

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 Property

Historic name: U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building

Other names/site number: Earle Cabell Federal Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1100 Commerce Street

City or town: Dallas State: Texas County: Dallas

Not For Publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

☒ national ☐ statewide ☐ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Mark Wolfe

6/28/2023

Signature of commenting official:

Date

SHPO Texas Historical Commission

Title: Executive Director

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building
Name of Property

Dallas, Texas
County and State

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 ☒

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/government office

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/government office

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/New Formalism

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: granite, aluminum, steel, glass, marble, brick

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The United States Courthouse and Federal Office Building is located at 1100 Commerce Street in downtown Dallas, Texas. Developed by the General Services Administration (GSA) to house federal agencies and the U.S. Courts, the building was designed by noted Dallas architect George L. Dahl and was completed in 1971. The sixteen-story, modernist, high-rise building is of steel frame and reinforced concrete construction and is rectangular in plan with a flat roof. In addition to the upper sixteen floors, the 1,056,000 gross square foot building contains a basement, sub-basement, and mechanical penthouse. The main entrance to the building is located in the primary north elevation, facing Commerce Street, with secondary entrances in the west and south elevations. The exterior is visually organized into a three-part composition consisting of base, shaft, and capital. The base, comprising the first and second stories, is clad in panels of polished red granite, and features square, granite-clad piers spaced at intervals.¹ The third through sixteenth stories form the shaft, fenestrated with original aluminum pivot-sash windows separated by opaque glass spandrels and anodized aluminum mullions. Vertically aligned panels of polished white marble separate the bays and are suggestive of classical columns, indicating

¹ The original finish schedule lists three possible exterior granites: Regal Red, Cherokee Red, and Sunset Red. The choices are not numbered to indicate preference. Regal Red is an imported granite from India. Cherokee Red was sourced from quarries in Oklahoma. Sunset Red was quarried by the Texas Granite Corp. at Marble Falls, Texas. It seems highly likely that Sunset Red was the material used for the Cabell Federal Building. Evidence for this is found in a letter contained in the Earle Cabell papers held at Southern Methodist University (Box 89, Folder 46), dated July 6, 1967, in which H. L. Hicks, a representative of the Texas Granite Corp. wrote to Rep. Cabell, stating "you are mighty kind to intercede in our behalf and all of us appreciate your doing so." Although not conclusive, this suggests that Cabell endorsed the selection of Sunset Red, a native Texas material, for the building.

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the influence of New Formalism in the design.² The shaft terminates in a modernist capital formed by a series of tall windows at the fifteenth and sixteenth stories that are framed in granite and surmounted by rows of granite panels. Rising from the roof is a one-story, rectangular-plan, flat-roofed mechanical penthouse faced in brick. The Courthouse and Federal Office Building retains a high degree of architectural integrity on its exterior and in its significant interior spaces, which include the original first-floor lobby and five original U.S. district courtrooms located on the fifteenth floor. The building is referred to as the Courthouse and Federal Office Building in period GSA documents and the original 1967 architectural plans. It was dedicated as the Earle Cabell Federal Building in 1974, in honor of former Dallas Mayor and U.S. Congressman Earle Cabell.³

Narrative Description

Site

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building sits on a 1.3-acre corner site bound by Commerce Street on the north, Jackson Street on the south, and South Griffin Street on the west. To the east, the building adjoins the nineteen-story Santa Fe Federal Building (1925, NRHP #97000478). The two federal buildings connect on the interior at different floors and share some mechanical systems. The 1971 building's footprint extends to the concrete public sidewalk. Non-historic spherical stone bollards line the edge of the sidewalk along Commerce Street while non-original concrete posts and planters line the edge of the sidewalks along Griffin and Jackson Streets. These features are not contained within the government-owned property and are not part of the historic site.⁴ Belo Garden, a city park completed in 2012, is located to the north of the federal building, across Commerce Street. To the west, across Griffin Street, is a restaurant, and a parking lot is situated to the south, across Jackson Street.

Exterior Elevations

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building is a modernist interpretation of the three-part commercial block, and its exterior elevations are organized into base, shaft, and capital (Photos 1-5). The base consists of the first and second stories and is clad in panels of polished red granite. Along the north, south, and west elevations, the base is organized into bays by visually-prominent, granite-clad piers that are square in cross-section and frame either recessed granite wall panels or, in the case of the building entrances, openings (Photos 6 and 7). The piers rise from the public sidewalk and terminate at a thick, blocky, granite-clad entablature. The

² Three marbles are listed in the finish schedule: White Cherokee, Ozark Gray Texture Veined, and Eureka or Royal Danby. It is unclear which was selected, as no preference is indicated.

³ *An Act to name a federal office building in Dallas, Texas, the "Earle Cabell Federal Building,"* Public Law 93-187, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (December 15, 1973), 713.

⁴ Dallas Central Appraisal District (DCAD) aerial map at 1100 Commerce Street shows the bollards to be outside of the parcel boundary and within city right of way. See <https://gis.bisclient.com/dallascad/>

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dedication stone, a granite panel at the west end of the north elevation is engraved with the following:

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
LYNDON B. JOHNSON
PRESIDENT
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
LAWSON B. KNOTT
ADMINISTRATOR
1968

The north, or principal, elevation of the base is divided into eleven bays. There are six engaged piers, in addition to four free-standing piers that support the overhang of a centered five-bay recess containing the main building entrance (Photo 7). A curtain wall of large glass panes divided by dark bronze anodized aluminum mullions extends across the recessed bays. Original drawings indicate that the main entrance once consisted of six sets of double-leaf glass doors. Above the entrance was a round Great Seal that has been removed. Today, the entrance is contained in a flat roofed pavilion, added by GSA in 2000, that is nested within the center of the five-bay recess. The pavilion is clad in dark anodized aluminum panels and there are three sets of double-leaf aluminum-framed glass doors in its north elevation, in addition to two single-leaf doors. The side elevations of the pavilion are canted, and each contains a single revolving door. Additional sets of double-leaf glass doors are in the curtain wall, to either side of the projecting pavilion. In the granite-clad reveals at the east and west ends of the recess are decorative panels composed of narrow granite strips that extend the full height of the base (Photo 9). Mounted to the granite wall of the west reveal is a bronze dedication plaque installed in 1974 to commemorate the renaming of the building in honor of Rep. Earle Cabell of Texas (Photo 10). The soffit of the entrance recess is finished in concrete and features non-original decorative corrugated aluminum panels in original anodized aluminum housings. Historic photographs indicate that square-shaped lighting fixtures were originally contained in the housings (Figure 11). Affixed to the fascia of the granite-clad entablature, above the entrance pavilion, are stainless steel letters that spell the words "EARLE CABELL FEDERAL BUILDING" arranged on two rows. The lower row of lettering is original, while the words "Earle Cabell" were added when the name of the building was changed in 1974. Two rows of stainless steel lettering spelling the words "UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE" are mounted in the bay immediately east of the entrance recess. Above the lettering are two round cast aluminum plaques bearing the obverse and reverse of the Great Seal of the United States (Photo 8). Similarly, two rows of lettering mounted in the bay immediately west of the recess reads "1100 COMMERCE STREET."

The west elevation of the base is divided into eight bays and features seven engaged piers. A secondary entrance is located in a deep recess occupying the two center bays of the elevation (Photo 11). The entrance is a set of double-leaf, aluminum-framed glass doors placed within a section of curtain wall, which extends upwards to the granite-clad entablature that marks the

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termination of the base. There were originally two sets of doors, however the northern set has been removed and replaced with a large glass pane. As in the north elevation, the reveal created by the entrance recess features two decorative granite panels. Above the entrance, two rows of steel letters spell the words "EARLE CABELL FEDERAL BUILDING." The lower row of lettering is original while the upper row was added in 1974. In the bay immediately north of the entrance, two rows of original steel lettering affixed to the granite facing panels read "UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE."

The south elevation of the base is divided into twelve bays and features eleven engaged piers. A secondary employee entrance is located in the center bay (Photo 12). It was originally composed of two double-leaf glass doors set within a section of curtain wall. The two doors have been replaced by a single revolving door in a projecting circular kiosk of dark anodized aluminum. Two single-leaf glass doors flank the revolving door. As with the other entrances, two rows of steel lettering above the entrance read "EARLE CABELL FEDERAL BUILDING," while lettering in the bay west of the entrance spells the words "UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE," above which are two cast aluminum plaques of the obverse and reverse of the Great Seal. In addition, there are three vehicular entrances in the south elevation, located in the first, tenth, and eleventh bays (counting from the west). Two of these entrances are open, with access controlled by security barriers, while the third is gated. The twelfth bay is open and serves as an additional gated service entrance.

The third through the sixteenth stories of the north, west, and south elevations are consistent in appearance. The north and south elevations at these stories are divided into twenty-four bays, while the west elevation is divided into sixteen bays. Each bay contains a paired aluminum pivot-sash window. Opaque glass spandrel panels in each bay are situated above and below each window. Both the paired windows and the spandrels are separated by aluminum mullions. The bays, in turn, are separated by vertically-aligned panels of polished white marble. A portion of the east elevation is visible due to the difference in height between the Courthouse and Federal Office Building and the adjacent Santa Fe Building at 1114 Commerce Street. The east elevation is faced in buff-colored brick matching that of the Santa Fe Building, and the bays contain paired eight-light steel casement windows separated by brick, versus veneered marble piers. At the fifteenth and sixteenth stories of all four elevations, pairs of windows are framed within projecting, rectangular granite surrounds. A broad band of granite panels extends across the top of the building, above the rectangular window frames, terminating in granite coping. A single-story mechanical penthouse is present on the roof but not readily visible from the ground. It is faced in brick and features single-leaf metal doors, louvered aluminum vents, and steel access ladders. A flagpole is mounted on the roof at the center of Commerce Street elevation.

Interior

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building is occupied by a wide variety of government agencies and contains federal courtrooms on the thirteenth through sixteenth floors. Five courtrooms are original, including a large ceremonial courtroom on the fifteenth floor. The

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building also contains large assembly rooms, storage rooms, mechanical rooms, mechanical equipment throughout the sub-basement and penthouse levels, and administrative areas. An indoor parking garage is located in the basement level.

The Commerce Street entrance vestibule opens into the main public lobby. The interior of the vestibule is carpeted, with columns clad in wood paneling. Additional, non-original wood paneling clads the upper portion of the vestibule's south curtain wall. An opening in the center of this curtain wall contains the main entrance security checkpoint and screening equipment, added in 2000, at the time that the vestibule was installed. The vestibule leads to the main lobby, a large double-height space featuring terrazzo floors and walls faced in panels of polished white marble. Two rows of large, square structural columns, also clad in white marble, traverse the lobby from east to west. The lobby's plaster ceiling features inset can-style LED lighting fixtures, as well as wide, non-original corrugated aluminum panels in polished aluminum housings that are oriented north-to-south and spaced at intervals between the columns. The housings originally held lighting fixtures recessed within a louverall ceiling system of reflective baffles divided into three rows of square-shaped cells. Additional, non-original track lighting is suspended from the ceiling by long, thin steel cables. The north wall of the lobby is formed by the exterior glazed curtain wall and glazed entrance vestibule (Photo 13). One-bay niches, created by the security vestibule and located at the northeast and northwest corners of the lobby, feature long, narrow, decorative openings in the marble paneling in their respective east and west walls, much like the decorative, vent-like granite panels found on the exterior (Photo 14). There is a second-floor mezzanine, faced in white marble, that is visible on the south wall, overlooking the lobby. Beneath the overhang of the mezzanine, large, non-original, wood-paneled informational displays are mounted to the marble-clad south wall of the lobby and are lit from above by lighting fixtures in recessed, square-shaped wells (Photo 15). Similar wood-paneled displays are mounted to the lobby's east and west walls (Photo 16). An opening in the east wall of the main lobby leads to a corridor that connects with the lobby of the Santa Fe Building.

Twelve passenger elevators, arranged in four groups of three aligned north-to-south, service the lobby. The elevators are accessed from two north-south corridors, or elevator lobbies, that open from the main lobby space to the north (Photo 17). These elevator lobbies are finished in the same manner as the main lobby, but with lower, acoustical tile ceilings featuring inset lighting fixtures. A band of louverall lighting originally extended around the outer perimeter of the elevator lobby ceilings. The elevators have automatic center-opening stainless steel doors and surrounds. The elevator call buttons are mounted to stainless steel panels between the elevators, and the non-original directional indicator panels are situated above each elevator. Two stairwells are enclosed between the two center banks of elevators. Two outer north-south circulation corridors are located to the east and west of the elevator lobbies, and they are finished in the same manner.

