

July 3, 2024

NR ITEM NO.: TWO

FILE NO.: NR2024-005

NAME: The Worthen Building

LOCATION: 200 West Capitol Avenue

APPLICANT/AUTHORIZED AGENT:

Ralph Wilcox
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
1101 North Street,
Little Rock, AR

200 West Capitol Investments LLC
9800 Maumelle Blvd
North Little Rock, AR



Figure 1. Worthen Building, 200 W Capitol Street, 2023.

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AREA: 1.39 acres

NUMBER OF LOTS: 2

WARD: 1

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Across from the Capitol-Main Historic District

HISTORIC STATUS: DOE 2023

CURRENT ZONING: UU, Urban Use

A. BACKGROUND

Location

The subject structure is located at 200 W. Capitol Street, Little Rock, AR.

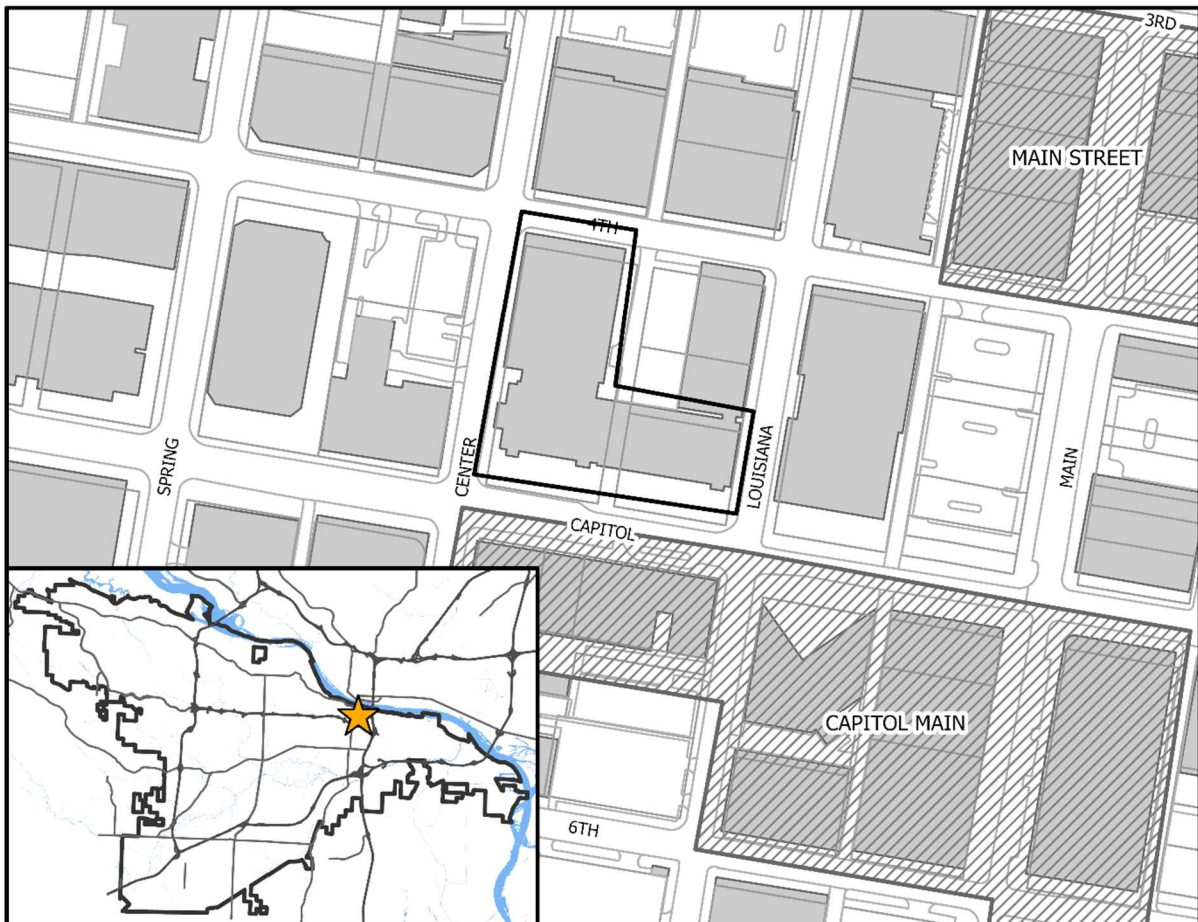


Figure 2. Location of the Worthen Building at 200 W Capitol Street.

B. PROPOSAL/REQUEST/APPLICANT'S STATEMENT:

The application requests to nominate the Worthen Bank Building to the National Register of Historic Places for local significance under Criterion C as an outstanding representation of the Brutalist architectural style. The area of significance is Architecture. The period of significance is 1967-1969.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS:

See photos in Nomination (Attachment A).

D. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS:

At the time of distribution, there were no comments regarding this application.

All neighborhood associations registered with the City of Little Rock that surround the site were notified of the public hearing.

E. ANALYSIS:

The Nomination's Statement of Significance summary section states:

"The Worthen Bank Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criterion C. Designed by the architect Noland Bass, Jr., in the late 1960s, the Worthen Building is an outstanding representation of the Brutalist style. The *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* notes the following characteristics of Brutalism: raw concrete, sometimes with formwork patterns visible or possibly emphasized; use of over-sized rough concrete elements; aspects of mechanical engineering, such as service ducts, ventilation-towers, and the like, often overtly displayed. The Worthen Building design embodies these characteristics of Brutalism with its frame of reinforced concrete and the exterior of white precast concrete panels with deep-set bronze-tinted windows. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete tower which enclose the elevators, stairs, restrooms, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four and twenty-three. The Worthen Building represents a significant period in American architectural history in Arkansas. The period of significance for the building, 1967-1969, represents the years of the building's construction."

The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has set forth the "Arkansas Certified Local Government Procedures." In Section V of this agreement, "Certified Local

Governments Participation in the National Register Nomination Process,” Little Rock Historic District Commission’s role is identified:

“B. CLG involvement in the National Register process

- 1. Within 60 calendar days of receipt of the nomination, the CLG shall inform the AHPP by submission of a report (see section V-A) as to its opinion regarding the eligibility of the property. The CLG shall also inform the property owner(s) using National Register criteria for evaluation, as to its opinion regarding the eligibility of the property.*
- 2. In the event a nomination is received by the AHPP before submission to the CLG, the AHPP will forward a copy of the completed nomination to the CLG within 30 calendar days of receipt.*
- 3. If both the commission and chief elected official recommend that a property not be nominated because it does not meet the National Register criteria for eligibility, the CLG will so inform the property owner(s) and the State Historic Preservation Officer, the property will then not be nominated unless an appeal is filed with the SHPO in accordance with appeal procedures outlined in 36 CFR 60. Appeals must be received by the SHPO within 30 calendar days of the date the property owner receives notification by certified mail that the property has been determined ineligible for nomination by both the CLG and the Chief elected official. This is in accordance with Section 101(c) 2 of the NHPA.*
- 4. If the commission or the chief elected official of the CLG recommend that a property should be nominated, the nomination will be scheduled for submission to the Arkansas State Review Board. Scheduling will be in accordance with notification time constraints as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.*
- 5. The Arkansas State Review Board, after considering all opinions, including those of the commission and the chief elected official of the CLG, shall make its recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Officer. Either the local preservation commission or the chief elected official may appeal the SHPOs final decision.*
- 6. When a National Register nomination, that has been reviewed by a commission, is submitted to the National Park Service for review and*

listing, all reports or comments from the local officials will be submitted along with the nomination.

7. *The AHPP and the CLG will work together to provide ample opportunity for public participation in the nomination of properties to the National register. All reports submitted by the CLG to the AHPP regarding the eligibility of properties shall include assurances of public input. The CLG shall retain a list of all persons contacted during the evaluation period and note comments that were received. If a public meeting was held, a list of those attending shall be included in the report.”*

Staff finds the nomination meets the National Register criteria for eligibility, is an excellent example of Brutalist architecture in Little Rock’s downtown, and worthy of preservation. The nomination is scheduled to be heard at the April 3rd, 2024 State Review Board meeting.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the nomination of the Worthen Building to the National Register of Historic Places for local significance under Criterion C and the submission of the nomination as written to the State Review Board.

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Attachment A

Nomination



Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor
Shea Lewis
Secretary

May 30, 2024

Hannah Ratzlaff, Urban Designer
City of Little Rock
723 West Markham Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Worthen Building – Little Rock, Pulaski County

Dear Ms. Ratzlaff:

We are pleased to inform you that the above referenced property will be considered by the State Review Board of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, an agency of the Division of Arkansas Heritage, for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of the preservation. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places provides recognition and assists in preserving our nation's heritage.

Listing of this property provides recognition of the community's historic importance and assures protective review of the federal projects that might adversely affect the character of the historic property.

Listing in the National Register does not mean that limitations will be placed on the property by the federal government. Public visitation rights are not required of property owners. The federal government will not attach covenants to the property or seek to acquire it.

We have enclosed a copy of the National Register nomination for your review. If you have any comments on the proposed nomination, please submit a letter with your comments, concerns, or concurrence to the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program at least 24 hours prior to the date of the State Review Board meeting.

You are invited to attend the State Review Board meeting at which the nomination will be considered. The board will begin meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 7th, 2024, at the Department of Arkansas Heritage headquarters at 1100 North Street in Little Rock.

If you have any questions regarding the State Review Board meeting feel free to call Ralph Wilcox, Travis Ratermann, or Megan Willmes at (501) 324-9880.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Scott Kaufman'.

Scott Kaufman
Director

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: The Worthen Building

Other names/site number: Worthen National Bank, Worthen Bank and Trust Company, Bank of America Building, Site #PU3536

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 200 West Capitol Avenue

City or town: Little Rock State: AR County: Pulaski

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

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

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<hr/>	<hr/>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure

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Object



Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution/savings and loan/bank
- COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building
- COMMERCE/TRADE/professional/law offices
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business/office building
- COMMERCE/TRADE/professional/law offices
- TRANSPORTATION/road-related (vehicular)

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Brutalism

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, BRICK, GLASS, SYNTHETICS/rubber

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Worthen Bank Building is an example of a late 1960s high-rise building designed in the Brutalist style. The style is characterized by raw concrete structure, geometric forms, and fortress-like appearance. The choice of Brutalism, a style credited to the Swiss architect Le Corbusier and popular for civic and bank buildings in the 1950s and 60s, reflects the era's architectural trends and the desire to project stability and longevity, especially in financial institutions. The Worthen Bank Building consists of three interwoven parts: a large banking room entered at Louisiana Street and running along Capitol to Center Street, a twenty-four story (plus basement) office tower rising out of the ground floor banking room at the Capitol and Center Streets corner and the original attached parking facility with drive-in banking at the ground floor at the Center and Louisiana streets corner. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of large white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete towers which enclose the elevators, stairs, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four, and twenty-three. All windows and door systems are bronze colored aluminum with tinted glass. All entries have commercial store front door systems with rotating plate glass doors. The main entry on the south façade is defined by three recessed bays that are two-story in height with two-story white concrete columns. The attached seven-story parking deck, which was built to compliment the main structure, is located north of the tower.

