

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NPS 29

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.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Tower East

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 20600 Chagrin Boulevard

City or town: Shaker Heights State: OH County: Cuyahoga

Not For Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national X statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B X C ___ D

Barbara Power DSHPO Inventory & Registration October 10, 2013
Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ Date
Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society _____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ Date

Title : _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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:)

Joe Elson H. Ball
Signature of the Keeper

2-22-14
Date of Action

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

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(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE

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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

Tower East is a 12-story concrete frame office building with precast concrete facing in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a historic suburban community east of Cleveland. The building occupies a triangular site bordered by Chagrin Boulevard and Northfield Road. Designed by master architect Walter Gropius and completed in 1967-1968, the building's main tower includes 10 stories supported by freestanding concrete columns, rising above a 2-story rectangular base oriented in the opposite direction. The white precast concrete panels facing the main tower create narrow vertical piers between each bay of windows, with angled sunshades crossing each opening built into the panels. The panels wrapping each corner have no sunshades and no vertical members, lending them a lighter, open character. The exposed exterior concrete and modular, grid-like appearance of the tower façades reflects the functional modern aesthetic of the International Style advanced by Gropius. In addition to the primary office building, the Tower East site also includes a 5-level concrete parking garage to the east and surface parking in the triangular area on the south side of the property, all of which was designed and constructed with the original building. Despite multiple modifications of the interior tenant spaces, the building's exterior and lower-level common areas remain largely unaltered and the building retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity.

Narrative Description

Tower East is a 12-story concrete frame office building with precast concrete facing in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a historic suburban community east of Cleveland. The building occupies a triangular site bordered by Chagrin Boulevard and Northfield Road, immediately southeast of the large intersection created where those significant thoroughfares meet two more - Warrensville Center Road and Van Aken Boulevard. The intersection is surrounded by low-rise commercial development, which also continues east along Chagrin, but the majority of the surrounding area is characterized by large clusters of single-family residences with apartment blocks fronting the main streets. Tower East is by far the tallest building in the area, where a few scattered buildings are four and five stories but most are two or fewer, making it a prominent landmark visible from some distance. The site is also adjacent to Highland Park Cemetery, which maintains a large area of undeveloped land to the southeast, further emphasizing the verticality of Tower East.

Completed in 1967-1968, the building's main tower includes 10 stories supported by freestanding concrete columns, rising above a 2-story rectangular base oriented in the opposite direction. Both stories of the building's base are exposed on the south side, with an entry into the

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lower-level restaurant and retail spaces. The grade of the site is a full story higher on the three remaining sides, with an east-facing entry accessing the main office lobby on the second floor and an outdoor terrace along the west elevation. Concrete columns, beams and walls at the base of the building feature exposed aggregate and regularly spaced rustication strips accentuating the distinct pours. The white precast concrete panels facing the main tower create narrow vertical piers between each bay of windows, with angled sunshades crossing each opening built into the panels. The panels wrapping each corner have no sunshades and no vertical members, lending them a lighter, open character. The exposed exterior concrete and modular, grid-like appearance of the tower façades reflects the functional modern aesthetic of the International Style advanced by Walter Gropius, the renowned architect widely regarded as one of the style's founders and most preeminent figures, who designed Tower East through his firm The Architect's Collaborative ('TAC').

In addition to the primary office building, the Tower East site also includes a 6-level concrete parking garage to the east and surface parking in the triangular area on the south side of the property, all of which was designed and constructed with the original building. The parking garage is a simple, utilitarian structure, with exposed concrete floors, walls, columns and ceilings and cast concrete railings around the perimeter. The concrete railings and perimeter retaining walls feature the same exposed aggregate finish and rustication strips used on the base of the tower. The bottom two floors of the garage are below grade and all floors include two distinct levels, with the east side a half-floor higher than the west. The primary entry and exit is via a divided ramp centered on the west elevation that accesses the second floor of the garage, which is a half-floor below the site's main interior drive. A small attendant's booth remains at the base of the ramp on the north side but it is now unused. A secondary entrance and exit also exist at the third floor on the north elevation, providing direct access to Chagrin Boulevard. Ramps at the north and south ends of the building, which are built into the concrete structure and expressed on those elevations, connect the west and east sections of each floor, with another pair of ramps flanking a central core to provide access to the next floor. The central core is constructed of exposed concrete block and includes a pair of elevators on the west side and an enclosed stair on the east. Elevators are open to the garage except at the second floor, which includes an enclosed lobby and a pair of bathrooms. A second stair exists adjacent to the north ramp on the west side, and both stairs are simple cast concrete with continuous painted metal pipe railings rounded at the landings.

The original plan for Tower East included a subsequent phase to add a second smaller office building at the north end of the site along Chagrin, with the parking garage also designed to support two additional levels. That work was never executed, however, and an older unrelated commercial building remains on the intended site of the second office building, which is now under separate ownership and no longer included in the Tower East property.

On the interior of Tower East, the main office lobby and lower-level public spaces are largely intact. The open terrazzo stair with wood railings that is the predominant feature of the space is unaltered from its original design. The original terrazzo floors and precast concrete wall panels also remain, as well as marble wainscoting and unique linear light fixtures at the elevator cores.

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As a result, the main public space looks much as it did when originally completed (see enclosed photos). All upper floors (2-12) of Tower East have undergone multiple interior alterations over time to accommodate changing tenants, with no significant historic interior finishes remaining. The overall office-level plan devised by Gropius is intact, however. It features a central elevator lobby flanked by a pair of mirrored cores, each of which houses two elevators, a stair, a bathroom and a vertical chase for building systems. Each floor also includes a pair of freestanding columns but is otherwise entirely free of fixed obstructions, with the intention of providing maximum flexibility to the tenants (Figure 11). In addition to the base plan, Gropius and TAC also designed the office interiors for the building's largest original tenant, Avco Delta Corp., which occupied the top five floors of the building when it first opened. The design featured an open plan with glass partitions and a 2-story lobby on the eighth and ninth levels. After Avco Delta vacated the building in 1970, however, their lobby was filled in and no historic interior fabric remains. Upper floors now typically feature enclosed elevator lobbies and a corridor along the central cores, with offices around the perimeter of the building and contemporary finishes throughout.

Tower East retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity. The exterior design and materials are virtually unaltered, with the original aluminum windows remaining on all floors and no changes to the concrete structure or cladding. A number of small antennas have been added to the roof and a wheelchair ramp was constructed off the northeast corner of the building's 2-story base, but these changes represent only minor visual intrusions and the exterior looks nearly identical to its original appearance. The interior of Tower East has experienced more modifications, but most significant changes have been limited to the office levels on the upper floors, with the design and materials of the main two-story public entry lobby remaining intact. All original interior furnishings and artwork have been removed, but although they did contribute to the building's character they were never intended to be permanent elements. Original interior signage has also been replaced, but the character of the primary spaces was not significantly affected by the change. The Tower East site also remains unchanged since its original construction, with the parking garage, surface lots, vehicular circulation, and related site features like the outdoor terrace and retaining walls all included in the original design. Construction of a gas station at the corner of Chagrin and Northfield, abutting the site on the west, has moderately impacted the building's setting as experienced when approaching from that direction, but the intersection was already a commercial hub when Tower East was constructed and such development is generally in character with the immediate surroundings. The unusual height of Tower East, which required a zoning variance, has always been the defining feature of its setting and that characteristic of the building remains unrivaled. The building therefore continues to illustrate its significant architectural design as originally conceived by Gropius.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1967-1968

Significant Dates

1968

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Gropius, Walter (with The Architects Collaborative), architect
Turner Construction Company, builder

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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.)

Tower East is a significant example of the work of master architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) during his tenure with The Architect's Collaborative (TAC), a firm he founded with 7 young architects in 1945 and where he served as a principal until his death in 1969. Designed beginning in 1964 and completed in 1967-1968, Tower East is representative of the modern International Style of architecture Gropius was instrumental in developing and propagating from the 1910s through the 1960s, and it provides an instructive example of design issues he continued to grapple with during the latter part of his career. Within Gropius' body of work, Tower East represents an illustrative example of his philosophy of architectural design with an eye toward a building's relationship to its surrounding context, in this case going against existing zoning rules to create a vertical tower as a strong visual focus for what is otherwise a disjointed and confusing intersection. Gropius himself also saw the building as a successful resolution for designing a concrete building with a sense of lightness and openness at the corners, a characteristic of his earlier steel and glass compositions that he felt was lacking in his previous concrete works like the Pan Am Building in New York and John F. Kennedy Federal Office Building in Boston. It is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

Although completed in 1967-1968, and therefore less than 50 years old, Tower East is 'exceptionally significant' and therefore satisfies Criterion Consideration G. It is the only Gropius-designed building in Ohio, and was his first building constructed between New York and Chicago. Tower East is also a rare example from Gropius' time with The Architect's Collaborative (TAC) in which he was the sole principal assigned to a project, and one of his last commissions.

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

Tower East was developed by local businessman Frank H. Porter, Sr. (1920-2002). Porter had worked at Central Cadillac Company since 1945, when he joined the downtown Cleveland automobile dealership as a salesman after attending Cleveland Heights High School and Ohio State University and serving as an Army Air Corps bombardier and navigator in World War II. In 1943 Porter had married his high-school friend Nancy Lyon Porter (1921-1996), daughter of Central Cadillac owner George H. Lyon (1895-1976). Although Lyon had operated the Central Chevrolet dealership since 1929 and Southeast Chevrolet since 1939, he had only secured the role of Cadillac dealer and distributor for Northeast Ohio in 1942 and first opened Central Cadillac in 1943. Porter was instrumental in building the business and advanced quickly through the role of sales manager and assistant general manager before being named general manager in 1949, just as the dealership opened a massive new \$1 million-dollar sales and service center at

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2801 Carnegie Avenue. Porter would eventually become President of Central Cadillac upon Lyon's retirement in 1965, and his son Frank Porter, Jr. remains President of the company today.

