the two differed in approach in the United States as they had in Germany.²¹

²⁰ <http://www.essential-architecture.com/STYLE/STY-M04.htm>

²¹ Fitch, James Marston. American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It (New York, NY: Shocken Books, 1966), 276.

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Gropius's theory of architecture was that industrial production must provide a basis for a modern aesthetic, just as handicraft had been the basis of a pre-industrial standard of beauty. He believed that cooperation was essential from the design studio to the production line, and that to produce good modern design, there had to be an overarching philosophy of what was taught in an architectural school. Mies van der Rohe's differed from Gropius in that his canons of design influence were those of the craftsman rather than the theoretician. His lessons were to be taught visually, not verbally. While their work was complementary, Gropius was socially responsible, technologically conscious and rational, while van der Rohe was rational but more detached in his approach to architecture.²² Between the two, it was van der Rohe's approach to the structure of a building that eventually made his influence more dominant and his building forms popular. He was not interested particularly in the various uses to which a building might be used (hence interior flexibility), but in what appeared to be a practical piece-by-piece approach to building.²³ Most of his American buildings are different expressions of the same building – either a skeletal rectangular block or a rectangular pavilion composed of a platform base, columns and roof slab.²⁴ Whether the block or pavilion, Mies's designs were popular because they were economical to construct. No craftsmen were needed for decorative details, and the regularity of the grid exterior made mass production of building elements economical

The Fidelity National Building is a Sorey Hill and Sorey version of the skeletal rectangular block. Built with Mies's notion of "skin over bones", the lightweight aluminum and enameled-steel skin just covers the bones of steel and concrete. The building emphasizes the volume of its floor space rather than the building's exterior style. It rejects historical references and ornamentation, and denies the traditional sense of a primary façade. Strips of windows and solid planes helped create a horizontal feeling with floors of office space stacked on top of one another. Balance and regularity are fostered as artificial symmetry is avoided.²⁵

One aspect of the International Style was that the design solutions were indifferent to location, site, and climate and buildings of this style were constructed in countries other than the United States. It was one of the reasons it was called 'international'; the style made no reference to local history or national vernacular.

The Miesian box conveyed the preferred image of modernism to Oklahoma City. Builders could get a desired image for their clients with relative economy. Similar in many ways to Mies's own Chicago Lake Shore Apartments are the Lever Building, Pepsi World Headquarters, the Seagram Building, the Midtown-Manhattan Branch of the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, as well as many other buildings, the Fidelity National Building/Park Harvey Center was constructed at a time when the International Style was popular in the United States.

²² Ibid., 270, 275.

²³ Jordy, William H. The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century, American Buildings and Their Architects, Volume 5 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1972), 226.

²⁴ Ibid., 228.

²⁵ Poppeliers John C., S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy B. Schwartz. What Style is it? A Guide to American Architecture (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1983), 92.

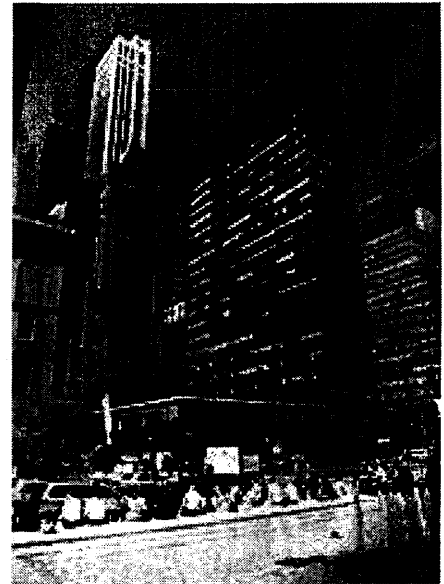
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Fidelity National Building
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Chicago Lake View Apartments
Mies van der Rohe (1948-51)



Lever Building, New York City
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,
Phillip Johnson (1954-1958)



Pepsi World Headquarters, New York City
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (1959)



Seagram Building, New York City
Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (1951-52)

