Saving the Unloved:
The J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building and Brutalist Preservation

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Introduction

Occupying a prominent location in downtown Washington, D.C., at 9th, 10th, and E streets and Pennsylvania Avenue N.W., the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building commands attention in a city with no shortage of monumental architecture. (**fig. 1**) The American Institute of Architects' *Guide to the Architecture of Washington* describes the building as "a swaggering bully…ungainly, ill-mannered, and seemingly looking for trouble."[1] To much of the public, it indeed seemed aggressive and inaccessible. However, the aspects of the building most criticized since its completion in 1975 were seen in the design stages as its strongest qualities by the architects and the influential Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). An announcement by the FBI in the summer of 2014 to relocate to the Maryland or Virginia suburbs surprised few, but brought into focus a discussion about the future of what that had become a defining feature of Pennsylvania Avenue. It appeared almost a foregone conclusion, including among many preservationists, that the building would be demolished.

Designed by Stanislaw Gladych and Carter Manny Jr. and their project team at C.F. Murphy & Associates, the FBI Building was supposed to be a crowning achievement of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue, led by architect Nathaniel Owings, and a keystone of the redevelopment of the street. Instead, a lengthy design review process with CFA and a host of concessions to the security demands of the FBI resulted in a product that ultimately satisfied none of the parties involved and seemed compromised—in other words, architecture designed by committee—before the building opened. What amounted to a turf war between CFA, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the President's Council ultimately left an enduring legacy in the physical form of the building. Gladych and Manny struggled to resolve the massing

[1] G. Martin Moeller, Jr., *AIA Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.*, fifth edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 105.

of the building with the diagonal line of Pennsylvania Avenue advocated by the President's Council, while mediating a contentious debate over the form and program of the ground floor. Advisory from the CFA pushed the architects to abandon an open ground-level arcade in favor of a solid base.

In the years since, the FBI Building was derided by critics for what was seen as a harsh environment created by its liberal use of exposed concrete, lack of accessible public space, shutting off to the street, and monumental scale. A moat on three sides and the subsequent closing of the courtyard and second-story gallery furthered the feeling that the building was a fortress. Nevertheless, the FBI Building is representative of a distinctive approach to federal architecture in the 1960s and, could be, with proper advocacy, altered to realize the unfulfilled vision of the President's Council.

Questions had circulated since the mid-1970s about the appropriateness of the building in Washington architecture. However, much of this criticism failed to account for the breadth of the collection of other concrete modernist, or Brutalist, public buildings of the period. In form, scale, and material, federal architecture of the 1960s communicated through a common architectural language a postwar confidence in the ability of the government to solve societal problems. Similar buildings were constructed in the city in the same period for the federal Departments of Labor, Education, and Energy. Each was identifiable by an exposed concrete exterior, repetitive geometries, bands of deep recessed windows, and muscular massing. Encouraged by President John F. Kennedy, new attention was devoted to the state of federal architecture in the 1960s, to create a built environment reflective of a prosperous post-war nation and free from what was seen as the Beaux Arts constraints of the Senate Park Commission Plan of 1901-02. Against this backdrop, the FBI Building was hardly an anomaly.

Additionally, their raw, exposed concrete framing systems led such buildings to be folded into the catchall term "Brutalism," a problematic fusing of Reyner Banham's writings on the New Brutalism of Peter and Alison Smithson and Le Corbusier's concept of *le béton brut*. Like most stylistic categories, the term masks a more complex lineage and has been used indiscriminately by the press. While the European context is relevant, a more transnational conversation among architects had developed in the 1950s that sought a bold departure from the ubiquitous glass box that had come to define post-World War II modernism.

In the twenty-first century, debate over the FBI Building among preservationists, city leaders, and the public was not just a local matter, although there was certainly a set of issues particular to this building. Rather, it was one instance among many of concrete modernist architecture brought to the fore of preservation discourse across the United States. Despite initial hesitation or skepticism in the 1990s, preservationist efforts and resources had become increasingly dedicated to saving the built environment of the recent past. Yet, the renewed interest in modernism generally, including mid-century furniture, decoration, and home design, often did not extend to this concrete variant. Such buildings were dismissed as ugly, harsh, or not old enough to be preserved.

Washington preservationists had become skittish after a well-publicized loss in the fight for the Third Church of Christ, Scientist. The octagonal concrete church, designed by Araldo Cossutta, a partner at I. M. Pei & Partners, was located on 16th Street N.W. from 1970 until its demolition in 2014. The Board of Trustees of the DC Preservation League were divided over the degree to which the organization should fight for the church, and practitioners in the city did not predict much effort would amount to save the FBI Building, perhaps more intensely disliked, as it was much better known. The residential and commercial development of Pennsylvania Avenue

placed additional pressure to construct a mix-used building on the site that contributed more to the street than a large government building with an inactive plaza.

Debates about the building's significance in the national and local press lacked the necessary history and context of its design. No monograph or comprehensive scholarly work has been dedicated to studying the FBI Building, or, for that matter, the other federal buildings in Washington of the 1960s and 1970s.[2] Overlooking this period of design writ large has consequences for understanding the built heritage of the city and for particular cases like the FBI Building. Further, the void has allowed for the proliferation of misconceptions about architecture and the design process. For instance, the towering presence of the FBI Building led some to feel the building was watching them, apparently associating the built form with the activities associated with its controversial occupant. While the Boston City Hall was similarly disliked by much of the public, it has, nevertheless, received some scholarly treatment.[3] The FBI Building's assertive statement about public architecture merits further exploration.

When the national press addressed the broader debate about preserving Brutalism, the FBI Building was commonly offered as a revealing case: to represent everything that was wrong with this concrete modern architecture of the 1960s and '70s or to highlight the daunting task of advocating for its preservation. A 2014 study by the Washington firm Quinn-Evans Architects determined the building did not merit inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and a joint framework plan in 2009 by CFA and NCPC recommended replacing it with a

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[2] For a history of use of the building as an institutional headquarters, see: Susan Rosenfeld Falb, *History of the J. Edgar Hoover Building* (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, 1987). This short text, by the official FBI historian, however, does not attempt much critical or scholarly engagement with the building as architecture.

[3] See: David Monteyne, "Boston City Hall and a History of Reception," *Journal of Architectural Education* 65, no. 1 (Nov 2011): 45-62; Mark Pasnik, Chris Grimley, and Michael Kubo, *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2015).

commemorative space or museum. Unlike Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago or the Orange County Government Center in Goshen, New York, both cases drawing a sizable coordinated effort, the FBI Building did not receive a similar level of commitment from the preservation community. Imagination and will to consider a wider range of options was essential if a hasty decision to demolish were to be prevented.

Chapter 1:
"A Strong, Simple Thing": Designing the FBI Building

"If we let the FBI do this," National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) member Paul Thiry told the *Washington Post* in September 1967, "the Pennsylvania Avenue plan will be defeated before it starts."[4] In a meeting that month before the NCPC, Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue Chairman Nathaniel Owings echoed this objection to the FBI's refusal to allow street-level arcades in its new headquarters out of security concerns.[5] To be located on an important site on Pennsylvania Avenue, the building was viewed as a keystone for redeveloping the Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly space with arcades and plazas. While the FBI Building was one of the only built projects to result from the recommendations of the commission led by Owings to remake Pennsylvania Avenue in the 1960s, it ultimately failed to fulfill this vision. Further, the design review of the FBI Building before the influential Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) placed lead architects Stanislaw Z. Gladych and Carter Manny, Jr. of C.F. Murphy & Associates in conflict with the priorities of the FBI, NCPC, and the commission Owings chaired, resulting in a project that seemed compromised at the moment it was completed.

The J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building was representative of a desire in the 1960s for a new modern federal architecture, but ultimately demonstrated in form a tenuous merging of competing preferences. The building was characteristic of the bold structurally expressive form and monumental scale of other public buildings in Washington and the nation in the 1960s and 1970s that evoked the confidence in the federal government's ability to address societal problems that defined the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The omission of

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[4] Paul Thiry, quoted in *Washington Post*, Sep 15, 1967.

[5] The commission Owings chaired underwent a series of name changes throughout its existence, and each name will be used in the text in its appropriate place in the chronology: originally the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue (and alternatively as the Pennsylvania Avenue Advisory Council, or PAAC) in 1962, the President's Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1965, and, finally, the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in 1973.

arcades and street-level shops, a moat on the bordering streets of the superblock, and its commanding presence on Pennsylvania Avenue meant that the FBI Building expressed perhaps more than other similar concrete modernist public buildings in the city the specific bureaucracy it housed.

To better understand and evaluate the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building, it is necessary to locate it within Washington's mid-twentieth-century urban development, discussions at the time about federal architecture, and the convoluted processes of design, review, and construction of the building. The work of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue and the larger phenomenon of urban redevelopment and renewal serve as backdrop for the types of large-scale urban design thinking of the mid-twentieth century that manifested itself in monumental concrete modernist buildings with strong massing and set within new superblocks. Additionally, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, the legacy of urban renewal helped shape the reception of Brutalist public buildings such as the FBI Building.

Like their counterparts in many other cities across the country, Washington city leaders worried about the decline of the urban core that had resulted from suburbanization of workplaces as well as of residential enclaves. The federal government had encouraged decentralization of Washington government agencies in the 1930s and 1940s, out of fear the concentration of bureaucracy would cause too much congestion in the city. By the 1950s and 1960s, however, city leaders feared that decentralization had caused the decline of vital inner-city areas, particularly those closest to federal workplaces.[6] In 1946, Congress passed the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act, which created the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) to remove blight from the District. However, the RLA was not funded until the National Housing Act of 1949,

[6] Howard Gillette, Jr, *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 151.

which declared the federal government would cover two-thirds of the cost of urban renewal and would allow the city the power of eminent domain. Redevelopment of the Southwest portion of the city, the area south and west of the Capitol, became the first large-scale test of this new authority. Washington architects Louis Justement and Cloethiel Woodward Smith proposed leveling much of the area's shops and houses, with a "new fashionable district" constructed in their place.[7] **(fig. 2)** Demolition of the neighborhood that began in 1954 resulted in the 10th Street Mall and L'Enfant Plaza, causing the displacement of hundreds of residents. Nevertheless, the Southwest project was initially seen as a model for future redevelopment schemes in the city.[8] **(fig. 3)**

Concern for blight within the city extended to its major thoroughfare, Pennsylvania Avenue. A 1964 *Washington Post* article described the northern end of the street as "little better than a slum."[9] Pennsylvania Avenue had become a disjointed combination of austere classical monumental buildings on the south side and under-maintained commercial blocks on the north side. Photographs of the area in the 1960s, however, reveal that the "slum" claim was perhaps overstated. **(figs. 4 and 5)** The election of President John F. Kennedy brought new attention to the widely held concern that the ceremonial street, connecting legislative and executive branches of government, had deteriorated. On the morning of his inauguration in 1961, the president reportedly complained about the poor condition of Pennsylvania Avenue to his future Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg.

Kennedy appointed the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space in August 1961 to study Pennsylvania Avenue and recommend improvements. The committee released their *Report*

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[7] Frederick Gutheim and Antoinette J. Lee, *Worthy of the Nation: Washington, D.C., from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission*, second edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 315.
[8] Zachary Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro*, 23.
[9] *Washington Post*, May 31, 1964.

to the President by the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space in June 1962, finding that 50,000 federal employees worked in poorly lit, over-crowded, and often obsolete buildings. The committee recommended more efficient, comfortable buildings, as well as improvements to the streetscape and more attention to activity on Pennsylvania Avenue. The President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue, chaired by architect Nathaniel Owings of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill (SOM), was established in 1962 to further explore the committee's findings and propose solutions to the problems plaguing Pennsylvania Avenue. General improvements to the street were to be undertaken by the NCPC, while the General Services Administration (GSA) was responsible for the construction of new public buildings. The President's Council argued in the 1964 report of their findings:

> It was along Pennsylvania Avenue that the McMillan plan was least successful. The proposed new governmental buildings were sharply separated from the surrounding city. Organic connections between capital and capital city were unrecognized. From having been a great urban bond, Pennsylvania Avenue was in fact reduced to being the boundary between the two. [10]

The plan called for a set of guidelines to be followed in all new construction on the avenue. "The north side of the avenue would evolve into a Northern Triangle office district of government and private office buildings" that would adhere to a new setback order of fifty feet behind the existing line and two new public squares would be created along the street.[11] **(fig. 6)** Additionally, the President's Commission called for sidewalks to be widened by five feet on the south side. Under the master plan, what was an already a wide street was to become two hundred feet wide.

The north side was to be redeveloped to mirror the south side in scale, to make this middle section of the street, between 9th and 13th streets and the National Gallery to the

[10] "Pennsylvania Avenue," Report of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue (1964), 16.
[11] Frederick Gutheim and Antoinette J. Lee, *Worthy of the Nation: Washington, D.C., from L'Enfant to the National Capital Planning Commission*, second edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 323.

Treasury Department, legible and consistent. The President's Council hoped to establish uniform heights on both sides of the avenue and develop commercial space on the north side to create active street life after working hours. Much of the language of the 1964 report emphasized the importance of the street's role in presidential inaugural parades. The current Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts, Thomas Luebke, summarized it as an "obsession with the ceremonial and the panoply of power."[12] To this end, the President's Council called for a consistent street pattern with specially designed tree grades and brown brick paving, "like a welcoming carpet," and "broad sidewalks stepped up in three stages like grandstand designed for viewing parades and celebrations."[13] As Luebke remarked, however, redesigning a street to accommodate a parade that occurs once every four years was "like trying to design an entire church for Easter Sunday, always."[14]

Although many existing buildings north of Pennsylvania Avenue were demolished, too many sat at the existing line to enact the bold scope of the Owings plan. Facing resistance and a growing sentiment in favor of preservation, Owings' commission released a proposal smaller in scale in 1969, and significant public protest stopped their plans to raze the Old Post Office building. Indeed, much of the Owings plan was never implemented, with the exception of two buildings: the FBI Building and the Presidential Building, a private office building designed by Edmund W. Dreyfuss & Associates at the intersection of 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. **(fig. 7)** By the twenty-first century, pre-1960s buildings kept the original right-of-way line, while everything built under the President's Council was setback an additional fifty feet: the Canadian Embassy, Market Square, 1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, the Presidential Building, and the FBI building.

[12] Thomas Luebke, interview with the author, October 23, 2015.
[13] "Pennsylvania Avenue." Report of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue (1964), 18.
[14] Thomas Luebke, interview with the author, October 23, 2015.

The intensified interest in redeveloping Pennsylvania Avenue was concurrent with a contentious discussion within the city of Washington in the early 1960s among government officials, CFA, and GSA, over the future of federal architecture. This was, of course, hardly a new development. Various parties, since at least the Senate Park Commission of 1901-1902, had debated what architecture was worthy of occupying the hallowed grounds of Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall. Historian Richard Guy Wilson describes the arguments over architecture on and near the Mall as a "battle royal," a fight often pitting modernism against traditionalism to interpret the meaning of the space.[15] Attitudes towards modernism in Washington of the 1950s, Wilson writes, "remained openly hostile."[16]

The Beaux Arts buildings that arose from the Senate Park Commission had helped establish Washington as an important American city for architecture. However, the CFA throughout the first half of the twentieth century were committed so loyally to retaining the classical forms of the plan that they, as historian Zachary Schrag writes, lost touch with its original boldness.[17] As New York and Chicago had remade their skylines in Art Deco and Streamline Moderne in the 1920s and 1930s, Washington retained its commitment to traditionalism. In 1939, members of the CFA with more conservative tastes, for instance, rejected a modernist design by Eliel and Eero Saarinen for a contemporary art museum at the Smithsonian Institution. By the 1950s, some feared that the city "risked becoming a stagnant museum of the Beaux-Arts."[18] While architects of the buildings that comprised the original Senate Park Commission Plan were trained in the classical language, critics such as *Washington Post* architectural writer Wolf Von Eckardt, a fixture in design criticism in the city in the 1960

[15] Richard Guy Wilson, "High Noon on the Mall: Modernism versus Traditionalism, 1910-1970," in *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, ed. Richard Longstreth, second edition (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 143.
[16] Ibid., 159.
[17] Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 67.
[18] Ibid.

through the 1980s, argued that architects of the 1950s and early 1960s often did not have such training and instead practiced "pastiche Beaux Arts."[19] President Kennedy, for his part, had attempted to promote his interests in modern architecture, showing a concern for the built environment only rivaled by Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Roosevelt. The president used his limited power in design decisions to call for a combination of new design and historic preservation in Lafayette Square.[20]

The debate over appropriate federal architecture was not just occurring in Washington, but part of a broader discussion about the state of federal architecture. By the 1950s and 1960s, modernism, particularly what was termed the International Style, had become a fixture of corporate building design and had transformed the skylines of many American cities, but government architecture was noticeably lagging. Writing in the June 1963 issue of *American Institute of Architects Journal*, just months before the assassination of President Kennedy, urban planner and Washington-based writer Frederick Gutheim called for federal architecture to be raised to higher standards. Gutheim argued that the architecture of public buildings was "behind culturally" and should be more responsive to the period. [21]

To move the discussion forward, Kennedy set in motion a series of government initiatives to improve the condition and architectural character of Pennsylvania Avenue, outlined in the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture" in May 1962. While it did not advocate for a particular style, the document called for government architecture to "reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor and stability of the American National Government" and "embody the finest

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[19] Wolf Von Eckardt, "Washington's Chance for Splendor," *Harper's*, Sept. 1963, 61.
[20] Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 68.
[21] Frederick Gutheim, "The New Federal Architecture: Will the New Frontier Bring a New Look?," *American Institute of Architects Journal* 39 (June 1963): 34.

contemporary American architectural thought."[22] Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill's design for the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Eero Saarinen's Washington Dulles International Airport; and, eventually, Mies Van Der Rohe's Federal Center in Chicago, Illinois marked important strides toward the acceptance of modernism for federal buildings.[23]

The initial hesitance in Washington about modernism gave way to a fertile period of new design in the capital city of the 1960s. As the International Style had come to dominate corporate building, concrete became a preferred material for new government buildings, particularly in the 1960s. A series of such buildings helped to remake Washington and set a precedent for public architecture that spread throughout the country. Marcel Breuer's designs for the Housing and Urban Development headquarters, completed in 1968, became the first federal building to use precast concrete, with the panels precast and set within a poured frame.[24] The curved double Y-shaped plan of the HUD headquarters communicated a more expressive approach to concrete modernism that set it apart from the more blocky forms of other concrete modernist federal buildings such as the Forrestal Building and "marked a watershed for the acceptance of Brutalist design in Washington."[25] **(fig. 8)** *New York Times* architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable called the building "a handsome, functional structure that adds quality design and genuine 20th century style to a city badly in need of both."[26]

Breuer followed his design for the HUD Building with another low-rise concrete modernist building for the Department of Health and Human Services Building in 1977. Similar

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[22] "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture." Report to the President by the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space, June 1, 1962.
[23] Robinson and Associates, *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, '60s and '70s* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration, Office of the Chief Architect, Center for Historic Buildings, 2003), 6.
[24] *New York Times,* July 2, 1981.
[25] Quinn-Evans Architects, "J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Headquarters," DC State Historic Preservation Office Determination Of Eligibility (2014), 48.
[26] *New York Times.* Sept 22, 1968.

such buildings for other cabinet departments and agencies were built throughout the late 1960s and 1970s as part of the redevelopment of the Southwest, including the Forrestal Building in 1969 and the Department of Education Building in 1961.[27] **(fig. 9)** Each of these buildings shared an architectural language that would become identified with Brutalist federal architecture of the 1960s and 1970s: strong massing, long expanses of exposed concrete, bands of deep recessed windows, and repetitive geometries. However, many did not fare as well in the architectural press as the HUD Building. Critics were particularly harsh in their assessment of the Forrestal Building, which Huxtable said "failed miserably" and *Washington Post* critic Wolf Von Eckardt called an "esthetic disaster" and "silly."[28] Similarly, Harry Weese's design for the city's Metro stations were constructed in coffered exposed concrete vaults. As it shared many of the architectural features of this new Washington public architecture, what would become the FBI Building was, therefore, hardly an architectural anomaly in the city.

