



# DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

## PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Name(s): Federal Office Building 10B; Wilbur Wright Building  
Street Address(es): 600 Independence Avenue, SW  
Square(s) and Lot(s): Square Number 0462, Lots 69, 70, 819, and 824  
Property Owner(s): General Services Administration

The property/properties is/are being evaluated for potential historical significance as:

- ☒ An individual building or structure
- ☐ A contributing element of a historic district (specify):
- ☐ A possible expansion of a historic district (specify):
- ☐ A previously unevaluated historic district to be known as (specify):
- ☐ An archaeological resource with site number(s) (specify):
- ☐ An object (e.g. statue, stone marker etc.) (specify):
- ☐ A new multiple property/thematic study regarding (specify):
- ☐ A contributing element of a multiple property/thematic study (specify):
- ☐ Other (specify):

Property description, rationale for determination & other pertinent information:



## Introduction

The Wilbur Wright Building, also known as Federal Office Building (FOB) 10B, is located on Maryland Avenue between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, SW (UTM: 18S 324777.51 Easting 4306147.58 Northing; PM location: 38.887158 N, 77.020941 W; USGS Quad: Washington West Quadrangle) (Figure 1). It is one of a pair of buildings designed by Holabird & Root & Burgee, and Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen between 1957 and 1960 for the General Services Administration (GSA) (Figure 2). Its large, box-shaped form, emphasis on volume, lack of ornamentation, smooth wall surfaces, expansive windows, horizontality, and flat roof identify FOB 10B as an example of the International Style.<sup>1</sup> Its sister building, the Orville Wright Building, or FOB 10A, lies directly to the east. FOB 10A was designed concurrently with FOB 10B and shares a common design vocabulary, however, FOB 10A is larger and is raised on *pilotis*. The two buildings currently house the headquarters offices of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The analysis that follows begins with a brief discussion of the purpose of this Determination of Eligibility (DOE), the research methodology, and the site history and context. This is followed by a physical description of the building, as well as an assessment of the property's integrity. A statement of potential significance evaluates the building based on the four criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: Criterion A, properties associated with significant events; Criterion B, properties associated with significant persons; Criterion C, properties that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values; and Criterion D, properties that yield or may yield information important in prehistory or history. Finally, a brief conclusion summarizes the findings of the analysis.

## Purpose

The National Park Service (NPS) and the Eisenhower Memorial Commission (EMC) propose to construct a national memorial to Dwight D. Eisenhower on a four-acre site encompassing two parcels and roadway infrastructure directly east of the Wilbur Wright Building. The memorial will commemorate Eisenhower's military achievements, Presidential accomplishments, and lifetime of public service.

In 2006, the NPS and the EMC undertook an environmental assessment (EA) and Section 106 consultation to the address selection and approval of the Memorial site. Environmental compliance and Section 106 consultation are now being undertaken on the conceptual designs for the memorial. As required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800.4), a Determination of Eligibility is required for the Wilbur Wright Building due to its proximity to the proposed Memorial and thus the potential for effects on this resource.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Characteristics of the International Style are identified in Marcus Wiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969): 241, as well as in Robinson & Associates, *DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976*, Draft Report (Washington, DC: 2009): 11. It should be noted that the Wilbur Wright Building does not employ cantilevered building extensions, another characteristic of International Style Design.

<sup>2</sup> While this DOE does not evaluate the eligibility of FOB 10A, it should be recognized that the two Wright Buildings were the product of a single design effort by GSA, and were even referred to at the time as a single building, Federal Office Building 10.

## Methodology

Several key resources were referenced in assessing the potential eligibility of the Wilbur Wright Building. GSA's 2003 study, *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA's Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, provides a valuable context within which to evaluate Modern-era federal buildings. In addition, GSA's Eligibility Assessment Tool, an insert to the 2003 study, offers a checklist for use in evaluating the eligibility of these buildings. *DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976* places the Wilbur Wright Building within the context of other Modern buildings within Washington, DC, thereby providing assistance in assessing the local significance of the resource. Further, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) study, *Southwest Washington, Urban Renewal Area*, by Francesca Russello Ammon, was invaluable in assessing the potential significance of the property within the context of urban renewal in Southwest Washington, DC.

Other resources supplemented these key resources. A 2009 presentation provided by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) History Division, *NASA Historical Data Book, 1958-1968*, and an interview with NASA Archivist Elizabeth Suckow, offered insight into the potential significance of the building for its association with the early years of NASA and the U.S. space program during the Cold War space race. Additional research conducted at the Library of Congress and the Washingtoniana Room of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library provided background information and contemporary newspaper and journal articles. Research conducted within the GSA's National Capital Region Technical Library offered construction drawings and reports documenting renovations since the building's construction. Finally, field study included a physical and photographic survey of the existing conditions of the building.

## Site History and Context

The earliest urban development in Southwest Washington, DC grew out of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 Plan for the Capital City and resulting land speculation.<sup>3</sup> The plan envisioned a canal that would connect the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers along Tiber Creek north and east of the site. The Washington City Canal opened in 1815 and was a key element in the commercial and residential development of Southwest.<sup>4</sup>

Following the Civil War, with an influx of freed slaves, thousands of row houses were built and numerous businesses were established and expanded.<sup>5</sup> The largest growth in the area was in alley dwellings – small row houses built along alleys in the interior of city blocks. These dwellings, due to their limited light, and lack of sanitary sewage and water facilities, created unhealthy living conditions for residents.<sup>6</sup> According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, such dense residential development existed on the site of the Wilbur Wright Building at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth A. Moore and Charles W. McNett, "Archaeological Survey of the Southwest Quadrant of the District of Columbia," (Washington, DC: 1992), 89.

