



Date September 14, 2020

**RESOLUTION HOLDING HEARING ON REQUEST FROM LAWMARK, L. P.
(OWNER) FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE “FINANCIAL CENTER” PROPERTY
LOCATED AT 606-666 WALNUT AND 207 7TH STREET,
DES MOINES, IOWA, AS A LOCAL LANDMARK**

WHEREAS, the Owner of the Financial Center, Lawmark, L. P., has made application to designate the Financial Center, located at 606-666 Walnut and 207 7th Street, Des Moines, as a local landmark; and

WHEREAS, the property is Legally Described as follows:

Lots 1-4 and west half of Lots 7-8, the N-S alley, and part of the E-W alley of Block 11, Original Plat of Fort Des Moines, along with certain easements, leases, and encroachments

WHEREAS, the application submitted contains detailed references to the historical nature of the “Financial Center” being associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; and

WHEREAS, on July 7, 2020, the Landmark Review Board unanimously approved the recommendation that the “Financial Center” be designated a local Landmark; and

WHEREAS, on August 6, 2020, the Plan and Zoning Commission, by a vote of 12-0-1, recommended to the Council **APPROVAL** of the said application; and

WHEREAS, the Des Moines Municipal Code Section 58-60 requires a public hearing be held to consider the application.

WHEREAS on August 17, 2020, by Roll Call No. 20-____, it was duly resolved by the City Council that the communication from the Plan and Zoning Commission be received and filed, and that the application from Lawmark L.P. for Declaration of a Local Landmark be set down for hearing on September 14, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. by electronic means to encourage and maintain social distancing to curb the spread of COVID19 in the community, without public access to the meeting location; and

WHEREAS, due notice of said hearing was published in the Des Moines Register, as provided by law, setting forth the time and place for hearing on said proposed Declaration of Local Landmark; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with said notice, those interested in said proposed Local Landmark designation, both for and against, have been given opportunity to be heard with respect thereto and have presented their views to the City Council.

**Date** September 14, 2020

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. Upon due consideration of the facts, and any and all statements of interested persons and arguments of counsel, any objections to the proposed Declaration of Local Landmark for the Property, "Financial Center" are hereby overruled, and the hearing is closed.
2. The Financial Center meets the requirements of Des Moines Municipal Code section 58-58 to be designated as a local landmark because the structure:
 - i. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and
 - ii. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.
3. The City Council accepts the recommendation of the Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission and grants the application of the Owner to have the Financial Center designated a local landmark.
4. The City Clerk is directed to file the designation and description of the Financial Center with the Community Development Department and record this resolution as the designation and description of the Financial Center in the office of the county recorder.

MOVED BY _____ to grant the application for the Designation of the

(Council Communication No. 20-384) Financial Center as a local landmark.

FORM APPROVED: Judy K. Parks-Kruse
Judy K. Parks-Kruse, Assistant City Attorney

(20-2021-4.01)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
MANDELBAUM				
VOSS				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED		APPROVED		

CERTIFICATE

I, P. Kay Cmelik, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

Mayor_____
City Clerk



Date September 14, 2020
Agenda Item 85
Roll Call # _____

August 11, 2020

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their August 6, 2020 meeting, the following action was taken regarding a request from LawMark, L.P. (owner) to designate the "Financial Center" property located at 606-666 Walnut Street and 207 7th Street as a Local Landmark.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

After public hearing, the members voted 13-0 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Francis Boggus	X			
Dory Briles	X			
Abby Chungath	X			
Kayla Berkson	X			
Jann Freed	X			
Johnny Alcivar	X			
Lisa Howard				X
Carolyn Jenison	X			
Greg Jones	X			
William Page	X			
Rocky Sposato	X			
Steve Wallace	X			
Greg Wattier	X			
Emily Webb	X			

APPROVAL of the "Financial Center" property be designated as a local Landmark.

(20-2021-4.01)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION

Construction of the Financial Center started 48 years ago. Section 58-58(b) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance allows a building of less than 50 years of age to be designated a landmark "if it is of exceptional importance." The Financial Center is an iconic building in the downtown and staff believes it is of exceptional importance to Des Moines. Staff recommends that the "Financial Center" property be designated as a local Landmark.

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Case Overview:** The subject property is located on the southeast corner of the Walnut Street and 6th Avenue intersection in the downtown. The property also has frontage on Mulberry Street to the south. Construction of the Financial Center was completed in 1974. The building consists of a 25-story tower flanked by lower wings with underground parking in the basement.

On July 7, 2020, the Landmark Review Board unanimously approved the recommendation that the "Financial Center" be designated a local Landmark. The Board is comprised of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Urban Design Review Board. The Board meets as needed to review nominations and proposed alternations to landmarks not located within a local historic district.

The Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for review in accordance with Chapter 58-60 and Chapter 82-40 of the City Code. If the site is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council.

2. **Size of Site:** 1.19 acres.

3. **Existing Zoning (site):** "DX1" Downtown District.

4. **Adjacent Land Use and Zoning:**

North – "DX1"; Uses are commercial.

South – "DX1"; Uses are commercial.

East – "DX1"; Uses are commercial.

West – "DX1"; Uses are commercial.

5. **Applicable Recognized Neighborhood(s):** The subject building is located within the Downtown Des Moines Neighborhood. All recognized neighborhoods were notified of the meeting by mailing of the Final Agenda on July 31, 2020. All agendas are mailed to the primary contact(s) designated by the recognized neighborhood association to the City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division. The Downtown Neighborhood Association mailings were sent to Sebastian Hamirani, 1400 Walnut Street, #413, Des Moines, IA 50309.

6. PlanDSM Land Use Plan Designation: Downtown Mixed Use.

7. Applicable Regulations: Pursuant to Chapter 82-40(a) of the City Code, the Plan and Zoning Commission is an advisory body to the City Council and is a key factor in the growth and development of the city. Therefore, the Commission reviews all local Landmark and Historic District nominations in accordance with the Historic Preservation Ordinance and for compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and forwards a recommendation to the City Council.

II. APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF THE CITY CODE

Section 58-56 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance contains the landmark purpose statement. Section 58-58 contains the criteria for the designation of a landmark and Section 58-60 establishes the nomination process.

Sec. 58-56. Purpose.

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (2) Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements;
- (3) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (4) Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- (5) Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (6) Strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (7) Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

Sec. 58-58. Designation criteria.

(a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;

- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
 - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
 - (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.
- (b) Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures; properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes; structures that have been moved from their original locations; reconstructed historic buildings; properties primarily commemorative in nature; and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the landmark designation. However, such properties will qualify if they fall within the following categories:
- (1) A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.
 - (2) A building or structure removed from its original location which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event.
 - (3) A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance, if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life.
 - (4) A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.
 - (5) A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived.
 - (6) A property primarily commemorative in nature, if design, age, tradition or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance.
 - (7) A property achieving significance within the past 50 years, if it is of exceptional importance.

Sec. 58-60. Procedures.

- (a) The historic preservation commission shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located within historic districts, and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below. The landmark review board shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located outside historic districts and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below.
- (b) Notice that an application for designation of a landmark or landmark site is being considered shall be given to the owner of the parcel on which the proposed landmark is

situated or which is part of the proposed landmark site in accordance with the following:

- (1) Such notice shall be served by certified mail, addressed to the owner at his or her last known address as such appears in the records of the county treasurer's office, or if there is no name on such records, such notice may be served by regular mail addressed to "owner" at the street address of the property in question.
 - (2) Such owner shall have the right to confer with the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, prior to final action by the commission or board on the application.
 - (3) The historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, may, in addition, hold the public hearing of the proposed designation by giving notice as required by law.
- (c) After such investigation by the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as is deemed necessary, but in no case more than 60 days after the receipt of the complete application, the application for designation shall be recommended for approval or disapproval. Such recommendation shall be in writing and signed by the chair of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, and shall state the reasons for recommending approval or disapproval. The recommendation may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site as described in the application or may include modifications thereof. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to and filed with the plan and zoning commission, within five days after making such recommendation.
- (d) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the plan and zoning commission shall schedule a public hearing at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (e) Within 30 days after the public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall forward such application to the city council, together with the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board. The plan and zoning commission may adopt the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as its own or may prepare a written recommendation of its own. The plan and zoning commission may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site or may include modifications thereof. If the modification requires an additional public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall hold such hearing before forwarding the application to the city council.
- (f) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the council shall schedule a public hearing to consider the recommendation at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (g) The city council, after public hearing, may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the recommendation of the plan and zoning commission by a majority vote of its membership. If the plan and zoning commission shall have failed to act within the time limit set forth in this section, the city council may, nevertheless, approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposed landmark or landmark site as originally proposed or modified by a majority vote of its membership.

II. ANALYSIS

- 4. Landmark Nomination Criteria:** A nomination must demonstrate that the subject building or site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and meets one or more of the following criterion.

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The nomination suggests the building meets Criterion 2 and 4. The following points from the submitted form make the case for how the building “is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” and “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”

- Developed as the state’s tallest skyscraper to be built in 50 years, the Financial Center is the city’s most prominent example of the Late Modern International Style of architecture. The Financial Center embodies the style’s principle tenets of asymmetrical massing, emphasis of volume, use of industrial material, and functionality over ornament, as designed and built by architect Phoenix-based Russell McCaleb, AIA, and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co., with the east wing detailed by the local firm of Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local contractor Weitz Co.
- The tower rises from an asymmetrical plinth consisting of two wings that are differentiated to reflect the two different financial institutions that anchored the complex. Volume is emphasized with the rhythmic verticality of tapered precast concrete and formed aluminum fins and subtle patterns in the curtain wall glass repeating on all four sides of the 25-story tower and echoing with variation on the two- and three-story plinth wings.
- Form follows function with the creamy white painted industrial concrete and aluminum mullion fins shading the recessed curtain wall of non-reflective tinted bronze insulated glazing and insulated spandrel glass; the overall effect is to reduce glare and solar gain, increasing tenant comfort and reducing air conditioning load. The creamy white and nonreflective bronze finishes, terminating at flat roofs behind broad perimeter concrete parapet walls with recessed shadow line, contrasted with surrounding buildings and made the Financial Center a standout beyond its height.

- The Financial Center realized the ideals of a modern banking and office high rise, adding status as well as stature to the downtown skyline, while also demonstrating progress and vitality during Des Moines' 1970s post-interstate freeway era of central business district redevelopment. Notably, the Financial Center appears to be the first downtown Des Moines private office high rise to offer underground parking and incorporate fire suppression to meet a new city fire code for high rise buildings.
- The Financial Center appears to be the first private office high rise to incorporate planned accommodation for an interior skywalk route. Other key features of the Financial Center complex include a central circulation and service core with eight elevators divided into two banks for more efficient service to top floors; mechanical systems on each floor to provide tenants with variable control; additional west wing bank circulation core with two additional private elevators, rear stairs, and file conveyor system; and a flexible floor plate and concrete floor systems built to accommodate the weight of bank vaults and other specialized bank equipment. These features defined the Financial Center as the most modern skyscraper in Des Moines upon its completion, differentiating it from earlier downtown office buildings and establishing new standards for future office development that followed.
- The Financial Center is strongly associated with its major tenant, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, which as the premier and largest bank in Iowa at the time of construction was a leading force for downtown Des Moines economic redevelopment during the 1970s. Prior to the Financial Center's announced construction, public opinion of downtown Des Moines plummeted as businesses left for new suburban locations made readily accessible by the recently completed interstate freeway loop.
- The \$21 million Financial Center project—when announced it was the highest dollar private downtown Des Moines office construction project in the post-war era—set a new local standard for investment in the city's central business district.
- Located within the city's new downtown redevelopment zone, the Financial Center was designed as a linchpin in the nascent skywalk system, intended to invigorate the commercial business district.
- The Financial Center project was noted as the state's first joint development project coordinated by two competing financial institutions, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association; cooperation allowed for a larger unified complex dedicated to modern banking and Class A professional office space.
- The Financial Center continues to reflect the legacy of Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association and their vision for downtown Des Moines in the 1970s.

5. PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow: The PlanDSM Comprehensive Plan was approved on April 25, 2016. The nomination is supported by numerous PlanDSM Goals and Policies including:

Land Use Goal 6

Recognize the value of Des Moines' historic building stock and landscapes and ensure their preservation

LU 35: Encourage expansion and establishment of National Historic Districts, local historic districts, and local landmarks.

Community Character and Neighborhood Goal 1

Embrace the distinct character offered in each of Des Moines' neighborhoods.

CCN1: Celebrate the City's culture and diversity through the creation of vibrant neighborhood nodes and corridors.

Community Character and Neighborhood Goal 4

Protect Des Moines' historic and cultural assets that contribute to neighborhood and community identity.

