

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ordean Building

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 424 West Superior Street

City or town: Duluth State: MN County: Saint Louis

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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 ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

SOCIAL/Civic

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: CONCRETE

Roof: OTHER

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

See attached continuation sheets.

Narrative Description

See attached continuation sheets.

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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.)

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1974-1986

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Damberg and Peck

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

See attached continuation sheets.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See attached continuation sheets.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See attached 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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other
Name of repository: Ordean Foundation

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): SL-DUL-00953

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.397

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 568399 | Northing: 518351 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property encompasses two parcels and includes all of Lot 76 on Block 8 of the Central Division of Duluth and Lots 76, 78, and 80 on Block 1 of the Duluth Proper Third Division.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries encompass the city lots on which the Ordean Building and plaza were constructed.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Phyllis Brower, Historian
organization: Hess, Roise and Company
street & number: 100 North First Street
city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55401
e-mail brower@hessroise.com
telephone: 612-338-1987
date: March 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Ordean Building
City or Vicinity:	Duluth
County:	Saint Louis
State:	Minnesota
Name of Photographer:	Elizabeth Gales/Phyllis Brower
Date of Photograph:	October/December 2023 (unless otherwise noted)

Photograph 1 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0001, exterior, looking southeast

Photograph 2 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0002, exterior, looking southeast into plaza

Photograph 3 of 13.

Date of Photograph: June 2024

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MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0003, exterior, looking east at plaza

Photograph 4 of 13.

Date of Photograph: June 2024

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0004, exterior, looking north into plaza

Photograph 5 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0005, exterior, looking northeast

Photograph 6 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0006, ground floor, looking south

Photograph 7 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0007, first floor, looking south

Photograph 8 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0008, first floor, looking southwest

Photograph 9 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0009, second floor, looking north

Photograph 10 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0010, third floor, looking north

Photograph 11 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0011, fourth floor, looking southwest

Photograph 12 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0012, fifth floor, looking northeast

Photograph 13 of 13.

MN_SaintLouisCounty_OrdeanBuilding_0013, sixth floor, looking northeast

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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7. Description

Summary Paragraph

The street grid in Downtown Duluth is oriented to Lake Superior and is on a northwest-southeast axis. For ease of description, West Superior Street is north, West Michigan Street is south, etc.

The Ordean Building, constructed in 1974, is located at 424 West Superior Street in Duluth, Minnesota. The building is six stories with a full basement. Due to a steep grade change in the downtown grid, the basement level is exposed on the south side of the building but concealed on the north side. The building occupies the entire width of the block between Superior and Michigan Streets. It has entrances on both the north and south facades, but the primary facade is oriented north. The building has a rectangular footprint and a flat roof. The west facade overlooks a public plaza that extends between West Superior Street, North Fifth Avenue West, and West Michigan Street.¹ The plaza was constructed in 1971 as part of streetscape improvements on North/South Fifth Avenue West from Michigan Street to Priley Drive by the St. Louis County Courthouse. The building was designed in response to the plaza, and the plaza has been acquired by the building owner. The plaza is a contributing resource to the property.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Ordean Building is a pre-cast concrete building. The exterior has an exposed, smooth concrete structure with incised joints that reference historical architectural details. The windows are historic unless otherwise noted. All openings on the first story of the north, west, and south facades are large Romanesque arches. The first floor of the north facade has two arched openings. The main entrance is the east opening and is recessed from the facade. The entrance has double doors, a sidelight, and transom.² The west opening holds a tripartite window with a concrete beam spanning the bottom of the opening. The upper second through sixth stories are divided into eight bays, defined by an inverted round arch at the bottom and a round arch at the top of each bay. In each bay, each floor alternates between a window and concrete spandrel panels with large pebble aggregate. The windows are fixed, plate glass with aluminum frames.

On the west facade, five arched openings on the first floor hold tripartite windows with concrete beams spanning the bottoms of the arches. The upper floors are divided into twenty window bays, which have the same configuration, sashes, and frames as the window bays on the north facade. A reinforced-concrete patio cantilevers off the west facade and overlooks the adjacent plaza. The south end of the patio is supported by reinforced-concrete buttresses. The patio has a concrete surface scored with squares and a historic, low metal railing attaches to the concrete plaza wall to the north and follows the contour of the cantilevered patio to the south. Due to the slope of the site, the ground level of the west facade is largely exposed. The north section is concealed by an enclosed storage area under the patio,

¹ The plaza is included in the boundary based on recommendations by the Technical Preservation Services staff (NPS) during the Part 1 application process.

² It is unclear if the doors are historic or replacements; however, they are compatible with the building's character.

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which is accessed through a metal garage door, which faces south. The exposed ground level facade holds rectangular windows with concrete beams at the windows.

On the south facade, the ground level is fully exposed and is divided into two bays. The secondary entrance to the building is located in the east half of the east bay and comprises a recessed pair of metal-and-glass doors with a sidelight and transom. The west half of the bay holds two storefront windows; a concrete beam spans the bottom of the opening. The west bay holds three storefront windows, with a concrete beam spanning the bottom of the opening. The first floor has two arched openings, each holding a tripartite window. The upper floors are divided into eight bays, which have the same configuration, sashes, and frame as the north and west facades.

The east facade is on the property line and has no window or door openings. The restrooms and interior circulation—two staircases and two elevators—are located on the east side of the building. On the exterior, this circulation block extends above the main roofline as a penthouse. The east facade, and a narrow section on the east edge of the north and south facades, are the smoother concrete scored with a rectangular pattern of expansion joints.

The Ordean Building has a flat roof with no parapet and the roof is a gravel built-up system. The circulation penthouse on the roof holds the elevator equipment and large mechanical equipment for the entire building.

Plaza

The west facade overlooks a public plaza that extends between West Superior Street, South Fifth Avenue West, and West Michigan Street. The plaza was constructed in 1971 as part of streetscape improvements on North/South Fifth Avenue West from West Michigan Street to Priley Drive by the St. Louis County Courthouse. The plaza has a large concrete staircase leading from Superior Street down to a circular space paved in concrete and accessed from Michigan Street. Concrete planters on the south and west hold a variety of trees and low-level plantings. Brick sidewalks extend on the south, west, and north and tie the landscape to the larger streetscape noted above. The design of the Ordean Building responded to the plaza through the construction of the patio on the west side of the building, and therefore the plaza was included within the boundary of the historic property. Although it was constructed outside the period of significance it was present during the period of significance, has integrity, and is critical to understanding the historic design and setting of the property. It is considered a contributing resource.

Interior

Common areas in the building are limited to corridors on each floor. The first floor is the main level of the building and is accessed through a metal and glass entrance vestibule on the north side of the building. The corridor is wider at the elevators and by the restrooms before narrowing into the standard width seen on the upper floors. The floor is clad in historic quarry tile, the walls are gypsum board with wall covering with historic quarry tile on the wall by the elevator doors, and the ceiling is suspended acoustic tile. On the ground level, the corridor is also wider at the elevators and at the south end by the metal-and-glass entrance vestibule to Michigan Street.

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Circulation for the building is grouped along the east side. Two stairwells, one at the north end and one at the south end provide access from the ground level to the sixth floor. The south stairwell also extends into the penthouse on the roof. The staircases are utilitarian in character with concrete treads and painted metal handrails. Two elevators are located near the north end of the building and provide access from the ground through to the sixth floor. A maintenance closet, a niche for a water fountain, and restrooms for tenant usage are located between the elevators and the south staircase. The corridor width is uniform on the second through sixth floors and includes a slightly wider area at the elevators. The length is also consistent, although on the sixth floor the corridor is shorter and the tenant has integrated part of the corridor in its office space. The corridors have historic carpeted floors, gypsum-board walls with wallcovering, and suspended acoustic-tile ceilings. The locations of doors to tenant spaces have changed over time, and the millwork is not consistent on all floors.

Tenant offices are located on all floors of the building, and most have similar finishes. Because the office spaces have been altered throughout the occupancy to address the needs of the tenants, the finishes are a mix of historic and non-historic materials. The floors are carpeted or have vinyl flooring, the walls are gypsum board that is painted or covered with wallcovering. The ceilings are suspended acoustic tile with a pattern of 2'x4' tiles alternating with 4'x4' tiles. Fluorescent lights are flush-mounted in the 2'x4' sections. Partition walls and cubicles within the offices have changed over time and have the same finishes as described above. One exception is a tenant space on the first floor where the suspended ceiling was removed by the tenant and the exposed concrete structure and mechanical system painted black. The alteration likely took place ca. 2017.³

Communal spaces in the building include two conference rooms on the first floor, which can be used by all tenants in the building. These occupy a significant portion of the first floor. The larger conference room has a movable partition that can divide the space into two smaller rooms. Both of the conference rooms have non-historic carpeted floors, gypsum-board walls with non-historic wallcovering, and historic suspended ceilings with coffered wood panels that include ceiling lights, speakers, and acoustic treatment. On the ground level, small wood-frame storage units are located on the north side of the floor, along with a mechanical room that holds equipment for the entire building.

Integrity

The Ordean Building retains sufficient historic integrity to support its significance under Criterion A in the area of Social History. The building has integrity of location and setting; it has not been moved from its original location and maintains its historic setting in downtown Duluth, including the plaza that influenced its designed. The exterior design and materials have not been significantly altered, and any interior modifications or repairs used materials complimentary to the building so it retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building maintains its integrity of location, setting, design, and materials and therefore its integrity of feeling of a 1970s office building. These aspects also contribute to its integrity of association with the Ordean Foundation.

