



UPDATED LIBERTY THEATRE
FEASIBILITY STUDY
200 PARK AVE, EUNICE, LOUISIANA
APRIL 27, 2023

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01 | VISION STATEMENT & INTRODUCTION

PROJECT VISION & MISSION STATEMENT

The VISION for the project is the creation of an experiential destination known locally, regionally, and worldwide for celebrating Louisiana's dynamic heritage and being a crossroads for the cultural roots of humankind. With a MISSION to support and develop the cultures of Louisiana through interpretive programming, showcasing of the very best talent, and building connections with the artists, artisans, and purveyors of other cultures.

INTRODUCTION

The Association for the Liberty Theatre of Eunice (the Association), together with input and ideas of stakeholders from the surrounding community, has put together a detailed Strategic Plan for the culturally and historically significant asset, that is The Liberty Theatre (Theatre). The Theatre is an historically important landmark, as well as a cultural beacon for Eunice, the historic Tri-Parish Area and Southwest Louisiana. In a first step on the path to realizing the vision for the Liberty Theatre, the Association engaged OTJ Architects (OTJ) to develop a Feasibility Study (Study). The Study aims to determine the Theatre's suitability to be adaptively re-visioned as a new performing arts center for the City of Eunice, the region and beyond Louisiana. The Study aims to identify project opportunities and potential challenges that might be associated with the proposed vision for the theater and adjacent spaces. Providing recommendations for remediation of any issues found, to help deliver an innovative, vibrant, flexible, and sustainable performing arts center. On Friday May 7, 2021, the OTJ Team of Georgina Sperber and Grace Hernandez visited the Theatre, and lead the team of structural engineer Shawn Franke, Lundy Franke Engineering (L&F), and Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing Engineers, Shane Hernandez, and Paul Montgomery, ADG Engineering (ADG) through the theatre to make on-site visual observations of the space and to get an understanding of the existing conditions. The OTJ, L&F and ADG teams are pleased to present this Study to the Association with our observations and recommendations.



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

SITE OBSERVATIONS

Following our day of on-site observations, the Theatre appeared in good physical condition, having been operational until March 2020. Issues with the theatre's heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system need more immediate attention to ensure the historic fabric does not deteriorate due to the lack of thermal and humidity control and management of the interior environment.

Our observations were that, while the facility is in need of an overall rehabilitation, it does not exhibit the extensive damage which we have encountered in so many other projects. This is not to say that there are not issues and deficiencies to be addressed. We have broken down our observations, starting from the exterior and working our way through the front of house patron spaces, the main performance space, and the back of house and support spaces.

EXTERIOR OBSERVATIONS

MAIN ENTRANCE FACADE

The iconic **entrance marquee** at the main entrance, on the corner of Park Avenue and 2nd Street is showing signs of loose, missing and rusting soffit panels. The recessed downlights do not appear to be operational. OTJ's recommendation is the marquee should be cleaned, restored, and re-lamped. The marquee is an important marker of the main entrance and gives the Theatre a clear main entry. Refer to image 1 & 2

The **Poster Boxes** on either side of the main entrance doors appear to be in fair condition, however they are missing or have damaged poster box doors and glazing. OTJ's recommendation is that the poster boxes be restored, and new doors be provided. We also recommend power be provided to enable the poster boxes to be illuminated. These improvements will present a location for graphics to publicize and promote upcoming attractions. Refer to image 3 & 4

The **main entrance doors**, with glazed panels with etched figurines, make a striking and memorable first impression. We recommend retaining the glazed panels which appear in good condition. We recommend the entrance opening be widened, eliminating the existing **ticket window**. Adding an additional leaf, which will provide for two sets of double doors. We recommend, if possible, restoring the wood stiles and frames or replacing in kind with profiles to match existing. The additional door will need to be a replication to match existing profiles. All doors will need to be providing with new code compliant door hardware. We recommend developing a fourth etched glass figurine design, compatible with the existing glass panels, for the new fourth door leaf. Refer to image 5

The exterior **ticket window** is to be eliminated to make way for a wider entrance opening. A new Box Office / Ticket Sales area will be created within the Entry Foyer. Discussed further under INTERIOR OBSERVATIONS. Refer to image 6.



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

PARK AVENUE FAÇADE

The **two double exit doors** and the **seven sash windows** appeared in fair to good condition. The door hardware on the exit doors needs to be assessed to ensure it meets life safety code requirements and may need to be upgraded. The **fixed three panel doors** appear to be missing trim pieces and need some minor repairs. There is also a louver that is bent and could use replacement. The condition of the windows at the upper balcony level could not be easily observed from street level. Refer to image 7. Refer to images 8, 9, 10 & 11

There are several areas where the **face of the masonry units** has deteriorated. These units will need to be replaced with masonry units and mortar that are compatible with the adjacent existing masonry façade. Masonry repair work to be done in accordance with the Secretary for Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation. Refer to images 12 & 13

OTJ recommends upgrading the **exterior lighting** along this façade, to up light and wash the façade. OTJ also observed that the sidewalk pavers have several cracked, uneven and damage sections of pavers. We recommend repaving the area of the sidewalk on Park Avenue, where patrons are approaching the entrances to the building and potentially waiting in line pre-show. Refer to image 14.

THE ANNEX BUILDING

As the Annex Building was built more recently, in the 1990's, it appears to be well maintained and we did not observe any deficiencies with the envelope. We recommend that the exit door, that currently exits directly into a landscaped area, be re-purposed as a second main entrance, that will provide ADA access directly to the main lobby level. The entrance will be accessed off Park Avenue via a new ADA accessible ramp and entrance landing. The new ramp and entrance landing will be covered with a small marquee, which will not only serve as shelter to patrons as they enter the building, but also frame the new entrance and give it



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

some prominence on Park Avenue.

The existing Annex Covered Entry Walkway, which is open on two-sides, is to be enclosed to provide for additional area for the Café/Bar space. There will be two sets of double entry doors on the west, one set of double doors directly to the outdoor stage, and the existing entry doors and adjacent walls are to be removed. Refer to image 15

The existing Outdoor Stage area is in good condition and is to be maintained. A roof covering is to be added over the stage area to improve functionality and use of the stage. A glazed, garage style door, is to be added to the wall between the stage and Café / Bar to provide a visual and physical connection between the two spaces.

Landscaping and site work, minor modifications to the landscaped area near the stage to provide an outdoor amphitheater seating area and utilize plantings that are native to the Acadian Prairie. The enhanced outdoor stage and seating area could serve either as a stage for outdoor festivals or as an opportunity for pre- or post- show acts to present. Site work is to include the addition of ADA compliant curb cuts at three locations along Park Avenue, and ADA accessible walkway along Park Avenue and around the southwest side of the property for ADA access to the entrance to Bar/Café and to ADA parking off alley. Refer to image 16

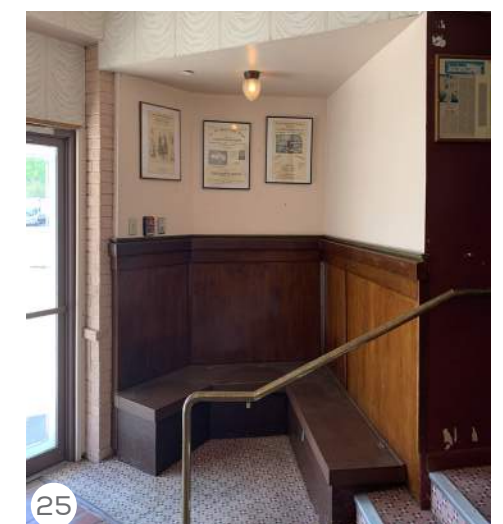
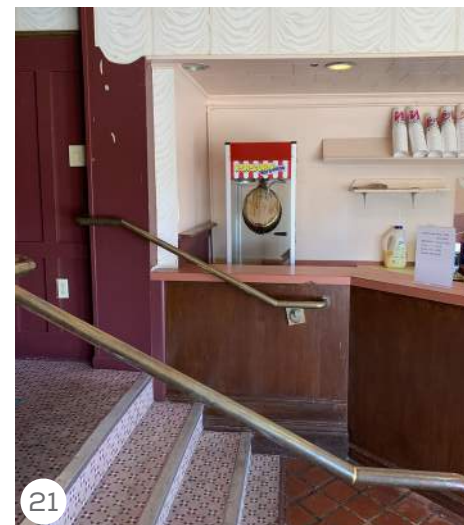
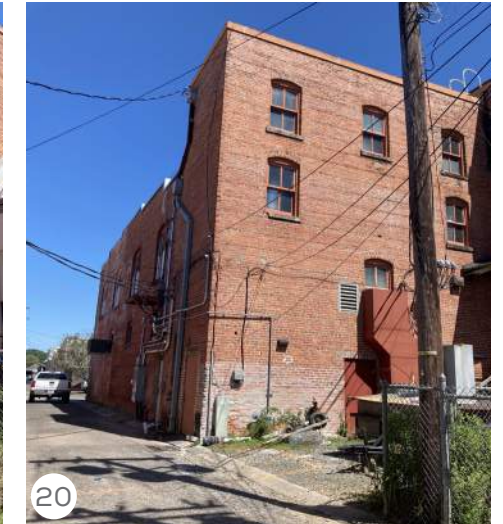
REAR STAGEHOUSE / ALLEY FAÇADE

The large cooling tower that currently occupies the northeast corner of the property, will be removed and the Theatre will have a stand-alone, viable HVAC system. The removal of the cooling tower opens a large portion of property at the northwest corner that can now be utilized to improve load-in, delivery and parking. Allowing for the addition of a modest back of house space for improved back of house flow and accessibility. Provide a catering storage area for the Café / Bar, as well as a connection to front of house and improved ADA access to stage and back of house. Refer to images 17, 18, 19 & 20.

INTERIOR OBSERVATIONS

ENTRY FOYER

OTJ's observation of the **Entry Foyer** is that it is a compact space, prone to congestion, that could benefit from some reconfiguration to help improve patron flow. OTJ recommends modification of the existing Box Office / Concessions / Concessions Pantry area to create a new ADA accessible Box Office / Ticketing counter in the northeast corner of the Entry Foyer. OTJ recommends working with a decorative finishes restoration conservator to perform investigative work throughout the historic front of house spaces. Walls, ceiling, and trim work in the Entry Foyer to be executed in alignment with the color palette and surface finish recommendations of the conservator. Architectural lighting to be upgraded to enhance the Entry Foyer, provide code required lighting levels and task lighting in Box Office / Ticketing area as required. OTJ also recommends the floor treatment at the entry doors include a recessed walk off matt for non-slip entry during inclement weather. Possibly relocating the "New Liberty 1924" tiles further into the Entry Foyer space. Refer to images 21-25



