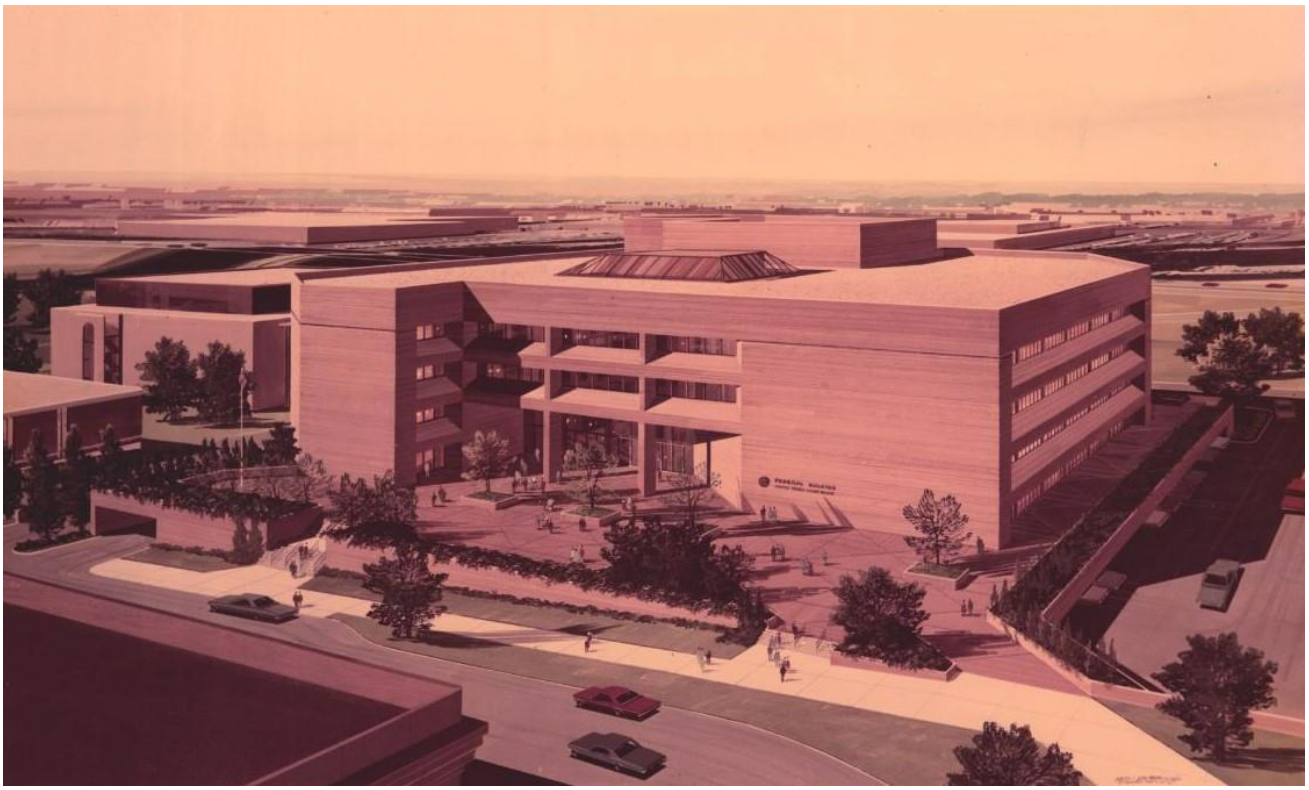

Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse
Topeka, Kansas

Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places

December 13, 2022
Final Submission

Prepared by:
STRATA Architecture Inc.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse in Topeka, Kansas, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to identify and evaluate historic properties under their justification or control in a timely manner for potential listing in the National Register of Historic Places. As the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse will soon reach fifty years old and, therefore, the minimum age required for listing, US General Services Administration (GSA), which has jurisdiction over the building, is seeking to assess its National Register eligibility.

This determination of eligibility will provide GSA with the necessary information to assess the building's significance and eligibility and serve as a guide for potential future renovations or alterations to the building. STRATA and Quinn Evans have developed this report based on the following source materials: onsite investigation, research in archival repositories, and a review of primary and secondary sources. The building was evaluated under National Register criteria A, B, and C, as well as Criteria Consideration G for exceptional significance (as it is not yet fifty years old).

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse is located at 444 SE Quincy Street in Topeka, Kansas, and occupies the majority of a 2.4-acre site bounded by Quincy Street to the west and Monroe Street to the east. The Carlson Building is set back slightly from the street, allowing room for a plaza fronting the building and extending around to the south and east sides of the building. The building is four stories tall above a two-story parking garage and exhibits in massing and repeated decorative motifs the bold geometric forms that defined late modernism.

Completed in 1977, the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was constructed to consolidate the federal offices scattered throughout Topeka and provide a home to the US courthouse. Planning for the building in the early 1970s was concurrent with discussions among Topeka city leaders about reviving a declining downtown core. City leaders and GSA officials viewed the Carlson Building as a key feature of Townsite Plaza, an urban redevelopment/renewal project in downtown Topeka.

The building was designed by a geographically representative consortium of architecture firms that called themselves Kansas Architects and Planners Associates (KAPA). Turner Construction Company of Chicago served as the general contractor for the project. The building was constructed 1975–77. Upon completion in 1977, the building was hailed as the most energy efficient federal building in the country due to a number of cutting-edge, energy-saving features incorporated into its design.

3.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse is six stories tall with two of those stories housing parking facilities largely below grade and is located within a 2.4-acre site. Above the parking level is a four-story building housing office space with an added small level on the roof to house mechanical equipment. The building is surrounded by a landscaped plaza that extends around the building from the west primary entrance to the south and around to the east. The plaza is a raised system of pavers featuring raised brick site walls and planters. (Figure 1) Along the southern edge of the plaza, there is a gradual incline from the surrounding site on the west which leads from surrounding buildings and the bordering sidewalk into the entry plaza. The south and west sections of the terrace are blocked from the general public, and only designated personnel can utilize them. The plaza is separated from SE Quincy Street to the west by a series of retaining walls, two sets of stairs, and bollards. (Figure 2) The plaza separation from the street has a steep drop as the street runs from south to the north. The plaza perimeter at the raised planters as well as along the sidewalk at the lower street level is heavily landscaped. There is evidence of a previous garage access point on the northern end of the west façade that has been enclosed with brick, and only a secured pedestrian entrance remains. On the north end of the site, a secured loading dock provides access to the lowest level of the building into the Maintenance and Facility zones. The loading dock is a one-way passage with entry on the east and exiting on the west. Secured parking for employees is accessed through this area. The progression around the building from the north to the east presents the tallest section of the facility from grade with a raised terrace over mechanical spaces. (Figures 3, 5, 7) A single pedestrian stair is present at the southern edge of the east façade and is secured with a non-original metal fence and locked gate preventing public access to the raised terraces at the east and south elevations of the building. Along the southern edge of the building is a surface parking lot which is secured with raised vehicular barriers and bollards. A non-original security booth is installed at the entry to the parking lot and serves to provide monitoring for the site and access to the parking lot on the building's south elevation. On the south elevation of the building's raised plaza, a non-original metal fence encloses the plaza which is raised a story above grade. (Figure 4)

The building's presence is monolithic with its use of a limited material palette of brown brick and dark bronze metal cladding and finishes at the doors and windows. There is a range of tones in the brick from a dark iron ore manganese to a mid-range brown tone. The fenestrations on the building are few, featuring deep recesses with large overhangs to integrate natural shading effects with the building's orientation to promote energy efficient design. This monolithic massing allows the viewer to grasp the bold geometry of the building's architecture, which creates an undeniable presence on the site. The six-story building is comprised of a four-story mass with plazas extending at grade and above grade to conceal the two lower levels of the parking structure. (Figures 1- 7). The building was constructed with a steel frame clad with concrete block walls and brick veneer facing. (Figure 7) The mass of the building is broken in key areas with sharp angled walls leading the occupant into the building and with deep inset fenestration. The bulk of the fenestration is reserved for the west, south, and east facades, and a small inset

section on the north elevation. The sills of the deep-set ribbon windows are pitched down to provide good drainage away from the building while emphasizing the angled geometry present throughout the exterior detailing of the building. The ribbon windows above the ground level appear to have originally been operable. While they are still operable, the windows are rarely opened. Operation of the windows requires a special crank, which the tenants are not able to access. Most tenant spaces have since installed coverings to prevent windows from being opened.[1]. Glazing runs full height at all openings with no intermittent muntins or horizontal mullions, further emphasizing the mass of the building and supporting the oversized scale of the structure. At the primary west entrance to the building there is a two-story deep recess with two rectangular columns clad in brick extending from the second floor to the plaza. The aluminum storefront glazing at the entrance is broken into three horizontal sections. The recessed façade in this location is largely in shadow and conceals the detailing from the street appearing to be a dark mass in keeping with the ribbon windows above. With the exception of the southwest corner of the building, all corners feature a chamfered appearance with a large expanse of angled wall to ease the edge breaking up the mass. While the west is considered the primary façade, all facades of the building are prominent and highly visible from the surrounding site. Each façade is uniquely detailed in terms of composition but utilize the same massing and geometrical cues. Lighting, accessories, and detailing are limited and concealed in most instances.

The front (west) façade has a large solid expanse at the southern end with the brick only broken with barely visible control joints and no detailing. Light bronze signage for the building name and a federal seal are present at the left side of this mass. The façade is then broken into three vertical bays with strips of windows between brick columns and pilasters. At the northern end of the façade the building steps out and extend west with the façade brick mass unbroken. The northern corner is chamfered to the northeast. At the three center bays on this façade is a recess in the wall plane that features a deep angled wall at the right edge directing pedestrians into the building. At the southern edge of this façade, the sidewalk transitions into an accessible ramp that leads both up to the plaza and extends down to the sidewalk around the building. Bollards separate the gradual ramp from the plaza. There was previously a sculpture known as "Hexatryst" present at the southern end of the plaza, but it has since been removed for safety reasons.[2] A double-height window/door ensemble compromises the primary entrance to the building. The window/door assembly consists of a storefront system of glass set within aluminum mullions and frames and four pairs of double-leaf, out-swinging aluminum doors. The doors to the south are designated for entrance and the doors to the north are designated as exit only. A dedication plaque is mounted on the brick wall to the south of the entrance doors. (Figures 1,2,6) The plaque reads:

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
GERALD R. FORD
PRESIDENT

[1] Jason Parker, Building Manager, Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse, response to comment matrix, December 2022.
[2] Parker, December 2022.

The north elevation is broken into six primary sections. At the west side is a mid-height retaining wall that extends the length of the plaza. Then the building steps up into a large mass in keeping with the west elevation with three bays of unbroken brick void of detailing. At the center is a slightly recessed section of the building comprised of two bays broken up with a center brick pilaster in keeping with the brick clad columns on the west and fenestration featuring four stories of ribbon windows. Each window bay has aluminum framing and mullions dividing the windows into six equal openings. These windows also remain operable but seldomly opened.[3] The lowest level has an integrated planter sitting in front of the windows and projecting out to be flush with the main façade brick veneer. East of the two bays of windows is another solid mass of brick essentially one bay wide and extending another level above the roof to conceal mechanical equipment. Both ends of this façade to the east and to the west are chamfered in transition to the adjacent facades. Another mid-height wall extends from the east mass to run along the north side of the east building plaza. At the garage level, the façade has two large louvers that are in alignment with the recessed windows above. A concrete portico extends from the building over the loading area drive and terminates into a low height brick retaining wall at the northern edge of the site. This low-height retaining wall extends the full width of the building including the plaza extensions. (Figure 5)

Continuing clockwise around the building to the east (rear) elevation, the composition is similar to the north elevation but is mirrored from the northeast corner. There is a raised plaza along this full façade and extending beyond the southern edge. The plaza wall extends from one story above grade at the south to a story and a half above grade at the northern edge. There are two large mechanical louvers center right of the wall that aligns with the window bays above. An areaway is placed at the south end adjacent to the pedestrian stair. As noted previously, the stair access is secured. The building wraps from the north elevation with a chamfered corner and a single bay that is a solid brick mass extending the full four-story height and one bay above at the roof level to terminate at the mechanical enclosure. The center of the elevation has two recessed bays that feature ribbon windows divided in the center with brick pilasters at the second, third and fourth floors and storefront with pairs of out-swinging doors and fixed sidelites at the plaza / first floor level. The aluminum ribbon windows have vertical mullions dividing the openings into six windows per opening. The original windows were designed to be operable but, like windows on the rest of the building, are today rarely opened.[4] The doors at the plaza level are secured for limited access only. Above the four stories of windows is a story-and-a-half-height enclosure with mechanical louvers at the roof level. To the south of this recessed section, the building height lowers to realign with the west

[3] Parker, December 2022.
[4] Parker, December 2022.

façade parapet height with a two-bay mass of brick cladding transitioning to a chamfered, angled wall to the south elevation. The northern edge of the brick massing features signage of a federal seal and the building name in light bronze finish. (Figures 3 and 7)

The south elevation transitions from the east elevation with a chamfered wall. There is a parapet wall above grade that encloses the plaza along the southern edge of the building. A non-original metal fence is installed on top of the parapet wall surrounding the plaza. The main façade steps back and is a single bay in terms of composition with three large expanses of ribbon windows at the ground (plaza level), second, third and fourth floors. The ribbon windows are divided into six overall bays with widened mullions and each bay is broken into six window openings with frames. Below the plaza are a series of storefront openings covered with metal grates adjacent to the surface parking lot. (Figure 4)

The interior of the building surrounds a central four-story high lobby atrium that extends to the roof / ceiling and features a canted skylight. (Figures 8 and 9) The lobby is surrounded by open balconies that utilize glazing capped with an oak rail to expand the openness of each floor. To the eastern edge of the lobby is the elevator and restroom core with the elevator doors facing back into the lobby. Just past the entrance is a fountain / pool that generates a soft white noise in the space, softening the sounds of all the hard surfaces present. Additionally, there are two large planters featured in the lobby with live plantings. The detailing for the planters features canted brick walls extending up from the brick floor with references back to the exterior planters and fenestration detailing on the exterior. Non-original metal benches are placed throughout the lobby. A non-original guard booth is placed just inside the west vestibule for controlling access into the building. The guard booth was installed in such a way that it can be removed without damage to the historic fabric in the building (Figure 10) Central in the lobby ceiling is the *White Tornado* sculpture. (Figure 11) Office space is immediately adjacent to the lobby at the south and north sides of the lobby on the ground level and at the west, north and south sides on the second through fourth floors. The ground level features public amenity spaces to the east of the lobby and building core with a small seating area and café. Interior materials include brick cladding at the lobby floor, planters, elevator / restroom core walls (full building height) and throughout the first floor. (Figure 12) The elevator entrances have canted walls on either side of the doors referencing back to the exterior angled walls. The restrooms have tiled floors and walls, some original installations are still extant with mosaic 1” square tiles in various colors. The open atrium sections of the building beyond the core walls appear to be in keeping with the original construction of gypsum board and/or movable gypsum partitions with a painted finish and rubber base. Doors throughout are oak with a translucent stained finish in keeping with the oak cap on the atrium guardrail. Acoustical lay-in ceiling tiles are present at each floor surrounding the lobby and appear to be replacement materials. Floors two through four have modular carpet tiles. At each of the upper floors there are raised planting beds with live plants abutting the glass guardrail along the west and northwest sides. The fourth-floor west wall features a mural that has a companion mural located in the upper level of the parking structure. (Figure 14)

On floors two through four, corridors extend from the central lobby in varying arrangements depending on the floor. The building primarily houses office space; however, the fourth floor is reserved for courts. In a typical office area, there is a mixture of original demountable partitions which promoted flexibility in the use of the spaces and non-original gypsum drywall construction. The demountable partitions snap into top and bottom tracks for ease of movement. The ceilings where these partitions are still extant appear to be original. The partitions are visible in the first-floor GSA office just south of the guard booth. At the fourth floor, the courtrooms and judges' chambers have a mixture of new finishes within the original layout of the spaces. (Figure 13) Courtrooms include one large courtroom and two medium-sized courtrooms. All of the courtrooms follow the same arrangement: a tiered jury box and a dais supporting a desk for the judge sit at one end of the room, an attorney lectern is near the middle of the room, and rows of angled benches occupy the other side of the room. A medium-sized courtroom, Courtroom #1, features oak wall paneling and oak furnishings, and a perforated laylight at the center of the ceiling. The extent of original features in the courtrooms is unclear, as the rooms have undergone several renovations since completion of the building. Several of the judges' chambers have undergone full renovation with interior wall layout revisions. Beyond the primary floors, the lower levels where parking is not present feature Facilities and Maintenance spaces, training areas, storage, and mechanical areas.

