# GUIDE TO PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF THE NAVAL AIR STATION ALAMEDA HISTORIC DISTRICT

Naval Air Station
Alameda, California

and

Engineering Field Activity, West
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
900 Commodore Drive
San Bruno, California 94066-5006

**APRIL 1997**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Introduction to the NAS Alameda Historic District

The Naval Air Station (NAS) Alameda Historic District represents the architectural and historical core of the NAS Alameda. The historic district extends from the Main Gate on the north to the principal row of hangars on the west and south. It is bounded on the east by historic officers' and non-commissioned officers' housing units. The historic district comprises 79 buildings that are slated either for re-use or "mothball" status under current re-use plans for the area.[1]

The NAS Alameda Historic District occupies a special place among historic military properties in Northern California. American military bases may be roughly grouped into two categories: those that developed over a long period of time, and those that were built up during a single period of construction. The Presidio of San Francisco and Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo are characteristic of the first group. Each developed slowly and has historic properties that date from virtually every decade since the 1850s. The NAS Alameda Historic District is characteristic of the second group. While there are more recent buildings outside the boundaries of the historic district, the buildings within the district were all built over a period of just a few years, from 1939 through the early 1940s.

The construction within this historic district is analogous to that of an "instant city," a term that was applied to the massive build-up of San Francisco during the early years of the Gold Rush, in which a city was laid out, built up, and occupied in a very short period of time.[2] The building of NAS Alameda, however, was far more regimented and controlled than was the case with Gold Rush San Francisco. San Francisco was developed by thousands of individuals, with only minimal control over even the essentials of city-building, such as street placement and grade. The building of NAS Alameda, by contrast, was what we would now call a "master-planned community," with very strict design control and uniformity in the use of materials, design features and elements.

*If there is one overriding character-defining element of the NAS Alameda Historic District, it is this uniformity of design features, elements, and materials. These buildings were designed as a group, or ensemble, and should, to the extent possible, be managed in the same manner.*

Although it was designed as a single unit, the historic district does include four distinct types of buildings, clustered into four discrete areas. The four areas are defined, for the purpose of this "Guide" as: the Administrative Core; the Hangars Area; the Shops Area; and this Residential

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[1] The number of buildings treated in this guide does not include the six buildings slated for demolition by the Navy, in conformance with the re-use plan for the facility. The buildings slated for demolition are wood frame buildings that the city did not want retained. The six buildings are: Buildings 75A, 115, 116, 130, 135, and 137. Buildings slated for a "mothball" status, however, are treated in this guide.

[2] That term is used in Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Area. [All are in the "Civic Core," as defined in the community re-use plan for the facility.] The 79 contributing buildings are distributed as follows: 13 in the Administrative Core; eight in the Hangars Area; 11 in the Shops Area; and 47 in the Residential Area. These four areas are discussed separately below, and the boundaries and buildings within each area clearly delineated in the text and in **Figure 1**. The layout of the base made sense from the design standpoint as well as the functional standpoint. The major functional buildings, including administrative buildings, huge barracks, and recreational buildings, were clustered at the entrance to the base and given the highest degree of attention to architectural details. The hangars were built at the edge of the facility, near the runways. The hangars were well-designed but largely utilitarian in appearance. The shops buildings were placed between the administrative sector and the hangars. These shops buildings were even more frankly utilitarian than the hangars. Finally, the residences were built at the eastern edge of the facility, as far away from the shops and hangars as was possible, given the relatively small acreage at the station.

The layout of the base was developed chiefly from a utilitarian standpoint, keeping buildings in separate functional areas for safety reasons and to promote the efficiency of the various operations. The buildings were also arranged from an aesthetic standpoint, in the manner of a civic plaza or large park. Open spaces, street patterns, and landscaping were combined to create a series of very dramatic vistas, or streetscapes. If there is a flaw in the design of these streetscapes it is that they are too grand in scale. For example, the great vista along Second and Third Streets between the Gate House (Buildings 30 and 31) and the Headquarters Building (Building 1) is a dramatic landscape plan, linking the principal entry with the functional center of the base. The distance is so great, however, that the Gate House can scarcely be seen from Building 1, and vice-versa. Another great open space is that between Building 18 on one side and Buildings 2, 3, and 4; that open space, too, is so large that the buildings can scarcely be seen from one another. The importance of streetscapes and vista points is treated in Chapter 7 of this report.

## 1.2. Purpose of the Document

This document is entitled a "Guide to Preserving the Character of the NAS Alameda Historic District," directed toward persons unfamiliar with the architectural traditions represented by the buildings within the district. At the same time, the guide is directed to individuals with an expressed interest in historic preservation and with some familiarity with the principles of historic preservation. Specifically, the guide is intended for use by the Historical Advisory Board and the planning staff of the City of Alameda in their consideration of projects that may be proposed for re-use of the buildings within the historic district.

This document is intended to serve as a guide for the long-range management of the buildings within the NAS Alameda Historic District by the City of Alameda, after the property has been transferred out of Navy ownership and/or control. It is assumed that the Historical Advisory Board of the City of Alameda will be asked to provide design review for the private, governmental, and non-profit organizations that will seek to re-use the buildings within the historic district. This document seeks to provide guidance on how re-use plans may be reviewed,
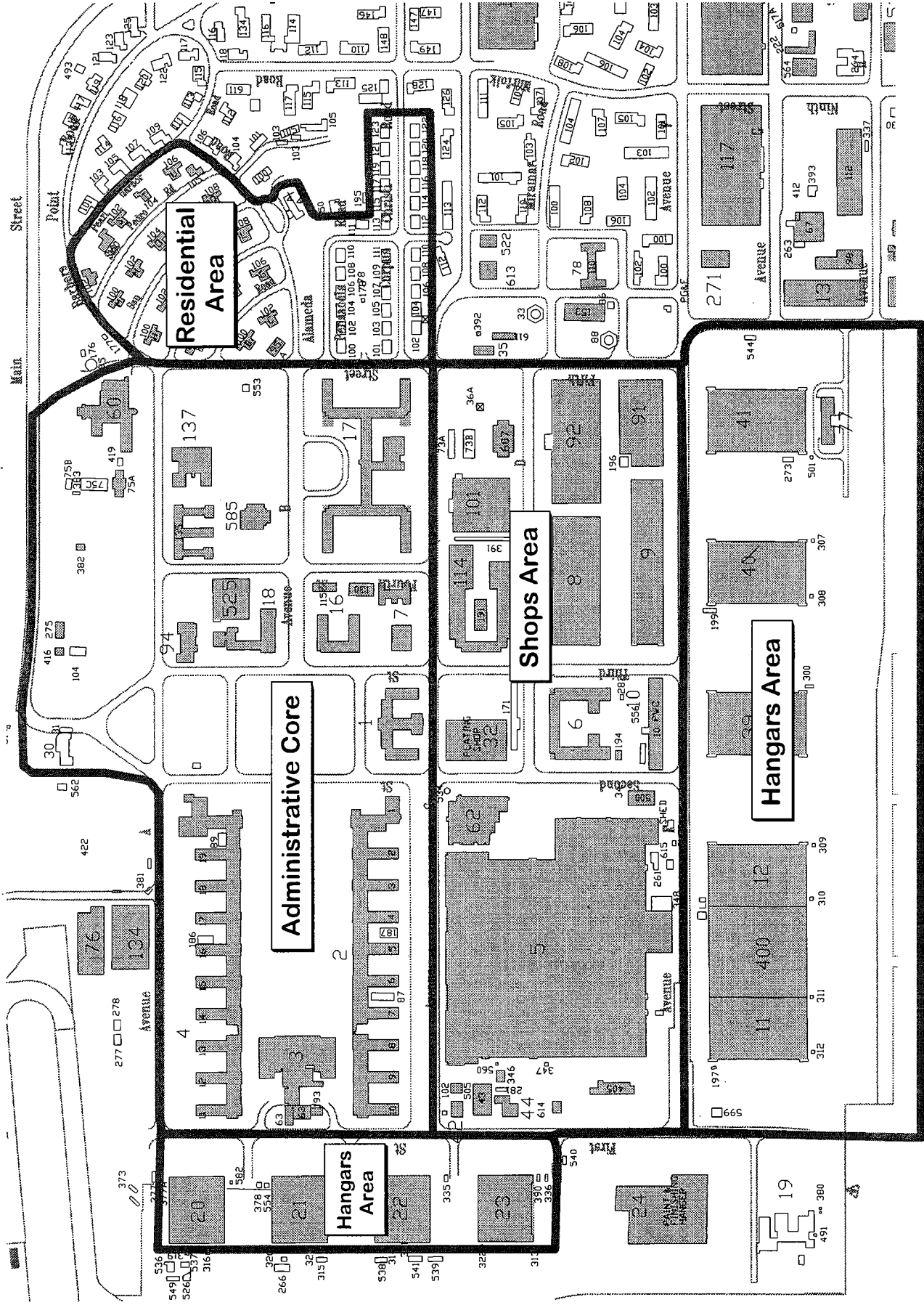
**Figure 1.** Map of NAS Alameda Historic District
[NOTE: Shading *DOES NOT* indicate buildings with historical significance]

to facilitate economic reuse of the buildings while minimizing damage to the historic character of the district.

