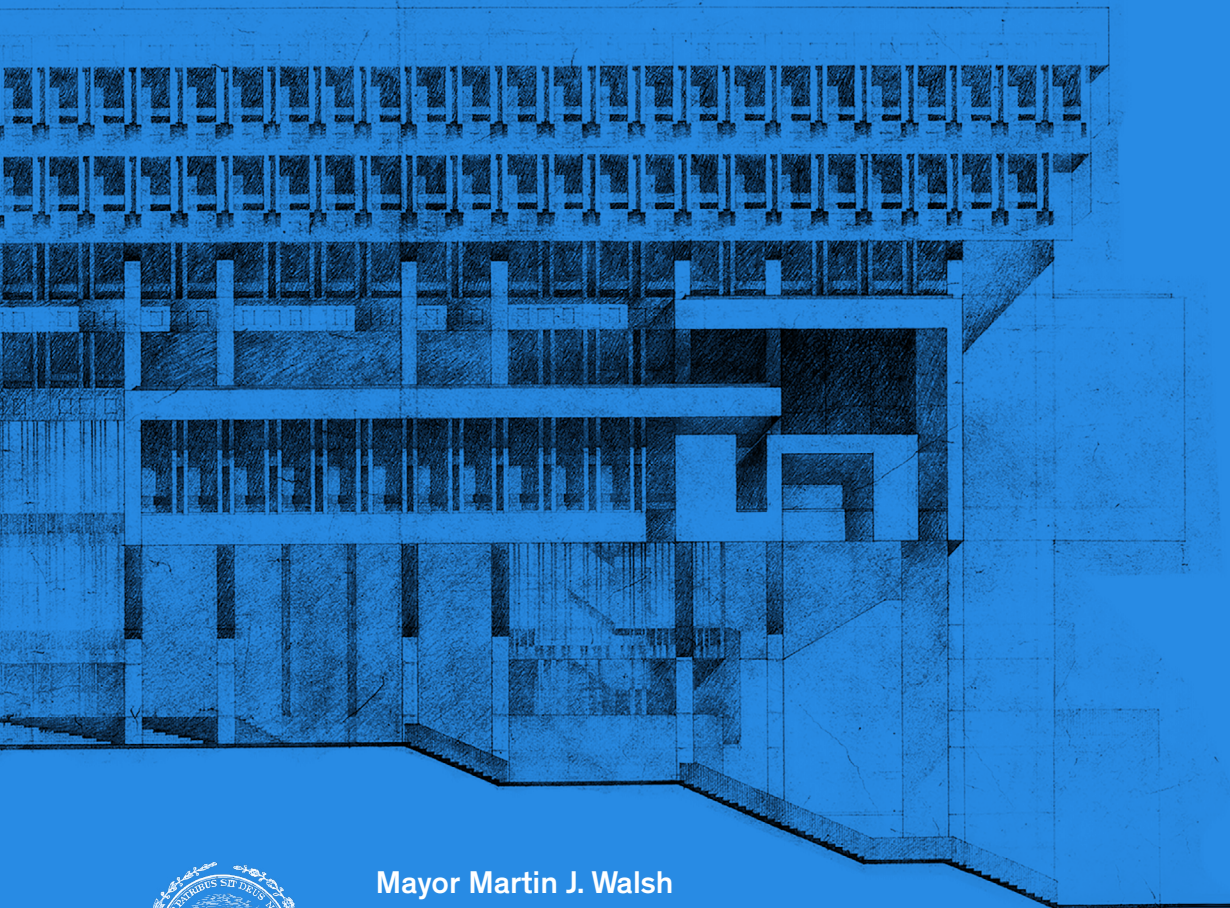


Boston City Hall

Conservation Management Plan



Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Patrick Brophy, Chief of Operations

City of Boston Property Management Department

City of Boston Public Facilities Department

utile BCA OverUnder

Boston City Hall

Conservation Management Plan

Prepared by:

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January 2021

Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Patrick Brophy, Chief of Operations

City of Boston Property Management Department

City of Boston Public Facilities Department

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Foreword

I am pleased to share our conservation management plan, which reflects the great confidence we have in the future of Boston City Hall and its plaza. The building itself is a world-renowned masterwork of 1960s concrete architecture, created through an open competition that led to ground-breaking results in both design and function. It was envisioned by city leaders and planners to reflect a monumental spirit of civic optimism, aspiring to put the city on a forward-looking path under what was termed the “New Boston.”

In February 2015, I met with Michael McKinnell, one of the original architects of City Hall, who enhanced my understanding of the vision he and his partners Gerhard Kallmann and Edward Knowles developed. He believed City Hall should be “the people’s building.” He also helped me understand how the work of achieving that goal continues today. This conservation management plan will serve as our roadmap, helping to ensure that Boston City Hall achieves those original, admirable goals throughout the next half century.

Our aim is to protect and improve the architectural significance of Boston City Hall by making the necessary changes to better capture the imagination of the public and serve generations to come. We appreciate the support **The Getty Foundation** has provided us through the “Keeping it Modern” program for the creation of this plan. We also sincerely thank the entire team that has come together to bring this vision to life. We know it will serve City Hall, our city, and our communities well into the future.

Sincerely,

Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

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1.0

Introduction

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Section 1.1

Purposes and Circumstances of this Plan

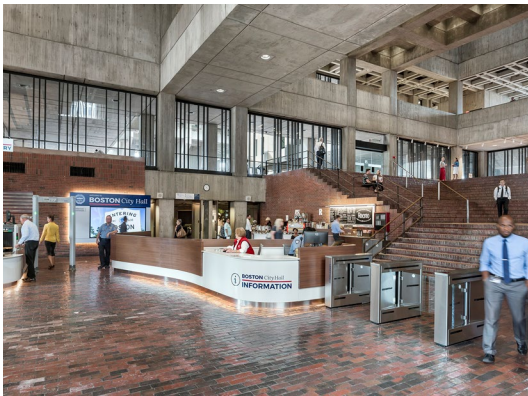
“When we designed the City Hall, we envisioned not only a fragment of the city, but also a fragment in time. That is to say, we regarded the construction of the building to be the start of a process that would engage successive generations of the citizenry in the embellishment, decoration, and adornment of the robust armature that we had designed.”¹

—Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, 2005

Boston City Hall has been the seat of municipal government in the City of Boston since the building opened to the public in February 1969. Designed by Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles as part of a nation-wide competition, Boston City Hall is internationally recognized as a masterwork of 1960s modernism and civic design. Over these fifty-plus years, the building’s urban context, security requirements, technology, accessibility standards, and municipal operations have evolved significantly, requiring the building to adapt in response.

A long-term master planning study was completed in 2017, which examined the city’s operational and programmatic needs as well as ways to improve services to constituents, with a high-level evalua-

tion of the building’s systems and existing conditions.² A number of pilot projects have been completed to address the most public-facing spaces, including: the illumination of the building’s exterior³; renovations to the plaza lobby to replace the security equipment and improve wayfinding and lighting⁴; the renovation of the city council chamber to improve accessibility, technology, and lighting⁵; renovations to portions of the transaction level to re-open transaction windows and improve lighting and wayfinding⁶; and the first phase of a comprehensive signage and wayfinding update.⁷ A first-phase plaza renovation project is underway to comprehensively renovate a large portion of the plaza to improve accessibility and infrastructure.⁸ The project will activate



Plaza lobby improvements.

and re-energize the plaza as a community gathering hub and reopen and expand the north entrance. These projects have brought to light a number of overall questions—such as whether to clean the concrete or how to address material failures—which led the city to commission this conservation management plan.

Due to its many significant qualities, Boston City Hall deserves a thoughtful conservation management plan to guide a long-term approach that deals sensitively and sensibly with future changes, repairs, preservation, and upgrades. At a time when many concrete buildings of this era are being demolished, Boston City Hall can become a model for sensitive conservation, environmental sustainability through re-use, and respectful evolution of one of Boston’s—and one of the world’s—most recognized municipal works of modernism.

In 2017, the City of Boston was awarded a Keeping It Modern grant from the Getty Foundation, a prestigious honor given to only one other building in the United States and nine other buildings worldwide that year. The distinguished group of buildings included the Price Tower by Frank Lloyd

Wright, the 1960 Olympic Stadium in Rome by Pier Luigi Nervi, the Bauhaus Building by Walter Gropius, the Museo de Artes de São Paulo by Lina Bo Bardi, and the Yoyogi National Gymnasium in Tokyo by Kenzo Tange.

Scope and Limitations of the Plan

This conservation management plan is intended to be a working document to guide the city’s Property Management Department and Public Facilities Department in decision-making as it relates to maintenance of and future change to the building. The plan is not a regulatory document, nor is it a comprehensive existing conditions report or survey. Rather, it provides the historic architectural, cultural, and urban context in which it was designed and built; it evaluates the significance of the building and its major elements; and it provides a strategy for conservation. The plan puts forth a clear set of conservation principles, policies, and recommendations for maintenance, management, minor alterations, and major change.

This plan is focused on the building itself. However, since the building and plaza were designed and considered as a whole, there are a few areas where the plan makes mention of the plaza because it is essential to the understanding of the building. The scope of this plan has been tailored to meet the budget available, which includes funding from the Getty Foundation’s Keeping It Modern grant and funds provided by the City of Boston’s Public Facilities Department. The background information and guidelines in this plan will serve as an essential resource for the City of Boston to conserve one of its most important buildings. The plan’s prin-

ciples, policies, and recommendations will provide the city with guidelines for maintenance and management and the framework within which changes to the building can be made, while retaining the character and intent of the design and the integrity of the building and its elements.

Process

This conservation management plan (CMP) for Boston City Hall is based on The Burra Charter and James Semple Kerr's Conservation Plan, which outline a standard process followed by most conservation management plans: understanding the place, assessing its significance, and developing policies to retain that significance.⁹ This plan has been developed by considering the building across scales as large as its urban context and as detailed as its material expression. The approach addresses Boston City Hall as holistically as possible, from preserving its authenticity to developing best practices for cleaning each material and surface. The plan's process involved four steps, starting with historical research and existing conditions observation, then moving to assessment of significance, policy development, and finally the production of the report itself.

In the first step, historical documentation, publications, correspondences, construction documents, and maintenance reports were reviewed. This historical research included visits to the collections at Historic New England and the Boston Architectural College Library. A visual examination of the building was completed through site visits that assessed probable causes for deterioration. Interviews were conducted with key figures



Interview and tour with Michael McKinnell;
the research archive at Historic New England.

in City Hall's history, including one of its original architects, Michael McKinnell. He took the CMP team on a guided tour of the building and spoke about its history and the architects' intentions at length from a table in the central courtyard. This process established the history of the building's design, construction, and use, as well as its current performance, successes, and shortcomings.

Following this first research-focused task, an assessment of significance was undertaken that sought to prioritize building components—defined as elements—by degrees of significance: high significance, significance, and low significance. Significance levels were assigned after surveying



Michael McKinnell during the tour he gave to the conservation management plan team (May 2, 2018).

the project's working group and assessing each component of the building through a set of criteria and standards. The process evaluated components not merely by scale or recognizability, but by the degree to which they are central to defining the building's character. The standards of the Burra Charter were adapted and applied, evaluating each element for its architectural, social

and civic, historic and political, and technical and material values.¹⁰

Assessing the significance of each building component led to a statement of significance to guide the development of conservation policies and strategies of implementation. These policies were further informed by an understanding of building operations and functionality along with targeted *in situ* tests of the building's concrete, terrazzo, and bronze components. Specific in their recommendations and comprehensive in their understanding of how even small decisions can influence the building's integrity, the policies in this document are developed to be living guidelines. Three major factors were used to guide the recommendations for each building element: significance, physical condition, and functionality.

These policies and the plan for their implementation have been compiled into this report. It is designed to relay the story of the building's development and significance, while outlining the tools by which Boston City Hall's integrity may be maintained across the next half-century of service to the City of Boston.

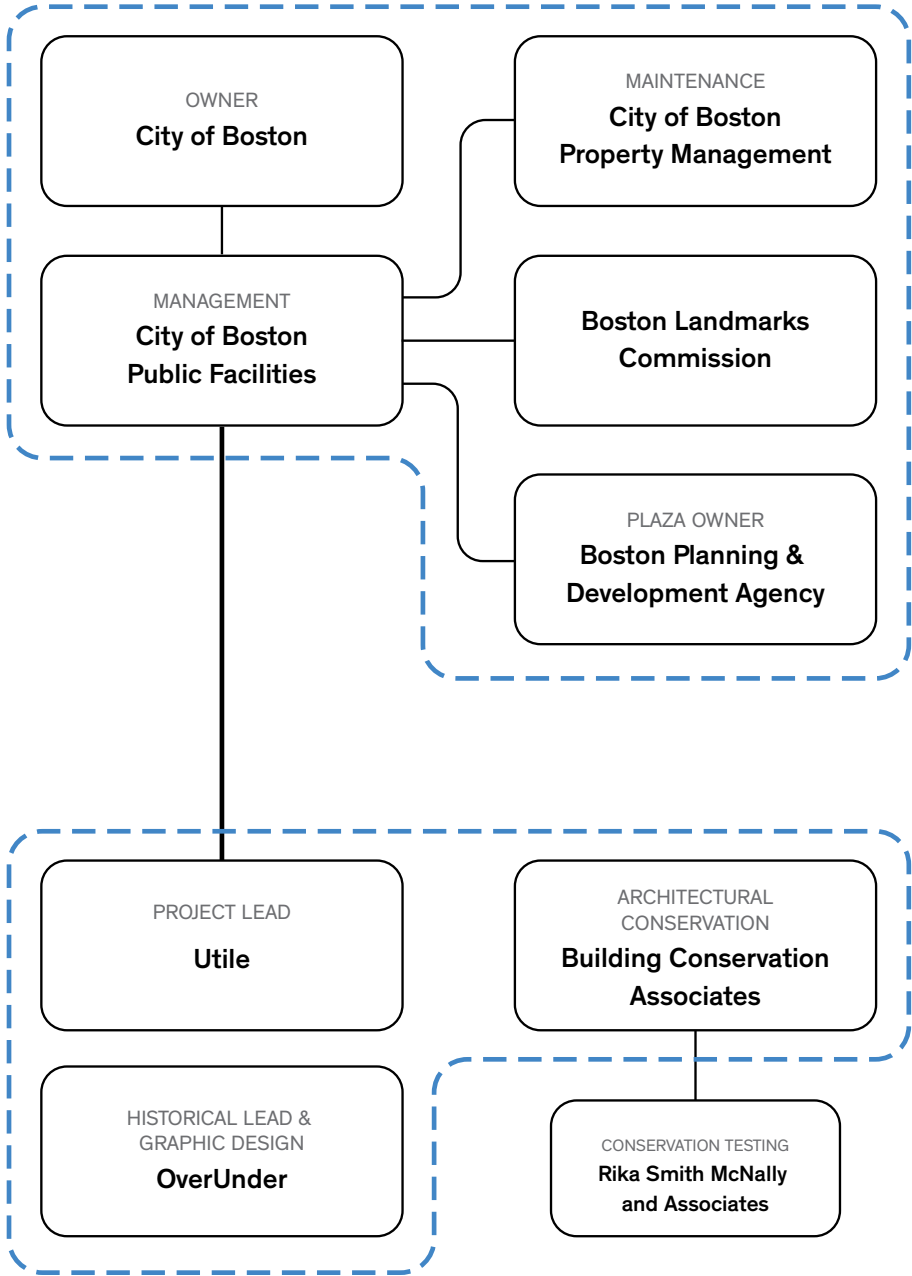
- 1 Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, "Original Thinking: Reflections on the Genesis of Boston City Hall," *ArchitectureBoston* (May/June 2005): 35.
- 2 Boston City Hall and Plaza Study, or "Rethink City Hall," PFD Project #7042.
- 3 Exterior Lighting Project, PFD Project #7088.
- 4 Lobby Renovation Project, PFD Project #7097.
- 5 City Council Chamber Renovation, PFD Project #7116.
- 6 Parking Clerk Renovation Project, PFD Project #7142.
- 7 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot, PMD 2019-01.
- 8 Phase I Plaza Renovation, PFD Project #7140.
- 9 James Semple Kerr, *Conservation Plan*, Seventh Edition (Australia ICOMOS, 2013): 1.
- 10 The Burra Charter lists these as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual values, although additional terms are often used, such as "architectural" or "archaeological" value.



East elevation of Boston City Hall viewed from Congress Street.

Section 1.2

Team



Above: Chart describing structure of the consultant team and city departments that were involved in the creation of the conservation management plan.

City of Boston

Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Patrick Brophy, Chief of Operations

City of Boston

Public Facilities Department

Paul Donnelly, Director of Design

Maureen Anderson,

Senior Project Manager

Patricia Lyons, Former Director

Brian Melia, Senior Project Manager

City of Boston

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Indira Alvarez, Commissioner

Carlene Laurent,

Director of Alterations and Repair

Gregory Rooney, Former Commissioner

John Sinagra,

Building Systems Engineer

Leon Graves, Executive Assistant

Kenya Germain,

Special Assistant to the Commissioner

City of Boston

Planning & Development Agency

Brian P. Golden, Director

David Carlson, Former Deputy Director
for Urban Design

Boston Landmarks Commission

Rosanne Foley, Executive Director

Yolanda Romero, Staff Architect

Todd Satter, Former Staff Architect

Joseph Cornish,

Director of Design Review

Mayor's Office of

New Urban Mechanics

Sabrina Dorsainvil,

Director of Civic Design

Utile

Michael LeBlanc, Principal

Maressa Perreault, Associate Principal and
CMP Project Manager

Margaret Rew, Architect

Cyrus Dahmubed, Designer

Shelly Chipimo, Designer

Alessia Haddad, Designer

OverUnder

Mark Pasnik, Principal

Hannah Cane, Designer

Mandy Lee, Designer

Shannon McLean, Designer

Building Conservation Associates

Lisa Howe, Director

Colleen Chapin,

Senior Architectural Conservator

Team Organization

The Boston City Hall conservation management plan was managed by the City of Boston's Public Facilities Department in collaboration with the City of Boston and the City's Property Management Department, Boston Landmarks Commission, and the Boston Planning & Development Agency. The plan is prepared by a consulting team of Utile, OverUnder, and Building Conservation Associates.

Section 1.3

Outline of the Plan

2.0 Understanding the Place

Describes the history of the building and the circumstances in which it was designed, including the planning background and design competition, the design and construction process, and its urban, political, and cultural contexts.

3.0 Assessment of Significance

Outlines the various types of significance that should be understood and respected in any considerations surrounding future changes to Boston City Hall. Assesses the level of significance for individual elements and spaces, concluding with a formal statement of significance.

4.0 Issues and Opportunities

Describes the current contexts in which the building is situated and issues that the building and its occupants face. Includes opportunities and potential changes to the building that have been proposed or considered previously.

5.0 Conservation Policies

Describes the major parts and elements of the building and provides both historical context and current conditions. Provides conservation policies and recommendations, both for the building as a whole and for individual elements or spaces and materials.

6.0 References

Acknowledgements, image credits, bibliography, PFD project references, glossary, building documentation, and list of all principles, policies, and recommendations.



The mayor's office hood viewed from the south.





2.0

Understanding the Place

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and Cultural Contexts 30

Section 2.1

Historic Overview

“At a distance the building achieves great monumentality, drama and unity and in detail the contrasting textures, the play of light and shade, the richness of forms and spaces, culminate in a series of dramatic terraces which provides a strong focus for the symbol of city government. It is a daring yet classical architectural statement, contained within a vigorous unified form.... The Jury was unanimously delighted to see its best hopes for a great building for Boston so brilliantly fulfilled.”¹

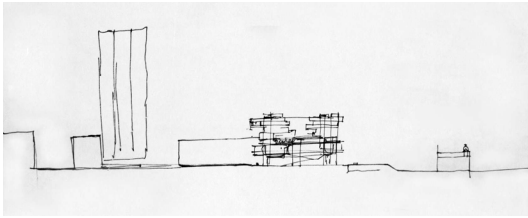
—Boston City Hall Competition Jury Letter, May 3, 1962

As the keystone of Boston’s ambitious new Government Center project and an emblem of the city’s larger urban renewal efforts, Boston City Hall played a central role in reinvigorating the city under the political leadership of Mayor John F. Collins and Boston Redevelopment Authority director Edward J. Logue.² The ensemble’s design was commissioned through a nationwide, two-round competition initiated on October 16, 1961. From a pool of 256 entries, a distinguished jury of architects and business leaders selected a bold and daring scheme by Gerhard M. Kallmann, N. Michael McKinnell, and Edward F. Knowles on May 4, 1962. It was their first joint commission and remains the most important work of architecture in the lifelong design partnership of Kallmann and McKinnell.

The building that resulted is a deeply considered reflection on political will, civic

aspiration, economic rejuvenation, architectural history, and urban context. In conjunction with its plaza, the building was constructed faithfully to the competition vision and opened to the public in February 1969 to wide critical acclaim in the press around the globe. Since that time, it has served as a major symbol of the City of Boston, the urban renewal initiatives of the era, and the movement known as Brutalism. The building’s international significance as a work of concrete modernism is paralleled by its cultural and economic legacies—as “a miracle in Boston” in the words of competition juror Harold Hodgkinson, that initiated “the rebirth of confidence in this city.”³

In a place that was the professional home to Charles Bulfinch, Henry Hobson Richardson, Ralph Adams Cram, Frederick Law Olmsted, Walter Gropius, Hugh Stub-



The first sketch, a section looking north by Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell.

bins, and Josep Lluís Sert, and graced by the architecture of Paul Rudolph, I. M. Pei and Henry N. Cobb, Eero Saarinen, Alvar Aalto, and Le Corbusier, Boston City Hall remains one of the city’s most recognized icons. While the structure and plaza are often viewed as controversial in the public eye—and hence face dangers for their future—they also inspire passionate defenders and represent a 1960s-era vision of civic aspiration achieved through monumental concrete.

Kallmann and McKinnell intended their building to change over time, believing their “robust armature” would be embellished, decorated, and adorned by future generations.⁴ Despite opening to fanfare, concerts, and galas, such aspirations were never fully realized and the building has since suffered over time, both from deferred maintenance as well as a public distaste for its architectural characteristics. Logue believed it would carry a “long life as the centerpiece of Boston . . . This City Hall was intended to last for a long time . . . it will be busy for as long as Boston survives.”⁵ Fifty years later, the building is in need of significant investment in systems, improvements to meet contemporary codes, and changes in response to functional needs and deferred maintenance.

-
- 1 William W. Wurster, Chairman, et al. to Lawrence B. Anderson, Professional Advisor, Boston City Hall Competition, May 3, 1962.
 - 2 Historical texts are adapted versions of content previously published in *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston*. See: Mark Pasnik, Michael Kubo, Chris Grimley, *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2015).
 - 3 Harold D. Hodgkinson, “Miracle in Boston,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*: 81.
 - 4 Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, “Original Thinking: Reflections on the Genesis of Boston City Hall,” *ArchitectureBoston* (May/June 2005): 35.
 - 5 Edward J. Logue, “Boston 1960–1976: Seven Years of Plenty,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, vol. 84 (1972): 96.

Facing: A second-round competition perspective and photograph show how faithfully the building was built to the competition design.



Section 2.2

The Competition, Design Process, and Construction

Boston's vision for its new city hall was first spelled out in the competition brief, which had been developed by Lawrence B. Anderson, chair of MIT's architecture department. The document formed the foundation to the winning scheme's formal ordering around three major categories of space: public, symbolic, and bureaucratic.¹ The competition involved a two-round, anonymous selection process overseen by a jury of distinguished architects: Pietro Belluschi, Walter A. Netsch, Ralph Rapson, and William W. Wurster, along with business leader Harold D. Hodgkinson, chairman of the board of William Filene's and Sons. Two additional jury members were part of the second round, O. Kelley Anderson, president of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company, and Sidney R. Rabb, chairman of the board of Stop and Shop.

Announced in October 1961, the competition drew 256 entries for its January 17, 1962 submission date. The jury then selected eight finalist teams. Each was given \$5,000 to develop their final stage pro-

posals, which were to be submitted three months later, on April 25. The jury deliberated and selected the relatively unknown trio of Gerhard M. Kallmann, N. Michael McKinell, and Edward F. Knowles in a unanimous decision. The report extolled the winning proposal's virtues: "the building achieves great monumentality, drama and unity . . . the play of light and shade, the richness of forms and spaces . . . [and] a strong focus for the symbol of city government. It is a daring yet classical architectural statement, contained within a vigorous unified form."²

On May 4, the victorious scheme was unveiled to the public. The announcement sparked a "dignified controversy,"³ with one *Boston Globe* headline querying: "Filling Station? Work of Art? Councilors Not Sure."⁴ A *Boston Herald* headline asked if the design was "'Delightful' or 'Way Out'?" The newspaper's editorial page was more circumspect: "Boston's bold experiment with the contemporary look has made it a focus of architectural interest for the whole country. Red brick Boston is taking a new

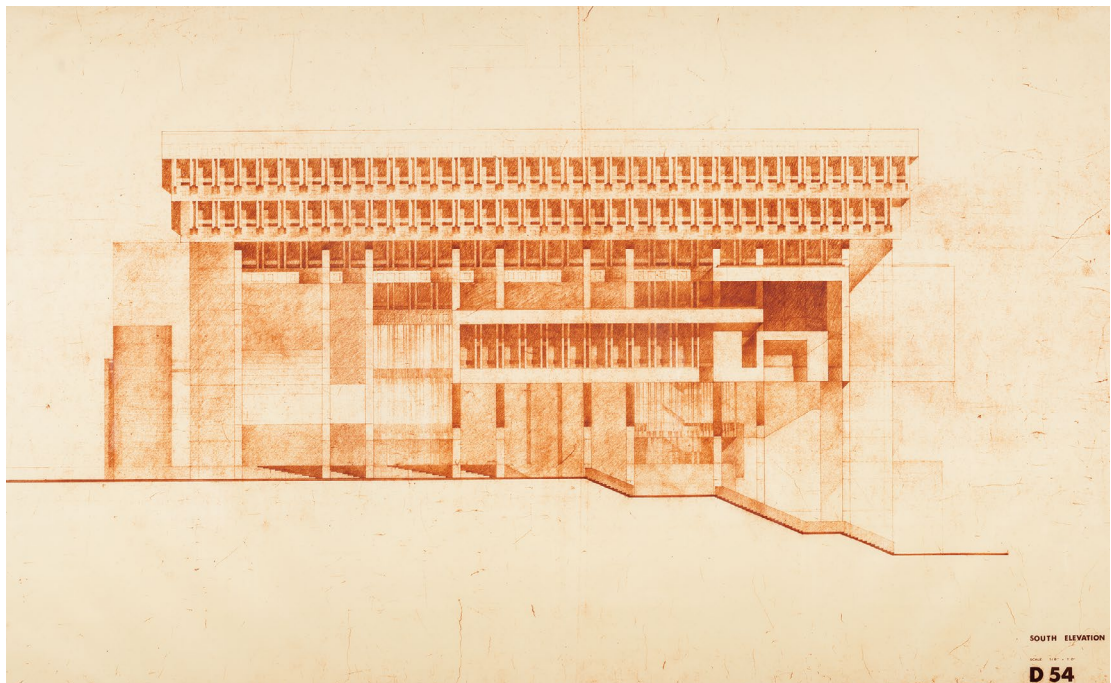
direction. It is proving that it can look boldly ahead as well as comfortably back.”⁵

After winning the competition, the firm Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles entered into a joint venture with architects Campbell and Aldrich along with structural engineers William J. LeMessurier Associates to form “Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall”—often using the acronym AEBCH in correspondences. Growing out of the competition brief, the authors envisioned a monumental concrete and brick building surrounded by a plaza that would be characterized by its openness and embrace of civic life, referencing European models such as the Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy. Boston

City Hall follows the competition brief with a tripartite order for its programmatic distribution: public services in the brick mound at the base, a columnated middle zone of ceremonial spaces meant to symbolize the functioning of government, and an attic of office spaces above for the municipal bureaucracy.

In this arrangement, the lowest floors of the northern concourse contain high-traffic services on various terracing levels. The top floors form a veritable building cornice with tiers of offices projecting outward. The middle levels of the tripartite scheme contain the symbolic and ceremonial elements visualized through monumental

South elevation from the design development phase showing the ceremonial hoods of the mayor’s office suite.



concrete “hoods,” to use the architects’ term. These projecting volumes contain the council chamber and councilors’ offices on the west face, as well as the mayor’s suite and municipal reference library (later converted to additional councilors’ offices) on the south and east faces. Arrival from the plaza occurs under the council chamber, where the stepped seating of the hall above registers as the ceiling. Moving inside, the

plaza lobby is a vast room rising upward through two dramatic light wells. An enormous amphitheater-like staircase leads up to the next floor and joins with an outdoor courtyard at the center of the structure, followed by a smaller flight of steps leading to the ceremonial fifth floor, where the council chamber and mayor’s suites are located.

-
- 1 Lawrence B. Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 17.
 - 2 William W. Wurster, Chairman, et al., Jury report to Lawrence B. Anderson (May 3, 1962). Obtained from the City Hall Competition Materials, Shaw and Stone Library of the Boston Architectural College.
 - 3 Tom Downey, “‘Dignified’ Controversy on City Hall Design,” *Record American* (May 5, 1962).
 - 4 *The Boston Globe* (Friday, May 4, 1962).
 - 5 “The City Hall Look,” *Boston Herald* (May 5, 1962).

Views of the west elevation and the plaza lobby interior.





Section 2.3

Urban, Political, and Cultural Contexts

In the face of economic stagnation, a declining population, and a decreasing tax base burdened with some of the highest land taxes in the nation, Collins saw an opportunity to resuscitate Boston's downtown core. His selection of Logue to lead the Boston Redevelopment Authority was part of an effort to develop the city's urban renewal program and capture federal investment, which Logue had done so skillfully in New Haven. It proved successful, with Logue acquiring more than \$100 million in federal funds.¹

Logue commissioned I. M. Pei (with Henry N. Cobb) to develop a master plan that would transform sixty acres of what was deemed a derelict neighborhood around Scollay Square. Logue's desire was to convert what he saw as "a decadent and blighted area in the heart of the City" to "a major center of governmental and private activity."² The competition brief for Boston City Hall outlined the view of planners and politicians at the time. Scollay Square "has a long reputation as the place where inelegant transients come to enjoy themselves," the document states. Furthermore, "accidents of history have left it with a disor-

dered street system and small odd-shaped parcels of land." The goal of the project for Government Center was to correct these issues and help resuscitate the city's struggling economy and business district. "Re-development involving major street changes is now imperative not only to improve traffic movement but also to create land parcels of size and shape suitable for modern business operations."³

The approach aimed to rationalize Boston's urban center, replacing many narrow roadways with larger, more efficient thoroughfares, while creating separated pedestrian plazas in the manner of grand European public plazas. The plan included conservation and rehabilitation of important structures such as the Sears Crescent and reflected an understanding of the significance of neighboring historic resources such as the Old State House, Faneuil Hall, Quincy Market, and the pre-Revolutionary streets around the Union Oyster House.

The more aggressive renewal strategies were driven by the era's urban planning ideologies: wholesale demolition in service of enlarged lot sizes bounded by a reduced number of roadways of increased widths.



View of the east elevation from Union and Marshall Streets.

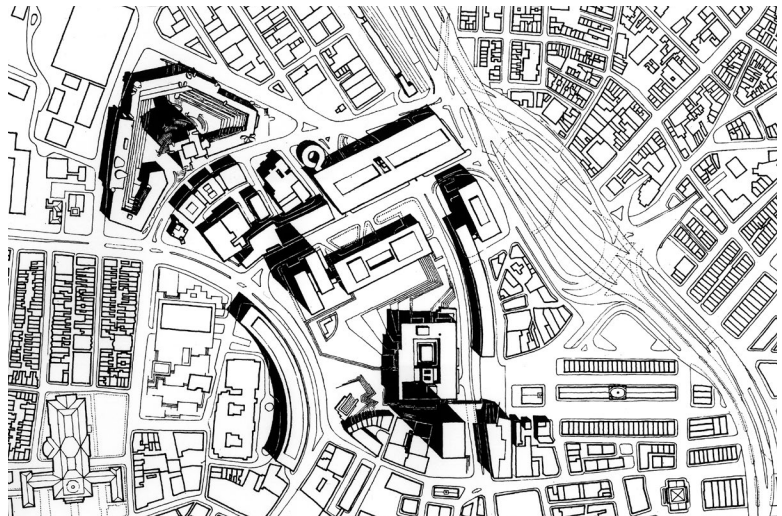
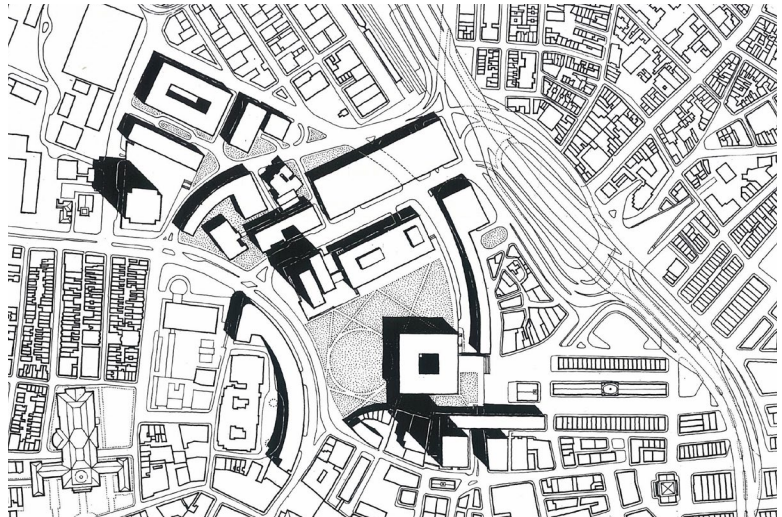
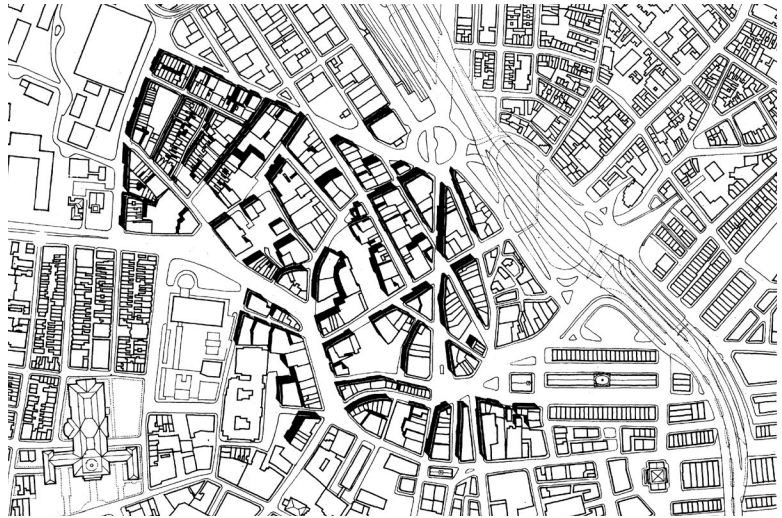
The uniformity of function focused predominantly on government services. As Cobb pointed out more recently, while these strategies were what made Government Center “politically and economically viable” at the time, they are the precise characteristics “that have made its realization in built form so problematic.”⁴

Completed in 1961, the Pei plan envisioned Boston City Hall as the keystone structure, specifying its location, overall dimensions, and the scope of the plaza setting surrounding it. The Government Center complex and Boston City Hall in particular helped catalyze growth in the central city and led to the preservation of the adjacent Quincy Market historical structures in subsequent years.

The city has evolved around Government Center, in part due to the project’s success as a catalyst. The adjacent commercial center has become more mixed-use, multimodal, and vibrant, characterized by preservation and densification as well as commercial and residential developments. The streets once planned as high-traffic thoroughfares have, in recent years, been activated with greater pedestrian life and commercial activity, and will become more vital with the development of new residential buildings nearby. An ongoing plan for the redevelopment of Boston City Hall Plaza will bring this more active cityscape closer to the building, by stimulating increased vibrancy surrounding the building itself and spreading outward across the Government Center complex.

-
- 1 Harold D. Hodgkinson, “Miracle in Boston,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*: 77.
 - 2 Edward J. Logue, *Seven Years of Progress: A Final Report* (Boston: Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1967): 17.
 - 3 *Government Center Commission, A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (1961): 8.
 - 4 Henry N. Cobb, *Words & Works: 1948–2018* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2018): 77.

Three urban plans show Scollay Square before urban renewal (top) and the Government Center Urban Renewal Plan by I. M. Pei and Harry Cobb from 1961 (middle) and 1963 (bottom).







3.0

Assessment of Significance

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Section 3.1

Factors of Significance

“Boston can celebrate with the knowledge that it has produced a superior public building in an age that values cheapness over quality as a form of public virtue. It also has one of the handsomest buildings around, and thus far, one of the least understood . . . It is a product of this moment and these times—something that can be said of successful art of any period.”¹

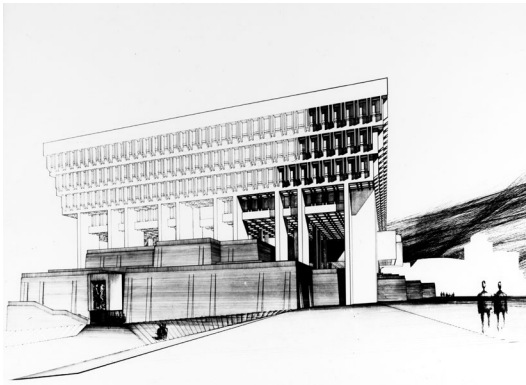
—Ada Louise Huxtable, *The New York Times*, February 4, 1969

The following texts outline the various types of significance that should be understood and respected in any considerations surrounding future changes to Boston City Hall.

A Civic Symbol

Boston City Hall has served the administrations of John Collins, Kevin H. White, Raymond L. Flynn, Thomas M. Menino, and currently Martin J. Walsh. Its physical features, especially its tripartite arrangement of functions (symbolic, public, and bureaucratic zones) and its projecting chambers, offer a civics lesson in the nature of bicameral government. In a fashion rooted in the expression of Brutalist ideals, the heroic scale of projecting volumes for the city council chambers and mayor’s office suite put the actions of government on display in the public realm.

Much like the building, the plaza has been host to important city events, ranging from sporting celebrations and circuses, to protests and festivals. In 1976 it was the site of enormous crowds greeting the arrival of Queen Elizabeth II to celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States. That same year the plaza was the backdrop to the indelible Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph by Stanley Forman, “The Soiling of Old Glory,” in which anti-busing protesters attacked an African-American man using the American flag as a weapon. In popular culture, the building and plaza have come to symbolize centralized government facilities, often darkly, in such films ranging from *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973) to *Black Mass* (2015). The 2020 release of Frederick Wiseman’s *City Hall* secured the building a supporting role in a sweeping documentary



Second-round competition perspective of the north entrance.

about Boston's municipal government. Fifty years after completion the building's image remains a potent, iconic symbol of the City of Boston.

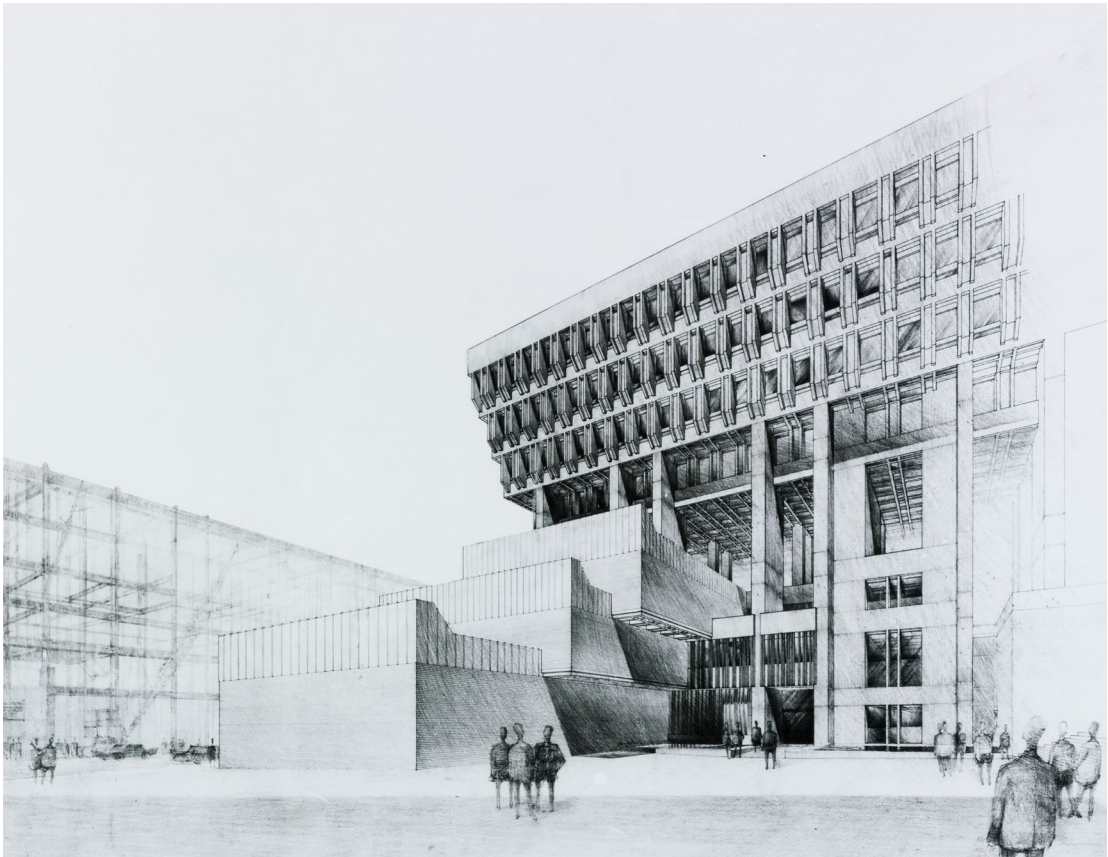
A Masterwork of Brutalism

Conceptually and materially, Boston City Hall has roots in a critique of the prevailing glass and steel modernism of the 1950s and 1960s. The architects later recalled that they “regarded the post-Miesian elegance and minimalism of that time as somewhat exhausted, and had a greater affinity with the architecture of Wright, the late work of Le Corbusier, the Brutalists, and [Louis] Kahn.”² Prior to winning the competition, Kallmann was best known for his theoretical writings on the “New Brutalists” and “Compositional Rigorists,” two budding movements in architecture he traced in his 1959 article, “The ‘Action’ Architecture of a New Generation.”³ In the piece he spelled out a critique of modernist architectural functionalism and made favorable observations about the growing tendencies in architecture toward “action rather than objectives,” which Kallmann saw

“as vital impulses challenging architectural routine.”³ For Kallmann, the key quality of Action Architecture was “the effect of shock therapy in galvanizing architecture out of its lethargy. . . . It is an architecture true only to its own manner of making and doing. In its physical concreteness and firmness of build, it strives for a confirmation of identity and existence to counter the modern fear of nothingness.”⁵

A synthesis of the characteristics of these two movements is evident in Boston City Hall's composition. It shares New Brutalism's “levitation of masses” and call for “actuality” and materials “as found,” while the “manner of doing”—or in this case, pouring and assembling—“is clearly revealed.” This is coupled with the “coherent ‘build of space,’” which Kallmann ascribed to the Compositional Rigorists, often reflected in defining and exposing the building systems within a repeating structural-spatial unit.⁶ City Hall's structural configuration is defined by a precast modular system of Vierendeel trusses with integrated building systems—ducts, pipes, electrical systems, and other mechanical equipment. The building's expressive monumentality joins these two movements in a language of brick, cast-in-place concrete, and precast elements, creating a spatially rich composition of interpenetrating solids and voids within a rigorous structural system. Its forms echo and, in turn, influenced many of the tenants of the strain of Brutalism from that era in the United States.

This American strain had its roots in Europe, where the British historian Reyner



Design development perspective showing the redesigned north entrance.

Banham first defined the characteristics in his 1955 “The New Brutalism” essay appearing in the *Architectural Review*. He considered Brutalism as founded on an “ethic” or set of principles that included “memorability as an image,” “exhibition of structure,” and “valuation of materials ‘as found.’”⁷ These principles set in motion many of the characteristics visible in buildings like Boston City Hall, with its memorable and dynamic profile, its insistence on structure and systems being visible, and its forthright display of its materials—especially concrete, which is formed with the markings of its construction process still on display.

A Lodestone of Architectural and Public Discourse

Recognized as among the most important municipal buildings of its kind in the United States, Boston City Hall has been the subject of wide-ranging publications and has appeared in notable architectural history books, including works by William J. R. Curtis, Francesco Dal Co, Manfredo Tafuri, Charles Jencks, and many others. In these contexts it is portrayed as an exemplar of Brutalism, or more broadly concrete modernism. Its influence can be seen in civic buildings across the globe, from Dallas to Toronto to Istanbul. Its profound role in discourse of the era is

evident both in positive reactions and critiques by successive generations. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, for instance, place the building critically at a hinge point in a line of work from Le Corbusier's La Tourette to a Dallas Neiman Marcus store, through their publication *Learning from Las Vegas*. Their well-known "I am a monument" sketch was a direct proposal to demonstrate what they felt would make a better model for Boston City Hall: a loft office building topped with a flashing billboard, instead of the monumental concrete building that won the competition.