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

LOBBY

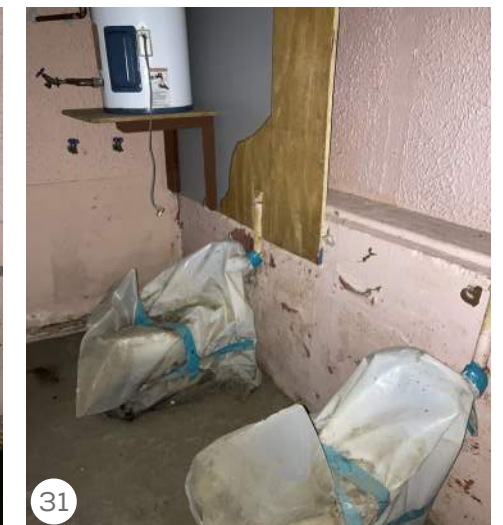
OTJ's observation is that the stair transition between the **Entry Foyer** and the **Lobby** has a negative spatial impact on both spaces. Additionally, it presents an impediment to ADA patrons accessing the venue. OTJ's recommendation, is that the stairs be modified to a single run, with the first tread aligning with face of the walls of the opening between the Entry Foyer and Lobby. The modification to the stairs allows for more room in both the Lobby and the Foyer. To address the congestion concerns and provide an ADA accessible route OTJ recommends modifying the Annex Exit door, at the west, into a second entrance off Park Avenue, accessed via an ADA compliant ramp (as described in EXTERIOR OBSERVATIONS). This would provide for ADA access directly to the Lobby Level. OTJ also recommends removing the wall between the rear of the audience chamber and expanding the Lobby space into the area below the Balcony to create a more open, less compressed Lobby experience. The expanded Lobby will allow space for an optional bar, concessions or food service area. Providing capacity for an 80 person cocktail event with bar or 100 person event without a bar. Adding stair access on both sides of the lobby, and an ADA ramp, in the area along the wall between the Lobby and Audience Chamber, to provide ease of access from the Lobby into the Audience Chamber for all patrons. Similarly, to the Entry Foyer finishes discussion, OTJ recommends working with a decorative finishes restoration conservator to perform investigative work throughout the historic front of house spaces. Walls, ceiling, and trim work in the Lobby to be executed in alignment with the color palette and surface finish recommendations of the conservator. Research historic carpet pattern and color palette for the lobby floors. Refer to images 26 & 27

MEN'S & WOMEN'S RESTROOM

The existing basement level Men's Restroom has been abandoned and closed off and is no longer accessible from the Lobby area. We recommend the Women's Restroom also be abandoned and access closed off. The restrooms do not meet code head height clearance requirements, the stairs to the restrooms do not meet code stair width requirements, the restroom shows evidence of water infiltration, and there are only 2-3 fixtures in each. The work to remedy these deficiencies may not be worth the effort given that the restroom facilities in the Annex are ADA accessible, meet code requirements and exceed plumbing code fixture count requirements for the venue. The void created by closing off the access to the Women's Restroom could be utilized to provide a Merchandise position, as well as some storage for either merchandise or front of house needs at Lobby Level. Refer to images 28-31.

ANNEX BUILDING

The Annex Building is a somewhat blank canvas that presents the opportunity to provide front of house patron support facilities. By reconfiguring the ramp to code minimum required ADA width and infilling the remaining portion of the ramp area to Lobby level, creating an area for a Concessions position with loose tables and chairs. At the base of the ramp the large



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

open area of the Annex (at grade level) could become a **Bar / Café** area with a Catering Prep and Storage area off it, at the north end. The **Café / Bar** could operate independently of the Theatre as it has its own accessible entrance at grade level, and the doors to the Theatre Lobby and Audience Chamber can be secured. The **Bar / Café** area would be an open and flexible space that could also be set up for pre-show, post-show, or other types of events. The finishes in the Annex space should be compatible with the historic theatre but could be more contemporary in nature. The Association has expressed an interest in the **Bar / Café** having a bold but classy, relaxed, and sophisticated feel.

The existing **Men's and Women's Restrooms** and **Janitor's Closet** are generally in good condition. There may be a few fixtures that require replacement. The restrooms are ADA accessible and provide more than the code required number of fixtures. They can be put into use as they are to support both the Theatre and the Bar / Café. Refer to images 32-35.

AUDITORIUM

The Auditorium is the heart of the Theatre. It retains some of the original characteristics that are what patrons connect to and are an intrinsic part of the experience. These characteristics are to be retained and where possible enhanced. We recommend working with a decorative finishes restoration conservator to perform investigative work throughout the space to determine palette and surface finishes. The Theatre was originally built as a film and vaudeville show house, with some reconfiguring over the years. The seating and sightlines in the Orchestra and Balcony will need to be assessed and reconfigured to improve the functionality and flexibility of the Theatre as a live performance venue.

For the venue to be successful, the Association would like for the theatre to have the flexibility to accommodate a wide variety of programs and events. To meet the desire for flexibility the floor of the Orchestra Level, would be modified to be a flat floor, with a retractable tiered seating system. With the change in floor plane, sightlines to the stage need to be evaluated during design development. The flat floor allows for ADA access to the Audience Chamber at the Orchestra Level. A suitable new location for the Audio Mix (removing it from the center of the house) will need to be coordinated with the retractable seating system

At the Balcony Level we are proposing maintaining the fixed, tiered seating at the Lower Balcony, and introducing banquette seating in the Mid-Balcony. The Upper Balcony has been reconfigured and modified over the years from its original configuration and presents the opportunity for some program enhancement for the venue. OTJ propose introducing a bar area, a dedicated projection room, and a men's and women's restrooms. The projection room would house follow spots, lighting controls, and other production and recording equipment. OTJ had previously recommended including a Club or VIP level seating area at the middle balcony, with dedicated bar service. The Association confirmed that there is no desire for VIP or Club level of service. The Association also provided direction that the non-traditional "social seating area" proposed at the upper balcony area was not compatible with the vision and proposed programming of the theatre.

Architectural lighting will be added to enhance the space, highlighting characteristics of the house, and providing adequate lighting for patron safety and comfort. Performance



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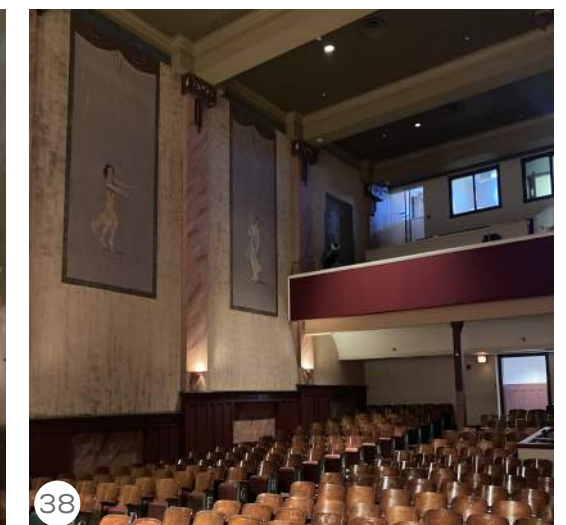
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02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

equipment (such as theatre lighting and A/V) and adjustable and permanent acoustic treatments will be carefully coordinated and integrated into the house, working within the constraints of the existing fabric. Refer to images 36-39.

STAGEHOUSE

If the Auditorium is the heart of the experience, then the stagehouse is really the brain. It needs to be functional and flexible enough to support a variety of live presentations. From discussions with the Association, OTJ understands that the primary type of performance at the theatre will be live music, but other formats, including but not limited to, live broadcasting, speaking events, and banquets, should also be accommodated. Based on our on-site observations there are several factors that are limiting stagehouse functionality. There is limited wing space, there is no crossover, the rigging zone is traversed with large ducts that have not been coordinated with the rigging and performance needs.

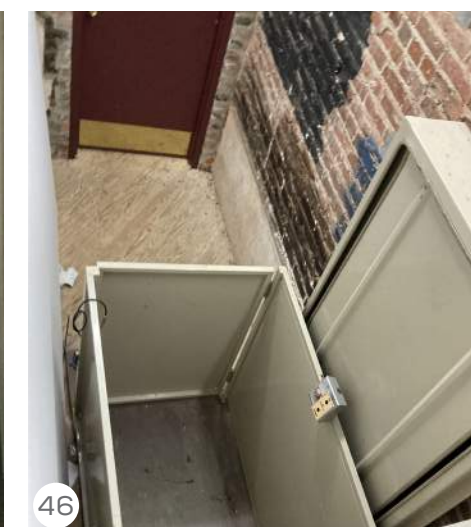
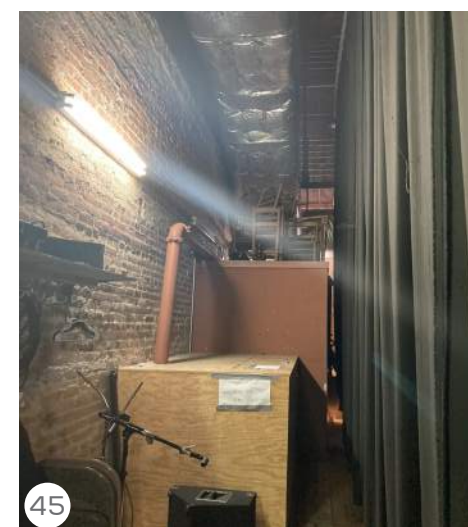
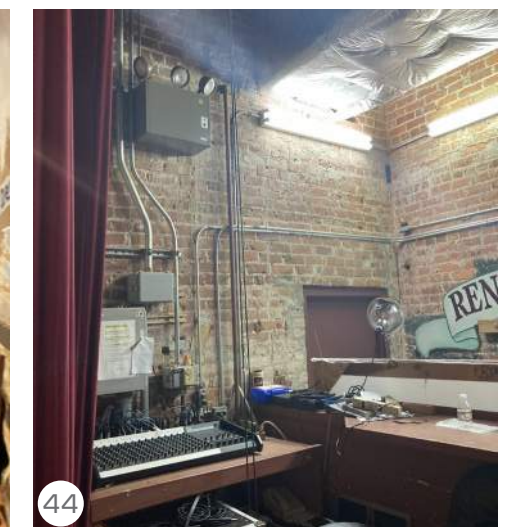
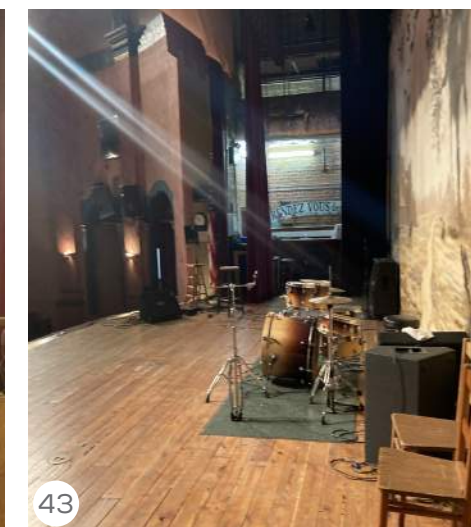
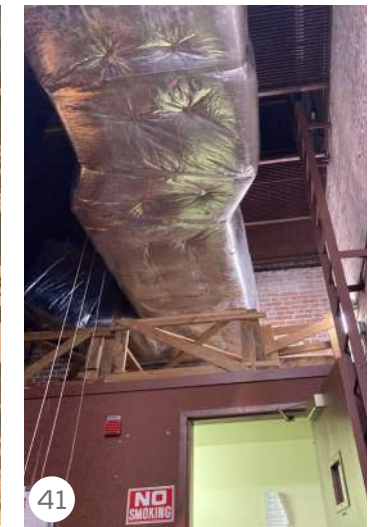
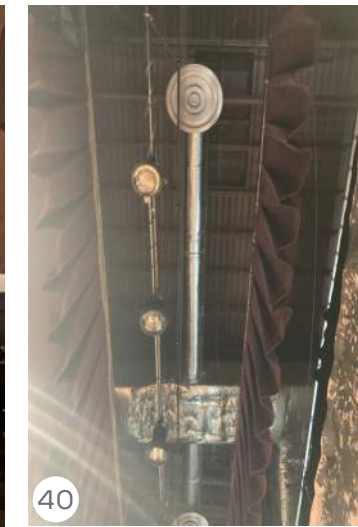
OTJ recommends creating stage left wing space by eliminating stair access between the stage and the basement level below the stage. Introducing motorized dead hung rigging will further clear the floor area at stage left.

Stage right wing space can be reclaimed with the removal of the ADA lift. ADA patron access between auditorium and stage to be provided by means of a new lift in the back of house area (described in more detail in BACK OF HOUSE SUPPORT description). To create a rear crossover, OTJ is recommending removal of the stairs to the fire pump room, storing piano off stage in newly created back of house storage area, and removal of stair access to the below stage (as discussed in previous paragraph).

The ducts traversing the stagehouse need to be removed and new duct routing, that is carefully coordinated with rigging and performance needs, installed as part of the new HVAC system effort. Discussed further in the MEP narrative. Refer to images 40-46.