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Narrative Description

The Worthen Bank Building is an example of a late 1960s high-rise building designed in the Brutalist style. The style is characterized by raw concrete structure, geometric forms, and fortress-like appearance. The choice of Brutalism, a style credited to the Swiss architect Le Corbusier and popular for civic and bank buildings in the 1950s and 60s, reflects the era's architectural trends and the desire to project stability and longevity, especially in financial institutions. Worthen Bank & Trust Company desired to project these ideals in their new office building and banking center. The Worthen Building consists of three interwoven parts: a large banking room entered at Louisiana Street and running along Capitol to Center Street, a twenty-four story (plus basement) office tower rising out of the ground floor banking room at the Capitol and Center streets corner and the original attached parking facility with drive-in banking at the ground floor at the Center and Louisiana streets corner. The building is reinforced concrete construction with the only exception being the steel beams placed above the long span first floor banking room to hold the depth of construction to a minimum and increase the ceiling height. The exterior of the building is white precast concrete panels with deep-set windows. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete towers which enclose the elevators, stairs, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four and twenty-three. All windows and door systems are bronze colored aluminum with tinted glass. All first-floor entries have commercial store front door systems with rotating plate-glass doors. The main entry on the south façade is defined by three recessed bays that are two-story in height with two-story white concrete columns. The twenty-third floor features plate-glass windows that are not recessed nor framed in precast concrete which emphasizes the twenty-fourth floor, which returns to this treatment, as the crown of the building. The banking lobby main entry at the east façade is comprised of two recessed entries with bronze rotating door systems. The west entries into the office tower feature two bronze rotating door systems, one located on either side of the large cast-concrete tower that houses the elevator shafts. One bronze colored rotating door system is located in the far-left bay along with a double entry commercial system, also bronze colored. The attached seven-story parking deck, which was built to compliment the main structure, is located north of the tower. It, too, is made entirely of reinforced concrete. It is sheathed in concrete panels to match the Worthen Bank Building with precast concrete railings and square balustrades.

Front/South Façade

The front façade of the building is asymmetrical in nature. The building runs the length of the city block on Capitol Avenue from Center Street to Louisiana Street. Approximately two-thirds of the block toward the east is the three-story portion of the building which features the two-story banking room or bank lobby. There are five recessed bays, two-story in height, which are fenestrated with two tiers of vertical panels of plate glass divided by a transom of plate glass in a bronze-colored metal commercial system. The bays are formed by the placement of four one and one-half story towers sheathed in textured concrete panels. The third story begins the curtain wall of large white precast concrete panels with recessed glazing, each of which are twelve feet high and eight feet wide. There are twenty panels over this portion of the building. The corner of the building at Capitol Avenue and Louisiana Street features a column sheathed in textured

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concrete panels. The column terminates just above the third story. The office high rise sits on the remaining third of the west end of the block. The first and second floors are recessed and divided into three bays by two white precast concrete columns. Opaque glass divides the first floor from the second floor on this façade. The three bays are fenestrated with three vertical panels on the first and second floor, separated by a horizontal band of opaque spandrel glass in a bronze-colored metal system. There is a bronze-colored rotating commercial entry door system at the far-left bay, along with a double door commercial system to its immediate right, both have transoms and sidelights. Single walk doors have been added to the bronze-colored store front system in the far-right bay. The corners of the office building are defined by two textured concrete towers that terminate above the twenty-fourth floor. These textured concrete towers are a pattern of stacked rectangles and squares whose seams align with the entry system's pattern of vertical plate glass and transoms. The tower seams also align with the precast concrete panels. The third story begins the curtain wall of large white precast concrete panels with recessed tinted glazing. These intersect with the ones over the bank lobby, creating a fenestration of thirty white rectangular panels on the third floor along Capitol Avenue. The fourth-floor glazing is recessed back into the building, similar to the first and second floor. Two white half-story precast concrete columns divide the façade at the fourth floor into three recessed bays, each fenestrated into six sections of double doors framed with vertical plate-glass panels, all with transoms, to allow balcony access on the fourth floor. At the fifth-floor, the curtain wall of large white precast concrete panels begins again. These are squares instead of rectangles found at the third story, and number nine inside the concrete towers and one each on the outside of the towers, for a total of eleven across. Floors five through twenty-two are fenestrated with a total of 198 white square precast concrete panels. The twenty-third floor is recessed like the fourth floor with identical recessed bays and fenestration. The twenty-fourth floor returns to the rectangular shaped white precast concrete panels with recessed glazing. The recessed treatment on the twenty-third floor coupled with the return of the larger panels emphasize the twenty-fourth floor as the crown of the building. The south façade is fenestrated with 228 white precast concrete panels in total.

Side/East Façade

The east façade is symmetrical in nature. This side of the building was the main entrance to the bank lobby though the bank lobby and this entrance is not in use at this time. The corners of this side feature textured cast concrete square columns that are made up of rectangular and square patterns stacked on top of each other. The columns are just over three stories tall. The seams in the concrete align with the adjoining fenestration and white precast concrete panels. There is a two-story curtain wall of glass located in the middle of this side. This curtain wall features two rows of six stacked vertical panels separated by a row of transom panels, in a bronze-colored aluminum store front system with two recessed entries. Both recessed entries are rotating door systems with single walk doors built-in on either side, set on the diagonal. A tinted glass sky-bridge projects from a second story window to the Union Bank Building across Louisiana Street. The sky-bridge is no longer accessible though it remains in place. The third-floor fenestration features ten white precast concrete panels with recessed glazing that project from this side of the building. The panels are rectangular. Recessed behind the banking lobby is the east side of the office building high rise. The fourth-floor east façade features three recessed bays of bronze-colored store front systems with double entry doors and transoms on the outer bays to allow building tenants and guests entry to an outdoor recreation area above the bank lobby. The fifth

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floor begins the grid pattern of square white precast concrete panels with recessed glazing numbering ten across. This pattern continues through the twenty-second floor. The twenty-third floor changes dramatically to a curtain wall of plate glass that turns the corners of the building. This treatment emphasizes the twenty-fourth floors return to the rectangular white precast concrete panels and recessed glazing. The east façade is fenestrated with 200 white precast concrete panels in total.

The parking deck, which is only visible from the empty lot adjacent to the bank lobby, has six bays on the east façade and the ramp to exit the parking deck. The first bay closest to the office high rise is covered in thirty-six textured concrete panels and attached the parking deck to the office high rise. To the left (south) of this bay a large metal vent is installed in the adjacent textured concrete panels. At the base of this bay is a one-story brown brick wall with brown mortar. The brick is laid in running bond with one course of recessed vertical stacked bond to divide this area into two sections. There is a recessed metal entry door in the back of the bank area. The other five bays of the parking deck are open air with concrete railings and balustrades for parking.

Back/North Façade

The north façade is asymmetrical in nature, similar to the front of the building. Part of the view is partially obstructed by other buildings along Fourth Street and the parking deck. The first floor of the bank lobby is a variegated brown brick with brown mortar in running bond broken up by a vertical course of stacked bond that is recessed into the wall. The top and bottom of the wall are soldier courses. This brick wall is one and one-half stories tall with a half-story wall of plate glass in bronze-colored aluminum sitting on top of the wall. The third floor is large white rectangular precast concrete panels that match those on the south and east facades of the bank lobby. The back of the office building matches the front/south façade of the office building from floors five through twenty-four. Floors one through four are where the building is attached to the parking deck. The parking deck ramp starts at the north façade of the parking deck. The parking deck, like the rest of the building, is made of reinforced concrete. The north façade of the parking deck has three bays. Each bay has a curb cut for coming and going to the drive-in banking (now closed), parking or leaving the parking deck and parking on the first level. The middle bay has a grid of thirty textured concrete panels framed with smooth precast concrete to match those on the bank and office building. The parking deck was designed to complement the office building.

Side/West Façade

The west façade is symmetrical in nature except where it connects to the parking deck. The parking deck is divided into six bays on this façade. Five of the bays have concrete railings and balustrades for parking. There is a mix of textured concrete panels and smooth precast concrete that match the office high rise. Brown brick with brown mortar are infilled in the third bay of the first floor of the parking deck. The brick is running bond with two courses of recessed stacked bond that divide the brick panel into thirds. The enclosed bay nearest the office high rise is sheathed in thirty vertical textured concrete panels framed with smooth precast concrete. There is a garage door opening at the first floor for waste and other deliveries. Featured prominently on the west façade is the exterior of the elevator tower. This tower is massive due to it containing

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eight elevators on the interior of the building. The tower is sheathed with textured concrete that is stacked in rectangular and square patterns that coordinate with the height of the glass entries and white precast concrete panels. The tower projects from the middle of the west side of the building and is a significant design feature of the building, rising well above the entire building to about twenty-seven stories, or three stories above the top floor. The first and second floor and building entrances are recessed under the white precast concrete panels of the third floor and on both sides of the tower. Both first floor entrances consist of commercial store front entrances with rotating plate-glass doors, sidelights and transoms. The second-floor fenestration is two vertical plate-glass panels stacked on top of two horizontal plate-glass panels. The third floor begins a row of the large rectangular white precast concrete panels with recessed glazing. There are three panels on each side of the tower. The fourth-floor glazing is recessed and without the concrete panels, similar to the opposite/east façade of the building. The fourth floor incorporates bronze-colored aluminum store front systems to access the fourth-floor balconies on the west façade. These systems are divided into four sections as one large plate-glass window flanked by double plate-glass commercial doors with large plate-glass transoms on top. The concrete panels resume at the fifth floor and continue to the twenty-fourth floor like the east façade except for the three/three pattern of the cast-concrete panels. This side of the building is fenestrated with 120 white precast concrete panels.

Interior

The interior of the tower building has commercial spaces on the first floor (originally banking spaces, including the vault) along with the main lobby and corridors providing access to the north, west, south entrances, along with access to the banking lobby at the east. The ceiling of the tower lobby is an acoustical tile system with recessed lighting. The main lobby has marble and ceramic tile floors, along with brick pavers that lead to the banking lobby. The banking lobby or banking room is to the east of the main tower and takes up two-thirds of the block. This large room is two stories in height. It has textured concrete towers at its corners. The floor is carpet and the perimeter walls are paneled with darkly finished wood with rows of plate-glass windows at the top of the wood panels. The ceiling is an acoustical tile system with recessed lighting. The main lobby of the tower includes a bank of six elevators with decorative bronze mesh doors and cabs. There are two additional "fast elevators" that face east and are adjacent to the elevator bank. These elevators service the banking floors and do not have decorative elements. The elevator bank ceiling at the first floor has decorative panels that resemble plaster or concrete. The walls are concrete and covered with a slightly textured wallpaper. Restrooms and stairwells for every floor are located in the structural towers at the corners of the main lobby. Mechanical equipment is located on top of the west facing elevator tower on floors twenty-five through twenty-eight. The main body of the building contains each floor's office space.