Shortly after its dedication in 1969, architecture writers were effusive. In the *Washington Post*, Wolf Von Eckardt wrote of it as "a great work of architecture . . . that

proclaims the majesty of government by the people."⁸ In the *New York Times*, Ada Louise Huxtable extolled that "Boston can celebrate with the knowledge that it has produced a superior public building in an age that values cheapness over quality as a form of public virtue. It also has one of the handsomest buildings around, and thus far, one of the least understood."⁹ Huxtable hinted at what she called the "architecture gap" between the building's quality and public opinion—a gap that remains evident today. "Its spaces are meant to be grand and permanent, symbolic of the democratic ideals of a city," explained John Conti in the *Wall Street Journal*.¹⁰ In Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's view, writing in *Architectural Forum*, "the highest meaning of the new civic center will come

Design development perspective
and photograph of the west elevation.



not from monumentality but from a gradual awareness of its profound humanism by the citizens.”¹¹

In 1969, the building was awarded an American Institute of Architects Honor Award as well as the Harleston Parker Medal, the highest prize given by the Boston Society of Architects annually to “the most beautiful piece of architecture, building, monument or structure” in Greater Boston completed within the prior decade. In 1976 as part of the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations, the American Institute of Architects conducted a poll of historians and architects to identify the greatest buildings in the United States. Boston City Hall received the sixth most mentions. In his *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800–2000*, historian Doug-

lass Shand-Tucci refers to Boston City Hall as “one of America’s foremost landmarks” and “arguably the great building of twentieth-century Boston.”¹²

By contrast, Boston City Hall has been widely disparaged in the popular press and across media platforms. Members of the public and users of the building have mixed or deeply negative reviews, as documented in an essay on the building’s reception by University of Calgary scholar David Monteyne. “For the most part . . . the general public has not had positive feelings about the design of the building,” referencing typical words used as “overbearing,” “cold,” and “monstrous.”¹³ In a lecture, prominent architect Edward Durell Stone is reported to have commented that “it looks like the crate





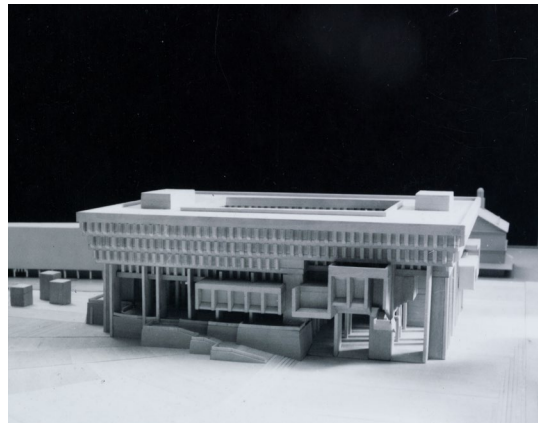
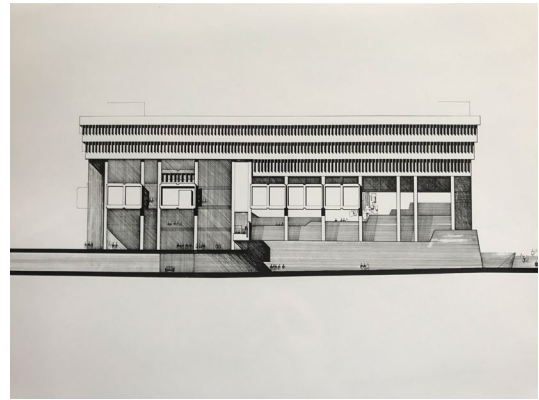
The entrance porch showing the underside of the stepped city council chamber.

that Faneuil Hall might have come in.”¹⁴ Historian Lawrence Kennedy described it as “the building that Bostonians love to hate.”¹⁵ Despite this tradition of disparagement, Boston City Hall has in recent years slowly garnered more widespread respect, paralleling a growing interest in Brutalism worldwide. Its status as a pending landmark in the Boston Landmarks Commission process recognizes its special significance and historical importance.

An Initiator of Restored Interest in Open Competitions in the United States

To select the architects for Boston City Hall, a juried competition was initiated in 1961. Robert Morgan, chair of the Government Center Commission, and Mayor Collins envisioned the independently managed and juried competition as a means to put “a new face on Boston and to shake any vestiges of political favoritism.”¹⁶ Historian Brian Sirman explains a broader political intention, to foreground the mayor’s goals of creating a New Boston that would be politically and economically revitalized. “The competition seemed like the city’s best hope for getting local residents—and people throughout the United States—excited about the New Boston.”¹⁷

Open to architects from across the nation, the process restored interest in competitions as a method of selection for the first time in a generation. Historian Hélène Lipstadt later explained that “the competition and winners were both immediately hailed as models of democratic and equitable municipal practice for design, for they convinced observers not only that the po-



First-round competition elevation and second-round competition model.

litical favoritism had been avoided, but that the competition had allowed young and untried architects to provide the city with an exceptional design.” The results were, as Lipstadt noted, “praised as successful municipal patronage of architecture.”¹⁸

The competition was not without controversy. Although the selection process was managed successfully and independent of political interference, the chosen design caused a wide range of responses, including some furor. One juror, Harold Hodgkinson, later reported Mayor Collins’ own concerning response when viewing the winning proposal for the first time inside the Museum of Fine

Arts. At the very moment of the unveiling, “surprise was evident in every line of his face, then amazement, and then executive composure.” Mayor Collins followed with his observations on the design and competition format. “It is exciting and monumental. I believe in this century it is a really historic event, a design that will live for many years.” Despite his initial look of concerns, the mayor ultimately supported the selection because he believed in the independent process.¹⁹

At a final meeting of the design selection committee, its chair, William Wurster, made a prediction of his own. “Mark my words, the

world will beat a pathway to see this building.” Another member of the jury characterized it more dramatically: “It’s reaching for the stars with a Boston flavor.”²⁰ Juror Hodkinson later noted it was “the first open United States architectural competition for a major public structure” since the San Francisco City Hall competition in 1912, a half century earlier.²¹ Boston’s competition built on the more recent successes of international competitions for Toronto City Hall in 1958 and the Sydney Opera House in 1957. It set the groundwork for subsequent competitions locally and across the nation, many of which used Boston’s experience as

[View of the plaza with the original fountain.](#)

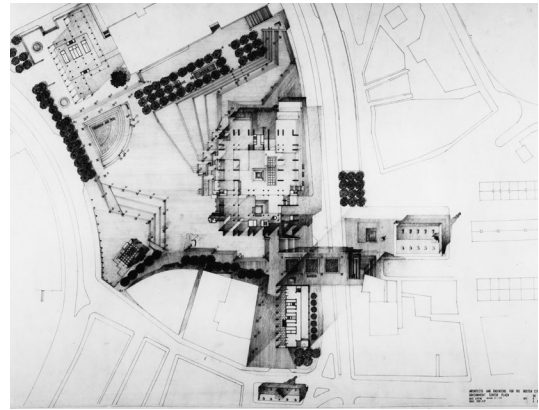


a model and inspiration. These include the Boston Architectural Center (1963), the AIA Headquarters in Washington (1964), the University of California, Berkeley, Arts Center (1965), and civic centers in California for Los Gatos, Fremont, Santa Rosa, and Fairfield.²² Lipstadt expresses its most fundamental impact succinctly: Boston's success "restored the competition process to respect as a successful means of selecting an architect."²³

An Economic Catalyst and Example of a U.S. City's Urban Renewal Program

Boston City Hall and its plaza are part of the larger Government Center complex developed as a means of rejuvenating a stagnant city through governmental investment and urban renewal planning. The Boston City Hall competition program spelled out these economic motivations: "A major objective of Government Center is to stimulate regeneration of the declining central business district."²⁴ The siting of City Hall within the plan was determined for its accessibility and to help resuscitate business activity in the heart of the central city. As one competition juror later noted about the results of this process, these efforts "sparked [a] great building spree" in the surrounding downtown core of Boston.²⁵

The site's master plan is an example of early planning by the firm I. M. Pei and Associates, and was overseen by Pei and Henry N. Cobb. The plaza's design was later completed by Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles. It was conceived to be inextricably linked to the City Hall building itself. A continuous use of the brick ground plane from plaza to build-



Plaza-level site and building plan showing the continuity of public space and a proposed bridge to Faneuil Hall.

ing is meant to express accessibility and openness, connecting the plaza to the public functions of the lower levels of the municipal structure. The interior courtyard at the fourth floor was designed to be reached from the plaza via a ramping stair. In keeping with the larger aspirations of a new, progressive political era, this space was conceived to allow the public to walk from the plaza, through the core of the building, to Congress Street without ever needing to open a doorway.

Ada Louise Huxtable called City Hall Plaza a "skillful use of urban space," one that could take its place "among the world's great city spaces."²⁶ With a complex topography of brick surfaces and stone stairs, it represents an open and democratic vision for public gatherings, protests, and events. Careful consideration was given to preserving views of the Old North Church and Faneuil Hall from the plaza and Tremont Street. The entire complex is interconnected with the historical context of Quincy Market and Beacon Hill through what is known

as the “Walk to the Sea,” a sequence of public monuments and spaces that includes Government Center. Huxtable observed that the building itself is “a powerful focus for the new Government Center that has replaced the sordid charms of the old Scollay Square. It confers, in a kind of architectural status transferral, an instant image of progressive excellence on a city government traditionally known for something less than creativity and quality.”²⁷

The plaza and the larger Government Center reflect many of the principles—and failures—of 1960s urban renewal planning: a reduction in the number of streets, enlarging of automotive thoroughfares, the creation of pedestrian plazas separated from motorists, increased lot sizes for the needs of government agencies, and a focused zone dedicated primarily to a single function of government services. It also exhibits a commitment to the preservation and activation of key buildings such as the Sears Crescent, Faneuil Hall, and the Old Statehouse.

The city has evolved around Government Center, in part due to the project’s success as a catalyst. The adjacent commercial center has become more mixed-use, multimodal, and vibrant, characterized by preservation and densification as well as commercial and residential developments. The streets once planned as high-traffic thoroughfares have, in recent years, been activated with greater pedestrian life and commercial activity. An ongoing plan for the redevelopment of Boston City Hall Plaza

will bring this more active cityscape closer to the building, by stimulating increased vibrancy surrounding the building itself and spreading outward across the Government Center complex.

The First Work of an Acclaimed U.S. Architecture Partnership

Boston City Hall and City Hall Plaza are reflections of the theoretical and formal ideals of a partnership between Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell. As their first building together and an unprecedented entry into practice at such a high profile, the structure had an enormous influence on their later work and their illustrious careers that spanned five decades. Notable early commissions following the City Hall competition included a heavy presence of the concrete modern vocabulary, seen in the Government Center Garage (Boston), Exeter Academy’s athletics building (Exeter, New Hampshire), and the Five Cents Savings Bank (Boston). The bank was awarded after Kallmann and McKinnell won an invited competition initiated by the bank’s chair, Robert Morgan, who had led the Government Center Commission.

Later work under the firm name Kallmann McKinnell and Wood received awards, honors, and wide recognition as well, especially the firm’s transformative American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Cambridge), which signaled a new aesthetic direction for the partnership during the rise of postmodernism. These later works still drew from the



Top: Aerial view during construction.

Bottom: View of the east and north elevations from the Union Oyster House.



original preoccupations and expressions of symbolic forms first tested at Boston City Hall. In some respects, the interest in symbols and ancient memories evoked by Boston City Hall presaged some of the next two decades' discourse, albeit more abstractly in the earlier model. Kallmann McKinnell and Wood's projects have ranged from uni-

versity buildings to civic structures across the country and around the globe, including embassies, courthouses, and museums. Kallmann passed away in June 2012 and McKinnell died in March 2020. Their firm Kallmann McKinnell and Wood continues under a new generation of architects.

- 1 Ada Louise Huxtable, "Boston's New City Hall: A Public Building of Quality," *The New York Times* (February 8, 1969): 33.
- 2 Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, "Original Thinking: Reflections on the Genesis of Boston City Hall," *ArchitectureBoston* (May/June 2005): 33.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Gerhard Kallmann, "The 'Action' Architecture of a New Generation," *Architectural Forum* (October 1959): 133.
- 5 Ibid., 134, 244.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism," *The Architectural Review* (December 1955): 361.
- 8 Wolf Von Eckardt, "Boston Builds Challenge to Dulles Terminal," *The Washington Post* (April 2, 1967).
- 9 Ada Louise Huxtable, "Boston's New City Hall: A Public Building of Quality," *The New York Times* (February 8, 1969): 33.
- 10 John Conti, "A New City Hall: Boston's Boost for Urban Renewal," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 12, 1969).
- 11 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, "Boston's City Hall: It Binds the Past to the Future," *Architectural Forum* (January/February 1969): 47.
- 12 Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800–2000* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999): 279.
- 13 David Monteyne, "Boston City Hall and a History of Reception," *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 65, No. 1 (October 2011): 45–62.
- 14 Reported in a clipping from an article "New City Hall Like a Crate?" Dated May 13, 1966. Historic New England archives.
- 15 Walter Muir Whitehill and Lawrence W. Kennedy, *Boston: A Topographical History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000): 242.
- 16 Harold D. Hodgkinson, "Miracle in Boston," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*: 77.
- 17 Brian M. Sirman, *Concrete Changes: Architecture, Politics, and the Design of Boston City Hall* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 58.
- 18 Hélène Lipstadt, ed., *The Experimental Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), 99.
- 19 Hodgkinson, 78.
- 20 Ibid., 78.
- 21 Ibid., 77.
- 22 Sirman, 78.
- 23 Lipstadt, 99.
- 24 Government Center Commission, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (1961): 15.
- 25 Hodgkinson, 79.
- 26 Ada Louise Huxtable, "New Boston Center: Skillful Use of Urban Space," *The New York Times* (September 11, 1972): 73.
- 27 Ada Louise Huxtable, "Boston's New City Hall: A Public Building of Quality," *The New York Times* (February 8, 1969): 33.



Michael McKinnell (left) and Gerhard Kallmann (right) in 1964.



Kallmann and McKinnell, Boston Five Cents Savings Bank, 1972.

Section 3.2

Statement of Significance

Architectural and Urban Significance

Boston City Hall was commissioned through a national competition in 1962 and opened to the public in 1969. The winning scheme by Gerhard Kallmann, Michael McKinnell, and Edward Knowles was constructed faithfully to the intentions outlined in their competition entry. The building is an outstanding and internationally significant example of concrete modernism, formed from a synthesis of ideas and ideals by its authors, and reflecting the importance of its central function in the municipal life of the city. Its architectural and urban significance are demonstrated by:

Receiving worldwide recognition as an archetype of the movement known as Brutalism, shown in the building's publications, critical praise, distinctions and honors, and its status as a pending Boston landmark.

Becoming the object of intense debate by the public and the architectural community surrounding its design characteristics and ideas.

Expressing a dynamic composition of elements, its materials in a forthright manner, the full-spirited display of its structure and systems, and an overall character of monumentality meant to communicate the importance of the civic realm.

Reflecting the launch point of a lifelong architectural partnership between noted architects Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, setting the foundation

of their half century of practice together, distinguished by award-winning projects across the globe.

Cultural, Political, and Economic Significance

During its lifetime, Boston City Hall has become an iconic structure and an important symbol of Boston. It was a protagonist in the transformation of the city during the 1960s, responding to a desire to symbolize a new political order while demonstrating new economic opportunities for a previously struggling city. Its cultural, political, and economic significance are noted by:

Symbolizing the bicameral structure of government with the mayor's office and city council chamber on display and expressing the three layers of governmental functions—public, ceremonial, municipal—through formal and material distinctions.

Hosting significant political, social, and cultural events and accommodating the needs of many residents for more than half a century in the building and on the plaza, from protests and celebrations to key policy debates and initiatives across five mayoral administrations.

Convening the public and civil servants in the day-to-day functioning of municipal government through small and large personal milestones, from marriages to deeds of purchase, to the registering of births and adoptions.

Signifying a new political order under the moniker of the New Boston through its independent process of selection, design, and construction, to overcome the city's past reputation for corruption.

Representing the achievements of renewal in Boston as the keystone building of the Government Center complex, which contributed to the resuscitation of the city's flagging economy.

Section 3.3

Levels of Significance

Four contributing factors of significance were evaluated as part of this assessment:

Architectural Value

The element contributes to the architectural success of the building. Does it have special compositional or aesthetic qualities involving combinations of color, texture, spaces, massing, detail, or dynamism? Does it express the architectural tenets of the movement known as Brutalism? Is it a clear embodiment of an architectural idea or the intention of its architects? An element of architectural value reflects specific and meaningful design intent.

Social and Civic Value

The element has meaning to City Hall's particular community. Does it host civic functions such as city council meetings or provide a gathering space for public discourse? Does the element assert or embrace the presence of the public, or demonstrate the democratic aspirations of the design? Elements of social and civic value should have meaning to the public and the building's occupants.

Historic and Political Value

The element represents the building's historic role as the center of Boston government since 1969. Have important events occurred in proximity to this element? Is its presence a signifier or reminder of a moment in history?

Technical and Material Value

The element demonstrates the technical aspirations of the building. Do its materials exhibit an exemplary expression of the structure, systems, or process of construction? Is the element a part of the building's strategy to maximize future flexibility?

Significance is assessed without regard for operational functionality or potential for change, and as such is not directly linked to the development of policies. However, significance is one of the most important factors when developing policies and considering change.

Each part, major space, and element of Boston City Hall was assessed and assigned a level of significance. An evaluation was completed in collaboration with the City Working Group representing the Mayor's Cabinet, Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, Public Facilities Department, Property Management Department, Boston Planning and Redevelopment Agency, and Boston Landmarks Commission. The levels of significance are:

- • • **High Significance**

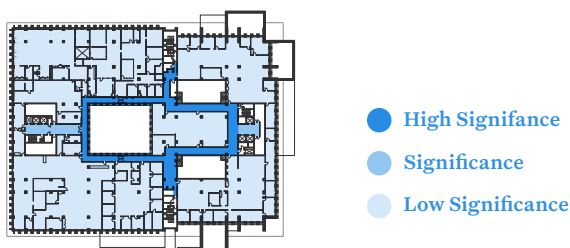
Elements that are of exceptional interest and make a fundamental contribution to significance

- • **Significance**

Elements that are of notable interest and make a contribution to significance

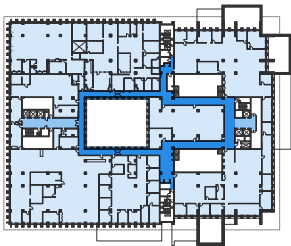
- **Low Significance**

Elements that are of some interest and make a minor contribution to significance

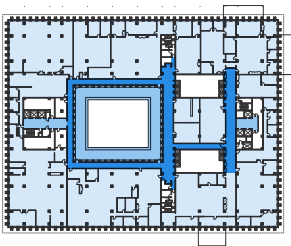


Elements such as restrooms and egress stairs that are fundamental to the functions of the building but not individually significant are not assigned a level of significance or discussed in this conservation management plan.

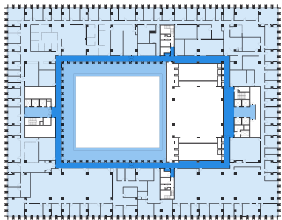
Schedule of Levels of Significance



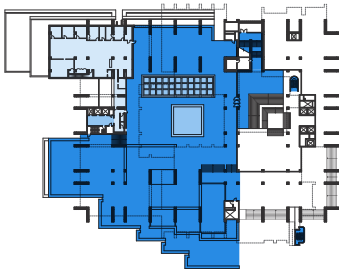
Floor 7



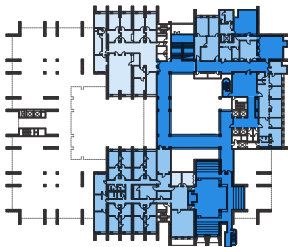
Floor 8



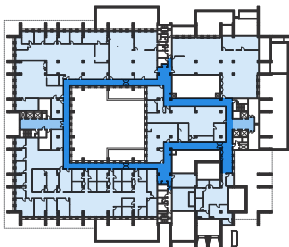
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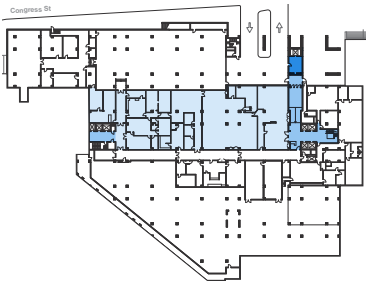
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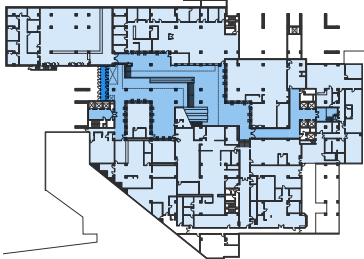
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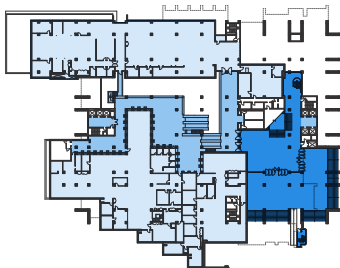
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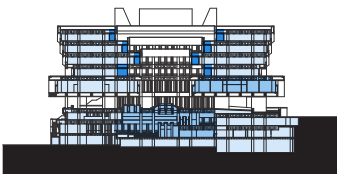
Floor 1



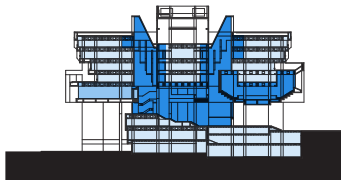
Floor 2



Floor 3 and M



Section looking south through courtyard



Section looking south through plaza lobby

- High Significance
- Significance
- Low Significance

• • •	Exterior	•	Service Level
• • •	Public Levels	• •	Congress Street Porch
• • •	Historic Public Entrances	• •	Mayor's Drop-Off
• • •	Ramped Steps to Courtyard	• •	Mayor's Elevator
• • •	Fire Stair to Council Chamber	•	Vestibule
• • •	Corbelled Walls	•	Inner Lobby
• •	Stair to Courtyard	• •	Elevator Core and Lobby
• • •	Ceremonial Levels	• •	Open Stair
• • •	Structural Piers and Columns		
• • •	Hoods	• • •	Ceremonial Level
• • •	Municipal Levels	• • •	Mayor's Office
• • •	Precast Fins	• • •	Eagle Room
• •	Windows	• • •	Bronze Hallway
• • •	Courtyard	• •	Mayor's Reception
• • •	Coffered Ceiling	• •	Mayor's Administrative Offices
• • •	Courtyard Ground Plane	• •	City Council Reception
• •	Courtyard Skylights	• • •	City Council Chamber
		• •	Curley Room and Piemonte Room
• • •	Plaza Lobby Level	• •	City Council Offices
• • •	Entrance Porch	• • •	Public Circulation and Bridge
• • •	Plaza Level Foyer	• • •	Ceremonial Stair to Fifth Floor
• • •	Monumental Stair		
• • •	Mayor's Stair	• •	Municipal Levels
• • •	Fifth Floor Gallery and Bridge	•	Public Meeting Rooms
• •	Elevator Core and Lobby	• •	Elevator Core and Lobbies
• • •	Coffered Cast-in-Place Ceiling	• • •	Circulation
• • •	Light Wells	•	Administrative Offices
		• •	Courtyard Balconies
• •	Transaction Levels		
• • •	North Entrance	• • •	Systemic Elements
• • •	Connection between Levels	• •	Skylights
• •	Skylights	• • •	Vierendeel Trusses and Ceiling Grid
• •	Transaction Windows	• • •	Mullioned Exterior Curtain Wall
•	Administrative Offices	• • •	Mullioned Interior Storefront
		• •	Lighting
		•	Service Infrastructure





4.0

Issues and Opportunities

4.1 An Evolving Context 59

4.2 Potential for Change 64

Section 4.1

An Evolving Context

“This isn’t a building where the pattern is frozen, where if you move one detail, you ruin everything. The process of democratic government is the meaning of City Hall. It should never be finished.”¹

—Michael McKinnell, 1969

From Urban Renewal Zone to a Tourist Destination

Boston City Hall was completed as part of 1960s urban renewal. The eastern facade was built with the assumption that Congress Street would become a high-traffic artery to funnel commuters into the downtown. In response, City Hall fronted Congress Street with a tall brick wall and only one minor entrance. Today, the area across Congress street has become one of the most popular tourist and shopping destinations in all of Boston—Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market. The Congress Street entrance is used by City Hall employees and people with disabilities because of its proximity to the street and to nearby MBTA stations. It is the only after-hours door for all entering or leaving the building after 5:00pm, including staff departing at the end of the workday and the general public coming to the building for evening meetings.

From Public Passage to a Secure Area

Boston City Hall was envisioned to provide open public access to the lower floors and

the courtyard. The architects sequenced the entrances, the level changes, even the materials around this central premise, and it remains one of the building’s most important contributions to municipal architecture. However, public space security demands have changed after September 11, 2001, resulting in the closure of courtyard and the north entrance, the increased use of the Congress Street entrance, and changes in the plaza lobby. While the north entrance will be re-opened as part of a current project, the courtyard remains closed.

From Paper Bureaucracy to Public Meetings in the Age of the Internet Forum

The original competition brief challenged respondents to design for a very specific set of programmatic needs. This specificity is part of what allowed the building to be such a departure from previous city halls. However, many of the operations required of a city government in the 1960s have shifted again as a result of technological

advances and the changing role of municipal governance. Boston City Hall was built as the symbol of mid-century efficiency, but now it should be adapted into a symbol of twenty-first century participation.

Public Education

While Boston City Hall has been long lauded by the architectural community, the general public's reaction to the building is often deeply negative. Many of these views are responses to disparaging portrayals in the popular media throughout its lifetime. The city led a public process as a part of the Rethink City Hall master plan with the intention of using public opinion to guide possible changes to Boston City Hall and its plaza. Initial pilot projects that address the most public-facing spaces have improved

the building's image and its reception by the general public. This is a meaningful first move but only a small step to narrow the gap in the public's esteem.

Political Vulnerability

Boston City Hall and City Hall Plaza have long been vulnerable as symbols of political isolation and urban renewal. After decades of neglect, Mayor Walsh saw the building's potential and the value in its easily accessible downtown location, and chose to showcase investment in public life through a series of small tactical projects in the building and plaza to indicate a new era. In 2015 the city introduced plastic turf, lawn games, and Adirondack chairs to the plaza in an effort to enliven the area in front of the plaza lobby. Following a positive reception to that

Security equipment and a new information desk in the plaza lobby.



intervention, the city funded projects to light the building's exterior, including the replacement of 180 original recessed lights that had not functioned in more than twenty-five years. A small improvement in the plaza lobby reconfigured security equipment and created a welcoming entrance with new wayfinding. More recently, the city partnered with the Delaware North Companies Inc. for a three-year operating pilot to bring programming and events to the plaza. An ongoing first-phase plaza renovation will reimagine a more accessible and lively place.

Changes in Use

The building is used as the City of Boston's principal municipal building and its seat of government, housing the mayor's office, city council offices and chamber, and many

city departments. As the Rethink City Hall master plan revealed, changing needs—technology, security, accessibility—along with an evolution in the way the city does business, have led to a breakdown in the building's original tripartite interior organization. For instance, changing departmental needs and growth have led to a disorienting arrangement of hard-to-find public meeting rooms and resident services on the upper levels, which were originally intended as administrative levels, not for the public. The second- and third-floor transaction concourse was an area originally designed to accommodate 2,800 daily visitors for civic functions such as paying taxes and parking tickets and registering to vote. Currently it sees only 260 visitors per day on average, leaving the area severely underutilized and

Transaction-level concourse.





North elevation and entrance.

empty. The original entrance to the transaction-level concourse, which opens directly onto the plaza on the building's north side, was closed after September 11, 2001. Changing technology, along with active dislike for and neglect of the building, led to new electrical and data lines haphazardly draped across the building's interior and exterior. The courtyard, originally intended to be accessed directly from the plaza and to be part of the public realm, was also closed after September 11, 2001.

Mounting Deferred Maintenance

The 515,000 square foot building celebrated its fiftieth year of service in 2019 and is showing commensurate signs of age. Due in large part to the durable materials used in construction, the building remains in nearly its original configuration with very minor deterioration or physical alterations to the interior or exterior.

The materials consist of a cast-in-place concrete structure (exposed on the interior and exterior), precast concrete fins and spandrels on the exterior, precast concrete ceiling trusses on the interior, brick walls on the exterior and interior, brownstone coping on the exterior, brick paving (interior and exterior), aluminum windows, steel curtain wall, steel door and entry framing on the interior, bronze trim and decorative elements, clay tile flooring, and polyester terrazzo flooring.

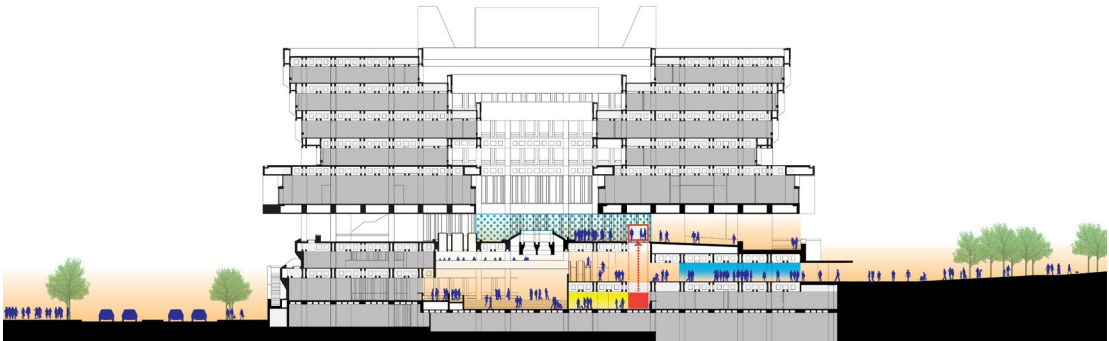
The concrete appears to be in relatively good condition, with some cracks and spalls in the precast and cast-in-place elements. The brick is experiencing more distress, with efflorescence, open mortar joints, and areas of inappropriate brick and mortar repairs. Open joints at the brownstone parapet caps are allowing water infiltration and accelerating adjacent brick deterioration. Ongoing buckling of interior floor tiles is most likely due to the lack of expansion joints in the building.

A phased plan to address these issues was proposed as part of the 2017 Rethink City Hall master plan. This conservation management plan provides the guidelines for addressing these issues while maintaining and enhancing the building's original design intent, significance, and character-defining elements.

¹ Michael McKinnell as quoted in Robert Taylor, "A Plain Man's Guide to City Hall: the architects tell us why they designed it that way," *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969). B16.

Top: Aerial rendering of the Boston City Hall Plaza Phase 1 Renovation project by Sasaki.

Bottom: Section drawing showing possible uses for Boston City Hall from the 2017 Rethink City Hall master plan by Utile.



Section 4.2

Potential for Change

Over the years many changes to the building have been considered, including those outlined in the 2017 Rethink City Hall master plan. A number of these considerations are listed here, which range from small-scale to sweeping changes in the building's organization and urban persona. Although this conservation management plan addresses the potential for change, the plan does not advocate for or against any particular potential changes. The intent of this conservation management plan is to provide a context in which decisions regarding future changes can be made.



The space now known as the Eagle Room was originally set up as the mayor's office.

Some previously considered changes include:

- Enclosing the courtyard in glass
- Creating openings in the brick walls facing the plaza
- Creating openings in the brick walls facing Congress Street
- Improving accessibility to the fourth-floor mezzanine
- Replacing the escalators to the lower level with elevators
- Removing or improving courtyard skylights
- Expanding the Congress Street entrance
- Introducing environmental features, such as solar panels
- Moving public functions to the lower levels for improved access
- Restoring and reopening the mayor's stair
- Replacing individual transaction windows with shared service counters and meeting spaces
- Introducing additional considerations for improved public health
- Removing revolving doors and adding a vestibule to the plaza entrance
- Introducing heating, sound control, audio-visual, and event infrastructure in the plaza lobby
- Introducing code upgrades and guard rails in the plaza lobby's monumental stair and fire stairs
- Modifying or removing the monumental stair
- Renovating bathrooms to address accessibility
- Developing and implementing signage system standards
- Reconsidering new uses for the transaction zone
- Adding an interior and exterior café at the public levels





5.0

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View of the east elevation from Congress Street.

Section 5.1

Conservation Strategy

“We have dared to hold a national competition and we have dared to choose a building of great modern design. We have dared to recreate the center of our city in a government center that has few equals in this country—or abroad—for beauty of design and breadth of concept. We have dared to say that—as Boston once was—so Boston will be again—a city prosperous, progressive, and preeminent.”¹

—Mayor John F. Collins, September 18, 1963

The first chapters of this plan—Introduction, Understanding the Place, and Assessment of Significance—provide the background and context behind the building’s design and assess its significance. The fourth chapter, Issues and Opportunities, describes the building’s current context and concerns the building’s occupants face. This chapter, Conservation Policies, further describes the building, while providing policies and recommendations for maintenance and adaptations. Each element of the building has been assessed individually and assigned a level of significance.

The purpose of the conservation policies is to provide guidance for maintenance practices and inform decision-making with regard to future change in ways that reinforce and retain the building’s significance. The section titled Principles and Overall Policies lays out standards that guide the more specific policies and recommendations found throughout this chapter.

Each section begins with an introduction that outlines the design principles and context for the more specific descriptions of the elements to follow. Policies should be read in conjunction with the associated text, as this will make the context clear and aid in interpretation. Each part of the building is described, followed by a description of its elements and its main materials.

¹ Brian M. Sirman, *Concrete Changes: Architecture, Politics, and the Design of Boston City Hall* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 86.

Section 5.2

Policy and Recommendation Types

The conservation policies and recommendations that follow take three aspects into consideration: significance of the part, space, or element; operational functionality; and potential for change. The policies and recommendations are broken into three categories, with a recommended process for each based on the level of change being considered, and also reflect governance structure identified in the City of Boston Charter and Municipal Code. Each is labeled with a corresponding color: green, yellow, red.

Maintenance and Management

Work related to policies for maintenance, management, and temporary changes can generally be carried out by the **Property Management Department** without additional review.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

Work related to policies for minor alterations and rehabilitation should be coordinated with the **Cabinet, Public Facilities Department, and Property Management Department**, and should be conducted with a greater degree of consideration.

Potential Change

Work related to policies for substantial changes to the building's fabric should be coordinated with the **Cabinet, Public Facilities Department, Property Management Department**, and should be conducted with the greatest degree of consideration. It is recommended that substantial changes are reviewed with the **Boston Landmarks Commission**.



Landmark Status

The exterior and plaza lobby have pending landmark status with the Boston Landmarks Commission. Any alterations or changes to these areas should follow already-established advisory review processes with the Boston Landmarks Commission.

Policies for Maintenance and Management

Recommended department to involve:

Property Management Department (PMD)

Policies for Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

Recommended departments to involve:

Cabinet

Public Facilities Department (PFD)

Property Management Department (PMD)

Policies for Potential Change

Recommended departments to involve:

Cabinet

Public Facilities Department (PFD)

Property Management Department (PMD)

It is recommended that substantial changes are reviewed with:

Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC)

Examples:

Patching or cleaning of terrazzo flooring



Examples:

Wholesale replacement of terrazzo flooring (in kind)



Examples:

Replacement of terrazzo flooring with a different material

Repairing of steel mullions



Replacing steel mullions (in kind)



Replacing steel mullion system with a different system

Repairing, repointing, or cleaning of ramp steps



Replacement of ramp steps brick treads (in kind)



Change to configuration or materials of ramp steps

Section 5.3

Principles and Overall Policies

Conservation Principles

I This document is based on the 2017 *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Properties*. The treatment *rehabilitation* has been identified as the appropriate standard to follow for work conducted on Boston City Hall. Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The Secretary of the Interior's rehabilitation standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building's historic character.

II The conservation management plan (CMP) should be formally adopted by the City of Boston.

III The conservation management plan should be consulted whenever work to the building or parts of the plaza touching the building is being planned or carried out. Adequate planning time within individual projects should be allotted for decisions to be made that are fully informed by the CMP.

IV Recognize that the building, a pending Boston landmark, is highly significant with cultural, political, architectural, economic, and historic value. Respect the original design intentions, including its symbolism, programmatic organization, the objective to allow for change, and the relationships among the building, plaza, and their surrounding context.

V Respect the original design intentions when addressing the evolving roles and functions of municipal government.

VI Ensure that all conservation work is safe, environmentally sound, economically viable, and sustainable. Repair, maintenance, and alterations should consider the level of significance, tolerance for change, public health and safety, operational priority, and extent of damage.

Overall Policies

01 Recognize that the Commissioner of Property Management—as the steward of Boston City Hall designated in the City of Boston’s Charter and Municipal Code—is solely responsible for implementing the recommendations of the CMP on all maintenance and capital work. Projects within areas of significance or high significance, major alterations, or renovations should coordinate with a representative from the cabinet and Public Facilities Department (PFD). Additionally, work within areas of pending landmark status (exterior and plaza lobby) and substantial changes should be reviewed with the Boston Landmarks Commission. It is recommended that substantial changes include an engagement process with the residents of the city as well as local preservation groups that might have a stake in the historic architecture of Boston. In times of a public health or safety crisis, the protocols of the CMP may be overridden to more effectively meet the responsibility of municipal government to the health and safety of the public.

02 Review, evaluate, and update the CMP every five to ten years. Maintain an ongoing log of modifications keyed into the full CMP that documents new discoveries and procedures.

03 Produce a maintenance manual specifying cycles on which inspections are to be performed with procedures for necessary repair.

04 Retain as much of the original significant and highly significant fabric *in situ* as possible and continue its repair as defined in the *Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

- 05** Strive for conservation that is proactive rather than reactive, guided by the principle “as much as necessary and as little as possible.” Repair wherever feasible; consider replacement only as a last resort.
- 06** Prior to commencement of work, record (with photographs and/or drawings) all original elements to be altered or removed when repair, replacement, or alteration is undertaken.
- 07** Identify and implement alternative strategies for routing new building mechanical services and providing temporary signage and exhibits. Use original routing strategies (exterior wall chases, or within concrete ceiling grid) wherever possible.
- 08** In keeping with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for New Additions*, elements that are added should be designed and constructed “so that the character-defining features of the historic building, its site, and setting are not negatively impacted.”¹
- 09** The lighting strategy throughout the building should be systematic and based on the original design strategy, while allowing for appropriate light levels. Lighting should be integrated into the architecture and ceiling grid.
- 10** All work to exterior and interior surfaces—including cleaning, affixing signage, etc.—should follow the materials and methods detailed in the CMP.
- 11** Photograph the elevations of the exterior and the major interior spaces of the building every five years to document change over time.
- 12** Establish qualifications requirements consistent with applicable public bidding requirements for consultants and contractors who work on design and construction projects. Engage qualified professionals whenever work is undertaken on the building.

¹ *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, (2017): 79.

13 When planning alterations or changes to the building refer to Climate Ready Boston and the associated plan for Downtown Boston to design for resiliency regarding predicted flooding and sea-level rise.

General Cleaning Guidance

- Start with the gentlest means possible: water and a sponge can yield effective results.
- If necessary, stubborn staining may be cleaned with the use of a nylon bristle brush. As masonry surfaces are porous, avoid cleaning in weather conditions that may risk freezing before the water can safely dry and evaporate from the surface.
- Cleaning should proceed in small, manageable sections at a time.
- If stronger cleaning is required, chemical solutions can typically be used. These solutions should be pH neutral—neither acidic nor alkaline. The use of non-neutral cleaners will be near impossible to neutralize and can cause long-term damage to the substrate.
- For bronze and wood surfaces, the recommended cleaner is Orvus paste, which is a biodegradable, anionic, pH neutral cleaner activated with water.
- For concrete surfaces, products such as Prosoco 942 Limestone and Marble Cleaner, or Prosoco Cleaner and Degreaser are near-pH neutral and are effective for these surfaces.
- At times when public health issues require alcohol-based surface cleaning, the use of such products should be limited to surfaces that are routinely contacted by humans. Because these solutions are alcohol based, the alcohol will evaporate and will not dwell into the substrate, minimizing the possibility of long-term damage to surfaces. It should be noted, alcohol will disinfect the surface, but not clean organic matter.





5.4

Exterior

Overall Rating of Significance: High

- 5.4.1** **A Civic Monument** 81
- 5.4.2** **Public Levels** 85
- 5.4.3** **Ceremonial Level** 97
- 5.4.4** **Municipal Levels** 103
- 5.4.5** **Courtyard** 109

Section 5.4.1

A Civic Monument

“The building is a successful demonstration of how a structure can be planned to show what it does. In the language of architects, it articulates its functions. The ceremonial spaces (the council chambers and mayor’s office), for instance are emphasized and their location made apparent by the way they project over the city square and by deep hoods around the windows. The architecture itself makes the building easily understandable to anyone approaching it.”¹

—John Conti, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 1969

Boston City Hall was conceived by its architects as a monumental building that would embody a progressive view of municipal government and celebrate democratic values, openness, and civic life. As the centerpiece of the larger effort to modernize Boston under the slogan of the “New Boston,” Boston City Hall is the gravitational core of the Government Center complex, while also establishing relationships with neighboring historical structures such as the Sears Crescent and Faneuil Hall.

The structure’s form grew from the demands of the original competition brief, which identified three types of building functions: “Administrative Departments with Heavy Public Traffic,” spaces of “Symbolic Importance,” and “Other Administrative Departments” that did not require significant public access.² The architects envisioned a tripartite arrangement, with a brick mound containing public services, a middle zone with monumental columns and ceremonial spaces symbolizing the func-

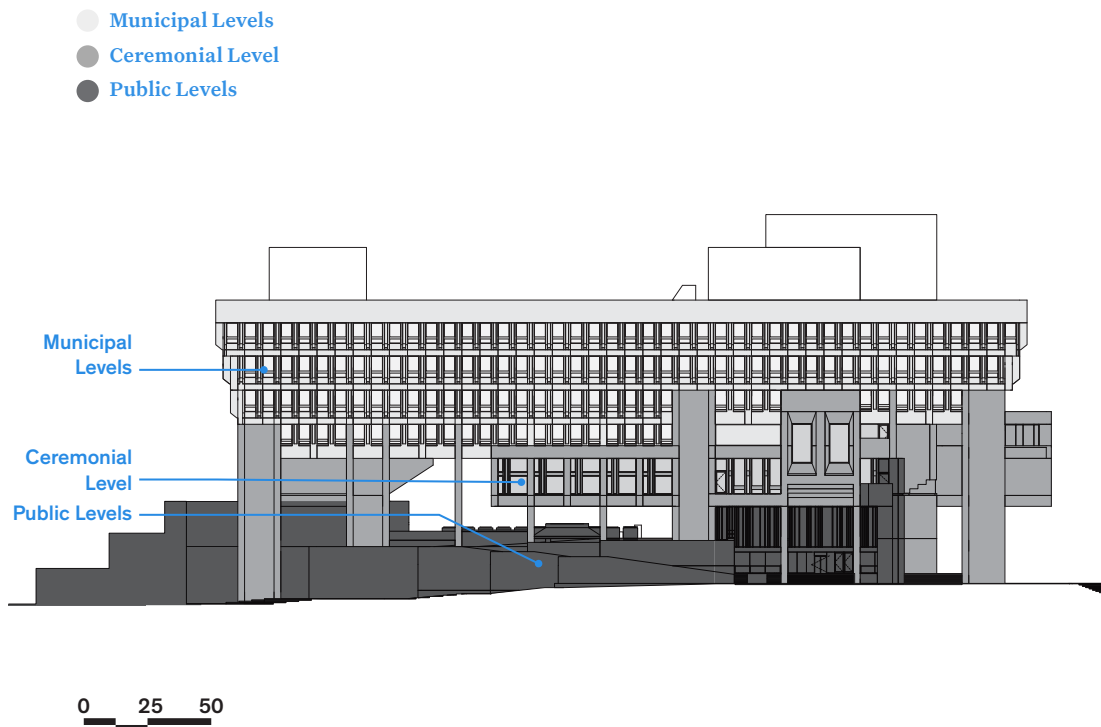
tioning of government, and several stories above as a crown of office spaces for the municipal bureaucracy. These three layers are each identified on the elevations with a predominant material: brick for the lower public functions, cast-in-place concrete for the ceremonial areas, and precast concrete for the upper floors.

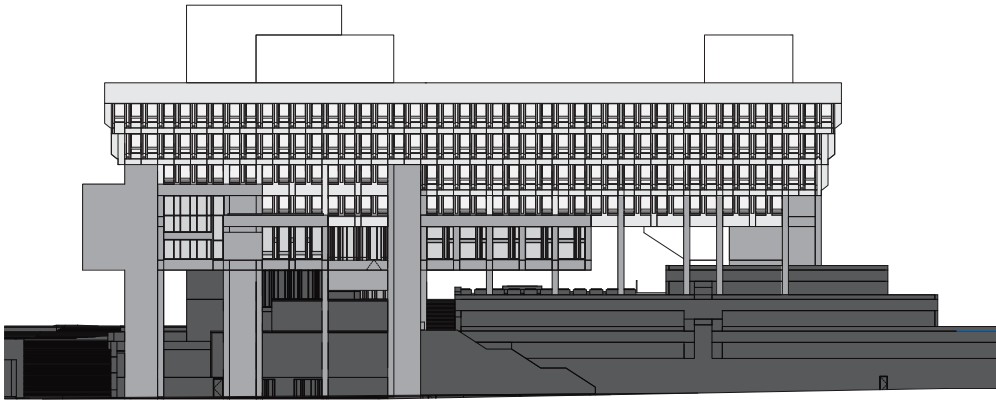
The jury of distinguished architects and local business leaders selected the scheme by Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles from 256 submissions in a two-round process. Members of the jury were drawn to the design as “a keystone between the historic past and brilliant future which is to come” and an “alive and exciting solution to the program.”³ The competition jury’s report emphasized the importance of the building’s “great monumentality, drama and unity . . . the play of light and shade, the richness of forms and spaces,” seeing it as “a daring yet classical architectural statement, contained within a vigorous unified form.”⁴

These qualities are present in the symbolic elements of the building, with its landscape of brick surfaces, suspended concrete masses, multi-story monumental columns, and repetitive fins. The city's Design Advisory Committee—made up of Pietro Belluschi, Josep Lluís Sert, Henry R. Shepley, and Hugh Stubbins—reviewed the proposal in 1962 and found it to be “a powerful concept [that] proposes a building which is strong in character and possesses the sculptural quality needed to create a symbol of city government.”⁵ Its interpenetrations of solid and void, its material palette, and its mix of regular and idiosyncratic components provide a composition that reflects the importance of government in society.

