

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name One Bell Center

Other names/site number One SBC Center; One ATT Center

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 909 Chestnut Street

N/A

not for publication

City or town St. Louis

N/A

vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Independent City Code 510 Zip code 63101

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: A B X C D

B. K. Doe DEPUTY SHPO 8-8-22
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

One Bell Center
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
	1	objects
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Post-Modern

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Stone (Granite veneer)
roof: Synthetics
other:

X

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

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.)

Property is:

☐ 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.

☒ **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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: **St. Louis Public Library**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1985

Significant Dates

1985

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hellmuth, Obata, & Kassabaum, Inc. (HOK)

McCarthy Brothers Company (builder)

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.6

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.627913 -90.194555
Latitude: Longitude:

3 Latitude: Longitude:

2 Latitude: Longitude:

4 Latitude: Longitude:

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rachel Consolloy & Amanda K. Loughlin

organization Rosin Preservation LLC

date April 2022

street & number 1712 Holmes

telephone 816-472-4950

city or town Kansas City

state MO

zip code 64108

e-mail amanda@rosinpreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

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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: **One Bell Center**

City or Vicinity: **St. Louis**

County: **St. Louis (Independent City)** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, f-stop Photography**

Date

Photographed: **March 2022**

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

See Photo Maps 1 through 15 (These are the available construction drawings from HOK and represent the most current available plans of the building.)

- 01 of 32:** View northwest at south elevation
- 02 of 32:** View northeast at west and south elevations, showing base of building
- 03 of 32:** View southeast at north and partial west elevations
- 04 of 32:** West elevation, view east
- 05 of 32:** Detail of base and west breezeway, non-historic sculpture, and west planter, looking NNE
- 06 of 32:** East breezeway, view NNE
- 07 of 32:** South (primary) entrance, also showing historic concrete pattern, view WNW
- 08 of 32:** East planter and east side of building base, view W
- 09 of 32:** View west of historic row of planters along north side of site
- 10 of 32:** Lobby level, atrium, view south
- 11 of 32:** Lobby level, atrium, view north, showing lobby and elevator core beyond atrium
- 12 of 32:** View of lobby, atrium, executive elevator, looking south from mezzanine
- 13 of 32:** Lobby level, view NE from SW corner of lobby
- 14 of 32:** View west from east side of Mezzanine, showing elevator core and two-story lobby level
- 15 of 32:** Lobby level, view ESE from elevator core, showing built-ins and historic escalators
- 16 of 32:** Floor 3, employee dining room, view west
- 17 of 32:** Floor 4, east stair, view north (west stair sim)
- 18 of 32:** Floor 12, typical open office floor, view west on south side of floor
- 19 of 32:** Floor 21, view southwest toward central core and showing some demountable partitions
- 20 of 32:** Floor 30, view NNE at elevator core, showing both mid-rise (left) and high-rise (right) banks
- 21 of 32:** Floor 36, view south from high-rise elevator corridor toward and example of demountable partitions
- 22 of 32:** Floor 38, view south of typical open office area to west of central core
- 23 of 32:** Floor 39, view south down typical high-rise elevator corridor, and showing service elevators
- 24 of 32:** Floor 40, view east, showing typical open office area to north of central core
- 25 of 32:** Executive level, floor 41, view north of stair between executive floors
- 26 of 32:** Executive level, floor 42, view ESE of elevator corridor
- 27 of 32:** Executive level, floor 41, large bar in west half of south side of floor, view east
- 28 of 32:** Executive level, floor 41, typical open office area for executive staff, view NE

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29 of 32: Executive level, floor 42, east conference room, view NW

30 of 32: Executive level, floor 42, southeast executive office, view NW

31 of 32: Executive level, floor 42, north office, view east

32 of 32: Upper basement level, view west

Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1. Contextual map, showing One Bell Center within downtown St. Louis. Source: Google.

Figure 2. Boundary map. Solid line around city block represents the nominated boundary. The non-contributing Obelisk sculpture is at the southwest corner of the property. Base map from Google Earth (July 2020 image).

Figure 3. View of the 1985 One Bell Center juxtaposed with the 1925 Southwestern Bell Building, looking northeast. Source: Amanda Loughlin, April 2021.

Figure 4. Sidewalk joint layout. Base map HOK Construction Plans, 1981.

Figure 5. Typical elevator cabs, as seen in the mid-rise elevator bank of the lobby level. Source: Brad Finch, March 2022.

Figure 6. Examples of phone banks in the lobby, floor 4, and the executive floor 42. Source: Brad Finch, March 2022.

Figure 7. Historic rendering, 1981. Source: St. Louis Public Library. Local History Archives, Central Library. Clipping files.

Figure 8. One Bell Center, 1986. Source: Inland Architect, July/August 1986, 34.

Figure 9. One Metropolitan Square, HOK, constructed 1989. Source: Daron Dierkes.

Figure 10. Thomas F. Eagleton United States Courthouse, HOK, constructed 2000. Source: U.S. General Services Administration.

Figure 11. The Equitable Building 10 South Broadway, Saint Louis. Source: Architecture and Urbanism, January 1982, 103.

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One Bell Center
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Constructed between 1981 and 1985, One Bell Center is a forty-four-story Postmodern office building over basement and sub-basement. Located at 909 Chestnut Street in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, the 1.4 million square foot building occupies an entire city block. A paved plaza to the south of the building provides a public pedestrian area flanked by granite-veneered planters; a row of granite planters lines the north side of the property. Granite veneer clads the steel and concrete structure, creating a grid of flush, fixed windows. The first five stories extend south of the main shaft of the building. The elongated octagonal floor plan of the main shaft creates prominent north and south elevations. Notches and setbacks in these elevations define the top of the building. Recessed false balconies interrupt the otherwise monolithic east and west elevations. Flat roofs behind parapets cap the building; a skylighted atrium covers the lobby entrance. The ubiquitous octagon shapes the building shaft, the modules that create the building base, and even the exterior planters. A centralized core organizes each floor of the office building, containing three banks of elevators (low-, mid-, and high-rise), stairs, restrooms, and mechanical spaces. The first six stories house communal corporate spaces (e.g., classrooms, employee cafeteria), as well as public areas such as a five-story atrium, a two-story lobby with mezzanine, and retail around the building perimeter. Open office areas fill floors seven through forty, while the executive suites fill the top two floors beneath a mechanical floor. The basement contains a small parking garage, as well as mail room and mechanical spaces. Alterations to the building since its construction include updated finishes in the executive floors in the 1990s and the 2017 removal of the sky bridges that connected One Bell Center to the buildings to the east and west. The building retains historic integrity from its period of significance, 1985, as an excellent local example of Postmodern architecture.

ELABORATION

SETTING AND SITE

One Bell Center is in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, on the north side of Gateway Mall (*Figure 1*). Its location on Chestnut Street between 9th & 10th streets allows its south elevation to overlook the green space. The 1925 Southwestern Bell Telephone Headquarters Building sits across 10th Street to the west, and the 1990 ATT Data Center occupies the parcel across 9th Street to the east. Early 20th century commercial buildings fill the blocks to the north of One Bell Center.

The One Bell Center property includes the full block bound by Pine Street (north), 9th Street (east), Chestnut Street (south), and 10th Street (west) (*Figure 2*). Concrete driveways on the east and west sides of the parcel provide access down to the basements. Because the driveways occur within the sidewalk right-of-way, covered passageways on the east and west sides of the building allow for pedestrian access from north and south (*Photos 5, 6*). The building fills most of the parcel; however, the main shaft of the building sits north of center, allowing for public space to the south of the building (*Photos 2, 5, 8*).

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One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Elongated octagonal granite planters with integrated benches occupy the southwest and southeast corners of the site (*Photos 5, 8*). The metal Obelisk statue (non-contributing object), installed at an unknown date after the construction of One Bell Center, sits at the southwest corner of the property near the planter (*Photos 2, 5*). Three sets of concrete steps with metal handrails lead up from the sidewalk to the building. The grid of the concrete pavement joints is oriented on a forty-five-degree angle (*Figure 4*), with a larger grid at the southeast and southwest corners of the property as well as in the covered passageways, and a smaller grid closer to the building (*Photos 5 through 7*). A row of ten granite veneered planters lines the sidewalk to the north of the building (*Photo 9*).

ONE BELL CENTER (1981-1985)

The forty-four story One Bell Center has an elongated octagonal footprint that creates eight distinct wall planes. A five-story base extends from the south side of the main shaft of the building (*Photos 1, 2*). The Postmodern skyscraper has a reinforced concrete and steel structure with no internal columns dividing open office areas. Membrane and pavers cover the roofs behind parapets of varying heights. Granite cladding covers the entire building with an intentional joint pattern that creates a uniform grid of windows. The fixed dark-tinted windows have dark anodized frames and center mullions; smaller windows fill the grid on the northwest, northeast, southwest, and southwest-facing walls. Granite joints align with centered window mullions and the centerlines of the grid. Parapet walls slant inward, mimicking the faceted edges of the building itself. A base-shaft-capital motif organizes the exterior. Notches and setbacks define the top of the building, reminiscent of the architecture of the 1925 Southwestern Bell Building to the west.

South (Primary) Elevation

The symmetrical south elevation faces Chestnut Street (*Photos 1, 2*). For clarity, this description of the south elevation includes the southwest- and southeast-facing wall planes created by the shape of the footprint. The five-story base of the building extends south of the main shaft. Forming the base, five “modules” flank the centered inset main entrance. These modules have elongated octagonal footprints and, in plan, step progressively south toward the center of the building (*Photo 2*). They also vary in height; from outside to inside they are three, four, five, four, and three stories tall. Each module features a typical paired window at each story of the south elevations, as well as the exposed portions of their east and west elevations (*Photos 5 7, 8*). The end modules contain the two-story covered sidewalks. A three-tiered glass atrium and skylight system spans the center of the base. The main inset entrance fills the center of the south elevation below the atrium; tiered steps lead up to the entrance from the sidewalk (*Photo 7*). The glazed entrance bay features a single door at the ends and two revolving glass doors in the center of the wall; two fixed panes separate the doors. The upper glass wall of the entry bay slants up and out from the doors then transitions into the glass wall of the tiered skylight.

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N/A

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The main shaft of the building rises from the base. Beginning at floor 35, notches and setbacks begin to shape the top of the building into three tiers, repeating the design of the atrium of the base. The mechanical floors and roof step back. Sixteen bays organize the main wall of the south-facing elevation. Between floors 35 and 40, notches replace the windows of bays 2 and 15. Bays 1 and 16 of floors 41 and 42 set back from the main wall (*Photos 1,2*). No windows pierce the granite walls of the top mechanical stories located within the furthest set back portion of the elevation. Seven bays organize the southeast- and southwest-facing elevations. Smaller fixed windows without center mullions fill these bays. The canted elevations fully extend to floor 36 and finally terminate at floor 38. Tiered, octagonal south-facing bays extend up from this point. Double windows matching those on the primary south façade pierce the east-, south-, and west-facing sides of these upper tiered bays.

East and West Elevations

The east and west elevations shared mirrored designs (*Photos 1 through 4*). Seven bays organize the three-story south walls of the base. Two-story openings at the bottom of the elevation correspond to the covered passageways; seven typical paired windows fill the third story. Three bays organize the narrow primary walls of the east and west elevations. The three masonry openings at the first story correspond to the covered passageway, which is one-story tall at this location. Typical paired windows fill the outer bays at all but the first story. A six-story inset center bay articulates the base of the elevation. Four fixed windows fill center masonry openings in the second through fourth stories. Skybridges formerly connected to One Bell Center at the fourth story, evidenced only by the differently colored granite panels above and below the fourth story windows (*Photo 4*). These were removed in 2017.¹ Louvres fill the center masonry openings of the fifth and sixth stories. The center bays of the upper stories are also inset, giving the illusion of recessed balconies at these floors. Windows fill the walls of these fake balconies (*visible in Photo 22*); only the side windows contain operable panes for easy access when washing windows.

North Elevation

The north elevation shares a similar design to the south elevation, mirroring this elevation from the seventh story up (*Photo 3*). Only the design of the base differs on this elevation. As with the south elevation, the north elevation includes the canted northeast- and northwest-facing walls of the octagonal building. Five inset six-story bays organize the base of this elevation, contrasting the projecting base of the south elevation. Double-height windows span the first and second stories; louvres fill the second story

¹ "2 AT&T Sky Bridges to be Demolished," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (28 April 2017): n.p., One AT&T Center Clipping File, St. Louis Public Library.

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Name of Property

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N/A

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in bays 2 and 4. Typical paired windows pierce the wall at the third and fourth stories, and double-height louvres span the fifth and sixth stories.

Two-story inset entrances fill the base of the northwest- and northeast-facing elevations. Similar to the main south entrance, these entrances feature a single pedestrian door at the outer ends and two revolving doors in the center; fixed panes separate these doors. The covered east and west sidewalks begin to the south of the entrances; fixed display windows corresponding to retail spaces fill the canted walls to the north of the doors. Granite panels separate the first and second stories, and fixed windows fill the second story. Seven windows pierce the third and fourth stories. Mechanical louvres span the fifth and sixth stories.

Interior

The building contains over one million square feet. The first five stories house the public spaces with offices filling the remaining floors. The two basements contain parking and back-of-house functions. A rectangular organizes each floor (*Photo Maps 2 through 15; Photos 11, 13, 14, 18 through 20, 23*). Elevators, restrooms, stairs, storage rooms, and mechanical spaces fill this core.