The upper floors of the building are currently offices spaces with the exception of the auditorium and community spaces on the fourth floor and a restaurant space on the twenty-third floor. Many of the floors have been renovated several times as the buildings occupants have changed, however the banking offices on several floors appear to have original varnished cabinetry, paneling, woodwork and additional vaults. Floors two and four have the original sandblasted concrete interior walls that resemble pebbles and are painted white. The elevator lobby on each floor is either carpet, tile or parquet flooring with the office areas being carpet. The concrete

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walls on each floor are covered with dense wallpaper. Most ceilings are original acoustical tiles with recessed lighting though some areas are the bare concrete structure.

Setting

The setting around the Worthen Building still reflects the period in which it was built. Due to its urban location, the building is surrounded by sidewalks, streets, and other commercial buildings. The south side of the building is set back further from the street than the other sides, so there are trees and cast-concrete planters along the south side of the building, which form a sort of outdoor plaza where workers and passing pedestrians could rest and enjoy some fresh air. Rectangular, cast-concrete planters are also located near the entrances on the west side of the building. When the building was constructed, it was in the heart of Little Rock's downtown area. Although some buildings in the vicinity of the building have been lost in order to accommodate more parking, the Worthen Building's location still remains in the heart of the capital city.

Integrity

Overall, the Worthen Building retains good integrity from the time of its construction. The exterior remains largely unchanged with the exception of the installation of plate-glass entry doors on the south elevation. With respect to the interior, many of the interior spaces have been renovated, especially the office space, as tenants have changed over the years. On the first floor, the office tower lobby flooring has been changed from carpet to ceramic and marble tile, however the brick pavers to the banking lobby remain. The bank of elevators retains their original decorative bronze mesh doors and cabs. A large spiral staircase located behind the first-floor lobby and that terminated at the second floor Worthen offices was removed most likely after a bank merger in the 1990s. The banking lobby, vaults and banking offices on multiple floors remain largely unchanged except for updated carpet. These banking areas feature varnished cabinetry, paneling and woodwork that appears to be original. The fourth-floor auditorium remains fully original with varnished cabinetry, paneling and woodwork. The adjoining community spaces have been retained though with updates to carpet and wall surfaces. The large putting green area on the fourth floor is in the process of being restored. All of its hardscape remains in place, though is worn from exposure to the outside elements. Although some modifications have been made to the building's interior over time, it has managed to preserve much of its original design and the era in which it was constructed.

The setting around the Worthen Building still reflects the period in which it was built. When the building was constructed, it was in the heart of Little Rock's downtown area. Although some buildings in the vicinity of the building have been lost in order to accommodate more parking, the Worthen Building's location still remains the heart of the capital city.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

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ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1967-1969

Significant Dates
1967: Ground Breaking
May 21, 1969: Topping off ceremony
November 1969: Building opens

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch, & Blass, Architects
E.K. Riddick, Engineer
Matson/Bellows, Builders

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Worthen Bank Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C**. Designed by architect Noland Blass, Jr., in the late 1960s, the Worthen Building is an outstanding representation of the Brutalist style. The *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* notes the following characteristics of Brutalism: raw concrete, sometimes with formwork patterns visible or possibly emphasized; use of over-sized rough concrete elements; aspects of mechanical engineering, such as service ducts, ventilation-towers, and the like, often overtly displayed. The Worthen Building design embodies these characteristics of Brutalism with its frame of reinforced concrete and the exterior of white precast concrete panels with deep-set bronze-tinted windows. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete towers which enclose the elevators, stairs, restrooms, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four and twenty-three. The Worthen Building represents a significant period in American architectural history in Arkansas. The period of significance for the building, 1967-1969, represents the years of the building's construction.¹

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

William Booker Worthen

William Booker Worthen, a prominent banker in Arkansas from 1874 until his passing in 1911, also authored a comprehensive history of Arkansas banking. The bank he established not only withstood economic downturns, including the Great Depression, but also grew to become the largest bank holding company in the state until it was acquired by Boatmen's Bank in 1994. Today, it operates as part of Bank of America.

Born on September 17, 1852, in Little Rock to George Alfonso Worthen and Louisa Booker Worthen, W. B. Worthen grew up amidst the turmoil of the Civil War. His father, a merchant involved in various businesses, passed away as a civilian in 1864. Following the Civil War, Worthen attended St. John's College in Little Rock as a cadet for two years before working as a rod man with an engineering firm. In 1869, he joined David F. Shall's real estate and brokerage business. Tragically, Shall was killed by a stray bullet during the Brooks-Baxter War in 1874, leading Worthen to form Peay & Worthen, a private banking firm in collaboration with Colonel Gordon Neill Peay. Following Peay's demise in December 1876, Worthen partnered with Edward W. Parker to create Parker & Worthen, a partnership initially situated in a one-story building at the corner of Louisiana and Markham streets.²

¹ Curl, James Steven. *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 104-105.

² "William Booker (W. B.) Worthen (1852–1911)." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 16 June 2023, www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/william-booker-2438.

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On June 3, 1879, Worthen married Mollie Crease Peay, the daughter of his late partner. The couple had five children. In 1882, they constructed a spacious residence at 704 West 2nd St., which remained their family home until Mollie Worthen's passing on October 10, 1944.³

The partnership thrived, and Worthen acquired Parker's share in 1888, operating the business as W. B. Worthen & Company. In 1902, W. B. Worthen & Company was formally incorporated with a capital stock of \$100,000. Among sixteen banks in Little Rock, Worthen Bank relocated to the Metropolitan Hotel at the corner of Markham and Main in 1904. By 1911, Worthen reported capital of \$100,000, a surplus of \$200,000, and undivided profits of \$80,415 to stockholders, with family members being the primary shareholders.⁴

Worthen also made personal investments in various enterprises, including the *Arkansas Gazette* newspaper. He served as president of the Gazette Publishing Company twice in the 1890s and maintained a controlling interest when the *Gazette* was sold to the Heiskell family in 1902. In 1906, the Arkansas Bankers Association, recognizing Worthen's significant contributions to the profession, requested that he write a history of banking in the state. The result, "Early Banking in Arkansas" (1906), remains the definitive historical account of banking in nineteenth-century Arkansas.⁵

On October 23, 1911, Worthen passed away following a brief illness. The *Arkansas Democrat* eulogized him, noting his instrumental role in numerous significant financial transactions in the state, characterized by unwavering integrity and a sense of purpose. The Little Rock Clearing House Association also issued a memorial resolution praising Worthen's remarkable banking skills and courage, which often proved justified, considering him a "tower of strength" in times of financial crisis and an exceptional judge of character.⁶ Worthen's family, including his widow Mollie Worthen, retained majority ownership of the bank. Despite the challenges of the Great Depression, Mollie Worthen and the family successfully recapitalized Worthen Bank and continued its operation after President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Bank Holiday." By the end of 1933, only five banks remained in business in Little Rock, with Worthen Bank being the sole institution with a history of continuous ownership and management since its founding.

Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch and Blass, architects

The Little Rock firm of Erhart, Eichenbaum & Rauch was founded in 1930, when architects Frank Erhart and Howard Eichenbaum left the firm of Eugene Stern. Erhart was a Hot Springs, Arkansas, native, having been born in 1889 and educated in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Eichenbaum was a Little Rock, Arkansas, native and was born in 1904 and attended architecture school at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. The pair met when they both started working in the offices of Mann & Stern in 1920. However, when that firm dissolved in 1928, both men went to work for Eugene Stern. Two years later, they approached Stern about the possibility of becoming named partners, who dismissed the idea. As a result,

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "W.B. Worthen Died Early Today." *Arkansas Democrat*, 24 Oct. 1911, pp. 1-3.

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Erhart and Eichenbaum chose to leave the practice in order to create their own firm, though their timing could not have been worse.⁷

With the onset of the Great Depression, there were few commissions for the young firm. To make ends meet, Eichenbaum worked for the Works Progress Administration as an Arkansas state architect, while Erhart manned the office. Due to the tough financial times, the firm paid their rent in service to the owner, creating designs for his other real estate holdings. Their first major commission came in 1931, in the design for a new administrative and classroom building on the campus of the Arkansas School for the Blind in Little Rock, named Parnell Hall (NR listed 1/24/08). As the effects of the Great Depression began to wane in the late 1930s, the firm received other notable commissions, such the Arkansas State Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Booneville, Arkansas, (NR listed 10/5/06) and a new building for the Baptist Hospital in Little Rock.⁸

In 1945, the firm welcomed John A. Rauch as a partner. Rauch was born in St. James, Missouri, in 1891 and studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He worked at the firm of Mann & Stem from 1917 until 1920, when he opened a small private practice in Little Rock, Arkansas.⁹ During World War II, most of the non-governmental work in the state halted. As a result, an association of architects and engineers was created to complete work on military installations and war-time housing projects in Arkansas. Erhart, Eichenbaum, and Rauch were all part of this association, as were several other notable architects in the state at that time. Following the conclusion of the war, most of the members of the association returned to their previous firms; however, Rauch decided to join with Erhart and Eichenbaum, whom he had befriended during the course of the association.¹⁰

A year later, a young architect named Noland Blass, Jr., began working as a draftsman at the firm of Erhart, Eichenbaum & Rauch. Noland Blass, Jr., was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 28, 1920, to parents Noland and Isabel Ringelhaupt Blass, Sr. He was the eldest of Noland and Isabel's three children. However, young Noland knew from an early age that he did not want to go into the family business, which was in the department store industry. Reportedly, at only twelve years of age, he decided he wanted to be an architect, because it was a job that he would enjoy doing every day.¹¹ He attended architecture school at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where he was awarded a gold medal for his senior thesis and graduated in 1941. Shortly thereafter, Blass enlisted in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he served in Germany and the Philippines. He remained in the military until 1945, eventually achieving the rank of Major.¹² After the war, Blass returned to Little Rock to begin his architectural career at the firm Erhart, Eichenbaum & Rauch in 1946, a career which spanned over forty years.¹³

⁷ Witsell, Charles, et al. *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*. The University of Arkansas Press, 2014. Pgs. 95-97.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Koyl, George S. *American Architects Directory*. 1st ed., R.R. Bowker Company, 1955. Pg. 452.

¹⁰ Witsell, Charles, et al. *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*. The University of Arkansas Press, 2014. Pg. 97.

¹¹ Wilcox, Ralph. "Noland Blass Jr. (1920-1998)." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 26 Oct. 2023, www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/noland-blass-15104/. (accessed 15 December 2023).

¹² Koyl, George S. *American Architects Directory*. 1st ed., R.R. Bowker Company, 1955. Pg.4.

¹³ "Noland Blass, Jr., of Little Rock," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 23, 1998, 6B.