CCN25: Partner with the historic preservation community to promote Des Moines' rich history through education and outreach on historic structures, districts, and landscapes.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Jann Freed asked if any member of the public or the commission desired to speak on the item. None requested to speak.

COMMISSION ACTION:

Will Page made a motion for approval of the "Financial Center" property be designated as a local Landmark.

Motion passed: 13-0

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Van Essen, AICP
Senior City Planner

JVE:tjh

85

Request from LawMark, L.P. (owner) for property located at 666 Walnut Street				File #	
				20-2021-4.01	
Description of Action	Designate the "Financial Center" property located at 666 Walnut Street as a Local Landmark.				
PlanDSM Future Land Use	Downtown Mixed Use.				
Mobilizing Tomorrow Transportation Plan	No planned improvements.				
Current Zoning District	"DX1" Downtown Mixed Use District				
Proposed Zoning District	N/A.				
Consent Card Responses	In Favor	Not In Favor	Undetermined	% Opposition	
Outside Area (200 feet)	0	0			
Within Subject Property					
Plan and Zoning Commission Action	Approval	X	Required 6/7 Vote of the City Council	Yes	
	Denial			No	X

Landmark Nomination Form

Landmark Review Board

IDENTIFICATION:

SITE NAME Financial Center

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Generally Lots 1-4 and west half of Lots 7-8, the N-S alley, and part of the E-W alley of Block 11, Original Plat of Fort Des Moines, along with certain easements, leases, and encroachments

OWNER(S) NAME LawMark, L.P.

OWNER(S) SIGNATURE _____
(signed owner's letter of support or petition can be attached in lieu of signature here)

OWNER(S) ADDRESS 666 Walnut Street Des Moines Iowa 50309
(street address) (city) (state) (zip)

CATEGORY:

STRUCTURAL/ARCHITECTURAL ☒ **LANDSCAPE** ☐ **ARCHEOLOGICAL** ☐

COMPONENTS Slab-shaped 25-story tower atop west wing with curtain wall of bronze-tinted glazing and spandrel glass panels behind vertical fins of pre-cast concrete and aluminum, with limited brick and bronze-finished louvers at rear; east wing of two-story curtain wall system framed by precast parapet spandrel supported by narrow precast concrete wall sections and stepped-back third story; canopies shelter entrances; travertine, terrazzo flooring, and finished ceilings define the shared ground-floor vestibule, shared lobby, shared elevator lobby, and additional former bank vestibules; shared underground parking ramp has exposed concrete structure.

USE (present) office / retail (past) office / financial

DESCRIPTION:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1972-1974 **ARCHITECT/BUILDER** Architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, of Phoenix, Arizona, rendered the Financial Center design, detailing the tower, west wing, shared circulation systems and common areas, and full basement underground parking that underlies the entire complex, as constructed by the Phoenix office of general contracting firm Henry C. Beck Co. The east wing's design for the above-ground three stories was completed by local architects Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local general contractor Weitz Co.

BUILDING TYPE:

Single-family dwelling ☐ Industrial ☐ Other institutional ☐ Religious ☐
Multiple-family dwelling ☐ Educational ☐ Public ☐ Agricultural ☐
Commercial ☒

EXTERIOR WALLS: clapboard ☐ stone ☐ brick ☒ board and batten ☐ shingles ☐

stucco__ other Curtain wall with precast concrete and aluminum vertical mullion fins, precast concrete walls and parapet walls.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: wood frame with interlocking joints__ masonry load-bearing walls__
wood frame with light members (balloon frame)__ iron frame__ steel frame with curtain walls
x reinforced concrete x other__

CONDITION: excellent__ good x fair__ deteriorated__

INTEGRITY: original site X moved--if so, when_____
from where_____

Information on alterations, additions (with dates & architect, if known) and any other notable features of building/site: See attached

RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY: barn__ other farm structures__ carriage house__ garage__ privy__ other N/A

SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE: open land__ woodland__ scattered outbuildings__
commercial X industrial__ residential__ densely built-up__ other_____

Prepared by Jennifer Irsfeld James, MAHP Date June 29, 2020

Address On behalf of LawMark, L.P., 666 Walnut Street, Des Moines, Iowa, 50309

Telephone (515) 250-7196 Email jenjames123@gmail.com

Organization On behalf of Financial Center owner LawMark, L.P.

SIGNIFICANCE: (Indicate all sources of information for all statements)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

Summary:

The Financial Center at 606–666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street in Des Moines, Iowa, sits at the southeast corner of Walnut and Seventh streets in the city's downtown central business district. Completed in 1973–1974 as the state's tallest building, the 25-story office high rise with flanking wings and underground parking occupies more than half of a city block and remains a recognizable landmark on the downtown skyline. The 345-foot-tall Late Modern International Style slab-shaped 25-story tower arises from an asymmetrical plinth; the façade faces north, fronting Walnut Street. The plinth consists of a three-story east wing and a two-story west wing, which is set back from the property line to create a pedestrian plaza at Walnut Street near the corner of Seventh Street. Underpinning the complex are two levels of underground parking that extend beneath the public sidewalks. The tower and west wing employ a curtain wall of alternating horizontal bands of insulated non-reflective warm bronze tinted glass and spandrel glass defined by vertical precast concrete and aluminum mullion fins painted a creamy white; the east wing repeats these themes with a two-story curtain wall system framed by a precast parapet spandrel supported by narrow precast concrete wall sections, topped and stepped-back third story. The walls on the wings and tower all terminate at flat roofs defined by broad horizontal parapet walls constructed of precast concrete. Cantilevered canopies define pedestrian and vehicular entrances. These design elements characterize the Financial Center's Late Modern International Style—and collectively emphasize its stature and volume at time of completion as the city's largest modern skyscraper and tallest building to be built in the state since the 19-story Equitable of Iowa insurance company building in 1924. With subsequent skyscraper construction, the Financial Center stands as the fourth tallest high rise in Des Moines.

The collaborative Financial Center project was reported as the state's first joint construction venture involving two unrelated financial institutions, which created a unified complex of two functionally interdependent sections. The Financial Center was conceived of by California-based developers David and Gabriele Murdock, and Des Moines-based financial institutions Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. In 1972, Murdock's architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, of Phoenix, Arizona, rendered the Financial Center design, detailing the tower, west wing, shared circulation systems and common areas, and full basement underground parking that underlies the entire complex, as constructed by the Phoenix office of master general contracting firm Henry C. Beck Co. The east wing's design for the above-ground three stories was completed by local architects Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local contractor Weitz Co., with design sign off by the Murdocks and the bank. (Lynch et al) The asymmetrical east and west wings share the same palette of precast concrete fins, broad precast concrete parapet walls, and bronze glazing to create individuated designs for the two financial institutions that originated and anchored the Financial Center.

Setting:

The Financial Center occupies more than half of a block within the heart of the downtown Des Moines Central Business District. The downtown platting is oriented to the Des Moines River, which bisects the city, resulting in platting that is rotated some 15 degrees from directional north. The Financial Center complex is located within the original Fort Des Moines plat, laid out with square blocks subsected by north-south and east-west alleys, which form quarter blocks. Walnut Street, along with parallel Locust Street, developed as the key retail, banking, and professional office corridor. The mostly flat grade of Walnut Street and Locust Street, joined by Grand Avenue, encouraged construction of the city's tallest buildings throughout the 19th century and 20th centuries. Walnut Street begins at the Des Moines River, spanning east via bridge over the river toward the Iowa State Capitol grounds, and west terminating at 16th Street. In the center of the central business district, between Fourth and Ninth streets, the buildings are densely developed and include the preponderance of downtown Des Moines's mid-rise buildings of 5 to 12 stories and high-rise buildings of 13 stories and above. These buildings are of a variety of ages and materials, with most spanning the 20th century and constructed with cladding as varied as brick and stone to glass and metal. Setbacks are minimal, with many buildings constructed to the public sidewalk and paved alleys. Skywalk connectors cross over streets and connect

many of these buildings. Current uses tend toward insurance, finance, and general office, with some retail on sidewalk and skywalk levels and some parking ramps.

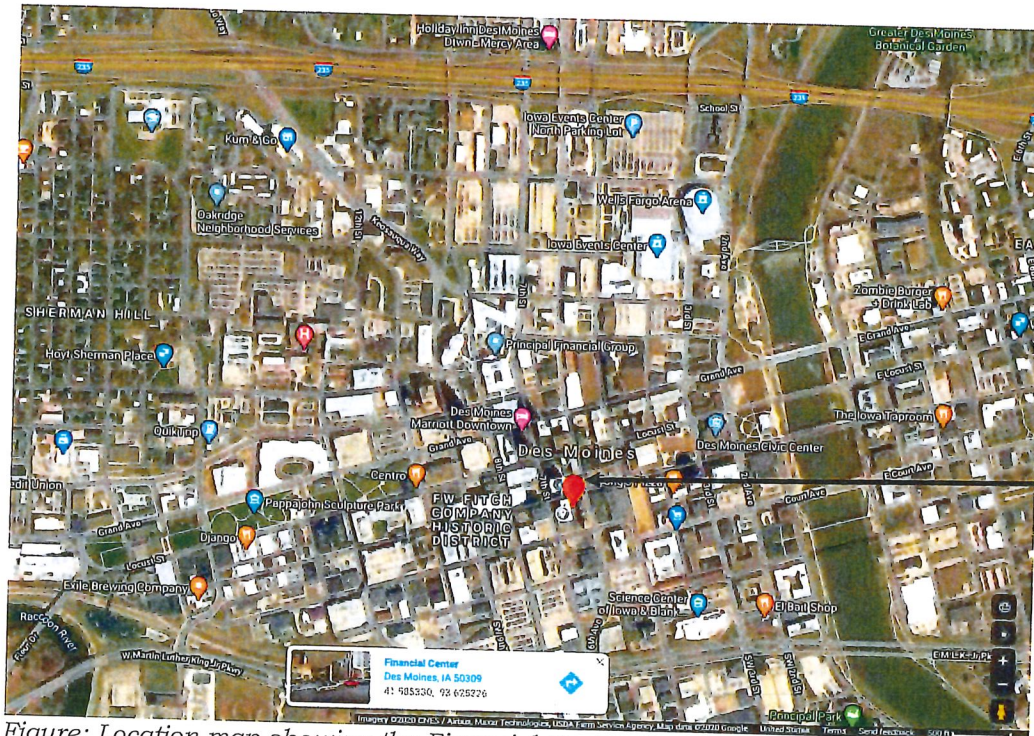


Figure: Location map showing the Financial Center Complex (indicated by arrow) in the heart of the downtown Des Moines central business district. The top of the map is north. (Google Maps, 2020)

On the Financial Center's immediate block, Block 11 of the original Fort Des Moines plat, the Financial Center complex was built over the north-south alley and part of the east-west alley. Adjoining to the east are the 1907 11-story Fleming Building (218 Sixth Avenue, NRHP) designed by Daniel Burnham, and 1913 12-story Hippee Building (206 Sixth Avenue, NRHP), both of which included banking facilities early in their history; across the street stands the former five-story 1932 Art Deco Iowa-Des Moines National Bank (520 Walnut Street, NRHP), designed to accommodate a never-built skyscraper tower, construction of which was thwarted by the Great Depression and World War II.

Within a block radius of the Financial Center stand some of the tallest buildings in the downtown, including the 1924 19-story Equitable Life Insurance Company of Iowa Building (316 Sixth Avenue and 604 Locust Street, NRHP), 1986 25-story HUB Tower (699 Walnut Street; stands about 20 feet shorter than the Financial Center), and 1997 19-story and 1971 10-story EMC Insurance Companies buildings (700 Walnut Street and 717 Mulberry Street). East from the Financial Center are located the 1906 Polk County Courthouse (500 Mulberry Street, NRHP), Polk County administrative offices (formerly the U.S. Post Office, 111 Court Avenue, NRHP), and across the river, the Des Moines city hall (NRHP), state capitol building (NRHP), and state administrative offices. The close proximity to these government entities has made the Financial Center's location ideal for its finance-related tenants, including banks, law firms, accounting firms, and investment firms.