The two elevator lobbies and the two outer corridors all join with a long east-west corridor that provides access to the west, or Griffin Street, vestibule, and entrance (Photo 18). The vestibule is separated from the corridor by a glazed partition and a set of double-leaf glass doors. A stairwell

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connecting to the upper floors and public restrooms is located on the west side of the building, adjacent to the Griffin Street vestibule. A double-leaf metal door at the east end of the long corridor accesses non-public mechanical spaces. Also at the east end of the corridor are two original aluminum mail receptacles against the north wall, fed from the upper floors by a glass and aluminum mail chute. Two areas of the corridor's north wall, between the elevator lobbies, feature the decorative, slatted, vent-like openings in the marble paneling seen at the northeast and northwest corners of the main lobby (Photo 19). From this long transverse corridor, an additional north-south corridor leads to a security checkpoint and the south employee entrance vestibule. The material palette of terrazzo floors, white marble wall paneling, and acoustical tile ceilings continues throughout all these spaces. Like the two elevator lobbies and the outer north-south corridors, the ceilings of these corridors originally featured perimeter bands of louverall lighting.

The second through sixteenth floors exhibit varying interior layouts; however, the predominant layout has a network of common area corridors accessed from the elevator lobby and giving access to restrooms, various mechanical spaces, stairwells, courtrooms, and numerous office areas. On these floors, a stairwell is located on the west, as well as the east side of the building, in addition to the two stairwells within the central elevator core. Only six elevators service the upper floors, with the six on the east side terminating at the ninth floor. The office areas on the second through twelfth floors are a combination of small, highly altered offices and large open-plan office areas. A cafeteria and food prep kitchen are located on the sixth floor. Tenant spaces, constructed for maximum flexibility to allow for changing agency requirements, have been updated over the years, as detailed in the alteration's history below. These spaces, along with the public corridors and elevator landings, are typically finished with carpeted floors, painted or papered gypsum board walls with vinyl base strips, and acoustical tile ceilings with inset lighting fixtures. Doors are typically single-leaf wood veneered with plated hardware.

The thirteenth through sixteenth floors are primarily occupied by courtrooms and associated court functions. The five original double-height courtrooms remain on the fifteenth floor, arrayed around a central core of elevators and restrooms: two on the east side, two on the west side, and the larger ceremonial courtroom on the south side of the building. The fifteenth-floor elevator landing and corridors, including the court lobbies, are finished with terrazzo flooring, plaster walls with white marble wainscoting, and acoustical tile ceilings (Photo 20). In addition, original telephone booths are located in the court lobby.

The five original U.S. District Courtrooms are entered through double-leaf wood doors in wood surrounds (Photo 21). The entrances are deeply recessed, and the marble jambs are splayed. The courtrooms all feature a similar floorplan. One half of the courtroom, adjacent to the entrance doors, contains public seating in the form of rows of long wood pews, arranged to either side of a central aisle. The other half of the courtroom contains the jury box, judge's bench, and seating for attorneys, litigants, and the court reporter. It is divided from the public seating area by a low wooden barrier with a swing gate at the central aisle.

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The five courtrooms retain original finishes, materials, and iconography, and they are relatively consistent in design (Photos 22-24). The floors of the courtrooms are carpeted. The lower walls feature original wood paneling, while the upper wall surfaces are of gypsum board, with metal air vents spaced at intervals. In two of the five original courtrooms, the lower wood paneling is accented with wood trim featuring incised decoration, or gouge work, while two others feature aluminum trim.⁵ Single-leaf doors, flush with the wood paneling, with brass-plated hardware serve as entrances for court staff. In three of the courtrooms, original aluminum wall-mounted clocks remain. Lighting is provided by large square fixtures recessed into the acoustical tile ceilings. In all the courtrooms, an original round bronze plaque bearing the obverse of the Great Seal is mounted to the wall behind the judge's bench. The interior faces of the entrance doors to the courtrooms feature original, bookended, trapezoid-shaped brass plates. The ceremonial courtroom is of the same design as the other four courtrooms but has a slightly larger bench to accommodate all of the U.S. District Court judges when required. Original architectural drawings specify completely paneled walls for the ceremonial courtroom, with trapezoid-shaped perforated aluminum inserts augmenting the upper wall paneling. It seems that this design was never implemented, however, and the courtroom as constructed matches the design of the other four and is in keeping with standard GSA courtroom design of the 1960s.

Alterations

The exterior of the Courthouse and Federal Office Building has seen few substantial alterations and remains largely as constructed. The north, south, and west building entrances were each altered c. 2000 as part of GSA's First Impressions program, intended to address security issues and improve the visitor experience. At the building's main, Commerce Street entrance, which originally had a glazed curtain wall with two sets of glass doors in the wall's three central bays, a projecting pavilion with multiple swinging and revolving doors has been added. A small projecting vestibule with revolving doors has been added to the Jackson Street entrance, replacing a single set of doors, while the Griffin Street entrance, which originally had two sets of doors, has been taken out of service and secured by metal gating. Security bollards were installed along the perimeter of the sidewalks on all three sides of the building. Those along Commerce Street were more recently replaced with the present spherical stone bollards.

The interior has been subject to more extensive alterations over the years, as necessary to meet the changing requirements of the building's tenants. Changes range from minor rehabilitation of finishes in limited areas to the complete remodeling of entire floors; however, it should be noted that the original plans were intended to accommodate flexibility. Drawings dated 1967 show "general office" areas divided into a six foot by six-foot grid for "relocatable partitions." The actual office and interior corridor partition locations were to "be determined by approved layout

⁵ It is unclear when this varied trim was added, or if it is original. Neither wood nor aluminum trim of the kind seen in these courtrooms is specified in the original drawings. In the two courtrooms with gouged wood trim, the court furnishings (judge's bench, etc.) also exhibit gouged decoration. The ceremonial courtroom is one of the two that have aluminum, versus wood, trim.

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drawings.” In addition, the drawings show two double-height spaces on the thirteenth floor reserved for future courtrooms.

There have been minor, cosmetic changes in the original U.S. District Courtrooms that include the installation of new trim, replacement of original wall clocks, and new court furnishings. Small, wall-mounted lighting fixtures have been added in two courtrooms. Also, four square wood panels have been added around the Great Seal mounted to the wall behind the judge’s bench in one of the courtrooms.

Significant interior alterations include the expansion of the courts into the thirteenth floor and the expansion of the number of courtrooms from the original five to the present eighteen. Several of the openings to the adjoining Santa Fe Federal Building have been closed, reducing the connections from the original nine to the present four on floors one, five, six, and seven. A cafeteria has been added to the sixth floor. Restrooms on the third through twelfth floors were remodeled c. 2004-2005.⁶

Integrity

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building has retained the integrity to communicate its historical and architectural significance. The building still occupies its original **location** in downtown Dallas and maintains its original orientation towards Commerce Street. The building’s **setting** at the west end of downtown still features a number of buildings dating from the mid to late 1960s and early 1970s, such as One Main Place to the north and the Dallas City Hall to the southeast, in addition to the intact 1925 Santa Fe Building Complex, which directly adjoins the subject property. Integrity of **design** remains relatively robust, with few exterior alterations to the building other than changes to the three public entrances. Important exterior design elements, from the granite-clad base with its rows of piers to the original fenestration and marble paneling, to the treatment of the upper story windows with their distinctive form and granite surrounds, have all survived. On the interior, the main lobby and the five original courtrooms have largely retained their original layouts and design elements, despite minor changes. While the offices and corridors occupied by federal tenant agencies have been rehabilitated multiple times over the years, such interventions are in accord with the original design philosophy that stressed flexibility for future space realignment. The building has retained almost all its original **materials**, from granite and marble to terrazzo flooring and original courtroom wood paneling, and original **workmanship** is exhibited throughout. Collectively, these aspects of integrity allow the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building to convey the **feeling** of a well-designed, modernist federal building, and **association** with the postwar contexts of GSA’s building program and architectural modernism in Dallas.

⁶ General Services Administration, Determination of Eligibility for the Earle Cabell Federal Building, submitted to the Texas Historical Commission in July 2022, 3-4.

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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.)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1967-1971

Significant Dates

1967 - groundbreaking

1971 - completion

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George L. Dahl (architect)

Robert D. McKee, Inc. (contractor)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building demonstrates local significance under **National Register Criterion A** in the areas of **Politics/Government**. The property serves as a noteworthy example of the modernization of federal facilities undertaken by GSA in the U.S. during the postwar era, and the historical development of federal courthouses in the Northern District of Texas. The building is also locally significant under **National Register Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** as an example of a prominent, modernist, high-rise office building commissioned by GSA. The Period of Significance is 1967 to 1971, extending from the start of construction in 1967 to the building's completion in 1971.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Courthouse and Federal Office Building was designed and constructed during the postwar period, an era of growth for the federal government that was concurrent with initiatives aimed at improving the quality of federal architecture. After World War II, the newly created GSA undertook a nationwide building campaign to address the office space and facilities requirements of federal agencies and programs. As part of this effort to modernize federal facilities, GSA developed functional, architecturally modern office buildings, courthouses, and post offices in cities and towns across the U.S. After 1962, matters of federal design were influenced by the *Guiding Principles of Federal Architecture*, created by an ad-hoc committee appointed by President Kennedy to improve the quality of new government buildings.⁷ While the original plans for the Courthouse and Federal Office Building were completed in 1960 and largely reflected early postwar office building design, they were updated in 1967 to address current design trends and construction techniques. The updated design also reflects the tenets of the *Guiding Principles*, incorporating high quality materials, such as granite and marble, that create a sense of monumentality communicating the power, authority, and stability of the federal government, as called for in the 1962 policy directive. Completed in 1971, after years of funding delays, the Courthouse and Federal Office Building housed multiple federal agencies in Dallas that had previously been located at various sites scattered across the city. The building's construction was also a noteworthy contribution to the growth and modernization of federal court facilities in the Northern District of Texas, which began in the late nineteenth century and continued into the postwar period.

Architecturally, the Courthouse and Federal Office Building merges various twentieth-century modern design influences, and it represents the evolution of modern architecture in downtown Dallas after World War II. The building exhibits the rectangular-plan, box-like building form, and curtain-walled lobby often associated with the postwar International Style office building.

⁷ Judith H. Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and '70s* (Washington: General Services Administration, 2005), 6.

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By the late 1960s, however, Dallas architects were reinterpreting this approach, and following the 1967 redesign, the building's exterior took on a New Formalist appearance, reflecting a shift from rigid adherence to modernist tenets to a renewed appreciation for the harmony and monumentality of classicism. This can be seen in the design of the base, with its rows of granite piers supporting a strong granite horizontal element suggesting a classical entablature, to the marble panels of the upper stories and the large granite-framed windows at the termination of the tower. In addition, the abstracted tripartite composition and strong vertical elements of the design contextualize with the adjacent Santa Fe Building at 1114 Commerce Street (NRHP #97000478). The Courthouse and Federal Office Building is a late example of the work of George L. Dahl, a nationally-known architect who played a significant role in shaping the built environment of Dallas in the second half of the twentieth century, a period of enormous growth and redevelopment for the city. A graduate of the University of Minnesota and Harvard University, Dahl arrived in Dallas in 1926 to work for prominent architect Herbert M. Greene, and he later established his own architectural practice in 1943. He served as the supervising architect of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition alongside renowned architect Paul Cret, and surviving buildings designed by Dahl contribute to Fair Park, a National Historic Landmark. Dahl's noteworthy postwar commissions in Dallas include the Morning News Building (1950), Dallas Public Library (1953), Dallas Memorial Auditorium (1957, now part of the Dallas Convention Center), First National Bank Tower (1965), and the Courthouse and Federal Office Building (1971). George Dahl was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and he received numerous design awards from the AIA and other organizations.

Historic Context

GSA Postwar Building Program and Modernism

The postwar period was an era of growth for the federal government, resulting in an increase in funding, employees, and construction activity. Following a slowdown in new federal construction during the Great Depression and World War II years, the economic expansion and population growth of the postwar era placed considerable strain on publicly provided services and existing facilities. By the mid-twentieth century, many federal facilities nationwide were no longer able to provide the space, or the quality of facilities, required to accommodate the growing number of government employees and agencies. To meet their needs, cramped federal agencies often leased office space in multiple buildings, resulting in inefficient decentralized operations that hindered the delivery of government services and were expensive to maintain.⁸

GSA was created in 1949 to enhance and modernize the building management and general procurement services of the federal government. Guided by The Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, GSA's construction and property management functions were placed within its Public Buildings Service division, which oversaw the design,

⁸ Lois Craig et al., *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978), 240, 438.

