

# 10 CHURCH STREET

Cambridge, MA

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**PROMONTORIO**

[www.promontorio.net](http://www.promontorio.net)

**MERGEARCHITECTS**<sup>INC</sup>

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Design Partnership

**CAMBRIDGE HISTORIC COMMISSION**

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2018**

## Project Description

The applicant is seeking to demolish the former Harvard Square Theater and replace it with: three retail spaces along Church Street, a prominent movie theater, and courtyard-lit office space. The design aims to be both iconic and unique but also appropriate in scale and materiality to the surrounding historic buildings and district.

The community has asked owners to activate this street frontage along Church Street and restore a commercial theater to this site. The proposed design seeks to activate Church Street by: celebrating the entrance to the theater; continuing the retail program along the length of the frontage; utilizing a courtyard to bring light to the street while providing a break in the facade (and alleviating the need for an all glass facade to bring light into the offices); and employing a light-colored terracotta facade to brighten the street and create a dialogue with the First Parish Church.

The theater lobby is signed by a marquee at the east of the site, nearest Massachusetts Avenue, which is visible from both approaches on Church Street. The lobby leads to a voluminous below-grade cinema with 250 seats, two spacious theaters, a lounge and gathering space. At present, the ground floor retail is conceived of as three unique

spaces, with the office lobby situated on the western edge of the building to maximize the pedestrian retail experience along the frontage. At the rear of the building, a new entry connects to the bike parking to bring activity to the Palmer Street Alley.

The project is proposing an expressive facade that uses concealed, fully-dimmable LED lights to create subtle moving imagery to spur delight in passers-by. The facade will not be used to display advertising or building-specific content. The applicant has received positive feedback on this proposal at two community meetings to date.

The applicant is working with the abutter at 1430 Massachusetts Avenue on providing continued access across the 10 Church Street property for basement egress and loading. The applicant is seeking parking & loading relief to activate pedestrian foot traffic to and from Church Street, as requested. Within a complex footprint this proposal attempts to respond to various community desires and provide a building that is consistent in design and scale with the Harvard Square Historic District zoning, guidelines and contemplated changes.

## Proposed Uses

### Theater

- Two theaters
- Approximately 9,500 sf

### Retail

- Approximately three retail spaces
- Approximately 5,800 sf

### Office

- Approximately 35,750 sf

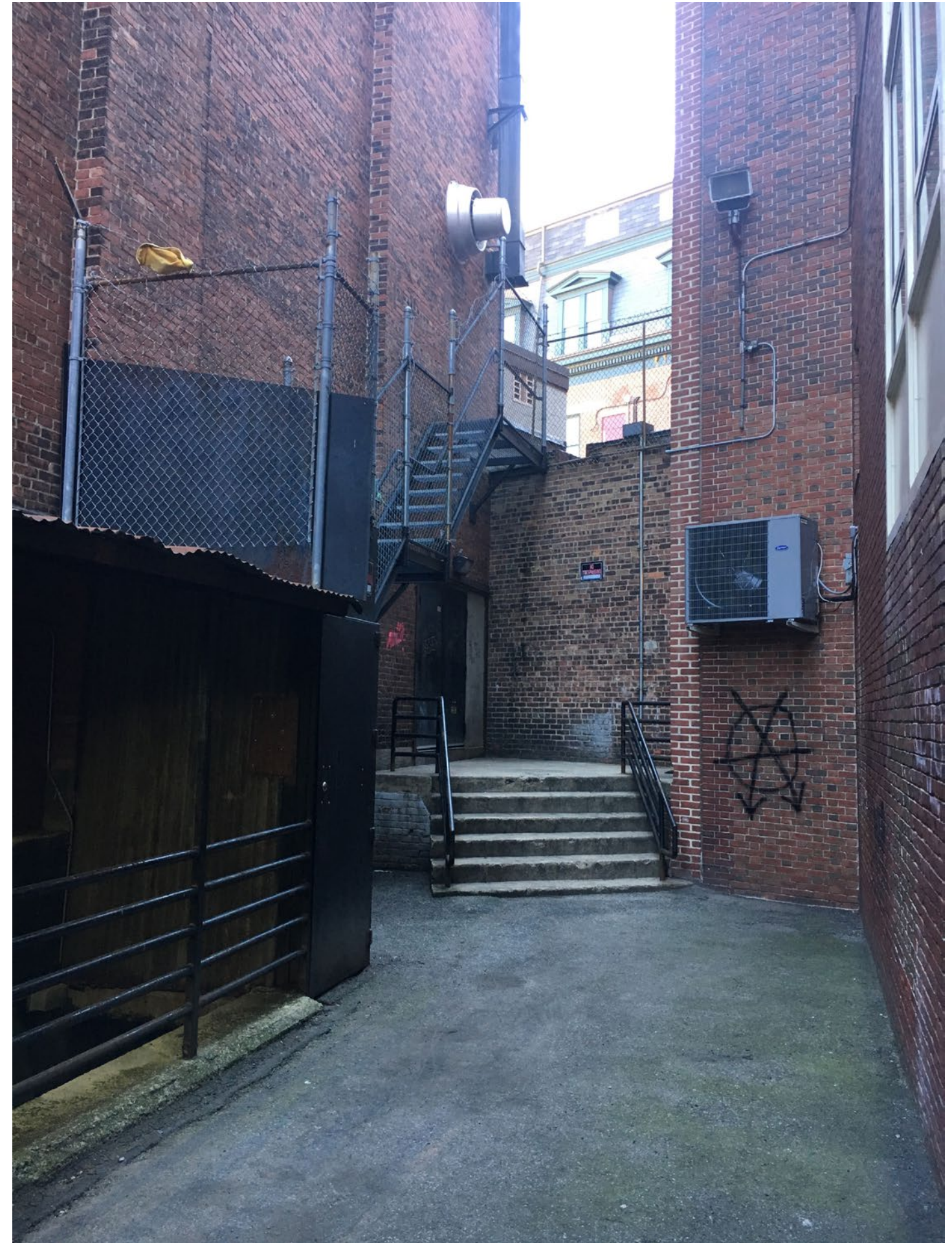
## Challenges & Accommodations

### 1430 Massachusetts Avenue

- Basement Egress
- Roof Egress
- Easement at 10 Church Street

### Rear Alley

- Limited ownership
- Existing dumpster & parking spaces



# Preservation and Development Goals of the Harvard Square Conservation District

## Primary Goal

The goal of the District is to guide change and encourage diversity in order to protect the distinctive characteristics of the District's buildings and public spaces, and to **enhance the livability and vitality of the District** for its residents and all Cambridge residents, students, visitors, and business people. The Historical Commission WILL seek to preserve and **enhance the unique functional environment and visual form of the District**; preserve its architecturally and historically significant structures and their settings, and **encourage design compatible** therewith; **mitigate any adverse impact of new development** on adjacent properties and areas; and **discourage homogeneity by maintaining the present diversity** of development and open space patterns and building scales and ages. The District must remain a pedestrian-friendly, accessible, human-scale, mixed-use environment that complements nearby neighborhoods and maintains the history and traditions of its location. The following secondary goals for the District are intended to provide general guidance to the Historical Commission in a wide variety of situations, and are not intended to be applied to every project that will come before it. They are statements of policy, not prescriptive measures that must be applied equally in each situation.