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In 1955, Blass became a named partner in his firm, and the name was changed to Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch and Blass. Over the next several years, Blass worked to expand the focus of the firm to large-scale projects that used many designers, architects, engineers and even other firms. Since Blass was the principal designer, he left a significant and extensive architectural legacy in the state, including the Worthen Bank Building – considered his finest corporate work, the State Justice Building and Supreme Court Rotunda, Baptist Medical Center, and several projects on the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences campus. Later in 1968, he was named a Fellow of the AIA, followed by him being awarded the Gold Medal of the Arkansas Chapter of the AIA in 1989.¹⁴

Early on in Blass's career, he developed a reputation as one of the premier residential architects 'in central Arkansas, though they are not as well known. His earliest known commissions occurred in 1951.¹⁵ His own home in Little Rock, the Noland Blass, Jr., House at 217 Normandy Road, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 24, 2019. Over the course of his long career, Blass would design dozens of remarkable Modernist inspired residences in the Central Arkansas area, several of which are listed on the National Register, including the Dante House in Dumas (NR listed January 23, 2020), the Sam and Shirley Strauss House in Cammack Village (NR listed on September 28, 2015), the Alexander House in Little Rock (NR listed on March 24, 2020), and the Newbill-Porter House in Little Rock (NR listed on January 12, 2021). However, unlike some of his contemporaries, Blass did not script solely to any one vein of Modernism, in particular. Instead, his work displayed a variety of sources of inspiration from Frank Lloyd Wright and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to Edward Durrell Stone and Donald Wexler.¹⁶

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Worthen Savings & Loan embarked on the construction of their iconic tower in 1967-69, intending it to serve as their central offices and make a bold statement about their prominence and influence. Their previous headquarters had been the Art Deco building at the corner of Fourth and Main Streets (NR listed November 13, 1986). This 1928 building was designed by the renowned architectural firm Mann, Wanger & King and had served Worthen well over the years. However, the bank's substantial expansion during the 1950s and 1960s necessitated additional space. Although the building at Fourth and Main streets was expanded, it was soon apparent that even more space would be needed. The bank's board of trustees enlisted the services of the esteemed local architectural firm Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch & Blass, to create a new building design that would propel them into the future and solidify their position in the city.

Noland Blass, Jr., led the project and opted for the Brutalist Style of architecture for the design, a choice in vogue at the time for civic and bank structures. Contrary to popular belief that the style's name reflects the somewhat austere appearance of these buildings, it derives from the

¹⁴ Wilcox, Ralph. "Noland Blass Jr. (1920–1998)." *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 26 Oct. 2023, www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/noland-blass-15104/. (accessed 15 December 2023).

¹⁵ Koyle, George S. *American Architects Directory*. 1st ed., R.R. Bowker Company, 1955. Pg.4.

¹⁶ Williams, Callie, and Mason Toms. Lecture on the life and work of Noland Blass Jr., May 9, 2017. On file at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, Arkansas.

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French term “béton brut,” meaning “raw concrete.” The style is credited to the renowned Swiss architect and pioneer of Modernism, Le Corbusier, and was first showcased in his 1952 Unité D’Habitation in Marseille, France, and his 1953 Secretariat Building in Chandigarh, India.¹⁷ However, it took at least another decade after the construction of these buildings for the style to gain popularity in the United States. The late 1960s and early 1970s marked the heyday of Brutalism in America. The style was marked by its bold and imposing geometric forms. Structures in this style often feature massive, block-like shapes with sharp angles and clean lines. This emphasis on geometry imparts a sense of order, simplicity, and strength to the buildings. The hallmark of Brutalist architecture is the extensive use of exposed concrete. Brutalism was characterized by its fortress-like, geometric structures primarily constructed from concrete. Brutalist buildings are designed with a strong emphasis on functionality. Every element of the structure serves a purpose, and there is little room for unnecessary ornamentation. This functional approach aligns with the movement’s rejection of superficial decoration, resulting in spaces that prioritize utility and purpose. Despite their imposing presence, Brutalist buildings often blend harmoniously with their natural surroundings. Architects incorporate green spaces and landscaping, creating a symbiotic relationship between the structures and their environment. This integration with nature adds an element of serenity to the often-stark concrete landscapes. Due to their connotations of stability and longevity, these buildings became favored choices for banks and civic institutions. The Worthen Building design embodies these characteristics of Brutalism with its frame of reinforced concrete and the exterior of white precast concrete panels with deep-set bronze-tinted windows. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete towers which enclose the elevators, stairs, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four and twenty-three. Greenspaces were incorporated with the new “plaza” that was built surrounding the building, as well as the putting green that was constructed on the fourth floor of the building above the expansive bank lobby. The fourth floor also allowed building tenants and visitors access to the outdoors with multiple balconies. When the energy crisis of the 1970s emerged, Brutalism gained further favor due to its inherent energy efficiency in construction. However, this also led to a proliferation of poorly designed examples, contributing to a largely negative perception of the style among the general public.¹⁸

Overall, Brutalism is a relatively rare style in Arkansas, with most of the state’s examples found in Little Rock. The Arkla Building (demolished 2014) which was at 400 East Capitol, the Little Rock Central Fire Station at 624 South Chester, are some of the state’s more notable examples of the style.

In July 1966, articles began appearing in local newspapers about Worthen’s proposed 18-story skyscraper which was reputed to be the tallest building in the state, once built. Construction was slated to begin in April or May 1967 after the removal of several buildings as part of the Central Little Rock Urban Renewal Project, which became a national model for urban revitalization. The direct result of the project was the construction of the Worthen Building, as well as the

¹⁷ Information on Brutalism found at: <https://www.architecture.com/explore-architecture/brutalism>.

¹⁸ Information on Brutalism found at: <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/brutalism/>.

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Union Bank Building, one block east of Worthen. The Little Rock Housing Authority had purchased the almost three-quarters of a block for \$1,732,500 then sold it to Worthen for \$1,425,299.95. The building project was estimated to cost at least \$5 Million dollars and provide additional square footage of office space in the newly revitalized downtown and boost tax revenue for the city.¹⁹

Redevelopment of the downtown commercial heart of Little Rock received a major thrust with the announcement that Worthen Bank & Trust Co. will build a \$5 Million-plus, 18 story bank and office building on the block bounded by West Capitol, West 4th, Louisiana and Center.

The new structure will not only provide 200,000 square feet of additional office space for the downtown sector but will also provide a healthy boost to the tax dollars being received by the city..."

It will be the tallest structure in Arkansas – topping the neighboring Tower Building by several feet – and one of the tallest in the south.

The announcement came jointly at a press conference by Fred W. Parris, chairman of the Little Rock Housing Authority, and Edward M. Penick, president of Worthen's...²⁰

There were three components of the project from the outset: provide impressive headquarters for Worthen Bank in the tallest building downtown, provide a showpiece banking lobby for Worthen Bank, and provide drive-in banking downtown. Initially, there was to be an Urban Renewal funded project that would build an underground parking facility, but this did not materialize, and Worthen went ahead with their back up plan to build a parking deck along with the new drive-in banking facility.

Initially, the banking division will occupy the first floor - except for some rental space that will be available along Center – [along with] the second, third, fourth and seventh floors and part of the fifth floor. The remainder of the fifth floor and the entire sixth floor will be available for rental on short term leases since these floors, too, will eventually be occupied by the bank as it expands.

¹⁹ Smith, Doug. "Worthen to Build 18-Story Building, Highest in State." *Arkansas Gazette*, 17 July 1966, pp. 1-2.

²⁰ Forster, Robbie. "18-Story Building Slated by Worthen In Downtown Area." *Arkansas Democrat*, 17 July 1966, pp. 1-2.

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The eighth through the sixteenth floors will be developed as “prestige” office space for long-term tenants, the Worthen proposal said.²¹

Noland Blass Jr., of Erhart, Eichenbaum, Rauch and Blass of Little Rock, the architectural firm for the building, said it was hoped that the 17th floor would be developed as a club or similar eating facility. The top floor will house all the mechanical equipment usually housed in the basement of similar buildings.

Additional floors are contemplated if there is sufficient demand, Worthen said.

Even at 18 floors the Worthen Building still will be slightly taller than the Tower Building which also has 18 floors because of higher floor-to-floor space, Blass said.

He said the first floor would be 27 feet high.

Blass said the building would consist of three interwoven parts – a large banking room entered from Louisiana and running along Capitol to Center, an office tower surmounting this element at the Capitol and Center corner and a drive-in facility at street level entered from Center and Fourth Streets.

The main banking room will be of an unusual design of large, widely spaced piers, supporting the roof, which will be comprised of concrete coffers – recessed squares formed by the intersections of many small beams. Each of these coffers will be centered with a light fixture so that the effect will be light in the ceiling, Blass said.

There will be a landscaped plaza with trees, plantings, and a large fountain set back 25 feet from Capitol Avenue. The roof of the third floor will also be landscaped and turned into an outdoor lounge for visitors and employees.

The second floor which will only cover part of the first-floor banking area, will be located under the office tower at the west end of the building and will contain a large community room and committee rooms that will be available to groups outside of the Bank.

²¹*Ibid.*

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The third floor will contain bank services and customer departments and the fourth floor will contain executive offices and the Board of Directors room.

The exterior of the building will be white precast concrete. All windows and storefronts will be of aluminum sections of a deep bronze color and all window glass, except on the first floor, will have a deep bronze tone.²²

A brochure entitled "FACTS ABOUT THE 'NEW WORTHEN BUILDING'" which discusses everything from building construction, elevators, available tenant finishes, why the bathrooms have the best views of the city, heating and cooling mechanisms, speculative versus institutional office buildings, all presumably to help lease out the tenant spaces, indicates:²³

Each floor in the tower will consist of 10,368 square feet of space. Three exterior walls will provide windows on a regular module. Interior columns will be on 24-foot centers allowing complete flexibility of interior arrangements. Entire floors, as well as a variety of partial floor space arrangements, are available for leasing now. Multiple decorating schemes are available...including a choice of tile or carpeting, paneled or painted walls. Acoustical ceilings and modern recessed lighting is standard in all arrangements.

Eleven elevators will serve the building. Five high-speed passenger elevators serve all floors along with one high-speed combination freight-passenger elevator. In addition, three elevators will be provided for banking floors, and one elevator will serve the parking garage and one elevator will handle the freight and mail servicing the basement, first and second floors.

Each tenant will have fingertip control of his own inside environment, regardless of the weather outside and regardless of the quantity of space leased. This is made possible by air-mixing boxes in each room or area.

The Worthen Bank and Trust Company Building includes a 7-level parking facility to accommodate 359 cars. This parking facility has its own brand of individuality and unique concepts in that all traffic will circulate in one direction with separate ramp systems for the up and down traffic. The parking facility is designed to

²² Smith, Doug. "Worthen to Build 18-Story Building, Highest in State." *Arkansas Gazette*, 17 July 1966, pp. 1-2.

²³ Worthen Bank and Trust Company. *Facts About The New Worthen Building*, Worthen Bank, Little Rock, AR, 1969.

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provide maximum parking convenience for the customers and the tenants of the Worthen Building. There will be through access from the parking to the Worthen Building on the first four floors of the Worthen Building.

Multiple eating facilities within the building will provide various menus for noon-time, and evening dining. The executive and the office worker will find their needs satisfied without ever leaving the building.

