

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building

other names/site number Looman Building

2. Location

street & number 25 S. Montgomery Street

not for publication

city or town Trenton City

vicinity

state New Jersey

code NJ

County Mercer

zip code 08608

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Deputy SHPO Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment and Economic Revitalization

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT – State office building

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT - International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached continuation sheets.

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria considerations

(mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on continuation sheets.)
See attached continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on continuation sheets.)
See attached continuation sheets.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1961

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi, architects

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency: National Register of Historic Places
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building
Name of Property

Mercer County, New Jersey
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.41 acres

Latitude / Longitude Coordinates

(Note to Preparers: NJ HPO will complete this portion of the Registration Form for all Preparers, based on the coordinates derived from the Site Map or District Map that HPO produces.)

1. Lat. 40.219545 Long. -74.762358
2. Lat. 40.219619 Long. -74.761826
3. Lat. 40.219327 Long. -74.761766
4. Lat. 40.219321 Long. -74.762312

Datum: NAD 1983 State Plane New Jersey

(NJ HPO will place additional coordinates, if needed, on a continuation sheet for Section 10.)

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet for Section 10.)

Boundary Justification Statement

(Explain, on the section sheet following the Verbal Boundary Description, how the chosen boundaries meet the requirements for boundary selection and are the most appropriate boundaries for the nominated property or district.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kevin McMahon, Senior Associate
organization Powers & Company, Inc. date August 4, 2022
street & number 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1717 telephone 215-636-0192
city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19107

Additional Documentation

(Submit the additional items with the completed form that are outlined in the "Standard Order of Presentation" that NJ HPO provides. Each page must contain the name of the nominated property or district, and the State and the county in which the property or district is located. Consult with NJ HPO if you have questions.)

Property Owner

(Either provide the name and address of the property owner here or provide the information separately to NJ HPO. Check with NJ HPO for other requirements. All owners' names and addresses must be provided, including public and non-profit owners, but their presence on the form, itself, is not required).

name 25 S. Montgomery LLC
street & number 80 Hamilton Avenue, Suite 101 telephone 609-656-8300
city or town Trenton state NJ zip code 08611

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. The proper completion of this form and the related requirements is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Direct questions regarding the proper completion of this form or questions about related matters to the Registration Section, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Mail code 501-04B, PO Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625-0420.

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SECTION 7: DESCRIPTION

Summary Paragraph

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building is a seven-story, International Style office building on the west side of South Montgomery Street just north of East Front Street in downtown Trenton, New Jersey. Designed by the Trenton architectural firm of Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi, the building is constructed of structural steel and, on the east, north, and part of the south elevation, is faced in glazed white brick. The other elevations are faced in red brick. The east (primary) elevation, which faces South Montgomery Street, is defined by long, aluminum ribbon windows above the first floor, a feature common among International Style architecture. The building housed the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles as its sole tenant from its completion in 1961 until 1993 and has remained unoccupied since that time.

Narrative Description

Setting (Photos 1, 2, 4, 6, 8)

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building is located in the dense urban environment of downtown Trenton. Immediately surrounding the building, there are concrete sidewalks along the east elevation, an asphalt parking lot along the south elevation (the parking lot is not part of the historic property), an asphalt driveway along the west elevation that leads to a curving ramp leading down into the building's basement-level parking garage, and a narrow alley along the north elevation that separates the building from an adjacent 8-story building at 143 East State Street (the former Broad Street National Bank Building, which was built in 1900 and expanded with a 12-story addition to the west in 1913). The driveway and ramp along the west elevation, although located on an adjacent parcel (City of Trenton, Block 201, Lot 21), are included in the National Register Boundary because they were directly related to the operation of the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicle Building's basement-level parking garage (the attached National Register Boundary map shows the relationship between the parcels). Just north of the ramp, there is a rectangular, seven-story brick tower with no windows that partially abuts the west elevation of the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building (Photo 6). This tower is not part of the historic building, but rather is the southernmost end of the neighboring building at 137 E. State Street and is located entirely on that parcel (City of Trenton, Block 201, Lot 21).¹

Beyond the historic property, the surrounding area to the east, north, and west primarily consists of low- to mid-rise commercial and governmental office buildings from the early to late twentieth century. To the south, across East Front Street, there is a small park (Mill Hill Park) as well as a residential area of predominantly three-story brick rowhouses dating to the nineteenth century. The residential area also contains a mid-rise apartment building that appears to date to the late twentieth century.

Exterior (Photos 1-8)

The east or primary elevation, which faces Montgomery Street, is primarily faced in glazed white brick (Photos 1, 2). On the first floor, the main entrance, consisting of aluminum-framed glass doors with side lights and a transom, is located in the southernmost bay (Photo 3). The entrance, which is slightly recessed, is framed by polished black marble panels, although a few of the panels to the south are missing, revealing the underlying concrete block walls. To the north of the entrance, the first floor contains four aluminum storefront windows, which have four lights each (separated by thin aluminum mullions) and sit on concrete bases (Photo 4). The storefronts sit behind square columns, which are clad in polished black marble panels matching the marble cladding around the main entrance. The columns are similar in effect to

¹ In October 1959, the *Daily Home News* of New Brunswick, NJ reported that a shaft would connect each floor of 25 S. Montgomery Street to the one at 137 E. State Street, where the State of New Jersey already leased some office space ("State Leases Trenton Building," *Daily Home News*, October 29, 1959). It is unclear if the existing brick tower is the shaft described in this report, but there are no openings into the tower from inside the Division of Motor Vehicle Building.

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pilotis, ground-level supporting columns that were often used in International Style architecture to raise a building above an open ground level. In this case, however, the ground level is not open, but rather contains enclosed interior space. The second through seventh floors on the east elevation are all identical, consisting of alternating bands of glazed white brick with ribbon windows. The windows, which are original, consist of three-light aluminum units with an operable, center awning panel.

On the north elevation, which is largely blocked from view by the adjacent nine-story building, the easternmost bay on the first floor contains a four-light aluminum storefront window over a concrete base, matching the storefront treatment on the east elevation. West of the storefront and on the second through seventh floors, the north elevation is faced in glazed white brick matching the brick on the east elevation. On the second through seventh floors, the ribbon windows from the east elevation turn, extending one bay in on this side (Photo 5). Beyond this first bay, the north elevation contains a number of individual punched window openings on each floor. The windows are similar to the three-light ribbon window units, each containing an operable center panel.

The west elevation, which is faced in common, unglazed red brick, is located adjacent to a driveway that leads north from East Front Street (Photos 6, 7). At ground level (below the first floor on this elevation), there is a parking garage entrance with concrete retaining walls on each side. On the first floor, there is a hollow metal door in the northernmost bay and two rectangular glass block windows. The second through seventh floors are all identical, containing a single aluminum unit in the northernmost bay and groups of three and four window units in the center and southernmost bays, respectively (the latter two of matching width and aligned with the glass block windows on the first floor). In the northernmost bay, which contains the stair tower, there is also an eighth-floor window where the stair tower rises above the main roofline to provide access to the roof. The eighth-floor window is a three-light aluminum unit matching those on the second through seventh floors. Like the windows on the east and north elevations, the center panel of each window unit on the second through seventh floors, including those in the groups of three and four units, is operable.

The south elevation (Photo 8), which faces a parking lot on an adjacent, separate parcel, is partially clad in glazed white brick (eastern third) and standard, unglazed red brick (western two-thirds). The red brick portion of the south elevation is slightly recessed from the white brick portion. There are no door or window openings on the south elevation.

Roof (Photos 25, 26)

The roof is flat, has an asphalt surface, and does not have a parapet wall. At the southeast corner of the roof, there is a one-story elevator machine room. The machine room is faced in glazed white brick, which is recessed from the edge of the roof on the east side, but is flush with the south elevation. There is a hollow metal door on the east side of the machine room, which is accessed by a small, utilitarian metal stair. At the northwest corner of the roof, there is a one-story pilot house over the stairway, which provides access up to the roof. The pilot house is faced in red brick and has a hollow metal door on the east side. Both rooftop structures have flat roofs. Except for some mechanical units, the remainder of the roof is devoid of features.

Interior (Photos 9-23)

The overall plan of each floor is rectangular except that a portion of the south elevation (the western two-thirds, faced in red brick) is angled, creating a modified trapezoidal shape.

Entered from the main entrance on the east elevation, there is a vestibule and lobby, both of which are small, rectangular spaces with original terrazzo floors, polished marble paneling on the walls, and an illuminated ceiling consisting of translucent acrylic panels supported by stainless steel ribs (Photos 9, 10). On the east side of the lobby, there are two pairs of glass double doors with stainless steel trim that open from the vestibule, which has matching floor, wall, and ceiling finishes. The vestibule doors, which are topped by a single-light transom, appear to be original. Just south of the vestibule,

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there is an original hollow metal door that opens to one of the two main stairs. On the north wall of the lobby, there is a glass door with stainless steel trim that opens to the office space, a stainless steel-framed building directory, and a stainless-steel framed service window with pull-down metal screen, all of which are original. On the west wall, there is a stainless-steel metal door (date unknown), which opens to a small corridor (Photo 11), and an enclosed guard desk, which is framed in metal and clad in laminate that attempts to imitate the original marble panels on the walls. The precise date of the guard desk is unknown, but based on the incompatibility of the laminate surfaces with the surrounding, high-quality terrazzo and marble treatments, it is very likely a later feature. Finally, on the south wall of the lobby, there are two original stainless steel elevator doors with polished and brushed vertical bands.