Architecturally the design is rooted in two movements of the era, as expressed by Gerhard Kallmann in his essay of 1959, “The ‘Action’ Architecture of a New Generation,” which describes “an architecture true only to its own manner of making and doing.” On the one hand, Boston City Hall shares Brutalism’s “levitation of masses” and its call for using materials “as found,” including revealing the process of making, especially in concrete. On the other hand, it follows the patterns of logic of the Compositional Rigoirists, who were drawn to the “coherent ‘build of space,’” as evident in Boston City Hall’s exposure of its mechanical systems and consistent use of a uniform structural grid.⁶ By synthesizing these two movements, of-

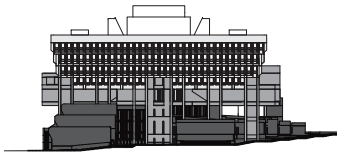
West Elevation



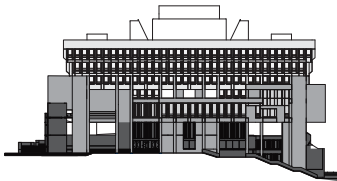


0 25 50

East Elevation



North Elevation



South Elevation

ten most closely associated with the work of modernist architects Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn respectively, Boston City Hall establishes its own monumental conception of materials, structure, systems, and form.

Reception of and reactions to the building's design and aesthetic have been mixed, often receiving high praise from architectural critics and negative reactions from the general public. At their heart, the exterior elevations are meant to express monumental symbols of government as a way of demystifying bureaucracy, ennobling civic life, and communicating the city's highest democratic aspirations.

- 1 John Conti, "A New City Hall: Boston's Boost for Urban Renewal," *The Wall Street Journal* (February 12, 1969).
- 2 Lawrence Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 19.
- 3 William W. Wurster, Chairman, et al., *Jury report to Lawrence B. Anderson* (May 3, 1962). Letter from the jury to Mr. Lawrence B. Anderson, May 3, 1962.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Hugh Stubbins, Chairman, et al., Design Advisory Committee letter to Hon. John F. Collins (June 4, 1962). Obtained from the Boston City Hall Competition Materials, Shaw and Stone Library of the Boston Architectural College.
- 6 G. M. Kallmann, "The 'Action' Architecture of a New Generation." *Architectural Forum* 111 (October 1959): 244.



View of the southwest corner during construction of the plaza.



Public Levels

Elements

Historic Public Entrances

Ramped Steps to Courtyard

Fire Stair to Council Chamber

Corbelled Walls

Stair to Courtyard

The lower public levels of Boston City Hall form a mound-like volume that was envisioned as a foothill to the nearby Beacon Hill. This is clad in brick and brownstone to reinforce the reference to Beacon Hill's traditional architecture. The brick volumes step in and out of the rigorous structural grid of the levels above.

The use of brick signifies continuity with the public spaces of the city's brick sidewalks, drawn through the plaza and into the building. The brick mound can be surmounted via a stepped ramp that leads into a central courtyard. The intent was that the public could pass through the building—up from the plaza and back down to Congress Street—without ever opening a door, a nod to openness and transparency of government.

Three entrances are recessed between concrete piers and the brick volumes: the

plaza lobby at the southwest corner, the north entrance, and a smaller, entrance along Congress Street. At the plaza lobby and north entrance, the brick of the plaza carries inside to emphasize openness and continuity between the plaza and the building interiors.

Light is introduced to the functions within the mound via narrow slot windows on the perimeter, skylights in the courtyard, and skylights above the cascading corbelled wall along Congress Street. Corbelling and brownstone coping animate the walls at unique moments, including a figural emergency stair from the city council chamber near the southwest entry. The mound is the most dynamic and idiosyncratic of the tripartite elements, negotiating the plaza landscape, the urban context, and the building's rigorous structural bay system.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The blank and expansive brick walls along Congress Street face an active street corridor, making the walk along Congress Street uncomfortable.

Maintenance of the brick has been a challenge. Flashing has been added under the brownstone coping in various ways, causing an inconsistent appearance.

Security concerns mean that public access to the courtyard is no longer permitted, nor are the ramped steps leading to it universally accessible. The accessible ramp for the plaza lobby is narrow and does not provide what is considered equal access.

Accessibility is addressed as part of Plaza Renovation Phase I (PFD Project #7140). The narrow ramp and many of the south-facing steps up to the plaza lobby are replaced with a wide, sloped brick walkway. The ramped steps to the courtyard are changed to an accessible ramp, while the base is altered to provide a “speakers’ corner” platform, with low, terraced walls of granite designed for seating capacity.

Vehicles and event equipment are often stored under the overhangs of the building and near the entrances due to a lack of parking and storage.

Materials and Systemic Elements

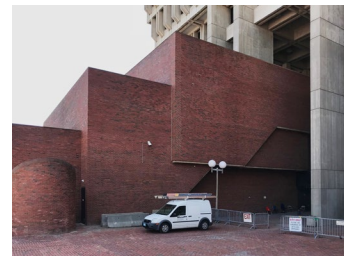
Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Brick: The lower levels of the building are clad in brick, tying the building to the plaza and recognizing the historic brick architecture of the city.

Brownstone: The brick walls are topped with brownstone coping. The brownstone represents a nod to the prevalent use of brownstone in the city’s architectural roots.



Approaching the plaza lobby entrance from the west.



Security fence and vehicle parked outside of the north entrance.



Vehicles parked in the Congress Street porch and under the building overhangs.

Concrete: The concrete columns and piers rising from the plaza to support the building are visible at the three entrances and through the courtyard. These columns are cast-in-place, with the form board markings distinctly evident.

Bronze: Bronze railings are used along stepped access points as handrails. Most of these railings are not original as modern accessibility codes require a different form for railings than the original design.

Glass: The entrances are formed from a bank of frameless glass units interspersed with glass swing doors. Revolving doors inserted into the plaza entrance span are not original.

Mullioned exterior curtain wall: The plaza and north entrances feature glass curtain walls with varied spacing among the steel mullions. These curtain walls rise high above the entrance doors.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G2 As a pending Boston Landmark, any alterations or changes proposed to the exterior of the building or the plaza lobby should be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission through their design review process.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

Maintenance and Management

E1 Limit vehicles parked on brick paved areas. Emergency vehicles and vehicles conducting active exterior maintenance or event loading may need to be parked for short periods at times.

E2 Provide alternate parking for city and maintenance vehicles. Consider designating part of the plaza away from the building, such as along Cambridge Street, for active maintenance or loading vehicles.

E3 Avoid storing equipment, vehicles, etc. around and under the building overhangs. Provide alternate storage for special event equipment, currently stored against the building.

E4 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E9** Features such as bike racks should be attached to the ground and reversible.
- E10** Any signage should be consistent and follow standards developed by the city.
- E11** Temporary signage should be standard, consistent, and reversible. A request should go through Property Management Department before mounting or installing any signage.
- E12** Identify and implement strategies for bird deterrent that avoid permanent staining of concrete, limit the introduction of additional systems that may be unsympathetic to the overall aesthetic, and effectively minimize the natural roosting behavior of all bird species found in the vicinity.

Potential Change

- E47** When considering future change to the public levels, maintain the expression of the base of the building as a brick mound.
- E48** Any signage mounted to the exterior of the building should be reversible and reviewed by Boston Landmarks Commission.

Historic Public Entrances

High Significance ●●●

The architects conceived of the thresholds of the building at the plaza lobby and north entrances as continuous, marked by the butt-glazed glass walls, frameless glass doors, and continuous brick surfaces on walls and floors. The height at each entrance is dramatic, rising to several stories at both the plaza lobby and the north entrances.

The Congress Street entrance was never conceived as a major entrance, but is now used as a primary access point and the only entrance and exit after regular business hours. In the 1960s Congress Street was planned to be an arterial road, not intended for pedestrians. The entrance's diminutive opening and modest corridor reflects this. With the redevelopment of Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market in the 1970s the area is now an active and vibrant business and commercial district. An update to this entrance in the future should consider holding the new addition to the standards defined by the plaza entrance and north entrance in terms of materials, glazing, and height.



Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E49 When planning accessibility, security, environmental, or other upgrades to any entrance, consider the original design intent around materials, transparency, and height of elements.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Exterior—Public Levels [85](#)
Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Brick [254](#)
Brownstone [262](#)
Steel [274](#)
Glass [278](#)
Bronze [282](#)

Ramped Steps to Courtyard

High Significance ●●●



The ramped steps were originally intended to play a key role in providing public access to the courtyard. As an extension of the plaza, the brick paving continues up the ramped steps and into the courtyard. Soldier courses at the top of the brick walls mark the height of the ramp and courtyard floor beyond.

The steps have been closed to the public since 2001 for security reasons and have more recently been altered by the replacement of its brick treads with concrete. The ramped steps face significant stress because they are often used as a route for maintenance lifts to get to the courtyard. They are not used by the public because of security concerns and they do not meet accessibility standards.

The Plaza Renovation Phase I (PFD Project #7140) alters the ramped steps to be a universally accessible ramp and the base of the wall is altered to provide a “speakers’ corner” platform.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Public Levels [85](#)

Brick [254](#)

Brownstone [262](#)

Bronze [282](#)

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

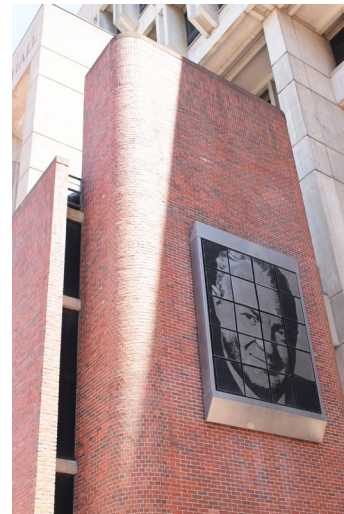
E4 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

Fire Stair to Council Chamber

High Significance ●●●

The fire stair from the council chamber at the plaza entrance is an important anomaly in the exterior form of the building. It was not included in early design sketches and was a solution to provide sufficient exits from the assembly space of the council chamber. Though the rest of the fire stairs in the building are encased in concrete towers, the architects articulated this stair in brick as an element of the ground reaching upward.

A narrow ramp wrapping around this stair tower replaced the original steeper, single-run ramp to improve accessibility to the plaza entrance. As part of Plaza Renovation Phase I (PFD Project #7140) the narrow ramp and many of the south-facing steps to the plaza lobby level are replaced with a wide, sloped walkway to address universal accessibility.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Public Levels [81](#)

Brick [254](#)

Brownstone [262](#)

Bronze [282](#)

Corbelled Walls

High Significance ●●●



Some of the brick exterior masses are finished with a corbelled edge. This occurs along Congress Street and at the council chamber fire stair. The corbelling echoes the outward stepping of the fins on the municipal level and contains skylights behind the Congress Street facade, which provide the interior spaces with daylight.

The brick and brownstone walls along Congress Street were repaired as part of the 2019 Masonry Repair Project (PFD Project #7135).



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Public Levels [81](#)

Brick [254](#)

Brownstone [262](#)

Stair to Courtyard

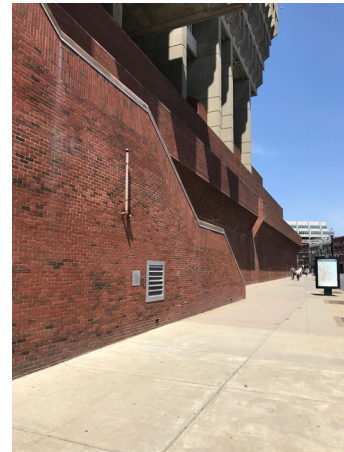
Significance ●●

This stair to the courtyard once completed the procession from the plaza through the courtyard down to Faneuil Hall. Spatially, it is a thin straight-run stair that cuts across the corbelled walls. It is now permanently gated for security reasons, and its protrusion adds another pinch point to the walk along Congress Street.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E13 Consider reopening the stair as public access to the courtyard in conjunction with the reopening of the ramped steps and activation of courtyard. If public access is not feasible, consider replacing the recently added gate with a more sympathetic design and material.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Exterior—Public Levels 81

Brick 254

Brownstone 262



View of the corbeled brick volumes from Congress Street.



View of the southeast corner and mayor's office suite hoods.



Ceremonial Level

Elements

Structural Piers and Columns

Hoods

The fifth floor contains the most significant ceremonial spaces, represented as iconic formal projections on the exterior, predominantly made of cast-in-place concrete. The architects termed these “hoods,” and they denote functions for the legislative and executive branches of government. With the fourth floor largely open throughout the building, the elements of the fifth appear to be suspended above the brick mound.

On the western side, the city council chamber and councilor offices face the plaza. The south and east elevations contain the projections of the mayor’s offices and a related suite of rooms. A third element, the municipal reference library, appears on the east elevation, although its interiors have since been converted into additional councilor offices. These hoods, sometimes two stories in height, are of cast-in-place concrete with precast window dividers. Their heft and projecting character creates deep shadows and represents what Gerhard Kallmann saw as “the vigor of government,” supported by multi-story, colossal columns.²

The columns are made of cast-in-place concrete with formwork markings and reveals that differentiate the actual structural columns (which are similar to columns throughout the building) and the enlarged figure of the monumental exterior column. Olga Gueft of *Interiors Magazine* remarked that these hoods and columns are collectively meant to identify the functions of the building to the public, such that “government is no mystery here.”¹

Hoods at the west-facing city council offices.



1 Wolf Von Eckardt, “Boston’s New City Hall: It Has Vigor,” *Boston Sunday Globe* (April 2, 1967).

2 Olga Gueft, “What it took to bring about the best public building of our time.” *Interiors* 128, no. 9 (April 1969): 131.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

Balconies on the east and west have been used as banner mounting locations for public service announcements and events. This has resulted in ad hoc fasteners and damage to bronze railings.

Ongoing aging and deterioration of concrete has led to spalling, staining, and cracking. Various repair efforts have resulted in inconsistent color and texture of patching materials.

Bronze-colored aluminium channels holding light fixtures have been added under the windows of the hoods and on top of the hoods to uplight the building.



Banner on the balcony outside the Curley Room.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: The projecting hoods representing the city council chamber, councilor offices, the mayor's office, and mayor's department offices are cast-in-place concrete. The smooth fins separating the windows along the ceremonial level are precast concrete.

Brick: While predominant along the lower public levels, the brick clad tower adjacent to the city council chamber hides the fire stair function within.

Bronze: Openings in the brickwork at the top of the fire stairs on the west elevation are filled with original bronze railings.

Glass: windows at the ceremonial level are insulated glass units.

Mullioned exterior curtain wall: The east elevation at the ceremonial stair to the fifth floor features a glass curtain wall with varied spacing among the steel mullions.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G2 As a pending Boston Landmark, any alterations or changes proposed to the exterior of the building or the plaza lobby should be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission through their design review process.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

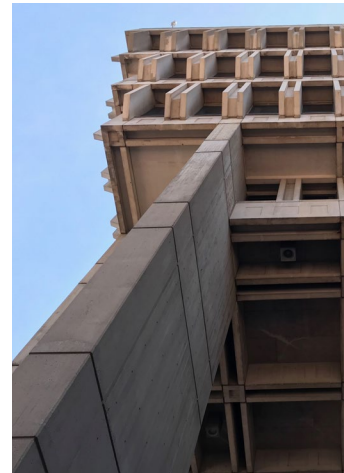
Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E12 Identify and implement strategies for bird deterrent that avoid permanent staining of concrete, limit the introduction of additional systems that may be unsympathetic to the overall aesthetic, and effectively minimize the natural roosting behavior of all bird species found in the vicinity.

Structural Piers and Columns

High Significance ●●●

Cast-in-place freestanding piers and columns connect the ceremonial levels to the ground. Their freestanding nature allows for views through the building into the courtyard and beyond. The piers comprise 2'-8" by 2'-8" structural columns and 9-inch walls surrounding a hollow center. Piers break up the plaza where they hit the ground. These dramatic moments are often used as parking spots for municipal vehicles. Sculptural bronze pylons were added at three of the corner piers in 2016 to uplight the building as part of a comprehensive exterior lighting strategy.



Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

- E1** Limit vehicles parked on brick paved areas. Emergency vehicles and vehicles conducting active exterior maintenance or event loading may need to be parked for short periods at times.
- E2** Provide alternate parking for city and maintenance vehicles. Consider designating part of the plaza away from the building, such as along Cambridge Street, for active maintenance or loading vehicles.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E14** Avoid attachments to the piers and columns.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Ceremonial Level [97](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Hoods

High Significance ● ● ●



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Exterior—Ceremonial Level 97

Concrete, Precast

and Cast-in-Place 240

Glass 278

Hoods protrude from the face of the building to emphasize the importance of the mayor's office suite, city council offices, and the city council chamber. The openings in the hoods are large and step outside the strict grid of the municipal levels above. This results in a sculptural expression of the interior programs with dramatic shadows.

Some of these hoods include balcony access from the ceremonial level. These were conceived as a connection point for the government to the public. They have often been used as banner locations for public service announcements. This use has had some negative impacts on the building, such as ad hoc fasteners and old banners covering up light fixtures.

The area above the Eagle Room on the east facade was infilled, likely for use as a projection room for the city's Jubilee 350 celebration in 1980, but remains empty and unused. This infill removed the deep recess and dramatic shadow lines in this area.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

E5 Provide improved signage mounting systems that protect existing railings. Banners may only be hung from the railing systems at the balcony outside the Curley Room on the west or the balcony outside the ceremonial stair on the east. Banners should be secured at their lower edge via an inconspicuous, reversible, and repeatable system, such as UV-resistant zip ties. Any banner must have a timeline to be taken down and all fasteners should be discarded at that time. No permanent drilled or adhesive fasteners are acceptable.



View of the southwest corner's municipal levels.



Municipal Levels

Elements:

Precast Fins

Windows

Floors six through nine are designed to provide flexible office space for various municipal departments. Each successive floor extends outward and is lined by precast concrete fins that create a continuous pattern of shadows across deep-set windows where metal frames are minimized. The façades of each level compose an overall cornice-like crown to the building, with the effect of shedding water and offering solar protection to the lower levels. The individual fins contain vertical pipes for perimeter induction units, reaffirming the general desire to showcase the presence of building systems.

The upper floors are designed to provide a measure of regularity that acknowledges

the functionally open plan inside, contrasting with the more differentiated volumes of the ceremonial floors below. An article in *Progressive Architecture* referred to this as the “restraining hand of the upper floors’ frieze” in contrast to the “miniature city of concrete hooded sculptures.”¹ The horizontal faces of the Vierendeel trusses between levels are lined on the exterior by precast panels with insets that identify where the mechanical systems thread through the trusses behind. Much like other areas of the building, the elevations of the upper floors express the nature of the interior programs, but here predominantly in a precast concrete palette with smoother finishes and more regular rhythm.

¹ “The New Boston City Hall.” *Progressive Architecture* (April 1963): 132.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

Some precast fins contain mechanical piping connecting perimeter heating units to rooftop equipment. Piping failures have damaged some of the precast fins, resulting in spalling.

The aluminum and steel windows lack thermal breaks, which results in transfer of heat or cold from the exterior directly into the interior. The window units have heating equipment built directly into the spandrel panel. Window replacement should be completed in conjunction with heating system replacement.

Ongoing aging and deterioration of concrete has led to spalling, staining, and cracking. Various repair efforts have led to inconsistent color and texture of patching materials. Inappropriate bird deterrent materials and systems have been applied or attached to the concrete over the years.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: The concrete fins, spandrels, and parapets are precast concrete.

Aluminum framed windows: The windows are aluminum and incorporate a large, pivoting unit at the top, a spandrel panel, and a clear fixed panel at the bottom.

Glass: Window glass at the municipal levels is grey, heat-absorbing glass.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G2 As a pending Boston landmark, any alterations or changes proposed to the exterior of the building or the plaza lobby should be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission through their design review process.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

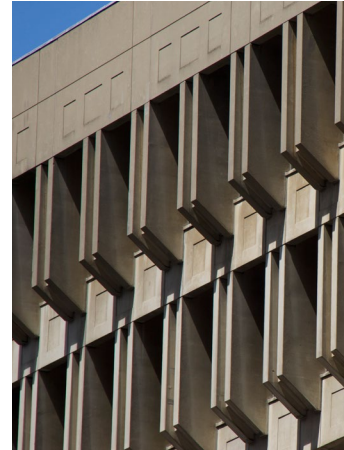
Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E12 Identify and implement strategies for bird deterrent that avoid permanent staining of concrete, limit the introduction of additional systems that may be unsympathetic to the overall aesthetic, and effectively minimize the natural roosting behavior of all bird species found in the vicinity.

Precast Fins

High Significance ●●●

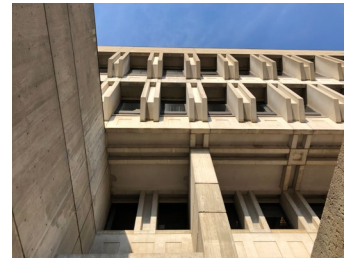
The precast fins create deep shadow lines between the regular spacing of windows. Some fins contain mechanical piping that connects perimeter induction heating units to equipment on the roof. The piping is in poor condition, resulting in multiple failures with temporary fixes. A report was issued in 2011 containing recommendations for piping replacement.¹ Piping failures have damaged some of the fins, resulting in spalling. Surface crazing can be seen on some fins.



Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E15 Replacement of mechanical piping should be done in conjunction with replacement of perimeter heating.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

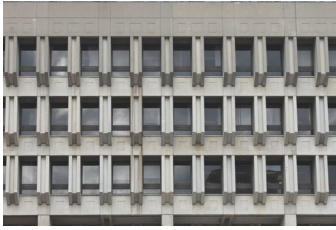
Exterior—Municipal Levels 103

Concrete, Precast 240

¹ Boston City Hall Existing Induction Unit Piping Analysis (CIPR) Report, RDK Engineers (December 21, 2011).

Windows

Significance • •



The windows have bronze-anodized aluminum frames and consist of three sections: an operable center-pivot window at the top, a spandrel covering the perimeter heating unit, and a fixed window at the bottom. The glazing is double-pane with ¼-inch plate glass. The windows are not thermally broken, and some have large gaps between the operable sash and frame. The windows were designed to pivot in order to facilitate cleaning. They require an original custom key.

Policies and Recommendations

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Exterior—Municipal Levels 103

Glass 278

Potential Change

E50 Window replacement should be done in conjunction with heating system replacement.



View of and through the courtyard looking east.



Courtyard

Elements

Coffered Ceiling

Courtyard Ground Plane

Courtyard Skylights

The central courtyard on the fourth level brings light into various areas of the building, including via skylights to the enclosed transaction levels below. Since the fourth floor has few enclosed spaces, the courtyard has views in all directions. Corridors lining the courtyard on the municipal levels (floors six through nine) benefit from daylight. The uppermost floors (eight and nine) have wrap-around outdoor balconies. Hoods project into the courtyard on the east and west, which currently contain meeting rooms and offices of the city council.

Michael McKinnell imagined that the courtyard would show the building's activity. "One sees people moving at all times; this lends variety and interest. Huge flowerpots and shrubs will decorate the courtyard;

also civic sculpture."¹ This intent to have an actively used space has been lost due to contemporary security concerns and accessibility deficiencies. The ramped steps between the plaza and the courtyard are closed and no longer give access to the public promenade as originally envisioned. The courtyard's material palette is similar to other elevations, with a brick floor as well as cast-in-place columns and hoods, surmounted by precast elements on the upper floors. A large skylight sits in the center of the courtyard as a single central figure, with thirty-three additional skylights under the eastern hood. A children's play area now occupies the bulk of the eastern side of the outdoor space for the BCYF City Hall Childcare.

¹ Robert Taylor, "A Plain Man's Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way," *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969): B16.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

Contemporary security concerns and lack of an accessible route have resulted in the courtyard being closed to the public.

Waterproofing of the brick floor and skylights has deteriorated, resulting in leaks into the spaces below.

Nearly all of the original downlights have failed or are no longer being maintained due to their height off the ground. Roughly half of the lights were replaced with LEDs and new housings in the 2015 Exterior Lighting Project (PFD Project #7088).

Many of the skylights in the of the bank of thirty-three are located under the eastern hood, limiting the amount of daylight that can reach the transaction areas below.

The central skylight is currently covered with a temporary membrane of waterproofing material to address a leak.

Metal panels have been added under many of the windows facing the courtyard as bird deterrent. The concrete under many of these windows is stained.

Some of the concrete has organic staining and spalling.

Materials and Systemic Elements

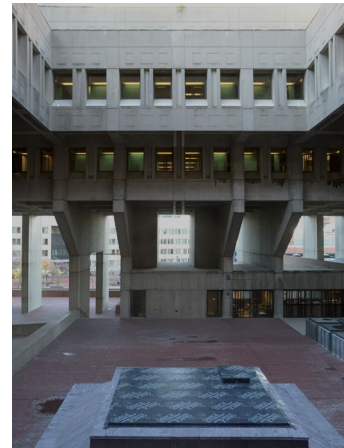
Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Structural columns and piers visible throughout the courtyard are cast-in-place concrete. The columns were cast with hoop forms rather than board forms. The ceiling is flat, cast-in-place concrete under the hoods with cast-in-place coffers on the underside of the municipal levels. The precast fins within the hoods of the ceremonial level and the precast fins, spandrels, and parapets of the municipal levels are visible in the courtyard.

Brick: The floor of the courtyard is brick pavers, similar to those in the plaza.



Spalling and organic staining.



Waterproofing membrane covering central skylight and metal panels under upper-floor windows.

Brownstone: The coping stones on top of the brick walls rising to the courtyard level are brownstone.

Bronze: Railings set in brick openings of the courtyard are original bronze details. Handrails leading up to the courtyard from the ramped steps are not original, but were intended to match the design intention for bronze in such features.

Glass: Frameless glass swing doors are located at the entrance from the top of the monumental stair in the plaza lobby.

Mullioned exterior curtain wall: A curtain wall of plate glass set among steel mullions with varied spacing occupies the north and south walls of the courtyard.

Skylights: A large, four-shaft pyramidal skylight dominates the middle of the courtyard, doubling as a sculptural element and a source of natural light for the transaction level below. A bank of thirty-three skylights is located on the east side of the courtyard, intending to provide some additional natural light below.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G4 Utilize the courtyard for events, meetings, seating, and other activities that allow the space to function closer to the original intent as an vibrant heart of the building linked to the interior public spaces and the plaza. Consider adding infrastructure such as power, seating, lighting, etc. to support that use. Implement security, accessibility, and life-safety measures that are in keeping with the historic nature of the courtyard's materials and configuration. Refer to Rethink City Hall Master Plan, PFD Project #7074.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E16 Study alternative locations and/or expression of child-care playground to better integrate it into an activated courtyard.

E17 Improve quality of gates with a more sympathetic design and material.

Coffered Ceiling

High Significance ●●●

The high ceiling of the exterior courtyard is made of cast-in-place concrete, continuing the structural pattern of Vierendeel trusses and beams used throughout the building. The coffered ceiling adds to the drama of the experience of the tall space. The distance between this ceiling and the courtyard floor presents difficulty for the maintenance of the lights, though many of them have recently been updated to LEDs.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential Change

E51 Replace remaining original lights with LEDs and housings to match replacement fixtures installed in the 2015 Exterior Lighting Project (PFD Project #7088).



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Courtyard [109](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Courtyard Ground Plane

Significance ●●



The floor of the courtyard is brick, the same specification as the brick of the plaza. This connects the courtyard materially to both the plaza and the mezzanine of the plaza lobby. The courtyard's brick surface was designed to be continuous with the plaza, extending the material language through the building to demonstrate the role of the public in activating the building's core. A capital project is planned to address waterproofing and water infiltration to the transaction and offices spaces below.

Policies and Recommendations

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Exterior—Courtyard 109

Brick 254

Bronze 282

Potential Change

E52 Consider accessibility upgrades and access for maintenance equipment when planning renovations to address waterproofing issues.

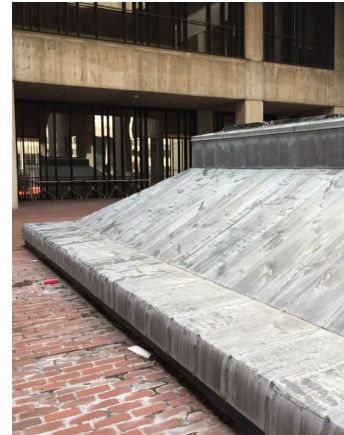
Courtyard Skylights

High Significance ●●●

Several skylights in the courtyard were designed to bring light to the transaction levels below. As seen from the courtyard, the skylights have a sculptural presence. They play an important role in the drawings of Boston City Hall from the early design phases, providing a pivot point for the composition in section and a demonstration of continuity between the various levels.

The main skylight has battered walls, with a central oculus that once filtered light into the transaction levels below. This sculptural skylight was originally clad in brick with an integrated bench around its perimeter. The concrete and brick were covered with a flat-seam metal cladding after 1981, likely to address water infiltration issues. More recently, an opaque watershield membrane was applied to the top of the oculus to address leaking.

The thirty-three eastern skylights are shorter and form three rows that relate directly to the structural grid below. These have also had issues over the years, including insufficient natural light reaching the skylights and concerns about the public climbing on top of them. Today, the shafts include light fixtures that provide artificial lighting in the spaces below.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Exterior—Courtyard [109](#)

Skylights [226](#)



Courtyard looking northwest.





5.5

Interior

Overall Rating of Significance: High

- 5.5.1** The People's Building 119
- 5.5.2** Public Levels—Plaza Lobby Level 121
- 5.5.3** Public Levels—Transaction Levels 138
- 5.5.4** Public Levels—Service Level 154
- 5.5.5** Ceremonial Level 170
- 5.5.6** Municipal Levels 190

Section 5.5.1

The People's Building

“Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles . . . have given pre-eminence to the third and most important function of a city hall: the ceremonials of government as conducted in the Council Chamber and the Mayor’s offices, with the Municipal Library added to give the proceedings a little wisdom and memory. On the inside, these rooms frame an interior hall nine stories high—a gathering place all open and public with magnificent stairs, balconies and terraces, a great agora, a place that with all the eloquence of a Demosthenes proclaims the majesty of government by the people.”¹

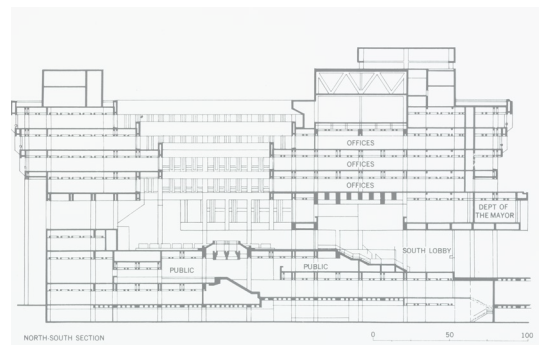
—Wolf von Eckardt, *The Washington Post*, April 2, 1967

Similar to the exterior, the interior of the building is organized according to the tripartite arrangement of public services, ceremonial spaces, and municipal offices. As originally designed, the lower levels hosted all of the departments with “Heavy Public Traffic,” spaces of “Symbolic Importance” were located on the fifth floor, and “Other Administrative Departments” that did not require significant public access were located on the upper four floors.² The three layers are each identified with a predominant material palette and a differentiated organization of its floor plans.

The lower public levels are characterized by irregular floor plans and a heavy use of brick to symbolize continuity between the plaza and the building interiors.

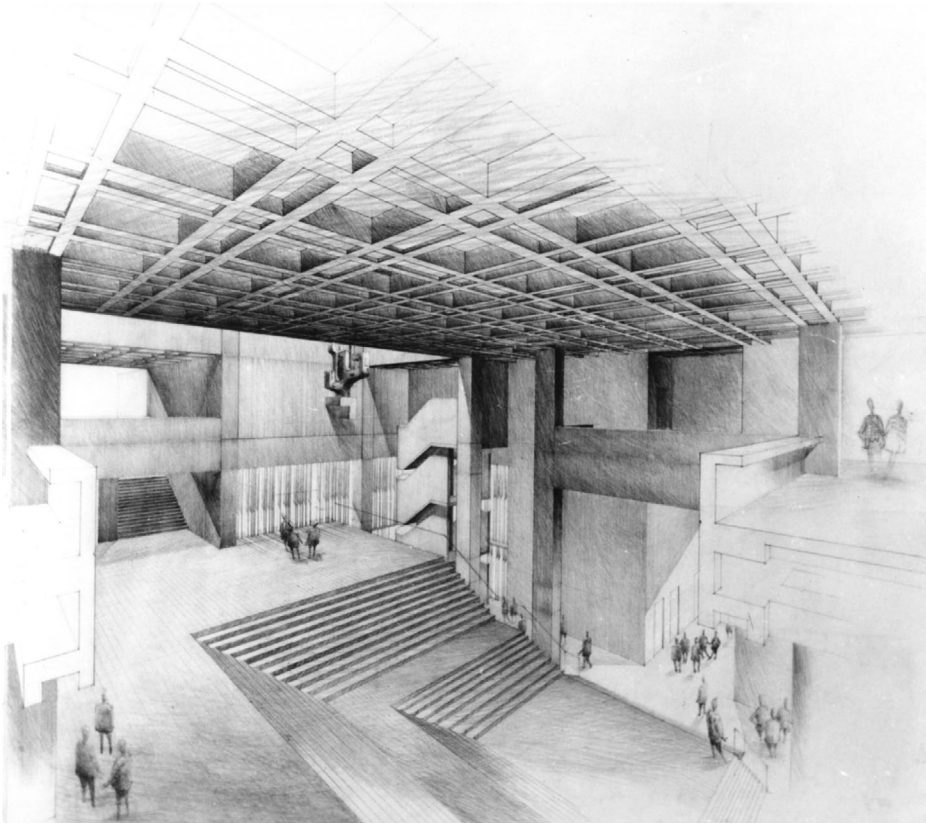
On the ceremonial fifth floor, the material palette turns lighter, while the floor-to-floor height is increased to reflect the importance of the spaces. On the upper municipal levels, the irregularity of the plans of the floors below gives way to a more symmetrical and flexible layout.

Section drawing showing the building organization.



¹ Wolf Von Eckardt, “Boston Builds Challenge to Dulles Terminal,” *The Washington Post* (April 2, 1967).

² Lawrence B. Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 17.



Design development perspective and photograph of the plaza lobby.



Plaza Lobby Level

Overall Rating of Significance: High

Elements

Entrance Porch

Plaza Level Foyer

Monumental Stair

Mayor's Stair

Fifth Floor Gallery and Bridge

Elevator Core and Lobby

Coffered Cast-in-Place Ceiling

Light Wells

The plaza lobby (also known as the south lobby, plaza entrance and city forum) was conceived as the building's central hall, providing an entry point from the plaza and linking to the two other monumental spaces, the courtyard and the northern concourse. Kallmann and McKinnell imagined a "city forum" where Bostonians could join with their government through a range of activities: celebrations, protests, concerts, exhibitions, and informal encounters that characterize participatory democracy.¹ To emphasize its openness to the city, the lobby's floor extends the brickwork of the outdoor plaza and porch through uninterrupted banks of frameless glass doors. Further reinforcing this connection to the city around it, the space opens southward to views of the Washington Mall and eastward to Faneuil Hall and the harbor.

A monumental brick staircase occupies the bulk of the plaza lobby's footprint and doubles as an amphitheater. It provides a grand procession rising from the plaza to the fourth floor, where the outdoor courtyard was once accessible via another transparent bank of glass doors. From the fourth floor, a much smaller terrazzo staircase rises past an east-facing balcony to the ceremonial functions of the fifth floor—the city council chamber and the mayor's office suite. A second stair, this one a spiraling sculptural form of cast-in-place concrete, stands adjacent to the brick staircase, providing direct access to the mayor's suite above.

Vertical links are made through two large light wells that rise the full height of the building, 135 feet in total, with light entering from clerestory windows above. Cast-in-place concrete lines each

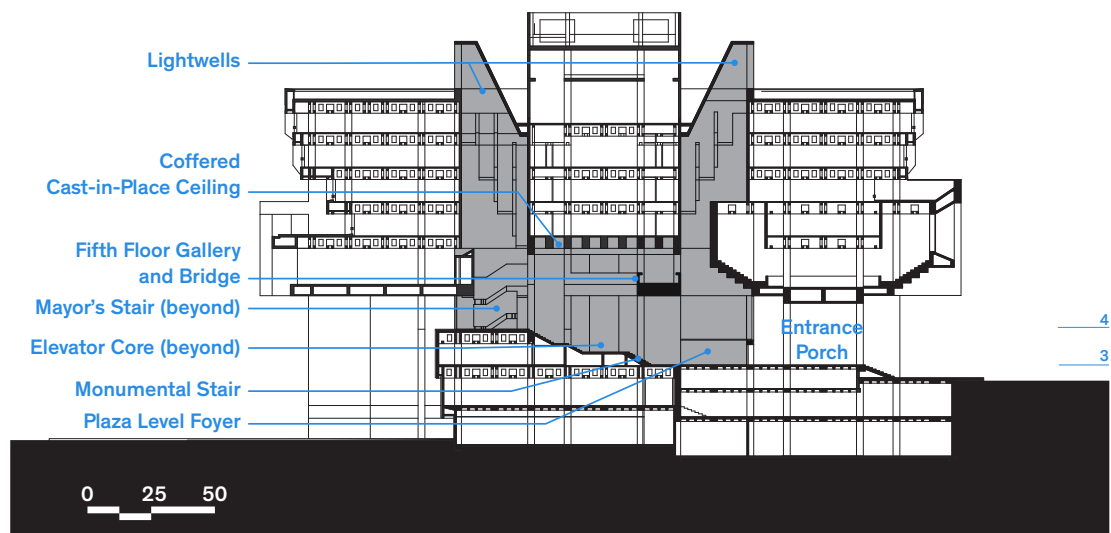
shaft, with narrow slots revealing windows into the upper floors on the narrow north and south sides. Locations of ducts are expressed as sculptural concrete bays that connect each floor with the roof. Between these two shafts is a lower ceiling of cast-in-place concrete that, along with a fifth-floor bridge, caps the occupiable portions of the hall. Early drawings show a gridded ceiling of precast elements similar to other areas of the building. During the design process, the ceiling was made more monumental, resulting in the cast-in-place coffers visible today. Other consistently used elements of the space include the curtain wall system of rhythmic metal mullions, cast-in-place concrete columns, Vierendeel ceiling trusses with visually exposed mechanical services running through the trusses, and the

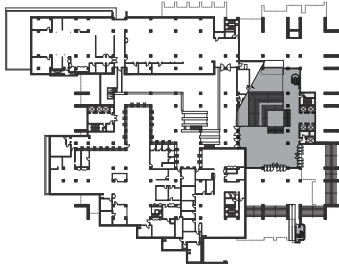
elevator core. The information desk, security zone, and cafe were added in 2017 to replace an ad hoc arrangement of security equipment installed after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

In many ways, the plaza lobby is the central hinge point of the scheme—linking the plaza, the northern concourse, the elevator core, the ceremonial chambers, and upward via the light wells to the offices of the municipal levels. While it has many important elements within it, the space’s use as a “city forum” for gatherings and daily encounters—one that invites participation from the public—remains among the most significant features of its conception and realization.

With its sense of urban theatrics, McKinnell termed this hall “a space waiting for things to happen.”² It has been the

Section looking south.





Floor 3

site of important events since its opening week in February 1969, when the Boston Pops under the direction of renowned conductor Arthur Fiedler performed in front of an audience of two thousand. Critics have assessed the space with a range of reactions. In a 1969 article in *Architectural Forum*, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy wrote that the brick stairs are “disproportionate to their terminations,” echoing other writers who criticized the resolution of the sequence up to the ceremonial floors.³ John Conti of the *Wall Street Journal* called the south lobby “the most impressive room in the building.”⁴ As part of the building’s status as a pending Boston landmark, changes to this space should be reviewed by the Boston Landmarks Commission.

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- 1 Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell, “Original Thinking: Reflections on the Genesis of Boston City Hall,” *ArchitectureBoston* (May/June 2005): 34.
 - 2 Robert Taylor, “A Plain Man’s Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way,” *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969).
 - 3 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, “Boston’s City Hall: It Binds the Past to the Future,” *Architectural Forum* 130, no. 1 (January/February 1969): 46.
 - 4 John Conti, “A New City Hall: Boston’s Boost for Urban Renewal,” *The Wall Street Journal* (February 12, 1969).

Looking down upon the monumental stair from the fifth floor balcony.



Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The plaza lobby is the largest open space in the building. The top of the monumental stair, often referred to as the mezzanine level, is frequently used for events and speeches. Poor acoustics and a lack of infrastructure make events challenging.

There is limited accessibility to the mezzanine level. A rail-mounted lift is unreliable and is rarely used. It does not provide a universal accessible design for the public. The city is considering other options to provide an accessible route to the mezzanine due to the limitations of the lift.

The doors to the courtyard are kept locked and with no public access to the courtyard.

Due to modern security concerns, anyone entering the building is required to have a staff ID card or submit to a bag check. While this is a necessary procedure in today's security climate, it has had a significant impact on the procession from the plaza to the stair. In 2017, the Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097) replaced a formerly ad hoc arrangement with a furniture-like intervention that includes an information desk, security zone, and cafe. The project re-opened the space under the western light well to reestablish the feeling of an open hall.

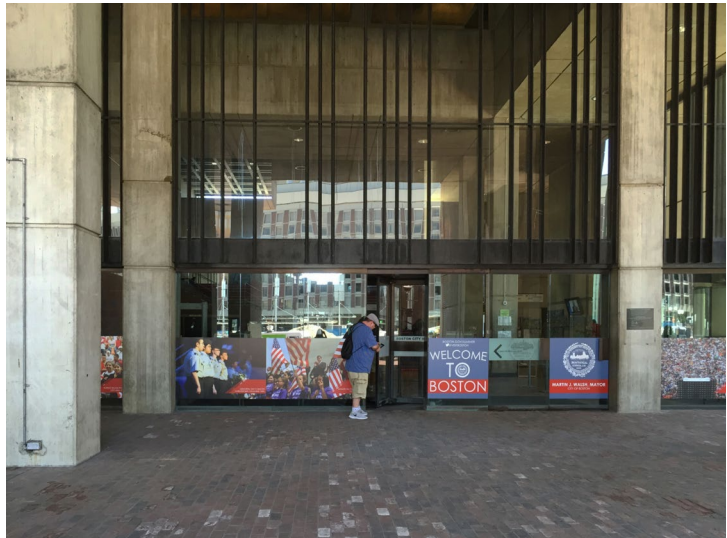


Rail-mounted lift on the monumental stair.



An event at the top of the monumental stair.

Vinyl window graphics at the plaza lobby entrance.



Stairs are not often used as originally intended for event seating. This is partly due to limitations in city programming and poor acoustics, but is also compounded by an awkward seat height on the stairs and lack of accessibility.

Wayfinding is an issue. Original signage has been supplemented by larger and more boldly colored signs. This issue is exaggerated by a different set of directions for members of the public who are mobility impaired.

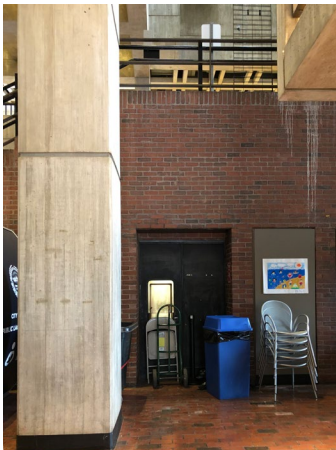
Technological vestiges like phone booths and water fountains are no longer in use. The phone booths in this space have been replaced with solid panels. The water fountains are no longer functional.

The lack of a vestibule and the low performance of the exterior glazing system contribute to the poor environmental quality of the space.

Original lighting has been retrofitted with LED bulbs, which have a longer lifespan than the original fixtures.

Items such as moveable furniture and equipment for cleaning and events are often stored near the bottom of the mayor's stair.

Vinyl on the glass at the plaza lobby entrance impair views into the space.



Furniture and equipment stored in the lobby. Non-functional water fountain and new panels at former phone booth locations.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Exposed cast-in-place concrete dominates the walls of the plaza lobby. The sculptural, cast-in-place concrete mayor's stair stands at the southeast corner of the space. The cast-in-place light wells, rising the full height of the building, light the entrance. Cast-in-place columns are visible throughout the space. The cast-in-place coffered ceiling is unique to the plaza lobby. The precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid system is visible at the elevator lobby and at the west end of the monumental stair.

Brick: The monumental brick staircase occupies the bulk of the plaza lobby. The flooring throughout the space is brick, and is continuous with the brick of the plaza and entrance porch.

Bronze: Bronze railings are mounted on the monumental brick stairway.

Glass: The south and west entrances and the entrance at the courtyard have frameless tempered glass swing doors. Revolving doors not original to the building have been incorporated at the south and west entrances to the plaza lobby.

Mullioned exterior storefront: The curtain walls at the south and west entrances into the plaza lobby and curtain wall facing the courtyard feature the varied spacing for the steel mullions and clear plate glass.

