# PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - PHOTO/SITE PLAN SHEET

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission **Bureau of Historic Preservation** 

156329

89A

Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor

							See Attached	Historic Name/Other Name: The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvar SITE PLAN	Municipality: Pittsburgh Address: 201	Survey Code/Tax Parcel/Other No.: Parcel ID # 0001-G-00075-0000-00	400 North Street, Hai
Photographer Name: <u>Nick Kraus</u> Date: <u>9/2010</u>		Number Description of View Direction of Camera					Attach Photo Here	The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building/ Verizon Building PHOTO INFORMATION	201 Stanwix Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222	County: Allegheny	400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

## PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - DATA SHEET Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

	IDENTIF	ICATION AND LOC	ATION			
Survey Code:		Tax Parce	el/Other No: <u>0001-G-0</u>	0075-0000-00		
	3					
Municipality: 1. Pittsburgh						
Address: 201 Stanwix Street	et					
Historic Name: The Bell Te	lephone Company of Pennsy	lvania Western Head	dquarters Building			
Other Name: Verizon Build	ing					
Owner Name/Address:						
Owner Category:	<u>C</u> PrivatePι	ıblic-Local	Public-state	Public-federal		
Resource Category	KBuildingD	strict	Site	Structure	_Object	į.
	per of Resources Covered by	This Form: 1				
USGS Quad: 1. Pittsburgh \						
	84379E 4477077N	C				
References B		D				
	HISTORIC A	ND CURRENT FU	INCTIONS			
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A. COMMERCE/TRADE	busine	ess		<u>0 2 A</u>		
B						
C	<del></del>	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	<del></del>			
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Particular Type: A.	administration building		-			
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Current Function Category:		tegory:		Code:		
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	PHYS	SICAL DESCRIPTI	ON			
Architectural Classification:	A. MODERN MOVEMENT		-	<u>7_0</u>		
B		C			-	
D		Other:				
Exterior Materials:	Foundation CONCRETE	<u>65</u>	Roof ALU	IMINUM	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
	Walls GRANITE	<u>4</u> <u>1</u>		JMINUM		
	Other					
Structural System:	1. Steel Frame 4					
Width Approx. 192' F	Depth_Approx. 101'			eight 12		

Year Built: C. 1956		ORICAL INFORMATION Iditions/Alterations: C.	_ C				
Basis for Dating: X Do	ocumentary	_Physical	_				
Explain:	ittaboonah loosana Oslisatia						
Newspaper Reports, Historic Pi	ttsburgh image Collectio	on					
Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation:	4 None						
Associated Individuals:	4 11		2.				
Associated Events: 1. Growth of Telephone Industry			2				
Architects/Engineers: 1. Press Dowler Architects							
Builders:	1. Mellon-Stuart Co.		2				
	MAJOR BIBL	IOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE	CES				
See Attached							
	PREVIOUS	SURVEY, DETERMINATION	IS				
None							
None							
	EVALUATION (	Survey Director/Consultants	Only)				
Individual NR Potential:	Yes	No. Contoutfall	-				
Contributes to a Potential Dis		No District Name/Stat	us]:	<del></del>			
Explain:		<del></del>					
		THREATS					
Threats:3 1. None Explain:	e 2. Public Development	3. Private Development	4. Neglect 5. Other				
•		/					
Possible insensitive redevelopm	ient.	,					
		/EYOR INFORMATION					
Surveyor Name/Title: Nick Kra Project Name:	us	Date: December 2	010				
Organization: Heritage Consult	ting Group	Telephone: 215-2	48-1260				
Street and No.: 15 W. Highland		-					
City, State: Philadelphia, PA Additional Survey Documenta	ition:	<b>Zip Code:</b> 19118					
Associated Survey Codes:							

### PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - NARRATIVE SHEET

89C

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

Survey Code:	Tax Parcel/Other No: 0001-G-00075-0000-00
County: 1. Allegheny	Municipality: Pittsburgh
Address: 201 Stanwix Street	·····
Historic Name/Other Name: The Bell Telephone Company	of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:	

The 12-story Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building (Bell Telephone Building) was constructed between 1956 and 1957 in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Located within Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, the Bell Telephone Building was constructed as part of the Renaissance I urban renewal program which converted "The Point" area from a collection of run-down early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings into a planned mid-century modernist office district. The Bell Telephone Building is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Stanwix Street and The Boulevard of the Allies and is built to the sidewalk on both elevations. The Bell Building features a glazed aluminum curtain wall system with pressed anodized spandrels and columns and aluminum windows. The notched corners of the building are finished in grey granite panels. Along the Stanwix Street (east) main elevation, there is an exposed colonnade of red granite clad square columns, aluminum glazed storefronts above a red granite base and pinkish grey granite panels on the exterior walls. On the interior, the first floor lobby features marble paneled walls, terrazzo floors and polished aluminum doors, elevators and fixtures. The upper floors feature identical elevator lobbies with floor plans that have been modernized throughout the years.

<u>Setting:</u> The Bell Telephone Building is located near the western "point" of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle business district. The subject building is located within an area that was formerly populated with railroad freight houses and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings which were demolished in 1950 and redeveloped as part of the urban renewal project known as Renaissance I. The 23 acre site was redeveloped between 1950 and 1970 and became known as Gateway Center. The sprawling Gateway Center includes six office buildings, a hotel, two apartment buildings and a park all under separate ownership.

The Bell Telephone Building is located on a triangular block bound by Stanwix Street to the east, The Boulevard of the Allies to the south, and curvilinear Liberty Avenue to the west and north. The subject building is located at the southeast corner of the block, at the northwest corner of the intersection of Stanwix Street and The Boulevard of the Allies. Located at the northeast corner of the block is Four Gateway Center and at the southwest corner of the block is the former Pennsylvania State Office Building. Both buildings are mid-century modern movement buildings constructed between 1955 and 1960, though the former Pennsylvania State Office Building was significantly altered and has modern curtain walls. At the center of the block is Equitable Plaza, a landscaped park designed by local landscape architect John O. Simonds, which was developed in 1955 and sits atop an underground parking garage. Directly to the east of the subject building, across Stanwix Street, is PPG Place, an early 1980s 40-story office complex designed by Johnson and Burgee and the adjacent St. Mary of Mercy Church which was built in 1935. South of the subject building, across The Boulevard of the Allies, is the United Steel Workers Building (formerly IBM Building) which was constructed in 1963.

<u>Site:</u> The Bell Telephone Building is located on a 1.5 acre site at the northwest corner of the intersection of Stanwix Street and The Boulevard of the Allies. The subject building is constructed to the sidewalk on the east and south elevations and the sidewalks are paved with red and white rough-finished terrazzo. Near the northeast and southeast corners of the building, within the sidewalk area, there are matching paired flagpoles that are freestanding within red granite orbed bases. Adjacent to the west (rear) elevation, there is a small plaza that abuts the north end of the building and an automobile ramp that abuts the south end. The plaza is paved with to match the sidewalks and is enclosed by red granite planters. The automobile ramp provides access to the basement of the subject building and is paved with concrete. The ramp has a painted concrete retaining wall to the west that is topped with an aluminum guardrail while the north and east walls are finished with granite. Directly to the north of the Bell Telephone Building is a paved walkway that provides access between Stanwix Street and the rear plaza. The walkway is enclosed on the north side by a red granite knee wall topped with an aluminum guardrail.

**Structure:** The Bell Telephone Building is constructed of a steel frame with poured concrete floors and concrete foundation. The building features a central core with an elevator bank at the center flanked to the north and south by restrooms and stairs.

<u>Description:</u> The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building is 12 stories in height with a raised mechanical penthouse. The building represents a transitional period in design as architects began to embrace principles of the Modern movement, specifically the Radiant City Movement. The exterior of the building exemplifies the form, functionality and use of modern materials professed by the Modern movement, but is not completely void of ornamentation as found in International Style Buildings. The building also exhibits a quasi-pedestal design with an articulated base which forms a colonnade on the east elevation anticipating the modern pedestal forms that would follow. The interior of the building has a grand, yet austere lobby of

glass, marble and terrazzo and the upper floors feature elevator lobbies finished with simple marble paneling and terrazzo floors. The primary office space throughout the building is utilitarian in design with carpeted floors, unornamented plaster and gypsum board walls and acoustic tile ceilings.

**Exterior:** The Bell Telephone Building is rectangular in shape with bump-outs projecting from the north and south elevations. The building features an articulated base and shaft topped with a simple flush granite paneled cap.

On the primary east elevation, the first floor forms an exterior colonnade. At the plane of the elevation, the columns are clad in sleek red granite and extend upward to a tan granite belt course that marks the base of the shaft. At the north and south ends, the columns are connected by matching red granite planters. Within the colonnade, the façade has a red granite water table and pinkish grey granite cladding above. Near the south end of the elevation, the granite is inscribed with the name of the company (Bell Telephone Co. of Pennsylvania 1956) and to the north there is a granite relief map of the State of Pennsylvania depicting historical scenes. The carving features an inset spinning globe and clock which was installed as a tribute to the global reach of the Bell Telephone system. The art installation is protected by an arched freestanding aluminum guardrail. At the center of the façade is the building's primary entrance. The entrance features large plate glass windows with aluminum frames and projecting aluminum mullions and red granite bulkheads. The entrance features two pairs of glazed aluminum revolving doors and two modern ADA compliant single-leaf glazed aluminum doors with sidelights. Within the colonnade, the floor is paved with red and white rough-finished terrazzo to match the sidewalks and the ceiling is finished with pink ceramic tiles set within projecting aluminum grids that match the profile of the storefront window mullions.