Beyond the lobby, the first floor primarily consists of an open office area with vinyl tile floors, perimeter gypsum board walls, a grid of structural steel columns with drywall enclosures, and dropped acoustical tile ceilings (Photos 12, 13). There are long, linear fluorescent light fixtures on the ceiling, but the date of their installation is unknown. The upper floors are similar except that they primarily contain carpeting rather than vinyl tile floors (Photos 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22). Additionally, in many locations on the upper floors there are small, private offices and meeting rooms with drywall partitions along the perimeter walls (Photos 16, 21, 23).

The building is served by two elevators and two stairs. The elevators are found at the southeast corner of the building. On the first floor, the elevator doors are clad in polished and brushed stainless steel (Photo 9), however on the upper floors they consist of painted stainless steel and open directly into the office spaces without separate lobbies (Photo 19). Stair #1, which is steel and has painted metal pipe railings, is located just south of the elevators, and rises from the basement to the seventh floor (Photo 14). Stair #2, which is identical, is found at the northwest corner of the building and also rises from the basement to the seventh floor, but also extends one additional level to the roof (Photo 18).

Parking Garage (Photo 24)

The basement primarily consists of a parking garage, which is original to the building. It is a single level and conforms to the building's foot print. As described above, the garage is accessed from a ramp on the west elevation. Typical of such a use, the garage contains exposed concrete floors, walls, columns, and ceilings. The lower half of the columns is painted.

Integrity

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building retains integrity. The aspects of design and materials, in particular, are easily conveyed as the exterior and some significant interior spaces have changed little since the building's completion in 1961. Critical to our understanding of the building as an International Style work of architecture are its unornamented, geometric massing, the marble-clad columns (similar to *pilotis*) at ground level on the east elevation, the glazed white brick above the first floor, and the characteristic aluminum ribbon windows, which are original. Likewise, the first floor lobby, with its intact terrazzo floors, marble-clad walls, and striking, illuminated ceiling, are all characteristic of the mid-century period in architectural design.

Due to the largely intact nature of the building's design and materials, the aspect of feeling is also retained. The exterior and interior treatments described above speak to the building's modernity and create a striking composition that is a clear break from the architectural traditions of previous decades and centuries.

The aspect of workmanship is also conveyed through the intact, high-quality exterior masonry, especially the glazed white brick, as well as the terrazzo floors and marble-clad walls in the first-floor lobby. Although the International Style often embraced new, mass-produced materials, these particular treatments relied on traditional crafts and skills that were still valued in architecture and construction during the mid-century period.

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Finally, the building also retains integrity through the aspects of location and setting. It remains in its original location in downtown Trenton and many of the building's commercial, institutional, and governmental neighbors. Although some new construction has occurred in the vicinity of the building in recent decades, the scale and material treatment of these works is generally compatible with the historic urban streetscape of downtown Trenton and has not dramatically changed the building's setting.

The aspect of association is not present as the building has no apparent direct link to an important historic event or person.

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SECTION 8: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building has statewide significance under Criterion C in the Area of Architecture as a significant example of the International Style. The period of significance is 1961, the year the building was completed.

A Brief History of the Building

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building was built by Looman Associates, Incorporated, a real estate development company based in New York City, for the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in 1959-1961. The DMV traces its roots to 1906, when the Department of Motor Vehicle Registration was founded in connection with the Department of State. As the name suggests, the department was responsible for the registration of all automobiles and drivers in the state, issuing both license plates and drivers licenses. In 1926, the department became an independent entity but later became part of the Department of Law and Public Safety in 1948 and was renamed the Division of Motor Vehicles that year. The Division had offices in several buildings scattered around downtown Trenton and by the late 1950s was in need of a consolidated headquarters. In 1959, the State signed a 15-year lease with Looman prior to the start of construction. On the building's completion in January 1961, the Division of Motor Vehicles had moved in and was fully operational in their new headquarters. The lease was renewed for another 15 years in 1976 and the Division remained in the building until 1993. That year, the Division moved into a new building just around the corner at 225 East State Street. In 2003 the Division was abolished and replaced by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, which is still located at 225 East State Street.¹ Since 1993, the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building at 25 South Montgomery Street has been unoccupied.

The International Style

Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi's design for the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building is a quintessential example of the International Style. Originating in Europe in the 1920s, the International Style was in part a product of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus, a progressive design school he founded in 1919 in Weimar, Germany. The school was later directed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in Dessau and then moved briefly to Berlin before closing down in 1933 due to pressure from the Nazi regime. Seeking an ordered response to the chaos of World War I, the Bauhaus sought to unite all forms of design – art, architecture, interior design, decorative arts, and graphic design – to create a type of building that was at once rational, functional, and beautiful. The Bauhaus philosophy was a radical break with historical precedents, primarily from the Classical and Renaissance eras, that had defined European and American architecture for centuries. Gone were formal properties like symmetry and proportion, material traditions like heavy masonry walls, and ornamental qualities rooted in the Classical orders, all of which were viewed as irrelevant in a rapidly industrializing and technologically sophisticated world. In their place, the Bauhaus envisioned a greater harmony between form and function, leading to a highly rational aesthetic characterized by simple geometric forms, asymmetry, and smooth surfaces without ornamentation. Taking advantage of the physical properties of modern materials – concrete, glass, and steel were frequently employed – the Bauhaus and its disciples emphasized the sheer enclosure of volumes rather than the creation of mass.²

Concurrently with the Bauhaus in Germany, the built work and theoretical writings of Le Corbusier, a Swiss-born (later French) architect, were significantly influencing the development of the International Style in France. In his highly influential treatise, *Vers une Architecture* (1923), one of the defining architectural texts of the era, Le Corbusier argued for a mode of living derived from the spirit of the new age of industry and mass production. Like automobiles, airplanes, and ships, which made use of new materials and forms that were not fettered by tradition, Le Corbusier believed buildings should be reflective of their era, in this case one of technological progress. To this end, like the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier

¹ "A Chronology of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Department," 1953 (Unknown author); "City Holds 'Topping Out' Party," *Trenton Evening Times*, September 6, 1991.

² William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 193-195; Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 159-162.

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embraced recent structural and material advancements, using steel, concrete, and glass to create an architecture of volume and simple geometries, one that eschewed symmetry and historical ornamentation. The hallmarks of Le Corbusier's approach to design are laid out in his Five Points of Architecture, which were published in *Vers une Architecture*: 1) a skeletal frame, giving point supports (*pilotis*) instead of walls; 2) an open plan instead of boxed rooms; 3) a roof terrace instead of a pitched roof; 4) a window band instead of individual windows; and 5) an asymmetrical composition for facades consonant with the functional demands of the interior. Functionalism became the defining characteristic of Le Corbusier's work during this period.³

Although the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier influenced some work in the United States during the 1920s, it was not until the founding of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in 1929, and the museum's subsequent International Style exhibition in 1932, that European Modernism began to influence American architecture more widely. That same year, the first International Style skyscraper, designed by George Howe and William Lescaze, was completed in Philadelphia for the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (PSFS). Other influential works include numerous houses designed by Richard Neutra in Los Angeles during the late 1920s and early 30s; the Gropius House in Lincoln, MA designed by Walter Gropius in 1938; and the new building for the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, designed by Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone in 1939. Still, it was not until after World War II that the International Style gained any significant traction in the United States. This new wave was characterized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson as having three defining characteristics: planes to create the form of the building; regularity, not symmetry, in the façade, and a lack of ornamentation. Some of best-known works to fully embrace these principles are the United Nations Building by Harrison and Abramowitz (1947), Lever House by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (1952) and the Seagram Building by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson (1958), all of which are located in Manhattan and remain standing. In New Jersey, the Pavilion and Colonnade Apartments in Newark, matching 22-story residential towers designed by Mies van der Rohe, are among the best high style examples of the International Style in the Garden State (Figure 11).

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building as an International Style Work

Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi's design for the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building displays numerous hallmark features of the International Style as formulated by the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier, and as later defined by Hitchcock and Johnson. The building's sharp, cubic form, with its smooth surfaces, is devoid of ornamentation. The east or primary elevation, which faces South Montgomery Street, is primarily defined by alternating bands of glazed white brick and aluminum ribbon windows above the first floor, the latter a common feature in Le Corbusier's work (Figures 8, 10). The windows begin in the more solid southern end of the wall, continuing north and wrapping around the side of the building, creating a balanced asymmetry that characterizes so many International Style buildings. At ground level, the façade is supported by black marble-clad columns that visually serve the same purpose as *pilotis*, the supporting columns prescribed by Le Corbusier to raise a building above the ground.

Echoing Hitchcock's and Johnson's thoughts on International Style form, the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicle Building's sense of volume is also one of its key characteristics. The way in which the ribbon windows wrap the northeast corner of the building helps to dissolve the building's mass and make the alternating brick bands appear as if they are floating horizontal planes. This compositional device, which takes full advantage of structural steel and recent developments in curtain wall design, clearly demonstrates that the brick bands are not self-supporting; rather, in the words of architectural historian William H. Jordy, they are part of a "non-structural membrane stretched around the frame merely to provide weather protection for the interior" (Figure 9). This treatment clearly distinguished the building from those in previous decades and centuries where windows were isolated units that sat within a load-bearing masonry wall rather than serving as an integral part of the wall. It also conveyed a lightness and thinness inherent in the enclosure that "suggested even from

³ Curtis, 168-173; Colquhoun, 146-149.

