

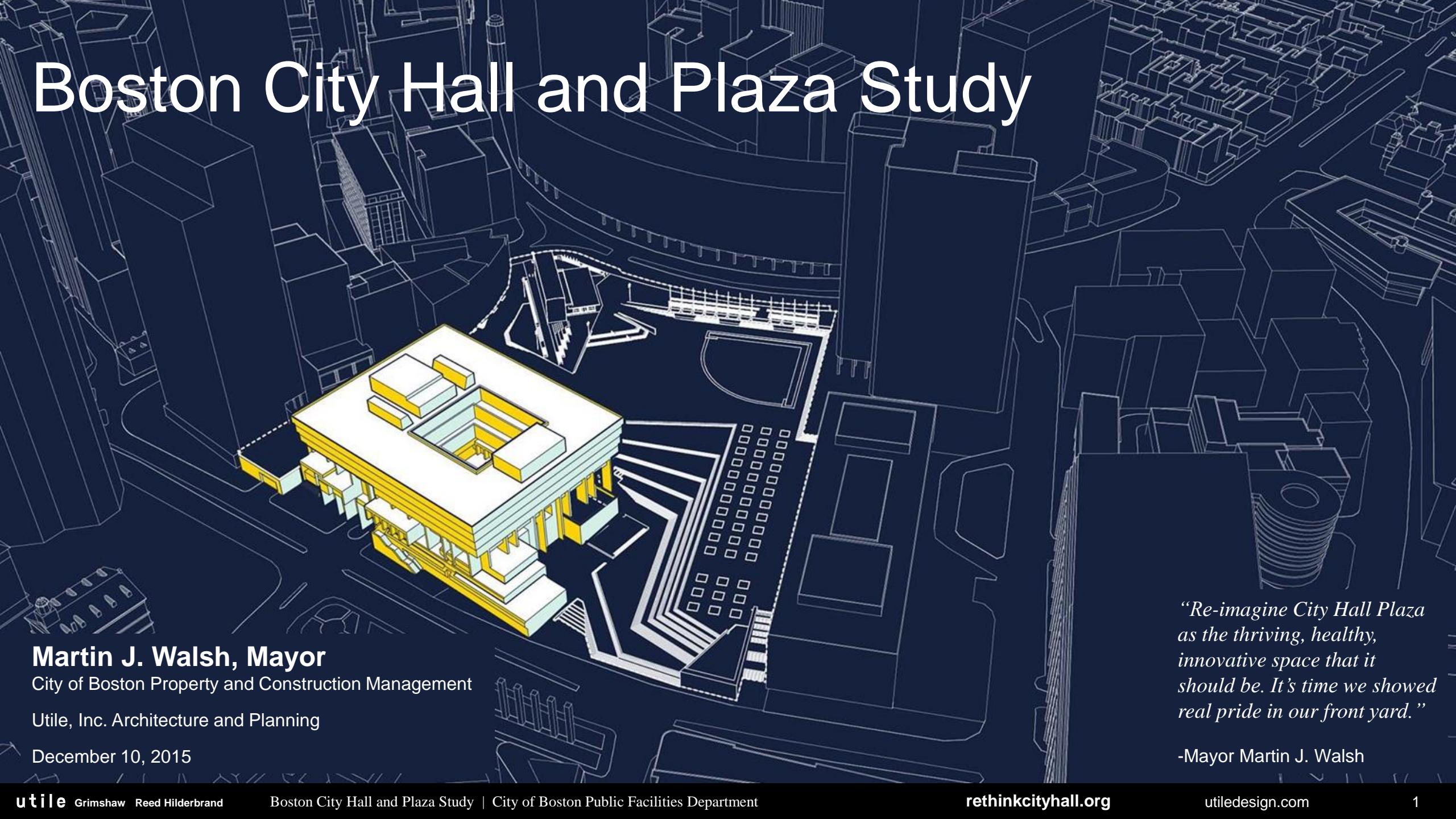
Boston City Hall and Plaza Study

Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

City of Boston Property and Construction Management

Utile, Inc. Architecture and Planning

December 10, 2015



*"Re-imagine City Hall Plaza
as the thriving, healthy,
innovative space that it
should be. It's time we showed
real pride in our front yard."*

-Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Agenda

Project Overview

- Process
- Goals
- City Initiatives

Historic Understanding

- The Building
- The Plaza

Feedback and Thoughts

Agenda

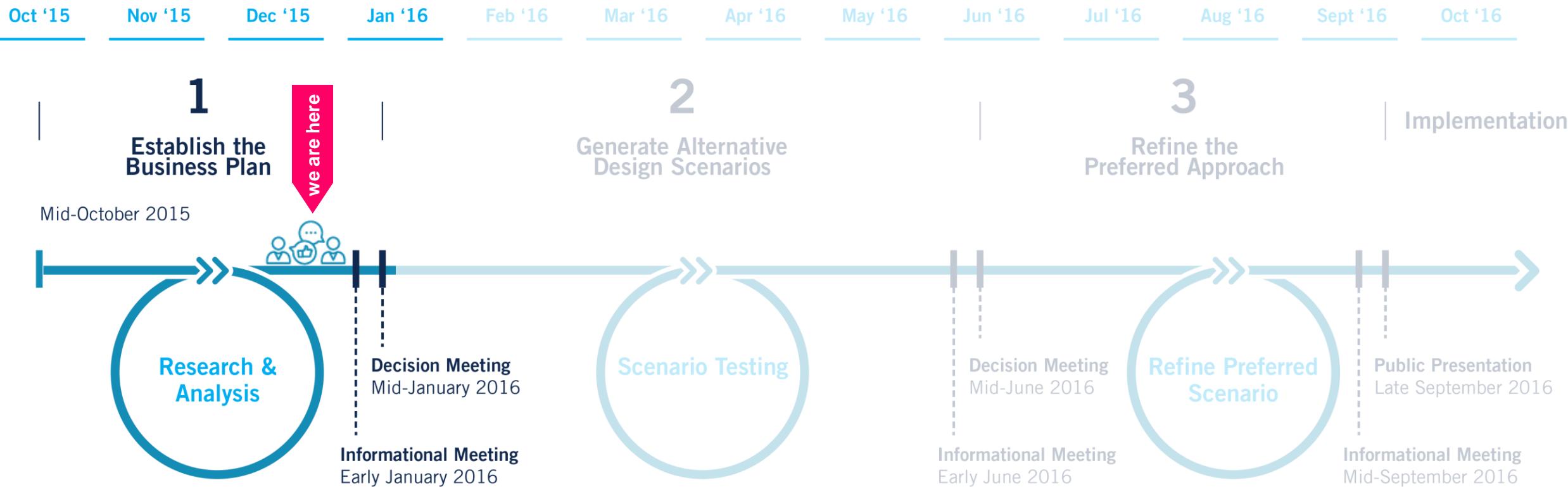
Attendees

Tricia Lyons	Public Facilities Department
Maureen Anderson	Property and Construction Management
Gert Thorn	Property and Construction Management
Molly Murphy	Mayor's Office
Donny Tavares	Mayor's Office
Rosanne Foley	Boston Landmarks Commission
Elizabeth Stifel	Boston Landmarks Commission
David Carlson	Boston Redevelopment Authority
Jill Zick	Boston Redevelopment Authority
Michael LeBlanc	Utile
Tim Love	Utile
Mimi Love	Utile
Maressa Perreault	Utile
Eric Kramer	Reed Hilderbrand
Mark Pasnik	over,under
Greg Galer	Boston Preservation Alliance
David Fixler	DOCOMOMO/EYP
Gary Wolf	DOCOMOMO/WA

A One-Year, Three Phase Process



Phase 1: Establish a Business Plan



Phase 1 Objectives

- Build awareness and excitement
- Analyze potential revenue sources and ambitions
- Programming and space planning
- Historic understanding and opportunities
- Existing conditions analysis



RFP Goals and Objectives

- 1 Create a welcoming, loved front yard and front door for constituents
- 2 Strengthen Government Center's capacity to be the **civic heart of the city**
- 3 Make City Hall and Court Street **a great place to work and improve services for the public**
- 4 Create an infrastructure that is **agile and sustainable**

Recent City Campaigns

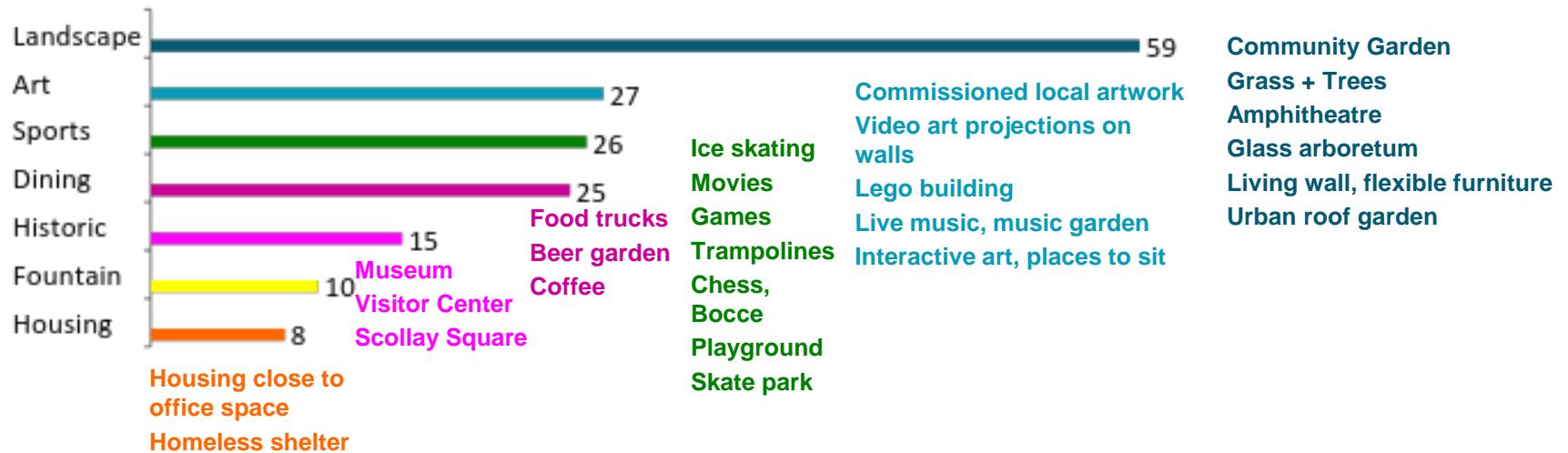
Request for Ideas, Interest and Innovation (RFI³)

- March 2015

“Mayor Walsh wants City Hall Plaza to be an inviting and attractive public forum that is robustly used by residents and visitors. It should contribute to the vitality of City Hall and the surrounding neighborhood. It should attract people to spend time on the Plaza relaxing, watching entertainment, participating in educational or cultural or athletic activities, enjoying their lunch, and just generally enjoying the Plaza. The Mayor welcomes any ideas that further these goals from leasing to designing to curating and any other public-private partnership.”