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construction, maintenance, and enlargement of federal buildings across the United States.⁹ For local projects in small to medium-sized cities, GSA selected local architects from within state boundaries, while for higher profile projects in Washington, D.C. and major cities, GSA sought out well-known, national architecture firms. GSA placed great emphasis on economy of design and construction during the postwar period, but architects were nevertheless afforded creative latitude in solving design problems, staying within the economic criteria of each project. By 1958, GSA's construction program had grown to over half a billion dollars, with over 125 design contracts being undertaken at that time.¹⁰

The Public Buildings Act of 1959 further bolstered the capacity of the Public Buildings Service to undertake and manage federal building projects, and it allowed GSA to receive a direct appropriation from Congress to fund its operations. GSA submitted proposals for new buildings to Congress based on surveys undertaken across the country to assess the facilities requirements of federal agencies and programs. These surveys gauged population growth, real estate trends, infrastructure development, and other factors in identifying federal office space needs. Federal construction activity increased dramatically following the passage of the 1959 act, with over 7.7 million square feet of office space added between 1961-62 alone. The wave of new federal construction projects undertaken by GSA during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s included more than 700 new office buildings, courthouses, post offices, and other buildings that reflected to varying degrees the government's postwar aspirations to modernism and design excellence.¹¹ Frequently, buildings were designed to accommodate multiple functions, combining postal, court, and office spaces, each with its own design requirements. Postal workrooms were more industrial in feel, while courtrooms were designed to communicate the power and authority of the federal government through their iconography, materials, and finishes.¹²

This increase in federal construction coincided with the postwar phase of the Modern Movement in the United States. Successful projects, such as the series of new federal office buildings developed in Washington, D.C. during the early 1960s, and the Air Force Academy Campus and Cadet Chapel in Colorado Springs, Colorado (1958-63, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill), reflected the government's embrace of modernism as an accepted and preferred design approach for its expanding postwar construction program. Indicative of the government's acceptance of modernism, President John F. Kennedy's Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space developed the *Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture* in 1962. The *Guiding Principles* constituted an architectural policy statement that embraced modern design, the incorporation of fine art into new buildings, and greater functionality. The principles sought to avoid an official government architectural style, and to this end, GSA continued to retain private architects and rely on their guidance in the areas of design and aesthetic direction. In 1962, GSA established the Fine Arts in New Federal Buildings Program, which allocated a portion of GSA's annual construction budget

⁹ Robinson and Foell, 28-30.

¹⁰ L. L. Hunter, "GSA's Design and Construction Program: A Half-Billion Dollars Worth of Buildings," *AIA Journal* 30, no. 3 (September 1958): 46-47.

¹¹ Robinson and Foell, 6, 38-41.

¹² Hunter, 48.

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for public art. The *Guiding Principles* also placed a renewed emphasis on site development, resulting in landscaped plazas and courtyards at federal buildings. Choices regarding site selection were to be made in cooperation with local agencies.¹³

Urban renewal also shaped the development of federal buildings after World War II. Beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, municipalities in the U.S. undertook large-scale, publicly-financed urban redevelopment campaigns, which often entailed the demolition of older buildings that were replaced with modernist architecture and public spaces. In some cases, architects commissioned by GSA worked to harmonize their designs for new federal buildings with that of surrounding historic buildings, in terms of scale, setbacks, massing, and materials, as seen in the relationship between the Courthouse and Federal Office Building and the adjacent Santa Fe Building.¹⁴ While not directly associated with any specific urban renewal project, the Courthouse and Federal Office Building was a critical element in the postwar urban planning of downtown Dallas.

The Federal Courts and Courthouse Development in Texas

With the formal entry of Texas into the Union in 1845, Congress organized the state as one judicial district and authorized one judgeship for the district court. The district court in Texas was not assigned to a judicial circuit but was granted the same jurisdiction as the U.S. circuit courts. During this period, courts were held in the cities of Galveston, Austin, Brownsville, and Tyler. In 1857, Congress divided the state into the eastern and western districts and authorized one judgeship for each. In 1866, the state's courts were reassigned to the Fifth Circuit. The Northern District of Texas was created in 1879, and the Southern District in 1902. With the increase in litigation that accompanied the growth of the region, Congress continued to authorize new Texas judgeships within the Fifth Circuit throughout the twentieth century.¹⁵

Courthouse construction in the Northern District began in the late nineteenth century and continued in earnest during the twentieth. The first federal district court was held in Dallas in 1879, coinciding with the creation of the Northern District. A new federal courthouse was later constructed in Dallas in 1888. The eclectic, three-story, masonry building featured a steeply pitched roof and dual towers. A court was also established at Waco at this time, and a building of similar style was constructed there in 1889. In 1902, the Waco court was transferred from the Northern to the Western District. Beginning in 1896, courts were held in three additional cities, and courthouses were subsequently developed in Fort Worth (1896, demolished), Abilene (1903, demolished), and San Angelo (1911, O. C. Fisher Federal Building, NRHP #88002592). The courthouses built in these Northern District cities reflected the eclectic and revivalist styles of the

¹³ Robinson and Foell, 6-9, 42. Note: the Fine Arts in New Federal Buildings Program was the precursor to the Art in Architecture Program, begun in 1972.

¹⁴ Robinson and Foell, 74.

¹⁵ Federal Judicial Center (FJC), History of the Federal Judiciary, "U.S. District Courts for the Districts of Texas: Legislative History," <https://www.fjc.gov/history/courts/us-district-courts-districts-texas-legislative-history> (accessed January 2023).

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era, ranging from the Romanesque Revival-Style Fort Worth courthouse to the Georgian and Italian Renaissance Revival-Style San Angelo and Abilene buildings.¹⁶

Three additional north Texas cities were added to the list of Northern District court sites during the early twentieth century. Beginning in 1908, court was held in Amarillo, and a new Italian Renaissance Revival-Style federal building and courthouse was constructed there in 1916. Federal court sessions were held in Wichita Falls beginning in 1917 and Lubbock beginning in 1928, with new buildings constructed in both cities during the 1930s.¹⁷

The U.S. Treasury Department developed numerous federal courthouses in the Northern District during the 1930s. This increase in federal construction was undertaken to replace older courthouse and post office facilities that were considered too small and outdated to serve the many functions of federal agencies in the state's growing communities.¹⁸ The increased construction was enabled by the Public Buildings Act of 1926, which authorized and funded the construction of new federal buildings throughout the U.S. New buildings constructed in the Northern District during this period included those in Dallas (1930, currently the North Ervay Apartment Homes), Lubbock (1932, currently the Courthouse Lofts apartments, NRHP #95000101), Wichita Falls (1933, Graham B. Purcell, Jr. Post Office Building), Fort Worth (1934, Eldon B. Mahon United States Courthouse, NRHP #01000437), Abilene (1936, Federal Building, U.S. Post Office, and Courthouse, NRHP #92000228), and Amarillo (1938, J. Marvin Jones Federal Building, NRHP #00001175). These buildings reflected the Simplified Classical aesthetic to varying degrees, revealing the transitional nature of American public architecture during this period. Earlier examples, such as Dallas and Lubbock, incorporated more decorative exterior elements in their design, while the later courthouses in Abilene and Amarillo featured a modicum of ornamentation relative to previous regional examples.¹⁹

After World War II, GSA embarked on another campaign of new federal courthouse construction in Texas, part of the agency's previously mentioned nationwide effort to upgrade federal court facilities following passage of the Public Buildings Act of 1959. Buildings completed during the 1960s included the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Building in Victoria, Texas (1960), the Bob Casey U.S. Courthouse in Houston (1962), and the John H. Wood, Jr. United States Courthouse in San Antonio (1968), which was constructed as part of the 1968 World's Fair (HemisFair '68) and later brought into the GSA inventory. These modernist buildings represent a sharp break with the architecture of the pre-World War II period. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Building was designed by Jordan C. Ault, Robert Rick, and Page Southerland Page. The main façade is cantilevered over a recessed, curtain-walled lobby, and the building features multi-toned, patterned brick masonry. The Bob Casey U.S. Courthouse in Houston, designed by Harvin

¹⁶ FJC, History of the Federal Judiciary, "U.S. District Courts for the Districts of Texas: Meeting Places," <https://www.fjc.gov/history/courts/u.s.-district-courts-districts-texas-meeting-places>; FJC, History of the Federal Judiciary, Historic Federal Courthouses, <https://www.fjc.gov/history/courthouses/list> (accessed January 2023).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ This theme is recurring in the National Register documentation for the 1930s federal buildings discussed here.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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Moore, is a modernist high-rise building clad in rough-textured precast concrete panels that, combined with its small square windows, suggest the influence of Brutalism.²⁰

Three additional federal buildings were completed in Texas during the 1970s. The George H. Mahon Federal Building and United States Courthouse in Lubbock (1971, Atcheson, Atkinson, and Cartwright) is a high-rise building with overhanging roof, strong vertical elements, and marble-clad columns—all design attributes associated with New Formalism. The Courthouse and Federal Office Building in Dallas (1971) also exhibits strong vertical elements and marble cladding. In addition, GSA developed a modernist federal building, courthouse, and post office in Midland (1974, Neuhardt and Babb; Covington, Shelton, and Taylor) that combines aspects of Brutalism with other postwar modern influences.²¹

Twentieth-Century Growth of Downtown Dallas

New federal courthouse construction in Dallas was necessitated by the vigorous growth of the city's economy and built environment during the twentieth century. By 1900, the city of Dallas had risen to become a regional center for commerce, banking, and transportation, and was one of the world's largest inland cotton markets. The early years of the twentieth century saw the continued growth of the city's manufacturing sector, centered on the production of farm machinery and leather products, which primarily served the state's agricultural economy. The first steel-frame high-rise office building constructed in Dallas, the Praetorian Building, was completed in 1907, and in 1914 the city was selected as the site for a Federal Reserve Bank. During the 1910s, Dallas doubled in size to 18.31 square miles.²² Numerous steel-framed high-rise office buildings and hotels were constructed downtown between 1910 and 1920. Examples such as the Beaux-Arts Adolphus Hotel (1912, NRHP #83003133) exude the eclecticism of the early twentieth century, while examples such as the former department store building at 801 Main Street (1910) reflect the Chicago School of high-rise commercial architecture through its large windows and terra cotta ornamentation. To manage this growth, the city commissioned a city plan, which was prepared by George E. Kessler in 1911. Although the Kessler Plan was never fully implemented, it did influence the development of public spaces in downtown Dallas such as Ferris and Dealey Plazas, as well as the Central Expressway and Turtle Creek Parkway.²³ Dallas' Union Station opened in 1916.²⁴

Dallas experienced tremendous growth during the 1920s. The population increased by 100,000, and the city expanded to over forty-five square miles in size. In 1924, John Surratt and George Dealey established the Kessler Plan Association, a city-wide improvement organization that

²⁰ FJC, History of the Federal Judiciary, Historic Federal Courthouses, <https://www.fjc.gov/history/courthouses/list> (accessed January 2023).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ron Tyler et al., eds. *The New Handbook of Texas*, vol. 2 (Austin: Texas Historical Association, 1996), 479.

²³ Larry Paul Fuller, ed., *The American Institute of Architecture Guide to Dallas Architecture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1999), 4, 19, 23.

²⁴ National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, Dallas, Dallas County, Texas, National Register #04000894, section 8, 44.