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Fidelity National Building
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In 1958, the Fidelity National Building was sold to Tenoke Associates of New York. Owner Sylvanus Felix held an option to purchase the building back after ten years, and took a twenty-one year lease for the management of the building.²⁶

The Fidelity National Bank remained in the building through 1972. When no longer associated with the bank, the building was renamed the Park Harvey Center in c. 1974 for its location at the junction of Park and Harvey Avenues. Another bank, Central National Bank and Trust, moved into the building in 1978 but left in 1982 when Couch Drive, which provided access to drive-through banking, was closed to accommodate the construction of Leadership Square (c. 1984).²⁷ The now-named Park Harvey Center remained an office building in the downtown, but occupancy declined over the years. In 1971, the building had only seventy-five percent occupancy.²⁸

In 2005, the Gardner-Tanenbaum Group purchased the Park Harvey Center to convert it from office space to high-rise housing units. As downtown Oklahoma City began to redefine itself with an arts district, the Ford Center (an arena) and Bricktown (a warehouse district now entertainment/restaurant area), a renewed interest in downtown housing has led to several successful office/housing conversions.

The Fidelity National Building is eligible for architectural significance as the best example of Oklahoma City's early International Style buildings. It was one of the largest office buildings constructed in the post-World War II era. Faced with the emergence of retail flight to suburban areas which began in the 1950s, downtown promoters and banks constructed new buildings and building additions in the International Style which they believed would visually maintain the downtown core as a significant and modern-day location for business. Contemporary with the construction of other significant International Style buildings in cities such as New York, the Oklahoma City architectural firm of Sorey Hill and Sorey demonstrated its knowledge and acceptance of a style that embraced the vision of a more modern world after World War II. The Fidelity National Building, when compared with other Oklahoma City buildings using characteristics of the International Style, is the best and earliest in a stand-alone high-rise building.

²⁶ The Oklahoman, June 17, 1958.

²⁷ These changes were noted in the Polk's Oklahoma City Phone Directories. The building is listed in 1974 as the Fidelity National Building and in 1975 as the Park Harvey Center so the change could have occurred in either year.

²⁸ The Oklahoman, September 26, 1971.

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PHOTOS

Fidelity National Bank scrapbook, provided by John R. Calhoun, AICP, Planner II, Planning Dept., City of Oklahoma City.

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Fidelity National Building
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PHOTO LOG

Photographer: Cathy Ambler

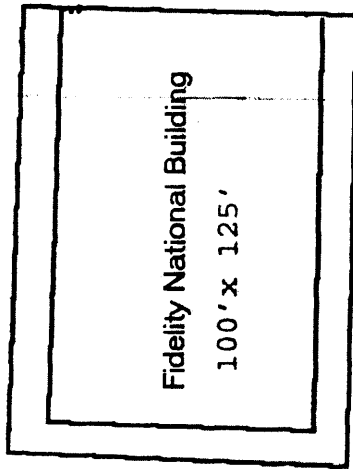
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2	Fidelity National Building	West Façade	NE	11/1/2007
3	Fidelity National Building	West Façade Primary Entry	E	11/1/2007
4	Fidelity National Building	South Façade	N	11/1/2007
5	Fidelity National Building	North Façade	SW	11/1/2007
6	Fidelity National Building	Interior – Lobby	N	11/1/2007
7	Fidelity National Building	Interior – Lobby	E	11/1/2007
8	Fidelity National Building	South Canopy	NE	11/20/2007
9	Fidelity National Building	Sixteenth Floor Elevators	SE	11/20/2007