BACK OF HOUSE SUPPORT

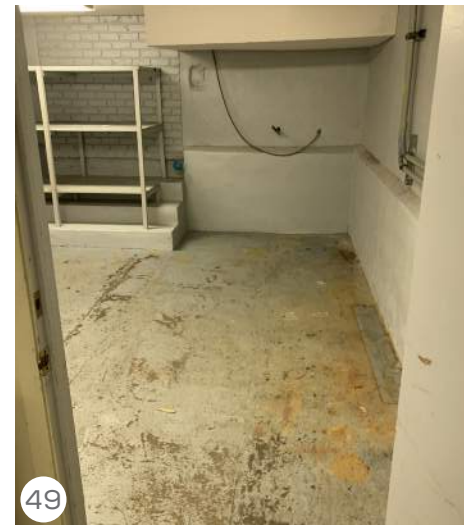
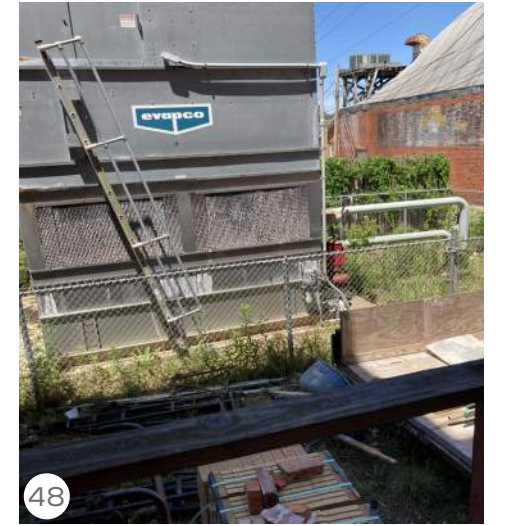
The existing Theatre has very limited back of house support, limited to the area below the stage. Stage access and load in is a challenge with the approximate 5' level change between grade and stage level. With the removal of the cooling tower there is property available at the northwest corner to improve back of house support space and flow. OTJ are proposing a bump out that would provide a modest back of house support area. This area could be expanded as needs and funds become available. The current recommendation shows a small receiving area, some limited storage space, ADA access between front of house and back of house, stair access to stage. The area below stage has limited head room clearance, which does not comply with code. We recommend that this be used primarily as a utilitarian area (storage). It would be grandfathered as an existing space, and used as a Multi-Purpose space, with a sink, shower and toilet being added. The newly created back of house bump out at the northwest corner could also house a catering prep and storage area to support the Bar / Café area. A dedicated delivery / parking area off the rear alley will improve back of house functionality, particularly with regards to catering and performer back of house load-in. Refer to images 47-49.



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - SITE OBSERVATIONS

CONCLUSION

The observations and recommendations from OTJ and the design team presented in this Feasibility Study are preliminary observations. Assessments of the existing conditions, recommendations and opportunities identified will need to be refined as the project moves into the next stages of design, documentation and, ultimately, construction. OTJ and the team, are standing by and are ready to assist the Association with making the Theatre all it can be. We look forward to helping with sorting out any issues that may arise and to finding the right balance for the project that achieves the Vision and Mission outlined in the strategic plan.



02 | ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE - PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

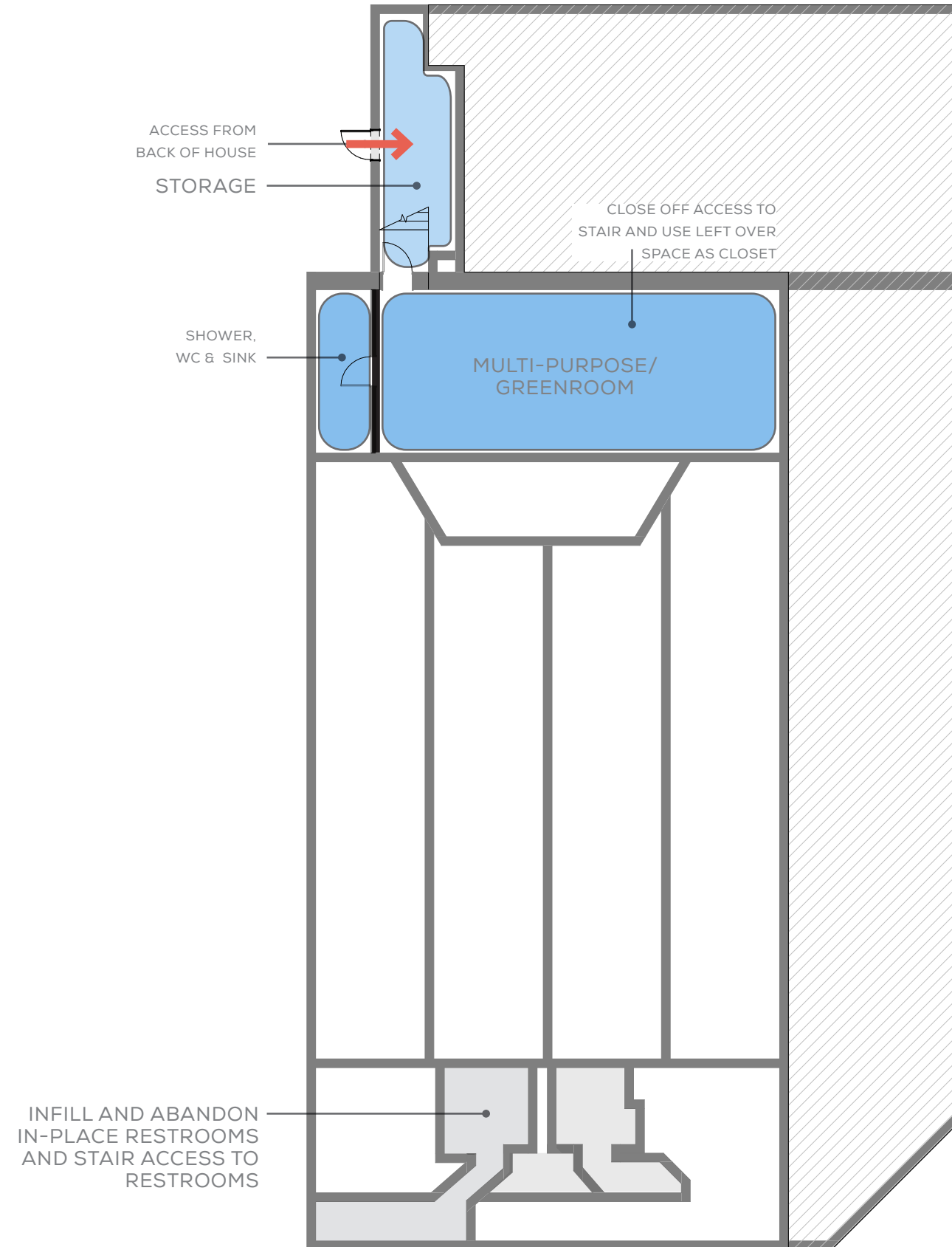
<i>Space</i>	<i>Quant.</i>	<i>Total SF</i>	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>Remarks / Considerations</i>
Front of House			3,880	
Lobby	1	1,295		Includes displays for regional tourism, historical artifacts, etc. Expanded lobby space
Café / Bar	1	1,290		In existing annex area, serves both theatre-goers and general public
Restrooms	2	740		Existing Women's & Men's; replace only inoperable fixtures, & damaged or missing accessories
Box Office / Ticketing	1	115		
Merchandise	1	80		
Bar / Catering Storage	1	290		
Janitor's Closet	1	70		Existing
Auditorium & Performance Space			5,880	
Stage	1	1,085		Includes dead hung rigging, cinema screen
Orchestra Level Seating Area	1	2,715		Level modified to have flat floor with retractable tiered seating system. Flat floor allows ADA access to Audience chamber at Orchestra level.
Tiered Balcony seating area	1	1,670		Replace existing fixed seating and lower balcony, banquette seating at mid-balcony, bar service and restrooms at upper balcony.
Projection / Control Room	1	125		At upper balcony level; dedicated projection & lighting
Upper Balcony Restrooms	2			Men's and Women's Restrooms
Upper Balcony Bar / Bar Storage	1			Bar service for Balcony area
Outdoor Stage	1	285		Existing outdoor performance space, 285 sf stage area to be covered with a roof, surrounded area landscaped with native plantings
Back of House			2,300	
Flexible Back of House	1	1,370		Flexible, open space for staging, crew, and other misc. BOH needs
Circulation	1	705		Stairs and Lift
Open Parking	1			Fits 2 parking spots
Load In	1			Adjacent to parking & delivery zone
Multi-Purpose Room / GreenRoom	1			Existing space below stage
BOH Shower, WC, Sink	1			In existing space below stage
AV / Dimmer Room	1			Located at Orchestra Level
Storage	1			Basement level storage area
Fire Pump Room	1	225		Existing
Space				Quant. Total SF Subtotal Remarks / Considerations
Program Area Sub-total (NSF)		12,060		
Total Building Area (GSF)		17,150		

*Not included in total

03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - SITE DIAGRAM



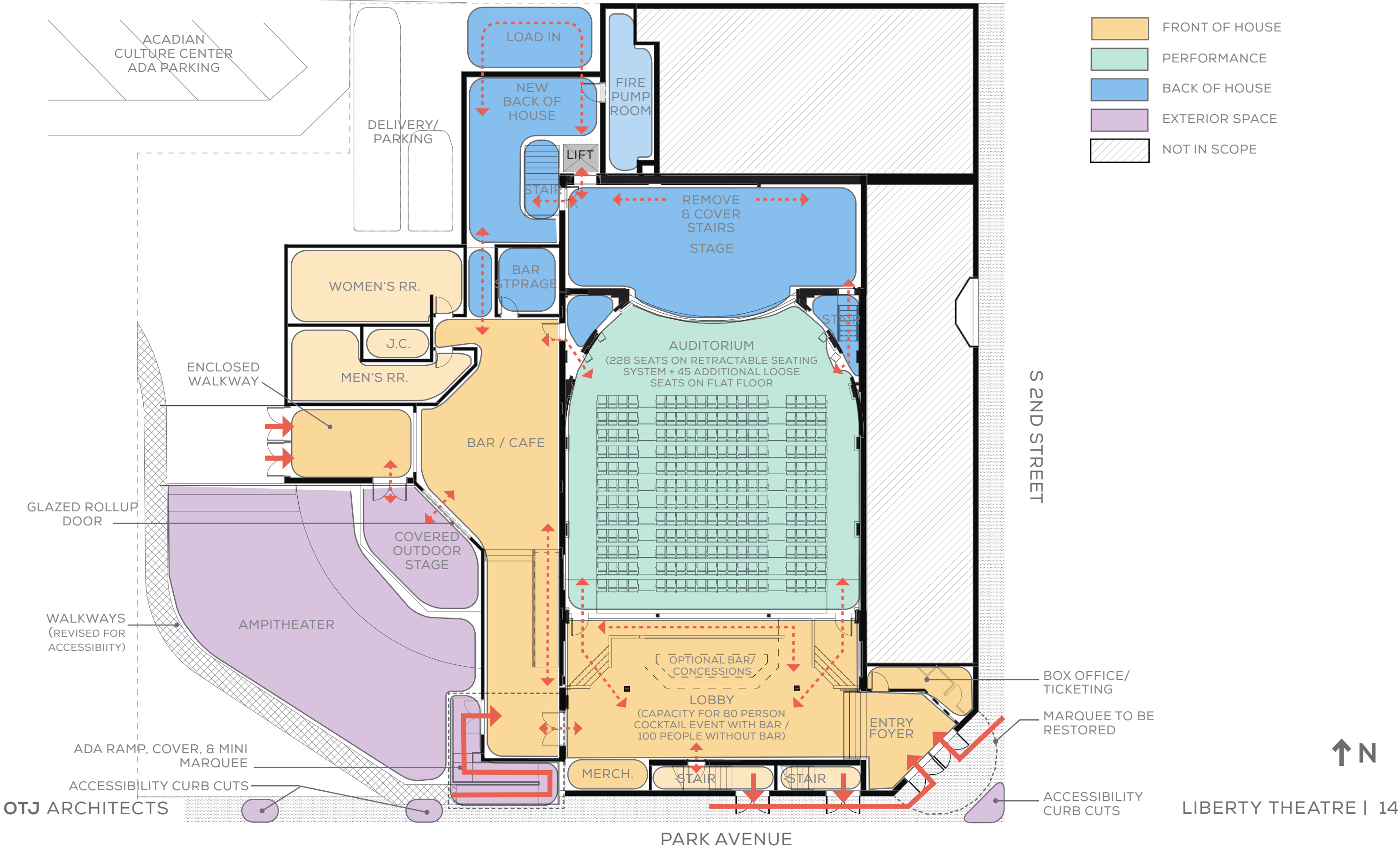
03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - BASEMENT LEVEL PLAN



