

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Stowers, Dan, Office Building

Other names/site number: PU4627

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1516 West Third Street

City or town: Little Rock State: AR County: Pulaski

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide **X** local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B **X** C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___meets ___does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE / professional

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: cast concrete, brick, porcelain-enameled panels

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Dan Stowers Office Building, a one-story commercial form located at 1516 West Third Street in Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, stands north of the Arkansas State Capitol grounds. The West Third Street corridor transitioned from a residential neighborhood to a commercial area during the mid-twentieth century. This building remains as part of the mid-century modern commercial construction trend which replaced residential dwellings from the 1940s through the 1970s in this area. The Dan Stowers Office Building exhibits International style with mid-century influences evident in the flat roofline, asymmetrical design, and floor to ceiling windows on the front entrance wall typical of the time period.

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Narrative Description

Dan F. Stowers Sr. designed the Dan Stowers Office Building in the International style with a flat roofline, asymmetrical design, and floor to ceiling windows on the front entrance wall. The minimal decorative features characterized mid-century architecture. The flat roof consists of poured gypsum concrete, which is a durable, fire-resistant material. Flat rooflines generally contribute to the deterioration of the roofing materials from lack of drainage, but gypsum has proven to be a long-lasting substance. The turquoise trim at the roofline surrounding the building emphasizes the clean lines and wide overhanging eaves. A concrete foundation supports the building covered with brick. The floor-to-ceiling windows in the front façade display the modernist influence. The asymmetrical design highlights the glazing system and leads the focus to the front entrance.

South Elevation (front facade)

The front landscaping accents the building. From the curb, crossing the concrete sidewalk walkway, the view includes a rock garden with two rows of asymmetrical brick benches/fences to delineate the rock garden space from the public walkway. These brick accent structures run along the front and west side of the garden space, but are not contiguous, rather separate structures designed in row format. The rock garden contains small pebble rocks with larger stepping stones and decorative rocks. Three crepe myrtle trees and flowers bring color and tranquility to this area. A walkway ramp of rock borders the garden area on the east and leads to the front door of the building. This ramp replaced original concrete stairs.

The building entrance displays subtle design features, which is consistent with the mid-century modern clean and simple ideal. From east to west, a thin column of brick frames the doorway on the east. Stowers (Sr.) designed the glass and aluminum door inset within a glazing system creating an L-shape. Above the door, the rectangular-shaped transom (with short edges on each side) blends the door upward into the thin, rectangular, light turquoise-colored porcelain-enameled panel just below the roofline. Facing south next to the glass door, a thin, tall pane of glass reaches the height of the transom and the door. Mid-level in this pane, a vertical aluminum mail slot exists. A cutout in the southeast roofline reflects the inset of the doorway. To the west, the glazing system continues with large single panes of glass. One facing east joins the inset door area into the rest of the front façade. A large aluminum post creates the corner and connects to the remaining two panes of glass to complete the glazing system with the same porcelain-enameled panels near the roofline and concrete foundation visible below. The large panes of glass inhabit approximately one third of the front façade.

Continuing west, brick veneer rises from the ground. Four single pane, wide, rectangular hopper-style casement windows rest side-by-side to separate the roofline from the brick exterior. Wide overhanging eaves extend to protect the windows. Approximately one foot from the west corner, a tall, thin window of wavy glass or plexiglass, with the same concrete foundation below it as the glazing system, connects to the last of the four rectangle windows above. The remaining façade to the corner of the building presents brick from foundation to roofline with a water spout projecting a couple feet from ground level.

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West Elevation

The west elevation slopes downhill northward toward the back of the building, leaving more of the concrete foundation/basement exposed. Grass and an empty lot occupy the space west of the structure to the corner of West Third Street and Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. Brick, as the main exterior material, covers the first floor. No fenestration exists on this side of the building. Although, a utility pipe and wiring visibly extend from the concrete near the north corner below the brick (at the top of the foundation).

North Elevation

A paved parking area occupies the portion of the property on the north side of the building. The building's north elevation contains a walk-out basement. The cantilevered main floor, supported in the center of the open area, rests on a large round column creating a paved, covered parking area. The wall on the right (west) side also serves as a visual border for both the basement area and the first floor. It displays a thin area of brick on the south elevation from ground to roofline. A turquoise-colored drain spout rests against this section of brick.