Frank Porter, Sr. was known as an innovative and highly successful automobile dealer and businessman. Central Cadillac was one of the first dealers in the Midwest to create its own finance and leasing companies, which it established in the mid to late-1950s. The company purchased land along Kinsman Road in Shaker Heights, near the intersection with Warrensville Center Road and Van Aken Boulevard, with the intention of building another dealership. In 1956, however, they opted instead to develop a new office building for Ohio Bell Telephone on a portion of the site, a 2-story \$750 million building that still exists (although significantly modified) just east of the Tower East garage.

The Ohio Bell project apparently whetted Porter's appetite for real estate and also left him with a somewhat oddly shaped triangular parcel near a major intersection in Shaker Heights. The City of Shaker Heights (NR 1984, 'Shaker Village Historic District') was originally planned as an almost exclusively residential community, with the Shaker Square (NR 1976) retail complex just west of the city's boundary serving as the community's only significant commercial district until the 1950s. The location of Porter's site was near the east end of Shaker Heights, in what had been a less developed area of the city, but the growing automobile culture was pushing development further out and by the mid-1950s relatively sizable retail centers had been constructed along Warrensville Center Road and Van Aken Boulevard at their intersection with Kinsman Road, which was renamed Chagrin Boulevard in 1959. Porter recognized these emerging changes and envisioned Chagrin developing into a significant commercial corridor.

Frank and Nancy Porter were enthusiastic collectors of contemporary art and sculpture. They were strong supporters of the Cleveland Museum of Art and Frank was a member of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. These connections linked them to the heart of the artistic world in the 1950s and 1960s, and when he decided to pursue a commercial office development on the remainder of the Shaker Heights parcel, Porter ambitiously sought out the most renowned modern architects of the day to lead the project. He reportedly interviewed both Mies van der Rohe and Phillip Johnson before settling on Walter Gropius, then a principal with The Architects Collaborative (TAC), a firm he had founded in 1945. Porter appreciated Gropius' mantra that "good design does not cost more" and his promise to seriously consider the economics of a speculative office development. Although some of his associates at TAC were less than enthusiastic about the project and its location, Gropius recognized its potential and, perhaps more importantly, respected Porter's well-developed interest in art and design.

After visiting the site, Gropius quickly determined what he believed to be the appropriate direction for the property's development. As he explained in a Cleveland Plain-Dealer article from April 5, 1966:

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“I inspected the site in Shaker Heights and my immediate impression was the need for a strong focal point. There is a star-pattern of many streets there and many low buildings. To me it needs a large massive building.”

As Gropius began working on the project in 1964, his early studies therefore focused on a high-rise tower as the centerpiece of the design (Figure 1). At the time, however, Shaker Heights zoning codes restricted all buildings to a maximum of four stories, and the city had a long-established reputation as a strict and proud enforcer of its stringent design requirements, dating back to the community’s original development by the Van Sweringen brothers. So although Gropius favored the high-rise scheme and was determined to promote it as the superior solution, he simultaneously designed a low-rise version of the design as an alternative that would fit within the established local guidelines (Figure 2).

Shaker Heights Mayor Paul K. Jones was immediately receptive to Gropius’ high-rise tower concept, despite the conflict with existing zoning, and offered his administration’s support for the necessary regulatory changes and approvals. Shaker Heights Ordinance No. 65-2 was soon drafted to amend the city’s zoning code, adding a new section to allow for creation of a ‘Planned Retail-Office Development’ in certain situations, with a distinct set of rules and procedures established to govern such projects. The ordinance placed substantial restrictions on which properties were eligible for a Planned Retail-Office Development. The site was required to be in a General Retail District, with all land under common ownership. It was also required to have at least 500 feet of frontage on a major street, an additional 300 feet of frontage on another street, and could not be contiguous to any property with residential zoning. Planning Commission and City Council approval were also required. Once a site was approved for a Planned Retail-Office Development, however, existing height limits would not apply, although buildings were still limited to maximum of 12 stories, 160 feet, and 50 percent of the land area. Very few sites in Shaker Heights could even meet the basic eligibility requirements, and the ordinance was clearly drafted with Tower East in mind. At a January 4, 1965 meeting of the Shaker Heights Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals, unanimous approval was given to rezone the parcels included in the Tower East site from Office to General Retail, and to amend the city’s zoning ordinance as described in Ordinance No. 65-2 to allow for a Planned Retail-Office Development.

As news of the rezoning plans became public, however, the project encountered significant opposition from some Shaker Heights residents. As indicated, there is a proud tradition in Shaker Heights of highly restrictive development guidelines, and many have credited those guidelines with maintaining the city’s character and property values. A commercial high-rise like that proposed for Tower East was in direct conflict with such traditions, and a number of residents considered the proposed zoning changes to be a dangerous threat to their city’s aesthetic values. One such resident, Alfred J. Palmer, created “The Committee for Regulated Progress in Shaker Heights” in direct response to Ordinance No. 65-2. He purchased an advertisement in the March 20, 1965 issue of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, with a hand-drawn rendering of high-rise towers surrounding a small house and bold-print warnings like “Can’t See the HOMES for the BUILDINGS” and “SHAKER HEIGHTS WAS NOT MEANT TO BE A METROPOLIS ORDINANCE NO. 65-2 CAN MAKE IT ONE!” (Figure 3)

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Palmer's advertisement included a call to Shaker Heights residents to attend the upcoming March 22, 1965 City Council meeting where the ordinance would be considered. More than 80 people did attend, most of who were there to express their opposition to the rezoning. According to the account in the Cleveland Plain Dealer on the next day, Palmer indicated that residents would tolerate tax increases to compensate for revenue lost from the proposed development, and others described the planned building "as an intrusion and an encroachment." Three residents did speak in favor of the rezoning, with one suggesting that the city had "lost some \$9 million in buildings recently because of tight zoning restrictions." City Council members also voiced their support for the project, with Councilman Herbert W. Strong Jr. asking, "Can Shaker Heights move ahead by standing still?" and Councilman Robert Denison adding, "We can't wait until the city falls apart and then do something about it." At the end of what was clearly a tense meeting, City Council tabled the request to await a recommendation from newly appointed planning consultant Don Hisaka.

Shaker Heights City Council considered the rezoning proposal again on April 19, 1965. They heard testimony from Hisaka, who recommended approval of the plans. According to the Cleveland Plain Dealer article from the following day:

"(Hisaka) said it would 'enhance the area architecturally without impairing the residential character of Shaker Heights.' He said the office structure would be 300 feet from the nearest house and is further buffered by commercial and retail areas."

Despite the earlier opposition, no one attended the April 19 meeting to protest the rezoning. It is unclear why the opposition faded so quickly, although it may have become clear that the zoning change would affect few if any other sites other than Tower East due to the eligibility requirements described above. Regardless, City Council unanimously approved the rezoning, and Ordinance No. 65-2 went into effect on April 20, 1965.

With the rezoning approved to allow the high-rise scheme, Gropius and TAC were free to complete the final design of the Tower East complex. Gropius had already worked out the main tenets of the design. He would use the sloping site to allow for two levels of automobile traffic, with access from both Chagrin and Northfield, and to partially bury the two levels of general commercial space in the building's base. The site also included generous landscaping and an outdoor terrace off the rear of the main lobby (Figure 4). For the main tower, Gropius devoted significant effort to the design of the characteristic precast panels. His study sketches demonstrate experimentation with various arrangements for the built-in sun shades to achieve his desired patterns of light and shade (Figure 5). He was also especially focused on the treatment of the corners. In the years leading up to his design of Tower East, Gropius had struggled to achieve in a concrete curtain wall the same lightness and openness at the corners that had characterized his earlier steel buildings. He was reportedly troubled by the heavy corners at the 1963 Pan Am Building in New York, where Gropius and Pietro Belluschi acted as consulting architects to Emery Roth & Sons (Figure 6). When working on the 1966 John F. Kennedy Federal Office Building in Boston, Gropius attempted to create a continuous wall surface wrapping the corners

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by using rounded quarter circle panels but was bothered by the lack of relationship between the façade treatment and the underlying structural system, which maintained vertical columns at the corners (Figure 7). After studying various options for Tower East, Gropius settled on a design with the corners cantilevered from the structural columns, which were inset slightly on each side, allowing the uninterrupted glass to wrap around at each level (Figure 8). The design lends a sense of lightness to the otherwise massive building, and Gropius believed that Tower East represented an effective resolution of this difficult problem.

Gropius and Porter presented the plan for Tower East to the Shaker Heights Planning Commission on April 4, 1966. (Floor plans of the lower level, main lobby level, and typical upper level attached as Figures 9, 10, and 11, respectively). The Architectural Board had already offered its unanimous approval of the design, adding that the “overall development was deserving of high praise for a job well done.” Porter promised that the building would be “a thing of real beauty for Shaker Heights,” and the Planning Commission apparently agreed, offering their unanimous approval. The plan was to be executed in two phases, with the first including the main 12-story office tower and a 5-story parking garage. The second phase, which was never executed, was to include a second 4-story office building along Chagrin Boulevard in the same style as the main tower, with 2 additional levels added to the parking garage as well.

A groundbreaking ceremony for Tower East was held on August 9, 1966, with approximately 100 people in attendance. Gropius arrived dramatically via helicopter, which landed directly at the site, and personally turned the first shovel of dirt for the project. His celebrity clearly increased the prominence of Tower East and excitement for the project, with an editorial comment appearing in the Cleveland Plain Dealer on August 11 reading:

“Dr. Walter Gropius, famed architect from Cambridge, Mass. rightly sets his sights on making Tower East a landmark ‘by its height and massive design.’ Cleveland long has needed architectural vision to make the city’s new structures into functional items of beauty to lend distinction to the area. Frank H. Porter, developer of the \$8 million building in Shaker Heights at Chagrin Boulevard and Northfield Road, is to be commended for putting the design of his apartment-garage-office complex in such capable hands as those of Dr. Gropius.”

Although they mistakenly included apartments in the description of the complex – there is no evidence that residential use was ever considered for the project – Gropius’ involvement in Tower East was clearly a significant event in the local community.

