



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development  
**Office of the Director**

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**DATE:** August 20, 2008

**TO:** Plan Commission

**FROM:** Mark A. Olinger, Secretary  
Madison Plan Commission

**SUBJECT:** Alteration to the U.S. Bank Plaza Building at 1 South Pinckney Street

Urban Land Interests (ULI), the new owners of the U.S. Bank Plaza Building at 1 South Pinckney Street, are proposing several changes to the façade of the building as well as small additions to the building.

The main exterior changes being proposed include:

- Reconstruction of the sloped atrium area to address significant solar heat gain issues. The sloped atrium areas would be reconstructed with vertical glass walls which maintains a 2-story volume on the main floor levels of the atria and creates landscaped roof terraces on the third and sixth floors.
- Construction of a building addition of approximately 15,000 square feet of rentable area which occurs as a result of the removal of the secondary atrium on the fourth floor and the construction of a six-story addition to the Pinckney Street side of the building, set well back from the existing front facade.
- In addition to the exterior improvements to the building, the new owners will also be replacing the existing chillers on the ninth floor with new equipment to be relocated on the ground floor of the building. This relocation allows this mechanical space to be recaptured and reused as office space.

Attached are copies of the Plans.

Because the building is located in the C4 (Central Commercial) District, new construction, additions to existing buildings, or major alterations to the exterior face of the building must be approved by the Urban Design Commission. Such changes are also conditional uses which must be reviewed under the conditional use process in the Zoning Code. Because the

proposed changes are primarily design related, staff have recommended that the applicant seek the approval by the Urban Design Commission following a public hearing. Since it appears that the alterations to the building can meet all of the conditional use standards and are compatible with the original design of the building, staff have recommended that the alterations and additions be administratively approved under the conditional use process. This allows the Director of the Planning & Community & Economic Development to approve minor alterations and additions to a conditional use which are compatible with the concept approved by the Plan Commission and the standards for conditional uses.

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify the Plan Commission of the staff recommendation for the process to review and approve the alterations and additions to the U.S. Bank Plaza Building. If Commission members have questions concerning the project or this process, please let me know.

c: Mayor David J. Cieslewicz  
Ald. Michael Verveer  
Brad Binkowski, ULI

CITY OF MADISON  
**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL**  
CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: August 19, 2008

TO: Urban Design Commission  
FROM: Kitty Rankin, Preservation Planner  
SUBJECT: **U. S. Bank Building, 1 S. Pinckney Street**

The Urban Design Commission has asked for my opinion on whether or not the U. S. Bank building might be eligible to be a Madison Landmark.

History

The U. S. Bank Building was built in 1972 as the First Wisconsin Plaza. It was designed by the internationally known architectural firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM). The firm was founded in 1936 in Chicago and is still in practice today as a very large multi-national firm. According to *Wikipedia*, their "primary expertise is in high-end commercial buildings, and it was SOM that led the way to the widespread use of the modern international-style or 'glass box' skyscraper."

Another web source, "Great Buildings Online," appears to quote the original architect, Bruce Graham, of SOM, to describe the building:

The back of the building is a straight, nine-story wall of glass, while the front steps down with sloping glass roofs to the first floor. The banking facilities, located on the lower, ground and first levels, penetrate deep into the building, providing generous space for the thirty-foot high atrium. Offices on the upper floors wrap around a fourth floor roof garden on three sides and have unobstructed views of the centrally located Capitol Square. The Wisconsin climate dictated the spacious, airy, internal environment of the building. The use of a high-tech curtain wall eliminated the need for typical spandrel panels and provided an economical solution for the building's skin of white painted aluminum mullions and double-glazed glass in 3 x 5 foot panels. All structural and mechanical elements are exposed and expressed as design elements. A series of air risers and induction units painted blue and water risers painted yellow are visible and are set behind an outer grid of white mullions.....

## Landmark Eligibility

It is possible that the First Wisconsin Plaza would be eligible to be a Madison Landmark but I cannot say it with certainty. When a building in Madison is considered for Landmark status, its context is the most important factor in determining whether or not a building meets the criteria in the Madison General Ordinances for landmark designation. For most potentially historic buildings in Madison a context has been developed through the City of Madison's comprehensive survey of historic resources. Five thousand buildings have been studied in that effort and the City has developed contextual information in the form of a comparative analysis of buildings by their historical importance, their architectural importance and an analysis of the significant work of every Madison architect who practiced in the historical era. The cut-off date for our work was the early 1930s, since our work began in the early 1980s and, as with most other cities in the country, we used funding for the survey from the National Register of Historic Places, which has a rule that buildings less than 50 years old cannot be considered eligible for the National Register unless they are of extreme importance.

The Madison Landmarks Commission, unlike many landmarks commissions, does not follow the National Register's suit and does not have a 50-year requirement for landmark designation, so newer buildings can be considered for landmark status and a few have attained landmark status. The problem is that a context has not yet been formulated by the City for the vast majority of newer buildings. Without a comparative City-wide assessment of the buildings that make up our more modern heritage, the person who wished to nominate a building would need to develop a context in the nomination by which it could be demonstrated that the building is one of the best examples of a style or the work of a particular architect. The National Register program and other historical agencies are gearing up to develop methods for documenting more modern buildings, but the work has not yet been undertaken here or most other places. In the past few years, citizens have suggested that several modern buildings that are threatened or have been recently demolished might be worth saving include the A. W. Peterson Office Building, the Wisconsin Life Insurance Co. on Segoe Road, the Hillel Foundation on Langdon St., the UW Humanities Building and St. Paul's Church on State Street. Creating a context by which to judge buildings is something that will have to be done sooner than later.

Lacking such a context, I would submit that the Urban Design Commission is more likely than the Landmarks Commission to have an aesthetic appreciation and the knowledge to place such buildings in a position of relative importance.