## Secondary Goals

1. Preserve historically or architecturally significant buildings and structures as well as those that contribute to the distinctive visual character or historical significance of the District.
2. Sustain the vitality of the commercial environment by preserving architecturally-significant or original building fabric where it currently exists. When this is not possible, **support creative, contemporary design for storefront alterations and additions.**
3. **Support creative, contemporary design for new construction that complements and contributes to its immediate neighbors** and the character of the District. Recognize and respect creativity of design during the review process and mitigate the functional impacts of development on adjacent areas.
4. **Build on and sustain the diversity of existing building form, scale and material.** Preserve and encourage flowers, green yards and courtyards and small, freestanding and wood-frame buildings where that character prevails. **Encourage streetwall buildings** where that character has been set. **Encourage groundlevel, small-scale storefronts** to preserve the vitality and character of the streets.
5. Expand the high quality public environment established in the heart of the District with **attractive and compatible materials, lighting, and street furniture.**
6. Expand the network of pedestrian walkways and paths wherever they can conveniently provide alternate routes through the District. **Increase public access to alleys and interior spaces** where appropriate, and upgrade paving and landscaping of such pathways and spaces. Enhance accessibility and safety for pedestrians throughout the District.
7. Encourage new residential projects in the District, especially in mixed-use buildings, and support existing residential uses.
8. **Encourage projects that will maintain a wide diversity of uses** serving the needs of surrounding neighborhoods, students, and visitors from around the world.
9. Encourage creative solutions to the District's parking and transportation issues, including the problem of on-street deliveries. **Discourage loading docks**, which do not generally contribute to the historic character of the street.

Excerpted from the "Harvard Square Development Guidelines"

**Applicant's recent projects recognized by  
the Cambridge Historical Commission**



115 Mount Auburn Street



40 Bow Street



24 JFK Street

## 10 Church Street: History

- 1926: The Harvard Square Theater opened with 1,900 seats and a 40-foot screen
- The lobby & main entry faced Massachusetts Ave via a corridor on the abutter's property
- 1960s: Property was acquired by Ed Manck
- 1981: Balcony was partitioned into two smaller screens
- The building was acquired by AMC Loews
- The egress rental agreement with the abutters expired and the main entrance was moved to Church Street
- 1987: Two additional screens were added
- 2012: AMC Loews closed the theatre on July 8
- 2013: Property was acquired by Richard L. Friedman
- 2014: Property was acquired by Kirche LLC

Photo: The entry to the Harvard Square Theater from Massachusetts Avenue near the time of it's opening



## 10 Church Street: Existing Condition



View from  
Massachusetts Avenue



View looking toward  
Massachusetts Avenue

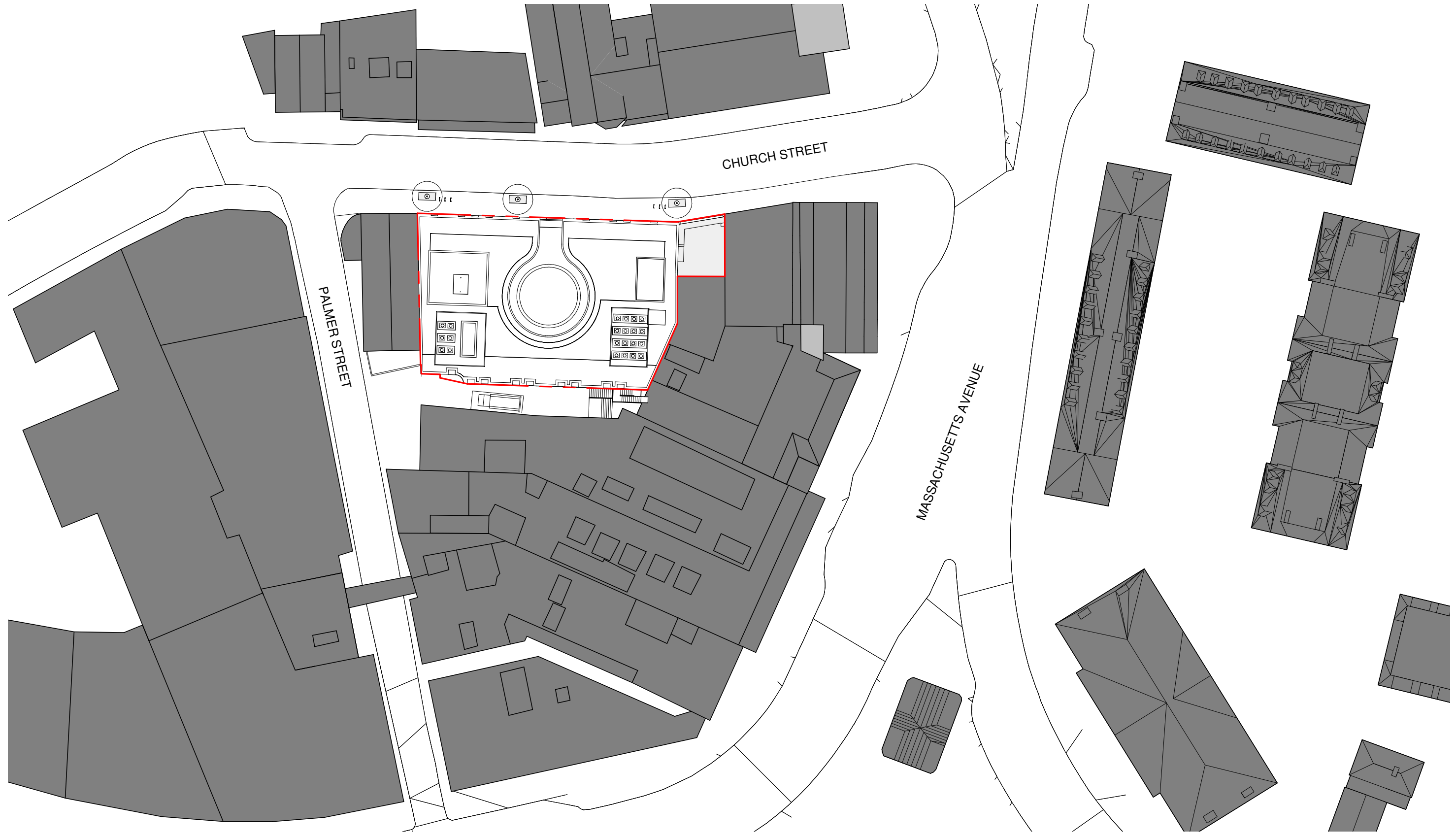


View of Palmer Alley  
from Palmer St.

