

**Dallas Landmark Commission
Landmark Nomination Form**

1. Name

**historic: One Main Place
and/or common:
date: 1968**

2. Location

**address: 1201 Main Street
location/neighborhood:**

block: lot: land survey: tract size: 2.25 acres

3. Current Zoning

current zoning: PD 619 sub areas A, B, & C, SPSD overlay, video board district, retail A district, CP overlay

4. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> residence
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public	Accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input type="checkbox"/> object	Acquisition	<input type="checkbox"/> yes:restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> yes:unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other, specify
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Ownership

Current Owner: One Main Place Office, LLC / One Main Place Hotel, LLC
Contact: Elie Khoury **Phone:** 504-585-1535
Address: 1205 St. Charles Ave. Suite D **City:** New Orleans
State: LA **Zip:** 70130

6. Form Preparation

Date: February 15, 2017
Name & Title: Jay Firsching, Associate, Hayli Ballentine, Preservation Specialist Intern
Organization: ARCHITEXAS – Architecture, Planning and Historic Preservation, Inc.

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boundary of the Dallas Downtown National Register Historic District. The building has a prominent and heavy structural concrete frame with an exposed granite aggregate finish, and features deep and regular fenestration. At street level, the tower occupies a fraction of the total site, with broad sidewalks, a large sunken plaza to the west, and a smaller one to the east.

One Main Place is in excellent condition and continues to support office use. An ongoing rehabilitation converted a portion to hotel use in 2015. The building has changed very little since its construction and retains its historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) with Gordon Bunshaft as lead designer, One Main Place is difficult to assign to a single architectural style and is best described as modernist. While its physical form exhibits elements of the International Style, the use of a massive concrete structural frame is a significant departure from the lightweight metal and glass curtain wall typical of the style. Often identified as a Brutalist building due to the emphasis on concrete in the design, it lacks that style's more important defining characteristics such as an irregularity in form and clearly-articulated functional divisions in the form of externally-expressed circulation, mechanical, and tenant spaces. The design is reminiscent of other SOM buildings constructed for corporate America. Breaking with the tradition of maximizing density across an entire site, the sleek and dramatic tower occupies only a fraction of the site leaving room for broader sidewalks, plazas and retail blocks. However, where their previous compositions in the International Style generally placed an emphasis on lightness and volume rather than structure, at One Main Place this idea is turned inside out with a prominent and heavy concrete structural frame becoming its distinguishing feature.

To fully understand the composition of One Main Place, one must first recognize the context of its design. One Main Place was the first phase of a proposed three-phase superblock project covering more than 10 acres and to be called Main Place. Land for the site was accumulated over a number of years and the proposed design required the realignment of the street grid and the abandonment by the city of the land under Main Street to a depth of 80 feet. For the first phase, One Main Place, the city abandoned Field and Poydras Streets between Main and Elm, and realigned Griffin Street to create a boulevard to the west. One Main Place was to be connected to Two Main Place and Three Main Place with a massive, underground complex of retail shops, pedestrian tunnels, roadways, freight tunnels and plazas. While the land was cleared for phases one and two, the project proved unsuccessful and was canceled due to lack of financing.

Visually, One Main Place rises from street level as a structural concrete grid with an exposed aggregate surface. The columns and beams of the building are regular in width, neither being subordinate to the other and making the building appear almost as a monolith with deeply-punched openings in its surfaces. Fenestration is fixed, regular and deeply recessed. The structural frame of the building flares outward at the base, tapering gradually to the 10th floor level. The fenestration maintains a regular vertical plane, leaving the lower level windows even more deeply recessed than those above. At ground level the lobby storefronts are further recessed. This arrangement provides the first level exterior with a deep protective arcade, sheltering the windows and entrances from the sun and rain.

The building exterior reveals something of its internal organization simply in the height of its window openings. The single-height first floor, serving as the entry level and primary space for organizing circulation, is surmounted by a double height banking lobby at the second. Above this, single-level tenant floors are regular in height up to the slightly-taller top row of windows, elevating the importance of the penthouse space. The building's upper floors up to the flat roof are windowless, obscuring the secondary mechanical and operational spaces beyond.

The building is rectangular in plan and is sited with its short sides facing east and west. The east and west facades are divided into twelve equal bays, the north and south into twenty-four. The tower itself occupies only 25% of the total site, the building being surrounded on all sides by sidewalks and plaza spaces. The western and most prominent of these plazas rests one floor below grade and originally featured a large circular fountain, later replaced with planters and more recently a pavilion. At the perimeter of the plaza, retail spaces and pedestrian tunnels extend beneath the sidewalks across the entirety of the site. One level below the plaza lies a system of vehicular circulation spaces, loading docks and secondary lease space. Historically this level included a US post office. Below this are three levels of underground parking.

The exposed aggregate structure is carried to the building interior on the lower floors. The central core of elevators, stairs and restrooms is also of concrete with a Naturbetong, exposed aggregate finish differentiating it from the concrete structure. Floors on the first level and concourses below are of terrazzo resembling polished concrete.

The first floor of One Main Place was designed to serve as a lobby and organizational space for distributing visitors from street level to the building's various functional areas. Centrally-placed elevators provide access to the buildings low, mid and high rise floors as well as underground parking. Escalators flanking the elevators to the east and west provide immediate access up to the massive second-floor banking center and down to the plaza level and retail concourses with further connections to the downtown pedestrian tunnel system. Today the lobby remains largely intact, but with the eastern and westernmost sections subdivided into tenant spaces. The easternmost escalator up to the banking center is now missing. Much of the exposed concrete structural frame and core, central to the aesthetic of the original design, is now hidden behind modern finishes.

The exposed aggregate structure and terrazzo floors continue as a theme in the first two below-grade levels where long corridors are surrounded by retail storefront at the plaza level, and by lease space at the level below. Upstairs, the aggregate concrete structure is particularly prominent at the double-height banking hall on the second floor. The original composition of the banking hall was shaped largely by its interior design features including carpeting, floor-to-ceiling draperies, granite floors and modern furnishings. Of the bank's interior composition, only the concrete structure and core, and remnants of the granite flooring remain.

Tenant floors are devoid of historic detail, having been designed specifically for each tenant and changed significantly over time. The penthouse, originally home of the Dallas Club, commands striking views of the city. It features contemporary finishes installed by Bank of America within the last 15 years.

A rehabilitation of the building conducted in 2015-2017 resulted in the restoration of most exterior features. The intent of the rehabilitation, conducted under the state and federal rehabilitation tax credit programs, was the conversion of the building to mixed hotel and business use. Notable exterior modifications to the building included the construction of a pavilion and planters in the west sunken-plaza and the rehabilitation of the sunken-plaza level storefronts. A new above ground planter and statuary were added between the west sunken-plaza guardrail and the building, and temporary planters placed in the arcade at the southwest corner to create a patio for the restaurant. A new porte-cochere and drive lane on the north site were added for the new hotel, and new entry marquee structures constructed on the south site to serve the general lobby. Some building and tenant signs were also added, as were compatible new entry doors to service the street-level restaurant tenant. These modifications are further documented in the photographic attachment to this document.

While some changes have been made to the original design, One Main Place retains a remarkable degree of integrity.



West facade, October 2014



Southwest oblique, October 2014



Southeast oblique, October 2014



Northeast Oblique, October 2014



Northwest oblique, October 2014



View of west site and plaza guardrail from the southeast, January 2017



View into the west sunken-plaza from the southwest, October 2014



View of west sunken-plaza from street level northwest showing new pavilion and planters, January 2017



View of rehabilitated west sunken-plaza storefronts, east side (top), and north side (bottom), January 2017



Detail of west sunken-plaza guardrail (top), October 2014
Stair to west sunken-plaza at northwest site (bottom), October 2014



West street-level plaza detail prior to building rehabilitation, 2014 (top), and with new planter and statuary, January 2017 (bottom). Views from the north



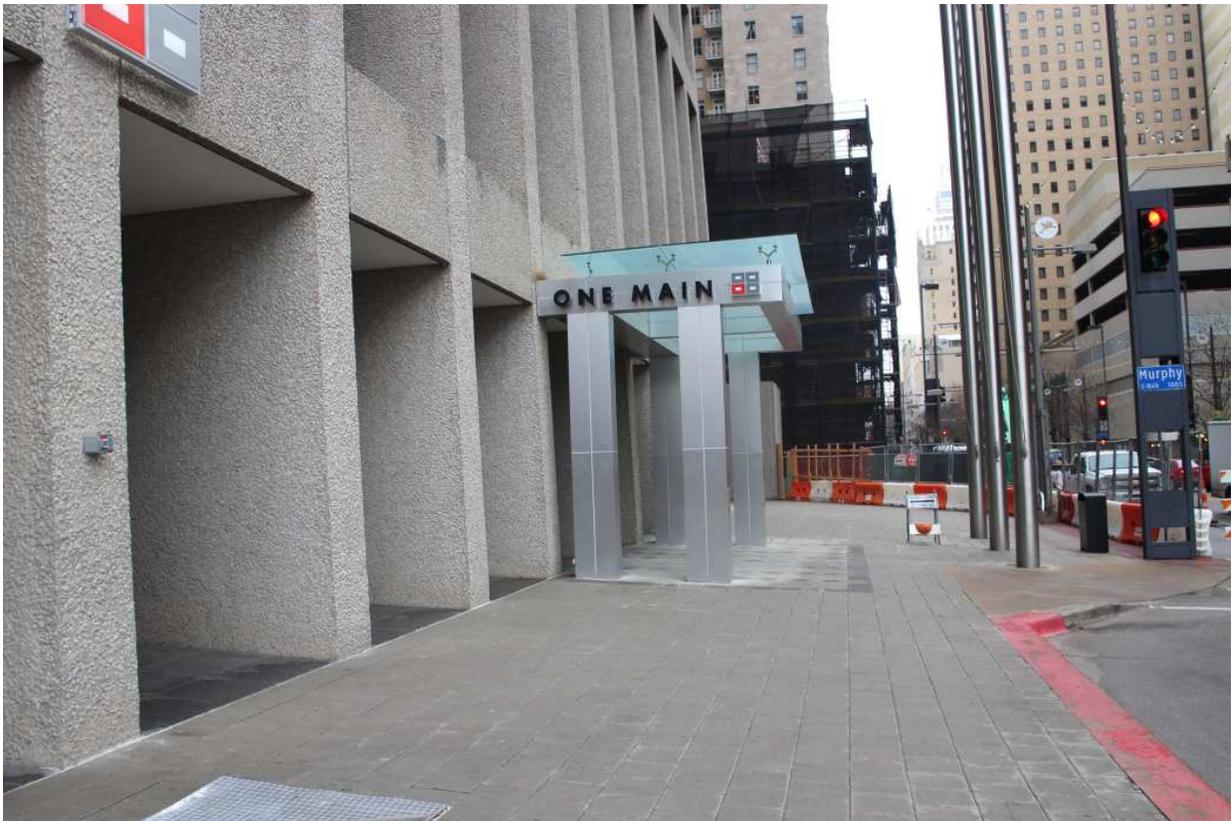
Detail of north facade facing southeast, October 2014