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the outside that the interior space was continuous, open, light and airy.”⁴ The interior of the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building contains an open area in the center of each floor, allowing greater flexibility of use, as well as numerous private offices around the perimeter in an arrangement that was typical of modern work environments.⁵

Comparative Examples of the International Style in New Jersey

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building was one of many International Style buildings that appeared across New Jersey in both cities and suburban locations during the 1950s and early 1960s. Although the state’s sprawling, suburban corporate headquarters often dominate the conversation when it comes to mid-century architecture in New Jersey – the Bell Labs in Holmdel, designed by Eero Saarinen and built 1959-1962, and the American Cyanamid Company Headquarters in Wayne Township, designed by Philadelphia-based Vincent Kling and built 1960-1962 are two of the best known – there are good examples of International Style buildings in both small towns and large cities across the state (Figures 16 and 17). Their expression of International Style principles varies, but all are sharply geometric in their basic form and to a greater or lesser degree take advantage of the structural possibilities of concrete and steel to create thin, semi-transparent facades. These buildings, which were designed by architects of a stature similar to Kramer, Hirsch and Carchidi – that is locally or regionally prominent, but not internationally known – also all take advantage of new developments in materials such as glass, aluminum, and stainless steel.

In Trenton itself, the International Style appeared in buildings of various types, including schools, offices, and stores, among others. The Stokes Elementary School at 915 Parkside Avenue, designed by Trenton architects Micklewright & Mountford and built 1950-53, presents a balanced interplay of solid masonry walls with thinner glazed walls featuring ribbon windows, much like the Division of Motor Vehicles Building (Figure 18). Similarly, the Trenton Times Building at 500 Perry Street, also designed by Micklewright & Mountford and built in 1960-61, consists of a simple, rectangular brick mass with ribbon windows interrupted a projecting pavilion, which is framed on the sides and top by polished granite and presents an aluminum-framed glass wall to the street (Figure 19). The Hamilton Jewelers Building at the northeast corner of Broad and Hanover Streets in downtown Trenton, designed by Trenton architect Louis S. Kaplan and built in 1958, features an entirely different type of wall treatment, but one that became common among International Style works in the United States (Figure 20). Like the Lever House in New York City, the Hamilton Jewelers building features a curtain wall of stainless-steel mullions and colored glass spandrel panels, creating a gridded façade that became a defining characteristic of 1950s commercial buildings. The *Trenton Evening Times* reported that the Hamilton Jewelers store was “the first building in Trenton to have this type of construction.”⁶ Despite being of a different structural system and different materials, the façade conveys a lightness similar to that of the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building. All three buildings remain standing. To date, none of these examples have been listed in either the New Jersey or National Register of Historic Places. Outside of Trenton, the five-story Hackensack Building, designed by Hackensack architects Walter G. Bartels & Son and built in 1957 is closely comparable to the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building (Figure 21). Although smaller than its Trenton counterpart, it displays a similarly sharp, rectilinear composition with alternating bands of brick and ribbon windows, although in this case the windows on the primary elevation do not wrap either corner. A much larger example is the 20-story Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Building in Newark, designed by Eggers & Higgins of New York City and completed in 1957 (Figure 22). Like the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building, the building rises from columns similar to pilotis on the ground floor. Although the façade differs slightly – it primarily consists of a curtain wall of aluminum windows and metal spandrel panels, but set within a monolithic concrete block – the suggestion of the exterior wall as a non-structural membrane with open spaces behind is similar. Pushing the curtain wall idea even further, the Prudential

⁴ William H. Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 68.

⁵ George Musser, “The Origin of Cubicles and the Open-Plan Offices” *Scientific American*, August 17, 2009: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-origin-of-cubicles-an/>

⁶ “Hamilton Jewelers Returning to New Store Tomorrow on Site of Fire Remains,” *Trenton Evening Times*, December 3, 1958.

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Insurance Company, Southern New Jersey Regional Office in Millville, which opened in 1958, significantly reduces the amount of masonry to the barest of structural frameworks (Figure 23). This long, two-story building, designed by Newark-based Frank Grad & Sons, consists of a reductive concrete grid with bays infilled with aluminum windows and metal spandrel panels. A two-story office building at 495 Main Street in Metuchen, designed by architect John MacWilliam and built in 1958, repeats the gridded stainless steel and spandrel panel treatment and presents a similarly sheer wall of glass and metal spandrel panels framed on the sides by brick walls (Figure 24). Lastly, the Hudson County Administration Building at 595 Newark Avenue in Jersey City, designed by Comparetto & Kenny and built 1955-56, utilizes the same type of skeletal framework, but on a much larger scale, making the 10-story building one of the largest of its type in the state (Figure 25). These five buildings, all but one of which (the Hackensack Building) remain standing, offer a representative sample of the great variety of scale and material treatment, not to mention geographic diversity, present in New Jersey's prevalent International Style resources. To date, none of these examples have been listed in either the New Jersey or National Register of Historic Places.

Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi, Architects

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building was designed by the Trenton, New Jersey firm of Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi. Formed in 1953 when Joseph G. Carchidi (1921-1974) became a partner in the firm of Kramer & Hirsch, which Harold J. Kramer (1920-2000) and John M. Hirsch (1919-1973) had founded in 1950.⁷ Kramer, a 1942 graduate of the Yale University School of Architecture, joined the renowned New York firm of Harrison & Abramowitz following his service in the Navy during World War II. During his time at Harrison & Abramowitz, Kramer was chiefly involved in the design of the new United Nations Building in Manhattan, a major work in the International Style. Hirsch graduated from Syracuse University's School of Architecture in 1941 and served in the Army during the war. On his return from active duty, Hirsch worked in the Trenton firms of Louis S. Kaplan and Micklewright & Mountford (as discussed below, both firms produced numerous International Style works in New Jersey around the same time as Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi). Finally, Carchidi graduated from Princeton University in 1947 after serving as a Marine Corps officer during the war. Carchidi may have joined Kramer & Hirsch immediately after graduating from Princeton, although information on the earliest years of his career is sparse.⁸

In addition to dozens of elementary, middle, and high schools built in and around Trenton during the 1950s through the early 1970s, Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi designed many of the city's most prominent governmental, institutional, residential, and commercial buildings during this period. Among their large body of work in the city is the Fuld Hospital, now the Capital Regional Health Center, where the firm designed numerous large buildings during the 1960s; the five-story New Jersey Department of Education Building at 225 W. State Street (Figure 12), which was completed in 1961 and now houses the office of the governor; the nine-story Louis Josephson Apartments at 237 Oakland Street (Figure 13), a senior housing facility opened in 1962; and the 10-story New Jersey Division of Taxation Building at 50 Barrack Street (Figure 14), built in 1968. All four buildings remain standing. To date, none have been listed in either the New Jersey or National Register of Historic Places.

The firm also completed numerous large public housing projects for the Trenton Housing Authority starting in 1960. These include the Miller Homes, two 10-story towers amongst a group of two-story houses on Lincoln Avenue, built 1962-1965; and the Kingsbury Corporation Towers, two 21-story apartment buildings at the corner of Market and Warren Streets (Figure 15), completed in 1971. The Miller Homes, which became a symbol of the racial disparities associated with urban renewal – it was meant to rehouse residents displaced from the Fitch Way Urban Renewal Area to the west, primarily African-Americans – later became notorious for poor living conditions and were demolished in 2011. The Kingsbury Towers, which

⁷ "New Architect Firm Organized," *Trenton Evening Times*, February 2, 1950; "The Record Reports," *Architectural Record* (November 1954), 326.

⁸ "Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi Combine Hard Work, Desire to Form Top Firm," *Trenton Evening Times*, April 24, 1966.

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were built during the final phase of the Fitch Way Urban Renewal project, remain standing, but are not listed in either the New Jersey or National Register of Historic Places.

Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi remained in operation until 1975. Following the deaths of partners Hirsch and Carchidi in 1973 and 1974, respectively, Kramer left the firm in 1975 to take over his family's electrical motor manufacturing business, the Kramer Trenton Company.⁹ In April of that year, Richard E. Bennett, who had served as one of the firm's senior associates since its founding, succeeded Kramer and renamed the firm Richard E. Bennett & Associates. Bennett himself died only eight months later.¹⁰ In 1976, the widows sold the firm, which then operated out of the office located at 42 West Lafayette Street in Trenton as Ronald E. Vaughn Associates Architects, completing projects in progress at the time of the sale.¹¹

During Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi's over twenty years of activity, the firm played a major role in revitalizing and transforming the look of downtown Trenton in the post-World War II period. Although the broader urban renewal effort in Trenton during the 1950s and later can and should be questioned in many respects, particularly for its displacement of low-income African-American residents and cutting the downtown off from the river, it resulted in the construction of numerous high-quality modernist buildings, many designed by Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi. Their prolific work on strikingly modern office buildings, along with residential and educational projects, signaled a new direction for Trenton during this period, when the city, county and state governments hoped to bring the city back from the loss of manufacturing jobs and the consequent decline in population. As many of the firm's works are still standing today, their significant impact on the city's built environment remains evident.

