

# PRESERVATION PLAN FOR

est. 1973

# DELAWARE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

at the historic theatre house

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA | STUART WEITZMAN SCHOOL OF DESIGN  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
HSPV 7010 HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDIO  
FALL 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This studio was advised by Molly Lester, Associate Director of the Urban Heritage Project, based in the Weitzman School of Design's Department of Historic Preservation. Molly provided us with deep knowledge, guidance and many insights. We are grateful for the time and thoughtfulness of Donna Swajeski, Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) Artistic Director, and David Swajeski, Board President, for whom the theater is a labor of dedication and love. We are appreciative of their kind welcome into DCT on numerous occasions and for so readily giving of their time, expertise and thoughtfulness regarding DCTs history and future aspirations. Likewise, we are grateful for Donna and DCT staff members, Shawn Nau and Jessica Koubek, for assisting with repeated visits and, along with DCT volunteers, for taking the time to speak with us about the organization. This project heavily relied on the architectural drawings created by Marianna Thomas Architects and Elizabeth Felicella's photography.

## STUDIO INSTRUCTOR

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This report represents the culmination of work that took place during the Fall 2024 semester through a studio course in the Department of Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design. The following students generated all content, including photographs and graphics:

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# INTRODUCTION

This report reflects the work undertaken during the Fall 2024 semester by nineeight students in the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation department. Under the guidance of historian and studio professor Molly Lester, the students partnered with The Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) in Wilmington, DE, to develop plans and provide support for the theater's operations and long-term preservation.

Our work included documenting the building's original design and evolution, identifying conservation issues, and proposing strategies for site management. Throughout the semester, students explored opportunities for public history interpretation, developed a preservation plan with treatment recommendations, and identified methods for securing funding and external support to ensure the theater's continued stewardship for future generations.

The studio project was organized into three phases: research, analysis, and response, all of which are reflected in this report.

The **research** section presents architectural

drawings of the site as it exists today, explores the building's history—covering the Wilmington New Century Club, the dinner theater, and the Delaware Children's Theatre—and examines the evolution of both the building and its urban context. This section also discusses the regulatory context and provides demographic insights into the surrounding community to identify interested stakeholders. A power map is included to show the relationships between DCT, its internal staff and supporters, local government, and preservation entities.

Audience surveys and interviews with key members of DCT, including David and Donna Swajeski and long-term volunteers, were integral to the research. The findings from these outreach efforts are summarized in the report.

The **analysis** section identifies five core values assigned to the site: historical, aesthetic, economic, social, and use value. It highlights character-defining architectural elements and provides an assessment of the building's current condition. A SWOT analysis of DCT's strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, and threats lays the groundwork for future planning. Additionally, research into comparable sites offers insights into how similar organizations manage operations, programming, and partnerships.

The **response** section outlines our preservation strategy and treatment recommendations, focusing on physical conditions, management, programming, and partnerships. These recommendations are categorized in five ways: physical conditions, management and programming, partnerships, collections, and interpretation.

The report concludes with **individual projects** created by the team members, informed by the treatment recommendations, to provide DCT with a concrete roadmap for future steps. Finally, a fictional newspaper article envisions DCT's future in 10 years, synthesizing all the knowledge gained throughout the studio project to foresee the theater's potential growth and success in the years to come.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights that the Delaware Children's Theatre is a highly influential organization and a cultural asset in the city of Wilmington, Delaware, having made a significant impact on multiple generations of participants. This relevance is supported by the values DCT has as an organization and as a place for the community: Historic, Social, Use, Aesthetic and Economic. Compared to other cultural venues, the great quality of the plays and community engagement requires the building fabric to provide a unique DCT theatrical experience.

About its history, it was built between 1892 and 1893 by Minerva Parker Nichols, the nation's first independent female architect, today 1014 Delaware Ave is the only surviving public commission by Parker Nichols. The building was originally the Wilmington New Century Club (WNCC), the first purpose-built women's club in Delaware and one of the earliest in the United States which had a profound influence on social advocacy, political reform and Wilmington's cultural scene. The building itself served as a vital space for community gathering and activism, with its history intricately linked to

physical space.

In 1983, Marie Swajeski saved the building from demolition and transformed it into The Delaware Children's Theatre. Today, the theater is led by Marie's children, Donna and David Swajeski, who continue to honor the legacy of the building. Their great work is represented by their engagement with the volunteers and youth development initiatives, the influx of local as well as out-of-state attendees to the shows, and the good condition of the building, preserving numerous character defining elements. Despite their dedication, the organization faces challenges such as limited resources, a small volunteer base, and a constrained site surrounded by commercial infrastructure.

The recommendations provided in this report follow the proposed Preservation Philosophy which advocates for balancing heritage, community and theatre. The goals are to promote physical preservation, cultural continuity, sustainability efforts, educational outreach and inventory & stewardship. The treatment framework for DCT is Rehabilitation as it is important to preserve the building's

historic character while adapting its spaces for contemporary uses. To achieve it, the report proposes recommendations and 8 individual projects that will address the identified areas of improvement: physical conditions, management, programming & partnerships, collections and interpretation. All these recommendations and projects are classified in time as Urgent, Short Term, Mid Term and Long Term.

The recommendations provided aim to preserve, promote and expand DCT's legacy to continue being a place where children can find their way to the stage and families can experience exceptional theatrical shows, enriching Wilmington's cultural life.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.....8

RESEARCH

PHYSICAL CONTEXT.....12

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS.....14

HISTORY.....22

REGULATORY CONTEXT.....46

COMMUNITY CONTEXT.....54

ENGAGEMENT.....58

ANALYSIS

VALUES.....68

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS.....88

ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY.....140

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT.....142

SWOT ANALYSIS.....152

COMPARABLES.....162

RESPONSE

10 YEARS LATER.....190

PRESERVATION PHILOSOPHY.....192

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.....194

INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.....208

MANAGEMENT.....272

PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS.....288

INTERPRETATION.....310

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION.....344



# STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## DELAWARE CHILDREN’S THEATRE

The Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT), located in the historic Wilmington New Century Club building, is an important part of Wilmington’s cultural and architectural history, holding significance at both the local and state levels for its architectural heritage and role in social reform. Designed in 1892 by Minerva Parker Nichols, one of the first female architects in the United States, this building is her only surviving public commission, giving the building National significance. Its Colonial Revival style and well-preserved architectural features represent the aesthetic and cultural values of the late 19th century.

Originally built for the Wilmington New Century Club, the building played a key role during the Progressive Era, especially in promoting women’s rights and social reforms. Led by figures like Emalea P. Warner, the Club advocated for causes such as compulsory education, child labor laws, and women’s suffrage, making the building an important hub for social activism in Delaware during a major change in American history.

Since 1982, the building has been home to

the Delaware Children’s Theatre, offering a wide range of artistic and educational programs for children and families in the region. Despite significant urban changes, including the construction of the I-95 highway in the 1960s, the building remained resilient, maintaining its presence in Wilmington’s evolving landscape. The theater, run since 2014 by artistic director Donna Swajeski, is centered on community involvement and supported by a multi-generational group of volunteers and family-run operations, which helps maintain strong ties to the local community. This focus on community engagement highlights the theater’s role as more than just a performance venue, demonstrating a continuity of use that ties back to its original purpose as a community-centered space.

The significance of the DCT building extends beyond its architectural and historical features; it is a vibrant cultural center that connects Wilmington’s rich history with its present artistic scene. The building has preserved its historic character through adaptive reuse while evolving into a modern theater, maintaining the overall integrity of

its original design while adapting to modern needs. For over 42 years, the DCT has served as a cornerstone of the community at the corner of Jackson Street and Delaware Avenue, embodying a legacy of community engagement and cultural vitality. This purpose-built landmark continues the Wilmington New Century Club’s commitment to community, supported by the multigenerational involvement of actors, volunteers, and audiences.



Auditorium, 2020-2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)

**RESEARCH**



# PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The Delaware Children's Theatre is located at 1014 Delaware Avenue, at the southwest corner of Delaware Avenue and Jackson Street in northwest Wilmington. The building sits east of Interstate 95, primarily surrounded by residential areas with commercial establishments along Delaware Avenue. Cool Spring Park lies to the southwest of the theatre, while the Wilmington & Brandywine Cemetery and Wilmington State Parks.

The neighborhood features several educational and religious institutions, including Ursuline Academy, William Lewis Elementary School, Trinity Episcopal Parish, Mother African Union Church, and the City Church Wilmington. A CVS Pharmacy is located across Delaware Avenue from the theatre.



City Church Wilmington



Former Cool Spring Pumping Station



DCT Delaware Ave. view looking northeast



Cool Springs Park



Cool Springs Reservoir

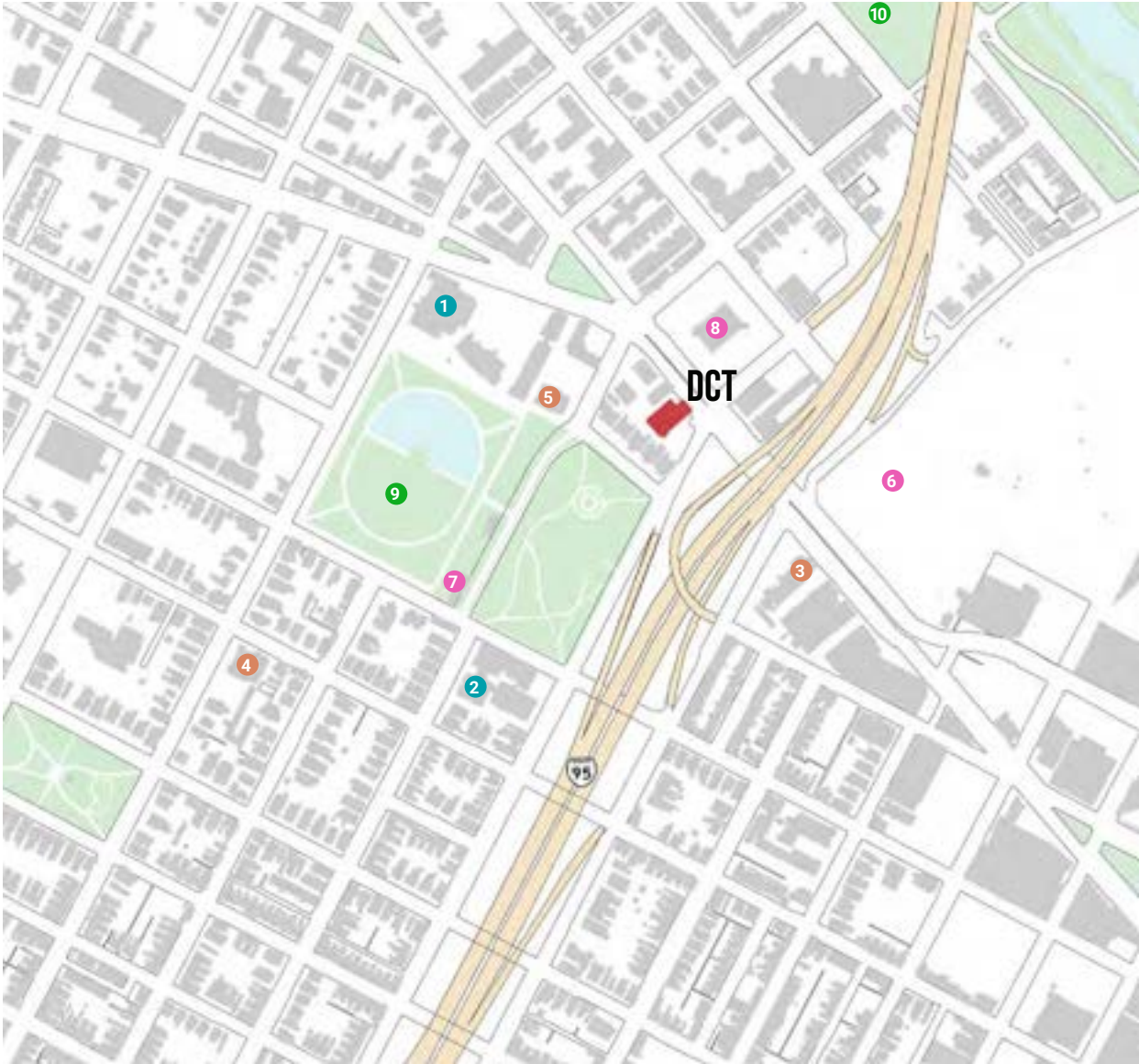


Parking lot across Delaware Ave.



CVS across Delaware Ave.

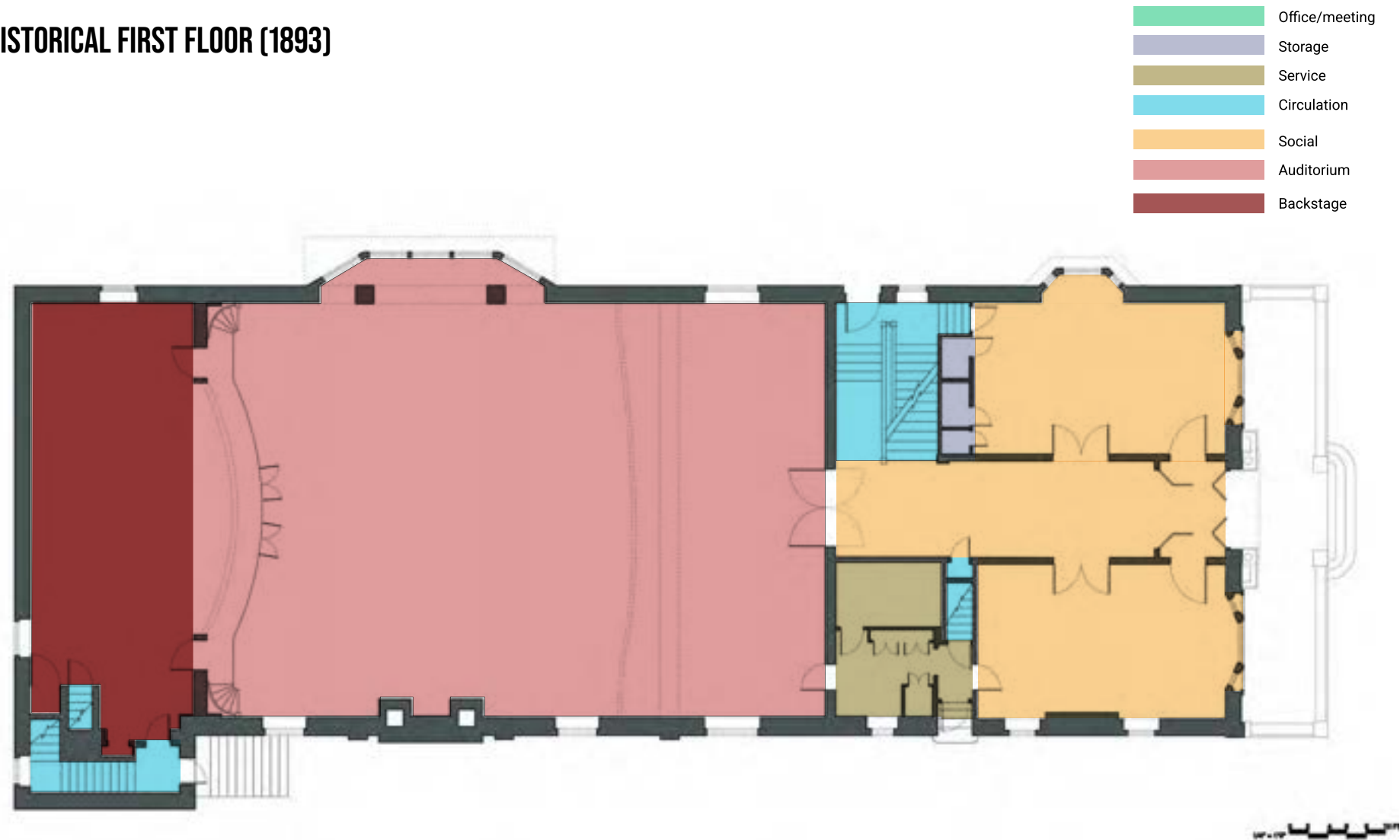
- 1 Ursuline Academy
- 2 William Lewis Elementary School
- 3 Trinity Episcopal Parish
- 4 Mother African Union Church
- 5 City Church Wilmington
- 6 Wilmington & Brandywine Cemetery
- 7 Cool Spring Pumping Station
- 8 CVS
- 9 Cool Springs Park
- 10 Wilmington State Parks





# ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

HISTORICAL FIRST FLOOR (1893)



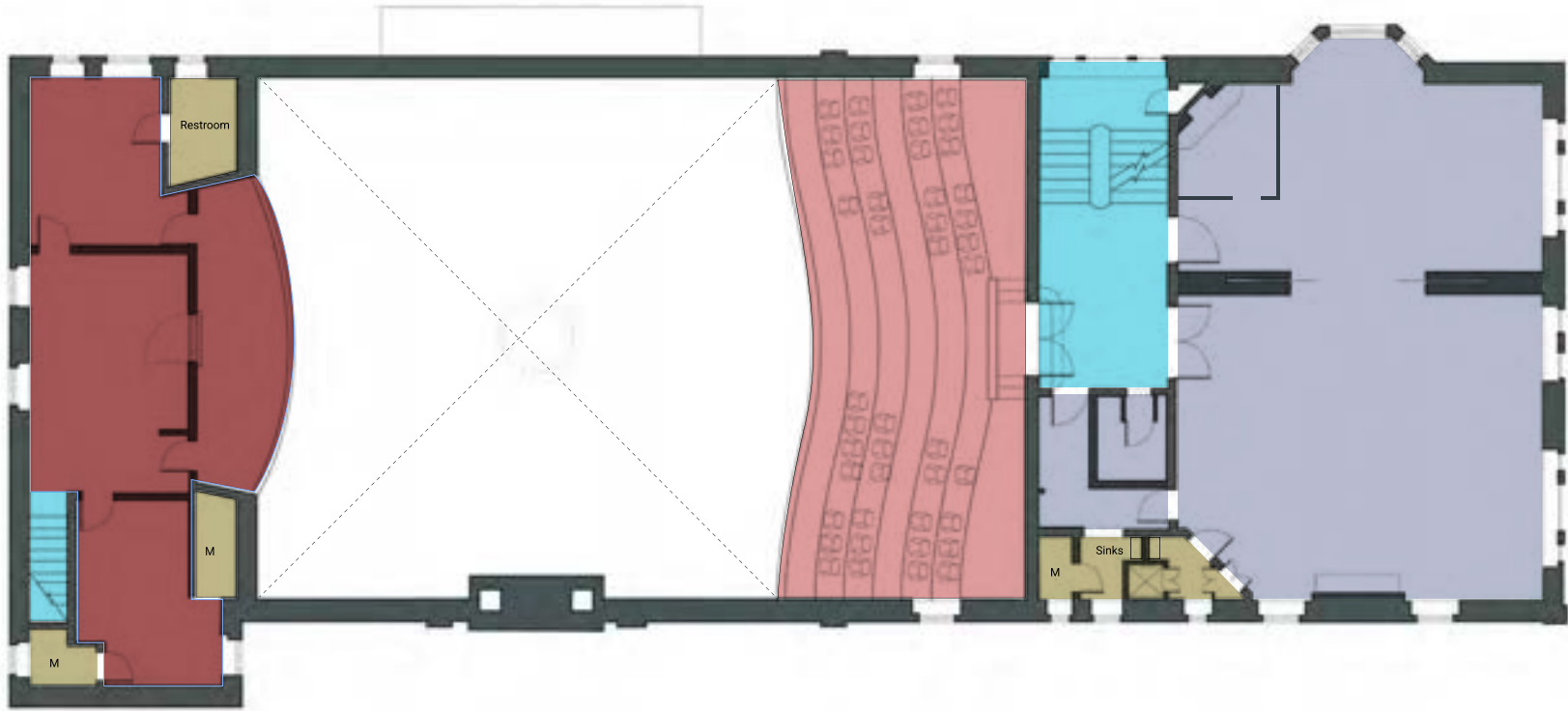
The following set of architectural drawings are based off of Marianna Thomas' interpretation of the original drawing set by Minerva Parker Nichols. The students surveyed the site to include the additions that were constructed after the original building was finished. These drawings highlight the different spaces in accordance to use.

EXISTING FIRST FLOOR (2024)



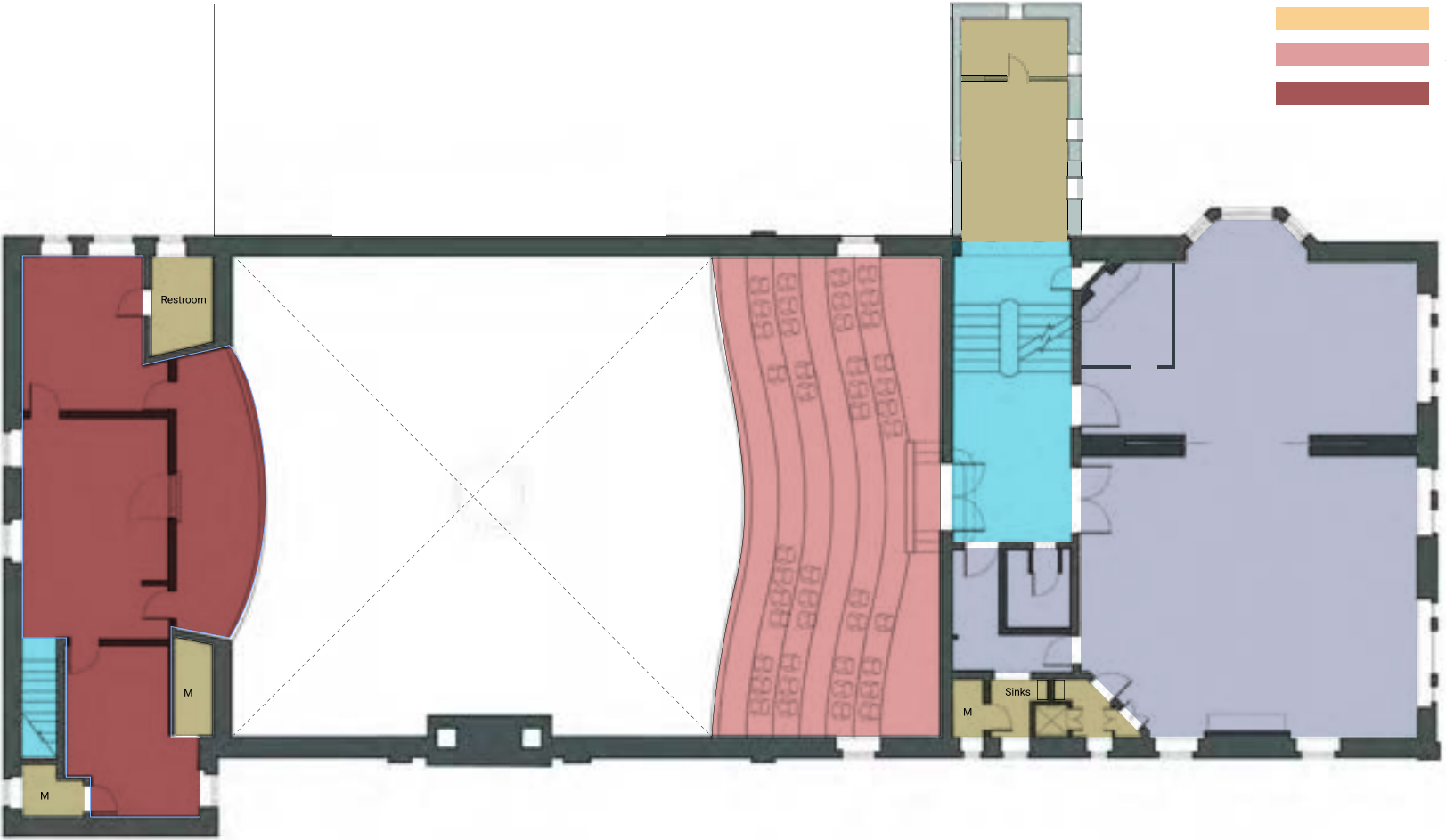
HISTORICAL SECOND FLOOR (1893)

- Office/meeting
- Storage
- Service
- Circulation
- Social
- Auditorium
- Backstage

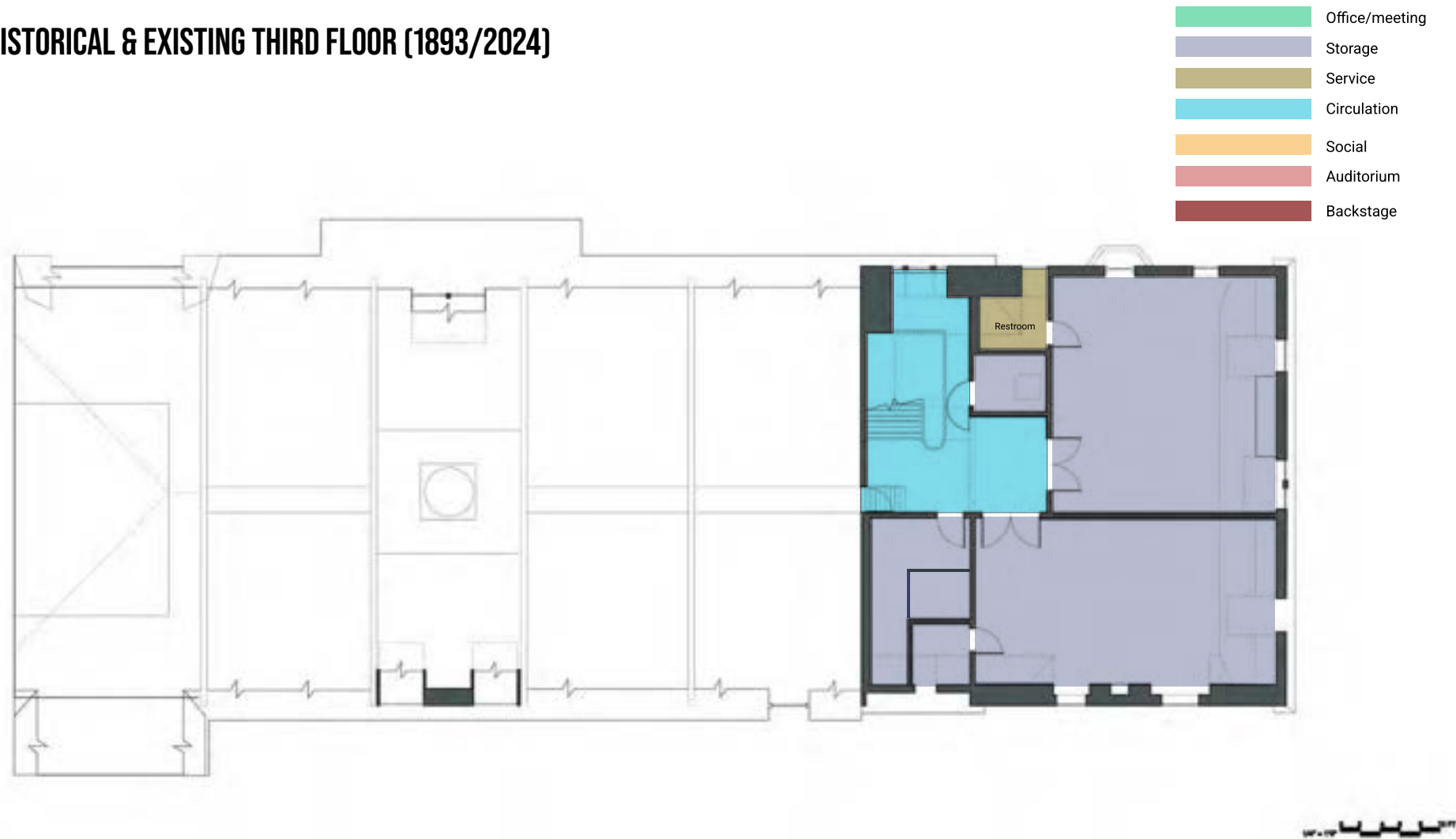


EXISTING SECOND FLOOR (2024)

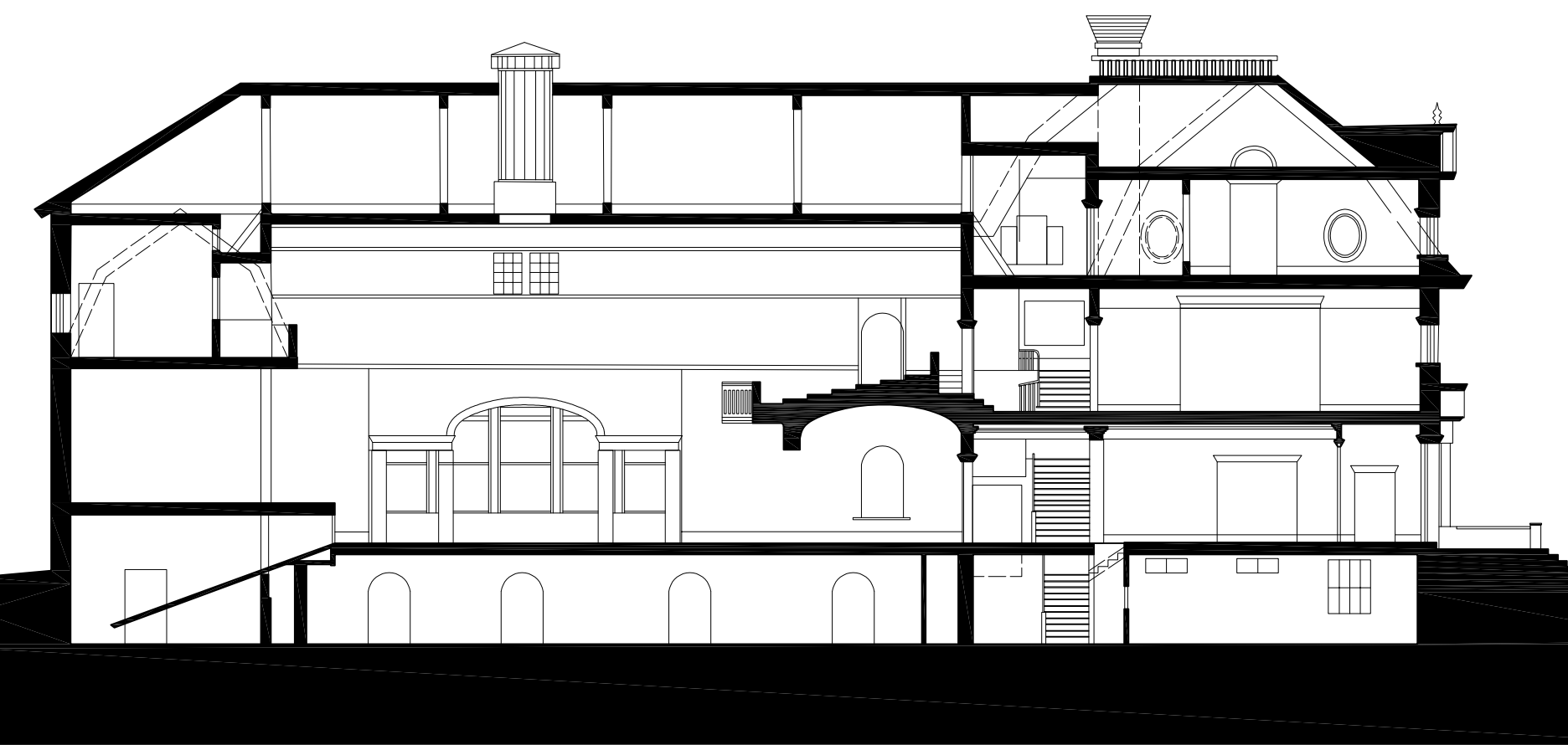
- Office/meeting
- Storage
- Service
- Circulation
- Social
- Auditorium
- Backstage



HISTORICAL & EXISTING THIRD FLOOR (1893/2024)



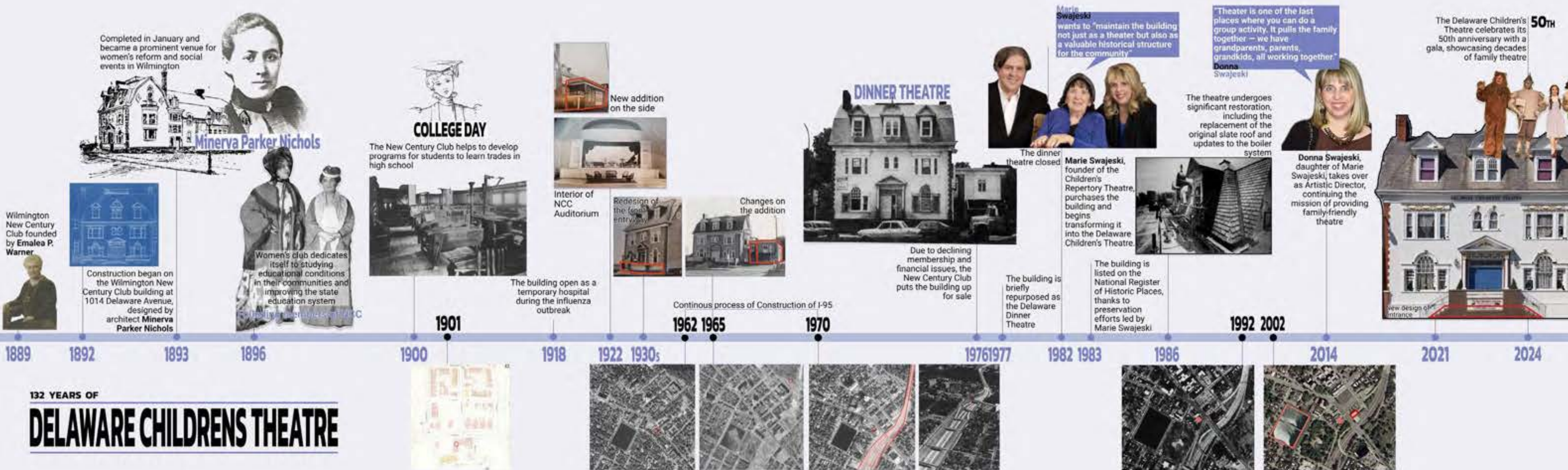
HISTORICAL & EXISTING SECTION (1893/2024)



Longitudinal Section (Marianna Thomas Architects)



# 132 YEARS OF DELAWARE CHILDRENS THEATRE





# HISTORY

## THE HISTORY OF THE WILMINGTON NEW CENTURY CLUB (1889 - 1976)

### INTRODUCTION

The Wilmington New Century Club had a significant and lasting impact on both local Wilmington and statewide Delaware culture, social advocacy, and political reform, particularly in addressing structural inequities at the legislative level. To understand the club's influence, it's important to consider its daily operations and how they were shaped by the club's social history and the physical space in which it operated. The clubhouse, designed to support their diverse pursuits, provided a platform for the club's members to broaden their efforts. It allowed for the expansion of membership, the hosting of educational events, concerts, and lectures, and the introduction of activities such as cooking and dancing. It also created a gathering place for community building, assembly, and action. Thus, the history of the club is closely intertwined with the history of the material space which enabled the club to succeed.



Article Announcing Completion of WNCC Clubhouse (The Delaware Gazette, 1893)

### SEEKING A CLUBHOUSE

The history of 1014 Delaware Ave, Wilmington, which currently houses the Delaware Children's Theatre, dates back to 1892. At that time, the newly established Wilmington New Century Club (WNCC) was seeking land to build a new facility to accommodate its growing membership and needs. Prior to the building, the club had no settled abiding place to meet. Business meetings and lectures were held above a store, while the "Current Events Class" was held in a parlor of one of the members. As the club grew, the Wilmington Young Men's Christian Association allowed the women to use several of their rooms.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, with a membership of three hundred and twenty-five, the club made the decision to build, believing that the new structure should "meet the demands and gratify the taste of its successors."<sup>2</sup> This would prove to be a significant accomplishment, particularly given that the men of Wilmington had unsuccessfully attempted several times to build a clubhouse of their own.

The members of the WNCC identified a business opportunity, noting that

Wilmington was missing a suitable venue for large performances, private dances, and receptions. They pointed out that the opera house to be "too large and too carelessly kept" to meet the standards for an event space.<sup>3</sup> The club invested a capital stock of \$30,000, divided into 6,000 shares valued at \$5 each, with nearly all the women of the club becoming shareholders. The club now effectively operated as a corporation, and Mrs. Charles L. Miller, the club's third president, also took on the role of president of the corporation.<sup>4</sup>



Drawing of WNCC Building After Construction (The Delaware Gazette)



## DESIGNING THE BUILDING

As the process to acquire a new clubhouse progressed, the club established committees to focus on buildings and potential sites. The land, located at the intersection of Delaware and Pennsylvania, was chosen due to its ideal position “at the graciously spaced residential area and the more densely packed downtown.”<sup>5</sup> The Building Committee noted that the standout architectural design came from Minerva Parker Nichols, who had previously designed the women’s clubhouse for Philadelphia’s New Century Club, adding to its appeal for the Wilmington club. The required funds were raised within a year of purchasing the lot with the cost for the land and the building totaling to \$35,153.05, the building costing \$27,000 on its own.<sup>6</sup>

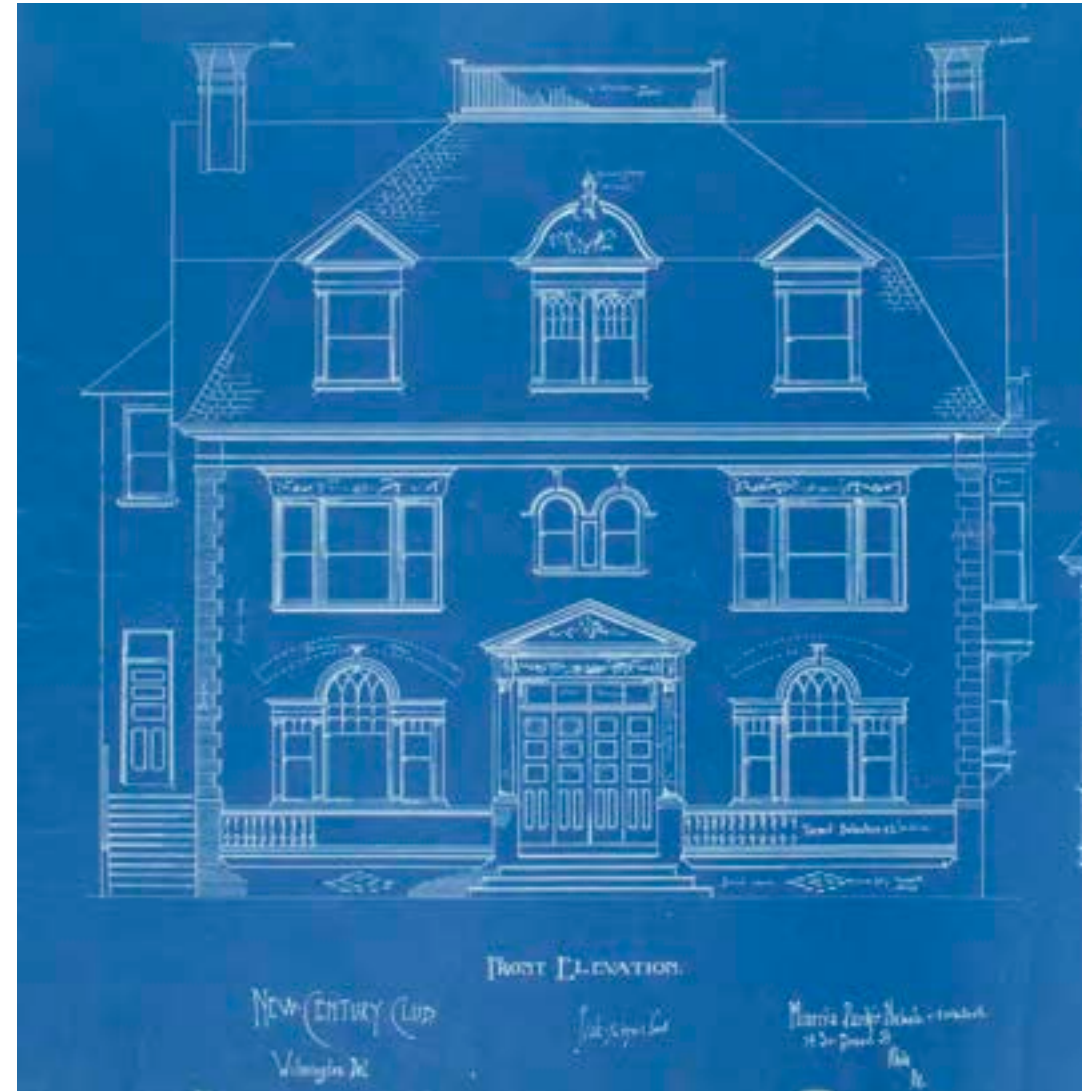
Reports note that the building committee felt it was beyond their budget to purchase curtains, which would have added to the “house-like” appearance of the clubhouse.<sup>7</sup> This accurately references Minerva Parker’s design, which combined a residential aesthetic with the goal of creating a functional public building—a feature that also caught the attention of newspapers announcing its construction, such as *The Delaware Gazette*:

“The front elevation has the characteristics of a private residence. Its lines do not reveal to the passer-by either the business or social purpose for which it is intended. The architect has happily and successfully embodied its business and social needs without sacrifice of any beautiful or artistic effects, but has expressed these in the broad and generous outlines which marks the home as an intelligent and refined hospitality.”<sup>8</sup>

## CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the building began on July 1, 1892, and was completed just seven months later on January 31, 1893. To commemorate the occasion, a cornerstone containing a time capsule was placed at the northeast corner. Although no formal ceremony took place, the women of the club collected various documents related to the club’s founding, including a history of the NCC up to that point, reports, bylaws, newspaper articles about the building’s construction, and other items from the year, such as postage stamps, coins, and photographs of the World’s Fair buildings.<sup>9</sup>

As a business endeavor, the clubhouse proved highly successful, with its rooms consistently sought after by various groups and the two offices on the main floor being nearly always rented. Within the first year, the front hall spaces were leased to an ice cream parlor and a pharmacy, thanks to the building’s practical design.<sup>10</sup> The entire venture offered club members valuable experience in finance and business, enhancing their financial and social standing in the city while providing Wilmington with its first venue for large events.



*Blueprint Drawing of NCC Building: (Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.)*

## MINERVA PARKER NICHOLS

Minerva Parker Nichols was born on May 14, 1862, in the village of Glassfield, Illinois, in rural Lancaster. Her architectural career was partly inspired by her grandfather, Seth A. Doane, who designed both houses and “prairie schooners” for Western settlers.<sup>11</sup> She received her formal education in architectural design at the Normal Art School and the Franklin Institute Drawing School. Around 1885, Minerva moved to Philadelphia with her family, with whom she lived until 1893, even having married two years earlier. Parker Nichols began her architectural apprenticeship in 1886 at Edwin W. Thorne’s office. When Thorne left, she took over his role, becoming the “the first woman to establish and maintain an independent practice”, working without male supervision or a male partner.<sup>12</sup> In 1889, she announced the founding of her own architectural firm in downtown Philadelphia, which she ran until 1896.

Around 1890, Nichols gained significant recognition, securing two major commissions, both of which were for women: the Philadelphia New Century Club, one of the first women’s clubs in the U.S.,

and the Queen Isabella Association, a proto feminist organization. The Queen Isabella Association tasked Minerva with designing a building inspired by the Alhambra Palace in Spain for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where her design garnered significant public praise and recognition.<sup>13</sup> In 1892, Parker Nichol's design for the Wilmington New Century Club won approval and was celebrated for its "womanly genius" in planning a "perfectly convenient dwelling" that suited the club's needs and intentions to host a variety of events, classes, and activities.<sup>14</sup> Today, the Wilmington New Century Club is the only surviving public commission by Minerva.

Throughout her career, Parker Nichols designed over 80 projects, many of which have since been demolished, leaving a notable mark on the railroad suburbs of Philadelphia. Her specialty was residential architecture, and for a woman entering the architectural field in nineteenth-century America, concentrating on domestic architecture was a logical choice, as "the same conventions by which white women were deemed the arbiters of taste made

it acceptable for women to become designers of homes."<sup>15</sup> Minerva's entry into architecture, leveraging her privilege as a white woman and her ability to navigate the domestic sphere, parallels how the women the clubs she designed also stretched the boundaries of the domestic realm to assert their presence in the public domain.



Portrait of Minerva Parker Nichols (<https://www.minervaparkernichols.com/>)



The Philadelphia New Century Club ([http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/washw/images/D/D10\\_1.jpg](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/washw/images/D/D10_1.jpg))

## THE RISE OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

Women's clubs began to appear in the United States around the 1860s, functioning primarily as "study clubs" focused on self-improvement. Most members were white middle-upper class women who read books and literature and presented papers on historical subjects to address their lack of formal education. Over time, the topics expanded to include political and social sciences. It was not until the 1880s and 1890s that the clubs evolved into organizations dedicated to community improvement and social reform.<sup>16</sup>

The first women's club in the nation, the Sorosis Club of New York, was established in 1868. However, in the Philadelphia area, women's clubs began to emerge after the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, where the Women's Pavilion showcased the vital contributions of women to society, including their roles in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. In the Pavilion's newspaper, Eliza Sproat Turner, president of the Women's Committee for the Centennial, published a rationale for creating women's clubs, which significantly influenced the growth of the women's club movement across the country.<sup>17</sup>

Building on the momentum created by the Women's Pavilion, Turner collaborated with Sarah Catherine Fraley Hallowell in 1877 to found the New Century Club, one of the first women's clubs in the country. This initiative led to the formation of New Century Club branches and spiked the development of women's clubs throughout the Philadelphia and New York regions.<sup>18</sup> In 1889, when the Sorosis Club of New York City invited 61 women's clubs to come together to create the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Jane Croly, the founder of the New York City club and a prominent women's leader, urged that club committees examine a wide array of social issues, including reformatories, streets, sanitation, lighting, and education.<sup>19</sup>



Portrait of Emalea P. Warner, C. 1900 (<https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009656532>)



## THE FOUNDING OF THE CLUB

Emalea P. Warner attended the meeting in New York City and founded the Wilmington New Century Club (WNCC) in 1889, inspired by these progressive social concerns. The daughter of Lea Pusey, a prominent industrialist in Wilmington, Emalea was raised in a Quaker family known for their commitment to helping those in need, an influence that significantly shaped her adult life.<sup>20</sup> Before founding the Wilmington chapter of the New Century Club, she played a key role in establishing the city's Associated Charities in 1884. As a young woman, she became one of Delaware's most influential social leaders, with a strong focus on education. She chaired the education committee of both the NCC and the Delaware State Federation.<sup>21</sup> The WNCC began modestly, with forty members, eventually growing to sixty-five in its first year. Initially, the club focused on supporting sewing and cooking classes in public schools and advocating for literary lectures for its members.<sup>22</sup>

In 1896, the national convention of the Federation of Women's Clubs formalized Croly's 1889 demands from the New York City meeting by passing a resolution

urging women's clubs to focus on studying educational conditions in their communities and working to improve the state education system—an effort that many women's clubs were already beginning to pursue at the time. As such, the WNCC's initial initiatives included establishing sewing, wood-working, cooking and other trades classes in schools, donating pictures, books, and magazines, implementing penny savings programs, creating a lunchroom for Wilmington High School, and advocating for medical inspections, ultimately securing nurses for the Wilmington public schools.<sup>23</sup>



*Auditorium Photographed in 1922 (NCC Collection: The Historical Society of Delaware)*

## THE PURPOSEFUL DESIGN

In addition to these initiatives, the club continued to offer classes that emphasized traditional “self-improvement” elements. The WNCC hosted a variety of lectures on both “culturally enriching” topics like literature, art, and history, as well as more “more serious economic social and political matters” such as business training, school challenges, and global affairs.<sup>24</sup> The committee invited prominent speakers, including Woodrow Wilson, Jane Addams, and Lyman Abbott.<sup>25</sup> Early newspaper advertisements and announcements suggest that these lectures were very popular and in high demand. The auditorium, with a seating capacity of 200, was well-equipped to host a variety of lectures.

Near the entrance of the building, a bulletin board was displayed to advertise various classes and activities offered in the space. It was noted that the building was open at all hours, both day and night, allowing visitors to consult the board whenever needed. Various classes were offered, covering a wide range of subjects, including language courses in French, German, and Latin, as well as physical classes in dancing and fencing,

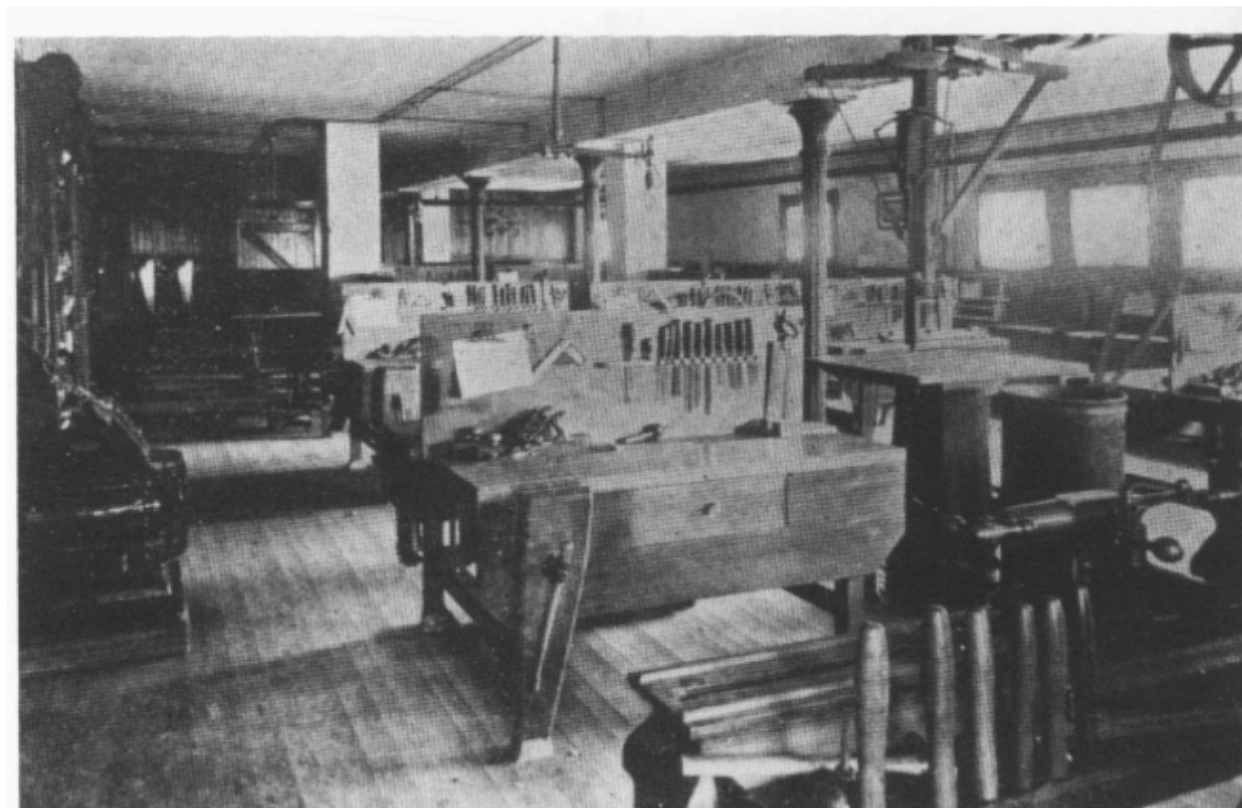
and practical classes in dressmaking and cooking.<sup>26</sup> The building’s original layout was designed to accommodate a wide range of classes and interests, offering flexibility to suit various needs. An article detailing the interior described an opening beneath the stage where chairs could be moved to create space for dancing on the polished floor. The electric lights were said to be “studded along the curved ceiling,” providing immaculate illumination for the stage. On the second floor, two large parlors, a pantry, a china closet, and dumbwaiters catered to tea parties, while the parlors—also known as the assembly room—served as the gathering place for meetings, teas, and small lectures or concerts. The third floor featured two dressing rooms, which were used for dances and receptions. Lastly, the basement housed a cellar with a kitchen, perfectly suited for cooking classes. Given the building’s frequent use, the kitchen was undoubtedly a valuable asset that was put to good use.<sup>27</sup>

## EARLY EDUCATION INITIATIVES

One of the WNCC’s first political advocacy efforts focused on compulsory education in the mid-1890s, a controversial issue since many farmers opposed the bill due to their reliance on child labor. Although the bill did not initially pass, the club continued to attempt to advocate for it again through the new state constitution in 1897, but was unsuccessful once more. They then turned to local efforts, writing letters to property-owning women in Wilmington, urging them to vote for board of education candidates who supported compulsory education.<sup>28</sup> Before the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, twenty-two states granted partial suffrage, meaning women could vote in certain elections. Delaware was one of these states, allowing property-owning women the right to vote in local school board elections. Thanks to these extensive efforts, in 1902, the Delaware Federation passed a resolution favoring a compulsory education law, as well as a summer school program, normal school instruction, manual training classes, and graded union schools in rural areas.<sup>29</sup> This pattern of persistence through advocacy and local engagement would become a hallmark of the Wilmington club,

contributing significantly to the passing of various resolutions.

Another notable state-level achievement occurred when Mrs. Warner and the education committee urged the state legislature in 1909 to empower the State Board of Education to propose a bill for a state college and normal school for women. Although this proposal did not pass, the clubwomen organized a statewide committee of college women to advocate for the establishment of a women’s college and collaborated with the State Federation of Women’s Clubs, holding several meetings that included various legislators. Finally, in 1913, a bill introduced by the State Board of Education to “establish and maintain an Affiliated College for Women at Newark” was passed.<sup>30</sup>



Wilmington High School Woodshop c. 1900 (NCC Collection, The Historical Society of Delaware)



THE SCOPE OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL REFORM

Among the club's original committees was the Current Events committee, which focused on local, national, and international issues related to education, philanthropy, arts, science, and politics. Importantly, this committee served as one of the few platforms for discussing controversial topics such as suffrage, the war in Europe, and socialism.

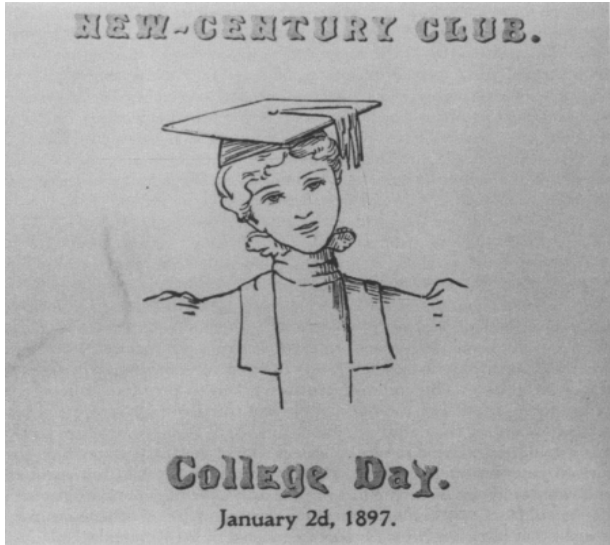
The philanthropy committee, another original committee established in 1889, changed its name in 1908 to the social service committee to better reflect its progressive work. This committee sent letters and petitions to newspapers, influential individuals, city and state officials, state legislators, and Congress members. A key aspect of the club's mission was the networks and connections its members established with powerful men and politicians, which helped pass policies they could not yet vote on. The philanthropy committee organized an industrial school for girls, advocated for better accommodations for female prisoners, and called for female inspectors in mills, factories, and stores where women and children worked. The committee also played a crucial role in

forming a permanent state child labor committee in 1910 and establishing a juvenile court and probation officer in 1911 to assist children who were arrested.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the clubs' commitment to social reform, it had restrictive entrance policies, including fees that supported building maintenance, effectively excluding women of lower socioeconomic status. Furthermore, to become a member, a candidate had to be proposed by an existing member, and as Gail Stanislow notes based on her reading of the NCC minutes, all selected were typically middle or upper class, and white, often hailing from prominent local families. Most of these women resided in affluent neighborhoods, suggesting that, given their status, they likely had servants to manage household chores while they engaged in club activities.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, the club was structured to advocate for the interests of working women (including possibly the servants in their own households), while maintaining a separation from them as club members.

Additionally, it's important to note that while some social work undertaken by club

members genuinely addressed the needs of disadvantaged communities, particularly those with lower economic status, other efforts appeared more focused on preserving the societal and political norms of the time, which often marginalized the voices of the Black community. In addition to the significant lack of diversity within the club, there were a few instances where they attempted to persuade the school board to offer a night class for training cooks at the Black Howard High School, likely driven by a desire to fulfill their own household labor needs.<sup>34</sup>

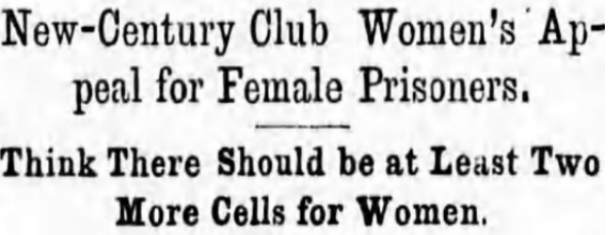


"College Day" Pamphlets for Annual NCC Event (NCC Collection, Historical Society of Delaware)

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Despite their support for various progressive initiatives, the New Century Club never endorsed the women's suffrage movement even after the General Federation of Women's Clubs endorsed the movement in 1914, with other women's clubs following suit.<sup>35</sup> Scholars of women's history note that prior to 1914, attitudes that opposed women's suffrage were quite common, as "the right to vote was seen as a challenge to the family and outside the proper role of women."<sup>36</sup> The club likely sought to avoid political controversies to prevent alienating its more conservative members. Alternatively, by the time women secured the right to vote in 1920, many club members committed to women's rights may have found themselves occupied with other reform efforts and political movements, which diverted their attention. Certainly this was the case for the WNCC's founder, Emalea Warner, who went on to be the vice-president of the Women's Suffrage Association and the first president of the new League of Women Voters chapter in 1920.<sup>37</sup> Despite not ever officially endorsing the movement, the current events committee did provide a platform for those who supported the women's suffrage

movement to discuss it, as evidenced by its frequent mentions in the NCC minutes.



Newspaper Headline about WNCC Prison Advocacy Work (The Daily Republican, 1901)

THE CULT OF DOMESTICITY

The WNCC was at its most active from its founding in 1889 until 1920, a period of significant change for women in the United States, particularly for upper-class white women, as they navigated the shifting boundaries both within and beyond the domestic sphere. As developments in the late nineteenth century created more leisure time for upper-class women, they began to engage in activities outside of domesticity by forming clubs like the New Century. In this context, "women were not challenging their traditional role in society as caretakers of the home and nurturers of children," but rather, "they were expanding their role to include the community at large as an extension of the home."<sup>38</sup> Often referred to as "Domestic Feminism" or "The Cult of Domesticity," the "domestic feminists" of the Wilmington New Century Club used the evolving discourse on women's roles in the home and the intersection of work and family as a platform for pursuing social reform. This parallely coincided with Minerva Parker Nichols' entry into the architecture field, where she focused on residential or "domestic" designs.