Construction of the Tower East complex was overseen by Turner Construction Company, with the bulk of the exterior work completed in less than one year. The building was dedicated in July 1967, with tenants scheduled to begin moving in on October 1 of that year. (See Figures 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 for images of the building shortly after completion.) Local brokerage Ostendorf-Morris was the original agent for the building (and continues to manage the property even today), and by the time of the dedication all but 10,000 square feet of the 140,000 square-foot building had been

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leased. One major tenant was Avco Delta Corp., a consumer finance company that was moving its international headquarters to the building from London, Ontario and committed to occupy all of the top five floors of Tower East. Avco Delta commissioned TAC to design their office interiors, which featured a two-story lobby connecting the eighth and ninth floors, including selecting the furnishings and overseeing acquisition of over 30 pieces of contemporary art (Figures 17 and 18). Their space and all remaining office tenant interiors were completed in 1968.

Throughout the project and for the duration of his ownership of the building, Porter trusted Gropius and TAC with full control over all design decisions, from the modern furniture and Al Held murals chosen to grace the building's public spaces to the design of the Tower East letterhead. As reported in a local newspaper account, "Gropius personally specified the decorative detail of the building's public areas. Color schemes, textural contrasts, tile patterns, and even the typography of EXIT signs, the building directory and parking markers in the garage." All proposed tenant improvements were also required by Porter to be reviewed and approved by TAC. When he transferred ownership of the building to the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio in 1986, Porter convinced them to retain TAC as an advisor and the firm oversaw significant improvements to the building's public spaces in 1990. Although Gropius died in 1969, Porter continued his relationship with TAC on other projects as well, including Enterprise Place in Beachwood, Ohio, completed in 1986, as well as an unrealized residential development in Pepper Pike, Ohio.

Additional architectural historic context:

As discussed in *Cleveland Architecture 1876-1976*, Gropius' commission for Tower East is representative of a trend in Cleveland during the 1960s and 1970s, when a number of projects were designed by high-profile Modern architects from outside of the city. Marcel Breuer, a former student and colleague of Gropius, designed large-scale additions to the Cleveland Trust Company and Cleveland Museum of Art, both of which were completed in 1971. Other notable buildings by nationally known architects included the 1963 East Ohio Gas Building designed by Emery Roth & Sons, Edward Durrell Stone's Jewish Community Federation building, completed in 1965, and Los Angeles architect Charles Luckman's Central National Bank from 1969. Following the Erieview urban renewal plan developed by I.M. Pei, another student of Gropius who had gone on to international acclaim, new downtown office towers included the 1964 Erieview Tower, designed by Harrison and Abramovitz, and the 1971 Bond Court office building by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Frank Porter's selection of Gropius for the design of Tower East therefore reflects a broader local effort during the period to raise the profile of new building projects by attracting prominent architects to the area.

An earlier inroad of modernism into the Van Sweringens' traditional period revival architectural preference was the construction of the suburban branch store for the Halle's Department Store in Shaker Square, an early suburban shopping center in Cleveland built in 1927 in conjunction with the development of Shaker Heights. The Van Sweringen brothers hired Cleveland architects

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Philip Small and Charles Bacon Rowley to design the Shaker Square commercial buildings in the American Colonial Revival style to conform to the domestic vision planned for Shaker Heights.

In 1948, Halle's opened their new store on Shaker Square, an award winning design by local architects Conrad, Hayes, Simpson, Ruth and Robert A. Little. Halle's Shaker Square (NR, 2005) was the first Halle building constructed in the International Style as a suburban branch. The 2-story building although modern in design employed red brick and white limestone elements to blend in with the Shaker Square architecture. The Halle site was covered by deed restrictions calling for a specific architectural style of red brick and white trimmed Colonial Revival with approval of building plans by the Van Sweringen Company. Although the International Style design was a departure from the Colonial Revival appearance of the main square, the modern building was considered to conform in material and scale to the existing buildings.

Tower East is being nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as a significant example of the work of master architect Walter Gropius. As the only building in Ohio designed by Gropius, it warrants designation at the state level of significance. The period of significance is 1967-1968, the date span during which the building was originally completed and occupied.

Exceptional Significance:

Although completed in 1967-1968, and therefore less than 50 years old, several factors support recognition of Tower East as 'exceptionally significant.' As indicated above, it is the only Gropius-designed building in Ohio, and was his first building constructed between New York and Chicago. Tower East is also a rare example from Gropius' time with The Architect's Collaborative (TAC) in which he was the sole principal assigned to a project. Of the roughly 70 TAC projects in which Gropius played a major role, all but 5 (including Tower East) included significant contributions from additional TAC principals and senior staff. Given his individual focus on the project and the unusual latitude offered by Porter, Tower East may well be one of the most faithful representations of Gropius' personal design aesthetic during this period.

Gropius' involvement in the project was immediately recognized as significant to the Cleveland area, with extensive coverage of the project in the local media, and once completed the project garnered national recognition with a profile in the March 1969 issue of *Architectural Record*. The article highlights the relationship of the building and site to its surroundings, and Gropius' successful challenge of existing zoning regulations to achieve the desired result. It also cites some distinguishing features of the Gropius design that separate it from more typical office buildings of the period and highlight the master architect's attention to detail:

“Exposed poured-in-place concrete is sandblasted with rustication strips to separate the pours. Tower facades are of precast panels made in fiberglass forms to obtain a glossy, smooth finish. White cement and white silica were used to obtain a pure white color. The glare-reducing slanted shades...are an integrated

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part of the precast panel. Windows are of dark gray heat absorbing glass. No shades or blinds are needed.”

Tower East was among the 68 projects from Gropius’ prolific career selected for inclusion in a 1972 retrospective exhibit honoring his life’s work, curated by Gropius’ wife Ise and biographer James Marston Fitch, and one of only 44 projects featured in the associated catalog. Like the *Architectural Record* profile, the catalog begins its description of the project with a focus on the building’s relationship to its site and the significance of achieving its zoning approval:

“This office complex represents the solution to the problem of designing a major building to be integrated with its surroundings and solving the urban problems associated with the site. The site selected was a major traffic junction of seven streets. The client concurred with the architects’ opinion that ‘a strong landmark providing visual orientation’ was needed, though the zoning law did not permit high-rise buildings. Only after the client obtained a variance could the project be realized.”

These most significant elements of Gropius’ design for Tower East, including the prominent vertical tower as focal point, the overall integration of the site with its surroundings, and the building’s distinctive materials and construction details remain unaltered and continue to express Gropius’ original vision for the property.

The exceptional historical significance of Walter Gropius’ contributions to architecture in the 20th century are widely recognized, and Tower East is clearly an important and representative example of his later work. The building therefore satisfies Criterion Consideration G and warrants individual National Register designation despite being less than 50 years old.

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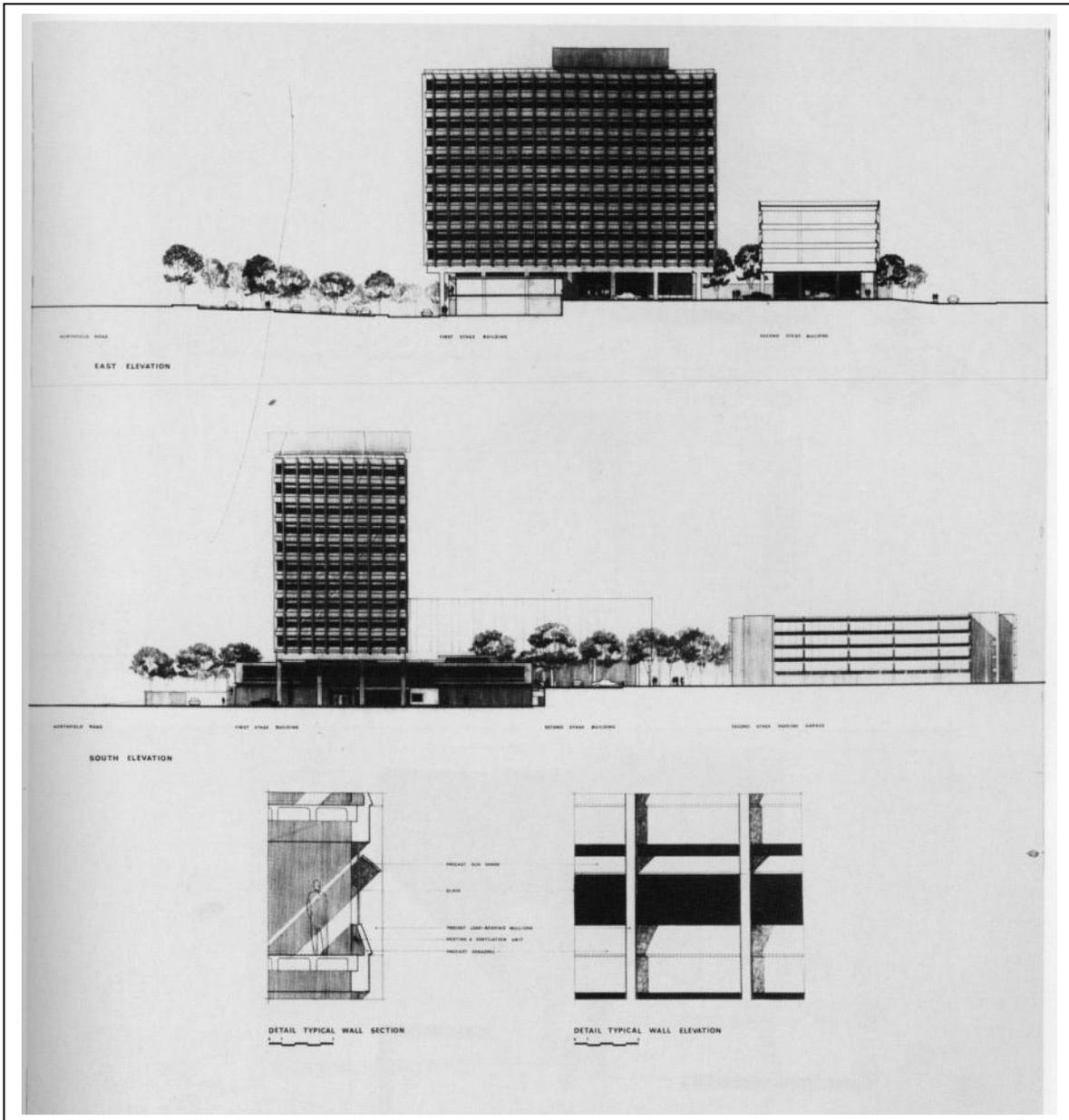