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advocated for street widening to improve downtown traffic congestion, infrastructure improvements, and greater city planning. New construction between 1920 and 1926 added many new high-rise buildings to the city's growing skyline, with investment totaling over \$150 million during this period.²⁵ These buildings, while modern structurally, continued to evoke historicism in their exterior treatment, an approach typified by the twenty-nine-story, limestone-clad, Renaissance Revival-Style Magnolia Building at 108 S. Akard Street (1922, Alfred C. Bossom, NRHP #78002915). Another important downtown building constructed during the 1920s was the Neoclassical Revival-Style Old Federal Reserve Bank Building at 400 S. Akard Street (1921, Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White).²⁶

The Great Depression caused widespread unemployment and a sharp decline in retail sales and bank deposits. The discovery of oil in east Texas in 1930, however, provided a boon to the city's banks and Dallas became a center for petroleum financing. The selection of Dallas as the site of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, which was attended by over ten million people including President Franklin Roosevelt, was a promotional victory for the city, and spearheaded by supervising architect George Dahl, helped usher modern architecture and its vision of progress into the city's physical and cultural landscape. By the late 1930s, the city's economy had diversified into food processing, apparel manufacturing, and printing.²⁷

During World War II, Dallas' industrial workforce expanded to more than 75,000, led by war-related employers such as North American Aviation.²⁸ Downtown construction slowed to a near standstill, however, due to a shortage of steel and other materials needed for the war effort.²⁹ A 1945 master plan, commissioned by the city and prepared by Harland Bartholomew and Associates of St. Louis, although only partially implemented, was critical towards guiding postwar growth in Dallas.³⁰ An important aspect of the plan in this regard was its focus on greater integration of automobile usage within the city, which included highway and street planning to alleviate downtown congestion and measures to streamline commutes from outlying neighborhoods into the central business district.³¹

Downtown Dallas was transformed during the postwar era, with twenty-five major building projects completed between 1945 and 1955 alone. Prominent among them was the thirty-four-story, International-Style Republic National Bank (1954, Harrison and Abramovitz, NRHP #05000243), then the tallest building in Dallas. By mid-1956, over \$100 million in new construction had been completed in downtown since the end of the war, and by 1958 the city had added over six million square-feet of new office space. The buildings completed during this construction boom included new hotels, banks, high-rise office buildings, retail stores, and high-

²⁵ National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, section 8, 50.

²⁶ Fuller ed., 14, 24.

²⁷ Tyler et al., eds., 479.

²⁸ Tyler et al., eds., 479.

²⁹ Doug Tomlinson, *Dallas Architecture: 1936-1986* (Austin, TX: Texas Monthly Press, 1985), 31.

³⁰ National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, section 8, 56.

³¹ E. A. Wood, "A City Looks to the Future: Dallas Believes in City Planning," *Southwest Review* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1944): 305-06.

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profile civic projects that included a new library, auditorium, city hall, and county courthouse expansion.³²

By 1959 the city's population had increased to 680,000. Annexation increased the city's geographic extent from 114 to nearly 300 square miles. The development of a network of expressways and beltway highways helped facilitate this outward suburban expansion.³³ During the 1950s and 60s, Dallas became the third largest technology center in the country, anchored by companies such as the Ling-Tempco-Vought (LTV) Corporation and Texas Instruments. In 1957, Dallas developers Trammel Crow and John M. Stemmons opened the Dallas Market Center, the largest wholesale trade complex in the world.³⁴

Downtown growth during the 1960s was tempered by the development of the city's booming suburbs. During the early part of the decade, this development, concentrated in the affluent neighborhoods of north Dallas, began to draw retail sales and banking away from the central business district. The construction of major shopping malls, such as the Northpark Center, accelerated the trend towards suburbanization. Pressure to develop new houses and retail in the north, south, and surrounding suburbs continued, spurred in part by school desegregation in Dallas. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in downtown Dallas in 1963, in addition to being a national tragedy, was a public relations setback for the city. With concern growing over the city's civic health, the city's leaders united behind a new planning effort, the "Goals for Dallas," which addressed growth throughout the metropolitan area, versus only downtown, and included public input. Major downtown building projects undertaken during the 1960s included the First National Bank Building (1965) and the thirty-four-story One Main Place (1968). There was also a renewed emphasis on historic preservation in Dallas during the 1960s with the opening of Old City Park, which showcased the architectural heritage of north Texas.³⁵ By 1970, the city's population had risen to 844,401. The completion of the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport in 1974 attracted new corporations and capital to the Dallas area, and it further established the city's reputation as a national center for business and finance.³⁶

Planning, Site Acquisition, and Funding Delays, 1954-1965

In the early 1950s, when planning for the Courthouse and Federal Office Building began, federal offices were scattered among three federally owned buildings and numerous leased sites in Dallas. They included the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse at Bryan and Ervay streets, a five-story, Italian Renaissance Revival-Style building constructed in 1930, which housed the main post office, all federal courts and related activities, and many federal agency offices. The U.S. Post Office Terminal Annex, a five-story, Art Deco-Style building constructed in 1937 at Commerce and Houston streets, handled bulk mail and also housed some federal offices. The

³² National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, section 8, 57-58.

³³ Tomlinson, 31.

³⁴ Tyler et al., eds., 479.

³⁵ Marcel Quimby, Dennis Stacy, and Willis Winters, *Transformations: The Architects, Buildings, and Events That Shaped Dallas Architecture* (New York: McGraw Hill Construction Group, 2008), 18.

³⁶ Tyler et al., eds., 479; National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, section 8, 59-60.

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Santa Fe Building at 1114 Commerce Street (NRHP #97000478), a Renaissance Revival-Style building constructed in 1925 as the headquarters for the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railway, had been acquired by the federal government in 1942 for use by the U.S. Army and was subsequently transferred to GSA in 1949 for federal agency offices.³⁷ These three buildings fell far short of meeting the space requirements of the federal government in growing postwar Dallas, which resulted in satellite federal offices in leased spaces throughout the city.

To address these facility needs, GSA commenced planning for a new federal building in Dallas in 1954, one of eighteen new buildings to be constructed in the four-state Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana administrative region.³⁸ The formal GSA prospectus for the project, initially designated “7-TEX-04,” called for the construction of a combined courthouse and federal office building on a site to be acquired by the federal government. In the prospectus, GSA cited the inadequacy of existing space in federally owned Dallas buildings to meet the current requirements of the federal courts and government agencies. The appointment of additional judgeships in the Northern District required additional court facilities, and the consolidation of federal agencies under one roof would improve coordination and efficiency of operations. The proposed building would be “functional in concept and devoid of excessive embellishment and extravagant appointments.”³⁹

In March of 1956, the House Appropriations Committee approved funds for site acquisition and design services for the proposed fourteen million dollar federal office building in Dallas. At the time, it was anticipated that the building would be financed through the lease-purchase program.⁴⁰ The Dallas project was approved by the House and Senate Public Works Committees in July 1956.⁴¹

In January 1957, GSA received twenty-one site bids from local property owners. Eighteen of the sites were located in downtown Dallas, the area specified by GSA in its request for bids.⁴² In December, GSA announced that it had chosen a 1.3-acre site in downtown Dallas for the new federal building. The site, proposed by a group of downtown property owners, extended for 290 feet along Commerce and Jackson Streets from the western edge of the government-owned Santa Fe Building at 1114 Commerce Street. It would be bounded on the west by a planned extension of Griffin Street, between Murphy and Poydras Streets.⁴³

³⁷ The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a Dallas Landmark. The U.S. Post Office Terminal Annex is a contributing resource in the Dealey Plaza Historic District, a National Historic Landmark (NR #93001607). The Santa Fe Federal Building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Santa Fe Terminal Buildings #1 and #2, NR #97000478).

³⁸ Walter B. Moore, “Other Cities Favored Over Dallas,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1963, 6.

³⁹ General Services Administration, “Formal Prospectus for Proposed Building Under Title I of Public Law 519, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session,” undated, Box 21, Folder 21, Bruce Alger Collection, Dallas Public Library, History and Archives Division, Dallas, Texas.

⁴⁰ “Appropriations Get OK for U.S. Buildings Sites,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 3, 1956, 8.

⁴¹ Moore, “Other Cities Favored...,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1963, 6.

⁴² John Mashek, “21 Site Bids Made for Federal Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 25, 1957, 1.

⁴³ “Site for Federal Building Picked,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 1957, 1, 9.

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In reporting on the acquisition of the Commerce Street site, the *Dallas Morning News* noted that:

The Commerce Street site is favorable for such a building. The new center, together with street improvements now planned, should help revive the western end of the downtown area. It also will give improved housing to the agencies using it and will provide the convenience of having related agencies under the same roof.⁴⁴

From the earliest planning stages, the development of the new federal building was closely associated with the Santa Fe Building. GSA initially considered extending the Santa Fe Building west to Poydras Street, but later decided to build a completely new building and sell the Santa Fe Building once the new building was completed. A GSA news release issued at the time of the property acquisition stated that “it is felt that locating the new building in this area will enhance the value of the existing government owned building as well as providing a convenient location for Government employees and the public.”⁴⁵ GSA subsequently decided to retain the Santa Fe Building, and new internal connections between the two buildings on floors one through ten were planned so as to permit the housing of the larger Dallas-based agencies on single floors, versus on two or more floor levels.⁴⁶

In October 1958, GSA awarded the contract to design the building to architects George L. Dahl and Mark Lemmon of Dallas.⁴⁷ The following summer, regional GSA staff and the architects met with GSA officials in Washington to review and discuss the initial plans for the building.⁴⁸ In November 1959, GSA released a preliminary sketch drawing prepared by the architects. The initial design bears a striking resemblance to that of the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in New York, with a base composed of dark columns alternating with glazed panels supporting a simple geometric form clad in a distinctive checkerboard pattern. Proposed was a sixteen-story high-rise office building that would house approximately 3,340 workers. Planned were two basement levels that would contain mechanical equipment and an underground parking garage. Five courtrooms, jury rooms, judge’s chambers, and offices for the court clerk would be on the fifteenth floor. Offices for the U.S. Marshal, probation officers, U.S. attorney, and U.S. commissioner would be located on the sixteenth floor. GSA was conducting space management studies to determine how the remaining office space would be best allocated. At this time, GSA planned to retain the existing Santa Fe Building at 1114 Commerce Street and connect it to the new building.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ “Federal Building,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 21, 1959, 4.

⁴⁵ “Site for Federal Building Picked,” *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 1957, 1.

⁴⁶ Dallas Chamber of Commerce, “The Dallas Federal Center: A Factual Review of the Background and Current Status of the Project” (1963), 5, Earle Cabell Papers, 1950-1975, Box 18, Folder 69, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

⁴⁷ Moore, “Other Cities Favored...,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1963, 6.

⁴⁸ “Final Drafts for Federal Center Eyed,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1959, 10.

⁴⁹ Julian Levine, “Drawing of Center Unveiled,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 19, 1959, 1.

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In 1959, passage of the Public Buildings Act ended the lease-purchase program. The new law also required that any projects previously recommended, but not completed, be reauthorized by Congress. In 1960, the Dallas building was reauthorized by the House and Senate Public Works Committees. In addition, GSA approved the final drawings in 1960.⁵⁰

A series of delays over the next seven years, primarily involving funding, pushed back the beginning of construction until 1967. The first of these delays occurred when President Eisenhower eliminated funds for construction of the building from his 1960 budget submission to Congress. GSA had requested appropriations for new buildings in Dallas and ten other U.S. cities, based on emergency need. Despite this setback, GSA Regional Director David S. Phillips described the project as “very much alive,” although delayed, and he stated that the agency would continue to advance the project with the funds available. Rep. Bruce Alger of Dallas stated that he would re-examine the cost-savings that the new building was projected to realize over time and would continue to lobby for the building’s construction.⁵¹ An additional impediment appeared in February when allegations of impropriety surrounding GSA’s purchasing of the site were brought forward by a disgruntled Dallas property owner, precipitating an investigation of the site purchase by the House government operations subcommittee on government efficiency and economy, chaired by Rep. Jack Brooks of Beaumont, Texas.⁵² In September, a report prepared by the General Accountability Office approved the manner in which GSA conducted negotiations with property owners and acquired the site.⁵³

Despite this, by mid-1961, Congress still had not approved the appropriation for the construction of the Dallas federal building. By this time, GSA had designated and acquired the site, the final architectural plans had been completed, and Congress had authorized \$819,000 for the renovation of the Santa Fe Building. Giving voice to the frustrated local business and civic community, the editors of the *Dallas Morning News* wrote: “What then is the controversy now? Nobody says. And the subcommittee refuses to hold a hearing to find out what the controversy is.”⁵⁴

Funding issues during the Kennedy administration continued to delay the project, and the Dallas building was omitted from the president’s 1962 and 1963 budget requests.⁵⁵ By September 1963, there still had been no approval of funds for construction, leading *Dallas Morning News* columnist Walter B. Moore to note that seventeen of the eighteen regional projects originally approved by GSA in 1954 had been completed, Dallas being the exception, and that subsequently approved and funded projects included a new \$15,664,000 federal building in Fort Worth. In testimony before Congress, GSA administrator Bernard L. Boutin admitted that the Dallas building was much needed, but he cited the high cost of the proposed project coupled with

⁵⁰ Moore, “Other Cities Favored...,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1963, 6.

