

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Medical Dental Building

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Republic National Life Building; Jefferson Tower, Carter Towers

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 300 block (north side) West Jefferson Blvd.

CITY OR TOWN: Dallas

STATE: Texas

CODE: TX

COUNTY: Dallas

CODE: 113

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

VICINITY: N/A

ZIP CODE: 75208

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

Signature of certifying official

Nov. 8, 2000

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this 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

 other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

12/13/00

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Historic Resources of Oak Cliff, Dallas, Texas*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:	Commerce/Trade: business; professional: specialty store; department store Health Care: Medical business/office
CURRENT FUNCTIONS:	Commerce/Trade: business, specialty store; department store; restaurant Work in progress

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: Art Deco

MATERIALS:	FOUNDATION	CONCRETE
	WALLS	BRICK, TERRA COTTA
	ROOF	CONCRETE, WOOD, ASPHALT
	OTHER	GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-10).

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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Description

The Medical Dental Building (also known as Republic National Life Building, Carter Towers, and today, Jefferson Tower) is an eight-story office tower flanked by retail wings on Oak Cliff's most prominent commercial street, West Jefferson Boulevard. Built in 1929, The Medical Dental Building is clad in brick with terra-cotta decoration and ground floor terra cotta ashlar treatment and adorned by four lanterns at the top of the building. The building is constructed of a concrete frame with masonry in-fill on a concrete foundation. The retail wings are one and one-half stories with two story end pieces. The tower floor plan is symmetrically arranged with an elevator core in the center, rear of the building, flanked by a fire stair on one side and restrooms on the other side. The elevator lobby opens to a corridor that serves office space along the perimeter. The office space has the benefit of continuous light and air from windows on three sides. The Medical Dental Building occupies one-half a city block; an alley that runs mid-block provides access to rear service entrances. Despite a history that includes a change of use (from professional, medical and dental offices to professional and commercial offices) in 1930s, interior remodeling in the 1950's, and a mayor re-design that included cladding the building with aluminum panels in 1970 and then removal of that cladding in 1983, The Medical Dental Building retains most of its original exterior architectural features and some of its interior features.

The Medical Dental Building occupies an entire block length and is the tallest structure on Jefferson Boulevard, which consists of primarily one and two-story commercial buildings and retail establishments. The Medical Dental Building is one of a handful of tall buildings in Oak Cliff even today. Jefferson Boulevard is a commercial street composed of one and two-story buildings, with a center median and parking along each block front. The parking serves commercial and retail establishments on both sides of the street. Most of these establishments cater to the local Hispanic population and include furniture, restaurants, grocery stores, hardware, clothing, among other merchandise. The heart of this commercial activity is the Medical Dental Building, where the ground floor level is devoted entirely to retail space. At the back (north) of the building is an alley that serves the rear service entrances of the tower and retail wings. The service alley is continued through adjacent blocks. The remainder of the block, to the north of the alley, is vacant and used for parking. Residential neighborhoods are immediately adjacent to the north.

The Medical Dental Building is surrounded by historic neighborhoods, many of which are on the National Register of Historic Places including Winnetka Heights Historic District, King's Highway Historic District, Tenth Street Historic District, Rosemont Crest Historic District, which includes a portion of Jefferson Boulevard, Kessler Park Historic District, North Bishop Avenue Commercial District, Miller and Stemmons Historic District and Lake Cliff Historic District.

General Characteristics

The building is constructed of a concrete frame with masonry in-fill and is clad on all four sides in a buff colored, textured brick, laid in a common bond pattern, with terra cotta decorative elements and first floor base in an ashlar pattern. The building is designed with a base, shaft and cornice utilizing alternating width pilasters to accentuate the height of the building. The eight-story tower, or shaft, sits on top of a one and one-half-story base, with two-story bays at each end. The base forms the retail wings which extend under the

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tower. The overall height of the tower is approximately 84', excluding two upper mechanical floors of approximately 20' in total height (Moss n.d.). Construction of The Medical Dental Building began in 1928 and was completed in April of 1929 at a cost of \$1,000,000 (AAE 1996:1; Moss n.d.; Singleton 1990:7-8). The architect/designer is unknown.

Facade Descriptions

On the primary elevation (south) facing Jefferson Boulevard, the tower is divided symmetrically into five unequal bays: end bays with one window, a center bay with three pairs of windows, and the bays in between which have two pairs of windows. The end bay follows the general design of other bays, except a single window is used in lieu of window pairs. On each end bay is a terra cotta shield with an abstracted fleur-de-lis motif held by three bands in blue and buff colors. The shield shape is also used at the first floor over the entrance. The center bay is defined by vertical pilasters which extend above the cornice line to become four terra-cotta and glass lanterns. Windows have 1/1 lights in double hung wood sash and frames with terra cotta sills and a header brick course to express the lintel. The windows on the third floor are accented by terra-cotta decorative spandrel panels. All bays, except for the end bays, have decorative terra cotta lintels, designed in a stepped pattern, above the eighth floor windows. Above the eighth floor windows is a dentil course that is interrupted at each pilaster. A paterae or medallion is located centered on each window above the dentil course. The medallion design is a stylized floral motif in blue. In the center bay this floral design is included in a larger panel that extends upward with the lanterns and is decorated in red and buff colors. The coping is terra cotta which is pitched on the end bays to form a slight pediment shape.

The ground floor retail wings are clad with terra cotta laid in an ashlar pattern. The glaze on the terra cotta has a mottled appearance, distinguishing it from the single-tone appearance of the terra cotta used on the upper floors of the tower. Running ornament is incorporated in a belt course just under the coping and in between the storefronts. The paterae and the shield are repeated in this ornament along with abstracted classical and organic forms. From examination of historic photographs, it is evident that the storefront materials that exist today are not original. Remnants of the original line of transom windows over the storefront in the one and one-half story portions remain but the storefronts themselves have been heavily altered or removed entirely. The transom windows of the one and one-half story wings extend under the tower itself, interrupted only by the central entrance arch. Under the tower the storefronts have also been altered although the general configuration and bay rhythm established by the facade pilasters that meet the ground on granite bases remains. In the place of the original material (unknown) is contemporary ceramic tile and glass in the recessed areas and canvas canopies over each storefront.

