

BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR THE

OLD HAMMOND TOWN HALL & OPERA HOUSE

17 NORTH MAIN STREET
HAMMOND, NEW YORK 13646
TOWN OF HAMMOND / ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY



PREPARED BY:
CRAWFORD & STEARNS
ARCHITECTS AND PRESERVATION PLANNERS, PLLC
134 WALTON STREET / SYRACUSE, NEW YORK

PREPARED FOR:
TOWN OF HAMMOND
21 SOUTH MAIN STREET
HAMMOND, NEW YORK

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TOWN OF HAMMOND

JULY 15, 2026

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FOR THE

(FORMER)
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& OPERA HOUSE**
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Limited Building History	1
III.	Old Town Hall & Opera House	1
	A. General & Site	1
	B. Exterior Observations & Recommendations	2
	C. Interior Observations & Recommendations	5
	D. Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing	9
	E. Additional Observations	11
IV.	Summary & Short Term Recommendations	11
V.	Attachments	
	Attachment A: Existing Floor Plans 1, 2, 3	
	Attachment B: Preliminary Reuse Plan - First Floor	
	Attachment C: "The Old Town Hall and Opera House" by Pamela Burton, Hammond Town Clerk (12/1/25)	
	Attachment D: Representative Photographs #1 through #36	

I. INTRODUCTION

This report describes conditions observed at the Old Hammond Town Hall & Opera House by Randy and Beth Crawford of Crawford & Stearns, Architects and Preservation Planners, PLLC (Syracuse, NY) in the course of a site visit on March 18, 2026.

These services have been coordinated by Town Clerk Pamela Burton with valuable assistance from Town Historian Donna Demick, County Historian Nancy LaFaver, and Pam Winchester in addition to Supervisor Ron Bertram and the proactive local organization HOPE (Hammond Opens Possibilities for Everyone).

Funding for this report has been provided by the Rock Charitable Fund of the Northern New York Community Foundation, whose support is gratefully acknowledged, and the Town of Hammond.

It should be noted that this assessment is a somewhat limited overview of readily observable conditions to identify, in general, those which warrant treatment, particularly where necessary to correct existing damage or failure, to prevent further deterioration, or to address possible threats to life safety. A more extensive investigation would be necessary to verify the extent and specifics of these needs and to develop detailed scopes sufficient for actual construction.

II. LIMITED BUILDING HISTORY

Based on information provided by Town Clerk Pamela Burton and other sources, the Old Town Hall & Opera House was constructed in 1915 and until the 1950s served the community as an important cultural center. In the early 1960s the building was modified to accommodate the Library and Town offices and then in 2022 these functions were relocated to a new building across the street and the original building was vacated.

It was not, however, abandoned and since then efforts have continued to maintain the structure, to agree on alternative uses, and to identify possible sources of funding to implement the necessary improvements. In addition, to recognize its significance to the community the Town is in the process of having the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Refer to the attached “The Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House” by Pamela Burton, Hammond Town Clerk / December 1, 2025 for additional background information.

III. OLD TOWN HALL & OPERA HOUSE

A. General & Site

1. **Orientation**: The building is located on the west side of Main Street (NY Rt 37) in the Village of Hammond and faces slightly south of east. For this report and the associated drawings it is considered to face due east.
2. **Massing**: The building is a rectangular mass with a gabled roof and is oriented east to west. The front (east) face is recessed somewhat and accented with classical pilasters at each side and two columns freestanding in between. The front outer corners of the building front are also embellished with pilasters supporting the triangular classical pediment form above.
3. **Grade & Drainage**: Grade adjacent to the building slopes slightly away from the foundation on all sides except the west such that there is limited accumulation of water other than from the roof and direct fall around the building. Beyond about ten feet from the foundation grade slopes up to the north and west.

Recommendations:

- ***Except at the west side grade does not appear to be a particular concern for drainage, but note recommendations for the installation of skirt drains as well as monitoring and documenting actual conditions during significant rain events.***
- ***At the west side, consider options for diverting surface water with intercepting trenches and secondary drains.***

4. Site Features: External metal steps project from the north and south faces of the building to exit the theater space and warrant repairs. A somewhat flimsy porch roof with plain wood posts has been constructed at the south face to protect the Southeast Exit from the historic interior stairs.

A concrete walk and ramp have been constructed to bring pedestrians from the street to the building entry. In general this is in acceptable condition and functional, but where the walk abuts the concrete deck at the entry recess it has settled several inches making the route inaccessible to wheelchairs and a tripping hazard to others.

The extensions of this concrete walk to the south is uneven and also a tripping hazard.

Included as a site feature is the concrete deck within the front entry recess. It has been poured up around the base of the columns suggesting that it's a topping for an older deck and is cracked itself.

Recommendations:

- ***Unless otherwise addressed as part of proposed additions to the south side of the building, reinforce or, preferably, replace the current porch roof with something sturdier and more visually appropriate.***
 - ***Repair the side steps to sound condition unless they're to be replaced.***
 - ***Raise the settled concrete walk to align with the recess deck and correct other walk safety issues.***
 - ***Remove the entire slab within the front entry recess and install one that meets accessibility standards, doesn't compromise the columns, pitches to drain, and withstands deicing salts in winter.***
 - ***Repair other concrete walks to sound, safe, accessible condition and coordinate with any new circulation around the building.***
5. Trees: At least three trees around the building obscure the front face or otherwise present a potential danger of causing damage if they fail.

Recommendations:

- ***Retain a qualified arborist to assess these trees, their condition, and their potential for damage.***

B. Exterior Observations & Recommendations

1. Roof & Roof Water Control

The main roof, studied using only binoculars, is covered with a corrugated metal

panel system and appears to be generally sound, but can be deceptive.

Flashing (especially cricketing) where the main roof surrounds an added external chimney on the north side of the building may be effective, but couldn't be inspected at close hand.

Although remnants of hanging straps suggest a failed earlier effort, there are no gutters or other diversion systems so that roof water falls directly to the ground. This results in damage to the lower portions of the side walls as the water splashes back up onto them and saturates the masonry.

Properly detailed and installed (which doesn't always happen), gutters are good for roof water control, but vulnerable to ice and snow slides as well as freezing-up, and require periodic cleaning. There is no ideal solution, including gutter screens.