## Suitability of Alterations

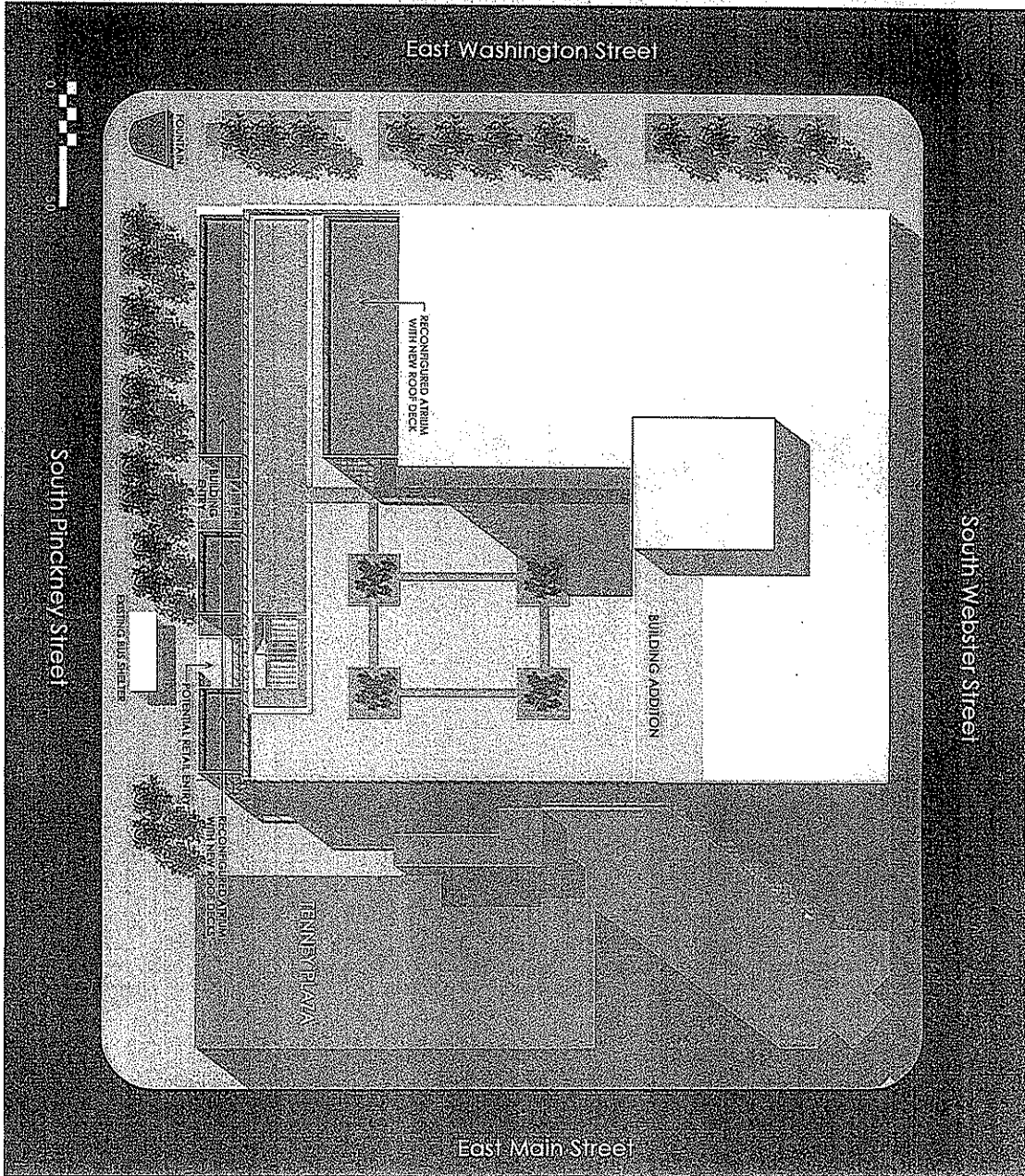
Assuming that the building has historical importance, the next important question is – can the building be remodeled in such a way as to not harm the elements that make the building worthy of preservation? One of the reasons that so many older buildings have been designated as Landmarks is that they typically are simple and functional enough on the interior that they can be rehabilitated without significantly altering their exterior appearance. There have been cases, however, in which an historic building cannot be