The side elevations (east and west) are similar to the south facade, except the composition is arranged in three bays; the center bay here has the same treatment as the bays to each side of the center bay on the front facade. The rear elevation (north) is devoid of decoration or pilasters and is composed of windows with terra cotta sills and brick header course at the lintel. The fascia and dentil course extends the width of the end bay and stops. The end bays are flush with the remainder of the rear facade. A two-story penthouse for mechanical equipment is flush with the rear facade, but set back from the front and side facades.

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Description of Floor Plan

The plan of the building occupies the entire block frontage on Jefferson Boulevard and one-half the depth of the block as defined by the alley that runs through the block. The retail wings are approximately sixty-five feet deep, except at the corners, where the depth is increased to one hundred, thirty seven feet along Bishop Avenue to the west and to one hundred feet along Madison Avenue to the east. The retail space is open and flexible. At the center of the block is the tower.

The plan of the tower is rectangular in form: approximately sixty-five feet deep and one hundred and eight feet wide. The plan is organized symmetrically by a bank of three elevators in the center and against the rear exterior wall of the building. To one side of the elevator bank is a fire stair and to the other side are restrooms. A Corridor was located centrally to provide access to multiple offices on each floor. On the ground floor, the plan changed with the lobby located in front of the elevators and the remainder of the foot-print developed as retail space. The entrance to the tower is in the center of the Jefferson Boulevard facade in a deeply recessed arched opening above which the name of the building was carved (this element is no longer visible, but can be seen in historic photographs)

The interior is not representative of Art Deco design, but is very typical of 1920's and 30's office building design. The lobby on the ground floor has been completely altered. However, the original ceiling featuring a decorative plaster cornice molding, is intact above a later suspended ceiling. In the original design, there were doors from the lobby to the retail space flanking it. The lobby walls are made of flush marble panels. On the upper floors, the corridor is composed of plaster walls with a marble wainscot, a flush plaster ceiling, wood doors and frames with transom windows, arranged apparently as required on a floor by floor basis. Some of the walls include windows which opened to offices; these are irregularly located. The floor is terrazzo throughout the building, indicative of the original medical office use. The office space benefited from light on all sides. The exterior walls were plaster and a simple wood molding is used as casing for the windows (the same molding is found in only a few of the door frames, an indication of remaining original material) and in some rooms a picture mold remains. Wood is stained and since painted. Interior partitions are simple and placed as required on a floor by floor, office by office basis. Sinks were located at each interior column within the office space, but are no longer existing (plumbing revealed this).

Alterations to the building included two significant interior renovation projects, a complete exterior re-facing and an exterior restoration project. In 1932 the building was purchased by Republic National Life Insurance Company who in 1939 renamed the building the Republic National Life Insurance Building and occupied two floors, signifying a change in use from medical and dental offices to general office space. The extent of renovations from this change in use is not known. In 1946 the building was purchased by Oak Cliff Realty Corp. and renamed Jefferson Tower in 1951. The first documented remodeling occurred during the early 1950s, under the management division of Henry S. Miller Company. The cost for remodeling was \$200,000, and improvements included a new lobby and entrance along with "a brighter new appearance outside and inside the building" (The Dallas Morning News 1955:1A-7). In 1955 the lobby and entrance were remodeled. The building retained the Jefferson Tower name until 1969 when W.S. "Bill" Carter purchased the building and renamed it "Carter Towers." With the name change came a complete re-facing of the building's facades in 1970, when W.S. "Bill" Carter, decided to give the entire building "a new look of glamour and modern luxury" (Dallas Times Herald April 26, 1970:6). Carter had the exterior of the tower covered with

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anodized gold aluminum in a fluted design with silver trim; the spandrels were covered with a blue Plexiglas material (Dallas Morning News August 21, 1970:6E). Signs, announcing the building's new name "Carter Towers," were placed near the top of the tower on all four sides, and a newspaper article from 1969 announced that Carter intended to install a large, orange star that would extend 35 feet above the penthouse (Dallas Times Herald 1969). Alterations to the interior included office paneling designed to hide the exposed pipes, wall-to-wall carpeting, dropped ceilings of acoustical tile with recessed lighting fixtures, invisible air conditioning ducts, and piped in music for the elevators and corridors. The ground floor lobby was remodeled with recessed soft lighting fixtures (Dallas Times Herald 1970:6). Gone was the Art Deco style exterior, and a red carpet which covered the length of the sidewalk was a visible reminder of the new advertising motto, "where you always get the red carpet treatment" (Dallas Morning News August 21, 1970:1E). The lobby has been altered by the removal of the original wall material (stone) and the installation of tan colored marble on the walls and a suspended ceiling designed with circular forms; the original ceiling remains, hidden, above. Investigation of the walls reveals that there were originally entrances from the lobby to the retail spaces that flank it, as well as glass storefronts flanking the recessed arched opening that leads to the tower entrance.

In 1983, renovations began to uncover the original brick and terra cotta features of the exterior. Ownership changed to a group called 300 West Jefferson Joint Venture, which included Roland Bandy and Talmadge Tinsley and the name reverted to Jefferson Tower again. Developer, Mike Haney, proclaimed the tower's "modern" look to be "the ugliest, gaudiest, tackiest eyesore you ever saw" (Dallas Morning News September 16, 1984:6). Corgan Associates, Dallas, were the architects for this phase of renovation which included the restoration of the tower exterior and rehabilitation of new design) of the ground floor storefronts, the installation of awnings, and in general, an improved appearance for the exterior. There was no work undertaken on the interior at that time. Reference has been made to sandblasting of the exterior brick during the 1983 restoration project (GeoMarine draft NRN, 1997); however, there is no physical evidence of this. The original brick has a very rough and textured surface; this surface is found on all facades and is likely a characteristic of the brick's design. In areas where brick was replaced with new matching brick, the matching brick has the same texture and surface characteristics as the original brick. And the texture of the brick is irregular, rather than evenly pitted or abraded as would signify possible sandblasting. In addition, the terra cotta shows no evidence of sandblasting. At a cost of 3.9 million dollars, The Medical Dental Building was restored (Hansard 1983:4D) in 1983. The architect for the 1983 renovation (Corgan Associates) was not reached for comment. In 1997 the tower portion of the building was donated to the Southern Dallas Development Corp. (SDDC), the current owner. The retail wings, and the retail space beneath the tower proper are owned by Rampart Properties. SDDC has commissioned plans from ARCHITEXAS to rehabilitate the interior of the tower building for office use, including SDDC offices on the seventh and eighth floors. The rehabilitation of the interior of the property is underway.