A connection between concrete and politics, architectural historian Adrian Forty argues, was not without historical precedent. In particular, Forty writes that concrete became particularly associated with the politics of the left in Europe in the early twentieth century. Exemplified by Centennial Hall, completed in 1913 in Breslau, Germany, reinforced concrete, Forty writes, "offered a means to draw people closer together, and by so doing enhance their collective social consciousness."[29] In the post-World War II Soviet Union, concrete was used "to speed up the supply of new building, the elimination of specialist trades, and the utilization of unskilled labour."[30] In England, concrete as a choice material became symbolic of a commitment to a strong welfare state, used widely in the construction of social housing projects. While the

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[27] The Forrestal Building was originally called Federal Office Building 5, but became home to the Department of Energy in 1977.
[28] *New York Times*. June 27, 1965; *Washington Post*. June 9, 1968.
[29] Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 146.
[30] Ibid., 159.

connection between concrete and politics was never so explicit in the United States, the emergence of concrete modernist buildings in Washington coincided with an the built projects of expansion of the federal government under the policies of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.

Architecture built during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations did not necessarily have a consciously political design component, but, rather, the Brutalist public architecture of Washington expressed, as historian Timothy Rohan argues, a particular attitude about confidence in government's abilities to solve the nation's problems.[31] In 2000, Robert A.M. Stern, as Dean of the School of Architecture at Yale University hosted an event that embraced this association, "Architecture of the Great Society: A Forum on Public Architecture from the 1960s and 1970s." The Washington Metro transit system, according to historian Zachary Schrag, was not only a significant engineering and architectural feat, but such a large-scale project reflected the dominant ideology of what historians have termed the "liberal consensus" of mid-twentieth century American politics.[32] Similarly, the scale, form, and materials of the FBI Building and other such public buildings in Washington communicated strength and confidence in government. This exposed concrete variant of modernism became a dominant approach for government architecture across the United States, in buildings ranging from city halls in cities such as Boston to post offices in small Midwestern towns.

Conceiving the FBI Building required confronting this ongoing debate in the city over what architecture was appropriate for Pennsylvania Avenue. The design went through several stages over several years, as the architects attempted to mediate between the requirements of the FBI and the vision advocated by the CFA and Pennsylvania Avenue planners. FBI officials were

[31] Timothy Rohan, "The Rise and Fall of Brutalism, Rudolph and the Liberal Consensus," in *Brutalism*, eds. Kyle May, Julia van den Hout, et al (Brooklyn, NY: Clog, 2013), 60.
[32] Schrag, *The Great Society Subway,* 3.

consistently altering designs, even as the architects were completing the final drawings.[33] The 291,000-square-foot site, bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, and E, 9th, and 10th streets, consisted of mostly commercial buildings dating to the nineteenth century. **(fig. 10)** Congress approved the funding for the project in April 1962 $12 million, $41.17 per square foot. The new FBI Building would need to supply ample room for the agency's various administrative requirements, including their collection of fingerprints and documents, and as well as provide shooting ranges and training facilities. For the President's Council, the building was seen as a cornerstone of redevelopment of the Pennsylvania Avenue and therefore needed to meet the standards set forth in the "Guiding Principles." **(fig. 11)** As GSA Administrator Bernard L. Boutin remarked, "the site chosen for the new FBI Building not only offers outstanding advantages to the Government, but also will provide a focal point for the revitalization of the Capitol's [sic] most famous thoroughfare."[34] **(fig. 12)**

C.F. Murphy & Associates of Chicago was chosen to work on the new FBI headquarters, through an architect with ties to the Kennedy administration. In the 1950s, what was then Shaw, Naess & Murphy worked with the engineering firm Beiswenger and Hoch on the Bunker Hill Air Base outside of Peru, Indiana, and eventually the Illinois Toll Road, the latter of which initiated a working relationship between Murphy and Robert Arnold, a young architect at Beiswenger & Hoch.[35] Arnold had quickly established connections in Washington and helped Murphy win the commission to design the new FBI Building. Carter Manny Jr., Stanislaw Z. Gladych, and John Burgee were selected to lead the Murphy team for the project.

C.F. Murphy was one of the most prolific firms in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, working on a number of high-profile projects, including the Blue-Cross Blue-Shield Building,

[33] Carter Manny, in *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 8, 1978.
[34] *Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1962.
[35] Carter Manny, interview by Franz Schulze, 1992, Chicago Oral History Project, Art Institute of Chicago, 238.

Chicago First National Bank, and numerous projects at O'Hare International Airport. As the *Chicago Tribune* declared in 1969, "In the Chicago architectural arena, C.F. Murphy Associates is the perennial contender for, and often winner of, the prized contract for the design of an important building."[36] The firm originated in Charles Murphy's role as a bookkeeper with Daniel Burnham in the 1910s and Murphy achieved an increasingly important role in the successor firm Graham, Anderson, Probst, & White, which was founded following Burnham's death. The firm underwent several name changes following the death of Ernest Graham, Murphy's mentor, before finally becoming C.F. Murphy & Associates in 1960.

The design for the FBI Building needed to win approval from the CFA, NCPC, and the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue. As Manny later complained, "There are so many bases that have to be touched on this thing, this has been frustrating."[37] The Murphy team held several meetings with the President's Council in March and April 1963 for budget negotiations. Returning on June 5th, Manny and Gladych presented early designs that were of the "simple rectangular type of building that would meet the requirements of the space directive and the cost budget."[38] **(fig. 13)** The Miesian language of this early scheme was more consistent with the work of the firm and of Gladych in particular.

However, Owings pressed for a design that resembled more closely preliminary schemes by the President's Council, which included a rectangular building with a "doughnut" hole in the middle. **(fig. 14)** Owings then rejected an updated rectangular block scheme presented on July

[36] *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1969.
[37] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of Oct 19, 1965, 151.
[38] Letter from C.F. Murphy to Leonard L. Hunter, January 12, 1968. C.F. Murphy Collection, Chicago History Museum.

24, 1963 for not following the diagonal line of Pennsylvania Avenue.[39] **(figs. 15 and 16)** As Manny later recalled:

> Stan's rationale for ignoring the diagonal—and this was the heresy part of it—was that a diagonal street is a baroque anachronism, and that in the far-off future the diagonals are going to be eliminated in Washington and you're going to go back to the really true American [Cartesian Grid].[40]

Manny later noted that the building marked a break from Gladych's preference for glass-and-steel modernism and instead showed his interest in engaging with the limestone of Washington.[41] For instance, on a late night trip to the Mall, Manny, Gladych, and Burgee became particularly enamored with the Lincoln Memorial.[42]

The FBI design was originally intended for completion by December 1964, the construction contract to be given in March 1965, and the overall project completed by 1967, but the process was initially delayed in order for Owings' commission to finish the redevelopment plan.[43] Discussions resumed in April 1964, when Manny and Gladych presented new massing sought by Owings: low on Pennsylvania Avenue and high on E Street. **(fig. 17)** The President's Council "tried to harmonize what it knew would be an imposing building."[44] Owings' staff worried since the beginning of the project that a 2.2 million-square-foot building would negatively impact Pennsylvania Avenue. The *Washington Post* was optimistic in January 1963, before any designs had become public, stating: "there is general feeling that it probably will not be the blockfilling style of, for instance, the General Accounting Office Building."[45] Although the FBI needed a large building to house the agency and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover insisted

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[39] Carter Manny, interview by Franz Schulze, 239.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 244.
[42] Ibid..
[43] Quinn-Evans, 20.
[44] Zachary M. Schrag, "'Rather Strong Advisory': William Walton's Commission and the Challenge of the FBI Building," in *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts*, ed. Thomas Luebke (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013), 297.
[45] *Washington Post*, Jan 5, 1963.

that the building sit across from the Department of Justice, the President's Council was "anxious to avoid any huge block-like structures on the Avenue, and to this end preferred that the large masses of the new buildings be placed to the rear."[46] The lower mass on Pennsylvania Avenue would be a "symbolic FBI Building" and "a taller, more prosaic part to the north that would house the clerical operations."[47]

The arduous design review process with the CFA and NCPC began in October 1964 and lasted three years. The conservative tastes of the CFA had been largely erased as John F. Kennedy had the opportunity to completely remake the commission, appointing members who shared his preferences and tastes. Kennedy first appointed his friend William Walton as chairman, who was soon joined by John Carl Warnecke, Hideo Sasaki, Gordon Bunshaft, Aline Saarinen, sculptor Theodore Roszak, and planner Burnham Kelly. As historian Zachary Schrag has noted, the CFA of the Walton era proved to have enormous clout, more than past or future versions of the commission, as they had the full backing of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In addition to the pressure from Owings, the architects learned that navigating the demands of the CFA and NCPC proved difficult, as "each of them remained somewhat jealous of its turf and suspicious of the others."[48]

On October 1, 1964, NCPC approved the design concept, Gladych's model for a two-level building of interlocking cubes: an eight-story structure on Pennsylvania Avenue, a twelve-story structure on E Street, a central plaza, and a viewing platform for parades.[49] The NCPC members were especially pleased that the building followed the President's Council guidelines.[50]

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[46] Sue A. Kohler, *The Commission of Fine Arts, A Brief History, 1910-1995* (Washington, DC: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 1996), 96.
[47] Schrag, "'Rather Strong Advisory,'" 297.
[48] Ibid.
[49] *Washington Post,* Oct 2, 1964.
[50] Letter from James H. Rowe Jr. to Robert T. Daly, Oct. 7, 1967. National Capital Planning Commission Archives.

Gladych commented that the building expressed the "precise, integrated form of the FBI." [51] Wolf Von Eckardt called this early design "gutsy" and showcased it within this new emerging federal architecture. He wrote:

> It gets us away from the bare and square glass boxes of late and back to the dynamic interplay between masses and voids and the fascination of shadows under the moving sun. This masculine, non-sense architecture is not only appropriate for a national police headquarters. It is also a promising beginning for the new Pennsylvania Avenue. It is certainly a vast improvement over the glass and marble monsters the government has lately up on Independence Avenue.[52]

Von Eckardt admitted he did not know what to call this new concrete "style" that had emerged, but recognized a visual relationship to Le Corbusier and Paul Rudolph.

Despite success at NCPC and praise from the press, in their meeting before the CFA on October 21, the architects still noted problems with resolving the massing with its relationship to the street as dictated by the President's Council report, stating: "the struggle for us has been the merging of the diagonal with this large mass behind."[53] Gladych stated that he and Manny attempted to communicate in the form what they determined the FBI should represent: strength and integrity.[54] "Strength in a building," Gladych told CFA members, "will give a feeling of confidence to the people looking at the building."[55] Further, he contended that the massing was "masculine, strong expression."[56]

Gordon Bunshaft, a partner with Owings at SOM and arguably the most outspoken member of the CFA, congratulated the architects for creating "an exciting scheme."[57] However, he asked for changes to the scale of the courtyard and declared the Pennsylvania Avenue façade

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[51] Stanislaw Z. Gladych, quoted in *Washington Post*, Oct 2, 1964.
[52] *Washington Post*, Oct 22, 1964.
[53] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 21 Oct 1964, 134.
[54] Ibid., 138.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 139.
[57] Ibid., 143.

"too precious."[58] When Gladych suggested the building could be constructed of either concrete or steel, Bunshaft reacted with: "That's a pretty sad statement, because this concept is obviously a strong concrete piece and to start talking about building it out of light steel sounds superficial."[59] Interestingly, strength was repeatedly emphasized throughout the design review process. While solidity was later seen as one of the building's flaws, for the CFA of the 1960s, it was a virtue.[60] Reviewing FBI proposals, with a phrase that mirrored most of his suggestions for any project, Bunshaft responded: "Why can't it just be a strong, simple thing?"[61]

After the architects reworked and sent sketches and concepts to GSA throughout the fall of 1964 and winter of 1965, the street development plan for the building, with a fifty-feet setback, was approved by NCPC in April 1965. **(fig. 18)** The FBI and GSA, however, began demanding that security measures for the building be addressed. As an organization born partly out of the terrorist bombings in American cities in the 1910s and 1920s, the FBI's desire for security trumped most other concerns in building their new headquarters.[62] Such a bunker mentality, as the building would be in the middle of downtown and thus open to potential attacks, would come to define the parameters of the project. To accommodate these requests, the architects drafted a moat concept. The moat would extend from the building on three sides of the block, at 9th, 10th, and E streets, and terminate at a concrete retaining wall, with a gravel floor and stairs spanning across to building entrances. **(figs. 19 and 20)** In October, the architects presented to CFA the poured-in-place concrete building, as requested by Bunshaft, set in the

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[58] Quinn-Evans, 27.
[59] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 21 Oct 1964, 143. Commission of Fine Arts Archives, Washington, D.C.
[60] Schrag, "'Rather Strong Advisory,'" 298.
[61] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 19 Oct 1965, 136.
[62] Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 127-30.

moat, to which Bunshaft responded, "Feudal, isn't it?" and playfully suggested adding snakes.[63] Still, Bunshaft argued that it was appropriate that the FBI's headquarters should express a sense of security; the building, he quipped, was not meant to appear as though it housed the Department of Agriculture.[64] At one point, he declared, "I think personally it would be wonderful if FBI looked kind of closed in."[65] While Walton stated that the "façade appeared clumsy and without scale," the CFA continued to request further study of the base, which became a defining issue in the design review process. [66]

The debate over what the ground floor would look like and what would be allowed to occur there dated to the beginning of the project, as originally conceived in negotiations between the President's Council and the FBI. Owings hoped that the new building would accommodate street-level shopping and incorporate arcades and courtyards to contribute to the street life and provide space for viewing parades. Tension emerged between the FBI's desire for security and the Owings' plans for an open and welcoming space to revive Pennsylvania Avenue. While the FBI flatly rejected commercial space at the base in January 1963, GSA assured Owings that they were still committed to the Pennsylvania Avenue redevelopment plan and suggested that arcades and ample open space could be an effective compromise. This debate soon spilled over into the design review process, pitting the CFA against the NCPC.

As the design review process entered its final year in 1967, an April meeting at CFA turned to the expression of the first and second floor. Bunshaft commended the architects on the design, declaring, "Let's hope they build it."[67] The CFA, however, requested the columns from

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[63] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 19 Oct 1965, 136.
[64] Ibid., 148.
[65] Ibid., 144.
[66] Letter from William Walton to Knot, Administrator, GSA, Commission of Fine Arts Minutes, November 16, 1965.
[67] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 19 April 1967, 144.

the second-story loggia should continue uninterrupted to the ground floor and the base be recessed behind the columns. What was by then the Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue went further, suggesting the first floor be set back ten feet from free-standing columns, to create at least a small arcade and increase circulation to comply with their plans, as well as provide shelter from weather. The FBI, however, argued it would provide a space for "undesirables" to attack female employees.[68] Walton appeared to express some doubt about the direction in which Bunshaft was pushing the architects, writing in a letter to the GSA: "the treatment of the base of this building adjoining the sidewalks is particularly oppressive in the present scheme."[69]

The President's Council continued to emphasize to the architects the standards set forth in their 1964 report. Owings especially stressed the ways in which an arcade and retail space could contribute to life on the street. Nevertheless, the FBI repeatedly rejected the arcade concept. CFA historian Sue Kohler notes that CFA members, however, "felt that, visually, the massive building needed to stand on a strong base with few openings," save the entrance.[70] Bunshaft pressed the Murphy team for this stronger base, stating: "I think this business of somebody ruling that the ground floor has to be open and it applies to all is a joke."[71] In a review meeting in October 1965, Bunshaft and Gladych had traded off marking up the drawings the architects brought. Gladych agreed that a solid base, described throughout the discussions as a podium, would be most effective. Owings's idea to treat the base as a tray, rather than as a podium, with open spaces for gardens and foundations, did not gain traction. The influence of the

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[68] *Washington Post,* Sept 15, 1967.
[69] *Minutes of the Commission of Fine Arts*, meeting of 19 April 1967. Commission of Fine Arts Archives, Washington, D.C.
[70] Kohler, 96.
[71] *Transcript of Proceedings*, Commission of Fine Arts, meeting of 19 Oct 1965, 153.

CFA struck the fatal blow to the arcade concept. Further, this October meeting revealed that a divide between Bunshaft/Gladych and Owings had become increasingly stark.

Zachary Schrag argues that the CFA's dismissal of the arcade could be attributed to a lack of interest in planning among the architects on the commission, that Owings or Harry Weese might have been better equipped for such discussions. He writes, "While Bunshaft and Saarinen talked about avenues and looked at models showing broad sections of the city, it is not clear that they had a good feeling for Washington and for the people who moved through it."[72] Indeed, Bunshaft's concerns for proportions and contrasts did not correspond with Owings' ideas about circulation. Ultimately, that CFA was able to win the day on this issue was a testament to its clout in the 1960s. The NCPC, according to its Executive Director Charles Conrad, repeated its request for the arcade each time the design was brought before the commission.[73] Nevertheless, the NCPC approved the preliminary site and building plans on December 1, 1966.

On August 21, 1967, the architects presented four schemes of the facade to the GSA, where Acting Commissioner for Design and Construction Leonard Hunter chose Scheme A. **(figs. 21 and 22)** When Owings saw the scheme the next day, he insisted one last time for the arcade, but was again overruled by the FBI and GSA, who instructed the architects to present this scheme for final review. [74] The NCPC approved the final plans, without the arcade on September 14. **(figs. 23 and 24)** Critics such as Von Eckardt feared the FBI's rejection of the arcade would create "dead space" in front of the building that would leave pedestrians more exposed to

[72] Schrag, "'Rather Strong Advisory,'" 298.
[73] Letter from Charles Conrad to William Schmidt, May 19, 1967. National Capital Planning Commission Archives, Washington, DC.
[74] Quinn-Evans, 34.

potential crime.[75] A second-level gallery was included in the final design in an attempt to placate Owings, but the FBI never allowed pedestrian access as intended.[76]

Although the FBI Building emerged from the early work of the President's Council, the final form more closely followed the wishes of the FBI, CFA, and the architects. For Owings, that it kept the line of Pennsylvania Avenue and followed the setback guidelines—at seventy-five feet—were the only redeeming qualities of the finished design. **(fig. 25)** Of the parties involved, Owings arguably won the least. The finished building would not have a street-level arcade, retail space, and the courtyard and gallery would eventually be closed off to pedestrians. **(fig. 26)** Although Manny and Gladych quickly grew frustrated with the design review discussions, they often viewed Bunshaft as an ally against Owings.[77] By the end of the project Manny seemed dismayed by both the process and the final product, commenting, in a prediction of what would occur decades later: "I sometimes wish the FBI had just decided to pack up and move to Virginia or someplace, as the CIA did. That would have made things a lot simpler."[78]

By the time the final design was approved in November 1967, a feeling persisted that several problems were left unsolved, especially those of program and site.[79] Echoing concerns that CFA emphasized building over site, Walton recalled in 1969: "We are happy with it as far as the design goes, but we are all scared of the size of it. It is a blockbuster. And the symbolism of putting this size building for the FBI right in the heart of the city is terrible."[80] His comments suggest his fellow commission members predicted how the building might be received once constructed and understood the impact their decisions would have on the street. Indeed, Walton

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[75] *Washington Post*, Oct 22, 1967.
[76] *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 8, 1978.
[77] Carter Manny, interview by Franz Schulze, 241.
[78] Carter Manny, quoted in *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 8, 1978.
[79] Kohler, 97.
[80] William Walton, quoted in, *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1970: Hearings on H.R. 12781, Part 3 Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives*, 91st Cong., 1st Session, 9 (1969).

often acted as a voice of caution, compared to the steadfast Bunshaft, throughout the design review discussions.

