

Pioneer Arcade
1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HIBS No. CK-2025-2

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDING SURVEY
State Historic Preservation Office
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield, Illinois 62701

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDING SURVEY

Pioneer Arcade 1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road

HIBS No. CK-2025-2

- Location: 1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois
- The building is located at latitude 41.909238°N longitude 87.726129°W. This point was obtained on September 12, 2025, using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release.
- Present Owner: Hispanic Housing Development Corporation
- Present Use: Vacant
- Significance: The Pioneer Arcade at 1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road in Chicago, Illinois, was designed by Chicago architect Jens J. Jensen (1891-1969) and completed in 1925. The building, which was designated a Chicago Landmark in 2022, is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for local significance under National Register Criterion A in the area of Recreation/Entertainment for its associations with Chicago's early 20th-century leisure culture, and as a representation of the evolution of the games of bowling and billiards during this period. The building is also locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a fine example of Spanish Baroque Revival architecture in Chicago. The building's design is notable for the exuberant terra-cotta design work on its front façade.
- Historians: Emily Ramsey, Lara Ramsey, and John Cramer of Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc.
- Project Information: This project was undertaken in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 U.S.C. § 306108). This building was recorded as a stipulation of the Memorandum of Agreement among Hispanic Housing Development Corporation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the demolition, new construction, and partial rehabilitation of the building.

Part I: Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. *Date of construction:* 1924-1925
2. *Architect:* Jens J. Jensen
3. *Original and subsequent owners:*

Records from the Cook County Recorder of Deeds show that the parcel on which the building was constructed, which included Lots 12, 13, and 14 in Hosmer and Mackey's Subdivision, was deeded to Gust Regas, Spiros Regas, and Peter Danigeles on February 2, 1924. The three men retained ownership of the building until February 21, 1928, when they sold the property to Paul Krueger. However, research conducted by John Cramer indicates that the three men continued to be involved in the operation of the recreation center after the sale of the building. Title records appear to confirm this, showing a number of leases for the building between 1929 and 1932, including leases to the Regas brothers and Peter Danigeles and to William Goldhammer, who along with his brother Otto operated several West Side recreation centers in the 1920s. The landmark report for the Pioneer Arcade suggests that the Regas Brothers and Danigeles—who later formed the company Regas & Danis—operated the Pioneer Arcade in partnership with the Goldhammer Brothers, although how long this partnership lasted is unknown. The obituary published for Gust Regas in the October 21, 1986 edition of the *Chicago Tribune* states that Regas remained involved with the operation of the Pioneer Arcade until 1969, when he built a new bowling alley in Melrose Park.¹

Title records also show that the property was deeded to Kaliope Danigeles, wife of Peter Danigeles and sister to Gust and Spiros Regas, in September of 1935. The couple retained ownership of the property only for a short time, and the building is transferred via a quit claim deed to John L. Schunde in March of 1936. The property was transferred to several owners between 1945 and 1967, including Margaret A. Neely (1945-1956); Beatrice Klapman (1956-1960), and Elaine Somers, who deeded a half-interest in the property to Helen R. Keeper. Title records indicate that the property was owned by John A. Zaucha from the late 1960s through the late 1990s—Zaucha received a half-interest in the property from Helen Keeper in June of 1967, and documents from the late 1990s indicate that he gained ownership of

¹ Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Tract Book 102 (old), 18-19; "Gust Regas," *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 1986, Section 2, Page 11.

the remaining half interest sometime after that date. Title records also indicate that by 1998, ownership of the property had been transferred to Carlos and Felix Vazquez. In 2005, Felix Vazquez sold the property to Hispanic Housing Development Corporation, which remains the current owner.²

4. *Original and subsequent uses:* Bowling alley and billiard hall

5. *Builder, contractor, suppliers:* Neslo Wagstad Company³

6. *Original plans and construction:* Original plans have not been found for the building.

7. *Alterations and additions:* The Pioneer Arcade retains its original location along N. Pulaski Road, as well as its original massing. Exterior alterations to the Pioneer Arcade building are relatively minor. The building's impressive terra-cotta front façade remains largely intact – a small number of terra cotta pieces have been lost, including several “flames” that originally sat atop torches at the parapet and the north and south ends of the building; several balusters at the balustrade across the second-story windows at the north end of the façade; and the center keystone at the three-part window at the center of the façade. Lower sections of terra cotta around the storefronts have been painted, and graffiti covers sections of terra cotta at the second story. Other terra cotta elements are damaged, and pins and plates from previous signage are also evident.

The original storefront doors and windows have been replaced with aluminum windows, as have the original multi-light windows on the second story of the front façade, but the original openings remain intact. At the north, south, and east (rear) elevations, most window openings have been infilled or are boarded up.

More extensive alterations mark the interior of the building. The round arches that originally framed the three-part main entry to the building were removed at some point; although deteriorating, the plaster detailing at the arched openings that line the north and south walls of the main lobby are still evident. Openings underneath the arches, which provide access to the north and south retail spaces, have been altered with new windows and doors. The room retains its original beamed ceiling, which has been painted, and its original double-flight staircase with ornamental iron railings and newel posts. The north upper flight of the staircase has been walled off,

² Cook County Recorder of Deeds, online records (accessed September 12, 2025 at <https://crs.cookcountyclerk.il.gov/Search/ResultByPin?id1=16021000060000>).

³ Chicago Building Permit No. 92352, June 19, 1924.

but the south flight remains open, providing access to the second-floor bowling alley. Although historic mosaic tile remains on the treads and landings of the staircase, the square tiles on the floor of the lobby are a later alteration.

The north and south retail spaces retain little historic fabric. The building originally contained four separate storefronts. The south storefronts were combined into a single retail space in the 1930s, and the north storefronts were combined at a later date.⁴ Most finishes in the north retail space have been stripped, leaving exposed concrete on the floor of the space and sections of exposed brick wall. The south storefront is in a similar condition, with sections of the dropped ceiling and brick exterior wall exposed. Although largely obscured by debris, the square ceramic tile flooring is visible at the west end of the space – this flooring does not appear to be original, and likely dates from a mid-to-late 20th century remodeling. The L-shaped bar that extends from the north wall of the space also likely dates from a later remodeling.

The large billiard hall at the east end of the first floor was divided by a plaster partition wall sometime before 1936. More recent partitions enclose the east end of the room. The space retains historic strip wood floors and decorative brackets that mark the intersection of the oversized ceiling beams with the columns and exterior walls, but all other historic finishing in the space has been removed.

Although the plan of the space is original, very little historic fabric remains at the building's second-floor bowling alley level. Sections of the original mosaic tile flooring are still evident near the south staircase opening and may remain under carpeting at the west-end lounge area, and decorative brackets remain on the west columns, but the remainder of the space has been altered through subsequent remodelings. The northwest and southwest corner mezzanines, which were originally open to allow spectators to view the bowling lanes, have been enclosed for offices, and the staircases leading to the mezzanines have been replaced. The north flight of stairs leading to the second floor has been enclosed and the floor at the original opening leveled. The long counter that frames the three-part window at the center of the west wall is not historic, although it is in the same location as an original service counter in the center of the lounge area. The area east of the lounge containing the bowling alleys has been modernized – the ceiling was dropped, and the floor was raised to accommodate pin-setting machines.

⁴ John D. Cramer, "Health Factories and Palaces of Pleasure: Bowling, Billiards, and the Chicago 'Rec,' 1895-1929," (Master of Sciences Thesis, Art Institute of Chicago, 2011), 157.

The small third-floor level at the southeast corner of the building was not accessible during field work, and its current condition is unknown. The area historically housed locker rooms, showers, and storage space.

B. Historical Context:

[Note: Information included in this historic context statement is drawn primarily from *Health Factories and Palaces of Pleasure: Bowling, Billiards, and the Chicago 'Rec,' 1895-1929*, a thesis written by John Cramer in 2011 for the master of Science in Preservation Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and from the Chicago landmark designation report for the Pioneer Arcade building, prepared by Kandilyn Hahn and Matt Crawford of the Landmarks Division of the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development in 2022.]

Chicago's Humboldt Park Community and the North Avenue/Pulaski Road Commercial Area

The Pioneer Arcade is located in the Humboldt Park Community Area, one of over 75 community areas first established by the University of Chicago in 1920. The community area is roughly bound by Bloomingdale Avenue on the north; the Union Pacific railroad lines to the south; train lines running between Kostner Avenue and Cicero Avenue to the west, and Humboldt Park to the east. The building sits directly south of the intersection of Pulaski Road and North Avenue, which has historically served as a commercial hub for the neighborhood.

Before White settlement, the area that would later be Humboldt Park was part of the ancestral lands of several Native American tribes, including the Peoria, Bodwéwadmí (Potawatomi), Myaamia, Očhéthi Šakówiŋ, Kanskaskia, and Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo).⁵ By the mid-19th century, the area was dotted with small farms and settlements, and its proximity to Chicago made it attractive for annexation. In 1869, an act of the state legislature extended the city limits to North Avenue and Pulaski Road (formerly known as North 40th Avenue and Crawford Avenue)—that same year, architect William LeBaron Jenney began laying out the impressive park east of California Avenue, from which the neighborhood took its name. The creation of the park and the neighborhood's location just outside of the fire code limits established after the Great Fire of 1871 boosted development in the neighborhood, and annexations in the late 1880s extended its boundaries farther west.⁶

⁵ "Native Land Digital," accessed September 5, 2025 at [Native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca).

⁶ Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Kandilyn Hahn (project manager), research, writing, and layout; Matt Crawford, editing, "Pioneer Arcade, 1535-1545 North Pulaski Road, Final Landmark Recommendation Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks," December 8, 2022, 16.; Chicago Fact Book Consortium, *Local*

Improvements in the neighborhood's transportation infrastructure in the 1890s spurred more rapid development in the early 20th century. In 1895, the Humboldt Park branch of the Metropolitan elevated line was constructed to Lawndale Avenue, providing residents in the northern section of the neighborhood direct and rapid access to downtown. That same year, the North Avenue streetcar line was extended to Pulaski Road, and other lines expanded along Chicago Avenue, Grand Avenue, and Crawford Avenue in the first decades of the 20th century. By 1920, the population of Humboldt Park had swelled to over 65,000 and reached over 80,000 by 1930. Most of the earlier residents were German or Norwegian immigrants who had begun to move into the area in the late 19th century, but in the 1920s Italian, Polish and Russian Jewish immigrants also began to settle in the neighborhood in larger numbers.⁷

Although residents of Humboldt Park continued to frequent the more established commercial areas east of California Avenue, in the early 20th century the neighborhood developed its own commercial center along North Avenue. Commercial activity was especially robust at the “transfer nodes” of intersecting streetcar lines, and retail, service, and entertainment establishments proliferated at these intersections in the 1910s and 1920s.⁸ With the completion of the Crawford Avenue streetcar line in 1911, the intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road evolved into the central commercial hub of the Humboldt Park neighborhood. The Pioneer State Bank, which was founded in 1914, occupied a prominent position at the northwest corner of the intersection; after merging with another local bank in the mid-1920s, the new Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank constructed an impressive Classical Revival building at the same site, which still serves as an important landmark in Humboldt Park today.⁹ In addition to retail, service, and financial providers, the area around the intersection also boasted a number of entertainment and recreational facilities, including the Tiffin Theatre at 4045 W. North Avenue (demolished) and the Apollo Theatre, which was built in 1914 directly across from the Pioneer Arcade. South of the Apollo was a large two-story commercial building with a bowling and billiards hall on its second story – the building was one of three bowling alleys in Humboldt Park, including the Pioneer Arcade.¹⁰

Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1984), 59.

⁷ *Local Community Fact Book*, 59; Rand McNally and Company, *The Rand McNally New Standard Map of Chicago* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1913).

⁸ Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 16

⁹ Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Matt Crawford, research, writing, photography, and layout; Terry Tatum, editing; Eleanor Esser Gorski, editing, “(Former) Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank Building, 4000 W. North Ave., Final Landmark Recommendation Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks,” April 5, 2012, 3-4.