Recommendations:

- ***Undertake a more extensive close-hand investigation of the roof using a lift or possibly a drone to verify conditions, and then repair identified damage as necessary.***
- ***Consider the installation of snow guards, properly planned and located, to limit snow slides and ice-damming at the eaves.***
- ***Strongly consider the installation of skirt drains below grade where the roof water lands on the ground to limit infiltration into the basement. A skirt drain consists of a buried membrane along the foundation and extending outward below grade such that water percolating down through the ground (as from the roof above) is directed away from the face of the foundation.***

2. Exterior Walls

The exterior walls are constructed of a hard fired pressed yellow brick in a standard running bond pattern with a clay tile back-up (visible at a hole in the interior face of the east wall in the attic above the entry recess). Most of the mortar joints are concave and older, but some areas have been repaired with a Portland cement based mix that's probably too hard and not as breathable as it should be. Other areas of the brick walls also require repointing to varying degrees.

The top of the external chimney, apparently a later addition, on the north side of the building appears to be in questionable condition and warrants investigation.

The window and door heads, sills, and related trim are concrete, often referred to as cast stone.

A south-facing basement window opening has been infilled with mis-matched red brick. Former doorways at the west wall have been infilled with obtrusive plywood.

Several specific issues were noted with the masonry. First, there are numerous instances where the bricks above window and door openings have dropped slightly creating stepped cracks in an inverted "V" form. This might be related to sagging of the lintels, but couldn't be confirmed.

Second is that several of the cast stone lintels have started to roll over or push outward from their intended positions and are becoming displaced.

Third, in several cases bricks bearing on the concrete sills at the sides of window openings have failed as the result of water getting under them, freezing, and heaving.

In addition, miscellaneous areas needing repairs were noted in the concrete foundation, some having been repaired ineffectively previously.

At the southeast corner of the cornice, an outdoor light is somewhat precariously installed.

Recommendations:

- ***Undertake a thorough assessment and scoping of the exterior masonry to identify areas needing attention then make repairs properly using an appropriate lime-based mortar to improve the wall's ability to pass moisture outward.***
- ***Confirm that the external chimney on the north side of the building is inactive then cap it. Removal would be an option, but would require additional restoration of the original wall masonry and cornice.***
- ***See reference above regarding skirt drains below grade. Excavate several feet below grade, clean and repoint the masonry foundation walls, then apply a mortar parge coat plus a liquid membrane waterproof coating (not visible above grade) before installing the skirt drains.***
- ***Secure or, preferably, replace the southeast cornice light with something more effective, unobtrusive, and energy efficient.***
- ***Consider less obtrusive methods for infilling openings in the exterior walls.***

3. Exterior Trim & Features

The cornices and related trim are presumed to be wood and are covered with ferrous sheet metal. They appear to be generally sound except for apparent deterioration adjacent to the external chimney at the north side of the building. Wood nailer strips, apparently used to hold the lower edge of the cornice metal in place, are failing in some locations.

The tympanum, i.e. the triangular face of the front gable, is faced with diamond-shaped shingles which could be asbestos. The Town logo at the center of the tympanum is deteriorated.

The ceiling of the front entry recess has been screened to prevent birds and other unwanted visitors. This area is too dark to study from the ground, appears to be tongue & groove boards, and its condition is unknown.

The bases of the unvented hollow columns at the front entry are crushing due, presumably, to chronic moisture. The column capitals were inaccessible for close hand investigation, but from within the attic it is possible to see down into the columns which might permit moisture testing, mold treatment, and possibly epoxy reinforcing.

Recommendations

- ***Assess the tympanum diamond shingles. Removal may not be required even if they are asbestos.***
- ***Secure, repair, and properly paint the metal cornice and trim.***

- ***Investigate conditions at the column bases closely to determine the extent of repair needed. Also install round screen vents near the bottom of the shafts or at the bases to allow air to move upwards inside and help dry out the core.***
- ***Investigate the ceiling of the front entry recess at close hand. Develop a comprehensive pest control approach.***

4. Windows & Exterior Doors

Most of the windows are wood, double hung, and single glazed with cords missing, no weatherstripping, and deteriorated glazing putty, but very restorable. The primary windows in the theater space are tall one-over-one units. A number of the basement windows are vinyl double hung replacements in average condition. The existing exterior storm units are aluminum triple tracks (with fixed versions for the upper half of the tall windows) in fair condition.

The exterior door frames are generally in repairable condition. The doors vary in visual appropriateness and most are not original.

The front entry doors are a pair at 32" wide each which, with their ability to swing outward to perhaps 150 degrees, might just provide the legal minimum of 32" for legal accessibility (the clear opening of a single unit must be 32"), but this was not checked in the field.

Recommendations:

- ***Each window should be evaluated and documented carefully to assess conditions and needs. In general, restoration with new unobtrusive triple track aluminum storms & screens is recommended to preserve the historic features, but - subject to SHPO as applicable - costs (especially if the glazing putty has asbestos) and difficulty of operation (especially storms) may lean towards replacement with double glazed, aluminum clad, wood units that match the originals accurately.***
- ***Each door should also be evaluated and consideration should be given to replacing those in poor condition or historically inconsistent with the character of the building.***
The front doors and their hardware are rusty and replacement is recommended. If they can't provide the 32" clear space, consideration could be given to replacing them with a single, power operated 36" unit, but that would reduce the overall exiting capacity.

C. Interior Observations & Recommendations

1. Basement Level

The floor of the basement is concrete, the walls are concrete below grade and clay tile above with a cracking and failing parge coating in most areas, and the ceilings are tin, i.e. pressed metal, with peeling paint. It's not clear where, or if, the concrete foundation wall itself might be cracking behind the parging.

There are two dropped beams east to west supported by a total of six 4 1/2" dia. iron posts in the Center Basement. A later steel post is located in the Mechanical Room to support the toilet room above while a wooden 4x4 near the oil tank supports framing above. In the western three spaces the dividing walls are brick full height.

There is evidence of general moisture infiltration plus more specific instances at the

center window on the north side of the large space, at the northeast corner, in the Mechanical Room, below doors at grade, and at several other locations especially the Northwest Room. In addition, it's likely that moisture migrates upwards into the space through the floor slab.