Three elevators serve the tower; the center elevator is a service elevator with a door to the rear of the building; only one elevator cab remains. The corridors have been altered several times over the years resulting in loss of original fabric on all but two floors: the second floor and the sixth floor (ARCHITEXAS 1999). The configuration of the corridors has been altered on several floors by either shortening or lengthening. There are no original corridor doors remaining, some transom windows remain behind later wall finishes, some ceiling is intact, although heavily penetrated, and approximately half the floors retain the marble wainscot. The terrazzo flooring remains throughout the building.

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Site Features There are no historic site features remaining. The sidewalk is made of modern concrete. Sidewalk improvements, planting beds and historic styled lamp posts were added recently.

Physical Condition/Integrity The physical condition of the building's exterior is good and with the exception of the ground floor storefronts, the original materials are intact. The brick and terra cotta are in good condition. Mortar appears to be the original mortar, although no testing has been done to confirm this. Where repointing or brick replacement is evident, the mortar and the brick are good matches to the original. The original cypress wood windows are undergoing restoration as part of the interior restoration project; the original color was found on the windows to be a light buff-cream color, similar to the color of the terra cotta ornament. On the ground floor, nearly all the original storefront material is gone, replaced with a new design in 1983 and the main entrance to the building is covered with later cement-like materials. It is not known if the original terra cotta is intact behind these new materials. On the interior, the condition of materials and integrity of historic fabric varies by floor but may generally be described as 40% remaining, although altered. Some features, such as the terrazzo floor are entirely intact, while others, such as the ground floor lobby retain only small amounts of historic fabric.

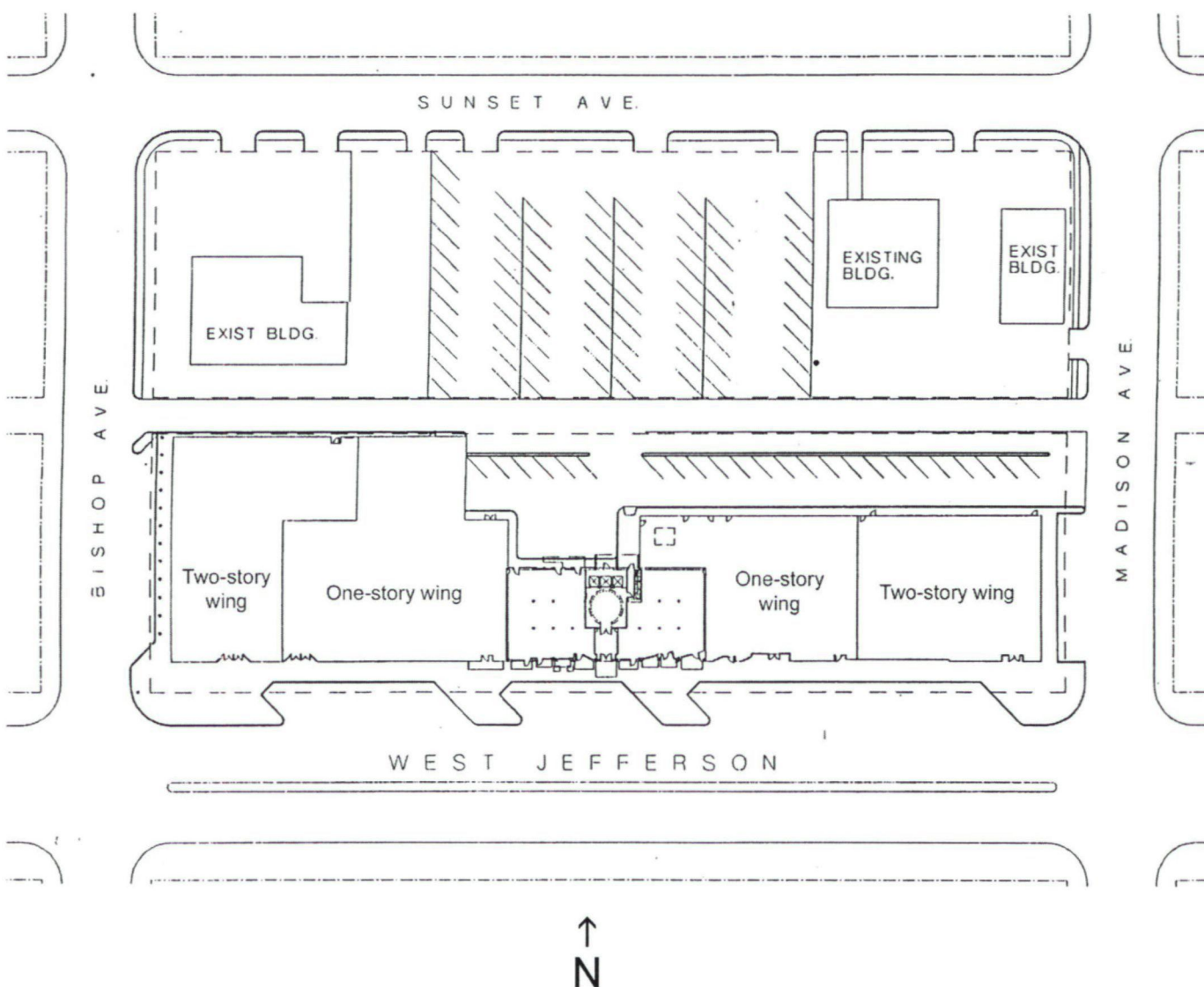
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Site plan
Not to scale



8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- ☒ **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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Community Planning and Development; Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1929-1950

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1929

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Arthur J. Rife Construction Co. (builder); architect unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-18).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-19 through 9-21).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- ☒ 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 #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: *Dallas Public Library; Preservation Dallas*

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The Medical Dental Building (1929) is currently known as Jefferson Tower, which reflects its location on Jefferson Boulevard, a prominent street in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. The building was called the Medical Dental Building from its completion in 1929 through 1939, and was subsequently known as the Republic National Life Building (1939-1950), Jefferson Tower (1951-1969), Carter Towers (1970-1985) and Jefferson Tower again in 1986. The Medical Dental Building has served the commercial heart of downtown Oak Cliff for over 70 years. Once advertised as a "one stop shopping service," the building offered medical and dental offices, professional, trade and retail uses all in one block. The building is the most prominent feature on Jefferson Boulevard, and represents an important period of growth and prosperity for the community of Oak Cliff and Dallas, playing a pivotal role in the commercial, professional and social development of Oak Cliff. The building meets Criterion A at the local level in the area of Community and Regional Planning. The Medical Dental Building embodies the design principals and aesthetic qualities typical of the Art Deco style, and meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture on the local level of significance as one of the best examples of Art Deco architecture in Oak Cliff.