¹⁰ Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 17.

In the decades following World War II, the neighborhood's European immigrants were replaced with new immigrant populations from Puerto Rico and Mexico, as well as African Americans moving north and west from other parts of the city. Today, the area surrounding the Pioneer Arcade remains the commercial center of the Humboldt Park neighborhood, and its businesses continue to serve the local community.

The Evolution of Bowling and Billiards in the Early 20th Century and the Rise of Commercial Recreation Centers in Chicago

The opening of the Pioneer Arcade in the mid-1920s signaled the culmination of a dramatic shift in perception surrounding the games of bowling and billiards in Chicago and throughout the country that had begun at the turn of the 20th century. The full evolution of the games away from their association with drinking and vice and toward a more family-friendly reputation was enabled in large part by the development of commercial recreation centers like the Pioneer Arcade in the late 1910s and 1920s, which brought bowling and billiards out of local taverns and into dedicated, respectable spaces that could accommodate a diverse array of working- and middle-class players and conform to standards established by the sports' newly-created governing bodies. Taking inspiration from grand movie palaces and upscale athletic clubs, recreation centers like the Pioneer Arcade often featured richly ornamented interiors and amenities for players.

Bowling in the United States can trace its roots back to the medieval games of skittles and bowls, in which pins were knocked down with a ball thrown across a lawn of closely-cropped grass. A similar game, called *kegling*, was played throughout Germany and brought to America by German immigrants. Like bowling, billiards also developed out of medieval lawn games, but quickly evolved into an indoor sport, with balls maneuvered on a cloth-covered table with wooden cues. The game, which gained favor with the French nobility in the 15th century and spread to other countries in Europe in the 16th century, was generally played only by the upper-class in America until the nineteenth century, when mass-produced billiard tables made it a more affordable pastime. By the late 19th- century, both bowling and billiards were popular indoor pursuits for both the wealthy and working-class in Chicago and other urban centers.¹¹

Most of America's urban upper-class bowled and played billiards in lavish private athletic clubs, which provided a place for wealthy men to socialize and participate in a range of athletic and leisure activities in finely-appointed surroundings. The Chicago Athletic Association (C.A.A.), founded in 1890 and the most prominent of the city's athletic clubs, boasted elite businessmen like Marshall Field and Cyrus McCormick among its members. In 1893, the club commissioned architect Henry Ives Cobb, who was a member, to design

¹¹ Cramer, 29-30.

an impressive Venetian Gothic Revival-style club building on Michigan Avenue. In addition to a gymnasium with a suspended running track, indoor swimming pool, and indoor racquet ball courts, the building also included an eight-lane bowling alley and shooting gallery in the basement and a twenty-six-table billiard room that adjoined the lounge on the second floor.¹²

In contrast to the opulent surroundings of the athletic club, Chicago's working-class bowled and played billiards in ethno-centric clubs like German Turnvereins, in Y.M.C.A.'s, in dedicated billiard halls, and, most frequently, in neighborhood saloons. Through the late 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th century, the saloon was a fixture of urban life—a 1905 survey of Chicago conducted by the Committee of Fifty, a Progressive-Era organization formed to investigate issues surrounding the abuse of alcohol in America, found that approximately half of the city's population visited a saloon on any given day.¹³ While downtown saloons catered to largely to businessmen, neighborhood saloons served a much broader social function, acting as the de facto "workingman's club" and often loosely organized around ethnic, political, or job affiliation. In addition to a drink at the bar, a saloon patron could also get a free lunch, read the paper, play cards, handball, or billiards, or cash his paycheck. Some saloons offered furnished rooms, and many hosted political or social meetings and family events including wedding and funeral receptions. In his study of the saloons of Chicago in 1900, sociologist Royal Melendy called the saloon "the social and intellectual center of the neighborhood," noting as a typical example a saloon on Armitage Avenue, which boasted "a bowling-alley, billiard tables, and club-rooms, in which nonpartisan political meetings were held during last spring's campaign. It is also offered to the people for various neighborhood meetings. In such a room a gay wedding party celebrated the marriage vow. It is, in very truth, a part of the life of the people of this district."¹⁴

Occupying a social space somewhere in between the athletic club and neighborhood saloon were the bars of Chicago's "Billiards Row," which stretched west along Madison Avenue from Michigan Avenue. These establishments catered to the emerging population of downtown office workers and took inspiration from the athletic clubs of the city's elite, while providing affordable food, drink and entertainment. Billiard halls and bowling alleys were standard recreational offerings in the bars of Billiards Row, and many also offered other services and club-like features, including in-house barbers and reading rooms.¹⁵

¹² Edward W. Wolner, *Henry Ives Cobb's Chicago: Architecture, Institutions, and the Making of a Modern Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 163-164.

¹³ Jon M. Kingsdale, "The 'Poor Man's Club': Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Oct. 1973), 473.

¹⁴ Royal Melendy, "The Saloon in Chicago," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Nov. 1900), 294-5.

¹⁵ Cramer, 42.

As bowling and billiards become more popular in the last years of the 19th century, both upper- and working-class players often held informal competitions among existing clubs and other fraternal or social organizations. The evolution into more formal competition in both sports was hampered, however, by the lack of uniform rules and equipment. Billiard halls and saloons offered multiple iterations of cue sports, including carom billiards, pool, and snooker, with variations in the size of the table and the sizes and weights of the balls and cues. Bowling as a sport was similarly unregulated, with differing lengths and widths of bowling lanes and variations in the size of bowling balls.¹⁶

The organization and regulation of bowling came first, with the formation of the American Bowling Congress in 1895. Founded by bowling enthusiasts from New York and the Midwest, the congress established regulations for the sport, including alley width and length and rules of play. These new regulations provided the uniformity necessary for competitions, which helped to further popularize the sport in Chicago and other cities. By 1901, Chicago boasted thirty bowling leagues and was host to the first modern bowling tournament in the United States.¹⁷ Chicago formed its first league under the new organization the following year, and by 1901 the city boasted thirty leagues.¹⁸ The movement to regulate billiards was less formal, and the sport did not form a national governing body until the founding of the National Billiard Association in 1921.¹⁹

Instrumental to the push to regulate bowling and billiards was Moses Bensinger, president of the Brunswick Balke Collender Company (also known as the Brunswick Company), a Chicago firm that was the largest manufacturer of indoor sports equipment in the world. The company had been founded as J. M. Brunswick & Brothers by Bensinger's father-in-law John Moses Brunswick in the mid-1840s and expanded through a series of mergers in the 1870s. At the time of Brunswick's death in 1886, the company controlled every major market associated with billiard equipment in the United States. Bensinger was appointed company president in 1890, and under his leadership Brunswick expanded its line to include bar equipment and bowling equipment.²⁰ Bensinger actively lobbied local bowling and billiard hall owners to reorganize their operations to comply with the new standardized regulations and equipment and encouraged them to organize to bring more players to the sports.²¹

The rise of billiards and bowling as organized, competitive sports coincided with a growing temperance movement in the United States, which viewed saloons as dens of vice that

¹⁶ Pioneer Arcade Landmark report, 11.

¹⁷ Cramer, 76-77.

¹⁸ Pioneer Arcade Landmark report, 11.

¹⁹ Ibid, 13.

²⁰ Cramer, 49-52.

²¹ Ibid, 72.

damaged the family structure and the moral fabric of the country. Even before the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which established the prohibition of alcohol in the United States, bowling and billiards had begun to expand beyond the local saloon or athletic club; the city's Turnvereins and YMCAs had provided facilities for a wide variety of athletic and recreational pursuits for decades, and by the early 20th century these sports were also played in public field houses, industrial clubhouses, and union clubs.

Even with this expansion of the sports outside of the neighborhood saloon, temperance supporters and many in the broader public associated bowling and billiards with drinking, gambling, and vice. The billiard halls along West Madison Street, which had expanded into grand multi-story operations in the 1890s and 1900s, still served alcohol on the premises, and although their operations were like those of the elite athletic clubs, many in the temperance movement viewed their activities—and their working-class immigrant patrons—with suspicion.

In 1915, the Chicago Bowling and Billiards Protective League (CBBPL) was founded to combat temperance and anti-gambling forces in the city and improve the reputation of bowling and billiards as family-friendly activities. The League's executive committee included prominent billiard hall owners Louis Bensinger and W. P. Mussey and Illinois Bowling Association president Frank L. Pasdeloup.²² Each member of the CBBPL pledged under the organization's by-laws to "conduct his bowling alley or billiard hall in an orderly and unobjectionable manner," and in return received legal and political support. In addition to advocating for its members, the league also hosted large bowling and billiard tournaments in the city to increase the visibility of the sports.²³

While the creation of national and local regulatory bodies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries helped to legitimize bowling and billiards, the construction of larger, increasing lavish bowling and billiard halls during this same period also helped to draw a wider audience to the sports. In the late 1890s, W. P. Mussey opened a grand six-story billiard hall on Billiard Row that was purported to be the largest in the world. The facility boasted nearly 50 billiard tables and 17 bowling alleys, as well as a restaurant, barber shop, and reading room. Mussey was an early advocate for billiards and bowling as wholesome, healthy pastimes, arguing in an advertisement for his billiard hall in the 1913 edition of *Bowlers Journal* that both were "the ideal exercise."²⁴ In 1919, Mussey retired and sold his business to Louis A. and Norman Bensinger, brothers of Brunswick president Moses Bensinger. At the time of the sale, Louis Bensinger had become the most successful bowling and billiard room operator in Chicago. Beginning with a small one-story

²² Ibid, 81-82.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *Bowlers Journal*, November 8, 1913, 3.

establishment on Randolph Street in 1899, Bensinger expanded his operations through the first two decades of the 20th century, and by the time of his death in 1928 operated seven bowling and billiard halls scattered throughout downtown Chicago. Like Mussey, Bensinger also emphasized the health benefits of bowling and billiards as a way of deflecting criticism from the temperance and anti-gambling leagues, advertising his billiard halls and bowling alleys as “health factories.”²⁵

When Prohibition went into effect in 1920, it effectively severed the connection between bowling and billiards and the saloon. While most of the large downtown billiard halls survived the transition, the back-room bowling alleys and billiard tables of neighborhood taverns did not, and commercial recreation centers were constructed along commercial thoroughfares in residential neighborhoods throughout the city in the 1920s to fill the gap. Taking their cues from other entertainment venues like movie palaces and commercial ballrooms, which combined elaborate interior and exterior design with the latest in creature comforts, the owners of the new commercial recreation centers commissioned architects to create eye-catching façades and ornate, climate-controlled interiors. In addition to a larger number of billiard tables and bowling lanes, the most successful commercial recreation centers in the city also provided other amenities similar to those of the athletic club or downtown billiard hall, including restaurants, lounges, barber shops and cigar stores, and spectator galleries above bowling lanes where visitors could watch the action below. Some of the larger commercial recs even included indoor golf courses and dancing halls.²⁶ These new rec centers also boasted the most up-to-date bowling and billiard equipment, almost always purchased from the Brunswick Company.²⁷

Pioneer Arcade Building History

The Pioneer Arcade was constructed in 1924-1925 for brothers Gust and Spiros Regas and their brother-in-law Peter Danigeles. The three men had all been born in Greece and had immigrated to the United States as teenagers just after the turn of the 20th century. All three had also worked as shoe shiners in various bowling and billiard halls before establishing their own shoeshine parlors in the 1910s.²⁸ Hoping to capitalize on the exploding popularity of bowling and billiards in Chicago, in February 1924 the trio purchased a parcel of land just south of the rapidly-developing intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road with the intent of building a commercial recreation center.²⁹ They hired local architect Jens J. Jensen to design an elaborately ornamented two-story building with an extravagant

²⁵ Cramer 89-91; 93-94.

²⁶ Pioneer Arcade Landmark report, 1

²⁷ Cramer, 120-121.

²⁸ Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 1

²⁹ Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Tract Book 102 (old), 18-19.