On the south elevation, the first floor base is flush with the plane of the building and projects outward at the middle of the elevation. The base features a red granite water table and pinkish grey granite at the corners and on the columns. On this elevation, the base includes the first floor and a mezzanine level above. The base includes three tripartite storefront windows that extend from the red granite water table to the grey granite band above the mezzanine level. Within the easternmost storefront, there is a single-leaf glazed aluminum door within the center bay and the transoms contain vision glass. Within the remaining two storefronts, the transoms contain spandrel glass due to the mezzanine floor at this location.

The west (rear) elevation base, extending from ground level through the mezzanine, features nine storefronts and has a red granite water table and pinkish grey granite columns that match the other elevations. Each storefront has a tripartite configuration with aluminum frame and mullions. Between the first floor and mezzanine windows, the tripartite transoms are finished with pink ceramic tiles. Near the center of the elevation, one storefront features a single-leaf glazed aluminum door with a sidelight and provides access from the rear lobby onto the rear plaza.

The north elevation has three aluminum framed storefronts topped with two transoms. Within the easternmost and westernmost storefronts, the center bay features a double-leaf aluminum door with three portals with the top portal containing an inset Pennsylvania Bell Company insignia.

On each elevation, the shaft of the building is clad in an aluminum curtain wall framed by grey granite at the perimeter and corner notches. The curtain walls feature narrow window bays which are separated by faux aluminum columns. The columns feature two projecting silver finished aluminum rails that frame recessed, anodized aluminum channels. Within the window bays, the spandrels are pressed anodized aluminum panels ornamented with diamond shapes. The square aluminum framed windows throughout the shaft have a compressed appearance and are inset within anodized aluminum frames. At the four corners of the building, the shaft is L-shaped due to the bump-outs on the north and south elevations. The L-shaped corners of the shaft are clad in tan granite panels that match the cap at the top of the building. On the north and south elevations, the bump-outs have tall granite parapets and flat roofs which are accessible from the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the building. At these locations, aluminum framed storefront systems provide access from the adjacent offices onto the two roof decks. Above the roof decks, the remainder of the building is clad in matching tan granite panels.

Interior: On the interior, the first floor of the Bell Telephone Building is utilized as the main lobby, assembly room and office space. The main lobby features polished marble walls and a terrazzo floor. The ceiling of the main lobby is painted unornamented plaster with a suspended acoustic tile ceiling located at the center. Within the suspended ceiling there are three circular cutouts that expose the plaster ceiling above. Within these cutouts there are hanging aluminum light fixtures. Located along the west and north walls are multiple single-leaf and double-leaf fluted aluminum doors with fluted transoms and curved aluminum casing. Along the south wall there is a modern double-leaf glass door. The east wall of the main lobby features large aluminum framed storefront windows with inset glazed aluminum revolving doors and two single-leaf doors. Projecting outward from the storefront is a raised marble bulkhead that curves outward at two locations to form planting beds. Rising from the bulkhead are marble clad columns that are slightly recessed from the storefront. At the center of the lobby, along the west wall, is a U-shaped security desk that is finished with fluted aluminum cladding and has a marble counter that matches the wall paneling.

Located at the center of the first floor is the Bell Telephone Building's elevator lobby. The elevator lobby has polished marble walls and ceiling and terrazzo flooring that matches the main lobby. The six elevators feature aluminum doors and surrounds with fluted aluminum panels above that rise to the ceiling. The elevators have aluminum casing which runs from the floor to ceiling and then across the ceiling connecting between the parallel elevators on the north and south sides. On the ceiling, between the casings, there are recessed florescent lighting fixtures with flush aluminum diffusers. Located between the elevators there are two

aluminum directories and an inset aluminum mail chute. At the west end of the elevator lobby, there is a mezzanine level wall that is clad in fluted aluminum with an inset clock and paired aluminum columns that run from the floor to the ceiling.

Located to the west of the elevator lobby is the rear lobby and corridor. The rear lobby provides access to the exterior plaza along the west elevation of the building. Within the rear lobby and corridor the walls are finished with marble cladding with aluminum doors and frames and the floors are terrazzo. The ceiling is suspended acoustic tile with inset aluminum lighting fixtures.

At the north end of the first floor is a large assembly room. The assembly room has an open floor plan with a raised stage at the east end with a fluted wood bulkhead. The walls and columns contain sleek wood paneling with acoustic tiles above. The floor is wood parquet tile and the ceiling is acoustic tile at the perimeter with a suspended panel ceiling at the center. Set within the suspended ceiling are aluminum lighting fixtures and HVAC diffusers. Located south of the elevator lobby is office space that has been reconfigured with modern finishes included suspended acoustic tile ceilings, gypsum board walls and carpeted floors.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors is a mezzanine level that is located along the south and west elevations. The mezzanine is accessible via the freight elevator located within the core and the two stairs. The mezzanine has a U-shaped corridor with unornamented plaster walls and linoleum tile flooring. Within the mezzanine the finishes are utilitarian and there are mechanicals throughout. The exterior windows are limited in height as expressed within the storefronts on the exterior.

Floors 2-11 have similar floor plans and finishes. At each level, the elevator lobby features marble paneled walls and aluminum mail chute, acoustic tile ceiling and terrazzo floor. The elevators have painted aluminum doors and surrounds. On the even numbered levels, the elevators and terrazzo floors have a red color scheme while on the odd numbered levels the elevators and floors have a green color scheme. The floor plans of the core vary from floor to floor. In most locations, the elevator lobby is enclosed on both ends and is accessible via single-leaf flush metal doors while in some locations, the elevator lobbies have short corridors that extend just south of the central core.

The upper floors have been altered over the years and the floor plans vary but are generally open. The office areas generally contain modern finishes including suspended acoustic tile ceilings with florescent lighting fixtures, exposed columns and walls finished in unornamented plaster. On many of the floors, the office areas have open floor plans with low-rise cubicles. In certain areas, including the majority of the eighth floor, the office area has been subdivided with modern gypsum board partitions to create offices and classrooms. In limited locations, modern gypsum board circulation corridors surround the core.

The 12<sup>th</sup> floor contains a corridor west of the central core with marble clad walls and suspended acoustic ceiling. The 12<sup>th</sup> floor office finishes are similar to the remainder of the office floors with the exception of the northwest corner which contains several rooms with wood finishes. The northwest corner offices have been altered by the subdivision of some rooms with modern drywall and glass partitioning. The walls in these offices are plaster with areas containing wood paneling and cabinets. The ceilings contain acoustic tiles along the perimeter with recessed plaster panels at the center. At the north and south end of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor there are terraces with granite kneewalls and pavers.

Above the 12<sup>th</sup> floor there is a mechanical penthouse that is recessed from the primary elevation on each elevation. The penthouse is utilitarian in character with painted masonry walls and exposed beams.

In the basement, the elevator lobby has marble wall cladding and terrazzo flooring to match the upper floors. Located to the east of the central core is a public circulation corridor with finishes that match the elevator lobby. The corridor provides access to the former lunch room and kitchen. The lunch room has an acoustic tile ceiling, brick clad columns and terrazzo floor. The kitchen is utilitarian in design with commercial floor tile and ceramic block walls. The remainder of the basement and sub-basement space is utilitarian and utilized for mechanical equipment, workshops, storage and a loading and receiving area.

The building is serviced by two full height stairs located at the north and south ends of the core. The stairs each have steel risers, terrazzo treads and landings and metal balustrades and handrails. The walls are painted unornamented plaster.

Alterations: The exterior of the building generally retains its original appearance though modern signage now covers the original signage engraved into the granite panels. On the interior, the south end of the first floor was previously utilized as the bill payment center for the Bell Telephone of Pennsylvania Company but was converted for use as office space during the 1980s. Throughout the remainder of the building, the office areas surround the central core have been modernized to meet the needs of the individual tenants. The alterations have included rearranging and installation of new partitions, installation of gypsum board demising walls and installation of new suspended acoustic ceilings.

### PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM - NARRATIVE SHEET

89C

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

Historic Name/Other Name:	The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building

### SUMMARY

**HISTORIC NARRATIVE:** 

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building is significant under Criterion A for **COMMERCE** as the consolidated western headquarters for the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania and under Criterion C for **ARCHITECTURE** as a work of the prominent local architecture firm of Press C. Dowler. The subject building was constructed between 1956 and 1957 as part of a massive urban renewal project known as the Pittsburgh Renaissance I. The building was designed to consolidate the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania's 1500 regional employees into one administration building as these employees were previously distributed amongst 15 separate locations. The subject building was designed by prominent local architects Press C. Dowler and his son William C. Dowler who together were responsible for the design of over 60 Bell Telephone buildings in the western region during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building is a representative example of a Mid-century Modernist design and is modern in form with modern materials and limited ornamentation. The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building is significant at the local level and its period of significance is 1958-1961 in accordance with the National Park Service 50-year guideline.

