

# CHET HOLIFIELD FEDERAL BUILDING

LAGUNA NIGUEL, CALIFORNIA

Determination of Eligibility



Prepared for  
**U.S. General Services Administration**

50 United Nations Plaza  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Prepared by  
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January 29, 2016



## SECTION I - INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose of the Report

The Chet Holifield Federal Building located at 24000 Avila Road in Laguna Niguel, California houses various Federal agencies. The 1,003,041 square foot, seven-story building sits on a 92-acre landscaped site. Commissioned by the Rockwell Corporation, the complex was constructed in 1968-1971 and designed by William L. Pereira & Associates. The Modernist complex exhibits a stepped pyramidal and Brutalist style influence in its geometric design.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the eligibility of the Chet Holifield Federal Building for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This determination will allow the General Services Administration (GSA) to appropriately address any future alterations and renovations to the site and buildings while extending the useful life of the complex.

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act under Section 110, requires the GSA to identify, evaluate, and nominate properties under its jurisdiction that qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It is GSA's policy to identify potentially eligible properties, apply the criteria, and make a preliminary determination. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer is required to make a formal determination. GSA commissioned this report to fulfill its Section 110 obligation for this property.

### B. Methodology

A review of information provided by GSA and archival and historical research was conducted by Heritage Architecture & Planning (Heritage). The on-site evaluation was conducted on September 23, 2014 by Project Architect Carmen Pauli and Historian Eileen Magno of Heritage Architecture & Planning. The Laguna Niguel Historical Society, the County of Orange, the University of Southern California, and the University of California Irvine Library as well as online sources provided necessary background information. Heritage then applied the criteria for evaluation for the National Register of Historic Places including Criteria Consideration G as the property is not over 50 years old.

### C. Project Personnel

The primary investigators and review staff from Heritage Architecture & Planning are Carmen Pauli, Project Architect, Eileen Magno, Historian/Architectural Historian, and Brian S. Rickling, AIA, Principal Architect. All staff members meet or exceed *The Secretary of the Interior's Qualification Standards* as published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heritage Architecture & Planning staff members are qualified under the *Secretary of the Interior's Qualification Standards*. Professional qualifications established by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation* have been developed to assist State, Federal, and Local agencies, and other in identifying qualified professionals under the disciplines of history, archaeology, architectural history, and historic architecture.

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## SECTION II – HISTORY OVERVIEW

The Chet Holifield Federal Building was commissioned in reaction to growing government defense contracts fueled by the Cold War, conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, and the aerospace industry. In 1947, the Berlin Airlift marked the start of Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, a symbolic conflict in which perceptions of aviation played a key role. Defense spending loomed on the horizon as the newly independent Air Force began to lobby for the return of an international capacity for air power, including the design, manufacture, and serving of global strategic bombers capable of delivering the atomic bomb anywhere on the planet.<sup>1</sup> This call for increased aviation and defense technology spurred American firms to develop and incorporate into their designs the technological advances triggered from World War II.<sup>2</sup>

As World War II gave way to the Cold War, other technological developments grew from the aviation industry; aviation led to missiles, and missiles eventually led to aerospace. Facilitating the creation of these new technologies was the close relationship that developed between the aerospace and defense manufacturers and the United States government, which had the resources and capacity to fund research and development budgets for large multi-year projects.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Defense awarded one-quarter of all of its contracts to California in the 1950s. During this period, 15 of the 25 largest aerospace companies in the United States were based in Southern California.<sup>4</sup> Companies such as North American, Douglas, Lockheed, and Northrop developed manufacturing campuses throughout Los Angeles and its adjacent hinterland, Orange County. These California companies experienced a 140 percent increase in employment in the aircraft industry during the Korean War as the 88,400 jobs of 1950 became the 213,000 of 1953.

In August 1957, the United States lost its sense of invulnerability to nuclear attack when the Soviet Union successfully tested the world's first intercontinental ballistic missile.<sup>5</sup> To counter, the United States accelerated development of a protective fleet of land-based missiles.<sup>6</sup> That same year in October 1957, the Soviet Union launched a man-made satellite, *Sputnik*. With this launching, the transition to aerospace industry began and accounted for more than 5.7 percent of all manufacturing jobs in the United States.

By 1959, national defense spending increased by 246 percent, reaching a staggering sum of \$228 billion.<sup>7</sup> At this time, California's defense industry amounted to 40 percent of all defense contracts for manufacturing and research nationwide and had a labor force of six million. Thus, nearly one out of every fifteen working Californians was being supported by the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> By 1963, seventy thousand defense research scientist and/or engineer, who were technically trained and proficient, resided in

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance 1950-1963*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> "The History of the Aerospace Industry." <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-history-of-the-aerospace-industry>. Accessed 11/3/2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ingrad Clausen & Edward A. Miller, "Intelligence Revolution 1960: Retrieving the Corona Imagery that Helped Win the Cold War." (Chantilly, VA: National Reconnaissance Office, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, "The Aerospace Industry in Southern California." (August 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Clausen, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Boeing, "Honoring the Legacy of Autonetics: Anaheim Commemorative Monument Dedication." n.d.

<sup>7</sup> Starr, p. 219. Department of Defense awarded \$50 billion in contracts to California, twice the amount received by any other state.

<sup>8</sup> Starr, p. 227.

Southern California. They lived in suburban areas and newly developed master planned communities, such as Irvine and Laguna Niguel in Orange County.<sup>9</sup>

### Laguna Niguel

Growth and development of communities in areas such as Orange County came at a slower pace than their neighbor Los Angeles. Up until the 1950s, agriculture remained the most important part of Orange County's economy. It was not until the 1960s that South Orange County began to grow with the development of master planned communities including Laguna Niguel, Irvine, and Mission Viejo. Many of these planned communities provided much needed housing for the populating defense workers. These workers travelled by automobile through freeways to their "Cold War campuses" where they tackled cutting-edge missile engineering and/or deployment.

Originally part of the Rancho Niguel, the city of Laguna Niguel was first inhabited by the Juaneño and the Gabrielino Indians. The area that is now Laguna Niguel would eventually be under Spanish control by the mid-1700s. These conquered lands were deeded to the Catholic Church, and later the King of Spain awarded land grants to various individuals. The Mexican government eventually came into possession of large parcels of land in the area and in 1842, the Mexican Governor of California granted Juan Avila 13,316 acres, part of present day Laguna Niguel. Avila retained the land until 1865, when a severe drought killed off most of his cattle.<sup>10</sup> In 1895, Lewis Moulton of the Moulton Company purchased Rancho Niguel along with significant other portions of the surrounding area from farmers who were hard-pressed due to the local drought in the area. The Moulton Company would eventually control over 19,000 acres of local ranch land.

In 1959, the Laguna Niguel Corporation was established by Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes of Boston, making Laguna Niguel one of the first master planned communities in California. Victor Gruen and Associates, an Austrian architect, developed a community plan for 7,100 acres. By 1961, land sales commenced in the Monarch Bay and Laguna Terrace subdivisions and by the mid-1960s, Laguna Niguel was primed as a potential site for North American Aviation's growing Autonetics division. In 1971, Avco Community Developer acquired the Laguna Niguel Plan and initiated development as set forth in the original master plan. By 1989, Laguna Niguel became the 29<sup>th</sup> city incorporated with Orange County.<sup>11</sup>

### Building History

At the same time Laguna Niguel was being established as a master planned community in 1959, the Los Angeles-based North American Aviation began moving its expanding Autonetics division to Anaheim.<sup>12</sup> Autonetics history and growth coincided with that of the missile and space age in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. At its peak in the 1960s, the Autonetics workforce numbered nearly 36,000 men and women in the

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<sup>9</sup> Starr, p. 222.