⁵¹ “New Ike Budget Omits Dallas Federal Center,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 19, 1960, 1.

⁵² “Federal Center Plan Hits New Obstacle,” *Dallas Morning News*, February 20, 1960, 3.

⁵³ “Dallas Group’s Plan to Get Site Cleared,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 2, 1960, 10.

⁵⁴ “Federal Building Deferred,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 15, 1961, 2.

⁵⁵ Gene Ormsby, “Delay, Delay Sums Up Story,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 23, 1965, 6.

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the need to work within available funding parameters to broadly meet the agency's many priorities within the region.⁵⁶ In a letter to Rep. Bruce Alger, David Bell, director of the Executive Office of the President, Bureau of the Budget, similarly noted the need to "defer a number of good projects" due to fiscal constraints, and referred to the Dallas federal building as a "high priority" moving forward.⁵⁷

In January 1965, a delegation composed of Rep. Earle Cabell, Congressman at Large Joe Pool, Dallas Chamber of Commerce president Hobart D. Turman, and a group of local business leaders, met with GSA officials in Washington to present an updated argument for the building. The group cited the \$1,951,000 in government funds that had already been spent on site acquisition and architectural plans, as well as statistical data on downtown growth and development, and infrastructure improvements such as the completion of Griffin Street adjacent to the project site and the development of a nearby county building complex. The group also pointed to the greater efficiency that would be achieved through the centralization of government offices in Dallas, which had long served as a key rationale for the project.⁵⁸

The impasse appeared to be broken when President Lyndon Johnson included the \$22,128,000 Dallas federal building in his budget request for 1966. It marked the end of an eleven-year campaign by local civic and business leaders to press for the building's construction. Quoted in the *Dallas Morning News*, Hobart Turman of the Chamber of Commerce praised the efforts of Congressmen Cabell and Pool, and Texas Gov. John Connally, who personally communicated with President Johnson regarding the matter.⁵⁹ The newspaper also published a sketch drawing of the building in January of 1965.⁶⁰

The delays seemed poised to continue, however, when funds for the building were eliminated from the appropriation bill in the House following opposition from Rep. Albert Thomas of Houston, who maintained that the expenditure was unnecessary given the new federal building in Fort Worth.⁶¹ In response, Texas Sen. Ralph Yarborough argued convincingly in a hearing of the Senate-House conference committee on the independent offices appropriation bill, stating that "Dallas is a large and growing community where there will be a continuing need for federal office space. The federal government is not going to move out of Dallas."⁶² By August 1965, funds for the project had been restored into the appropriation bill following months of hearings and negotiations.⁶³

⁵⁶ Moore, "Other Cities Favored...", *Dallas Morning News*, September 28, 1963, 6.

⁵⁷ David L. Bell to Rep. Bruce Alger, February 19, 1962, Box 21, Folder 20, Bruce Alger Collection, Dallas Public Library, History and Archives Division, Dallas, Texas.

⁵⁸ "Dallas Group Pleads for Federal Building," *Dallas Morning News*, January 5, 1965, 6.

⁵⁹ Griff Singer, "Dallas Leaders Hail LBJ's OK on Center," *Dallas Morning News*, January 23, 1965, 6.

⁶⁰ Robert E. Baskin, "\$22,128,000 for Dallas Federal Center Allocated in President's 1966 Budget," *Dallas Morning News*, January 23, 1965, 1.

⁶¹ Robert E. Baskin, "Yarborough Aid Asked in Federal Center Fight," *Dallas Morning News*, May 15, 1965, 8.

⁶² Robert E. Baskin, "Center Funds May Be Put in By Senate," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28, 1965, 1.

⁶³ Robert E. Baskin, "Center Given Committee's Official OK," *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1965, 1.

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Design Modifications and Construction, 1965-1971

After the funding issues were finally resolved, architect George Dahl updated the architectural plans that he originally prepared with Mark Lemmon at the request of GSA to reflect current design and material preferences.⁶⁴ Dahl is generally credited as architect for the design that was finally constructed, and only his name appears in the title block of the final drawings. While the basic arrangement of the exterior design was not changed substantially, the overall character of the building took on a New Formalist appearance through the introduction of vertically aligned marble panels. Dahl also articulated the tower's termination through the addition of tall windows in heavy granite surrounds at the fifteenth and sixteenth stories, a design element not typically associated with International-Style architecture that seems to reference the cornices found in pre-World War II commercial buildings. The windows line up horizontally with the terminal windows and setback of the adjacent historic Santa Fe building, and the strong vertical elements of the revised design compliment the prominent brick piers of the Santa Fe Building's Commerce Street facade. In addition, the cornice-like articulation of the federal building's terminal stories, and the building's three-part composition, are very similar to the contemporary Court of Claims and New Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. (1969, John Carl Warnecke and Associates), as pointed out in a 1968 GSA publication. These modernist buildings were designed to contextualize with the surrounding historic architecture lining Washington's Lafayette Square in much the same way that Dahl's Dallas federal building relates to the adjacent Santa Fe Building.⁶⁵

In the seven years since the design had been initiated, the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture had been released and had compelled GSA to seek higher quality design and to cooperate with the urban planning goals of communities within which federal buildings were being placed. By 1965, new development was increasingly focused on the area of downtown near the planned Courthouse and Federal Office Building. While the plans for the federal building had stalled, other urban redevelopment plans had advanced, such as One Main Place, originally planned as three-phase superblock development on property north of the federal building, and the new Dallas City Hall, planned for a site several blocks to the south.⁶⁶ The location of the new federal building was an important factor in determining the site for the new city hall, according to a resolution of the Dallas City Council passed in 1965. In it, the City Council described the federal building project as a "major element in a plan for the revitalization and rehabilitation of the older section of the city and is an important part of the plan to preserve the vitality and expand the usefulness of the central city as the core of the entire urban area."⁶⁷ A

⁶⁴ Mike Quinn, "Work on Center Due in Spring," *Dallas Morning News*, November 5, 1965, 1.

⁶⁵ General Services Administration, Determination of Eligibility for the Earle Cabell Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, submitted to the Texas Historical Commission, July 2022; Robinson and Associates, *DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976*, historic context study prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2009.

⁶⁶ General Services Administration, Determination of Eligibility for the Earle Cabell Federal Building, submitted to the Texas Historical Commission in July 2022, 8.

⁶⁷ Resolution of the City Council of the City of Dallas, approved May 31, 1965, Earle Cabell Papers, 1950-1975, Box 89, Folder 44, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

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map that appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* in 1965, in connection with a story on the redesign of the federal building, depicted other current and planned development projects in the general area, which included One Main Place and the future city hall.⁶⁸ The city hall, to be located on a site across from the Dallas Memorial Auditorium, was designed by I. M. Pei and Partners in association with Harper and Kemp. While planning and design began during the mid-1960s, the Dallas City Hall was not completed until 1978, delayed by budget overages, design revisions, and other issues. At the outset, both Pei and city officials hoped that the project, like the federal building, would help revitalize the entire southern edge of downtown.⁶⁹

The new design for the federal building not only reflected the effort to revitalize downtown Dallas, but also the desire to improve the city's image in the wake of the 1963 Kennedy Assassination. The Goals for Dallas, a program conceived by Dallas Mayor Erik Jonsson, was modeled on Goals for America, a policy statement prepared in 1960 by a panel appointed by President Eisenhower. Jonsson, who succeeded Earle Cabell as Dallas mayor in 1965, was a former Texas Instruments executive who was deeply interested in the historical growth and development of American cities. Jonsson wanted urban planning in Dallas to be more responsive to community needs, and the city assembled a twenty-three-member committee of individuals with varying professional backgrounds to begin the process. Dallas architect Pat Spillman, FAIA was selected to draft an essay on the relationship between architectural design and city planning. The Goals called for improving design within the central business district and using urban renewal to revitalize blighted areas. The 1966 draft publication, finalized in 1967 following rounds of community meetings, included a statement on design: "We demand a city of quality with beauty and fitness to satisfy both eye and mind."⁷⁰ This is in accord with the renewed emphasis on aesthetic beauty that gave rise to New Formalism, the influence of which is seen in the federal building and other examples of George Dahl's work from this period. The federal building redesign, therefore, was shaped by this overall civic context in which city leaders were looking to planning and architectural design as a means of reinventing the city's public image while improving the aesthetic qualities of downtown and removing blight. Dahl's revised design, which referenced historic commercial and civic architecture through its abstracted tripartite composition, strong vertical elements, and marble cladding, was at the same time a forward-looking architectural statement that created both physical and aesthetic connections with the Santa Fe Building that it was designed to compliment.

Bidding on the construction contract was delayed while GSA conducted a survey of local building costs in the Dallas area in mid-1966.⁷¹ Site clearing work began in November of that year.⁷² Cave-ins that occurred on a block-long section of Elm Street in January 1967, near a

⁶⁸ "Architects Contacted on Center Possibilities," *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1965, 11.

⁶⁹ Tomlinson, 99.

⁷⁰ Greg Brown, "Forever Changed: The Architecture of Dallas: Forever Changed by the Kennedy Assassination," AIA Dallas, <https://www.aiadallas.org/v/columns-detail/Forever-Changed-The-Architecture-of-Dallas-Reframed-by-the-Kennedy-Assassination/92/> (accessed April 2023).

⁷¹ "Survey of Building Costs Delays Federal Center Bids," *Dallas Morning News*, May 7, 1966, 6.

⁷² "Job Starts on Federal Building," *Dallas Morning News*, November 6, 1966, 11.

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private construction site one block from the subject property, led GSA to halt work and conduct additional soil tests during the spring of 1967.⁷³ General contractor Robert D. McKee, Inc. began construction on August 15, 1967.⁷⁴ Construction was approximately fifteen percent complete by November of the following year.⁷⁵ By May 1970, the building was seventy percent complete.⁷⁶ It had been completed by January of 1971, and the first federal tenants began moving in at that time. By June, the building was fully occupied.⁷⁷

In 1973, Congress passed legislation renaming the building the Earle Cabell Federal Building.⁷⁸ Earle Cabell (1906-1975) served as the Mayor of Dallas from 1961-1964, and four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1965-1973. The dedication ceremony was held on January 11, 1974. Dallas Mayor George Allen delivered remarks, as did Rep. Dale Milford and Rep. Alan Steelman.⁷⁹

Judicial History of the Courthouse and Federal Office Building

The Northern District of Texas, established in 1879, is today comprised of 100 of the state's 254 counties. Encompassing ninety-six square miles, the district is among the nation's largest, and it contains some of the state's most populous cities, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Arlington, Lubbock, Garland, Irving, Amarillo, Grand Prairie, and Mesquite. There are currently sixteen sitting district court judges, led by Chief Judge David C. Godbey, in addition to nine magistrate judges.⁸⁰ The number of judges most recently increased in 1990, when Congress authorized the appointment of two new judges to the Northern District.⁸¹

Judge Harold "Barefoot" Sanders, Jr. (1925-2008) was one of the most important individuals associated with the judicial history of the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building. Sanders was a prominent American lawyer, politician, and jurist who served as a federal judge in the Northern District of Texas from 1979 until his retirement in 2006. Born in Dallas in 1925, Sanders earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Southern Methodist University in 1948 and his Juris Doctor degree from Harvard Law School in 1951. He established a private law practice in Dallas in 1950 and served in the Texas House of Representatives from 1953-1959. Sanders was the Dallas County campaign manager for the 1960 Kennedy-Johnson ticket. Once elected, President Kennedy appointed Sanders to serve as U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of

⁷³ Dorothy De La Garza, "Federal Center Site Gets Second Look," *Dallas Morning News*, March 17, 1967, 11.

⁷⁴ Earl Golz, "Federal Center Nearing Finish; Tenancy Delayed," *Dallas Morning News*, May 3, 1970, 39.

⁷⁵ "Construction Box Score 1968," *Dallas Morning News*, November 10, 1968, 20.

⁷⁶ Golz, "Federal Center...", *Dallas Morning News*, May 3, 1970, 39.

⁷⁷ "U.S. Courts, Aides Move Into New Federal Building," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1971, 11.

⁷⁸ *An Act to name a Federal office building in Dallas, Texas, the "Earle Cabell Federal Building,"* Public Law 93-187, 93rd Cong., 1st sess. (December 15, 1973), 713.

⁷⁹ "Dedication Ceremony Earle Cabell Federal Building Dallas, Texas," printed dedication program dated January 11, 1974, Earle Cabell Papers, 1950-1975, Box 1, Folder 10, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

⁸⁰ United States District Court, Northern District of Texas, "Court Information," <https://www.txnd.uscourts.gov/court-info> (accessed June 2023).