The City of Alameda has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as its basic criteria for consideration of a "Certificate of Approval" for structural alterations to designated Historical Monuments and properties on the Historical Building Study List.[3] The comments in this report adopt a simplified two-step review, adapted from the general approach of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Two questions should be asked and answered for any proposed project. First, does the project affect a *character-defining element* of a contributing building within the historic district? Second, if so, does the project provide a *sympathetic treatment* for the character-defining element?

This approach may be illustrated by reference to a particular issue. **Photograph 1** illustrates the south elevation of Building 77, the Passenger Terminal and temporary museum site, at the southern edge of the historic district. Original windows -- multiple-pane steel sash -- exist at the first story, while single-pane, "picture window" replacements exist at the second story. In addition, the building was expanded to a full three-stories; it was originally two stories on the side wings and three stories only at the center. The new side wings are sided in plywood, not at all consistent with the concrete surface of the original, and they were fitted with sliding windows, inconsistent with the original steel sash. Suppose that construction of the wing additions and installation of the replacement windows was an issue before the Historical Advisory Board. The two questions would be answered in sequence. First, the original windows and the original building form should be regarded as character-defining elements for this building. Second, the third story addition and single-pane replacement windows do not constitute a sympathetic treatment of those elements. As discussed below, there are many examples of sympathetic treatment of windows in the NAS Alameda Historic District; unfortunately, this particular example does not fall into that category. There are sympathetic ways to make additions; the plywood surface of this addition does not fit into that category either, even though, clearly, an effort was made to make the addition fit in with the curved surface of the original building. Fortunately, there are very few additions that have been made to any of the historic buildings within the district.

This document is divided into 7 chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 addresses the unusual architectural style of the buildings within the NAS Alameda Historic District. Chapter 3 deals with the buildings in the Administrative Core. Chapter 4 deals with the buildings in the Hangars Area, Chapter 5 with the buildings in the Shops Area, and Chapter 6 with the buildings in the Residential Area. Chapter 7 includes observations about the landscaping, streetscapes, and open spaces of the historic district.

Within the building-specific chapters, 3 through 6, character-defining elements are identified, first for buildings within the area generally, and then on a building-by-building basis. Various observations are also made as to the design review implications of the particular types of character-defining elements found in each area of the historic district.

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[3] City of Alameda, "Architectural and Historical Resources of the City of Alameda," March, 1994.
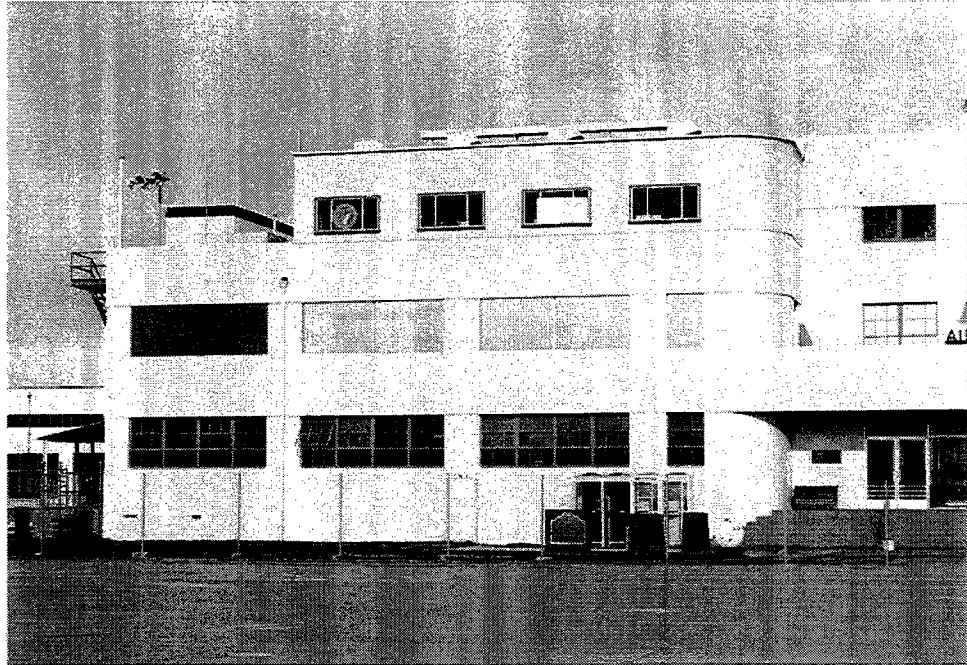
**Photograph 1.** Windows and new third story on Building 77; original windows on first story, replacement windows on second and third stories; addition on third story, side wing.

## 2. WHAT IS THE "STYLE" OF THE NAS ALAMEDA HISTORIC DISTRICT? HOW DOES IT FIT INTO THE LARGER CONTEXT OF MILITARY ARCHITECTURE?

There is a long tradition in American military architecture of designing bases in such a way that all, or nearly all, of the buildings within a single installation are united by a consistent design. This was true of construction by the Army's Quartermaster Corps which until 1942 was in charge of most Army and later Air Corps (Air Force) construction. It was true as well of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, the principal construction arm of the Navy as well as the Marine Corps.[4] As suggested earlier, the fundamental character of the NAS Alameda Historic District, as with nearly all other military bases, is the uniformity of design found there.

This is not to suggest, however, that there was ever a single, "one-size-fits-all" style for all types of Navy construction. The style of military design changed over time, although more slowly and conservatively than civilian architecture. Lois Craig, in her excellent study, *The Federal Presence*. contends that military architecture tended to follow the fashions of other types of Federal architecture, such as the design of post offices, court houses, and other civilian Federal buildings.[5] Civilian Federal architecture, in turn, tended to follow the fashions of the time, but in a very conservative manner. Federal design was always rooted in the neo-classical architectural tradition of the early Federal buildings in Washington, D.C. The popular styles of the day were blended with the underlying neo-classical tradition. Thus a Federal building from the late 19th century might be predominantly Victorian in many of its details, but it would generally respect the classical "base, shaft, capital" geometry typical of the government's early major structures. Basically, until the Great Depression, it would have been unusual for a Federal building to be built without homage to that classicism.

During the 1930s, this blending of popular and traditional styles produced a highly unusual mix, combining the sleek, smooth surfaces of Art Deco or Moderne architecture with the older traditional architecture of Federal buildings. The popular architecture of the time emphasized the use of sleek and smooth surfaces, imitating the surfaces of machinery of the era, especially automobiles and airplanes. Variously called Art Deco and Moderne, the style was commonly used in commercial design during the 1930s and early 1940s. It was the dominant style of the Golden Gate International Exposition, a World's Fair that was in operation on Treasure Island during the years in which NAS Alameda was under construction.[6]

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[4] The history of the agency is detailed in United States. Naval Facilities Engineering Command. *150 Years of Doing It Right: The Bureau of Yards and Docks, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, 1842-1992.* Alexandria Va., 1992.

[5] Lois Craig, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and National Design.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984.

[6] The buildings of the GGIE are treated in many books, most recently in Patricia F. Carpenter and Paul Totah, *The San Francisco Fair: Treasure Island, 1939-40.* San Francisco: Scottwalls Associates, 1989.

Government buildings from the 1930s sometimes attempted a somewhat improbable combination of classicism and Art Deco; this combination appears to be unique to government buildings of the era. Various architectural historians have attempted to devise a name for this unusual style. Lois Craig, cited earlier, has called it "Starved Classicism", emphasizing the classical side of the compromise. David Gebhard has called it "WPA Moderne", emphasizing the Moderne part of the equation.[7] The blending of these new expressions with traditional classicism produced an architecture unique to the 1930s and early 1940s: typically, a quite heavy-handed, robust, derivative form of classicism, with classical details and sculpture rendered in stylized, cubistic forms. The Federal Reserve Buildings built during this era in Los Angeles and San Francisco are two outstanding examples of this style. Interestingly, this form of architecture rose and fell within a generation. Today the underlying style is generally identified under a number of terms: "Art Deco", "machine-age", and "Streamline Moderne" being the most common identifications for this uncommon artistic flowering. In the remainder of this report, "Moderne" will be used to describe the Federal interpretation of this style.

*This* is the style of the NAS Alameda Historic District, particularly in the Administrative Core area. Examples of Moderne may still be found throughout California, particularly in the dozens of post offices that were built during the 1930s. The style is exclusive to Federal buildings from the period; the Federal Reserve Building in Los Angeles is generally considered to be the best example of the style.[8]

Although popular in civilian Federal architecture, the style was rarely used in the design of military buildings. In California, there appear to be only two other examples of Moderne military bases or buildings. One -- another Navy-owned property -- is the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center in Los Angeles. The other property, most comparable to NAS Alameda, is McClellan Air Force Base near Sacramento. The Reserve Center was designed by a private architect, Stiles O. Clements, while the buildings at McClellan AFB were designed directly by the Quartermaster Corps, the Army's equivalent of the Bureau of Yards and Docks.