Supplemental Information: The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building and Post-war Developments in Trenton

The New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building was one of the first major post-World War II governmental buildings completed in Trenton. As in many American cities during the post-war period, Trenton's urban core was deteriorating, and its population was declining – from 128,009 in 1950 to 114,167 in 1960, or a drop of over 10%.¹² In an effort to revitalize the downtown area, city, county and state leaders took advantage of federal funding to create the John Fitch Way urban renewal area, in which residential neighborhoods home to predominantly African-American Trentonians were cleared to create the John Fitch Parkway (Route 29) along the Delaware River waterfront (Figures 26-28). The state used this opportunity to create a new capitol complex just north of the new highway.¹³ From the early 1960s, the state government built numerous large office buildings in the Fitch Way area, including the Department of Education Building (Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi, arch., 1961), the Department of Health and Agriculture Buildings (Alfred and Jane West Clauss, arch., 1962-65, demolished in 2021), the Department of Labor & Industry Building (Frank Grad & Sons, arch., 1962, demolished in 2021), the New Jersey State Museum (Frank Grad & Sons, arch., 1962-1964), the New Jersey State Library (Frank Grad & Sons, arch., 1964), and the Division of Taxation Building (Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi, arch., 1961), among others. Although not within the Fitch Way area, the Division of Motor Vehicles Building was built in close proximity to the core of the new capitol complex and was part of the state's effort to modernize the look of the state office buildings during this period. As one of the earliest major office buildings completed in Trenton after World War II, the building, unlike the many that followed it, was firmly a by-product of the Bauhaus and Corbusian approach to modern design.

⁹ Obituary of Harold J. Kramer, CentralJersey.com, July 28, 2000, <https://archive.centraljersey.com/2000/07/28/obituaries-july-28-2000/>, accessed August 2, 2022.

¹⁰ "Firm Likely to Bear Bennett's Name," *Trenton Evening Times*, April 15, 1975; "Heart Attack Kills City Architect," *Trenton Evening Times*, December 22, 1975.

¹¹ Ronald E. Vaughn Jr., Personal communication to Andrea Tingey, August 12, 2022.

¹² These population figures are taken from the 1950 and 1960 United States Censuses as cited in "New Jersey Population Trends, 1790 to 2000," available at <https://www.nj.gov/labor/labormarketinformation/assets/PDFs/census/2kpub/njsdcp3.pdf>

¹³ "Multifaceted Concrete for New Jersey Capital Redeveloping," *Progressive Architecture* (January 1962); Mercer County Tercentenary, 1664-1964 (Trenton: Mercer County Tercentenary Commission, 1964); Zachary Kozak, "Racism and the Construction of John Fitch Way: The City Government's Role and the Victims, 1960-1975," TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship, April 2021.

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By the time the state began the project of reconstructing the capitol complex in the Fitch Way area around 1962, an aesthetic known today as the New Formalism, an effort to reintroduce a sense of monumentality to public buildings, was already beginning to supplant the International Style as the predominant form of modern architecture in Trenton and elsewhere. In the new capitol complex, for example, architects like the Clausses; Frank Grad & Sons; and Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi resorted to more solid materials like concrete and stone, often with more sculptural, three-dimensional facades with playful geometric patterns, or with abstracted Classical forms that included arches and colonnades at ground level (Figures 12, 14).

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SECTION 9: BIBLIOGRAPHY (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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SECTION 10: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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

The boundary of the property is shown as a red line on the accompanying map entitled "New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building: Boundary and Tax Map."

Boundary Justification Statement (Explain why the chosen boundaries are the most appropriate.)

The proposed National Register Boundary largely conforms to the current parcel (City of Trenton, Block 201, Lot 2) and includes all remaining resources that were historically associated with the New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building. As the driveway and ramp on the west side of the building were directly related to the operation of the building's basement-level parking garage, they are included in the boundary but are located on an adjacent parcel (City of Trenton, Block 201, Lot 21) as shown in the attached boundary map.

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Figure 1 – Current aerial view with National Register Boundary and Photo Key.

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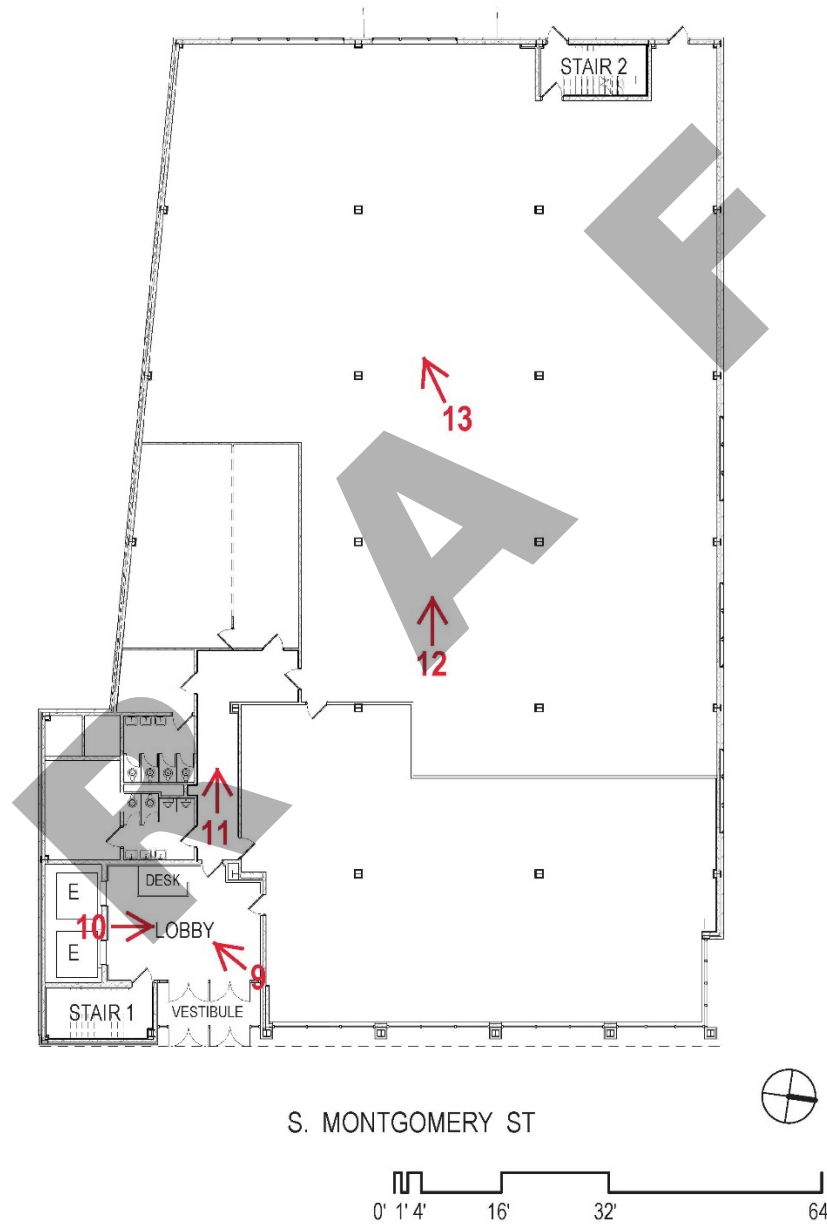


Figure 2 – First floor plan with photo key.

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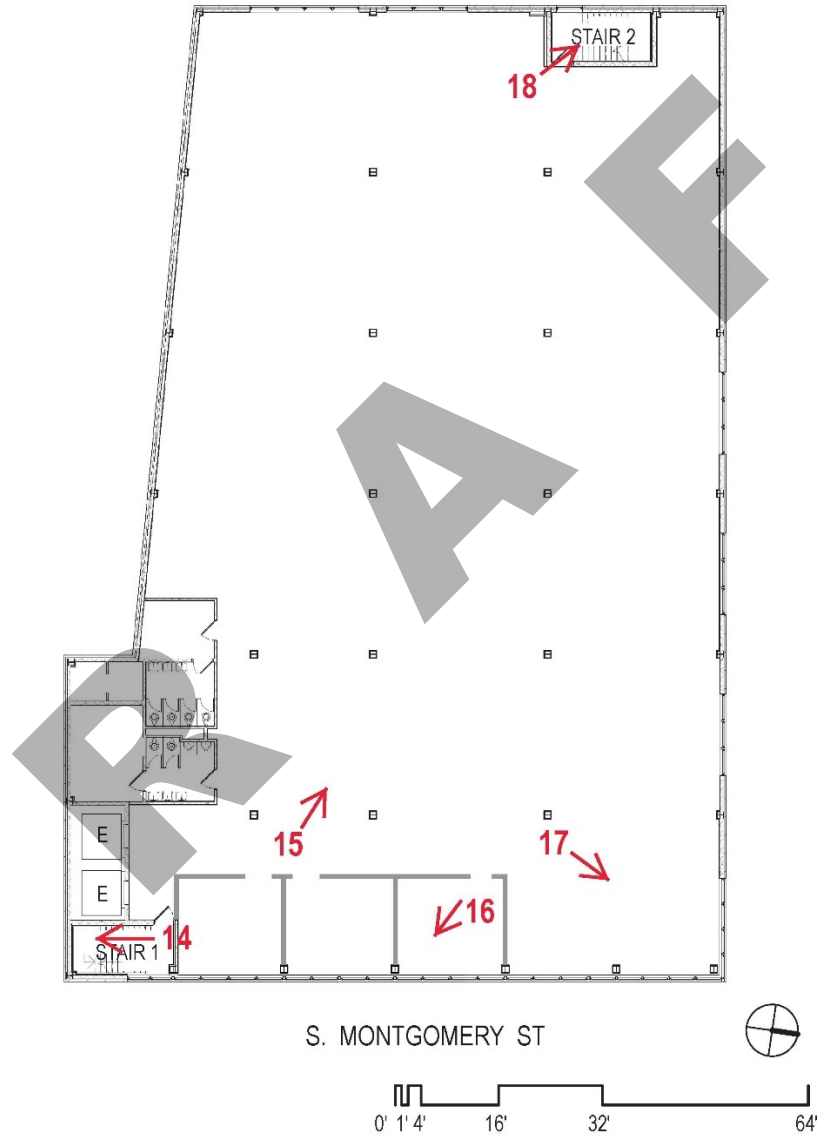


Figure 3 – Second floor plan with photo key.