<sup>4</sup> Moore and McNett, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Moore and McNett, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Moore and McNett, 103.

<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1888.

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By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southwest DC had come to be viewed as a slum. Beyond concerns from reformers about the unhealthy living conditions, the rise of the City Beautiful movement brought pressures to clean up the city, particularly those areas around the Capitol.<sup>8</sup> While the L'Enfant Plan had focused on the configuration of streets and the placement of civic spaces, the Senate Park Commission Plan (also known as the McMillan Plan), prepared in 1901, and later plans produced by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, began to focus on the redevelopment of both the Federal Triangle area and portions of Southwest DC with a series of monumental federal buildings. By 1946, with the establishment of the Redevelopment Land Authority (RLA), the concept of large-scale urban renewal in the city had taken hold.

The product of “redevelopment theory”—the idea that a revitalized downtown would draw people back from the suburbs—urban renewal gained traction in Southwest DC with the release of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s *1950 Comprehensive Plan*. This plan defined Southwest DC as one of the “Principal Problem Areas in the District of Columbia.” In 1953, the RLA began acquiring property; by 1956, a redevelopment plan for Southwest had been drafted. The Wilbur Wright Building lies within Redevelopment Area C, which clustered federal buildings along Independence Avenue and residential and commercial structures to the south closer to the waterfront (Figure 3).

Beyond removing what were perceived as unhealthy and unattractive slums, the redevelopment of Southwest DC offered the opportunity to remove temporary buildings, or “tempos,” from the Mall to the north. These buildings had been constructed as short-term office space during World War I and II and were considered both visually unappealing and at risk from fire. Reformers believed new federal buildings along Independence Avenue would return grandeur to the Mall and create a “dramatic northern boundary” for Southwest.<sup>9</sup>

The General Services Administration was responsible for the development of the first federal office buildings in Southwest under the urban renewal program of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1955, Congress passed a lease-purchase act that provided for the construction of these buildings on four sites; Federal Office Building 10, made up of 10A and 10B, was the second of four, the others being FOB 6, also known as the Lyndon Baines Johnson Building, FOB 8, and FOB 5, also known as the Forrestal Building.<sup>10</sup> The first piece of the redevelopment of Area C, these federal buildings were viewed at the time as the foundation for residential development proposed closer to the waterfront.<sup>11</sup>

Based on presentation drawings held by the University of Pennsylvania Archives, it appears initial conceptual designs for FOB 10B were underway by 1957, with construction drawings complete in June of 1960.<sup>12</sup> Contemporary newspaper articles indicate that by the spring of 1960 the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) had committed to occupying the building. Historic photographs illustrate that GSA had begun clearing the site by May of 1961 (Figure 4), with construction in progress by December of the same year (Figure 5). Construction was completed on the building two years later. At the time, it was one of the

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<sup>8</sup> Moore and McNett, 107.

<sup>9</sup> Francesca Russello Ammon, *Southwest Washington Urban Renewal Area* (Washington, DC: Historic American Building Survey, 2004), 104.

<sup>10</sup> Ammon 105.

<sup>11</sup> “Fund Cut Seen as Threat to Southwest Project,” *Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 21, 1960.

<sup>12</sup> *Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen Collection*, available online at <http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/faids/aaup/CarrollGrisdaleVanAlen.pdf>.



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most expensive federal construction projects in the city, FOB 10B and 10A together costing \$27.8 million.<sup>13</sup>

FOB 10B, together with FOB 10A, was among the earliest federal office buildings built under the urban renewal program in Southwest Washington. In the fifteen years following the commencement of the construction of FOB 10A and 10B, six more headquarters buildings were constructed in Southwest, both by GSA and by private developers: FOB 8, located on C Street, SW between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets; FOB 5, also known as the Forrestal Building, located between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, SW on Independence Avenue; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Building, also known as the Weaver Building, located at the southwest corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and D Streets, SW; the Nassif Building, constructed on a speculative basis by a private developer and occupied by U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), located at the southeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and D Streets, SW; the Reporters Building, also privately developed, located at the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and D Streets, SW; and the Hubert Humphrey Building, constructed by GSA for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), located at the southwest corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SW and Independence Avenue.<sup>14</sup> Constructed over a span of more than 17 years, these diverse buildings were designed by an array of architectural firms, some local and others of national importance. While each building is distinct, all are unified in their use of the Modern style, be it articulated as Formalism, Brutalism, Expressionism, or the International Style. Since urban renewal was a product of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Modern ideals, it is appropriate that the physical manifestations of the movement would be expressions of the Modern style.<sup>15</sup>

FOB 10B was first occupied by NASA. NASA's predecessor organization, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), was established in 1915. NACA provided technical advice to the aviation industry and undertook aeronautics research.<sup>16</sup> In 1958, following the Soviet launch of *Sputnik I*, President Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, which called for the establishment of a centralized national space program. By October 1958, NASA had been founded and the *Mercury* program, the first to focus on manned space flight, was underway. Three years later, President Kennedy urged Congress to accelerate the space program in order to land a man on the moon before the end of the decade. Other priorities included the development of a nuclear rocket and a worldwide applications satellite system.<sup>17</sup>

With space exploration now a national priority, there was a massive expansion of the agency. NASA dropped earlier program area distinctions and established four new primary offices at the headquarters level: Manned Space Flight, Space Sciences, Applications, and Advanced Research and Technology. The center directors reported directly to the Associate Administrator. In 1963, the offices of Applications and Space Sciences were combined into a

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<sup>13</sup> Phil Casey, "Federal Government on Big Building Spree," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, January 14, 1962.