Spanish Baroque Revival façade, first-floor billiard hall, and double-height second-floor bowling alley.³⁰

Contractors Neslo Wagstad began construction on the building, named the “Pioneer Arcade,” in June of 1924. In an article on the new building published on June 22, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Pioneer Arcade would be “one of the most elaborate recreation buildings in the city,” and provided a detailed description of the building:

The entire façade of the building will be of ivory terra cotta in elaborate Spanish design. There'll be four shops on the ground floor, the remainder of the building being devoted to recreation rooms.

The main floor lobby will lead directly into the billiard room which will have thirty-five tables. A broad tile staircase, with ornamental railings, will connect the lobby with the main lounge for both men and women, which will extend across the entire front of the building.

There'll be twenty bowling alleys adjoining the lounge with spectators' platforms to accommodate 600 at one time. The third floor will be given over to locker rooms, store rooms and special rest rooms and showers.

A mechanical ventilating system throughout the building is promised and it is presumed this means a cooling system for summer.³¹

The Pioneer Arcade was completed in March 1925. Although the building did not initially have a dedicated restaurant attached to its bowling alley or billiard hall, the owners leased one of the four retail spaces to a lunch counter called the “Arcade Lunch Room.” A barber named Peter Rousos leased another storefront in the building, adding a common amenity provided by other larger billiard halls and commercial recreation centers. Sometime before 1936, Gust Regas combined the south-end retail spaces into a new lunch room and cigar vendor, which was accessible from the building's main lobby.³²

Jensen's design for the interior spaces provided a lavish backdrop for its recreational uses. The main entrance lobby, with its arcaded openings, beamed ceiling, and Baroque-inspired double-flight staircase, was meant to evoke a 17th-century Spanish salon. The billiard hall at the rear of the first floor contained north-facing windows that bathed the hall in natural light and was large enough for thirty-five billiard tables. The north section of the hall was separated from the rest of the hall sometime before 1936 and may have housed indoor golf games.³³ The bowling alley upstairs featured a lounge that stretched along its west end,

³⁰ “Start Work on \$350,000 Bldg. for Recreation,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1924, Part 2, Page 15.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Cramer, 157.

³³ Ibid, 158.

with raised spectator galleries at the northwest and southwest corners from which visitors could view the play along the alley's twenty lanes.

The Pioneer Arcade was an immediate success, becoming a social and recreational fixture in the Humboldt Park Neighborhood. The recreation center hosted a variety of bowling and billiards competitions for local leagues and clubs throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. In the 1930s, the Pioneer Arcade also served as the "home room" of Allen Hall, who was a Three-cushion Billiard World Championship Finalist in 1931.³⁴

Although the Regas brothers and Peter Danigeles sold the Pioneer Arcade building to Paul Krueger in 1928, the trio continued to operate the recreation center under the company Regas & Danis.³⁵ The company later partnered with brothers Otto and William Goldhammer, although it is unclear how long the two groups operated the Pioneer Arcade together. In 1932, Gust, Spiros, and Peter, along with their wives, purchased the 1500-seat Apollo Theater across the street from the Pioneer Arcade, and operated it under the Apollo Building Corporation.³⁶ Gust continued to have ties with the Pioneer until 1969, when he built and operated another bowling alley in Melrose Park.³⁷

The Pioneer Arcade continued to operate under various owners as a commercial bowling and billiard hall until 2005, when it was sold to Hispanic Housing Development Corporation.

Jens J. Jensen, Architect of the Pioneer Arcade

The Pioneer Arcade was designed by Jens J. Jensen (1891-1969), a Danish-born architect who practiced in Chicago from 1915 until his retirement in 1961. Jensen immigrated with his family to Chicago around the turn of the 20th century and attended Chicago's Lewis Institute before undergoing an apprenticeship with architect Francis M. Barton. In 1915, Jensen founded his own architecture firm; in the mid-1920s, he partnered with Greek-American developer Geroge W. Prassas to design several block-sized multi-use developments in neighborhoods throughout Chicago's North and Northwest sides. In the late 1920s, Jensen designed two significant commercial buildings in Chicago – the 300 West Adams Loop office building (1927), and the Guyon Hotel at 4000 W. Washington Street (1928).³⁸

³⁴ Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 12; "Hall Beats Reiselt Twice in Title Billiards Meet," *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1939, 30.

³⁵ "Pioneer Arcade Changes Hands for \$250,000," *Chicago Tribune*, April 22, 1928, 40.

³⁶ "Lease Hyde Park Corner," *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1932, 28.

³⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, October 21, 1986, Section 2, Page 11.

³⁸ "Our Legacy," Jensen & Jensen website (accessed September 10, 2025 at <https://jensen-jensen.com/history/>); Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 9.

After ending his collaboration with Prassas in 1929, Jensen later partnered with the Charles L. Schrager Company, the developers of Jewel Food Stores in Chicago. From the 1930s through the 1950s, Jensen worked almost exclusively with Schrager, designing Jewel supermarkets across the Chicagoland area.³⁹

In 1955, Jensen's son Jens J. Jensen, Jr., who had studied architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, joined the firm, which became Jensen & Jensen. Six years later, Jens Jensen Sr. retired and later moved to Arizona, where he died in 1969.⁴⁰ The firm of Jensen & Jensen continues to operate out of its office in Oak Brook, Illinois, and is currently headed by Jarrett J. Jensen, Jens J. Jensen's grandson.

Spanish Baroque Revival Style

The Pioneer Arcade is a fine example of the Spanish Baroque Revival style, one of a plethora of historic revival styles that marked the building boom of the 1920s in the United States. Marked by elaborate and varied ornamentation and rich materials, Spanish Baroque architecture flourished under the support of the Roman Catholic Church in the 17th and early 18th centuries and was brought to the Americas through Spanish colonial settlement. In Spain, the style reached its most exuberant phase under architect and sculptor José Benito de Churriguera (1665-1725) and his brothers Joaquin (1674-1724) and Alberto (1676-1750). The Churriguera family were known for their floridly decorated buildings and altar pieces, and their work ushered in a phase of Baroque architecture in Spain that was later called "Churrigueresque." Churrigueresque buildings often featured twisted or "Solomonic" columns and an encrustation of ornamental detailing that left no surface untouched.⁴¹

In the Spanish settlements of what would later become the American West and Southwest, the influence of the Spanish Baroque was limited to the restrained ornamentation on otherwise plain mission churches; however, the revival of the style in the late 1910s and early 1920s, ushered in by architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's designs for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, fully embraced the exuberance of the Spanish Baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries. The extravagant ornament that was characteristic of the style could easily and economically be reproduced using terra cotta, and by the 1920s Spanish Baroque Revival had become a popular choice for the lavish movie palaces and ballrooms of Chicago and other large cities in the United States. Other well-known examples of the style in the city are the Uptown Theatre at 4816 N. Broadway, designed

³⁹ Pioneer Arcade Landmark Report, 9.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pioneer Arcade Landmark report, 7.

by theater architects Rapp & Rapp and completed in 1925; and the Aragon Ballroom at 1106 W. Lawrence Avenue, designed by Huszagh & Hill and completed in 1926.⁴²

Part II: Architectural Information

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character:

The Pioneer Arcade, designed by architect Jens J. Jensen and completed in 1925, is a notable example of a commercial recreation center, a building type that proliferated throughout Chicago neighborhoods in the 1920s and served as local entertainment and social centers after the widespread closure of neighborhood saloons due to Prohibition. The Pioneer Arcade is one of the most elaborate and well-preserved of the extant recreation centers in Chicago, and retains its ornate main lobby, first-floor billiard hall, and second-floor bowling alley. The building is also one of only a handful of large-scale commercial buildings around the intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road that formed the center of the Humboldt Park neighborhood's thriving business district in the 1920s.

The Pioneer Arcade is also an excellent and rare example of the Spanish Baroque Revival style in Chicago. Its elaborate street-facing façade is clad in exuberant terra-cotta ornament that is characteristic of the style, and includes an arcaded frieze and detailed parapet wall with extended torches; a diamond-shaped diaper pattern on the walls around the windows; twisted columns at the corners of the façade and the sides of the central bay; and a profusion of classical detailing (including garlands, medallions, and acanthus leaves), shell-shaped elements, and cartouches. The style is also expressed through the three-part arcaded window in the center bay, as well as through the arcaded round wall arches, beamed ceiling, and dramatic double-flight staircase with twisted iron railings in the main entrance lobby on the interior.

2. Condition of Fabric:

The overall condition of the building is fair. The exterior architectural elements are intact with minor alterations limited to replacement windows and doors, set within the original openings. Some terra-cotta elements on the façade are missing or damaged, and graffiti covers sections of the façade and secondary elevations. Windows on the secondary elevations have also been infilled.

⁴² Ibid, 7-9.

In comparison to the exterior, the condition of many of the building's interior spaces is poor. The entrance lobby retains the historic main staircase, round arches along the north and south walls, and some decorative plasterwork, but elements of the staircase are deteriorating and other historic finishes in the space have been replaced. Both the north and south storefronts have been partially gutted, and no historic features remain. Although their historic plans remain largely intact, the rear billiard hall and second-floor bowling alley retain very few historic finishes.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions:

The Pioneer Arcade is a rectangular, two-story building with a very small, rectangular third-story room at the southeast corner. The building is constructed to the lot line on all sides and measures approximately 96'-0" along its east and west elevations and approximately 123'-4" long along its north and south elevations. The overall height of the building is approximately 46'-3" tall from the sidewalk to the highest point of the parapet wall at the west elevation, and approximately 36'-0" tall at the north and south elevations.

2. Foundations:

The foundation of the building is concrete.

3. Exterior Walls:

The primary west exterior wall is clad in ivory, cream, and tan-colored terra cotta with Spanish Baroque terra-cotta ornament. The secondary north, south, and east elevations are clad in Chicago common brick laid in common bond, with Flemish bond at every sixth course.

West (Front) Elevation

The west (front) elevation is clad entirely in terra cotta and divided into three bays, framed by flat piers at the first story and decorative columns at the second story. The second story is taller than the first, as it was designed to accommodate mezzanine seating along the inside of the building's west wall. Polygonal Corinthian columns frame entries and storefronts at the sidewalk. Above the columns, terra-cotta-clad lintels with designs of garlands, medallions, and acanthus leaves span each bay. The slightly protruding form above each column capital has a center rosette with consoles at each side. An intermediate cornice delineates the

first from the second floor. The terra-cotta throughout the first story has been painted.

The second floor has a narrow central bay that houses three elongated, arched window openings. The terra-cotta balconette that originally extended along the base of these windows has been removed, exposing the simple terra-cotta panels behind. The center bay is framed by twisted engaged columns with Ionic capitals. The shafts of these capitals are embossed with a decorative grapevine pattern. Each arched window opening is recessed within an ornate surround—the concave jambs feature foliate ornament, set within a molded frame topped by a scrolled keystone. The ornamental lintel above the arched window openings also features a molded frame that curves around two small cartouches inscribed with the letter “P.” The center bay is topped by an ornamented parapet that features a molded cornice, a band of foliate ornament, and a central aedicula niche with broken pediment.

The longer end bays flanking the central bay each house a central rectangular window opening with terra-cotta balconette. A band of foliate and medallion panels extends between the balconettes. Each window opening is set within an ornamental surround with engaged Composite order columns at the jambs, supporting a lintel with a geometric frieze and molded cornice topped by a central cartouche and flanking torches. The wall surface on these bays features a uniform diaper pattern. An arcaded cornice topped by a parapet with extended torches creates a dramatic crown flanking the central bay.

North Elevation

The north elevation, facing the alley, is seven structural bays long and clad in Chicago common brick laid in common bond. A metal fire escape is located near the west end of this elevation.

South Elevation

The south elevation is seven structural bays long and clad in Chicago common brick laid in common bond.

East (Rear) Elevation

The east (rear) elevation is three structural bays long and clad in Chicago common brick laid in common bond. A metal fire escape is located south of center on this elevation.