4.0 HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Building History

Planning, Site Selection, and Design

Planning for the construction of a new federal building in Topeka occurred throughout the early 1970s. At this time, the federal presence in Topeka was housed in a post office and courthouse at 424 S. Kansas Avenue and thirteen leased buildings across the city. The post office and courthouse (extant, NR-listed) was a limestone-clad neoclassical-style building constructed in 1933 and designed by architect Louis Simon (1867–1958). In 1971, US Rep. William Roy penned a letter to GSA administrator Robert L. Kunzig on the need to consolidate federal offices into a single building.[5] Senator Robert "Bob" Dole (1923–2021) was also a prominent proponent of constructing the building. In April 1973, the Nixon administration's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approved a prospectus for the construction of what was estimated to be an $18–20 million project.[6] Congress approved funding for the project in November.[7] A group of GSA officials toured potential building sites in Topeka in December 1973.[8]

As early as April 1971, GSA officials had a particular site in mind: the southern half of the block bounded by Quincy Street to the west, SE 5th Street to the south, SE 4th Street

[5] "Roy Urges Move for New Topeka Federal Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, December 14, 1971.
[6] Press release, "News from U.S. Senator Bob Dole," April 18, 1973, Dole Archive Collection, University of Kansas.
[7] "Congress Moves on Topeka Federal Building," *Parsons Sun*, November 7, 1973.
[8] Jeffrey P. Hillelson, regional administrator, General Services Administration Region 6, to Elmer E. Smith, regional administrator, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, letter, November 14, 1973, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

to the north and Monroe Street to the east.[9] The site was formally announced in February 1974.[10] The 2.4-acre site was situated near the northern edge of the central business district and roughly in the middle of the twenty-seven-block area the city's Urban Renewal Authority had identified for redevelopment (see section 4.3 Local Context for more on Topeka Urban Renewal).[11] The Urban Renewal Authority named these twenty-seven blocks the Keyway Urban Renewal Project. By the 1950s, the 2.4-acre site selected for the new federal building was in a section of downtown colloquially known as the Bottoms. A 1954 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the site included a Salvation Army Citadel at the southwest corner of the building site, a series of connected one-story buildings dedicated to auto sales and services north of the citadel, the Colonial Hotel at the southeast corner, and residences north of the hotel.[12] A cobblestone alley ran north–south between the two tracts that comprised the block.[13] In January 1961, city commissioners declared the Keyway project area "a combination slum and blighted area."[14] Through 1962, the Urban Renewal Authority oversaw the demolition of the buildings on the Keyway site. In 1964, the 2.4-acre federal building site became part of the Townsite Plaza urban redevelopment/renewal project (a smaller project area siphoned off from the larger Keyway project), although nothing was constructed at this time. Townsite Plaza Development, Inc., Vice President John F. Harbes wrote to David Childs, the chief of the Space Requirements Branch at GSA in April 1971 to discuss the construction of the federal building as part of Townsite Plaza.[15] By November 1974, the site identified for construction of the federal building was in use as a parking lot.[16] The federal government purchased the site from the city of Topeka in November 1974.[17]

By April 1974, GSA announced that a consortium of architecture firms would design the new federal building. The group would be known as Kansas Architects and Planners Associates (KAPA) and would encompass Eicholtz & Groth of Topeka; Robertson, Peters & Williams of Lawrence; Woods & Starr Associates of Hays; Platt Associates of Wichita; and Kivett & Myers of Kansas City.[18] Turner Construction Company was the general contractor for the project.

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[9] John F. Harbes to David Childs, letter, April 26, 1971, published in General Services Administration, *Topeka, FOB: Environmental Impact Statement* (April 1974), 48–49.
[10] "New fed building," *Great Bend Tribune*, February 14, 1974.
[11] Jaime Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975," 2020.
[12] Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas* (1954), Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.
[13] W.A. Sisk, chief, administrative branch, Public Buildings Service, GSA, to Ed Carmona, letter, February 3, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[14] "City Finds Keyway Area Is 'Blighted,'" *Topeka State Journal*, January 10, 1961.
[15] Harbes to Childs, letter, April 26, 1971, published in *Topeka, FOB: Environmental Impact Statement*, 48–49.
[16] W. A. Sisk, chief, administrative branch, Public Buildings Service, GSA, to Ed Carmona, letter, February 3, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[17] W. A. Sisk, chief, administrative branch, Public Buildings Service, GSA, to Lyman Figgins, building manager, letter, November 20, 1974, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[18] "Joint Work is Planned," *Parsons Sun*, April 13, 1974.

In January 1975, KAPA presented a conceptual design of the building to the Public Advisory Panel on Architectural Services of GSA.[19] GSA established the Public Advisory Panel on Architectural Services, composed of a group of well-established architects, in 1965 to review designs of GSA buildings and make recommendations.[20] Little is known about this early conceptual design. During this early phase of design, however, discussion emerged about the exterior cladding material and an interior atrium. In February 1975, Rex Denham, president of the Strong City Bank in Strong City, Kansas, wrote to US senator James Pearson (1920–2009) lobbying for the use of Cottonwood Limestone, which was a Kansas product. KAPA ultimately chose brick as the exterior cladding material as it was cheaper than stone.[21] This early conceptual design included an interior atrium lit by a skylight of a series of vertically oriented sawtooth-shaped windows. The sawtooth design limited viewing the sky to standing in only certain areas of the atrium. KAPA revised the design in March, replacing the sawtooth skylight with a 45-degree skylight with direct admission of sunlight, allowing those in the atrium to see the sky from any point. This revision of the skylight also resulted in KAPA designing an interior pool for the atrium. Lyman Figgins, building manager for the Topeka federal building, predicted that the pool would be a "maintenance problem for the next thirty years."[22] Research to date has not determined whether Figgins' prediction proved true. Figgins lamented that with the revisions, "the atrium has progressed from a complementary facet of the structure to the position of dominance."[23]

KAPA completed a full set of revised drawings for the building in September 1975. The building appears to have been constructed largely to this design. The massing of the building featured sharp-angled, chamfered corners, a key element of late-modern architecture. Exterior walls were 14"-thick, consisting of 8"-thick concrete block, 2"-thick polyurethane insulation, and 4"-thick brick veneer. Fenestration consisted of bands of deeply recessed windows. The principal entrance was set in a two-story recess in the front (west) façade. A sharp-angled wall at the south end of the recess further communicated the bold geometry of the building. The drawings showed the four-story building resting on a raised plaza above a two-story parking garage. The concrete foundation of the building encased the parking garage. The plaza extended around the building to the west, south, and east. A recess in the front (west) façade of the building created a transition to a defined entrance plaza to lead to the front entrance. Long planters along the western edge featured sharp-angled projection into or recesses from the field of

[19] J. C. Spradley to Eleanor King, memorandum, "Meetings of Public Advisory Panel on Architectural and Engineering Services," December 4, 1975, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Region VI, Box 1, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.
[20] Bill Moore, "Government Is Giving Its Buildings Class," *Kansas City Star*, February 17, 1969.
[21] J. V. Garrett, regional administrator of GSA Region 6, to Senator James Pearson, letter, March 20, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[22] Lyman Figgins, building manager, memorandum, March 19, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[23] Lyman Figgins, building manager, memorandum, March 19, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

the plaza floor, referencing the bold geometry of the building. Pavers covered the floor of the plaza, and long planters extended around the western and southern edges.[24]

All four floors of the interior were arranged around the atrium and a central core that housed elevators, a central staircase, restrooms, and various small maintenance rooms. The architects also fitted the building with a raised access floor for easy maintenance of electrical and telecommunication lines. On the first floor, the atrium would serve as the primary public space of the building, with sharp-angled planters and a pool designed to provide a welcoming and comfortable environment. The floor of the atrium and first-floor corridors were covered with brick. Surrounding the atrium and central core on the first floor were offices for GSA staff, other office space, and a vending area.[25] Office space similarly surrounded the atrium and central core on all sides on the second and third floors. A glass railing with an oak handrail extended around the opening to the atrium at the second, third, and fourth floors. Offices were designed for optimal flexibility, with demountable partitions of gypsum wallboard that would hook into mounting tracks on the floors and ceiling. The partitions were set in 0.125" extruded aluminum frames. The demountable partitions created a modular system that allowed for optimal flexibility in office arrangement. Offices also featured acoustical-tile drop ceilings and carpeted floors.[26] The fourth floor were to house the courtrooms and judges' chambers.[27]

The consortium designed the building with optimal energy efficiency in mind. The oil embargo of 1973 prompted GSA to emphasize energy conservation in its buildings. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed the embargo against the United States in retaliation for US efforts to aid Israel during the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (also known as the Yom Kippur War). The embargo banned petroleum exports to specific nations, such as the United States, and cut oil production. Both actions resulted in significantly higher prices for oil.[28] In response, GSA published the "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings" in 1974 to provide specific guidance on designing new federal buildings for energy efficiency. James R. Elsea, the director of the Space Management Division of the Public Buildings Service at GSA stated that "energy conservation was…a prime factor in the design of the building."[29]

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[24] KAPA, *Building Elevations, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 40-1-2B, General Services Administration; KAPA, *Plaza Layout Plan, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 20-1-4A, General Services Administration.

[25] KAPA, *First Floor Plan, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 30-1-5E, General Services Administration.

[26] General Services Administration, "Interior Partitions," *Amendment to Bid Documents*, June 16, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse; KAPA, *Second Floor Plan, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 30-1-6B, General Services Administration; KAPA, *Third Floor Plan, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 30-1-7B, General Services Administration.

[27] KAPA, *Fourth Floor Plan, FOB CT HSE PARK FAC*, September 19, 1975, drawing no. 30-1-8C, General Services Administration.

[28] US Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Oil Embargo, 1973–1974," accessed June 29, 2022, available at https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo.

[29] James R. Elsea, director, Space Management Division, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, to Leonard Munker, federal public defender, letter, October 21, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

Elsea emphasized the atrium as one of the most significant features of the building, writing that it would "help to provide an attractive and functional environment."[30]

In response to the new energy efficiency push, the architects sought to design a building that was comfortable yet economical, with particular emphasis placed on heating and cooling the building efficiently. Architect Sid Platt of Platt Associates (part of the KAPA consortium) quipped, "How a building is used is often more important than how it is designed."[31] However, he also argued that beauty in architecture need not be sacrificed in designing an energy efficient building.[32] The architects devised a number of techniques to optimize climate control within the building. The 14"-thick walls, of 8"-thick concrete block, 2"-thick polyurethane insulation, and 4"-thick brick veneer, were intended to enhance insulation. A glazing scheme was devised to regulate sunlight exposure: depending on the elevation, windows were either deeply recessed and/or fenestration was minimized. The ribbon windows were set within 5'-deep recesses in the wall plane, which shaded the glass when the sun was at its strongest.[33] Fenestration on the north, east, and west elevations was limited, when compared to the more liberal glazing on the south elevation. The air conditioning and heating systems were also designed to optimize energy efficiency. Air conditioning for the building was to consist of a variable volume fan system and central chiller equipped with a mixed air economizer cycle, minimum summer outdoor control, cooling coil discharge temperature control, and total humidity control. The total heating controls would allow maximum use of outdoor air for cooling. Rather than relying on boilers, fuel tanks, or fuel piping, ducted fan coil units above the drop ceiling on each floor were designed to take heat from the building's core and redistribute it to the perimeter.[34]

An important component of the design would also include the integration of art, a reflection of GSA's Art in Architecture program that committed to enhancing new federal buildings and showcasing American visual arts. In 1976, representatives of the Art in Architecture program selected Rockne Krebs to design a work that would adorn the atrium.[35] Concurrent with the construction of the building, two murals were applied to the walls on the fourth floor and parking garage. GSA officials suspect that an unknown tenant agency commissioned the murals. The artist remains unknown. Similar in composition, the two murals are each a colorful, abstract depiction of two eagles flanking either one or two center stars. The fourth-floor mural features a single center star abutting two out-facing eagles, and the mural in the parking garage includes an out-facing eagle

[30] James R. Elsea, director, Space Management Division, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, to Leonard Munker, federal public defender, letter, October 21, 1975, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[31] Sid Platt, quoted in Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[32] Sid Platt, quoted in Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[33] Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[34] Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[35] Turner Construction Co., "Owner, Architect, Construction Manager Meeting No. 30," April 20, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

and a star on each side of a door opening. The artist of the murals has not been identified in research to date.

The federal building was built to house thirty-two federal agencies, congressional offices, three federal courtrooms, a bankruptcy courtroom, and judges' chambers. Senators Dole and Pearson, US Representative Martha Keys would have offices in the building. The US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Transportation, and several other federal departments would also be located in the building. Senator Dole coordinated with GSA in summer 1976 on plans for his office.[36]

The architects refined elements of the design into autumn 1976. In October, KAPA completed a set of drawings that specified details for the atrium. Although the basic outline of the sharp-angled planters and pool had been provided in the September 1975 design, the October 1976 drawings showed that the walls along the planters and pool would be canted, clad with brick laid in soldier courses, and fitted with custom contoured, oak benches.[37] These October drawings also outlined office arrangement schemes, including the potential placement of partitions and desk clusters.[38]

Construction

A groundbreaking ceremony occurred on May 22, 1975. In June 1975, the *Hays Dailey News* reported that Topeka city commissioners waived enforcement of the city's building codes so that excavation work on the new federal building could begin. The article did not provide context or explanation as to the nature of this action. It is possible city officials altered building codes as part of negotiations with GSA for an early footings and foundation package phase to begin excavation work. R.S. Ehinger Co. of Kansas City carried out excavation of the site beginning that June.[39] Turner Construction Company initiated construction of the building soon after excavation was completed. Changes to the street grid were required, as a portion of the building, the south section of the plaza, and a visitor parking lot would extend south beyond the property line. The section of 5th Street between Quincy and Monroe was permanently vacated and closed for the building project. The building was constructed north of the other buildings of the Townsite Plaza urban redevelopment/renewal project, which largely obscured views to the new federal building from downtown Topeka. Although the rear elevation would be visible from

[36] H.D. Harvell, GSA regional administrator, to Senator Bob Dole, letter, July 6, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[37] KAPA, *Atrium Base Plan*, October 16, 1976, drawing no. 50-1-31, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Region VI, Envelope 429, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.
[38] KAPA, *Second-Floor Plan*, October 16, 1976, drawing no. 30-2-3, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Region VI, Envelope 432, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.
[39] *Hays Dailey News*, June 18, 1975.