<sup>10</sup> "History and Statistics: About the City of Laguna Niguel." [www.cityoflagunaniguel.org/index.aspx?nid=388](http://www.cityoflagunaniguel.org/index.aspx?nid=388) Accessed November 12, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Boeing, "Honoring the Legacy of Autonetics: Anaheim Commemorative Monument Dedication." Autonetics would be partially responsible for the development of the Minuteman missile contributing to its navigation and flight control hardware and software. Autonetics ultimately supplied more than 3,000 inertial guidance and control systems for the Minuteman I and its successors, the II and III.

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Anaheim site.<sup>13</sup> The company was in need of larger facilities to continue to meet the industry's demanding need. As early as 1966, the company chose the Laguna Niguel area because of its isolation and as a secured location for its Autonetics' Data System Division. The following year, North American Aviation merged with Rockwell Standard to become the North American Rockwell Corporation; it subsequently became known as Rockwell.

The newly formed Rockwell then purchased 1,340 acres from the Laguna Niguel Corporation and the Moulton Ranch and hired William Pereira & Associates Planning & Architecture to design the building which would service the enormous demands of the aerospace industry and the Vietnam conflict. The seven-story structure was designed to resemble an ancient Babylonian temple tower called a "Ziggurat." Its nearly one million square foot building was to employ 7,500 workers. It was to be the world's largest electronics manufacturing plant of its time and the largest building in Orange County.

In 1968, an \$18.5 million contract was awarded to Huber, Hunt, and Nichols, Inc., general contractors, and construction began immediately.<sup>14</sup> Rockwell planned to use the building's lower floors for electronics manufacturing and assembly, the middle floors for engineering, and the top floors for management offices. The facility was to be part of the planned community including residences and other industrial buildings. However, by 1971, when construction was complete, the aerospace industry hit a downturn with both the space program and the Vietnam War ramping down.<sup>15</sup> Plans for the plant were changed and eventually Rockwell abandoned the use of the site.<sup>16</sup> For several years the building remained unoccupied.<sup>17</sup>

Unable to sell the building, Rockwell contacted the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) regional officials in San Francisco in 1971 to determine whether the government was interested in exchanging the building for government-owned defense plants at El Segundo and Canoga Park, California, and certain machinery and equipment located in Los Angeles. Negotiations followed and the trade was made in March 1974.<sup>18</sup> Since that time, GSA has occupied the building.<sup>19</sup>

In 1978, the building was renamed in honor of former Congressman Chester Earl Holifield. Also referred to as Chet Holifield, the former Representative was first elected to the House in 1942 and went on to serve 15 more terms. He represented the 78th district in Los Angeles County.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Holifield specialized in atomic energy matters and was influential in legislation enabling development of military and peacetime nuclear programs. He led a successful effort stopping plans to put the military in sole

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. From 1958-1970, Autonetics designed and produced more than 3,000 radar and fire control sensors to give fighter-bomber aircraft a precision all-weather weapons delivery capability. These sensors gave aircrafts the capability to enter enemy territory undetected, release their payload, and return to base.

<sup>14</sup> "Gigantic Building to Go Up." *Corona Daily Independent*. November 8, 1968.

<sup>15</sup> "Unemployment Shocks Orange County: Jobless Pay Lines Swollen." *Star News*, November 7, 1970. Recession due to slowdown in U.S. defense spending spurred an increase in the unemployment rate beginning in the 1970s. By November 1970, Rockwell, the largest employer in Orange County, laid off approximately 350 employees.

<sup>16</sup> The Autonetics Division remained in their Anaheim facility. From the early 1970s until the 1990s, 55% of all major components used on the satellites were designed, built, and tested at the Anaheim site.

<sup>17</sup> "In Laguna Niguel \$25-million Rockwell Plant Empty for 3 Years." *Press Telegram*. September 28, 1973.

<sup>18</sup> "Ziggurat." *Press Telegram*. February 11, 1976.

<sup>19</sup> John Hardy, "Laguna Niguel's Seven Tiered Ziggurat to House 'Precious' National Documents." *Santa Ana Register*. May 1, 1974. The National Archives were located within the building.

<sup>20</sup> "Chester Holifield, 91, Congressman for 32 Years." *New York Times*, February 9, 1995.

control of atomic energy, and in 1946, he persuaded Congress to pass legislation creating the civilian Atomic Energy Commission.<sup>21</sup> He voluntarily retired in 1974 after 42 years of public service.<sup>22</sup>

By 1984, 29 percent of the building was occupied by various Federal agencies. At that time GSA attempted to sell it, but was unsuccessful. By 1986, the building was 63 percent occupied. GSA submitted a prospectus to Congress on June 2, 1986 to complete renovation of the Holifield Building for continued long-term occupancy.<sup>23</sup>

### Original Project Team

Architect:	William Pereira & Associates Planning & Architecture
Structural Engineers:	Brandow & Johnston
Mechanical/Electrical Engineers:	Budlong & Associates
Civil Engineer:	Shuirman-Simpson
Landscape Architect:	Donald Brinkerhoff Associates
General Contractor:	Huber, Hunt, and Nichols, Inc.

#### *William Pereira & Associates Planning & Architecture*<sup>24</sup>

William Leonard Pereira (April 25, 1909-November 13, 1989) graduated from the University of Illinois' School of Architecture, and began his career in his home town of Chicago. His earliest architectural experience was helping to draft the master plan for the 1933 "A Century of Progress." Chicago World's Fair. With his brother, Hal, he designed the Esquire Theater, considered one of Chicago's best examples of Art Deco.

In the 1930s Pereira and his brother moved to Los Angeles. Working as a solo architect, he designed the first buildings for the Motion Picture Country House in Woodland Hills, CA (1942). After a short stint working in Hollywood as an art director and occasional producer, he continued his architecture career first as a professor of architecture at the University of Southern California (USC) and then formed a partnership with Charles Luckman in 1950. One of their most well-known buildings in their nine year partnership was the Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport (in collaboration with Paul Williams and Welton Becket). They parted in 1959 and Pereira formed his third and final company, William L. Pereira and Associates. In the 1960s and 70s he and his team completed over 250 projects.

By the time of his death, Pereira had over 400 projects to his name. His buildings often had a unique style, taking on unusual forms such as pyramids and ziggurats and generally projected a grand presence through their towering scale and heavy appearance. Among the noted building and planning projects completed in California include the CBS Television City (1953), University of Southern California Master Plan (1960), Irvine Ranch Master Plan (1961), University of California San Diego Central/Geisel Library (1965), the Transamerica Corporate Headquarters Tower (1973), and the LAX Master Plan

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> "Former Congressman Chet Holifield Dies at 91." *Los Angeles Times*. February 8, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> On June 10, 1986, attorneys for a real estate firm wrote to GSA expressing interest in submitting an unsolicited proposal to purchase the Holifield Building for \$60 million. The real estate firm intended to lease the building to an aircraft company. GSA replied that with the planned renovations, the occupancy level would be at 71 percent, and that would be in the best interest of the government to retain the building.

<sup>24</sup> "William Pereira." *Modernsandiego.com*. Accessed 10/10/2014.



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(1967).<sup>25</sup> William Pereira was one of the few architects recognized on the cover of *Time Magazine*. His stylish and yet efficient architecture had a tremendous impact on California from the 1950s through the 1980s.

### *Donald Brinkerhoff Associates*<sup>26</sup>

Donald Brinkerhoff graduated from CalPoly San Luis Obispo in 1952 and is a distinguished recipient of the College of Fellows from the American Society of Landscape Architects for his outstanding body of work and his overall contributions to the profession of landscape architecture. He is noted for originating the terms “softscape” and “hardscape” to more easily distinguish plant materials from pools, walkways, and walls. With over 50 years of experience, Mr. Brinkerhoff continues to design today through his firm Lifescapes International, Inc.