<sup>14</sup> Ammon, 105-110; the HUD Building was listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites on June 26, 2008, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>15</sup> The common history and context for these buildings may indicate that they should be considered as part of a multiple property listing.

<sup>16</sup> NASA, *NACA 90 Years Later*, available online at [http://www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/news/X-Press/stories/2005/032505\\_NACA\\_90th.html](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/news/X-Press/stories/2005/032505_NACA_90th.html).

<sup>17</sup> Jane Van Nimmen and Leonard C. Bruno, with Robert L. Rosholt, *NASA Historical Data Book, 1958-1968, Volume 1: NASA Resources* (Washington, DC: 1976), 232.

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single office. The headquarters function of these three primary program offices were moved to the newly completed FOB 10B on November 8, 1963.<sup>18</sup>

Each of the program offices housed within FOB 10B served essential functions within the agency during the space race. The Office of Manned Space Flight was responsible for all NASA activities directly related to the manned space flight missions. This included launch responsibility for all major manned and unmanned missions from the George Marshall Space Flight Center, the Manned Spacecraft Center and the White Sands Test Facility, and the John F. Kennedy Space Center. A component of the Office of Manned Space Flight was the Apollo Program Office. The Office of Space Science and Applications held responsibility for several key programs and functions that augmented the manned missions, including: the automated space flight program that focused on the scientific exploration of the earth, moon, planets, sun, and interplanetary space; scientific experiments conducted by astronauts; the selection and training of astronaut-scientists; the research and development of space flight applications in the areas of meteorology, communications, navigation, geodesy, and earth resources surveys; and the development, procurement, and use of light and medium-class launch vehicles. In this role, the Office of Space Sciences and Applications had institutional responsibility for the installations focused on space science and applications. The Office of Advanced Research and Technology was responsible for the planning, direction, execution, evaluation, documentation, and dissemination of the results of NASA research and technology programs. As such, the office had responsibility for the six research centers carrying out the agency's advanced research programs.<sup>19</sup> FOB 10B housed these key program offices through critical years in the space race leading up to the *Apollo 11* mission and the landing of the first U.S. astronauts on the moon.

Beginning in 1968, portions of these key offices moved out of the Wilbur Wright Building to L'Enfant Plaza. In 1992, NASA vacated the building, moving to its new headquarters, also in Southwest Washington. Today, FOB 10B, like FOB 10A, houses headquarters functions of the FAA.

## **Building Description and Integrity Assessment**

### Building Description

FOB 10B is a six-story, 421,319-square-foot federal office building. The building also features a two-level mechanical penthouse above the main block of the building, a ground floor partially below grade, a garage level, and a basement level that includes storage and building infrastructure. The building encompasses an entire city block and is situated between Independence Avenue, SW to its north, 6<sup>th</sup> Street, SW to its east, Maryland Avenue, SW to its south, and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW to its west (Figures 6 and 7). It is tightly defined on the east, north and west sides of the building, but includes a terrace and lawn areas on its south side due to the angle of Maryland Avenue.

The flat-roofed building is rectangular in plan and has a steel frame structural system encased in concrete with granite cladding. While primarily symmetrical in design, the north and south entrances are pulled slightly west of the center of the building. At the top of the structure, the two penthouse levels step back from the building's main mass. Fenestration consists of a grid of rectangular fixed bronze windows that are set flush against each wall of the building. Each

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<sup>18</sup> Van Nimmen and Bruno, 232-233.

<sup>19</sup> Van Nimmen and Bruno, 233-234.

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window has divided lights, with two large glass panels above, and four smaller panels below (Figure 8). The glass is partially reflective throughout the building, and six windows on the ground level near the northeast corner of the north elevation employ opaque glazing. The smooth surface of the marble, together with the flush windows and entries, provide the building facades with a planar quality.

The building's primary pedestrian entrance is located on its south elevation on Maryland Avenue (Figure 9). This entrance features wide granite steps leading to a terrace paved in light gray and buff colored concrete panels. The alternating colors of the panels form a geometric design. The paving material does not date from the construction of the building, as construction drawings indicate that the terrace was historically paved in a combination of green and black marble, extending the color scheme employed inside the lobby. The edges of the terrace on the east and west sides are defined by granite-edged planting beds and metal railings. At the west end of the steps to the terrace is a concrete ramp flanked by metal handrails, which were added later to provide accessible entry to the plaza and building on its south side. The two-story building entrance features four bays set with tempered glass doors and transoms. Lettering above the entrance reads "Federal Building." A curved concrete drive with a narrow center island is located on the south elevation, east of the terrace. It leads to below grade parking (Figure 10). A lawn panel fills the rectangular space west of the entry terrace, and a triangular grass parcel with a flagpole lies at the southwest corner of the site.