Figure 1: Study Elevations - High-Rise Scheme, 1964
The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume Four

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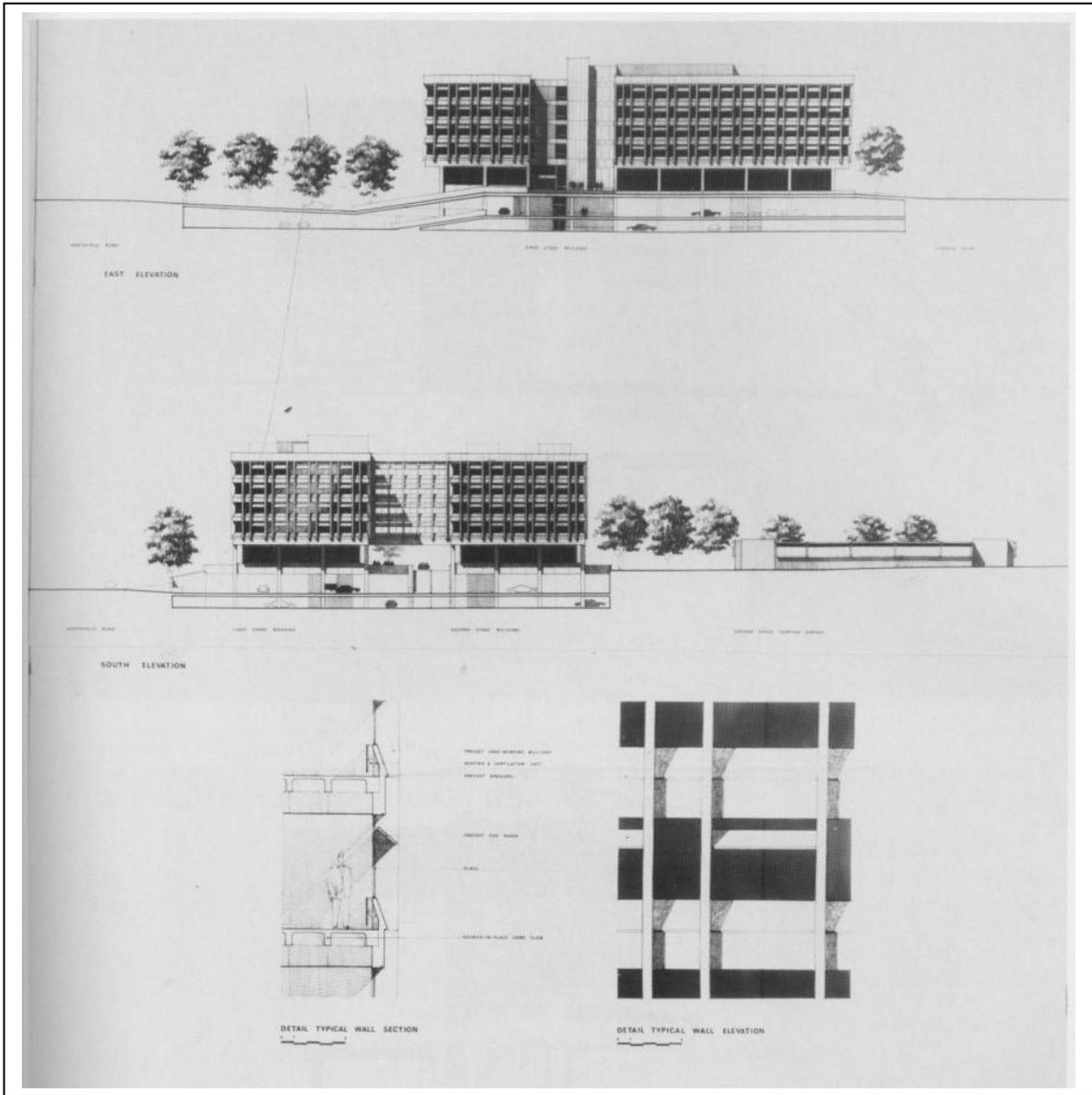


Figure 2: Study Elevations - Low-Rise Scheme, 1964
The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume Four

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ATTENTION

SHAKER HEIGHTS RESIDENTS!

**IS IT WISE TO ALLOW HIGH RISE BUILDINGS IN SHAKER HEIGHTS?
IF NOT, VOICE YOUR OPINION AGAINST PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 65-2**



Can't See the HOMES for the BUILDINGS!

THIS CAN BE THE PICTURE NOT JUST AT ONE LOCATION — BUT ANYWHERE IN SHAKER HEIGHTS IF ORDINANCE NO. 65-2 IS PASSED. This MAJOR ZONING CHANGE in the form of an Amendment is NOW BEING CONSIDERED — CONTACT YOUR COUNCILMAN AND ATTEND A MEETING TO BE HELD AT SHAKER HEIGHTS CITY HALL MON., 8 P. M., MARCH 22, 1965.

**SHAKER HEIGHTS WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A METROPOLIS
ORDINANCE NO. 65-2 CAN MAKE IT ONE!**

In planning Shaker Heights the Van Sweringens expressed the following views:
"No matter what changes time may bring around it, no matter what waves of commercialism may beat upon its borders, Shaker Heights is secure, its homes and gardens are in peaceful surroundings, serene and protected for all times . . . contentment, peacefulness, the beauty of nature and of **WISE PLANNING**, forever assured by protective restrictions . . . And as Cleveland grows and becomes more and more congested, the secluded peace, the spaciousness, the permanently protected beauty of Shaker becomes more and more desirable, more sought after . . . The same **PROTECTIVE RESTRICTIONS** which have made Shaker what it is today, **GUARANTEE THESE HOME SITES AGAINST THE INVASION OF COMMERCE OR ANY DEPRECIATING INFLUENCE . . .**

If you wish to remain a Residential Community, CALL SKYLINE 2-3996,
THE COMMITTEE FOR REGULATED PROGRESS IN SHAKER HEIGHTS
A. J. Palmer, Chairman

Figure 3: Advertisement Opposing Proposed Zoning Change
Cleveland Plain Dealer, March 20, 1965

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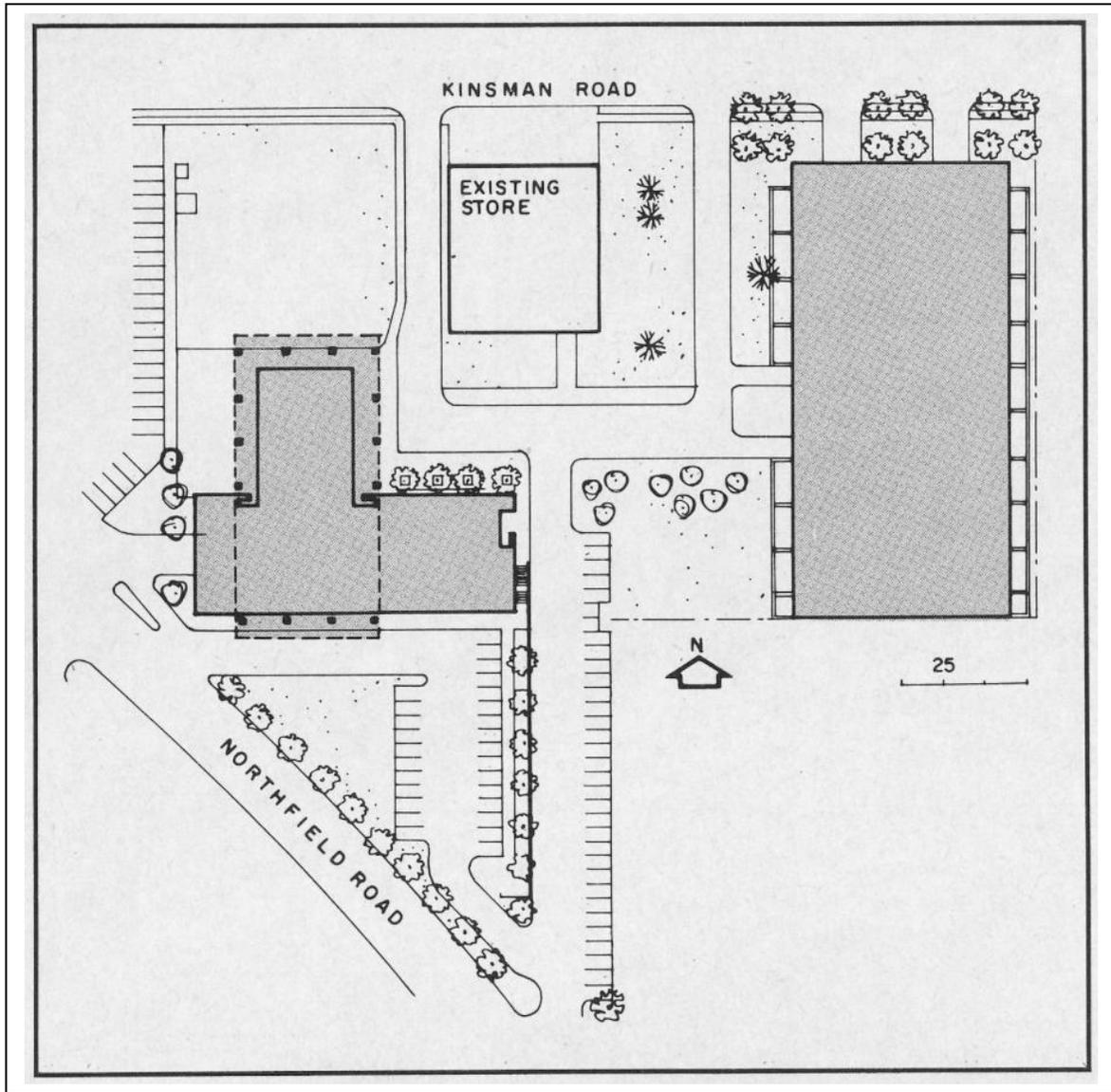


Figure 4: Site Plan, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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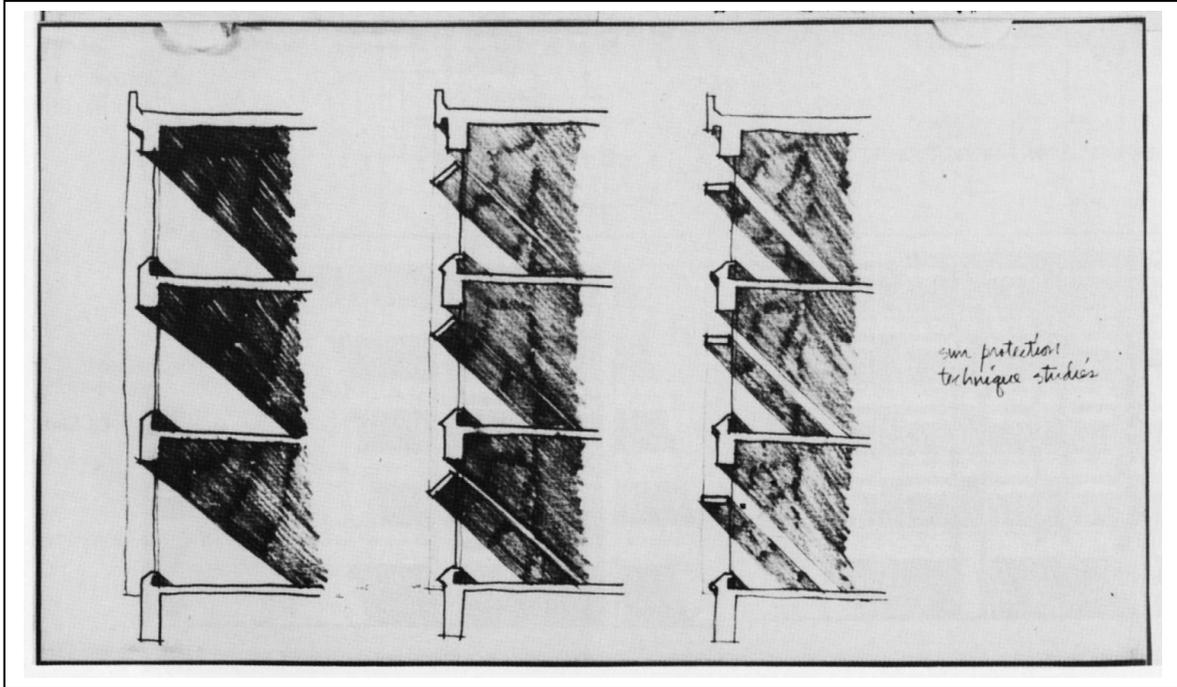


Figure 5: Sun Protection Technique Studies, 1964
The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume Four

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Figure 6: Pan Am Building, New York, NY, c.1963
<http://www.panamair.org>

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Figure 7: John F. Kennedy Federal Building, Boston, MA, Unknown Date
General Services Administration

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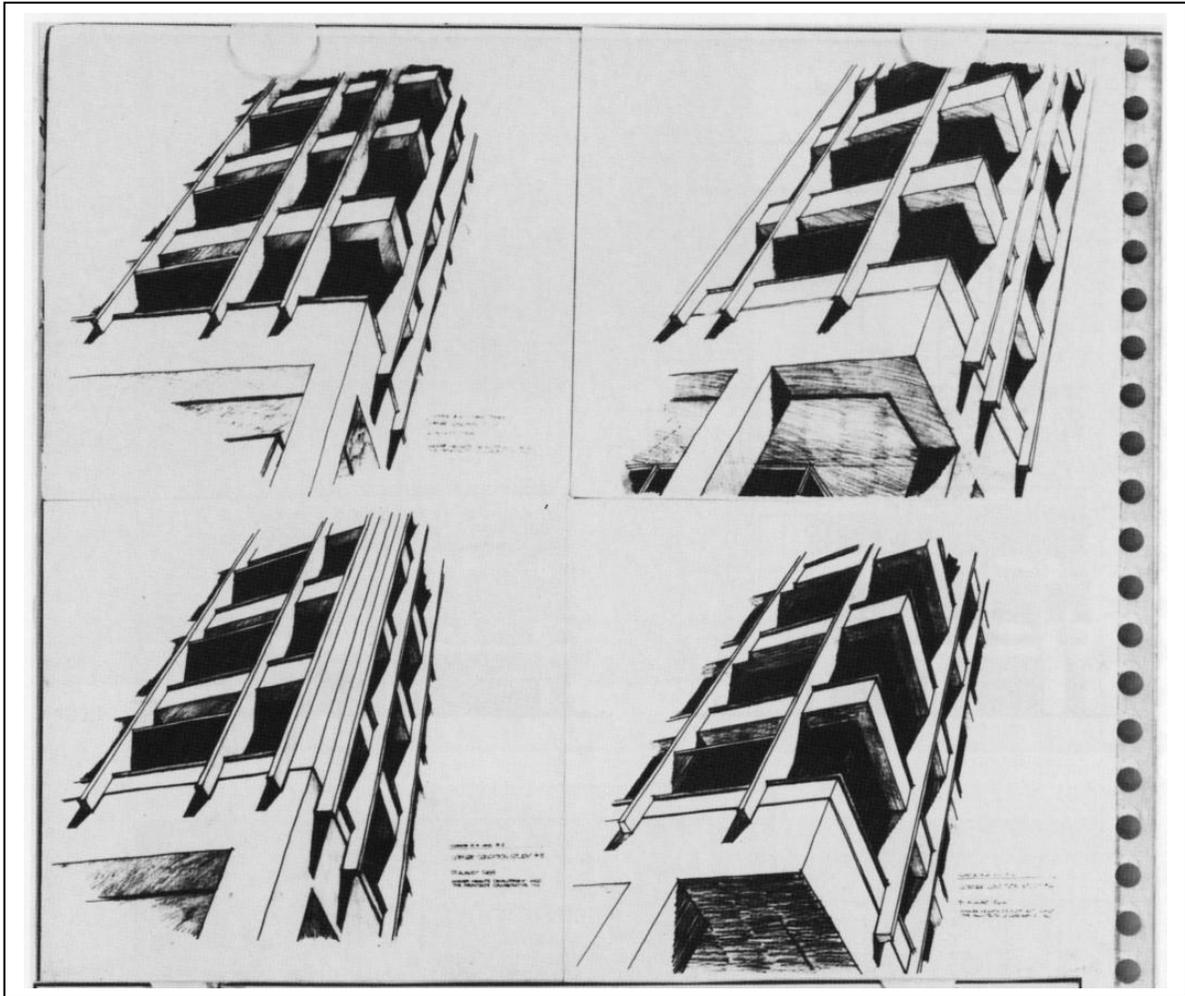


Figure 8: Corner Treatment Studies, 1964
The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume Four

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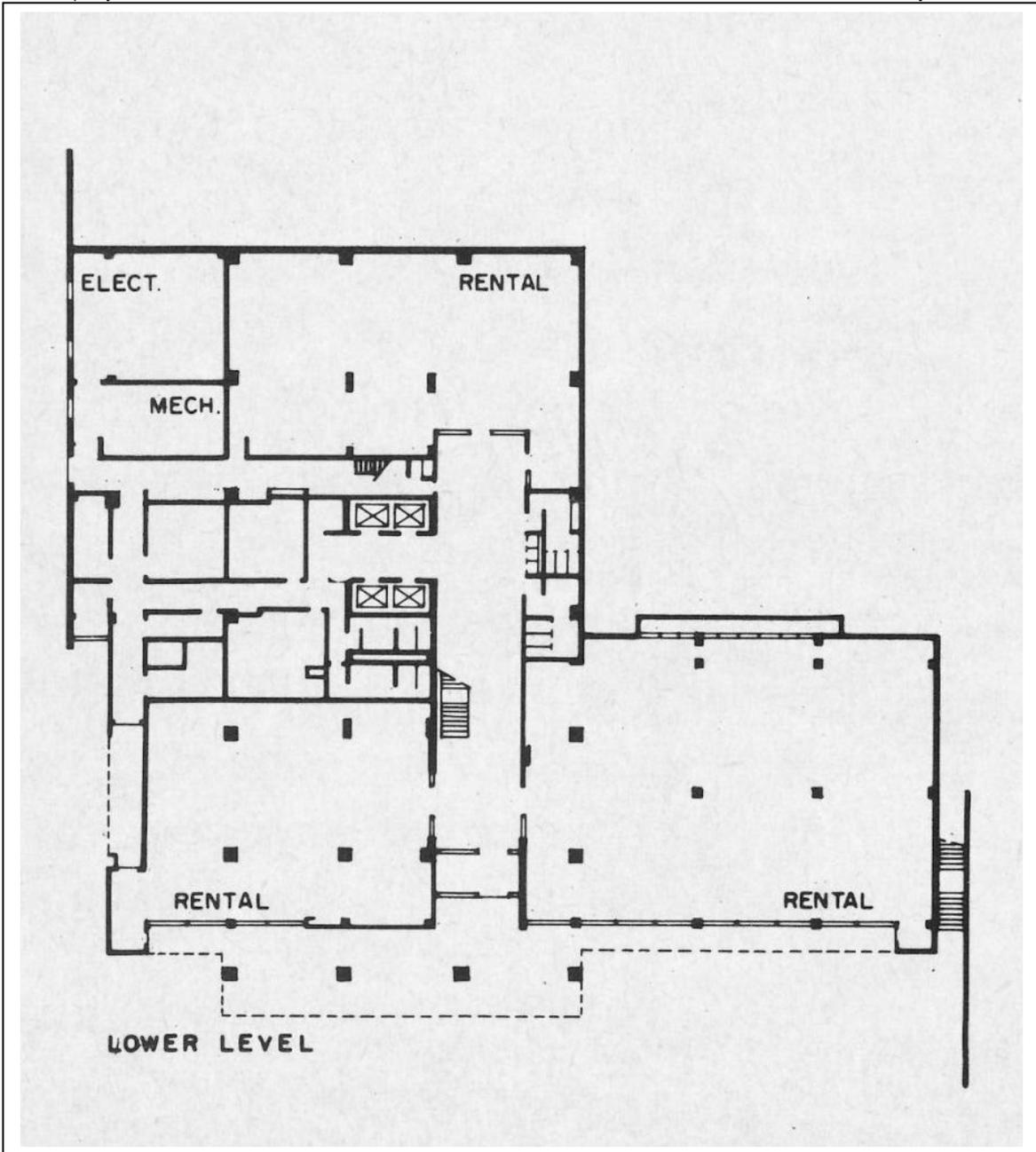