At the doors to the Southwest and Northwest Rooms there are small floor drains that may connect to the two sumps nearby.

There is a sump in the floor at the northwest corner of the large space with a pump that pumps overhead to a matching sump and pump at the southwest corner and from this location the water is discharged through the south wall of the building beneath the southwest exit. An old floor drain is located by the east wall of the large space, but it's not clear if it functions.

Active and inactive ductwork, piping, and wiring are suspended from the ceiling throughout the basement.

There is what appears to be an original beadboard-faced wooden enclosure surrounding the historic stair as it rises to the landing from which it exits to the exterior. The lower parts of the partition, in contact with the slab, are deteriorated from moisture.

With the exception of two small spaces cast into the east wall of the large center room, the basement exists only under the theater space and stage area above. One of the small spaces is located beneath the large built-in safe in the northwest room, first floor, while the other seems to be related to the construction of the historic stair.

In the Southwest Room are, along with miscellaneous debris, the remains of a stair that appears once to have risen into the stage right area.

Much of the building's current mechanical equipment is located in the Mechanical Room, but these would be likely to change, at least to some extent, as part of a comprehensive building renovation plan.

In the Northwest Room are a disconnected oil storage tank and wooden stairs actively used to access the exterior. Another disconnected tank is located in the Mechanical Room.

Recommendations:

- ***Determine how much moisture is rising up through the concrete floor slab. Consider cleaning and sealing the slab, which may not be entirely effective, or raise vulnerable materials off the floor.***
- ***Remove deteriorated parging from the interior face of the foundation walls. Identify cracks in the concrete wall, if any, and make necessary watertight repairs. Also repair the large vertical crack in the concrete east wall of the large space.***
- ***As part of a comprehensive basement renovation plan remove all loose paint from the tin ceiling, secure a/o patch pieces as necessary, and repaint.***
- ***Correct conditions at water infiltration locations from the exterior. Do not try to waterproof the interior face of the foundation walls as it is unlikely to be effective.***
- ***Investigate the two sumps and pumps carefully to confirm effective operation. Consider installing a third sump and pump at the northeast corner of the large space and draining out through the north foundation wall to a secure drainage path.***

- *As part of a comprehensive basement renovation plan remove all extraneous ductwork, wiring, etc. and develop a less obtrusive installation.*
- *Replace the deteriorated portions of the historic stair enclosure, but retain the historic components and make appropriate adjustments as necessary as part of a comprehensive basement renovation plan.*
- *In the Southwest Room remove the miscellaneous debris and study the space to identify unseen problems and see if it might be usable for ongoing building purposes such as backstage access.*
- *In the Northwest and Mechanical Rooms, remove the unused oil tanks and correct the water infiltration.*

2. Front Entry Level

This area includes the Front Entry with steps and lift up to the Main Level, the Southwest Room and closet, and the Office with two closets. Originally the steps were full width, but were, apparently, narrowed to accommodate the platform lift for accessibility. Incongruously there are ticket windows on both sides of the stairs, but the stairs cover the floor areas immediately in front of these windows. There are wood handrails at both sides of the stairs and are properly returned at their ends.

The wood trim and beaded board wainscoting are substantially intact, stained, and clear finished. The walls are plaster and the ceilings (low at the upper landing) are typically non-original 12x12 surface applied acoustic ceiling tiles with a stained cornice trim all around. Floors are carpet on top of, presumably, finished concrete.

The lift is an Ameriglide Hercules II 600 residential unit with a car 36" x 57" and is believed to be in operating condition.

The doors are a mixture of older and newer ones, some with glass in them. Hardware varies.

The exterior walls appear to be plaster directly on clay tile leaving no space for easy wiring or insulation. Furring the walls to add insulation would adversely affect historic trim, especially at windows and door.

A counter in the Office is removeable whereas removal of the built in iron safe accessed from that space would be significantly more difficult.

Recommendations:

- *Verify whether glass in the older doors is safety glass and, if not, replace it or apply a protective film to improve safety.*
- *Retain all historic finishes. The acoustic ceiling tiles could be retained or replaced with ones that mimic smooth plaster more effectively as part of a comprehensive renovation.*
- *As part of a comprehensive renovation consider replacement of door hardware with lever units for accessibility*

3. Main Level

Originally constructed as the auditorium or theater and stage this level has been carved up into now unoccupied spaces referred to for this report as the West Room

the Meeting Room, the enclosed Historic Stair, a Hall, and, at the former stage the electrical closet, the Toilet Room, the Southwest Room and a Storage room. The added Toilet Room has been cut down through the raised stage space to be level with the Main Floor.

The floors of the theater spaces are strip wood covered by a mixture of plywood, 9x9 (presumably asbestos) floor tiles, vinyl plank, and carpet. Backstage the wood floors are exposed.

The exterior walls are plaster-faced clay tile (faced on the exterior with brick) similar to the Front Entry Level. The interior walls appear to be wood studs with 1/4" plywood (some scored to mimic wainscoting) drywall and, possibly, some plaster on older ones.

Most of the original wood base, casings, and other trim survives, but has been painted when it might originally have been finished naturally as in the Front Entry. Later partitions have newer, plain trim.

The original steps up to the stage survive at stage left and stage right. These are steeper than current codes would allow for new, but can be retained as "historic" or replaced with new, simple equivalents if preferred.

The 12x12 acoustic tile ceiling is the underside of a floor level inserted into the original theater space mid-height, presumably in the early 1960s to create more energy-efficient and functional spaces below once the theater/opera house closed.

This inserted level is made of wood joists and hung from the original ceiling structure above. On top of the joists is 1/2" thick particleboard and though its loading capacity may not be great the floor is used for limited light storage. The ceiling of the space above the inserted floor is the original 1915 pressed metal ("tin") which is extremely historic and in excellent condition. Plaster walls in this upper space are decorated with painted designs and bordering.

The Historic Stair is located in the southeast corner of this level and extends from the original stepped Balcony above down to the Main Floor then to a grade level exit in the south wall and continues down to the basement. This stair is substantially intact and a significant historic feature.

The doors in these spaces include both original and later additions and a comprehensive renovation should address them accordingly.