Maintenance standards will be uniformly excellent through a staff trained and equipped to give special attention to office appointments. Worthen Bank and Trust Company will maintain its major banking operations in this building. All full-service banking features will be available on the ground floor and the first six floors of the tower.²⁴

Worthen Building was built as in institutional building, one built as the home office of a large company or financial institution but also with a speculative component. This was promoted to tenants as an amenity that they could take advantage of good materials, good elevators, good air-conditioning systems and low maintenance since everything was brand new. Vertical and horizontal spaciousness, excellent mechanical systems and easily maintained finishes were also seen as amenities of the new building “in a fine blend of function and civic and institutional pride.”

The portfolio also attempted to explain the concrete construction and construction technologies at play in the new building with regard to the dignity of banking. Nothing was left to chance with balancing the interior design to the exterior and interior hardscape of the building. The window lighting pockets are explained as well as the vertical blinds which were a new feature at the time and worth a detailed explanation. The unusual fluorescent window lighting is explained though it does not mention the iconic Christmas Tree lights that so many Arkansans found familiar during the holidays for the 50-year history of the building. Additionally, the public spaces on the fourth floor are called out as “public service areas.” This includes an auditorium and meeting rooms. Finally, the interior décor of the bank is described in detail and how it was picked out to contrast with the ruggedness of the concrete exposed on the interior of the building.

As has been pointed out and explained, the bank is a concrete building. This means that the frame of the building, the columns, the beams and the floor slabs are of poured concrete with steel reinforcing bars. The only exception to this is that steel beams are placed above the long span first floor banking room in order to hold the depth of construction to a minimum and increase the

²⁴ Worthen Bank and Trust Company. *Facts About The New Worthen Building*, Worthen Bank, Little Rock, AR, 1969.

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ceiling height. With the concrete frame decided upon, the next step was to consider the exterior aesthetics and proper cladding of the building. The architects felt that was consistent with both the dignity of a banking institution and with the concrete frame to continue to express the concrete both structurally and as a curtain wall on the exterior of the building. A decision was therefore reached that the exterior portions of the building which are structural namely, the towers which enclose elevators, stairs, and mechanical shafts, should be a poured in-place concrete with a rich textured sandblasted finish which will connote the strength of the material used.

The in filling or curtain wall will be composed of large precast concrete panels, each of which will be twelve feet high and eight feet wide. These panels will be glazed with bronze glass, held in place by a vinyl rubber gasket instead of the usual metal window frame. This will accomplish several things: it will cut down on condensation usual with metal, it will provide a more leak proof wall, and it will provide a minimum of obstruction between the glass and the frames. Each of these frames are so designed that there will be an integral pocket cast into the head which will contain a fluorescent light strip so in the evening the building will illuminate with a soft glow in each of the window panels. In addition to the light pocket there will be a vertical louvre type of blind set in each opening which will traverse horizontally and stack at each side allowing the occupant to have a full view, a partially shaded view or a completely obscured view. The finish on the panels will be a smooth white, which will contrast with the light grey color and the texture on the cast-in-place walls.

A word as to the aesthetic derivation of the structure of the building; as we all know in Arkansas the exposure to be avoided is west and most of the modern buildings in town have avoided west exposure i.e. Lakewood House, Summit House and the Tower Building. Some structures recently completed or under construction have ignored this situation and will present a full wall of glass on the west side. The architects in designing the Worthen Building placed the functional elements which are necessary in all buildings on the west side, therefore no offices will have west exposure. The glass which shows on the west elevation opens into rest rooms which occur in these spots on each floor. The remaining west wall is occupied by the elevator towers and two emergency stair towers.

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By grouping these facilities on the west side of the building, it is possible to give a tenant a completely clear rectangular floor with no obstructions to his planning, located in the center of the floor. The Worthen Building has been designed to cater to tenants who will occupy a half floor or more. On the other hand, if certain floors should be divided into more than two sections, a central corridor can easily be introduced and offices in a conventional manner opened off of these corridors.

One of the great features of the building will be the public service areas allocated on the fourth floor. This will contain a sloping floor, carpeted auditorium similar to that of the Art Center with richly upholstered seats for approximately 175 people.

This auditorium will be equipped for all types of still and movie projection as well as lectures, seminars, and TV performances. Surrounding this auditorium will be a wood paneled space which will serve as an art gallery and a meeting place for users of this floor. Large glass walls will open up to the fourth-floor roof deck over the main banking wing which will contain handsome landscaping as well as a putting green. This floor is also reached by a short flight of steps directly from the garage so that after hour meetings can be reached by merely driving up to the appropriate floor of the garage and walking in.

The interior décor and color schemes throughout the bank generally will be of warm rich materials which will contrast with the ruggedness of the concrete which is exposed where it occurs structurally within the building. First floor will have a rich rust carpet with inserts of chocolate brown brick.

Tellers' counters and walls will be of imported English oak as will be the officer's desks. Behind the tellers' line will be installed a woven mural approximately 150 feet long and complementary colors to the bank's general décor. The over-all color schemes follow a basic neutral effect of either wood or off-white with furniture accents in rust, red, orange or royal blue. Many seating pieces will be upholstered in leather or rich vinyl simulating leather in color and texture. All hardware and glass settings on the first floor as well as elevator doors on the first floor will be in a rich bronze color, rather than with shining aluminum as typically seen. The interior of the elevator cabs will be unusual in that the ceiling height within the cabs will be eight foot six in lieu of the normal 7 feet. Ceiling lighting within the cabs will be a series of tiny pinhole incandescent light rheostatically controlled so that in

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the evening light may be adjusted to the mood of the tenants and occupants. All elevators will be carpeted.²⁵

Historically, Union National Bank was seen as Worthen's rival banking corporation in Arkansas. Worthen Bank announced its plans to construct a new tower, while Union National Bank was planning a tower of its own, which would be conveniently taller. Not to be outdone, the CEO of Worthen Bank went back to Blass and told him to increase the height of the Worthen tower. However, Union National Bank's new design was a closely guarded secret, so the actual height of the Worthen Building was up in the air while the Union National Bank building was under construction. Under the dark of night, the Worthen Board members held secret meetings to discuss the possibility of adding stories to the Worthen building to ensure it would be the tallest in the state.²⁶ Once the Union National Bank building held the topping-off ceremony on August 8, 1968, and the last piece of structural steel was placed on the top of the Union National Bank building, Worthen announced that they were no longer going to build an 18-story building but would instead build a 24-story building, thus ensuring that Worthen would have the tallest building in the State. At 375 feet, the Worthen tower surpassed Union National Bank's tower by forty-four feet, claiming the title of the tallest building in Arkansas. Worthen would hold onto the title for five years.

The 24-story Worthen Bank building at 200 West Capitol Avenue was dedicated on May 21, 1969, as the tallest building in Arkansas at its topping off ceremony, just five months before the building was completed.²⁷ Worthen opened for business at its new headquarters November 2, 1969 according to a newspaper ad comparing their new parking deck to their hitching post in 1877.²⁸ Union National Bank moved into their new 21-story skyscraper just one month prior in October.²⁹ The Worthen Building was dedicated January 31, 1970, with a four foot wide red satin ribbon that was hung from the top of the building, on both sides, to emphasize it as the tallest building in Arkansas. The wind unceremoniously cut the ribbon quickly after it was hung, and it was hastily held up horizontally so the ribbon could be cut for the ceremony.³⁰ In July 1975, the height of Worthen building was surpassed by the First National Building (now Regions Center). Eleven years later, in 1986, the Simmons Tower (then Capitol Tower) surpassed the Regions Center. To date, the Worthen Building is still the third tallest building in the state of Arkansas.

²⁵ Worthen Bank and Trust Company. *Facts About The New Worthen Building*, Worthen Bank, Little Rock, AR, 1969.

²⁶ "Building History." *Union Plaza Building*, 4 Nov. 2017, www.unionplazabuilding.com/history/.

²⁷ "Worthen Bank Tops Out Stage 2 of New Building 5 Months Before Completion." *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 May 1969, p. 1.

²⁸ "Our Assets Were \$75,000 and Our Parking Lot Was a Hitching Post." *Arkansas Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1969, p. 4A.

²⁹ "Fisheye View of Little Rock's New Skyline." *Arkansas Gazette*, 1 Jan. 1970, p. 2F.

³⁰ "Dedication of bank, Mammoth ribbon cut twice at Worthen's first time by cold, gusty wind," *Arkansas Democrat*, January 31, 1970, p.2.

The Worthen Building

Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas
County and State

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

Designed by Noland Blass, Jr., the Worthen Building is an outstanding representation of the Brutalist style, characterized by its raw concrete structure, geometric forms, and fortress-like appearance. The choice of Brutalism, a style credited to the Swiss architect Le Corbusier and popular for civic and bank buildings in the 1950s and 60s, reflects the era's architectural trends and the desire to project stability and longevity, especially in financial institutions.

Built as an expansion for the Worthen Bank, a key financial institution in Arkansas, the building symbolized the bank's growth and prominence. Initially conceived as an 18-story building, it was later expanded to 24 stories in a competitive response to a rival bank's construction plans, becoming the tallest building in Arkansas at the time. This event not only illustrates the competitive nature of local banking in the 1960s but also signifies the urban development and architectural ambition in Little Rock during this period.

In summary, the Worthen Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for Brutalist architectural style. Its design by Noland Blass, a notable figure in Arkansas's architectural scene, adds to its importance as a representation of mid-20th-century architectural trends and urban development in Arkansas. Designed in the late 1960s, the Worthen Building is an outstanding representation of the Brutalist style. The characteristics of Brutalism feature raw concrete, sometimes with formwork patterns visible or possibly emphasized; use of over-sized rough concrete elements; aspects of mechanical engineering, such as service ducts, ventilation-towers, and the like, often overtly displayed. The Worthen Building design embodies these characteristics of Brutalism with its frame of reinforced concrete and the exterior of white precast concrete panels with deep-set bronze-tinted windows. All four sides of the office high-rise are primarily uniform grids of white precast concrete with recessed windows contrasted by the placement of richly textured structural concrete towers which enclose the elevators, stairs, restrooms, and mechanical shafts. The repetitive design is emphasized by dramatic changes in fenestration on floors one, two, four and twenty-three. The Worthen Building represents a significant period in American architectural history in Arkansas.

Overall, Brutalism is a relatively rare style in Arkansas, with most of the state's examples found in Little Rock. The Arkla Building (demolished 2014) which was at 400 East Capitol, the Little Rock Central Fire Station at 624 South Chester, are some of the state's more notable examples of the style. However, the Worthen Building is the largest example of the style in Little Rock and the only high-rise example in the city.