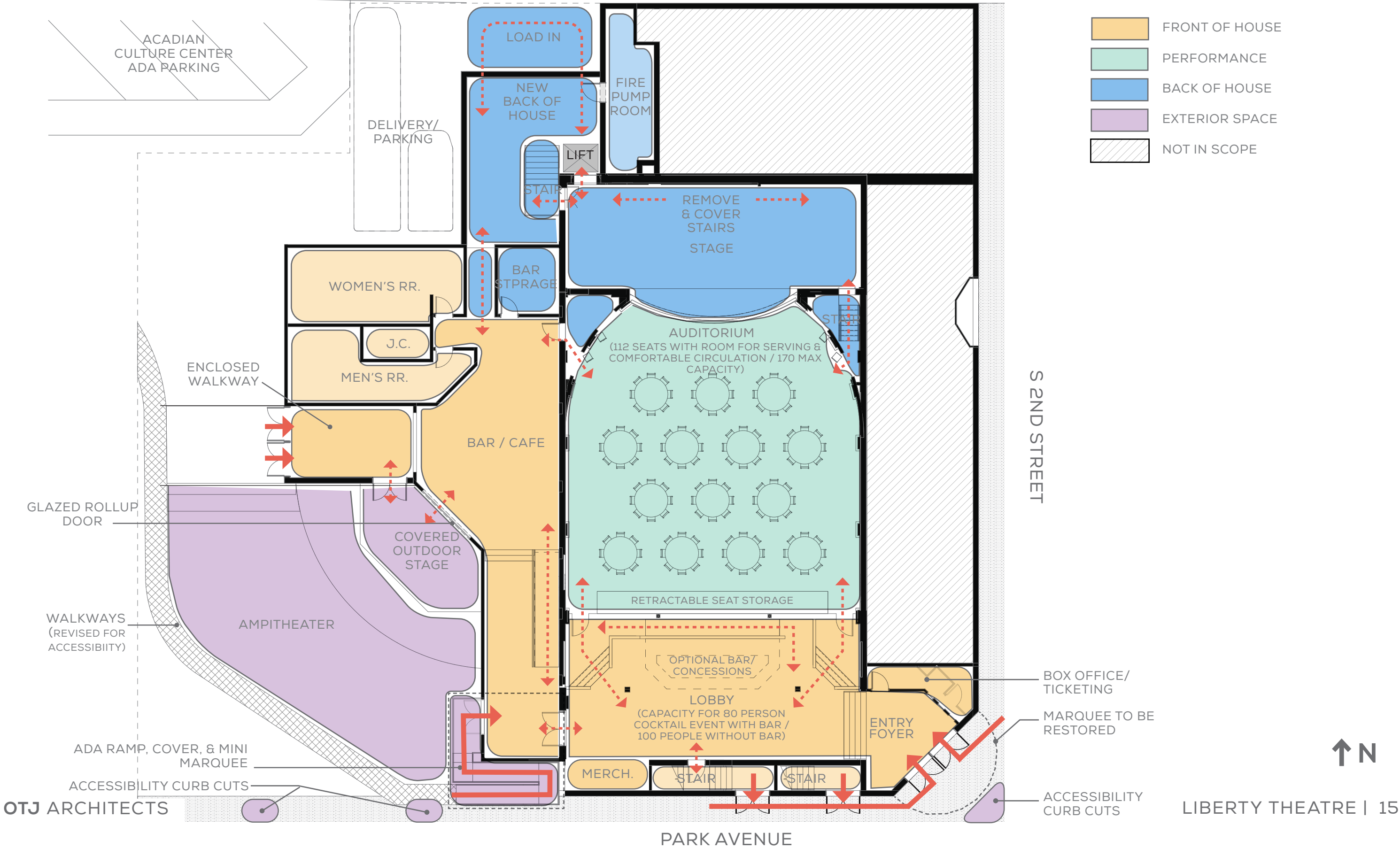
- FRONT OF HOUSE
- PERFORMANCE
- BACK OF HOUSE
- EXTERIOR SPACE
- NOT IN SCOPE



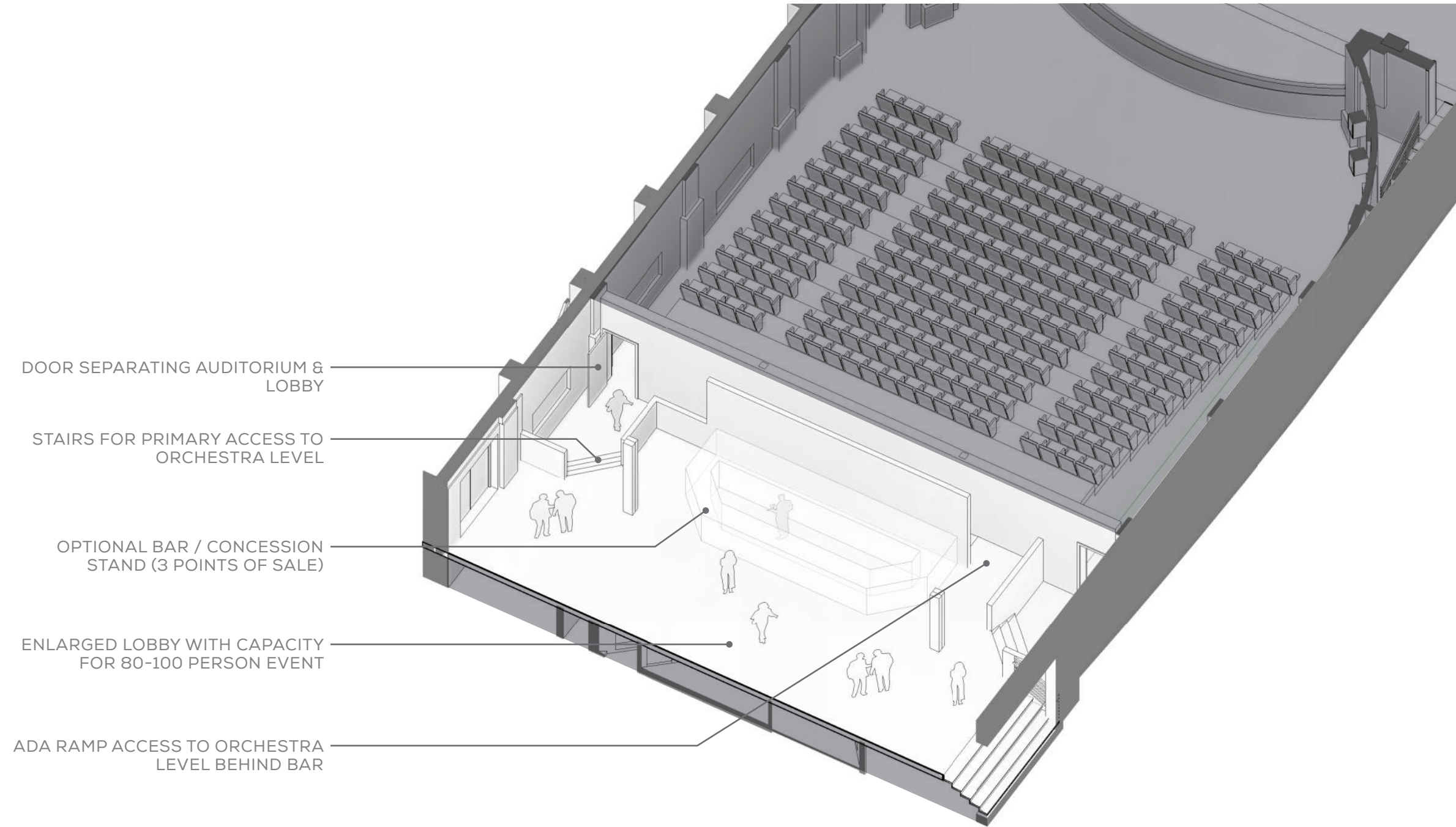
03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - ORCHESTRA LEVEL PLAN - THEATER MODE