Interstate 70, other elevations were not visible from any major street. The building would only be accessible via a short one-way loop of 5th Street that passed around it.[40]

While the building was under construction in October 1975, a 900-foot-long fence placed around the site was repurposed for a temporary mural. The Shawnee County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission led a group of volunteers to paint both a red, white, and blue ribbon and a timeline of thirty-five scenes of the history of Kansas on the fence. The mural remained on the fence until July 1976.[41]

A series of photographs by Wallace Photography document the construction of the building. The steel frame of the building was completed in spring 1976.[42] The concrete-block walls were installed through June and July, and the exterior brick cladding was added in August.[43] Photographs from December 1976 suggest the exterior of the building was largely complete by this time.[44] Interior construction work continued through 1977.[45] Carpet was installed in the building in February–March 1977.[46]

Completion and Reception

The new building, formally named the Federal Building and United States Courthouse, was completed by late spring 1977.[47] The total cost of construction was approximately $12 million.[48]

The new federal building was the first building designed to meet an overall energy budget in accordance with GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings." When completed, the energy efficiency measures meant that the building only needed a fourth of the fuel typically required to heat an office building comparable in size.[49] Samuel Hack, director of facilities and construction management with the US Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), commended the building as "almost twice as energy efficient as the current standard [for federal building

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[40] David Sachs, "Frank Carlson Federal Building," *SAH Archipedia*, accessed July 5, 2022, available at https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/KS-01-177-0003.
[41] "Fence painting plan to bicentennial group," *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 8, 1975; "Outdoing Tom Sawyer," *Topeka State Journal*, October 15, 1975.
[42] Wallace Photography, construction photograph of SE corner showing steel framing, March 17, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[43] Wallace Photography, construction photograph of west elevation showing steel framing, June 15, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse; Wallace Photography, construction photograph of north elevation, August 13, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[44] Wallace Photography, photograph of NE corner, December 17, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[45] Wallace Photography, photograph of fourth-floor courtroom under construction, February 2, 1977, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[46] Turner Construction Co. to Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, letter, November 24, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[47] "Hearing Set for Pearson Proposal," *Garden City Telegram*, June 22, 1977.
[48] Press release, "Ceremony Redesignating Topeka Federal Building on January 30th," January 6, 1981, Dole Archive Collection, University of Kansas.
[49] Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.

construction], which is half that previously achieved."[50] "That's about a fourth of the energy consumption per square foot as compared to buildings designed prior to the energy crisis," Hack noted. Indeed, the building would need 29,000 Btu per square foot, compared to the 55,000-Btu GSA guideline.[51] Established in 1974, the ERDA was merged with the Federal Administration to create the US Department of Energy in 1977. Hack further commended the building: "this is a significant job of designing. The architecture and engineering are beautifully integrated. The designers used architecture to achieve conservation ends, not just engineering solutions."[52] J.C. Spradley, director of Conservation Management Division of the Public Buildings Service at GSA, described the building as "an innovative blend of architecture and engineering" and "aesthetically pleasing, highly flexible, and extremely energy conscious.[53] For their energy conservation efforts in designing the building, KAPA won the Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation's fifth annual energy conservation award in the governmental category.[54]

An October 1976 issue of *Engineering News-Record* gave the new federal building national attention for its energy efficiency. The article highlighted the limited glazing, recessed windows, thick walls, and HVAC systems as key to the energy savings.[55]

Early Alterations, 1977–1980

A dispute with the landscaping company for the building emerged in spring 1978. Vern Brown Landscaping Service in Overland Park, Kansas, was responsible for installation of plantings in exterior and interior planters and their continued maintenance. Calvin W. Foster, resident engineer at GSA, wrote to Vern Brown Landscaping Service in May 1978 to report the "deplorable state" of exterior and interior landscaping. "Grass has not been cut this spring and is overgrown with weeds. Weeds in exterior planters are taller than the plants. There has been no plant replacement, no cultivating or pruning, no reguying of shrubs or trees…the tree in the atrium south planter must be replaced."[56] Work to improve these conditions was carried out in June, although details of the work were not specified in documents from the period.[57]

In October 1979, sculptor Rockne Krebs's sculpture *The White Tornado* was installed in the atrium. The 60'-high sculpture was suspended from the ceiling from a canted platform at the center of the skylight. The form of the sculpture evokes a gesture drawing of a tornado. It was fabricated from steel tubing with white coating. The sculpture

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[50] Samuel Hack, quoted in Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[51] "GSA cuts energy use in Topeka bldg.," *Engineering News-Record* 197 (October 1976): 14.
[52] Samuel Hack, quoted in Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[53] J.C. Spradley, director, Conservation Management Division, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, to Lyman Figgins, buildings manager, letter, March 11, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[54] Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.
[55] "GSA cuts energy use in Topeka bldg.," *Engineering News-Record* 197 (October 1976): 14.
[56] Calvin W. Foster, GSA resident engineer, to Vern Brown Landscaping Service, letter, May 25, 1978, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[57] Robert A. Flack, GSA contracting officer, to Vern Brown Landscaping Service, letter, June 16, 1978, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

includes supporting elements that create the sense of an active tornado. White, neon rods in the shape of lightning bolts are placed throughout the sculpture. The neon rods also form a five-pointed star, if viewed from a location in the atrium floor where the bricks are arranged to arrive at a point. Scrim material around the top outer edge suggests a rain cloud. A long neon rod hanging from the ceiling forms an outline of the artist's face profile. Small square prisms, which reflect light within the sculpture, are situated on the upper areas of the south side of the sculpture. Skylight windows with approximately 200 prism objects cast light dispersions onto the cloud, the tornado, and throughout the atrium.[58]

In a description of the piece written in 1980, Krebs noted that the piece was what he called "'a natural,' a uniquely compatible relationship of things. The key to create a natural in art is to discover in a place its own order."[59] Krebs also drew inspiration from a mural by John Steuart Curry on the second floor of the Kansas state capitol that captures a weaving black tornado encircling John Brown.[60] Following its installation, GSA area manager George Garoutte commented, "I think it blends well with the openness [of the atrium]. It catches the eye and pulls it right up to the atrium."[61]

In 1980, modifications were made to the bankruptcy courtroom on the fourth floor. The project included installing a new chair rail and adding new furniture, such as the jury box and lectern.[62]

The federal building and US courthouse was renamed in honor of Frank Carlson in January 1981. A ceremony was held at the building on January 30. Carlson was honored for his years of public services as a US congressman, US senator, and governor of Kansas.[63]

In 1982, alterations were made to several offices on the first and third floors. The demountable partitions and doors were removed in several offices.[64] Similar changes were made to four offices in 1985. These changes, also consisting of replacing partitions and doors, were made in three offices on the first floor and one office on the second floor.[65] Three partition walls were removed from Room 171, for instance, to create a larger, open office space.[66] At some point, a sculpture named "Hexatryst" designed by

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[58] McKay Lodge Fine Arts Conservation Laboratory, Inc., *Report on Treatment: Project No. 15117*, May 11, 2017.
[59] Rockne Krebs, Untitled GSA pamphlet, 1980.
[60] Don Skinner, "Art Twister Whirls to Peak," *Topeka Capital*, November 1, 1979.
[61] George Garoutte, GSA area manager, in Don Skinner, "Art Twister Whirls to Peak," *Topeka Capital*, November 1, 1979.
[62] General Services Administration, *4th Floor Details, Misc., Courtroom Modifications*, August 8, 1980, drawing no. 50-4-1A, General Services Administration.
[63] "Name federal building in Frank Carlson's honor," *Salina Journal*, February 1, 1981.
[64] General Services Administration, "Order for Supplies or Services," February 22, 1982, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[65] General Services Administration, "Memorandum Specification – Alterations Rooms 102, 171, 176E and 248," February 20, 1985, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.
[66] General Services Administration, "Memorandum Specification – RFP 6PBD-IT-15," undated, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

Rosemarie Castoro was installed on the south plaza. The sculpture was removed at an unknown date for safety reasons, as people were climbing on it.[67]

Later Alterations and Terrorist Attack, 1981–2022
A judge's chambers on the fourth floor were renovated in 1991. The work included removing a wall and replacing wall paneling.[68]

On August 5, 1993, the Carlson Building became the site of a major terrorist attack. Early in the morning, an armed gunman named Jack Garry McKnight parked his car in a parking space adjacent to the building. He entered the building through an unattended garage entry ramp. At this time, a bomb placed in his car set to a timer exploded as a distraction to divert police attention. The gunman proceeded to the fourth floor, where he shot and killed a security guard and wounded another person. He threw several detached pipe bombs from the fourth floor of the atrium. At some point, an explosive around McKnight's waist detonated and injured him.[69] McKnight then took his own life.[70]

The attack resulted in a number of security upgrades at the Carlson Building. Twenty-two entrances throughout the building were reduced to only two guarded pedestrian entrances and one secured garage entry. A security booth was installed in first floor of the atrium to screen entry from the main entrance. On the exterior, a metal fence was placed atop a segment of the brick wall lining the planters on the southern edge of the plaza. Metal doors comparable in design and materials to the fence were placed at either end of the fence, preventing public access to the eastern segment of the plaza.

The contoured, oak benches on the first floor of the atrium were removed at some point in the 2010s.[71]

4.2 National Context
Late Modernism
The glass box of International Style modernism dominated architectural practice for much of the mid-twentieth century. By the 1960s, however, architects and architectural theorists searched for alternatives to the ubiquitous glass box. Edward Durrell Stone practiced in a mode of modernism that embraced classicism often referred to as New Formalism, Eero Saarinen used dramatic, curvilinear forms that referenced baroque architecture, and Paul Rudolph designed buildings in raw, exposed concrete in a variant

[67] Parker, December 2022.
[68] General Services Administration, *Partial 4th Floor Plan, Fourth Floor Judge's Chambers Renovation, Frank Carlson FB USCH*, December 1991, drawing no. 30-21-1, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Region VI, Env. 434, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.
[69] David S. Turk, *Forging the Star: The Official Modern History of the United States Marshals Service* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2016), 296; Steve Fry, "Gunman's attack with bombs, pistols most memorable in deputy's career," *WIBW*, August 3, 2018, accessed July 5, 2022, available at https://www.wibw.com/content/news/Gunmans-attack-with-bombs-pistols-most-memorable-in-deputys-career-490037751.html.
[70] Steve Fry, "Victim has nightmares 20 years after Aug. 5, 1993, attack on federal building in Topeka, "*Topeka Capital-Journal*, August 4, 1993.
[71] Jason Parker, building manager, Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse, interview with the authors, June 2022.

of modernism termed Brutalism. Additional alternatives to canonical International Style modernism developed in the 1970s. Theorist Charles Jencks (1939–2019) famously declared the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1972–76 the "death of modernism," an indictment of what he saw as the naïve social goals of modernist architects and planners.[72]

In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, this desire for new architectural expression resulted in the development of another variant of modernism known as late modernism. Sharp angles, bold shapes, and a wrapping of a singular material (typically glass or brick) most often characterized this style.[73] Charles Jencks was quick to observe this distinct modernist variant and, by 1980, published a book titled *Late-Modern Architecture* that theorized its emergence and development. Jencks writes that late modernism "takes the ideas and forms of the Modern Movement to an extreme, exaggerating the structure and technical image of the building in its attempt to find amusement, or aesthetic pleasure."[74] The architects who designed in this mode, Jencks writes, sought new forms, but were not ready to abandon modernism's commitment to technology and abstraction. The late modernists tended toward exaggeration, pushing the theoretical precepts of modernism toward a renewed experimentalism.[75]

Late modernism was most often reflected in the architecture of large corporations.[76] Citicorp Center (1977, extant, not NR-listed) at 601 Lexington Avenue by architect Hugh Stubbins made a bold statement in the New York City skyline. The top of the building descends at a 45° angle, and its base is composed of broad columns clad in anodized aluminum that creates a smooth, slick finish. "The somewhat crude geometry," architecture critic Alexandra Lange writes, makes Citicorp "an ideal example of Late Modernism."[77] The principal public interior space is an 85'-high atrium at the base of the building. The IBM Building (1983, extant, not NR-listed) at 57th Street and Madison Avenue in New York also reflects the key elements of late modernism. Designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes & Associates, the forty-one-story tower was developed for the technology company IBM. The bold geometry and sharp angles of late modernism was reflected in the massing of the building, which consists of a pentagonal wedge with a larger chamfer at the southwest corner. The first three floors at the northeast corner are also chamfered. A skin of gray-green glass and polished granite clads the building. As with Citicorp Center, the IBM Building features a prominent multi-story interior atrium.

Late-modern architecture was also expressed in building types other than the corporate skyscraper. Prominent examples include museum commissions, perhaps best reflected in I.M. Pei's designs for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Louvre

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[72] Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, sixth edition (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 23.
[73] Alexandra Lange, "What is Late Modernism? And why you should care," *Curbed*, accessed July 5, 2022, available at https://archive.curbed.com/2017/1/5/14165394/late-modernism-architecture-alexandra-lange; Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), 54.
[74] Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 8.
[75] Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 8.
[76] Lange, "What is Late Modernism? And why you should care."
[77] Lange, "What is Late Modernism? And why you should care."

Museum in Paris. For the National Gallery of Art, Pei designed the East Building (1978, extant, not NR-listed) as a combination of two triangles, a form that responded to the diagonal line of Pennsylvania Avenue. At the top of the building are three towers that are angled sharply into the center of the building. The triangle is repeated as a motif throughout the interior of the building, including in the form of the atrium and in the coffered ceilings. The building is clad in pink marble. The Louvre Pyramid (1988, extant), built to serve as a new entrance to the famed Paris museum, is another Pei-designed late-modern museum project. The pyramid is in the main courtyard (Cour Napoléon) of the Louvre. The massing consists of a large pyramid surrounded by three smaller pyramids. The pyramids were constructed of glass set within a frame of metal poles. Together, the East Building and Louvre Pyramid demonstrate the defining bold geometry and sharp angles of late modernism.

Late modernism largely fell out of favor by the late 1980s and early 1990s, as post-modernism supplanted most forms of modernism. Although a short-lived style, late modernism marked a transformative period of architectural expression and a significant development in the history of modern architecture.