Founding of Oak Cliff

By 1929, when the Medical Dental Building was completed, the well-established downtown district of Oak Cliff served the needs of residents who found shopping across the river in downtown Dallas inconvenient. Separated by the Trinity River separating the two, Dallas (on the east side) and Oak Cliff (on the west) began as distinct and separate communities. European Americans settled in Oak in the 1840s, about the same time that John Neely Bryan encouraged settlers to locate in the Dallas area. In 1845, William H. Hord and his family arrived from Tennessee to settle on the west side of the river. Hord quickly became the recognized spokesperson for the growing population of the settlement, and lent his name to the fledgling community: Hord's Ridge. In 1846, homesteaders vied to have Hord's Ridge designated as the county seat, but lost out to Dallas (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:11-27; Payne 1982:102).

In the 1870s, T.J. Marsalis and his partner, John S. Armstrong, initiated a new phase of growth for Hord's Ridge. Marsalis and Armstrong founded the Dallas Land and Loan Company, purchased 2,000 acres of land, renamed the area for the oak trees which grew on the riverbank, and marketed the community as a scenic residential retreat from downtown Dallas. Part of their 2,000-acre purchase included the original 640-acre Hord Homestead. With Marsalis' vision as the driving force, Oak Cliff was transformed into a suburban enclave touted as the "beautiful residence and educational city of the Southwest" (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:212). Streets were paved and elaborate mansions, elegant hotels, and city parks were built. Part of the community's success, however, rested on Marsalis' conviction that transportation ties between Dallas and Oak Cliff were critical since most of the Oak Cliff population worked in Dallas. He ensured the suburb's success by investing \$400,000 into the Dallas and Oak Cliff Elevated Railway. The railway consisted of four coaches pulled by a steam engine. During peak hours the train ran every ten minutes. Though each coach was designed to hold 60 people, at times, as many as 100 rode each car (Dallas Times Herald 1955; Payne 1982:103).

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By the turn of the 20th century, Oak Cliff had a population of 3,092 European-Americans and 538 African-Americans. During this time, residents debated the pros and cons of annexation by Dallas. On March 17, 1903, residents voted for annexation by a mere 18 votes. Although now officially a part of Dallas, Oak Cliff came equipped with its own government system, public schools, business district, waterworks, electric company, and newspapers (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:104).

The Trinity River, initially responsible for the separate development of Dallas and Oak Cliff, continued to encourage self-sufficiency among Oak Cliff residents. Although never a *permanent* barrier to Dallas, the river's frequent flooding (1844, 1866, 1871, and 1890) most likely convinced Oak Cliff residents that a certain degree of autonomy, even after annexation, was advantageous—a point made all the more clear with the May 1908 flood. The results of this flood were disastrous for residents on both sides of the river, but with the "Long Wooden Bridge" (as it was commonly referred to) washed out, Oak Cliff was effectively cut off from Dallas. The bridge had linked Dallas at Cadiz Street, to Oak Cliff at a point near West Jefferson Boulevard. Both sides were without electricity, water, and fire protection for three days, but some parts of the city were forced to contend with the flood's ravages for several weeks (Dreesen 1939:56; Minutaglio and Williams 1990:114-116; Payne 1982:145-148).

After the flood, city leaders desired to establish more permanent links between Oak Cliff and Dallas. Construction on the Oak Cliff (now Houston) Viaduct, first proposed before the flood in 1908, began in 1910 and was completed in 1912. Upon completion, the viaduct was heralded as an important step toward integrating Dallas and Oak Cliff. No well-established political or economic programs were in place, however, to truly merge the two communities (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:124-127). Consequently, Oak Cliff continued along its own path of development with a high level of self-sufficiency, and residents enjoyed the convenience of having their own commercial district.

In Oak Cliff, West Jefferson Boulevard anchored the commercial district. Though originally platted for residential development, the street became an active transportation route, first serving as the right-of-way for the Dallas and Oak Cliff Elevated Railway, then for streetcars and the Dallas-Ft. Worth Interurban. The boulevard eventually became a major thoroughfare for automobiles and buses. Commercial activity began in the late 1800s at the intersection of West Jefferson Boulevard and Tenth Street at the terminus of the elevated railway. Shopkeepers recognized the advantages of locating to this area, through which numerous Oak Cliff residents traveled to and from Dallas. In 1901, a new center for commercial development developed further west at the intersection of Tyler Street and West Jefferson Boulevard, where the Dallas-Ft. Worth Inter Urban line was built (Hardy 1994:E6; Niederauer 1990; Payne 1982:145-148; Singleton 1990:1).

Between 1910 to 1920, Oak Cliff's population increased from 8,179 to 18,041. As the population rose, so too did commercial development. During this period of explosive growth, developers platted new areas such as Winnetka Heights, Miller-Stemmons, King's Highway, Ruthmede, Kessler Park, Lake Cliff, and Trinity Heights for residential development. West Jefferson Boulevard achieved prominence as the neighborhood's commercial center.. (Hardy 1994:E12-E15; Minutaglio and Williams 1990:108; Niederauer 1990; Singleton 1990).

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Oak Cliff's population continued to rise through the 1920s, climbing to 37,654 by 1930 (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:149). During this decade, several businesses joined the older commercial establishments to make West Jefferson Boulevard the second-largest commercial district in the city. Along West Jefferson Boulevard, city residents could find apartments, hotels, a bank, beauty parlor, furniture store, dry cleaners, theaters, a bakery and deli, a music store, grocery stores, and a Masonic Lodge, as well as other shops and offices. By the end of the decade, branch offices of Dallas Power and Light, the U.S. Post Office, the Dallas Police Department, and the *Dallas News and Journal* (now the *Dallas Morning News*) established offices on West Jefferson Boulevard. No other area in Dallas could lay claim to having branch offices of all the major public utilities (Hardy 1994:E18; Singleton 1990:3-4).

Oak Cliff's commercial growth during this time period was in part spurred by the newly organized Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial Association, later known as the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce. Established in 1920 by businessmen and civic leaders from Dallas and Oak Cliff, the association conducted its business from offices at West Jefferson and Beckley Avenue. As its name might suggest, the organization focused on Oak Cliff development, while at the same time, cementing ties with Dallas. One of the Association's first tasks, and one which would directly tie into the construction of the Medical Dental Building, was the establishment of a major hospital in Oak Cliff. A previous study had established that one-third of patients in Dallas hospitals came from the south side of the Trinity River. The new hospital, whose construction began in 1923, opened in December of 1927 (Minutaglio and Williams 1990:142; Singleton 1990:3). The opening of the Medical Dental Building in 1929 extended the range of services that residents could expect to find on the busy boulevard, and added to the community's sense of independence. With the development of medical facilities, Oak Cliff could now accommodate nearly all the commercial, retail, religious, residential, entertainment, and now healthcare needs of its population. (McClure 1998, personal communication).

Historical Development of the Property

The Medical Dental Building was built during Oak Cliff's second building boom (1925 to 1935) (Niederauer et al. 1990:n.p.). The building occupies the northern side of the 300 block of West Jefferson Boulevard, now considered the "heart of downtown Oak Cliff" (Star Tribune 1958:n.p.). Although the boulevard had been the site for commercial development for over forty, the block designated for the Medical Dental Building was still occupied by nine frame houses. On February 9, 1928, E. H. Server, owner of the property, obtained a permit to demolish the houses. Four months later, on June 6, the new property owners, Brinkerhoff and Bennett, contracted with A. J. Rife for the construction of an eight-story medical arts building (*City of Dallas Building Inspector Record Books* 1928).

The Medical Dental Building owes its existence in part to Martin Weiss and the aggressive agenda adopted by the Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial Association. A leading citizen of Oak Cliff, Weiss served as president of the Central Property Owners Association (an organization devoted to promoting the downtown interests of Dallas and Oak Cliff) in the early 1920s. In 1926, Weiss became president of the Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial Association. As president, he lobbied hard for a medical arts building which would complement

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the new hospital facility being erected (Dreesen 1939:65; Moses 1948:132-133). Weiss, along with civic leaders Zach K. Brinkerhoff and E.P. Bennett, formed a partnership to purchase land and develop the Medical Dental Building.

The Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial Association invited 1000 guests to a formal opening on April 3, 1929. Details of the elaborate event were announced in both the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Daily Times Herald*. Twenty Boy Scouts helped the police direct cars to the parking lot in the back, while the R.O.T.C. band of Oak Cliff High School provided music (*Daily Times Herald* 1929a, b, and c; *Dallas Morning News* 1929a). Louis F. Rick (director of the Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial association) served as chairman of the ceremonies and officially introduced Gary Niblo (newly elected president of the Oak Cliff-Dallas Commercial association), and Brinkerhoff and Bennett. Several prominent community leaders gave brief addresses. Charles Mangold predicted that growth in Oak Cliff would "exceed that of any other section of Dallas" and he praised Brinkerhoff and Bennett for "their great work in the upbuilding of the section west of the Trinity river (sic)." A. B. Small compared the new building to those in Dallas, claiming that "in at least two decades, this wonderful building will be surrounded by many as excellent as those in the center of Dallas" (*Daily Times Herald* 1929b). Prominent retail businesses also joined in the praise. Titche-Goetinger, Co. ran an advertisement extolling the new Medical Dental Building as another "praiseworthy contribution to the civic and professional advancement and the commercial stability of the big Oak Cliff-Dallas territory" (*Dallas Morning News* April 4, 1929). After the ceremonies, guests toured the building (*Daily Times Herald* 1929a, b, and c; *Dallas Morning News* 1929a).

A 1929 advertisement in the *Dallas Morning News* noted that the Oak Cliff Medical Dental Building was "open only to ethical, conscientious, skilled physicians and dentists," and that "this building combines convenience with the highest type of scientific practice" (*Dallas Morning News* 1929b,c). The 1929 city directory lists a total of 36 doctors and dentists (*Dallas City Directory* 1929). As is evident from these sources, the Oak Cliff community residing near West Jefferson Boulevard had convenient access to several different types of medical services.¹ The ground floor of the Medical Dental Building was devoted to commercial enterprises, utility companies, and other professional offices. In 1929, ground floor spaces were occupied by: Standard Shoe Repair Co.; Brannon's Dyeing and Dry Cleaning Co (branch); Lloyd's Men's Wear; Victory-Wilson, Inc.; Daisy "B" Shoppe; Skillern and Sons Store No. 13; Wesson Jewelry Co.; W U Tel Co Branch; Flurette Jane Beauty Shoppe; Medical Dental Barber Shop; Burton the Florist Inc.; A.C. Rogers Co. (Oak Cliff Branch); Saunders Clarence no. 24; Great A&P Tea Co. No 99; and Sears-Roebuck & Co. (Oak Cliff Branch) (*Dallas City Directory* 1929). In 1930, Dallas Power and Light maintained an Oak Cliff branch at the Medical

¹ The first year of its opening, office space was leased by the following: Dr. R. W. Barnes; Dr. A. L. Carrington (dentist); Dr. John F. Crabb (dentist); Dr. B. F. Crabtree (eye, ear, nose and throat); Dr. A. B. Carter (dentist); Dr. John D. Dial (dentist); Dr. W. Hyde (dermatology and syphology); Dr. Mood Knowles and Dr. S. F. Harrington (eyes, ear, nose and throat); Dr. Edgar W. Loomis (infants and children); Dr. E. O. Martin; Dr. F. E. Ormsby (surgery); Oak Cliff Clinical Laboratory; Dr. B. Randolph; Dr. M. O. Rea (x-ray laboratory); Dr. F. M. Schultz (dentist, x-ray diagnosis); Dr. Chas. C. Sorrells (obstetrics and gynecology); Dr. E. B. Strother and Dr. W. K. Strother; Dr. Chas. L. Thomas (dentist); Dr. C. W. Thornton; Miss Ruth Tucker (anesthetist); Dr. Robert Wilkins (dentist); Dr. C. Vincent White (general medicine and obstetrics); Clyde A. Wherry (real estate); and Dr. T. E. Winford (eye, ear, nose and throat) (*Daily Times Herald* 1929c).

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Section 8 Page 15

Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Dental Building (*Dallas City Directory* 1930). Over the years, the Medical Dental Building was home to several successful and long-term businesses and retail shops. The Rio Grande Life Insurance Company, which by 1978 had grown into a multi-million dollar business, occupied one half of the second floor during the building's early history (*Oak Cliff Tribune* 1978:7). Republic National Life purchased the Medical Dental Building from Brinkerhoff and Bennett in 1932 (*Dallas City Directory* 1932; *Star Tribune* March 26-28, 1958:5).

The first Jefferson Tower retail tenant was Standard Shoe, an operation that remained in business for at least 40 years. Two other retail businesses which served Oak Cliff residents for over forty years include Fay's Jewelers and Roland Ellis menswear. Fay's Jewelers, which advertised itself as Oak Cliff's oldest jewelers, was owned and operated by Ernest and Fay Seizler, who once lived in one of the frame houses razed for the tower's construction (and in fact, leased the same spot where the home had stood). Ellis, also well-known as a civic leader, moved to 333 West Jefferson soon after the depression and in 1949, he renovated and expanded the store. (*Dallas Morning News* August 21, 1970; *Star Tribune* 1958). Other long-term ground floor tenants include Jefferson Barber Service, Skillern's Drugs, Dallas Gas Company, and McCrory's department store. (Moss n.d.:3-4; Singleton 1990:3)

As the tallest building in the area, the Medical Dental Building was a popular meeting place, since anyone could find it. Some nearby residents got their first look at television from a set in an electronics store next to the office tower's entryway. The Skillerns Store held contests, giving away prizes such as dolls and doll houses to children. For several years in the 1940s, adults and children in costume would parade up and down the boulevard on Halloween night. (McClure interview, 1998).

Over the years, the Medical Dental Building has undergone several different owners, name changes, and remodeling and restoration phases. In 1929, under the ownership of Zach K. Brinkerhoff and E.P. Bennett, the tower's name, The Medical Dental Building, signified the office tower's primary purpose. Although Republic National Life Insurance Company bought the facility in 1932, owner Theodore Beasley retained the original name until 1939 (*Dallas City Directory* 1932, 1939). In 1946, Republic National Life sold the building to Oak Cliff Realty Corporation, but leased office space until 1951 (Envirocare 1995; *Star Tribune* March 26-28, 1958:5).

By 1951, the tower was officially referred to as Jefferson Tower in the city directory (*Dallas City Directory* 1951). Ownership transferred to David Rosenthal, Anna Rosenthal, and Fairmont Hotel Co. in October of 1957. The property was then transferred to Henry Kalman and to Robert H. Arnow in separate transactions during 1960. Entity Realty Corporation became the owner of the property on June 8, 1962. By 1965, Jefferson Tower was owned by Jefferson Tower Corporation. On October 7, 1966, Abe Meyer, Harry Freedman, Bill Sussman, and R.B. Carpenter, Jr., acquired the property and sold it to W.S. "Bill" Carter in 1969. It was under Carter that the Medical Dental Building underwent its most drastic change in appearance with Carter's vision of a new "modern" look. Carter, an active member of the Disciples of Christ Church, generously granted the church half-interest in the tower on April 13, 1970. The event was marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce (Envirocare 1995; *Dallas Morning News* 1970b).

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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

From 1970 until 1984, the building was known as Cater Towers, though Carter himself transferred ownership on June 30, 1976, to Burden Brothers, Inc. (*Dallas Times Herald* 1969; *Dallas City Directory* 1970-1984; Envirocare 1995). On October 31, 1983, the building was sold to 300 West Jefferson Joint Venture, a group that included Roland Bandy and Talmadge Tinsley. By 1985, the building's name had reverted to Jefferson Tower, the name that is currently used (*Dallas City Directory* 1985; Hansard 1983; Hawkins January 28, 1997:14). The eight-story office tower was donated by Roland Bandy to Southern Dallas Development Corporation. The retail spaces are owned by Rampart Properties, Houston.

General Trends in Building Practice and Style

The Medical Dental Building is an example of Art Deco architecture, built during the height of the style's popularity. The development of Art Deco as a style (the term "Art Deco" was not coined until the 1960's) in the United States owes its origin to the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* of 1925 in Paris (Hillier and Esoritt 1997). The style developed in the United States with both an acknowledgment of historical influence (as opposed to the Modern Movement's self-conscious attempt to break with history), as well as an appreciation of the machine aesthetic. Not minimalist, nor purely functional, the style's primary distinguishing characteristic is the abstraction of organic and figural forms, with an emphasis on decoration. Terra cotta became one of the most common materials used in large-scale Art Deco buildings as a replacement for stone; the manufacture and use of terra cotta peaked during the period of Art Deco's prominence. Terra cotta lent itself to the use of color and decorative glazes to achieve a wide variety of effects.

The form of tall buildings and skyscrapers, in part a result of zoning requirements in New York City, tended to include stepped back, ziggurat or "wedding cake" treatments. This form was often repeated in the design of Art Deco buildings nationwide. Pilasters were commonly used in tall buildings of the period as an organizing element, and the use of spandrel panels between windows served to further emphasize verticality. Buildings such as the Empire State Building (1930) and Rockefeller Center (1931) in New York utilize this design device. The prominent Dallas architectural firm Lang & Witchell designed several tall Art Deco buildings in Dallas, including the Lone Star Gas Building (1931). Closest in design to the Medical Dental Building is the Dallas Power & Light Building (1930) in which pilasters of alternating width are employed to provide vertical emphasis. The monochromatic decorative terra cotta is also very similar, although on the Medical Dental Building, a small amount of color was introduced high on the building. The design of the Medical Dental Building's lanterns is similar to those on Wiley G. Clarkson's Sinclair Building (1930) in Fort Worth.