³ Building Permit Nos. BBLDG1709-181 (October 10, 2017) and BHVAC1710-100 (October 25, 2017), City of Duluth; permits are for interior remodeling of the offices and replacing the existing duct work with spiral duct work.

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The plaza retains sufficient historic integrity to be a contributing resource to the Ordean Building. It has not been moved from its original location and maintains its historic setting in downtown Duluth and within the larger streetscape improvement area. The plaza retains integrity of location and setting. The design and materials have not been significantly altered, and the plaza retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These aspects contribute to the plaza's integrity of feeling and association with downtown streetscape improvements in the 1970s.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Ordean Building is significant under Criterion A for Social History for its association with the Ordean Foundation, an organization whose presence played an irreplaceable role in both social sustainability and the stability of nonprofit organizations in Duluth. The Ordean Foundation is significant as one of the first nonprofit organizations in Duluth and for its impressive influence over the development of the nonprofit sector in northeastern Minnesota. The Ordean Building represents the cumulation of the foundation's efforts to incorporate modern nonprofit practice into its historic values, which manifested in the construction of a new office tower to house other nonprofit entities. This innovative approach to charitable support a success and enabled social services organizations to flourish in the Duluth.

The Ordean Building's period of significance begins in 1974 with the building's construction, and ends in 1986, when the Northeast Minnesota Initiative Fund (Northland Foundation) was established and surpassed the Ordean Foundation as the leading private/community foundation in the city and county.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Early Development of Nonprofit Sector

The contemporary definition of nonprofit organizations is the product of centuries of evolving social, economic, and legal contexts. The practice of charitable giving and public welfare predates the formation of the country. Often connected with religious organizations, voluntary associations in the early colonies provided support to those in need. With the formation of the republic and the separation of church and state in the late-eighteenth century came a new relationship between established charitable associations and the government. These agencies continued to flourish alongside new government programs, often filling gaps left by the government's relief efforts. This system lasted into the early nineteenth century when the introduction of tax legislation solidified relationship between public and private sectors.⁴

The nonprofit sector continued to grow throughout the early nineteenth century, becoming especially active in the Northeast and Great Lake region.⁵ As the United States entered the second Industrial Revolution in the 1870s, rapid developments in technology and production allowed a select few individuals to accumulate an unprecedented amount of wealth. In the years leading up to the twentieth century, the United States experienced a substantial paradigm shift in charitable activities as organizations and individuals responded to widespread economic distress and the growing disparity in wealth.

Many of the changes in charitable giving during this period were influenced by Andrew Carnegie, who was critical of traditional charities, which he believed to be reactive to symptoms of poverty rather than

⁴ Paul Arnsberger et al., "A History of the Tax-Exempt Sector: An SOI Perspective," *Statistics of Income Bulletin* 27, no. 3 (2008): 122.

⁵ David C Hammack, "Growth, Transformation, and Quiet Revolution in the Nonprofit Sector Over Two Centuries," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 159, 164.

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proactively addressing the causes. Carnegie petitioned his contemporaries, who had benefited from the rise of industry and technology, to reinvest their fortunes into society. This new model of philanthropy focused on the role of charitable foundations in addressing wider matters of welfare instead of depending on individual, small-scale interventions.⁶

Though the emergence of wholesale philanthropy and grantmaking foundations through the early twentieth century was met with some concern over the power and capital held by the institutions, private donations continued to play a significant role in public welfare. In 1929, a study of 116 cities cited that 24 percent of relief was dependent on private funds.⁷ The creation of the New Deal amidst the economic turmoil of the Great Depression significantly decreased the influence of private philanthropy. The Social Security Act was incorporated as part of the New Deal in 1935 and created governmental systems of relief for the unemployed, the elderly, children, and the blind, setting the stage for what is now considered public welfare.⁸ Nevertheless, the increase in public relief agencies did not negate the role of private charities in the United States.

In Minnesota, private foundations were initially funded by a small group of influential and wealthy businessmen, such as Amherst H. Wilder, James J. Hill, and Charles A. Pillsbury, who had been “recruited to form an industrial and financial class” in the territory during the mid-nineteenth century. Like many of the economic elite in the state, they settled in the Twin Cities, growing their business enterprises, and their charitable activities included funding libraries and hospitals, and creating trusts for relief of the poor.⁹ The efforts of these early charitable organizations were place-based and typically did not reach beyond Minneapolis and Saint Paul. In northeast Minnesota, communities were served by regional philanthropy, the scope of this early activity was miniscule in comparison to that of the Twin Cities.

The Ordean Foundation

The Ordean Foundation was incorporated in 1933, a year after the death of Louise Ordean, wife of Albert L. Ordean (1856–1928). Originally known as the Albert and Louise Ordean Charity, the organization began with an endowment of \$2 million intended to provide “relief and charity for [Duluth’s] worthy poor without discrimination to age, sex, color or religious inclination of the beneficiary.”¹⁰ The Ordean Charity functioned in a similar fashion to Saint Paul’s Amherst H. Wilder Charity (now Wilder Foundation), acting as a private welfare organization and providing direct financial relief to individuals and families. These funds were intended to aid individuals in accessing medical care and other necessities such as clothing, food, and fuel.¹¹

⁶ Peter Dobkin Hall, “Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States,” chap. 1 in *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, ed. David O. Renz and Robert D. Herman (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 12.

⁷ Andrew James Francis Morris, “Charity, Therapy and Poverty: Private Social Service in the Era of Public Welfare” (PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2003), 6.

⁸ John Hanson, “The New Deal: Part II,” Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012.

⁹ Jon Pratt and Edson W. Spencer, “Dynamics of Corporate Philanthropy in Minnesota,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 3 (2000): 272.

¹⁰ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 2. The original endowment of \$2 million was similar to approximately \$39 million in 2020.

¹¹ The concept of “deserving poor” or “worthy poor” in the United States is a residual concept from the colonial period. Often

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In addition to providing individual financial support, the Ordean Charity oversaw the pharmacy at Miller Memorial Hospital. The city-owned hospital was financed in 1934 by funds bequeathed in the will of Andres M. Miller, former president of the Village of Duluth, who had funded the Lyceum Theater. Much like the establishment of the Ordean Charity, Miller called for the hospital to serve the “worthy sick and helpless poor,” prohibiting discrimination of individuals in accessing the services so long as they were not “afflicted with any loathsome or contagious disease.”¹² The Ordean Charity took charge of the pharmacy in 1935, providing free medication to those it felt met the organization’s charitable goals.

The Ordean Charity continued to function as a private welfare agency for three decades. The early years of the organization coincided with the Great Depression, during which the growth of nonprofit organizations in the United States slowed from lack of funding while the need for services rose. The relationship between active nonprofit organizations and government agencies experienced a time of significant transposition as the government greatly widened its role in welfare distribution. New Deal programs dictated that no funds would be distributed to private welfare agencies, and many private organizations worked towards incorporation into the novel government agencies instead.¹³ Unlike its contemporaries, the Ordean Charity remained a private entity and continued to develop its methods of welfare distribution, creating a system focused on social work and individual aid. This approach, which would guide the organization through the foreseeable future, entailed personal interviews of applicants to determine whether they were of the “worthy poor” and deserving of aid.¹⁴

By the mid-twentieth century, methods of welfare and relief shifted away from private organizations toward centralized, governmental agencies at the local, state, and national levels. To remain pertinent to an ever-changing society, the Ordean Charity accepted that certain aspects of the organization had become irrelevant to its mission of providing relief to the citizens of Duluth. By 1960, some of these aspects had become not only inapt but actively damaging to the organization’s efforts. This understanding first led to the conclusion that the name—the Albert and Louise Ordean Charity—hindered its ability to provide relief to those in need. The acceptance of “charity” was often viewed as disgraceful, an association the organization feared was deterring potential beneficiaries. After a brief petition to the district court, the Albert and Louise Ordean Charity was reincorporated as the Ordean Foundation in 1961.¹⁵

In 1963, the Ordean Foundation reached out to the Wilder Foundation and commissioned a peer-reviewed study to determine how the organization fit into the modern context of welfare and relief in Duluth. The Wilder study coincided with the production of *Services in Behalf of Families*, a survey and report funded by the Duluth Welfare Council that was conducted by the National Study Service.

linked to Puritanical governance, this attempted to validate a system distinguishing those unable to work from those able but unwilling to work.

¹² Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 2.

¹³ Hammack, "Growth, Transformation, and Quiet Revolution in the Nonprofit Sector Over Two Centuries," 162.

¹⁴ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 4.

¹⁵ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 5. During this time, the Ordean Foundation was responsible for over 21 percent of health and welfare spending in Duluth.

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Whereas the Wilder survey looked specifically at the Ordean Foundation, the report handled by the National Study Service analyzed seven prominent relief agencies to better understand how effective their services were, particularly in regard to their relationship to one another and the community. The Ordean Foundation was not analyzed in the report.¹⁶ The Duluth report concluded there were three significant issues with the current system of relief operations in Duluth: underqualified staff, overlapping services, and unreasonable rates of referral.