North site from the west showing new porte cochere and drive lane, January 2017



Detail of stair in east sunken-plaza from the southwest (top), October 2014
View into the east sunken-plaza from the north (bottom), October 2014



View of south site from the west showing new marquee structures and building identification signs (top), January 2017

New marquee structure at southeast entry (bottom), January 2017



New marquee structure at southwest entry, January 2017



View in west arcade facing north (typical), October 2014



Details of typical revolving door assembly (southwest entry), October 2014



Typical existing building entry (unmodified during rehabilitation) (top), January 2017
Ground level hotel entry at northwest showing added interior doors to create vestibule (bottom), January 2017



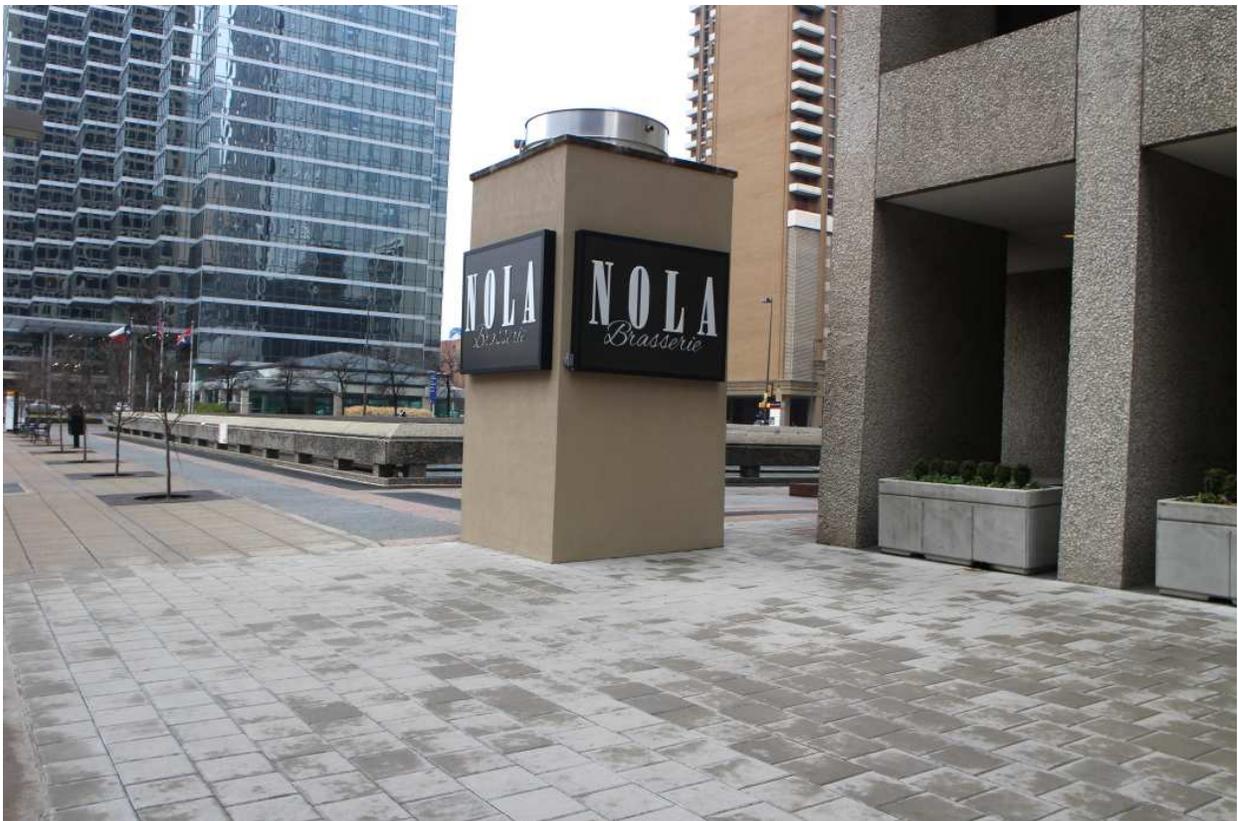
Compatible new entry added for restaurant tenant: at southwest (top) and at west (bottom), January 2017



Temporary barrier in south arcade for restaurant tenant, January 2017



Building identification sign at south arcade (bottom), January 2017



Ground-level tenant signs attached to existing vent structure on south site, January 2017

13. Historical Significance

One Main Place is the first of a three-phase superblock project proposed for downtown Dallas in the 1960s. The other two phases of the Main Place development were never constructed due to a lack of financing. Main Place was the city's first and most ambitious attempt at superblock development and, initially-conceived by the Columbia University School of Architecture, was refined into a constructible design by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Although the overall project was a failure, it influenced city planning in Dallas for another three decades.

Dallas in a new age of city planning

By the middle of the 20th-century, Dallas, Texas was facing a series of problems common to most cities of its day: degradation of its downtown core, congestion, suburbanization and related sprawl, and incredible pressure brought on by the popularity and abundance of the automobile. With industrialization came new ideas in town planning intended to respond to the fact that our rapidly-changing cities were gradually less livable.

In the 19th-century, industrialization and the advent of the railroad created major disruptions that began to break down these integrated cores ever more rapidly. Towns tended to spread out along rail lines, and industry brought with it greater density as land was repurposed to provide space for new industrial uses. Space for housing in the central city diminished even as the population grew. Expanding commercialization of downtown areas further broke them down, with massive buildings constructed on blocks originally intended for smaller, human-scaled structures. Homes, churches and other amenities that provided a higher quality of life were generally squeezed out in favor of industry and commerce. Typical street grids what once accommodated pedestrians and slow-moving means of transportation became overwhelmed by automobiles that were prevalent and fast. As a single-person conveyance, the automobile created issues of congestion downtown, and provided a greater ability to escape the center of the city for less dense areas.¹ Both living and working in the core of our cities became gradually more difficult and unsatisfying, and leaving it for the suburbs ever more desirable.²

The industrialization and commercialization of cities gave rise to urban planning movements which sought to create cities that were again balanced and livable with a minimum of conflict between pedestrians and automobiles. While planners behind such concepts as the English garden city movement and the new town movement sought to achieve these ideals in new communities, others looked to apply them to existing urban cores. Key to these urban plans was the idea of vertically-integrated architecture.³

In 1922, Swiss planner and architect Le Corbusier unveiled the first major concept in three-dimensional superblock planning. His, "Contemporary City" or "City of Tomorrow" sought to solve the problem of density and overcrowding by taking the concepts of garden city planning and applying them to vertical architecture. The City of Tomorrow envisioned organization through intentional separation of residential, commercial, and transportation functions that

1 Johnson-Marshall, Percy. *Rebuilding Cities*, Chicago, Aldine Pub. Co. (1966), p. 11-12

2 Gruen, Victor. *The Heart of our Cities: The Urban Crisis, Diagnosis and Cure*. Simon and Shuster: New York (1964).

3 Keating, W. Dennis, Norman Krumholz (2000). "Neighborhood Planning". *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20 (1): p. 111–114.

would create an elegantly proportioned and calm environment.⁴

In instances where Corbusier-influenced superblock projects were successfully constructed, large areas of historic buildings were sacrificed in the name of progress. Examples of this trend can be found in the urban renewal and public housing projects in Europe and the United States. Notable US examples are the Cabrini Green housing complex in Chicago and the massive Pruitt Igoe housing complex in St. Louis. Both required the extensive clearing of historic buildings for their construction.⁵ Le Corbusier's ideas are largely credited with starting the modern movement and strongly influenced planning and architecture in the 20th-century. Notable examples are the work of planners Robert Moses in New York City and Edmund Bacon in Philadelphia.

The problems facing Dallas in the 1950s and 1960s were a clear example of the urban decay and suburbanization superblock proponents sought to reverse. Ironically, it was growth and prosperity that created these destabilizing pressures. True to international trends, in a growing Dallas, small scale commercial blocks gave way to ever larger and taller buildings and greater density. Downtown streets, choked with pedestrians and automobiles became ever more difficult and unpleasant to navigate. The city's central residential areas were in decline in favor of suburbs to the north and east. Both Dallas and Fort Worth, its sister city to the west, found themselves in need of a plan to reverse these trends.

Early Planning in Dallas

Dallas as a city developed rapidly in the late 19th-century, the growth spurred on by the arrival and expansion of the railroad. As might be expected, the Dallas boom brought with it congestion and new problems, most notably a snarl of tracks, depots and freight terminals overlaying a traditional street grid designed to accommodate pedestrians, horses and wagons.⁶

By the 20th-century, the city was eager for a plan. George Kessler, a prominent city planner and designer of his day, was commissioned by the city and presented the Kessler Plan in 1910. This plan was the first adopted by the city that stressed an idea central to the success of downtown: for the city to function effectively the problem of congestion must be addressed and the efficient flow of people and goods promoted. Kessler called on the city to eliminate the complex and inefficient web of railroad tracks and depots from downtown, eliminate at-grade railroad crossings, and establish a system of boulevards and connecting loops to ease traffic. Kessler's vision was that the city's major transportation networks would operate with as little interference with one another as possible. Only a fraction of Kessler's ideas were realized, although many such as the realignment of the Trinity River, the establishment of a boulevard system, and a city-wide parks plan were highly significant.⁷ A lesser known outcome was the construction of the city's first downtown tunnel system, part of a massive underground freight

4 Le Corbusier, and Eleanor Levieux. *Looking at City Planning*. New York: Grossman Publishers (1971).

5 King, Jason . "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth: An Urban History." *Landscape and Urbanism*, <http://landscapeandurbanism.blogspot.com/2011/07/pruitt-igoe-now.html>. Accessed 15 sept, 2014.