The Worthen Building
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)
“Building History.” *Union Plaza Building*, 4 Nov. 2017, www.unionplazabuilding.com/history/.
- Curl, James Steven. *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- “Fisheye View of Little Rock’s New Skyline.” *Arkansas Gazette*, 1 Jan. 1970, p. 2F.
- Forster, Robbie. “18-Story Building Slated by Worthen In Downtown Area.” *Arkansas Democrat*, 17 July 1966, pp. 1–2.
- Information on Brutalism found at: <https://www.architecture.com/explore-architecture/brutalism>.
- Information on Brutalism found at: <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/brutalism/>.
- Koyl, George S. *American Architects Directory*. 1st ed., R.R. Bowker Company, 1955.
- “Our Assets Were \$75,000 and Our Parking Lot Was a Hitching Post.” *Arkansas Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1969, p. 4A.
- Smith, Doug. “Worthen to Build 18-Story Building, Highest in State.” *Arkansas Gazette*, 17 July 1966, pp. 1–2.
- “W.B. Worthen Died Early Today.” *Arkansas Democrat*, 24 Oct. 1911, pp. 1–3.
- Wilcox, Ralph. “Noland Blass Jr. (1920–1998).” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 26 Oct. 2023, www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/noland-blass-15104/.
- “William Booker (W. B.) Worthen (1852–1911).” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 16 June 2023, www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/william-booker-2438/.
- Williams, Callie, and Mason Toms. Lecture on the life and work of Noland Blass Jr., May 9, 2017. On file at the Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- Witsell, Charles, et al. *Architects of Little Rock, 1833-1950*. The University of Arkansas Press, 2014.
- “Worthen Bank Tops Out Stage 2 of New Building 5 Months Before Completion.” *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 May 1969, p. 1.
- Worthen Bank and Trust Company. *Facts About The New Worthen Building*, Worthen Bank, Little Rock, AR, 1969.

The Worthen Building
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas
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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): PU3536

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.39 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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

The Worthen Building
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas
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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 566546 | Northing: 3845002 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

City of Little Rock Lots 1 Thru 8 & South 16 45' of Lot 9 of Block 84. Parcel #34L0200501900.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the Worthen Building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Amber Carter Jones, edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
street & number: 1100 North Street
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201
e-mail: ralph.wilcox@arkansas.gov
telephone: (501) 324-9787
date: December 26, 2023

The Worthen Building
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Worthen Building

City or Vicinity: Little Rock

County: Pulaski County

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Ralph S. Wilcox

Date Photographed: March 19, 2024

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

1 of 35. South and west façades of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking northeast.

2 of 35. South façade of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking north.

3 of 35. Detail of the lower floors of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking north.

The Worthen Building

Pulaski County, Arkansas
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Name of Property

- 4 of 35. South façade of the banking lobby area of the Worthen Building, looking northeast.
- 5 of 35. South façade of the banking lobby area of the Worthen Building, looking northwest.
- 6 of 35. South and east façades of the Worthen Building, looking northwest.
- 7 of 35. South and east façades of the banking lobby area of the Worthen Building, looking northwest.
- 8 of 35. East façade of the banking lobby area of the Worthen Building, looking southwest.
- 9 of 35. East and north façades of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking southwest.
- 10 of 35. East and south façades of the Worthen Building, looking southwest.
- 11 of 35. East and north façades of the Worthen Building Parking Deck, looking southwest.
- 12 of 35. North façade of the Worthen Building Parking Deck, looking southwest.
- 13 of 35. North and west façades of the Worthen Building Parking Deck, looking southeast.
- 14 of 35. North façade of the tower of the Worthen Building and the west façade of the Worthen Building Parking Deck, looking southeast.
- 15 of 35. North and west façades of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking southeast.
- 16 of 35. West façade of the Worthen Building Parking Deck, looking east.
- 17 of 35. West façade of the tower of the Worthen Building, looking southeast.
- 18 of 35. Planters located on the south side of the Worthen Building, looking northeast.
- 19 of 35. Main entrance lobby of the Worthen Building, looking south.
- 20 of 35. Elevator door in the main entrance lobby of the Worthen Building, looking northwest.
- 21 of 35. Main banking lobby of the Worthen Building, looking southeast.
- 22 of 35. Main banking lobby of the Worthen Building, looking northwest.

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- 23 of 35 . Plaque in the main banking lobby of the Worthen Building, looking north.
- 24 of 35 . Door to the safe off of the main banking lobby of the Worthen Building, looking northeast.
- 25 of 35 . Hallway to the north of the Auditorium on the 4th floor of the Worthen Building, looking east.
- 26 of 35 . View of the Auditorium on the 4th floor of the Worthen Building, looking west.
- 27 of 35 . View of the Auditorium on the 4th floor of the Worthen Building, looking east.
- 28 of 35 . View of the terrace on the 4th floor on top of the banking lobby, looking southeast.
- 29 of 35 . View of the Elevator Lobby on the 5th floor (Executive Floor) with the original parquet floor.
- 30 of 35 . View of a typical office on the 5th floor (Executive Floor), looking northwest.
- 31 of 35 . View of the Board Room on the 5th floor (Executive Floor), looking southeast.
- 32 of 35 . View of a President's Office on the 5th floor (Executive Floor), looking southeast.
- 33 of 35 . View of the President's private bathroom on the 5th floor (Executive Floor), looking south.
- 34 of 35 . View of typical Men's Room on the 5th floor, looking northeast.
- 35 of 35 . View of typical Men's Room on the 5th floor, looking southeast.

The Worthen Building

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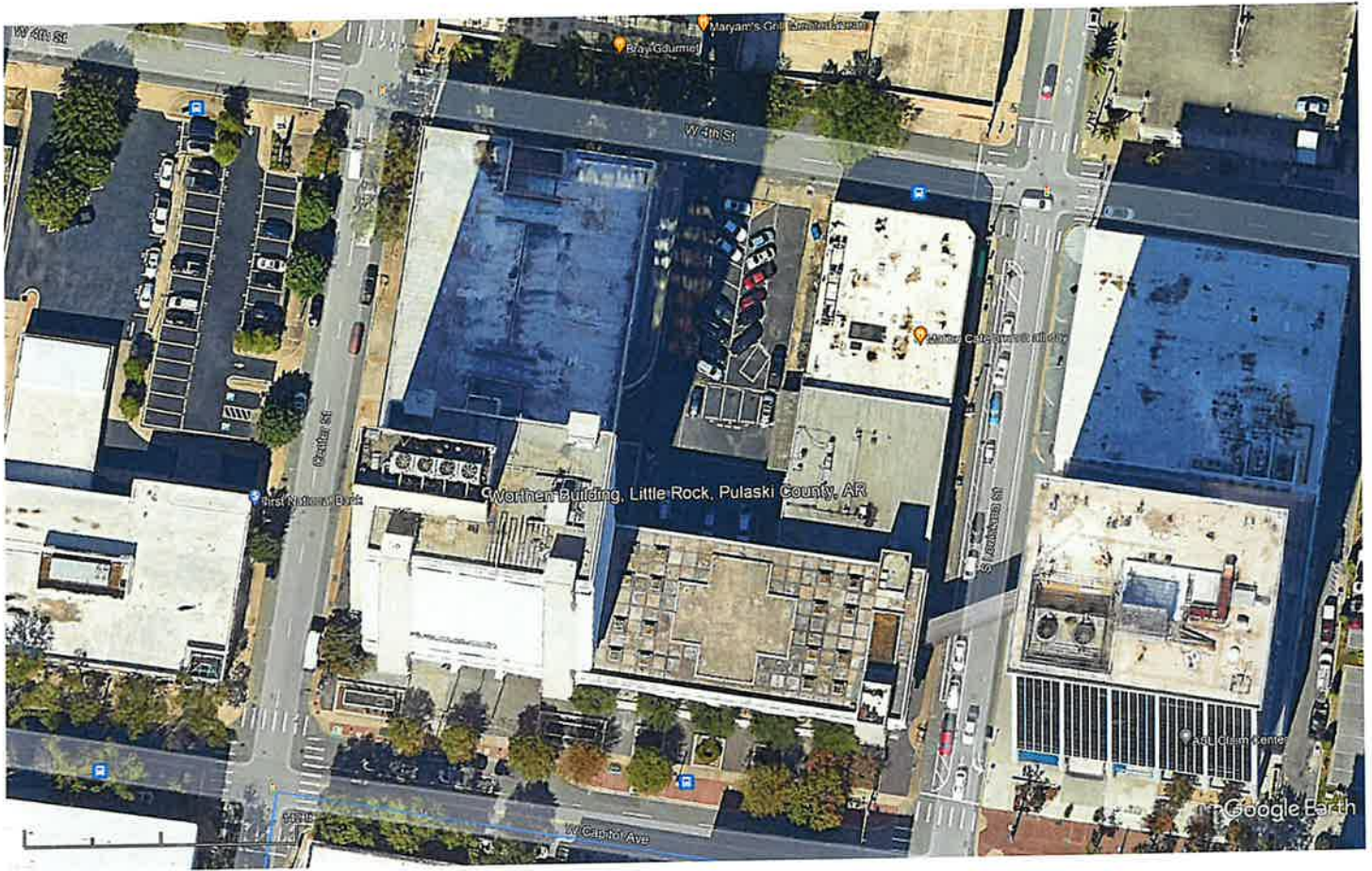
Name of Property

