

have enriched both cities and planning practice. Restored buildings, from San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square to Boston's Old City Hall, have proven to be practical and economic assets noted for historic style and urban value.

Inconceivably, all this experience is being ignored by Mayor Beame and his aides. Also ignored is the advice of experts who recommend conversion of the Tweed Courthouse for use as the City Hall annex that the administration wants on the site. Even the figures in the city's own feasibility report make it clear that conversion would be cheaper than new construction. Mr. Beame and Deputy Mayor Cavanagh would prefer putting up a new annex to be in something referred to as "compatible Colonial," a long-discredited architectural delusion that would substitute instant sterility for real style. This plan is a double throwback.

Apparently, everyone has learned a lot from the urban experience of recent years—a field in which New York led until now—except the gentlemen at City Hall.

Civic Banality

Stolidity has supplanted imagination at City Hall. In persisting in its determination to demolish the Tweed Courthouse, the Beame administration is turning the clock back ten years.

At that time the city proposed a Civic Center plan that called for formal, ordered open space behind City Hall. The Tweed Courthouse would have been a casualty, and few then mourned its prospective disappearance. Fortunately, the scheme never was carried out. Subsequent experience has brought new sensitivities.

No longer is it felt that change is the first law of the universe, that the past is expendable and that Victoriana is to be despised. The intervening years embrace a period of unprecedented and notable preservation successes that