Vertical circulation in the building includes elevators, stairs, and escalators. A single elevator shaft in the atrium provides access between the atrium and the basement parking garage. This octagonal structure features a granite veneer, brass elevators doors, and a clock in the wall above the doors (*visible in Photo 12*). Three banks of six elevators fill the central core that provide access to different zones (low-, mid-, and high-rise) of the building. The center bank of low-rise elevators provide access up to floor 18; the west, mid-rise elevators access floors 18 through 30 (*Photo 20*); and the high-rise elevators access floors 30 through 42 (*Photo 26*). All three elevators also access floors 1 through 5, and the high-rise elevators also extend down to the basement parking garage. An additional pair of elevators in the south wall of this central core provide access only between the first five floors. The elevator cabs feature historic vertical wood slat walls (*Figure 5*). Similarly, a pair of elevators (a service and a freight) on the north side of the core access all floors of the building (*Photo 23*). Two sets of paired escalators provide access between the lobby and mezzanine levels (*Photos 11 through 13*). Paired escalators in the center of the east and west sides of the building provide access between the mezzanine and floors (west) and the mezzanine and third floors (east). Two switchback stairs in the northwest and southeast corners of the central core provide egress routes for all floors. Decorative open stairs in the southwest and southeast portions of the building access floors 4 and 5 (*Photo 17*). In the executive levels, a decorative stair accesses the two top floors (*Photo 25*). This stair may post-date the 1985 construction.

Public Floors (Lobby, Mezzanine, and Floors 3 to 6)

The first two floors of One Bell Center contain the building lobby (floor 1) and a mezzanine (floor 2). Floors 3 through 6 house communal corporate spaces such as employee lunchroom and meeting rooms, as

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N/A

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well as mechanical spaces. The architects designed the lobby and mezzanine levels to function as one unit. Tenant-finished retail spaces fill the southwest and southeast corners of both floors and the north side of the lobby level (*Photo Maps 2, 3*). Mechanical spaces fill the north side of the mezzanine level. The south entrance opens into the five-story skylighted atrium of the base (*Photos 10, 11*). Dark-tinted windows of upper floors line the walls, allowing daylighting into these upper spaces. Narrow columns separate the atrium from the main lobby level to the north. An octagonal reception desk sits at the west end of this columned divider, and an octagonal planter with built-in benches sits to the east. Three columned openings between them lead into the two-story volume of the lobby (*Photos 11 through 15*). Paired elevators to the mezzanine flank the center opening, which continues to the central elevator bank (high-rise), on axis with the south entrance to the building (*Photo 11*). Planters with built-in benches fill the space beneath both escalators (*Photos 13 through 15*). Open circulation space encircles the central elevator core at both stories (*Photos 13, 14*). The northwest and northeast entrances lead directly into these lobby areas. In keeping with the original owner of the building, a set of three phone banks pierces the south wall of the north corridor (*Figure 6*).

Historic materials remain throughout these two floors. Granite matching the exterior clads vertical surfaces (walls, columns, planters, reception desk). Retail spaces have anodized storefronts separating them from the lobby and mezzanine levels. Pink marble panels clad the central core at both floors. Dark brown ceramic tile covers the floors, set in a forty-five-degree angled grid, recalling the concrete joint pattern outside. Light granite tiles line the edges of the ceramic tile fields. Fields of granite tiles also form south-pointing arrows between the columns separating the atrium and lobby (*Photos 11, 12*). Textured acoustical ceiling tiles cover the ceilings of the lobby and mezzanine (*Photos 13 through 15*). Retail spaces do not retain historic material, having intentionally been updated and changed over the decades by the tenants.

Floors 3 through 6 contain a variety of communal spaces, supporting the employees of the building. The employee dining room and associated kitchen fill the entire third floor (*Photo Map 4*). The dining room fills the south side of the floor, overlooking the atrium. Finishes throughout this floor reflect a combination of historic and non-historic materials. Historic stepped glass block dividers define walkways within the dining room, and banquet walls repeat the glass block design with square lattice dividers (*Photo 16*). Historic, textured acoustical ceiling tiles cover the ceiling with suspended tubular light fixtures. Gypsum board covers walls throughout this level. Non-historic carpet tiles cover the concrete floor.² The kitchen retain dark ceramic tile floors, as well as textured ceiling tiles.

² Whole areas of the carpeting have been removed for unknown reasons in sections of the floor, exposing the concrete subfloor.

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Meeting rooms, classrooms, mechanical rooms, and other support spaces fill floors 4 through 6. The fourth floor formerly served as a transitional space for employees. Covered walkways between the 1925 Southwestern Bell Building to the west and, later, the 1990 ATT Data Center to the east, connected to One Bell Center at the fourth floor. This allowed corporate employees in both buildings to access the dining room, meeting rooms, and offices in upper floors. Elevators, escalators, and additional stairs provided vertical access to and from this floor (*Photo 17*). Like the first floor, this floor contains a bank of three telephone booths (*Figure 6*). Finishes throughout these floors also include a mixture of historic and non-historic carpeting, dropped acoustical grids, moveable partitions, and gypsum board walls (some painted; some with vinyl wall covering).

Typical Office Floors

Open offices fill floors 7 to 40, organized around the central core. The architects design each floor to be adapted for the needs of each department housed therein. Both demountable partitions and gypsum board walls subdivide spaces. Floors 7 through 11 housed the marketing department (*Photo 18*); 11 through 14 housed the network department; the information systems department occupied 16 through 25 (*Photo 19*). Floors 26 through 37 were a mixture of financial, human relations, and public relations departments (*Photos 20, 21*). The legal department occupied floors 38 through 40 (*Photo 22 through 24*).³ The 1981 construction drawings show different partition configurations on the open office floors that have been reconfigured since construction, indicating the design intent for each floor to be adaptable. Simple finishes throughout the floors also include a mixture of historic and non-historic carpeting, rubber floor base, painted gypsum board walls and demountable partitions, dropped ceiling grids with integral light fixtures. Floors 7 to 35 have the same exterior perimeter wall configurations; exterior walls begin to see more undulations in floors 36 up, matching the setbacks and notches of the exterior (*Photo 24 shows a notched exterior wall*).

Executive Floors (41 & 42)

The Southwestern Bell executive offices and suites filled floors 41 and 42. The lower of the two floors housed recreational spaces, meeting rooms, private dining rooms, as well as executive offices. The top floor housed executive office suites, as well as the primary conference rooms. A large bar occupies the southwest corner of floor 41 (*Photo 27*). This room contains glass-doored built-ins along the east wall, and a paneled bar with marble counter. A heavy, corniced coffered ceiling spans the room with two brass candelabra chandeliers. To the east of the bar is a smaller paneled conference room, followed by two small dining rooms. These latter two rooms have engineered hardwood floors, paneled wainscoting, and coffered ceilings like in the bar. Private office suites with personal bathrooms fill the east side of the

³ Chart hanging in the basement mailroom.

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

building; an open office with historic built-ins fills the space between the offices (*Photo Map 13*; *Photo 28*).⁴ Similar office arrangements fill the north side of the floor, and open office area fills the west half of the floor. The central core of this floor contains a small kitchen, restrooms, elevators, and a stair that leads up to the top floor (*Photo 25*).

Floor 42 contains a conference room along the south portion of the floor (*Photo Map 14*), as well as an executive conference room filling the east half of the floor (*Photo 29*). Both conference rooms feature historic tables constructed with the original building. The table in the east conference room is an octagonal shape with a corresponding historic octagonal coffer above.⁵ Wood paneling covers the walls. Three private phone booths line the hallway to the west of the conference room (*Figure 6*). The large office suites on this floor feature wood paneled walls, built-ins, and grided ceiling fixtures within textured acoustical tile ceilings (*Photos 30, 31*).

The finishes throughout the executive floors represent a more formal motif than the more utilitarian finishes of the lower office floors. Dark wood paneling and built-ins dominate, with a mixture of historic and non-historic features. Neoclassical-inspired elements such columns, pilasters, and heavily coffered ceilings likely postdate the 1980s construction. For instance, available construction documents, including details for built-ins and reflected ceiling plans, do not show the corniced coffered ceilings nor the Neocolonial stair between the two floors (*Photo 25*). An undated *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article noted renovations to the building occurred in the late 1990s, which may have included updates to the finishes in the executive suites.⁶ Floors include carpeting, tile, and wood. The elevator lobby of Floor 42 features pink marble surrounds at each door with lowered soffits; mirrors cover the walls between each elevator above wood wainscot. The floor is a grid of pink marble and granite (*Photo 26*).

Basements

One hundred parking spaces fill the south sides of the basement and sub-basement (*Photo 32*). Mechanical, storage, and maintenance areas fill the remainder of the sub-basement, surrounding the central core. In the basement, loading docks fill the north side of the floor. The mail room occupies most of the southwest corner of the floor between the parking area and elevator core.

⁴ The construction drawings show these built-ins.

⁵ Shown on the original reflected ceiling plan for this floor.

⁶ Charlene Prost, "Downtown Will Gain 800 Jobs," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (n.d.): C6 in the St. Louis Buildings-Southwestern Bell (1986) "One Bell Center" clippings file at the St. Louis Public Library.

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INTEGRITY

One Bell Center retains its historic integrity as an excellent local example of a Postmodern office building constructed between 1981 and 1985. The building remains in its historic location within downtown St. Louis. Office buildings from earlier eras fill the blocks to the north, and Southwestern Bell buildings continue to flank One Bell Center. When constructed, parking lots and a couple of buildings filled the blocks to the southwest, south, and southeast. The Gateway Mall development altered the landscape, removing these structures and creating open park areas. Although this aspect of the setting changed, the open landscape allows the design of the building, with its offset shaft and five-story base, to dominate the blocks. Commercial buildings to the immediate south of the mall continue to communicate the commercial character the area.

The building retains a high degree of its historic design, materials, and workmanship. Few alterations have occurred since construction. Granite veneer continues to cover the exterior walls and the walls of the lobby and mezzanine. The historic windows and doors remain in place, with the dark tint providing a visual contrast to the surrounding granite veneer. Retail spaces in the lobby and mezzanine retain their interior-facing storefront walls, with the spaces themselves having been adapted by various tenants over the years, as expected. The simple finishes throughout the office floors were intended to be updated as needed, as were partitions within each floor. The central core continues to function as historically intended with all three banks of elevators servicing their respective floor zones.

The removal of the skybridges does not adversely impact the design of the building. The date of the construction of the west skybridge is unknown, as the original construction drawings do not delineate the structure. The east skybridge would have been constructed after the AT&T Data Center was built in the 1990s. The bridges minimally connected to One Bell Center at the fourth floor, and today, windows matching the designs of the historic windows fill the openings; the use of a differently colored granite veneer is the only hint of where the skybridges formerly connected.

The executive floors retain a mixture of historic and non-historic materials, including wood paneling and built-ins, carpet and polished stone floors, and gypsum board walls. Executive suites retain their private bathrooms, and the main executive conference room retains its historic conference table and finishes. Alterations to the floors include the open stair connecting s floors 41 and 42, and finish upgrades that resemble more Neoclassical design motifs that are found elsewhere on the floors. Functionally, however, the two floors continue to communicate their executive functions, and no major spatial reconfigurations occurred. The retention of the historic materials and design continue to allow the building to communicate its historic significance as a Postmodern office building constructed in the 1980s.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

One Bell Center, at 909 Chestnut Street in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. It is an exceptionally significant example of the work of a master, Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK), the internationally renowned architecture firm based in St. Louis. Completed in 1985, it also complies with Criteria Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years. The building marks an important moment in HOK's body of work, as the first embrace of Postmodernism. The monumental and uniquely shaped One Bell Center clearly reflects HOK's use of precedent and context to design with nuanced intention. Designed as the new headquarters for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, the 44-story octagonal tower of One Bell Center fills the block adjacent to the 28-story Southwestern Bell Building, constructed sixty years prior in the Gothic Revival style popular at the time of its construction. The design of One Bell Center communicates a subtle, yet definitive visual connection to the building it functionally replaced as the headquarters when it opened in 1985. This design connection speaks to the mastery of HOK in achieving the goal of Postmodernism, which was not a full rebuke of Modernism, but intended to be the next step beyond it, using context and precedent. The context for One Bell Center was the Southwestern Bell Building and the skyline of downtown St. Louis, while the precedent was the Gothic Revival style of the adjacent building. One Bell Center also embodies the characteristics of the contemporaneous Late Modern aesthetic, primarily in the execution of the façade. HOK deftly combined these elements of context and precedent to design a monumental building that is of its time while communicating its connection to the past and its environment. The period of significance is 1985, the year of completion.

ELABORATION

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Postmodern Architecture

While Postmodernism is often debated as a style people either love or hate, there is clearly an identifiable aesthetic or set of characteristics associated with buildings from the late 1970s to the 1990s. While the expressions of Postmodernism are as varied as architecture was under the umbrella of the Modern Movement, these buildings collectively demonstrate a deliberate shift away from the tenets of Modernism. The style is often maligned for being too outlandish, simplistic, and literal, but critics acknowledge that when done well, it is clearly an evolution of Modernism rather than a break from it. Architectural scholar, Charles Jencks, who coined the term in 1978, defined Postmodernism as "doubly-coded, one-half Modern and one-half something else (usually traditional building) in its attempt to

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communicate with the public...[both] the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence.”⁷ Jencks contended that Modernism had failed to communicate effectively with users, particularly the ideologies behind the attempts to solve social problems through design. Architectural historian and critic, William Curtis, acknowledged that “the increase in historical self-consciousness was undoubtedly related to an erosion of faith in the validity and relevance of an abstract and unadorned aesthetic,”⁸ that Modern architecture was not as successful in addressing social issues as its proponents had originally hoped. Curtis believed the deeper meaning behind the movement was that while “formalist manipulations and witty gyrations implied a rejection of the progressive ethos and social planning associated with the ‘modern project,’ ... they also revealed a wider anxiety about the rootlessness of rapid technological change.”⁹ The Modern Movement experimentation with design and materials to create buildings and features that appeared to defy, or at least test, the laws of physics was equal parts exciting and disconcerting. The Late-Modern architectural expression, described in detail below, was what Jencks identified as “single coded,” where one Modern concept or feature was exaggerated to abstraction, often due to a technological advancement in material or method.¹⁰ The response to the discomfort from this abstraction was the retreat to the comfort of the past and the familiar. Architects achieved this comfort by incorporating elements of historic styles in new ways, often by adjusting the scale or function of these elements.