Lighting: Downlights are located in the lowered ceiling planes immediately adjacent to the entrances. Additional lighting mounted in the precast coffered ceiling provides accent lighting for that detail.

Service Infrastructure: The south elevator lobby, on the south side of the plaza lobby includes a service core containing a fire stair, elevators, and an integrated mail

chute. Telephone booths were incorporated into niches on the south side of the monumental stair. The telephones have been removed and the remaining niches covered. Restrooms are located under the monumental stair. There is no north elevator lobby on this level.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G2 As a pending Boston Landmark, any alterations or changes proposed to the exterior of the building or the plaza lobby should be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission through their design review process.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

G5 Consider the plaza lobby as the “city room,” offering a first impression of Boston City Hall and a space where public gatherings can take place.

G6 Consider the original design intent which had public services connected to the plaza and north entrances. Where possible, concentrate civic gathering spaces and meeting rooms at plaza level, as outlined in the October 2017 Rethink City Hall master plan (PFD Project #7074).

Maintenance and Management

E6 Keep all areas in the plaza lobby clear of items such as extra furniture and equipment. Provide alternate storage for such items.

Potential Change

E49 When planning accessibility, security, environmental, or other upgrades, consider the original design intent around materials and relationships of elements.

E53 Provide an accessible interior route to the courtyard and mezzanine level.



New lighting, information desk, and coffee kiosk in the plaza-level foyer.

Entrance Porch

High Significance ●●●

The entrance porch is a multi-storied outdoor space connecting the plaza to the plaza lobby. The stepped seating of the council chamber above is expressed as a continuous ceiling from outside to inside, and the brick paving of the plaza carries up the steps into the lobby. The threshold between inside and outside is formed by a frameless glass wall of doors on the south and west.

Revolving doors have been added to entrances on both faces. The original bronze railings on the steps from the plaza have been replaced. A narrow ramp provides an accessible route, but it is not considered universally accessible. The Phase I City Hall Plaza Renovation project (PFD Project #7140) will re-grade the plaza and replace a large portion of the steps with a sloped walkway to provide universal access.

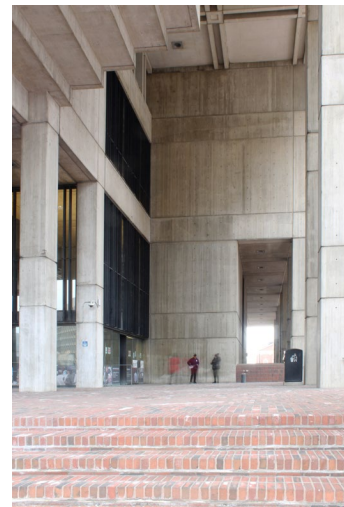
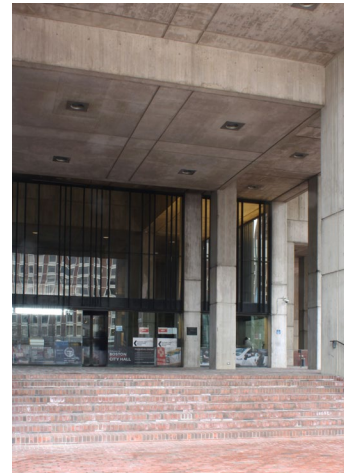
Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E18 Consider alternate layouts of vinyl graphics that do not obscure the transparency through the glass.

Potential for Change

E49 When planning accessibility, security, environmental, or other upgrades to any entrance, consider the original design intent around materials and relationships of elements.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)
Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Brick [254](#)
Brownstone [262](#)
Steel [274](#)
Glass [278](#)
Bronze [282](#)

Plaza-Level Foyer

High Significance ●●●



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Brick [254](#)

Brownstone [262](#)

Steel [274](#)

Glass [278](#)

Bronze [282](#)

The plaza-level foyer is contiguous with the public plaza and was designed as an open hall. Overhead, the stepped seating of the council chamber expresses itself, and the western light well soars upward. The brick floor carries through from the plaza, to the porch, into the foyer, and up the monumental stair. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, an ad hoc arrangement of security equipment was installed that took up much of the formerly open hall. In 2017 the Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097) replaced this arrangement with a furniture-like intervention that includes an information desk, security zone, and cafe. The 2017 project re-opened the space under the western light well to reestablish the feeling of an open hall.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E49 When planning accessibility, security, environmental, or other upgrades to any entrance, consider the original design intent around materials and relationship of elements.

Monumental Stair

High Significance ●●●

A monumental brick stair connects the plaza to the courtyard and the ceremonial level as a central element of the plaza lobby. The stair was conceived as a pivotal link between the plaza and the courtyard, and as an amphitheater for performances and gatherings. The top of the stair, referred to as the mezzanine level, is used for events and speeches. However, it lacks accessibility and audio-visual infrastructure, making events challenging. The original bronze handrails are not code compliant.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E19 Remove stair lift if adequate alternative access method is implemented. Repair all attachment locations after removal.

Potential for Change

E54 Retain use as a public space for daily encounters and structured events.

E55 Maintain openness of stair when considering alternatives to provide an accessible route to the mezzanine and courtyard level or improvements to acoustics, audio-visual equipment, or power infrastructure.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

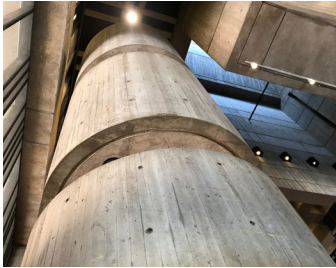
Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Brick [254](#)

Bronze [282](#)

Mayor's Stair

High Significance ●●●



The mayor's stair is a symbolic and sculptural connection between the mayor's office and the public levels. It was a key feature of the plaza lobby from the early stages of the design process. Though functional, the stair is not used often because of security concerns with people entering the mayor's reception area from that direction. The 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097) replaced the original non-functional lights with LEDs. A retractable belt barrier is installed at the bottom of the stair.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

E7 Consider using the stair as an exit-only path from the mayor's lobby.

Potential for Change

E56 Although the stair is no longer used, retain it as an original sculptural element of the design.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Bronze [282](#)

Fifth-Floor Gallery and Bridge

High Significance ●●●

The gallery on the fifth floor connects the offices of the mayor, the city council, and the city council chamber. This circulation path doubles as a shared space among functions of government, overlooking the buzzing public lobby below. The concrete parapet walls of the bridge are frequently used to hang temporary art displays.



Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art that locate permanent mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location, such as the underside of the ledge at the fifth floor level. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

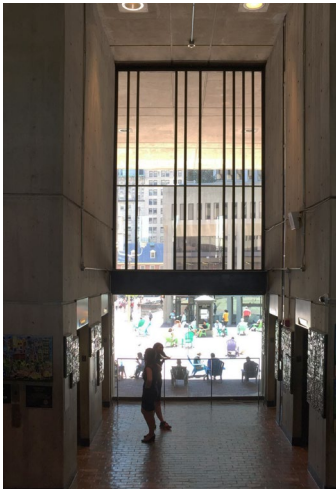
Overall [74](#)

Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Elevator Core and Lobby

Significance ●●



The elevator lobby contains elevators leading to all other floors of City Hall (with the exception of the fourth floor). The elevators are heavily used, and their lobbies are key functional spaces for the building. The concrete in the elevator lobbies has the most contact with the public and is characterized by heavy soiling. Mail chutes are set into the wall and remain as a vestige of the era in which the building was built. A building directory and display monitor were installed as part of the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097). The elevator core in the plaza lobby is known as the south elevator. A second core is located on the north side of the building.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Lighting [214](#)

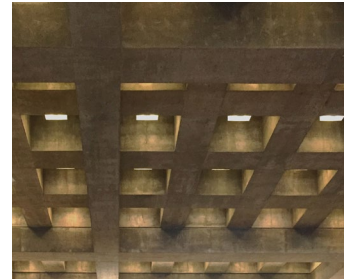
Service Infrastructure [232](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Coffered Cast-in-Place Ceiling

High Significance ●●●

The cast-in-place coffers over the monumental stair differ from the standard Vierendeel system and mark the area below as a significant space of performance and activity. The original lights were installed with a mechanical lowering system that failed, leaving all of the lights inaccessible for bulb changes. Some of the lights were left hanging down. All fixtures were replaced in 2017 as part of the Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097) with LED units inside custom translucent housings that match the size of the original aluminum housings. While the lights are typically white, they are RGBW LEDs, allowing the city to change the colors in times of celebration or memorial. The flexible lighting levels support various uses in the space.



Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E21** In typical everyday use, lighting should be white.
- E22** Future changes to color schemes should consider the architectural layout of the coffers.

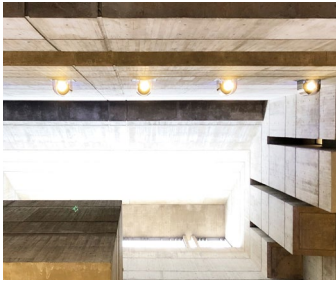
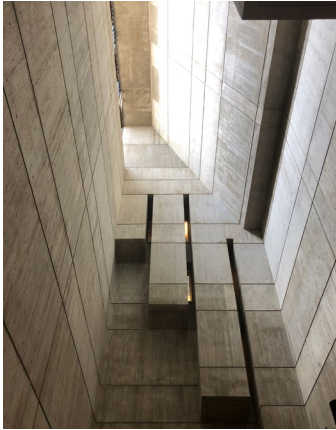
Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)
Lighting [214](#)
Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Light Wells

High Significance ●●●



Monumental cast-in-place light wells extend to the roof of the building and are integral to the significance of the space. Attention to their locations should be noted when making changes on the plaza level, as it is essential to retain the ability to pause and look up into these vast spaces. Slot windows into the upper-floor hallways should be maintained, as they offer important moments of orientation, access to natural light, and subtle moments of visual discovery.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E23 Maintain window openings at the top of the light wells and the lighting of these spaces.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Plaza Lobby [121](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Section 5.5.3

Transaction Levels

Overall Rating of Significance: High

Elements

North Entrance

Connection Between Levels

Skylights

Transaction Windows

Administrative Offices

The transaction zone was established in the original competition program as an area of the building that would accommodate “administrative departments with heavy public traffic,” including Treasury, Auditing, Assessing, Election, Registry, Weights and Measures, the Licensing Board, among several others. In the competition brief, the programming consultants, Becker & Becker Associates, and the competition advisors recommended that these spaces, which were expected to serve up to 5,000 people daily, be placed “on one or more levels near the street, with escalator connections between levels.”¹

This organization was conceived to provide easy access to the departments on the lower floors while encouraging direct connections between city officials and the public. The configuration also reduced the amount of circulation and elevator service required for public access to the upper floors.

Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles faithfully responded to these guidelines in their solution for a “northern concourse” with direct access from the north corner of the plaza (at the building’s second floor) and linking southward to the plaza lobby (at the building’s third floor). As McKinnell described it in 1969, the transaction zone carries “the idea of the outside plaza into the building. The bricks come in, like a street. Glass doors suggest the natural extension of sidewalks into a place where people do business.”² Equated by the architects to a European galleria, this street-like space is lined by service windows for city agencies. Such an arrangement offered the possibility, in the words of critic Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, of “making a passage through . . . City Hall a daily experience for citizens on the way to other business.”³

Illuminated by skylight shafts that open into the courtyard above, the space

is organized with terracing half-levels that are interconnected by stairs, ramps, and escalators. There is a strong presence of red brick and tile in addition to the precast and cast-in-place elements. Heavy concrete parapet walls line the edges of each floor plate.

The concourse is ringed with transaction windows that front each public-facing department's administrative offices. These windows are composed of precast

concrete counters and bronze-colored anodized aluminum grates separated by precast fins. At the bottom of each fin, a cast-in-place block projects into the public space and was intended to function as seats or a place to place one's bag or parcel.⁴

Administrative offices make up the remainder of the transaction levels. Architecturally, these resemble the municipal offices on the upper floors, with a key dis-

Transaction zone from third floor bridge above north entrance.



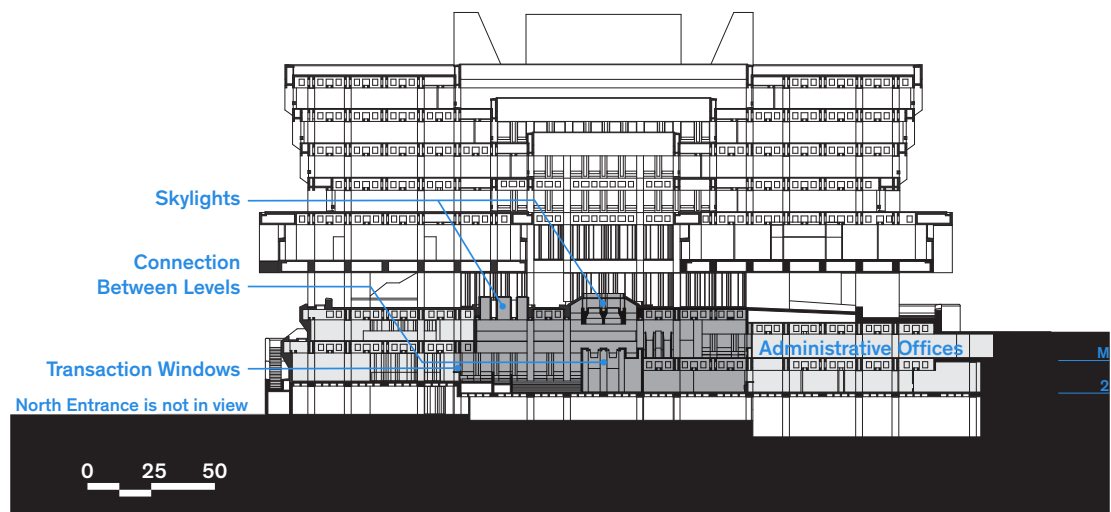
tion that almost all of the workspaces have no windows to the exterior. Instead, they are illuminated almost fully by artificial fixtures. Skylights at the perimeter on the east side of the building and narrow slot windows on the west side provide limited natural light. These openings are most often located within private offices.

The form of the northern entrance and its bank of doors resulted from one of the most significant design changes after the original competition entry. This entrance was originally conceived with a

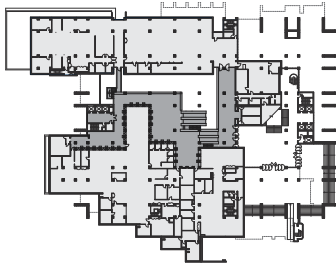
projecting concrete hood over a small entryway. To either side were defensive battered brick walls. The enlarged glass system that was built provides more light to the interior and establishes the northern entry as being of greater significance in the building's engagement with the plaza. Closed since 2001, this entrance will be re-opened and expanded as part of the 2020 Plaza Renovations Phase 1 Project (PFD Project #7140). The changes involve adding an information and security desk along with security equipment.

- 1 Lawrence Anderson. *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 18.
- 2 Robert Taylor, "A Plain Man's Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way," *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969): B18.
- 3 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, "Boston's City Hall: It Binds the Past to the Future," *Architectural Forum* 130, no. 1 (January/February 1969): 46.
- 4 Original elevations found on New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, A101, 1962-02-07 and details on A114 of the same drawing set 3 PFD Project #7142.

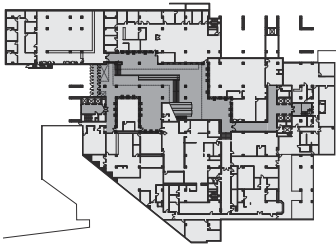
Section looking south.



Issues, Barriers, & Observations



Floor M



Floor 2

Light levels are low in the public areas. The original lighting design was based on natural light from skylights in the courtyard and cylindrical downlights. Many of the set of thirty-three skylights are located under the eastern hood, limiting the amount of light that gets to the transaction areas below. The central skylight is covered with a temporary membrane of waterproofing material to address a leak.

The cylindrical downlights alone, spaced at 14'-4" intervals, are inadequate to meet current light level standards. Brighter office spaces behind the transaction windows make the public space seem dimmer in comparison. The 2018 Parking Clerk Renovation project (PFD Project #7142) replaced the incandescent cylindrical downlights with LED fixtures of the same size and shape, adding lights concealed above the precast ceiling grid to uplight the underside of the slab.

Fluorescent fixtures have been added under the ceiling grid in front of the transaction windows on the second floor to increase the level of light in these areas. Many of these fixtures were removed and replaced with concealed fixtures during the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovation project, but some still remain on the lower part of this floor.

The space is not universally accessible from the main plaza lobby. The accessible route to the second floor is relatively straightforward via the south elevator. Visitors seeking an accessible route to the M level, which is half a level down from the plaza lobby, must take the south elevator to a different floor, cross the building, and finally take the north elevator to the M level.

The transaction window counter height of 3'-10" is not universally accessible. The pilasters dividing the windows and the counters are integrated, making alterations to the height of the counters difficult. One accessible-height window was created as part of the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project in place of an unused door.

New aluminum grates were fabricated to match the original at a few windows on the second floor as part of the Parking Clerk Renovation project. Due to concerns about security, the plexiglass panels were not replaced with new grates that would have matched the original.

There is a lack of seating in the public space where visitors are often waiting. Although the cast-in-place blocks between transaction windows were originally intended to function as seats, they are too high to be comfortable.

Wayfinding is challenging due to the multiple levels and irregular circulation pattern.

The space was originally designed for 2,800 visitors on a typical day (5,000 visitors at peak times). Current visitorship is roughly 250 visitors per day due to technological advances that allow many of the transactions formerly conducted in person to be completed online.

Though this is still the main location for public transactions, there are substantially fewer in-person transactions compared to the original planning. As a result, a profusion of closed windows makes the space feel unwelcoming.

Art is displayed in multiple locations on the transaction levels. Large-scale artwork is exhibited on the cast-in-place concrete and brick walls. The M level is often used for



Supplementary heating with cords taped to the concrete.



Closed transaction windows on level M.

public art or event exhibitions, with works mounted to the columns or temporary displays. This space is not universally accessible from the main plaza lobby. The third-floor gallery overlooking the transaction space has been designated the Scollay Square Gallery. The second-floor hallway connecting the south elevators and the main transaction concourse has been designated the Mayor's Neighborhood Gallery.

Materials and Systemic Elements

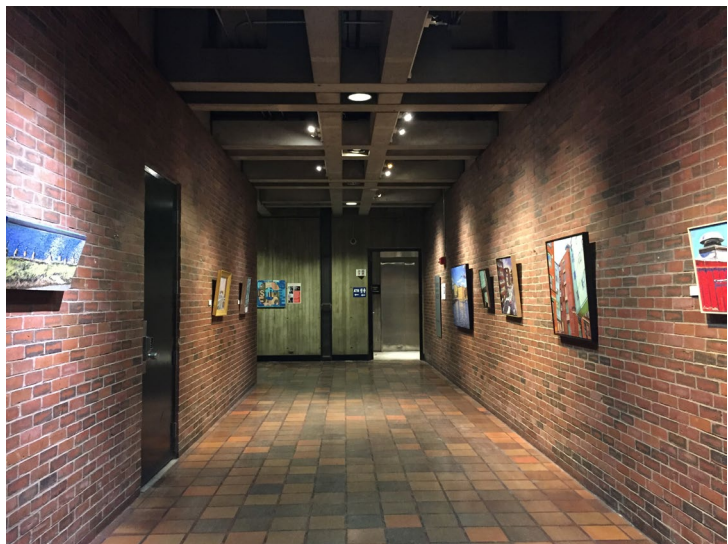
Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Exposed cast-in-place concrete dominates the walls of the lower level of the public transaction space. Precast transaction windows separated by precast fins and cast-in-place seating blocks line the space. Precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and the ceiling grid system make up most of the ceilings.

Brick: Some offices are located behind brick walls. This brick is an extension of the brick volumes at the exterior.

Clay Tile: The flooring of the transaction area within the "mound" is clay tile, nominally 9 inches by 9 inches. Bricks come into the north entry vestibule at the

Mayor's Neighborhood Gallery.



second floor and then transition to the clay tile beyond the vestibule. From the south lobby, the brick floor transitions to clay tile at the doorway into the transaction area. Clay tile is also used as treads and risers for the six stairways in the transaction area.

Polyester terrazzo: The counters of the transaction area are concrete clad in polyester terrazzo. This is the same material used for corridor flooring in the upper levels. Due to timing of construction and issues with product selection, the countertops are a slightly different color than that of the flooring.

Vierendeel trusses with precast grid: The precast Vierendeel truss system dominates the ceiling of the transaction level. Downlights are installed at the intersection of the truss with the bisecting double beams

Glass: The north entrance has frameless swing doors.

Mullioned interior storefront: Some entrances into departments on the third and second floor feature varied spacing for the steel mullions.

Lighting: Lighting is a mix of can downlights occupying the intersections of the Vierendeel trusses and bisecting beams at the public areas as well as fluorescent



Second-floor office space showing power drops from the ceiling.

fixtures located with the doubled beams within the administrative offices.

Service infrastructure: The south elevator lobby includes a service core containing a fire stair, elevators, and an integrated mail chute. This lobby connects to an open stair that links down to the first floor service level. The north elevator lobby contains a fire stair and elevators. Telephone booths were incorporated into niches in the brick near the north elevator lobby, but have been removed. Drinking fountains were incorporated into niches in the brick.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art that locate mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

E24 Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088), which replaced the linear and can downlight fixtures in their original locations with LEDs and uplit the space above the ceiling grid.

E25 Interior renovations to office and administration space should involve removal of unused infrastructure, including cleaning out of existing walker ducts. Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. This work should be done in a neat and organized fashion hidden above the ceiling grid to the extent possible.

E26 Retain water fountains until a larger project to replace them is considered. Use the original location of water fountains where possible when implementing a new system.

E27 Implement the new signage and wayfinding strategy that was introduced with the 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project # PMD 2019-01) on level M.

Potential Change

E57 Recognize the original design intent which had public services connected to the plaza entrance and north entrance when considering any substantial change or change of use in the transaction areas.



New signage and lighting at transaction windows.

North Entrance

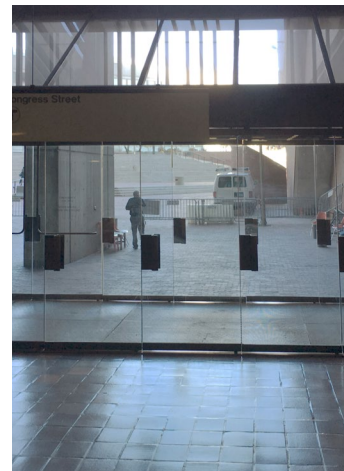
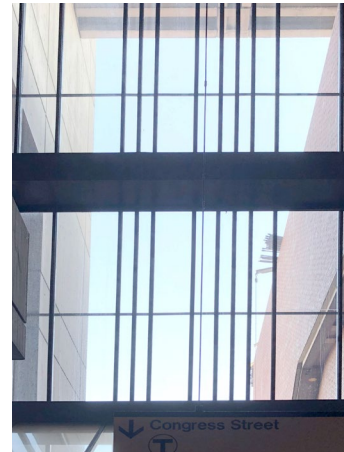
High Significance ●●●

The north entrance is formed by a glass wall situated between two brick masses. This space was originally intended to provide a direct connection from the plaza to the public transaction concourse. Since 2001, the entrance has been closed and used only as an exit. In its current condition, barricades and a security station take up the space that once was an inviting route into the concourse. The large panes of glass are not well insulated, and the cold is a source of discomfort for the staff working in transaction windows during winter months. The north entrance will be re-opened and expanded to accommodate security equipment as part of the Plaza Renovation Phase I (PFD Project #7140).

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E58 Incorporate similar upgrades for accessibility, wayfinding, security, and lighting from the Plaza Lobby project (PFD Project #7097).



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Transaction Levels [138](#)
Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Clay Floor Tile [266](#)
Steel [274](#)
Glass [278](#)

Connection between Levels

High Significance ●●●

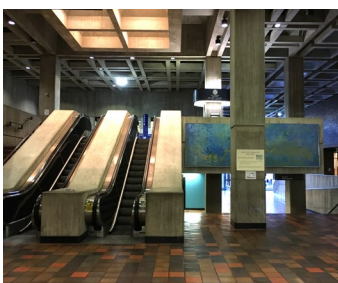


Easy movement through the transaction levels was a key conceptual and functional driver to the design of the transaction area. This connection is accomplished through escalators, stairs, and ramps. The visual and pedestrian connection among the levels is significant, but the drama of the space is lost today due to insufficient lighting.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E59 Maintain the visual and experiential connection of the various transaction levels when considering changes to this area. Refer to the October 2017 Rethink City Hall: Boston City Hall and Plaza master plan (PFD Project #7074).



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Transaction Levels [138](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Mullioned Interior Storefront [222](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Brick [254](#)

Clay Tile [266](#)

Glass [278](#)

Skylights

Significance ●●

The architects imagined that the transaction concourse would be lit naturally through skylights in the courtyard, a concept shown in their sectional sketches throughout the design process. The shafts of the central skylight produce a sculptural expression in concrete that visualizes the connection between the transaction levels and the courtyard above. Originally, it was intended to be a main source of natural light in the space, positioned at a pivot point to highlight the circulation between the levels. The skylight has since been covered because of water infiltration issues.

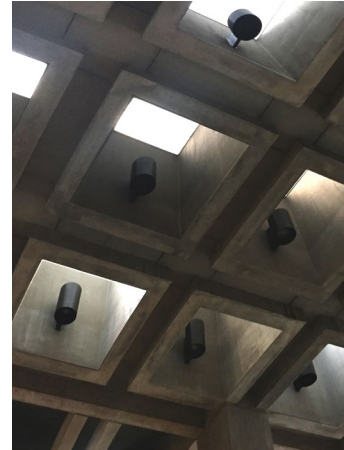
The bank of thirty-three skylights does not provide significant levels of natural light, because the covers of the skylights are rarely cleaned and have darkened over time. Many of them are located directly below a building overhang, which also contributes to the low levels of light. All of the skylights are supplemented with large incandescent fixtures installed inside. The bulbs have an extremely short lifespan and are often not functional, leaving the space dark.

Additional skylights are located along the perimeter of the administrative offices on the east side of the concourse. These skylights were replaced as part of the 2019 Congress Street Masonry Repair (PFD Project #7135).

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E28 Skylight shafts were originally conceived to provide illumination. Future projects should acknowledge this and re-light the skylight shafts.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Transaction Levels 138

Courtyard, Skylights 114, 226

Concrete, Cast-in-Place 240

Transaction Windows

Significance ●●



Each public-facing department was built with a specific number of transaction windows lining the concourse. These windows are composed of a combination of cast-in-place and precast concrete with polyester terrazzo. The windows can be secured with dark bronze-colored anodized aluminum grates that hinge to stack flat behind the precast pilasters. Some of the bronze grates have been removed and replaced with plexiglass panels.

Due to the extensive shift in services to digital formats, most of the transaction windows are not utilized, and the 3'-10" counter heights do not meet contemporary accessibility standards. The pilasters dividing the windows and the counters are integrated, making alterations to the height of the counters difficult. In 2018 the Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088) re-opened a number of transaction windows that were previously closed. New signage and lighting was installed. As part of this project, an obsolete door was replaced with an accessible transaction window and counter.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

- Overall 74
- Interior—Transaction Levels 138
- Lighting 214
- Concrete, Precast and Cast-in-Place 240
- Terrazzo 270

Policies and Recommendations

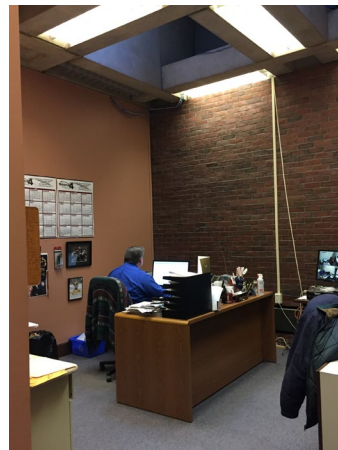
Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E29** Minor alterations of transaction windows should provide replacement signage consistent with city standards and as implemented in the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088).
- E30** Activate all transaction windows. Open windows as service windows or locate public gathering space behind the windows as recommended in Rethink City Hall: Boston City Hall and Plaza master plan (PFD Project #7074).
- E31** Retain and use existing grates at transaction windows, which open to provide a welcoming connection between city service employees and visitors. When possible, remove plexiglass where it has been added to transaction windows, replacing with original grates or installing new aluminum grates to match the existing.

Administrative Offices

Low Significance •

City departments with public engagement needs were arranged behind transaction windows. Architecturally, these offices resemble the municipal offices on the upper floors, with the key distinction that almost all of the workspaces have no windows to the exterior. Instead, they are illuminated almost exclusively by artificial light. Skylights at the perimeter on the east side of the building and narrow slot windows on the west side provide limited natural light, most often located within private offices. Long plagued by water infiltration issues, the skylights were replaced as part of the Congress Street Masonry Repair (PFD Project #7135) in 2019.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Transaction Levels [138](#)

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Steel [274](#)

Glass [278](#)



Transaction windows.

Section 5.5.4

Service Level

Overall Rating of Significance: Low

Elements

Congress Street Porch

Mayor's Drop Off and Executive Garage

Mayor's Elevator

Vestibule

Inner Lobby

Elevator Core and Lobby

Open Stair

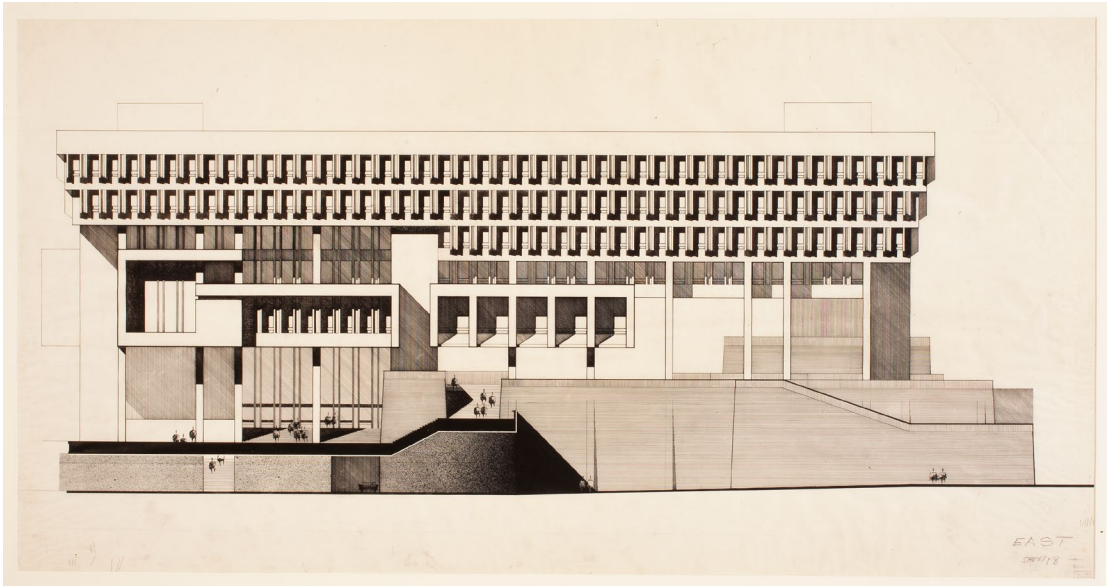
The Congress Street entrance includes spaces apparent from the exterior, such as the mayor's drop-off and public entry porch, as well as an interior procession comprising the vestibule, inner lobby, elevator core, and open stair. From the street, a multi-story porch invites vehicles and pedestrians to a visitor entrance, drop-off for the mayor, and entry to the executive parking garage. It provides access to a private mayoral entrance and elevator. Although the Congress Street entrance was conceived to serve back-of-house functions and the mayor's secure arrival, it is now used as one of two primary entrances to the building.

A public entry porch creates a visual acknowledgement towards Faneuil Hall, which the competition brief called "outside the project area, but [. . .] an inseparable part of the design ensemble."¹ Proceeding from either the mayor's drop-off or the entry porch, the public can enter

City Hall through the vestibule. As the security environment has evolved since 1969 and especially after 2001, security equipment and personnel now occupy the inner lobby. A Vierendeel ceiling grid and board-formed concrete walls line the passage. Ancillary service spaces are constructed from concrete masonry unit walls and waffle slab ceilings. Deeper into the space a two-story zone reveals a stairway leading to the transaction levels.

The original design for the plaza envisioned a bridge over Congress Street (then known as New Congress Street, conceived as major arterial road) to create a pedestrian access point between City Hall and Dock Square, the public square adjacent to Faneuil Hall. To promote this accessibility, the Government Center master plan by I. M. Pei & Associates proposed a 350-foot-wide pedestrian bridge, which would have extended City Hall Plaza to Dock Square and a new motor inn

Competition elevation showing the originally planned bridge over Congress Street and photograph of east elevation.



across New Congress Street. The bridge design was later reduced to fifty feet, and finally eliminated from the project altogether at the request of the Boston Redevelopment Authority. In 1998 and 1999, the concept for a footbridge and hotel adjacent to the federal building were re-examined, only to again be abandoned.

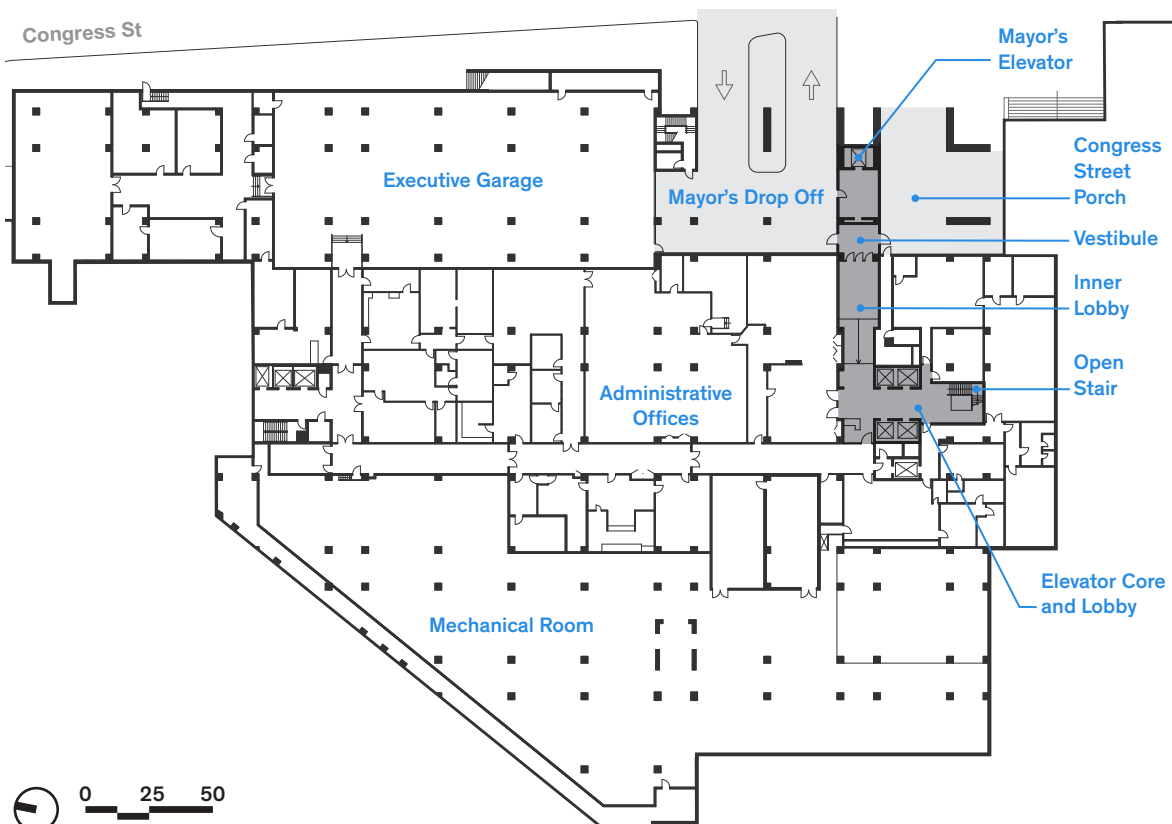
Although meant to provide a physical link to Dock Square, Michael McKinnell explained that the Congress Street entrance “was conceived of only as a way

of getting to the carpark; it was not conceived as being a major public entrance at all.”² The prediction that the introduction of City Hall would be a catalyst for the Dock Square area’s revitalization proved correct. Given the urban energy of this side of the building, the Congress Street entrance is ripe for reinterpretation to better link City Hall with its surroundings—although predictions for sea-level rise indicate that there is risk of water infiltration at this location.

1 Lawrence Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston*, (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 12.

2 Interview with Michael McKinnell in the courtyard of Boston City Hall conducted by the conservation management plan team (May 2, 2018).

Service-level plan.



Issues, Barriers, & Observations



Vehicle parked on the Congress Street porch.



Security desk in the inner lobby.

The Congress Street entrance is undersized for the daily capacity it handles. Its location provides a crucial entry to the building, as it is the only entrance that is visible from and located on a street. It is currently the only after-hours entrance and exit.

The entrance is not welcoming or ceremonial. Unlike the plaza lobby and north entrance, there are low ceilings, poor lighting, and no natural light. The arrival route is characterized by poor sight lines to the entry doors and poor exterior signage. The entry lobby is very narrow with limited space for security equipment and no room for an information desk. The ramp is not compliant with accessibility standards.

Wayfinding is confusing, as the space connects to most of the building only by elevator. An open stair links to the second floor south elevator lobby.

The Congress Street porch and mayor's drop-off create conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. The mayor's drop-off is also the vehicular entrance to the executive garage.

Technically part of the plaza, the wide exterior stair that connects Congress Street to the plaza is not accessible. Visitors can enter the building and use the elevators to move between levels, but this is not a known or encouraged route. The Rethink City Hall master plan proposes an exterior elevator in the area of the Congress Street porch to address this issue.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Cast-in-place concrete lines the passage from the Congress Street entrance to the elevator lobby. Precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and the ceiling grid system make up the ceilings of the public areas. The ceilings of the back-of-house spaces are the cast-in-place waffle slabs of the floor above.

Polyester terrazzo: Floor coverings in the inner lobby and elevator lobby are polyester terrazzo.

Bronze: Railings in the vestibule and inner lobby are bronze.

Vierendeel trusses with precast grid: This precast ceiling grid is present along the passage from the entrance through to the elevator lobby.

Glass: The entrance between the vestibule and the inner lobby features frameless swing doors.

Mullioned exterior curtain wall: A small section of the mullioned storefront with varied spacing exists at the entrances to the vestibule.

Lighting: Fluorescent tube lighting is located in the doubled beams of the precast ceiling grid.

Service infrastructure: The south elevator lobby includes a service core containing a fire stair, elevators, and an integrated mail chute. This lobby connects into an open stair that links up to the transaction levels. The north elevator lobby contains a fire stair and elevators. Restrooms are located near the south elevator lobby.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

G7 When planning alterations or changes to the service level, refer to Climate Ready Boston and the associated plan for Downtown Boston to design for resiliency regarding predicted flooding and sea-level rise.

Maintenance and Management

E2 Provide alternate parking for city and maintenance vehicles. Consider designating part of the plaza away from the building, such as along Cambridge Street, for active maintenance or loading vehicles.

E3 Avoid storing equipment and vehicles around or under the building overhangs. Provide alternate storage for special event equipment currently stored against the building.

E4 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E9 Features such as bike racks should be attached to the ground and reversible.

E25 Interior renovations to office and administration space should involve removal of unused infrastructure, including cleaning out of existing walker ducts. Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. This work should be done in a neat and organized fashion hidden above the ceiling grid to the extent possible.

E27 Implement the new signage and wayfinding strategy that was introduced with the 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project # PMD 2019-01) on this floor.

E32 Refer to recommended phased replacement of terrazzo flooring in terrazzo material section.



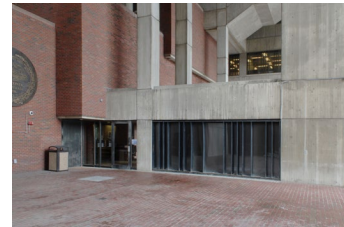
Congress Street inner lobby.

Congress Street Porch

Significance ●●

The Congress Street porch is a multi-story brick-paved space that leads to the Congress Street entrance. This entrance has come to serve many more members of the public than originally intended. Its visibility should be considered as a key point of intervention for improving public access to the building. The dramatic height of the space serves to distract from wayfinding to the tiny entrance door.

The Rethink City Hall master plan proposes an expansion to the Congress Street entrance in the area of the porch that provides space for security, wayfinding, and a ceremonial entrance. Technically part of the plaza, the wide exterior stair that connects Congress Street to the plaza is not accessible. This issue can be addressed by visitors entering the building and using the elevators. But this is not a visible or encouraged route. The Rethink City Hall master plan proposes an exterior elevator in the area of the porch to address this issue.



Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

- E1** Limit vehicles parked on brick paved areas. Emergency vehicles and vehicles conducting active exterior maintenance or event loading may need to be parked for short periods.

Potential for Change

- E60** When considering an expansion to the Congress Street entrance to improve accessibility, security, and visibility, hold a new addition to the standards defined by the plaza and north entrances in terms of materials, transparency, and height.

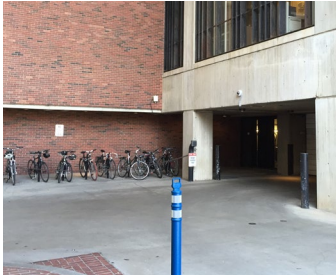
Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

- Overall [74](#)
- Interior—Service Level [154](#)
- Lighting [214](#)
- Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)
- Brick [254](#)
- Brownstone [262](#)
- Steel [274](#)
- Glass [278](#)

Mayor's Drop-Off

Significance ●●



The mayor's drop-off fulfills the main functional intent of the Congress Street entrance, which was considered a service entry for use by officials or city employees. The drive is still in use today, acting as a private entry for the mayor and staff. Though the door to the mayor's entry and elevator is subtle, the space above the drop-off soars dramatically, several stories high. Vehicle and pedestrian conflicts occur as pedestrians approach the vestibule from both the Congress Street porch and the mayor's drop-off.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

E8 Consider use of the horseshoe drive as an active entrance, providing space for accessible drop-off and active loading.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Service Level [154](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Brick [254](#)

Brownstone [262](#)

Steel [274](#)

Glass [278](#)

Mayor's Elevator

Significance ●●

The mayor's elevator was incorporated into the design to accommodate Mayor Collins, who was a wheelchair user after a battle with polio. The elevator is still in frequent use, and its location continues to be functional for the mayor and staff.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Service Level [154](#)

Concrete, Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Vestibule

Low Significance •



The vestibule that the public enters was originally intended to serve a very small portion of City Hall’s visitors. It was never considered to be as significant as the plaza or north entrances and therefore does not employ their theatrical drama. The entrance feels small and unceremonious by comparison to the main access points.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E60 When considering an expansion to the Congress Street entrance to improve accessibility, security, and visibility, hold a new addition to the standards defined by the plaza and north entrances in terms of materials, transparency, and height.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Service Level 154

Lighting 214

Concrete, Cast-in-Place 240

Steel 274

Glass 278

Bronze 282

Inner Lobby

Low Significance •

The inner lobby is a narrow passage between the entry vestibule and the elevator core. A ramp mediates between the levels of entrance porch and the slightly lower floor plate beyond. An integrated cast-in-place bench lines the south side of the lobby. The space is crowded with security equipment to accommodate modern security needs. The cramped space does not fit the ceremonial standards developed for the two other original entrances, which are much larger in scale. The slope of the ramp does not meet current accessibility standards.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E60 When considering an expansion to the Congress Street entrance to improve accessibility, security, and visibility, hold a new addition to the standards defined by the plaza and north entrances in terms of materials, transparency, and height.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Service Level [154](#)
Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)
Lighting [214](#)
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Terrazzo [270](#)
Steel [274](#)
Glass [278](#)

Elevator Core and Lobby

Significance ●●

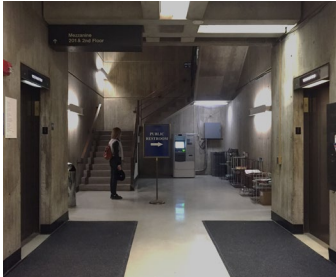


The inner lobby opens onto the south elevator lobby on this floor. This space contains elevators, public restrooms, and access to staff locker rooms. It ends in an open stair that connects to the second floor. A building directory and display monitor were installed as part of the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097). Mail chutes set into the elevator core wall remain as a vestige of the era in which the building was built.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E58 Incorporate similar upgrades for accessibility, wayfinding, security, and lighting from the Plaza Lobby project (PFD Project #7097).



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Service Level [154](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Service Infrastructure [232](#)

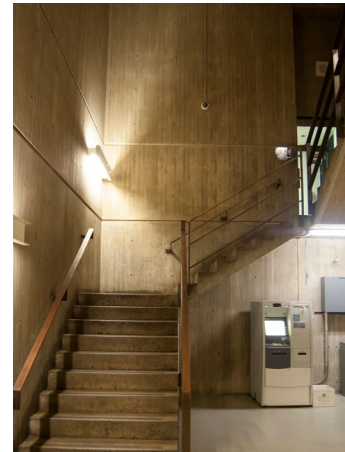
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Terrazzo [270](#)

Open Stair

Significance ●●

The stair from the first to the second level provides a key connection between the Congress Street entrance and the rest of the building. It is one of several special stairs within the building, differentiated by its open condition. This double-height space offers one of the only moments in the building where the floor slab can be seen in profile (in most places the slab terminates in a thick concrete railing). This detail and the board-formed concrete walls make it a subtly unique moment. It serves an important wayfinding role by connecting between levels. An ATM and a number of pieces of electrical equipment have been installed under the stairs.



