

AGENDA

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

September 17, 2019

**4:00 PM, City Council Chambers
130 S Galena Street, Aspen**



I. WORK SESSION

I.A. Arts Facilities Study Update

I.B. Wheeler Parcel - Site Work Plan

I.C. Update 2020 Budget Overview - No Packet Information Provided



Memorandum

TO: Mayor and City Council
CC: Wheeler Opera House Board of Directors

FROM: Gena Buhler, Executive Director, Wheeler Opera House
THROUGH: Jeff Woods, Manager, Parks & Recreation

MEMO DATE: September 10, 2019
MEETING DATE: September 17, 2019
RE: Wheeler Facility Growth - Feasibility Study Findings

REQUEST OF COUNCIL: Staff requests Council direction on the next steps for additional study in preparation for potential repurposing of surplus WRETT funds not needed by Wheeler Opera House operations, programs, and maintenance of its historic facility over the next 20 – 30 years, assuming these funds exist.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: In May 2018, City Council directed Wheeler Opera House staff and Wheeler Board to undertake a feasibility and community needs study to determine if Wheeler Real Estate Transfer Tax (WRETT) funds should be set aside for future expansion of the municipal performing arts facility (located at 320 E Hyman Avenue) on to the adjacent property known as the Wheeler Parcel. City Council's directive was to determine if facility expansion is warranted, and if so:

- What size and type of facility should be built (community, non-profit, arts focus)
- What is the capital cost to build
- When is the optimal time to build
- What is the annual operational financial estimate
- How much annual WRETT subsidy would be required to make the facility viable

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND: In May 2019, the Wheeler contracted Theatre Projects along with Keen Independent Research to complete the feasibility & community studies. The current contract was limited to specifically studying an expansion onto the Wheeler Parcel. Conducted over a four-month time period, work included study of market data and demographics, current and planned facility inventories (including tours of 9 facilities and/or campuses), community and key stakeholder interviews, community meetings, and review of current Wheeler operations of the site.

The community outreach plan included:

- \$5,000 advertising plan (mid May – mid July 2019)
- Public Open House (May 30, 2019) – 24 attendees

- Virtual Workshop / Email Survey (late June – early July)
 - 44 “attendees” of which 3 had attended the May meeting and 9 reported arts group affiliations
- Key Stakeholder Meetings with 12 local organizations plus 4 members of City Council
- Wheeler Board of Directors meeting

To make the determination, Theatre Projects set out to answer two sets of questions. First, they sought to understand if the demographic trends in Aspen and the greater community supported an additional performing arts facility, and whether the Aspen community favored building on the Wheeler Parcel. Second, proved the need and desire existed to build a new facility, was it feasible both financially and operationally for the Wheeler Opera House to build on the site, and would a new facility serve the Wheeler’s mission and future programming plans.

The attached executive summary and final reports from Theatre Projects outline the specific details of the findings – that there is the lack of feasibility for Wheeler Parcel expansion. Building a new facility would put the current operations of Wheeler at risk and would jeopardize Wheeler staff’s ability to plan for and implement capital improvements required to maintain the Wheeler as a premiere venue in the community. While it is possible to design and build a new and exciting facility, the risks to Wheeler operations is too great. This recommendation is based on observations of the Wheeler, survey of the site, and discussions with Wheeler staff regarding the current use of the site, and the existing operations of the Wheeler itself. The primary concerns include the need to reroute audience egress during construction and potentially permanently, re-routing and/or closure of passenger and freight elevators during construction, rerouting load-in/out pathways and orchestration during construction, relocate talent bus and trailer parking permanently, permanently rerouting utilities and plumbing, and site remediation including the possible need to shore up Wheeler and adjacent buildings’ foundations. Current financial projections to build on the site would require using approximately \$30M of the fund balance for full scale development, in addition to a substantial ongoing annual operational subsidy.

The findings reveal a community evenly divided over whether there is a need for another facility within Aspen. Many of the arts leaders and key stakeholders expressed interest in using a small (150 – 200 seat) flexible venue if one existed. Recent approvals for the JAS Center (Red Onion project) could see this flexible space already being added to the inventory soon.

Additionally, the many talented semi-professional artists in the community expressed a strong desire for an inexpensive, small, flexible venue. However, many members of the public perceive a glut of seats and programming in Aspen, especially during peak seasons and are therefore wary of building any additional spaces. There is, however, a strong consensus that preservation of the existing Wheeler Opera House as a historic operating venue is a priority.

Wheeler staff and Board believe it is important to focus on the future needs of the Wheeler building, operations, and fund balance in order to report to City Council if there are potential

unused funds in the future WRETT fund balance once Wheeler operations and need to maintain the historic building over the next 20-30 years is met. In early August 2019, staff negotiated with Theatre Projects to redirect a portion of the contract (approximately 35%-40%) to focus on review of the current 20-year facility master plan. Final work on facility master plan will take place on September 17, 2019 when the consultants are in Aspen. These findings will be sent to Council in an informational memo by early November 2019.

DISCUSSION: The facility inventory and demographic studies confirm that Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley have, for such a small permanent population, an unusually high density of performing arts facilities and successful programming. The inventory for Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley was compared to that of a major metropolitan center – the only real comparison based on the existing density of the community. In these comparable markets, there is a dearth of small, flexible, experimental venues for local artists to utilize, and the recommendation is that if funds and political will existed, the City of Aspen could consider how to fill this gap in performing arts facilities. However, if this falls to the Wheeler's mission and WRETT fund is for discussion of City Council and potentially a public vote.

To put the high demand for performing arts in Aspen in perspective, the number of seats available in all Aspen performing arts venues combined (approximately 6,131) translates into more than one venue seat for every three Aspen to Snowmass Village area residents. This shows how strong the arts are in Aspen relative to the size of the local population.

The Wheeler Board has a strong desire and passion to serve the community with an additional event/cultural arts space in Aspen that is funded by the WRETT and operated under the Wheeler staffing and funding umbrella. In addition, they support additional WRETT funds being designated towards supporting the established cultural institutions through a larger granting program, or other funding models.

Staff feels that there are currently too many unknowns with growth, development and programming across the city to devote time or resources to plans for growth on property not owned by the Wheeler. In addition, with recent HPC & City of Aspen approvals of the proposed JAS Center facility, a space very similar to the outlined community needs may already be in process. Could the best investment of any additional WRETT funds outside of its current purpose be to invest in already established facilities, and either convert or help to improve them versus building a new venue from the ground up; or to simply raise the amount of annual funding to the established arts organizations through an increased grant program?

Following the final analysis of the Wheeler Facility Master Plan (currently estimated at \$20M over 20 years), staff recommends completion of a fuller departmental study to review the current and future operational structure and programming models of the Wheeler Opera House. This final piece of information will help to determine if there are additional WRETT funds available once Wheeler operations and need to maintain its historic facility over the next 20 – 30 years are met. With a fuller long-term funding picture then established, decisions about the uses of the fund outside of Wheeler needs can be better determined.

Any use of WRETT funds outside of the current purpose will require voter approval.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPACTS: If Council directs further study, a supplemental budget request will be submitted in order to cover the additional costs. Staff recommends utilizing Theatre Projects for this additional scope to be the most efficient with the financial outlay and information already gathered during Phase One of the study.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A: Final Consultant Report & Supporting Documentation

Wheeler Opera House

Facility Expansion Study – September 10, 2019

Prepared for Wheeler Opera House

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The following pages form a Study Report for the Wheeler Opera House. This material is for review and discussion and was prepared for Wheeler Opera House.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Study history	6
Scope of this study	6
Wheeler mission and WRETT	7
Demographic analysis Size of the Aspen and Roaring Fork Valley Performing Arts Market.....	7
Summary	13
Aspen and Greater Roaring Fork Region Demographic Characteristics.....	13
Population projections by age group	16
Summary	19
The Wheeler Parcel	20
Background	20
Current use of parcel in Wheeler Operations	20
Options for expansion	22
Feasibility of construction on the parcel	23
Qualitative needs.....	24
Recommendations	25
Conclusion	26
Appendix.....	27
Qualitative findings	27
Construction cost analysis	37
Markup of operational impact.....	38

Executive Summary

In May of 2019, Aspen City Council with the Wheeler Opera House board and management engaged Theatre Projects and Keen Independent to conduct a needs and feasibility study to determine the viability of and need for using excess funds from the Wheeler Real Estate Transfer Tax to expand the Wheeler Opera House onto a Wheeler owned parcel of land adjacent to the existing historic building.

To make our determinations, Theatre Projects and Keen Independent set out to answer two sets of questions. First, we sought to understand if the demographic trends in Aspen and the greater Roaring Fork Valley supported an additional performing arts facility, and whether the Aspen community favored building on the Wheeler Parcel. Second, provided the need and desire existed to build a new facility, was it feasible both financially and operationally for the Wheeler Opera House to build on the parcel, and would a new facility serve Wheeler's mission and future programming plans.

We gathered information through in-person and virtual interviews and meetings, independent research and review of documents, and on-site visits to Roaring Fork Valley arts facilities including the Wheeler Opera House and the Wheeler parcel, and we conclude that:

- There is a need and desire among the community of potential users including established cultural organizations, semi-professional local artists, and the event and conference industry for a small (150-250 seat), flexible, and affordable space in Aspen's core for rehearsals, performances, and other events.
- There is a need to enhance the functionality, quality, and operations of current programming in the historic Wheeler Opera House through improved loading facilities, back-of-house upgrades including storage, wing and fly space, front-of-house upgrades including patron service facilities, and other production infrastructure.
- Construction of a new venue on the Wheeler parcel would put the current operations of Wheeler at risk and would jeopardize Wheeler management's ability to plan for and implement capital improvements required to maintain the Wheeler as a premiere venue in the Roaring Fork Valley.
- Operating an additional venue would stretch an already small staff and necessitate hiring additional Wheeler staff subsidized by WRETT funds thereby further reducing the funds available for construction.

Our analysis leads us to recommend the following next steps:

- Perform a review of the Wheeler 20-year capital plan to identify additional needs, replacements, repairs, and costs of that program to maintain and grow the Wheeler Opera House as a premiere Aspen venue. This study would determine if a WRETT reserve exists and its size. At the guidance of Wheeler management in coordination with City leadership, Theatre Projects has directed resources away from an intended operational analysis of the expansion plan to this capital analysis. An addendum will be issued to this report when that scope is complete.
- Reserve the use of the Wheeler parcel for incremental improvements to the functionality and operations of the historic Wheeler Opera House, including improved loading facilities, back-of-house upgrades (storage, wing and fly space), front-of-house upgrades (patron service facilities), and other improvements that enhance the quality and efficiency of current programming. Design work should be undertaken soon for upgrades that might involve use of the parcel.
- Commission a study to provide concept, costs, and operational models to renovate the existing old Power Station building into a flexible 150-200 seat venue to fill the community need for a multipurpose rehearsal and event space. Because the cost and disruption of an adaptive reuse of this existing city-owned property would be significantly less than construction on the Wheeler parcel, we believe excess WRETT funds could finance this project.

- Commission a study to provide cost estimates to renovate the District Theatre into a world-class venue worthy of Aspen—including additional patron support spaces, back-of-house support spaces, and functional improvements to the auditorium and stage house.
- Determine how much WRETT funding can and should be used for the Power Station and the District Theater upgrades.

We acknowledge that there are significant political and legal questions that would arise from the redirection of WRETT funds away from Wheeler, but Aspen’s clear commitment to arts and culture would be elevated by expanding the inventory of facilities to include a multipurpose hall and upgrading existing facilities throughout town.

Introduction

Study history

Two previous studies have been commissioned and completed on this topic, and in 2015 the City Council rejected a master capital plan that included (on the parcel) a black box theater, meeting space, and artist housing. Subsequently, a new Executive Director joined Wheeler. Since 2015, new management has instituted numerous operational changes at the Wheeler, focusing on expanded programming, and investing in capital renovations and improvements to create a more user-friendly, world-class experience for talent and audiences. The lobby has become a second performance space for small concerts and productions and the loading dock and freight elevator have been improved with additional planned improvements slated for 2019-2020. Programming has expanded from less than 50% of available dates to more than 85%. Wheeler management's current programming plans do not include the need for additional performance space, and though offices and other support spaces have been upgraded and expanded in recent years, support space remains restricted due to the historic nature of the building. We also note that the creation of the "Vault" space in the Wheeler lobby turned an existing space into an intimate 100 seat cabaret-style event space, reducing Wheeler's need to build an alternate performance space on the parcel. Theatre Projects has considered these operational changes in its assessment in this report.

Scope of this study

Theatre Projects and Keen Independent initially understood City Council's directive for this study was to determine first, if facility expansion is warranted, and if so:

- What size and type of facility should be built (community, non-profit, arts focus)?
- What is the capital cost to build?
- When is the optimal time to build?
- What is the operational financial estimate from pre-open through year five?
- How much annual WRETT subsidy would be required to make the facility viable?

The results of the facility inventory, demographic analysis, and qualitative needs assessment paint a picture of a robust and growing cultural and performing arts marketplace throughout the entire Roaring Fork Valley. The density of cultural institutions and availability of performance offerings for residents rival that of many major metropolitan areas. As the region continues to grow, additional seats and venues could be required, and Aspen will see growing competition from new and planned performance spaces Down Valley (communities that are highly connected to Aspen located to the northwest on Highway 82). Our qualitative analysis, conducted through interviews, a public forum, and a virtual workshop, supports the demographic analysis and suggest that Aspen should consider building a small, 150-250 seat, highly flexible and adaptable venue for community, semi-professional, and established organization use for rehearsals, events, and performances at highly subsidized rates. As artists are priced out of housing in Aspen and move down valley, this type of venue could attract artists to perform and produce in Aspen.

Simultaneously with our needs assessment, Theatre Projects began its feasibility work with a visit to the Wheeler and the parcel. Through our observations of the site and conversations with Wheeler staff, we determined that the parcel is not a viable location for the needed venue. We presented those initial findings to the Wheeler board and management in mid-July and suggested adjusting the scope of our study so as not to waste city funds on irrelevant report data. We therefore redirected resources away from operational models for a new facility that we were recommending shouldn't be built, to an analysis of Wheeler's future capital plans. Our goal is to determine how much WRETT funding, if approved by proper channels, could be redirected to renovation of alternate existing

properties within Aspen to fill the need for a new flexible space. We anticipate finishing that newly assigned scope in the fall of 2019.

Wheeler mission and WRETT

The Wheeler Opera House (est. 1889) is a 500-seat historic performing arts facility, owned and operated by the City of Aspen. The Wheeler hosts the Aspen Music Festival and Summer School Opera program during the peak summer months, presents a full slate of music, comedy, and other touring acts at other times (including an overlap summer season in the lobby “Vault” space), and hosts a number of community performances and events throughout the rest of the year. Approximately 300 dates a year are booked with the remainder of time held for maintenance and upgrades. Due to the large demands on the Wheeler’s schedule, community organizations are limited to a maximum of four rental days for each desired program, especially during peak season. Wheeler management plans to continue growing programming through partnerships in the community and the use of alternate spaces as the opportunities arise.

The Wheeler is largely supported by the Wheeler Real Estate Transfer Tax (WRETT), a small percentage of the city-imposed tax on transfers of real property, which provides for the general operation and maintenance of the physical facility. Management targets an operational subsidy level of 85% annually. This allows for affordable ticket prices and community use of the facility at reduced rental rates, at or below cost. In addition, the fund balance of the WRETT ensures the continued operation and success of the facility. In recent years as the value of Aspen real estate has climbed, so has the WRETT fund balance providing a current estimated balance of \$30M.