The site for the building had been cleared by early 1967 and the basement substructure under construction a few months later. D Street would be closed to construct the superblock promoted by the Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue, interfering with the original L'Enfant Plan. The total price of the project in 1967 was estimated to be $102.5 million, making it the most expensive federal building to date.[81] **(figs. 27 and 28)** Blake Construction Company of Washington was responsible for the eight-year task, which totaled $126 million by the project's conclusion. The building was constructed of buff-colored precast and cast-in-place concrete with bands of successive windows in concrete frames. The completed project was officially dedicated in September 1975 and named after the recently deceased FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover.

Reaction among architectural critics tended to be either negative or lukewarm. Despite initial enthusiasm for the early designs, Von Eckardt worried that the base presented "nothing but a brutally blank concrete wall." Inside the courtyard space, concrete walls created dark cavernous spaces that, Von Eckardt wrote, "would make a perfect stage set for a dramatization of George Orwell's '1984.'"[82] *Chicago Tribune* critic Paul Gapp argued the second-level gallery was the building's biggest failure, that it was confusing to access, led through too many dark spaces, and was inaccessible to the general public not on business or official tours. Gapp rated the building mediocre and "nondescript" and ultimately blamed Bunshaft for the strong base being chosen over the arcade.[83] Von Eckardt similarly directed the brunt of his criticism toward Bunshaft and the Commission, writing, "I don't even blame the architects…I blame the Fine Arts

[81] *Washington Post*, June 19, 1970.
[82] *Washington Post,* July 12, 1975.
[83] Paul Gapp, "Washington's FBI Building, missing its mark," *Inland Architect* (April 1978), 19.

Commission which, under the influence of Gordon Bunshaft…tried so hard to make its imprint on Washington and Pennsylvania Avenue that it delivered a painful kick instead."[84]

Ada Louise Huxtable was more generous in her verdict, calling the building "uncompromisingly contemporary in technology and style." She commended C.F. Murphy & Associates for doing a "superior job" with the many limitations placed upon them, that "what would have been a deadly mass is skillfully rearranged into visibly defined structural and functional parts."[85] Still, Huxtable noted the absence of the arcade or shops had created the "inevitable bunker." As its final form reflected so much of the FBI's demands, the building "is what you get when power is exercised not by individuals but by organizations or a bureaucracy."[86] Prior to his death, Hoover likewise expressed his dissatisfaction, calling the design "obnoxious" in 1966 and that it looked "like something from Mars" in 1972."[87] This, however, did not prevent critics from assuming that a building of such scale was Hoover's attempt to build a monument to himself.[88]

The NCPC again attempted in the late 1970s to convince the FBI to allow retail shopping on the ground floor. With the passage of the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act of 1976 in Congress, the federal government began encouraging public buildings to accommodate commercial, cultural, and educational activities. NCPC Chairman David Childs wrote to FBI Director William Webster in May 1979 after learning the FBI was considering reversing their previous decision. Stating that although the commission approved the building in its current form in 1967, allowing street-level shopping on Pennsylvania Avenue would "contribute significantly

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[84] *Washington Post*, July 12, 1975.
[85] Ada Louise Huxtable, "J. Edgar Hoover Builds His Dream House," *Architectural Forum* 136, no. 3 (April 1972): 45.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Susan Rosenfeld Falb, *History of the J. Edgar Hoover Building* (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, 1987), 2.
[88] *Washington Post*, June 9, 1971.

to the quality and vitality of the Nation's most important street."[89] By August, a feasibility study had convinced Webster that opening the building to retail was not worth the security risk.[90]

The FBI Building was unapologetically modern, owing to both popular, but waning, architectural trends and the push within the federal government in the 1960s for contemporary design. But the program and the tenant of the building, as well as Gordon Bunshaft's insistence that it be a "strong, simple thing," assured that the design would be more aggressively expressed than other concrete modernist buildings of the period in Washington. Kriston Capps wrote, "Were future civilizations to judge ours by our architecture alone, they would surely pick the FBI Building as the seat of power, not the White House."[91] With the numerous concessions to the FBI, Nathaniel Owings and the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue lost crucial ground in their quest to redevelop Pennsylvania Avenue as an open, pedestrian-friendly space. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, critics saw the FBI Building as an aesthetically harsh building, an unwelcoming space that ignored the street, and a missed opportunity to create a grand, publicly accessible building to enliven Pennsylvania Avenue.

[89] Letter from David N. Childs to William H. Webster, May 9, 1979. National Capital Planning Commision Archives, Washington, DC.
[90] *Washington Star*, Aug 8, 1979.
[91] Kriston Capps, "Requiem for a Nightmare," *CityLab*, July 30, 2014.

Chapter 2:
Brutalism and Its Discontents: A Preservation Challenge

In the midst of a high-profile 2012 preservation fight over Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago, writer Llewellyn Hinkes-Jones published an article in *The Atlantic Cities* [now *CityLab*] provocatively titled "The Case for Saving Ugly Buildings." Either tongue-in-cheek or ceding ground to skeptics about such buildings' aesthetic values, Hinkes-Jones argued, "Even horrendously ugly and soulless abominations are part of our architectural heritage and need to be preserved for future generations."[92] Further, he wrote that aesthetic value was a poor criterion for assessing significance. His piece touched on what had become a heated issue played out in other cities across the country in the late 2000s and early 2010s and preserving Brutalist buildings became a hot topic in the press, particularly for those publications dedicated to cities and urban issues. Likewise, an internet fascination with Brutalism emerged, with articles and blog posts that either mocked (e.g., "The 7 Most Heinously Ugly Government Buildings in Washington") or attempted to understand what struck twenty-first-century audiences as odd relics (e.g., "'Brutalist' Buildings That Should Be Dystopian Movie Sets").[93]

As concrete modernist buildings of the 1960s and 1970s became eligible for landmark status under both local and national laws, preservationists struggled to convince a skeptical public of their worthiness. Most examples were threatened before reaching the fifty-year threshold, as they were only eligible for designation under "exceptional importance." What arguments could preservationists use to sway city dwellers and local governments to protect buildings that for decades they had been inclined to dismiss as ugly, oppressive relics of a

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[92] Llewellyn Hinkes-Jones, "The Case for Saving Ugly Buildings," *The Atlantic Cities*, Jan 10, 2012.
[93] Benny Johnson, "The 7 Most Heinously Ugly Government Buildings in Washington," *Buzzfeed*, July 16, 2014, http://www.buzzfeed.com/bennyjohnson/the-7-most-heinously-ugly-government-buildings-in-washington#.cvN7b2apo ; Vincze Miklós, "'Brutalist' Buildings That Should Be Dystopian Movie Sets," *io9*, July 16, 2013, http://io9.gizmodo.com/brutalist-buildings-that-should-be-dystopian-movie-se-802637713

misguided approach to urban design? While many forms of modernist design, including mid-twentieth century furniture in particular, had become en vogue, much of the public resisted embracing buildings that were never well liked in the first place. Nevertheless, a preservation movement began developing to address what was becoming a defining cultural challenge for American cities in the twenty-first century.

As modernism had fallen out of favor among the public, the concept of saving such buildings in the 1990s, historian Richard Longstreth noted, "was still somewhat of a novel one."[94] For many years, Longstreth was one of the few scholarly figures addressing the issue of modernist preservation. Indeed, even much of the preservation field was skeptical that modernist buildings were historically significant enough to warrant recognition or landmark designation. Meanwhile, advocates warned about the dangers of making decisions about preservation based on the whims of style. At the height of modernism's popularity in the mid-twentieth century, after all, many works by late nineteenth and early twentieth century architects were razed for seeming outdated and out of step with popular taste. Art Deco and Victorian architecture, too, had been disliked by the public at one time.

This judgment was, in part, based on a prejudice widely shared in the American preservation movement that something older was inherently more valuable, a preference for tradition. In the 1960s, when the preservation movement scored important legal victories for the landmarking of important historic resources, their caseloads included buildings dating to the Antebellum period, over one hundred years in the past. Given this context, Longstreth writes, the fifty-year provision established for the National Register of Historic Places was "a bold move."[95]

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[94] Richard Longstreth, "I Can't See It; I Don't Understand It; And it Doesn't Look Old to Me," *Forum Journal* (2012): 35.
[95] Richard Longstreth, "The Significance of the Recent Past," *APT Bulletin* 23, no. 2 (1991): 14.

The increasing attention to the recent past was thanks in part to the work of historians, including architectural historians, to expand the scope of what counted as historic.

The mid-twentieth century was unprecedented in the changes it brought to American life, as wealth was shared by a greater percentage of the population in the post-World War II era that at any time prior in American history. The economic vitality of the 1940s-1970s manifested itself in a dynamic era of new design, defined by modern architecture. However, Longstreth writes, "Most people perceive representative buildings from the recent past as part of the current world."[96] This would especially prove true when preservationists devoted attention to saving modernism not seen as "high design," including shopping malls, visitor centers, big-box stores, and landscapes associated with sprawl. Longstreth highlighted some of these daunting struggles in his article "I Can't See It; I Don't Understand It; And it Doesn't Look Old to Me." He notes that the public was reluctant to rally around modern architecture because they could not "see" it; many buildings and landscapes of this period, including suburban office parks, were often decentralized, without the focal points associated with a traditional urban setting. Likewise, modernist buildings were perhaps more challenging to understand through a single exterior elevation, but instead required movement around and throughout the building to appreciate its design.[97] As *Chicago Tribune* architectural critic Blair Kamin argued, "Modernist buildings are exemplars of art, culture, and technology, but it's a demanding architecture."[98]

One of the most important cultural values of preservation, Longstreth argues, is providing a sense of continuity, by maintaining the past and honoring the present. "When we exclude much of the twentieth century from consideration," he writes, "we are in effect creating an artificial

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[96] Ibid.
[97] Longstreth, "I Can't See It; I Don't Understand It; And it Doesn't Look Old to Me," 39.
[98] Blair Kamin, quoted in Carlos Harrison, "Hope for Modernism," *Preservation* (Winter 2014), 24.

separation between contemporary life and that of our forebears."[99] By the 2000s, the situation had changed, as preservationists and the public began to embrace modernism in full force. This was partly due to a rediscovery of the rich legacy of the mid-twentieth century and partly owed to cultural phenomena. The television series *Mad Men*, as just one of many sources, contributed to a new interest in the furniture, clothing, and architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. Longstreth argues that Americans in their twenties and thirties in the 2010s drove this resurgence out of an interest in "a different past…nostalgia or an attraction to things that just predate childhood remembrance."[100]

On the professional front, preservationists overcame their opposition or ambivalence to work for the preservation of modern architecture. In doing so, they had the unique task of arguing to save buildings by modernists who had often ignored or rejected the past. A non-profit organization called Docomomo was established in 1988 to focus attention on the quickly disappearing resources of the recent past, while preservationists increasingly saw their caseloads filled with modernist buildings. Noted works such as the Mies van der Rohe-designed 860-880 Lake Shore Drive apartment buildings in Chicago or the SOM-designed Lever House in New York were given landmark status. **(figs. 29 and 30)** However, many projects considered outside of the canon of modernist architecture, including vernacular buildings or the more eccentric work of Bruce Goff or the quirky historicism of Edward Durrell Stone, were not as understood or appreciated and revealed that a significant portion of the built environment of the midcentury remained threatened.

But where certain forms of modernism had returned to the forefront of popular taste, others failed to garner popular support for preservation. American and European buildings

[99] Longstreth, "The Significance of the Recent Past," 15.
[100] Richard Longstreth, *Looking Beyond the Icons: Midcentury Architecture, Landscape, and Urbanism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 1.

attributed to a modernist variant of exposed concrete, often referred to as Brutalism, were rarely appreciated by the public, even when they were originally built in the 1960s and 1970s. However, building in concrete was popular at this time among federal, state, and local governments. Poured-in-place concrete provided an opportunity to communicate a sense of monumentality for government architecture, but on a smaller budget. The I.M. Pei-designed Kips Bay Towers in Manhattan were reported to cost $11.00 per square foot when constructed in 1961.[101] Such muscular expressions of form were part of a broader interest in creating an alternative to the modernist glass box, that a concrete wall would be a bolder, stronger statement than the ubiquitous curtain wall. The ability to mold poured-in-place concrete into virtually any shape additionally provided unique design possibilities. The debate over preserving Brutalist architecture was but one front in the larger fight for modernist preservation, but proved a more difficult challenge.

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) implemented a radical revision of SOM architect Walter Netsch's original design for the campus in the early 1990s with little resistance. The East Campus of the then-newly formed university was a series of Brutalist buildings connected by upper-level walkways and a Greek forum, all of concrete. **(figs. 31 and 32)** Netsch's designs were heralded by the architectural press in the 1960s, but became roundly disliked by students, faculty, and the general public. The crumbling walkways created a physical hazard and the concrete was stained from the effects of weather. As the campus was constructed as part of an urban renewal project in the Greek Town and Little Italy neighborhoods of Chicago, memory in the neighborhood of what was seen as a destructive force was only reinforced by the imposing concrete architecture of the campus. Students were known to complain about how the

[101] Francis C. Wickham, architect and Pei associate, quoted in David Hay, "Defending Brutalism: The Uncertain Future of Modernist Concrete Structures," *Preservation* (Winter 2013).

dominance of concrete created an uncomfortable space, but Netsch argued that decades of inadequate maintenance was responsible for much of the campus problems. By the beginning of the second phase of campus construction in 1967, Netsch's ideas about design had become increasingly devoted to what he termed Field Theory, which consisted of interlocking and overlaid geometric shapes. Field Theory resulted in a series of buildings, including the Art and Architecture Building, with floor plans that students and faculty found confusing to navigate.

The university hired architect Daniel Coffey to reimagine the campus in 1990, leading to the removal of the upper level walkways and the forum, in favor of more green space and an open student gathering space in place of the forum. Blair Kamin, in his *Chicago Tribune* column, perhaps best reflected the opinion of most of the major media outlets in the city. **(fig. 33)** Following the removal of the upper walkways and forum and various landscaping projects, completed in 1995, Kamin wrote, with journalistic hyperbole, "A river of humanity runs through the renovated campus core," making it "one of the liveliest public spaces in Chicago."[102] Indeed, the Netsch campus had few proponents, and a preservation movement for modernism, and Brutalism, had not yet formed to prevent the campus from being altered so significantly.

Brutalism was never able to match the level public appreciation that some other forms of modernism achieved, as it reception was shaped by myriad of cultural, political, and aesthetic reactions. Further, as the preservation debate over such buildings reached a fever pitch in the late 2000s, preservationists struggled with addressing the term "Brutalist." Indeed, the term was more likely to be used by members of the press writing about the latest fight over a concrete modernist building, despite the fact that academics challenged the appropriateness of its usage. Wide popular use of the term led many to mistakenly equate Brutalism with a conscious desire by designers to create harsh, or "brutal," environments, especially given their rough concrete

[102] *Chicago Tribune,* Oct 29, 1995.

exteriors. Brutalism became a catchall for any modernist building of the 1960s and 1970s constructed of concrete, but was a questionable fusing of the writings of architectural historian Reyner Banham and Le Corbusier. As historians Mark Pasnik, Chris Grimley, and Michael Kubo argue, "In retrospect, the worst aspect of Brutalism has been the misapplication of its name."[103]

Writing in *Architectural Review* in 1955, Banham, described Brutalism as originally a reaction against New Humanism, an English architectural trend that Banham said, "meant…brickwork, segmented arches, pitched roofs, small windows…picturesque detailing without picturesque planning."[104] For this reason, what was known as New Brutalism sought to reject this historicizing fad. Banham credits the term to architect Hans Asplund, who noted in 1950 the raw, unfinished quality of a house being designed in Switzerland. From there, according to Banham, it spread to England by way of architects Michael Ventris, Oliver Cox, and Graeme Shankland, who used it in a "jocular fashion."[105] Banham writes of a wave in early 1950s Britain of satirically naming things "New" (e.g., New Humanism, New Empiricism). Indeed, architectural historian Robert Bruegmann suggests the term was more of "an in-house joke among British architects" than a serious design philosophy.[106]

Importantly for Banham, New Brutalism was meant to be an ethic, rather than an aesthetic. He charged that modern architects had become too concerned with formal qualities, at the expense of the lived human experience in the city.[107] For this reason, Banham defined New Brutalism as containing three essential qualities: Memorability as an Image; Clear exhibition of Structure; and Valuation of Material 'as found.'[108] British architects Peter and Alison Smithson

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[103] Mark Pasnik, Chris Grimley, and Michael Kubo, *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2015), 16.
[104] Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," *Architectural Review* 118 (Dec 1955): 355.
[105] Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (New York: Reinhold, 1966), 10.
[106] Robert Bruegmann, correspondence with the author, October 2013.
[107] Banham, "The New Brutalism," *Architectural Review* 118 (Dec 1955): 354-55.
[108] Ibid., 361.

were showcased as exemplars of this new approach, with particular attention to their work at the Hunstanton School in Norfolk, England. Banham described the English avant-garde design culture, which included the Smithsons and their fellow members of Team 10, as "a younger generation" that "had the depressing sense that the drive was going out of Modern Architecture, its pure dogma being diluted by politicians and compromisers who had lost their intellectual nerve."[109]

Revisiting Banham's definition reveals that Brutalism did not necessarily indicate concrete as a building material, as would later be assumed. Rather, the way in which the material is used determines whether a building is Brutalist. Banham emphasized the "coarseness of the surface" and the "rough wooden formwork which was allowed to impress its grain."[110] The steel frame construction of the Hunstanton School, for instance, had a much stronger correlation with the work of Mies van der Rohe. **(fig. 34)** Further, the Brutalism of Banham and the Smithsons, in its commitment to honesty to materials, emphasized exposing a building's mechanical systems. As historian Anthony Vidler writes, "There is little in Banham's article, or in the Smithsons' early projects," to indicate the future preeminence of the rough concrete style to come.[111] By 1966, Banham's enthusiasm for the Smithsons had waned. He particularly objected to their contribution to the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition in 1956, in which the Smithsons designed a wooden garden shed with a corrugated roof that Banham accused of being submissive to traditionalism. Their betrayal of the ethic of New Brutalism, Banham argued, was part and parcel of a larger trend of incorporating coarseness for solely aesthetic purposes.

