

25 December 2007

Historic Preservation Program
Department of Neighborhoods
City of Seattle
PO Box 94649
Seattle, WA 98124-4649

Re: Landmark Nomination of Manning's Restaurant/Denny's, Ballard

Attn: Landmarks Preservation Board [Beth Chave]

Dear Landmarks Preservation Board members:

I have written this report to add to the information contained in the Historic and Cultural Resources Report (HCRR) prepared by the Johnson Partnership for the Manning's Cafeteria (later Denny's Restaurant). I would like to expand on data contained in the HCRR and further delineate the various aspects of Manning's historical importance. Specifically, this report will discuss the restaurant's significance on four grounds enumerated in the City of Seattle Legislative Information Service Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 25.12.350 Standards for Designation):

- 1.) "D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction."¹ The Ballard Manning's is an outstanding example of what has been described by such authorities as Alan Hess and Prof. Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, as the "Googie" architectural style.
- 2.) "F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City."² Manning's occupies an important, highly visible location and serves as an important Ballard landmark and gathering place.
- 3.) "C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation;"³ Manning's has manifold cultural significance for the neighborhood of Ballard and

¹ See SMC 25.12.350 Standards for Designation : <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~scripts/nph-brs.exe?s1=25.12&s2=&S3=&Sect4=AND&l=20&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect3=PLURON&Sect5=CODE1&d=CODE&p=1&u=%2F%7Epublic%2Fcode1.htm&r=1&Sect6=HITOFF&f=L3%3B1%3B25.12.350.SNUM>
. Accessed 12/24/2007.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

the city of Seattle. The restaurant, bakery and food service company originated in Seattle's Pike Place Market in 1908 (a year after the market's opening) and grew into a chain of 48 restaurants operating in 9 western states. At one time, it employed 315 people in the city and was beloved for its good food and low prices. The Ballard outlet was the last to be built.

4.) "E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder."⁴ The nationally-known, San Francisco architect, Clarence W.W. Mayhew (1906-1994), who came to prominence just before World War II and practiced until the late 1960s, designed the Ballard Manning's.

In the following paragraphs, I will consider these points in more detail.

Ballard's Taj Mahal

At the time of Manning's opening in November 1964, a *Seattle Times* article appeared with the title: "Manning's New Restaurant Called 'Taj Mahal of Ballard.'"⁵ The new restaurant had an unconventional and distinctive appearance prompting the article's writer to state: "The newest addition to the firm is the new Manning's restaurant in Ballard. Sometimes referred to as the 'Taj Mahal of Ballard,' because of its delightful and colorful architecture..."⁶ (See Image #1) Other articles described it as a "longhouse," referring to its resemblance to a particular type of Old Norse dwelling.⁷ Its rooflines also suggested the architect's study of Polynesian vernacular. (Additionally, it also resembled the Information Booth built for the 1962 World's Fair, which also had these Norse-Polynesian qualities.)⁸ This flamboyant mix of sources was calculated to attract attention.



Image #1 Interior of Manning's Cafeteria, Ballard, Seattle, WA, 1962-1964 (Image from Collection of Eugenia Woo.)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Manning's New Restaurant Called 'Taj Mahal of Ballard'" *Seattle Times*, 11/19/1964, p. 29

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Doreen Yarwood, *Encyclopedia of Architecture*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1985), p.235-236.

⁸ To the best of my knowledge, journalist Knute Berger was the first to make the parallel with the World's Fair Information Pavilion. See his column, "Another Roadside Attraction to be Demolished," see <http://www.crosscut.com/mossback/4501/> (Accessed 12/25/2007).

The Ballard Manning's is an outstanding example of what is called "Googie" architecture, a stylistic term coined by the editor of *Architectural Forum*, Douglas Haskell, following a late 1940s tour of buildings by the Los Angeles architect, John Lautner (1911-1994).⁹ Googie's (1949) was a coffee shop design by Lautner located next to the famous Schwab's Pharmacy on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. (See image #2) The term "Googie" was most often applied to roadside commercial architecture built during the 1950s-1960s, and its genesis lay in designs by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and his California disciples, Lautner and Rudolph Schindler (1887-1953). Its characteristics were designed for maximum visibility from a moving automobile. Thus, Googie restaurants frequently had large areas of glass (enabling distant views of the interior), flamboyant, soaring roof forms, bold colors and signage, and diverse, modern building materials. Building and signage forms often suggested weightlessness or movement; airplanes (boomerang shapes) or space travel vehicles (real or imagined) offered formal imagery. There was no stylistic formula, however, and Googie restaurants, gas stations and motels, had great formal diversity. They were designed to appear clean, up-to-date and "space-age" and to compete for the motorist's attention on rapidly developing, ever-changing roadside sites.