With the advent of government assistance programs in the Great Depression, the fiscal structure of welfare distribution moved away from private welfare organizations. Family service agencies no longer shouldered the full responsibility of auxiliary support, and many organizations shifted their focus to active intervention. Instead of reacting to matters of immediate distress through direct financial, medical, or material support, relief agencies began to focus on treating the causes of distress, often viewed in the context of preventing familial breakdown. Social casework became the primary service provided by these relief agencies, and their role in the community grew. The Duluth report noted, however, that educational standards for members of the organizations did not keep pace with the growing demand for services, and by 1963, many professionals lacked practical training or education in social work.¹⁷

The underqualified staff in overwhelmed agencies led to overlap of the services different organizations provided in the community. As explained in the Duluth study, the relief agencies unwittingly caused confusion in their efforts to provide relief, leading to apprehension within the community. In one example, a family in Duluth seeking support in challenges relating to “alcoholism, physical disablement, and [an] inability to manage their efforts” was advised by the Family Service Society, the Center on Problem Drinking, a public-school social worker, the Ordean Foundation, and an unassociated, private physician who reached out to the Humane Society, which in turn led to the referral to the State Hospital’s alcoholic treatment program.¹⁸ This fragmentation of services, caused by a client being referred to several different organizations to address the same problem, deterred individuals from seeking support until situations become “so severe that they defy solution by any source.”¹⁹

The agencies analyzed in the Duluth report were each given specific recommendations to improve their efficacy within the city’s nonprofit sector. In addition to the internal recommendations, the Duluth report provided nine proposals for inter-agency organization. These suggestions primarily entailed the use of adequately educated professional staff, the consolidation of services, and increased collaboration between agencies to avoid the overlap of services leading to the segmentation of the support process.²⁰

¹⁶ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families: Report of a Study Conducted in Duluth, Minnesota* (Duluth: Duluth Welfare Council, 1963), 3. The seven agencies referenced were the Catholic Social Service, Center on Problem Drinking, Duluth Mental Hygiene Clinic, Family Service Society, Jewish Social Services, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, and the Saint Louis County Welfare Department.

¹⁷ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 39, 83.

¹⁸ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 37.

¹⁹ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 43.

²⁰ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 107-110.

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Due to its unique function and extraordinary influence within Duluth's nonprofit sector, the Ordean Foundation was included in the inter-agency section of the report despite not being an active participant of the study. Most of the charitable relief agencies had case workers that managed support in areas such as career placement and substance abuse while also providing some level of financial support to individual citizens. In 1962, the year before the Duluth report, \$207,571 in direct financial assistance to individuals was provided by six relief agencies, and \$182,642 of that amount, almost 90 percent, was provided solely by the Ordean Foundation.²¹ The Ordean Foundation distributed funds with the aid of a case worker who interviewed citizens to determine if their situation merited intervention. The Duluth report asserted that by only providing financial assistance without accompanying casework services, the Ordean Foundation was adding to the rate of overlapping services in the community.²²

Aside from the shortcomings underscored by the report, it was determined that the Ordean Foundation had the potential to play an important role in the successful reorganization of the city's charitable sector. The report suggested that the foundation consolidate its functions by employing properly trained individuals to conduct social counseling services, while adhering to the organization's regulations regarding financial assistance. The report also suggested that the Ordean Foundation consider using its extensive resources to help provide training for casework employees through scholarships.²³

The publication of *Services in Behalf of Families* in the fall of 1963 coincided with the research on the Ordean Foundation conducted by the Wilder Foundation, which was published in the spring of 1963. Although it is unclear whether one study prompted the other, the Duluth report asserts that the results of the ongoing, outside appraisal were not available for use in the citywide study. As noted above, the Duluth report focused on the effectiveness of several prominent charities in the city, particularly in relation to each other, while the Wilder study was focused on the effectiveness of the Ordean Foundation and its public image.

The Wilder study presented a highly critical view of the Ordean Foundation and reported an equally negative public perception of the usefulness and intent of the organization. The study reiterated that while the vast majority of welfare was handled by public agencies by this time, the Ordean Foundation had continued as a private relief organization, attempting to occupy a niche that no longer fit in the social ecology of Duluth. The results of the study reflected a growing question among the public and the government on whether private philanthropic organizations such as the Ordean Foundation had outlived their usefulness.²⁴ Many citizens were also wary of the intent of Ordean Foundation, suspecting the organization to be a cover for a bank or trust company instead of a charitable organization.²⁵

²¹ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 64. The agencies referenced were the Family Service Society, Jewish Social Services, Catholic Social Services, Salvation Army, Duluth chapter of the American Red Cross, and the Ordean Foundation.

²² National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 107-110.

²³ National Study Service, *Services in Behalf of Families*, 107-110.

²⁴ Hall, "Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States," 20.

²⁵ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 7.

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A negative perception of private charitable institutions as lacking public accountability had emerged nationally, indicating the beginning of a paradigm shift in how nonprofit organizations functioned.²⁶ To mitigate the negative view of the organization, the Wilder report suggested that the Ordean Foundation should make several changes to its charitable activities, the most drastic of which was to do away with its relief program all together and instead develop and manage its own programs. The foundation was essentially recommended to redirect its efforts from private financial support to public-facing programs to actively engage with the community.²⁷

Following the Wilder and Duluth studies, the Ordean Foundation rejected most of the recommendations to create and operate its own programs. Instead, the foundation shifted away from privately assisting the “worthy poor” to providing financial support for existing nonprofit organizations working to combat poverty in Duluth. To implement this decision, the Ordean Foundation first had to petition the district court to amend its articles of incorporation. It increased the scope of “worthy poor” to include scholarships for nursing students and grants to nonprofit organizations. Additionally, the Ordean Foundation adjusted its existing investment policies, which were limited to industries which were not as financially lucrative as they had once been. These amendments were approved in 1965, and the organization began phasing out individual charitable gifts.²⁸

The Ordean Foundation focused on funding organizations rooted in public health and education. Several nonprofit organizations, which continue to hold a fundamental role in providing public aid in Duluth and St. Louis County, received critical funding from the Ordean Foundation. One example is the Duluth Free Clinic, which purchased its own offices in 1972 after receiving a grant from the Ordean Foundation. The small clinic, which began in a church basement, is now the Lake Superior Community Health Center and operates clinics in both Duluth and Superior.²⁹ The Ordean Foundation later provided an interest-free loan to the Women’s Coalition (now Safe Haven Shelter), which led to the development of the Duluth Model, a globally recognized approach to domestic abuse.³⁰ The success of these organizations, and many others, was made possible through the financial support of the Ordean Foundation, especially in its ability to secure a location to house nonprofit operations. In embracing the need for change within the organization and shifting away from private financial support, the Ordean Foundation played an irreplaceable role in both social sustainability and the livelihood of nonprofit organizations in Duluth.

The Ordean Building

In the early 1970s, the Ordean Foundation set out to fulfill a central tenet of Albert Ordean’s will: to erect a building to serve as the headquarters from which the foundation managed and expanded efforts to contribute to the social and physical health of the community. This was not to be a “home for beneficiaries, or a hospital for their aid and relief,” but a place for beneficiaries to organize and conduct

²⁶ Paul Arnsberger, et al., “A History of the Tax-Exempt Sector: An SOI Perspective,” *Statistics of Income Bulletin* 27, no. 3 (2008): 108.

²⁷ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 7.

²⁸ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 8.

²⁹ “Lake Superior Health Center,” Community Health Center Chronicles, n.d., <https://www.chcchronicles.org/explore/lake-superior-health-center>.

³⁰ Shirley Oberg, “Safe Haven/Women’s Coalition Oral History Project,” by Gina Temple-Rhodes, 2015.

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the business necessary for the relief efforts to function.³¹ The foundation planned to occupy a portion of one floor, with the rest of the building leased to other charitable organizations at lower-than-market rates subsidized by the Ordean Foundation. The organization pledged to continue to operate the building at a loss, allowing the tenant organizations to use more of their budgets for their work rather than paying market rents. The Ordean Foundation required approval to use its funds to construct a building, which was granted by the district court in 1972.³² Despite being exempt from property taxes, the Ordean Foundation opted to annually pay the City of Duluth and Duluth Public Schools the amount that would have accumulated from taxes if the building was owned by a for-profit company, which further supported city services and public education.

The Ordean Foundation had intended to build a headquarters from its founding in 1933, but amidst the Great Depression, the foundation focused its funds on immediate aid to the community. Nearly four decades later, the foundation was in a strong financial position to undertake a construction project while continuing to provide aid. The decision in 1972 to build a headquarters came on the coattails of the Tax Reform Act of 1969 (TRA69), which was drafted in response to widespread distrust of private charitable foundations. In addition to creating an explicit definition of a private nonprofit organization, TRA69 instituted a formal set of restrictions and requirements specific to nonprofits, some of which had a significant impact on the Ordean Foundation's charitable operations. Among them was an annual minimum required to be distributed by nonoperating foundations.³³ The funds were to be distributed only to quantifiable expenses. Distribution to public charities, private operating foundations, and sometimes private nonoperating foundations, were appropriate, as were setting aside funds for specific charitable programs and the associated assets. Direct expenditures for charitable purposes were also approved.³⁴

The Ordean Foundation's endowment had grown to \$9 million by 1974, with investments bringing in over \$1 million annually.³⁵ By constructing a building specifically to subsidize offices for nonprofit organizations, in addition to distributing grants, the Ordean Foundation was better able to satisfy its mission while complying with TRA69.

The completion of the Ordean Building in 1974 marked the beginning of a new era for the foundation—a physical representation of the successful culmination of efforts to integrate modern policies into the historic mission of the organization. The new building was designed by Duluth architects Damberg and Peck, and the original plans noted some of the first tenants, with specific office spaces designed for the Center on Problem Drinking, the Area Mental Health Board, the Planning Coalition, Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (ARCH), the United Way, the Association for Retarded Citizens (now ARC

³¹ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 12.

³² Lisa Oas, "Philanthropist Ordean Was a Man of Vision and Concern," *Skyworld Duluth News*, January, 1989.