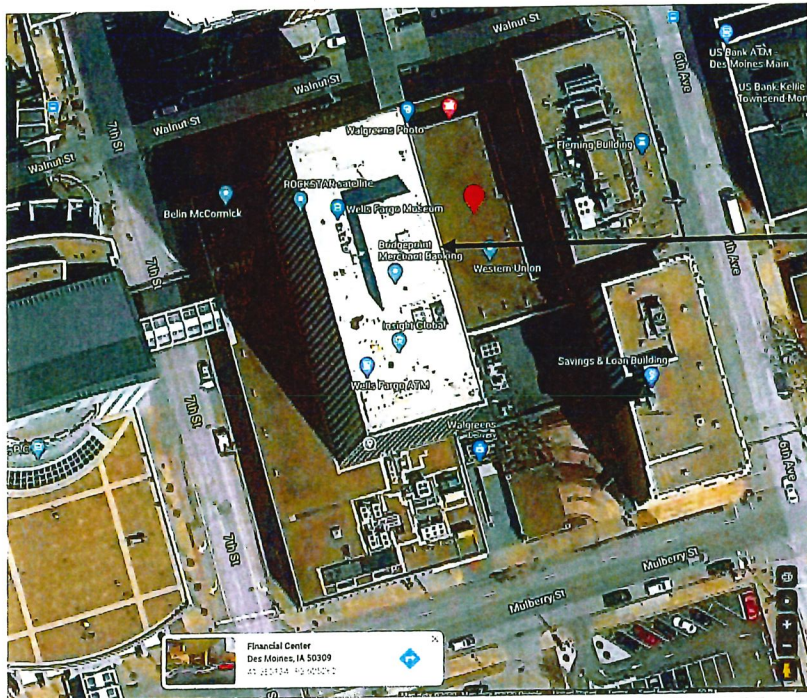


Figure: Aerial view of the Financial Center complex (indicated by arrow), showing the site with the east wing adjoining the west wing with tower, 606-666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street. The top of the map is north. (Google Maps, 2020)

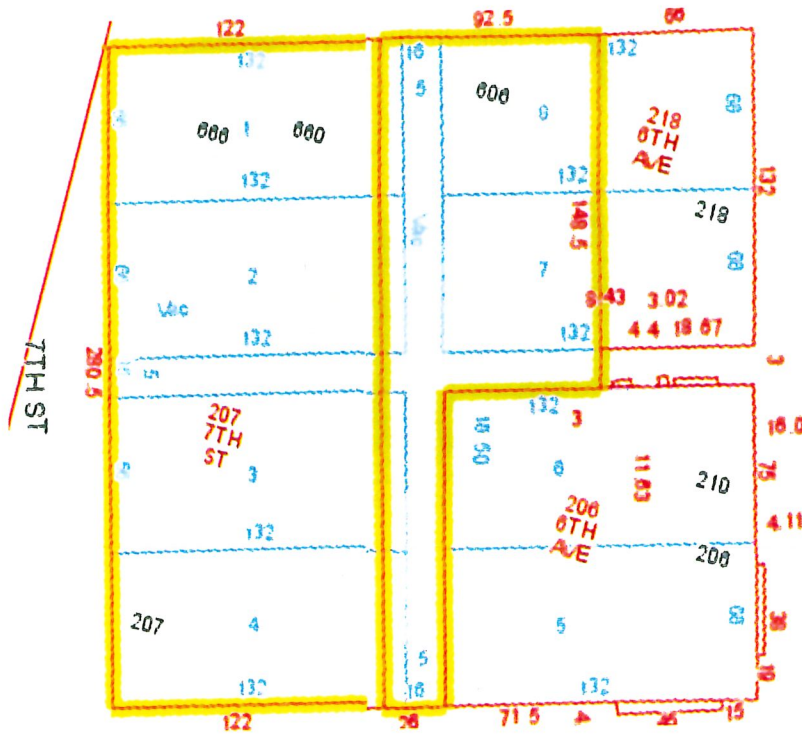


Figure: Rotated view of Block 11 of the original Fort Des Moines plat, showing the Financial Center complex with rectangular west wing at left (666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street), and east wing at right (606 Walnut Street), outlined in yellow. The top of the map is plan north. (Polk County Assessor, 2020)

Site:

The Financial Center complex occupies most of its flat site. The west wing with tower is set back from the property line to create an open pedestrian plaza along Walnut Street at the corner of Seventh Street; two cantilevered canopies at pedestrian entrances project into the plaza. The secondary façade is along Seventh Street; a narrower cantilevered canopy shelters a pedestrian side entrance and a wider cantilevered canopy announces the parking ramp entrance. At the west wing's rear southeast corner along Mulberry Street, the first story is recessed beneath the building to form a rear service court with parking ramp exit, egress doors, delivery dock, and trash collection zone. The east wing's rear elevation is set back from the south property line, with a pedestrian walk providing access to a narrow one-story rear entrance ell. The complex is ringed by public paved sidewalks; the Walnut Street sidewalk is inset with recently installed granite stone pavers as part of a second-generation multi-block-long streetscape project; other sidewalks are typical concrete. There are several types of non-contributing objects on the limited site: concrete planters, safety bollards and posts in front the corner entrance and at the rear, sections of fencing and screening at the rear, parking ramp equipment, a small wooden parking attendant enclosure, public benches, trash cans, and bike racks.



Figures: Left, tower and west wing looking southeast from Walnut Street. Right, east wing and tower looking southwest from Walnut Street. (Jennifer Irsfeld James, 2020)



Figures: Left, detail of tower curtain wall bronze tinted glazing and spandrel glass behind vertical mullion fins looking east from rooftop. Right, detail of the canopy entrance into the former Iowa-Des Moines National Bank west wing, with bronze storefront entrances. (Jennifer Irsfeld James, 2020)

Exterior:

The more than 525,000-square-foot 25-story Financial Center sits on a concrete foundation, with reinforced concrete structure for the tower and two-story west wing, and steel framing for the three-story east wing. In keeping with the International Style, the Financial Center design emphasizes volume (rather than mass or weight) via asymmetry of the complementary east and west wings, which balance the slab-shaped tower; smooth uniform non-reflective bronze tinted curtain walls behind shade-providing vertical fins; and flat roofs behind broad smooth concrete parapet walls. Precast tapered concrete fins that transition to formed aluminum fins at the third story extend to the flat rooflines. Smooth, broad parapet walls of precast concrete stand at the roof perimeters; a notched reveal at the base of the parapet walls was specified to be painted a dark color. On the west wing, cantilevered rectangular canopies define pedestrian and vehicular entrances; bronze-finished storefront entrance doors include transoms, side lites, pivoting door hardware, and rectangular door handles. A small penthouse at the top of the tower houses elevator equipment. The flat roofs are each covered with synthetic membrane, with stone ballast on the east and west wings. There are three flag poles on the west wing low roof, and rooftop equipment is located at the rear of the plan. The rectangular west wing measures about 122 wide east to west, by 280 feet deep north to south; starting at the third story, the rectangular slab tower measures some 72 feet wide by 183 feet deep. The rectangular east wing measures about 92 feet wide and 148 feet deep, plus rear projecting ell.

The west wing and tower exteriors are clad in a curtain wall of non-reflective bronze-tinted insulated glazing with bronze-finished aluminum framing, specified by the architect as PPG Twindows (double-paned insulating glass) with one-fourth-inch Solar Bronze glass on the exterior and one-fourth-inch polished glass on the interior, and one-fourth-inch Harmony Solar Bronze Spandrelite with insulation at floor levels. The bronze-tinted glass and spandrels are organized in horizontal bands, with vertical columns of spandrel glass occurring at column lines including the corners. This subtle curtain wall pattern is the backdrop for the prominent vertical mullion fins of precast concrete and formed aluminum, painted a creamy white, that frame the recessed columns of windows. These character-defining 1-and-a-half-foot-deep fins have a tapered profile and were designed to provide shade to reduce glare and solar gain in combination with the bronze-tinted glazing. On the ground level adjoining the sidewalk, the two-story concrete fins rest atop a precast concrete bulkhead with painted terrazzo topping (except above the west wing recessed rear corner, where aluminum fins are exclusively used); where the concrete fins rise to meet the smooth, flat precast concrete parapet walls, a recessed dark painted

reveal creates a dramatic shadow line. At the third story of the tower, the fins transition to aluminum. Given the Financial Center's towering stature downtown and beyond, the skyscraper's fins and recessed tinted glazing are the primary historic fabric visible; from certain angles, only the fins are visible, giving the tower the appearance of solid white.

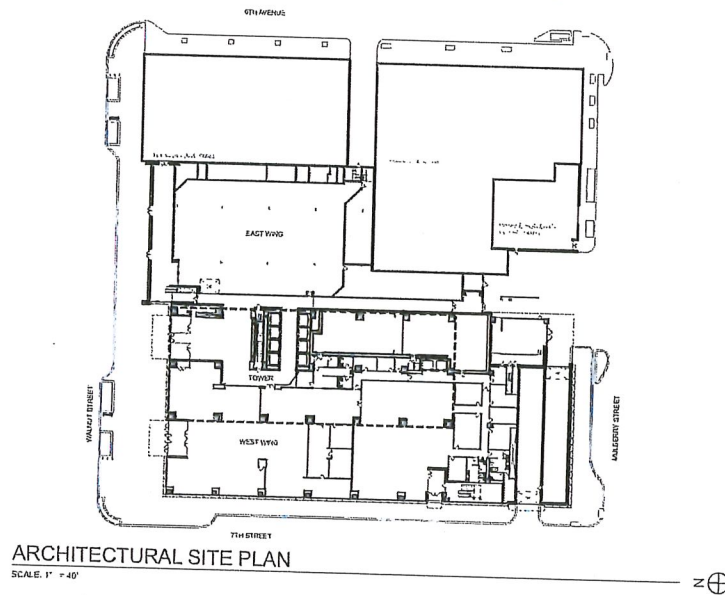


Figure: Architectural site plan showing east wing, west wing, and tower location (tower indicated with dashed line). (Slingshot Architecture, 2020)

The west wing curtain wall is interrupted at sidewalk level by the aforementioned four projecting rectangular canopies, two each on the main façade fronting Walnut Street and the secondary façade along Seventh Street. These canopies announce three pedestrian entrances and the underground parking garage entrance: From Walnut Street, pedestrians enter the main shared Financial Center lobby vestibule and the west wing's lobby vestibule, each reached by two sets of original bronze storefront-framed clear glazed doors with rectangular bronze pulls plus a center revolving door; both vestibules feature travertine wall cladding and smooth plastered ceilings. The Seventh Street side entrance has travertine wall cladding and a recessed set of bronze storefront doors reached by terrazzo stairs, materials that continue through to the interior.

At the rear, the two-story west wing adopts brown face brick and bronze-finished aluminum ventilation louvers between the fins, demarking the rear mechanical area and integrated underground parking. As mentioned, the canopied recessed vehicle entrance on Seventh Street, with non-original signage, ramps down to the basement parking garage that underpins the Financial Center complex, and the recessed vehicle exit ramp is located in the recessed southeast service court along Mulberry Street. At the rear recessed service court, walls are clad in brown face brick and there are brick-clad columns, a plastered ceiling with recessed lighting, and concrete pavement plus the concrete delivery dock.

The east wing continues the palette of concrete and bronze glazing: The main north façade employs narrow precast concrete walls supporting a precast concrete spandrel to dramatically frame a two-story-tall curtain wall with tinted glazing above, clear glazing below, and bronze-finished aluminum framing. This glazed entrance shelters a two-story-tall public vestibule/atrium on the interior. At the intersection of the east wing meeting the set-back face of the west wing, the narrow west elevation employs concrete fins; the fins are repeated on a smaller scale on the east wing's recessed third story and rear elevation. The east wing's recessed second story windows reside within the two-story vestibule/atrium; this recessed wall plane aligns with the east wing's third story and the façade of the west wing and tower. The east wing's top third floor steps back from the roofline on three sides, attaching solely to the Financial Center tower, reflecting the shared circulation via the Financial Center tower's elevator. Another shared circulation element is the interior second-floor skywalk corridor, which enters via attached skywalk connection on the west wing's Seventh Street elevation and exits on the east

wing's Walnut Street elevation, with interior stairs leading to the east wing vestibule/atrium. This vestibule/atrium has a terrazzo floor with an oversize Greek key pattern, curtain wall with dimensional bronze-finished vertical aluminum fins, finished walls including upper second-story windows inset into the south wall plane and a travertine accent wall, and finished ceiling. In the rear of the east wing, the upper stories include pre-cast concrete fins and bronze glazing on the upper level and brown brick on the first story. The east wing rear entrances are contained in a short one-story ell (constrained by the adjoining Hippee Building) that contains a rear public pedestrian entrance into the shared Financial Center corridor, plus receiving doors into the retail space.