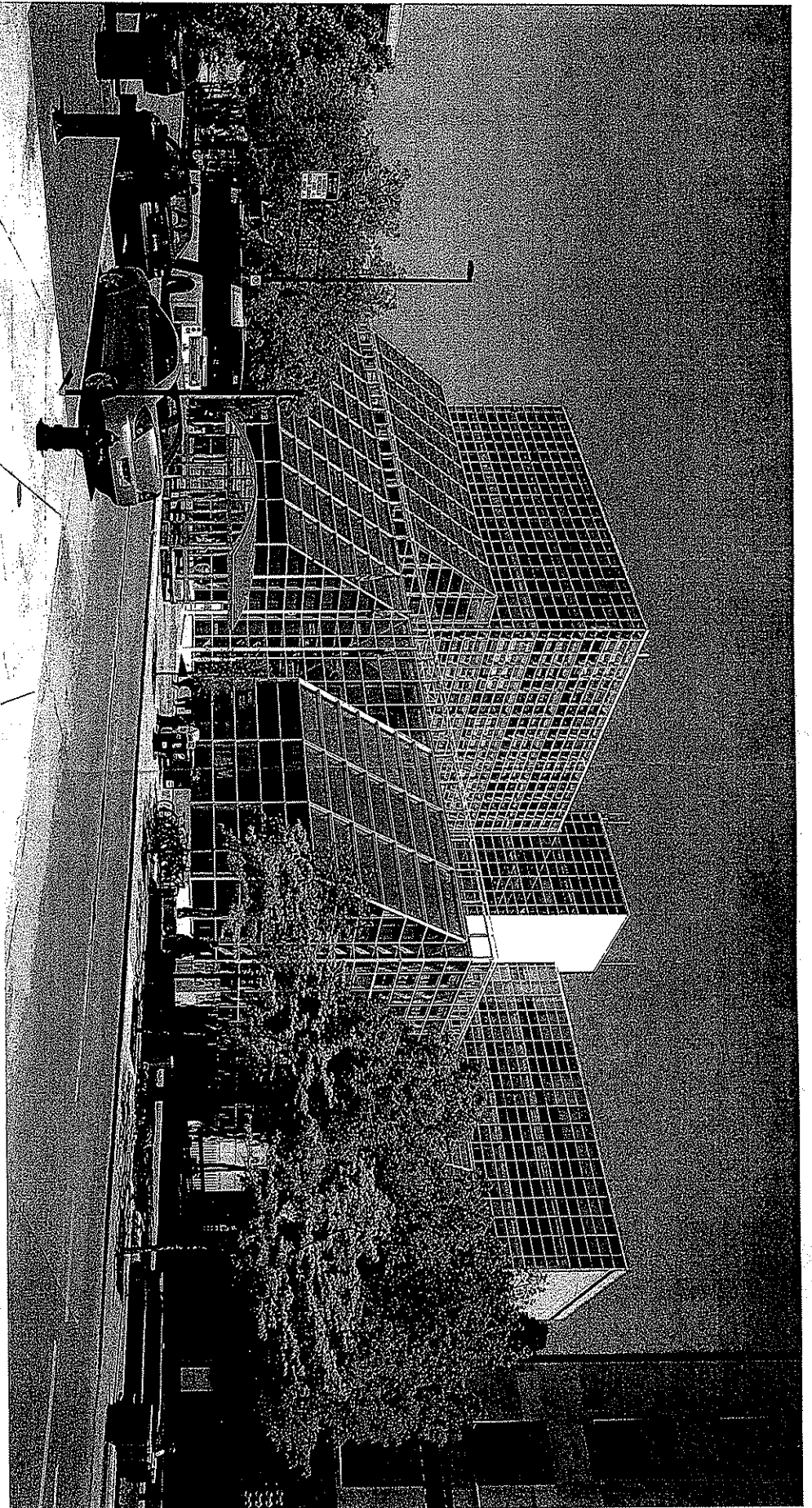
reused without losing its historic appearance. A good example is the Union Transfer Company Warehouse at the foot of King Street. The main façade of the building included only a few windows placed near the sides of the building, with a large brick area in the middle of the second floor left plain as a background for giant electrified lettering identifying the Union Transfer Co. The building was clearly eligible to be a landmark, but any reuse besides cold storage would require losing the most distinguishing historic feature, the sign area. The City of Madison agreed that the building would be hard to rehab for another use without losing its inherent aesthetics and allowed its demolition.

The First Wisconsin Plaza represents a similar scenario. Two of the distinctive features of the building is the large slanted-roofed atrium spaces at the front of the building and the window-wall design. The building was designed as an experiment in creating large greenhouse-type space as a public indoor plaza, allowing for public use during the cold months. Unfortunately, the architects did not properly understand the implications of this large greenhouse space, and the result was that the solar gain has been staggering. Even during construction the architects had realized their mistake and urged the owners to use different materials on the front to alleviate the solar gain, but such changes were not undertaken. Subsequent attempts to deal with the issue have not solved the problems. In my opinion, we have another example of a building that well may be eligible to be a landmark, but whose inherent design is not functional. While the architects were attempting to conserve energy, they had actually created a building that does the opposite.

While the window-wall exterior can be retained it would be hard to retain the slanted roofs without changes to their appearance to make the interior functional. I recommend approval of the proposed changes.