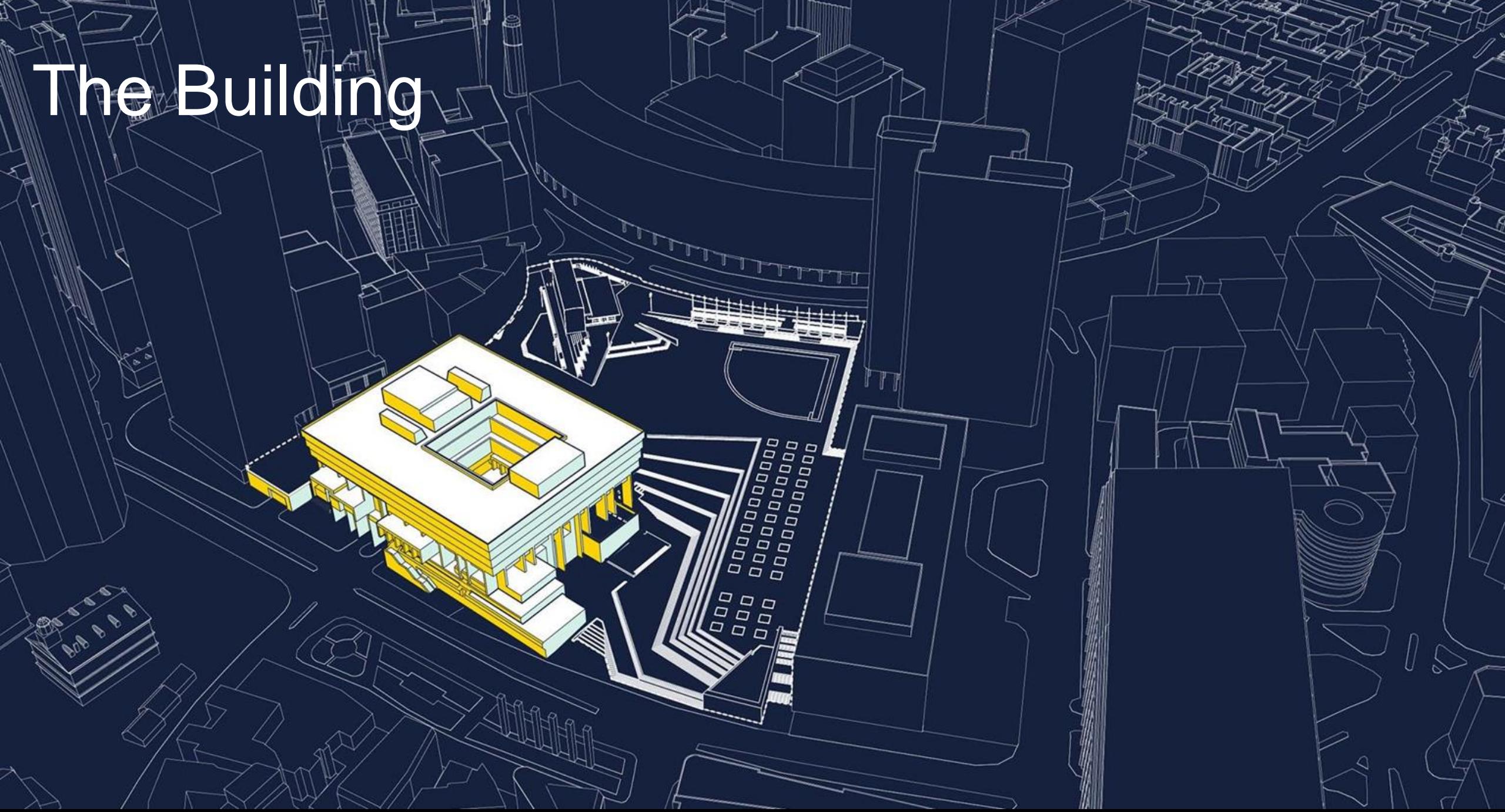
#cityhallplaza Twitter campaign

- Spring 2015
- 292 tweets



Initial Findings

The Building



Identifying Intentions and Character-Defining Elements

- Competition brief
- Jury report
- 1962/1969 publications (competition/completion)
- Theoretical texts (“Action Architecture,” 1959)
- Archival documentation
- Interviews with McKinnell and Kallmann
- Visual assessments of elements and spaces
- Other publications (historical assessments, proposals, public reception, etc.)



Influences



A COMPETITION TO SELECT AN ARCHITECT FOR THE NEW
CITY HALL
IN THE GOVERNMENT CENTER OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

Mayor: HONORABLE JOHN F. COLLINS

ROBERT M. MORGAN *Chairman*

M. MURRAY WEISS *Vice Chairman*

FRANK W. CRIMP, AIA

JOHN F. DEADY

JAMES W. HALEY

JOHN P. McMORROW

HENRY A. SCAGNOLI

Professional Adviser: LAWRENCE B. ANDERSON, AIA

Character

“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....”

—Jury Report, May 3, 1962

Character

“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....”

—Jury Report, May 3, 1962

Character

“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 is a product of this moment and these times.... The result is a tough and complex building for a tough and complex age, a structure of dignity, humanism, and power.”

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

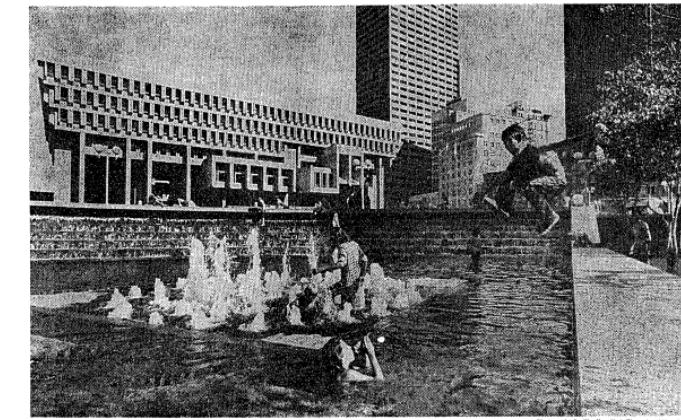
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1972

The New York Times

L-4

39

New Boston Center: Skillful Use of Urban Space



Photographs by The New York Times by JOYCE DOPPELBERG



An outdoor cafe spills onto brick paving that leads to City Hall, left. Fenwick Hall is at right.

In a corner of the Boston Government Center, formed by the Cambridge Street boundary and the Federal Building, children play in a sunken pool

By McCANDLISH PHILLIPS

SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

BOSTON — Urban renewal is a lot like pudding: the process is often more令人满意的 than the finished product. The recently completed renovation projects in America's cities is largely one of failure, revelatory humor and the learning that went into it. And the learning about what makes a city work well is something we have been patient enough to wait for.

As Appraised

by the country's most ambitious urban renewal project, the \$300-million Boston Government Center is now virtually complete.

After a decade of planning and construction, and notwithstanding charges of pollution, clear-cut homogenization of function, this huge complex of office and private buildings in the heart of old Boston on the former site of the Boston Stock Exchange now can be reported a success. Boston has been transformed, transformed by and largely positively, by the skyscraper age.

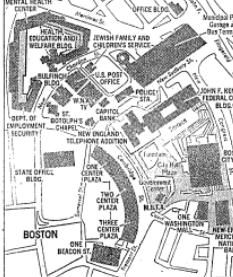
Like most of men's works, the results are mixed, but it can be said now that the scheme has produced some of the best new spaces of the 20th century, and that is no insignificant achievement.

Originally conceived in the nineteen-fifties and carried out according to a 1961 master plan by a team of partners under the direction of Edward J. Logue, then head of the Massachusetts State Planning Authority and now in charge of the New York State Urban Development Corporation, this is one of the most important groups of urban structures in the country.

Approaching its goal of 30 co-ordinated buildings through the site of the former financial race of politics, aesthetics and economics, it has itself fully realized its potential of construction around its stellar attraction, the compacted complex of the Boston City Hall. In this focal building Boston sought, and got, excellence.

In addition to City Hall, the Government Center contains 15 office buildings and wings and an assortment of official and quasi-official structures, including a scale commercial construction standards laboratory and a parking garage.

More important than individual buildings and statistics,



The New York Times/PAUL HENDERSON

map of the Boston Government Center, formed by the Cambridge Street boundary and the Federal Building, children play in a sunken pool

By McCANDLISH PHILLIPS

There were 420 competi-

tors, nearly all in the prime

of youth, as trim as Greek

athletes and as graceful as

graceful as deers.

The spectators, a noisy lot,

stood on the sidewalks and

balconies, cheering their

favorites going through

fallaways and spot turns and

overheads and somersaults and

body drops and dead

falls and more.

There were no injuries,

except for a few cases of

severely wounded pride.

In between, the music

set to music — the Second

Annual Official United States

National Amateur Dancing

Championships.

Anyone who had combed

the city in the early

days of '63 would have been

mildly astonished to have

walked into the city on the

weekend in the grand

ballrooms of the Americana

Hotel.

2 Orchestras Alternate

The dance events can nor-

mally last three hours in long

sessions starting at 1 P.M.

On Saturday, they start at 7

yesterday afternoon. The 15-

piece orchestra of Jack

Campbell, the conductor, al-

ternated throughout.