### History of the Building

Prior to the construction of the subject building, the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania had administrative staff located throughout the City of Pittsburgh at 15 separate offices. At the beginning of the 1950s, the company did own and occupy a 20-story building located at 416 Grant Street and an adjacent 7-story building but these buildings used almost entirely for operations and equipment.<sup>3</sup> The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania purchased the plot of land at the northwest corner of Ferry Street (Stanwix Street) and The Boulevard of the Allies from the Equitable Life Assurance Society in May 1950 during which time the entire surrounding 23 acres of land were being cleared and redevelopment as the Gateway Center.<sup>4</sup> On October 28, 1954, W.D. Gillen, president of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, announced that the company would build a new headquarters building at the Gateway Center.<sup>5</sup> Plans for the proposed building were developed by architect Press C. Dowler and were released in June 1955. The building was to be 12 stories in height and "entirely different" in design from any other structure in the City."<sup>6</sup>

Construction of the Bell Telephone Building began in January 1956 when contractors began to excavate the site to lay the building's massive concrete foundation. Excavation of the site was lengthy and tedious as the workers encountered 72 buried concrete pillars, relics of the former Wabash railroad shed which was demolished in 1947. Each pillar was 12-15 feet wide and 20 feet deep and had to be demolishing utilizing a swinging "Headache Ball." While eight of the pillars were reused in the foundation of the Bell Telephone Building, the remaining pillars were demolished, a process that took in excess of a month and a half. By April 1956, excavation work was completed and the concrete footings were being poured. Construction of the steel frame began in late spring of 1956 and by September the framing was nearly complete.

On September 27, 1956, amid much fanfare and with civic, political and industry leaders in attendance, the building's cornerstone was laid. The pink granite cornerstone contained a vault replete with mementos for the future including: copies of the daily newspapers, key to the city, "modern" telephone equipment, political resolutions and knickknacks from prominent local corporations. The last steel beam was erected on October 5, 1956 and the exterior curtain wall and interior fittings were completed throughout 1957. The first occupants to move into the \$8.5 million headquarters building in January 1958 were the company's engineering staff which occupied the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> floors. By the end of April 1958, the building was complete and the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania had relocated its Western Pennsylvania headquarters staff into the building. The building was officially dedicated as the headquarters of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Area in September 1958.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Bell Tel's New Building." *The Pittsburgh Press* 28 Sept. 1958: 18, 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> American Architects Directory. Ed. George S. Koyl. I ed. New York, NY: R.R. Bowker, 1955. 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "10-Story Bell Building to Rise at Gateway." *The Pittsburgh Press* 29 Oct. 1954.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Allegheny County Deed Book 12741, Page 228.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "10-Story Bell Building to Rise at Gateway." *The Pittsburgh Press* 29 Oct. 1954.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "Bell Building to Fit Gateway Motif." The Pittsburgh Press 16 June 1955.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "Gould's Roots Stump Engineers." *The Pittsburgh Press* 28 Feb. 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> "Aluminum Coat for Bell Bldg." *The Pittsburgh Press* 27 Apr. 1956.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "Long Distance Link With Future Set Up in Bell Cornerstone." *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 27 Sept. 1956.

<sup>10 &</sup>quot;Bell to Start 'Living' In Gateway Building." The Pittsburgh Press 26 Jan. 1958.

The building continued to be operated as the western headquarters of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania until 1994 when the company became known as Bell Atlantic – Pennsylvania. Following the merger of the Bell Atlantic Corporation and GTE Corporation in 2000, the building came under the ownership of the newly created Verizon Communications Inc. and the subject building became known as the Verizon Building. During this period Verizon began to move its employees out of the building and the former payment center on the first floor was converted to office space. In 2006, Verizon sold the subject building to the Hertz Investment Group though limited Verizon offices remain in the building as of October 2010.

### The Point Before 1950

Located at the convergence of the Allegheny River and the Monongahela River is the area known as "The Point." The Point was established as Fort Duquesne, a French outpost, in 1754. In 1758, the British forces defeated the French and constructed Fort Pitt. When the City of Pittsburgh was incorporated in 1816, the Point became the country's first "Gateway to the West." Through the 1830s, the Point had seen little development, with remnants of the abandoned Fort Pitt remaining. Once the Fort was demolished, the Point began to develop into an industrial and commercial district, replacing houses that had occupied the area previously. Through the 1860s, the Point continued its industrial growth as railroad yards and freight houses replaced the earlier commercial buildings. Between 1874 and 1876, bridges across the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers were constructed at the Point. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the lower Point was covered by railroad yards with only the 1764 Blockhouse remaining from Fort Pitt. Much of the point was occupied by industrial buildings and immigrant slums, though the land adjacent to the Allegheny River was developed as a landscaped exposition area with three structures: Exposition Hall, Mechanical Hall and Music Hall. Hall.

Between 1903 and 1905, the site of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building was significantly altered as the existing industrial buildings were demolished and an elevated railroad shed and headhouse were constructed for the Wabash Railroad. The railroad yard was accessed via the Wabash Bridge was constructed over the Monongahela River (demolished 1948). At the tip of the Point, the two 19<sup>th</sup> century bridges were replaced in the 1910s by the Manchester Bridge (1915) and the Point Bridge (1920) which were demolished in 1970. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Point remained a bastion of industry dominated by the Pennsylvania Railroad freight terminal. At the tip of the Point a small park, located between the two bridges, provided the only public access to the waterfront at the point. Up until 1950, the Point was seen as a commercial slum that was representative of Pittsburgh's fall from glory.

### Pittsburgh Renaissance I - Gateway Center

During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pittsburgh was a hub of industrial might with large manufacturers such as U.S. Steel Corporation, Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation, ALCOA, Westinghouse Airbrake Corporation and Pittsburgh Plate Glass. Although its vast industries led to economic prosperity, those same industries blanketed the city with pollution, then known as "The Smoky City," and fouled the triumphant Three Rivers. In the city's Golden Triangle business district, the constant threat of flooding reduced property values by \$10 million per year and 40 percent of the office space was vacant. Between 1930 and 1945, no new office buildings were erected within the Golden Triangle and the major corporations were purchasing real estate in other cities, intent on moving their headquarters. In 1944, The Wall Street Journal classified Pittsburgh as a Class D city with "poor" prospects for the future. 14

After years of failed efforts to correct Pittsburgh's problems, change began during World War II. In 1941, the Pittsburgh City Council passed a smoke ordinance which was implemented in 1946 following the conclusion of the war. The ordinance affected both commercial and residential fuel users and reduced smoke by nearly 90 percent. In 1943, the non-profit Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) was established "to develop, stimulate, encourage and coordinate planning in the Pittsburgh region." In 1945 the ACCD lobbied the Commonwealth legislature to approve enabling legislation for municipalities to create urban redevelopment authorities (URA). The enabling legislation was passed in 1945 and the city of Pittsburgh established its URA on November 18, 1946. Through the enabling legislation, the URA gained the power of eminent domain and redevelopment for areas certified as blighted by the City Planning Commission.

Following a study by the City Planning Commission, 59-acres at the tip of the Point were certified as blighted and the URA took authority to redevelop the site. Utilizing its power of eminent domain, the URA acquired and assembled the individual land parcels into two large parcels, a 36-acre parcel at the tip that would be redeveloped by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Point State

<sup>18</sup> Grove, John J. "Pittsburgh's Renaissance." U.S.A. Tomorrow October (1954): 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Alberts, Robert C. The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Park. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1980: 30.

Alberts, Robert C. The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh's Renaissance Park. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1980: 37.

<sup>13</sup> Fitzpatrick, Dan. "The Story of Urban Renewal." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 21 May 2000. Post-gazette.com. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Web.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Grove, John J. "Pittsburgh's Renaissance." U.S.A. Tomorrow October (1954): 14-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Allegheny Conference on Community Development. *Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: An Era of Progress and Accomplishment.* 1956: 18. <sup>16</sup> Grove, John J. "Pittsburgh's Renaissance." *U.S.A. Tomorrow* October (1954): 14-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Pittsburgh and Allegheny County: An Era of Progress and Accomplishment. 1956: 7.

Park, and a 23-acre parcel to be redeveloped as a modern business district.

In the spring of 1947, the URA sold the 23-acre parcel to the Equitable Life Assurance Society of New York (Equitable) which planned to clear the site and redevelop it as Gateway Center. Equitable agree to pay the URA an annual \$50,000 fee and to build a series of office towers on the site. The agreement also stipulated that the URA, City Planning Commission and City Council each had review jurisdiction for proposed work, and that any new construction would have to fit the guidelines developed for the project. Design requirements for the development were tailored "to protect the project from excessive land coverage, Park-like appearance is contractually assured, as are adequate off-street parking and harmonious building uses." 19

As originally planned, the Gateway Center project was intended to have between 8 and 11 cruciform shaped high-rise towers set within a park-like setting based on LeCorbusier's Radiant City prototype. Between 1950 and 1952, three of the towers (Gateway 1, 2 and 3) were constructed on the block to the northwest of that which comprises the subject building. The three austere, aluminum clad buildings were designed by Claven, Eggers and Higgins Architects and surrounded a public plaza. The Radiant City styled site plan was developed by Clarke and Rapuano.

Although Equitable had planned to complete the entire Gateway Center complex, high vacancy rates and the Korean War derailed the plan. The remainder of this block was sold to individual entities and developed during the 1950s and 1960s with two high-rise residences and the Pittsburgh Hilton. The block in which the subject building is sited, bordered by Liberty Avenue to the north and west, Stanwix Street to the east and The Boulevard of the Allies to the south, was developed between 1955 and 1960. The center area of the block spanning from Liberty Avenue southward to The Boulevard of the Allies, known as Equitable Plaza, was constructed atop a multi-story underground parking garage. The plaza was designed by landscape architect John O. Simonds and is surrounded by three buildings. Of the three buildings only Four Gateway Center (1960), located at the intersection of Liberty Avenue and Stanwix Street and designed by architecture firm Harrison and Abramovitz, was constructed by the Equitable Life Assurance Society. As with the adjacent block, Equitable sold these two parcels of land for development by other entities. The Pennsylvania state office building, located at the southwest corner of the site, was designed by Altehnhof and Bown and constructed in 1955 and the subject building was constructed in 1956-1958 after the parcel was purchased by the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania.