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[109] Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (New York: Reinhold, 1966), 13.
[110] Ibid.,16.
[111] Anthony Vidler, "Troubles in Theory V: The Brutalist Moment(s)," *Architectural Review* 235, no. 1404 (Feb 2014): 97.

Le Corbusier's writings on *béton brut*, French for raw, exposed concrete, are also likely to be cited as sources of Brutalism. Indeed, Le Corbusier adopted concrete as a choice material for much of his work in the 1950s and early 1960s, but rejected the label "Brutalist." He later recalled:

> Beton brut was born at the Unite d'Habitation at Marseilles where there were 80 contractors and such a massacre of concrete that one simply could not dream of making useful transitions by means of grouting. I decided: let us leave all that brute. I called it 'beton brute.' The English immediately jumped on the piece and treated me (Ronchamp and Monastery of La Tourette) as 'Brutal' – beton brutal – all things considered, the brute is Corbu. They called that 'the new brutality'. My friends and admirers take me for the brut of the brutal concrete![112]

Certainly many of the architects later associated with Brutalism were aware of and inspired by Le Corbusier, but to argue that Paul Rudolph or Marcel Breuer, for instance, were ascribing wholesale to his design philosophy would be problematic. *Béton brut* and New Brutalism have different intellectual origins, but were often conflated in later treatments of the subject. As Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo write, "what these terms referred to was ambiguous from the start."[113]

Instead, Vidler argues, "The emergence of what has since come to signify 'Brutalist Style,' the monumental abstract-geometric rough concrete box" is more accurately attributed to students trained by Walter Gropius at Harvard in response to the omnipresent International Style.[114] Meanwhile, Sigfried Giedion's call for a *new monumentality* heavily influenced the intellectual world of architecture in the 1950s. He argued that modern architecture required "the reconquest of the monumental expression" and that people wanted "their buildings to be more

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[112] Le Corbusier, letter to Josep Lluís Sert, May 12, 1961, reprinted in Eduard F. Sekler and William Curtis, *Le Corbusier at Work: The Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 302.
[113] Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo, *Heroic*, 16.
[114] Anthony Vidler, "Troubles in Theory V: The Brutalist Moment(s)," 99.

than a functional fulfillment," but to represent joy, excitement, and community life.[115] Giedion challenged modern architects to be bolder and search for new forms. Gerhard Kallmann, the lead designer of the Boston City Hall, advocated for what he termed "Action Architecture," a stronger and more vigorous expression of functionalism. The most important attribute of Action Architecture, according to Kallmann, was:

> The effect of shock therapy in galvanizing architecture out of its lethargy…It is an architecture true only to its own manner of making and doing. In its physical concreteness and firmness of build, it strives for a confirmation of identity and existence to counter the modern fear of nothingness.[116]

However, Brutalism in United States was more likely to draw associations with Rudolph. His use of exposed, corrugated concrete in buildings such as the Yale Art and Architecture Building and the Orange County Government Center communicated in form and materials an assertive new approach to modernism that many critics sought to understand and differentiate from the glass box.

Rudolph's expression of interest in British Brutalism was, according to historian Timothy Rohan, only a brief flirtation. On his design for the Yale Married Student Housing, Rohan writes that "the project's block-like forms and brick walls edged with precast concrete coping suggested that Rudolph was also engaging with the vocabulary of British brutalist architecture, if not its ideas."[117] **(fig. 35)** However, as the brick veneer Rudolph used in the final design was not load bearing, Banham would likely have argued it violated Brutalism's commitment to the honest use of materials. Still, the heavy monumentality that became associated with Brutalism can be seen in Rudolph's prior work, such as his designs for the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan in the mid-

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[115] Sigfried Giedion, "The Need for a New Monumentality," in *New Architecture and City Planning*: A *Symposium*, edited by Paul Zucker (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), 552.
[116] Gerhard Kallmann, "The 'Action' Architecture of a New Generation," *Architectural Forum* (October 1959): 134, 244.
[117] Timothy Rohan, *The Architecture of Paul Rudolph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 75.

1950s, suggesting that his particular approach predated his interest with the work of the Smithsons a few years later. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Rudolph never used the term "Brutalist" to describe his work, he had a common interest in rough, simple materials similar to the British Brutalist architecture of James Stirling or the Smithsons.

The term was much more likely to be used in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries than when the buildings were originally constructed. However, this lineage was rarely part of debates occurring in preservation practice, as advocates often determined "Brutalism" as only an obstacle to their efforts. When Landmarks Illinois, the lead preservation agency in the state, made its case to save Chicago's Prentice Women's Hospital in 2011-12, Director of Advocacy Lisa DiChiera and her staff strategically avoided the word in their campaign, believing that it only reinforced public perception that the building was ugly. **(fig. 36)** According to DiChiera, her staff did not believe they could convince those who were already skeptics with a term that often evoked such a negative response. Instead, Landmarks consistently referred to the building as "modernist" in their campaign literature.[118]

Others attempted a rebranding that replaced Brutalism with terms they believed might garner more positive reactions. As academics in Boston, Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo, sought to reframe the discussion over their city's concrete modernist legacy by instead referring to buildings such as the Boston City Hall as "Heroic" modernism, drawing upon earlier references to the term by the Smithsons. "Rejecting the cultural baggage of Brutalism," they write, "'Heroic' refers at once to the formal attributes of the buildings themselves—powerful, singular, aspiring to the iconic—and to the attitudes of the architects and institutions that created them."[119] Timothy Rohan similarly prefers "concrete monumentality" to Brutalism in describing the work

[118] Lisa DiChiera, interview with the author, October 2013.
[119] Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo, *Heroic*, 19.

of Paul Rudolph. Indeed, recapturing the attitudes of architects, their patrons, and intellectuals such as Giedion is necessary to reinterpret concrete modernist buildings of this period in a more positive light. But, while context is useful, the widely held belief Brutalism means brutal is, nevertheless, unlikely to dissipate. The term invites observers to read negative physical characteristics and values into the architecture, making the case for preservation only more difficult. Despite the fact that the term as understood by the public and the term to which Banham gave meaning have proved so markedly divergent, scholarship on the subject has yet to effectively dismantle the public discourse that conflates the varied definitions and cites Banham as the originator. While undoing decades of popular usage of a word would prove a formidable task, and language is but one front in the fight to save concrete modernist buildings, searching for linguistic alternatives to Brutalism is necessary if such architecture is to be better understood and evaluated.

A literal interpretation of the term and the visual impact of the concrete were complimentary factors in the public rejection of these buildings on aesthetic grounds. The raw, exposed concrete associated with Brutalism was seen as cold, overbearing, and inhumane. Designer and historian Anthony Vidler outlined the task ahead for advocates of this architecture in his keynote address to the 2012 meeting of Docomomo International: "While a portion of the architectural community might be supportive," the general public found Brutalist buildings "unredeemably ugly and worthy only of being torn down."[120] A *Slate* article in 2013 investigated an old myth that universities preferred the at times confusing floor plans of Brutalist buildings because they were designed to prevent student riots.[121] Landmarks Illinois decided the most

[120] Anthony Vidler, "*Learning to Love Brutalism,*" (Lecture,12th Docomomo International Conference in Espoo, Finland, August 7-10, 2012.
[121] J. Bryan Lowder, "Were Brutalist Buildings on College Campuses Really Designed to Thwart Student Riots?" *Slate*, Oct 18, 2013,

effective strategy to save Prentice Hospital would be to avoid an aesthetically based argument. According to DiChiera, "People are always going to be of the opinion that aesthetically the building is ugly."[122] DiChiera reported talking to mothers who had given birth in the old Prentice Hospital and hated their experience, thinking it was "dingy" and "not a nice setting."[123] However, Landmarks Illinois struggled to build an effective case that avoided the aesthetic issue.

Additionally, some of the aesthetic reaction derived from their weather-beaten condition, as concrete was perhaps more likely than most modern materials to show signs of weathering and staining. At times, spalling concrete deteriorated enough to reveal its reinforcing, a tendency seen in Le Corbusier's High Court in Chandigarh, India.[124] The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) removed the upper level concrete walkways because pieces of concrete were breaking and falling on pedestrians. While such conditions were partly a result of poor maintenance over the years, some architects paid insufficient attention to the practical realities of building in concrete; it was merely a construction detail.[125] London's Robin Hood Gardens housing complex, the best known project by the Smithsons, was notorious for water leaks.

For some, concrete was not just ugly, but interpreted as anti-history. In his book *Concrete and Culture*, architectural historian Adrian Forty writes, "Concrete is often regarded as a dumb or stupid material, more associated with death than life."[126] Forty argues that concrete is inherently modern; its adoption as a choice material for revitalization projects throughout history meant that it was often seen as erasing older patterns and social relations, and has, for this

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http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_eye/2013/10/18/campus_brutalism_were_the_buildings_designed_to_thwart_student_riots.html

[122] Lisa DiChiera, interview with the author, October 2013.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Theodore H.M. Prudon, *Preservation of Modern Architecture* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008), 44.

[125] Llewellyn Hinkes-Jones, "The Case for Saving Ugly Buildings," *The Atlantic Cities*, Jan 10, 2012.

[126] Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (London: Reaktion, 2012), 9.

reason, long provoked resistance.[127] Indeed, in the United States, concrete architecture was at times interpreted through the lens of the disruptive forces of urban redevelopment and renewal. The unornamented buildings with often massive scale and set in superblocks or large concrete plazas were seen as disrespectful of the existing fabric. Urban renewal is commonly viewed as a cold, imposing force that destroyed neighborhoods and dislocated urban, mostly low-income, populations.

The memory of urban renewal as destruction was often transferred to the reaction to the buildings that replaced the older fabric. Indeed, the long-standing view of the buildings and plan of the UIC campus as alien to the surrounding fabric by neighboring residents was partly an association with its urban renewal origins. However, this antipathy was not limited to concrete, as modernism itself was often tied to urban renewal and understood as anti-history. As urban historian David Hamer wrote, "In the new urban landscape [of the 1950s and 1960s] the past was not only ignored, it was destroyed."[128] While much of the opposition to urban renewal, which reached a fever pitch in the 1970s, is warranted, its history is fraught with misunderstanding and often treated monolithically. Supporters of urban renewal were long accused of totally rejecting the past and favoring only wide-scale demolition, but rehabilitation of existing buildings and neighborhoods were incorporated in renewal programs as early as the 1950s in cities such as Boston and Philadelphia.[129] And, as historian Daniel Bluestone has argued, city boosters promoted the modernist architecture of Mies van der Rohe as a continuation of the so-called "Chicago School" of Louis Sullivan, rather than a rupture with the past.[130]

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[127] Ibid., 14.
[128] David Hamer, *History in Urban Places: The Historic Districts of the United States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 13.
[129] Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 114.
[130] Daniel Bluestone, *Buildings, Landscapes, and Memory: Case Studies in Historic Preservation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 178.

Public perception of modernism and Brutalism in the 1970s was also influenced by political shifts and a rising movement toward post-modernist architecture led by critics of modernism such as Robert Venturi and Charles Jencks. The economic turmoil (e.g., oil shocks, high inflation, and high unemployment) of this watershed decade undermined many of the assumptions about post-war liberalism's ability to effectively manage the economy. As what has been termed the midcentury "liberal consensus" collapsed, a new conservative movement provided a convincing case against the effectiveness of government policy to solve societal problems, advocating for the neoliberal logic of the market over the commitment to social democracy that had defined the New Deal and Great Society. The monumental, assertive public architecture of the 1960s and 1970s would already appear by the early 1980s, to a public whose faith in government had been shaken, to be relics of a different age. Timothy Rohan writes, "Brutalism in America rose and fell along with the 'liberal consensus' that supported this largely civic and academic architecture."[131] The reputations of architects responsible for much of this work, especially Rudolph, suffered in the process. Indeed, the vague categorization of Brutalism in the twenty-first century tended to be disconnected from the concerns of this period.[132]

The rejection of modernism and its concrete variant was a product of such political and intellectual shifts. Jencks famously declared the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex in St. Louis, Missouri the "death of modernism," an indictment of what he saw as the idealistic, but naïve, social goals of modernist architects and planners.[133] That modernism broadly defined and politics were inherently connected in their objectives and outcomes was implied in Jencks' critique. While still far short of the wider acceptance gained in the coming

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[131] Timothy Rohan, "The Rise and Fall of Brutalism, Rudolph and the Liberal Consensus," in *Brutalism*, eds. Kyle May, Julia van den Hout, et al (Brooklyn, NY: Clog, 2013), 60.
[132] Pasnik, Grimley, and Kubo, *Heroic*, 18.
[133] Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, sixth edition (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 23.

decades, in the 1980s, as historian Michael Tomlan writes, architects and theorists began reinterpreting modernism as a part of tradition and one more option in the stylistic canon.[134]

The intersections of architecture and politics are exemplified by the debate over Boston City Hall. In his article "Boston City Hall and a History of Reception," David Monteyne explores the noticeable divisions in public opinion over the building. While a large portion of the city disliked Boston City Hall and it was routine for a newly elected mayor to promise its demolition or alteration, the building was more likely to receive critical approval. **(fig. 37)** Defenders of the building, and other similar buildings often criticized the public who dislike Brutalist, or modernist, buildings as lacking the necessary understanding to appreciate it. Rather than dismissing such opinions, Monteyne argues "those outside of professional discourse interpret architecture in fundamentally different ways, through different lenses."[135] Further, the professional/non-professional binary is not so clear, as plenty of citizens appreciated the Boston City Hall and some critics disliked it. While architects interpreted the building as an admirable expression in form, the public perception was partly shaped by what the building was communicating about government. Boston City Hall came across as an expression of authoritarian municipal power, especially demonstrated in a city council chambers that seemed to reinforce hierarchy. Concrete barriers separated the council from citizen, while the mayor sat in a throne on a dais within another concrete barrier.[136]

By the time discussions emerged over the fate of Prentice Women's Hospital in Chicago in the late 2000s, preservationists nationwide had begun to recognize the value of saving these works of concrete modernism. The clover-shaped building with an exposed concrete exterior and

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[134] Michael A. Tomlan, *Historic Preservation: Caring for Our Expanding Legacy* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer 2015), 230.
[135] David Monteyne, "Boston City Hall and a History of Reception," *Journal of Architectural Education* 65 (Nov 2011): 45.
[136] Ibid., 57.

four cantilevered shells, atop a glass-and-steel base, was an example of Chicago architect Bertrand Goldberg's innovative approach that made him a sought-after hospital architect in the 1960s-70s. Northwestern University planned to demolish the building to construct a new research facility for their Feinberg School of Medicine in the Streeterville neighborhood. Led by Landmarks Illinois and Preservation Chicago, the "Save Prentice" coalition garnered significant support from the public and architectural communities. The coalition emphasized the building as a feat of structural engineering and the relationship to its designer, Chicago's own, Goldberg. Showcasing the capabilities of a twenty-first century preservation movement, Save Prentice used Facebook extensively to provide coverage of the campaign and proceedings of Chicago Commission on City Landmarks meetings.

The Paul Rudolph-designed Orange County Government in Goshen, New York was subject to a decade-long preservation fight. **(fig. 38)** County executive Edward Diana made it his personal mission to have the building demolished. Diana told the *New York Times* in 2007, "If I took a poll in town, the building would be demolished tomorrow."[137] Although the building had drawn complaints over the years for leaks, two storms in 2011 had caused significant physical damage. Lawmakers argued the costs of maintaining the building was too expensive, while preservationists argued years of neglected maintenance was to blame for its current state. Architect Gene Kaufman proposed a plan to save and convert the building into artists' residences and exhibition space, to no avail. Rich Baum, a minority leader in the county in the 1990s, accused the county of wanting demolition because Rudolph's design for the building emphasized government transparency. "What this meant," he said, "was that, as the leaders of county government went about their business, there was always the din of people coming in and out and doing their business. Critics said this was impractical. I think it was a purposeful and an inspired

[137] Edward Diana, quoted in *New York Times*, March 23, 2007.

idea by Rudolph."[138] The council chamber was designed similarly to the House of Commons in British Parliament, so that council members faced one another.

The plan advocated by the county called for one of the three pavilions to be demolished and replaced with a new glass pavilion and much of the corrugated concrete removed. Preservationists nationwide rallied behind the building. The World Monuments Fund placed the Government Center on its global watch list and the Preservation League of New York State, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Paul Rudolph Foundation contributed to the effort. Architecture critic Michael Kimmelman became its champion in the *New York Times*, writing that the county, if successful, would go "down as reckless stewards of the nation's heritage."[139] Despite last minute legal attempts to stop the plan, the partial demolition began in mid-2015.

Proponents of concrete modernist architecture were forced to navigate the ways in which aesthetics, politics, and the larger reputation of modernism generally in the last quarter of the twentieth century had shaped the interpretation of such buildings. Although widespread appreciation was never achieved, Brutalism gained something of a cult following in the twenty-first century. A new, nostalgic appreciation of the pre-renovation UIC campus emerged, championed by architectural historian Robert Bruegmann and other faculty who saw the revisions as inappropriate. Nevertheless, despite this new appreciation, Prentice Hospital was demolished and the Orange County Government Center underwent partial demolition. In October 2013, St. Louis-based preservationists Michael Allen published an article in *Next City* arguing that the demolition of Prentice Hospital marked a "Penn Station moment" for modernism. However, more buildings were scheduled to be demolished despite hard fought campaigns.

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[138] Rich Baum, quoted in *New York Times*, March 3, 2015.
[139] *New York Times*, March 3, 2015.

Saving concrete modernist buildings in the future would require moving traditional definitions of architectural beauty.

Chapter 3:
Worth the Fight: Preservation Debates over the FBI Building

In July 2014, the FBI confirmed long-speculated plans to relocate from its downtown Washington headquarters, deemed programmatically obsolete by its occupant, to three potential sites in suburban Virginia or Maryland. Many city columnists were quick to celebrate the move, despite the fact that an estimated 4,800 city jobs would be lost to the suburbs.[140] It was seen as a necessary sacrifice for the opportunity to replace the downtown FBI headquarters with a mixed-used building that would contribute to the revitalization of Pennsylvania Avenue and rid the city of what the *Washingtonian* called an "eyesore."[141] Tersh Boasberg, a longtime chair of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board, told the *Washington Post*, "Certainly the general public detests it."[142] Additionally, a stalemate in the mid-2010s between Congress and President Barack Obama over federal government funding for new building projects placed pressure on the GSA to sell holdings to private developers. Never particularly appreciated in the first place, the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building faced enormous obstacles if it were to be saved from demolition.

