

CITY OF HIGH POINT

AGENDA ITEM



TITLE: National Register Nomination Application Recommendation for One Plaza Center Property (101 S. Main Street)

FROM: Sushil Nepal, AICP
Planning & Development Director

MEETING DATE: January 16, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING: No

ADVERTISED DATE/BY: January 6 & 9, 2024
Planning & Development

ATTACHMENTS: A. Historic Preservation Commission Memo
B. Location Map
C. National Register Nomination Report
D. Fact Sheet: National Register Criteria for Evaluation

PURPOSE:

To review and make a recommendation as to whether the nomination meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places after providing a forum for public comment.

BACKGROUND:

This fulfills the City's obligation under the State Historic Preservation Office's Certified Local Government (CLG) program to provide an opportunity for public comment on the nomination, and for Council to comment on the nomination. The High Point Historic Preservation Commission is expected to review and make a recommendation on the nomination at their January 10, 2024 meeting.

BUDGET IMPACT:

There is no budget impact.

RECOMMENDATION/ACTION REQUESTED:

A. Staff Recommendation
Staff recommended approval of this request as outlined in the attached memo.

B. Historic Preservation Commission Action

The Historic Preservation Commission is scheduled to review the National Register Nomination application and make a recommendation at its January 10, 2024 meeting.

C. City Council Action

City Council is requested to provide a recommendation to the NC National Register Advisory Committee that the One Plaza Center property located at 101 S. Main Street be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as the nomination meets the required criteria.



To: Historic Preservation Commission Members

From: David Fencel, Senior Planner

Meeting Date: January 10, 2024

Subject: National Register Nomination for the One Plaza Center Property,
101 S. Main Street

PURPOSE:

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is provided an opportunity to comment on proposed National Register nominations within High Point by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to the nomination being presented to the North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee (NRAC). Under the terms of its certification agreement with the SHPO, the HPC is also to provide an opportunity for public comment on any proposed National Register nominations.

Attached for the Commission's review and recommendation is the nomination application for the One Plaza Center Property to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The One Plaza Center Property is located at 101 S. Main Street and is owned by FHP High Street LLC who have contracted with Commonwealth Preservation Group to prepare the nomination.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

One Plaza Center, also known as First Citizens Bank Plaza and Showplace West, is located on an approximately 0.56 acre property situated on a narrow rectangular parcel facing E. High Avenue and situated between S. Main Street to the west and S. Wrenn Street to the east. The property features an eight-story, c. 1974 Brutalist bank building, an associated mid-century plaza along the front of the building to the north, and a c. 2000 addition at the northeast corner of the building over the plaza. Architect J. Norman Pease, Jr. of J.N. Pease designed the office tower in the Brutalist style reflecting shifting mid-century architectural trends in institutional and office buildings of that time.

The nomination report states that the One Plaza Center property retains strong architectural integrity of design, materials and workmanship representative of its mid-century construction. The exterior of the building and plaza are largely intact and, with the exception of the pyramidal addition, in keeping with their original design. The primary materials and design elements, such as the use of concrete, pre-cast concrete panels, and aluminum and glass, with an emphasis on mass and scale, demonstrate



the original design and workmanship associated with mid-century building technology and the Brutalist style.

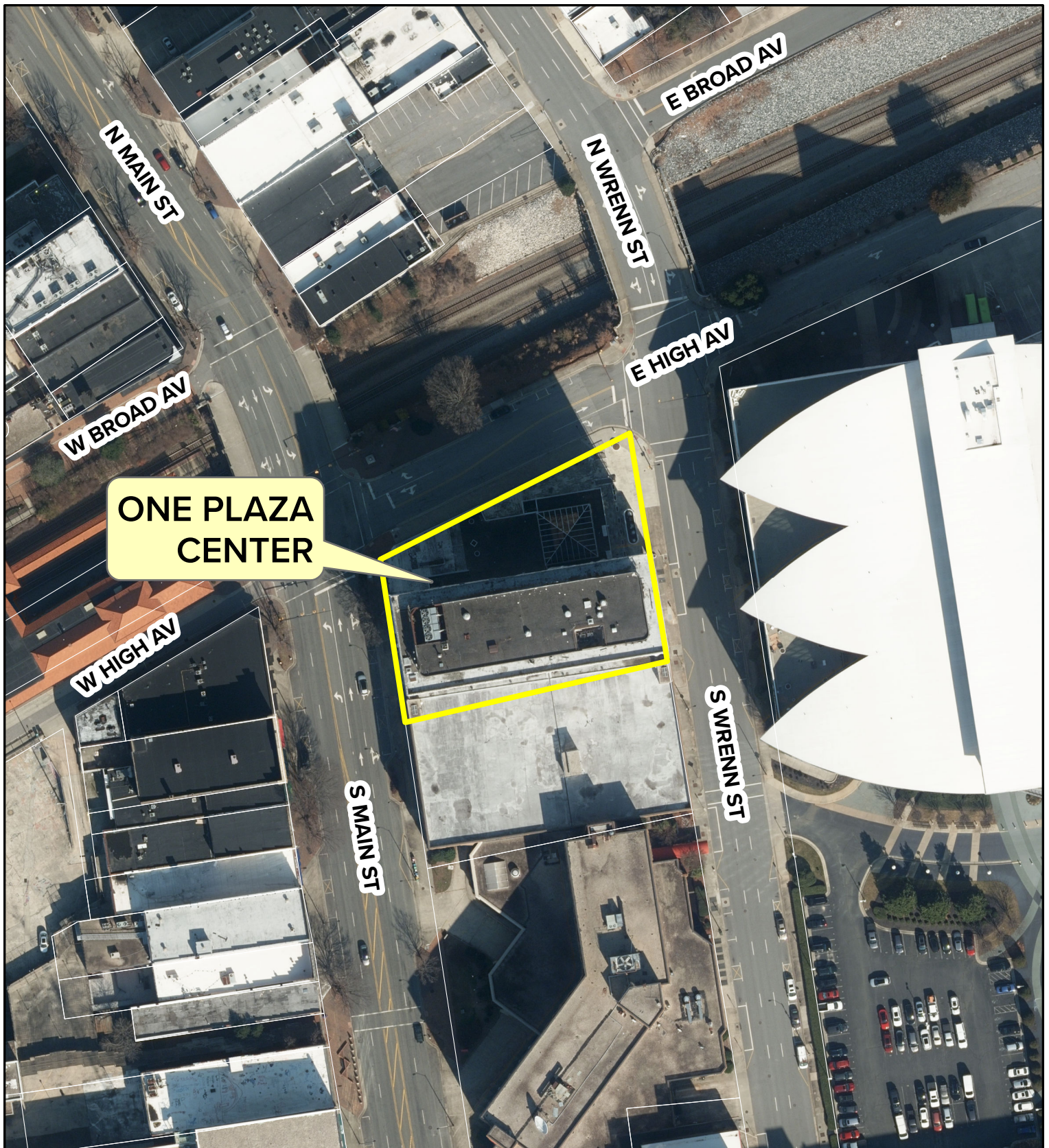
The One Plaza Center property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development, as well as under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. During the mid-twentieth century, the City of High Point and the High Point Redevelopment Commission (HPRC) carried out an urban renewal program that reshaped the city. In 1962, the city initiated the East Central Urban Renewal Project to address their concerns that the central business district had become dilapidated and an inadequate representation of a thriving industrial city. One Plaza Center, due to its key location in the heart of downtown High Point, was a high priority for the HPRC and it is one of the few remaining mid-twentieth century office buildings in downtown High Point. The resulting Brutalist style office building, designed by prominent North Carolina architect James Norman Pease, Jr. is an integral piece of the fabric of downtown High Point and served as the physical and visual center of the mid-twentieth century commercial district. The development of One Plaza Center represents the effective use of Urban Renewal funds and served as an impetus to a broader shift in community planning and development in High Point. One Plaza Center's period of significance begins in 1970, when construction of the building commenced through 1974, when construction was completed, and tenants began moving into the building.

This application will be presented to, and reviewed by, the North Carolina National Register Advisory Committee (NRAC) at its meeting on February 8, 2024. The Commission is being asked to comment on whether the One Plaza Center Property meets the requirements for listing in the National Register, to take any public comment offered regarding the application, and to make a recommendation to the NC NRAC. To assist in determining the merit of the application, a fact sheet entitled *National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office, has been included. All comments will be forwarded to the NC NRAC before the February 8 meeting. A favorable review by the NC NRAC will mean an endorsement by the State Historic Preservation Officer, Dr. Darin J. Waters, and the application will be forwarded to the Department of the Interior for final review and listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

RECOMMENDATION / ACTION REQUESTED:

Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission recommend approval of the National Register nomination for the One Plaza Center Property.

Attachments: Location Map
 National Register Criteria for Evaluation
 National Register Nomination Application



**ONE PLAZA CENTER
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY (FEB. 2022)**

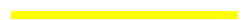
CITY OF
high point.

PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT



Scale: 1" = 100'

Subject Property Boundary



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.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: One Plaza CenterOther names/site number: First Citizens Bank Plaza; Showplace West

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 101 S. Main StreetCity or town: High PointState: NCCounty: GuilfordNot For Publication: ☐ N/AVicinity: ☐ N/A**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 statewideX local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A BX C DSignature of certifying official/Title: State Historic Preservation Officer DateNorth Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

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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

1

0

1

0

2

Noncontributing

0

0

0

0

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Office Building, Bank

RECREATION/CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation, Plaza

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Brutalism

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; METAL/aluminum, steel; GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

One Plaza Center is located in an urban environment in the central downtown commercial district of High Point, North Carolina. The approximately .56-acre property is situated on a narrow rectangular parcel facing East High Avenue and situated between South Main Street to the west and South Wrenn Street to the east. The property features an eight-story, c.1974 Brutalist bank building, an associated mid-century plaza along the front of the building to the north, and a c.2000 addition at the northeast corner of the building over the plaza. The building abuts public sidewalks on the east and west, with no setback from the street, and is attached to a parking garage via a modern hyphen to the south. One Plaza Center is located just south of sunken railroad tracks that bisect the downtown, and the dense commercial core includes small plazas with street trees and benches at the intersection of Main and High Streets. Architect J. Norman Pease, Jr. of J.N. Pease designed the office tower in the Brutalist style reflecting shifting mid-century architectural trends in institutional and office buildings of that time. The building retains strong architectural integrity of design, materials, and workmanship representative of its mid-century construction. The exterior of the building and plaza are largely intact and, with the exception of the pyramidal addition, in keeping with their original design. The primary materials and design elements, such as the use of concrete, pre-cast concrete panels, and aluminum and

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glass, with an emphasis on mass and scale, demonstrate the original design and workmanship associated with mid-century building technology and the Brutalist style.