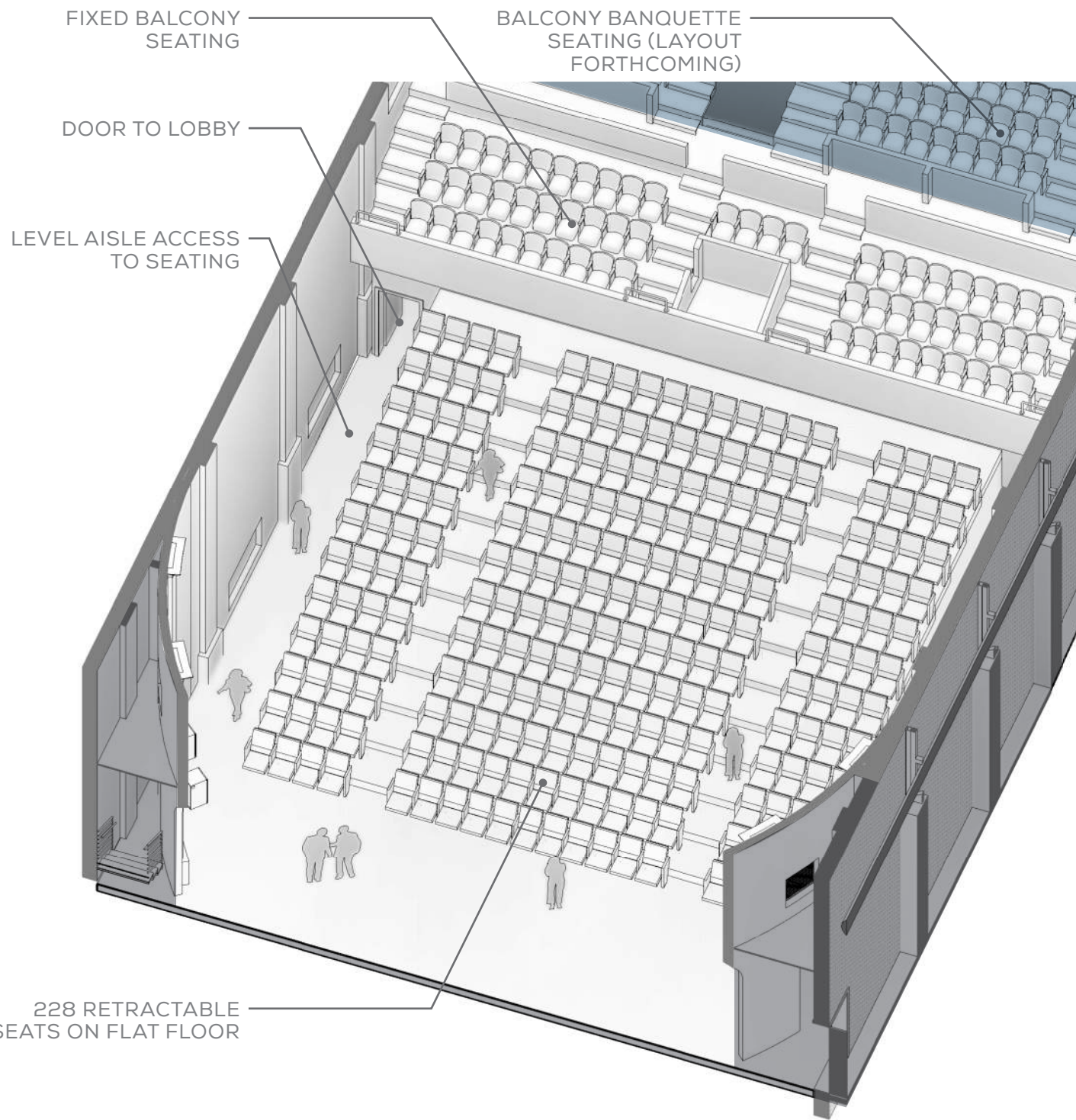
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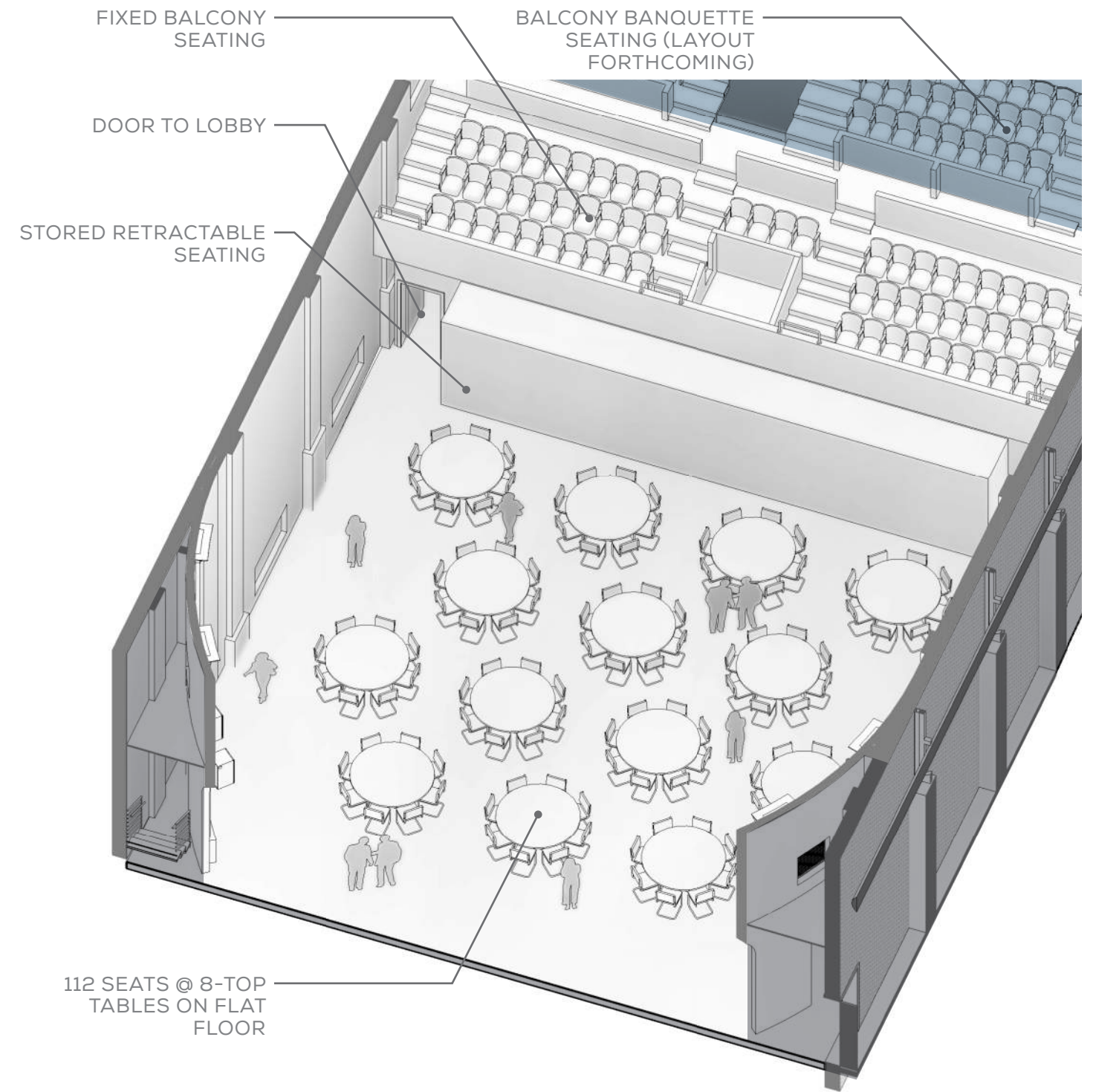
03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - ORCHESTRA LEVEL 3D VIEW - LOBBY



03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - ORCHESTRA LEVEL 3D VIEW - AUDITORIUM

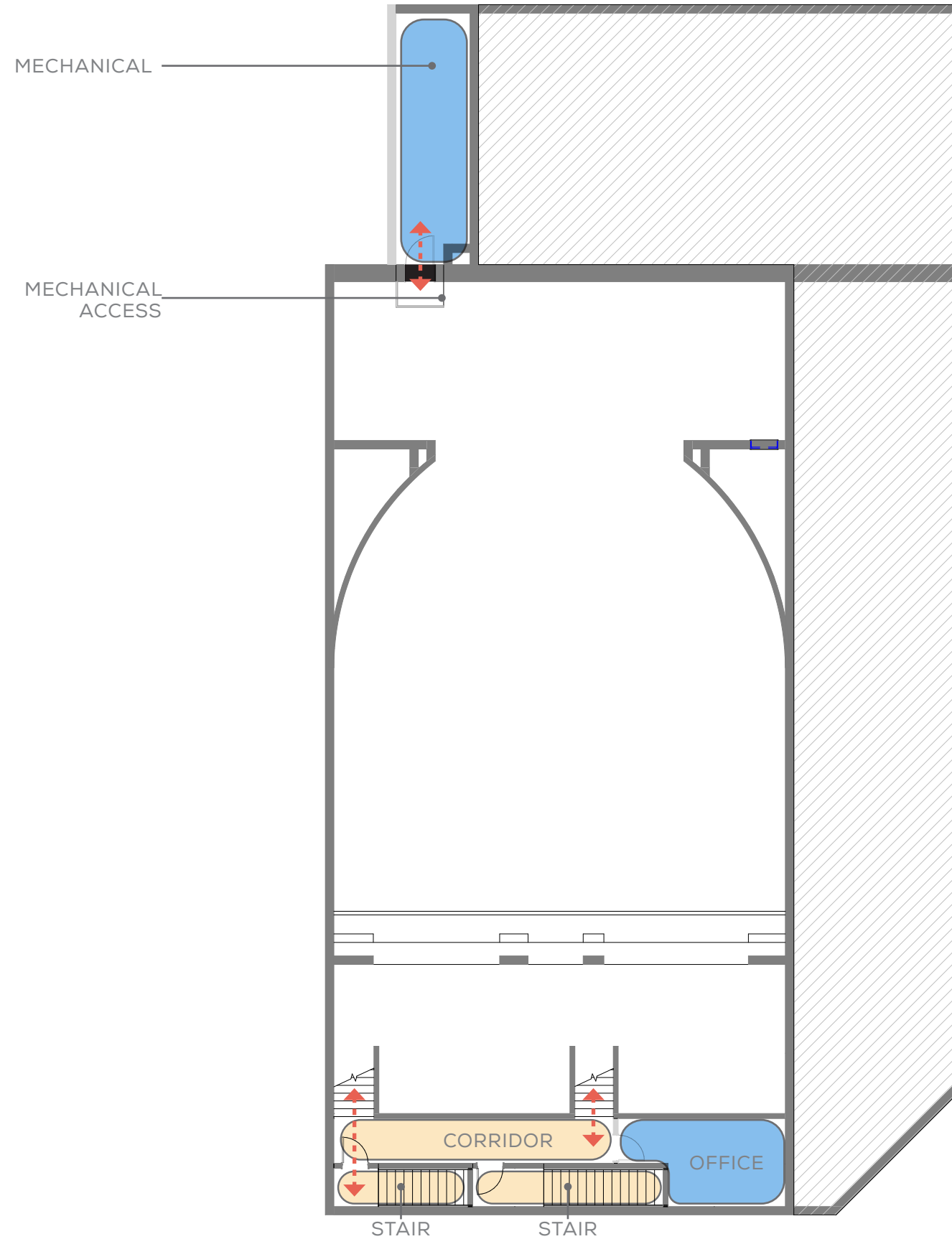


THEATER MODE



EVENT MODE

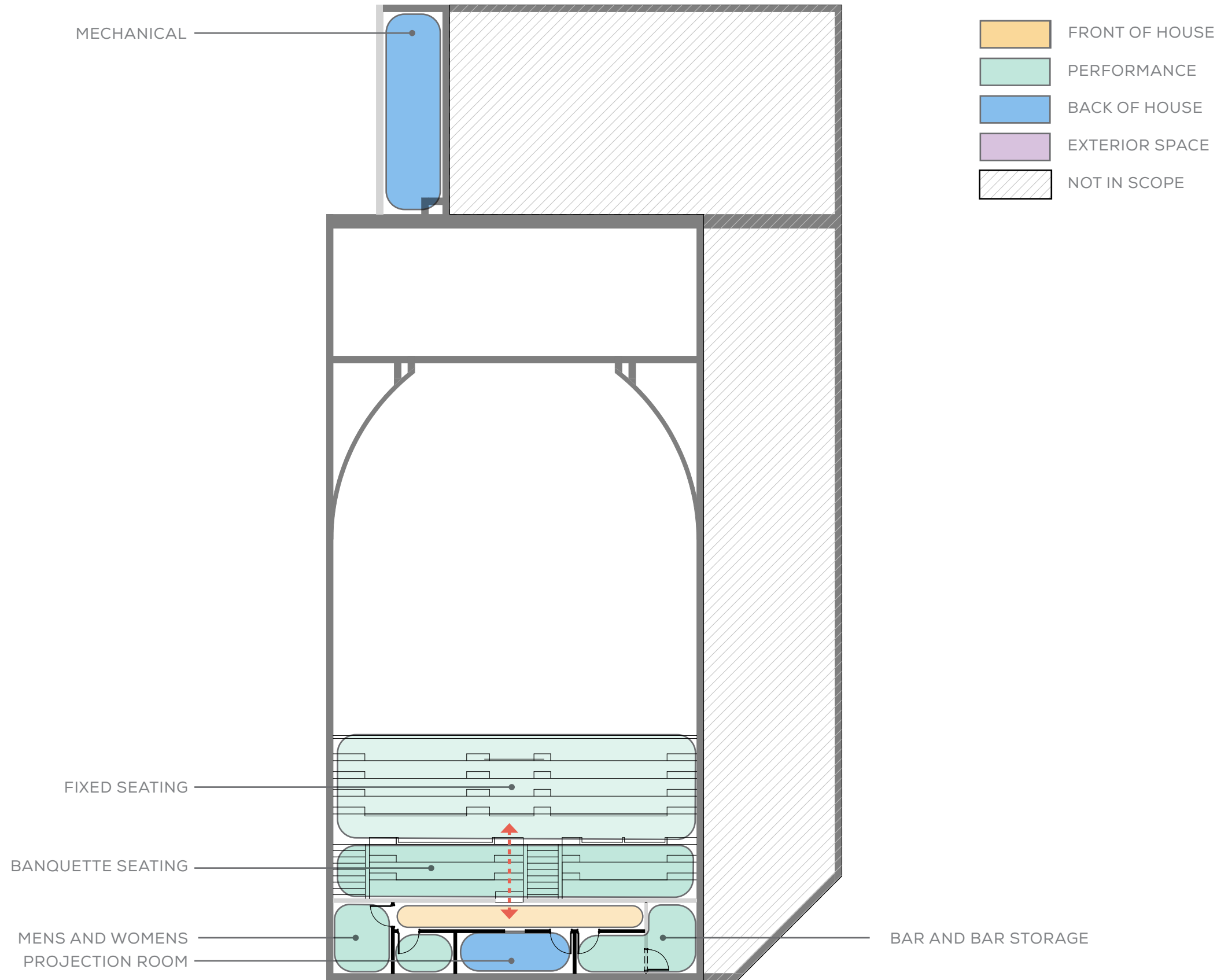
03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - MEZZANINE LEVEL PLAN



- FRONT OF HOUSE
- PERFORMANCE
- BACK OF HOUSE
- EXTERIOR SPACE
- NOT IN SCOPE



03 | ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS - BALCONY LEVEL PLAN



04 | STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE

Structural Narrative:

The existing structure is typical of historic theatres built in this era. The structure has had three major renovations.

1. Replacement and re-raking of auditorium floor for the change of use from a movie house to a performing arts theatre.
2. Replacement of the original wood roof with a steel and open web bar joists.
3. Addition of restroom and connecting corridor.

Front of House:

Existing: The front of house consists of a partial basement, a multi-level street level with several staircases to the balcony seating area. The street level and balcony consist of wood framing with a large steel beam supporting the balcony edge. There have been minor modifications under the balcony to framing for additional useable spaces.

Proposed: Front of house modification will be determined upon needs for restrooms, people access, and mechanical ductwork. The framing is wood and is feasible to make changes without great expenses. The restrooms in the dug-out area will require infill. Any new restrooms or improvements to these restrooms would require extensive excavation and would not yield enough fixtures to warrant the expense. The dug-out area will be infilled and abandoned.

Orchestra Level Seating/Balcony:

Existing: The existing orchestra level is currently comprised of a sloped floor consisting of a wood structure. The framing when re-built did not include foundations, just blocks of wood under wood post at approximately 4' o.c. The access under the wood framing varied from approximately 6" to 8", and therefore there is no access to the crawl space under the floor.

The balcony level appears to be original and with only minor modifications. The attic was not accessible and the partial drawings indicate minimal space between the ceiling steel structure. There does not appear to be a catwalk or rigging points in the ceiling.

Proposed: The existing orchestra level to provide return air access and access to sound booth.

New stairs will be framed within the existing structure. Modifications will be required to existing trusses. The Balcony tiers will remain as is, with the exception of the production suites at the rear. Those will all be demolished, and new tiers will be built to continue the fixed tiered seating to the rear wall

A new catwalk system will be hung from the existing roof trusses. The existing trusses will be augmented with new steel supporting the hanging members. In addition, there will be anti-proscenium rigging points provided for lighting trusses, speakers and show trusses. Each point will be designed for 2000 lb. capacity.

The new attic access will be from a spiral staircase located on house left or right on the stage and a door installed in the proscenium wall.

Stage House

Existing: The existing stage has a small green room below the stage, it does not appear to have a trap. The orchestra pit is at the same elevation as the green room under the stage. It is only about 8' front to back. It is currently covered by the raked floor at orchestra level.

The roof was also replaced with open web joist and the current curtain drops hang from the joist. There is a gallery on each side at about 10' and just below the roof.

Proposed: The stage will have an apron that will be similar to the existing apron in size and depth to which it extends into the house.

The rigging above the stage will be switched to a dead hung system with electrics controlling scenery. Structure will need to add framing spanning up and down stage at approximately 10' o.c. to support the new dead hung system.

Back of House

Existing: The existing back of house is minimal, including almost no load in area. There is several levels, however there is a lack of communication between levels.

Proposed: It is proposed to extend and enlarge the back of house. Framing will be constructed of conventional structural steel framing.

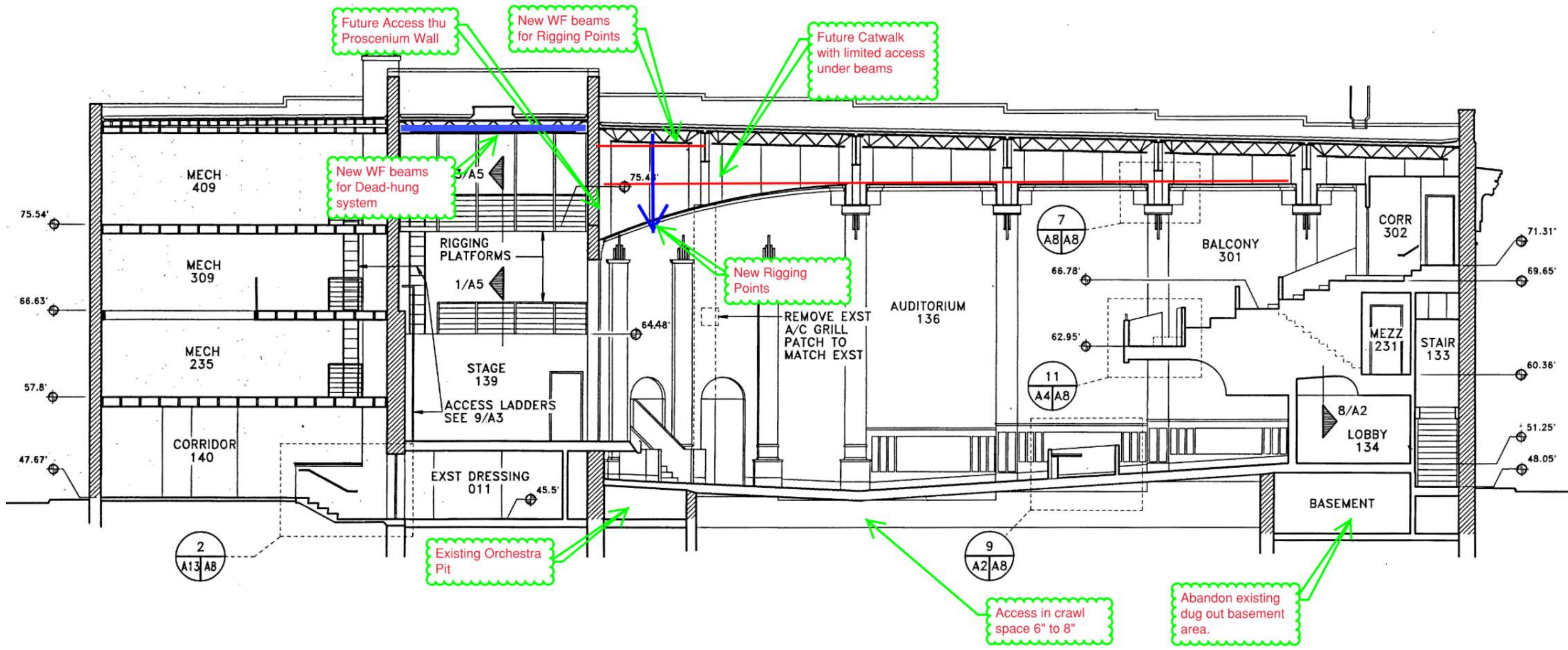
House left Lobby and Restrooms

Existing: The existing area is slab on grade with tube steel trusses.

Proposed: It is proposed to infill a portion of the ramp to create a larger area at lobby level.

The restrooms should be able to be salvaged as there is no expansion or modifications to structure in this area.

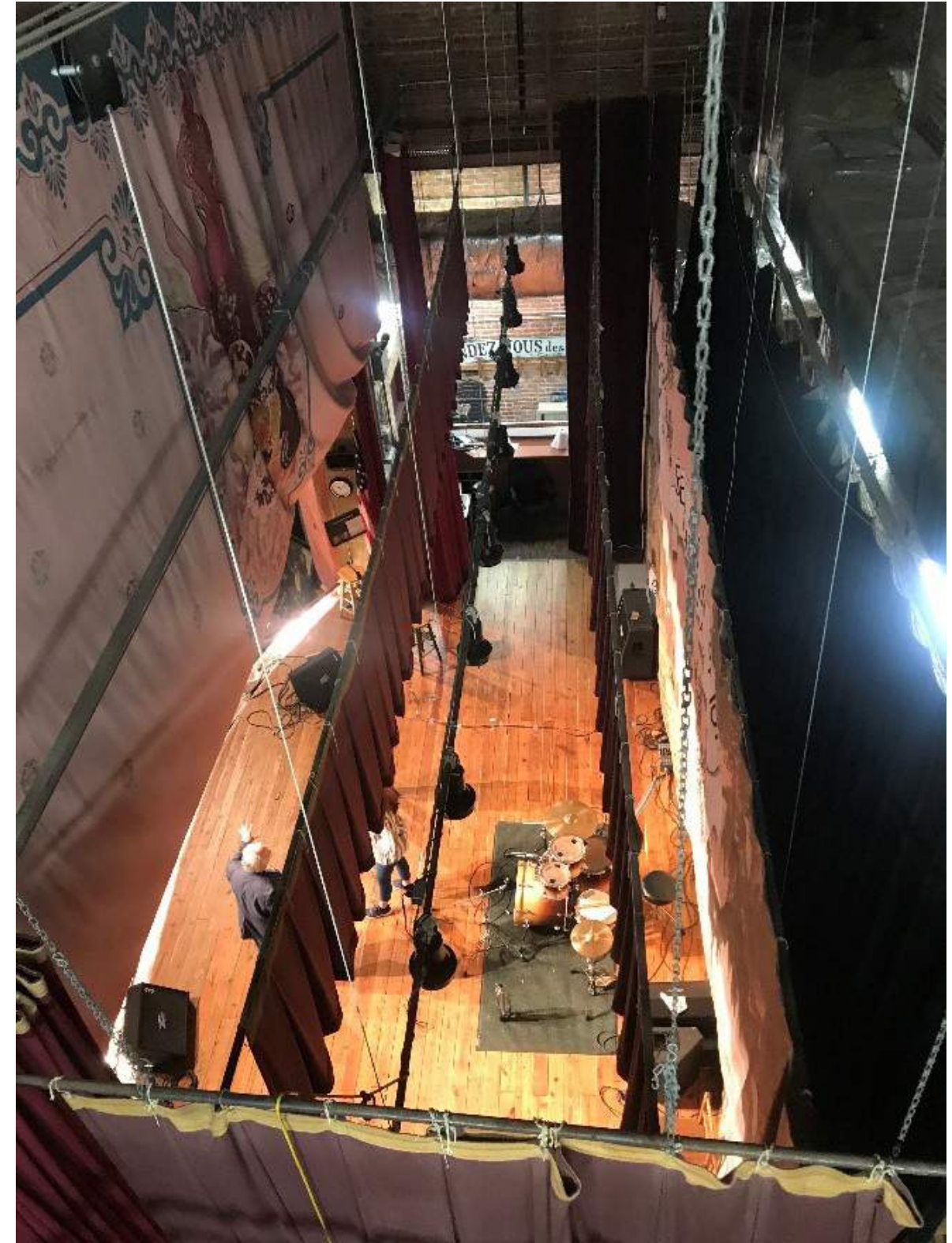
04 | STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE



04 | STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE



STAGE ROOF FRAMING



LOOKING DOWN ON STAGE

04 | STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE



LOOKING ACROSS HOUSE ROOF



MECHANICAL UNIT ON HOUSE ROOF

04 | STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE



LOOKING DOWN ON MECHANICAL YARD



SMOKE HATCH

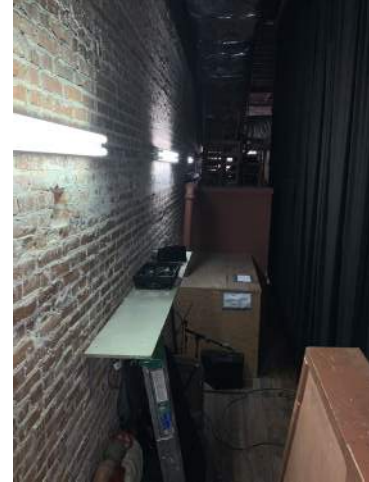
05 | ELECTRICAL NARRATIVE

LIBERTY THEATER

EXISTING ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS NARRATIVE

LIGHTING SYSTEMS:

The lighting in this facility consists of a combination of incandescent and fluorescent light fixtures.



LIGHTING CONTROLS:

A mixture of lighting controls have been utilized throughout the building. General lighting is controlled from wall mounted light fixtures. Performance stage lighting is controlled from lighting dimmer panels located on a wall stage left. Individual light switches are located in or near the spaces that they control.



LIFE SAFETY LIGHTING:

Emergency lighting is provided via emergency fixtures with integral batteries. These fixtures are located throughout the building. Emergency light coverage appears to be inadequate for this building.



ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM:

The facility's power system consists of a 120/208 volt, 3 Phase, 4 wire, 1,200 amp main electrical service. Overhead electrical lines run from a pole mounted utility transformer bank located in the back of the building to electrical panelboard "M" located inside the building, adjacent to the Fire Pump Room. Panel "M" serves some of the building's Mechanical equipment as well as various sub-panels that are located throughout the building. These sub-panels provide power to light fixtures, power outlets, and miscellaneous equipment.

There is no evidence that electrical studies have been performed (short circuit, selective coordination, arc flash).

No Surge Protective Devices (SPDs) were observed during the site visit.

No isolation transformers for stage lighting or sound systems were observed.



05 | ELECTRICAL NARRATIVE

EMERGENCY POWER:

Currently, there are no emergency power generators or backup power inverters on site.

INTRUSION DETECTION SYSTEM:

There is no intrusion detection system currently installed in the building.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM:

There is currently no video surveillance system installed in the building.

ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM:

There is currently no access control system installed in the building.

TELEPHONE/DATA/VIDEO DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS:

Telephone/data cables enter through the back of the building.



VIDEO PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT

There is currently no video production system installed in the building.

LIGHTNING PROTECTION:

There is currently no Lightning Protection on the building.

FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM:

The existing Fire Alarm Control Panel is a Gamewell Fire Control Instruments Flex 410 by Honeywell with a Thorn Voice Evac component. The Fire Alarm Control Panel is located in a utility space downstairs, behind the stage. This equipment appears to be approximately 8 years old. This panel appears to have expansion capabilities for device additions in the future.

Fire alarm devices appear to be older than the control panel, likely 1990's vintage. These devices should be scheduled for replacement.

The system consists of manual pull stations, audible and visual notification devices, voice evac speakers, and LCD control screen located on the Fire Alarm Control Panel.



AREA OF REFUGE / RESCUE ASSISTANCE:

There is currently no Area of Refuge / Rescue Assistance System installed in the building.

A/V/ELECTRICAL FLOOR BOXES

There are currently no A/V/Electrical floor boxes on the stage.

RECOMMENDED RENOVATIONS TO ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS NARRATIVE

LIGHTING SYSTEMS:

Replacement of all general-purpose lighting fixtures is recommended for modernization, reduced energy consumption, and compliance with current energy code requirements.

Stage lighting should be evaluated to determine if the existing light fixtures will provide satisfactory results for the intended use and functions of the stage. Functional condition, operational appropriateness, and remaining life expectancy of the current stage lighting fixtures will need to be investigated.

Recommend replacing all existing light fixtures and installing LED fixtures as well as utilizing LED fixtures in areas and spaces that are being added to the project.

LIGHTING CONTROLS:

General lighting controls should be replaced and upgraded to dual technology ultrasonic and motion activated sensors to meet current lighting code requirements.

05 | ELECTRICAL NARRATIVE

Performance stage lighting controls should be evaluated to determine if the existing controls will provide satisfactory results for the intended use and functions of the stage. Functional condition, operational appropriateness, and remaining life expectancy of the current stage lighting controls will need to be investigated.

LIFE SAFETY LIGHTING:

Emergency lighting will need to be updated to provide increased coverage throughout the building. A central battery backup inverter system should be considered to increase light expectancy, reliability, and reduce maintenance requirements and costs.

ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM:

Increasing the facility's current power systems (120/208 volt, 3 Phase, 4 wire, 1,600 amp main electrical service) capacity is recommended. This increase would be designed to accommodate the addition of HVAC equipment as well as other features that may be added to the building such as a café, catering prep, green room, additional restrooms, office, load in flex space, elevators, and amphitheater enhancements to performance systems (lighting, sound, video, special effects). Replacement of the main electrical panel is recommended as it is at the end of its expected life cycle.

Replacement of electrical sub-panels is recommended as current sub-panels are at the end of their expected life cycle.

Replacement of the buildings electrical service grounding and bonding system is recommended. This would be a required component of the electrical service upgrade if it is performed.

Performing electrical studies (short circuit analysis, selective coordination study, arc flash study) is recommended to increase safety and reliability as well as meet current codes in the case.

Installation Surge Protective Devices (SPDs) on the main electrical service and all electrical sub-panels is recommended.

Installation of an emergency backup power generator and automatic transfer switch is recommended to increase electrical reliability throughout the building and various systems.

Installation of an isolation transformer on the stage lighting system is recommended to reduce the possibility of electrical noise and interference.

Installation of an isolation transformer on the stage audio/visual system is recommended to reduce the possibility of electrical noise and interference.

INTRUSION DETECTION SYSTEM:

Installation of an intrusion detection system is recommended to increase safety of patrons, performers, staff, and building contents.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM:

Installation of an intrusion detection system is recommended to increase safety of patrons, performers, staff, and building contents.

ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM:

Installation of an intrusion detection system is recommended to increase safety of patrons, performers, staff, and building contents.

TELEPHONE/DATA DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS:

Telephone/data systems upgrades should be evaluated to ensure that these systems are performing to the owners standards.

VIDEO PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT

Video production equipment should be considered to ensure that the owners desires are met.

LIGHTNING PROTECTION:

Installation of A UL Master Labeled lightning protection system is recommended to provide protection for this facility.

FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM:

The existing Fire Alarm Control Panel appears to have several years of remaining useful life. The system may require upgrades to accommodate various upgrades to the building.

Replacement of fire alarm devices is recommended to increase system function and reliability.

AREA OF REFUGE / RESCUE ASSISTANCE:

An Area of Refuge/Rescue Assistance will be required if an elevator is installed.

A/V/ELECTRICAL FLOOR BOXES

Installation of A/V/Electrical floor boxes on the stage is recommended.

06 | MECHANICAL + PLUMBING NARRATIVE

Liberty Theatre Building

FRONT OF HOUSE

Existing: The front lobby of the Liberty Theatre has second floor rooms, above the lobby, which is served by a five (5) ton DX-split air conditioning system. The DX-Split condensing unit is located on the roof above the rooms. The DX-split air handling unit is located above the ceiling and supplies air to the rooms. This DX-Split A/C system is standalone which is not connected to the central cooling plant and heating plant located at the Cultural Center. The DX-split air conditioning system appears to be added to the building circa 1991. The existing air conditioning system is past its useful life expectancy.

The Annex building is conditioned by a single 4-pipe chilled and hot water air handling unit that is located on the north side of the building. The Annex building is also currently served by the cooling and heating central plant located at the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center Building. The Annex air handling unit has a capacity of 20 tons. Supply air ductwork is routed from the AHU and serves the building. The chilled water and hot water flow to the AHU is controlled with three-way control valves. The HVAC system is original to the building. The Annex Building appears to be constructed circa 1991. A temperature controls retrofit (circa 2008) added a T.A.C. energy management system (EMS) to the building, DDC controls, new 3-way control valves and a variable frequency drive (VFD) for the supply fan of the AHU.

The Annex building is protected with a sprinkler system. The sprinkler system for the Annex building is fed by the fire pump and sprinkler riser located in the Theater building.

The Annex building has large men's and women's restrooms that appear to be in good condition.

Proposed: For the front lobby, we propose providing high efficiency variable refrigerant flow (VRF) simultaneous cooling and heating recovery type air conditioning equipment. This type of HVAC systems allows for multiple indoor thermostats to achieve an enhanced level of temperature control.

For the Annex building to have a stand-alone viable HVAC system, the buildings will need to be disconnected from the cooling and heating plant of the adjacent property of the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center Building. To allow space for the proposed new addition at the Back of House, the AHU serving the Annex building will need to be removed.

We propose replacing the Annex AHU unit with a packaged rooftop air conditioning equipment with DX cooling and natural gas heating. This will require structural upgrades to the lower roof in order to handle the weight of the new unit. The new rooftop AC will need to be ducted to the existing duct in the Annex building.

As far as plumbing in the Front of House, we do not see a short term need to remodel the existing restrooms unless code analysis requires them to be upgraded. As an enhanced betterment to the building, we propose to replace the plumbing fixtures with new sensor type and low flow plumbing fixtures. We propose to also add plumbing fixtures at the Café area along with a grease trap installed on the building exterior in the green area of the Amphitheater. We propose to replace the existing service sink in the Janitor Closet and upgrade the existing water heater with a new water heater that can handle the increased hot water demand of the plumbing fixtures in the Café.

PERFORMANCE

Existing: The main theater is conditioned by a single 4-pipe chilled and hot water air handling unit that is located behind the stage at the northwest corner of the building. The air handling is served by a water-cooled chiller, natural gas boiler and circulator pumps that are located off-site in the nearby building called the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center.

The cooling plant includes a water-cooled chiller (140 tons) with a remote cooling tower. The cooling tower itself is located on-site on the ground at the northwest corner of the property. Refer to the cooling tower photo on the previous sheet (Exhibit A).

The heating plant includes a natural gas boiler (1,000 MBtuh). The chilled water and hot water are pumped to the Liberty Theatre building and the adjacent Annex building by circulating pumps. The pumps are located off-site. The HVAC system appears to be added to the building circa 1991.



EXHIBIT A - COOLING TOWER

06 | MECHANICAL + PLUMBING NARRATIVE

Within the Liberty Theatre, the chilled water and hot water is supplied to one central constant air volume air handling unit (AHU). The AHU has a capacity of 40 tons. The chilled water and hot water flow to the AHU is controlled with three-way valves. A temperature controls retrofit appears to have been done in 2008. The temperature controls retrofit added a T.A.C. energy management system (EMS) to the building, DDC controls, new 3-way control valves and a variable frequency drive (VFD) for the supply fan of the AHU. Supply air ductwork is routed from the AHU and serves the stage and seating areas within the Theatre. The return air ductwork is routed through the stage area and connects to return air grilles located "stage left" and "stage right". Refer to the Theater air handling unit photo on this sheet (Exhibit B).

Proposed: For the Theater building to have a stand-alone viable HVAC system, it will need to be disconnected from the cooling and heating plant of the adjacent property of the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center Building. Concurrently, the existing cooling tower will need to be removed or relocated to the adjacent property. The existing air handling unit will need to be removed to accommodate the repurposed mechanical room space.

We propose replacing the HVAC units with packaged rooftop air conditioning equipment with DX cooling and natural gas heating. This will require structural upgrades to handle the weight of the new units. The reason for rooftop equipment is because the site presents a challenge for adding units on ground level.

The existing ductwork will need to be removed and replaced with new ductwork and diffusers. This will allow for repurposed space above the stage area.

BACK OF HOUSE

Existing: The Theater building is protected with a sprinkler system and electric fire pump. The fire pump is located at the Back of House area, behind the stage, at the northwest corner of the building. The fire pump is in poor condition and is past its useful life expectancy. The sprinkler system and fire pump appear to have been added to the building circa 1991. Refer to the fire pump photo on this sheet.

The stage area is served by the air conditioning system that serves the Performance area.

Proposed: We propose to replace the fire pump.

For the new addition building areas, we propose including high efficiency variable refrigerant flow (VRF) simultaneous cooling and heating recovery type air conditioning equipment. This type of HVAC systems allows for multiple indoor thermostats to achieve an enhanced level of temperature control.

We propose to add a new building management system to control the new HVAC units. The proposed location of the central controller panel is in the new office.

EXTERIOR

Existing: The perimeter of the property has a zero lot line except for the west side of building.

Proposed: We propose to relocate existing water hose bibbs to accommodate the new addition at the Back of House. We propose to add a water feed to a new irrigation system to the green space by the exterior stage. We propose to add a grease trap to serve the new concession type plumbing fixtures at the Café area.



EXHIBIT B - THEATER AIR HANDLING UNIT



EXHIBIT C - FIRE PUMP

APPENDIX

A | "THE LIBERTY THEATRE" BY JOHN WIRT

A | THE LIBERTY THEATRE BY JOHN WIRT

The following is a relevant history of the Liberty Theatre writing by John Wirt and published online by 64 Parishes. Please refer to the end for a citation.

J. Claude Keller and A. F. McGee unveiled the Liberty Theatre nearly one hundred years ago. During most of the past ten decades, the uniquely asymmetrical building has been the centerpiece of Eunice, Louisiana, a small but culturally vibrant city in what was once the vast Cajun Prairie. Originally a silent movie theatre and vaudeville house, the theatre's filmed and in-person offerings entertained generations of Acadians. Following the Liberty's resurrection in the 1980s as a music venue, it became a principal player in southwest Louisiana's Cajun cultural renaissance.

Construction for the two-story brick building that became the Liberty Theatre began in 1919. Work ceased due to the financial crisis of 1920 that devolved into the short depression of 1921, leaving only the exterior near completion. In the spring of 1924, construction resumed in a rush to meet the New Liberty Theatre's July opening date. "The theatre will move up in the front ranks of the larger theatres of the state," the New Era newspaper predicted. "Now, as we plunge into a description of this modern theatre, take into consideration the value of such an amusement rendez-vous for a town of this size." In addition to movies, Liberty manager Keller, a fourteen-year veteran of the theatrical business, promised a winter season including opera, musical comedies, and "high-class" vaudeville.

The New Liberty Theatre opened on Saturday, July 19, 1924. The theatre's ad in the New Era proclaimed it "the biggest thing in southwest Louisiana," boasting that the forty-two-thousand-square-foot building required thirty-five carts of bricks and eighteen months of construction to complete, at a cost of \$110,000. The partially towering structure at Park Avenue and Second Street soon earned its title as the region's "Premier Temple of Amusement."

Opening day at the Liberty began with a free screening of an Our Gang comedy for children. Lilies of the Field, a melodrama about an unfaithful husband who accuses his innocent wife of infidelity, screened that afternoon. Upcoming attractions included The Eternal Three, billed as "a powerful drama of a man who made beautiful women his prey," and the likewise torrid Scars of Jealousy.

The New Liberty Theatre—designated "new" because two previous Liberty theatres had operated in Eunice—featured one thousand seats as well as electrical fixtures, a "typhoon cooling" system, and steam heat. In the event of a fire on the stage, the auditorium's nonflammable curtain could be dropped, therefore saving the remainder of the building, not to mention the audience. The stage, measuring fifty-two feet high, forty feet wide and twenty-five feet deep, could accommodate "any road show touring as far south as New Orleans," the New Era reported. The theatre's attributes also included restrooms for men and women featuring "running ice water" and "a large balcony, one side of the latter for whites and the other side for colored."

On March 3, 1929, the Liberty screened the first talking picture exhibited in Eunice. Ten cents' admission bought patrons vaudeville and musical performances and a screening of The Bellamy Trial, a crime drama in which a Long Island society woman's husband, ex-boyfriend, and romantic rival are suspects in her mysterious death. The murals on the theatre's walls—depicting women in a contemporary and classical vein—were painted in the early 1930s by an artist known only as "old man Zelman."

Keller proved a showman. His promotions included the installation of a log cabin façade for 1935's

Call of the Wild, starring Clark Gable and Loretta Young, and a high-wire act above Second Street. The Liberty operated as a family business, and the box office staff included Keller's wife, Regina Guillory Keller, and the couple's daughters. Following Keller's death in 1951, the Keller family continued operating the Liberty and its sister theatres the Queen (opened 1937) and K&B (1946). When the Eunice News profiled the Liberty Theatre Company in 1952 for its twenty-eighth anniversary, J. Claude and Regina Kellers' children, Rosemary Herrod and J. C. Keller Jr., were co-managing the business. By 1982, the Liberty, like thousands of single-screen downtown movie theatres across the United States, had closed. It ended its nearly fifty-eight years as a movie theatre with The Cannonball Run, starring Burt Reynolds, on January 3, 1982.

Liberty Reborn

The cultural stirrings that spurred the reopening of the Liberty Theatre later that year began nearly twenty years earlier. In 1964, Dewey Balfa, Gladius Thibodeaux, and Louis "Venesse" Lejeune became the first Cajun musicians to perform at the Newport Folk Festival. For an audience that had come to hear Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul, & Mary, and Joan Baez, the Cajun band proved a revelation. "I had played in house dances," Cajun fiddler Balfa said later, "family gatherings, maybe a dance hall where you might have seen as many as two hundred people at once. In fact, I doubt I had ever seen two hundred people at once. And in Newport, there were seventeen thousand. Seventeen thousand people who wouldn't let us get off stage."

In succeeding years, more Cajun and Creole performers were enthusiastically received at Newport. Southwest Louisiana's indigenous music became a staple of folk festivals throughout the world. Meanwhile, Marc Savoy, a Cajun musician and accordion maker, lamented that the music wasn't appreciated in Eunice and Acadiana. "I told everybody," he remembered, "there's all this amazing culture that's alive here, but then we travel eighteen hundred miles from Louisiana to come to a folk festival, because there are no festivals in our area."

In 1980, after Savoy participated in folk festivals at national parks throughout the United States, he helped organize the Society for the Preservation of Ethnic Culture in Acadian Louisiana, a.k.a. SPECIAL. In 1982, Savoy and his SPECIAL friends cleaned and repaired the Liberty Theatre so the organization could present Santiago Jiménez, a Tex-Mex musician from San Antonio, in concert there.

"A couple of guys could fix anything," Savoy said. "Some others were good plumbers and electricians. We fixed the toilets and the lights. I'm sure we were drinking beer, but we made it workable for this concert. We couldn't go to a bar or a dancehall because this music wouldn't interest people who went to Cajun dances. We had to find someplace else. There was this funky old theatre built in my father's day. He told me about his time at the vaudevilles." Savoy also knew the Liberty from his own childhood. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he attended movies there when his father hauled rice to the mill across the railroad tracks from the theatre. "Nine cents for a whole afternoon of movies," he said.

SPECIAL's Jiménez concert and the subsequent Liberty screening of folklorist Nick Spitzer's documentary, Zydeco, were successful. Savoy told Spitzer about his dream of establishing a national park in Eunice that would showcase Cajun and Creole culture. Spitzer put Savoy in touch with Jim Isenogle, superintendent of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park in New Orleans. After Isenogle suggested the Liberty Theatre was the ideal companion for a national park, Savoy approached

A | THE LIBERTY THEATRE BY JOHN WIRT

Eunice's mayor, Curtis Joubert, about the city buying the property. Joubert happened to be a French-speaking Cajun who loved Cajun music. And like generations of people in Acadia and St. Landry Parishes, he'd watched cliffhanger serials at the Liberty on Saturday afternoons in an auditorium packed with Cajun country kids. "I thought it was fantastic," Joubert said of Savoy's national park idea. "Because we had this old empty theatre right across the street [from the mayor's office]. And we had all these legendary musicians around here, but all they used to do was go play overseas and then come back and put their fiddles and guitars and accordions under the bed. We came up with the idea of putting them on the [Liberty] stage."

Eunice purchased the Liberty Theatre in 1986. "Curtis took my idea and ran with the ball," Marc Savoy said. Savoy's wife and fellow musician, Ann Allen Savoy, curated a series of venue-testing shows, including reenactments of a fais do-do (Cajun house dance), an Acadian wedding, and an old-time radio show. The shows included classic Cajun musicians Dennis McGee, Sady Courville, Aldus Roger, and the Hackberry Ramblers. Although the Park Service's Prairie Acadian Cultural Center, part of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, wouldn't open in Eunice until 1991, the Rendez-vous des Cajuns show at the Liberty Theatre debuted on July 11, 1987.

Ann Savoy booked the first fifteen years of weekly Saturday night performances. In its original conception, Rendez-vous des Cajuns was a Cajun-French hybrid of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, Shreveport's Louisiana Hayride, and Garrison Keillor's A Prairie Home Companion. A typical show featured a Cajun band, a zydeco or Creole band, and a cultural segment featuring a humorist, recipe, or craftsperson. "It was super fun to have that wealth of working musicians to draw upon," Savoy said. "Because the show was new and a big deal then, everybody wanted to play."

"I'm so glad that they saved the theatre," said Liberty performer Michael Doucet, leader of the Grammy Award-winning BeauSoleil. "That was the main thing, because there are so few of them left. A lot of them are parking lots, which probably the Liberty would have been, too."

Barry Jean Ancelet, a professor of francophone studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, emceed Rendez-vous des Cajuns through its first twenty-four years. "It was a showcase, a statement about who we are," Ancelet explained. "And because it was attached to the National Park Service, it didn't present us as a caricature or a tourist brochure. It was important to tell them our story ourselves."

At first, Ancelet clashed with Ann Belkov, the new superintendent of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, over whether the show should be in French or English. A few weeks after he performed the first Rendez-vous des Cajuns show in French, the issue came up at a meeting whose attendees included Dewey Balfa. "A sage, a philosopher," Ancelet said of Balfa. "At the meeting, Ann Belkov said, 'This has to be English, because this is for Americans.' Dewey said, 'Ma'am, we are Americans.' He went on to say that this weekly show in Eunice is one of the only indications he had that the tax dollars he paid year after year were coming back to him in anything but bombs and interstates. You could have heard a pin drop. It hit home that Americans are not only English speakers. To her credit, Ann Belkov realized the wisdom of this."

The Rendez-vous des Cajuns program quickly found an audience of locals and tourists. Eunice's mayor remained a big supporter. "Curtis Joubert was there every night to greet the people," Ann Savoy said. "And the mayors after him always were there to greet people. It was something dear to their hearts."

"It took off and people from all over the world came," Joubert said. "We were proud to host it. Besides that, it brought business to our little community. People would listen to music and then go to all of the restaurants."

The Liberty itself is an important part of Rendez-vous des Cajuns, Ancelet said. "It wasn't a smoky dancehall. It was a lovely, big environment with seating. People listened to the music in a way that they didn't often do. And the fact that the building is historic, people felt like they were coming back to vaudeville days; but it also was modern. Young kids were playing up there. And kids in the audience saw their moms and dads and grandparents and aunts and uncles enjoying it. It showed them the value in their own culture."

The Rendez-vous des Cajuns shows at the Liberty continued until the coronavirus pandemic prompted a ban on large public gatherings in March 2020. By summer, issues with the theatre's heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning system would have stopped the show anyway. The city of Eunice plans to replace the HVAC system, Mayor Scott Fontenot said, reopen the Liberty Theatre, and revive Rendez-vous des Cajuns as soon as possible. Joubert, the eighty-nine-year-old former mayor of Eunice, is looking forward to another Liberty Theatre era. "Don't think we don't miss that Saturday-night packed house, with people going to the restaurants in our little town, shopping, and just coming to Eunice," he said.

CITATION:

Wirt, John. "The Liberty Theatre in Eunice, Louisiana." 64 Parishes, 64 Parishes, 30 Nov. 2020, 64parishes.org/the-liberty-theatre.