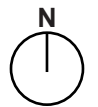


View of Palmer Alley at  
Abutting Properties





Site Plan  
Scale 1" = 50'-0"



## Design Concept

- Bring activity and interest to Church Street through an iconic and unique design and facade concept
- Bring light & air onto Church Street and into the building
- Activate the streetscape

## Aerial View: Comparison



Existing



Proposed

- Break down massing with Courtyard
- Bring light & air to Church St



**Proposed Perspective from Massachusetts Avenue**

- Brighten Church St
- Relate to First Parish
- Celebrate theater entry

## View from Massachusetts Avenue: Comparison



Existing Perspective



Proposed Perspective



**Proposed Perspective of Theater Entry from Church Street**

- Create prominent theater entry
- Transition scale
- Replicate Women's Mural



**Proposed Perspective from Across Church Street**

- Activate streetscape
- Bring light & air to street
- Break long facade



**Proposed Perspective from Church Street at Palmer Street Intersection**

- Continue retail along Church St
- Create proportional relationship to adjacent building



## View from Church Street at Palmer Street Intersection: Comparison



Existing Perspective



Proposed Perspective



**Proposed Perspective from Third Floor of Coop of Palmer Alley**  
Clear view at grade was obstructed by parked cars and existing dumpster



**Proposed Perspective from Old Burial Ground**

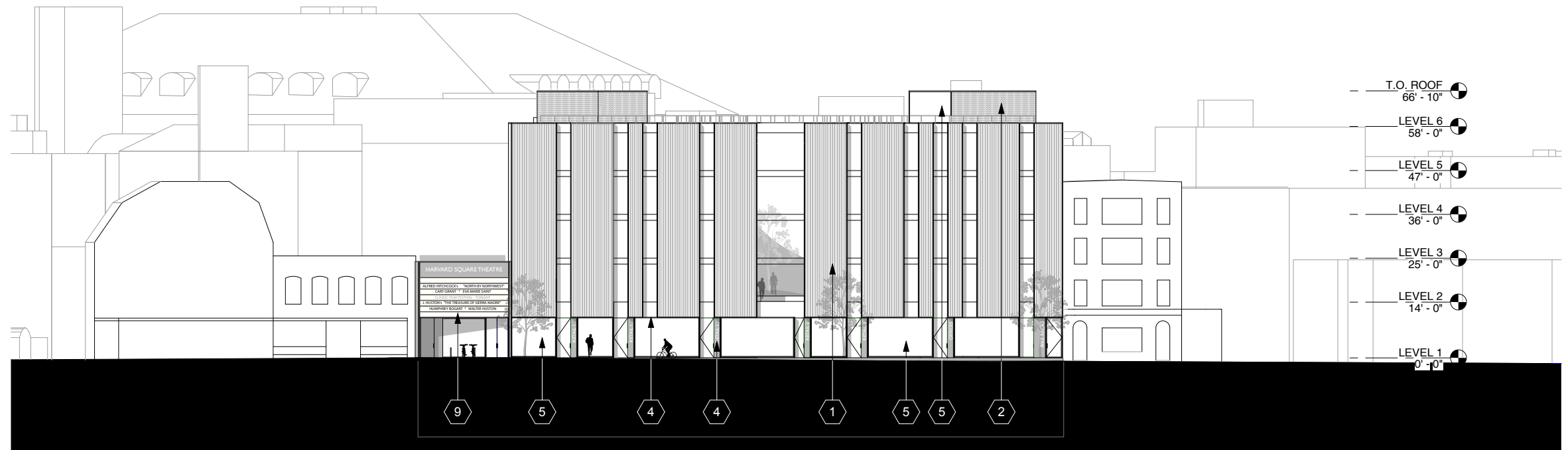


Proposed Perspective of Courtyard from Office Interior

# Proposed Elevations



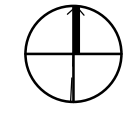
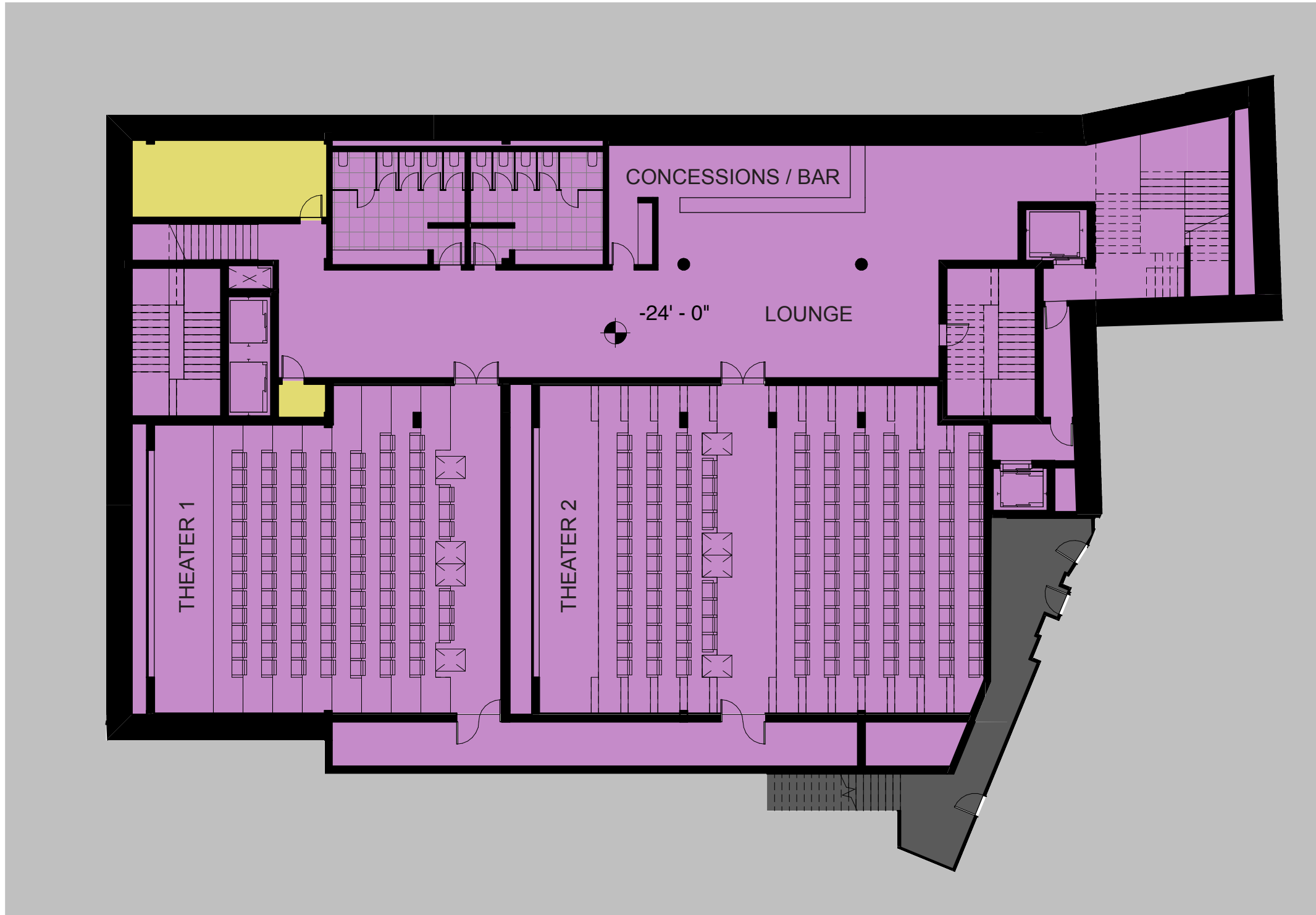
**Proposed Palmer Alley Elevation**  
Scale 1/32"=1'-0"