Interior:

The interior of the Financial Center complex reflects the building's historic purpose: to provide banking space on the first floor and class A leasable office space above that could be flexibly configured to meet the changing needs of tenants. Although specific configurations have changed over time, floor 1 retains its original layout of west wing central shared vestibule, main central lobby, and main central elevator/stair lobby, opening to the east and west wing banking halls. Terrazzo flooring, travertine-clad walls and columns, bronze-finished aluminum vestibule doors, textured double-height elevator doors with projecting metal surrounds, bronze-finish elevator indicator lights (painted silver), and a 25-floor bronze mail chute are among original finishes and features; some cover-up wall and ceiling materials have been added to the central lobby over time, but investigation shows many original materials remain. The central lobby opens to both east and west wings. The state's largest bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, occupied the large west wing corner banking hall, which retains its original volume, columns, window configuration, vault area, two private bank elevators, as well as its main canopied vestibule entrance and narrower side canopied vestibule entrance with original travertine and terrazzo finishes. The east wing banking hall served Des Moines Savings and Loan Association and retains its original volume, columns, travertine accent wall, and two-story volume vestibule/atrium with distinctive terrazzo floor and second-story interior windows.

The upper levels of both east and west wings remain offices, with the floor plates differing on each level. The Des Moines Savings and Loan Association's east wing contained offices; finishes have been replaced over time with carpet, painted gypsum wallboard, and acoustical ceiling tile. Circulation occurs with rear and front staircases and the shared elevators; the west wing central core placed the elevator lobbies east-west, so as to open into the east wing. There are also additional doorways between east and west wing that appears to have been added when the successor to Iowa-Des Moines National Bank began leasing floors 2 and 3 of the east wing. The shared floor 2 skywalk corridor forms an L-shape traveling from Seventh Street through the west wing elevator lobby and turning into the east wing to cross Walnut Street. The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's west wing and tower former office space on floors 2 through 9 contains a rear secondary core of auxiliary bank elevators, rear stair, and file conveyor (up to floor 5). The elevator lobbies on floors 4 through 13 are lit by natural light, with the windows having a wide laminated shelf-like stool; each floor includes the 25-floor working mail chute; the ceilings have an inset pattern on many of the floors, with original projecting painted metal elevator surrounds being another character-defining feature. The west wing and tower central core also contains stairs, men's and women's restrooms, and mechanical rooms on every floor; original finishes include painted finished walls, tiled restroom floors and wainscots with marble door thresholds, and tall laminated doors with bronze-finished hardware that extend to the ceiling. The balance of the upper stories were designed with flexible open tenant space designed to be easily be reconfigured in and around the central core and regularly spaced columns, using typical office finishes of carpet, painted gypsum wallboard, and acoustical ceiling tile. Alterations are typical of large office buildings where tenants change with frequency. The two basement levels have about 260 parking spaces and unfinished exposed concrete structure; main elevator service opens to P1 at a minimally finished garage elevator lobby with glazed side walls, and the bank's private elevators also service this level entering directing into the parking garage; P2 has like exposed concrete but is accessed only via stairs.

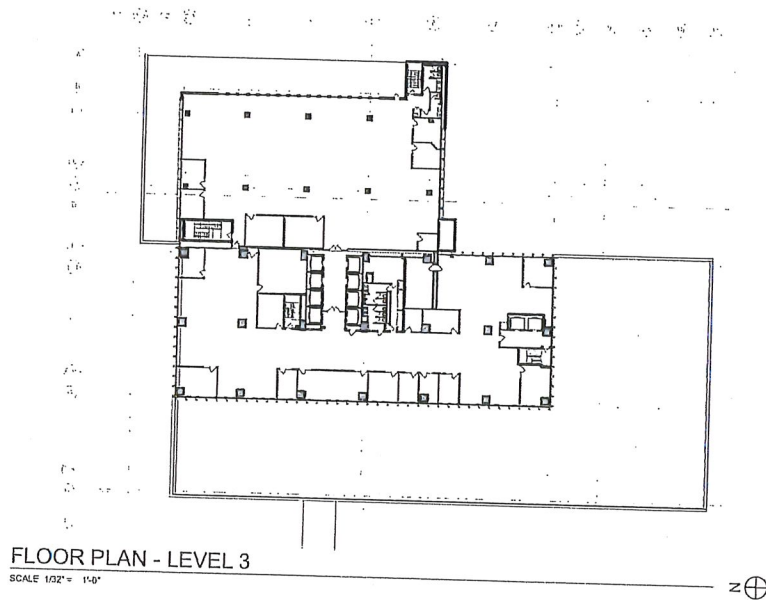
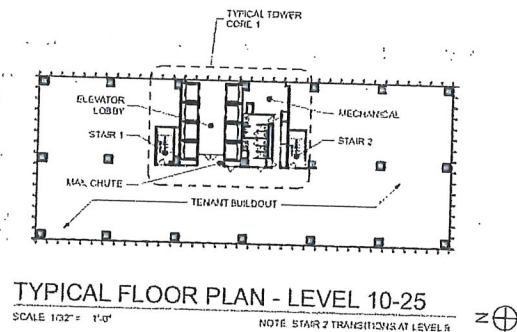
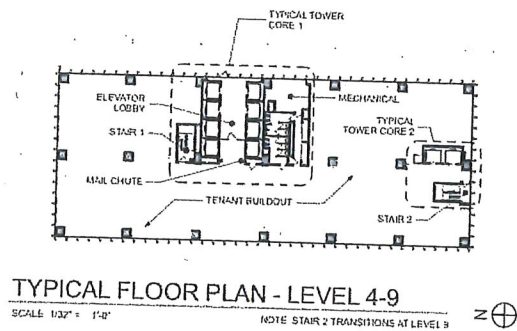
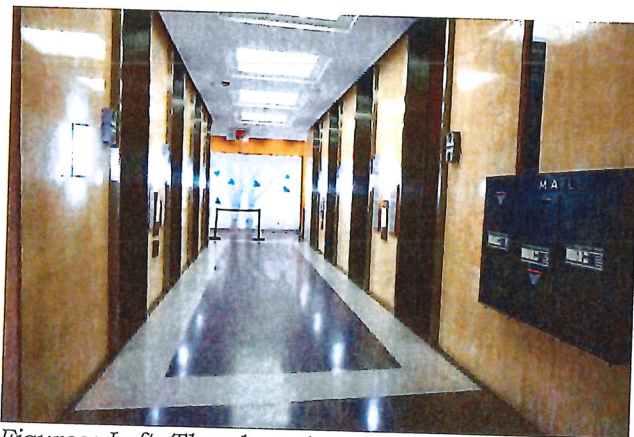


Figure: Shared circulation is one aspect of the functional interdependence of the Financial Center east and west wings and the tower, as seen in the floor 3 plan with shared elevator lobby opening to the east wing. (Slingshot Architecture, 2020)



Figures: The tower features a central circulation and service core. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's former office space on floors 2 through 9 contain a rear secondary core of auxiliary bank elevators, file conveyor (up to floor 5), and rear stair. (Slingshot Architecture, 2020)



Figures: Left: The shared central elevator lobby on floor 1 provides circulation to both the east and west wings of the Financial Center. Right: The floor 13 elevator lobby (along with P1 parking and floor 1) is a

transitional floor that contains elevator service with all eight elevators; all floors above floor 13 are serviced by the western four elevators, all floors below floor 13 are serviced by the eastern four elevators. (Jennifer Irsfeld James, 2020)

Integrity:

The Financial Center retains all aspects of integrity specific to its periods of significance, 1972 to 1974 and 1972 to circa 1979.

At its original location, the Financial Center continues to occupy the prominent southeastern corner of Walnut and Seventh streets, occupying more than half a block within the heart of the central business district, providing excellent integrity as it relates to the setting.

The Financial Center retains its strong association as a prominent retail banking location and office tower. With its 1973 to 1974 Late Modern International Style vertically focused exterior design intact, it readily conveys its local importance as the tallest building in Iowa when constructed since the 1924 Equitable of Iowa building, and for its association with the financial institutions Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, the largest bank in Iowa at the time, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. In sum, the Financial Center retains its association as the city's tallest and most modern skyscraper when completed in 1973 to 1974.

The exterior design and materials remain intact, as envisioned by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, Des Moines Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines, developers David and Gabriele Murdock, and their architects Russell McCaleb and Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc. No major alterations have been made to the exterior of the Financial Center, which has preserved the character-defining features of the building. These architectural features include the volume and massing created by the asymmetrical east wing and west wing plinths and central tower; the continuous curtain wall of tinted nonreflective solar bronze and spandrel glass, organized into horizontal and vertical patterns, recessed behind the vertical mullion fins that provide shade to reduce solar gain and glare; the east wing's dramatic precast concrete walls and spandrel framing the two-story curtain wall; the broad precast concrete parapet walls topping the lower wings and soaring tower; the cantilevered canopies; and the rear shared service court. The integrity of exterior design and materials is excellent. The insertion of skywalk connectors into the east and west wings underscores the Financial Center's important role in anchoring the nascent skywalk system. The main exterior changes are replacement of some exterior doors and the terrazzo sidewalk (mandated for a mid 1980s city streetscape project), and disconnection at the rear of the east wing from a non-extant exterior connector to the Hippee Building; these changes are minimal in the totality of the well-preserved 25-story complex exterior.

On the interior, the Financial Center retains a good level of historic design and material integrity. The four pedestrian entrance vestibules and main central lobby with central elevator lobby are key public spaces and retain their original unifying palette of terrazzo flooring, travertine wall cladding, travertine columns, and finished ceilings. Over time, remodeling campaigns have covered some of the central lobby's travertine and interior glazed storefront windows and lower ceilings installed in part, but at least some original wall materials and higher ceilings appear intact beneath. The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association ground floor banking halls retain their historic connection to the central lobby, the large volume of each space, interior columns, and for the corner banking hall, the two walls of perimeter windows, vault area, and private bank elevators. The upper stories retain the duplicative circulation and service core with elevator lobbies, the 25-floor mail chute, restrooms, and mechanical and electrical rooms and closets; the remaining floor plate was left open for tenants to configure as desired, with the bronze window framing, bronze window stool, and interior columns being the main interior character-defining features, plus Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's private elevator lobbies (up to floor 9) and file conveyor system (up to floor 5). The reconfiguration of the ground floor bank spaces and upper office spaces is considered acceptable given the intent of the developer to leave configurations and finishes to tenants and the long-standing practice of such changes being typical for banks and professional office buildings. Given that the Financial Center was designed for flexibly configurable tenant spaces, changes to partitions and finishes over time do not harm the integrity of the design and, in fact, allowed the complex continued viability in a crowded marketplace.

The integrity of workmanship on the exterior is excellent, reflecting the high quality technical expertise provided by architect Russell McCaleb and master builder Henry C. Beck Co., both noted for their skyscraper construction work nationally, as well as the curtain wall by Olden & Co. of Dallas, Texas, underground parking concrete work, and precast concrete work. The interior shared spaces and central core travertine, terrazzo, tilework, underlying concrete structure, and exposed concrete basement parking ramp also reflect high quality workmanship.

The Financial Center retains its integrity of feeling, providing a sense of time and place through its Late Modern International Style exterior design and high quality finishes in its vestibules and central lobby and central elevator lobby, shared central circulation and tower elevator lobbies, and exposed structure underground parking. The complex would be readily recognizable to all those who collaborated to create the Financial Center complex.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Significance

The Financial Center at 606-666 Walnut Street and 207 Seventh Street, Des Moines, Iowa, is locally significant in the area of architecture. Developed as the state's tallest skyscraper to be built in 50 years, the Financial Center is the city's most prominent example of the Late Modern International Style of architecture. The Financial Center embodies the style's principle tenets of asymmetrical massing, emphasis of volume, use of industrial material, and functionality over ornament, as designed and built by architect Phoenix-based Russell McCaleb, AIA, and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co., with the east wing detailed by the local firm of Lynch, Payne, Champion, Bernabe, Inc., as constructed by local contractor Weitz Co. The tower rises from an asymmetrical plinth consisting of two wings that are differentiated to reflect the two different financial institutions that anchored the complex. Volume is emphasized with the rhythmic verticality of tapered precast concrete and formed aluminum fins and subtle patterns in the curtain wall glass repeating on all four sides of the 25-story tower and echoing with variation on the two- and three-story plinth wings. Form follows function with the creamy white painted industrial concrete and aluminum mullion fins shading the recessed curtain wall of non-reflective tinted bronze insulated glazing and insulated spandrel glass; the overall effect is to reduce glare and solar gain, increasing tenant comfort and reducing air conditioning load. The creamy white and non-reflective bronze finishes, terminating at flat roofs behind broad perimeter concrete parapet walls with recessed shadow line, contrasted with surrounding buildings and made the Financial Center a stand-out beyond its height. The Financial Center realized the ideals of a modern banking and office high rise, adding status as well as stature to the downtown skyline, while also demonstrating progress and vitality during Des Moines' 1970s post-interstate freeway era of central business district redevelopment. Notably, the Financial Center appears to be the first downtown Des Moines private office high rise to offer underground parking and incorporate fire suppression to meet a new city fire code for high rise buildings. In addition, the Financial Center appears to be the first private office high rise to incorporate planned accommodation for an interior skywalk route. Other key features of the Financial Center complex include a central circulation and service core with eight elevators divided into two banks for more efficient service to top floors; mechanical systems on each floor to provide tenants with variable control; additional west wing bank circulation core with two additional private elevators, rear stairs, and file conveyor system; and a flexible floor plate and concrete floor systems built to accommodate the weight of bank vaults and other specialized bank equipment. These features defined the Financial Center as the most modern skyscraper in Des Moines upon its completion, differentiating it from earlier downtown office buildings and establishing new standards for future office development that followed. The period of significance for architecture is 1972 to 1974, being the period of construction.