Under the cantilevered area, the concrete foundation leads to an interior corner and the south facing exposed haydite block wall. Off centered, near the west side, a door interrupts the wall surface. The east portion of the wall contains four floor-to-ceiling metal screen doors of turquoise painted metal. These doors enclose a partially open-air maintenance room. A concrete wall creates a border to the left of the metal screen doors. A concrete stairway rises on the east side of that wall. The north façade partially encloses the stairwell and displays approximately three to four feet wide brick section of wall rising to the roofline creating the distinct asymmetrical design. The utility connections, boxes, and wires show on this section of the wall.

The main floor of the office building exterior consists of a Miesian-inspired curtain wall of windows with the brick and drainpipes framing it on either side. Just above the covered parking area, tall, rectangular porcelain-enameled panels delineate the bottom of the first floor. A wall of single-hung, aluminum windows ascend above these panels and lead to the thin rectangular porcelain-enameled panels near the roofline matching the front entry. The curtain wall of windows consists of columns of four-high panes with awning casement windows as the center two in each column. The wide overhanging eaves suspend over the expanse of glass and a cutout in the roofline on the northeast corner matches the front entrance detail.

East Elevation

The east border of the property contains an asphalt paved driveway from the street to the open parking area behind (north of) the building. On the building, the brick wraps around from the north elevation exterior with a large opening to access the stairwell at the basement level. The brick continues up the building accented by a large (tall and narrow) rectangular shaped metal trim outline in the same turquoise color found on the other building accents. The trim outlines the space directly above the stairway opening and closes at the roofline. Progressing to the south, the concrete foundation supports decorative concrete masonry unit (CMU) panels, which hang within metal frames (also turquoise). The CMUs are circular in design and form a screen-block wall partially enclosing the stairwell to the covered parking area. Although the CMU panels do not reach completely ground to roofline, the frame that contains them connects the foundation to the eaves. The suspended screen block design separates Stowers Sr.'s designs from other architects of the period.

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The screen-block wall conceals an exterior walkway and stairs. The east exterior wall actually consists of brick, which is masked by the decorative, yet functional, screen block panels. The panels also conceal an exterior metal door. Where the panels stop, a metal railing with four posts and two rails creates an east border for the walkway. On the other side of the walkway, the brick exterior appears to be recessed. Two small equally spaced sliding windows, each with two frosted panes, breach the brick wall between the two exterior doors. The window sills extrude below the sliding panes from the wall surface, consisting of the brick headers creating subtle accents. Heading south along the wall at the end of the brick, another floor-to-ceiling aluminum glazing system exists. One large, tall and narrow, glass pane faces east before forming another L-shaped entryway with a southern facing glass entry door surrounded by a thin pane of glass to the right of the door handle, and a rectangle transom above. Brick joins this southern oriented door, to turn the corner and become the remainder of the east exterior wall, showing concrete foundation below and turquoise metal trim and roofline above; the wall terminates at the southeast corner of the building.

Interior

The interior of the Dan Stowers Office Building remains mainly unchanged. The front entrance leads into a small lobby. In this lobby, a small room exists that had been the plan room for contractors to review plans from the architects. The room still has the original Executone Intercom System on the wall. A hallway led from the lobby to the bathrooms; however, the hallway has been removed when the bathrooms expanded into its space in 2013. From the lobby, doorways still offer entrance to two other rooms. One had been Dan Stowers' office (east), now used as a reception area, and the other used as a conference room (west). The conference room still displays the original Mexican terrazzo tiled wall, although its use has changed. Both rooms enter into the large, north room, which was designed as the drafting room. It held a small kitchenette just off the south-east side. The wall separating the kitchenette and large room (west wall) was removed during the remodel for the current tenants. The north wall of the kitchenette endures originally designed with the upper half of strips of wood with textile screening intermittently displayed to create the illusion of a full wall. The remainder of the floor plan remains unchanged.

INTEGRITY

The Dan Stowers Office Building exhibits a high level of integrity resting in its original location. The building remains almost completely unaltered with only a few slight modifications. The only external changes in the design show in the landscaping and front entrance porch. Modernism brought landscaping into the design process, which is incorporated here. The original landscaping design consisted of a rock garden replaced by pavement with an astroturf cover, for a time. In November 2013, the Ecumenical Buddhist Society (EBS) returned the property landscaping to the rock garden feel and replaced the concrete porch steps with an ADA compliant ramp leading to the front entrance.¹ The remainder of the building exterior has been maintained as designed. It even retains the original turquoise colored trim, or as close as one can match it to the original with today's available paints.² The West Third Street corridor held mainly residential dwellings when the Dan Stowers Office Building was constructed; however, the building joined a transitioning neighborhood. Along this street, many of the

¹ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

² Ibid.