“The mission of the Wheeler Opera House is to monitor and ensure the preservation and viability of the historic venue and its property through exceptional performance experiences for residents, guests and performers, and to support the cultural assets of the Roaring Fork Valley.”

The Wheeler Opera House is advised by a City Council appointed Board of Directors.

The Wheeler also operates a community box office—Aspen Show Tix; selling tickets for in-house and off-site clients throughout the Roaring Fork Valley. Box Office operations are managed by Wheeler staff from the first floor of the facility and are open for in person and phone transactions, as well as online access.

Demographic analysis

Size of the Aspen and Roaring Fork Valley Performing Arts Market

Keen Independent conducted a market analysis of Aspen and the Greater Roaring Fork Valley to understand current and future supply and demand for performing arts and associated venues.

Number of performing arts venues and performances

The Aspen marketplace is rich with cultural offerings and events. Keen Independent identified 13 event spaces in Aspen, nine of which are performing arts venues. On average, there is one performing arts venue per 0.43 square miles of area within Aspen city limits.

In addition to the hundreds of events that happen annually at the Wheeler Opera House, hundreds more take place throughout Aspen simultaneously. Aspen Music Festival takes place June through August presenting up to ten events daily at over 60 different locations throughout Aspen, totaling over 100 ticketed events and nearly 200 free events every summer. In addition, Belly Up Aspen presents over 300 live concerts annually and Theatre Aspen has performing arts events almost every day of the summer. Given the size of the resident and visitor market, there is a wide variety of performing arts and a large number of performances in Aspen.

Figure 1-1 is a list of performing arts venues in the Greater Roaring Fork Region (GRFR) organized by distance from the Wheeler. Six performing arts venues are within approximately one mile of driving distance from the Wheeler Opera House. Two of these venues are small (100–200 seats), three are medium-sized (450–500 seats) and one is large (2,050 seats). As of the date of this report, Jazz Aspen Snowmass received approval from Aspen City Council to create a new 125-250 seat cabaret/music club at the Red Onion Building, the seventh venue within one mile of Wheeler.

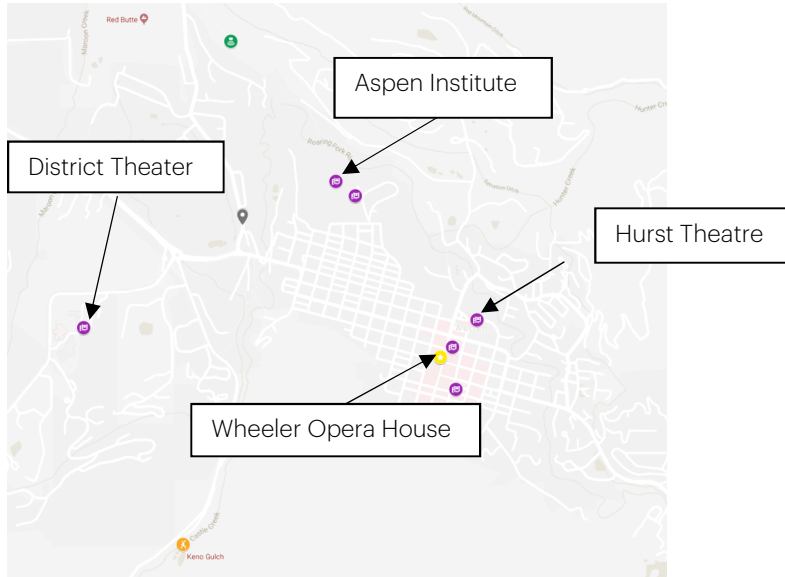
Figure 1-1
Inventory of event venues in the Greater Roaring Fork Region

Venue name	City	Seat count	Type of Venue	Driving distance from the Wheeler
Wheeler Opera House	Aspen	450	Theater (fixed seating)	0.0
Vault at the Wheeler	Aspen	100	Event space	0.0
Isis Theater	Aspen	65-161	Movie theater	0.0
Jazz Aspen Snowmass arts center (proposed)	Aspen	125-250	Club/studio	0.1
Belly Up Aspen	Aspen	450	Club	0.2
Hurst Theatre	Aspen	200	Theater (fixed seating)	0.3
Red Brick Center for the Arts	Aspen		Studio	0.5
Benedict Music Tent	Aspen	2,050	Amphitheater (covered)	1.0
Joan and Irving Harris Concert Hall	Aspen	500	Theater (fixed seating)	1.0
Paepcke Auditorium	Aspen	420	Theater (fixed seating)	1.1
Greenwald Pavilion	Aspen	300-750	Event space	1.2
Rio Grande Park	Aspen		Other	1.3
Aspen District Theatre	Aspen	550	Theater (fixed seating)	2.1
Aspen High School Black Box Theater	Aspen	200	Theater (flexible)	2.1
Matthew and Carolyn Bucksbaum Campus	Aspen		Studio	2.8
The Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW) (proposed)	Basalt	250	Theater (flexible)	22.2
Carbondale Creative District	Carbondale		Other	29.4
Crystal Theatre	Carbondale	125	Movie theater	29.4
Launchpad, The	Carbondale		Studio	29.4
Thunder River Theatre Company	Carbondale	90-120	Theater (flexible)	29.5
Sopris Park	Carbondale		Other	31.0

Source: Keen Independent Research

Figure 1-2 shows the location of Aspen performing arts venues in relation to the Wheeler. The Wheeler is marked by a yellow star.

Figure 1-2
Map of event venues in Aspen

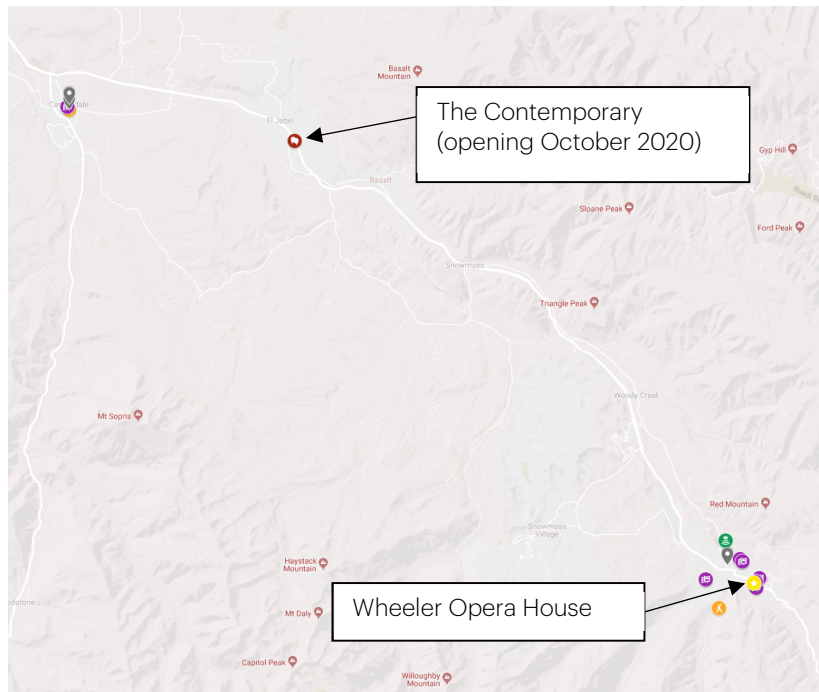


Source: Keen Independent Research; Google Maps

Figure 1-3 shows Aspen and other Roaring Fork Valley performing arts venues. Note that The Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW) is fundraising to construct, The Contemporary, a new 240-seat performing arts venue with a community room, lobby/workspace, outdoor amphitheater and other support spaces. An Aspen Times article stated that TACAW has a goal of opening this facility in October 2020.¹ Based on in-depth interviews with arts community leaders and area population projections², the study team expects that facilities like TACAW will continue to construct Down Valley. There also appears to be sufficient current and future demand for Down Valley communities to support these venues.

Figure 1-3

Map of event venues in the Greater Roaring Fork Region



Source: Keen Independent Research; Google Maps.

Aspen Performing Arts Market

Aspen is a performing arts destination during summer months. For example, the Aspen Chamber Resort Association Summer 2016 Visitor Research report found that two-thirds of survey respondents visited at least one event or venue during their trip to Aspen. As one arts organization representative reported to Keen Independent, “The arts are a big engine of the summer economy.”

To understand the size of the potential Aspen performing arts market, the study team examined the following reports:

- U.S. Census data (American Community Survey);
- Greater Roaring Fork Region Housing Study;

¹ Condon, Scott. 2019. “Plan tweaked for Basalt performing arts center after loss of The Temporary.” *The Aspen Times*. <https://www.aspentimes.com/news/plan-tweaked-for-basalt-performing-arts-center-after-loss-of-the-temporary/>

² The Colorado State Demography Office estimates the population of Pitkin, Garfield and Eagle Counties to rise over the next thirty years. <https://data.colorado.gov/>

- Destimetrics Aspen Lodging Inventory Reports;
- City of Aspen Municipal Water Efficiency Plan (2015); and
- Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District Wastewater Flow Chart.

Aspen population and visitors

Keen Independent's analysis begins with Aspen area residents and visitors.

Resident population

The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2012–2017 estimate stated that there were 14,855 people living in the Aspen/Snowmass area and 86,518 people living throughout the rest of the Greater Roaring Fork Valley.

Short-term rental units³

The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study determined that the Aspen/Snowmass area has 1,094 short-term rental units, where the units are rented for up to 60 days. In 2017, there were 4,521 vacant units, or secondary homes, in the Aspen/Snowmass area for the seasonal population.⁴

Short-term beds⁵

According to the Destimetrics Aspen Lodging Inventory Report, in 2015, Aspen had 9,193 short-term beds available for guests for stays up to 30 days with an average occupancy of 57 percent in 2015.

Average number of individuals in Aspen per day

To estimate the average number of individuals in Aspen each day (including residents, visitors and people working in the city), the study team analyzed wastewater flow records of the local wastewater utility. The Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District developed a wastewater flow analysis to calculate the number of people who were in Aspen each day from 2015 to 2017, assuming each person generates an average of 70 gallons of wastewater per day.⁶ With this methodology, we estimated that the daily average number of people in Aspen between 2015 and 2017 was about 18,600.

Keen Independent also analyzed monthly variations in the average number of people in Aspen each day. As shown in Figure 1-4 there were peaks in January and July averaging 21,299 and 23,416 people respectively for 2015–2017. Note that the Greater Roaring Fork Region Housing Study determined that in 2015, the Aspen/Snowmass Area had 2,465 individuals commuting out of the area and 9,913 commuting into the area for work. These numbers of commuters, who are neither visitors nor residents of Aspen, should also be considered when observing estimates in the Figure 1-4.

³ The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study defined short-term rental as the rental of a furnished home, apartment, or condominium for a "short-term stay." Definitions of "short-term" vary from 5 days or fewer to up to 60 days. Short-term rental units can be managed independently by owners or third-party representatives and/or advertised via online platforms such as www.airbnb.com, www.vrbo.com, or others.

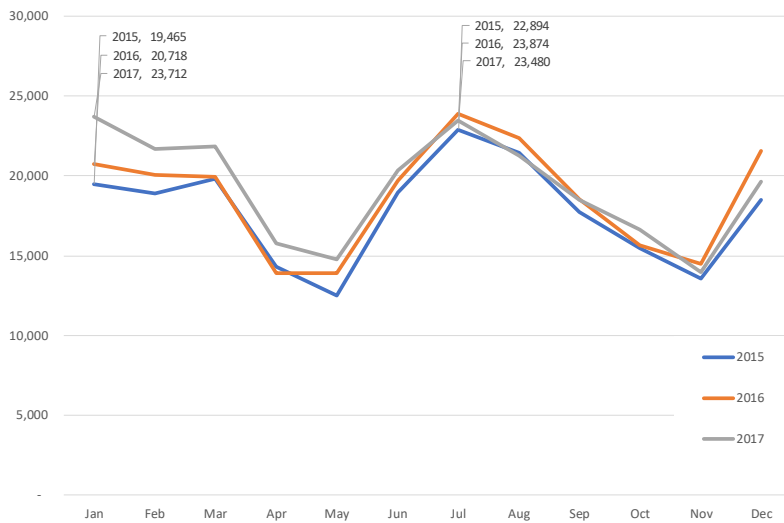
⁴ The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study specified that vacant units are for seasonal use.

⁵ Note: The Destimetrics Aspen Lodging Inventory Report defines "short-term beds" as the number of units and/or pillows for traditional lodging (hotels/lodges), as well as for condos and private homes.

⁶ Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District: <https://aspensan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Copy-of-Flow-through-11.6.18.pdf>. Note that use of these data are an estimate, because many factors contribute to wastewater flow. Water usage can vary widely from 70–120 gallons per person per day.

Figure 1-4

Average number of people in Aspen by month (assuming 70 gallons of wastewater per person)



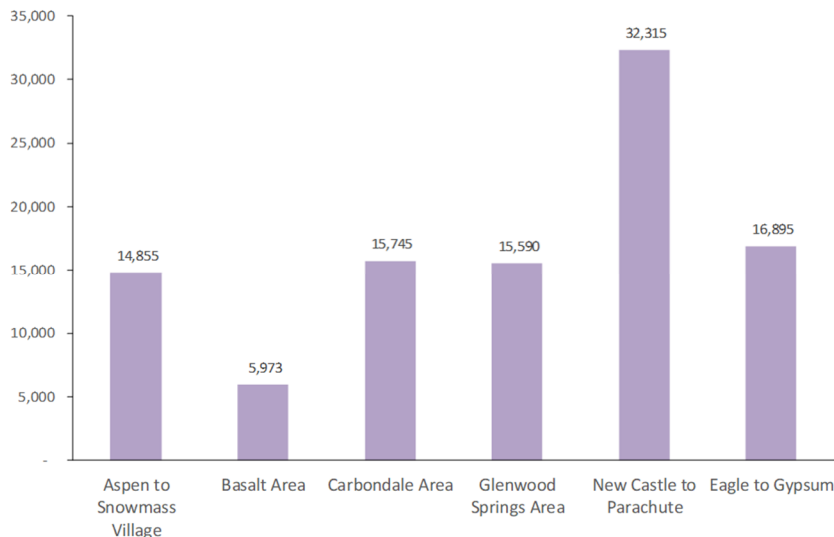
Source: Aspen Consolidated Sanitation District Wastewater Flow Chart, 2018

Greater Roaring Fork Region population

Figure 1-5 shows the 2017 population of Greater Roaring Fork Region areas. Note that these distinct areas were determined by zip code in The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study, and the study team applied the same methodology when gathering population data from the American Community Survey.

Figure 1-5

Population of Greater Roaring Fork Region areas, 2017



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2012–2017 estimate

Summary

To put the high demand for performing arts in Aspen in perspective, the number of seats available in all Aspen performing arts venues combined (approximately 6,131) translates into more than one venue seat for every three Aspen to Snowmass Village area residents. This shows how strong the performing arts are in Aspen relative to the size of the local population, a dynamic that will likely persist if the community continues to invest in performing arts.

Aspen and Greater Roaring Fork Region Demographic Characteristics

Keen Independent studied demographic characteristics of performing arts audiences in the National Endowment for the Arts Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), a national study on arts participation. We compared these characteristics to the demographics of Aspen and the Greater Roaring Fork Region.

Arts attendance by demographics

Nationally, per-capita arts attendance is higher for people with greater income and who have higher levels of educational attainment. In addition, adults over the age of 55 attend more performances per year than adults who are younger.⁷ Keen Independent examined income, education and age profile of residents and visitors to the region.

Household income

Relatively high incomes of residents and visitors is one reason why arts attendance is high. In the 2012 SPPA, 49 percent of individuals with a family income of \$100,000 to \$150,000 and 62 percent of individuals with a family income of \$150,000 and over attended an arts event in 2012.