The Financial Center is further historically significant for its role in local community planning and development. The Financial Center is strongly associated with its major tenant, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, which as the premier and largest bank in Iowa at the time of construction was a leading force for downtown Des Moines economic redevelopment during the 1970s. Prior to the Financial Center's announced construction, public opinion of downtown Des Moines plummeted as businesses left for new suburban locations made readily accessible by the recently completed interstate freeway

TALLEST IN IOWA

Plan 25-Story D.M. Financial Center

By Gary Heinlein

Plans to build a \$21-million, 25-story financial office building in downtown Des Moines—a building that would be Iowa's tallest—were unveiled Tuesday.

The building, to be called The Financial Center, would house the offices of both the Iowa Des Moines National Bank and the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, which would expand from its present location at Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street and the Des Moines National Bank, which would move from its present location at Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street.



DAVID H. LINDBECK, president of the Des Moines National Bank.

The new building would occupy just over a half-block. The site would include the site of the former Davidson Furniture

MAP AND PHOTO of proposed new downtown financial center. Picture Page

and Loan parking lot south of the Davidson site and the site of a two-story structure known as the Fleming Building Annex, just east of the Davidson site.

The proposed building would front on Walnut and extend eastward from the Seventh Street corner to the Fleming Building at Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street. It would extend southward the entire block along Seventh Street between Walnut and Mulberry Streets.

Vertical Design

The dark-bronze, vertical-de-

Iowa-Des Moines, D.M. Savings Venture A 'First' for State

Building—

Continued from Page One

is a 25-story office building under construction in Cedar Rapids. It is being built by the Trans-America Investment Group of Tulsa, Okla., and will be occupied mostly by the Iowa Electric Light and Power Co.

The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank would occupy the west wing of the two-story base and the first seven stories of the



RICHARD L. RYAN, president of the Des Moines National Bank.

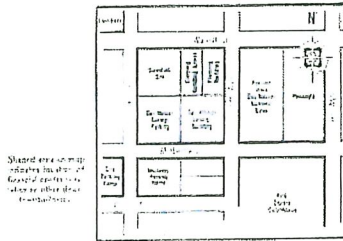


JOHN E. FITZGIBBON, president of the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association.

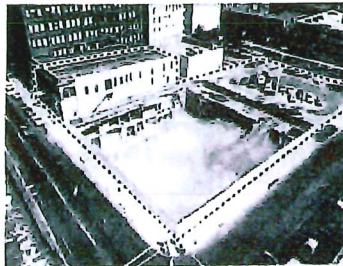
contribution to the Des Moines business community.

Figure: Front page coverage announced the 25-story Financial Center project. The joint bank and savings and loan Financial Center project was called "a first" for the state of Iowa when announced in 1972, as attested by these headlines from a long article about the project. (Des Moines Tribune, July 6, 1972: 1, 5)

\$21-Million Financial Complex



Shared area of city square located at corner of Walnut and Seventh Streets.



Above is an artist's concept of the proposed \$21-million, 25-story financial center at the corner of Walnut and Seventh Streets. The west wing, which will house the offices of the Des Moines National Bank, the east wing will house the offices of the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association.

The location of the proposed financial center—located southeast from the intersection of Walnut and Seventh Streets—is the site of the former Davidson Furniture and Loan building. The former Davidson building site is shown in the sketch. The Fleming Building Annex, which is shown in the sketch, is located at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street. The Fleming Building Annex is shown in the sketch. The Fleming Building Annex is shown in the sketch.

Figure: The front page coverage announcing the 25-story Financial Center project included a map of the site, photo of the recently excavated site, and architect's rendering of the complex. (Des Moines Tribune, July 6, 1972: 1, 5, 20)

loop. The \$21 million Financial Center project—when announced it was the highest dollar private downtown Des Moines office construction project in the post-war era—set a new local standard for investment in the city's central business district. Located within the city's new downtown redevelopment zone, the Financial Center was designed as a linchpin in the nascent skywalk system, intended to invigorate the commercial business district. The Financial Center project was noted as the state's first

joint development project coordinated by two competing financial institutions, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association; cooperation allowed for a larger unified complex dedicated to modern banking and Class A professional office space. And as the most expensive and largest private office high rise development when announced, the Financial Center helped spark additional redevelopment. The Financial Center continues to reflect the legacy of Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association and their vision for downtown Des Moines in the 1970s. The period of significance for community planning and development is 1972 to circa 1979, being the period of construction and a concentrated era of downtown redevelopment influenced by Iowa-Des Moines National Bank.

Architectural Significance: Financial Center Architectural Features

The Financial Center is an excellent expression of Late Modern International Style skyscraper construction. As an example of high rise bank office tower property type, it reflects its era of construction. The primary aspects of the property type are the asymmetrical plinth, comprised of three-story east wing and two-story west wing, and the slab-type tower centered on the west wing that arises from ground floor to the full 25-story height. The tower and surrounding two-story west wing are clad in glass curtain wall set behind concrete and aluminum mullion fins, which continue to broad perimeter concrete parapet walls, expressing the flat roofs beyond. The Financial Center was the tallest high rise to be built in 50 years in Iowa and embraced the Late Modern International Style, with vertical emphasis provided by the fins and patterns within the curtain wall. As the first skyscraper built in decades, it was the first to incorporate a new fire suppression requirement for improved life safety. The tower also incorporated underground parking in what appears to be the first such example for a downtown private commercial tower. In addition, the Financial Center planned accommodations for an interior skywalk route, and appears to have been the first such building in Des Moines to do so. Finally, the Financial Center incorporated an efficient, flexible floor plate with compact circulation and service core, plus reinforced concrete floors able to take the loads of bank vaults and heavy early computer equipment. With these features, the Financial Tower represents a distinct turning point in downtown high rise commercial architecture in Des Moines.

Defined as the state's tallest skyscraper at time of construction, the use of Late Modern International Style architecture—strong vertical lines with contrasting horizontal lines of concrete, glass, and metal—created a recognizable landmark. The Financial Center as the state's tallest and most expensive office high rise upon completion in 1973 to 1974 was so recognizable that no signage was placed on the complex save for the canopies and an interior sign within the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association vestibule/atrium. In eclipsing the 1924 Equitable Building as tallest building, the Financial Center repeated the same strategy employed by Equitable, using the impressive tower as a way of telegraphing the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank's presence and importance in downtown Des Moines and beyond. As noted in historian Joseph Frazier Wall's history of competitor Bankers Life, *Policies and People*: "No other company in the state had such a magnificently impressive advertising billboard [as the Equitable Building]. Although the company occupied less than a one third of the building, it was still in the public's mind the "Equitable Building." Any insurance company that could spend that much on a building and occupy that much space must be as solid as Prudential's Rock of Gibraltar. Bankers Life had nearly twice as much insurance in force in 1925 as did Equitable of Iowa, but nine out of ten people in Des Moines if asked what was the city's largest insurance company, would have answered without hesitation, "Why Equitable, of course." (Wall: 93) In the same way, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank telegraphed its size and importance to the community via its location with the state's tallest tower, the Financial Center.

Developer David Murdock and his nationally active team of architect Russell McCaleb and general contractor Henry C. Beck Co., plus Phoenix-based engineers were adept at modern movement mid-rise and high-rise office tower design and construction. A post-war developer who began his career building houses in Phoenix, David Murdock quickly and very successfully moved into commercial development—by 1961 *The Saturday Evening Post* profiled Murdock as "the most spectacular" of the new young millionaires of Phoenix for his ambitious real estate development. (*The Saturday Evening Post*, "The New Millionaires of Phoenix," September 30, 1961: 26-32) To ensure quality design and construction, Murdock employed a specialized technical team based in Phoenix of Henry C. Beck Co., architect Russell McCaleb, AIA, and engineers. Active nationally, general contractor and project coordinator Henry C. Beck Co. specialized in constructing skyscrapers and other technically challenging building

projects such as sports complexes and the Cape Canaveral launch complex. Murdock's relationship with the nationally active Henry C. Beck Co. began with his first skyscraper project, a 20-story tower in Phoenix begun in 1959; Henry C. Beck Co. opened a Phoenix office for the job. The collaboration between Murdock and the Phoenix office of Henry C. Beck Co. continued through at least the early 1970s and produced at least 17 projects; it appears that the Des Moines Financial Center was one of the largest and tallest high rises Henry C. Beck Co. built for Murdock. (Beck Group) Review of period newspaper coverage shows Murdock regularly completed projects where the office tower was the city's or state's tallest such building. Murdock's portfolio included mid- and high-rise buildings in the southwest, various Midwestern cities, as well as California and Baltimore, among other locations; some buildings he sold, others he leased and managed.

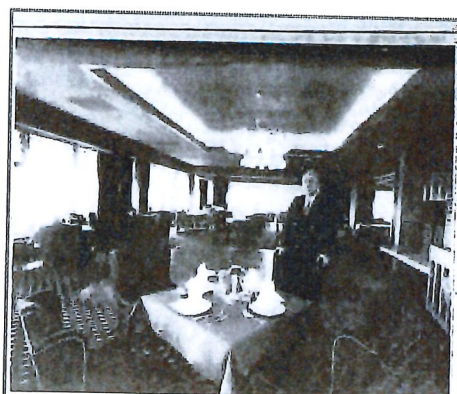


Figure: August 1974 post-completion photograph, view looking south from across Walnut Street. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Beck Group archives)

For Murdock, McCaleb often employed vertical fins to provide a variety of distinctive vertical designs based in functionality—dimensional fins provided shade to reduce glare and solar gain through the windows. The use of fins can be found on Murdock's first financial center project, the 1960s Phoenix Financial Center. Window glare and solar heat gain and loss were problems that plagued some earlier modernistic office buildings and high rise projects, including some in Des Moines. (James 2017) For thermal performance and tenant comfort, architect McCaleb's Financial Center curtain wall employed insulated "twindows" with environmentally friendly insulated "twindows," with non-reflective tinted bronze glazing on the exterior and clear glass on the interior, inset behind one-and-a-half-foot-deep projecting vertical mullion fins painted creamy white. (McCaleb) The Financial Center tower's use of windows on all four sides provided for well-lit interiors and commanding views attractive to tenants.

Flexible floor plates allowed for easily reconfigurable tenant buildout outside of the central core. The west wing and tower were developed with the shared center vestibule, lobby, and elevator lobby, plus upper floor central circulation and service cores. These cores contained finished elevator lobbies with four elevators (except for P1 parking level, ground floor, and floor 13, which service all eight main elevators), with 25-floor mail chute, women's and men's tiled restrooms with marble thresholds, mechanical rooms, and electrical and telephone chases. The reinforced concrete floors supported by squared concrete ceiling beams and columns, accommodated bank vaults and heavy equipment including early computers. For the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, a special rear circulation core was designed

through floor 9, with two additional elevators, rear egress stair, and a file conveyor through floor 5. (McCaleb) Developer Murdock set aside floor 25 for use as the private Embassy Club, with restaurant and bar relocated from the Hotel Fort Des Moines to provide a convenient meeting place for Financial Center tenants to take clients and discuss business outside of the conference room. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Embassy Club Moves Up in the World," April 19, 1975: 16)



The Embassy Club Moves Up In the World



Figures: Financial Center amenities included the top floor club and underground parking with fire suppression. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Embassy Club Moves Up in the World," April 19, 1975: 16; Jennifer Irsfeld James, 2020)

Modern fire suppression, concrete fire stair towers, and mechanical systems on each floor for tenant-controlled heating and cooling provided safety and comfort. The 25-story Financial Center appears to be the first downtown Des Moines private office high rise to install an automatic fire extinguishing system. In January 1973, a few months after construction had begun on the Financial Center, the Des Moines City Council passed an ordinance requiring specialized fire suppression systems in high-rise buildings. The ordinance was requested by Fire Chief Lee Williams in response to new high-rise construction in Des Moines including the Financial Center and following a 1972 fatal fire in a 16-story building in New Orleans; the Des Moines fire department's equipment could only reach up to seven stories. In reporting about the ordinance, which mandated sprinklers for all new construction of five stories or more, or 65 feet taller and above, the *Des Moines Register* reported that the 25-story Financial Center would include the required sprinkler equipment. (*Des Moines Register*, "High-Rise Fire System Rule Voted," January 16, 1973: 3)

The Financial Center Complex also provided underground parking, and appears to be the first downtown Des Moines private office high rise to do so. The city council in 1972 amended an ordinance allowing construction of the underground parking ramp over former alleys and beneath sidewalks, and later negotiated a lease with Murdock for the use of certain subterranean land. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Sell City Parking Garage," June 27, 1972: 3) The two-story subterranean parking ramp extends beneath both the east and west wings, plus leased space beneath sidewalks, to provide 260 parking spaces. Previously Des Moines leaders had considered the benefits of underground parking beginning in the immediate post-war era, as downtown vehicle congestion worsened; and although a municipal downtown underground parking ramp was proposed and previously architect Mies van der Rohe proposed underground parking in his initial 1959 design for the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines, the higher costs for underground construction and lower land prices (as compared to van der Rohe's adopted city of Chicago) generally led to above-ground municipal ramps and surface parking lots as the norm. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "City Council to Eye 'Same Old Problems' in '47," January 1, 1947: 3; *Des Moines Tribune*, "New D.M. Building To Be Designed by van der Rohe," March 2, 1959: 1; James 2017) However, future office high rise projects including the 1975 36-story Ruan Center and 1991 44-story 801 Grand Avenue would be among those that included underground parking as an amenity. In addition, the Financial Center appears to be one of the first, if not the first, downtown new construction project to plan for an interior skywalk connection, as will be further discussed below.