### *Huber, Hunt & Nichols*<sup>27</sup>

Founded 1944 in Indianapolis, Indiana by Paul Hunt, Arber Huber, and Harry Nichols, the general contractor was a privately-held organization and known as Huber, Hunt & Nichols at that time. Huber and Nichols left the company shortly after its founding and Paul Hunt carried on as sole owner. The cornerstone of Hunt’s founding began during World War II with industrial/manufacturing facilities.

Huber, Hunt & Nichols formed its construction management department in 1960 in response to increasing involvement of construction technology and know-how during building design. During the 1960s, Hunt continued repeat business with the Big Three: General Motors, Chrysler Corporation, and Ford Motor Company. They also completed the company’s first high-rise building—Indianapolis City-County Building—and experienced growth in the higher education, healthcare, government, and corporate office building market sectors. By 2000, Huber, Hunt & Nichols became known as Hunt Construction Group.

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<sup>25</sup> James Steele, ed. *William Pereira*. (Los Angeles: Architectural Guild Press, 2002), 140-143. The Geisel/Central Library was commissioned in 1957 with the firm Pereira and Luckman by the Regents of the University of California.

<sup>26</sup> Lifescapes International, Inc. “History.” <http://lifescapesintl.com/about>. Accessed 1/26/2016.

<sup>27</sup> Hunt Construction Group. “Timeline/History.” <http://huntconstructiongroup.com/about/history>. Accessed 2/23/2014.

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## SECTION III - DESCRIPTION

The Chet Holifield Federal Building was designed in 1968 by William Pereira & Associates Planning & Architecture. The building is characterized by its horizontal massing, ziggurat form, sloped walls, and textured pre-cast concrete cladding. The building is situated on a slightly sloped site which allows portions of the lower floors to be recessed into the hillside, accentuating the horizontality of the design.

### Construction Chronology

- July 29, 1968 Date on the original Construction Drawings. William Pereira & Associates Planning & Architecture designed the building for Autonetics, a division of the North American Rockwell Corporation.
- 1971 Construction of the building is completed.
- 1971-1974 Although the building is completed, it remained unoccupied.
- 1974 The North American Rockwell Corporation negotiates a deal with the U.S. General Services Administration to trade the building for surplus federal government facilities of equal value.
- 1974 GSA officially takes occupancy of the building.
- 1977 Repair of water leakage.<sup>1</sup>
- 1978 The building is renamed in honor of former Congressman Chet Holifield.
- 1987 Renovation of the Chet Holifield Federal Building.
- 1996 Energy-efficient electrical and mechanical upgrade.
- 2003 Energy-efficient roofing upgrade.
- 2005 Elevator and escalator upgrades.
- 2010 HVAC/Mechanical Improvements.

### A. Site

The Chet Holifield Federal Building is located in the community of Laguna Niguel. At the time of its original construction in 1971, it was the only building in the area. In recent years the surrounding properties have been developed for commercial and residential uses. Relatively few changes however, have occurred on the Chet Holifield building site. Changes to the site include: the re-alignment of Alicia Parkway, repurposing of some of the original parking areas, and changing the primary building approach

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<sup>1</sup> "Ziggurat Repair to Cost \$62,000." *The Register*. September 20, 1977.

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and entrance from the north to the south side of the building. The relocation of the primary site entry does not affect the building's significance as the north entry is still accessible.

Additionally, an outdoor play area has been added in a former parking area on the northwest corner of the site. The play area includes a sheet metal shade canopy, chain link fencing, new paving materials, and play structures. Due to the topography of the site and surrounding landscaping, the new play area is well shielded from view and it does not substantially detract from the original character of the site.

The site also includes a detached storage and maintenance building facility (Building 502), helipad, and pump house (Building 503) all located to the west of the main building and constructed at the same time. Building 502 does not share the same architectural detailing as the Chet Holifield Federal Building. Guard Stations are located at the east and west entries.

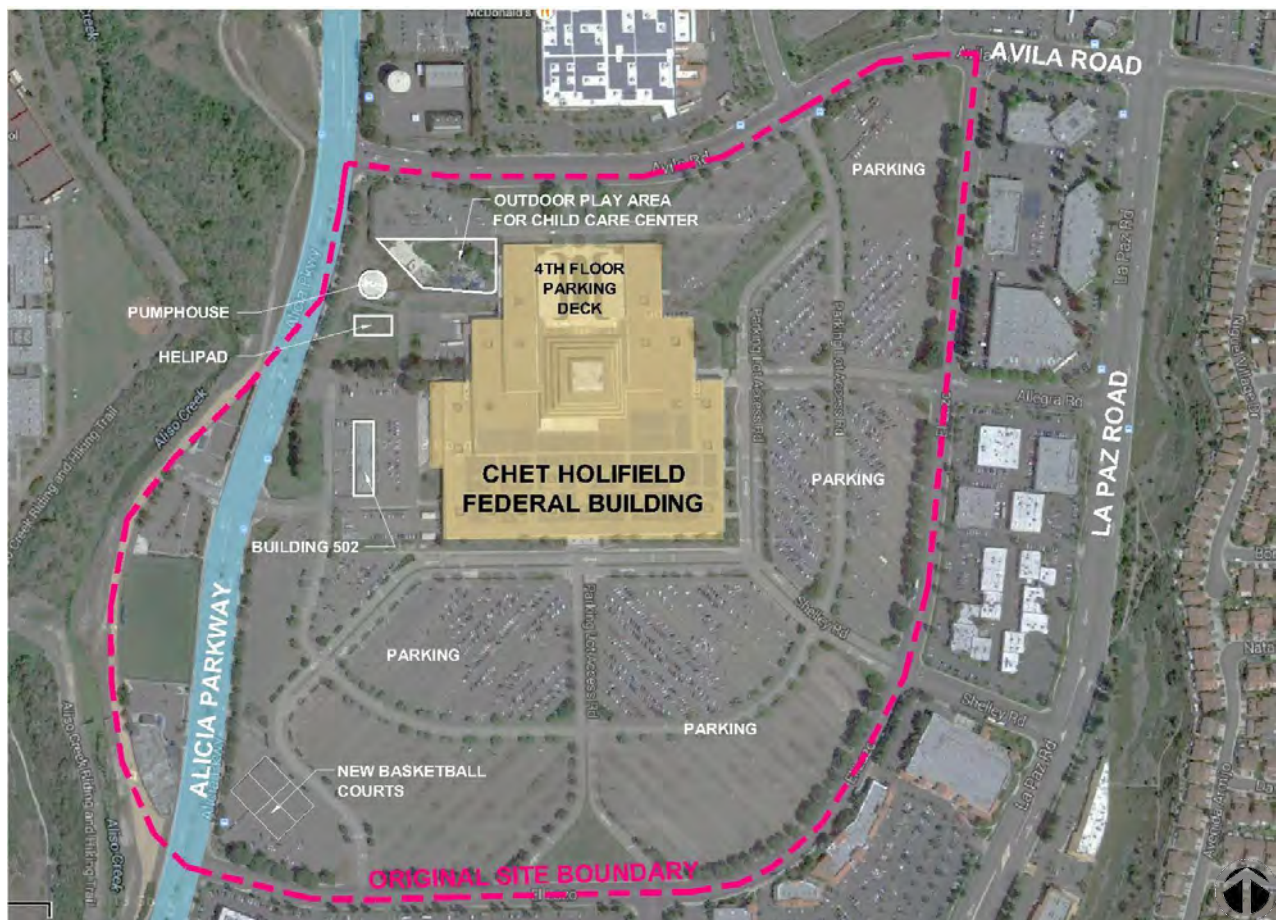


Figure 1: Site for the Chet Holifield Federal Building property showing the building and surrounding parking lots. The original site boundary is shown dashed (in red) and the realignment of Alicia Parkway is shown in blue.