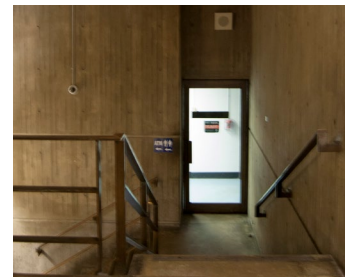
Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E24** Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088), which replaced the linear and downlights in their original locations with LEDs, while uplighting the space above the ceiling grid
- E33** Consider moving the ATM and electrical equipment to the service corridor near the restrooms on this floor.

Potential for Change

- E61** Maintain stair as an open and visible means of connection between the first and second floors.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74
Interior—Service Level 154
Lighting 214
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place 240
Bronze 282



Congress Street inner lobby.

Section 5.5.5

Ceremonial Level

Overall Rating of Significance: High

Elements

Mayor's Office

Eagle Room

Bronze Hallway

Mayor's Reception

Mayor's Administrative Offices

City Council Reception

City Council Chamber

Curley Room and Piemonte Room

City Council Offices

Public Circulation and Bridge

Ceremonial Stair to Fifth Floor

The fifth floor is the ceremonial center of City Hall. It houses the building's major ceremonial functions, including the city council chamber, city councilor offices, and the mayor's office suite. These spaces manifest and symbolize the relationship between the two major arms of city government, the legislative and executive. A municipal reference library originally formed a third element of the ensemble.

Unlike the spatial strategy for the administrative levels of the building, the fifth floor was designed to express permanence and stability in the forms of government. The rooms were built for specific purposes and spatial experiences. Many rooms are still used as originally designed, though the expansion of the number of city council members required

the conversion of the municipal reference library into additional city council offices.

Two key spaces in the mayor's suite form the largest volumes, which project outward. One room faces east to a framed view of Faneuil Hall and Boston Harbor, the other looks south over Washington Street and the Old State House. Together the two rooms were designed to remind the mayor occupying them of the city's mercantile past as well as its engines of commerce downtown. This object lesson has a counterpoint; the mayor is placed on display to the city, a goal of making the actions of government transparent.

Though the architects avoided traditional architectural symbols of government, they employed explicit adjacencies and symbolic overlapping of spaces to



Top: View of the plaza lobby from the fifth-floor balcony.

Bottom: Mayor's office looking toward Faneuil Hall.



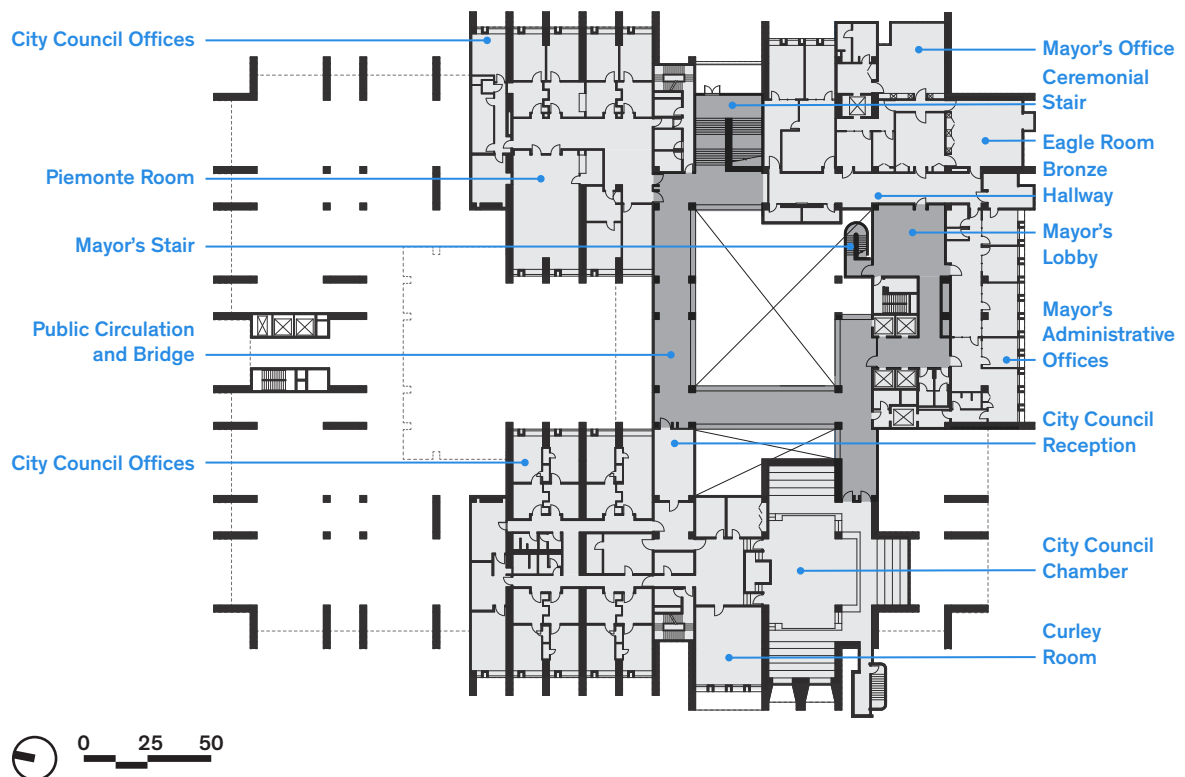
communicate the functions and forms of city government. The hallways that connect the mayor's suite and the city council chamber are wide galleries open to the public below. The tiered seating in the city council chamber (also known as the Christopher A. Iannella Chamber) is expressed in the ceiling of the lobby below.

This ceremonial level is also characterized by grand ceiling heights and the use of more refined materials than the rest of the building. These materials include African mahogany millwork, bronze wall finishes, and terrazzo flooring. The importance of occupying this suite

of spaces was illustrated by Mayor John Collins, who initiated the competition for the building in 1962. Olga Gueft, editor of *Interiors Magazine*, reported that in late 1967, well before construction was complete but before handing over the mayorship to his recently elected successor, "Collins managed to occupy the suite for the last weeks in December, before Mayor White took over. Collins caught pneumonia."¹ Even unconditioned spaces were alluring enough to a mayor who wanted to celebrate the near-completion of a process for a New Boston he had launched many years earlier.

1 Olga Gueft, "What it took to bring about the best public building of our time," *Interiors* 128, no. 9 (April 1969): 128.

Ceremonial-level plan.



Issues, Barriers & Observations



Ad hoc arrangement of rooms in the former municipal library, now the eastern city council offices and Piemonte Room.

The ceremonial level of Boston City Hall was designed as an expression of permanence and stability of the democratic system. It was not designed for flexible reprogramming, but was suited precisely to the program provided in the competition brief. In spite of this, program adjustments have been made over time. The mayor's office has been consolidated into one room and its circulation made more private. After the number of city councilors increased from nine to thirteen in 1983, the municipal library was converted into city council offices and conference rooms, including the Piemonte Room.

Security measures have needed to be incorporated for contemporary risks. Changes include the introduction of a security desk in the mayor's reception area and the closing of the mayor's stair.

The ceilings originally had acoustic panels on the underside of the concrete ceiling slab. However, because the panels contained asbestos they were removed throughout the building in the 1990s. In many spaces, the loss of the acoustic material resulted in poor sound quality. The city council chamber was renovated in 2018 (PFD Project #7116), and new acoustic material was applied.

The 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project #2019-01) replaced outdated signage to address wayfinding issues on the fifth floor, as well as the second, third, and eighth floors.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Exposed cast-in-place concrete is visible where structural columns penetrate the bronze walls as well as the exposed walls of the various spaces throughout this level, including the city council chamber. The precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid system make up the ceilings of the public areas.

Polyester terrazzo: Floor coverings in the corridors and the city council chamber are polyester terrazzo.

Bronze: The principal corridors through the mayor's and city council spaces are lined with large bronze panels. The interior wall of the Curley Room also features this bronze wall paneling.

Wood: Wood is featured in the flooring (pine) and built-in cabinets (mahogany) of the mayor's suite. Most doors are veneered mahogany atop a solid plywood core. A solid mahogany panel is set above the doors to highlight the elevated feel of these spaces. The doors of the bronze hallway in the mayor's suite are clad in the same bronze material of the wall panels.

Vierendeel trusses with precast grid: The precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid system is present throughout the ceremonial level.

Glass: The entrances to the city council chamber and offices suites feature frameless glass doors. There is a mullioned interior storefront glass wall in the mayor's lobby.

Lighting: Lighting is a mix of canned downlights occupying the intersections of the Vierendeel trusses and bisecting beams as well as fluorescent fixtures located with the doubled beams.

Service infrastructure: The south elevator lobby includes a service core containing a fire stair, elevators, and an integrated mail chute. Restrooms are located in this lobby. There is no north elevator lobby on this level.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E25 Interior renovations to office and administration space should involve removal of unused infrastructure, including cleaning out of existing walker ducts. Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. This work should be done in a neat and organized fashion hidden above the ceiling grid to the extent possible.

E32 Refer to recommended phased replacement in terrazzo material section.

E34 Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097), which replaced the linear and downlights in their original locations with 3000K LEDs.

E35 Consider re-installing metal grilles in the square sections of the concrete ceiling grid in the highly significant spaces.



City council chamber.

Mayor's Office

High Significance ●●●

The mayor's office (originally the mayor's conference room), is a two-story space that makes a significant mark on the elevation of the building. It is broken into several volumes, each of which is marked on the exterior by glass and concrete. The interior finishes are wood and concrete, with furnishings that have been replaced since the original fitout, most recently in 2020 (PFD Project #7141), when the mayor's office received new furniture and the recessed lighting was replaced with LEDs.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- **E36** Retain built-in wood panels and cabinets.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)
Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)
Lighting [214](#)
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Bronze [282](#)
Wood [288](#)

Eagle Room

High Significance ●●●



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Ceremonial Level 170

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Bronze 282

Wood 288

The Eagle Room was originally designed to be the mayor's private office, but has functioned for many years as the main meeting room for the mayor and staff. The room is one of the spaces expressed on the exterior elevation of the building, facing Washington Street and the Washington Mall. It is a sculptural volume, with an enclosed balcony that juts into the room to facilitate shadows on the exterior. This characteristic of the Eagle Room is an example of how the building's facade design impacts the spaces within and vice versa.

The room houses a large wooden eagle, which is a carved replica from 1939 of one made in 1868 that sat atop Old City Hall. The original was destroyed in the hurricane of 1938. The Eagle Room is often used to make public announcements, but audio-visual infrastructure and acoustics are poor.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E37 Coordinate conservation of the eagle statue with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

Bronze Hallway

High Significance ● ● ●

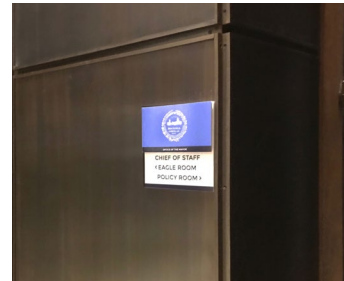
The bronze hallway is an elegant corridor that connects the various spaces of the mayor's suite. It is significant for its high ceilings, concrete base, and bronze walls, as well as for its historic role as a place central to the political functioning of the government. The bronze walls have been marked by handprints, scuffs, and adhesives over the decades.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art, which situate the mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location that does not damage the bronze, such as within the bronze reveals. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

E38 Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. in an organized fashion. Avoid running infrastructure on the bronze walls.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)
Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)
Lighting [214](#)
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Terrazzo [270](#)
Bronze [282](#)
Wood [288](#)

Mayor's Reception

Significance • •



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Ceremonial Level 170

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Mullioned Interior Storefront 222

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Glass 278

Wood 288

Located at the eastern corner of the building, the mayor's office suite contains a sequence of rooms dedicated to the mayor and key members of the leadership team. An outer reception area provides access to the inner bronze-walled corridor that links several of the important rooms with staff areas.

The mayor's reception and lobby mark the transition from public corridors into controlled administrative spaces. Directly accessible from the fifth-floor elevator core, the lobby was intended to be the public's point of contact with the mayor. The lighting pattern matches the administrative offices, while the bronze walls denote a ceremonial character. From the lobby, the architects set up a series of spatial layers that invokes ancient models of procession—through a series of doors between the mayor's lobby, across the bronze hallway, and through the mayor's reception into the mayor's office. If all of these doors are open, a member of the public in the mayor's lobby would be able to see a view of Faneuil Hall.

These rooms have been renovated several times since the building was opened, most recently in 2020 (PFD Project #7141), with new carpet, millwork (including a reception desk and display cabinet), and furniture.

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E62 Maintain the openness of the space and prominence of the glass and bronze walls when considering changes.

Mayor's Administrative Offices

Significance ●●

A number of ancillary rooms and staff offices support the mayor's activities and link to key members of the mayor's team. Like city council offices, these spaces are presented on the exterior through hooded forms with windows subdivided by precast concrete elements. The interior walls of these chambers have been updated through the years to accommodate growing staffing needs for the contemporary needs of mayors.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)

City Council Reception

Significance ●●



The city council reception is between the city council offices and the city council chamber. A series of low concrete benches along the public balconies continue into the space as a waiting area for visitors to interface with their representatives.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Mullioned Interior Storefront [222](#)

Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Terrazzo [270](#)

Glass [278](#)

City Council Chamber

High Significance ●●●

The largest of the ceremonial spaces on the fifth floor is the council chamber, which holds a privileged position above the entry to the plaza lobby. The stepped profile of the public seats are visible from below. The chamber was organized around a central sunken area with a ring of council desks. This area was partially enclosed by a low, cast-in-place concrete wall. Galleries of stepped seating extend on three sides behind the low wall—two for the public, one for the press. The fourth side provides the backdrop to a poured-in-place concrete platform. Michael McKinnell likened it to a “theater-in-the-round . . . The audience sits the same way as the councilors around the central table,” in an effort to “involve people with the legislative process.”¹ The sense of pageantry and theater is reinforced with separate access points to the chamber for the city council and the public. The city councilors walk in from behind the stage while members of the public enter through a door from the bridge in the plaza lobby. In 2017 the chamber was modified to raise the sunken floor and remove parts of the low concrete wall, providing an accessible means for members of the public wishing to address the city council (PFD Project #7116). Accessible seating was added, lighting was replaced, acoustic and audio-visual improvements were made, and the council president’s desk was renovated.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)
Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)
Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)
Lighting [214](#)
Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)
Terrazzo [270](#)
Bronze [282](#)
Wood [288](#)

Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E63 Maintain this space as the city council chamber, utilized for public city council meetings. Any changes to this space should maintain the volume of the space, the arrangement of seating, and the character of concrete elements.

¹ Robert Taylor, “A Plain Man’s Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way,” *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969).

Curley Room, Piemonte Room

Significance ●●



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Ceremonial Level 170

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Bronze 282

Wood 288

The city council suite includes a number of shared spaces, including two large rooms where public meetings can be held. These rooms are accessed from inside the city council suites. The Curley Room looks out onto the plaza and the Piemonte Room views into the courtyard. The Curley Room was original to the building, whereas the Piemonte Room was created when the municipal library was turned into additional city councilor offices in the 1980s. The interiors of these rooms have been updated many times over the years when technical and furnishing needs have changed. Though their architectural value is limited compared to other spaces on the floor, the rooms hold historical and social value for the role they have played in city governance.

The rooms have audio-visual, lighting, and acoustical limitations which could be improved. In both rooms, the original fluorescent light fixtures have been replaced with large intrusive fixtures that hang below the underside of the ceiling grid.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E34 Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097), which replaced the linear lights and downlights in their original locations with 3000K LEDs.

City Council Offices

Significance • •

The suite of spaces dedicated to city council offices is located to the north of the city council chamber. The public enters from the bridge in the plaza lobby, and is received into a space with a long, low concrete bench. Offices are arrayed along the perimeter of the west facade as well as the interior face of the courtyard. Bronze panels at each of the office doors signify the importance of the space. Each office is made up of two rooms—a reception area that is often filled with staff desks, which opens into the formal office itself. The second room is expressed on the exterior through one of the concrete hoods. Precast window dividers set up smaller zones within the office and control natural light. Though the rooms feature glossy wood doors and carefully composed glass windows, they are quite small for their purpose.

The corresponding space on the east side of the building was converted into additional offices in the 1980s when the number of city councilors increased from nine to thirteen. As a result, the finishes in these spaces are not original, and are of lower significance.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E39 Identify and recommend less invasive options for personalization of the bronze walls outside the councilor offices, such as tackable panels. Situate mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location that does not damage the bronze, such as within the bronze reveals.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Ceremonial Level 170

Vierendeel Trusses with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Concrete, Precast and Cast-in-Place 240

Bronze 282

Wood 288

Public Circulation and Bridge

High Significance ●●●



The circulation between the mayor's suite and the city council suites has the distinct characteristic of being open to the plaza lobby below and the light wells above. Sometimes called the fifth floor galleries, the hallways have a grand span of a full 14'-4" structural module. The railings are 2'-8" deep, giving the galleries a sense of privacy from below, without full separation. During large events, these balconies serve as overlooks to the theater of activity on the lower levels. Concrete benches line the circulation space along the north wall and continue into the city council reception.

Policies and Recommendations

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Ceremonial Level 170

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Mullioned Exterior Curtain Wall 218

Mullioned Interior Storefront 222

Service Infrastructure 232

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Terrazzo 270

Glass 278

Bronze 282

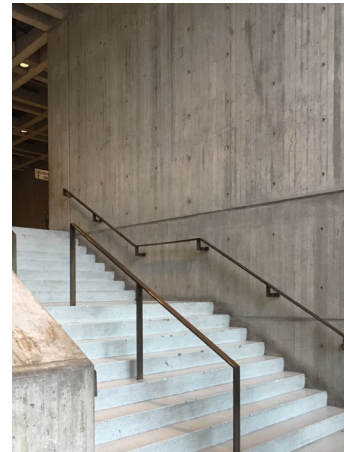
Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art that locate mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

Ceremonial Stair to Fifth Floor

High Significance ●●●

A light-washed terrazzo stair connects the top of the monumental brick stair to the fifth-floor gallery, offering a view to Faneuil Hall. The stair provides a processional path for city employees and the public on their way to the city council offices and chamber. This traffic is the main source of activity for the monumental stair, since access to the courtyard on the mezzanine is presently closed. The stair marks the transition from the public levels to the ceremonial levels through a change in floor material, from brick to terrazzo.



Policies and Recommendations

Potential for Change

E64 The stair should remain open and an integral sequence of public movement between the plaza and the fifth-floor ceremonial level.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Ceremonial Level [170](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Mullioned Exterior Curtain Wall [218](#)

Concrete, Precast and
Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Terrazzo [270](#)

Glass [278](#)

Bronze [282](#)



View from the ceremonial level showing the stepped city council chamber and the west light well.

Section 5.5.6

Municipal Levels

Overall Rating of Significance: Significance

Elements

Public Meeting Rooms

Elevator Core and Lobbies

Circulation

Administrative Offices

Courtyard Balconies

Floors six through nine of Boston City Hall are a crown of municipal offices. In contrast to the sculptural drama of the ceremonial levels, the elevations are consistent, with a repetitive A-B pattern of glazing and solid double fins that “suggests a modern office building and, hence, the activities that take place within.”¹ As viewed from the plaza, Olga Gueft, editor of *Interiors Magazine*, notes: “the form of the building also follows the space requirements, with upper floors fanning out to accommodate less often visited but larger-staffed departments.”² The levels step outward, giving the building an assertive stature on the plaza, while creating space for balconies in the courtyard. The posture of the offices elevate the work of public service accomplished within the building.

One competition bulletin provided to the design teams called for “simplicity and flexibility in the general administrative portions of the building.”³ Where the

public floors of the building have sweeping and dramatic gestures of architectural concrete, the municipal floors follow strict core locations and a ceiling grid that prioritizes open planning and flexibility.

Offices and meeting rooms are enclosed with less permanent materials such as drywall partitions that can adapt with evolving functional needs. The architects went to great lengths to integrate building systems into the architecture, and this effort is particularly evident on the municipal levels. The system of precast Vierendeel trusses incorporates mechanical distribution. The precast grid hosts lighting fixtures. Walker ducts were cast into the concrete floors at regular intervals for a network of pathways that can be used and reused over the life of the building.⁴

For Michael McKinnell, the exterior concrete walls on these levels were “intended to give a sense of density . . . a feeling there’s a zone between you and

the outside of the structure, rather than a papery metallic skin.”⁵ Precast concrete fins between exterior windows not only create the thickness that McKinnell desired, but provide shade and vertical chases for a perimeter induction unit system. Mildred Schmertz in *Architectural Record* notes that this zone functions as “a perimeter induction unit system . . . fed vertically from the roof through the precast exterior fins.”⁶ It conditions the building through registers that bisect each window.

Inside, the corridors are lined with glazed walls consisting of clear wire glass separated by black metal mullions with

varied spacing. Translucent wire glass shields departments where privacy is important while still providing light and maintaining the mullion pattern. The metal glazing system contains fire-safety equipment, water fountains, storage, as well as electrical cabinets that are tucked into thickened portions of the walls and hidden behind black panels. The open Vierendeel ceiling grid offers a sense of loftiness beyond that in many conventional offices. The ceiling forms a framework where mechanical and lighting systems can be repaired and replaced. Each Vierendeel bay measures 28’–8” square and

Municipal-level office space.



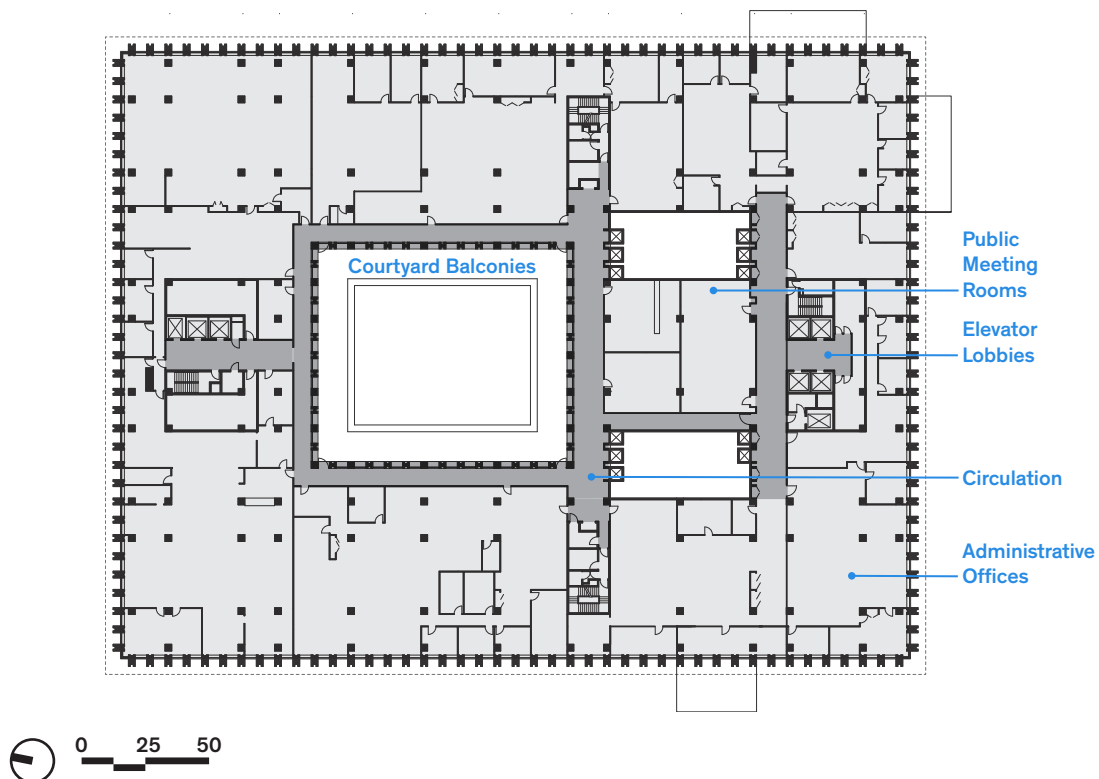
extends 4'–4" from the bottom of the grid to the ceiling. The column rhythm creates smaller 14'–4" square or 14'–4" by 28'–8" bays. The bays not only orchestrate the placement of mechanical and electrical equipment, but provide points of attachment for drywall panels. Openings within the trusses of each gridded bay are conceived to be closed with drywall or metal infill panels when needed.

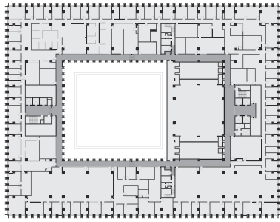
The municipal levels are characterized by lighter materials and their proximity to daylight for a "mounting color palette" as one ascends from the lower to upper floors, providing "an airy, light-filled atmosphere," as described by Michael

McKinnell.⁷ These lighter materials include polyester terrazzo floors and the smooth finishes of precast concrete. Only select moments on these floors—columns and service cores—are cast-in-place concrete, anchoring literally and symbolically to the floors below. According to Gueft, the interior finishes of the offices originally included "greige vinyl asbestos tile in general offices" and "greige wool carpet (often charcoal speckled) in private offices." Greige is a color defined by Gueft as a mixture of gray and beige.⁸

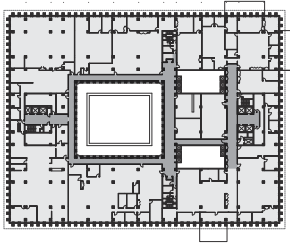
On the eighth floor, the O'Neill Public Hearing Room (known commonly as room 801) is the largest of the meeting

Municipal-level plan.

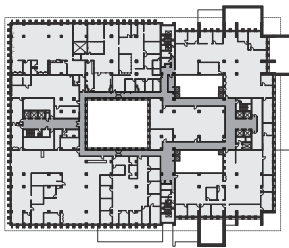




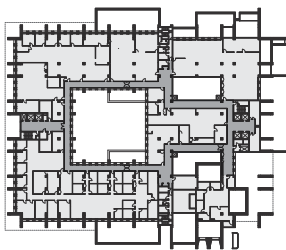
Floor 9



Floor 8



Floor 7



Floor 6

rooms. It originally occupied the entire block between the courtyard and south elevator lobby. The room was first designed to be divided by a centrally located folding partition wall. It was later subdivided to accommodate a deli and additional offices to the north. The space has several differentiating features that distinguish it from its neighbors. Part of the Vierendeel grid is raised to twelve feet high. This vertical shift pushes into the mechanical room directly above. Hardwood closets line the east and west sides of the room, while a glass partition is at its southernmost end.

- 1 Charles Millard, "The New Boston: City Hall." *Hudson Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 111.
- 2 Olga Gueft, "What it took to bring about the best public building of our time," *Interiors* 128, no. 9 (April 1969): 118.
- 3 Government Center Commission, Bulletin No. 3 (February 5, 1962): 3. The bulletin was sent to finalists in the competition. Obtained from the Boston City Hall Competition Materials, Shaw and Stone Library of the Boston Architectural College.
- 4 Underfloor "Walker" ducts shown in New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, E20-E35, February 7, 1964.
- 5 Robert Taylor, "A Plain Man's Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way," *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969): B19.
- 6 Mildred F. Schmertz, "The New Boston City Hall." *Architectural Record* (February 1969).
- 7 Taylor, B19.
- 8 Gueft, 118.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The nature of work and of public service has changed significantly since Boston City Hall opened. The offices have been renovated over time to adjust to these needs, with more private offices, more computers, more public-facing spaces on the upper levels, and more public meetings in general. The public meeting rooms are too small for the functions they now provide

Changes to the original plan have created a wayfinding challenge. Updates to the original design have been handled differently on various floors. The 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project #2019-01) replaced outdated signage to address wayfinding issues on the second, third, fifth, and eighth floors.

While there has been an effort to accommodate accessible bathrooms wherever possible, the rigidity of the core design on the upper floors presents a particular challenge for adjusting the restrooms to meet contemporary accessibility standards.

The ceilings originally had acoustic panels on the underside of the concrete ceiling slab. Because the panels contained asbestos, they were removed throughout the building in the 1990s. In many spaces the loss of the acoustic material has resulted in poor sound quality.

Original under-floor walker ducts are crowded with existing and unused infrastructure. In many cases the ducts are not large enough to accommodate contemporary data requirements. Where the location of the walker ducts does not align with where data or power is needed, surface-mounted boxes (often called “tombstones”) or whips are needed.



Typical municipal level corridor showing mullioned interior storefront and windows to the courtyard. New signage has been installed on the eighth floor.



Entrance to the licensing hearing room showing newer hollow metal door and frame inserted into the mullioned interior storefront.

Materials and Systemic Elements

Policies for materials and systemic elements apply and should be referenced:

Concrete: Exposed cast-in-place concrete is visible at structural columns and the walls at the south, west, east, and north cores and along the sides of the light wells. The precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid system make up the ceilings of these levels.

Polyester terrazzo: Flooring throughout the corridors on the municipal levels is polyester terrazzo.

Vierendeel trusses with precast grid: The precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid system is present throughout the municipal level.

Mullioned interior storefront: The office spaces are separated from the main corridor wrapping around the courtyard by glazed walls with steel mullions set at varied spacing. For sections where services like fire-hose cabinets are located, the glazing is replaced with solid metal panels.

Lighting: Fluorescent tube lighting is located in the doubled beams of the precast ceiling grid.

Service infrastructure: The south elevator lobby includes a service core containing a fire stair, elevators, and an integrated mail chute. Restrooms are located in this lobby. The north elevator lobbies contain a fire stair, elevators, and restrooms. Cores on the east and west contain a fire stair as well as electrical and janitor closets. Water fountains are integrated into niches at each core, but are no longer functional.

Policies and Recommendations

General

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space.

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment."

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E25 Interior renovations to office and administration space should involve removal of unused infrastructure, including cleaning out of existing walker ducts. Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. This work should be done in a neat and organized fashion hidden above the ceiling grid to the extent possible.

E26 Retain water fountains until a larger project to replace them is considered. Use the original location of water fountains where possible when implementing a new system.

E32 Refer to recommended phased replacement of terrazzo in the terrazzo material section.

E40 Department office renovations should locate any enclosed rooms along the interior hallway, leaving the perimeter window walls open to maximize daylight and dispersal of perimeter heat.

E41 When renovations occur, replace lighting with 3000K LEDs in original locations (linear fixtures recessed within ceiling grid, downlights where they occur), as piloted in the 2014 Room 709 Renovation (PFD Project #6986), part of the Bruce Bolling Municipal Building project completed as a prototype in City Hall.

E42 Implement the new signage and wayfinding strategy that was introduced with the 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project # PMD 2019-01) on the sixth, seventh, and ninth floors.

Public Meeting Rooms

Low Significance •

Though the upper floors were designed for municipal offices and not intended for frequent visits by the public, they now house the main public meeting rooms: room 801 on the eighth floor and the Boston Planning and Development Agency Board Room on the ninth floor. Room 801 is the largest and most heavily used, and was originally twice as large with a moveable partition. Early drawings suggest that this room was intended to have skylights, which would have elevated the quality of the interior experience. These skylights were eliminated from the design when the mechanical penthouse needed to increase in size. As constructed, the public meeting rooms lack gravitas, and they are too small for the functions they now provide. The storefront system dividing room 801 from the corridor is newer and does not match the original detailing.



Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E43 Consider sensitive upgrades to lighting, audio-visual infrastructure, and acoustics.

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Municipal Levels [190](#)

Vierendeel Trusses
with Precast Grid [210](#)

Lighting [214](#)

Mullioned Interior Storefront [222](#)

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place [240](#)

Terrazzo [270](#)

Elevator Core and Lobbies

Significance ●●



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Municipal Levels 190

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Service Infrastructure 232

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Terrazzo 270

Elevator cores and lobbies are located at the south and north sides of the building. The south elevator lobbies contain two sets of restrooms and a blank wall that has been repurposed for artwork by the Arts and Culture Department. The north elevator lobby contains restrooms, utility rooms, and fire stairs. Like the hallways that lead to them, the elevator cores are consistent across the municipal levels. They have been marked by signs and paper postings from various departments over the years, leading to layers of tape and adhesives staining the cast-in-place concrete walls. The concrete walls are additionally stained at high-touch areas around the elevator doors and call buttons. A building directory and display monitor were installed as part of the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097). Mail chutes were placed into the wall and remain as a vestige of the era in which the building was built.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art that situate permanent mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location, such as the reveals in the concrete. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.

E44 Retain and maintain mail slot infrastructure at the elevator lobbies.

Circulation

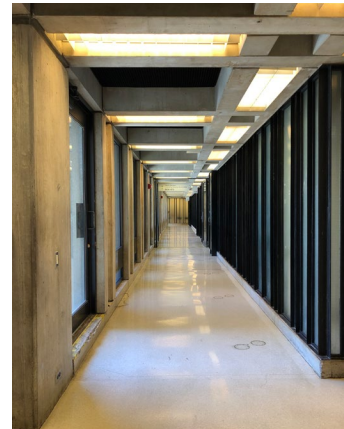
High Significance ● ● ●

In a building with many idiosyncrasies on the lower levels, the diagram of circulation through the municipal levels was intended to be relatively consistent across floors. This facilitated wayfinding and encouraged a democratic equality among the city's many departments. The hallways on these levels are materially uniform, composed of terrazzo floors lined by glazing with mullions of varied spacing. This system offers views from the offices to the courtyard balconies. The consistency of these features ties various departments together and contributes to a sense of community within the building. On several floors the circulation has been reduced to accommodate growth. This has led to a confusing layout of hallways on these levels, serving to illustrate the importance of the original circulation diagram's clarity.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- E32** Refer to recommended phased replacement of terrazzo flooring in terrazzo material section.
- E45** Original steel-and-glass walls on the office side of the corridor are to remain intact wherever possible.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

- Overall 74
- Interior—Municipal Levels 190
- Vierendeel Trusses with Precast Grid 210
- Lighting 214
- Mullioned Interior Storefront 222
- Service Infrastructure 232
- Concrete, Precast and Cast-in-Place 240
- Terrazzo 270

Administrative Offices

Low Significance •



The administrative offices were originally designed around utilitarian flexibility. These rooms have seen the most change over the years, resulting in a significant variation depending on the needs of each department. Over time, the open plans of many offices were converted into warrens of private offices, which were often banked against the windows. These layouts impede the intended flexibility of the floorplates, leading to inefficiencies in many departments. The location of small rooms against the perimeter hinders the design of the mechanical system, which pumps heat from units integrated below the exterior windows. It also leaves many inner spaces without access to daylight. The original furnishings were coordinated throughout the municipal levels and designed to be in dialogue with the pronounced solidity of the architecture. Olga Gueft of *Interior Magazine* notes that each desk was “a boxy, monolith shell and a divided plane—a form emphatic enough not to be overwhelmed by the ceilings.”¹

Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall 74

Interior—Municipal Levels 190

Vierendeel Trusses

with Precast Grid 210

Lighting 214

Mullioned Interior Storefront 222

Concrete, Precast and

Cast-in-Place 240

Terrazzo 270

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E40 Department office renovations should locate any enclosed rooms along the interior hallway, leaving the perimeter window walls open to maximize daylight and dispersal of perimeter heat.

¹ Olga Gueft, “What it took to bring about the best public building of our time,” *Interiors* 128, no. 9 (April 1969): 125.

Courtyard Balconies

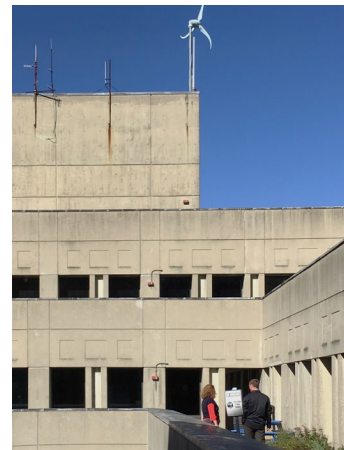
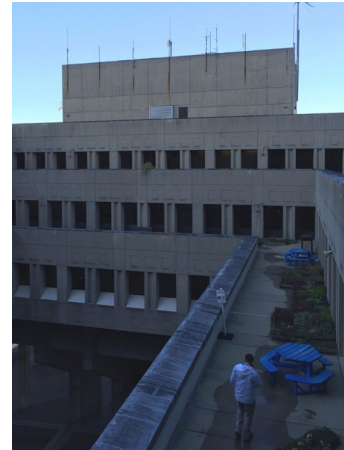
Significance ●●

Balconies bring light, air, and a place for informal gathering. They overlook what had been intended to be an active and stimulating public space in the courtyard. The architects often drew these balconies with lush plants. This vision has been partially fulfilled in planters.

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E46 Refer to Exterior, Courtyard.



Additional Policies

The following policies also apply to this space and should be referenced:

Overall [74](#)

Interior—Municipal Levels [190](#)

Concrete, Precast [240](#)



Municipal-level hallway.





5.6

Systemic Elements

- 5.6.1** Civic Infrastructure 207
- 5.6.2** Vierendeel Trusses and Precast Grid 210
- 5.6.3** Lighting 214
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- 5.6.5** Mullioned Interior Storefront 222
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Section 5.6.1

Civic Infrastructure

“The bold aesthetics of the building are unified by the sensitive integration of its mechanical, electrical and structural elements which emphasize and delineate the variety of internal spaces The Jury was unanimously delighted to see its best hopes for a great building for Boston so brilliantly fulfilled.”¹

—Boston City Hall Competition Jury Letter, May 3, 1962

Boston City Hall’s collection of repeated—or systemic—elements appear in more than one space throughout the building. They clarify and celebrate the programs of each space. These systemic elements provide consistency across floors and spaces that may otherwise feel disparate in both their design and function. The elements each represent some of the key civic values that the architects sought to instill in the building’s DNA: authenticity, transparency, and civic grandeur bolstered by an effective infrastructure of basic services.

City Hall’s most unifying element is the system of Vierendeel trusses and the precast ceiling grid. The trusses create a repetitive and unifying ceiling pattern throughout many spaces. They also create a zone for accommodating infrastructure. Lighting is integrated into the grid in the form of linear fluorescent tubes and can downlights, the selection of which varies based on its placement within the public, ceremonial, and municipal levels. Ductwork, cables, and electrical conduit run through the Vierendeel

trusses and are partially screened by the precast grid. The grid organizes the location of walls and gives visual logic to the experience of spaces, particularly on the municipal levels.

At the public and ceremonial levels, a mullioned exterior curtain wall system provides transparency into the building and marks the points of entry. A similar mullioned glass storefront system is used on the interior of the municipal levels and at some administrative offices on the public levels. The storefront system lines the corridors that wrap the central courtyard and serve as each floor’s primary circulation, filtering daylight from the courtyard into the office spaces.

The skylights in the courtyard are perhaps the most distinct of these elements, for both the singularity of their use within the building and the role they play in identifying areas accessible to the public. Intended to illuminate the way for visitors seeking key services within the transaction concourse, the skylights extend the monumentality

of the plaza lobby into the realm of civic services. The central oculus skylight is the dominant feature of the courtyard, where its truncated pyramidal form was originally wrapped in brick to integrate it with the building's material logic. All the skylights perform the crucial role of connecting City Hall's most publicly accessible spaces with a grand legacy of historic public buildings.

In addition to these large, highly visible elements, smaller but equally essential elements of service infrastructure are

integrated throughout the building. Cores provide vertical circulation linking the municipal, ceremonial, and public levels. While water fountains are no longer functioning, a system of mail chutes remains partially operational, and fire-hose and telephone cabinets are integrated directly into the brick, concrete, and glass walls. These elements are a reminder of the level of resolution and thoughtfulness given to the design of every component of the building in relation to the larger whole.

¹ William W. Wurster, Chairman, et al. to Lawrence B. Anderson, Professional Advisor, Boston City Hall Competition, May 3, 1962.



Transaction-level concourse.

Vierendeel Trusses and Precast Grid

Overall Rating of Significance: High

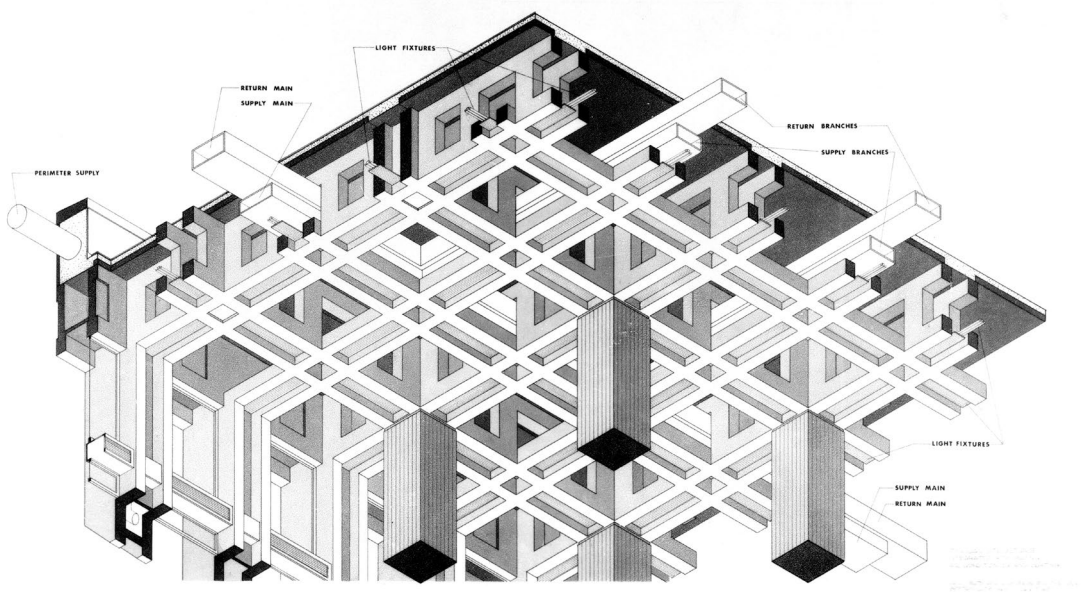
An important part of the building's design is the visible ceiling grid formed from the regular spacing of precast Vierendeel trusses. The paired trusses, typically laid on a 14'-4" square grid, rest on cast-in-place concrete columns. The trusses and columns are then tied together with cast-in-place concrete "joints." The regular arrangement and the thickness of the beam results in 11'-8" between beams. At the municipal levels, this dimension allows for consistent alignment of office walls.

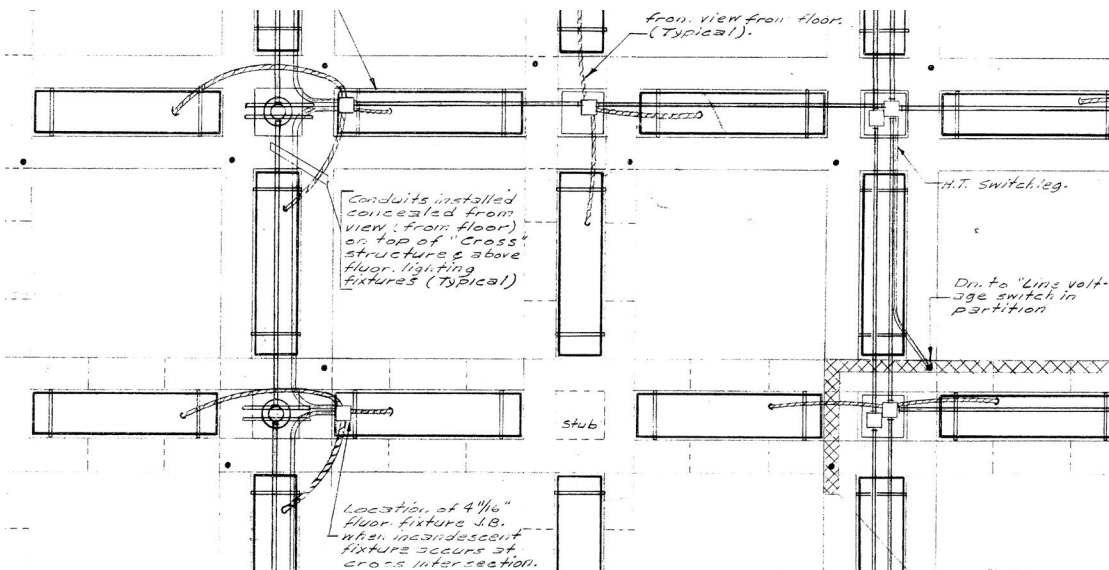
The space between beams is then bisected with shallower, non-structural precast double beams, creating a doubled cross within each bay. This structural system remains exposed throughout much

of the building, lending a sense of height and lightness to the structure. The rectangular openings of the truss provide space for building system infrastructure (ductwork, plumbing, and wiring) to thread through the openings. By leaving the structure exposed, the infrastructure is readily accessible for maintenance and upgrades with little need to alter the concrete framework or to open a ceiling.

The overall effect of the arrangement of the trusses and dividing beams is a repeating pattern of squares. The system provides a tidy location for tube-style light fixtures while masking ductwork, sprinkler and electrical services running above the grid.

Facing: Vierendeel trusses and the precast grid are visible in the municipal-level photograph and drawing.







Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid in the second-floor transaction area.

Facing: Vierendeel truss and precast grid at the fifth floor, east.

New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, E50, February 7, 1964, noting “Conduits installed concealed from view (from floor) on top of ‘Cross’ structure (Typical).”

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The precast concrete Vierendeel truss and associated cross beams are in good condition. There are some areas of small spalling and staining, consistent with the exposed concrete surfaces throughout the building.

At the transaction level, there is at least one example of inspired graffiti. The original intent of using the grid to mask the various runs of mechanical infrastructure and facilitate access to these systems for repair and upgrades has been lost. New cables are run haphazardly above the grid and blight the otherwise neat appearance originally intended. In some cases, the installation of new services has resulted in physical installation along the precast ceiling grid.