GSA and the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture"

Throughout American history, federal architecture has reflected the values, history, and goals of its government and citizens. In 1852, the Office of the Supervising Architect was established within the Treasury Department to oversee federal design and construction. By 1912, the Supervising Architect's Office was responsible for the management of 1,126 federal buildings.[78]

Federal construction increased dramatically in the 1930s, as the New Deal programs of President Franklin Roosevelt attempted to mitigate the ravages of the Great Depression through Keynesian spending policies, resulting in large sums of money devoted to public building projects. In 1939, the Office of the Supervising Architect was phased into the newly established Public Building Administration. The dramatic expansion of the federal government during the New Deal, World War II, and immediate post-war years required new facilities for the larger federal workforce and for the various new agencies and departments. In response to these needs, President Harry Truman signed the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 that established the General Services Administration (GSA) to streamline the acquisition and maintenance of federal buildings, records management, and supply requirements. The legislation also transferred the role of the Public Building Administration in overseeing constructing new federal buildings and managing existing federal buildings to the newly created Public Buildings Service (PBS) within GSA.[79]

Upon its formation, GSA emphasized economy and efficiency in construction and maintenance costs. Architectural features seen as unnecessary, such as monumental exterior stairs or custom-made features, were typically rejected. GSA also committed to

[78] Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s* (US General Services Administration, Office of the Chief Architect, Center for Historic Buildings, 2003), 20–24.
[79] Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism*, 28–29.

hiring private architects for federal building design. This emphasis on economy and efficiency in the post-war era resulted in utilitarian buildings constructed with cheaper materials. At the same time, existing federal office space became further crowded over the course of the 1950s as more employees joined the federal workforce.[80]

Soon after taking office in 1961, President John F. Kennedy communicated his disappointment with the state of federal office buildings: they often lacked efficient space and were inadequate for contemporary needs. At Kennedy's direction, the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space was formed to advise the administration on office space needs. When the committee issued its report in 1962, a document titled the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture" was included. The "Guiding Principles" recommended new mandates for "high quality architectural designs" for all new federal architecture across the nation. The document established the following system for federal design standards:

> Designs should incorporate the finest in contemporary architectural thought. Including local and regional architectural traditions and influences of the area where the building is located is encouraged. Incorporating pieces of fine art, preferably by living American artists should be a top priority. Buildings should also be functional for users, including the disabled, and should incorporate materials, methods, and equipment of proven dependability, making them economical to build, operate, and maintain.
>
> The development of an official style should be avoided. The architectural profession should dictate the trend of government buildings, but the government should not dictate architectural trends. Costs will likely be slightly higher to obtain quality designs, and the government should be willing to pay more to avoid excessive uniformity of design for Federal buildings. Design competitions may be held, and the advice of prominent architects should be sought prior to awarding important design contracts.
>
> The choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step in the design process of Federal buildings, with special attention paid to nearby street layout and public places. Buildings should be located so as to permit a generous development of landscape.

Although the "Guiding Principles" did not mandate a particular architectural style for federal buildings, the document encouraged federal architecture to be designed according to the latest in contemporary architectural thought. Some of the foremost influential architects in modern architecture were hired for federal projects, including Bauhaus-affiliated designers like Walter Gropius (John F. Kennedy Federal Building in Boston), Marcel Breuer (Robert C. Weaver Federal Building in Washington, DC) and Mies van der Rohe (Federal Center in Chicago) and American modernists like Victor Lundy (US Tax Court in Washington, DC).

Frank Carlson

Frank Carlson was a US representative, US senator, and governor of Kansas. Carlson was born in Concordia, Kansas, in 1893, to Swedish immigrants. He attended Concordia

[80] Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism*, 29, 36–37, 41.

Normal School and Business College and Kansas State College in Manhattan, where he majored in agriculture. Carlson served in Europe during World War I, after which he returned to Concordia and purchased a farm. In 1928, Carlson ran for and won a seat as a representative in the Kansas state legislature. He served in the US House of Representatives from 1935 to 1947. During this congressional career, Carlson focused his attention on simplifying the federal tax code, natural flood control, water conservation, and agricultural aid. He returned to Kansas politics with a successful run for governor, serving from 1947 to 1950. Upon the death of Kansas state senator Clyde M. Reed, Carlson appointed Harry Darby to the seat. Darby remained in the senate until Carlson himself was elected to the seat in 1950. Rather than waiting until January to be sworn in, Carlson took his seat in November 1950. Carlson was instrumental in recruiting Dwight D. Eisenhower to run for president in the 1952 election. His career in the senate included votes in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. He became the only Kansan to serve in the Kansas state legislature, governor's office, and both houses of Congress. Carlson retired from politics and returned to Concordia in 1969.[81]

Rockne Krebs

Rockne Krebs (1938–2011) was a contemporary artist and sculptor. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Krebs graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in sculpture in 1961. After graduation, Krebs joined the Navy and moved to Washington, D.C. While in Washington, Krebs drew inspiration for his art from the Washington Color School, a group of abstract expressionists painters based in the city. By the late 1960s, Krebs developed a focus in sun and laser art. He used intricately arranged lenses, prisms and mirrors to direct light from lasers or the sun. Krebs' approach to sculpture was to eliminate its materiality and create sculptural works that had no solid form.[82]

He designed a number of sculptures of intersecting beams of light, often employing mirrors to redirect beams in particular directions. One of his earliest installations was created for the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., featuring a laser and sunlight piece titled *Ra*, using a fog machine to enhance the laser light. In 1974, Krebs designed a sculpture of beams of lasers titled *Rite de Passage* in New Orleans.[83] Some of his most high-profile installations were on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., at the Kennedy Space Center, and at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

By the time he created *The White Tornado* for the federal building and courthouse in Topeka in 1979, Krebs indicated that he preferred such "sun pieces" to sculpted objects because it gave him a chance to work in the space the art would occupy. Krebs worked in other media as well. A 1976 piece comprised a conch shell which Krebs carved into the shape of an American flag and fitted with fifty rhinestones representing stars.[84] Krebs continued designing sun and laser pieces throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

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[81] "Biographical Sketch," Correspondence of the Governor's Office, Frank Carlson, Kansas State Archives, Kansas State Historical Society.
[82] Matt Schudel, "Rockne Krebs, innovative D.C. laser artist, dies at 72," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2011.
[83] Don Skinner, "Art Twister Whirls to Peak," *Topeka Capital*, November 1, 1979; Charles Benbow, "Laser art," *Tampa Bay Times*, December 1, 1974.
[84] Don Skinner, "Art Twister Whirls to Peak," *Topeka Capital*, November 1, 1979

4.3 Local Context

Downtown Topeka Transformed: Urban Redevelopment/Renewal, Townsite Plaza, and a Tornado

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was planned as part of a redevelopment scheme for downtown Topeka. By the mid-1950s, Topeka civic leaders faced problems familiar to their counterparts across the country. Retail businesses were fleeing the downtown core, limiting commercial activity and resulting in vacancy and deteriorating building stock. A 1957 *Topeka State Journal* article noted that thousands of square feet of downtown upper-story floor space was left vacant, reporting that "fifteen or twenty feet above street level along Kansas Avenue, a second story ghost town is evolving gradually."[85] A significant portion of housing stock had also fallen into disrepair. A 1956 article identified "many blocks…where hovels face onto dismal alleys, where junk piles high in the yards."[86]

The Federal Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 provided substantial federal funding for local and state urban redevelopment (after 1954, urban *renewal*) projects that sought to solve the problem of downtown decline and decayed building stock. These efforts most often resulted in the destruction of older building in favor of the construction of new buildings. Demolition of older buildings, houses, and entire neighborhoods became a widely employed practice. Urban historian David Hamer points out that though the term *urban renewal* later developed negative associations, the policies initially drew substantial support from the public and city leaders. As Hamer writes, "It [urban renewal] fitted in well with the postwar mood of making a new start and ridding cities of the burdensome legacy of the past—which for most people was primarily identified with the grim depression years."[87]

In 1956, Topeka initiated their own Urban Renewal Authority (URA) to use federal money to redevelop downtown. The URA identified thirty-seven blocks in the northeast corner of downtown as most in need of redevelopment. The 207.2-acre area extended from Crane Street south to 8th Avenue and Kansas Avenue east to Adams Street and included portions of downtown, some industrial areas, and some residential enclaves. The redevelopment project of this thirty-seven-block tract was named the Keyway Urban Renewal Project. Controversy over the large scope of the Keyway plan led to its reduction to twenty-seven acres. Several blocks of the Keyway area were reserved for construction of Interstate 70, which was funded through the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act.[88] The new interstate highway would provide direct connections to the central business district, as envisioned in the Keyway plan. The interstate would cut through the

[85] Dave Hudson, "Second-Story Ghost Town," *Topeka State Journal*, May 18, 1957.
[86] Gene Beyer, "What Is Urban Redevelopment?," *Topeka State Journal*, March 24, 1956.
[87] David Hamer, *History in Urban Places: The Historic Districts of the United States* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 13.
[88] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."

heart of downtown and claim approximately seven square blocks in the Keyway project (about 20% of the area), resulting in the removal of all buildings in its right-of-way.[89]

A large portion of the Keyway project area was comprised of a majority of African American neighborhoods. Among those neighborhoods was "the Bottoms," the city's oldest Black neighborhood. The Bottoms was bounded by S.E. 6th Street to the south, the Kansas River to the north, S. Kansas Avenue to the west, and S.E. Adams Street to the east. The neighborhood included residences and several small businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, bars, drug stores, a hardware store, a pool hall, a shoeshine parlor, and a pawn shop.[90] The Bottoms had suffered significant damage after a major flood in 1951. In preparation of the clearing of the land for the construction of new buildings and I-70, approximately 3,000 residents of the Bottoms were displaced and their homes demolished. Most of the land was cleared by 1962. The 2.4-acre tract on which the Carlson Building would be constructed was cleared and used as a parking lot through the rest of the 1960s and into the 1970s. The displaced people, however, were, in most instances, not immediately relocated or offered any assistance in finding new homes. As an attempt at resolving charges of discrimination in the displacement of a mostly African American population, the city government pushed for the construction of a public housing facility. Pine Ridge Manor, the city's first public housing facility, did not open until 1965.[91]

In 1964, the URA developed plans for 2 1/4 blocks at the southwest corner of the Keyway project area. The project was named Townsite Plaza and encompassed the blocks between 4th and 6th streets and Kansas Avenue and Monroe Street. The post office and courthouse at 424 S. Kansas Avenue, the Duffens Optical Company Building at 400 SE Quincy Street, and the Thacher Building at 217 SE 4th Street were not part of the redevelopment plans. The project resulted in the construction of a tower originally occupied by the First National Bank (now Townsite Tower) at 534 S. Kansas Avenue in 1968; and a parking garage north of Townsite Tower in 1968; and a low-rise International Style building called Townsite Plaza Office Park with an underground parking garage at 200 SE 6th Street circa 1976.[92] The Townsite Plaza development area included the site acquired for the new federal building and courthouse (renamed Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse) in Topeka.[93] The federal building was completed in 1977, a year after the Townsite Plaza Office Park was finished.

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[89] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."
[90] Tim Hrenchir, "Urban renewal did away with downtown Topeka's aging 'Bottoms' neighborhood in 1960s," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, February 27, 2021.
[91] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."
[92] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."; India Yarborough, "'One bite at a time': Local businessman plans to renovate Townsite Plaza, Topeka Tower," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, July 22, 2020.
[93] "Highway Patrol is Moving to Urban Renewal Complex," *Wichita Beacon*, August 8, 1976.

Through the 1960s, new buildings were constructed in place of the demolished buildings. By 1973, the Keyway project was closed out at a final cost of $8.2 million.[94] Through the 1960s and 1970s, urban redevelopment/renewal dramatically altered the scale and character of downtown Topeka. I-70 created a clear line separating the districts of commercial and government buildings to the west and the industrial sector to the east.[95]

In addition to the human-driven changes, a natural disaster also transformed Topeka in the mid-1960s. On June 8, 1966, a tornado swept through the city, leaving widespread destruction in its wake. The tornado ripped a hole in the Kansas state capitol dome, destroyed the ten-story National Reserve Life Building at 1000 S. Kansas Avenue, and severely damaged several public and private office buildings. Every building on the Washburn University campus was either destroyed or severely damaged. Across Topeka, approximately 800 homes were completely destroyed and nearly 3000 were damaged.[96]

Modernism in Topeka

When it was completed in 1977, the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse became part of a collection of noteworthy modernist works in Topeka. The buildings reflected a period of profound transformation in the city, as urban redevelopment/renewal resulted in the widespread demolition of older buildings and construction of new buildings, often designed in modern-era styles. In the decades after World War II, modernist office buildings were mostly constructed downtown, while residences, schools, and churches designed in various modern styles were built throughout the city's rapidly expanding suburbs.[97]

The Docking State Office Building (not-NR listed) was constructed as a twelve-story modernist building at 915 SW Harrison Street. Built between 1954 and 1957, the building sits across the street from the state capitol. Docomomo US, the leading modernist preservation advocacy group, names the Docking Building "perhaps the most important example" of modernism in Topeka.[98] Architect John A. Brown, state architect at that time, designed the building. It is composed of an asymmetrical cross configuration of intersecting masses. Slabs of limestone panels clad the building broken by expanses of double-glazed curtain walls and ribbon windows. The building is ornamented with abstracted bas-reliefs. The Docking Building was one of the first modernist public buildings in Kansas. In the early 2010s, the Kansas state government began moving offices out of the building, and the governor at the time called for the building to be demolished. The plan collapsed, however, when his administration discovered that the

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[94] *Urban Renewal Agency of the City of Topeka, Annual Report* (Topeka, Kansas, 1973), 4.
[95] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."
[96] "June 8th 1966 Topeka Tornado," *Weather*, accessed July 5, 2022, available at https://www.weather.gov/top/1966TopekaTornado; "Topeka Tornado 1966," *Kansapedia (Kansas Historical Society)*, accessed July 5, 2022, available at https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/topeka-tornado-1966/17242.
[97] Destefano, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975."
[98] Michael Grogan, "Plains Modern: Postwar Architecture in Kansas," *Docomomo*, accessed July 7, 2022, available at https://www.docomomo-us.org/news/plains-modern-postwar-architecture-in-kansas.

basement of the Docking Building held the heating plant for the entire capitol complex.[99] A successor governor and legislative leaders suggested a partial demolition in May 2022, while preservation advocates pushed for the building to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.[100]

The Merchants National Bank Building (extant, not NR-listed) at 800 SW Jackson Street was designed in the concrete variant of modernism known as Brutalism. Completed in 1969, the bank building was designed by Van Doren, Hazard, Stallings & Schnacke of Topeka. The sixteen-story building is composed of a tower above a four-story base, which includes a recessed first story with fluted concrete piers and glass curtainwalls. A screen of concrete strips covers the parking garage on stories two through four. Projecting vertical concrete bands divide the tower into bays, and within each bay narrower concrete bands run vertically between each window. The building was assessed as part of the National Register nomination for the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District in 2015. The authors concluded that though the building was potentially significant for its conveyance of the principles of the modern movement and its association with Topeka urban redevelopment/renewal, it was at that time not old to enough to be considered for listing.[101]

The Kansas Judicial Center (extant, not NR-listed), which houses the Kansas Supreme Court, displays the weighty massing characteristic of Brutalism but is clad with limestone instead of concrete. The building was completed in 1976 to a design by Kiene & Bradley Architects of Topeka. The exterior wall plane recedes as it descends from its heavy cornice. Paired rectangular columns support the cornice and give the building an added sense of strength and permanence. The building was given added monumentality with its placement on high ground on axis with the state capitol.[102] The Judicial Center was surveyed as part of the National Register multiple properties form "Mid-Century Modern, Non, Single-Family Residential Architectural in Topeka, 1945–1975" in 2020. The nomination did not determine whether the building was potentially eligible for listing in the National Register.