Oklahoma City, OK

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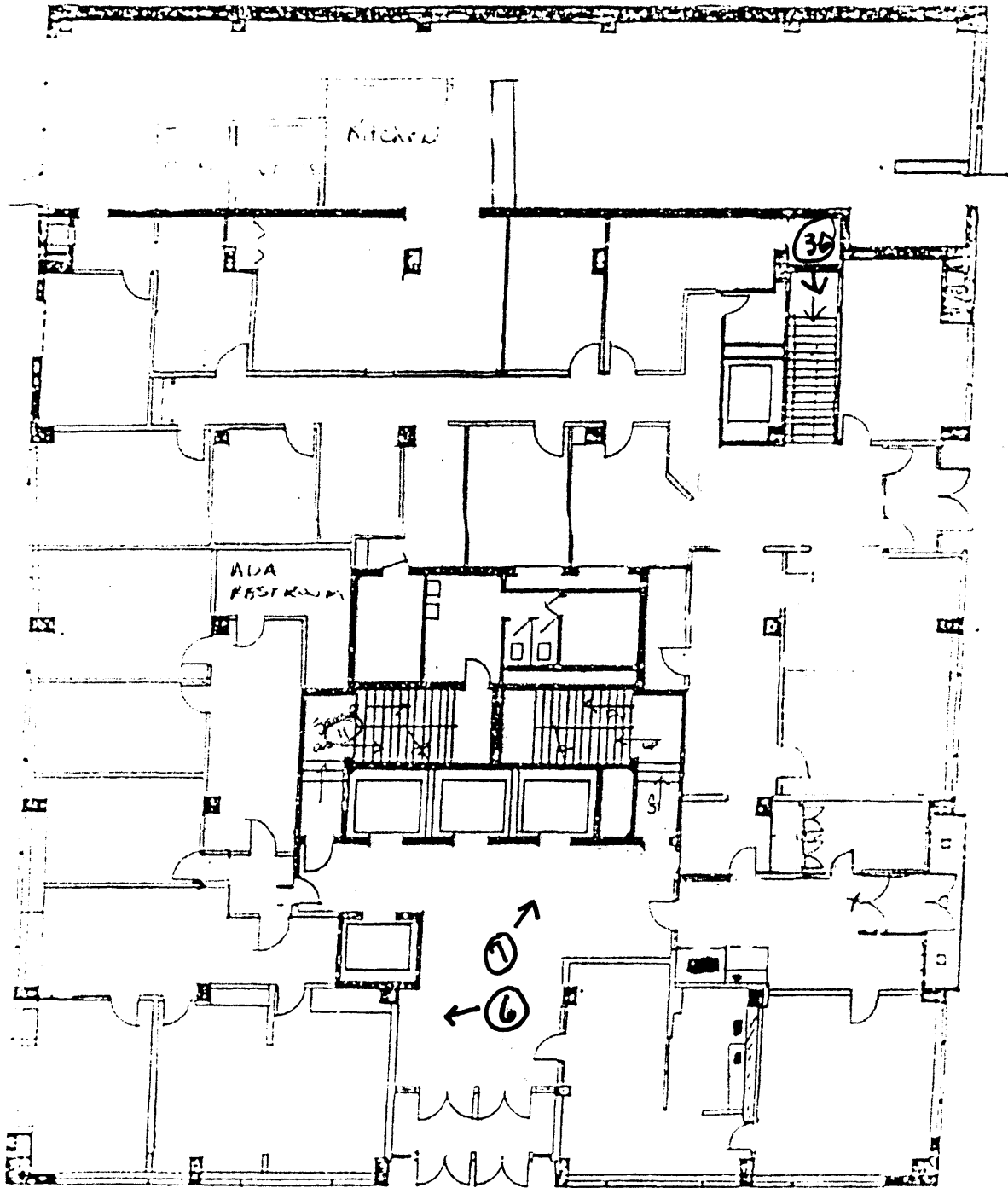
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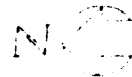
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Photo Key



Fidelity National Building (Park Harvey Center), 200 N. Harvey Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK
1st Floor and Lobby (Plan is prior to conversion to loft apartments)