The style of NAS Alameda Historic District, then is quite unusual among military bases in California or elsewhere, although it was used more commonly among individual Federal buildings from the decade. It is rare to find an entire complex of buildings in the style; while others may exist, it appears that only NAS Alameda and McClellan AFB represent large collections of buildings in this style.

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[7] Craig, *The Federal Presence*; Gebhard uses that phrase in several publications, including: David Gebhard, et al, *A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco & Northern California*. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc. 1973. The same combining of classical and Art Deco/Moderne was popular in Europe during the 1930s as well.

[8] Arguably, the best examples of this style are found in Los Angeles, as discussed in David Gebhard and Hariette Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the Thirties, 1931-1941*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1989.

# 3. ADMINISTRATIVE CORE

The Administrative Core represents the heart of the historic district, including a large number of buildings and the most sophisticated buildings from the architectural standpoint. The area includes the following buildings: the Gate House Group (Buildings 30 and 31); the Barracks Group (Buildings 2, 3, 4, 65, and 193); the Headquarters Building (Building 1); the Bachelor Officers' Quarters Building (Building 17); the Theater-Post Office and Chapel Group (Buildings 18 and 94); the Dispensary (Building 16); and the Officers' Club (Building 60). The Administrative Core is bounded by Avenue A on the north; Fifth Street on the east; First Street on the west; and Avenue C on the south.

## 3.1. Architectural Vocabulary of the Administrative Core

The Administrative Core buildings represent the best expression of the "Moderne" style that was the design theme for the entire base. The Administrative Core buildings, indeed, are excellent representatives of the style, bearing most of the characteristic elements of the style: reinforced concrete materials; smooth surfaces with many curved elements; highly stylized vertical emphasis elements at the entrances; columns whose cross-section has been elongated, transforming them into aerodynamic struts; and the overriding element of horizontal bands, running continuously across the facade, over the windows and over the wall panels between the windows.

While there are important differences, particularly with respect to the Chapel (Building 94), the buildings within the Administrative Core are remarkably consistent in design. The vocabulary may be summarized with respect to the surface treatment, roof and building forms; windows and doors; and use of strong, repetitive design elements.

### 3.1.1. Surface, Roof and Building Forms

The dominant character of buildings in the Administrative Core is that they are made of smooth reinforced concrete walls and have flat roofs. The concrete was likely poured into plywood rather than the more common rough-board forms, giving the buildings a very smooth texture. The roofs are not actually flat; shallow slopes exist behind the flat parapets to promote drainage. For visual purposes, however, the intent and the effect is that of a truly flat roof, emphasizing the rigidly horizontal nature of the buildings generally. Building 94 -- a hip-roofed, wooden sided building -- is the only exception to this rule.

The smooth surfaces and flat roofs are particularly effective in emphasizing the horizontality of the buildings in question. The administrative buildings tend to be very long and low. Some are enormous: Buildings 2 and 4 and, to a lesser degree, Building 17 are so long they cannot be seen in their entirety from any one perspective. Even smaller buildings, such as Building 1, are long and low.

The horizontality of the buildings is best illustrated in Buildings 2 and 4. **Photograph 2** illustrates the rear wing of Building 4. The long, sweeping design is emphasized by the continuous horizontal bands in the concrete panels (these are discussed under "features and elements") and by the bands of windows, which are themselves arranged in horizontal bands (these are discussed under "windows and doors"). Building 1 is equally horizontal in its appearance, as shown in **Photograph 3**. The designers of these buildings, however, typically used vertical elements for powerful emphasis, as with the prominent entry pavilion at the center of Building 1. Another important element is the use of curved surfaces which enhance the sense of movement. These curved surfaces are also discussed under "Features and Elements". The effect of these curved elements is shown in **Photograph 4**, which illustrates the curving arcade that connects Buildings 2, 3, and 4.

In summary, the key structural elements of the Administrative Core are:

- Smooth reinforced concrete surface (except for Building 94, which is wooden sided).
- Horizontal orientation.
- Flat roofs.
- Use of vertical elements for emphasis.
- Use of curved elements for contrast.

These basic elements are extremely durable; they form the basic structural components of these sturdy reinforced concrete buildings. This is good news from the standpoint of managing these historic properties; most of the key character-defining elements of this historic district are so durable as to require very little management. As long as the buildings are still standing, these elements should still be in place.

Design review considerations for these major structural forms include:

- Preserving the original surface. These sturdy concrete surfaces are immune to nearly any kind of work except for making new openings or in-filling original openings. Window and door openings provide the "rhythm" of the building. In-filling of one of these openings breaks the rhythm and appears clumsy. In **Photograph 5**, for example, a door has been closed off; its location is shown by the canopy above it. If this area needed to be closed off, it should have been accomplished from the inside, leaving the door in place to retain the rhythm.
- Additions should be discouraged. If it is absolutely necessary to build an addition to one of these buildings, the addition must respect the surface, horizontality, and window and door patterns of the original. Very few additions have been built within the historic district; only Buildings 60 and 77 includes major additions. In neither case do the additions respect the surface, window and door patterns, or general building form of the original.
- Paint schemes should continue the pattern followed by the Navy, generally, with a light base coat for the major surface and a darker hue for the wall panels between windows as well as vertical features. This paint scheme tends to emphasize the original design scheme and works well with its horizontal bands and vertical accents.
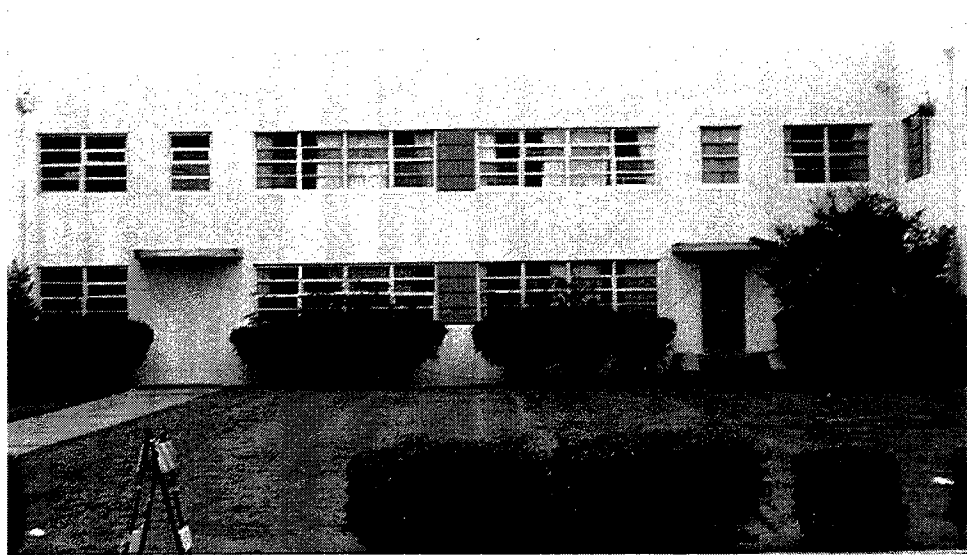
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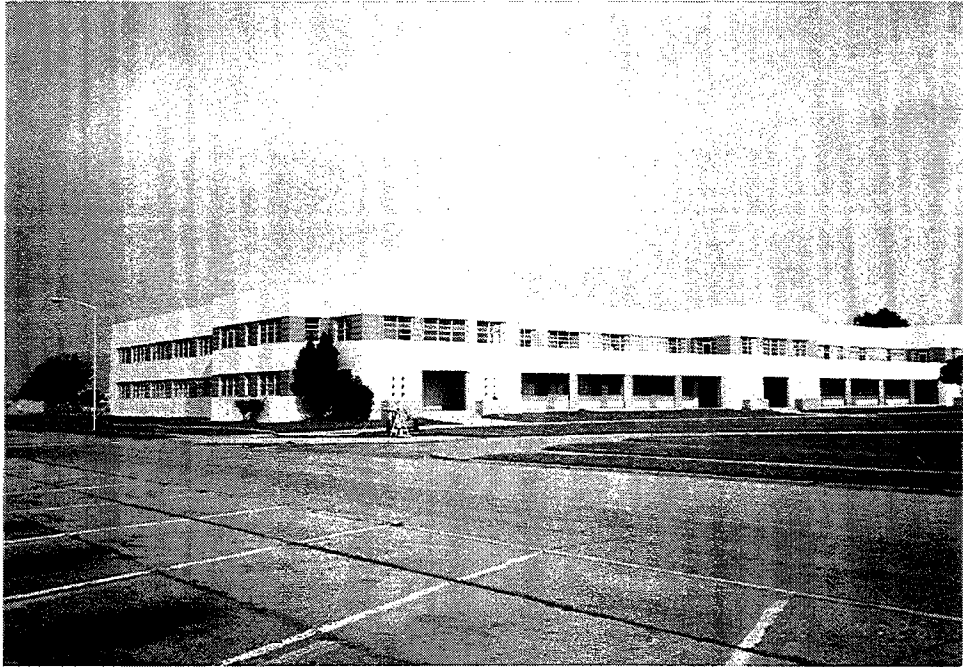
**Photograph 2.** Horizontal orientation, rear wing of Building 4.
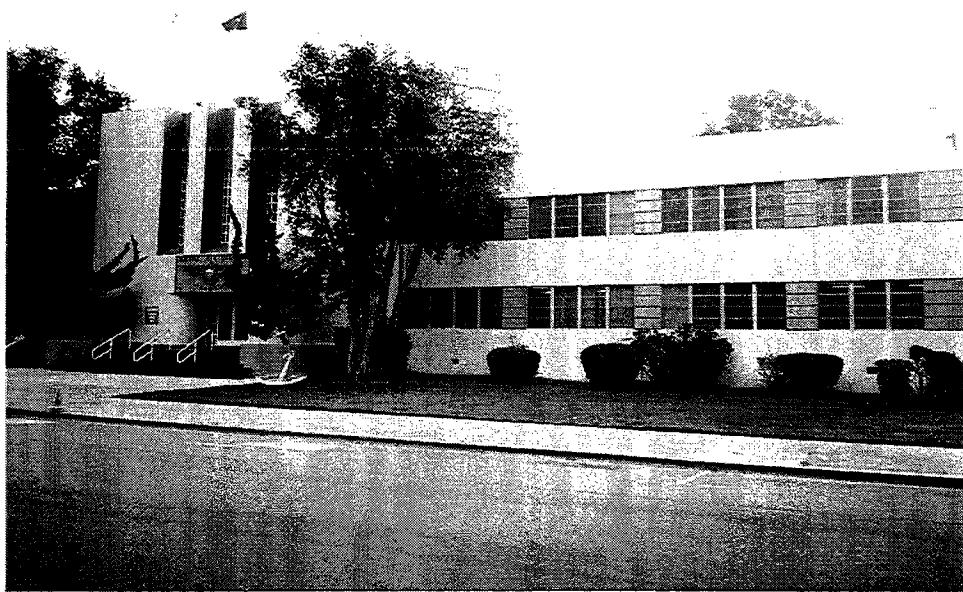