³³ Arnsberger, "A History of the Tax-Exempt Sector: An SOI Perspective," 108-109. The TRA69 created two subclasses of private foundations. Nonoperating foundations are typically grantmaking organizations and do not engage in public activities; operating foundations were organizations which functioned in a similar fashion to public charities yet retained the qualities distinguishing private foundations from public foundations.

³⁴ "Statistics of Income 1974-1978: Private Foundations," *Internal Revenue Service* (1981): 6.

³⁵ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 11.

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Northland), the American Red Cross, and the Girl Scouts of America.³⁶ The building was located in the Gateway Renewal area of Downtown Duluth and shares a parcel with the “East Plaza,” constructed as part of the Fifth Avenue West Mall development renewal project in 1971. Both the East Plaza and the West Plaza, which shares a parcel with the Duluth Public Library across Fifth Avenue West, predate their associated buildings but were designed in anticipation of future developments. The Ordean Building was designed not only to accommodate but to interact with the existing plaza. The cantilevered patio that extends south off the west facade creates a sense of continuity, and the use of concrete for the patio and the building responds to the materiality of the plaza.³⁷

The Ordean Building is significant as a physical representation of the Ordean Foundation’s transition from a private welfare charity to a modern grantmaking organization. By the time the Ordean Foundation moved into the newly constructed building in 1974, the program changes made in the previous decade had come to fruition, with half of the grants distributed to other nonprofit organizations. Though the foundation did not completely turn away from providing individual support, they took up only a quarter of the giving by 1974, with the majority split between nursing scholarships, employee payroll, and building utilities. Executive director Howard J. Alaspa retired in 1981, at which point the Ordean Building housed fifteen nonprofit organizations, making it a unique resource to the charitable sector in Duluth. The transition in leadership was overseen by the Board of Directors.³⁸

Ernest S. Peterson replaced Alaspa as executive director, and, in 1982, the foundation successfully petitioned the district courts to allow for the expansion of their services to the neighboring communities. This decision coincided with expansion in the nonprofit sector to respond to a growing economic crisis in the 1980s that had resulted in the scaling down of federal aid in funding programs for the poor. Minnesota philanthropy also grew during this period, and the first statewide reports on nonprofits were started that decade. New private foundations with missions similar to the Ordean Foundation were formed in Duluth throughout the 1980s, including the Wildey H. Mitchell Family Foundation (1980) and the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation (1982).³⁹ These organizations were not as large as the Ordean Foundation and were therefore excluded from a 1985 statewide study of the forty largest foundations and corporate-giving programs. The Ordean Foundation was large enough to warrant inclusion and was among the oldest organizations included in the study. Additionally, the Ordean Foundation was the only organization headquartered in Duluth. The report noted that the estimated amount of grants provided by all Minnesota foundations in 1985 was \$208.5 million; 69 percent of this amount came from the forty foundations analyzed in the study.⁴⁰ When ranked by the total amount donated, the Ordean Foundation paled in comparison to others. However, the organization ranked the highest in terms of the percentage of its endowment that was used for grants, giving away 97.6 percent of its \$826,330 income in 1985. The largest organization, the McKnight Foundation, had a total income

³⁶ Damberg and Peck Architects, “Ordean Building,” 1973, drawings belonging to the property owner.

³⁷ “Good Things Due for Mall,” *Duluth News Tribune*, May 24, 1970.

³⁸ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 11.

³⁹ Foundation information was located through Cause IQ, a subscription website, and verified on ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/search?q=Minnesota>, accessed April 15, 2024.

⁴⁰ John Pratt, Rosangelica Aburto, and Frederick W. Smith, *Minnesota Philanthropy and Disadvantaged People* (Minneapolis: The Philanthropy Project, 1986), 6-10.

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of over \$26 million and provided over \$18 million in grants in 1985, which fell just under 70 percent of donated income. Over half of the funding by the McKnight Foundation was distributed to the Twin Cities.⁴¹

The increase in nonprofit foundations in the state and in Duluth would soon impact the relevance of the Ordean Foundation in its community. The foundation had fully eliminated its caseworker positions, after providing a grant to Duluth Family Services to take over the responsibility.⁴² In 1986, the McKnight Foundation revolutionized philanthropy in the state when it created the Minnesota Initiatives Foundations in rural regions of Greater Minnesota (outside of the Twin Cities metro). Working with regional leaders, six separate nonprofit foundations were chartered, including the Northeast Minnesota Initiative Fund (now known as the Northland Foundation), which provided grants to nonprofit groups in seven counties in northeastern Minnesota, including Duluth and St. Louis County. The Northeast Minnesota Initiative Fund, with funding from the McKnight Foundation, dramatically increased the amount of nonprofit grants available in Duluth. It also marked the end of the Ordean Foundation as the leading nonprofit in the community.⁴³

The Ordean Building was an essential tool for furthering its mission despite the changes to foundation's status. The building continued to provide affordable offices for nonprofit organizations, and tenant spaces continually adapted to changing needs of nonprofit organizations. Alterations included partition walls for additional offices on the sixth floor in 1988, and sheetrock panels added to partition walls of "various offices" the following year.⁴⁴ The flexibility of these spaces reinforces the significance of the building as a representation of the Ordean Foundation's ambition and the ability to adapt its methods to carry on the legacy of the organization. In 1995, an investigation of the exterior envelope revealed signs of aging on ground and first stories of all visible facades. The south facade overlooking Michigan Street had the most significant deterioration, with several areas of spalled concrete and exposed metal anchors.⁴⁵ Masonry restoration was overseen by LHB Engineers and Architects the same year. No significant alterations were made to the historic design of the exterior.⁴⁶ Permit records note a round, illuminated sign was added to the Superior Street elevation in 1995, which is likely the extant sign for United Way.⁴⁷ Building permits indicate that the only other exterior alterations occurred in 2016, when a broken window was replaced. It is unclear which window this was.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Pratt, Aburto, and Smith, *Minnesota Philanthropy*, 26, 33. The McKnight Foundation was established in 1953 by William L. and Maude L. McKnight from profits Mr. McKnight made as president, CEO, and board chair of the 3M Corporation. It is a private independent foundation not affiliated with 3M. McKnight Foundation, "History," <https://www.mcknight.org/about/history/>.

⁴² Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 15.

⁴³ "The Stories Behind Minnesota's Foundations," *Star Tribune*, November 13, 2015; Minnesota Initiative Foundations, "About Us," <https://greaterminnesota.net/about-us/>, accessed April 15, 2024; Northland Foundation, "History," <https://northlandfdn.org/about-us/history.php>, accessed April 15, 2024.

⁴⁴ Building Permit Nos. 41433 (October 27, 1988) and 42835 (June 15, 1989), City of Duluth, Minnesota.

⁴⁵ LHB Engineers and Architects, "Ordean Building Lower Facade Investigation," 1995, drawings belonging to the property owner.

⁴⁶ LHB Engineers and Architects, Ordean Building Lower Facade Restoration, drawings belonging to the property owner.

⁴⁷ Building Permit No. S-008843 (December 20, 1995), City of Duluth, Minnesota.

⁴⁸ Building Permit No. EOBST1611-005 (November 7, 2016), City of Duluth, Minnesota.

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The building was owned by the Ordean Foundation until the fall of 2019, when it was sold to Titanium Partners. As Don Ness, the executive director of the Ordean Foundation, discussed in an interview with the *Duluth News Tribune*, the active management of the building was taking energy from the mission of the organization to support local nonprofits. In addition to the attention of staff, upkeep of the building was drawing funds away from current and future beneficiaries.⁴⁹ The Ordean Foundation financed the building from the organization's endowment, which had decreased considerably in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Selling the building allowed the Ordean Foundation to continue its historic mission of providing relief to the community.⁵⁰

The Ordean Foundation remains a significant organization that supports nonprofit entities in Duluth and St. Louis County. The Ordean Building represents the foundation's once-exclusive role in the nonprofit sector. Other buildings erected in the late-twentieth century may house nonprofit institutions, but the Ordean Building was built specifically for the benefit and support of nonprofits, making it a unique and significant resource. The Ordean Building was ahead of its time in nonprofit support and collaboration.

The mission of the Ordean Foundation to provide aid to those in need remained consistent while its methods evolved from private donations to funding other organizations. The Ordean Building represents the historic ambition of the organization and was the culmination of its efforts to modernize its mission and continue its exceptional role in the nonprofit sector in Duluth. The property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Social History. The beginning of the period of significance is 1974, the year that construction of the building was completed, and the foundation and other nonprofit organizations moved in. The period of significance ends in 1986, when the Northeast Minnesota Initiative Fund (Northland Foundation) was established and surpassed the Ordean Foundation as the leading private/community foundation in the city and county. The organization's importance in the community lessened after 1986, and although it is still active to the present, it is no longer the leading nonprofit in terms of grants or income. The Ordean Building has achieved significance within the last fifty years and must also meet Criteria Consideration G. After construction of the building, the Ordean Foundation expanded its service area to include the entire county and continued to lead the nonprofit sector in Duluth. A report on the nonprofit sector showed that in 1985, the Ordean Foundation was the most prominent nonprofit organization in Duluth and ranked as one of the forty largest nonprofits in the state. It therefore demonstrates exceptional significance within the development of the nonprofit sector of Duluth and St. Louis County.

⁴⁹ Steve Kuchera, "Ordean Foundation Sells Building in Downtown Duluth," *Duluth News Tribune*, September 12, 2019.

⁵⁰ Dierckins, *The Ordean Foundation*, 13.