Materials and Additional Policies

- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Plaza Lobby 121
- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Transaction Levels 138
- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Service Level 154
- | Refer to Interior—Municipal Levels 190
- | Refer to Concrete material section. 240

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M1 During any project that adds infrastructure above the ceiling grid, develop performance requirements that strive to hide the new work above the grid. Where practical, remove any infrastructure that is no longer in use. Data cabling should utilize j-hooks or cable trays to keep cables organized and supported above the trusses.

Section 5.6.3

Lighting

Overall Rating of Significance: Significance

Original lighting was largely accomplished with fluorescent fixtures in the administrative spaces and incandescent fixtures in public and ceremonial areas.¹ The Vierendeel truss system of paired beams and cross members created the ideal location to lay in the tubed fluorescent fixtures on the municipal levels and in administrative offices throughout the building. In the public areas of the transaction levels, can downlights are located at alternating intersections of paired beams. The two lighting systems are used together on the ceremonial level, where linear fluorescent fixtures within the paired beams and can downlight fixtures at each of the beam intersections are present.

At the transaction level, the skylights provided additional natural light as well as a pathway from the north lobby to the transaction windows. Can downlights between every other transaction window provided task lighting. The exterior of the building was lit mainly with 200W–500W incandescent and halogen lights of two main types: recessed into the areas with flat concrete ceilings and inside rectangular metal housings in areas with concrete coffers.



Fluorescent fixtures in an administrative office space.



Incandescent can downlights in the transaction area.

-
- 1 Original lighting layouts shown in New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, E1-E18, February 7, 1964. Lighting fixtures types shown in New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, E53-E56, February 7, 1964.
 - 2 Fixtures have been replaced in room 709 in part of the second floor administrative offices (Parking Clerk Renovation Project, PFD Project #7142), and in the city council chamber and anteroom outside of the Curley Room. The recommended fixture type and lighting strategy should follow those used in room 709 and the Parking Clerk Renovation Project.
 - 3 The original can downlights are 7 inches in diameter on the inside of the can and 8 inches in diameter outside. The 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097) and 2018 Parking Clerk Renovation Project (PFD Project #7142) used a standard 7-inch can fixture. The City Council Chamber Renovation Project (PFD Project #7116) used a smaller fixture that does not match the size of the original fixtures.
 - 4 PFD Project #7088.



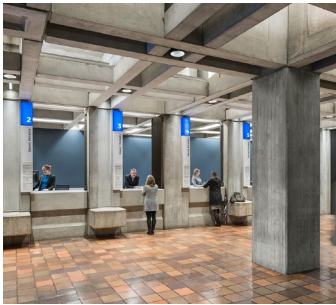
Linear fluorescent fixtures in a second-floor office space.



Issues, Barriers, & Observations



New LED fixtures in the plaza lobby.



New LED lighting in part of the second-floor transaction level.

Facing: New exterior LED lighting.

Most of the original linear fluorescent fixtures on the interior are still in place. The lamps are in need of frequent replacement, and they are not always replaced with consistent color temperature lamps—many fixtures are located in extremely high locations that require costly lifts and other specialized equipment to reach. Fixtures have been replaced in some locations as part of recent office renovation projects.² Replacement LED lamps have been installed in other locations.

All of the original can downlights in the plaza lobby, city council chamber, and anteroom outside of the Curley Room, as well as a number of the cans on the second floor transaction level have been replaced with LED fixtures as part of recent renovation projects.³ LED relamping has resulted in maintaining design intent, cost effective and energy savings.

Almost all of the original exterior lighting fixtures failed, either due to blown lamps or melted wiring within the fixtures from the heat of the lamps. Roughly half of the original exterior lighting fixtures were replaced with LEDs in 2015 as part of the Exterior Lighting Project.⁴ This project also installed new fixtures to uplight the building. It is considered a first phase, with plans to replace the remaining original fixtures in the future when the budget allows.

Materials and Additional Policies

Refer to Interior section. 118

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M2 Lighting strategy throughout the building should be systematic, based on the original lighting design strategy and allowing for appropriate light levels. Lighting should be integrated into the architecture and ceiling grid.

M3 All fixtures and lamp or bulb replacements should be 3000K color temperature.

Section 5.6.4

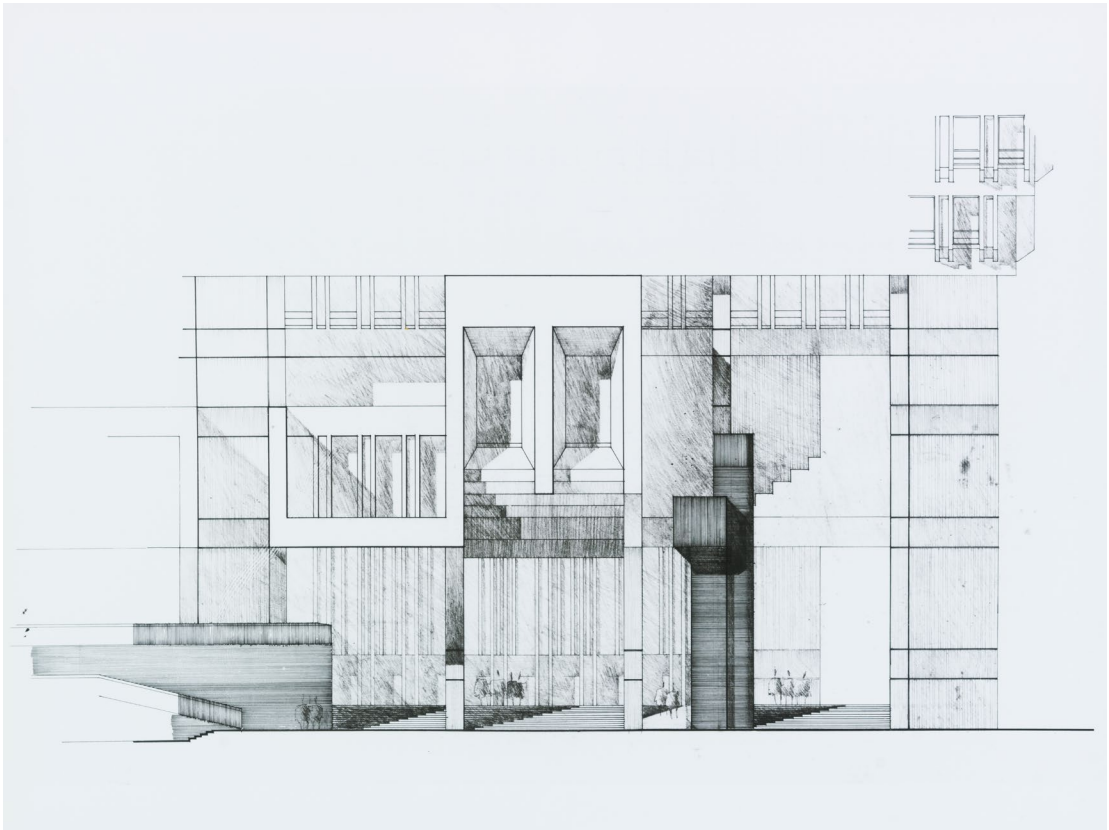
Mullioned Exterior Curtain Wall

Overall Rating of Significance: High

The glass curtain walls located at the various entrances areas and balconies are composed of a series of ¼-inch clear, plate-glass panels separated by steel mullions. The spacing of the mullions is documented in the original drawings to four widths: 9 inches, 1'–1½", 1'–10½", and 3 feet. Gordon Tully, who was a job captain in the architects' team, recalled that the window system was heavily influenced by the patterning and ideas exhibited in Le Corbusier's convent of Sainte Marie de La Tourette in France (completed in 1961).¹ Le Corbusier's pattern of vertical concrete slats, known as "ondulatoires," was developed using his Modulor proportioning system. Similar attention to pattern and proportioning was part of the development of the steel mullions at Boston City Hall, according to Tully.

Facing: A design development study and a photograph of the mullioned exterior curtain wall show the varied spacing between the mullions.

¹ Gordon Tully, telephone interview conducted by Mark Pasnik on November 13, 2020.





Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The steel mullions all show significant signs of coating failure on the exterior. As the coating has failed, rust has developed on these surfaces. There is no obvious evidence of structural failure in these mullions. Also the system is not energy efficient.

Materials and Additional Policies

- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Plaza Lobby [121](#)
- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Transaction Levels [138](#)
- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Service Level [154](#)
- | Refer to Steel material section. [274](#)
- | Refer to Glass material section. [278](#)

Right: Example of coating failure and subsequent rusting of mullions at exterior curtain wall. This location is at the Congress Street entrance, but the condition is typical.

Facing: Mullioned curtain wall at the north entrance.



Mullioned Interior Storefront

Overall Rating of Significance: High

The walls separating the corridors from the office spaces at the municipal levels and in some locations on the transaction levels feature a steel mullioned glazing system similar to the one at the curtain wall.¹ Prefabricated panels (glass plus mullion) lend the arrangement a standardized repeat. Within the panels, there are five spacing options between the mullions: 4¼", 7 inches, 1'–¾", and 1'–7¾". The glass at these locations is either ¼-inch clear wired plate glass or ¼-inch obscured wired plate glass.

Doors within the mullioned interior storefront are metal. At most department entrances the doors have a large wired glass panel, while at other locations the doors are solid. They feature a top and bottom pivot, with a closer assembly that is cast into the concrete floor slab.

¹ Glazed storefront details found on The New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, A110, (February 7, 1962).



Mullioned interior storefront lining a municipal-level hallway.





Meeting room 801, showing the storefront system that does not match the original.

Facing: Example of mullioned interior storefront with an original door and frame.

Example of corridor wall at the municipal level showing mullioned interior storefront with obscured wired plate glass.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The mullioned interior storefront assemblies are generally in good condition, with some instances of cracked glass.

There have been some maintenance difficulties with the pivoting doors.

A standard storefront system that does not match the original has been installed in a few places, including at room 801.

Standard hollow metal doors and frames have been inserted in some locations.

Materials and Additional Policies

- | Refer to Interior—Public Levels—Transaction Levels [138](#)
- | Refer to Interior—Municipal Levels [190](#)
- | Refer to Steel material section. [274](#)
- | Refer to Glass material section. [278](#)



Section 5.6.6

Skylights

Overall Rating of Significance: Significance

Above the open gallery space of the transaction-level concourse are two banks of skylights. The first of these includes thirty-three skylights with square openings of 4'–6" each, arrayed in three rows along the concourse, running north to south. These skylights were originally intended to provide a path of natural light, guiding the public into the heart of the space below. They are open to the courtyard, although partially shaded by the overhang of the fifth-floor east hood. The skylights play an important role in the drawings of Boston City Hall from the early design phases, providing a pivot point for the composition in section and a demonstration of continuity between the levels.

The original construction drawings indicate that the skylights were to be a sandwich of ¼-inch heat-absorbing gray glass (Type 2) and ¼-inch polished plate wire glass (Type 6)¹ with shafts made from steel-formed precast concrete, but their existing condition differs from this design.² No additional details have been uncovered, but correspondences from 1968 suggest that the implementation of these skylights evolved during construction.

In 1965, American Cyanamid provided a simple declaration that "The Acrylite Sky-

pan Skydome . . . was found to be weathertight."³ In August 1968, handwritten notes by job captain Gordon. F. Tully appear to explore a change to the skylights that would feature either a domed or a pyramidal top, frosted to "avoid kids looking in."⁴ Within these notes is a cut sheet comparing three products from Wasco, a skylight company based at the time in Wakefield, Massachusetts. These units are the Skypan, the Pyramid Unit, and the Low Silhouette and Double Dome. Based on the cut sheet it appears that the Skypan (or something very similar) was used for the skylights over the transaction area.

The Skypan product features two ⅛-inch acrylic panels separated by a 1½-inch-high acrylic grid. This unit is then secured to a four-inch curb. The existing skylights appear to match this description, although actual details of the separating grid system and any guidance associated with the color of the panels is unclear. The unit and curb are mounted on a series of concrete bases clad in metal with a vertical batten detail.

The drawings do not indicate any physical structure below the glass that would protect against an object dropping through the glass layers. Can light fixtures were installed approximately two feet above the ceiling line



View of the courtyard and central skylight.

on one sidewall of each of these skylights in order to provide supplementary light.

With respect to this bank of skylights, an article in *Building Construction* notes that the precasting sub-contractor for the project, Northeast Concrete Products Inc., became involved in the project when they were consulted by the architects during the design development phase in relation to the precasting associated with this skylight element.⁵

A second type of skylight forms a truncated pyramidal structure (26'-4" square) that sits in the middle of the courtyard. This structure houses four large skylight shafts, originally fitted with ¼-inch wired plate glass. It illuminates the escalators of the transaction levels below. Like with the bank of thirty-three skylights, a lamp was suspended in the middle of each shaft to provide additional illumination. The form of this structure mirrors that of the MBTA's Government Center headhouse as constructed in 1963 (since replaced with a glass enclosed

structure in 2016). While the structure was depicted in original drawings with a concrete ledge for seating surrounding the base and its roof clad in metal, a photograph from *Interiors Magazine* published in 1969 and a 1981 HABS image show the structure clad in brick. At some point after 1981, this skylight structure was modified and clad with metal. The parapet at the top of the structure hides the oculus and bronze grid overlaying the skylights from view.

In addition to these two prominent skylight features, the administrative offices located within the bricked spaces of the first, second, and third floors at the northeast corner of the building are lit by a series of skylights. These originally featured ¼-inch heat-absorbing gray glass above ¼-inch polished wire glass. These skylights provide the only natural light source for the administrative spaces below. These skylights have had a long history of leaking and were replaced in 2019 as part of the Congress Street Masonry Project (PFD Project #7135).

1 Drawing A 61, Section 64, detail 2, February 7, 1964.

2 Drawing A 63, Section 66, February 7, 1964.

3 Historic New England Archives, Folder 9.27 Skylights, 1965–1975, October 7, 1965.

4 Gordon F. Tully was the job captain for the Boston City Hall project. Tully graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1959, and served as job captain for the project from 1962 through 1968.

5 "Boston City Hall . . . monumental architecture or monument to ingenuity," *Building Construction* (July 1969): 51. Article clipping obtained from a portfolio of publications in the Boston City Hall collection at Historic New England.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations



Bank of thirty-three skylights as seen in courtyard.



View of central skylight showing metal cladding and Grace I&W covering the top opening.

The acrylic covering for the bank of thirty-three skylights on the courtyard is dark, dirty, and provides little natural light to the transaction space below. Several of the coverings are cracked or broken. Due to various failures of the fixtures or bulbs, the supplementary lighting installed within the shafts is often not functional. Given that these skylights are partially located under the overhanging hood above, there is some question as to the effectiveness of this natural lighting strategy. Writing in the *Hudson Review* in 1970, art scholar Charles W. Millard observed that:

“In general the skylighting in the public spaces is not as effective as it might be, partly because the skylights get dirty easily, partly because for the most part they open into the inner courtyard rather than directly to the sky, and partly because they are so deep and divided into such small units that the amount of light that can enter is somewhat restricted. But these are minor quarrels with what is essentially a very fine building indeed.”⁶

The oculus has suffered from extensive leaking, which results in mechanical failure of the escalators below. In response to these ongoing leaks, the top of the oculus has been sealed with W.R. Grace Ice & Water Shield.

6 Charles W. Millard, “The New Boston: City Hall,” *The Hudson Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring, 1970): 110–115.

Materials and Additional Policies

- I Refer to Exterior—Public Levels 85
- I Refer to Exterior—Courtyard 109
- I Maintain glass work in accordance with Glass material section. 278

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

- M4 Restore the central skylight to provide daylight to spaces below.
- M5 Replace acrylic cover panels on the bank of thirty-three skylights to increase the amount of light that penetrates to the transaction area below.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

- M21 Renovations to skylights should include anti-climbing measures.
- M22 Restore the brick cladding of the oculus skylight to its original installation detail. This work could be part of any future project working to re-open the courtyard to public use.

Potential Change

- M44 When considering a larger courtyard renovation, study alternative configurations for a skylight that could bring daylight to the spaces below, while opening up more space for events.
- M45 When considering a larger courtyard renovation, evaluate the amount of light that reaches the top of each of the thirty-three skylights. Test the light levels at different times of the day and year (vernal equinox, summer solstice, autumnal equinox and winter solstice) to determine the effectiveness in bringing natural light into the space and illuminating the ceiling plane.



Views of the courtyard looking northeast showing the central skylight and bank of thirty-three skylights beyond.

Section 5.6.7

Service Infrastructure

Overall Rating of Significance: Low

There are a number of systemic elements throughout the building that should be mentioned, as they were—and some still are—integral to the functioning of the building.

Service Cores

Four sets of service cores, all with fire stairs, electrical closets, telephone closets, and janitor closets, are located at the south, east, north, and west sides of the building. The south and north cores also contain elevators and restrooms. The south core contains a freight elevator. The public-facing sides of these cores are cast-in-place concrete. The insides of the stairs and closets are mostly painted concrete masonry units.

Views of restroom interior and entrance.





Mail chute.



Cabinet inset into mullioned interior storefront.



Walker duct covers in floor.

Mail Chutes

Mail chutes are integrated into the south elevator lobby walls. The mail is still collected on the ground floor each day and processed in the mail room. Mail often gets stuck and, as a result, many openings have been closed off with tape.

Water Fountains

Water fountains are located on the south, east, north, and west sides of the building. The fixtures are mounted onto metal panels that are inset into the concrete core walls. The filtration system failed many years ago, and the piping was found to have lead. As such, the water fountains are no longer functional.

Fire Hose and Telephone Cabinets

Fire hose and telephone cabinets are located throughout the building. The cabinets are inset into the concrete core walls, brick walls, and mullioned interior storefront. They feature painted flat-panel doors.

Under-floor “Walker” Duct System

As the building was designed for open-plan office spaces, a system of under-floor, or “walker”, ducts was designed into the floor slabs. The ducts are now crowded with existing and unused infrastructure. In many cases the ducts are not large enough to accommodate contemporary data requirements. Where the location of the walker ducts does not align with where data or power is needed, surface-mounted boxes (often called “tombstones”) or whips are needed.





5.7

Materials

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- 5.7.2** Precast and Cast-in-Place Concrete 240
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- 5.7.7** Steel and Aluminum 274
- 5.7.8** Glass 278
- 5.7.9** Bronze 282
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Section 5.7.1

Material Authenticity

“[We] were particularly interested in imbuing architecture with an authenticity which we thought was lacking in the buildings of the time. We thought concrete was the appropriate material to achieve this. When you build in concrete, what you see is what it is. City Hall is concrete, it is made in concrete, it is structured of concrete . . . The characteristic of concrete that we enjoyed most was that one material could do so much, and could be seen to do so much. It could be the structure. It could be the cladding. It could be the floors, it could be the walls.”¹

—Michael McKinnell, 2015

The primary materials selected for City Hall were not new or unfamiliar in architecture, but their use in the seat of government of a city steeped in the traditions of stone and brick construction was decidedly novel. The building’s brick base provides the transition from the “old” city to the “new” city. The mass of concrete emphasizes the functional and symbolic importance of the building. Kallmann and McKinnell wished to “produce a building that exists strongly and irrevocably,” a standard trait for a public building in a large and prominent city.² But the architects were deliberate in their choice of concrete, which they were drawn to because of its perceived authenticity. “When you build in concrete, what you see is what it is.”³

The brick slips into the building on the lower levels creating a continuity with the surrounding plaza, while the concrete

remains highly visible. In fact, the exposed concrete makes clear the overall structure and construction of the building. The solid concrete mass provides an air of clarity for the building and contributes to the metaphor of transparency in government.

The fifth-floor ceremonial level has incorporated additional materials. The competition brief identified an area of “Symbolic Importance” to include the city council and mayoral areas, which form the fifth-floor ceremonial spaces. The brief stated “the tourist would expect to find here the most sumptuously-fitted spaces.”⁴ Additionally, “the inner character of these areas should be in some way more distinguished than would be true of the other departments, though the actual number of visitors is very small.”⁵ Concrete is also highly visible in the fifth-floor spaces. The bronze hallway of the mayor’s suite, which contains significant

amounts of bronze paneling and wood detailing, is also punctuated with cast-in-place concrete columns and the ever-present ceiling grid formed by Vierendeel trusses. The municipal levels are dominated by concrete, with cast-in-place concrete columns and the precast concrete Vierendeel trusses and ceiling grid throughout.

-
- 1 Mark Pasnik, Michael Kubo, Chris Grimley, "Concrete Is Patient: N. Michael McKinnell," *Heroic: Concrete Architecture and the New Boston* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2015): 307, 309.
 - 2 Heyer, Paul. *Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America* (New York: Walker and Company, 1978): 260.
 - 3 Pasnik, Kubo, Grimley, 307.
 - 4 *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (1961): 18.
 - 5 Ibid, 18.

Transaction-level window (below);
plaza lobby entrance porch (facing).





Precast and Cast-in-Place Concrete

The major structural and architectural features of Boston City Hall are a combination of precast and cast-in-place concrete. The drawings and specifications were detailed as to where each type of material and formwork was to be used. In general, cast-in-place was used for the main structural elements such as the columns and to express the symbolic governmental spaces such as the hoods that project beyond the building. Precast components include the spandrel beams of the top administrative floors (floors six through nine), the concrete fins framing each window, and the Vierendeel trusses providing both structure and a regular gridwork for the ceiling.

An undated memo discusses the use of precast concrete in the building.¹ The use of precast concrete led to important advantages in the building's design and construction. These advantages included:

- The use of steel forms provided a uniform smooth finish.
- Repeated architectural elements such as sills, bases, counters and mullions could be easily replicated in plant conditions with a uniform finish.

- The Vierendeel trusses could be fabricated without onsite forming costs and complexity.
- Prefabrication of the majority of the structure could occur in parallel with the extensive site preparation work.

Cast-in-place concrete was board formed in a manner consistent with where the material was used. Vertical surfaces such as columns and walls were formed using nominal four-inch-wide Douglas fir tongue-and-groove boards. Horizontal surfaces such as soffits and flat ceilings, were formed with exterior grade Douglas fir plywood. Form oil was used to facilitate the release of the form from the cured concrete. The use of these materials imparted a pattern on the cured concrete surfaces, reflecting the grain and slight imperfections of the wood. The wood formwork was not to be reused for subsequent pours, suggesting that while the use of precast concrete improved the efficiency of construction, there was some recognition that the formwork of the cast-in-place concrete imparted a specifically intended aesthetic. The re-use of formwork was likely to negatively change that look over the course of the project.

Not all cast-in-place elements were board formed. Specifications note that certain cast-in-place components were to be formed using steel, which would leave a smooth finish and no joint marks. Among these components are the insides of the elevator shafts and framing around the skylights and stair risers.

The team that developed the design of the building—known in their memos as the Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall (AEBCH) were deliberate about their about their use of concrete at a time when glass and steel were the predominant materials in new construction.² Understanding the cement and aggregate used in the original construction is essential to ongoing repair efforts.

When initial cost estimates were solicited in 1963, two types of cement were identified. Type I was indicated for the cast-in-place areas while Type II was indicated for the precast elements.³ Undated, handwritten notes from Earl Flansburgh, who provided consulting services early in the project, indicate the differences in Type I and Type II cement based on a conversation with Emil Hervol, who was a partner at



Sample of wall with filled form tie holes at the columns and partially filled tie holes in the field (January 11, 2021).

LeMessurier Associates. These notes indicate that Type I is a lighter cement whose color is dependent on the cement source and sand. Type II is a darker cement, typically more consistent in color regardless of its source.⁴

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- 1 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 8.17—Background Information, 1963–1968.
 - 2 The firm Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles (Gerhard Kallmann, Michael McKinnell, and Edward Knowles) was formed for the express purpose of entering the design competition for Boston City Hall. By Knowles' own recollection, he was the registered architect but Kallmann and McKinnell were the driving force behind the actual design [See: Brian M. Sirman, *Concrete Changes: Architecture, Politics, and the Design of Boston City Hall* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 97.]. By 1965, Kallmann and McKinnell had relocated to Boston from New York and formally established a firm with Henry Wood. With respect to the construction of City Hall, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles joined with Campbell Aldrich and Nulty and consulting engineers LeMessurier Associates to form "The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall" to execute the design and oversee construction. All correspondence during the project was done under the acronym "AEBCH."



Cast-in-place concrete hood of the city council chamber with precast concrete fins and spandrels of the municipal levels beyond (September 5, 2009).

Final specifications indicate that approved cements for the cast-in-place work were to be Type I. Preference was given to Saylor's Cement, with handwritten notes suggesting that Dragon Cement and Penn-Dixie Cement were approved alternatives. Penn-Dixie was apparently the chosen cement per a 1968 article titled "Boston City Hall . . . monumental architecture or monument to construction ingenuity".⁵ Unfortunately, Penn-Dixie is no longer in operation. Its quarries were located in Upstate New York and Pennsylvania, and it is likely that suitable material for repairs might be sourced from these general areas.

The specifications for Section 3A—Concrete Work, the cast-in-place section, state that "all other concrete" is to be Type I. The exception noted is the pile caps, which can

be Type I or Type II.⁶ Section 3B—Precast Concrete work leads with a reference noting that the materials specified in Section 3A are to be used for Section 3B.⁷ This supports Michael McKinnell's comment that the cast-in-place and precast concrete were intended to have the same component mix and visual appearance.⁸

In addition to the impression of the board and plank forms, the cast-in-place sections exhibit small holes (approximately one inch in diameter) in a regular grid pattern. These holes indicate the location of the form ties that were required to hold the forms in place while the concrete cured. This detail is considered to represent the material honesty often associated with Brutalism by revealing its process of construction. From the specifications, the metal ties were to be cut at

least one inch back from the surface. The holes were then to be filled with the “same source of cement and sand as used in the parent concrete” and plugged to within $\frac{3}{8}$ inch of the surface.⁹ The form tie is expressed, but the consistent filling provides a regular shadow for the ultimate visual detail. Form ties were not necessary in factory molding processes and are not part of the aesthetic of the precast sections.

Throughout the building, cast-in-place columns are joined with cast-in-place wall sections, forming structural piers. While both elements are cast-in-place, only the wall sections exhibit the board-form detail with plugged form ties. The columns were cast using steel hoops, a technique that eliminates the form-tie holes as well as the board impressions. This detail is evident throughout the building but is most visible in the open areas of the courtyard and plaza porch. No mention of this different treatment has been located in any archival materials to date, with the exception of a field sketch dated October 21, 1965.¹⁰ The drawing shows a layout for tie spacing on the fifth floor and clearly indicates column elements without form-tie holes detailed.

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- 3 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 8.13, “Estimates: Description of materials, finish schedule, and cost estimate.”
 - 4 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 1.11, “Memoranda: Building Materials,” Earl Flansburgh, undated handwritten notes.
 - 5 “Boston City Hall . . . monumental architecture or monument to ingenuity,” *Building Construction* (July 1969): 51. Article clipping obtained from a portfolio publication in the Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles collection at Historic New England.
 - 6 The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall, “Specifications for Construction of the new Boston City Hall,” Section 3A—Concrete Work, 18a and 18b, (February, 1964): 17.
 - 7 The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall, “Specifications for Construction of the new Boston City Hall,” Section 3B—Precast Concrete, 1, (February 7, 1964): 1.
 - 8 Michael McKinnell, Interview with conservation management plan team, May 2, 2018.
 - 9 The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall, “Specifications for Construction of the new Boston City Hall,” Section 3A—Concrete Work, 27c, (February, 1964): 26–27.
 - 10 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 9.15—Tully Project Notebook—Notes and Sketches [1 of 3].

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The overall condition of the exterior concrete elements is good to fair. Facade inspections are required every five years and typically generate a list of specific short-term repairs that the city addresses. The conditions noted within the scope of this document are generalized observations and not a substitute for the cyclical facade inspections.

There are generally six types of failure:

Soiling—atmospheric, biologic, birds, etc.

Cracks—large cracks requiring repair, small cracks, surface crazing

Spalls—typically associated with rusting reinforcing bars just below the surface

Failed patches—typically associated with improper patch preparation and/or continued rusting of reinforcing bars where exposed to moisture due to earlier cracking or spalling

Failed joint sealant—shrinkage or long-term degradation of elastic properties of sealant

Fasteners—random assortment of anchors left in place, rusting fasteners, holes associated with removed fasteners, etc.

Conditions on the east elevation (along Congress Street) are significantly worse than conditions on other elevations. This is likely the result of prevailing harsh weather coming from the east.

Spalling of the concrete surface is not a new issue. A preliminary report is referenced to June 11, 1969, less than a year after the building was substantially completed and placed into service. By August 1970, the Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall issued a summary report related to concrete spalling issues.¹



East elevation at south corner (nominally above mayor's office suite); note multiple instances of spalled concrete on fins and window sills (June 21, 2018).



Top: Crazing located outside of council chamber at fire stair balcony (March 29, 2018).



Bottom: Spalling adjacent to the city council chamber (June 21, 2018).

At the time of the 1970 report, four generally groupings of issues or causes were identified:

- Spalls, cracks, leaking joints, moisture retention, open joints, caulking missing or loose, patches or patched spalls
- Rust spots, exposed steel
- Crazed areas
- Winding/twisting of joints, joint imperfection or rotation, settled parapet

The summary report indicates that failed joint sealant at the parapets and improper spall repairs throughout the project are the primary cause for issues. What is not known is where spalls were repaired at that time.

The 1970 report noted that the various locations where “crazing” or “honeycombing” were observed were structurally fine—at least where tested at parapet locations. The exact cause of the crazing is unknown, although it is likely related to various curing conditions throughout the project.

On the interior, the concrete remains exposed as the finish material. While not exposed to weather over the last fifty years, the appearance of the concrete inside has also evolved. There is overall atmospheric staining (likely due to decades of cigarette smoke), general staining at high traffic areas (likely due to hand oils), chips and dings in the concrete surface, and residue associated with various adhesives.

1 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 5.21, Concrete Spalls, “1970-08-04 Report on Concrete Spalling on New Boston City Hall.” This memo references earlier memos on the same topic, but those earlier memos were not located with this summary report from 1970.



Courtyard at sixth and seventh floors, north-facing facade—representative soiling conditions on precast concrete sections (May 23, 2018).



General conditions of interior concrete, shown at the mayor's stair (June 21, 2018).

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

M7 Concrete should not be painted. Clear coatings should only be applied if necessary to extend the life of the concrete, as recommended by an engineer and verified by testing.

M8 Routine maintenance and small projects may include cleaning of surface staining. The goal of localized spot concrete cleaning is to remove adhesives, oil staining, food staining, wax staining, etc., but retain the overall atmospheric patina that has developed. Avoid overcleaning areas that could lead to bright patches that will highlight the area that has been cleaned.

M9 Cleaning should never include the use of any acidic products. Such products infiltrate the concrete, alter the alkaline balance of the substrate, will never be thoroughly or properly neutralized, and can cause ongoing accelerated deterioration of the concrete over time. Evidence of this deterioration will be in the form of surface scaling, pitting, and cracking. Refer to “Procedure for Interior Concrete Cleaning” and “Procedure for Surface Cleaning at Exterior” in this document.

M10 Avoid fastening to the concrete by any means, including tape, mastic, or mechanical fasteners. If unavoidable (for example, attaching permanent code-required signage), mounting with the smallest possible fastener is preferred to tape. Temporary signs should never be mounted to the concrete; temporary signs affixed with tape should only be located on painted drywall or glass.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M23 Consider a comprehensive assessment of all concrete surfaces on elevation drawings. Document the conditions and areas to be repaired as well as areas that have previously been repaired. Integrate prior project information where available to note when repairs were made at each location. This annotated document will serve as a long-term planning tool for large repair projects and regular maintenance efforts.

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

M26 Consider development of standard concrete repair recommendations for all future concrete repairs.

M27 Exterior patching and repair material is to match the adjacent cleaned concrete surface, including the sand/aggregate size, distribution, and color. Due to differential weathering a standardized mix should not be assumed. Mockups are required to confirm visual appearance of the repair mix. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Exterior Patching and Repair Material” in this document.

M28 Concrete cleaning should utilize the gentlest possible means. Before a cleaning procedure is chosen, mockups should be performed to determine the level of means necessary for each project.

M29 Exterior cleaning should be approached using the gentlest means possible to achieve the desired removal of atmospheric soiling and localized rust, paint, and bio-

logical staining. The use of chemicals and high pressure sprays is discouraged to avoid driving chemicals below the surface and contributing to possible long-term damage of the concrete. Testing of the identified methods should be conducted in discrete areas to determine the standard of cleaning to be implemented on the building. Refer to “Procedure for Surface Cleaning at Exterior” in this document.

M30 When considering cleaning of interior surfaces, the loss of overall surface patina will result in stark differences in the appearance of cleaned concrete directly adjacent to uncleaned concrete. Care should be taken to select cleaning products that remove only surface staining, such as hand oil, tape residue, and food stains, without removing the overall atmospheric patina. The extent of cleaning should be carefully considered to avoid incongruent appearances and cleaned areas should be blended into uncleaned areas where necessary. Refer to “Procedure for Interior Concrete Cleaning” in this document.

M31 Avoid mounting surface conduit to the concrete. If necessary, conduit runs should be within concrete reveals and generally organized in a linear fashion. New conduit runs should be placed near existing conduit to minimize the visual impact of random runs throughout the space. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized. Any required exterior devices should be located where they are most visually unobtrusive and be dark where possible.

Potential Change

M46 In the event of a comprehensive facade restoration, consider cleaning the exterior surface staining using the gentlest possible means. The goal of comprehensive concrete cleaning should be to remove atmospheric soiling and staining to restore the original color of the exterior.

Recommended Procedures

Interior Concrete Cleaning

- Interior concrete surfaces can be cleaned of accumulated organic matter (e.g., dirt, grime, hand oils, food stains, etc.) and adhesive build-up using pH neutral to slightly alkaline (pH 7-9) commercially available cleaning products.
- Preferred products are low VOC and low toxicity.
- Follow manufacturer's recommendations regarding dilution, application, dwell time, and rinsing.
- Heavy cleaning should be included as part of planned projects. Daily cleaning should be concentrated at high touch areas.
- Cleaning mockups of approximately one-foot square should be incorporated into project to validate results and refine application and clean-up processes.

Recommended Products

- **Prosoco Limestone and Marble Cleaner 942**
This gel-based product has consistently provided the most effective cleaning results on surface staining and adhesive residue. As the product's pH is 8.3, this product has also proven effective and safe for the terrazzo countertops and flooring.
- **Prosoco Cleaner / Degreaser at 1:20 dilution**
Because of the liquid nature of the product, logistical planning for managing application, rinsing and clean-up is required. Dilutions down to 1:4 can be tested for heavier soiling.
- **Simple Green All Purpose Cleaner at full strength**
Because of the liquid nature of the product, logistical planning for managing application, rinsing and clean-up is required.
- Refer to "Interior Concrete Cleaning Testing (2021)" within the "Cleaning Test Recommendations" in the Appendix for additional testing and recommendation details.

Mastic Adhesive Removal

- Removal of mastic adhesive from the concrete interior baseboard areas is a labor intensive process—approximately two hours per six square inch panel. Perform work in small-sized areas so that they can be sufficiently cleared of remover and mastic residues within one day. Removal conditions will most likely vary across the wall surfaces. Adhesive removal dwell times, methods, and materials may have to be adjusted according to the conditions found and then modified to achieve the most desirable removal results.
- Recommended product: Prosoco Safety Peel 1 or approved equivalent. Recommended product is a solvent paste with a mild citrus odor that contains no methylene chloride or methanol; solids are trapped in the semi-dry paste, which is then peeled from the surface, simplifying containment and disposal.
- Dwell time: twenty-four hours. It is important for the adhesive remover be enclosed in plastic throughout the dwell duration to prevent solvent evaporation.
- Refer to “Interior Concrete Cleaning and Coating Removal Testing (2016)” within the “Cleaning Test Recommendations” in the Appendix.

Surface Cleaning at Exterior

- Cleaning tests should start with water, hot water, or steam cleaning using pressures less than 800psi. If water-only cleaning does not achieve desired results, a low-pressure media blast method using a soft media (calcium carbonate, walnut shells, etc.) should be tested. Consideration should be given to dispersal/collection of the media to determine the type required.
- Chemical cleaning should be tested only if water and media cleaning do not produce desired results. Chemical cleaner should be formulated specifically for historic concrete. Each method should be carefully tested to ensure that it does not damage the concrete

Exterior Patching and Repair Material

- Repair compound to be keyed to substrate with stainless-steel helical pins. Where repair area crosses original board-form lines, configure form for patches to align with those lines.

Example of poorly matched patches.





Detail view of the stepped city council chamber inside the plaza lobby (January 26, 2021).

Section 5.7.3

Brick

The façades of the lower, public levels of Boston City Hall are designed to appear like a brick mound. The brick continues inside with the walls, the floor of the plaza lobby and the ground of the courtyard at the top of the mound. On the east elevation, the first four levels at the northeast corner are articulated in a series of brick terraces topped at each level with brownstone coping panels. On the west elevation, a similar expanse of bricks matches the brick paving of the plaza itself, establishing a material continuity with the surrounding plaza.

While meeting a competition criterion calling for “an effective visual closure to Dock Square,” the red brick of the mound reinforces a connection with the prevalent use of brick elsewhere in the city.¹ Faneuil Hall and the Old State House sit nearby, both significant red brick structures of the early eighteenth century colonial period. Adjacent neighborhoods include the North End and Beacon Hill, which are characterized by a significant number of brick buildings.

Part of the competition also called for designing the landscape around the building. “The competitor should illustrate as fully as possible his [or her] recommendations for the detailed treatment of these public open spaces.”² The plan for City Hall involved connecting a brick-paved plaza with



West (plaza side) elevation showing the brick mound (June 21, 2018).

ramps and steps that essentially flow down from Cambridge Street toward Congress Street.³ They also flow into the building with the plaza lobby floor, which forms a plane of bricks that is continuous with the plaza. According to McKinnell, “the bricks come in, like a street.”⁴

The bricks specified at City Hall—interior and exterior—were originally planned to be waterstruck with black stretchers eliminated as made by the Eno Brick Corporation of Exeter, New Hampshire.⁵ Addendum notes mention a “Marin County—Colby Blend” as furnished by the Spaulding Brick Company of Somerville, Massachusetts.⁶ Most likely, this is actually a reference to the Morin Brick Company of Auburn, Maine. The Spaulding Brick Company is a brick supplier that sources from many different manufacturing facilities. The Morin Brick company currently

offers a waterstruck brick labeled “College Blend Waterstruck,” which appears to be a close match to the brick incorporated into the project.

Stiles and Hart (S+H), a brickyard located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, offers a brick called “Boston City Hall Paving Brick.” While there are instances where S+H bricks have been incorporated into the paving surrounding the building, these appear to be contemporary replacement pavers and not original to the project. These bricks are easily identified in that the “S+H” brand is struck into the exposed surface. The vast majority of bricks do not display such a brand iden-

tifier, but may have been installed with the mark face down.

Generally, the bricks were to be $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches by $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches by $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches with other sizes as noted in the drawings. The mortar cement was to be Portland Type I, light tan. For exterior walls, a Portland-to-lime ratio by volume ranged from 1:0.75 to 1:1.33. The overall ratio of cementitious material (cement plus lime) to sand is 1:3 (or less, but not less than 2.25). Additionally, Omicron Mortarproofing was to be added per manufacturer’s guidelines. Mortarproofing was marketed for reducing shrinkage, increasing adhesion, checking

East (Congress Street) elevation showing the terraced brick mound (August 26, 2019).



efflorescence, strengthening, plasticizing and waterproofing mortar and concrete. This additive was available in different colors plus “non-colored,” but no mention is made regarding color selection. For interior brickwork, the Portland-to-lime-to-sand ratio was 1:2:8 with no mortarproofing agent included.⁷

Wall and paving bricks were to be laid up in running bond.⁸ The exterior stairways are topped with several soldier courses. The number of such soldier courses is noted in the drawings.⁹ Onsite observation suggests that these soldier courses generally correlate to the ground plane hidden behind the brick face of the various stairs, ramps, and parapets, although there is no direct mention of this detail in the specifications.

Paving bricks are set in Portland cement-based mortar for the exterior spaces (the courtyard, entrance porch, etc.) with Portland cement mortar at the joints. While this is a typically unforgiving installation scenario, flexible control joints have been incorporated in the paving bricks in the courtyard. In general, the exterior paving bricks appear to have aged well, showing some surface wear but no significant cracking, breaking, or general loss. Where loss has occurred, replacement bricks with the visible “S+H” stamp have been inserted. There is some settling of bricks in the area in front of the plaza lobby entrance. This type of settling represents a trip hazard and should be remediated as soon as possible.



Top: Soldier course on the brick parapet walls nominally indicating the ground plane. (May 24, 2018).



Bottom: “Control joints” in the courtyard’s brick paving. (May 23, 2018).

- 1 Lawrence Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 14.
- 2 Ibid., 16.
- 3 Brian M. Sirman, *Concrete Changes: Architecture, Politics, and the Design of Boston City Hall* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 117.
- 4 Robert Taylor, “A Plain Man’s Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way,” *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969): B16.
- 5 Traditionally, clay bricks fired in a kiln will have different shades of color depending on proximity to heat source. Blacker bricks would have been closer to the heat source. With respect to City Hall, the architects wanted to exclude those from the final work.
- 6 The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall, “Specifications for Construction of the new Boston City Hall,” Section 4A—Masonry, 7a(1), (February 7, 1964): 4.
- 7 Ibid., 7a(2) and 9a, 4–6.
- 8 Ibid., 14a.
- 9 New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, A71, (February 7, 1964).

Issues, Barriers, & Observations



Top: Displacement cracking
(May 23, 2018).



Bottom: Displacement and
efflorescence (March 29, 2018).

The overall condition of the exterior brick elements is fair to poor. There are generally five types of failure:

Soiling—atmospheric, biologic, efflorescence, rust staining, etc.

Mortar—loss, failure, inappropriate repointing

Spalls—surface spalling due to trapped moisture and subsequent freeze-thaw cycles

Fasteners—random assortment of anchors left in place, rusting fasteners, holes associated with removed fasteners

Displacement—shifts in brick in the paving areas representing trip hazards

Poor repairs—mismatched mortar and/or brick

The overall condition of the interior brick elements is good. The bricks are not exposed to the weather or the heavy traffic of events and miscellaneous vehicular traffic. The interior bricks in the plaza lobby floor have been treated with a high-gloss finish.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.



Top: General masonry failure adjacent to accessible ramp to the west entry (May 23, 2018).

Bottom: Staining from seasonal salt piles located in this area. Image also shows added concrete stair “nosings” which are not original (May 23, 2018).



M10 Avoid fastening to the brick by any means, including tape, mastic, or mechanical fasteners. If unavoidable (for example, attaching permanent code-required signage), mounting with the smallest possible fastener is preferred to tape. Temporary signs should never be mounted to the brick; temporary signs affixed with tape should only be located on painted drywall or glass.

M11 Masonry-to-masonry joints should be mortar. Masonry-to-dissimilar materials (metal, wood, glass) should be sealant.

M12 Brick restoration and maintenance work should match original design, patterns, dimension, appearance, and materials.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

M32 Avoid mounting surface conduit to the brick. Attachment points in mortar will minimize damage to the brick. Where possible, core through the exterior wall to supply power to these locations. If necessary, the conduit runs should be minimized. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized. Any required exterior devices should be located where they are most visually unobtrusive and be dark where possible.

M33 Replacement brick should match the original brick in color range, size, texture, composition, and compressive strength. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Replacement Brick” in this document.

M34 Repointing mortar should match the original in color, texture, composition, and compressive strength. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Repointing Mortar” in this document.

Recommended Procedures

Recommendation for Replacement Wall Brick

- Morin Brick, the original source for the building, currently remains operational in Maine and would be a reliable source for waterstruck bricks.
- Bricks should have a minimal amount of “black” included, thus making College Blend the preferred option.
- For walking surfaces accessibility requirements indicate the use of wire cut bricks instead of water struck bricks. In these cases, the bricks should be set as close as possible to minimize joint widths. Color palette selection remains unchanged for these surfaces.

Procedure for Repointing Mortar

- Mortar should be Type N
- Color should match adjacent mortar. Mockups should be required to confirm color match; allow mockups to cure a minimum of 7 days.
- Failed mortar joints should be cleaned out of loose material to a depth at least twice the width of the joint.
- Existing stable mortar should be damp prior to installation of new mortar.
- New mortar should be mixed to a moist, but firm consistency.
- New mortar should be pressed into joint firmly.
- Joint should be tooled to match adjacent joint detail.
- Clean area using gentlest means possible to remove residue after new mortar sets.

Failed mortar joints (January 11, 2021).



Section 5.7.4

Brownstone

The brick parapet walls of the exterior stairs and ramps are topped with a brownstone coping course. The drawings simply indicate “stone coping” and provide a profile but are quiet on type of stone. The masonry specifications refer to cut stone work specifications, a copy of which has not been located. Brownstone has obvious connections to Boston with widespread use of the material on Beacon Hill. Together with red brick, the use of brownstone in the overall material selection for City Hall helps to reinforce the connection to the older city, while still envisioning a significant portion of the building in the modern material of concrete.

Brownstone with cementitious mortar joint (June 21, 2018).



Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The brownstone appears in fair to good condition with notable areas of damage at the west elevation. Undated repair work has negatively impacted the appearance of the brownstone. This work appears to have involved removal of the brownstone caps and the introduction of lead through-wall flashing. While the flashing detail is potentially an upgrade on water infiltration into the underlying brick walls, alternative materials would have provided an aesthetic more in keeping with the original design intent. The joints between coping stones have been treated with an elastomeric sealant, which does not match the brownstone and is failing, allowing water into the system. The use of appropriate mortars at these joints would have provided a better aesthetic with similar—or better—maintenance requirements.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

M11 Masonry-to-masonry joints should be mortar. Masonry-to-dissimilar materials (metal, wood, glass) should be sealant.