Architectural Significance: National and Local Central Business District Bank Architecture Trends

Prior to the Great Depression, the banking industry used monumental stone and masonry architecture to portray security and wealth, as detailed by scholar Charles Belfoure in his study of bank architecture, *Monuments to Money: The Architecture of American Banks*. The state's largest bank, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, constructed the city's last major pre-World War II bank building in 1932. The five-story Art Deco stone bank building was constructed as a skyscraper base that could accommodate a future tower, which was never built due to the Great Depression and World War II. Founded in 1875 and grown over time in part through mergers, in 1929, the institution adopted its name Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Trust Company with a three-way merger of the city's largest banks (Iowa National Bank, Des Moines Savings Bank and Trust Company, and Des Moines National Bank). At the same time, bank stockholders voted to affiliate the new merged bank with the Northwest Bankcorporation ("Banco"), a Minneapolis-based holding company then with a chain of more than 30 Midwestern banks. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Iowa-Des Moines National Bank: Des Moines on Bancorporation Map," September 13, 1929: 12) This affiliation with combined resources among the participating banks proved invaluable in the face of the Great Depression, and allowed the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank to thrive and even expand, building the aforementioned 5-story Art Deco facility at Sixth Avenue and Walnut Street (remains in use by a different bank). By the time construction supplies were available after World War II, architecture styles had changed and the 20-story skyscraper tower was never built.



A photo from a 1959 brochure for the newly installed motor bank at Iowa-Des Moines National Bank (today Wells Fargo). Photo Credit: Wells Fargo Corporate Archives.

Figure: In 1959 Iowa-Des Moines National Bank added a drive-through "motor bank" using modern movement architecture designed by local firm Brooks-Borg, as seen in this photo from a 1959 brochure about the motor bank. (Courtesy of Wells Fargo corporate archives)

During the Great Depression, fortress-like banks became associated with loss and anger at the industry, as documented by Belfoure. And so after World War II, the banking industry readily adapted "glass-and-steel modernism" to portray a new image of transparency and customer service. Belfoure notes that banks across the country remodeled or built new facilities in the early post-war era, with modernistic drive-through additions one way that banks with older existing facilities put forth a modern façade. (Belfoure: 244-273) In downtown Des Moines, savings and loan "thrifts" and banks employed modernism for new construction and remodeling. The best extant example is the 1959 to 1962 Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines building (601 Grand Avenue, NRHP). The savings and loan commissioned master architect Mies van der Rohe to design a monumental banking hall with upper offices; recessed on the corner site with a granite-paved plaza, the three-story building completed employed a grid for the glass, stone, and steel building. Also in 1959, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank added a drive through bank connected via underground tunnel to its building; the design by local firm Brooks-Borg featured a distinctive roof over five teller lanes, which the bank promoted as a new modern face. Des Moines Saving and Loan, founded in 1916, moved into the 1913 12-story Hippee Building in 1944. By 1963, the thrift had reoriented the façade to the rear, where unadorned brick predominated, a modern drive-through incorporated new technology, and an adjoining surface parking lot provided customers with predictable access. (Des Moines Savings and Loan 1963)

The prosperous 1960s brought two new trends in bank architecture: the aesthetic of combining concrete and glass, and construction of downtown slab-shaped skyscrapers with banking halls and offices,

plus leasable tenant space, to anchor and improve urban financial districts, as noted by Belfoure. In the early 1960s Iowa-Des Moines National Bank watched as smaller competitor Central National Bank hired the prominent architecture firm of SOM (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) to design a high-rise granite-clad tower—only to walk away from the design as costs rose dramatically during planning and as the downtown Des Moines business district emptied as new suburban business locations boomed. Instead, Central National Bank paired with out-of-state developers, who brought in a Chicago architecture firm to design a shorter, less expensive 14-story Miesian tower on a low plinth, clad in black metal and gray-tinted single-pane glazing, with a rear parking ramp ringed by ground-floor commercial spaces. (*Des Moines Register*, “Bank Plans D.M. Building of 14 Stories,” October 18, 1964) While the project was hailed as the first modern office high-rise building to be constructed in Des Moines since the 1931 Art Deco Des Moines Building, the loss of such a prominent architecture firm and the downsizing of the tower gave the project an air of diminishment. Meanwhile, after the nine-story Davidson’s department store at the southeast corner of Seventh and Walnut streets closed in 1964, Des Moines Savings worked for several years to secure purchase for the two parcels split among more than 100 fractional owners, which it completed in 1968. The turn-of-the-20th-century brick store sat mostly vacant, however, until 1971 and was held up as an embarrassing example of the urban decay in downtown Des Moines. A lengthy 1970 *Des Moines Tribune* newspaper story entitled “A Vacant 9-Story Building: It Stands as a Focal Point to Business Area’s Ills,” chronicled the pessimistic outlook banks and businesses held for the future of downtown Des Moines. (*Des Moines Tribune*, “A Vacant 9-Story Building: It Stands as a Focal Point to Business Area’s Ills,” July 7, 1970: 13)

During the early 1970s, new national bank design trends emerged, with the move toward reduced transparency and boxlike rather than sculptural shapes, reflecting changing tastes and a desire to conserve energy. (Belfoure: 265-273) These trends are reflected to a degree in the Financial Center design. Both the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan Association had been planning separate new construction projects since the 1960s. Des Moines Savings and Loan announced two different, but never built, low-rise bank concepts for the newly acquired land along Seventh Street between Walnut and Mulberry streets. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank began planning a high rise office tower in the 1960s, bank president John Fitzgibbon announced in 1970 that that the state’s largest bank would build the state’s tallest tower—projected as a 20-story skyscraper—with details promised in the future. When the details emerged in 1972, the 25-story Financial Center was worth the wait.

Community Planning and Development Significance: Financial Center Impact on Downtown Des Moines
The Financial Center is historically significant for its role in local community planning and development. The Financial Center complex is strongly associated with its major tenant, the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, which as the premier and largest bank in Iowa at the time of construction was a leading force for economic redevelopment in the city during the 1970s. In addition, the Financial Center is associated with David and Gabriele Murdock and the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. The 1972 to 1974 Financial Center project played a critical role in downtown Des Moines redevelopment, providing investment and creating high quality banking and office space that revived confidence in the relevance of the downtown Des Moines central business district. The \$21 million Financial Center project was the highest dollar private downtown Des Moines office construction project and created the tallest building in Iowa to be built in 50 years—setting new local standards for investment. Construction of the Financial Center provided optimism and confidence in the future of downtown Des Moines in an era of unprecedented corporate flight from downtown to the suburbs, spurred in part by the 1968 completion of the metropolitan area’s interstate freeway loop. (Elbert) Other skyscrapers would follow in the 1970s through 1990, influenced by the Financial Center.

A Vacant 9-Story Building

IT STANDS AS FOCAL POINT OF BUSINESS AREA'S ILLS

(This is the second of three articles examining the state of downtown Des Moines, its problems and its future.)

By Arnold Garson

THE 9-story-plus room often hanging from the building doesn't hold up any more, but it still identifies the structure, "Davidson's."

The nine-story Davidson store at the southeast corner of Seventh and Walnut Street closed in 1964 and the building has been nearly empty since.

The brick exterior has blackened with age. Inside, paint is peeling, plaster is crumbling, floor tiles are broken and crumbling.

To save downtown businessmen interviewed by The Tribune, the Davidson building is available of much that all downtown Des Moines.

The insurance company executive put it this way:

"When you see a building like that at the lowest interest rate in Des Moines just sitting there for as long as it has, you kind of lose some respect for the concept of downtown as the heart of the city."

"Something really big" and a personal commitment to "do something good for downtown" that has caused Ryan to delay for two years.

Now, he predicts that it will be at least one more year, maybe even three years, before anything begins to happen at the southeast corner of Seventh and Walnut Street.

With all of the problems involved in such development — money, land assembly, uncoordinated ownership, the need for local commitment and leadership — realtor Arthur S. Kirk, a specialist in commercial real estate, says, "It is a wonder, not that redevelopment takes so long, but that it can be accomplished anywhere downtown."

First Secretary that the No. 1



The long-empty Davidson store building at Seventh and Walnut.

business leaders believe that in Des Moines, the problem has been complicated by the example of what local developers can accomplish. The Franco decision is size, raise the money people were saying they wouldn't build downtown. However — As I pointed, however — saying that they wouldn't build downtown. However —

Figure: The corner of Seventh and Walnut was pinpointed as a problem area for downtown Des Moines. (Des Moines Tribune, "A Vacant 9-Story Building," July 7, 1970: 13)

By 1970, the long-vacant nine-story former Davidson's Department Store at the southeast corner of Seventh and Walnut streets had become a source of embarrassment for the downtown. Walnut Street was no longer the top retailing center for the city, with specialty and department stores departing for suburban locations such as the 1971 Valley West Mall or closing altogether. The Des Moines Savings and Loan Association eventually acquired the Davidsons building, after working through two ownership groups with more than 100 fractional owners. In 1973 public opinion about downtown as measured by the *Des Moines Tribune's* Metro Poll showed metro residents were out of the habit of coming downtown and preferred suburban shopping. (*Des Moines Tribune*, August 20, 1973: 1, 5) The city council member who would go on to become mayor during the 1970s, Richard Olson, urged the local business community to step up action and adopt a "we can do it" attitude. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "A Vacant 9-Story Building," July 7, 1970: 13)

On this very same corner, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank president and chairman John Fitzgibbon saw a different possibility. Fitzgibbon is credited with bringing to bear the Financial Center as a \$21 million 25-story private development by David and Gabriele Murdock with Des Moines Savings and Loan Association. The Financial Center melded the half-block land holdings of Des Moines Savings and Loan, the skyscraper tower viability from Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, and additional land plus the turnkey construction and leasing operations of the Murdocks. Des Moines Savings and Loan sold the Murdocks the corner lots for the Financial Center west wing and tower; Murdock sold the savings and loan the interior parcel for the Financial Center east wing, located adjoining the thrift's older quarters and drive through (nonextant); and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank sold its Art Deco bank facility to the Murdocks. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank leased the west wing and the tower through floor 9 from the Murdocks, and Des Moines Savings and Loan developed the above-ground portion of its three-story east wing. A variety of easements and agreements recorded the functional interdependence of the east wing and west wing/tower, including shared design, shared circulation, and shared underground parking. The exterior design unified the Financial Center with non-reflective bronze-tinted glazing recessed behind slender pre-stressed concrete and aluminum vertical fins and topped by broad horizontal precast concrete parapet walls. The shared design concepts continued to the interior vestibule and lobby designs, with use of terrazzo flooring, travertine wall cladding, and finished ceilings. The Murdocks and Iowa-Des Moines National Bank had design review input on the savings and loan layout. (Lynch et al) The west wing's shared central vestibule opened to the shared lobby, with interior access to both banking institutions; beyond shared lobby, the shared central elevator lobby provided elevator access to the east wing's upper stories and basement parking, plus west wing and tower. The

east wing's ground floor shared corridor provided access to the west wing's shared elevator lobby and central lobby underground parking egress door.