While Postmodernism did not offer more successful solutions to social problems, Jencks believed it was relatable for the public because architects “keep something of a modern sensibility, some intention that distinguishes their work from revivalists, whether this is irony, parody, displacement, complexity, eclecticism, realism or any number of contemporary tactics and goals.”¹¹ These designs were also responding to evolving theories in city planning, which were based on buildings that provided “scale, texture, and memorability” in the urban setting.¹² Architects had to reconcile this public desire for relatability with their clients’ desire for signature buildings that communicate corporate identity and status.¹³ Architects for this new wave of corporate office buildings began exploring forms beyond the

⁷ Charles Jencks, “Postmodern and Late Modern: The Essential Definitions,” *Chicago Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1987), 33-34.

⁸ William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996) 602.

⁹ Curtis, 619.

¹⁰ Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, (Great Britain: Rizzoli, 1980) 8.

¹¹ Jencks, “Postmodern and Late Modern: The Essential Definitions,” 34.

¹² Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture*, (New York: The Penguin Group, 2001), 268.

¹³ Rifkind, 268-269.

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rectangular box that dominated the Modern Movement, particularly for commercial resources. Building footprints and profiles took on shapes unique within the commercial setting. The Postmodern stepped roof harkened back to the stepped rooflines of the 1920s, dictated by zoning code at the time.

More skeptical critics of Postmodernism, such as Curtis, lamented the superficiality of Postmodern design that used blunt references and direct, if exaggerated, quotations from historic precedents. A common criticism of Postmodernism was that these surface designs were a pastiche of earlier styles that would “recall a previous building more than it convinces us that its present re-use of form is inventive and suitable.”¹⁴ However, Curtis conceded that “while the preoccupation with meaning often degenerated into a surface manipulation of signs and references, it also prompted reflections upon the basis of architectural language, and upon the role of precedent in design.”¹⁵ It is this more deliberate analysis of precedent and context that drove the design and execution of One Bell Center and illustrates the mastery of HOK.

One Bell Center is not a direct reference to the adjacent Gothic Revival Southwestern Bell Building; the reference is subtle and inventive, a successful expression of Postmodernism, as defined by both Jencks and Curtis. While the stone cladding and the arcade at the base provide visual connection to the adjacent building, it is primarily the articulation of the stepped portion of the top that evokes the impression of the Gothic Revival style in an interpretive rather than literal way. The octagonal projections are stepped inversely compared with the older Southwestern Bell Building, increasing in height at the outer edges (*Figure 3*). These stepped projections also flank the entrance at the base of the building, emphasizing the foundation and stability of the building as it rises from the center of the block. The windows fill individual openings, like its predecessor, rather than forming bands, as was common for contemporary skyscrapers. There are no obvious Gothic Revival features that have been exaggerated or abstracted, however when these two buildings are viewed side-by-side, there is a clear call-and-response visual connection, based on the Gothic Revival aesthetic of that specific building (*Figure 7*). The design for the building illustrates HOK’s skill and deliberation. In an interview with the journal *Inland Architect* in 1986, HOK principal and chief designer, Gyo Obata, discussed the firm’s process regarding the design. Regarding the top of the building, “that grew out of wanting to do some profile in the skyline...I worked really hard on Bell [Center] at the top. We made hundreds of models of that top to see how we could make a big, fat building, which is 35,000 square feet at the base, have some soaring effect at the top. That is pure design, I would say.”¹⁶ Secondary to the Postmodern aesthetic, One Bell Center embodies

¹⁴ Charles Jencks, “The Evolution from Modern Architecture,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, November 1979, Vol. 127, No. 5280, 761.

¹⁵ Curtis, 589.

¹⁶ Cynthia Davidson-Powers, “Reshaping the Envelope: New Projects at HOK,” *Inland Architect*, July/August 1986, 39.

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components of the Late-Modern architectural expression with a series of wide, flat façades composed entirely of windows set in a grid, to organize the massive façades of this enormous building. In keeping with the Late-Modern aesthetic, this one feature is repeated and exaggerated to abstraction over its sheer size, to where the scale of the building is no longer legible.

One Bell Center stands out, not only for its intentional, nuanced Postmodern design, but because it was the tallest building in St. Louis when it was built. With 1.4 million square feet, it is the largest building in the state, by area.¹⁷ The configuration of the floorplate varied by floor, to adapt to the changing shape of the exterior (*Figure 4, Photo Maps 7 and 11*). Designed for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, which was part of the largest corporation in the world at the time, the building had to be monumental in size and design to convey the company's status and dominance in the industry. In 1986, *Inland Architect* described what they considered successful about the top:

The climbing setbacks push the tower's flat top skyward, slimming the massive shaft and creating a distinctive profile on the skyline. It is a fascinating conclusion to a basically modern building, and demonstrates that the tall, flat-topped box is still a valuable building shape that readily lends itself to manipulation.¹⁸

HOK succeeded in designing a building with an enormous amount of floor space that remained subtle in its contemporary styling.

Late-Modern Architecture

Architectural historian Marcus Whiffen characterized Late-Modern as a rhetorical style, as opposed to the rational International Style. In examining Late-Modern architecture, particularly in comparison with the International Style, Whiffen identified rhetorical devices commonly used to make an architectural statement.¹⁹ One Bell Building Center incorporates two of these: *exaggeration* and *repetition*. The building's design *exaggerated* its articulation of the base and arcade from which extends a soaring tower, which affects the viewer's understanding of proportion and scale. The result is an inability to read its size in human terms.²⁰ The uniform, single-sized window and spandrel unit repeats until the unit loses its individuality in the grid. This extreme *repetition* creates visual impact as the façade appears to stretch

¹⁷ Lisa R. Brown, "One AT&T Center on sale block," *St. Louis Business Journal*, September 3, 2006. <https://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/stories/2006/09/04/story1.html> (accessed April 1, 2022).

¹⁸ Davidson-Powers, "Reshaping the Envelope: New Projects at HOK," 36.

¹⁹ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) 285.

²⁰ Heinrich Klotz, *The History of post-Modern Architecture*, (Cambridge, MIT Press 1988) 63.

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beyond what is expected, seemingly indefinitely. The viewer is drawn into One Bell Center at the tall, fortress-like base, but then up and out to the edges that are not designed as expected.

Late-Modern describes a style of architectural expression that evolved out of, and in reaction to, the previously dominant Modern Movement architectural style shortly after the mid twentieth century. Evaluating the late 1960s and 1970s to gain perspective on diverging and concurrent architectural trends, Jencks and Whiffen published independent essays designed to assist in identifying and classifying contemporary architecture. Jencks coined the term “Late-Modern” in 1977.²¹ Typically executed in modern materials like metal, glass, and concrete, Late-Modern buildings can share traits with Modern Movement examples.

Jencks identified extreme logic, extreme repetition of modular elements, an exaggerated emphasis on constructional metaphors, and a sensuous imagery as defining aspects of the Late-Modern style.²² Jencks emphasized the “single code”, or the goal of taking Modern Movement devices to an extreme for the express and singular purpose of creating an amusing or dramatic aesthetic, as a hallmark of Late-Modern buildings.²³ While Late-Modern does not denote a specific aesthetic, these buildings are a recognizable group sharing some of Late-Modern’s characteristics, or “notions” as described in Jencks’ work. Jencks’ notion of *extreme repetition* is expressed by a single wall and window unit set in a repeating pattern across the façade. These buildings display Jencks’ notion of *structure and construction as ornament* by dispensing with other applied decoration. In place of added ornament, Late-Modern buildings rely on exposed construction materials, in this case granite panels, for their aesthetic. HOK employed the notions of *extreme repetition* and *structure and construction as ornament* in the design of One Bell Center, with the important distinction of incorporating subtle historical references, to manage the enormity of the 44-story building.

Postmodern and Late-Modern in the context of Modern Movement

Postmodern and Late-Modern occurred simultaneously with other styles and were not part of a linear progression away from Modern Movement or toward a single subsequent expression. Rather, they represented unique sets of ideals that informed design. A comparison and contrast of contemporaneous architectural styles helps to understand how Postmodern and Late-Modern are distinguishable as distinct styles.

²¹ Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 8.

²² Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 8.

²³ Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 8.

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Modern architecture is a broad term that includes trends and styles spanning the mid- to late-twentieth century and describes a design theory that relies on function to inform design. Modern Movement as a style produces a machine character by embracing contemporary means of construction without ornamentation or historical reference. The style proliferated in the mid-twentieth century as Mies van der Rohe's rhythmic geometry influenced Modern Movement commercial tower construction in the post-World War II era. The resulting expressed exterior grid structure paired with curtain walls composed of glass and contrasting spandrel panels served as a common template for commercial buildings into the 1960s.

Late-Modern adapted and exaggerated some Modern Movement concepts such as repetition. In Modern Movement examples, rhythmic, repeating proportions are informed by the building program and are therefore "rational." In a Late-Modern treatment, extreme repetition is exploited. One Bell Center's extreme repetition of identically sized window and wall units serves only as a visual device for the exterior and has no other rational function. Where Modern Movement eschewed ornament in favor of undisguised structure and materials, Late-Modern utilized structure and construction *as* ornament.²⁴ One Bell Center exemplifies this concept by highlighting the form and elevating it to a decorative element. Using a reality of construction—the exterior wall—as a decorative device exemplifies Late-Modern emphasis on construction metaphor.

The evolution of Modern Movement architecture in the latter part of the twentieth century did not merge into a cohesive, single subsequent style.²⁵ Postmodernism's response to Modern Movement differed from the roughly contemporaneous Late-Modern style.²⁶ Postmodernism notably embraced historicism as a contrast to Modern Movement. Historicist elements with distorted scale or a reimagined function characterized Postmodern designs. Architects referenced the stepped rooflines of the 1920s, which arose from newly implemented zoning code requirements for tall buildings but were now an aesthetic choice. Architects also experimented with footprints. The rectangular box gave way to various polygons or curvilinear shapes. Postmodern still used modern construction materials and methods but incorporated coded or implied symbolism as an antidote to Modern Movement's rationality. By way of contrast, Late-Modern buildings have a direct and obvious visual impact whereas Postmodern examples contain large-scale or small-scale historical references.

Gyo Obata and HOK

²⁴ Jenks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 46.

²⁵ Jenks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays*, 46.

²⁶ Robert Venturi's 1966 book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was a notable milestone in celebrating eclecticism in architecture that had previously been dominated by Modern Movement reason.

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HOK incorporated in 1955 in St. Louis. George Hellmuth fulfilled a business development role, George Kausabaum oversaw production, and Gyo Obata was the principal designer. The firm did not focus on a specific building type, but rather pursued commercial, institutional, educational, and large-scale planning projects. During the 1960s, the firm designed their first nationally-recognized corporate building, the 1964 lab for IBM in Los Gatos, California, and opened their first branch office in San Francisco in 1966.²⁷ By the 1970s, the firm had designed notable projects including the Dallas / Fort Worth Airport in Dallas Texas and the Galleria in Houston, Texas, the nation's first enclosed mall. HOK opened offices in New York City and Washington D.C., and had nine offices in the early 1980s when they received an international commission to build the King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh Saudi Arabia. Hellmuth retired in 1978, and Kausabaum died in 1982. Obata stepped down as chairman in 1993. In 1998, World Architecture declared HOK the largest architectural firm in the world.²⁸

Gyo Obata earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Washington University in 1945. He studied under internationally-renowned architect Eero Saarinen, and worked in the Chicago offices of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill before returning to St. Louis to work under Minoru Yamasaki, who later designed the World Trade Center. After forming HOK, Obata soon gained recognition for his innovative designs.²⁹ Obata's 1967 American Zinc, Lead & Smelting Company Building (20 South First St.) in St. Louis was a dramatic Modern Movement office building that earned local designation as an architectural landmark within a year of its completion.³⁰

Obata's projects are remarkably diverse and are characterized by custom solutions rather than a unifying signature, as he was highly adept at embracing and incorporating contemporary design philosophy into his works. He was also a skilled urban planner who carefully incorporated site considerations and circulation in large-scale and individual designs.³¹ Gyo Obata died on March 8, 2022, leaving a legacy of thoughtful and innovative design.

HOK in St. Louis

²⁷ Walter McQuade, *Architecture in the Real World: The Work of HOK*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams. 1984) 16.

²⁸ Esley Hamilton, Doris A. Danna, and Steven E. Mitchell, "American Zinc, Lead & Smelting Company Building," *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, 2015, Section 8-11.

²⁹ "Three New Office Structures by HOK," *Architectural Record* 146.2 (August 1969):121-126.

³⁰ Hamilton, et al. Section 8-4.

³¹ Muriel Emanuel, *Contemporary Architects*. (New York: St. James Press, 1994).