- According to the Aspen Chamber Resort Association Summer 2016 Visitor Research, median annual household income in 2016 for summer visitors was \$135,000 and 62 percent of visitor households made over \$100,000 annually.
- The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study (2019) found that approximately 40 percent of Aspen/Snowmass area households made over \$100,000 annually.⁸

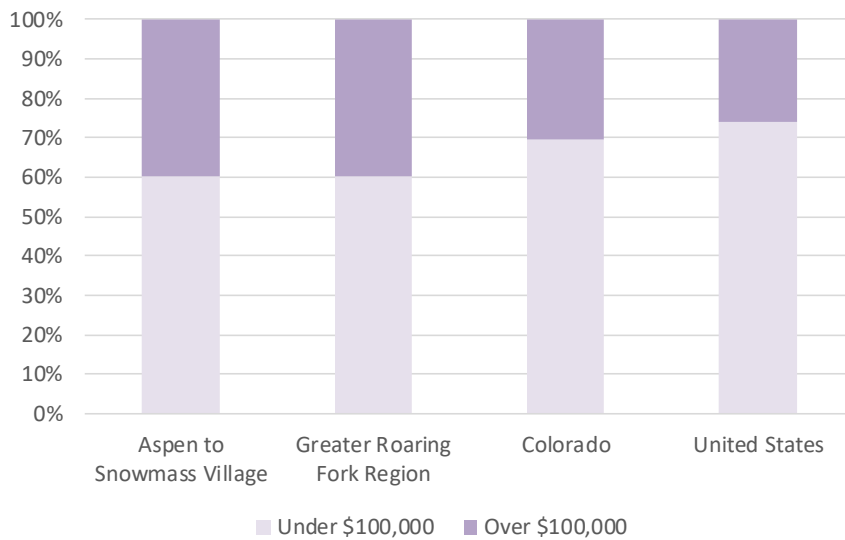
⁷ A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002–2012. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2012-sppa-feb2015.pdf>.

⁸ Note that the Aspen/Snowmass area includes Aspen, Snowmass and Woody Creek. The Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study gathered data for this area by zip code and the study team used the same zip codes when finding more demographic data through the US Census Bureau American Community Survey.

Figure 2-1 shows the percentage of households with average annual incomes over \$100,000 in the Aspen/Snowmass area, Greater Roaring Fork Region, Colorado and United States. A higher proportion of the Aspen/Snowmass resident and visitor households make over \$100,000 annually compared to Colorado (30 percent in 2017) and the United States (26 percent in 2017).⁹

Figure 2-1

Percentage of households by annual household income



Source: Greater Roaring Fork Regional Housing Study, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017

Educational attainment

The 2012 SPPA found that people with a graduate degree are three times more likely than high school graduates to attend a benchmark activity.¹⁰ Figure 2-2 shows the Aspen/Snowmass area population and the whole Greater Roaring Fork Region (age 25 and older) by educational attainment.

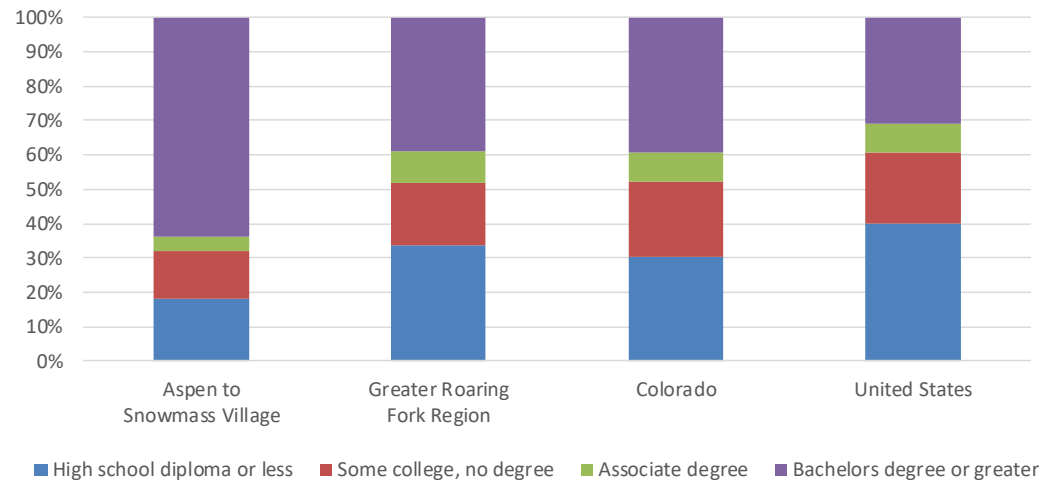
Aspen/Snowmass residents tend to have more years of education than adults in Colorado and the United States as a whole. In the Aspen/Snowmass area, 64 percent of residents over 25 have a four-year college degree. This is much higher than the 39 percent of Colorado adults over 25 and 31 percent for the U.S. population over 25.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017.

¹⁰ The SPPA benchmark activities are jazz events, classical music performances, opera, musical plays, non-musical plays, ballet and art museums or galleries. These activities are called “benchmark” because participation in them has been tracked since 1982, not because of any significance or value to the arts.

Figure 2-2

Percentage of population age 25+ by educational attainment, 2017

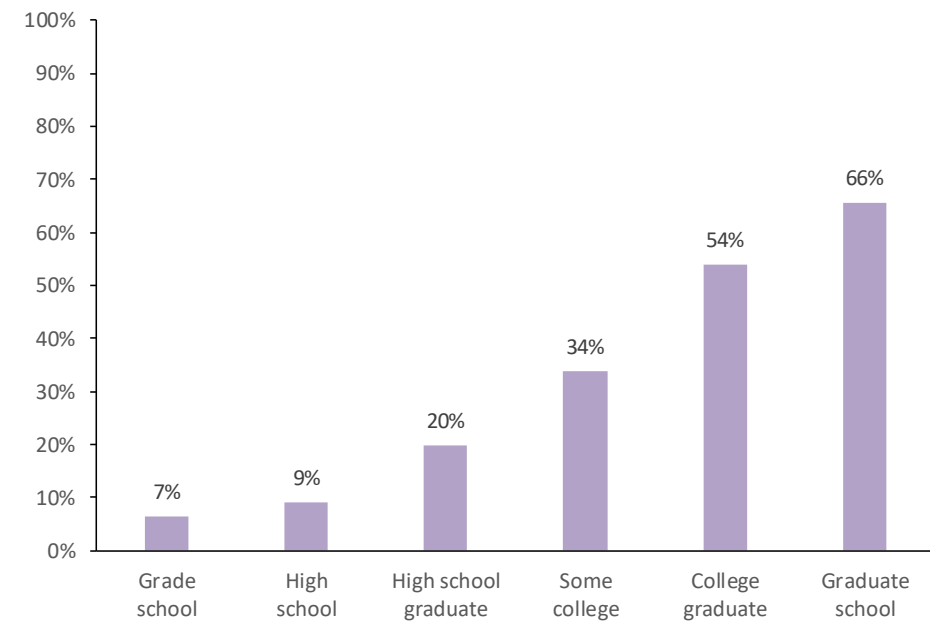


Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

Figure 2-3 shows the rate of attendance of the U.S. population to a benchmark arts activity by education level.

Figure 2-3

Rate of attendance by highest level of education



Source: Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2012

Population projections by age group

The future could bring some additional demand for performing arts due to the projected population growth in the region and continued visitor growth.

Current age profiles

Figure 2-4 shows the population of the Aspen/Snowmass area and Greater Roaring Fork Region by age group.

Figure 2-4
Population by age, 2017

	Aspen to Snowmass Village		Greater Roaring Fork Region	
0-4	550	3.7 %	6,397	6.3 %
5-9	547	3.7	7,603	7.5
10-14	831	5.6	6,527	6.4
15-19	725	4.9	6,116	6.0
20-24	790	5.3	4,978	4.9
25-34	2,433	16.4	14,350	14.2
35-44	2,028	13.7	14,656	14.5
45-54	2,219	14.9	14,700	14.5
55-64	2,230	15.0	13,976	13.8
65-74	1,692	11.4	8,154	8.0
75-84	599	4.0	2,804	2.8
85 and older	211	1.4	1,112	1.1
Total	14,855	100.0 %	101,373	100.0 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

Pitkin county projections

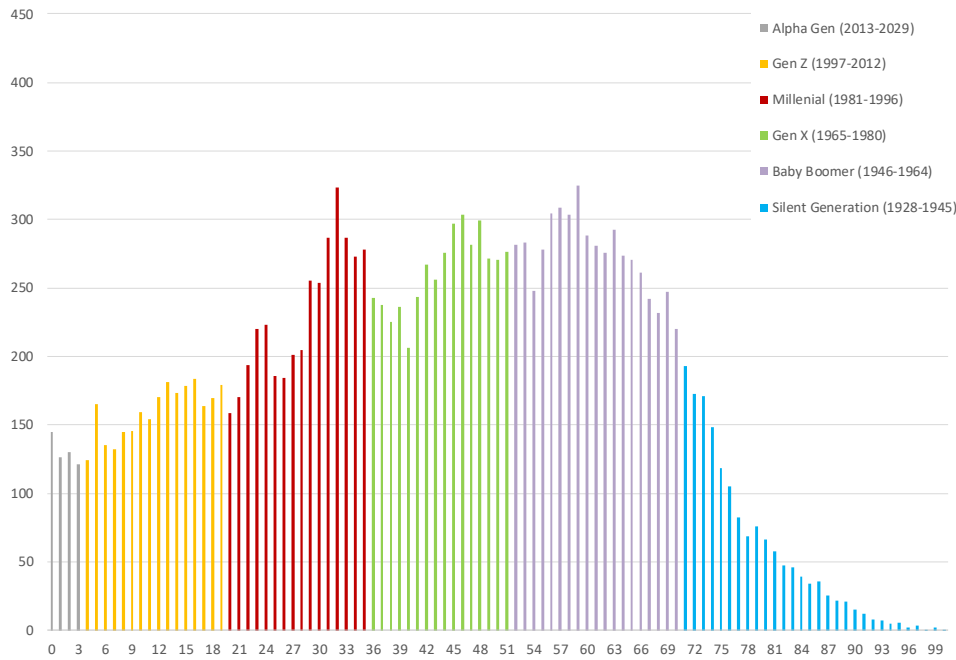
Population projections provided by the Colorado State Demography Office show that the Pitkin county population is projected to grow from 17,773 in 2016 to 23,209 in 2050.¹¹ Compound annual growth rate is projected to be 0.8 percent.

Figures 2-5 and 2-6 on the following page show the age distribution for Pitkin County in 2016 and 2050, respectively, based on the Colorado State Demography Office forecast. Note that Keen Independent shows a 20-year age cohort of people who will be born between 2030 and 2050 as “Beta Gen” (name invented to follow the “Alpha Gen” generation now being born).

The oldest generations (age 55+) will make up a smaller percentage of the Pitkin County population in 2050 than in 2016. This is less favorable for per-capita arts attendance because individuals age 55+ have the highest per-capita annual arts attendance based on national data. The 2012 SPPA found the rate of attendance for individuals under 55 is 30–34 percent, 36–38 percent for individuals 55 to 74 and 26 percent for individuals 75 and older. However, the total number of residents age 55+ is still projected to increase over this time period.

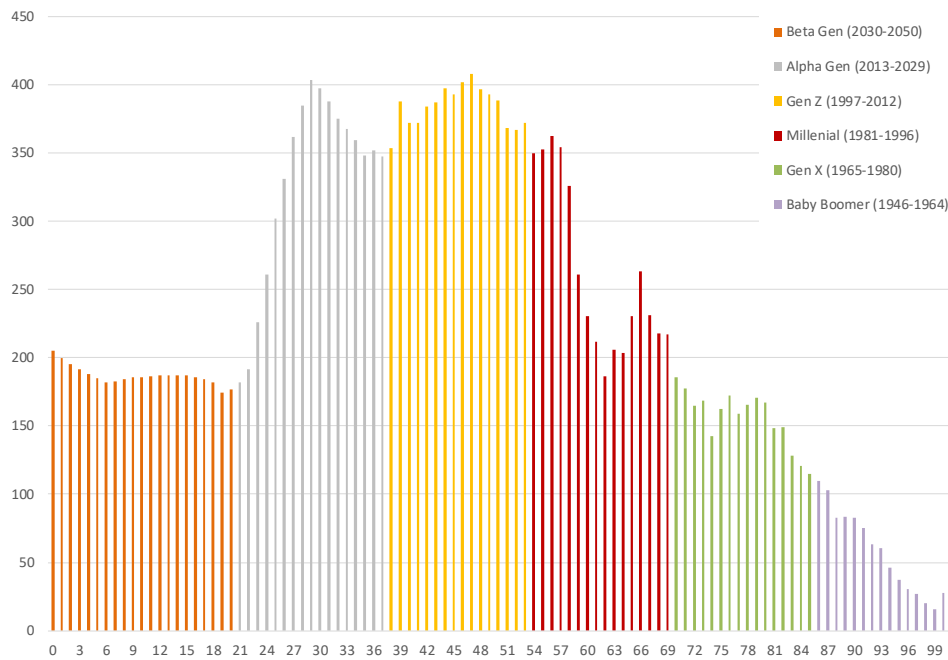
¹¹ Colorado State Demography Office: <https://data.colorado.gov/>.

Figure 2-5
Population by age for Pitkin County, 2016 estimate



Source: Colorado State Demography Office. <https://data.colorado.gov/>

Figure 2-6
Population by age for Pitkin County, 2050 forecast



Source: Colorado State Demography Office. <https://data.colorado.gov/>

Tri-county projections

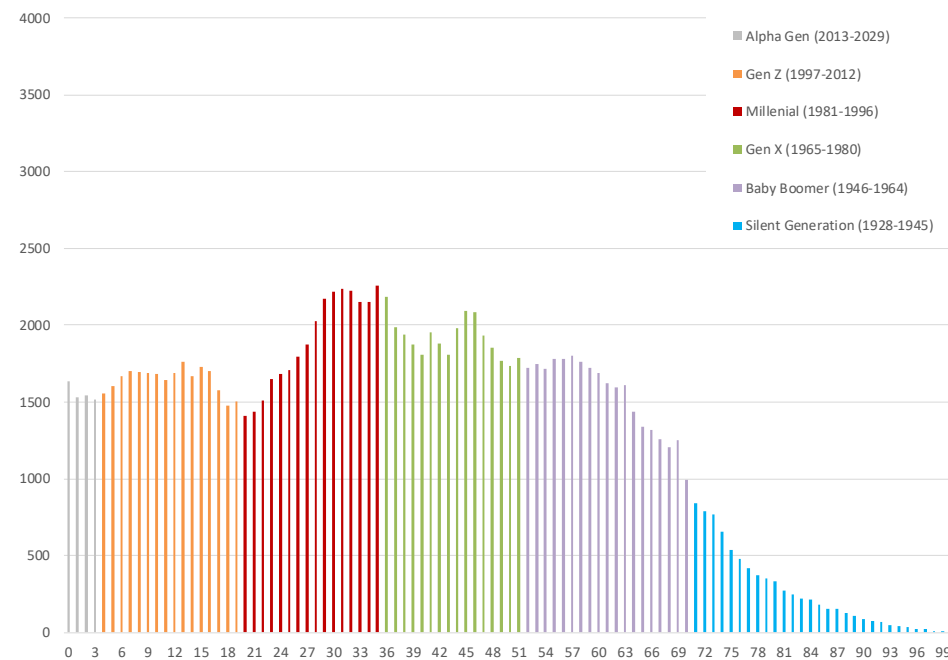
To analyze the rate of future population growth that is more representative of the Greater Roaring Fork Valley, the study team added population projections for Eagle and Garfield counties to those for Pitkin County. The population of Pitkin, Eagle and Garfield counties combined is projected to increase from 130,685 in 2016 to 223,379 in 2050. The compound annual growth rate is projected to be 1.6 percent — twice as fast as Pitkin County alone. Applying a 1.6 percent annual population growth rate to the current population of the Greater Roaring Fork Region (101,373) would result in 69,792 new residents between 2017 and 2050.