The construction of modernist buildings in Topeka reflected the growth of the city at mid-century, reflective of its status as a capital city and county seat, and the transformative impact of urban redevelopment/renewal. As of 2022, only one modernist building in Topeka is listed in the National Register: a modest, one-story International Style building known as the Menninger Education Center at 2209 SW 29th Street.[103]

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[99] Paul Post, "After years of discussion, fate of Docking building still murky and contested," *Kansas Reflector*, November 13, 2021.
[100] Tim Carpenter, "Kansas preservation group raises objections to Docking building reconfiguration," *Kansas Reflector*, accessed July 7, 2012, available at https://kansasreflector.com/2022/05/19/kansas-preservation-group-raises-objections-to-docking-building-reconfiguration/.
[101] Rachel Nugent, Lauren Rieke, and Ellis Mumford-Russell, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District," March 2015.
[102] Grogan, "Plains Modern: Postwar Architecture in Kansas."
[103] Bryan Falk, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "2209 SW 29th Street / Dr. Karl & Jeanetta Lyle Menninger Education Center," August 2019.

4.4 Project Architects

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was designed by a geographically representative consortium of five firms named Kansas Architects and Planners Associates (KAPA). The consortium was organized specifically for this project. It consisted of Eicholtz & Groth of Topeka; Robertson, Peters & Williams of Lawrence; Woods & Starr Associates of Hays; Platt Associates of Wichita; and Kivett & Myers of Kansas City. All five were productive firms with long careers in their respective communities.

Eicholtz & Groth was an architecture firm established by George Eicholtz and William Groth. Their career in Topeka included a two-story New Formalist-style building for the Topeka Savings Association at 800 SE Quincy Street (1973). The firm designed or collaborated in the design of many buildings throughout Topeka and other parts of Kansas, including Thacher Building at 217 SE 4th Street (adjacent to Carlson Building), Chase Middle School, and additions to Morgan Hall at Washburn University.[104]

Robertson, Peters & Williams was an architecture firm based in Lawrence, Kansas, that underwent a number of name changes through the 1960s and 1970s. Although known as Robertson, Peters & Williams at the time the Carlson Building was designed, the firm was also known at different times as Peters Harrison Williams and Robertson, Peters, Ericson & Williams. James "Jim" Williams and Dick Peters were the two consistent partners at the firm. They designed several prominent buildings in Lawrence, such as Haworth Hall at the University of Kansas, Deerfield Elementary School, Commerce Bank building (University State Bank), First Baptist Church, Lawrence City Hall, Lawrence Public Library, Babcock Place, and several buildings on Massachusetts Street as part of a 1972 urban renewal project.[105]

Woods & Starr Associates was an architecture and engineering firm in Hays, Kansas. Partners H. D. "Spec" Woods and Richard Starr founded the firm in 1952.[106] The firm had a productive career in Hays, with projects that included an office building at 1305 Main Street and a commercial building for the Schwaller Company retail hardware store. They also designed the Wichita County High School in Leoti, Kansas.

Platt Associates was an architecture firm based in Wichita, Kansas, founded by Sid Platt. The firm worked on a variety of commissions including the Kiva shopping mall in the Garvey Center in Wichita constructed in 1971, Lawrence Elementary School completed in 1976, and a New Formalist-style office tower at 2200 Concord Pike in Wilmington, Delaware, built from 1970 to 1972.

Kivett & Myers were a prolific architecture firm based in Kansas City. Clarence Kivett and Ralph Myers founded the firm in 1940. The firm became known for bold, modern designs and for introducing modernism to Kansas City. In a career that spanned over

[104] "Bill Groth Obituary," *Legacy*, accessed July 8, 2022, available at https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/wickedlocal-northshoresunday/name/bill-groth-obituary?id=11213296.
[105] "Architects," *Lawrence Modern*, accessed July 8, 2022, available at https://lawrencemodern.com/architects-2/.
[106] "Architectural Firm Appoints Associates," *Hays Dailey News*, June 15, 1975.

thirty years, Kivett & Myers designed a substantial catalog of buildings, including the Spencer Chemistry and Biological Sciences Building at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, the Missouri State Office Building, the Alameda Plaza Hotel (now the Ritz-Carlton), the Truman Sports Complex, and the Kansas City International Airport. The firm also designed airports in and Lisbon, Portugal, and Munich, Germany. Kivett & Myers merged with HNTB Corporation in 1975, around the time they would have been contributing to the design of the Carlson Building.[107]

5.0 HISTORIC INTEGRITY

In order to determine a building's eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, it is necessary to analyze the building's degree of integrity. Section V of the *National Register Bulletin: How to Appy the National Register Criteria* published by the National Park Service was developed as a guide for evaluating a building's integrity. According to the *Bulletin*, integrity is "the ability of a property to convey its significance."[108] The National Register cites seven aspects that define a property's integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Integrity of Location
Because the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse has not been moved, it retains integrity of location.

Integrity of Design
The building retains integrity of design. No noteworthy alterations have been made to the design of the exterior of the building. The massing and composition of the elevations, as designed by KAPA, remain intact. The security booths placed at the first floor of the atrium did not diminish the original design of the space. The most significant intervention was to the landscape plan, as the plaza was slightly modified for security upgrades. Modifications have been made to the courtrooms, over the course of several renovations. Although the courtrooms maintain their original arrangement of features and furnishings, the extent of original materials in the courtrooms is not known. Overall, the original design intent for the building remains.

Integrity of Setting
The setting of the Carlson Building remains intact. Indeed, all of the buildings immediately adjacent to the building have been in place since it was completed in 1977, including the post office building across Quincy Street, the buildings of Townsite Plaza, and the two modern-era buildings immediately to the north—217 SE 4th Street and 400 SE Quincy Street. The setting of the building remains largely as it was when the building was completed.

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[107] "Kivett & Myers | History of KCI," *Airport Projects*, accessed July 8, 2022, available at https://www.airportprojects.net/historickci/historic-terminals/.
[108] National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Appy the National Register Criteria* (National Park Service, 1997), 44.

Integrity of Materials
The building retains its original exterior brick cladding. The aluminum doors remain in place. Likewise, interior features in the primary public space, the atrium, are intact. The brick floor, glass-and-oak handrail, brick wall on the central core of elevator, a central staircase, and restrooms are extant. Therefore, the building retains integrity of materials.

Integrity of Workmanship
The craft employed in the construction of the building is still evident. Therefore, integrity of workmanship has been maintained.

Integrity of Feeling
The building still conveys its late-modern aesthetic and, therefore, retains integrity of feeling.

Integrity of Association
The building remains in use as federal building and US courthouse and retains its direct relationship to the adjacent buildings of Townsite Plaza and, therefore, retains its integrity of association.

6.0 NATIONAL REGISTER ANALYSIS

Based on extensive research conducted and a survey of the existing conditions, the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse is analyzed below for potential eligibility under National Register Criteria A, B, C, as well as Criteria Consideration G. Criterion D, which primarily involves archaeological sites that "have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history," was not applicable in this case and was not considered.

6.1 Criterion A

Criterion A states that properties may be eligible for National Register listing if they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. According to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, a property can be eligible based on its association with "a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a State, or the nation."[109] The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was a key feature in urban redevelopment/renewal in Topeka and the Townsite Plaza development. Both urban redevelopment/renewal and the planning and building of Townsite Plaza represented a "pattern of events" that contributed significantly to the development of the city of Topeka. Assessment of the building's eligibility under Criterion A is discussed below, using the *GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool*, established in the guide to GSA architecture *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s* by Robinson & Associates.

GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool

[109] National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service, 1997), 12.

The following analysis breaks down the five sub-categories of the *Assessment Tool* as they relate to the evaluation of eligibility for the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse under Criterion A:

Significant Federal Program

A property may be considered eligible under Criterion A if it embodies the goals of a significant federal initiative, such as the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture." The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse exhibits goals of the "Guiding Principles," such as evoking contemporary architectural thought and functional design. The building was constructed according to the latest in contemporary architectural thought, a product of both groundbreaking energy conservation measures and the late modern style that marked a shift in architectural thought in the late 1970s. The building also achieved the call of the "Guiding Principles" for locating the building "so as to permit a generous development of landscape." The building was set back from the street to allow for the generous plaza. Nevertheless, there is no direct documentary evidence that links the design of the building to the "Guiding Principles."

GSA Philosophy in Practice

A property may also be considered eligible if it is an exceptional example of a clear link between GSA's core public buildings philosophy and design programs or processes. The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse reflects GSA programs and practices, including Art in Architecture, the architect selection process at the time, and its pioneering energy efficiency according to GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings."

Rockne Krebs's *White Tornado* reflects the values and goals of GSA's Art in Architecture program. The piece gives dramatic definition to the volume of the four-story atrium, is well integrated into the design of the building, and has been a defining element of the building's central public space since its installation in 1979.

When the building was designed in the 1970s, the public building philosophy at GSA included selecting architects who would design functional and efficient buildings that reflected the latest in contemporary architectural thought. Although it is not an exceptional achievement of this philosophy, the building does embody this GSA philosophy.

The Carlson Building is a pioneering example of GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings," created in 1974 in reaction to the energy crisis after the Arab-Israeli War. The document provided specific guidance on designing new federal buildings for energy efficiency. The Carlson Building was first federal building designed to adhere to GSA's energy guidelines. In fact, the building was "almost twice as energy efficient" as what was required under the

guidelines.[110] KAPA designed a number of energy-saving features for the building. According to architectural historian and architect David Sachs, the Carlson Building was, at the time it was completed, "the most energy-efficient federal building in the nation."[111] The building achieved widespread recognition for its energy efficiency. An October 1976 article *Engineering News-Record* gave the building national attention for its energy efficiency. For this reason, the Carlson Building is an exceptional achievement of GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings" program.

Embodies Social Goals

Properties that address significant social goals broadly embraced in the United States are considered for eligibility under Criterion A. This category in the *GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool* includes "eradication of urban blight." The Urban Renewal Authority of Topeka determined that the residential and commercial building of the Bottoms were blighted. Although a number of buildings in the Bottoms were damaged by the 1951 flood in Topeka, research-to-date has not confirmed to what degree the buildings on which the Carlson Building was constructed were blighted, a term overused, often in a classist and racist manner, in urban renewal planning rhetoric of the era. Nevertheless, the Carlson Building was constructed as a result of an urban redevelopment/renewal project that sought to revive downtown Topeka by demolishing older buildings and encouraging new construction.

Although the urban redevelopment/renewal and the "eradication of urban blight" that allowed for the construction of the building was significant in the development of Topeka, the project was not an exceptionally influential example of urban redevelopment/renewal to other US cities or towns. City leaders throughout the country viewed urban redevelopment/renewal as the primary solution to reviving city cores.

Public Building Icon

A property may be eligible if it is a "significant symbol of the Federal presence, an integral part of a city or Federal district master plan, or an architectural or social focal point of a town or city." The curious siting of the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse, with views from downtown blocked by Townsite Plaza and with its rear facing I-70, diminishes views of and access to the building. The building is also neither an anchor in a master plan nor a community hub. Nevertheless, the federal building, in its bold massing and striking late-modern design, is a significant symbol of the federal presence in downtown Topeka and is a public building icon. The Carlson Building is, therefore, eligible under this subcategory.

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[110] Samuel Hack, quoted in Ted Blankenship, "Huge Fuel Savings Seen for Building," *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, November 28, 1976.

[111] David Sachs, "Frank Carlson Federal Building," *SAH Archipedia*, accessed July 5, 2022, aavailable at https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/KS-01-177-0003.

Location of Historic Action or Event

A property may be eligible under Criterion A if it is the site of an important government action or occasion, or an event significant in state, local, or national history. The Carlson Building was the site of a terrorist attack on August 5, 1993, when a gunman burst into the building, killed a security guard, and threw bombs from the fourth floor of the atrium. In addition to the death of the guard and the gunman, five people were injured. The attack left a profound impact on the design of public buildings. In the years after the attack, metal detectors began to be a regular feature of county, state, and federal buildings.[112] The Carlson Building is eligible under Criterion A as the site of an event with significance in local history.

Fifty-Year Rule

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse meets many of the determining factors necessary under Criterion A for eligibility. It lacks the necessary age and exceptional significance requirement under most of those determining factors. However, because the Carlson Building was a pioneering example of GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings," the building *does* meet exceptional significance under the *Philosophy in Practice* sub-category and is, therefore, eligible under Criterion A at this time.

6.2 Criterion B

Criterion B states that properties may be eligible if they are associated with the lives of persons significant in the past. The building is named after politician Frank Carlson for his achievements in Kansas politics. However, Carlson had no direct connection to the building.

Properties eligible for Criterion B must have been the primary site of the person's productive life and "illustrate a person's important achievements." Properties that "commemorate" a person are not generally considered eligible under Criterion B. Although the building was named after Carlson, this commemoration alone does not make it eligible under Criterion B.

6.3 Criterion C

Criterion C states that a property may be eligible if it embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. The *GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool* is employed below to assess the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse under Criterion C.

GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool

The following analysis breaks down the seven sub-categories as they relate to eligibility under Criterion C:

[112] "Kansas Today," *Council Grove Republican*, May 15, 1995; Joe Rodriguez, "Security: A reflection of the times," *Wichita Eagle*, August 7, 1997.

Master Architect

A property may be eligible under Criterion C if it is a formative design in the portfolio of a prominent architect whose work had an important influence on a community, region, state, or country. The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was designed by a consortium named Kansas Architects and Planners Associates (KAPA). The consortium had no other projects, meaning KAPA as an entity of combined firms would not quality as master architect. Although individual firms of the consortium, such as Kivett & Myers, may qualify as master architect, the nature of five firms contributing to such a large project complicates attributing particular aspects of the design of the Carlson Building to specific firms. Therefore, the Carlson Building does not qualify under this sub-category.

Exemplifies a Modern-Era Style

The Carlson Building exemplifies late modern-style architecture. Its bold and geometric massing, motif of sharp angles, and cladding in a continuous material makes it a clear example of late modernism.

Although the building exemplifies a modern-era style, research-to-date does not indicate that it was an influential design that prompted a stylistic shift in federal architecture. Nevertheless, the Carlson Building is a significant example of a modern-era style in Topeka.

Federal Prototype

A property may be eligible under Criterion C if it was influential in its technological advances, functionality, framing systems, materials selection, or space design. The Carlson Building was widely recognized for its pioneering energy efficiency. The building was the first designed to meet an overall energy budget in accordance with GSA's "Energy Conservation Design Guidelines for Office Buildings." The *General Services Administration 1975 Annual Report* states that the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse "typified" what GSA had in mind when energy efficiency guidelines were drafted.[113] J.C. Spradley, director of Conservation Management Division of the Public Buildings Service at GSA, described the building as "innovative" in its energy efficiency-focused features.[114] The Carlson Building, therefore, is a groundbreaking model and exceptional prototype for GSA public buildings.