Material Key	
1	Light Gray Terracotta
2	Dark Gray Brick
3	Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete
4	Dark Gray Powdercoated Steel
5	Glazing
6	Concrete
7	Chainlink Fence
8	Dark Gray Powdercoated Aluminum Louvers
9	Backlit White Acrylic

**Proposed Church Street Elevation**  
Scale 1/32"=1'-0"

Church Street

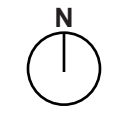


**ROOMS**

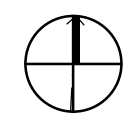
- SERVICE
- THEATERS
- ABUTTER  
EGRESS

Theater	10748 sf
Circulation	1403 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>12151 sf</b>

**Basement Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"



Church Street

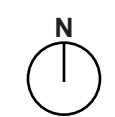


**ROOMS**

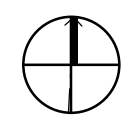
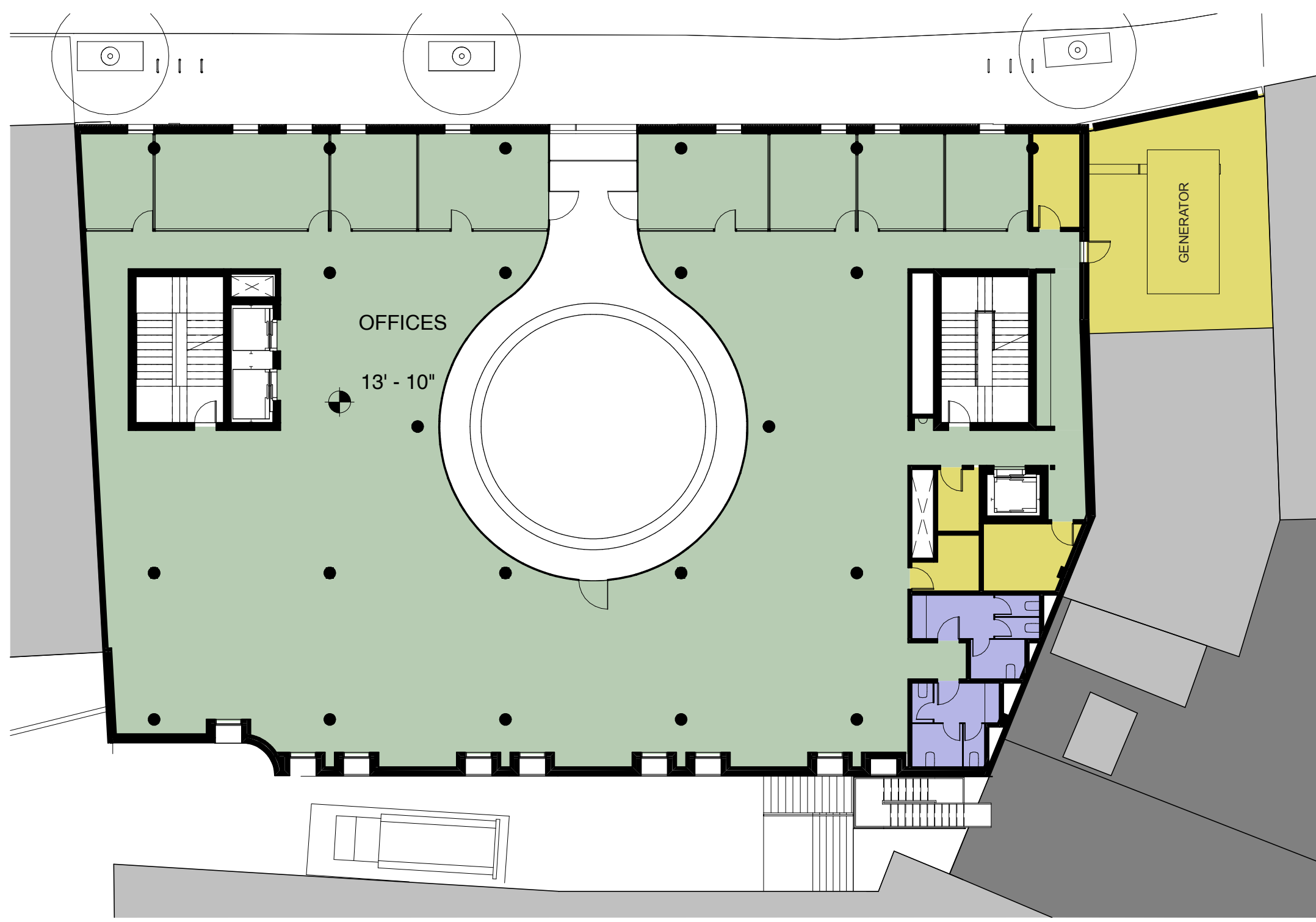
- OFFICE
- RETAIL
- SERVICE
- THEATERS
- EASEMENT FOR ABUTTER

Retail	5165 sf
Office Lobby	495 sf
Theater Entry	394 sf
Circulation	3672 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>9726 sf</b>

**Level 1 Plan**  
 Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"



Church Street

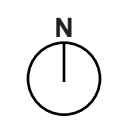


**ROOMS**

- COMMON
- OFFICE
- SERVICE

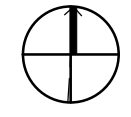
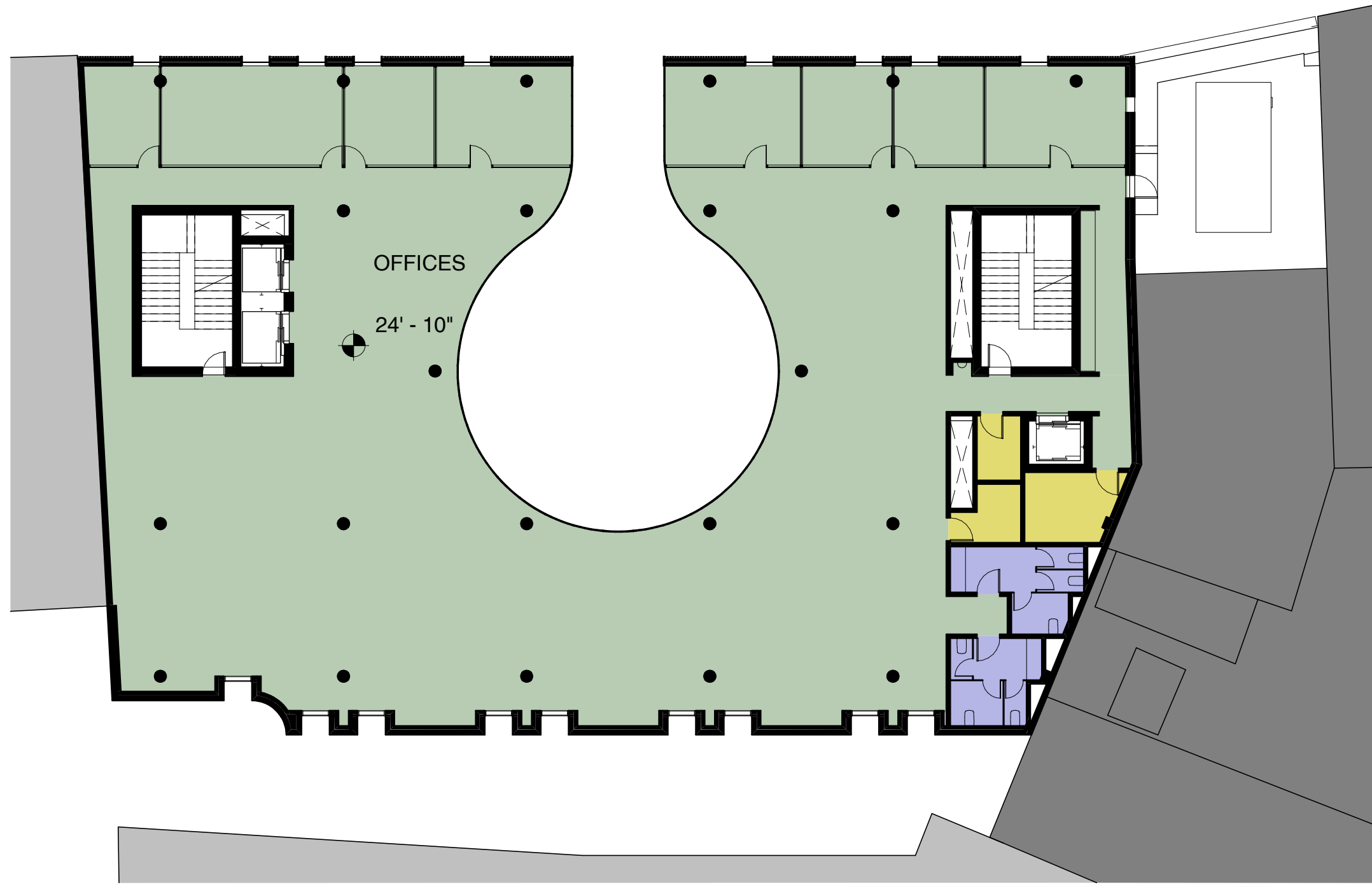
Office	8867 sf
Circulation	700 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>9597 sf</b>

**Level 2 Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"





Church Street

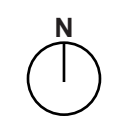


**ROOMS**

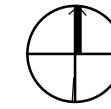
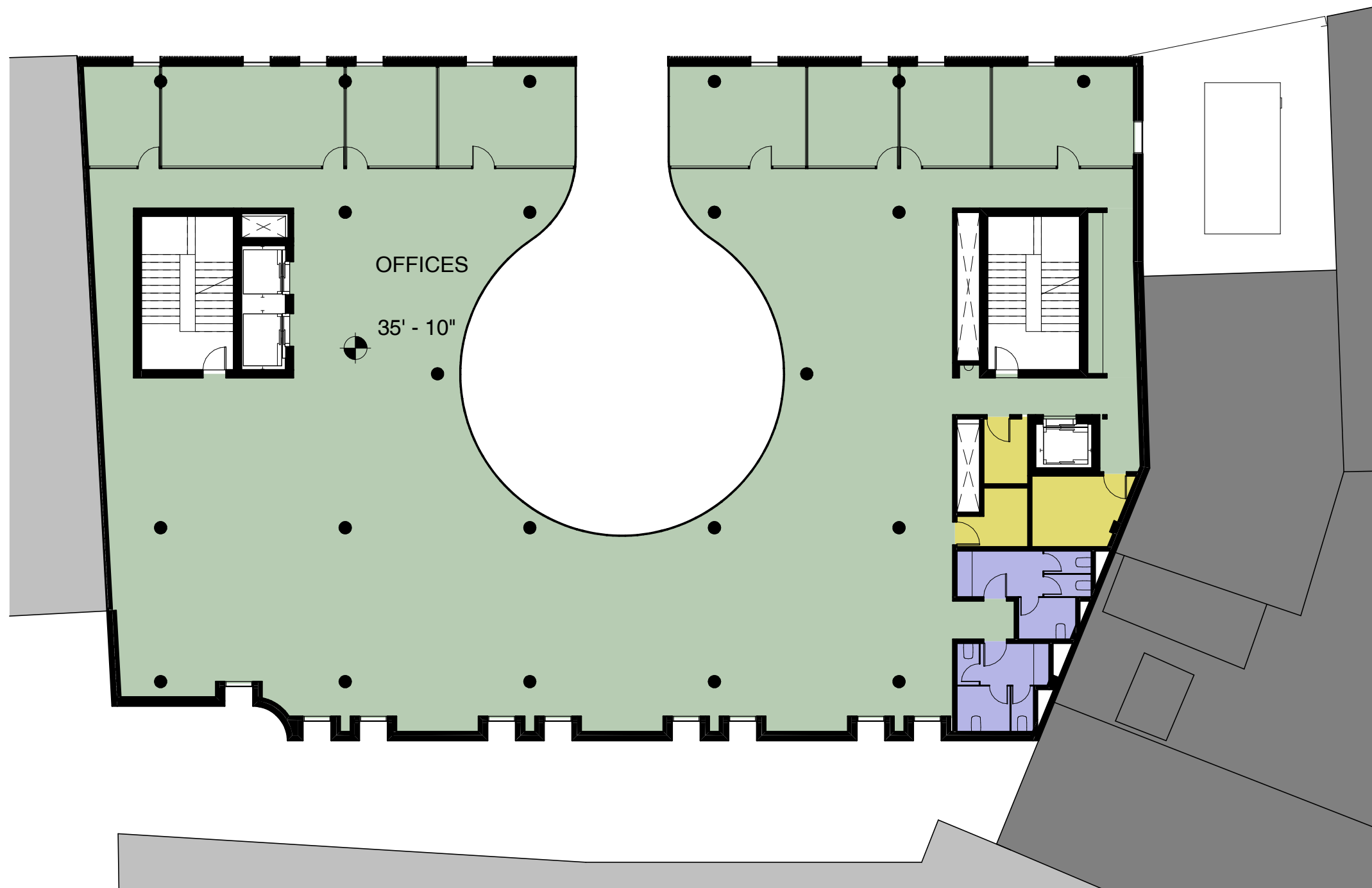
- COMMON
- OFFICE
- SERVICE

Office	8867 sf
Circulation	700 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>9597 sf</b>

**Level 3 Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"



Church Street

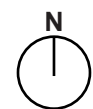


**ROOMS**

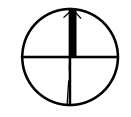
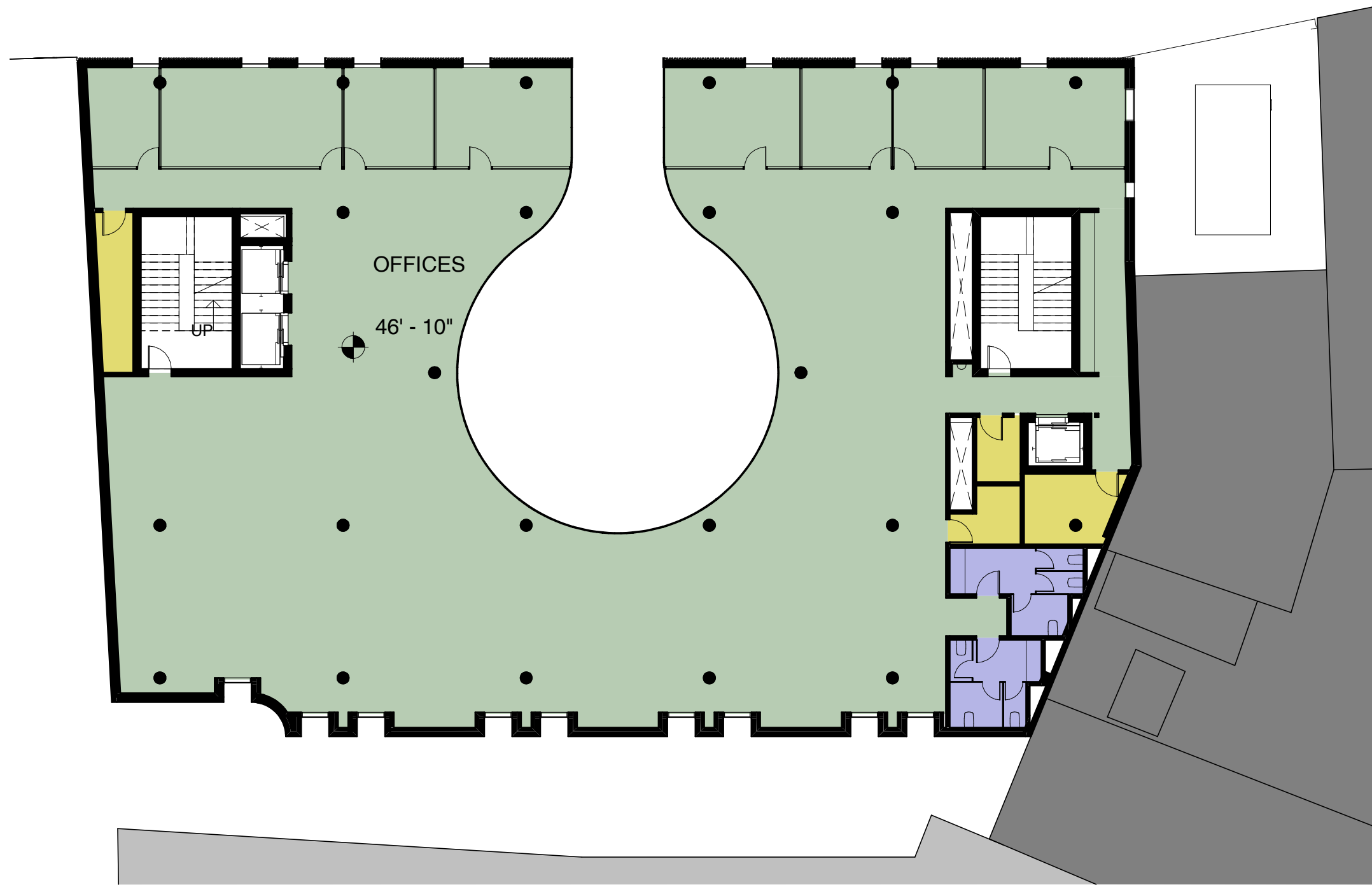
- COMMON
- OFFICE
- SERVICE

Office	8867 sf
Circulation	700 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>9597 sf</b>

**Level 4 Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"



Church Street

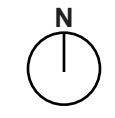


**ROOMS**

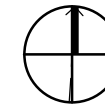
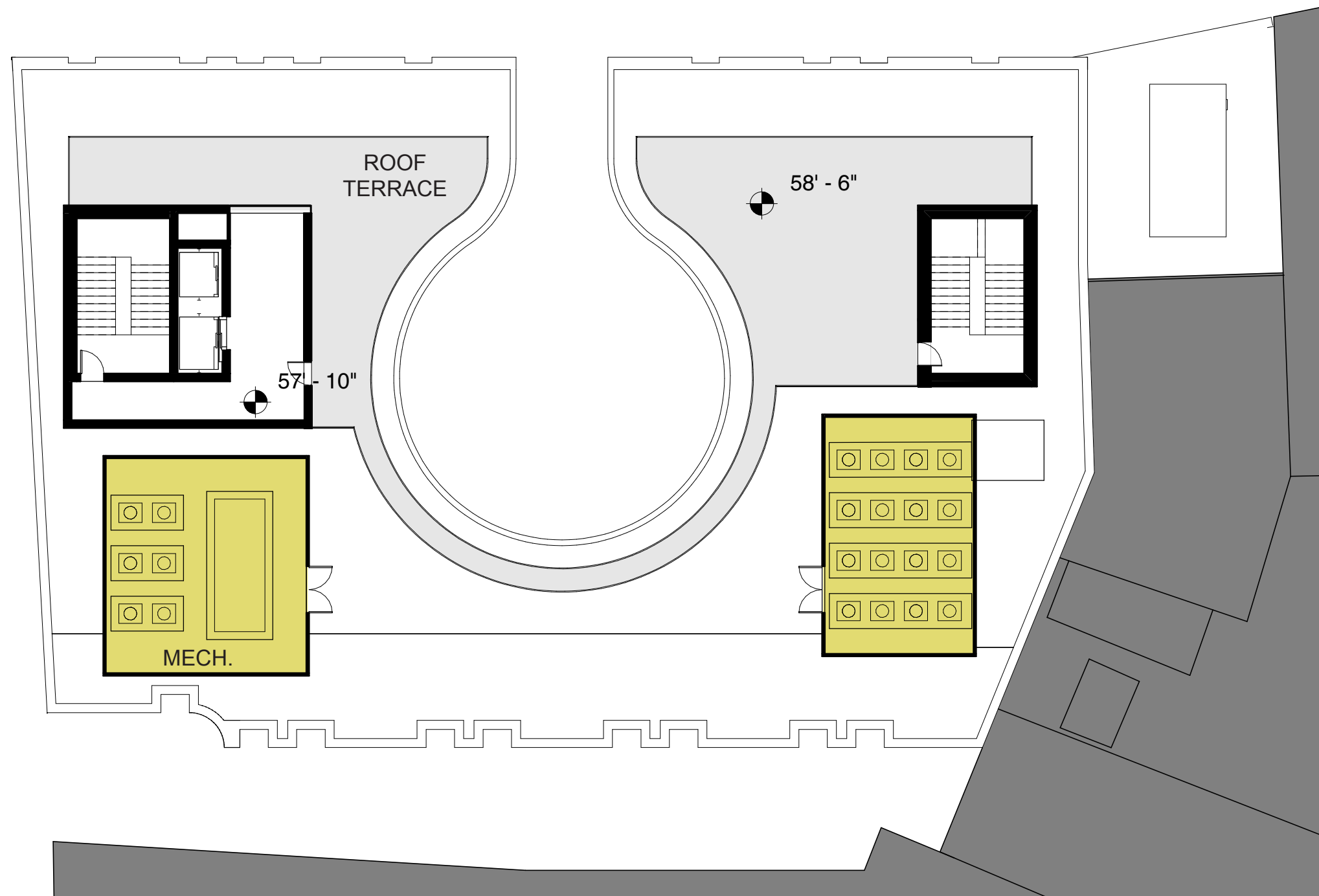
- COMMON
- OFFICE
- SERVICE

Office	8775 sf
Circulation	700 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>9475 sf</b>

**Level 5 Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"



Church Street

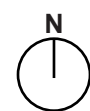


**ROOMS**

SERVICE

Roof Terrace	1725 sf
Circulation	765 sf
<b>Total</b>	<b>2490 sf</b>

**Level 6 Plan**  
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"

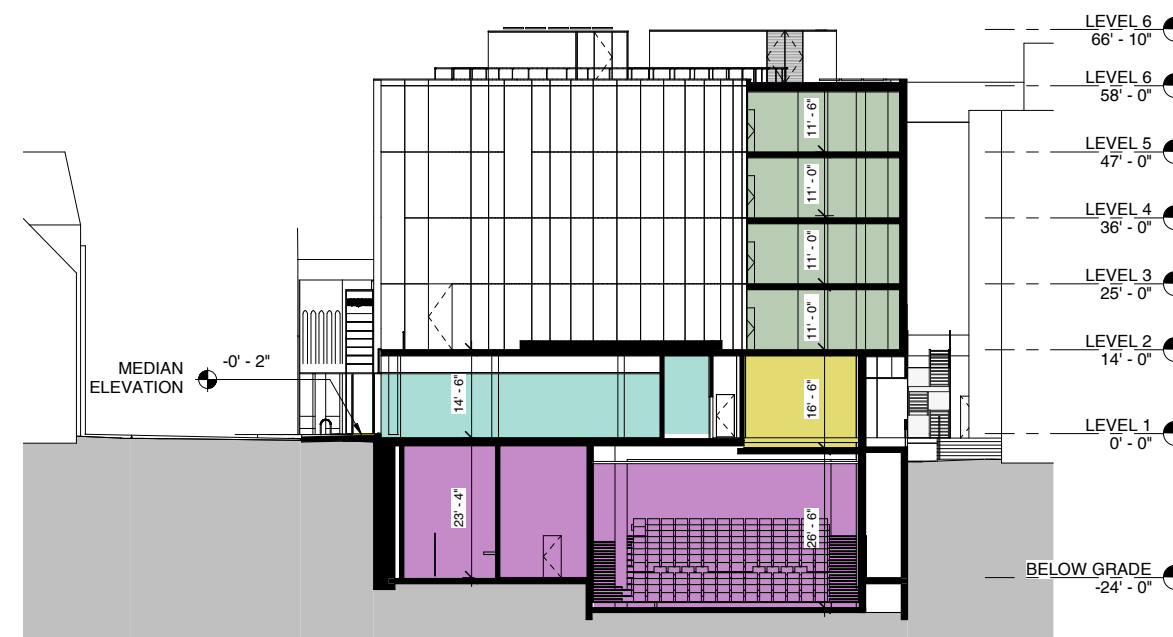
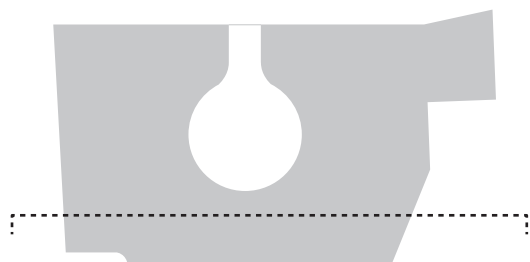