Image #2 Googie's Sunset Strip (See <http://www.spaceagecity.com/googie/goog1.jpg> accessed 12/30/2007)

As a result of frenetic real estate development and business competition, few of the once-plentiful Googie buildings remain along Seattle's major arteries such as Aurora Avenue (Highway 99), Lake City Way and 15th Avenue NW. The Manning's is one of the best of perhaps a half-dozen Googie survivors in the region.¹⁰ Its scarcity is a compelling reason in itself for preservation. It remains an important artifact of the automobile era in the U.S., and its vibrant, space-age forms crystallized the era's enthusiasm and faith in commerce and technology.

A Gateway Building and Gathering Spot

⁹ Douglas Haskell, "Googie Architecture," *House and Home*, 2/1952, v. 1, p. 86-88. Haskell served as *Architectural Forum's* Editor from 1949-1964. For more on Haskell, see <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/avery/da/haskell.html> accessed 12/26/2007.

¹⁰ Only a few remaining examples of Googie design in Seattle can be cited: Spud's Fish and Chips at 6860 Green Lake Way N, Ying's Drive-In, 8500 Lake City Way NE, and a much-altered, nearly unrecognizable, former Sambo's Restaurant at 8800 Aurora Avenue.

A writer for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* noted in 1974 how the Manning's restaurant served as a central gathering place for Ballard residents, particularly its elderly. In an article entitled, "Cafeteria is More Like Social Club," it was stated: "When is a restaurant not a restaurant but more like a neighborhood club or area social center? When it's Manning Cafeteria on NW Market and 15th streets in Ballard." What made this restaurant so appealing to Ballardites? First, it occupied a very prominent site at a major intersection. Second, its food was consistently good and inexpensive, reasons that kept generations coming back.

Since the 1920s, an eating spot has existed at this location. In the 1920s, the Fiorito family opened a creamery on this corner. (See image #3) Its presence between the 1920s-1960s habituated residents to gathering and socializing here. Edward Manning, Jr., undoubtedly knew that this had been a center for neighborhood activity when he announced plans for his last Manning's restaurant in 1963.¹¹



Image #3 Fiorito's Creamery, Ballard

The site's importance to Ballard's commercial core cannot be overstated. It occupies a lot that is visually prominent, particularly when viewed from 15th Avenue NW traveling south to north. It also marks the beginning of the NW Market Street effectively. Landmarks assist residents in orientation but also have an emotional resonance. They

¹¹ Manning's operated a restaurant at 2246 Market Street prior to this 1964 building, and was very familiar with doing business in the neighborhood. A headline in the local newspaper, "Manning's Comes Back Home to Ballard," suggests the neighborhood's affection for Manning's. A headline in the local newspaper, "Manning's Comes Back Home to Ballard," suggests the neighborhood's affection for Manning's and its happiness at its relocation. See "Manning's Comes Back Home to Ballard," *Ballard News-Tribune*, 11/23/1964, p. 5.

help create a sense of place and distinctiveness; memorable neighborhoods have architectural features surviving from various phases of development. A resonant building does not have to be traditionally monumental or officially historical. In this case, a cafeteria can be remembered for the hours passed informally with friends within it.