Figure 9: Lower Level Plan, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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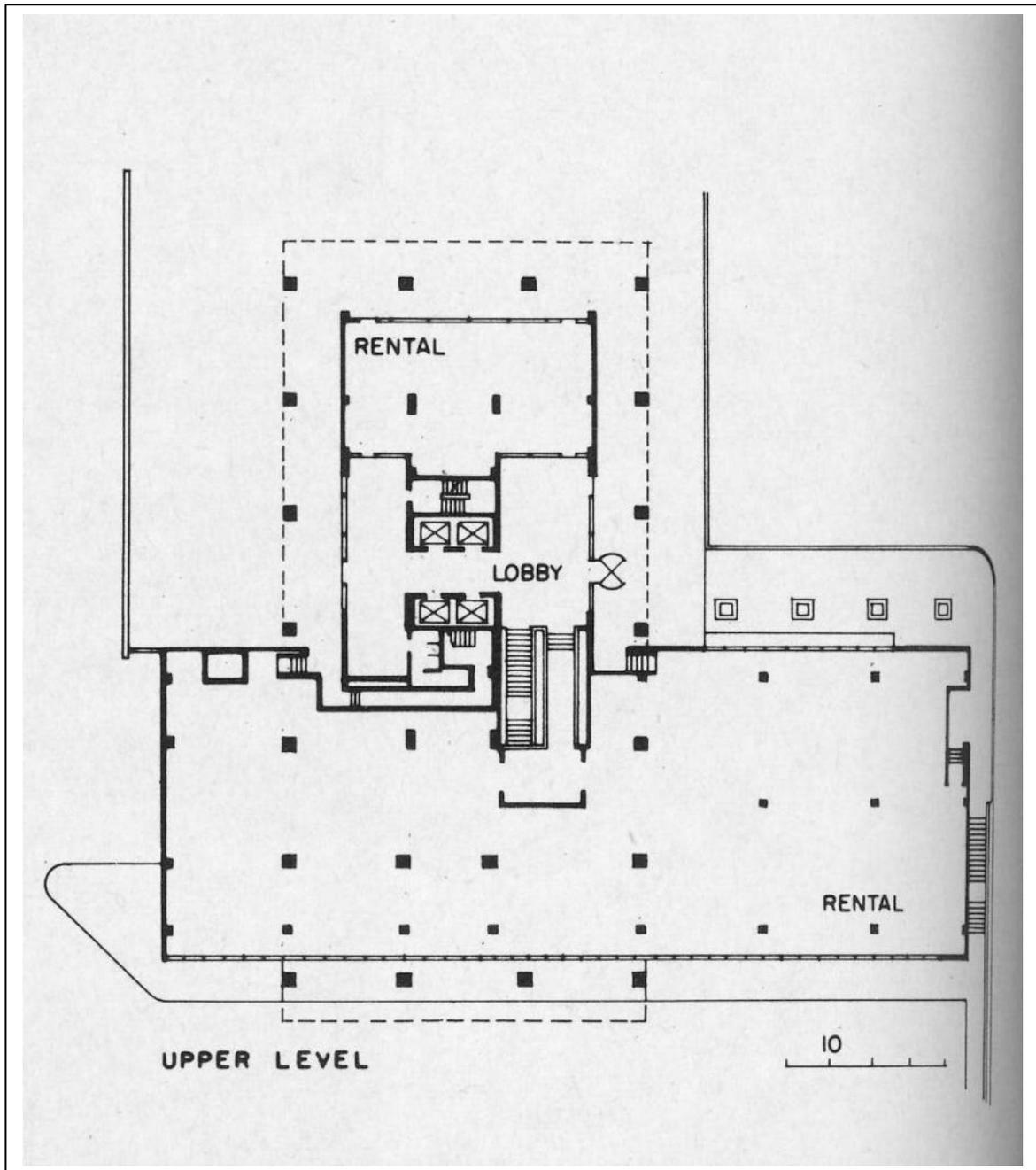


Figure 10: First Floor Plan, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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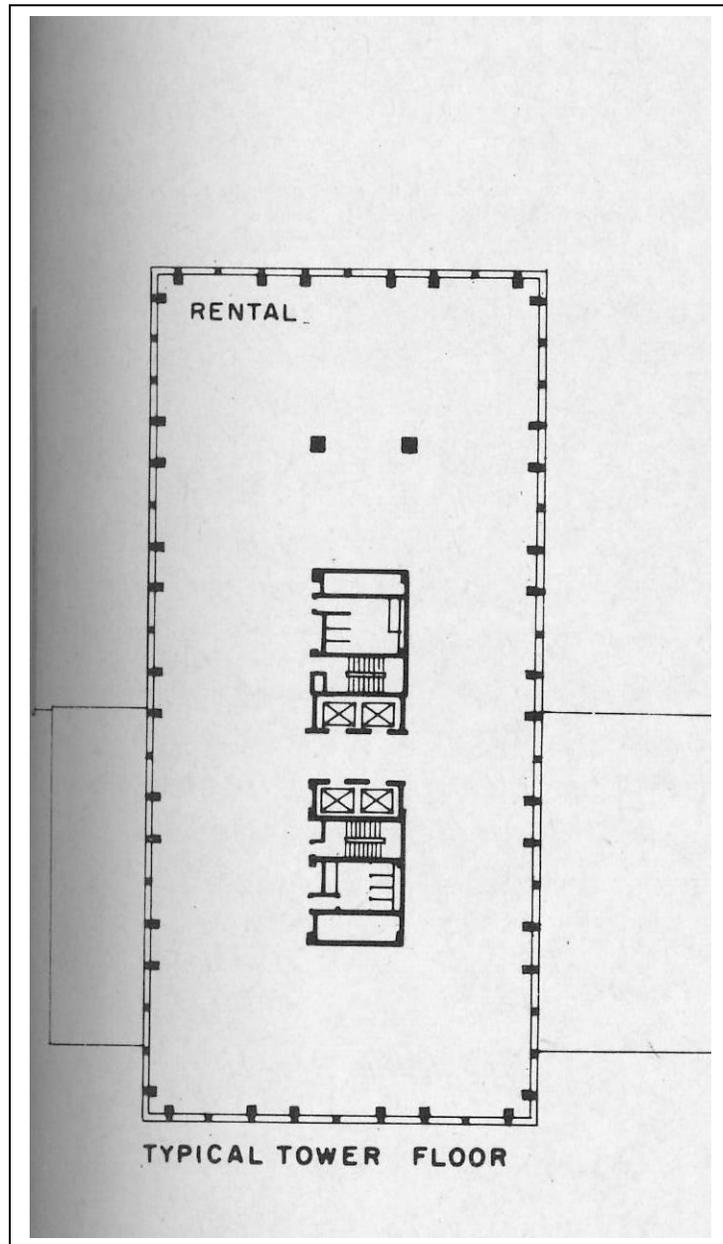


Figure 11: Typical Upper Floor Plan, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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Figure 12: East Elevation, 1968
Walter Gropius: Buildings, Plans, Projects 1906-1969