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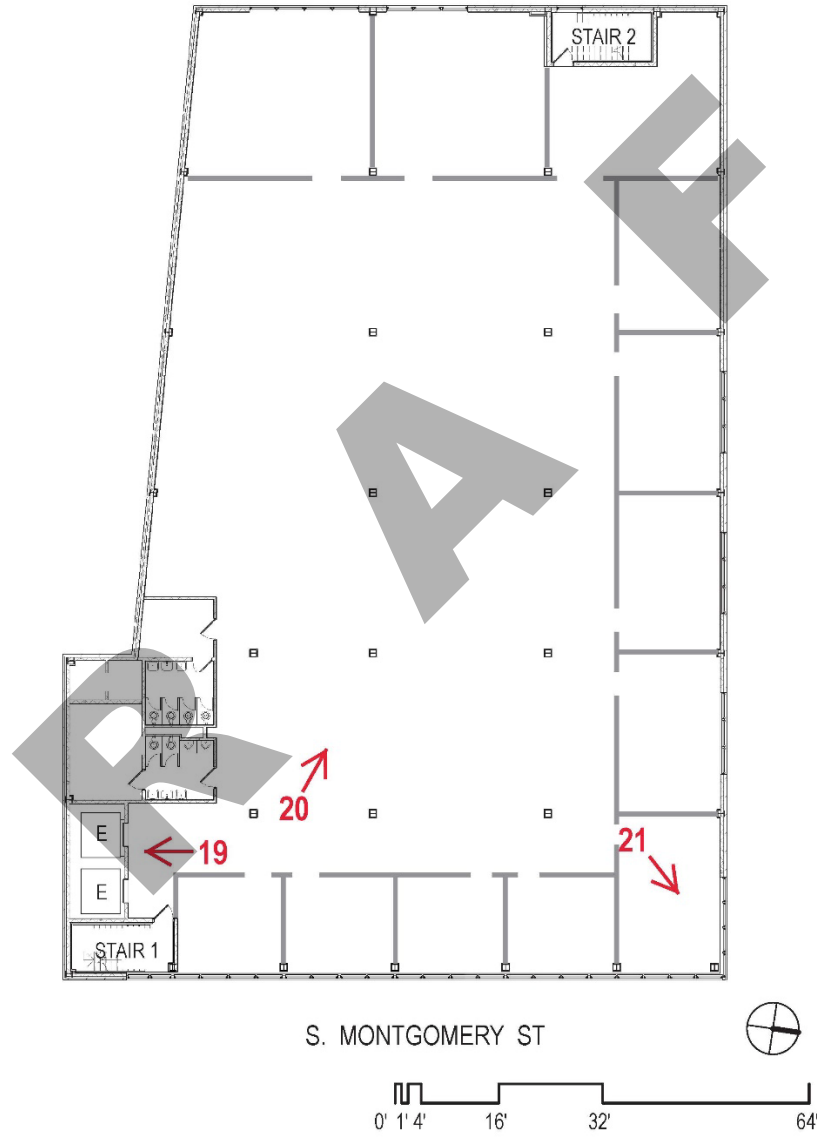


Figure 4 – Fourth floor plan with photo key.

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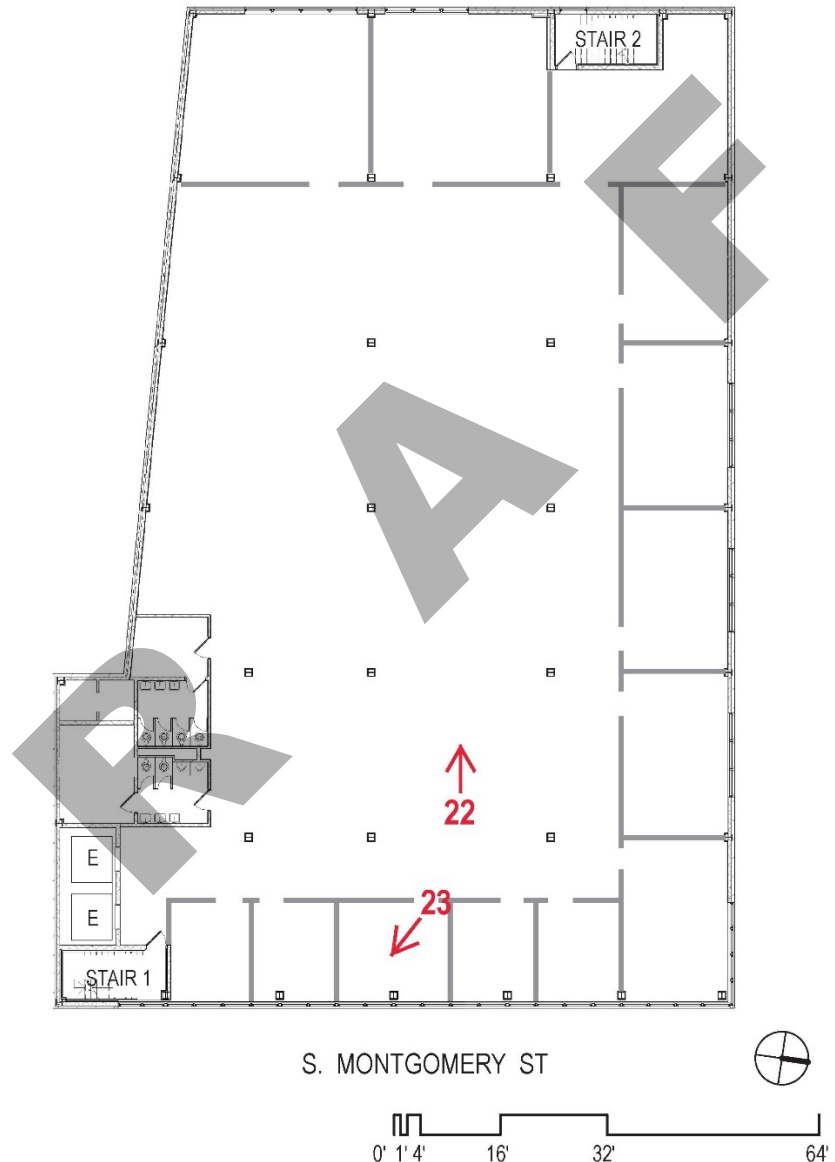


Figure 5 – Sixth floor plan with photo key.

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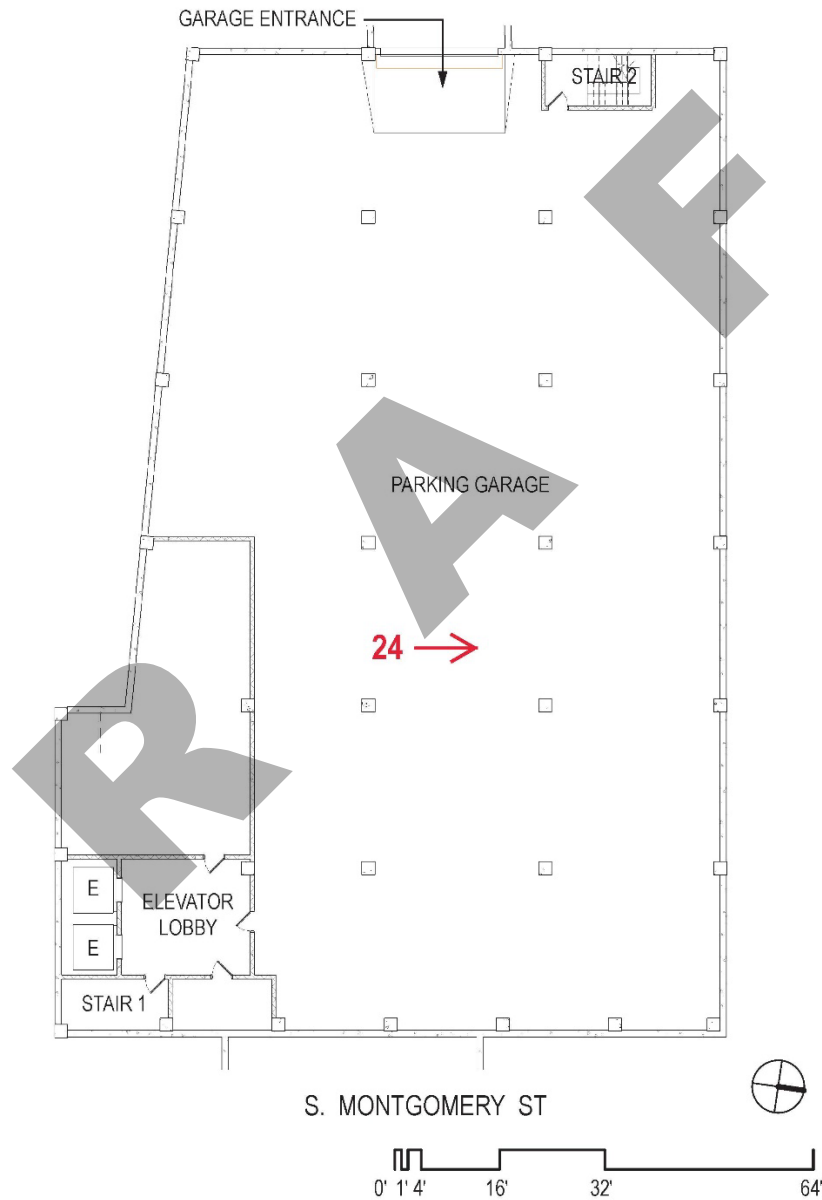


Figure 6 – Basement plan with photo key.