6 William H. Wilson, "Adapting to Growth: Dallas, Texas, and the Kessler Plan, 1908–1933," *Arizona and the West* 25 (Autumn 1983). P. 245-248

7 Kessler, George. *A City Plan for Dallas*. Dallas, Texas (1910). p. 5-8

terminal under the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Warehouses.⁸

While Kessler's plan did lead to many improvements in the city, political and business rivalries prevented broad and even implementation of Kessler's ideas.⁹ Additional plans followed, each resulting in limited successes. In 1925 the Ulrickson plan achieved the realignment of the Trinity River, levee construction, and the completion of a number of viaducts connecting Dallas with Oak Cliff to the south, but the broader effort at city-wide improvements was again a failure.¹⁰ A 1943 city-wide planning study by St. Louis planning expert, Harland Bartholomew, resulted in a sweeping 12-volume plan of city improvements with the goal of implementing the proposals at the completion of the war.¹¹ However, overwhelmed by the growth, the city found itself unable to keep up, much less implement the proposals of the Bartholomew Plan, completing only piecemeal components.¹² Additional but less comprehensive studies were implemented in the 1950s with little result. Notable among these was city planning engineer, Marvin Springer's, plan for a new system of highway improvements including freeway loops around the central business district.¹³

It is worth noting that government-funded urban renewal programs implemented in the years after World War II did not have a major impact on development in Dallas. Title 1, passed in 1949 and authorizing the clearing of urban slums to make way for new development, was a tool used in many major metropolitan areas, most famously by Robert Moses in his efforts as part of city and state government to reshape the City of New York. The provisions of Title 1 proved unpopular in Dallas, a city where individual property rights were highly valued, and efforts to clear slums such as those found in West Dallas, were roundly rejected.¹⁴

The Early Underground in Dallas

A primary focus of Kessler's ideas was railroad traffic, particularly downtown. The railroad companies of early 20th-century Dallas operated independently of one another, each with its own tracks, passenger and freight terminals. This web of infrastructure was highly inefficient and choked the city's streets. Kessler proposed a consolidation and simplification of the trackage downtown, the elimination wherever possible of at-grade railroad crossings, and the construction of a single Union Terminal and rail yard on the west end of downtown.¹⁵

In 1917, Union Terminal was completed one block southwest of the courthouse square. This was the catalyst that allowed for the simplification of the track network downtown and made the city's many downtown passenger terminals obsolete, including that of the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad. On the site of its downtown station and on several adjoining blocks to

8 Kessler. P 13-16

9 Fairbanks. P 31-32

10 Fairbanks. P 51-54

11 Fairbanks. P. 126

12 Fairbanks. P. 171-174

13 Fairbanks. P 216.

14 Fairbanks. P. 219-220

15 Kessler, George. *A City Plan for Dallas*. p. 13-16

the south, the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe constructed four large freight terminals. Each was connected to the other by a set of tunnels that further connected to the main line to the south. This was the first example in Dallas of vertically-separated infrastructure in the downtown core and allowed the daily transport of tons of freight into the central business district with no disruption to the streets and sidewalks above. When the freight terminals fell into disuse after World War II, the tunnels were abandoned, eventually being disconnected from the main line by the construction of the Dallas Convention Center.¹⁶

The further development of vertically-separated infrastructure in Dallas was largely incidental in the first half of the 20th-century. An underground tunnel was constructed under Main Street in 1913 to connect the 1912 Adolphus Hotel (NR 1983) and the 1913 Busch Building (NR 1980), but this was used largely to connect the large power plant in the hotel to its new neighbor.¹⁷ At Union Terminal itself, the massive rail yards were originally navigated by passengers via a long overhead transit-way above the tracks. With the continued expansion of the yards, this transit-way was removed in 1947 in favor of an underground tunnel system connecting the terminal to the various tracks and to other buildings nearby.¹⁸ A portion of this tunnel remains in use today, serving its original purpose of distributing passengers to trains, and now to the modern Reunion Center complex. This was the city's first use of a tunnel system to separate pedestrians from the transportation systems above them.

In 1951, the Mercantile National Bank was the first to take downtown Dallas' growing parking problem underground with the construction of the Mercantile Commerce Building (later renamed the Mercantile Continental Building). The three-story structure featured an additional five levels of parking below ground and a large set of freight docks. The parking structure was connected to the Mercantile Bank Building across the street by the city's second underground pedestrian tunnel.¹⁹ The parking structure now serves the newly-rehabilitated Continental Lofts and the tunnel remains intact, but abandoned.

While some warehouse complexes such as Sears (now Southside on Lamar) south of downtown connected buildings with overhead walkways, overhead pedestrian connections prior to 1950 were rare. A "Venetian bridge" was constructed in 1934 to connect the mezzanine levels of the Adolphus and Baker Hotels. The temporary bridge was utilized to prevent congestion along Commerce Street during the American Petroleum Institute convention and was removed soon after.²⁰

16 Santa Fe Terminal Buildings 1 & 2. National Register Listing (1997). Accessed via the web: http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/common/view_narrative.asp?narrative=97000478.htm&title=Sante%20Fe%20Terminal%20Buildings&filepath=E:\atlas_text\nr_listed\html . 20 August 2014.

17 "Underground Tunnel Ordinance Passes." *Dallas Morning News*, page 4 (11-26-1912).

18 Dallas union Terminal. National Register Listing (1975). Accessed via the web: http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/viewform.asp?atlas_num=2075001966&site_name=Dallas%20Union%20Terminal&class=2002. 27 Aug 2014

19 "Underground Parking Garage in Dallas to be Ready by June." *Dallas Morning News*, p. 3 (2-13-1950).

20 32 "Hotel Bridge Work to Start; City Approves." *Dallas Morning News*, Section 2, p.1 (10-18-1934).



Victor Gruen's plan for downtown Fort Worth, 1957

Superblock planners come to north Texas

In the 1950s, visionary urban planners such as Victor Gruen and Vincent Ponte were promoting the idea of efficient multi-level cities on a scale that George Kessler might never have imagined possible. These planners drew on the ideas promoted by Le Corbusier in his vertical garden cities, but sought to overcome what was perceived as their greatest flaw, a lack of humanity and human scale.²¹ Gruen and Ponte sought create diverse and fully-

²¹ Gruen, Victor. *The Heart of our Cities*. P. 178-181

integrated superblocks in which people could work and live with great convenience and personal satisfaction. These would then be connected to similar adjoining superblocks to cover the larger urban core. Transportation within the superblock system would be provided by pedestrian tunnel systems, moving sidewalks and personal conveyances.²²

In 1956, the City of Fort Worth commissioned Victor Gruen to develop a plan for its central business district. True to the ideals of multi-level planning and superblock development, Gruen designed a plan that eliminated surface parking lots downtown to create plazas, providing instead six massive centralized parking structures served by an outer highway loop. People would be moved throughout the core with a system of dedicated above and below-ground walkways and automatic conveyances. Other forms of transportation such as trucking, rail and commuter traffic would be separated from pedestrians with their own networks. In discussing his illustrations for the newly-envisioned city, Gruen said that the traditional and uniform street grid would be, “enlivened by the introduction of plazas, the narrowing of some streets and the construction of new buildings, the covering of some streets, and by the introduction of various exhibit and selling facilities in the center of streets and plazas.” The illustrations depict a downtown Fort Worth that appears as a series on interconnected shopping malls and office towers. From a historical standpoint, implementation of the Gruen plan would have been disastrous, with much of the historic downtown core we see today lost to demolition.²³

In Dallas, Gruen’s work in Fort Worth did not go unnoticed. The Dallas Texas Corporation soon initiated its own plan for a Dallas superblock. The Dallas Texas Corporation was the brainchild of William W. Overton, Jr., Chairman of the Texas Bank and Trust, Co. and founding member of the Dallas Citizens Council. Overton’s office overlooked the area of downtown buildings along Main and Griffin Streets, some of which he owned. While full of thriving businesses at the time, Overton saw the collection of aging buildings as an area of decline and eventual blight. In 1953 he approached another area businessman, Clint Murchison, who also owned property in the area including his offices in a small building at 1201 Main. The two men resolved to combine their property holdings on Main Street into a single entity, the Overton-Murchison Interests, and work together to purchase the remaining tracts in order to construct a major new development.²⁴

Overton and Murchison both relied heavily on the talents of their sons in managing their combined interests. Clint Murchison was joined by his sons, Clint Jr. and John, while Overton was joined by his son William W. Overton.²⁵ A 1958 article on the younger Overton described him as “a man going places.” Then 30-years old, he was already a junior director of Texas Bank and Trust, president of W. W. Overton Company, president of Dallas Downtown Investment Company, director of Overton Real Estate Company, and director of Dal-Tex Aviation. Overton was in the spotlight at the time for his efforts to establish the Addison Airport. Utilizing the combined political and financial influence of the Overton-Murchison Interests he succeeded in developing the state’s largest private airport at the time, and in developing the

22 Gruen, Victor. *The Heart of our Cities*

23 Gruen, Victor. *The Heart of our Cities*. p. 219

24 “Dream to Prevent Downtown Blight Now Coming True.” *Dallas Morning News*; Page 7 (05-31-1964).

25 “Dream to Prevent Downtown Blight Now Coming True.”



Composite Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing proposed site for Main Place 1921
 Courtesy Dolph Briscoe Center for American History

surrounding area for industrial use.²⁶ He played a leading role in the effort to redevelop the Murchison-Overton section of Main Street.

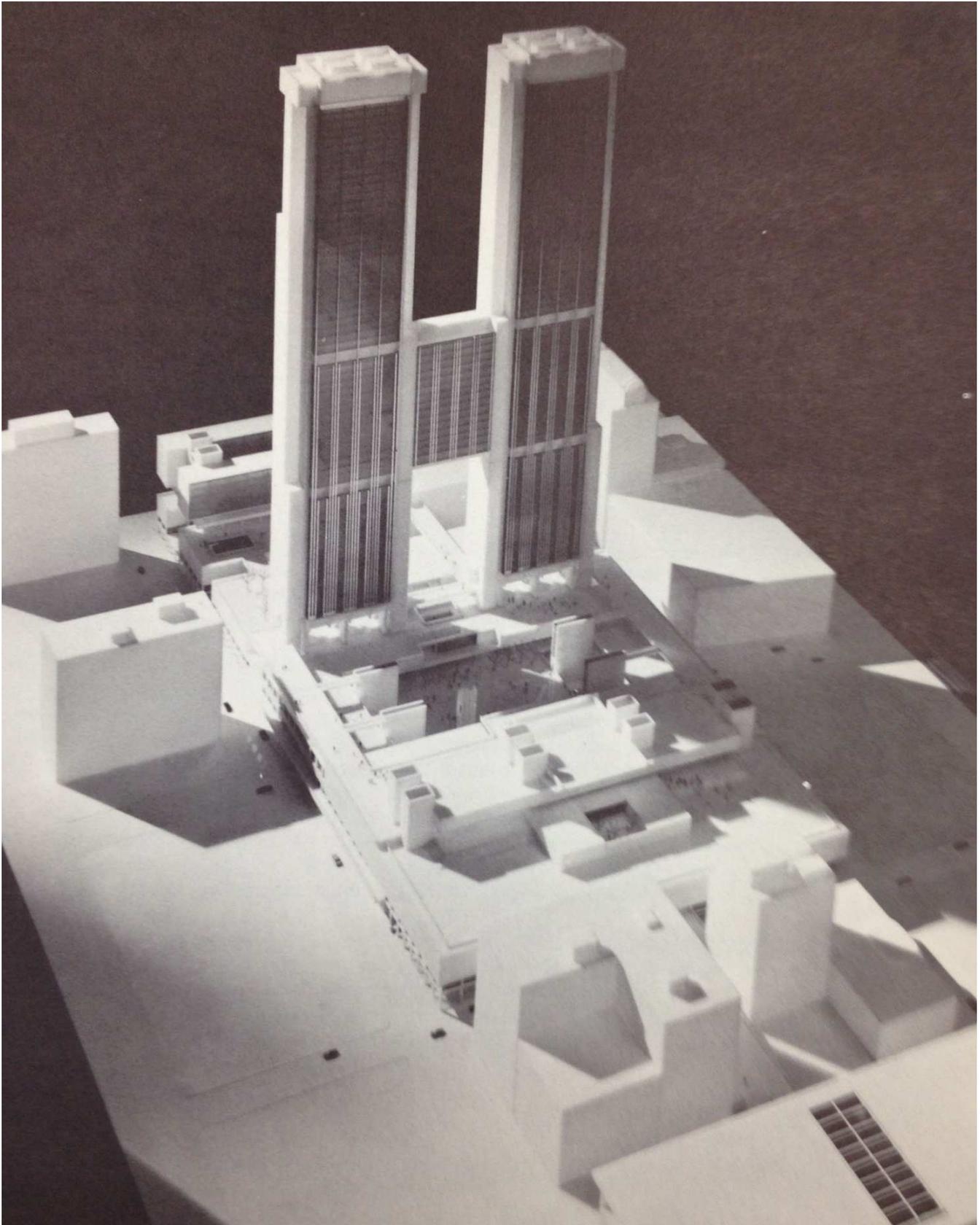
The Overtons and Murchisons created the Dallas Texas Corporation as the entity to undertake their new development and began to accumulate additional property along Main Street in the heart of downtown. The corporation also funded its own study of the Dallas central business district centered on the idea of constructing a superblock as a catalyst project for the redevelopment of the downtown core.²⁷ The plan was presented in 1961.

