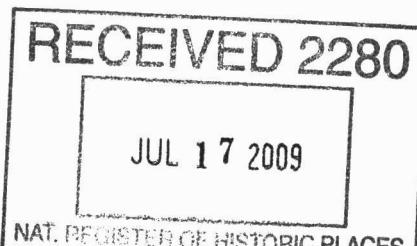


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Northern Natural Gas Building

Other names/site number DO09:0124-027

2. Location

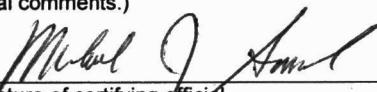
Street & number 2223 Dodge Street Not for publication

City or town Omaha Vicinity

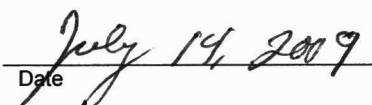
State Nebraska Code NE County Douglas Code 055 Zip code 68102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Signature of certifying official



Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

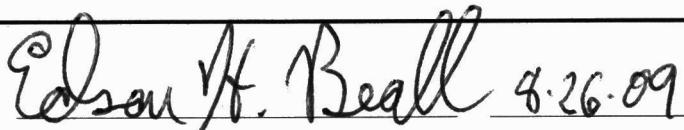
determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____



8.26.09



Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Private
 Public-local
 Public-state
 Public-federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Building(s)
 District
 Site
 Structure
 Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
2	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business

LANDSCAPE/parking lot

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick, Granite, Glass, Steel, Concrete

Roof

Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

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8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B Removed from its original location.
- C A birthplace or a grave.
- D A cemetery.
- E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F A commemorative property.
- G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE**COMMERCE**

Period of Significance

1951-1963

Significant Dates

1951

1958

c.1960, 1963

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Latenser & Sons

Architect/Builder

Latenser & Sons

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Northern Natural Gas Company, 1111 South 103rd Street, Omaha, Nebraska

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property** Approximately 3 acres

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	253173	4571543	3.	
2.			4.		

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Christine Long and Emily Pettisorganization Mead & Hunt, Inc.date March 2009street & number 6501 Watts Roadtelephone 608.273.6380city or town Madisonstate WI zip code 53719**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Mid-City Bankstreet & number 304 South 42nd Streettelephone 402.558.8000city or town Omahastate Nebraska zip code 68131

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

The Northern Natural Gas Building is located at 2223 Dodge Street in Omaha, Nebraska. It is positioned on the northwest edge of the established downtown area on the west end of the block bounded by Dodge Street on the north, Douglas Street on the south, 24th Street on the west, and 20th Street on the east. The Northern Natural Gas Building is sited immediately across the street from the Joslyn Memorial Art Museum and near Central High School in what was envisioned to be Omaha's cultural and civic center. Set on a slight slope, the Northern Natural Gas Building has a partially exposed basement level at the rear (south) elevation. Surface parking, which surrounds the building, is accessible from both Dodge and Douglas Streets. Two contributing parking garages are located on the south side of the building, adjacent to Douglas Street. Landscaping is limited to shrubbery at the northeast corner of the building and along the driveway east of the building, small coniferous trees along 24th Street, and deciduous trees along Douglas Street, adjacent to the parking garages.

The Northern Natural Gas Building, designed in the Modern Movement style, is a fifteen-story tall office building comprised of two primary structural masses that reflect the rapid expansion of the company in the 1950s. The primary (north) facade of the building is dominated by the horizontally-oriented, original six-story mass. Designed by Latenser & Sons in 1951, the original office building features a symmetrical, stepped facade of buff-colored brick. Polished red granite adorns the first story and wraps around the building's side elevations. A stainless steel frame surrounds banded ribbon windows and fluted stainless steel panels in the center of the facade, adding architectural interest.

The original 1951 building features steel frame construction that is fireproofed with vermiculate plaster. The use of vermiculate plaster resulted in a savings of steel and the elimination of one series of structural supports, which in turn resulted in a more open floor area that enabled the extensive use of movable office partitions. Additionally, the building uses cellular steel floor construction, which permits the distribution of wiring and ventilation throughout the building. The 1951 mass originally featured more than 500 double-glazed windows with aluminum sashes; when the fifteen-story addition was incorporated in 1957-1958, the original rear (south elevation) windows were removed. The first-floor windows measure 4-by-8 feet while the upper story windows measure a smaller 4-by-6 feet. The main entrance of the building is centrally located on the main facade. Clad in polished red granite and featuring fixed windows, the partially-enclosed external vestibule has a flat roof, polished red granite steps, and a revolving door that provides access to the interior.¹

A fifteen-story rear addition, also designed by Latzner & Sons, was incorporated into the original mass in 1957-1958. The fifteen-story mass is clad in buff-colored brick, consistent with the original structure. The buff-colored brick essentially frames the second through fourteenth stories, while the center of each elevation is dominated by bands of windows alternating with pewter-colored panels. Decorative stainless steel panels project forward and extend up the center of the north facade and three stories above the top of the building, creating a visual anchor and unifying the two structural

¹ "Northern Gas Company," *Northwest Architect* 16, no. 4 (1952): 14.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

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masses through the continuity of stainless steel accents. Within the three-story stainless steel projection are mechanical rooms and air-intake areas.

Fixed-pane ribbon windows separated by thin steel mullions that run continuously between the second and fourteenth story adorn each elevation. The ribbon windows alternate with bands of filled pewter-colored panels, creating the illusion of a curtain wall. The alternation of fixed ribbon windows and filled panels simultaneously identifies floor levels and accentuates the horizontal in tension with the continuous vertical mullions. Moreover, the uniformity and continuity of the windows across each elevation is suggestive of the open plan within. Unlike the lower stories, the fifteenth story features floor-to-ceiling windows with transoms, vertical steel mullions, steel framing, and the absence of buff-colored brick, thus definitively crowning the top of the building.

The rear (south) elevation, which is dominated by the 1957-1958 addition, features the exposed basement and first level that are sheathed in red brick. The basement level includes a recessed entry supported by large concrete columns. A wing addition, with an unknown construction date, extends along the south and west elevations at the basement level. Although it is not visible from the facade, the addition is sheathed in red granite along the west elevation, cohesively linking it with the two dominant components of the building. Surface parking on the roof of the wing addition is accessible from Dodge Street.

Two contributing parking garages are located at the rear (south) of the building, accessible from both Dodge and Douglas Street via a driveway on the east side of the headquarters building. The similarly designed three-deck prestressed precast concrete garages flank the central driveway. The westernmost (c.1960) garage measures nine bays long on the south elevation and four bays wide on the east elevation. The garage's westernmost bay on the south elevation displays a large industrial garage door, while the remaining bays feature fixed multi-light windows recessed within prestressed precast units. The easternmost (1963) garage was designed by engineers at Northern Natural Gas to look identical to the earlier garage. It measures six bays along the south elevation and four bays along the west elevation, features fixed multi-light windows like its western counterpart, and includes a low-clearance garage door along its west elevation. At the intersection of the driveway and Douglas Street, both garages feature clipped corners with low-clearance garage doors and concrete overhangs. Both garages feature surface parking on their roofs, which corresponds with the basement level of the fifteen-story addition. The perimeter of the garages' surface parking is lined with tubular metal railings.

*Interior*²

Primary access to the office building is gained on Dodge Street through the red-granite entry vestibule. Red granite continues along the walls of the small square-shaped reception room and along the reception desk. To the right (west) of the reception desk is a small waiting room; behind and flanking the reception desk are two glass doors that lead to a

² Floor plans detailing the interior of the building are provided as additional documentation.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

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three-car elevator well in a hallway that provides access to two open office areas on either side of the building (east and west). The open office areas on either end of the original building run continuously into the office space in the south addition; the only suggestion of the different structural spaces is the use of internal piers at the seam of the buildings. A second four-car elevator well is provided in the center of the south addition; at the basement level, this elevator well is sheathed in red granite, similar to the reception area. As the banded windows on the exterior suggest, the interior space of the building is largely open and anchored by the two elevator wells and sets of staircases in the center of the two-part structure; restrooms are also provided between the two elevator wells. Open flexible office spaces, with some partitions for conference rooms and private offices, continue on the first through fifth stories. The sixth story is dedicated to a kitchen, remodeled cafeteria, and partitioned conference rooms. The kitchen, which retains its original 1959 features, including glazed tile walls, is located in the southwest corner of the building.

The seventh through fifteenth floors are located exclusively in the south tower addition. Floors seven through fourteen are generally open in plan with few partitioned spaces. A circular staircase connects the fourteenth and fifteenth stories. The fifteenth story features corner offices and offices along the south and north perimeter of the space with expansive views through the floor-to-ceiling windows, as well as a central reception area with a round black marble inset in the floor echoed by a dome-shaped cutout with a pendant light in the ceiling. The fifteenth floor elevator bay also features a rectangular black marble inset in the tile floor. Although the interior of the building has been remodeled, most obviously on the fifteenth floor, the spatial organization and openness of the building appears to be consistent with the original office space.

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Section 8 Page 1

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

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The Northern Natural Gas Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A: Commerce* and *Criterion C: Architecture*. The Northern Natural Gas Building is significant under *Criterion A* for its association with Omaha's emergence as a regional headquarters location for service industry-related companies during the post-World War II period. As Omaha's economy shifted from a focus on commercial-processing to a focus on service industries, Northern Natural Gas Company became representative of the city's corporate image. The building is also eligible under *Criterion C* for its embodiment of a type and period of design, namely corporate American architecture of the post-World War II period as manifested in the Modern Movement style. Sheathed in glass and flat brick walls with simple stainless steel accents, the Northern Natural Gas Building embodies Modern architecture. The building retains good physical integrity from its construction, and the significant, character-defining features are intact. The period of significance for the building is 1951-1963, encompassing the years in which construction of the building and its contributing parking garages were completed.

History³

During the post-World War II period, the city of Omaha witnessed its economy shift from a commercial-processing dominated economy to a service economy. As the stockyards and meatpacking industries declined, insurance, banking, finance, and real-estate industries grew. Well-known for its wealth of insurance companies, including Mutual of Omaha and Woodmen of the World, both of which led the rise of Omaha's insurance-industry during the postwar period, the city of Omaha also housed two other companies that became crucial to the local economy: Northwestern Bell and Northern Natural Gas. In addition to the economic successes of Northwestern Bell and Northern Natural Gas, the companies' histories during the period were marked by the activities of their top executives within Omaha's leadership structure.⁴

Although in operation since 1930, Northern Natural Gas expanded rapidly during the 1950s, as natural gas, a relatively new energy product, won general acceptance. During this period, Northern Natural Gas became a rising star in Omaha's growing service economy, as the company expanded by building new pipelines and acquiring new customers. At the end

³ Although Northern Natural Gas is the predecessor to Enron, its association with Enron post-dates the headquarter building's period of significance. In 1985 Northern Natural Gas (then a subsidiary of parent company InterNorth, Inc.) merged with Houston Natural Gas Corporation to form HNG/InterNorth. The name of the merged company changed to Enron Corporation in 1986, and the headquarters were moved in their entirety from Omaha to Houston, thus severing the company's association with the original Northern Natural Gas headquarters building at 2223 Dodge Street. Although the parent company's headquarters were located in Houston, in 1990-1991 Enron built a new seven-story office building in the western fringe of Omaha (at 103rd and Pacific Streets) to house the divisions of Northern Natural Gas, Northern Plains Natural Gas and EDS. In 2002 Dynegy assumed ownership of Northern Natural Gas after a failed merger with Enron. Within the same year, Omaha investors with Warren Buffett's MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company purchased Northern Natural Gas, thus solidifying the company's continued operation in Omaha. Northern Natural Gas, still associated with MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, maintains its office headquarters in the 1990-1991 building erected by Enron.

⁴ Janet Daly-Bednarek, *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945-1973*, (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 52-59.

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

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of 1948, Northern Natural Gas served 242 cities and towns, and by 1959 this number had increased to 444 communities.⁵ By 1965 Northern Natural Gas had 19,000 miles of pipeline extending from 50 miles within the Mexican border to within 50 miles of the Canadian border. Despite the national scope of its pipelines, Northern Natural Gas' service area remained concentrated in the Plains region. Further demonstrating Northern Natural Gas' rise to regional and national prominence was *Fortune* Magazine's June 1957 listing of the company as one the six major natural gas pipelines in the United States.⁶ Accompanying the rapid expansion of the company in the 1950s was Northern Natural Gas' establishment of their headquarters building at 2223 Dodge Street, near downtown Omaha, and the subsequent expansion of the building.

Building Up Reserves and Clientele

During the 1950s, John Merriam served as president of Northern Natural Gas and led the company on an aggressive expansion program that, at a cost of \$52 million, involved constructing pipelines to increase system capacity from 489 million cubic feet per day to over one billion cubic feet per day. Northern Natural Gas diligently searched for new natural gas reserves during the 1950s, primarily between Kansas and western Texas. At this time, the company also purchased the Permian Basin Pipeline Company, resulting in 2.3 trillion cubic feet of additional gas reserves in western Texas and eastern New Mexico.⁷

In order to develop new customers for their increasing gas reserves, Northern Natural Gas added an Area Development Department to its Marketing Division; the department focused on bringing new industry to Northern Natural Gas' market area. Additionally, the Public Relations Department enlisted an Omaha artist to paint a number of pictures depicting everyday life in various towns and cities along Northern Natural Gas' pipeline. The resulting "Living in the Northern Plains" series appeared as ads in *TIME* and other national magazines in an effort to boost the perception of the communities and the company. According to Merriam, natural gas was misunderstood during the 1950s and because of buried pipelines, the company tended to seem invisible. Efforts to market and advertise contributed to the company's visibility and presence, through which it established itself as a contributor to the "cultural, civic, educational, and charitable well-being of the communities in which it does business." As a result of marketing, exploration, and construction efforts, the number of communities served by Northern Natural Gas more than doubled from 349 to 740 between 1955 and 1965.⁸

Promoting natural gas and gas appliances was yet another way to build a viable customer base for Northern Natural Gas. Such efforts are readily apparent in the pages of the company's quarterly publication *Transmission* during the 1950s. A

⁵ Patt Buell and Reinecke, Bryan, "Northern Natural Gas History - 1930 to Present," N.p., 2004, 4, 6.