## Parking:

According to the original drawings, the Chet Holifield property included 5,814 parking spaces in surface lots around the building. Eighty additional parking spaces were located on the fourth floor parking deck at the main entrance on the north side of the building. The fourth floor parking was actually located on



The original 1968 drawings indicate a double row of multi-trunk European Olive trees (Olea europaea) planted in pyramidal berms flanking the front entry drive. The drawings also show pre-cast concrete planters at the perimeter of the parking deck. The planters have been removed and the olive trees have been replaced with shrubs. Additionally, shrubs and annual flowering plants have been added in the original lawn area in the center. However, the general layout of the parking deck remains unchanged including the vehicle access roads, sidewalks, curbs, and planting areas. The north entry and parking deck were the original main entrance to the site. Although the main public entrance has been moved and the parking area is no longer used, this area continues to contribute to the overall historical character of the building.

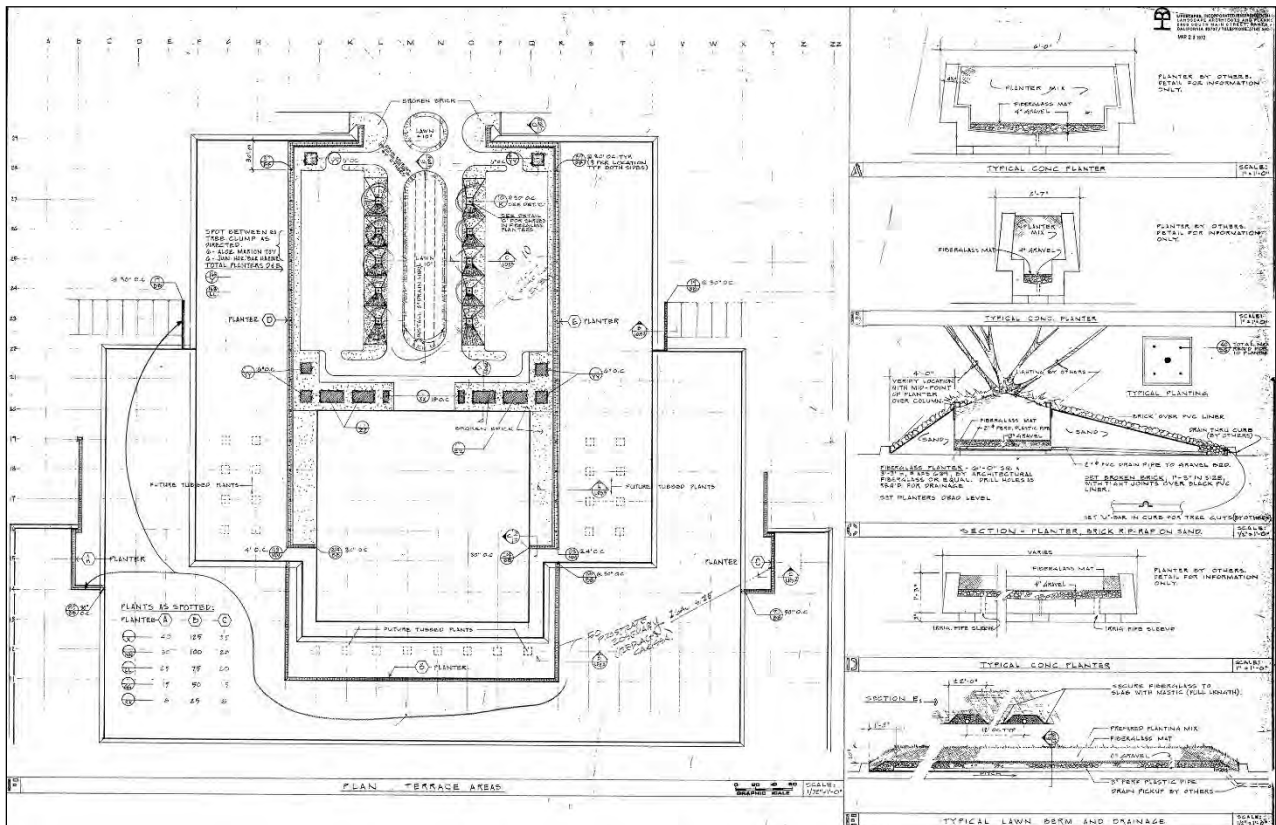


Figure 3: Original terrace plan, July 29, 1968.

### B. Main Building

#### Exterior:

The exterior of the building retains a high degree of integrity and is the most significant. The main character-defining features of the building, including the massing, stepped ziggurat shape, linear fenestration, and pebble-textured pre-cast concrete cladding remain intact. The building has been painted a pale yellow color. Early photographs of the building indicate that it was originally gray, possibly unfinished concrete.

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The Chet Holifield Federal Building has a concrete structural system with cast-in-place concrete columns on a 30-foot structural grid and a “spancrete” pre-cast concrete floor system at each level. The floor system below the fourth floor traffic deck on the north side of the building and at the helipad on the upper roof is more substantial to accommodate the additional structural loads associated with vehicular traffic and parking. The structural deck in these areas consists of a concrete deck with 2-foot deep pan joists. The exposed concrete columns of the building were originally labeled in accordance with the structural grid noted on the 1968 construction drawings. The notation is still visible on many of the existing columns. There is no evidence of any significant changes to the original concrete structural systems.

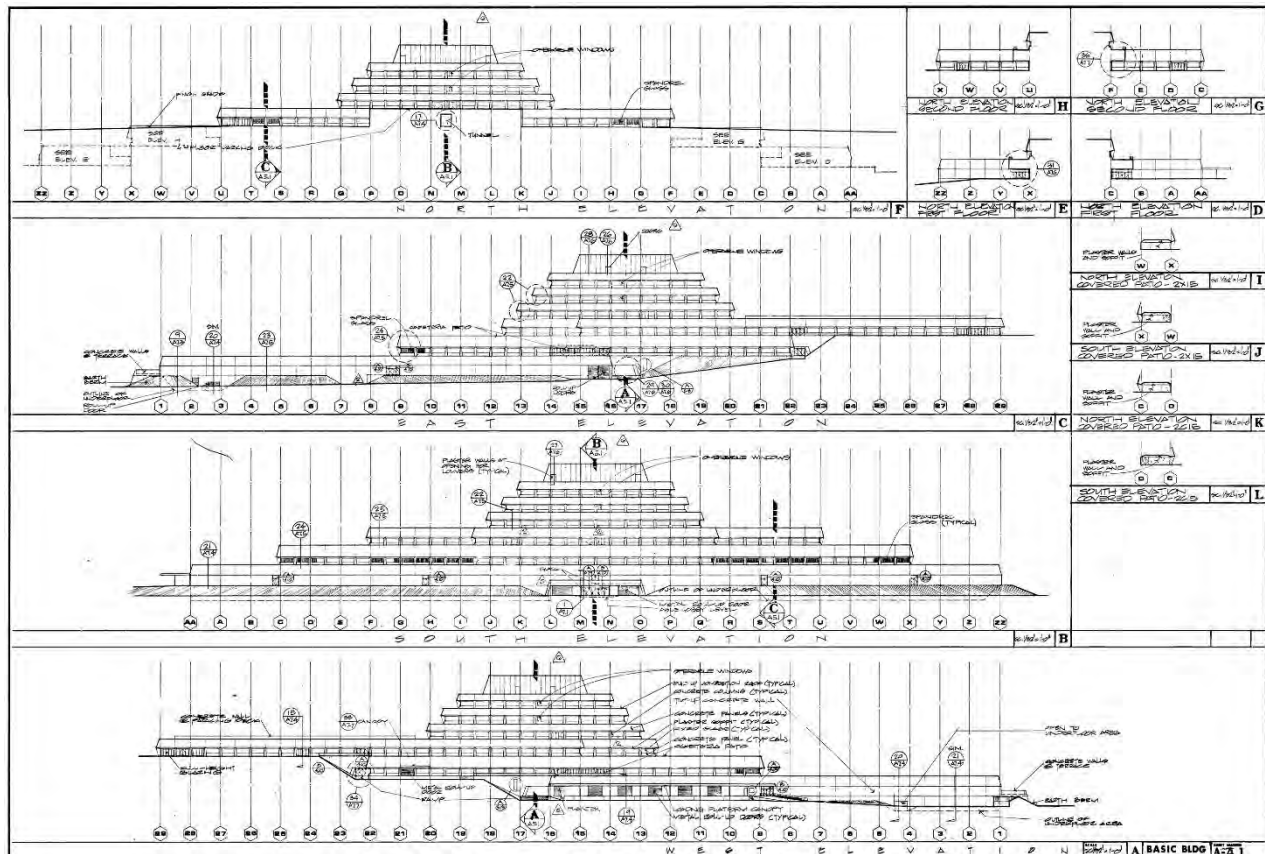


Figure 4: Original building elevations showing the stepped ziggurat shape, July 29, 1968.