K. H. Rankin

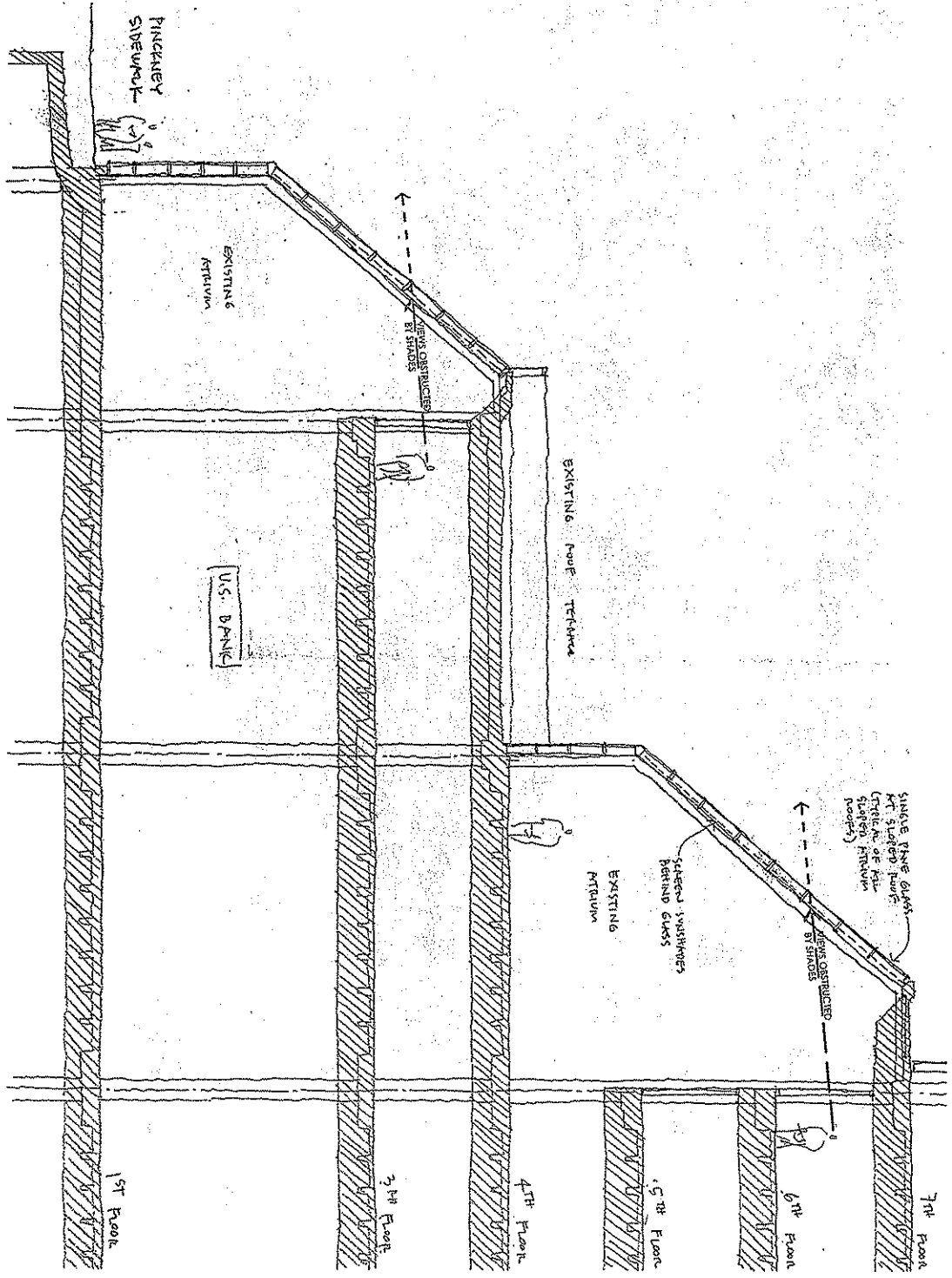




US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

STREET / EXISTING

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalt Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008

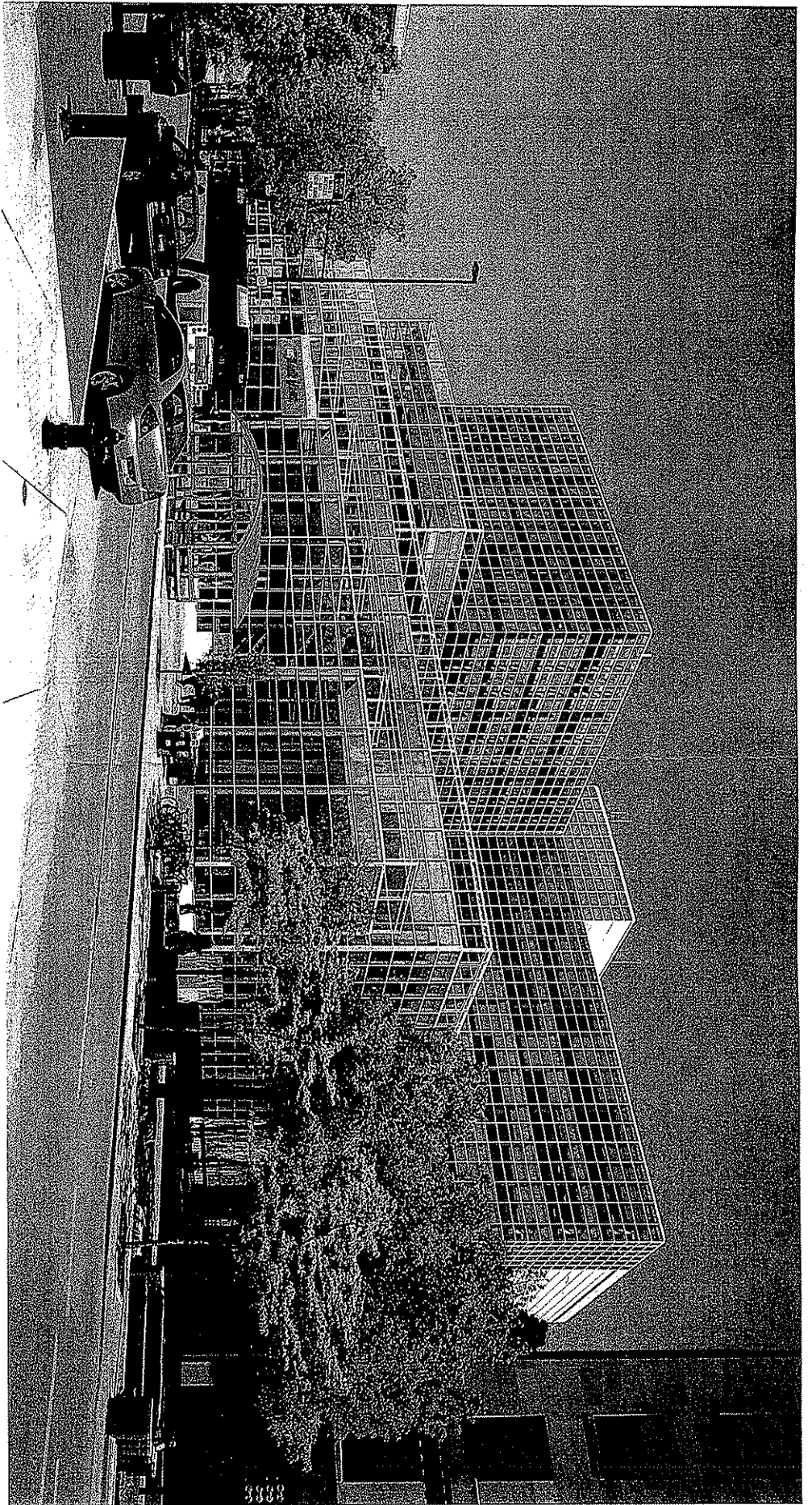


EXISTING BUILDING SECTION

US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalff Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008