⁶ Stephen Szmrecsanyi, *Northern: The First Fifty Years* ([Omaha, Neb.]: Northern Natural Gas Company, 1980), 15; Buell and Reinecke, "Northern Natural Gas History - 1930 to Present," 6.

⁷ Szmrecsanyi, *Northern: The First Fifty Years*, 14-15; Buell and Reinecke, "Northern Natural Gas History - 1930 to Present," 4, 7.

⁸ Szmrecsanyi, *Northern: The First Fifty Years*, 13-15; Buell and Reinecke, "Northern Natural Gas History - 1930 to Present," 4, 7.

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Northern Natural Gas Building

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1958 article claims, "the gas industry, whose fuel to the home owner is more economical and cleaner than any other, can offer anything, from the 'Multimatic Wall'⁹ to the gas light, a revival that has caught on well beyond the dreams of gas industry officials."¹⁰ In between the futuristic and the traditional, Northern Natural Gas featured more typical domestic appliances including refrigerators, incinerators, washers, dryers, stoves and ovens. The company also highlighted the fact that these products could be customized with built-in designs and "colors and styles to compliment the decor of all kitchens."¹¹ By promoting the growing gas options from RCA Whirlpool and others, Northern Natural Gas was helping to change the layout and functionality of the American home while also enlisting new customers who would depend on their product for years to come.

Building an Image

Related to Northern Natural Gas' marketing efforts were the company's efforts to improve the image of the Midwest. According to historian Janet Daly-Bednarek, Northern Natural Gas "pioneered the idea of depicting the Midwest as a lively place to live, a booster theme taken up more generally in the late 1960s as the value of such an approach became more evident."¹² In an effort to increase business, the company promoted the quality of life in the Midwest through advertisements and artwork in *Transmission*. Additionally, John Merriam carried his executive leadership into city matters through his position as chairman of Omaha's Public Educational and Cultural Facilities Committee. As chairman, Merriam brought cultural and recreational resources to light in the Omaha Plan, a postwar land use plan. Through the plan, he and others promoted transforming the northwest section of downtown, which contained the Joslyn Museum, Central High School, Creighton University, and blighted residential areas, into a civic center.¹³ With established ties to the Joslyn Art Museum, Northern Natural Gas purchased a large area near the museum that had previously been considered blighted, and used the area for its 1951 headquarters, which was "designed to harmonize with the Joslyn and Omaha's proposed civic center."¹⁴ Construction of the building, sited within the proposed civic center and solidifying Northern Natural Gas Company's partnership with the Joslyn Art Museum, confirmed Merriam's frequently and publically expressed belief that the cultural development of Omaha was as important as industrial growth.¹⁵

At the end of 1951 Northern Natural Gas assembled its five dispersed Omaha offices in the new headquarters building. Six years later, on April 25, 1957, Northern Natural Gas announced plans for a fifteen-story addition to the company

⁹ The "Multimatic Wall" included five appliances in one 10 ft. x 8 ft. x 33 in. surface.

¹⁰ Northern Natural Gas Company, "That Which Adds Comfort," *Transmission*, VI: 3, 1958, 13.

¹¹ Northern Natural Gas Company, "Built-Ins are 'In Solid,'" *Transmission*, V: 2, 1959, 3.

¹² Daly-Bednarek, *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945-1973*, 58-59.

¹³ Daly-Bednarek, *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945-1973*, 111, 137.

¹⁴ "Northern Natural Gas Co. to Build 6-Story Office Building," *News Bulletin: Omaha Chamber of Commerce* IX, no. 46, 23 June 1950, 1.

¹⁵ Daly-Bednarek, *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945-1973*, 138. Although a civic center was envisioned to extend from the central post office to 24th Street, it never came into fruition as envisioned.

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

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headquarters, and excavation was underway immediately.¹⁶ The headquarters addition would accommodate the company's growing workforce, which increased from 2,539 to 3,219 between 1953 and 1958. The resulting structure reflected the new corporate architectural language of post-World War II American modernism; projected an architectural image of organization, standardization, and efficiency; and provided Omaha with one of its tallest and most modern office buildings. Moreover, the building's 1951 and 1958 components reflected the company's corporate success within Omaha's new service-dominated economy, which was, in part, anchored by the Northern Natural Gas itself.¹⁷ Since 1990, when Northern Natural Gas Company relocated to a new headquarters building in west Omaha, the building at 2223 Dodge Street has been only temporarily occupied and is now vacant.

Modern Architecture in Corporate America

Modern architecture of the post-World War II period has its roots in late nineteenth and early twentieth century architectural styles, including the Prairie, Art Moderne, Art Deco, and International Style. Although established and accepted in Europe in the early twentieth-century, modern architecture was not widely accepted in America until the 1950s. Modern architecture generally refers to structures that share certain characteristic features, such as simple design, integration of all design elements, rectilinear forms, use of modern materials, exposed structure, little ornamentation, open plans, and functional spaces.¹⁸

Following World War II, job growth in professional fields boomed as the American economy shifted from the production of goods to the provision of services. As a result, the need for office spaces for a rising managerial and professional class emerged. Notable architects such as Pietro Belluschi (Equitable Life Assurance Building, 1948); Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Lever House, 1952 and Inland Steel, 1957); Eero Saarinen (General Motors Technical Center, 1956); and Mies van der Rohe (Seagram Building, 1958) ushered in a new corporate image for American businesses. Drawing upon the International Style and industrial architecture of the Bauhaus, these architects transformed the tall office building into a sealed box with symmetrical and rhythmic elevations of curtain walls, comprised of banded glass windows with steel mullions and polished surfaces. Using steel skeletons with glass skins, these architects perfected an architectural image of organization, efficiency, standardization, and ambition, embodying the principles of postwar corporate America.¹⁹

¹⁶ Buell and Reinecke, "Northern Natural Gas History - 1930 to Present," 5-6.

¹⁷ The former Northern Natural Gas building continues to rank as Omaha's eighth tallest building, and represents the earliest extant modern style tall building in Omaha. The Woodmen Tower and the Masonic Manor, both modern tall buildings, were constructed in the 1960s.

¹⁸ Storrow Kinsella Partnership, Inc., "Modernism in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Design and Art in Bartholomew County, Indiana, 1942-1999, National Historic Landmark Theme Study," N.p., 1999, 17, 19.

¹⁹ See Donald Albrecht and Chrysanthi B. Broikos, eds., *On the Job: Design and the American Office* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 17-59; Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1998), 263-312; William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1996), 405-410; Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1992), 231-237; Sarah Allaback, "Essays on Modern Architecture: For the National Historic Landmark Program," N.p., 2003, 7-17.

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

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Corporate American architecture of the 1950s not only evoked the advancement of technology in business and economic growth, it was enabled by the proliferation of technological innovations mobilized during World War II. Mechanical ventilation, air conditioning, and fluorescent lighting became universal in the postwar period. In particular, air conditioning made possible the 1950s sealed office box, so immediately recognizable by its iconic uninterrupted glazed windows.²⁰ The Northern Natural Gas building with its cellular steel floor construction (which enabled the distribution of electrical wiring and ventilation throughout the building), incorporated air conditioning system, and sealed glazed windows, exemplifies the use of technological innovations applied to the postwar office building.

During the post-World War II period, architects in Lincoln and Omaha designed sophisticated modern institutional, commercial, and residential buildings. Illustrative of modern architecture in Nebraska are the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln (Davis and Wilson, 1951), the Hayes County Courthouse in Hayes Center (Davis and Wilson, 1954), the former Security Mutual Life Insurance Building in Lincoln (Davis and Wilson, 1956), the former Strategic Air Command Headquarters Building and SAC Memorial Chapel at Offutt Air Force Base (Leo Daly, 1957), the Walter and Ruby Behlen House in Columbus (Leo Daly, 1958), and the former Bankers Life Building in Lincoln (Unthank & Unthank, 1959).²¹ Like these buildings, the Northern Natural Gas Building is immediately recognizable as a Modern-style architectural form, and more specifically as postwar corporate architecture. Notably, the building is also comprised of components that quite literally reflect the company's rapid expansion, corporate success, and association with Omaha's transition to a service economy during the 1950s.

Northern Natural Gas Building (1951)

Designed by Latenser & Sons, a notable Omaha architectural firm, and completed in 1951, the Northern Natural Gas Building demonstrates Modern architectural style through its simple design, rectilinear form, open plan, functional spaces, and limited ornamentation. This six-story corporate headquarters features 55,000 square feet of office space. Designed with significant forethought, this horizontally-oriented brick structure, centrally anchored by a three-car elevator bay, was planned so that a wing could be added on either end when the need for space arose. In 1952 the building was profiled in *Northwest Architect* as "the latest addition to that city's beautiful growing Civic Center."²²

Latenser & Sons employed innovative structural engineering to achieve one of the major tenets of modern architecture, namely the use of open plan functional spaces. By using vermiculite plaster fireproofing around the structure's steel frame, the architects were able to reduce the amount of steel required and eliminate a series of structural supports,

²⁰ Donald Albrecht and C. B. Broikos, eds., *On the Job: Design and the American Office*, 55, 56.

²¹ Stacy Stupka-Burda, Gregg Callahan, Greg Miller, and Jennifer Brockmeier, "Nebraska State Historical Society Building, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," N.p., 2003, 8.3.

²² "Northern Gas Company," *Northwest Architect* 16, no. 4 (1952): 14.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

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resulting in two structural spans of 27 feet each. Notably, the use of modern construction techniques, resulting in two rather than three spans, led to a more open floor plan, conducive to the extensive use of movable office partitions, a characteristic feature of modern architectural design.²³

Although the building was clad in buff-colored brick, which risked conveying a sense of weight and mass derived from the use of masonry, the sophisticated use of similarly colored mortar resulted in a less evident bonding pattern and more emphasis on a continuous surface. Moreover, the rich use of granite on the first story, a material promoted by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson in their seminal work, *The International Style*, first published in 1932, provided a smooth continuous surface.²⁴ With more than 500 tinted double-glazed windows in aluminum sashes, the 1951 Northern Natural Gas building also conspicuously used windows to sheath the building and provide a cohesive surface that echoed the horizontal lines of the structure, consistent with the tenets of modern architecture, and influenced by earlier Bauhaus buildings. Definitively modern, the open floor plan further hinted at by the banded ribbon windows on each elevation, facilitated the flexible use of office space within.

Rising Skyward (1958-1963)

Just six years after moving into the Latenser & Sons-designed headquarters, Northern Natural Gas required a substantial office expansion project. A \$230,000 addition by Latenser & Sons in 1953 simply could not keep pace with the company's growth.²⁵ In a one-page spread titled "Growing with the Northern Plains," Northern Natural Gas publicized their headquarters' planned expansion in *Transmission*, stating:

Construction of a 15-story addition to Northern's headquarters building in Omaha symbolizes not only Northern's rapid growth but its faith in the future of the area it serves. Northern's need for more space influenced the decision to more than double its present office space. The determining factors were the growth potential of Northern Plains area served by Northern and the ever-increasing demand for natural gas. Like the future of the Northern Plains our tower rises skyward on a firm foundation.²⁶

Latenser & Sons were again tapped by Northern Natural Gas, ensuring the addition was carefully integrated into the headquarters' existing building, such that the interior space remains open and accessible between the two structural components. Completed in 1958 at a cost of just over 2 million dollars, the fifteen-story addition carries forward the

²³ "Northern Gas Company," *Northwest Architect*, 14, 18.

²⁴ Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), 65-67.

²⁵ City of Omaha Planning Division, Building Permit Records. This addition was removed to make way for the 15-story tower.

²⁶ "Growing with the Northern Plains," *Transmission* V, no. 2 (1957): 23.

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 7

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

corporate image promulgated by modern tall office building architecture.²⁷ Cohesively integrated into the existing structure by the use of the same buff-colored brick and mortar and simple stainless steel decoration, the fifteen-story addition provides a vertical counterpart to the largely horizontal orientation of its six-story predecessor. Decorative stainless steel panels that rise above the fifteenth story visually anchor the facade of the building, thrusting the addition's verticality into the core of the original mass. The alternation of fixed ribbon windows and filled pewter-colored panels simultaneously identifies floor levels and accentuates the horizontal in tension with the continuous vertical mullions. The addition is crowned by the fifteenth story, which features floor-to-ceiling windows with transoms, vertical steel mullions, and steel framing. Like Miesian tall building architecture of the postwar period, the windows of the Northern Natural Gas building's fifteen-story addition are tinted and create an opaque barrier that encloses the private corporate space. Additionally, the building obscures its structural frame by the use of a unitary skin that wraps around the building, each elevation framed by buff-colored brick and enveloped by sealed windows, influenced by the office buildings of Mies van der Rohe and contemporary modern architects.