Narrative Description

Setting

One Plaza Center is located in an urban environment in the central downtown commercial district of High Point, North Carolina. The approximately .56-acre property is situated on a narrow rectangular parcel facing East High Avenue. It is bound by South Main Street to the west, East High Avenue to the north, South Wrenn Street to the east, and a large modern parking garage immediately adjacent to the south. The building has zero setback from the street and public sidewalks on the east and west sides and is attached to the parking garage via a modern hyphen that contains storage space to the rear/south. However, on the north side, the building is set back from the street and features a small trapezoidal-shaped, open-air sunken plaza. This concrete and paved, multi-level plaza takes up the remaining portion of the lot on the north side and is bound by the public sidewalk to the west, north, and east. It is partially enclosed with a painted hollow metal railing, and tiered concrete steps provide access to each level on the east and west sides. A square enclosure over the below-grade restaurant, with a pyramidal glass skylight roof, is located on the east side of the plaza on the lower level. Two flag poles are located just to the northeast of the skylight room along the south side of the east staircase. Although the plaza consists exclusively of impervious surfaces, a few square and round planter boxes are situated throughout the plaza. The only other vegetation nearby is a single planter bed and street tree at the northwest corner of the building between the public sidewalk and South Main Street.

Inventory

One Plaza Center, 101 South Main Street

Primary Resource: **Bank Tower (Building), Stories 8, Style: Brutalist, c.1970**

Contributing *Total: 1*

Secondary Resource: **Plaza (Structure), Style: Brutalist, c.1970, 2000**

Contributing *Total: 1*

Description

Bank Tower and Plaza

This eight-story, ten-bay, rectangular masonry and steel-frame building, designed by prominent North Carolina architect, James Norman Pease, Jr., was completed in c.1974. Consistent with the characteristics of the Brutalist style architecture of the mid-twentieth century, the building emphasizes mass and solidarity with its use of concrete load-bearing walls and supports, pre-cast concrete panels, minimal ornamentation, and minimal fenestration. The building has a concrete foundation, concrete walls, and a flat membrane roof with a tall concrete parapet and a

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corrugated metal penthouse. An inset concrete walkway runs along the width of the façade at the building's first story. Thin, tapered inverted isosceles/trapezoid-shaped concrete vertical supports the upper stories. The first story also features an aluminum-and-glass storefront curtain wall. The façade of the upper stories is lined with symmetrically-placed, slightly recessed, fixed aluminum-frame, four-light windows separated by pre-cast concrete columns and pre-cast concrete horizontal bands between each floor. The rear (south) elevation abuts the adjacent, but separately developed municipal parking deck, along the first three stories. The upper stories of the rear elevation feature symmetrically spaced, steel frame eight-light wire-glass windows. The east and west elevations of the upper stories are devoid of openings and are clad in a combination of square and rectangular pre-cast concrete panels.

The primary entrance is located at the east end of the north elevation (façade) south of the pyramidal addition. This slightly recessed entrance features a double-leaf glass door with large sidelights and an arched transom encased within a larger rectangular transom window. Another prominent entrance is centrally located on the west side facing South Main Street and consists of a double-leaf aluminum-and-glass door with sidelights and a cantilevered metal canopy. Two secondary entrances are located on the east elevation. These include a single-leaf aluminum-and-glass door with sidelights and a single-leaf metal slab door with a single-light transom. Additionally, a corrugated metal, roll-up loading door is located in the southernmost bay on the east elevation.

Interior

On the interior, the first floor opens to a small, somewhat central, entrance and elevator lobby that provides access to the historic bank teller space, offices, the loading dock, and the adjacent parking garage. The ornamental lobby features a decorative-patterned tile floor, ornate wood-paneled elevator doors with a circular floral motif, an ornate, multi-armed highly polished brass (or brass-plated) central chandelier, and marble walls flanking the elevators. Double-leaf wood-and-glass doors on the west side of the lobby lead to a large, open bank teller space that can be accessed directly from South Main Street through a small aluminum-and-glass vestibule. The lobby and bank teller space are separated by an unpainted, wood-paneled wall with pilasters, chair-rail, and an overdoor with an elliptical fan directly above the entrance. The bank teller space has exposed concrete floors, square, concrete load-bearing columns that have been wrapped with wood paneling, and an exposed wood rafter ceiling. The historic Mosler bank vault is located at the southwest corner of the space and retains the original metal vault door, screening, and door surround.

Additional offices are located at the northeast corner of the building accessed from the lobby on the east side. This space is separated from the lobby by a full-height aluminum-and-glass curtain wall and is accessed through unpainted, wood-paneled double-leaf doors. On the southeast corner of the floor, there are restrooms and a long east/west corridor leading to a rectangular loading bay that can be accessed directly off South Wrenn Street. In addition to the central elevators, there are two enclosed staircases providing access to the upper floors. One is located on the east side of the building behind the elevators and is accessed off the rear corridor. The other staircase is located at the southwest corner of the building and is accessed from the exterior. Other first-floor finishes are limited to exposed concrete block, dropped acoustical tile

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ceilings (ATC), and tile wainscoting in the restrooms. Finishes have been removed from the office spaces.

The upper floors, with the exception of the eighth floor, largely feature an open plan with ghosting of former offices and circulation situated around two central, rectangular partitioned enclosures that feature restrooms, the interior staircase, and the elevators. On these floors, most of the finishes – both historic and otherwise - have been removed. What remains is exposed concrete floors, an exposed concrete ceiling structure, and exposed systems. Limited patches of ceramic and/or asbestos tile remain in patches on each of the upper floors. On the eighth floor, the executive staff office plan is intact along with the floor and wall finishes, doors, and trim. Like the lower floors, the plan includes a central rectangular section for the elevators and interior stairs. The remainder of the offices are accessed off a primary corridor that encircles the central section. The offices largely feature carpeted floors, wallpapered walls, and acoustical tile ceilings. While the date of the ACT is currently unknown, it appears that the finished ceiling height has remained consistent. Some of the rooms feature horizontal wood veneer paneling and wainscoting. Interior doors largely include flush, hollow-core wood doors. The conference room is more ornate and features wood-paneled wainscoting and applied wood crown molding and is accessed via double-leaf wood-paneled doors. Additionally, original double-leaf, twenty-seven coffered-paneled wood doors, flanked by fluted wood pilasters, remain and provide access to a prominent office space. While intact, and representative of the building's historic finishes that have largely been lost, extensive water damage has severely deteriorated the eighth-floor finishes.

Basement

The tower basement, which connects to the sunken plaza, features multiple offices, storage space, and a restaurant. Like the upper floors, the basement features a central rectangular partition containing the elevators, elevator lobby, central staircase, and restrooms. Along the rear, or south side, of the basement, a long east/west corridor provides access to offices along the rear wall. The north side of the basement features the restaurant space, including a kitchen and a bar with direct access to the exterior plaza. In c.2000, a one-story, square addition with a pyramidal glass atrium was added at the northeast corner of the building over the plaza. The addition provided additional covered and conditioned space for the restaurant and the design of the new space allowed for additional natural light.

Complimentary to the design of the office tower, this addition has concrete walls and emphasizes mass and solidarity. In addition to the aluminum-and-glass pyramidal roof, it has fixed, single-light windows along the upper wall and five entrances, which consist of single-leaf and double-leaf wood-and-glass paneled doors, accessing the sunken plaza on the west side. Level with the basement, additional rooms, including restrooms and a mechanical space, are located underneath the upper levels of the plaza along the northeast and southwest corners. The basement includes a mixture of exposed concrete flooring and concrete flooring finished with ceramic tile. Other basement finishes include wallpapered drywall walls, dropped acoustical tile ceilings, and ceramic tile walls in the kitchen. Some areas of the public space feature marble walls matching those in the elevator lobby. Additionally, the restaurant and bar space features wood-paneled wainscoting and trim.

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The concrete and paved, multi-level plaza takes up the remaining portion of the lot on the north side of the building, and it is partially enclosed with a painted hollow metal railing. Wide, terraced concrete steps provide access to the lowest level of the plaza, accessing the restaurant and pyramidal atrium, directly from South Main Street and the walkway at the northwest corner of the building. This expansive staircase features a central railing, as well as a rectangular planter bed feature situated mid-way down the stairs. This planter bed feature is constructed of concrete and has a plant bed over a louvered vent at one end and a t-shaped aluminum monument sign identifying the restaurant at the other. The lowest level of the plaza, adjacent to the basement restaurant space, is open and features concrete pavers. On the east side of the plaza, at street level, a large, wide, concrete cylindrical monument sign identifies the different suites within the building. At the northeast corner, concrete stairs lead to a mid-level concrete platform that extends along the northeastern end along East High Avenue. At the west end of this section, additional concrete steps lead to the sidewalk along East High Avenue. Additionally, a ramp, which is separated from the main level of the plaza to the east by a row of planter boxes, is located along the east side of the plaza and connects to the mid-level landing on the north side. A painted hollow metal railing separates the ramp and the mid-level plaza from the lower level to the south and west. Two flag poles, which are situated on a concrete base, are located just to the northeast of the skylight room along the south side of the east staircase. Although the plaza consists exclusively of impervious surfaces, a few square and round planter boxes are situated throughout the plaza.

Integrity Analysis

Although the pyramidal skylight atrium was added outside the period of significance, the exterior of the building retains strong architectural integrity of design, materials, and workmanship as a mid-century bank building. The exterior of the building and plaza are largely intact and in keeping with their original design. The primary materials and design elements, such as the use of concrete, pre-cast concrete panels, and aluminum and glass, with an emphasis on mass and scale, demonstrate the original design and workmanship associated with mid-century building technology and the Brutalist style. While there has been loss of the historic plan and finishes on several of the upper floors, this is typical for an office building which often sees interior partition walls and finishes changed out numerous times. Despite alterations and loss of more-temporal material, the plan remains intact in the primary public first-floor spaces and the bank vault remains. Additionally, the primary circulation around the central staircase and elevator lobby remains intact on each floor. Furthermore, historic finishes and trim remain in the entrance lobby and throughout much of the eighth floor. The majority of the windows and the first-floor storefront have also been retained. Additionally, the building's relationship with the sunken plaza has been preserved. Although the surrounding landscape has changed a little over time, and some nearby historic resources have disappeared from the landscape, the building retains integrity of location and setting because the site itself is largely intact with much of it appearing similar to what it did in the mid-twentieth century, and the surrounding environment maintains its dense urban commercial setting. Additionally, One Center Plaza retains integrity of feeling as a mid-twentieth-century office building and outdoor gathering space and its association with its areas and period of significance.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- ☐ 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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT/Urban Renewal
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1970-1974

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pease, James Norman, Jr. (J.N. Pease and Associates)

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

One Plaza Center is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under **Criterion A** in the area of **Community Planning and Development**, as well as under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture**. During the mid-twentieth century, the City of High Point and the High Point Redevelopment Commission (HPRC) carried out an urban renewal program that reshaped the city. In 1962, the city initiated the East Central Urban Renewal Project to address their concerns that the central business district had become dilapidated. Due to its key location in the heart of downtown High Point, One Plaza Center was a high-priority for the HPRC and it is one of the few remaining mid-twentieth-century office buildings in downtown High Point. The resulting Brutalist style office building, designed by prominent North Carolina architect James Norman Pease, Jr., is an integral piece of the fabric of downtown High Point and served as the physical and visual center of the mid-twentieth century commercial district.¹ Its development and construction represent the effective use of Urban Renewal funds and served as an impetus to a broader shift in community planning and development in High Point. One Plaza Center's period of significance begins in 1970, when construction on the building commenced through 1974, when construction was completed, and tenants began moving into the building.