The north entrance is similar in design to the south entrance, featuring four bays set with tempered glass doors and transoms. However, the entrance is taller due to the grade change between the north and south sides of the building. In addition, the north elevation lacks a terrace. Instead, the entrance is accessed by granite steps with metal railings that lead to a narrow landing. Flanking the steps are square granite planter boxes. L-shaped granite planter boxes line the remaining first floor level of the building's north elevation and wrap to the east and west elevations. Like the south elevation, the north elevation has lettering that reads "Federal Building" directly above the entrance. An inscription on the north side near the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street reads "United States of America: John F. Kennedy, President 1962."

A third and fourth entrance are located on the east and west elevations. Both have granite steps, metal hand rails, and single bay entrances with tempered glass doors and transoms. Square granite planter boxes, identical to those at the north entrance, flank the steps.

The north and south entrances lead to the building's main entrance lobby. The entrance lobby is accessed through two-story vestibules, each with light gray marble walls and a second set of tempered glass doors and transoms. The polished terrazzo flooring is primarily grey-green in color, with bands of black forming a geometric pattern. The wall and floor finishes in the vestibules are continued into the entrance lobby, with terrazzo flooring, marble walls, and marble-clad piers (Figure 11). A set of wide polished marble stairs with metal railings on the north side of the lobby accommodates the grade change between the north and south sides of the building (Figure 12). On the west side, a series of small circles puncture the walls in two locations serving as intake vents. A security desk and screening equipment are sited at the center of the entrance lobby. The entrance lobby opens to the east into an elevator lobby with four passenger elevators, a single freight elevator, and a stairwell. Finishes in this area are consistent with the adjacent space, including marble walls and terrazzo flooring. A narrow hallway runs east from the elevator lobby, providing access to the first floor office space (Figure 13). A similar, although shorter, hallway runs west from the entrance lobby to the west end of the building.

Although the exterior of the building and the entrance and first floor elevator lobby remain largely unchanged from their historic conditions (Figure 14), modifications have occurred to the balance of the interior spaces within the building. On the upper floors, the spatial organization of the stairwells, elevator lobbies, and primary hallways remains intact (Figure 15). However, the configuration of the office spaces was altered in a recent renovation. In addition, the interior finishes in the office spaces do not reflect their historic conditions. On the ground floor, at its east end, a cafeteria remains in its historic location, but has been renovated. In addition, a fitness center has been added on this level. Two penthouse levels lie above the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, each recessed from the main building block. The roofs of both the penthouses and the 6<sup>th</sup> floor are rubber membrane covered in gravel and were replaced c. 2000.

The design intent for the Wilbur Wright Building is reflected in various architectural records for FOB 10B. Selected architectural drawings are provided in Figures 16 – 20.

### Integrity Assessment

The Wilbur Wright Building has undergone limited changes since its construction. Both the north and south entries appear to have been replaced, but they were replaced in kind with glazed panels set within bronze frames. In addition, the historic terrazzo paving on the south terrace was replaced with concrete. A concrete ramp providing accessible entry to the terrace and south entry is also a later addition. On the interior, the finishes in the office spaces have been changed and some of the offices reconfigured, a fitness center has been added on the ground level, and the cafeteria has been renovated.

Although there have been minor changes to the building, important character-defining features remain intact, including the bands of windows, smooth exterior skin, sense of volume, and horizontal form. It's setting, including the rights-of-way that define the site, has not been substantially altered, and the building continues to function as federal office space. Thus, the Wilbur Wright Building retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

### **Statement of Potential Significance**

For a property to be listed in the National Register it must possess both historic significance and integrity. As documented above, the Wilbur Wright Building has been evaluated to possess sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. In order to be considered significant, a historic property must meet one or more of the four National Register significance criteria, discussed in detail below. Properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years are generally not considered eligible for the National Register, to ensure that sufficient time has passed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. However, under Criteria Consideration G, such a property may be eligible if it has “exceptional importance” at the national, state, or local level, or if it is an integral part of a district that is eligible for listing in the National Register. Although the National Register does not define “exceptional



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significance,” it does state that scholarly evaluation of a type of architecture or historic associations of the property can aid in determining exceptional significance.<sup>20</sup>

National Register Criterion A: *Properties Associated with Events that have made a Significant Contribution to the Broad Patterns of our History*

FOB 10B, together with FOB 10A, was one of a series of four buildings initially constructed by GSA under the Southwest Urban Renewal program in the 1950s and 1960s. As such, it must be understood within this context. Francesca Russello Ammon’s study the *Southwest Washington, Urban Renewal Area*, completed in 2004 for the Historic American Buildings Survey, provides a strong foundation for the evaluation of the property and its association with this historic movement.

According to Ammon, the urban renewal program in Southwest DC “represented the most comprehensive and ambitious approach to urban redevelopment in the nation.”<sup>21</sup> It was not only one of the earliest efforts in the United States, it was also one of the largest such undertakings. At the time, it was—and remains today—the Capital City’s most comprehensive attempt to redevelop an entire neighborhood. As such, it should be recognized as a pioneering effort intended to be a prototype in national urban renewal.<sup>22</sup> As a key component of GSA’s urban renewal program, an anchor that allowed for the further redevelopment of Area C, FOB 10B demonstrates potential local and national significance under National Register Criterion A. Its potential period of significance spans from 1961 when construction began on the building through 1963 when it was completed, and its potential area of significance is Community Planning and Development.<sup>23</sup>