4. Structural system, framing:

The structural system of the building features load bearing exterior masonry walls on the concrete foundation. The second floor is wood frame structure supported by wood posts. The roof of the building is supported by a wood truss system.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:

As noted under B.3 above, the west elevation features terra-cotta balconettes under windows on west elevation, with scrolled end brackets and turned balustrades.

6. Chimneys:

A square brick chimney extends above the roofline at the northeast corner of the building.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

West Elevation

The primary entrance to the building is located at the center of the west elevation and consists of three non-historic aluminum and glass double doors with large single-light transoms set within the original door openings. These doors are boarded up with plywood on the exterior.

The non-historic aluminum and glass storefronts within the original openings on the north and south bays of the west elevation house non-historic single-leaf aluminum frame glass doors. These storefronts are boarded up with plywood on the exterior.

North Elevation

On the north elevation, a non-historic hollow metal door is located near the west end of the second story, providing access to the fire escape.

South Elevation

A single doorway with non-historic hollow metal door is located just west of center on the south elevation.

East (rear) Elevation

The east elevation houses several secondary entrances. Near the north end of the elevation are two pedestrian entrances in punched openings, with non-historic doors that are covered on the exterior with plywood. Immediately south of these doors is a larger loading entrance, which has been partially infilled with brick. The lower portion of the opening is infilled with plywood and blocked by a security gate. Near the center of the elevation, hollow metal doors on the upper floors provide access to the fire escape. A third pedestrian entrance is located at ground level just south of the fire escape, with a painted metal fire door.

b. Windows and shutters:

West Elevation

The central bay of the west elevation houses an arcade of three tall, round-arch window openings. The windows themselves are non-historic replacement windows with single fixed lower panes and large single-paned transoms.

The rectangular window openings at the center of the two end bays house three-part windows with transoms. The wood framing in these openings is original, but the windows themselves are non-historic.

North Elevation

Four large, rectangular window openings with brick lintels and concrete sills are situated on the first story of the north elevation, set back from the west corner. The openings have been infilled with brick.

South Elevation

Five rectangular window openings with brick lintels and concrete sills are located along the first story of the south elevation, set back from the west corner. These openings have been infilled with brick.

East (rear) Elevation

One small metal casement window remains on the first story of the east elevation, near the northeast corner of the building. Larger rectangular window openings on the first, second, and third stories feature brick lintels

and concrete sills. All of these window openings have been infilled with brick.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The roof is flat at the west end with a rectangular non-historic enclosure containing HVAC equipment set back substantially from the tall, front parapet. East of the pop-up are two large skylights. The eastern two-thirds of the roof is slightly sloped with dual barrel shapes projecting above the parapets, one on the north half and one on the south half.

b. Cornice, eaves:

As described under B.3 above, the west parapet ornamental terra-cotta features and ornamental terra-cotta cornice with a central aedicula niche with broken pediment. The brick parapets on the north, south, and west walls are capped by clay tile copings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

First Floor

The center west entrance to the building opens into the main entrance lobby. An open, double-flight stair on the east wall of the lobby leads to the second floor. North and south of the lobby are retail spaces. Arched doorways on either side of the center stair lead to short passageways that connect to the billiard room, a large, open space that occupies the remainder of the first floor. A small storage room is located under the center stair landing between these passageways, accessed on each side by single doors. The north end of the billiard room was separated from the rest of the original room with partition wall sometime before 1936. The east end of the billiard room is enclosed with non-historic partitions.

Second Floor

The second floor of the building is largely open and houses a bowling alley. Mezzanines at the northwest and southwest corners of the floor, which were

originally open to allow spectators to view the bowling lanes, have been enclosed for use as offices, and the staircases to the mezzanines are non-historic replacements. At the southwest corner below the mezzanine level, a short hallway provides access to two small offices; a restroom and storage closet are located under the northwest corner mezzanine. A non-historic glass brick and wood counter is located near the west wall at the center bay.

Third Floor

The small third floor at the southeast end of the building, which originally housed locker rooms and a fan room based on historic Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, was not accessible at the time of the consultant's site visit.

2. Stairways:

A double-flight stair is located on the east wall of the lobby, connecting to the second-floor bowling alley. The metal stair features painted ornamental balustrades and square, paneled newel posts with ornamental caps. The painted metal risers have a simple panel detail, and the treads are white and tan mosaic tile with red and green accents.

3. Flooring

First Floor

The flooring in the lobby is non-historic ceramic tile. The south retail space has non-historic unglazed ceramic tile flooring. In the north retail space, there is no finished floor, and the concrete subfloor is exposed. The passageways between the lobby and billiard room have historic mosaic tile flooring, laid in a checkerboard pattern. The billiard room has strip wood flooring, which is covered with non-historic flooring in some areas.

Second Floor

The floor throughout most of the second-floor bowling alley has been raised above the original floor level to accommodate pin-setting and ball-return machines. The flooring is primary strip wood flooring. Sections of mosaic tile flooring in an identical pattern to the flooring on the treads of the main staircase are visible at the west end of the floor near the staircase opening, but most of the western side of the floor is covered with carpeting.

4. Wall and ceiling finishes:

First Floor

The first-floor lobby has painted plaster walls and ceilings with painted ornamental plasterwork, which is described below, under C.6.b. On the north and south walls, non-historic openings within the arched recesses house non-historic windows, doors, and infill.

The perimeter walls and historic ceilings of the retail spaces are largely painted plaster over structure, in poor condition. Non-historic partition walls are painted drywall. A wood framed dropped ceiling was installed in the south retail space, and the finished ceiling on this structure has been largely removed.

The walls and ceilings in the passageways between the lobby and billiard room are painted plaster. The ceilings are arched with wide painted moldings on the north and south sides.

The walls in the billiard room are painted plaster. The ceilings are painted plaster, with painted plaster beams supported by square plaster columns with plaster modillions. The non-historic partitions and dropped ceilings at the east end of the billiard room are painted drywall.

Second Floor

The walls throughout the second floor appear to be non-historic painted drywall. Ceilings on the west side of the floor primarily non-historic dropped ceilings covered in painted drywall. Over the bowling lanes, the dropped ceiling is clad in acoustic tile.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

First Floor

In the main lobby, non-historic doors in non-historic openings on the north and south walls lead to the adjacent retail spaces. Doors in the retail spaces are also non-historic.

At the passageways connecting the lobby and billiard room, historic painted paneled wood doors in painted wood frames open into the small storage area under the stair landing.

There are no historic interior doors in the billiard room.

Second Floor

There are no historic interior doors on the second floor.

6. Decorative features and trim:

First Floor

The first-floor lobby features decorative Classical Revival plaster ornament on the walls and ceiling. The north and south walls are divided into three equal bays, each with a round-arched blind opening. Each arch is decorated by a foliate and medallion molding and supported by ornate corbels. Non-historic doors and windows have been inserted below the arches. Although the wall surfaces are deteriorated and in poor condition, it appears that the flat plaster walls were scored to mimic ashlar stone. The ceiling in the lobby is a decorative beamed ceiling supported by corbels.

The billiard room is largely unornamented, except for plaster corbels at each of the columns. The plaster surface of the columns and walls appear to originally have been scored to mimic ashlar stone.

Second Floor

The second-floor billiard room was remodeled at some point and retains no decorative features or trim.

D. Site

1. General Setting, Orientation, and Description:

The Pioneer Arcade is located on a rectangular lot just south of the intersection of West North Avenue and North Pulaski Road. The building is built to the lot line on all sides. The west elevation faces North Pulaski Road and fronts onto a concrete sidewalk. The building is bound on the north and east side by service alleys. A vacant lot is located directly south of the building.

Part III: Sources of Information

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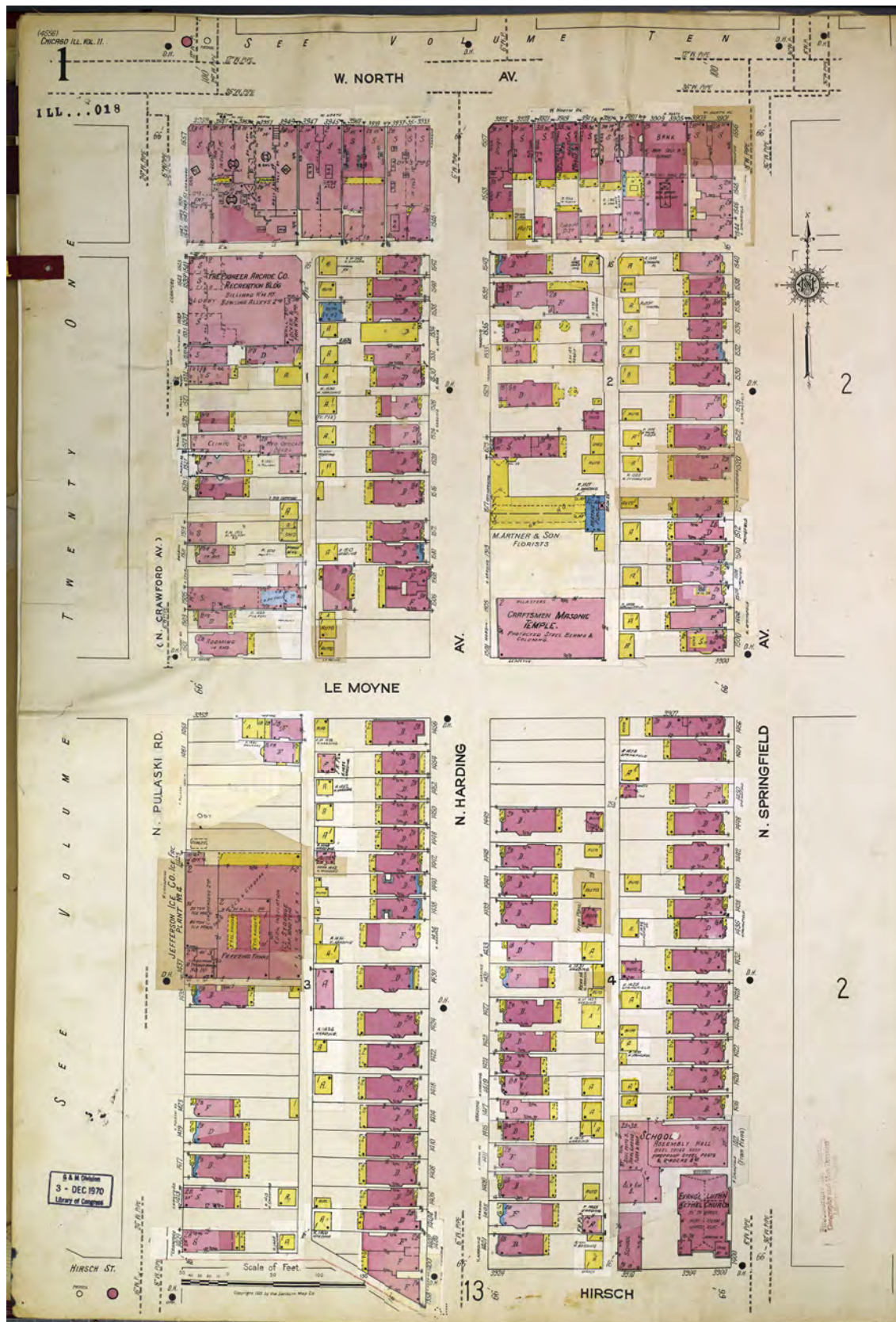
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001. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Volume 11, Sheet 1 (1918, corrected to 1950)

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002. Pioneer Arcade, May 1936. Cook County Clerk of Court Archives.