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The firm, with its origins in St. Louis, designed dozens of buildings in the metropolitan area, including the three tallest buildings in St. Louis, in order of height: One Metropolitan Center (1989), One Bell Center (1985), and the Thomas F. Eagleton United States Courthouse (2000). The Gateway Arch is the tallest structure in St. Louis (and in Missouri) (*Figure 8*). The other two tallest buildings serve as the most direct comparables for One Bell Center, as they are both later examples of the Postmodern style. One Metropolitan Square, on North 6th Street between Olive and Pine streets, was completed within five years of the completion of One Bell Center and is only five feet taller (*Figure 9*).³² The Thomas F. Eagleton United States Courthouse at 111 South 10th Street was completed in 2000 and is thirty feet shorter than One Bell Center (*Figure 10*). One Metropolitan Square and the Eagleton Courthouse both employ more overt historical references as exterior ornamentation. One Metropolitan Square contains a complex cross-gable roof with green metal roofing, to create an elaborate skyline profile. Glazed walls with exaggerated, oversized muntins fill the gable ends while various window sizes and types create vertical columns that articulate the façade. The courthouse is, in essence, a tall office building with exaggerated classical ornament and tripart façade arrangement, referencing the connection between classical architecture and government function. Horizontal divisions between the windows serve to provide a sense of scale to the façade.

HOK also designed an example of a Late-Modern building that preceded One Bell Center. The Equitable Building, at 10 South Broadway, is a 21-story tower with a thin-mullion, continuous grid, reflective glass curtain wall connected to a low-rise, street-level building via a 4,000 square-foot glass-enclosed garden walkway (*Figure 11*).³³ The continuous-grid reflective glass curtain wall was visually distinctive from earlier Modern Movement curtain wall examples that typically contained differentiated spandrels and visible frames. The Equitable Building, completed in 1971, was recognized in a national context as a new aesthetic when architecture critic Heinrich Klotz noted “with the Equitable Building, Modern architecture was reconfirmed in a striking new way.”³⁴ The Equitable Building’s ground level has exterior granite-clad vertical supports and a horizontal band demarcating the first floor. This use of traditional material at the lower level delineates the base from the tower and invites the viewer to read a distinct ground floor and primary and secondary entrances. By defining the first story, the masonry cladding becomes a scaling device that gives reference to the ground floor proportion.

One Bell Center stands, categorically, between these three buildings to illustrate how HOK had moved away from the total abstraction of the Late-Modern style to the historical references of the Postmodern aesthetic. One Bell Center employs several of the Late-Modern *notions*, particularly exaggeration and

³² “One Metropolitan Square,” Emporis website. <https://www.emporis.com/buildings/127235/one-metropolitan-square-st-louis-mo-usa>, (accessed April 1, 2022).

³³ “Profile of a Highrise Boss,” *Fruin-Colnan Magazine*, Fall, 1969.

³⁴ Klotz, 63.

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repetition, combined with the Postmodern concepts of context and precedent. The later Postmodern examples of HOK's work clearly reference precedent, but the context for them is not as obvious and the execution is not as subtle, nuanced, or inventive as at One Bell Center.

History of One Bell Center

Southwestern Bell's corporate headquarters had been in the 350,000sf building at 1010 Pine Street since its construction in 1925. Growth of the company necessitated the construction of another building in 1964 at 100 North Tucker Boulevard, but by the late 1970s, the company needed more room. Planning for a new corporate headquarters coincided with the lawsuits stemming from *United States v. AT&T*, where the U.S. government contested the evolution of the company into a monopoly.

In May 1980, Southwestern Bell purchased a full city block in downtown St. Louis for the construction of a new headquarters. The board of directors favored the location at 9th and Chestnut streets over seven alternative locations, two of which were in St. Louis County. Initial plans called for a building of more than 700,000 square feet, double that of the 1925 building. As planning for the new building continued, office space needs were based on projected needs over the next thirty years, and by the end of 1980, Southwestern Bell spokesmen estimated the new headquarters would be between thirty-five and sixty stories and contain between 850,00 to 1.5 million square feet. The company anticipated the new building would be open for use by mid-1984.

Southwestern Bell hired the local architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Inc. (HOK) to design their new headquarters. In March 1981, the company announced that plans were being finalized for a forty-four-story, 1.5 million sf granite and glass office building. The new headquarters would house over five thousand employees in thirty-six office floors. Additionally, the building would contain a grand lobby with atrium, multiple mezzanine levels, food service areas, conference rooms, and two basements.

Before construction could begin, the existing buildings within the city block encompassed by Pine, 9th, Chestnut, and 10th streets needed to be removed. Demolition of the block began in July 1981 and construction commenced later that year. Work progressed throughout 1982 and into 1985 with occasional work stoppages due to labor strikes. In the first half of 1985, two window units blew out of the tower due to high wind. Although most windows were fixed, one hundred operable units opened onto ledges to allow for cleaning; two of these units fell out, once in March and once in May 1985. The second incident injured passers-by and damaged adjacent buildings.

Construction of One Bell Center coincided with the settlement between the US Justice Department and AT&T. The new headquarters opened after Southwestern Bell had separated from its parent company. The first two thousand employees moved into One Bell Center in August 1985. During the corporation's tenure in the building, almost six thousand people occupied office spaces within the building. In the early

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1990s, plans developed to remove the corporate headquarters to San Antonio. The move began in 1992, and by 1993, St. Louis remained the state headquarters for the company. Southwestern Bell continued to use One Bell Center until the early 2000s. The building was known as One SBC Center c. 1996 and then One ATT Center, c. 2006.

Conclusion

One Bell Center is an exceptionally significant local example of the work of master architects HOK. It exemplifies the architects' early exploration of the Postmodern style. As an early example of Postmodernism, One Bell Center is nuanced and subtle in the use of references to past styles. HOK, with principal Gyo Obata as chief designer, referenced the adjacent 1925 Gothic Revival Southwestern Bell Building as precedent in innovative ways, creating a design that clearly related to the context of its surroundings while it rose to new heights in downtown St. Louis. The monumental One Bell Center has a stepped base and top, and octagonal projections, all that reference the ornament and form of the Southwestern Bell Building, but are exaggerated and subtly inverted to form a complement to the adjacent building. The repetition of the window and wall unit across the façade creates a uniformity and abstraction that HOK had previously explored in its other Late-Modern designs, particularly the 1971 Equitable Building. One Bell Center is a clear evolution from the Late-Modern aesthetic to the Postmodern aesthetic and is one that meets the critics' definition of a successful Postmodern design, one that conveys "reflections upon the basis of architectural language, and upon the role of precedent in design."³⁵

³⁵ Curtis, 589.

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One Bell Center
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

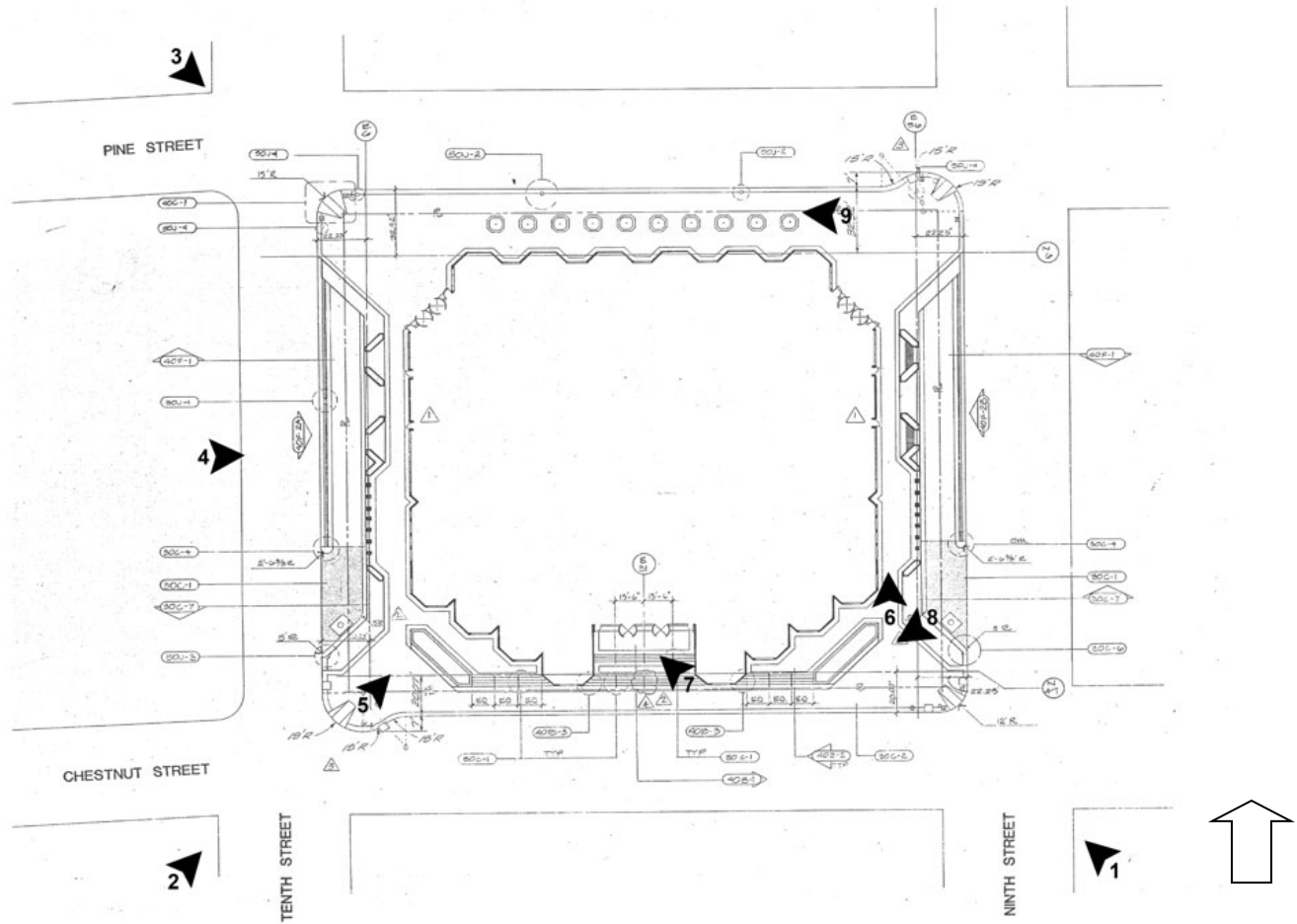
The boundary for the nominated property includes one city block in downtown St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri described as "C.B. 0275 Pine Street, 1.163 acres, Lucas & Hunt Additions and vacated alley and streets, bound on the west by 10th St and south by Chestnut St" (Parcel id 0275-9-013.000). The parcel is physically bounded by the rights-of-way of Pine Street (north), North 9th Street (east), Chestnut Street (south), and North 10th Street (west).

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary encompasses the land historically and currently associated with One Bell Center.

One Bell Center
Name of Property
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N/A
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Photo Map 1. Exteriors and site. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



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One Bell Center

Name of Property

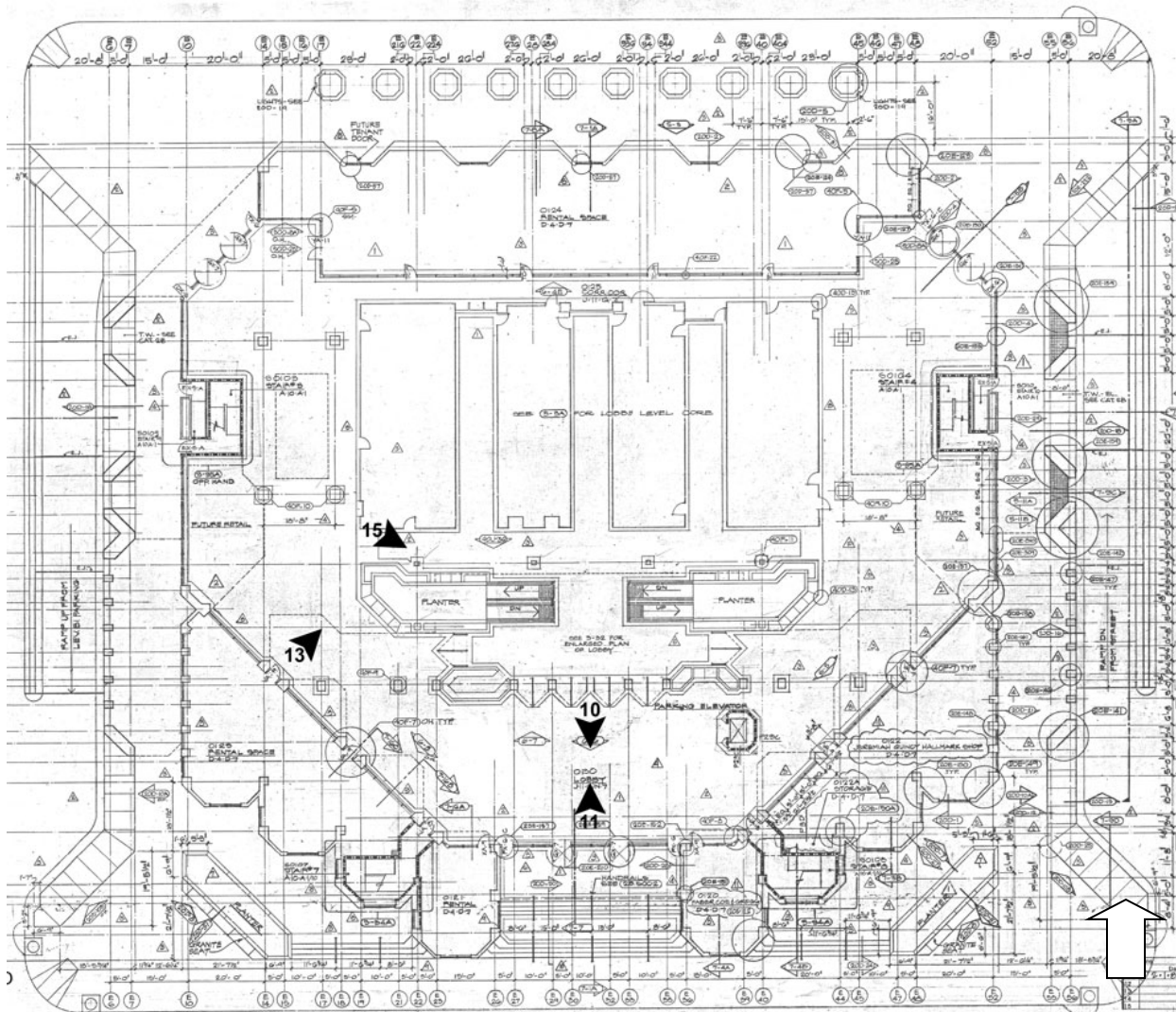
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 2. Lobby level. Base map HOK Construction Plans. Represents current conditions.