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surrounding commercial buildings replaced houses during the mid-twentieth century with modern vernacular forms. These buildings demonstrate a trend at that time that includes the Dan Stowers Office Building.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1960-1961

Significant Dates

1960-1961

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Dan F. Stowers (Sr.), Architect

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Dan Stowers Office Building, located at 1516 West Third Street, Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** as an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture. The West Third Street neighborhood consisted of residential dwellings at the beginning of the twentieth century, then the Arkansas State Capitol was built just to the south. As the century progressed, residential buildings became vacant and were replaced by commercial buildings. The Dan Stowers Office Building demonstrates that mid-century modern architectural trend of using modern ideas and experimental materials. The construction with haydite blocks, porcelain-enameled panels, curtain wall of windows, and the floor-to-ceiling glazing system show the material change and shift in design ideas during the middle of the twentieth century. The building, which is currently leased by a religious organization, is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A**.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Brief History of Little Rock, Pulaski County and the State Capitol

Pulaski County was designated in Arkansas Territory in 1819. The French explorer, Jean-Baptiste Bénard de La Harpe, created the name for the city by describing the rock on the southern bank of the Arkansas River “le Petit Rocher,” which translated into the little rock. By 1821, the territorial legislature named Little Rock the new territorial capitol, although it was not incorporated as a town until 1831. The city of Little Rock officially incorporated in 1835.³

In 1833, Gideon Shryock designed the Old State House building to be used as the seat of government.⁴ Before its completion, Arkansas joined the Union as a state in 1836. George Weigart modified the plans to meet budgetary guidelines and completed the building in 1842.⁵ State Government business remained in this building until the Union troops invaded Little Rock in 1863. During the remainder of the Civil War, the seat of government became Washington, Arkansas.

³ James W. Bell, “Little Rock (Pulaski County),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, last updated February 19, 2015, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=970>.

⁴ “National Register of Historic Places, Inventory – Nomination Form, First Arkansas State Capitol, Old State House,” *Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage*, accessed April 19, 2015, http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/historic-properties/national-register/results.aspx?county=Pulaski&city=&historic_name=&description=.

⁵ Georganne Sisco, “Old State House,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, last modified November 18, 2011, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2111>.

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Legislators approved the establishment of the Deaf Mute Institute in Little Rock in 1869. The institute subdivided and sold twenty acres to fund itself. Little Rock purchased and added the Deaf-Mute Addition bordering its boundary on the west of the originally platted area in 1871.⁶ After expanding the Old State House building in 1885, Senate Concurrent Resolution 3 called for construction of a new capitol building. In March 1899, Act 128 passed creating a Governor appointed commission to oversee the construction of the new building.⁷ The Commission moved the site of the building to the old state penitentiary at 5th and Woodlane. The north part of the grounds extended into the Deaf-Mute Addition. George Mann planned the original design, but Architect Cass Gilbert completed the reconstructive design during the long construction process.⁸ The Arkansas State Capitol building reached completion in 1915. The Arkansas State Capitol building and ground boundaries now extend from West Third Street on the north to 7th Street on the south and from Wolfe Street on the west to Woodlane Drive on the east. Residential buildings comprised the neighborhood on West Third Street, located on the streetcar line, directly to the north of the Capitol. This marked the beginning of the neighborhood transition.

History of the West Third Street Corridor

The West Third Street neighborhood contained mainly residential buildings through the first half of the twentieth century. This trend continued through the 1930s. Annis McDonald Schaer purchased the lot (9) in Block 6 of the Deaf Mute Addition along with the building on it at 1516 W. Third Street in 1935, along with the lot (10) directly east of it.⁹ According to Sanborn maps, a frame domestic dwelling existed at 1516 West Third Street prior to 1897.¹⁰ Various renters occupied the house over the years; Wesley Reed became the final renter from 1954 through 1958. The Polk & Company Little Rock City Directory does not list any occupants in 1959.¹¹ Mrs. Annis McDonnell Schaer, the owner following her husband's death, sold both the lot at 1516 West Third Street and the lot at 1514 West Third Street to Dan F. Stowers (Sr.) in 1960. Stowers (Sr.), a Little Rock architect, razed the domestic dwelling the same year and constructed the current building, completed in 1961.¹² Residential buildings dominated West Third Street at this time. Although, from the 1100 block through the 1700 block of West Third Street, a few commercial buildings did exist including gas stations, insurance adjusters, a

⁶ Rachel Silva, "Sandwiching in History, Archived Tour Scripts, May 8, 2015 – Dan Stowers Office Building," Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/tours-events-workshops/sandwiching-schedule/archive.aspx>.