As Brutalist buildings in other American cities were being razed or threatened, the stakes appeared particularly high for making a more convincing case to save this architecture. Indeed, in 2014, much of the public, as well as government officials and developers, retained their skepticism about preserving such buildings, either because the architecture did not conform to contemporary tastes or were not old enough to be considered historic. Yet, unlike Prentice Hospital or Boston City Hall, the FBI Building did not receive a similar level of commitment from the preservation community. DC Preservation League (DCPL) and other preservation advocates in the city estimated the building was either not worth the fight or not significant

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[140] *Washington City Paper*, July 1, 2013.
[141] *Washingtonian*, July 29, 2014.
[142] *Washington Post*, Oct 28, 2012.

enough to save, while the Commission of Fine Arts and National Capital Planning Commission reiterated the widely held opinion that the building should be replaced with something more architecturally and urbanistically compatible with the surrounding fabric. Economic and political pressure over the future of Pennsylvania Avenue and the ongoing precarious state of advocacy for Brutalist architecture threatened not just the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building, but risked erasing a representative piece of mid-twentieth-century Washington architectural and planning history. While even many of its defenders admitted the building had its flaws, appropriate reuse could mitigate these harsher qualities to reimagine the old FBI headquarters as an active contributor to downtown street life, as Nathaniel Owings and the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue originally intended.

In the forty years since opening, the FBI Building found few fans. A list compiled by travel website Trippy.com declared it the ugliest building worth visiting.[143] Architect Arthur Cotton Moore attacked the building for its aggressive presence on the street:

> It creates a void along Pennsylvania Avenue. Given its elephantine size and harshness, it creates a black hole. Its concrete wall, with no windows or life to it, is an urban sin. People should be strolling down America's main street. Nobody strolls in front of the FBI Building.[144]

Architectural writer Kriston Capps noted that DC residents and officials were more than willing to sacrifice the sizable FBI workforce if it meant the building would be demolished. He continued, "And really, that doesn't come close to painting how passionately people hate this building."[145] While plenty in the public and government criticized the building on aesthetic or urbanistic grounds, some rejection could have been attributed to its occupant. Any comparisons to a fortress, that arose partly from the inclusion of the moat concept, were only enhanced with

[143] Reuters, May 7, 2012.
[144] *Washingtonian*, Oct 1, 2005.
[145] Kriston Capps, "Requiem for a Nightmare," *CityLab*, July 30, 2014.

the additional security measures undertaken after the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. The open courtyard and second-story gallery were closed to the public and tours became a rare occasion. **(figs. 39 and 40)** Thus, the FBI headquarters became a public building the public could not access. What hope Nathaniel Owings and his commission had that the FBI Building would be an open, lively public space were further doomed. Additionally, the FBI leader for whom its headquarters was named was indeed disliked among government officials during his lifetime, but the public increasingly saw J. Edgar Hoover as a sinister historical character in the decades following his death.

Along with its infamous former director, the FBI itself became what historian Richard Gid Powers calls a "cultural villain."[146] As Americans' faith in their government collapsed in the early 1970s, the activities of the agency, no longer tightly controlled by the influential Hoover, became intensely scrutinized by the press and the public. Congressional investigations in the mid-1970s brought to light a series of instances of overreach and abuse of power, including the agency's harassment of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and its role in the cover-up of the Watergate break-in by members of the Nixon administration. The public accused the FBI of aiding the operation of a surveillance state through their extensive data-collecting operations. And, indeed, this perception of the agency would not wane in subsequent decades. If the FBI Building communicated bureaucracy through its architecture, what those who walked by the building thought about the activities of its occupant contributed to its reception. The additional security measures of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries furthered the sense of an unaccountable government agency hiding its operations from the public. For some residents, the building itself seemed to be watching them.

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[146] Richard Gid Powers, *Broken: The Trouble Past and Uncertain Future of the FBI* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 317.

However, there was never a shortage of hated buildings in Washington. The Rayburn House Office Building long held the distinction of being one of the most disliked. **(fig. 41)** *Washington Post* architectural critic Wolf Von Eckardt in 1974 ranked the Rayburn building as one of the foremost examples of bad architectural taste in the city—although quick to note the arbitrariness of taste.[147] Von Eckardt described it as an "ill-proportioned, overbearingly massive, nauseatingly ostentatious marble mausoleum, that displays all the worst manifestations of Roman Imperialism."[148] The old State, War and Navy Department Building (now the Eisenhower Executive Office Building) was similarly derided by the early twentieth-century, as ugly, garish, and inappropriate next to the White House. **(fig. 42)** Government officials considered demolishing the Second Empire-inspired building, declared a "hideous monstrosity" by the *Post*, in the late 1950s, but an act of Congress in 1960 allocated funding for its renovation.[149] An extensive cleaning of the façade improved its image as a grimy relic of the Victorian era. Von Eckardt recalled in the 1970s the ways in which tastes had shifted in his time in the city. The once-hated State, War and Navy Building had become seen, as soon as fifteen years after the demolition threat, as "one of the most inspired buildings in the capital."[150] Von Eckardt recognized even then the dangers of making decisions about historic buildings based on the whims of style or taste.

For the FBI, the concerns were less about aesthetic value than about function. When the building was completed, the FBI had 9,800 employees spread over seven sites, but by 2010s there were 17,300 and contractors at forty sites.[151] The agency hoped to consolidate all of their employees into a new single campus and deemed the current building programmatically

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[147] Von Eckardt also included the FBI Building in his "top five" examples of bad architectural taste.
[148] *Washington Post*, Jan 6, 1974.
[149] *Washington Post, Times Herald*, Sep 2, 1960.
[150] Ibid., Jan 6, 1974.
[151] Ibid., Nov 9, 2011.

obsolete. For instance, the large database of fingerprint files the building needed to house originally was mostly digitized by the twenty-first century. The FBI also determined the current building was a security risk, as it was too close to non-FBI tenants to perform sensitive operations and allowed little control over the common areas.[152] A Government Accountability Office study in 2011 concluded that the existing floor plates were inefficient and did not meet current federal construction standards. The GSA established space efficiency target for federal office buildings in 2010 of seventy-five percent for usable square footage, but the FBI Building had an efficiency ratio of fifty-three percent.[153] Further, the GAO determined the load bearing elements of the building prevented opportunities to reconfigure interior spaces and maximize usability and workspaces were too deep to access natural light.[154] **(fig. 43)** The study reported complaints from FBI employees about space constraints in the current floor plan that hindered collaboration, as certain types of analysts and specialists who needed to work in proximity were instead dispersed to other locations.[155]

Additionally, signs of deterioration and deferred maintenance were apparent on the exterior of the building. A detail of the east face shows concrete worn to the point of revealing its reinforcing bars, while a crumbling section of street-level wall appeared on the front page of the *Post*. **(fig. 44 and 45)** Pieces of concrete were removed after coming loose and netting was installed on the upper-level tray to mitigate any possible danger to pedestrians. **(fig. 46 and 47)** A 2009 condition survey conducted by the GSA found that the FBI Building required approximately $80.5 million for repairs and upgrades, with $8.9 million needed to repair the

[152] "Federal Bureau of Investigation: Actions Needed to Document Security Decisions and Address Issues with Condition of Headquarters Buildings," Government Accountability Office (2011), 12.
[153] Ibid., 17.
[154] Ibid., 18.
[155] Ibid., 20.

concrete exterior.[156] Proposals for a new site at Poplar Point, a large piece of land in the Southeast, and another near Union Station, would have retained the agency in the city, but were both were determined too densely populated for the FBI's security needs.

As the FBI announced plans to vacate the building, discussion in the city quickly turned to questions about its future. Yet, preservationists appeared less than eager to take an advocacy role. "There's not a lot of love for this building," DCPL Executive Director Rebecca Miller told the *Post*. "And it's such a primary piece of real estate that," she continued, "saving the building would be a very difficult endeavor."[157] Indeed, any attempt to preserve and repurpose the FBI Building would face the intersecting challenges of advocating for architecture disliked by the public and the political pressures brought by the changing character of Pennsylvania Avenue. Fears in the 1960s of a declining street seemed a distant memory by the early 2000s, as the downtown had become a thriving commercial district. Thus, debate over the FBI Building became part of the continuing conversation over Pennsylvania Avenue redevelopment, brought to the fore by the growth of Penn Quarter as a residential neighborhood and the conversation of the Old Post Office into a hotel.

Preservationists were partly hesitant to advocate for the FBI Building after a well-publicized loss in the fight for the Third Church of Christ, Scientist. The octagonal building, formerly on the northwest corner of 16th and I streets, NW, was razed in 2014 to build an office building on the site. **(fig. 48)** Completed in 1970, the concrete modernist church was designed by Araldo Cossutta, a partner in the firm of I.M. Pei & Partners. The cross-shaped plan allowed for four nearly equal sides, while the interior was "a generous chamber with a strong, high ceiling of

[156] Ibid., 21.
[157] *Washington Post*, Oct 28, 2012.

deep concrete coffers."[158] After the congregation initially applied for a demolition permit in 1990, the Committee of 100 of the Federal City and DCPL submitted a landmark nomination to the city. However, responding to requests from the congregation, the Committee of 100 asked that the Historic Preservation Review Board defer the matter. Despite promises that their delays would eventually lead to resolution, the church refused to negotiate throughout the process.

The fight was renewed in 2007 when the property was sold to a developer, to be resold to the church. The Boston-based Mother Church, not the congregation, owned the building and determined delivering the site to a developer without the building would be more financially advantageous. The Historic Preservation Review Board revisited and unanimously approved the dormant landmark application, but the District government intervened and revoked landmark status, citing a determination of economic hardship.[159] The church had filed a lawsuit after being denied a demolition permit on the grounds that refusal imposed a burden that violated the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment, as well as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000. John Sandor, involved in the fight as a member of the Board of Trustees at DCPL, argues that the judges in the two court cases involving the building were clearly prejudicial against the building.[160] Preservationists did not press by appealing the ruling of economic hardship on the condition the church withdraw the suit. DCPL settled legal issues with the developer and a financial agreement was reached, providing the preservation group a grant fund to dedicate toward advocating for religious and modern properties. Sandor argued that the best attributes of the building were in the

[158] Ibid., Jan 11, 1992.
[159] Richard Longstreth, *Looking Beyond the Icons: Midcentury Architecture, Landscape, and Urbanism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 7.
[160] John Sandor, interview with the author, Nov 13, 2015.

interior, but before DCPL organized tours the church had "trashed it very thoroughly."[161] Third Church presented an advocacy problem because the building, he notes, "had no public…all people saw was the dead plaza" outside.[162] Sandor added that DCPL lost some supporters for not fighting harder for the Third Church, and their staff and board accused of selling out to developers, while others argued the organization should not have waged a campaign for the building in the first place. The split among the members of the DCPL Board of Trustees over the building provides important context for the FBI Building case.

Dismissing the Third Church and the FBI Building on aesthetic grounds as "ugly" risks not only shortsightedness, as tastes certainly change over time, but also denying an important period of the city's architectural heritage. At the "Architecture of the Great Society" conference held at Yale University in 2000, J. Carter Brown, then Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, distinguished between *value* and *quality* in assessing the importance of buildings. Value, he stated, is based on economic and use concerns, while quality, which he believed to be more important, is beyond these concerns and endures in the buildings.[163] The proliferation of concrete modernist buildings, including churches, cabinet department buildings, such as Marcel Breuer's HUD headquarters, and other government buildings, such as the former Office of Thrift Supervision (now home to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau), altered the Washington landscape and indicates that the FBI building was hardly an anomaly. Wolf Von Eckardt argued in 1975 that the FBI headquarters was "alien to the spirit of the capital."[164] But such a hyperbolic statement ignored reality on the ground. In their *Heroic* project, Boston-based historians Mark Pasnik, Chris Grimley, and Michael Kubo have provided a model for a way in which a city can

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[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] J. Carter Brown, quoted in "Architecture of the Great Society," Summary of Comments and Issues from a Forum Convened at Yale University, December 5, 2000. General Services Administration (2000), 11.
[164] *Washington* Post, July 12, 1975.

begin to think about their concrete modernist, or Brutalist, buildings, not as individual mistakes in need of correction, but as a collective whole that implicitly worked in tandem to revitalize the city. Indeed, *Heroic* is arguably as much a celebration of Brutalist architecture as a celebration of the city of Boston.

Still, while a convincing case can be made for the similarities in scale between the FBI Building and older monumental architecture in the city, such as the Capitol or Union Station, concrete modernist buildings of the 1960s and 1970s marked a significant departure. Kriston Capps argued the FBI Building should be saved for the ways in which it did *not* conform to the rest of the city. "Whenever a Brutalist structure is scheduled for demolition," he writes, "the city that hosts it grows that much more regular and orderly…[a]nd that much less original."[165] Indeed, the FBI Building was a forceful form of structural expressionism, with formal clarity that Reyner Banham might have appreciated, that communicated an unapologetic use of exposed concrete. As Commission of Fine Arts Secretary Thomas Luebke, not particularly an advocate of the building, notes, "it's an extremely clear building and it has certain value for that."[166]

For architectural firm Quinn-Evans, hired by GSA in the early 2010s to determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, the FBI Building was neither a notable expression of Brutalist architecture nor an important piece of the redevelopment plans for Pennsylvania Avenue undertaken by Nathaniel Owings and the commission he chaired. In considering the building under Criterion A of the Secretary of the Interior Standards, Quinn-Evans concluded that the design of the building was far too compromised, by way of the numerous concessions to the FBI and Commission of Fine Arts, to be considered an enduring part of the Owings-led commission. The report states:

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[165] Capps, *CityLab*, July 30, 2014.
[166] Thomas Luebke, interview with the author, Oct 2015.

> The FBI Building is an artifact associated with the PAAC plans rather than an embodiment of the plan. The FBI Building does not exemplify the principles of the PAAC plans and can be considered an anomaly. Although the zoning requirements and setbacks and heights followed the plans, the final design for the FBI Building only partially met the principles of the PAAC plans. [167]

The exclusion of the ground-level arcade or space for commercial purposes, outlined by Owings and the commission, are described as primary disqualifying elements. That the FBI Building is the building most associated with these plans, according to Quinn-Evans, is not enough to signify importance. The report contends, "It is difficult to argue that one building can represent an urban redevelopment plan, which is intended to order a larger area."[168]

While the building may not have been an embodiment of the plans of the 1960s and 1970s, there is significance in that it was one of the only built projects to emerge. The other building constructed out of these plans, the Presidential Building at 1111 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, was significantly altered, and reclad with a more post-modern façade in the early 2000s. **(fig. 49)** Nor is the connection to PADC the only historical association that could be argued. As discussed in chapter 1, the FBI Building was part of a larger trend, in the city and the nation, of building materially and compositionally similar "new federal architecture" in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Further, Quinn-Evans argues, under Criterion C, the FBI Building is not an exceptional example of Brutalist architecture. It lacks, they write, the successful courtyards and circulation components of the Hirshhorn Museum, designed by Gordon Bunshaft, or the HUD headquarters. The Boston City Hall is additionally commended for providing access points to other parts of the city. The report states, "There is no evidence that the building's design was ground-breaking or influential; indeed, by the time it was completed, Brutalist architecture had generally fallen into

[167] Quinn-Evans, Quinn-Evans Architects, "J. Edgar Hoover Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Headquarters," DC State Historic Preservation Office Determination Of Eligibility (2014), 83.
[168] Ibid.

disfavor, which may have affected the general opinion of it."[169] Their determination, however, fails to address design features other than circulation, merely mentioning other buildings they believe to be better examples of Brutalist architecture. Beyond circulation, which is not typically among the foremost considerations used to describe a building as Brutalist, Quinn-Evans do not disclose their criteria for what does or does not make for an "exceptional" Brutalist building. There is no engagement with other attributes, such as the clear structural expression, a hallmark of Brutalism, exhibited by the FBI Building. Additionally, the report, under Criterion C, relies too heavily on criticism of the building in the popular press at the time as a rationale for its insignificance. While architectural criticism can be useful in understanding the reception of a building, among a particular group of individuals, it does not fully account for its success or failure as architecture.

However, little support was shown from the usual proponents of modernist architecture in the city. DCPL and other preservation organizations in the city had made no plans to advocate for the building, either because they felt the building was not architecturally significant or that avoiding this fight would provide more capital to wage future campaigns. Nevertheless, Sandor notes that if any party were to for file a landmark designation, thereby determining the building had significance, "then they [DCPL] will feel the need to champion it."[170] Given their preference to remain on the sidelines, such an instance would indeed force DCPL into a difficult position among its members and the public.[171] "It's hard to have any sort of credibility," Sandor states, "if we say 'yes it's significant, but because we don't like it, we won't take it on.'"[172] The Committee of 100 released a letter in 2014 encouraging particular consideration of the future of the FBI site,

[169] Ibid., 84.
[170] John Sandor, interview with the author, Nov 13, 2015.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

but stopped short of advocating for its preservation. "The present building," the letter states, "with its front façade, and large moat-like setbacks on 9th, 10th and E streets, has a negative effect on adjacent frontages."[173]

The Commission of Fine Arts faced a dilemma that further complicated the debate over the building. CFA had long declared their foremost mission was to protect, and restore when possible, the original L'Enfant plan for the city. The clearing and construction of the FBI site in the 1960s closed off a section of D Street between 9th and 10th streets. **(figs. 50 and 51)** As D Street connected the District of Columbia Building to old city hall at Judiciary Square, Luebke argues, the change violated a "fundamental principle of Washington design," that is, symbolically linking houses of government.[174] Thus, CFA was force to mitigate preserving a historic modernist building, which had its own connection to the commission's history, and restoring the urbanistic features of the L'Enfant plan that the building interrupted.

CFA sided with the latter option in 2009, publicly entering the debate over the future of Pennsylvania Avenue, through collaboration with NCPC, with their *Monumental Core Framework Plan*. The plan was partly a reaction to debate in the early 2000s about the future of the Mall, amid a concern it could become overcrowded with commemorative spaces. Legislation passed by Congress in 2003 forbid further construction of new memorials. The *Framework Plan*, thus, sought new opportunities to extend the commemorative space of the Mall into downtown. Acting as a representative for CFA as well as a design principal for the project, Luebke believed the FBI site would be an ideal location for either a museum or a mixed-use development. Indeed, the plan, released before the FBI had announced plans to relocate, placed the FBI site and Old Post Office as the two foremost anchors to further establish Pennsylvania Avenue as a

[173] Letter from the Committee of 100 of the Federal City to Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission, Sept 25, 2014.
[174] Thomas Luebke, interview with the author, Oct 2015.

destination for residents and tourists. The plan states, "development would strengthen the avenue as an important thoroughfare, increase public activity on adjacent streets, and provide opportunities for commemoration."[175] Further, the *Framework Plan* presented a familiar argument about the FBI Building: insufficient street-level activity, inappropriate scale, and features such as the moat had rendered the building inhospitable to pedestrians and disengaged with the surrounding streets. A sketch of the new plan shows a series of new buildings, including one on the corner site of the reinstalled section of D Street. **(fig. 52)**

It would be difficult to argue, however, that the FBI Building was a hindrance to Pennsylvania Avenue development in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As Capps writes, "Whatever the totalitarian qualities of the structure, it hasn't cratered downtown."[176] Indeed, the street became a successful commercial and residential district. Yet, according to longtime local preservationist Charles Robertson, many in the city government viewed the building as merely a monumental burden and would likely advocate for replacing the FBI Building with a mixed-use residential and commercial building or buildings that would contribute tax revenue.[177] Deputy mayor for economic development Jeff Miller spared little time after the FBI's relocation announcement to express the city's eagerness to redevelop the site.[178] But as Luebke rhetorically asked, "Who needs another block with Starbucks and expensive apartments with a view?"[179]

Contemporary discourse on the FBI Building rarely considered the ways in which it could be renovated or reused. The building was treated as a fixed entity. The earlier mentioned

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[175] Commission of Fine Arts and National Capital Planning Commission, *Monumental Core Framework Plan* (2009), 70.
[176] Capps, *CityLab*, July 30, 2014.
[177] Charles Robertson, conversation with the author, Oct. 2015.
[178] *Washingtonian*, July 29, 2014.
[179] Thomas Luebke, interview with the author, Oct 2015.

comment by architect Arthur Cotton Moore that "nobody strolls" in front of the FBI Building reveals part of this shortsightedness.[180] It is a criticism of the building with the FBI as occupant, but should be questioned as a serious indictment of the architecture. That pedestrians rarely stroll in front of the building, as Moore suggests, was largely due to the fact that they had no reason to do so, as it held offices for the FBI.