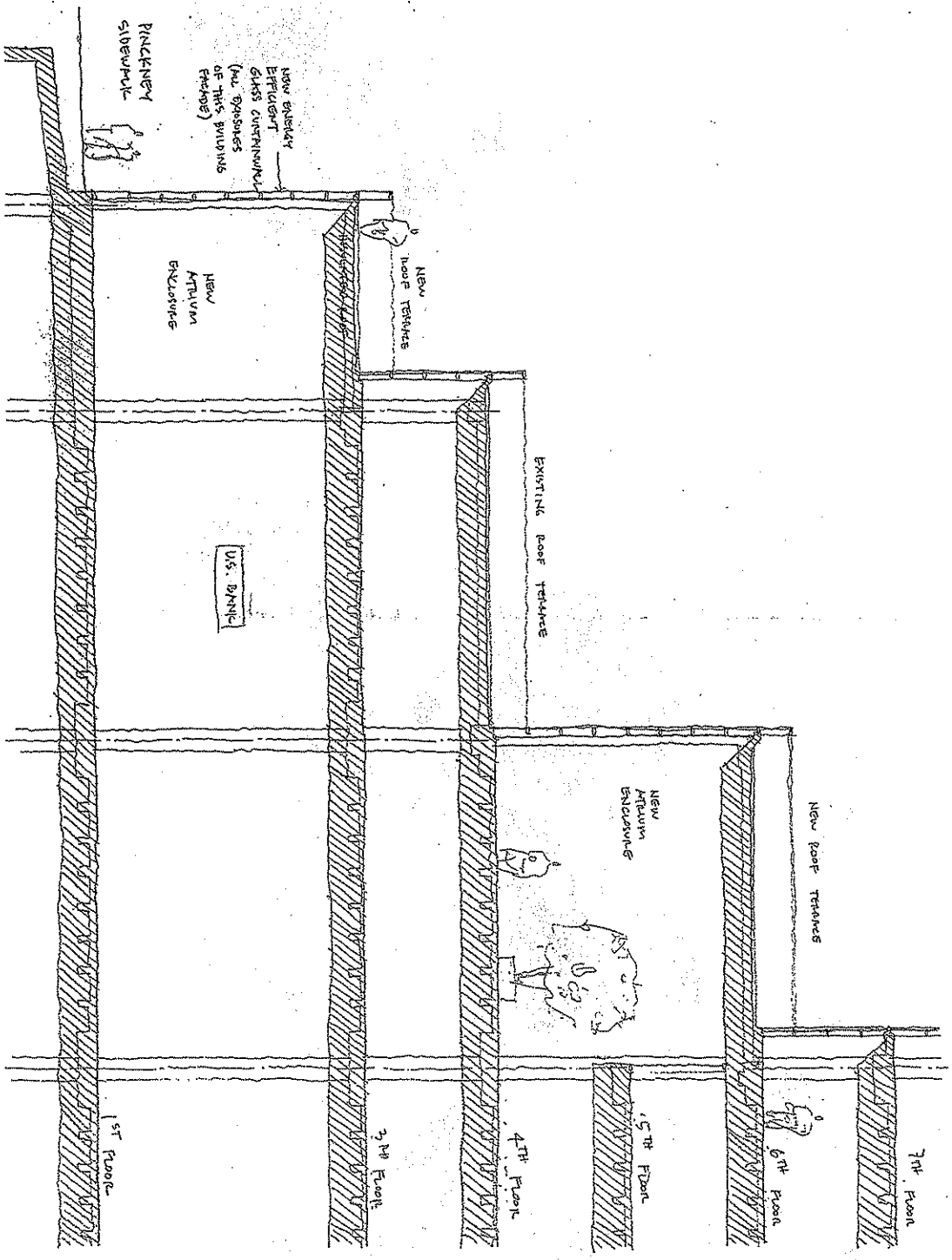




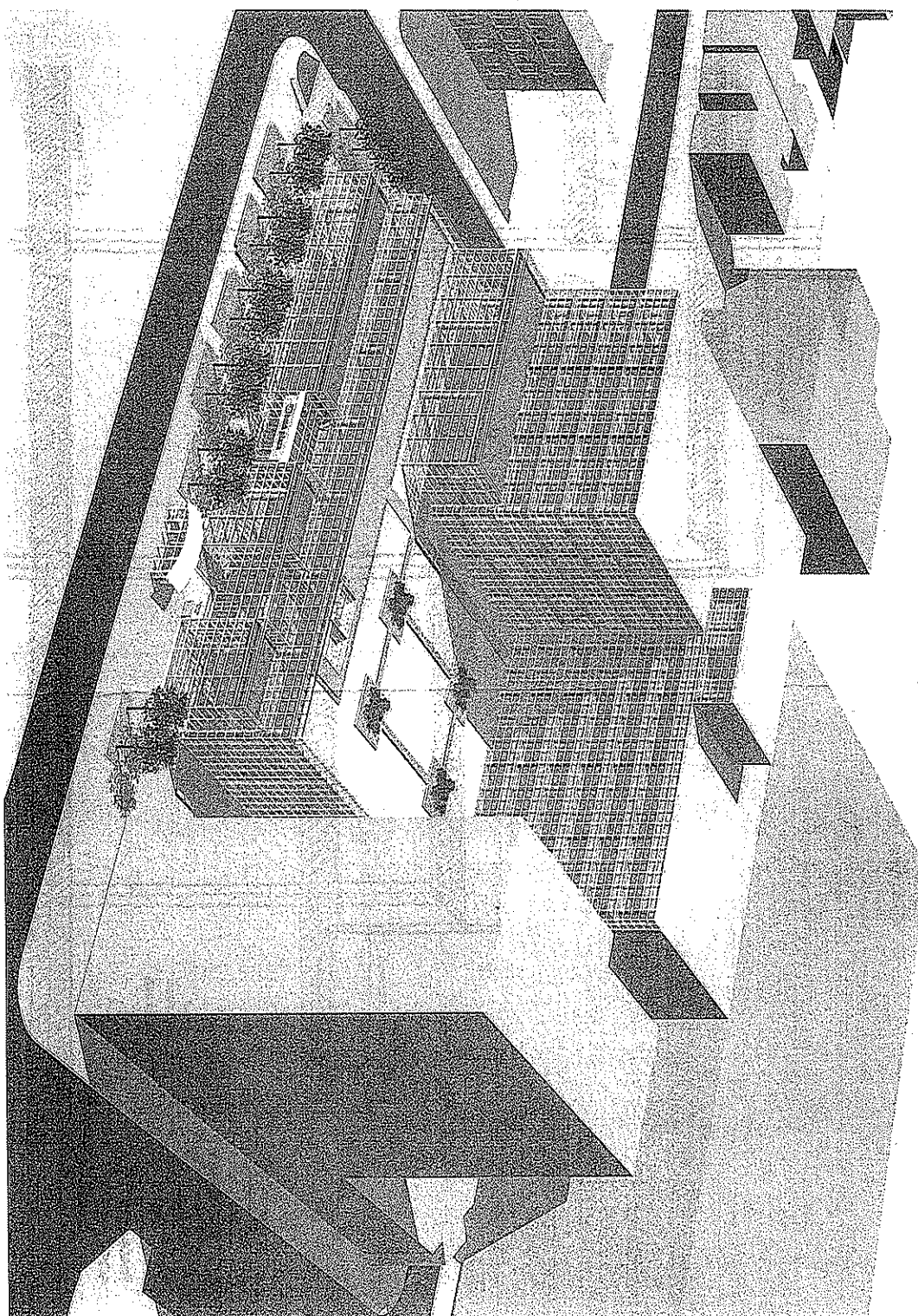
US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