**Photograph 3.** Horizontal orientation of Building 1, with strong vertical element in entry pavilion.
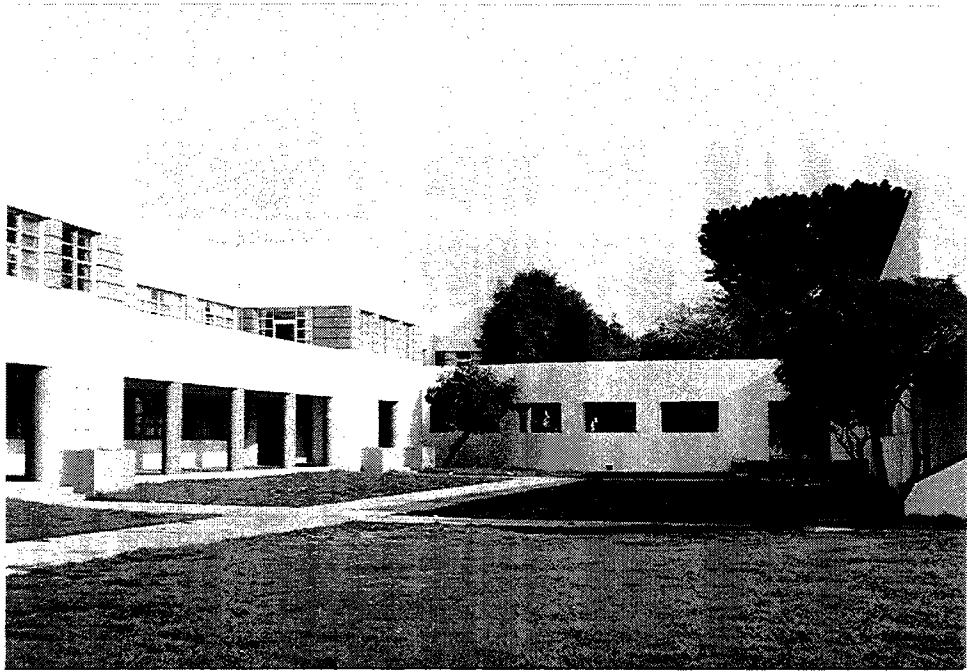
**Photograph 4.** Curving arcade connecting Buildings 2, 3, and 4.



**Photograph 5.** Building 4; inappropriately closed-off door opening, to the left of the picture.

## 3.1.2. Windows and Doors

The designers of NAS Alameda had in mind a predominantly horizontal appearance to the individual buildings and to the groups as a whole. That horizontality is emphasized chiefly through the forms of the buildings but was emphasized through other elements as well, especially the windows.

The basic type of window originally installed throughout the historic district was a two-over-two double-hung wooden sash, i.e. a wooden window with two movable sash, divided by muntins into two separate panes on the top and two on the bottom. Very few of these still remain. A few may still be seen on the postal sorting area of Building 18, on the east and south sides of Building 1, and on most of the second story of Building 2. Original wooden windows in Building 2 are shown in **Photograph 6**. Through the years, nearly all of these windows have been replaced, most with aluminum double-hung sash. These replacement windows are quite sympathetic in that they retain the basic geometry of the original, including the double-hung operational type and the two-over-two configuration. Replacement windows are shown in **Photograph 7**; these windows are located directly below those shown in Photograph 6. As discussed earlier, this two-over-two orientation contributes greatly to the horizontal emphasis of the design of the buildings. The aluminum replacement windows lack some of the warmth associated with wooden windows. The muntins in many of the aluminum windows are also thicker and flatter than the originals. In general, however, the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of aluminum replacement sash within the historic district are quite sympathetic to the original because they repeat the essential geometry of the original design.

It should be emphasized that the muntins of the two-over-two windows align with the incised concrete lines in the adjacent wall panels, creating a continuous horizontal band across the window areas. If the horizontal lines of the window muntins are not preserved, this long band will be broken. To appreciate the importance of the double-hung window design to the overall building, one needs only to inspect those few instances in which non-sympathetic windows have been installed. **Photograph 8** shows windows on the east face of Building 2. At the first story, the double-hung windows have been replaced with single-pane, fixed and tinted glass. These new windows violate the basic design of the building and appear out-of-place and inappropriate. **Photograph 9** illustrates a patio area of Building 17, in which the windows and doors have been replaced with modern sliding aluminum windows and doors. These replacements appear frankly modern and are easily recognizable as inappropriate to the design.

Fortunately from the standpoint of historic preservation, there are very few inappropriate windows anywhere within the NAS Alameda Historic District.

Not all windows within the Administrative Core were originally wooden or double-hung. Building 3 was originally fitted with steel windows which were hinged at the top, called "awning" type windows. These appear in groups of two and three; **Photograph 10** shows a group of steel awning windows, stacked three high, on Building 3. These steel windows are
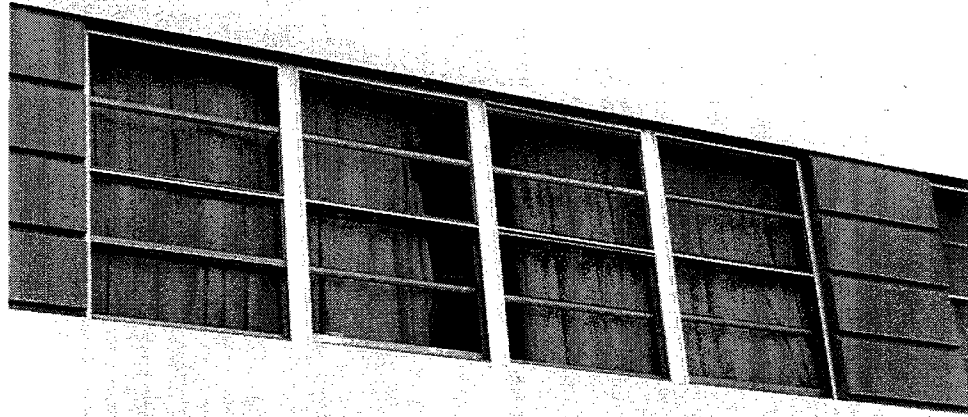
**Photograph 6.** Original two-over-two double-hung wooden sash in Building 2.
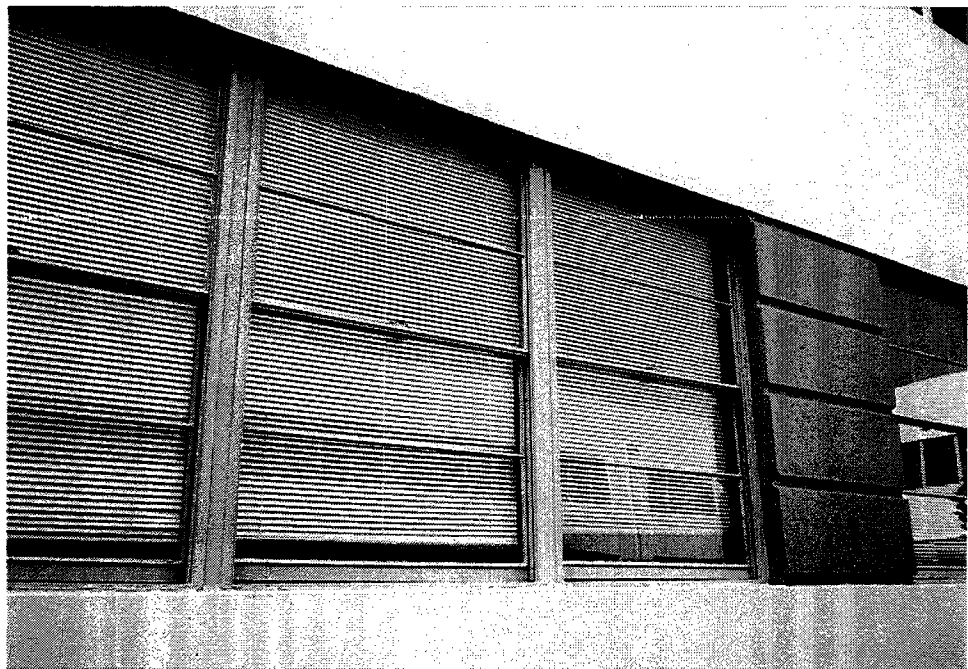