Conceived by the Columbia University School of Architecture Master's Program, the ideas in the 1961 Columbia plan for Dallas closely paralleled those of Corbusier, Ponte, and Gruen and it was described in the press as Dallas' "City of Tomorrow."²⁸ According to the plan, successful development projects at the hearts of our cities would include multiple functions including corporate, government, financial, retail, housing and cultural.

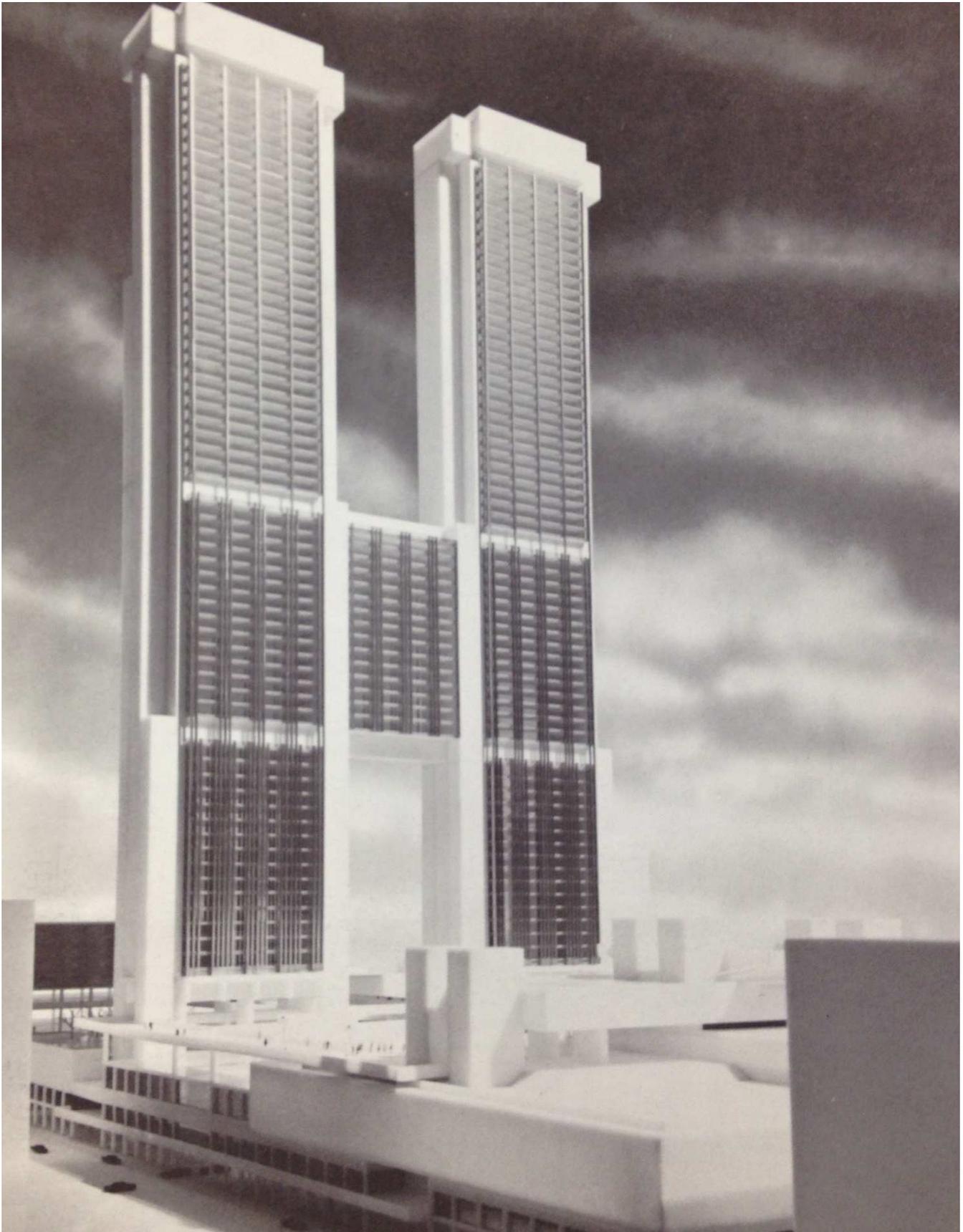
²⁶ "A Man Going Places: William W. Murchison" Dallas Magazine: page 58 (November 1958).

²⁷ "Dream to Prevent Downtown Blight Now Coming True."

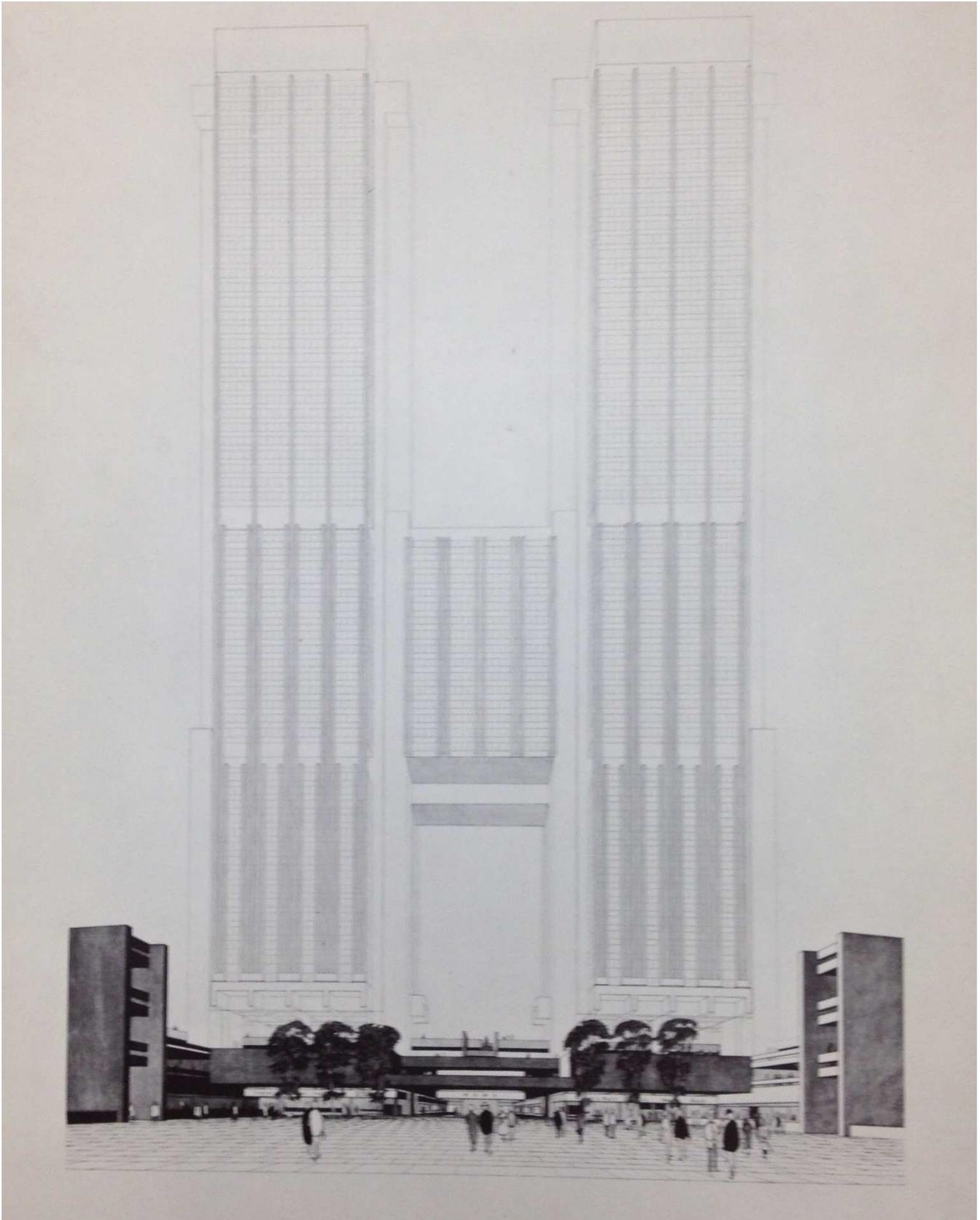
²⁸ "Group Formed in 1959 to Revitalize Area" Dallas Morning News: page 18 (04-29-1962).