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

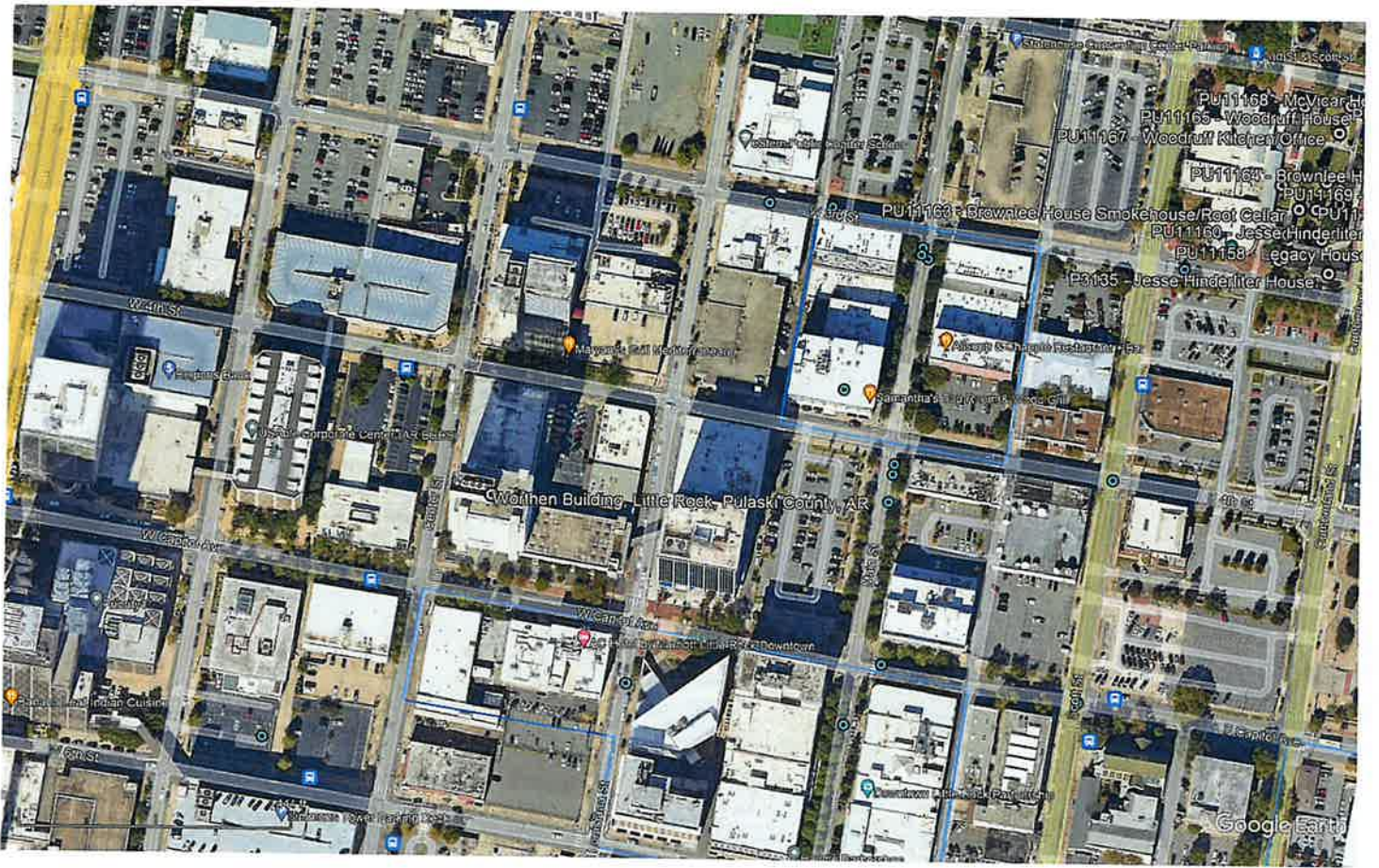


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Worthen Building
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

UTM: 15 566546E 3845002N

↑
North



|-----444 feet-----|

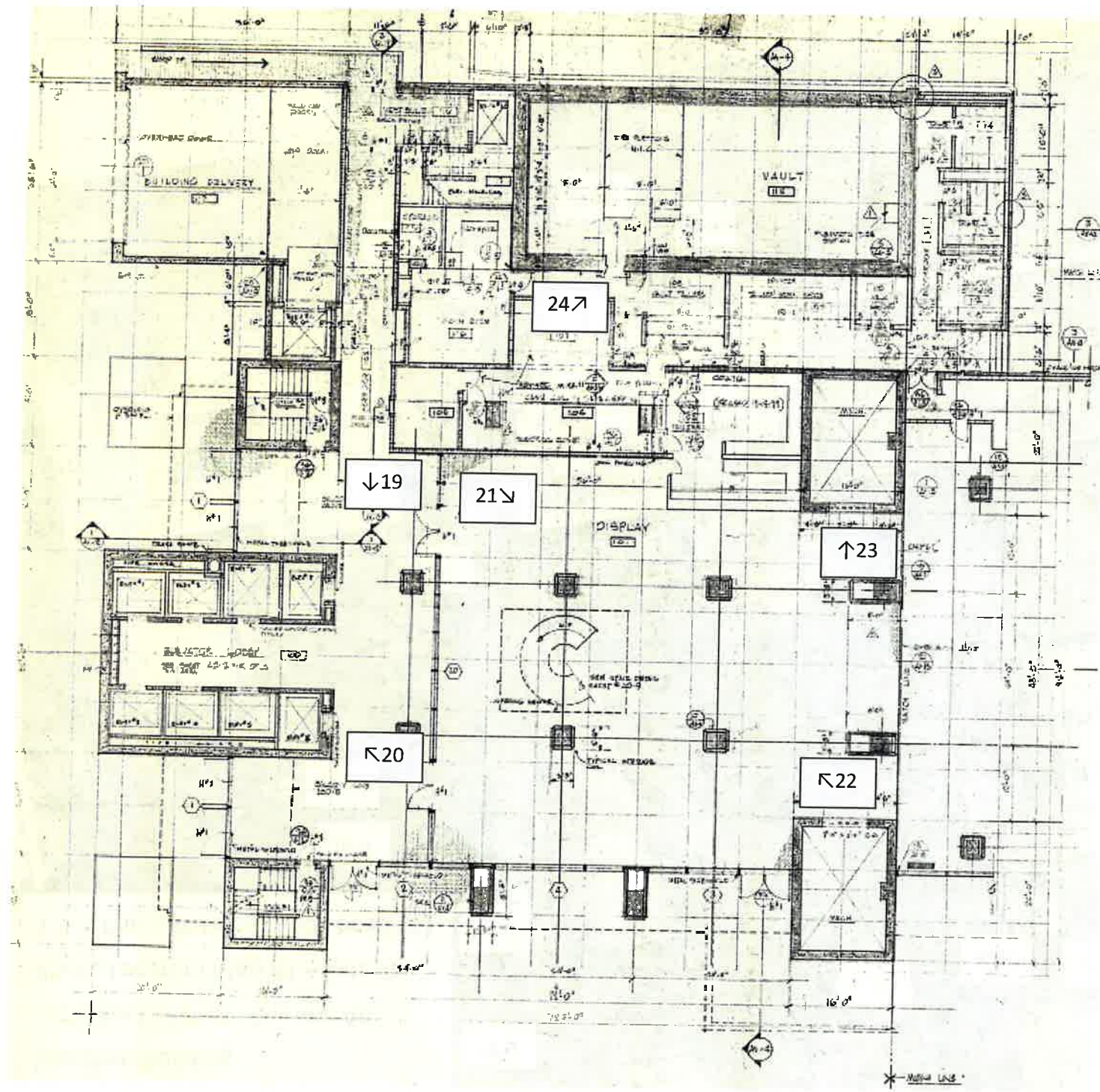
Worthen Building
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

UTM: 15 566546E 3845002N

↑
North

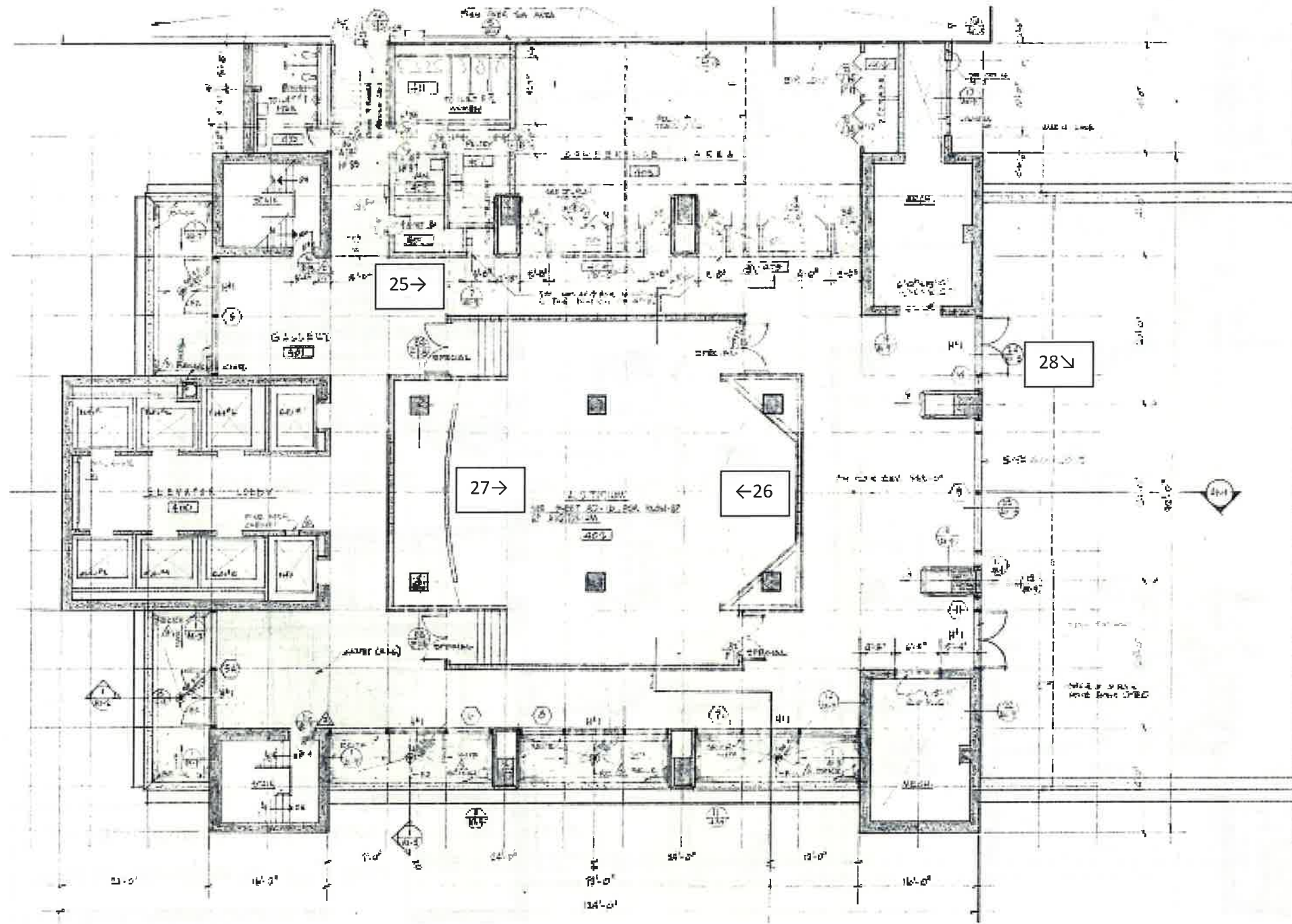
Worthen Building
Little Rock, Pulaski County, AR
Photo Location Map #1 – Exterior
1 → = Photo Number and Location





Worthen Building
Little Rock, Pulaski County, AR
Photo Location Map #2 – First Floor
1→ = Photo Number and Location

Worthen Building
Little Rock, Pulaski County, AR
Photo Location Map #1 – Fourth Floor
1→ = Photo Number and Location