M13 Any brownstone units removed and replaced should be retained to provide source for future repair dutchmen as necessary.

M14 Repair spalled stone areas larger than two inches in any dimension with dutchmen. When less than two inches, patch with color matched cementitious patching material.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

M35 Some brownstone-to-brownstone mortar joints have been replaced with sealant; these should be replaced with lime-based mortar, matching the brownstone coloring as closely as possible.

M36 Identify a source for replacement and dutchmen as part of the next project requiring brownstone repair or replacement. Consider stockpiling from the source to allow for future repair efforts.



Poorly matched brownstone repairs and through-wall flashing detail (May 23, 2018).



Brownstone with sealant mortar joint (May 23, 2018).

Clay Floor Tile

The flooring of the transaction area within the brick mound is a fired clay material, nominally nine inches by nine inches. Bricks are used in the north entry at the second floor, transitioning to this clay floor tile beyond the vestibule. From the south lobby, the brick floor transitions to clay tile at the doorway into the transaction area. Clay tile is also used as treads and risers for the six stairways in the transaction area.

While the use of brick as a continuation of the plaza into and through the building has been readily acknowledged, the decision to use clay flooring tiles remains a mystery. These fired clay tiles (sometimes referred to as “quarry tile”) are generally considered to be more durable than clay bricks. Given the expectation that the “Heavy Public Traffic” areas anticipated up to 5,000 visitors per

day under peak conditions, a more durable surface would be warranted.¹ The material selection may be nothing more than a common-sense selection based on economics and long-term viability in a high-traffic space that still provided visual continuity with a red clay product. In early 1964, the Tile Shop in Boston submitted samples of “Dennis Heatherbrown Quarry Tiles.” These tiles are formed from a natural clay deposit in Wales—and there is “nothing like it in the U.S. for color and texture.” The Tile Shop noted that American quarry tiles are often used in utilitarian buildings, but City Hall needs “something with more artistic qualities.”² These Welsh quarry tiles are reported to be the only “non-American material” originally used in the building.³

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- 1 Lawrence Anderson, *A Competition to Select an Architect for the New City Hall in the Government Center of the City of Boston* (Boston: Government Center Commission, 1961): 30.
 - 2 Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 1.11, 1964 memo, the Tile Shop, Folder 1.11.
 - 3 Robert Taylor, “A Plain Man’s Guide to City Hall: The architects tell why they designed it that way,” *The Boston Globe* (February 9, 1969): B16.
 - 4 Ruabon Quarry Tiles, Ruabon, Wales UK; a 9-inch by 9-inch tile is not a standard stock size.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The flooring tiles themselves appear generally in good condition, although there are several areas where entire sections have heaved and shattered over the past twenty years. Various engineers have identified the lack of expansion control joints within the floor tile system as a concern. The underlying concrete structure has not been found to be structurally deficient, but even small shifts due to settling and expansion can have a significant impact on the tile flooring without control joints. While the source of the original clay floor tiles is known, sole sourcing of materials for municipal projects is challenging.⁴ For some repairs, tile salvaged from work related to changes to the flooring area have been used, but there is no salvaged tile remaining.

As quarry tiles are a glazed and fired compressed clay product, it may be more successful to source terracotta floor tile. This is an equivalent product in performance and can be colored and sized to meet matching requirements in support of the original design intent. It is highly unlikely

Clay tile showing a section replaced with an off-the-shelf material (January 11, 2021).



that appropriate tile will be readily available as a standard stocked product. It should be anticipated that a custom production run will be required. When factoring mockups for size and color range confirmation, lead times for product acquisition will have to be considered. Prior to acquisition, detailed planning of the replacement layout will be needed in order to implement control joints that were not a part of the original installation. The introduction of control joints will likely require slight adjustments in the size of replacement tiles in order to retain the visual alignment of the original installation.



Brick to clay tile transition at the entry to the transaction area from the plaza lobby (March 29, 2018).

Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

M37 Salvage tiles for reuse from any work requiring removal of tiles.

M38 Replace broken clay floor tiles with clay tiles matching existing in dimension, color range, texture, composition, and compressive strength. For small areas within general public spaces, consider removing similar tile from non-public spaces. If replacement tile must be sourced, consider adding 25 percent more tile in order to have a ready stock for future repairs.

M39 Options for new replacement tile include the original material from Ruabon, Wales, a domestic clay tile that matches dimension, color range, texture, composition, and compressive strength, or a custom clay tile that meets these requirements.

M40 New clay floor tile installation should extend to logical break points—walls, doors, or transitions to different floor materials.

M41 Short-term repair and maintenance should include the recommended installation of control joints as indicated by post-failure studies. Identify opportunities for the implementation of control joints as recommended by Souza, True and Partners (1998) in previous clay tile reports.

Polyester Terrazzo

Corridor floor surfaces, primarily at the fifth level and above, and counter surfaces in the transaction zone were specified originally as polished concrete with an addendum changing the finish to “polyester terrazzo.” While the original intent of the terrazzo was to have the counters in the transaction space be the same appearance (color and aggregate) as the terrazzo of the flooring, challenges with color matching and material availability resulted in two slightly different colors being implemented.

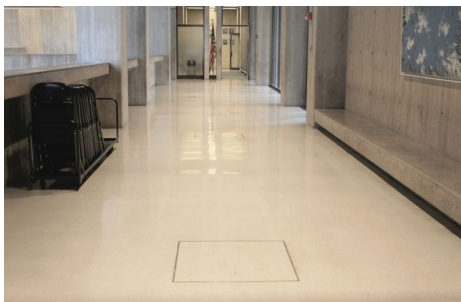
Whereas traditional terrazzo uses cementitious binders for the aggregate, the terrazzo at City Hall uses polyester resins and hardeners for the binding of the marble-chip aggregate. According to industry literature, this material provided four times the wear resistance at one eighth the square foot weight and without dividers or expansion joints. The material was poured and troweled at a thickness of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.¹

Cementitious terrazzo had been widely used in the United States since the late 1890s, gaining popularity during the Art Deco and Moderne periods in the early twentieth century. However, the use of polyester terrazzo was a short-lived trend in the industry (the late 1950s to the late 1960s).² The post-World War II building boom brought

with it a variety of advances in building technology. The use of synthetic resins grew beyond scientific experimentation and into routine use.

Initially the polyester resin was approximately half the cost of epoxy resins, which would make the use of the product in a municipal setting more attractive. As the product was put in use, building operators found the polyester resin version was not as dimensionally stable as epoxy—and far more susceptible to moisture, especially in the highly alkaline environment typical of concrete. Any cracking of the substrate or moisture penetration would lead to failure of the bond layer. Polyester-based terrazzo fell out of favor by the late 1960s as the cost of epoxy resin dropped and the failure of polyester resin became more evident. In retrospect, it is probably no surprise that the use of polyester terrazzo at City Hall has been problematic since the original installation in 1968.

By July of 1968 there were several instances of delamination of the flooring on the fifth through ninth floors. These areas were described as “large blisters of approximately 2 to 3 feet in diameter.”³ Synterra Corporation of California (no longer in business) hypothesized three potential causes of the failure:



Polyester terrazzo floor on the fifth floor's known delamination area (June 21, 2018).

- The use of localized space heaters after the floor work could cause thermal stress that could result in bond failure and warping in specific locations.
- Spillage of materials after priming and before application of the topping—this includes water. Apparently “a half ounce of water spilled just prior to pouring of the topping can cause a 3 foot diameter bond failure.”⁴
- The use of special additives such as calcium chloride, accelerators, retarders, or curing compounds.

Colonial Marble (the local agent for Synterra) suggested delamination was due to impact loads. The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall (AEBCH) rejected this opinion since the specification required that the material (terrazzo) resist loads of 7,000 PSI. Failed sections clearly demonstrate failure of the bond to the base and thus the fault lies in the installation.⁵

More than likely, the delamination is a result of moisture reaching the bond layer between the concrete substrate and the terrazzo. This could be caused by inadequate curing of the concrete, improper preparation of the terrazzo matrix, or surface cracks—any of which would have let in moisture.

It is not clear how (or if) the various issues with the polyester terrazzo were resolved. The issue of delaminating areas continues to the present day.

¹ “Products and Progress,” *Mississippi Architect*, (April 1963): 10.

² Thomas Jester, *Twentieth Century Materials: History and Conservation* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1995): 204.

³ Synterra Corporation to Power Engineering, Historic New England Archives—Folder 7.20—Specifications: Section 9E: Polyester Terrazzo—1961–1969 (July 25, 1968).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ AEBCH to J.W. Bateson Company, Historic New England Archives—Folder 7.20—Specifications: Section 9E: Polyester Terrazzo—1961–1969 (July 26, 1968).

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The terrazzo floors throughout the ceremonial and municipal levels are generally in fair to good condition. Where there is significant damage such as delamination, the condition of the flooring represents a serious trip hazard. Repair attempts have left these areas with patches that reflect poorly on the original design aesthetic.

Cracks and Chips—typical observed

Stains—typical observed

Delamination—physical separation of terrazzo from underlying subfloor (long-term issue)

Poor repairs—mismatched repair matrix



Top: Typical cracking of terrazzo flooring (June 13, 2018).

Bottom: Failed terrazzo areas polished and feathered to blend with remaining terrazzo (December 23, 2020).

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M15 Where the existing terrazzo has failed, cut out failed section across width of corridor. Polish the underlying, exposed concrete and feather the edge of the remaining terrazzo down to the concrete to eliminate a trip hazard.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M42 As the original polyester terrazzo technology is no longer viable, wholesale replacement of the terrazzo flooring with modern epoxy based terrazzo is recommended, with the new material to match the original in visual presence to the greatest extent possible. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Terrazzo Floor Replacement” in this document.

Potential Change

M47 Replacement of the terrazzo flooring with a non-terrazzo material should be avoided.

Recommended Procedures

Terrazzo Floor Replacement

- Match aggregate size range and distribution, color range, and matrix color.
- The new epoxy terrazzo will likely require the use of boundary strips in new locations. The implementation of these boundary strips should be planned and reviewed in advance.
- Wholesale phased replacement should be done one full floor at a time due to required thickness of the modern material. Epoxy terrazzo is approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thicker than that originally installed.

Procedure for Cleaning Terrazzo

- Due to the chemical composition of the polyester terrazzo countertops and floors, cleaning agents should be neutral, ideally in the pH 7 to pH 9 range. Avoid all-purpose cleaners or soaps with a pH outside this range.
- Neutral cleaners require a dwell time of several minutes to allow for the cleaning action to take effect. Scrubbing with a nylon bristle brush after the dwell time may loosen additional grime.
- Rinse cleaned area thoroughly with water.

Section 5.7.7

Steel and Aluminum

The window detailing uses steel mullions on the lower levels and aluminum mullions on the upper municipal levels. The metal window framing was specified to have a zinc-rich primer followed by an enamel-finish coating—all shop applied. The frame color was to be Kaiser KALCOLOR No. 6345 (Dark Amber) or ALCOA Duranodic 313S (Dark Bronze). KALCOLOR 6345 is today known as “Statuary Bronze.”

Metal bronze-colored grates are found at the transaction windows on the public levels. These are not bronze, but rather bronze-colored anodized aluminum. They are designed to hinge 180 degrees and next to each other on the office side, such that they are fully open while the window is in use. They can be closed and locked after hours.

Typical window mullion conditions (March 29, 2018).



Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The steel window mullions located at levels five and lower are all showing significant paint loss with resulting rust development. Based on inspection of the mullions at various levels, it appears that the specified color (Dark Amber or Dark Bronze) was never implemented. All mullions (interior and exterior) are black. There is a small section of bronze colored mullions at the Congress Street entrance, but this appears to be a post construction replacement of a storefront unit at this sole location.

The aluminum windows located at the municipal levels have no thermal breaks. Some have large gaps between the frame and the sash, leading to poor environmental conditions inside and low energy efficiency. The windows are designed to pivot vertically at the center. This pivoting was touted as a solution for easy cleaning. However, the pivoting is gated by a key, which is tightly controlled but subject to occasional loss.

Some of the aluminum grates have been removed on the second floor at the current location of the parking clerk and replaced with plexiglass panels. New aluminum grates were fabricated to match the original at a few windows on the second floor as part of the Parking Clerk Renovation project (PFD Project #7142). Due to concerns that some of the staff had about security, the plexiglass panels were not replaced with new grates that would have matched the original.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

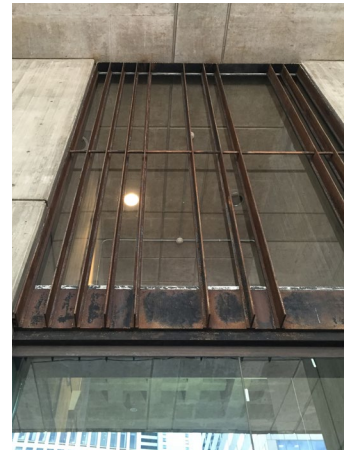
M16 Repaint steel mullions to match original paint color. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Repainting Steel Mullions” in this document.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

M43 If replacement of steel mullions is required, match size and spacing in addition to the above parameters.



Rust development at steel window mullions on the south elevation (May 16, 2016).

Recommended Procedures

Repainting Steel Mullions

- Initiate paint analysis for confirmation of color; additional instrumental analysis will characterize the binder used. Color analysis shows that the remaining coating on exterior and interior of the mullions is black. This includes the mullioned storefronts at the municipal level. Closest commercial matches to the black are:

Benjamin Moore 2131-10 "Black Satin"

Benjamin Moore 2132-10 "Black"

Benjamin Moore 2129-10 "Midnight Dream"

Sherwin Williams SW6258 "Tricorn Black"

- Remove all loose paint and rust buildup.
- Prime with zinc-rich or appropriate metal primer.
- Paint with enamel paint matching original color, based on paint analysis.

Section 5.7.8

Glass

The use of glass in this concrete building was a clear part of the design with eleven different glass types defined. The three most noticeable areas of glass use are the entrances (including the light wells), the office windows, and the corridors at the municipal levels.

The tempered glass doors at the plaza and north entrances are frameless, creating a transparent connection between the plaza and the interior. Rising above these principal entrances are long stretches of clear plate glass separated by steel mullions set at varied spacing. Inside the plaza lobby, the light wells at the east and west utilized clear plate glass to enhance the effect of natural lighting on these soaring spaces.

The glass for windows at office spaces was specified as “heat absorbing, grey plate

glass.”¹ At the ceremonial levels, the use of one-inch and three-quarter-inch insulating glass provided additional acoustical and temperature control for those spaces. Coupled with the various overhangs and flanking fins, the design was assumed to preclude the need for venetian blinds, thus leading to a clean aesthetic.² The windows at the municipal levels were designed to pivot open in order to facilitate cleaning.³

At the municipal levels, the circulation corridor wraps around the central courtyard. In order to help light the offices from the courtyard side, the interior wall is a mix of clear and obscured wire plate glass. As with the glass exterior walls, these interior glass walls are also interspersed with aluminum and steel mullions set at varied spacing.

-
- 1 The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall, “Specifications for Construction of the new Boston City Hall,” Section 8E—Aluminum Frames, Glass and Glazing, (February 7, 1964): 18–19.
 - 2 Brian M. Sirman, *Concrete Changes: Architecture, Politics, and the Design of Boston City Hall* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 107.
 - 3 Correspondence from Henry Wood, Project Manager to the *Evening Globe*. Historic New England, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles Archives, Series II, Subseries B, Sub-subseries i, Folder 8.17—General Overview Information (September 25, 1967).

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The glass is in good condition with some cracks observed. The most pressing concern for the glass is the low energy efficiency profile. The aluminum and steel windows lack thermal breaks, a condition that results in the transfer of heat or cold from the exterior directly into the interior. During extreme temperature swings, this often results in condensation build-up, which contributes to the deterioration of the window frames over time. Occupant comfort is also compromised, which ultimately results in increased energy consumption.

Typical window configuration at the municipal levels (June 21, 2018).



Policies and Recommendations

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

Potential Change

M48 Investigate window replacement options for the municipal levels. New windows should have the same tinting and general visual appearance but be more energy efficient with thermally broken frames and more easily and safely operated for cleaning. Features to be replicated include: fenestration pattern; jamb and sash thickness; glass color, texture and reflectance; and metal color. All windows on each elevation should be replaced at the same time if full replacement is considered.

M49 Identify feasibility of replacement of single-pane window units on the ceremonial levels with insulated glass units. Units must matching originals in glazing color, reflectance, and transparency, while replicating the original design details.



Glass in the ceremonial hood along the south facade (January 26, 2021).



The storefront system at the eighth-floor municipal level (January 26, 2021).

Bronze

Within the specifications, “Muntz metal” is referenced. The documents call out the difference between bronze and Muntz metal. The functional difference is minimal except that bronze contains much more lead, whereas Muntz can be formed in the large sheets used for the bronze hallway of the ceremonial level. For the purposes of this document, all such metal will be referred to as bronze (see chart below).

All exposed bronze and Muntz surfaces were to have a satin finish, with a dark “statuary bronze” finish. The bronze doors at the fifth-floor ceremonial level are essentially hollow doors formed from Muntz sheet metal and filled with rock wool for sound deadening. The doors are

1¾-inches thick. The bronze door frames are bronze sheet clad over galvanized steel.

The various stair railings are bronze and set with lead at the floor level. The bronze railings located at the top of the fire stair outside the city council chamber and those located on the monumental lobby stair appear to be the original railing style. These railings are rectangular in profile with sharp corners and nominally ¾ of an inch thick by 2½-inches wide. Additional, railings have been introduced or replaced over time. The new railings resemble the original in their bronze coloring, but have a softened profile. New railings have been inserted into courtyard spaces, presumably to aid with overall site accessibility. Many of the

Architectural Bronze (shall contain)	Muntz Metal (shall contain)
55%–58% copper	58%–61% copper
2%–3.25% lead	0.35% maximum lead
0.50% maximum iron	0.25% maximum tin
0.50% maximum tin	0.15% maximum iron
0.25% maximum manganese	0.10% maximum other elements
0.75% maximum other elements	The remainder zinc (~40%)
The remainder zinc (~28–30%)	

railings at City Hall are not appropriately accessible under twenty-first-century codes. This fact may require alterations in future building maintenance and improvement campaigns.

The fifth floor ceremonial space prominently features bronze wall paneling in the original city council corridors on the west and in the reception area and principal corridor in the mayoral suite. The bronze panels are installed in a pattern featuring eighteen

different panel sizes. These patterns are specified on the drawings. Bronze extruded channels are used to clip the panels to the wall backing, which is made of plywood and galvanized sheet metal with countersunk flat-head bronze screws at twelve-inch intervals. The panels have a unique patinating pattern, in medium to dark browns of subtle vertical strips, possibly applied by brush. This pattern elongates the appearance and makes the wall appear even taller.¹

¹ Rika Smith McNally + Associates Report, “Art Conservation Cleaning Assessment for Muntz Metal Panel Walls in the Mayor’s Office Reception Area: Results and Recommendations” (October 7, 2020).

Bronze panels in the mayor's office suite (October 26, 2016).



Issues, Barriers, & Observations

Generally the bronze railings are in good condition. It is important to note that the original design intent called for a uniform “statuary bronze” finish, which is a fairly dark finish. Over the years, the patina of the railings has changed variably throughout the building. The railing for the monumental stair in the lobby has been polished either by use over time or as a result of incorrect assumptions that it should be polished to a lighter color. It now displays as a light golden color. The railing at the fire escape outside the city council chamber has been left to weather and oxidize. It has developed a verdigris appearance.

Where presumably new railing systems have been installed in the courtyard spaces, it appears that iron tubes were part of the anchoring system. Rusting is occurring at these locations. This has caused visual staining of the adjacent bricks, and may lead to instability of the railing attachment.

Much of the bronze paneling is in fair condition with staining, drips, dings, use of miscellaneous adhesives, etc. The bronze paneling in the city council corridors has been freely personalized by the councilors displaying flyers and notices with tape and attaching stickers to the bronze. It is unclear if this practice has resulted in any long-term damage to the material. The copper metal alloy walls are dirty from having not been regularly cleaned or maintained and have collected heavy dirt and grime. There are numerous areas of patina damage from handprints around doorways and above the desk (without a continuous protective coating hand grease and oil from fingerprints cause patina damage). There are also abrasions, particularly at doorways, and adhesive residue from pressure-sensitive tapes used to attach papers and posters. The wall appears to have originally had a protective wax coat, buffed to a



Newer bronze railing system installed in the courtyard space (May 23, 2018).



Original exterior railing detail; fire escape area adjacent to city council chamber (June 21, 2018).



Rusting of railing attachment into the brick paving surface (May 23, 2018).



Typical bronze paneling conditions, city council corridor (June 21, 2018).



New sculptural style up-lighting at the building corners (May 23, 2018).

lustrous sheen over a saturated brown color. The wax is currently so deteriorated it can be partly removed using a cotton pad. There are some areas that appear to have been partially cleaned, possibly with a metal polish. There are also areas on the bottom course of panels that have uneven sheen. This may be due to previous attempts to clean using furniture polish or oils.¹

Other bronze—or metal colored the same statuary bronze—components have been added to the exterior of the building. While some of these might be considered to have a modernist style sympathetic with the building and its original design intentions, the features are more recent interventions and should not be confused with the original design. One such intervention is the introduction of a sculptural up-lighting at three of the four building corners as well as lighting meant to illuminate various elements of the fifth-floor ceremonial level.

¹ Rika Smith McNally + Associates Report, “Art Conservation Cleaning Assessment for Muntz Metal Panel Walls in the Mayor’s Office Reception Area: Results and Recommendations” (October 7, 2020).

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.

M17 Cleaning and re-patination of bronze panels should follow materials and methods developed as part of this conservation management plan. Reference “Art Conservation Cleaning Assessment for Muntz Metal Panel Walls in the Mayor’s Office Reception Area: Results and Recommendations (2020).”

M18 Avoid mounting anything to bronze, including signage (permanent or temporary), equipment, etc.

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension.

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed.

Recommended Procedures

Procedure for Cleaning, Color Integration and Protective Coating for Interior Bronze Elements

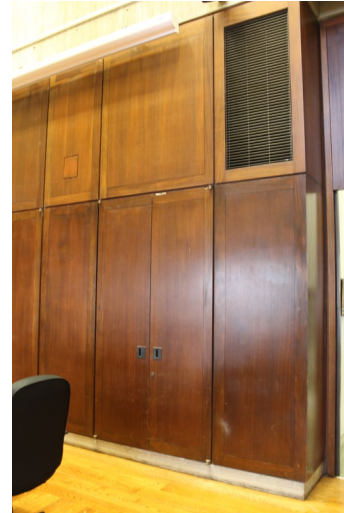
- Clean with Orvus detergent.
- Follow with clear Butcher's Wax, toned wax, and a final coat of Butcher's Wax.
- Adhesive tape can be removed by naphtha or acetone/ethanol.
- Localized patina repair can be carried out by a hand-rubbed cold patina using Golden MSA mineral pigments to tone damaged areas of patina and abrasions.
- Refer to "Art Conservation Cleaning Assessment for Muntz Metal Panel Walls in the Mayor's Office Reception Area: Results and Recommendations (2020)" in the "Cleaning Test Recommendations" section of the Appendix.

Section 5.7.10

Wood

Although typically a major building material, there is relatively little wood used in the construction of Boston City Hall. The most notable use is in the fifth-floor ceremonial spaces. The west wall of the mayor's office and the north wall of the mayor's conference room have full wood-paneled walls. This paneling was specified as African mahogany veneer over plywood cores. Similar paneling was installed on one wall of the original city council offices. A hidden door in this paneled wall system opens to reveal a small washroom.

The mayor's office was specified as having a mahogany strip floor (2¼-inch wide strips). However, Mayor White had some latitude in finishing his "personal rooms." Ann Sullivan, founder of Hilary House Interiors, was hired to complete the mayor's rooms. While largely following original detailing specified, the wood floors in the mayor's office (which was originally the mayor's conference room) and the Eagle Room (which was originally the mayor's private office) appear to be the significant departure.¹ In these spaces, the floors are pine planks with wooden pegs.² The pegs are plugs that cover the nails. The floor is finished with a high-gloss urethane.



Wood-paneled wall, Eagle Room
(June 21, 2018).

¹ The Eagle Room was originally specified to have carpet. New Boston City Hall Drawing Set, A10, (July 2, 1964).

² Olga Gueft, "What it took to bring about the best public building of our time," *Interiors* 128, no. 9 (April 1969): 131.



Wood-paneled wall, mayor's office.

Issues, Barriers, & Observations

The wood features, primarily as observed on the fifth-floor ceremonial level, are in good condition. There is some evidence of scratches and nicks, but this is typical of normal wear and tear in a busy office environment.

The treatment of the wood features has varied over the years. There is wide latitude in the city council spaces with respect to the care of the wood paneled walls. Some city councilors are known to use a portion of their budgets for maintenance of the finish, and thus some areas retain the original matte finish while others have been treated with a high-gloss finish.

Policies and Recommendations

Maintenance and Management

M19 Wood floors in mayoral suite should be maintained as part of cyclical maintenance. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Wood Flooring” in this document.

M20 Wood doors and wood panels should be periodically reviewed for surface damage. Damage should be repaired with the gentlest means possible and color matched to the surrounding area.

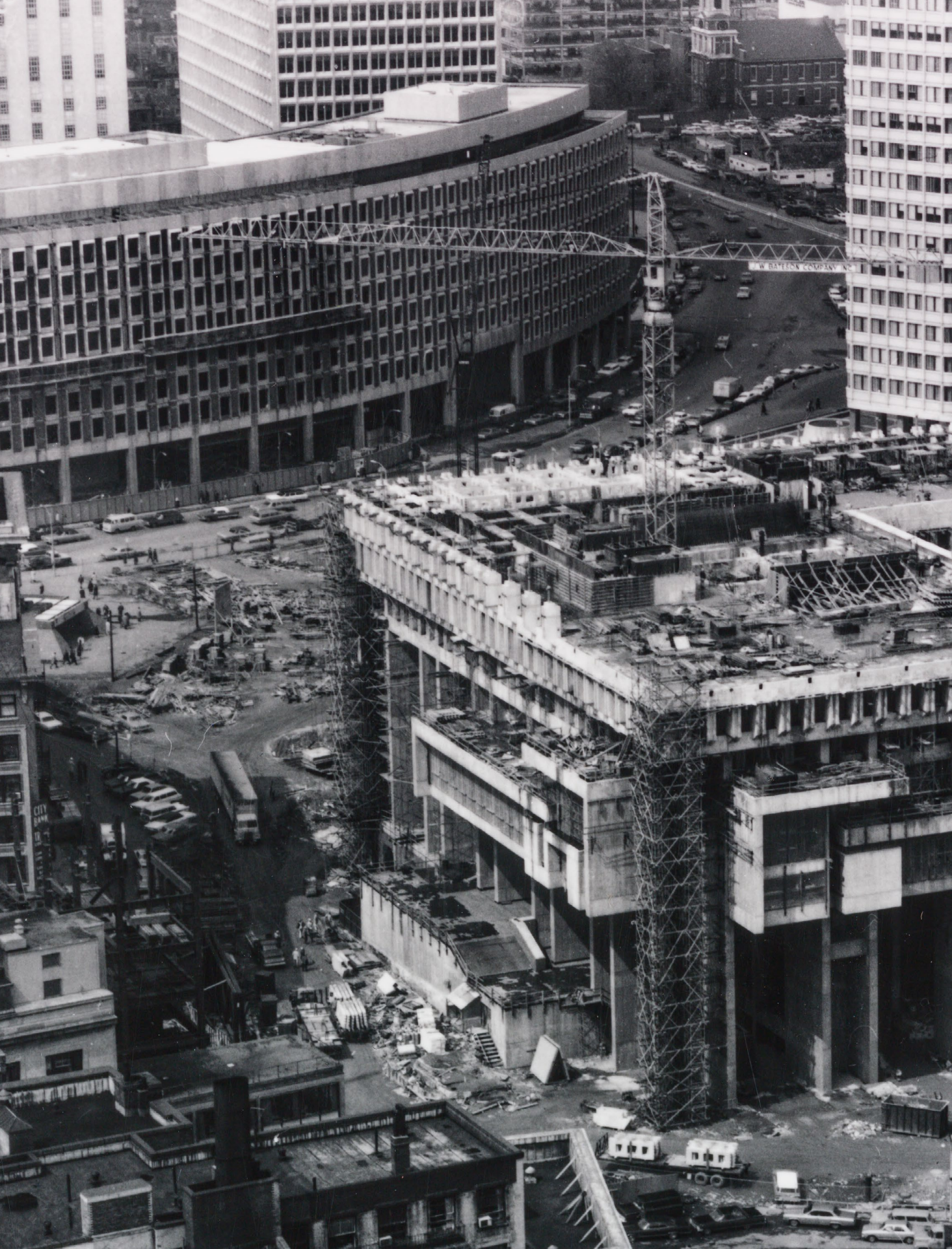
Recommended Procedures

Procedure for Wood Flooring:

- Screening the floors every one to two years should allow for less invasive work, less down time, and less expense as compared to full refinishing.
- Where plugs for fastener holes in the floor have been removed, install new plugs matching as best as possible the wood species and the grain of surrounding floor boards. Plugs may be secured with PVA glue; epoxy is not necessary. The area of each plug should be treated (stain, protective coating) to match the surrounding flooring.

Wood floor, mayor's office showing plugged fastening holes (June 21, 2018).







6.0

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Section 6.1

Acknowledgements

This conservation management plan is the result of three years of research and collaboration with a team from various city departments and consultants representing building maintenance, facilities planning, operations cabinet, plaza ownership, project management, and architectural conservation.

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And finally, it was a great honor to speak with **Michael McKinnell** about the vision he and **Gerhard Kallmann** had for Boston City Hall. We were touched by Michael's openness to discussing the evolving future of the building and his sharing of details from more than fifty years ago. We dedicate this conservation management plan to the ideas he and Kallmann first initiated, and to those who helped carry them forward—across several generations—ensuring that Boston City Hall continues to reach for those lofty original goals of becoming “the people’s building.”

Section 6.2

Image Credits

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to,” the designation is unconfirmed): [Cover](#),
[24](#) (Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell),
[25](#) (top, Michael McKinnell), [27](#) and [38](#) (Michael
McKinnell), [39](#) (attributed to Michael McKinnell
and Gary Larsen), [40](#) (Michael McKinnell and Gary
Larsen), [43](#) (top, Michael McKinnell), [43](#) (bottom,
Bill Cope), [45](#) (attributed to Gary Larsen), [47](#) (top),
[49](#) (top), [119](#), [120](#) (top, Gerhard Kallmann), [155](#)
(top, Michael McKinnell), [211](#) (bottom), [219](#) (top,
attributed to Michael McKinnell), [292–293](#).

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[28](#), [29](#), [34–35](#), [41](#), [44](#), [47](#) (bottom), [49](#) (bottom),
[56–57](#), [66–67](#), [70](#), [84](#), [108](#), [116–117](#), [123](#), [139](#),
[155](#) (bottom), [171](#) (top), [191](#), [204–205](#), [209](#),
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The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City
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Section 6.3

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Section 6.4

PFD Projects Referenced

The following projects are referenced in this document:

Bolling Building Municipal Building Office Space Prototype
(Room 709), #6986, 2014

Rethink City Hall: Boston City Hall and Plaza Master Plan,
#7074, 2015–2017

Exterior Lighting Project, #7088, 2015

Lobby Renovation Project, #7097, 2017

City Council Chamber Renovation Project, #7116, 2018

Congress Street Masonry Repair Project, #7135, 2018–2019

Parking Clerk Renovation Project, #7142, 2018

Signage and Wayfinding Pilot Project,
#PMD 2019–01, 2019

Plaza Renovations Phase 1 Project, #7140, 2019–

5th Floor Renovations Project, #7141, 2020

Glossary

Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall (AEBCH)

The firm Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles (Gerhard Kallmann, Michael McKinnell, and Edward Knowles) was formed for the express purpose of entering the design competition for Boston City Hall. By Knowles' own recollection, he was the registered architect but Kallmann and McKinnell were the driving force behind the actual design (See: Brian Serman, *Concrete Changes*, 6). By 1965, Kallmann and McKinnell had located to Boston from New York and formally established a firm with Henry Wood. With respect to the construction of City Hall, Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles joined with Campbell Aldrich and Nulty and consulting engineers Le Messurier Associates to form "The Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall" to execute the design and oversee construction. (Historic American Building Survey, Historical Narrative Data Sheet for Boston City Hall, MA-1176, 1981, p6). As the winning architects in the design competition, Kallmann and McKinnell are generally recognized as the designers of City Hall. Officially, the construction project was the collective responsibility of AEBCH. All drawings and specifications are officially marked "Architects and Engineers for the Boston City Hall. All correspondence during the project was rendered under the letterhead of "AEBCH."

¹ *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013): 2.

Adaptation

Changing a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.¹

Brutalism

An architectural movement that started in the mid-1950s in Europe. Although there are many possible derivations for the term, the origin story of Brutalism most often references the French phrase “béton brut,” meaning “raw concrete.” It is closely linked to the late work of the French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier, especially his *Unite d’Habitation* in Marseilles, France of 1952, which is characterized by its exposed board-formed and rough-finished concrete. The formal movement was first known as the New Brutalism and was promoted by the British historian Reyner Banham, whose 1955 essay “The New Brutalism” in *The Architectural Review* outlines the nature of movement as an “ethic” or set of principles. These included “memorability as an image,” “exhibition of structure,” and “valuation of materials ‘as found.’”

Burra Charter

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance was first adopted in 1979 in Burra, South Australia. Last modified in 2013, this conservation charter is typically used as the basis for conservation plans for buildings worldwide.

Concrete, Cast-in-Place

Construction technology wherein building elements (foundations, walls, slabs) are constructed at the building site, directly forming these components *in situ* where they are intended and defined by the construction documents.

Concrete, Precast

Concrete materials that are formed separate from the building and then moved to the building and incorporated into the construction as required.

Conservation

The processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. In the United States the term preservation is typically used instead of conservation.

Conservation Management Plan

Conservation plans come from Burra Charter building conservation efforts from Australia and are largely considered the global standard. A conservation plan identifies and documents the significance of a cultural asset. The conservation management plan takes this concept one step further by focusing on the permanent value of a site with the creation of research-based, long-term policy guidelines. These policies provide for general maintenance guidelines and a framework for implementing and managing change where warranted. This conservation management plan applies the *U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* as guiding principles for conservation management.

Dutchman

A piece of new stone material cut to replace a damaged section. The new piece should match the original in material, dimension, color, and profile detail.

Element

Major and significant component of the building or the space. Examples of an element include the monumental stair and the mayor's stair of the plaza lobby, the Vierendeel trusses making up the ceiling grid through the building, the projecting Hoods indicating the locations of the city council chamber, the mayor's suite and councilor offices.

ICOMOS

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental professional organization formed in 1965, headquartered in Paris.

In Situ

A term that means in its installed location.

Lamp

The replaceable component of a light fixture. Lamp is the technical term for what is commonly called a light bulb.

Mullion

A vertical element that divides window units. At Boston City Hall, the steel projecting mullions use varied spacing to create separated glass units as part of the overall linear design.

Rehabilitation

In the United States, the Secretary of the Interior (SOI) through the National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for the administration of certain historic buildings and sites. Additionally, the *SOI's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are used to provide guidelines for administration of buildings and sites not directly overseen by the NPS. The standards define rehabilitation as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The rehabilitation standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building's historic character.²

2 *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, 2017: 2.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings

These standards are a set of principles and guidelines that provide recommendations for the treatment of historic properties in the United States. The guidance provides examples of appropriate maintenance and upgrade considerations so that owners can help to retain the country's cultural heritage.

Space

In this document a space is understood as an overall area of the building which contains elements. A space may be the entirety of a level (public, ceremonial, municipal) or a defined area within a level. Examples of a space include the courtyard, the plaza lobby, the transaction levels, and the city council chamber.

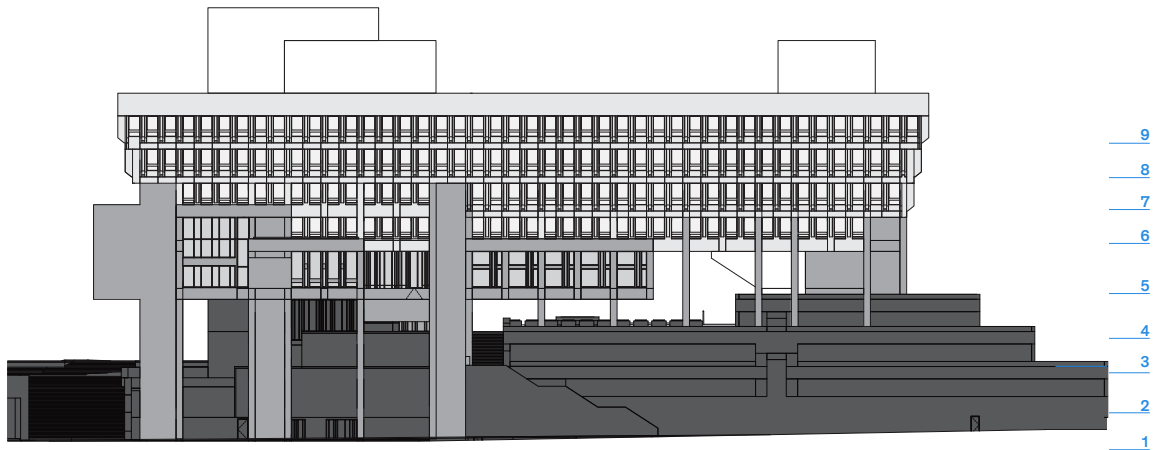
Vierendeel Truss

An open-web truss using vertical (rather than diagonal) members and rigid joints. Vierendeel trusses comprise most of the horizontal structure of Boston City Hall.

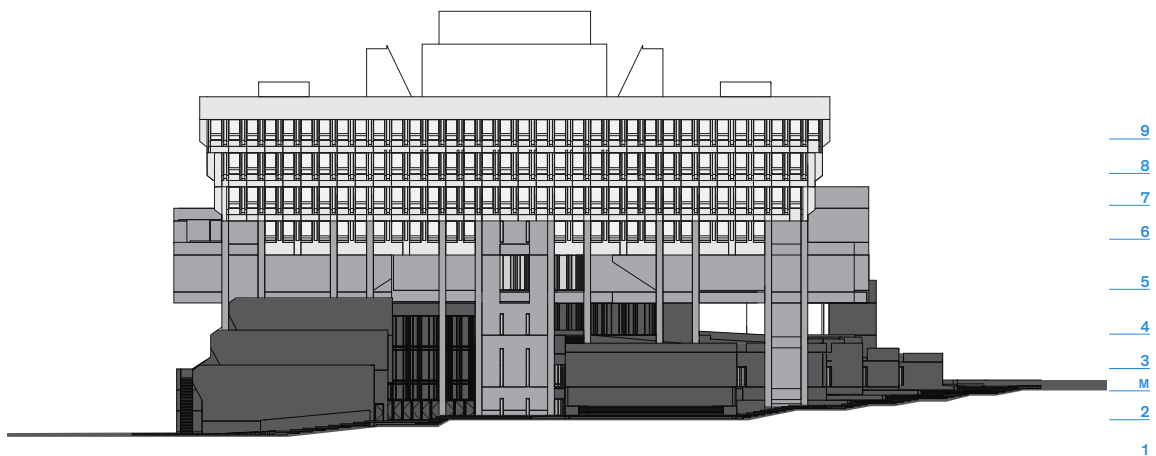
Section 6.6

Building Elevations, Plans, and Sections

Existing Conditions (January 2021)