While Gateway Center was not completed as the avant-garde Radiant City that was originally planned, it was seen as a success as the formerly blighted Point area was redeveloped into a productive "modern" business district. Total project costs topped \$115 million but public expenditures were limited to \$600,000 and by 1967 there were 22,000 workers within Gateway Center.<sup>21</sup>

### **Criterion A: COMMERCE**

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building (Bell Telephone Building) is significant under Criterion A for Commerce as the headquarters for the western region of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania. Prior to the opening of the subject building, the company's administrative operations were spread amongst 15 locations throughout the city of Pittsburgh. Opening of the Bell Telephone Building consolidated the company's 1500 administration workers into one centralized location.

### Bell Telephone Company in Pittsburgh

On March 7, 1876 Alexander Graham Bell was granted a United States patent for the telephone and the Bell Telephone Company was established in 1877 by Bell and partners Gardiner Hubbard and Thomas Sanders. In Pittsburgh, the first telephone service was established by the Central District and Printing Telegraph Company (CDPTC), an operating agent for the Bell Telephone Company. In its first subscriber directory printed in the summer of 1878 there were 130 businesses and homes that were listed as having telephone service. In 1890, the CDPTC constructed a seven-story switching hall at 416 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue (extant) designed in the Romanesque Revival style by architect Frederick J. Osterling. The CDPTC exclusively provided telephone service to the Pittsburgh region and grew substantially at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the acquisition of thirteen independent local telephone companies. In 1909, the CDPTC was absorbed by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

In 1913, the company changed its name to the Central District Telephone Co. of Pittsburgh and handled 300,000 daily calls. Although operated as an independent company from its establishment in 1874, the Central District Telephone Company was absorbed into the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania system, a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Telephone and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> "Pittsburgh's Mayor Discusses Urban Design at Harvard Conference." *The Charette* 36.5 (1956): 23-25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Simonds, John O. "Equitable Plaza, Pittsburgh." Landscape Architecture 53.1 (1962): 18-19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Fitzpatrick, Dan. "The Story of Urban Renewal." Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 21 May 2000. Post-gazette.com. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Web.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> AT&T. "A Brief History: Origins." *AT&T*. Web. 26 Oct. 2010. <a href="http://www.corp.att.com/history/history1.html">http://www.corp.att.com/history/history1.html</a>>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> "A Fact a Day About Pittsburgh." The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 7 Sept. 1927.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> "Real Estate Plat Book of the City of Pittsburgh." Map. *Plate 5*. Vol. 3. Philadelphia, PA: G.M. Hopkins, 1900.

<sup>25</sup> Stehman, J. Warren. The Financial History of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. New York: A.M. Kelley, 1967: 106.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "Telephone Co. Absorbed." *The New York Times* 23 July 1909.

Telegraph Company, in September 1918.<sup>27</sup> Following the absorption, the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania constructed a 20-story building in Pittsburgh designed by Philadelphia architect James T. Windrim. Constructed in 1923, the building was sited adjacent to the 1890 building and both were utilized for equipment and exchanges. Significant growth of the system and usage within the Pittsburgh region accompanied the Bell acquisition and by 1927 usage had increased to 900,000 outgoing calls per day. In the local district there were 191,000 telephones and over 20 percent of families had telephone service.<sup>28</sup>

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania continued its effort to consolidate telephone service in the Commonwealth by purchasing seven independent companies and assets between 1924 and 1932. With the many acquisitions, the company's offices and equipment was distributed throughout the state. In the Pittsburgh region alone the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania had 25 central offices, a fact reflective of the company's challenges in consolidating the state's telephone operations into one efficient system.<sup>29</sup> Growth in the western region of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania was continuous during the 1930s and 1940s as the number of phones reached 425,000 in 1946. In 1940, 50 percent of families within the city and 38 percent of families within the western service region had telephones; by 1950, 82 percent of families within the city had telephones and 75 percent of all families within the western service region had telephones. By 1951, telephone density within the Pittsburgh region was fourth in the nation behind only San Francisco, Cleveland and Detroit and over 830,000 telephones had been installed in the past five years.<sup>30</sup>

Although the western region of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania experienced two decades of explosive growth, in 1950 it was still plagued with the same administration inefficiencies that were created through the acquisitions of the 1920s and 1930s. Although its primary telephone operations and exchanges were consolidated at the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue complex, the company's regional administration staff was distributed throughout the city in 15 rented offices.<sup>31</sup> In order to streamline the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania's western region operations, a consolidated headquarters building was required.

The solution to the company's western region administrative office quandary was solved on October 28, 1954 when company president W.D. Gillen announced its plan to construct an administrative headquarters within the Gateway Center at the intersection of Stanwix Street and The Boulevard of the Allies.

From this new headquarters building will come the direction of the 275-million dollar telephone plant of Western Pennsylvania.<sup>32</sup>

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building was designed to consolidate the company's 1500 regional administration staff into one location. The subject building's construction, maintenance and interest expenses were afforded as the company would no longer pay rent for the 15 office spaces previously occupied.<sup>33</sup> The \$8.5 million administration building included men's and women's lounges and a cafeteria, an auditorium and payment center on the first floor, general administrative offices on floors 2-10, engineering department offices on floors 11 and 12 and executive offices on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. The building effectively consolidated the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania's regional administration offices and improved the efficiency of its operations.

### **Criterion C: ARCHITECTURE**

The resource is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a work of prominent local father and son architect Press C. Dowler and as a representative example of a Mid-century Modernist building.

Press C. Dowler was born in Portersville, Pennsylvania in August 1877 and was raised in New Castle. Dowler's first experience in the architectural field was as an apprentice for architect C.C. Thayer in New Castle between 1893 and 1895. At the time, Dowler was not paid and wore many hats at the firm including janitor, blueprint maker and typist, but also was afforded the opportunity to be a cub draftsman.<sup>34</sup> Between 1895 and 1897, Dowler worked for architect Samuel T. McClarren in Pittsburgh. In 1897, Dowler relocated to Washington, Pennsylvania to work as a draftsman for the architecture firm McCollum & Ely. While working for McCollum & Ely, Dowler attended a two-year architectural Special Course at the University of Pennsylvania that was open to draftsmen with six years of experience. Prior to completing the Special Course, Dowler was offered the opportunity to become a partner with Jennings M. McCollum following the death of Mr. Ely in 1901. Renamed McCollum & Dowler, Jennings M. McCollum remained in Washington, PA while Dowler

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "The Bell Telephone Co. of Pennsylvania - Lehman Brothers Collection." *Lehman Brothers Collections - Twentieth-Century Business Archives*. Harvard Business School Baker Library Historical Collections. Web. 26 Oct. 2010.

<sup>&</sup>lt;a href="http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/lehman/chrono.html?company=the\_bell\_telephone\_co\_of\_pennsylvania">http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/lehman/chrono.html?company=the\_bell\_telephone\_co\_of\_pennsylvania</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "A Fact a Day About Pittsburgh." *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 7 Sept. 1927.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> "A Fact a Day About Pittsburgh." The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 7 Sept. 1927.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Friedman, Arthur R. "82 of Each 100 Families in City Have Telephones." The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 26 July 1951.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> "Bell Building to Fit Gateway Motif." *The Pittsburgh Press* 16 June 1955.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> "10-Story Bell Building to Rise at Gateway." *The Pittsburgh Press* 29 Oct. 1954.

<sup>33 &</sup>quot;Bell Tel's New Building." The Pittsburgh Press 28 Sept. 1958: 18-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Lucas, Robert I. "Press C. Dowler." Tarentum Times 9.12 (2002): 269-73.

established a Pittsburgh office in 1902.<sup>35</sup> Press Dowler remained a partner in McCollum & Dowler until 1911 and claimed the 1906 Braddock National Bank as his principle work while a partner with the firm.

Dowler established his own architectural firm, Press C. Dowler, Architect, in 1912. The firm specialized in the design of schools, hospitals and bank buildings and was active throughout the Pittsburgh region. During the first two decades of his own practice, Dowler was a prolific designer of school buildings throughout the region including within the city of Pittsburgh and outlying towns of Springdale, Tarentum, West Deer and Dormont. The schools generally were multi-floor with "modern" linear floor plans designed in period Revival styles with Art Deco influences. <sup>36</sup> In 1921, Dowler was elected to the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Although Dowler had begun his career designing buildings utilizing various Revival styles, by the mid-to-late 1920s he had embraced the modern movement and was fully engaged in the Art Deco style. Dowler's Art Deco commissions included the Allegheny Valley Hospital Nurses Residence constructed in 1928 and the Tarentum American Legion Building constructed in 1931. Although Dowler continued to receive a range of commissions over the next two decades (1930-1950), the bulk of his work was commissioned by the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania. Between 1935 and 1955, Press C. Dowler designed in excess of 60 buildings for Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania in the Pittsburgh region. The Bell buildings were generally small exchange buildings but Dowler's existing relationship with the company provided the impetus for his selection as architect for the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building in 1955. Press C. Dowler was assisted in the design by his son William C. Dowler, who joined the firm in 1947. William C. Dowler graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1935 with a Bachelors of Architecture degree and was admitted to the AIA in 1955.