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

High Point was founded in 1859 at the highest point of the North Carolina railroad where it intersected with the Great Plank Road.² The first furniture factory opened in High Point in 1888, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the city was one of the leading furniture manufacturing centers in the south.³ The furniture industry, along with textiles and hosiery, continued to boom as the city grew in the early twentieth century. Although the city's focus eventually shifted from manufacturing to showcasing furniture, by the 1980s, the city had become known as "The Furniture Capital of the World."⁴

Like many American cities during the mid-twentieth century, High Point began to suburbanize, and less development and attention was focused downtown. In the late 1950s, High Point viewed its downtown as dated and stagnant and inadequate representation of a thriving industrial city. As

¹City Planning and Architectural Associates, "Core Area Study, High Point, North Carolina: Visual Analysis," March 1975; Frank Warren, "Elwood Hotel Removal Is Considered," *The High Point Enterprise* (January 24, 1964).

²"Geography, History, and Climate," The City of High Point, North Carolina. Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://www.highpointnc.gov/2007/Geography-History-Climate>.

³Richard B. McCaslin, "High Point," NCpedia (2006). Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://www.ncpedia.org/high-point/>; "Geography, History, and Climate."

⁴"Key Industries: Furniture," ANCHOR: A North Carolina History Online Resource. Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/key-industries-furniture/>; "Find Inspiration Here," Visit High Point. Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://visithighpoint.com/>.

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a first step to rejuvenate the central business district and draw people back downtown, the city published "Pilot Plan: A Preliminary Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan for The High Point Planning Area" in 1960. The Pilot Plan set forth ambitious expectations for population growth, manufacturing, retail, and wholesale and distributing industries by 1980.⁵ The city planners who authored the plan advocated for a plethora of changes that needed to be undertaken to make downtown High Point, "a desirable place for the location of commerce and industry which will constitute a well-balanced economy."⁶

After two years, High Point's Downtown Development Corporation sought an outside opinion on how best to revitalize the downtown area and hired City Planning Associates Inc. (CPAI) of Mishawaka, Indiana. CPAI was a full-service community planning and urban design consulting firm. During the 1960s, the firm added "Urban Renewal Consultants," to their portfolio of services, and over the course of the decade authored numerous studies and redevelopment plans. In 1962, CPAI completed the "Central Business District Study," which presented their findings on the conditions of downtown High Point and recommendations for redevelopment.⁷ The study claimed that the current central business district did not fully "express... the vitality of the people of High Point," and suggested solutions relating to the aesthetics and cohesion of the central business district (CBD) utilizing data from extensive surveys of the district's built environment, traffic patterns, and assessments of its general feeling. The overall goal of this plan was to create a healthier downtown that was more suited to modern methods of transportation, a burgeoning middle class, and the need for increased speculative office space.

CPAI's report indicated several key areas of concern that contributed to stalling downtown development. In the 1930s, the train tracks that bisected the town were lowered to help alleviate traffic and safety concerns. The unintended consequence of the below-grade train-track, however, was a physically divided central business district. Another issue cited in the report was the high upper floor vacancy rates throughout the CBD due to a lack of elevator services in historic buildings.⁸ However, to CPAI, the most glaring issue was the built environment's deterioration and inconsistent streetscapes. During the mid-twentieth century, downtown buildings were competing with sleek, modern suburban development such as low-rise retail strip malls and office centers with vast, dedicated parking lots. In addition to deterioration, inconsistent uses had resulted in unharmonious storefronts and streetscapes. According to CPAI, the first step in downtown revitalization was to cover the railroad tracks and create a series of pedestrian plazas.⁹ CPAI also proposed that downtown buildings should be converted to single uses and updated to modern standards, and to create a unified vision for downtown High Point.¹⁰

⁵ "Pilot Plan: A Preliminary Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan for The High Point Planning Area," City Planning Department of High Point North Carolina (January 1960). High Point Collection Planning Vertical File, High Point Library.

⁶ "Pilot Plan," 3.

⁷ City Planning Associates, Inc., "Central Business District Study, High Point, North Carolina," (September 25, 1962).

⁸ City Planning Associates, Inc., "Central Business District Study," 2, 16, 29.

⁹ City Planning Associates, Inc., "Central Business District Study."

¹⁰ City Planning Associates, Inc., "Central Business District Study," 37.

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Like many cities facing redevelopment challenges during the mid-twentieth century, the City of High Point applied for federal urban renewal funds to address the desired changes to the CBD and other areas of the city that faced similar challenges. The North Carolina General Assembly passed the Urban Redevelopment Law in 1951 to permit municipalities to participate in the Federal Urban Renewal program established under the United States Housing Act of 1949.¹¹ The Federal Urban Renewal program was designed to provide federal funding to assist cities in removing and redeveloping areas deemed as "blighted" and/or "slums," and many cities utilized these funds to redevelop their dated and deteriorating downtowns and neighborhoods. By the late 1950s, High Point had acknowledged the need for redevelopment. In 1961, City Council initiated participation in the Urban Renewal Program by formally identifying target areas within the city, a requirement to petition for inclusion in the program.¹² Within days of City Council approval, the High Point Mayor appointed five citizens to serve on the Redevelopment Commission. Once incorporated, the High Point Redevelopment Commission had authority to "purchase property, issue bonds and file condemnation proceedings" as part of the city's urban renewal program.¹³

In 1962, the City Planning Associates also prepared a proposal for High Point's East Central Urban Renewal Project, NC R-23. Rather than undertaking multiple smaller or area-focused projects like other cities in North Carolina, High Point opted to include all of the areas slated for urban renewal and redevelopment into one project. The boundary of the project included the CBD, as well as nearby residential areas (Figure 1). The project boundary was divided into three segments – A, B, and C – primarily for land acquisition purposes. Segment C included the CBD project area (Figure 1).¹⁴

One of the areas identified for acquisition in Section C was downtown's most sought-after plot of land located at the southern intersections of S. Main, E. High, and S. Wrenn Streets. At the time, the site, located in the physical heart of the commercial downtown, was occupied by the c. 1905 Elwood Hotel. Although not specifically mentioned in the East Central Urban Renewal Project, as development plans evolved, City officials, community members, and developers frequently cited the property as pivotal for "the success of the entire High Point downtown renewal," for its proximity to the commercial core and other planned renewal projects such as the never-realized pedestrian plaza over the railroad tracks.¹⁵ Real estate consulting firm Frederick M. Babcock and Co. provided recommendations for the site's future use, and described the property as "the most prominent one" in the area where the construction of a "good, modern building" would promote increased values for neighboring properties.¹⁶

¹¹ "Urban Renewal, After Slow Start, Now is Reshaping City," *Journal and Sentinel* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina, March 10, 1963).

¹² "Council Initiates City Participation In Urban Renewal," *The High Point Enterprise* (March 9, 1961).

¹³ "Mayor Appoints Commission on Urban Renewal," *The High Point Enterprise*, March 16, 1961.

¹⁴ City Planning Associates, Inc., *Summary Report: East Central Urban Renewal Project, N.C. R-23, High Point, North Carolina* (1962).

¹⁵ Frank Warren, "Elwood Hotel Removal Is Considered," *The High Point Enterprise* (January 24, 1964).

¹⁶ Warren, "Elwood Hotel Removal Is Considered."

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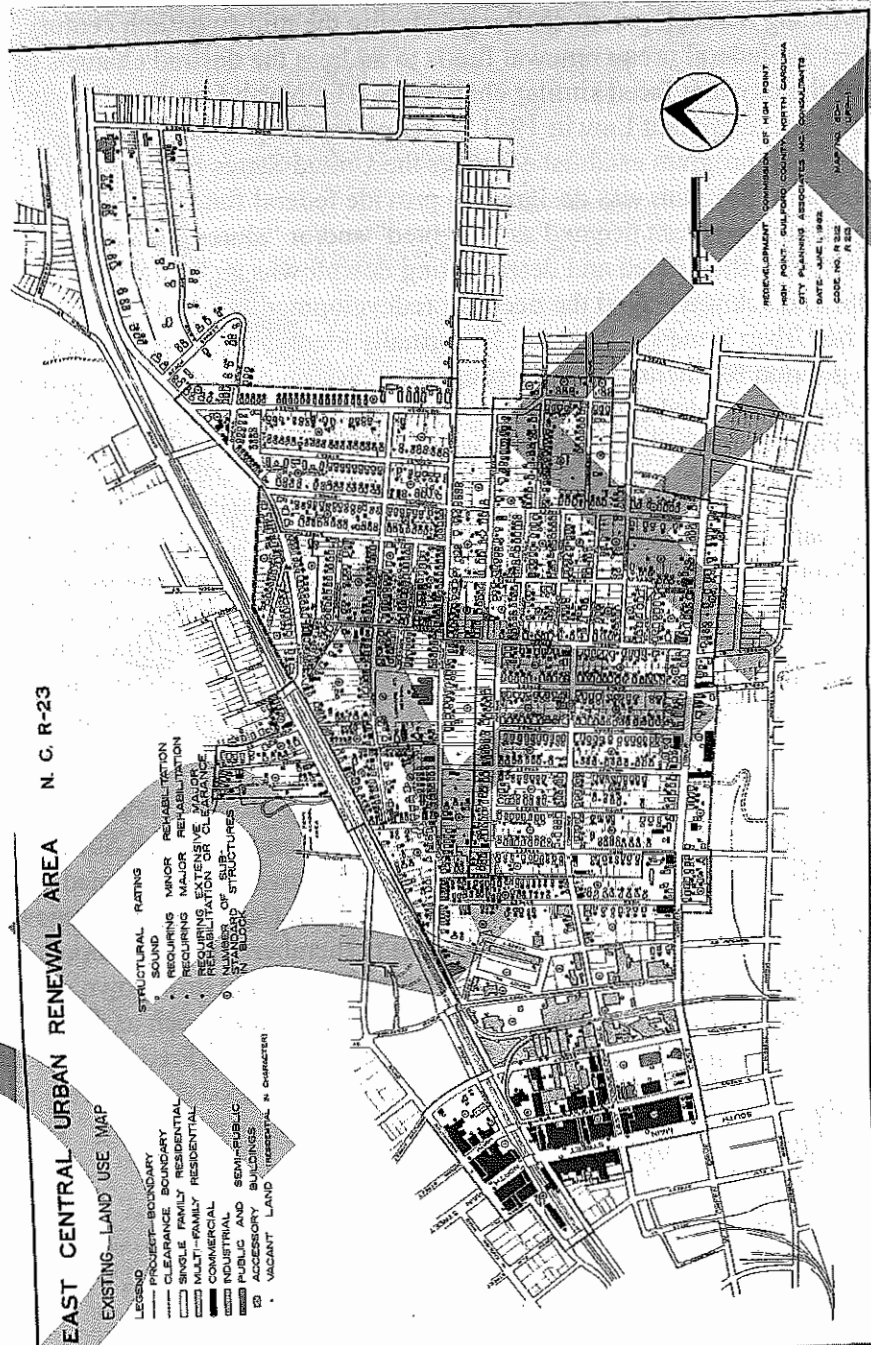


Figure 1. East Central Urban Renewal Area Existing Land Use Map depicting the project boundary. The central business district is located on the western end of the project area. City Planning Associates, Inc., "Summary Report: East Central Urban Renewal Project, N.C. R-23, High Point, North Carolina," (1962).