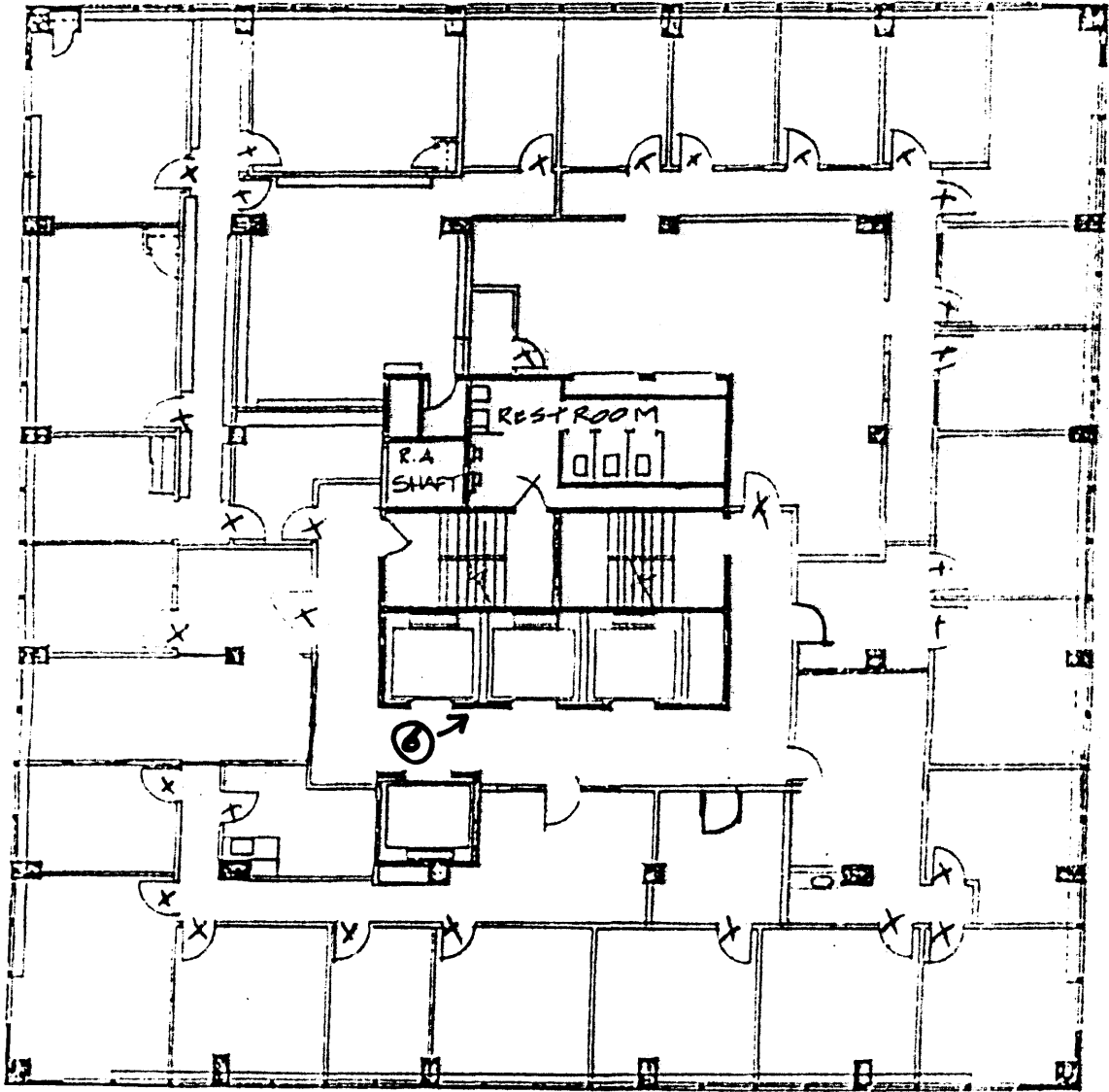


PARK HARVEY CENTER
200 NORTH HARVEY
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

1st

OFFICE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT
 analytical space planners - interior
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Photo Key



Fidelity National Building (Park Harvey Center), 200 N. Harvey Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK
16th Floor (Plan is prior to conversion to loft apartments)

~~PARK-HARVEY CENTER~~
~~PARK & NORTH HARVEY~~
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

6th

OFFICE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
analytical space planners - interior designer
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