Two hundred of the en-

thusiastic young people

frequently paired with their

star, if amateur, pupil — and

Continued on Page 73, Column 1

Concepts: Monumentality

Civic Expression

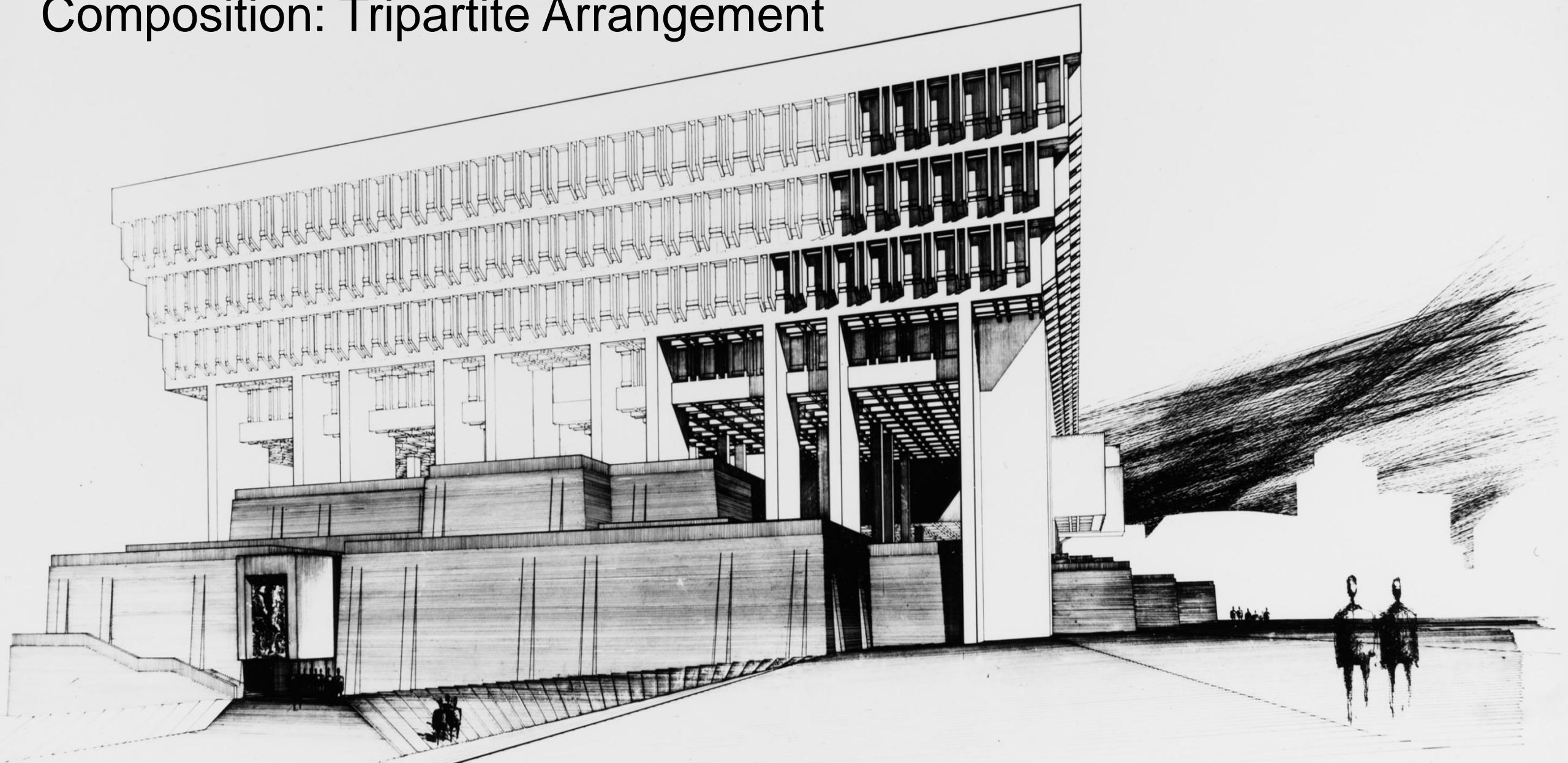
Democracy Displayed

Openness

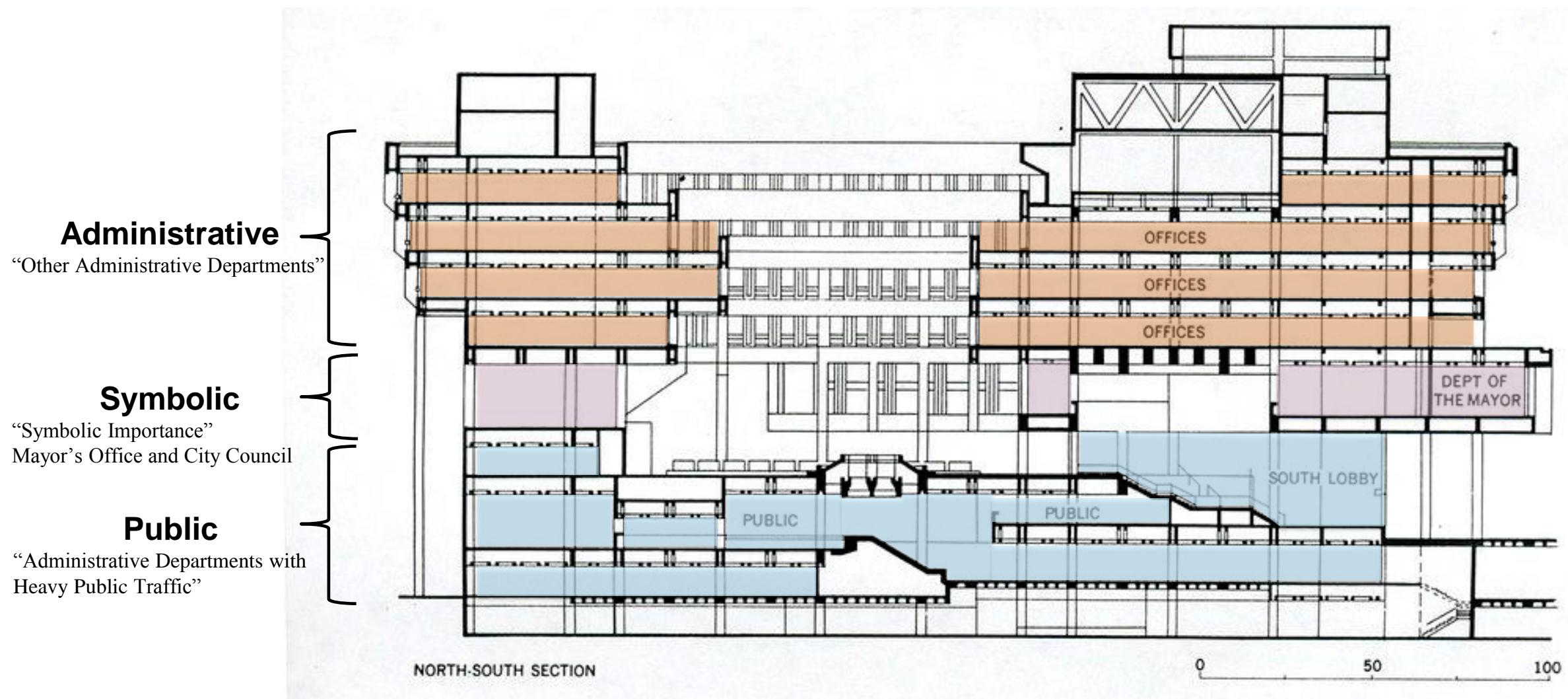
International Style Rejoinder



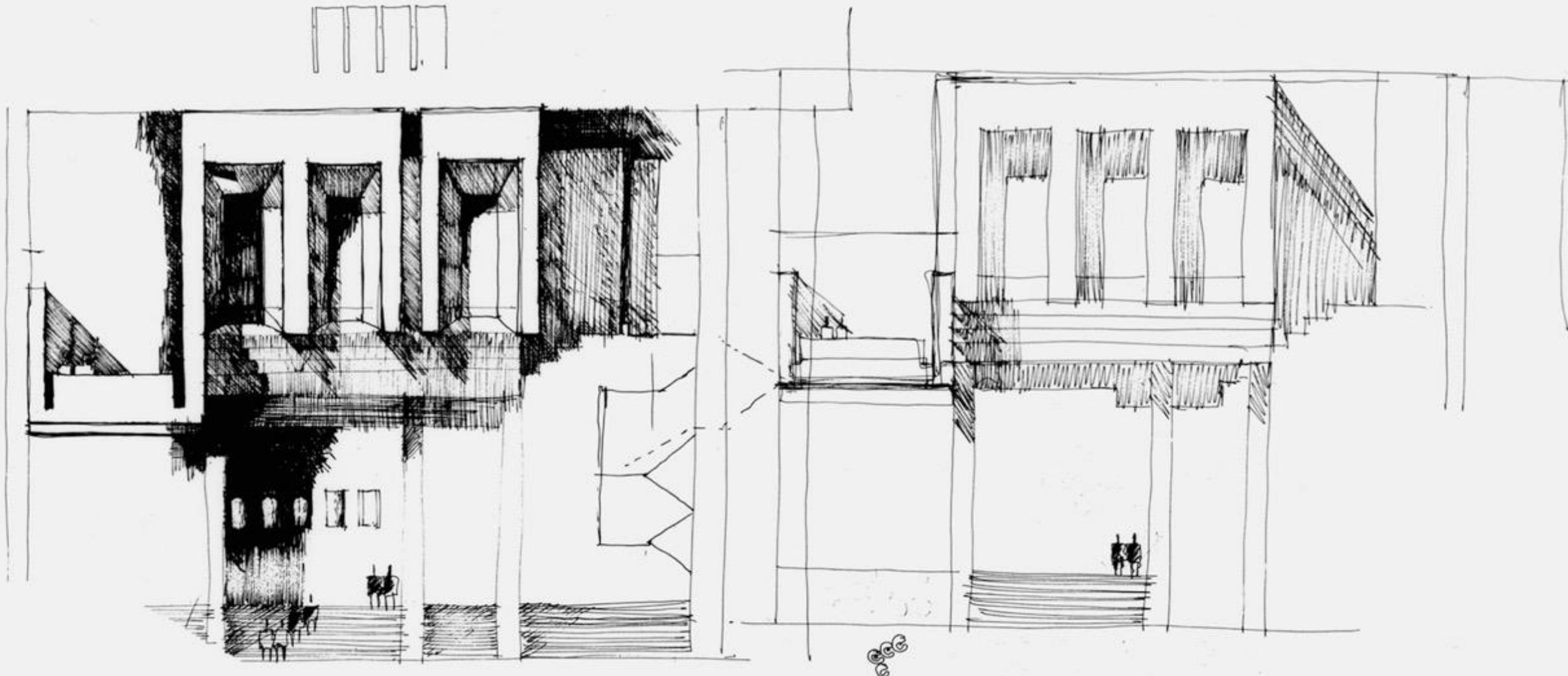
Composition: Tripartite Arrangement



Composition: Tripartite Arrangement



Intentions/Character: Symbolism of “Hoods”



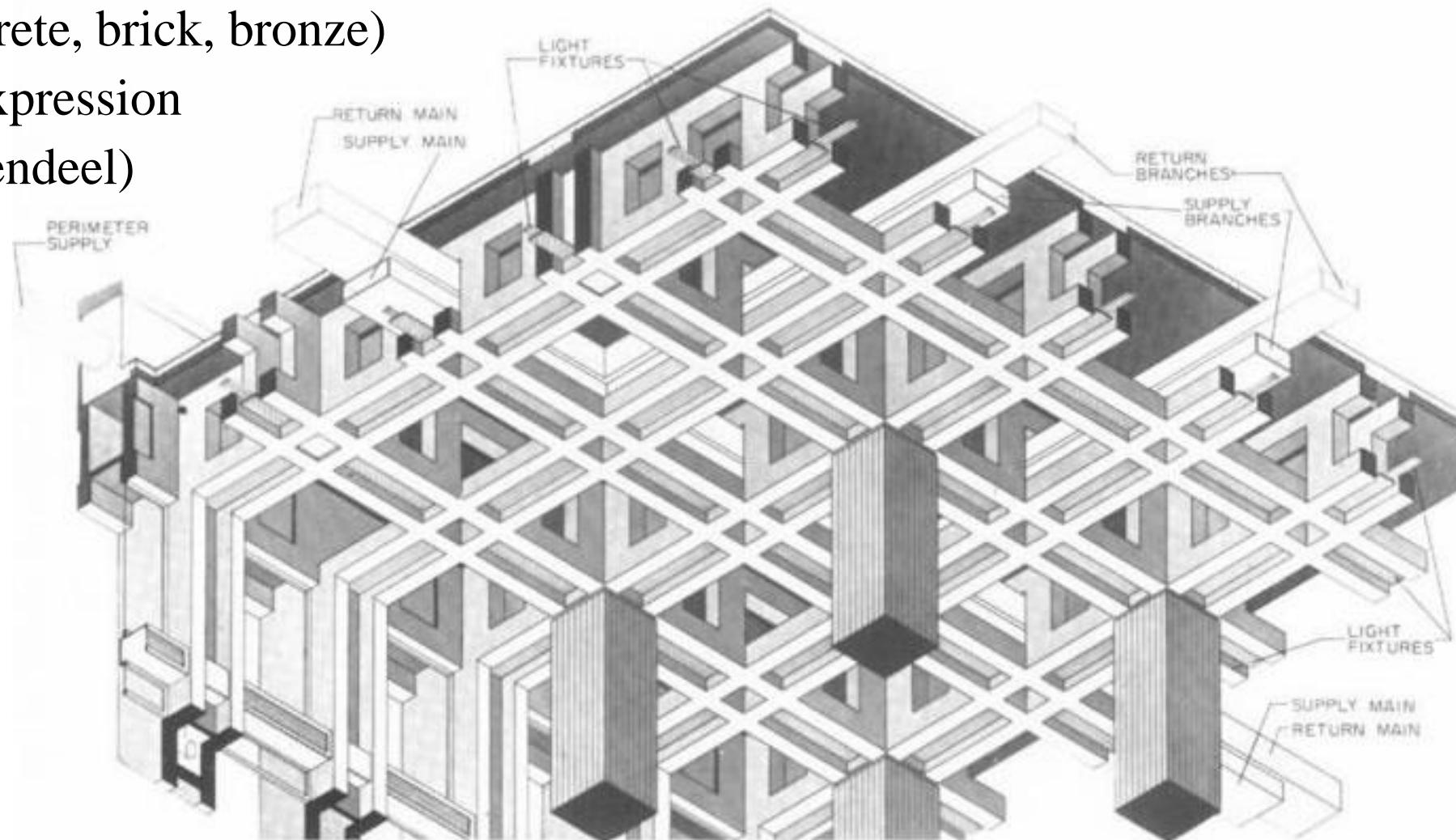
Principles: “All-through-ness”

Material authenticity (concrete, brick, bronze)

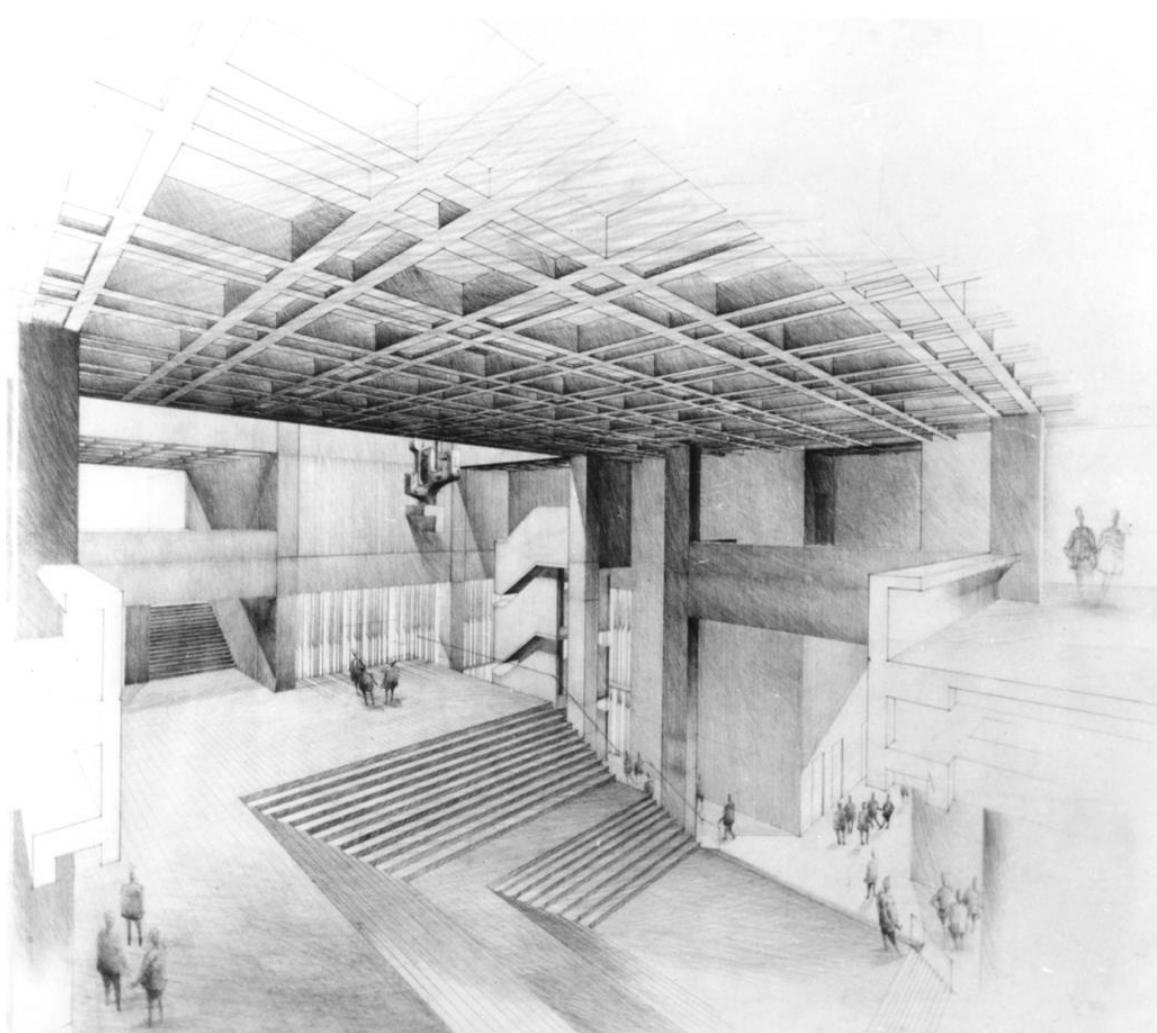
Precast and cast-in-place expression

Structural expression (vierendeel)

Systems integration



Character: Coherence of Space, Material, Structure, Light

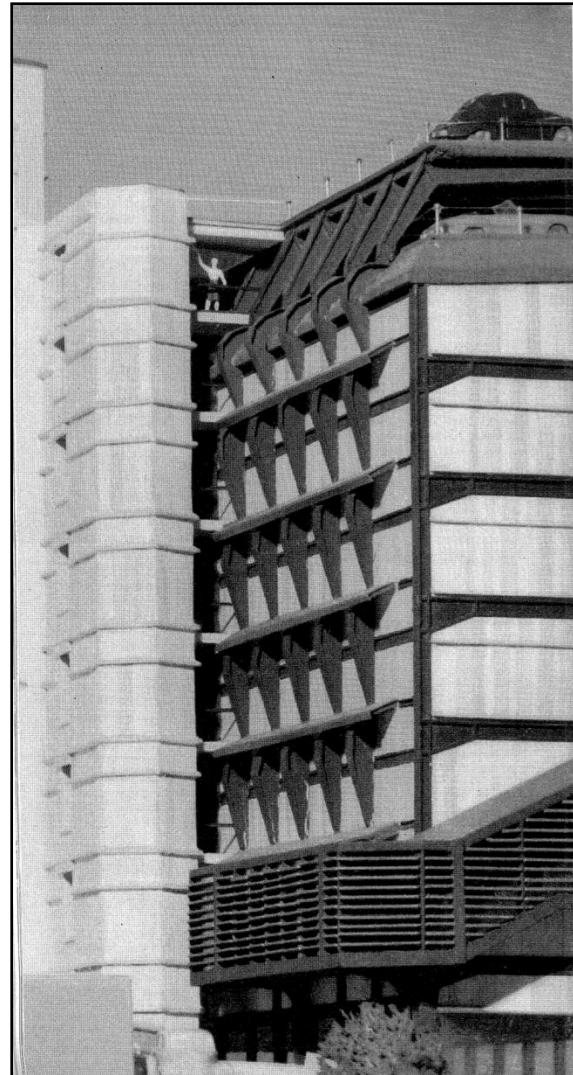


Theory: “Action” Architecture

New Brutalists “...deliberate, starkly physical embodiment of architecture, sometimes in brutal head-on collision of parts and untamed by any superimposed order of things.”

Compositional Rigorists: “...a rigorous thematic construction of all space... in which geometric or organic spatial sequences are manipulated within defined rules.”

—Gerhard Kallmann, “Action Architecture,” 1959



The “action” architecture of a new generation

BY G. M. KALLMANN

The idea that modern architecture is losing its early grip was discussed by Australian Critic Robin Boyd in FORUM for July. He deplored the glib and slick, or flashy and shallow, building conceptions of today's boom and called for repentance and return to the early faith. Now Gerald Kallmann of Columbia University turns the theme around. He finds a younger generation sharing Boyd's unhappiness with easy answers to cover up a state of confusion, but looking forward. Like their young friends in the other arts, the young architects shock their elders with fierce, direct, and brutal action in design. Yet they seek no easy beatnik way out. What Kallmann reports is the beginning of a new, serious avant-garde.

1. Vivid impression of bodily strength and concreteness is produced by enlargement of structural details in an abstract pattern based on the methods of “the build.” Model of a department store, Rome, by Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

Now that the heroic age of modern architecture is over and its pioneers are accepted as masters, what is there for a new generation to accomplish? To follow in the wake of giants, yet to act with confidence in its own powers, is the unenviable task of a generation harshly described by the Italian Critic Bruno Zevi as “too immodest to follow Wright and Le Corbusier, but too tormented to be as great as they are.”

Nothing would be easier than to settle down and develop, in elegant variations, the many inventions in technology and form proliferated by the modern movement in its first unprecedented burst of creativity. This, in fact, is what has been done by the architects who have made the new esthetics generally acceptable. For advanced spirits, however, it is essential to move out of the shadow that falls on epigones. This revolt is partly the patriarchal wish of youth to end dependence on the patriarchal figures still dominating the scene, partly the facing up to new realities of a harsher present. And it is directed not so much against the fundamentals of the modern movement—the integrity of which is envied as a paradise lost—as against more recent shallowness and abuses.

The climate of thought today is radically different from that of the early days of functionalism, with its manifestoes, its nuclei of advanced opinion focused in such international groups as *L'Esprit Nouveau*, *de Stijl*, and the *Bauhaus*. Objectives are more diffuse, vision is more clouded, methods are less clear, confidence is not so high, and pragmatic attitudes replace idealism and dogma. The nourishing source of Wright's organic functionalism and the

humanist ideas that gave form to Le Corbusier's world no longer sustain architects dealing in a new era with vast programs of a general rather than specific nature, serving clients who are faceless and corporate and often engaged in enterprises of seemingly dubious architectural value.

Thus, the creative energies of younger architects, increasingly alienated from program content, become focused largely on action rather than objectives. Emphasis decidedly shifts from what is to be done to the manner of doing. Instead of exploring distant social aims in idealized concepts, the young men seek answers to immediate and limited situations. And as if in reaction from the glut of invention in a novelty-seeking phase of modernism, they search for a new and appropriate discipline, a harsher esthetics than that of the present modish eclecticism (1). The direction of their ideas and efforts is too diffuse as yet to have the status of a representative *avant-garde*. Yet their influence is being increasingly felt as vital impulses challenging architectural routine.

Beyond the individual form

How far the modern position has moved from the classical may be seen by noting that the key principle of classicism was the absolute dominion of the individual whole form, self-enclosed and raised to universal significance.

The growth of modernist theory is in the opposite direction, transcending the single finite form. “The cult of the individual form is ‘at an end,’ ” said Mondrian toward the close of his life,

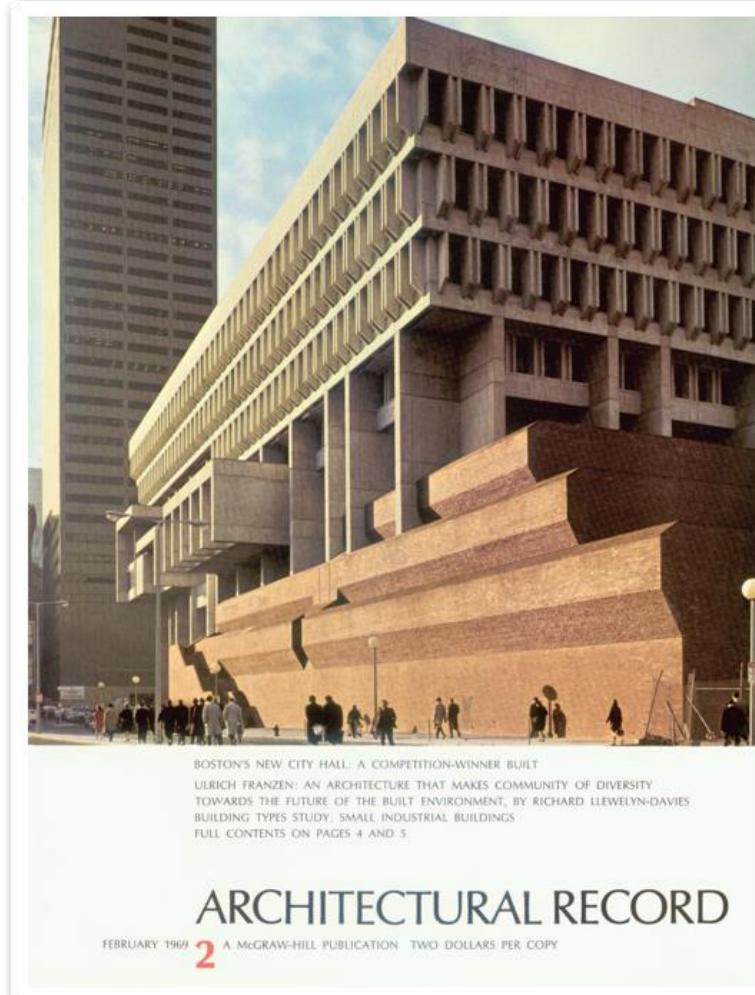
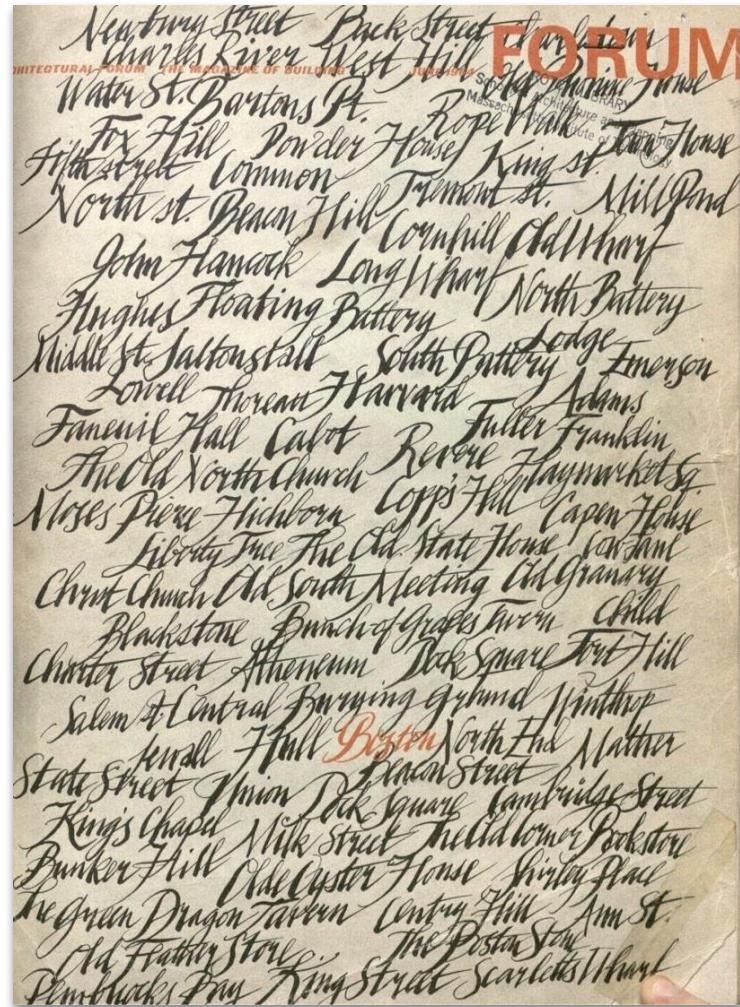
“and that of continuous relatedness is about to begin.” And this tendency may now be seen in architecture.

Many new buildings are closely interrelated in a complex scene. Even when they stand alone, there is a readiness to let them appear as mere passages in the unending game of space around them. Modern architecture always has had as a basic theme the opening up of the building to outer space, but now the effort is more decisive and has entered a new phase.

This is most evident in the treatment of the boundary that delineates recent

Architectural Forum / October 1959

Cultural Resonance: Professional Reception



Cultural Resonance: Public Debate

'Dignified' Controversy on City Hall Design

By TOM DOWNEY

A controversy raged over the original design for the city's new Bostonian City Hall. It was—but it was being conducted in a manner that would restore the dignity of the most proper of proper institutions.

Boston Mayor Raymond W. Flynn, chairman of the competition, found MIT School of Architecture and Planning one of the judges who selected the proposed unique design in a nationwide contest, convinced that any design that is original will meet with some acceptance.

The chief objection that some of the ten members of the team of judges at first expressed was doubt about the proposed municipal home until they studied it and saw its "beauty." Leon Fetterman, who is well educated, believes the design will fit beautifully into Boston's history.

City officials, architects and residents disagreed significantly—but with restraint—on the design for the City Hall, which will grace the planned modern \$100,000,000 Government Center in the shadow of Faneuil Hall—the "Cathedral of Liberty." Henry R. Shepley, senior partner of the prominent

architectural firm of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott said, "I think it's fine."

A member of another leading

design architectural organization said, "I think it is too derivative for Boston. I am

profoundly the effort of the in-

dividual. But I think it is derivative because it would sit up so well outside the finished. It would take a responsibility for Boston."

Another firm architect said,

"It's derivative. Peter F. Flynn, representing the Bostonian Society of a New York architectural team, said his

contested design seems to be

original. The solution could stand

a lot of interpretation. It is very

decorative. It has too much style,"

said Peter F.

Another architect said, "It is not unique,"

he continued.

City Councilor Charles V. McDevitt said, "I am satisfied

that they made an excellent

proposal. However, I am also

for the low City Hall as a

background for the buildings

in the area."

City Councilor Peter F.

McDevitt said the design

was impressive by a Septem-

ber vote.

Councilor Thomas A. Sullivan

said, "The quick first reaction

was that it was banal in scale

and yet suggests monumental

strength and mass, a combination not appropriate. I wish

the materials used in the model

were clearly duplicated. There

was a lack of detail in the

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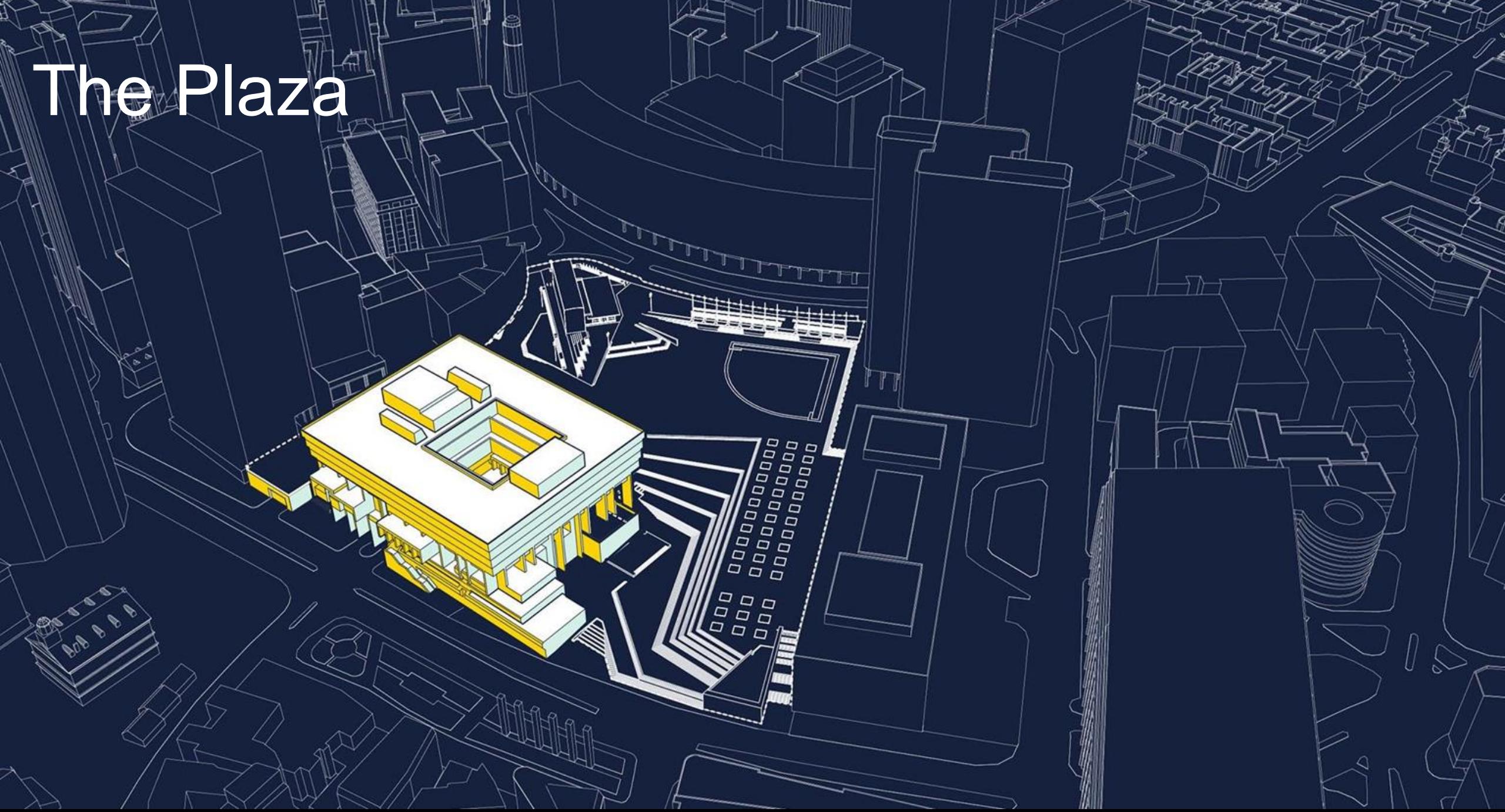
ber vote.

Intention: Ennobling Public Life

“...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.”

—Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell

The Plaza



LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

The plaza is an extension of the surfaces of Boston, and was conceived as the urbane heart of a living, evolving city.

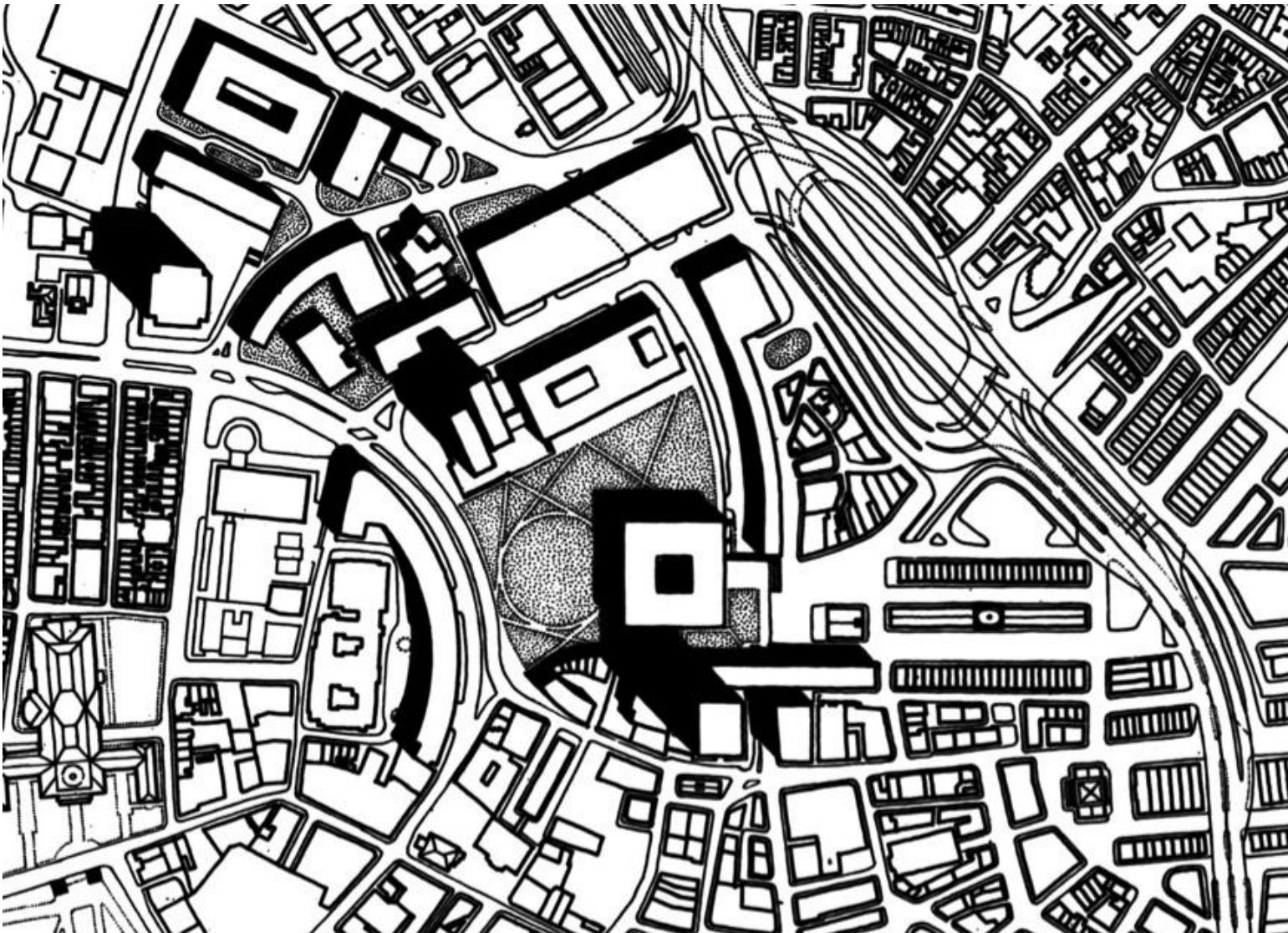


Piazza del Campo, Siena



LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

The plaza is not a pastoral park or common, conceived as a break in the city fabric.

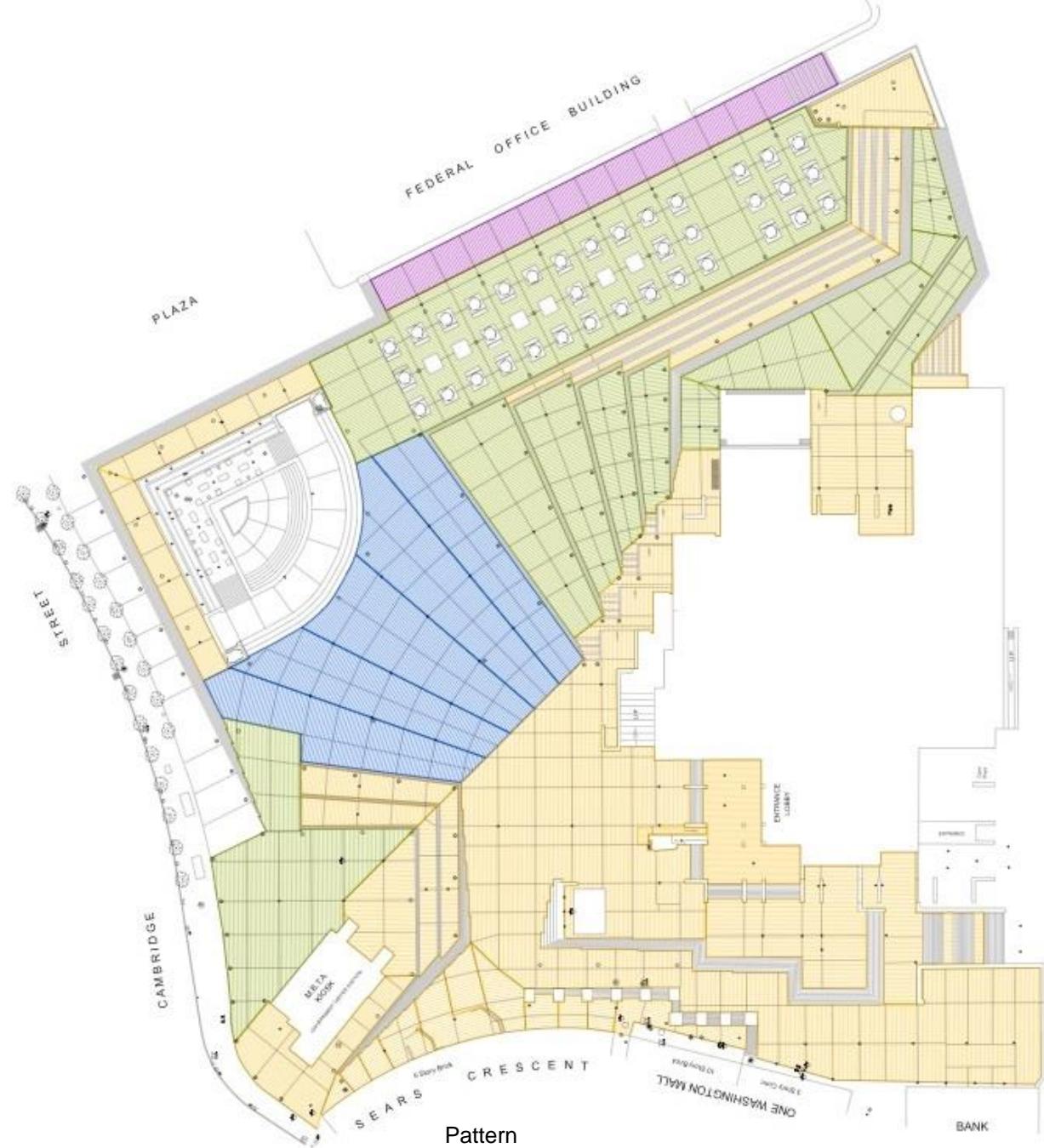
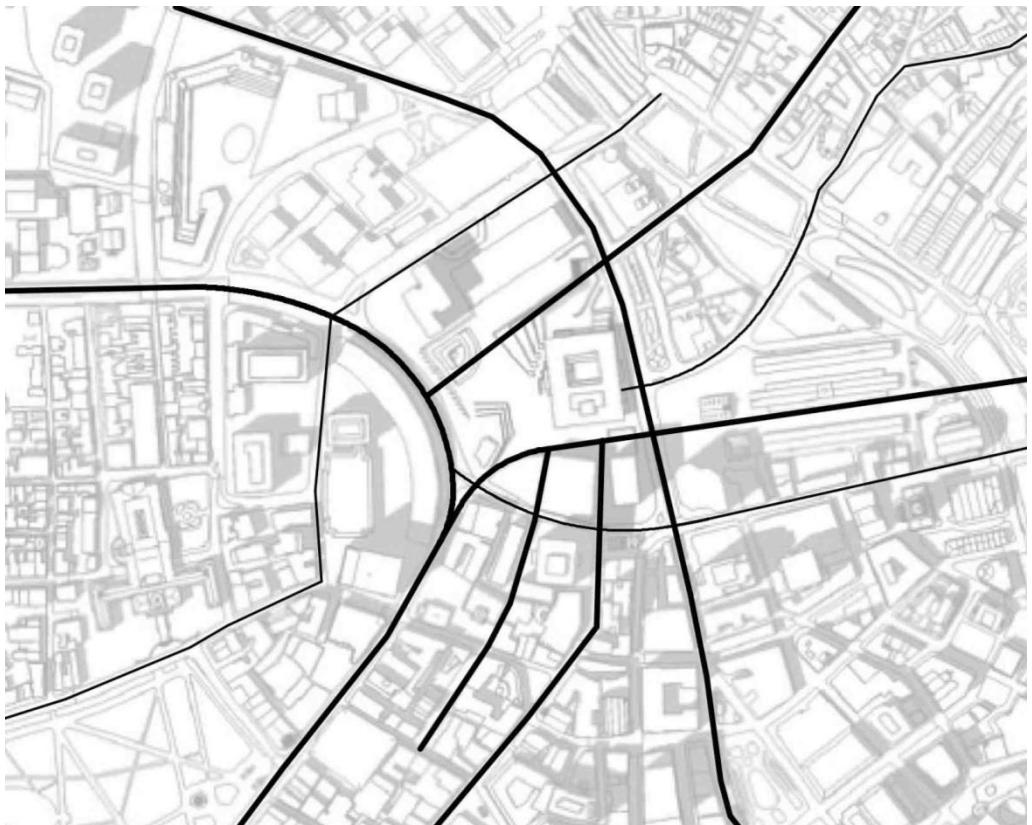


Government Center, Boston | I.M. Pei and Henry J. Cobb, 1961

LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

The plaza extends the patterns of the city

- Extending and adjusting street grids
- Creating connections and overlaps



LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Paving systems reinforce structural conditions

- Grids and rotated grids
- Terraces and radial lines
- Shifting and overlapping orders



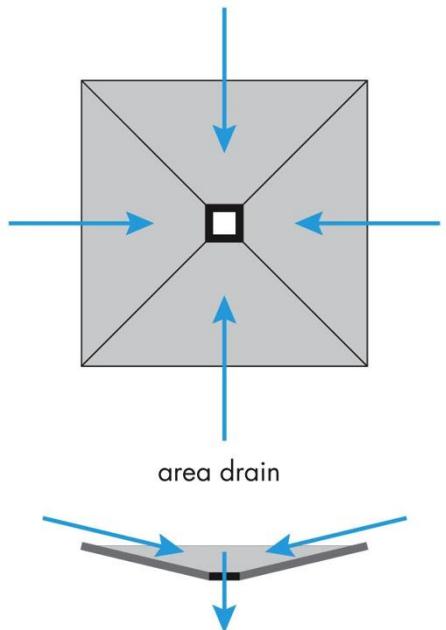
Jointing and brick coursing follow slab structure and drainage pattern



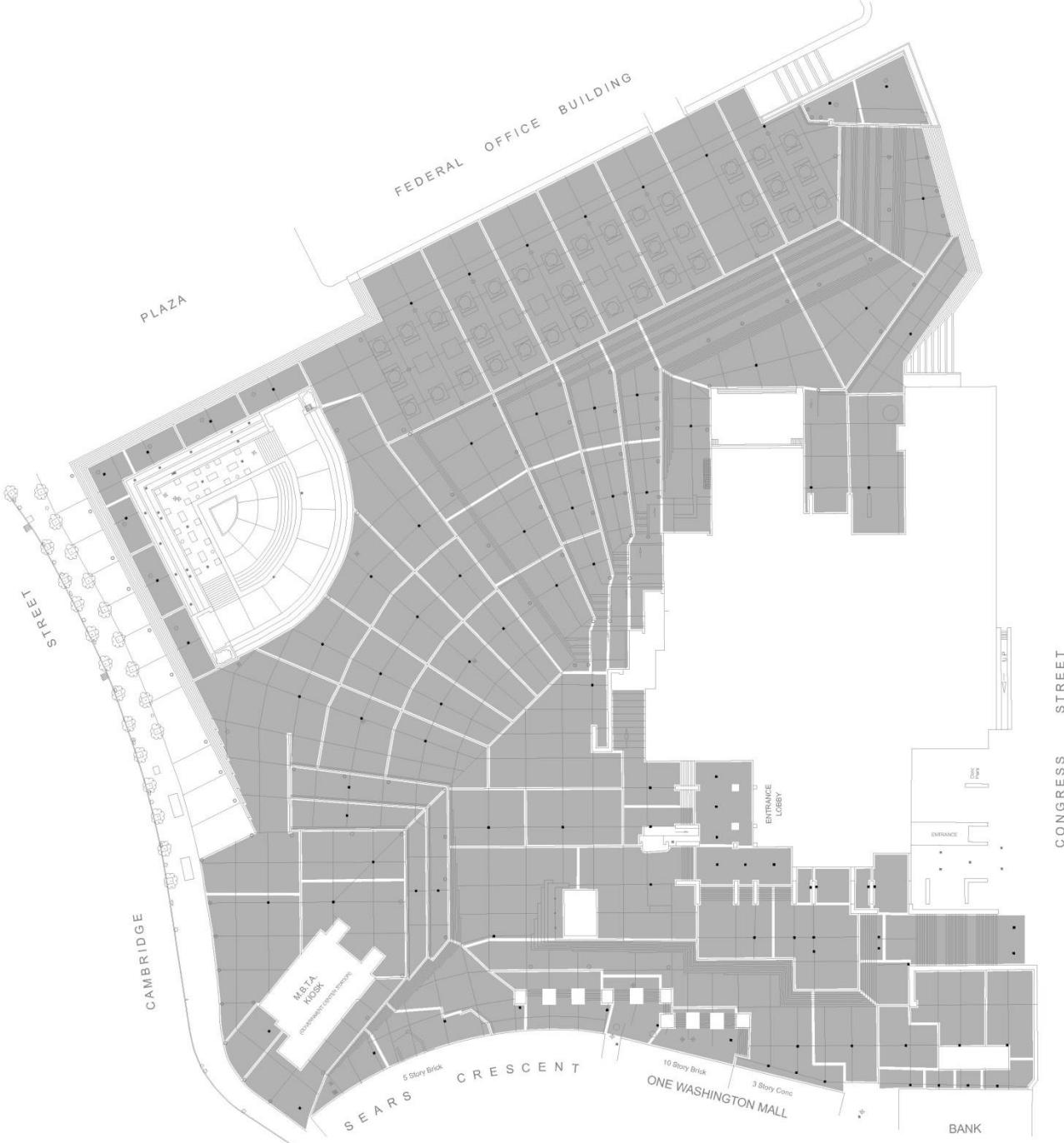
LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Paving systems reinforce drainage patterns

