



Rehabilitating a **Sacramento** landmark



On May 23, 1960, Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House. Babe Ruth still held the single-season home run record. The Soviets were winning the Space Race.

That very day in 1960, in one small step for mankind but a giant leap for a teenaged utility, the first customer passed through the doors of the new SMUD Headquarters on S Street.

"The striking new electric service center has beauty and features unequalled in other public buildings in the Sacramento region," reporter Tom Arden wrote on the front page of *The Sacramento Bee*.

Its visibility from Highway 50, accentuated by the striking "Water City" mural created by artist Wayne Thiebaud, made the SMUD building a Sacramento landmark. In 2010, the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of Modern International Design.



To bring the aging building up to modern standards without sacrificing its historical integrity, the SMUD Board approved in 2014 a renovation project that includes safety, security, environmental and structural upgrades. Following demolition and abatement work in 2017, construction began in early 2018 under a collaborative design-assist process with Roebbelen Contracting and the architectural firm of Dreyfuss & Blackford.

Assisting on the rehabilitation is Alan Dreyfuss, a preservationist architect and son of the late Albert Dreyfuss. Albert Dreyfuss and Leonard Blackford founded the Sacramento firm that designed the SMUD Headquarters in the late 1950s.

"It's one of the best modernist buildings, certainly in California and maybe in the nation," said Alan Dreyfuss, who admittedly didn't pay much attention as a young boy when his father and Leonard Blackford were working on the project. "As a preservationist architect, it's a thrill for me to see the original drawings. The

louvers and overhangs work so well and are such a beautiful part of the building. The original design was so thoughtful."

The original design incorporated the characteristic features of classic Miessian Modernist design, including steel frame construction and glass curtain walls. Vertical louvers on the south side of the building could be set level in the summer and tilted 45 degrees in the winter – an innovative means of temperature and glare control.

The remodeled Headquarters is scheduled to open in 2019. The renovation is a timely opportunity for SMUD to create an environment that fosters innovation and collaboration with an emphasis on flexibility, open work spaces and increased mobility with full ADA compliance.

As for the beloved "Water City" tile mosaic, which is currently covered by plywood to protect it from damage, don't worry. It's being cleaned and restored and will adorn the southern, western and eastern sides of the building for decades to come.