⁸¹ *Judicial Improvements Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-650, *U.S. Statutes at Large* 104 (1990): 5089.

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Texas in 1961. He later advised the president to postpone his fateful 1963 trip to the city due to the hostile partisan atmosphere at the time. Sanders was a few cars behind that of the president in the motorcade on the day of the assassination, and he later located federal judge Sarah T. Hughes to swear in Johnson as president on Air Force One. During the Johnson administration, Sanders served at the Justice Department from 1965-1967 as assistant deputy attorney general and assistant attorney general. From 1967-1969, he was legislative counsel to President Johnson. Afterwards, he returned to private practice in Dallas.⁸²

In 1979, President Carter nominated Sanders to serve as U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of Texas. As a federal judge for more than twenty-five years, including his tenure as chief judge from 1989 to 1995, Judge Sanders ruled on a range of legal matters. In 1981, Sanders inherited *Tasby, et al. v. Wright, et al.*, the case that led to the eventual desegregation of the Dallas public schools, from U.S. District Judge W. Mac Taylor. The case, which was originally filed as *Tasby v. Estes* in 1970, was brought by Eddie Mitchell Tasby, representing a group of African American and Hispanic students in the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). The plaintiffs alleged that the DISD, through its incremental approach to implementing desegregation after the 1955 *Brown v. Board* ruling, had allowed systemic racial segregation to persist to the disadvantage of the city's minority students. Following extensive litigation, in 1976, the court adopted a desegregation plan submitted by the Dallas Alliance, a community service organization that assisted in devising solutions for a wide range of issues facing the city. The plan divided the school district into subdistricts structured to ensure racial diversity reflective of the broader DISD. After the case was returned to the Northern District of Texas by the Supreme Court in 1980, the parties negotiated unsuccessfully in an effort to reach an agreement on a desegregation plan.⁸³ Judge Sanders ruled that the DISD continued to show signs of racial segregation, but he concluded that mandatory cross-district busing was not the most effective solution to the problem. Instead, Sanders made busing voluntary, and he ordered the opening of magnet schools and super-sized learning centers aimed at eliminating the achievement gap between white and minority students. He ended federal oversight of the school district in 2003.⁸⁴

While a federal judge, Sanders also oversaw the restructuring of the state hospitals for the mentally ill under the 1984 suit, *R.A.J. v. Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation*. In the case, originally brought in 1974, patients at eight state mental hospitals charged that the state had engaged in an overall pattern of neglect and had failed to provide effective treatment programs tailored to the needs of individual patients. In 1982, the court established the R.A.J. Review Panel to monitor the implementation of a settlement agreement filed in 1981. In his 1984 ruling, Judge Sanders found that the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation had failed to adequately plan and document individualized treatment, had

⁸² "Barefoot Sanders Dies; Dallas Judge was 83," *New York Times*, September 23, 2008; Federal Judicial Center, History of the Federal Judiciary, Judges, "Sanders, Harold Barefoot, Jr., <https://www.fjc.gov/history/judges/sanders-harold-barefoot-jr> (accessed April 2023).

⁸³ *Tasby v. Wright*, 520 F. Supp. 683 (N.D. Tex. 1981), <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/520/683/1445954/> (accessed April 2023).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; State Bar of Texas, "Barefoot Sanders (1925-2008)," <https://www.texasbar.com/AM/PrinterTemplate.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14964> (accessed April 2023).

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failed to protect patients from harm, and had failed to provide sufficient staff at state mental hospitals. As a result of Sanders' supervision of the settlement, Texas began to address the needs of its mentally ill patients.⁸⁵

The Modern Movement and Postwar High-Rise Building Design in Dallas

Architectural modernism in Dallas initially surfaced in the aesthetic trends of the Depression Era. New Art Deco-Style downtown skyscrapers planned prior to the 1929 stock market crash, and built during the early 1930s, included the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company Building (1930, Lang and Witchell), Dallas Power and Light Building (1930, Lang and Witchell), Lone Star Gas Company Building (1931, Lang and Witchell), and the Tower Petroleum Building (1931, Mark Lemmon). Conveying a progressive spirit of optimism, these and other designs featured setback massing, strong vertical elements, and stylized decorative elements, in addition to stylish, opulent interior spaces.⁸⁶

The 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition served as the most prominent venue for the dissemination of modern architecture in Dallas prior to World War II. In 1935, George Dahl was appointed to serve as the chief architect and technical director for the exposition, organized to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Republic of Texas. The twenty-five-million-dollar Fair Park included six museums, numerous exhibit halls, an administration building, and a restaurant, among other buildings. The Centennial Committee hired ten architecture firms to contribute designs for the buildings. Paul Cret, with whom Dahl had previously worked with in designing buildings at the University of Texas, served as consulting architect. The exposition campus was developed on the existing layout for the Dallas fairgrounds that was formulated as part of the 1904 Kessler Plan. Dahl improved Kessler's plan by upgrading existing buildings on the fairgrounds with new monumental facades and projecting porticos, arranged to either side of a central 700-foot-long reflecting pool. The architecture of the Fair buildings reflects a fusion of Art Deco, Streamlined Moderne, and Simplified Classicism, combined with monumental public art and other site features. The Parry Avenue entrance (1936, Lang and Witchell) was one of four symbolic entrance gates into the exposition grounds, and it features a striking, eighty-five-foot-high pylon and a sculptural frieze by Texas artist Buck Winn. The Hall of State (1936, Donald Barthelme), the centerpiece of the campus, shows the influence of Cret's Classical Modern aesthetic, seen in the composition of the central block and flanking wings. Other buildings, such as the Hall of Administration (1910, C. D. Hill; George Dahl redesign, 1935) feature prominent Art Deco-Style porticos with arched openings. The Tower Building (1936, George Dahl) included a central tower element that exhibits clean, elegant lines, while the Dallas Museum of Natural History

⁸⁵ RAJ v. Miller, 590 F. Supp. 1310 (N.D. Tex. 1984), <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/590/1310/2247280/> (accessed April 2023); State Bar of Texas, "Barefoot Sanders (1925-2008)."

⁸⁶ National Register of Historic Places, Dallas Downtown Historic District, Dallas, Dallas County, Texas, National Register #04000894, section 8, 53-54.

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(1936, Mark Lemmon) shows similarities to the Simplified Classical public buildings of the era.⁸⁷

After World War II, the International Style gained popularity in the United States, particularly in the area of office building design, and it featured prominently in the postwar transformation of downtown Dallas. Three of the most significant examples constructed during this period include the Republic National Bank building (1954, Harrison and Abramovitz, NRHP #05000243), the Statler Hilton Hotel (1956, William B. Tabler), and Southland Center (1958, Welton Beckett and Associates). These International-Style buildings feature exterior curtain walls, modern building forms, and minimal exterior ornamentation. The Republic National Bank Building at 350 N. Ervay Street, among the first International-Style office towers developed in the central business district, exhibits an anodized aluminum and glass exterior that was the hallmark of the style during this period. Similarly, the Statler Hilton at 1914 Commerce Street is sheathed in glass curtain walls with porcelain enameled spandrel panels. Southland Center, consisting of the Southland Life Building and the Sheraton Dallas Hotel (N. Pearl Street between Bryan and Live Oak Streets) share these traits, along with exterior concrete elements and expansive curtain walled lobbies. These buildings, and others constructed in downtown Dallas during the 1950s, stand in stark contrast to those of the 1920s and 1930s, which often featured ornate exterior detailing.⁸⁸

Mid-century modern design also extended to low and mid-rise civic and institutional buildings, which combined with the new office towers being constructed, added to the architectural development of downtown Dallas. The Dallas Public Library at Commerce and S. Harwood Streets (1953, George Dahl) communicates the influence of the International Style, particularly seen in the highly articulated Harwood Street elevation. The industrial feel of the International Style is combined with the mid-century emphasis on materiality seen in the building's use of high-quality granite and marble cladding. The Dallas Convention Center (1957 with later additions), also designed by Dahl, is another example that demonstrates the architect's skillful merging of form, structure, and materials.⁸⁹

The International Style continued to heavily influence downtown architecture during the 1960s, alongside new directions in postwar design that had begun to appear in Dallas by mid-decade. Republic Tower (1964, NRHP #05000243), a fifty-two-story, International-Style tower designed by Dallas architects Harrell and Hamilton, was constructed as an addition to the adjacent 1954 Republic National Bank Building and the buildings are nearly identical in appearance.⁹⁰ Another large project from this period is the thirty-one-story LTV Tower (1964) at 1600 Pacific Avenue. The International-Style office building features dark tinted glass curtain walls with aluminum mullions and side elevations clad in precast concrete panels.

⁸⁷ Fuller, ed., 52-55.

⁸⁸ Tomlinson, 35-37, 41.

⁸⁹ Fuller, ed., 15, 27.

⁹⁰ Tomlinson, 36, 107.

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New Formalism appeared in Dallas architecture during the mid-1960s, representing a break with the International-Style. This aesthetic movement in postwar architecture featured a return to the use of classical symmetry, columns, arches, and natural materials such as marble.⁹¹ In 1958, architect Edward Durell Stone famously called for a re-examination of classical and ancient artistic traditions in a *Time* magazine interview in which he stated, “What we need is to put pure beauty into our buildings.”⁹² Leading national examples of New Formalism include Philip Johnson’s New York State Theater at Lincoln Center in New York (1964, with Richard Foster) and Stone’s Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. (1971), which features a temple-like form, marble cladding, and metal detailing.⁹³ In Dallas, Stone’s design for the Bruno Graf Residence (1957) stands as one of the most significant residential examples of New Formalism in the U.S., and it presents a low modern form, flat overhanging roof, central glazed entrance, and a perforated concrete screen made famous by Stone in his design for the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India, designed at around the same time as the Graf Residence. One of the most prominent examples of the style in downtown Dallas is the First National Bank Building at 1401 Elm Street (1965; George Dahl and Thomas E. Stanley). The design of the fifty-two-story office tower illustrates the progression of the Modern Movement beyond the International Style in that it combines elements of New Formalism, seen in the tall thin columns and marble cladding of the tower’s two-story base and marble panels on the upper stories aligned vertically much like columns.⁹⁴ Thomas E. Stanley, who partnered with Dahl on the design of the First National Bank Building, was another local Dallas architect who worked in the New Formalist Style during this period. Stanley’s design for the Sanger Harris Department Store at 1401 Pacific Avenue, completed in 1965, incorporates marble cladding and arched bays framed by tall thin columns. Outside of downtown, Stanley’s design for the Lover’s Lane United Methodist Church (1970), at 9200 Inwood Road, is another noteworthy example of New Formalism in the Dallas metropolitan area.⁹⁵

By the late 1960s, concrete was increasingly being used as an exterior finishing material in modernist Dallas buildings, part of the movement away from the curtain-walled, box-like forms that had proliferated in America’s larger cities during the 1950s and early 1960s. This transition can be seen in the thirty-three-story, One Main Place (1968) at 1201 Main Street, designed by architect Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. The building features a concrete exterior with tapered elevations and deeply articulated window bays. It was built as the first phase of Main Place, a mixed-use development financed by a group of local investors to revitalize the west end of downtown. The Brutalist-Style Brookhollow One (1970), located at 7200 N. Stemmons Freeway and designed by Paul Rudolph, presents atypical geometries and the

⁹¹ Robert Twombly, *Power and Style: A Critique of Twentieth-Century Architecture in the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 97.

⁹² “Art: More Than Modern,” *Time*, March 31, 1958.

⁹³ Robinson and Foell, 14, 32.

⁹⁴ Preservation Dallas and the Dallas Landmark Commission, “Downtown Dallas Historic/Architectural Significant Properties,” survey prepared for the City of Dallas, 2003.

⁹⁵ City of Dallas Office of Historic Preservation, “Dallas-Based Architect Thomas E. Stanley (1917-2001),” <https://cityofdallaspreservation.wordpress.com/tag/new-formalism/> (accessed April 2023).