Figures: Left, *The Henry C. Beck Co. newsletter from January 1974 noted the Financial Center as "Iowa's Tallest Building" as construction nears completion.* (Beck Group archives) Right, *similar view 2020.* (Jennifer Irsfeld James, 2020)

In an editorial published July 1, 1972, the *Des Moines Tribune* celebrated the Financial Center as a boon for the future of downtown Des Moines:

New Life Downtown

The tallest building in Iowa is going to rise from a site that has become something of a community embarrassment. The old Davidson Furniture Co. building was unoccupied for several years, causing some businessmen to wonder about the vitality of the downtown core.

The old building has been torn down to make way for a \$21 million 25-story financial center on a half block along Seventh Street between Mulberry and Walnut. The new building will have offices for the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank, the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, and other tenants.

The building plans announced by a Los Angeles development firm hardly reflect commercial stagnation. The empty furniture store was an unfortunate happening but it was not a symbol of decline....

At a time when urban planners and city fathers across the country are shaking their heads gloomily about the future, [there is] new-found vigor. It is a happy prospect. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "New Life Downtown," June 8, 1972)

The Financial Center rapidly sparked additional downtown redevelopment. In late 1972, a competing private office tower project was announced by trucking company owner John Ruan: He would build a 36-story-tall skyscraper called "Ruan Center," to become the state's tallest building in Iowa when completed in 1975. Ruan's eponymous project would incorporate a banking hall and offices for Bankers Trust, underground parking, planned skywalk routing, and a top floor private club with restaurant. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan a 36-Story Office-Bank Center in Downtown D.M." December 18, 1972: 3) Within a year's time, Des Moines newspapers reported a downtown building boom. By 1975, the Financial Center and Ruan Center provided downtown with more than 1 million square feet in Class A office space. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "D.M. Office Space Shuffle," March 31, 1975: 1) And additional 1970s projects followed, with Fitzgibbon's involvement, that furthered the downtown redevelopment spirit, turning the tide of public opinion.

A decade after the Financial Center's construction announcement, new high-rise projects were underway, prompting the *Des Moines Register* to report in 1982 on the historical importance of the Financial Center's project to downtown redevelopment:

Little more than a decade ago, Des Moines didn't have reason to worry about an office space glut. Except for the [1967] Central National Bank Building, little new office space had been built since World War II and civic leaders were worried about keeping downtown alive at all. But in the early 1970s, the 25-story Financial Center was completed, quickly followed by the 36-story Ruan Center.... [Appraiser Don] Johnson and others have a more optimistic view for downtown. "You see, downtown is now the place to be," he said. And with plans to expand city parking facilities plus the rapidly growing network of skywalks, Johnson says, the downtown market will continue to improve." (*Des Moines Register*, "Expansions help fill new D.M. offices," October 17, 1982: 52)

Historians Barbara Beving Long Henning and Patricia Beam in their history of Des Moines and Polk County credit the Financial Center with changing the future for downtown Des Moines: "1972 was the bellwether year for change and marked the beginning of a long-sought renaissance of downtown. Announced in that year were plans to construct the 25-story Financial Center and the 36-story Ruan Center. The Civic Center, Botanical Center, and Convention Center also emerged from plans first announced in 1972." (Henning and Beam: 104)

In another community development impact, the Financial Center complex appears to be the first downtown Des Moines new construction project designed to accommodate an interior route for the future skywalk system. As noted in local press, skywalk planning had begun in Des Moines in the early 1970s with plans to connect central business district buildings to above-ground ramps; an alternative model proposed an underground city parking ramp with public park on top, which was not selected. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Back Downtown Plaza Idea," June 8, 1973: 3) The Des Moines skywalk plan was modeled on the 1960s Minneapolis skywalk system, with support from key Des Moines business leaders, including Iowa-Des Moines National Bank with its ties to Minneapolis through Banco. The city planned on federal funding for the early skywalk system, to connect the Financial Center with the Ruan Center as the first phase, but funding challenges caused skywalk construction delays. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Money for Skywalk," March 5, 1976: 16) The Financial Center leaders' commitment to introducing an interior skywalk connection was ratified in a late 1970s agreement between the Murdocks and the heads of the Financial Center financial institutions Iowa-Des Moines National Bank and Des Moines Savings and Loan, plus the ownership of the adjoining Fleming Building (a rear door at the Fleming Building's west wall opens into the Financial Center's east wing vestibule, connecting via stairs or elevator to the skywalk). (Abstract)

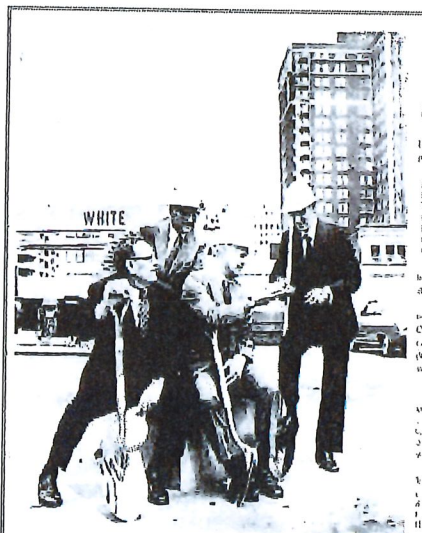
Fitzgibbon also championed redevelopment on additional fronts during the 1970s, including chairing the Greater Des Moines Partnership that supported the downtown redevelopment and backing building a new downtown civic theater, new botanical center, and new open green spaces while removing eyesores. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "These 'Miracles' Lesson for D.M. Revitalization," August 20, 1973: 1) When a bond effort that included a new convention center and civic theater failed, Fitzgibbon took a leadership role in fundraising for the new Civic Center and downtown plaza. With funds successfully raised, the Civic Center was completed by the end of the decade and hailed as a critical element in sparking the next wave of continuing redevelopment, which would include additional high-rise office and residential towers. (Pridmore: 145-146; Elbert 62-63)

Historical Background: Des Moines High Rise History and Financial Center Construction

In Des Moines during the 20th century, businesses and real estate developers constructed office buildings with leasable space clustered in the central business district. Advances in building and elevator technology made taller buildings possible, with the Equitable of Iowa's 19-story brick masonry office tower being the largest such tower built in Iowa, at its completion in 1924. The last major office building to arise was the 1931 14-story Des Moines Building with two-story penthouse on top (405 Sixth Avenue, NRHP), and the last major interwar bank constructed was the previously mentioned 1932 five-story Iowa-Des Moines National Bank—both clad in stone in Art Deco styling. It should be noted that the Iowa-Des Moines Bank building as built was intended to be the base for an approximately 20-story skyscraper, with tower to be added later as space and economy allowed. (Page; Klingensmith) After

these two projects, construction in downtown Des Moines mostly halted during the Great Depression and World War II.

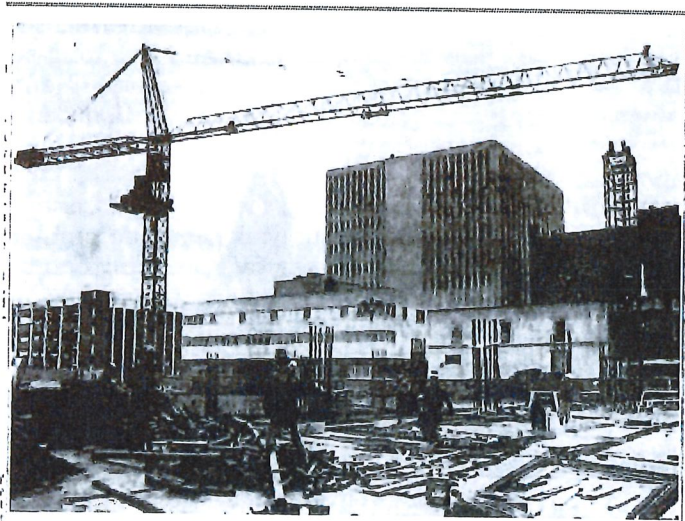
In the post-war era with resumption of construction, modern movement architecture became the preferred expression in downtown Des Moines commercial buildings. Low-rise and mid-rise office buildings, rather than towers, predominated, with the insurance industry investing heavily in home office buildings and smaller banks building new facilities. Two 1960s commercial business district projects incorporated taller building heights and leasable office space: the 14-story Central National Bank building tower completed in 1967 with dark metal and tinted glass was noted as the first modern office tower building constructed in Des Moines since 1931, and the 10-story EMC insurance building completed in the early 1970s employed vertical concrete forms with the upper two stories reserved for mechanical floors. Both of these projects were planned as taller, larger projects that were shortened (floor levels removed) before construction began, based on perceptions of reduced demand for office space and an overall weakening of the downtown Des Moines business district. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "A Vacant 9-Story Building," July 7, 1970: 13)



Participants in groundbreaking ceremonies for the proposed 25-story Financial Center at Seventh Street and Walnut Street Tuesday are left: Alan H. Fitzgibbon, president of Iowa Des Moines National Bank, Richard J. Layton, president of Des Moines Savings and Loan Association, Mayor Richard Olson, and David B. Murdock, president of Marbach Development Co. of Los Angeles, the project developer.

25-Story Building Ceremonies

At the breaking ceremony, Olson, and David B. Murdock, president of Marbach Development Co. of Los Angeles, the project developer.



Ready to Rise in D.M.

The ground is set for place of Seventh and Walnut Streets in downtown Des Moines to enable workmen to begin erecting the 25-story Financial Center of the city. The first "iron structure"—labeled to be "first" with a steel skeleton—scheduled for foundation late

1972. Henry C. Beck Construction Co., of Phoenix, Ariz., has set 20 Cabela architectural firms of Phoenix, and Leitch-Payne Construction Co., of Des Moines, designed the building.

Figures: The 1972 groundbreaking for the Financial Center include the mayor of Des Moines, developer David Murdock and the two financial institution presidents. (Des Moines Tribune, July 11, 1972: 3) Typical newspaper coverage about the Financial Center construction. (Des Moines Register, November 10, 1972: 6)

In contrast, Iowa-Des Moines National Bank leadership saw a need for a landmark skyscraper project that would express progress and confidence in downtown. Preparation for construction began prior to the official announcement, with the summer 1971 razing of the vacant eight-story masonry Davidson Department Store building, which dated to 1895 and continued as a store until closure in 1964. The Des Moines Savings and Loan Association announced it would build a low-rise bank building on the corner of Seventh and Walnut streets in fall 1971, but negotiations with Iowa-Des Moines National Bank led to creation of the much larger Financial Center. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Plan: Raze, Rebuild On Davidson Site," July 2, 1971: 1) The project was announced in late spring 1972; newspaper coverage of the project to build Iowa's tallest high rise included newspapers around Iowa plus Phoenix-based Arizona Republic. (*Arizona Republic*, "Murdock to build in Iowa," June 11, 1972: 56) In early June the City Council approved vacating portions of the alleys to accommodate construction of the 25-story Financial Center. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Ask City to Vacate Alleys," June 9, 1972: 34) The Financial Center project broke ground in July, with the Mayor Richard Olson, Murdock, Fitzgibbon, and Richard Bryan of Des Moines Savings and Loan participating. The *Des Moines Tribune* reported that at groundbreaking, "Mayor Olson hailed the new project as a "continuation of confidence" that businessmen and

retail merchant have in downtown Des Moines and in rebuilding the city's core area." (*Des Moines Tribune*, 25-Story Building Ceremonies, July 11, 1972: 3) The two daily newspapers kept readers apprised of the tower's construction status with frequent photographs and news updates. Construction progressed generally without interruption, except for some extreme weather.



Figure: Typical newspaper coverage of Financial Center construction, here noting its status as the tallest building in Iowa. (*Des Moines Register*, September 23, 1973: 4C) The two daily newspapers closely followed the construction process for the Financial Center. (*Des Moines Tribune*, September 7, 1973: 34)

**TOMORROW,
AUGUST 11,
IS MOVING DAY
AT THE
SAVINGS PLACE**



Des Moines Savings and Loan

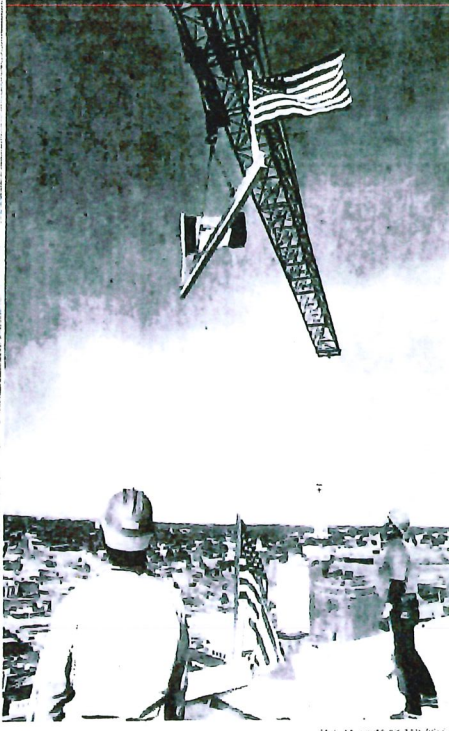
**Our Downtown Office Closed Saturday Only;
All Branches Open 'Til Noon**

The new Savings Place is a new big store...
The new Savings Place is a new big store...
The new Savings Place is a new big store...