The roofs of the building are generally flat and finished with composition roofing. The upper roof was originally used as a helipad. In recent years, mechanical and communications equipment have been added to the upper roof and the helipad has been moved to an adjacent area on the site. Textured fiberglass fins have been added to help screen some of the equipment. Solar panels have also been added on the lower roofs at the south side of the building.

The exterior window system appears to be original. They are single-pane dark bronze aluminum windows with a dark coating on the glass. The original 1968 specifications indicate Series 900 windows by Soule Architectural Products or equal. The specifications also note gray-colored plate glass for all

exterior windows. Exterior doors at the building generally consist of dark bronze colored aluminum framed doors with glass lites that match the dark coating of the windows.

### **Interior:**

#### *General:*

The interior of the Chet Holifield Federal Building is generally occupied by private office suites housing various federal agencies. There are relatively few significant character-defining interior spaces. The original Main Lobby located on the north end of the fourth floor is the most significant interior space in the building. The fourth floor lobby features a decorative wood ceiling treatment and wood wall paneling. Other important interior spaces include the elevator lobbies and the main corridors. The offices and support spaces in the rest of the building are generally repetitive and lack significant specialized interior detailing to be considered important to the overall historical character of the building.

According to the original drawings, the main office areas in the building were originally large open areas without interior walls and partitions in most areas of the building. In many spaces, walls have been added to subdivide the spaces into smaller office suites and private offices. The additional walls are evident because the ceiling grid does not line up with the walls. The walls, which were added after the ceiling finish, bisect the tile grid and light fixtures in many locations. Since these changes have generally occurred in secondary interior office spaces, the overall impact to the historical character of the building is minor.

The original interior finishes, such as flooring and interior paint, have been replaced several times to facilitate continued use of the building for offices. In general, the original interior finishes in the building appear to have been fairly standard including carpet, resilient flooring, ceramic tile, and painted surfaces. These finishes have been replaced with similar, though more contemporary, finishes. Overall the renewal of interior finishes is an anticipated change in this building and it has not significantly impacted the historical character of the building because the original finishes were not of particular craftsmanship or significance.

#### *Escalators:*

There are two sets of escalators which connect the main north/south corridors from the underfloor to the third floor. The underfloor, as noted in the original drawings, is the south side entrance level below the first floor. The original 1968 drawings indicate that there was originally one escalator going up from the underfloor to the third floor. The existing escalators, which go down from the third to the underfloor (on the west wall of the corridor), were added during the 1987 remodel, replacing the original stairs. The replacement of the original stairs does not significantly impact the historical character of the building because the original stairs were not of particular craftsmanship or significance. Above the third floor, the fourth through seventh floors can be accessed by interior stairs or elevators.

#### *Ceilings:*

One of the few original decorative interior features in the Chet Holifield Federal Building is the wood ceiling treatment that is located in primary interior spaces such as the Main Lobby on the fourth floor, elevator lobbies on all levels, above the escalators, and at the recessed entry on the south side of the underfloor. The decorative ceiling finish includes suspended, evenly-spaced, clear-finished wood boards. The ceiling finish contributes to the architectural character of the building.



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The rest of the interior ceilings are primarily finished with suspended acoustical ceilings with recessed fluorescent lighting. The ceiling finish and lighting appear to be original.

### *Restrooms:*

Restroom finishes have generally been replaced. The original specifications called for ceramic tile on walls and floors with baked enamel toilet partitions. The ceramic tile, toilet partitions, and fixtures have been replaced in all restrooms. The general location, configuration, and size of the restrooms appear to match the original design.

### *Interior Doors:*

The original interior doors were wood slab doors with a light stain finish in metal frames. Many of the original doors remain at the main corridors.

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Image 1: Aerial photo of the Chet Holifield Federal Building site shortly after the completion of construction in 1971. The land surrounding the site is undeveloped. (Source: General Services Administration.)



Image 2: The Chet Holifield Federal Building under construction. (Source: General Services Administration.)

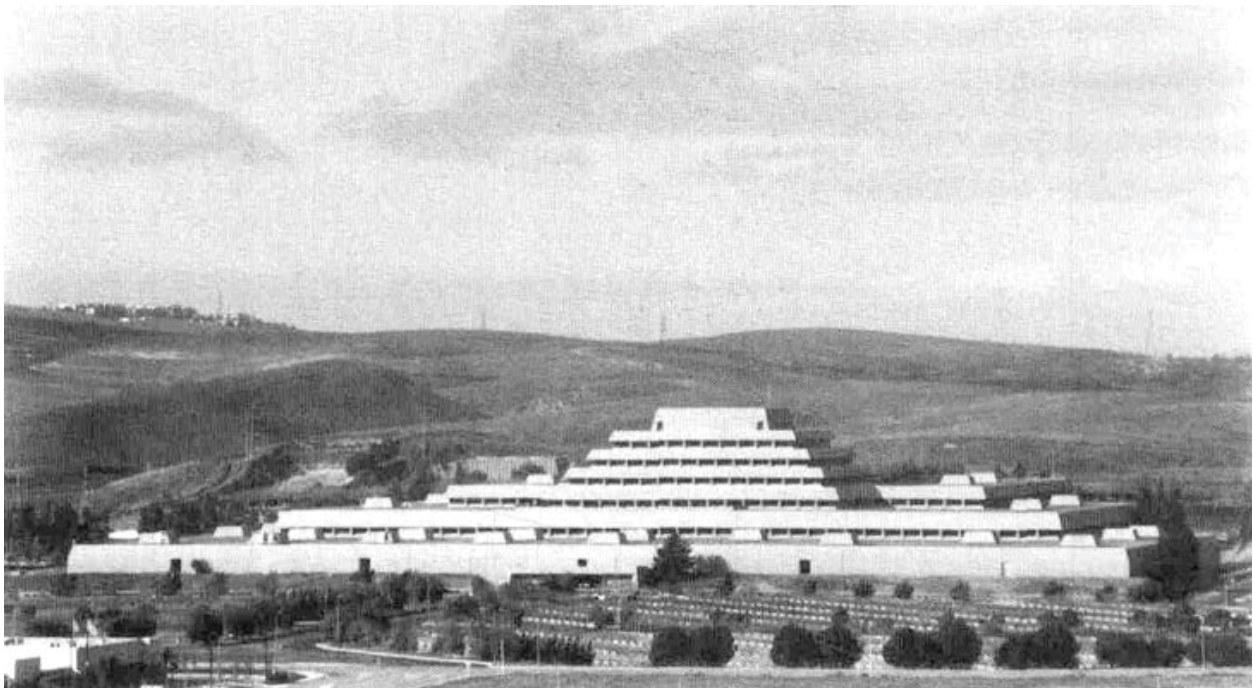


Image 3: The Chet Holifield Federal Building ca. 1971 looking north. (Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* Volume 38 No. 2.)