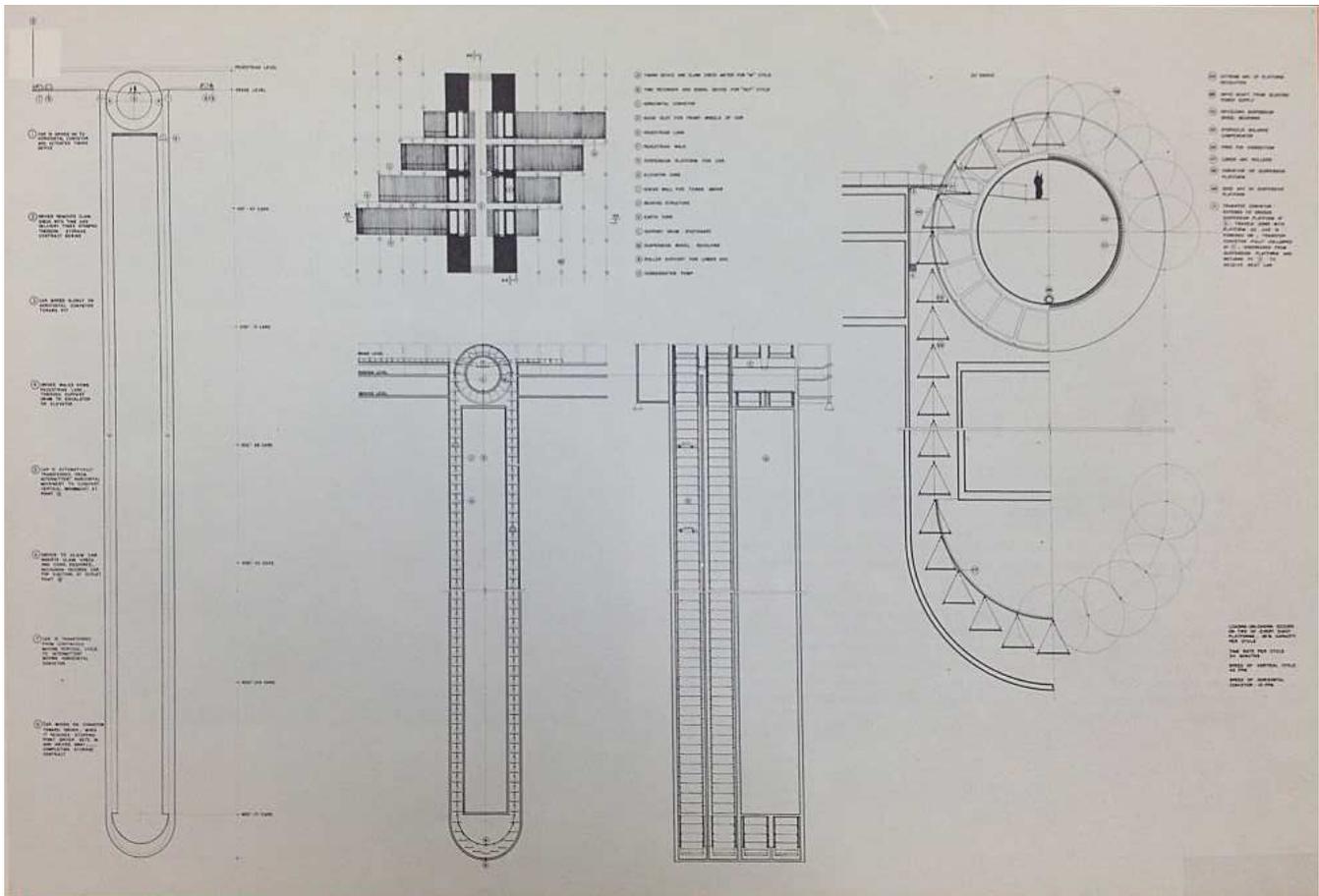
The Columbia University plan for Main Place (Architectural Record, May 1962)



The Columbia University plan for Main Place (Architectural Record, May 1962)



*The Columbia University plan for Main Place: View on Main Street facing west
(Architectural Record, May 1962)*



The Columbia University plan for Main Place: Diagram of mechanized parking pits (Architectural Record, May 1962)

These functions would be grouped into related and overlapping clusters to provide continuity without congestion across the entire central core.²⁹

In addition to providing facilities for various interrelated functions, the study also found the connections of these facilities to one another to be of critical importance. Specifically, the study called for transportation systems to be layered horizontally and vertically with a minimum of conflict and interference with one another. The plan stated that vertical transportation should be accommodated on three levels. The uppermost level, open to the sky, was strictly for the use of pedestrians who must be able to move from place to place without the interference of other types of transportation. This level would also include low-speed automatic conveyors. The level below was designed for higher speed conveyance including cars, taxis, and local city buses. The lowest level was for the use of trucks and long-range commuter vehicles. The plan called for the accommodation of these transportation systems and nodes of activity above ground by bridging the street grid.³⁰

Visually, the plan was striking. Covering 36 blocks, the proposal would have enveloped the street grid between Austin Street on the west and Akard on the east, Pacific to the north and Jackson to the south. The superblock plan included below-grade service and parking

29 *Main Place, Dallas, Texas*. Columbia University. p. 8-9.

30 *Main Place, Dallas, Texas*. Columbia University. Fold-out section & p. 28-29

levels. At grade, the street grid was to provide distribution of cars and transit across the entire superblock. Other above-ground levels were reserved for pedestrians. Parking for the massive complex was to include both flat parking and parking pits. The pits were to consist of continuously-operating mechanical conveyors carrying cars hundreds of feet below ground. A 30-minute full-cycle would have required careful planning by patrons of the system wanting to retrieve their vehicles. The centerpiece of the superblock was a pair of massive twin towers bridging Main Street.

According to the Columbia Plan, Main Place was to be implemented in three phases. The first phase was to cover the almost 10-acres already owned by the Dallas Texas Corporation. The second phase would include the 36-block area as conceived in the plan and illustrated in its pages. Finally, the third phase would cover a full 63 blocks. A diagram of the complete superblock showed that it would stretch from Ross Avenue to the north, Akard Street to the east, Young street to the South, and Houston Street to the west.³¹ Such a plan, if implemented, would have erased the western portion of downtown, and with it the entire Dallas County Government Center, the Adolphus Hotel, and Republic National Bank Buildings, among many others.

Main Place and SOM

While the lofty aspirations of the Columbia plan might have seemed out of reach to the Dallas, Texas Company, it is clear that many of the major ideas for the superblock were embraced and that the company believed it could, in fact, complete some version of the massive project. Representatives of the company and of the city of Dallas traveled to a number of major North American cities to examine various approaches being undertaken elsewhere. Most significantly, an 85-person delegation made up largely of members of the Dallas Central Business District Association visited both Constitution Plaza in Hartford, Connecticut, and Place Ville Marie in Montreal, Canada. Constitution Plaza, constructed on the site of one of Hartford's oldest neighborhoods, was under construction and designed as a series of interconnected buildings bridging the street grid. Place Ville Marie, on the other hand, pushed the lower levels of the superblock below ground, leaving much of the street grid intact.³² It is clear that the approach taken in Montreal impressed the delegation. The Dallas Texas Company immediately appointed David Owen, vice president of Webb & Knapp Canada and director of development of Place Ville Marie, to its staff and board of directors. Owen would be head of construction and leasing responsibilities at Main Place,³³ Dallas' appreciation of the Montreal scheme would be further exemplified by the hiring of Ville Place Marie planner Vincent Ponte in 1968.

In May of 1964 a plan for phase one covering the initial 10 acres and developed by SOM with Gordon Bunshaft as lead designer was revealed in the Dallas Morning News.³⁴ Gone from the plan were Columbia's visions for a vast island of infrastructure bridging the downtown street grid, mechanical pedestrian conveyors, and complex automated parking systems.

31 "Group Formed in 1959 to Revitalize Area"

32 "85 Leaders Visit Montreal, Hartford" Dallas Morning News; page 5 (05-22-1962).

33 "Dallas Corp. Appointees Announced." Dallas Morning News; page 1 (12-16-1962).

34 "Huge Project Planned in Downtown Dallas." Dallas Morning News, page 1 (05-31-1964).

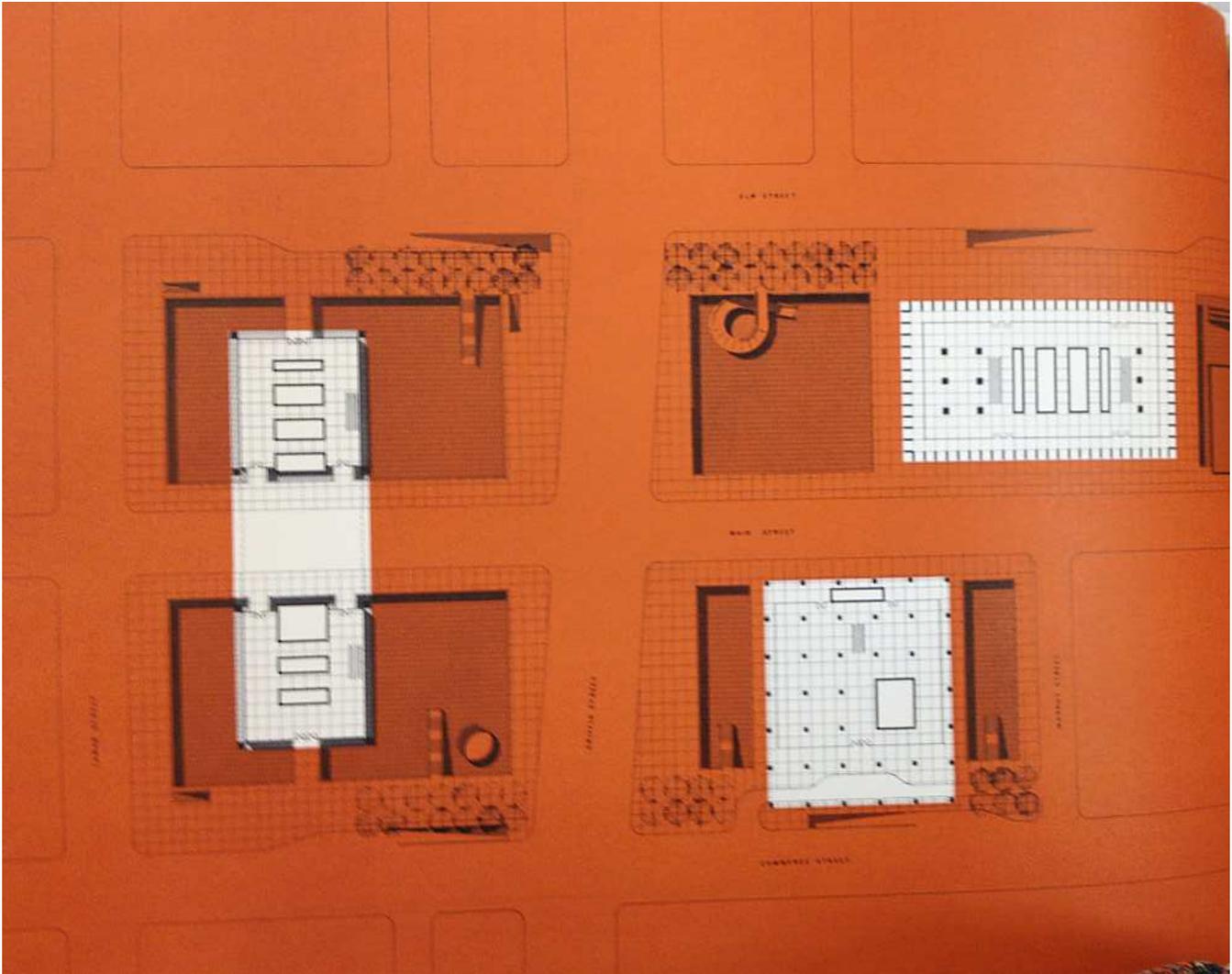


*View of Main Place plan from marketing brochure, 1965
 Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center*