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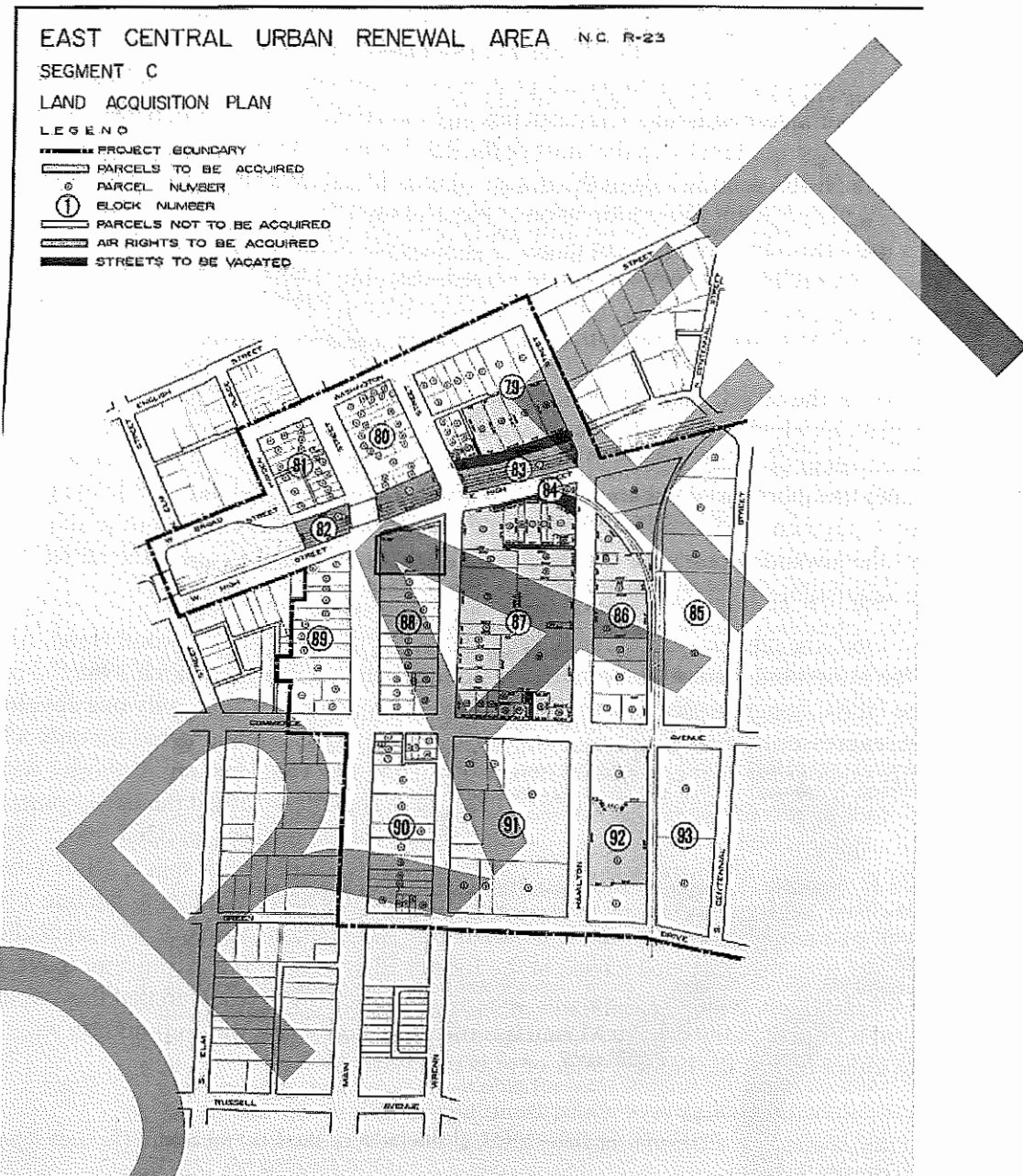


Figure 2: Map of the East Central Urban Renewal Area's Section C - Land Acquisition Plan. City Planning Associates, Inc., "Summary Report: East Central Urban Renewal Project, N.C. R-23, High Point, North Carolina," (1962). NOTE: Red boundary indicates approximate location of the future One Plaza Center.

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The HPRC received multiple proposals for the site of the Elwood Hotel and spent months considering the redevelopment of the parcel and evaluating the quality of the submissions. Several of the proposals focused on the adaptive reuse of the site while others proposed the construction of a modern building. City officials and the HPRC, however, determined that demolishing the historic hotel was the most cost-effective and responsible action the city could take. While the HPRC acknowledged the beauty of the old building, they rendered it obsolete and unsafe. *The High Point Enterprise* wrote, "Experts say High Point's largest and oldest landmark - the Elwood Hotel - has got to go."¹⁷ In the eyes of the HPRC, the success of the entire downtown revitalization efforts rested on redeveloping this plot of land, and as *The Enterprise* wrote, anything less than full redevelopment of the site was a "gamble on perpetuating the blight which is helping to sap the lifeblood of the downtown area."¹⁸

In January 1967, the HPRC used its authority to condemn and acquire property for redevelopment, gaining ownership of the Elwood Site, as it was then known.¹⁹ Although initially settling on payment of a little over \$500,000, the former property owner filed a condemnation suit regarding the appropriate valuation of the Elwood Hotel in April 1969. While the previous owner sought payment of \$1 million, the jury ultimately awarded \$942,500 for the site. The outcome of the lawsuit, along with similar condemnation hearings, prompted the HPRC to limit any future acquisitions by condemnation proceedings whenever possible.²⁰

By August 1967, the city was entertaining bids for the demolition of the Elwood Hotel. After selecting the lowest bid, demolition proceeded from September 1967 to March 1968.²¹ For nine months the HPRC sought a proposal for the site's redevelopment. At first, only one developer, A. Pat Brown, expressed interest in the property. Brown submitted an opening bid for only \$75,000 and the only other group that expressed interest was the High Point Housing Authority with plans to develop a high-rise home for the elderly.²² The city eventually awarded the development project to L. Ray McMahan who offered the highest bid for the property at \$207,000.²³ While all of the other proposals submitted to the HPRC recommended commercial space, office towers, or apartments, McMahan's plan differentiated itself from the rest as he planned to include a built-in mall, as well as a large banking space. The Merchants' Association, however, was staunchly opposed to any plan that included a bank at the former Elwood site, preferring a more retail-oriented plan or a large retail development. Despite this, the HPRC resolved that they would not receive a bid higher than the one McMahan has offered, and by law, the commission was required to either accept the highest offer or reject all bids.²⁴

¹⁷ Frank Warren, "By a Department Store: Elwood Hotel Replacement Is Proposed," *The High Point Enterprise* (February 9, 1964).

¹⁸ Warren, "By a Department Store: Elwood Hotel Replacement Is Proposed,"

¹⁹ Ray Hubbard, "Urban Renewal Progress Report: Remaking The Face Of A City," *The High Point Enterprise* (May 8, 1966), Forrest Cates, "Mayor Appoints Commission on Urban Renewal," *The High Point Enterprise* (March 16, 1961).

²⁰ "Looting The Taxpayers," *The High Point Enterprise* (April 7, 1969).

²¹ "Elwood Bids Are Opened," *The High Point Enterprise* (December 6, 1968).

²² "Elwood Site Interest Slim," *The High Point Enterprise* (November 29, 1968).

²³ Ray Hubbard, "Price Tab on Elwood Soars; Four Bids Are Entered," *The High Point Enterprise* (December 4, 1968).

²⁴ Hubbard, "Price Tab on Elwood Soars; Four Bids Are Entered."

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In January 1969, the sale of the site to McMahan was approved by the City Council with one opposing vote.²⁵ The dissenting voter worried about the lack of confirmed tenants and the vagueness of the plan, and wanted to iron out specifics before the federal government stamped its seal of approval on the project. McMahan, however, contested that no large tenants would commit themselves to the site until its purchase was secured and development initiated.

In May 1969, McMahan unveiled the preliminary development plan for the site which included a four-story modern building (Figure 3). The plan itself featured equal square footage for banking and retail on the first floor, a second-floor cafeteria, and office space on the third and fourth floors. The estimated cost of the building was \$2.5 million.²⁶ First Citizens Bank and Trust, the eventual owners of the building, and First Union Bank expressed interest in the space; other interested tenants included Mann Drug, three additional banks, and S&W Cafeteria.²⁷ The Merchants' Association was disappointed with the inclusion of a bank in roughly half of the retail space on the first floor, but supported the idea of Mann Drug and S&W Cafeteria locating within the building. The Association cited issues of traffic congestion caused by drive-thru bank windows, the need to "strengthen the downtown retail area," and the opinion that it was unfair that the city turned down the original offer of \$75,000 by Mr. Brown who proposed a similar plan to make the building a primary space for banking.²⁸

Initially, it was announced that McMahan's proposal was not accepted, and the issues of internal layout were hotly debated at a series of city council meetings. However, on May 11, 1969, city council approved the plan, and lifted restrictions in order to allow McMahan to continue with the most feasible plan, including placing a bank inside the building. McMahan's proposal was deemed by city council to be "attractive, combining utility and a type of easiness uncommon to business structure on high-priced land."²⁹ The detailed development plans for One Plaza Center, as the site had been named, were unveiled for HPRC and Housing and Urban Development Officials in September 1969. The four-story Brutalist building was designed by Charlotte-based architect J. N. Pease, who was known for his Bauhaus-influenced modern designs.³⁰ Ultimately the large department store component of the project was not pursued due to a lack of viable parking, but space for retail was still included in the plan. Although the building's design was for at least four stories, McMahan stated that there was enough tenant-interest to possibly increase the building to five, eight, or even a dozen floors.³¹

²⁵ Forrest Cates, "Elwood Site Sale Okayed By Council: One Vote Is Cast Against," *The High Point Enterprise* (January 16, 1969).

²⁶ Ray Hubbard, "No Approval Yet: Elwood Action Still Stymied," *The High Point Enterprise* (May 6, 1969).

²⁷ Ray Hubbard, "No Lease Is Signed Yet: Mann Drug Is A Top Elwood Prospect," *The High Point Enterprise* (May 9, 1969).

²⁸ Hubbard, "No Lease Is Signed Yet: Mann Drug Is A Top Elwood Prospect."