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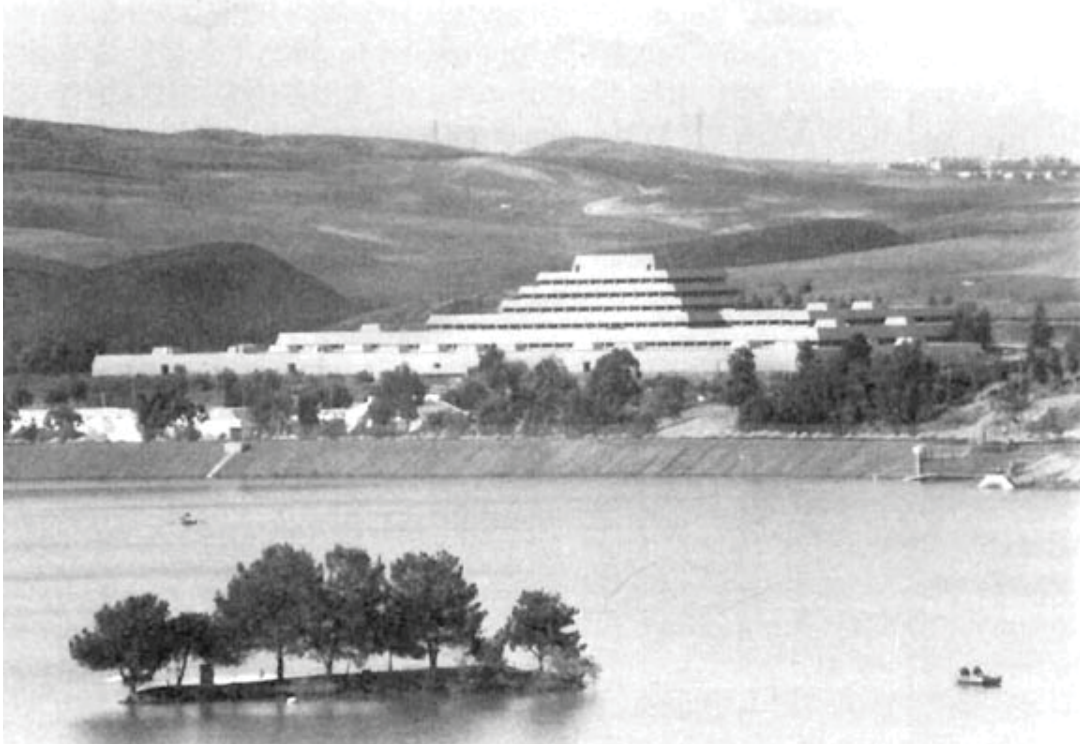


Image 4: The Chet Holifield Federal Building ca. 1970s looking north. The area in the foreground is flooded. (Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* Volume 38 No. 2.)



Image 5: The genealogical research room located on the first floor, ca. 1974. (Source: *The Journal of San Diego History* Volume 38 No. 2.)



Image 6: The Chet Holifield Federal Building looking northeast ca. 1970s. This early color photo shows the original gray color of the exterior. (Source: General Services Administration)



Image 7: Current Google Maps aerial photo of the Chet Holifield Federal Building site. The surrounding area on all sides of the property have been developed with numerous commercial and residential uses. (Source: Google Maps)

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Image 8: The original main entry to the Chet Holifield Federal Building on the north side of the building. The entry drive leads to two parking areas which are located on top of the third floor roof deck. These lots are currently closed and the main public entrance has been moved to the opposite side of the building.



Image 9: The original main entrance located on the north facade.



Image 10: The parking area at the north side of the building looking down from the roof.



Image 11: The north wall of the third floor looking west.



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Image 12: The east facade looking southeast.



Image 13: The east entrance looking west.



Image 14: The south facade of the Chet Holifield Federal Building looking north from the parking entrance.



Image 15: The south facade looking northwest toward the south entrance. This entrance now serves as the main public entrance to the building.

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Image 16: The west facade looking southeast toward the loading dock.



Image 17: A secondary building entrance on the west facade.



Image 18: The loading dock on the west facade of the building.



Image 19: A detached storage and maintenance building to the west of the loading area. This building was constructed at the same time as the main building, but it does not share the same architectural detailing.



Image 20: An outdoor play area that has been added at the northwest corner of the site in a former parking area.



Image 21: The southwest corner of the parking area. The outer sections of parking are under utilized and not regularly maintained.



Image 22: Close-up view of the typical exterior wall finish. The pre-cast concrete panels have a pebble texture.



Image 23: The main entry corridor at the south entrance looking north toward the main escalators.

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Image 24: A typical interior corridor on the first floor. The suspended ceiling is original and matches interior photos from the 1970s (Refer to Image 5).



Image 25: Typical original interior flush wood doors on the first floor.



Image 26: The cafeteria on the second floor. The basic size and configuration of the cafeteria are original. The interior fixtures and finishes have been replaced.



Image 27: The cafeteria dining area.



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Image 28: Outdoor dining area adjacent to the cafeteria on the east side of the building.



Image 29: A covered vestibule at the outdoor dining area. The wood ceiling finish is original. The same detail is used at other primary interior spaces including elevator lobbies, escalator areas, and the south entrance.



Image 30: A numbered structural column. The numbers corresponds with the original drawings and can be found on structural columns throughout the building.



Image 31: A typical corridor on the second floor. The interior finishes in this corridor have been replaced.



Image 32: A typical office area on the second floor.



Image 33: A typical restroom on the second floor. Finishes, fixtures, toilet partitions, and accessories have been replaced.



Image 34: The escalators on the second floor. The suspended ceiling and wood ceiling finish are original.

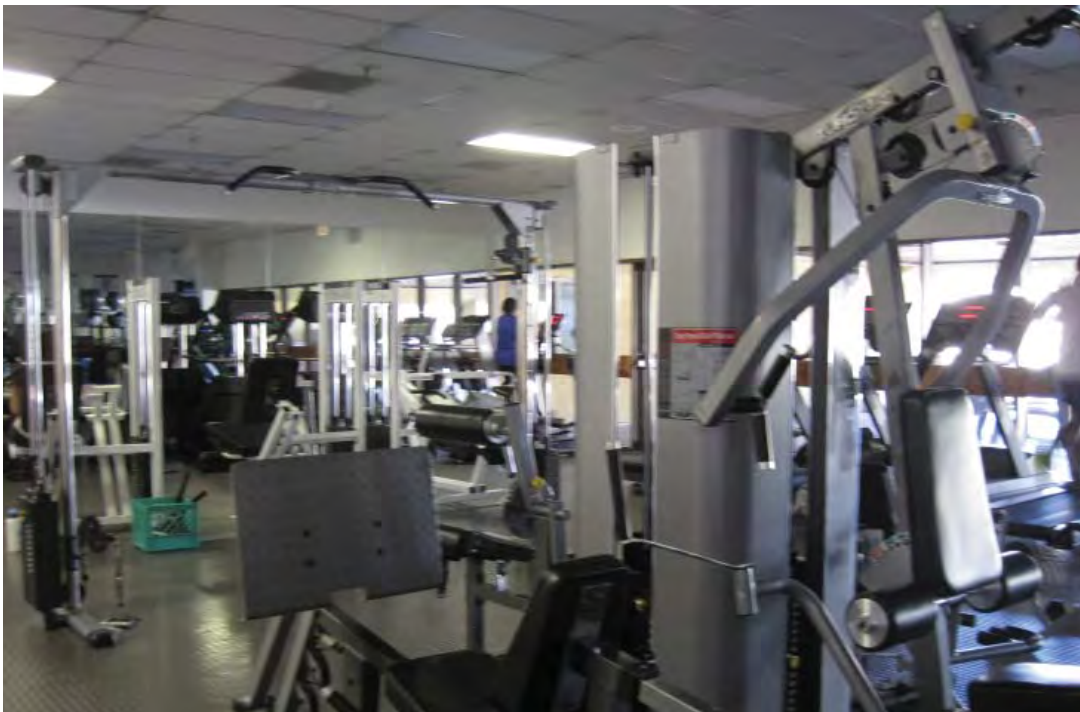


Image 35: The fitness center on the second floor. The interior finishes have been replaced.

