

**STAFF REPORT
HISTORIC AND CULTURAL LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CITY OF FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

DATE: April 8, 2024

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9

GENERAL INFORMATION

REQUEST	Recommendation for Designation as a Historic and Cultural Landmark
APPLICANT/AGENT	John Doubleday
LOCATION	115 W 7 th Street
ZONING/ USE (S)	H – Central Business / DUDD Overlay
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION	Individual

REQUEST

The owners request a recommendation to City Council to consider designating the property at 115 W 7th Street as a Historic and Cultural Landmark (HC).

APPLICABLE CITY OF FORT WORTH ZONING ORINANCE PROVISIONS**4.401 Historic Preservation Overlay Districts***(c) Identification and Designation of Cultural Resources*

3. Eligibility for Designation
 - a. Eligibility for HC and HC District Designations.
 - i. Individual Property. An individual property may be designation as HC if it meets the following qualifications:
 1. Two or more of the criteria for significance; and
 2. The necessary criteria for assessing integrity.

Criteria for Historic Significance

1. Is distinctive in character, interest or value, and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.
2. Is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen in the City of Fort Worth.
3. Has been identified as the work of an important architect or master builder whose individual work has contributed to the development of Fort Worth.
8. Is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Antiquities Landmark or an American Civil Engineering Landmark, or is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1952, the building at 115 W 7th Street was the largest commercial building in downtown Fort Worth by square footage and serviced as the headquarters for the Fort Worth National Bank from 1952 until 1974 (Criterion 1); as an example of Mid-Century Modern style of architecture in Fort Worth (Criterion 2); as an example of work from Preston M. Geren Sr., architect and engineer, whose individual work contributed to the development of Fort Worth (Criterion 3); and in 2022 the building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Criterion 8).

In regards to Criterion 1, 115 W 7th Street is prominently located in the heart of downtown Fort Worth. The sixteen-story building has a massive presence as it fronts the south side of West 7th Street, stretching the width of the block between Main Street and Houston Street. West 7th Street is an important corridor connecting downtown with west Fort Worth. Since the early decades of the twentieth century, this street has been lined with many of downtown's most significant commercial, social, and financial institutions. Originally established in 1874 under the name Tidball, Van Zandt and Company and assuming the name Fort Worth National Bank in 1884, it became the city's longest operating and largest bank, assisting businesses and residents with their financial needs. At the time the Fort Worth National Bank was celebrating its move into its new home in 1952, it was the largest bank in Fort Worth and the ninety-third largest bank in the country out of a total of 14,700 banks. More than 300 banks in the Southwest carried correspondent accounts with it. The bank remained one of the largest in the state. The period of significance begins in 1952 when the building was completed. It ends in 1972, acknowledging the bank's continued occupation of the building and corresponding to the National Register's fifty-year guideline.

In regards to Criterion 2, 115 W 7th Street is an example of a post-World War II Modernist skyscraper. The building is composed of three segments. The front section is a symmetrical fifteen-story slab that fronts West 7th Street. Behind the slab is a three- and four-story irregular rectangular-shaped base that fronts Main and Houston Streets. Historically, both the east and west elevations of the base were three stories tall. In 1961, a fourth floor was added on the base's east elevation and a small four-story addition was built at its southeast corner. Rising behind the center of the slab and setback from the base is a tower that rises to sixteen stories. The sixteenth floor of the tower rises above the roof of the fifteen-story slab and is referred to as the penthouse. The tower gives the building a T-shape above the base. The front slab and base feature rust-colored face brick curtain walls whereas the tower's curtain walls are built of a rust colored common brick. The building is largely unadorned although the grouping and alignment of windows and the contrasting color and texture of the Virginia greenstone spandrels on the front slab and base provide visual interest and are a character-defining feature. As with many mid- to high-rise buildings from the mid-twentieth century, its exterior is organized as a two-part vertical block with parapets that lack a cornice or other distinctive features. Instead, they are capped with stainless steel coping.