Recommendations:

- ***As part of a comprehensive renovation remove the non-historic partitions, inserted floor, toilet room, and other obtrusive treatments then actively restore (not renovate) the original theater and support spaces with original finishes and details modified carefully enough to improve the overall functioning without compromising historic character.***

4. Balcony Level

The Balcony level retains a significant amount of original material including seating that has been disconnected and piled up, but the space has been disturbed by the addition of the inserted level and newer HVAC ducted down into the spaces below.

The wood floor is tiered in five levels with steps at both sides, a single exit stair at the south side, and the remains of what may have been a second at the north side.

The ceiling is pressed tin, a continuation of the ceiling for the original theater space and equally significant.

There is a storage closet located at the southeast corner and another at the northeast corner that contains steps up to the attic space above the recessed front entrance to the building.

Recommendations

- **As with other such facilities, the seating is typically steep and cramped with difficult egress and for this reason reuse of the Balcony for assembly occupancy is not recommended. It should, however be preserved as part of the historic and architectural artifact.**

5. Attic

The attic space is accessed by way of the stairs in the closet in the northeast corner of the Balcony. The framing is an integrated system of roof rafters and theater ceiling rafters below them with purlins running east to west. The underside of the metal roofing and butted wood decking is visible and in fair to good condition.

The ridge vent appears to have been foamed closed and it's unclear what, if any ventilation there is for the attic.

There are no lights, emergency lights (not required, but recommended), or fire/smoke detection.

Several pieces of what appears to be cement asbestos board were noted with hinged panels suggesting that the space was used as a protected projection room at a time when combustible nitrate film was used and dangerous.

Recommendations:

- **Document and investigate the attic and roof framing conditions more thoroughly.**
- **Investigate the issue and provide ventilation if necessary.**
- **Provide lighting, emergency lighting, and fire/smoke detection throughout the attic.**

D. Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing:

1. Mechanical:

There is no mechanical cooling in the building. Heating varies and was not documented thoroughly because it will be replaced entirely as part of a comprehensive renovation. One system in the basement delivers air up through grilles in the floor of the Main Level above. Another in the balcony ducts air down through the ceiling to the subdivided spaces at the Main Level, the Office, and the Southeast Room. Unit heaters have been installed in the Office, Southeast Room, Front Entry, Historic Stair, and the west end of the West Room. Electric baseboard heat has been installed in the Toilet Room and the Southwest Room.

Primary equipment serving these units is located in the Mechanical Room in the

Basement and includes an ultra-high efficiency gas-fired boiler. A separate Modine hot water, ceiling-mounted heater provides heat in the Center Basement.

There are multiple thermostats that vary by equipment and location.

Recommendations:

- ***As plans are developed for a comprehensive renovation of the entire building, determine whether the existing equipment can be reused, at least in part.***

2. Electrical

The electric service entrance and main panel is located in a closet at the southeast corner of the Southwest Room, Main Level, and appears to be sound but was not documented in detail during the limited site visit.

Light fixtures in the building are reasonably adequate and functional, but a substantial renovation should include all new fixtures for better lighting, efficiency, and distribution. The condition of observed wiring, outlets, devices, etc. is fair.

At the original tin ceiling above the floor level inserted into the theater there are several very significant and substantially intact brass chandeliers.

Fire/smoke detectors/alarms, illuminated exit signs, emergency lights, motion sensors, and various other electrical items were noted throughout the building and are generally adequate, but could be better.

Areas of obtrusive surface wiring and Wiremold were noted throughout the building and this is understandable given the limited options for running wire within the wall construction.

Recommendations:

- ***As part of the comprehensive renovation, strong consideration should be given to replacing the existing electrical systems (including services, distribution/wiring, devices, fixtures, and controls) entirely based on proposed needs, life safety, and energy conservation.***
- ***Carefully preserve and restore the historic chandeliers for active use.***
- ***Carefully conceal all wiring in finished spaces, and especially historic ones.***

3. Plumbing:

Although some appears to be relatively new and is copper or PEX, general plumbing was not investigated closely during the site visit with the understanding that most is old and will be reconfigured in the course of a comprehensive renovation.

An electric 30 gal. Reliance 606 domestic water heater is located against the west wall of the Center Basement, presumably serving the toilet room. Fittings appear to be deteriorated and the top is badly rusted.

Water stains and mold were noted in the plywood flooring beneath the toilet suggesting leaks or at least surface condensation issues.

Recommendations:

- ***Replace all plumbing as part of a comprehensive renovation of the building.***

- **See separate discussion of underslab drainage, sumps, and sump pumps for Basement water control.**

E. Additional Observations

1. Hazardous Materials:

This consultant is not legally certified to identify or make recommendations for the treatment of materials such as asbestos, PCBs, etc. which are considered to be hazardous. It should also be assumed that most of the paint on these buildings, at least lower layers, is lead-based and all procedures required by law should be applied when disturbing it.

Recommendations:

- ***It's strongly recommended that a certified consultant be retained to undertake a formal hazardous materials assessment for the building.***

2. Accessibility:

At some point a decent effort was made to provide universal access throughout the building with the installation of ramping from the sidewalk in front, a lift at the Front Entry up to the Main Level, and a toilet room that could accommodate a wheelchair although not perfectly nor consistent with standards for public facilities.

Recommendations:

- ***Any comprehensive renovation should incorporate more effective and extensive access in accordance with applicable current standards***

3. Invasive Pests:

It appears that roosting birds have been an issue for the building in the past and bat and squirrel feces was noted in the attic. Bats can easily carry rabies (though some bats are protected and they provide valuable services in nature).

Recommendations:

- ***Carefully assess and monitor to determine the type and extend of infestation then develop a game plan to eliminate the problem.***

IV. SUMMARY & SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

With the understanding that the objective of the Town is to pursue a comprehensive renovation of the Old Town Hall & Opera House, the following recommendations can be offered for immediate action and in the process of undertaking these efforts, a game plan will be developed to guide subsequent action.

A. Prioritized Planning & Management Recommendations

1. **Establish and maintain an active working committee to, in collaboration with the Town, deal with all aspects of the adaptive reuse of the Old Town Hall & Opera House.**
2. **Review this report to identify questions of all sorts then engage in a virtual coordination meeting with this consultant to discuss these. Note that this report is a limited assessment and can address issues only to the extent allowed by the available fees. If additional**

services are desirable, and they are strongly recommended for many aspects of such a project, these can be discussed along with options for the associated funding.