- Folded planes collect water
- Area drains convey to storm sewer

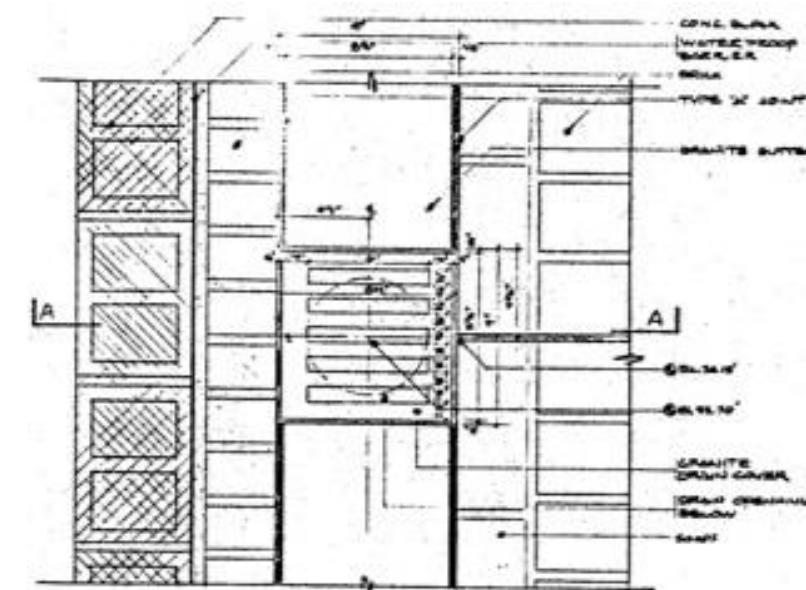
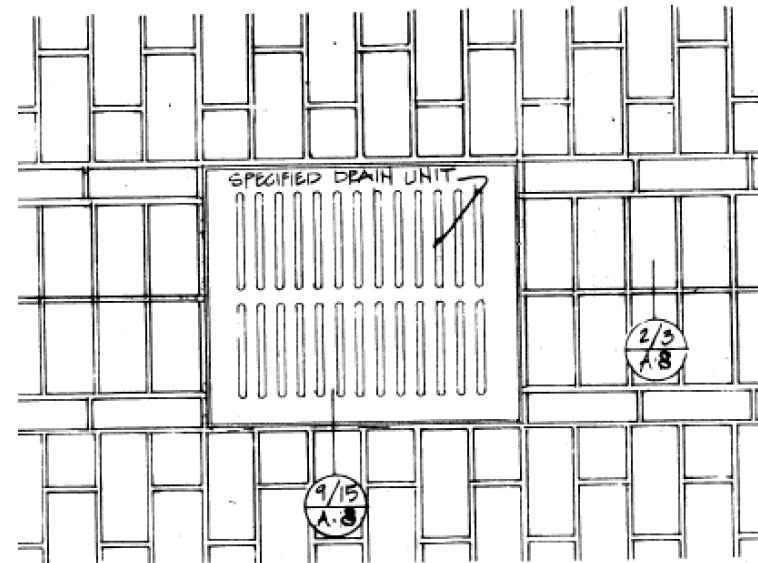
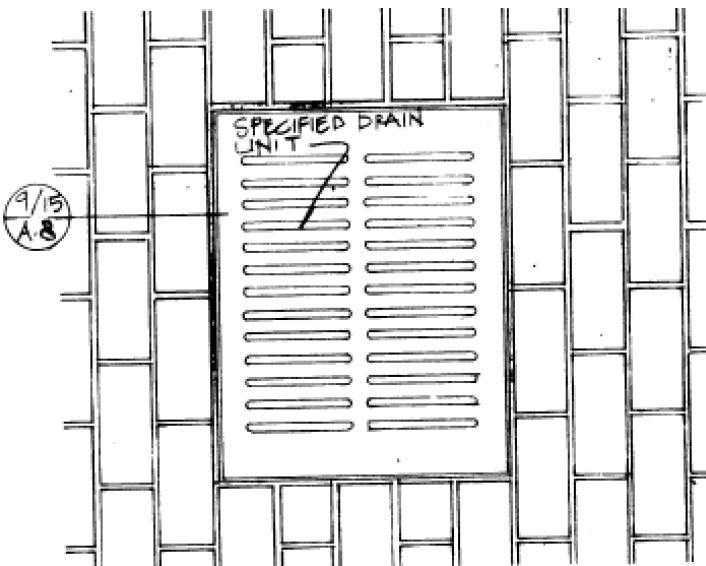


Paving and drainage patterns



LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Structural, topographic, and drainage systems were conceived systematically

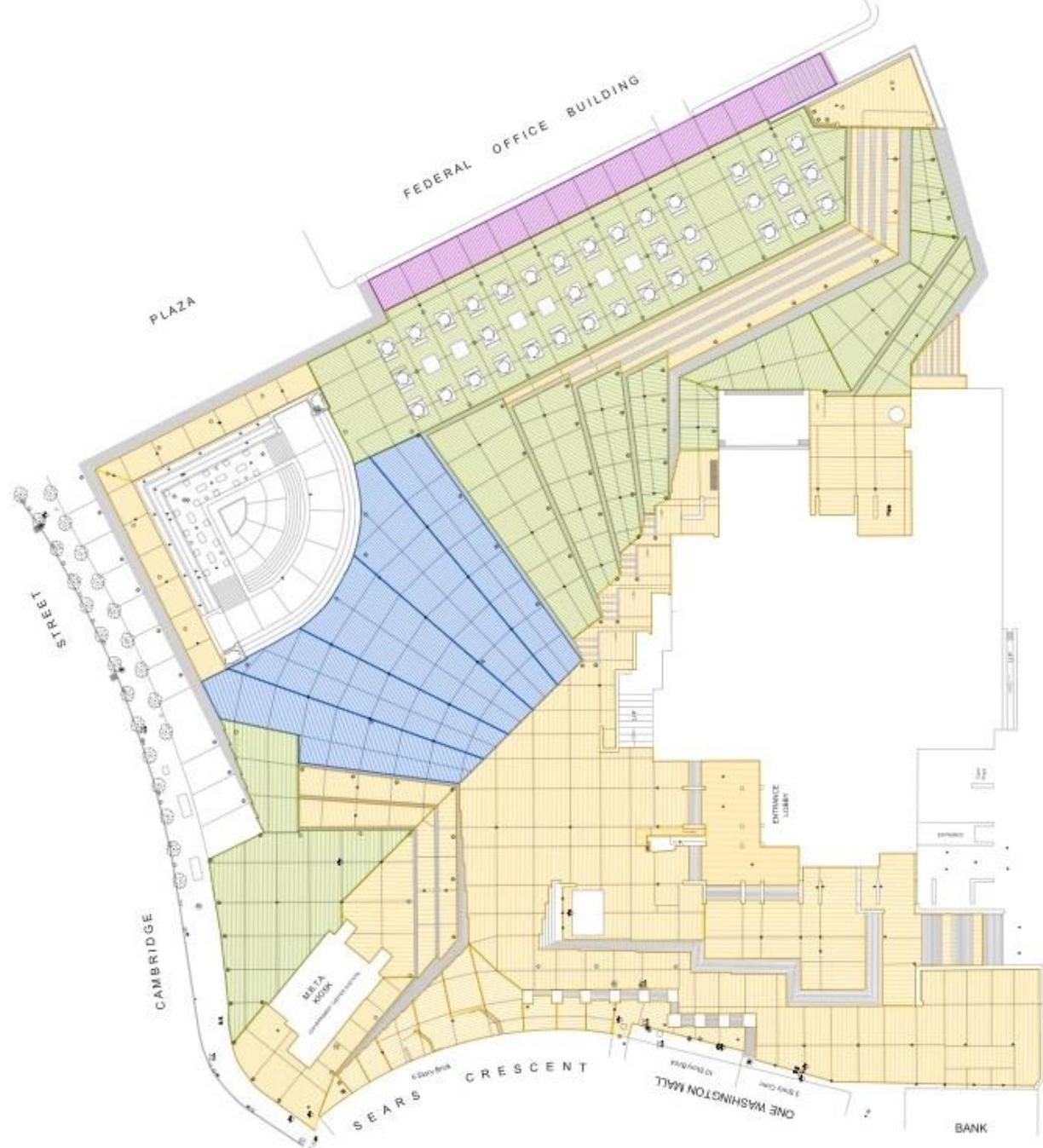
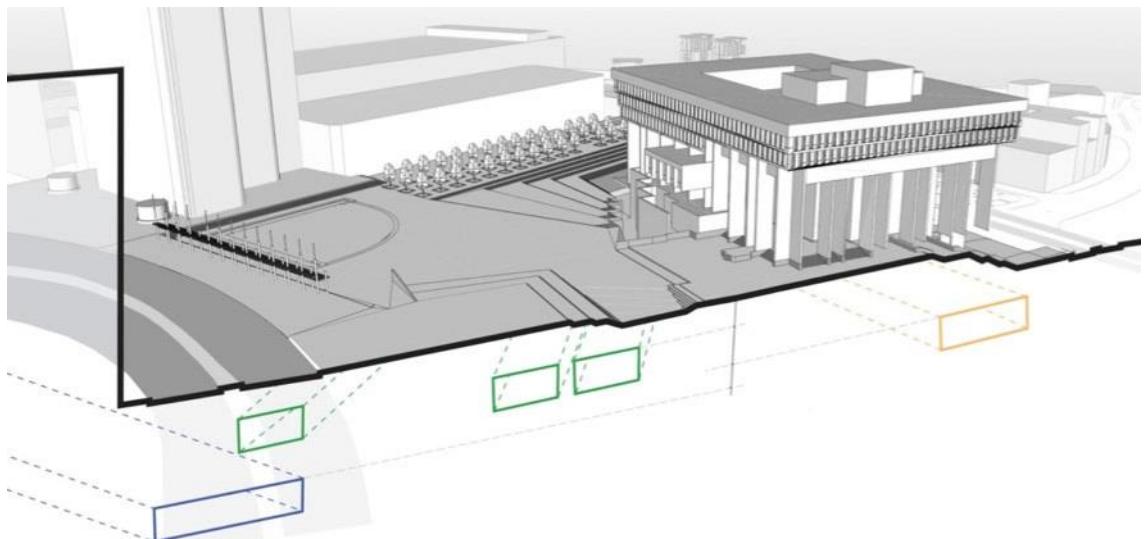


LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Systematic Approach

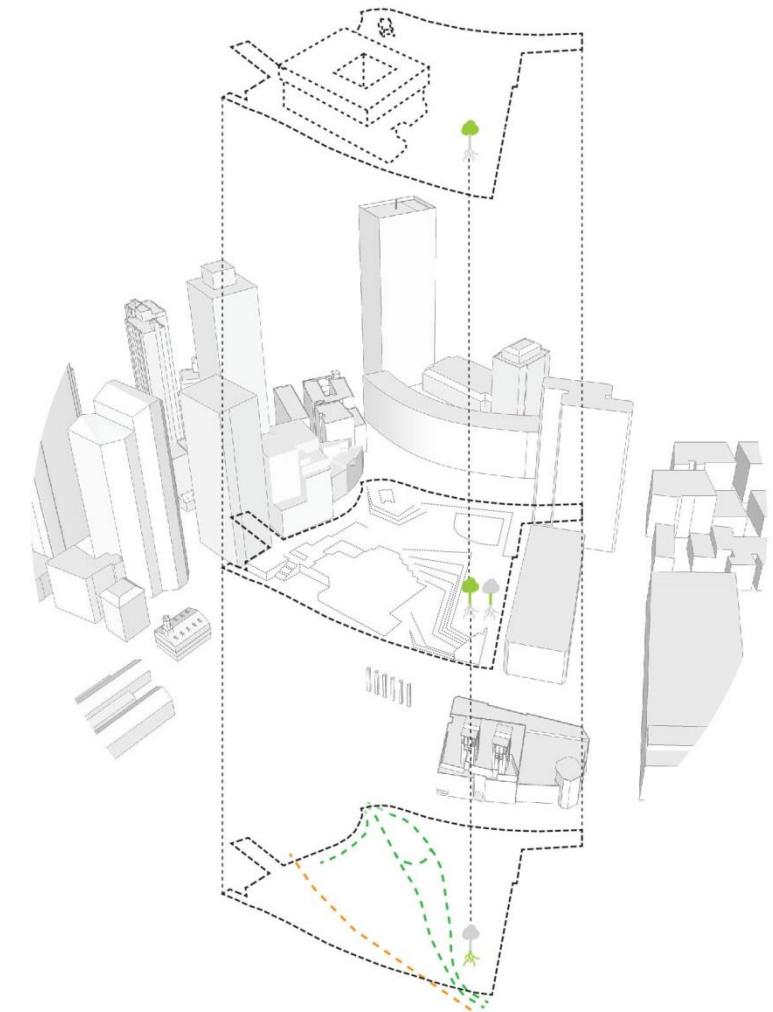
Originally the landscape was conceived as an integrated surface supporting flexible occupation and evolving civic uses.

Today we understand that the complex systems above and below the surface require equally systematic design to create a high-functioning work of civic infrastructure.



SURFACE, ABOVE, AND BELOW

- Surface
 - Pattern
 - Drainage
 - Accessibility
- Above
 - Wayfinding
 - Shade
 - Lighting
- Below
 - Structure
 - Soils
 - Utilities

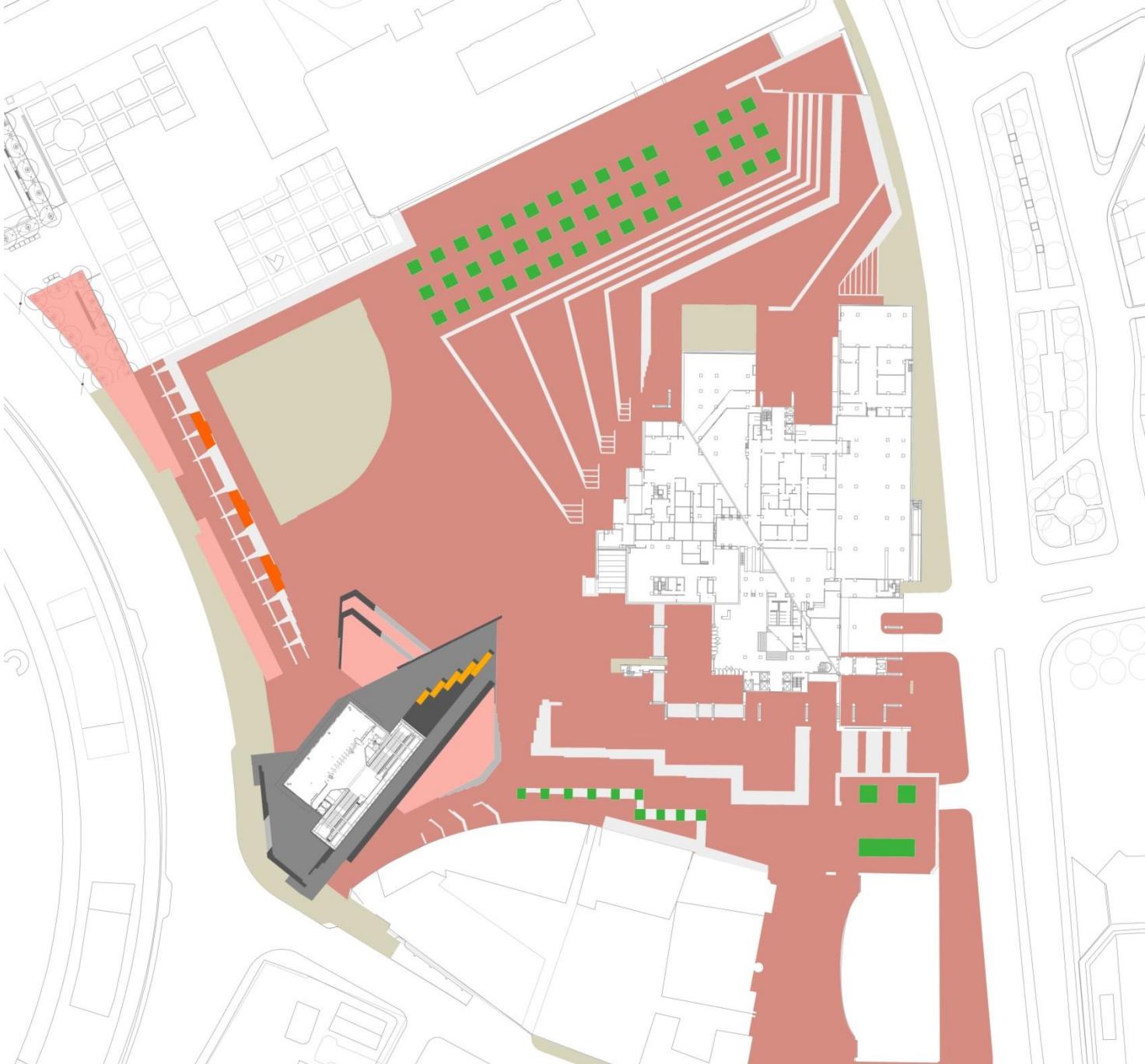


SURFACE

Material values articulate an approach to elevation change

- Light granite steps contrast dark field
- MBTA Project alters balance

	CONCRETE		BRICK
	WOOD - EXISTING		BRICK - PERVIOUS
	WOOD - NEW		GRANITE - CALEDONIA (EXISTING)
	PLANTERS		GRANITE - MADISON PINK
	GRANITE - DEER BROWN		GRANITE - AUTUMN BROWN



SURFACE

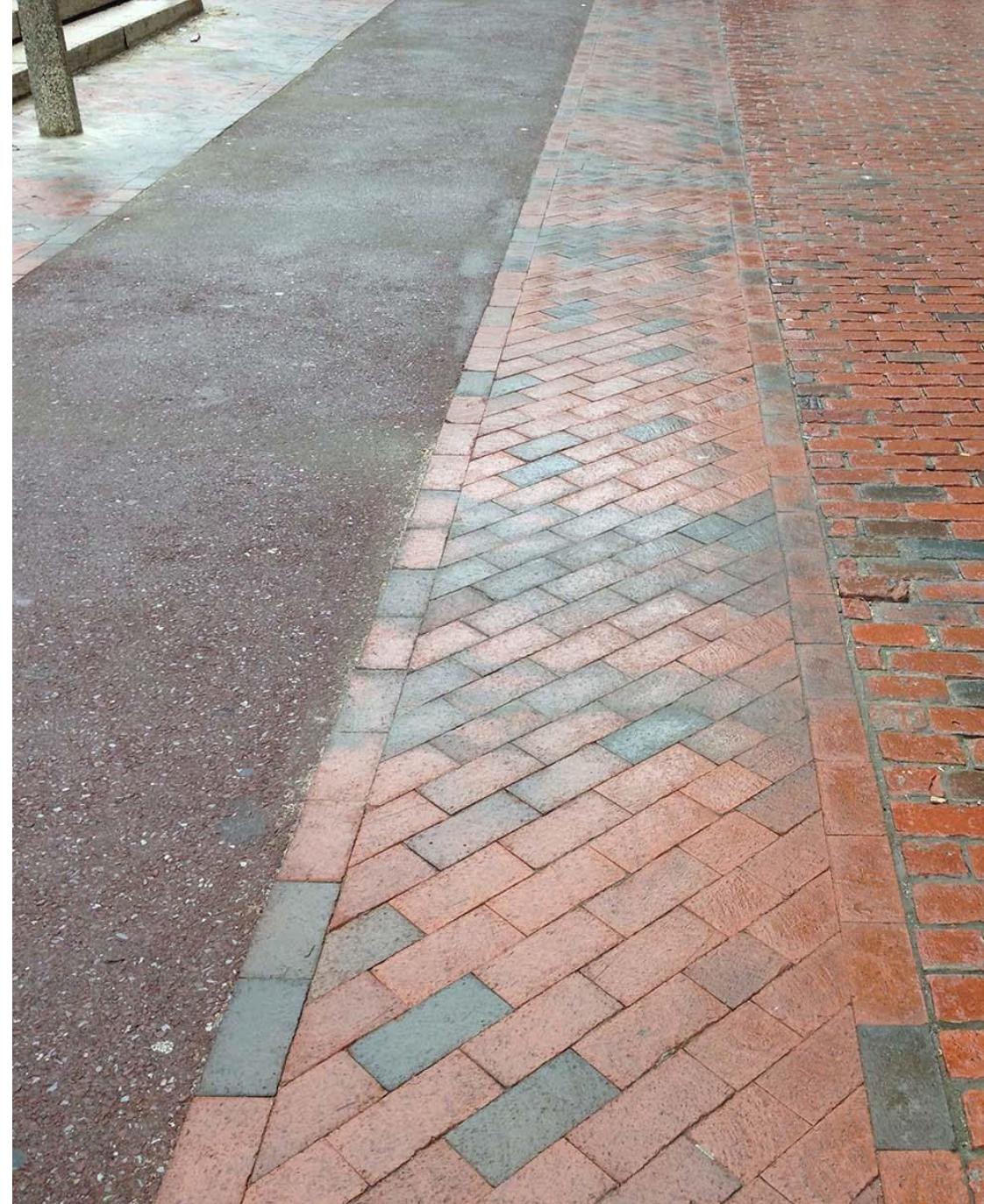
Materials have degraded over time



SURFACE

The accessibility pilot project tested new materials

- Colored asphalt as uniform surface
- Hand tight, dry-laid wire cut paver



ABOVE

The plaza is the political, cultural, and civic heart of Boston



ABOVE

The plaza is the political, cultural, and civic heart of Boston



What are your thoughts?