STREET / PROPOSED

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalt Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008



BUILDING SECTION WITH PROPOSED  
ATRIUM ENCLOSURE MODIFICATIONS

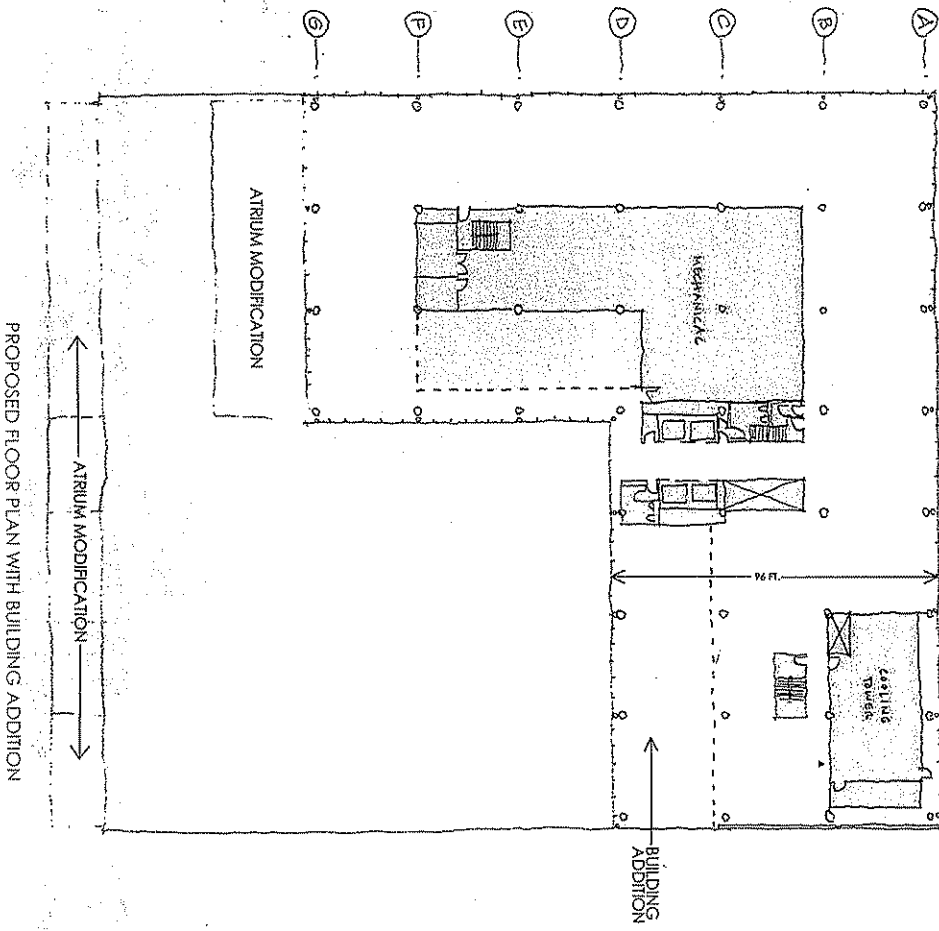
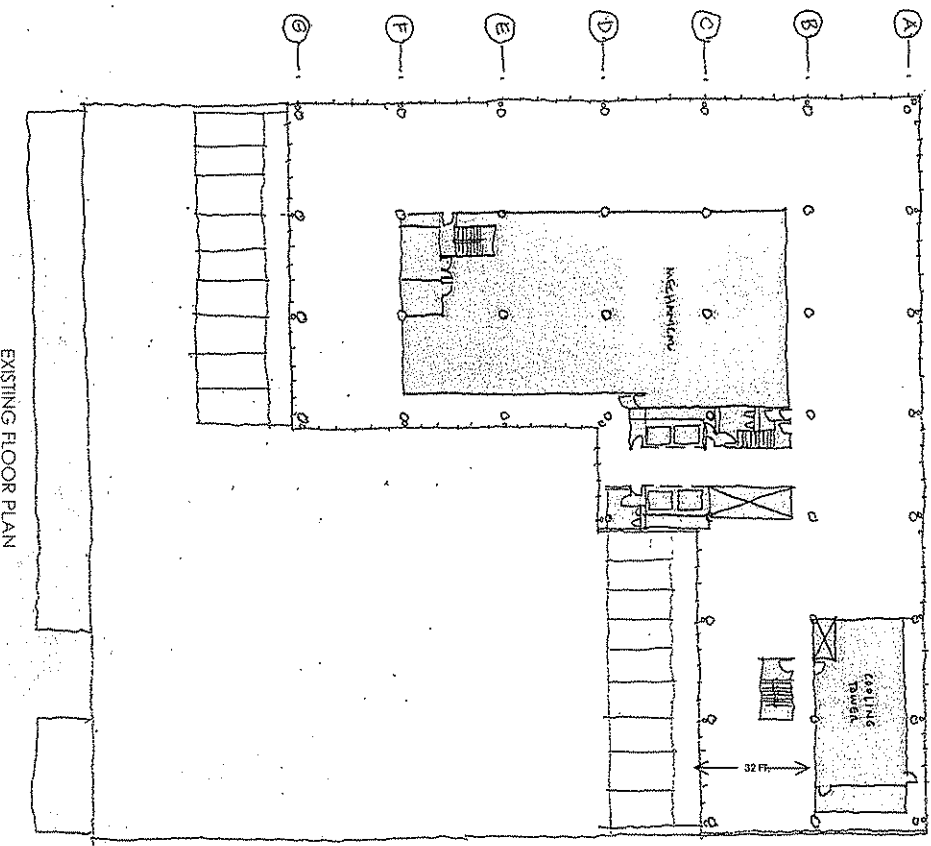