**Photograph 7.** Sympathetic two-over-two aluminum windows in Building 2.
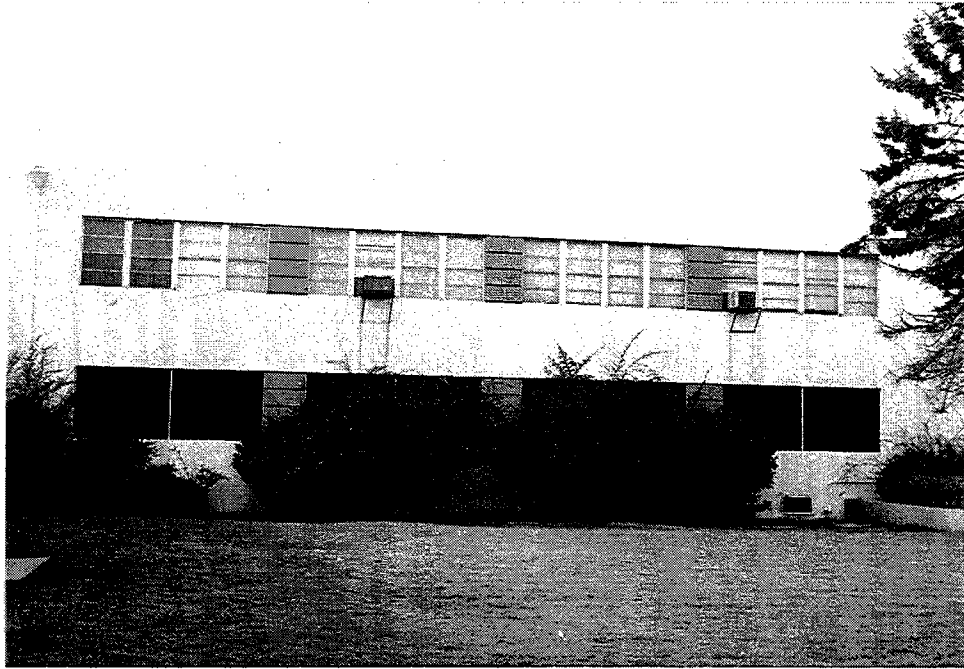
**Photograph 8.** Inappropriate picture windows in Building 2.



**Photograph 9.** Inappropriate windows and doors in Building 17.

**Photograph 10.** Steel awning windows in Building 3.

more typical of those found in the Shops Area and in the Hangar Area, as discussed below. Steel awning windows were also used in the Officers' Club, Building 60; very few original windows remain in that building. Glass blocks were used in Building 17, the most frankly modern building in the complex. Unusual "stacked" windows were used in Buildings 1, 17, and 94; these are discussed under "Design Features and Elements." For the most part, however, windows throughout the Administrative Area were double-hung wooden sash, now replaced by aluminum double-hung sash.

The original doors within the Administrative Core area were glazed wooden doors with three, four, or five horizontal panes per door. **Photograph 11** illustrates a five-light door at a side entrance to Building 1. **Photograph 12** shows a four-light door in Building 17. **Photograph 13** illustrates a three-light door in Building 2.

There are far fewer original doors than windows within the Administrative Core. In addition, the replacement doors are much less sympathetic than the replacement windows. Modern doors are, in nearly all cases, large single-pane glass doors set in dark aluminum frames.

To summarize important window and door elements within the Administrative Core:

- Original wooden double-hung, two-over-two windows, found on Buildings 1, 2, 18, and 94.
- Appropriate metal two-over-two double-hung windows, found in buildings throughout the Administrative Core.
- Steel awning-type windows, found on Buildings 3 and 60.
- Original three-, four-, and five-light wooden doors, found on several buildings.
- Stacked windows, found principally on Buildings 1, 17, and 94.

Design review considerations for windows and doors include the following:

- The basic geometry of the windows should be repeated, even when the windows are replaced. The aluminum double-hung, two-over-two windows throughout the district show how this can be done. The sympathetic character of the aluminum replacements may be attributed to three factors: they repeat the two-over-two geometry; they are double-hung and therefore operate in the manner of the originals; and the muntins are about the size and shape of the originals.
- Under no circumstances should fixed "picture windows" or aluminum sliding windows or doors be installed; the effect of these windows are shown in Photographs 1, 6, and 7.
- Generally, a building should have only one style of window, unless it had more than one style historically. This principle is consistent with the original design and the intended uniformity of the base. In a few isolated cases, different generations of replacement windows have been installed in individual buildings. Building 4, for example, has several generations of metal double-hung windows, one of which has wider muntins, as shown later in **Photograph 14**. As the buildings are scheduled for window replacements, the windows should be brought into conformity with a single style, one that most closely approximates the original.

**Photograph 11.** Five-light door, concrete canopy, concrete planters, and steel railings are rounded to go with the other rounded forms, Building 1.

**Photograph 12.** Four-light door in Building 17.
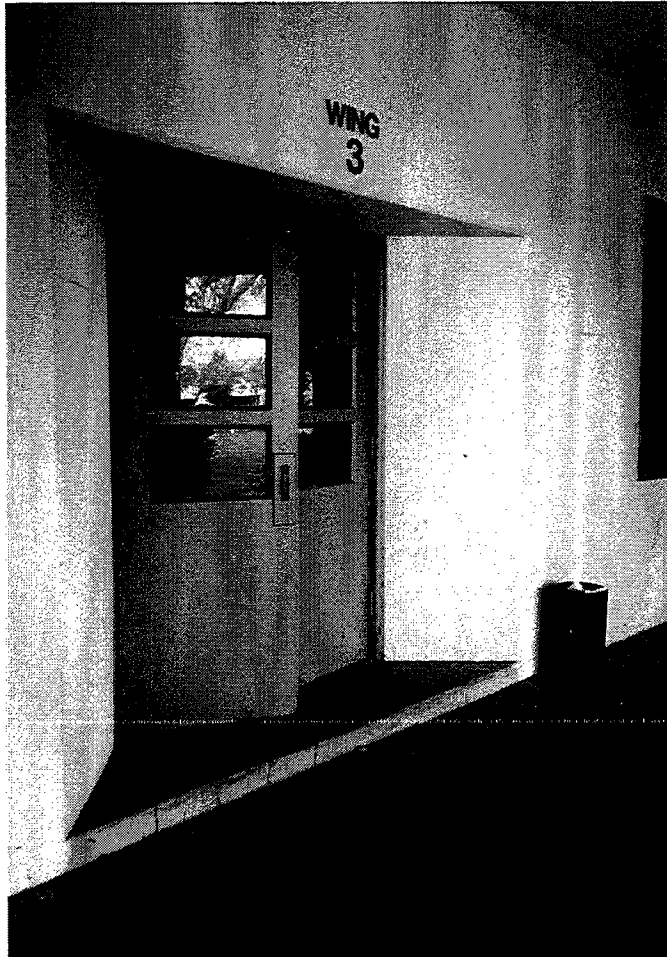
**Photograph 13.** Three-light door in Building 12.

**Photograph 14.** Quoin-like features in Building 4; also illustrates replacement windows with wide muntins.

- Efforts should be made to retain the few original multiple-light doors still in place within the historic district.
- Replacement doors should approximate the appearance of the original doors, patterned after the three-, four-, or five-light doors.
- As a matter of economy, it would be wise for the City of Alameda to assist tenants or lessees in identifying manufacturers of windows and doors that are appropriate for the historic district. It is likely, for example, that dozens of replacement two-over-two, double-hung windows will be required over time. If each tenant were to order from a separate vendor, it is likely that the windows will be more expensive and not uniform in design. If all orders were placed with the same vendor, it is more likely that the appearance would be uniform and the costs reduced.