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building is the most prominent and unique building attributed to Press C. Dowler and his only major downtown commission. The building was widely recognized in the local press and was seen not only as important for its location within the burgeoning Gateway Center, but was planned as "the latest and most modern type of construction." The building featured a contemporary design that was complementary to the other buildings within Gateway Center and embraced modern design principles including the straightforward form interrelationship of proportion and form, awareness of setting, use of modern materials, limited ornamentation and minimal land coverage.

### CONCLUSION

The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania Western Headquarters Building is locally significant under Criterion A for Commerce as the consolidated western headquarters for the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania and under Criterion C for Architecture as a work of the prominent local architecture firm of Press C. Dowler and as a representative example of the Modern Movement style of architecture.

<sup>38</sup> "10-Story Bell Building to Rise at Gateway." *The Pittsburgh Press* 29 Oct. 1954.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Tannler, Albert M. Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. Profile: Press C. Dowler (1877-1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Bureau for Historic Preservation. *PA Historic Resource Survey Form: Beechwood School*. By Martin Aurand. 1986.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> American Architects Directory. Ed. George S. Koyl. I ed. New York, NY: R.R. Bowker, 1955. 142.

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### **United States Department of the Interior**

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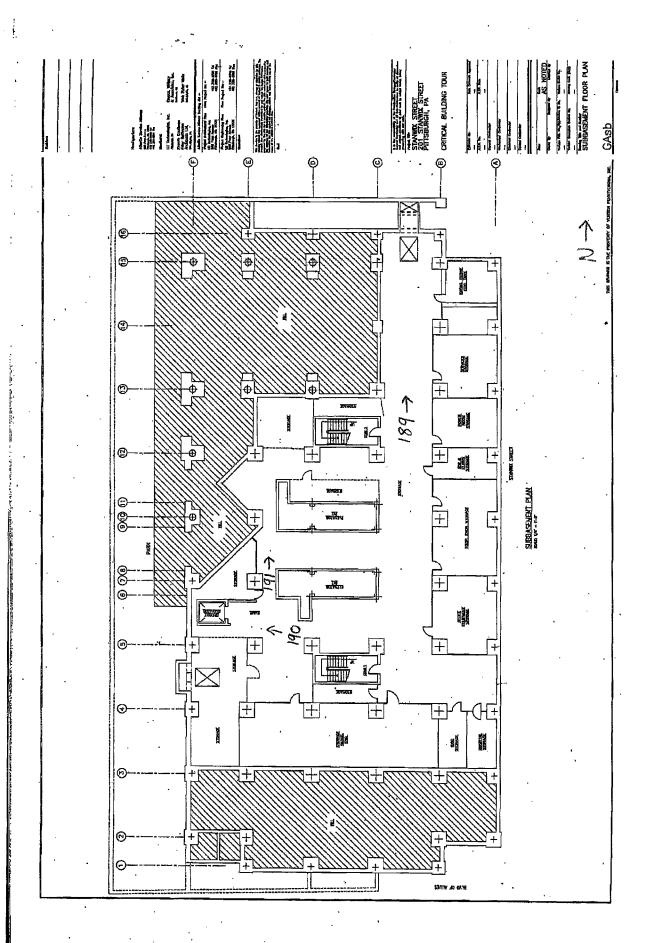
# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Site Plan