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDING SURVEY
INDEX TO COLOR FIELD PHOTOGRAPHS

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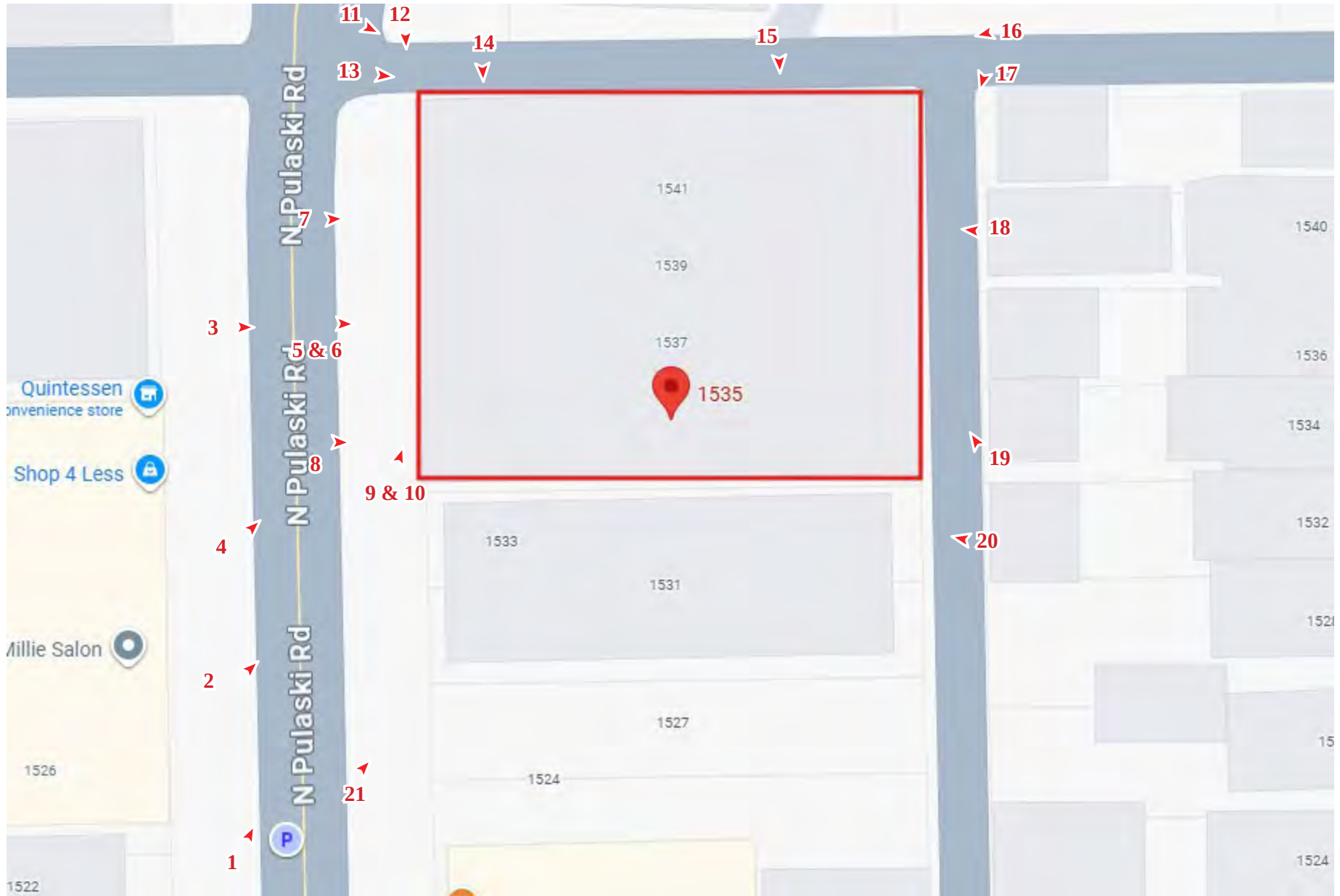
Lara Ramsey, photographer, August 2025

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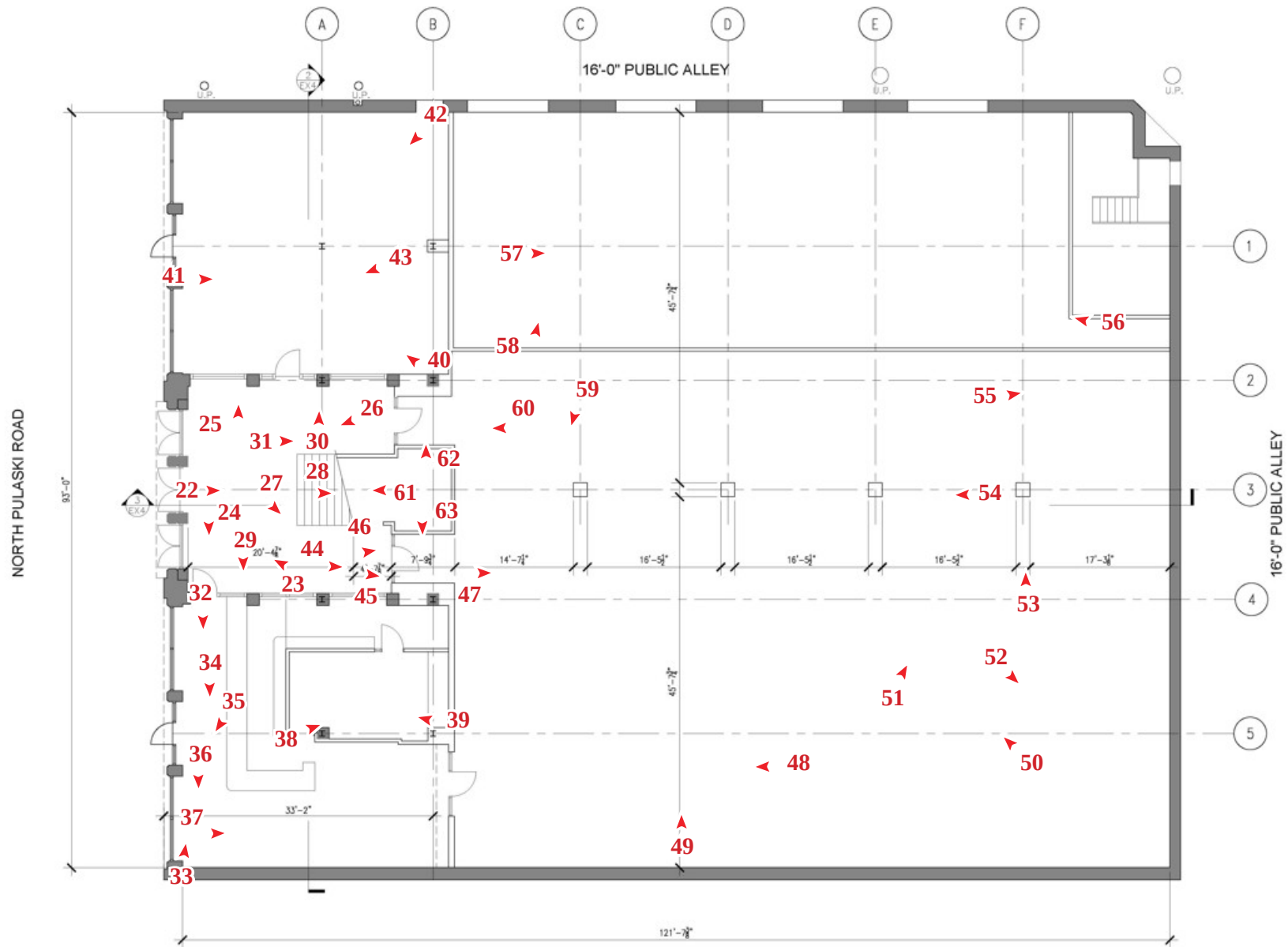
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Site Plan

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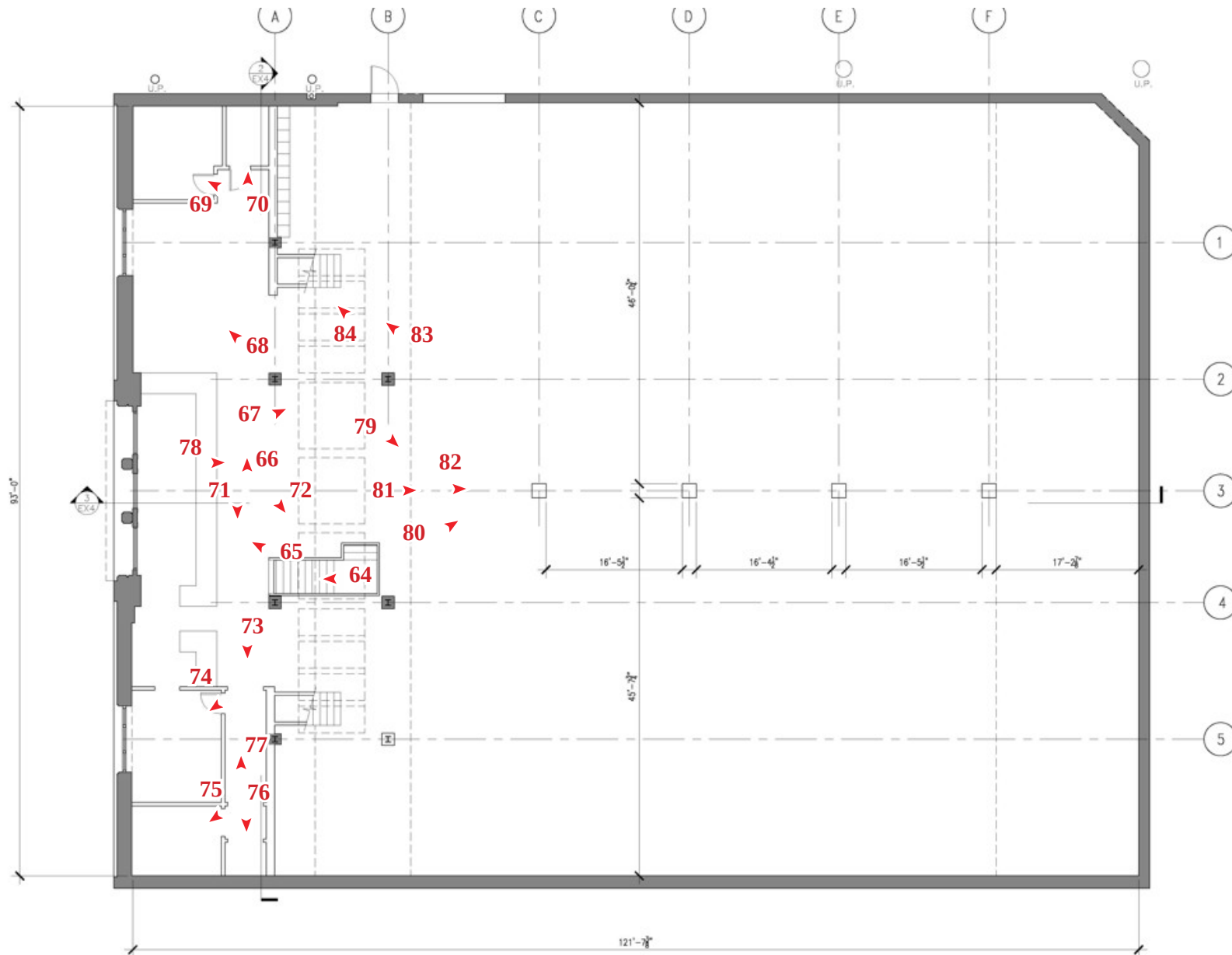




First Floor Plan

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Second-Floor Plan

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1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road, Chicago, Cook Co., IL