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Image 36: A typical office area on the third floor. The suspended ceiling appears to be original, but other interior finishes have been replaced.



Image 37: The child care center on the third floor. A new sheet metal shade canopy has been added on the original exterior wall.



Image 38: The interior of the child care center. Interior finishes and fixtures have been replaced.



Image 39: A typical office area on the third floor. The ceiling appears to be original but other finishes and fixtures have been replaced.

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Image 40: The original main lobby on the fourth floor. This space features original wood wall paneling and a decorative wood ceiling finish.



Image 41: A detail of the original wood ceiling finish at the fourth floor lobby.



Image 42: The sixth floor roof. Textured fiberglass fins have been added to conceal some of the added equipment on the upper edge of the roof.

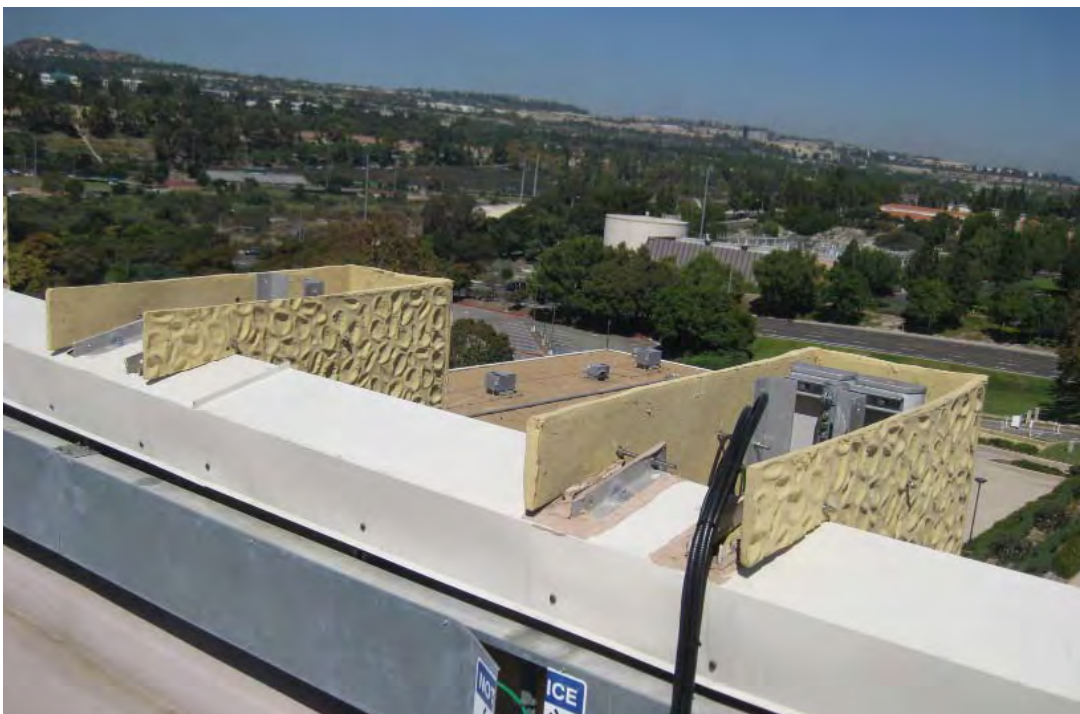


Image 43: A detail of the added fiberglass equipment screens from above.



## SECTION IV – ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION

### A. National Register Criterion

In order to evaluate properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, the Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.4) was applied according to the guidelines set forth in the National Register Bulletin 15 and 16A. According to National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, the resource must be associated with an important historic context.<sup>1</sup> Second, the resource must “possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.” Third, the resource must meet at least one of four “evaluation criteria” for determining the quality of “significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture”. If a property is less than 50 years old, it may also be eligible under Criteria Consideration G upon achieving “significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.”<sup>2</sup>

#### *A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building was constructed as a result of the defense and aerospace industry build-up. However, the building was never utilized as it was originally intended and left empty and abandoned by Rockwell for four years before its transfer of ownership to GSA. In addition, the project did not spur local trends as the surrounding areas were developed as residential and commercial.

Since the property was not originally constructed by GSA, a discussion of the five sub-categories listed in the GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool is not applicable for this building. Therefore, considering the National Register requirements only, it is our professional opinion that the Chet Holifield Federal Building does not meet eligibility for listing under Criterion A.

#### *B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past*

The complex was renamed in 1978 to Chet Holifield Federal Building in honor of the former Representative Chester Earl Holifield. However, naming a property in honor of an important individual does not make the site significant. In addition, historical research failed to reveal any other exceptionally significant persons that would justify being exceptionally important to local, state, or national history. Therefore, the complex does not meet eligibility for listing under Criterion B.

#### *C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building is an excellent example of a modernist architectural and landscape design within the local context. The Chet Holifield Federal Building is Modern with stepped pyramidal influences similar to that of the ancient ziggurats. The building has several tiers and is constructed of angled, painted, pre-cast concrete panels with reticulation, and a pebble textured finish that displays curvilinear forms. The building also displays some Brutalist influences, which is distinguished by bold, massive forms; rough, exposed concrete surfaces; broad, expansive wall planes; and recessed windows. Furthermore, its surrounding landscape and parking lot contributes visually to the building's

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 1990), 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-43.

monumental feeling. The grass panels, trees, landscaped beds, and platers provide contrast to the massive concrete structure. When the site was developed, more than 2,500 trees and 6,500 shrubs were included in the initial plan.

The Chet Holifield Federal Building's style is extremely rare. Locally there are no other buildings of this type in the city of Laguna Niguel. The style is also rare statewide and nationally with only two modern ziggurat-style buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places. There are only seven known ziggurat buildings throughout the nation and only two of which are located in California:

- United State Bullion Depository Gold Vault, Fort Knox, Kentucky, designed by architect Louis A. Simon (1936)<sup>3</sup>, listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, conceived as an “inverted ziggurat” by architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1959)<sup>4</sup>, listed in the National Register of Historic Places;
- Chet Holifield Federal Building, Laguna Niguel, California (1971);
- National Geographic Society Headquarters, Washington, D.C., designed by Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill (1984);
- University of Tennessee, John C. Hodges Library, Knoxville, Tennessee, designed by McCarty Bullock Holsapple, Lindsay & Maples, and Cooper & Peery (1987);
- The Temple Eck, Chanhassen, Minnesota (1990);
- The Ziggurat, Headquarters of the California Department of General Services, West Sacramento, California (1997).

In addition, the building was designed by William L. Pereira. William Pereira was a nationally-prominent practitioner of Modernist architecture. Pereira has been recognized as a leader of the modernist movement and is known, especially throughout California. His work spans nearly 50 years and contributes to over 400 projects. His stylish and efficient architectural style had a tremendous impact on California from the 1950s through the 1980s. To date, Pereira is most acknowledged for his CBS Television City (1953), University of Southern California Master Plan (1960), Irvine Ranch Master Plan (1961), University of California San Diego Central/Geisel Library (1965), LAX Master Plan (1967), and the Transamerica Corporate Headquarters Tower (1973). Although not as prominent as these, the Chet Holifield Federal Building can also be locally classified as a significant modern building in Pereira's architectural repertoire as there are no other comparative buildings of its kind in the city of Laguna Niguel.

