

The Parliament House may be gone, but its swinging '60s spirit lives on just over Red Mountain. That's where you'll find Office Park, probably the greatest concentration of mid-century modern architecture in the Birmingham area.

You know mid-century modern architecture, with its sleek lines, cool facades, and prominent use of glass and metal. It can be beautiful (such as in the Parliament House's circular lobby with the floating staircase) or hideous, and while that modern look was a dominant architectural style nationwide in the 1950s and 60s, Birmingham doesn't seem to be teeming with examples from that era—except at Office Park.

When I turn off Highway 280 into the east side of Office Park, it feels like I've driven into another time, when architects thought outside the great glass box to make each office building unique and interesting. I particularly like the building just past the entrance, up on the hill, with a front door surrounded by windows in a harlequin pattern. Now seriously, have you seen a façade like that anywhere else? Further down the street, at 2 Office Park Circle, I'm fond of the ornamental brickwork that stretches three stories high. And just around the bend, there's a building lined with bright blue panels and windows that remind me of a blocky Mondrian painting. But Office Park's piece de resistance has to be its cascade of fountains, which, according to an [old postcard](#), were a tourist attraction in their early days. With that kind of setting, I expect Frank Sinatra or Doris Day to pop out of one of the buildings, stride confidently to the water's edge, and burst into song.

By the way, have you ever wondered how the place got the bland, matter-of-fact name of "Office Park"? It's because this is supposedly the first office park ever—the forefather of them all. According to information provided by the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, the concept was radical in its day; its founders believed that office workers deserved parking areas just like laborers in the city's industrial plants.

*Want to go and see **Office Park** is located off Highway 280 in Mountain Brook.*