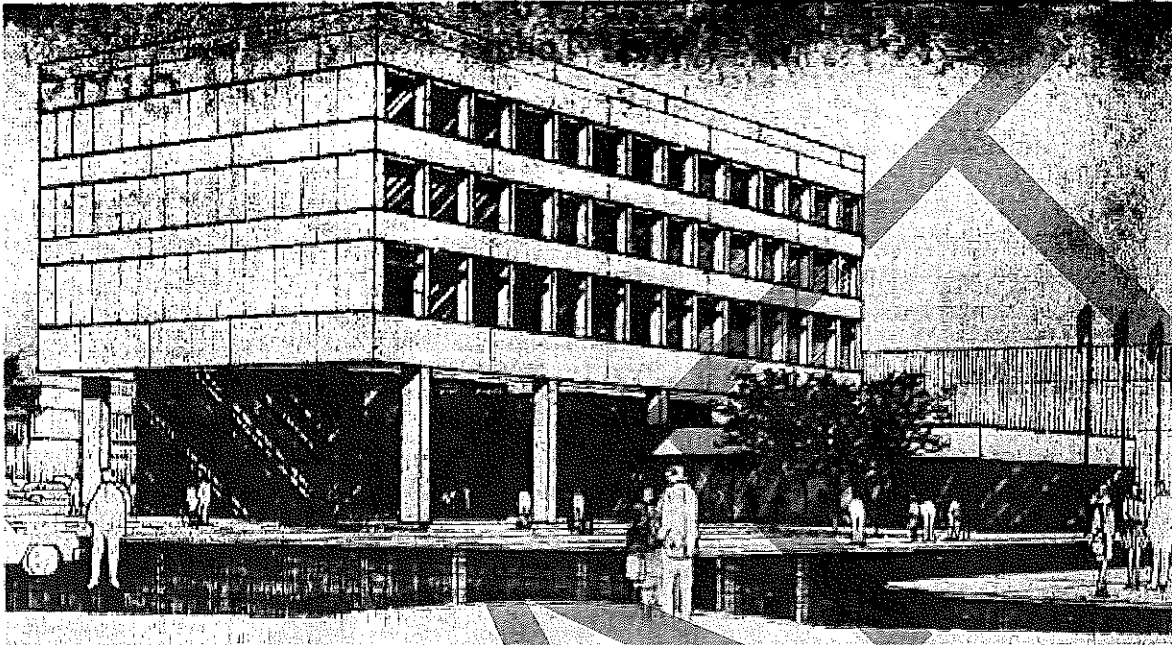
²⁹ "Elwood Redevelopment Needs to Be Pressed," *The High Point Enterprise* (May 11, 1969).

³⁰ Benjamin Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina: A History and Guide to the City's Houses, Churches, and Public Buildings* (Charleston: The History Press, 2008), 110.

³¹ "One Plaza Center Replacing Old Elwood," *The High Point Enterprise* (September 17, 1969).

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ARCHITECT'S DRAWING OF LATEST PLANS FOR ELWOOD SITE DEVELOPMENT

Figure 3: "Architect's Drawing of Latest Plans for Elwood Site Development," May 1969. "No Approval Yet: Elwood Action Still Stymied," The High Point Enterprise (May 6, 1969).

In addition to the four or more stories that would be included for banking, retail, cafeteria, and office space, the design for One Plaza Center included a sunken pedestrian plaza. As cities became increasingly autocentric, architects and planners began reshaping the ways in which people interacted with the built environment through the introduction of plazas. In many cities during the mid-twentieth century, high-rise developers were encouraged to add plazas to their designs; planners viewed the addition as a way to "create public space on private land," while architects appreciated the neutral setting to display their building design.³² Plazas were characterized by a combination of hardscape and landscape features – typically minimalist raised planters that were integrated into the plaza floor – which welcomed pedestrians off of the city sidewalks with their integrated benches or step designs that encouraged momentary respite. In addition to their functional purpose, plazas served as a podium or stage for the towers that rose from them, and combined the role of architect and urban planner in the way that they encouraged users to move through built environment. By the 1970s, plazas were a typical design component of many downtown office buildings, and the use of sunken plazas in particular had become a J.N. Pease Associates trademark.³³

³² Witold Rybczynski, *Making Cities Work: Prospects and Policies for Urban America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³³ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 110.

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By November 1970, George W. Kane, Inc contracting company was selected as the prime contractor and construction on One Plaza Center was underway. McMahan was now confident the building could secure enough tenants for additional floors, and obtained a building permit for the construction of an eight-story building; officials told *The High Point Enterprise* that the foundations were being prepared to support as many as twelve floors.³⁴ City officials, including Mayor Robert Davis, viewed the new One Plaza Center development as a key to "rejuvenating development" of the CBD, with City Planning Director Duncan McIntyre stating, "If this comes through as projected, then downtown may be revitalized."³⁵

The building was substantially complete by 1973, and in 1974 it was purchased by Neuse, Inc., a real estate subsidiary of First-Citizens Bank and Trust Co.³⁶ The property was purchased for about \$5 million, and at this time the bank renamed One Plaza Center to First-Citizens Bank Plaza to prevent any confusion since the bank intended to place their name on the building.³⁷ The completed building was designed to include tenant-designed office space, and advertised its modern features such as "year-around temperature comfort control" and "four high-speed synchronized elevators." Additional advertised amenities included a mini-mall shopping facility, which was associated with the sunken pedestrian plaza.³⁸

The first tenants to move into the almost-completed building were Seidman & Seidman, one of the largest accounting firms in the world who had worked in the furniture and textiles industries for generations. Beginning in the spring of 1974, Seidman & Seidman occupied most of the sixth floor and moved to One Plaza Center (then named First-Citizens Bank Plaza) for its expanded space and modern amenities. The firm's North Carolina operations often involved consultation on predictions for the future of the furniture industry. Their role as accountants and market evaluators was integral to the success of dozens of local furniture companies and manufacturers that they represented from their One Plaza Center office.

³⁴ "One Plaza Center Boosts Building Permits Way Up," *The High Point Enterprise* (November 13, 1970).

³⁵ "Downtown is At Crossroads Again," *The High Point Enterprise* (September 13, 1970).

³⁶ "One Plaza Bought By Bank," *The High Point Enterprise* (January 14, 1974).

³⁷ "One Plaza Renamed for Bank," *The High Point Enterprise* (April 30, 1974).

³⁸ "Your Prestigious New Business Address: First-Citizens Bank Plaza," *The High Point Enterprise* (July 28, 1974).

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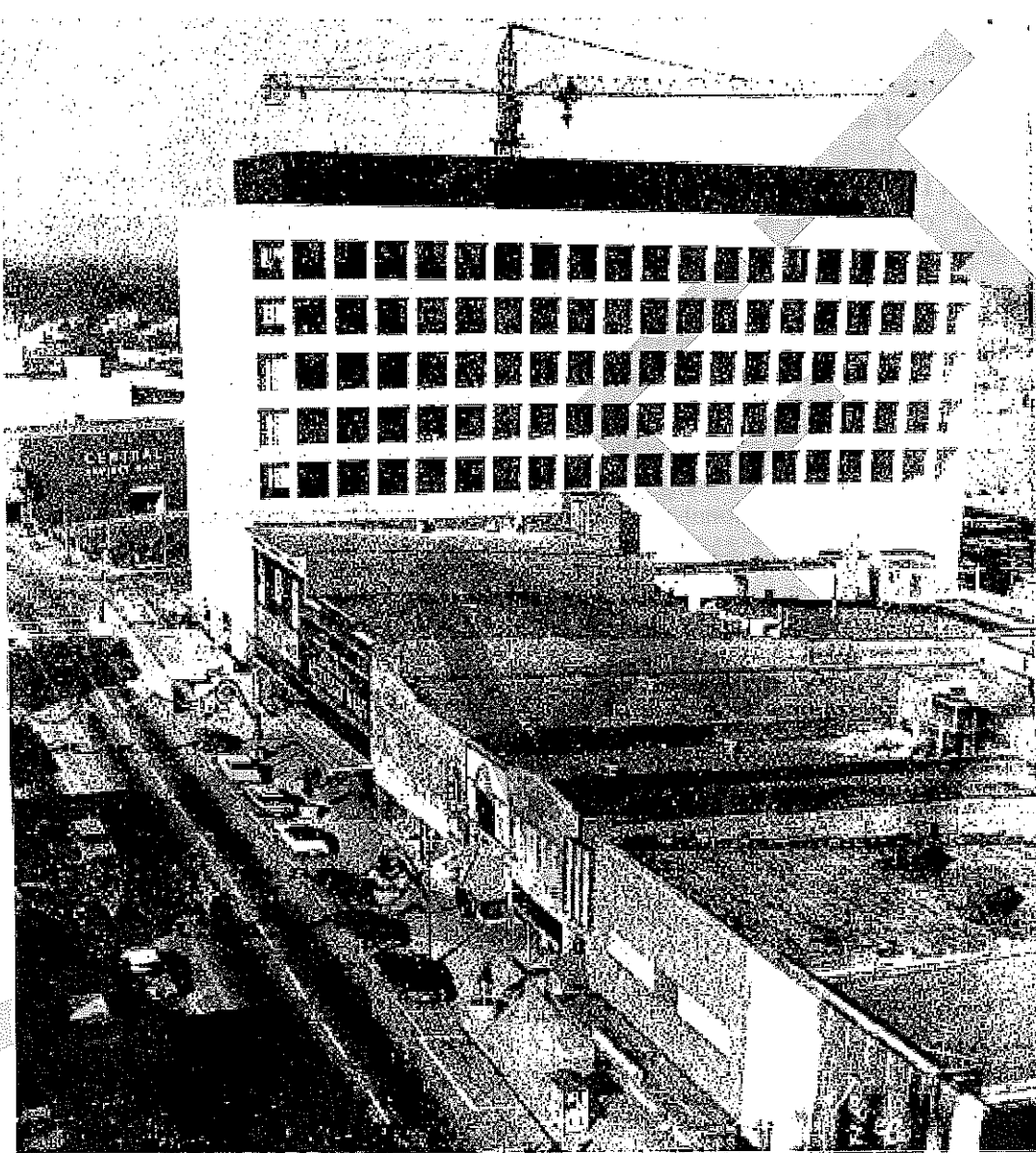


Figure 4: One Plaza Center substantially completed, with First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. expected to occupy the first floor. "Changes on the Skyline," The High Point Enterprise (December 9, 1973).

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The High Point Municipal Band brought 200 shoppers and workers to the FESTIVAL-IN-THE-PLAZA.



The sounds of blue grass by The Renegades had many feet tapping at the noonline concert.

Figure 5: Photos from the 1978 lunchtime series "FESTIVAL-IN-THE-PLAZA." "Significant Investments," *Downtown High Point* (September 1978), 3.

One Plaza Center officially opened as First-Citizens Bank Plaza on June 3, 1974, celebrating with a free, open-to-the-public "Festival in the First-Citizens Bank Plaza."³⁹ The event was a success with the community, and began a series of public events held in the plaza. Those involved with the development had hoped that the plaza's pedestrian mall and fountain would help draw people back downtown, and as intended, the completed pedestrian plaza provided a space for gathering and entertainment.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1970s the space continued to be used, with events such as the "FESTIVAL-IN-THE-PLAZA" series that provided free, public entertainment during lunchtime, coordinated by the High Point Economic Development Corporation. A *Downtown High Point* newsletter described the events stating that 200-300 "secretaries, bankers, lawyers, businessmen and women, families, merchants and shoppers have spent lunch hours in the Plaza listening and watching the entertainment presented."⁴¹ The success of these events is representative of the utilization of pedestrian plazas in American urban centers nationally during the mid-to-late twentieth century.