3.1.3. Design Features and Elements

The terms, "features" and "elements" are used to refer to components of the buildings. Elements are major parts of the building, such as the entry pavilion shown in Photograph 3. Features are smaller, generally non-structural parts of buildings, such as the horizontal bands shown in Photograph 14. The difference between the two is a matter of scale; both help to define the architectural character of the building in question.

Among the most important features and elements of the buildings in the Administrative Core are the various neo-classical and Moderne design motifs which help to define the "Moderne" of the historic district. It is pointless to debate whether the district is predominantly neo-classical or Moderne; it is both and it is this unusual blending of styles that makes the area so interesting.

The classical features within the historic district tend to be highly stylized. These features do not recreate exactly the proportions or geometry of the original classical features but rather suggest those features in a modern, streamlined interpretation. For example, the horizontal concrete bands found on most buildings in the area are vaguely reminiscent of quoins. Historically, quoins were stacked masonry units, ordinarily fitted at the corners of buildings. In the NAS Alameda, quoin-like features were incised into the concrete and used on many buildings. Quoin-like features were used chiefly in the wall panels separating the windows in many of the buildings. A typical quoin-like feature is shown in **Photograph 14**, from Building 4. This quoin-like feature was also used extensively in Building 1, as shown in **Photograph 15**. This quoin-like concrete feature was used most extensively and inventively in Building 16, as shown in **Photograph 16.**

Another feature, one with clear classical antecedents, is the column. Columns are found throughout the historic district, particularly in Buildings 2, 3, 4, and 18. The NAS Alameda column, however, is a loose interpretation of the original, being oval-shaped and aerodynamic rather than round, and without capital or base. A typical oval column is shown in **Photograph 17**, in the arcade of Building 4. More massive columns exist at the entrance to Building 3, as
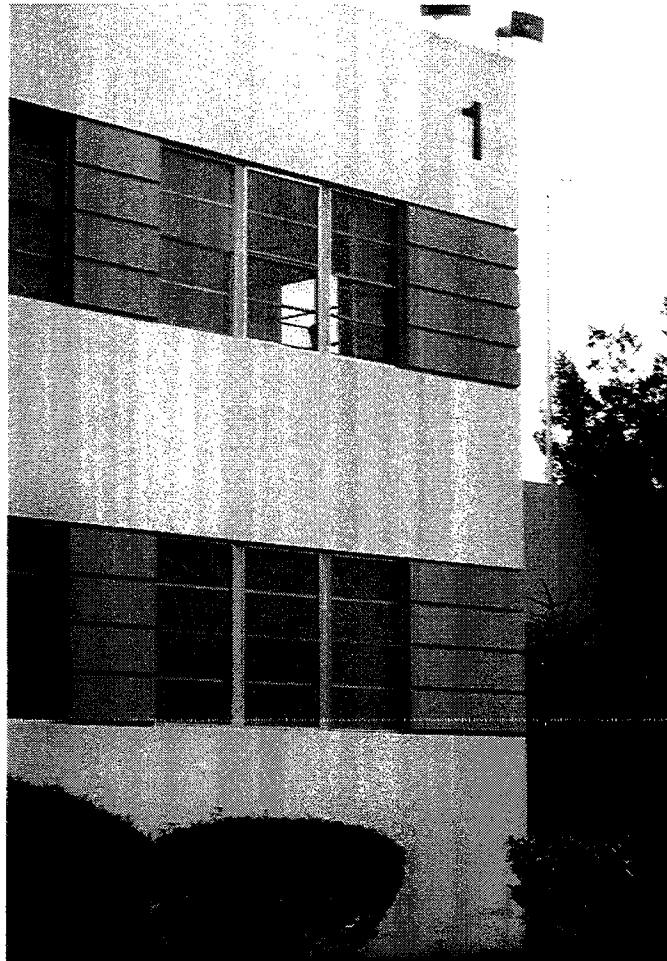
**Photograph 15.** Quoin-like features in Building 1.

**Photograph 16.** Quoin-like features in Building 16.



**Photograph 17.** Oval columns, arcade, Building 2.

shown in **Photograph 18**. Smaller columns exist on Building 18, as shown in **Photograph 19**. A larger neo-classical element is the arcade itself, found in Buildings 2, 3, 4, and 18. This element always appears with the oval columns, which support the exterior of the arcade. The columns and arcades are arguably the dominant classical elements of the historic district.

Also suggestive of classical origins are the cast stone ornaments, placed at strategic points within the Administrative Core. These include concrete Pegasus figures on Buildings 2 and 4, shown in **Photograph 20**, and eagle figures, flanking the entrance to Building 3, as shown in **Photograph 21**. It is worthy of note that the figure of Pegasus, the mythological winged horse, was chosen because of his many associations with the sea.[9]

Other design features and elements within the Administrative Core area have no precedence in classical design; these are strictly derived from the fashions of the 1930s. Nowhere is this more evident than in Building 17, the most frankly modern building within the historic district. Throughout the historic district, "stacked" elements are used, i.e., horizontal opening (usually windows) stacked in a vertical manner. Building 17 includes stacked elements on all major elevations. The large concrete elements at the ends of the major wings of Building 17 include stacked openings, as shown in **Photograph 22**. Building 17 also includes stacked glass block windows (glass blocks are also frankly modern for the time period) as shown in **Photograph 23**, and stacked corner windows, as shown in **Photograph 24**.

These "stacked" window elements are found elsewhere in the historic district: in the entry pavilion of Building 1 (see **Photograph 25**), in the theater wing of Building 18 (see **Photograph 26**), and in the belfry of the Chapel, Building 94 (see **Photograph 27**).

A smaller design feature, found throughout the Administrative Core, is a curved concrete canopy over entry doors. Curved concrete canopies exist on most of the buildings within the Administrative Core: an example, on Building 1, is shown in Photograph 11. This curved canopy is very characteristic of Moderne design from the 1930s and was used in the Shops Area as well as the Administrative Core.

Curved elements are found on buildings throughout the Administrative Core. In the general traditions of Moderne design, these curved elements are used to soften the hard edges of the concrete buildings and to give the buildings the "streamlined" look that was popular in industrial and furniture design, as well as in architecture. In the NAS Alameda Historic District, curved

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[9] As part of a character defining element for the historic district, it is interesting to point out the purposeful placement of the mythological winged-horse Pegasus in front of the Bachelor's Enlisted Quarters. The waves below Pegasus' hooves are stylized. Pegasus was the winged horse of the hero Perseus. He was gift from the Gods and he enabled Perseus to rescue the distressed maiden Andromeda who had been chained to a rock in the middle of the sea to be sacrificed to the Sea Monster (Posiden). Understanding that Pegasus' many associations with the Sea and the fact that he was the "ship" which carried the hero. Perseus across the sea to defeat the "enemy" and not only rescue the maiden but save the city as well, adds a little more light to why this particular architectural ornament was chosen. Pegasus, as a flying horse with connections to the sea is a perfect classical motif for a naval air station. Also, this was Classical Mythology (ancient Greece) and compliments the use of highly stylized Classical architecture. (Navy comments, CJM)

elements are found chiefly at entrances. An example is shown in **Photograph 28**, at the entrance to a major wing of Building 4. **Photograph 29** shows a similar curved element at an entry to Building 17. Other curving entrance elements exist on Building 1 and 18. One of the most dramatic curving elements within the entire historic district is the spiral staircase, found at the entrances to Building 2 and 4; the staircase on Building 4 is shown in **Photograph 30**. Another very dramatic use of curved concrete surfacing is in Building 16, as shown in **Photograph 31**. This type of curved element was characteristic of Moderne design, particularly the sub-category of "Streamline Moderne." Building 16 is arguably the more pure example of Streamline Moderne within the historic district.