The architect of the Medical Dental Building has not yet been identified. At least two thorough yet unsuccessful searches have been conducted: Ron Emrich performed a search for ARCHITEXAS, and a search referred to in the 1997 draft National Register nomination. Interviews with local architectural historians, past building owners and shop keepers yielded no results. While it is **not** likely that Lang and Witchell designed the Medical Dental Building, the building's architect shared that firm's aesthetic and interest in contemporary design. (McDonald 1978:94-95).

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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Justification of Criteria

The Medical Dental Building is eligible for listing under Criterion A, at the local level of significance, in the area of Community and Regional Planning. The building represents an important period of growth and prosperity for the community of Oak Cliff and Dallas and it has played a pivotal role in the commercial, professional and social development of Oak Cliff. As the centerpiece of Jefferson Boulevard, the most prosperous commercial street in downtown Oak Cliff, the Medical Dental Building is a source of pride for the community. It was the tallest building on Jefferson Boulevard at the time it was built, and is still today one of a handful of tall buildings in Oak Cliff. The building helped Oak Cliff compete with downtown Dallas by increasing the variety of goods and services available in the neighborhood.

The Medical Dental Building is also eligible under Criterion C, at the local level of significance, in the area of Architecture, as a good example of the Art Deco style. The building embodies the design characteristics of the style through the use of terra cotta cladding, stylized classical and organic forms in the decoration, facade organization utilizing pilasters, paired windows and spandrel panels, and in the zigurat form of the building's four lanterns. The Art Deco style of the building relates to other Art Deco buildings on Jefferson Boulevard, notably the theater at 901 W. Jefferson Boulevard.

The historic integrity of the exterior of the building is intact. The location and setting have not changed since construction. The exterior materials are intact and in generally good condition. Only the ground floor has been altered by changes to storefronts, but only by modifications which should be expected considering the turnover of tenants over several decades. Finally, the building stands proudly and contributes significantly to the character of the street and of Oak Cliff and Dallas.

Preservation Efforts

As a symbolic and actual cornerstone of the development of Oak Cliff, the preservation of the building is important to Oak Cliff and Dallas. The Southern Dallas Development Corp. (SDDC) plans to rehabilitate the interior of the tower using funding partially obtained from the federal Economic Development Commission. The total cost of construction is estimated to be \$4 million. The work will include the rehabilitation of the seventh and eighth floors for SDDC offices and preparation of the remaining floors for future tenant fit-out. The SDDC floors will include incubator office space to attract local start-up businesses to Oak Cliff and the neighborhood. An addition will be constructed at the rear of the building to house a second means of egress and ADA-compliant restrooms. The addition will also include a rear entrance (the only original entrance to the tower was from Jefferson Boulevard) with access to parking on adjacent lots across the service alley.

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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Historic photo, 1940s



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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

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Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

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Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	14	703620	3624740

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 10-22)

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (see continuation sheet 10-22)

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Gregory Smith, THC Historian)

NAME/TITLE: Nancy McCoy

ORGANIZATION: ARCHITEXAS, Inc.

DATE: Feb. 11, 2000

STREET & NUMBER: 1907 Marilla

TELEPHONE: (214) 748-4561

CITY OR TOWN: Dallas

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 75201

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see site plan, continuation sheet 7-10)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-23)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Southern Dallas Development Program, Mr. Jim Reid

STREET & NUMBER: 1402 Corinth Street

TELEPHONE: (214) 428-7332

CITY OR TOWN: Dallas

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 75215

NAME: Rampart Capital Corp., Mr. Jim Carpenter

STREET & NUMBER: 700 Louisiana St., Suite 2510

TELEPHONE: (713) 223-4610

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 77002

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Geographical Data:

Verbal Boundary Description Lots 1A, 2A, 3A, Block 47/3167, Official city Number, of Dallas Land and Loan Company Second Addition to the City of Dallas, Dallas, County, Texas (ARCHITEXAS Site Plan dated 1-7-99). The Medical Dental Building is located on the north side of the 300 block of West Jefferson Boulevard in the historic business section of Oak Cliff. Oak Cliff is a part of the southern section of the city of Dallas, Dallas County, Texas. The site is approximately 2,000 feet west of Interstate Highway 35E and two miles south from downtown Dallas. The building is bound by West Jefferson Boulevard on the south, a mid block alley on the north, Madison Avenue on the east, and Bishop Avenue on the west. The boundary includes the eight story tower and the one and two story retails wings. The eight-story office tower is at 351 West Jefferson Boulevard; the retailers maintain the following street addresses: 311-341, 345, 349 (along the east wing) and 355, 359, 365-367, 371 (along the west wing).

Boundary Justification The boundaries of the property are the same as the historical boundaries associated with the property. Although the lots to the north of the building lots have been, and may continue to be, used as parking lots to serve the building, there is no known historical connection between the building and these lots. These lots were platted as narrow, residential scale lots and the building has no architectural relationship, in the form of entrances either to the tower or to the retail wings, that would signify that the parking lots were relevant historically.

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Section PHOTO Page 23

Medical Dental Building
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Medical Dental Building
300 block (north side) West Jefferson Blvd.
Dallas, Dallas County
Photographed by Alan Robertson
March 1998

Southeast oblique
Camera facing northwest
Photo 1 of 3

Southwest oblique
Camera facing northeast
Photo 2 of 3

Southeast oblique - tower
Camera facing north
Photo 3 of 3

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Medical Dental Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE Oak Ridge MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Dallas

DATE RECEIVED: 11/17/00 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/27/00
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/13/00 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/01/01
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 00001537

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 12/13/00 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING

300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.

DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 3



MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING
300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 3



MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING

300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.

DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 3

2



MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING

300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.

DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 3

2



MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING

300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.

DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 3



#3

MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING

300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD.