When the Manning's finally served its last meal on 6/30/1983, the property was set to be demolished by its owners, the Fioritos. Denny's, the large national restaurant chain, had leased the site and typically favored demolition of existing structures in order to build an economical, standard chain design. Susan Miller, the Assistant Manager of the new Denny's stated in 1984: "Denny's originally planned to tear the building down, but the community who fondly remembered the Manning's cafeteria staged a protest. Denny's remodeled the building instead. 'It's a landmark.'"¹² Miller was, like a lot of Manning's and Denny's employees, a Ballard resident, and she was sensitive to neighborhood's preferences. She was also quoted as saying: "'The remodel of the former Manning's was a unique undertaking for the Denny's corporation,' Miller said. 'Usually they go in and build from scratch.' But when the building was purchased more than a year ago, there was an 'outcry of community support' for keeping the building, Miller said."¹³ Clearly, many in the neighborhood had developed a strong attachment to the building as a restaurant, landmark, and social center.

Manning's Seattle Heritage

Manning's, Inc., developed a loyal clientele in Seattle over the years. *Seattle Times* reporter, Carlton Smith, wrote in an article covering the cafeteria's closing in 1983: "W.K. Grisim, 81, ... said he'd been coming to Manning's regularly for the past 20 years. He said that he liked the quality of the food. 'It was kind of like home,' he said. In its final years, the cafeteria had become a favorite of senior citizens, many of whom remember Manning's when it had facilities downtown, at the Pike Place Market and in the University District."¹⁴ (See Image #4)



Image #4 Manning's Cafeteria, Ballard, Seattle, WA, c. 1965

¹² "Manning's building is reborn as a Denny's" *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 10/2/1984, p B5.

¹³ "New Denny's now open in former Manning's," *Ballard News-Tribune*, 10/3/1984, p. 4

¹⁴ Carlton Smith, "Adieu eatery's end: to many its familiar friend." *Seattle Times*, 6/28/1983, p. B1

Manning's corporate history occupies a prominent place in the history of Seattle. Brothers William W. Manning (d. 1939) and Edward M. Manning, Sr., (d. 1956) migrated from Boston to Seattle c. 1905 and founded a Manning's coffee and tea stand at the Pike Place Market in 1908, only a year after the market opened.¹⁵ (See Image #5) They remained bedrock tenants at Pike Place, occupying space here from 1908-1956; they left the market only when it began to deteriorate noticeably in the mid-1950s, preferring to transfer their operations and employees to several other locations in town. For most of the century, the Manning's operated about a half dozen cafeterias and coffee shops in town. They transferred their headquarters to a more centralized location in Palo Alto, CA, in 1928 (in part because Edward M. Manning, Jr., [1920-1986] was set to attend Stanford University there), and began to diversify across the West, adding large-scale bakeries and institutional food services to their coffee and tea distribution company and cafeterias. Growth was fueled in the Depression era, as poor economic times improved patronage at cafeteria-style restaurants.



Image #5 Manning's at the Market 1920s (From <http://www.eatatlowells.com/abouttext.html> Accessed 12/30/2007)

Manning's emphasized its Seattle roots in its advertising. In 1950, a newspaper advertisement announced the opening of a new Manning's location downtown. It noted that Manning's had 45 retail units, coffee and tea stores and bakeries in 14 Washington, Oregon, and California cities including, "...the 'home city' of Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, and Bellingham in Washington, Portland, San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Hollywood, Long Beach, Santa Monica, and San Diego."¹⁶ Many

¹⁵ The Manning Brothers came out to Seattle on a vacation c. 1905, and like many others, decided to settle here. In their early years in town, they lived together. William Manning gained experience in the coffee and tea business as an employee of the Pacific Coffee and Tea Company in 1907 before he started his own coffee stand in the market.

¹⁶ "Bigger Beautiful Manning's Coffee Café Opened," Seattle Times, 11/7/1950, advertisement.

Manning's ads and news stories appearing in Seattle papers recounted the same story of the company's founding in the early years of Pike Place Market.¹⁷ The emphasis of the chain's local origins was an important marketing angle.

Manning's pioneered a unique brand image in the city. In many ways, it was a forerunner of the later Seattle/Starbucks "gourmet" coffee phenomenon. Manning's strongly emphasized the quality of its coffee and the care with which it was prepared and brewed. It often detailed the firm's complex coffee brewing process and the steps that insured its freshness. It also underscored its extremely high standards in food preparation, noting in one ad that it hired only women cooks, because they tended to follow time-tested recipes more closely than men.¹⁸ This emphasis on quality presaged Starbucks; at the same time, the firm also realized that its clientele, particularly in Seattle, was made up of working-class and middle-income customers. It, therefore, stressed the affordability and abundant portions of its food. Manning's successfully characterized itself as a homey, inexpensive mass-market eatery that never sacrificed the highest quality standards. Interestingly, as the Manning's coffee business began to decline in the 1970s, Starbucks was beginning its growth spurt.

The Significance of Clarence W.W. Mayhew

In 1947, the renowned critic, Lewis Mumford, noted in his "Skylines" column in *The New Yorker* the importance of the Bay Region School of architecture.¹⁹ This group of architects, including William W. Wurster, Gardner A. Dailey, John Funk, Francis J. McCarthy, Clarence W.W. Mayhew and others, was producing modern architecture that utilized existing vernacular building traditions and organically reflected the region's varied landscape and clientele; Mumford contrasted this "native and humane form of Modernism" with the imported and sterile International Style buildings produced by the Bauhaus architects, among others.²⁰ Dating back to the mid-1930s, other national architectural observers began to focus on the mostly residential work of Bay Area architects. Mayhew published a number of his early works in regional and national periodicals, such as the Harold V. Manor House, (1939), (see Image #6) which was praised for its thrifty inclusion of indoor/outdoor living areas and its convenient and spacious one-story floor plan, like Mexican haciendas, shaped around a patio.

An article featuring several of Mayhew's recent houses appeared in the West Coast journal, *Architect and Engineer*, in July 1940; a portion of the article on the Manor House underscored the architect's pragmatism and flexibility:

"When I asked Mr. Mayhew if he was 'sold' to the modern school, he replied, 'Not at all,' and continued, 'I think to [sic] much emphasis is being placed on the word 'modern.' We are living in a changed world and these changes demand a

¹⁷ See, for example, "Manning's Celebrates Fifty Years of Progress, Service in the West 1908-1958," advertising supplement in the *Seattle Times*, 2/6/1958.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Lewis Mumford, "Skyline, *Status Quo*" *The New Yorker*, (11 October 1947): 104-106, 109-110.

²⁰ Ibid.

different approach in residence design to any followed in the past. New building products have inspired greater originality; the call of the out-of-doors has brought living quarters into our gardens, so to speak, and the demand for space and more space has resulted in replacing wherever possible the old-time solid partitions with rolling doors, sliding windows, and glass partitions."²¹

This article, featuring seven recent house designs, spread Mayhew's fame on the West Coast, and attracted interest by East Coast magazine editors later in the 1940s-1950s.

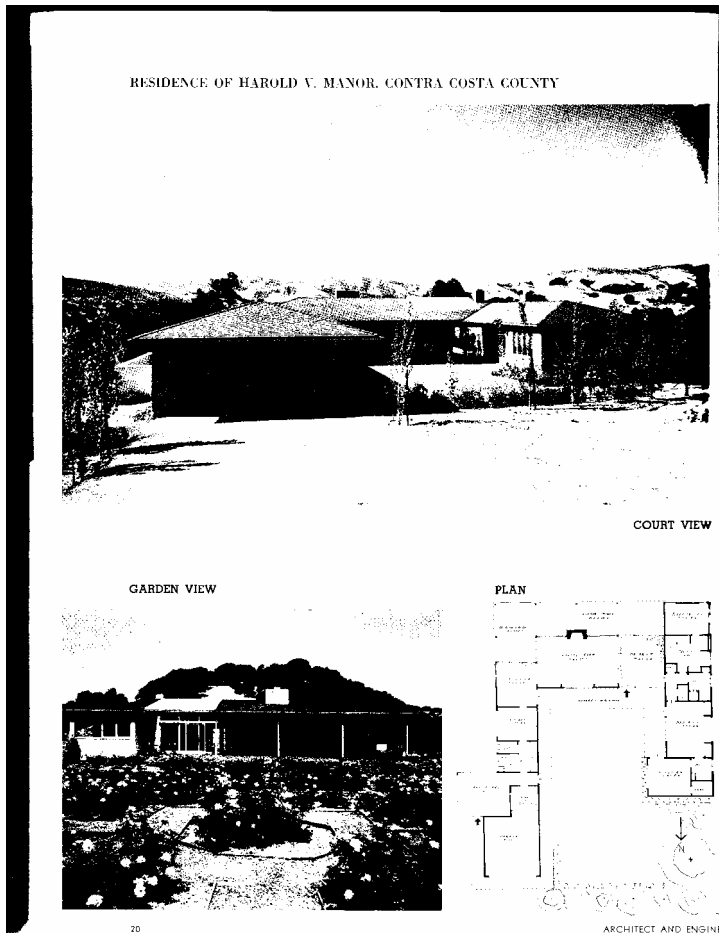


Image #6 Harold V. Manor House, Contra Costa County, CA, 1937-1938 (Frederick Jennings, "Recent Work of Clarence W.W. Mayhew, Architect," *Architect and Engineer*, 142:1. 7/1940, p. 20)

Born in Colorado, Mayhew came to the Bay Area in his youth and graduated with a Beaux-Arts architectural education from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1927. While the Beaux-Arts stressed revivalistic styles and planning methods, it fundamentally taught young architects the importance of intellectual flexibility. This was especially important for the Bay Region architects during the Depression of the 1930s, a period that

²¹ Frederick Jennings, "Recent Work of Clarence W.W. Mayhew, Architect," *Architect and Engineer*, 142:1. 7/1940, p. 21.

shunned revivalism and sought a more utilitarian architecture that included practical ideas derived from local vernacular sources. Particularly important was the re-use of one-story Mexican adobe floor plans that, combined with modern Western platform framing, allowed for greater integration of interior and exterior living spaces. Mayhew produced a range of houses in various styles and plans, several along the lines of the Manor House, modern, simple, but designed with traditional one-story floor plans and recognizable gable roofs, wood siding, and open fenestrations. After World War II, Mayhew, building on pre-war fame, began attracting larger, commercial and institutional commissions.

Mayhew won national acclaim for the university buildings, hospitals, and office buildings that he designed from 1945-1965. *Architectural Forum* published an article entitled, "Today's Most Talked-About Hospital," in July 1954 about his Kaiser Foundation Medical Center, Walnut Creek, CA, (1952). This multi-page analysis indicated the various modern aspects of Mayhew's sprawling one-story hospital plan.²² Soon after, Mayhew's fame reached internationally, when the French periodical, *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, published an article on his University of California, Berkeley, Alumni House (1952-1953). As in his pre-war work, Mayhew used various approaches to design that suited the individual site, program, and client. He did not develop a formulaic "Mayhew Style."

According to H.L. Thiederman (b. 1923), Mayhew's associate in the 1960s, the firm had several commissions for Manning's, Incorporated.²³ At least one other restaurant was designed for Manning's in Pasadena, located on Colorado Avenue in the downtown business district. The design for the Ballard Manning's did not resemble the New Orleans-influenced design of the Pasadena outlet. Mayhew produced a unique, flamboyant design for the Ballard location, one that may have been influenced by the Information Pavilion (perhaps designed by Victor Steinbrueck) that Mayhew probably saw at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. (See Image #7) (According to Thiederman, this Manning's was Mayhew's design, and it is unlikely that he would have designed it without personally inspecting the site.²⁴) Combining what were termed "a marriage of Northwest and Polynesian longhouse" influences, Mayhew's office created the final elevations and sections in 11/1962, just after the 21st Century Exposition closed.²⁵ It is significant that Mayhew, regionalist that he was, hoped to incorporate Scandinavian influences in a building located in a Norwegian-Swedish enclave like Ballard.

²² "Today's Most Talked-About Hospital," *Architectural Forum*, 101: 1, July 1954, p. 108-115; this article appeared just after the annual American Institute of Architect annual convention in Denver, CO, in which a panel convened to consider new trends in hospital design.

²³ Knute Berger, telephone conversation with H.L. Thiederman, 6/23/2007; information given to the author from Berger.

²⁴ Mildred Andrews, telephone conversation with H.L. Thiederman, 8/6/2007; information related to the author.

²⁵ Smith, p. B-1

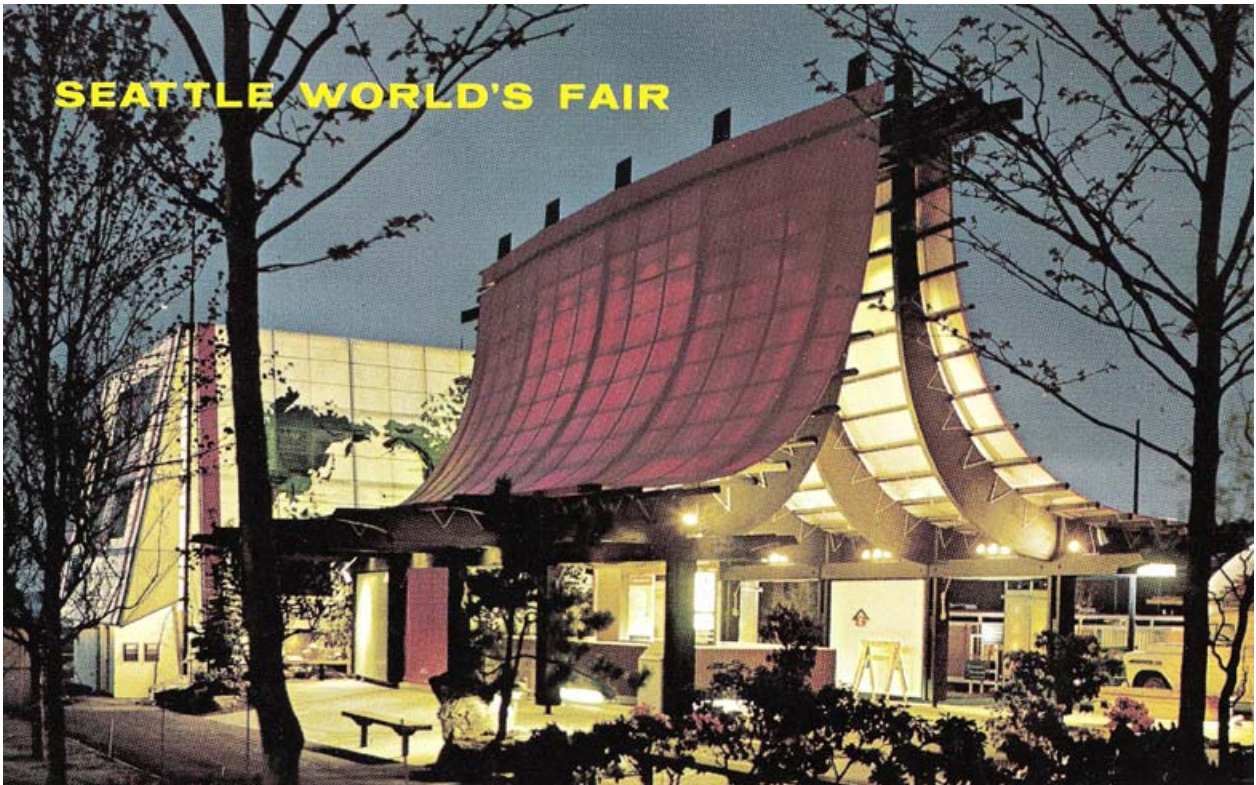


Image #7 Seattle World's Fair Information Booth (From: http://www.alamedainfo.com/seattle_worlds_fair_1962.htm Accessed 12/30/2007)

Conclusion: the Ballard Manning's Integrity

The Ballard Manning's has undergone two large-scale renovations, once in 1979 by Skip Downing's Contract Designs Unlimited and again in 1984 by D.E. Miller. At both times, the interior floorplan was altered, but little was actually removed from the building. The main creative element of the building, the dining room with its uplifting glue-laminated beams is largely intact. The original dimensions of the room are there, and paint covers the original dramatic red color scheme. A hung acoustic ceiling obscures the vaulting. The George Nelson Bubble lamps that hung throughout the dining area are gone, but identical models can be readily reacquired as they have been reissued through Modernica in Los Angeles. A key feature of the dining room was the transparency that linked the interior with views of the major intersection. All mullions appear to remain in place, awaiting the reinstallation of glass, including on the dramatic south façade. Only the large metal *brise-soleil* on the south has been removed. The dining room could again serve as a restaurant, and could, with minimal cost and effort, be returned to near-original condition. Other buildings in more altered states, have been accorded landmark status.