Since the property was not originally constructed by GSA, a discussion of the seven sub-categories listed in the GSA Eligibility Assessment Tool is not applicable for this building. In accordance with National Register criteria, it is our opinion that the building appears to be locally significant and eligible under Criterion C for architecture as well as its association with master architect William L. Pereira. However, the building is less than 50 years and must be considered for its exceptional significance under Criterion G.

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<sup>3</sup> The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 in recognition of its significance in the economic history of the United States and its status as a well-known landmark.

<sup>4</sup> The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2008.

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*D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building is not likely to yield additional information important to Laguna Niguel, California or our Nation's history, and therefore the structure is ineligible to the National Register under this criterion.

### *Criteria Consideration G*

Criteria Consideration G provides that a property may be eligible for listing in the National Register even if it is less than 50 years old if it is “[a] property...of exceptional importance.” (36 C.F.R. § 60.4). The phrase “exceptional importance” may be applied to the extraordinary importance of an event or to an entire category of resources so fragile that survivors of any age are unusual. A property that has achieved significance within the past fifty years can be evaluated only when sufficient historical perspective exists to determine that the property is exceptionally important. The necessary perspective can be provided by scholarly research and evaluation, and must consider both the historic context and the specific property's role in that context.<sup>5</sup> The National Register does not include properties important solely for their contemporary impact and visibility, and it rarely is possible to evaluate historical impact, role, or relative value immediately after an event occurs or a building is constructed.<sup>6</sup> To be considered under this criterion, a property must also meet eligibility requirements for Criteria A, B, C, or D.

While the Chet Holifield Federal Building does meet eligibility for Criterion C, it also rises to the level of “exceptional significance” as required by the National Register due to its rarity of architectural style, landscape design, and its association with master architect William L. Pereira. The modernist design with its stepped pyramidal and Brutalist influence are rare both locally and statewide as there are only two existing in California, the Chet Holifield Federal Building (1971) and the Ziggurat, Headquarters of the California Department of General Services (1997), of which the Chet Holifield Federal Building is the oldest. Nationally, it is unique for its era of construction and differentiates itself from the Guggenheim as it is not an inverted ziggurat. Therefore, at this time, it is our professional opinion that the Chet Holifield Federal Building does meet eligibility under Criterion Consideration G.

## **B. Integrity**

In addition to having significance under at least one criterion, resources must have integrity. Integrity is the authenticity of a historical resource's physical identity as evidenced by the survival of characteristics or historic fabric that existed during the resource's period of significance. A period of significance is the date or span of time within which significant events transpired, or significant individuals made their important contributions. Alterations to a resource or changes in its use overtime may have historical, cultural or architectural significance. Simple resources must retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance.

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<sup>5</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service 1990), 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Marcella Sherfy and W. Ray Luce, *National Register Bulletin 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1998 ed.), p. 1. “The passage of time is necessary in order to apply the adjective ‘historic’ and to ensure adequate perspective. To be a useful tool for public administration, the National Register cannot include properties of only transient value or interest. The passage of time allows our perceptions to be influenced by education, the judgment of previous decades, and the dispassion of distance. In nominating properties to the National Register, we should be settled in our belief that they will possess enduring value for their historical associations, appearance, or information potential.”

Integrity is defined as the ability of a resource to convey its significance through the property's physical features and how those features relate to the property's significance, although not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present for a property to be significant. The National Register recognizes location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feelings, and association as the seven aspects of integrity. Evaluation of the Chet Holifield Federal Building includes the application of the seven aspects of integrity as follows:

*Location – is the place where a resource was constructed or where an event occurred.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building retains integrity of location as the buildings have not been moved.

*Design – results from intentional decisions made during the conception and planning of a resource. Design includes form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.*

To retain integrity of design, the complex must retain elements which exhibit its historic form, space, and style. The exterior of the complex to date remains relatively intact with only a few modifications since construction including exterior paint finish and mechanical, communication, and solar equipment located on the roof. The building retains its angled, painted, pre-cast concrete panels with textured finish and its evenly spaced anodized aluminum windows which provide a consistent rhythm to the symmetrical building. The top tier's large flat roof with attached protruding vertical elements still remains today.

The building's landscape also contributes to the overall design intent of the site. The building continues to be surrounded by landscaping and a large parking lot with spaces that radiate diagonally along the building axes. The moat of smooth rocks that surrounds the building on three sides still alludes to the idea that the massive structure is a modern-day fortress.

The interior changes to the Chet Holifield Federal Building do not significantly impact the historical character of the building because the original finishes were not of particular craftsmanship nor significance and do not compromise the experience of the building from the public approach and view. The original character defining interior features, such as the wood paneling and wood ceiling at the main lobby, remain intact. The removal of the original stair and its escalator replacement possibly provides the most impact to the interior design, but is overall a minimal change.

Therefore, the Chet Holifield Federal Building has retained a high level of its design integrity.

*Setting—applies to a physical environment, the character of a resource's location, and a resource's relationship to the surrounding area.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building is located in its original setting surrounded by mass landscape which contributes visually to the building's monumental feeling. The large parking areas, grass panels, trees, landscaped beds, and planters continue to provide contrast to the massive concrete structure. Therefore, the property has retained its integrity of setting.

*Materials—comprise the physical elements combined or deposited in a particular pattern or configuration to form a property.*

The vast majority of the original structure's materials have been retained throughout the years and visually appears as it did when first constructed including the pre-cast, textured exterior panels and anodized aluminum windows. Therefore, the Chet Holifield Federal Building has maintained its material integrity.

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*Workmanship—consists of the physical evidence of crafts employed by a particular culture, people, or artisan, which includes traditional, vernacular, and high styles.*

Architectural/engineering influences reflect popular building or structural movements of the times. The overall workmanship demonstrated and the materials used in the construction of the complex are reflective of the era in which it was constructed and are intact. The integrity of workmanship is clearly retained.

*Feeling—Integrity of feeling relies on present physical features of a property to convey and evoke an aesthetic or historic sense of past time and place.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building possesses a high degree of integrity of feeling to express the Modern aesthetic style of the era it was constructed. The building is monumental in feeling while the landscaping adds a human scale to the site. A walk around the building or into the building still evokes the feeling of a Modernist/Brutalist building.

*Association—directly links a historic property with a historic event, activity, or person of past time and place; and requires the presence of physical features to convey the property's historic character.*

The Chet Holifield Federal Building was commissioned by the Rockwell Corporation, but was never occupied by the company. The building laid vacant for many years until it was sold to the Federal government which began occupancy in 1974 for offices and national archive storage. The complex does not retain integrity of association with the Rockwell Corporation as the building's occupancy and use changed shortly after the building construction.

Therefore, it is our professional opinion that the Chet Holifield Federal Building remains largely intact with the majority of the original design intent visibly apparent throughout the building and site. It is evident that the building was constructed in substantial conformance with the original construction drawings. For the most part, the existing conditions reflect what is shown in the original 1968 drawings. The Chet Holifield Federal Building, therefore, continues to retain a high degree of integrity.

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### **SECTION V – CONCLUSION**

The Chet Holifield Federal Building is currently eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The property maintains a high degree of integrity and meets the eligibility requirements under Criterion C and is of “exceptional importance” under National Register Criteria Consideration G when evaluated within local, state, and national contexts. The Chet Holifield Federal Building distinguishes itself as the work of a master architect, William L. Pereira, a nationally-prominent practitioner of Modernist architecture. The building and site also expresses its significance for embodying distinctive characteristics of Modernist/Brutalist design. The rarity of its ziggurat design influence, having seven tiers atop a sloped lot with surrounding landscape, continues to allude to the idea that the massive structure is a modern-day fortress.

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