What remained were the plan's more fundamental concepts. The above-ground hierarchy of layers for pedestrian, auto and freight traffic was pushed below ground. Automobile and bus circulation would remain at street level. Primary pedestrian circulation, including a network of tunnels connecting major downtown buildings, was placed on the first level below ground, thus eliminating pedestrian and automobile conflict at street level. This level also included plazas, retail amenities and other conveniences.³⁵

Architecturally, phase one of the superblock plan was broken down into three sub-phases. One Main Place was to be 33 above-ground stories with 1,000,000 square feet of office space. Two Main Place, spanning Main Street much as the central architectural piece of the Columbia plan had envisioned, was to be 50 stories with 1,400,000 square feet of office space. Finally, Three Main Place was to include a 300,000 square foot department store with a 400 room hotel above. Below grade and surrounding the sunken-plazas and courtyards was to be 225,000 square feet of retail and recreational amenities, a drive-through bank and 3,000 parking spaces. Freight docks were also placed at this level in anticipation of a future downtown freight tunnel system dedicated completely to truck traffic. Missing was any attempt at providing a

³⁵ *Main Place*. (Marketing Publication) Dallas Texas Corporation (May 1964).



View of Main Place plan from marketing brochure, 1965
 Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center

residential component or the amenities necessary for residential living.³⁶

According to the developer, the Main Place Concept was designed to:

- *Function as a single unit so that pedestrians may have continuous access over the entire ten acres.*
- *Maximize the site's incomparable access from all parts of the metropolitan area to the massive underground parking garage.*
- *Ease the flow of traffic into and out of the project by separating conflicting movements.*
- *Relate complimentary uses to produce a dynamic union of various activities.*
- *Create on this vast land area carefully organized open areas which blend with each other and the building masses surrounding them to develop a true urban scale.³⁷*

³⁶ *Main Place*. Dallas Texas Corporation.

³⁷ *Main Place*. Dallas Texas Corporation.



*View of Main Place Plan from marketing brochure, 1965
Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center*

It is not clear how the Texas Corporation came to select SOM and Gordon Bunshaft as their architectural designer. The firm and Bunshaft had gained national notoriety for the design of Lever House and the Union Carbide Building in New York, among others. They also made local news for their designs for the Medical Center and Great Southern Life Buildings in Houston, and the First National Bank Building in downtown Fort Worth. Certainly SOM was the go-to firm at the time for corporate branding through architectural design, making them an obvious choice as architect. It is worth noting that in attributing any of SOM's buildings to a particular lead designer, we are not being entirely faithful to the principles of the firm or to Gordon Bunshaft. SOM is known for fostering a climate of collaboration and for a reluctance to place credit for a design in the hands of any single team member. This is a climate in which Bunshaft preferred to work and in which he thrived. ³⁸

³⁸ Martin, Reinhold. "The Bunshaft Tapes: A Preliminary Report." *Journal of Architectural Education* (Nov 2000) p. 80-87.



*Rendering of One Main Place from marketing brochure, 1965: View from northwest
Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center*

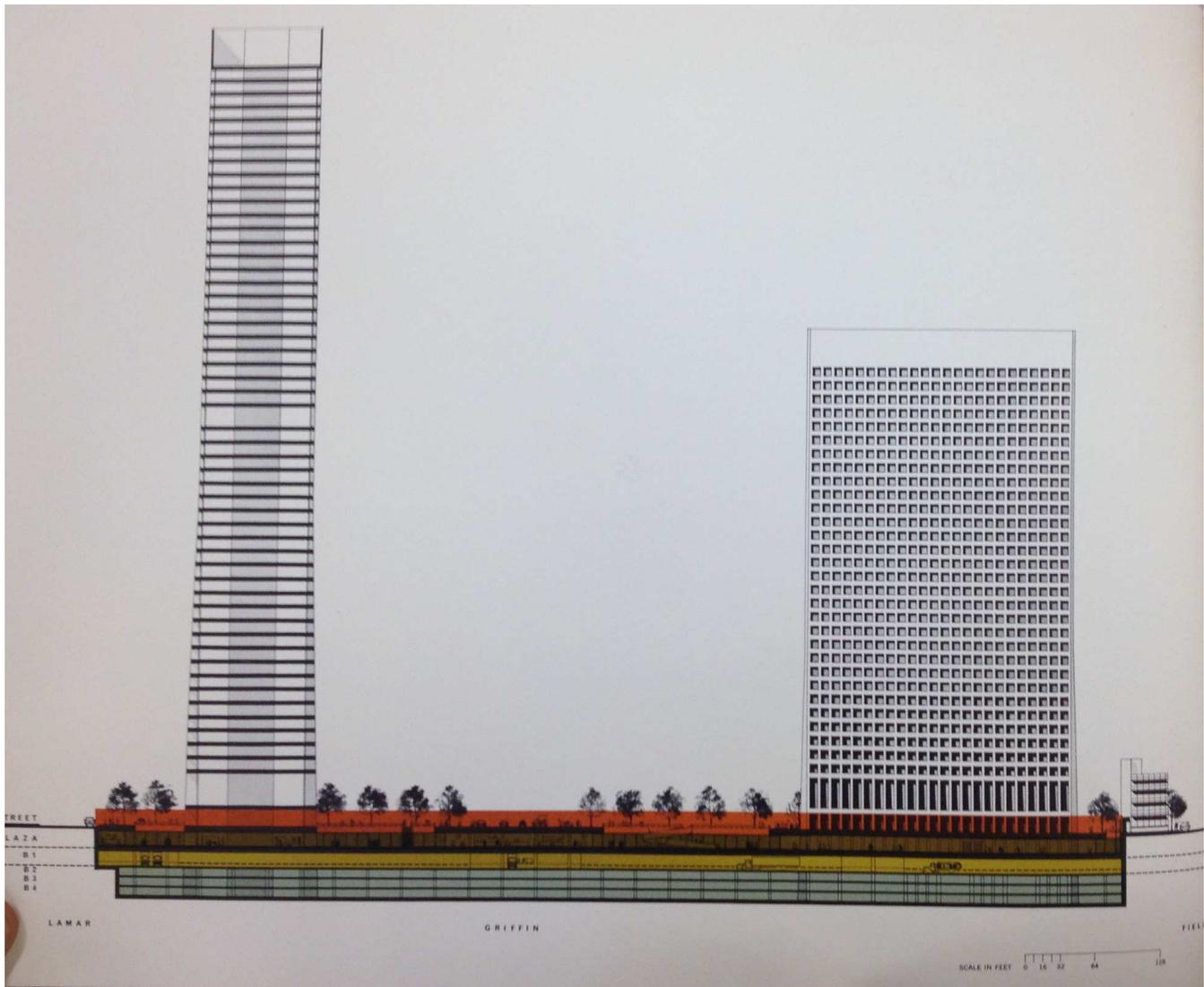


*Rendering of One Main Place west plaza from marketing brochure, 1965: View from southwest
Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center*

The ideas driving the architectural design details of Main Place are not well documented in the architectural record. In fact, outside of Dallas, One Main Place was not heralded as an important example of SOM's work, perhaps because the entire vision for the superblock was never fully realized. In interviews concerning his career, Gordon Bunshaft insisted that his designs were based on a collaborative process between himself, his colleagues and his clients. He said his clients were central to creating a composition that reflected the ideals of their corporate culture. He also stressed that the designs were in part evolutionary, capitalizing on the successes of past efforts, and casting aside those design ideas he found to be problematic. Building forms were also shaped significantly by functional needs and environmental limitations.³⁹

While many of Bunshaft's designs in the northeast featured elegant and lightweight skins of glass and aluminum, his compositions for buildings in the south were typically given heavier and more robust facades of stone and concrete, deeply recessed windows, and even walls devoid of windows altogether. This was apparently in response to the climate, where

³⁹ Martin. "The Bunshaft Tapes." p. 80-87.



*Section through Main Place underground from marketing brochure, 1965: View facing north
 Courtesy Dallas Public Library Dallas and Texas History Center*

heavier massing and protection from the summer sun were critical to efficient building function. This seems a logical characteristic of the architectural designs at Main Place.