National Register of Historic Places
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One Bell Center

Name of Property

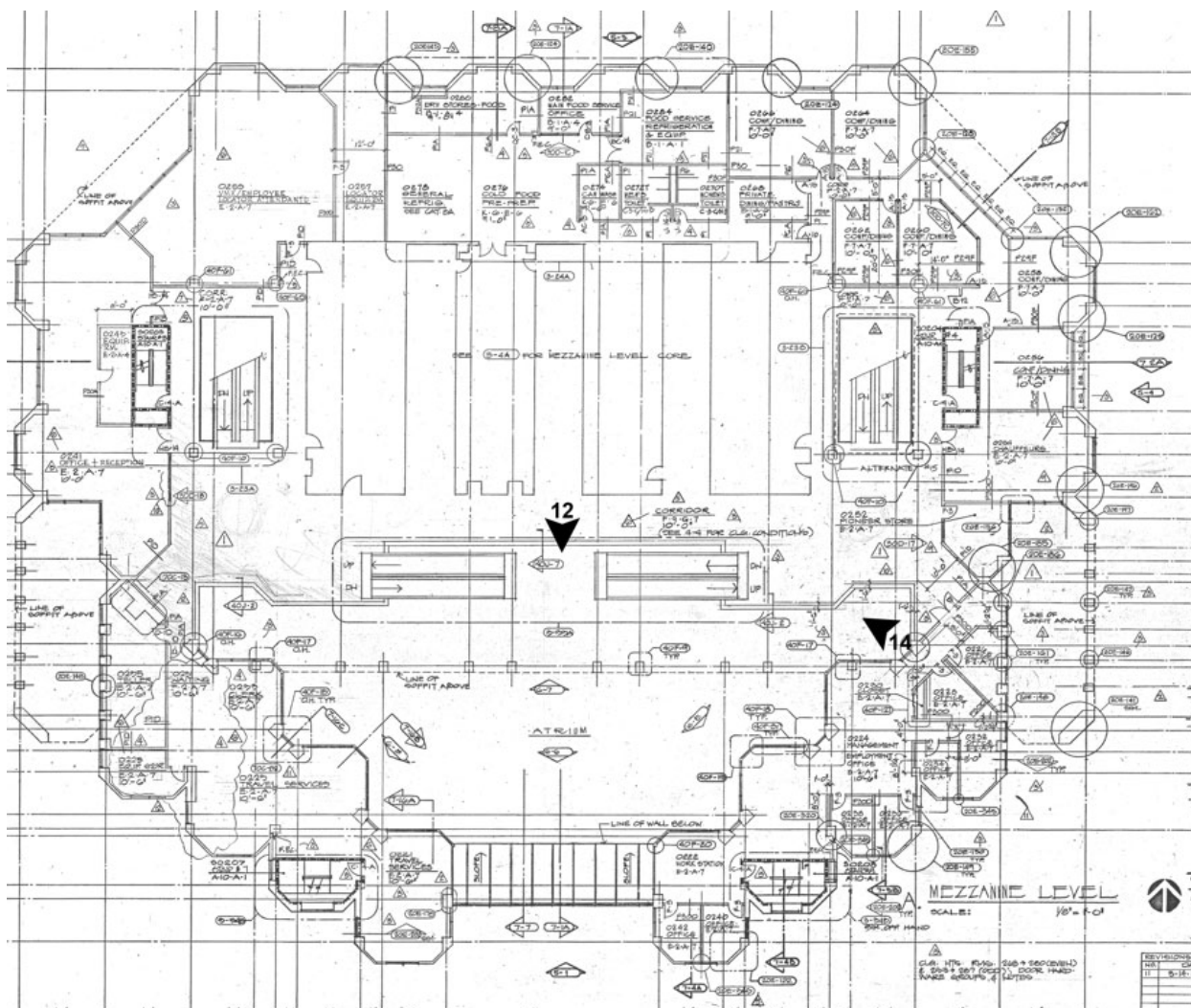
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 3. Mezzanine level. Base map HOK Construction Plans. Represents current conditions.



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Section number Figures Page 25

One Bell Center

Name of Property

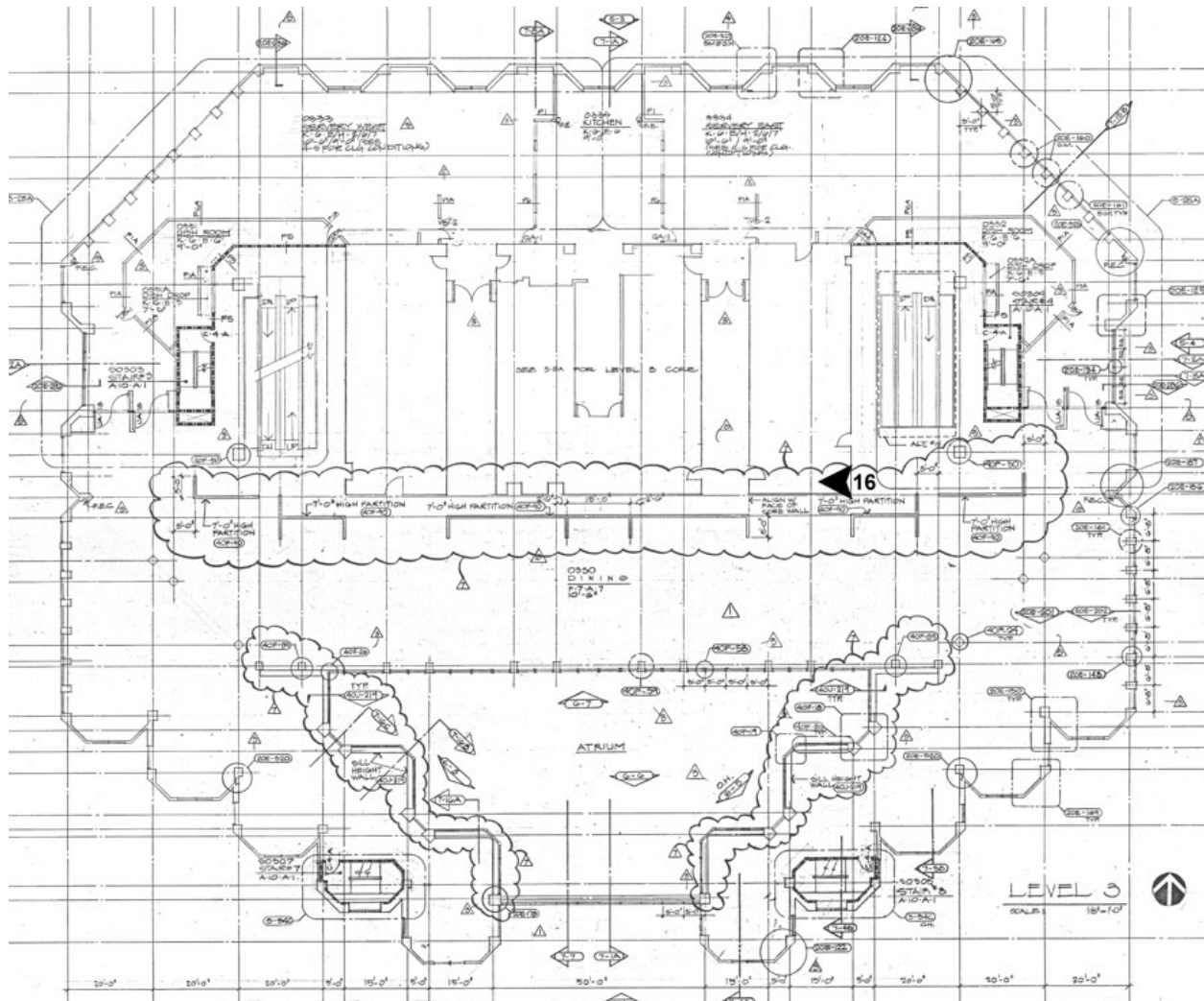
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 4. Third floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



One Bell Center
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 6. Twelfth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.

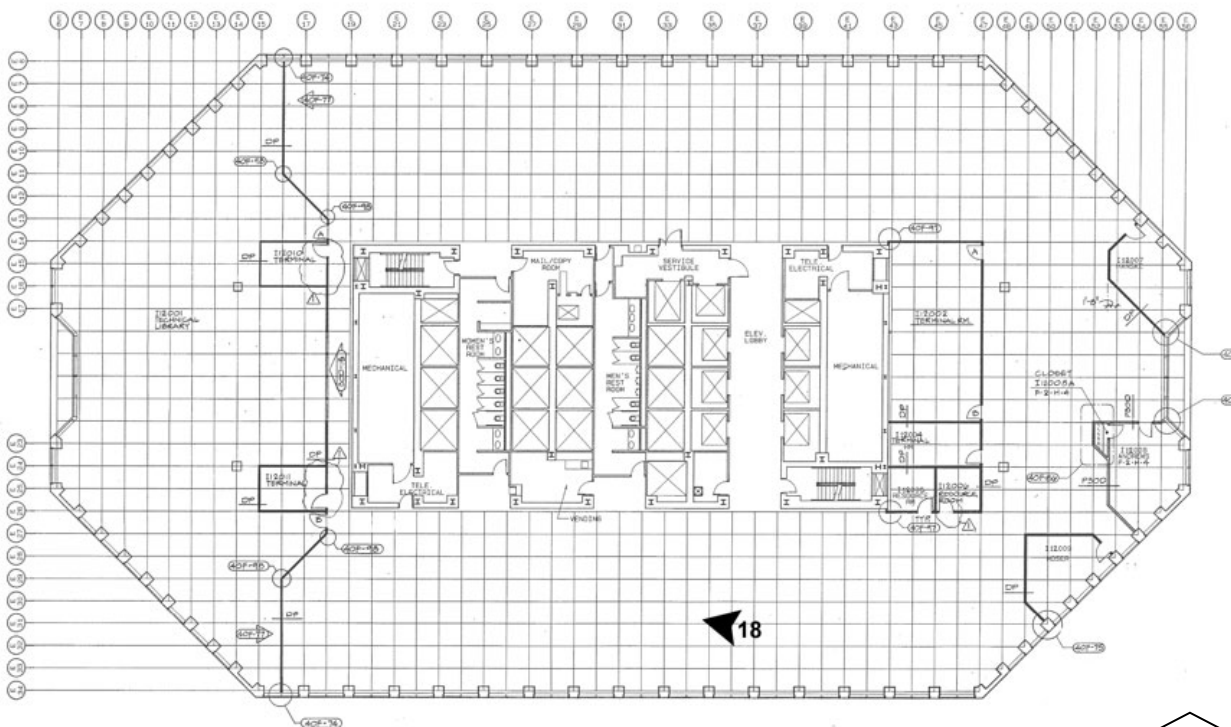
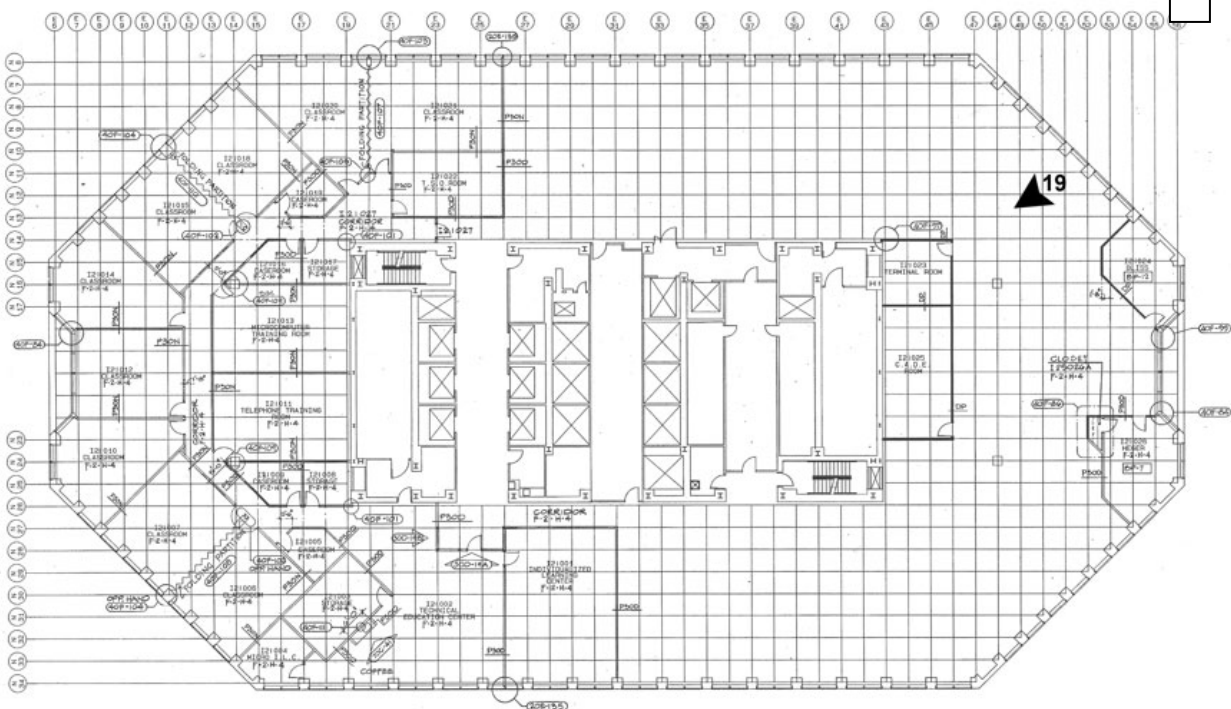


Photo Map 7. Twenty-first floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 28

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 8. Thirtieth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.