3. Based on this report and additional community input identify and prioritize needs based on local desires, the viability of such a revitalized facility, the availability of physical improvement funding, what would be required to procure and administer such funds, and how such a facility would be managed and maintained going forward.
4. Going forward it will be necessary to include a qualified preservation architect to identify physical needs and appropriate corrective action in greater detail than this limited report can include. In addition, such assistance will be needed to support funding applications plus preparation of drawings, scopes, specifications, and bidding materials as well as to monitor bidding and construction through to completion.

Since the building is publicly owned the work will be classified as Public Works subject to General Municipal Law which (above mandated low levels of cost) require Prevailing Wage Rates. Funding sources will have their own requirements and most will necessitate review and approval of the proposed work by the State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") which, in New York State is the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

All of this may seem daunting and limiting, but funding is available, these are legal requirements, and thousands of historic resources throughout the state (and other states) are successfully taking this path to restore and revitalize their historic resources.

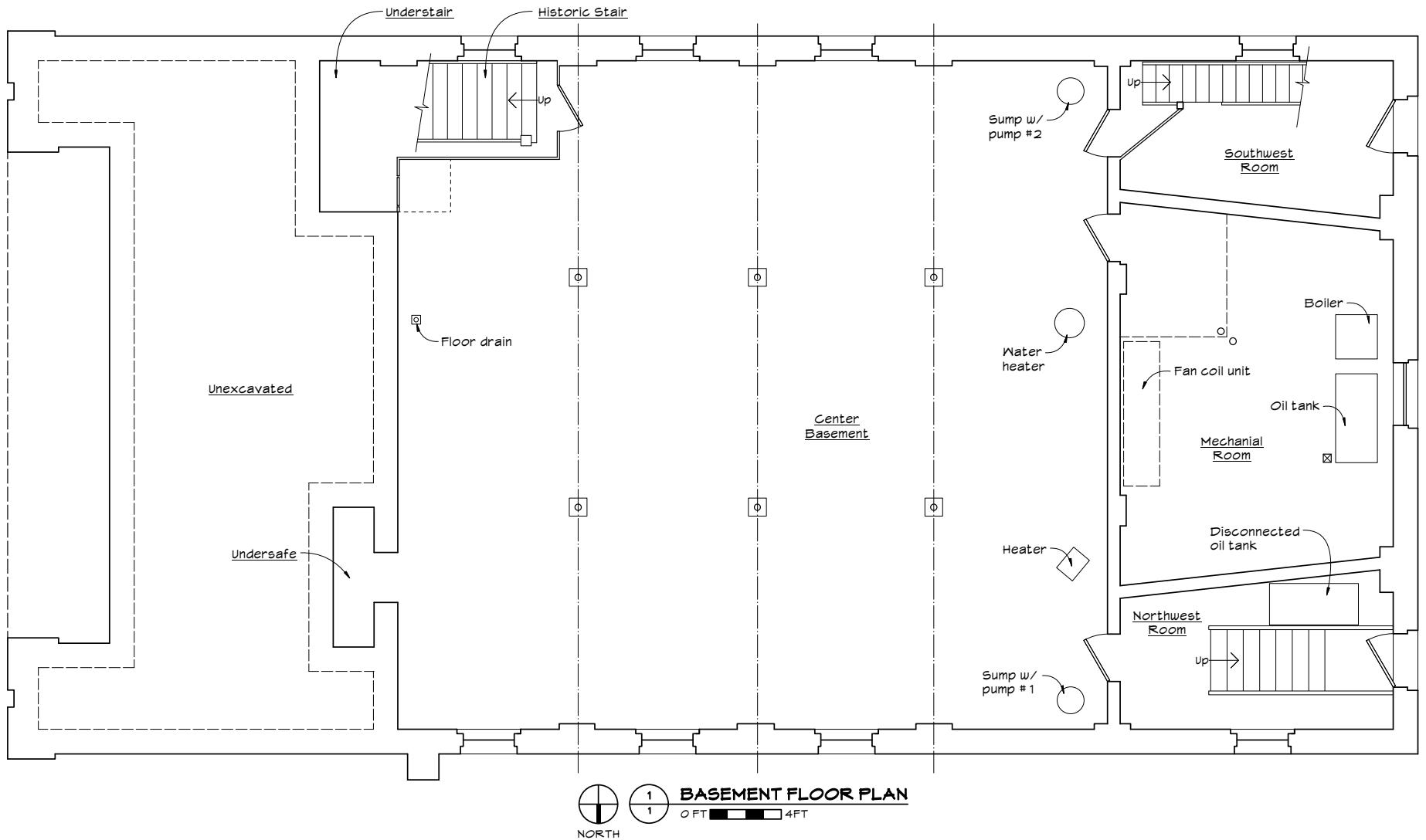
5. Using a qualified technical specialist undertake a hazardous materials assessment to identify materials of concern in and around the building which require abatement or alternative treatment.
6. Be sure that the local fire department and other first responders are thoroughly familiar with the building to maximize their safety and effectiveness in the event of an emergency.
7. Monitor and, if possible, eliminate bats, squirrels, and other undesirable visitors from the building.
8. Working with the selected professional, develop and agree on a reuse plan whether based on the preliminary one included in this report or going in another direction entirely. Be sure to meet applicable building, safety, and accessibility codes and that the proposed alterations will be acceptable to SHPO.