³⁹ "You're Invited Tonight! Festival in the First-Citizens Bank Plaza," *The High Point Enterprise* (June 3, 1974).

⁴⁰ "Thomasville Trying to Salvage Heart of Town," *The High Point Enterprise* (August 11, 1974).

⁴¹ "Significant Investments," *Downtown High Point* (Pamphlet) (September 1978), 3.

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Although some of the designs, proposals, and goals for urban renewal improvements in High Point - such as covering the railroad tracks and creating a pedestrian plaza in their place - were never realized, One Plaza Center (First-Citizens Bank Plaza) was successful in its goal to contribute positively to the revitalization of downtown High Point. Within four years of its completion, the City acknowledged the building as the "most notable" of the important developments within the city.⁴² While other smaller office buildings were constructed in downtown High Point during this period, it is significant as the largest high rise office tower constructed in the Brutalist style in downtown during the second half of the twentieth century.⁴³ In a 1975 visual analysis by City Planning and Architectural Associates of Chapel Hill, One Plaza Center's "size, color, and bold simple design" as well as its "highly visible location" made the building "an effective visual mid-point for the primary commercial area."⁴⁴ Decades later, architectural historian Benjamin Briggs described the building as setting "a progressive tone for the development of downtown High Point" while redefining the CBD's appearance.⁴⁵ One Plaza Center continued operation as a bank and retail space with offices on the upper floors until 2006 when it was purchased by the nearby Furniture Showplace and utilized as additional furniture showroom space and offices for the company.

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

One Plaza Center is locally significant under **Criterion A** in the area of **Community Planning and Development** for its key role in the redevelopment plans for the City of High Point's central business district and the East Central Urban Renewal Project (NC R-23). Like many cities facing redevelopment challenges during the mid-twentieth century, the City of High Point applied for federal urban renewal funds to address the desired changes to the CBD and other areas of the city. The North Carolina General Assembly passed the Urban Redevelopment Law in 1951 to permit municipalities to participate in the Federal Urban Renewal program established under the United States Housing Act of 1949.⁴⁶ The Federal Urban Renewal program was designed to provide federal funding to assist cities in removing and redeveloping areas deemed as blighted, and many cities utilized these funds to redevelop their dated and deteriorating downtowns and neighborhoods. By the late 1950s, High Point had acknowledged the need for redevelopment. In 1961, City Council initiated participation in the Urban Renewal Program by formally identifying target areas within the city, a requirement to petition for inclusion in the program.⁴⁷

The mid-twentieth century history of urban planning in High Point is inextricably tied to urban renewal, and the development of One Plaza Center was pivotal to the city's plan to revitalize its downtown. In the late 1950s, furniture and hosiery mills began to consolidate and move out of downtown and into larger suburban facilities. Additionally, the economic boom of the post-war period and the housing opportunities afforded by the G.I. Bill led many of its citizens to move

⁴² "Significant Investments," *Downtown High Point* (Pamphlet) (September 1978), 2.

⁴³ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 76, 110.

⁴⁴ City Planning and Architectural Associates, "Core Area Study, High Point, North Carolina: Visual Analysis," March 1975, 23.

⁴⁵ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 76.

⁴⁶ "Urban Renewal, After Slow Start, Now is Reshaping City," *Journal and Sentinel* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina, March 10, 1963).

⁴⁷ "Council Initiates City Participation In Urban Renewal," *The High Point Enterprise* (March 9, 1961).

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away from the town's urban center. As a result, and like many other American cities, High Point enlisted planning expertise and Federal Urban Renewal dollars to re-envision its downtown and attract economic activity back to the central business district.

One Plaza Center became the heart of High Point's downtown urban renewal effort. The design for One Plaza Center sought to provide banking, commercial, and retail space in a prominent and central location that would encourage people to return downtown while improving the aesthetics of the central business district. The redevelopment plans for the CBD called for modern development, a common symbol of progress and forward movement for urban areas during the 1960s and 1970s. The incorporation of a sunken plaza, typical of J.N. Pease Associates design, provided public access to private property and encouraged pedestrian use of the space. The plaza became a public gathering space in High Point for festivals and events, as well as everyday use for outdoor respite. Because of the site's location in central downtown, city officials, developers, and citizens recognized the importance of the site and the potential of the One Plaza Center development to turn around downtown's outlook, rejuvenate the CBD, and encourage future development.

When completed in 1974, commercial and professional tenants such as Seidman & Seidman and First Citizens Bank utilized this key location to conduct business that supported the success of High Point's various industries and manufacturers. Creating a space with all of the conveniences of modern technology was critical to bringing economic activity back to the heart of High Point. One Plaza Center reshaped the city skyline and re-activated downtown. While many of the proposals of the City's Urban Renewal plan never came to fruition, One Plaza Center remains as a symbol of the program's impact on High Point.

Criterion C: Architecture

One Plaza Center is also locally significant under **Criterion C for Architecture** as an excellent local example of Brutalist architecture. The building is also one of only a few local examples the work of North Carolina architect James Norman Pease, and is representative of his modernist design aesthetic.⁴⁸ This eight-story Brutalist building sits on one of the most prominent locations in High Point and represents a style of architecture and era of history that is largely absent from the downtown High Point built environment and is an integral piece of High Point's skyline.⁴⁹ Consistent with mid-twentieth century Brutalist style architecture, the building emphasizes mass and solidarity through the use of concrete load-bearing walls and supports, pre-cast concrete panels, minimal ornamentation, and minimal fenestration. The building's structure was originally designed to accommodate future expansions up to a maximum of twelve floors. This design feature was almost immediately invoked as the original mock-ups included only four stories.

⁴⁸ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 76, 110; The Wachovia Building at 200 North Main Street is a four-story, New Formalist style bank building designed by Odell and Associates, and constructed in 1965. It is cited as the other of two large office buildings constructed in High Point during the 1960s and 1970s. Briggs also notes that the building's exterior sheathing was replaced in the 1990s.

⁴⁹ The building's original design in 1969 included four stories, however, by the time the permits were pulled in November 1970, it included 8 stories. See historical overview narrative for additional information.

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Interest generated in leasing opportunities resulted in the construction of an eight-story building at the time of permit approval and completion.

While other mid-twentieth century buildings were constructed in High Point, One Plaza Center is one of only a few examples of Brutalism constructed in the downtown area during the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁰ Among the other examples of Brutalist influence in High Point is the Wachovia Building located just a few blocks away from One Plaza Center at 200 N Main Street. Completed in 1964, the building is three stories tall and was designed by Odell and Associates of Charlotte. While One Plaza Center demonstrates more International Style influences such as its ribbon-like windows and floating base, the Wachovia Building is more characteristic of New Formalist architecture with its emphasized flat capital and thin colonnade. Though the Wachovia Building retains its general modernist design features, its aggregate concrete exterior (a characteristic element of Brutalist influence) was re-sheathed with smooth tile in the late 1990s.⁵¹

One Plaza Center was designed by J.N. Pease and Associates, a Charlotte-based architecture firm. James Norman Pease Jr. rose quickly through the ranks of his father's company, eventually becoming the chief designer for the firm. He was responsible for designing a number of projects in Charlotte during the urban renewal period and was known for his modernist designs. The firm's shift to modern architecture was cemented when Pease replaced a Beaux Arts-trained architect as chief designer.⁵² Modern design components such as the sunken plaza featured at One Plaza Center were a trademark of his, and the firm's, work.⁵³ One of Pease's most notable designs is the Charlotte Observer Building, completed in 1972. Pease's design for One Plaza Center bears some resemblance to the firm's design for the Charlotte Government Center complex in 1966 (Figure 6). Other works by Pease included the former First Union Tower in Charlotte (renamed Two Wells Fargo Tower), Duke Power Computer Center, also located in Charlotte, and at least ten buildings on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill.⁵⁴ While Pease's architectural legacy in Charlotte is well documented, One Plaza Center offers a representative example of the firm's modernist portfolio outside its headquarters in Charlotte.

⁵⁰ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 76, 110.

⁵¹ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*.

⁵² "Charlotte Observer Building," North Carolina Landmarks Commission, n.d.

⁵³ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 110.

⁵⁴ NC Modernist, "James Norman Pease, Jr (FAIA(1921-2009)," <https://www.ncmodernist.org/pease.htm>

(accessed 13 Nov 2023. Note: Pease's designs varied across the spectrum in Modernist designs and the firm demonstrated experience in various stylistic idioms. Current research has not revealed how frequently Brutalism was used in Pease designs.

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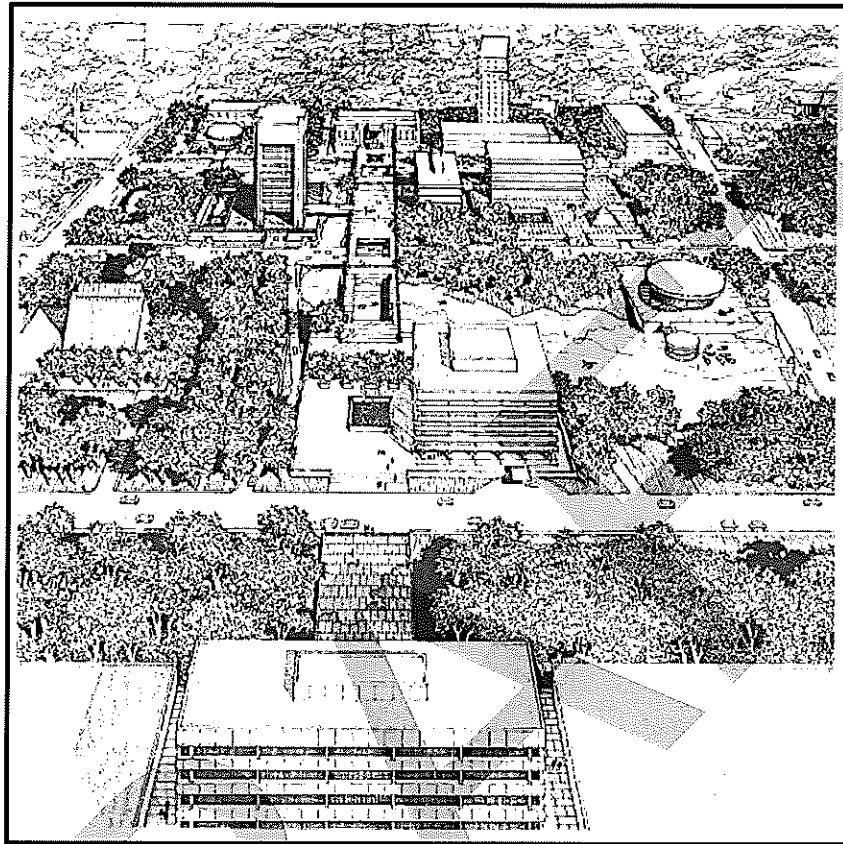


Figure 6: J.N. Pease Associate's design for the Charlotte Government Center complex, 1966.
"Charlotte Observer Building," North Carolina Landmarks Commission, n.d.