## WORLD WAR I

From 1914 to 1918, the Social Service Committee continued its efforts, engaging in Red Cross relief work, advocating for medical care and aid for soldiers, and supporting the sale of Liberty and Victory bonds. In March 1918, shortly after the war, the club briefly opened its doors to function as a temporary hospital during the influenza outbreak.<sup>39</sup>

## A NEW ADDITION

Advocacy to that of the pre-war years continued, leading to the building's first expansion in 1922, when a wing was added adjacent to the auditorium, later known as the buffet room. Keeping the spirit of Parker Nichols' original design, the extension of the building retrofitted the bay window from the demolished facade onto the new elevation.<sup>40</sup>

In 1923, a meeting at the Wilmington New Century Club led to the proposal and subsequent creation of an organization for junior clubs. Sixteen years later, a 1939 newspaper article proudly highlighted the club's annual meetings with junior clubs, now numbering six in total, which was considered "gratifying and encouraging" to longtime members.<sup>41</sup>



*From the Annual Report (1921)*

By 1939, the club still had 400 members, though it is unclear how actively they were involved. However, it appears that the club's ongoing efforts in civic engagement continued, with members still "working with determination and a deep sense of constructive purpose" in areas such as education, libraries, health, markets, roads, garbage collection, and overall civic improvement.<sup>42</sup> At this time, the building—now with a new addition—was reported to be in excellent condition, retaining the same quality as when it was first built, with the property's value significantly increased, estimated at about \$100,000.<sup>43</sup>

By the late 1930s, the Wilmington New Century Club had started to see more of a noticeable decline in both membership and activity, along with a reduction in its social and political influence. The club was regarded as "never again reaching the heights of the reforming spirit that had driven it in the years before the war," referring to the peak of its impact before World War I.<sup>44</sup>

Social advocacy continued, though with a



*New Century Club, Exterior (Delaware Historical Society, WNCC Annual Report, 1922.)*



smaller following. As some social movements advanced, club members remained active in supporting the rights of those challenging the status quo. In 1965, the club initiated an ABA (Access to Buildings for All) campaign aimed at improving building accessibility in Wilmington. To carry out this initiative, the club formed an ABA committee that planned to conduct local architectural surveys and propose recommendations for remodeling or new construction projects, ensuring better accommodations for physically handicapped individuals.<sup>45</sup>



*Club members on auditorium stage c.1940s (NCC Collection, Historical Society of Delaware)*



*Building exterior 1965 (General Federation of Women's Clubs)*

## I-95 CONSTRUCTION

I-95 in the 1960s, which was built along the eastern side of the theater, establishing a major north-south transportation route. While the interstate improved access to the city in some respects, its construction south of Wilmington—cutting through farmland and spurring suburban sprawl—permanently altered the neighborhoods of thousands of city residents. The development also had a constraining effect on the clubhouse and its location in the larger Cool Spring Park area, limiting future expansion and development opportunities around the theater, while dramatically reshaping the landscape and these neighborhoods in a profoundly disruptive way.

Given its close proximity to the New Century Club building, the property likely felt disconnected from the once-strong community ties that had made the area a safe, walkable space for Wilmington residents to gather at all hours.



*Wilmington Downtown, 1939 (Hagley Museum and Library)*



*I-95 Construction, Wilmington, Delaware (Delaware Public Archives)*

## THE END OF AN ERA FOR THE CLUB

On August 10, 1977, the Wilmington Evening Journal published an article announcing that the WNCC building was set to become a dinner theater. The article noted that the Wilmington New Century Club could no longer compete with “dwindling attendance, increased expenses, and problems with daytime parking,” prompting the owners to sell the building.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the sale of the building, the club continued to exist, albeit at a much smaller scale. Given the significant advancements women made throughout the 20th century, many members began entering the workforce, likely limiting their availability for the extensive commitments required by the club. This shift offered them new avenues to engage with the public sphere, rendering the WNCC as an organization somewhat obsolete. Since club members had launched projects essential to the quality of life in both the city and state, much of the club’s work laid the groundwork for the social and political reform movements that eventually emerged and succeeded in Wilmington and throughout Delaware.

## THE DINNER THEATRE (1977-1982)

The Dinner Theatre opened in October 1977, offering a new form of entertainment for Wilmington's residents. Despite initial success, the venture struggled to generate consistent revenue due to the operational challenges of running a business in an aging building with outdated facilities.<sup>48</sup> The dinner theatre closed its doors in 1982, again leaving the building vacant.<sup>49</sup>

## TRANSFORMATION TO DCT (1982)

At this point, Marie Swajeski, founder of the Children's Repertory Theatre (CRT), saw an opportunity to provide a permanent home for her growing company. Founded in 1973, CRT quickly developed a reputation for producing exceptional family theatre. In 1982, with the support of local volunteers and community members, Swajeski purchased the New Century Club building, transforming it into the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT).<sup>50</sup> According to Donna Swajeski, Marie's daughter, her parents promised to keep the building a community asset, ensuring it would remain open for future generations.<sup>51</sup>



*The New Century Club on Delaware Avenue has been sold to the Beavers, Wilmington, Delaware, 1977: (Evening Journal.)*

## DCT PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION EFFORTS

When Marie Swajeski acquired the building in 1982, Swajeski recognized the building's historic significance and led efforts to have it listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a goal that was achieved in 1983.<sup>52</sup>

However, the building was in dire need of repairs. The original slate roof had deteriorated, and the boiler system, electrical wiring, and lighting system were outdated, posing both safety risks and operational challenges.<sup>53</sup> The organization launched fundraising efforts to restore these essential systems, and over the next decade, the Delaware Children's Theatre embarked on an extensive series of renovations aimed at preserving the building's historical integrity while making it suitable for modern performances.<sup>54</sup>

Donna Marie Swajeski, who succeeded her mother as Artistic Director in 2014, oversaw several creative projects to modernize the theatre while preserving its charm and architectural character. These included installing new sound systems, theatrical lighting, and stage equipment, all of which were essential for the theatre to compete

with more modern venues.<sup>55</sup> In addition to these technical improvements, the theatre's interior was refurbished to reflect its historical roots, including the restoration of original woodwork and architectural features, which had been damaged or obscured over the years.<sup>56</sup>

The replacement of the 5,000-square-foot slate roof cost \$47,700—a fraction of the \$500,000 estimated for complete renovation. The group was granted \$20,000 from the federal Community Development Block Grant program, but additional funds were needed.<sup>57</sup>



*Workers scrape paint high above the building, Wilmington, Delaware, 1984 (The News Journal)*



Swajeski remarked that restoring the building was challenging, stating they had to “gut the whole roof” to make it safe. While interior renovations were still necessary, the priority was to secure the roof. As the restoration progressed, she expressed her commitment to maintaining the building as a theatre and a valuable historic structure for the community.

Donna Swajeski has also contributed creatively, writing original musicals such as *One Magic Kiss* and continuing the tradition of making the theatre a place for both children and families to enjoy live performances. In 2024, the theatre celebrated its 50th anniversary with a gala themed around *Alice’s Rock & Roll Adventure*, marking a half-century of success.<sup>59</sup>

ENTRANCE

The entrance has undergone several transformations that balance modern needs with respect for the building’s original design. Initially, the entrance featured a wide platform spanning the building’s full width, with steps leading to a central doorway. This design, visible in 1930s photographs, remained unchanged through the 1960s.

By around 2000, the platform had been reduced to match the width of the doorway, with stairs added on either side, creating a more streamlined appearance. Additionally, the masonry pillars supporting the railings were replaced with full cast iron railings, offering a more cohesive and durable design. Recent changes to the handrails, documented through Google Street View imagery from 2014 to 2016, further reflect ongoing adjustments to improve functionality while maintaining historical integrity.



*New Century Club State Federation Convention, 1930 (Delaware Historical Society)*



*New Century Club, Wilmington, exterior 1900 (Delaware Historical Society)*



*Delaware Children's Theatre (McGhievery)*

CURRENT CHALLENGES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, which devastated arts organizations worldwide, DCT found innovative ways to keep its community engaged. While the theater had to close its doors for over a year, it pivoted to virtual programming, offering online workshops and storytelling sessions to maintain connections with its audience<sup>60</sup>. This period of isolation also allowed the organization to reflect on its operations and plan for a more sustainable future. Once in-person performances resumed, DCT implemented safety protocols and expanded its outreach to reassure audiences and volunteers of a safe return to the theater.

DCT’s longevity can be attributed to its unique strengths. The theater’s emphasis on family-friendly productions, such as beloved classics like *Peter Pan* and *The Wizard of Oz*, has solidified its reputation as a welcoming space for children to experience the magic of live performance. Over the past 30 years, DCT has diversified its offerings, incorporating innovative production techniques such as puppetry and modern sound systems to appeal to contemporary audiences. The theater’s educational

programs, including drama workshops and mentorship opportunities, have further enriched its mission by fostering creativity and confidence in young participants.

Central to DCT’s survival has been its ability to cultivate strong partnerships. Collaborations with local businesses, schools, and nonprofit organizations have provided vital resources for productions and community initiatives. For example, DCT’s partnerships with schools have allowed it to bring theater experiences directly to students, expanding its reach beyond the stage. Additionally, local grants and fundraising events, such as holiday performances and community galas, have played a critical role in sustaining the theater’s financial health.

Despite its many successes, DCT faces significant challenges. While a historic gem, the aging infrastructure of the building requires constant attention and significant investment. Issues such as the lack of air conditioning, an outdated heating system, and costly structural repairs continue to strain the theater’s resources<sup>61</sup>. Though fostering a strong sense of community,

the organization’s reliance on a volunteer-driven operational model presents additional hurdles. Many volunteers lack the specialized skills needed for complex building maintenance and long-term fundraising, creating a gap that external contractors and preservation specialists must fill. Balancing historic preservation with the need for modernization remains one of DCT’s most pressing issues. While recent projects, such as roof replacement and electrical upgrades, have ensured the building’s functionality, they often come at the expense of expanding programming and other initiatives. These challenges underscore the need for a more sustainable model that combines volunteer support with professional management, ensuring DCT can continue serving future generations.



DCT Show, 2024 (DCT Instagram)

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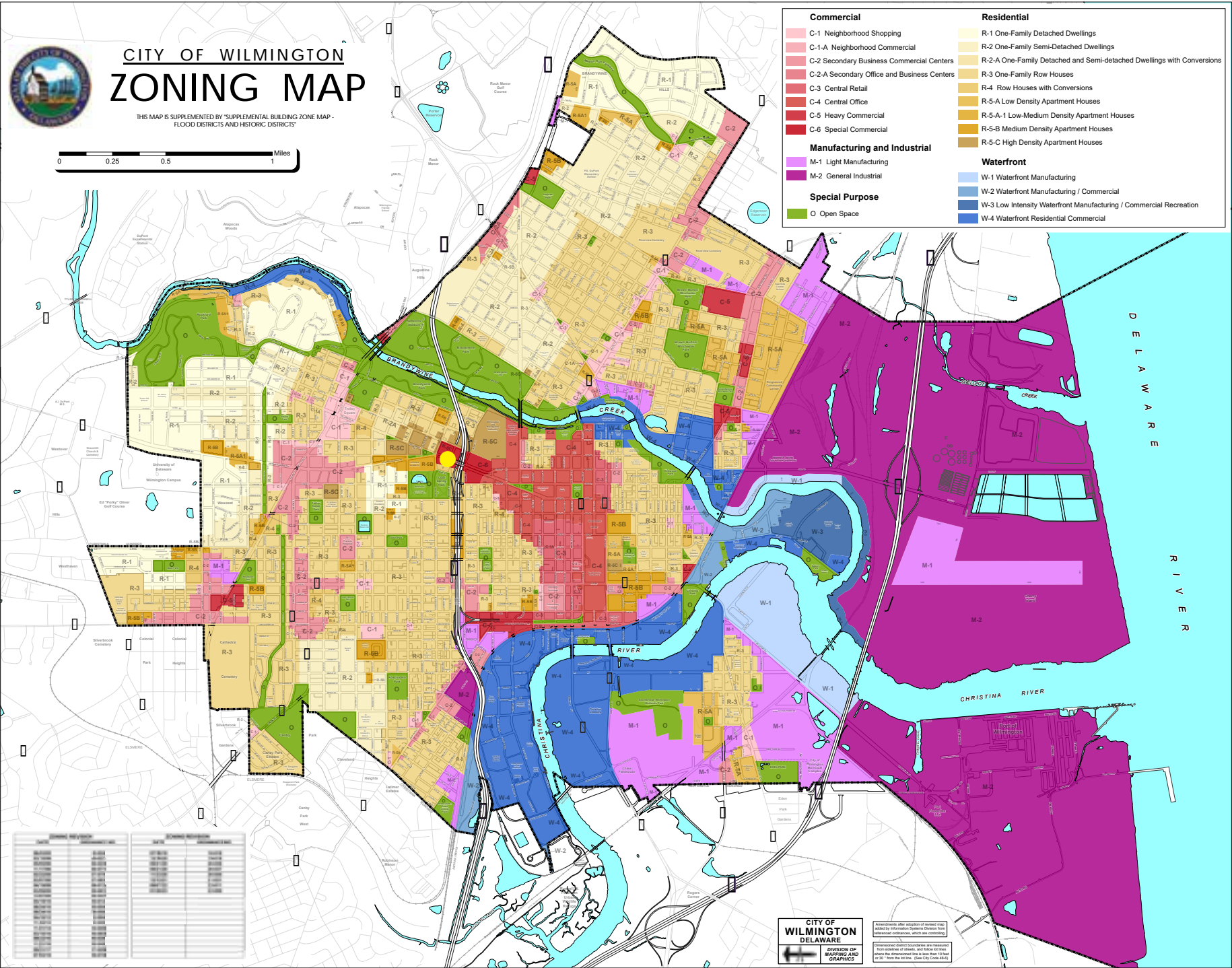
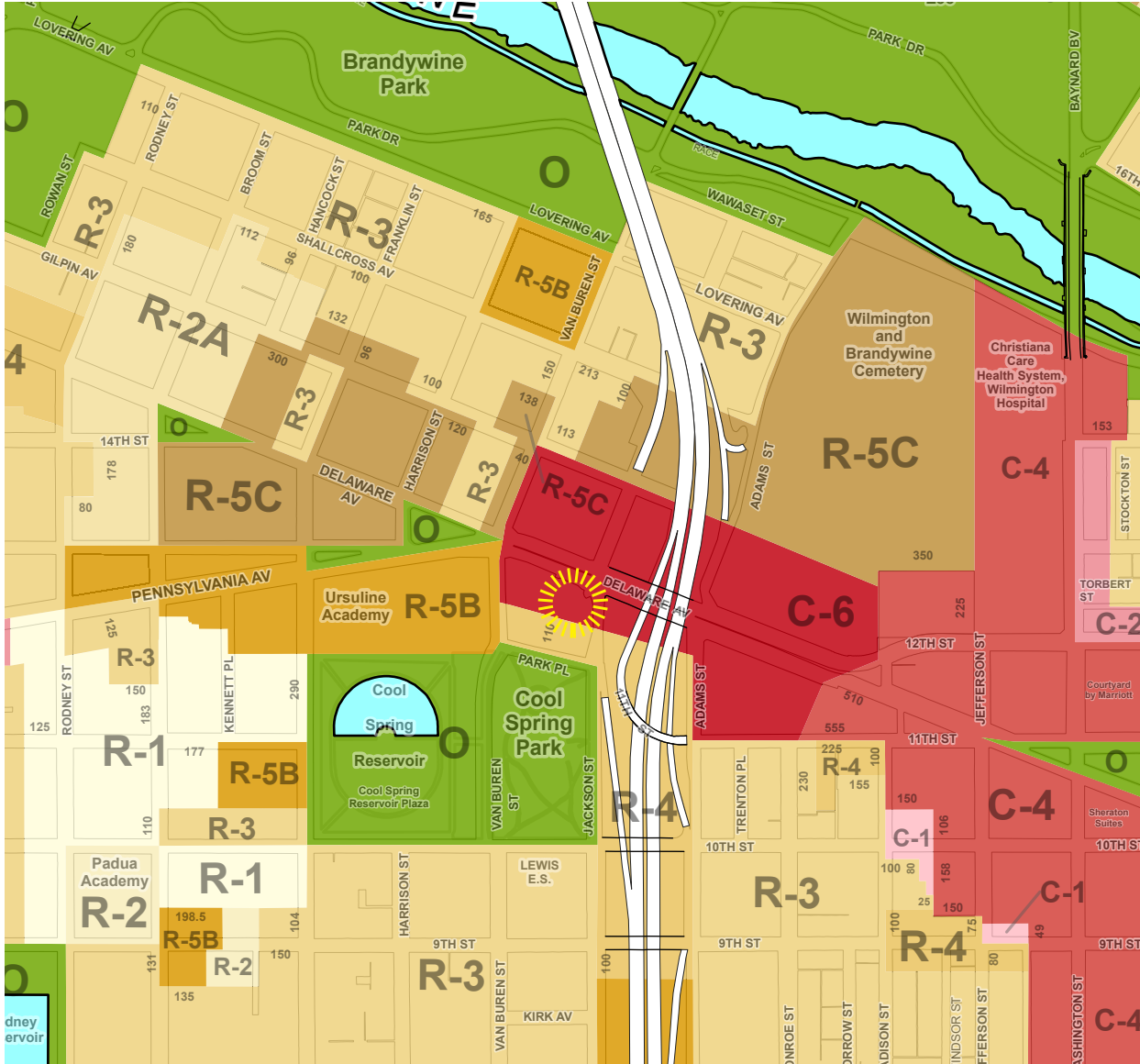
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# REGULATORY CONTEXT

## ZONING

Wilmington’s zoning demonstrates a clear east-to-west progression. The Delaware and Christina Rivers’ waterfronts are predominantly industrial with W-1 and W-2 zones, though some areas have been rezoned to W-4 for mixed-use development. A transitional zone of light manufacturing (M-1) and secondary business (C-2) separates the waterfront from downtown’s dense commercial district (C-3/C-4). The western portions of the city become residential, featuring rowhouses (R-3/R-4) closer to downtown and single-family homes (R-1/R-2) further west, with neighborhood commercial (C-1) zones interspersed throughout.

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is located at the edge of the commercial zone, serving as a transition point to the residential zones to the north, west, and south. It is situated within the **C-6 Special Commercial** zone.



C-6 SPECIAL COMMERCIAL

PURPOSE

The C-6 district, special commercial, is designed to encourage intense and high quality commercial uses along boulevards and major arterial streets leading to and from Wilmington's downtown area. Special controls on height and bulk are designed to provide a proper setting for the development of these commercial uses. Review and approval of all new buildings and uses by a design review and preservation commission is required.

USES, ETC.

Generally, in any C-6 district, no building or premises shall be used and no building shall be erected or altered, except as provided elsewhere in this chapter, which is arranged, intended or designed to be used except for one or more of the uses listed in the following paragraphs of this section, subject to the review and approval of the design review and preservation commission, and further subject to off-street parking and loading requirements, but in no case

shall the powers of the design review and preservation commission be exercised until such time as standards for the review of buildings to be erected or altered in C-6 districts have been adopted by the design review and preservation commission and by city council, following which, such powers shall be exercised in accordance therewith.

USES PERMITTED AS A MATTER OF RIGHT

- 1. Any use permitted in R-5-C districts
- 2. Retail store or shop for the performance of personal services, subject to conditions
- 3. Office, bank or other financial institution
- 4. Restaurant or lunchroom
- 5. Accessory parking, subject to conditions
- 6. Private garage, subject to conditions
- 7. Public garage and service facility for motor vehicles, but not paint or body shop
- 8. Private club or lodge not conducted for gain
- 9. Hotel or motel
- 10. Telephone central office
- 11. Indoor theater or assembly hall

- 12. Commercial parking lot
- 13. A sign other than a billboard
- 14. Emergency shelter, subject to conditions
- 15. Antenna mounted to a roof at a minimum height of 10 stories or 100'

USES PERMITTED UNDER ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT APPROVAL

Commercial telecommunications antenna

PERMITTED ACCESSORY USES AND BUILDINGS

Uses or buildings customarily incident to the uses permitted in C-6 districts

PERMITTED HOURS OF OPERATION

- Consumer recycling collection center: 7am-9pm
- Limitations on certain convenience stores, gas stations, fast food establishments (see Section 5-78(f))

MAXIMUM HEIGHT

None prescribed

MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

10.0

MINIMUM FRONT SETBACK

10'

MINIMUM SIDE YARD SETBACK

- Side yards are generally not required in commercial districts except when required by Section 602 of the Building Code
- Side yards provided where not required shall be a minimum of 4' wide
- See Section 48-215 for additional exceptions for lots adjacent to residential zoning districts.

MINIMUM REAR YARD SETBACK

None prescribed (see Section 48-214(b) for exceptions for corner lots)

Wilmington City Code, Commercial Districts, C-6 districts, Published 1993 by Order of the City Council, Adopted June 17, 1993, Effective July 1, 1993, [https://library.municode.com/de/wilmington/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIWICO\\_CH48ZO\\_ARTVCODI\\_DIV2USRE\\_S48-198DI](https://library.municode.com/de/wilmington/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIWICO_CH48ZO_ARTVCODI_DIV2USRE_S48-198DI)



## CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

### COOL SPRING/TILTON PARK CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Delaware Children’s Theatre, situated in the northeast portion of the Cool Spring/ Tilton Park City Historic District, is part of one of Wilmington’s twelve protected historic areas designated in 1996. The district represents significant late 19th and early 20th-century architectural heritage, evolving from “Cool Spring,” the former estate of Caesar A. Rodney, nephew of a Declaration of Independence signer. This 23-acre estate was developed between 1885 and 1900 into a residential neighborhood.

The district’s significance stems from multiple factors: its diverse architectural styles (Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival, and Second Empire), the 1870s construction of the 37-million-gallon Cool Spring Reservoir, and the establishment of both Cool Spring and Tilton Parks as urban amenities. The reservoir and pumping station were built between 1873 and 1877 to serve Wilmington’s expanding west side as the city transitioned from industrial to corporate character.

As Wilmington’s largest historic district, it features an array of structures from large

Colonial Revival residences to substantial row houses. Like all City Historic Districts, it is protected through a design review process that monitors all exterior changes to maintain its historical integrity. The Delaware Children’s Theatre, being part of this protected district, contributes to and benefits from these preservation measures.

### CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

The Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) forwards all building permit applications that include exterior work on buildings, structures, objects, or sites within a City Historic District to the Planning Department for evaluation. Building permits will not be issued by L&I until the design review process is finalized.

Property owners who make changes without adhering to the design review and permitting procedures may face financial penalties and may be required to remove unauthorized work.

### THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF WORK ARE SUBJECT TO REVIEW

- Maintenance
- Renovation or Restoration
- Alterations
- New Construction
- Demolition
- Changes in Topography

### INITIATING THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

For a building permit, applicants within a City Historic District are referred by the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) to the Planning Department for review. The Design Review process officially begins when the applicant submits a complete application along with all required supporting documents. These may include:

- Completed building permit application;
- Completed Design Review application;
- Description of proposed work;
- Plans and specifications showing all facets of proposed work;
- Photographs of the current site conditions.

### THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

Projects involving routine maintenance, in-kind repairs, or work that complies with preapproved design standards may be reviewed administratively by Planning staff. More complex proposals are referred to the Design Review and Preservation Commission (DRPC) for evaluation. Once an application is submitted, certified Planning staff will determine whether the proposal qualifies for administrative review or requires referral to the DRPC.

### DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE AND PLANNING (FORMERLY THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT)

Sec. 48-418 of the City Code allows for the expedited review of certain maintenance type proposals based on review by the Planning Department. These items include:

- Work that is considered in-kind repair or replacement of materials specifying historically appropriate materials;
- Work that does not change the design, material type (if extant material is historically appropriate), or outward appearance of a property;

- Work that meets preestablished design criteria approved by the Design Review and Preservation Commission.

Upon completion of the in-house review, the Planning Department will transmit a Certificate of Appropriateness Memorandum to L&I recommending approval of the proposed work and issuance of a building permit. Applicants are responsible for meeting all other L&I permit requirements prior to issuance of a permit.

### DESIGN REVIEW AND PRESERVATION COMMISSION

If the Planning Department determines that a work proposal is not considered ordinary repair with in-kind materials or maintenance, does not meet preestablished design criteria, or involves signage, new construction or demolition, the proposal may be referred to the DRPC for review.

The DRPC is a seven-member commission appointed by the Mayor, with members having backgrounds in architecture, planning, urban design, real estate, construction, environmental systems and the fine arts (Sec. 2-66 through 2-69 of the Wilmington

City Code).

The DRPC generally meets on the third Wednesday of each month. To be placed on the agenda, a fully completed application and support documentation must be received and accepted by the Planning Department a minimum of three weeks in advance of the meeting.

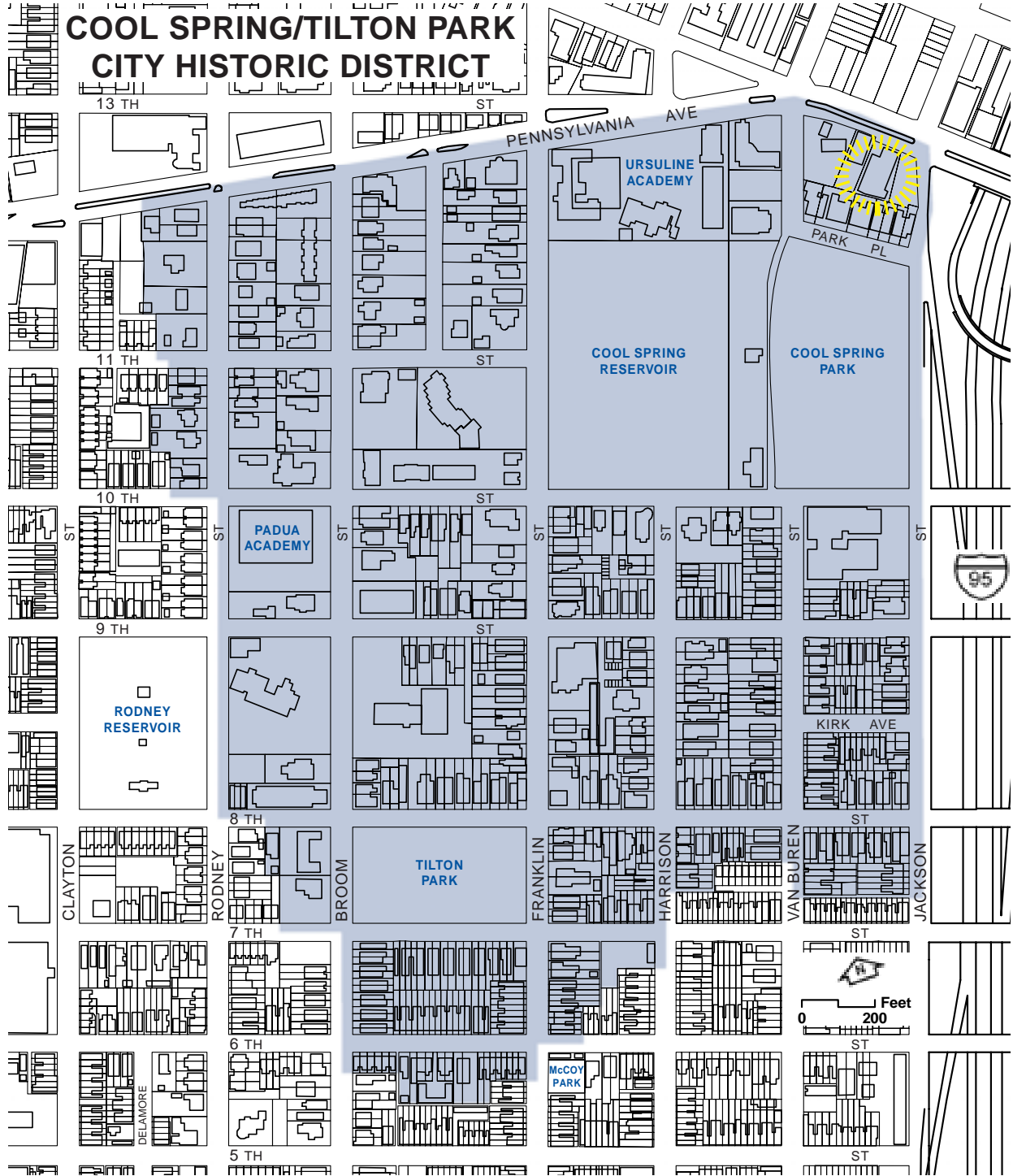
The Planning Department prepares a brief analysis regarding the proposed project for review by the DRPC. Applicants or their agents must attend the DRPC meeting to answer any questions about their proposal. Following review, the DRPC recommends approval, conditional approval, or denial of the application. They may also choose to defer the application if further information is required.

The DRPC recommendation is forwarded to L&I within five working days, after which building permits may be issued. Applicants are responsible for meeting all other L&I permit requirements prior to issuance of a building permit.

Proposals that are denied by the DRPC can be revised and resubmitted for consideration

at the next monthly meeting, or appealed through the L&I Commissioner.

Wilmington City Code: Historic Areas, Historic Districts and Historic Landmarks, [https://library.municode.com/de/wilmington/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIWICO\\_CH48ZO\\_ARTIXSUDL\\_DIV2HIARHIDIHILA](https://library.municode.com/de/wilmington/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIWICO_CH48ZO_ARTIXSUDL_DIV2HIARHIDIHILA)



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

COOL SPRING PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Delaware Children's Theatre was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in May 1983 under its original name, the New Century Club. In November of the same year, the Cool Spring Park Historic District was also nominated to the National Register, though initially only including a portion of the residential neighborhood and Cool Spring Park along the highway. In 2007, a boundary expansion of the Cool Spring Park Historic District's National Register designation included the Delaware Children's Theatre, the western neighborhood, and the Cool Spring Reservoir.





# COMMUNITY CONTEXT

## ACCESS TO DCT

Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) is centrally located in Wilmington amidst a changing and diverse landscape off of a central thoroughfare and intersection. There is a mixture of commercial, offices and other non-residential low-rise buildings to the north and west of DCT. To the east is Jackson Street and I-95, and further to the east is the historic part of downtown Wilmington. To the south of DCT lies the residential historic Cool Spring/Tifton Historic District and Cool Spring Park.

There are several ways to access DCT via public transportation. There are two bus stops within walking distance and two train lines within a twenty minute walk. Parking is available on the east and south sides of the building along with a parking lot directly opposite the theater that is available on the weekends. There is also sidewalk access along Delaware Avenue and Jackson Streets.

## RELEVANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

One planned and one proposed infrastructure project would provide Wilmington with more equitable, safe, and connected access for pedestrians, cyclists, cars and buses and, in turn, would positively impact DCT's urban environment. The **Jackson Street Improvements** from 6th Street to Delaware Avenue will promote pedestrian and bike safety by adding buffered bike lanes, opening new parkings spots near the Delaware Ave intersection and enhancing sidewalks with a new street configuration. This program is planned for 2025 Summer.

The proposed federal **I-95 Cap Project** is a 10-year and nearly \$400 million project currently (as of 2024) in a concept phase. (It is unclear if the 2024 presidential election will alter its likelihood.) If implemented, it would mean a major modernization and revitalization for downtown Wilmington. It would extend above the section of I-95 between the Jackson and Adams Street corridors and from the Delaware Avenue Bridge to the 6th Street Bridge. The Cap would create 15 acres of new green spaces and reconnect the east and west sides of downtown Wilmington. Thus, it would

enhance the character of surrounding neighborhoods. Not only will it improve the area, it would also help to leverage DCT with greater exposure and access as an integral part of the revitalization given the theater's location at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Jackson Streets



Jackson Street Improvement Proposal



I-95 Capping Proposal

Wilmington 2028 Plan, Bridging I-95 Cap Study



CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Within a one-mile radius, there are local schools, libraries, religious buildings and community centers that may provide opportunities for greater engagement. However, most of the libraries, community centers and museums are located on the east side of Wilmington, to the east of I-95. Its immediate environs include the residential historic Cools Springs/Tifton Historic District, in which DCT is located, a residential area and park directly to the south of the building. To the west is a mix of old and newer buildings primarily used as schools, religious institutions and offices.

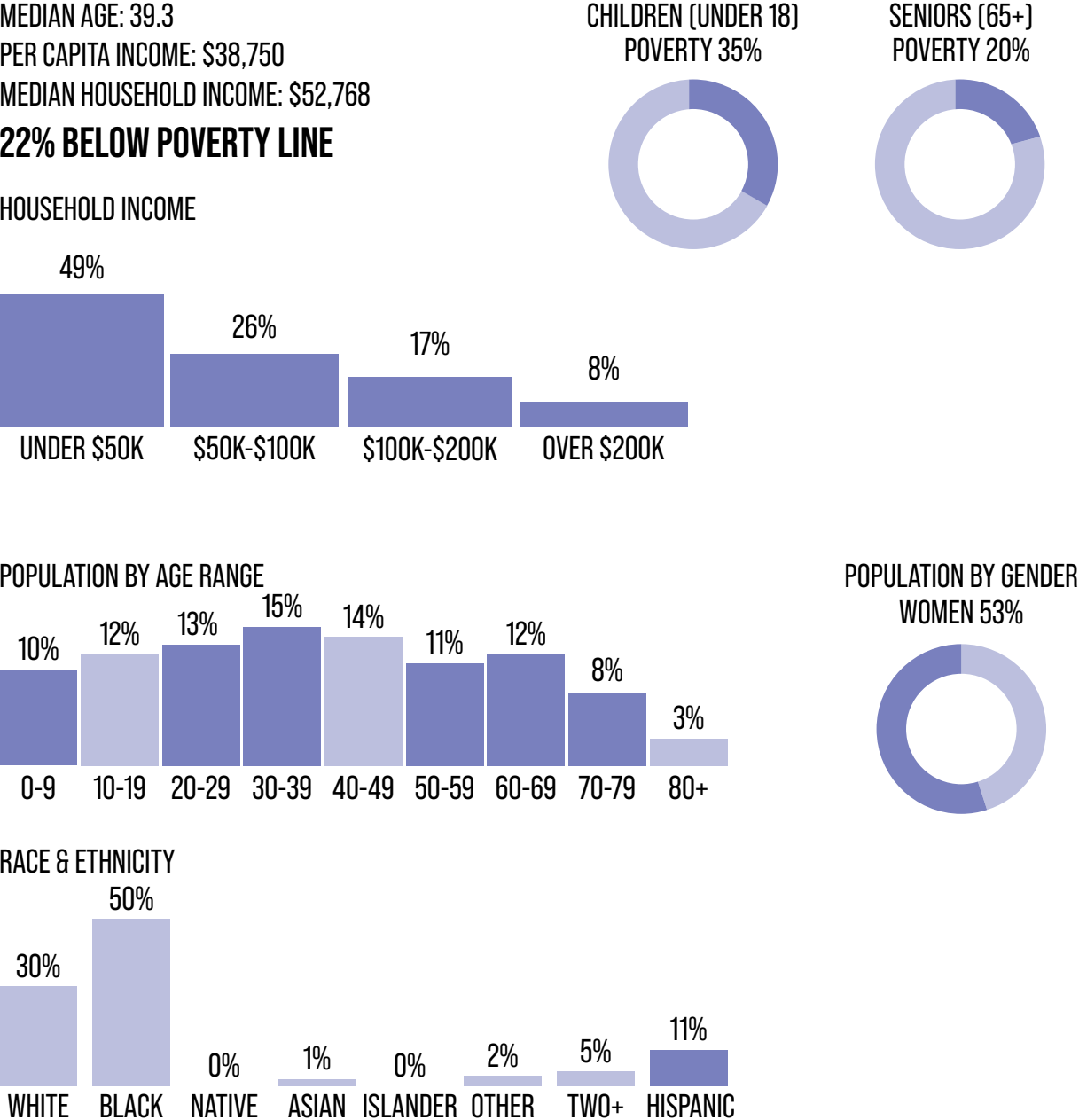


Wilmington 2028 Plan (Bridging 1-95 Cap Study)

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the Wilmington 2028 plan, the greatest growth in age ranges will be 0-5, 25-34 and 45-74 which is great for attracting new audiences, actors, volunteers and donors. Trends indicate that by 2040, the number of Latinos and people of other/or multiple ethnicities will soon outpace the number of Black individuals which will hold steady and the number of White individuals which will decrease. As a city with residents that struggle with 22% poverty, childhood poverty at 35% and a median household income of \$52,768, the socioeconomics of Wilmington may be an increasing factor regarding the theater's access to the involvement of residents as actors, audience, volunteers and donors. For example, incentive pricing might be worthy of consideration to draw socioeconomically diverse adults and children. In addition, key public input illustrates that residents value and prioritize parks and recreational opportunities, local history, architecture, and affordability among the best things about Wilmington. Thus, a desire for livable communities includes culture and entertainment.

Wilmington 2028 Plan (Bridging 1-95 Cap Study)



# ENGAGEMENT

## METHODOLOGY

The studio team utilized four methods of outreach – interview, survey, email inquiry, and context mapping – to become more familiar with how the community views and interacts with DCT. Each method provided greater understanding from three key segments of the community: individuals already involved with DCT as staff and volunteers, audience members, and professionals from related sectors (including existing relationships and individuals from sectors with which it may be useful for DCT to engage).

Eight interviews were conducted via Zoom and in person. They were conducted with David Swajeski, board president; Donna Swajeski, Artistic Director; Shawn Nau, Operations Manager; Jessica Koubek, Staff Manager and Office Coordinator; three long-time parent volunteers; and the District 8 City Councilmember, Nathan Field.

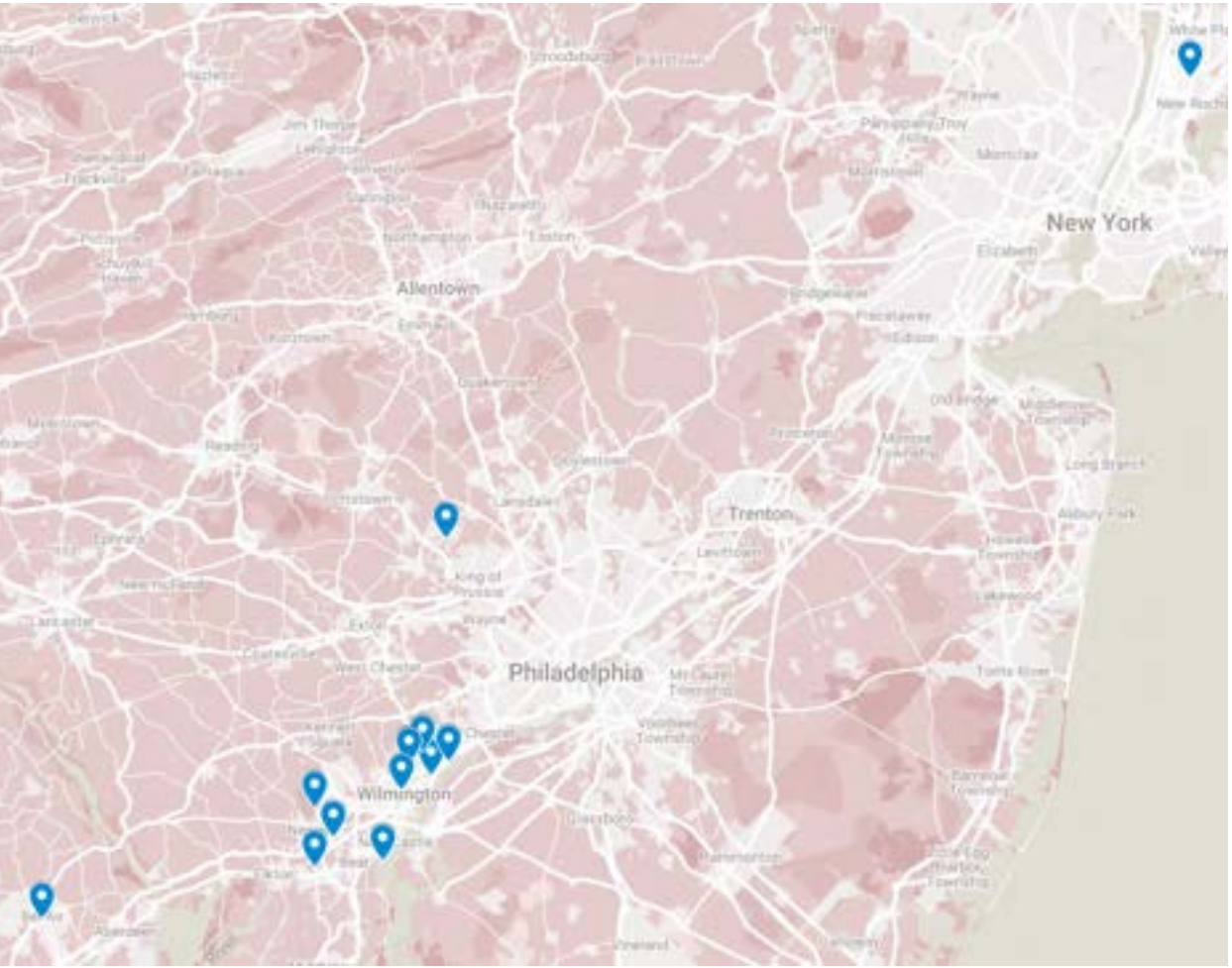
In addition, the studio team prepared an online survey and promoted it at performances and rehearsals via a QR code and flyers.

Twenty-nine individuals responded to the survey which was provided on the Qualtrics

platform through use of a QR Code that was available at DCT and utilized after five performances of the recent production of “Spookley.”

Engagement with the non-profit and state historic preservation community occurred over email. These outreach methods revealed anticipated as well as new information.

With the data from the different interviews, two diagrams were created: power map and interested parties. The power map illustrates the different relationships that surround DCT and their interactions with them at different levels. The interested parties diagram maps out the different power controls of DCT’s surrounded interested parties and how involved they are within the theater’s structure.



Household zip codes of survey-takers at “Spookley” shows

To provide context to the survey results, the catchment area of respondents stretched from Westchester County, NY to Bel Air, MD, with the vast majority living in the suburbs around Wilmington. Nearly half of respondents were ages 36-55 and the rest spread between under 18, 18-35 and 56+. The vast majority arrived by private vehicle and no one utilized public transportation.

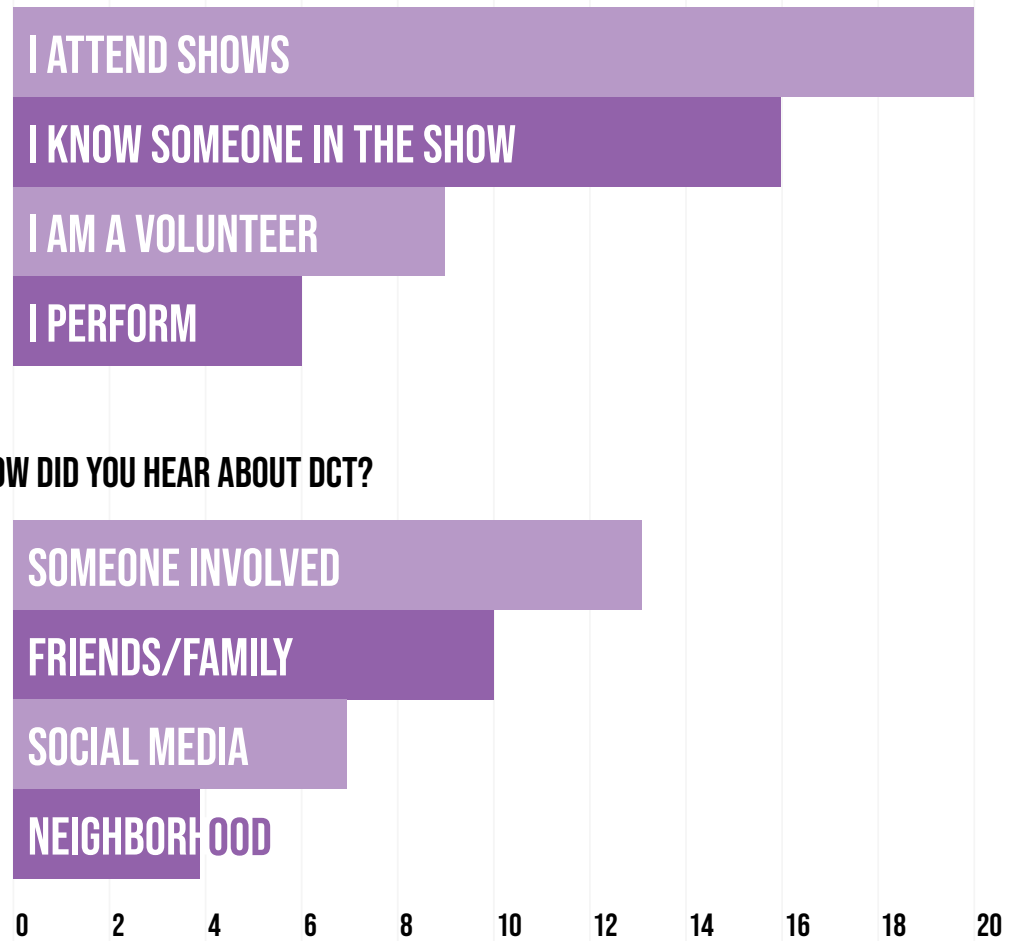
Most people attended as audience members and it was their first show. They heard about DCT from someone involved. And, surprisingly, when asked why you attend, entertainment for themselves nudged out entertainment for kids.

## SURVEY

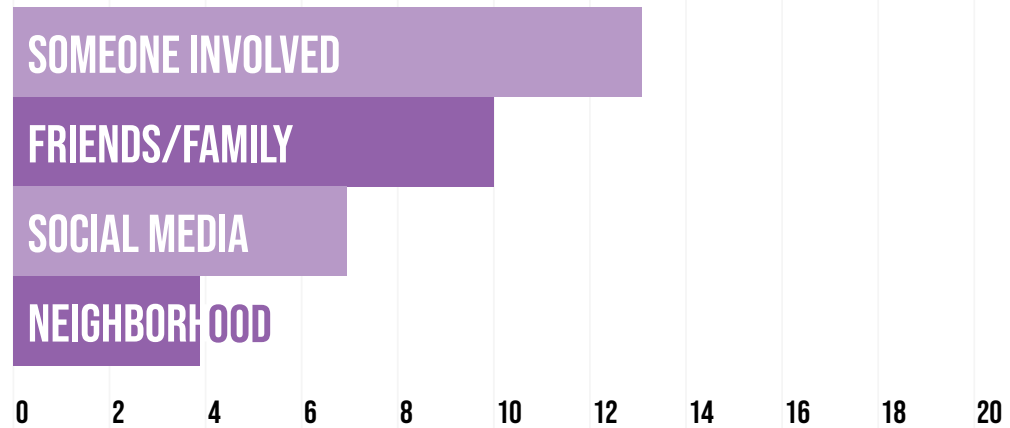
The survey looked at respondents' relationships with the theater, why they attend performances, how they receive information about performances, and the length of personal relationship with the theater. It also gauged knowledge of the historic nature of the building and if the building's history adds to the experience of coming to DCT.

The survey indicated that DCT enjoys the loyalty of a close-knit family of participants, audience and volunteers. Word of mouth is strong due to the reputation and quality of the productions. The survey also demonstrated the potential for increased involvement among first-timers as well as the strength of commitment to DCT over many years. Responses also demonstrated the broad appeal of DCT productions. Furthermore, the history of the building is known to those who participate as actors, volunteers, donors and audience. And, the history of the building was a decidedly important part of respondents' experience while at DCT.

### WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO DCT?



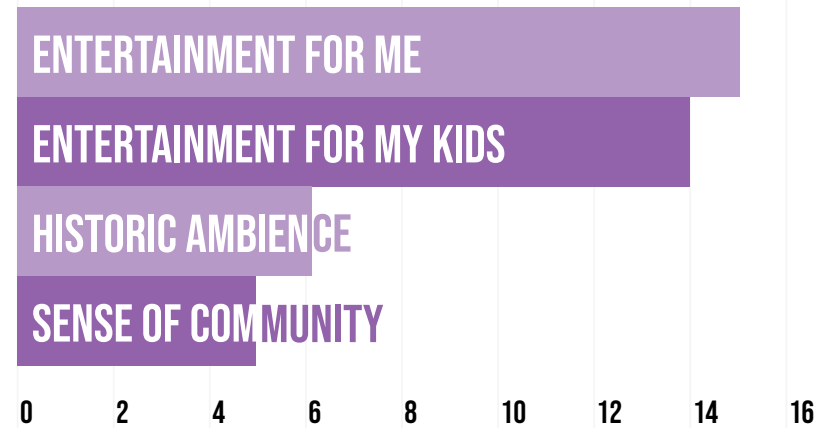
### HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT DCT?



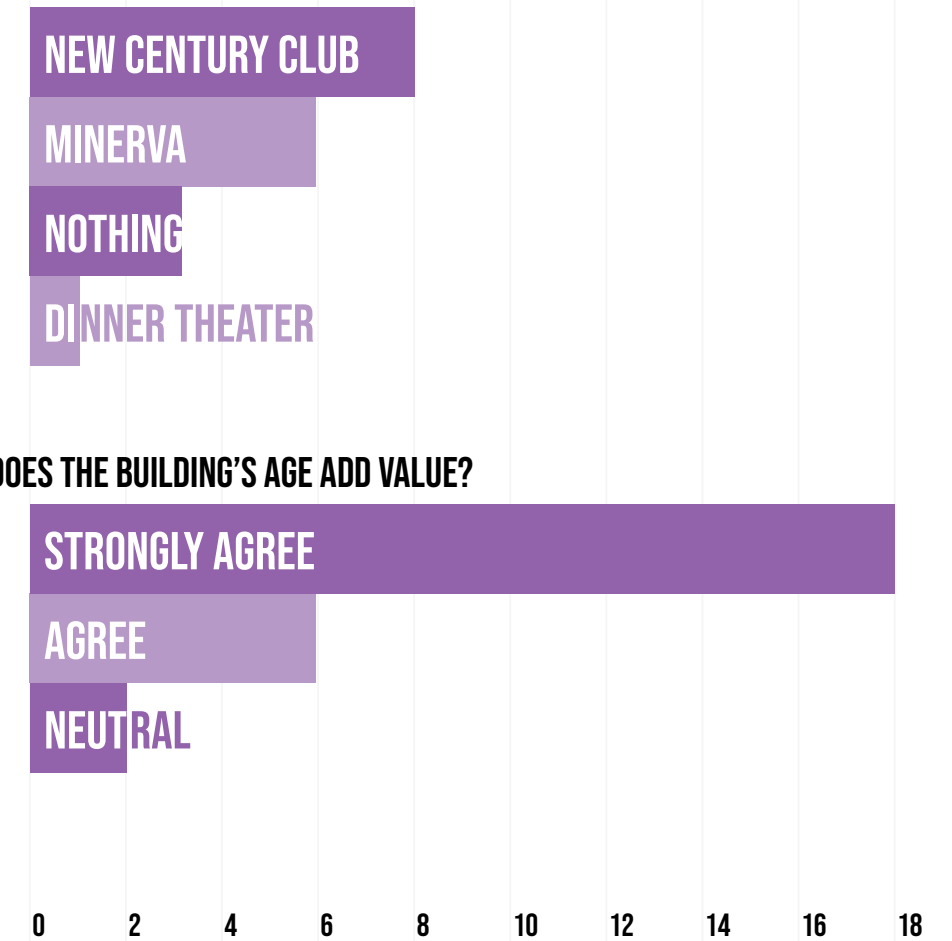
### HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PART OF DCT?



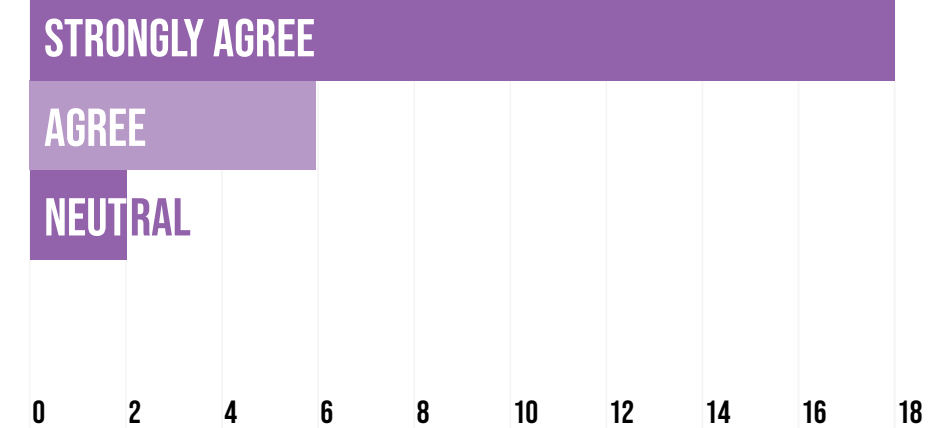
### WHY DID YOU COME TO DCT?



### WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY?



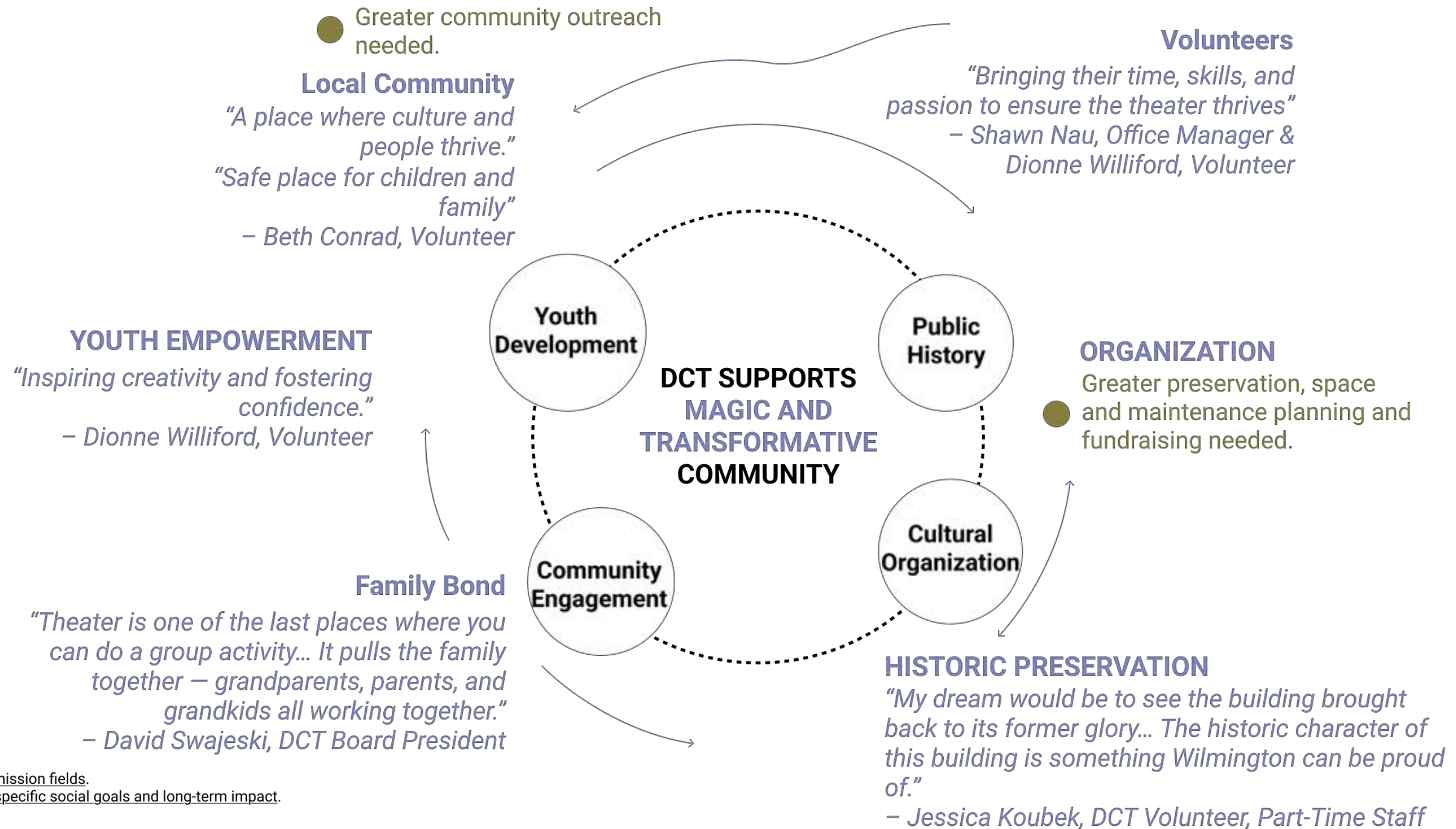
### DOES THE BUILDING'S AGE ADD VALUE?





## MAJOR TAKEAWAYS FROM INTERVIEWS

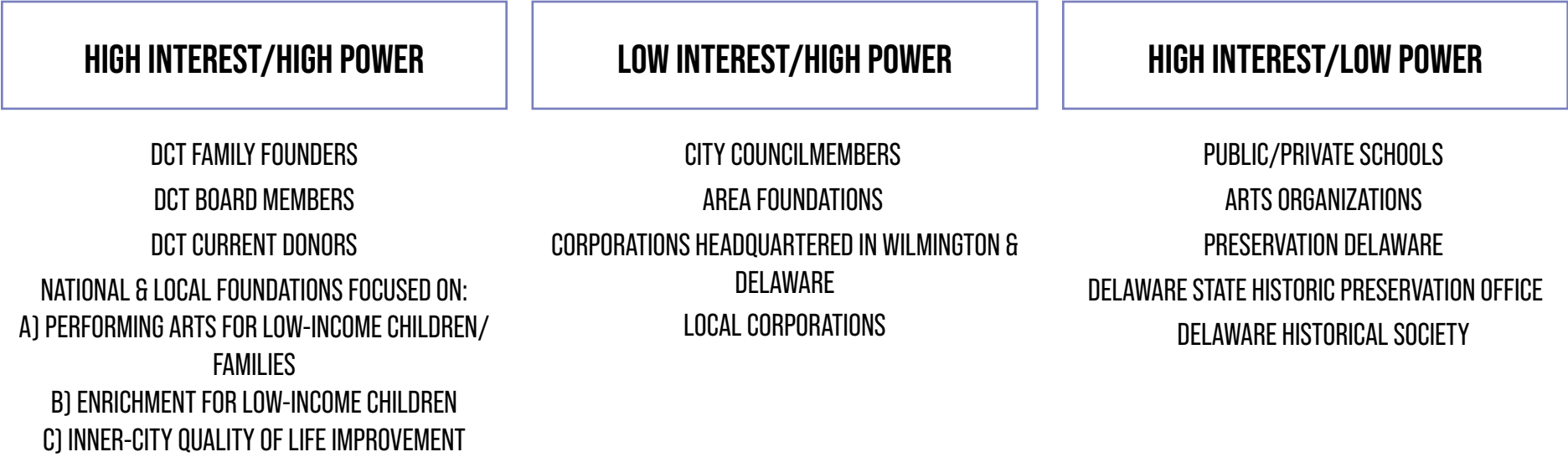
At the center of the takeaways and recurring themes of interviews was that DCT is “magical” and “transformative”! The shared understanding is that DCT’s mission is threefold - guiding young talent, offering affordable and quality family theater, and preserving its historic building. DCT has wonderful strengths as well as areas for improvement. Its connection within its family is strong. It has great programmatic and historical building stories to tell and would benefit in many ways from greater outreach. DCT would also greatly benefit in programmatic, fundraising, management and building operations and maintenance by expanding staff capability. Preservation and maintenance plans may help to prioritize areas for attention.