It is also instructive to examine the age distribution for the three counties combined. Figure 2-7 shows the age distribution for Pitkin, Eagle and Garfield counties combined in 2016. Figure 2-8 shows the Colorado State Demography Office’s forecasted age distribution for this area in 2050.

These two figures show that the oldest generations of the Greater Roaring Fork Valley are projected to make up a larger portion of the population in 2050 than in 2016, and many Down Valley residents go up valley for performing arts events. Note that potential future performing arts venues Down Valley, such as TACAW’s future performing arts center building plans for The Contemporary and The Permanent in Basalt, may affect Aspen’s performing arts attendance of Down Valley residents.

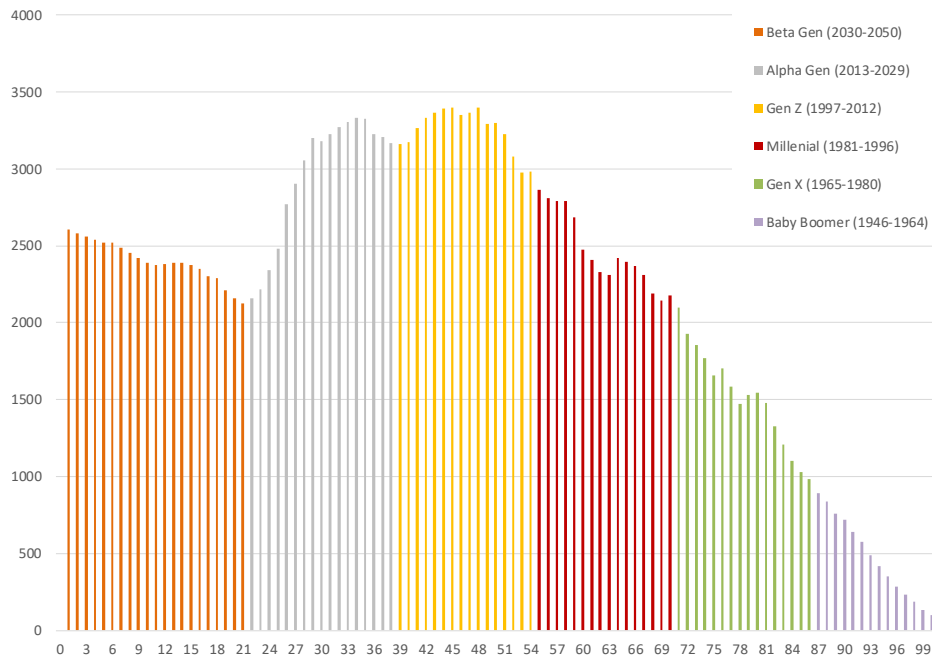
Figure 2-7

Population by age for Pitkin, Garfield and Eagle counties, 2016 estimate



Source: Colorado State Demography Office: <https://data.colorado.gov/>

Figure 2-8
Population by age for Pitkin, Garfield and Eagle Counties, 2050 forecast



Source: Colorado State Demography Office: <https://data.colorado.gov/>

Summary

The projected demographics of the Greater Roaring Fork Valley are favorable overall for the performing arts market in Aspen. Aspen/Snowmass area residents have a high amount of income and education, which increases their potential to attend arts events. As the number of Aspen/Snowmass residents continues to grow, the number of potential arts attendees grows. However, future Down Valley investment in the performing arts may increase competition in the arts marketplace.

The Wheeler Parcel

Background

The Wheeler Opera House acquired the adjoining mid-block parcels on East Hyman Street as part of the 1984 renovation of the Wheeler Opera House. We understand that parcels were originally required to enlarge the Wheeler facilities by upgrading office space, adding storage, a secondary performance venue, additional retail, and perhaps provide some artist housing. The parcel is bounded by the Wheeler Opera House to the east, a multiuse development to the west, East Hyman Ave to the south, and the service alley to the north. For political, functional, and financial reasons, the parcel was never developed though renovations and upgrades to the Wheeler have been undertaken numerous times during the last 35 years.



Current use of parcel in Wheeler Operations

- The portion of the parcel (approximately 1/3 of the total parcel) that fronts onto E. Hyman Ave. currently is used as an outdoor gathering space for Wheeler staff and patrons. While not a public park, this front portion of the parcel currently acts as such, with art displays, seating, trees, and plantings (Figure 3-1).
- There is indication that city utilities including plumbing for the fountains in the Aspen Pedestrian Mall across the street run directly under the center of the parcel (Figure 3-2).
- There is a fence separating the front portion from the rear of the parcel. A path and a locked gate on the west side of the parcel provide access to the Wheeler loading dock and stage to the rear of the parcel.

Figure 3-1



Figure 3-2



The rear 2/3 of the parcel is used for staff, talent, and road company parking. It is also used for tour bus staging with shore power bus hookups available (Figure 3-3).

The parcel currently provides the only access to the loading dock and freight elevator. Because trailers cannot easily turn into the alleyway behind the Wheeler and are not allowed to block the alleyway, in order to load shows into the Wheeler, trailers must be parked on East Hyman Ave and show material is rolled across the front of the parcel, through the gate and into the loading dock and freight elevator. Upgrades to the loading dock are planned for 2020 to ease this process.

Access is through the parcel to staff and stage door entrances and is a secondary means of audience egress from the Wheeler Opera House through a fire stairwell on the west side of the Wheeler Opera House. The lobby passenger elevator shaft, the freight elevator shaft, west fire stairs all currently sit within the parcel.

Wheeler mechanicals including power transformers and HVAC compressors also sit within the parcel footprint (Figure 3-4).

Though undeveloped, the Wheeler parcel is integral to the smooth operation of the Wheeler Opera House.

Figure 3-3



Figure 3-4



Options for expansion

As part of our study, Theatre Projects pursued two development options for the parcel for operational impact analysis and cost estimation.

Option 1 – Full scale development

Our initial study called for a program and building similar to the plan proposed in the 2009 masterplan and includes a 150-seat flexible space, additional office and meeting space, new storage, and an upgraded and expanded lobby for Wheeler. Though we did not develop a full program plan, using our estimates of gross square footage and the information from previous programming studies, we estimate this option to encompass 30,000 gross square feet. With an estimated price per square foot of \$1000/ sq ft (see appendix for comparables) this option would require a \$30M budget.

Option 2 – Partial development

The second option we considered developed only the front 1/3 of the property—approximately the same footprint as the existing green space. Our program for this option included upgraded and expanded Wheeler lobby, a 99-seat flexible event and rehearsal hall, and retail space on the ground floor. This option leaves the rear 2/3 of the parcel unchanged for Wheeler loading and staging functions. We estimate this program to include about 12,000 gross square feet at a construction cost of \$12M.

Feasibility of construction on the parcel

Operational impacts

Any construction on the parcel will have significant negative operational impacts on the current Wheeler operations. We note that though the community is divided on whether to build on the parcel, the community strongly believes that no expansion should adversely impact the Wheeler Opera House operations.

Construction is tightly regulated in Aspen. Excavation and envelope work can only be done in the short shoulder seasons and exterior work must stop during the peak seasons. This severely elongates construction timelines, especially for a full development of the parcel that would require significant excavation. We estimate that Wheeler operations could be disrupted for 24-36 months during construction.

The environmental condition of the Wheeler parcel is unknown, and we did not study the structural integrity of the historic Wheeler Opera House. Should construction on the parcel be approved, mitigation of environmental and engineering unknowns will require time and budget in any planning. City utilities will likely have to be re-routed from under the parcel, and existing Wheeler power and mechanicals will need to be replaced.

Any development of the Wheeler parcel will interfere with current loading dock operations. As equipment is currently brought in from Hyman Ave, variances will need to be provided at least during construction, and perhaps permanently, to allow for Wheeler to load and unload trucks from the alley. Reconfiguration of Wheeler loading and parking operations to accommodate a venue on the parcel may not be feasible without variances on the use of the alley behind Wheeler to allow trucks to enter the alley and park there during load-ins, strikes, and some performances. This will likely disrupt the operations of the commercial tenants on the block who use that alley as well as sanitation activities. Alternately, a new curb cut on East Hyman Avenue would need to be approved by the city to allow trucks to park and load and unload through the front of the parcel.

Both development options would require the lobby passenger elevator to be razed and reconstructed. We caution that the elevator shaft exceeds Wheeler's historic height and reconstruction may require a variance from the city and HPC. Similarly, a full parcel development would require razing and reconfiguring the current loading dock, freight elevator, and emergency egress path for the Wheeler. Reconstructing these may require zoning variances as well. Should construction cause any delays to reconstruction of egress paths, Wheeler would be unusable as a theatre during the delay.

Operational considerations and ongoing costs

Though we did not complete our operational analysis at the direction of Wheeler management, we note that the Wheeler staff already works long hours to oversee all current activities in the Wheeler. An additional venue will require additional staff, at least 3 FTE staff members—production, facilities, and programming. As the current community use of the Wheeler is highly subsidized—our preliminary analysis shows that most community and non-profit rentals are provided at less than cost—those users would expect similar or lower rental costs for the new venue. New staff costs will not be supported by new revenue requiring additional WRETT subsidies to Wheeler operations.

Qualitative needs

Keen Independent and Theatre Projects gathered qualitative data from Greater Roaring Fork Region arts organization representatives, community members and community leaders to understand the performing arts needs and wants of the community. Keen Independent and Theatre Projects conducted a public meeting, a virtual workshop, in-depth interviews, area venue walkthroughs and stakeholder meetings.

Public meeting

The public meeting took place on May 30, 2019 at the Wheeler Opera House and had 24 stakeholders in attendance. The Keen Independent and Theatre Projects study team presented the following discussion prompts:

- What needs exist for new performance space in Aspen?
- If a new performance space is constructed, what capabilities should it have? Configuration?
- How many seats?
- What other types of spaces are needed (rehearsal space, office space, etc.)?
- If a new space is built, how could it improve the experience at the Wheeler Opera House?
- Should a new space be built?

Comments from the public meeting are identified in appendix as #W (i.e. #W-1, #W-2, #W-3 and so on).

Virtual workshop

Keen Independent and Theatre Projects conducted a virtual workshop with the Aspen community that was available for responses from June 20, 2019 to July 6, 2019. Wheeler staff sent an invitation to everyone in the AspenShowTix email list with a Colorado address (about 20,000 people), advertised the workshop and put a social plan in place to promote the workshop. Keen Independent sent virtual workshop invitations to the attendees of the May 30, 2019 public meeting.

Forty-four arts community members and supporters attended the virtual workshop. They were asked nine open-ended questions regarding a potential new performance/event space next to the Wheeler Opera House. Of these respondents, nine reported themselves as artists or affiliated with an arts organization. Three respondents attended the public meeting.

The study team asked the following questions to virtual workshop attendees:

- Is there currently enough performance/event space in Aspen? Please explain.
- Are you, or other arts and nonprofit organizations that you know of, interested in using a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler Opera House? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits and/or barriers to using the Wheeler Opera House?
- If interested in a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler Opera House, describe your ideal performance space. Please be specific about seat count, configuration and technology.
- For the space you described next to the Wheeler Opera House, what would you expect or be able to pay per day (rent and staff costs)? Please explain.
- If your ideal space was available next to the Wheeler Opera House, how many days per year would you utilize it and how often? Please describe the frequency in which you would utilize the space and during what time of year. (For example, using the space on Saturdays and Sundays, five times per year during spring and fall.)

- If a space were to be built next to the Wheeler Opera House, what other types of amenities would you use? (For example, rehearsal space, office space, meeting space, scene/costume shop, other.)
- If applicable, where do you currently perform, rehearse and/or house your administrative staff? Do you rent or own these facilities?
- Do you have any other input to provide to inform the study?

Comments from the virtual workshop are identified in appendix as #VW (i.e. #VW-1, #VW-2, #VW-3 and so on).

Additional stakeholder meetings and in-depth interviews

Additional stakeholder meetings and in-depth interviews took place May through July and involved Wheeler Opera House staff, City of Aspen staff and over 30 arts and community stakeholders.

Comments from stakeholder meetings and in-depth interviews are identified in appendix as #SH (i.e. #SH-1, #SH-2, #SH-3 and so on).

Qualitative findings

Based on community member comments, the community appears to be divided on multiple parts of the future use of Wheeler Real Estate Transfer Tax (WRETT) funds such as whether to expand the Wheeler, where to expand the Wheeler, the specifications of a new performing arts venue, whether the community needs a new performing arts venue, whether the excess WRETT funding is necessary for the arts and if/how some of the WRETT funding should be repurposed.

Although the community is divided on the future use of WRETT funds, there is a general consensus that the structure and operations of the Wheeler should be free of risk and disruptions.

Recommendations

Though our needs analysis suggests that a flexible, multiuse, 150-200 seat venue would be a welcome addition to the Aspen community, we recommend against developing that facility on the Wheeler parcel. We believe that the operational, financial, and goodwill risks to the existing Wheeler programming and brand outweigh any new benefits to the Aspen arts community.

We, therefore, recommend that Aspen City Council and the Wheeler reserve the parcel for current Wheeler operations and incremental upgrades as planned.

We recommend further exploration of the Wheeler lobby addition plan (our Option 2) to determine if the required zoning, historic preservation, and planning variances would be approved. This addition would solve some of the existing challenges Wheeler faces in its historic building.

We encourage the City to look to redeveloping the old power plant space into a multipurpose, flexible venue as an adaptive reuse to fill the growing needs of the Aspen arts and cultural community.

We recommend determining the funding needs for Wheeler's capital plan over the next 20-30 years to determine if and by how much the WRETT fund will exceed those needs. The determination of what to do with any excess funds is a political issue best determined by the City and the community.

Conclusion

Aspen's long-standing commitment to fostering world-class arts and culture within its small community is a unique draw and economic engine for the city. A continued investment in growing its cultural resources through improvements to and adaptive reuse of existing venues and with the funds available through the WRETT will allow Aspen to compete in drawing audiences from new venues down-valley and drive long-term economic growth.

Appendix

Qualitative findings

Below is a synthesis of qualitative input gathered during this study. The study team organized this input into 11 topics:

- A. Benefits to utilizing the Wheeler;
- B. Barriers to utilizing the Wheeler;
- C. Interest in a new performing arts venue in Aspen;
- D. Location preferences for a new performing arts venue;
- E. Ideal venue specifications for a new performing arts venue;
- F. Other needs in a new performing arts venue;
- G. Fair market price to utilize a new performing arts venue;
- H. Potential utilization of a new performing arts venue;
- I. Current accommodations utilized by performing arts organizations;
- J. Updates to existing performing arts venues; and
- K. Other input to inform the study.

A. Benefits to utilizing the Wheeler

The community holds the Wheeler in high regard. When asked about benefits to utilizing the Wheeler, they mentioned aesthetics and central location most often.

Comments about the Wheeler's aesthetics include:

- Many individuals described the Wheeler as "beautiful." [#VW-07, #VW-14, #VW-18, #VW-24, #VW-27, #VW-29, #VW-34, #VW-45]
- Several respondents described the Wheeler as "historic." [#VW-09, #VW-29, #VW-34]
- Other respondents described the Wheeler as "grand" or "classic." [#VW-01, #VW-15]
- One stakeholder reported, "It is a cherished venue for all of the Aspen community to enjoy." [#VW-08]
- Another stakeholder reported, "The Wheeler is a timeless classic, five-star, world-class, stunning venue and its wild west grandeur makes even the worst performance seem worth sitting through." [#VW-22]
- "The space, in itself, has been remarked on by many performers as one of the most beautiful theaters they have ever played [in]," commented a virtual workshop participant. [#VW-34]

Other comments about benefits to utilizing the Wheeler include:

- Six respondents reported location as a benefit to the Wheeler. [#VW-09, #VW-11, #VW-27, #VW-31, #VW-36, #VW-43]
- Two respondents noted that the Wheeler has good acoustics. [#VW-13, #VW-28]
- One stakeholder reported, "[The Wheeler is] the best of the Colorado opera houses." [#VW-04]
- A community member described the Wheeler as "a bonafide opera house in a small town with world class performances." [#VW-06]
- Another community member remarked, "Constituents [are offered] a real operatic experience right here in the valley." [#VW-10]
- One respondent mentioned availability as a benefit. [#VW-11]
- Another respondent mentioned, "[The Wheeler is] the right size and proportions for this small City of Aspen." [#VW-29]

- A community member reported, “It is close to public transportation and ... a perfect size.” [#VW-29]
- One respondent noted the professional staff and “state-of-the-art equipment” as a benefit. [#VW-44]

B. Barriers to utilizing the Wheeler. The community is somewhat divided on benefits and barriers to utilizing the Wheeler. For example, two stakeholders mentioned the Wheeler’s size as a benefit, while multiple stakeholders commented that the house size is too small or too big. One stakeholder mentioned the availability of the Wheeler as a benefit, while another mentioned scheduling as a barrier.

Barriers reported by stakeholders include the following:

- Multiple virtual workshop participants mentioned cost as a barrier. [#VW-15, #VW-19, #VW-27, #VW-38, #VW-41]
- Five participants reported that the house of the Wheeler is too small. [#VW-01, #VW-05, #VW-18, #VW-20, #VW-33] Conversely, four participants reported that the house is too big. [#VW-11, #VW-15, #VW-16, #VW-42]
- Several respondents mentioned that the stage is too small. [#VW-05, #VW-08, #VW-20]
- Two respondents and one interviewee reported that the Wheeler has wing and fly space issues. [#VW-27, #VW-38, #SH-05]
- One individual reported that the Wheeler has “technical inadequacies”. [#VW-20]
- One virtual workshop participant reported, “Chain motors [are] rated for more weight than the floor [can] hold.... There needs to be a complete engineering assessment nose to tail on this building, not just one floor at a time.” [#VW-25]
- Another individual mentioned elevator issues as a barrier. [#VW-01]
- One respondent reported parking as a barrier to utilizing the Wheeler. [#VW-26]
- Another virtual workshop participant mentioned, “The new configuration of seating rows without the middle door-to-stage entrance/egress has really affected the flow of coming and going.” [#VW-28]
- One stakeholder commented, “[No] options to create different presentations other than simply proscenium based. [#VW-08]
- Another stakeholder commented, “It’s ‘controlled’ by some groups dominating the use of the space.” [#VW-07]
- One respondent mentioned needing to schedule far in advance as a barrier. They reported, “Most small organizations aren’t able to build an event a year in advance of the performance.” [#VW-44]
- One community member reported, “[The Wheeler is] not a place for customers to have fun, [it has] very strict venue rules.” [#VW-45]

C. Interest in a new performing arts venue in Aspen. To assess the demand for a new performing arts venue in Aspen, Keen Independent and Theatre Projects asked various stakeholders if they have interest in a new performing arts venue. The community is divided on this. Multiple public meeting attendees and in-depth interviewees expressed the desire for a new performing arts venue that is accessible to small artists and organizations at an affordable rate. [e.g. #W-01, #W-13, #W-23] However, most virtual workshop attendees indicated that Aspen does not need a new performing arts venue. [e.g. #VW-01, #VW-05, #VW-12, #VW-22, #VW-26, #VW-28, #VW-31, #VW-41]

Comments opposing a new performing arts venue include:

- One virtual workshop respondent reported, “There is plenty of performance space in Aspen, it is just not utilized to its full potential.” [#VW-10]
- Another respondent reported, “Some venues are underutilized.” [VW-11]

- One individual commented, “There is enough space, but the space that exists is not adequate to serve the performance needs in Aspen.” [#VW-20]
- Another individual reported, “The Wheeler is a terrific facility, but it is horribly underutilized.” [#VW-32]
- One stakeholder reported, “Aspen is maxed out on events.” [#VW-34]
- One community member commented, “Just because Aspen ‘can’ build more...doesn't mean they have to. Construction fatigue is taking over the town.” [#VW-37]
- Regarding the potential expansion of the Wheeler, one interviewee reported that they like the parcel next to the Wheeler as a park. [#SH-01]
- An arts organization representative commented, “There is space available for rent that nobody is using.” [#SH-03]
- One interviewee sarcastically remarked, “The community loves new spaces.” [#SH-04]
- Comments in favor of a new performing arts venue include:
- Some respondents indicated that they believe Aspen would benefit from more performance spaces. [#VW-02, #VW-14, #VW-28]
- Several respondents noted that there are not enough small, affordable performance spaces. [#VW-15, #VW-19, #VW-27]
- Some respondents reported that Aspen is lacking rehearsal space. [#VW-08, #VW-15, #VW-44]
- One virtual workshop respondent noted, “[There are] not enough [performing arts venues] in the heart of Aspen ... for locals without cars or tourists to get to.” [#VW-07]
- Another virtual workshop respondent mentioned, “Aspen could benefit from a venue with a larger capacity, possibly an amphitheater...” [#VW-18]
- One interviewee commented that Aspen does not have a proper theater space. [#SH-02]

D. Whether to expand the Wheeler. Some community members believe the Wheeler should be expanded. [e.g. #VW-07, #VW-19, #VW-25] However, most of the community engaged by Keen Independent and Theatre Projects seems to agree that WRETT funds should not be used for a physical expansion of the Wheeler. Many respondents indicated that they are either not interested in a new space next to the Wheeler or against the construction of a new space. [#VW-01, #VW-12, #VW-22, #VW-29, #VW-31, #VW-32, #VW-33, #VW-35, #VW-36, #VW-37, #VW-39, #VW-40, #VW-45] Some public meeting participants reported a preference for a new space that is not adjacent to the Wheeler building. [e.g., #W-01, #W-10, #W-17, #W-21].

Comments about whether to expand the Wheeler include:

- One community member mentioned that they prefer to keep the parcel next to the Wheeler as a park. [#SH-01]
- Some community members reported that they are interested in the historic preservation of the building. [#W-08, #W-10] One added, “This is one of the most significant historic assets that Aspen has.” [#W-08]
- One participant asked, “[Are] there any buildings that can be restored?” [#W-17]
- One virtual workshop respondent remarked, “I think we should use the spaces currently available before expanding...” [#VW-16]
- A community member remarked, “Wheeler should focus on maintaining the quality of its performances and increasing attendance.” [#VW-06]
- A virtual workshop participant reported, “We do not need a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler. Leave that space alone! Let it stay open!” and later added, “There is aesthetic value in open lots in the city. Every cubic inch does not need to be filled up with a structure. Let it be! ... More is not better!” [#VW-29]
- Another virtual workshop participant reported, “Building a new facility would be a waste of taxpayer funds and a violation of taxpayer approved uses for the WRETT.” [#VW-32]

- One individual asked, “Why build a new space when the District Theater with 330 seats already exists and needs renovation and updating?” [#VW-33]
- Another individual commented, “If anything is built there, it will create more need for parking, and will eliminate the existing parking spaces behind the park.” [#VW-35]
- One stakeholder remarked, “If anything is proposed, it should stand alone from the Wheeler Opera House itself.” [#VW-34]
- One individual expressed the concern that construction could have a negative effect on the operations and patron experience at the Wheeler. [#W-12]

E. Ideal venue specifications for a new performing arts venue. If a new performance space is built, the study team recommends that the performance space is flexible and seats 200 or fewer. The community prefers a new performing arts venue to be small, flexible space.

Seat Count. Most stakeholders who mentioned a preference for a new, performance venue mentioned seat counts of 200 or fewer, because filling a 200-seat venue would be easier than filling the 500-seat Wheeler. One stakeholder reported that having a small percentage of the seats filled is discouraging. Having 100 people in a 150-seat venue appears more well-attended than 100 people in the 500-seat Wheeler. Comments include:

- One public meeting attendee did not specify a preferred seat count for the space, but emphasized the need for a seating capacity that is much less than the Wheeler because, “It’s discouraging when you can’t fill the auditorium ... It’s heartbreaking to come to an event at the Wheeler ... and have 10 or 15 rows filled.” She reported that one of the only performance space alternatives is the Aspen District Theater, which is the same size as the Wheeler. [#W-01]
- One attendee recommended an expansion of the Wheeler involving a space with 120 seats and stadium style seating. Under this plan, every floor would line up with the existing Wheeler so the two spaces could connect and provide overflow capabilities to for both theaters. [#W-02]
- One individual reported a need for a flexible space of 100–120 seats. He reported being on a task force with a long-term plan of creating a small venue and found that 30 organizations were willing to utilize the potential space. When he was asked how long each organization would use the space, he guessed one to two weeks per visit. He also cited the success and lack of rental availability of a 100-seat black box space in Carbondale. [#W-04]
- Another individual stated that she would prefer a space of about 200 seats and reported that her organization would utilize the space four to five times per year. [#W-07]
- One participant reported his observation that Aspen does not currently have a small venue, but there would be programming for a small venue if one existed in the area. He asked, “What comes first, the venue or the programming? You can’t have programming without a venue.” [#W-09]
- One performer reported that he receives five to ten emails per week from touring artists who would love to play in a space with 50–100 seats, but they can’t find a suitable space and would not be able to sufficiently fill the Wheeler. He indicated that there are not enough options to grow as an artist in Aspen. [#W-11]
- One participant reported that she would like a new, small performance space so she could go to a less expensive than the “big-ticket items in the summer.” [#W-15]
- An event planner reported that she required a space with 100–150 seats for a past event, but the theaters were already fully booked for the season. [#W-18]
- Six virtual workshop respondents suggested seat counts of 200 or fewer. [#VW-08, #VW-14, #VW-19, #VW-27, #VW-30, #VW-41]
- One respondent mentioned a desire for a space of 250–300 seats [#VW-38]
- Another respondent reported a preference for a larger space than the Wheeler. [#VW-13]
- One interviewee suggested a seat count of 150–200 seats. [#SH-09]

Configuration. Stakeholders most often mentioned a flexible space when describing their configuration preferences of their ideal performing arts venue. Some arts organization representatives mentioned that a traditional theater does not fulfil their performance space needs [e.g. #SH-08]. A flexible performing arts venue, such as a black box, could accommodate traditional theater configurations along with various unique configuration needs of other performing arts organizations in Aspen.

- Six virtual workshop respondents requested adaptable or flexible spaces. [#VW-02, #VW-08, #VW-09, #VW-14, #VW-30, #VW-38]
- Three respondents suggested a black box. [#VW-08, #VW-27, #VW-41]
- One interviewee remarked, “The more flexible, the better.” [#SH-12]
- An arts organization representative suggested building a large space that can be scaled down. [#SH-07]
- One community member mentioned, “Maybe a transitional space ... that can be transformed from an interior space in the winter to an exterior space in the summer ... Here is a website to better explain. <https://dsrny.com/project/the-shed>.” [#VW-09]
- A virtual workshop respondent mentioned “traditional multi-layered seating.” [#VW-04]

Technology. Stakeholders want the latest technology in a new performing arts venue.

Comments include:

- One individual stated that they want “the latest technology.” [#VW-02]
- Another individual stated, “Appropriate lighting and sound technology ... availability to screen films.” [#VW-15]
- A stakeholder recommended, “Space-appropriate sound/screen/computer equipment for film or PowerPoint style presentations.” [#VW-19]
- One respondent who mentioned that they are interested in the new venue being next to the Wheeler provided a list of technology preferences, “[A] 25-foot ceiling with lighting and technical catwalks. Lighting, sound, projection should be state of the art. Performances should be able to take place with one in the [Wheeler] simultaneously. Soft goods, [cyc], scrim, travelers ... storage for chairs, audience risers ... ability for performers to get around the outside of the space, lobby [that] could be shared with the [Wheeler] if workable).” [#VW-27]
- Another respondent suggested, “Full A/V capabilities, fly tower, rehearsal space [and] most up-to-date stage technology.” [#VW-38]
- An interviewee suggested, “World-class digital projection capabilities and stadium-style seating.” [#SH-09]

F. Other needs in a new performing arts venue. Stakeholders mentioned needs for rehearsal spaces, teaching spaces, dressing rooms, scene shops, dressing rooms and more.

Rehearsal space. Ten stakeholders mentioned rehearsal space as an additional need in a new performing arts venue. Their comments include:

- A public meeting participant mentioned that people are always looking for rehearsal spaces and studios for teaching. [#W-23]
- A virtual workshop respondent requested multiple rehearsal space options. [#VW-08]
- Another virtual workshop respondent suggested a space that has “cheap rental” for rehearsals and dance and acting classes. [#VW-14]
- Another respondent mentioned a preference for a rehearsal space that can be rented separately from the rest of the building. [#VW-27]

- Six virtual workshop respondents recommended adding rehearsal space. [#VW-10, #VW-15, #VW-27, #VW-30, #VW-41, #VW-44]

Other amenities. Stakeholders suggested other amenities including:

- Four respondents requested a scene and/or costume shop. [#VW-10, #VW-27, #VW-30, #VW-44]
- Three respondents suggested meeting spaces. [#VW-02, #VW-14, #VW-28]
- Three individuals requested dressing rooms. [#VW-08, #VW-27, #VW-44] One specified a chorus-sized dressing room. [#VW-44]
- One individual mentioned long- and short-term storage options for equipment and cases. [#VW-44]
- Another individual recommended “food and bar service.” [#VW-09]
- One community member remarked, “A cocktail lounge would be nice.” [#VW-13]
- A stakeholder recommended outdoor seating, table service and adding more high-tops into the lobby. [#VW-12]
- One individual mentioned, “Retail is always a nice add [such as] a cafe, coffee or tea house.” [#VW-14]
- One stakeholder recommended a hotel. [#VW-16]
- A community member mentioned that the new space could be used for “weddings and other social events.” [#VW-02]
- One stakeholder suggested, “All amenities could be housed elsewhere — say in a space built [elsewhere] dedicated to serving as the Wheeler Annex to house these amenities so as not to sacrifice vital performance Wheeler space in town.” [#VW-08]

Suggestions for additional amenities specific to a performance/event space next to the Wheeler include:

- One individual recommended, “Concessions and box office separate from [the] main building ... and priority booking for community organization events, performances [and other] uses.” [#VW-19]
- Another individual proposed, “A box office with a sidewalk window ... [stage right] wing space to the Wheeler enabling larger productions for both the opera and the winter season. Any remaining space ... [should be] devoted to community outreach for the arts and a donor’s lounge.” [#VW-25]
- One stakeholder suggested, “The two spaces could easily share ticketing services but should otherwise be separated.” [#VW-07]
- Another stakeholder recommended, “A state-of-the-art production space with comfortable seating in a beautiful building made to match the historic spaces and buildings around it.” [#VW-14]

G. Fair market price to utilize a new performing arts venue

The City will likely need to subsidize costs of utilizing a performance space in some way. Most stakeholders who responded to questions about the ideal market value for a performance space did not mention a specific dollar amount, but they indicated that nonprofit organizations should have a discount. Public meeting attendees expressed a desire for a new space that is accessible to small artists and organizations to enhance the opportunity for emerging artists to perform in Aspen at an affordable rate. Stakeholder comments include:

- When asked about the fair market value of their ideal performing arts venue, one stakeholder reported, “Less than the main space and less than other rentals.” [#VW-15]
- Another stakeholder remarked, “Nonprofits should have a significant discount over commercial for space rental, possibly even free if it's a non-charged community event.” [#VW-19]
- One individual mentioned, “It would have to be subsidized for smaller groups and there should be special pricing for nonprofit vs for-profit organizations.” [#VW-27]
- Another individual reported that a fair market price would be \$350. [#VW-41]

- One community member indicated that the fair market rate is whatever the market rate is for private spaces. [#VW-43]

H. Potential utilization of a new performing arts venue

Interested stakeholders. Respondents who reported an interest in a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler reported the following:

- One virtual workshop respondent reported, “Depending on the costs, we could host department meetings four times a year and host conferences and events about four times a year.” [#VW-02]
- Another virtual workshop respondent mentioned, “Having a weekly dance would be wonderful if the space wasn't too expensive.” [#VW-03]
- One stakeholder reported, “For theatrical productions, rehearsal space would be needed 3–4 consecutive weeks [5–8 hours per day, six days per week] ideally in off-season, say May and November, for prime-time productions in summer and winter seasons. Off-season months could be used also for local community-based productions with rehearsal 3–4 weeks in April and May and performance dates mid/late May into early June; October/November with performance dates mid/late November up to December 21st approximately [Thursday–Sundays].” [#VW-08]
- One community member mentioned that if rehearsal space is available then they would use it more than 30 days. [#VW-19]
- Another community member reported, “If we really had a fully fitted out theatre, 150–200 days per year.” [#VW38]
- One stakeholder mentioned that they would use it for a week. [#VW-41]
- Six respondents reported that they would be interested or know organizations that would be interested in utilizing a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler. [#VW-07, #VW-08, #VW-19, #VW-27, #VW-30] One respondent reported, “I believe that another space adjacent to the Opera House would be heavily used for events that range from business meetings to receptions.” [#VW-28]

Potentially interested stakeholders. Nine respondents reported that they might utilize a new performance/event space next to the Wheeler. [#VW-17, #VW-38, #VW-41, #VW-43] Some respondents reported what would make them interested in a new performance/event venue at the Wheeler. Their comments include:

- Two respondents reported that they would be interested in utilizing a new performance/event space if it was affordable. [#VW-15, #VW-41]
- One stakeholder remarked, “We could hold meetings and host conferences that we typically need to travel [out of town] for.” [#VW-02]
- One community member mentioned that they would only utilize a new performing arts venue if it has a wood dance floor. [#VW-03]
- Two respondents reported that they would use the space depending on how it is configured. [#VW-38, #VW-44]

Uninterested stakeholders. Twenty virtual workshop respondents reported that they would not utilize a space next to the Wheeler and/or do not know anyone who is interested. [e.g. #VW-01, #VW-05, #VW-09, #VW-16, #VW-26, #VW-35, #VW-40]

I. Current accommodations utilized by arts organizations. Most arts organization representatives that were engaged currently utilize facilities of Aspen High School such as Aspen District Theater and Black Box Theater.

- Six respondents reported that they currently utilize Aspen District Theatre. [#VW-08, #VW-19, #VW-24, #VW-30, #VW-35, #VW-41]
- Four respondents reported that they utilize the Black Box Theater. [#VW-08, #VW-19, #VW-30, #VW-35]

Other comments about current facility use include:

- One community member reported that they utilize City Hall, Truscott and water treatment offices. [#VW-02]
- An arts organization representative remarked, “We have been dancing in Carbondale for lack of an Aspen location.” [#VW-03]
- One individual reported, “For rehearsal space, we have used Red Brick admin offices, community space above Tasters Rest, people’s homes, wherever and whatever space becomes available. [#VW-08]
- Another individual mentioned that they utilize Benedict Music Tent, Harris Hall, [the Wheeler] and various other spaces throughout the Greater Roaring Fork Valley. [#VW-10]
- One community member reported that they utilize Aspen Historical Society facilities.” [#VW-19]
- Another community member remarked, “Housing is seasonal and via rentals. Very high cost. Full time staff mostly lives Down Valley rehearsal space at Dance Progressions.” [#VW-38]
- One individual reported that they utilize local churches. [#VW-41]
- Three respondents explicitly stated that they rent facilities. [#VW-03, #VW-35, #VW-38]
- Two respondents reported that they own facilities. [#VW-10, #VW-25]
- Another individual reported that they work from home and at a “co-working space.” [#VW-43]

J. Updates to existing performing arts venues. Some public meeting attendees and in-depth interviewees want to use the Wheeler expansion funds to update other facilities such as Aspen District Theater and Aspen High School Black Box Theater. Their comments include:

- One public meeting participant reported his perception of the WRETT stating, “I think the idea was to fund the arts in the community.” He commented that Aspen District Theater and Aspen High School Black Box Theater both have potential but need updates. He added that these spaces are key community resources. [#W-05]
- One individual reported, “The upkeep of the District Theater is a huge priority for me.” [#W-23]
- One interviewee suggested that the Wheeler should take over Aspen District Theater. [#SH-14]
- Another participant added that Aspen High School Black Box Theater is a great resource for the community but needs updating, and if it was redesigned to include a new entryway, dressing rooms, a projection system, etc., then it would be utilized more. She added, “I think we should take care of what we have and then look at adding more later.” [#W-06]
- Due to the entrance of Aspen High School Black Box Theater being within the high school, the space currently cannot be utilized until after school hours. One participant reported that if there was a separate entryway, the space could potentially allow daytime use. [#W-05]
- One virtual workshop participant reported, “There are multiple intimate spaces [in Aspen], however ... not any with real capacity.” [#VW-04]

K. Other input to inform the study. Other comments from stakeholders include:

- Keen Independent asked public meeting participants if there is an audience demand for more than what there is right now. A collective “yes” came from participants. Keen Independent then asked if audiences are struggling to find performances they want to attend. A collective “no” came from participants.
- One community leader reported that they believe the WRETT could be spent on housing instead. [#SH-06]
- One participant stated, “The people Up Valley will not go Down Valley to see a show, so the organizations Down Valley need to go to the Up Valley.” [Unidentified #1 (37:40)]
- Some public meeting participants asked for the proposed plan to be put to a vote once details and cost structure are figured out. [#W-10, #W-06]
- One individual reported that a prior plan which was put to a vote was turned down because it involved putting the City in debt. He requested that this plan does not put the City in debt. [#W-02]
- When asked what should be done with the proposed new space to make sure it is available for smaller groups during summer, one participant suggested limiting the amount of time each organization can utilize the space. Another participant recommended a lottery system for use of the space. [Unidentified #2, #3 (1:17:10)]
- One participant recommended asking smaller organizations how much they would be willing to pay for a space and what they could afford to pay for it to determine potential usage. [#W-09]
- One public meeting participant reported that this new space could be filled with non-arts events which could also contribute to the Aspen community. [#W-16]
- One community member requested, “Please focus on the demand side — what’s driving the need based on what is in demand by consumers rather than what users want.” [#VW-43]
- One individual reported, “You will lose business to the new Mid Valley performance center when it is up and running if you limit your vision to only the existing structure, fabulous though it is.” [#VW-28]
- One stakeholder commented, “Don’t schedule programming on Labor Day,” indicating that programming must be scheduled strategically to minimize competition with other recreational activities that tourists participate in such as skiing and hiking. [#SH-11]
- A community leader commented on arts organizations, “All of them have tried to hire good staff and failed.” [#SH-10]

Additional input from respondents who do not support the addition of a new event/performance space next to the Wheeler include:

- One individual reported, “I don’t see the demand to justify the expense.” [#VW-06]
- Another individual reported, “I see unused space and not enough public offerings currently.” [#VW-11]
- A community member mentioned, “Another performance/art space is not a good expenditure of tax dollars. Use a half a million or so to subsidize acts at the Wheeler or cost of renting for local/small acts.” [#VW-16]
- Another community member noted, “The space should be left as open space/park ... The Wheeler should make itself available to more community events.” [#VW-21]
- Another community member remarked, “Venues in a town the size of Aspen cannot be all things to all people — there will always be groups who want something different.” [#VW-34]
- A stakeholder commented, “Please, please talk to the school district about the optimal utilization of existing performance facilities before you build a new facility on an open space parcel.” [#VW-24]

- Another stakeholder reported, “The District Theatre ... is in desperate need of refurbishment. The Wheeler is well renovated. It seems to be a crime that it has 30+ million dollars of taxpayer funds for the arts and none of it can go to the arts outside the opera house.” [#VW-33]

Comments from respondents who are concerned about maintaining the historic integrity of the Wheeler include:

- One community member reported, “Any consideration of space ... needs to honor the historic integrity [of the Wheeler] ... space next to the Wheeler may compromise the Wheeler itself.” [#VW-34]
- A virtual workshop participant remarked, “I would like to see the architecture for the [new] facility to align with the Wheeler while also leaving the Wheeler as it is.” [#VW-07]

Additional comments in support of the addition of a new space next to the Wheeler include:




- One community member commented that the expansion of the Wheeler is “a wealth of opportunity not only in dollars but also in human resources.” [#VW-25]
- Another community member remarked, “If a space is built ... it will be used ... it needs to not be taken over for long periods of time by the larger nonprofits.” [#VW-17]
- One individual reported, “There was a great adaption of the Bridgeport brewery in Portland that transitioned an old historic building to an updated restaurant. It could be a good precedent.” [#VW-09]

Construction cost analysis

Comparative Construction Cost Analysis for Wheeler Opera House

29 August 2019




CONFIDENTIAL FOR THIS PROJECT'S USE ONLY


<i>Facility</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type/Seat Count</i>	<i>Gross Floor Area</i>	<i>\$/gsf</i>	<i>Construction Cost adjusted to mid 2021 bid date and Aspen location</i>
Dallas City Performance Hall 	Dallas, TX	Performance Hall (700)	56,300 new facility	\$1,165	\$65,600,000
Texas State University Performing Arts Center 	San Marcos, TX	Theatre (400) Recital Hall (300)	43,700 new facility	\$1,119	\$48,900,000
Montgomery College PAC 	Washington, D.C.	Main Theatre (500) Studio Theatre (100)	52,350 new facility	\$1,114	\$58,300,000

Comparative Construction Cost Analysis for Wheeler Opera House

29 August 2019

CONFIDENTIAL FOR THIS PROJECT'S USE ONLY

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type/Seat Count</i>	<i>Gross Floor Area</i>	<i>\$/gsf</i>	<i>Construction Cost adjusted to mid 2021 bid date and Aspen location</i>
Hunter Smith Band Building University Virginia 	Charlottesville, VA	Band Room	17,898 new facility	\$1,008	\$18,050,000
Cleveland Institute of Music 	Cleveland, OH	Recital Hall (250) Practice Rooms Teaching Studios Library Distance Learning	36,000 new facility	\$964	\$34,700,000
Studzinski Recital Hall Bowdoin College 	Brunswick, ME	Recital Hall (290)	20,200 renovated facility	\$906	\$18,300,000

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type/Seat Count</i>	<i>Gross Floor Area</i>	<i>\$/gsf</i>	<i>Construction Cost adjusted to mid 2021 bid date and Aspen location</i>
Zach Theatre 	Austin, TX	Theatre (418)	29,700 new facility	\$891	\$26,450,000

All Projects listed:

Inclusive of design/pricing contingency, CM's general conditions, overhead and fee, escalation to mid 2021 bid date, and construction change order contingency

Exclusive of soft costs

Note - all figures are interpolated from published information and necessarily approximate

Markup of operational impact

FOUNDATIONAL SHORING WOULD NEED TO BE DONE ON WHEELER AND ADJACENT BUILDING. EXTENT WOULD DEPEND ON ADDITION.

EGRESSING, AND LOADING WOULD POTENTIALLY NEED TO BE REWORKED DEPENDING ON EXTENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN PARCEL.

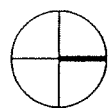
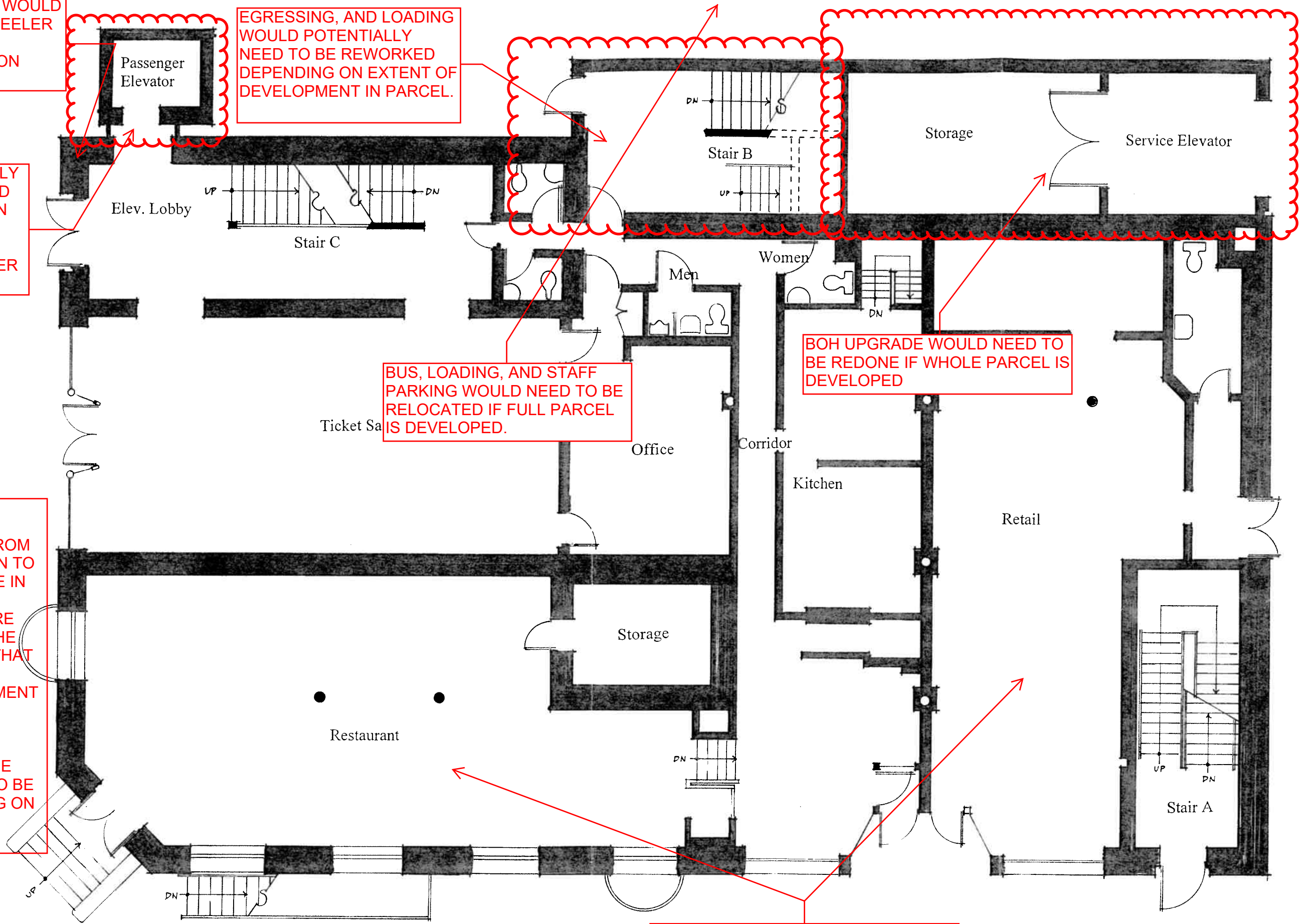
ELEVATOR WOULD LIKELY NEED TO BE RELOCATED DURING CONSTRUCTION THUS RENDERING THE UPPER AND LOWER LEVELS OF THE WHEELER NON ADA COMPLIANT.

BOH UPGRADE WOULD NEED TO BE REDONE IF WHOLE PARCEL IS DEVELOPED

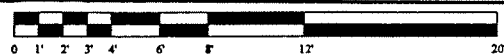
BUS, LOADING, AND STAFF PARKING WOULD NEED TO BE RELOCATED IF FULL PARCEL IS DEVELOPED.

NOTES:
-ADDITIONAL POWER WILL NEED TO BE ROUTED IN FROM THE NEAREST SUBSTATION TO SUPPORT ANY NEW VENUE IN THE PARCEL.
-LARGE WATER LINES WERE NOTED RUNNING DOWN THE CENTER OF THE PARCEL THAT WOULD NEED TO BE RE ROUTED IF ANY DEVELOPMENT WERE TO OCCUR ON THE PARCEL.
- ACCESS TO ROOFTOP MECHANICAL UNITS ON THE WHEELER WOULD NEED TO BE REEVALUATED DEPENDING ON EXTENT OF PARCEL DEVELOPMENT.

TENNANTS LIKELY TO BE ADVERSELY IMPACTED BY CONSTRUCTION



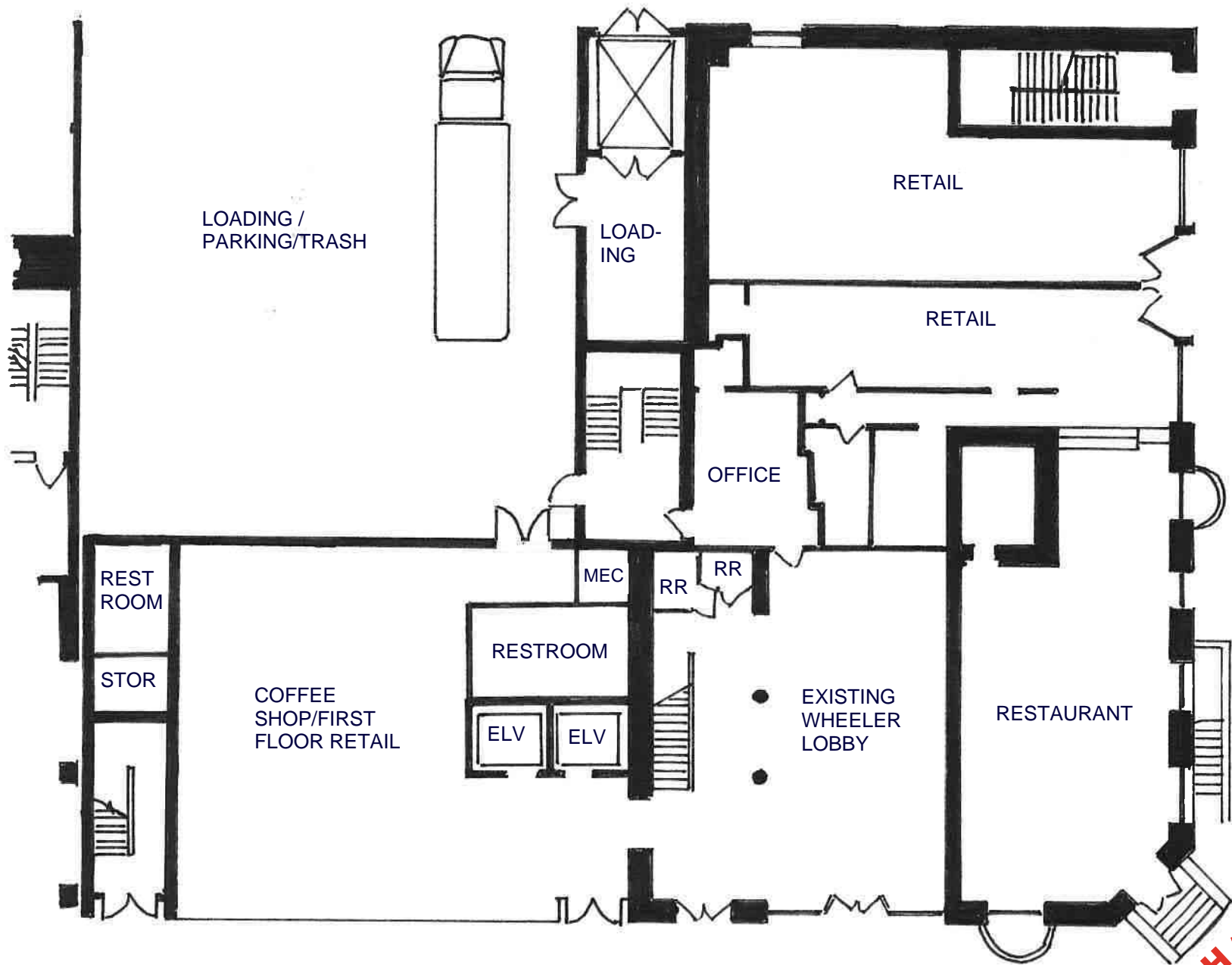
Wheeler Opera House



Drawings for Reference Only

First Floor Plan

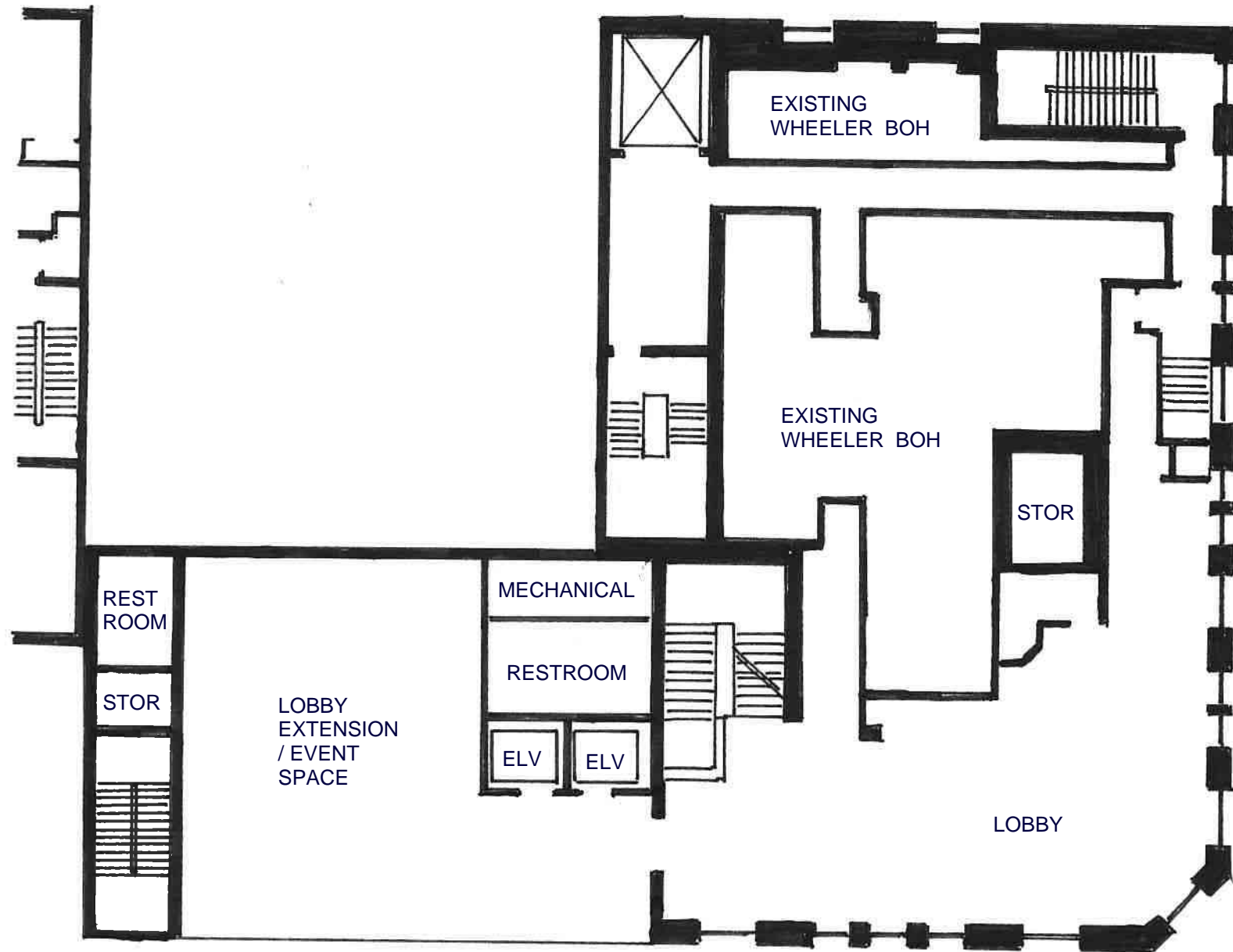
Andrews & Anderson, P.C.



Wheeler Opera House - 1/3 Parcel Development
Level One Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

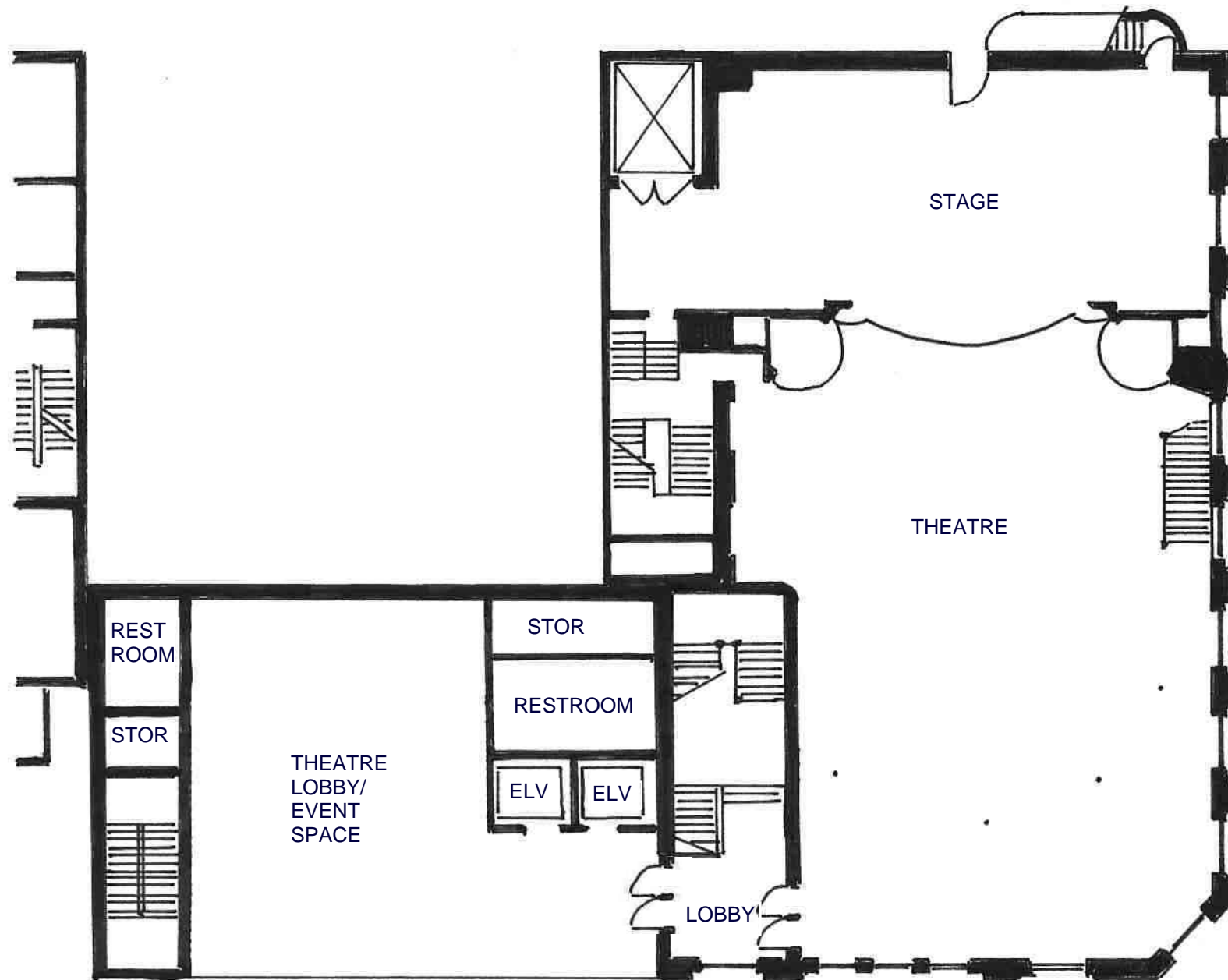
THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - 1/3 Parcel Development
Level Two Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

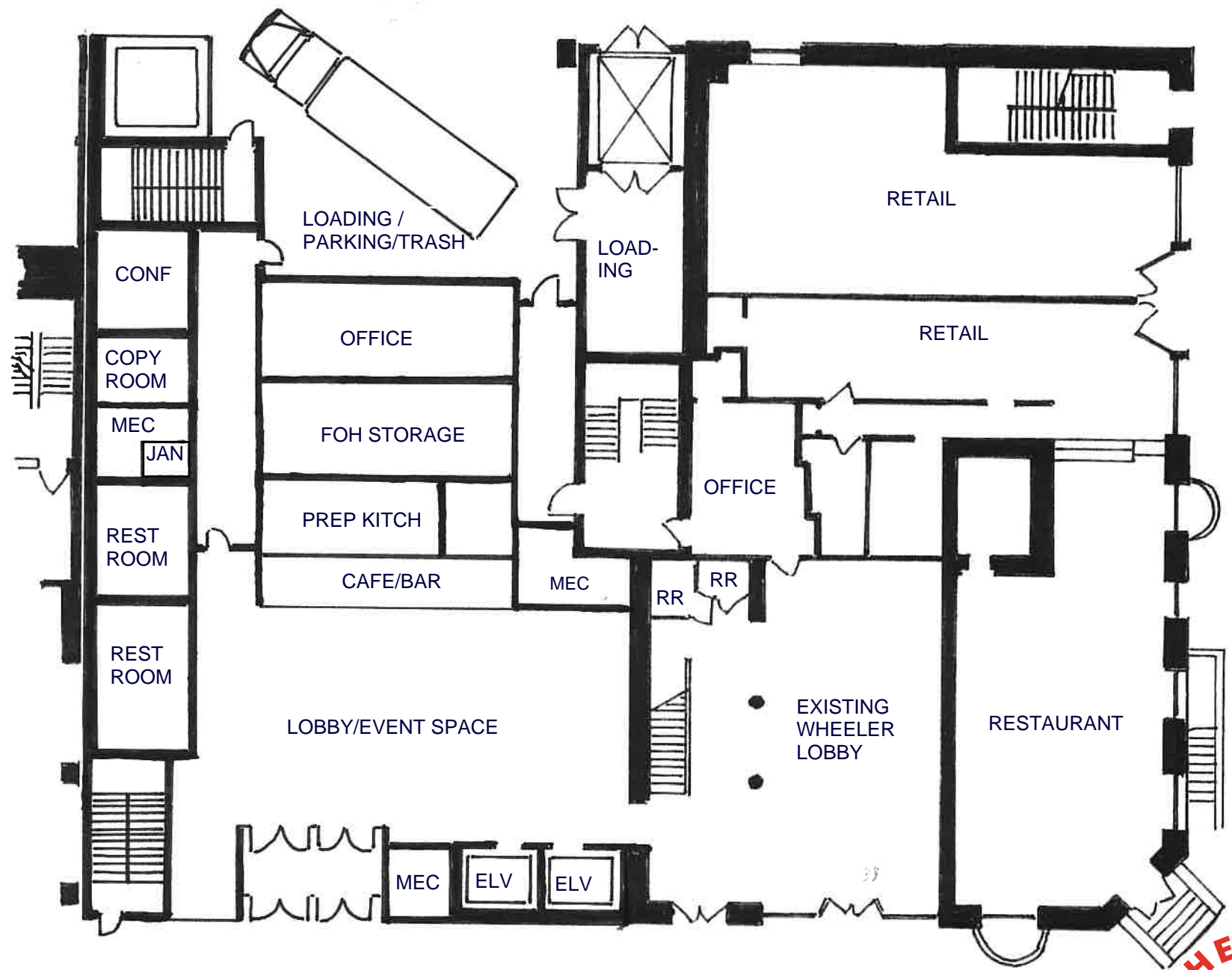
THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - 1/3 Parcel Development
Level Three Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