In late 2012, the Genzler architectural firm contributed a series of renderings of a dramatically overhauled FBI Building for the "Office Building of the Future" design competition hosted by the commercial real estate organization NAIOP. The designs show an open first floor, retail space, a new exterior circulation to the roof, and a vertical garden, among other features.[181] **(figs. 53 and 54)** The redesign is provocative, but demonstrates the potential for adaptive reuse. At the very least, the courtyard and second-story gallery could be reopened to the public, the first floor reconfigured for commercial use, and the admittedly forbidding moat covered. Likewise, if any party were willing to provide funding, internal spaces could be renovated to accommodate a twenty-first century office building. However, the debate over the FBI Building lacked the imagination or will for such possibilities.

The political stakes of saving a building that evokes through its architectural form the ideology of the mid-twentieth century liberal project seem particularly high in a political moment in which liberalism has been in retreat and the welfare state threatened. The building and other large public projects such as the Washington Metro are emblematic of an era far removed from political discourse since the 1980s, as large public investments often require public-private partnerships. Political and labor historian Jefferson Cowie argues that Richard Nixon was the last

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[180] *Washingtonian*, Oct 1, 2005.
[181] Lamar Anderson, "Gensler Wants To Turn Doomed FBI Fortress Into A Futuristic Office Playground," *Architizer*, Nov 6, 2012, http://architizer.com/blog/gensler-wants-to-turn-doomed-fbi-fortress-into-a-futuristic-office-playground/

American president to govern within the New Deal paradigm, albeit out of political necessity rather than conviction.[182] While Nixon would certainly not have been labeled a liberal in the 1970s, on domestic policy arguably every president to follow, Republican or Democrat, governed to his right. Americans of the left have long held hopes for a revival of the politics created during the New Deal and extended in the Great Society. Architecture is part of this legacy and eliminating such a high-profile example would contribute to the further fading of this politics in the collective memory. Further, locating the FBI Building within the context of mid-twentieth century politics and Pennsylvania Avenue redevelopment planning efforts provides a clearer and more compelling case than the tenuous association with Brutalism.

Such a positively focused argument could refocus the debate, away from a deficit model, in which emphasis is placed on refuting the building's negative qualities or associations. However, saving the building would nevertheless require addressing aesthetic biases, connections drawn between the building and the operations of its tenant, and the overwhelming political pressure in the city brought by the changing character of Pennsylvania Avenue. The usual advocates, who aligned to fight for the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, were ambivalent or opposed to considering the FBI Building, but such a coalition would be required to convince the public and the city and federal governments of its worthiness. The determination of eligibility completed by Quinn-Evans ultimately fails to fully account for the ways in which the building could be seen as architecturally and historically significant. Rejection on aesthetic grounds risks repeating mistakes of the mid-twentieth century when Victorian and Art Deco buildings were demolished for seeming out of step with popular taste, only to be rediscovered and appreciated decades later. The FBI Building was representative of a new approach to public building in the

[182] Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 138.

1960s and 1970s and an important chapter in Washington architectural and planning history that merits recognition.

Conclusion

The 1960s and 1970s marked a transformative period for the built environment of Washington, D.C. Initial hesitation about modernism in the capital city had waned and presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and the Commission of Fine Arts they helped shape, championed new design for public projects. Some of the city's most enduring modernist buildings, including the HUD headquarters, Hirshhorn Museum, and the Mies van der Rohe-designed Martin Luther King Jr. Library, to name a few, helped demonstrate Washington was far from a city trapped in the past.

However, modernist architecture, for much of the 1980s and 1990s, was often rejected as outdated, not aesthetically pleasing, or associated with the negative aspects of urban renewal. In addition, the forms such buildings took made preservation a difficult prospect for property owners. Buildings, such as hospitals, theaters, and churches, constructed for specific purposes, required imaginative, but not always convincing, reuse proposals. Unique floor plans and sculptural interior and exterior features made options for adaptation to contemporary needs more limited. Cracks, leaks, and weather-related staining also made these buildings expensive to maintain and difficult to convince the public and property owners to look past. Preservationists, however, argued reuse was more realistic than property owners were willing to admit. Preservationists nationwide overcame their initial skepticism about modernism by the early 2000s to increasingly dedicate resources to saving modern buildings. A renewed interest in modernist design occurred simultaneously, but such an appreciation often did not extend to works of exposed concrete. Much of the public had never embraced these buildings. In the early 2010s, hard-fought efforts to save Prentice Hospital and the Orange County Government Center ended in defeat.

The challenges to saving buildings of the recent past also began expanding to post-modern architecture. A renewed appreciation for modernism has regrettably and perhaps inevitably called into question the buildings that succeeded them. In January 2014, the Portland Building, designed by Michael Graves and completed in 1982, became one of the first post-modern buildings to become the subject of national preservation discussions. The title of an *Atlantic Cities* article asked "Should Portland save a building it really, really hates?" The article highlighted the larger dilemma facing cities and the public about buildings that are no longer desirable to the public that use or live among them. As Mark Byrnes wrote, while "the Portland Building's incredibly playful, attention-demanding facade represents what 1980s America wanted out of its architecture…like every other style that came before it, it too lost favor with time."[183] Awareness of the threat to post-modern buildings again surfaced in late 2015, when Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner announced plans to sell the James R. Thompson Center, a state office building in downtown Chicago designed by Helmut Jahn. The building, with a soaring atrium and a curved façade of glass panels that led *Chicago Tribune* architectural critic Blair Kamin to refer to it as a "glitter palace," was deemed inefficient amid complaints from workers over decades that the roof leaked and had poor climate control.[184]

Advocating for the architecture of the recent past seemed a formidable endeavor and preservationists had mixed success. Yet, more and better scholarship can reveal a broader range of historical, cultural, and social associations for architecture much of the public does not find valuable. More effort should be devoted to thinking about the concrete modernist buildings in Washington as a collection representative of a particular period and attitude about design, along similar lines as the *Heroic* project in Boston. GSA's use of the "Architecture of the Great

[183] Mark Byrnes, "Should Portland Save a Building it Really, Really Hates?," *The Atlantic Cities*, Jan 8, 2014.
[184] *Chicago Tribune*, Oct 14, 2015.

Society" label is a notable starting point for reframing these buildings positively, rather than as anomalies or mistakes, or as manifestations of a search for bold structural expressionism, rather than as fortresses that architects intended to be harsh, unwelcoming environments. Moreover, preservationists and scholars should work to convince Washington residents to take pride in this architecture.

Few seemed convinced, however, that the FBI Building was worth saving, either because it was an aesthetic or urbanistic aberration or because it was too expensive to renovate according to modern efficiency standards. Organizations such as DCPL retreated before a debate could take form, fearing the ramifications of challenging a city government intent on seeing a new building constructed that would contribute more tax revenue or a public that met the possibility of demolition with glee. In the face of public ambivalence and reluctance from preservationists, the building's fate appeared sealed. However, as a new FBI site has yet to be chosen, decades could pass before the building is in serious danger, allowing sufficient time for a preservation campaign to emerge.

The J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building remains an illustrative example of the search for a bold new federal architecture in the 1960s that deserves a more thorough consideration than it has received thus far. A common architectural language emerged in the mid-twentieth century that reshaped Americans' expectations of what signified a government building. Further, if the FBI Building ultimately failed to meet the aspirations of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue as one of the only built projects, it is not too late to modify the building to fulfill this vision. Saving the building will necessitate addressing the daunting set of challenges national and international preservationists have struggled to face and forcing a conversation about what architecture is worthy of the nation's capital city.

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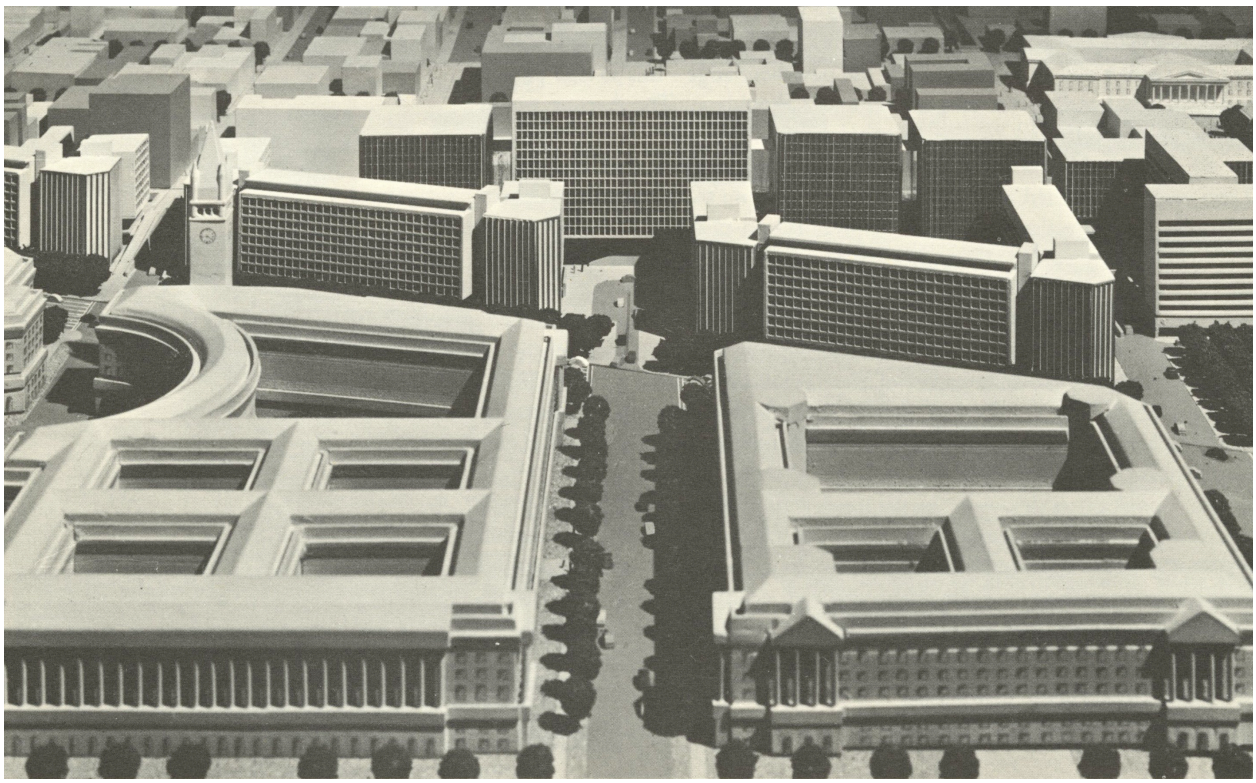

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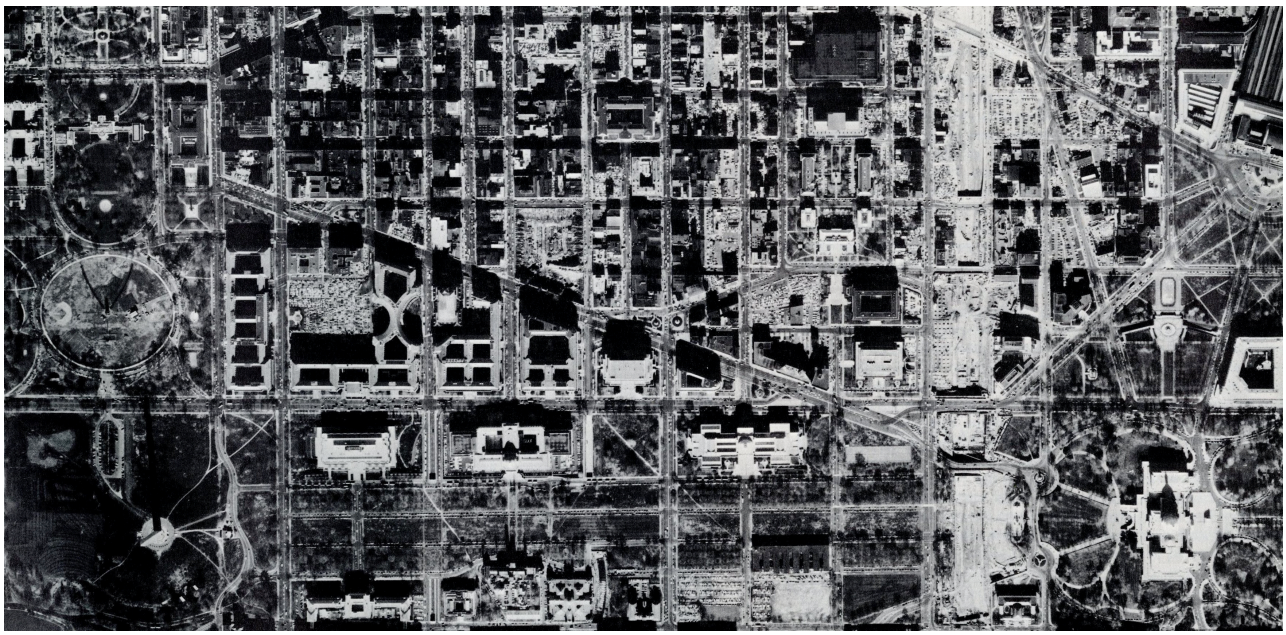

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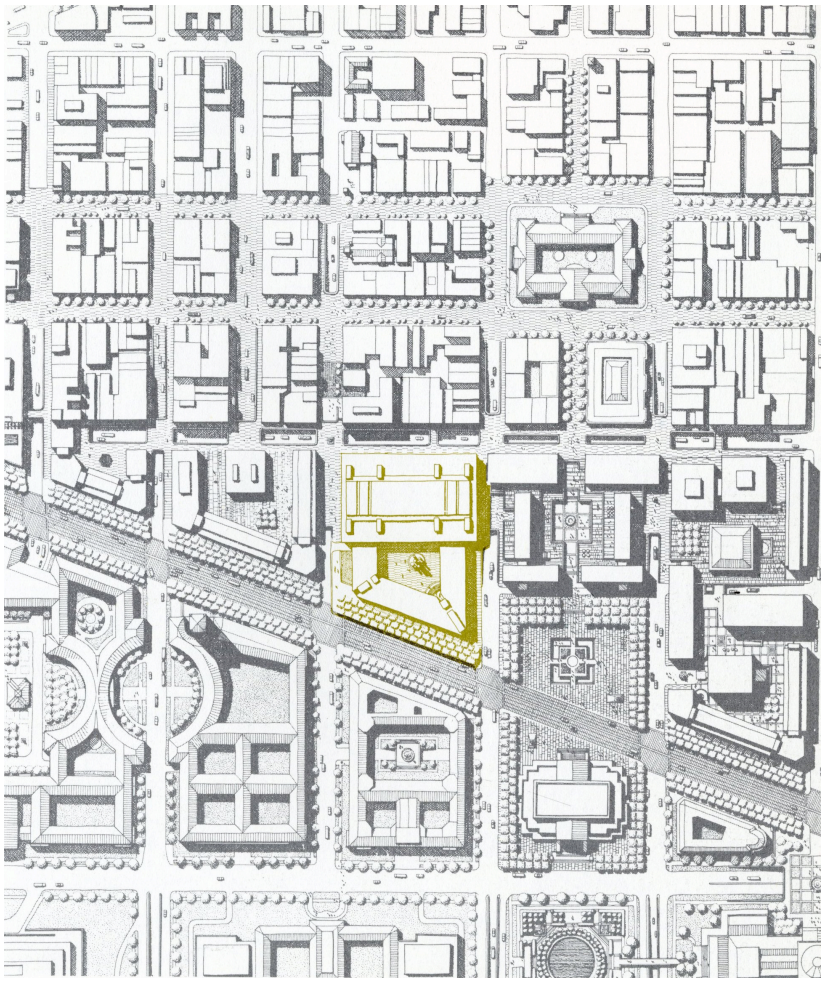

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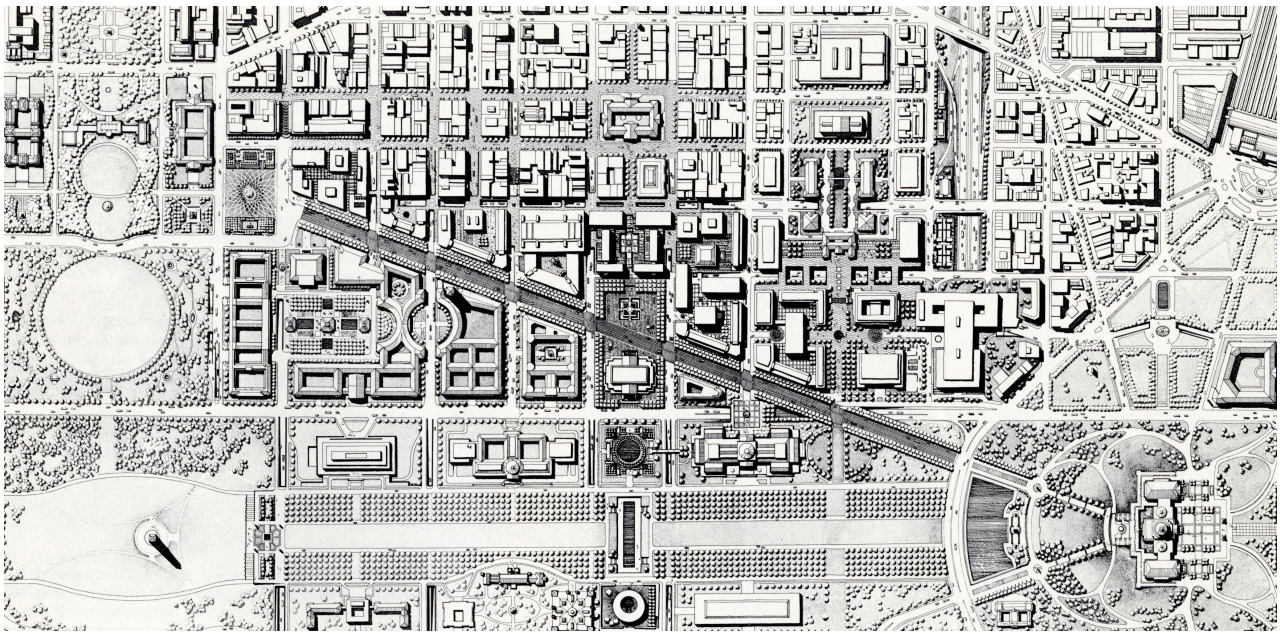