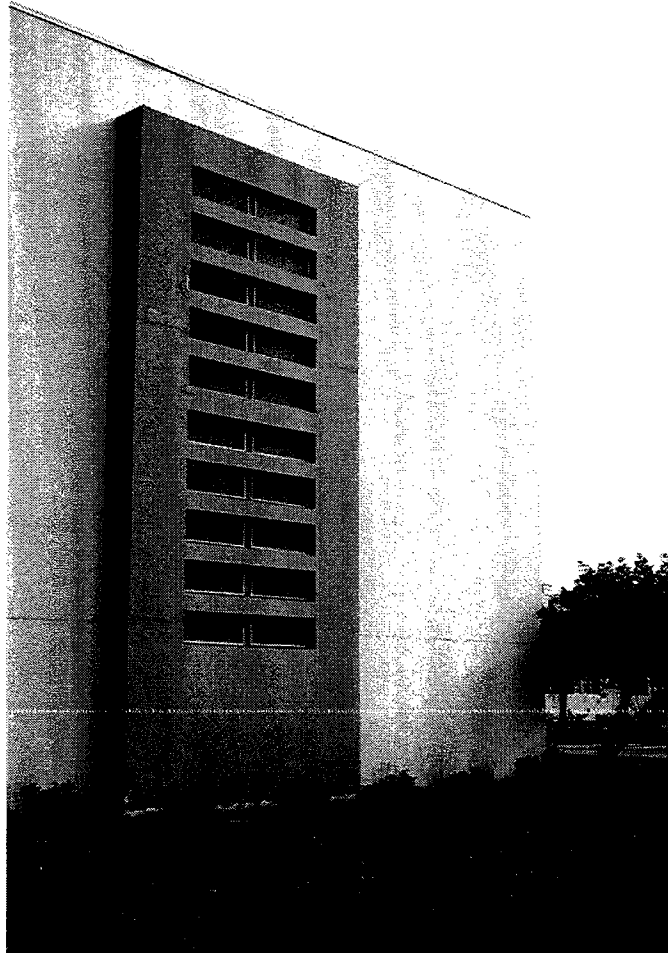**Photograph 18.** Massive columns, Building 3.
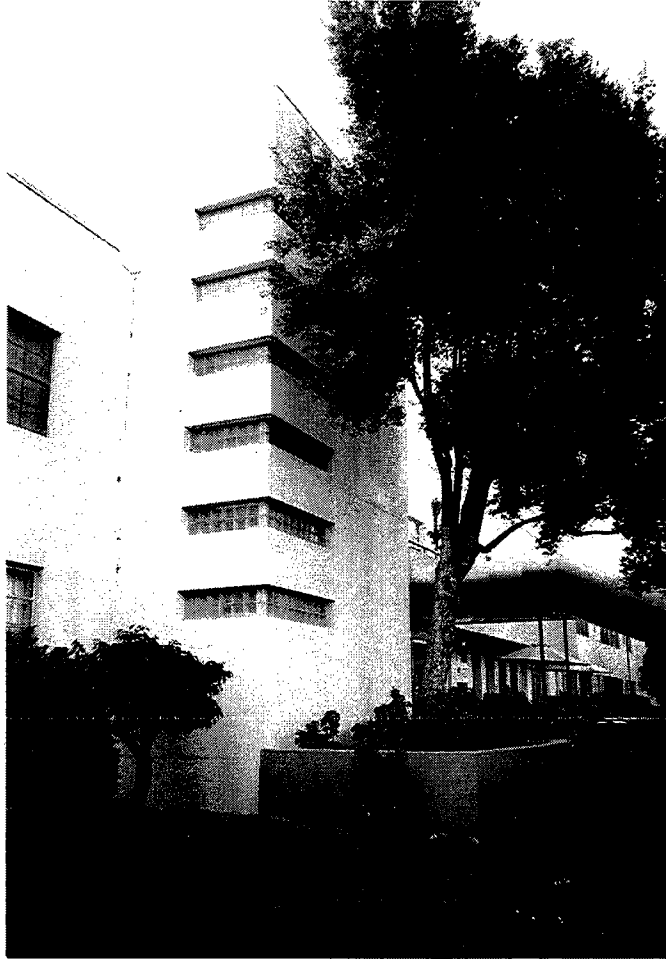
**Photograph 19.** Columns, Building 18.

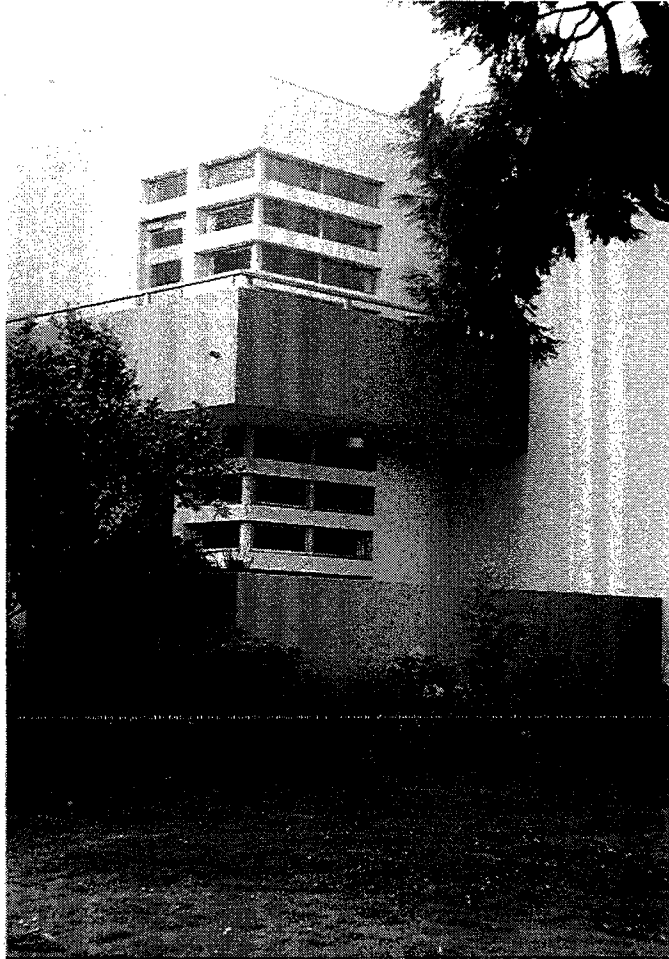**Photograph 20.** Pegasus figure, Building 4.

**Photograph 21.** Eagle figure, Building 3.

**Photograph 22.** Stacked concrete element at end of Building 17.
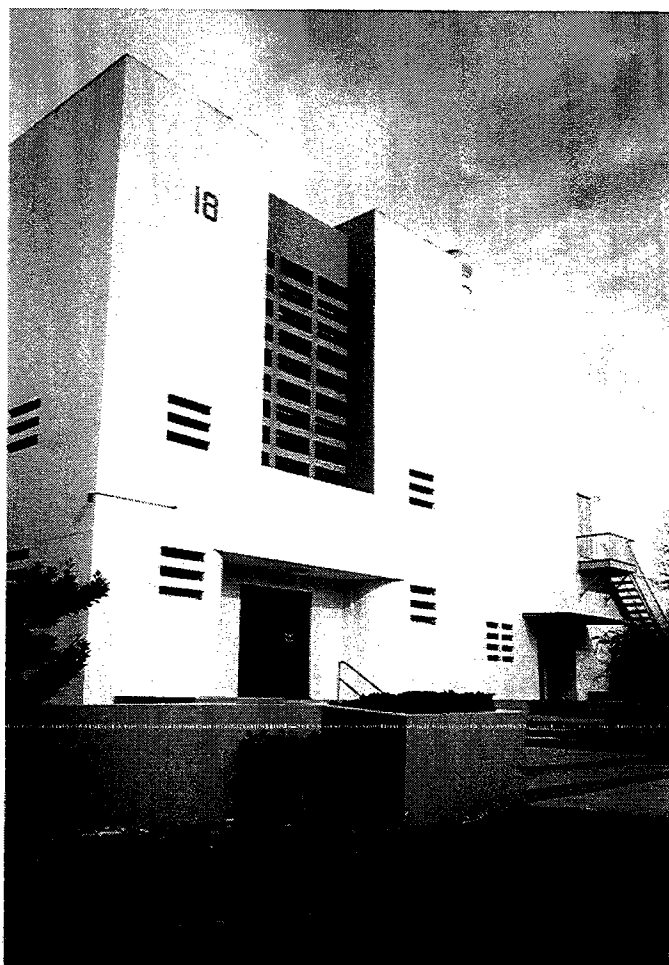
**Photograph 23.** Stacked glass block windows in Building 17.
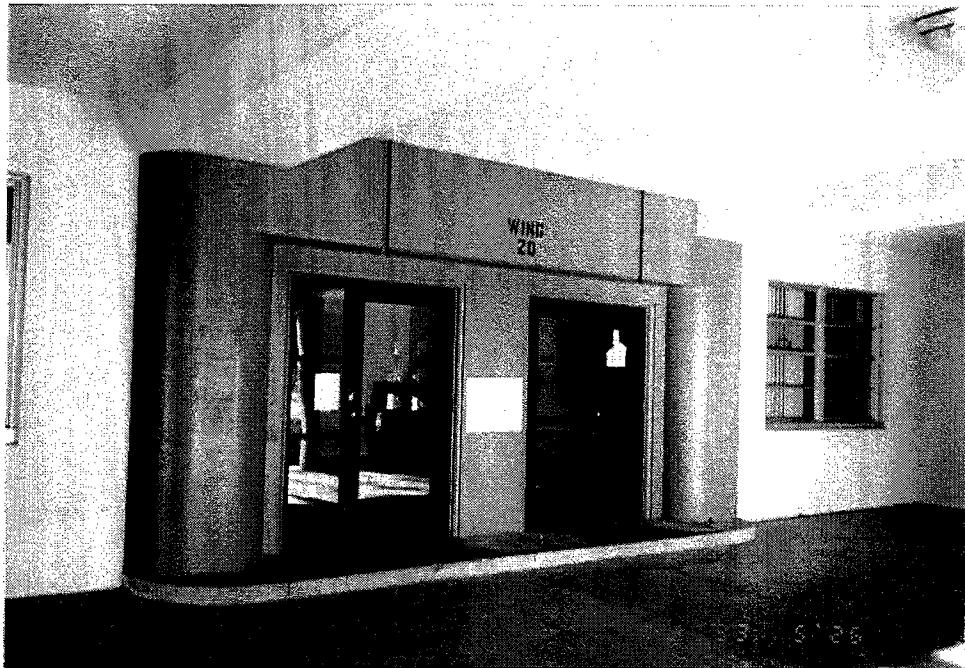
**Photograph 24.** Stacked corner windows in Building 17.