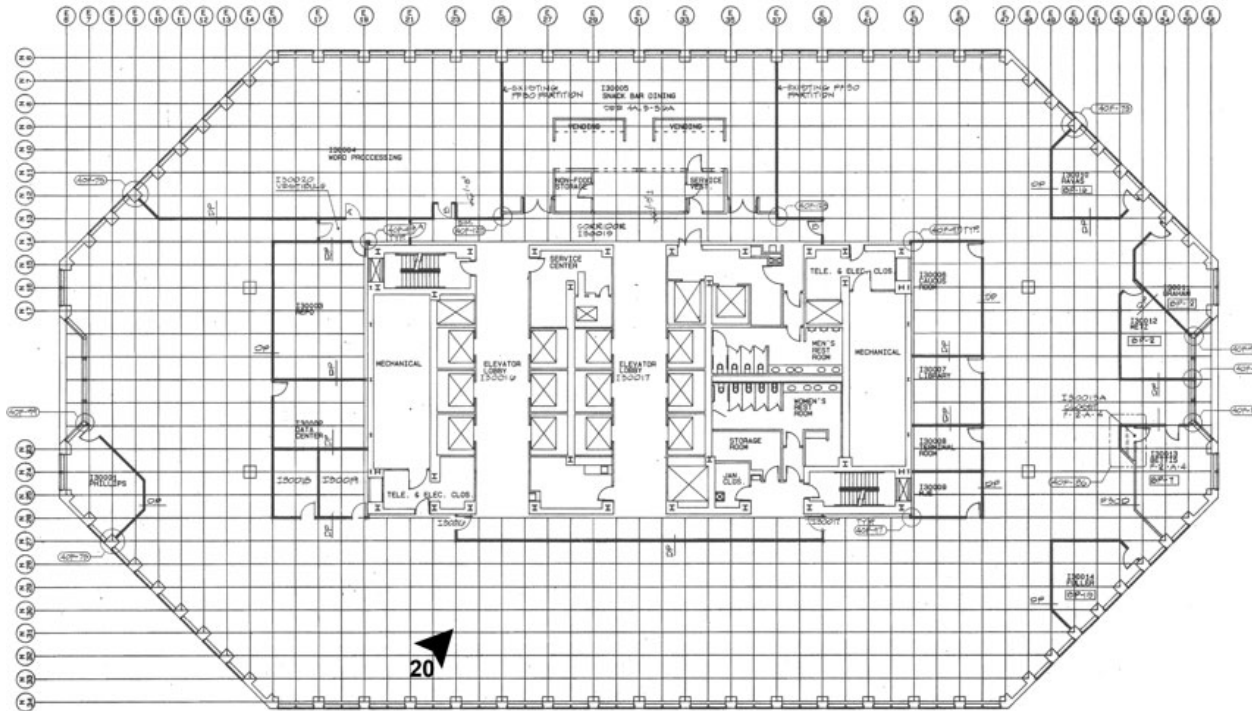
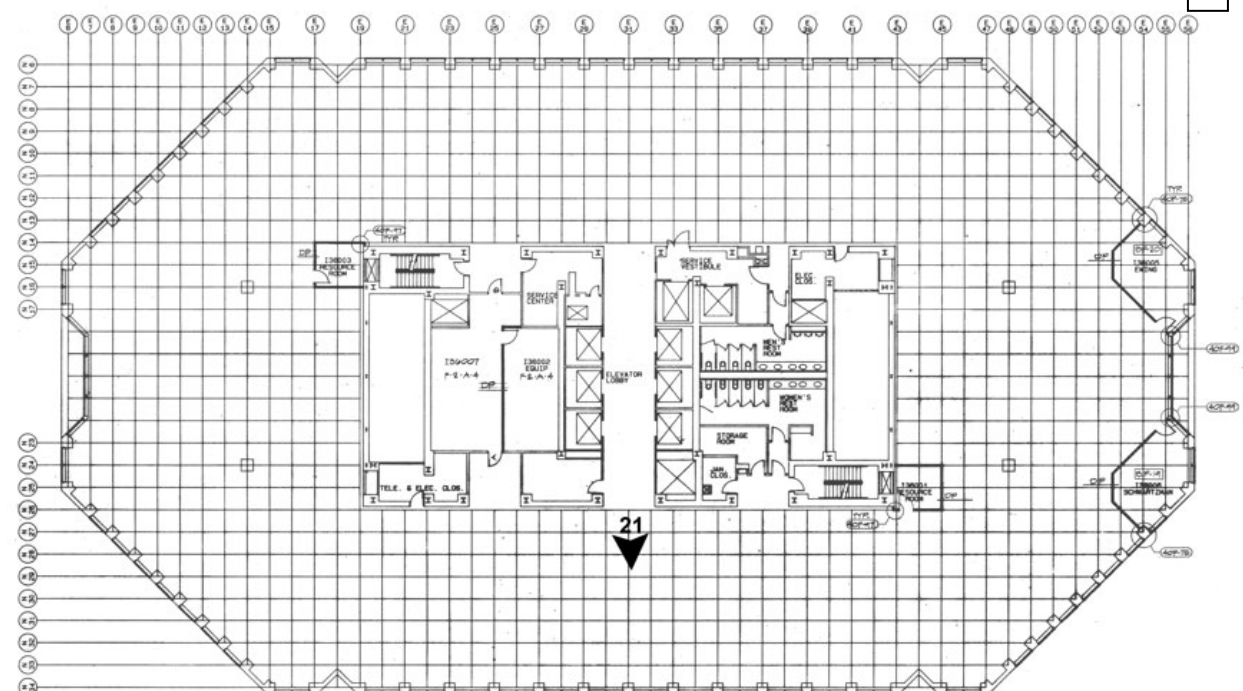


Photo Map 9. Thirty-sixth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 29

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 10. Thirty-eighth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.

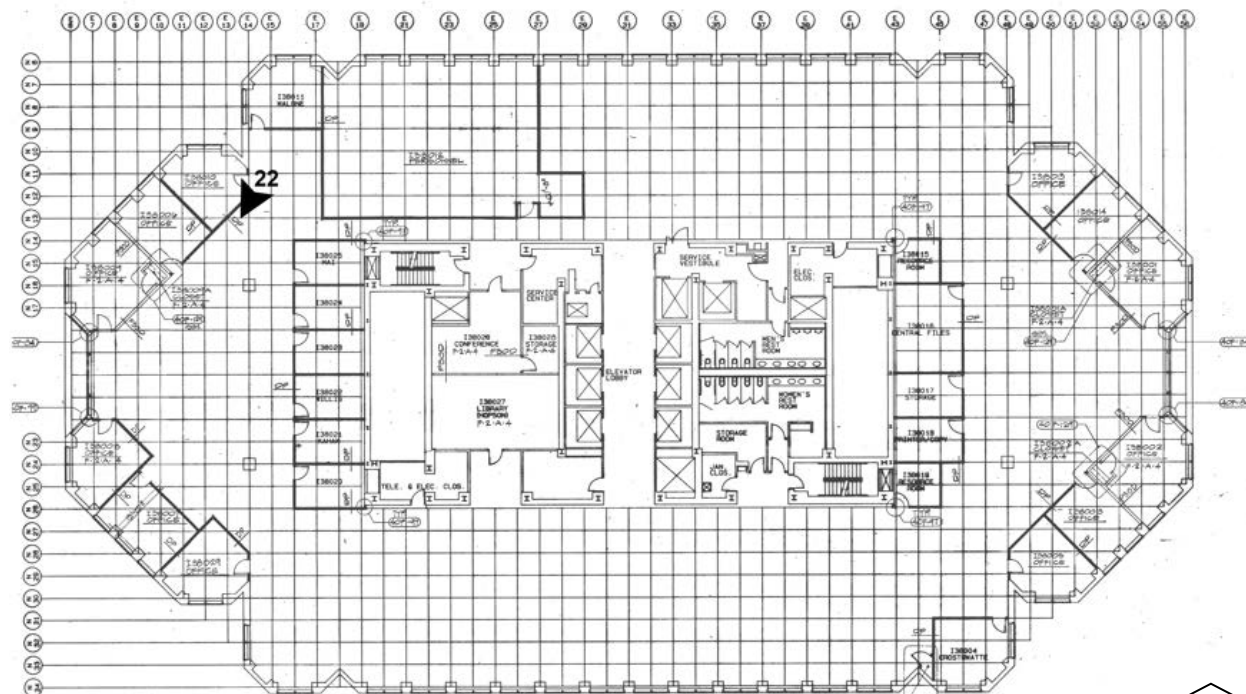
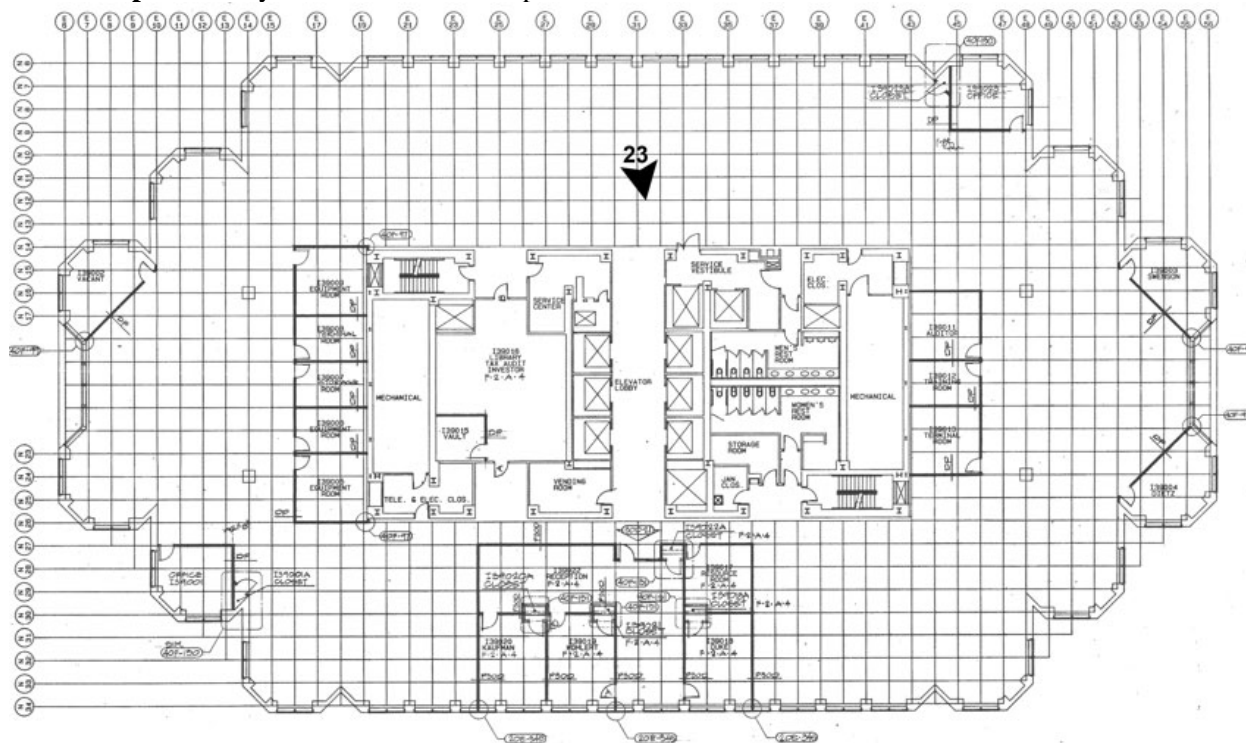


Photo Map 11. Thirty-ninth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 30