⁷ David Ware, "Arkansas State Capitol Building," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, last updated November 20, 2009, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=377>.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places, Inventory – Nomination Form, Arkansas State Capitol," *Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/userfiles/PU3077.nr.pdf>.

⁹ "Pulaski County Real Estate Tax Book 2 Additions and Subdivisions of Little Rock," *Arkansas History Commission*, p 34.

¹⁰ "Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970, Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas," *ProQuest, LLC*, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://sanborn.umi.com.ezproxy.library.arkansas.gov/ar/0285/dateid-000010.htm?CCSI=7054n>.

¹¹ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1954 – 1959* (Dallas: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishing, 1954-1959).

¹² Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015; *Polk's Little Rock City Directory, 1961* (Dallas: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishing, 1961).

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laundry/cleaner business, and a physician's office.¹³ At the point of construction, the Dan Stowers Office Building integrated into a transitioning neighborhood.

The rest of the West Third Street corridor integrated commercial buildings over several decades. The R.L. Polk & Company Little Rock City Directory listed Vogue Cleaners at 1323 West Third Street and Shaw Gas and Plumbing Company at 1401 West Third Street in 1942. In 1944, the Joseph Ivy Filling Station occupied a corner lot at 1600 West Third Street and Spur Oil Company distributed gasoline at 1700 West Third Street. The Warehouse Liquor Market opened on the lot at 1601 in 1949. A&J Electric Company began supplying contracting services in 1954 from 1223 West Third Street and at 1400 West Third Street became the site of The Shack restaurant. The same year saw the opening of another gas station, run by Don Ridgeway, at 1523 West Third Street. The physicians of Howard Bailey Jr., et al, also hung a shingle in the mid-1950s on the next block at 1610. This building remains with the low roofline, minimal decoration, and floor to ceiling glass on the front facade. A gift shop, Sybil's Ceramic Gifts, joined the neighborhood two years later (1957) with an address at 1622 West Third Street. In 1957, Standard Oil Company of Louisiana also replaced their building at 1600 West Third Street (and the empty lot at 1604 West Third Street that previously held a house) with a larger three-bay structure for use as a filling and service station. That building displays mid-century materials on an International style design. As businesses moved out, other businesses moved in, including Majestic Laundry and Cleaners at 1523 West Third Street replacing the filling station that previously filled the lot. This building no longer exists. Stowers & Boyce, architects, joined the street with construction beginning in 1960.¹⁴

While the West Third Street corridor of Little Rock began as mainly residential dwellings, several mid-century modern structures crept into the neighborhood replacing houses one by one. Within a few blocks surrounding the Dan Stowers Office Building along West Third Street, several buildings from this period remain. Some of these buildings include 1610 West Third Street (1955), which began as a physician's office and today houses Capitol Place Building, LLC. The Dan Stowers Office Building developed amid this construction trend in 1960-61. In the early 1960s, there were also three other buildings constructed along this corridor including 1614 West Third Street (1960-61) for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1616 West Third Street (circa 1960-1965) for Building Maintenance Service, Inc., and ACME Brick Company built its offices at 301 S. Victory Street by 1965. All of these buildings were molded by mid-century modernism.

The Mitchell-Bowie School Equipment Co. surfaced in 1968 at 1512 West Third Street.¹⁵ Dan F. Stowers (Sr.) also designed this building directly east of his firm's address. He followed the modern trend, but with less subtle detailing than his office exhibited. By 1998, the two residential buildings directly to the west of the Dan Stowers Office Building were demolished. The shift from residential to commercial in the neighborhood developed on the edge of the Arkansas State Capitol grounds at a time when urban sprawl influenced the area.

¹³ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1954 - 1961* (Dallas: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishing, 1954-1961).

¹⁴ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1942 - 1966* (Dallas: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1942-1966).

¹⁵ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1968* (Dallas: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1968).