Model for Cost Efficiency, Functional Utility

A property may be eligible under Criterion C if it achieved notable cost efficiency and functional utility. The building was designed to be efficient and functional to

[113] General Services Administration, *General Services Administration 1975 Annual Report* (June 1976), 11.
[114] J.C. Spradley, director, Conservation Management Division, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, to Lyman Figgins, building manager, letter, March 11, 1976, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

its tenants. Demountable interior partitions allowed the offices to be reconfigured according to need. The building was constructed with materials of quality that remain in good condition after forty-five years of wear and use. The Carlson Building was also cost-efficient, as the estimated cost of construction in 1973 was $18–20 million but the building was constructed for only $12 million. Although a model of cost-efficient functionality, there is no evidence that the building directly influenced the design and construction of subsequent federal buildings.

Embodies Modern Design Values

A property may be eligible under Criterion C if it exemplifies the modernist design philosophy. The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse exemplifies modernist design philosophy in its spare, but geometric form and avoidance of superfluous ornamentation. The design successfully integrates site-specific public art, Rockne Krebs's *White Tornado,* installed in the building in 1979. The building was not *exceptionally* influential as a work of modern design, neither within context of GSA public buildings nor of modern architecture generally.

Significant Ensemble or District

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse was constructed as part of the Townsite Plaza urban redevelopment/renewal project. The building was part of the original 2 1/4 blocks the Urban Renewal Authority identified for the Townsite Plaza development in 1964. The site was developed through the late 1960s and late 1970s, and the Carlson Building was the last building constructed as part of the project. The buildings that comprise Townsite Plaza, Townsite Tower, Townsite Plaza Office Park, and the Carlson Building, form an ensemble of modern-era buildings in a geographically definable area linked by a common plan and could, therefore, be considered a historic district. However, both the Carlson Building and Townsite Plaza Office Park are under fifty years old. Moreover, although Townsite Plaza was an urban redevelopment/renewal scheme, it was one among several of such projects in Topeka. It is not an exceptionally significant district.

Intact Original Architecture

The building is substantially intact. No noteworthy alterations have been made to the exterior of the building. The plaza has undergone some changes, particularly when a fence and metal doors were added to the planters at the south end of the plaza to prevent public entry to the rear portion of the plaza. Courtrooms and offices spaces have been renovated since the building was completed, but the key public spaces, particularly the atrium, remain largely intact and true to their original design. Although a security booth was added at the front (west) entrance, the change was merely additive and did not negatively impact original conditions or features.

The original design of the building remains largely intact, particularly on the exterior.

Fifty-Year Rule

The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse meets many of the determining factors necessary under Criterion C for eligibility but lacks the necessary age threshold and exceptional significance requirement to be considered under most of the factors. The influence of the building as an exemplar of energy efficiency and GSA energy guidelines merits exceptional significance under the sub-category of *Federal Prototype*.

6.4 Criteria Consideration G

Under Criteria Consideration G, a building can be eligible for the National Register for exceptional importance as a property that has achieved significance within the past fifty years for exceptional cultural or architectural importance or if it is an integral part of a historic district that qualifies for National Register listing. To qualify for Criteria Consideration G a property must first meet the eligibility standards of Criteria A, B, C, or D. As indicated in the analysis above, the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse meets some of the determining factors under Criteria A and C, but it is not yet fifty years old.

The building was evaluated within its national and local context to determine whether the building could be considered "exceptional" for its associations and qualities evaluated under Criteria A and C. The Carlson Building does have "exceptional" significance under both Criteria A and C. The building is currently eligible for listing as exceptionally significant under Criterion A in the sub-category of *GSA Philosophy in Practice*, and, under Criterion C, the building is eligible in the sub-category of *Federal Prototype*.

When the building reaches fifty years old, as the analysis above states, the Carlson Building will be eligible under additional sub-categories. Under Criterion A, it will be eligible under *Public Building Icon*, and *Location of Historic Action or Event*. Under Criterion C, the federal building will be eligible under *Exemplifies a Modern-Era Style*, *Intact Original Architecture*, and *Model for Cost Efficiency*, *Functional Utility*.

6.5 Conclusion

Based on thorough research, on-site investigation, and analysis, this report concludes that the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse is currently eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

It is not eligible under Criterion B because, although the building is named politician Frank Carlson, there is not a strong enough connection between Carlson and the building to merit eligibility under this criterion.

The preceding analysis details the ways in which the building meets some determining factors for eligibility under Criterion A, such as its status as a public building icon and site of a terrorist attack that was a significant event in local history. The building also meets some determining factors under Criterion C, such as its exemplifying a modern-era style (late modernism), its status as a work of intact original architecture, and its

achievement as a model for cost efficiency and functional utility. The Carlson Building will be eligible under these sub-categories when it reaches fifty years old.

At this time, however, the Carlson Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria Consideration G for its exceptional significance derived from its pioneering energy-efficient design and a seminal building in the implementation of GSA energy guidelines.

7.0 FIGURES

Figure 1. Oblique view of front façade and front section of plaza, looking northeast. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

Figure 2. Front façade. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

Figure 3. Rear elevation. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

Figure 4. Oblique view of south elevation. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

Figure 5. Oblique view of north elevation. [STRATA, 2022]

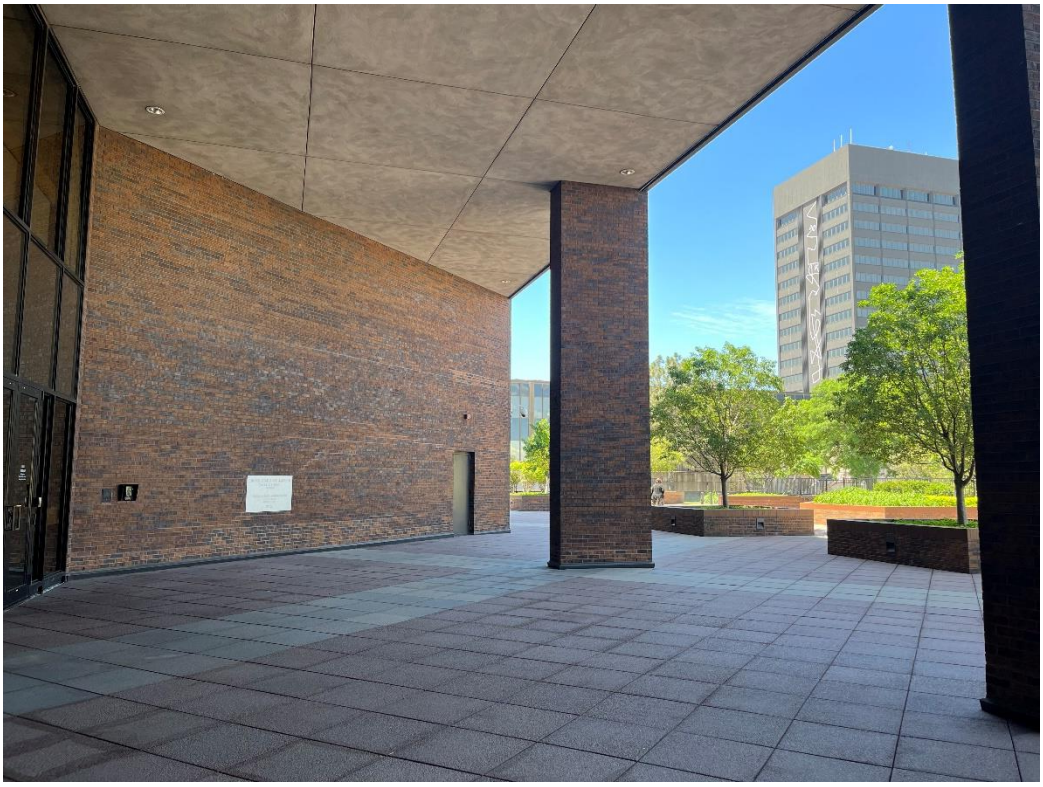

Figure 6. Entrance plaza, looking south. The sharply angled wall is a hallmark of late-modern architecture. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

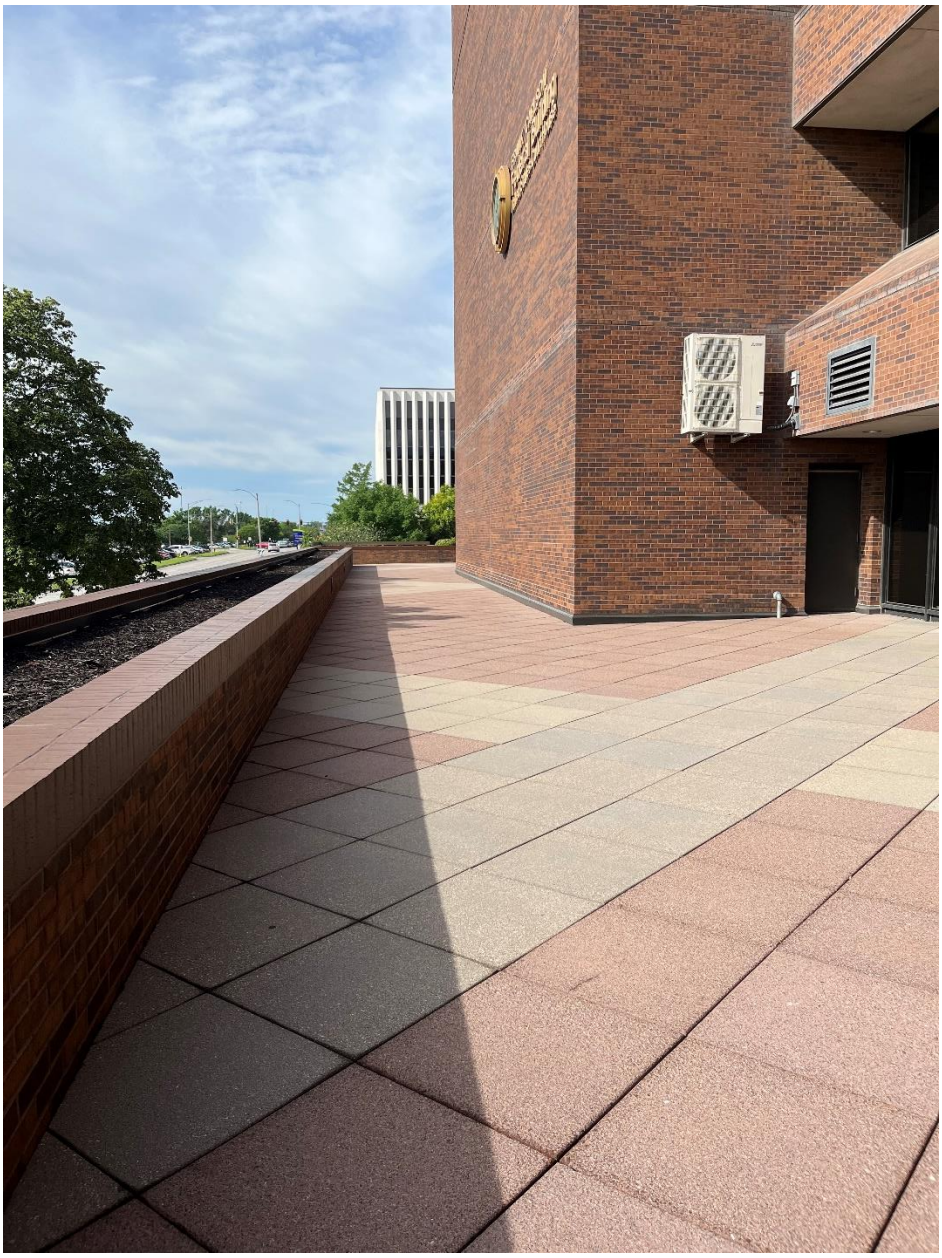

Figure 7. View of east section of plaza, looking south. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

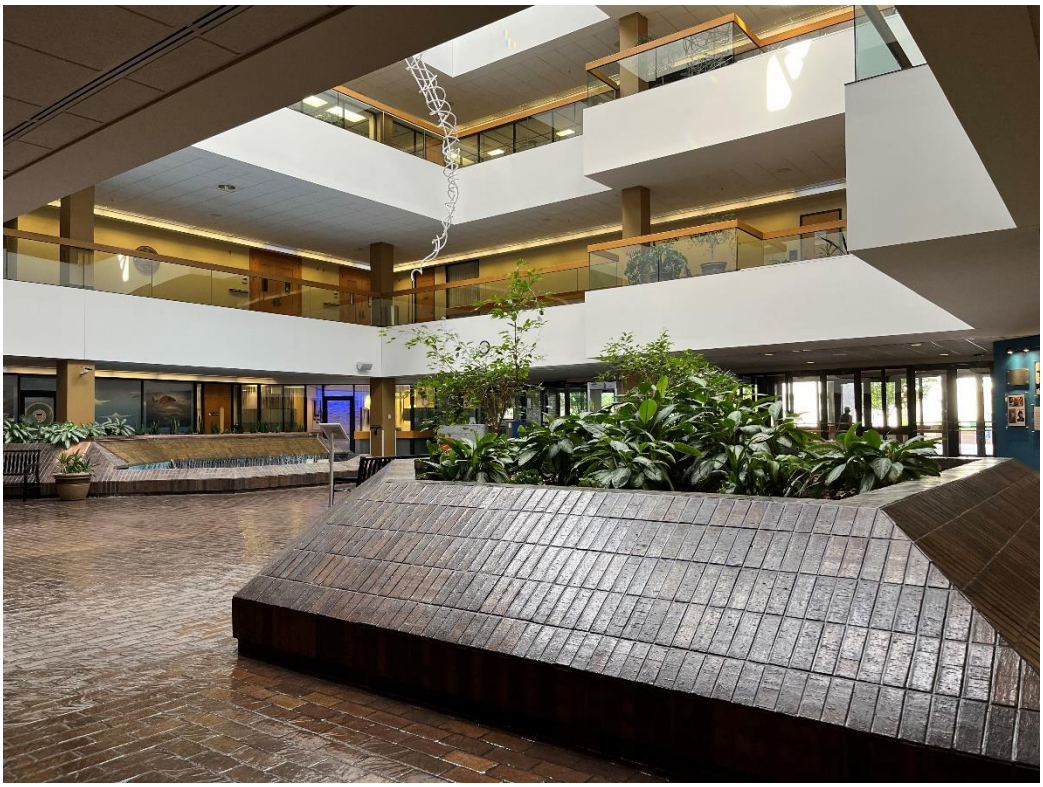

Figure 8. First floor of interior atrium from front entrance. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

