

# The Arts & Adaptive Reuse:

## Case Studies in Historic School Buildings

Landmark Society of Western New York State-Wide Preservation Conference

Session Block 1 B, April 17, 2015



*Presented by:*



Clinton Brown, FAIA, President

**Clinton Brown Company Architecture, pc**

Kathie Kudela, Executive Director

Katherine Johnson, Board Member

**Niagara Arts and Cultural Center**

# AIA Rochester

A001

ROC2015-The Arts & Adaptive Reuse:

Case studies in Historic School Buildings

Paul Dyster, Mayor, City of Niagara Falls

Clinton Brown, FAIA, Co-founder, The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center

Paul Minor, Architect

Holger Stave, President, Finger Lakes Symphony Orchestra

Eileen Broderick, Conifer Realty

April 17, 2015



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Questions related to specific materials, methods, and services will be addressed at the conclusion of this presentation.



# Course Description

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Approaching its 15th year of successful operation, The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC) remains one of the country's best examples of combining the arts and culture with historic preservation for neighborhood revitalization. Now home to nearly 70 artists and arts organizations, it is hard to believe that this huge former high school that was a Preservation League Seven-to-Save almost did not happen. Hear from two of its founders, Paul Dyster, now Mayor of the City of Niagara Falls, and City native and architect Clinton Brown, how they returned to the city and worked with a dedicated group to overcome all the odds against them to create The NACC.

Many developers have converted old school buildings into apartments but often find they have space that can't be converted reasonably—the old school auditorium! Explore a case study in action—how did the process start, what are the issues, organization, funding, community reaction. The Fort Hill Apartments (a former high school) in Canandaigua is a work-in-progress: how close are we, will it succeed, can it be a model? Only time will tell

# Learning Objectives

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At the end of the this course, participants will be able to:

- 1) Participants will be able to judge whether proposed work in a rehabilitation project will meet the requirements for historic tax credits.
- 2) Participants will be able to apply creative design solutions that both allow for adaptive reuse of historic school buildings and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- 3) Participants will be able to predict, avoid, and/or react to building code guidelines, technical, mechanical, electrical, and sustainability issues that may arise during a rehabilitation of this nature.
- 4) Participants will be able to plan strategies to secure funding to finance and develop community support for projects of this nature.

# The Early Days of the NACC



- Creation of Niagara Falls High School
- Decline of the city, consolidation of schools
- Founding of Save Our Schools in Niagara Falls/The NACC...Art at the Heart of the City

# How we have been able to come this far



- Operating The NACC
- What we do, whom we serve
- In the building, on the grounds
- Successes
- Challenges

# The community impact and the NACC's place in the strategic plan for the city



# Where We Plan to Go Next...



- Operating The NACC
- In the building, on the grounds
- Challenges to overcome
- Successes we will have!

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Questions?

Thank You!



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# The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center

Community Anchor

Institutional Driver

Core City Asset

# The Developer of the NACC Continues to be the Board of Directors



- Vision: to embrace the cultural heritage of the past, present, and future as an awe-inspiring multi-arts center
- Mission: to protect the landmark building, preserve cultural heritage, and promote arts and cultural experiences

# Planning- always planning



City of Niagara Falls: 12/30/2004



- 2004 City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan was newly released
- 2004- City of Niagara Falls Senior Planner, Tom DeSantis ,attended a NACC Board Meeting
- Advice from Tom DeSantis:  
“Know how the NACC fits into the strategic plan of the city”
- 2008-City Plan updated

# 2008 City of Niagara Falls Strategic Plan

## Niagara Arts and Cultural Center



- NACC- one of the “key drivers”
  - Tremendous potential to contribute positively to the future of the city
- NACC- a key institution within the “core city”
  - A unique asset not found in other parts of the city

# 2008 City of Niagara Falls Strategic Plan

## Niagara Arts and Cultural Center



- NACC- listed as one of the places that “must be strengthened and leveraged to bring about growth in the whole city”

# 2008 City of Niagara Falls Strategic Plan

## Niagara Arts and Cultural Center



- Arts and Culture
  - Supports the diversification of the tourism and economic base
  - Promotes the development of a culturally unique and rich environment
  - Attractive to residents and visitors

# Status as a Core City Asset

- Understanding where the NACC fits into the city's comprehensive plan has benefitted the NACC
  - In many ways
  - For a variety of reasons