During the 1960s, in an effort to accommodate increasing employee numbers, Northern Natural Gas Company erected two parking garages (contributing) at the rear (south) of the building, with access from Douglas and Dodge Streets.²⁸ Although the exact construction date of the westernmost parking garage is unknown, it is estimated that it post-dates the fifteen-story tower and dates to c.1960. The easternmost garage was built in 1963, according to plans designed by engineers from within the Northern Natural Gas Company. Designed to look identical to its predecessor garage on the corner of 24th Street and Douglas Street, the prestressed concrete three-deck garage would hold 220 employee cars.²⁹

The parking garages, both built of prestressed precast concrete units, a material which gained prominence during the late 1950s and early 1960s, continue the modern imagery propagated by the headquarters building through both contemporary materials and functional design. Simple and utilitarian, the garages also incorporate the company's own product through the use of natural gas infra-red overhead heaters to prevent ice and snow accumulation on the driveway and garage approaches.³⁰ Moreover, the garages are consistent with a national trend toward urban parking garages during the postwar period. As the nation experienced rising affluence during the postwar era and succumbed to a general "transportation affliction," the rising number of vehicles in the urban and commercial core dictated the erection of parking

²⁷ City of Omaha Planning Division, Building Permit Records.

²⁸ Research did not uncover whether Northern Natural Gas originally planned for the parking garages during the 1950s headquarters planning efforts, nor whether the garages were the result of employee demand.

²⁹ "Northern Natural to Build 3-Deck Garage for Employees," *Omaha World-Herald*, 11 October 1963, n.p. The construction date of the earlier parking garage is unknown.

³⁰ "Northern Natural to Build 3-Deck Garage for Employees," *Omaha World-Herald*, 11 October 1963, n.p.

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

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garages to both protect and hide the vehicular clutter.³¹ Northern Natural Gas' development of two parking garages provided a modern convenience for the company's white-collar workers, who drove their own vehicles to work, while also contributing to the transportation and commercial architecture of the postwar urban built environment.

Significance

The Northern Natural Gas Building is eligible under *Criterion A: Commerce* for its association with and significant role in Omaha's growing service economy during the postwar period and under *Criterion C: Architecture* for its embodiment of the Modern architectural style as applied to the tall office building. As one of the first tall modern office buildings in downtown Omaha, the Northern Natural Gas Building anchored the company both physically and symbolically within Omaha's new postwar economy. Additionally, with John Merriam as its president, Northern Natural Gas established itself and its executives as integral to Omaha's economic prosperity and cultural leadership. The design of this building specifically reflects corporate American architecture of the post-World War II period, which was generally influenced by the International Style and the buildings of Mies van der Rohe, in particular. With its steel structural form sheathed in brick and continuous glass windows, the Northern Natural Gas Building, like its more famous counterparts, reflects a corporate image of organization and standardization. Moreover, as an amalgamation of two structures, built within eight years, the Northern Natural Gas Building quite literally reflects the company's rapid expansion, boom, and success during the 1950s, typical of the post-World War II economic climate in America. The building stands as one of the best representative examples of Modern corporate office architecture in Omaha.

³¹ Jane Holtz Kay, "A Brief History of Parking: The Life and After-life of Paving the Planet," Electronic document, www.janeholtzkay.com/articles/parking.html, accessed April 6, 2009.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

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National Park Service**

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Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

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National Park Service**

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Section 10 Page 1

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Northern Natural Gas Building is shown on the accompanying map entitled "Northern Natural Gas Building." The boundary follows the back edge of the sidewalk along Douglas Street on the south, 24th Street on the west, and Dodge Street on the north. The eastern boundary line is drawn to encompass the driveway accessible from Dodge Street, which provides access to the building's contributing parking garage facilities, and to encompass the easternmost parking garage.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Northern Natural Gas Building was delineated to encompass the historic property and contributing resources.

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet**

Section Photos Page 1

Northern Natural Gas Building

Name of Property

Douglas County, Nebraska

County and State

Photographs

Northern Natural Gas Building

Douglas County, Nebraska

Photographs by Mead & Hunt

January and March, 2009

Negatives in the collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska

Photo 1 of 10

View looking southwest

Photo 2 of 10

View looking southeast

Photo 3 of 10

North elevation

View looking southwest

Photo 4 of 10

Main entrance, north elevation

View looking west

Photo 5 of 10

View looking northeast

Photo 6 of 10

View looking northwest

Photo 7 of 10

Rear parking garage (c.1960)

View looking northeast

Photo 8 of 10

View looking northwest

Photo 9 of 10

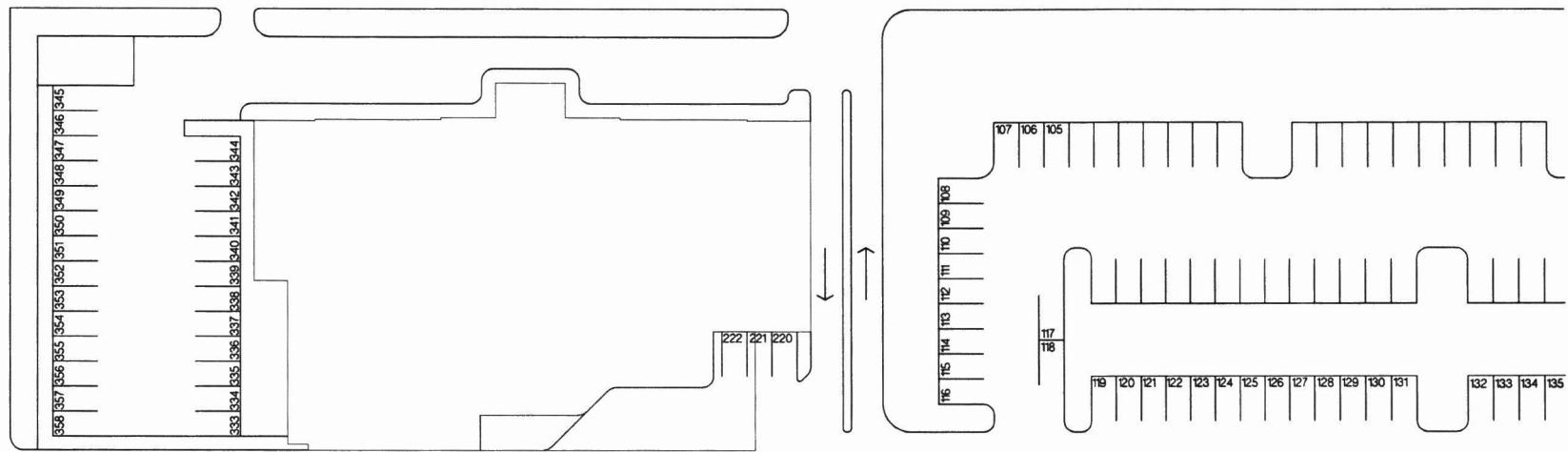
Lobby at rear entrance

View looking east

Photo 10 of 10

Fifteenth floor conference room

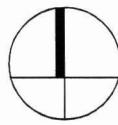
View looking southwest



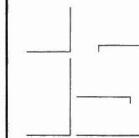
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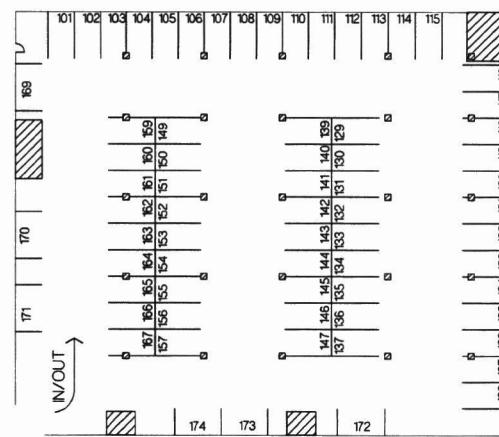
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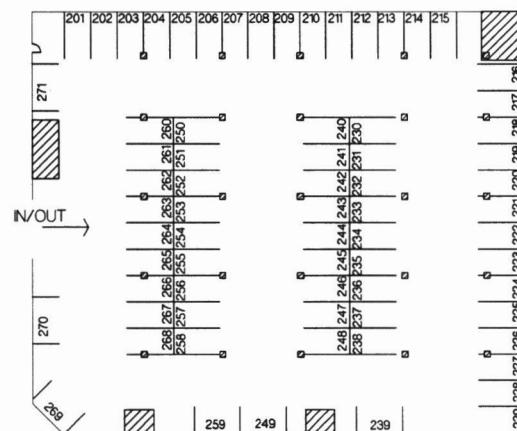
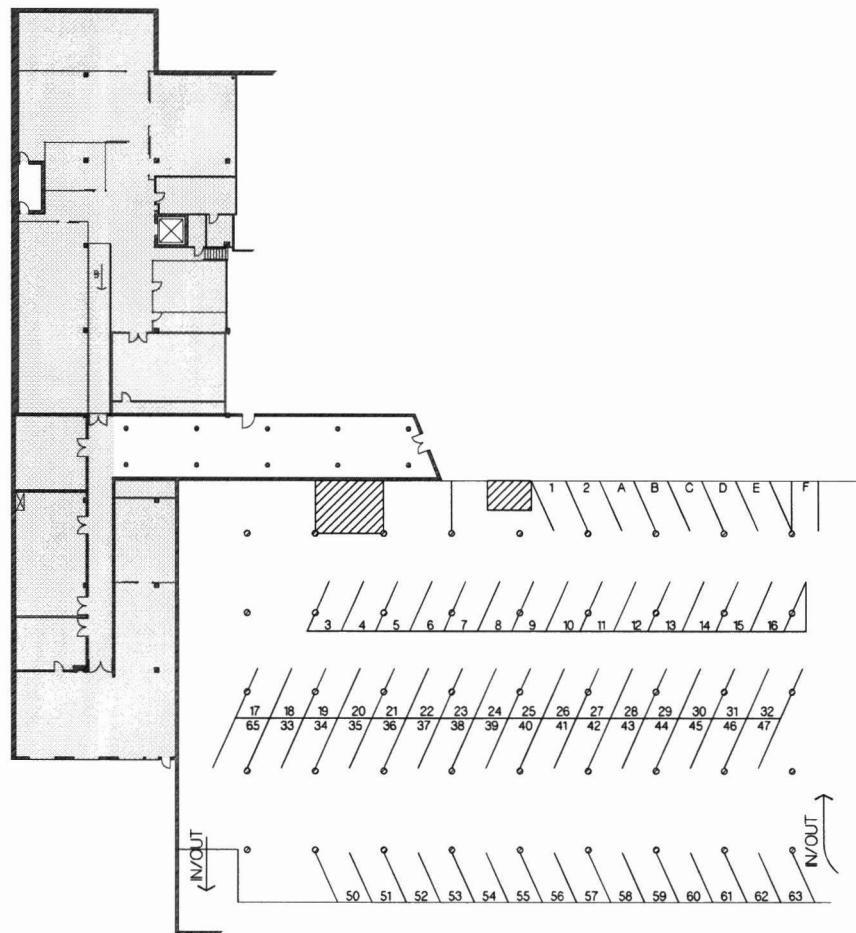
Sub-Level 2
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2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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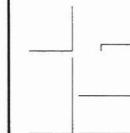
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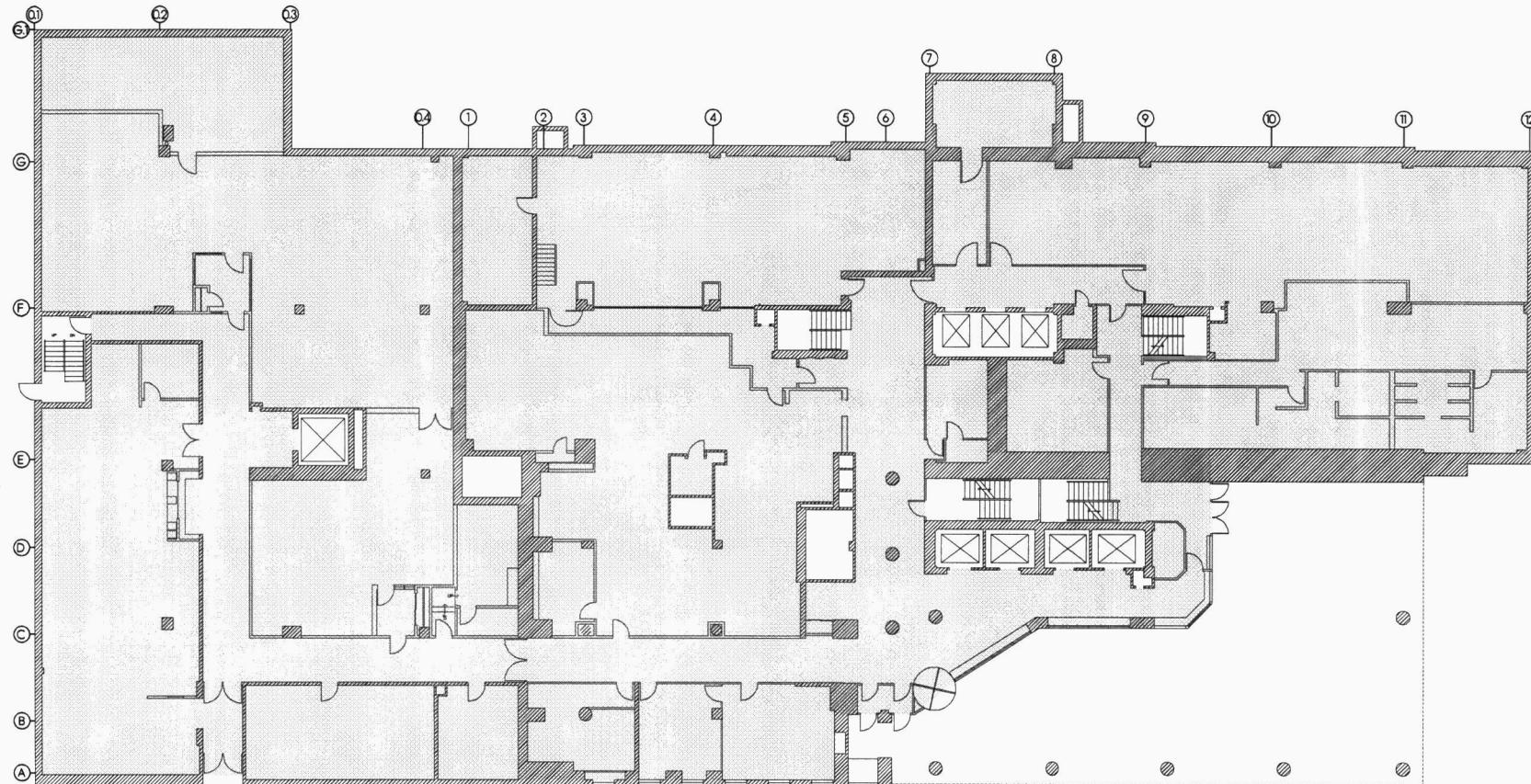