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building's structure is articulated in its exterior elevations and roofline. Philip Johnson also used concrete in his modernist design for the John F. Kennedy Memorial (1971), located on Main Street in downtown Dallas.⁹⁶

Within this architecturally rich local context, George Dahl's design for the Courthouse and Federal Office Building communicates the varying twentieth-century design trends that shaped the design of federal courthouses and office buildings in Texas, and nationwide. Dahl's clean, modern articulation of the base's columns and entablature recall the Simplified Classicism of the 1930s, particularly the Hall of State at the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition, designed by Houston architect Donald Barthelme.⁹⁷ The tower element in Dahl and Lemmon's original 1960 design for the Courthouse and Federal Office Building was strongly International Style in feel, still apparent in the building's form and the curtain walled elevations of the upper stories. Dahl's revised design, requested by GSA due to funding delays, augmented the tower design with vertically aligned marble panels that seem to reference classical columns, showing the influence of New Formalism. A similar approach can be seen in Dahl's design for the 1965 First National Bank Building, one of his larger postwar commissions in Dallas. Through this merging of various modernist trends, the Courthouse and Federal Office Building illustrates a departure from the standard International-Style template that took hold in the U.S. during the 1950s, alongside buildings such as the previously discussed Bob Casey U.S. Courthouse in Houston (1962) and the New Formalist-Style George H. Mahon Federal Building and United States Courthouse in Lubbock (1971). The Courthouse and Federal Office Building, therefore, represents a significant contribution to postwar modernism in Dallas, and more broadly to federal building design in Texas.

Architect George L. Dahl (1894-1987)

George Leighton Dahl was born in 1894 in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Norwegian immigrant parents. He entered the University of Minnesota in 1912 to pursue a degree in architecture. His studies were interrupted by World War I, during which he served as a First Lieutenant in the Air Service Signal Corps and was put in charge of airfield construction and maintenance of bases in Minnesota, Texas, New York, and Washington, D.C. Dahl completed his bachelor's degree in architecture in 1920. While in school, he worked as a draftsman in the Minneapolis firm of W. C. Whitney and the St. Paul firm of C. H. Johnston. He went on to complete a master's degree in architecture at Harvard University in 1923, and he worked as a draftsman for two years at the Boston firm of Bellows and Aldridge. Dahl was the recipient of Harvard's Nelson Robinson Fellowship, which allowed him to undertake postgraduate work at the American Academy in Rome from 1923 to 1925 and travel throughout western Europe.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Fuller, ed., 19, 22, 78.

⁹⁷ Fuller, ed., 51.

⁹⁸ American Institute of Architects, Application for Membership, George L. Dahl, Application No. B-32, March 17, 1932; Michael McCullar, "Profile: George L. Dahl, FAIA," *Texas Architect* 30, no. 6 (November-December 1980): 72.

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Upon his return to the U.S., Dahl moved to Los Angeles, where he briefly worked as a designer in the office of architect Myron Hunt. Prominent Dallas architect Herbert M. Greene hired Dahl in 1926. After two years, he became a partner in the firm, which was known as Greene, LaRoche, and Dahl. Edwin LaRoche, former Dean of the architecture school at Texas A&M, had joined the firm in 1925. After the death of Herbert Greene in 1933, Dahl continued the practice with LaRoche under the name LaRoche and Dahl, Architects and Engineers. In 1943, he started his own firm in Dallas, George L. Dahl, Inc. He retired in 1973 at the age of 78, at which time his firm merged with two other established Dallas firms.⁹⁹

George Dahl was involved in several civic and architectural organizations. He served as an alderman for the town of Highland Park, Texas from 1932-1936. Dahl was also president of the Dallas Rotary Club from 1936-1937, a member of the Dallas City Advisory Committee from 1943 to 1945, and a member of the Greater Dallas Planning Council from 1948 to 1956. He served as secretary of the North Texas Chapter of the AIA from 1932 to 1937 and was president of the Dallas Chapter in 1959. He became an AIA Fellow in 1951. Dahl also helped form the Texas Society of Architects in 1939, and he served as president from 1940 to 1941. In addition, he was chairman of the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners from 1951 to 1963.¹⁰⁰

George Dahl designed a wide range of building types throughout his career, including banks, stores, schools and university buildings, auditoriums, stadiums, and office towers. Dahl designed in the classical and revivalist styles to suit the tastes of commercial and institutional clients, but he was equally proficient as a modernist. An example of Dahl's early work in Dallas is the 1929, Italian Renaissance Revival-Style Titch-Goettinger Department Store Building at 1900 Elm Street, described by Dahl as a "Florentine Palace." His early commissions at the University of Texas, Austin, during the 1920s and 30s, which included the Littlefield Dormitory, Power Plant, and the Engineering, Architecture, Home Economics, Physics, Geology, and Administration Buildings, were classically derived, in keeping with the prevailing campus aesthetic established by Cass Gilbert.¹⁰¹ As previously discussed, Dahl was appointed in 1935 to serve as the chief architect and technical director for the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas. As chief architect for the exposition, Dahl was responsible for master planning and developing an overall architectural vision for the exposition campus.¹⁰² Dahl also designed several fair buildings and public spaces, including the Esplanade (Reflecting Basin), the Tower Building (U.S. Government Building), the Food and Fiber Pavilion (Agriculture Building), and the Swine Building (Livestock Building No. 2).¹⁰³ In 1977, the Dallas chapter of the Texas Society of Architects awarded Dahl a Citation of Honor for his leading role in the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition.¹⁰⁴ The campus was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ John F. Gane and George S. Koyl, eds., *American Architects Directory*, 3rd ed. (New York: AIA, 1970), 198.

¹⁰¹ McCullar, 73-74.

¹⁰² Tomlinson, 14-15.

¹⁰³ Fuller, ed., 50-55.

¹⁰⁴ "Dallas Award Winners," *Texas Architect* 27, no. 5 (September-October 1977): 51.

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George Dahl was licensed to practice throughout much of the United States, although his firm primarily worked in the state of Texas, designing many prominent buildings in postwar Dallas. These include the Dallas Morning News Building (1950) at Young and S. Houston Streets, the Dallas Public Library (1953) on Commerce Street, The Dallas Memorial Auditorium (1957, now part of the Dallas Convention Center), the First National Bank Tower (1965), and the Courthouse and Federal Office Building (1971).¹⁰⁵ In addition to his work at the University of Texas in Austin, Dahl's firm designed many buildings on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas during the 1950s and 1960s, including a number of dormitories, a Health Center, and a Fine Arts Center. For the El Paso National Bank Building in El Paso (1960), Dahl designed a nineteen-story, steel-framed office building wrapped in a curtain wall of brown tinted glass and bronze colored porcelain panels, accented with precast concrete and brick.¹⁰⁶ Another major project for the firm was the design of a twenty-two million-dollar plant in the Dallas area for the LTV Aerospace Corp. in 1968. The plant was completed in under a year and was an example of the "fast track" method of design and construction that Dahl pioneered.¹⁰⁷

Dahl won several awards for his work. In 1950, the American Red Cross Building at McKinney and Maple Streets in Dallas (demolished) received an award from the Dallas chapter of the AIA for best commercial-institutional building.¹⁰⁸ He also received AIA Awards of Merit for the Central Elementary School in Texarkana, Texas (1949) and the Employers Insurance Building in Dallas (1952). Dahl was the recipient of a Construction Practice Award from the American Concrete Institute in 1958 for the Dallas Memorial Auditorium. His design for the Naval Installation at New Iberia, Louisiana earned Dahl a merit award from the U.S. Navy in 1958. In 1965, Dahl received a merit award from the Texas Society of Architects for the Southwest Life Insurance Building in Dallas.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Gane and Koyl, eds., 198.

¹⁰⁶ Virginia George, "Sidewalk Supervisor," *Texas Architect* 11, no. 10 (December 1960): 12.

¹⁰⁷ McCullar, 73.

¹⁰⁸ "Winners Named in Dallas Chapter's First Annual Architectural Exhibit," *Texas Architect* 1, no. 2 (March-April 1950): 14.

¹⁰⁹ Gane and Koyl, eds., 198.

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Name of Property

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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: Texas Historical Commission

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.35 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: -96.802619

Longitude: 32.778988

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- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 2. Latitude: -96.801702 | Longitude: 32.779189 |
| 3. Latitude: -96.801550 | Longitude: 32.778400 |
| 4. Latitude: -96.802465 | Longitude: 32.778496 |

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.)

The property consists of Lot1 in Block 63, bounded by Commerce Street on the north, Jackson Street on the south, Lot 2 on the east, and S. Griffin Street on the west.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the property that was acquired by the United States in 1957 for the construction of the U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Gentry, Senior Architectural Historian
organization: EHT Traceries, Inc.
street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail john.gentry@traceries.com
telephone: (202) 393-1199
date: February 2023

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Additional Documentation

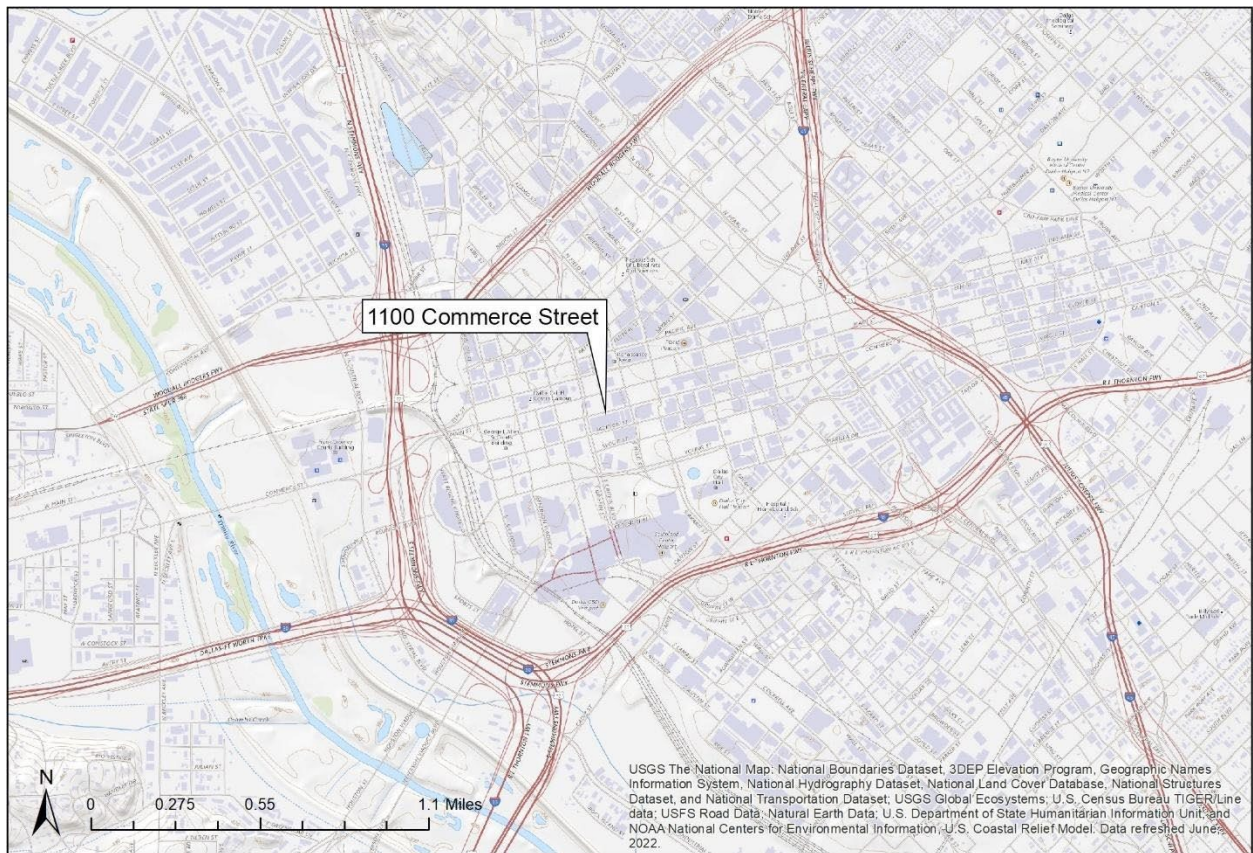


Figure 1. Locator map with subject property annotated. Scale 1:24,000 (USGS/ESRI)

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Figure 2. Locator map with National Register boundaries annotated. Scale 1:2,400 (Dallas County GIS)

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Figure 3. Preliminary sketch drawing, 1959 (Dallas Public Library, Archives and History Division)

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Figure 4. Revised sketch drawing, c. 1967 (GSA)

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Figure 5. Construction, c. 1968-1969 (GSA)

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Figure 6. Construction, c. 1968-1969 (GSA)

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Figure 7. Construction, c. 1968-1969 (GSA)

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Figure 8. Construction, c. 1968-1969 (GSA)