**Des Moines Savings
and Loan Association**

**THE
SAVINGS
PLACE**

Six-O-Six Walnut



TOPPING OUT

The last beam was lowered to the top of the 25-story Financial Center building at Seventh and Walnut Streets Friday as iron workers Larry Tuttle of 2017 S. E. Falkland Drive (left) and Larry Hindert of 2850 Lower Beaver Road looked on. The tower's final two beams were signed by 3,247 persons before being set in place in a "topping-out" ceremony. The \$21-million Financial Center is to be completed in December.

Figures: Left, The Des Moines Savings and Loan Association used the image of its new downtown office within the Financial Center as part of its marketing materials. (*Des Moines Tribune*, ad, August 10, 1973: 9) Right, Tower topping off ceremony occurred in fall 1973. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Topping Out," October 12, 1973: 1)

Construction for Des Moines Savings and Loan was completed by the time of its August 1973 move. The savings and loan relocated its banking hall, executive offices, and many additional offices to the Financial Center; rear connection with the Hippee Building allowed interior access to additional offices (this interconnection no longer exists). The savings and loan advertised its new banking hall and corporate offices with a sketch of the 606 Walnut Street façade, titled "building our future and yours." (*Des Moines Register*, Des Moines Savings and Loan ads, August 10, 1973: 9; January 17, 1974: 8)

Meanwhile, the Financial Center tower's topping off ceremony occurred in October 1973 and a photograph ran on the front page of the *Des Moines Tribune*, celebrating the accomplishment and noting that nearly 3,250 signatures were added to the final beams. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Topping Out," October 12, 1973: 1) The Financial Center while under construction provided a unique venue for a Junior League fundraising event with developer David Murdock attending and some of the guests seated at tables in the Iowa-Des Moines National Bank vault. (*Des Moines Tribune*, "Junior League Benefit Takes Place," November 20, 1973: 10)

The Financial Center's west wing and tower offices for Iowa-Des Moines National Bank were completed in spring 1974. The project incorporated some 28,000 yards of concrete, 3,250 tons of reinforcing steel, 82,000 feet of lumber, 12 tons of nails, and five acres of glass. In April, working around weather conditions, the bank moved twelve 44-foot-long moving vans of computer equipment and 200 of its employees during one weekend. The following weekend the bank relocated the rest of the 540 employees plus all 7,000 safety deposit boxes and vault holdings, including \$2 million in cash and \$800 million in securities. The bank occupied some 112,000 square feet of space initially through floor 8 and later extending to floor 9. (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, "D.M. bank has new quarters," April 28, 1974: 4-5) The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank used images of the tower in its advertising and marketing

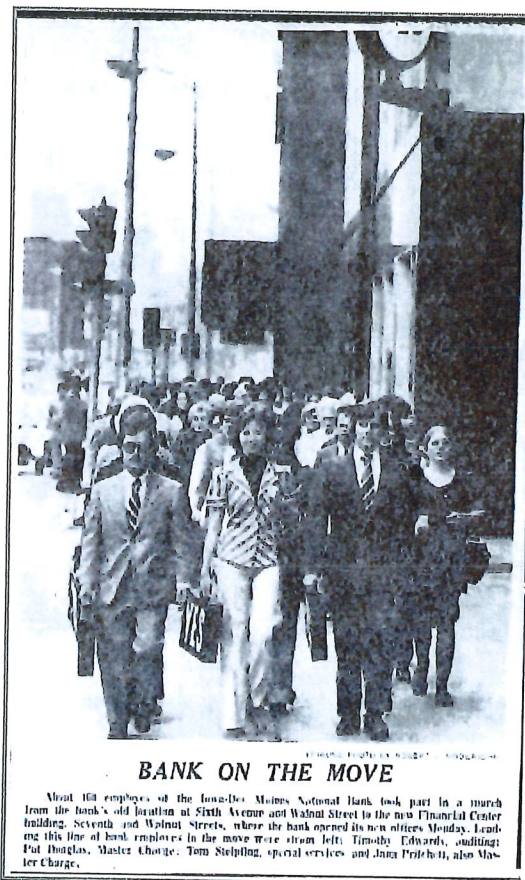


Figure: The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank employees walked in a one-block march west into the Financial Center attracted newspaper coverage. (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, "D.M. bank has new quarters," April 28, 1974) Right: The Iowa-Des Moines National Bank utilized imagery of the Financial Center tower in its advertising and marketing. (*Des Moines Tribune*, April 29, 1974: 8, 18)

Iowa-Des Moines National Bank dedicated the building in 1974 with the bank occupying ground floor through floor 8, except for floor 7. The ground floor housed personal bankers, tellers, vault, savings bonds, and safe deposit department. The second floor included executive offices. The Iowa-Des Moines Trust Division, the largest in the state, occupied third floor: "This division is a major institutional investor, ranking 149th out of over 3,500 full time bank trust departments in terms of assets entrusted for investment management," the bank reported. The fifth floor had computer operations and master charge department, with services to more than 280,000 cardholders and more than 3,600 merchant outlets in Iowa. (Iowa-Des Moines National Bank 1974) Initially the seventh and ninth floors were leased to others; over time these floors and the upper levels of the east wing would become bank offices. With the banking industry and technology changing rapidly, the ability to flexibly reconfigure its leased space allowed the bank to adapt, expand, and redecorate while maintaining its position as the state's largest bank while remaining within the Financial Center.

Postscript: In 1980 the Des Moines Savings and Loan Association changed its name to Midland Financial, and later was merged and moved in response to the savings and loan crisis. Iowa-Des Moines National Bank adopted the name Norwest Bank Des Moines in 1983, part of a Banco system-wide re-branding as a unified bank chain; in the late 1980s Norwest merged with Wells Fargo. In the 1990s the savings and loan retail bank was remodeled into a Walgreens. Wells Fargo vacated the Financial Center in 2019. Developer David Murdock sold the Financial Center in the mid 1980s; the east and west wing/tower parcels have been under common ownership since 2001. (Abstract) With additional downtown high rise construction, the Financial Center now stands as the fourth tallest building in downtown Des Moines.

Historic construction images

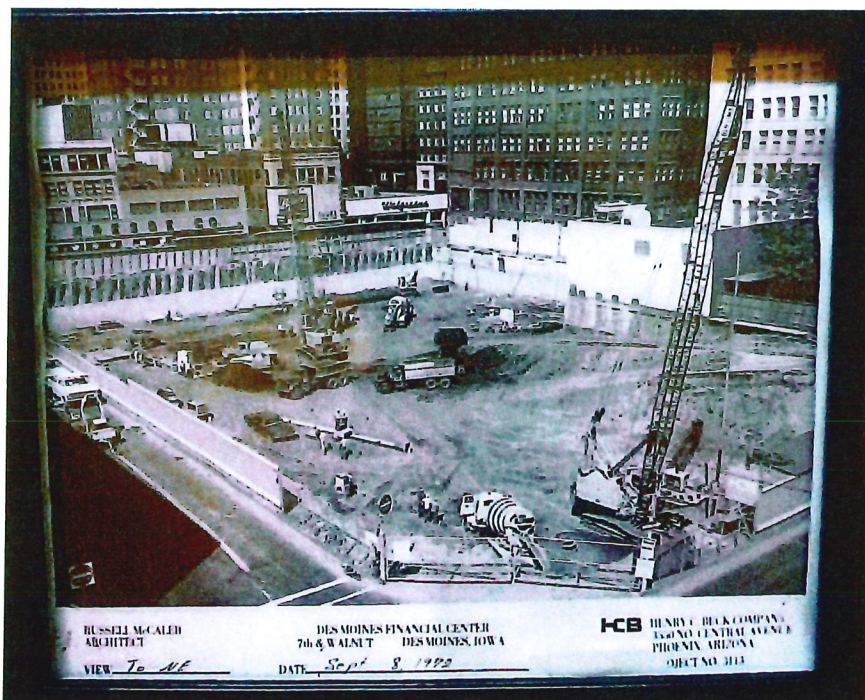


Figure: September 1972 progress photograph shows the site excavation status, view looking northeast from the corner of Seventh and Mulberry streets. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Financial Center files)

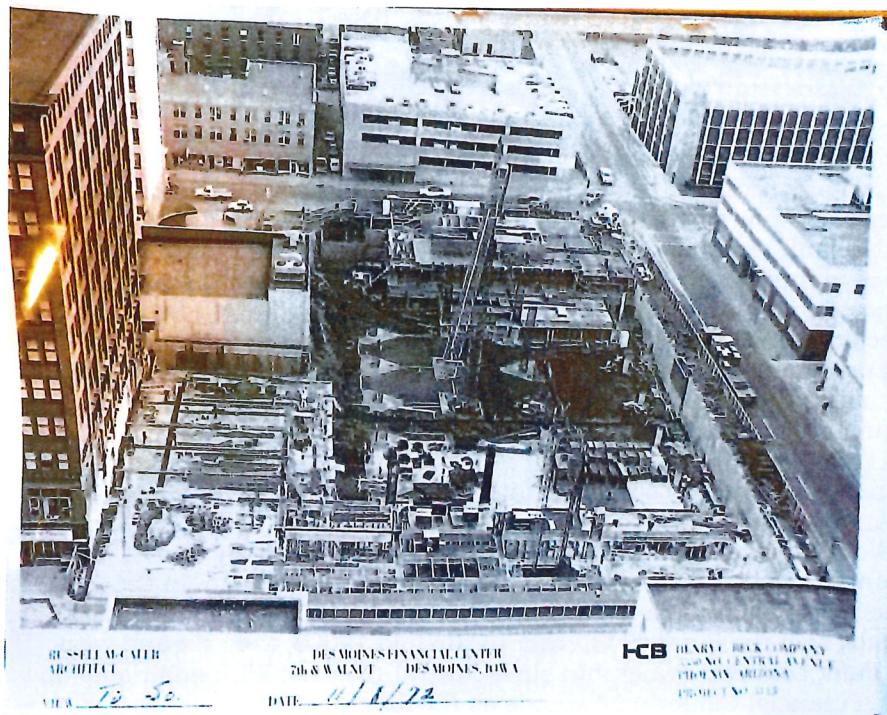


Figure: November 1972 progress photograph shows the construction status of the underground parking ramp, view looking south from across Walnut Street. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Financial Center files)

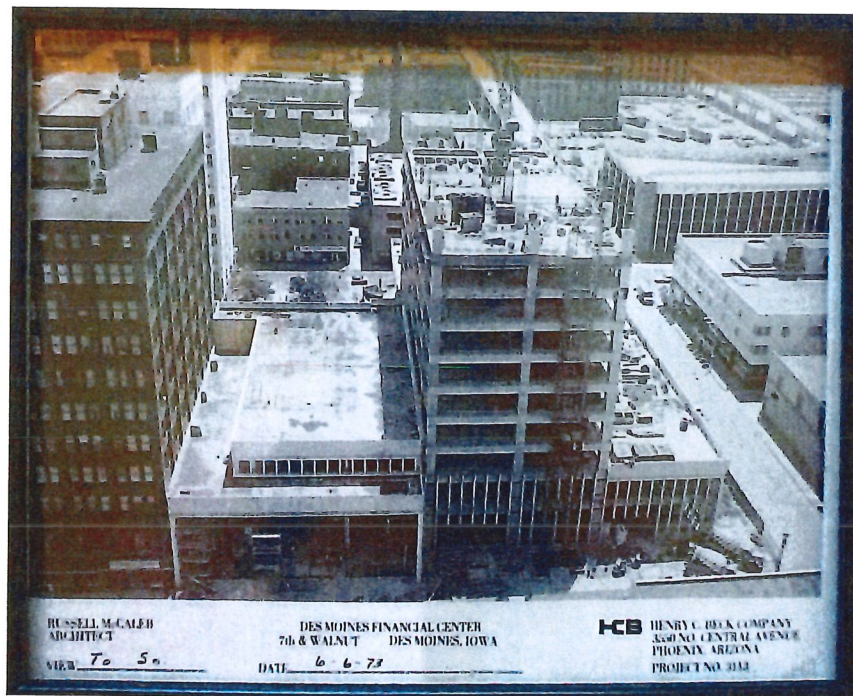


Figure: June 1973 progress photograph shows the construction status, view looking south from across Walnut Street. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Financial Center files)



Figure: February 1974 progress photograph shows the nearly complete project, view looking south from across Walnut Street. Taken by Henry C. Beck Co. (Beck Group archives)

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