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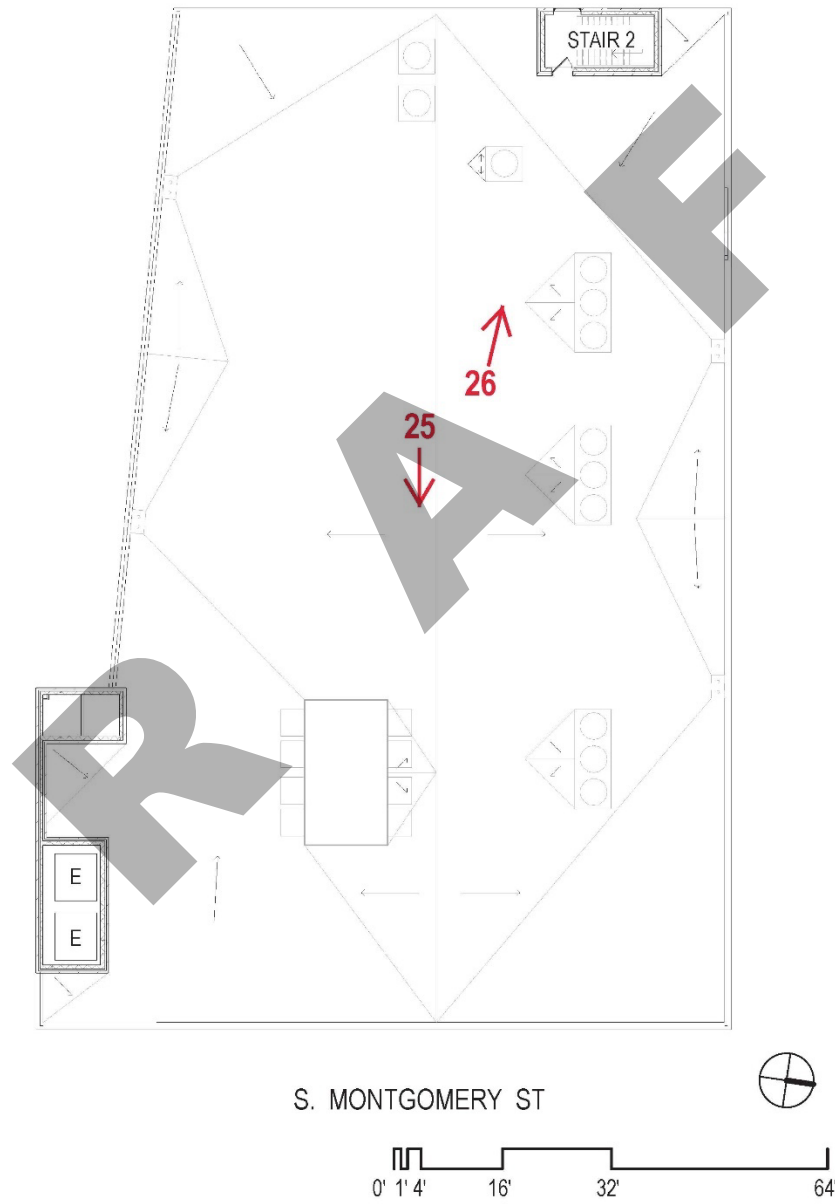


Figure 7 – Roof plan with photo key.

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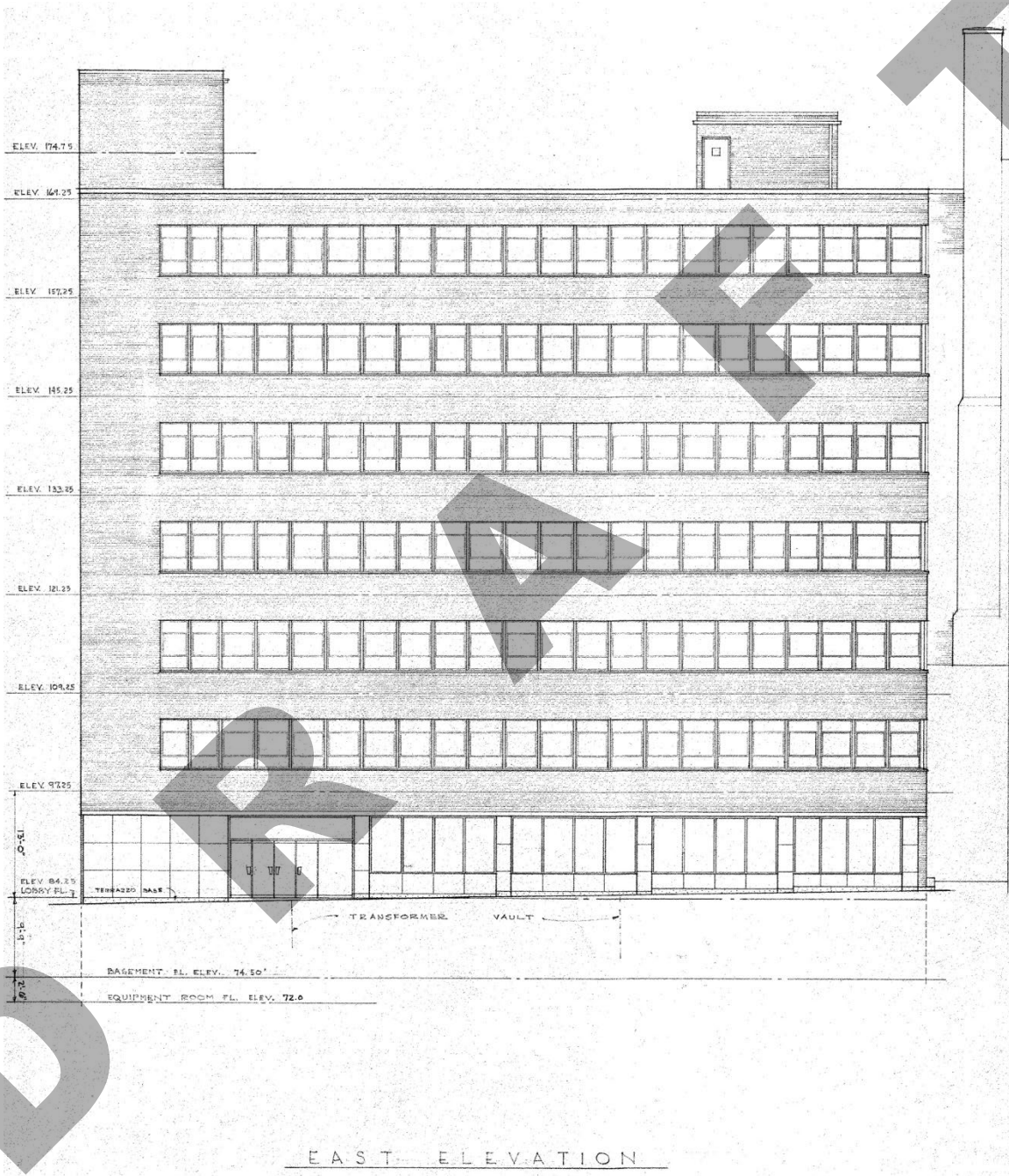


Figure 8 – East elevation as drawn by Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi in 1959 (original drawings are in the private collection of the owner).

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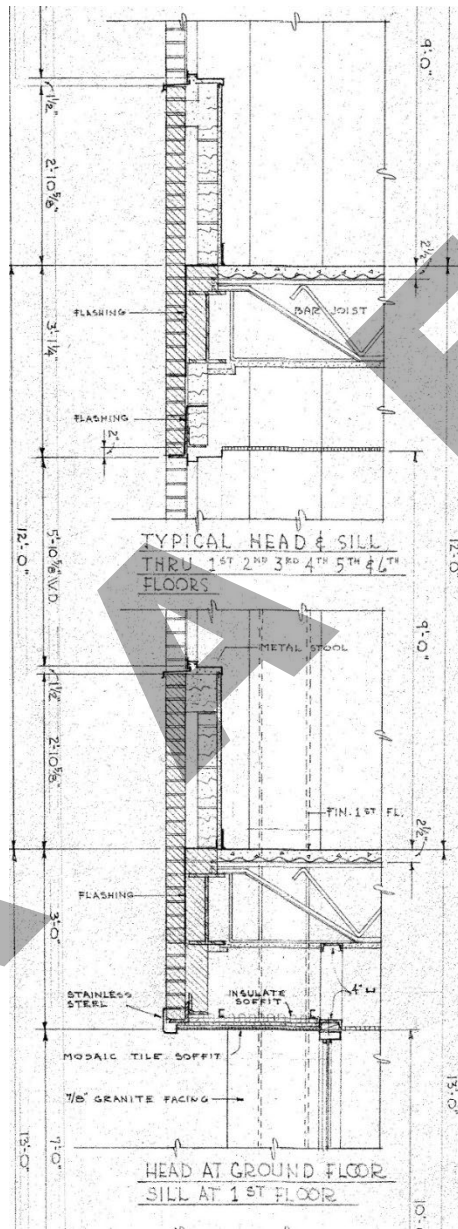


Figure 9 – East elevation wall section as drawn by Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi in 1959 (original drawings are in the private collection of the owner).