“The active and on-going participation of many, works to ensure benefits are shared with the entire community.”  
8<sup>th</sup> principle of the City of Niagara Falls Strategic Plan



# SAVED FROM THE WRECKING BALL



## ARCHITECT

WLLIAM B. ITTNER FAIA

1864-1936

He graduated with a degree in architecture from Cornell University, traveled in Europe and was elected to the new office of Commissioner of School Buildings .Because he had attended a prison-like school himself, he was determined to create a different kind of environment for students and teachers. Using what became known as the “open plan,” he stretched out the vertical boxes into H-, U- and E-shaped structures; filled the schools with natural light by lining up the classrooms along a windowed corridor; drew the damp outside with ventilation devices; and introduced modern plumbing and fireproofing. Ittner schools were the first to have multiuse rooms, such as the high school auditorium used for athletic events, concerts, school assemblies or plays. He is credited with the design of over 430 schools nationwide and has over 35 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.



The NACC is an adaptively reused high school in operation for over 14 years . It is the largest multi arts cent in the state outside of NYC (180,000 square feet)--with over 70 artists and art group. The NACC includes two galleries and two theaters, a WIFI gift shop, a café and a radio station.



What we encountered when we first took possession of the building in 2001.



## Before and After-Main Gallery-Former Cafeteria



Although there is still work to do-much of the space has been cleaned and painted. Every space is used including bathrooms, teacher rooms, the main hallway and even a closet.

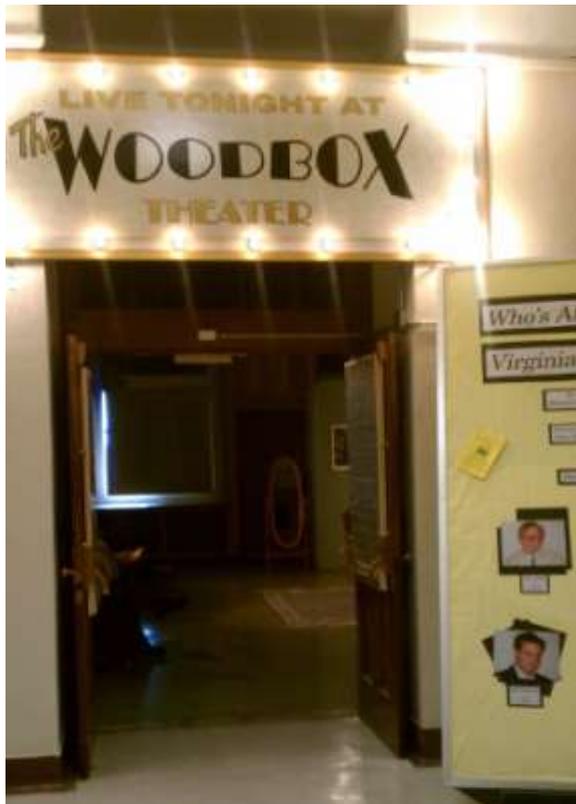


The studios are filled with many disciplines and classes including Music, Art, Woodworking, Photography, Dance, the Written Word and Theater FOR ALL AGES and backgrounds.



Many uses-Film making, woodworking gallery, children's art, Holiday events, vendor events.





# The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC) 2001-2015

## Successes

- 98% occupancy
- Largest multi arts center in the state at 180,000 square feet
- Year round programming
- Recognized by the community as a city asset
- Completed the new roof (\$1 million), circular drive (\$160,00) and restored the elevator (\$150,000)
- Run like a business by a businessman-- Louis Townsend age 82



## Challenges

- We are in an economically depressed area-neighborhood cannot support us financially
- Suburbs “fear” coming to the inner city and have free programs where they live.
- If we want tourists to come to the NACC-we need to build programs directed towards them.
- Large capital projects and infrastructure (heating and plumbing) that must be addressed soon

## WHAT IS NEXT?

1-1000 seat Grand Theater when restored would add needed revenue and become a regional asset.