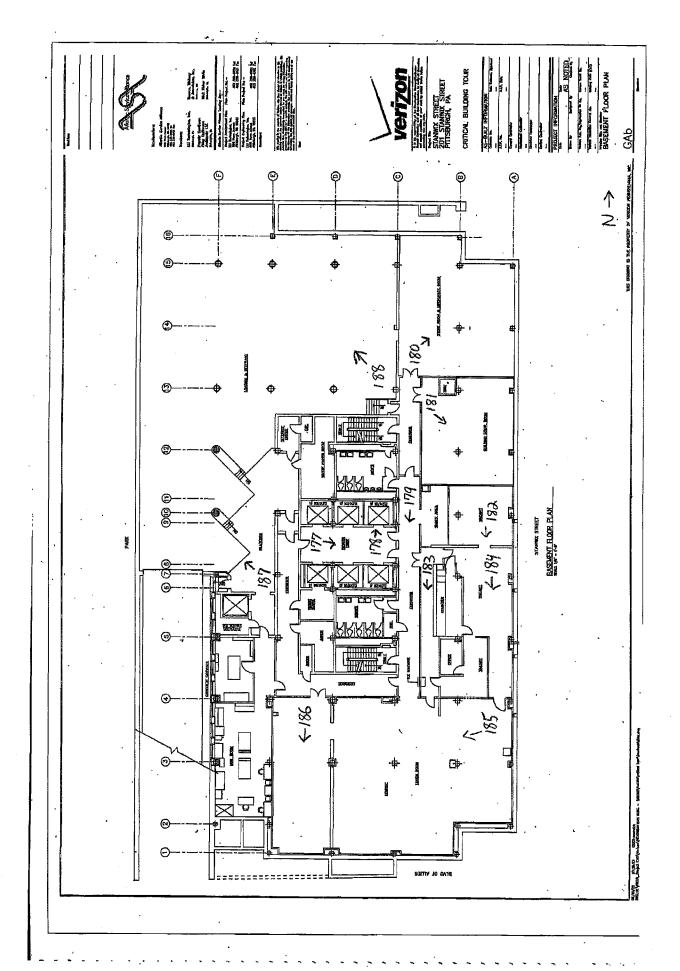


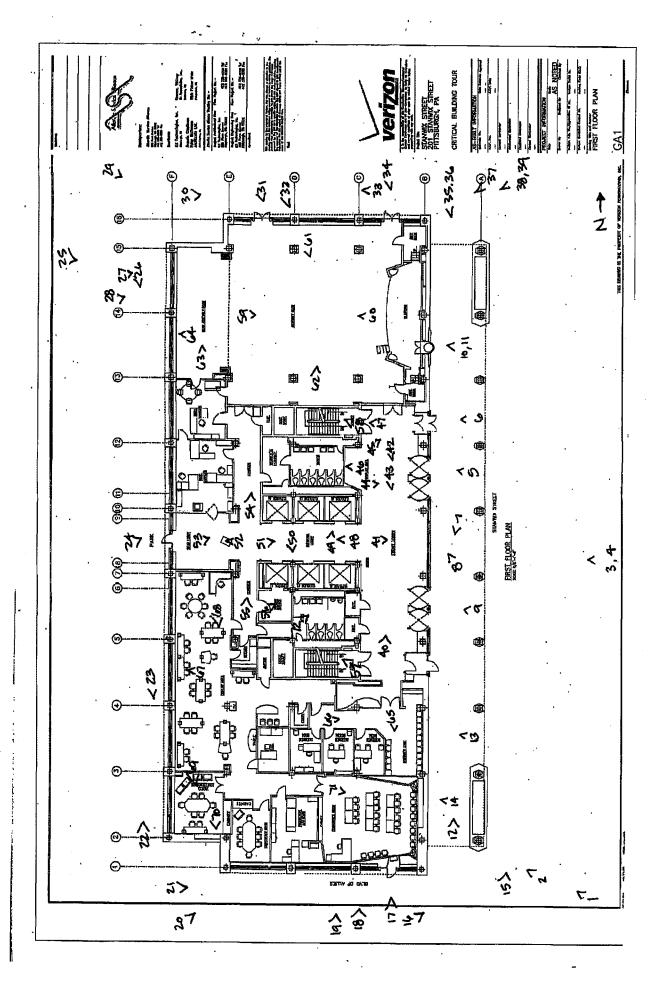
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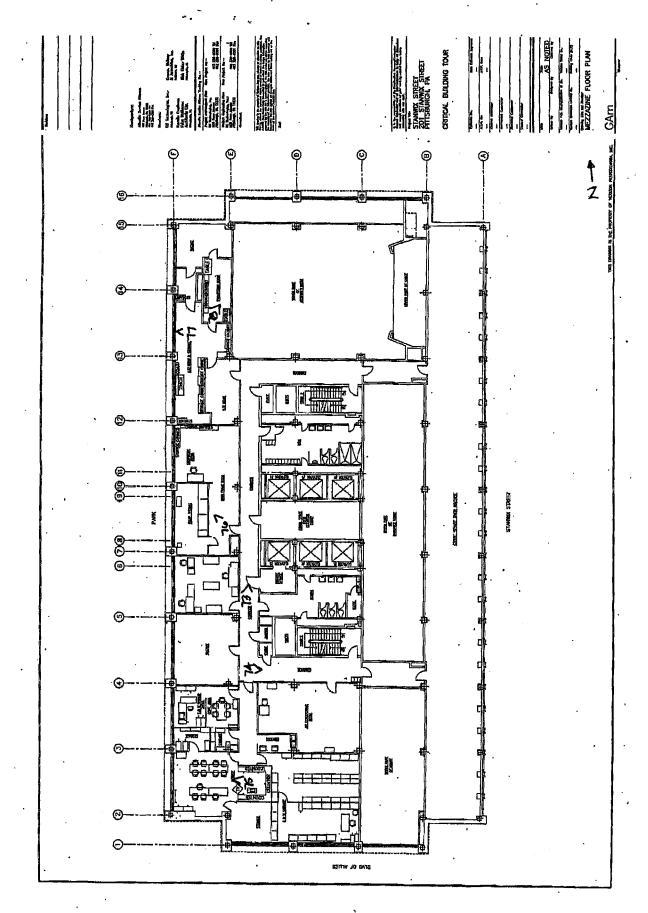
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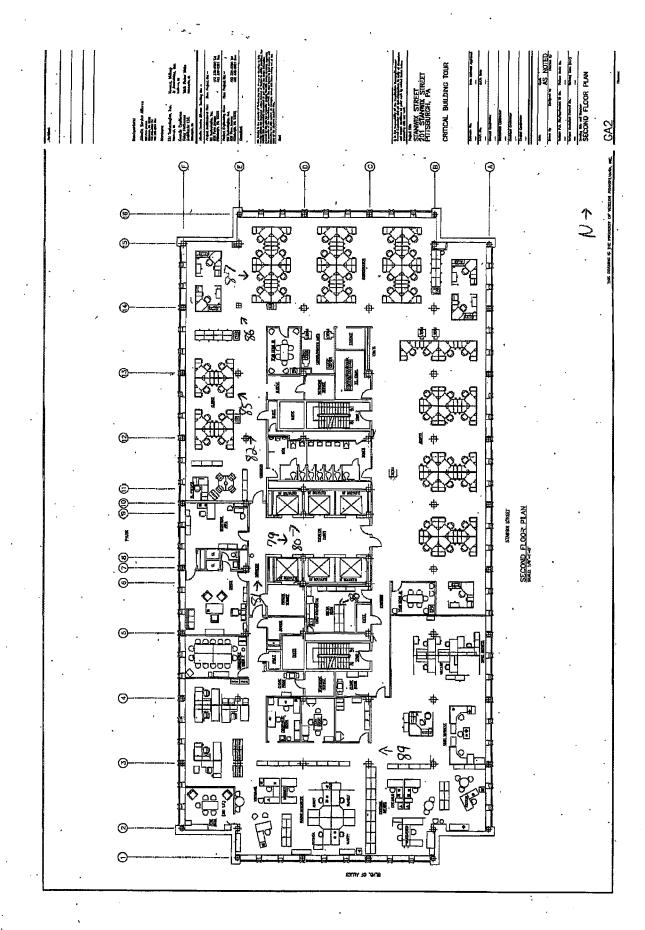
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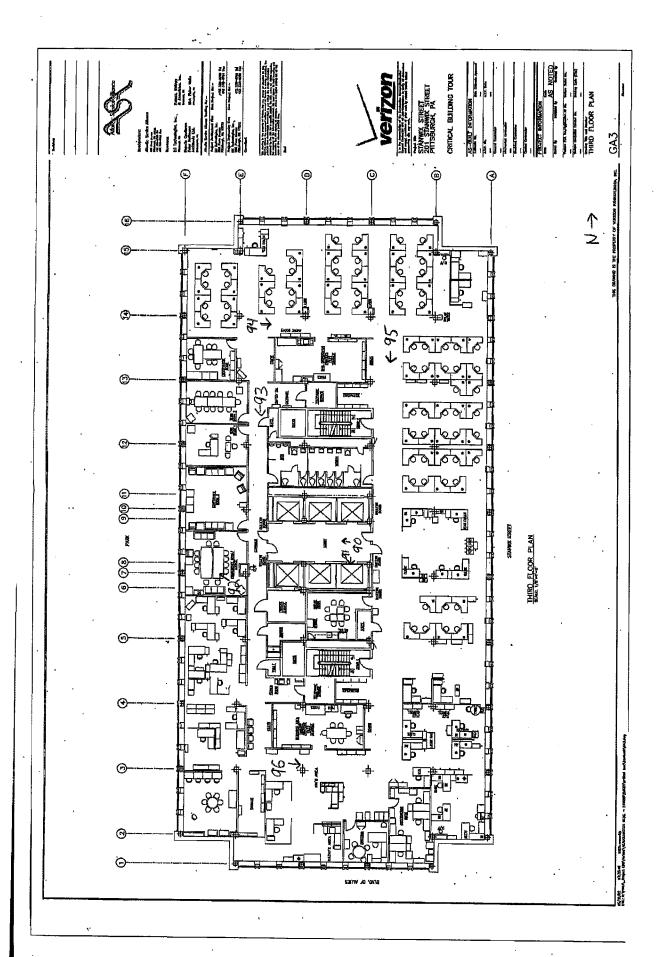