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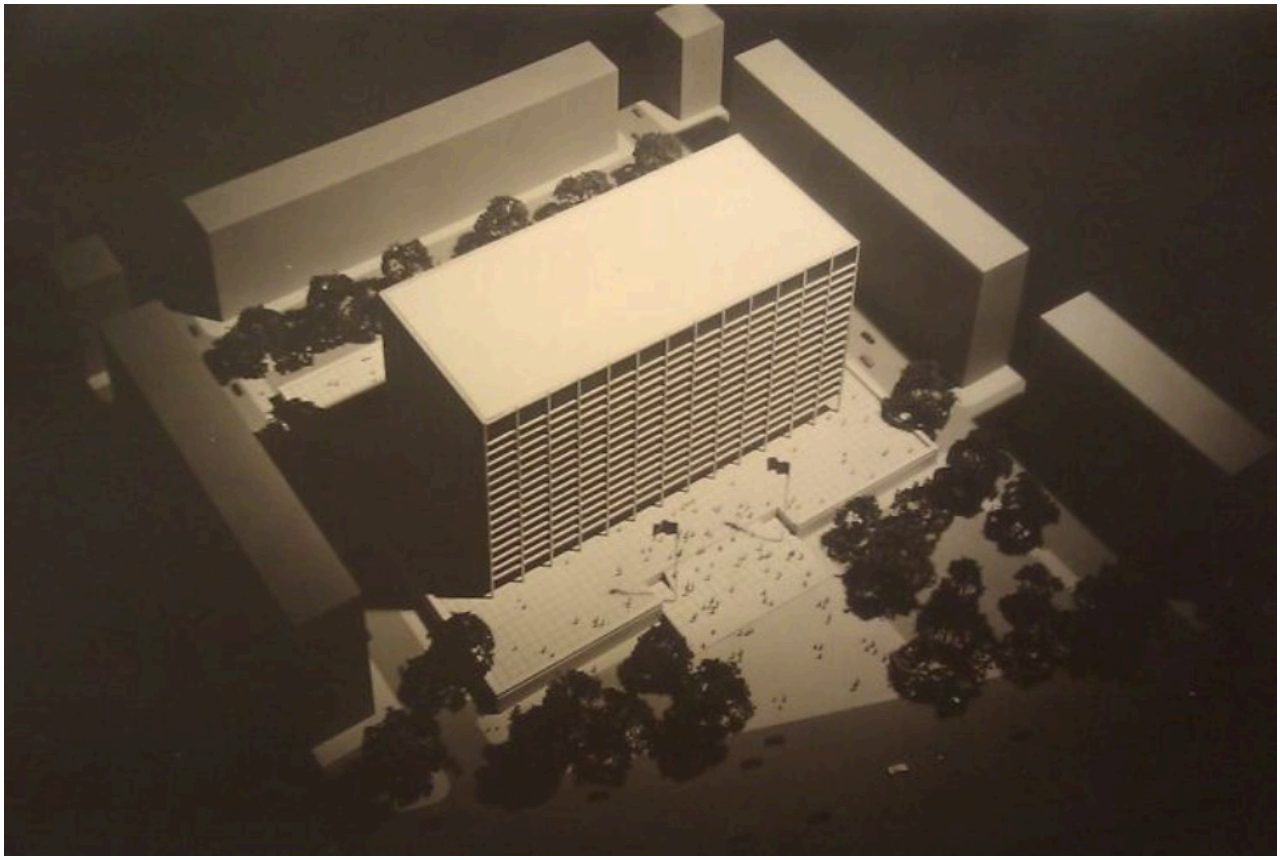

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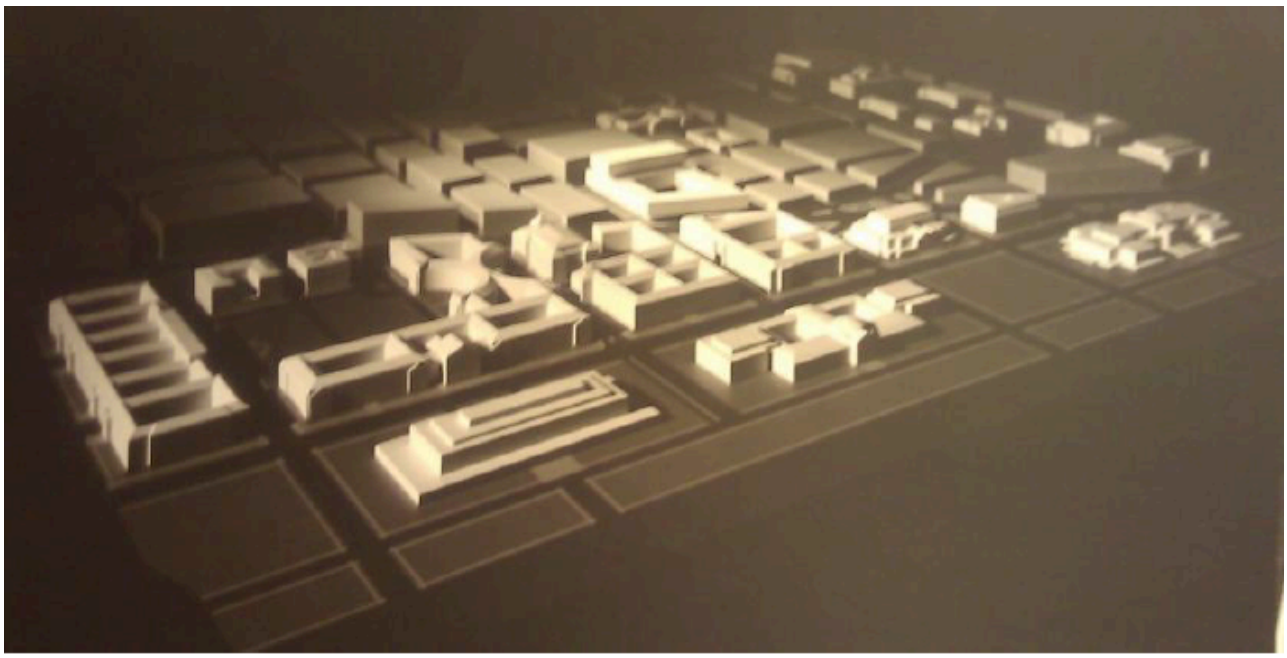

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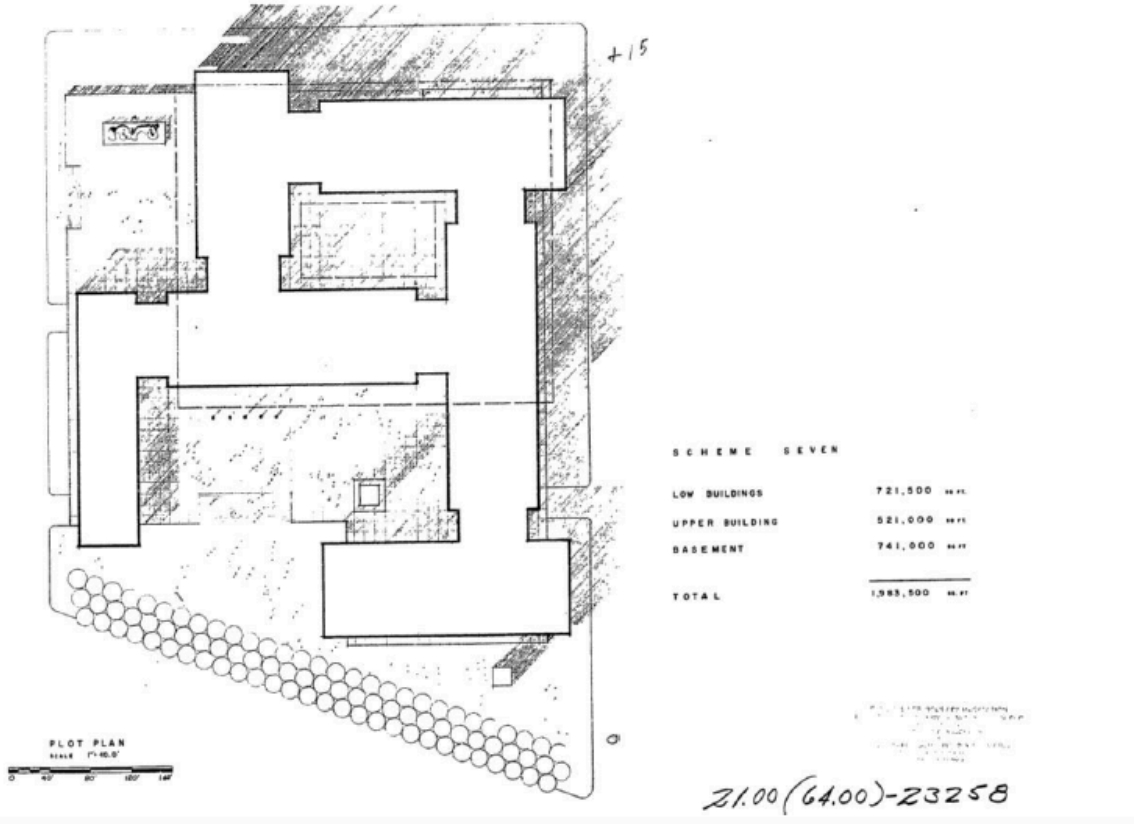

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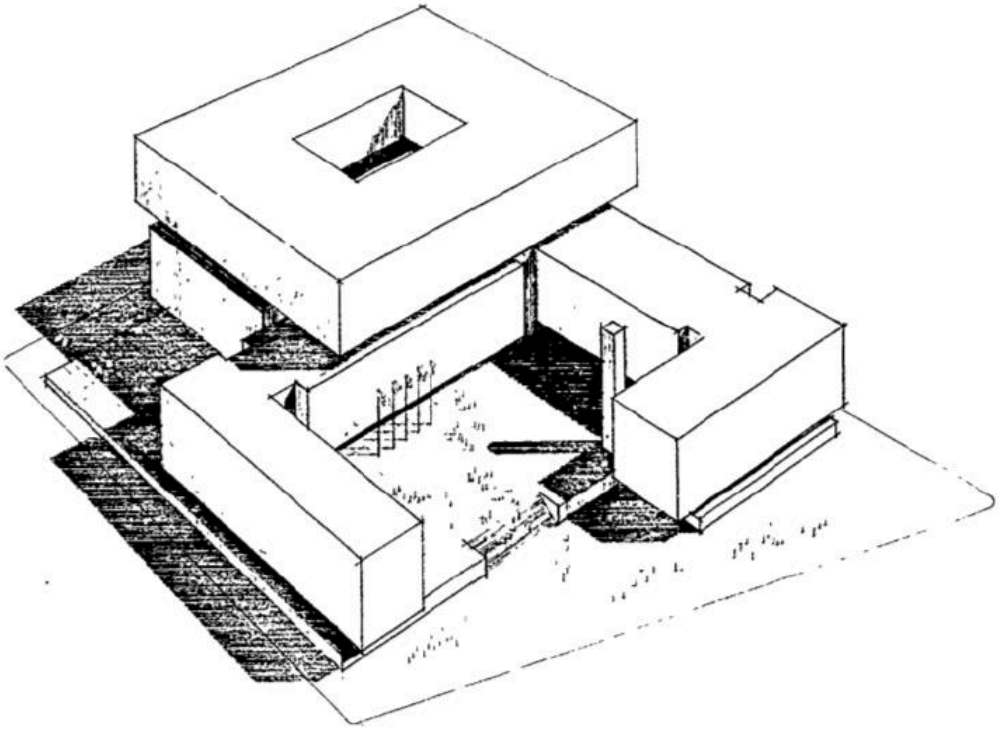

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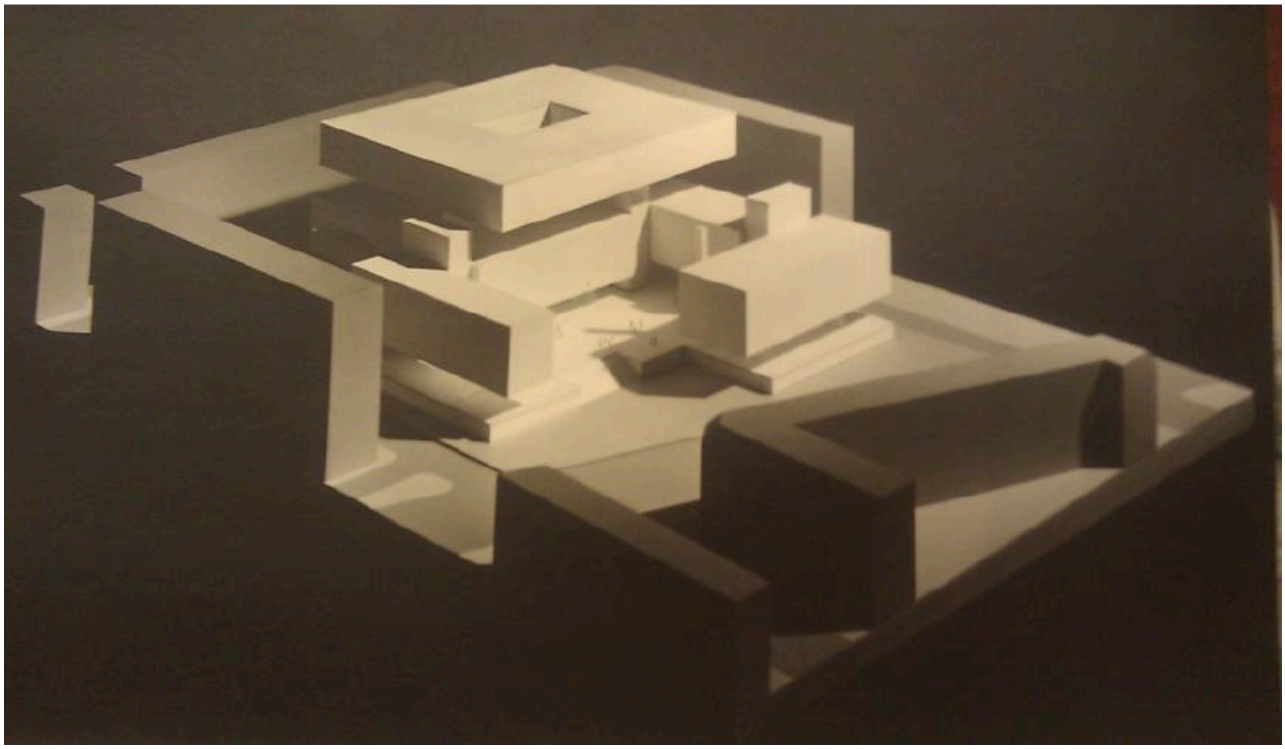

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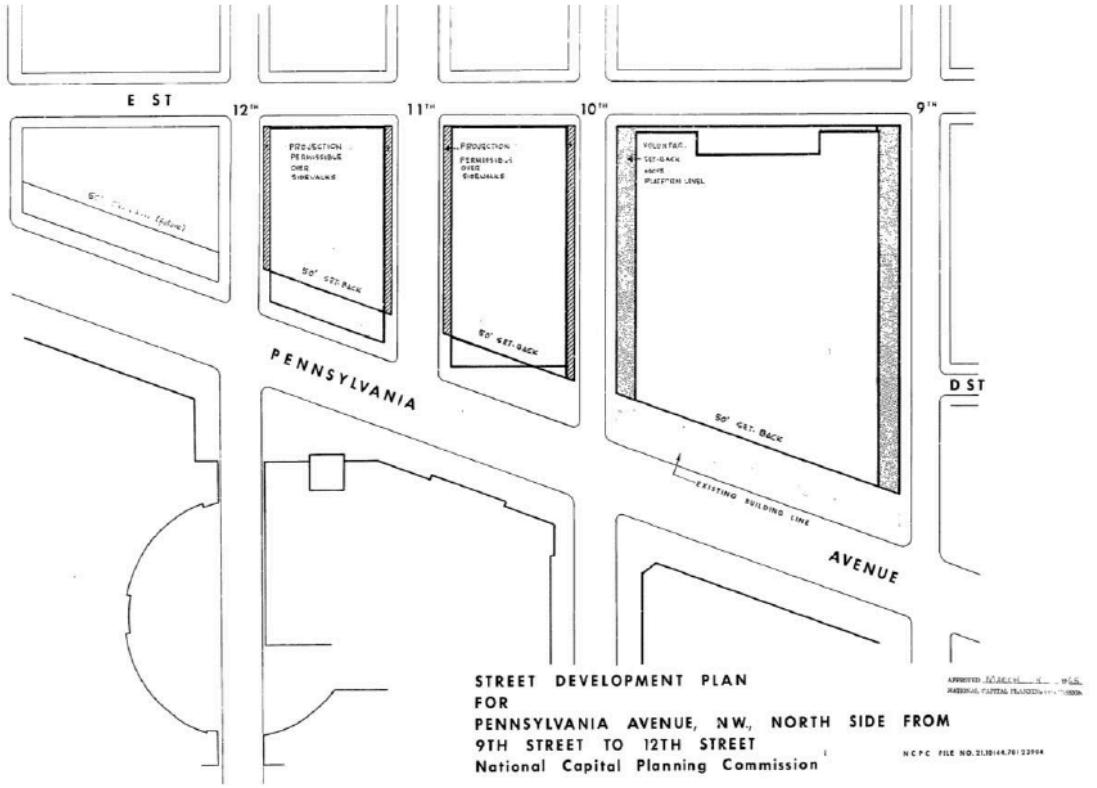

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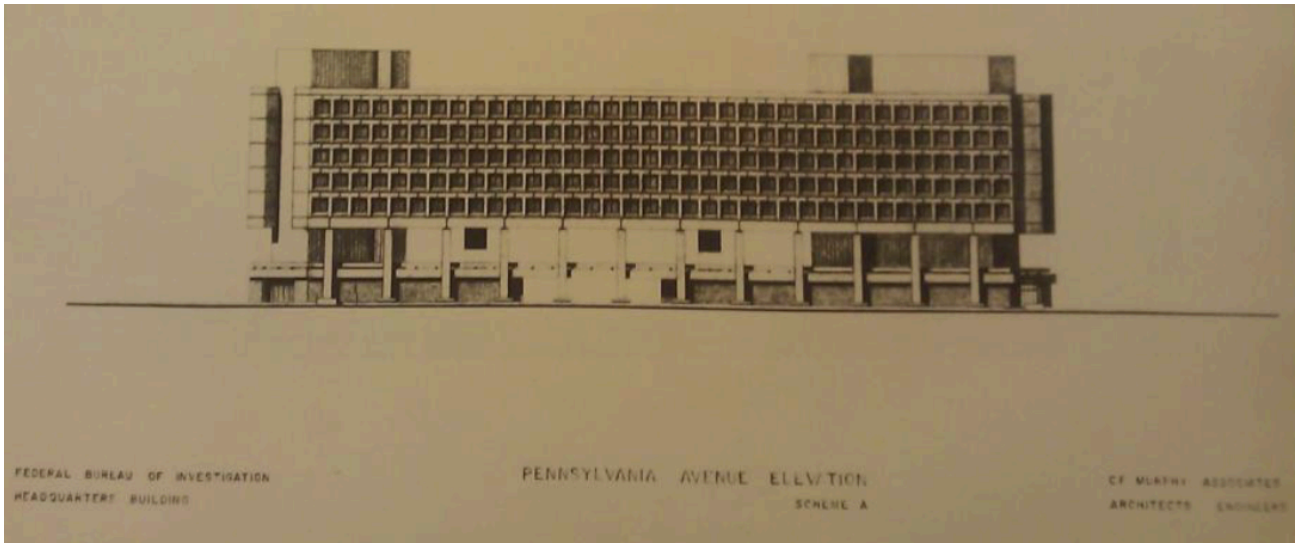

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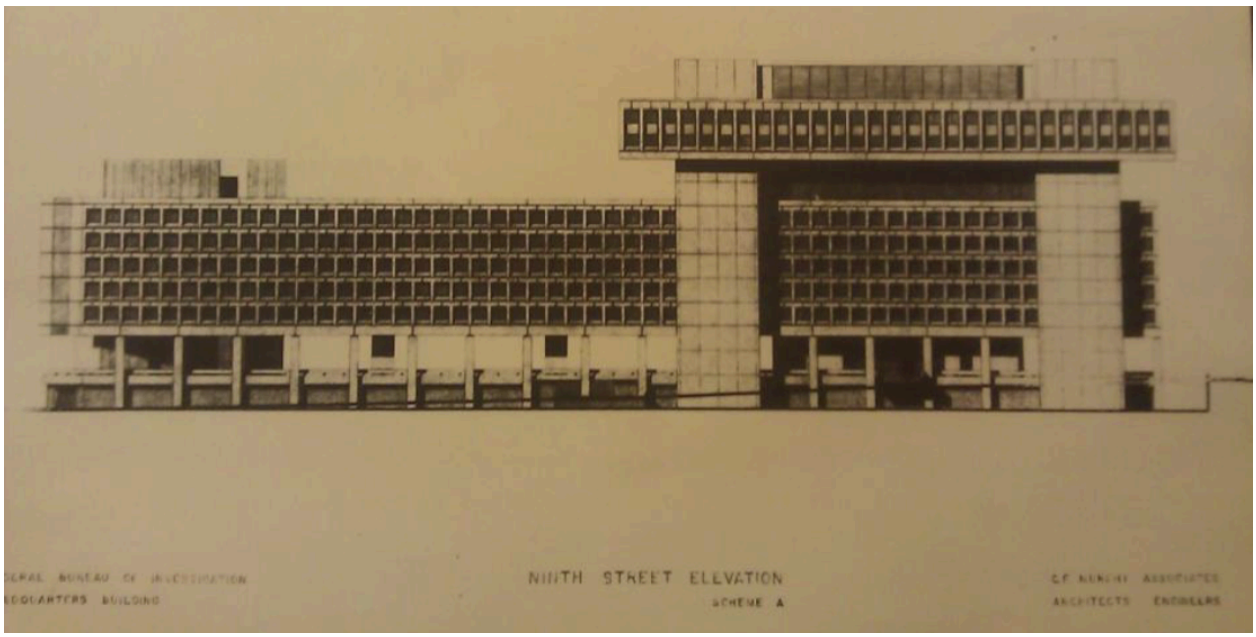

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Figure 24. Perspective view of approved design, 1967.