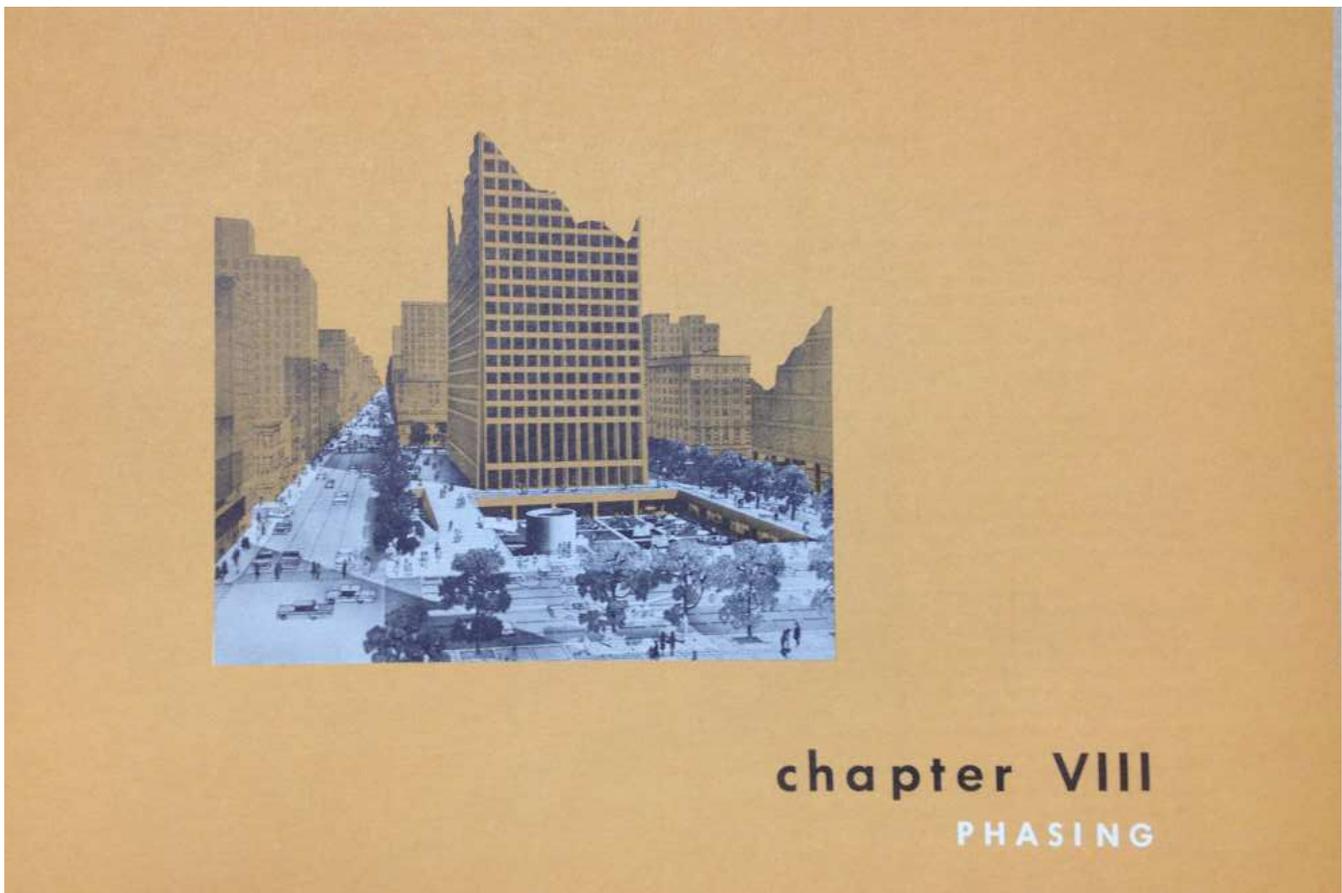
One Main Place, the first and only building constructed in the Main Place superblock, provides room for comparison with other SOM buildings designed under Bunshaft's influence. With Lever House, Bunshaft set a precedent by placing a central tower, occupying only a quarter of the site, atop a broader base of several stories housing parking, retail, service and other functions. At first glance, One Main Place abandons this idea, eliminating the larger base altogether. However, in studying the building in section, the similarities of the designs becomes clear, with the base section simply pushed below the street level. This approach addressed the problem of providing uninterrupted connectivity across the entire site with the added benefit of protection from the intense summer heat.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Main Place*. Dallas Texas Corporation.

The public-sector plan for Dallas

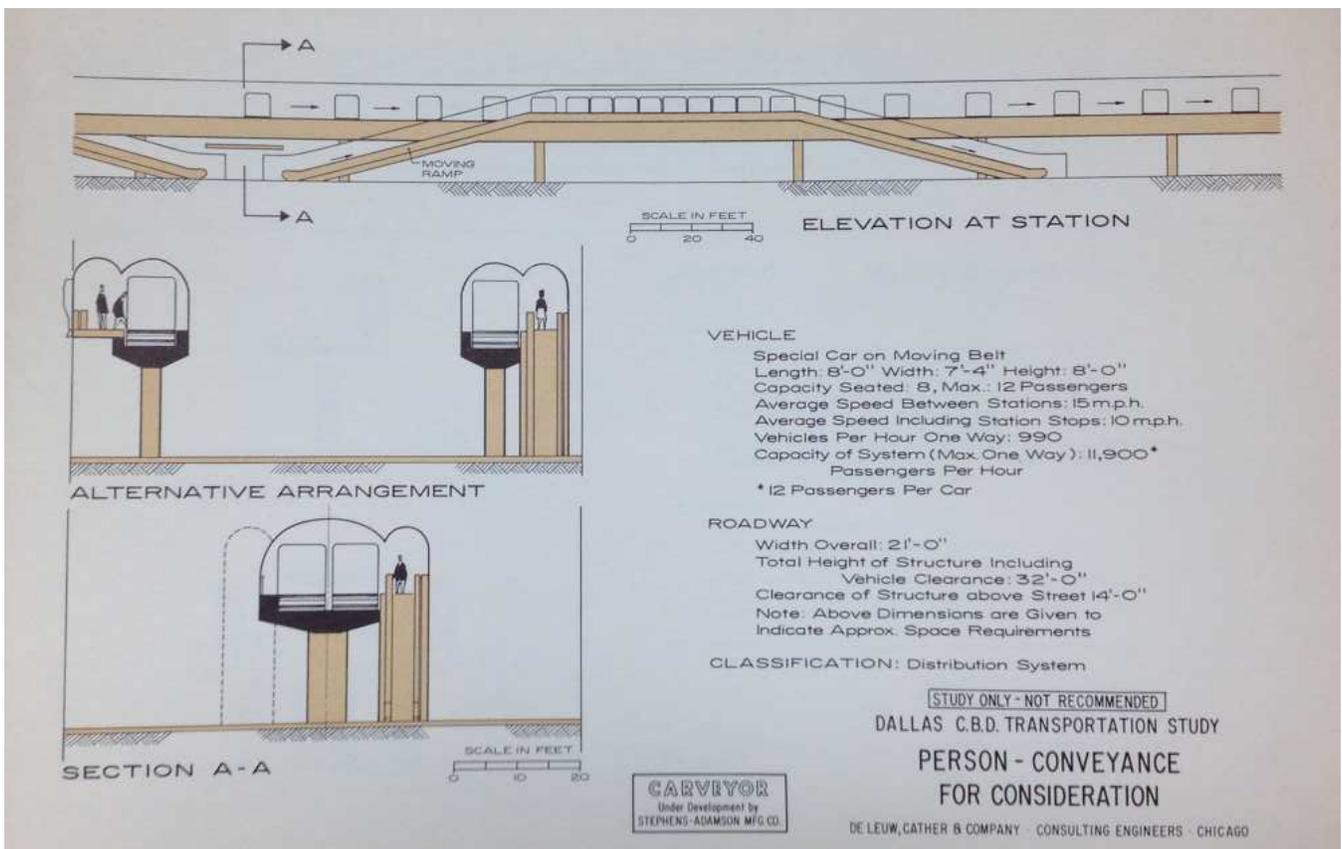
In the shadow of Victor Gruen's multi-layered plan for Fort Worth, the privately-funded Columbia plan, and with SOM's concept for Main Place under development, the City of Dallas found itself playing catch up and commissioned its own plan for the city focusing largely on traffic and transportation. Conducted by DeLeuw, Cather and Company of Chicago and released in July, 1965, the plan was yet another comprehensive example of a multi-layered city plan and included many of the general concepts for the city core presented in the Columbia Plan while leaving out the massive 36-block superblock. The DeLeuw, Cather document included detailed studies of traffic and growth patterns downtown and made specific recommendations for future development including freeways, new street alignments, centralized parking structures and transportation terminals, layered Transportation Networks including freight tunnels, and pedestrian conveyances.⁴¹

The 1965 plan for downtown made direct references to the Main Place development which was not yet under construction. Maps, diagrams and even artwork in the plan clearly identified Main Place as a central part of the overall proposal. Although the public plan coordinated closely with the ideas of the Dallas, Texas Corporation for the Main Place development, it failed to effectively address how the massive new infrastructure proposed for downtown might be



Chapter art depicting One Main Place from the DeLeuw and Cather plan for Dallas, 1965

⁴¹ DeLeuw, Cather and Company Consulting Engineers. *Long Range Transportation Plan for the Central Business District, Dallas, Texas* (July 1965).



Concept drawings from the DeLeuw and Cather plan for Dallas, 1965: Main Street freight tunnel (top), and "Carveyor" personal conveyance (bottom)

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constructed. The expressway loop around downtown was completed, though the parking and transportation terminals it was to feed were not. The downtown street grid was modified as suggested by the planners and the Griffin Street connector completed through the heart of the proposed Main Place development.

Also in 1965, the first segment of an underground pedestrian network was constructed. It was an 800-foot long collection of tunnels connecting the Davis, Metropolitan Federal Savings, and First National Bank Buildings. The meandering tunnel included several shops.

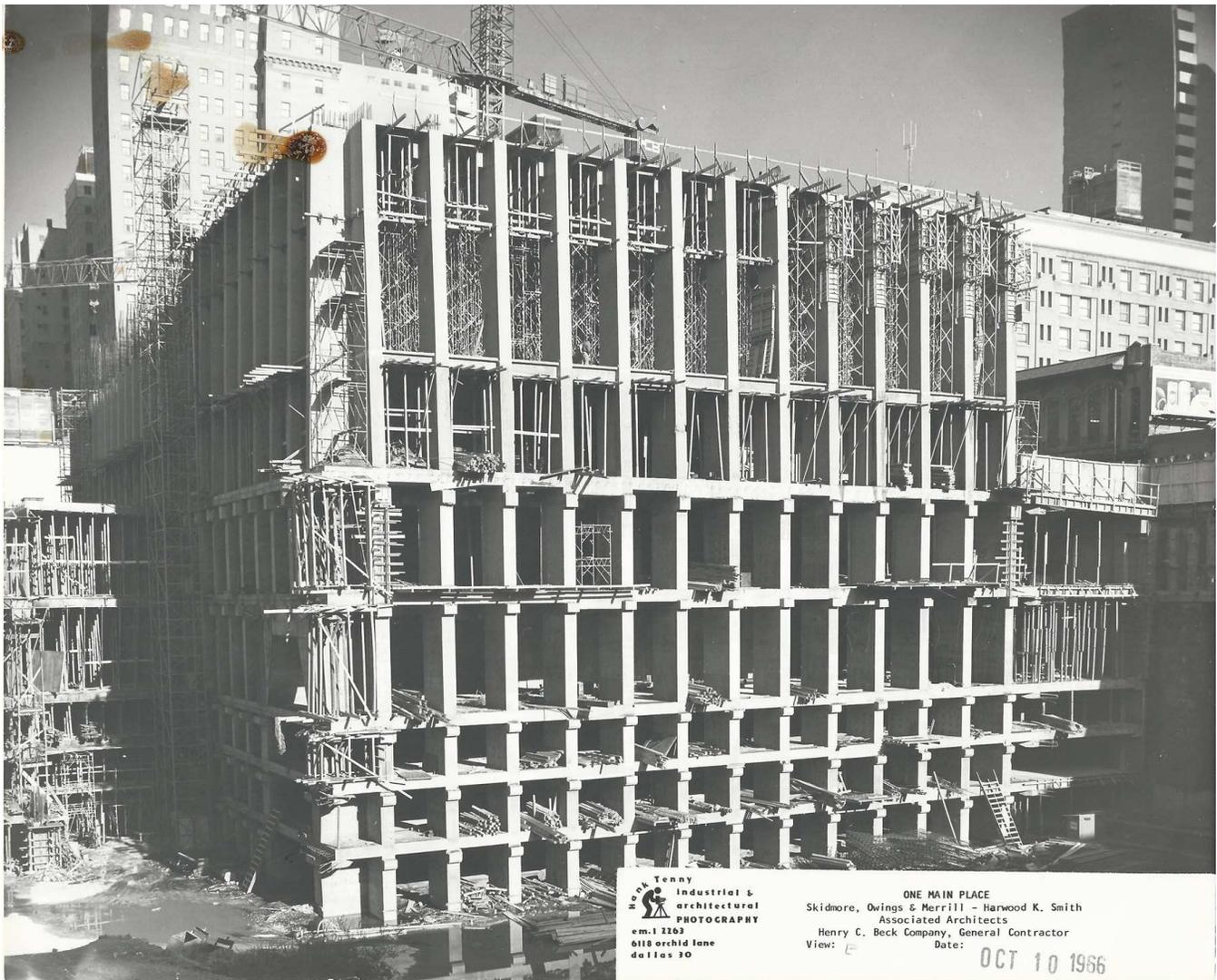
One Main Place construction

By 1965, the 3 acre site for One Main Place was fully cleared and the massive excavation of the site underway, an effort claimed by the Dallas Times Herald to be the largest excavation