US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

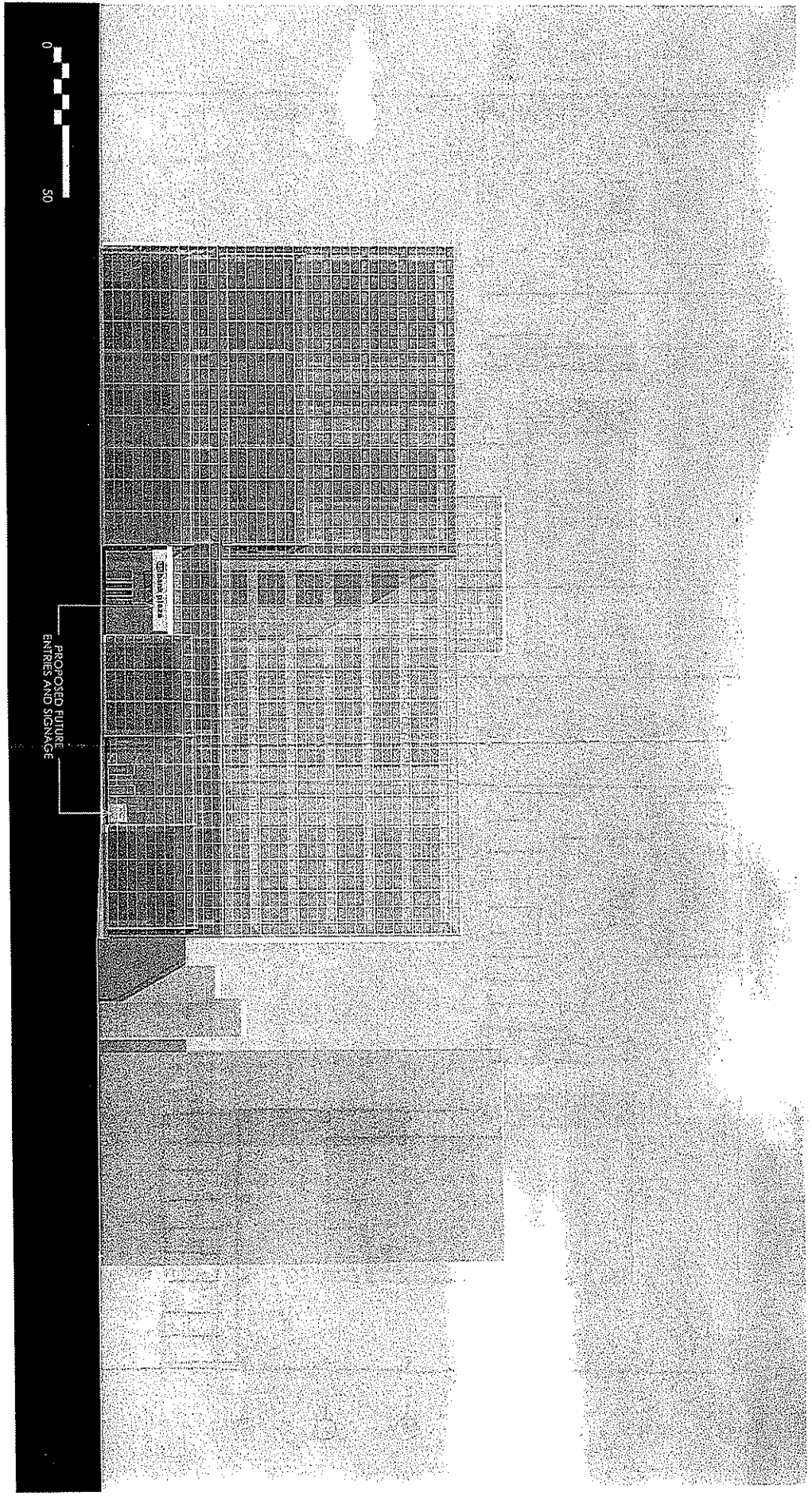
AERIAL VIEW

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalt Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008