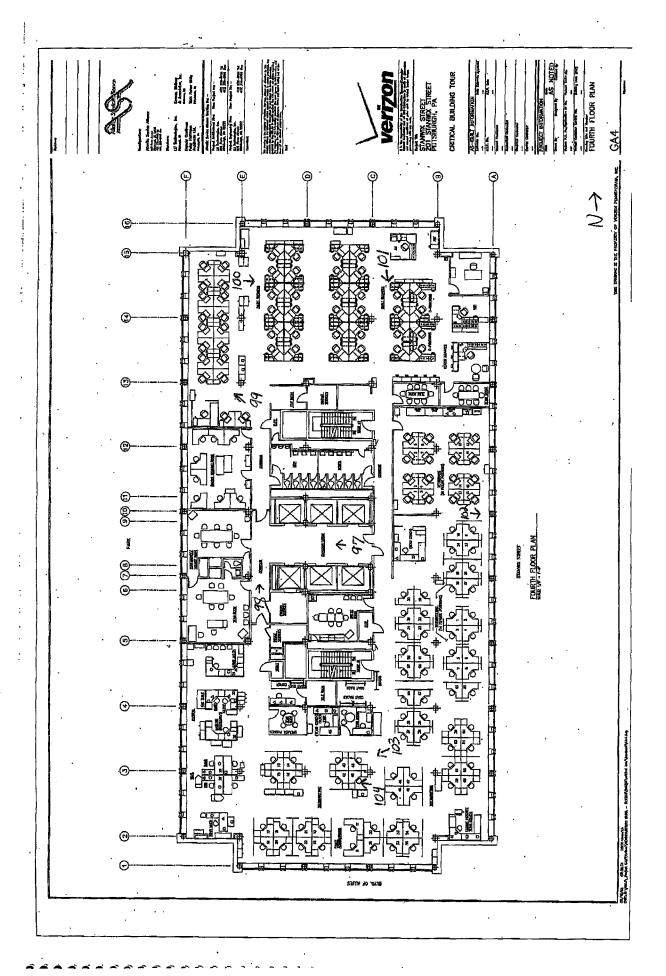
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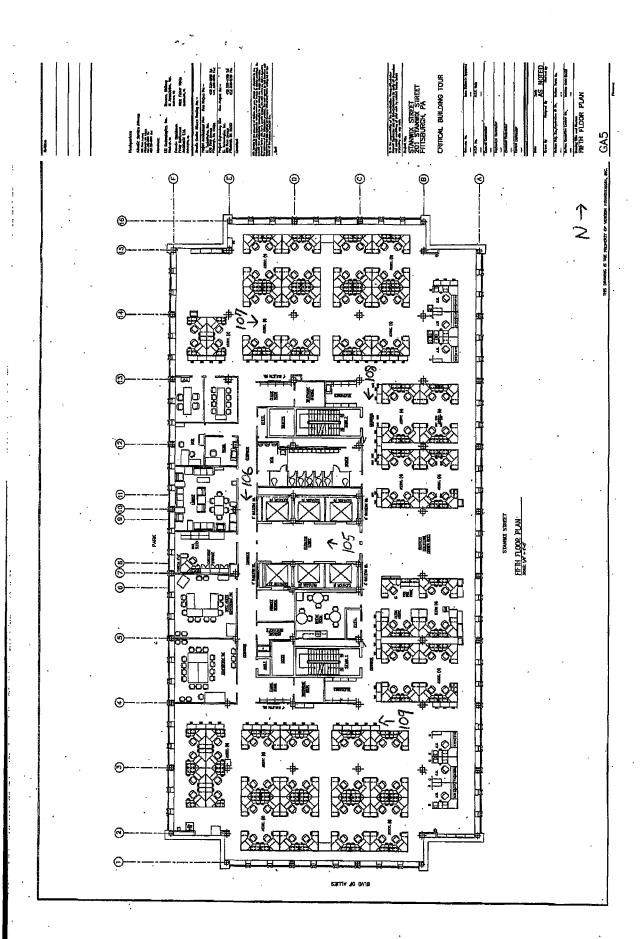
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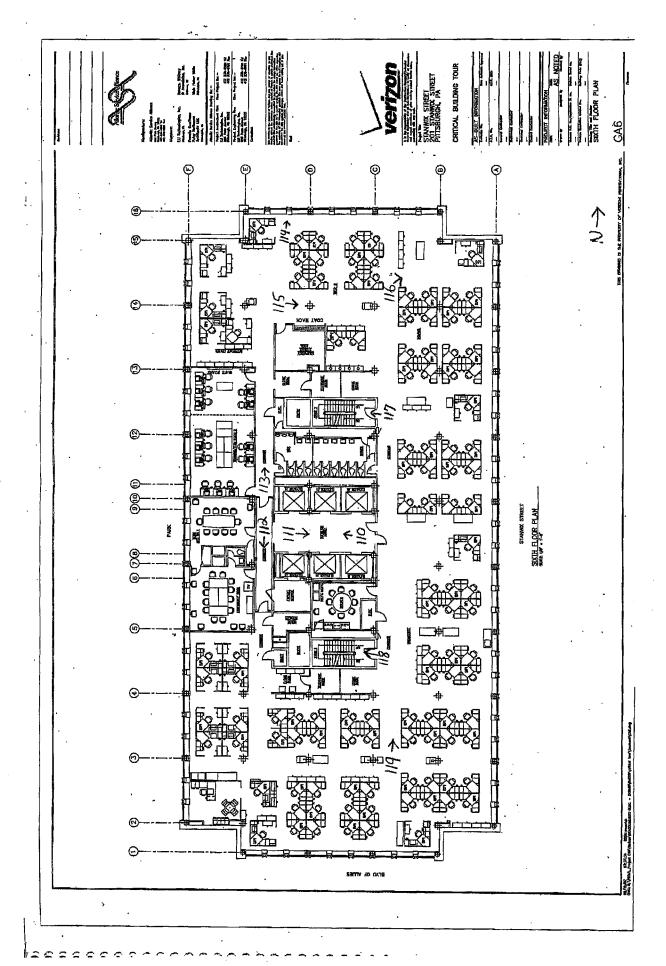
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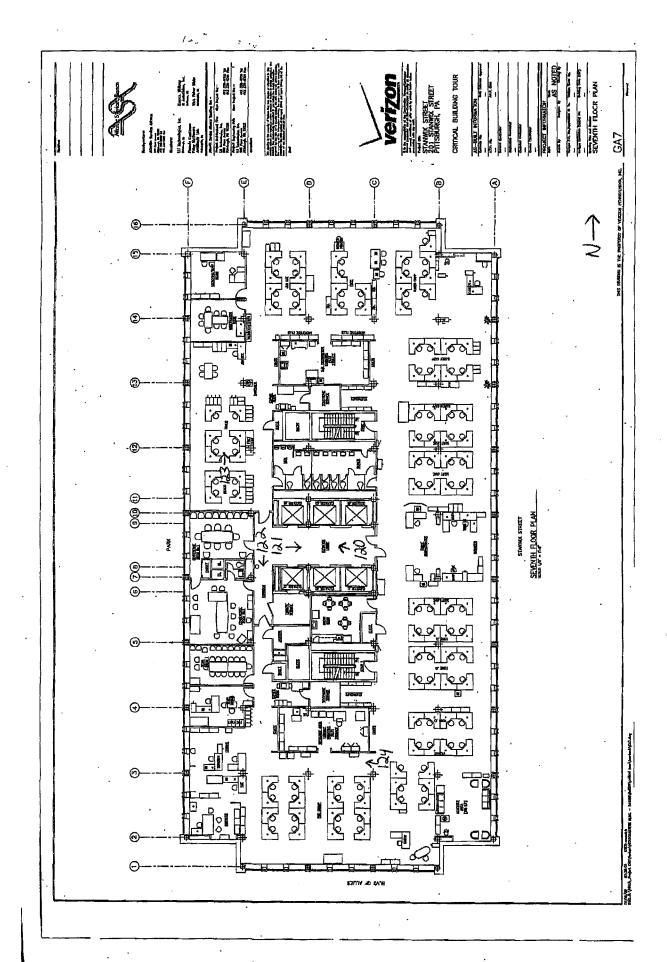