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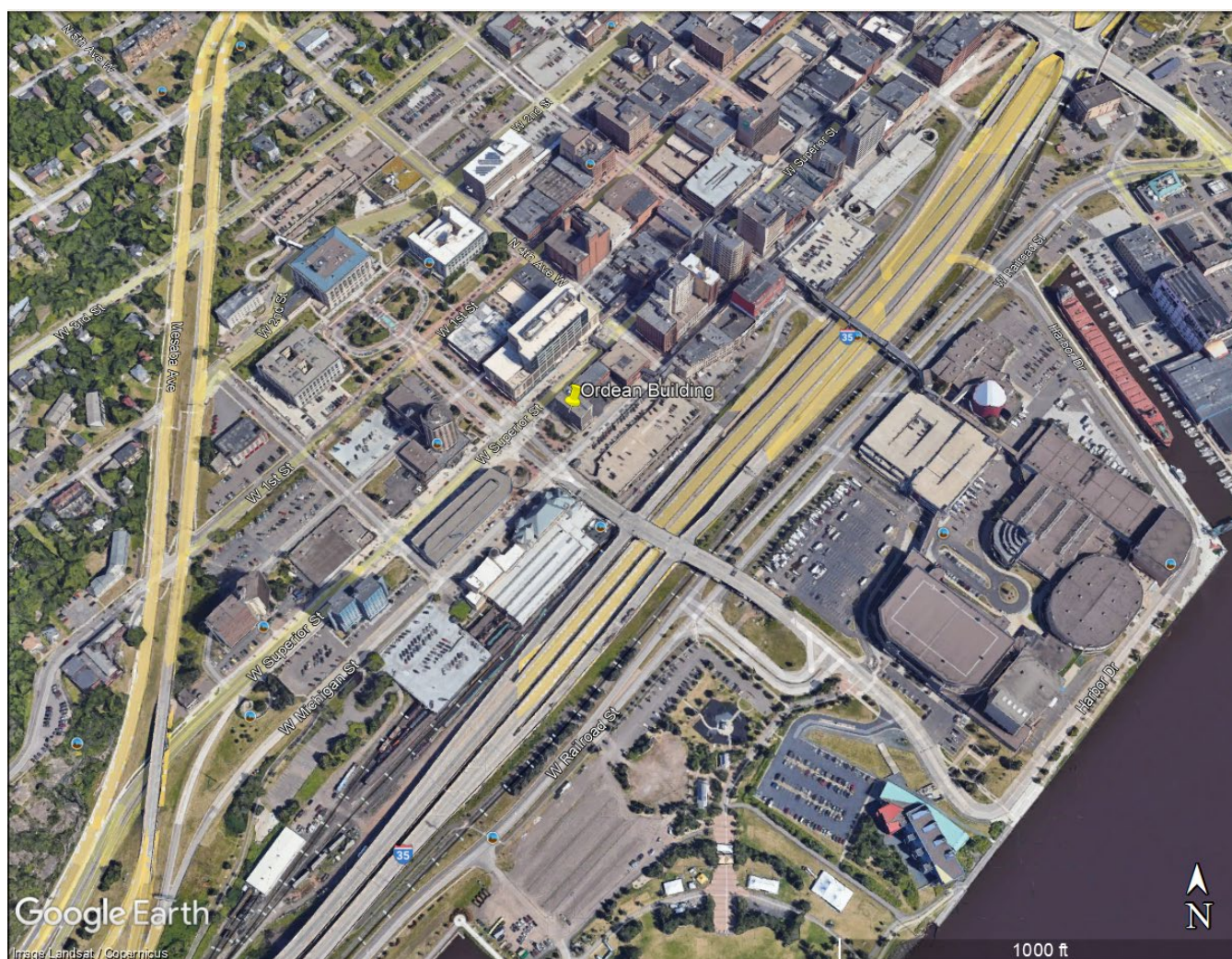
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Ordean Building

424 West Superior Street

Duluth, Minnesota 55805

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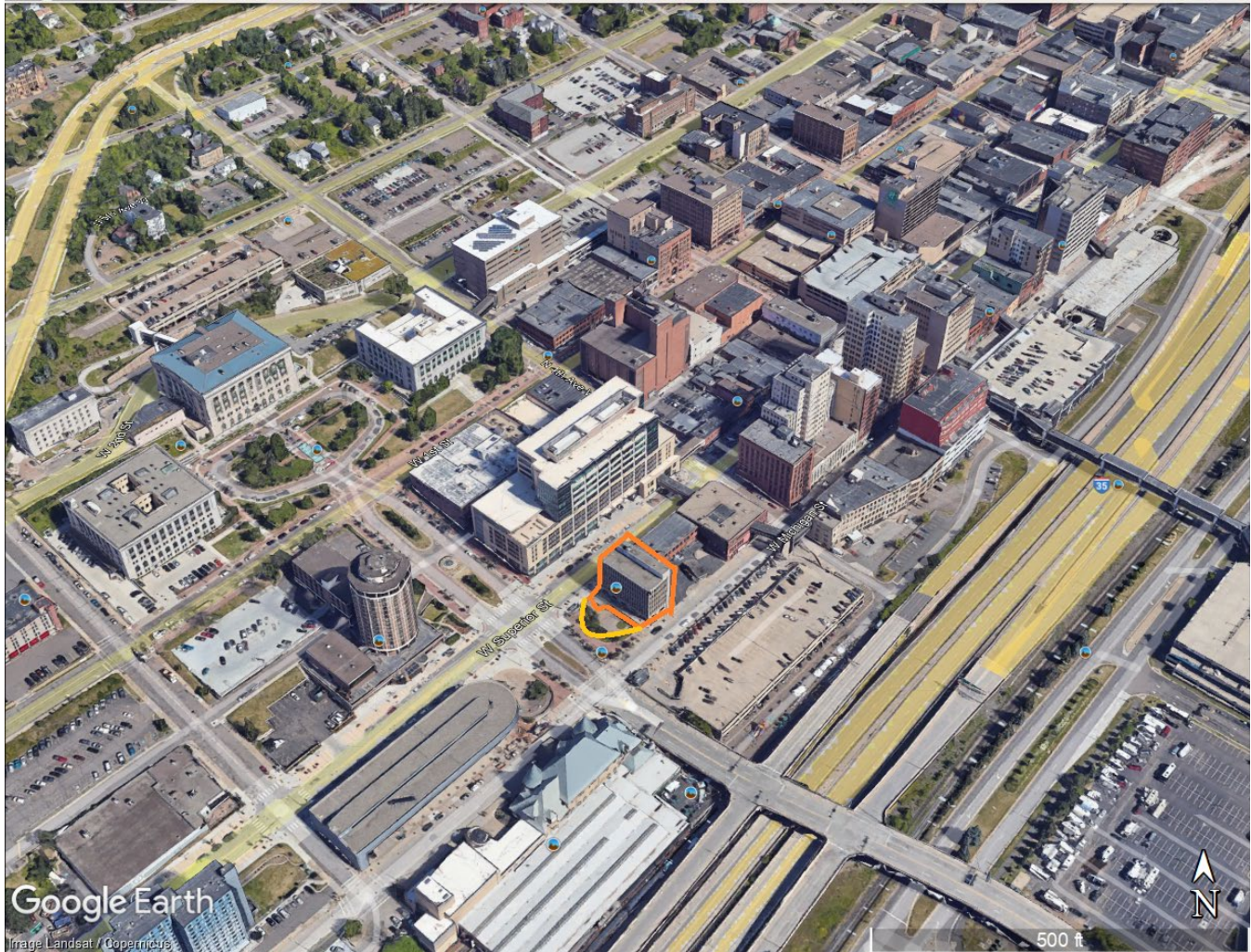
Property location map

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Property map showing the Ordean Building (orange outline) and plaza (yellow outline)