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Modernism into the Mid-Century

Mid-century modern architecture developed from the modernist movement in the early twentieth century. Modern architecture broke away from the traditional forms of construction without creating standard characteristics to define it.¹⁶ Modernism incorporated ideas of cleanliness, sunlight, health, and openness following World War I.¹⁷ Cleanliness and sunlight added to the idea of physical and psychological health, which became intertwined with the built environment. As it applied to architecture, openness referred to open space within the building, along with an extension of the outside into the interior space through design-incorporated walls of windows.¹⁸ The function of a building dictated which modernist form was used.¹⁹ Practicality and simple lines became a theme that can be identified in most modernist buildings, and carried over into the mid-century period.

Technology and building materials in the machine-age emerged to offer options in construction materials and methods. Architects utilized structural steel, reinforced concrete, and glass in the transformational designs. Modernism experimented with new ideas and designs, as well as materials, in a complete break from tradition. "The buildings of the midcentury depend upon a host of innovative technologies, such as exterior cladding systems. Curtain walls of the period were often constructed of a steel subframe (with glazing and new types of thin panel cladding)..."²⁰ Unprecedented design freedom and immediate cost savings from prefabricated materials encouraged incorporation of these changes.²¹ Public buildings, such as schools and hospitals, exhibited the new designs in the beginning of the twentieth century, "Combining qualities of light, air and openness with a scrupulous attention to hygiene and cleanliness, sanatoriums became the models for housing, schools and other educational buildings."²²

Modernist creators, like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier, cultivated mid-century modern form. Each taught their own set of guidelines within modernism ideals to students who adapted and then combined these lessons into a classification of "populist modern." Populist modern included the multiple sets of rules culminated into a more vernacular modern form that can be identified as mid-century modern. As a reaction against traditional styles containing customary elements, each of these architects worked from the idea of clean lines and open spaces, although, with their own set of rules, for example, Mies van der Rohe used a grid system for design.²³

¹⁶ J. Mason Toms (architect with Arkansas Historic Preservation Program), email message to author, February 27, 2015.

¹⁷ Paul Overly, *Light, Air, and Openness* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2007), page 9.

¹⁸ Paul Overly, *Light, Air, and Openness* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2007), p 11.

¹⁹ Mark Wilcken, *Clean Lines, Open Spaces, A View of Mid-Century Modern Architecture*, video, (Conway, AETN, 2012), <http://www.aetn.org/programs/cleanlinesopenspaces>.

²⁰ Elizabeth Milnarik, "AIA Knowledge, Aging in Place Sustaining the GSA'S Modern Sensibilities," *Architect* Mar2012 Vol. 101 Issue 3: 27, accessed February 17, 2015, <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=af2e1d5582&view=pt&search=inbox&th=14ba84d53c3ef761&siml=14ba84d53c3ef761>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Paul Overly, *Light, Air and Openness* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), p 30.

²³ J. Mason Toms (architect with Arkansas Historic Preservation Program), email message to author, February 27, 2015.

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Identification of mid-century modern architecture encompasses a combination of modernist ideas and forms, outlined by the decades in the middle of the twentieth century. Some identifiable features among ideas incorporated into this period include a) an emphasis on interior spaces and use, b) the indoor-outdoor relationship that was “quite the opposite of the emphasis on their separation in traditional buildings, c) engendered a need for innovations in the way buildings were put together,” and d) a lightness as “they avoid being massive and ponderous.”²⁴ Although modernist architects reacted against the standardized common characteristics of traditional styles, some identifiers existed in modernist forms, such as the repetition of walls of windows or floor-to-ceiling windows in many building designs, as “...modernist architects persisted in the belief that open and transparent structures of glass, steel and concrete would demonstrate the benefits of sunlight and fresh air...”²⁵ Another recurring concept is the use of structural elements as architectural details.

Dan F. Stowers Sr. and Dan F. Stowers, Jr., Architects

Dan F. Stowers, Sr. was born April 28, 1914, in Benton, Arkansas. He attended high school in Little Rock before marrying Evelyn Edds of Blytheville, Arkansas, on May 23, 1936. In November 1937, Dan and Evelyn Stowers welcomed a son, Dan F. Stowers, Jr, who became their only son. According to the 1940s census, Stowers, Sr. attended two years of college and worked as a draftsman architect before military service.²⁶ He was honorably discharged from service in 1945. Following World War II, Stowers Sr. worked for the Federal Housing Authority inspecting houses all over the state of Arkansas while residing in North Little Rock, Arkansas.²⁷ By 1949, Stowers and his family lived in Little Rock and David Weaver employed him as Chief Draftsman.²⁸ He had already begun the process of taking the state architecture exam(s) and according to the American Institute of Architects, Stowers, Sr. received official licensure as an architect in 1952.²⁹

Stowers, Sr. designed several buildings around the Little Rock and North Little Rock area. Many of these consisted of educational or public buildings. Several of his North Little Rock buildings included Scipio A. Jones High School (1952), Boone Park Elementary (1952), Lakewood Elementary (1954), and North Heights Elementary (1954). Stowers Sr. also designed Benton High School and Benton Junior High School (Benton, Arkansas) in the early 1950s. Weaver & Stowers were listed as the architects of record on these projects.