Sub-Level 1
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2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102

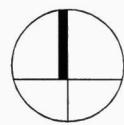


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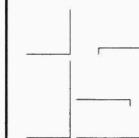
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GROSS AREA - 27,710 SF



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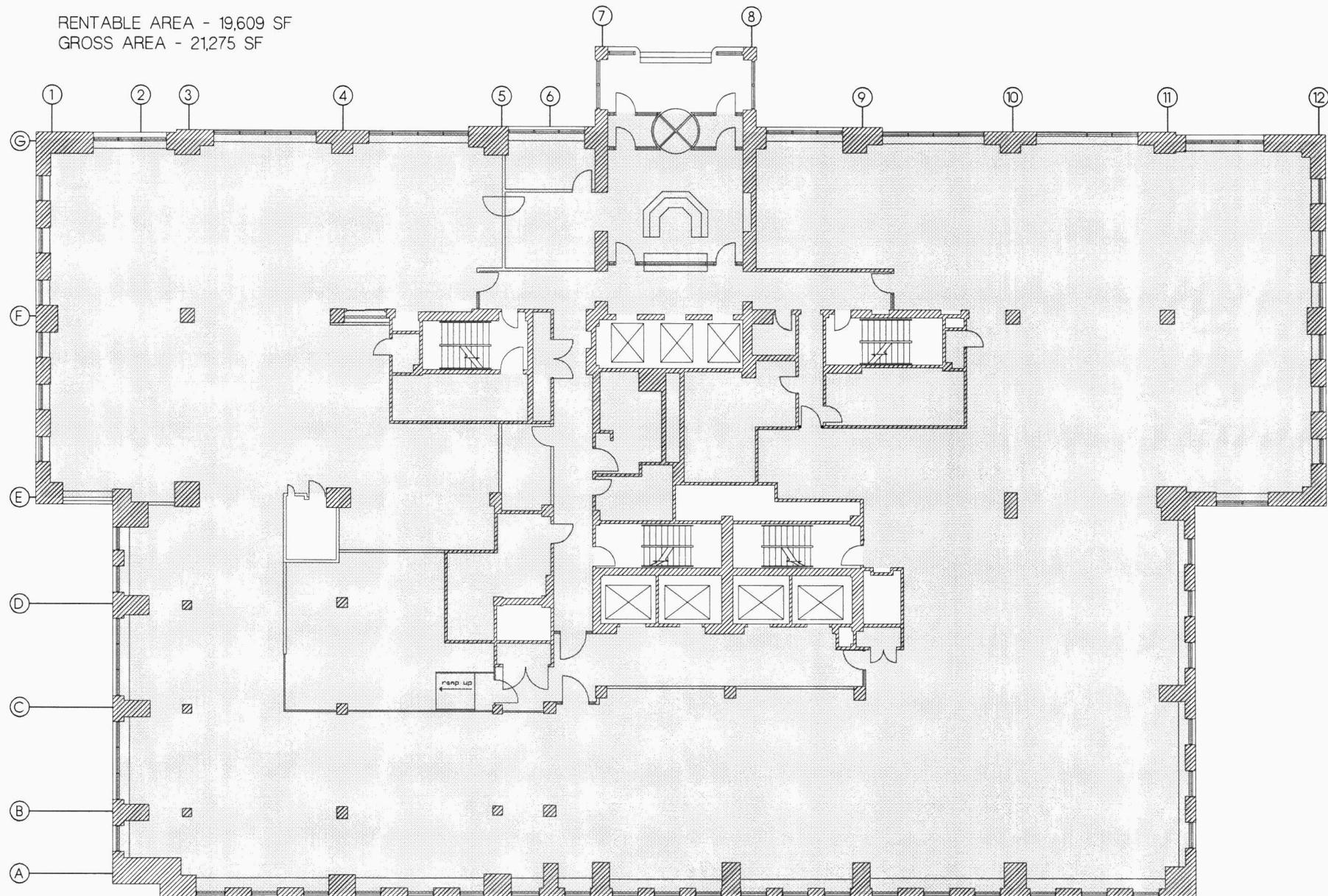


Ground Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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RENTABLE AREA - 19,609 SF
GROSS AREA - 21,275 SF

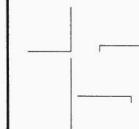


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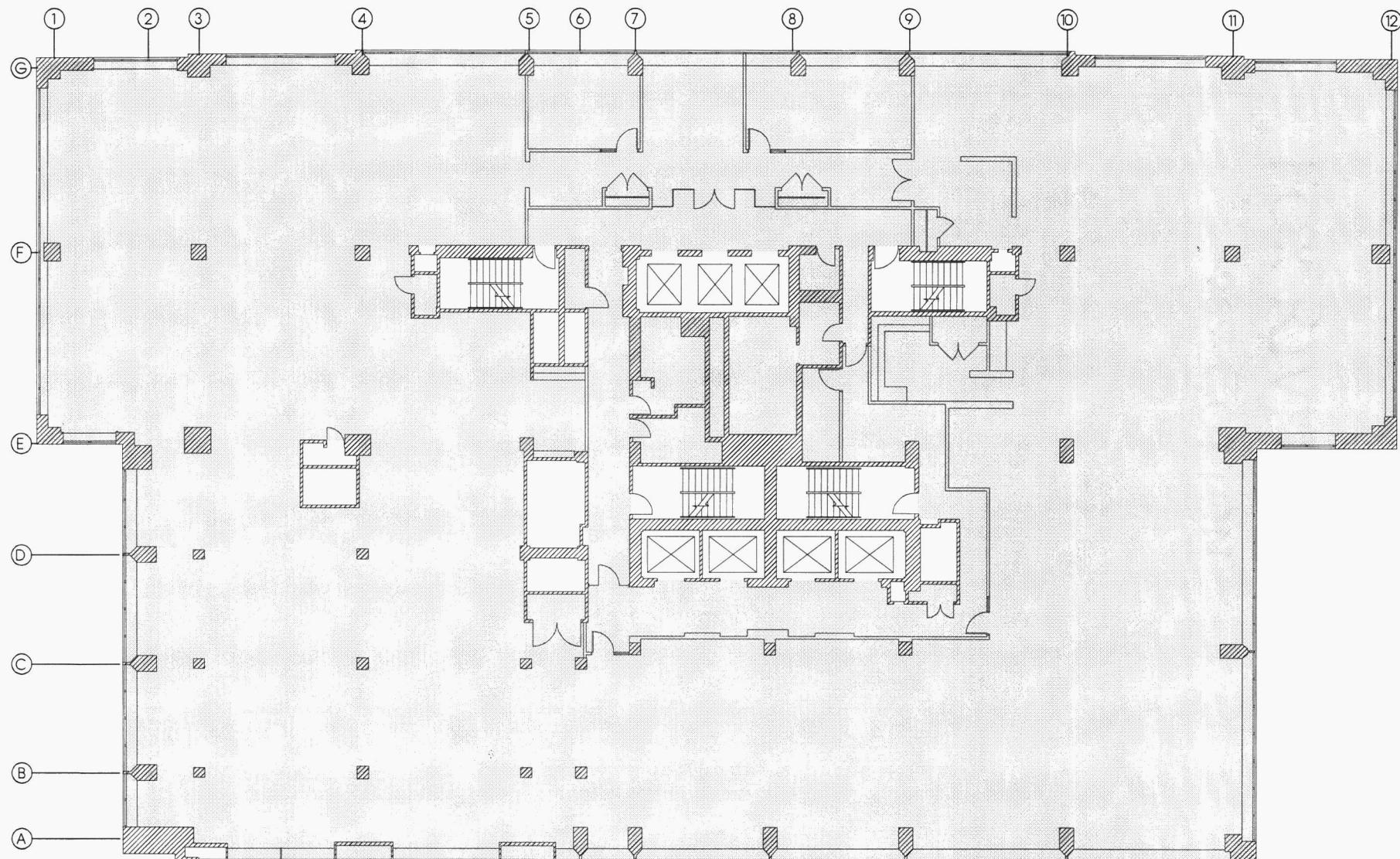


1st Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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RENTABLE AREA - 19,425 SF
GROSS AREA - 21,294 SF



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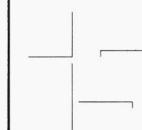
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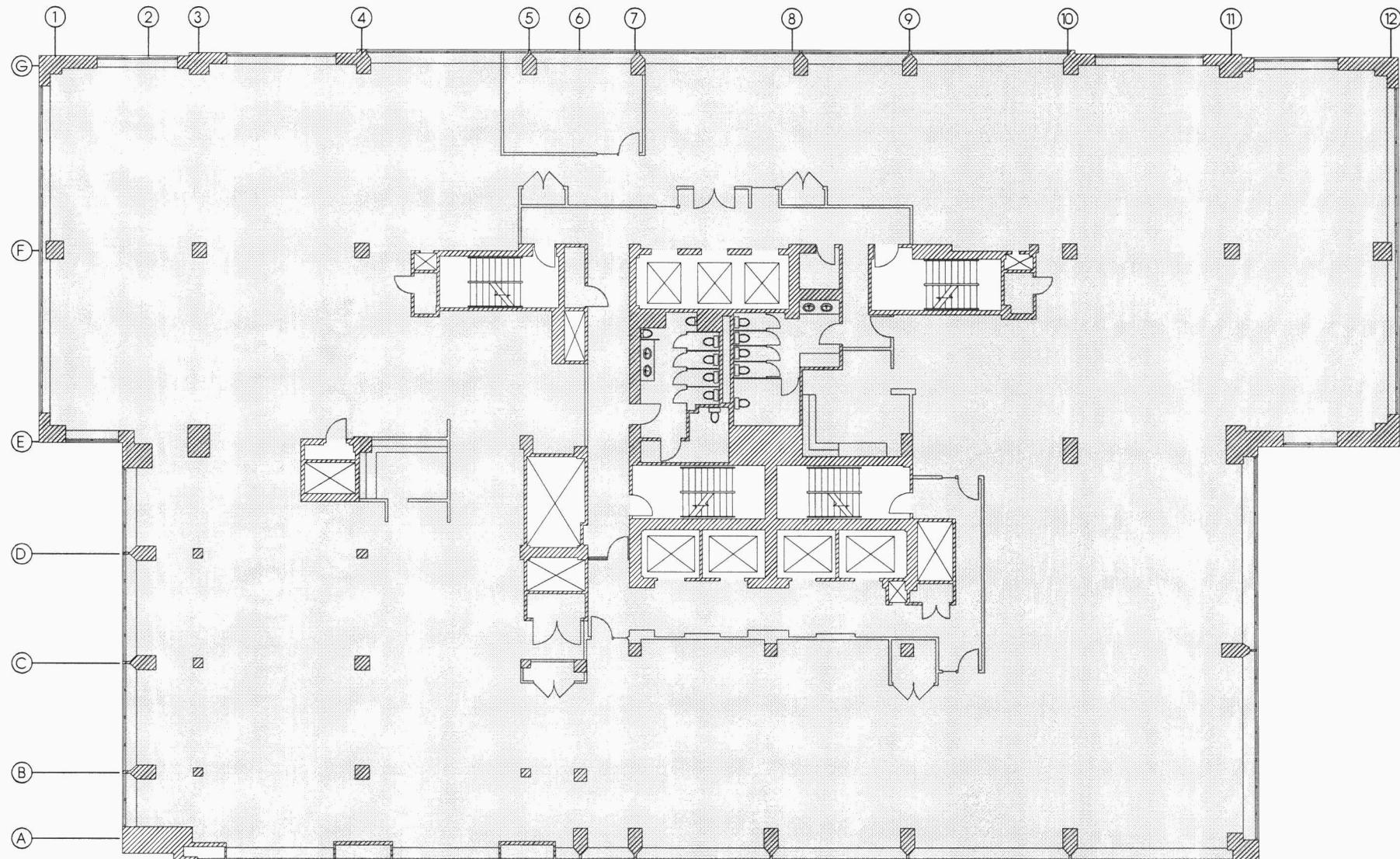


2nd Floor
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Omaha, NE 68102



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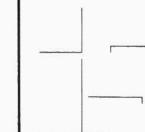
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GROSS AREA - 21,291 SF