One Bell Center

Name of Property

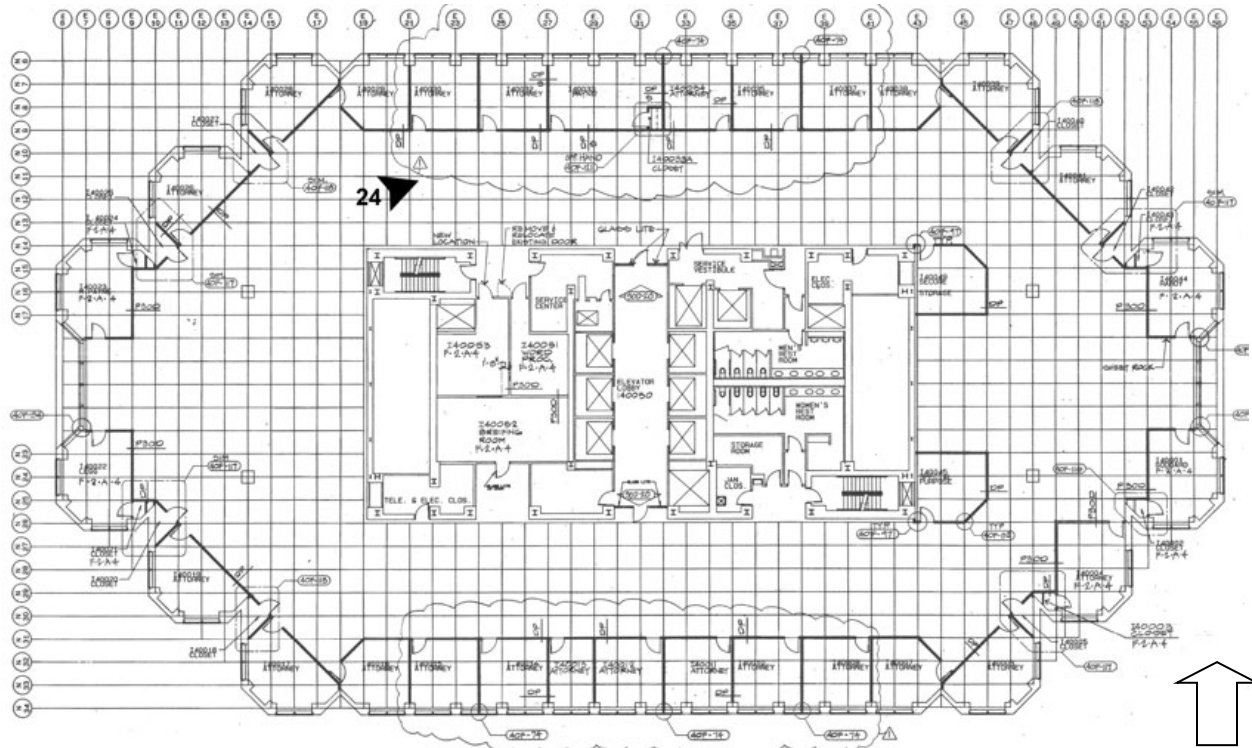
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

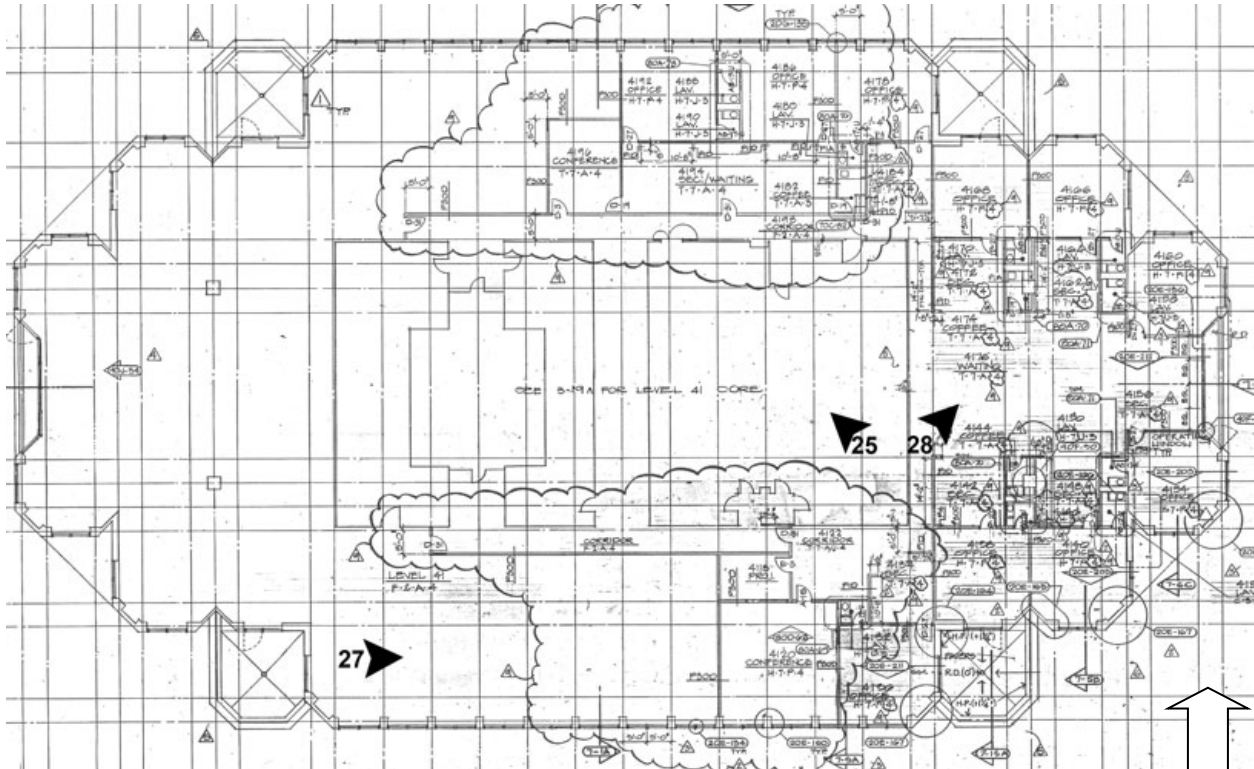
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 12. Fortieth floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 13. Forty-first floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 32

One Bell Center

Name of Property

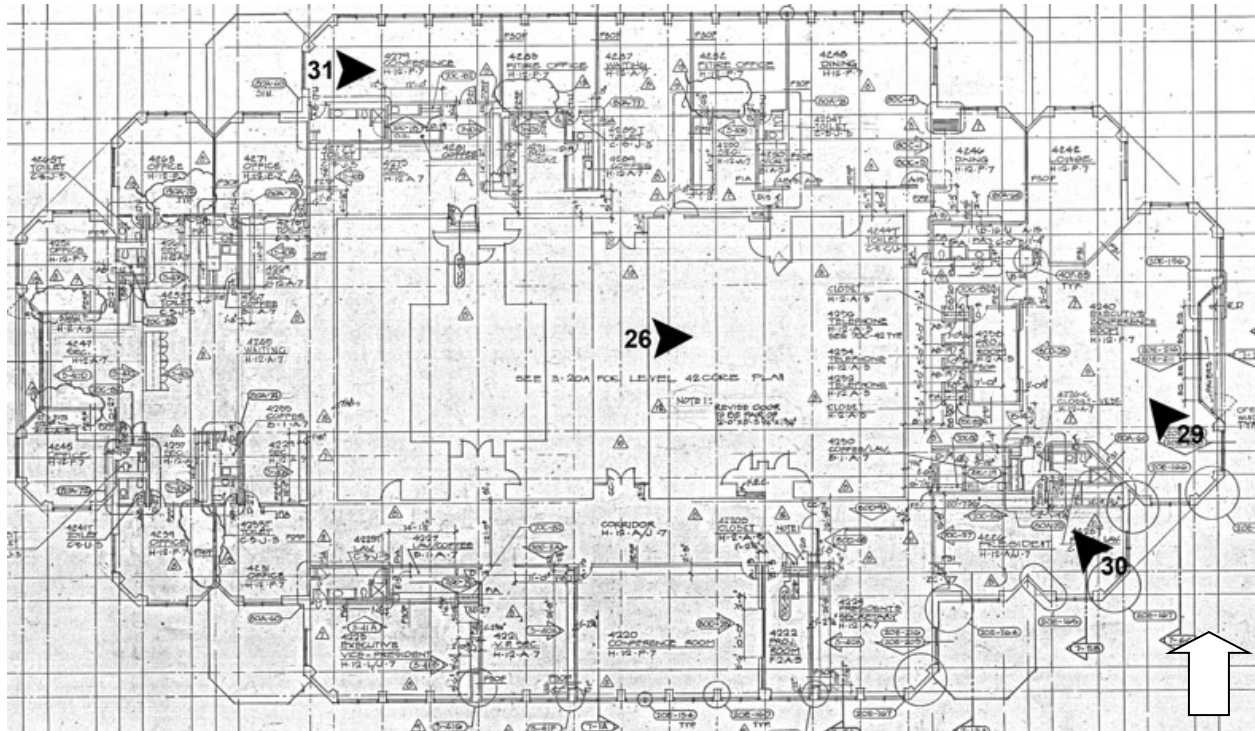
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 14. Forty-second floor. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



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Continuation Sheet

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One Bell Center

Name of Property

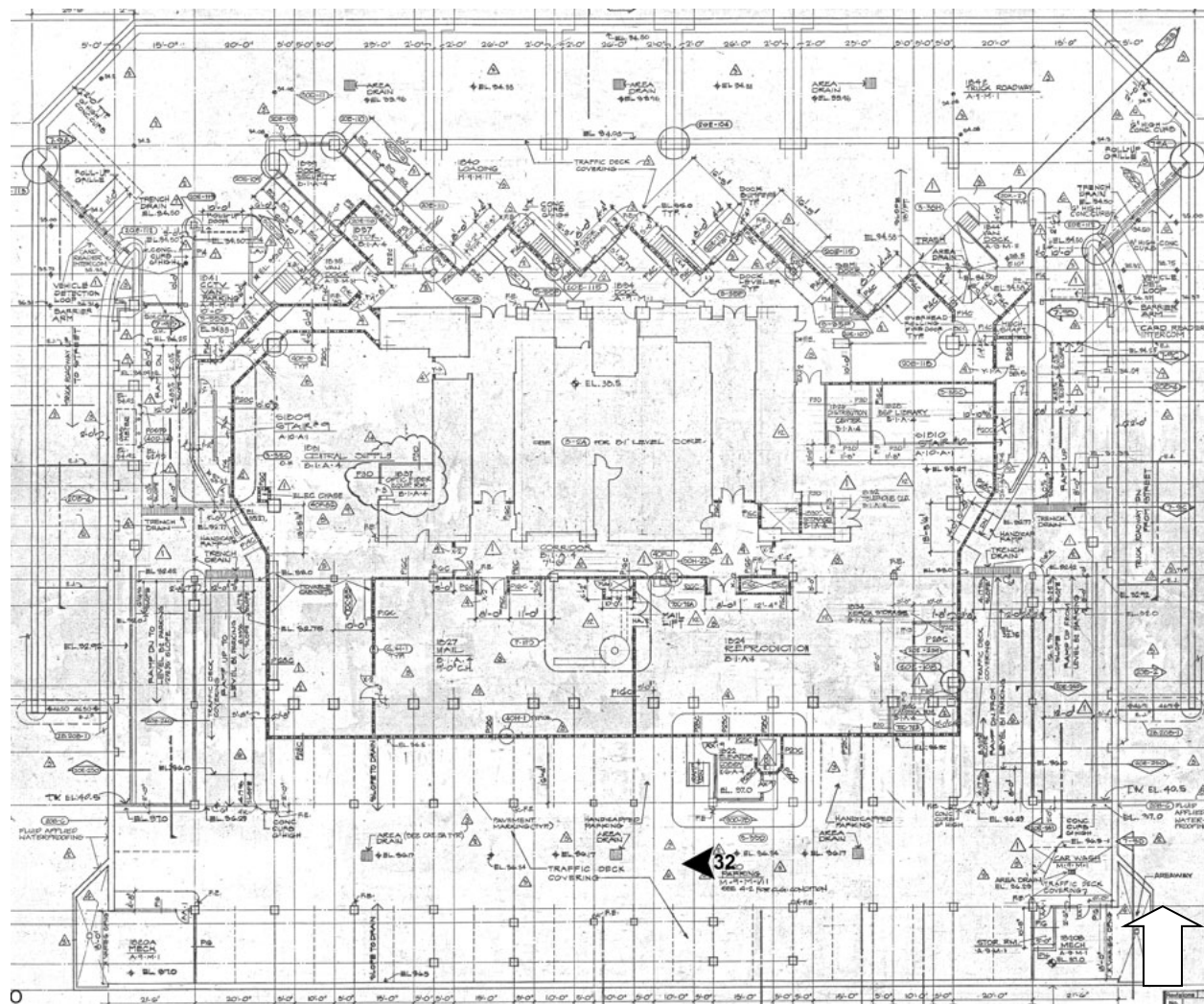
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Map 15. First basement level. Base map HOK Construction Plans.