In 1959, Stowers, Sr. left Weaver & Stowers and joined with Harold Boyce to create the Stowers & Boyce architect firm.³⁰ Originally, the firm worked from an office at 1001 West 2nd

²⁴ Wolf Von Eckardt, *Mid-Century Architecture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p 21-22.

²⁵ Paul Overly, *Light, Air and Openness* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), page 113.

²⁶ *United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940), T627, 4,643 rolls, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=try&db=1940usfedcen&h=99470336>.

²⁷ *Ibid*; Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

²⁸ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1949* (Dallas: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishing, 1949).

²⁹ *American Architects Directory, Third Edition* (New York: R.R. Bowker LLC, 1970), p 887.

³⁰ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

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Street.³¹ The Dan Stowers Office Building was designed and constructed to house the new partnership. The North Little Rock Public Health Center was designed under the name Boyce & Stowers in 1963, and continued the trend of low, flat roofline as Stowers Sr.'s other public buildings. About this time, Dan F. Stowers, Jr. joined the firm.

Dan F. Stowers, Jr. attended Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. He then continued his education at Oklahoma State in architecture, because he thought it would be challenging and offer a variety of projects.³² Stowers, Jr. worked with his father during the summers while he was in college. In 1963, Sue became his wife and Stowers, Jr. began working for his father full-time. One of the first projects he managed was the Burns Park Golf Center in 1964.³³ By 1965, Boyce had left the architecture firm. Other designs produced by the father/son team included the Housing Authority building for the City of North Little Rock (1966), and Lincoln Elementary School also known as Seventh Street Elementary School in North Little Rock (1967).

Stowers, Sr. worked with his son until his death. On Monday February 1st, 1971, the two worked together. Stowers, Sr. suffered a heart-attack and passed away at the age of 56.³⁴ On Tuesday, February 2, 1971, Dan F. Stowers, Jr. remained the only managing partner of Dan F. Stowers, architects. He continued to work from this office building until 2013.

Modernist Context of the Dan Stowers Office Building

The New York Times discussed the opening of the Metropolitan Museum's exhibit of "Form Givers at Mid-Century" in 1959, and expanded the idea of the exhibition across the country of "new ideas and techniques such as the all-glass curtain wall and the use of sprayed concrete."³⁵ Stowers & Boyce, architects, planned to occupy the building from time of the design and purchase of the lot by Dan F. Stowers, Sr. The building was intentionally contemporary and reflective of previous work. In the mid-twentieth century, interior use commonly directed design. "The planning of commercial buildings thus differs considerably from that of houses... commercial buildings can be seen as vessels, efficient containers of flexible space, their form determined by one set of demands and their internal organization dictated by others."³⁶ The Dan Stowers Office Building, designed by Dan F. Stowers, Sr. and completed in 1961, incorporated the modernist ideas of function over form, a link to the outdoors, and simple lines.³⁷

Dan F. Stowers, Jr., who joined his father in business in 1963, commented that his father's office building design contained influences from his educational construction projects in the

³¹ Rachel Silva, "Sandwiching in History, Archived Tour Scripts, May 8, 2015 – Dan Stowers Office Building," Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/tours-events-workshops/sandwiching-schedule/archive.aspx>.

³² Rachel Silva, "Sandwiching in History, Archived Tour Scripts, May 8, 2015 – Dan Stowers Office Building," Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/tours-events-workshops/sandwiching-schedule/archive.aspx>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*; "Dan Stowers," *Courier News* (Blytheville, AR), February 2, 1971, pg. 3.

³⁵ Stuart Preston, "Modern Architecture's New Look," *New York Times*, June 21, 1959; ProQuest Historical Papers, New York Times page x12.

³⁶ Richard Longstreth, "Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* Vol. 2 (1986): 12-23, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3514312>.

³⁷ *Polk's Little Rock - North Little Rock City Directory, 1961* (Dallas: R.L. Polk and Co. Publishing, 1961).

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1950s and 1960s, such as North Heights Elementary (North Little Rock, Arkansas), Benton High School (Benton, Arkansas) and Benton Junior High School (Benton, Arkansas).³⁸ The Dan Stowers Office Building contained several of the same characteristics used in school construction including window design, flat roofline, turquoise porcelain-enameled panels, and suspended screen-block walls.

Schools designed by Stowers, Sr. reflected the ideas demonstrated in the Crow Island School in Winnetka, IL, which Perkins and Will (and Saarinen) built in 1940. It was hailed as the “first truly contemporary school.”³⁹ The Crow Island School displayed plain brick, a flat roofline and walls of windows. North Heights Elementary and Benton High School both exhibited the same flat overhanging roofline above the entrance, as did the Dan Stowers Office Building. This feature carried over from earlier modernist ideas, including Wright’s schemes in the Usonian Houses of the 1940s, which also included the low, flat roofline and wide eaves over the integrated porch.⁴⁰

Influence for the office building originated in the schools that Stowers, Sr. designed and he incorporated these same signature features. The wall of windows and turquoise porcelain-enamel panels on Benton Junior High also resembled the Dan Stowers Office Building drafting room wall. Stowers, Sr. followed the idea of function over form by specifically considering use as an architect’s office during the construction process of his office space. The north exterior exhibits a wall of windows, which integrates the outdoors by harvesting light for the drafting room. The room positioning incorporated indirect sunlight to reduce glare along with the planned artificial interior lighting to supply the standard 120 foot-candles of light architects required.⁴¹ Architects must consider illumination during the design process. One foot-candle is measured as one lumen, a computation of light intensity, per square foot. Another feature on this elevation involved original porcelain-enameled panels. The light turquoise panels accented the roofline trim color. These aspects of the Dan Stowers Office Building embodied the idea of material evolution, “Such ‘curtain walls’ are still undergoing a flurry of new developments in steel, aluminum, porcelain enamel, glass, and other materials in all manner of color and design.”⁴²

The interior wall construction material of the Dan Stowers Office Building consisted of haydite blocks instead of the standard concrete block construction. Haydite blocks consist of aggregate masonry substance, but are much lighter. A higher fire rating for the building was also an added benefit from this construction material.⁴³ Haydite blocks also offered an economical substitute for the plaster interior walls that had been widely used.

The east elevation includes a screen block wall of designed clay blocks, also called breeze block or decorative block, popular in American mid-twentieth century buildings.⁴⁴ Architects

³⁸ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015

³⁹ Wolf Von Eckardt, *Mid-Century Architecture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), page 23.

⁴⁰ Alan Hess, *Frank Lloyd Wright Mid-Century Modern* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2007), pgs 11-17.

⁴¹ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

⁴² Wolf Von Eckardt, *Mid-Century Architecture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), page 13.

⁴³ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

⁴⁴ Claudette Stager and Martha Carver, eds., *Looking Beyond the Highway, Dixie Roads and Culture* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006), pg 160; “Architectural Screen Blocks,” *Carroll’s Building*

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used these decorative and functional blocks to diffuse exterior light without blocking the outdoor feel while still creating a privacy barrier. This feature, a common facet in the middle of the twentieth century of both commercial and residential construction, offered minimal decoration, along with the functionality of limited solar protection. Stowers, Sr. rarely used the same style of block, although the panels he designed generally were suspended within their metal frame; the screen block portion of the walls did not span floor to ceiling as was the general practice. Stowers, Sr. incorporated this feature because he found a local plant that made consistent clay blocks. With the availability, Stowers, Sr. liked to experiment with different designs and shadow patterns.⁴⁵

The south elevation, which is the main entrance, also blended the landscaping into the design; the landscaping included a rock garden and a tree for shade to accent the building. The landscaping, which currently closely matches the original scheme intended by the architect, reflected the modernist view of incorporating landscaping into the design of the building.⁴⁶

Another mid-century feature Stowers, Sr. incorporated into the property included the ARKLA heating and cooling system. The system controlled the air temperature using circulated, heated or cooled, water run through pipes. The fan coils remain visible above the bathroom doors. They also originally were located over the cabinets on the north wall and one in the floor. Stowers, Jr. removed the original equipment in approximately 1972 and replaced it with a boiler and chiller, but still used the same pipes and water system.⁴⁷

