

### 6.3.13. New Library Hotel.



Erf Number:	221 (previously 876).
Name:	New Library Hotel.
Architect:	Louw & Louw.
Previous Names:	None.
Approved / Existing Plans:	None.
Date of Construction:	1936
Architectural Style / Aesthetics :	Early Modernist (Urban Features).
Historical Use:	Hotel and Office.
Current Use:	Vacant.
Intended Use:	Office & possible ground floor retail.
Rarity or Technical interest:	Fair example of Early Modernism within Johannesburg.

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Relationship to setting and place:	The building is a good example of a corner Art Deco building with modernist details in Johannesburg. Excellent relationship between New Library Hotel and neighbouring Rand Water board building. Part of the “Commissioner Street Cavern” collection of similar height buildings along this artery.. The enclosed verandah is a disrupting element in the Market Streetscape. (RAU Report, June 1976).
Relationship to historical aspects:	Forms a built document of the development of Johannesburg between the 1st and 2nd world wars.
Social Importance:	One of the first Gay clubs in Johannesburg.
Modifications:	Addison of 1st floor enclosed verandah - when converted to a hotel.
Integrity of current Structure:	The interior floors have been 'cut into' compromising integrity of the overall structural system.
Known lost aspects or changes made:	The building is largely gutted, original Steel windows removed.
Scientific or Research Potential:	Limited. Fair example of Art Deco / Modernism within Johannesburg.
Other:	None.
Protection:	Yes - structure is more than 60 years old and protected in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act.
2002 - 2015 Historical information:	Demolition proposed for 2002 Kopnong project. Granted by SAHRA. Apposed by public in 2005. Appeal upheld.
Significance:	Forms part of a cohesive collection of Art Deco buildings of a similar height, style and age along the Commissioner Street corridor. Social importance lies in the beginning of the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism and how this lead to Afrikaner Capitalism.
Section 3.3 of NHRA:	a, d, e, g and h.
Grading:	Culturally Significant - grade to be confirmed following full heritage study.
Current Condition - Exterior:	Poor.
Current Condition - Interior:	The interior is stripped, with no conservation worthy fabric remaining.
Recommendations - Exterior:	The most important aspect of this building is the exterior architecture and facades which should be conserved and restored.
Recommendations - Interior:	Interior does not warrant conservation.
NHRA Applications:	An application as per Section 34.1 of the NHRA is required.
Recommendations - Overall:	The exterior architecture and facades of this building should be conserved and restored. A new structurally sound internal structure and floors may be installed, all proposed interior interventions to relate to the original levels of the building. Special reference is to be made to the sleekness of the original windows.

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Constructed in the Streamline Modern style, New Library Hotel was designed by the architects Louw & Louw (Architects of Volkskas Building) in 1936.

The building was originally designed as offices for African Homes Trust Syndicate. *“From the Minutes of a meeting of the Town Planning Committee held during February 1936, it appears that the owners were originally determined to erect a 12 storied block of shops and offices. It was decided at the above meeting to remind the owners, however, of the height restriction of eight storeys.”*<sup>58</sup> Upon completion, *“the building comprised a Basement, Ground Floor, with vestibule and shops, and seven office floor above. The Basement in turn comprised of a Restaurant as well as a Boiler Room, Transformer Chamber and Ventilation Chamber.”*<sup>59</sup> The roof provided accommodation in staff quarters for 6 persons.

The African Homes Trust and Insurance Company Ltd put the building on the market in 1961. Rand Water Board was approached, however, they declined purchase in favour of a northern site, today the location of Custom House (the site of the First New Library Hotel). Shatz & Schmidt purchased the property in 1963 and the architectural practice of Abramovitch, Pinshow & Schneider were commissioned to convert the property into a hotel. The building was associated with the Gay and Lesbian Community of South Africa – *“the bar became the most important venue catering for gay men in Johannesburg.”*<sup>60</sup>

58. Bruwer, J.J. (2009), New Library Hotel (C-2).

59. Bruwer, J.J. (2005), page 45.

60. Bruwer, J.J. (2005), page 46.



Contemporary image - exterior facade.