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One Bell Center

Name of Property

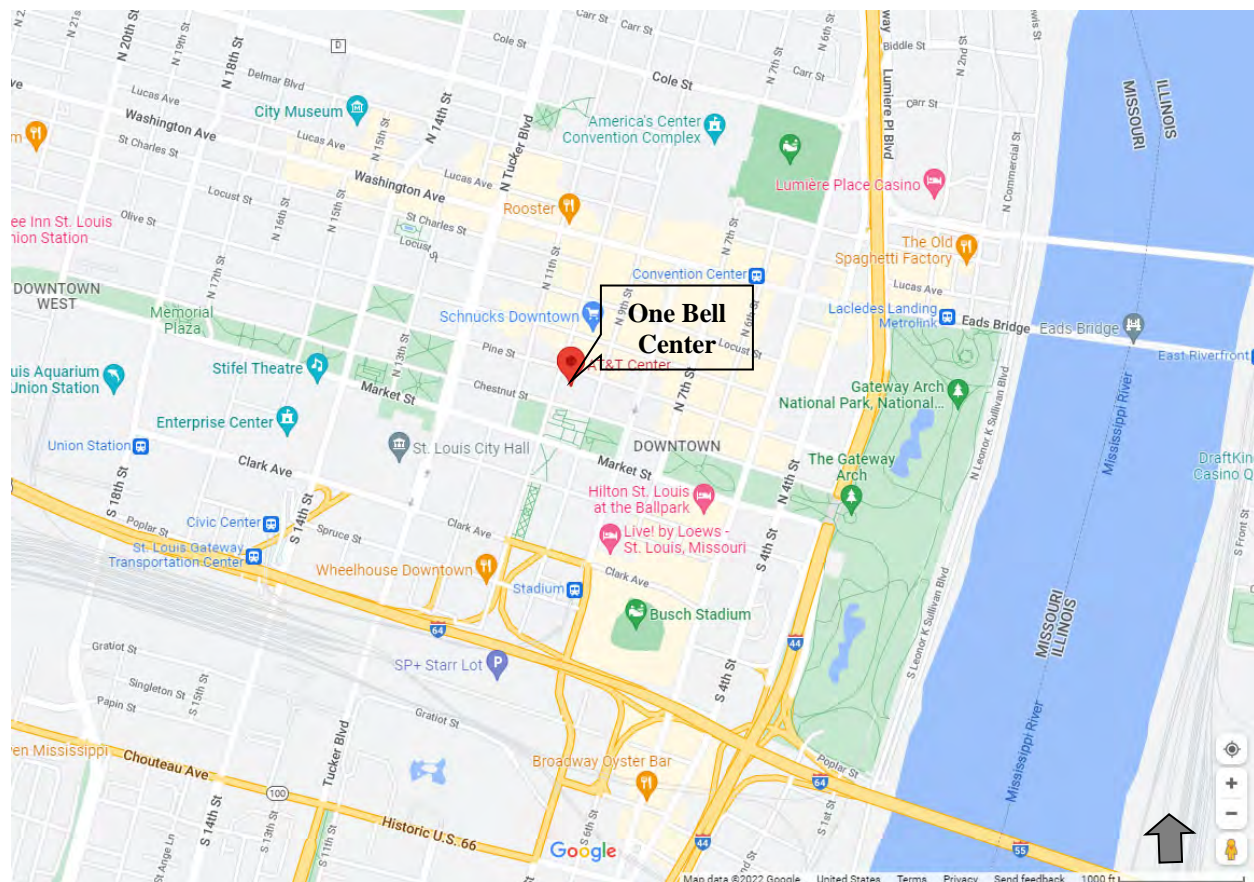
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 1. Contextual map, showing One Bell Center within downtown St. Louis. Source: Google.



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One Bell Center

Name of Property

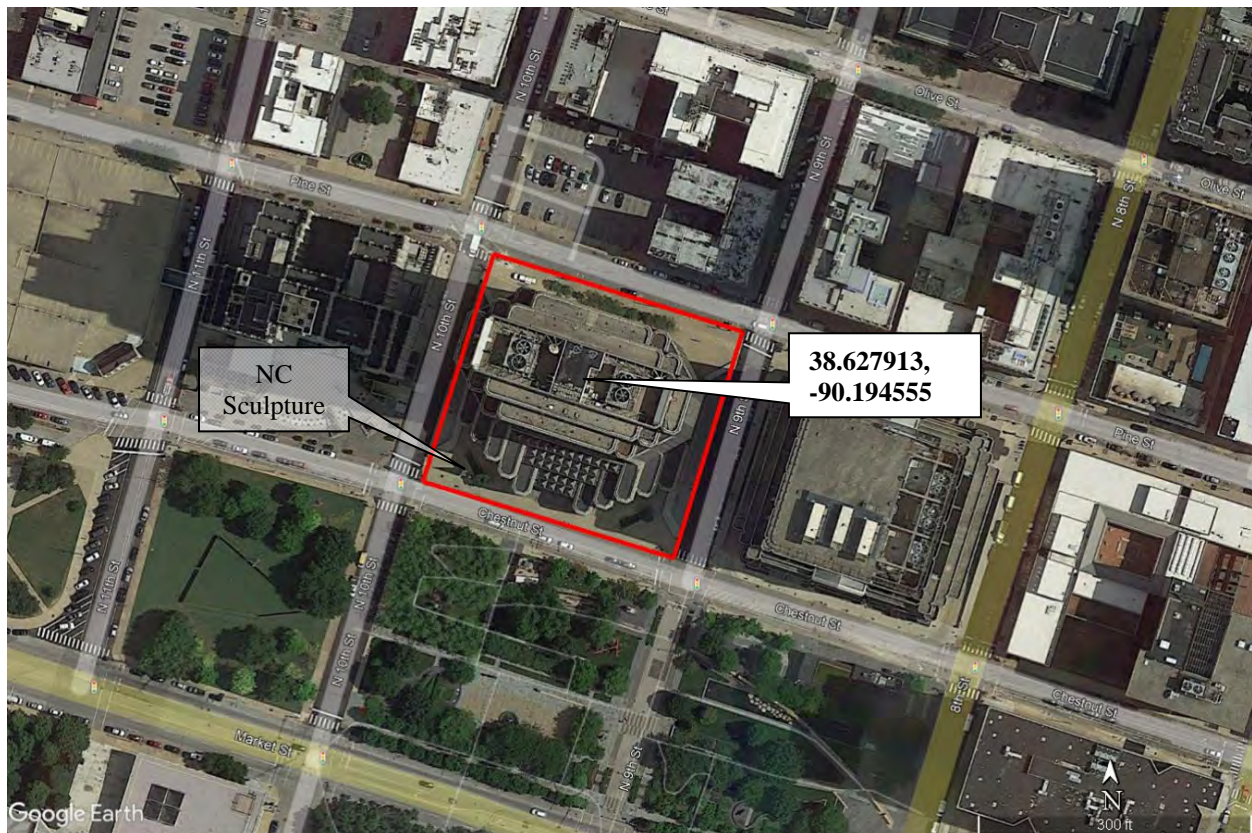
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 2. Boundary map. Solid line around city block represents the nominated boundary. The non-contributing Obelisk sculpture is at the southwest corner of the property. Base map from Google Earth (July 2020 image).



National Register of Historic Places
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One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 3. View of the 1985 One Bell Center juxtaposed with the 1925 Southwestern Bell Building, looking northeast. Source: Amanda Loughlin, April 2021.



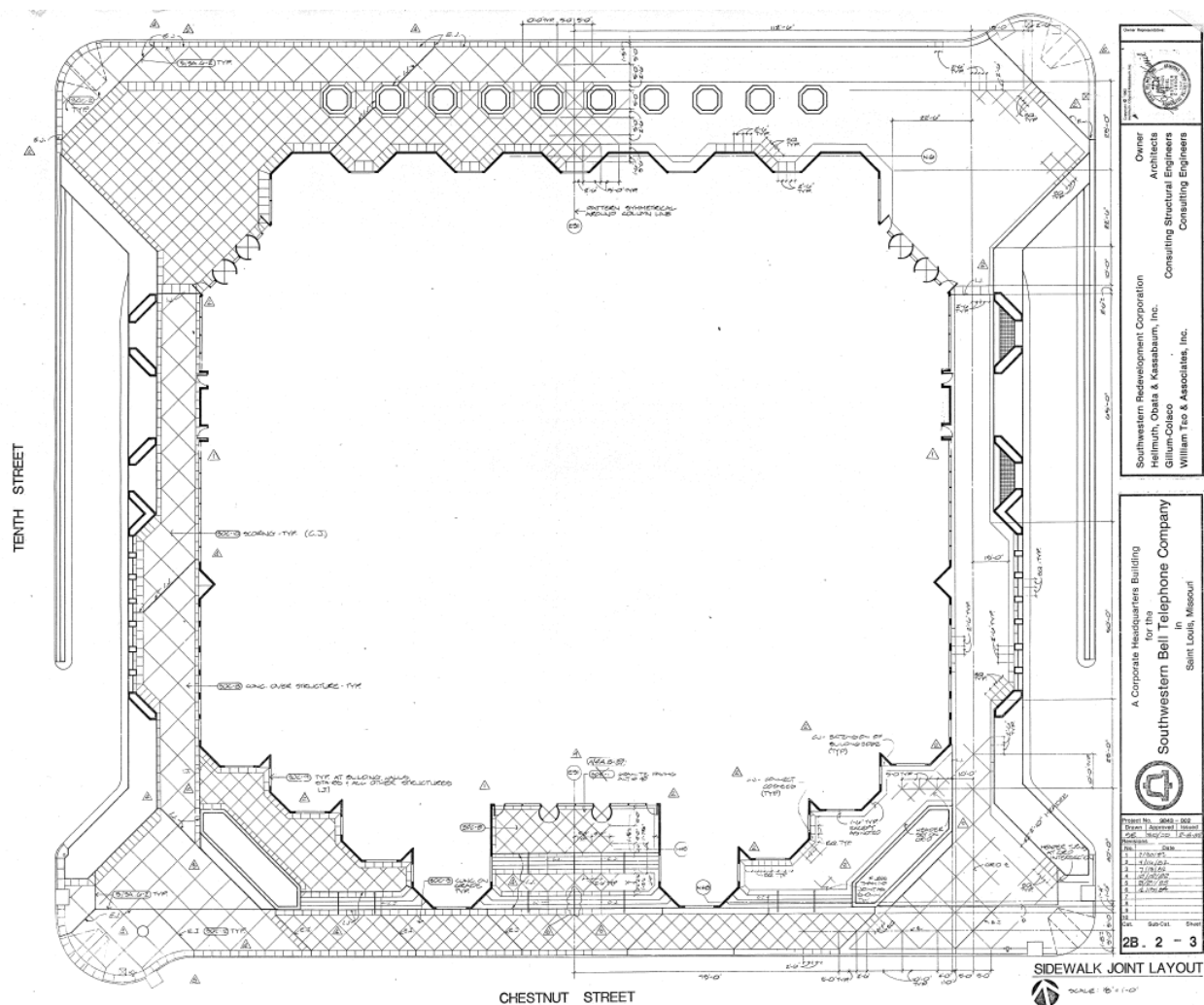
National Register of Historic Places
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One Bell Center

Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 4. Sidewalk joint layout. Base map HOK Construction Plans, 1981.



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One Bell Center

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5. Typical elevator cabs, as seen in the mid-rise elevator bank of the lobby level. Source: Brad Finch, March 2022.



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One Bell Center

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6. Examples of phone banks in the lobby, floor 4, and the executive floor 42. Source: Brad Finch, March 2022.



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One Bell Center

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St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 7. Historic rendering, 1981. Source: St. Louis Public Library. Local History Archives, Central Library. Clipping files.



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Section number Figures Page 41

One Bell Center

Name of Property

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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8. One Bell Center, 1986. Source: *Inland Architect*, July/August 1986, 34.



National Register of Historic Places
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Section number Figures Page 42

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 9. One Metropolitan Square, HOK, constructed 1989. Source: Daron Dierkes.



National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 43

One Bell Center

Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 10. Thomas F. Eagleton United States Courthouse, HOK, constructed 2000. Source: U.S. General Services Administration.



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One Bell Center

Name of Property

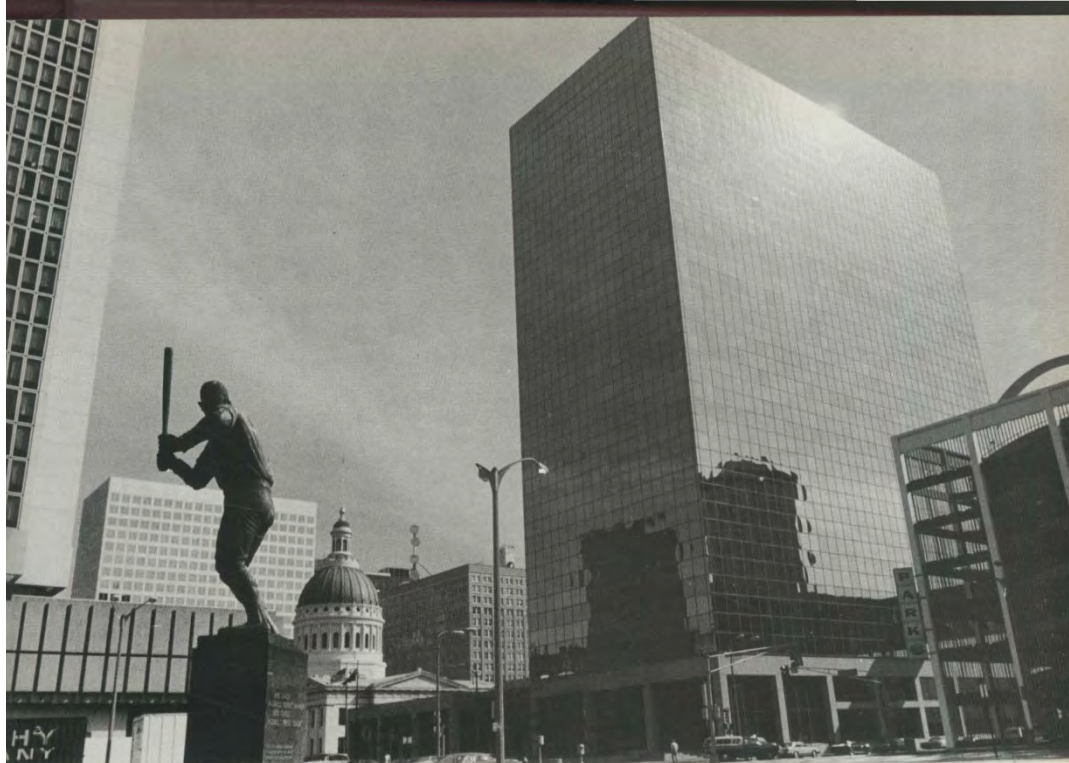
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 11. The Equitable Building 10 South Broadway, Saint Louis. Source: *Architecture and Urbanism*, January 1982, 103.



ブロード・ウェイからの外観。 Exterior view from Broadway.



外観。 Exterior view.































