022



023

HIBS No. CK-2025-2
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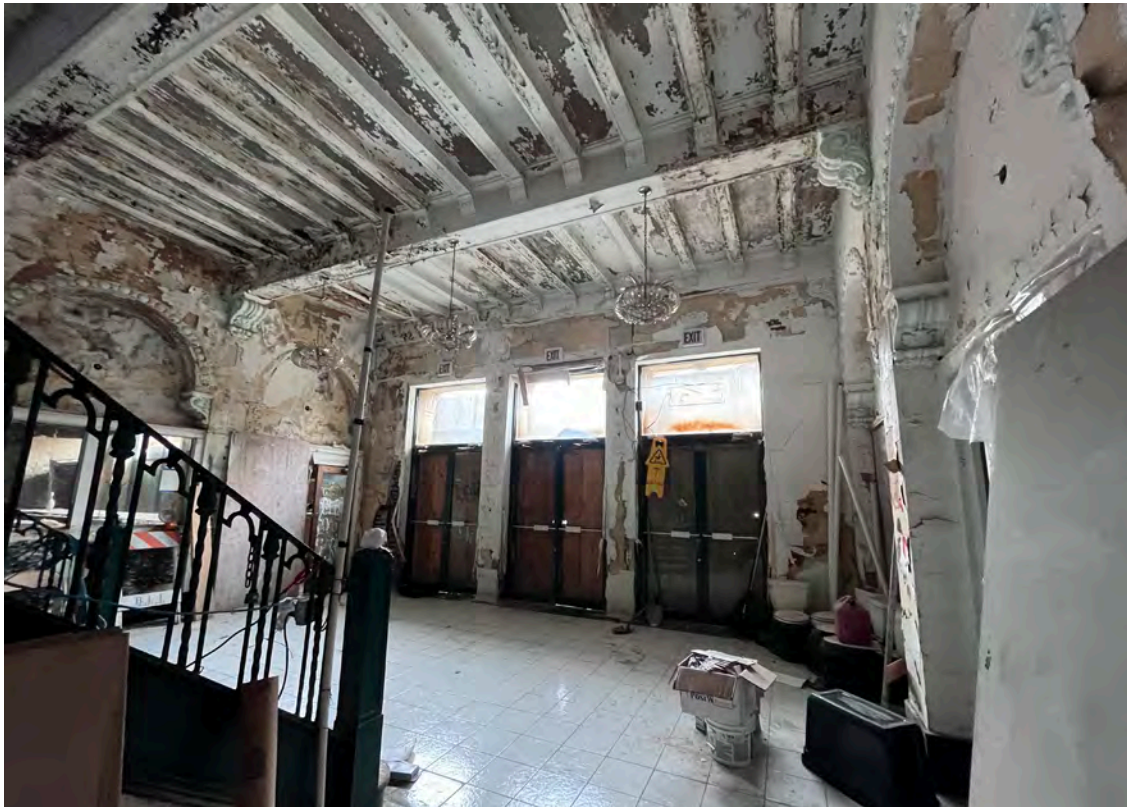


024



025

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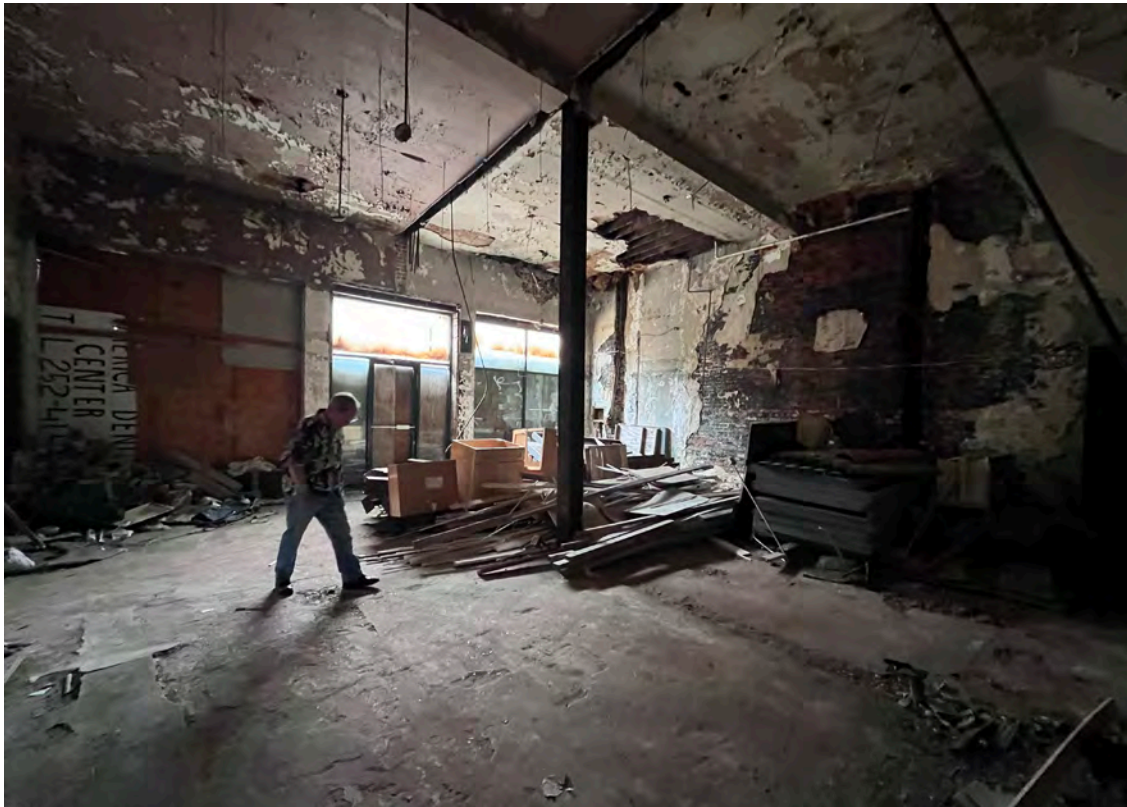
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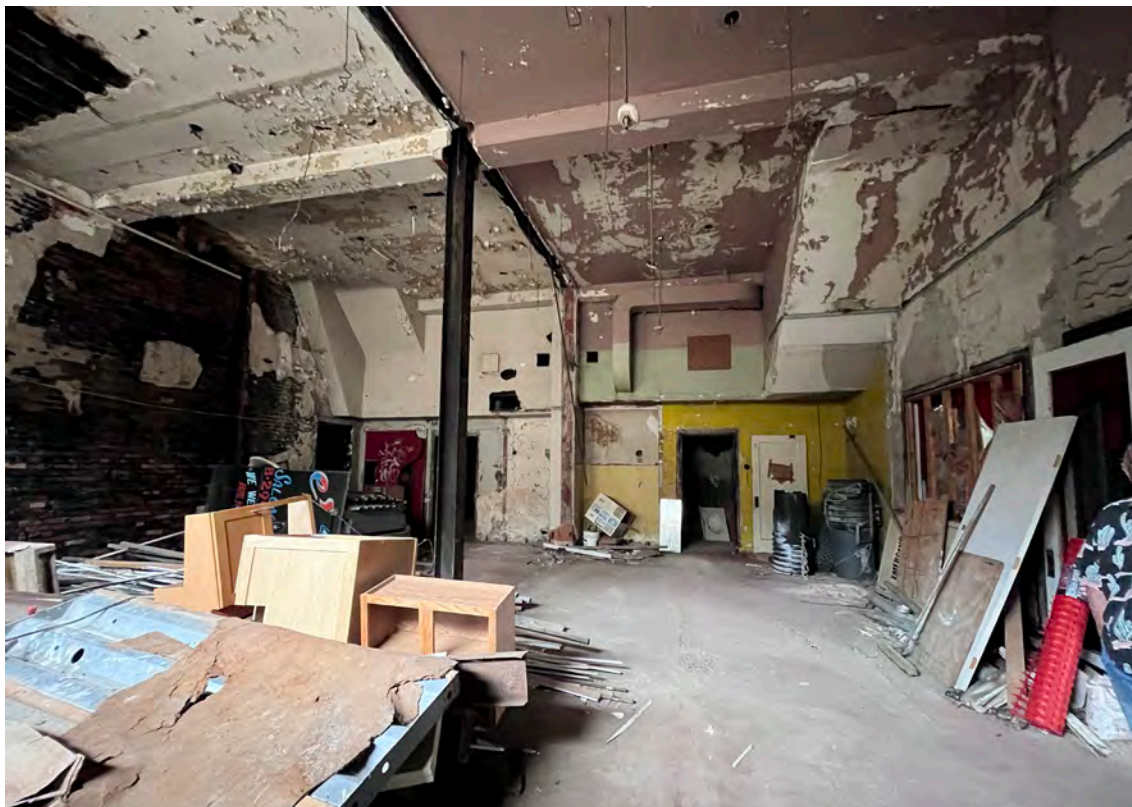
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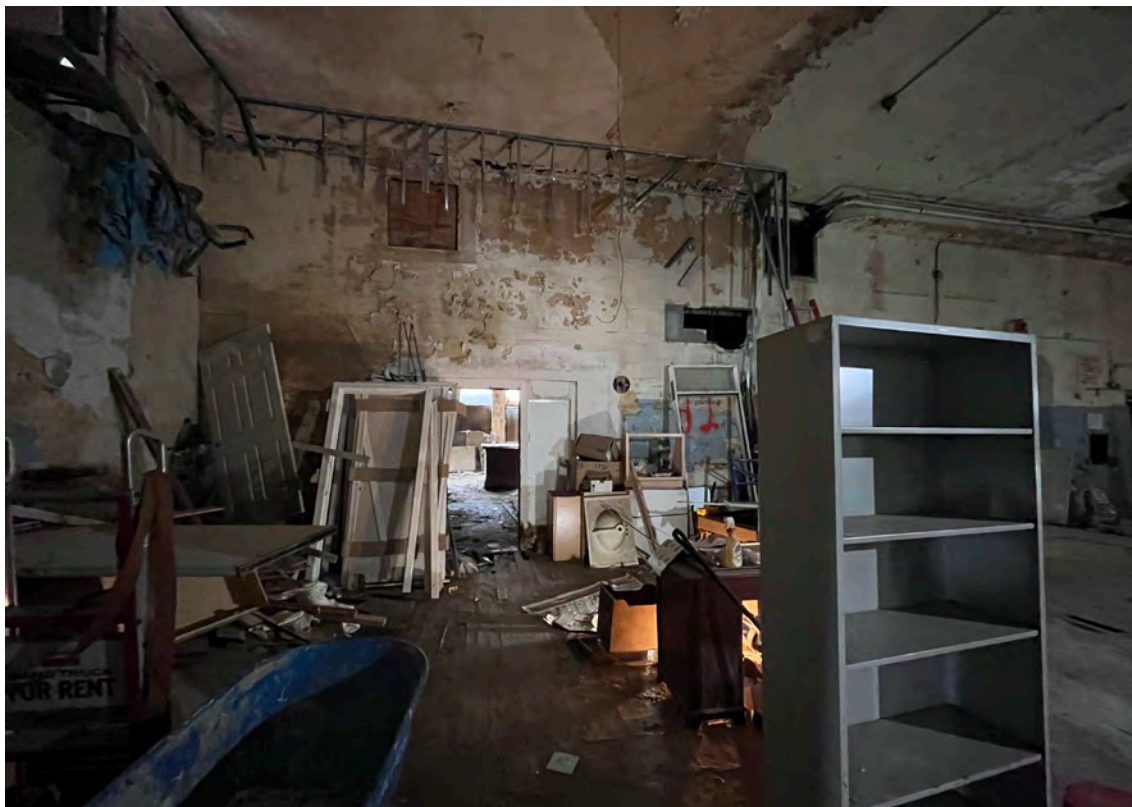
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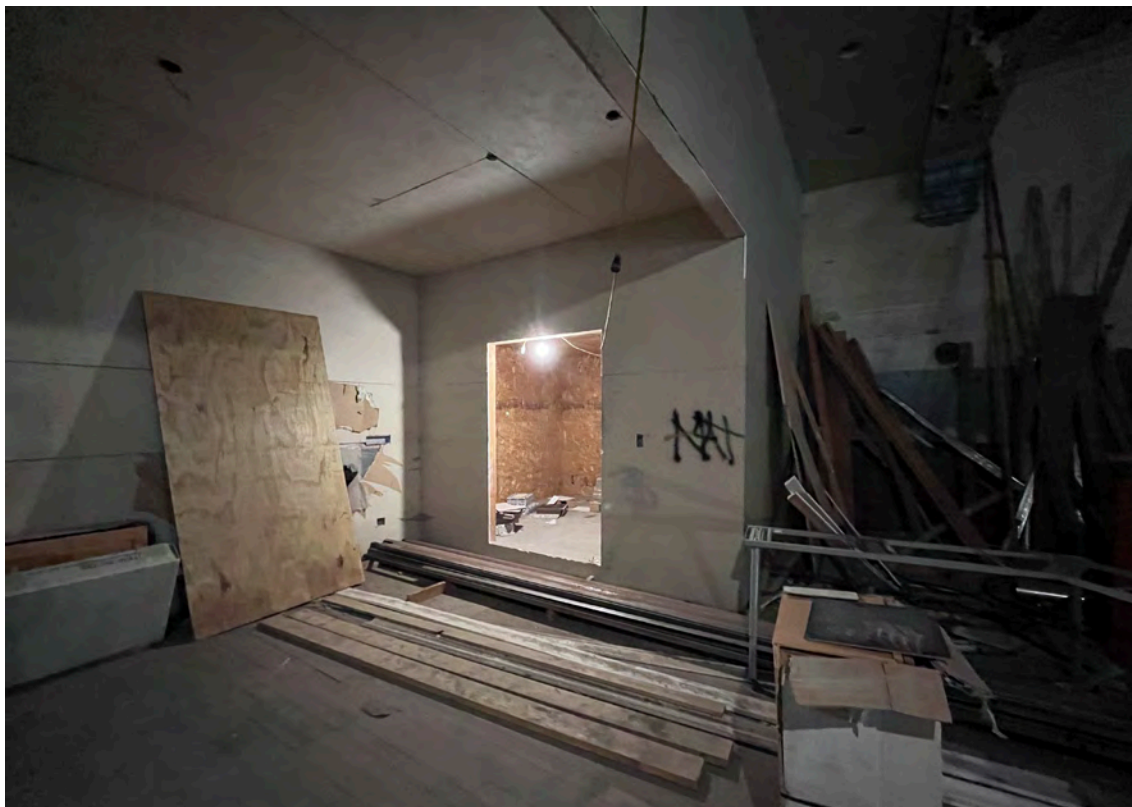