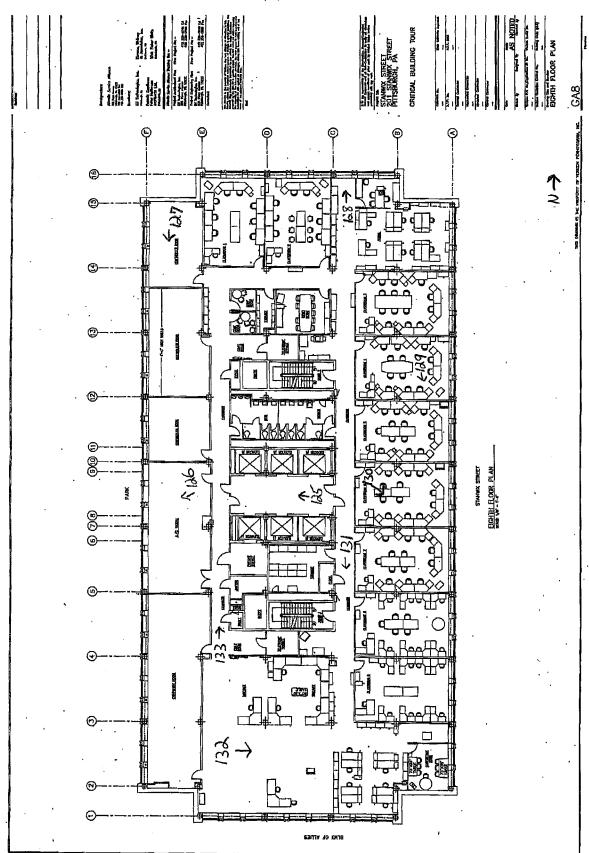




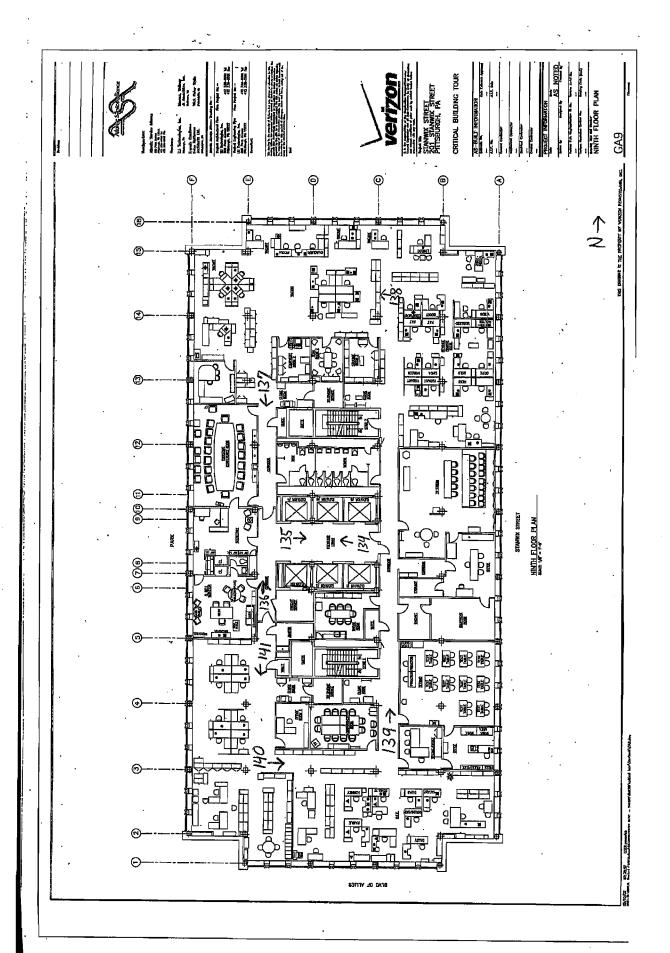


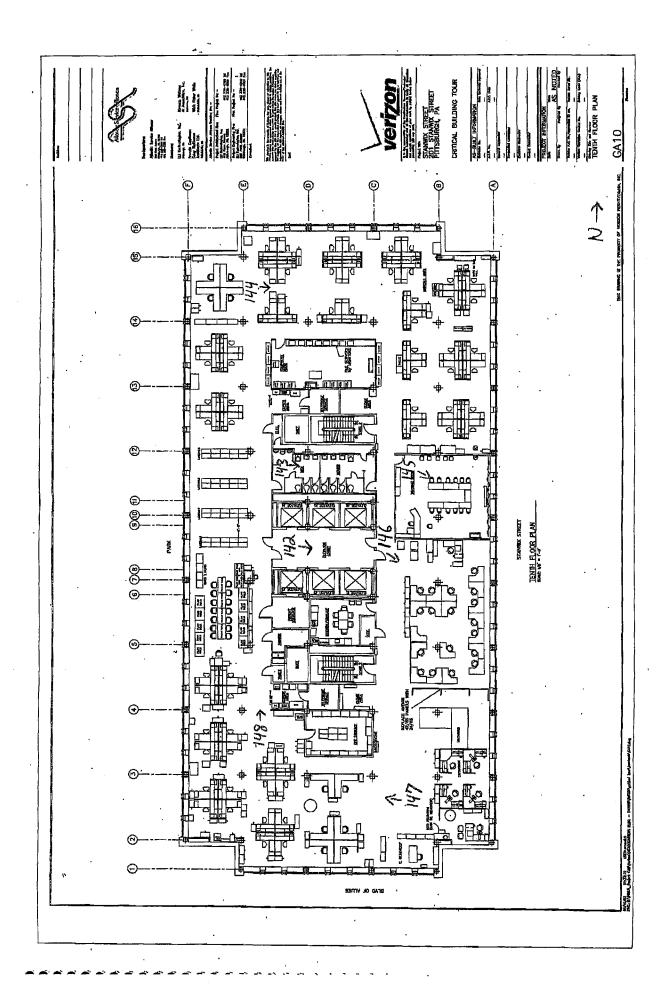


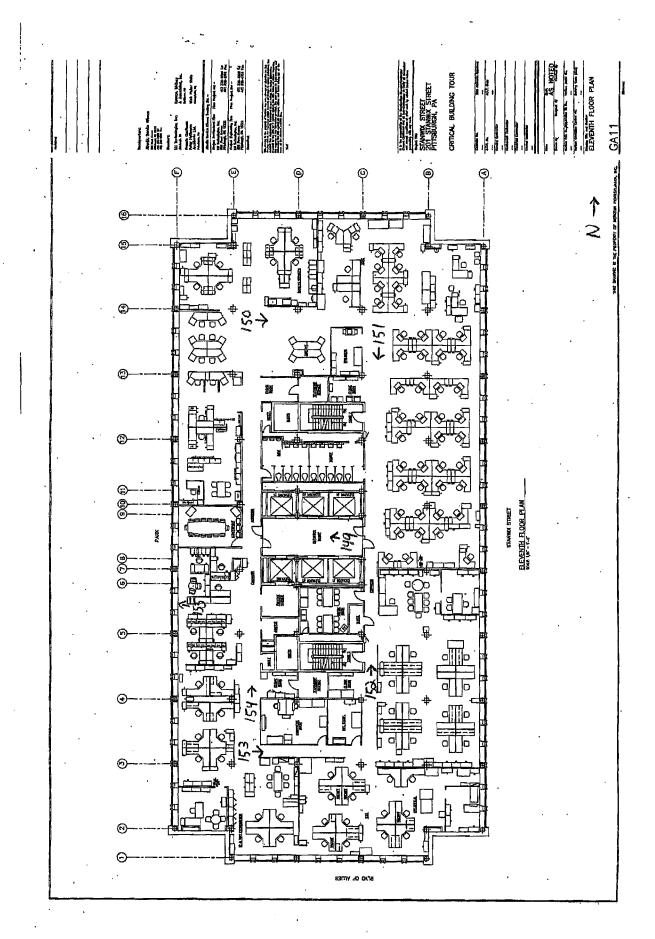




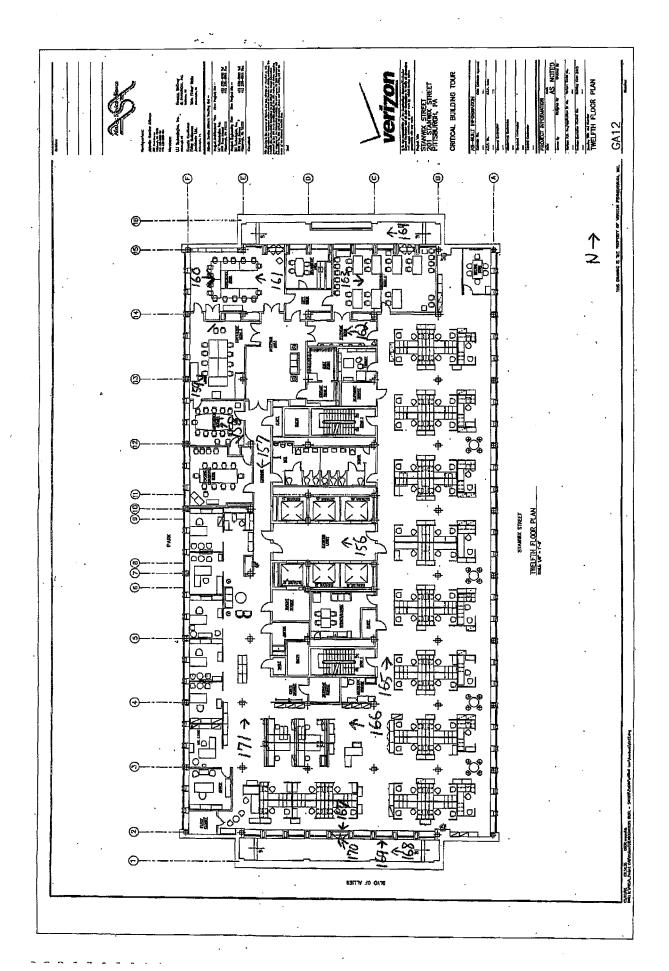
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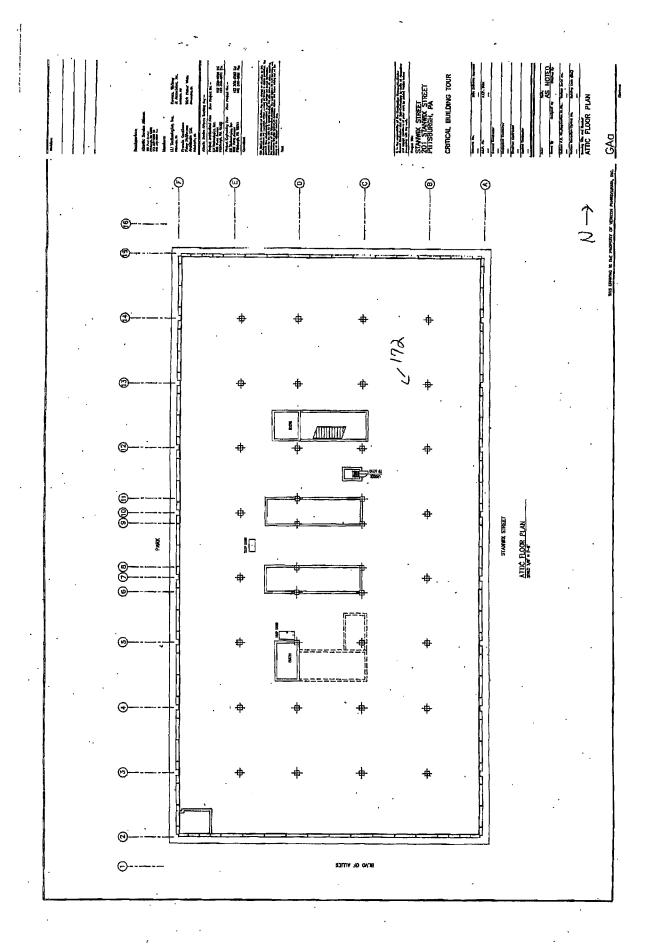


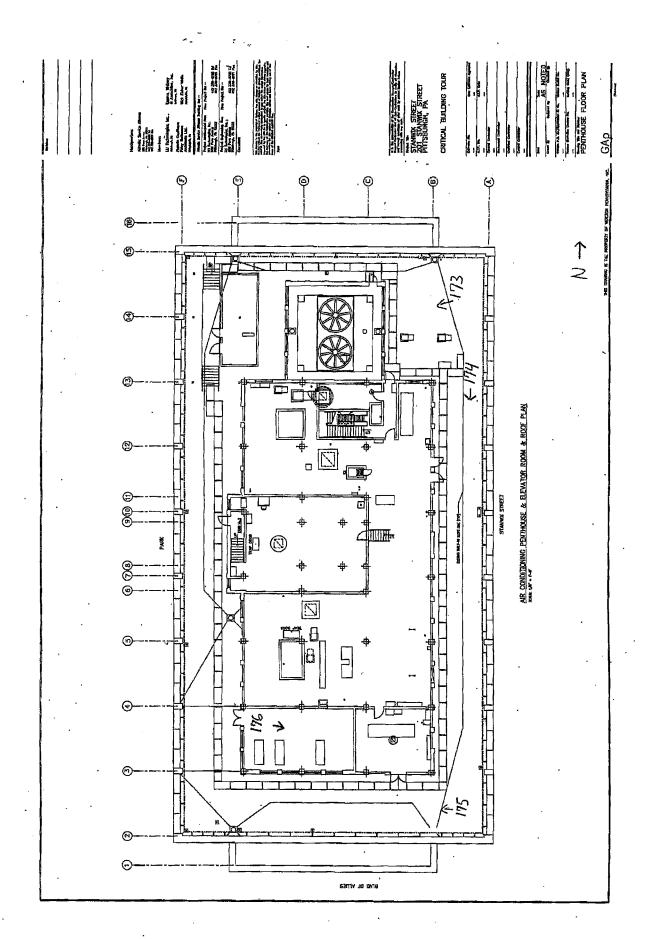


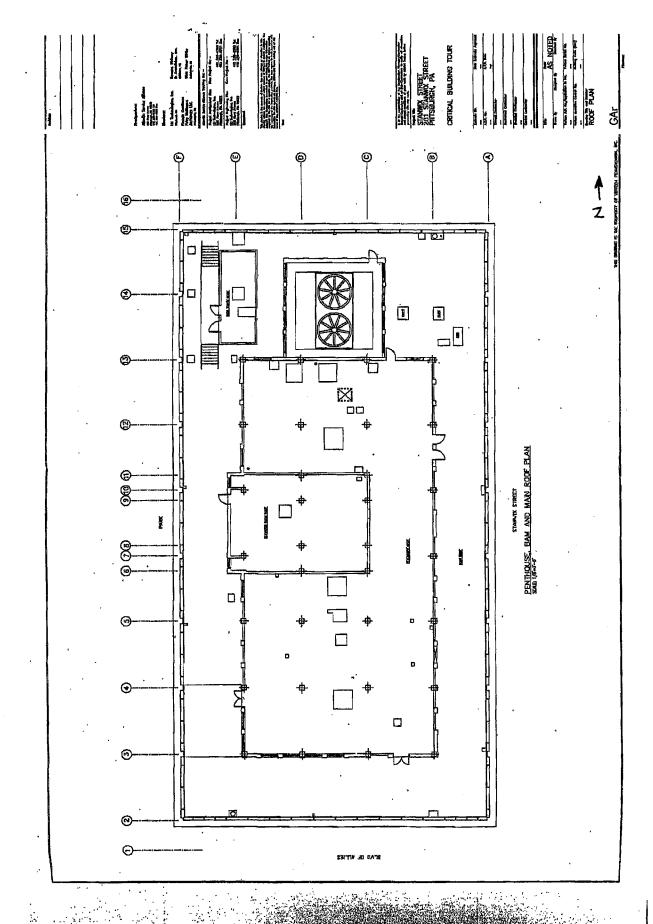


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