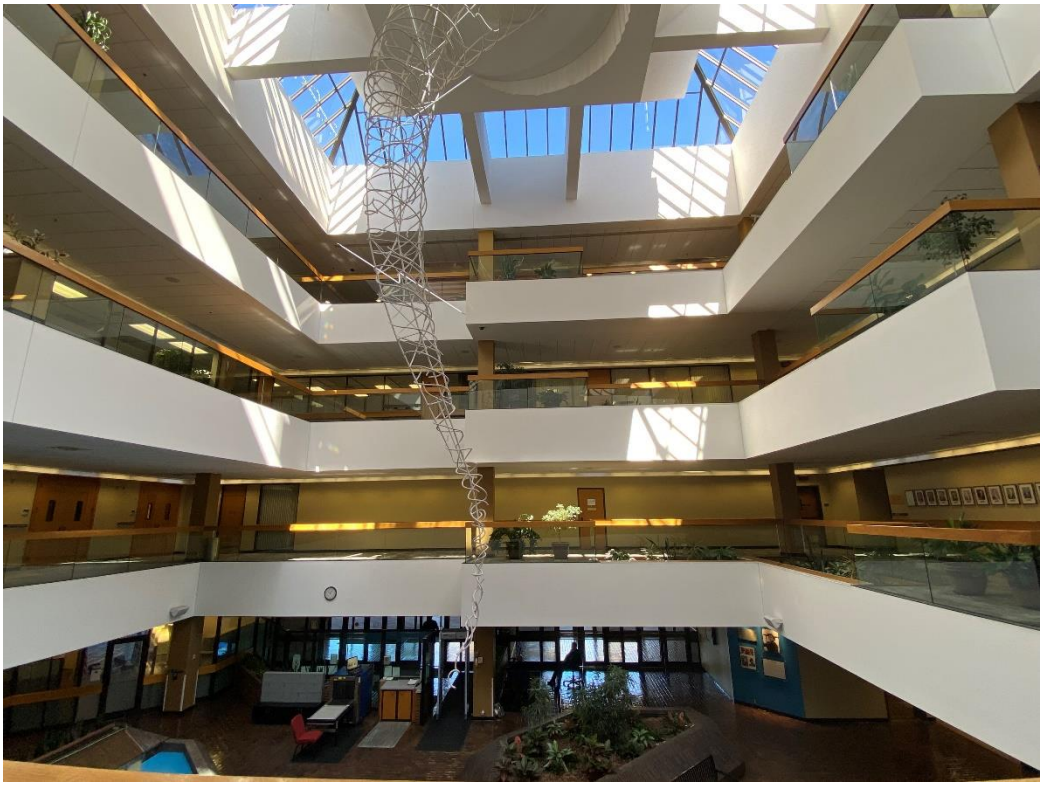

Figure 9. View of atrium, looking west, showing Rockne Krebs's White Tornado *[STRATA, 2022]*

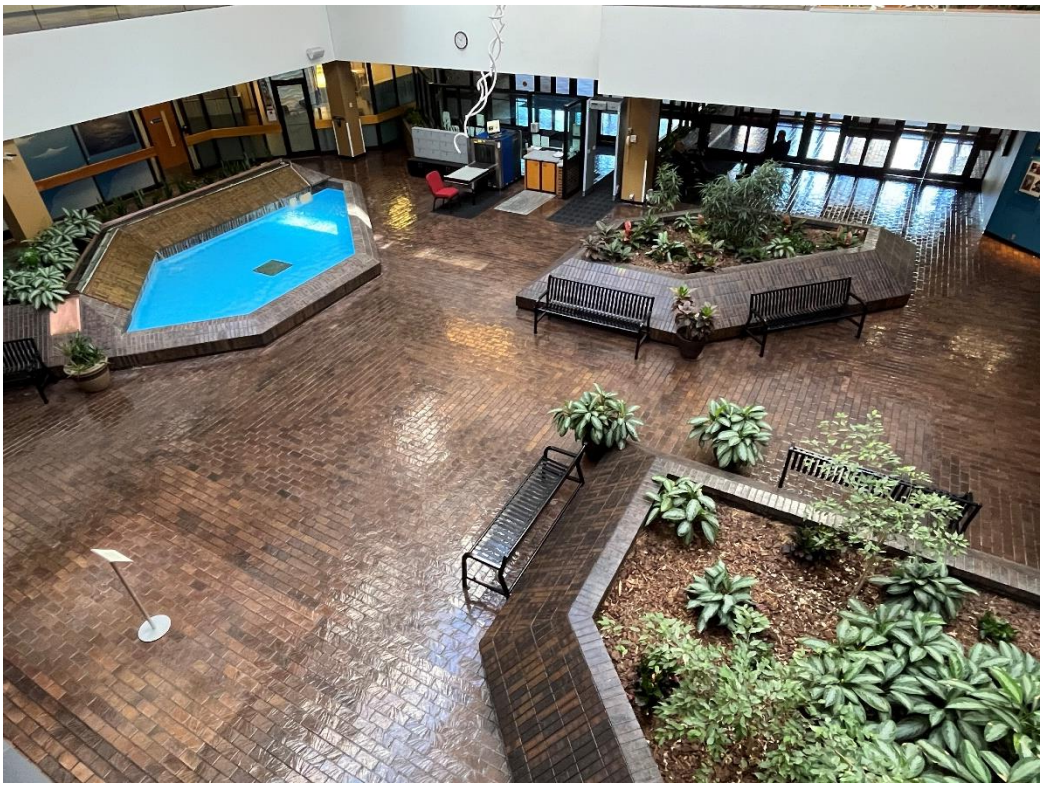

Figure 10. View from second floor of atrium to first floor, showing planters and pools with angled, canted walls. Note pattern of flooring which coalesces to a point at the center of the atrium, directly below the White Tornado *sculpture. [Quinn Evans, 2022]*

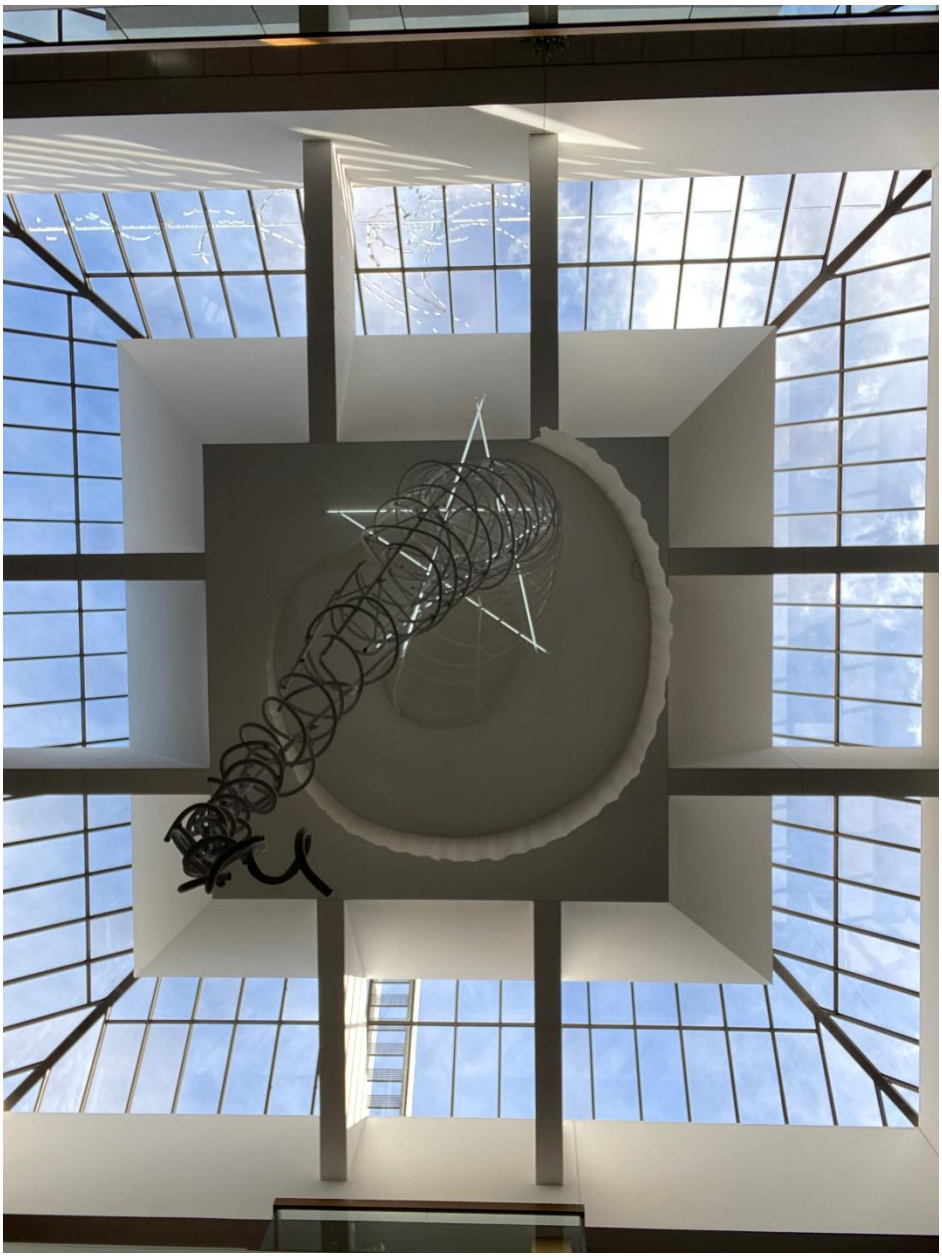

Figure 11. View of skylight and Krebs's White Tornado *looking up from first floor of atrium. [STRATA, 2022]*

Figure 12. Fourth-floor corridor surrounding the atrium. [STRATA, 2022]

Figure 13. Fourth-floor courtroom. [STRATA, 2022]

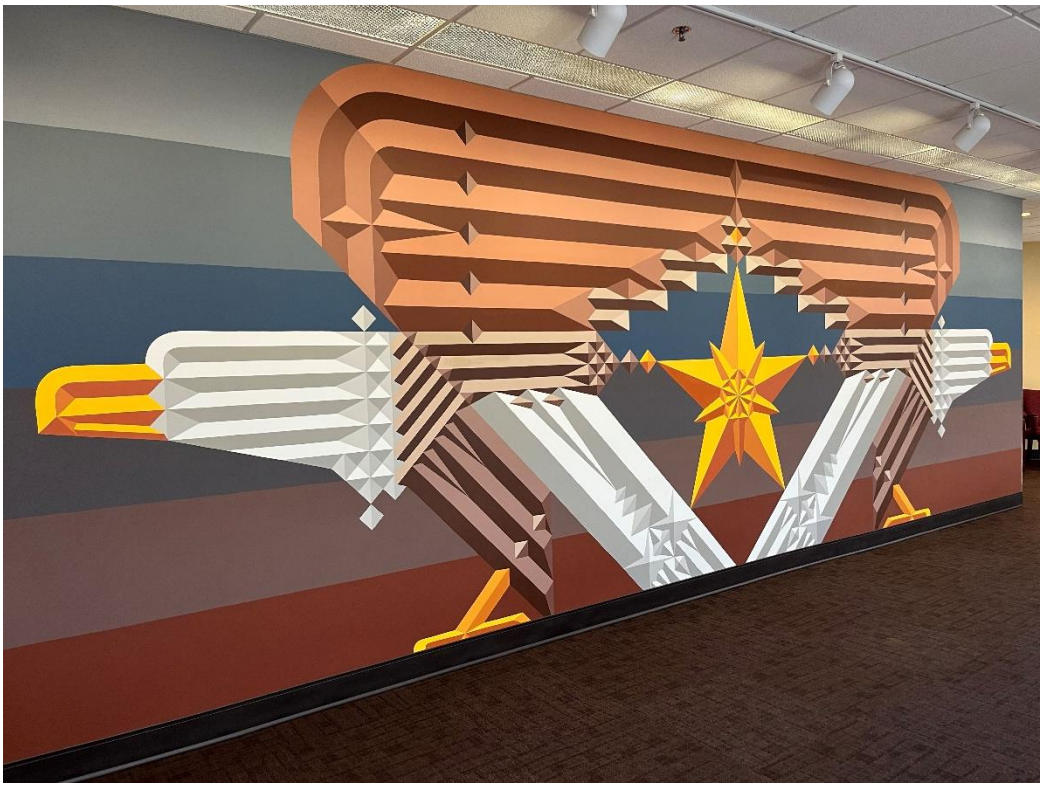

Figure 14. Mural on fourth floor. Note a similar mural is present on the upper level of the Parking Garage. [Quinn Evans, 2022]

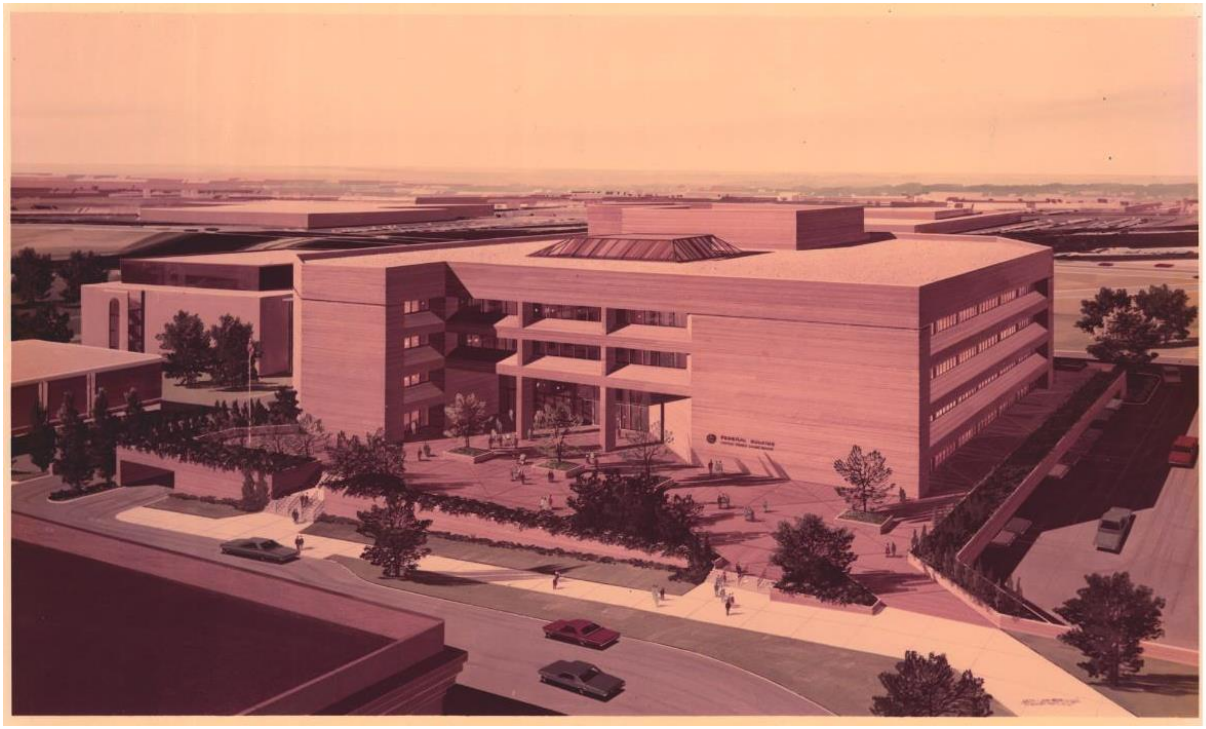

Figure 15. Artist rendering of federal building, 1976 [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