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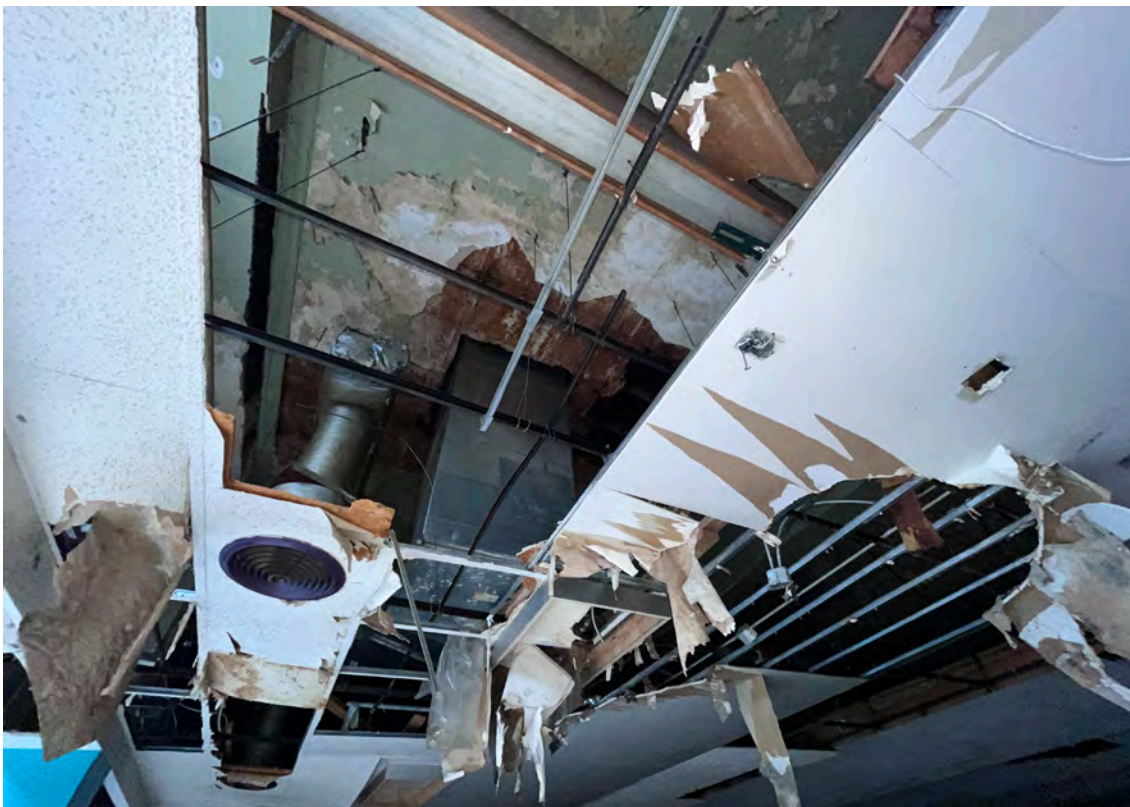


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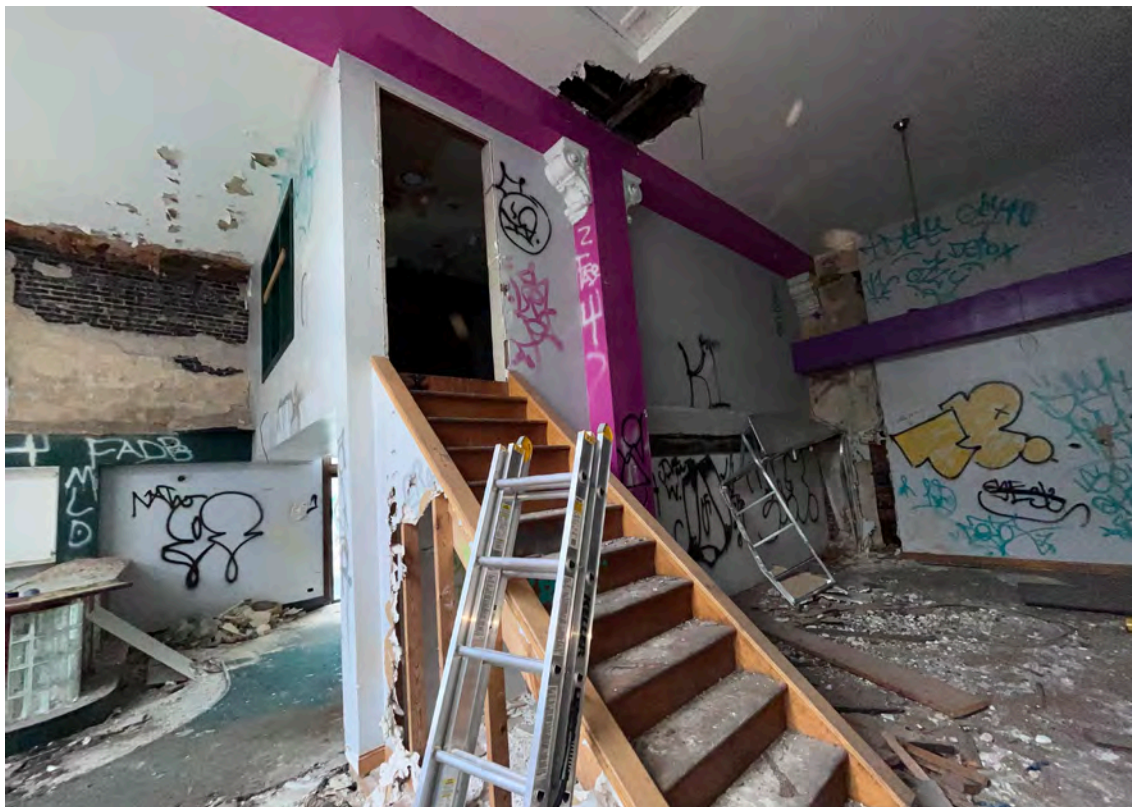


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HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDING SURVEY
INDEX TO BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Pioneer Arcade
1535-1545 N. Pulaski Road
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HIBS No. CK-2025-2

Leslie Schwartz, photographer, July 2025

- 001 West and south elevations and surrounding buildings, view northwest from west side of N. Pulaski Road
- 002 West elevation, view east
- 003 West and north elevations, view southeast
- 004 East and south elevations, view north-northwest
- 005 First floor, entrance lobby, view east
- 006 First floor, entrance lobby, view southeast
- 007 First floor, entrance lobby, view north
- 008 First floor, south storefront space, view south
- 009 First floor, billiard hall, view southwest
- 010 First floor, billiard hall, view northwest
- 011 First floor, billiard hall, partitioned north end, view east-northeast
- 012 View southwest to south end of entrance hall from main staircase landing
- 013 Second floor, staircase opening, view east
- 014 Second floor, bowling alley, west end, view north
- 015 Second floor, bowling alley, view west to three-part window at center of west wall
- 016 Second floor, bowling alley, view northeast























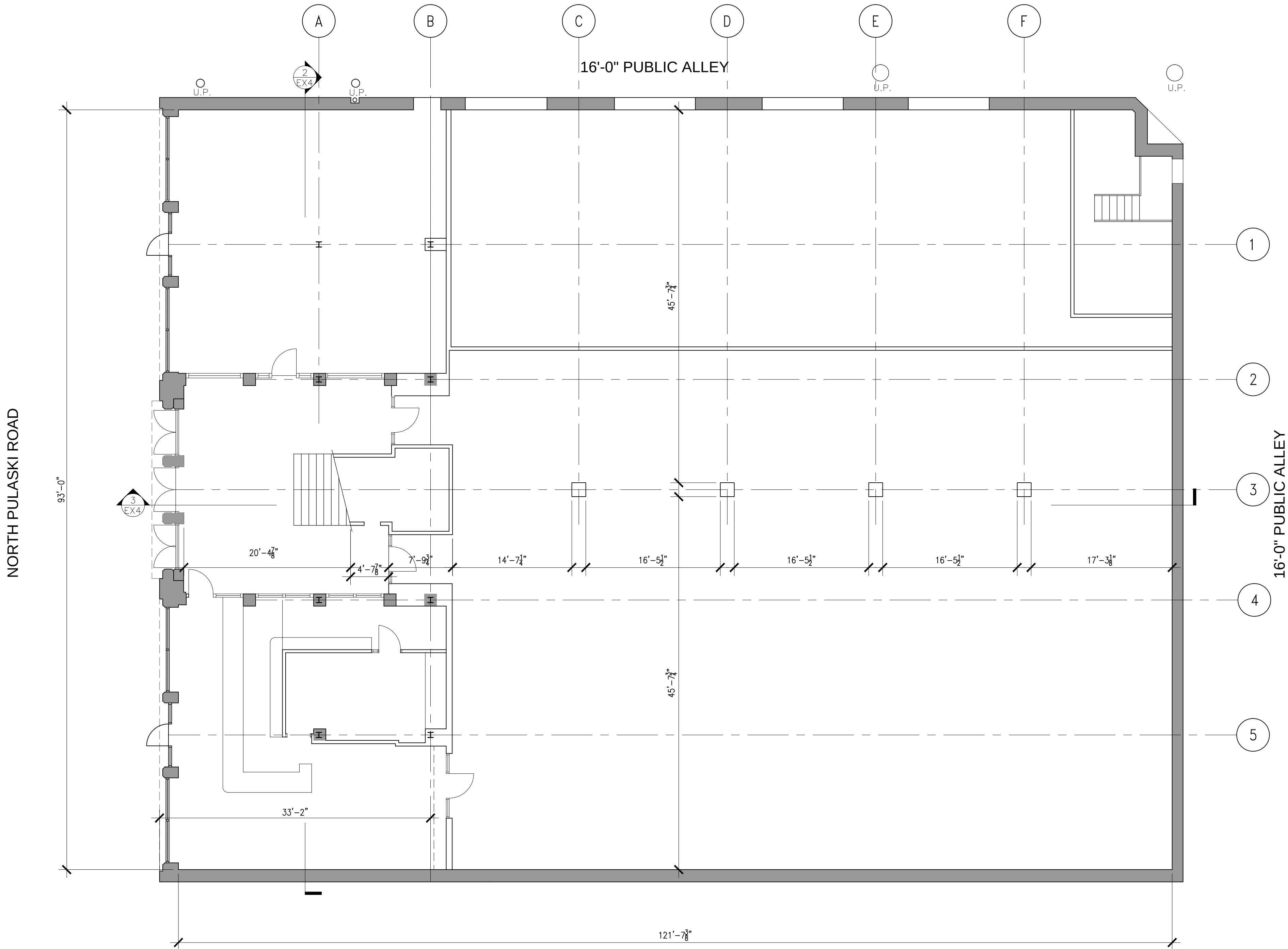












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No.	Revisions/Submissions	Date