The Wilbur Wright Building was also evaluated for its association with NASA and the space race. The Office of Applications and Spaces Sciences and the Office of Advanced Research and Technology oversaw key research programs during critical years in the space race. In addition, the Office of Manned Space Flight oversaw all activities directly related to the manned space flight missions, while its subsidiary Apollo Program Office provided direction to the *Apollo* program. Since NASA’s occupation of the building and direction of these key programs spans a period that both begins and ends less than 50 years ago, the building is required to meet National Register Criteria Consideration G by demonstrating exceptional significance. Although the Apollo Mission Control Center at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Flight Center in Houston, Texas was determined to be exceptionally significant and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the administrative headquarters functions of the agency housed in the Wilbur Wright Building do not appear to reach this level of significance. Thus, the Wilbur

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<sup>20</sup> Marcella Sherfy and W. Ray Luce, *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past 50 Years* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, revised 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Ammon, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ammon, 2. The importance of urban renewal in Southwest Washington was recognized at the time in the national press. See “Southwest Washington: Finest Urban Renewal Effort in the Country,” *Architectural Record*, January 1963. The importance was recognized more recently in Pamela Scott and Antoinette J. Lee, *Buildings of the District of Columbia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Ammon, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1995), states that “A resource whose construction began over fifty years ago, but the completion overlaps the fifty year period by a few years or less” does not need to meet Criteria Consideration G.

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Wright Building does not appear to meet Criteria Consideration G for its association with NASA and the space race.

Although FOB 10B was completed after President Kennedy's commitment to improve the quality of Federal office design, as articulated within the 1962 "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture," the selection of the architects and the design of the building occurred prior to Kennedy's taking office. Thus, the Wilbur Wright Building was not evaluated for its association with this important federal program.

National Register Criterion B: *Properties Associated with the Lives of Persons Significant in Our Past*

The Wilbur Wright Building does not appear to be eligible under Criterion B as a resource associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. While important NASA offices were located within FOB 10B, research has not revealed specific information about the significance of the directors of these offices.

National Register Criterion C: *Properties that Embody the Distinctive Characteristics of a Type, Period, or Method of Construction or Represent the Work of a Master, or Possess High Artistic Values, or Represent a Significant and Distinguishable Entity Whose Components Lack Individual Distinction*

The Wilbur Wright Building was designed by Holabird & Root & Burgee, together with Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen, and constructed between 1961 and 1963. It was designed concurrently with its sister building, FOB 10A, the Orville Wright Building. Holabird & Root & Burgee was a successor firm to Holabird & Roche, pioneers in the design of Chicago's first skyscrapers. In 1927, the company changed its name to Holabird and Root, when John Holabird, son of the founder, and John Root, took over the firm. With the death of John Holabird in 1945, Joseph Burgee joined the firm and it was thereafter known as Holabird, Root & Burgee. Other Washington projects by the firm include the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Headquarters (1955), the International Union of Operating Engineers Headquarters (1959), the National Memorial Building Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US (1960), and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (1961). Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen was formed in 1946 when William L. Van Alen joined J. Roy Carroll, Jr. and John T. Grisdale, who had established a partnership in the prior year. They undertook several important projects for the city of Philadelphia including the Philadelphia International Airport and the Youth Services Center. The product of collaboration between these two firms, the Wilbur Wright Building is an example of the International Style, as evidenced in its large, box-shaped form, lack of ornamentation, smooth wall surfaces, and expansive windows.<sup>24</sup>

In order to evaluate the potential significance of the Wilbur Wright Building under Criterion C, it is important to understand its place within the context of Modern design in the District of Columbia. GSA's *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism*, as well as the *DC Modern* historic context study, provide a set of guidelines for evaluating such structures. The Wilbur Wright Building is a successful example of the adaptation of the International Style to its context and to the

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<sup>24</sup> According to a 1992 interview with John A. Holabird, the design work was supposed to be done by Carroll, Grisdale & Van Alen, with Holabird, Root & Burgee doing the working drawings. However, Holabird & Root & Burgee appears to have been more fully involved in the design, paring it down to "a very simple statement." See "Oral History of John Augur Holabird," *Chicago Architects Oral History Project* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1994).

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needs of the federal office building. While modern in style, the marble clad exterior rendered the building consistent with other structures that lined the edges of the Mall.<sup>25</sup> On the interior, original moveable partitions (no longer extant) provided flexibility, allowing the spaces to be reconfigured based on the specific needs of the agency. The success of the design is reflected in the inclusion of the building in both GSA's modern context and *DC Modern*. FOB 10B demonstrates potential local significance under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The potential period of significance correlates with the construction of the building, from 1961 to 1963.

National Register Criterion D: Properties that Have Yielded, or are Likely to Yield, Information Important in Prehistory or History

The Wilbur Wright Building was not evaluated under Criterion D, as this Criterion generally applies to archaeological sites.

## Conclusion

Applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, the Wilbur Wright Building is eligible under Criterion A for its association with urban renewal. In addition, the building is significant under Criterion C as a successful example of the adaptation of the International Style to the specific requirements of federal design in Washington, DC.