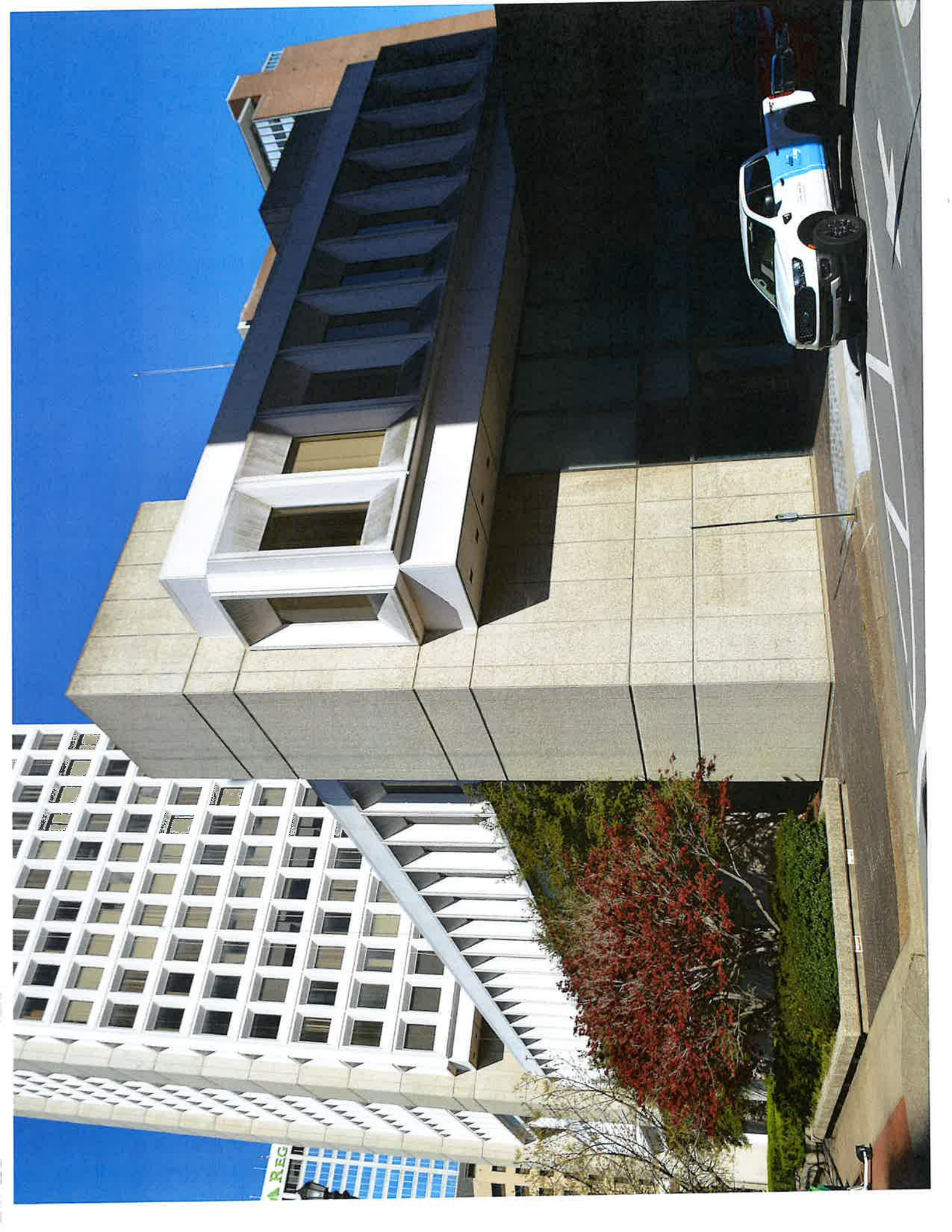














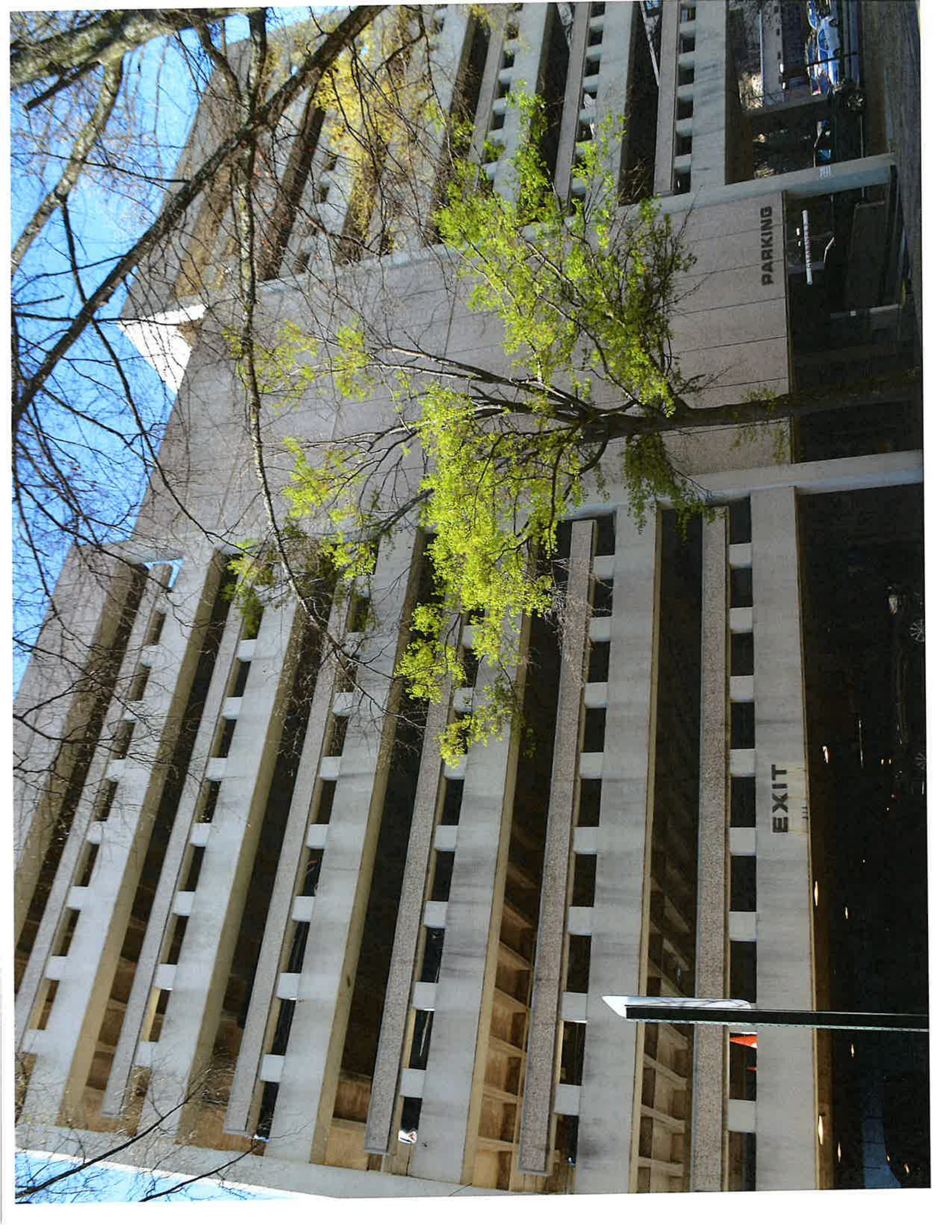


GILLY VISION CLINIC

SUBWAY







PARKING

EXIT



Center

634

PARKING

NO

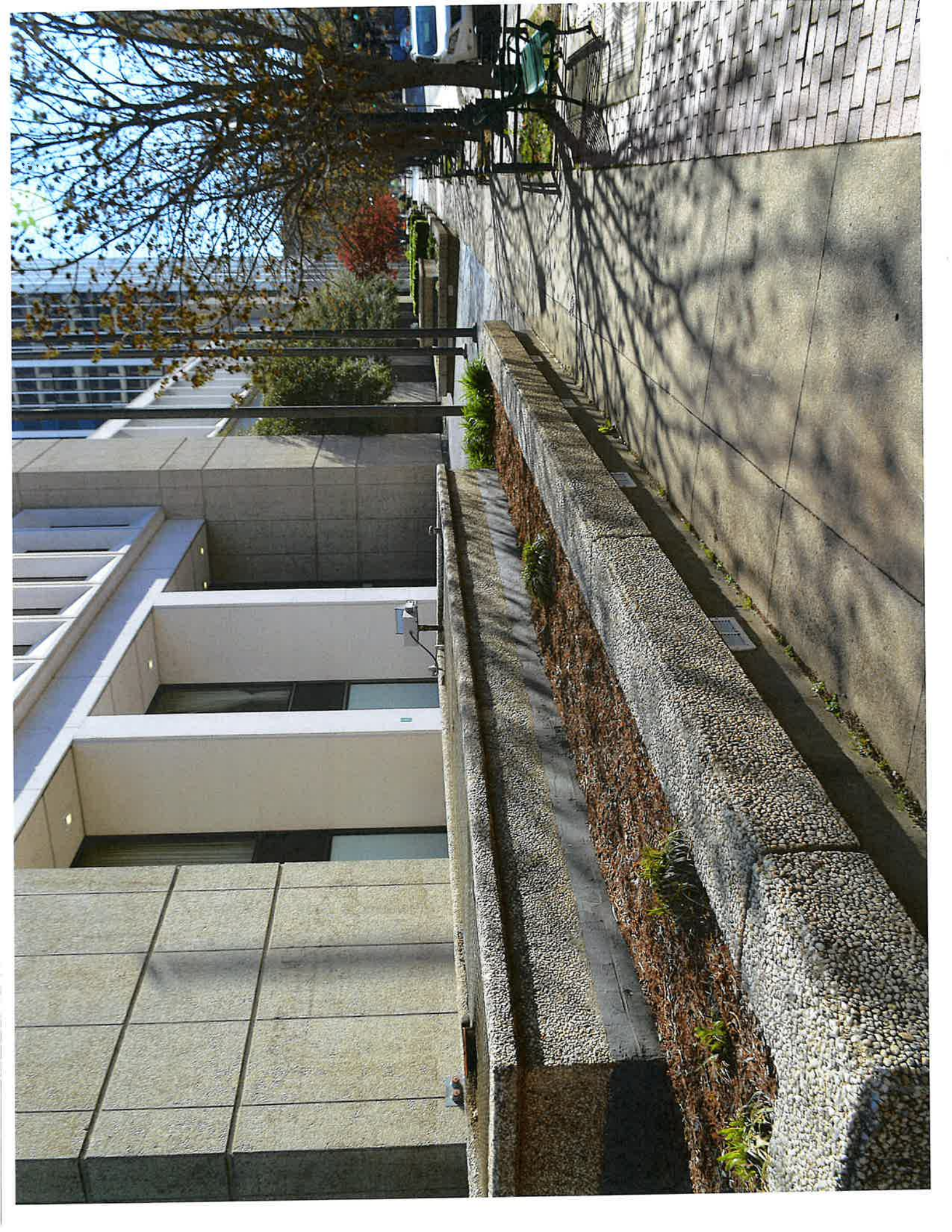
6



















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A

























July 3, 2024



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

723 West Markham Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1334
Phone: (501) 371-4790 Fax:(501) 399-3435
www.littlerock.gov

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REVIEW

Name and Address of property:

The Worthen Building, 200 W. Capitol Street, Little Rock, AR 72201

Name of Owner:

200 West Capitol Investments LLC

Project Sponsor:

200 West Capitol Investments LLC

Amber Carter Jones

Ralph Wilcox, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

CLG Name:

City of Little Rock, Arkansas

Date of Public Hearing by CLG:

July 3, 2024

Applicable Criteria:

Criterion A (Historic Events)

Criterion B (Important Person)

Criterion C (Architecture)

Criterion D (Archaeological)

The Little Rock Historic District Commission hereby recommends the above stated property for nomination.

Attest:

Chair

Date

Secretary/Staff

Date