*One Main Place under construction. View from the southwest, 1966
Courtesy KFK Group.*

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*One Main Place under construction. View from the northwest, 1966
Courtesy KFK Group.*

project for a single building in history.⁴² Notable aspects of the construction included the building's foundation. The 225,000 ton tower was considered too heavy to be supported on individual piers. Structural engineers instead dug a deep foundation, through the Austin Chalk that typically supported Dallas buildings, and down to the Eagle Ford Shale below. There was placed a massive reinforced concrete mat foundation, the city's first, 8-feet thick and weighing over 2,000 tons.⁴³

The building's exposed structure and core included two distinct methodologies for producing exposed aggregate finishes. At the cores, the Naturbetong process, developed in Norway by Erling Vicksjo, involved placing one-inch aggregate into the building forms and pumping cement through injection ports at the base until it flowed out the top. Once cured, the surfaces

⁴² "Main Place Excavation Bared Eons of History." *Dallas Times Herald*. One Main Place Special Section. page 3 (12-01-1968)

⁴³ "How to Support Skyscraper?" *Dallas Morning News*, page 26 (11-28-1965).

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*One Main Place under construction. View from the southwest, 1967
Courtesy KFK Group.*

were sandblasted to fully expose the aggregate.⁴⁴ At the structural columns, the Arbeton Process was utilized. The Arbeton Process was developed and patented by James Shilstone at the request of SOM and was first utilized in the design of the Great Southern Life Insurance Building in Houston. The process is similar to standard reinforced concrete construction, but includes the addition of a cage of wire mesh placed three inches from the interior surfaces of the forms. Decorative aggregate is placed between the mesh and form. A specially-formulated cement is then placed at the center of the column and with the use of vibration made to flow into the voids of the decorative stones.⁴⁵

Technologically, the building was among the most advanced of its day. The building was the first in Dallas to be fully electric in its operations and, if the entire Main Place complex had

⁴⁴ "From Norway... Exposed Aggregate Concrete Murals by Sandblasting." The Aberdeen Group (1968).

⁴⁵ Shilstone, James M. "Architectural Concrete: A Close-Up Look." *American Institute of Architects Journal* 44.5 (1965): 58. ProQuest. Web. 28 Apr. 2014.

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been completed, would have been the largest of its type in the world.⁴⁶

The mechanical systems featured advanced computer controls programmed to adapt over time to provide the most efficient operation possible.⁴⁷ The building also included the nation's first Vertically Improved Mail (VIM) system. With a fully operational postal substation in the second concourse level, mail was sorted continuously and distributed throughout the building via a series of computer-controlled conveyors.⁴⁸

Upon its completion in 1968, the building was already 75% leased. One Main Place was immediately sold to Equitable Life Insurance Company of the United States for \$40.5-million plus 50% of net income through 1984.⁴⁹ The Dallas, Texas Corporation would continue on in its efforts to complete phases 2 and 3 of the Main Place superblock development.

The Ponte-Travers plan

In 1969, with One Main Place fully complete and the future of the development hanging in the balance, the City of Dallas completed a revised study for downtown. Compiled by Vincent Ponte, the visionary behind Montreal's massive underground network, and traffic planner, Warren Travers, the plan revised and expanded upon DeLeuw and Cather's 1965 effort. The team was also hired to provide an update to the plan. Completed in 1986, the document was evolutionary, stressing the same concepts as the 1969 plan but in the context of 20-years of additional development.

The Ponte-Travers plans shared many of the basic concepts of the DeLeuw-Cather Plan and even that of George Kessler. Like their predecessors, they stressed the need to improve efficiency in the core by carefully controlling various modes of transportation to reduce conflicts and related congestion. However, their plans were a more pragmatic analysis than those put forth in the DeLeuw-Cather Plan, and in Victor Gruen's plan for Fort Worth. His plan focused less on futuristic ideas such as a street grid enveloped by new construction and made nearly obsolete by car-veyors and moving sidewalks. The plan focused more on improving the efficiency of the existing street grid and the use of traditional means of transit downtown like busses to distribute people. Also central to the Ponte-Travers plans for Dallas was the incremental establishment of a layered transportation network and an extensive pedestrian network that was to be placed primarily underground with strategically-placed overhead connections. The influence of this plan is evident in the existing Dallas pedestrian tunnel system, the Dallas Municipal Complex and Thanksgiving Square.

Main Place development comes to an end

With Ponte's plan released in 1969 and with One Main Place completed, the newspapers continued to describe the Main Place superblock as an important ongoing development. Downtown's first superblock was still seen as the catalyst project for a new area of

46 GE Executive Praises Main Place Innovations." *Dallas Morning News*, Section H, p. 16 (12-01-1968).

47 "Electronic Weatherman is World's First." *Dallas Morning News*, Section H, p. 3 (12-01-1968).

48 "VIM System Built In." *Dallas Morning News*, Section H, p. 2 (12-01-1968).

49 "Equitable Buying One Main Place." *Dallas Morning News*, page 8 (12-07-1968).

13. Historical Significance



*The west plaza, 1976
Courtesy KFK Group*

revitalization in the city. Then in early February, 1970, William T. Overton was found dead in his north Dallas apartment, the apparent victim of a murder suicide at the hands of his estranged wife, Dorothy.⁵⁰

It is unclear whether the death of the younger Overton directly impacted ongoing negotiations to fund phase 2 of Main Place. However, with all of the drama, planning and exposure the project received over more than 15 years, the announcement of its demise was remarkably subdued. In April, 1970, after months of negotiations with various investors, a short article in the Dallas Morning News indicated that funding for the project had fallen through.⁵¹ W. T. Overton, Jr. retired soon thereafter. Today, the northern portion of the site for Two Main Place contains Bank of America Plaza, Dallas' tallest skyscraper. The southern portion is a surface parking lot. The site of Three Main Place is Belo Gardens Park.

⁵⁰ "W. T. Overton, Wife Found Shot to Death." *Dallas Morning News*; page 1 (02-05-1970)

⁵¹ "Funds Hangup Endangering 2 Main Place." *Dallas Morning News*; page 1 (04-11-1970)

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Gordon Bunshaft

Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990), was born in Buffalo, New York, the son of David, an egg merchant, and Yetta Bunshaft. After attending public schools in Buffalo, Bunshaft earned bachelors and masters degrees (1933, 1935) from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After a year's work for Harold Field Kellogg, he won a traveling scholarship, which allowed him to study architecture in western and southern Europe.⁵²

Soon after his return from Europe, Bunshaft moved to New York City and by the end of 1937 was employed by Skidmore and Owings. The company took on a third partner shortly after his arrival and became Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Except for several years in the army corps of engineers (1942-1946) he remained at SOM for the entirety of his career, becoming an associate in 1946 and a full partner in 1949.⁵³

With a broadly-talented team of architects and designers, including Bunshaft, SOM grew to become the nation's largest architectural firm. In 1984, Bunshaft was awarded The Gold Medal by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, an institution to which he would later be elected. In 1988 he received the Pritzker Architecture Prize in recognition of his work, most notably Lever House in Midtown Manhattan (1952).⁵⁴

SOM's first major Texas commission drew dramatically from the Lever House design. Houston's Medical Towers Building (1957) included similar massing and aesthetic details. Later Bunshaft works in the south were clearly designed to respond to climatic conditions, with heavy, shaded outer skins.⁵⁵ A dramatic example was Houston's First City National Bank Building (1961) which features a marble clad structural frame and a window wall set back a full five feet to provide shading to protect interiors from the sun.⁵⁶ Fort Worth's First National Bank Building (1962) was designed using similar details. One Main Place (1968) uses similar shading techniques with its deeply-set windows and heavy concrete structural frame. Notable SOM projects from the period also include the Tenneco Building (1963) and One Shell Plaza (1971), both in Houston.

52 Krinsky, Carol Herselle. "Bunshaft, Gordon"; <http://www.anb.org/articles/17/17-01121.html>; American National Biography Online Feb. 2000. Access Date: Thu Oct 2 2014 10:15:35 GMT-0500 (Central Standard Time)

53 Krinsky, Carol Herselle. "Bunshaft, Gordon

54 Krinsky, Carol Herselle. "Bunshaft, Gordon

55 Alter, Kevin. "SOM in Houston." *Cite: the architecture and design review of Houston*.40 (1997)

56 "First City National Bank, Houston, Texas." *Bauen und Wohnen* 16 (1962): 22-7. ProQuest. Web. 28 Apr. 2014.

17. Designation Criteria

History, heritage and culture: Represents the historical development, ethnic heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or country.

Historic event: Location of or association with the site of a significant historic event.

Significant persons: Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, state, or country.

Architecture: Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, landscape design, method of construction, exceptional craftsmanship, architectural innovation, or contains details which represent folk or ethnic art.

Architect or master builder: Represents the work of an architect, designer or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or country.

Historic context: Relationship to other

distinctive buildings, sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation based on historic, cultural, or architectural characteristics.

Unique visual feature: Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city that is a source of pride or cultural significance.

Archeological: Archeological or paleontological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.

National and state recognition: Eligible of or designated as a National Historic Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, American Civil Engineering Landmark, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

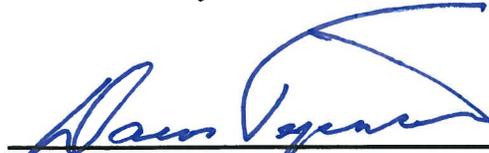
Historic education: Represents an era of architectural, social, or economic history that allows an understanding of how the place or area was used by past generations.

Recommendation

The Designation Committee requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.

Further, the Designation Committee endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Sustainable Development and Construction Department.

Date: February 15, 2017



*Daron Tapscott - Chair
Designation Committee*



*Liz Casso
Historic Preservation Planner*