

6.3.8.B. 30 Simmonds Street.



Erf Number:	1098 (Previously 139 and 143).
Name:	30 Simmonds Street.
Architect:	Pearse, Aneck Hann & Bristol.
Previous Names:	Commercial Union Building.
Approved / Existing Plans:	None.
Date of Construction:	Circa 1960s.
Architectural Style / Aesthetics :	Brazilian Modernism.
Historical Use:	Office / ground floor retail.
Current Use:	Office / ground floor retail.
Intended Use:	Office.
Rarity or Technical interest:	Good example of Brazilian Modernism within Johannesburg.
Relationship to setting and place:	Connects internally with Annan House. The height of the building relates to the surrounding buildings along Commissioner Street.

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Relationship to historical aspects:	Forms a built document of the development of Johannesburg in the second half of the Twentieth Century.
Social Importance:	n/a.
Modifications:	Interior has been substantially modified.
Integrity of current Structure:	Structure survives in relatively in-tact condition.
Known lost aspects or changes made:	None.
Scientific or Research Potential:	Limited/Good example of Brazilian Modernism within Johannesburg.
Other:	None.
Protection:	None - However, in a few years the building can be more than 60 years old and protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act.
2002 - 2015 Historical information:	Part of Koponong Project since 2002.
Significance:	Forms part of a cohesive collection of buildings of a similar height and mass along the Commissioner Street corridor. Good example of Modern Movement Brazilian inspired Johannesburg architecture.
Section 3.3 of NHRA:	a; d; e; f & h.
Grading:	Culturally Significant - grade to be confirmed following full heritage study.
Current Condition - Exterior:	Fair.
Current Condition - Interior:	Interior fit out is low grade contemporary office, not worthy of conservation. Limited historical fabric remains, such as, the original power skirting and the prefabricated service panels located along the internal perimeter of the building
Recommendations - Exterior:	Exterior facades are substantially original, and a pleasing example of a Brazilian Modernist perimeter block building. The exterior should be retained and restored. The original windows may be replaced, provided that new glazing respects the proportion and rhythm of the existing steel windows.
Recommendations - Interior:	Interior fit out is low grade contemporary office, not worthy of conservation.
NHRA Applications:	None - currently the building is not 60 years old. However, in a few years the building will be more than 60 years old and protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act and a application needs to be made.
Recommendations - Overall:	The exterior architecture and facades of this building should be conserved and restored, the interiors are largely stripped and offer little in terms of cultural significance, conservation worthy fabric or provenance. Changes may be affected throughout the interior of the building. The original interior building service configuration should be documented by a heritage consultant prior to removal. The roof scape should be retained – particularly the overhang which gives the building the illusion that it is floating.

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Designed in the 1963 by Pearse, Aneck, Hann & Bristol, the Commercial Union building is a Modern Movement structure, with visible Brazilian influences. The Ground Floor consists of lobby and retail space, characterised by large plate glass shopfronts and polished marble cladding. The building rises to eight and a half floors of Office Accommodation above Ground.

“A building was required to house the branch offices of two insurance groups which had merged, as well as the head office of the combine. Two banking halls were called for on the ground floor with offices on the upper floors for the company and for letting. The plan was resolved into a centrally placed service core with offices facing three streets. The court-yards are of sufficient size to give good supplementary day-lighting to the large office spaces, and corridors and lift lobbies are well lighted. The offices are free of any supports, other than a free standing column in each banking hall.”⁵²

It has been described as *“a well-articulated building, the length of a city block. Central articulated cupola in the facade creates interest, and the corners are turned well.”*⁵³

52. SAAR December 1963, page 9.

53. Bruwer, J. J. (2009), Commercial Union (North British Group Building) (BC1).



Contemporary image - facade.



Contemporary image - facade.