One Plaza Center is also representative of the trend in mid-century plaza or podium design that frequently accompanied commercial or institutional office towers, or sometimes served as stand-alone parks or public spaces. The field of urban planning encouraged the use of these spaces as a way to "create public space on private land," while architects appreciated the neutral setting to display their building design.⁵⁵ Plazas featured a combination of hardscape and landscape features – typically minimalist raised planters that were integrated into the plaza floor – which welcomed pedestrians off of the city sidewalks with their integrated benches or step designs that encouraged momentary respite. In addition to their functional purpose, plazas served as a podium or stage for the towers that rose from them, and combined the role of architect and urban planner in the way that they encouraged users to move through the built environment. By the 1970s, plazas were a typical design component of many downtown office buildings, and the use of sunken plazas, such as the one that accompanies the One Plaza Center office tower, had become a J.N. Pease Associates trademark.⁵⁶ The towering multi-story high-rise building juxtaposed against the sunken plaza created an effective complement. The sunken plaza at One Plaza Center

⁵⁵ Witold Rybczynski, *Making Cities Work: Prospects and Policies for Urban America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina*, 110.

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was also successful in attracting pedestrian activity and served as an open gathering space in the city's urban core.

One Plaza Center's Brutalist design and sunken plaza is reflective of the mid-twentieth century architectural expression, and in particular, is characteristic of the use of architecture and the built environment to promote and embody the ideals of progress. One Plaza Center is one of only a few remaining mid-twentieth century commercial and institutional buildings in High Point and was the largest constructed within downtown High Point during the second half of the twentieth century. Its location, size, and design serve as a landmark in the city's skyline, as well as a physical reminder of the optimism of the urban renewal movement.

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<https://www.ncpedia.org/high-point>

Rybczynski, Witold. *Making Cities Work: Prospects and Policies for Urban America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2009.

Shipman, Roy J. *High Point: A Pictorial History*. High Point North Carolina: Hall Printing Company, 1983.

Wright, Gwendolyn. *USA: Modern Architectures in History*. London: Reaktion Books: LTD, 2008.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: NCDCCR, High Point Public Library

One Plaza Center
Name of Property

Guilford Co., NC
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): GF0551

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .56

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.572640 | Longitude: -80.001833 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

One Plaza Center is bound by S. Main Street to the west, E. High Street to the North, S. Wrenn Street to the east, and the adjacent parking deck to the south. The boundary of One Plaza Center encompasses the parcel (Pin # 7800-24-5846), which follows the extent of the

One Plaza Center
Name of Property

Guilford Co., NC
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building and plaza footprint where it meets the public sidewalk or the adjacent building. The true and correct boundary is shown on the attached scaled Location and Sketch Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary of One Plaza Center encompasses the known historic bounds of the property constructed ca. 1970-1974. The boundary follows the extent of the historic parcel and excludes modern development south of One Plaza Center and the public right of way that abuts the property. The property's historic setting and all known associated historic resources have been included within the historic boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kayla Halberg/Project Manager, Ashlen Stump/Preservation Associate, Victoria Leonard/Preservation Associate, Jack Galle/Intern
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group
street & number: 536 W 35th Street
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508
e-mail: Admin@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com
telephone: 757-923-1900
date: November 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, 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,

One Plaza Center

Name of Property

Guilford Co., NC

County and State

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: One Plaza Center

City or Vicinity: High Point

County: Guilford

State: NC

Photographer: Kayla Halberg

Date Photographed: July 7, 2023

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

Photo Number	Description	Camera Direction
1	Façade and plaza	S
2	Façade and west elevation oblique	SE
3	Rear (south) elevation and adjacent parking deck	NW
4	Plaza entrance	E
5	Plaza and addition	E
6	Plaza floor, stair, and planter detail	W
7	Recessed first floor and column detail	E
8	Façade main entrance detail	S
9	First floor elevator lobby	S
10	First floor main entrance lobby	W
11	First floor bank teller lobby	E
12	Bank vault door detail	SW
13	Typical Stairwell	N
14	Basement elevator lobby	S
15	Basement storefront facing the plaza	N
16	Basement/plaza addition interior	N
17	Basement kitchen	E
18	Second floor elevator lobby	S
19	Typical upper floor with office partitions removed	W
20	Typical upper floor with office partitions removed	W
21	Typical upper floor, showing ghosting of former office partitions	E

One Plaza Center

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Guilford Co., NC

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22	Typical upper floor elevator lobby	SW
23	Typical stairwell access and mail slot	N
24	Typical upper floor windows	SE
25	Typical eight floor office	N
26	Eighth floor board room	E

Historic Photo/Rendering Log

Figure Number	Caption
1	East Central Urban Renewal Area Existing Land Use Map depicting the project boundary. The central business district is located on the western end of the project area. City Planning Associates, Inc., "Summary Report: East Central Urban Renewal Project, N.C. R-23, High Point, North Carolina," (1962).
2	Map of the East Central Urban Renewal Area's Section C - Land Acquisition Plan. City Planning Associates, Inc., "Summary Report: East Central Urban Renewal Project, N.C. R-23, High Point, North Carolina," (1962). Red boundary indicates approximate location of the future One Plaza Center.
3	"Architect's Drawing of Latest Plans for Elwood Site Development," May 1969. "No Approval Yet: Elwood Action Still Stymied," <i>The High Point Enterprise</i> (May 6, 1969).
4	One Plaza Center substantially completed, with First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. expected to occupy the first floor. "Changes on the Skyline," <i>The High Point Enterprise</i> (December 9, 1973).
5	Photos from the 1978 lunchtime series "FESTIVAL-IN-THE-PLAZA." "Significant Investments," <i>Downtown High Point</i> (September 1978), 3.
6	J.N. Pease Associate's design for the Charlotte Government Center complex, 1966. "Charlotte Observer Building," North Carolina Landmarks Commission, n.d.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

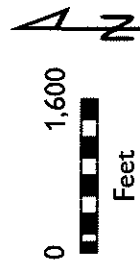
Tier 1 - 60-100 hours
Tier 2 - 120 hours
Tier 3 - 230 hours
Tier 4 - 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



Location Map

One Plaza Center
 101 South Main Street
 High Point, Guilford County, North Carolina
 GF0551



One Plaza Center

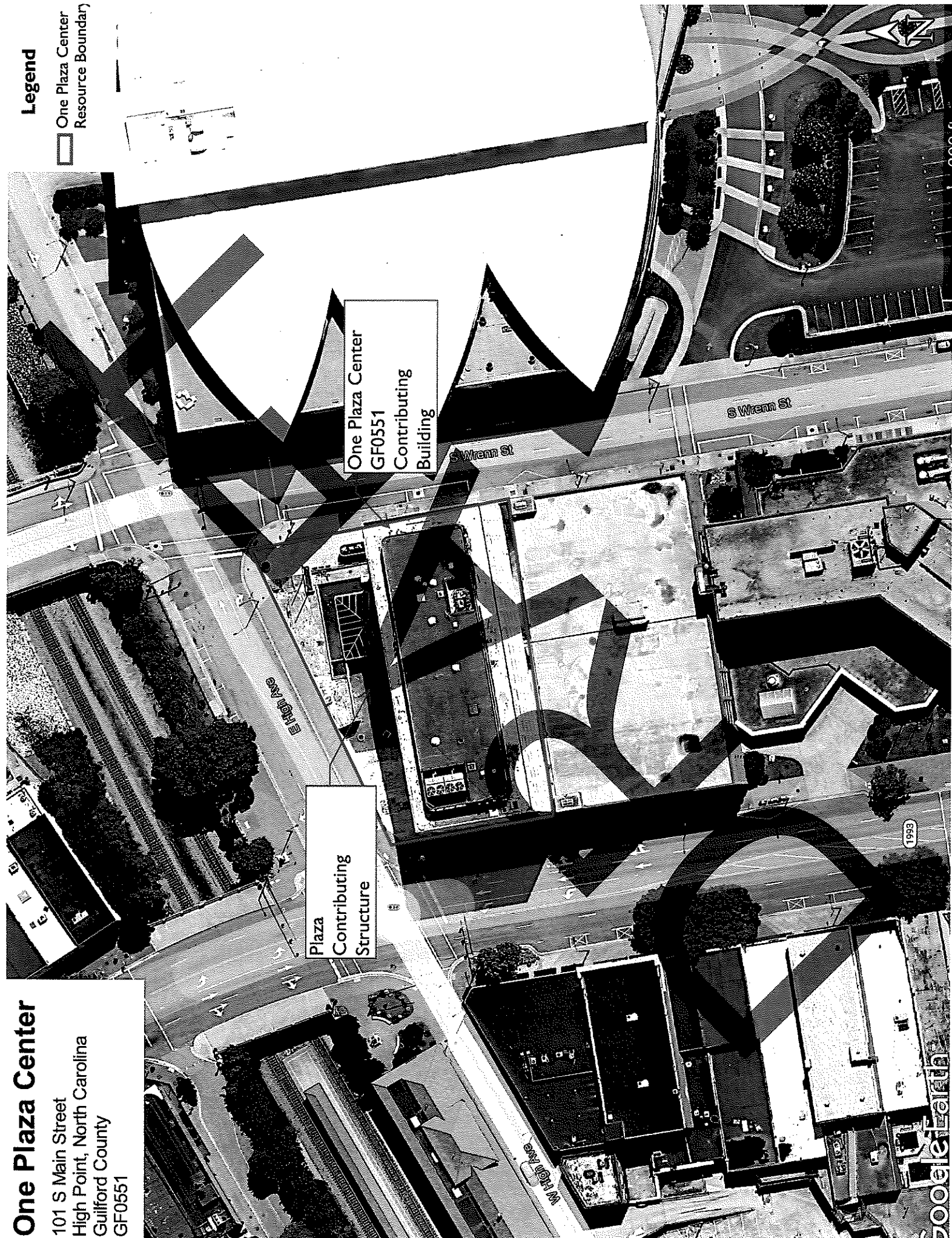
101 S Main Street
High Point, North Carolina
Guilford County
GF0551

Legend

- One Plaza Center
- Resource Boundary

Plaza
Contributing
Structure

One Plaza Center
GF0551
Contributing
Building





Boundary Map

One Plaza Center Parcel & Historic Boundary

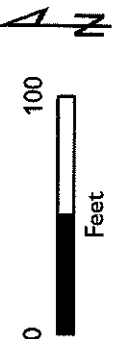
Parcel Lines ← □ Photo Number & Direction