In regards to Criterion 3, 115 W 7th Street has been identified as the work of an important architect whose individual work has contributed to the development of Fort Worth. The building was designed by Preston M. Geren Sr., Architect and Engineer, a very prominent firm in the city and one that designed numerous buildings for the city's financial institutions between 1950 and 1960. In addition to being a registered architect, he was also a registered engineer. Mr. Geren Sr., was active in professional, civic, and community organizations. Civic work included service as chairman of the City of Fort Worth's Zoning Board of Adjustment from 1940 to 1946. He was a member of the committee which wrote the city's first building code in 1928 and was chairman of the committee that wrote the revised building code which was adopted in 1959. Mr. Geren Sr.

received the City of Fort Worth's Distinguished Service Award in 1951 and 1959, a Distinguished Service Citation from the Texas Construction Council in 1957, and the Loyal Service Award from the Fort Worth Technical Club in 1930. Other notable works from Mr. Geren Sr. are Farrington Field, Colonial Country Club, Landmark Tower, and the Fort Worth Convention Center.

In regards to Criterion 8, 115 W 7th Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although it sustained alterations after the period of significance (1952-1972), the Fort Worth National Bank Building retains strong historic and architectural significance. On May 27, 2020, the National Park Service approved a Part 1 application for historic tax credits, the application demonstrated the building was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Commerce and Criterion C for Architecture at the local level of significance. The City of Fort Worth Historic and Cultural Landmark Commission supported the nomination to the Texas State Board of Review in May 2022, and the National Park Service listed the property on September 9, 2022.

EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The designation of a property must not only be shown to have significance under Zoning Ordinance, but it also must have integrity. Within the concept of integrity for example, the National Park Service criteria recognizes seven aspects that define integrity.

Seven Aspects of Integrity

1. **Location.**
2. **Design.**
3. **Setting.**
4. **Materials.**
5. **Workmanship**
6. **Feeling.**
7. **Association.**

In relation to the Seven Aspects of Integrity:

1. The building is still in its original **location** from when it was constructed in c. 1952.
2. The **design** of the T-shaped 16-story building is generally extant and identifiable. Historically, the base of the building was only three stories high on both the east (Main Street) and west (Houston Street) elevations but in 1961 a fourth floor was added on the east elevation as was a small four-story addition at its south end.
3. The building's original **setting** remains fairly intact with the retention of contemporaneous multi-story commercial buildings. Downtown retains its historic grid pattern with only minor realignments. The streets that border it are still primary circulation corridors in the business district.
4. The property's **materials** appear generally intact. It retains integrity of materials on its exterior, including its brick curtain walls and vertically aligned metal windows that are separated by Virginia greenstone spandrels. Although the exterior of the lower levels of the east, north, and west elevations have been altered with the introduction of new materials in 2011-2012, the texture and color variation between the historic rust-colored brick and greenstone spandrels remain a strong character-defining feature on the upper floors.
5. The building still displays the physical evidence of **workmanship** from 1952 and the 1950s through its brick, Virginia greenstone, and stainless-steel materials.

6. The building retains its **feeling** as a mid-20th century high-rise commercial building.
7. The building also retains its **association** because it is still used as an office building and it is surrounded by other historically relevant high-rise buildings that define the W 7th Street corridor.

FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Eligibility for Designation

The structure meets the following City of Fort Worth criteria for historic designation:

- Criterion 1: Is distinctive in character, interest or value, and exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City of Fort Worth, State of Texas or the United States.
- Criterion 2: Is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen in the City of Fort Worth.
- Criterion 3: Has been identified as the work of an important architect or master builder whose individual work has contributed to the development of Fort Worth.
- Criterion 8: Is designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Antiquities Landmark or an American Civil Engineering Landmark, or is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Integrity

Based on the evidence still extant at the property, the building at 115 W 7th Street sufficiently retains six aspects of integrity including location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Summary

Staff have found evidence that the property meets 4 of the 8 Criteria for Designation. The property also retains its original integrity and the identity for which it is significant. This is consistent with the requirements of the ordinance for Historic & Cultural Landmark properties.

Therefore, staff recommends the following motion:

That the HCLC recommend that City Council consider designating the building at 115 W 7th St as a Historic & Cultural Landmark (HC) and that the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* be used when evaluating any proposed future change to the property.



April 15, 2024

John Doubleday
Fort Worth First National Bank
6250 N River Road
Rosemont II, 60018

RE: HCLC-24-044 - 115 W 7th Street

Dear Mr. Doubleday,

On **April 8, 2024** the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission (HCLC) considered your request for a recommendation to City Council to consider designating the property located at 115 W 7th Street as a Historic & Cultural Landmark (HC) and made the following determinations regarding your properties:

That the HCLC recommend that City Council consider designating the building at 115 W 7th Street as a Historic & Cultural Landmark (HC) and that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties be used when evaluating any proposed future change to the property.

Please contact the Development Services Department if you would like further direction regarding your application and the decision of the HCLC at (817) 392-8000.

Sincerely,

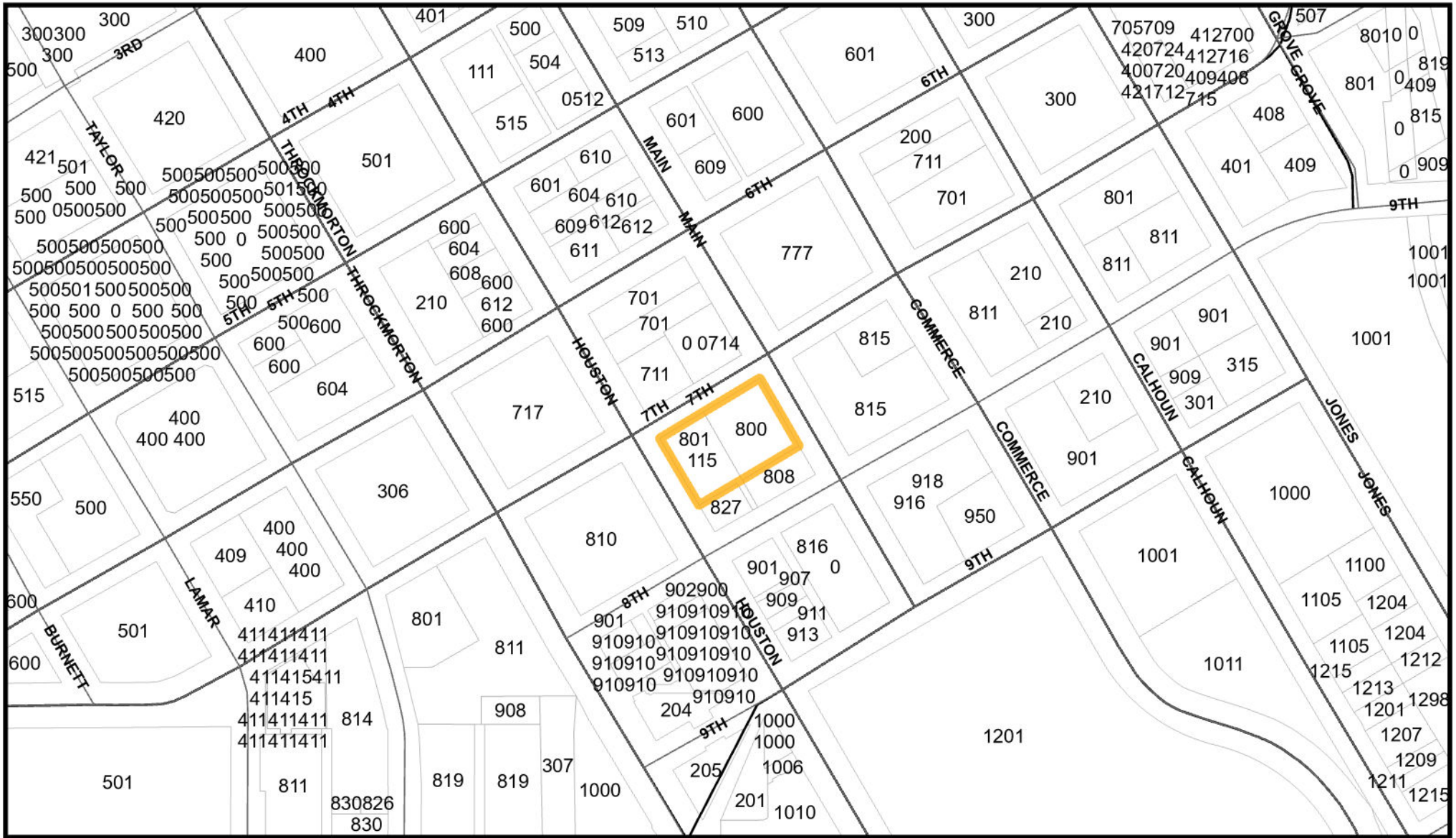
Lorelei Willett
Historic Preservation Officer

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

THE CITY OF FORT WORTH * 200 TEXAS STREET * FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76102-6311
CUSTOMER SERVICE 817-392-7820 * FAX 817-392-8116

Historic Designation

115 W 7th Street



*Individually designated historic property



SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS



Figure 1 Aerial Image of subject property circa 2022



Figure 2 Google Aerial image of 115 W 7th St in 2024



Figure 3 Google Street View of 115 W 7th St circa 2007 before the 2011 exterior renovations to the first and second floors. NWC of 7th and Houston.



Figure 4 Google Street View of 115 W 7th St circa 2022 after the 2011 exterior renovations to the first and second floors. NWC at 7th and Houston. Note the awnings, additional storefront windows, and material changes.



Figure 5 Google Street View of 115 W 7th St circa 2007 before the 2011 exterior renovations to the first and second floors. NEC at 7th and Main St.



Figure 6 Google Street View of 115 W 7th St circa 2022 after the 2011 exterior renovations to the first and second floors. NWC at 7th and Houston. Note the awnings, Oncor signage, additional storefront windows, material changes, ramp and outdoor patio area for a restaurant tenant.



Figure 7 Aerial Image showing the historic context surrounding 115 W 7th St (outlined in blue) and adjacent buildings with designations ranging from Demolition Delay (DD), Historic and Cultural (HC), and Highly Significant and Endangered (HSE).



Figure 8 115 W 7th Street in 1952 (outlined in yellow)

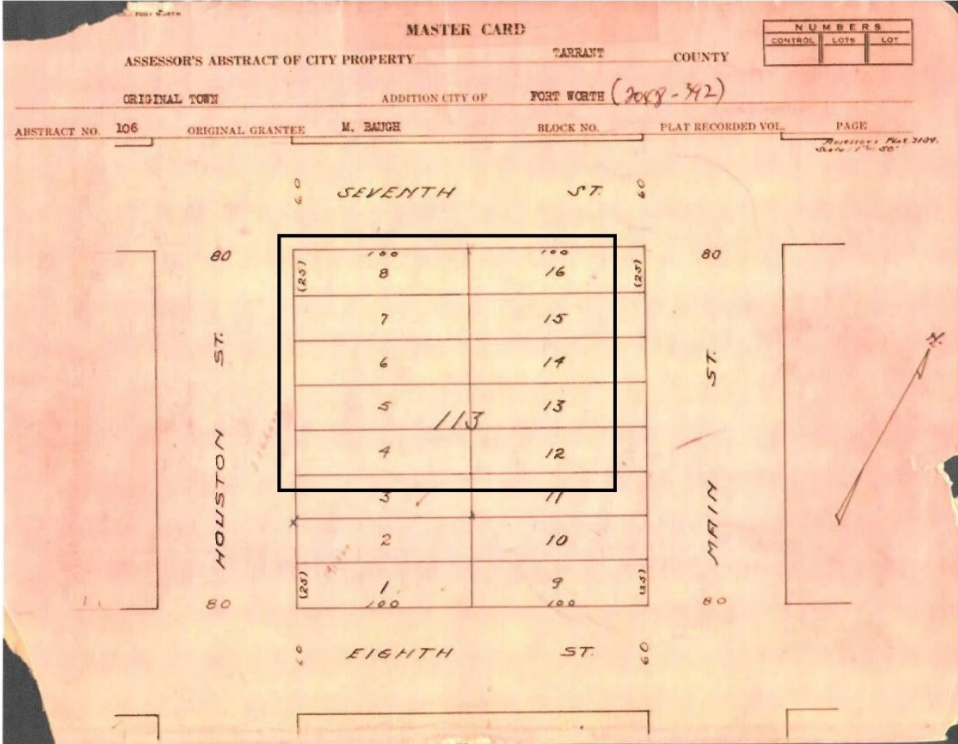


Figure 9 Block 113, Fort Worth Original Town, Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. The Fort Worth National Bank Building occupies Lots 3-8 and 11-16. Deed History Card, Tarrant County Tax Assessor's Office, accessed August 9, 2021 (www.tarrantcounty.com).

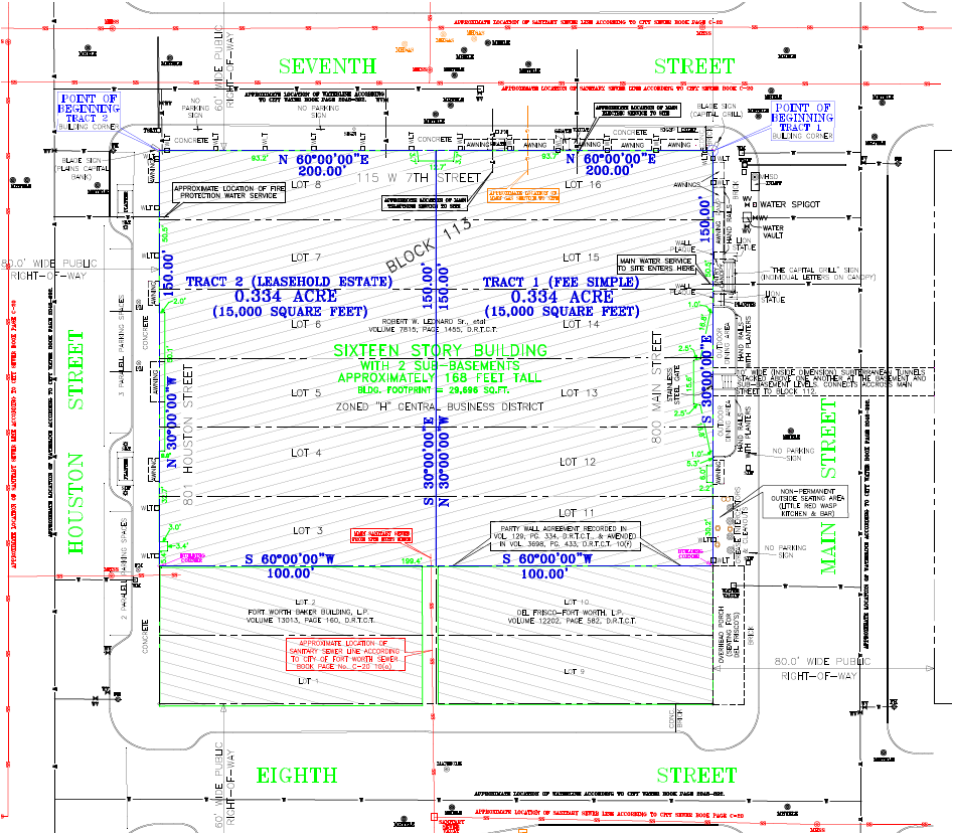


Figure 10 Survey of subject property.

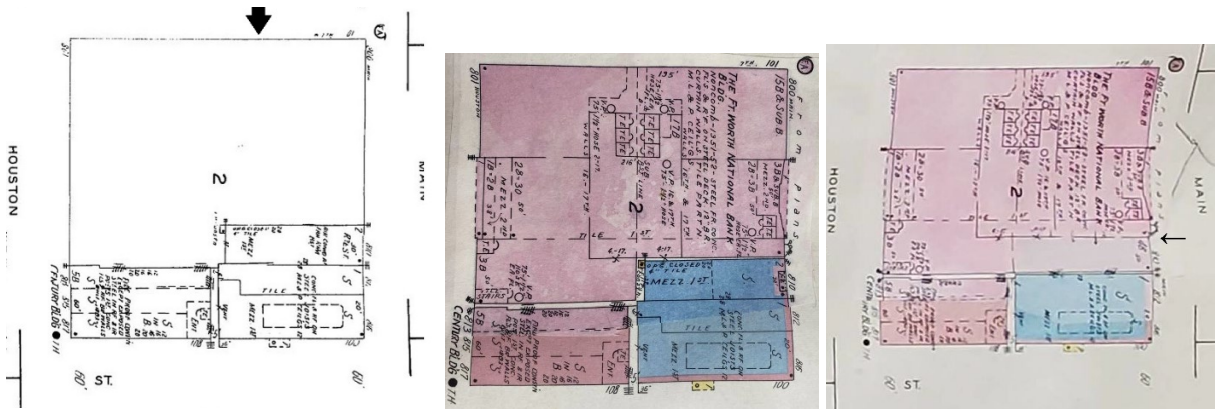


Figure 11 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Co., Fort Worth, 1951, V-1, Bank site from left to right: property cleared of buildings, property with the National Bank building, and property with the addition circa 1961.



Figure 12 Delineation of the three segments of the building: slab, base, and tower. Checkered area of the base indicates the area where a fourth story and a small four-story addition were constructed in 1961. Google Earth Pro image, retrieved October 8, 2021.



Figure 13 View Exterior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. East elevation, looking southwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-3-29. Identifier 20097271.



Figure 14 View Exterior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. East elevation, looking southwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-3-29. Identifier 20097271.



Figure 15 Fort Worth National Bank, 07/31/1951. H. Warren Smith, steel foreman, and Ed Grimes, inspector, ride the beam as the last piece of steel is hoisted into position atop the new Fort Worth National Bank Building. Courtesy, Fort Worth Star-Telegram Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR406-6-457. Identifier 20126776.



Figure 16 View Exterior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. East elevation, looking southwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-3-29. Identifier 20097271.



Figure 17 View Exterior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. East elevation, looking southwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-3-29. Identifier 20097115.



Figure 18 Exterior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. West elevation, Houston Street entrance, looking east. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-592-13. Identifier 20097114.



Figure 19 Two women entering Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1953. North elevation, West 7th Street entrance, looking southeast. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-53-1-43. Identifier 20098421.



Figure 20 Interior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. Banking room, first floor, looking west. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-592-11. Identifier 20096915.



Figure 21 Interior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. Banking room, stairs at west (Houston Street) entrance, first floor, looking southwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-592-9. Identifier 20096925.



Figure 22 Interior of Fort Worth National Bank Building, 1952. Elevator lobby off of West 7th Street entrance, looking west/northwest. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-52-592-10. Identifier 20096914.

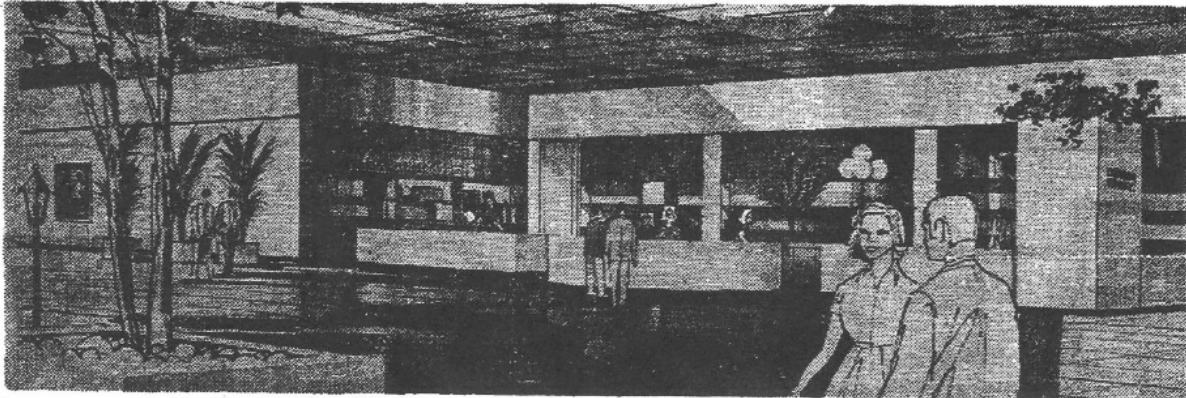


Figure 23 1974 proposed renovation to banking room when Texas Electric Service Company became the primary tenant. Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 28, 1974, E-9.