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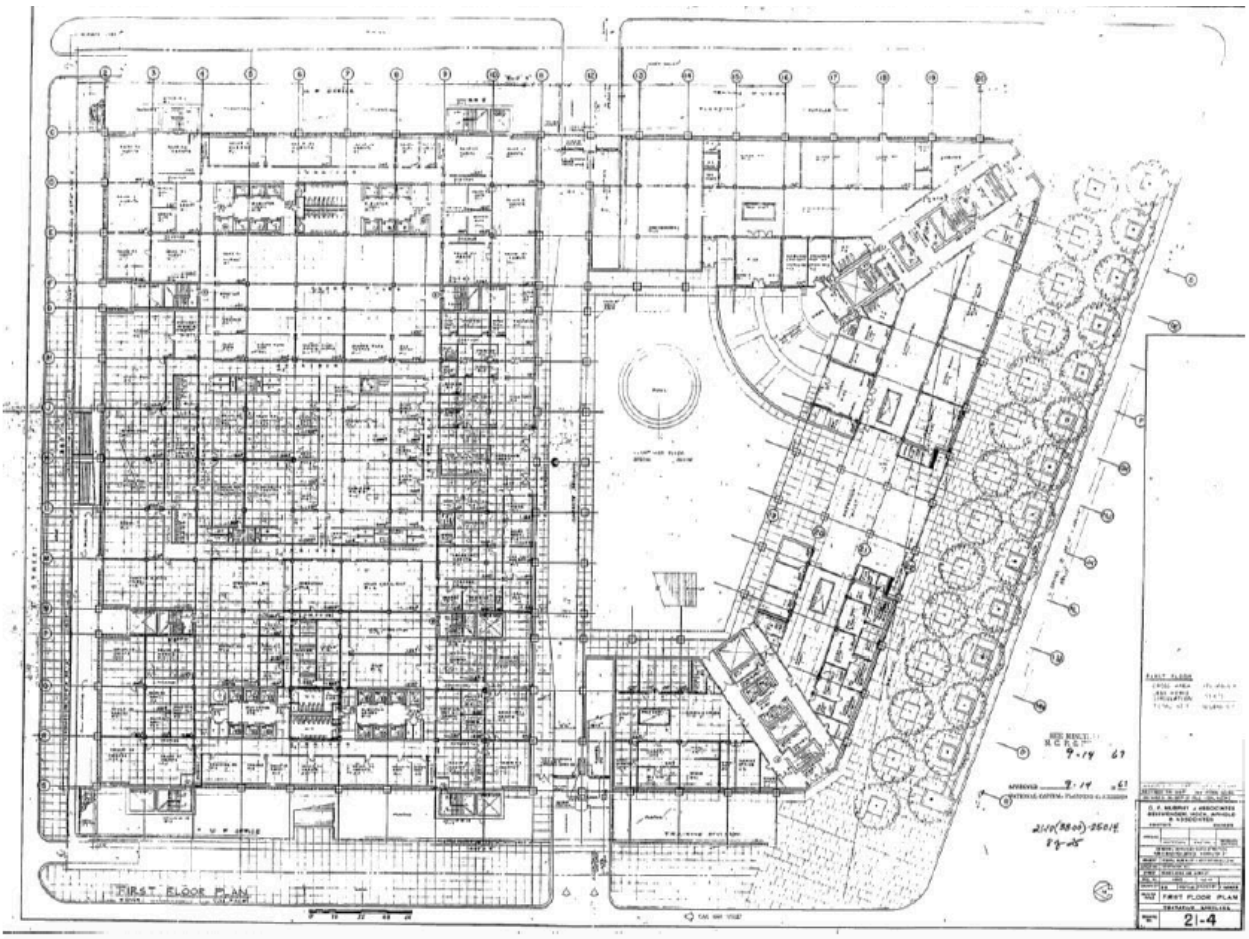

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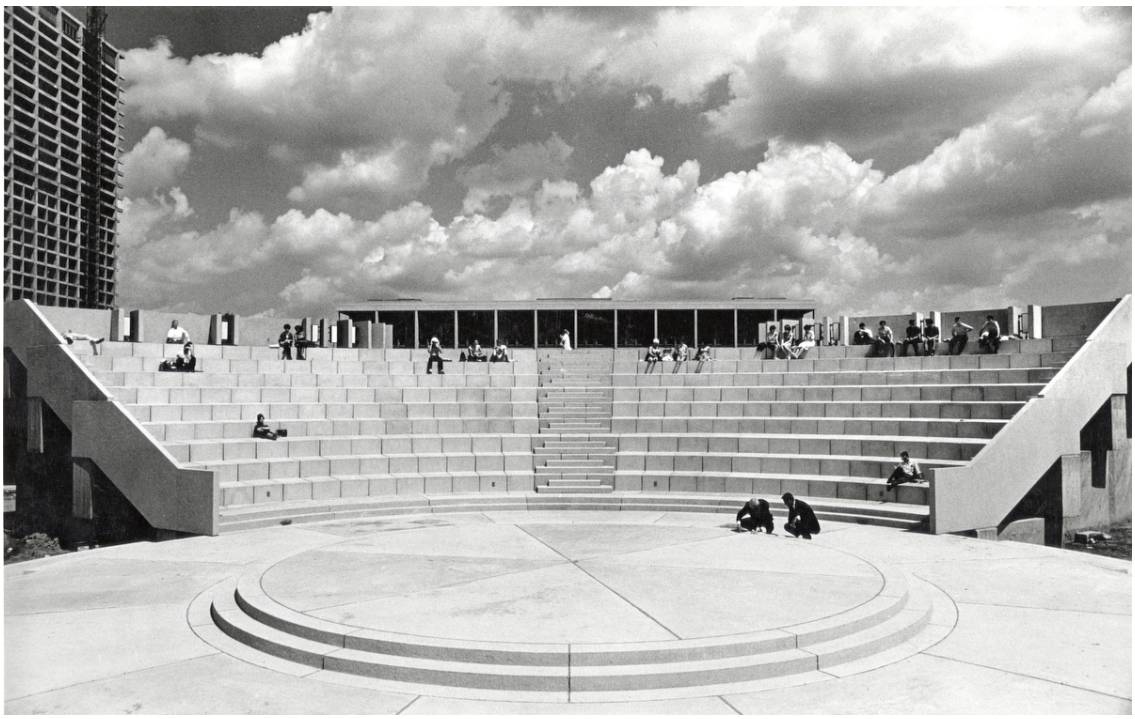

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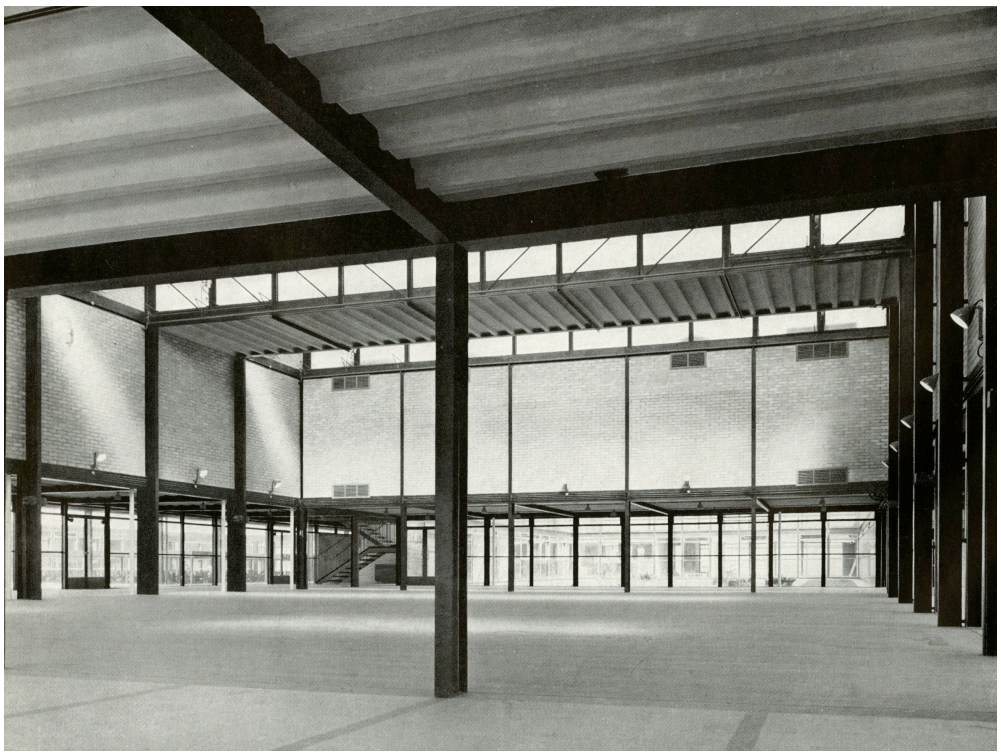

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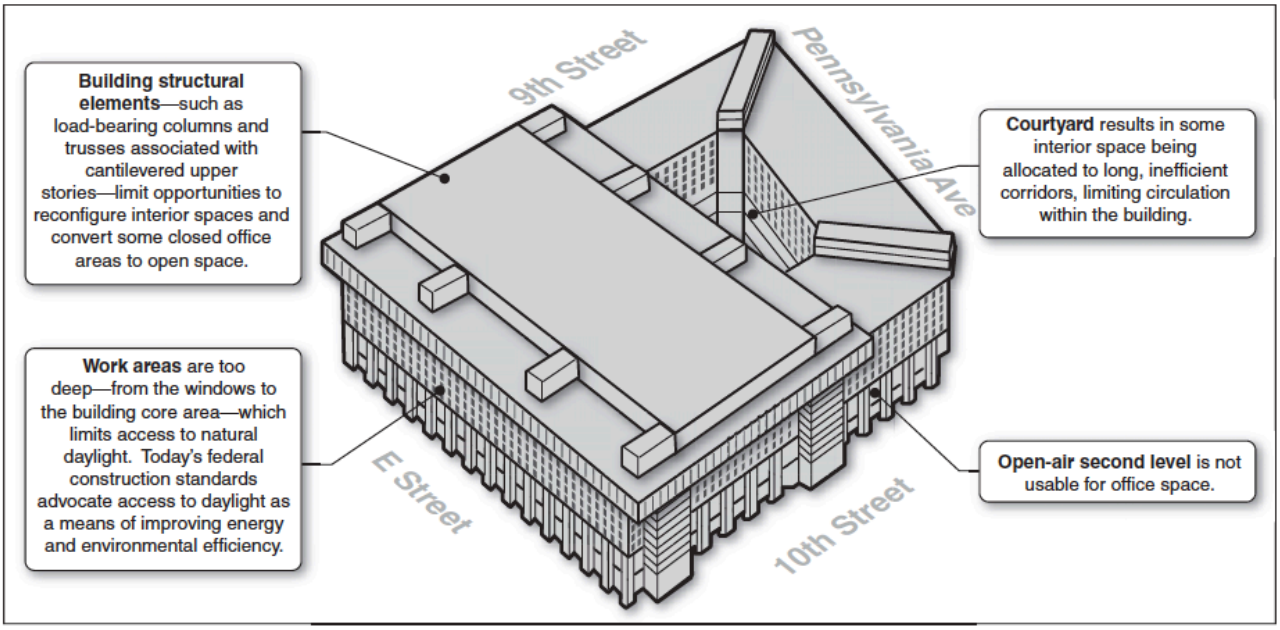

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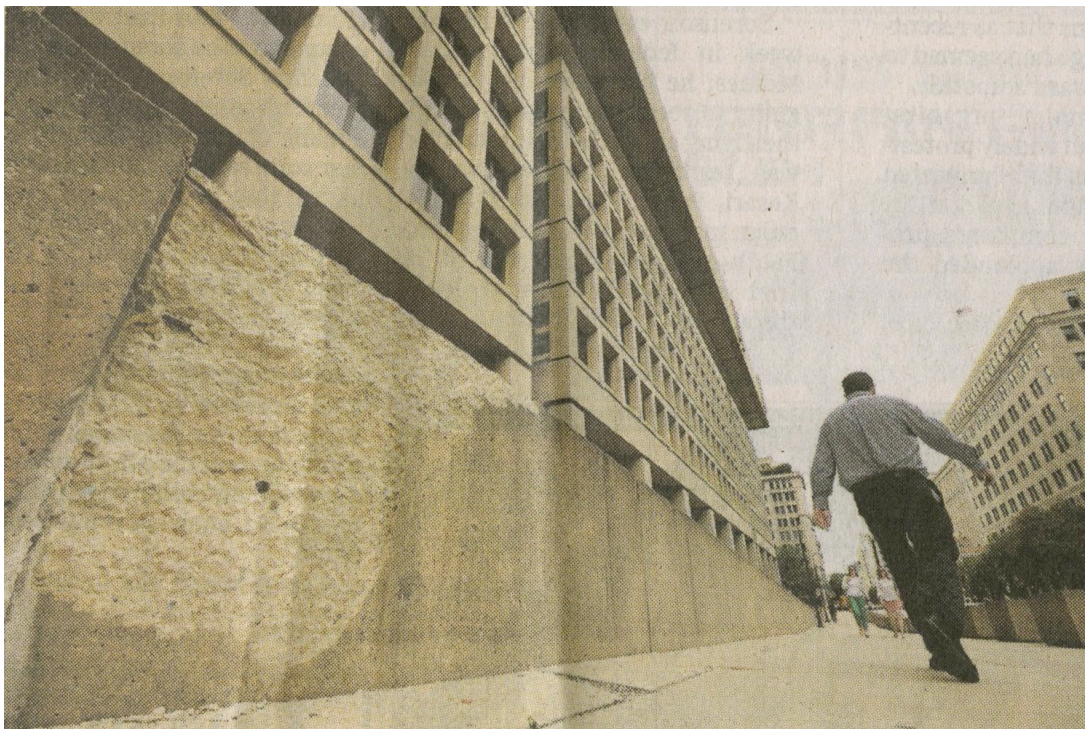

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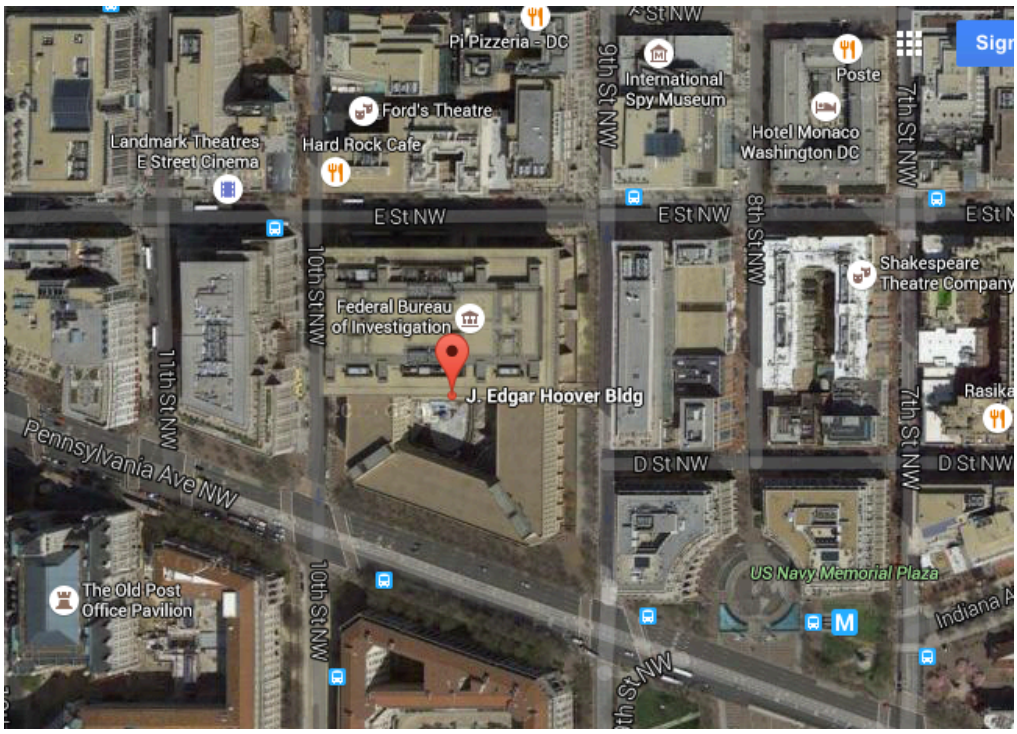
Figure 50. Original configuration of what would become the FBI Building site.



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