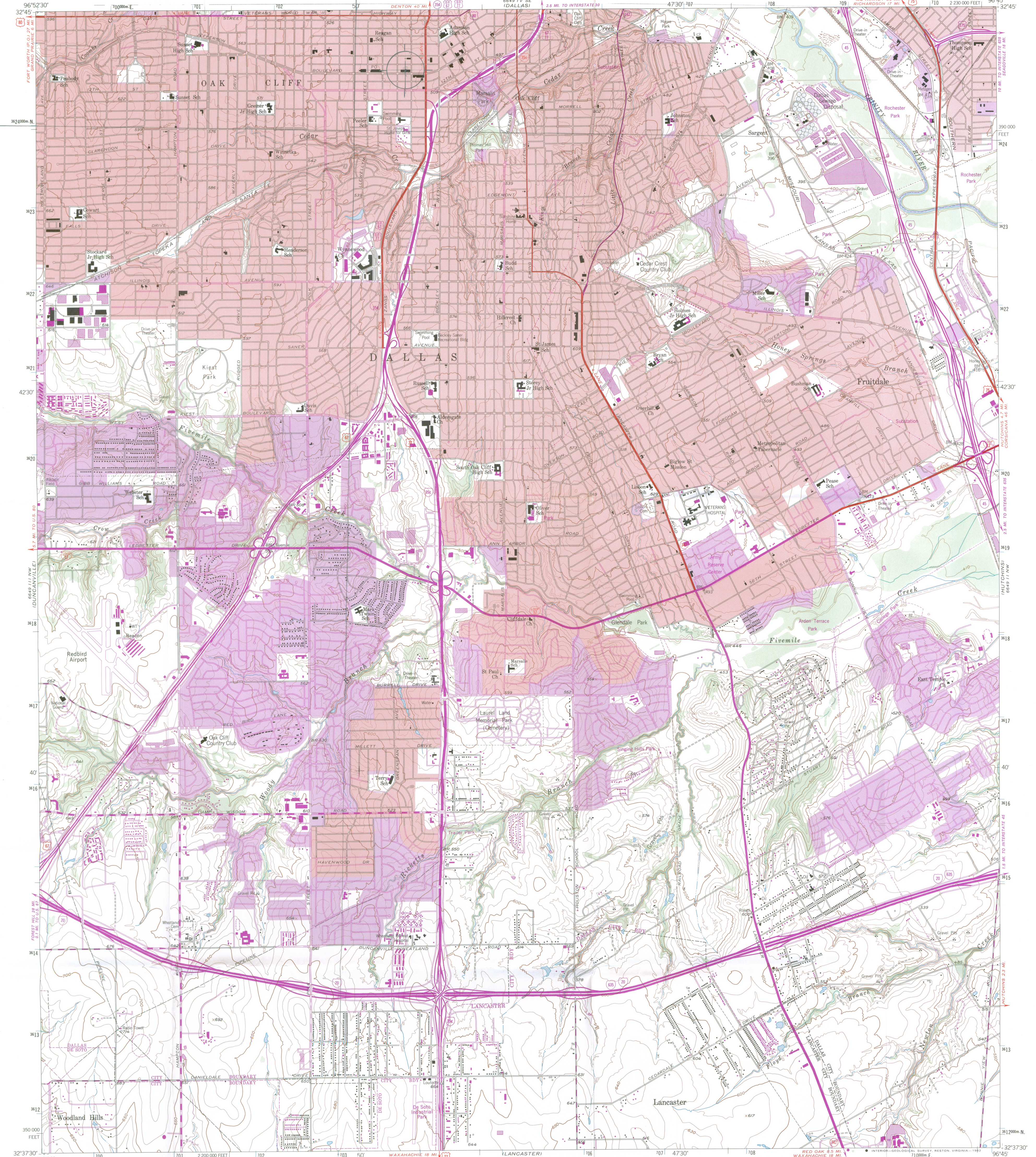
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 3

MEDICAL DENTAL BUILDING
300 BLOCK (NORTH SIDE) WEST JEFFERSON BLVD
DALLAS, DALLAS CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/703620/3624740

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

OAK CLIFF QUADRANGLE
TEXAS-DALLAS CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1952 and 1956. Topography from City of Dallas surveys 1954
and by planetable surveys 1958

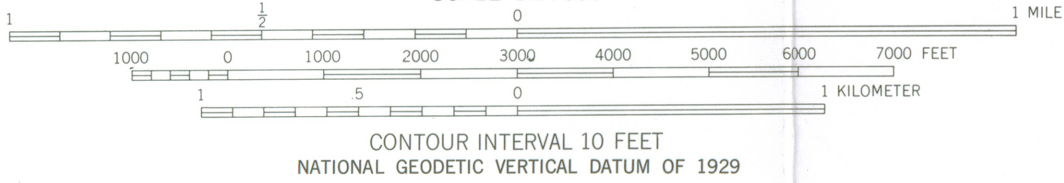
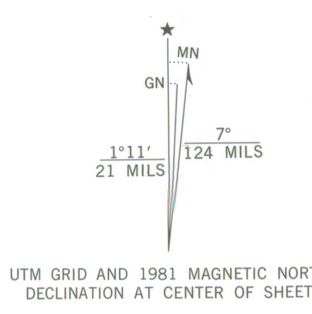
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Texas coordinate
system, north central zone. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator
grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection
lines 11 meters south and 26 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

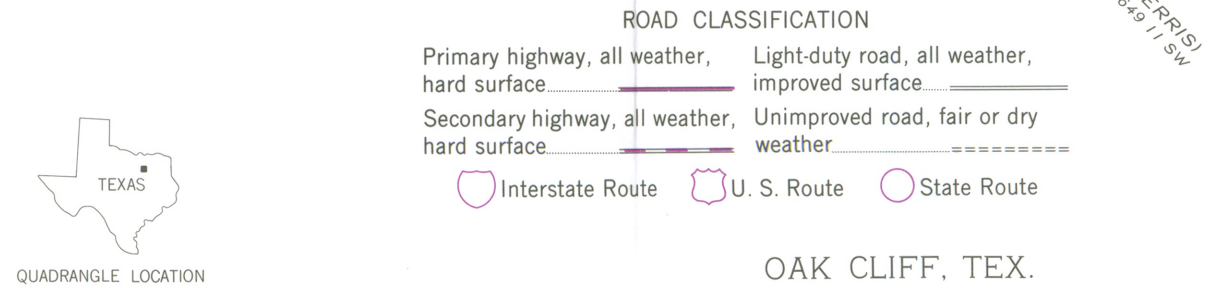
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries
of the National or State reservations shown on this map

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from
aerial photographs taken 1979 and other sources. This
information not field checked. Map edited 1981

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



3296-324

OAK CLIFF, TEX.
N3237.5-W9645.77.5

1958
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 6649 111 NE-SERIES V882