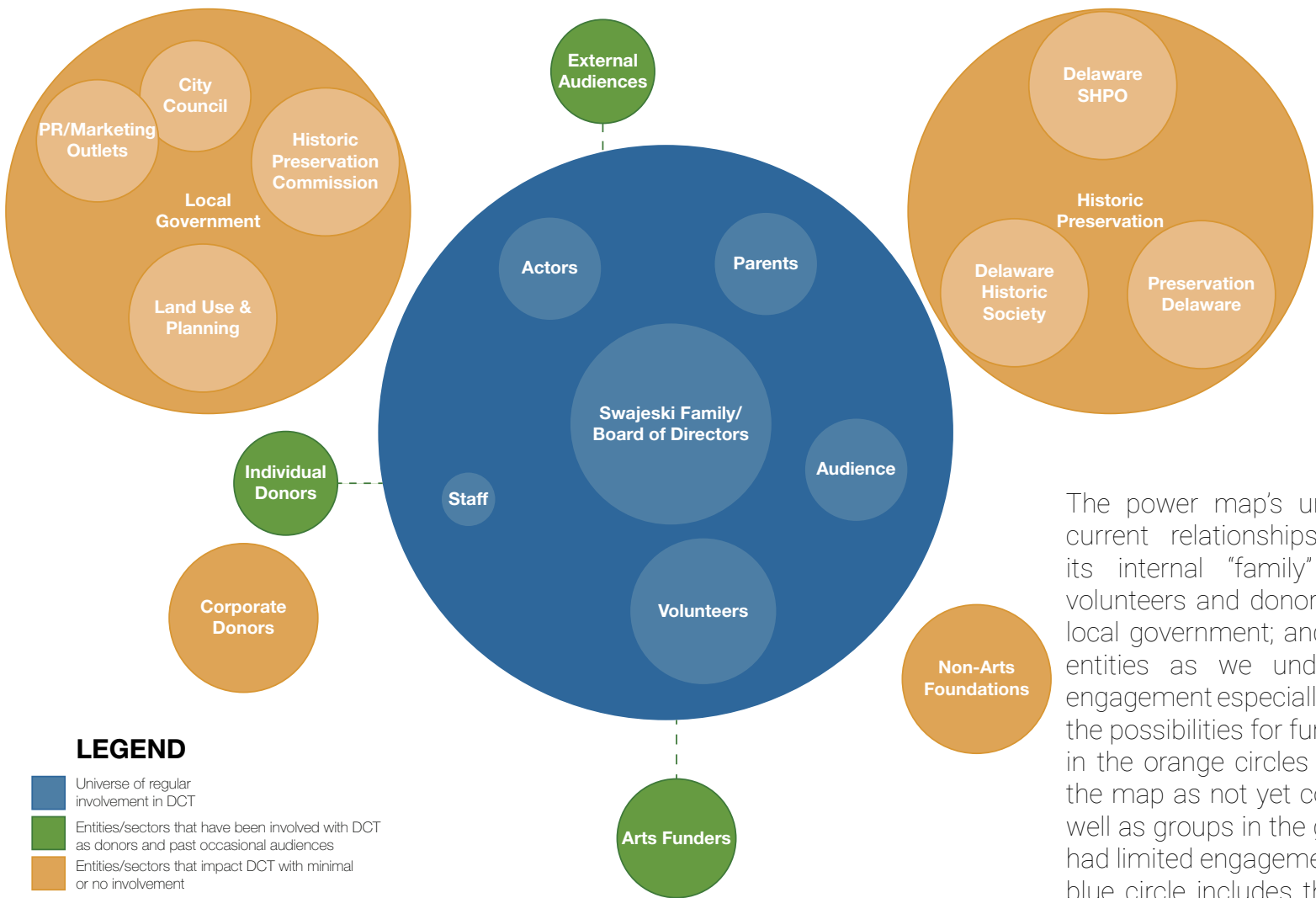
INTERESTED PARTIES

CURRENT & POTENTIAL INTEREST

These categories were organized as a result of our research and interviews about the community context in which DCT is located. They demonstrate our understanding of the universe of current and potential interest in DCT.



POWER MAP



The power map's universe illustrates the current relationships between DCT and its internal "family" of founders, staff, volunteers and donors; community donors; local government; and historic preservation entities as we understand them. Our engagement especially helped us to consider the possibilities for further work with groups in the orange circles that are illustrated on the map as not yet connected with DCT as well as groups in the green circles that have had limited engagement with DCT. The large blue circle includes the current universe of regular involvement with DCT as we currently understand it.

**ANALYSIS**

# VALUES

## VALUES NARRATIVE

### HISTORIC

Built in 1892-93, the building that now houses the Delaware Children's Theatre originally served as the Wilmington New Century Club (WNCC), the first purpose-built women's club in Delaware and one of the earliest in the United States. For nearly 80 years, the WNCC played a vital role in social and political reform, shaping legislation, education, prison systems, and labor movements at both local and state levels. The club's founder, Emalea P. Warner later became vice-president of the Delaware Women's Suffrage Association and the first president of the newly formed League of Women Voters local chapter in 1920. Designed by Minerva Parker Nichols, the first documented woman in the country to operate an independent architectural practice, the building holds historic value based on its role in women's history in America, and its association with Minerva Parker Nichols' career and architectural legacy. The New Century Club stands today as Minerva Parker Nichols' last surviving public structure, with many of her other institutional and civic designs lost to demolition.

Since its establishment as a women's club in 1892, the auditorium within the theater has consistently served as a performance venue; a conveyor belt under the stage delivered dishes and food to the auditorium, making large events possible. Initially, the New Century Club hosted lectures by notable figures such as Woodrow Wilson, Jane Addams, and Lyman Abbott, as well as musical events featuring bands and choirs, all of which drew audiences from Wilmington and beyond. Today, the auditorium remains consistent in its function of celebrating performance and talent while engaging with the local community, supported by a devoted group of volunteers, members, and actors. It attracts visitors from music, theater, and the arts through its productions and workshops.

The Colonial Revival style building largely maintains its original design, despite its varied history of use. This includes its short use as a dinner theater from 1977 to 1982. The Delaware Children's Theater houses a collection of props and costumes amassed over more than forty years of productions, along with archives from its history as a women's club, including scrapbooks that capture some of the building's rich history.

### SOCIAL

The social value of the Delaware Children's Theatre building relies on its association with influential people and past and present organizations that have made a lasting impact on the Wilmington community and the state of Delaware. The New Century Club of Wilmington commissioned its design from Minerva Parker Nichols, who was just beginning to gain recognition. By 1892, she had already secured two major commissions for women's organizations: the Philadelphia New Century Club, one of the first women's clubs in the U.S., and the Queen Isabella Association, a proto-feminist organization.

The founder of the Wilmington club, Emalea P. Warner, was one of Delaware's most influential advocates for social causes and women's rights. She broadened the WNCC's focus to encompass a wide range of social issues, including education, prison reform, and improvements in factory working conditions. The building served as a gathering place for women in Wilmington until the late-20th century, allowing them the opportunity to discuss literature, arts, and politics while engaging in advocacy that shaped social and political reform in the state.

The Swajeski family also embodies the social value of the building. In 1983, just before it was set for demolition, John and Marie Swajeski purchased the building and transformed it into the home of the Delaware Children's Theatre. In this new phase, the building continued to serve the community by hosting plays for children and creating an active volunteer base. Their legacy is continued by their children, David, a creative director and filmmaker, and Donna Swajeski, an Emmy-winning TV writer. This family-operated theater has thrived for more than 50 years through the multigenerational support of actors, members, volunteers, and audiences who contribute to its ongoing legacy.

### USE

The continuous use of the building for more than 130 years exemplifies the relevance and evolution of the site through time. Since its conception, it has been a space for congregation and community lingering. The spatial distribution of the New Century Club highlights the large auditorium for lectures and private meeting rooms for smaller

gatherings. After a short period of being a dinner theater, the family-run non-profit Delaware Children's Theatre transformed the site demonstrating the sustained use value of the building even after it changed owners. Today, the auditorium hosts plays for children while the former meeting rooms are offices, dressing rooms and workshops for props, showing the flexibility of the space. The uninterrupted use contributes to maintaining the integrity of the 19th and 20th century fabric and its function.

### AESTHETIC

The Delaware Children's Theatre retains distinctive features associated with the Colonial Revival architectural style. The accentuated front door with an extended pediment and overhead fanlights, as well as symmetrically balanced windows, characterize this style as shown in the facade. On the interior, the stage and balconies at the auditorium are some of the most ornamented spaces in the building. They are complemented by the classical wall paneling of the interior hall and the balustraded stairway which add to the aesthetic value

of the site. Although the construction of the I-95 highway in Wilmington and subsequent urban renewal resulted in the demolition of several historic buildings at the I-95/ Delaware Ave interchange, it underscored the prominence and aesthetic value of this building, with its distinctive visual presence and its side gambrel roof. After more than 130 years, the theater retains its integrity of fabric, including historic building technology such as the auditorium wooden ceiling, the truss system to support the gambrel roof, a dumbwaiter machinery and other systems that represent the aesthetic evolution of the building.

### ECONOMIC

The Delaware Children's Theatre was constructed in 1892-93 for the women of the Wilmington New Century Club. Initially, the building served not only as a women's club but also as a business venture for its members. A novel approach, the club invested capital stock, and nearly all of the members became shareholders. The property was selected for its prime location between a spacious residential area and the

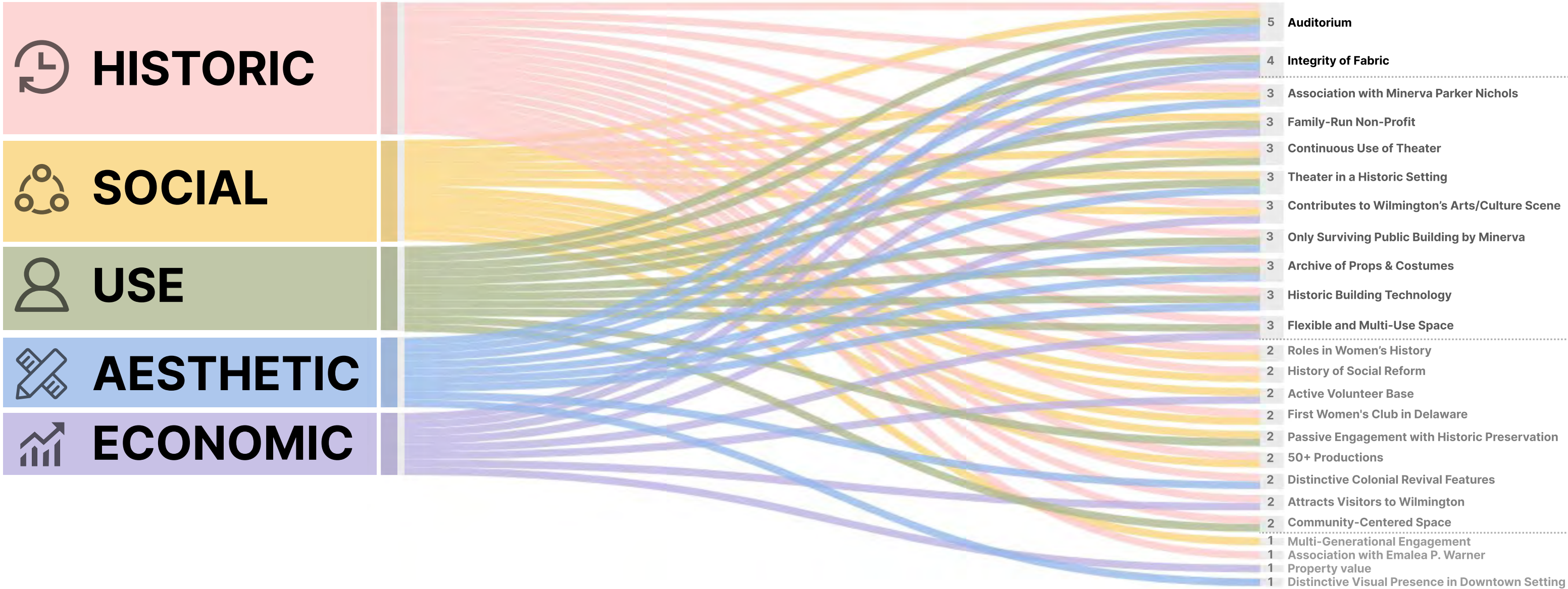
more densely populated downtown, making it a sound economic investment.

Acquiring this land and property offered many women in the club valuable experience in finance and business, enhanced their political and social capital in Wilmington, and created the city's first venue suitable for performances and large events. Designed by Minerva Parker Nichols at the height of her architectural career, this building's economic value was notably boosted by its association with her legacy. Its current status as the last remaining public structure she created further contributes to this economic value.

Currently, the theater's spacious auditorium, with a seating capacity of nearly 300, sustains its original role and economic value as a performance venue. Its well-preserved architectural integrity reflects the commitment of stewards who value its history and design, while also emphasizing the building's inherent versatility and economic value. Furthermore, its location as the first building seen upon entering Wilmington from this exit of the freeway greatly enhances the property's value due to

its striking architectural presence in the city. Now a key part of Wilmington's theater and arts scene, the Delaware Children's Theatre draws visitors from both the local area and beyond, who are looking for a quality theatrical experience for their families and children, thereby contributing to DCT's bottom line and the economic vitality of Wilmington and Delaware.





Refer to the Dictionary of Values for terminology breakdown



HISTORIC



SOCIAL



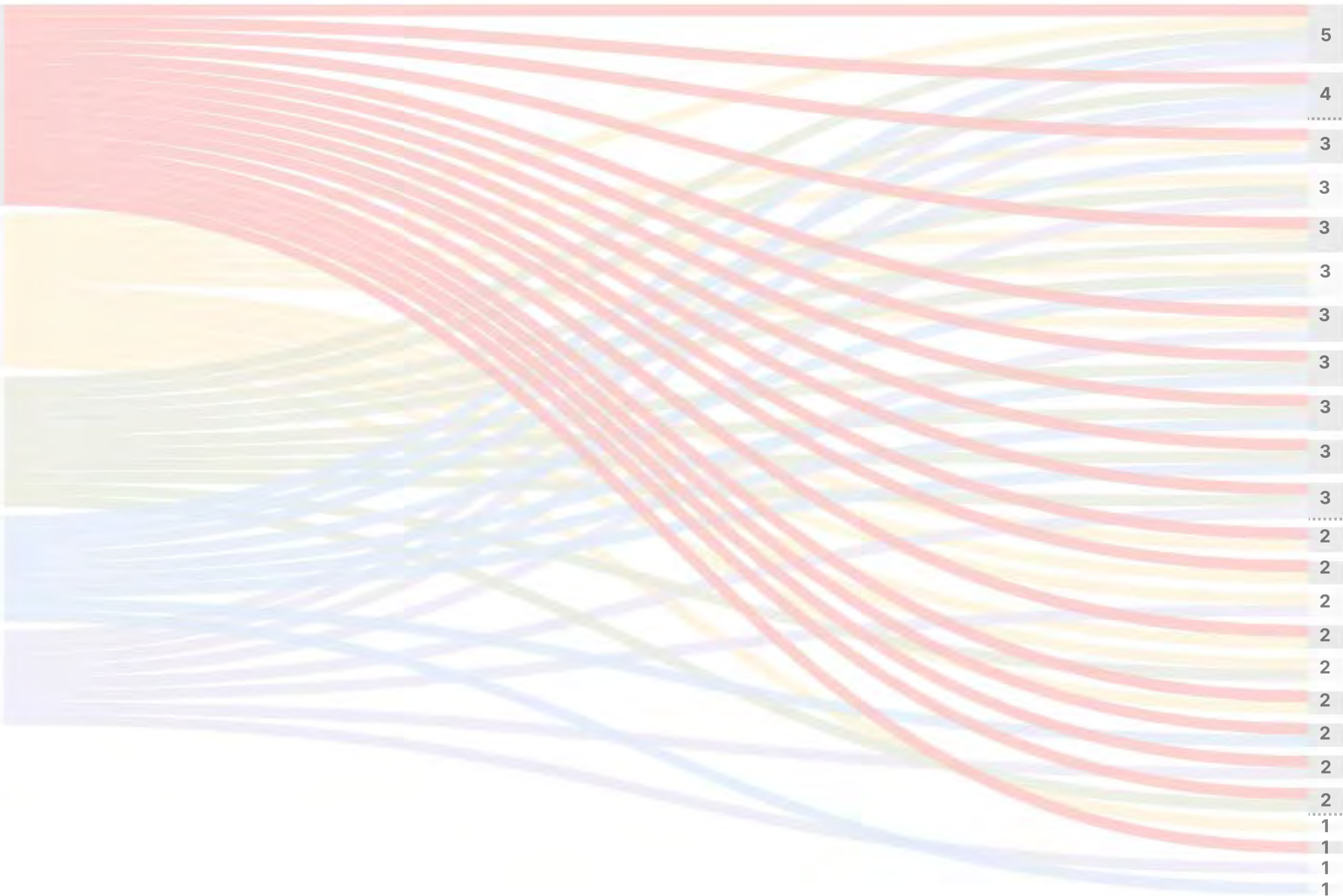
USE



AESTHETIC



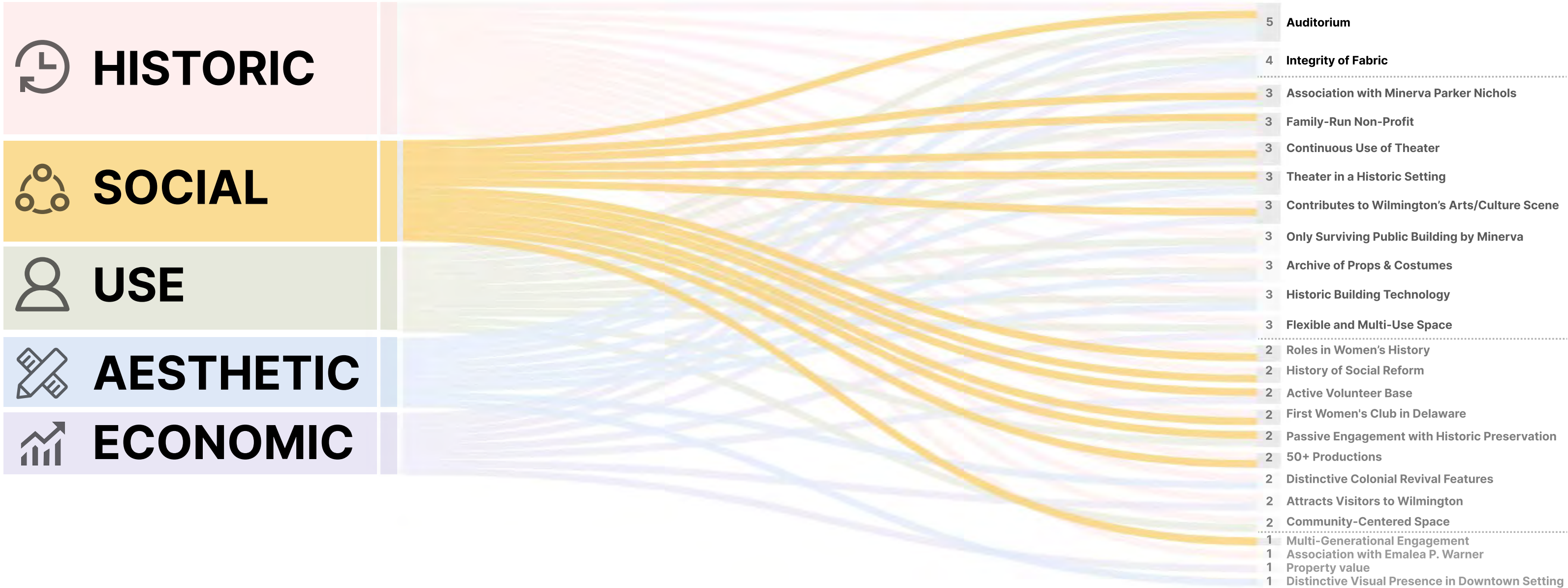
ECONOMIC



- 5 Auditorium
- 4 Integrity of Fabric
- 3 Association with Minerva Parker Nichols
- 3 Family-Run Non-Profit
- 3 Continuous Use of Theater
- 3 Theater in a Historic Setting
- 3 Contributes to Wilmington's Arts/Culture Scene
- 3 Only Surviving Public Building by Minerva
- 3 Archive of Props & Costumes
- 3 Historic Building Technology
- 3 Flexible and Multi-Use Space
- 2 Roles in Women's History
- 2 History of Social Reform
- 2 Active Volunteer Base
- 2 First Women's Club in Delaware
- 2 Passive Engagement with Historic Preservation
- 2 50+ Productions
- 2 Distinctive Colonial Revival Features
- 2 Attracts Visitors to Wilmington
- 2 Community-Centered Space
- 1 Multi-Generational Engagement
- 1 Association with Emalea P. Warner
- 1 Property value
- 1 Distinctive Visual Presence in Downtown Setting

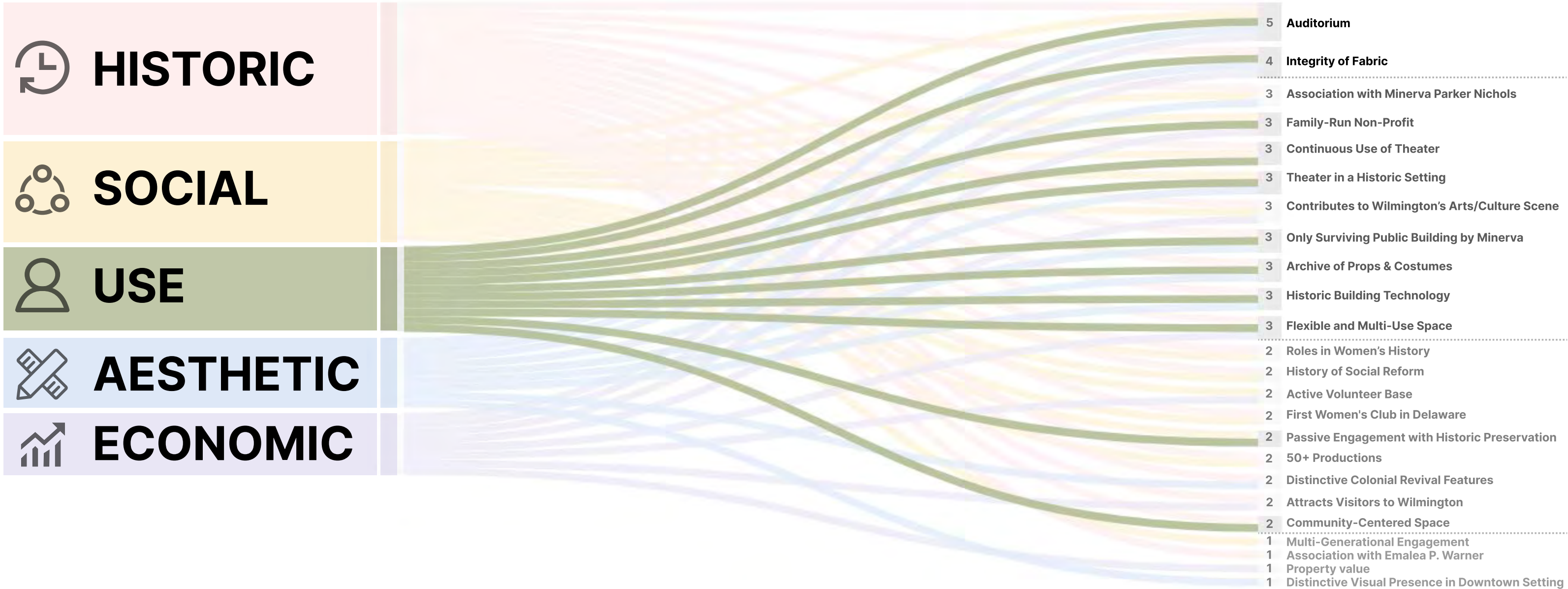
Refer to the Dictionary of Values for terminology breakdown





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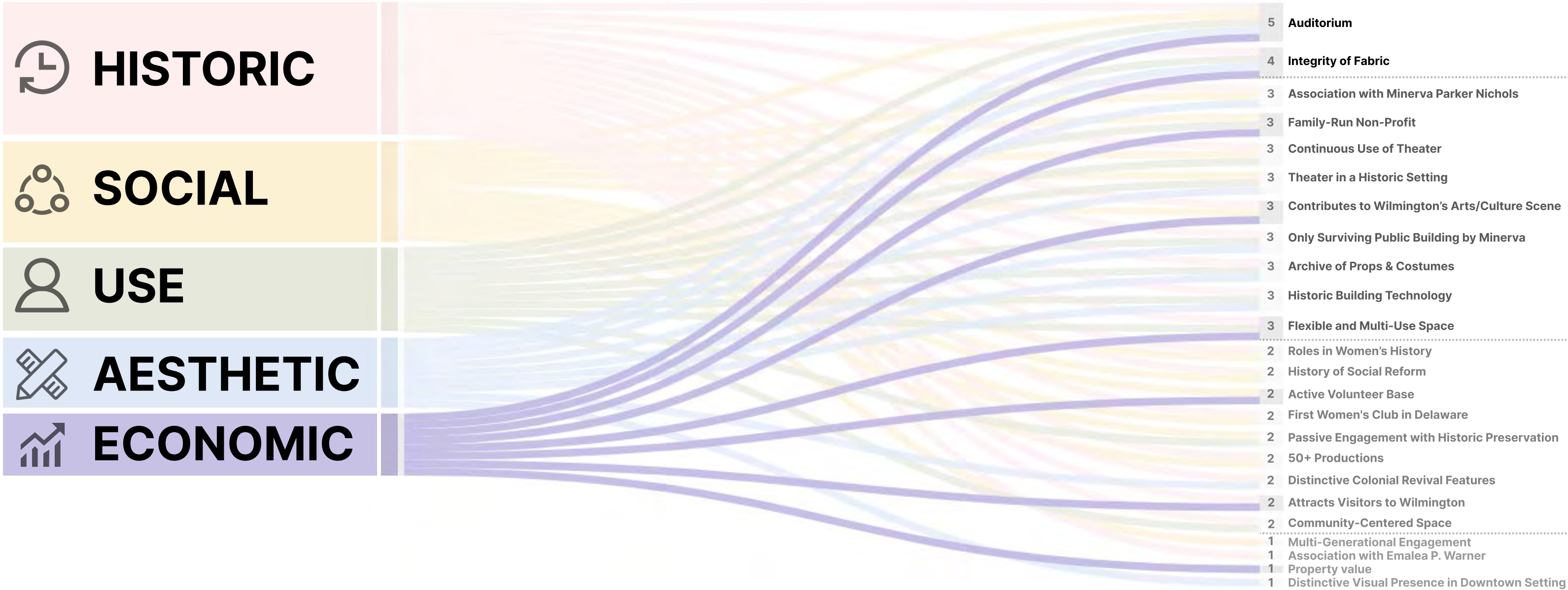




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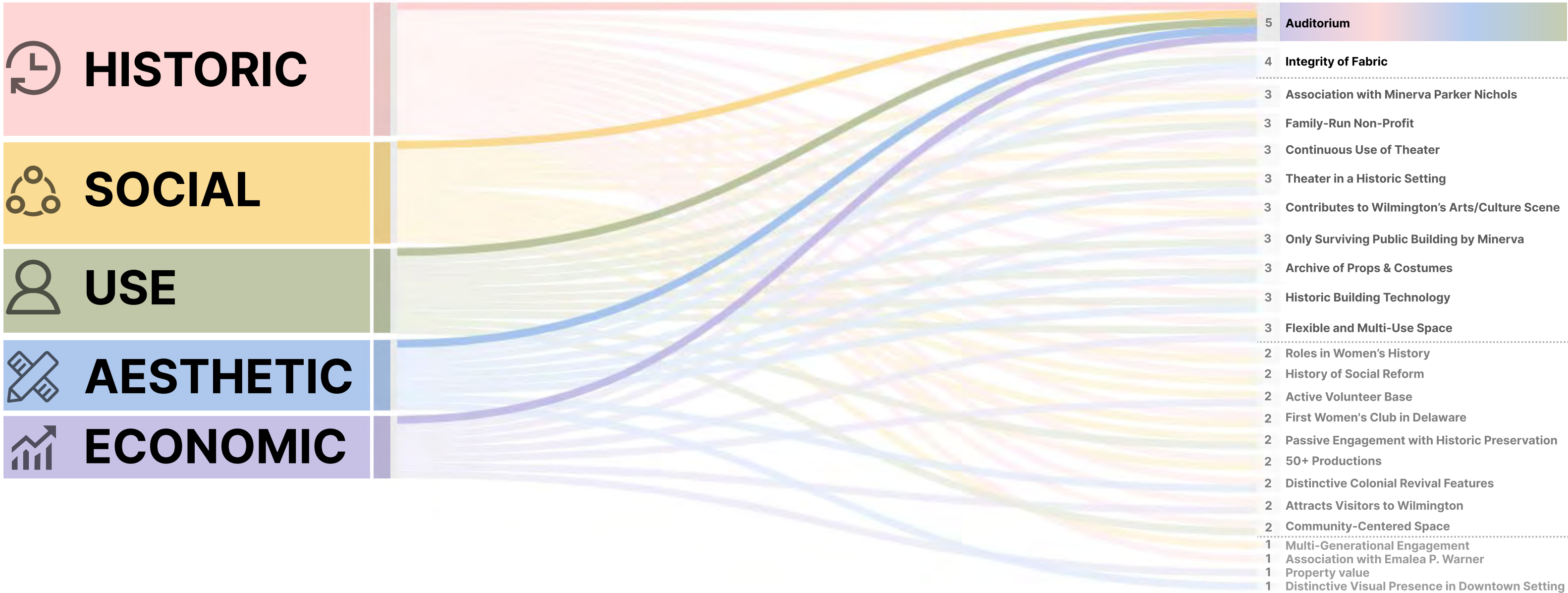


Refer to the Dictionary of Values for terminology breakdown



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DICTIONARY OF VALUES

This dictionary outlines the definitions of our identified values. We reached these terms through discussing key figures, historical context and contributions which shaped the significance of the Delaware Children’s Theatre building.

INTEGRITY OF FABRIC

The building’s original features largely remain unchanged, as most additions have been placed on top of original materials without altering them.

AUDITORIUM

Central theater space with double height gambrel ceiling, flexible seating arrangement and a permanent seating arrangement in the balcony overlooking the stage.

MINERVA

Minerva Parker Nichols was the first woman to practice architecture independently of male supervision in the United States.

FAMILY-RUN NON-PROFIT

The board of the Delaware Children’s Theatre is led by members of the Swajeski family

since the initiation of the non-profit 50 years ago.

CONTINUOUS IDENTITY AS A THEATER

In all the iterations of this building as the New Century Club, the Dinner Theater, and now Delaware Children’s Theatre, theater has been part of the building’s programming.

THEATER IN A HISTORIC SETTING

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is designated on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as part of the Cool Springs Historic District.

CONTRIBUTES TO WILMINGTON ARTS CULTURE

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is an important artistic and cultural venue for children in the Wilmington arts scene.

ONLY SURVIVING MINERVA PUBLIC BUILDING

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is the last surviving public building designed by Minerva Parker Nichols.

ARCHIVE OF PROPS & COSTUMES

With a history of more than 50 years of

productions, the Delaware Children’s Theatre has an extensive collection of costumes and props at their disposal.

HISTORIC TECHNOLOGY

The Delaware Children’s Theatre preserves historic building technology such as original auditorium wooden ceiling and truss system as well as mechanisms such as a dumbwaiter machinery and other systems depicting the evolution of the building.

FLEXIBLE & MULTI-USE SPACE

The auditorium and the buffet room both are large in space, and have moveable furniture creating a multitude of programming options.

WOMEN’S HISTORY

The theater has a long association with women’s history in Delaware including the architect Minera Parker Nichols, Emalea P. Warner and the Wilmington New Century Club, and the artistic legacy of Marie and Donna Swajeski.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL REFORM

The New Century Club, led by Emalea P. Warner, advocated for social causes such

as women’s rights, education, prison reform, and improvements of factory working conditions that shaped social and political reforms in the state.

ACTIVE VOLUNTEER BASE

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is largely run by volunteers, and there is an ample and continuous supply of people who are connected to the theater.

FIRST WOMEN’S CLUB IN DELAWARE

The historic building was commissioned by the Wilmington New Century Club, the first purpose-built women’s club in Delaware and one of the earliest in the United States.

PASSIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Being in a historic building is an asset for the Delaware Children’s Theatre. Families learn and appreciate its legacy and become advocates for its preservation.

50+ PRODUCTIONS

The Delaware Children’s Theatre has more than 50 years of productions and more than 40 years performing at the former New Century Club building.

DISTINCTIVE COLONIAL REVIVAL FEATURES

The building preserves its front door with an extended pediment and overhead fanlights, facade symmetry, gambrel roof and Palladian windows.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED SPACE

The building was designed as a place for community embodied by its auditorium and meeting rooms. Originally, it was used by members of the woman’s club, and now by actors and attendees to the children’s theater.

ATTRACTS VISITORS TO WILMINGTON

The plays at the Delaware Children’s Theatre attract families and visitors to Downtown Wilmington from the suburbs and tri-state area (Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey).

MULTI-GENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

At least two family generations have been part of the long history of the Delaware Children’s Theatre. Many former child actors and volunteers bring their children to play or attend the shows.

DISTINCTIVE SOCIAL PRESENCE

The plays and workshops at the Delaware Children’s Theatre have created a community of families around it which recognize its social presence.

ASSOCIATION WITH EMALEA P. WARNER

As one of Delaware’s most proactive advocates for social causes, she was founder of the Wilmington New Century Club, vice-president of the Women’s Suffrage Association and the first president of the League of Women Voters local chapter in 1920.

PROPERTY VALUE

The Delaware Children’s Theatre is located on the corner of Delaware Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue, placing it in a prime location in terms of real estate.

DISTINCTIVE VISUAL PRESENCE IN DOWNTOWN SETTING

The theater is a survivor of the I-95/Delaware Avenue interchange construction. Its Colonial Revival style contrasts with the parking lots and modern structures around it. Also, its strategic location makes it recognizable for many Wilmington residents.



# CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

## EXTERIOR: COLONIAL REVIVAL, DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, ORIGINAL FENESTRATION

Built in 1892-1893 in the Colonial Revival style, the Delaware Children's Theatre sits prominently on the corner of Delaware Avenue and Jackson Street. Just as the women of the New Century Club skillfully navigated both domestic and public spheres in their purchase of the property, the architect, Minerva Parker Nichols, did the same with her residential-appearing design for the club. She adapted her residential specialization for a new typology. As a woman entering the architectural field in the nineteenth-century, concentrating on domestic architecture was a logical and strategic choice. Today, the Delaware Children's Theatre still maintains its unique "house-like" appearance, serving as a distinctive icon and testament to the history of women's achievements.

The Colonial Revival style, popular at the turn of the 20th century for its reference to the founding of America, often features an eclectic combination of Georgian and Federal styles. The northeast facade features a heavily ornamented adaptation of a greek facade entryway, with entry doors flanked by pilasters and topped with decorative swags, and four transom windows (figure 2). A

gambrel-shaped roof tops both the "front-of-house" portion of the building (figures 3 & 5) and the larger rear massing that hosts the auditorium and backstage area (figure 4). The building has maintained its original set of first floor Palladian windows, set of second floor triple windows, pair of rounded windows, and third floor dormer windows, as seen in Minerva's 1892 blueprint for the facade (figure 1).

In 1922, an addition set back from the street was erected to serve as a buffet room and kitchen. The addition extends off the northwest elevation, off the side of the auditorium. The addition incorporates the original elevation's fenestration and brick quoining (figure 5). The northwest elevation abuts the edge of the property, saving room for just three parking spaces and an ADA accessible entry on the northeast edge (figure 5).

The building's high integrity and well maintained exterior not only honor Minerva Parker Nichols' boundary defying career, but reflects DCT's committed stewardship. Despite urban change, the "house-like"

building holds a cherished place in the collective memory of Wilmington and remains a landmark to all, especially due to its distinctive physical presence in a downtown setting.



Figure 1: Front Elevation, New Century Club by Minerva Parker Nichols, 1892



Figure 2: View of northeast and northwest elevations from across Delaware Avenue. Note location of building in relation to intersection and sidewalk, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 3: Northwest elevation. Note bay windows, fan light, and oval lights.





Figure 4: View of southeast elevation. Note window tracery, gambrel roof shape, and chimney with a first floor window in the middle , 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 5: View of northwest elevation and 1930 addition. Note original windows and brick quoining , 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



# FIRST FLOOR LOBBY AND “LIVING ROOMS”

## COLONIAL REVIVAL FINISHING, DOUBLE-LOADED CORRIDOR, ORIGINAL FLOORING, AND CENTRAL STAIRCASE

Through the front entry doors awaits the entry vestibule (A, figure 1). The space shields the main lobby from the weather outside and allows natural light to fill the space through the interior set of transom windows. The original floor tiling and door trimming decorate the welcoming space, along with a chandelier. The entry vestibule has doors on all four elevations, with folding doors leading into the lobby straight ahead, and paneled doors on both the left and the right leading to the office/“living room” spaces.

In the lobby, the original check floor tiling guides patrons and actors alike towards the heart of the building (B, figure 2). The double-loaded corridor is a social space, used as a queue area for auditorium admission, a gathering area pre and post shows, and general circulation. The lobby is spacious, grand, and warm, with flyers, artwork and photographs from past and present shows adorning the walls.

Two “living room” spaces flank either side of the lobby. One currently serves as the operations office, housing both the Artistic Director’s and Office Manager’s workspaces

(C, figure 3. The other room is multi-purpose, serving as a meeting room, waiting room, and box office on performance nights (D, figure 4).

Both “living rooms” are naturally well-lit by their large Palladian windows from the primary facade. On the interior, the slightly curved angle of the windows creates the illusion of a bay window, despite not actually projecting from the exterior facade. The original paneling and detailed tracery assign value and character to the space, along with other Colonial Revival details like paneled doors and molded trim and cornicing. As the “front-of-house” portion of the building, these rooms and original design work have been well preserved in good condition. Their distinct character was a purposeful choice by architect Minerva Parker Nichols, as these first rooms would have been noticed by all and considered a representation of the club’s status.

The large staircase, at the heart of the building and at the end of the lobby, features a detailed baluster and turned balustrade (E, figure 5). The original stairs have been

covered by either a lineoleum or vinyl covering. The stairs connect the lobby to both the basement and second and third floors.



Figure 1: View of vestibule and lobby. Note transom windows and tile flooring, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 2: View of lobby with auditorium entry doors, central staircase, and the box office/meeting room, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)





Figure 3: Operations office. Note double hung and Palladian windows and trim, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 4: Box office/meeting room. Note curved Palladian window and trim, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 5: View of staircase from lobby. Note wood baluster and paneling, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 6: View of original dutch door (left) and opened auditorium doors (right), 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 7: View of lobby, facing towards entry doors on Delaware Avenue. Note cornice molding, transom windows on entry vestibule and paneled doors, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



# AUDITORIUM

## GAMBREL CEILING, BALCONY SEATING, CURVED STAGE, COLNIAL REVIVAL FINISHES, FLEXIBILITY

At the heart of the Delaware Children's Theatre sits a two-and-a-half story tall auditorium. The auditorium can hold up to 400 people, spread across both first floor seating and second floor balcony seating. Temporary seating accommodations cover the first floor, keeping it a flexible, open-plan event room (figure 1). The balcony seats are fixed and historic, emphasizing the old theater charm (figure 4). The auditorium retains its original oak floor boards as well.

The auditorium's large volume is in part thanks to its gambrel shaped ceiling, which reflects the overall massing of the roof, though directly above the auditorium ceiling is in fact an attic/crawl space. Original to Minerva's designs for the New Century Club, the performance stage was built curved, with stage doors, stairs and railing flanking either side. The stage doors are adorned with Colonial Revival features seen throughout the building, like swags, fan lights, tracery, and paneling (figure 5). Above the stage is a balcony, which features additional colonial window details and molding (figure 1 & 6).

The northwest elevation was remade in 1922, when the buffet room/gallery was added (figure 2). Though not designed by Minerva, the wall aims to emulate an ornate Colonial Revival style with its swiving, double-wide paneled doors, ionic pilasters and large fanlight. The swinging doors lead into the extension, with the kitchen to the left. The original fenestration from this wall now lives on the northwest elevation of the addition. On the southeast elevation sits the auditorium's fireplace (figure 3). Above it, sits a cleverly designed Palladian window, with only one window at the center. On either side of it are two separate flues, which send the fireplace smoke up, around and out.

Though always intended for events, the auditorium has had to face the realities of advancements in lighting, sound, and tech production. Within the last 40 years, a sound booth was installed on the first floor (figure 4) to complement the existing booth on the second floor (figure 4). Within the last 10 years, lighting rigs for spot lights and cost-efficient, remote controllable LED lights have been installed in the gambrel ceiling, as well as a projector beneath the balcony

seating for the projection of sets and movies (figure 4 & 7). Additionally, the stage has been extended, covering up a conveyor belt mechanism that connects the auditorium floor to the basement below.

Despite these updates, the historic fabric of the building remains intact -- hidden beneath additions, never destroyed or removed. The auditorium has served large events and productions for the Wilmington community for 130+ years, with these highly ornamented Colonial Revival finishes serving as their backdrop.



Figure 1: View of stage from back of auditorium. Note gambrel ceiling, stage balcony, stage, stage doors and stairs, and temporary seating, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 2: View of northwest elevation fenestration, leading to the buffet room, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 3: View of southeast elevation. Note palladian window above fireplace, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)





Figure 4: View of balcony seating, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 5: Colonial Revival side door and stair railing. Note intricate tracery and panelling, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 6: Stage balcony with Colonial Revival finishing. (Elizabeth Felicella, 2021)



Figure 7: Original fixed balcony seats. Note lighting upgrades and stepped balcony floor, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

# BUFFET ROOM/GALLERY

OPEN FLOOR PLAN, COLONIAL REVIVAL FENESTRATION (FROM 1893 & 1922), COLONIAL REVIVAL FINISHES

To the northwest of the auditorium sits the "Buffet Room," named for its original programming. Built in the early 1930s, this addition was to facilitate large meals made in the new kitchen to the south and serve as a general gathering space. The large doors that separate the auditorium from the buffet room can be completely swung and slid open to connect the two spaces, as is often during intermissions or post productions (figure 3, 4 & 5).

The large versatile room serves many purposes throughout the year and throughout the course of productions. Housing a baby grand piano, the space lends itself to musical rehearsals and smaller group gatherings. The large floor also lends itself to set and prop making, with natural light flooding the room and proximity to the kitchen creating a helpful workroom. During weekend show days, the buffet room turns into the reception room, hosting both the concession booth and refreshment table. Post show, parents and audience members can wait for and mingle with the cast.

The large windows on the northwest elevation (figure 1) are the windows that originally occupied the northwest elevation of Minerva's original design. In 1922, the designers of the addition chose to salvage the exterior fenestration, reusing it on the exterior of their own design.

Consequently, a new fenestration system was required to take its place, connecting the auditorium to the buffet room. The system of doors and windows allows for the creation of a completely connected space, with operable transom windows encouraging air flow and ventilation. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, the ionic columns, transom windows, fan light upper window and door panelling nod to Minerva's original vision.

Added in 1922 by the New Century Women's Club, the buffet room and kitchen are integral features to the function and efficiency of the Delaware Children's Theatre. While the kitchen was an active part of catering events hosted by the New Century Women's Club, DCT has not had as much need for the space, using the appliances minimally and the space largely as storage. The 1922

added square footage and facilities allow for additional rehearsal space, set production, concessions and refreshments stands, and more, to all take place when needed.



Figure 1: View of the buffet room during performance weekends. Note the large original windows - relocated from the original exterior, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 2: View of the buffet room during rehearsal - set painting, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 3: View of the southeast corner, note the large sliding and hinging doors, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)





Figure 4: View of southeast elevation, featuring 1922-designed slidable and swingable windows and doors. Note operable transom windows, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 5: View of kitchen addition. Note large windows, set storage and appliances, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



## SECOND FLOOR LANDING AND DRESSING ROOMS

### COLONIAL REVIVAL FINISHES, OPEN FLOOR PLAN, FLEXIBILITY, STAGE MANAGEMENT

The second floor landing (A) provides access to both the boys (B) and girls (C) dressing rooms and the auditorium balcony seating. Finished with the same floor tile as the lobby, this landing is nearly as ornamented as the main first floor spaces (figures 1 & 2). Three large wooden steps lead up to the raised balcony seats through double paneled doors. The highly turned balustrade on the staircase and door trim is equally as intricate. Though on the second floor there is less public space to offer, it was still designed for the public's perception. The behind-the-scenes operations of the theatre are more on display on the second floor, with a dumbwaiter located in the closet space and a full-service elevator in the niche behind the locker (figure 2).

The two large dressing rooms are split by a large, paneled, retracting partition door (figure 3). Present day, both rooms are often opened to one another as the whole floor is used for children's dressing rooms, costume fittings and storage, and prep space (figure 3 & 4). This flexible interconnectedness was key to the functionality of these spaces. Meant to be offices for the New Centruy

Club to either occupy or rent out, Minerva intentionally designed these two large rooms to be highly finished and adaptable to the needs of its user. A fire place sits in the corner of each room (figure 4 & 5) with large windows naturally lighting the space. Closet doors are highly decorated with tracery over mirrors and each doorway has molded trim (figure 4). These rooms were meant to be public facing, making them equally as important as the rooms on the first floor. Currently, modern plastic panels cover the ceiling and a temporary structure was erected to provide privacy for dressing (figure 6).

Also on the second floor, but on the other side of the auditorium, sit the men's and women's dressing rooms (D & E, figures 7 & 8) and a backstage green room (F, figure 9 & 10). These spaces are utilitarian, providing bathrooms, vanities, and access to the stage for both actors and tech production. While noticeably less public-serving, these spaces still contain high integrity Colonial Revival detailing from Minerva's 1892-1893 design and illustrate the level of thought paid to the stage/performance experience.

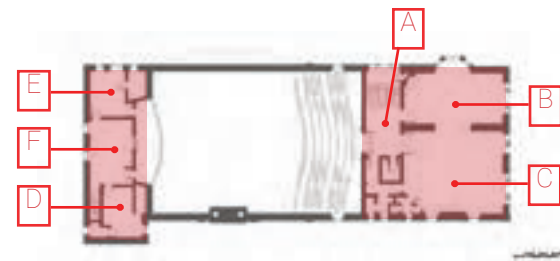


Figure 1: Second floor landing facing north, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 2: Second floor landing facing south, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 3: Girls dressing room (left) and boys dressing room (right), 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



Figure 4: Girls dressing room. Note fireplace, decorative mantel, closet door tracery and large windows, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 5: View inside temporary structure for boys dressing room and corner fireplace, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 6: View of temporary structure created for privacy purposes in boys dressing room, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 7: Men's dressing room (D), 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 8: Women's dressing room (E). Note windows & bathroom door, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 9: Green room/backstage access with operable window and over-painted tracery, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 10: Close up of decorated, balcony access door, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



# THIRD FLOOR LANDING AND COSTUME STORAGE

## COLONIAL REVIVAL “SECONDARY STATUS” FINISHES, BUILDING UTILITY

The third floor houses two large storage rooms, multiple smaller closets, and a built-in-ladder accessing the attic. The landing (location 1) is smaller, tighter and unornamented, implying the space would have been less-public, and saved for the New Century Club’s operations or storage (figure 3). The height of the floor is far shorter and walls are missing the more “status-driven” decorations seen throughout the first and second floors. Though condensed, the space is adequately lit with full height windows.

The central staircase and its balustrade remain highly turned and finished as it reaches its final floor. The mini-landing between the second and third floors is well lit by triple windows and the closet door is paneled (figure 1). The ladder to the attic greets users at the top of the central staircase (figure 2 & 5).

The two main rooms on the floor, currently used as storage for women’s (location 2, figure 6) and men’s costumes (location 3, figure 4), is less ornamented as well. Both entry doors are finished with decorative trim, but the interior walls and windows are not

as finished. As a secondary space intended most likely for the stewards’ use, there is a tangible and understandable difference in ornament and display, while still not forgoing functionality and use. Presently, the ceilings in these rooms are covered with the same modern plastic paneling as the second floor.

DCT has made the most with these rooms -- they are organized and packed. Every inch has been made useful, storing and archiving the costumes of the 40+ years of Delaware Children’s Theatre productions.

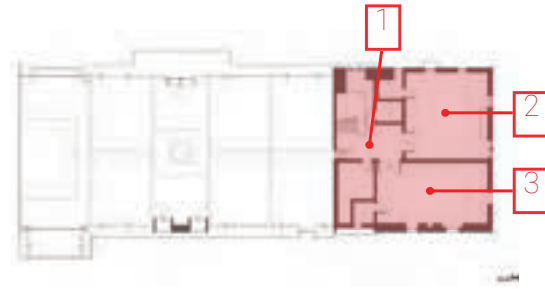


Figure 1: View of second floor to third floor stair landing, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 2: View of attic stairs from staircase, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 3: Third floor landing. Note turned balustrade, ceiling height and door trim, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)





Figure 4: View of men's costume room, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 5: View of attic door from landing, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 6: View of women's costume room, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



# BASEMENT

## HISTORIC BUIDLING TECHNOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTION

In the basement of the Delaware Children's Theatre remain the building's foundation (figure 1) and historic construction technology, along with technological relics from the building's 19th and 20th century design and life. In the basement, historic mechanisms such as the kitchen dumbwaiter system and the auditorium conveyor belt (figure 3) are tucked away in the maze-like basement plan. The basement also holds the 19th-century call system and elevator machinery. These technologies increased the efficiency of the public-facing services the club offered. Now, though less applicable to the operations of DCT, they still survive in their original locations, standing as an artifact of 19th and 20th century building technology.

The basement is an underground maze of storage space, with both concrete and dirt floors holding over 40 years worth of sets and props (figure 2), even storing some of the New Century Club's original paired, wood seats (figure 4).



Figure 1: View of masonry foundation and set storage. Figure 2: View of prop storage library.

Figure 3: View of conveyor belt, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

Figure 4: New Century Club chairs, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



# ATTIC

## HISTORIC BUIDLING TECHNOLOGY AND CONSTRUCTION

The attic, made accessbile via a cat walk that spans the length of the space, is a hollow, bare space, with wood trusses, rafters and beams exposed (figure 1). The transparent nature of the building's construction technology is a rare and important feature in 19th century buildings -- especially due to the rarity of extant Minerva-designed public buildings.

The attic, located above the gambrel shaped auditorium, houses the theatre's central heating system. A large furnace which heats the auditorium below through an ornate metal grate sits at the center of the space (figure 1). The attic also holds a cedar closet, typical of a 19th-century home, to protect clothes and textiles from pests (figure 2). Visible from the attic are also the dormer windows which pierce through the gambrel shaped roof (figure 3).



Figure 1. View of attic catwalk and furnace. Note trusses, exposed rafters, and outline of auditorium roof.



Figure 2: View of cat walk, furnace and cedar closets, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

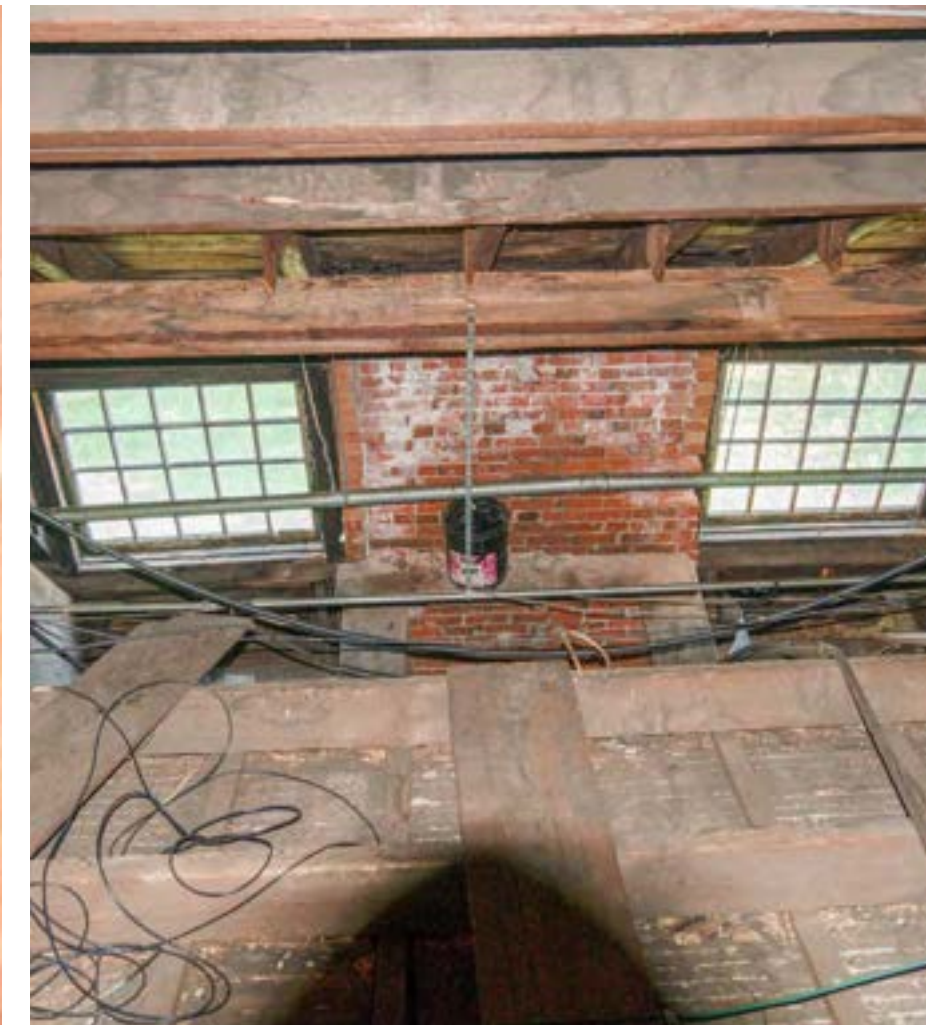







Figure 3: View of dormer windows, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)










# CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	1	North Facade	Greek Entryway	1	ORIG	The entryway features a four-panel door design framed by a Greek-style door surround. Each door has five raised panels (two vertical, in the lower portion of the door, and three horizontal, in the upper portion of the door), flanked by stately pilasters. Decorative swags sit above the doors, and a large transom window allows light to enter, enhancing the space's elegance and classical balance.	
EXT	1	North Facade	Palladian Windows	2	ORIG	The Palladian window features a tripartite design with a centered round-arched sash, decorative wooden keystone, and wooden pilasters. Tracery details and a slight bay effect for the two side lights add depth and classical elegance.	



EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	2	North Facade	Triple Windows	2	ORIG	The triple windows feature 1-over-1 double-hung sashes, adorned with garlands and swags. A decorative cornice crowns the design, adding a touch of classical elegance.	
EXT	2	North Facade	Rounded Arched Window	2	ORIG	The rounded-arched windows feature 1-over-1 double-hung sashes, accented with a decorative wooden keystone at the arch's center for a refined, classical touch.	
EXT	2	North Facade	"Delaware Children'S Theatre" Logo	1	ADDED (After 1982)	The "Delaware Children's Theatre" logo appears in a serif font, with all capital letters. It presents a formal design, aligned horizontally and centered above the main entrance.	

EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	3	North Facade	Center Dormer	1	ORIG	The center dormer features a bell-shaped, broken pediment hood. A decorative swag adorns the pediment, enhancing its Colonial Revival appeal.	
EXT	1,2,3	North Facade	Brick Quoining	2	ORIG	The building features red brick quoining, with alternating brickwork at the corners creating a strong visual contrast and emphasizing the structure's edges.	
EXT	3	North Facade	Gambrel Roof	1	repaired	The structure is topped with a gambrel roof, characterized by its dual slopes on each side, with the lower slope being steeper than the upper.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	2	West Facade	Fire Stair	1	ADDED (After 1922)	The fire stair consists of a metal platform supported by brackets extending from the building's exterior wall. The stair is equipped with a railing and a narrow ladder-like structure leads downwards from the platform. The platform connects to a secondary exit door.	
EXT	1,2	West Facade	Bay Window	2	ORIG	The bay window features a prominent three-sided design that extends outward from the building's facade. The structure is accented by decorative molding along the top and bottom. Each section of the bay contains large panes of glass framed by simple wooden trime. The flat roof of the bay window supports a small railing.	

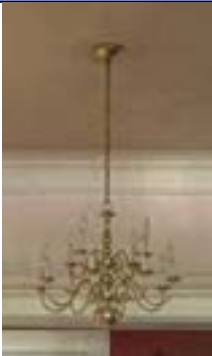




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	3	West Facade	Oval Window	2	ORIG	The oval window framed by clean, white trim that emphasizes its shape. Window was divided into segments by radial muntins. Decorative keystones extend outward from the top, bottom, and sides of the frame, further enhancing its ornate appearance.	
EXT	1,2	Addition West Facade	Engaged Column	4	ADDED (After 1922)	The engaged column features a rectangular profile with a simple design, partially embedded into the wall, showcasing its structural and decorative purpose. It has a exposed brick appearance	
EXT	1	East Facade	Fire Stairs	1	ADDED (After 1922)	The fire stair is a metal structure with a simple design, descending from the upper level to the ground. It consists of a metal platform and stairs with handrails.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
EXT	3	East Facade	Chimney	1	ORIG	The chimney is constructed of red brick with a tall, narrow design. It features brickwork at the top, with several courses of bricks extending outward.	
EXT	3	East Facade	Dormer	1	ORIG	The dormers are positioned symmetrically on either side of the tall red brick chimney. Each dormer features a multi-paned window with simple white trim, set within the roofline. The dormer roofs are pitched, blending seamlessly into the main roof, which is covered in shingles.	



GLOSSARY - FIRST FLOOR



EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Lobby	An Interior Set Of Double Doors	1	ORIG	The double door features a classic panel design, with multiple recessed panels on each door leaf, painted in a bright white finish. The doors are framed by a substantial doorway with fluted pilasters and a prominent cornice at the top.	
INT	1	Lobby	The Black And White Diagonally Tile	1	ORIG	The floor features a black-and-white checkerboard pattern, with alternating square tiles arranged diagonally across the space.	
INT	1	Lobby	Gas Light	1	ORIG	The original gas light fixture features a design with a rounded, frosted glass globe supported by a brass arm that extends horizontally from the wall.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Lobby	Brass Early 20Th Century Chandelier	1	ORIG	A brass early 20th-century chandelier with a multi-arm design, candle-style bulb holders, and a warm golden finish.	
INT	1	Office 2	Palladian Windows	1	ORIG	The Palladian window features a large central arched window flanked by two smaller rectangular windows on either side. The central window has an elegant fan-like tracery pattern in the arch.	
INT	1	Office 2	Oak Floor	1	ORIG	The oak floor features narrow, tightly fitted planks with a warm, natural finish. The wood has a smooth surface with a subtle grain pattern.	






EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Office 1	Paladian Windows	1	ORIG	The Palladian window features a large central arched window flanked by two smaller rectangular windows on either side. The central window has an elegant fan-like tracery pattern in the arch.	
INT	1	Office 1	Oak Floor	1	ORIG	The oak floor features narrow, tightly fitted planks with a warm, natural finish. The wood has a smooth surface with a subtle grain pattern.	
INT	1	Office 1	Double Door	1	ORIG	The double door features a classic panel design, with multiple recessed panels on each door leaf, painted in a bright white finish. The doors are framed by a substantial doorway with fluted pilasters and a prominent cornice at the top.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Auditorium	Gambrel Ceiling	1	ORIG	The ceiling features a gambrel design with a gently sloping arch, divided into sections by prominent white moldings. The surface of the ceiling has a stucco finish, creating a subtle sheen under the lighting.	
INT	1	Auditorium	Palladian Window With Fireplace	1	ORIG	The architectural feature includes a Palladian-style window framed by classical detailing. The window is topped by a large, arched opening, supported by substantial pilasters and framed by prominent molding. Below the window is a fireplace with a red brick hearth and intricate trim along the mantel, including decorative flourishes. The fireplace opening is framed by simple white woodwork.	



EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Auditorium	Stage (Includes Side Stairs, Stage Doors X2)	1	ORIG+ADDED (After 1982)	The stage features two side stairs leading up from either side, with curved railings. Two tall stage doors, adorned with arched panels and decorative molding, frame the stage. Above the doors are ornamental garlands.	
INT	1	Auditorium	Stage Balcony	1	ORIG	The stage balcony features a paneled design, with vertical rectangular panels creating a clean, symmetrical appearance. The light-colored paint contrasts with the darker background. The balcony has a simple cornice and is supported by unobtrusive structural elements. Two small, recessed panels near the center add a subtle decorative touch. The balcony sits directly above the red stage curtain.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Auditorium	Door	1	ADDED (After 1922)	An arched opening framed by white trim and pilasters.	
INT	1	Auditorium	Wood Floor "Oak Stripping With 12 Inch Molded Wood Baseboard"		ORIG	The wood floor is composed of oak stripping. The edges are finished with 12-inch molded wood baseboards.	
INT	1	Auditorium	Temporary Seating		ADDED (After 1982)	The auditorium features temporary seating arranged in neat rows, consisting of blue upholstered chairs with gold frames. The layout includes tiered levels at the back, allowing for improved visibility for the audience.	






EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Auditorium	Lighting		RECENT ADDED	Light fixtures are spaced evenly along the ceiling.	
INT	1	Auditorium	Textured Plaster Wall		ADDED (After 1982)	The wall features a textured plaster finish.	
INT	1	Staircase FI1-FI2	Newell Post	1	ORIG	The newel post is a prominent, dark-stained wooden structure at the base of the staircase. It features paneled sides and a slightly ornate top. The post anchors the white-painted balusters, which are turned and evenly spaced, supporting the handrail that ascends with the stairs.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Staircase FI1-FI2	Ballusters	1	ORIG	The balusters are painted white and are turned in a traditional style. The design includes subtle curves and bulbous shapes that give the balusters a classic, decorative appearance.	
INT	1	Staircase FI1-FI2	Black And White Diagonally Tile	1	ORIG	The floor features a black-and-white checkerboard pattern, with alternating square tiles arranged diagonally across the space.	
INT	1	Buffet Room/Gallery	Ceiling Fan	6	ADDED (After 1922)	The ceiling fan features a design with five dark wooden blades and a central light fixture.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	1	Kitchen	Four Window	5	ADDED (After 1922)	The four windows are large, rectangular, and evenly spaced, framed by deep red trim.	
INT	2	Green Room	Floor Entrance To The Stage	1	?	The hidden floor entrance to the stage is subtly integrated into the flooring.	


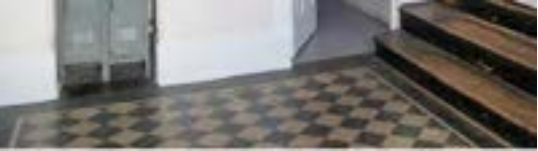
EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	2	Green Room	Door	1	ORIG	The window to the stage box is a small, decorative opening framed in white, featuring a Gothic-inspired tracery pattern with pointed arches. The design mirrors other architectural elements found in the building.	
INT	2	Green Room	Mini Door	1	ORIG	The mini door is set within a pointed arch frame, painted in white, and features a simple paneled design. The small size and unique shape give the door a whimsical.	
INT	2	Girls Dressing Room	Sliding Door	1	ORIG	This image shows a sliding door opening with a decorative wooden frame, featuring molding details and paneling.	






EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	2	Girls Dressing Room	Oak Floor	1	ORIG	The oak floor features narrow, tightly fitted planks.	
INT	2	Girls Dressing Room	Custums And Props			A colorful array of costumes and props.	
INT	2	Girls Dressing Room	Celling	1	ORIG	Fireplace featuring a brick surround with a semi-circular arched firebox, framed by richly textured bricks arranged in a radial pattern above the opening. The mantel is adorned with classical-style ornamentation, including garlands, floral motifs, and oval medallions, all rendered in white-painted wood or plaster. The combination of warm brick tones and the white decorative mantel creates a striking contrast.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	2	Dressing Room	Fireplace	1	ORIG	The fireplace features a rustic brick design with a small arched opening. The bricks are arranged horizontally, creating a layered texture, while the arch is accentuated by the curvature of the brick pattern.	
INT	2	Dressing Room	Oak Floor	1	ORIG	The oak floor features narrow, tightly fitted planks with a warm, natural finish. The wood has a smooth surface with a subtle grain pattern.	
INT	2	Dressing Room	Dutch Pocket	2	ORIG	The Dutch pocket door is designed with an upper portion ornamented by a decorative tracery pattern resembling gothic arches, similar to the tracery found on several windows throughout the building.	




EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	2	Dressing Room	Dutch Pocket Doors	2	ORIG	The Dutch pocket door with a built-in wardrobe.	
INT	2	Staricase FI2- FI3	Newell Post	1	ORIG	The newel post is a prominent, dark-stained wooden structure at the base of the staircase. It features paneled sides and a slightly ornate top. The post anchors the white-painted balusters, which are turned and evenly spaced, supporting the handrail that ascends with the stairs.	
INT	2	Staricase FI2- FI3	Ballusters	1	ORIG	The balusters are painted white and are turned in a traditional style. The design includes subtle curves and bulbous shapes that give the balusters a classic, decorative appearance.	



EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	2	Staricase FI2- FI3	Black And White Diagonally Tile	1	ORIG	The floor features a classic black-and-white checkerboard pattern, with alternating square tiles arranged diagonally across the space.	
INT	3	3Rd FI Landing	White And Black Tile	1	ORIG	The floor features a classic black-and-white checkerboard pattern, with alternating square tiles arranged diagonally across the space.	



EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	3	Storage	Custums And Props			A colorful array of costumes and props.	
INT	3	Storage	Celling	1	ADDED	The ceiling features large metal panels secured by visible screws.	
INT	3	Attic	Heating System	1	ORIG	A large furnace which heats the auditorium below through an ornate metal grate.	

EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	3	Attic	Cedar Storage Closet	1	ORIG	A typical of a 19th-century home, to protect clothes and textiles from pests.	
INT	3	Attic	Roof Stural Beams	1	ORIG	A cat walk that spans the length of the space, is a hollow, bare space, with wood trusses, rafters and beams exposed.	
INT	Basement	Basement	Dumb Waiter Machine	1	ORIG	The dumbwaiter machine consists of a large pulley system connected to a motor and gear assembly. The equipment shows signs of wear, dust, and age, indicating it may have been in use for many years, possibly as part of the original building design. The space housing the dumbwaiter is functional, with wooden paneling on the walls.	

EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	Basement	Basement	Telephone	1	ORIG	The system consists of a weathered control panel with exposed wiring and multiple switches or levers.	
INT	Basement	Basement	Old Light System	1	ORIG	The old lighting system consists of a large, industrial light fixture with a metal housing and control levers, The overall design reflects an earlier style of stage lighting, possibly from the mid-20th century, indicating its use in theater or other performance settings.	
INT	Basement	Basement	Chair			Some of the New Century Clubs original paired, wood seats.	

EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	FEATURE	AMOUNT	DATE (ORIG / ADDED)	DESCRIPTION	PHOTO
INT	Basement	Basement	Conveyor Belt	1	ORIG	A belt system connecting the auditorium stage and basement, likely used for transporting stage props or other items between levels. The setup consists of a conveyor belt-like mechanism with surrounding wooden beams and exposed structure.	
INT	Basement	Basement	Custom And Pops			Over 40 years woth of sets and props.	



# ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY

The Delaware Children's Theatre (historically, the New Century Club of Wilmington) retains a high degree of integrity. "Integrity" refers to the ability of a property to convey its significance according to the seven factors established by the National Park Service: setting; location; design; materials; workmanship; association; and feeling. The DCT building retains six of the seven aspects of integrity; the only diminished aspect of integrity is its setting.

## SETTING

"Setting" refers to the physical environment of a historic property which can be natural or human-made. However, due to urban renewal and I-95 construction, the built environment along Delaware Avenue has changed, isolating the theatre.

## LOCATION

"Location" refers to the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. The DCT building still remains in the same location thanks to Marie Swajewski's efforts to save the building from demolition.

## DESIGN

"Design" refers to the combination of elements that compose the significant building. DCT's is a great example of Colonial



New Century Club Wilmington, 1921 (NCC Annual Report, Delaware Historical Society)



Delaware Children's Theater, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

Revival architecture from the late 19th century. Its design by Minerva Parker Nichols as a women's club with an auditorium, offices and meeting rooms contributes to its aesthetic value.

## MATERIALS & WORKMANSHIP

These criteria refer to the physical elements and craftsmanship created during a particular period of time. The theatre clearly maintains most of its original historic fabric, especially in spaces such as the attic and auditorium.

## ASSOCIATION

The theatre has been associated with important historic personalities and events by being a meeting place for women activists, a venue for important speakers and the long history of DCT. The building continues to express this association with the ongoing presence and use of its significant public spaces, including the auditorium.

## FEELING

"Feeling" refers to a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. The theatre continues to be experienced as a place for community engagement led by women in a historic setting.



Auditorium, undated (Carrie Baker)



Auditorium, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Stage, 1922 (NCC Annual Report, Delaware Historical Society)



Stage, 2021 (Elizabeth Felicella)



# CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

## GENERAL COMMENTS

During Fall 2024, site visits were performed at the Delaware Children’s Theatre to assess the current condition of the building. The identified conditions were recorded using annotations, photographs and videos. Complementing the visual observations, communications with theatre’s staff and historic research helped to understand the building evolution and latest maintenance projects. It was known that no major restoration was ever performed at the whole structure. However, many focused repairs are performed based on its urgency and budget. The last major project was the rehabilitation of the roof structure in 2022.

After the assessment, the building is in good condition. However, a structural engineer must evaluate the building to confirm this diagnostic. Moisture-related deterioration mechanisms were the most identified conditions, especially on the basement and third floor rooms close to the roof. Dark staining as well as plaster and paint peeling were found.



Figure 1: Main facade of the theater, October 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 2: East Side Elevation (DCT Studio group, October 2024)



Figure 3: West Side Elevation, October 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

## ROOF

Apart from the basement, the roof was recognized as a main source of water-related issues on the upper floors. As the roof was repaired 2 years ago, this may have addressed the cause of many of the identified deterioration mechanisms.

Nevertheless, further assessment of these specific areas needs to be carried out to confirm this idea. It is relevant to spaces like the attic where the auditorium ceiling design may allow the accumulation of moisture at the connections with the supporting walls.



Figure 4: Aerial view of the theater. Note the different roofs: gambrel roof on the original massing (left) and the 1920s addition flat roof (right) 2024 (Google Earth Pro)





Figure 5: Connection of brick wall, historic roof and auditorium ceiling at the attic, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 6: Historic roof and auditorium ceiling at the attic, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 7: View of the 1920s flat roof with protective membrane, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

## BASEMENT

### MOISTURE-RELATED DETERIORATION

Moisture-related deterioration of the building behaves as a system affecting all floors in different degrees. However, the Basement was identified as the floor with more deterioration issues caused by moisture.

The stone and masonry foundation walls show detached finishes and plaster, possibly caused by rising damp (Figure 08). Also, the accumulation of detached material adjacent to the walls denotes the long duration of this process. It is important to indicate that the foundation walls with the most detached material are the perimetral ones. They are in direct contact with the soil and function as a retaining wall, increasing the chances of water infiltration (Figure 09)

Although the aforementioned general conditions are repeated throughout the floor, the rooms with the most water infiltration issues are the former machinery rooms and closed bathrooms. Possible water leakages and their proximity to perimetral walls created a space where most of the plaster is detached exposing old metal mesh. (Figures 10 - 11)

The difference in the deterioration level of certain areas may be explained by the current use of the basement. Per contemporary 1890s plans designed by Minerva Parker Nichols, the basement was planned as a storage facility, machinery area and restroom area connected to the vestibule via the main stairway. By 1920s, the creation of new restroom facilities closer to the vestibule and auditorium relegated the ones at the basement, reducing the number of users and people how could report any infiltration issue. This encouraged the use of the basement as a pure storage space. Nowadays, the most maintained spaces are the hallways connecting the spaces that store boxes and props, constantly used by volunteers. (Figure 12)

Nevertheless, the access to the walls at the storage rooms was restricted due to the large number of props blocking them. Apart from the walls, most of the basement shows exposed wooden beams and holes in the ceiling, possibly caused by water pipes and electrical installation as well as exploration windows. (Figures 13-14)



Figure 8: Stone and masonry walls with detached plaster, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)





Figure 9: Old machinery room adjacent to exposed perimetral wall and exposed metal mesh. Note the accumulation of material, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 10: Closed restroom with water infiltration due to rising damp and possible water leakage, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 11: Ceiling opening due to water pipe installation, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 12: Moisture on wall along hallway due to rising damp, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 13 (Left): Plaster detachment on ceiling, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 14 (Below): View of storage room with exposed wooden beams, masonry walls and boxes. Note the props and bxs obstructing the view of the perimetral walls, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



FIRST, SECOND & THIRD FLOORS

MOISTURE-RELATED DETERIORATION

Throughout the first, second and third floors, the building shows moisture-related deterioration in specific spots. Peeling plaster on walls or dark staining on ceilings are manifestations of water-related issues. However, in order to treat it, further assessment is necessary to determine if it is part of a broader issue such as an active roof water leakage.

On the first floor, the Auditorium and the Buffet Room are the spaces with the most visible deterioration of this kind. At the Auditorium, the brick pillar at the southeast corner is the most affected. Due to its location at a corner of the auditorium as well as under the corner roof structure change, it might enhance the possibility of moisture to concentrate in this area. (Figure 17)

The ceiling of the Buffet Room shows dark staining and paint peeling at the northeast corner of the room. This area is adjacent to the connection between the 1920s' addition and the 1890s structure. During the site visits, the flat roof above this area was protected by a membrane. Although further assessment will discard any roof leakage, it

might also be an inactive condition. (Figure 18)

On the second floor, the balcony of the auditorium shows a major plaster detachment. This situation appears to be caused by an accumulation of moisture such as the auditorium corner pillar. It is important to notice that both conditions occur along the wall exposed to the green area compared to the other side which is flanked by the 1920s addition. (Figure 19)

The ceiling of the third floor along the different rooms shows dark staining and some cracks on previous patches. The roof was repaired two years ago, which indicates that the dark staining may be inactive and may just require cleaning. The cracks on the repairs indicate that they are still active. However, it is important to know if these patches were performed before or after the roof repair. (Figure 20)



Figure 15: Brick pillar at southeast corner of the auditorium, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 16: Buffet Room, note moisture on ceiling corner, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 17: Detachment at auditorium balcony, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



POSSIBLE MOISTURE-RELATED DETERIORATION

The plastic paneling that covers the original ceilings of the second and third floors could not be removed to perform a visual inspection. However, the conditions identified around the paneling (e.g. dark staining) implies a ceiling deterioration that needs to be addressed, especially on the third floor. (Figure 19-20)



Figure 18: Cracks along patches and repairs, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 19: Plastic paneling covering existing ceiling on the second floor, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)



Figure 20: Dark staining on the third floor, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

DETERIORATING FINISHES

Throughout the building, apart from the moisture-related issues, deferred maintenance and use of facilities have removed the paint from elements such as the balustrade at the wooden stairway. (Figure 21)



Figure 21: Deteriorated wooden balustrade on stairway, 2024 (DCT Studio Group)

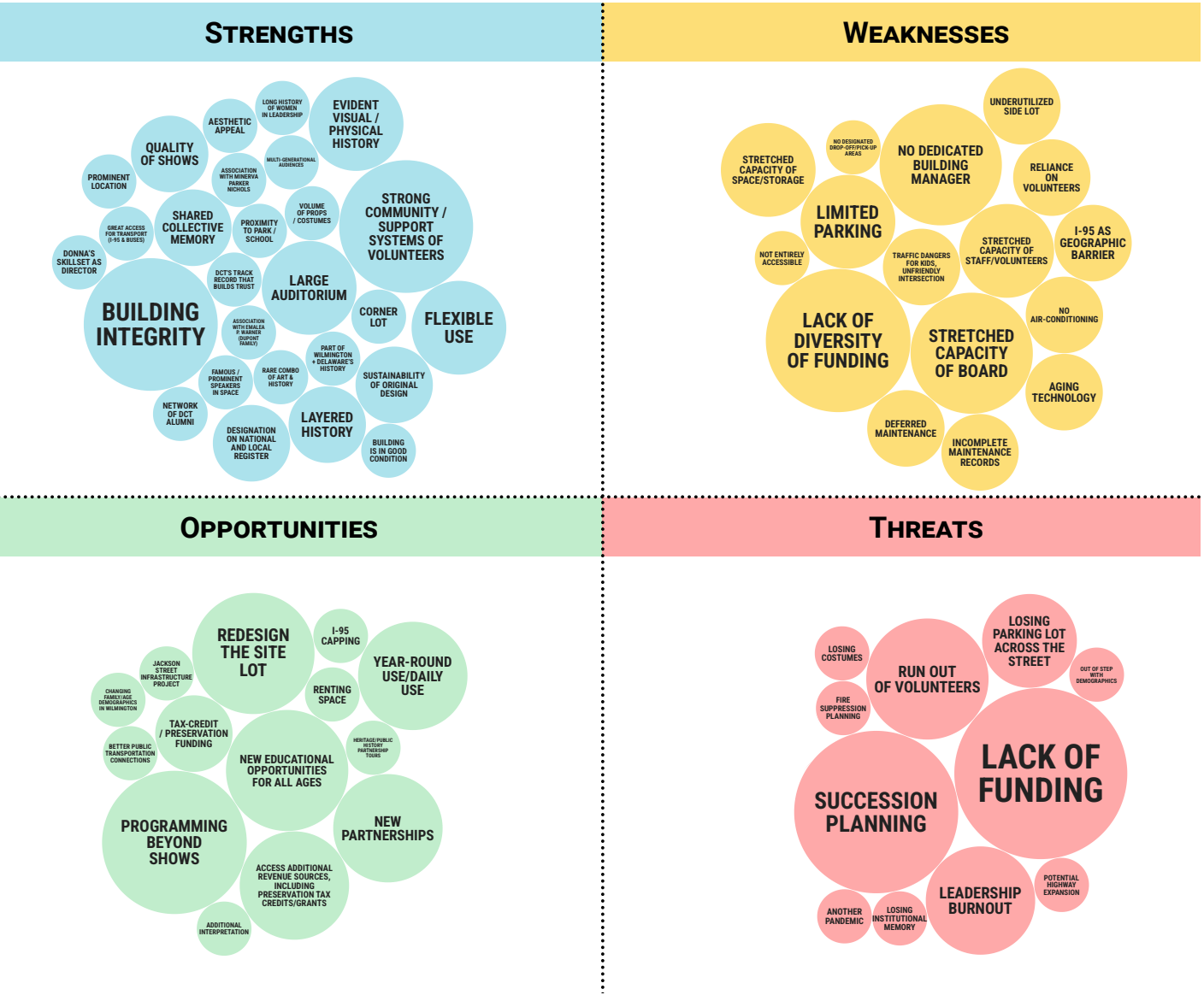


# SWOT ANALYSIS

## OVERVIEW

As our team discussed, understanding where we stand is essential for moving forward. Through in-depth research and careful observation, we have developed a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT), outlining its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. By prioritizing and voting on key points within each category, we have highlighted the most pressing and impactful factors, providing a sharper view of our internal and external landscape.

This analysis not only helps us assess our current position but also serves as a foundation for envisioning DCT's path forward. By identifying both our challenges and growth potential, we can make informed decisions to enhance the theater's resilience and relevance in our community. Our goal is to leverage these insights to build a roadmap that steers DCT toward long-term sustainability and success, ensuring that it continues to inspire and engage future generations.



STRENGTHS ANALYSIS

The Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT) boasts an impressive range of strengths that position it as a valued cultural and historical institution within Wilmington. The building’s integrity is at its core, reflecting its architectural robustness and preservation over time. Its designation on national and local registers further highlights this integrity, emphasizing its historical and cultural significance within the community.

One of the DCT’s greatest assets is its strong visual and physical history. The theater’s aesthetic appeal, layered with associations to historical figures like Minerva Parker Nichols and the DuPont family, infuses it with a deep shared collective memory that resonates across generations. These connections to notable personalities and events make DCT not only a theater but also a living testament to Wilmington and Delaware’s broader history.

The DCT’s large auditorium offers a unique advantage, allowing it to host substantial audiences and cater to multi-generational audiences easily. This feature, coupled with the flexible use of the space, enables

the venue to accommodate various events and gatherings, strengthening its role as a community hub.

Additionally, the DCT is supported by a strong volunteer network and a committed community that provides invaluable support and sustains its programs. This community engagement is complemented by a network of alums, many of whom continue to be involved, reinforcing DCT’s lasting impact on those participating in its productions and programs.

Another strength is the DCT’s prominent location. It is easily accessible via major transport routes like I-95 and nearby buses, making it convenient for patrons throughout the region. This accessibility is enhanced by its proximity to a local park and school, further embedding the theater into the community’s everyday landscape.

The quality of DCT’s productions is consistently high, thanks in part to Donna’s skill set as director, which has been instrumental in building DCT’s reputation. This dedication to excellence has established

a track record that builds trust and attracts returning audiences, creating a solid foundation for future growth.

DCT maintains its historical charm while offering flexible use options for various events, making DCT a rare gem within the area’s cultural landscape.

Strengths
Building Integrity
Strong Community / Support Systems of Voluneers
Flexible Use
Large Auditorium
Evident Visual / Physical History
Quality of Shows
Shared Collective Memory
Layered History
Sustainability of Original Design
Designation on National and Local Register
Network of DCT Alumni
Famous / Prominent Speakers in Space
Rare Combo of Art & History
Part of Wilmington + Delaware’s History
Association with Emalea P. Warner (Dupont Family)
Corner Lot
DCT’s Track Record that Builds Trust
Donna’s Skillset as Director
Prominent Location
Long History of Women in Leadership
Aesthetic Appeal
Proximity to Park / School
Multi-Generational Audiences
Association with Minerva Parker Nichols



WEAKNESS ANALYSIS

The Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT) faces several challenges that limit its operational efficiency and growth potential. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a dedicated building manager, which leaves the maintenance and management responsibility to an already stretched volunteer and staff base. While beneficial for community engagement, this reliance on volunteers places a strain on resources and creates inconsistencies in building upkeep and operations.

Another critical area of concern is limited parking, which affects accessibility for families and patrons. The lack of designated drop-off/pick-up areas, combined with traffic dangers for children due to an unfriendly intersection, poses safety risks and reduces the convenience of visiting the theater. The underutilized side lot presents an opportunity for improvement, but currently, it needs to be a better resource that could otherwise alleviate some of these logistical issues.

Financially, the theater’s lack of diversity in funding is a significant weakness, creating vulnerability in sustaining operations and

hindering the ability to plan long-term projects or improvements. This funding limitation contributes to deferred maintenance issues, and with incomplete maintenance records, there is a risk of unexpected repairs or structural problems that could impact the theater’s functioning.

The theater’s infrastructure also faces limitations due to aging technology and no air conditioning, affecting comfort and the quality of experience for staff and visitors, especially during warmer months. Accessibility is another concern, as the building is not entirely accessible to all patrons, potentially limiting audience diversity and inclusivity.

Additionally, DCT faces challenges related to its geographic location near I-95, which is a barrier for some potential visitors. The stretched capacity of the board and the stretched capacity of space/storage further compound the theater’s limitations, restricting its ability to store equipment, costumes, and props efficiently and fully accommodate all its needs.

Altogether, these weaknesses highlight the need for DCT to address both structural and operational gaps to improve its sustainability and continue providing a safe, enjoyable environment for its audiences and staff.

Weaknesses
Lack of Diversity of Funding
Stretched Capacity of Board
No Dedicated Building Manager
Limited Parking
Stretched Capacity of Space / Storage
Stretched Capacity of Staff / Volunteers
No Designated Drop-off / Pick-up Areas
Underutilized Side Lot
Reliance on Volunteers
I-95 as Geographic Barrier
Traffic Dangers for Kids, Unfriendly Intersection
No Airconditioning
Aging Technology
No Entirely Accessible
Deferred Maintenance
Incomplete Maintenance Records

OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS

The Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT) has numerous opportunities to expand its role in the community and improve its facilities. One of the most promising options is redesigning the site lot, which could alleviate current challenges related to parking and accessibility while creating additional space for outdoor activities and events. The potential for I-95 capping also presents an opportunity to enhance connections with surrounding neighborhoods, making the theater more accessible to a broader audience.

Expanding the DCT’s offerings beyond traditional shows opens doors to programming beyond performances, such as workshops, summer camps, and interactive events for families. This expansion could be coupled with new educational opportunities for all ages, allowing DCT to serve as an educational hub where children and adults alike can learn about theater arts, history, and preservation.

In addition to programming, new partnerships with local heritage and public history organizations could enrich DCT’s offerings.

These partnerships could lead to collaborative projects, such as heritage/public history partnership tours that highlight the historical and cultural value of the theater.

Collaborating with schools, cultural institutions, and local businesses may increase DCT’s visibility and draw new audiences.

DCT can also explore financial opportunities, including tax-credit preservation funding and additional grants. These resources could provide essential restoration, maintenance, and expansion funding. By pursuing additional revenue sources, DCT could strengthen its financial foundation and reduce its reliance on limited funding streams.

The theater can further benefit from the Jackson Street infrastructure project and improved public transportation connections. These developments could increase foot traffic and make it easier for audiences across Wilmington to visit DCT. With a strategy for year-round use, DCT could transform into a vibrant space that serves

the community daily, further integrating itself into Wilmington’s cultural and social landscape.

These opportunities position DCT to grow as a cultural landmark that not only provides theatrical performances but also serves as an educational and community-centered institution that preserves and promotes Wilmington’s history and arts.

Opportunities
Programming Beyond Shows
Redesign the Site Lot
Year-Round Use / Daily Use
New Partnership
New Educational Opportunities for all Ages
Access Additional Revenue Sources Including Preservation Tax Credit / Grants
Tax-credit / Preservation Funding
I-95 Capping
Rent Space
Jackson Street Infrastructure Project
Changing Family / Age Demographics in Wilmington
Better Public Transportation Connections
Heritage / Public History Partnership Tours
Additional Interpretation



THREATS ANALYSIS

The Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) faces several potential threats that could undermine its long-term sustainability and impact. The lack of funding is a critical concern, as it restricts DCT's ability to address necessary repairs, invest in programming, and secure additional resources. Without consistent financial support, DCT risks being unable to maintain its facilities or expand its offerings, which could ultimately affect its standing in the community.

DCT's dependence on volunteers also presents a significant risk, with the possibility of running out of volunteers due to burnout or lack of recruitment. The demand for current volunteers is high, and without a reliable pool of committed individuals, the theater's operations and ability to host events could be compromised. This challenge is compounded by leadership burnout, threatening the continuity of DCT's mission and initiatives. The heavy reliance on a small leadership team means that, over time, these individuals may face exhaustion, especially without a succession plan, to preserve institutional knowledge and management skills.

Another pressing threat is the potential loss of the parking lot across the street, which would exacerbate accessibility issues and potentially deter visitors. Additionally, the theater risks becoming out of step with demographic changes in the community, which could lead to a disconnect between DCT's offerings and the needs or interests of its audience.

Infrastructure threats are also significant, with the looming prospect of expensive, unfixable repairs. The age of the building increases the risk of costly maintenance challenges that could be beyond DCT's financial reach. The absence of fire suppression planning heightens the risk of catastrophic damage to the property and its contents, including valuable costumes and sets, in the event of a fire.

The potential for highway expansion further threatens DCT's environment and accessibility. This development could disrupt the local area, making it harder for patrons to reach the theater and impacting the neighborhood's dynamics.

The possibility of another pandemic poses a risk to DCT's programming and operations, as it could lead to closures, reduced attendance, or financial strain.

Finally, the theater faces the danger of losing institutional memory as key individuals move on or retire. Without proper documentation and succession planning, essential knowledge about DCT's history, practices, and relationships could be lost, making it harder for future teams to maintain continuity.

Threats
Lack of Funding
Succession Planning
Run out of Volunteers
Losing Parking Lot Across the Street
Leadership Burnout
Losing Costumes
Fire Suppression Planning
Out of Step with Demographics
Another Pandemic
Losing Institutional Memory
Potential Highway Expansion

# COMPARABLES

Our comparative analysis employed a comprehensive methodology examining five distinct categories of relevant precedents. We investigated Nonprofit Art Organizations in a Historic Site, Public Historic Buildings in Wilmington, Adaptive Reuse into Theater, Children’s Programs in a Historic Site, and Women’s Clubs. Through careful evaluation of the initial sites, we selected 10 case studies for deeper analysis, including both local Wilmington examples and national models. This targeted approach allowed us to examine successful operational strategies while considering both the regional context and broader industry best practices.



**Nonprofit Art Organizations**

**Delaplaine Visual Arts Center**  
(Frederick, MD)

- Scalable model: management + programming + rentals
- Diverse funding (individuals, corporations, government)

**Adaptive Reuse into Theater**

**The New Victory Theater**  
(New York, NY)

- Operation: large non-profit manages multiple theaters to leverage funding
- Program diversity

**St. Ann's Warehouse**  
(New York, NY)

- Additional revenue: studio space rentals + theater rentals

**Biograph Theater**  
(Chicago, IL)

- Historic preservation with modern upgrades
- Community partnerships + education programs

**Liberty Theater**  
(Astoria, OR)

- Balance between preservation and modern use
- Partnerships with local business

**Public Historic Buildings in Wilmington**

**Howard Pyle Studio Group**  
(Wilmington, DE)

- Operational model: women-led non-profit combining art studio + tours + exhibitions

**Ursuline Academy**  
(Wilmington, DE)

- Local precedent for funding model: non-profit tax credits as contributor to Cool Springs Park Historic District

**Children's Programs in a Historic Site**

**Wilmington Community Arts Center**  
(Wilmington, NC)

- City ownership with theater management
- History programming
- Additional revenue: community rentals

**Please Touch Museum**  
(Philadelphia, PA)

- Program model: interactive history + theater + early childhood education

**Women's Club**

**The Cosmopolitan Club**  
(New York, NY)

- Restoration focusing on architectural details and finishes
- Space optimization to meet contemporary needs

**Public Historic Buildings in Wilmington**

**Children's Programs in a Historic Site**

**Women's Club**



# DELAPLAINE VISUAL ARTS CENTER (FREDERICK, MD)

## ADAPTIVE REUSE INTO THEATER



Image Credit: Delaplaine Arts Center

Historic Name	Old Mountain City Flour Mill
Developer	JMT Architecture, Bruchey Builders
Built Year	1850
Current Use	Visual arts education center
Designations	Contributing to the Frederick Historic District on National Register
Website	<a href="https://www.delaplaine.org/">https://www.delaplaine.org/</a>

### HISTORY

The building was initially built in 1850 as a whiskey rectifying house and was converted to a steam flour mill only a few years later. The building became the Mountain City Mill company in 1906 after many years of revolving ownership. Almost 50 years later, the property was acquired by the Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company in 1958. From 1958, the building served as a storage facility for the Frederick News-Post, which was located just across Carroll Creek. In 1986, the Delaplaine and Randall families donated the mill property to the City of Frederick for use as a visual arts center. It was leased to the Frederick Art Center Foundation (now The Delaplaine Arts Center, Inc.), which moved into the building in 1993 and established The Delaplaine Arts Center.

### ABOUT

The Delaplaine is an active arts hub for the greater Frederick community. It and strives to offer “art for the masses.” The Delaplaine features five main galleries which showcase works by regional and national artists in fifty exhibitions annually. Art studios house classes and workshops throughout the year for artists of all ages. Two standing exhibits are An Art History Timeline and the Our Industrial Past panel exhibit. Also onsite are The Etchison Davis Library, the Community Art Gallery and the Community Outreach Gallery, featuring art created by local students and community groups. In addition, the building houses a gift shop.

### TENANTS/USES

The Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center currently serves the Frederick region as a community arts center, providing educational opportunities and experiences in the visual arts through classes, exhibits, studios and programs. It offers instruction in the visual arts to all ages.

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

The standing “Our Industrial Past” exhibit tells about the building’s history. The building’s exterior and some mechanical remnants of the historic mill have been preserved and are viewable. A framed flour bag also hangs on the wall adjacent to the main exhibition room.

### ONSITE INTERPRETATION

The standing “Our Industrial Past” exhibit tells about the building’s history. The building’s exterior and some mechanical remnants of the historic mill have been preserved and are viewable. A framed flour bag also hangs on the wall adjacent to the main exhibition room.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

Renovations began on the historic Mountain City Mill building in 1993 and were completed in 1999. Elements of the existing interior, along with selected mill machinery, were incorporated into the new interior spaces. Subsequent renovations completed in 1999 added usable space on the second and third floors along with a new addition. Mechanical remnants of the mill were preserved and are viewable. In 2020, a 1,000-square-foot event deck was added and overlooks Carroll Creek Park.

### REFERENCES TO HISTORY

The new Delaplaine Visual Arts Center, a successful example of adaptive reuse, is the renovation of an existing historic abandoned mill with a 10,000 SF addition. The project was awarded through a design competition. Renovations of the four- level mill building include: art studios, exhibit gallery, computer labs, darkrooms, administrative offices and a library. The new addition contains: main entrance, public lobby, restrooms, assembly hall and additional studio space. The addition maintains a distinct image separate from the mill building and is connected to the mill via a glass bridge. The project received an AIA Baltimore Design Award for Historic Preservation and the Maryland Smart Growth Award for sustainable building design.

### EVENT RENTALS

The Delaplaine offers exhibitions, programs, classes, individual studios, workshops, shopping and research onsite along with three satellite galleries in partnership with Frederick County Public Libraries.

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Although the Delaplaine is a larger organization than DCT, it offers replicable and scalable examples of management, programming, and rental structures. The Delaplaine is focused on casting a wide net of support and engagement which they leverage into funding support from individuals, corporations, foundations and government. This approach could be applied to DCT given similarities in value and importance in providing accessible arts to the population of Wilmington. The Delaplaine’s adaptive reuse experience may also provide lessons for DCT as it considers how to approach needed maintenance concerns as well as how to maximize its building and, potentially, its adjoining empty lot.



Image Credit: Delaplaine Arts Center



Image Credit: Delaplaine Arts Center



Image Credit: Delaplaine Arts Center

# THE NEW VICTORY THEATER (NEW YORK, NY)

## ADAPTIVE REUSE INTO THEATER



Historic Name	Theatre Republic, Belasco Theatre, Minsky’s Burlesque, and Victory Theatre
Developer	New 42nd Street
Built Year	1900
Current Use	Children’s Theater
Designations	n/a
Website	<a href="https://www.newvictory.org/">https://www.newvictory.org/</a>

### HISTORY

The New Victory Theater opened in 1900 as the Theatre Republic, evolving through several identities including the Belasco Theatre and Republic Theatre, before becoming the Victory Theatre during World War II. Originally hosting Broadway productions, it later served as Manhattan’s first 42nd Street burlesque house under Minsky’s management in 1931, then became a movie house showing newsreels, exploitation films, and eventually adult films by 1970. After decades of decline along with the rest of 42nd Street, the theater was acquired by New 42nd Street in the early 1990s and underwent an \$11.9 million restoration, reopening in 1995 as the New Victory Theater, becoming New York City’s first off-Broadway theater dedicated to children and families.

### ABOUT

Currently operated by New 42 (established in 1990 with 99-year leases for seven historic theaters including the Apollo, Empire, Liberty, Lyric, Selwyn, Victory, and Times Square theaters), the New Victory Theater stands as a testament to Times Square’s revitalization and serves as New York City’s premier theater for young audiences and families. Under New 42’s management, the theater has developed comprehensive educational and professional development initiatives, including the LabWorks program which provides \$15,000 stipends to four artists annually for new work development, the Usher Corps program offering paid positions to high school juniors and seniors, and various apprenticeship and education programs. The theater’s programming encompasses diverse offerings from international artists, dance productions, and theatrical adaptations.

### TENANTS/USES

Children’s theater operated by NGO New 42

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

Shows for children, family workshops, Broadway Up Close tour (architectural tour)

### INTERPRETATION

n/a

### ONLINE INTERPRETATION

<https://www.newvictory.org/about/theater-history/>

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

The New Victory Theater, celebrated by The New York Times as “an exquisite jewel on a

street of gems,” exemplifies both historic preservation and innovative adaptation. Built in 1900 by Oscar Hammerstein and recognized as New York’s oldest surviving theater, it underwent a transformative restoration under New 42’s vision to create New York’s first theater dedicated to young audiences. The restoration project, led by architect Hugh Hardy and H3, carefully balanced historic preservation with modern functionality. The exterior restoration recreated the original Venetian-styled façade, complete with its grand double staircase and wrought-iron lamps, while interior work included extensive architectural interventions such as expanded lobbies, new public areas designed for families, and modern theater infrastructure. The meticulous attention to historic detail is evident in the restoration of elaborate features including stacked boxes, faux plaster draperies, and gilded plasterwork with fleur-de-lis, laurel wreaths, and winged female figures. In 2017, the theater unveiled its reinvented lobbies designed by H3 to better showcase Family Engagement activities, and completed an intensive dome restoration that required 13,977 hours of plaster work and a ten-person team working continuously for 57 days, further cementing its position as a cornerstone of 42nd Street’s cultural renaissance.

### OTHER NOTES

About New 42 Team: Under the leadership of President & CEO Russell Granet and Artistic Director Mary Rose Lloyd, New 42 operates with a comprehensive team structure spanning multiple departments. The organization is managed through several key divisions, including Artistic Planning & General Management, Artistic Programming, Capital Projects & Real Estate (Facilities), Development, Digital Services, Education (School Engagement, Public Engagement, Front-of-House/Youth Engagement, and New Victory Theater Teaching Artists), Finance, Employee Engagement and HR, Information Technology, Marketing & Communications, Operations, Production, and Ticket Services. Specifically related to the New Victory Theater, the dedicated staff includes one superintendent in the facilities group, a roster of teaching artists, two operations team members, eight production team members, and two ticket services personnel.

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The multi-theater management model enabled more effective fundraising and resource allocation across venues. The theater combines performance programming with educational initiatives and youth employment opportunities, creating a sustainable model that serves both artistic and community needs.



Republic Theater (1901)



Minsky’s Burlesque (1930s)



1980s



During renovation (1995)



# ST. ANN’S WAREHOUSE (BROOKLYN, NY)

## ADAPTIVE REUSE INTO THEATER



Lobby entrance to St. Ann's Warehouse

Historic Name	Tobacco Warehouse
Developer	Marvel Architects
Built Year	1860
Current Use	Performing arts institution
Designations	n/a
Website	https://www.stannwarehouse.org/

### HISTORY

St. Ann’s Warehouse presents a diverse array of concert and theater performances in the former Tobacco Warehouse (45 Water Street), which was constructed in 1860. The organization launched in 1980 while based at the National Historic Landmark Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity (157 Montague Street). After September 11, 2001, the group moved to a spice milling factory at 38 Water Street in Dumbo, Brooklyn. Its third location (as of 2012) was a 19,000-square foot industrial space at 29 Jay Street, before the move to the former Tobacco Warehouse in 2015. The organization’s evolving name has reflected these shifts in place and identity: in its earliest days, it was known as “Arts at St. Ann’s”; today, it is the St. Ann’s Warehouse. The company initially focused on classical music concerts, but quickly expanded its artistic offerings to include different music genres and puppet theater.

### ABOUT

St. Ann’s Warehouse is a performing arts center specializing in theater and concerts. The organization has had partnerships with Tashi, the Academy of Ancient Music, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Bread and Puppet Theater, amongst others. Notable acts have also included the reunion of the Velvet Underground, featuring Lou Reed and John Cale. Its performances are generally targeted towards adult crowds, as even their past puppet performances have been for more mature audiences, such as the first American puppet opera under Amy Trompetter, performing Rossini’s The Barber of Seville.

### TENANTS/USES

St. Ann’s Warehouse (performance arts center), St. Ann’s Warehouse Puppet Lab (developmental artist laboratory)

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

The Max Family Garden and main lobby are open to the general public, other spaces such as performance spaces and private studios are subject to ticketing, space rental, or are restricted to performance artists.

### ONLINE INTERPRETATION

St. Ann’s Warehouse’s online interpretation is multifaceted, as they address different interpretations. Their online interpretation is divided into the history of the building and St. Ann’s Warehouse as a performance arts center, their past collaborations, their current season offerings, and how to get involved.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

The adaptive reuse of the Tobacco Warehouse to suit the current performance arts center has stripped it down to the exterior facades. Very little architectural integrity survives from the original structure. The architectural intervention involved major demolition work, retaining solely the exterior, while the interior construction is all new material.

### REFERENCES TO HISTORY

Their website has a small page dedicated to the Tobacco Warehouse, discussing how the original design of the façade has helped them integrate their new program into a historic structure.

### EVENT RENTALS

With permits requested through Brooklyn Bridge Park, it is possible to rent out the Studio, a 1,000 square foot space, and the lobby & Steinberg Theater.

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

St. Ann’s Warehouse is a performance arts company based in Brooklyn, New York with a history spanning over 40 years, following similar programming to DCT. One key takeaway from this comparable is their opportunities for additional revenue through venue leasing. St. Ann’s Warehouse allows for studio space rental, as well as theater rental.



Max Family Garden



Steinberg Theater



The Studio



# BIOGRAPH THEATER (CHICAGO, IL)

## REHABILITATION AS A THEATER



Fig 1: Main entrance  
Source: Carol Fox and Associates

<b>Historic Name</b>	Biograph Theater Victory Garden Theater
<b>Address</b>	2433 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, IL
<b>Architect</b>	Samuel Crowen
<b>Owner</b>	Victory Gardens Theater
<b>Built Year</b>	1914
<b>Rehabilitation</b>	2006
<b>Current Use</b>	Regional theater
<b>Designations</b>	1984, National Register of Historic Places
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://victorygardens.org/">https://victorygardens.org/</a>

### HISTORY

The Biograph Theater originally opened as a neighborhood cinema and was one of at least four movie theaters which opened in Chicago during 1910-1914. Its early 20th-century design, featuring a large stage and auditorium, complete with a balcony in the style of its era. It operated as a grand movie theater through the Great Depression, two world wars, and into the 1950s and 60s. It gained infamy in 1934 when gangster John Dillinger was killed outside by the FBI.

During the 1970's, the second floor of the building was converted into two small additional screens, it was converted into a four-screen multiplex. Victory Gardens Theater took over in 1974, transforming it into a live theater venue in 2004 after nearly 90 years as a cinema. Despite periods of closure, the theater remains a cultural site, hosting events like the International Puppet Theater Festival in 2024 amidst operational challenges.

### Development

The Biograph Theater is now home to Victory Gardens Theater, which renovated the venue in 2004 as part of its \$9.5 million "Expanding Horizons" campaign, transforming the historic cinema into a modern theater.

It expanded its community programming, offering training for over 500 students annually, and a Scholarship Subscription Series for Chicago Public School students, and mentoring for emerging theater companies. The renovated Biograph includes a modified mainstage with advanced technical features, a 135-seat studio theater, rehearsal hall, and other facilities to support its growing operations.

## INSIGHTS FOR DCT PROJECT

### I Integrity in Preservation Design

The interior has been entirely rebuilt, from a venue which could originally seat over 900 to 299 today (which is about 100 more seats than Victory Gardens' old space down the street, which will now be rented out to other area theater companies). The facade was repaired and cleaned, and the marquee was rebuilt to resemble its original appearance.

### II Community Engagement

In 1995, Victory Gardens Theater took over the access Project to enhance theater accessibility for people with disabilities, making it the leading presenter of barrier-free theater in Chicago.

Victory Gardens also founded the Playwrights Ensemble in 1996, a diverse group of playwrights who collaborated under a producing organization. In 2001, the theater won the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Victory Gardens pivoted to online performances. By 2022, after navigating leadership and staffing challenges, the Board decided to transition the organization into a foundation, continuing to support diverse and relevant works.

### III Urban

The Biograph Theater is strategically located at the intersection of North Lincoln Avenue, Fullerton, and Halsted, close to Children's Memorial Hospital and DePaul University. This prime location enhances accessibility and connectivity to the surrounding area, which can inform similar considerations for DCT's position at the intersection of two major urban arteries and a highway.

Located at a similar intersection of key roads and a highway, DCT could optimize visitor access and streamline traffic patterns, improving overall accessibility for its community. The prominent position of the Biograph Theater makes it a hub for local activity. DCT's location could also be leveraged for community outreach, outdoor events, or partnerships with nearby institutions, expanding its role as a cultural center.



Fig 3: Location of the Biograph Theater  
Source: PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION Commission on Chicago Landmarks, Oct 2000, P9.



Fig 4-6: Current condition of auditoriums and lobby  
Source: <https://thevendry.com/venue/27840/victory-gardens-biograph-theater-chicago-il>



# LIBERTY THEATER (ASTORIA, OREGON)

## ADAPTIVE REUSE INTO THEATER



Fig. 1: Liberty Theatre present day. Photo Credit: Coast Magazine, May 06, 2018,



Fig 2: Liberty Theatre logo. Photo Credit: Liberty Theatre

<b>Historic Name</b>	Astor Building
<b>Developer</b>	Liberty Theater
<b>Built Year</b>	1925
<b>Current Use</b>	Theater
<b>Designations</b>	National Registration
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://libertyastoria.org/">https://libertyastoria.org/</a>

### HISTORY:

The Liberty Theater in Astoria, Oregon, design by John E. Wicks, was reconstructed in 1925 by Bennes and Herzog company. This building blends Romanesque and Italian Renaissance elements. It stands as a premier example of 1920s vaudeville-motion picture palaces in the Pacific Northwest. Featuring a 700-seat stage, it hosted vaudeville acts, silent films, and notable performers like Duke Ellington and Jack Benny. Though it flourished during World War II, the theater fell into disrepair by the 1980s under poor maintenance. In 1992, a nonprofit was formed, initiating its eventual restoration.

### ABOUT:

The Liberty Theater in Astoria, Oregon, is a historic 1920s vaudeville-motion picture palace restored to its original grandeur. As a cultural hub, the theater offers a diverse array of performances, including live theater, concerts, and community events. It features a 700-seat venue designed in Romanesque and Italian Renaissance styles, hosting renowned performers like Duke Ellington. In addition to its performance space, the Liberty serves the community through educational programs, workshops, and special events. The theater is also available for weddings, corporate meetings, and private gatherings.

### TENANTS/USES:

The Liberty Theater serves as a dynamic Performing Arts Center and community hub. It hosts a variety of events, including live theater, concerts, and community performances, making it a cultural centerpiece. The venue is also used for educational workshops and youth programs, providing arts enrichment opportunities for local students. Additionally, the theater operates as a space for private rentals, such as weddings, corporate meetings, and conferences, supporting both cultural activities and the local economy while maintaining its historical character.

### OPEN TO PUBLIC:

The Liberty Theater is open to the public for guided tours, classes, performances, events, and rentals.

### INTERPRETATION/ ONLINE INTERPRETATION

The Liberty Theatre offers paid guided tours, providing visitors with an immersive experience that delves into the fascinating history of its construction and cultural significance.

Additionally, the theatre maintains an online website page featuring detailed historical information and a collection of historic photographs.

DCT can utilize the theater space for heritage tours or local storytelling events, capitalizing on the theater’s historical background. This would help position DCT as not just a theater but also a historical attraction, adding educational value to the community.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS REFERENCES TO HISTORY:

The theater’s focus is on “compatible modern additions” that respect the building’s 1920s architectural character, avoiding over-modernization. It is one of the few 1920s vintage motion picture palaces in Oregon restored to its original decorative architecture. Upgrades include a new concessions area, LED lighting, and an energy-efficient HVAC system, supported by the Energy Trust of Oregon to reduce operational costs.

### OTHER NOTES:

Economic impact: The economic impact of the Liberty Theater’s restoration has been transformative for downtown Astoria, serving as a catalyst for business growth and community revitalization. By forming strategic partnerships with local restaurants, hotels, and shops, the theater creates joint experiences, such as “dinner and a show” packages, drawing tourists and locals alike. These collaborations significantly boost tourism dollars and local spending, generating over \$814,000 in economic impact annually. This contribution strengthens the downtown economy, making the Liberty Theater a central pillar in the city’s cultural and commercial activity.

DCT could introduce “Community Showcase” events where local artists, schools, and performers get the opportunity to use the stage. This would encourage the local community to see the theater as a platform for their own stories and talents, not just as a place for performances brought in from outside.

Event Rentals: The Liberty Theatre offers its main stage for rent, accommodating live music performances, weddings, and other large-scale events. Additionally, the McTavish Room is available for hire, suitable for hosting events or gatherings with seating capacities ranging from 100 to 185 guests at round tables.

DCT could consider expanding its rental offerings to include community events, private functions, workshops, and art exhibitions. Such multipurpose use of the space would foster greater community integration and diversify DCT’s revenue streams, particularly during off-seasons when performances are less frequent.



Fig.3: Liberty Theatre Day of opening. (Coast Magazine, May 06, 2018)

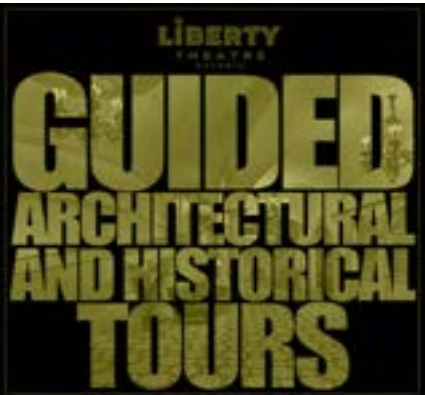


Fig 4: Liberty Theatre Guided Tours (<https://libertyastoria.showare.com>)



Fig 5: Liberty Theatre Main Stage (<https://libertyastoria.showare.com>)



# HOWARD PYLE STUDIO GROUP (WILMINGTON, DE)

## ART STUDIO IN A HISTORIC HOUSE BY WOMEN ARTISTS



Historic Name	Howard Pyle Studios
Developer	N/A
Built Year	1883
Current Use	Art Studio/Gallery
Designations	National Register of Historic Places on 3/8/1978
Website	<a href="https://howardpylestudio.org/">https://howardpylestudio.org/</a>

### HISTORY

The house/studio was built in 1883 commissioned by Howard Pyle (1853-1911), one of the most popular illustrators in the United States during the 19th century. He created more than 3000 illustrations and illustrate over 200 books. In 1900, he founded his own school of art and illustration named “The Howard Pyle School of Art” at his house. For this reason, two adjacent buildings were built. After his death in 1911, the house was acquired by his former students and the Studio Group was founded in 1935 as a small painting group of women. Nowadays, the Studio continues to congregate members and host art exhibitions.

### ABOUT

The Howard Pyle Studio Group is run by the Studio Group, Inc., a group of 40 women artists. Since 1935, it is the place where women artists create, study and exhibit their work as well as carry on and educate the legacy of the American artist, Howard Pyle. Its website mentions that it is one of the oldest continually operating art studios in the country.

### TENANTS/USES

The house hosts the Studio group of women artists where members meet regularly to paint, study art and to participate in classes and critiques.

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

Free art exhibitions are held each first Friday of the month during the Wilmington Art Loop. Also, private tours of the studio are arranged by phone.

### INTERPRETATION

An informative sign about the studio’s historical importance is located at the entrance of the house.

### ONLINE INTERPRETATION

The Howard Pyle Studio Group website divides the interpretation of the house in three main areas: the history of Howard Pyle and his relevance in the field of American Illustration; the History of the Studio Group; and the History of the building.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

Most of the original 1883 exterior and interior Tudor Revival architecture is preserved. At a certain moment, the southern skylights at the studio were covered, and an office was transformed into a kitchen. By 1900, new studios were built adjacent to the original building to serve as the Howard Pyle School of Art. After the death of Pyle in 1911, two students

bought the property renovating the flooring, plumbing and adding a dormer window. By the 1950s, when the Studio Group acquired the house, white panels were installed to host exhibitions.

### REFERENCES TO HISTORY

In addition to the plaque at the entrance, the website explains the legacy of Howard Pyle and the Studio Group.

### OTHER NOTES

This comparable is located in the same neighborhood as the Delaware Children’s Theatre. Some relevant takeaways are the thematic monthly visits/exhibitions as part of the Wilmington Art Loop, private tours and its long history of a being women-led.

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

The Howard Pyle Studio is a women-led non-profit organization which runs a historic house. Their insertion into Wilmington’s cultural scene as part of the Wilmington Art Loop, private tours and exhibitions provide a model for DCT to enhance its fundraising and programming opportunities. The historic relevance of the place is used to support and fund the current use of the art studio.



Historic Photo of the house



Free art exhibitions



Women artists at the historic studio



# FUSCO HALL STUDENT LIFE CENTER AT URSRULINE ACADEMY (WILMINGTON, DE)

HISTORIC BUILDING IN WILMINGTON, DE



Ursuline Convent, 2017. (EDiSCompany.com)

Historic Name	Ursuline Convent 1106 Pennsylvania Avenue Wilmington, DE 19806
Developer	ABHA Architects, EDiS (Construction Management) 1926
Built Year	Student Life Center
Current Use	None, considered
Designations	contributing to Cool Springs Historic District <a href="https://www.ursuline.org/">https://www.ursuline.org/</a>
Website	<a href="https://www.ursuline.org/about/student-life/campus">student-life/campus</a>

## HISTORY

The Ursuline Academy and convent was founded by the Ursuline Sisters, whom had moved from Bedford, New York to Wilmington, Delaware in 1893. The Academy, now a private, K-12 catholic school, originally occupied an existing convent and boarding house located at Harrison and Delaware Avenue, a block away from its present location. In 1926, with the acquisition of new land at 1106 Pennsylvania Avenue, a new convent for the Academy was built. Located at the heart of Ursuline Academy’s present campus, the 1926 Convent building has stood fast on the property amidst the rapid growth and expansion of the school and the surrounding city of Wilmington. The campus now features three large, adapted buildings, with a most recent capital campaign in 2017 to achieve a “state-of-the-art, expansive campus.” Having housed the Ursuline Sisters since 1926 and retained much of its original, historic fabric, the Convent building was adaptively reused as part of this 2017 campaign.

## ABOUT

Constructed to serve as a school, convent, and dorming for the Ursuline Sisters, the building featured a modest sized chapel, classrooms, and living quarters, up until 2017 when the final Sisters moved out. With the capital campaign to improve the Ursuline campus, the building was turned into the “Fusco Hall Student Life Center.” The building’s main programming is student oriented, with the creation of classrooms, dining facilities, a chapel, student commons, a welcome center and bookstore, and a library, which is located in the historic chapel space. The architects balanced designing for education with historic fabric, by creating a program that preserved many of the character-defining-elements while optimizing the space and layout for the school’s function. The third floor tucks away the administration offices, keeping the faculty and staff still at the heart of campus.

## TENANTS/USES

Student classrooms, library, dining facilities, chapel, commons, faculty offices.

## OPEN TO PUBLIC

While day-to-day the Ursuline Academy operates as a private K-12 school, aspects of the campus can be made open to the public through event rentals. Almost every asset the campus has can be rented and utilized by the community – even the 1926-built Fusco Hall. The list of facility rentals and pricing are viewable here: <https://www.ursuline.org/about/facility-rentals>

## INTERPRETATION/ONLINE INTERPRETATION

The Ursuline Academy website offers only a brief history on the origin of the school, dating all the way back to its 1893 New York origins. The brief history includes the acquisition of land and the renovations of buildings, which explains the current campus. At the core of the University are the Ursuline Sisters, so the online interpretation, and even the school’s program it appears, largely honor and incorporate their memory. The incorporation of interpretation physically on campus is unknown.

## INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

The architects behind the convent re-design did their best to honor the building’s history and character defining elements: “preserving the building’s historic features in a contemporary, technologically-advanced learning environment, with strategic and sensitive additions to improve the overall layout” said EDiS. The historic chapel, now turned library, unfortunately had to forgo its original pews to accommodate the open floor planned library, but other than this detail, the chapel maintained its original details. A large campaign for the rehabilitation was additionally updating doors, windows and other features to code.

## MAIN TAKEAWAYS

An important parallel for DCT here is financing. In Preservation Delaware’s 2023 Annual Conference, a workshop titled “Creating a New Future for a Historic Convent: Historic Building Rehab & Adaptive Reuse at Ursuline Academy.” The talk discussed the the projects eligibility for Delaware’s non-profit tax credits, and additionally, how the re-programming of the convent honored historic fabric and operational priorities (another important parallel for DCT). The state of Delaware has a unique tax credit opportunity for non-profits where credits can be sold to for-profit businesses. The building’s historic nature made it eligible for the program. Recorded as a ‘contributing’ structure to the Cool Springs Historic District qualified the school rehabilitation project for the non-profit tax credit program. The work for the convent rehabilitation project totaled \$11 million, with nearly \$1 million returned through the tax credit program. This could not have been done with out the help of financial consultant Cinnaire. Cinnaire, though headquartered in Lansing, Michigan has offices all over the MidWest and Mid-Atlantic states, including Wilmington, Delaware. Overall, the adaptive reuse of the Ursuline Convent, now Student Life Center, only one block from the DCT, would be an excellent example of a well considered program within historic fabric –community oriented and eligible for tax credit!



Chapel turned Library, 2017. (EDiSCompany.com)



Convent before rehabilitation. (Preservation Delaware “Creating a New Future for a Historic Convent: Historic Building Rehab & Adaptive Reuse at Ursuline Academy” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBrZae37MEU>)

# THE HANNAH BLOCK HISTORIC USO BUILDING (WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA)

## CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMING/THEATER IN HISTORIC SITE



Front Elevation of Wilmington Community Arts Center:(wilmingtoncommunityarts.com)

Historic Name	The USO Club, Wilmington NC
Developer	United States Armed Forces (World War II)
Built Year	1941
Current Use	Community Arts Center/ Thalian Association Community Theatre
Designations	National Register of Historic Places (1974) Wilmington was designated as the first “World War II Heritage City” by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior (2020)
Website	wilmingtoncommunityarts.org

### HISTORY

Situated at 120 South Second Street in downtown Wilmington NC, the building was constructed in December 1941 and became an important social hub for armed forces personnel during World War II, hosting dances, plays, and recreational activities. Hannah Block, was a prominent civic leader in Wilmington for 70 years. A notable figure in the community, she made history as the first woman elected to Wilmington’s City Council and served as the first female mayor pro tempore. Previously a cabaret singer, she organized entertainment and played piano for troops at the USO building. After the war, the building was purchased by the City of Wilmington and repurposed as a Community Center, providing programs for local children and young adults. In the 1960s, the center started to shift its focus toward the arts, resulting in its renaming as the Community Arts Center in 1973. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places just one year later, in 1974.

### ABOUT

Today, the center houses the offices and rehearsal space and youth theater classes for the Association Community Theatre, a non-profit membership organization founded in 1788 dedicated to arts education and the promotion of the performing arts in Wilmington. While the City of Wilmington retains ownership of the space, the theater is responsible for managing the center’s operations.

### TENANTS/USES

The multi-use facility features a kitchen and five studios, including dance studios, for rehearsals of plays, musicals, and classes across various disciplines, as well as recitals. The Community Arts Center is available to non-profit organizations for rehearsals and board meetings at no charge if admission is not charged or donations accepted during normal business hours, but is also rented for corporate functions and private events with a charge. The building houses the Orange Street Potters, a non-profit teaching studio for adults across skill level, and the Hannah Block Second Street Stage, an auditorium that seats 200 people and is equipped with a stage and technical loft for rehearsals and performances. The center hosts space for the community choir and in the summer, the center hosts a creative arts summer camp for children ages four and up.

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

In addition to offering a variety of programs, workshops, and classes in physical and artistic disciplines for adults and children of all ages—all accessible to the public—the building also

hosts free annual programming, seasonal festivals, and even as a main polling site in the area on election day.

### INTERPRETATION

The World War II Wilmington Home Front Heritage Coalition, an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) preservation organization, serves as the primary steward of the building’s history. They manage the home front museum located in the building’s lobby, which is open to the public. The exhibits feature World War II memorabilia, memorials for Medal of Honor recipients, a painting of Hannah Block—the building’s namesake—and her beloved piano, which she used for cabaret performances. Additionally, and advertised on the website, are themed events that are directly tied to the historic nature of the building such as the Veteran’s Day themed event “USO Show and Dance” which is a swing dance celebration in 40s themed as a way to honor those who served, and all of the proceeds go to the continued maintenance of the building.

### ONLINE INTERPRETATION

The website is vast and addresses the history of the building in various ways, primarily under the USO Museum tab, through displaying a historic timeline through to the building’s status and use now. The tab shows photographs of the current collections displayed in the lobby of the building, which is where the museum is located, and provides a link to a short documentary of the origins and evolution of the building.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

In 2008, the building—particularly the lobby housing the museum—was restored to closely reflect its 1943 design. The World War II Wilmington Home Front Heritage Coalition, a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) preservation organization, continues to maintain the lobby to uphold its architectural integrity.

### EVENT RENTALS

The building offers several spaces for rent, including the auditorium and Second Street Stage, which can be reserved for single or multiple performances. Additionally, the lobby, front-of-house area, and all studios—including Lavin Studio, Farrell Studio, South Studio, Dance Studio, and Kitchen—are available for classroom, workshop, performance use, or any event deemed feasible by the staff and management. Tables, chairs and the piano can also be included in the rental.



The Hannah Block Historic Piano in Lobby Museum (wilmingtoncommunityarts.com)



The Second Stage Theater/Auditorium (wilmingtoncommunityarts.com)



# PLEASE TOUCH MUSEUM (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

## CHILDREN’S PROGRAMS IN A HISTORIC SITE



Please Touch Museum

<b>Historic Name</b>	Memorial Hall
<b>Developer</b>	Hermann J. Schwarzmann, now owned by City of Philadelphia, operated by Please Touch Museum
<b>Built Year</b>	1876
<b>Current Use</b>	Children’s Museum
<b>Designations</b>	1976
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org">https://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org</a>

### HISTORY

Memorial Hall was built for the 1876 Centennial Exposition as an art gallery, showcasing America’s progress on its 100th anniversary. It is one of the few remaining structures from this grand event, emphasizing its significance in Philadelphia’s cultural and architectural history. The building transitioned through various uses, including housing the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, and later serving as offices and storage space for the Fairmount Park Commission.

Since 2008, Memorial Hall has housed the Please Touch Museum, a hands-on, interactive museum designed specifically for children. It offers a variety of exhibits that encourage learning through play, such as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and River Adventures, fostering early childhood development.

The museum’s relocation to Memorial Hall allowed for greater exhibit space and a focus on early childhood education. The building underwent extensive restoration to balance historic preservation with the needs of a modern interactive museum, making it a key cultural destination in Philadelphia.

### TENANTS/USES

Primary Use: Please Touch Museum (children’s interactive exhibits)  
Event Rentals: The museum offers spaces like Hamilton Hall for private events, including corporate gatherings, weddings, and birthday parties, providing a unique venue within a historic setting.

### OPEN TO PUBLIC

The museum is open to the public with general admission tickets, offering memberships for frequent visitors. Certain areas are reserved for private events, but the majority of exhibits are designed for public access, inviting families and children to engage in interactive learning experiences.

### INTERPRETATION

On-site Interpretation: The museum integrates the history of Memorial Hall into its exhibits, particularly in the basement, where visitors can explore the Centennial Exposition’s historical significance. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the building’s past while engaging with its present role as a children’s museum.  
Online Interpretation: The museum’s website offers detailed information about Memorial

Hall’s history, the Centennial Exhibition, and virtual tours, making its rich heritage accessible to a wider audience, even those who cannot visit in person.

### INTEGRITY/ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS

The adaptation of Memorial Hall into the Please Touch Museum preserved key architectural features like the Beaux-Arts façade and the grand interior dome. Modern modifications include child-friendly spaces and interactive exhibits, ensuring the building meets contemporary museum standards while respecting its historic character. The restoration emphasized maintaining the building’s exterior while transforming the interior for its new educational purpose.

### EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Museum Tinies: A program for children aged 8 to 18 months and their caregivers, focusing on enhancing development through play. It emphasizes gross and fine motor skills, early literacy, communication.

Museum Minis: Designed for children aged 1½ to 3½ years, this program offers opportunities for families to connect while engaging in activities that develop cognitive and social-emotional skills through music and art.

Play Builders: A free pilot program for 3-year-olds focusing on building social-emotional skills to prepare children for Pre-K experiences. Activities align with state standards for early childhood education.

Kinder Launch: A free kindergarten readiness program for 4- to 5-year-olds, providing a classroom-like setting and interactive tools to practice at home, supporting children’s transition into school environments.

### REFERENCES TO HISTORY

The museum emphasizes its historical roots in the Centennial Exposition, using exhibits and educational programs to highlight Memorial Hall’s original purpose as an art gallery. This blend of historical interpretation and interactive learning makes the museum a unique educational destination, helping visitors connect past and present through a playful, hands-on approach.

### COMMUNITY ROLE & MISSION

Please Touch Museum serves as a key educational resource for families in Philadelphia, offering a space where children can learn through interactive play. It plays a significant role in fostering a sense of community, and embracing diversity. The museum’s commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility principles ensures a welcoming environment for all visitors, staff, and partners.

### DCT TAKEAWAYS

The Please Touch Museum’s balance between historic preservation and interactive programming offers a valuable model for DCT. DCT can explore incorporating more historical narratives into its performances or creating interactive exhibits that highlight the theatre’s architectural and cultural history. Additionally, DCT could adopt similar early childhood education programs that blend storytelling and play to engage young audiences in a more meaningful way.



Please Touch Museum Activities



# THE COSMOPOLITAN CLUB (NEW YORK, NY)

## WOMEN’S CLUB REHABILITATION



Fig 1: Historic Facade  
Source: Thomas Harlan Ellett Collection

<b>Historic Name</b>	The Cosmopolitan Club
<b>Address</b>	122 East 65th Street, New York, NY
<b>Architect</b>	Thomas Harlan Ellett
<b>Built Year</b>	1932
<b>Rehabilitation</b>	2014
<b>Current Use</b>	Private women’s club
<b>Designations</b>	n/a
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.cosclub.com/general/viewHome">https://www.cosclub.com/general/viewHome</a>

### HISTORY

The Cosmopolitan Club, founded in 1909 as a gathering place for governesses, evolved into the Women’s Cosmopolitan Club in 1910, aiming to support New York women in the arts, sciences, education, literature, and philanthropy. Incorporating in 1911, it quickly became a center for notable members such as novelists Willa Cather and Ellen Glasgow, and philanthropist Grace Dodge. The club relocated to 44th Street in 1914, shortening its name to the Cosmopolitan Club, and hosted significant events, including Picasso exhibitions and speeches by figures like Maria Montessori and Lou Henry Hoover.

In 1932, the club moved to its current ten-story building at 122 East 66th Street, designed by Thomas Harlan Ellett. The clubhouse became a venue for musical performances by icons like Sergei Prokofiev and Count Basie, and talks by cultural figures such as Robert Frost and Edward R. Murrow. Today, the club remains a private, full-service space for members, their guests, and reciprocal club members, offering sun-drenched rooms, terraces, and overnight accommodations in the heart of Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

### USES

The building offers a variety of spaces for both private and social functions. It includes 23 guest bedrooms spread across three floors, providing accommodations for members and their guests. For leisure and social gatherings, there is a sunroom, a library, and a lounge. The West Room and East Room are available for dinners and receptions, while the dining room serves as another venue for meals. The ballroom provides a spacious setting for larger events and celebrations. These rooms collectively cater to the club’s multifaceted role, offering a range of spaces for relaxation, dining, and social events.



Fig 2-3: Balcony dining Source: Cosmopolitan Club, cosclub\_brochure, www.cosclub.com.

### PRESERVATION STRATEGY

**I. Adaptive Reuse and Spatial Enhancement**  
The building preserves its original function as a private club while updating its infrastructure to meet modern needs. The renovations respect Thomas Harlan Ellett’s architectural vision, maintaining the club’s historical character and landmark status. New administrative spaces and renovated social areas, including the grand ballroom, improve functionality without compromising the building’s aesthetics. Modern lighting and upgraded systems enhance energy efficiency and comfort.

**II. Architectural Restoration**  
Restoration focused on renewing the building’s facade, windows, and entry door, revitalizing its street presence. The Pegasus fountain was restored, symbolizing the club’s heritage.

**III. Preservation of Finishes**  
The original woodwork was treated to restore its patina, with re-gilded accents and a restored marble fireplace enhancing the building’s historical beauty.

**IV. Site-Specific Challenges**  
The complex layout, including a raised terrace, posed challenges for service upgrades, but the project refreshed the decor, reintroducing historical design elements while improving the space.

### MAIN TAKEAWAYS

**I. Maintaining Functional Consistency**  
The Cosmopolitan Club modernized its infrastructure while retaining its private club function. Similarly, DCT can update its theater spaces to remain relevant and serve future generations while preserving its historical significance.

**II. Spatial Enhancement and Adaptation**  
The Cosmopolitan Club improved administrative spaces and key areas like the grand ballroom. DCT could optimize storage and underused spaces, and integrate outdoor functions to enhance visitor experiences and community engagement.

**III. Architectural Restoration**  
The Cosmopolitan Club focused on preserving finishes and woodwork. DCT could restore its façade and interior features while integrating modern updates to maintain the building’s character.

**IV. Site-Specific Challenges**  
The Cosmopolitan Club addressed site complexities while maintaining historical integrity. DCT can utilize its adjacent green space for outdoor events, improving functionality and aesthetics while strengthening community ties.

Fig 4-6: Interior & exterior rehabilitation  
Source: Cosmopolitan Club, cosclub\_brochure, www.cosclub.com.





TAKEAWAYS

Through our extensive research and analysis of comparable sites, we identified three key areas critical for DCT’s future success:

First, Funding & Operational Models. Diversifying revenue streams through rentals, programs, and tours is essential. Building strategic management structures—such as partnerships with the city or multi-theater organizations—can reduce financial burdens. Additionally, DCT could explore funding opportunities like tax credits and grants.

Second, Programming Strategy. A multi-use approach that integrates theater, education, and community events would broaden DCT’s reach. Developing interactive programming—including workshops and camps—could engage audiences, while incorporating history into programming through exhibitions or heritage trails to enrich the visitor experience.

Lastly, Facility Management. Balancing preservation with modern upgrades is key to maintaining the building’s integrity.

Optimizing spaces for multiple revenue streams and prioritizing community-focused use could help sustain DCT’s role as a cultural hub.

These strategies, drawn from successful examples across the country, provide DCT with a potential roadmap for sustainable growth while preserving its historic character and strengthening its position as a vital community asset.

TAKEAWAYS FOR DCT



Funding & Operational Models

- **Diverse revenue streams:** rentals, programs, tours, etc.
- **Strategic ownership/management structures:** city partnerships, multi-theater management, etc.
- **Funding opportunities:** tax credits, grants, individual and corporate donors, etc.



Programming Strategy

- **Multi-use approach:** theater, education, community events, etc.
- **Interactive and diverse programming:** workshops, classes, camps, etc.
- **History integration into programming:** exhibitions, on-line interpretation, heritage trail, new design elements on-site, etc.



Facility Management

- **Balance of preservation and modern upgrades**
- **Space optimization for multiple revenue streams**
- **Community-focused facility use**

**RESPONSE**



# 10 YEARS LATER...

## THE MAGIC CONTINUES...50 YEARS AT THE DELAWARE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

This fall, the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) celebrates its 50th anniversary, marking five decades as a pillar of family entertainment in Wilmington in the historic New Century Club of Wilmington building. In 1982, Marie and John Swajeski rescued the historic building slated for demolition after a century of use as the New Century Club. The New Century Club was designed by Minerva Parker Nichols in 1892, the first female architect to practice independently in the US, who had previously designed the clubhouse for the Philadelphia New Century Club. Marie and John Swajeski's vision was to create a permanent home for their family-focused theater organization which began in Wilmington several years earlier, transforming the space into the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT). The Swajeskis dedicated themselves to preserving the building and were followed by their children, Donna and David, in practice and spirit. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Sites in 1983, ensuring its continued role as a valued community resource. Today, the building is the sole surviving public building by Minerva Parker Nichols and represents a significant landmark in women's history.

This anniversary celebration underscores DCT's commitment to engaging the community and enhancing its facility to serve future generations with several new initiatives. A special gathering of alumni from past productions took place over the weekend, bringing together performers, staff, and volunteers who have been part of the theater's journey. Donna Swajeski continues to actively serve as a consultant, emphasized DCT's ongoing mission. "The heart of DCT has always been the community," said Swajeski. "We aim to keep this a welcoming space for families and young actors, while making improvements to meet the needs of a growing audience."

The celebration also unveiled a commemorative statue honoring Minerva Parker Nichols in Cool Spring Park. DCT has been busy over the last several years stabilizing and ensuring the health of its 142-year-old purpose-built structure that was entrusted to the theater by the New Century Club. The 10-year rehabilitation project, completed five years ago, included fixing the foundation and sealing the building envelope so it will be ready for another fifty

years. Rehabilitation included attending to the plaster and woodwork throughout, updating the lighting and security systems, and upgrading the kitchen facilities. A new National Historic Landmark designation, received two years ago, has brought additional exposure and funding to DCT which also helped with the rehabilitation. With their 10-year rehabilitation plan completed, 1014 Delaware Avenue looks as good as it did the first day it opened in 1893.

DCT is also proud to present a permanent exhibit entitled "Women Changemakers: Minerva Nichols Parker – New Century Club – Marie and Donna Swajeski." With this exhibit, DCT hopes to continue to instill in young children their power to succeed, with hard work, and follow their dreams. The exhibit consists of five vertical panels on view upon entering the theater. These panels tell five narratives – Minerva Parker Nichols, the first independent woman architect in the U.S. who designed the building; Emalea P. Warner, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Wilmington New Century Club; the members of the New Century Club; Marie Swajeski; and Donna Swajeski. The Delaware



*Frozen (DCT)*

Community Foundation and the Kenny Family Foundation funded the exhibit. The Delaware Historical Society assisted with research for the project.

In addition, the side lot of DCT has been re-envisioned as an outdoor extension of the theater where a year-round changing schedule of themed and seasonal programs will be offered in a festive, convenient, tented environment. Marie's Carousel, as

the outdoor venue will be called, opens on January 1st, 2035, with a musical revue of some of our fan favorites. Be sure to stay posted on DCT's website and through Facebook and Instagram for updates and announcements regarding ticket sales.

Marie's Carousel will also make the most of the completion of the I-95 Cap Project, which is scheduled to begin within the coming months. The project has designed a greenway aimed at reconnecting neighborhoods that were

divided in the 1960s when the construction of the new interstate split the city in half. DCT anticipates that this major modernization and revitalization project for downtown Wilmington will benefit the theater in several ways. It will improve visibility, access, and safety for those visiting the theater. Likewise, the pull of all generations to activities and parks on the cap will help to leverage DCT as an integral part of the revitalization given its easy access at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Jackson Streets.

Wilmington is thrilled to have the ongoing care and steadfast stewardship of such an important city icon as Delaware Children's Theatre. For Wilmington families, the Delaware Children's Theatre continues to be more than a historic venue; it is a cherished space for creativity and connection, welcoming new and returning audiences for another many decades of memorable performances. In 2027, DCT hosted a significant celebration to excavate the cornerstone on the building's northeast side, where a time capsule from its construction had been sealed by members of the Wilmington New Century Club. The event

drew nearly one hundred attendees and was streamed live, allowing both regular patrons and newcomers to join in the excitement as they awaited the reveal of the time capsule's contents. The unveiling exceeded expectations, uncovering rare photographs from the period and treasured WNCC memorabilia. Some of these items were displayed in the DCT lobby, while others were entrusted to the Delaware Public Archives, with which DCT maintains an ongoing partnership.

To mark the anniversary, DCT sealed their own time capsule containing memorabilia from current productions and contributions from local children, with plans to open it on the theater's 100th anniversary.



Cast at one of the shows (DCT)



# PRESERVATION PHILOSOPHY

What steers our work is the vibrant community, layered social history, and distinct historic fabric that comprise the Delaware Children’s Theatre. To shape and inform our analysis and treatment recommendations, we first identified the integral aspects that give the building and DCT their unique value. By centering our work on the preservation and rehabilitation of these values, we have created an ethical guide to decision-making.

Our preservation philosophy centers on the principle of minimal intervention, aiming to preserve the building’s original appearance while protecting its historic and cultural significance. Preservation’s first goal is to ensure the building’s physical health so that it may continue to stand for future generations. To do so, key issues must first be addressed, such as moisture damage, water infiltration, and finish deterioration.

Preservation also aims to maintain the strong connection between Minerva’s physical fabric and the NCC and DCT’s joint, layered history. With its high integrity, the building retains the physical traces of women’s history. Preservation efforts

should emphasize retaining and conserving original architectural elements, such as original fenestration and distinctive finishing. Conservation of these elements should utilize appropriate techniques and interventions that are reversible where possible.

Though these values are contingent upon the safeguarding of physical fabric, our work also acknowledges that there must be a tolerance for change and utility. First and foremost, the building’s design was always intended to serve its community flexibly and effectively. Where necessary, updates to non-structural components will prioritize reversibility and low-impact, removable designs. These choices ensure that the building remains of high integrity and authenticity while still serving its community and operational needs effectively. This framework balances the import of the physical fabric while underscoring that the building’s function as a community resource is also highly important.

Additionally, successful rehabilitation of the building also hinges on management and stewardship that maintains the building’s

relevance. With its robust support systems of audiences, actors, and volunteers, DCT can continue to build upon its lasting foundation, inspiring continued public engagement and adapting to the needs of the future. Preservation hopes that DCT can continue to thrive as both a theatre and a historic site, optimizing its dual roles. Adjustments will focus on ensuring safety, enhancing accessibility, and supporting the building’s function as a children’s theatre while preserving its heritage. We hope to identify practices that will prioritize a balance between historical integrity and operational needs, respecting the theatre’s history, maintaining show frequency, integrating historical interpretation, and optimizing space utilization to align with preservation values.

Organizing and optimizing the building’s movable assets, such as the collections inventory, would ensure that each room contributes meaningfully to the theatre’s story. Diversifying funding sources ensures financial stability, the maintenance of accessible ticket pricing and programming, and lasting infrastructure for a strong

volunteer base. Expanding the theater’s existing network of partnerships with local businesses and cultural organizations may also provide additional opportunities. Regular assessments of these values and opportunities, both physical and non-physical, monitor DCT’s success in reaching its goals.

DCT is a vital community resource, and preservation efforts should reflect its cultural significance. Our approach ensures that preservation does not just freeze fabric in time but rather sustains the magic that has made DCT what it is today. Tolerance for change, both physical and non-physical, allows the building to fulfill its purpose within the significant and substantial asset that is its historic building. Engaging the local community, especially children and families, through educational programs about the building’s history and the importance of preservation will foster a sense of ownership and appreciation. In summation, our preservation philosophy envisions history and this palace as active characters in the theatre’s productions, bringing them alive as part of the storytelling process.

# TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## INTRODUCTION: REHABILITATION OF DCT

The Delaware Children's Theatre is a vital piece of Wilmington's cultural heritage. Since the late 20th century, DCT has adapted the building for modern use while maintaining its role as a community-centered space, offering engaging theater programs for children and families. Rehabilitation is chosen as the most appropriate treatment for this landmark because it preserves the building's historic character while addressing the practical needs of a contemporary theater. This approach balances heritage conservation with functional upgrades, ensuring that DCT remains a resilient cultural and community hub. Rehabilitation allows for thoughtful adaptation of spaces to enhance operational efficiency and visitor experience, all while respecting the building's architectural integrity. By prioritizing reversible, low-impact interventions, this strategy secures DCT's future as a vital historic site and a dynamic venue for creative and educational engagement.



Figure 1: Daily use of DCT (DCT Instagram @DECHILDRENTHEATRE)



Figure 2 (left): Summer repairment in 2023; Figure 3 (right): Holiday decorations in 2023 (DCT Instagram @DECHILDRENTHEATRE)

## TREATMENT FRAMEWORK

To address DCT's challenges and opportunities, we categorized our recommendations into four time scales:

**Urgent:** Immediate interventions to resolve critical safety and structural issues, preventing further deterioration.

**Short-Term (1-2 Years):** Actions to stabilize the building's condition and ensure continued functionality.

**Mid-Term (3-10 Years):** Comprehensive improvements based on detailed planning and prioritization.

**Long-Term (11+ Years):** Strategies for sustainable preservation and operational growth.

We also identified five thematic "buckets" to organize our recommendations:

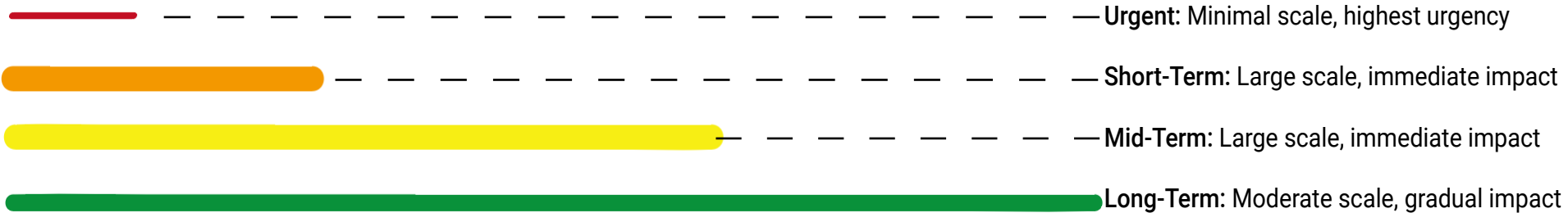
**Physical Conditions:** Addressing deterioration and creating a long-term maintenance plan.

**Management:** Enhancing outreach, securing funding, and optimizing infrastructure.

**Programming & Partnerships:** Strengthening community engagement and external collaborations.

**Collections:** Managing the building's movable assets to enhance theater operations.

**Interpretation:** Engaging broader audiences through exhibitions, events, and digital outreach.





# PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The following recommendations are based on three site visits performed throughout the months of September, October and November of 2024. Observations from these visits were recorded by students concentrating in architectural conservation within the department of Historic Preservation. Many of the conditions and recommendations should be inspected and treated by contractors specializing in historic buildings. Hired contractors should understand the importance of remediating historic fabric delicately and as appropriately as possible.



Figure 1: Moisture observed along southeast basement wall beneath electrical units, November 29, 2024

## URGENT

Urgent action includes addressing the water infiltration in the basement, specifically that nearelectricalunitsorotherimportantutilities. This was observed on a site visit performed on November 29, 2024 after Wilmington had experienced some significant rain. As stated in the Conditions Assessment chapter and as will be addressed in more detail in the Building Fabric chapter, the basement takes on a significant amount of water in wet seasons. Until serious abatement can occur, there are a few easy measures DCT can take to reduce the presence of moisture and its subsequent damage.

- 1) Move items away from the walls to prevent the spread of moisture (which cause mold and mildew, etc.). Things stored in cardboard boxes are highly likely to take on the moisture and become damaged.
- 2) Incorporate de-humidifiers. They can either be hanging bags, like DampRid, or larger plug-in units sold at large chain hardware stores.
- 3) Confirm storm drains and downspouts are clear and move water away from exterior walls.

## SHORT TERM

In the short term, priorities lie in identifying other physical vulnerabilities. Through the consultation of a preservation professional, certain key areas should be investigated further to determine prioritized next steps for the mid-term. Investigation should involve inspection beneath the ceiling panels to assess the state of deterioration, moisture monitoring of the basement walls, an assessment of the exterior water drainage system, and an assessment of the windows for potential storm coverings/efficiency glazing.



Figure 2: Staining observed on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor wall and ceiling, September 5, 2024

## MID TERM

Mid-term actions focus on executing repairs identified in the previous assessment. Key tasks will likley include addressing water management systems to prevent basement flooding, remediation of the 2nd and 3rd floor ceilings, and the (prioritized) remediation of paint finishes in the auditorium and on windows and doors. Once the 2nd and 3rd floor ceiling damage has been abated, it is recommended to repair the ceiling to match that of the first floor.

With these repairs completed, it will be important to have identified routines for cyclical maintenance. Such as a yearly evaluation of (and cleaning) of water management systems (storm drains, downspouts, etc.), basement moisture conditions on all masonry walls, and of painted finishes.

Further mid-term goals could include the consultation of a preservation architect for master plan designing and larger technological upgrades that continue to respect the building's historic character. These designs would likely increase building efficiency and ease management.

## LONG TERM

Long-term goals ensure the theater's lasting durability, and address the structure's resilience and historical authenticity for decades to come, including the following through of cyclical maintenance work and constant re-evaluation.



Figure 3: Downspouts to monitor on southeast elevation. Potential damage observed at roof line, November 29, 2024.

# MANAGEMENT

The following recommendations are based on different interviews with all involved with Delaware Children’s Theatre, as well as research into management.

## URGENT

An urgent recommendation is to designate someone to proactively monitor and manage the building conditions and address maintenance. This designation would situation this responsibility with one staff member and streamline decision-making and approach.

## SHORT TERM

In the short-term, we recommend that DCT establish a relationship with the Delaware State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Preservation Delaware for grant opportunities and technical services. It would also be advisable to add preservation and fundraising expertise to the board. Moreover, it would be advantageous to apply for National Historic Landmark designation and update National Register nomination to a national designation to expand grant eligibility. Lastly, it would be helpful to prioritize grant opportunities for a building conditions assessment.

## MID TERM

In the mid-term, DCT should consider launching a capital campaign based on conditions assessment. Likewise, it may be useful to introduce a benefit plan/loyalty program to attract more volunteers as well as formalize a subscription program and/or incentive packages for patrons to create a steadier base of revenue.

## LONG TERM

In the long-term, we suggest that DCT hire a dedicated development staff person or reposition a current staff, assuming appropriate experience and knowledge. Along the same lines, DCT would benefit from a dedicated staff position to steward artistic partnerships and external relations. Likewise, as staff increases, additional human resources expertise may be needed.



# PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS

For Programming & Partnerships, there is no urgent need for immediate action. However, developing and expanding this area is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability and community impact of DCT.

By broadening its programming offerings and forming key partnerships, DCT can increase its revenue, attract a more diverse audience, and further embed itself as a cultural and community cornerstone. These efforts will help DCT remain relevant, accessible, and aligned with its mission to serve as an inspiring hub for generations to come.



## SHORT-TERM GOALS: EXPANDING AUDIENCE AND REVENUE STREAMS

In the short term, we suggest incorporating special programs and events thematically related to DCT productions to broaden the audience base and generate additional revenue. These fee-based programs could align with the current theater performances, providing an opportunity for attendees to engage more deeply with the shows while attracting new visitors. Additionally, utilizing the side lot and buffet room during performances for small pop-up vendors or events could offer a variety of experiences to theatergoers, enhancing the overall atmosphere and diversifying revenue streams. These temporary events can create a lively environment that attracts people to visit even when they're not attending a performance, helping to increase the visibility of DCT as a community hub.

Figure 1: DCT's outdoor activities in September 2023 (DCT Instagram @DECHILDRENTHEATRE)

## MID-TERM GOALS: BUILDING ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

In the mid-term, we recommend establishing a volunteer docent program to offer historical tours, with a focus on senior audiences. Partnering with organizations such as the University of Delaware's museum program could help develop and manage this docent program, ensuring high-quality tours that highlight the theater's rich history. Additionally, fostering partnerships with local organizations like Preservation Delaware and the Delaware Historical Society will strengthen the volunteer base and provide resources for new interpretive exhibits and special events. These collaborations will enhance the community's connection to DCT, further solidifying its role as a cultural and historical institution. In the personal projects, we've identified significant opportunities to improve the use of DCT's theater space. While the theater serves its primary purpose for performances, there is potential to expand its role into a more multifunctional venue. By transforming the space to accommodate a variety of community events and activities,

we can attract a broader audience and increase public engagement, moving beyond the traditional use of the space as merely a theater. For example, hosting community workshops, educational programs, and events in the side lot or buffet room could turn these areas into dynamic spaces that draw in diverse groups. These approaches would not only increase the theater's functionality but also broaden its appeal to different audiences, increasing engagement and potential revenue.

## LONG-TERM GOALS: ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

In the long term, we suggest cultivating partnerships with schools to host field trips, workshops, and educational programs that align with DCT's mission. These collaborations will enhance the theater's visibility among younger audiences, fostering a long-term relationship with the community and securing future generations of theatergoers. Building relationships with trade programs and vocational schools will also be crucial for DCT's long-term sustainability.

These partnerships can offer opportunities for collaboration in areas such as building maintenance and other operational needs. By establishing ongoing relationships with these institutions, DCT can ensure the long-term health of the theater while providing valuable hands-on learning experiences for students. Together, these strategies will help strengthen DCT's role in the community, ensuring that it continues to thrive as both a cultural institution and a space for educational and community engagement.



Figure 2: DCT's backstage rebuilt in June 2020  
Figure 3: Dct's Summer Volunteers in 2023 (DCT Instagram @DECHILDRENTHEATRE)

# COLLECTIONS

The collections housed by DCT, including props, costumes, and set pieces, are integral to the organization’s operations. The “Collections Strategy” treatment recommendations focus not on major changes to the collections themselves, but on how their presence interacts with other factors, such as physical conditions and interpretation. Based on various interviews, it’s clear that these collections are actively used by DCT and will continue to be in the future.

## URGENT

As an immediate measure, we recommend moving all collections away from walls and windows to avoid potential damage and safety hazards. Additionally, priority should be given to relocating collections in areas prone to water damage, such as the basement, to protect their future condition and uncover any hidden issues in these areas. Before conducting a thorough basement assessment, collections should be moved to ensure the evaluation is comprehensive.

## SHORT TERM

In the short term, we suggest reviewing the props, costumes, and set pieces, adjusting shelving to eliminate tripping hazards, and ensuring clear egress routes. This will improve safety for DCT, especially since the collections are actively in use. By taking these steps, DCT will be able to assess the basement’s collections effectively. Additionally, proper storage conditions should be established for New Century Club and DCT memorabilia.

## MID TERM

For mid-term goals, we propose creating a detailed inventory of props, costumes, and set pieces, along with a space-use plan for storage and workspaces. Building on the short-term step of winnowing collections, this inventory will provide DCT with clarity on which items are actively used or planned for future use, helping to optimize storage and space management.

## LONG TERM

Lastly, in the long term, we recommend implementing a subscription service for props and costumes, with an option to sell any items no longer needed by DCT. This service will help DCT clear space and generate additional revenue, particularly as several arts and theater organizations in Wilmington may participate in the service.



# INTERPRETATION

The proposed interpretation strategy focuses on gradual, long-term goals, beginning with immediate priorities for preserving the building’s physical conditions. While the preservation of the building’s fabric should take precedence, we recognize that interpretation could play a significant role in DCT’s future and should be incorporated into the short and mid-term plans, serving as a path toward long-term success.

## URGENT

No action is immediately necessary for this treatment area.

## SHORT TERM

In the short term, we recommend focusing on research and interpretation planning. This includes maintaining partnerships with graduate programs and historical societies to conduct archival research. These partnerships could explore the future conservation of archival materials or ways to present them in exhibits or displays, such as in the lobby, to raise awareness of the museum’s history and generate revenue. Additionally, updating the DCT website to include historical content and integrating building interpretation into social media strategies can attract new audiences, including historical societies, museums, and active women’s clubs in Delaware, all of whom may become involved in the long-term interpretation and preservation of the building.

## MID TERM

In the mid-term, we suggest hiring consultants for exhibit design and installation, as well as creating video introductions that highlight the history of the building, DCT, and the New Century Club. We also recommend implementing architectural tours as discussed in earlier sections. Additionally, DCT should consider excavating the time capsule, potentially located behind the datestone in the northeast corner of the building. Uncovering the time capsule offers a unique opportunity to create dynamic events and initiatives that celebrate the building’s history and its impact on the community. This discovery can lead to a comprehensive programming effort, with both immediate and long-term opportunities for outreach, education, and community engagement.

## LONG TERM

For the long-term vision, we propose redesigning the side lot to include public-facing interpretation elements. By this stage, DCT will have established strong connections with historical societies and researchers and prioritized the WNCC memorabilia and collections, creating the space needed for this vision. It will also be the right time to establish a curator position, either as a staff member or consultant. Finally, DCT could turn the unveiling of the time capsule into a promotional event by burying a new time capsule, marking DCT’s role in the building’s legacy. The contents of this new capsule could be a collaborative effort involving current and past patrons of the organization, offering a meaningful experience for the younger generation to contribute memories and be part of the process.

**INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS**



PROJECTS:

1. BUILDING TECHNOLOGY AND CONDITIONS:  
KATE WHITNEY-SCHUBB & DANIEL SALDANA  
AYALA

2. WINDOW AND DOOR SCHEDULE:  
DONGLIN CHEN

# PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

# BUILDING TECHNOLOGY AND CONDITIONS

## A SUMMARY OF THE BUILDING’S CONSTRUCTION AND ITS PRESSING CONDITIONS

The following chapter/memo outlines three subjects. First, a brief summary of the building’s construction. This was informed by referencing Minerva Parker Nichol’s 1892 construction specifications, the drawings for her 1892 New Century Club in Philadelphia, and through in person, visual inspection. The second portion will address the observed conditions and their larger trends and patterns. This portion will address the ways in which water infiltration, via the roof and the basement, are largely responsible for most of the observed conditions. This portion will also provide documentation of the basement conditions via photographs and a plan drawing. Lastly, this chapter/memo will detail recommendations for abatement, treatment and further prevention. In all, this memo hopes to provide the staff at the Delaware Children’s Theatre with the first steps and language for preserving its wonderfully rich building.



Figure 1: View of northeast and southwest elevations. (November 29, 2024)

## SUMMARY OF BUILDING’S CONSTRUCTION

Analyzing the construction materials and original documentation of the Delaware Children’s Theatre provides a better understanding of the building as well as promotes adequate treatment and maintenance recommendations, especially in áreas like the basement.m throughout the upper floors and the joists built-in to the wall of the First Floor.

After numerous site visits and original documentation review, it is concluded that the 1892 DCT’s building has a transitional masonry system, a typical building system for structures erected between 1890s and 1930s in the United States. It is a transition between traditional load bearing masonry into modern curtain walls. This is identified by the use of iron structural elements along with brick masonry walls on key parts to enhance the structural stability of the original building such as trusses, tie rods, bolts, fitch beams (composed structural elements of steel and wood), I Beams and iron columns. These elements are mostly located within the auditorium walls providing support for the roof structure. Also, furring and plaster is placed to provide thermal comfort within the building.

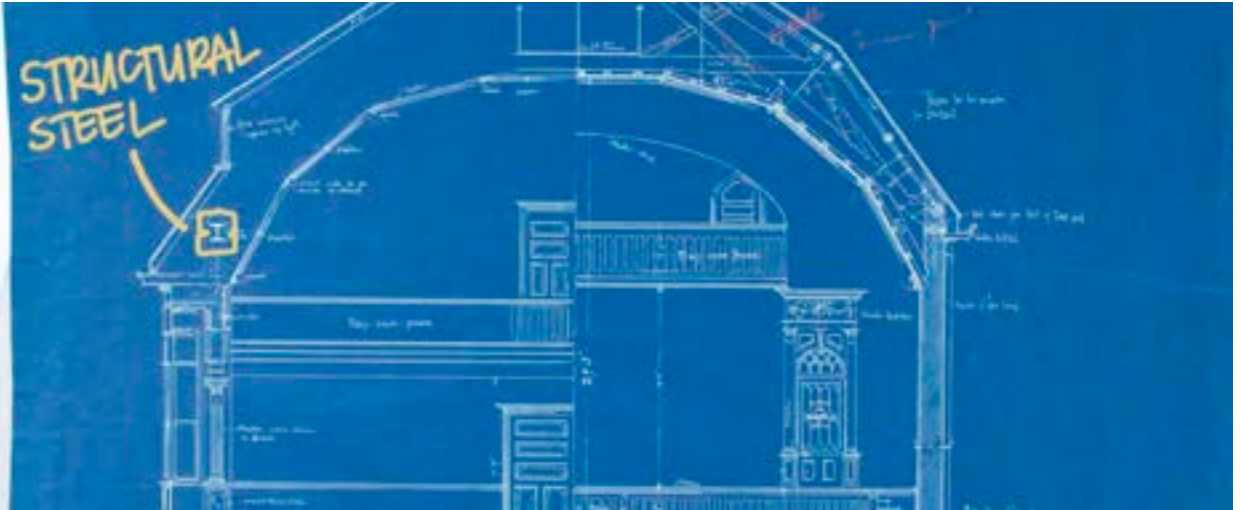


Figure 2: Structural Iron elements indicated on (1892 Section blueprints)

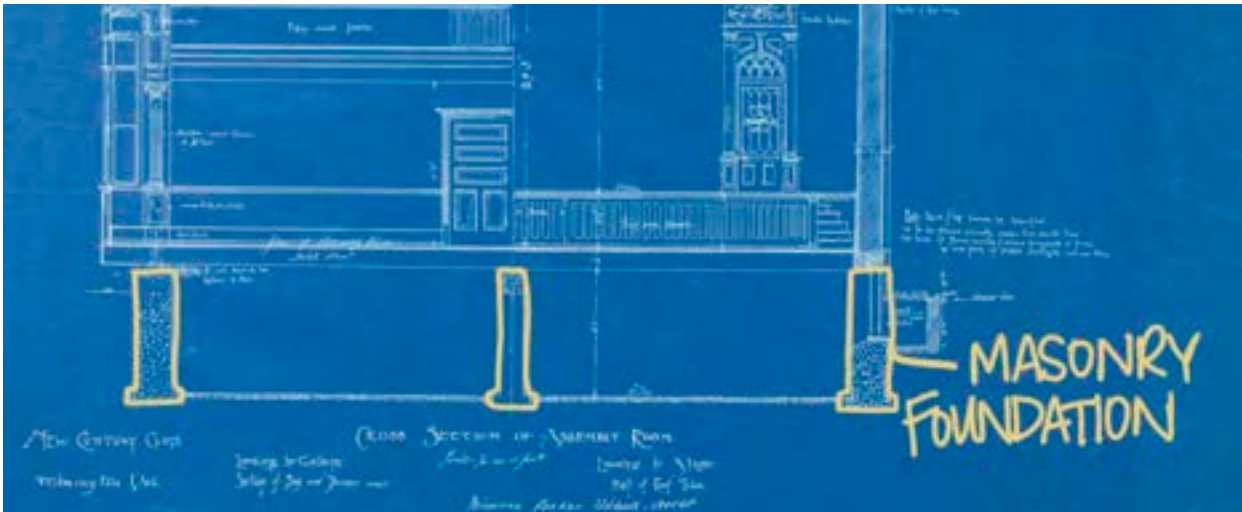


Figure 3: Rubble stone masonry supporting the brick masonry on (1892 Section blueprints)



BASEMENT’S BUILDING TECHNOLOGY

As part of the general condition assessment of the Studio Report, moisture was identified as the most important source of deterioration in the building. The roof and the basement were considered important áreas to address this issue. However, due to the roof treatment of 2022, it is likely the moisture-related problems in the upper floors have halted or may be inactive. For this reason, the following memorandum focuses on the basement conditions in order to provide guidance of its future maintenance. The Basement walls were considered as an important source of moisture for the whole building due to its direct contact with the soil. Also, most of its spaces are used as storage áreas which can hide many on-going issues.. Thus, a deeper understanding of its construction, materials and conditions is relevant. By reviewing Minerva’s similar plans of NCC Philadelphia, site visits to DCT in Wilmington and the 1892 Specifications, rubble load-bearing masonry walls of local stone is the system used for the foundations walls up to the ground level which support the transitional brick masonry system throughout the upper floors and the joists built-in to the wall of the First Floor.

As the rest of DCT’s building, two main construction campaigns were identified per their location and materials employed in the Basement.



Figure 4: Rubble stone masonry supporting the brick masonry walls and first floor joists on 1892-NW-Wall (November 29, 2024)

ORIGINAL BASEMENT LAYOUT (1892)

The rubble stone masonry walls are located around the original perimeter foundation of the building, serving as retaining walls. To complement the internal structural support, two rubble stone masonry walls with brick masonry arches in large openings create an axis within the structure (Figure XX). It has a 8’ height and the mortar used is fresh-burn lime (1 Lime : 3 Sand), which can be noted on the yellowish color in between the stones. The Specs also indicate that the cellar walls were dashed, trowelled and white-washed with lime. Apart from this type of walls, internal divisions of brick and wood

walls created spaces. The whole chimney structure is made out of bricks and plastered flues.

BASEMENT ADDITION (1922)

The 1922 addition included a new use of the basement with a large kitchen, new bathrooms for club’s guests and an extension of the backstage area. It used a similar construction masonry system as the original structure: rubble stone masonry walls along the perimeter. However, the finishes in this area are different as furring with plaster and metal mesh are utilized for the stone walls and ceiling.

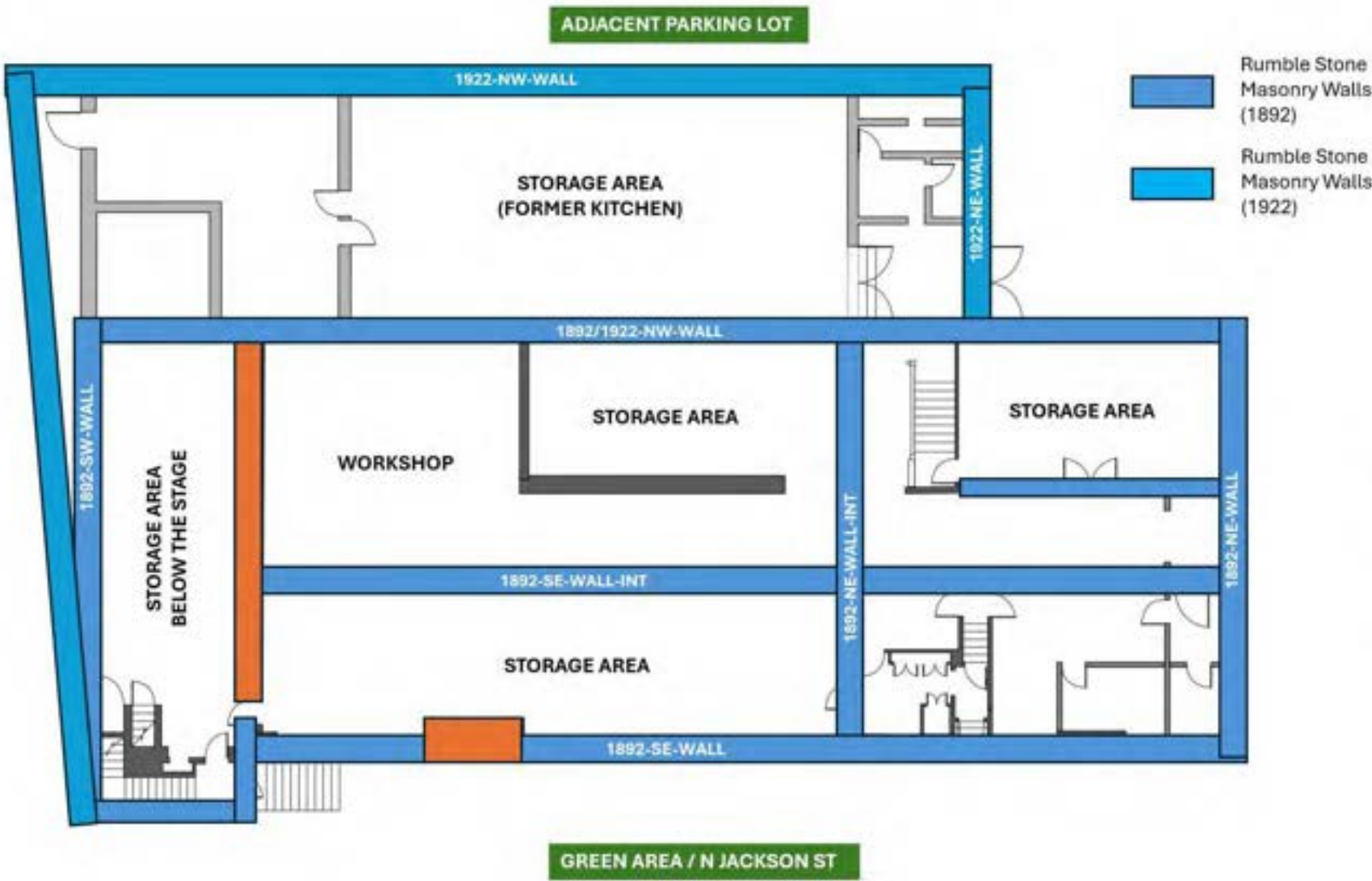


Figure 5: Plan of basement layout (Studio group, 12/15/2024)



BASEMENT CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

CONDITIONS GLOSSARY

As explained in the general Conditions Assessment for the DCT’s building, moisture -related issues affect most of the conditions identified in the basement, especially near perimeter foundation rubble masonry walls. However, the degree of deterioration and urgency to address vary depending on their location within the basement layout and period of construction.

WATER POOLING



Figure 6: Water pooling around 1892-SE-WALL (November 29, 2024)

Refers to water accumulation or moistured areas around or near walls which may indicate on-going water issues. Found around perimetral walls in the 1892 foundation areas. Needs to be addressed with urgency for safety issues.

STONE WALL MOISTURE



Figure 7: Stone wall moisture on 1892-SE-WALL. (November 29, 2024)

Refers to high concentration of moisture on stone walls. The dark color of the stone indicates that the stone is still wet. Usually located at lower wall areas. Needs to be monitored.

PLASTER PEELING/POWDERING FROM STONE WALLS



Figure 8: Plaster peeling on stone wall on 1892-SE-WALL-INT. (November 29, 2024)

Refers to plaster detachment by stone wall moisturing.

PLASTER PEELING/POWDERING ON BRICK WALLS



Figure 9: Plaster peeling of brick wall on 1892-SE-WALL-INT. (November 29, 2024)

Refers to plaster detachment by brick masonry wall moisturing.

PLASTER PEELING/POWDERING ON FURRING/CEILING



Figure 10: Plaster peeling from furring on 1922-NE-WALL (November 29, 2024)

Refers to plaster detachment from furring, possibly by moisture.

TREATMENT SUGGESTIONS FOR WATER/MOISTURE ABATEMENT

Based on the Condition Glossary shown and the conditions identified, the following suggestions are proposed for immediate application:

- 1) Move basement valuables away from all masonry foundation walls to prevent further damage and uncover possible hidden conditions.
- 2) Pay attention for water pooling areas, especially on the 1892-SE-Wall.
- 2) Employ dehumidifiers, either plug-in units from large hardware stores or smaller bags like DampRid.

For examination by a roofing, water or masonry expert:

- 1) Assess current downspouts and storm drains to gauge current water management system
- 2) Assess current flashing at roofline
- 3) At the basement, use a moisture reader device to map the degree of moistures on walls.

For execution by roofing, water or masonry expert:

- 1) Installation of sub-grade flashing
- 2) Installation of sub-grade drainage systems



Figure 11: Exterior view of 1892-SE-WALL with concrete capping and downspout (November 29, 2024)



Figure 12: Exterior view of 1922-NW-WALL with concrete and window closures (November 29, 2024)



Figure 13: Exterior view of closed window on 1892-SE-WALL (November 29, 2024)



CONDITIONS IDENTIFIED

After site visits to the Basement, the higher levels of moisture-related conditions are located on the perimeter foundations stone walls: water pooling, wall moisture and plaster peeling.

1892-SE-WALL

This is the wall with the most conditions identified. Water pooling near electrical systems and chimney requires immediate attention as this is an on-going issue. Large portions of plastes have detached, exposing the stone. Compared to others, this is the most exposed wall as it is adjacent to the open lot.

1892-SE-WALL-INT

Although some plaster detachment due to raising damp in the lower wall area, the plaster is in better conditions than other walls.

1892-NE-WALL

Almost all the original plastered have detached from this wall under the main entrance. Powdering and wall moisture was observed.



Figures 14 & 15: Water pooling and moisture close to eletrical systems at 1892-SE-WALL (November 29, 2024)



Figure 16: The plaster detachment on 1892-NE-WALL-INT interior wall increases as it gets close to the perimeter foundation 1892-se-wall Water pooling and moisture close to eletrical systems at 1892-SE-WALL (November 29, 2024)



Figure 17: Raising damp impacting 1892-SE-WALL-INT (November 29, 2024)



Figure 18: Brick powdering on 1892-NE-WALL (November 29, 2024)



Figure 19: Wall moisture on 1892-NW-WALL (November 29, 2024)

1892-NW-WALL

This wall shows plaster detachment in large section exposing the stone. In the lower area, moisture is noted on the stones.

1922-NE-WALL

The walls on the perimeter foundations in the 1922 addition show large areas of plaster and metal mesh detachment, especially on the bathrooms spaces with water connections.



Figure 20. Plaster detachment from furring on 1922-NE-WALL (November 29, 2024)

1922-NW-WALL

After the addition was completed, this NW wall became the perimter foundation with a large kitchen. However, in areas with water connections, plaster detachment has been noticed on walls and ceiling unde the first floor kitchen and buffet room.



Figure 21. Plaster detachment from ceiling and furring on 1922-NW-WALL (November 29, 2024)



# WINDOWS AND DOORS

## WINDOWS

The Windows and Doors Schedule provides a comprehensive overview of the architectural fenestration and entry systems that define the building's character and historical significance. It outlines the types, styles, and key features of each window and door, emphasizing their contribution to the site's overall aesthetic and structural integrity. By documenting original elements, modifications, and notable design details, this schedule serves as a crucial resource for understanding the structure's architectural evolution and guiding future conservation efforts.

Windows and doors are frequently among the first architectural elements to be replaced in historic buildings. Therefore, it was unexpected and significant to discover the intact original windows and doors at the Wilmington Children's Theatre. This observation underscores an extraordinary degree of preservation, prompting a comprehensive inventory to document these elements in detail.

A systematic approach was undertaken to document the windows and doors

systematically. Every window and door from the first to the third floor was cataloged. Each element was photographed and assigned a unique identification (ID) to ensure easy traceability for future reference. For accessible windows and doors, key measurements were recorded, including dimensions, materials, and other defining characteristics. Additionally, a condition assessment was conducted for each door and window, noting their current physical state and any signs of deterioration or damage. These details were carefully marked on the corresponding floor plans, providing a visual reference for their exact location within the building. All this information was compiled into a comprehensive table, offering a clear and organized reference for stakeholders involved in conservation and restoration efforts.

The northern façade serves as the main entrance and features the most diverse array of window designs attributed to Minerva's architectural approach. Flanking the main doorway are Palladian windows (W. NFAC.01.1&2) distinguished by a central arched sash crowned with a decorative

wooden keystone. The adjacent smaller windows on either side are framed by wooden pilasters and topped with a molded cornice. The lower sashes of all three windows consist of a single light. The upper sashes vary in design: the side windows feature five lights, while the central window contains eight square lights with additional irregularly shaped lights above, formed by Gothic-style tracery within the rounded arch. The side windows are angled to the wall, creating a subtle bay effect that is more pronounced when viewed from the interior.

On the second floor, the two outermost windows (W. NFAC.02.1&3) are triple one-over-one double-hung sashes. They are topped with large wooden panels adorned with garlands and capped by a molded cornice. The smaller double window (W. NFAC.02.2) above the main entrance features rounded arches, one-over-one double-hung sashes, and a central wooden keystone. Further enhancing the roofline, the gambrel roof projects slightly outward to accommodate three dormers. The two outer dormers (W. NFAC.03.1&3) have gable roofs with pediments and one-over-

one sash windows. In contrast, the central dormer is more elaborate, featuring a double window with round-arched upper sashes. This central dormer (W. NFAC.03.2) is topped by a bell-shaped hood with a broken pediment, crowned by a tall urn-like finial at its center. Below the pediment break, there is a decorative garland.

The remaining original section of the west wall retains its historical character with a shallow three-window bay on the first floor and a larger, more expansive bay on the second floor. The second-floor bay is accentuated with a molded cornice and a balustrade. Above the cornice of the third-floor central window, a fanlight with radiating muntins and a small wooden keystone is prominently featured. Flanking the third-floor central window are two oval windows. Each encased with a molded surround and adorned with radiating muntins and decorative wooden keystones on all four sides.

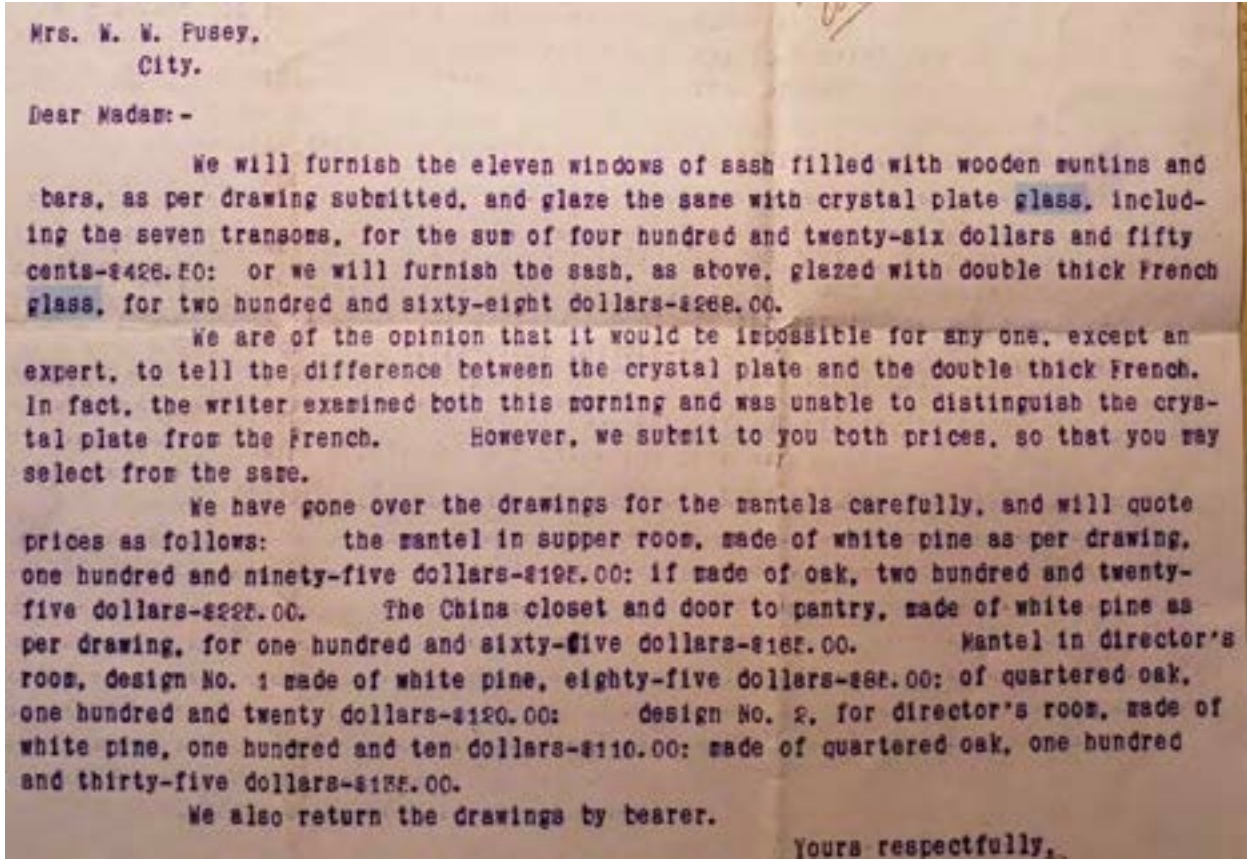
The building's west side also includes a one-story addition. The western wall of this addition features five double-sash windows





(W. WAFA.01.2) with Gothic-style tracery in the upper sashes. These windows were repurposed from the original five-window bay on the building's former western wall and reinstalled as part of the new addition, maintaining a connection to the original architectural design.

The east facade has a variety of window types throughout its length, though most are simple single double-hung windows. Notably, only two windows have Gothic-style tracery in their upper sashes. The two-and-a-half-story rear wing is marked by two shed dormers on either side of a central chimney, providing symmetry and architectural interest to the rear elevation.



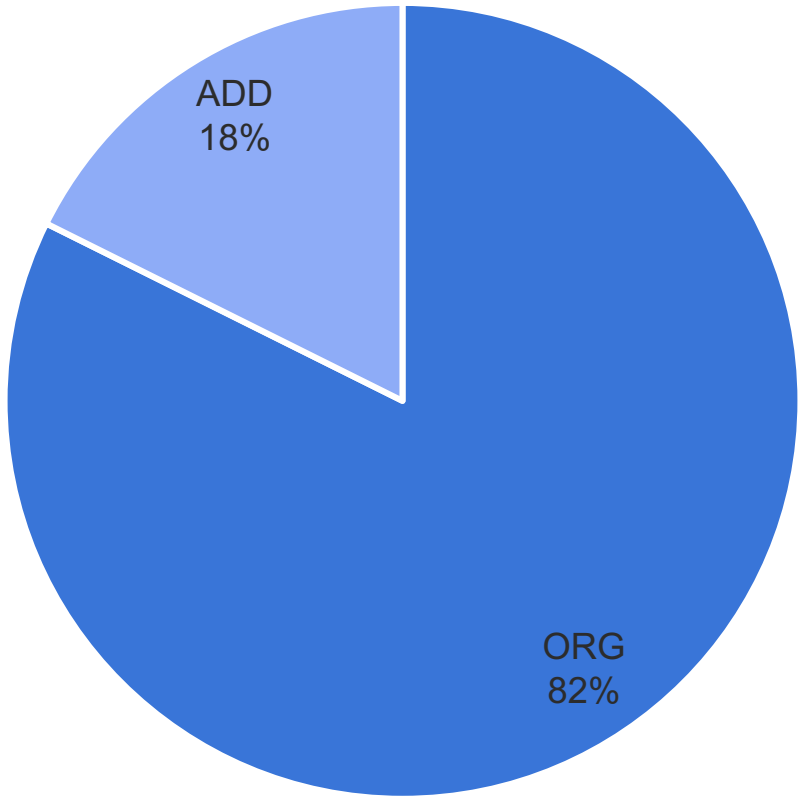
A letter from Jackson & Sharp Company to the New Century Club detailing prices and material options for window



The Changing of West Facade in 1896, 1921, 1920s & 2024. (Delaware Historical Society)

According to the specifications, all doors are made of the best white pine and thoroughly seasoned. The original panel doors are framed by a flat lintel, which is clearly depicted in the specifications. An analysis of the bidding letter revealed that the glass initially proposed for use in the building was specified as either crystal plate glass or double-thick French glass. These materials were both known for their superior clarity and durability, qualities that align with the aesthetic and functional goals of the original design. Despite this, the precise type of glass that was ultimately installed remains inconclusive based on the available documentation and visual assessments. Further archival research or material analysis may be necessary to definitively determine the glass type utilized in the final construction.

Through careful observation and comparison with the design drawings and historical photographs about 82% of the windows. The original designs by Minerva are especially evident on the main façade, where the windows and doors have experienced little to no alteration over time. Many features align closely with the original construction specifications. For instance, all window frames were originally specified as double-hung windows equipped with bronze-faced pulleys, a characteristic that remains present today. Additionally, all circular top windows have retained their square solid corners, precisely matching the details outlined in the original construction documents. This discovery reflects the remarkable integrity of the building's fenestration and highlights its historical value.



A pie chart showing that over 82% of the windows are original (ORG), while 18% are additions (ADD).

	1893	1971	1982	2024
W. NFAC.01.1&2				
W. NFAC.02.1&3				
W. NFAC.02.2				
W. NFAC.03.2				
W. NFAC.03.1&3				

Changing for the Windows on the Northern Facade in 1893, 1972, 1982. 2024



DOORS

The first floor features the most complex door designs in the building. The primary front entrance consists of four wooden doors (D. NFAC.01.1), each containing five sunken panels. Above these doors is a glass transom adorned with painted gilt lettering spelling “New Century Club.” The architrave above the transom is decorated with garlands, and two detached wooden columns set on brick bases support the pedimented frontispiece. Within the pediment, a decorative element is affixed to the wall, possibly representing a club insignia.

The small vestibule beyond the front entrance features two half-glazed wooden doors (D. OFF2.01.2& D. OFF1.01.3). The large upper glass panels allow for light and visibility, while three recessed panels below provide privacy and structural support. During the influenza outbreak, these doors played a critical role in allowing the office to serve as a doctor’s consultation space, effectively minimizing cross-infection.

After passing through the vestibule, one encounters an interior set of double doors leading to the main hallway. Here, the original

doors, molding, and pilasters remain intact, preserving the space’s historical character. Each office entrance is marked by a pair of five-sunken-panel doors (D. OFF2.01.4& D. OFF1.01.8) , providing both aesthetic appeal and functional access.

A Dutch-style doorway (D.LOBB.01.13) leads to the bar, its upper section ornamented with decorative tracery similar to that found on many of the building’s windows. Symmetrically positioned doorways (D.AUDI.01.18 & D.AUDI.01.19) provide access to the stage, and historical photographs confirm that these doors have remained unchanged over time.

On the western side of the main room is a Buffet Room ,added in the early 20th century. Entry to the Buffet Room is facilitated by large double doors set within a Palladian enclosure (D. BUFF.01.23). Fluted pilasters with Ionic detailing frame this entryway, adding classical architectural elements to the design.

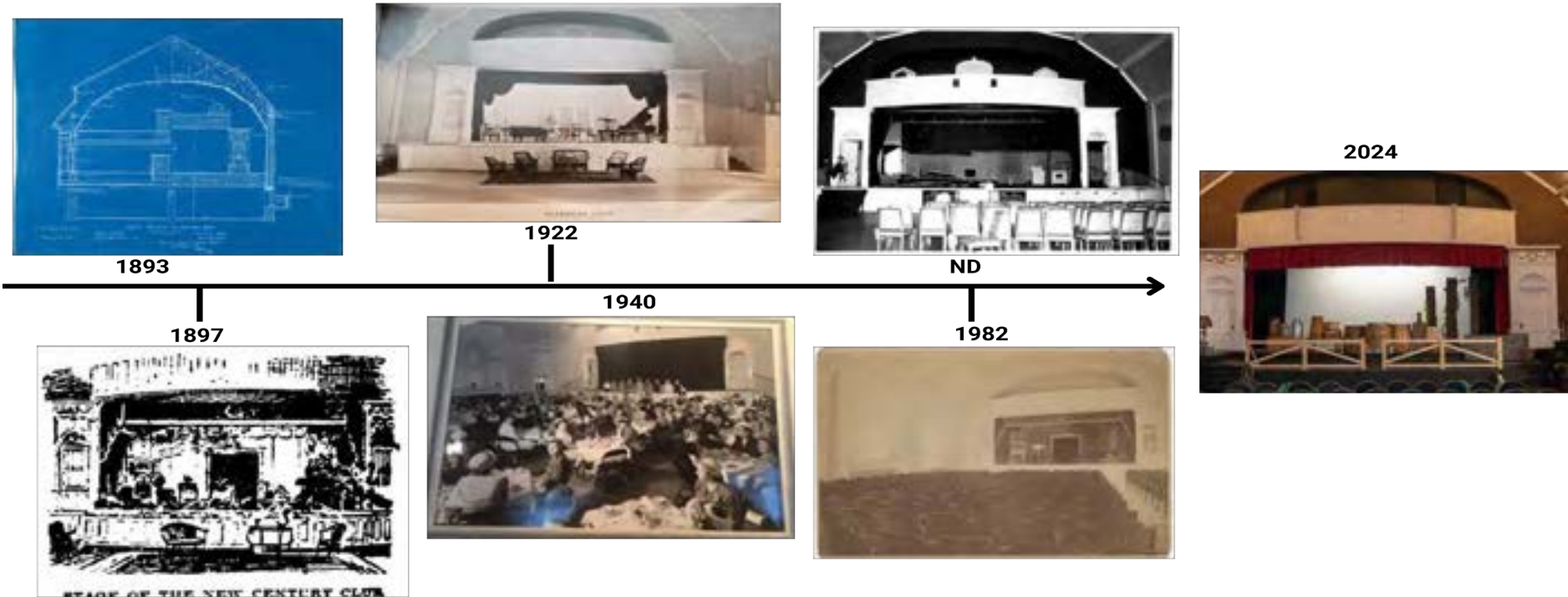
Compared to the first floor, the door designs on the second and third floors are

considerably simpler. Most doors are single or double wooden paneled doors. One notable exception on the second floor is the service bar, which is enclosed by Dutch doors (D.DRES.02.4) that provide access to the service elevator and dumbwaiter.

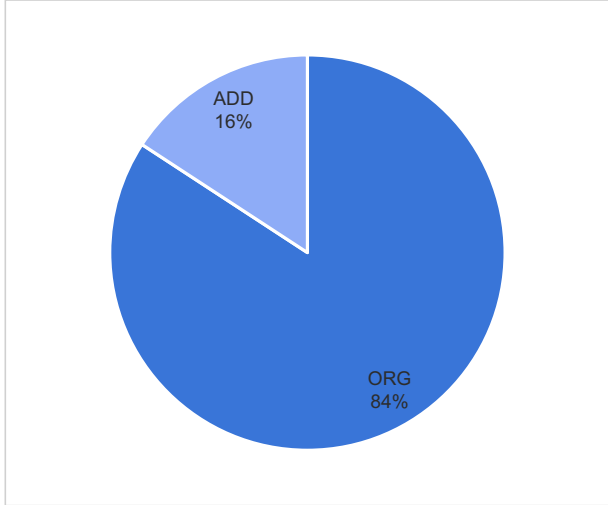
The backstage area contains a pair of symmetrically positioned small gable-topped doors (D.AUDI.02.9& D.AUDI.02.14), which provide access to the stage balcony. This functional and stylistic element reinforces the building’s architectural coherence and historical authenticity.



Changing for the Doors on the Northern Facade in 1893, 1972, 1982. 2024



Timeline for the Historic Photos for the Doors on the Stage.



Furthermore, approximately 84% of the doors remain original, underscoring the remarkable integrity and preservation of these architectural elements.

METAL HARDWARES

During the analysis of the doors, several examples of original metal hardware were discovered, including door closers. The original building utilized door hardware produced by Corbin Russwin, a company with a rich history of manufacturing high-quality commercial-grade door hardware. Founded in 1839, Corbin Russwin originated from the collaboration of Philip Corbin, Frank Corbin, and Ed Doen, initially known as Doen, Corbin & Co. By 1851, the company became P&F Corbin, and in 1902, it merged with Russell & Erwin to form The American Hardware Corporation. Notably, post-merger, Corbin-branded hardware was no longer produced, reinforcing the conclusion that the existing Corbin-marked door closer is indeed original to the building. However, Sargent & Company of New Haven was used for the door hardware for the west addition, reflecting a shift in supplier preference for this later construction phase.



Sargent Door Closer

GOTHIC-STYLE TRACERY



A distinctive architectural hallmark of the building is the influence of Minerva Parker Nichols, whose design philosophy prominently incorporated Gothic-style tracery in the upper sashes of windows and doors. This stylistic choice reflects the broader 19th-century Gothic Revival movement, characterized by an emphasis on verticality, intricate ornamentation, and symbolic references to medieval ecclesiastical architecture. By embedding these elements into the windows and doors, Nichols reinforced the building's cultural, educational, and reformist mission, aligning with the progressive values

often associated with such institutions. The tracery not only enhances the visual appeal of the fenestration but also serves a functional purpose, allowing for the diffusion of natural light and ventilation while preserving privacy. The subdivided window frames reduce glare and excessive sunlight exposure, a practical feature valued by late 19th-century households. Additionally, the use of tracery in smaller geometric units contributes to the structural strength of the windows, enhancing their durability and reducing the risk of damage from storms or physical impact. This dual role of aesthetic enrichment, functional lighting, and defensive capability illustrates Nichols' architectural ingenuity and her commitment to imbuing the built environment with both symbolic meaning and practical utility.



CONDITIONS

The majority of the windows and doors are in good condition, but several issues require attention to prevent further deterioration. The most urgent concern is the condition of the exterior doors on the west façade, particularly door D. NFAC.01.2 and the doors at backstage. This door shows significant damage at the bottom and sides, with a large gap between the door panel and the frame. This might be caused by the high frequency of use. To prevent further deterioration, immediate repair of these vulnerable sections is recommended.

Additionally, many of the windows and doors throughout the building exhibit signs of paint peeling and staining. These issues leave the underlying wood exposed, increasing the risk of moisture damage and decay. To address this, we recommend cleaning and removing old paint, followed by the application of compatible coatings that align with the original finishes. This approach will safeguard the wood, maintain its historical appearance, and preserve its role as a character-defining feature of the building.

One notable loss is the missing finial on

window W. NFAC.03.2, as evidenced by historic photographs. Restoring this original element would enhance the window's authenticity and support the building's historical integrity.

Although a comprehensive inspection of window and door hardware was not possible during this assessment, it remains a critical aspect of the building's overall condition and functionality. Hardware components such as pulleys, screws, and hinges play a vital role in the proper operation of windows and doors. Over time, these parts can become loose, corroded, or damaged, leading to misalignment, restricted movement, and compromised security. Ensuring that all hardware is intact and functional is essential for maintaining ease of use, preventing further wear, and safeguarding the building from moisture infiltration.

Moving forward, a more thorough inspection of hardware should be conducted to identify missing or damaged components that may require replacement. Restoring hardware functionality involves replacing broken or worn pulleys, screws, and hinges, as well

as cleaning, lubricating, and adjusting moving parts to ensure smooth operation. These measures will improve the overall usability and energy efficiency of windows and doors, while also preserving their historical authenticity. Regular maintenance and periodic hardware inspections are recommended to prevent future failures and avoid the need for costly repairs. Proper hardware maintenance is essential for protecting the building's architectural integrity and ensuring that its character-defining features continue to function as intended.

Another key consideration is improving energy efficiency without compromising the integrity of the original window and door frames. Rather than replacing entire units, solutions such as weatherstripping, sealing gaps, and adding discreet interior storm windows can enhance insulation and reduce air leakage. These minimally invasive interventions respect the historical fabric of the building while offering significant improvements in thermal performance. Incorporating energy efficiency upgrades as part of routine hardware maintenance will



Paint Peeling of Door of D. BUFF.01.23



Paint Peeling of Door of D. NFAC.01.1



Staining for Window of W. WFAC.02.2

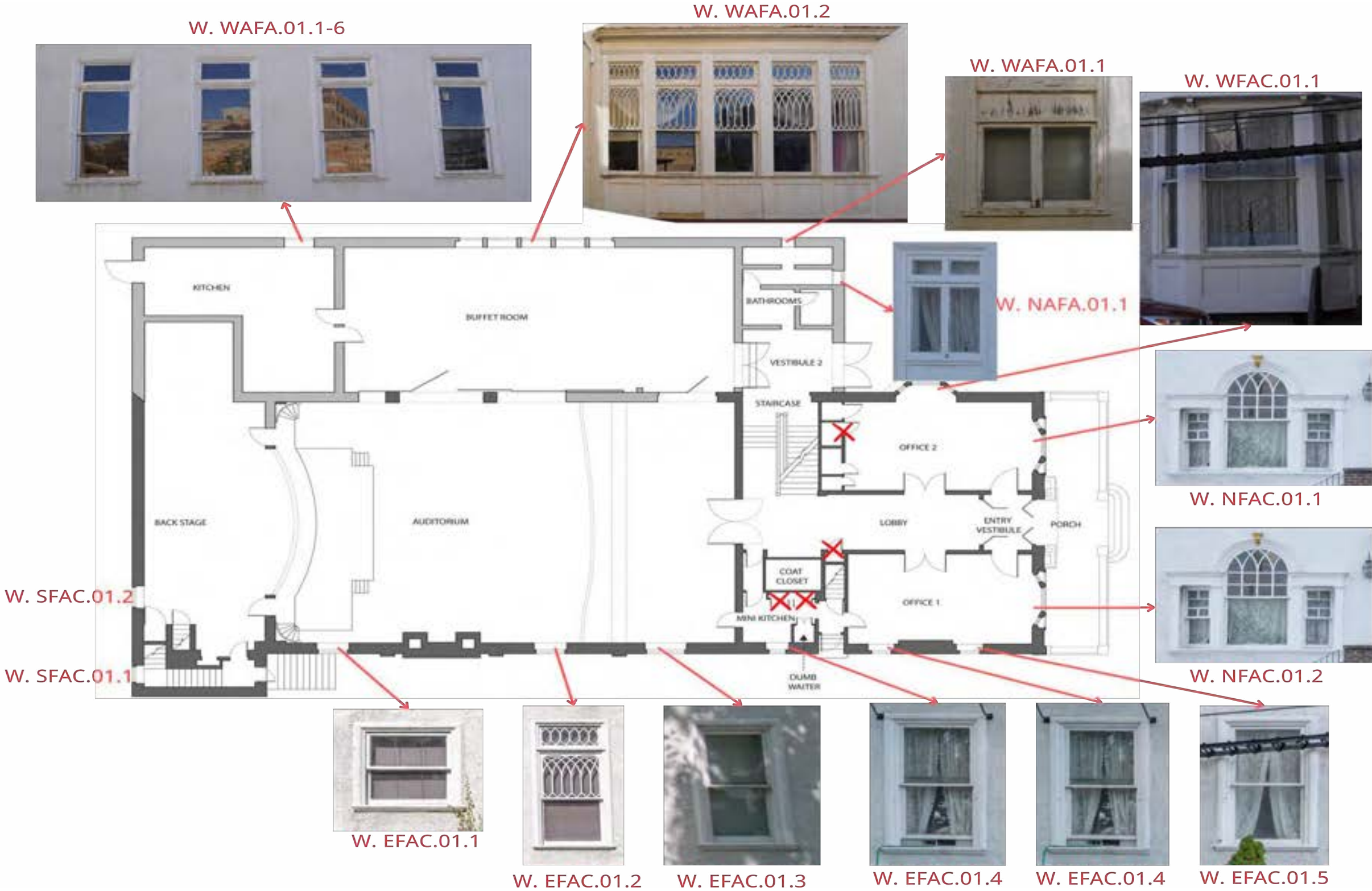
not only protect the building's character but also contribute to its long-term sustainability and occupant comfort. Periodic inspections and timely interventions are recommended to avoid more costly repairs and to ensure the continued performance and preservation of these essential architectural elements.



Changing for the Window of W. NFAC.03.2 in 1982. 2024

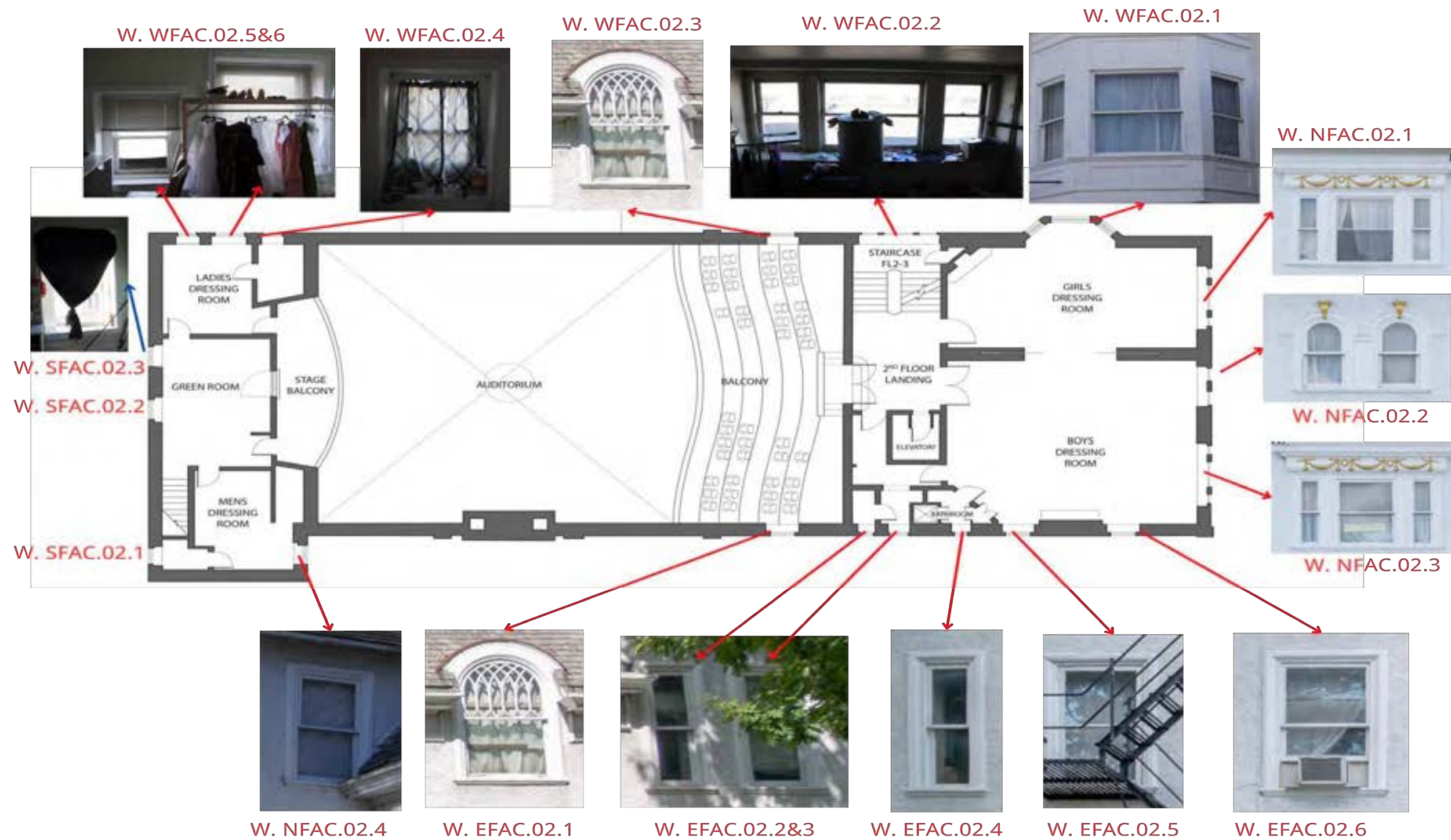
# WINDOWS AND DOORS

## FIRST FLOOR WINDOWS

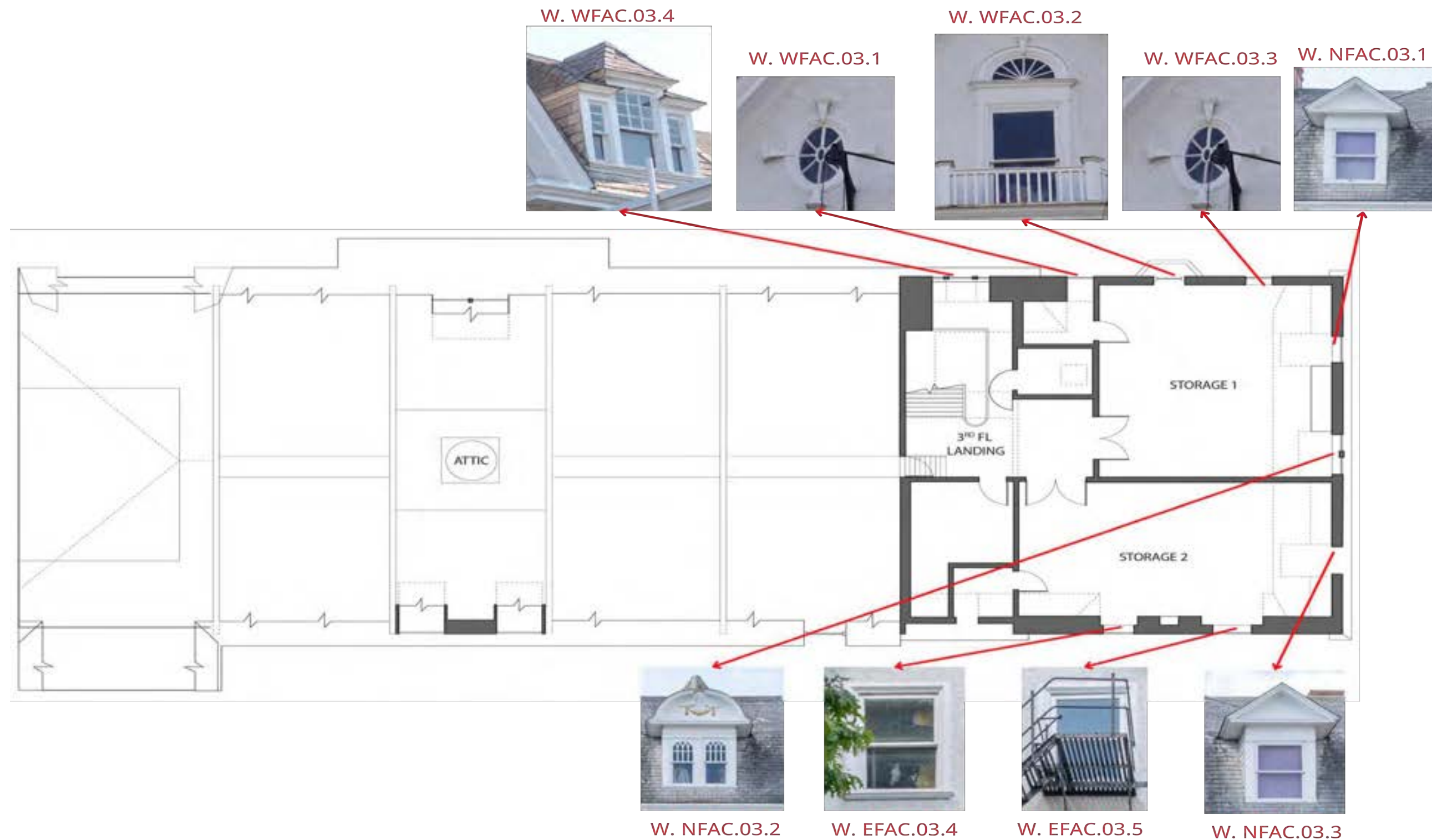




## SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS



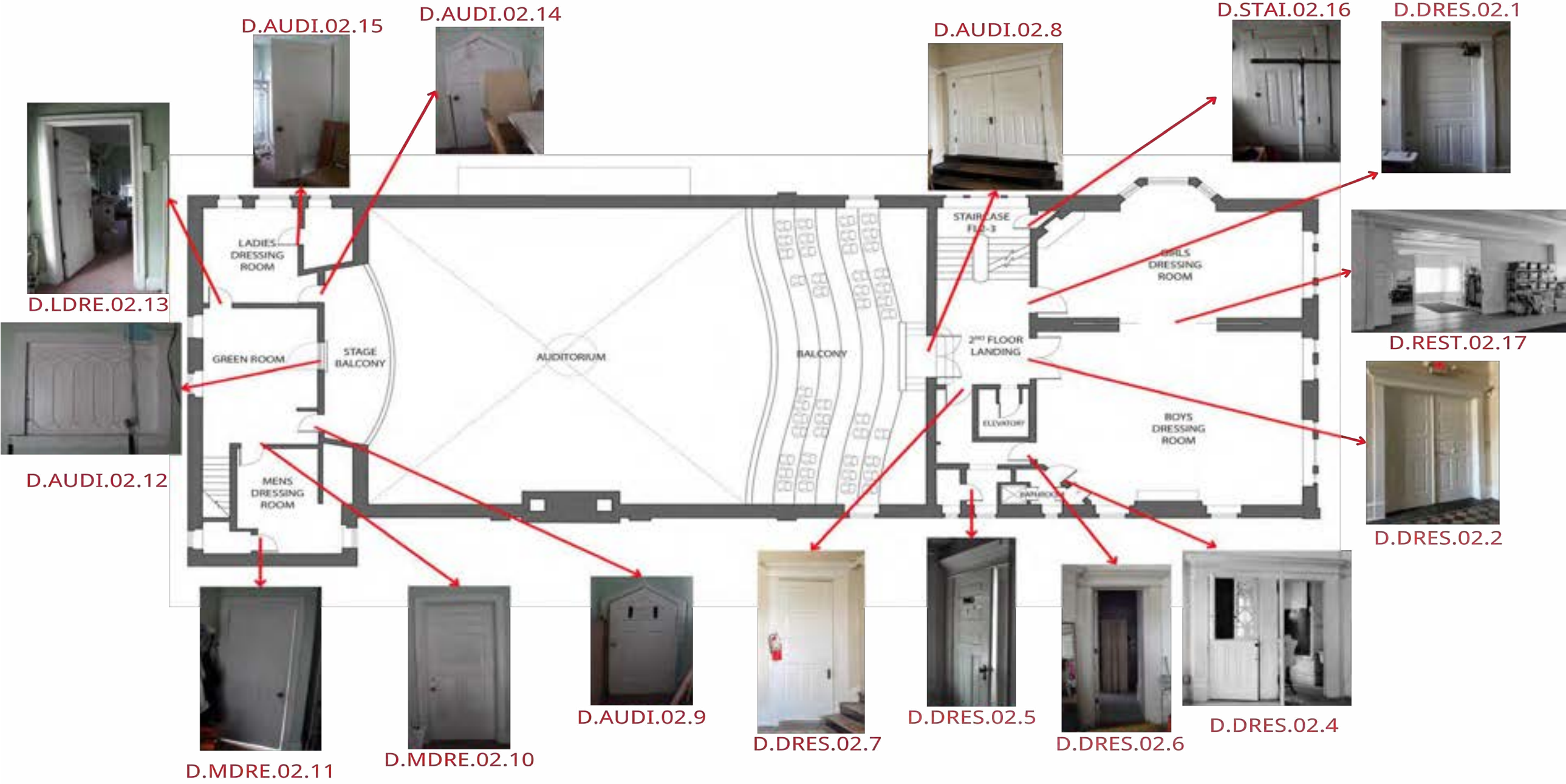
## THIRD FLOOR WINDOWS







# SECOND FLOOR DOORS





# THIRD FLOOR DOORS







# WINDOWS AND DOORS

## WINDOWS

ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. NFAC.01.1	Palladian Window	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair	7.759		Gothic-Style Tracery/ Round Arch Center Sash/ Square Lights/ Keystone	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.01.2	Palladian Window	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair	7.759		Gothic-Style Tracery/ Round Arch Center Sash/ Square Lights/ Keystone	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.02.1	Tripartite Window	2	Wood	Fair, peeling paint, needs repair			Garland Decoration	ORG	High		


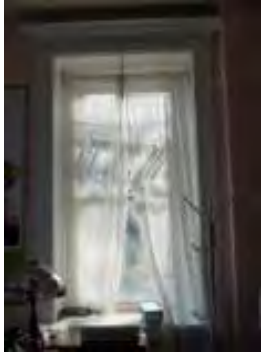



ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. NFAC.02.2	Arched Paired Windows	2	Wood	Good , Peeling paint			Keystone	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.02.3	Tripartite Window	2	Wood	Good , Peeling paint			Keys Garland Decoration	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.03.1	Gable Dormer Window	3	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		









ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. NFAC.03.2	Segmental Arched Dormer	3	Wood	Fair, missing a historic decoration			Gothic-Style Tracery/ Garland Decoration	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.03.3	Gable Dormer Window	3	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		
W. NFAC.02.4	Single Double-Hung Window	3	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		


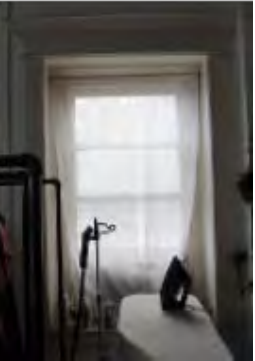


ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. NAFA.01.1	Casement	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair			Transom Window	ADDED (After 1922)	Low		
W. NAFA.02.2	Casement	2	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair			Transom Window	ADDED (After 1922)	Low		
W. EFAC.01.1	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		




ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.01.2	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	GOOD			Gothic-Style Tracery, Transom Window	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.01.3	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.01.4	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair	6.916	3.583	/	ORG	High		

ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.01.5	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair	6.916	3.583		ORG	High		
W. EFAC.02.1	Arched Window	2	Wood	Fair, black staining			Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.02.2	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	GOOD	5.761	1.768	/	ORG	High		



ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.02.3	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	GOOD	5.761	1.768	/	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.02.4	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	GOOD			/	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.02.5	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	/			/	ORG	High		






ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.02.6	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	/				ORG	High		
W. EFAC.03.1	Multi-Light Casement Dormer Window,	3	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair			Multi-Light	ORG	High		
W. EFAC.03.2	Multi-Light Casement Dormer Window,	3	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair			Multi-Light	ORG	High		

ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER6TY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.03.3	Louvered Dormer	3	Wood	GOOD				ORG	High		
W. EFAC.03.4	Single Double-Hung Window	3	Wood	GOOD				ORG	High		
W. EFAC.03.5	Single Double-Hung Window	3	Wood	GOOD				ORG	High		



ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER6TY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. EFAC.03.6	Fanlight Window	3	Wood	GOOD			Stucco/ Gothic- Style Tracery	ORG	High		
W. WFAC.01.1	Bay Window	1	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair				ORG	High		
W. WFAC.02.1	Bay Window	2	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair				ORG	High		





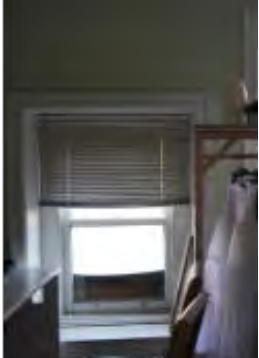
ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHA6	INTER6TY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. WFAC.02.2	Tripartite Window	2	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair, brown staining				ORG	High		
W. WFAC.03.1	Oval Window	3	Wood	GOOD			Molded Surround/ Radiating Muntins/ Keystone	ORG	High		
W. WFAC.03.2	Oval Window	3	Wood	GOOD			Molded Surround/ Radiating Muntins/ Keystone	ORG	High		

ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHA6	INTER6TY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. WFAC.03.3	Single Double-Hung Window	3	Wood	GOOD			Fanlight Window	ORG	High		
W. WFAC.03.4	Dormer Window	3	Wood	Fair, Peeling paint, needs repair			Multi-Light	ORG	High		
W. WAFA.01.1	Casement Window	1	Wood	Poor, Peeling paint, needs repair			Transom Window	ADDED (After 1922)	Low		

ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. WAFA.01.2	Five-Bay Window	1	Wood	Poor, Peeling paint, staining, needs repair	8.858	23.802	Transom Window/ Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	High		
W. WAFA.01.3-6	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	Poor, Peeling paint, staining, needs repair			Transom Window	ADDED (After 1922)	Low		
W. WAFA.02.1	Casement Window	2	Wood	Poor, Peeling paint, needs repair			Transom Window	ADDED (After 1922)	Low		




ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. SFAC.01.1	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	/				ORG	High		
W. SFAC.01.2	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	/				ORG	High		
W. SFAC.01.3	Single Double-Hung Window	1	Wood	/				ADDED (After 1922)	Low		
W. SFAC.02.1	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	/				ORG	High		
W. SFAC.02.2	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	/				ORG	High		
W. SFAC.02.3	Single Double-Hung Window	3	Wood	/				ORG	High		




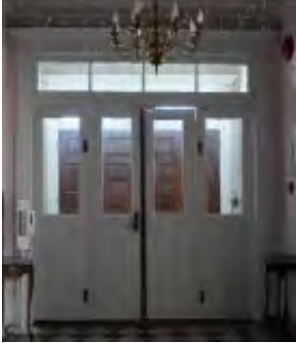




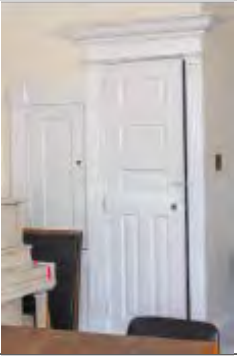
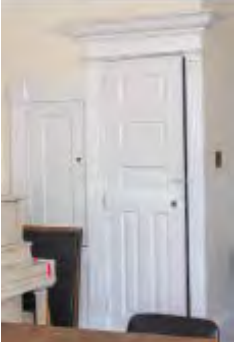
ID	TYPE	FLOOR	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO	INTERIOR PHOTO
W. WFAC.02.3	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	GOOD	3.94	2.743		ORG	High		
W. WFAC.02.4	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood		5.607	4.091		ORG	High		
W. WFAC.02.5	Single Double-Hung Window	2	Wood	GOOD	3.94	2.743		ORG	High		

WINDOWS AND DOORS





DOORS




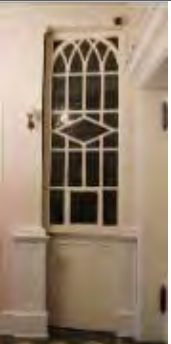
ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D. NFAC.01.1	Double-Leaf Door	EXT	1	PORCH	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint	7.365	7.651	Garland Decoration/ Transom Window	ORG	HIGH	
D. NFAC.01.2	Single-Panel Door	EXT	1	BACKSTAGE	GLASS, WOOD	Poor, Damage At The Bottom And Side; Peeling Paint	6.519	2.352	Transom Window	ORG	HIGH	
D. NAFA.01.1	Double-Leaf Door	EXT	1	BUFFET ROOM	GLASS, WOOD, METAL	Good	/	/		ADDED (After 1922)	N	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D. EFAC.01.2	Double-Leaf Door	EXT	1	AUDITORIUM	GLASS, WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Staining	13.435	4.419	Transom Window/ Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D. EFAC.01.1	Single-Panel Door	EXT	1	AUDITORIUM	GLASS, WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Staining	/	/	Transom Window/ Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D. EFAC.01.3	Single-Panel Door	EXT	1	BACKSTAGE	GLASS, WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Staining	/	/	Transom Window	ORG	HIGH	
D. PORC.01.1	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	PORCH	GLASS, WOOD	Good	7.234	7.556	Transom Window	ORG	HIGH	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.OFF2.01.2	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 2	GLASS, WOOD	Good	7.523	3.468		ORG	HIGH	
D.OFF2.01.4	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	OFFICE 2	WOOD	Good	7.5232	10.47		ORG	HIGH	
D.OFF2.01.5	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 2	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	
D.OFF2.01.6	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 2	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	







ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER&TY	PHOTO
D.OFF2.01.7	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 2	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	
D. OFF1.01.3	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 1	GLASS, WOOD	Good	7.5232	10.47		ORG	HIGH	
D. OFF1.01.8	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	OFFICE 1	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	
D. OFF1.01.9	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 1	WOOD	Good	7.513	2.303		ORG	HIGH	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER&TY	PHOTO
D. OFF1.01.10	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	OFFICE 1	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Staining	7.556	2.205		ORG	HIGH	
D.MIKI.01.11	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	MINI KITCHEN	WOOD	Good	7.592	2.454		ORG	HIGH	
D.LOBB.01.12	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	LOBBY	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	
D.LOBB.01.13	Dutch Door	INT	1	LOBBY	GLASS, WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Needs Repair	9.471	2.365	Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D. AUDI.01.14	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Good	/	/		ORG	HIGH	
D. AUDI.01.15	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	GLASS, WOOD	Good	10.18	7.324	Multi-Light	ADDED (After 1922)	LOW	
D. AUDI.01.16	French Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	GLASS, WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Needs Repair	13.081	24.47	Transom Window/ Sidelights	ADDED (After 1922)	MEDIUM	
D. AUDI.01.17	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Good	/	/		ADDED (After 1922)	LOW	



ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D. AUDI.01.18	Decorative Paneled Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Black Staining	/	/	Stucco/Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D. AUDI.01.19	Decorative Paneled Door	INT	1	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Black Staining	/	/	Stucco/Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D. BAST.01.20	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	BACKSTAGE	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Black Staining	6.617	4.972		ORG	HIGH	
D. BAST.01.21	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	BACKSTAGE	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Black Staining	6.617	2.336		ORG	HIGH	







ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER&TY	PHOTO
D. BUFF.01.22	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	BUFFET ROOM	GLASS, WOOD	Good	/	/	Multi-Light	ADDED (After 1922)	N	
D. BUFF.01.23	Double-Leaf Door	INT	1	BUFFET ROOM	WOOD	Good	6.545	5.956		ADDED (After 1922)	N	
D. BATH.01.24	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	BATHROOM	WOOD	Good	/	/		ADDED (After 1922)	N	
D. BATH.01.25	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	BATHROOM	WOOD	Good	/	/		ADDED (After 1922)	N	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTER&TY	PHOTO
D. KICT.01.30	Single-Panel Door	INT	1	KITCHEN	WOOD	Good	/	/		ADDED (After 1922)	N	
D.DRES.02.1	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	GIRLS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	8.11	3.473		ORG	HIGH	
D.DRES.02.2	Double-Leaf Door	INT	2	BOYS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	8.11	5.64		ORG	HIGH	
D.DRES.02.4	Dutch Door	INT	2	BOYS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	/	/	Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	





ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.DRES.02.5	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	BOYS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	7.881	2.303	Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D.DRES.02.6	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	BOYS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	7.881	2.303		ORG	HIGH	
D.DRES.02.7	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	BOYS DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	8.084	2.53		ORG	HIGH	
D.AUDI.02.8	Double-Leaf Door	INT	2	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Good	6.378	5.602		ORG	HIGH	


ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.AUDI.02.9	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Needs Repair	2.264	5.164	Pitched Top Frame	ORG	HIGH	
D.AUDI.02.12	Interior Hatch	INT	2	AUDITORIUM	WOOD	Good	/	/	Gothic-Style Tracery	ORG	HIGH	
D.AUDI.02.14	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	LADY DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Needs Repair	2.264	5.164	Pitched Top Frame	ORG	HIGH	
D.MDRE.02.10	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	MAN DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good, Some Black Dirt	2.3	6.611		ORG	HIGH	



ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.MDRE.02.11	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	MAN DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	2.3	6.611		ORG	HIGH	
D.LDRE.02.13	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	LADY DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	6.499	2.139		ORG	HIGH	
D.LDRE.02.15	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	LADY DRESSING ROOM	WOOD	Good	6.499	2.139		ORG	HIGH	
D.STAI.02.16	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	GREEN ROOM	WOOD	Good				ORG	HIGH	

ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.BATH.02.17	Sliding Door	INT	2	MAN DRESSING ROOM	GLASS, WOOD	Good				ORG	HIGH	
D.REST.02.18	Single-Panel Door	INT	2	BATHROOM	GLASS, WOOD	Good				ADDED (After 1922)	N	
D.STO1.03.1	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	STORAGE 1	WOOD	Good	7.625	2.031		ORG	HIGH	
D.STO1.03.2	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	STORAGE 1	WOOD	Good	7.629	5.6		ORG	HIGH	

ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.ST01.03.3	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	STORAGE ROOM	WOOD	Good	7.625	2.031		ORG	HIGH	
D.ST02.03.4	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	STORAGE 2	WOOD	Good	7.629	5.6		ORG	HIGH	
D.ST02.03.5	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	STORAGE 2	WOOD	Good	7.625	2.031		ORG	HIGH	
D.ST02.03.6	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	ELEVATION	WOOD	Good	7.625	2.031		ORG	HIGH	

ID	TYPE	EXT/ INT	FLOOR	LOCATION	MATERIAL	CONDITION	HEIGHT	WIDTH	DECORATION	ORG/ ADD/ CHAG	INTERGTY	PHOTO
D.LAND.03.7	Single-Panel Door	INT	3	ATTIC	WOOD	Fair, Peeling Paint, Staining	/	/		ORG	HIGH	



PROJECTS:  
1. GRANTMAKING TOOLBOX  
LAURIE WEXLER

# MANAGEMENT

# GRANTMAKING TOOLBOX

## CHART OF GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Chart of Grant Opportunities
- 2. National Historic Landmark Letter of Intent (LOI) application
- 3. Preservation Delaware Small Fund Grant
- 4. National Trust for Historic Preservation Johanna Favrot Fund Grant

Type of institution	Umbrella Institution	Name of Funder/Grant	Amount	Purpose of Grant	Eligibility	Dates	Additional Requirements	Link to form	More Information
Historic Preservation	National	National Park Service	Save America's Treasures	\$125,000-\$750,000	Preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant properties and collections; Need/Urgency/Threat: Describe the current condition of the historic property and explain how it is threatened or endangered including the source(s).	Nonprofit x	NR/NH L x (Nat'l or NHL)	Dec-25 1:1 non-federal match	Grants.gov
		National Trust	National Trust Preservation Fund	\$2,000 - 5,000	encourage preservation at the local level by supporting on-going preservation work and by providing seed money for preservation projects.	x	x	February, June, and October.	1:1 match
		National Trust	Johanna Favrot Funds	\$2,500 - 15,000	Planning, education and brick and mortar Obtaining professional expertise for architecture, planning, paint analysis, archeology, or graphic design; Hiring a preservation architect to create an interior restoration plan; Restoration, rehabilitation, stabilization, and preservation of designated historic interiors, including bricks-and-mortar	x	x	3-Mar-25	1:1 match
	State	National Trust	Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors Underrepresented Communities	\$2,500 - 15,000	interior construction Projects must result in the submission of a new nomination to the National	x	x	3-Mar-25	1:1 match
		National Park Service	Grant Program	\$15,000-75,000	Historic Landmarks Program	x	x	Summer 2025	
		Preservation Delaware	Small Grants	\$2000 - 10,000	Capital projects involving restoration of historic buildings and built elements, as well as historic objects such as ships and statuary; Restoration planning, architectural/engineering studies	x	x	1-Feb-25	50% match required
		Delaware Community Foundation	Community Impact/Capital Projects Grants	5,000 to \$20,000	Acquisition, final-stage design, construction, repair, renovation, rehabilitation, or other capital improvements	x	x	31-Jul-25	1:1 match
		Crystal Trust	Crystal Trust	\$50,000 - 100,000	Historic Preservation, Arts, New Castle County	x			Patricia Anderson, (302) 651-0533, https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/fdo-grantmaker-profile/?key=CRYS001#contact



Type of institution	Umbrella Institution	Name of Funder/Grant	Amount	Purpose of Grant	Eligibility	Dates	Additional Requirements	Link to form	more Information
Non-Historic Preservation-Specific									
State	Delaware Division of the Arts	Arts Stabilization Fund	up to \$20,000	For improvements to facilities	x	December 1, 2024 - March 3, 2025	match preferred	https://arts.delaware.gov/arts-stabilization-fund/;	Kathleen Dinsmore, Organization Support, 302-577-8287.
	State of Delaware	Delaware 250 grants	up to \$10,000	Developing programs or other public-facing ventures that help to commemorate the 250 <sup>th</sup> anniversary for Delawareans and Delaware’s visitors.	x x	Jan-25		https://heritage.delaware.gov/grants-de250/	
Foundation	Longwood Foundation	Longwood Foundation	up to \$500,000	Strengthen nonprofit organizations in Delaware and the Kennett Square area.		March 1, September 1		https://longwoodfoundation.org/guidelines/	
	Welfare Fund Inc.	Welfare Fund Inc.	\$10,000 - \$500,000	Arts/Humanities/Building	x	April 15, October 15			
	Chichester duPont	Lydia Fund	\$10,000-50,000	Arts and Culture - performing arts, cultural awareness, historical activities, humanities, fine arts, and museums	x	8/1/2025	Serves underprivileged children in Delaware; at least one Foundation Trustees have an established relationship with organization		Trish D’Antonio, Email: Trish D’Antonio, Phone: 302-651-8063
Corporate	M & T Bank Foundation	M & T Bank Foundation						https://mtb.versaic.com/login; Grant applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Applications should be submitted at a minimum of 8 weeks before a decision is needed.	
	Kline and Specter law firm	Kline and Specter law firm	not listed	Non-profit	x	Rolling	not listed		

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK – LETTER OF INTENT

A. WHAT IS THE HISTORIC IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPERTY? WHAT NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT STORY DOES THE PROPERTY TELL?

Significance focuses on the Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT) as the only surviving public building in Minerva Parker Nichols portfolio, how her design expertise evolved from residential to nonresidential use and how she successfully entered the field of architecture in the early 1880s and was the first woman to establish and maintain an independent practice.

DCT is a testament to her early and path breaking prolific career, practice approach, and determined marketing as well as management of her projects through building completion. The building signifies her adept skill, knowledge and professionalism in a field that, at the time, largely did not include women. The building mirrors her rise at the beginning of the trajectory of women on issues of national importance in the US and, in turn, the female independence to commission a building from a female architect with the purpose of female improvement and empowerment.

Her skills evolved from her understanding and interest in residential home design. *Minerva Parker Nichols: The Search for a*

*Forgotten Architect* states that:

*“She had clear views on how a house should be designed, taking into account the household’s members and the building’s physical context. Her designs subtly accounted for public gathering spaces and private family living quarters, articulating the differences between them with graceful archways leading to communal rooms and flat lintels that segued into more intimate spaces. Partitions between private and public spaces often featured massive pocket doors with retractable hardware, so that a wall could be opened—allowing guests to stroll between rooms or seated gatherings to overflow from one space into the next—or the door could be closed, to ensure the most privacy.”*

While her clientele included men and women, it was especially fueled by single and married women desiring homes. Her attention to detail and knowledge of how to make a large residential home efficient, comfortable and spacious made her a sought-after architect. Likewise, her “ability to handle a large volume of projects can [also] be explained by her deliberate focus on residential architecture.” Although Parker Nichol’s “bread and butter” was designing suburban, and some urban, homes for upper-middle- and middle-class clients, she adeptly and strategically applied her understanding of layouts, footprint, use and design techniques of these homes to design a new kind of building that became in demand in the early 1890s.

With “her four projects for women’s clubs [which] fueled her reputation locally, nationally, and even internationally”, she was able to astutely turn the residential designs she knew best into a “scaled-up” design for use in “a new building type, a club headquarters.” Although there were some similarities between these residential and non-residential buildings like overnight rooms, a notable addition was “income-producing amenities to help support club operations such as a large auditorium for big events and smaller public rooms for paid lectures, small concerts, and the like.”

Parker Nichols designed these buildings for the New Century Club (NCC) of Philadelphia, the New Century Club of Wilmington, Delaware, the New Century Guild of Philadelphia, and the Queen Isabella Association at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (for which she was not selected). For the Wilmington NCC she utilized a favored colonial revival exterior which she believed was “simple dignity, honest construction, and beauty of design.” Given her numerous commissions for suburban houses, Parker Nichols developed a style that was both relatable and useful for the time period. In so doing, she fused her knowledge in residential design with nonresidential design which, in turn, had multiple uses.

Carefully building and navigating her practice, Parker Nichols became well-known throughout Philadelphia and nationally. Hers is a story about how she shaped her professional profile and career as much as it is about her designs. Thus, she served as an important model for future female architects. From the beginning as an apprentice, she became masterful at leveraging writing letters and articles in business journals, chiefly Philadelphia’s leading Builders’ Guide, into commissions. Likewise, she was unique in the way she saw her commissions through to completion. By 1889, she was called “a worthy addition to the profession, one who brought indisputable skills to the process of designing and constructing buildings” by newspapers throughout the US. She would do the same with building competitions. In March 1890, the Builders’ Guide, gave her the first profile of an architect ever to appear over the 220 issues of the Builders’ Guide.

*“Mentions about Parker Nichols reached to far away states and countries, consistently expanding the number of commissions. In the eight years she maintained her independent practice in Philadelphia (1888–96), her name appeared in at least 606 newspaper articles in forty-four American states (as well as the District of Columbia) and eight countries, including New Zealand, Jamaica, and France as well a magazines and trade publications. In 1890 alone, readers worldwide saw her name at least 240 times, including eleven mentions in separate newspapers*

*on a single day (April 10). Tradesmen were quoted as saying, “[s]he’s the most particular and knowing person to work for that I ever struck. She knows every brick and just where it ought to go.” One contractor told a newspaper that he “had never worked for an architect who better understood the business,” while another went a step further: “She knows not only her business, but mine, too.”*

B. WHAT IS THE CURRENT HISTORIC INTEGRITY OF THE PROPERTY?

DCT’s building has good integrity and is a last-standing example of a high style, publicly commissioned building by Parker Nichols. The building remains in its original location. It has retained its integrity both inside and out through the continuity of its design and workmanship, highly finished interior and distinctive exterior. The workmanship demonstrates Parker Nichols as an architect of her time period with the decorative treatments on the exterior and interior surviving, and in continual use, for more than 130 years. The remarkable longevity is a testament to the strength and attraction of the building’s design. The building maintains much of its originally intended association as a residential-style building with a public purpose intended for a female population. Its feeling outwardly as a high style Colonial Revival home of its 1892-3 time period continues inside, gives way to

its non-residential purpose, evidenced by the auditorium with seating for 300 and meeting rooms.

The original materials of the exterior and the interior remain except for the western wall where two rounds of expansion occurred, in 1921-22 and again in 1965. Both expansions were done in a thoughtful manner to minimally impact the overall appearance and integrity of the original building. Keeping with the spirit of Parker Nichols’ original design, the northwest section adjacent to the auditorium was expanded to add practical spaces like the kitchen and buffet areas. From a 1965 photo, we can observe that there was a second expansion phase. Notably, the original five double sash windows from the early façade were preserved and integrated into the expanded section, maintaining a visual continuity with the building’s past.

After the building changed hands to become DCT in 1982, the original slate roof needed replacing as well as the boiler system, electrical wiring, and lighting system which posed safety risks and operational challenges. Over the next decade, the DCT embarked on an extensive series of renovations aimed at preserving the building’s historical integrity while making it suitable for modern performances. Again in



2014, Donna Swajeski, who succeeded her mother as Artistic Director in 2014, oversaw several creative projects to modernize the theatre while preserving its charm and architectural character. These included installing new sound systems, theatrical lighting, and stage equipment, all of which were essential for the theatre to compete with more modern venues. In addition, the theatre's interior was refurbished to reflect its historical roots, including the restoration of original woodwork and architectural features, which had been damaged or obscured over the years.

The only discernable change in integrity is with regard to some aspects of setting. The area to the south and southwest, the Cool Spring/TiltonPark Historic District of which DCT is a contributing site, maintains its character and integrity featuring "a spectrum of late 19th- and early 20th-century residential architecture representing Queen Anne, Italianate, Colonial Revival and Second Empire Styles. However, to the northwest and north are a mixture of older and newer buildings with some being mid-century, mostly now occupied by corporations, a few small businesses and educational facilities along with parking lots. To the east is Jackson Street which has an entrance onto 1-95 which was built in the mid-1960s.

### C. WHY SHOULD THIS PROPERTY BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY TO ILLUSTRATE THIS NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT STORY?



*Minerva Parker Nichols*

Minerva Parker Nichols arrived on the professional scene as few other female architects were doing the same. Yet the path in the field of architecture that Parker Nichols forged was unique. In this context, her contributions were significant in the field of mostly suburban residential architecture and the application of this residential style and expertise to non-residential buildings.

Moreover, she successfully entered the field of architecture in the early 1880s and was the first woman to establish and maintain an independent practice. These accomplishments distinguish her from other deserving female architects.



*Mill-Rae House*

Of the female architects which designed buildings that are designated as a National Historic Landmark or on the National Register, four, including Parker Nichols, are selected here for comparison. Parker Nichol's own 1890 Mill-Rae design provides an initial comparison. This design was built for suffragist Rachel Foster Avery and her family. Whereas Parker Nichols had already been designing residences for four years, in 1890 Mill-Rae could be viewed as the moment of her professional

expansion in which she began to apply her residential design acumen to uses that included nonresidential purposes. Avery had commissioned "a home that was expressly designed to accommodate both a private function (Avery's family home), and a public function (a [setting] for women's associations and activists)." Yet, the distinction remains that Mill-Rae was a home that included nonresidential purposes, unlike the New Century Club in Wilmington which was expressly nonresidential in purpose.



*Louise Blanchard Bethune*

Louise Blanchard Bethune was the closest in age and professional timeframe. Her

firm first received the commission to build a hotel on the site that would become Hotel Lafayette in Buffalo, NY in 1899 and then again in 1901. Her French Renaissance Revival design echoed the buildings of Henry IV's Place des Vosges (1605), particularly in the continuous arcade that forms the first floor of the building inside. It was updated to reflect modern materials, the Hotel Lafayette's arcade voussoirs, acroteria, Classical cornice moldings, and other decorative elements are constructed of glazed terra-cotta rather than cut stone. The exterior is dark red brick trimmed with extensive ornamental, semi-glazed, ivory terra-cotta details.



*Hotel Lafayette*

Blanchard Bethune (1856-1913) became the first woman member of the Western Association of Architects (WAA), a dynamic young group of practitioners challenging

the well-established American Institute of Architects (AIA). Louise became the first woman member of the latter national profession association in 1888 and when the two groups merged in 1889, all WAA members became AIA Fellows, another first for her. Like Parker Nichols, Blanchard Bethune impacted future generations of females entering the field. Her greatest impact was the model of her commitment to the development of professional standards in the profession and the promotion of "Equal Remuneration for Equal Services" for women. She declined an invitation to compete in the design of the Woman's Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, citing the difference in remuneration between women (a \$1,000 prize) and men (a \$10,000 prize). Her work to equalize the disparities between men and women continued in the profession throughout the 20th century.





Mary Jane Colter

Mary Jane Colter began designing buildings at the Grand Canyon in 1904 with Hopi House. Ultimately her designs for the Grand Canyon would total eight buildings. Four of these buildings are designated as National Historic Landmarks: Hopi House 1905, Hermit's Rest 1914, the Lookout Studio 1914 and the Desert View Watchtower 1931. They are located on the precipice of the south rim of the Grand Canyon and are

not only the best and least altered, but some of her only remaining work. Colter's place in American architecture is important because of the concern for archeology and a sense of history conveyed by her buildings, and the feelings she created in those spaces. More importantly, her creative free-form buildings, Hermit's Rest and Lookout Studio, took direct inspiration from the landscape and served as part of the basis of the developing architectural aesthetic for appropriate development in areas that became national parks. Desert View has additional regional significance in its tower paintings of Indian design—they were copied from prehistoric pictographs and petroglyphs at a New Mexico archeological site that is now destroyed.



Hopi House

With Hopi House, Colter went beyond the task of providing a good atmosphere for merchandising Indian goods. She introduced different aspects of Indian cultures — especially their architecture — to the rail-travelling public at a time when the preservation movement in the US was in its infancy. Hermit's Rest was a very different sort of structure than Hopi House. Developer Fred Harvey ran tours west along the rim and sought to design a small refreshment stand with character and style. Colter designed it tucked away in a small, partially man-made hill a few feet from the rim of the canyon in a way that the native rock structure seemed to grow out of the landscape. At Lookout Studio, she allowed the edge of the canyon and the natural rock outcroppings to give it form. And at Desert View, Colter returned to a sense of archeology and ethnohistory in her design—reminiscent of an Anasazi tower such as that found at Hovenweep National Monument — but endowed the building with more of a mystical fantasy than the archeological correctness she used at Hopi House. Colter's extreme care in the selection of the artists, their subject matter, and even the colors they used was identical to the care she used in selecting the site, designing the structure, and choosing the stones for the exterior masonry.



Julia Morgan

Julia Morgan may be the most prolific female architect of the early 20th century. By her death in 1957, she had designed an estimated 700 buildings, mostly in California, where she was the first woman in the state to be licensed as an architect. She was also the first woman to graduate from the École de Beaux Artes in 1902. By 1904, she had opened her own office in California. In addition to Hearst Castle, her crowning achievement, she is known for many others

in California, especially Asilomar Conference Grounds (107 acres) on the Monterey Peninsula which was declared a NHL in 1987 for its role in women's recreation, the development of the YWCA, and the resort heritage of Monterey, California.

Hearst Castle is the highest grossing park in the California state parks system. Hearst's modest initial request in 1919 for a small bungalow evolved into a vast Mediterranean-style estate of 165 rooms which Hearst and Morgan worked on together. Morgan's design evokes a Mediterranean hill town of the Renaissance era. An essential part of her engagement on Hearst Castle was the back and forth that Hearst's whims demanded. Morgan's acute professionalism and intuitive manner were the essential components that enabled this collaboration to produce a unique site with fabulous grandeur that includes some of Morgan's favorite details, the Neptune and Roman Pools, more than thirty fireplaces and de-formalizing even the most formal of spaces.



Hearst Castle



SAMPLE GRANT APPLICATION COMPONENTS

PRESERVATION DELAWARE SMALL GRANTS FUND

*Grant application for a conditions assessment but application components can be used as desired.*

A. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE - BRIEFLY OUTLINE THE SUBJECT PROPERTY'S HISTORICAL OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE (250 WORDS MAXIMUM)

Significance focuses on the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) as the only surviving public building in Minerva Parker Nichol's portfolio, how her design expertise evolved from residential to nonresidential use and how she successfully entered the field of architecture in the early 1880s and was the first woman to establish and maintain an independent practice. DCT is a testament to her early and path breaking prolific career, practice approach, and determined marketing as well as management of her projects through building completion.

In 1891, Nichols adeptly and strategically applied her deep understanding of layouts, use and design techniques of homes to design "a new building type, a club headquarters." With this building type, she turned residential design into a "scaled-up"

design. She included "income-producing amenities to help support club operations such as a large auditorium for big events and smaller public rooms for paid lectures, small concerts, and the like." For DCT, she utilized her favored colonial revival exterior which she believed was "simple dignity, honest construction, and beauty of design." Fusing her knowledge in residential with nonresidential, she developed a relatable, useful style. Nichols designed these buildings for the New Century Clubs (NCC) of Philadelphia and Wilmington, the New Century Guild of Philadelphia, and the Queen Isabella Association at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. "Her four projects for women's clubs fueled her reputation locally, nationally, and even internationally."

B. PROPOSED WORK - PLEASE PROVIDE A NARRATIVE OF THE WORK YOU WISH TO CARRY OUT, INCLUDING A OUTLINE OF THE SCOPE OF WORK (MAXIMUM 500 WORDS). HOW DID THE NEED FOR THE WORK ARISE? WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WHICH NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED? HOW WILL THE PROPOSED WORK REMEDY THE PROBLEM?

Upon an informal assessment by

University of Pennsylvania master's historic preservation students, it was concluded that the 132 year-old DCT building with high integrity requires attention to plan for, and remedy, areas of concern. The students determined that a conditions assessment by appropriate preservation professionals would be the first step to provide a holistic approach to the systems of the building and causes of deterioration. Such an assessment will identify issues, determine historically appropriate treatments, prioritize the work needed, and generate a construction budget. As DCT has not previously engaged in such an assessment, it is the first step in having an overall understanding and vision for the building which will include the detail needed for the creation of a proactive maintenance plan.

The students found several areas that warrant attention through observation and conversations with individuals who utilize the building. The basement had the most observed conditions. An area of immediate concern is water infiltration where pools of water were observed near electrical outlets. As water is not properly carried away from

the structure, it seeps in during the rainy season and dampens the soil around the structure's sub-walls, causing masonry walls to hold on to water content longer than normal. As conditions in the wet season do not allow the wall to release the moisture, it freezes causing expansion and therefore material deterioration. Masonry foundation walls show detached, powdering, and flaking plaster and loss of finishes with conditions worsening along walls in contact with exterior soil. A masonry contractor with experience in historic structures should assess the extent of this issue. And, stormwater management along the roof and downspouts needs to be inspected as it may contribute to moisture issues at the basement walls.

On the second and third floors, moisture-related deterioration is evident with signs like peeling plaster, dark staining, and cracking on prior patchwork. Top down moisture infiltration has been largely affecting the finishes on the ceilings of the third floor. With the addition of a rubber membrane to the roof in 2022, this condition may not be worsening but the deteriorated finishes still need to be addressed. Plastic paneling covers the

original ceilings on the second and third floors, likely obscuring deterioration beneath them. Removing these panels is essential for proper inspection and treatment.

A conditions assessment and preservation planning will provide:

- a review of the architectural and structural materials, and mechanical, electrical & plumbing (MEP) infrastructure of the building(s), assessing the conditions of each;
- identification of failures and deterioration, and the probable causes of those, with recommendations for restoration, repairs or replacement, and estimated budget costs;
- an outline a range of cost for each area to be addressed which will provide an understanding of the funds needed to the organization and help contractors to accurately reflect the real cost of the project; and
- as a National Register site, having the assessment done by an appropriate preservation professional will help ensure compliance with the Secretary of Interior Standards.

SAMPLE GRANT APPLICATION COMPONENTS

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION JOHANNA FAVROT FUNDS - GRANT APPLICATION FOR A CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

A. BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION: PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROJECT. THINK OF THIS AS YOUR “ELEVATOR PITCH.” YOU WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCLUDE A MORE DETAILED PROJECT NARRATIVE BELOW. [250 CHARACTERS]

DCT requires a conditions assessment for water infiltration; masonry foundation walls with detached, powdering, flaking plaster and loss of finishes with worsening issues; and upper floor moisture-related deterioration with peeling plaster, dark staining and cracking on prior patchwork.

B. APPLICANT OVERVIEW: TELL US ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION/AGENCY. WHAT IS YOUR MISSION AND WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE? IF YOU WORK WITH THE PUBLIC, PLEASE QUANTIFY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH YOUR WORK ON AN ANNUAL BASIS. [500 CHARACTERS]

For 50 seasons, DCT has been entertaining audiences of all ages and growing to meet the community’s needs. DCT’s mission is to enrich the cultural life of children actors and audience, help young talent to the stage,

continue a tradition of affordable quality theater, entertain families, and preserve its historic theater house. DCT reaches 1500 people annually through shows and summer programs. Supported by donors and ticket sales, DCT has a two-person staff and is run with the help of essential volunteers (eg. costume-makers, set-designers and audio-visual technicians).

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PROJECTS:  
1. SPATIAL ANALYSIS & STRATEGIES  
SIQI ZHAO  
  
2. REPROGRAMMING THE AUDITORIUM  
YANJIE ZHANG

# PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS

# SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIES

## OUTLINE

In this individual project, I explored the spatial typology of multifunctional women’s club buildings to identify common design patterns and their adaptability. By analyzing similar cases, I developed a typology diagram highlighting the relationship between fixed architectural elements, movable furnishings, and spatial flow. This foundation provided a framework to reimagine the potential of the Delaware Children’s Theatre. Focusing on the first floor—where social and theatrical functions converge—I conducted a detailed analysis of user movement and activity patterns to identify opportunities for enhancing flexibility and engagement. Building on these insights, my spatial activation strategy introduces targeted interventions to optimize the reception, workspace, and retail areas, fostering a more dynamic and multifunctional environment for the DCT.

## SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS

To better understand the design and adaptability of the Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT), I conducted a typological analysis of multifunctional club buildings from the same historical period. These buildings, like the DCT, were designed to support a blend of social, recreational, and cultural activities. By examining their spatial organization, several commonalities emerge, particularly in the treatment of auditoriums, recreational spaces, dining areas, and circulation connections.



Figure 2: Ridgewood Woman's Club, New York (<https://womansclubofridgewood.com/history/>)



Figure 1: Miami Beach Woman's Club, Miami (<https://miamibeachwomansclub.com/>)



Figure 3: Woman's Century Club, Seattle (<https://womanscenturyclub.org/>)

## AUDITORIUM AS THE CENTRAL SPACE

The auditorium often serves as the heart of multifunctional club buildings, with the stage acting as its defining and anchoring feature. Open and Adaptable Spaces: Auditoriums leave the floor area open and free of permanent fixtures, allowing for maximum flexibility. These spaces can host diverse activities, such as performances, lectures, and community events, depending on the needs of the moment (Column 1, Row 1). Fixed Seating Configurations: Others emphasize formality and focus by employing fixed seating arrangements. These configurations create a more structured environment (Column 1, Row 2). Although less adaptable, but ensures optimal viewing and acoustics, reinforcing the stage’s centrality. Balcony Integration: Some auditoriums add a vertical dimension to the space by incorporating balconies or mezzanines (Column 1, Row 3). These features enhance the spatial experience, offering varied perspectives.

## RECREATIONAL SPACES

Recreational spaces in multifunctional club buildings are typically designed to foster informal social engagement and relaxation, with layouts that encourage interaction and a sense of community. Indoor-Outdoor Connection: Many recreational spaces seamlessly extend into balconies, terraces, or garden areas, creating a direct link between interior and exterior environments (Column 2, Row 1). This integration allows for flexibility in use, enhancing the space’s appeal for both structured activities and casual gatherings. Furnishings as Anchors: Rely on interior furnishings to define their character and create points for gathering. Such as circular seating arrangements or central tables, promotes a sense of cohesion and interaction among users (Column 2, Row 2). Flow Integration: Designed as transitional nodes within the building’s circulation network. Acting as both connectors and destinations, they provide natural stopping points for users moving through the space (Column 2, Row 3).

## DINING SPACES

Dining spaces in these club buildings often mirror the auditorium in their dual emphasis on formality and flexibility. Structured Layouts: Formal dining rooms often feature fixed seating arrangements, with tables and chairs organized in a grid or other rigid patterns (Column 3, Row 1). These layouts convey a sense of order and ceremony. Flexible Configurations: Informal dining areas often adopt a more open and versatile approach. These spaces might include movable furniture, allowing for different setups depending on the event or user group (Column 3, Row 2-3).

## CIRCULATION AS AN ACTIVE CONNECTOR

Defined Corridors and Platforms: Hallways, bridges, or platforms create structured pathways, facilitating efficient movement and clear spatial separation (Column 4, Row 1). Gestalt Design Principles: Voids or cutouts act as subtle connectors, visually linking spaces and fostering openness (Column 4, Row 2). Unstructured Flow: Open layouts leverage sightlines and intuitive design, enabling flexible and spontaneous navigation (Column 4, Row 3).



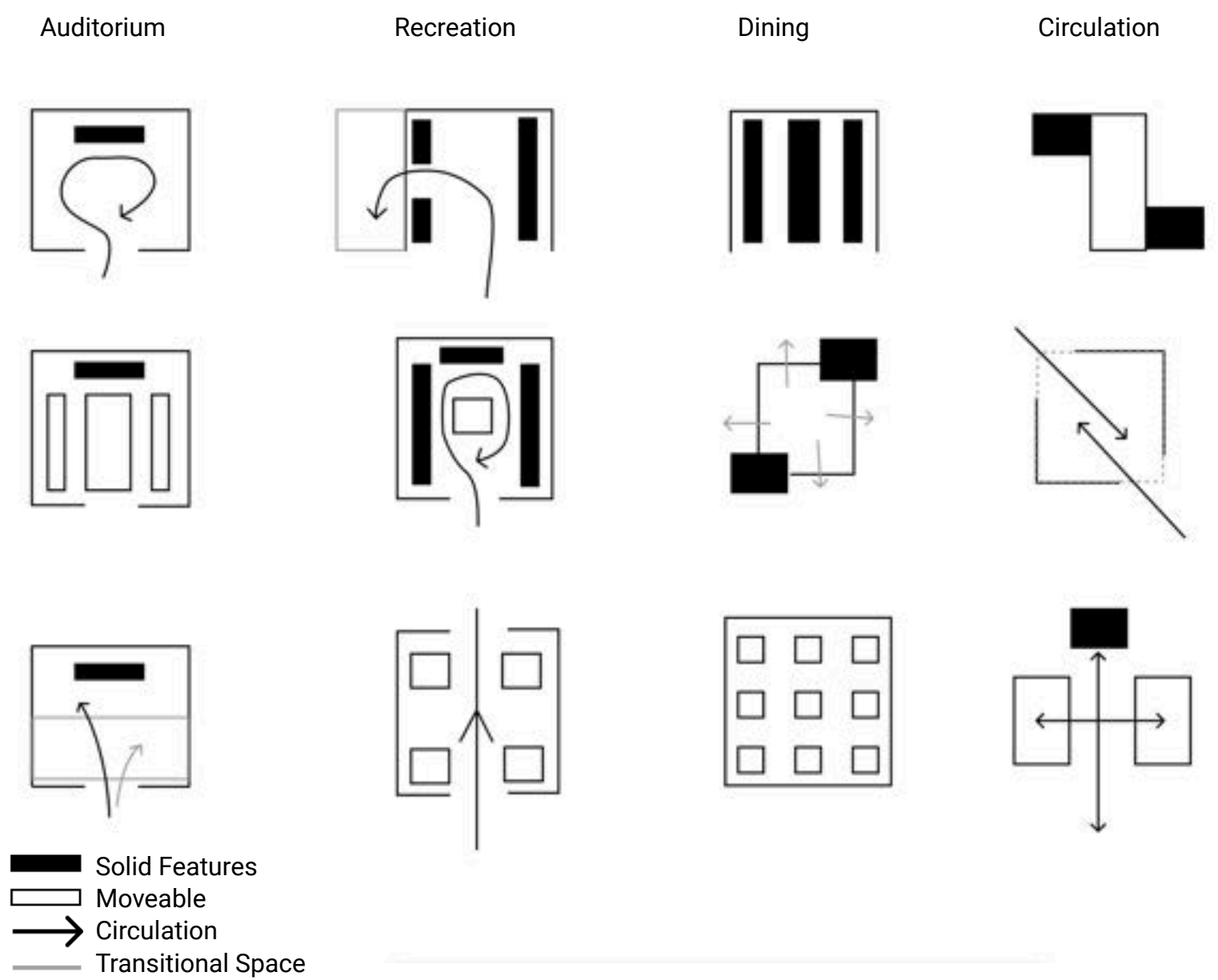


Figure 4: Club Building Spatial Use

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

- Social
- Theater
- Mix
- Circulation
- Kitchen
- Storage

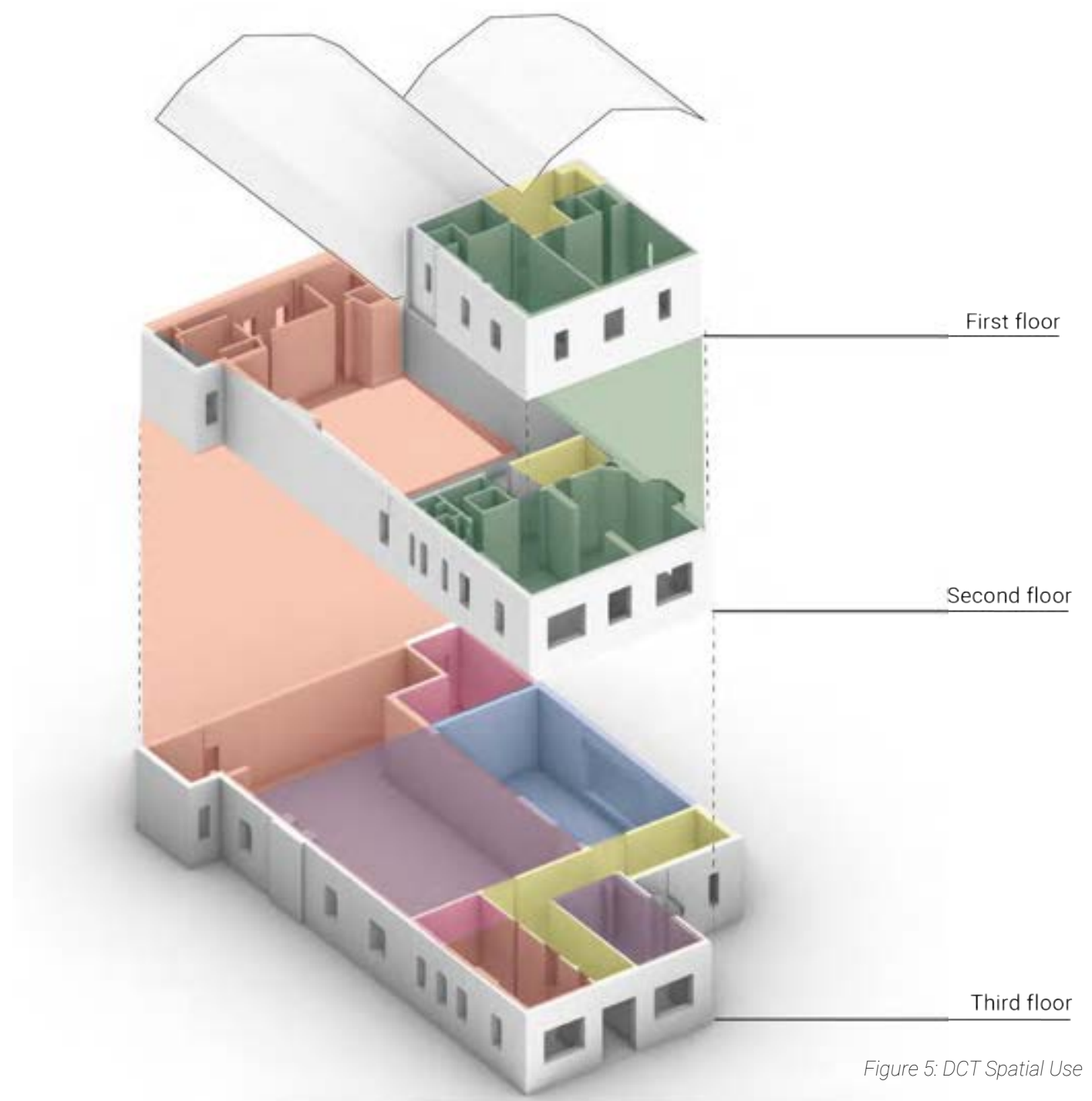


Figure 5: DCT Spatial Use

FIRST FLOOR: SOCIAL AND THEATER HUB

The first floor of the Delaware Children’s Theatre is the most dynamic and multifunctional area, serving as the central hub for both social and theatrical activities. This floor not only accommodates the operational needs of the theater but also supports its role as a gathering space for visitors.

Upon entry, the main hallway and foyer act as transitional zones, guiding visitors from the exterior into the heart of the building. These areas are designed as fluid, connective spaces that facilitate movement while offering opportunities for informal interactions.

Adjacent to this entrance zone, there is a mini kitchen, which is a compact yet versatile space, supporting small-scale food preparation. Further along, the main kitchen, connected to the buffet room, plays a more significant role during events, providing catering capabilities for larger gatherings. The focal point of the first floor is the auditorium, a space that dominates both the physical layout and functional use. Its placement at the center emphasizes its importance as the core venue for performances, drawing all other activities toward it.

Surrounding spaces, such as the hallways and kitchens, naturally orient themselves around the auditorium, supporting its operations and enriching the visitor experience.

SECOND FLOOR: PERFORMANCE SUPPORT

The second floor primarily supports the performers and production staff. It houses dressing rooms and makeup areas, providing private spaces for actors to prepare for shows. The auditorium balcony, accessible from this floor, extends the theater experience for audiences, offering elevated seating and a different perspective of the stage. This dual-purpose floor balances its backstage functionality with its role in audience accommodation.

Third Floor: Costume Storage and Management

The third floor is dedicated to the theater’s extensive collection of costumes. This storage space is critical to supporting the production process, ensuring costumes are well-organized and easily accessible. While primarily utilitarian, this floor is integral to the overall operation of the theater, connecting the creative and logistical aspects of production.

- Staff for the Shows
- Staff’s Daily
- Staff for Reception
- Visitors
- Activation Opportunities

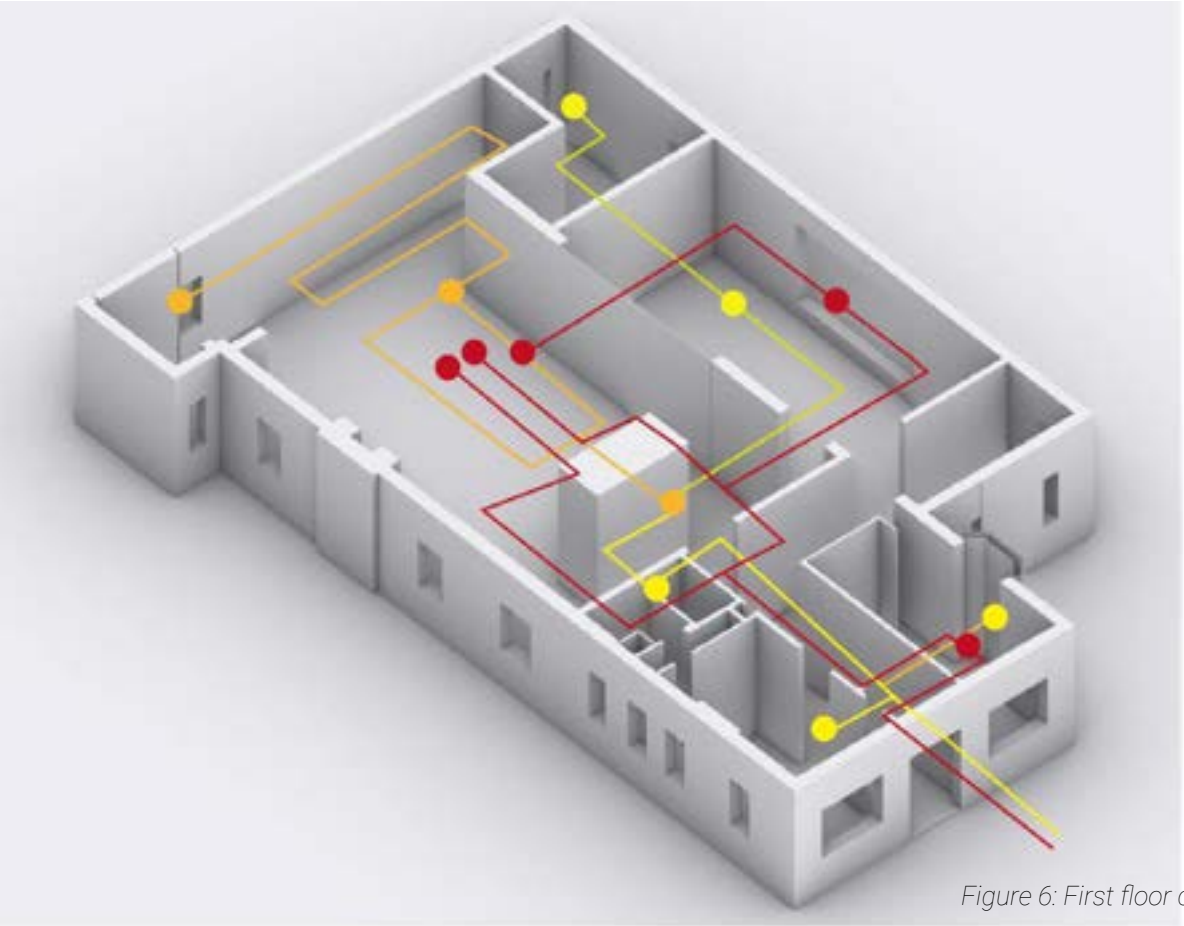


Figure 6: First floor circulation analysis

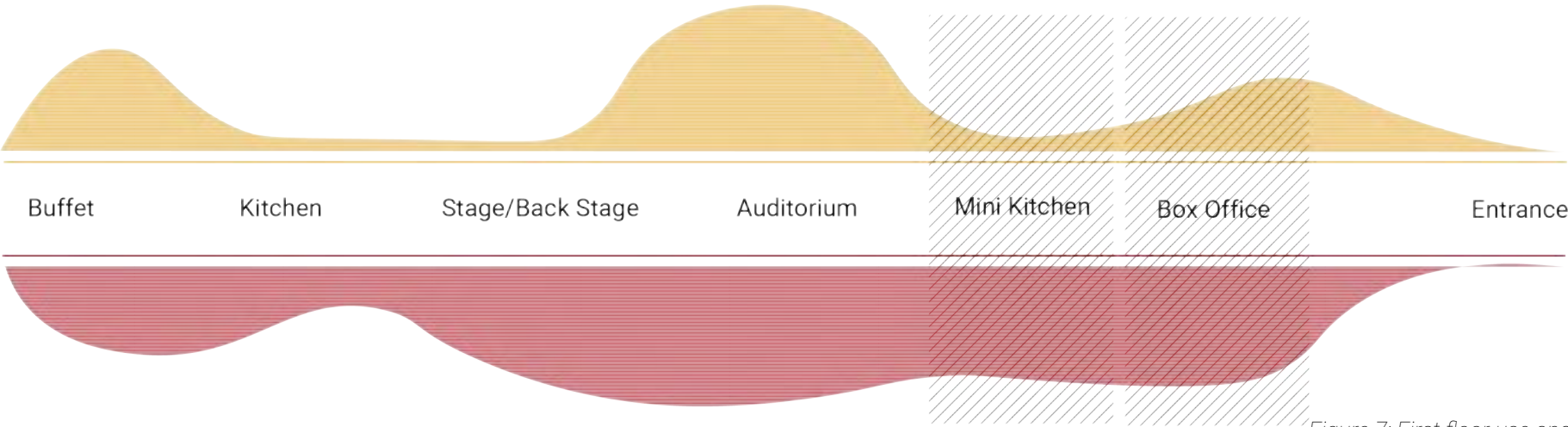


Figure 7: First floor use analysis



# USE ANALYSIS

The spatial analysis focuses on understanding the current utilization of the Delaware Children's Theatre's first floor. The diagram highlights the flow of activities within the building, with yellow lines representing the movement of staff and volunteers and red lines indicating the pathways of visitors. Key activity hubs are marked with dots, signifying areas where significant interactions or functions take place(Fig 6).

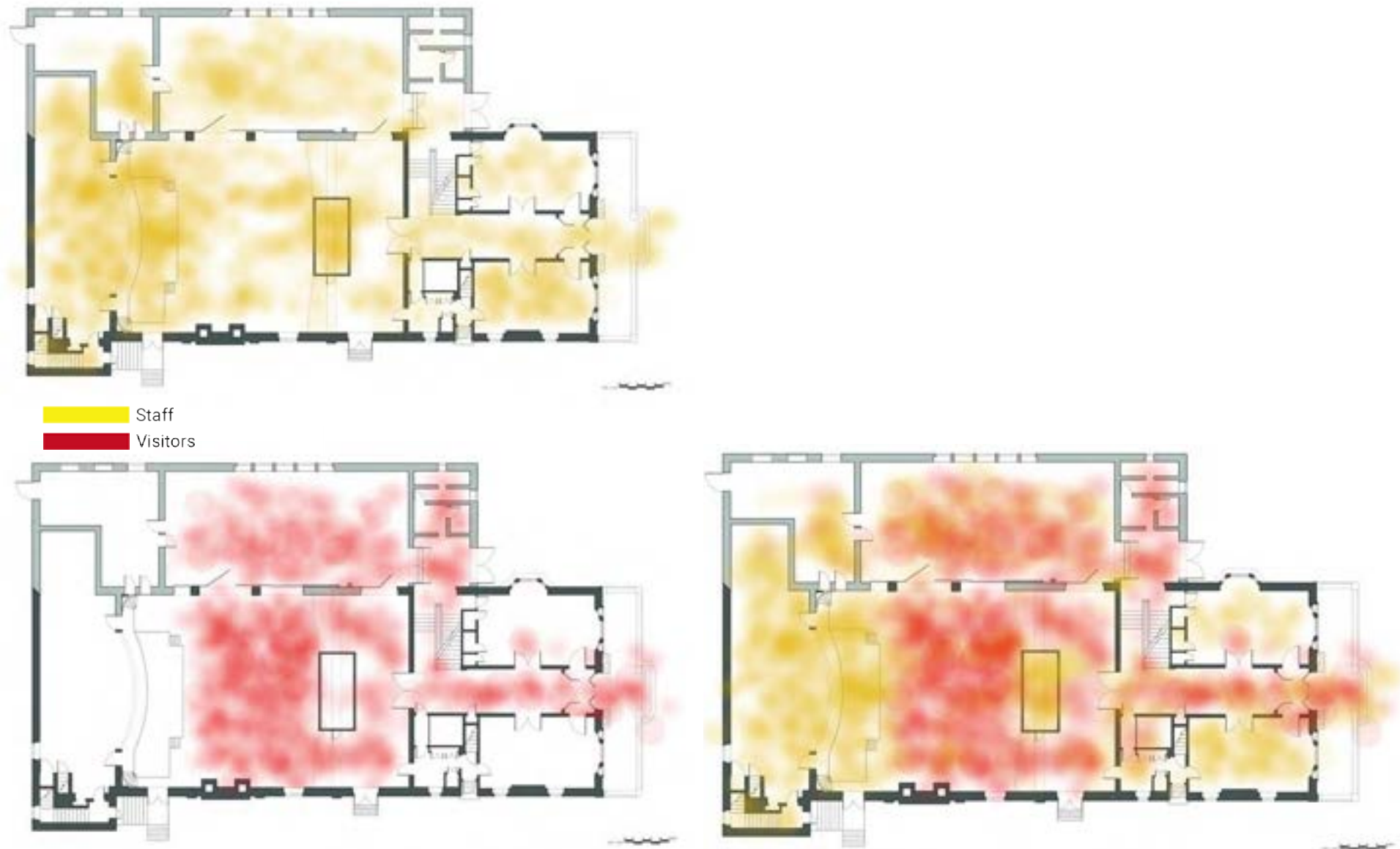
A line graph accompanying the plan provides a detailed view of the circulation, tracing the progression of movement from the entrance through to the backstage area. This analysis reveals distinct patterns in how different user groups navigate and interact with the space. Staff and volunteers primarily move through back-of-house areas, while visitors tend to follow a direct route from the entrance to the auditorium and other public-facing spaces(Fig 7).

Recognizing these distinct circulation paths, I identified a less crowded zone with untapped potential for development. This area, strategically located away from high-traffic routes, serves as the focus for my spatial activation strategy, aiming to enhance its functionality and accommodate future growth.

The heatmaps provide an in-depth representation of spatial usage during showtimes, based on field observations. Similar to the previous analysis, yellow represents the movements and activities of staff and performers, while red illustrates those of visitors. The darker shades in the heatmap indicate areas with higher activity density, highlighting zones of concentrated movement or prolonged presence.

In addition to the stage and backstage areas, staff and performers exhibit heightened activity in the kitchen and office spaces, reflecting the operational demands of the theater. Conversely, visitor movements follow a simpler and more predictable route: entering to watch the show, transitioning to the buffet room for social interaction, and then exiting the building.

This insight underscores the distinct functional patterns of the two user groups. Staff utilize a broader range of spaces, while visitor activities remain focused on public areas. These findings emphasize the importance of optimizing key operational zones and identifying opportunities to enrich the visitor experience within their current flow.



Figures 8-11: Heatmaps during the show



## ACTIVATING STRATEGIES

Building on the insights gathered from the spatial usage analysis, the proposed strategy for activating the space prioritizes improvements in operational efficiency and visitor engagement through three key components.

### BOX OFFICE AS RECEPTION HUB:

The box office will be transformed into a dynamic and welcoming reception area tailored to the target audience, including children. Serving dual purposes, it will function as both the primary point of entry and a central hub for event promotion and community interaction.

Interactive displays and informational signage will be introduced to enrich the guest experience. These enhancements will not only maintain the original function of the box office but also create a lively and engaging atmosphere, reinforcing its role as a focal point within the building.

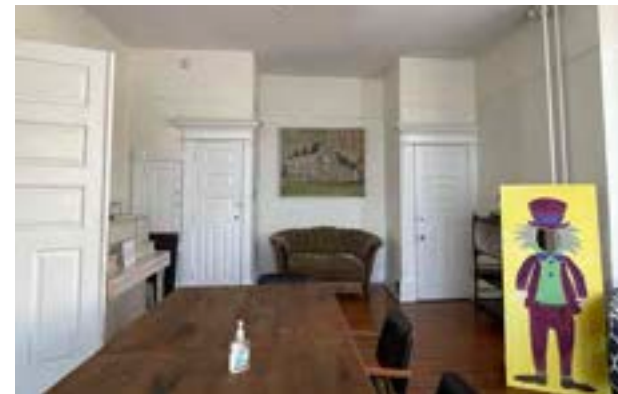


Figure 12: Box office in 2024

## THE DISPLAYS NEED TO BE RECONSIDERED



Figure 13: Box office designed for kids

## THE SPACE NEEDS TO BE REORGANIZED



### OPEN OFFICE & DISPLAY ZONE:

To foster greater interaction among staff, volunteers, and visitors, creating an open office that integrates a display zone might help.

This design would promote a sense of openness, allowing for a seamless flow between the administrative and public spaces.

By incorporating historical displays and artifacts related to the DCT's legacy, visitors will not only experience the space as a functional area but also connect with the theater's rich history. This approach blends functionality with cultural enrichment, encouraging visitors to engage with both the space and its stories.

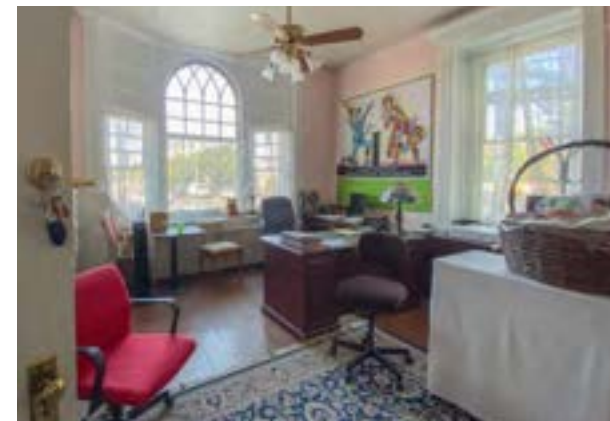


Figure 14: Office in 2024



Figure 15: Opened office for daily exhibition



MINI KITCHEN AS A FLEXIBLE RETAIL HUB:

The mini kitchen, located adjacent to the auditorium, is currently underutilized and has become a cluttered storage area with irregular maintenance. To address these issues, the space is proposed to be transformed into a flexible retail hub that serves both staff and visitors. With a reorganized layout, the area can support the sale of snacks, beverages, and theater merchandise during performances, fostering a more engaging and lively atmosphere. Enhancements to the lighting system are also recommended, as the current illumination levels are insufficient for expanded activities or creating an inviting environment. Upgraded lighting will improve functionality, support the new retail operations, and contribute to a visually appealing and welcoming space. These changes aim to reclaim and revitalize the kitchen area, ensuring it plays a meaningful role in enhancing visitor experiences and supporting the operational needs of the theater.

THE SPACE NEEDS CLEANING AND REFURBISHMENT

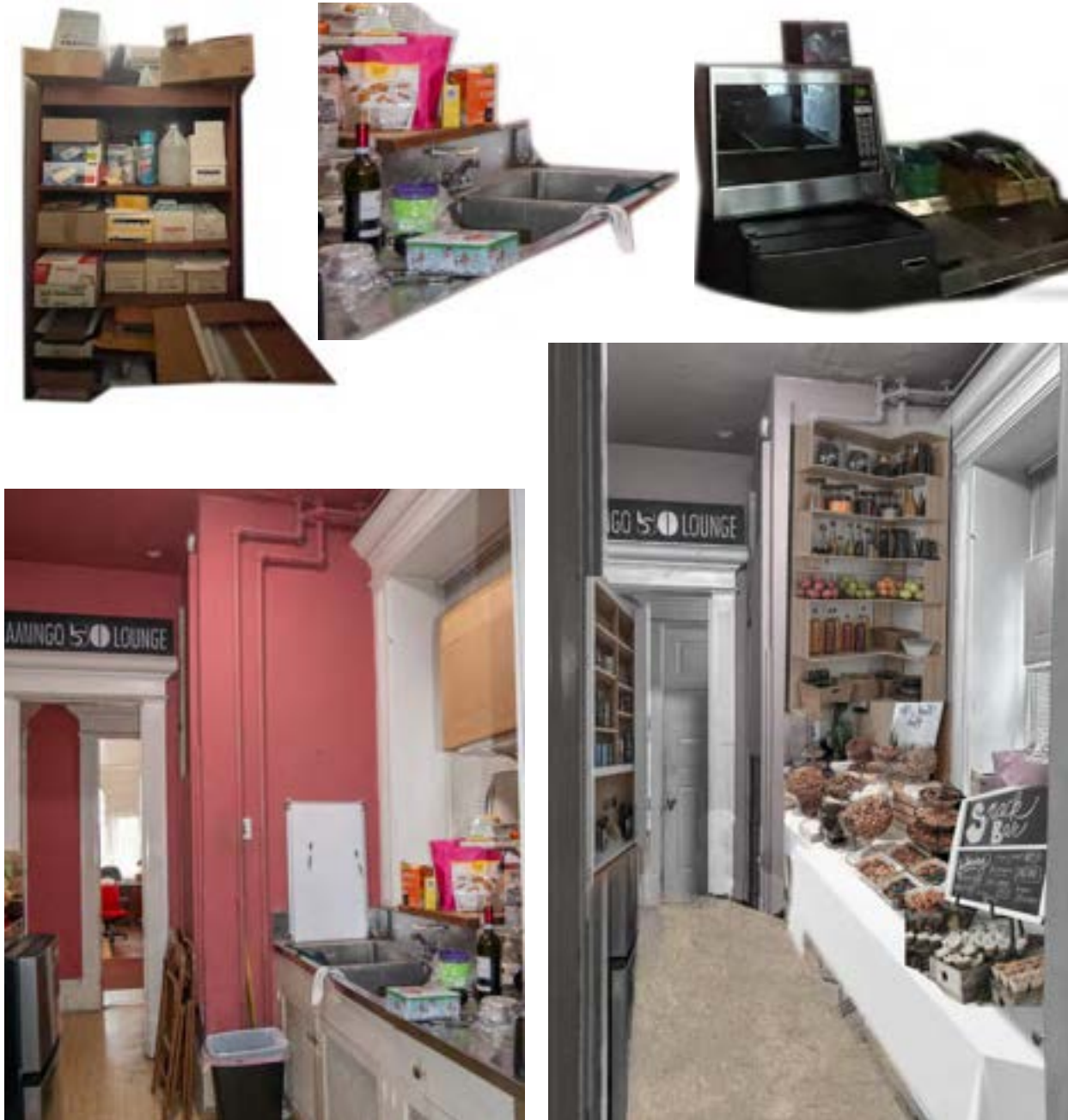


Figure 16: Mini kitchen in 2024

Figure 17: Mini kitchen reopen design

IMPROVED USER EXPERIENCE OUTCOMES

The implementation of the proposed strategies is anticipated to significantly enhance the functionality and user experience within the spaces. A key improvement is the integration of staff and visitor pathways between the box office and the office area, fostering greater interaction and collaboration. This overlap not only enhances communication but also strengthens partnerships, creating opportunities for community engagement and a more cohesive operational dynamic. The mini kitchen, positioned strategically near the auditorium and office, will be revitalized to serve dual functions. For staff, it becomes a convenient space for meals and breaks, while during performances, it will support visitor needs by offering snacks, beverages, and merchandise. This repurposing will maximize its spatial advantage, creating a resource that benefits both operational efficiency and revenue generation.

The relationship between the mini kitchen, auditorium, and buffet room will form a cohesive service loop. This arrangement enriches the visitor experience by streamlining access to refreshments and social spaces, ensuring that every stage of the event is supported by seamless services. These changes will not only enhance spatial utilization but also elevate the overall atmosphere and satisfaction for both staff and visitors.

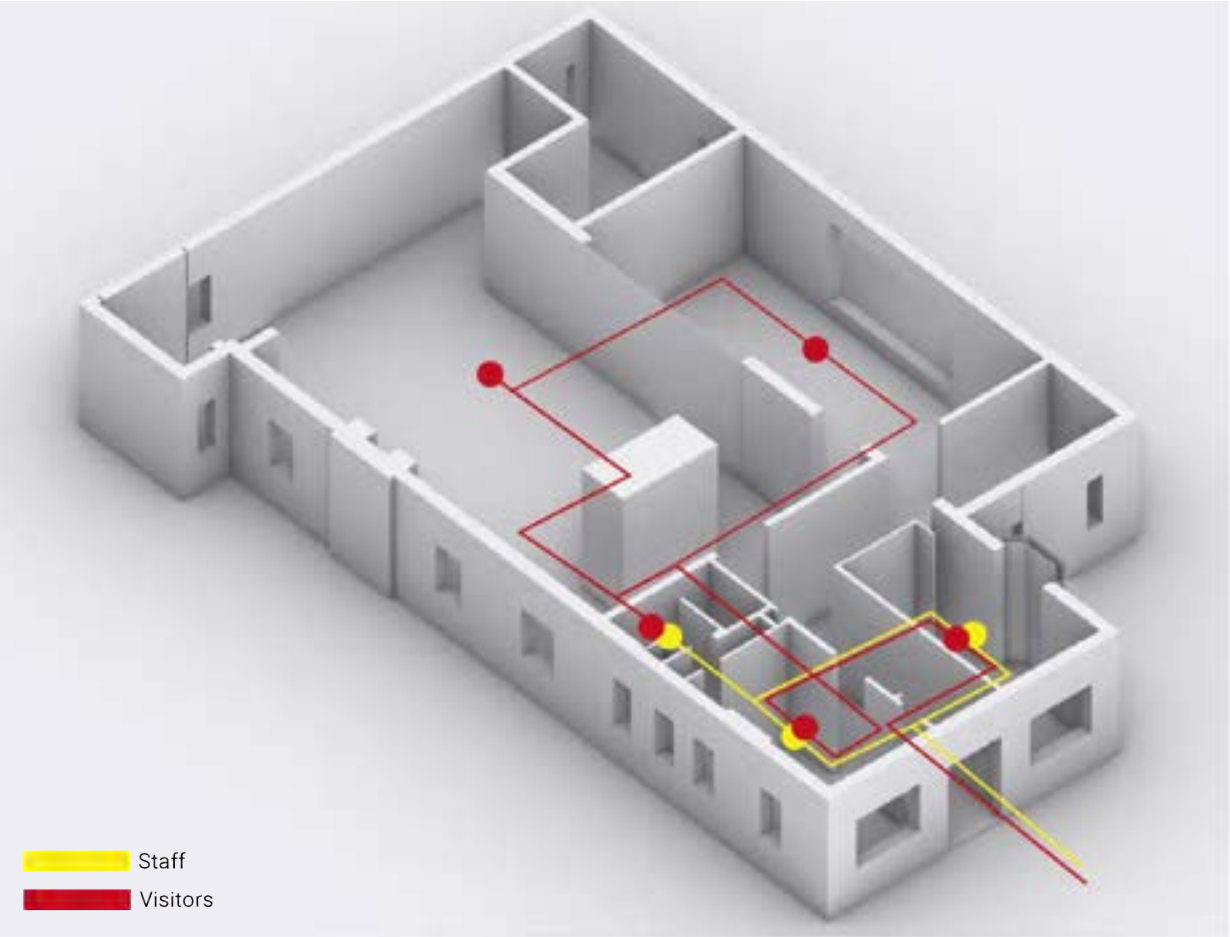


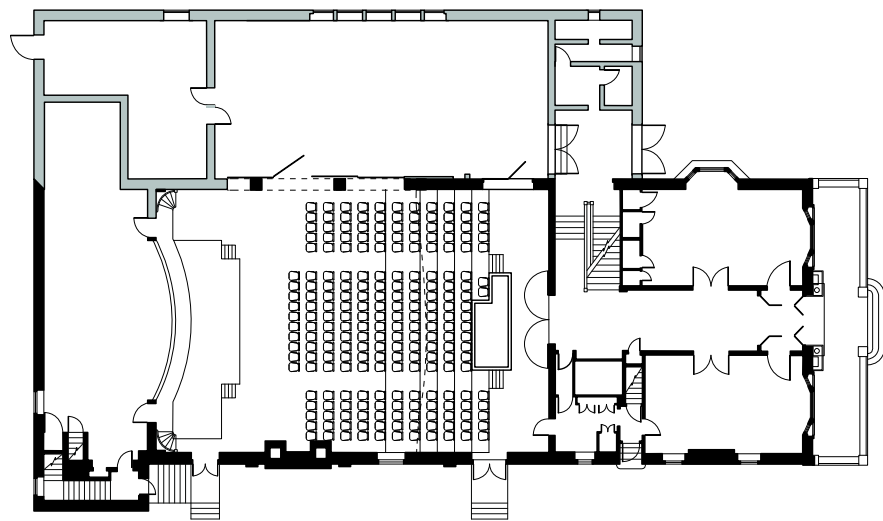
Figure 18: Enhanced Circulation and Spatial Utilization

# REPROGRAMMING THE AUDITORIUM

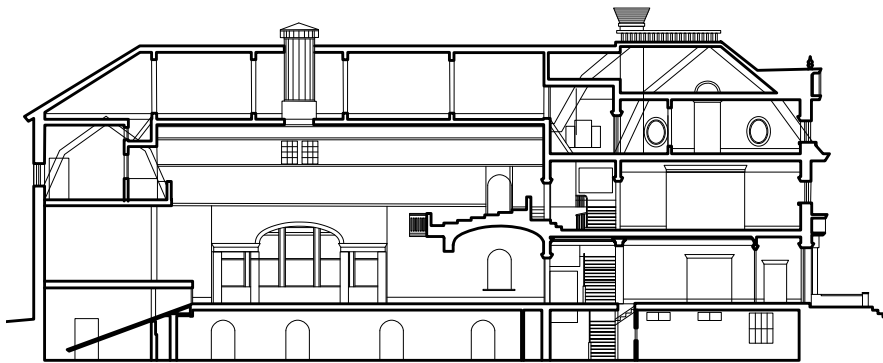
The Delaware Children’s Theatre building has undergone several transformations throughout its history - originally constructed as a women’s club, later serving as a dinner theater, and finally becoming the children’s theatre we see today. These adaptive reuses were made possible largely due to the spacious auditorium, which remains one of the building’s primary character-defining elements. My individual project focuses on reimagining this auditorium space through various programming options. These proposals aim to benefit DCT in the short to medium term by generating additional revenue while fostering stronger community engagement, ultimately serving as inspiration for DCT’s future planning.

## CURRENT CONDITION

The auditorium currently accommodates approximately 220 seats on the first floor. However, the existing seating arrangement, with rows directly aligned, creates significant sight line issues for viewers in the back rows. This is particularly problematic for children, who often struggle to see the stage when seated behind adults.



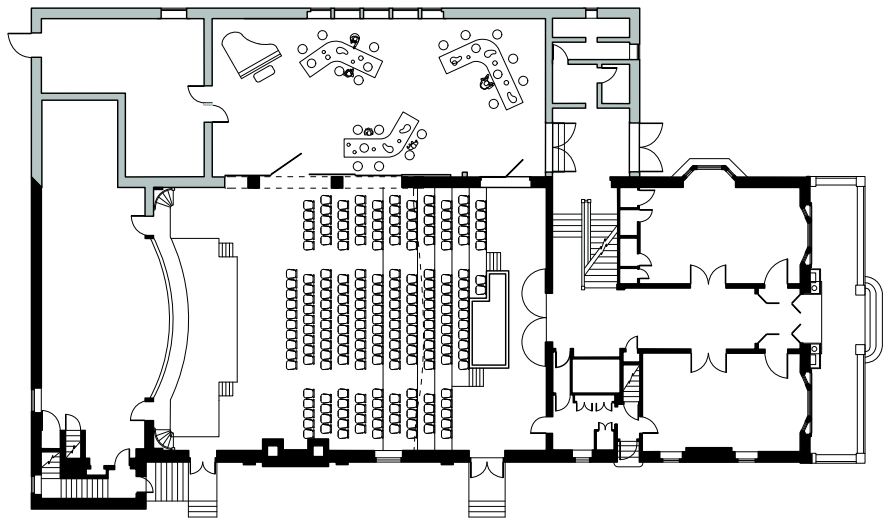
Current Version - Theater (Plan)  
Seats on the First Floor: 222



Current Version - Theater (Section)



Current Auditorium Photo (2024)



Theater Optimized  
Seats on the First Floor: 203

## REPROGRAMMING

Across all reprogramming scenarios, I propose designating the back door - currently blocked by seating - as the post-show exit. The circulation flow would guide audiences from the main entrance through the buffer room into the auditorium, then out through the back door to the side lot after performances.

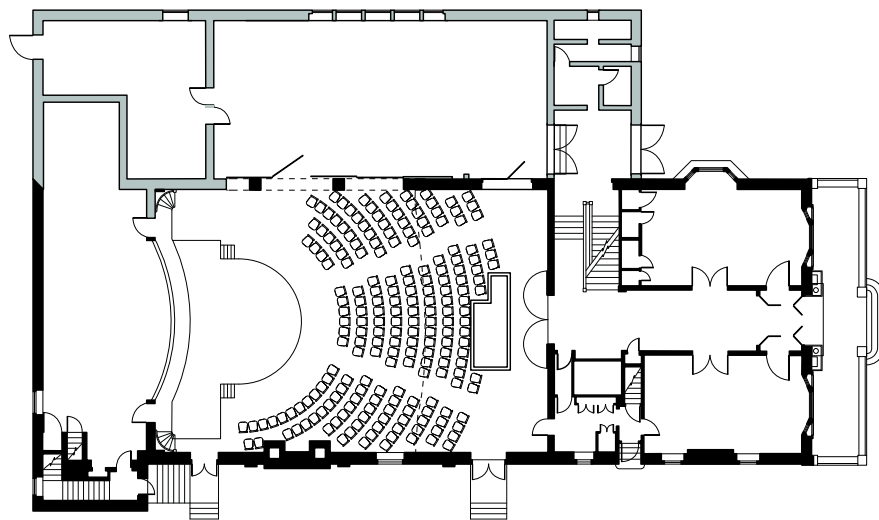
## THEATER USE - STAGING AND AUDIENCE CONFIGURATIONS

The first modification involves a subtle adjustment to the seating layout, where each row is offset by half a seat to improve sight lines. While this change would reduce capacity by 20 seats on the first floor, it would significantly enhance the viewing experience, especially for younger audience members.

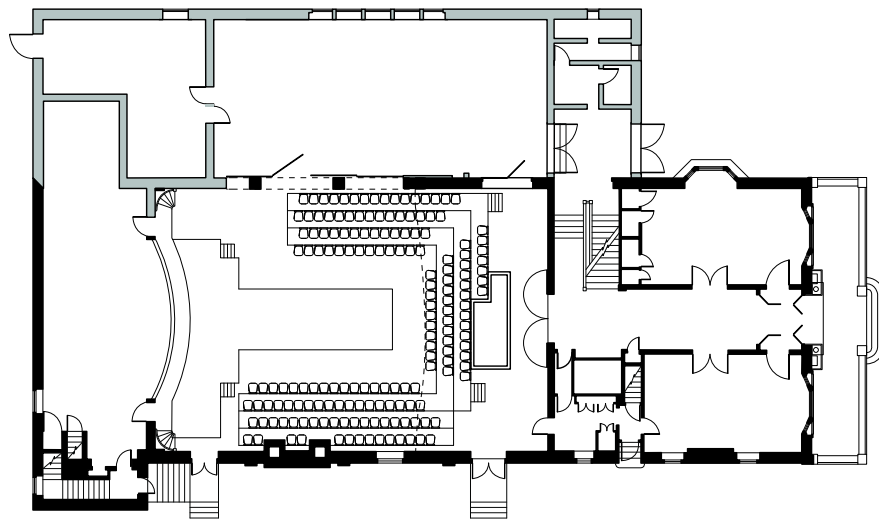
Alternative stage configurations, including semicircular and T-shaped arrangements, have been explored to accommodate diverse performances and activities. The semicircular stage configuration would reduce capacity by 20 seats, while the T-shaped arrangement would decrease it by approximately 50 seats. The thrust stage extends into the audience on three sides, creating greater intimacy between performers and audience compared to the original proscenium design. This thrust stage system could be stored underneath



the original stage, utilizing existing storage space, and extended when needed.



Theater (Semi-circle Shape)  
Seats on the First Floor: 203



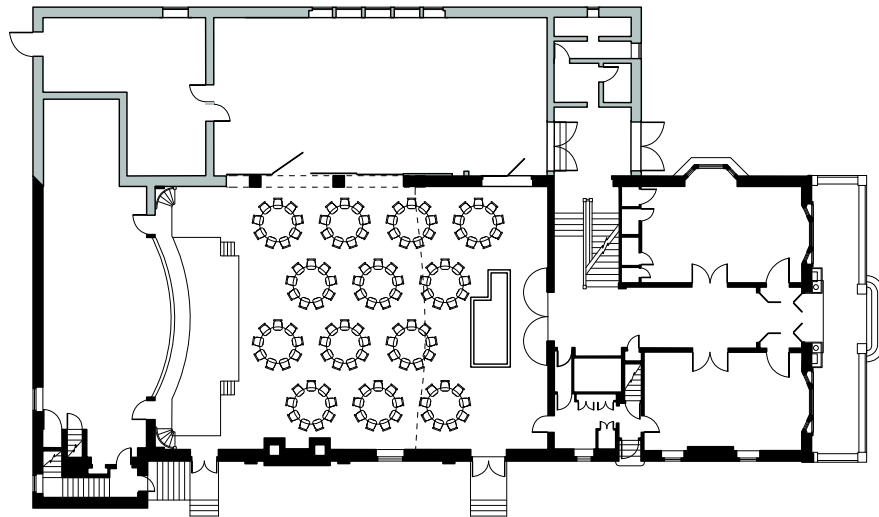
Theater (T Shape)  
Seats on the First Floor: 168



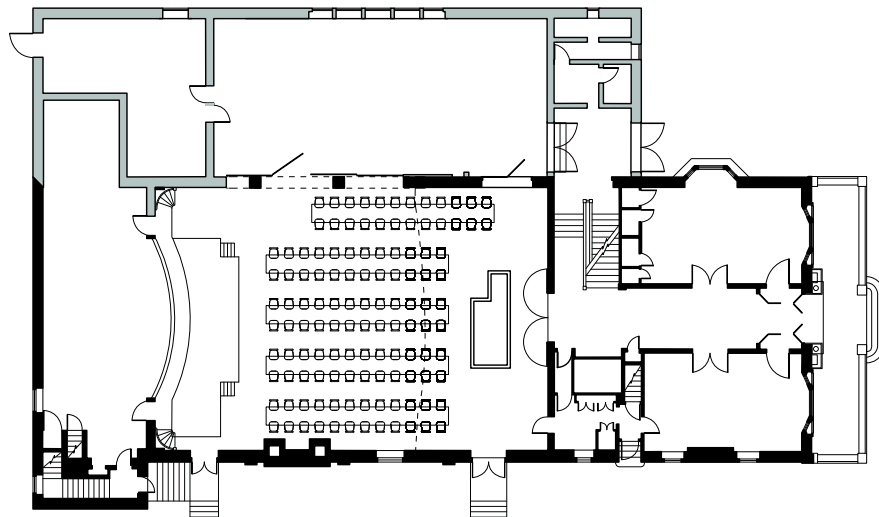
T-Shape Stage Collage Drawing

# **SPECIAL EVENTS - DINING THEATER USE**

For special events featuring dining theater, the space can be configured with either round or long tables, accommodating approximately 120 guests. The existing theater chairs would be used for seating, while tables could either be stored in DCT's basement or rented as needed.



Dining Theater (Round Tables)  
Seats: 117



Dining Theater (Long Tables)  
Seats: 120



Dinner Theater Collage Drawing

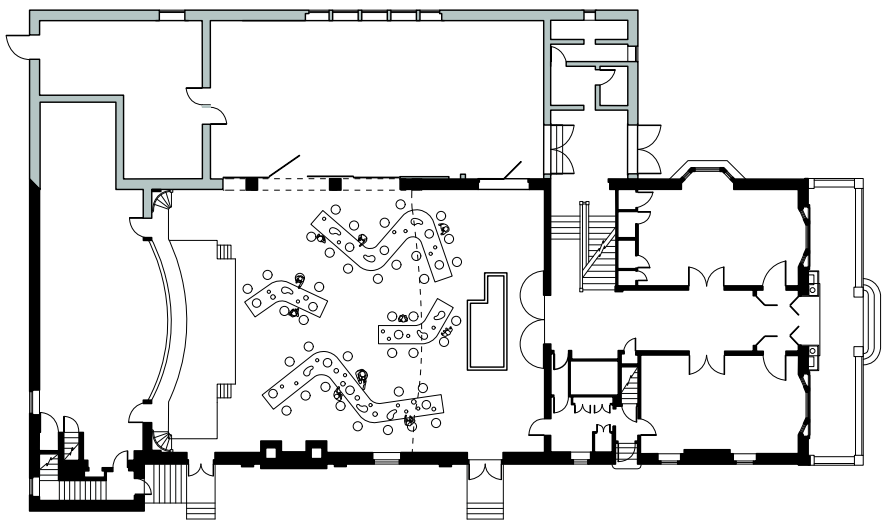


**WORKSHOP SPACE/EXHIBITION SPACE**

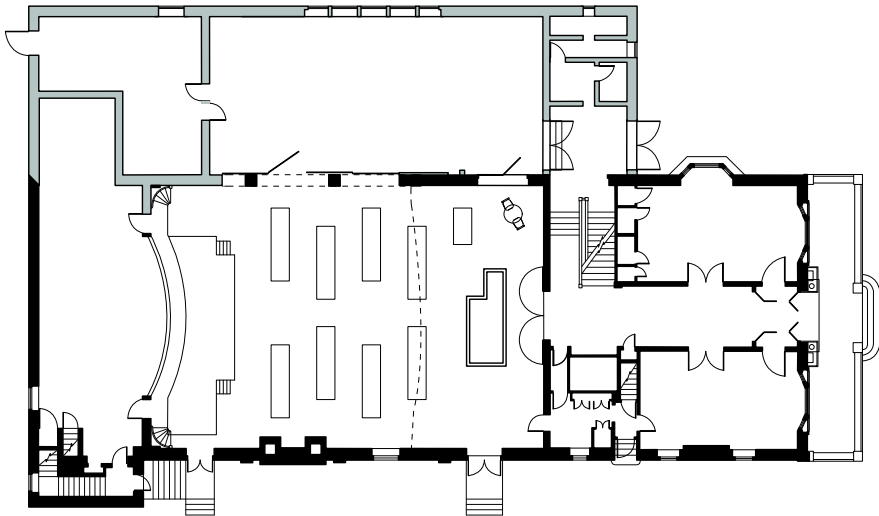
The workshop layout can accommodate 50 participants using either curved or rectangular table arrangements. The auditorium can also be transformed into an exhibition space, providing additional programming flexibility.

**CONCLUSION**

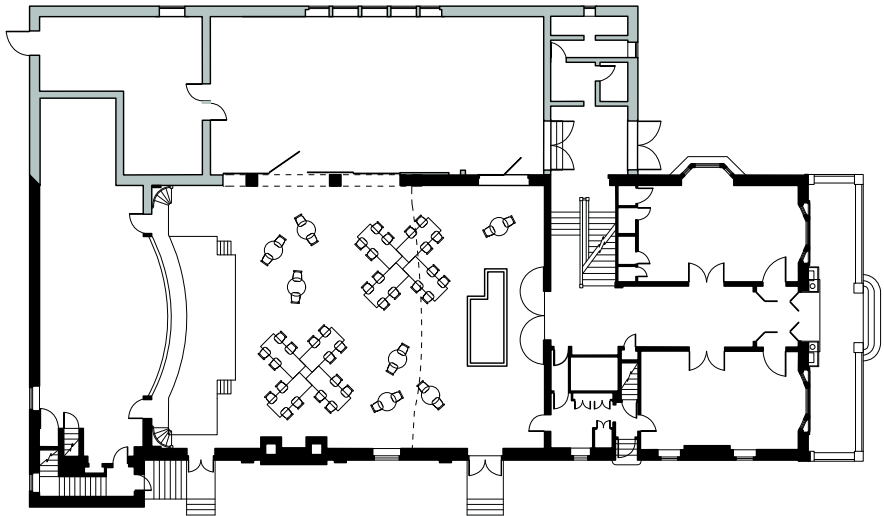
These programming options are intended to inspire DCT's future planning, creating new revenue opportunities while strengthening community engagement through the reimagined use of the auditorium space.



Workshop (Curved shape table)  
Seats: around 50



Exhibition



Workshop (Rectangular tables)  
Seats: around 50



Exhibition Collage Drawing

PROJECTS:

1. INTERPRETATION PLAN

NOUR JAFAR

2. INTERACTIVE WEBPAGE DESIGN

DI WU

3. CORNERSTONE TIME CAPSULE HANDBOOK

FRANNY HUTCHINS

# INTERPRETATION



# INTERPRETATION PLAN

The Delaware Children's Theatre currently does not have an active interpretation plan that reflects the building's history, nor the history of the Children's Theatre. This interpretation plan aims to provide guidance on how to interpret the historic building, as well as the objects, architecture, historical events, and people related to the site. The interpretation will be derived from this studio report's written history, as well as the character defining elements that were documented.

## HISTORICAL THEMES FOR DELAWARE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

There are three main historic themes developed from this semester's research process that included archival research, surveys, discussions, and interviews with staff and volunteers. These themes cover the most valuable and important points of history and culture of the site in accordance to its patrons and volunteer base.

1. Minerva Parker Nichols
2. New Century Club
3. Delaware Children's Theatre

## INTERPRETIVE PHILOSOPHY

Delaware Children's Theatre's interpretation will rely on a material culture approach, focusing on the physical historical fabric of the building, the furnishings, archeological collections, current material collections in the form of props and costumes, as well as the community that defines the Delaware Children's Theatre. These physical objects inform us about the history of the site, its users, and the evolution of the building to keep up with technological advancements. The community is the intangible aspect of this interpretation plan, and arguably the most important.

## SITE INTERPRETATION

The site interpretation is dependent on the three themes outlined above. These themes helped define the methodology of interpretation applied and how the exhibitions can be designed in the future. Currently, there is no active interpretation on site, however, it is David Swajeski's aspiration to have architectural tours in the future, as

well as on-site traditional interpretation, and videography documenting the history of the Delaware Children's Theatre. Based off of the interview conducted with Mr. Swajeski earlier this semester, these three interpretations were developed.

## 1. MINERVA PARKER NICHOLS

The interpretation of Minerva Parker Nichols can be divided into two phases. The short-term phase, and the long-term phase. The first phase, based on short-term treatment recommendations, focuses on the research that was conducted in this report to formulate an exhibition on Minerva. This research can be presented in a physical exhibition designed by a curating professional, or on an online platform such as a website. The interpretation method that can be applied directly by the Delaware Children's Theatre is wayfinding signage.

Traditionally wayfinding signage is placed high above head level of an average adult. Most signage targets adults for this reason. Since this space's target audience is primarily children, this interpretation will be focused on how children experience space, and their wayfinding methods. As children are curious about their surroundings, this interpretation takes an unorthodox approach at signage location: the floor decals lead into different spaces, depending on the path and its indicator. The floor decals can be created

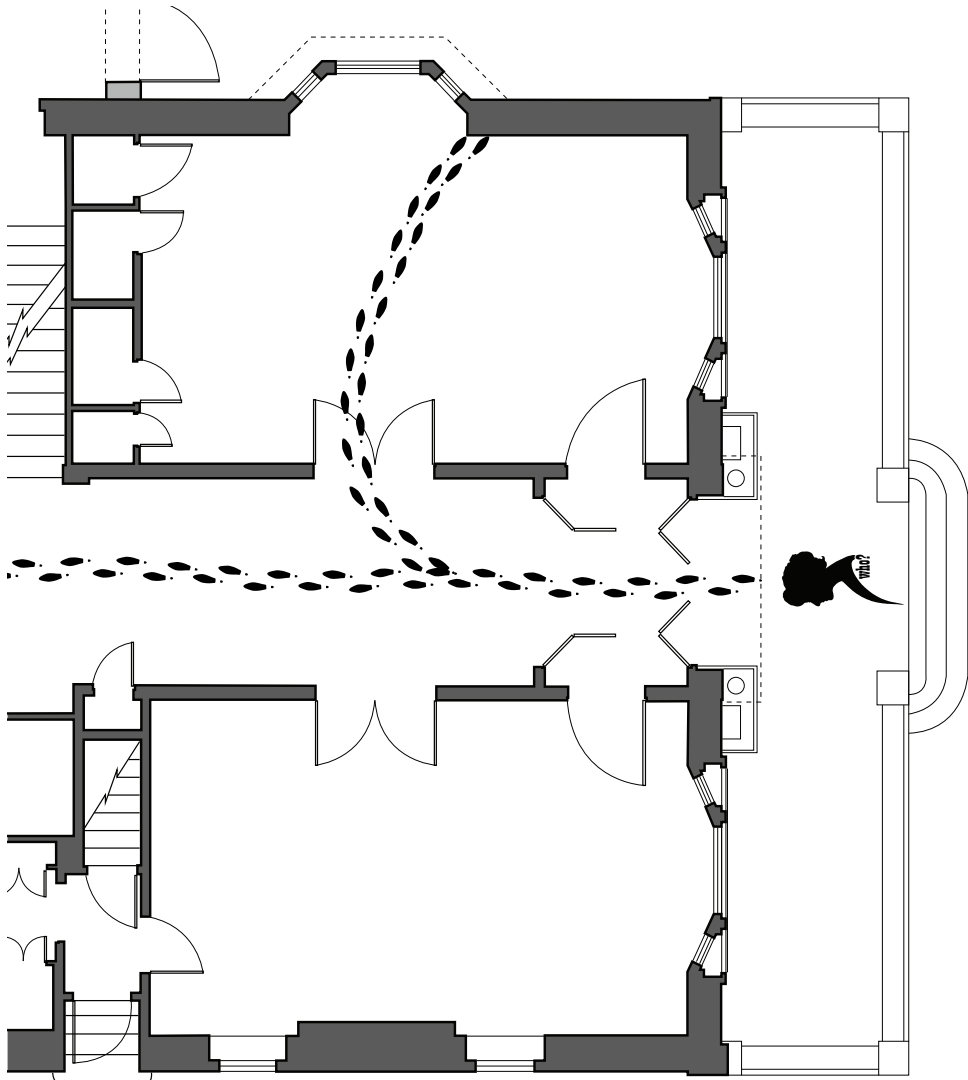
from vinyl and placed on the tiles to create temporary path signage. The path can end in a curated exhibition or with a plaque that has a QR code that leads to an online platform for more information.

The long term goal of this interpretation theme is to develop an architectural tour of the building. This can be achieved through different partnerships, such as the University of Delaware's Museum Program. Working with this educational partner can foster relationships and access to educational benefits that can support Delaware Children's Theatre's growth without adding to its workload capacity, such as tour design, docent training, and possibly new volunteers to lead these limited tours.



(Ingrid Fetell Lee)

# FLOOR DECAL PROTOTYPE



Example of how floor decals can be curated

## 2. NEW CENTURY CLUB

This interpretation method employs a traditional approach to presenting the newly acquired tea set from the New Century Club. The focus will be on curated object interpretation through display and accompanying interpretive plaques, ensuring accessibility and clarity for visitors. The tea set will be showcased in a dedicated exhibit space that highlights its historical and cultural significance, with plaques providing detailed narratives about its origins, the role of the New Century Club, and the importance of tea culture in the relevant era. This approach allows visitors to engage with the collection through a visually compelling presentation, while preserving the collection objects for decades to come.

The display will require careful curation and design to maximize its aesthetic and interpretive impact. The tea set will be arranged on a secure, museum-grade exhibit table or case to protect the objects while allowing close viewing. Thoughtful lighting will highlight the craftsmanship of the tea set and create a warm, inviting atmosphere. The

accompanying interpretive plaques will be placed at eye level near the objects, designed to be easily readable and visually cohesive with the overall exhibit design. These plaques will include historical context, donor information, and the significance of the New Century Club in fostering community and cultural traditions.

Beyond its role as a static exhibit, this method can be adapted for dynamic use in fundraising events, such as an afternoon tea gala. For such events, the tea set will serve as a centerpiece, bridging the historical significance of the collection with the thematic elements of the event. The use of the tea set in this context will create an immersive experience for attendees, fostering a deeper connection with the collection while supporting institutional fundraising goals.



Tea exhibition examples from Ostfriesisches Teemuseum Norden, Amsterdam



### 3. DELAWARE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

The "Celebrating DCT" interactive exhibition aims to foster a sense of belonging and connection within the DCT community by allowing patrons, performers, staff, and volunteers to visually map their relationships to the organization. This dynamic display will be set up in the buffet room, serving as both a creative focal point and a participatory experience. At the heart of the exhibit is a large, wall-mounted map or diagram representing the DCT community across different generations. Participants will contribute to the display by connecting themselves to others using color-coded strings that represent their roles: for example, red for performers, green for volunteers, and other colors for patrons or staff. This method creates an evolving, tangible representation of the interconnectedness of the DCT community.

The exhibition will require a robust and user-friendly setup. A durable base, such as a corkboard or magnetic board, will serve as the backdrop for the map. Pre-placed markers or labels will identify key

nodes, such as founding members, notable performances, or major milestones in DCT's history, to provide a starting point for participants. Colored strings, pins, and adhesive elements will be provided, along with clear instructions and an on-site facilitator to guide participation. The exhibit's design will balance aesthetics and functionality, ensuring it is visually appealing while accommodating a high volume of interactions. Adequate lighting and signage will emphasize the exhibit's purpose, inviting all attendees to contribute.

This interactive method has the potential to strengthen community ties, identify new donors, and expand the pool of volunteers and audience members. It will require collaboration between departments, including development, outreach, and design, to ensure it aligns with DCT's goals and logistical capabilities. Essential resources include materials for the display (e.g., strings, pins, and the board), staff or volunteers to manage the exhibit, and marketing efforts to encourage participation. As participants engage, the visual web of connections will not only celebrate the DCT community

but also highlight opportunities for deeper engagement, laying the groundwork for future support and collaboration.



Example interactive board by Skiffmade Installations



Example interactive board by Skiffmade Installations

# PRE-DCT HISTORY, INTERACTIVE WEBPAGE DESIGN

## INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: PRE-DCT History Webpage, Designed by Di Wu

The interactive webpage for the Delaware Children’s Theatre project was created as part of my individual contribution. This webpage addresses a significant gap in DCT’s existing online presence, which is the lack of a dedicated section highlighting the building’s rich pre-DCT history. By curating eight compelling historical stories, this project aims to preserve and share the cultural and architectural significance of the building before it became a children’s theatre.

This individual project is designed to integrate directly into DCT’s official website. By offering an engaging and visually dynamic platform for users, it seeks to enhance community engagement and promote greater awareness of the theatre’s historical legacy. It can also support DCT’s mission of fostering creativity and community involvement.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The interactive webpage focuses on showcasing eight key stories from the pre-DCT history of the Delaware Children’s Theatre building. These stories were carefully selected to highlight the building’s evolution, including its original purpose as the Wilmington New Century Club, the architectural contributions of Minerva Parker Nichols, and the social impact of the club’s activities on the local community. Each story emphasizes the historical, cultural, and architectural significance of the building before its transformation into a children’s theatre.

### CONTENT STRUCTURE

The webpage organizes the historical narratives into visually distinct cards, each linking to a dedicated page. These pages provide detailed descriptions, imagery, and contextual information for each story, ensuring accessibility and engagement for a diverse audience. The eight stories include topics such as the founding of the New Century Club, the building’s design and construction, its use as a dinner theatre, and the contributions of key club members.

### DESIGN AND USER EXPERIENCE

The design employs a minimalist yet visually dynamic approach, incorporating a clean layout and intuitive navigation. Each story card features an eye-catching image as a preview, inviting users to explore further. The use of modern web animation techniques, such as GSAP, adds a layer of interactivity, making the user experience engaging and immersive. The webpage’s responsive design ensures compatibility across devices, making it accessible to a wider audience.

By focusing on both content and design, this project aims to offer an informative and visually appealing experience that aligns with DCT’s mission while preserving the site’s historical legacy.

### WHY THESE EIGHT STORIES?

The selection of these eight stories reflects a deliberate effort to showcase the rich and multifaceted history of the Delaware Children’s Theatre (DCT) building before it became a children’s theatre. At the heart of these stories lies the pivotal role of women in shaping the building’s legacy—an aspect often overlooked in traditional historical narratives. From the founding of the Wilmington New Century Club to the architectural contributions of Minerva Parker Nichols, the first independent female architect in the United States, these stories highlight the groundbreaking achievements of women in a time when their voices were rarely acknowledged.

The Wilmington New Century Club, founded by and for women, was more than just a physical space; it was a platform for social reform, education, and cultural development. Through activities such as lectures, educational programs, and social outreach, the club’s members addressed critical issues of their time, including women’s rights, education, and community welfare. By including stories that focus on their contributions, this project seeks to honor their enduring legacy and emphasize the importance of women’s agency in both history and preservation efforts.

This collection of narratives not only bridges the gap between historical preservation and community memory but also celebrates the women who played an essential role in shaping this space. Their efforts, combined with the architectural significance of Nichols’ design, underscore the importance of preserving both the physical building and the stories it holds for future generations.





Figure 2: The Eight Stories



Figure 3: The Homepage Codes, Written by Di Wu

THE EIGHT STORIES

1. THE FOUNDING BACKGROUND OF THE CLUB  
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the 1870s, American society was undergoing rapid industrialization, which brought significant social challenges such as limited educational resources, restrictions on women’s rights, and urban poverty. Many progressive women began to unite, attempting to bring about change through organization and action. It was within this context that the Wilmington New Century Club was founded in 1876.

The club was established to provide a platform for women to enhance their knowledge and skills, participate in educational reform, and engage in community charity work. Their goals were not only to create opportunities for themselves but also to promote social progress through their actions. The name “New Century” symbolized their expectations for the role of women in the new century and represented their commitment to driving change.

EARLY ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

In its early years, the club’s members primarily focused on educational and charitable activities. They organized lectures, offered skill-building courses, and held small

charitable gatherings to provide practical support for the community. The club’s efforts quickly gained recognition from more women, and its membership grew steadily.

To further expand their influence, the club shifted from renting space to planning the construction of its own dedicated clubhouse. This decision not only reflected the club’s growth but also demonstrated the increasing organizational capabilities of women in public affairs.

Reference

“Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document.” National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

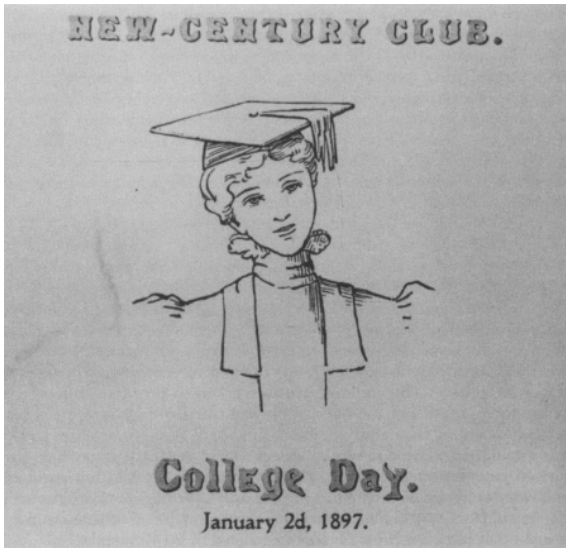


Figure 4: “College Day” Pamphlets for Annual NCC Event: (NCC Collection, Historical Society of Delaware)

2. THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING  
DESIGN INTENT

As the activities of the Wilmington New Century Club expanded, its members realized the need for a dedicated building to house their vision. This building would not only serve as a physical space but also symbolize the efforts of women in the late 19th century to gain equal opportunities and societal roles.

In 1892, the club members chose Minerva Parker Nichols, a renowned architect from Philadelphia, to design the building. As the first woman to practice architecture independently in the United States, Nichols’ involvement brought special significance to the project and highlighted the club’s commitment to supporting the professional development of women.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN DETAILS

Nichols’ design was based on the Colonial Revival style, which is known for its symmetry, classic proportions, and simple yet elegant appearance, while also respecting local architectural traditions.

- Facade: The building’s facade features a three-bay layout, with a central entrance and arched windows, with white wooden frames that contrast with the warm tones of the brick walls.

- Roof Design: The roof is gabled and features three decorative dormer windows, which not only enhance the building’s appearance but also provide additional natural light to the interior.
- Building Materials: The exterior walls are primarily made of glazed brick and stucco, which are durable and easy to maintain. This choice reflects Nichols’ focus on both practicality and aesthetic appeal.

INTERIOR LAYOUT AND FUNCTIONALITY

The interior of the building showcases Nichols’ deep understanding of spatial functionality. She carefully arranged different areas to accommodate the club’s diverse needs:

- Main Hall: The main hall on the first floor is the heart of the building, measuring 25 x 43 feet and capable of holding over 200 people. The hall features a high vaulted ceiling and black-and-white tiled floors, creating a grand and elegant atmosphere suitable for large gatherings and performances.
- Stage and Backstage: At one end of the main hall is a large stage, with dressing rooms and a backstage area to facilitate the preparation

for theatrical and musical performances.

- Meeting and Study Spaces: Offices and meeting rooms are located on both sides of the main hall for the club’s daily management and group activities. The second floor houses a multifunctional meeting room that can be used for literary discussions or art workshops.
- Kitchen and Banquet Hall: The basement is equipped with a modern kitchen to support cooking classes and large banquets. The second-floor banquet hall became a popular gathering space for club members and the community.
- Audience Seating: Above the stage, there is a second-floor audience seating area, a design commonly found in theaters or auditoriums, highlighting the building’s emphasis on cultural activities.

CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLETION

The construction of the building began in the summer of 1892 and was carried out by a well-known local construction company. The project was completed efficiently, with the main structure finished in just seven months and completed in January 1893. According to contemporary reports, the building was highly praised for its perfect combination of design and functionality and became an important landmark in the area.



Figure 5: Blueprint Drawing of NCC Building: (Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.)

SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DESIGN

Nichols’ design not only met the practical needs of the club but also imbued the building with significant symbolic meaning. As one historian remarked, “This building is a beacon, displaying the light of women’s intellect to the entire community.” The design details and layout of the building reflect Nichols’ exceptional balance between functionality and aesthetics, marking a breakthrough for women in the field of architecture.



Reference

"Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document." National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

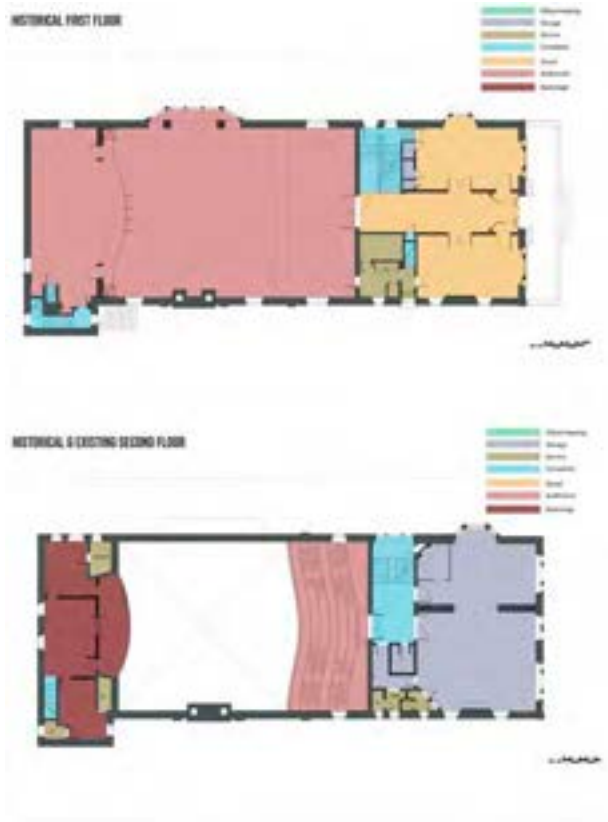


Fig 6,7,8: Historical Floor Plans, drawn by HSPV DCT Group

3. CLUB ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL IMPACT  
DIVERSE ACTIVITIES OF THE CLUB

Since the completion of its new clubhouse in 1893, the Wilmington New Century Club became the core of cultural, educational, and charitable activities in the community. The club's focus on advancing the social status of women led to a series of innovative and far-reaching initiatives. These activities not only benefited club members but also served the broader community.

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EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL PROMOTION

The club's activities were diverse, aiming to enhance the role of women in the home and society through knowledge sharing and skills training.

- Literary and Social Reform Lectures: The club regularly hosted literary discussions, focusing on classic novels like Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. These events were typically led by educators and writers within the club, discussing topics ranging from women's social roles to the role of literature in societal change.

- Theatrical and Musical Performances: The main hall and stage of the clubhouse were extensively used for drama performances written and directed by club members. These performances often carried educational messages, exploring the multiple roles of women in society. Additionally, the club invited local musical groups to perform string quartet concerts, providing the community with high-quality cultural experiences.



Fig 9: Wilmington High School Woodshop c. 1900: (NCC Collection, The Historical Society of Delaware)

CHARITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The club's charitable activities spanned multiple areas, with particular emphasis on educational support and public health.

Children's Educational Assistance: The club raised funds to support the education of children from low-income families.

Public Health and the Christmas Seal Campaign: One of the club's prominent members, Emily Bissell, launched the Christmas Seal Campaign in 1907. Initially promoted within the club, the campaign involved selling seals to raise funds for tuberculosis patients. The movement quickly expanded nationwide, gaining the support of the American Red Cross, and became a pivotal event in public health history.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL REFORM

The Wilmington New Century Club was not only engaged in cultural and educational activities but also took an active role in local policy and social reform.

Women's Suffrage Advocacy: The club regularly hosted public lectures and invited suffrage movement supporters to share their experiences.

Local Public Policy Initiatives: Club members also contributed to improving urban sanitation and advancing public education. Their efforts helped secure increased funding for public schools in Wilmington and led to the establishment of the first urban public health facilities.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

The Wilmington New Century Club's diverse activities not only enhanced women's education and social participation but also revitalized the community as a whole. Their efforts were highly regarded by local government and the community, making the club a model for women's club movements across the United States.

Reference

The Morning News. "New Century Club: An Organization of Women With a Purpose." The

Morning News, June 10, 1899. Accessed December 10, 2024.

"Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document." National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

4. DAILY USES OF THE BUILDING (BEFORE BECOMING DCT)  
THE BUILDING AS THE CENTER FOR CLUB ACTIVITIES

Since its completion in 1893, the New Century Club's new headquarters in Wilmington has served as the primary venue for the club's activities. The building's design fully considered functionality and flexibility, making it an ideal space for various events, supporting the club's social, educational, and charitable work. Spaces such as the main hall, basement kitchen, and upstairs meeting and reading rooms were utilized for different occasions, serving both the club and the surrounding community.

Main Hall: The main hall is the central space of the building, designed to accommodate up to 200 people. It was frequently used for club meetings, public lectures, and theatrical performances. For example, the club's monthly meetings were usually held here, attracting a large number of members. During these meetings, members discussed

educational, charitable, and community-related issues.

**Basement Kitchen and Charitable Use:** The club's basement kitchen, equipped with advanced cooking facilities, was used for cooking classes and charity events. The kitchen was especially busy during the holidays, when club members would prepare holiday meals for families in need. During the 1899 Thanksgiving event, the kitchen provided hundreds of warm holiday meals to the local community, symbolizing the club's charitable work. According to the club's records, the 1899 Thanksgiving event served over 60 families with food and warm meals.

THE BUILDING'S DIVERSE USE BY THE COMMUNITY

In addition to the club's own activities, the building also served as an important gathering place for other organizations and community members, becoming a center for local community events.

**Wedding and Celebration Venue:** The building's grand hall was widely used for weddings and other celebrations. Its large windows and elegant interior made it one of the preferred wedding venues for local residents. In 1905, the daughter of local businessman John Harlan held her wedding here, which attracted over 150 guests. The grand hall was

not only used for private celebrations but also for public events, becoming an integral part of the local social scene.

**Educational Activities:** The clubhouse was also rented out to educational institutions for teacher training and children's education programs. In 1903, the Wilmington School District held a three-week teacher seminar here, attracting over 100 teachers from across the state. The educational space provided by the club supported professional development and fostered the sharing and development of local educational resources.



Fig 10: Club members on auditorium stage c.1940s: (NCC Collection, Historical Society of Delaware)

Support for Public Cultural Activities

The building's stage and seating provided professional support for Wilmington's cultural activities, becoming a key platform for local arts.

**Concerts:** The local music association regularly rented the main hall to host concerts. The club's facilities became a bridge between local artists and their audience. These events not only enriched the cultural lives of the club's members but also opened to the wider community, attracting broader public participation. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, the club played a significant role in providing space for these musical performances.



Fig 11: Auditorium Photographed in 1922: (NCC Collection: The Historical Society of Delaware)

**Community Service:** In 1918, during the Spanish flu pandemic, the Wilmington New Century Club building played a significant role as a medical auxiliary facility. The building was temporarily converted into an emergency hospital to provide much-needed medical support and shelter for the local population. The grand hall and other spaces were transformed into makeshift wards, equipped with beds and basic medical supplies to care for the sick members of the community.

Reference

The News Journal. "New Century Club of Wilmington: History and Names." The News Journal, February 13, 1943. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/161904446>.

The News Journal. "New Century Club of Wilmington: 50th Anniversary." The News Journal, January 25, 1939. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/161397607>.

"Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document." National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

5. THE DINNER THEATRE  
BACKGROUND OF THE TRANSFORMATION

In the late 1960s, as societal changes and a decline in club activities led to a significant reduction in membership, the Wilmington New Century Club experienced financial difficulties. The costs associated with maintaining the building became a burden on the club's finances. Ultimately, the club decided to sell the property and seek a new use for the building.

In 1972, the building was purchased by a local entrepreneur James C. Beaver and his sons who planned to convert it into a dinner theatre. This transformation aimed to provide the community with a new cultural experience by combining dining and theatre, while still maintaining the building's public use.

RENOVATION AND OPERATION

The new owner undertook comprehensive interior renovations to accommodate the needs of a dinner theatre:

- Stage Renovation: The existing stage was modernized with upgraded lighting and sound systems to support higher-quality theatrical and musical performances.

- Hall Layout: The seating in the main hall was rearranged to incorporate tables and

chairs, providing a comfortable environment for both dining and watching performances.

- Kitchen Upgrades: The basement kitchen facilities were expanded to include larger stoves and refrigeration units, allowing for the preparation of dozens of meals simultaneously.



Fig 12: The New Century Club on Delaware Avenue has been sold to the Beavers, Wilmington, Delaware, 1977: (Evening Journal.)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DINNER THEATRE

The dinner theatre attracted many local residents and visitors, offering Wilmington a unique blend of dining and artistic experience. Performances typically included classic plays, comedies, and original local productions, all complemented by carefully curated dinner



menus. This novel cultural format quickly became a local hotspot.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Despite its relatively short operation, the dinner theatre phase revitalized the building and provided a platform for local arts and cultural activities. The theatre attracted audiences of various age groups, bringing economic and cultural benefits to the community.

CESSATION OF OPERATIONS AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT

Due to rising operating costs and a decline in audience interest, the dinner theatre ceased operations in the early 1980s. However, this phase in the building’s history demonstrated its adaptability and multifunctionality. After the dinner theatre closed, the building was converted into the Delaware Children’s Theatre, continuing to serve the community’s cultural and artistic needs.

Reference

Crosland, Philip F. “Club Will Become Dinner Theater.” The Evening Journal, October 10, 1977. Accessed December 10, 2024.

“Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document.” National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

6. THE CHANGING TIMES AND THE CLUB’S DECLINE  
SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF CHANGE

In the mid-20th century, American society underwent significant transformations. After World War II, increasing numbers of women entered the workforce, and the shift in traditional family roles gradually diminished the functionality of women’s clubs. Additionally, the rise of television and mass culture provided new alternatives for socializing and entertainment, reducing the appeal of traditional club activities.

MEMBERSHIP DECLINE AND ACTIVITY REDUCTION

Membership in the Wilmington New Century Club steadily declined after the 1950s. Public lectures and theatrical events, once popular, gradually diminished, and the scale of club activities began to shrink. Many older members left due to health or family reasons, while younger women increasingly focused on career development and family responsibilities.

FINANCIAL STRAIN AND BUILDING MAINTENANCE

The club also faced significant financial pressures. The costs of maintaining the building increased year after year, especially for repairs to the heating system and roof, which required substantial funds. Meanwhile,

the club’s income continued to decline due to decreasing membership. Despite attempts to increase revenue by renting out the building’s space, these efforts were insufficient to cover the funding gap.

THE DECISION TO SELL THE BUILDING

In 1972, faced with ongoing financial difficulties, the club had no choice but to sell the historic building. This decision marked the end of an era, leaving many members and community residents with a deep sense of loss.

THE BUILDING’S CONTINUED LEGACY

After its sale, the building was converted into a dinner theater and later transformed into the Delaware Children’s Theatre in the early 1980s, continuing to serve the community’s cultural and artistic needs. Although the club was no longer the building’s owner, its history and legacy were preserved through the continued use of the building.

A SYMBOL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In 1983, the building was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places, marking the official recognition of its architectural and cultural value. This was not only a preservation of the building itself but also an acknowledgment of the historical

contributions of the Wilmington New Century Club.

Reference

“Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document.” National Register of Historic Places, 1983.

Wilson, Charles P. “New Century Club of Wilmington Leaving Headquarters.” The Philadelphia Inquirer, August 15, 1976. Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/173135516>.



Fig 13: Women Say Good-by to a Proud Place, Wilmington, Delaware, 1976: (The Philadelphia Inquirer.)

7. MINERVA PARKER NICHOLS & WILMINGTON NEW CENTURY CLUB BUILDING  
GROUNDBREAKING CAREER

Minerva Parker Nichols (1862-1949) was a pioneering figure in the American architectural world in the late 19th century. Born in Pennsylvania, she showed an early interest in design. In 1888, she became a draftswoman at the prominent Philadelphia architectural firm Edwin W. Thorne, marking her formal entry into the architectural profession. By 1890, after completing several residential design projects, Nichols opened her own architectural practice, becoming the first woman in the United States to practice architecture independently.

Throughout her career, Nichols completed over 60 projects, including residences, clubhouses, and public buildings. Her work was known for balancing aesthetic appeal with functionality, and she had a deep understanding of her clients’ needs.

COLLABORATION WITH WILMINGTON NEW CENTURY CLUB

In 1892, the Wilmington New Century Club commissioned Minerva Parker Nichols to design their new clubhouse. This was a significant decision, as it not only acknowledged the professional abilities

of a female architect but also reflected the club’s commitment to supporting women’s professional development.

During the design process, Nichols communicated extensively with the club members to understand their functional and aesthetic needs. For instance, the club requested a multifunctional hall that could accommodate large meetings as well as serve as a venue for theatrical performances and concerts. They also requested the addition of meeting rooms and a basement kitchen to support educational lectures and charity banquets. Nichols successfully integrated these needs into the building’s flexible design.

INNOVATIVE DESIGN AND FEATURES

The Wilmington New Century Club building is a prime example of Nichols’ architectural style, showcasing her innovative thinking in design:

Colonial Revival Style: The building’s symmetrical layout, along with the use of glazed brick and stucco materials, reflects the elegance and solidity of Colonial Revival architecture.

Multifunctional Layout: The planning of spaces like the main hall, stage, and basement kitchen demonstrates Nichols’ skill in optimizing space usage, allowing the building

to serve multiple purposes.

**Lighting and Ventilation:** The design of dormer windows and arched windows optimized natural lighting and ventilation inside the building, providing a comfortable environment for its users.

#### CAREER MILESTONE

After the completion of the Wilmington New Century Club clubhouse, Nichols' professional reputation further grew. Her design was highly praised by clients, and it led to more architectural commissions. In 1893, she was also selected to design the new clubhouse for the Philadelphia New Century Club, solidifying her position in the field of women's club architecture.

#### LEGACY AND CONTINUATION

Minerva Parker Nichols' architectural works are now considered exemplary of 19th-century architectural innovation. In 1983, the Wilmington New Century Club building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, marking the broad recognition of its architectural value and historical significance. This achievement not only honors the building but also Nichols' historical contribution as a female architect.

The Influence of Minerva Parker Nichols'

life was marked by her passion and dedication to architecture. Although she passed away in 1949, her accomplishments continue to inspire generations of female architects. In recent years, there has been renewed attention to her work, which is being re-examined and included in architectural history, serving as an important case in the fight for gender equality and professional recognition.

#### Reference

Minerva Parker Nichols Website. "1892-93 New Century Club, Wilmington." Accessed December 10, 2024. <https://www.minervaparkernichols.com/1892-93-new-century-club-wilmington>.

"Wilmington New Century Club Nomination Document." National Register of Historic Places, 1983.



Fig 14: A portrait of Minerva Parker Nichols Historical Society of Pennsylvania

#### 8. STORIES OF NEW CENTURY CLUB MEMBERS

##### THE DIVERSITY AND COLLECTIVE STRENGTH OF THE CLUB

The Wilmington New Century Club (NCC) was an important representative of the late 19th-century women's club movement, with members from diverse backgrounds, including educators, philanthropists, community activists, and literary enthusiasts. Although women did not have the right to vote at the time and their social roles were limited, the members of NCC used collective action and organized events to advance local education, social reform, and charitable causes.

The members of NCC were united in their efforts to improve the community through education and promote social progress. Their work not only changed the social landscape of Delaware but also became an essential part of the broader women's club movement across the United States. While many individual stories of the members may not have been fully recorded, their collective achievements through their actions reflect the crucial role of the club's members in social progress.

##### COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Between the 1890s and 1910s, NCC's influence in the field of education was particularly significant. The club's members

were actively involved in promoting primary education and vocational training. They raised funds to support school construction and provided financial assistance to children who could not afford tuition. For example, NCC organized local fundraising efforts to improve facilities and provide after-school tutoring programs in Wilmington schools. Additionally, they organized many public discussions on educational equity and female literacy, advocating for more women to have access to education.

##### EMALEA PUSEY WARNER

Another significant member of NCC was Emalea Pusey Warner (1853-1948), a pioneering advocate for Delaware women's rights and education. Warner was a key organizer of the Wilmington New Century Club and played a central role in advancing education and welfare programs in the state. Under her leadership, the club helped establish programs such as kindergarten education, school lunch programs, carpentry shops, home economics, libraries, and penny savings banks in Wilmington schools.

In 1898, Warner led the club in becoming a charter member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and she was elected as the first president of the Delaware State Federation. In 1911, when Delaware was the

only state without a women's college, Warner successfully lobbied the State Legislature to create the Women's College at the University of Delaware, also serving as the first woman on the University's Board of Trustees in 1927.

Warner's activism extended beyond education. She served as vice president of the Women's Suffrage Association, president of the League of Women Voters of Delaware, and president of the S.P.C.A. for 21 years. She also successfully lobbied for the creation of the Family Court of New Castle County, which was established in 1945, marking a major victory after years of advocacy.



Fig 15: Portrait of Emalea P. Warner, C. 1900: <https://documents.alexanderstreet.com/d/1009656532>

Public Health and Social Welfare

NCC's charitable activities covered public health and social welfare areas. One of the most notable examples is the "Christmas Seals" campaign initiated by member Emily P. Bissell through the club platform. In 1907, this campaign raised significant funds for tuberculosis patients through the sale of stamps, and it successfully expanded nationwide, becoming a milestone in American public health history. This was not only a personal achievement for Bissell but also a reflection of the club's collective support.

##### THE CONTINUATION OF THE CLUB'S SPIRIT

Although NCC's membership began to decline in the mid-20th century, the spirit and values of the club were passed down through the efforts of its members. Many of the club's former members continued to participate in local and state-level social reform work, extending the club's influence into broader spheres.

#### Reference

Croly, Jane Cunningham. *The History of the Women's Club Movement in America*. 1898. Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973. 126.

Tabler, Dave. "Seals Save the Sanitorium." Dave



Tabler, accessed December 10, 2024. <https://davetabler.com/seals-save-the-sanitorium/>.



Fig 16: Emily Bissell, Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, University of Virginia

## IMPACT, REFLECTIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This project has significantly deepened my understanding of historical preservation, storytelling, and the power of digital platforms in engaging contemporary audiences. By curating and presenting the pre-DCT history, I aimed to address a critical gap in DCT's current narrative while celebrating the building's cultural and architectural legacy. The inclusion of stories about Minerva Parker Nichols—the first independent female architect in the United States—and the Wilmington New Century Club highlights the often-overlooked contributions of women in shaping both architectural innovation and social reform. These narratives not only honor the building's history but also underscore the importance of preserving the voices and achievements of marginalized groups.

Through this process, I gained valuable experience in research, content curation, and interactive design. I also developed a deeper appreciation for the role of community in preservation efforts, as the stories reveal how individuals and groups can collectively shape a space's legacy over time. This project serves as an example of how technology can bridge the gap between past and present, making history both accessible and relevant.

Looking ahead, this interactive webpage can serve as a foundational resource for DCT's official website, directly integrating into its existing structure to highlight the theatre's pre-DCT history. Future iterations could expand the project by incorporating oral histories, additional archival material, and multimedia features such as videos or interactive timelines. By continuing to evolve, the project has the potential to inspire deeper community engagement and greater appreciation for the cultural significance of DCT's heritage.

# CORNER STONE TIME CAPSULE HANDBOOK

## METHODS FOR REMOVAL AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR MID-TERM INTERPRETATION PLANNING

### WHERE IS IT, AND WHAT'S INSIDE?

On Thursday February 2nd 1893, just two days after construction was officially completed at the New Century club, the "Building Committee", placed a time capsule in a cornerstone in the northeast corner of the building. We believe the datestone marks the location, as the newspaper confirms the cornerstone was placed in the "northeast" corner, a tradition linked to centuries-old Freemason practices.<sup>1</sup> According to *The Delaware Gazette and State Journal*, which references the occasion, there was no ceremony or official event. Still, the article does reveal what was placed inside the box.<sup>2</sup>



Assumed location of WNCC Cornerstone, East corner of building (Photograph by Kate Whitney-Schubb)

### CONTENTS OF TIME CAPSULE

- Dedication Poem by Miss Susan Spalding.
- "Prophecy" A poem by Mrs. C. B/ Smith.
- History of the New Century Club by Mrs. Augusta L. Conant.
- Original music composed and written by Miss Emma Lore.
- Every Evening of Saturday November 12th, 1892 containing picture of New Century Club Building.
- The Morning News of Saturday, November 13th, 1892, containing picture of the New Century club and diagram of the interior.

Address of the Hon. Chauncey M. Depew at the formal opening of the World's Exposition at Chicago, October 20th, 1892.

Portfolio of World's Columbian Exposition containing pictures of the different fair buildings at Chicago.

Aluminum medal, commemorating the opening of the Chicago Exposition 1892.

Report of the NCC Club 1891 Constitution and bylaws of the club.

### PHASE 1: RESEARCH

Before moving forward with the excavation of the cornerstone, which requires time, consultation, and some funding, it is crucial to first confirm the precise location of the box, assess or better understand the nature of its contents, and evaluate the feasibility of removal. Even if the process seems relatively simple, it's important to fully grasp the scope of the task—especially if the time capsule is to be uncovered in a public setting. Gaining a clear understanding of all the variables will help in preparing adequately and managing expectations.



Assumed location of WNCC Cornerstone, East corner of building (Photograph by Kate Whitney-Schubb)

### PHASE 1: RESEARCH

#### NON-DESTRUCTIVE GROUND PENETRATING RADAR TO LOCATE THE EMBEDDED TIME CAPSULE

Metal Detection: Use a handheld metal detector to scan the stone's surface. It will detect the copper box if present without damaging the stone.

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR): A non-invasive radar technique to image the inside of the stone and locate objects like the copper box.

Magnetometry: Use a magnetometer to detect any magnetic anomalies caused by the copper box inside the stone.

Acoustic Testing: Gently tap the stone and listen for a "hollow" sound that could indicate a void or box inside.

Visual Inspection: If needed, drill a small hole to inspect the interior of the stone with a borescope or camera.

Recommended Method: Start with a metal detector for quick results, or use GPR for more detailed scans.

The following material characterization descriptions that accompany the section drawing are directly sourced from the original 1892 architectural specifications.

**TERRA COTTA**  
The cornerstone, 16" long and 4" thick, is the only terra cotta element on the exterior. The copper interior box, 8x5x3 inches, is sealed with cement.

**BRICK**  
The exterior brick wall provides mass and stability, with 4" x 8" face bricks laid with colored mortar, bonded to a backing layer. The wall is 18 inches thick, with the face brick layer being 4 inches thick, contributing to strength and thermal mass. Quoins reinforce the corners.

**PEBBLE-DASH PLASTER**  
A 4" pebble-dash plaster finish, embedded with pebbles, covers the brick and is flush with the quoins at the corners.

**MORTAR COMPOSITION**  
Mortar is a 3:1 mix of sand to lime, slaked for 24 hours before use, ensuring proper bonding and consistency with the stone.

**TIMBER FRAME**  
Supports 2" x 1" furring strips spaced 16" apart.

**FURRING**  
Furring strips are nailed to the timber frame, providing a base for the lath and plaster.

**LATH**  
Knot-free, seasoned No. 1 spruce lath is applied horizontally on walls and vertically on ceilings, spaced 3/8" apart, with joints broken every 18".

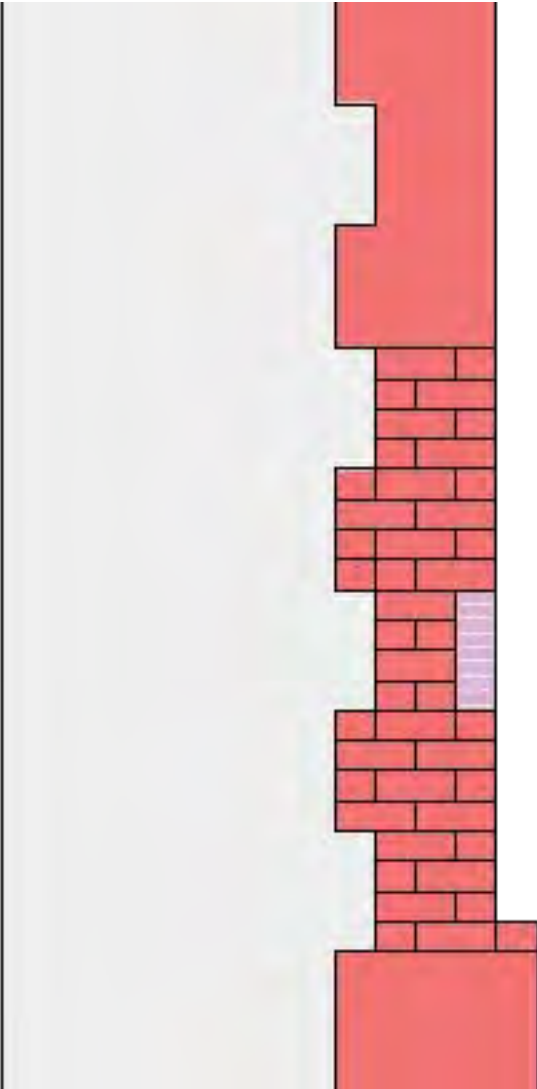
**PLASTER**  
Plaster, typically 2" thick, is applied over the lath.



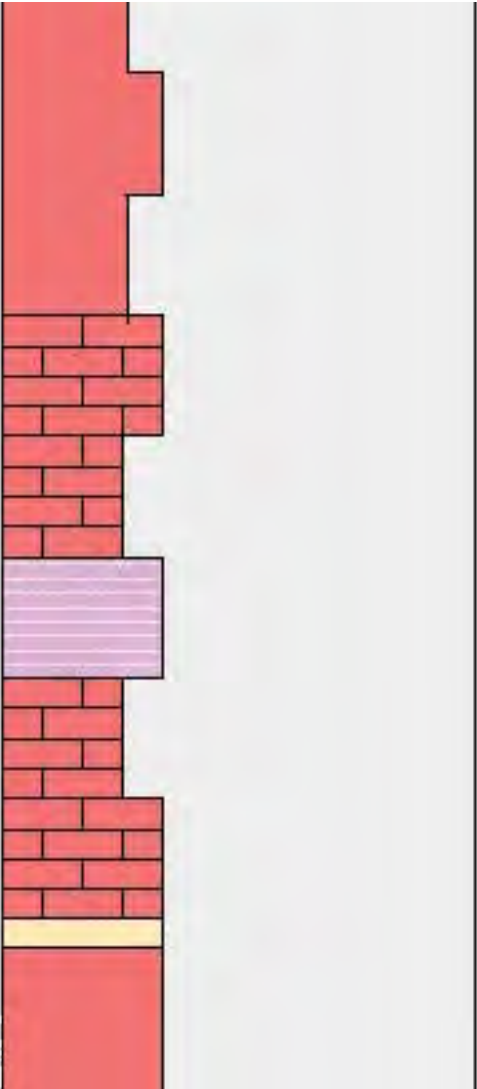
Metal detector on Warren County Courthouse cornerstone, PA (Photograph by Josh Cotton, 2017),



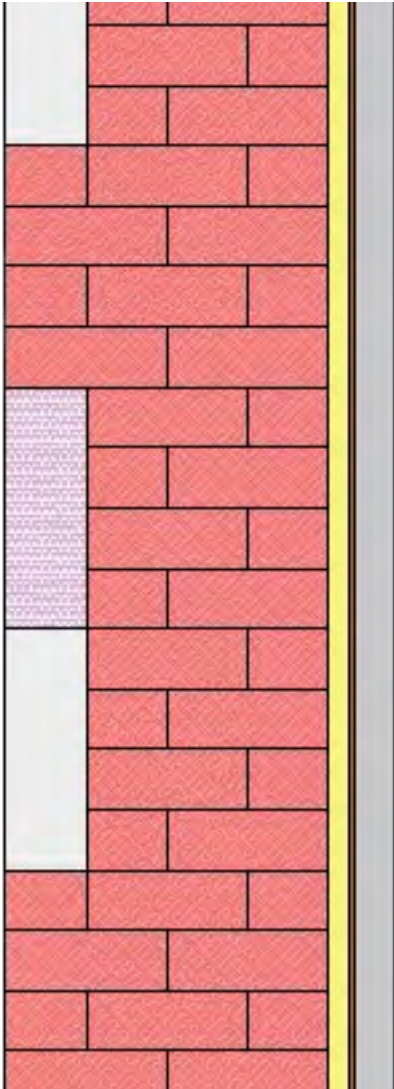
# WALL ASSEMBLY



Southeast Elevation Drawing of 1892 Datestone  
(Drawing by Franny Hutchins 2024)



Northeast Elevation Drawing of 1892 Datestone  
(Drawing by Franny Hutchins 2024)



Northeast Section Drawing of 1892 Datestone  
(Drawing by Franny Hutchins 2024)

- Cornerstone (Terra Cotta)
- Stucco (Pebbledashed)
- Plaster
- Lath
- Timber
- Brick

Material Characterization Key



Assumed location of WNCC Cornerstone, East corner of building (Photograph by Kate Whitney-Schubb)

PHASE 2: METHODS FOR REMOVAL

MATERIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF WALL ASSEMBLY

STEPS FOR EXTERIOR EXTRACTION:

Preparation:  
As previously stated, do testing to confirm that the box is indeed in the target location.

Tools & Equipment:  
Protective gear (gloves, goggles, etc.).  
Saw, chisels, hammers, pry bars, or mini-excavator.

Excavation Steps:

- 1) Protect Surrounding Area:  
Ensure that the quoining and brick around the terra cotta stone are shielded from damage during the removal process. Use protective sheeting or tarps to cover the surrounding area.
- 2) Use padding or foam around the edges of the stone to prevent accidental chipping.
- 3) Cut and remove the exterior plaster carefully around the cornerstone to expose the stone without damaging the finish.

4) If the excavation compromises the structural integrity of the quoining, it may be necessary to install a temporary block or support system until the corner stone is safely re-sealed. Consult with a structural engineer to ensure the stability of the building during and after the excavation.

5) Remove surrounding mortar using chisels and hammers, taking care not to damage the quoining or the stone.

6) Gradually tap around the stone with a rubber mallet and chisel to break up and loosen the mortar.

7) Lift the Stone: Once the mortar is loosened, use a small pry bar or your hands (if the stone is small enough) to gently lift the stone out of place.

8) Post-Excavation:  
Seal the cornerstone and reapply pebble-dash plaster to match the original finish.

WHO TO HIRE/CONSULT TO EXTRACT THE CORNERSTONE

DCT should consult a mason with historic preservation experience to safely remove the stone and protect the time capsule. A structural engineer may be needed to assess the building’s integrity during the process. If the time capsule contains delicate materials, a conservator or archivist should be consulted to ensure proper extraction and preservation of the contents.



Conservators handling the Dresden Church time-capsule , TN (Photography by Brody Kemp 2021)

STEPS FOR INTERIOR EXTRACTION

The second phase of the report addresses the methods for removing the cornerstone and the professionals who should be involved, particularly a mason experienced working with historic properties. This section outlines the steps for both exterior and interior extraction. The excavation steps are partially based on reports of cornerstone removals and also adapted from lintel removal procedures for brick buildings, which provide a closer comparison to repairs for historic masonry properties.

- 1) Clear the Area:  
Remove furniture, fixtures, or obstructions from the excavation site.
- 2) Protect Surrounding Walls: Cover adjacent interior walls (especially plaster and lath) with protective sheeting to avoid damage from debris or tools.
- 3) Gather Tools:  
Prepare necessary tools including chisels, hammers, rubber mallet, pry bars, protective gloves, and safety gear.

4) Identify the Cornerstone: Confirm the location of the terracotta cornerstone in the interior wall, specifically where the copper box is believed to be.

5) Check for Obstacles: Ensure there are no hidden pipes, wiring, or structural elements within the wall that could be affected.

6) Remove Interior Plaster & Lath:  
Cut & Remove Lath: Use a saw or pry bar to carefully remove the lath strips and furring strips. This will expose the brick and mortar beneath.

7) Remove Plaster: Gently tap with a rubber mallet and hammer to break and remove the plaster layers, ensuring minimal damage to the wall.

8) Expose the Brick Wall:  
Once the lath and plaster are removed, expose the brick backing. Check the brick for any mortar or obstructions around the cornerstone.

9) Clean the Surface:  
Remove any loose mortar/debris around the

area to ensure a clean work space.

10) Cut Away Mortar:  
Use cold chisels and a hammer to carefully remove the mortar surrounding the terra cotta stone.

11)) Protect the Stone:  
Use foam padding or protective sheeting to shield the cornerstone from damage during removal.

12) Loosen the Stone:  
Once the mortar is sufficiently loosened, use a pry bar or gentle tapping with a rubber mallet to lift the stone.



Excavation of Salem High School Cornerstone, MA (Photographer Unknown, 2023)



### CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS OF BOX CONTENTS

Wilmington, DE's humid climate and occasional flooding contribute to mold growth and metal oxidation in time capsules. If the building were to experience a fire or suffer severe storm or flood damage, water could have seeped into the cornerstone, potentially entering the time capsule itself. When the documents and objects inside the container get wet and then dry out over time, they often become "fused" together. Items with this kind of damage cannot be separated without some loss. A properly trained conservator can help minimize this damage. If you open a time capsule and find materials in a fused, moldy state, leave the documents inside the box and take the entire collection to a conservator.<sup>3</sup>

If the materials remained dry, the documents may still be in relatively good condition, though they will likely be brittle. If they can be separated easily, do so carefully, using proper supports for each item as described. Consult Delaware Archives for sources of Mylar, archival board, and micro spatulas. Be sure to use cotton gloves when handling these materials.



Unveiling of Avery Hall cornerstone, ne (Photograph by Troy Fedderson, 2014)

### PHASE 3: PRESS AND OUTREACH

The discovery of the time capsule in the cornerstone presents DCT with an exciting opportunity to develop a series of dynamic events and initiatives that highlight the building's history and its enduring influence on the community. This moment can be expanded into a comprehensive programming effort, creating both immediate and long-term avenues for outreach, education, and community engagement. Below are ideas for short-term and long-term initiatives designed to tie the unveiling of the WNCC 1893 time capsule into a broader effort to engage the Wilmington community and beyond, showcasing the building's history while fostering deeper connections with those who are invested in DCT and the building's long-term preservation.



Uncovering of Quebec City Hall cornerstone, CN (Photographer N/A 2022)

### A CEREMONIAL UNVEILING

DCT could organize a formal ceremony to unveil the time capsule, inviting community members, local dignitaries, and media. Key targets could include women's clubs in Delaware and Pennsylvania that may have ties to DCT or an interest in preserving the building. The event could feature speeches, a presentation on the building's history, and a reveal of the time capsule's contents. This would serve as an opportunity for DCT to raise awareness and funds, encouraging greater community involvement in supporting the nonprofit and its ongoing work to preserve the building.



Exhibit of the Dresden Church time-capsule, TN (Photography by Brody Kemp 2021)

### EXHIBIT AND DISPLAYS

DCT could create an interactive exhibit in the lobby of the building that showcases the time capsule's contents, taking the opportunity to display other in-house collections from WNCC.

### PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

This could be a chance for DCT to partner with local museums or historical societies to help curate the unveiling event, provide expert commentary, or host lectures about the building's significance. For example, the Delaware Historical Society, who has numerous partners both civic and cultural organizations, education institutions, government agencies, historic sites, businesses, and other nonprofits that DCT could work with.<sup>5</sup>

### COLLABORATION WITH WOMEN'S CLUBS

The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), particularly the Delaware Branch, remains actively engaged with clubs throughout the state that are still operational. While the Wilmington NCC is no longer active, DCT serves as an example of an organization that preserves the historic building and continues to honor its legacy. GFWC Delaware played a key role in the sign reveal for the Acorn Club in Seaford, DE, and could certainly assist in sponsoring or organizing aspects of the event.<sup>6</sup> Their involvement in both civic engagement and preserving the history of women's clubs in Delaware makes them a valuable partner for this occasion.



The Acorn Club of Seaford unveil the historic sign commemorating the history of their club (GFWC 2019)

BURYING A NEW DCT TIME-CAPSULE

DCT could turn the unveiling of the time capsule into a promotional opportunity by creating and burying a time capsule of their own, one that further establishes DCT’s connection to the building’s legacy. The contents of this new capsule could be a collaborative effort, involving both current and past patrons of the organization across generations. This would be a particularly meaningful experience for young children, allowing them to contribute their favorite memories in tangible form and participate in the burying process. The act of burying a time capsule encourages both adults and children to envision the future of the site—what the building might look like years from now and who will occupy it. This imaginative experience could foster a deeper sense of care and value for the building, reinforcing the idea that it should remain an important asset for Wilmington’s future. The appendix will delve into conservation guidelines, limitations, and ideas for time capsule contents, as well as resources for time-capsule information and consultation.

APPENDIX

REFERENCES FOR NEW A NEW TIME-CAPSULE

The following references provide detailed steps and procedures for burying a new time capsule, including recommended conditions and materials, as well as safe and unsafe options for its contents.

American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works (AIC)  
1717 K Street, N.W., Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 452-9545  
E-mail: [iinfo@conservation-us.org](mailto:iinfo@conservation-us.org)

A detailed pamphlet on time capsules, CCI Notes 1/6 is available from the Canadian Conservation Institute, 1030 Innes Road, Ottawa, ON K1A 0M8, Canada, (613) 998-3721,

The pamphlet Time Capsules, the do’s and don’ts is available from: Conservation Resources (U.K.) LTD., Units 1,2 & 4 Pony Road, Horsepath Industrial Estate, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2nd England, 001865-747755,

International Time Capsule Society (ITCS)  
c/o Oglethorpe University  
4484 Peachtree Road

Manufacture Time-Capsules:  
Atlanta, GA 30319-2797  
(404) 261-1441

Iowa Conservation and Preservation Consortium, So you want to do a time capsule? Tips to Keep in Mind While Trying to Defeat Time by Ivan Hanthorn, Preservation Department Head, Iowa State University Library



Students at Riverside School bury a time capsule, Ontario CN (Photograph by Nick Brancaccio 2014)

COMPANIES THAT MANUFACTURE TIME-CAPSULES

AMALCO  
230 Sheffield Street  
Mountainside, NJ 07092  
(908) 233-3500

Architectural Bronze Aluminum Corporation  
655 Deerfield Road, Suite #100 PMB422  
Deerfield, IL 60015-3241  
(800) 339-6581

Erie Landmark  
637 Hempfield Hill Road  
Columbia, PA 17512  
(800) 874-7848  
Future Packaging & Preservation  
544 E. Edna Place  
Covina, CA 91723  
(626) 966-1955

Heritage Time Capsules  
5373 Transit Road  
Williamsville, NY 14221  
(716) 868-0057

END NOTES

1. “XXIV. Symbolism of the Corner-Stone.” The Symbolism of Freemasonry. Last modified August 24, 2019. <https://freemasoninformation.com/masonic-education/books/the-symbolism-of-freemasonry/xxiv-symbolism-of-the-corner-stone/>.
2. “Placed in the Cornerstone.” The Delaware Gazette and State Journal, 1893.
3. Morris, Patricia A. Time Capsules Old and New. Public Records Information Leaflet No. 28. South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
4. Morris, Patricia A. Time Capsules Old and New. Public Records Information Leaflet No. 28. South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
5. “Partnerships.” Delaware Historical Society. <https://dehistory.org/about/about-us/partnerships/>.
6. “Volunteers in Action: GFWC Acorn Club of Seaford.” General Federation of Women’s Clubs.<https://www.gfwc.org/volunteers-in-action-gfwc-acorn-club-of-seaford/>.

REFERENCES USED TO INFORM EXTRACTION METHODS

“Cornerstone Removal.” Alvah N. Belding Library.<https://www.alvahnbeldinglibrary.org/library-cornerstone-and-time-capsule/cornerstone-removal.pdf>.

Lamb, Amy, and Casey Weisdock. “Historic Masonry Restoration Best Practices.” International Masonry Institute.

Friedman, Donald. “Anchoring Systems for Architectural Terra Cotta in Curtain-Wall Construction.” APT Bulletin 32, no. 4 (2001): 17-21.



# CONCLUSION

The analysis completed for this project reveals that the New Century Club and its longtime use as the Delaware Children's Theatre (DCT) share the vision and practice of being essential organizations in the Wilmington community while empowering current and future generations to pursue their dreams and aspirations. In so doing, both organizations embodied these same ideals that Minerva Parker Nichols believed and practiced. The importance of DCT and its historic building to the community was impressed upon us through our engagement with the theater and its users.

DCT is well-positioned to continue Marie Swajeski's dream with the help of available funding and technical preservation services. To that end, our treatment recommendations employ a rehabilitative approach. This method preserves the building's character while adapting its spaces to meet contemporary operational needs. Together these recommendations would help to strengthen DCT and prepare it for the future. They would also enhance its position within the Wilmington arts and funder communities, thereby elevating and

solidifying its essential role for the children and families of Wilmington as well as the city's cultural value and heritage.

As we have come to greatly appreciate, managing an historic building is not for the faint of heart. We applaud DCT for its fortitude and vision to keep the spirit and goals of Minerva Parker Nichols and the women of the New Century Club thriving through its dedication and hard work these many years later.