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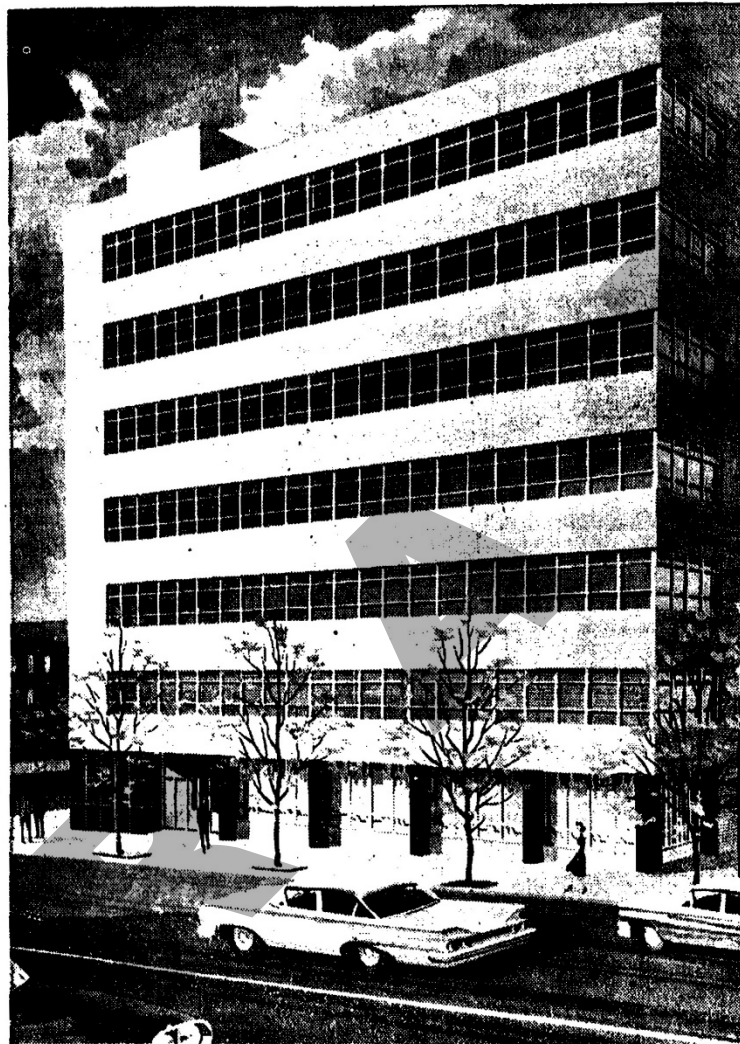
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78th YEAR — No. 13

PHONE—All Others — EXport 6-9181



RISE ON MIDCITY SCENE: This is an architects' sketch of the Looman Building, which is under construction at a South Montgomery Street site adjoining the Broad Street Bank Building. The New York owners, Looman Associates Inc., already have leased the seven-story structure to the State for bureaus of the Motor Vehicle Division. There will be passageways at each floor to the Montgomery Ward Building in which Motor Vehicle agencies also have offices. The imposing new

building with locust trees along the curb will be faced with black and off-white Swedish granite at the lobby entrance and around first floor windows. Above will be white glazed brick over a steel framework. The owners changed an original plan and parking for about 36 cars, formerly to be at ground level, will be in a basement. For the present, the state will not occupy ground level offices. They cannot be let, under the state lease, to other tenants. The state is taking about 100,

000 square feet. Access to and from the parking basement will be from East Front Street. The building, estimated to cost about \$1,500,000, will have extra-strength floors for filing cabinets. Bell Company is the general contractor for the Class A fireproof structure; William F. Hindley Company, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, and Robert Blyth Company, electrical installations and self-operated elevators. Kramer, Hirsch and Carchidi are supervising architects.

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Figure 10 – Rendering of the building by Kramer, Hirsch & Carchidi as it appeared in the *Trenton Evening Times*, October 28, 1959.

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Figure 11 – The Colonnade Apartments in Newark, NJ, one of two matching towers designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and built 1958-60, the other being the Pavilion Apartments (from *Architectural Record*, April 1960).

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Figure 12 – Department of Education Building (now the Office of the Governor) at 225 W. State Street in Trenton (njstatehousetours.org).



Figure 13 – Louis Josephson Apartments at 237 Oakland Street in Trenton (Google Maps).

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Figure 14 – Division of Taxation Building at 50 Barrack Street in Trenton (Wikimedia commons).



Figure 15 – One of the Kingsbury Towers at 1 Cooper Street in Trenton (skyscrapercenter.com).

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Figure 16 – Bell Labs, Holmdel, NJ. Designed by Eero Saarinen, built 1959-62 (image from *Architectural Record*, October 1962).



Figure 17 – American Cyanamid Company Headquarters in Wayne Township, NJ. Designed by Vincent Kling, built 1960-62 (image from *AIA New Jersey Journal*, May 1967).

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Figure 18 – Stokes Elementary School at 915 Parkside Avenue in Trenton, NJ, designed by Micklewright & Mountford and built 1950-53 (Google Street View).



Figure 19 – Trenton Times Building in Trenton, NJ, designed by Micklewright & Mountford and built 1960-61 (Google Street View).

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Figure 20 – Hamilton Jewelers Building at the northeast corner of N. Broad and E. Hanover Streets in Trenton, NJ, designed by Louis S. Kaplan and built 1958 (Google Street View).

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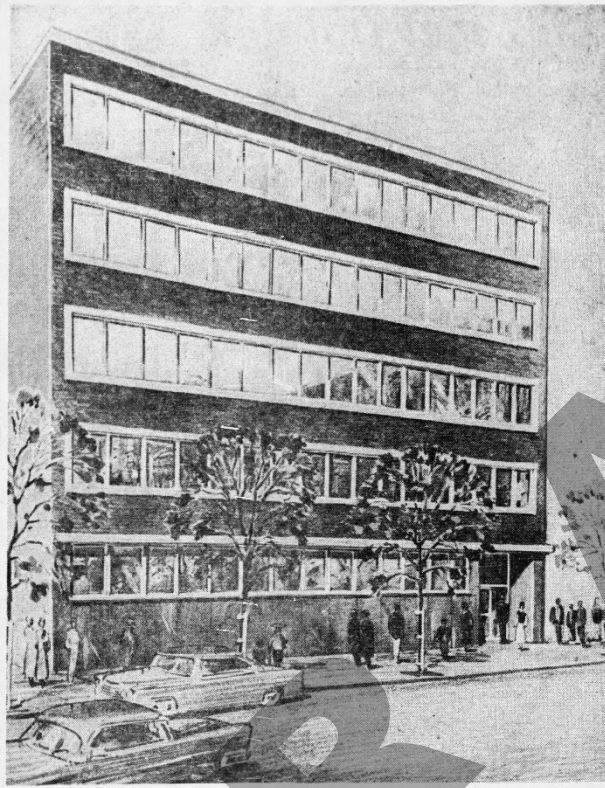


Figure 21 (left) – Hackensack Building in Hackensack, NJ. Designed by Walter G. Bartels & Son, built 1956-57 (image from *The Record*, Hackensack, July 27, 1957).

Figure 22 (right) – Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Building in Newark, NJ. Designed by Eggers & Higgins, completed 1957 (image from *Progressive Architecture*, June 1958).



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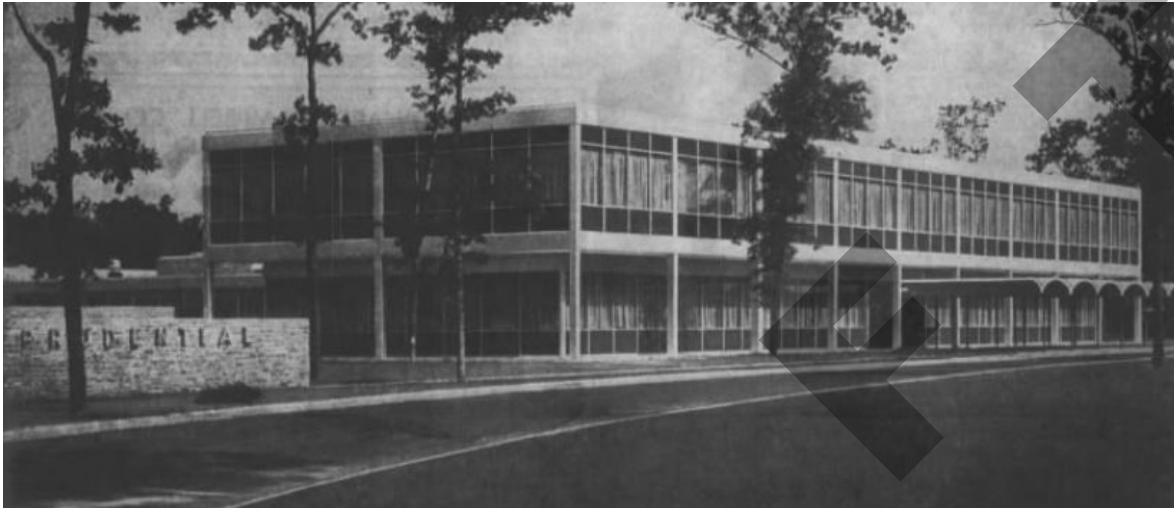


Figure 23 – Prudential Insurance, Southern New Jersey Regional Office in Millville, NJ, designed by Frank Grad & Sons and opened in 1958 (from the *Millville Daily*, September 29, 1958).