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Figure 9. Construction, c. 1970-1971 (GSA)

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Figure 10. Lobby interior, c. 1971 (GSA)

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Figure 11. North elevation, 1972 (Dallas Public Library, Archives and History Division)

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Figure 12. North elevation, 1972 (Dallas Public Library, Archives and History Division)

U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building
Name of Property

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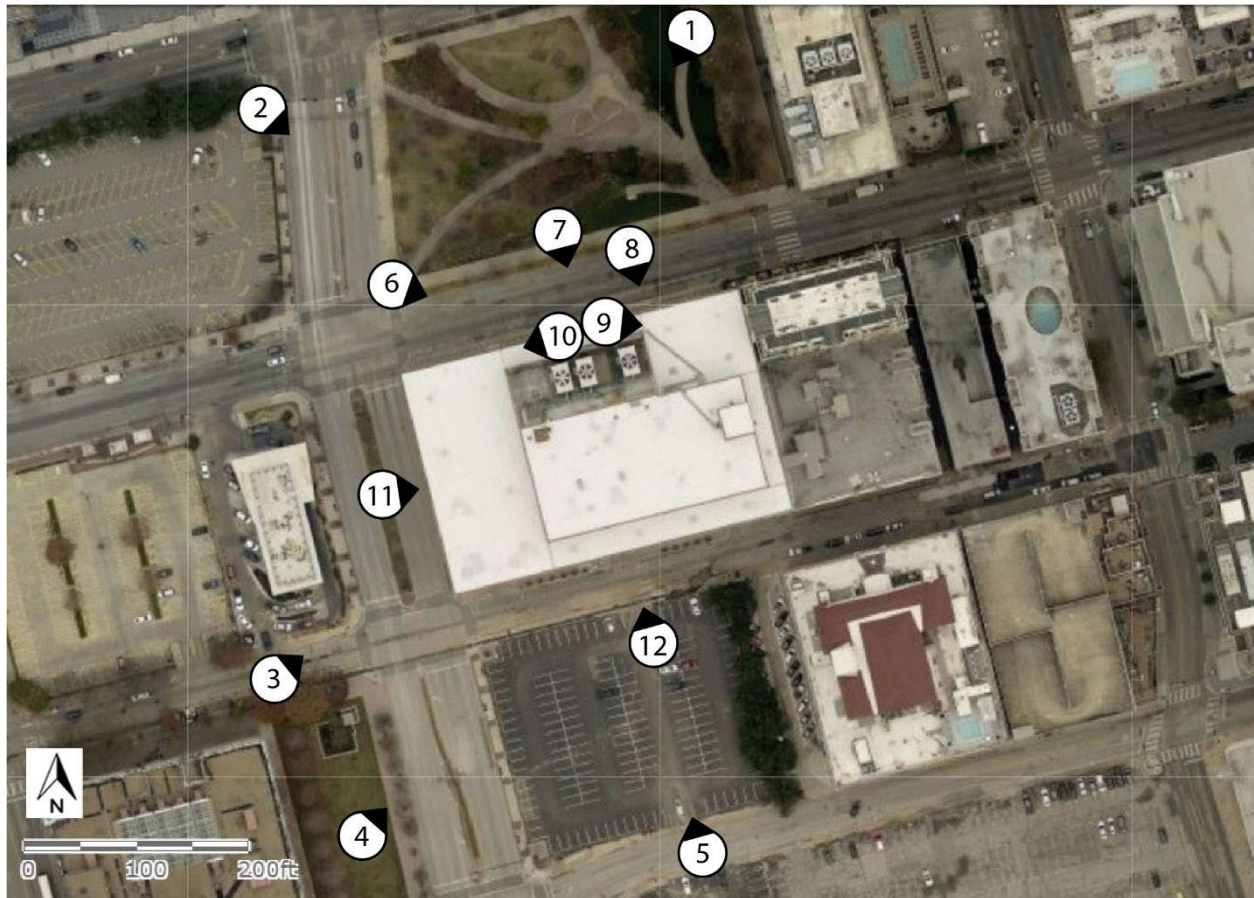


Figure 13. Exterior photo key. Scale 1:2,400 (Dallas County GIS)

U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building
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Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building

City or Vicinity: Dallas

County: Dallas

State: Texas

Photographer: John Gentry

Date Photographed: January 23-25, 2023

Photo #1 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0001 north elevation, looking south.



U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building
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Photo #2 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0002 north and west elevations, looking southeast.



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Photo #3 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0003 west elevation, looking east.



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Photo #4 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0004 west and south elevations, looking northeast.



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Photo #5 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0005 south elevation, looking north.



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Photo #6 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0006 north elevation, looking east along Commerce Street.



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Photo #7 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0007 north elevation entrance, looking south.



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Photo #8 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0008 north elevation, east of entrance, looking south.



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Photo #9 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0009 north entrance recess detail, looking east.



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Photo #10 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0010 north entrance dedication plaque, looking west.



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Photo #11 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0011 west elevation entrance, looking east.



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Photo #12 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0012 south elevation entrance, looking north.



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Photo #13 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0013 main lobby, looking north from second-floor mezzanine.



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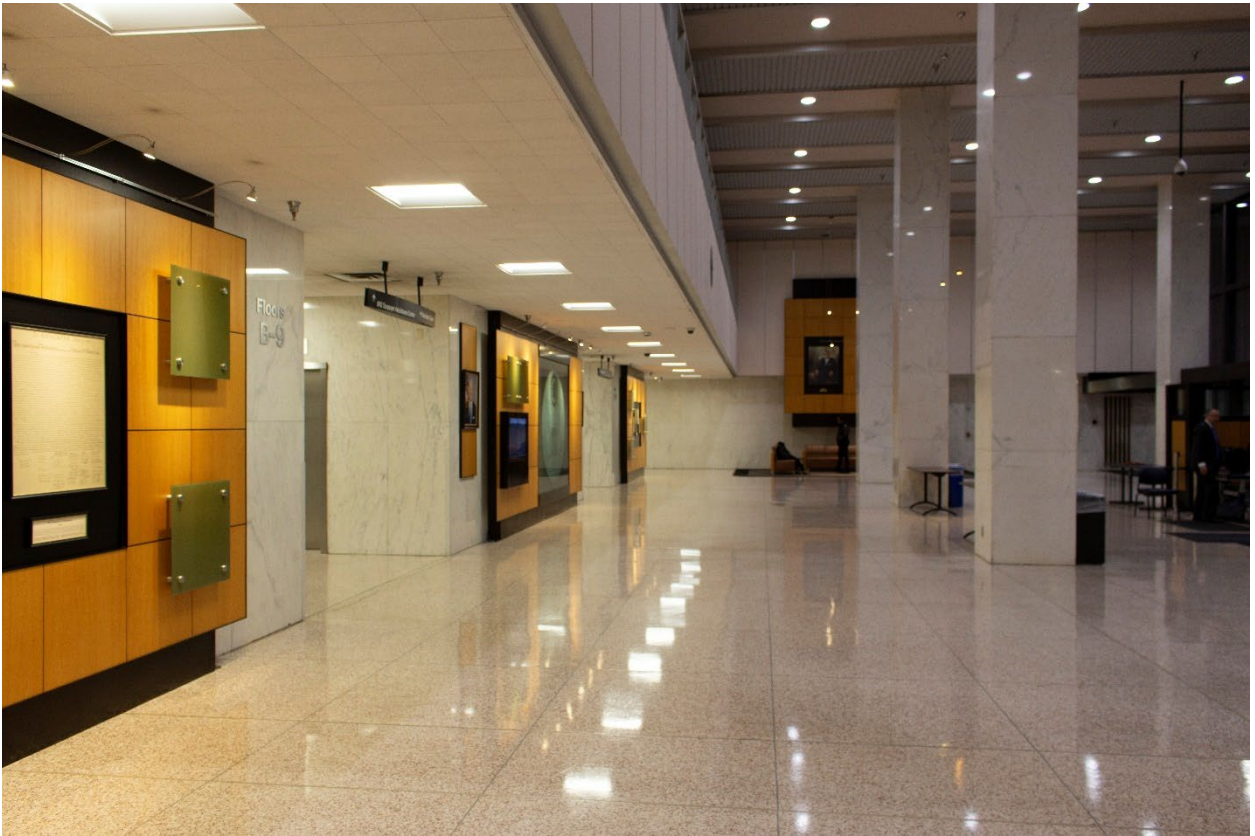
Photo #14 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0014 main lobby, looking northwest.



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Photo #15 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0015 main lobby, looking west.



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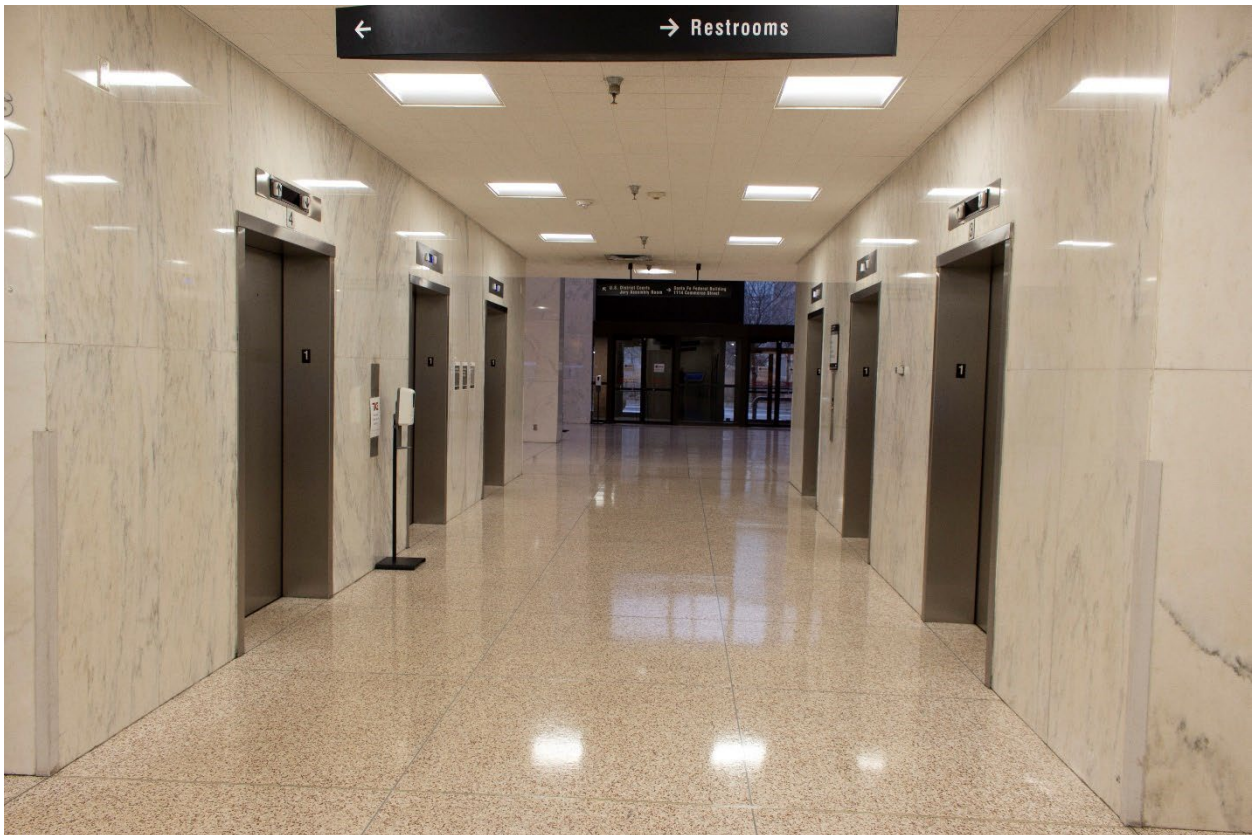
Photo #16 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0016 main lobby, looking west.



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Photo #17 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0017 elevator lobby, looking north.



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Photo #18 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0018 first-floor corridor, looking west.



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Photo #19 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0019 first-floor
corridor mail boxes and decorative detail.



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Photo #20 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0020 fifteenth-floor court lobby.



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Photo #21 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0021 fifteenth-floor courtroom entrance.



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Photo #22 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0022 fifteenth-floor U.S. District Courtroom.



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Photo #23 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0023 fifteenth-floor U.S. District Courtroom, judge's bench.



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Photo #24 TX_Dallas County_U.S. Courthouse and Federal Office Building_0024 fifteenth-floor U.S. District Courtroom, looking towards entrance.



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.