WHAT IS NEXT? Cultural Heritage Tourism. The Underground Railroad Exhibit and the Portage Road WIFI CAFE



# 2015 NY Statewide Preservation Conference

Smith Opera House

Geneva, NY

April 17, 2015

Eileen Broderick, Conifer Realty

Paul Minor, Architect

Holger Stave, Theater Designer

# Reuse of Historic School Buildings

Case Study.... A work in progress

Canandaigua Academy

c. 1906

Wilson Potter, Architect

Gymnasium and Auditorium Addition

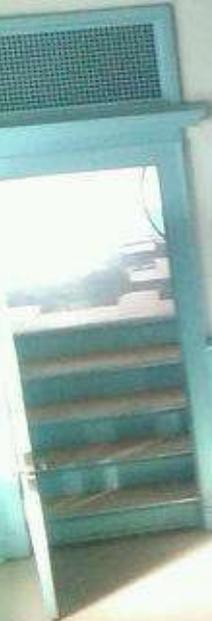
1928

Conifer Realty

and

old school buildings...



















11/02/2010



















MEND/Conte

# *Springside School*

A P A R T M E N T S

609-227-4433 mendinc.org  
TTY 800-852-7899 contedesign.com  
1508

Fort Hill Apartments  
Canandaigua  
1994





# Visual and Performing Arts Center





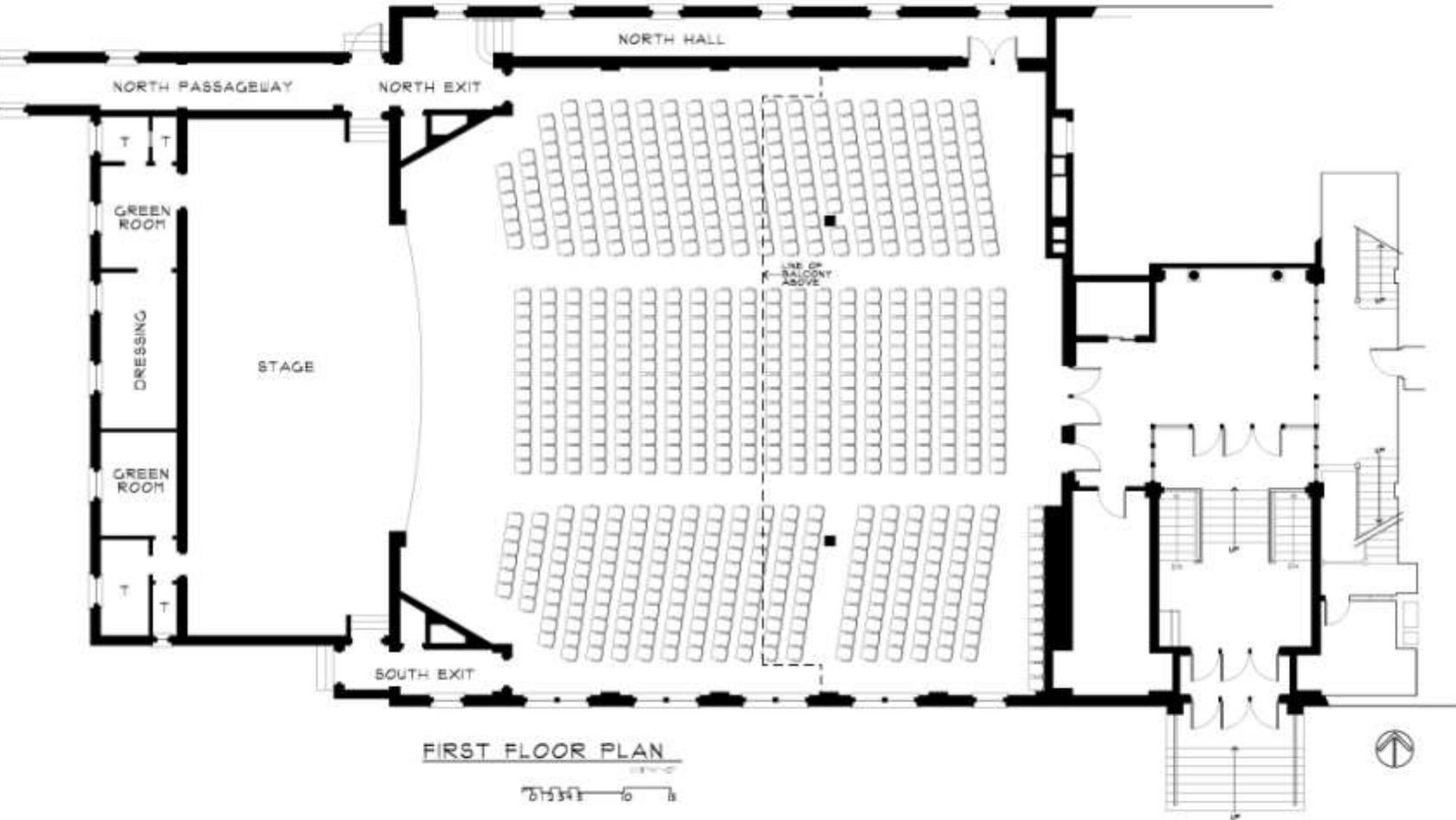
1928







# Existing First Floor



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"  
 0 5 10 15

JOB NO.	10
DRAWN BY	PTM
SCALE	1/4" = 1'-0"
DATE	
REVISIONS	

DATE	
REVISIONS	

PROPOSED RENOVATIONS FOR THE  
**FORT HILL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**  
 235 NORTH MAIN STREET  
 CANANDAIGUA, NEW YORK