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Figure 13: Southwest Corner, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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Figure 14: Northeast Corner, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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Figure 15: Lower-Level Lobby, 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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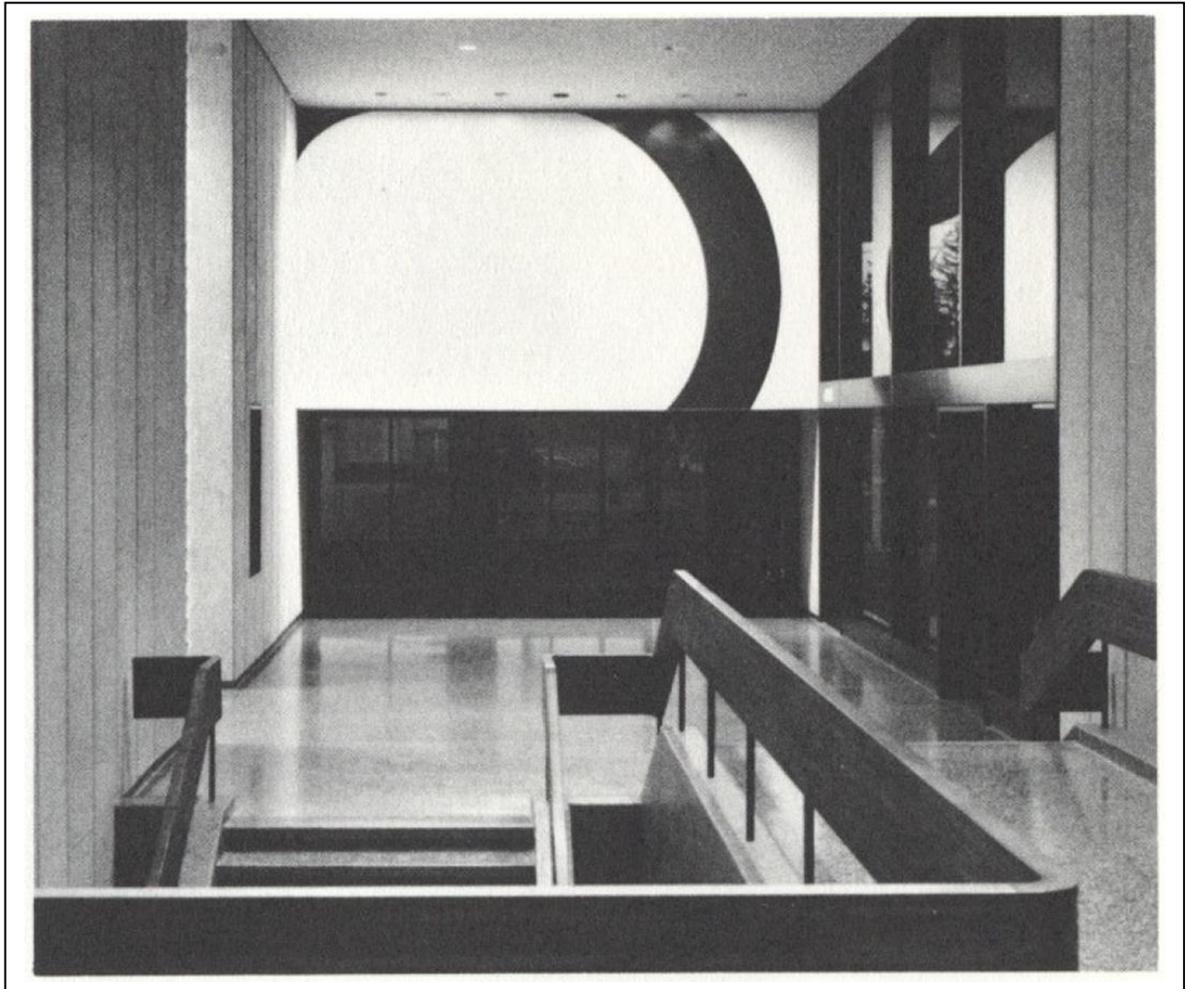


Figure 16: First-Floor Lobby, 1968
Walter Gropius: Buildings, Plans, Projects 1906-1969

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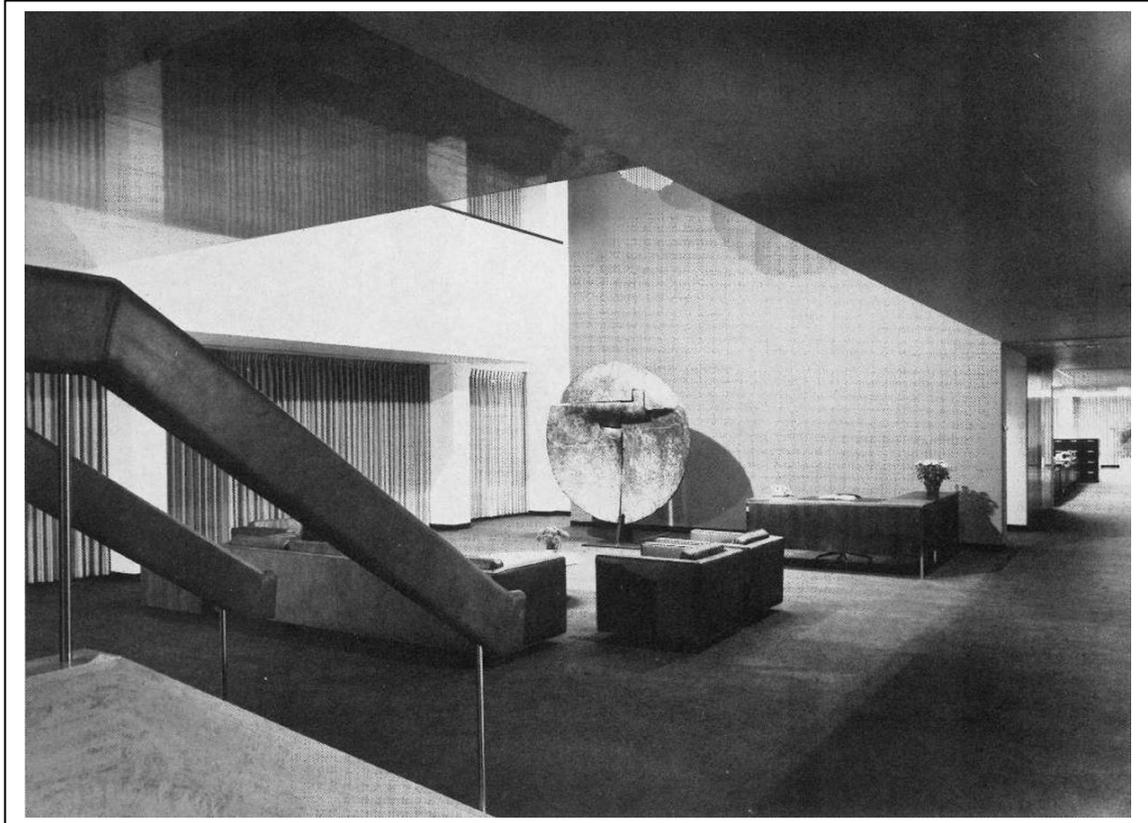


Figure 17: Avco-Delta Lobby (Eighth Floor), 1968
Architectural Record, March 1969

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Figure 18: Office Interior, 1968
The Walter Gropius Archive, Volume Four

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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- "Tower East Work Starts Today." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 9, 1966, 29.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Walter Gropius Archives: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): OHI #: CUY-08744-23

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 3.9

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.463827 | Longitude: -81.533790 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 455401 | Northing: 4590168 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The nominated property is comprised of one consolidated parcel – including Cuyahoga County Parcels #736-29-038, #736-14-055, and #736-14-056 – bounded on the south by Northfield Road and on the east and west by adjacent properties. The north boundary follows Chagrin Boulevard along the frontage of the office tower and the parking garage, with a U-shaped southward jog in the center to exclude a separate 2-story building and its site.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all property historically associated with the Tower East office building, parking garage and associated site improvements as originally constructed. The excluded section of Chagrin Boulevard frontage was originally reserved for Phase 2 of the development, but that phase was never realized and the property and building (which predates Tower East) have since been transferred to a separate owner. The excluded property is not associated with any executed portion of Tower East and is not included in the consolidated parcel described above.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Ketter, Director of Historic Preservation
organization: Sandvick Architects Inc
street & number: 1265 West 6th Street
city or town: Cleveland state: Ohio zip code: 44113
e-mail pketter@sandvickarchitects.com
telephone: 216-621-8055
date: July 10, 2013

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.

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- **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 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, 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.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Tower East

City or Vicinity: Shaker Heights

County: Cuyahoga

State: Ohio

Photographer: Peter Ketter

Date Photographed: October 4, 2012

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

Photo #1 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0001)

East elevation, camera facing west

Photo #2 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0002)

Northeast oblique, camera facing southwest

Photo #3 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0003)

North elevation, camera facing southwest

Photo #4 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0004)

North entry to site from Chagrin Blvd, camera facing southwest

Photo #5 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0005)

Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest

Photo #6 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0006)

South elevation, camera facing north

Photo #7 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0007)

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Lower levels of south elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo #8 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0008)
Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast

Photo #9 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0009)
West elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #10 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0010)
Terrace on west elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #11 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0011)
Lower level, interior stair, camera facing northwest

Photo #12 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0012)
First floor, interior stair, camera facing south

Photo #13 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0013)
First floor, main lobby, camera facing southeast

Photo #14 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0014)
Typical office floor, elevator lobby, camera facing west

Photo #15 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0015)
Parking garage, north elevation, camera facing southwest

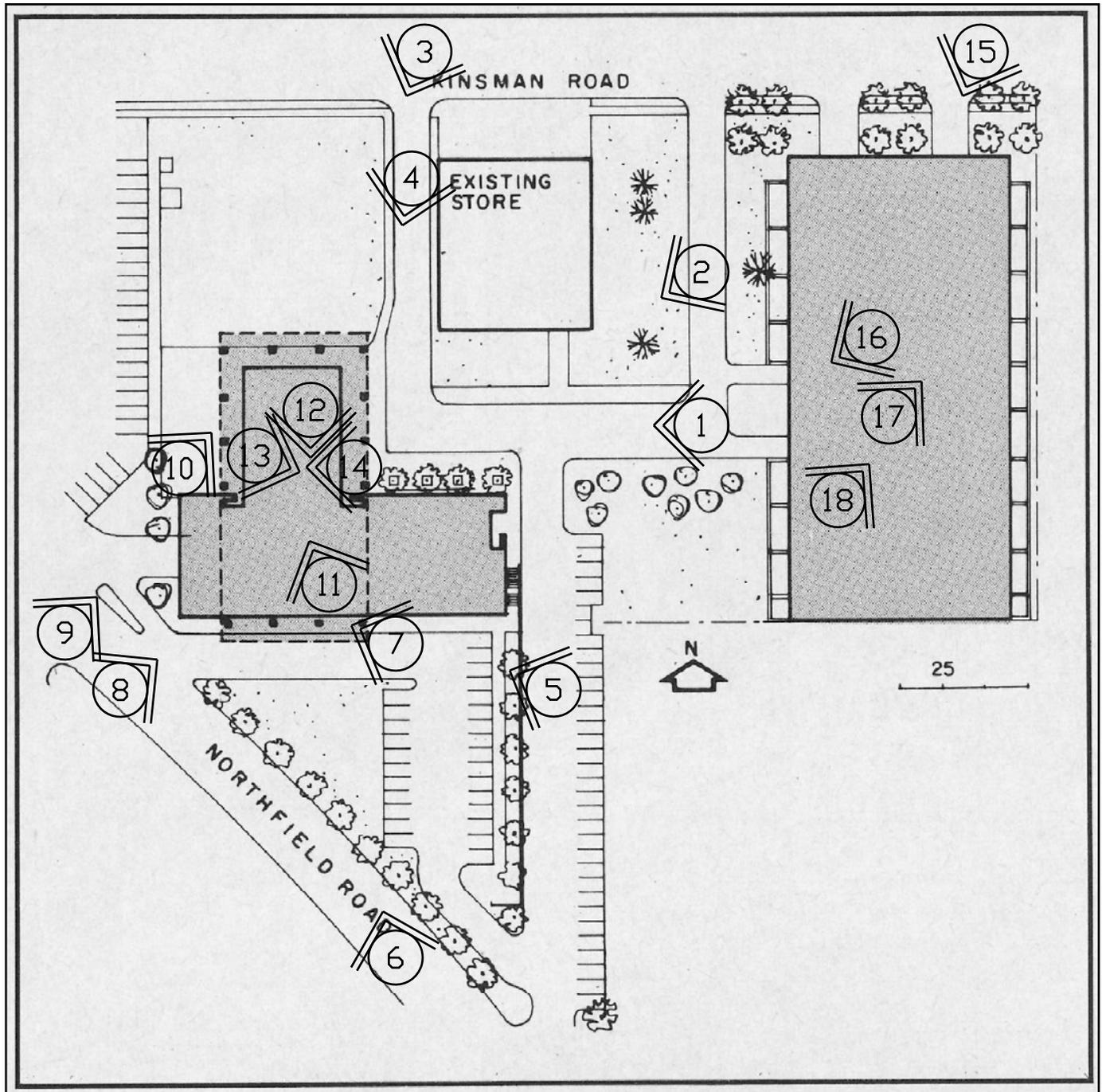
Photo #16 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0016)
Parking garage, main entrance and attendant's booth, camera facing southwest