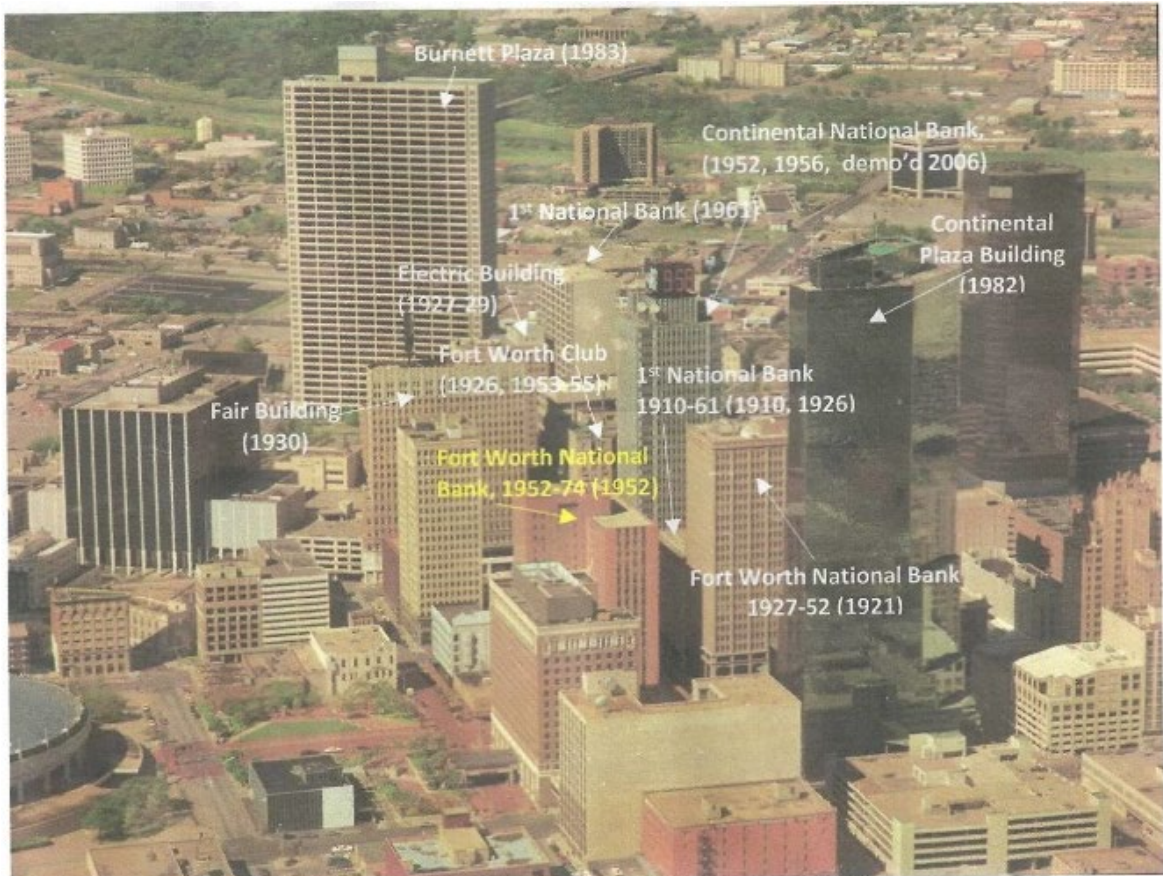


Figure 24 Buildings along West 7th Street, 1988. Dates of construction in parentheses; other inclusive dates are dates of occupation. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-88-1-53. Identifier 10002155.



Figure 25 Photo of Preston M. Geren Sr., used in the Texas A&M University College of Architecture Newsletter to name the school's 300-seat auditorium in his honor for his contributions to the school in 2006.



Figure 26 Continental National Bank Building, West 7th and Houston Streets. Designed by Preston M. Geren, Architect and Engineer (1952, 1956-57, demolished 2006). View looking north up Houston Street. Fort Worth National Bank Building is in the background, right side of the photograph. Strykers' Western Fotocolor, Artist Photographers, Fort Worth, Texas (authors' collection).



Figure 27 Rendering, c. 1957 of Mutual Savings and Loan Building, West 8th and Throckmorton Streets. Designed by Preston M. Geren, Architect and Engineer (1958, demolished 1998). View looking northeast. Courtesy, W. D. Smith Commercial Photography, Inc. Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries. AR430-57-224-8. Identifier 20101524.

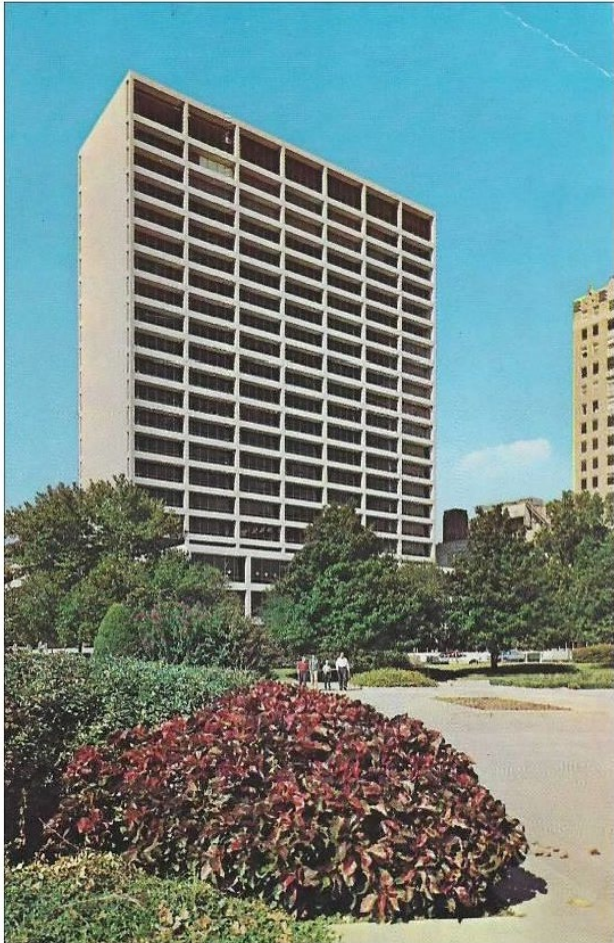


Figure 28 Postcard, First National Bank, 500 W.7th Street, 1960, Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, with Preston M. Geren, associate architect. Strykers' Western Fotocolor, Artist Photographers, Fort Worth, Texas (authors' collection).