One Plaza Center

101 South Main Street

High Point, Guilford County, North Carolina

GF0551



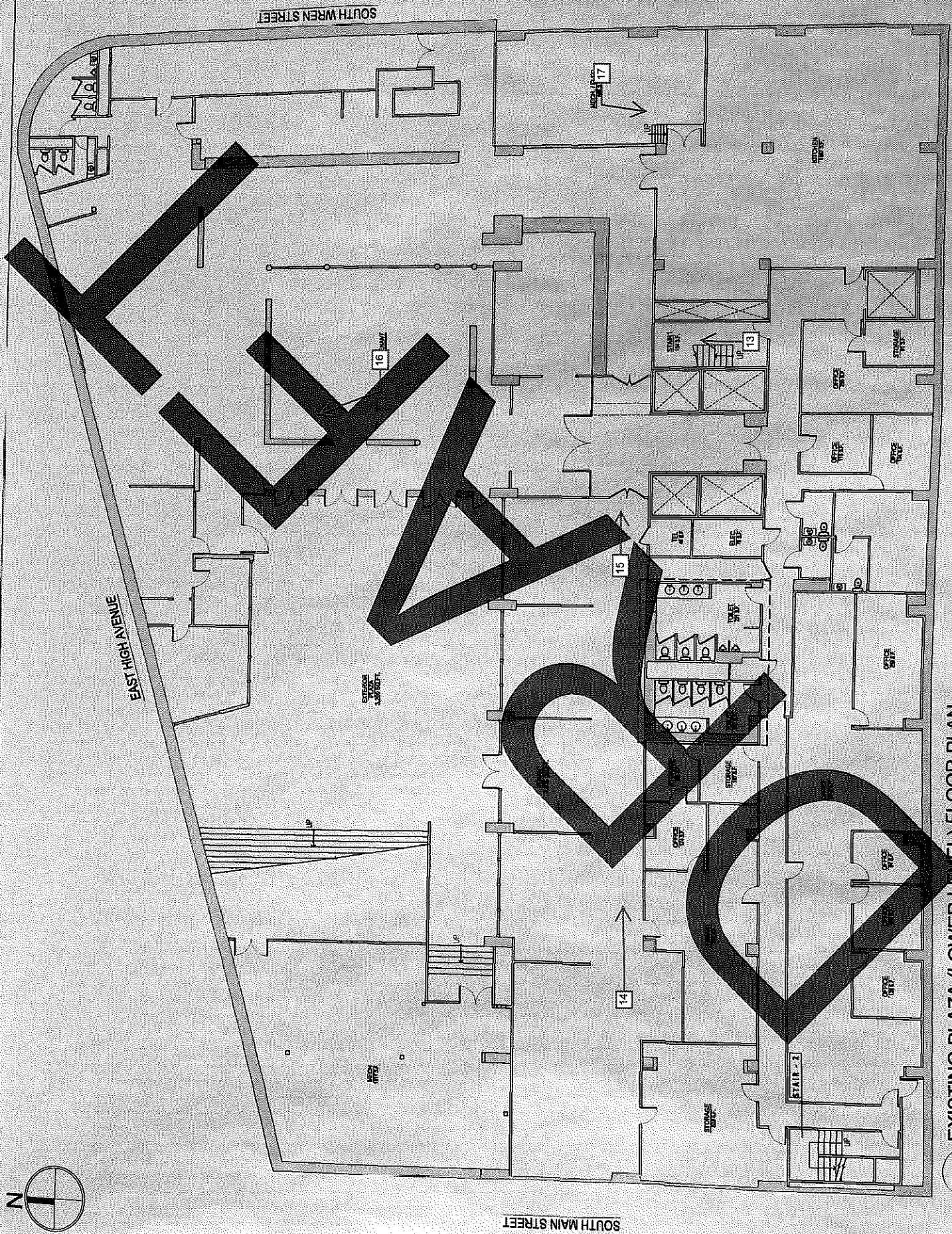
**Representative Photos
One Plaza Center
Guilford County**



Facade and west elevation oblique, SE



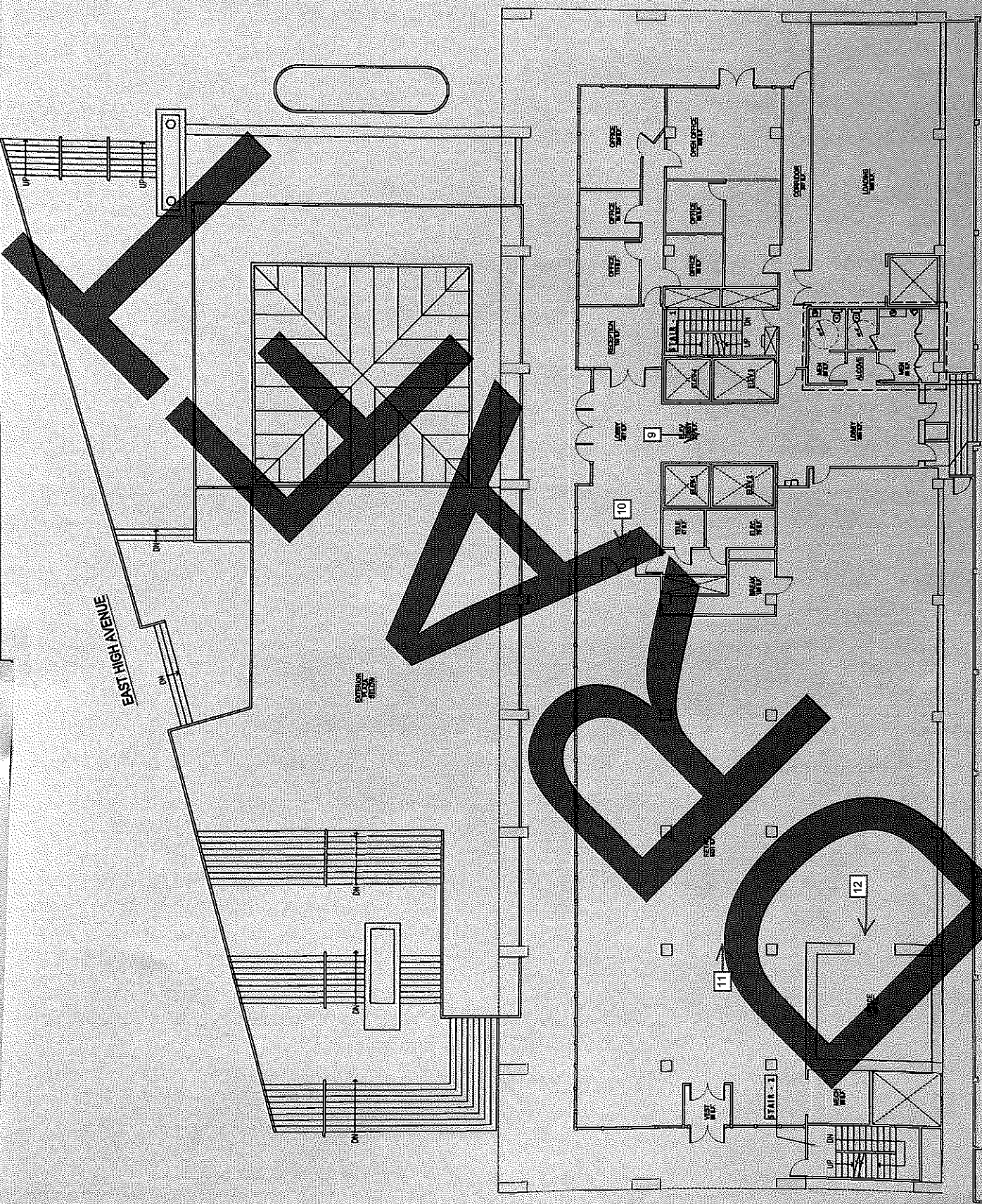
Typical upper floor windows, SE



EXISTING PLAZA (LOWER LEVEL) FLOOR PLAN

$$1_n = 1'0''$$

0 2' 4' 8'



1 EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1" = 1'-0"

NATIONAL REGISTER FACT SHEET 2

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The following criteria are designed to guide the states, federal agencies, and the Secretary of the Interior in evaluating potential entries for the National Register.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or*
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or*
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): *Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:*

- A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or*
- B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or*
- C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; or*
- D. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or*
- E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or*
- F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or*
- G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.*

(see other side)

APPLYING THE CRITERIA

The two principal issues to consider in determining eligibility for the National Register are "significance" and "integrity."

A property may have "**significance**" for association with important events or patterns of history (criterion A); for association with an important historical figure (criterion B); as an important example of period architecture, landscape, or engineering (criterion C); or for the information it is likely to yield (criterion D, applied to archaeological sites and districts, and sometimes applied to certain types of structures). A National Register nomination must demonstrate how a property is significant in at least one of these four areas. For properties nominated under criterion A, frequently cited areas of significance are agriculture, community planning and development, social history, commerce, industry, politics and government, education, recreation and culture, and others. For technical reasons, criterion B (significant person) nominations are rare. Criterion C (architecture) is cited for most, but not all, nominations of historic buildings. Archaeological sites are always nominated under criterion D, but may also have significance under one or more of the other three criteria.

Properties are nominated at a local, state, or national level of significance depending on the geographical range of the importance of a property and its associations. The level of significance must be justified in the nomination. The majority of properties (about 70%) are listed at the local level of significance. The level of significance has no effect on the protections or benefits of listing.

Besides meeting one or more of the above criteria, a property must also have "**integrity**" of "location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association." This means that the property must retain enough of its historic physical character (or in the case of archaeological sites, intact archaeological features) to represent its historic period and associations adequately.

All properties change over time, and in some cases past alterations can take on historical significance in their own right. The degree to which more recent, incompatible, or non-historic alterations are acceptable depends on the type of property, its rarity, and its period and area of significance. Buildings with certain types of alterations are usually turned down by the National Register Advisory Committee. For example, 19th and early 20th century wood frame buildings that have been brick veneered in the mid-20th century are routinely turned down for loss of historic integrity. Similarly, it is extremely rare that buildings covered in synthetic materials such as aluminum or vinyl siding are individually eligible for listing in the Register.

Criteria Exceptions

The criteria exclude birthplaces and graves of historical figures, cemeteries, religious properties, moved buildings, reconstructions, commemorative properties, and properties less than 50 years old, with certain exceptions. The following exceptions are sometimes encountered:

Historic **churches** that are architecturally significant and retain sufficient architectural integrity can be successfully nominated under criterion C (architecture), sometimes together with criterion A for social or religious history, provided they have not been brick-veneered or covered in aluminum or vinyl siding.

Cemeteries may sometimes successfully be nominated under criterion C when they retain important examples of historic stone carving, funerary art, and/or landscaping, and they also may be eligible under criterion A or criterion D. However, both the National Register Advisory Committee and the National Register have turned down nominations of graves when the historical importance of the deceased is the sole basis for the nomination. The National Register was created primarily to recognize and protect historic places and environments that represent how people lived, worked, and built in the historic past. Human burials are recognized and protected under other laws and programs.

Moved buildings may sometimes be successfully nominated under criterion C for architecture when they remain in their historic communities and the new setting adequately replicates the original setting. The point to remember is that the program is called the National Register of Historic Places, not Historic Buildings or Historic Things, because significance is embodied in locations and settings as well as in the structures themselves. Buildings moved great distances, buildings moved into incompatible settings (such as a farmhouse moved into an urban neighborhood or a downtown residence moved to a suburb), and collections of buildings moved from various locations to create a pseudo-historic "village" are routinely turned down. In some cases, the relocation of a historic building to a distant or incompatible setting may be the last and only way to save it, and such an undertaking may be worthwhile. However, sponsors of such a project must understand that the property subsequently may not be eligible for the National Register.

If a property is **less than 50 years old**, it can be nominated only if a strong argument can be made for exceptional significance. For example, Dorton Arena on the State Fairgrounds was completed in 1953. It was successfully nominated to the National Register in 1973 as one of the most important examples of modernism in post-World War II American architecture.