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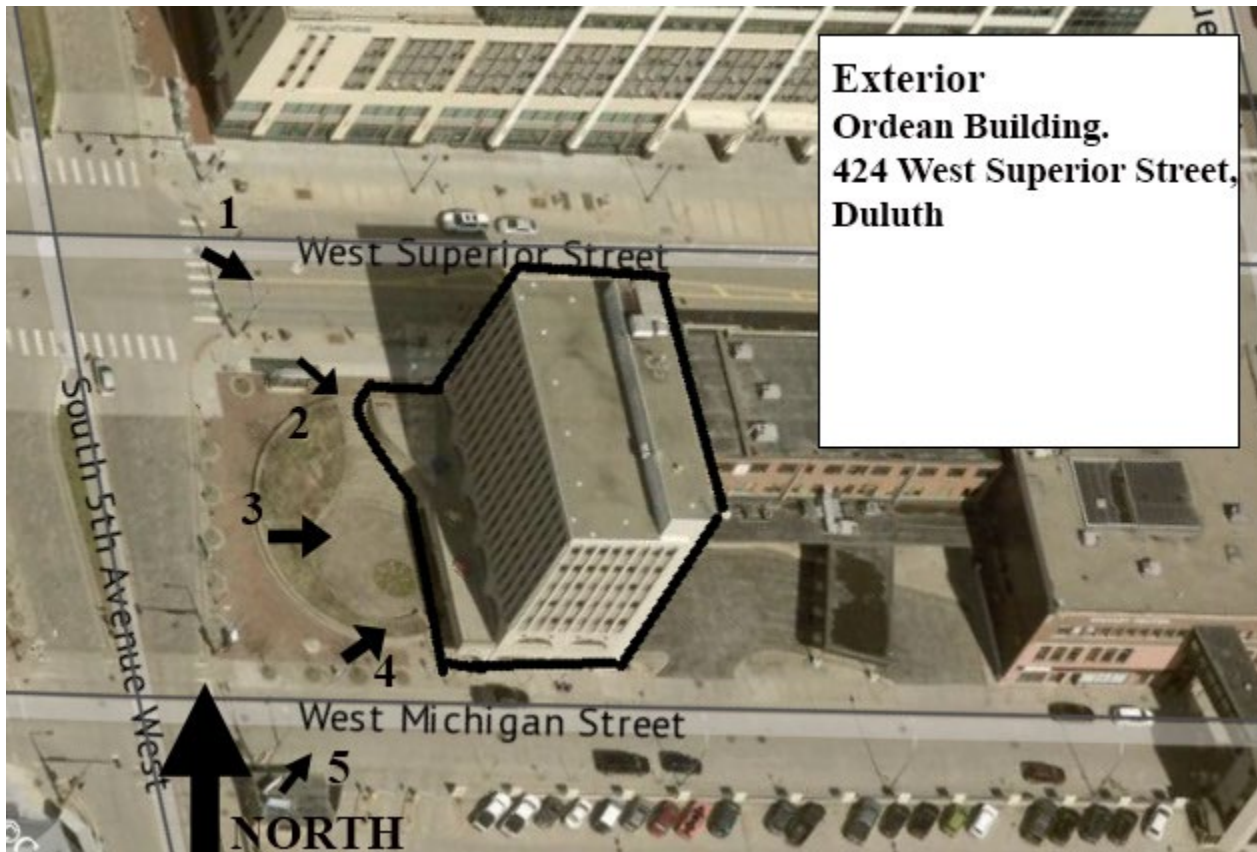
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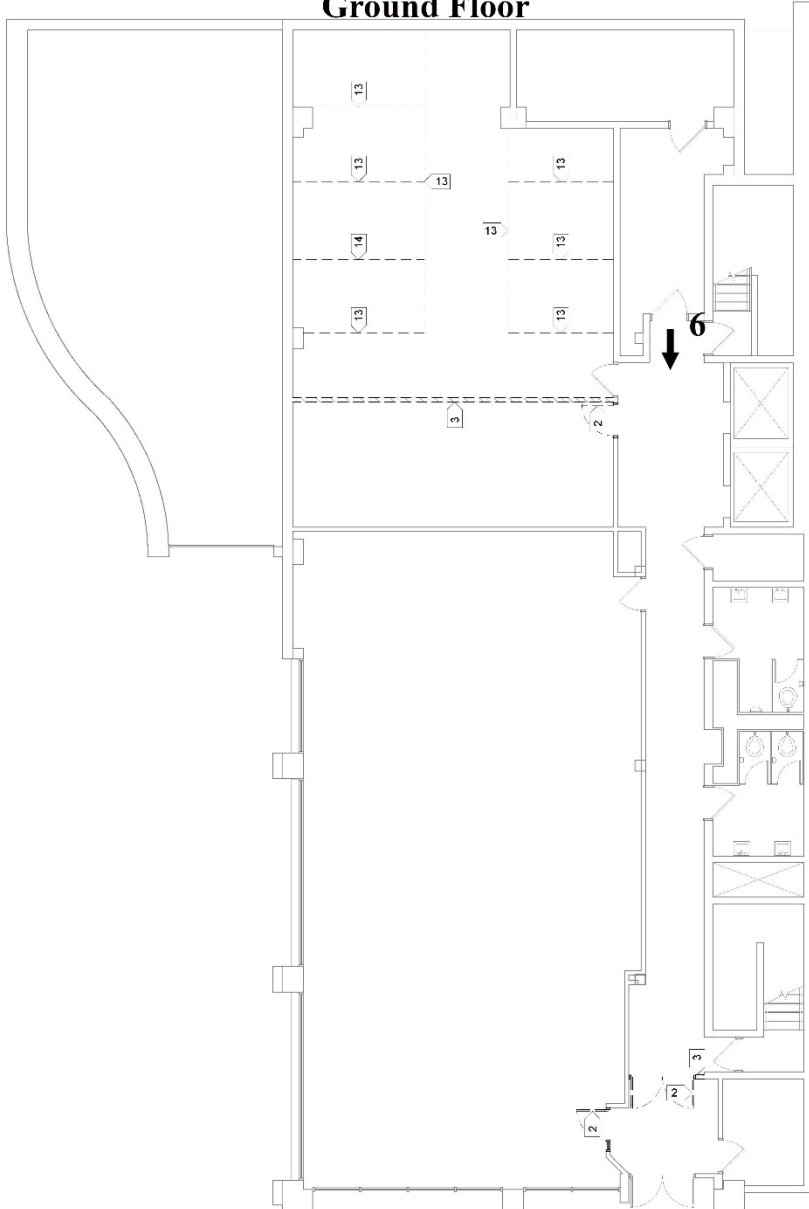
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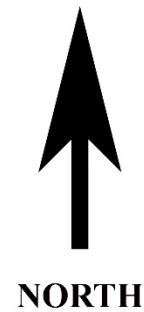
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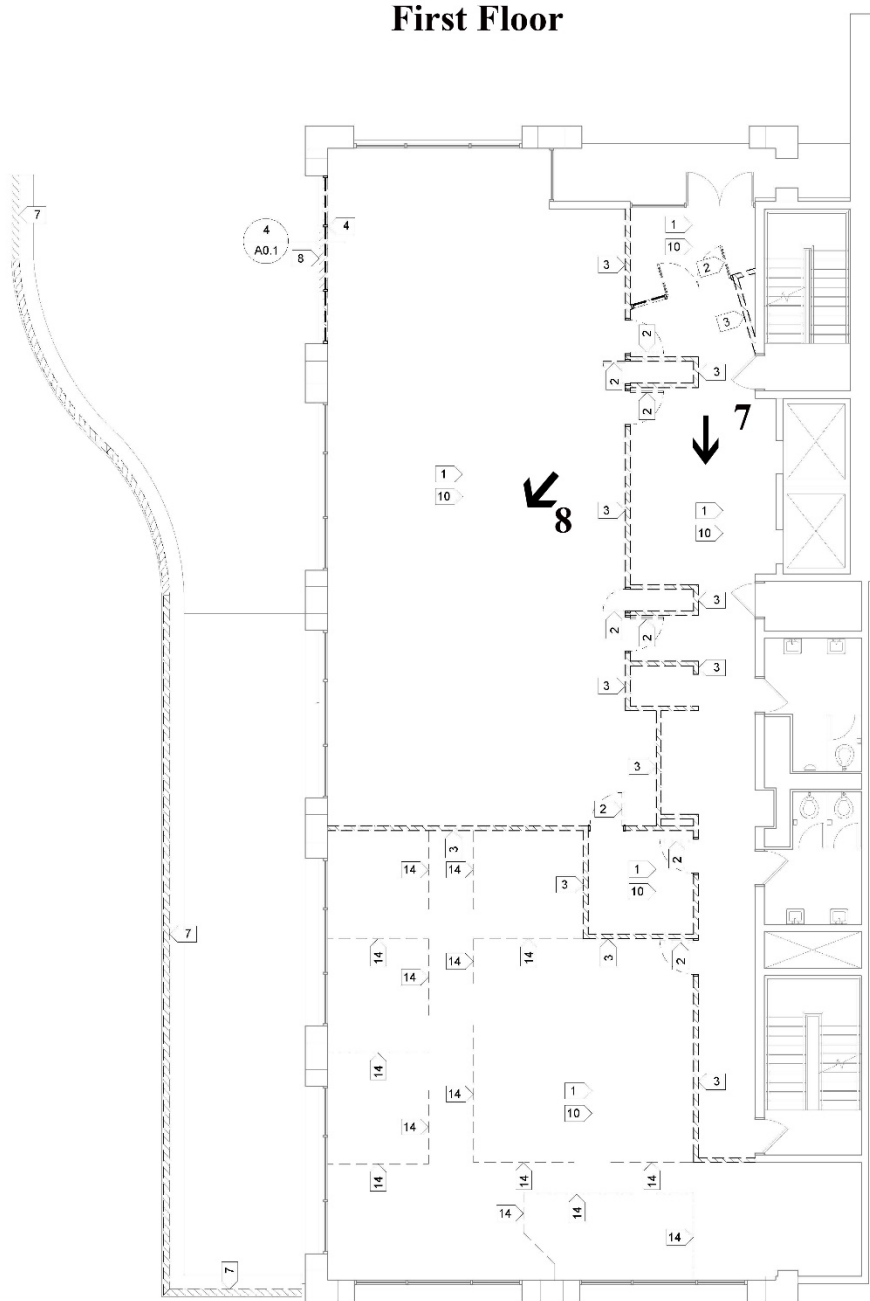


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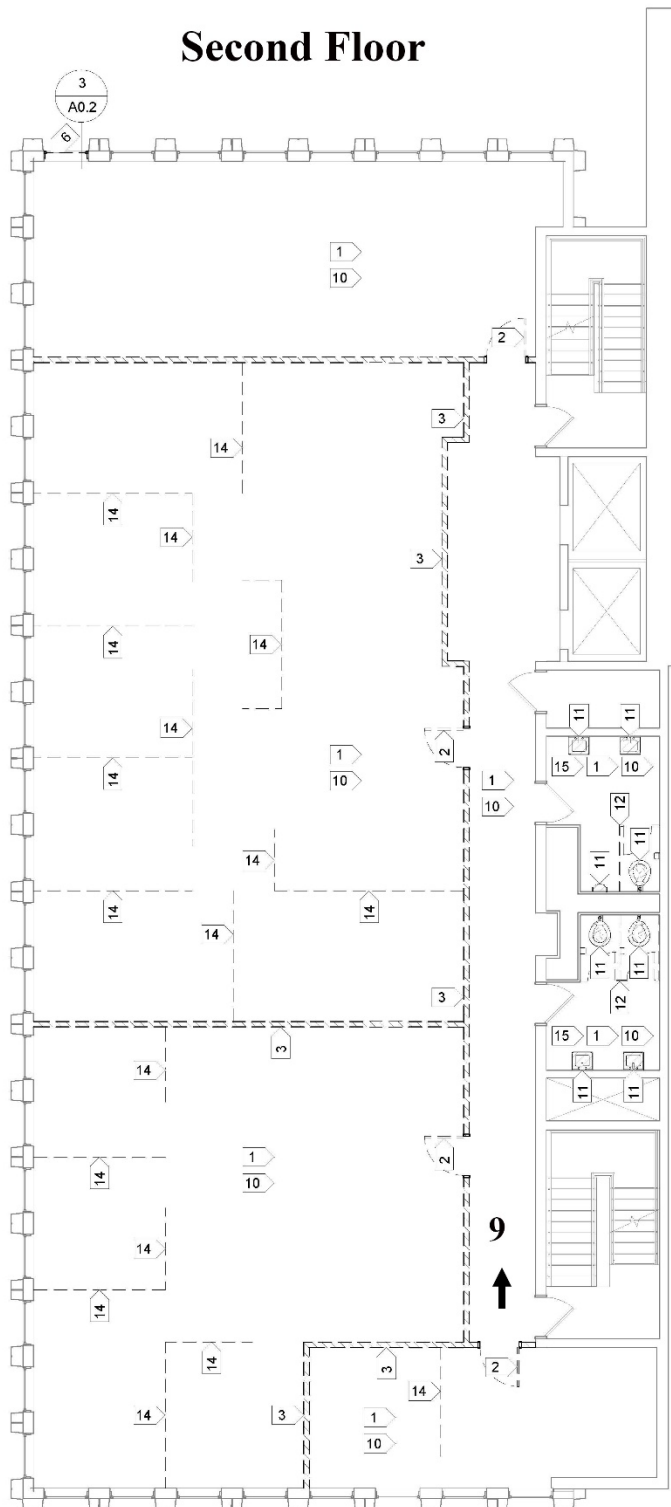
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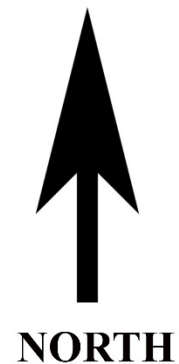
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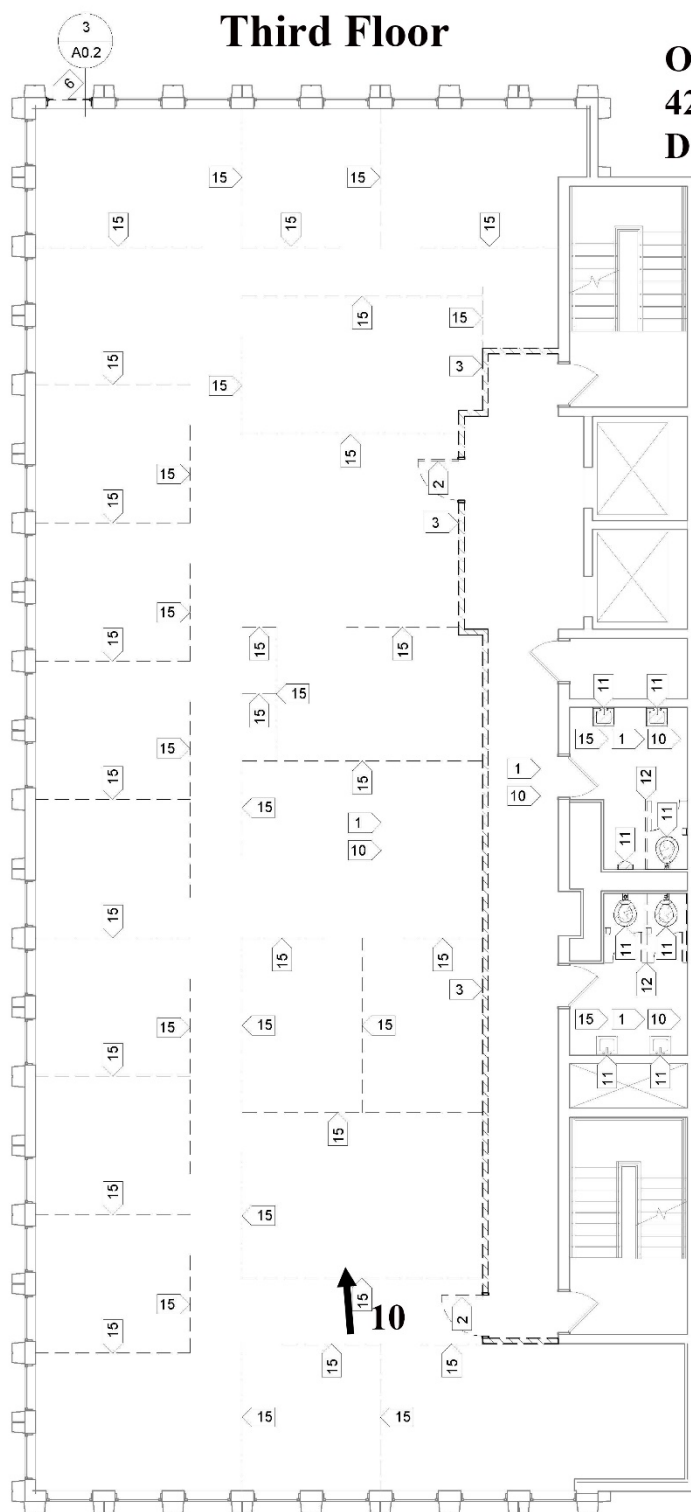
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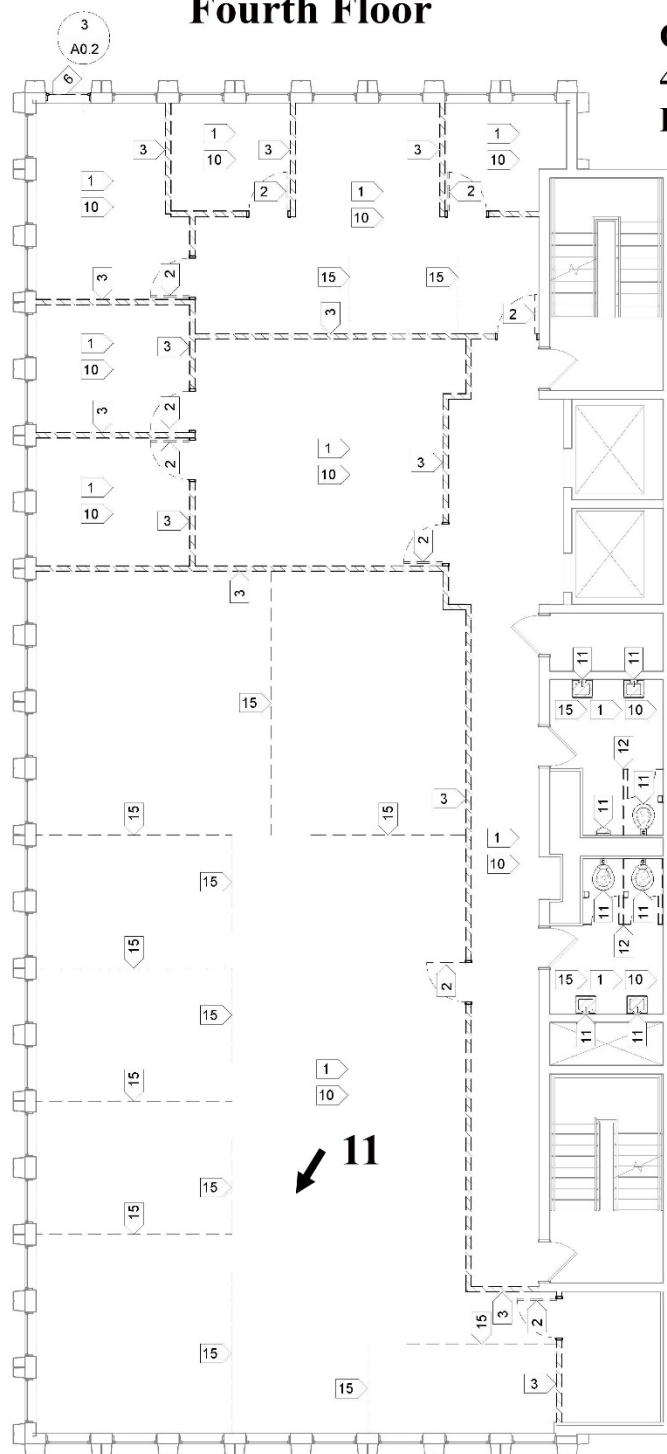


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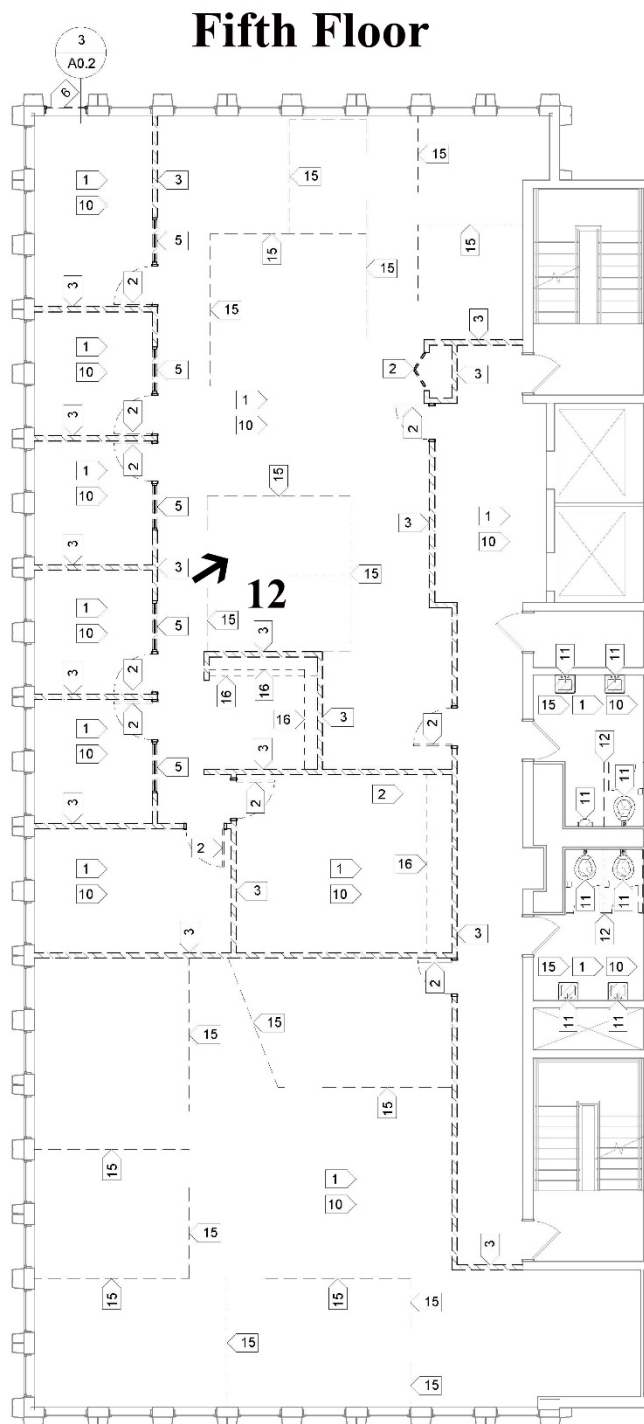


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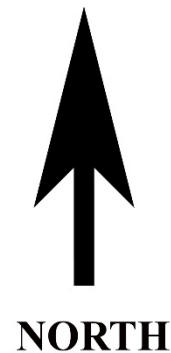
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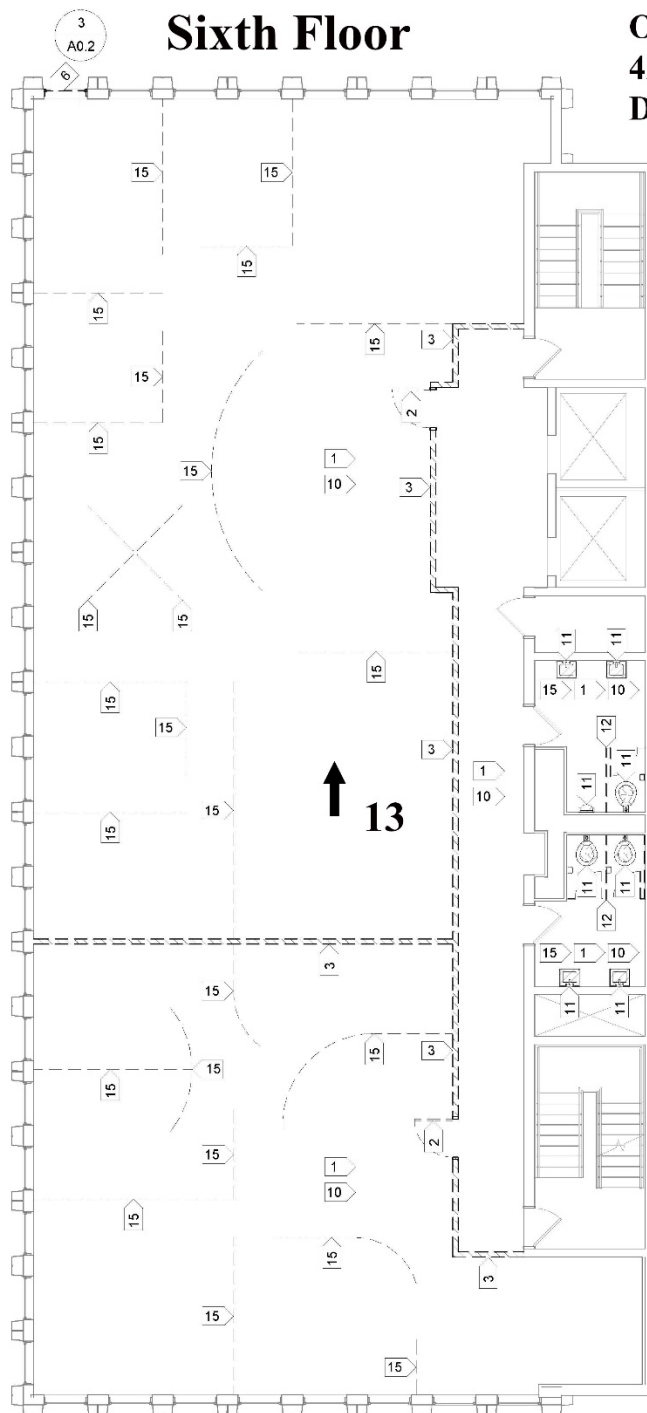


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

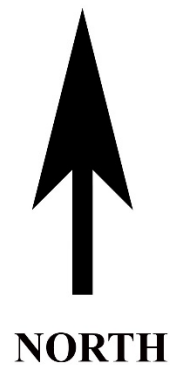
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Ordean Building
Name of Property
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**Ordean Building.
424 West Superior Street,
Duluth**



NORTH

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ordean Building

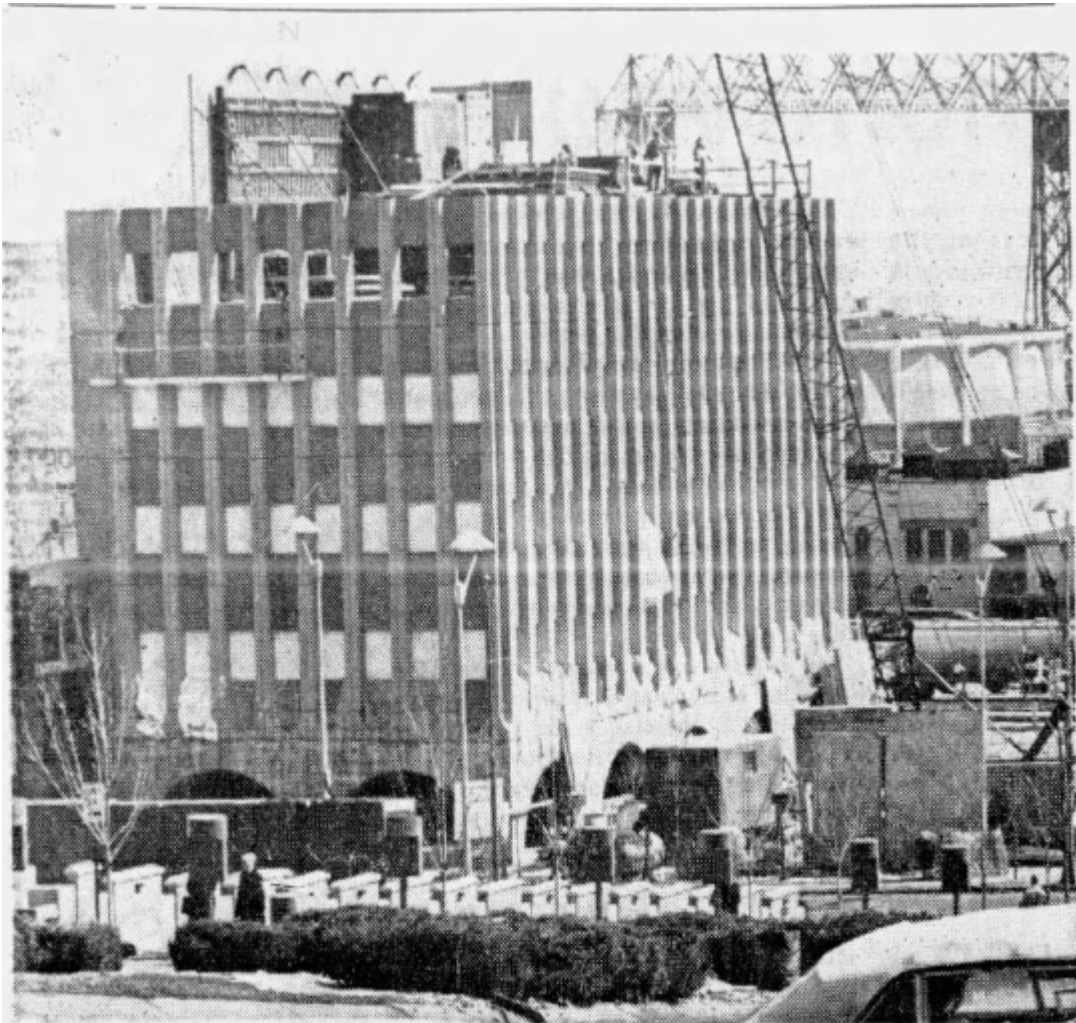
Name of Property

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County and State

NR Reference Number

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Ordean Building nearing completion (Duluth News Tribune, March 20, 1974)