NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

## **United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

Signature of certifying official/Title: Kristin Sande Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, a State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Gove  In my opinion, the property meets does not  Signature of commenting official:	and Tourism
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, a State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Gove	and Tourism rnment
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, a	and Tourism
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, a	and Tourism
	_
national state local  Applicable National Register Criteria: A	
I recommend that this property be considered signi	ficant at the following level(s) of significance:
professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part not meet the National Register Criteria.	60. In my opinion, the property $\boxtimes$ meets $\bigsqcup$ does
for registering properties in the National Register of	
that this nomination request for determination	on of eligibility meets the documentation standards
3. State/Federal Agency Certification As the designated authority under the National Hist	toric Preservation Act. as amended. I hereby certify
City or town: New Orleans State: LA Not for Publication: Vicinity:	County: Orleans
Street & Number: 1000 Howard Ave City or town: New Orleans State: LA	County of Orleans
2. Location	
<b>,</b>	
Orleans, 1935-1975	dential Mid-Century Modern Architecture of New
Name of related multiple property listing: Non-Residual	
Other Names/Site Number: N/A Name of related multiple property listing: Non-Residuel	ig
Name of related multiple property listing: Non-Residual	ng

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4. National Park Certification
I hereby certify that the property is:
entered in the National Register
determined eligible for the National Register
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other, explain:
•

## Signature of the Keeper

**Date of Action** 

## 5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

Х	Private
	Public – Local
	Public – State
	Public – Federal

## Category of Property (Check only one box.)

X	Building(s)
	District
	Site
	Structure
	object

**Number of Resources within Property** (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
2		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.): Commerce/Trade: Business, Professional, Financial Institution

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Commerce/Trade: Business

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## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions.): Modern Movement: International Style, Miesian

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Limestone, granite, aluminum and glass curtain walls

roof: Built up with gravel

other: N/A

## **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The First National Life Insurance Building, 1000 Howard Avenue, is located at the southeast corner of Howard Avenue and Loyola Avenue just south of the Central Business District of New Orleans. The building, which comprises a 12-story office tower and an attached 3.5-story parking garage, is roughly one block west of the Upper Central Business District National Register Historic District. Across Howard Avenue is the National Register-listed Plaza Tower (1969, NRHP, 2013), and across Loyola Avenue is the Union Passenger Terminal Station (1954). Built in 1960-62, the tower is designed in the modular arid modern or Miesian style and retains a high degree of exterior integrity. Constructed by the First National Life Insurance Company, the building housed a branch of the National Bank of Commerce, insurance companies, including the headquarters of First National Life, and a variety of other commercial businesses through 1989, when it was purchased by the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The three street facing elevations (façade/north, east, and west elevations) feature a curtain wall composed of gray-glass spandrel panels and square clear-anodized aluminum-frame fixed and operable-awning windows on each floor. The larger first and second floors create wings on the east and west elevations and feature the same grid pattern as the tower's upper floors. A flat aluminum-frame porte-cochere covers the main entrance, which is accessed via a curved driveway on each side as well as a set of flagstone-paved steps. At the rear of the building, there is a 3.5-story concrete parking garage that was completed in 1960-62 to provide tenant and visitor parking as well as a drive-through teller for the bank branch. The exterior of the tower retains a high degree of integrity with some minor damage to windows due to Hurricane Ida in 2021. The interior was designed with emphasis on the main lobby entrance and elevator lobby on the first floor, as well as the elevator lobbies on each of the upper floors. Outside of that, each individual floor was left open for tenant build outs, which changed frequently through the 1990s. Because of this, none of the interior partitions beyond the primary historic circulation core and entrance corridor are historic. Intact historic interior features include the flagstone flooring throughout the main lobby, extruded-aluminum elevator doors and white marble wall cladding in the ground-floor elevator lobby, reddish-brown marble wall cladding in all upper-floor elevator lobbies, the bank vault and night drop box on the first floor, and several features at exterior walls, including insulated wall panels, aluminum base plates and wrapped sills, and some plaster. For these reasons, the building is eligible for listing in the National Register.

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## **Narrative Description**

## Site and Setting

The First National Life Insurance Building sits on the southeast corner of Loyola Avenue and Howard Avenue at the edge of the central business district. Calliope Street and the Pontchartrain Expressway (Interstate 10) form the southern boundary of the block and Dryades Street forms the western boundary. The building, its parking lot, and parking garage occupy the northern half of the block. When the building was constructed, there were other commercial buildings on the southern half of the block; today, there is one building (the former New Orleans Auto Supply Co., Inc) at the southeast corner of the block while the rest is surface parking. In addition to being located directly next to the interstate, the building also has a prime location across Loyola Avenue from the Union Passenger Terminal, a historic train station that today houses train and bus services. The Plaza Tower, an enormous 1969 tower, sits to the north of First National across Howard Avenue (NRHP, 2013).

The building itself has sidewalks along Howard Avenue and Loyola Avenue with some grassy areas with small trees and shrubs. Currently, the Howard Avenue façade has modern metal construction fencing closing it off from public access. The surface parking lot has simple metal fencing and hedges along Howard Avenue and Dryades Street. Chain-link fences are found along the southern and eastern boundaries of the parking lot. At the Howard Avenue entrance, there are integrated planters on each side of the curving entrance ramps. At the former bank entrance along Loyola Avenue, the former entry steps to the bank lobby have been converted into a large, raised planter.

## Exterior

## Façade (North/Howard Avenue elevation) (Photos 1-8)

When comparing historic images, original plans, and contemporary photos of the building, the First National Life Insurance Building has undergone few exterior alterations. The twelve-story tower fronts onto Howard Avenue comprising a base, shaft, and capital. The shaft rises from the ground up and has a larger two-story "base" giving the overall building an upside-down T shape. The shaft is edged in an aluminum fascia framing the second to twelfth floors. The predominant cladding for the building, both in the shaft and the two-story base, is a curtain wall consisting of gray-glass spandrel panels and fixed and operable sashes organized in a modular grid pattern. The ground floor has a central entrance with three glass and aluminum storefront doors with fixed transoms above. Polished red granite provides a frame at the entry, cladding for the square columns supporting the second-floor overhang, and first-floor spandrel panels. The flat roof of the two-story base has a polished red granite fascia and floating cornice.

The second through twelfth floors of the shaft have gray-glass spandrel panels with alternating fixed and operable awning-type glazing panels above, totaling a width of 15 windows per floor. The flat roof of the tower has a polished red granite fascia and floating cornice forming the tower's capital. Mechanical equipment and the large framework that supported the original "First National Life Insurance" sign are located on the roof.

## West Elevation (Photos 3, 8-10)

The western elevation faces Loyola Avenue and mimics the Howard Avenue façade with the same curtain wall grid pattern. The main difference is that painted limestone panels (five on the left and nine on the right) flank the curtain wall glazing on the left and right sides of the shaft. At the two-story wing, there are three limestone panels on each side of the grid. As shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8, the primary entrance to the National Bank of Commerce was located on the first floor of the wing facing Loyola

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Avenue. At some point between 1963 and 1989 (per a newspaper image), the entrance was removed and infilled with matching curtain wall and the entrance steps were converted into a raised planter bed.

The 3.5 story parking garage, attached to the rear/south elevation of the tower, is highly visible on this elevation. The garage has a perforated cast-concrete screen on each side of a double gate. The second and third floors have a low concrete wall and are open above. There is one concrete screen at the top right corner of the parking garage above the stairwell (Photo 9).

## South Elevation (Photos 10-11)

The south/rear elevation of the tower is clad in painted limestone panels with aluminum louvered vents at each floor corresponding to mechanical rooms. The elevator and stairwell penthouse is visible above the flat roofline.

The rear elevation of the parking garage has two large openings that are infilled with concrete blocks (per the original plans).

### East Elevation (Photos 12-16)

The east elevation, which overlooks the parking lot and Dryades Street, is similar in appearance to the west elevation. One notable alteration is the addition of a small glass entrance vestibule added at an unknown date (Photo 15). The vestibule is constructed of clear-anodized aluminum and glass to blend in with the original design.

The east elevation of the garage is stepped as it also includes mechanical rooms attached to the shaft of the tower. This elevation is four bays wide and each of the bays is infilled with the same concrete blocks as the south elevation. A driveway provides accesses from the surface parking lot to the basement level (Photo 14).

#### <u>Interior</u>

## Basement (Photos 17-21)

Unlike most buildings in New Orleans, the First National Life Insurance Building was constructed with a full basement that includes a loading dock, custodial office, storage rooms, mechanical rooms, a pump room, maintenance shop, bathrooms, and an elevator lobby. The finishes are utilitarian and include concrete floors and painted concrete block walls. The concrete waffle slab ceiling structure within the custodial office and storage rooms is visible and painted. There have been minor changes to the floorplan, but the space retains its historic use as utility rooms and storage/support space for the building.

### First Floor (Photos 25-77)

The first floor of the tower was originally designed to house two office spaces, one on each side of the main lobby. The original lobby was designed with flagstone paving, laminated plastic faced plywood panels on the corridor walls, plaster ceilings, polished granite walls in the entry vestibule, white marble walls in the elevator lobby, and a brushed-steel metal mailbox and chute adjacent to the elevators. Most of these features remain except for the laminated plywood panel walls, which have been replaced with painted sheetrock. The ceiling in the lobby is now finished with brass-colored acoustical ceiling tiles.

The door openings in the main entrance lobby and the elevator lobby are all original and feature aluminum grilles above the entrance doors for each office space (horizontal on the lobby side and

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vertical on the office side). However, the doors themselves have been replaced with interior storefront doors. The door entries and hollow core metal flush doors leading to the two stairwells off the elevator lobby are original.

The first tenant of the eastern office space was a branch of the National Bank of Commerce and their original bank vault and night-drop box remain. Remnants of the bank's former entrance area off Loyola Avenue can be seen in Photos 47-48 (note the terrazzo flooring and where it ends). Other original features in the offices are located along exterior walls and consist of aluminum-faced insulated panels, some of which are painted, as well as aluminum baseplates and wrapped sills and some plaster walls.

Outside of the details mentioned above, all interior partition walls and finishes date to 1990s renovations and are non-historic.

## <u>Upper Floors</u> (Photos 81-96, 102-200)

Floors two through twelve of the tower were designed as open-plan office space to be built out by tenants. The key historic features that remain on each floor are found in the elevator lobbies and include polished reddish-brown marble walls and brushed-steel mail chutes. Additionally, the door entries and hollow-metal flush doors for the two side stairwells are original. Walls within the office spaces on each floor have been renovated multiple times, including in the 1990s. Current finishes on the upper floors include carpet or VCT floors, acoustical-tile ceilings (which were part of the original proposals for the open office spaces but have been replaced), and sheetrock walls. Like the first floor, the exterior walls retain their original aluminum panels, baseplates, and sills, and some plaster. Baseplates on the third floor have been covered in rubber bases.

## Parking Garage (Photos 22-24,78-80, 99-101)

The 3.5-story parking garage is attached to the south/rear elevation of the tower and comprises seven floors of parking as each floor is divided in half. Basement-level parking is accessed via a ramp connecting to the surface parking lot on Dryades Street. Doors provides at all levels provide access to the tower. There are interior metal stairs located at the southwest and southeast corners. The floors, walls, and ceiling are concrete. There are perforated cast-concrete screen walls along the west/Loyola Avenue elevation.

#### Integrity

The First National Life Insurance Buildings retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and craftsmanship, feeling, and association, and would be easily recognizable to former employees who worked in the building or those who came to the building over its 60-year life. The building has remained virtually unchanged on the exterior and retains the significant interior details that were incorporated into the building's public common areas.

#### 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

	Α	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the		
		broad patterns of our history.		
	В	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.		

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X	С	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

#### Criteria Considerations:

Α	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes	
В	Removed from its original location	
С	A birthplace or grave	
D	A cemetery	
Е	A reconstructed building, object, or structure	
F	A commemorative property	
G	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years	

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Architecture

Period of Significance: 1960-62

Significant Dates: 1962

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Mathes, Bergman & Associates

**Period of Significance (justification)**: The period of significance is 1960-62, encompassing the years that the building was constructed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The First National Life Insurance Building is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an exemplary example of Modernist architecture, in particular the International Style and its Miesian subtype. Within the context of New Orleans, the building is a prime example of the commercial property type found in the "Non-Residential Mid-Century Modern Architecture in New Orleans, 1935-1975" Multiple Property Submission and meets the registration requirements of this property type. First National's construction, from 1960-62, was directly related to the growth and modernization of the city's Central Business District after World War II, particularly the construction of commercial skyscrapers as the economy boomed and new industries were attracted to the city. The role of the automobile, the rise of post-war suburbs, and the construction of Interstate 10 in 1960-62 fueled the development of commercial skyscrapers with integrated parking to make it easier for employees and visitors to access these buildings. These modern new buildings were often designed in

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the Modernist style of the day and First National is a prime example of a Modernist skyscraper, purposefully planned adjacent to the new Interstate 10. The building included not only the prime amenities of both a surface lot and a parking garage, but also the hallmark characteristics of a Modernist skyscraper including an emphasis on verticality with a horizontal base, the use of polished granite and marble on the interior and exterior, modular panels and windows to create a grid pattern, clean lines. and an emphasis on detailing the public areas and leaving interior space design up to the tenants. The period of significance is 1960-62, covering the years of construction.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

## The First National Life Insurance Company of Louisiana and 1000 Howard Avenue

The First National Life Insurance Company of Louisiana was established in 1915 and was known as "Louisiana's Largest Industrial Life Insurance Company." In 1938, the company owned a three-story building at 632-34 Baronne Street in the upper Central Business District. The company operated exclusively in Louisiana and was organized into 15 districts with offices in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Alexandria, Monroe, Natchitoches, Opelousas, and Jena.<sup>2</sup> In 1960, plans were made for a new building to be constructed at the site previously occupied by the USO and New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) at Howard Avenue and Dryades Street. The project was expected to cost \$2,000,000 and result in a contemporary structure of glass with 80,000 square feet of usable space as well as a parking garage, basement parking, and surface parking. Designed by Mathes, Bergman & Associates, the building was described by newspapers as follows: "[the tower] will have a port cochere entry from a circular drive, will be air conditioned and will be encased in glass with limestone and granite trim. Three elevators will service the structure which is to be finished with a marble and wood lobby with stone floors."3

An official groundbreaking was held on December 22, 1960, and Mayor Chep Morrison noted that the project was "another great achievement of free enterprise in the downtown area." At that time, the First National Life Insurance Building would be the 47th multi-story building to be constructed in the Central Business District since 1950.<sup>5</sup> The 1950s and 1960s proved to be a boom period for the city's Central Business District with the construction of modern multi-story buildings. While several new buildings were constructed in the heart of the district, a number of them were sited on the district's periphery adjacent to the new Interstate 10 in order to have the space needed for off-street parking. According to an August 1961 Times-Picayune article, the Construction Industry Association of New Orleans reported that over \$40 million in construction contracts were to be let over the course of the next three months. New buildings included 225 Baronne (1962, NRHP 2013), the John Hancock Life Insurance Co. (1960, NRHP 2017), a Federal office building and main Post Office building on Loyola Avenue, and the First National Life Insurance Company Building (subject property).6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "First National Doubled Assets Since Year 1933." Times-Picayune. January 5, 1936. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 26, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "First National is Proud of its Splendid Gains." *Times-Picayune*. March 26, 1939. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 26, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "12-story Office Building Slated Near Rail Station." *Times-Picayune*. July 31, 1960. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 23,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Break Ground for 12-story Insurance Bldg." New Orleans States-Item. December 22, 1960. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 23, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Bill Stuckey. "Construction Gives City a Brand New Profile." New Orleans States-Item. August 5, 1961. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 23, 2022.

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As evidenced above, First National Life Insurance was not the only insurance company to construct a building in the area during this period. New Orleans was growing into the gulf region's insurance firm center. In 1950, the phone book had five pages of insurance firms listed. By 1956, there were 9 pages and by 1962, there were 20.7 New Orleans was becoming the center of the insurance industry in the gulf south with nearly 90% of insurance firms having an office in the city. Collectively, insurance companies at that time owned over \$26.4 million in Louisiana real estate.8 The construction of 1000 Howard Avenue further increased the foothold that the insurance industry had in the city.

When the subject property was planned, it had at least one tenant sign on very early in the process: the National Bank of Commerce. The bank had a long history in the city with a main branch in the heart of the Central Business District. With the construction of 1000 Howard Avenue, the bank planned to relocate its Dryades Market branch to 3800 square feet of the first floor of the building. Executive Vice-President E.M. McCarroll noted that the new branch would "continue the bank's modernization program to provide customer parking and drive-up teller facilities for the convenience of customers."9 By March of 1962, the bank was up and running as seen in advertisements published in the *Times-Picayune*, which include renderings of the bank (see Figure 6). Based on city directories, the National Bank of Commerce had a branch in First National until 1983. The First National Life Insurance Company itself kept offices in the building through 1983 as well. 10

## Criterion C: The First National Life Insurance Building as an example of Commercial Mid-**Century Modern Architecture**

The First National Life Insurance Building is a prime example of the Commercial Property Type described in the "Non-Residential Mid-Century Modern Architecture in New Orleans, 1935-1975" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The building was also included in the survey done to develop the MPDF. According to the MPDF:

Buildings associated with this property type include buildings used as stores, offices, theaters, banks, hotels, recreation, etc. These buildings must have been constructed between 1935 and 1975 within the City of New Orleans. The styles may either fall under the overall Modern Movement style as found in the National Register Bulletin 16A, the subtypes in 16A, or the subtypes defined in this submission on pages 12-17.11

The First National Life Insurance Building is designed in the overall Modernist style with its use of smooth surfaces, flat roofs, metal windows, rectilinear massing, use of a glass tower and emphasis on verticality, curtain wall construction, and through the use of reinforced concrete and plate glass. While the building is most certainly Modernist, its specific architectural details fall into the International Style, and within that, the Modular Grid Modern, or Miesian, subtype.

In the 2009 "Louisiana Architecture 1945-65: Modernism Triumphant – Commercial and Institutional Buildings" historic context, two subtypes, Miesian and the Holdover International Style, are discussed. General characteristics of the International style in Louisiana include:

<sup>9</sup> "Branch of Bank to be Relocated." *Times-Picayune*. April 26, 1961. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 24, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> 'N.O. Becoming Gulf States Insurance Firms' Center." New Orleans States-Item. April 23, 1962. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 24, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> New Orleans City Directory. Dallas: R. L. Polk & Co., 1983, pgs. 284-86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Non-Residential Mid-Century Modern Architecture in New Orleans, 1935-1975, Multiple Property Documentation Form, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, National Register # 100003382, pg. 34.

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- Focus on volume, not mass
- Conspicuous lack of ornament
- Smooth textures
- Asymmetrical elevations
- Light metal or concrete frames
- Open plans
- Ribbon windows
- Windows and doors flush with walls
- Flat roofs
- Large expanses of glass, including glass curtain walls
- Use of stilts or piers at ground level

The characteristics bolded above are found on the First National Life Insurance Building. Within this overall International Style, Miesian style buildings are distinguished by steel and glass curtain walls and modular, grid like structures. The Miesian style, also termed "Modular Grid Modern" in the 2009 historic context has the following general characteristics (as distinguished from the broader International Style):

- A heavier exposed skeleton look (versus a smooth taut building skin)
- A horizontal versus a more vertical feeling conveyed by the gridwork those associated with Mies van der Rohe, or his protegés, could achieve an elegant and harmonious balance
- Clear versus tinted glass
- All glass curtain walls versus glass used in combination with panels
- Neutral panels versus metallic panels with a baked-on color
- Panels of a single color versus panels of different colors
- Smooth panels versus panels with rougher surface (textured stucco or masonry)
- Panels in a relatively inexpensive material, as described above, versus a high-end material (marble or polished granite)

The bolded items above are found on the First National Life Insurance Building. It is interesting to note that the building has features of the Miesian style in its design, mostly on the main central tower, but sticks closer to the overall International Style in its execution.

The First National Life Insurance Building is a great example of the utilization of the International Style on a large multi-story skyscraper to create a landmark at a prime intersection of the Central Business District adjacent to Interstate 10. The building itself is known to anyone coming and going from this area of town as it is also adjacent to a transportation hub in the Union Passenger Terminal across Loyola Avenue.

The MPDF discusses in detail the importance of New Orleans as a port city and how its location made it a center of international trade. With the age of the automobile starting in the 1950s, the city's industries grew and built headquarters in the city. The automobile and its impact on transportation patterns, such as the construction of Interstate 10 between 1960 and 1962, also impacted other large-scale building projects on the periphery of the Central Business District. This impact was noted above by the 1961 *Times-Picayune* article discussing how the city was becoming an insurance center in the early 1960s. The buildings at the periphery were planned so that parking would be included in the planning and

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construction of the buildings to be easily accessible for suburban residents and to provide ample parking for employees and visitors. 12

According to the MPDF, the commercial property type's significance is noted as having designs that "reflect changes in style and taste, as well as materials and engineering design." Within the overall commercial type, the two main kinds of commercial buildings are high-rise/skyscrapers and low-rise commercial buildings. The two types vary obviously in their size and scale, but also in their use of materials, engineering methods (as high-rise buildings require unique methods to adapt to New Orleans' soil), and design. "High-rise commercial buildings can have characteristics of Modernism that use innovative design such as curtain wall construction, use new methods of construction with reinforced concrete, and large expanses of glass." This is particularly true of the First National Life Insurance Building.

#### Per the MPDF:

Eligible buildings in New Orleans are locally significant under Criterion C because of the high quality of the architecture and the innovations in design, technology, and engineering. These buildings embody distinctive characteristics of Modernism, the time period, some display innovation in construction, and many represent work of skilled architects and architectural firms.<sup>15</sup>

The First National Life Insurance building is a great example of the high quality of Modern architecture in New Orleans and retains many original features that embody the characteristics of Modernism and the International Style. In particular, the building's soaring verticality; use of curtain wall construction; modular panels and glass windows to create a grid pattern on the elevations; the use of smooth granite, limestone, and marble finishes on the interior and exterior; and the emphasis on details in the public spaces while allowing offices to be tenant-guided all relate to the Modernist architectural ideals. Outside of architecture, the building's planning and development relate directly to what was occurring in the Central Business District at the time, when growth was steady and increasing and the automobile was responsible for moving people at an unprecedented rate. Planning a building adjacent to the new Interstate 10 (Pontchartrain Expressway) and incorporating parking into the building's design helped First National become part of the Modern, fast-paced new world following World War II.

The property registration requirements for the commercial property subtype notes that the building should be evaluated for its architectural integrity, distinction, innovation in engineering, and how much it represents Modernist ideals and designs. It should retain most of the seven aspects of integrity and, at a minimum, should retain integrity of design and materials. Fortunately, the First National Life Insurance Building retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, workmanship, design, and materials. Since its construction in 1960-62, the First National Life Insurance Building has represented Modernist ideals and designs of the time period and remains a timeless midcentury landmark in New Orleans.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Non-Residential Mid-Century Modern Architecture in New Orleans, 1935-1975, Multiple Property Documentation Form, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, National Register # 100003382, pg. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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Specifically, the MPDF notes that of the specific registration requirements, a building qualifies for National Register listing if it retains at least 4 of the following 7 requirements. First National retains those shown in bold (6 out of 7):

- 1. The building retains integrity of location, design, setting, exterior materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Primarily, it retains integrity of design on the exterior and interior as well as exterior materials.
- 2. The building has a minimal loss of finishes and features with the main loss of finishes on the interior.
- 3. The building is just hitting its 50-year birthday
- 4. It exhibits most of its original features including curtain wall construction; large plate glass windows; smooth, flat surfaces; and honest structure that shows the construction of the building; original elevator vestibules; open floor plan in the lobby and dining room areas
- 5. It retains scale, massing, original roof shape, and fenestration patterns
- 6. The original window opening sizes have not been altered
- 7. Major interior spaces are retained the layout of the building remains on the ground floor with an entry lobby and all floors retain their central hallways.

Item 3 does not apply to the subject property as the building is currently 60 years old. The First National Life Insurance Building has very minimal loss of finishes that relate to its overall architectural significance, primarily on the exterior. This building had distinctive finishes only on the interior in the main lobby and in upper-floor elevator lobbies. The only alteration to the main lobby is the removal of the wood paneling, likely when the building was renovated by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in the 1990s. Therefore, the property clearly meets the registration requirements as defined in the MPDF.

#### Conclusion

The First National Life Insurance Building stands as an architectural landmark on the periphery of the Central Business District where it was designed to accommodate the automobile and capitalize on the construction of Interstate 10 through the city. It was designed not just to work with its location, but also to stand out in the popular Modernist style of the time. As it meets the registration requirements stated in the Non-Residential Mid-Century Architecture of New Orleans, 1935-1975, this building is eligible for listing on the National Register at the local level for its architectural significance.

## Developmental History/Additional historic context information

Many New Orleanians know this building as the Archdiocese Building since it has housed Archdiocese agencies from the organization's purchase of the property in 1989 until 2022. The property is for sale as of this writing. This nomination aims to educate the public on the building's much longer history as the First National Life Insurance Building.

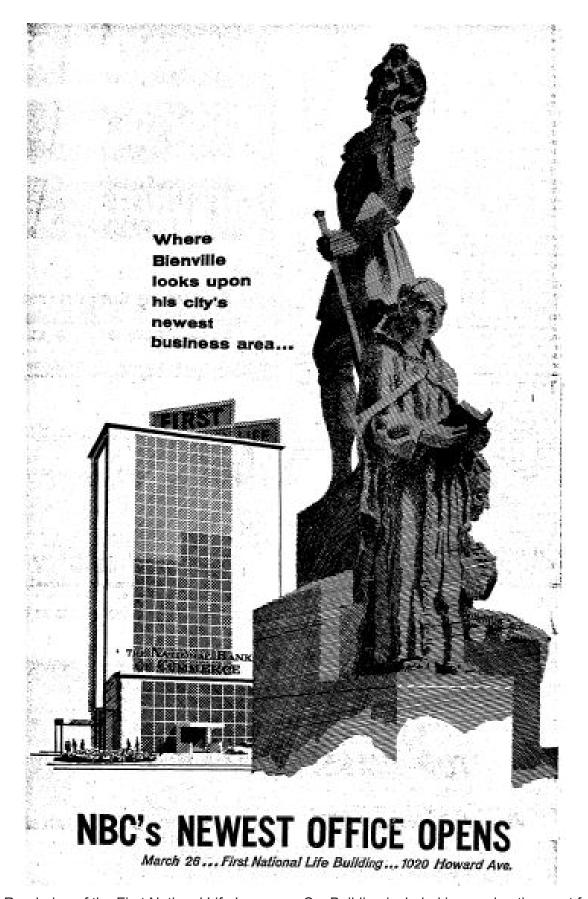


Figure 6. Rendering of the First National Life Insurance Co. Building included in an advertisement for the National Bank of Commerce, published March 23, 1962. Image courtesy of www.newsbank.com.





ALMOST READY FOR occupancy, the First National Life Insurance building dominates its surroundings at Loyola and Howard.

Figure 7. Photograph of the First National Life Insurance Co. Building just prior to opening; posted in The New Orleans States-Item, April 23, 1962. Image courtesy of www.newsbank.com.





Figure 8. Photograph of the First National Life Insurance Co. Building, 1963. Image courtesy of Franck-Bertacci Photograph Collection, Louisiana Digital Library, Historic New Orleans Collection.



First	National Li	fe Insurance	Building	
N I	of Duamanti.			Τ

Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical Resources

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- "First National Doubled Assets Since Year 1933." *Times-Picayune*. January 5, 1936. <u>www.newsbank.com</u>. Accessed August 26, 2022.
- "First National is Proud of its Splendid Gains." *Times-Picayune*. March 26, 1939. <u>www.newsbank.com</u>. Accessed August 26, 2022.
- "12-story Office Building Slated Near Rail Station." *Times-Picayune*. July 31, 1960. <u>www.newsbank.com</u>. Accessed August 23, 2022.
- "Break Ground for 12-story Insurance Bldg." *New Orleans States-Item.* December 22, 1960. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 23, 2022.
- Stuckey, Bill. "Construction Gives City a Brand New Profile." *New Orleans States-Item*. August 5, 1961. <a href="https://www.newsbank.com">www.newsbank.com</a>. Accessed August 23, 2022.
- "N.O. Becoming Gulf States Insurance Firms' Center." *New Orleans States-Item*. April 23, 1962. www.newsbank.com. Accessed August 24, 2022.
- "Branch of Bank to be Relocated." *Times-Picayune*. April 26, 1961. <a href="www.newsbank.com">www.newsbank.com</a>. Accessed August 24, 2022.
- New Orleans City Directory. R. L. Polk & Co.: Dallas, 1983.
- National Register of Historic Places, Non-Residential Mid-Century Modern Architecture in New Orleans, 1935-1975, Multiple Property Documentation Form, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, National Register # 100003382.

X	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
	previously listed in the National Register
	_previously determined eligible by the National Register
	_designated a National Historic Landmark
	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #
	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #
Prim	ary location of additional data:
	State Historic Preservation Office
	Other State agency
	Federal agency
	Local government
	University
	Other
	Name of repository:

Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigne	ed):N/A	
--	---------	--

#### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: < 1 Acre

## Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 29.945541 Longitude: -90.076833

## **Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is bounded by Howard Avenue to the north, Dryades Street to the east, neighboring properties to the south, and Loyola Avenue to the west. It consists of Square 276, Lots 28, 12, 13 (on Dryades and Howard Avenue), 29, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19-21 (on Howard Avenue), and Lots 1, 2, 22, or 23 (on Dryades).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries chosen are the historic boundaries of the property.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jessica Richardson, Senior Consultant

organization: Ryan, LLC

street & number: 301 Main St, Ste 1500

city or town: Baton Rouge state: LA zip code: 70801

e-mail: jessica.richardson@ryan.com

telephone: 225-937-6022 date: September 13, 2022

#### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

## **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

## **Photo Log**

Name of Property: First National Life Insurance

City or Vicinity: New Orleans

County: Orleans State: Louisiana

Name of Photographer: Jessica Richardson

Date of Photographs: August 8, 2022

- 1 of 126: Exterior view from Howard Avenue, facade and western elevation, view W
- 2 of 126: Exterior view from Howard Avenue, main facade, view SW
- 3 of 126: Exterior view from Howard Avenue, facade and western elevatoin, view S
- 4 of 126: Main entrance, view SW
- 5 of 126: View of main entrance canopy, view W
- 6 of 126: View from Loyola Avenue, western elevation of main building and parking garage, view S
- 7 of 126: View from Loyola Avenue of western elevation of parking garage, view SE
- 8 of 126: View of western and rear (southern) elevation of main building and western elevation of parking garage, view E
- 9 of 126: View of rear (southern) elevation of main building and parking garage, view E
- 10 of 126: View from Dryades Street side of building, eastern elevation of parking garage and main building, view NW
- 11 of 126: View from Dryades Street side of building, eastern elevations of parking garage and main building, view N
- 12 of 126: View of parking garage entrance from the surface lot adjacent to Dryades Street, view NW
- 13 of 126: View of western elevation, view NW
- 14 of 126: Interior view, basement, view from loading dock towards custodial supply room, view NE
- 15 of 126: Interior view, basement, view of custodial supply room, view NE
- 16 of 126: Interior view, basement, elevator lobby, view NW
- 17 of 126: Interior view, parking garage at first floor, view S
- 18 of 126: Interior view, parking garage at first floor, view E towards Dryades Street
- 19 of 126: Interior view, first floor, main entrance vestibule, view W
- 20 of 126: Interior view, first floor, main lobby, view SW
- 21 of 126: Interior view, first floor, main lobby, view SW
- 22 of 126: Interior view, first floor, chapel off of main lobby, view S
- 23 of 126: Interior view, first floor, main lobby, view NE
- 24 of 126: Interior view, first floor, side hall off elevator lobby, view SE
- 25 of 126: Interior view, first floor, elevator lobby, view NW
- 26 of 126: Interior view, first floor, elevator lobby, view SE
- 27 of 126: Interior view, first floor, elevator lobby, view S
- 28 of 126: Interior view, first floor, western stairwell, view SE

Name of Property

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29 of 126: Interior view, first floor, western half non-historic office space, view NW

30 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space, historic bank vault, view NW

31 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space, non-historic mechanical room in former bank area, view SW

32 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space, non-historic mechanical room in former bank area, view SW

33 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space; note the curved metal base plates below the windows, which are historic and found on most floors of the building, view N

34 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half non-historic office space, view SW

35 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space, view N

36 of 126: Interior, western half office space, historic night drop box at botttom left, view E

37 of 126: Interior, first floor, western half office space, view E

38 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view SE

39 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view W

40 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, historic metal grills above entry doors, view NW

41 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, historic metal grills above entry doors, view NW

42 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view SE

43 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view SE

44 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view N

45 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half non-historic office space, view NW

46 of 126: Interior, first floor, eastern half, ramp to exit to Dryades Street parking lot, view SE

47 of 126: Interior, second floor, parking garage, view SW

48 of 126: Interior, second floor, parking garage, view NE

49 of 126: Interior, second floor, elevator lobby, view NE

50 of 126: Interior, second floor, elevator lobby, view SW

51 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, view S

52 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, view NW

53 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE

54 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, view E

55 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SW

56 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, Hurricane Ida damage to the windows, view S

57 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW

58 of 126: Interior, second floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NE

59 of 126: Interior, third floor, parking garage, view SW

60 of 126: Interior, third floor, parking garage, view E

61 of 126: Interior, third floor, parking garage, view S

62 of 126: Interior, third floor, elevator lobby, view NE

63 of 126: Interior, third floor, elevator lobby, view W

64 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space, view E

Name of Property

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- 65 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE
- 66 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space, view E
- 67 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space, view SW
- 68 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW
- 69 of 126: Interior, third floor, non-historic office space; metal wall pieces have been removed in this office showing structure of walls, view W
- 70 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, elevator lobby, view E
- 71 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, elevator lobby, view W
- 72 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, non-historic office space, view SE
- 73 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, non-historic office space, view SE
- 74 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, non-historic office space, view NW
- 75 of 126: Interior, fourth floor, non-historic office space, view NW
- 76 of 126: Interior, fifth floor, elevator lobby, view NE
- 77 of 126: Interior, Interior, fifth floor, elevator lobby, view SW
- 78 of 126: Interior, fifth floor, hallway off of elevator lobby, view NE
- 79 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, elevator lobby, view N
- 80 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, elevator lobby, view W
- 81 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, non-historic office space, view NE
- 82 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE
- 83 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SW
- 84 of 126: Interior, sixth floor, non-historic office space, Hurricane Ida damage to window, view SE
- 85 of 126: Interior, seventh floor, elevator lobby, view N
- 86 of 126: Interior, seventh floor, elevator lobby, view SW
- 87 of 126: Interior, seventh floor, view through entrance door to non-historic office space (inaccessible for photos), view SE
- 88 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, elevator lobby, view NE
- 89 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, elevator lobby, view SW
- 90 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, view NE
- 91 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE
- 92 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, view E
- 93 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, view E
- 94 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, view S
- 95 of 126: Interior, eighth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW
- 96 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, elevator lobby, view NE
- 97 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, elevator lobby, view SW
- 98 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, view NE
- 99 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, view NE

Name of Property

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100 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE

101 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, view E

102 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, view S

103 of 126: Interior, ninth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW

104 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, elevator lobby, view N

105 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, elevator lobby, view SW

106 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, view NE

107 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, view SW

108 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, view SE

109 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, view E

110 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SW

111 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, Hurricane Ida damage to windows, view S

112 of 126: Interior, tenth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW

113 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, elevator lobby, view NE

114 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, elevator lobby, view NW

115 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, non-historic office space, view E

116 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SW

117 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW

118 of 126: Interior, eleventh floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NE

119 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, elevator lobby, view NE

120 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, elevator lobby, view W

121 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, view NE

122 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SE

123 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, view N

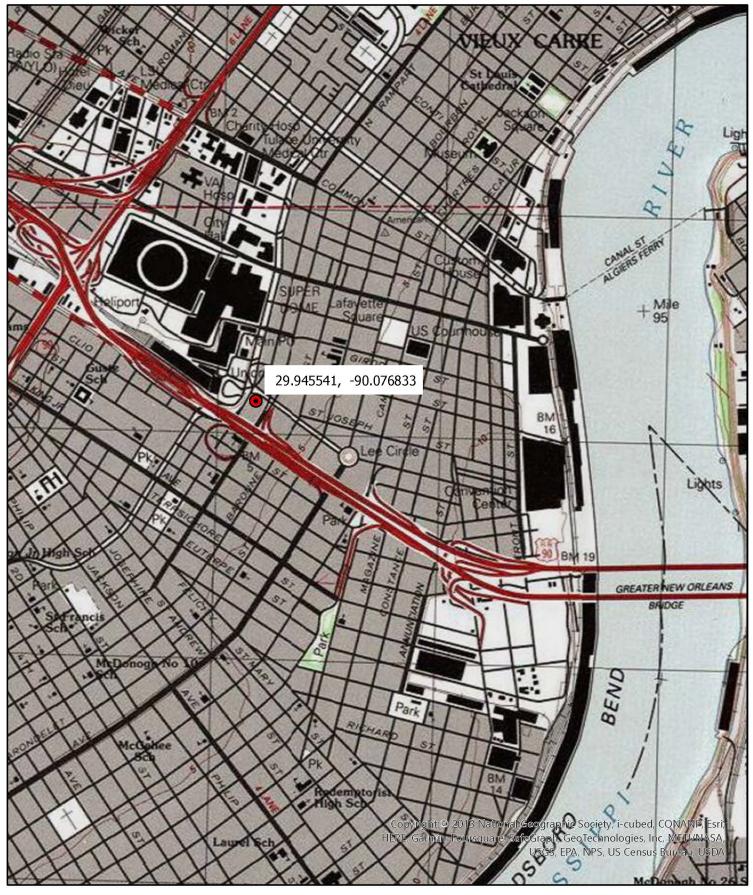
124 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view SW

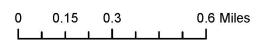
125 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, view S

126 of 126: Interior, twelfth floor, non-historic office space, hallway, view NW

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement**: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



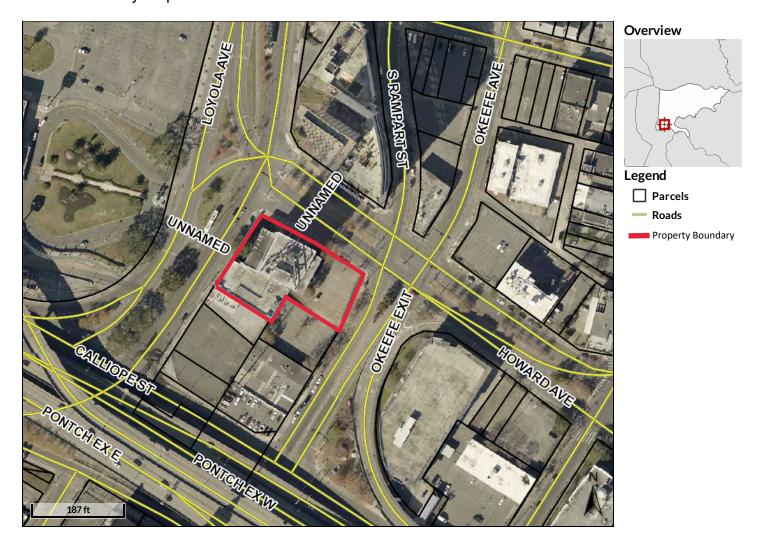


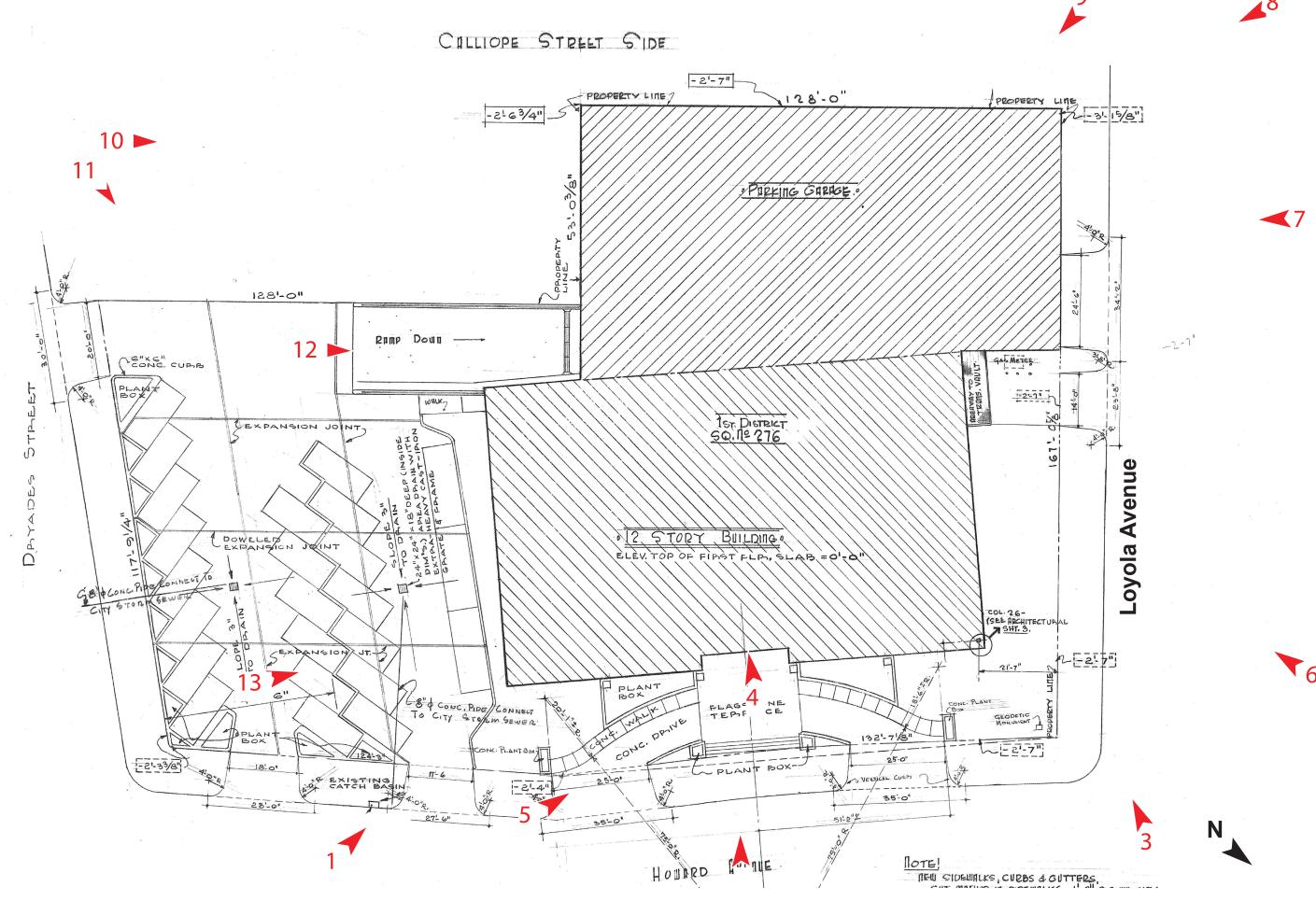
First National Life Insurance Building 1000 Howard Avenue New Orleans, Orleans Parish, LA





## First National Life Insurance Building 1000 Howard Avenue Orleans Parish, LA Boundary Map

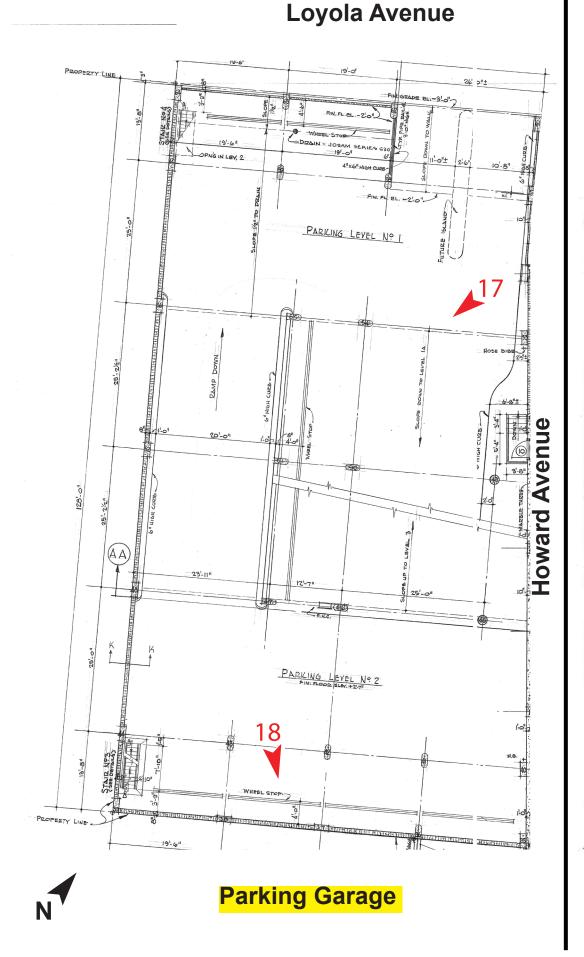




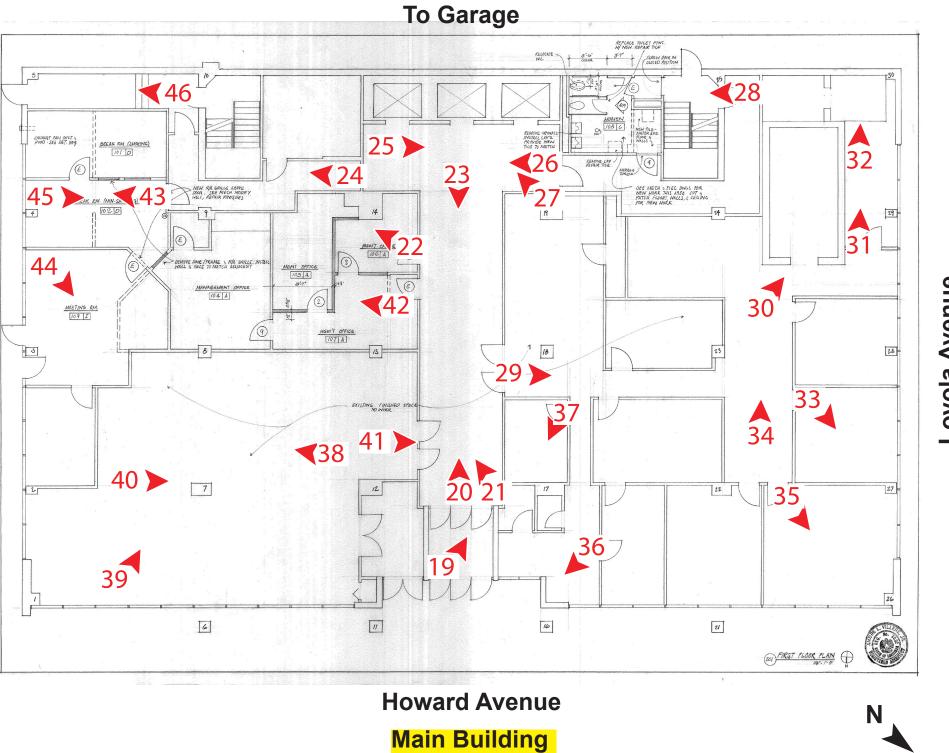
FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Site Plan



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Basement



Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1992 renovation. There are some door locations that have been altered since then.



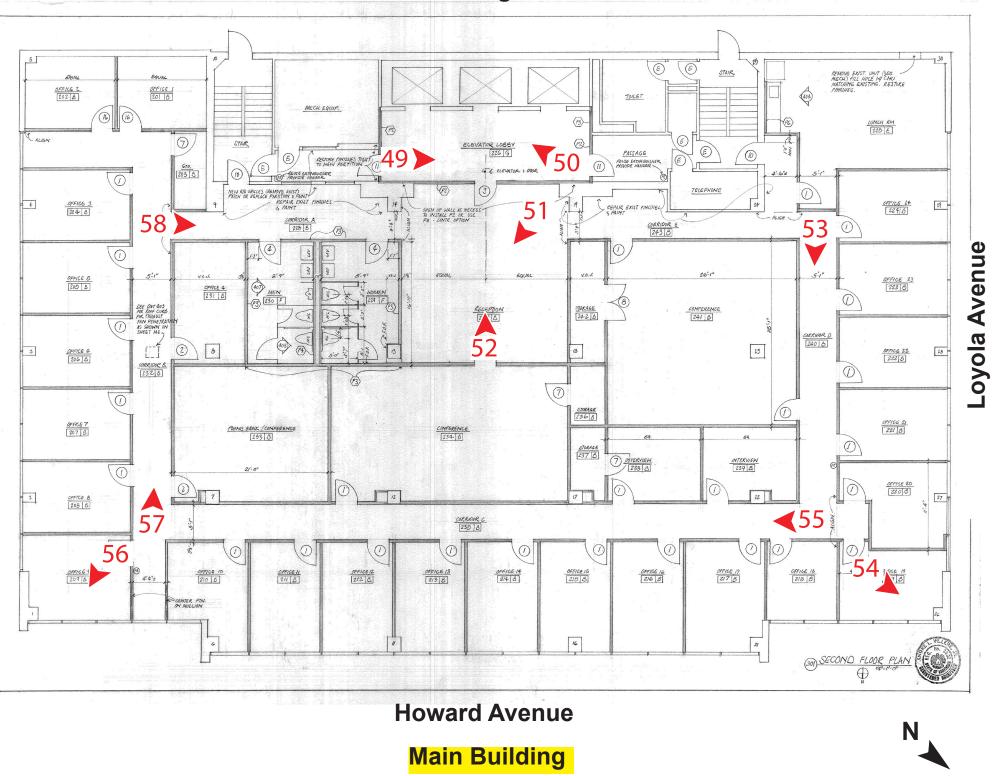
FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA **NR Nomination Photo Key - First Floor** 

## Loyola Avenue

LOW POINT IN SLAB J DEAIN PARKING LEVEL Nº 5 48 Avenue Howard 10" - 1 SLOPE 1/211 Parking Garage

Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1996 renovation.

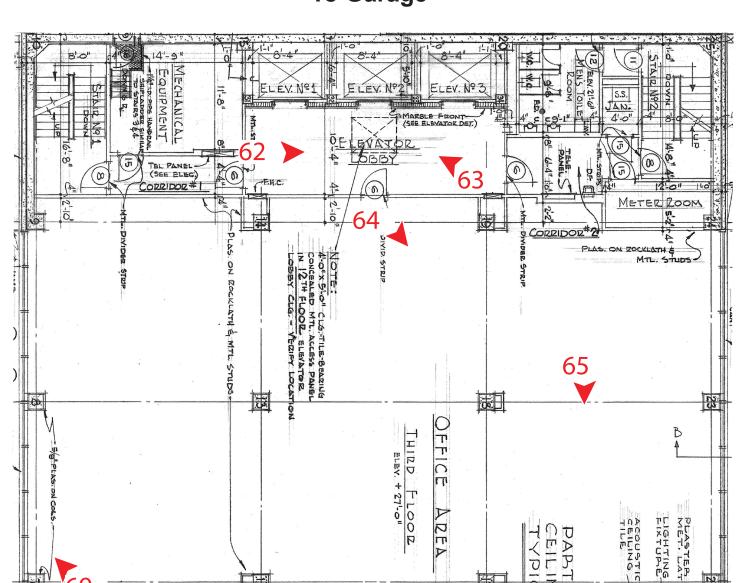
# To Garage



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Second Floor

Note: The existing plan below is the original 1961 plan. The current layout is non-historic.

# **To Garage**



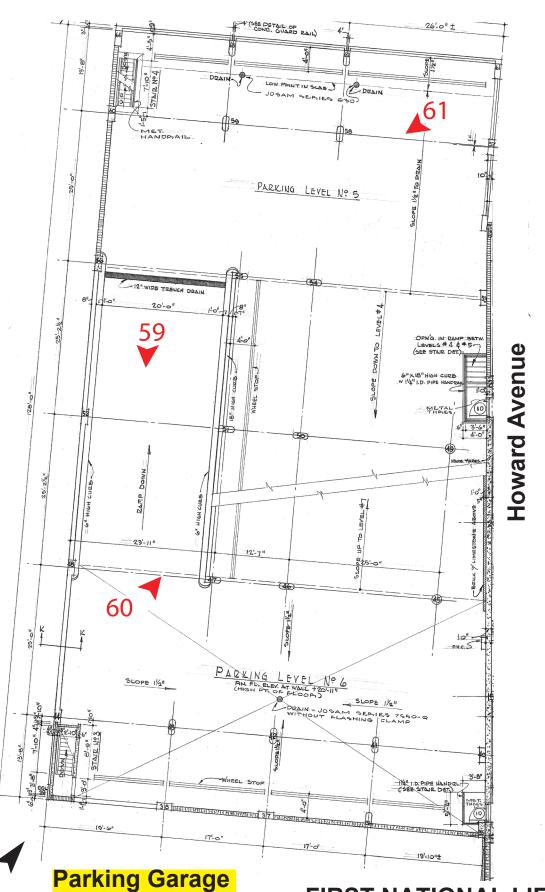
68

**Howard Avenue** 

Main Building



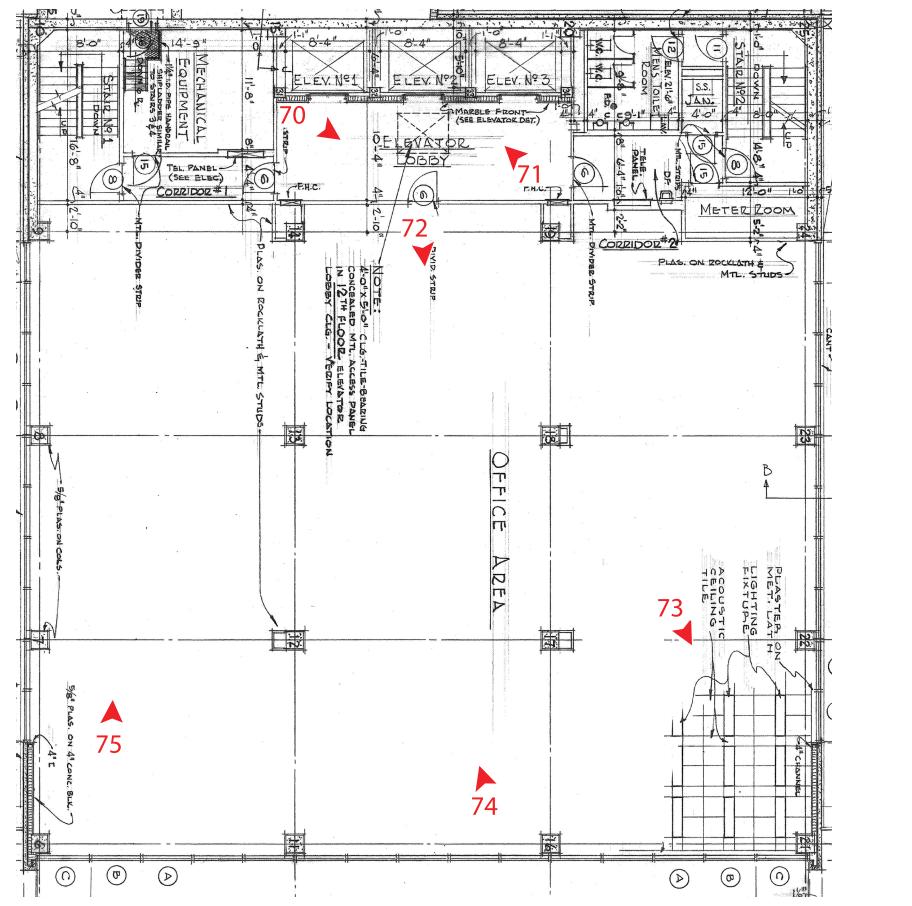
Loyola Avenue



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Third Floor

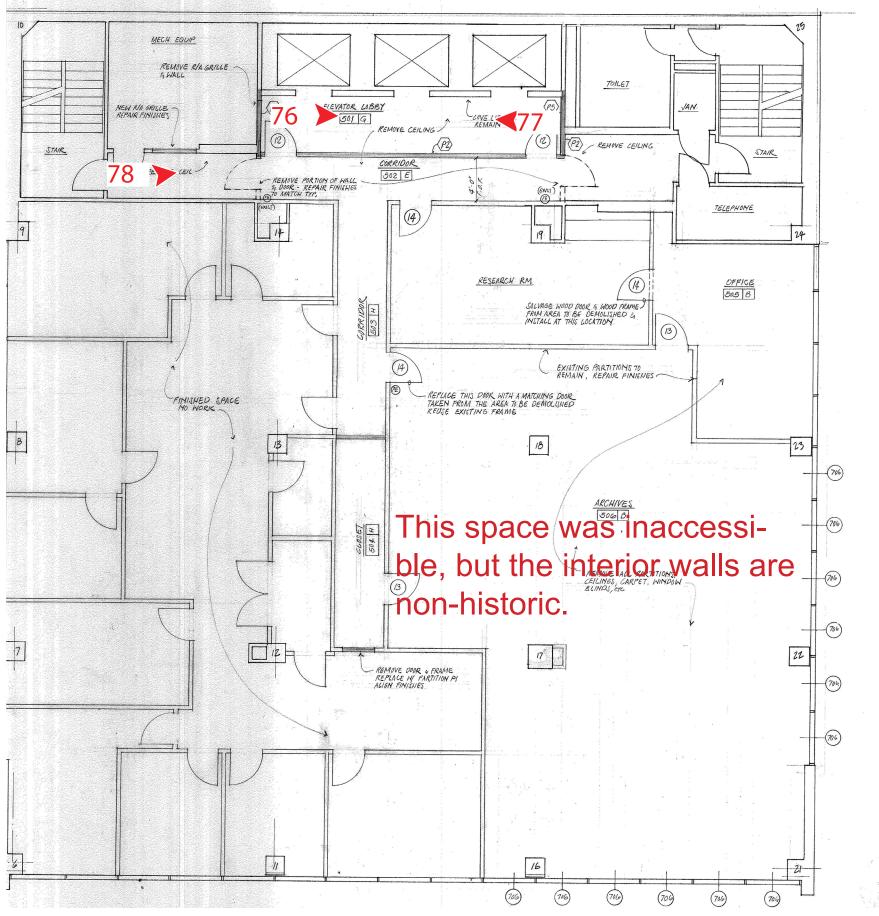
Note: The existing plan below is the original 1961 plan. The current layout is non-historic.

N



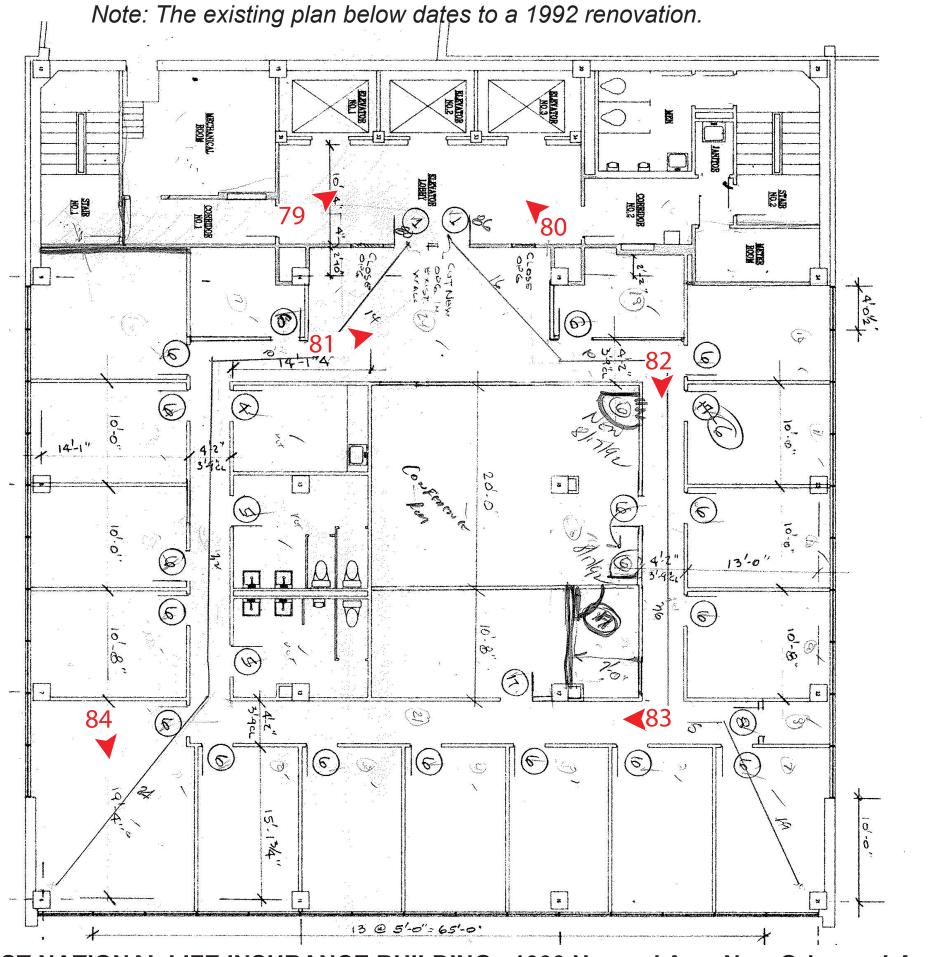
FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Fourth Floor

Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1996 renovation.



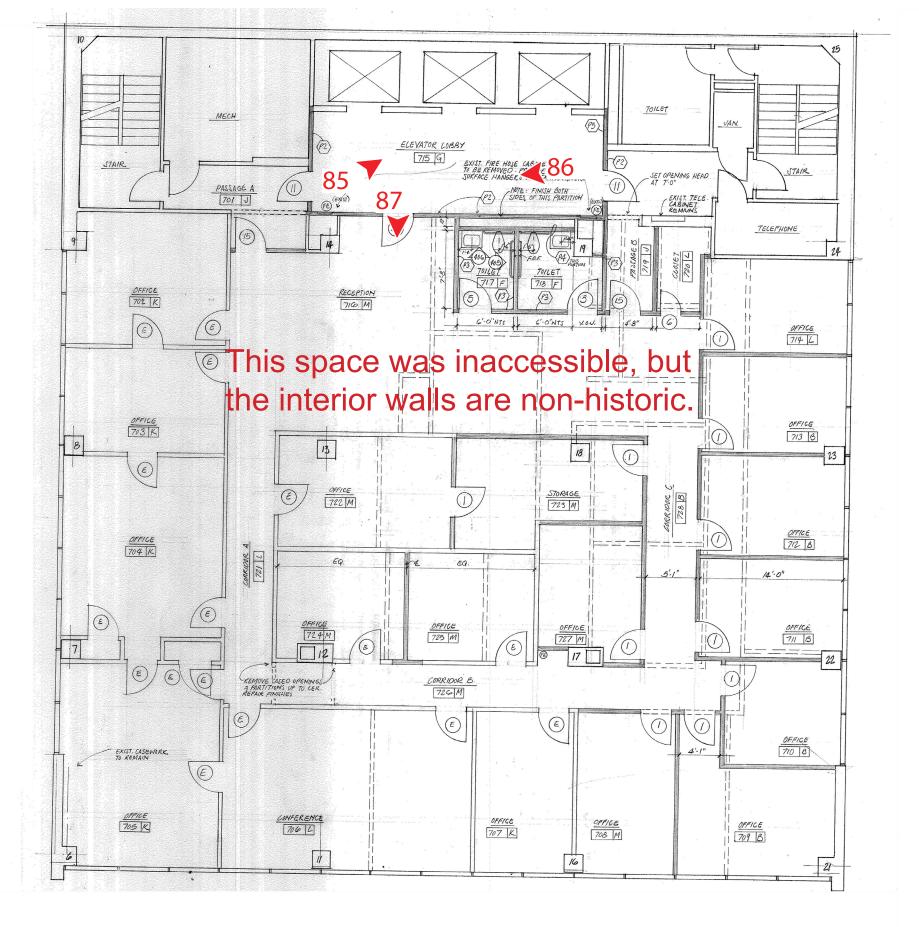
FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Fifth Floor





FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING , 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Sixth Floor

Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1996 renovation.

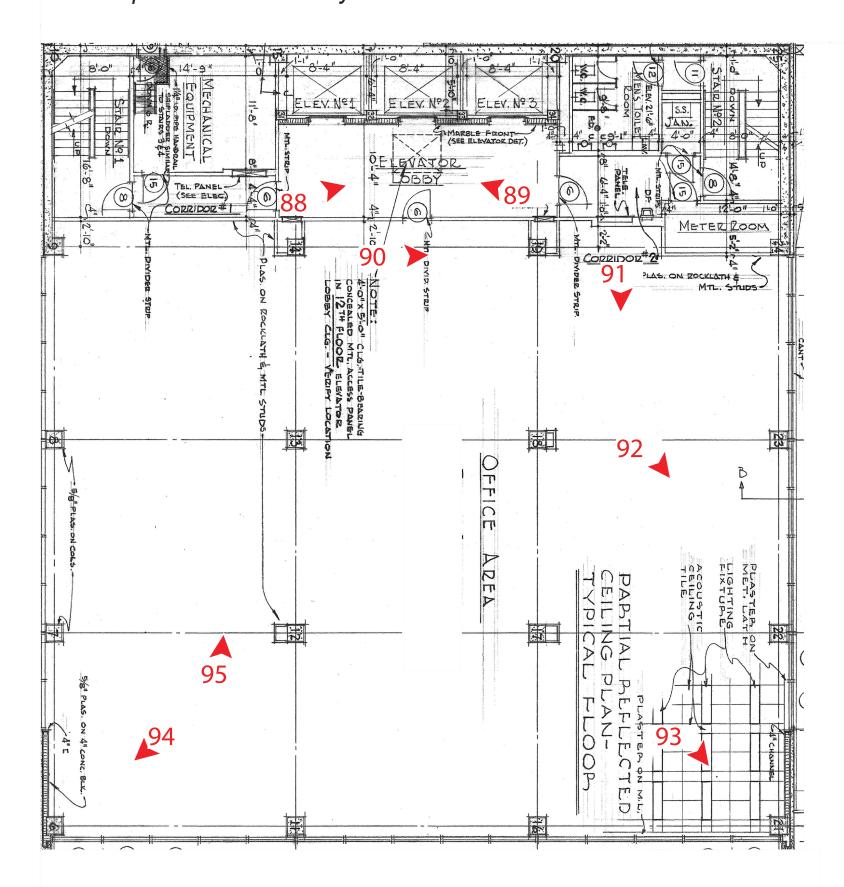


FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Seventh Floor



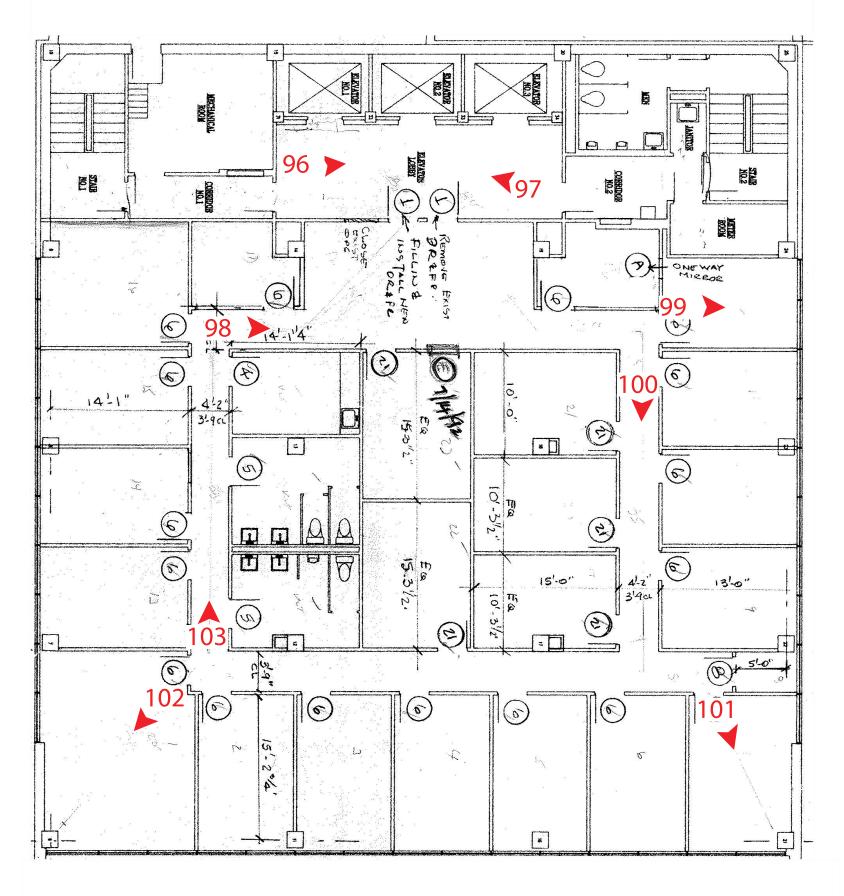
Note: The existing plan below is the original 1961 plan. The current layout is non-historic.

N,



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Eighth Floor

Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1992 renovation.



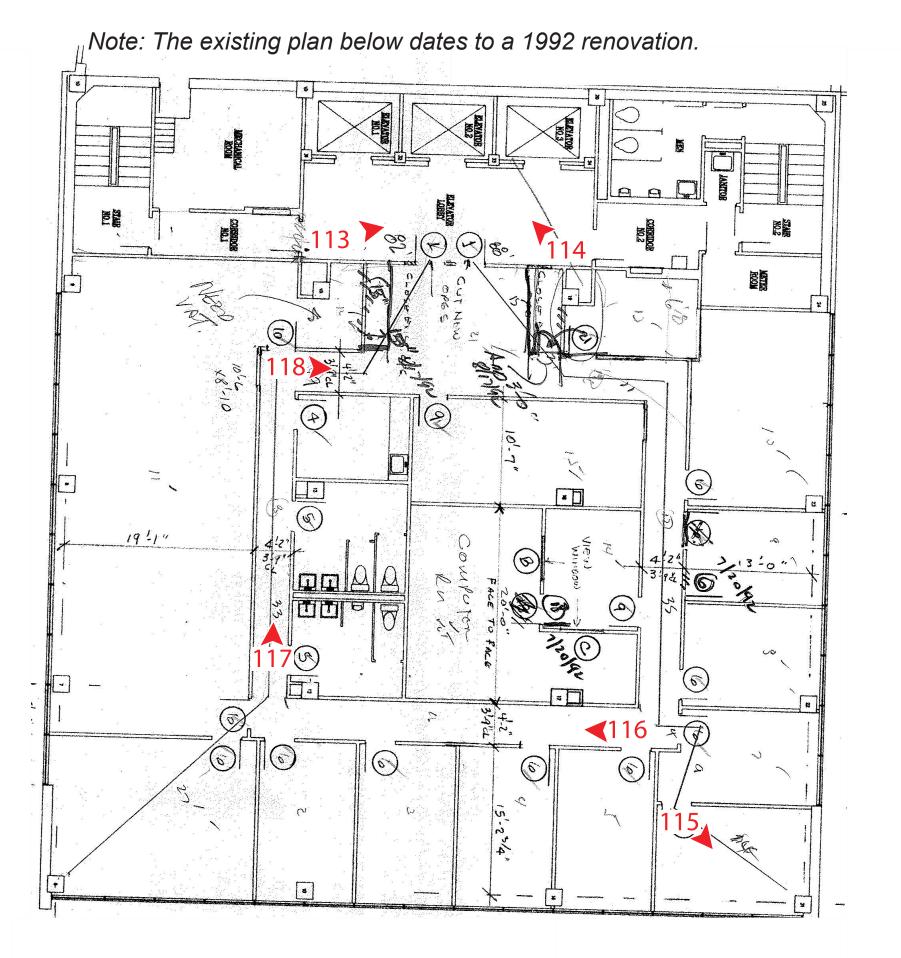
FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Ninth Floor



Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1992 renovation. E ST E STATE 106 104 ROOM N (E) (3) **-106** ➤ 108 EVIEW WINDOW (R) G (3) [5] 3 (95) 9 (J) 回回图丛丛 14-1" 13-0 (E) (23) 11 6 (E) (E) 2 0

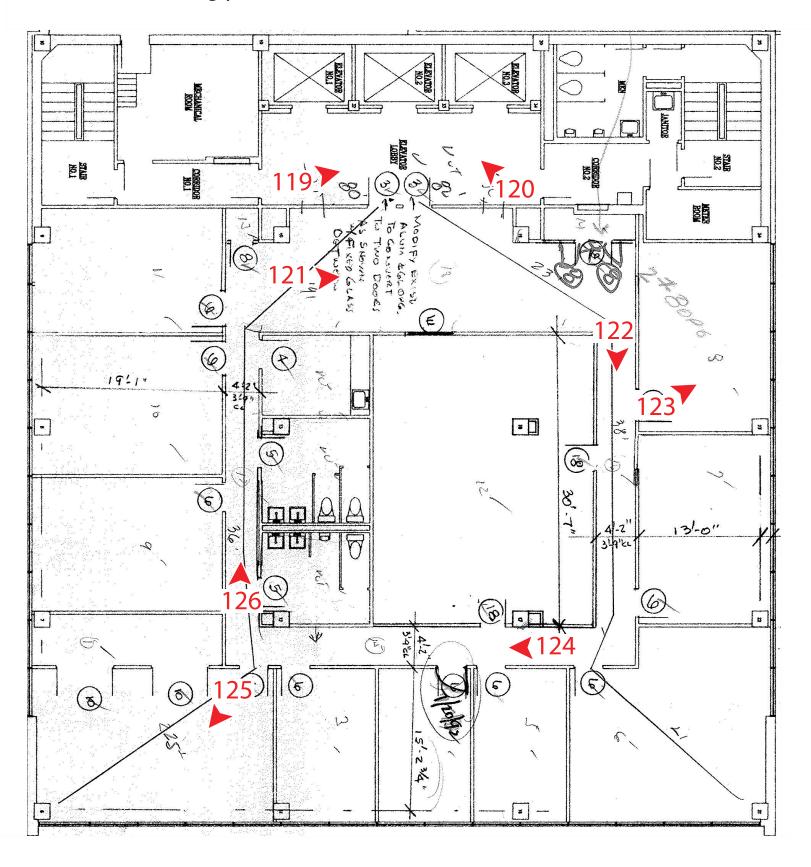
N,

FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key- Tenth Floor



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key- Eleventh Floor

Note: The existing plan below dates to a 1992 renovation.



FIRST NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE BUILDING, 1000 Howard Ave, New Orleans, LA NR Nomination Photo Key - Twelfth Floor





























































































































































































































