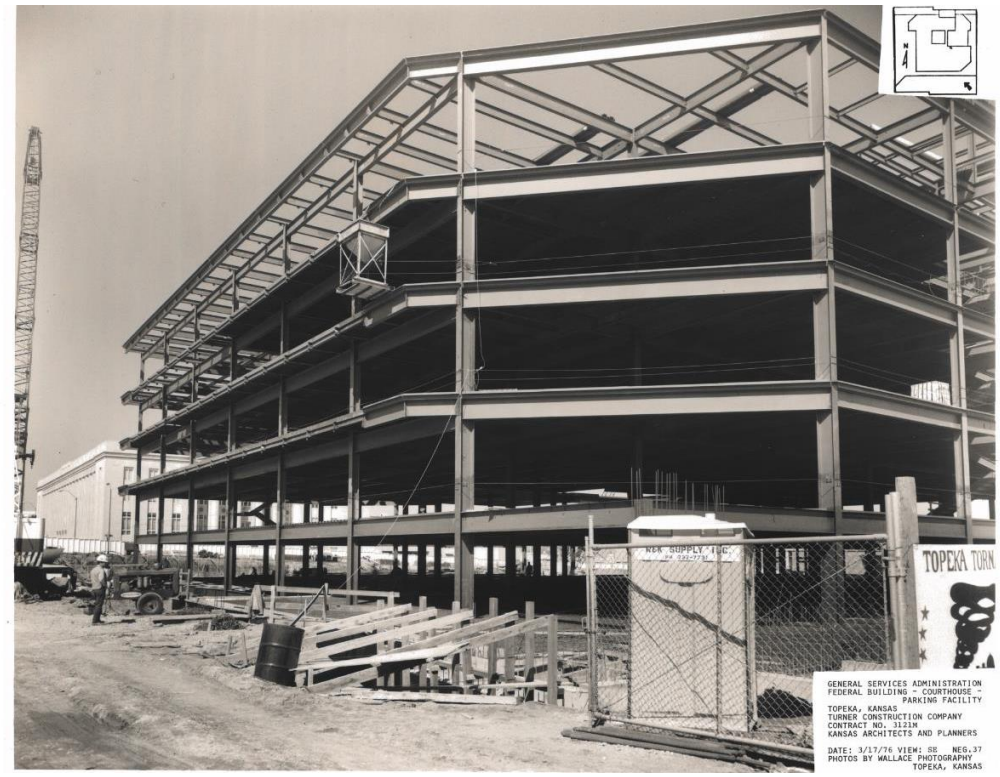

Figure 16. View of the construction of the steel frame, southeast corner, March 17, 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 17. View of steel frame, front façade, circa March 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 18. Aerial view, looking northeast, showing installation of concrete-block walls, June 15, 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 19. View toward northeast corner showing progress of brick veneer installation, July 14, 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

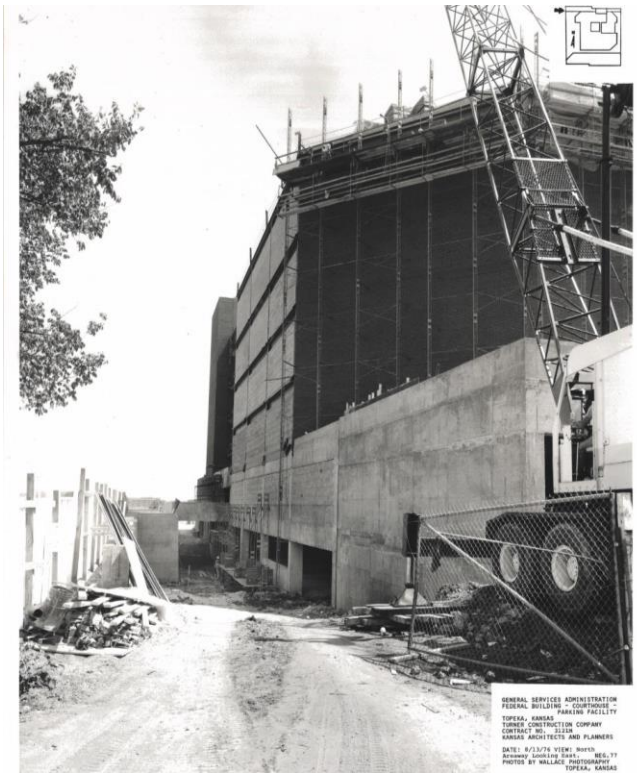

Figure 20. Oblique view of northwest corner showing drive toward loading dock, August 13, 1976, Wallace Photography, on file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse.

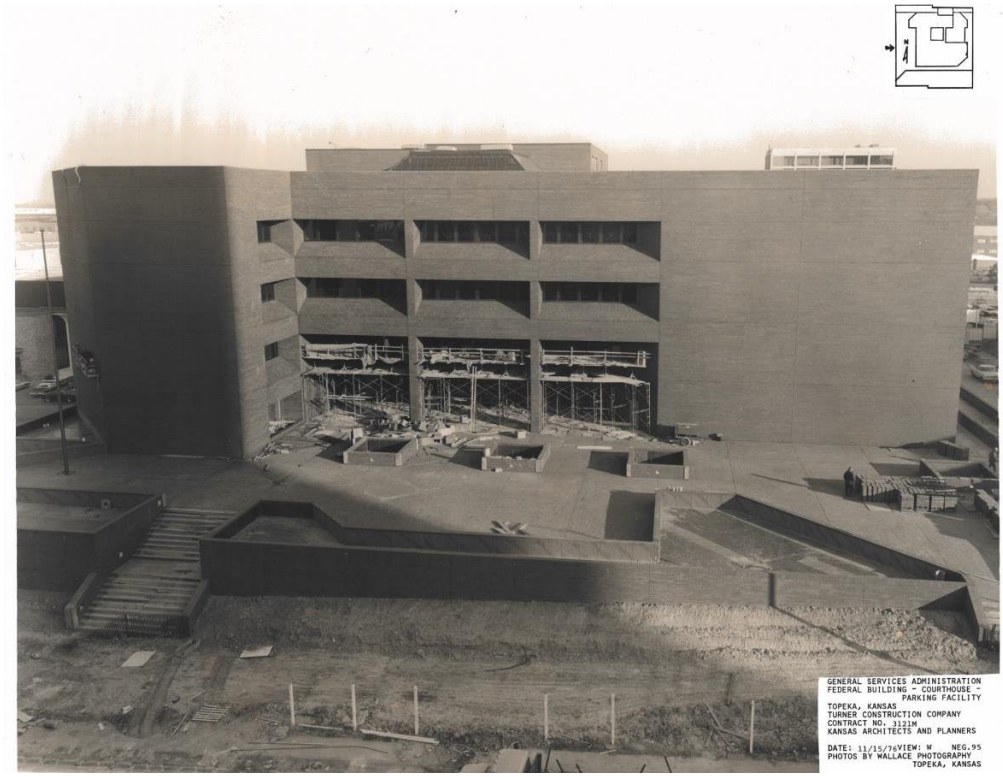

Figure 21. Front façade, November 15, 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 22. View of northeast corner, March 2, 1977, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 23. Courtroom under construction, February 2, 1977, Wallace Photography, [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 24. Atrium under construction, view likely from second floor, circa late 1976, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

Figure 25. View across fourth floor of atrium, circa late 1976 or early 1977, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

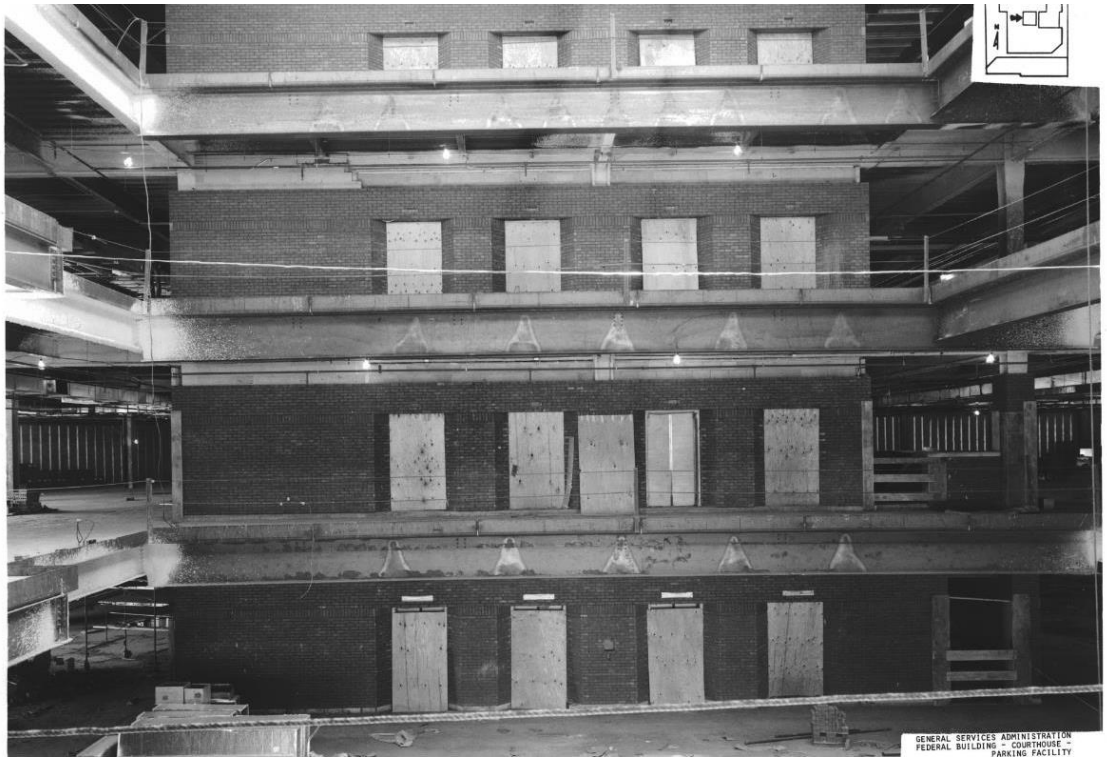

Figure 26. Undated view of atrium showing central core of elevators, Wallace Photography [On file at Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse]

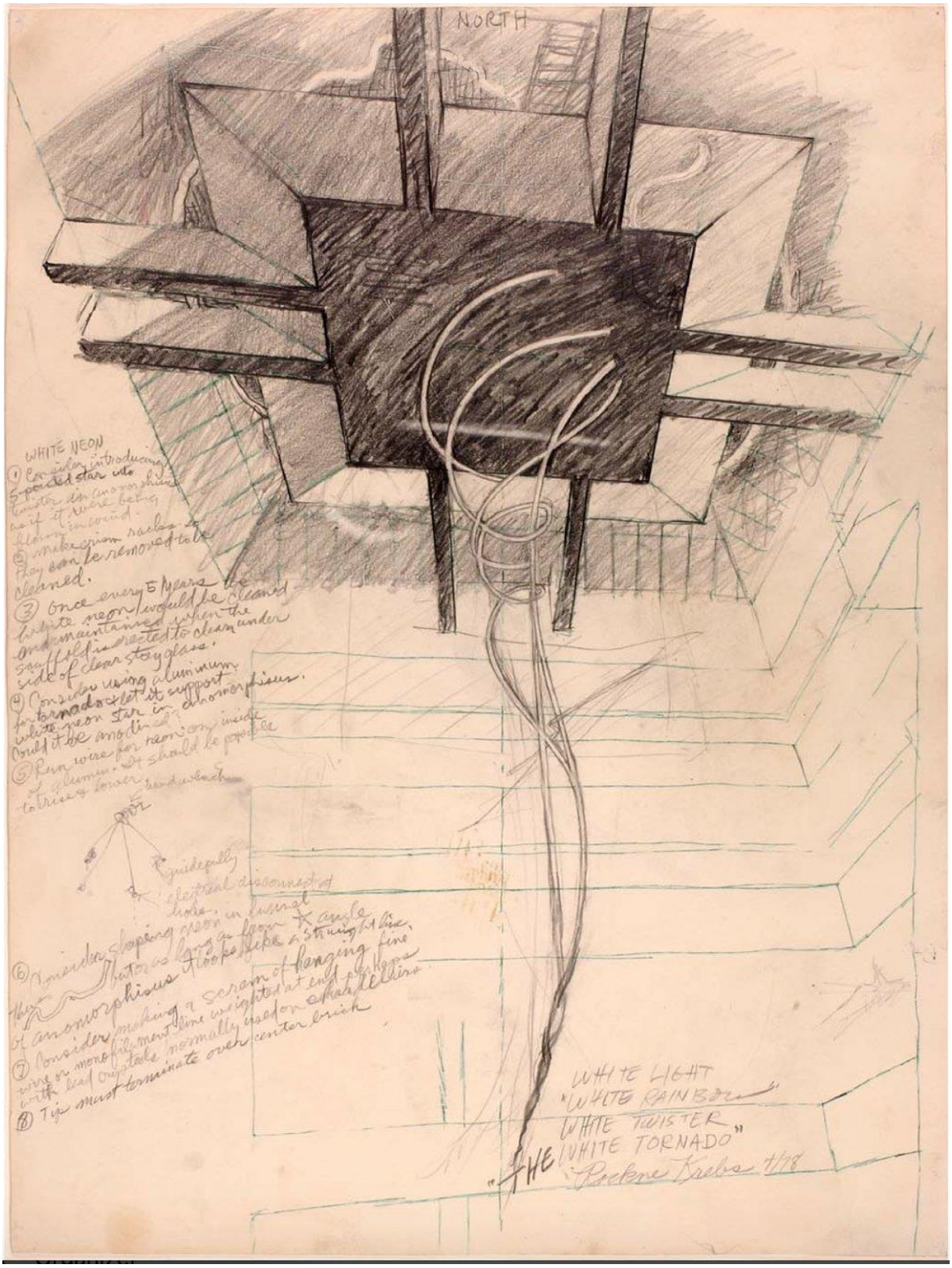

Figure 27. Rockne Krebs, White Light/"White Rainbow"/White Twister/"The White Tornado", *1978, pencil and colored ink on paperboard [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the General Services Administration, Art in Architecture Program, 1977.47.124]*

Figure 28. Aerial view showing a portion of the Bottoms neighborhood, circa mid–late 1950s. The west half of the future site of the Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse is the top right segment within the area outlined with dashed lines. All of the buildings in this segment were demolished in 1962 [Photograph by Gary Settle, Topeka Capital-Journal*]*

Figure 29. Mid-1950s drawing of proposed Keyway Urban Renewal Project, which was to replace a section of the Bottoms neighborhood. The Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse site is near the center of the image [Urban Renewal Authority, Topeka, Kansas]

*Figure 30. Ca. 1973 view of the partially constructed Townsite Plaza. At center-right is the site of the future Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse at that time in use as a parking lot. [*Urban Renewal Agency of the City of Topeka. Annual Report *(Topeka, Kansas, 1973)]*

*Figure 31. View of Frank Carlson Federal Building and US Courthouse under construction, ca. early 1976. Townsite Plaza Office Park is to the right. [*Topeka Capital Journal*]*

Figure 32. Docking State Office Building, ca. 1957 [Kansas Historical Society].

Figure 33. Merchant Bank Building [Quinn Evans, 2022].

Figure 34. Kansas Judicial Center, undated [Photograph by Michael Grogran, Docomomo].

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