

6.3.11. Custom House.



Erf Number:	4508 (previously 229, 4421).
Name:	Custom House.
Architect:	J. Fassler and W. D. Howie.
Previous Names:	Rand Water Board Building (according to J. Bruwer).
Approved / Existing Plans:	None.
Date of Construction:	1965
Architectural Style / Aesthetics :	Johannesburg Modernism.
Historical Use:	Office.
Current Use:	Vacant.
Intended Use:	Office & possible ground floor retail.
Rarity or Technical interest:	Good example of Johannesburg Modernism.
Relationship to setting and place:	Relationship to setting and place: Excellent relationship between Customs House and neighbouring Rand Water board Building in terms of scale and height relationships - excellent relationship between harmonious use of materials and architectural elements between buildings.

6.3.11. Custom House.	
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:	The building exterior survives largely in-tact, save the ground floor which has been gutted. The interior has been stripped.
Integrity of current Structure:	Structure survives in relatively in-tact condition.
Known lost aspects or changes made:	The interior and ground floor of the building have been gutted and the spaces stripped of all historical fabric.
Scientific or Research Potential:	Scientific or Research Potential: Excellent example of Modernist Regional Architecture within Johannesburg. Excellent example of major South African architect.
Other:	The Rand Water Board was formed in 1930 to provide Johannesburg and the Chamber of Mines with water. The estimate cost of the construction of the building was R 990 000.00. The ground floor interior was finished in unhoneled travertine.
Protection:	Yes - structure is connected to Rand Water Board which 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. Appealed by public in 2005. Appeal upheld.
Significance:	The building is currently vacant and gutted, however, the significance of the architectural form of the building is still in tact, and uncompromised. The exterior facades of the building exhibit fine craftsmanship in terms of masonry / detailing. Despite its poor condition the building exhibits high cultural significance and provenance. The building would warrant declaration as a provincial heritage resource.
Section 3.3 of NHRA:	a; e; f; g & h.
Grading:	Culturally Significant - grade to be confirmed following full heritage study.
Current Condition - Exterior:	Fair.
Current Condition - Interior:	The interior is stripped, with no conservation worthy fabric remaining.
Recommendations - Exterior:	The fine modernist facades of the building form a considered and cohesive whole with the facades the neighbouring Rand Water Board Building. Excellent relationship between Customs House and neighbouring Rand Water board Building in terms of scale and height relationships - excellent relationship created through harmonious use of materials and architectural elements between buildings. The building should be retained and restored. No changes are permitted to the external facades, the roof-line is to be respected, no additional bulk permissible. See marked up façade image.
Recommendations - Interior:	No conservation worthy fabric remains. Contemporary interiors may be designed, sympathetic to the restrained modernist aesthetic.
NHRA Applications:	An application as per Section 34.1 of the NHRA is required.
Recommendations - Overall:	The building would warrant declaration as a provincial heritage resource. The interior of the buildings floor plan (and structure) needs to be retained as it communicates with the façade, however, internal layout changes are possible. No changes are permitted to the façade. The new interior should reference the historical materials.

6.3.11. Custom House.

Designed by the prominent architect John Fassler in 1967, Custom House is an exemplary Johannesburg Modern Movement Structure. The building consists of a double volume glazed entrance lobby, with an additional eight floors of Office Accommodation above.

“At the time of the original submission of plans, it was proposed to only construct a five-storey building. These plans were approved. It was subsequently decided to increase the height of the building to the maximum permitted and plans for an additional four floors were then submitted and approved.

The building comprises the following: two basement levels (with a through-connection from the first basement level to the basement of the adjacent Rand Water Board Building); double volume Ground Floor; fully reversible windows with bronze spandrels; noteworthy are the tall columns at Ground Floor level, as well as the large entrance hall and the use of marble cladding in the interior, with reference also the mezzanine floor (upper part of the entrance lobby); externally, the application of chocolate coloured granite facings to match the facings of the adjacent Rand Water Board Building, is also worth noting; so is the copper covered built-up coping above the pre-cast terrazzo cornice as well as the copper sheet (roof); caretaker’s flat with lift room above roof level.”⁵⁵



Contemporary image - facade.

55. Bruwer, J. J. (2009), Custom House (C-4).



Contemporary image - interior.



Contemporary image - interior of Ground Floor.



Contemporary image - interior.



Contemporary image - interior of Ground Floor.