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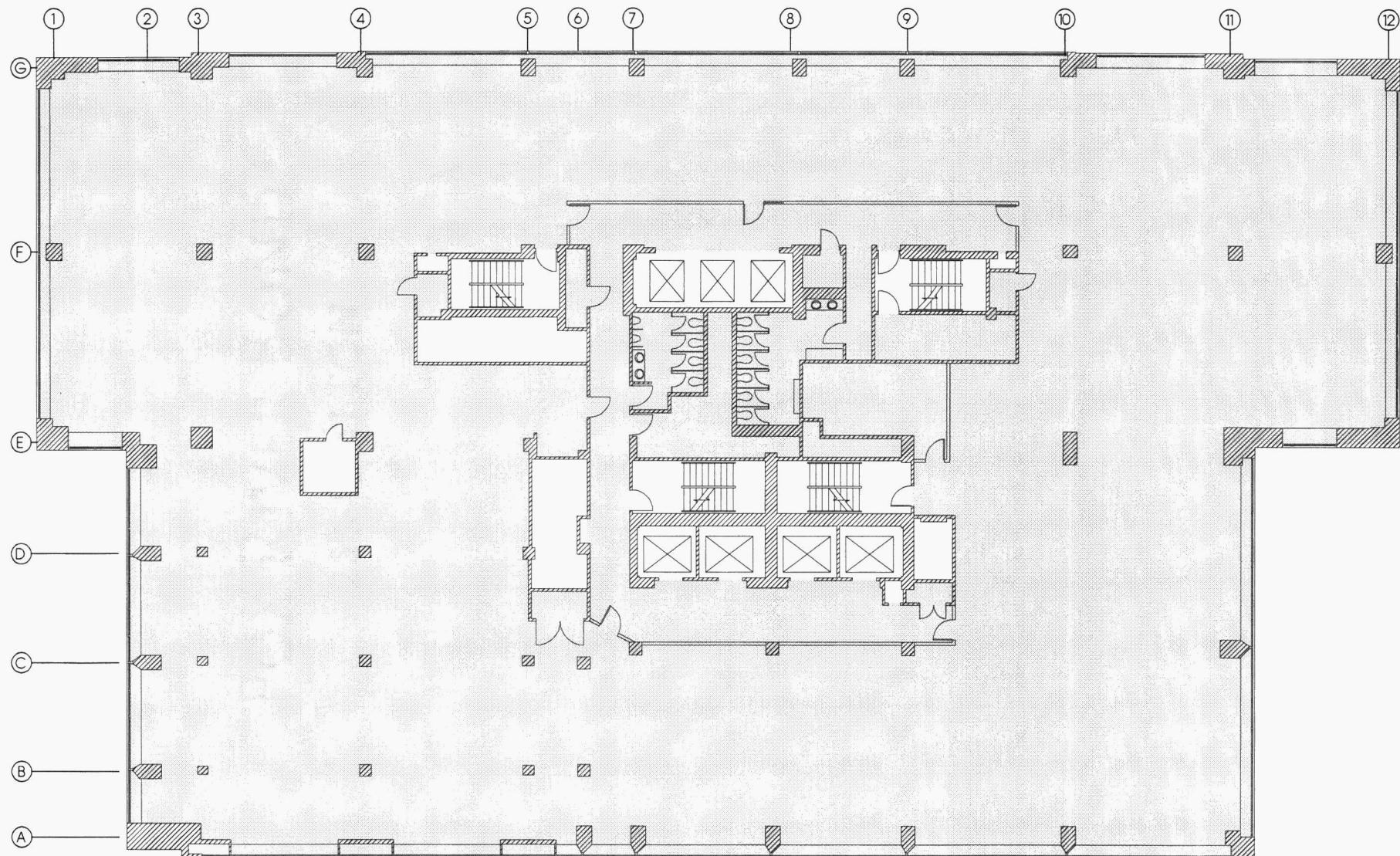


3rd Floor
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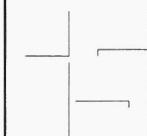
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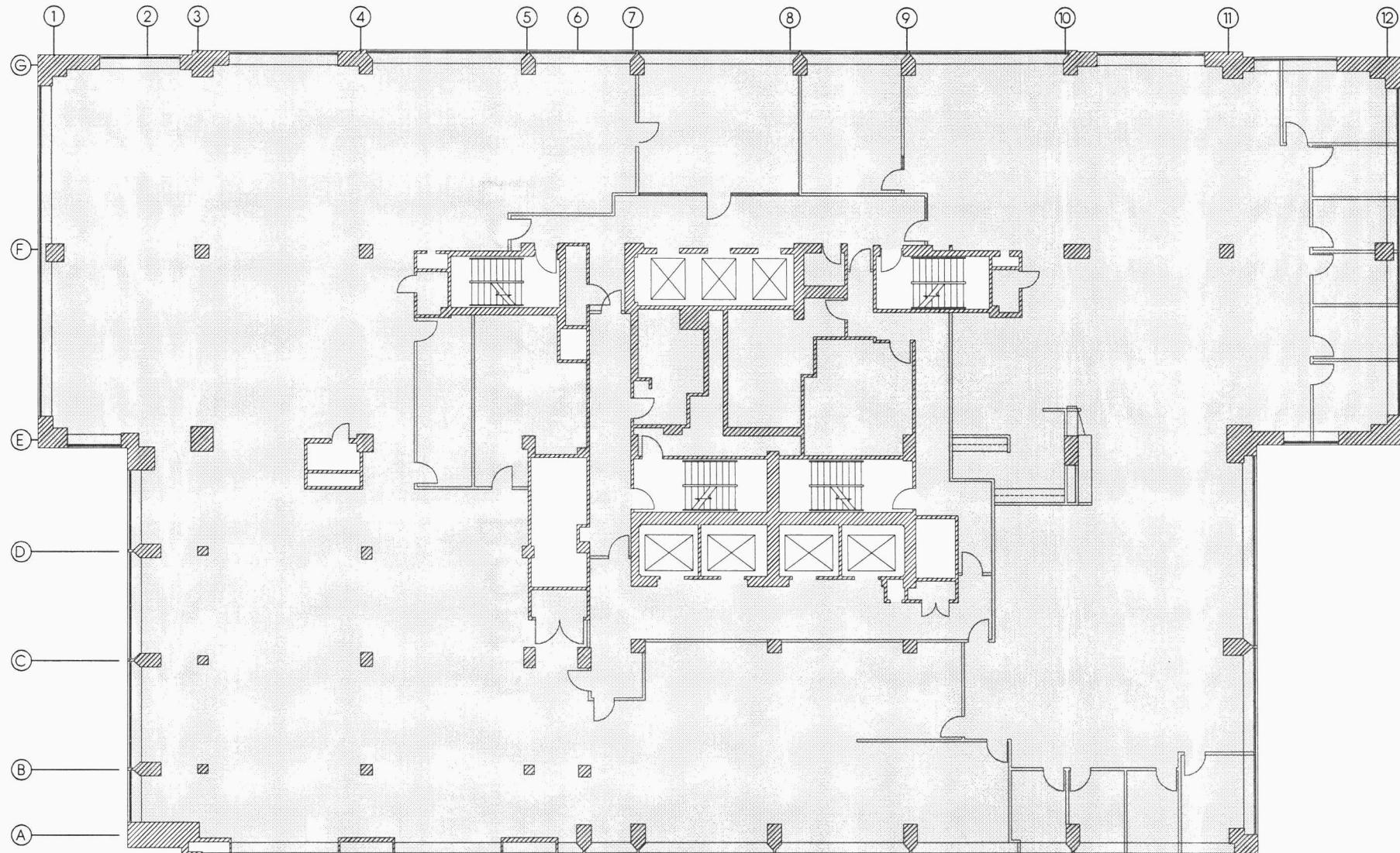


4th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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RENTABLE AREA - 19,625 SF
GROSS AREA - 21,325 SF

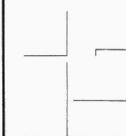


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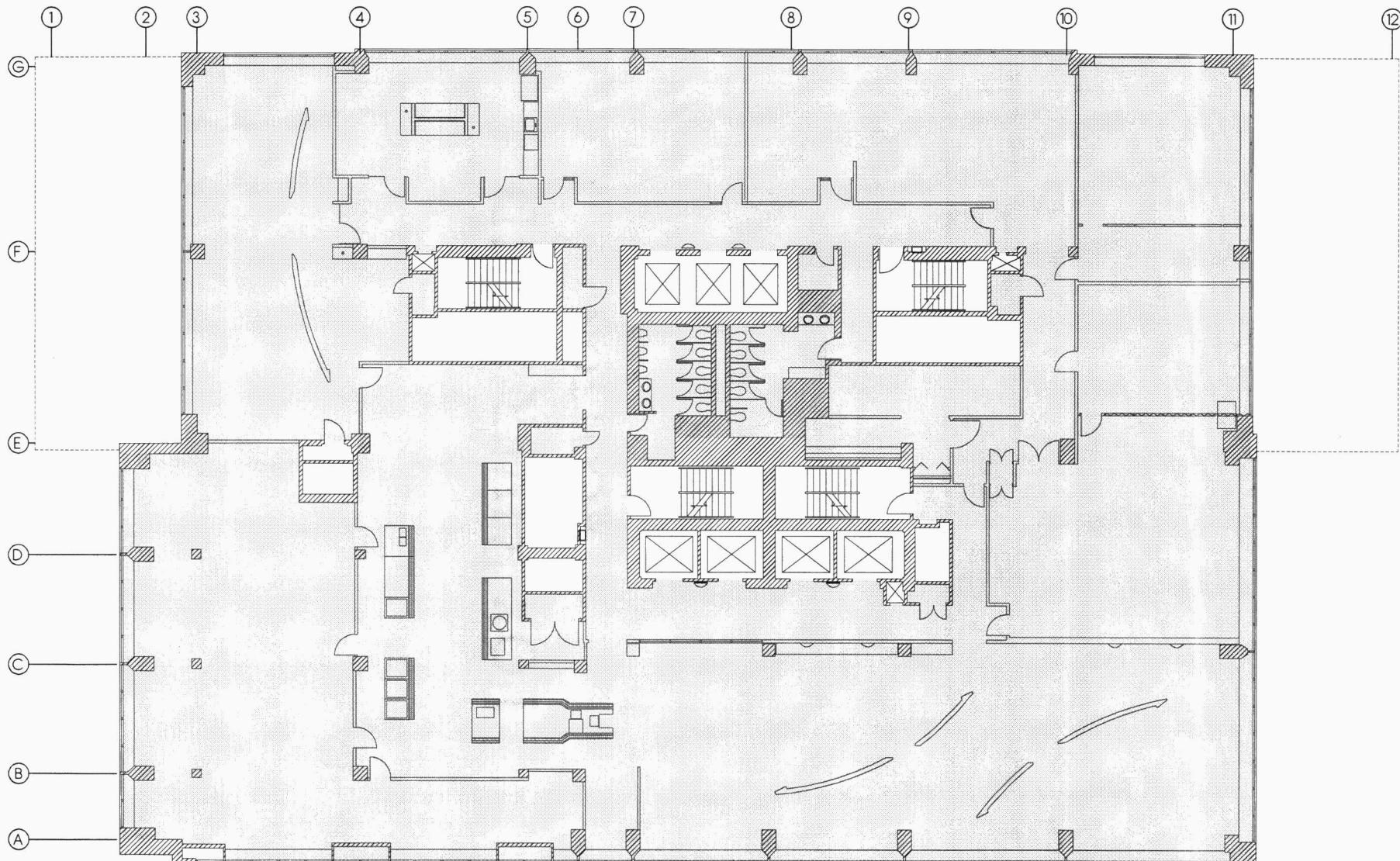


5th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
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RENTABLE AREA - 16,728 SF
GROSS AREA - 18,925 SF



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client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty

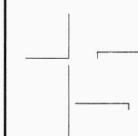
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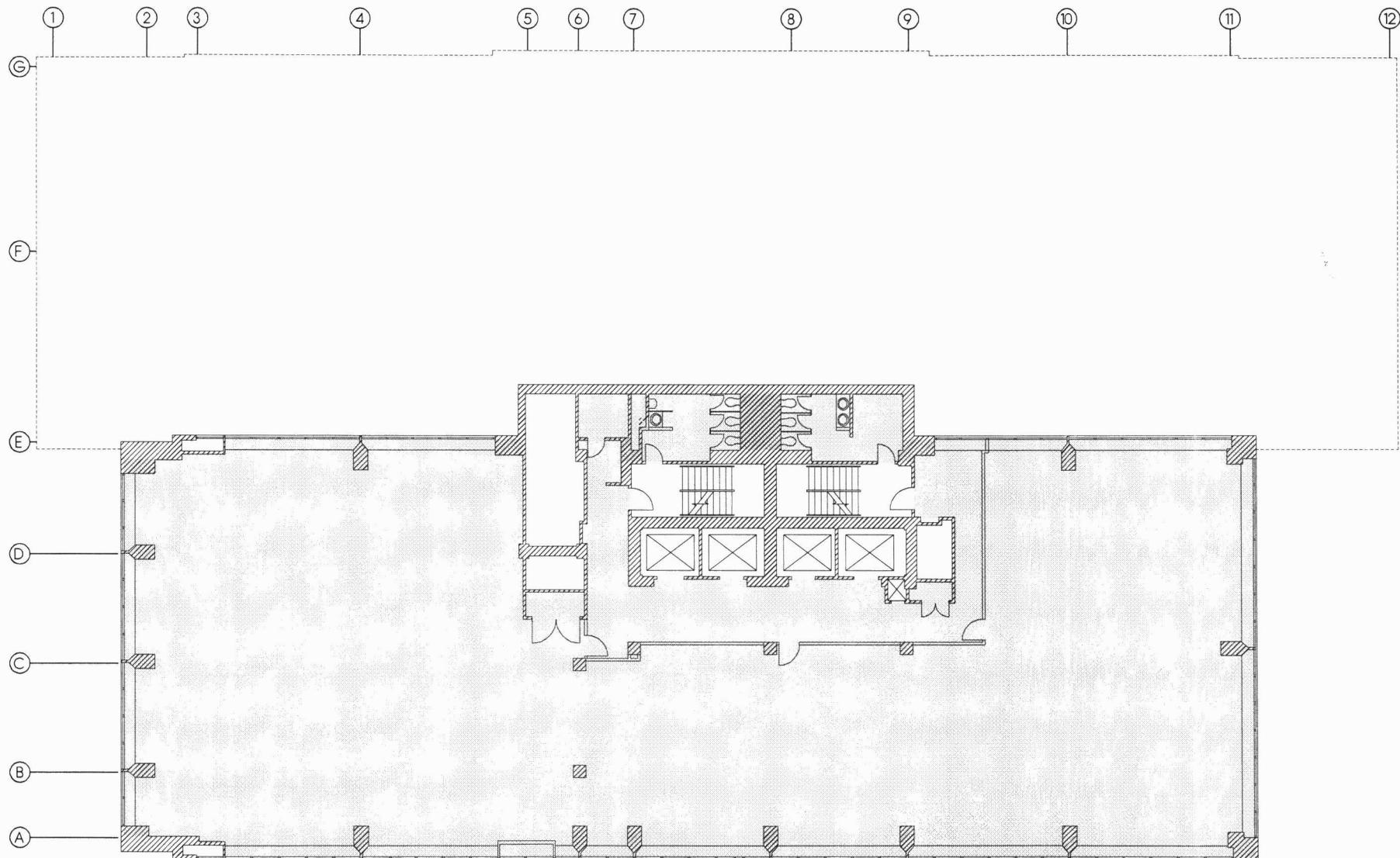


6th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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RENTABLE AREA - 9,349 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,444 SF



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client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty

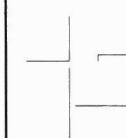
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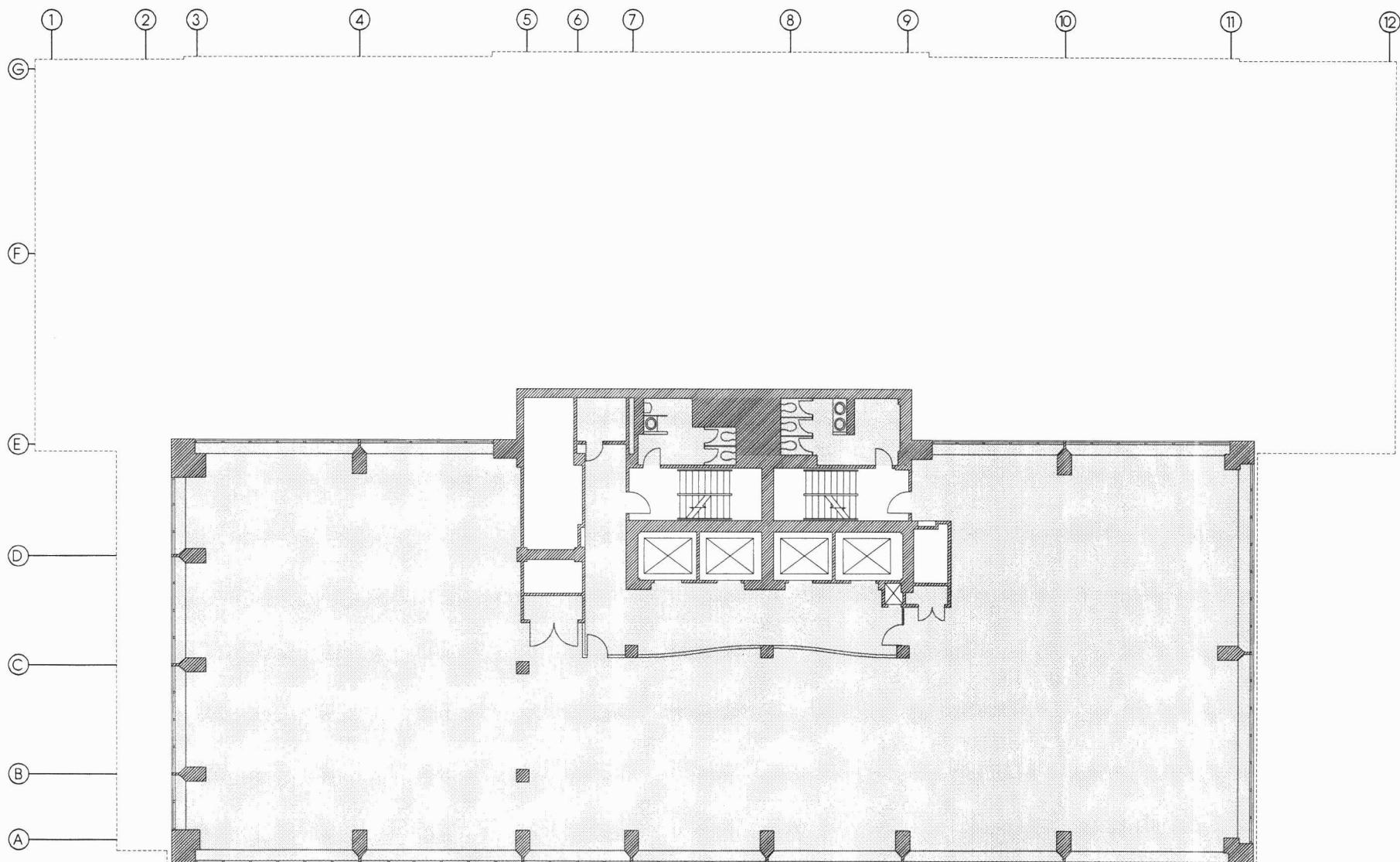


7th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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335 north 8th street, suite c
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
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RENTABLE AREA - 8,956 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



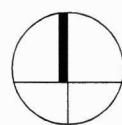
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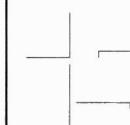
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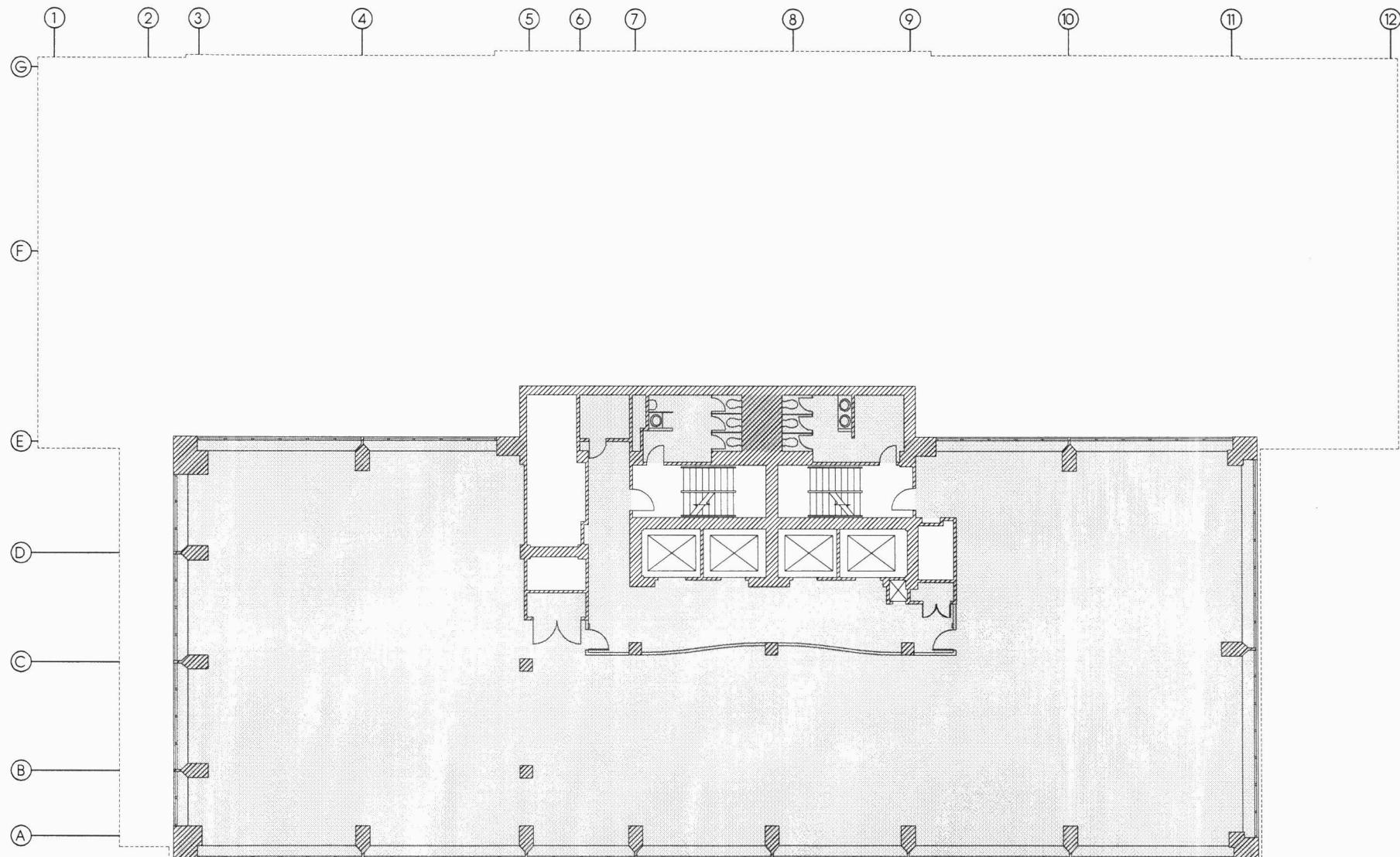


8th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102

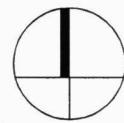


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Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
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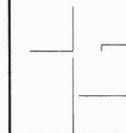
RENTABLE AREA - 8,950 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



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plotted: 11/04/02	by: mld

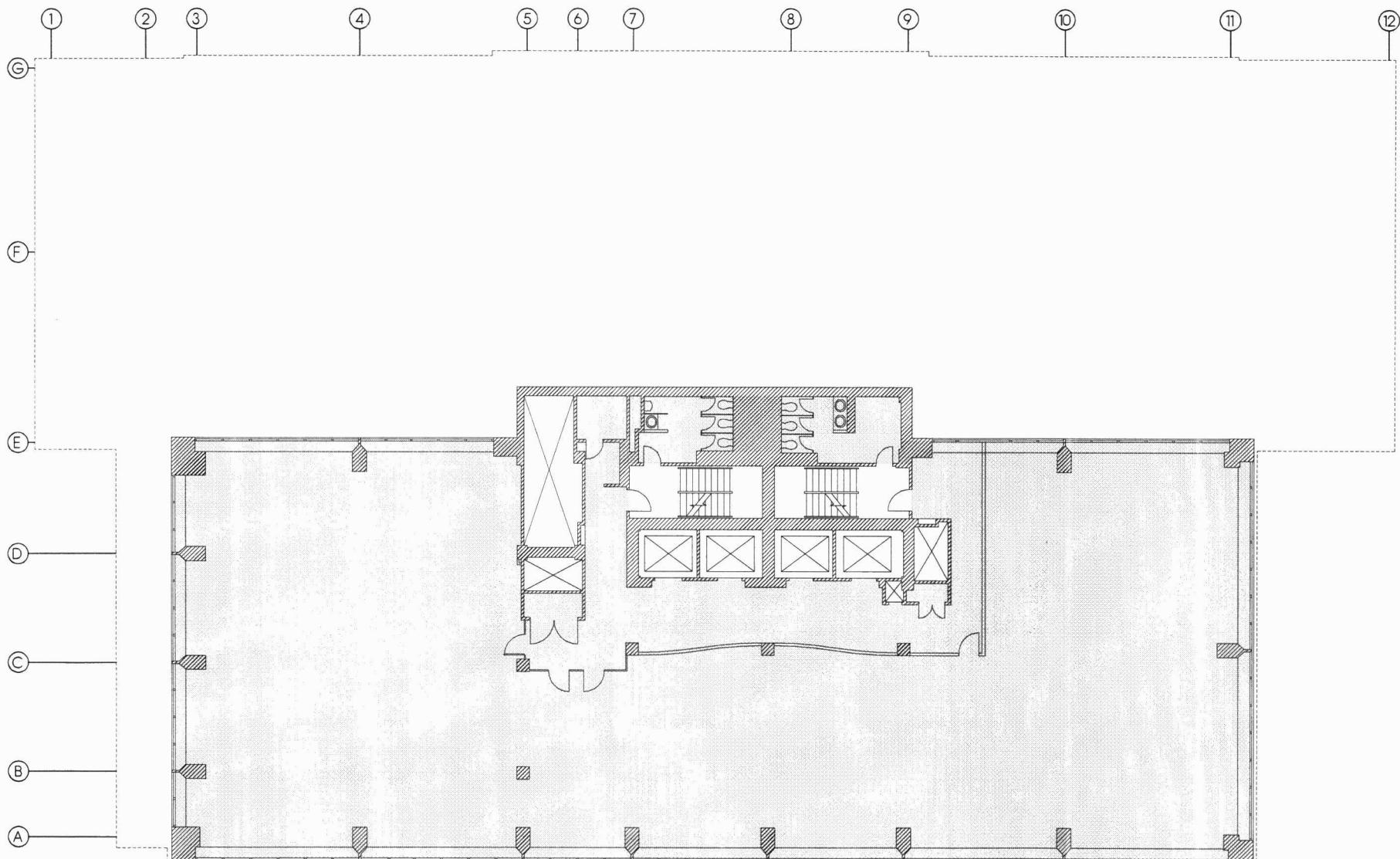


9th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



innerspace studios
interior architecture and space planning
335 north 8th street, suite c
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 475-7234

RENTABLE AREA - 8,940 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



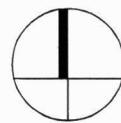
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client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty

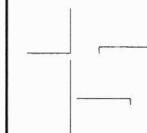
file name: 2433fl10.dwg

plotted: 11/04/02

this plan for mktg
purposes only.
actual rentable
square footages
will vary.
field verify prior
to construction.

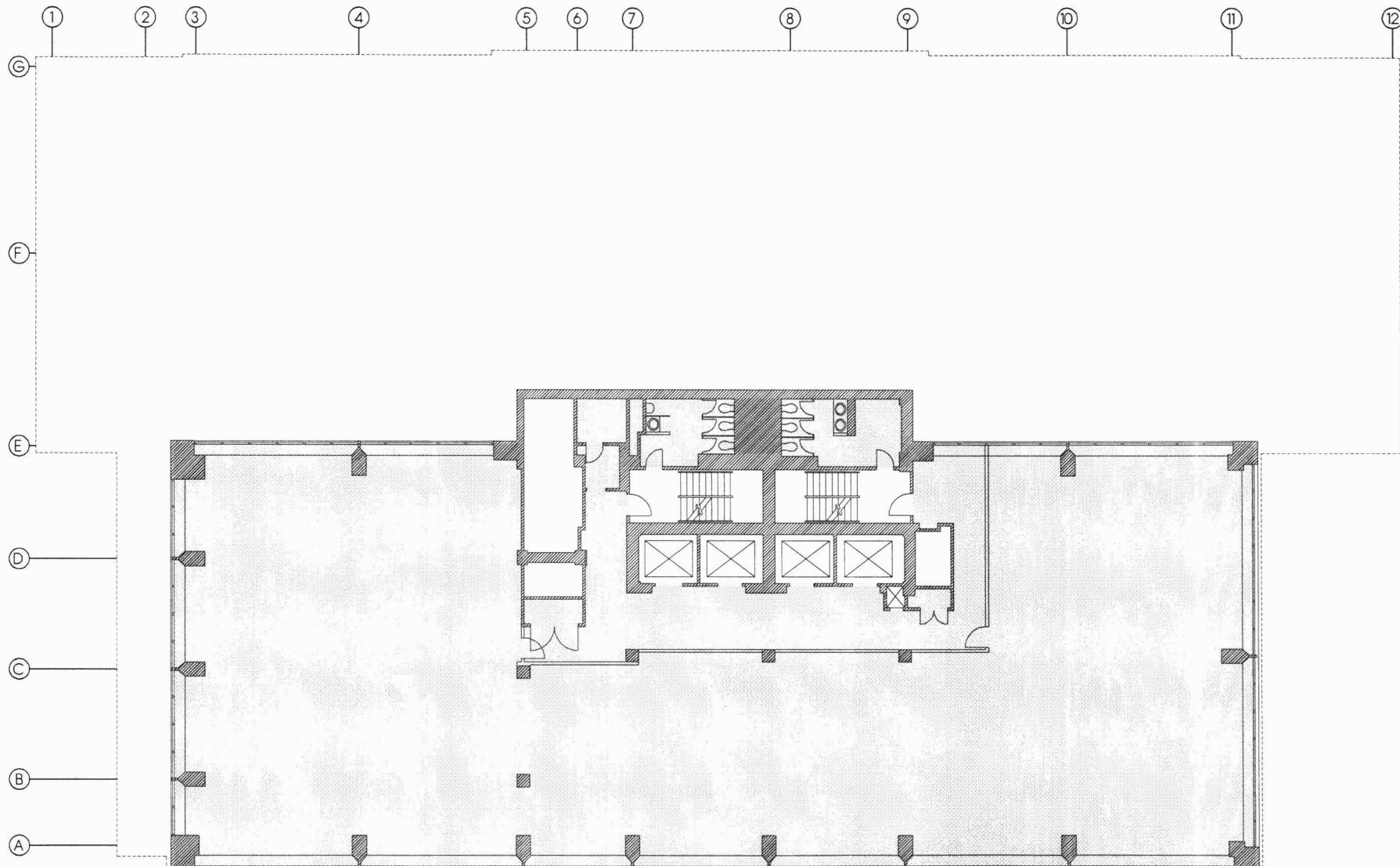


10th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102

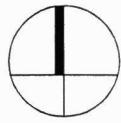


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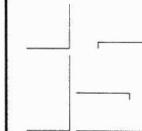
RENTABLE AREA - 8,938 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



scale: T=20'-0"	this plan for mktg purposes only. actual rentable square footages will vary. field verify prior to construction.
client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty	
file name: 2433ft13.dwg	
plotted: 11/04/02	by: mld

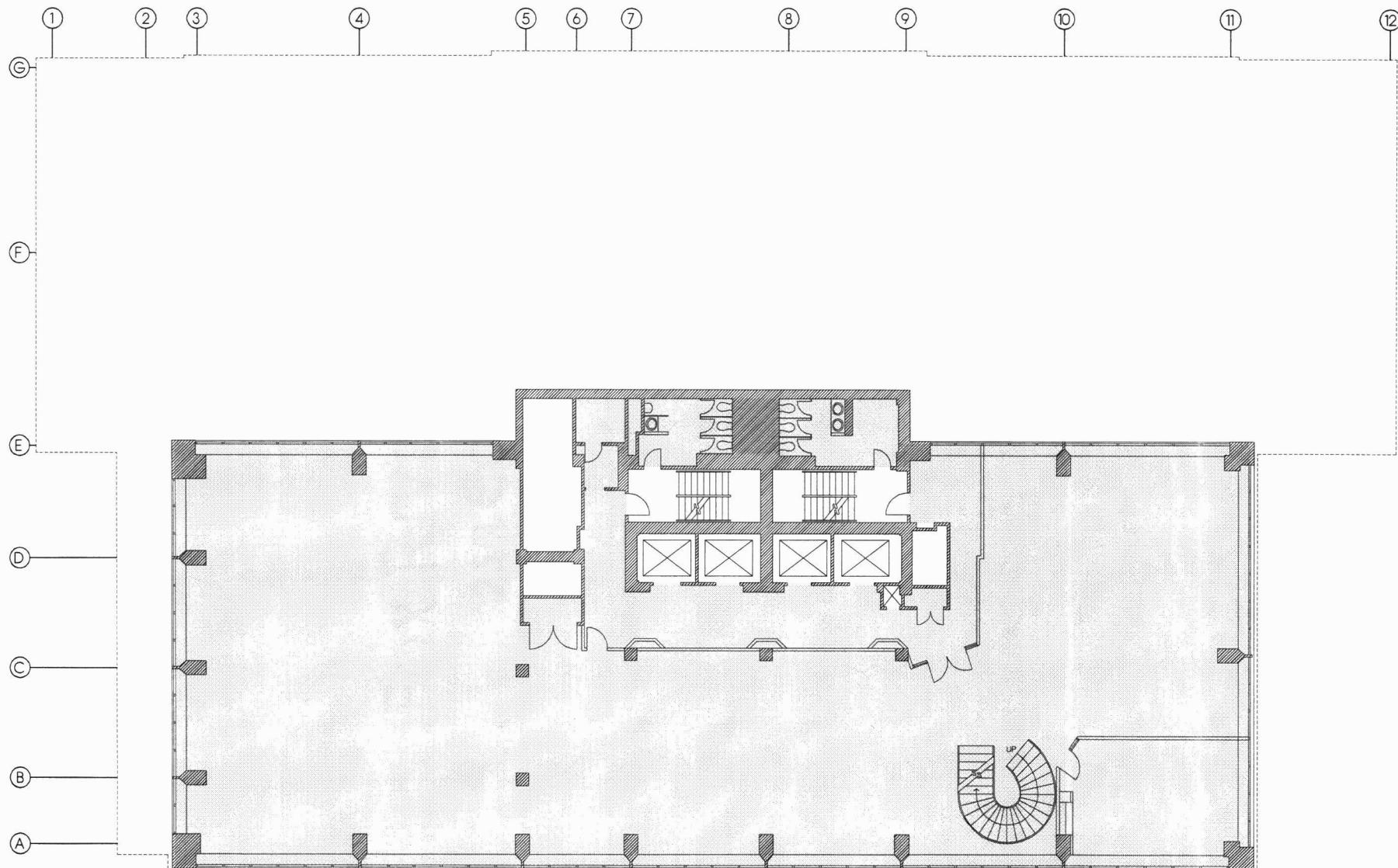


13th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102

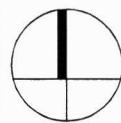


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Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
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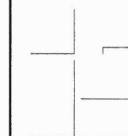
RENTABLE AREA - 8,938 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



scale: 1=20'-0"	this plan for mktg purposes only. actual rentable square footages will vary. field verify prior to construction.
client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty	
file name: 2433ft14.dwg	
plotted: 11/04/02	

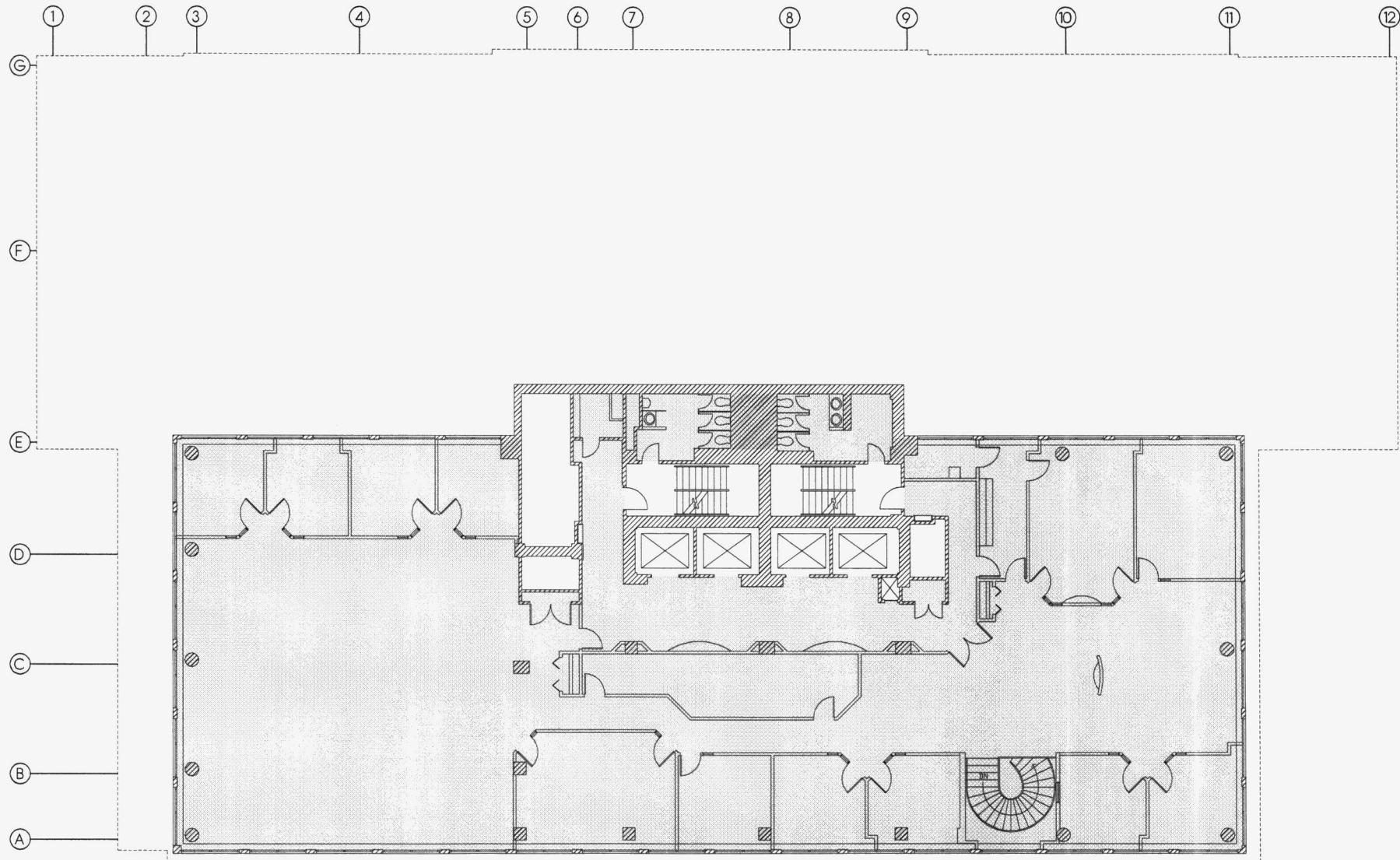


14th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



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Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 475-7234

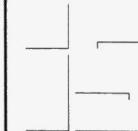
RENTABLE AREA - 8,685 SF
GROSS AREA - 9,756 SF



scale: T=20'-0"	
client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty	this plan for mktg purposes only. actual rentable square footages will vary. field verify prior to construction.
file name: 2433fl15.dwg	
plotted: 11/04/02	by: mld

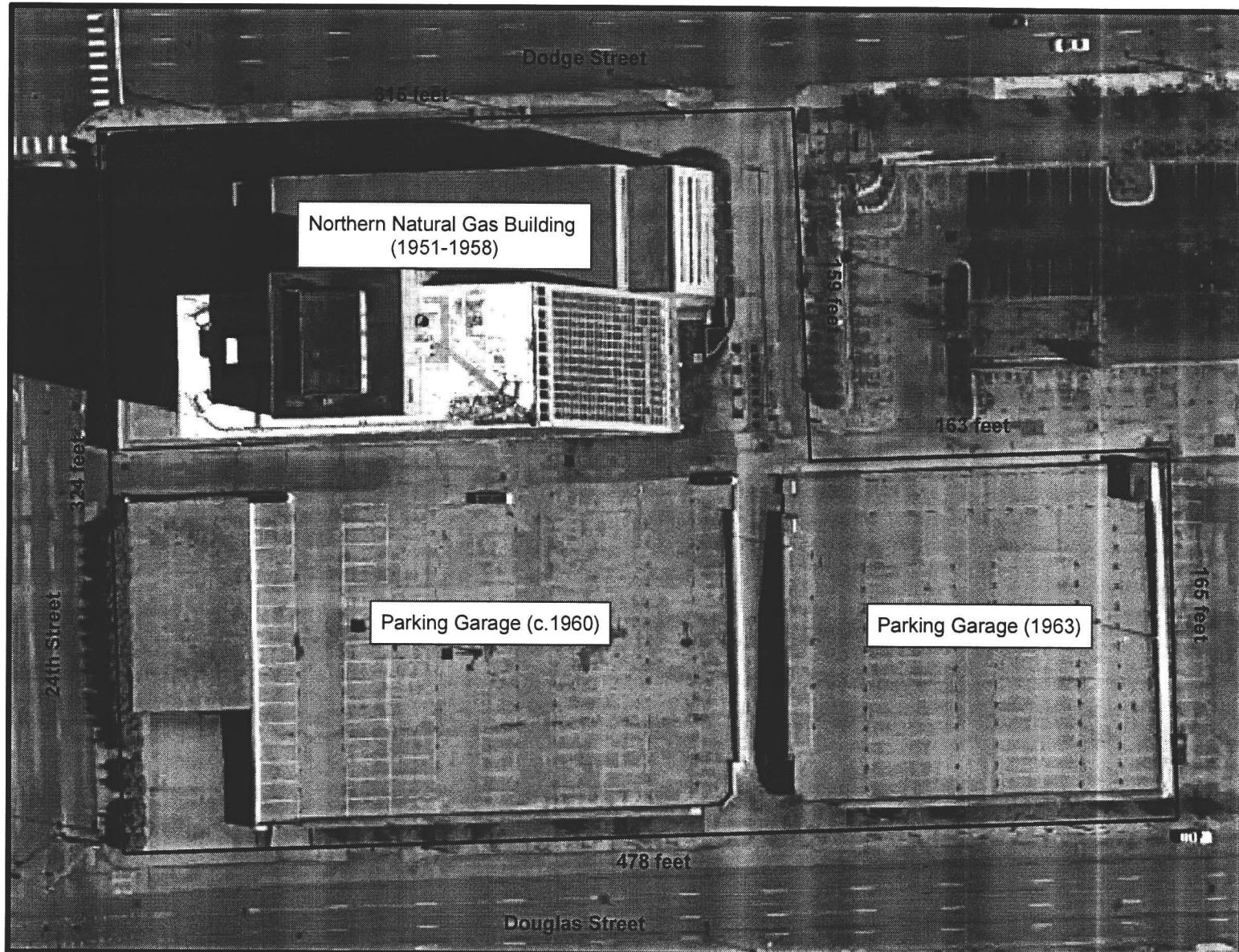


15th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102

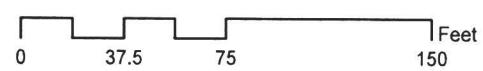


innerspace studios
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335 north 8th street, suite c
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 475-7234

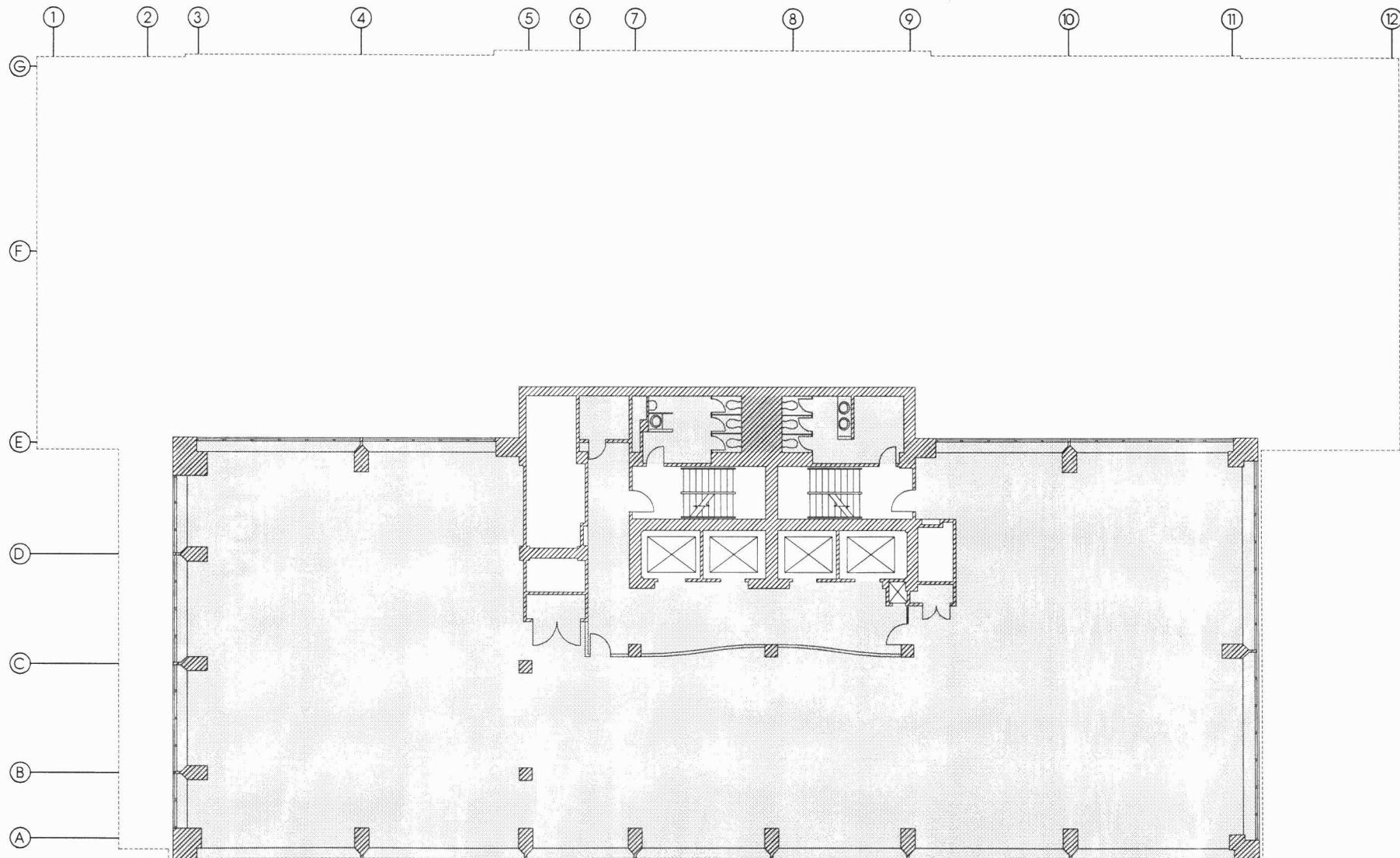
Northern Natural Gas Building



Northern Natural Gas Building Historic Boundary

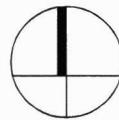


RENTABLE AREA - 8,950 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF

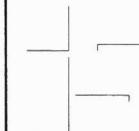


scale: T=20'-0"
client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty
file name: 2433ff11.dwg
plotted: 11/04/02 by: mld

this plan for mktg
purposes only.
actual rentable
square footages
will vary.
field verify prior
to construction.

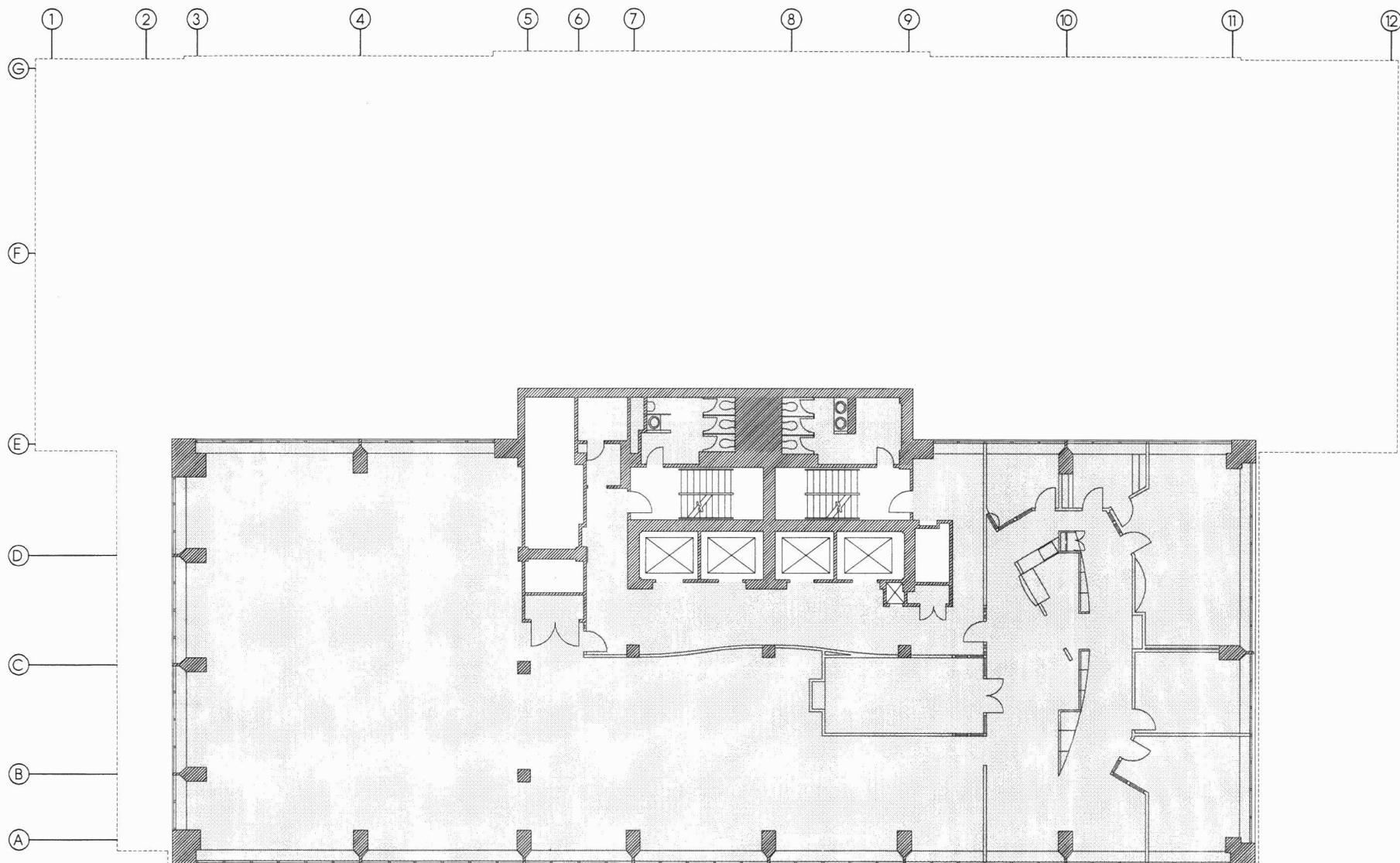


11th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



innerspace studios
interior architecture and space planning
335 north 8th street, suite c
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 475-7234

RENTABLE AREA - 8,938 SF
GROSS AREA - 10,041 SF



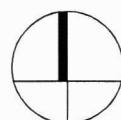
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client: Grubb & Ellis/Pacific Realty

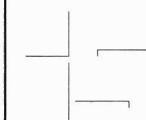
file name: 2433fl12.dwg

plotted 11/04/02

this plan for mktg
purposes only.
actual rentable
square footages
will vary.
field verify prior
to construction.



12th Floor
2223 Building
2223 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68102



innerspace studios
interior architecture and space planning
335 north 8th street, suite c
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 475-7234

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Northern Natural Gas Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Douglas

DATE RECEIVED: 7/17/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/31/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/15/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/30/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000649

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8-26-09 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 1 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building
Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 2 of 10



LIND.
393-9811

Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 3 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building
Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 4 of 10



6
EAST
ROUTE 6

Northern Natural Gas Building
Omaha, Nebraska
Photo 5 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 6 of 10



For Sale or Lease

LUND

393-8811

30

Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 7 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 8 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 9 of 10



Northern Natural Gas Building

Omaha, Nebraska

Photo 10 of 10

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

OMAHA NORTH QUADRANGLE

NEBRASKA-LOUISIANA

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

95°52'30" 95°52'30" 95°52'30" 95°52'30"

141°22'30" 141°22'30" 141°22'30" 141°22'30"

4584 4583 4582 4581

640 000 FEET (NEB.)

4583 4582 4581

4580 4579 4578

T 76 N T 75 N T 75 N

4579 4578 4577

4576 4575 4574

4573 4572 4571

4570 4569 4568

4567 4566 4565

4564 4563 4562

4561 4560 4559

4558 4557 4556

4555 4554 4553

4552 4551 4550

4559 4558 4557

4556 4555 4554

4553 4552 4551

4550 4549 4548

4547 4546 4545

4544 4543 4542

4541 4540 4539

4538 4537 4536

4533 4532 4531

4530 4529 4528

4527 4526 4525

4524 4523 4522

4521 4520 4519

4517 4516 4515

4514 4513 4512

4511 4510 4509

4507 4506 4505

4504 4503 4502

4501 4500 4509

4508 4507 4506

4505 4504 4503

4502 4501 4500

4509 4508 4507

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NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1500 R STREET, P.O.BOX 82554, LINCOLN, NE 68501-2554
(402) 471-3270 Fax: (402) 471-3100 1-800-833-6747 www.nebraskahistory.org

July 15, 2009

J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005



RE: Northern Natural Gas Building (NeHBS #DO09:0124-027)
Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the above resource. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Bob Puschendorf
L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure