

CITY HALL COURTYARD

February 2017

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LESSONS FROM THE PAST

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The final decision to relocate City Hall from Independence Hall to Centre Square was made in 1871, following several competitions and the consideration of multiple options between 1860 and 1871 for the location and configuration of both City Hall and a new Court House. The first competition was won by John McArthur in 1861, who placed a Court House in the northwest corner of the Centre Square site, and a separate City Hall building in the northeast corner of the site. But the decision was postponed due to scandals and the Civil War. After the Civil War ended, a second competition was announced in 1869, this time specifying one building at Independence Square. McArthur also won this competition in 1870, but due to disagreements about the site, a decision was again postponed. Then, instead of a third competition, a Commission met to appoint McArthur the Architect. In late 1870, McArthur presented a design for a new building at Washington Square, but a public referendum four days later decided by a vote of 51,623 to 32,825 that Centre Square should be the site for the City Hall and the Court House.

The first concept for Centre Square was originally designed as two buildings, with the front door and municipal government to the north and the courts located in a separate structure to the south. But eventually, the functions of the buildings were combined into one large City Hall and Court House with a central courtyard occupying the majority of the Centre Square site. The first stone was laid in 1872, and the entire construction process took nearly 30 years. Grand ceremonial entrances were located at the north, east and south portals, giving visitors a unique arrival experience, while the west portal served a less ornate, more functional purpose, as part of the east-west thoroughfare between the City's main train stations, and also as prisoner delivery to the "back doors" of the Court building on the south side of the Courtyard. There were only two points of entry from the Courtyard into City Hall, at the base of the two turrets on the southern side of the Courtyard, flanking the South portal. Once inside, judges ascended up to the courts, while prisoners would descend into the holding rooms.

Because City Hall was surrounded on all sides by completed buildings, during its 30 years of construction, the Courtyard was needed for construction staging, including the staging of the William Penn Statue. Once the building opened, the Courtyard served primarily a functional, rather than a ceremonial purpose: it was the delivery way for prisoners and for coal used to heat the building. It was also a staging area for subway construction. It functioned primarily as a crossroads, rather than a place. In stark contrast to the exterior of City Hall, there were no sculptures on the inner walls of the Courtyard. While in its early years, the Courtyard was used for several exhibits, there really was never a "golden age" of the Courtyard. It was mostly a utilitarian, functional space.



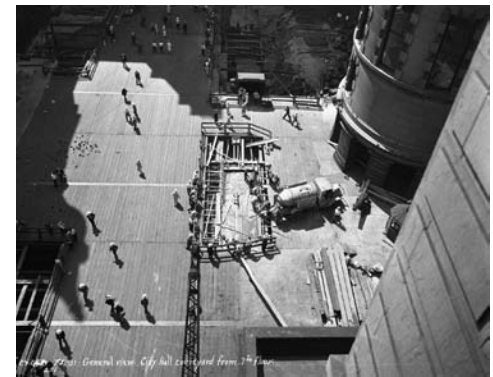
1878



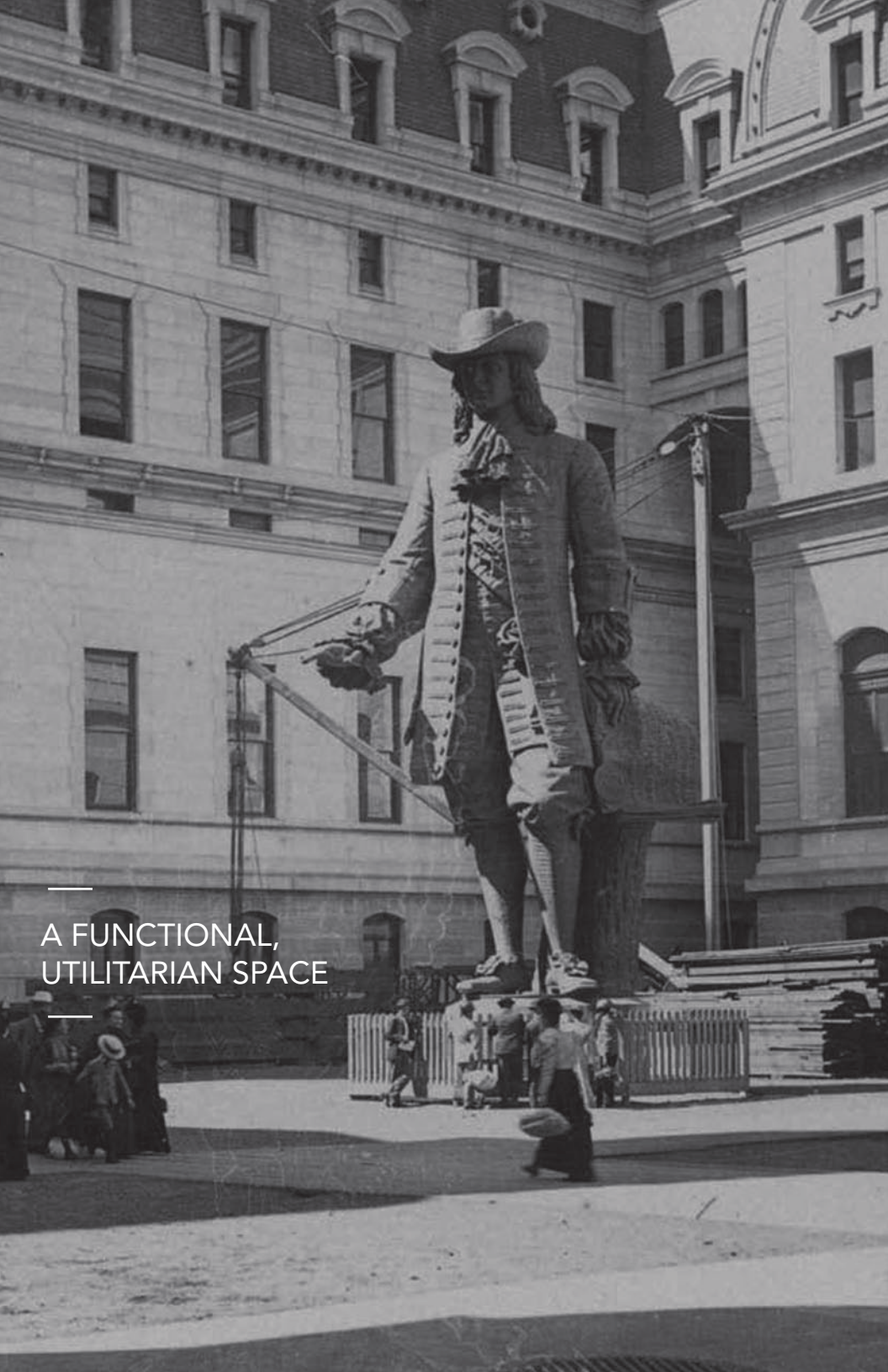
1901



1914



1931



A FUNCTIONAL,
UTILITARIAN SPACE

TIMELINE

CITY HALL

30 Years of Construction

- 1860** First competition for a City Hall + Court House at Centre Square site
- 1861** John McArthur wins, but scandal and Civil War postpone competition
- 1869** Second competition announced for 1 building at Independence Square
- 1870** McArthur wins, but with a divided City, competition was voided
- 1871** Commissioners name McArthur as the Architect at Centre Square site
- 1872** First foundation stone is laid
- 1875** Stone facade is underway with 500 masons at work
- 1877** First story is completed
- 1881 +** Fourth story is completed
- 1886** Alexander Calder finishes plaster cast for William Penn sculpture
- 1891** Tower is completed at 337 feet tall: tallest masonry building in the world
- 1894** William Penn sculpture is installed on top of the tower
- 1901** Construction completed: Submission of final report to commissioners
- 1903-1908** Market Street Subway under construction
- 1915-1920** Broad Street Subway under construction
- 1924-1928** Cret's proposed vision to demolish City Hall [except for the tower]
- 1929-1934** Market Street Subway lines relocated in tunnel below City Hall
- 1957-1962** Mayor Dilworth refuses to sign a City Hall Demolition Contract [\$50M]
- 2001** Post 9/11, City Hall's entrances were secured with security checkpoints
- 1908-PRES.** Numerous proposals and temporary exhibits/events in Courtyard *

⁺ After over 10 years of competitions for multiple buildings [4 vs. 2 vs. 1] on three different sites [Centre Square vs. Independence Square vs. Washington Square], the construction of Philadelphia's City Hall lasted 30 years.

^{*} Including: Proposal to transform "Long Neglected Courtyard into a Scene of Beauty" under Mayor Reyburn [1908], Municipal Water Conservation Exhibit [1912], Various Temporary Exhibits [1914-1918], Pavilions to enlist in the Army and Marines [1919], Hero and Police Memorials [1921-1957], Original Compass Installed [1935], Landscape Improvements [1950s], Holiday Celebrations [1959-Present], Flags hung for Bicentennial [1976], Theatrical Performances [1970s], Edmund Bacon Compass + Mirrored Ball Installation [1994], etc...

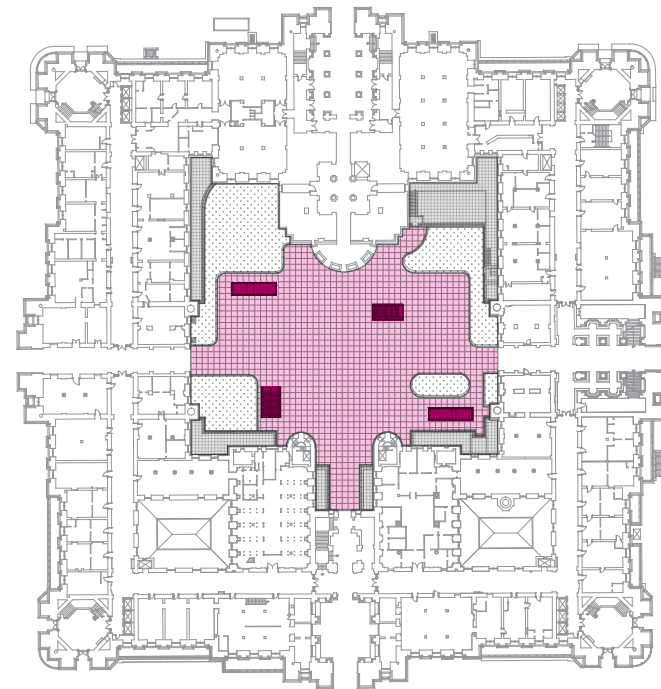
THE COURTYARD TODAY





CURRENT USES

Though the Courtyard is 38,885 square feet in size, only about 22,065 square feet of that is usable space. There are four SEPTA access points within the Courtyard, but only three are active, bringing pedestrians from the Courtyard to the concourse level of the City Hall SEPTA station. Fenced areas and grates along the edges of City Hall and raised planting beds further reduce usable space. The Courtyard's main function is as a crossroads and a pathway, allowing pedestrians to circulate along the North-South and East-West axis of the City, through the portals of City Hall and the Courtyard. The Courtyard also serves as a passive sitting and resting place, and a quiet destination for lunch in the Fall, Spring and Summer. Given the dramatic backdrop of City Hall surrounding the Courtyard on all sides, it is also a destination for photography (especially wedding photos). Less frequently, the Courtyard is used for special events. It has served as the location of the Holiday tree lighting, and Holiday programming in the Winter. Throughout the year it is used by organizations, including the Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts, as a special events space. But the space could be dramatically more successful if major investments were made to remove existing barriers, obstacles and edge conditions that limit the flexibility and adaptability of the space.



2016

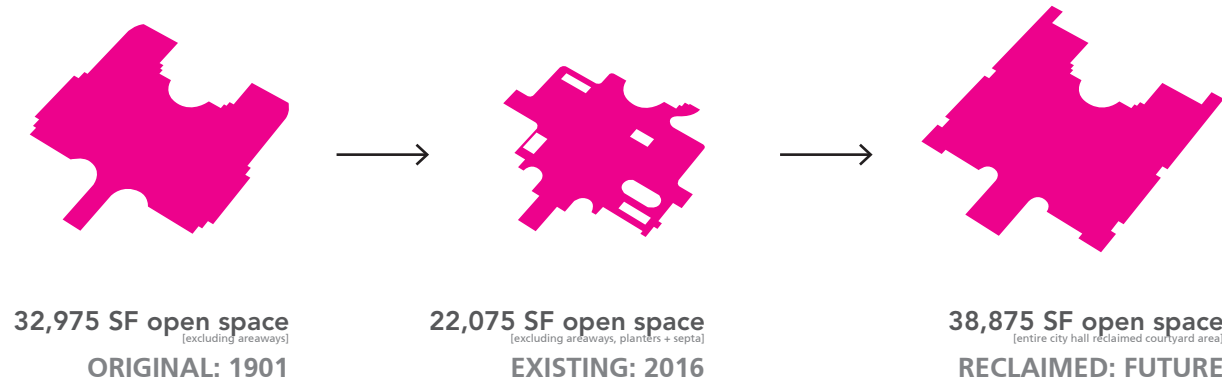


COURTYARD	
TOTAL = 38,885 SF	
	6,395 SF AREAWAYS
	9,310 SF RAISED PLANTERS
	1,115 SF SEPTA / TRANSIT
OBSTRUCTED SPACES TOTAL = 16,820 SF	
	22,065 SF EXISTING OPEN SPACE



IMPROVEMENT PLAN

RECLAIMING SPACE



STEP 1: REMOVE RAISED PLANTERS

STEP 2: INSTALL GRATES OVER AREAWAYS

STEP 3: CONSOLIDATE TRANSIT ACCESS POINTS

RESULT: OPEN + FLEXIBLE SPACE

The goal of the improvement plan for Philadelphia's City Hall Courtyard is to reclaim usable space that will support the activation of the Courtyard through programs and events, and also reflect the history of the site as the center of William Penn's plan for the City. When we compare the original, simple, and utilitarian layout of the Courtyard with its existing, present-day condition, the Courtyard has lost its sense of uniformity, and has a very limited potential for activation. By strategically reclaiming spaces within the Courtyard, not only can we regain a surface for programs and events, but we can also create a platform for education and civic and cultural activities, while maintaining the Courtyard's important function as a crossroads.



STEP 1



STEP 2



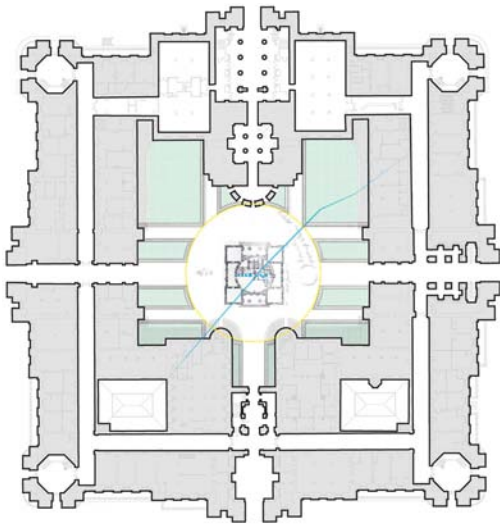
STEP 3



CONCEPT DESIGN

REVEALING LAYERS OF HISTORY

A new design of the Courtyard can draw its inspiration from the site's prior history. William Penn's original plan for Philadelphia placed Centre Square at the dividing line between the watersheds for the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers. The Courtyard was the location of the City's first Waterworks, surrounded by a circular path and public gardens. The new design traces in the pavement all those natural and historical elements. The space is kept open to the sky, but is dramatically widened to allow views of adjacent buildings when pedestrians stand at the edges of the space along the inner walls of City Hall. Walkways emphasize the crossroads function of the space, at the center of William Penn's plan.



City Hall **Courtyard**





CONCEPT DESIGN

RECLAIMING SPACE FOR FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING

The space is designed to be mostly passive, as a place for quiet enjoyment and in recognition of the municipal and court functions inside. But the design is organized to facilitate periodic programming of larger civic, cultural, theatrical, and artistic events and installations. The Courtyard should complement, but not compete with, Dilworth Park and the new Love Park. Dilworth Park is very active and outward facing, while the Courtyard will be more private and passive. In its current form, the Courtyard is too monochromatic and lacks a vibrancy, but there must be a balance between the aim of creating a contemplative place, with a design that creates more vibrancy, even when the space is un-programmed.

In order to make the Courtyard a truly unique destination, the space must be cleaned, redesigned and simplified. The reclamation of the space will increase its programmable area through removing raised planters, consolidating transit entrances and exits, and covering the open edges with walkable grates to expand the usable area. Moreover, the simplicity of the new design will allow one to focus on the grandeur of City Hall as a backdrop.

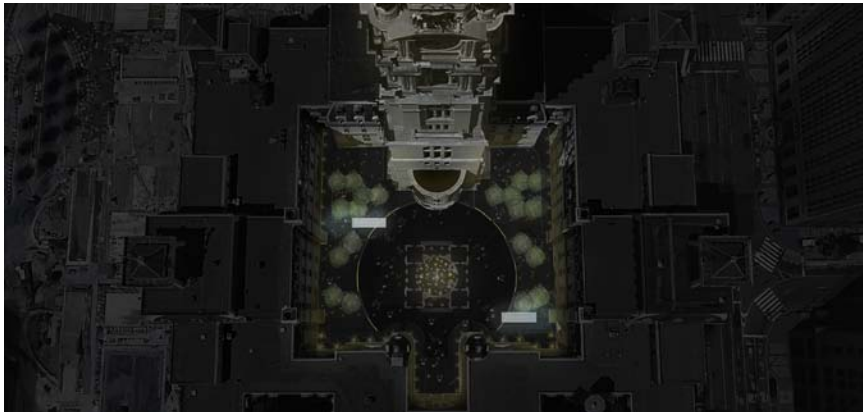
The Courtyard will serve as a surface, and a canvas, upon which a variety of programs and events can occur. From the periodic presence of food for sale (farmers markets, food trucks, catered events) to more active celebrations, the Courtyard can be a true meeting place in the very center of the City, activated and evolving from day to night.

By enhancing the visibility and connectivity between the Courtyard and City Hall, City Hall can plan for programmed public amenities and spaces along the first floor to support more public activity in the ground floor of the building, and in turn enhance accessibility to the City Hall Visitors Center. Along with the ground floor programs, as the thresholds to the Courtyard, the four portals can also be activated and programmed (*for example: a Wedding Chapel within the ground floor, accessible from the south portal, with direct connectivity to the Courtyard and the Avenue of the Arts for wedding photos, etc.*).

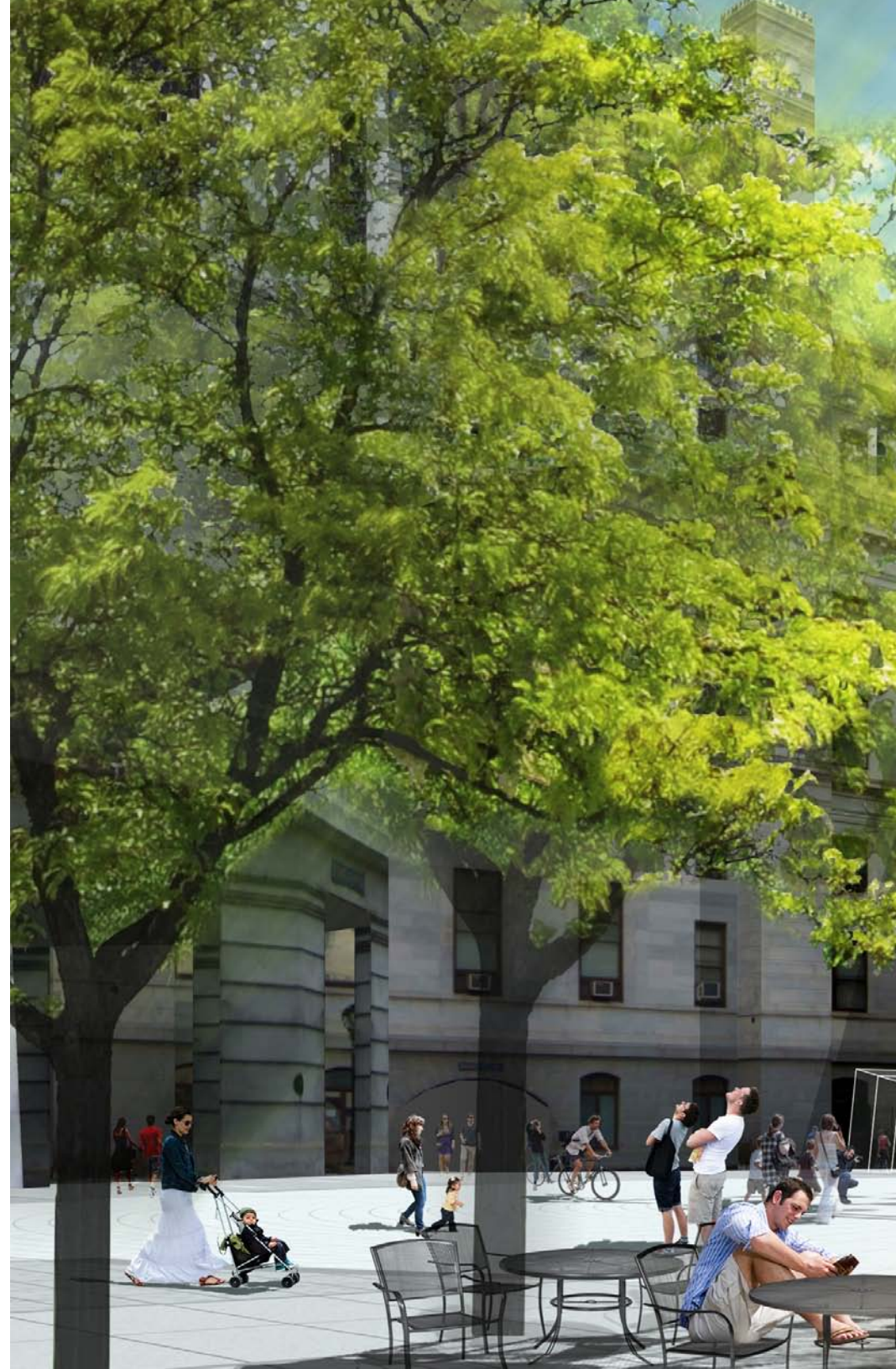




CONCEPT DESIGN



City Hall **Courtyard**



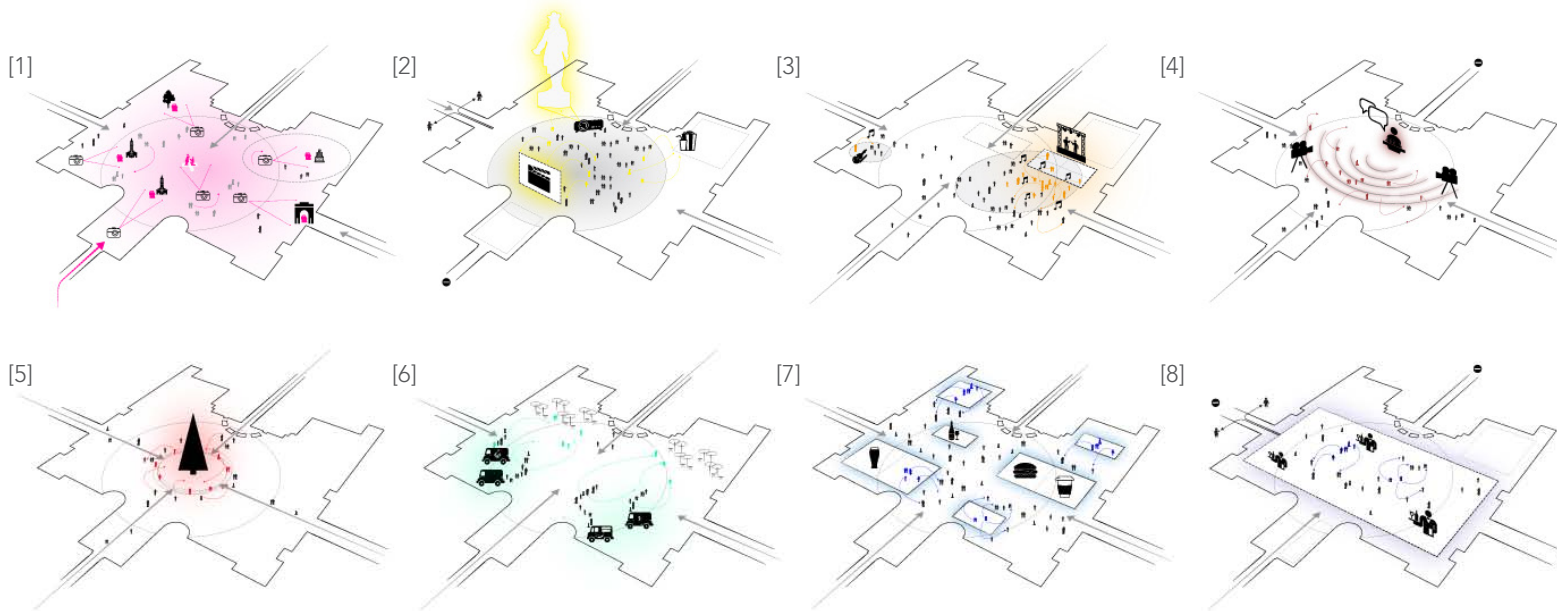


CONCEPT DESIGN

PROGRAMMING THE COURTYARD

With a flexible and open floor plan, the Courtyard has a variety of programming opportunities to activate the space and welcome visitors throughout the year, including:

[1] *Wedding and Photo Opportunities:* a great opportunity for photography capturing City Hall tower, trees, portals, etc, the Courtyard could be the premiere spot for photography at City Hall, especially with the potential for a Wedding Chapel in the first floor of City Hall; [2] *Nighttime Activities:* Movie nights could be supported in the space, the central circle accommodates up to 1,000 people, or interactive displays could tell the history (ex: William Penn statue projected and outlined to scale); [3] *Performances and Events:* Northeast corner is designated for concerts, with “backstage” area behind the stage (shown as 24’x48’ - flexible in size) with standing room for up to 500 people (still maintaining circulation around), but the Courtyard could also support smaller performances; [4] *City Hall Press Conferences:* the Courtyard is the prime location for press events, using the tower as a backdrop, by closing the north portal for security, other portals and circulation could remain open and active; [5] *Seasonal Celebrations:* the revised design will continue to support the existing programs offered in the Courtyard, including the tree-lighting, but the flexibility of the new design will allow for different configurations of events in different seasons, times and locations; [6] *Lunchtime Programming:* food trucks could be brought in through the West Portal, with flexible seating located under the trees to the north, and passive/active lunch programs, including a potential food truck calendar for the summer, or 12’x12’ tent parcels for food stands; [7] *Pop-up Events:* With 10,000 square feet of parcels shown (700 people seated), the Courtyard can be divided into 40’x40’ and 20’x40’ parcels with circulation space to accommodate 1,000+ people for multiple pop-up restaurants/bars/seasonal events; [8] *Private Events:* Up to 24,000 square feet of open air space (1,800 people banquet), or 18,000 square feet of tented space (1,250 people banquet), a private event could choose one portal as the main entrance, and secure the others, and utilize the facilities in the first floor of City Hall.





CONCLUSIONS

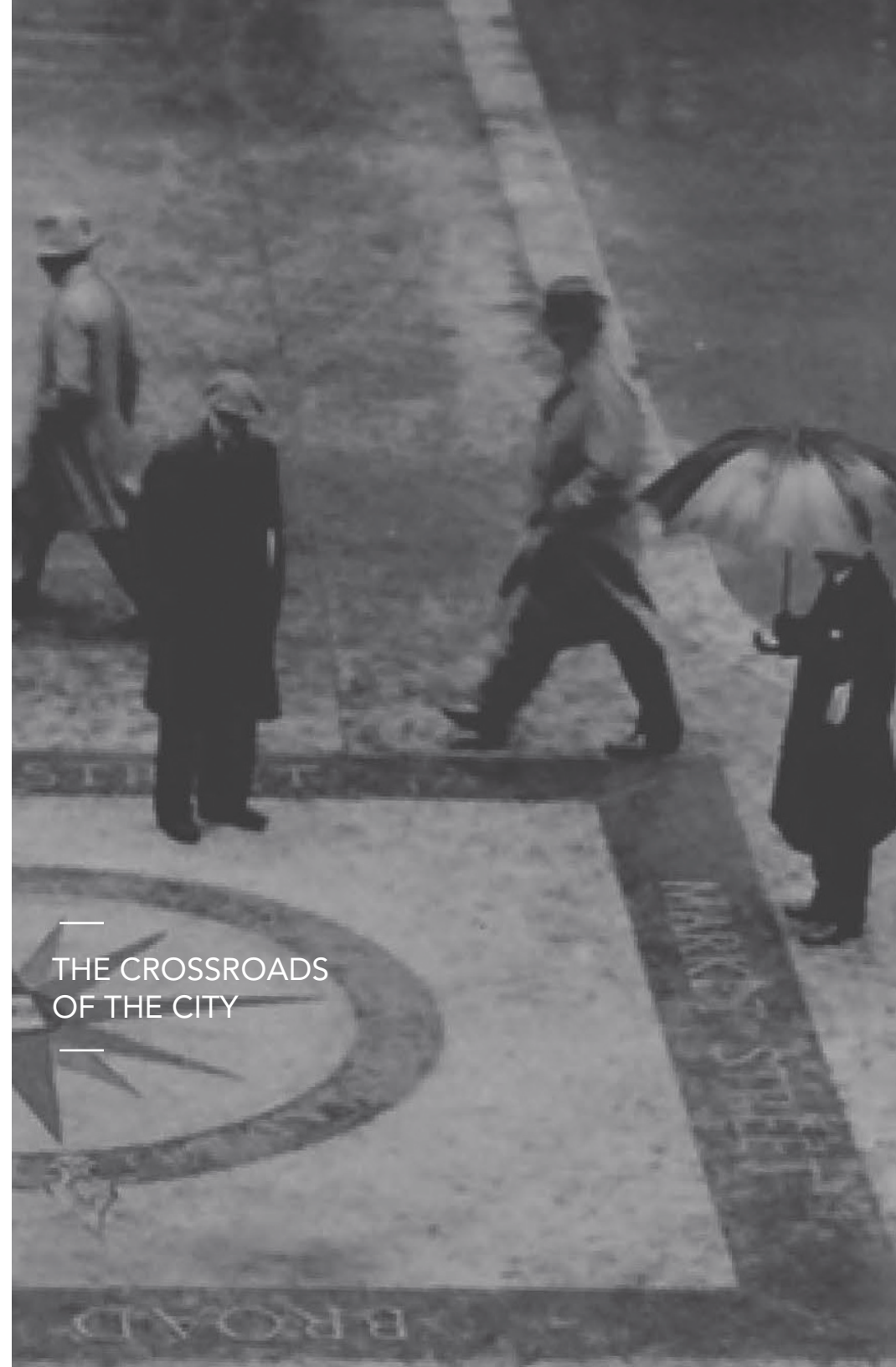
CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

We envision the design of the Courtyard as a surface that is open to the sky, revealing the layered history of the place, and emphasizing its central position and function as a crossroads in the life of the city for more than 300 years.

The Courtyard can tell the unique story of its history by etching layers of historic content into the design as educational, public art. It can take advantage of its increased usable area to allow for more flexible programs. The portal corridors should be actiated with more ground floor public uses in the building, to turn it into a more vibrant public space, even when no events are programmed.

To achieve these goals, we must first reclaim the space within the Courtyard to increase the usable areas by removing obstacles, consolidating the transit entrances, reclaiming the edges and removing the raised planters. Then, we can strategically add historical etchings on a new courtyard surface, defining the original park areas, the Centre Square Waterworks, and other details of the history of the space. The Courtyard should tell its own history, while also creating a stage for present and future events.

Most importantly, the Courtyard should integrate education and public art within the design to create a space for both quiet enjoyment and for civic and cultural events that celebrate the City and its diverse population.



THE CROSSROADS
OF THE CITY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

RECLAIMING SPACE FOR FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING

This report was funded by the William Penn Foundation & Poor Richard's Charitable Trust.

Research, analysis, conceptual design, and graphics were conducted and produced by WRT for the Center City District.

Throughout the process, the Center City District and WRT performed background interviews that provided extensive knowledge of City Hall, the Courtyard, and its history, and engaged in conversations with an Advisory Group.

BACKGROUND INTERVIEWS:

Greta Greenberger

Bridget Greenwald

Jon Farnham

Nan Gutterman

Jeff Knueppel

Bob Lund

Joe Palantino

Sherman Aronson

ADVISORY GROUP:

Paul Biedeman

David Brownlee

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Julian Rackow

David Seltzer

Harris Steinberg

Page Talbott

ABOUT WRT:

WRT is a team of planners, urban designers, architects, and landscape architects. We value the impact of our collective approach to create simple solutions for complex problems across scales. We serve our communities by designing places that enhance the natural and social environment.

ABOUT CENTER CITY DISTRICT:

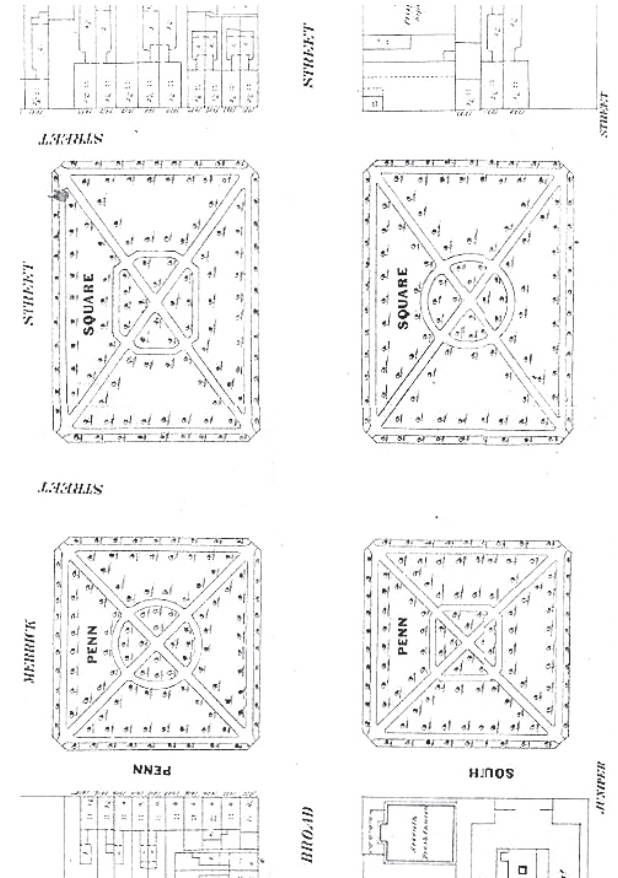
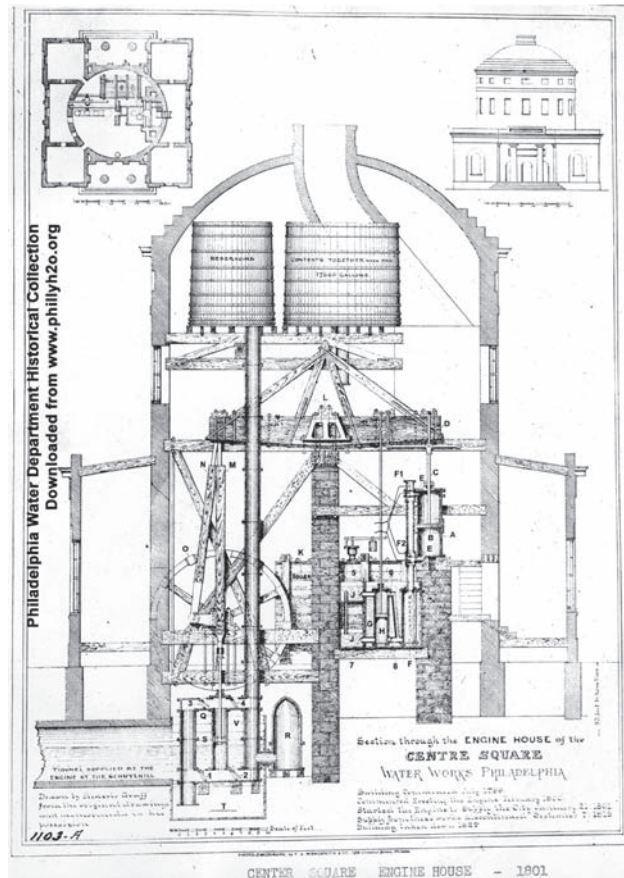
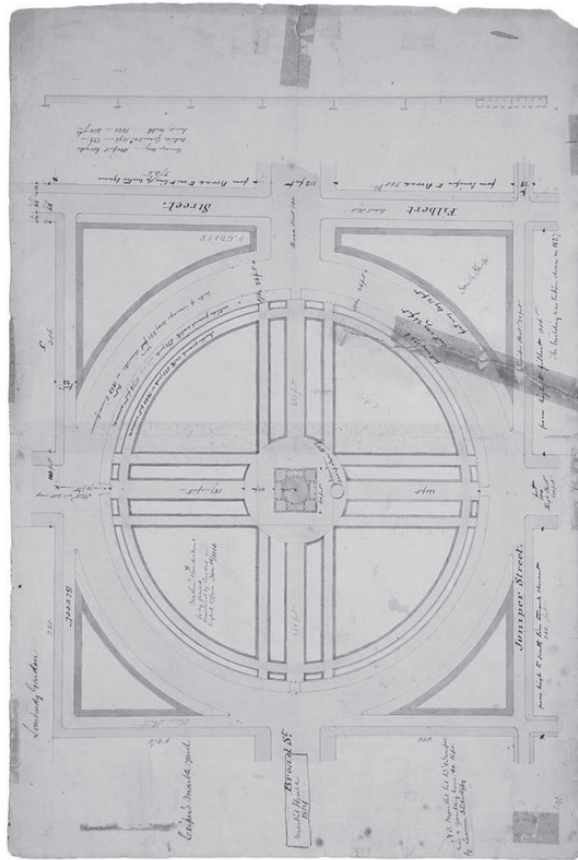
CCD is a business improvement district started in 1991. The CCD's mission is to keep Philadelphia's downtown, called Center City, clean, safe, beautiful and fun. CCD provides security, cleaning and promotional services that supplement, but do not replace, basic services provided by the City of Philadelphia and the fundamental responsibilities of property owners.

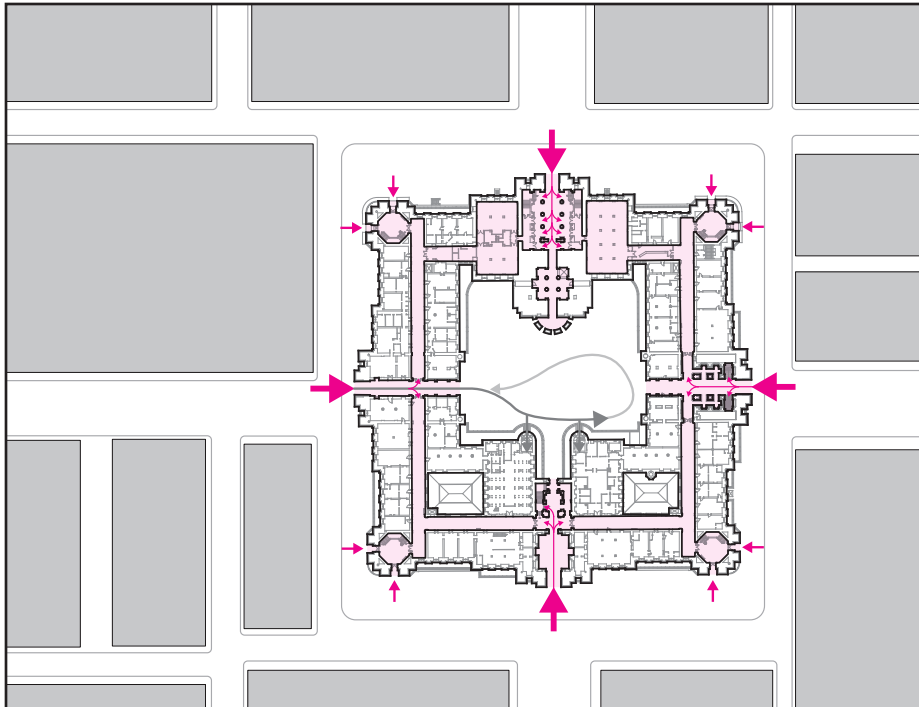
APPENDIX

HISTORIC MAPS OF CENTRE SQUARE

Frederick Graff Plan of Centre Square, 1800 | Philadelphia Water Works Centre Square Engine House, 1801 | Hexamer & Locher Plan of Penn Square, 1858

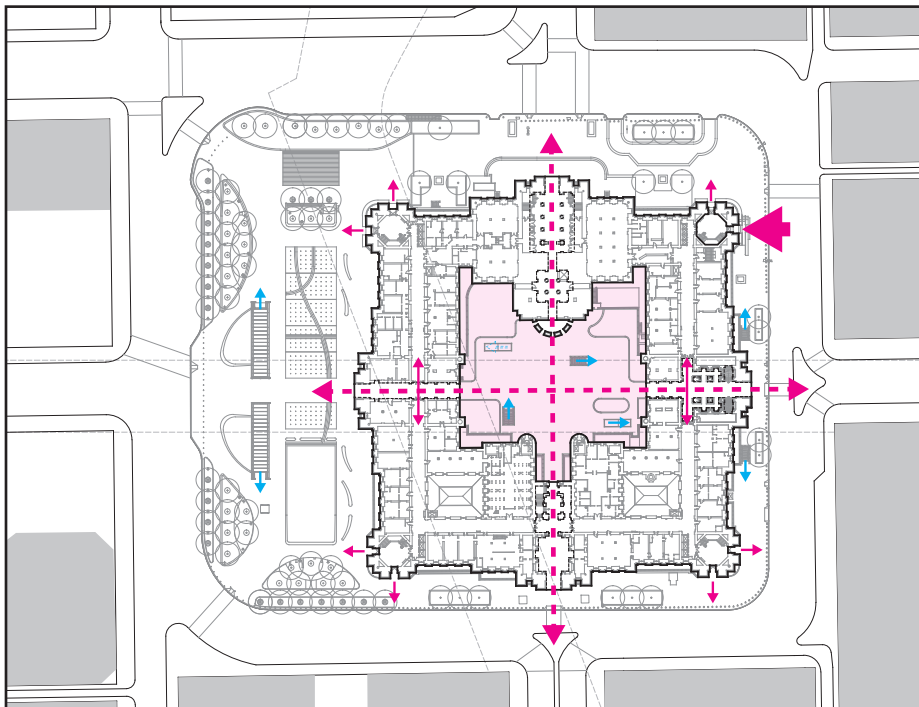
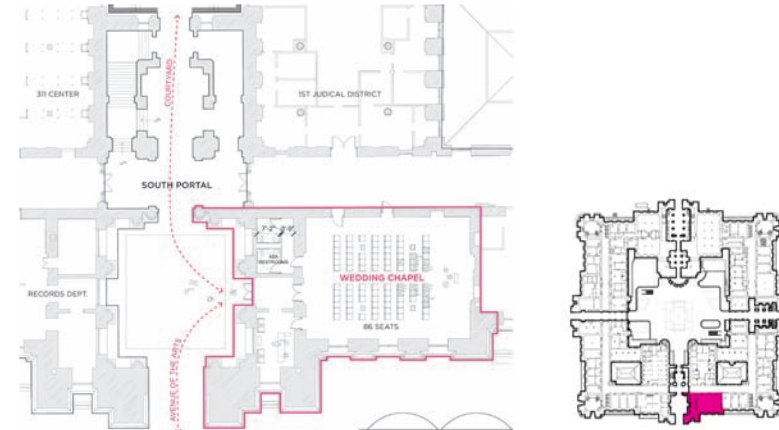
[Sources: Jay T. Snider Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia | Philadelphia Water Department Historical Collection | Free Library of Philadelphia - Maps of the City of Philadelphia vol. 2, Plate 20, 1858]





ACCESS + USES

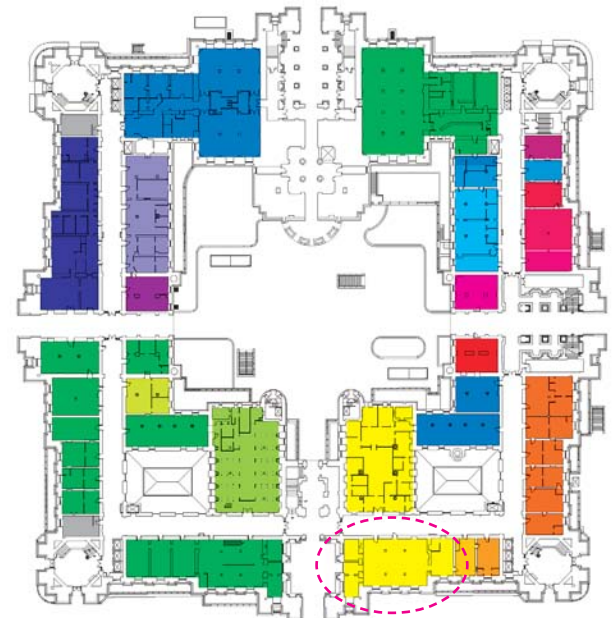
Originally [1901 condition], City Hall was designed to be extremely porous, with entrances at each corner, leading into the large staircases and more formal entrances through the directional portals. Post-9/11 [condition today], the crossroads are maintained, but secure access to City Hall is limited to the northeast corner (*although City employees may enter other areas with special badges*). The first floor of City Hall remains open to the public today, with a variety of existing uses that could be rearranged to activate both the portals and the Courtyard with future uses (*including the potential to move some municipal courts upstairs and add a wedding chapel, etc*):



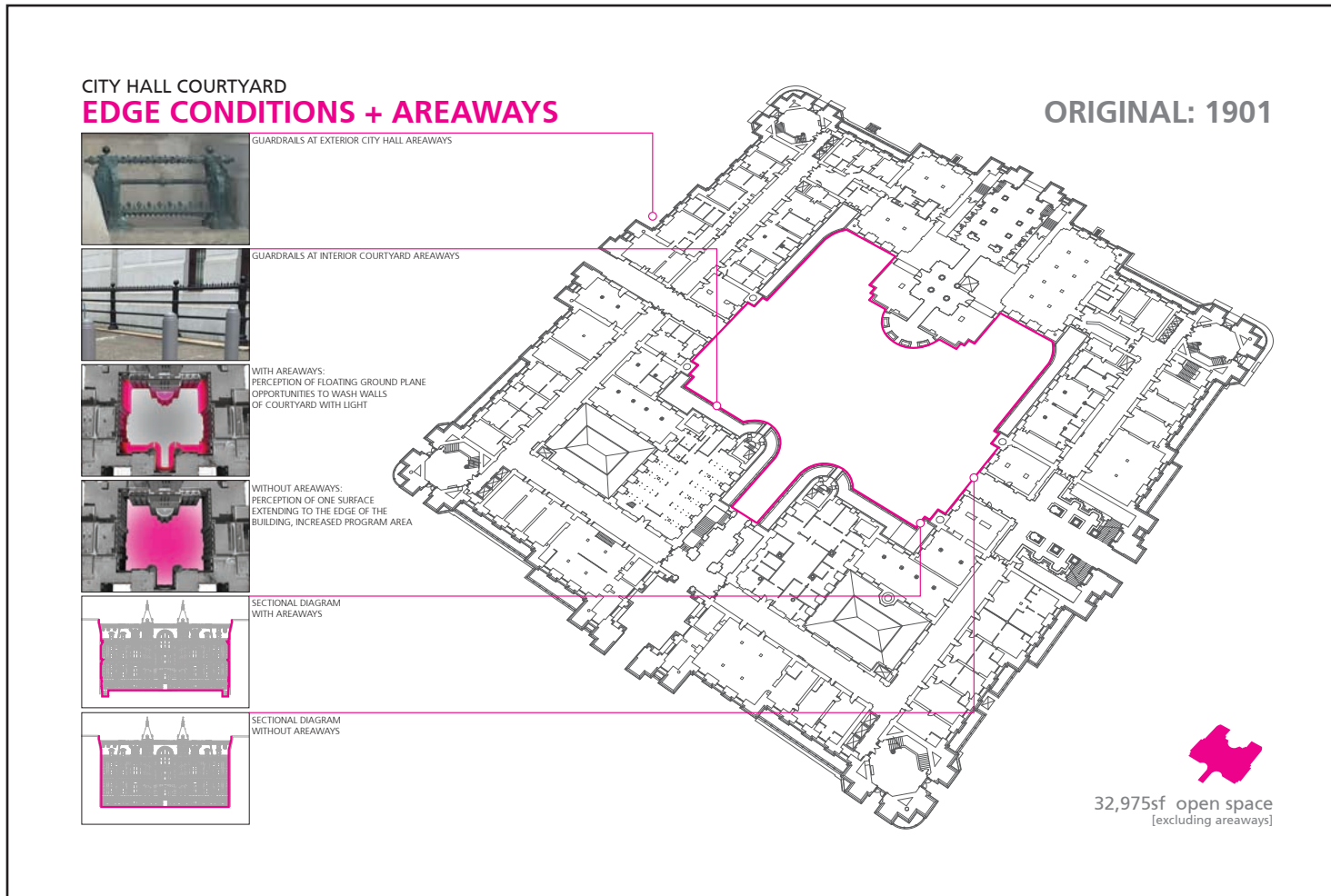
CITY HALL COURTYARD EXISTING USES

- FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF PA
INCLUDING JURY ROOM + DATA CENTER
- REGISTER OF WILLS
INCLUDING SERVICE + LITIGATION
- REGISTER OF WILLS
INCLUDING INDEX + RECORDS STORAGE
- REGISTER OF WILLS
INCLUDING STATE INHERITANCE TAX
- DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS
INCLUDING POLICE REPORTS + PHOTOGRAPHY
- 3-11 CALL CENTER
- 3-11 WALK-IN SERVICE CENTER
- MUNICIPAL COURTS
JUDGE OFFICES + BENCH JUDGE COMPLEX
- COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS
- PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
CITY HALL BUILDING
- COMMISSIONER OFFICES
SOMERSET SINGER CLARK
- VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION
- CITY HALL TOUR OFFICE
VISITOR CENTER + GIFT SHOP
- OFFICE OF ARTS, CULTURE, +
RECREATION
- THE ART GALLERY
CITY HALL
- VISITOR'S CENTER CLASSROOM
- MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT +
MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
- POLICE SUBPOENA
SERVICE COURT ENTRANCE
- MAYOR'S OFFICE OF EDUCATION
- FIRE COMMAND CENTER

PUBLIC RESTROOMS



APPENDIX



EDGE CONDITIONS

In examining the edge conditions and areaways around the perimeter of the Courtyard from the original 1901 Plan of City Hall, we see that the original Courtyard was a large, open, uninterrupted 32,975 sf space.

CITY HALL COURTYARD

EDGE CONDITIONS + AREAWAYS

EXISTING: 2015



AC UNIT AT NORTHWEST CORNER AREAWAY



ELECTRICAL SWITCHGEAR ROOM AND
AC UNIT AT NORTHEAST CORNER AREAWAY



3-1-1 EMERGENCY GENERATOR
AT SOUTHWEST CORNER AREAWAY



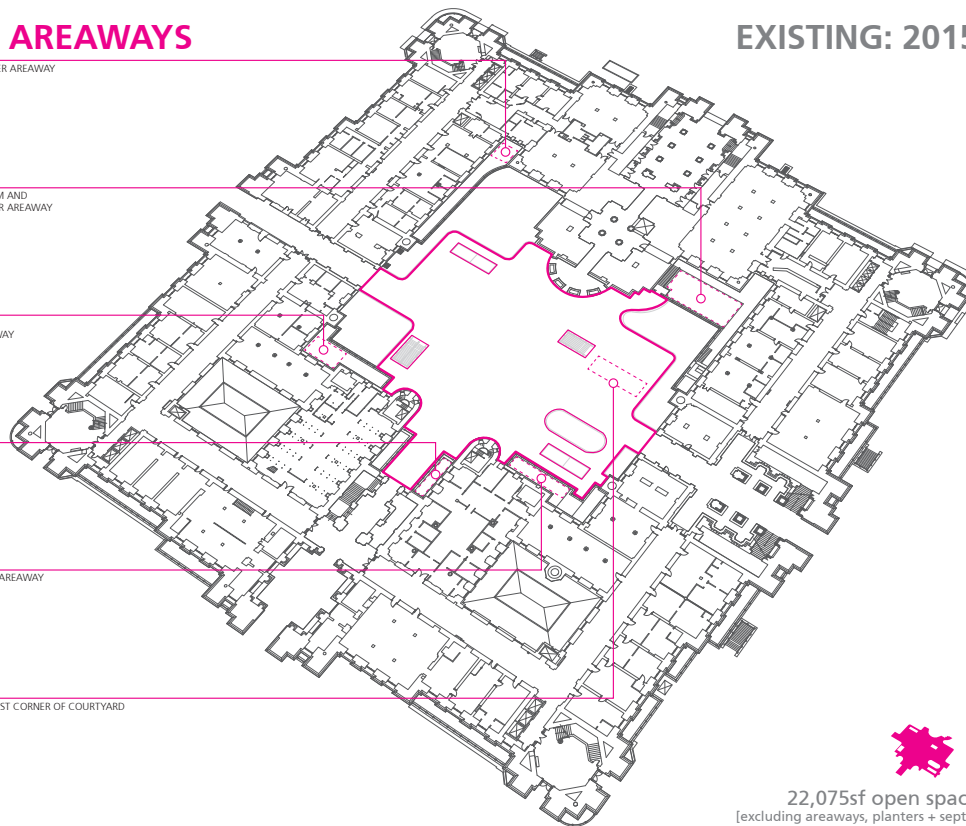
TRASH AND CLEANING
AT SOUTH PORTAL AREAWAY



TRASH AT SOUTHEAST CORNER AREAWAY



GRATING SURFACE AT NORTHEAST CORNER OF COURTYARD



22,075sf open space
[excluding areaways, planters + septa]

EDGE CONDITIONS

Today, the areaways have been significantly altered and fenced off, and are often full of garbage and equipment. With the alterations, and addition of planters, the open space is currently only 22,075 sf.

APPENDIX

RECLAIMING OBSTRUCTED SPACE

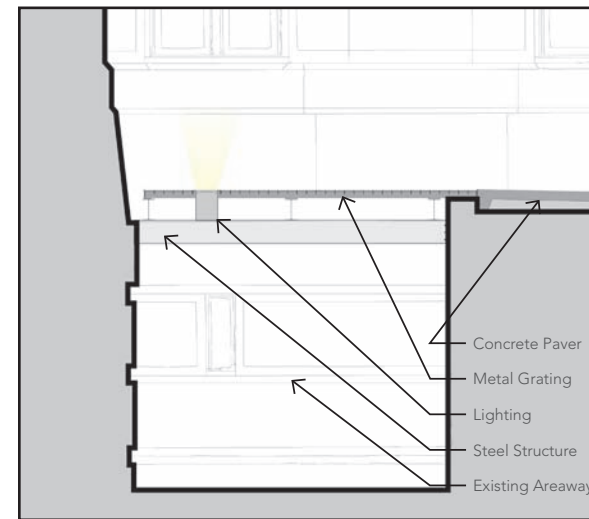
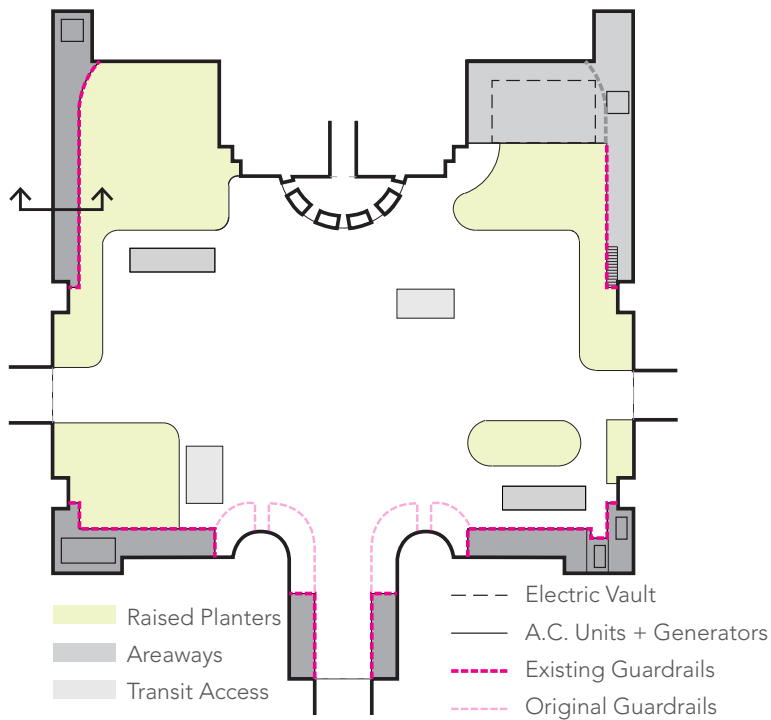
Reclaiming and covering areaways at the perimeter of the Courtyard = 6,395 square feet
Consolidating SEPTA transit access [all 4 entrances] = 1,115 square feet
Removing raised planters = 9,310 square feet

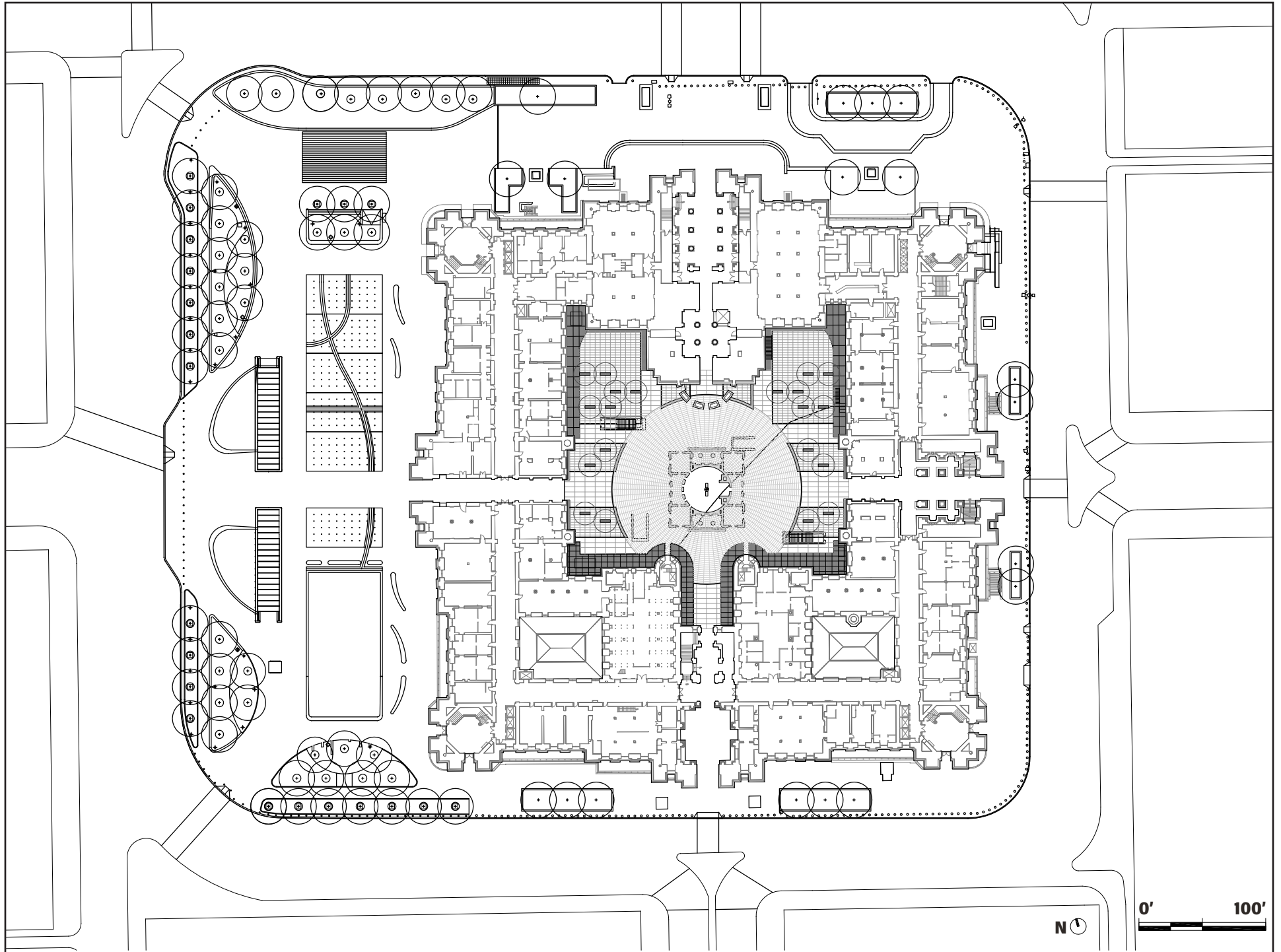
Total obstructed space: **16,820 square feet**

RECLAIMING OBSTRUCTED SPACE

The areaways at the perimeter of the Courtyard are currently eyesores, with equipment and garbage sitting below the level of the Courtyard. By covering them with grating and integrated lighting (similar to the exterior of City Hall), up to:

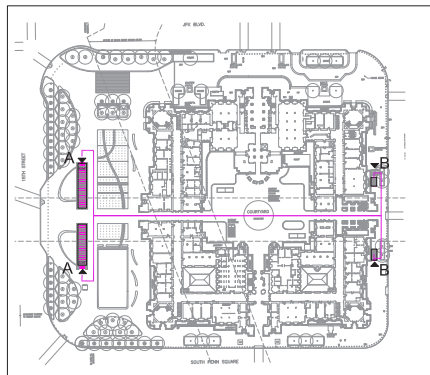
6,395 square feet of usable space can be reclaimed





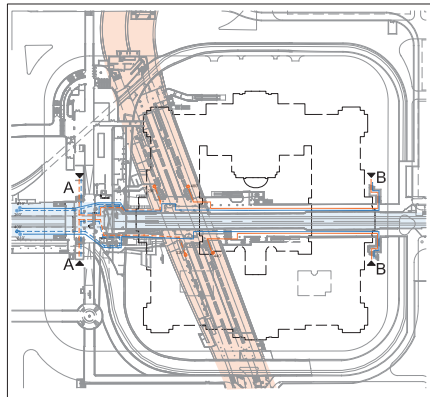
APPENDIX

STAIR A + B



GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

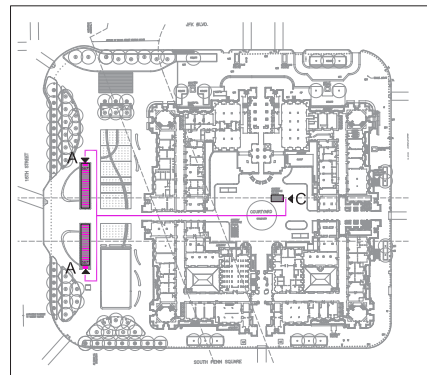
DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO STAIR =
A — B 834' (4 minutes)



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

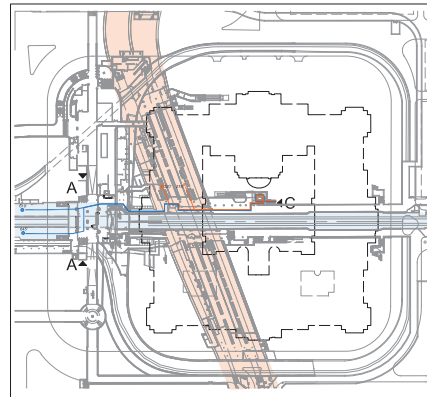
DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO PLATFORM
A — B 320' (1 minute)
400' (2 minutes)
480' (2 minutes)
810' (4 minutes)

STAIR A + C



GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

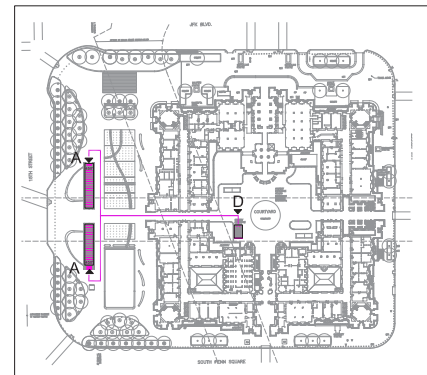
DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO STAIR =
A — C 567' (3 minutes)



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

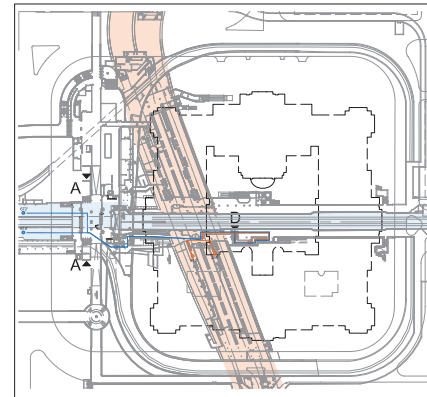
DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO PLATFORM
C — 320' (1 minutes)
645' (3 minutes)

STAIR A + D



GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO STAIR =
A — D 450' (2 minutes)



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=40'

DISTANCE FROM STAIR TO PLATFORM
D — 310' (1 minutes)
672' (3 minutes)

TRANSIT ACCESS

An analysis of the distances and times from existing SEPTA entrances at ground level, and also at the concourse level.

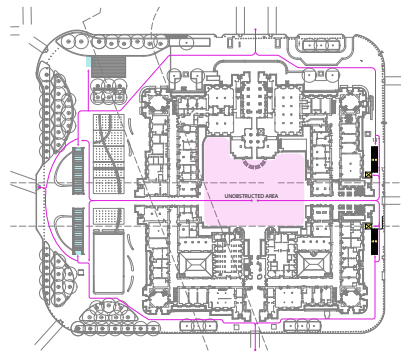
Stair A+B = Dilworth to E Penn Sq

Stair A+C = Dilworth to Courtyard 1

Stair A+D = Dilworth to Courtyard 2

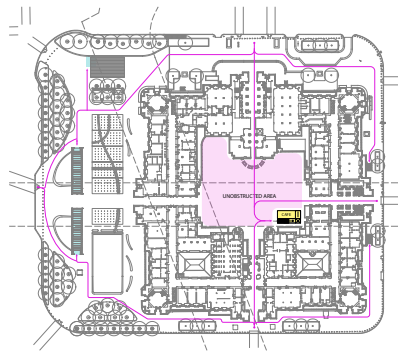
[Sources: SEPTA (subway plans and information)]

OPTION 1 - PREFERRED MIRROR ENTRY



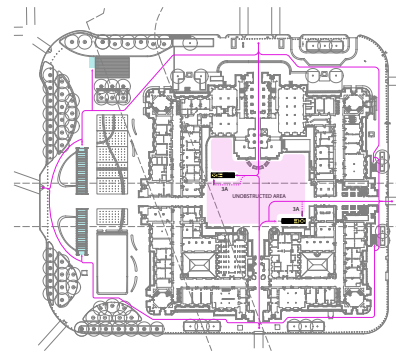
GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"

OPTION 2 - CONSOLIDATED ENTRY

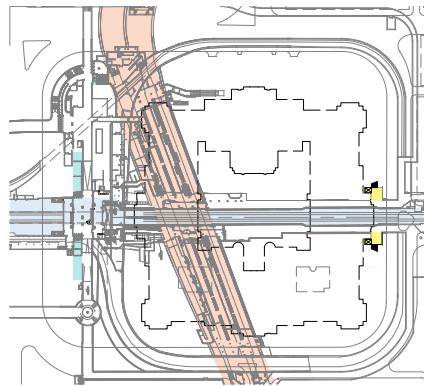


GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"

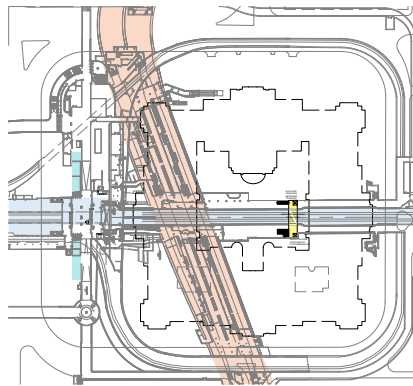
OPTION 3A - INTERIOR STAIRS WITH ELEVATOR
OPTION 3B - INTERIOR STAIRS WITHOUT ELEVATOR



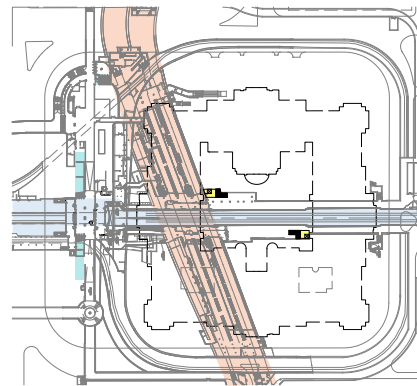
GROUND LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"



CONCOURSE LEVEL
SCALE 1"=60'-0"

EXISTING STAIRS/ELEVATOR
PROPOSED MODIFICATION
UNOCCUPIED AREA
PROPOSED MODIFICATION

TRANSIT ACCESS

An analysis of the proposed options for consolidating the existing (4) SEPTA entrances/exits in City Hall Courtyard.

Option 1: Remove Courtyard Access

Option 2: Consolidate to 1

Option 3: Re-purpose 2 Entrances

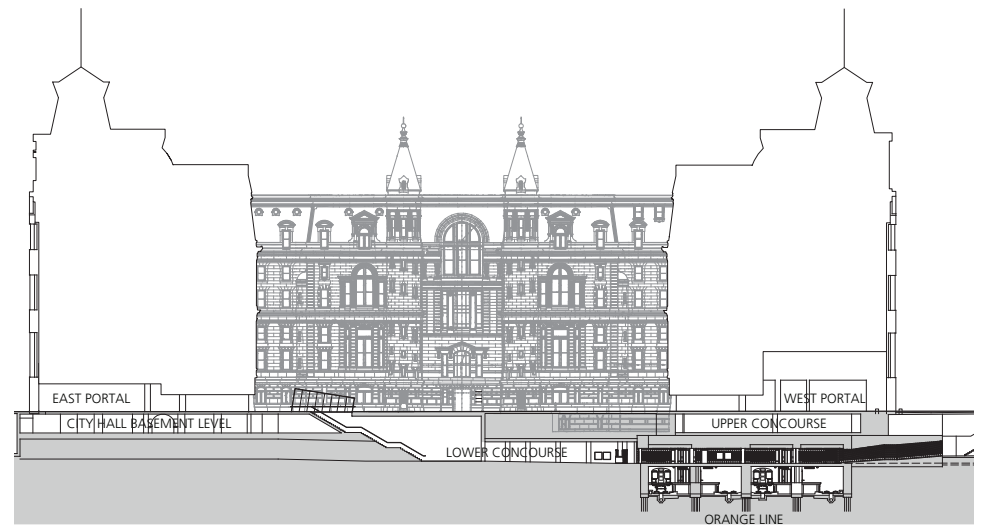
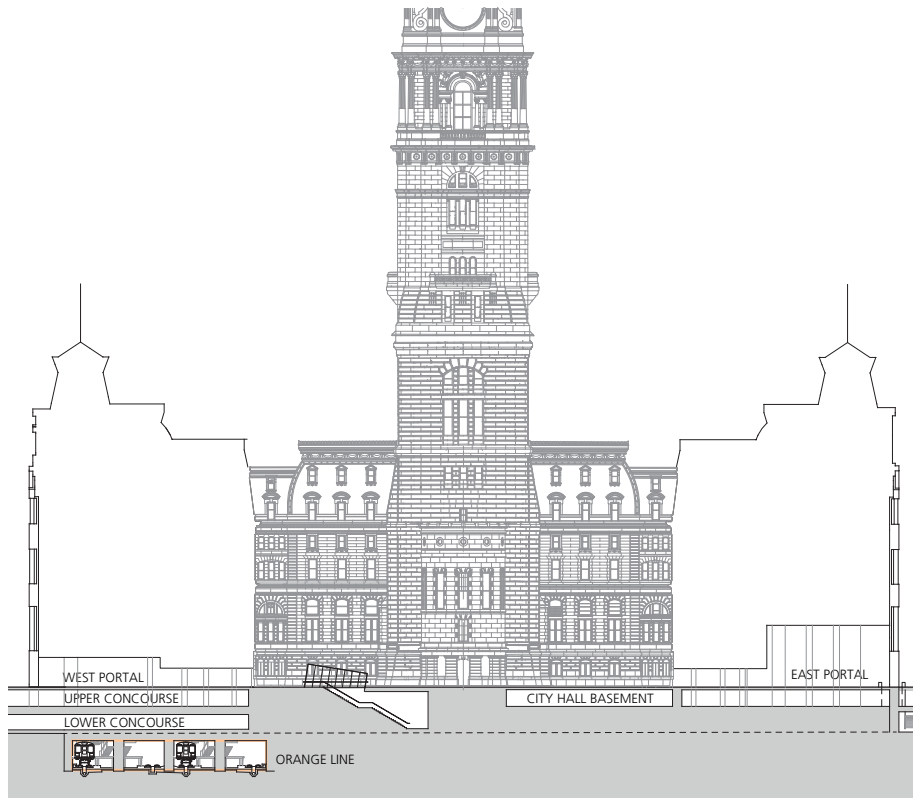
[Sources: SEPTA (subway plans and information)]

APPENDIX

TRANSIT ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Through a careful analysis of the existing conditions under the Courtyard, two new SEPTA entrances are located at the location of the existing headhouses in the Courtyard, connecting to the lower concourse level underneath the Courtyard.

[Sources: SEPTA (subway plans and information)]



TRANSIT ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Consolidating the SEPTA entrances/exits in the Courtyard offers a larger area of open space for more flexible and diverse programming. The new headhouses are envisioned to be transparent to increase the visibility across the courtyard

[Sources: SEPTA (subway plans and information)]