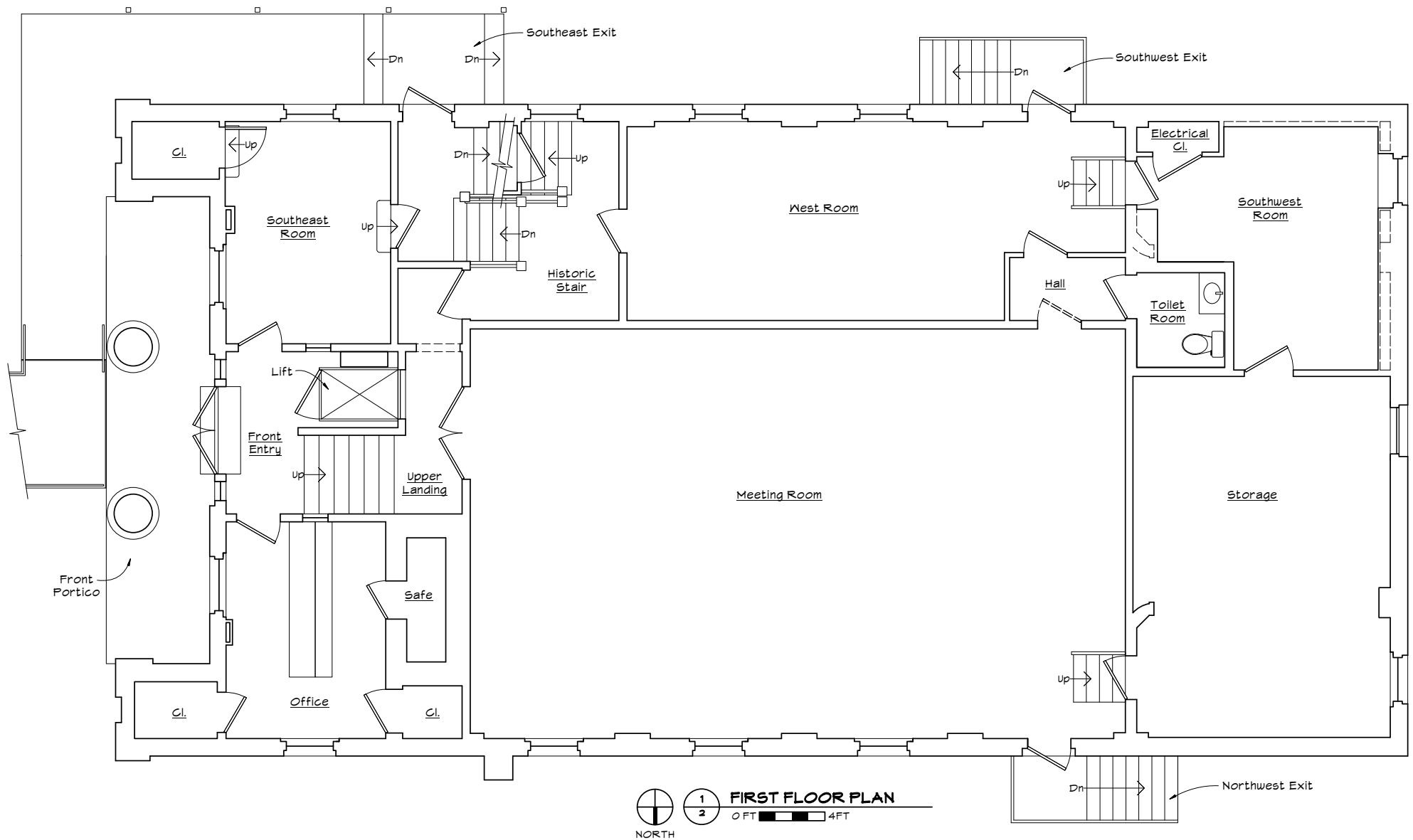
B. Prioritized Physical Improvement Recommendations

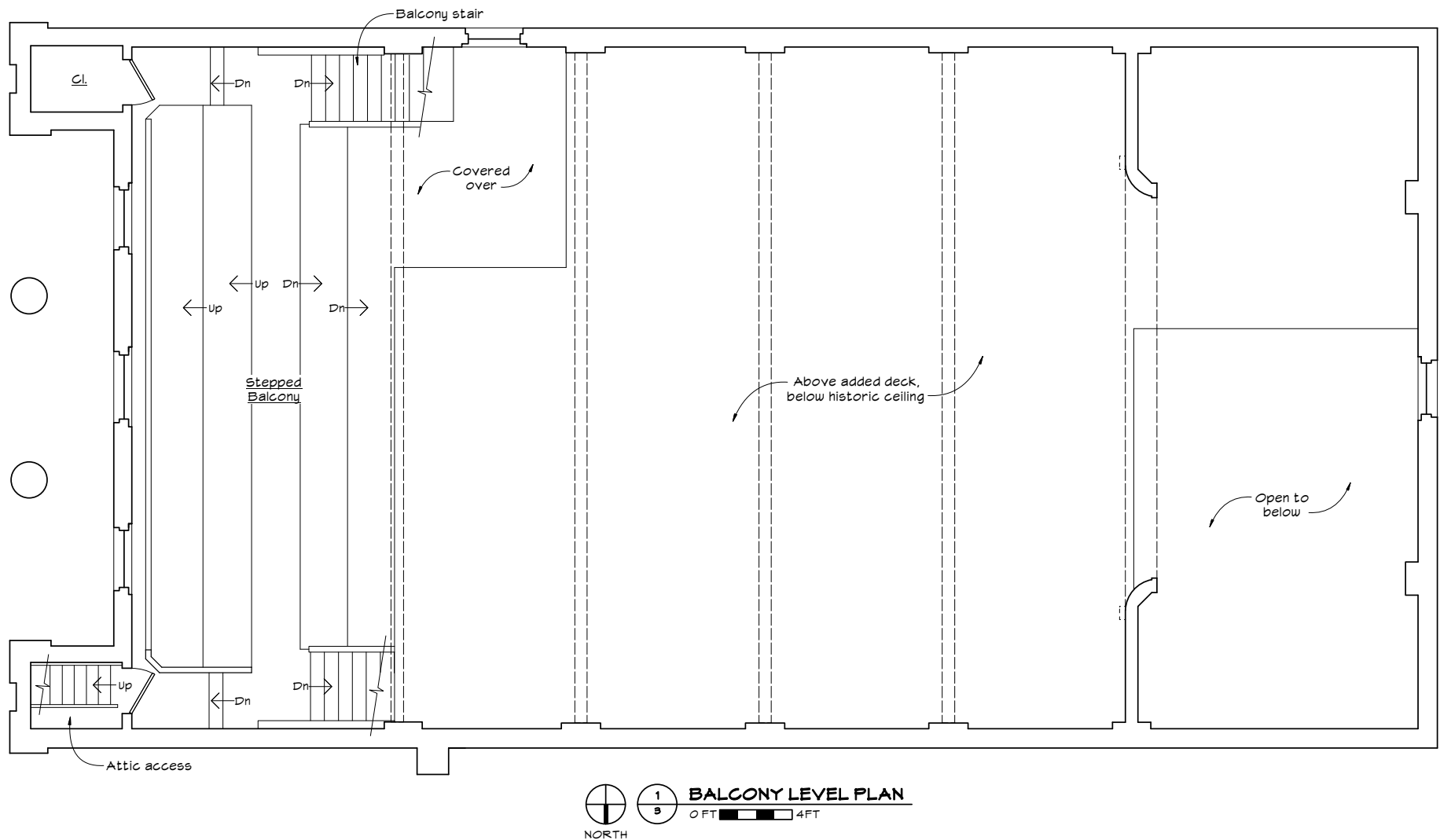
1. Control water in the basement. Be sure the sumps and pumps are operating properly. Extend the discharge piping to away from the foundation walls. Identify and implement adjustments to reduce water infiltration from the exterior.
2. Remove the more dangerous hazardous materials, usually asbestos. Others, such as lead-based paint, are common but not as threatening and relatively easy to manage in the course of maintenance and repairs. Include removal of the apparently disconnected oil storage tanks in the Mechanical and Northwest Rooms in the basement.
3. Remove miscellaneous, non-historic debris that might be obscuring possible damage or conditions to be inspected. Such material exists in the Southwest Room of the basement.
4. Identify and correct specific exterior masonry problems such as displaced masonry lintels and the step cracks above them as described above.

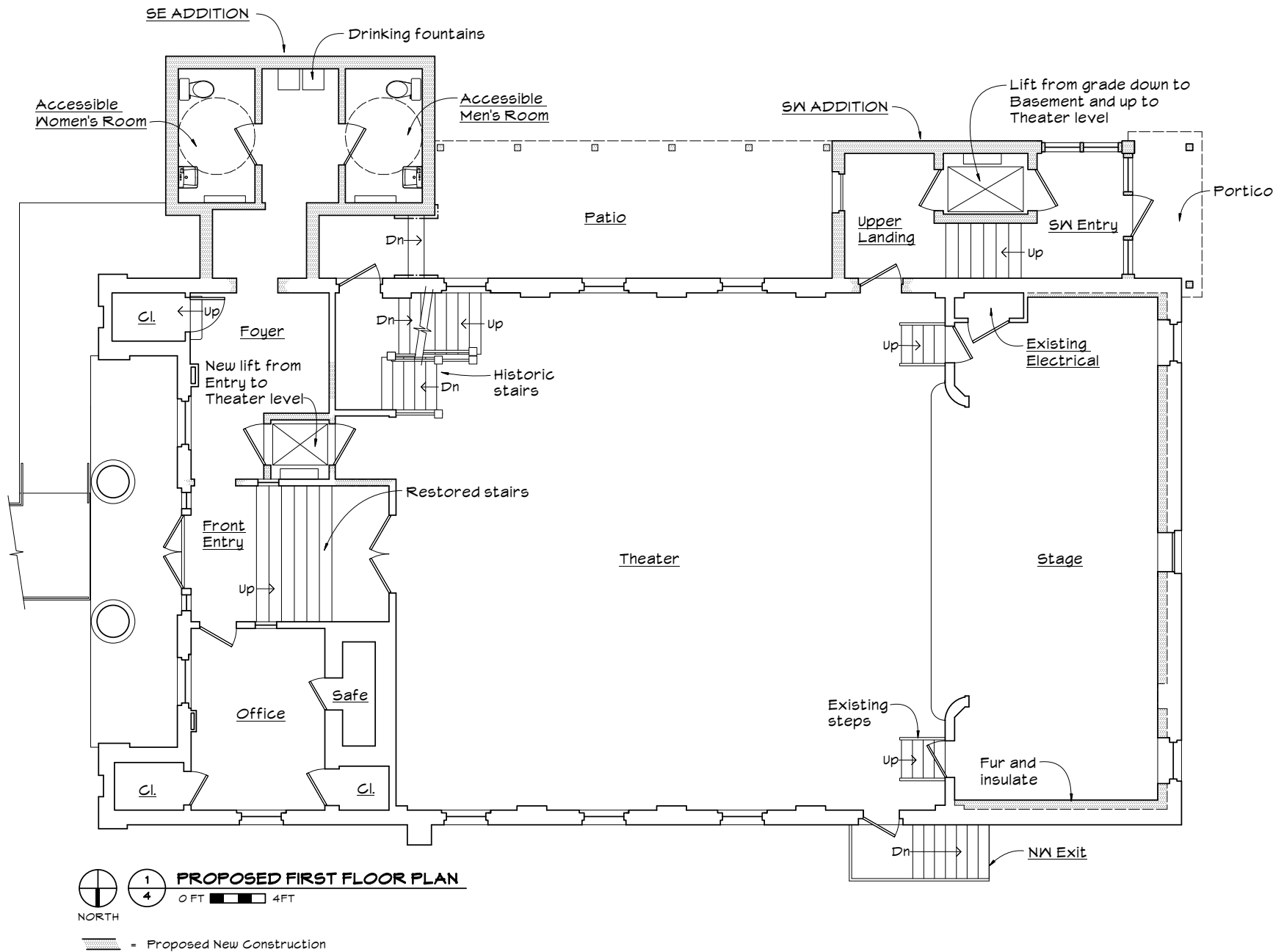
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7.15.26









PRELIMINARY REUSE PLAN AT THE HAMMOND OLD TOWN HALL

CRAWFORD & STEARNS • ARCHITECTS AND PRESERVATION PLANNERS, PLLC • SYRACUSE, NY

The Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House

By Pamela Burton, Hammond Town Clerk
December 1, 2025

The Town of Hammond is seeking State and National historic designation for the Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House.

From 1915 until the 1950s, the Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House was an important cultural center; hosting events from school graduations to touring musical acts and plays, to local talent shows and political functions. Circa 1960, school events moved to the Hammond Central School's new auditorium. In 2022, the town offices and library moved into a new office building just down the street. The Hammond Town Board is now ready to restore the Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House to its former cultural glory. The town board believes historical designation of the opera house would benefit the community in several ways; 1) designation would make Hammond part of the historic opera house cultural in St. Lawrence County, 2) an historic designation opens grant opportunities for the restoration and preservation, 3) preserving the building also preserves Hammond's past and, 4) a performing arts center would revitalize Hammond's struggling economy by improving tourism and business.

The Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House opened in December 1915 after the original 1889 wooden structure was destroyed by fire in February of 1915. Built in the same year by Doyle Construction, it was rebuilt as a brick structure on the same footprint and continued to function as town offices and a theater. It was used for school graduations, traveling shows, movies, fundraisers, political events, and the town board meetings.

The Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House is architecturally and historically significant as a largely intact representative example of Neo-Classical Revival civic architecture in the North Country, which continues to reflect its historic associations with the community. Built in 1915, it is a yellow brick building with imposing temple front and columns in antis. It commands a place of prominence on the Main Street of the small, rural community. Still remaining intact in the opera house building are the 2 ticket/coat areas, the 40ft-by-40ft open auditorium area, the balcony with the ~~actual folding chairs~~ actual folding chairs purchased through McFillis Furniture Company in Ogdensburg, the original 40ft-by-18ft stage that includes wonderful graffiti and 3 authentic chandeliers above, and back stage stairs. The ceiling and basement ceiling are still visible pressed, painted metal. There are visible authentic wood paneling features throughout.

The Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House was home to school functions and performances until 1953 when the Hammond Central School was built with a large auditorium. In 1962, the Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera House was renovated into town offices by adding a few temporary walls, and temporarily blocking the stage. After several years, the opera

house name was unintentionally dropped and became known as just the "town hall" with offices for the town supervisor, assessor, code officer, justice court, and town clerk. The Hammond Free Library had two other homes in the village before moving into the old town hall in 1963 and then moved with the town offices into the new town hall building in February 2022.

Since 2022, the Old Hammond Town Hall and Opera house has stood vacant. The building has been kept heated and well maintained since the move. Upkeep in the last 10 years includes painting the roof, replacing the boiler, and upgrading the bathroom. In 2012, a platform lift was added in the entranceway to take wheelchairs up to auditorium floor. There are no other outbuildings on the property. In 1966, the Town Board added a WWI and WWII Veterans monument to the property. The landscaping has always been kept neat.

Credits and Resources

Donna Demick- Hammond Historian and Director of Hammond Historical Museum

Nancy LaFaver- St. Lawrence County Historian

The April 2025 Town and Village of Hammond Joint Comprehensive Plan

The 1996 Resource Evaluation for Hammond Town Hall/Opera House, Hammond, NY from Office of Preservation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation



Photo 01: Hammond Town Hall 2015.



Photo 02: Interior of Hammond Town Hall (Undated).



Photo 03: Front (East) elevation. Note concrete walk with ramp for accessibility and veteran's memorial.



Photo 04: Detail at peak of front gable. Note sheet metal trim with decorative diamond shingles.



Photo 05: Looking southwesterly at front entry. Note that concrete walk has sunken to create shallow step at access to front doors.



Photo 06: Looking westerly along north side of building. Note external brick chimney.



Photo 07: Looking southeast to north face of building. Note metal steps and exit from stage left at theater floor level.



Photo 08: Rear (west) elevation. The “upper” door is located at stage level and the lower doors access stairs down to the basement level.



Photo 09: Looking northeasterly to south face of the building. Note exit and metal steps at stage right as well as southeast stair egress beyond.



Photo 10: Looking northwesterly to south face of building. Note light framed protective canopy.



Photo 10.1: (left) Detail at west end of canopy over Southeast Exit.

Photo 10.2: (below) Detail of exterior, south face. Note miscellaneous step cracks above the basement windows.





Photo 10.3: Detail of frozen basement sump pump discharge to exterior at Southwest Exit.



Photo 10.4: Detail of gable window at west elevation. Note deteriorated and poorly patched brick sill.



Photo 10.5: (left) Detail at exterior of typical window with an exterior aluminum storm window unit.

Photo 10.6: (below) Detail of displaced header and step cracking at typical window.





Photo 10.7: Detail of displaced lintel at basement window with triangular step-cracking above it.



Photo 11: First Floor Front Entry looking northwesterly to stairs with platform lift in foreground.



Photo 12: First Floor Front Entry looking northward to office door with front doors at right.



Photo 13: Looking northwesterly in Office at entry level.



Photo 14: Looking easterly to historic stair at main level.



Photo 15: Looking southwesterly to Southeast Exit door.



Photo 16: (left) Looking westerly up historic stair to main level.

Photo 17: (below) Looking easterly in Meeting Room, main level.





Photo 18: Looking northwesterly in Meeting Room, main level.



Photo 19: Looking westerly in South Room, main level. Note steps up to former stage.



Photo 20: (left) View of interior of Toilet Room, main level.

Photo 21: (below) Looking northeasterly in Southwest Room, stage level, towards Toilet Room enclosure.





Photo 22: (left) Detail of steps up to former stage from South Room.

Photo 23: (below) Looking north in Storage Room, stage level. Note ladder access to space above level added within original theater.





Photo 24: (left) Looking up historic stairs from main level to balcony space.

Photo 24.1: (below) Looking north in balcony space.





Photo 24.2: (left) Looking northeast in northeast corner of balcony.

Photo 25: (below) Looking southwest in space above level added within original theater. Note historic features and finishes.





Photo 26: Looking southwest in space above level added within original theater.



Photo 27: Looking south in attic space above recessed front entry.



Photo 28: View of primary roof framing in attic.



Photo 28.1: Top of theater ceiling framing, attic space, and roof framing above.



Photo 29: Looking northwesterly in Mechanical Room, basement level. Note concrete foundation and clay tile back-up at exterior walls, and brick interior walls.



Photo 30: Looking north in basement space underneath historic stair.



Photo 31: Looking west in Southwest Room, basement level.



Photo 32: Looking west in Northwest Room, basement. Note oil tank and exit door at grade above.



Photo 33: (left) Looking east to enclosed historic stair from basement level.



Photo 34: (below) Looking south in Center Basement. Note tin ceiling and water damage below windows.



Photo 35: (left) Detail of sump, pump, and discharge piping at southwest corner of Center Basement.



Photo 36: (below) Looking west in Center Basement. Note water heater and exposed mechanicals.