NOTE:  
 SEE SHEET 3 FOR PLAN 404



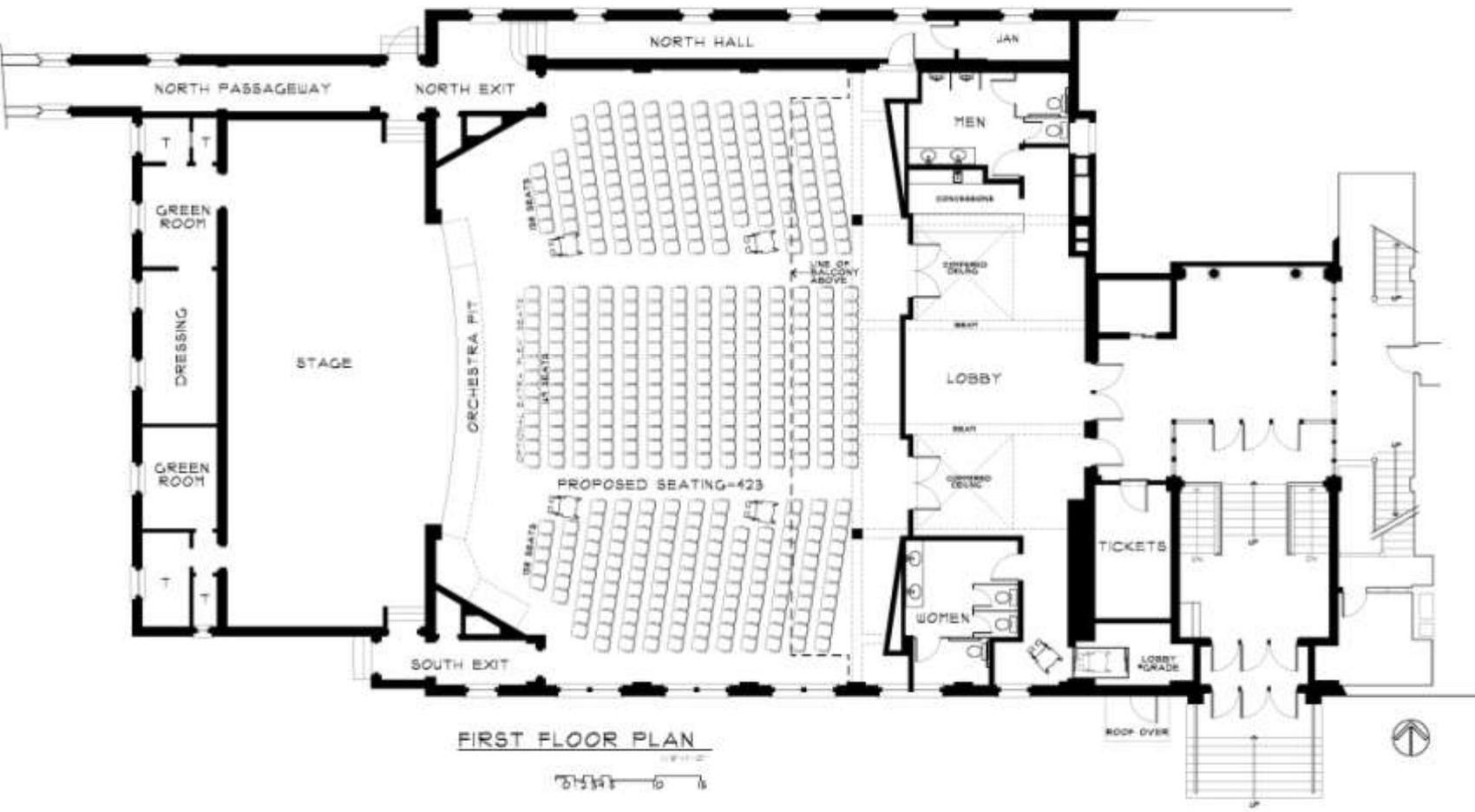




# Proposed First Floor

JOB NO.	
DRAWN	PCB
SCALE	1/4" = 1'-0"
DATE	
REVISIONS	

PROPOSED RENOVATIONS FOR THE  
**FORT HILL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**  
 235 NORTH MAIN STREET  