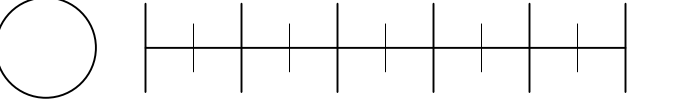
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PLAN

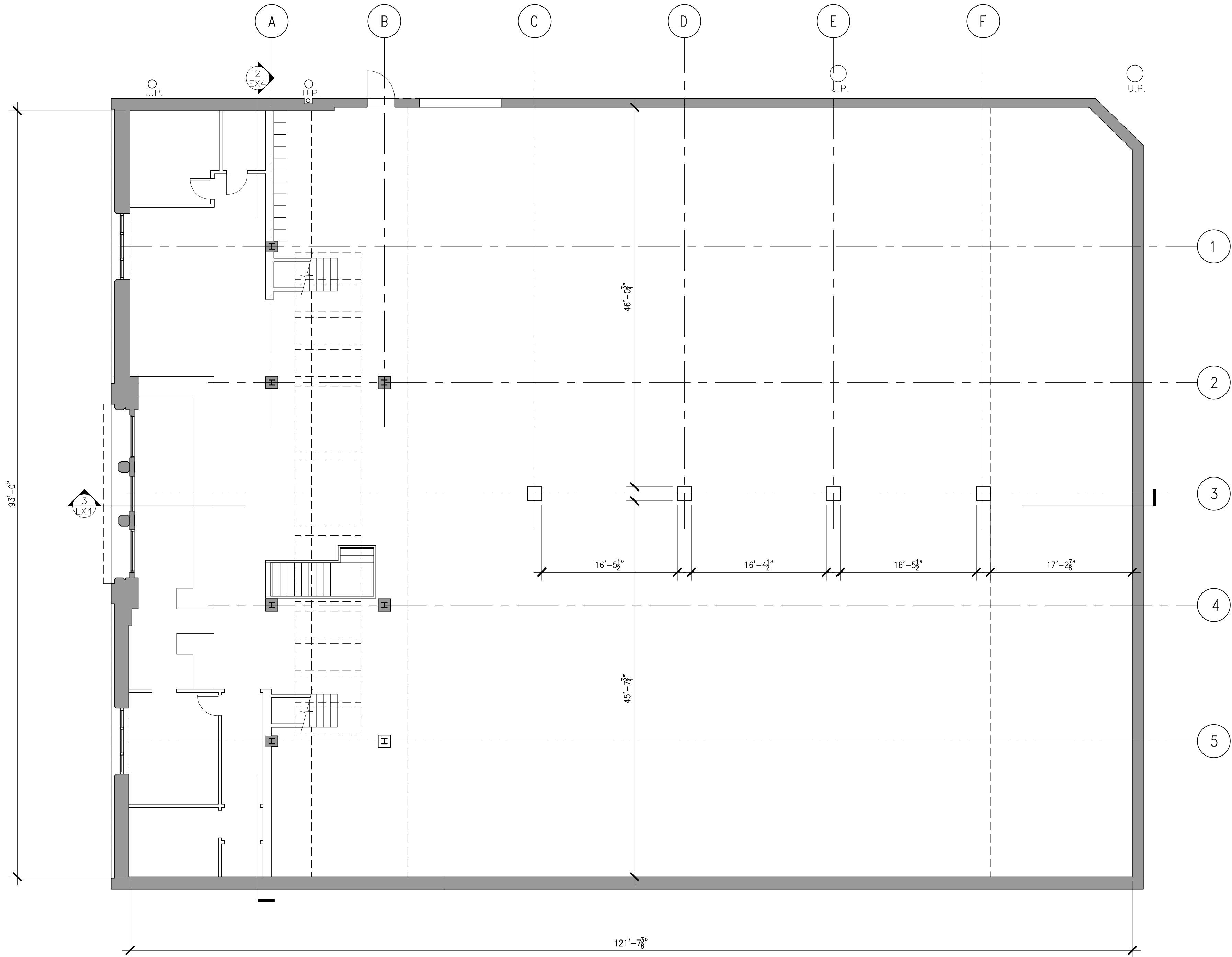
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NORTH SCALE As Noted



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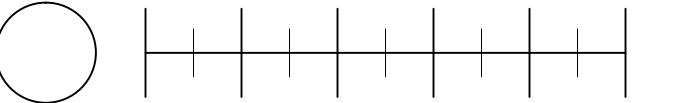
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SECOND FLOOR

PLAN

DATE

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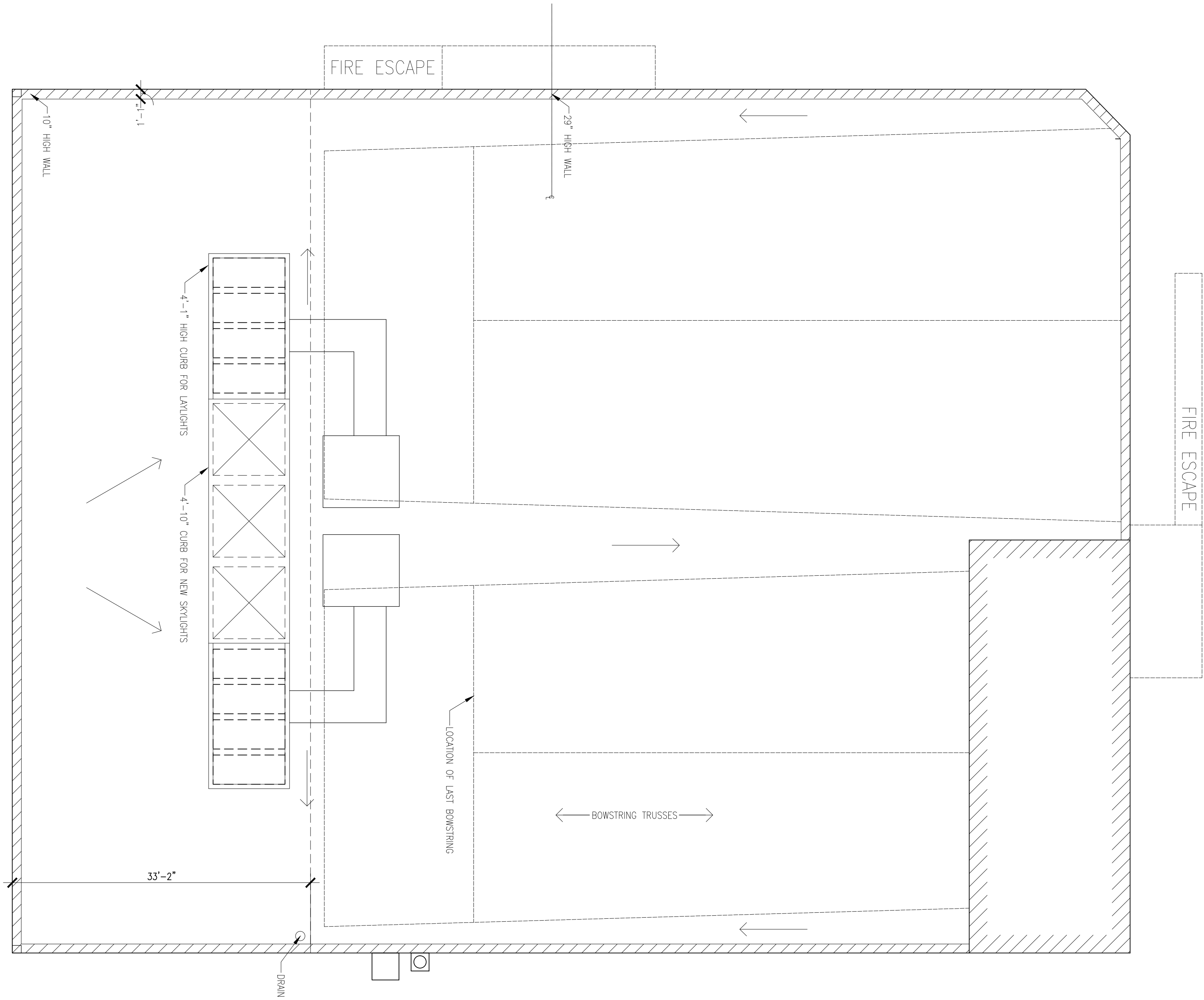


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EX.2

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No.	Revisions/Submissions	Date

TITLE

ROOF PLAN

DATE

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EX.3



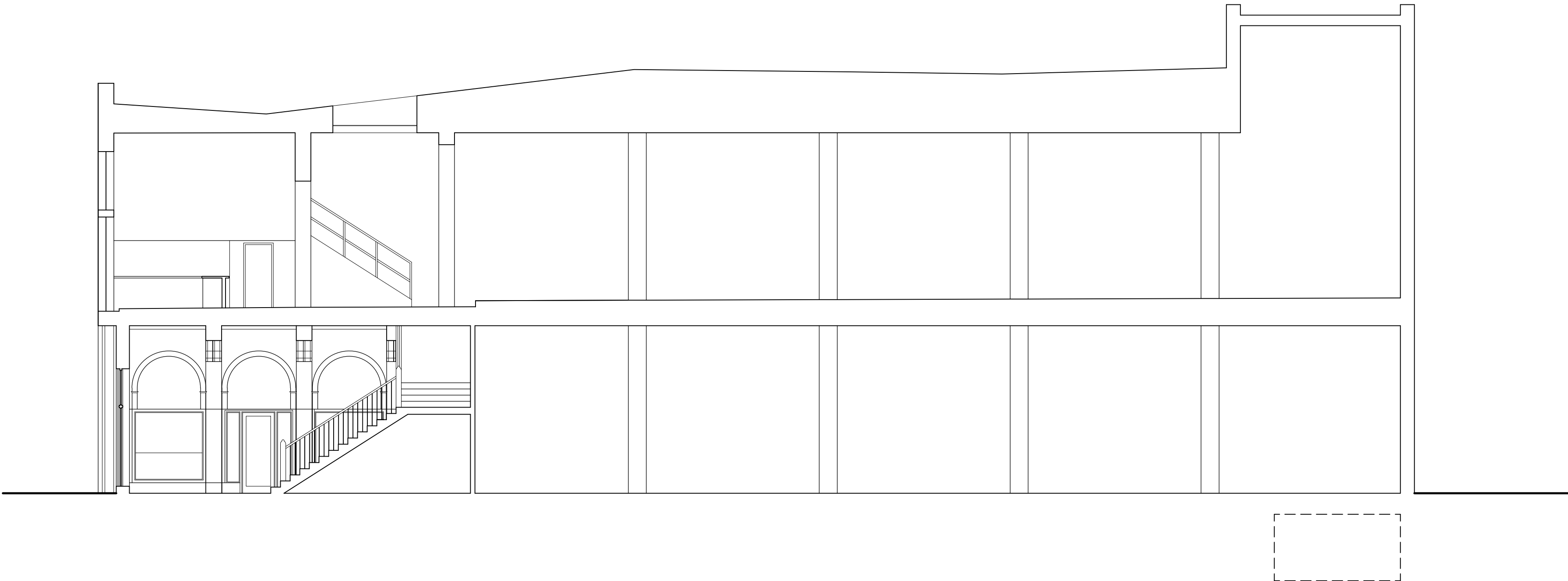
1

PULASKI ROAD ELEVATION



2

TRANSVERSE SECTION



3

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

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TITLE

BUILDING

SECTIONS

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