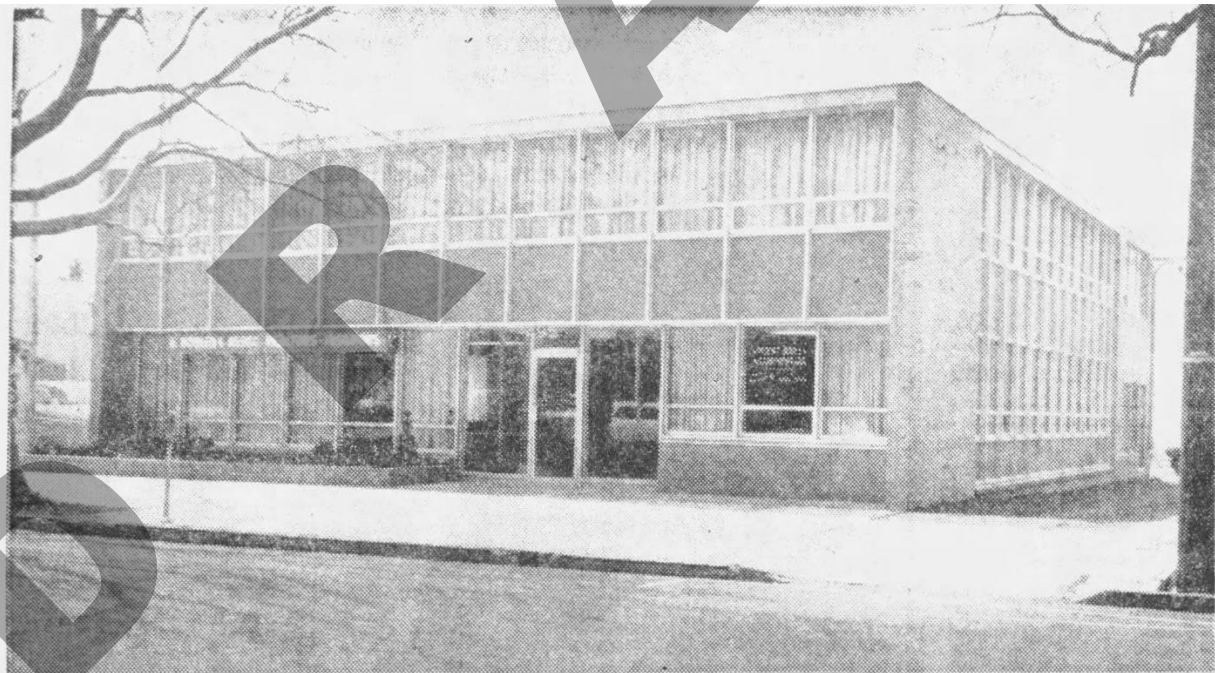


Figure 24 – Office Building at 495 Main Streets in Metuchen, NJ, designed John MacWilliam and built 1958 (from *The Central New Jersey Home News*, April 20, 1958).

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Figure 25 – Hudson County Administration Building at 595 Newark Avenue in Jersey City, NJ, designed by Comparetto & Kenny and built 1955-56 (Wikimedia commons).

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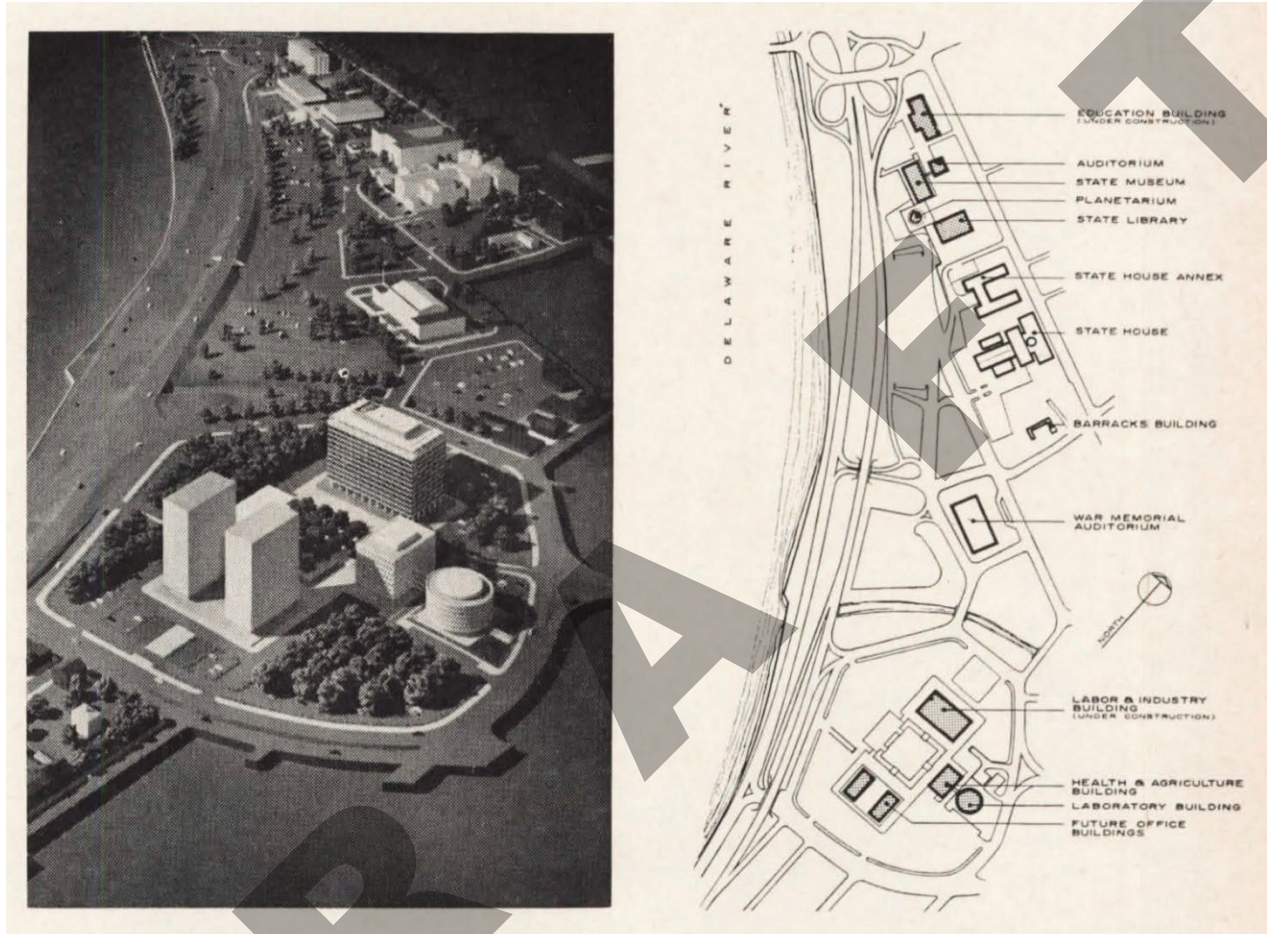


Figure 26 – Model and site plan showing the John Fitch Way urban renewal area, from *Progressive Architecture*, January 1962.

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Figure 27 – Department of Health and Agriculture Buildings (docomomo). Demolished in 2021.



Figure 28 – Department of Labor and Industry Building (nj.gov).

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Photo Log

Name of Property: New Jersey Division of Motor Vehicles Building
City or Vicinity: Trenton
County and State: Mercer County, NJ
Photographer: Kevin McMahon
Dates Photographed: January 18, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

<i>Photo #</i>	<i>Description of Photograph</i>	<i>View</i>
1.	East elevation.	SW
2.	East elevation.	W
3.	East elevation, main entrance.	SW
4.	East elevation, storefronts.	NW
5.	Northeast corner of the building.	SW
6.	West elevation.	NE
7.	West elevation, garage entrance.	E
8.	South and east elevations.	NW
9.	1 st floor, lobby.	SW
10.	1 st floor, lobby.	N
11.	1 st floor, hallway west of lobby.	W
12.	1 st floor, office area.	W
13.	1 st floor, office area.	SE
14.	2 nd floor, Stair #1.	S
15.	2 nd floor, office area.	NW
16.	2 nd floor, private office.	SE
17.	2 nd floor, office area.	NE
18.	2 nd floor, Stair #2.	NW
19.	4 th floor, elevators.	S
20.	4 th floor, office area.	NW
21.	4 th floor, private office.	NE
22.	6 th floor, office area.	W
23.	6 th floor, private office.	SE
24.	Basement-level parking garage.	N
25.	Roof	E
26.	Roof	W

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Photo 1 - East elevation, looking southwest.



Photo 2 - East elevation, looking west.

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Photo 3 - East elevation, main entrance, looking southwest.



Photo 4 - East elevation, storefronts, looking northwest.

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Photo 5 – Northeast corner, looking southwest.



Photo 6 - West elevation, looking northeast.

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Photo 7 - West elevation, garage entrance, looking east.



Photo 8 - South elevation, looking northwest.

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Photo 9 - 1st floor, lobby, looking southwest.



Photo 10 - 1st floor, lobby, looking north.

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Photo 11 - 1st floor, hallway, looking west.



Photo 12 - 1st floor, office area, looking west.

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Photo 13 - 1st floor, office area, looking southwest.



Photo 14 - 2nd floor, stair, looking south.

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Photo 15 - 2nd floor, office area, looking northwest.



Photo 16 - 2nd floor, private office, looking southeast.

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Photo 17 - 2nd floor, office area, looking northeast.



Photo 18 - 2nd floor, stair, looking northwest.

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Photo 19 - 4th floor, elevators, looking south.



Photo 20 - 4th floor, office area, looking northwest.

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Photo 21 - 4th floor, private office, looking northeast.



Photo 22 - 6th floor, office area, looking west.

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Photo 23 - 6th floor, private office, looking southeast.



Photo 24 – Basement-level parking garage, looking north.

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Photo 25 – Roof, looking east.



Photo 26 – Roof, looking west.