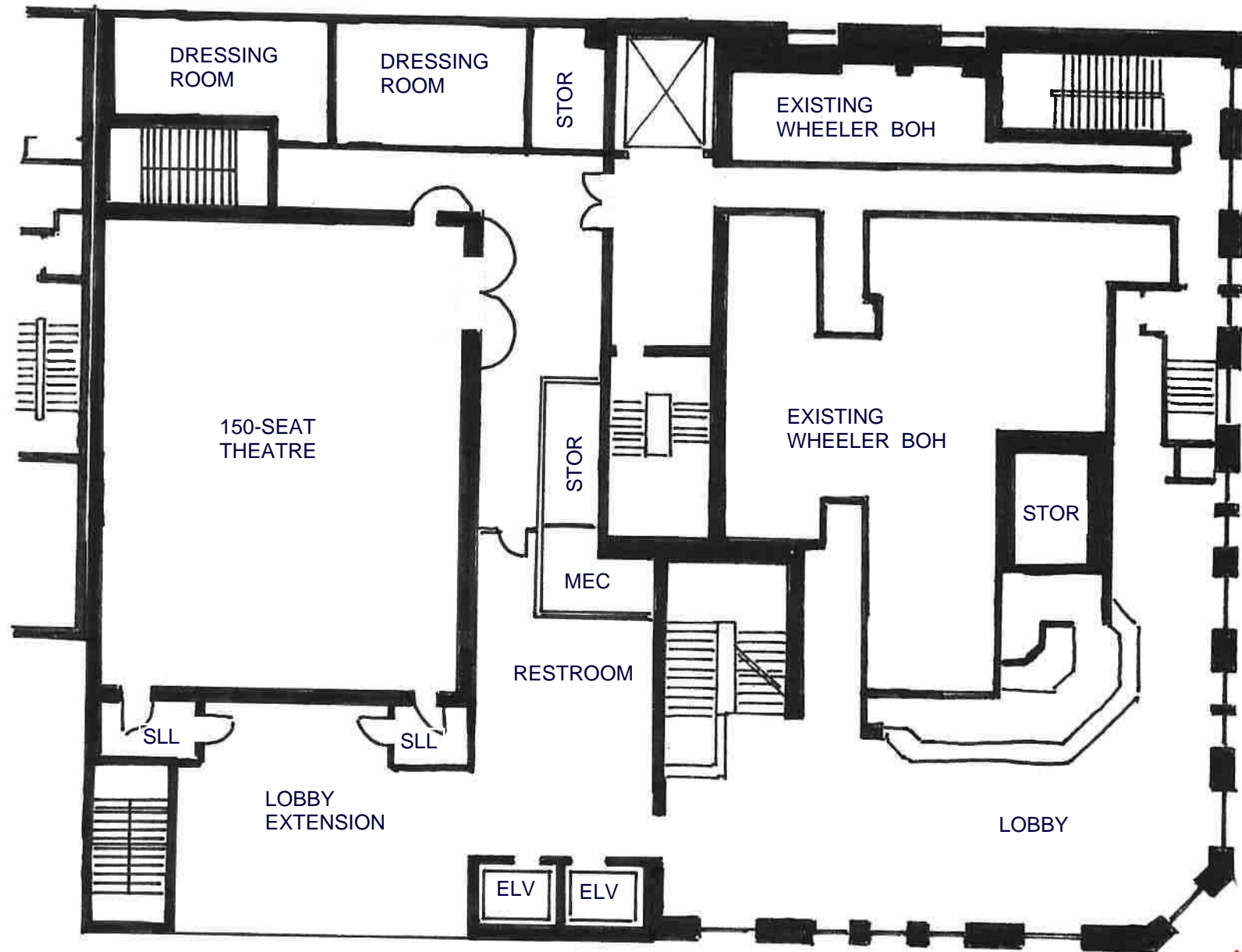
THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - Whole Parcel Development
Level One Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

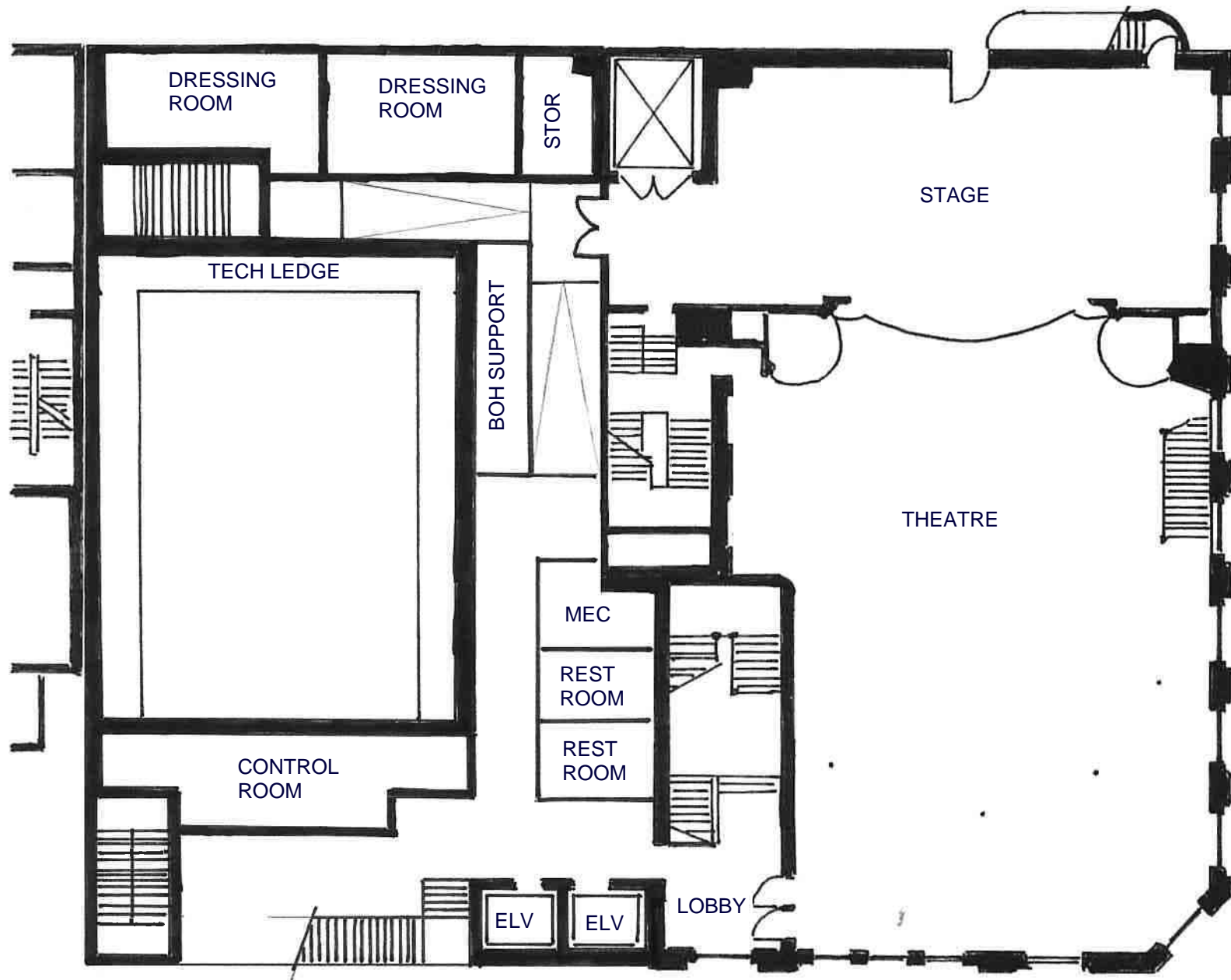
THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - Whole Parcel Development
Level Two Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

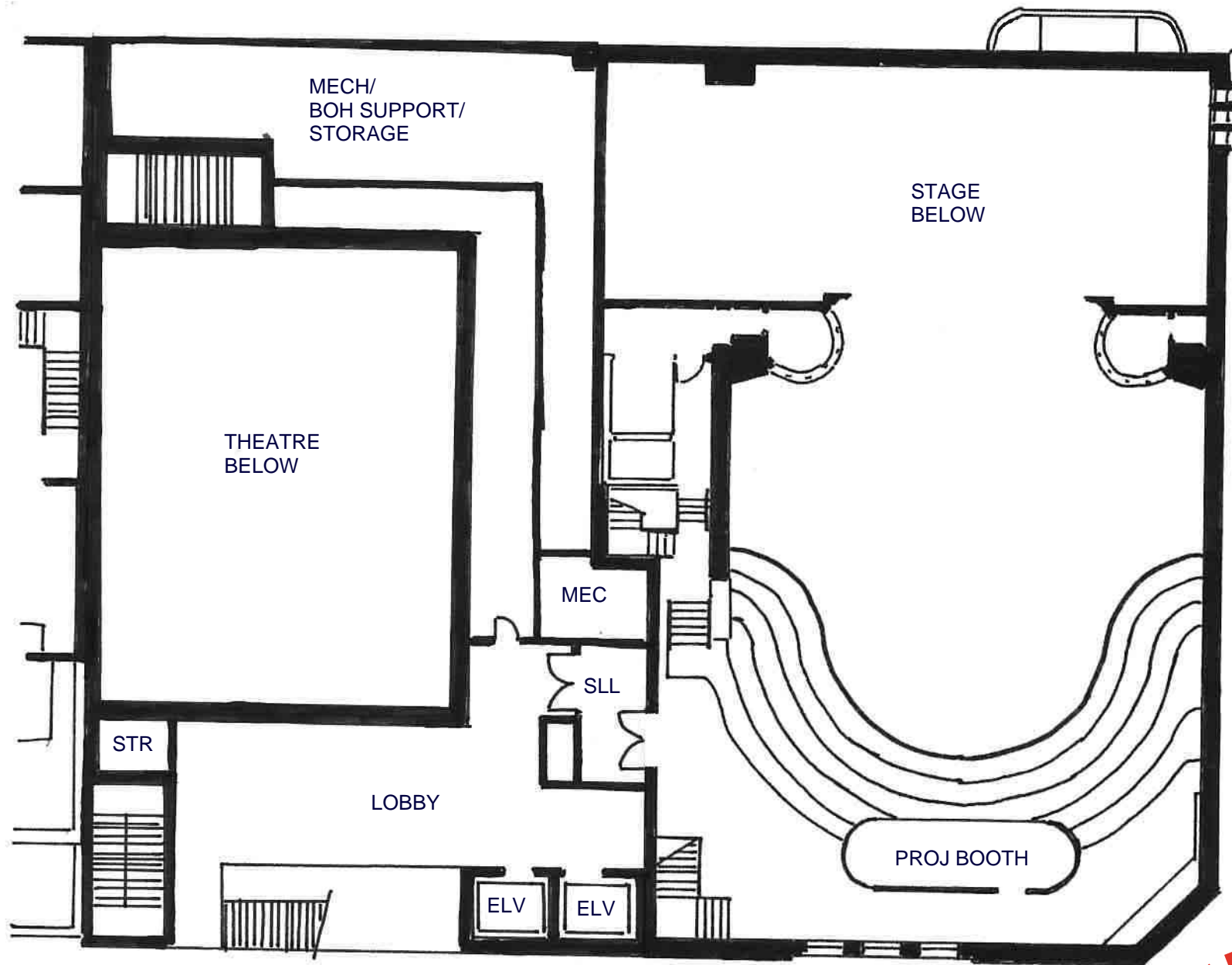
THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - Whole Parcel Development
Level Three Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

THEATRE
PROJECTS



Wheeler Opera House - Whole Parcel Development
Level Four Plan

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

THEATRE
PROJECTS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Torre and Aspen City Council
FROM: Robert Schober, Capital Asset Project Manager
THROUGH: Gena Buhler, Executive Director Wheeler Opera House
DATE OF MEMO: September 12, 2019
MEETING DATE: September 17, 2019
RE: Wheeler Opera House Exterior Renovation & Infrastructure Upgrades Project

REQUEST OF COUNCIL:

The project team would like to update Council on the current status and progress made to date on the Wheeler Opera House Exterior Renovation & Infrastructure Upgrades Project.

BACKGROUND:

This purpose of this project is to ensure the Historic Wheeler Opera House building is maintained with the up most care and is solid structurally, and functions as a modern performance and event facility to meet the demands and expectations of the community for the next 100 plus years. The project plans for a renovation of the exterior to maintain the historical character and structural integrity of the building as well as improve the infrastructure to accommodate operations.

Mills and Schnoering Architects has been awarded a contract to design and develop construction drawings by early 2020 and Phil Vaughn Construction Management is providing Construction Manager as Advisor services for the project.

DISCUSSION:

Staff would like to update council on challenging aspects of the project that come with renovating an historic building. We will focus on the following items: anticipated project scope, schedule and financial impacts.

PROJECT SCOPE:

At its inception the project scope was focused on renovation of the freight elevator and some mechanical and electrical needs. The exterior façade preservation became a focal point during scope development. An exhaustive building study in order to determine potential areas of concern on the stone and masonry exterior was performed and it was determined that further investigation and subsequent repairs are needed. In addition, the operational requirements of the Wheeler are always a driving force when any modifications to the building and site are contemplated. Asset and Wheeler staff along with the design team and the city's Engineering and Parks departments have been

collaborating on refining and finalizing the scope. We are at a point that an outside contractor is needed to help finalize budget, construction schedule and phasing requirements to perform the work with minimal impacts to Wheeler operations and the public.

PROJECT SCHEDULE:

- Schematic Design (currently underway) – June through November 2019
- General Contractor selection for preconstruction services – October 2019 (this will require Council approval)
- Design Development – November 2019 through February 2020
- Construction Documents, Permitting and HPC Approvals – January – April 2020
- Initial Construction Period – April 2020 through June 2020 (this is a hard construction window during which the Wheeler will be dark with no operations. Operations are to resume directly after construction completion).

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

Current budget status for the project is as follows:

<u>Current Project Budget</u>	<u>\$2,275,920</u>
Rowland & Broughton Preliminary Study & Emergency Repairs	\$238,733
Phil Vaughn Construction Management	\$88,745
<u>Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC</u>	<u>\$448,320</u>
Remaining Project Funds	\$1,500,122

Staff will be back in front of Council in late Fall 2019 for approval of a contract for General Contractor pre-construction services the cost of which will be contained within the current project funds.

Once project scope has been finalized the design team will work alongside the selected preconstruction GC to establish a construction budget. At this time staff will update Council. It is anticipated that to complete the entire scope, phase construction around the needs of the facility and to mitigate impacts to Mill St./Hyman Ave. corridor additional funding will be required.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

None.