**Photograph 25.** Stacked windows in entry pavilion of Building 1.

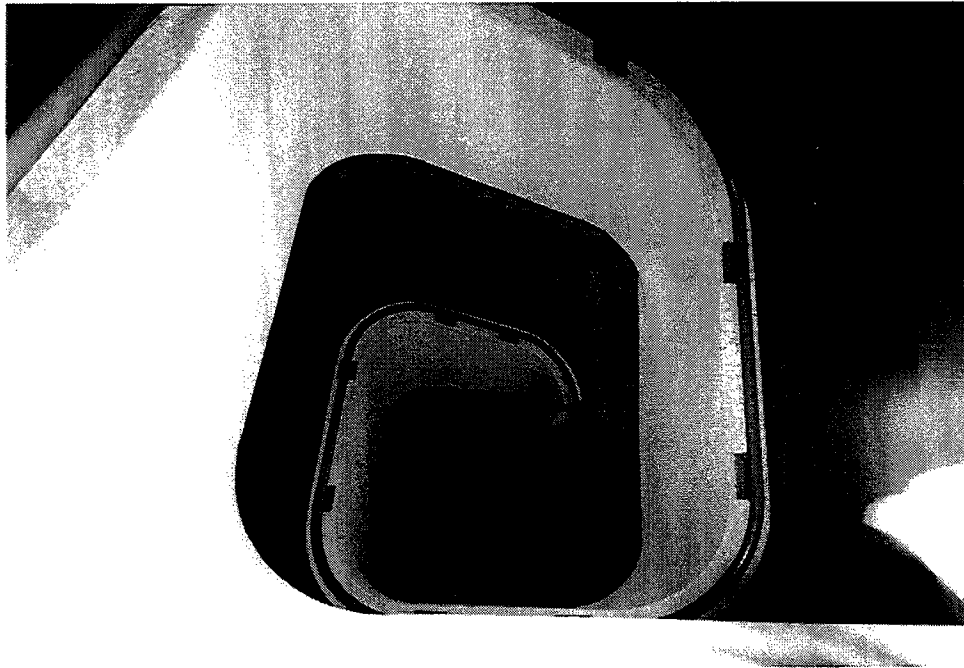**Photograph 26.** Stacked window openings in Building 18.

**Photograph 27.** Stacked openings in belfry of Building 94.
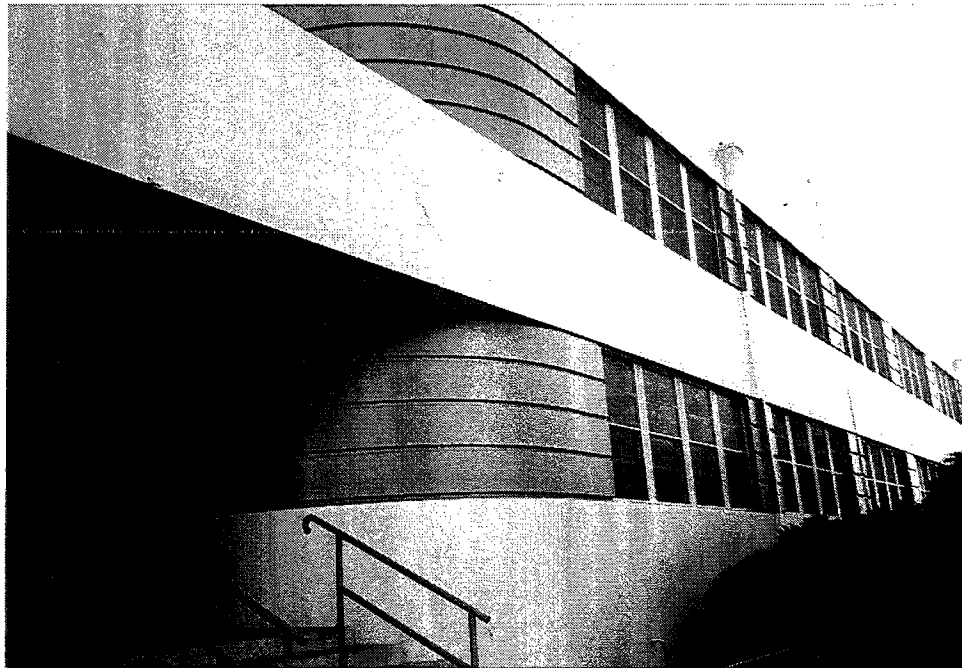
**Photograph 28.** Curved entrance at Wing 20 of Building 4.

**Photograph 29.** Curved entrance to
Building 17.

**Photograph 30.** Spiral staircase in Building 4.



**Photograph 31.** Streamline Moderne form in Building 16.

Finally, a common concrete element, utilized throughout the historic district, is a concrete planter or solid concrete element in the shape of a planter, situated in most instances at the principal entry of a building. The planters at Building 1 are arguably the most attractive, as shown in Photograph 11. In the arcades of Buildings 2 and 4, planter boxes are integrated with concrete seating areas, as shown in Photograph 17.

To summarize regarding the major character-defining elements in the Administrative Core, special attention should be paid to:

- Continuous horizontal concrete bands, or quoin like elements, used in wall panels separating windows.
- Columns, all oval in shape.
- Cast stone ornamental figures.
- "Stacked" features, usually windows.
- Curved concrete canopies.
- Curved concrete entry elements.
- Spiral staircases.
- Concrete planters.
- Concrete benches.

Design review considerations for these features and elements include:

- The major concrete features -- especially the oval columns, arcades, and quoin-like features -- are structurally integrated and should survive any proposed re-use work. The only consideration in design review has to do with paint schemes for these features. The Navy approach of contrasting paint colors for these elements appears to work well, highlighting the horizontal effect of the quoins and vertical emphasis of the columns.
- The cast stone figures should be regarded as *objects d'art* and protected under any type of re-use.
- The "stacked" features, especially those on Building 17, are major character-defining elements and should be protected in any re-use work.
- The spiral staircases in Buildings 2 and 4 are major elements of the historic district and should be treated appropriately.
- Lesser concrete elements -- planter boxes, seating, concrete canopies, and so forth -- collectively help define the historic district and should be given careful consideration under design review.

## 3.2. Character-Defining Elements of Building 1

Building 1 was the functional core of the base and was prominently sited; it is the first building to be seen from the historic gate house. For this reason, it was made into the showplace for the architectural theme of the base. Building 1 includes nearly all of the character-defining elements mentioned earlier, many of which have been illustrated in photographs. These include:

- Horizontal orientation with strong vertical emphasis in the entry pavilion (see Photograph 2).
- Horizontal concrete bands, or quoins.
- Curved planter boxes and concrete barriers at doorways.
- Curved concrete canopies.
- Five-light original doors (See Photograph 11).
- Some original two-over-two double-hung wooden windows and appropriate aluminum double-hung replacement windows.
- Stacked windows and cast-stone ornamentation at entry pavilion (see Photograph 24).

### 3.3. Character-Defining Elements of Buildings 2, 3, and 4 (also Building 63 and 193)

Buildings 2, 3, and 4 are best considered as a single entity. The buildings are united structurally via a massive arcade, which runs nearly the length of Buildings 2 and 4 and across the front of Building 3. Buildings 65 and 193 are relatively minor appendages to Building 3. This group of buildings arguably includes the best that the NAS Alameda Historic District has to offer. Virtually all character-defining elements found within the Administrative Core generally may be seen on these buildings.

Among the key character-defining elements are:

- Strong horizontal orientation with vertical elements for emphasis. The key vertical elements include the stairwells at the eastern end of Buildings 2 and 4, and the tall columns at the facade of Building 3.
- Quoin-like features.
- Cast stone figures, including the Pegasus figures at Buildings 2 and 4 and the eagle figures at the entrance to Building 3.
- Many original two-over-two double-hung wooden sash on the second story of Building 2.
- Sympathetic aluminum two-over-two double-hung sash in Buildings 2 and 4.
- Steel sash in Building 3.
- Three-light wooden doors.
- Oval columns and long arcade.
- Concrete planters and seating area.

### 3.4 Character-Defining Elements of Building 16.

Building 16 is a large U-shaped, two-story, flat-roofed concrete building, located immediately east of the Administration Building. It is characteristic of the general horizontal orientation of the buildings in the Administrative Core. More than any other building in the district, however, it typifies the sweeping curved concrete surfaces of the Streamline Moderne style; as noted, it is the most pure example of Streamline Moderne within the historic district. Character-defining elements include: