



HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 8, 2013

SUBJECT: A MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION (MAA) AND A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL REQUEST BY BANK OF AMERICA TO INSTALL ROOFTOP MECHANICAL SCREENING ON THE CITY NATIONAL BANK BUILDING, A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE LOCATED AT 588 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE (PALM CANYON AT CAMINO PAROCELA) ZONE C-1 (CASE 3.0899 MAA / HSPB 52)

FROM: Department of Planning Services

SUMMARY

Bank of America is replacing rooftop mechanical units with new units which require screening pursuant to Zoning Code Section 93.03.00(B) on a Class 1 historic site.

RECOMMENDATION:

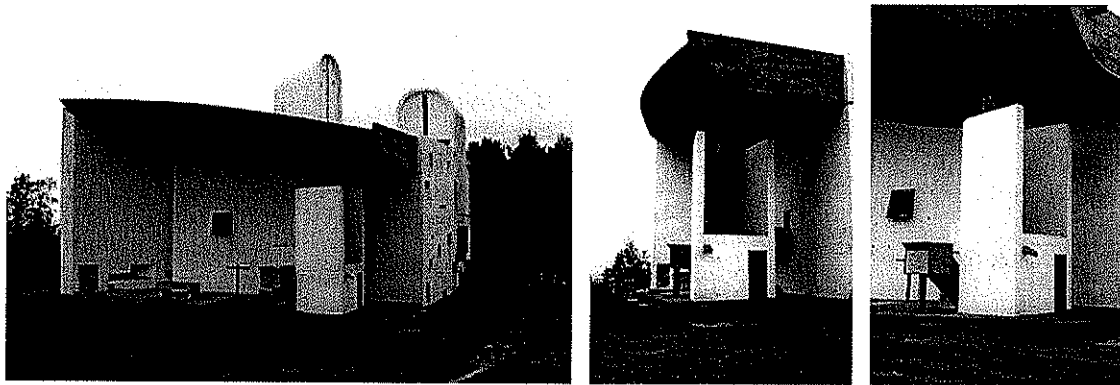
Approve the application.

ISSUES:

The unique architecture of the City National Bank Building (1959, Victor Gruen & Associates) that sits at the southern entry to the downtown area presents a special challenge to the applicant (B of A) to create a mechanical roof screen that is well-integrated and sympathetic with the historic building. The existing A/C units were located in a small mechanical well on the roof and behind parapets. The new larger equipment will not fit in the wells. They will need to be mounted in the center of the roof and will be higher than the existing parapets.

BACKGROUND:

Completed in 1959, the design of the building at 588 South Palm Canyon Drive is credited to Rudy Baumfeld (1903 – 1988) of the architectural firm Victor Gruen Associates of Beverly Hills. It was constructed as a branch office for The City National Bank of Beverly Hills. The building's designer Rudy Baumfeld is credited for designing the first two-level shopping mall in America in Southdale, Minnesota. The building's design is influenced by internationally renowned architect Le Corbusier's Ronchamp Chapel, built five years earlier in France.



The Chapel Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France by Le Corbusier – 1954



Details of the City National Bank Building – 1959.

As noted in the June 2007 HSPB staff report for the buildings' Class 1 designation, the City National Bank is historically significant in the following ways:

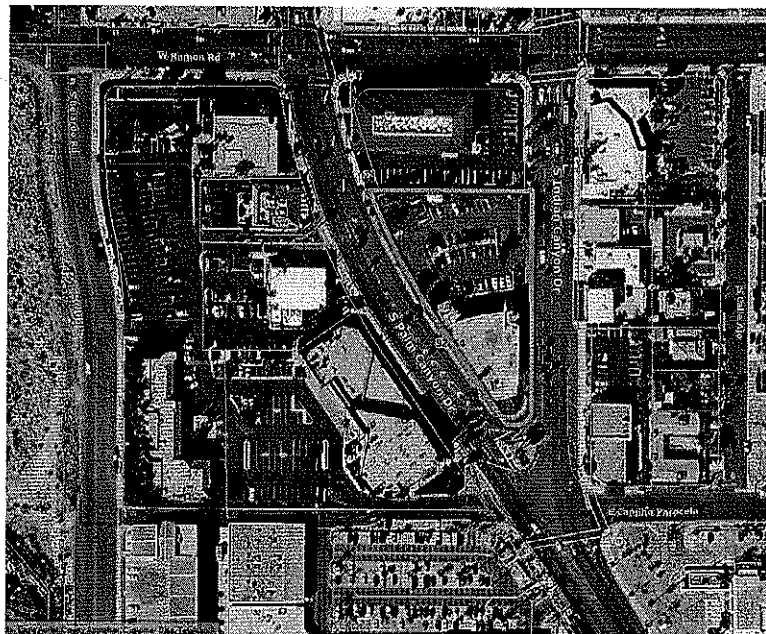
- 1) With its free-form shape, sculptural volume and curvilinear surfaces, it represents an excellent example of "Expressionistic Modernism" Different from the rational, grid-based buildings prevalent in Mid-century modern architecture, the City National / Bank of America Building is a notable example of a more romanticized type of modernism from this same period.
- 2) It is a radical departure from the traditional fortress-like bank structures modeled after classical temples. City National Bank / Bank of America's building conveyed an image of a sculptural "object" with open glassy surfaces balanced with artistic architectural sun screens of masonry and aluminum.
- 3) The inspiration for its proportion and form can clearly be traced to important historic structures in the modern movement, most notably the Chapel Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, France by internationally acclaimed French/Swiss architect Le Corbusier from 1954.
- 4) It was designed by Rudy Baumfeld of the Victor Gruen & Associates architectural firm of Beverly Hills, who is credited with designing the first two-story shopping mall in the United States and several notable buildings in Southern California , including the South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, the 22-story Tishman Building in downtown Los Angeles and many I. Magnin department stores throughout the southwest.

- 5) It is an important member of a collection of buildings in this vicinity that comprise Palm Springs "financial district" including the Santa Fe Federal Savings Bank, Coachella Valley Savings Bank (Washington Mutual), Coachella Savings & Loan (Prudential), Union Bank of California, Guaranty Bank, and Wells Fargo. This collection of financial institutions are all located on or near the intersection of Ramon and Palm Canyon Drive which was, at the time, the hub of commercial activity in the Coachella Valley. Each bank sought to capture customers by creating a significant presence through the use of outstanding architecture.

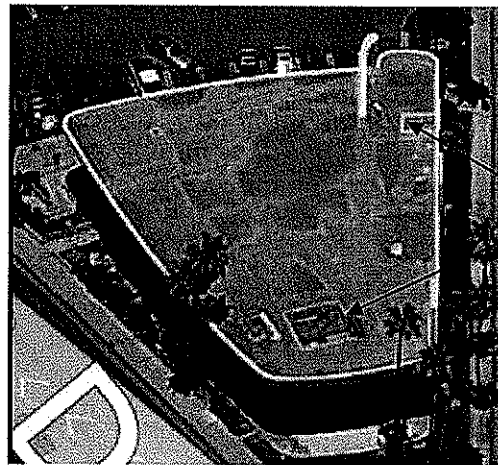
Modifications to commercial buildings require architectural approval pursuant to Zoning Code Section 94.04.00 (E) and as a Class 1 historic site, require a Certificate of Approval from the Historic Site Preservation Board pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.180.

<i>Related Relevant City Actions by Planning, Fire, Building, etc...</i>	
July 18, 2007	City Council designated Class 1 historic site

<i>Neighborhood Meeting</i>	
None	



SUBJECT SITE



VIEW OF EXISTING ROOF CONDITION

ANALYSIS:

The Bank of America (B of A) is replacing the air conditioning units on the roof of the building. Roof mounted mechanical equipment must conform as follows:

(PSZC 93.03.00, B) No mechanical equipment or duct work shall be allowed on the roof unless it is located in an orderly fashion to blend in with its surroundings and is concealed by roof structure, or other approved screening, which is no less than six (6) inches greater in height than the equipment being screened. Required screening shall be an integral part of the architecture. The planning commission or the director of planning and building may otherwise approve such equipment which may not meet this requirement if it is located in an orderly fashion to blend in with its surroundings; in no case shall duct work be exposed.

B of A has proposed placement of the new package units generally in the center of the roof of the existing building and screening. The proposed screening is 56 inches above the roof surface and is set in from the perimeter roof edge to be minimally visible from public view.

FINDINGS

Although there are no specific Findings for Certificates of Approval, pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.180, in reviewing and acting upon each application, the historic site preservation board shall consider:

- (1) The historic value and significance, or the architectural value and significance or both, of the structure and its relation to the historic value of the surrounding area;*

As noted above, the historic value and significance of the City National Bank building is in its unique architectural form, that its design was inspired by the world-renowned Chapel at Ronchamp, the importance of the architect (Rudy Baumfeld), its open, glassy, non-conventional bank form, and that it stands as part of an important group of branch bank buildings that once formed a sort of "financial district" in Palm Springs.

The proposed rooftop mechanical screen carefully and sensitively integrates with the curvilinear form of the banks facade. It is set back from the roof edge to minimize its visibility from the public streets. It is respectful of the architectural significance of the building and thus conforms to this guideline.

(2) The relationship of the exterior architectural features of any structure to the rest of the structure itself and to the surrounding area;

The proposed roof screen is proposed in a neutral color to blend with the cream white color of the roof element of the bank. It relates to the curvilinear west and south façade by following the same curvilinear form. The historic significance and architectural value of the City National Bank building is not impacted by the proposed screenwall and thus the project conforms to this guideline.

(3) The general compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture and material which is proposed by the applicant;

The solid metal screen is proposed in an off-white color that is harmonious and compatible with the existing surfaces and materials of the roofline of the bank while not attempting to mimic or replicate adjacent materials or surfaces. It will be slightly higher than the existing parapet roofs and set back from the parapet edge so it is not easily seen from the adjacent streets. It will not detract from the overall historic feeling or significance of the building. The proposed project conforms to this guideline.

(4) Archaeological or ecological significance of the area.

There is no known archaeological or ecological significance to the site or the surrounding area.

Staff believes the proposed screen is a sensitive and appropriate modification to provide screening of the new rooftop mechanical units. Therefore, staff recommends the HSPB moves to approve a Certificate of Approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

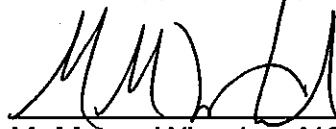
The proposed mechanical replacement and screening is defined as a project under the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff has evaluated the project and recommends a Class 31 Categorical Exemption from further analysis under CEQA. This class of exemption includes repair, stabilization, rehabilitation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the

Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995, Weeks and Grimmer).

Staff recommends that the HSPB issue a Certificate of Approval as presented.



Ken Lyon, RA
Associate Planner



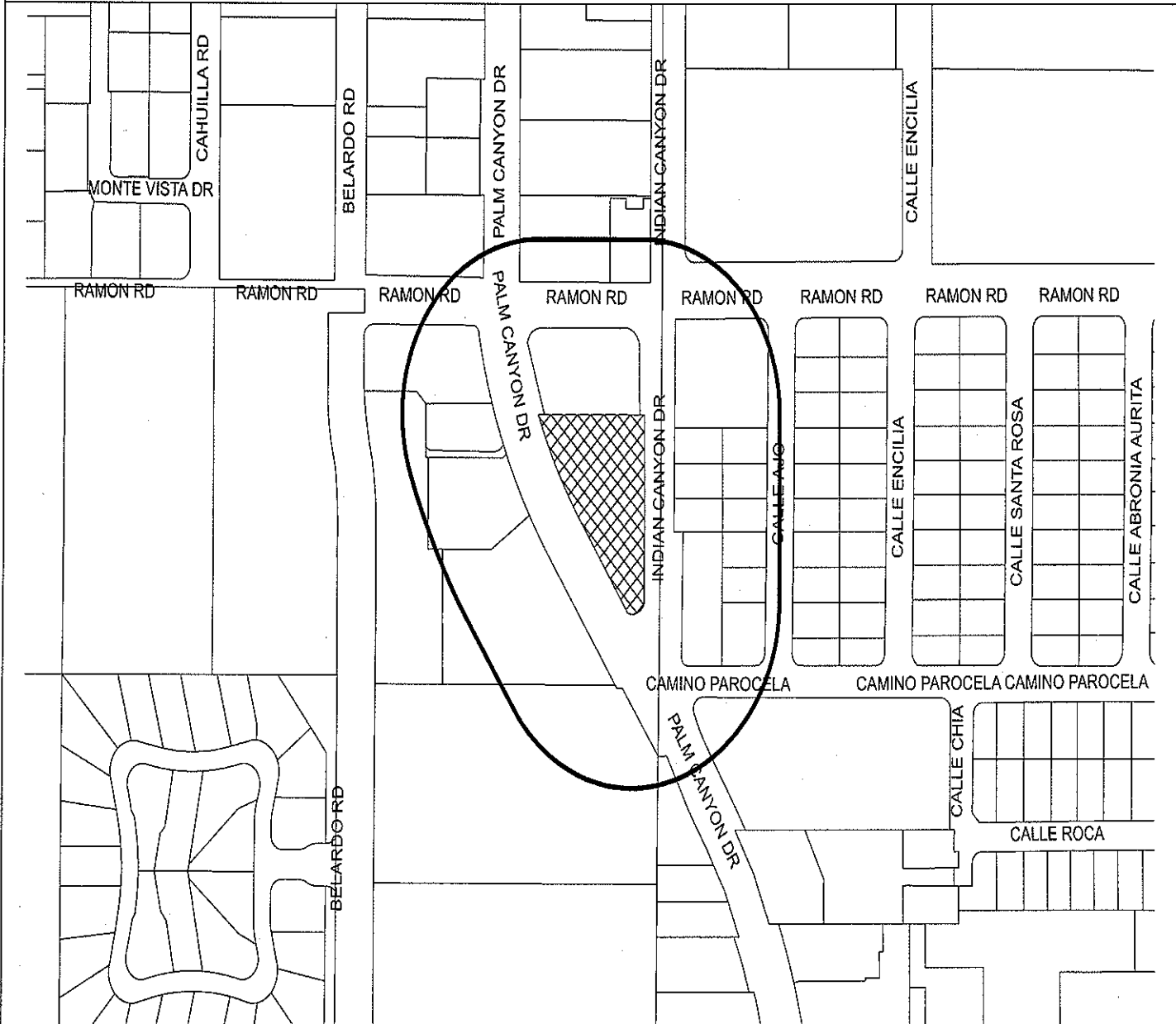
M. Margo Wheeler, AICP
Director of Planning Services

Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Plans, elevations, color cut sheet,
3. Photo-simulations of building from public view.
4. Existing Site Photographs



Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

CASE NO: 3.0899 MAA / HSPB 52

APPLICANT: Bank of America

DESCRIPTION: Proposed mechanical screening for rooftop mechanical units at the City National Bank Building, a Class 1 historic site, located at 588 S Palm Canyon Drive, Zone C-1, Section 23.

Bank of America





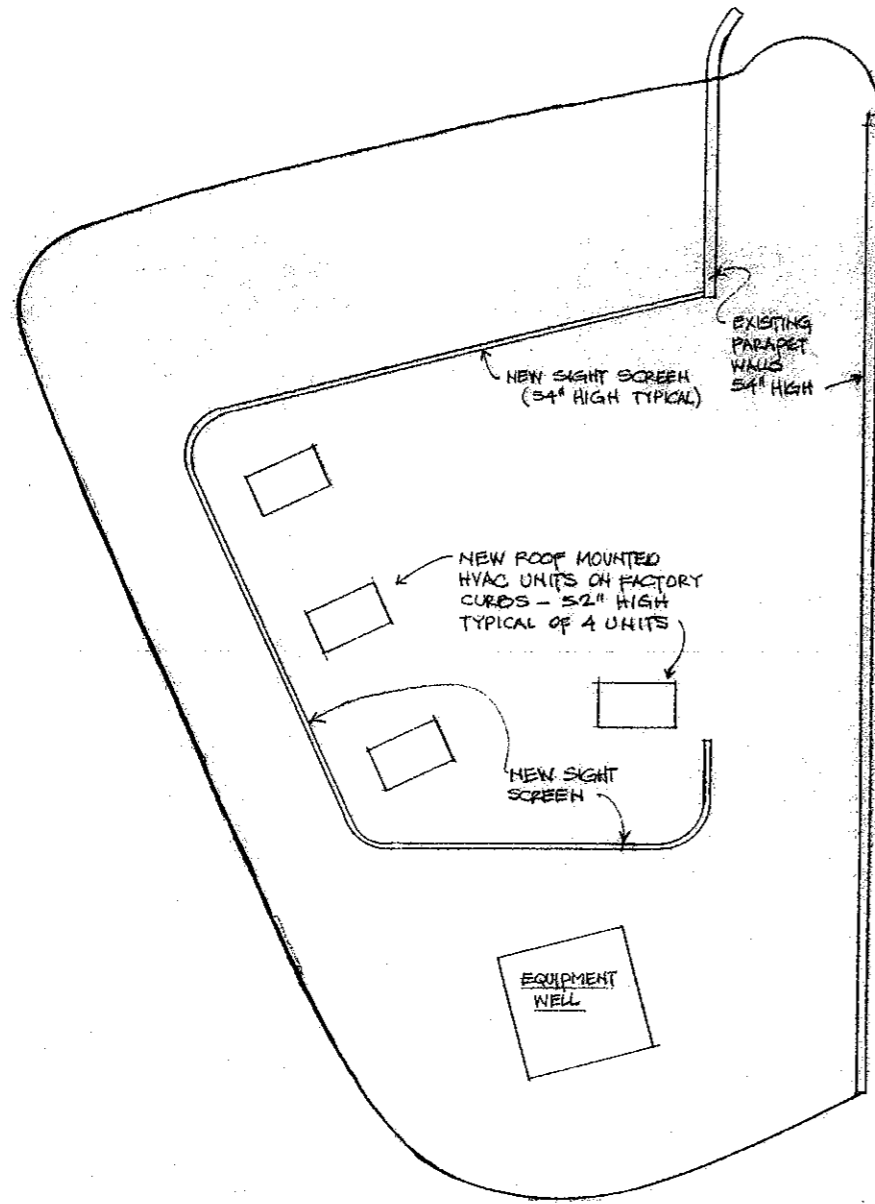




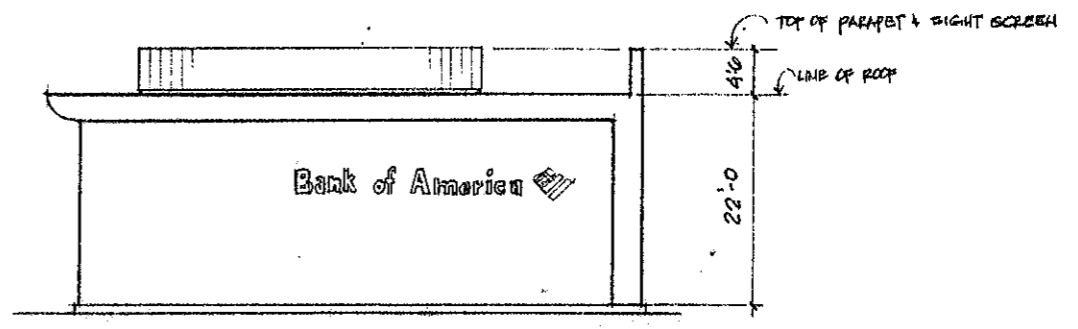




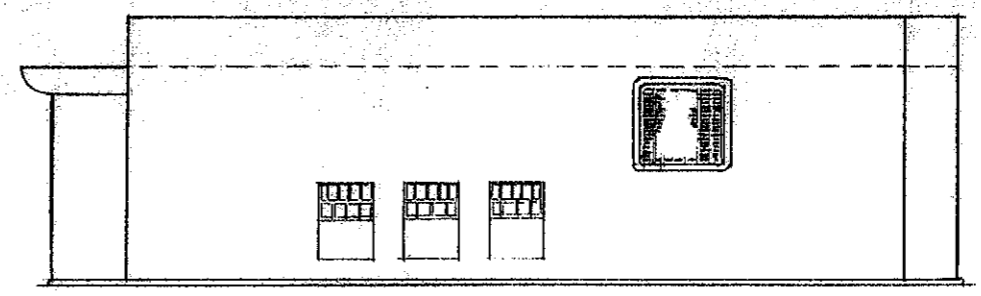




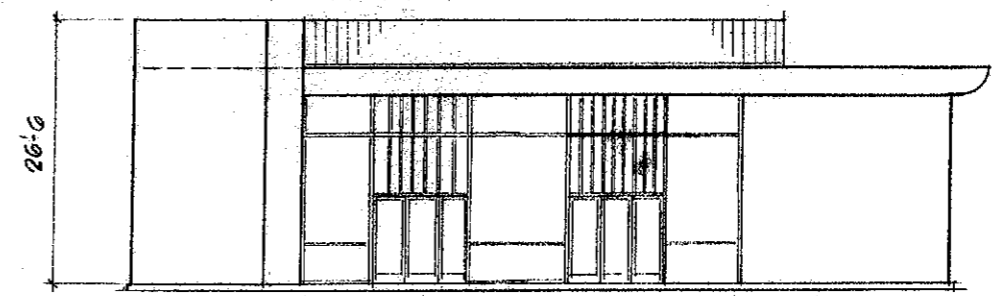
EXISTING ROOF PLAN SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



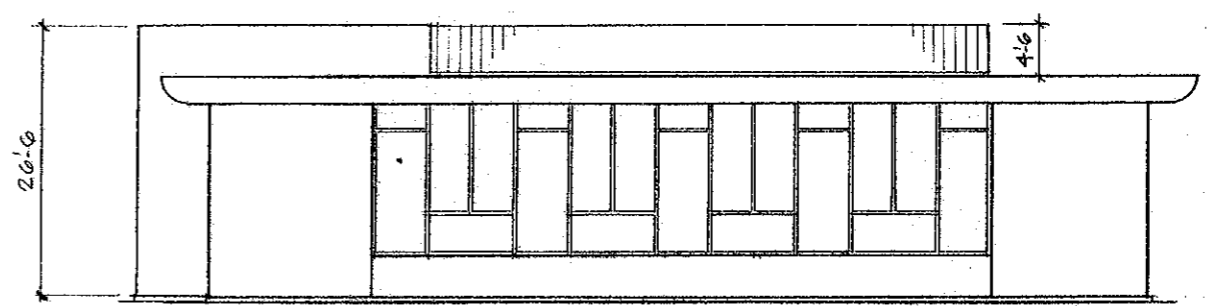
SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



Bank of America





Bank of America





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