 CANANDAIGUA, NEW YORK



NOTES:  
 SEE SHEET A2 FOR  
 STAIRS AND ELEVATORS











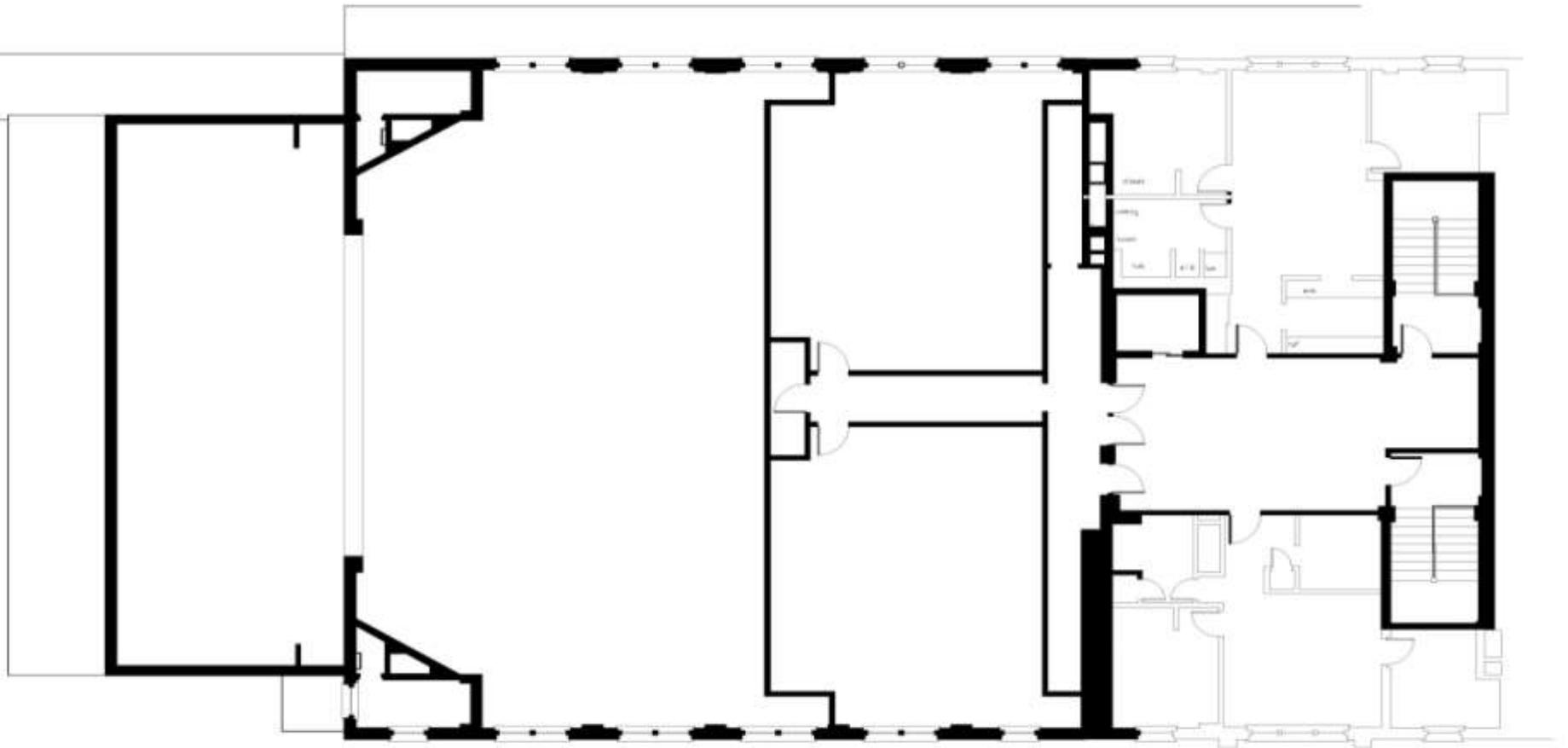








# Balcony Level



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

1/8" = 1'-0"