The building experienced very few changes. In November 2013, when Stowers, Jr. opted to lease the property to the Ecumenical Buddhist Society (EBS), the building and landscaping were remodeled to fit the tenant's needs. The front walkway and porch became an ADA compliant ramp, along with modifications to the entry door with the ADA button. Internally, the bathrooms were expanded into the previous hallway space to comply with ADA requirements. The original terrazzo floor endures in the lobby. The previous office area of Dan Stowers, Sr. persists and exists as a reception area with coat and shoe stowage. The room Dan F. Stowers, architect, previously used as conference room changed to a small Tibetan Buddhist practice room that still displays the original Mexican terrazzo wall. During building construction, contractors cut the poured slab of terrazzo into tiles to offer a unique look.⁴⁸ The drafting room on the north side of the offices contained a small walled-off kitchenette. The EBS removed one wall to open up the area, and covered the asbestos tile floor with bamboo. With these minimal changes, mid-century design and office features remain evident. The small "plan room" within the lobby exhibits the original Executone Intercom System, which remains visible on the small

Materials, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://carrollsbuidingmaterials.com/concrete-block/architectural-screen-blocks/>;
"Mid-Century Breeze Blocks," *American Standard Time*, accessed April 23, 2015,
<http://www.americanstandardtime.com/mid-century-breeze-blocks/>.

⁴⁵ Dan F. Stowers, Jr. (architect), discussion with Nikki Senn and Rachel Silva, February 13, 2015.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Rachel Silva, "Sandwiching in History, Archived Tour Scripts, May 8, 2015 – Dan Stowers Office Building," Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Department of Arkansas Heritage, accessed May 12, 2015, <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/tours-events-workshops/sandwiching-schedule/archive.aspx>.

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glossed-in room. While some changes are noticeable, there are still many original features and the exterior experienced minimal modifications.

Summary

The Dan Stowers Office Building is a very good example of mid-century modern influences on the International style. The architectural design remains almost completely intact from 1961, which makes this building stand out among mid-century construction. The changes to landscaping and the front entrance ramp are minimal and do not detract from the integrity of the property. The well-maintained building displays the typical elements, such as flat roofline with colored trim accent, asymmetrical design, floor-to-ceiling glazing system, new materials (enameled panels), and the curtain wall of windows. While exterior decoration is minimal, the fenestration adds subtle detail. The Dan Stowers Office Building emphasizes the modernist idea of incorporating the outdoors into the building interior through the north wall of windows, which was incorporated into the design to utilize the natural light in the room intended for drafting. The area transitioned from residential to commercial during the middle of the twentieth century. The Dan Stowers Office Building exemplifies the trend of replacing residential dwellings with commercial buildings near the Arkansas State Capitol. While the historic context has changed throughout the years, the building remains as a connection to the modernist ideals in the mid-century that have shaped our society today. As a tangible example of an era past, the Dan Stowers Office Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its association with the mid-century modernist influence on the International style. The building, which is currently leased by a religious organization, is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A**.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): PU4627

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

AD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 S | Easting: 565145 | Northing: 3845397 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot 9, Block 6, Deaf Mute Addition to the City of Little Rock

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this commercial structure.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Nikki Senn, Intern/Researcher
organization: Capitol Zoning District Commission
street & number: 410 South Battery Street
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201
date: May 15, 2015

name/title: Callie Williams, National Register Historian (Editor)
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500, Tower Building
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201
e-mail calliew@arkansasheritage.org
telephone: 501-324-9880
date: May 22, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Dan Stowers Office Building

City or Vicinity: Little Rock

County: Pulaski

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Callie Williams, National Register Historian, AHPP

Date Photographed: August 15, 2014

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

1 of 11: south (front) and east facades, camera facing northwest.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0001)

2 of 11: north (rear) and east facades, camera facing southwest.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0002)

3 of 11: north (rear) façade, camera facing south.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0003)

4 of 11: west façade, camera facing northeast.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0004)

5 of 11: south (front) façade, camera facing northeast.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0005)

6 of 11: detail of front entry, camera facing northwest.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0006)

7 of 11: interior, front entry and waiting area, camera facing southeast.
(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0007)

8 of 11: interior, original drawing storage area and reception area, camera facing south.

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(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0008)

9 of 11: interior, space with original bookshelves, camera facing west.

(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0009)

10 of 11: interior, detail of geometric detail on concrete blocks, camera facing north.

(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0010)

11 of 11: interior, window wall in drafting room, camera facing north.

(AR_PulaskiCounty_DanStowersOfficeBuilding_0011)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.