## Sources

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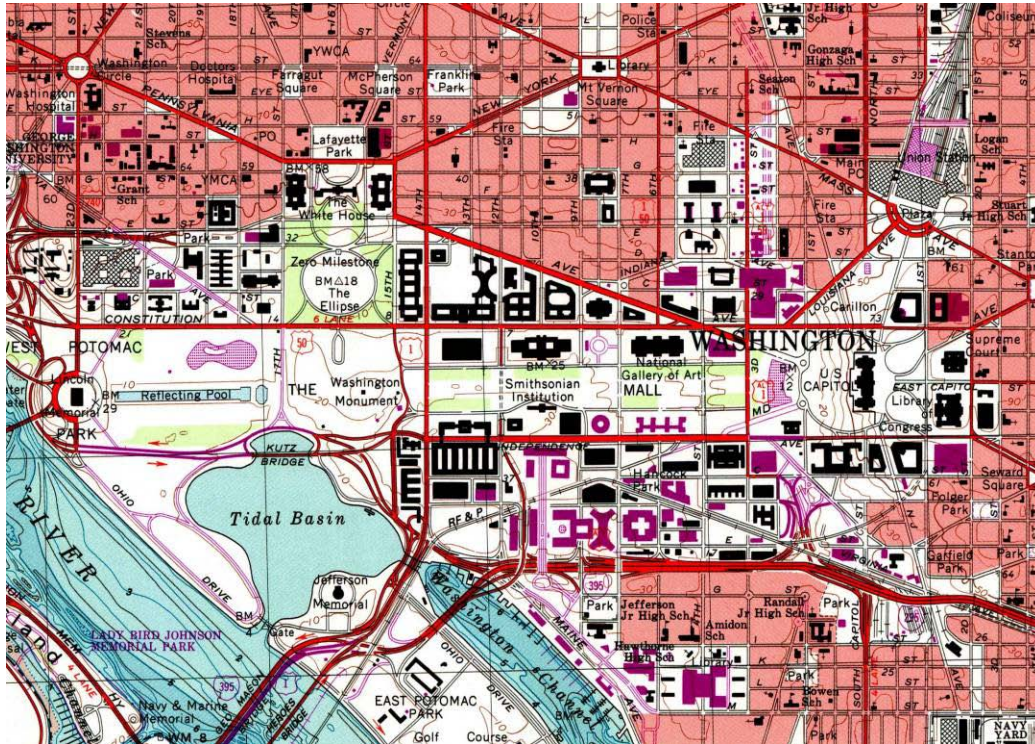


Figure 1  
USGS Quad Map: Washington West Quadrangle map, cropped  
Source: USGS



Figure 2  
FOB 10A (left) and FOB 10B (right)  
Source: AECOM 2010



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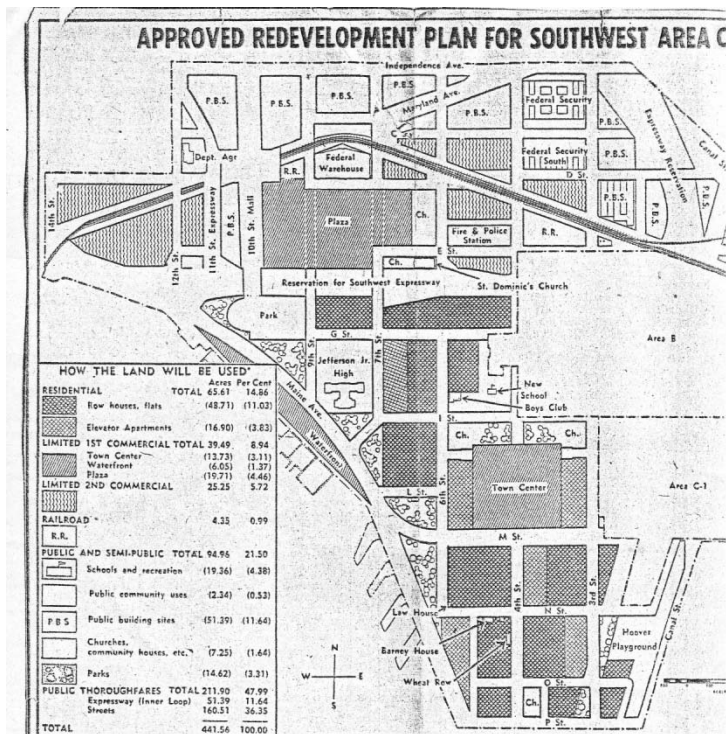


Figure 3  
Approved Redevelopment Plan for Southwest Area C  
Source: Washington Post, April 6, 1956



Figure 4  
Federal Office Building 10B Site Looking Northwest, May 24, 1961  
Source: GSA NCR Technical Library



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Figure 5  
Construction of Federal Office Building 10B, with LBJ Building in the distance, December 20, 1961  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*



Figure 6  
South Elevation from 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Maryland Avenue  
*Source: AECOM 2010*

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Figure 7  
North Elevation from 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Independence Avenue  
*Source: AECOM 2010*



Figure 8  
West Elevation from 7<sup>th</sup> Street with Grid of Windows  
*Source: AECOM 2010*



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Figure 9  
South Entrance and Plaza  
*Source: AECOM, 2010*



Figure 10  
Entrance and Exit Ramp  
*Source: AECOM, 2010*

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Figure 11  
South End of Entrance Lobby  
*Source: AECOM 2010*