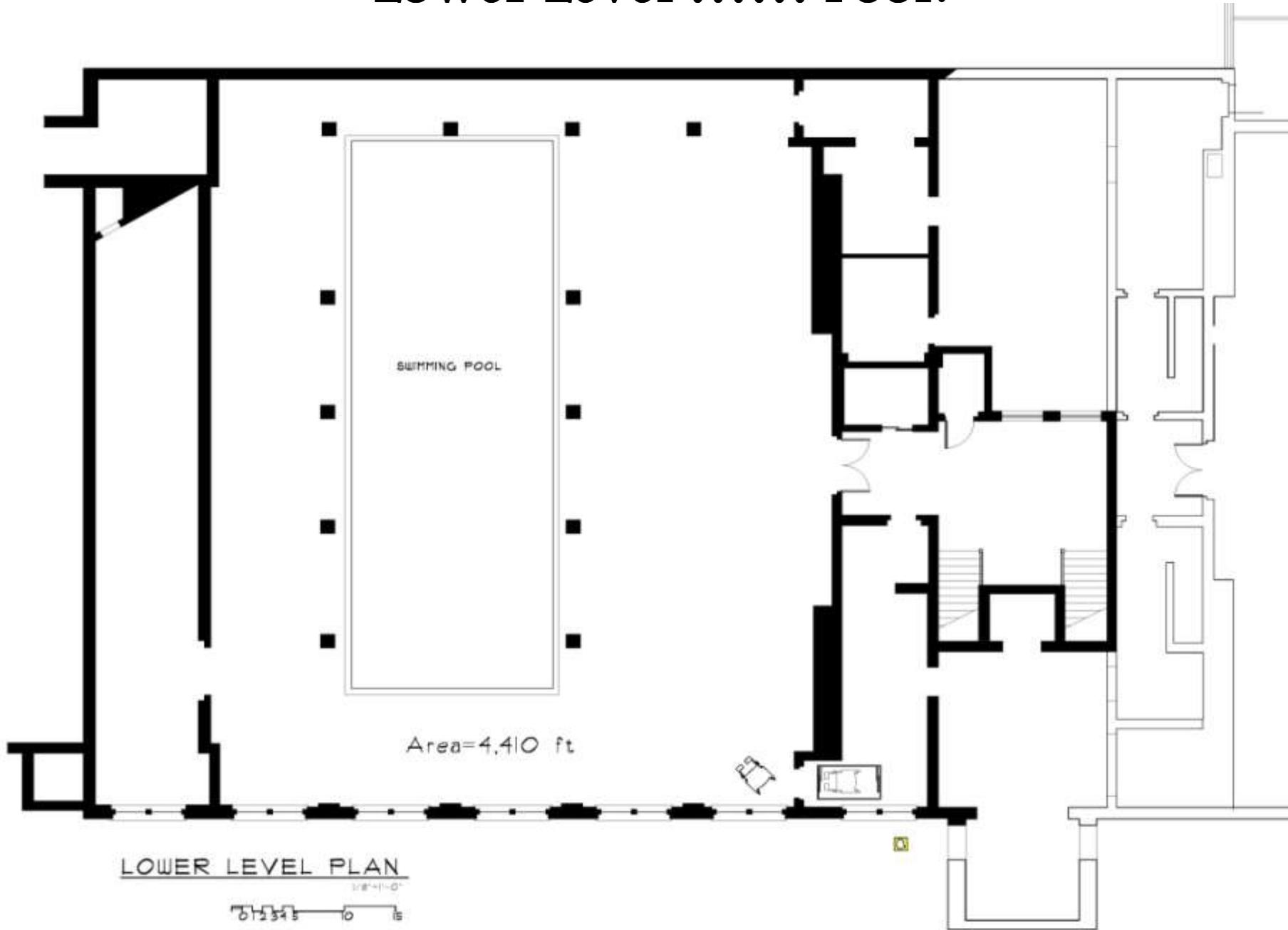








# Lower Level ..... Pool!











Don't touch







This concludes The American Institute of Architects  
Continuing Education Systems Course

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AIA Rochester

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