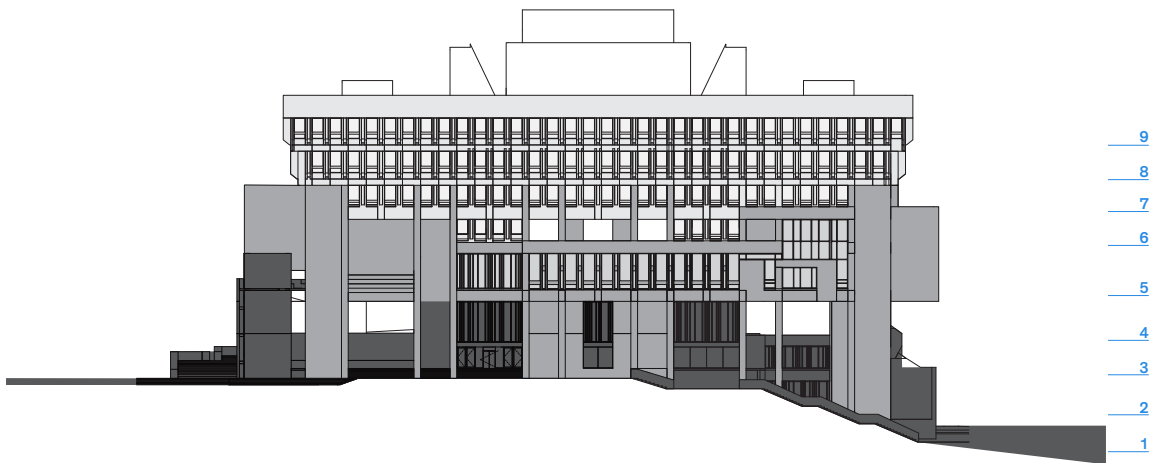


East Elevation

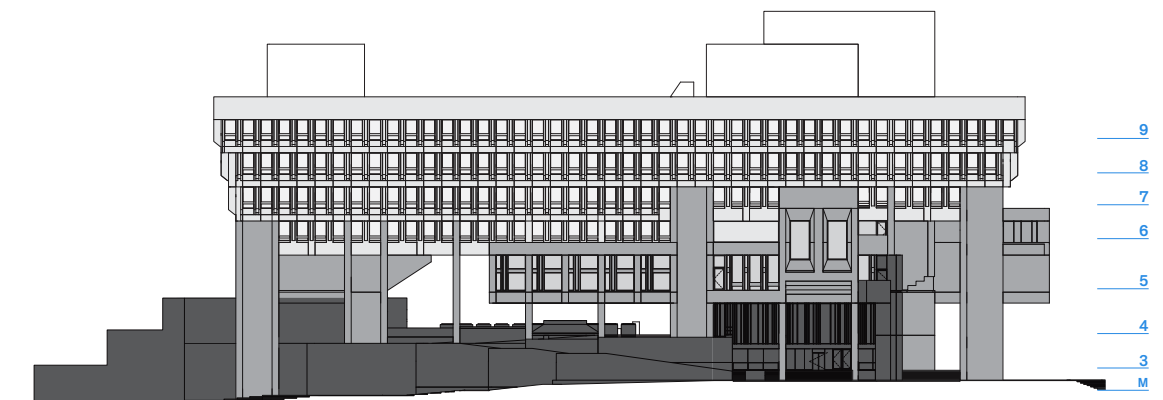


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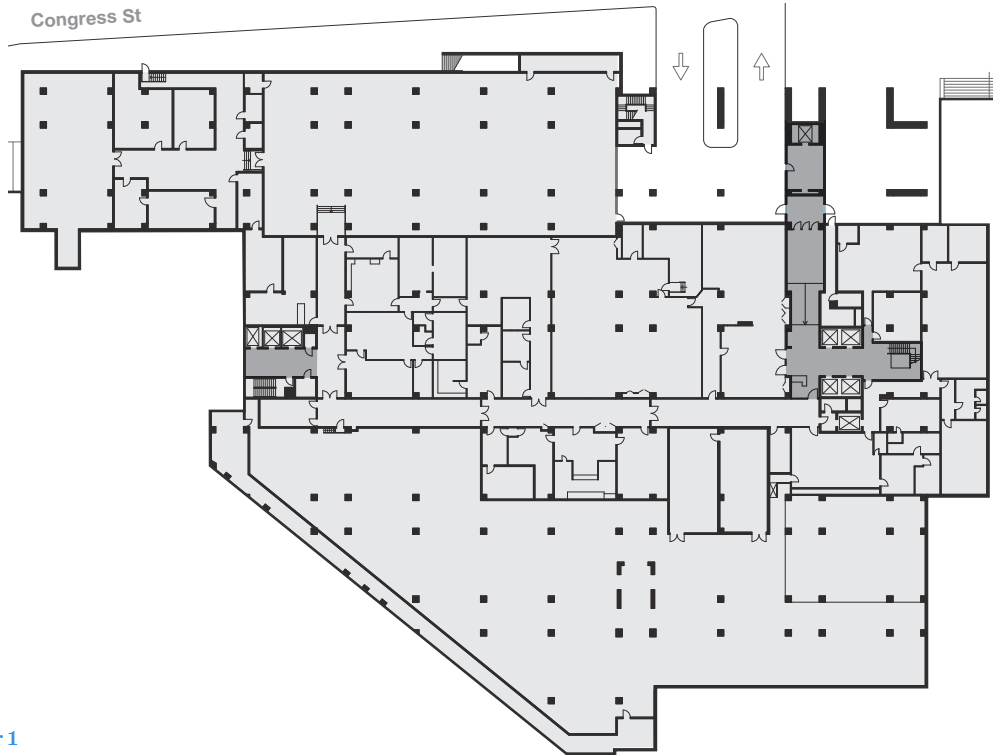
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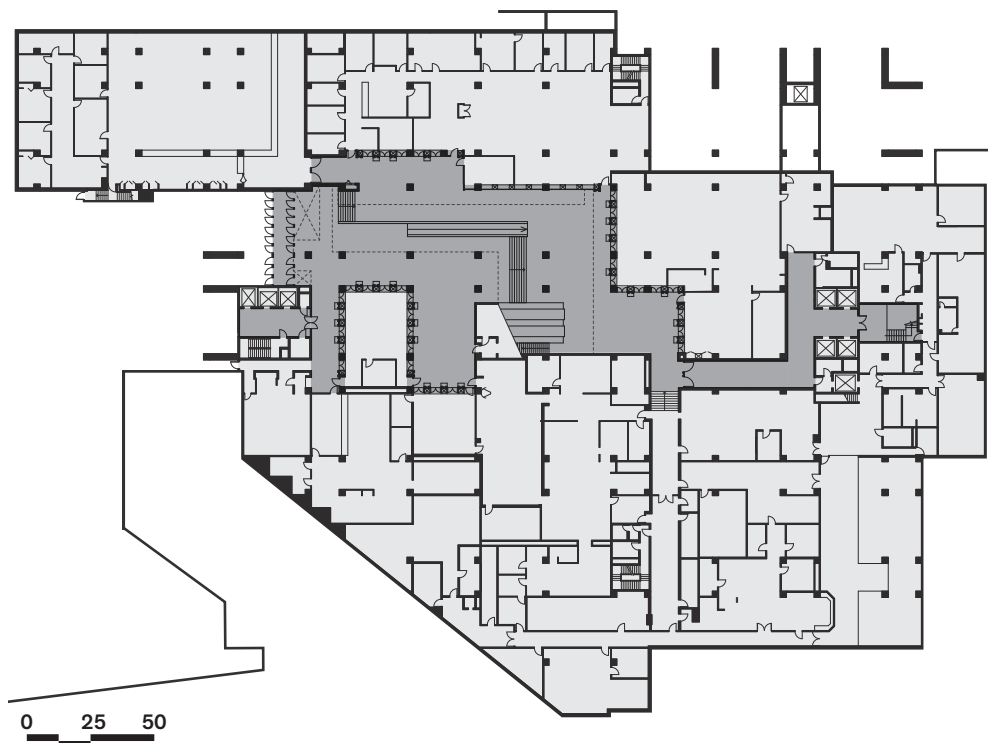
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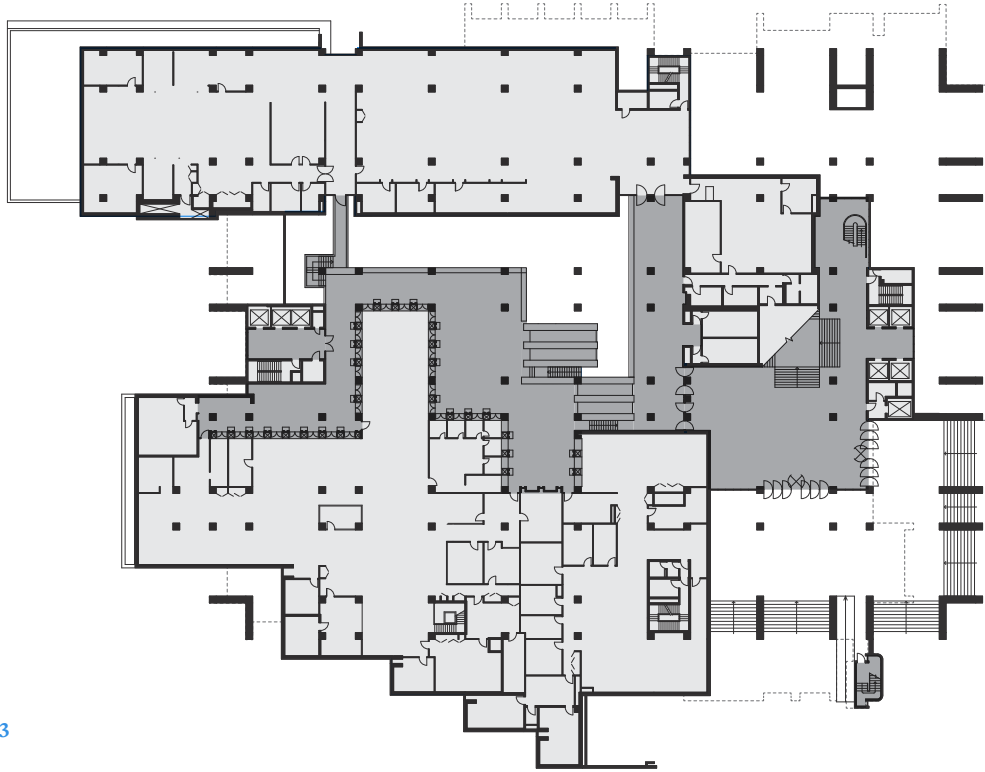
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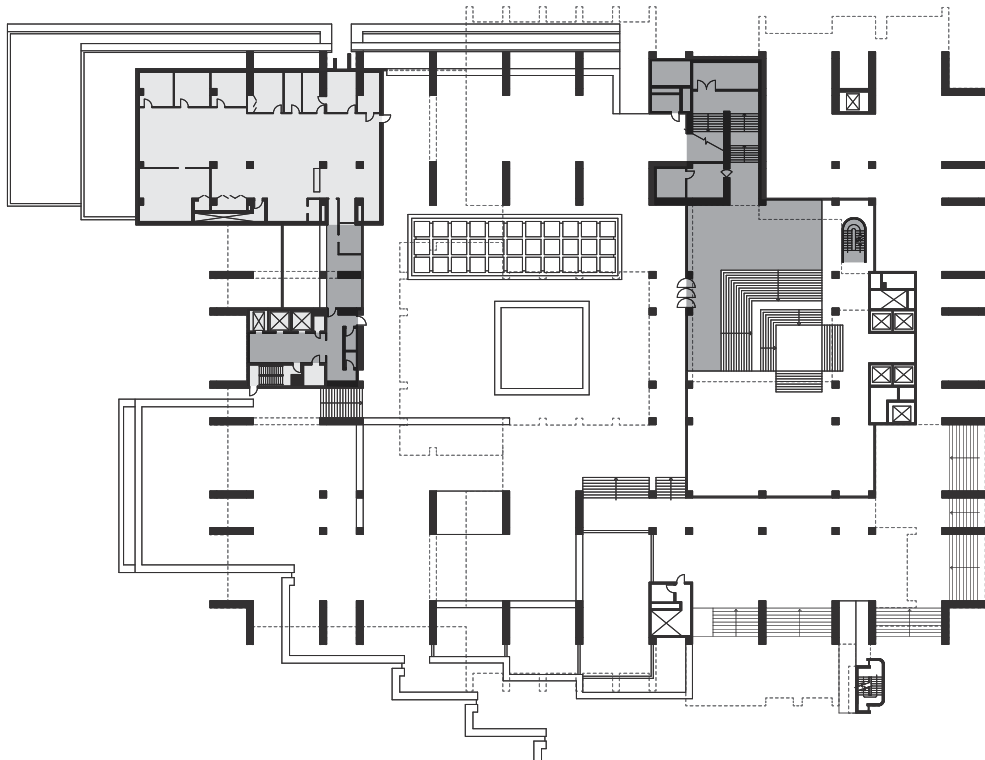
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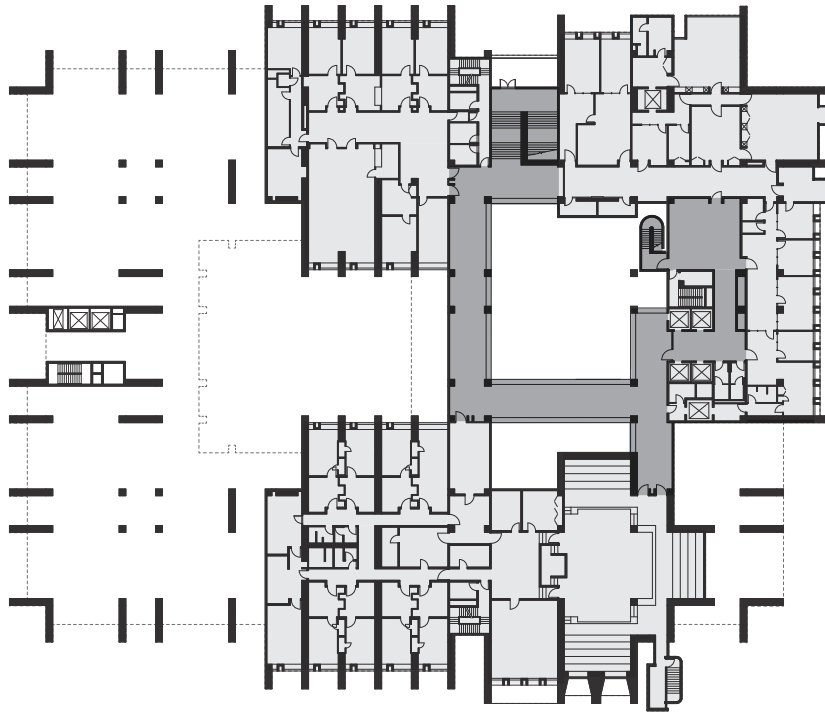
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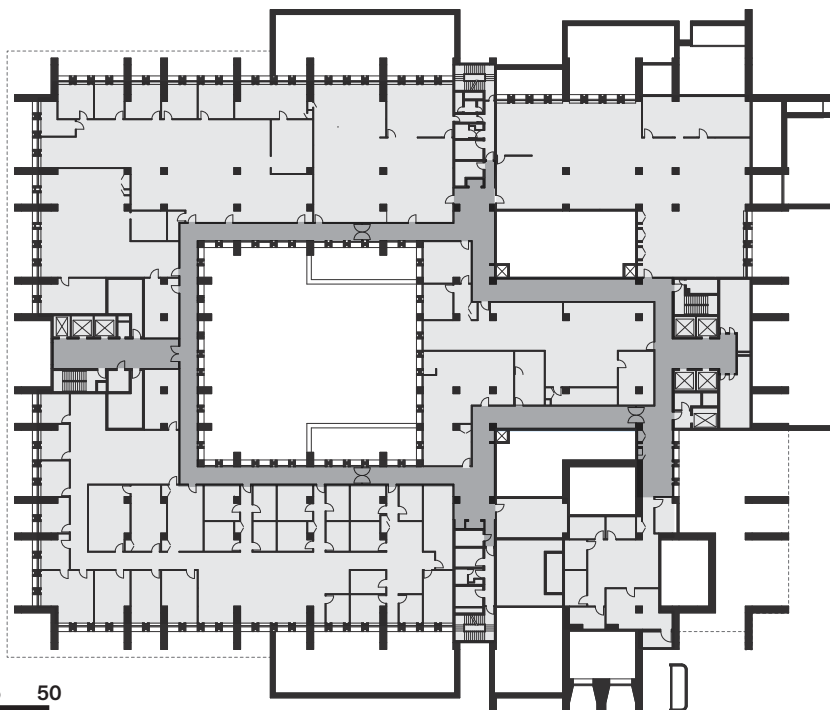
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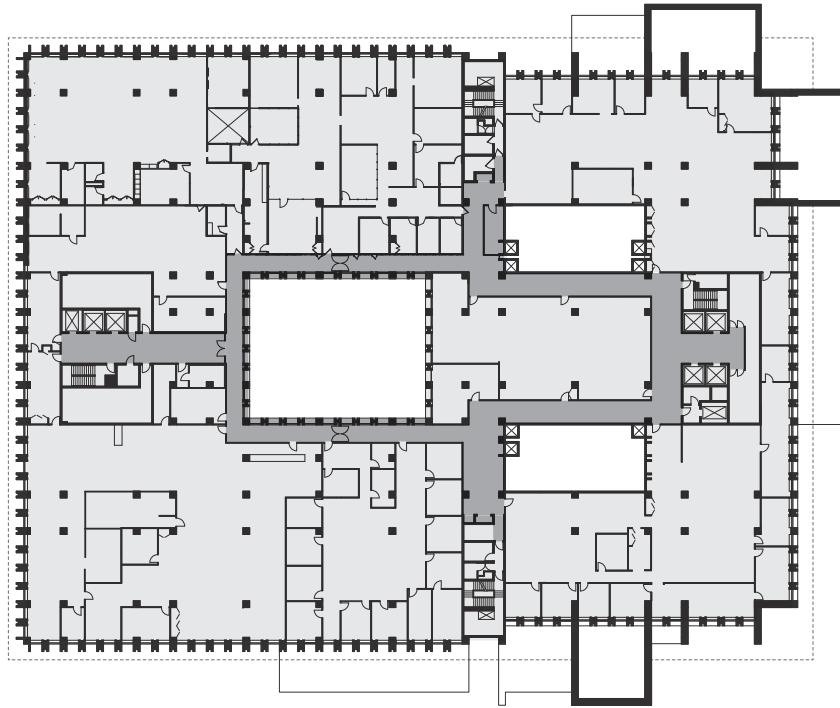
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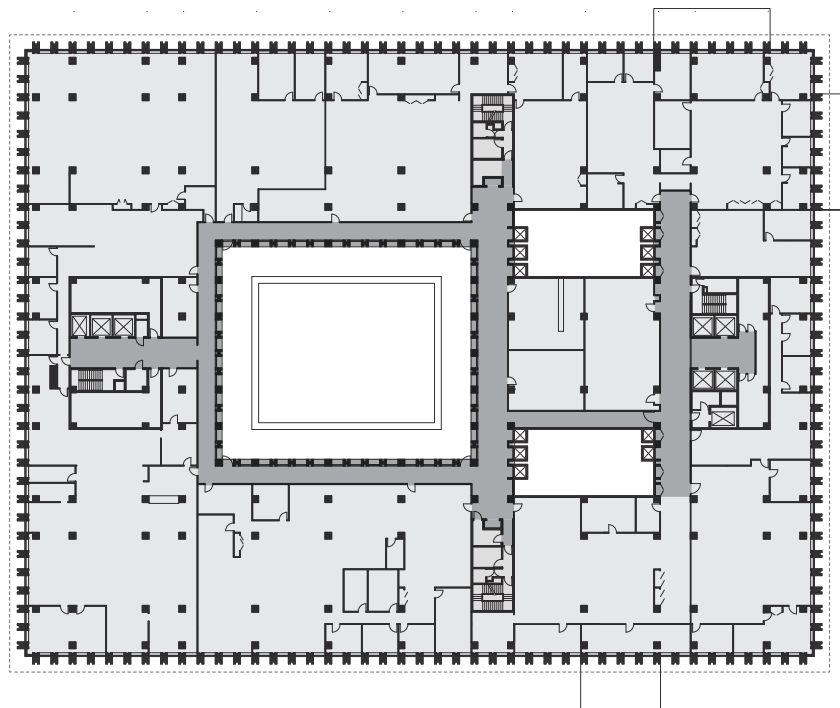
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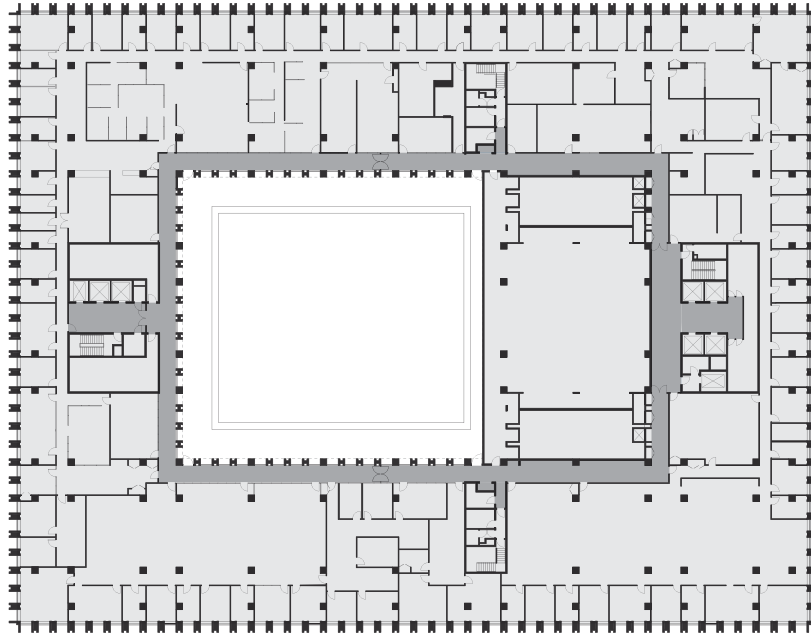
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Floor 7

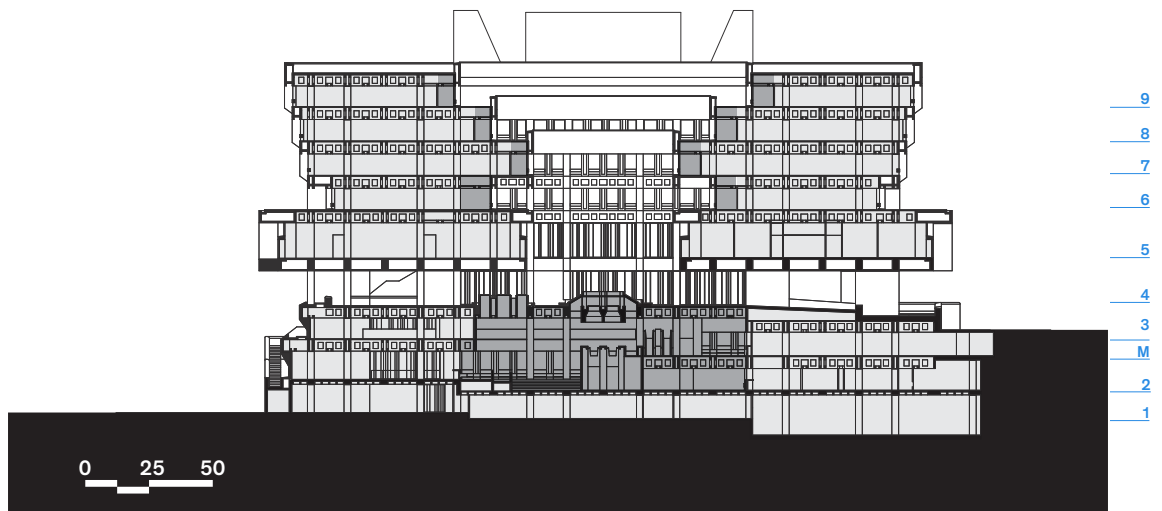


Floor 8

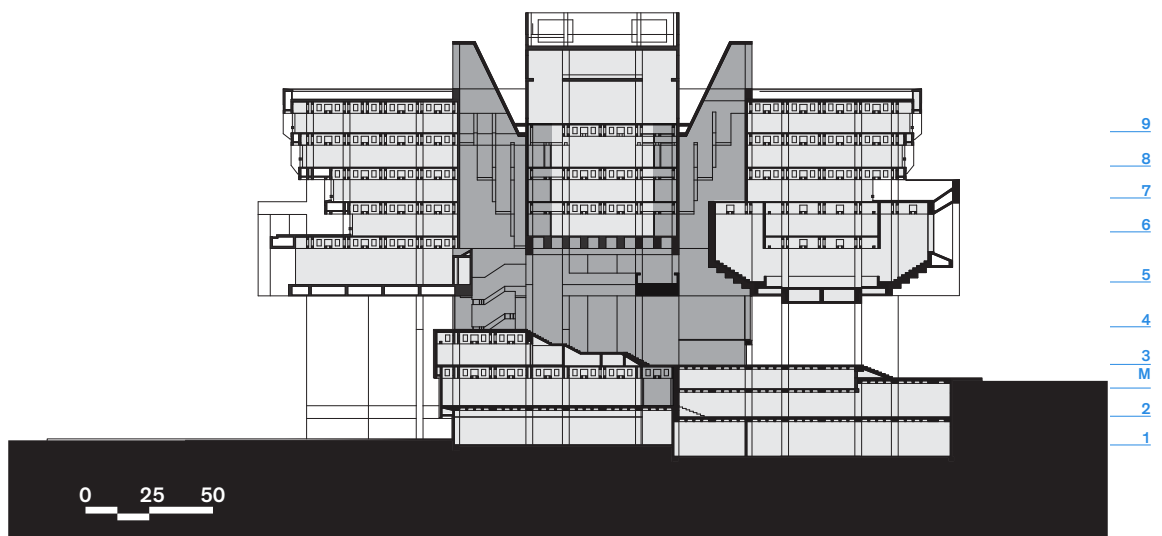


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Floor 9



Section looking south through the courtyard.



Section looking south through the plaza lobby.

Index of Conservation Principles and Policies

Principles, Overall Policies, and General Policies

Conservation Principles

I This document is based on the 2017 Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Properties. The treatment rehabilitation has been identified as the appropriate standard to follow for work conducted on Boston City Hall. Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The Secretary of the Interior's rehabilitation standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building's historic character. [74](#)

II The conservation management plan (CMP) should be formally adopted by the City of Boston. [74](#)

III The conservation management plan should be consulted whenever work to the building or parts of

the plaza touching the building is being planned or carried out. Adequate planning time within individual projects should be allotted for decisions to be made that are fully informed by the CMP. [74](#)

IV Recognize that the building, a pending Boston landmark, is highly significant with cultural, political, architectural, economic, and historic value. Respect the original design intentions, including its symbolism, programmatic organization, the objective to allow for change, and the relationships among the building, plaza, and their surrounding context. [74](#)

V Respect the original design intentions when addressing the evolving roles and functions of municipal government. [75](#)

VI Ensure that all conservation work is safe, environmentally sound, economically viable, and sustainable. Repair, maintenance, and alterations should consider the level of significance, tolerance for change, public health and safety, operational priority, and extent of damage. [75](#)

Overall Policies

01 Recognize that the Commissioner of Property Management—as the steward of Boston City Hall designated in the City of Boston’s Charter and Municipal Code—is solely responsible for implementing the recommendations of the CMP on all maintenance and capital work. Projects within areas of significance or high significance, major alterations, or renovations should coordinate with a representative from the cabinet and Public Facilities Department (PFD). Additionally, work within areas of pending landmark status (exterior and plaza lobby) and substantial changes should be reviewed with the Boston Landmarks Commission. It is recommended that substantial changes include an engagement process with the residents of the city as well as local preservation groups that might have a stake in the historic architecture of Boston. In times of a public health or safety crisis, the protocols of the CMP may be overridden to more effectively meet the responsibility of municipal government to the health and safety of the public. **75**

02 Review, evaluate, and update the CMP every five to ten years. Maintain an ongoing log of modifications keyed into the full CMP that documents new discoveries and procedures. **75**

03 Produce a maintenance manual specifying cycles on which inspections are to be performed with procedures for necessary repair. **75**

04 Retain as much of the original significant and highly significant fabric in situ as possible and continue its repair as defined in the *Secretary of Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. **75**

05 Strive for conservation that is proactive rather than reactive, guided by the principle “as much as necessary and as little as possible.” Repair whenever feasible; consider replacement only as a last resort. **76**

06 Prior to commencement of work, record (with photographs and/or drawings) all original elements to be altered or removed when repair, replacement, or alteration is undertaken. **76**

07 Identify and implement alternative strategies for routing new building mechanical services and providing temporary signage and exhibits. Use original routing strategies (exterior wall chases, or within concrete ceiling grid) wherever possible. **76**

08 In keeping with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for New Additions*, elements that are added should be designed and constructed “so that the character-defining features of the historic building, its site, and setting are not negatively impacted.”¹ **76**

09 The lighting strategy throughout the building should be systematic and based on the original design strategy, while allowing for appropriate light levels. Lighting should be integrated into the architecture and ceiling grid. **76**

10 All work to exterior and interior surfaces—including cleaning, affixing signage, etc.—should follow the materials and methods detailed in the CMP. **76**

11 Photograph the elevations of the exterior and the major interior spaces of the building every five years to document change over time. **76**

12 Establish qualifications requirements consistent with applicable public bidding requirements for consultants and contractors who work on design and construction projects. Engage qualified professionals whenever work is undertaken on the building. **76**

13 When planning alterations or changes to the building refer to Climate Ready Boston and the associated plan for Downtown Boston to design for resiliency regarding predicted flooding and sea-level rise. **77**

General Policies

G1 When mounting equipment for required services (fire alarms, cameras, etc.), locate equipment where it is least visually obtrusive. Any devices should be dark where possible. Avoid mounting surface conduit or wire mold. If it is necessary, make best attempts to minimize runs. Conduit or wire mold should be organized linearly and adjacent to existing runs and within existing reveals in concrete in order to avoid a haphazard, unplanned appearance. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized and wire mold should match the color of surface being mounted to. Use consistent materials throughout a space. **87, 99, 105, 127, 145, 159, 175, 196**

G2 As a pending Boston Landmark, any alterations or changes proposed to the exterior of the building or the plaza lobby should be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission through their design review process. **87, 99, 105, 127**

G3 When planning alterations or changes to the exterior or interior of the building, refer to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation,

which states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment." **88, 99, 105, 127, 145, 159, 175, 196**

G4 Utilize the courtyard for events, meetings, seating, and other activities that allow the space to function closer to the original intent as an vibrant heart of the building linked to the interior public spaces and the plaza. Consider adding infrastructure such as power, seating, lighting, etc. to support that use. Implement security, accessibility, and life-safety measures that are in keeping with the historic nature of the courtyard's materials and configuration. Refer to Rethink City Hall Master Plan, PFD Project #7074. **111**

G5 Consider the plaza lobby as the "city room," offering a first impression of Boston City Hall and a space where public gatherings can take place. **128**

G6 Consider the original design intent which had public services connected to the plaza and north entrances. Where possible, concentrate civic gathering spaces and meeting rooms at plaza level, as outlined in the October 2017 Rethink City Hall master plan (PFD Project #7074). **128**

G7 When planning alterations or changes to the service level, refer to Climate Ready Boston and the associated plan for Downtown Boston to design for resiliency regarding predicted flooding and sea-level rise. **159**

Element and Space-Based Policies

Maintenance and Management

E1 Limit vehicles parked on brick paved areas. Emergency vehicles and vehicles conducting active exterior maintenance or event loading may need to be parked for short periods at times. [88](#), [100](#), [162](#)

E2 Provide alternate parking for city and maintenance vehicles. Consider designating part of the plaza away from the building, such as along Cambridge Street, for active maintenance or loading vehicles. [88](#), [100](#), [159](#)

E3 Avoid storing equipment, vehicles, etc. around and under the building overhangs. Provide alternate storage for special event equipment, currently stored against the building. [88](#), [160](#)

E4 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc.. [88](#), [91](#), [160](#)

E5 Provide improved signage mounting systems that protect existing railings. Banners may only be hung from the railing systems at the balcony outside the Curley Room on the west or the balcony outside the ceremonial stair on the east. Banners should be secured at their lower edge via an inconspicuous, reversible, and repeatable system, such as UV-resistant zip ties. Any banner must have a timeline to be taken down and all fasteners should be discarded at that time. No permanent drilled or adhesive fasteners are acceptable. [101](#)

E6 Keep all areas in the plaza lobby clear of items such as extra furniture and equipment. Provide alternate storage for such items. [128](#)

E7 Consider using the stair as an exit-only path from the mayor's lobby. [133](#)

E8 Consider use of the horseshoe drive as an active entrance, providing space for accessible drop-off and active loading. [163](#)

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

E9 Features such as bike racks should be attached to the ground and reversible. [89](#), [169](#)

E10 Any signage should be consistent and follow standards developed by the city. [89](#)

E11 Temporary signage should be standard, consistent, and reversible. A request should go through Property Management Department before mounting or installing any signage. [89](#)

E12 Identify and implement strategies for bird deterrent that avoid permanent staining of concrete, limit the introduction of additional systems that may be unsympathetic to the overall aesthetic, and effectively minimize the natural roosting behavior of all bird species found in the vicinity. [89](#), [99](#), [105](#)

E13 Consider reopening the stair as public access to the courtyard in conjunction with the reopening of the ramped steps and activation of courtyard. If public access is not feasible, consider replacing the recently added gate with a more sympathetic design and material. [94](#)

E14 Avoid attachments to the piers and columns. [100](#)

E15 Replacement of mechanical piping should be done in conjunction with replacement of perimeter heating. [106](#)

E16 Study alternative locations and/or expression of child-care playground to better integrate it into an activated courtyard. [111](#)

E17 Improve quality of gates with a more sympathetic design and material. [111](#)

E18 Consider alternate layouts of vinyl graphics that do not obscure the transparency through the glass. [130](#)

E19 Remove stair lift if adequate alternative access method is implemented. Repair all attachment locations after removal. [132](#)

E20 Create standards for mounting and displaying public art that locate mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location. Coordinate mounting infrastructure and art locations with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture. [134](#), [146](#), [180](#), [187](#), [199](#)

E21 In typical everyday use, lighting should be white. [136](#)

E22 Future changes to color schemes should consider the architectural layout of the coffers. [136](#)

E23 Maintain window openings at the top of the light wells and the lighting of these spaces. [137](#)

E24 Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088), which replaced the linear and can downlight fixtures in their original locations with LEDs and uplit the space above the ceiling grid. [146](#), [168](#)

E25 Interior renovations to office and administra-

tion space should involve removal of unused infrastructure, including cleaning out of existing walker ducts. Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. This work should be done in a neat and organized fashion hidden above the ceiling grid to the extent possible. [146](#), [160](#), [176](#), [196](#)

E26 Retain water fountains until a larger project to replace them is considered. Use the original location of water fountains where possible when implementing a new system. [146](#), [197](#)

E27 Implement the new signage and wayfinding strategy that was introduced with the 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project # PMD 2019-01) on this floor. [146](#), [160](#)

E28 Skylight shafts were originally conceived to provide illumination. Future projects should acknowledge this and re-light the skylight shafts. [150](#)

E29 Minor alterations of transaction windows should provide replacement signage consistent with city standards and as implemented in the 2018 Parking Clerk Renovations project (PFD Project #7088). [151](#)

E30 Activate all transaction windows. Open windows as service windows or locate public gathering space behind the windows as recommended in Rethink City Hall: Boston City Hall and Plaza master plan (PFD Project #7074). [151](#)

E31 Retain and use existing grates at transaction windows, which open to provide a welcoming connection between city service employees and visitors. When possible, remove plexiglass where it has been added to transaction windows, replacing with original grates or installing new aluminum grates to match the existing. [151](#)

E32 Refer to recommended phased replacement of terrazzo flooring in terrazzo material section. [160](#), [176](#), [197](#), [200](#)

E33 Consider moving the ATM and electrical equipment to the service corridor near the restrooms on this floor. [168](#)

E34 Improve the quality of lighting, expanding on the 2017 Lobby Renovation Project (PFD Project #7097), which replaced the linear and downlights in their original locations with 3000K LEDs. [176](#), [185](#)

E35 Consider re-installing metal grilles in the square sections of the concrete ceiling grid in the highly significant spaces. [176](#)

E36 Retain built-in wood panels and cabinets.

E37 Coordinate conservation of the eagle statue with Boston Art Commission staff in the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture. [178](#)

E38 Utilize the space above the ceiling grid to run infrastructure such as cables, ductwork, etc. in an organized fashion. Avoid running infrastructure on the bronze walls. [180](#)

E39 Identify and recommend less invasive options for personalization of the bronze walls outside the councilor offices, such as tackable panels. Situate mounting infrastructure in an inconspicuous location that does not damage the bronze, such as within the bronze reveals. [186](#)

E40 Department office renovations should locate any enclosed rooms along the interior hallway, leaving the perimeter window walls open to maximize daylight and dispersal of perimeter heat. [197](#), [201](#)

E41 When renovations occur, replace lighting with 3000K LEDs in original locations (linear fixtures recessed within ceiling grid, downlights where they occur), as piloted in the 2014 Room 709 Renovation (PFD Project #6986), part of the Bruce Bolling Municipal Building project completed as a prototype in City Hall. [197](#)

E42 Implement the new signage and wayfinding strategy that was introduced with the 2019 Signage and Wayfinding Pilot (PMD Project # PMD 2019-01) on the sixth, seventh, and ninth floors. [197](#)

E43 Consider sensitive upgrades to lighting, audio-visual infrastructure, and acoustics. [198](#)

E44 Retain and maintain mail slot infrastructure at the elevator lobbies. [199](#)

E45 Original steel-and-glass walls on the office side of the corridor are to remain intact wherever possible. [200](#)

E46 Refer to Exterior, Courtyard. [202](#)

Potential for Change

E47 When considering future change to the public levels, maintain the expression of the base of the building as a brick mound. [89](#)

E48 Any signage mounted to the exterior of the building should be reversible and reviewed by Boston Landmarks Commission. [89](#)

E49 When planning accessibility, security, environmental, or other upgrades to any entrance, consider the original design intent around materials, transparency, and height of elements. [90](#), [128](#), [130](#), [131](#)

E50 Window replacement should be done in conjunction with heating system replacement. [107](#)

E51 Replace remaining original lights with LEDs and housings to match replacement fixtures installed in the 2015 Exterior Lighting Project (PFD Project #7088). [112](#)

E52 Consider accessibility upgrades and access for maintenance equipment when planning renovations maintenance equipment when planning renovations. [128](#)

E53 Provide an accessible interior route to the courtyard and mezzanine level.

E54 Retain use as a public space for daily encounters and structured events. [132](#)

E55 Maintain openness of stair when considering alternatives to provide an accessible route to the mezzanine and courtyard level or improvements to acoustics, audio-visual equipment, or power infrastructure. [132](#)

E56 Although the stair is no longer used, retain it as an original sculptural element of the design. [133](#)

E57 Recognize the original design intent which had public services connected to the plaza entrance and north entrance when considering any substantial change or change of use in the transaction areas. [146](#)

E58 Incorporate similar upgrades for accessibility, wayfinding, security, and lighting from the Plaza Lobby project (PFD Project #7097). [148](#), [167](#)

E59 Maintain the visual and experiential connection of the various transaction levels when considering changes to this area. Refer to the October 2017 Rethink City Hall: Boston City Hall and Plaza master plan (PFD Project #7074). [149](#)

E60 When considering an expansion to the Congress Street entrance to improve accessibility, security, and visibility, hold a new addition to the standards defined by the plaza and north entrances in terms of materials, transparency, and height. [162](#), [165](#), [166](#)

E61 Maintain stair as an open and visible means of connection between the first and second floors. [168](#)

E62 Maintain the openness of the space and prominence of the glass and bronze walls when considering changes. [181](#)

E63 Maintain this space as the city council chamber, utilized for public city council meetings. Any changes to this space should maintain the volume of the space, the arrangement of seating, and the character of concrete elements. [184](#)

E64 The stair should remain open and an integral sequence of public movement between the plaza and the fifth-floor ceremonial level. [188](#)

Material-Based Policies

Maintenance and Management

M1 During any project that adds infrastructure above the ceiling grid, develop performance requirements that strive to hide the new work above the grid. Where practical, remove any infrastructure that is no longer in use. Data cabling should utilize j-hooks or cable trays to keep cables organized and supported above the trusses. [213](#)

M2 Lighting strategy throughout the building should be systematic, based on the original lighting design strategy and allowing for appropriate light levels. Lighting should be integrated into the architecture and ceiling grid. [217](#)

M3 All fixtures and lamp or bulb replacements should be 3000K color temperature. [217](#)

M4 Restore the central skylight to provide daylight to spaces below.

M5 Replace acrylic cover panels on the bank of thirty-three skylights to increase the amount of light that penetrates to the transaction area below. [230](#)

M6 Snow, sand, and salt have adverse long-term impacts on exterior materials. Always remove as much snow and ice manually before applying any de-icing salt. Supplement de-icing salt with sand for added traction. After the danger of freezing temperatures subsides, clean up treated areas thoroughly by sweeping up as soon as possible. Do not pile ice/snow against the building, steps, walls, lights, railings, etc. [230](#)

M7 Concrete should not be painted. Clear coatings should only be applied if necessary to extend the life of the concrete, as recommended by an engineer and verified by testing. [247](#)

M8 Routine maintenance and small projects may include cleaning of surface staining. The goal of localized spot concrete cleaning is to remove adhesives, oil staining, food staining, wax staining, etc., but retain the overall atmospheric patina that has developed. Avoid overcleaning areas that could lead to bright patches that will highlight the area that has been cleaned. [247](#)

M9 Cleaning should never include the use of any acidic products. Such products infiltrate the concrete, alter the alkaline balance of the substrate, will never be thoroughly or properly neutralized, and can cause ongoing accelerated deterioration of the concrete over time. Evidence of this deterioration will be in the form of surface scaling, pitting, and cracking. Refer to “Procedure for Interior Concrete Cleaning” and “Procedure for Surface Cleaning at Exterior” in this document. [247](#)

M10 Avoid fastening to the concrete or brick by any means, including tape, mastic, or mechanical fasteners. If unavoidable (for example, attaching permanent code-required signage), mounting with the smallest possible fastener is preferred to tape. Temporary signs should never be mounted to the concrete; temporary signs affixed with tape should only be located on painted drywall or glass. [247, 259](#)

M11 Masonry-to-masonry joints should be mortar. Masonry-to-dissimilar materials (metal, wood, glass) should be sealant. [259, 263](#)

M12 Brick restoration and maintenance work should match original design, patterns, dimension, appearance, and materials. [259](#)

M13 Any brownstone units removed and replaced should be retained to provide source for future repair dutchmen as necessary. [263](#)

M14 Repair spalled stone areas larger than two inches in any dimension with dutchmen. When less than two inches, patch with color matched cementitious patching material. [263](#)

M15 Where the existing terrazzo has failed, cut out failed section across width of corridor. Polish the underlying, exposed concrete and feather the edge of the remaining terrazzo down to the concrete to eliminate a trip hazard. [272](#)

M16 Repaint steel mullions to match original paint color. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Repainting Steel Mullions” in this document. [276](#)

M17 Cleaning and re-patination of bronze panels should follow materials and methods developed as part of this conservation management plan. Reference “Art Conservation Cleaning Assessment for Muntz Metal Panel Walls in the Mayor’s Office Reception Area: Results and Recommendations (2020).” [286](#)

M18 Avoid mounting anything to bronze, including signage (permanent or temporary), equipment, etc. [286](#)

M19 Wood floors in mayoral suite should be maintained as part of cyclical maintenance. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Wood Flooring” in this document. [290](#)

M20 Wood doors and wood panels should be periodically reviewed for surface damage. Damage should be repaired with the gentlest means possible and color matched to the surrounding area. [290](#)

Minor Alterations and Rehabilitation

M21 Renovations to skylights should include anti-climbing measures. [230](#)

M22 Restore the brick cladding of the oculus skylight to its original installation detail. This work could be part of any future project working to re-open the courtyard to public use. [230](#)

M23 Consider a comprehensive assessment of all concrete surfaces on elevation drawings. Document the conditions and areas to be repaired as well as areas that have previously been repaired. Integrate prior project information where available to note when repairs were made at each location. This annotated document will serve as a long-term planning tool for large repair projects and regular maintenance efforts. [248](#)

M24 When repairing or replacing any original element, match the existing material, including color range, surface texture, surface reflectance, material composition, compressive strength, and dimension. [248, 259, 264, 268, 276, 280, 286](#)

M25 The material composition of repair materials may change over time. Product data for repair materials should be reviewed prior to use to determine if the composition has changed and if the material is still suitable for use on the building. Mockups should be performed for all materials where composition has changed. [248, 259, 264, 268, 276, 280, 286](#)

M26 Consider development of standard concrete repair recommendations for all future concrete repairs. [248](#)

M27 Exterior patching and repair material is to match the adjacent cleaned concrete surface, including the sand/aggregate size, distribution, and

color. Due to differential weathering a standardized mix should not be assumed. Mockups are required to confirm visual appearance of the repair mix. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Exterior Patching and Repair Material” in this document. [248](#)

M28 Concrete cleaning should utilize the gentlest possible means. Before a cleaning procedure is chosen, mock-ups should be performed to determine the level of means necessary for each project. [248](#)

M29 Exterior cleaning should be approached using the gentlest means possible to achieve the desired removal of atmospheric soiling and localized rust, paint, and biological staining. The use of chemicals and high pressure sprays is discouraged to avoid driving chemicals below the surface and contributing to possible long-term damage of the concrete. Testing of the identified methods should be conducted in discrete areas to determine the standard of cleaning to be implemented on the building. Refer to “Procedure for Surface Cleaning at Exterior” in this document. [248](#)

M30 When considering cleaning of interior surfaces, the loss of overall surface patina will result in stark differences in the appearance of cleaned concrete directly adjacent to uncleaned concrete. Care should be taken to select cleaning products that remove only surface staining, such as hand oil, tape residue, and food stains, without removing the overall atmospheric patina. The extent of cleaning should be carefully considered to avoid incongruent appearances and cleaned areas should be blended into uncleaned areas where necessary. Refer to “Procedure for Interior Concrete Cleaning” in this document. [249](#)

M31 Avoid mounting surface conduit to the concrete. If necessary, conduit runs should be within concrete reveals and generally organized in a linear fashion. New conduit runs should be placed near existing conduit to minimize the visual impact of random runs throughout the space. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized. Any required exterior devices should be located where they are most visually unobtrusive and be dark where possible. [249](#)

M32 Avoid mounting surface conduit to the brick. Attachment points in mortar will minimize damage to the brick. Where possible, core through the exterior wall to supply power to these locations. If necessary, the conduit runs should be minimized. Any conduit and clips should be double hot dip galvanized. Any required exterior devices should be located where they are most visually unobtrusive and be dark where possible. [259](#)

M33 Replacement brick should match the original brick in color range, size, texture, composition, and compressive strength. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Replacement Brick” in this document. [260](#)

M34 Repointing mortar should match the original in color, texture, composition, and compressive strength. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Repointing Mortar” in this document. [260](#)

M35 Some brownstone-to-brownstone mortar joints have been replaced with sealant; these should be replaced with lime-based mortar, matching the brownstone coloring as closely as possible. [264](#)

M36 Identify a source for replacement and dutchmen as part of the next project requiring brownstone repair or replacement. Consider stockpiling from the source to allow for future repair efforts. [264](#)

M37 Salvage tiles for reuse from any work requiring removal of tiles. [268](#)

M38 Replace broken clay floor tiles with clay tiles matching existing in dimension, color range, texture, composition, and compressive strength. For small areas within general public spaces, consider removing similar tile from non-public spaces. If replacement tile must be sourced, consider adding 25 percent more tile in order to have a ready stock for future repairs. [269](#)

M39 Options for new replacement tile include the original material from Ruabon, Wales, a domestic clay tile that matches dimension, color range, texture, composition, and compressive strength, or a custom clay tile that meets these requirements. [269](#)

M40 New clay floor tile installation should extend to logical break points—walls, doors, or transitions to different floor materials. [269](#)

M41 Short-term repair and maintenance should include the recommended installation of control joints as indicated by post-failure studies. Identify opportunities for the implementation of control joints as recommended by Souza, True and Partners (1998) in previous clay tile reports. [269](#)

M42 As the original polyester terrazzo technology is no longer viable, wholesale replacement of the terrazzo flooring with modern epoxy based terrazzo is recommended, with the new material to match the original in visual presence to the greatest extent possible. Refer to “Recommended Procedure for Terrazzo Floor Replacement” in this document. [272](#)

M43 If replacement of steel mullions is required, match size and spacing in addition to the above parameters. [276](#)

Potential for Change

M44 When considering a larger courtyard renovation, study alternative configurations for a skylight that could bring daylight to the spaces below, while opening up more space for events. [230](#)

M45 When considering a larger courtyard renovation, evaluate the amount of light that reaches the top of each of the thirty-three skylights. Test the light levels at different times of the day and year (vernal equinox, summer solstice, autumnal equinox and winter solstice) to determine the effectiveness in bringing natural light into the space and illuminating the ceiling plane. [230](#)

M46 In the event of a comprehensive facade restoration, consider cleaning the exterior surface staining using the gentlest possible means. The goal of comprehensive concrete cleaning should be to remove atmospheric soiling and staining to restore the original color of the exterior. [249](#)

M47 Replacement of the terrazzo flooring with a non-terrazzo material should be avoided. [272](#)

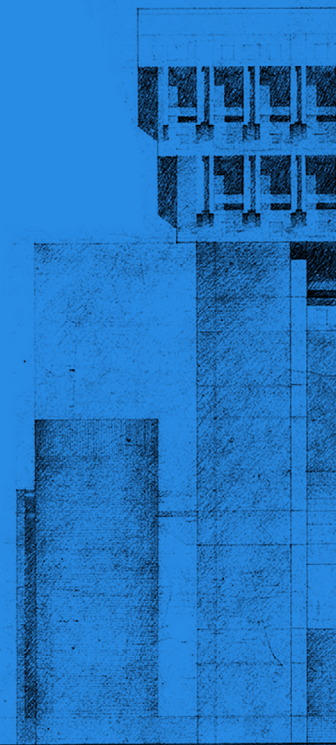
M48 Investigate window replacement options for the municipal levels. New windows should have the same tinting and general visual appearance but be more energy efficient with thermally broken frames and more easily and safely operated for cleaning. Features to be replicated include: fenestration pattern; jamb and sash thickness; glass color, texture and reflectance; and metal color. All windows on each elevation should be replaced at the same time if full replacement is considered. [280](#)

M49 Identify feasibility of replacement of single-pane window units on the ceremonial levels with insulated glass units. Units must matching originals in glazing color, reflectance, and transparency, while replicating the original design details. [280](#)



Boston City Hall has been the seat of municipal government in the City of Boston since it opened to the public in 1969. Designed by Kallmann, McKinnell, and Knowles as part of a nation-wide competition, the building is internationally recognized as a masterwork of 1960s modernism and civic design.

This conservation management plan provides a framework for maintenance decisions and future changes with respect for the building's original design intentions, historical importance, and significant features. Shaped by the conservation principles and policies outlined in this document, Boston City Hall will retain its integrity and iconic presence in the city, while remaining a model of sensitive conservation, environmental sustainability, and respectful evolution across its next half-century of service to the people of Boston.



Design development drawing of the south elevation.

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**For the City of Boston
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