Photo #17 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0017)
Parking garage, central stair at second floor, camera facing northeast

Photo #18 (OH_Cuyahoga County_Tower East_0018)
Parking garage, typical parking level and central core, camera facing northeast

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.).

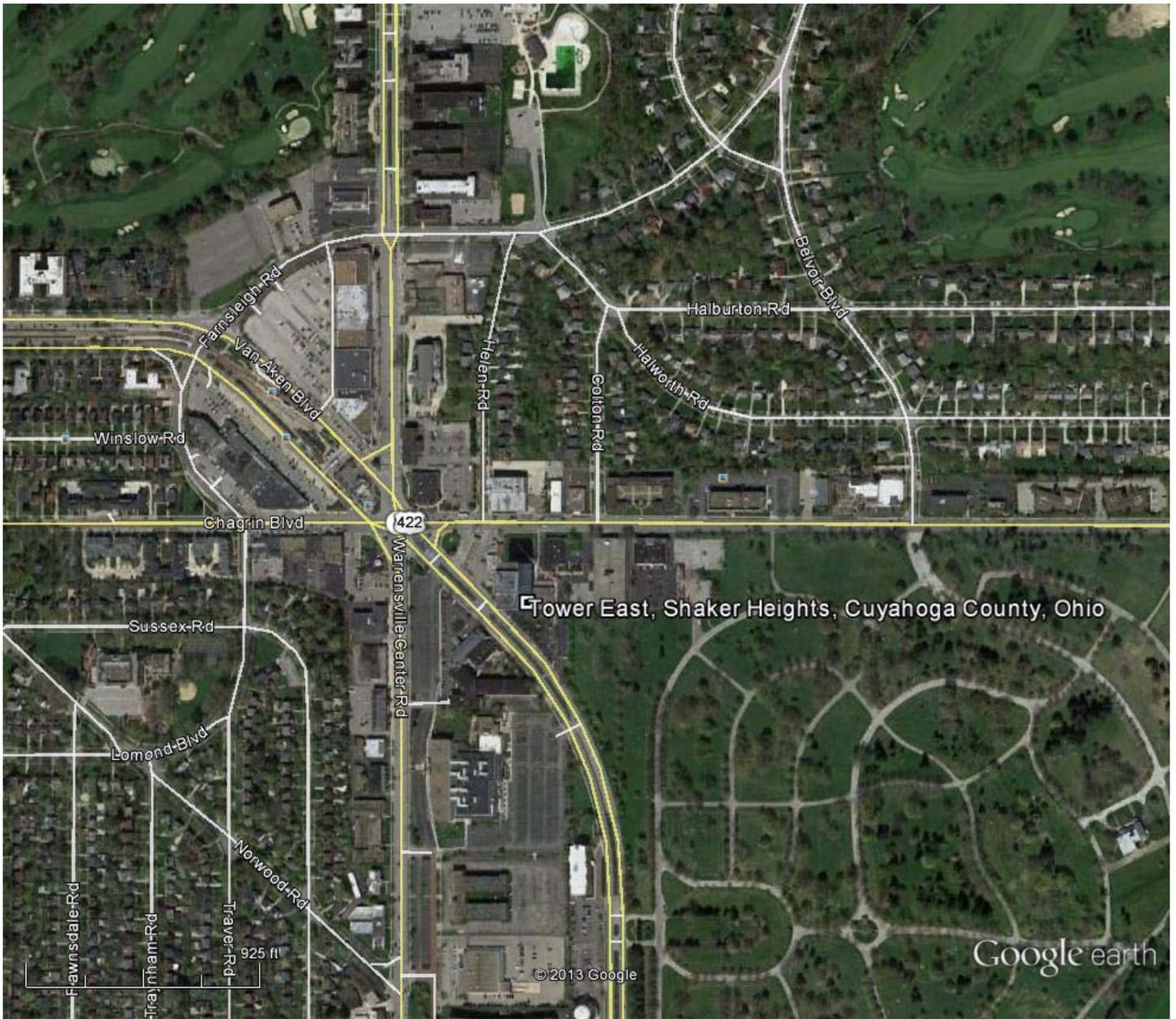
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form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



National Register Photograph Key
 Tower East, Shaker Heights, Cuyahoga County, Ohio



Tow er East, Shaker Heights, Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Datum: WGS84 Coordinates: 41.463827°, -81.533790°



Google earth

feet 2000
meters 700

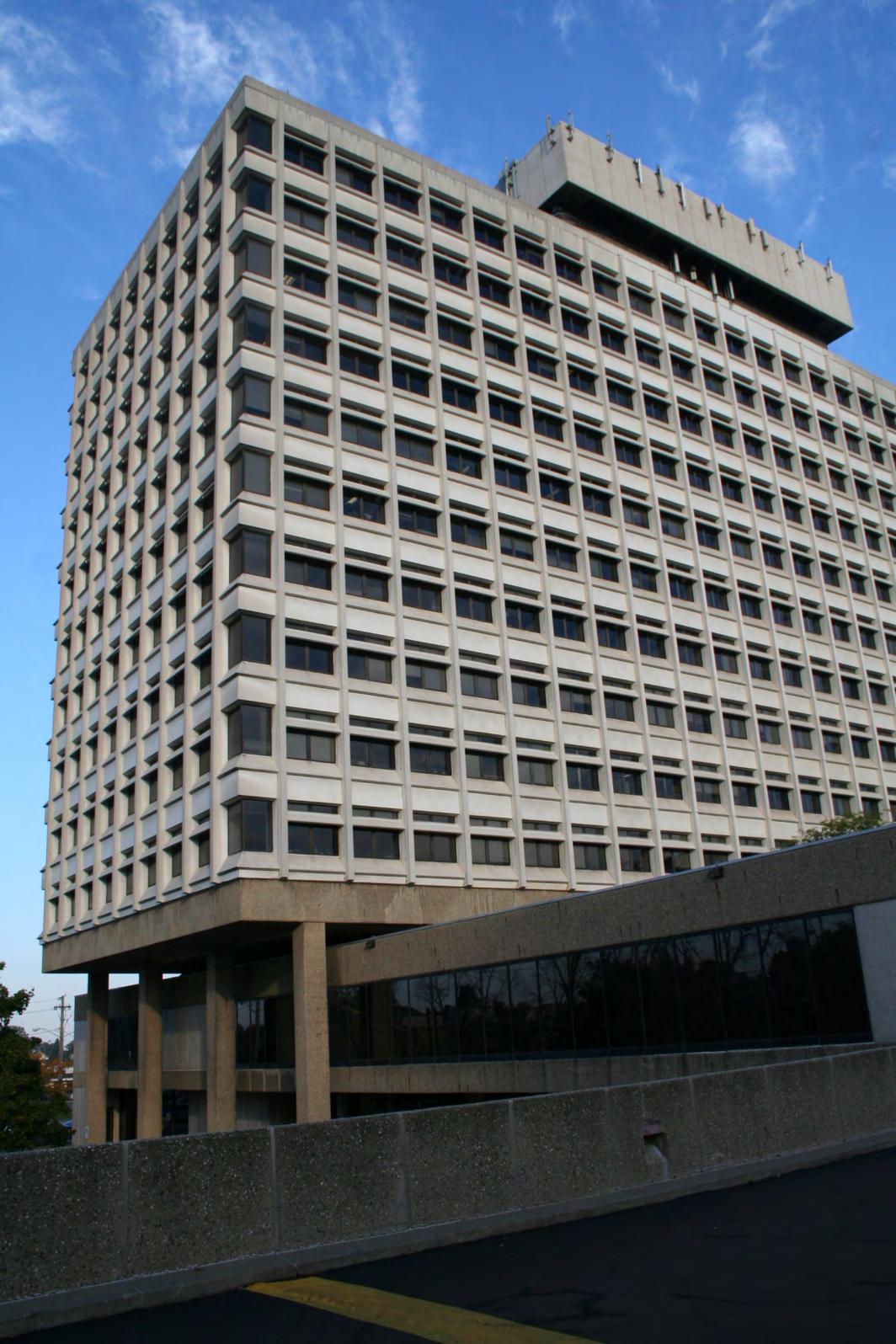






























9

9



EXIT ONLY

ENTRANCE ONLY

CAUTION - CROSS TRAFFIC







EXIT

EXIT

45 30

LEVEL 5

DO NOT
ENTER