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NINTH FLOOR

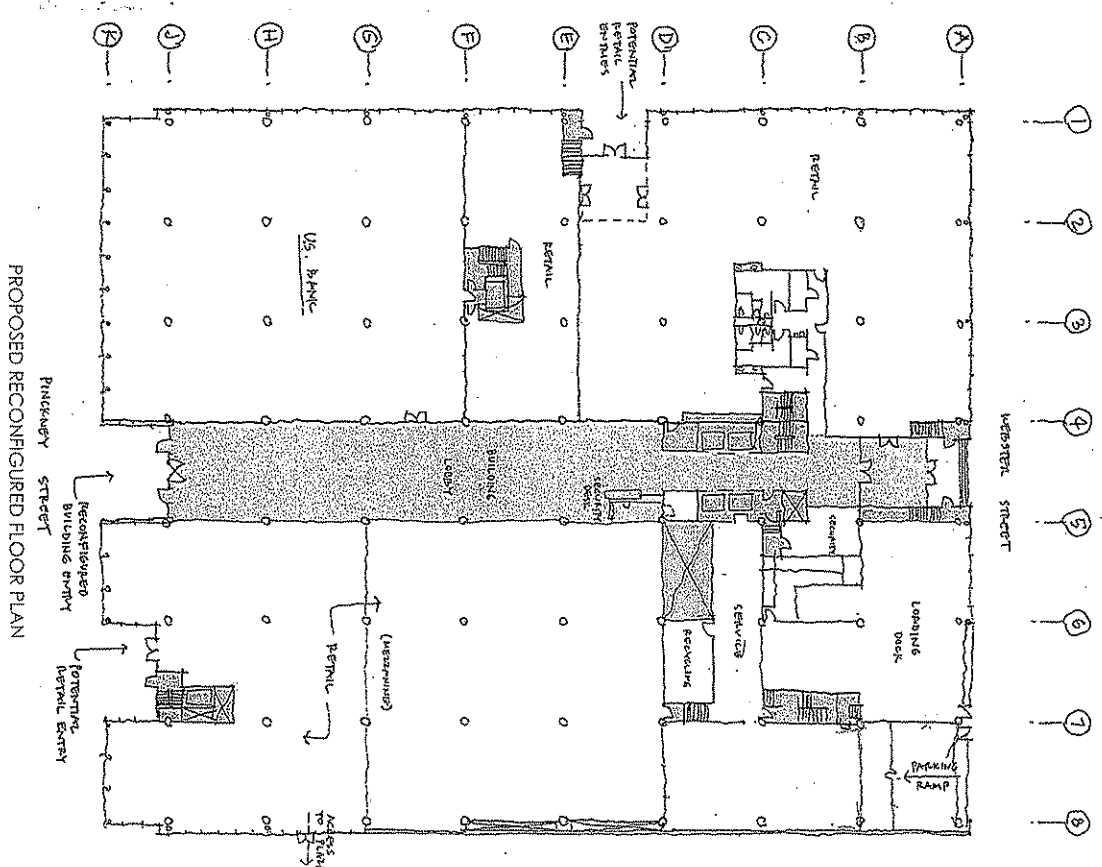
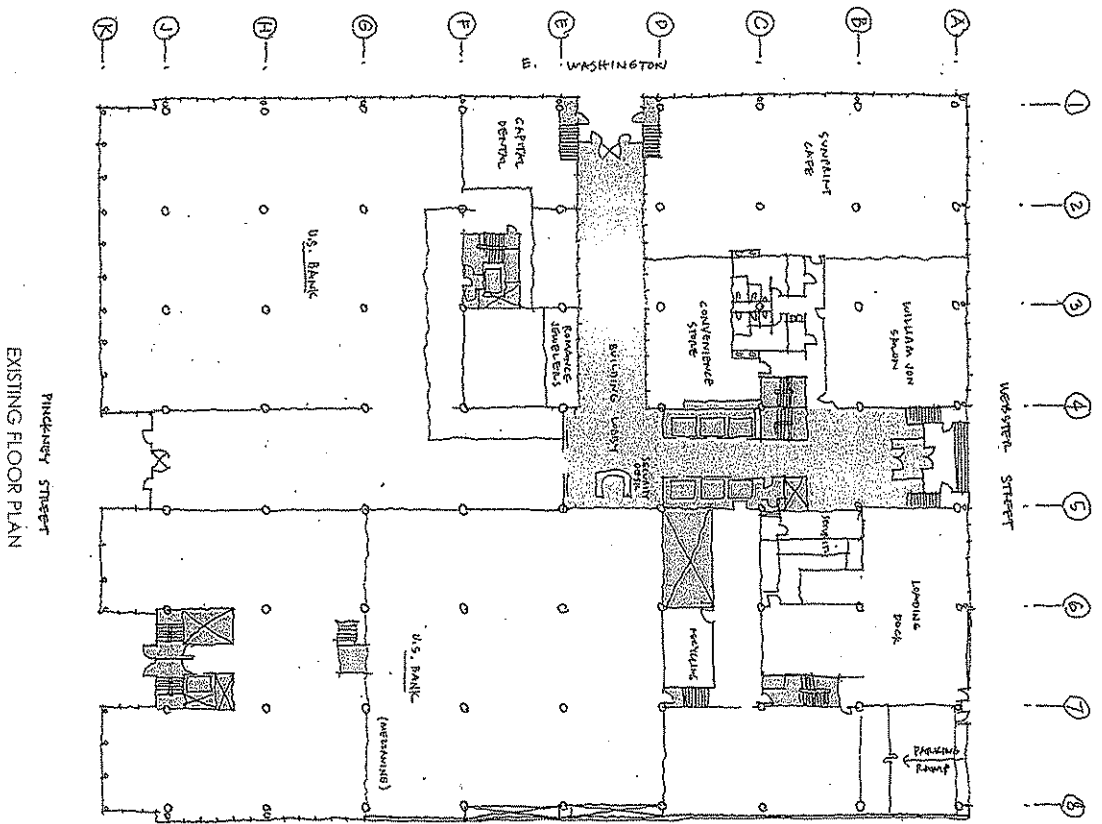


US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

West View  
South Pinckney Street

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalt Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008





US BANK PLAZA  
UDC Submission

FIRST FLOOR

Owner: Urban Land Interests  
Architect: Valerio Dewalt Train Assoc.  
July 16, 2008