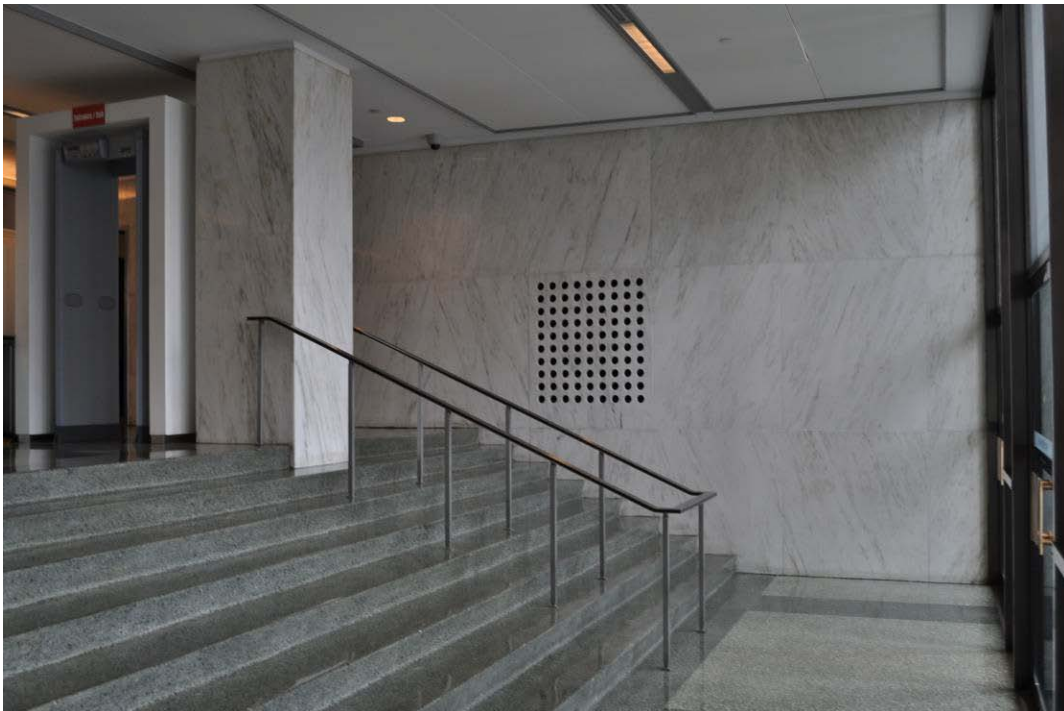


Figure 12  
North End of Entrance Lobby  
*Source: AECOM 2010*



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Figure 13  
First Floor Hallway East  
*Source: AECOM 2010*



Figure 14  
Entrance Lobby Looking North, June 15, 1964  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*

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Figure 15  
Fourth Floor Hallway, June 15, 1964  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*

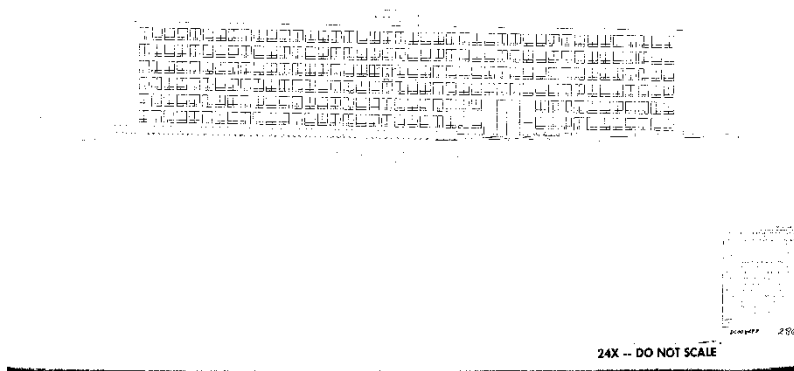


Figure 16  
North Elevation  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*



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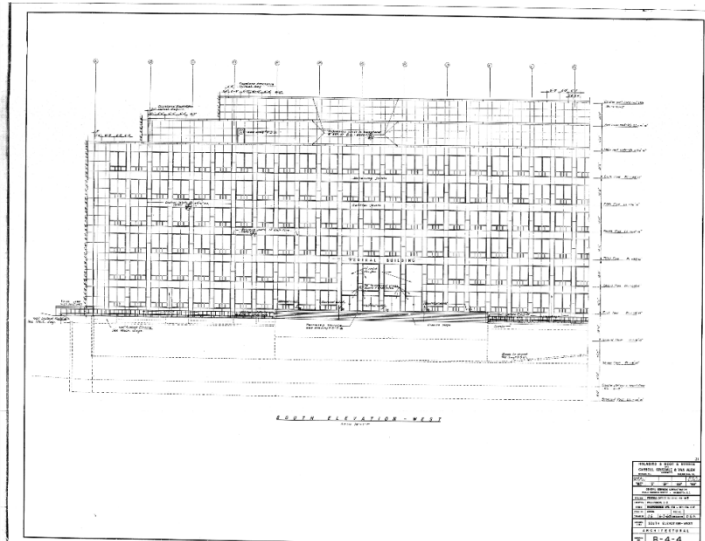


Figure 17  
South Elevation - West  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*

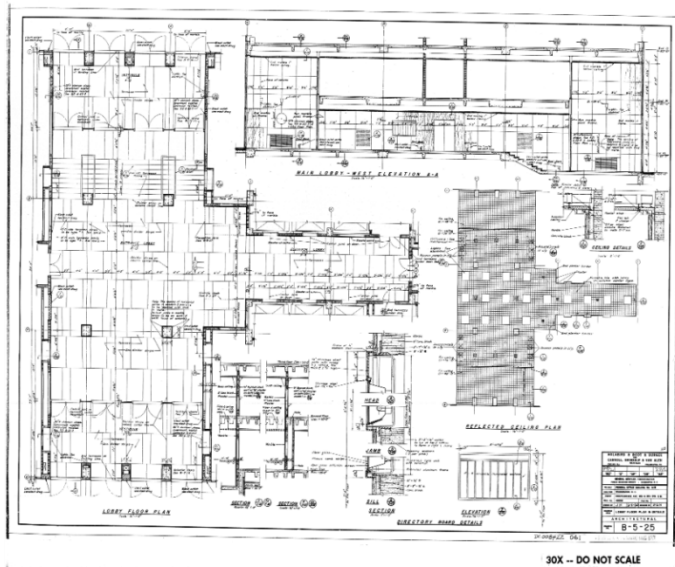


Figure 18  
Lobby Floor Plan and Details  
*Source: GSA NCR Technical Library*

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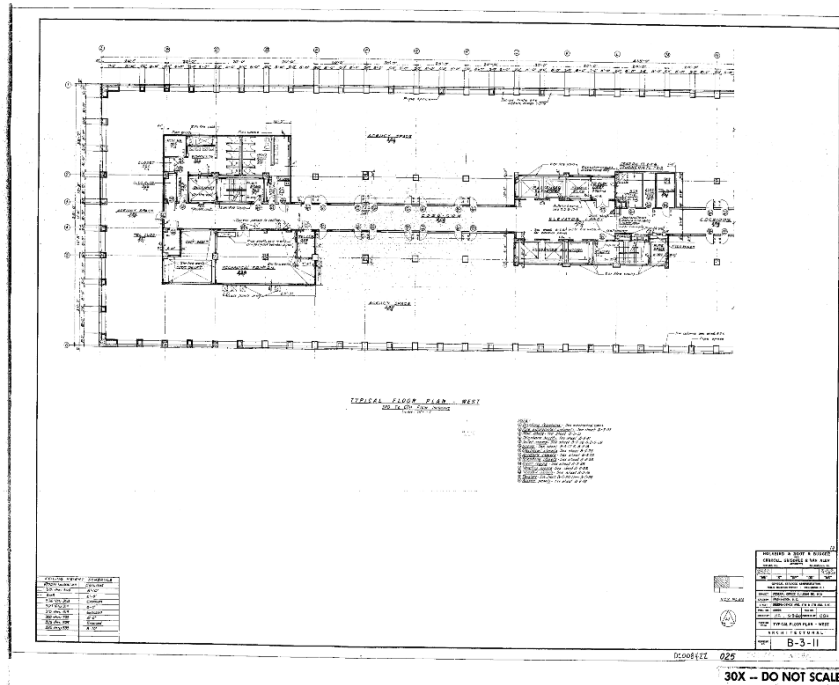


Figure 19  
Typical Floor Plan - West  
Source: GSA NCR Technical Library

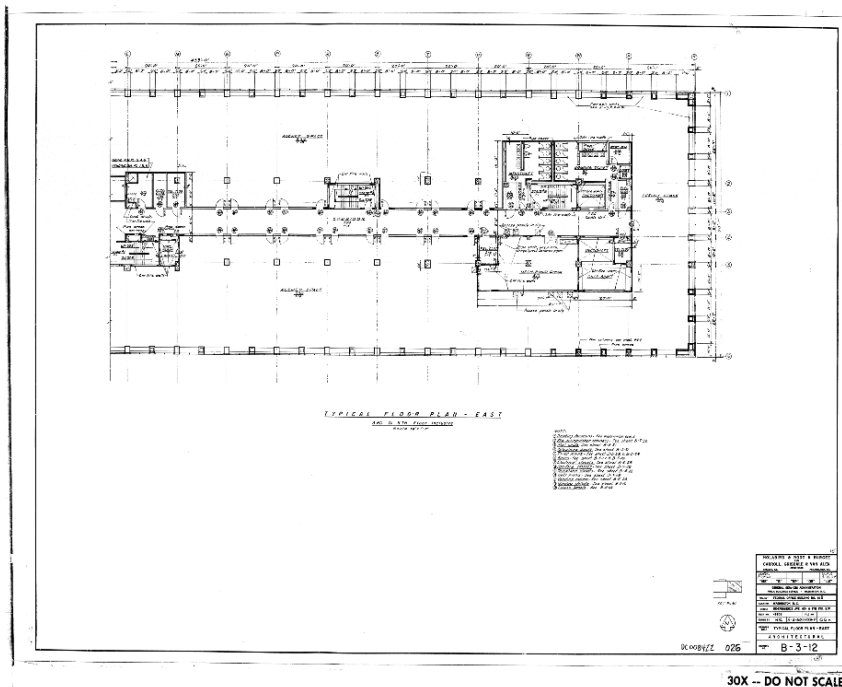


Figure 20  
Typical Floor Plan - East  
Source: GSA NCR Technical Library

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**PREPARER'S DETERMATION**

Eligibility Recommended ☒

Eligibility Not Recommended ☐

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A☒ B☐ C☒ D☐

Applicable Considerations:

A☐ B☐ C☐ D☐ E☐ F☐ G☐

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Prepared By: (specify Name, Title & Organization):

Date:

**DC SHPO DETERMINATION AND COMMENTS**

Determined Eligible ☐

Determined Not Eligible ☐

Reviewed By (specify):

Date:

DC Government Project/Permit Project Log Number (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_