### Proposed Building Sections

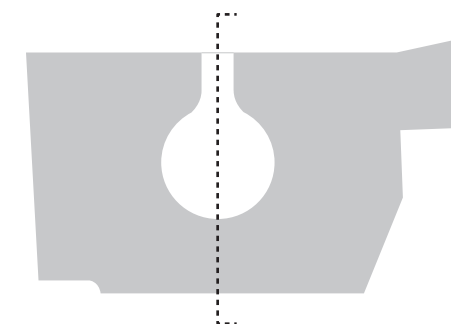


**Building Section B**  
Scale 1/32" = 1'-0"

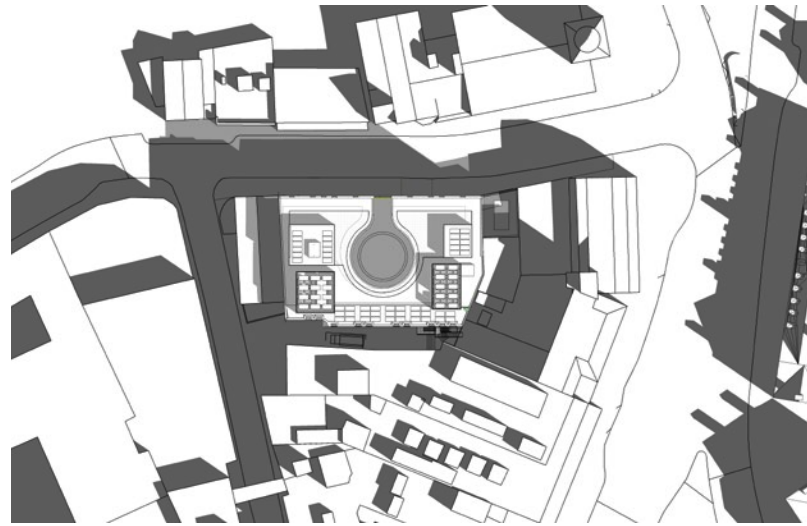
- OFFICE
- RETAIL
- SERVICE
- THEATERS
- COMMON



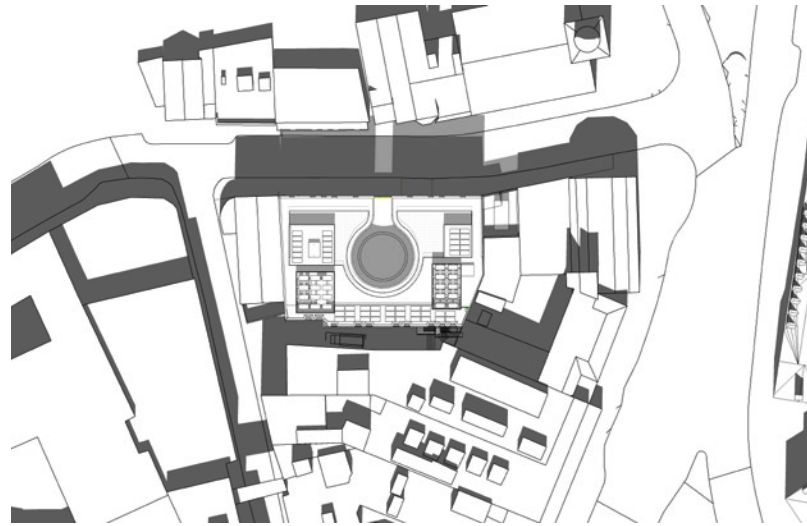
**Building Section A**  
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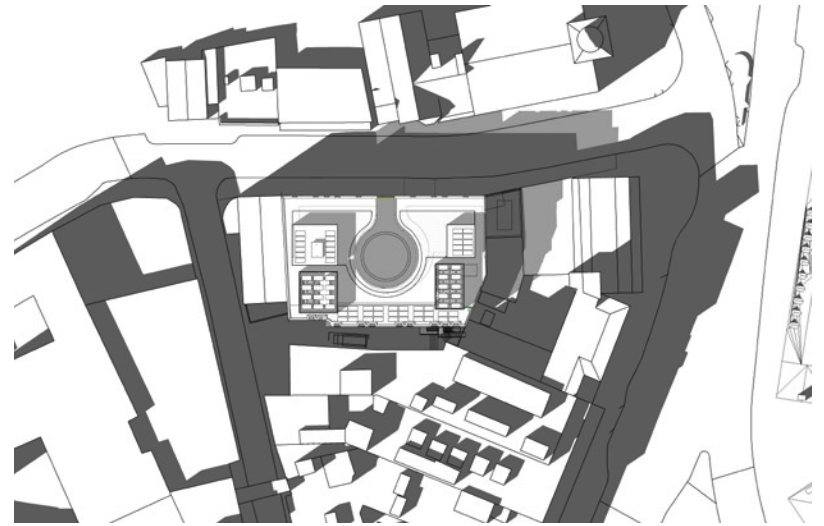
**Shadow Study**  
March 21st



9:00 AM

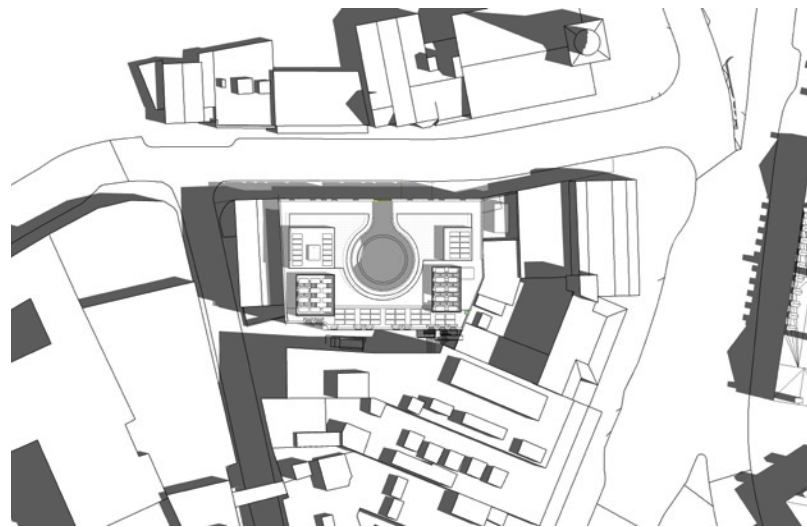


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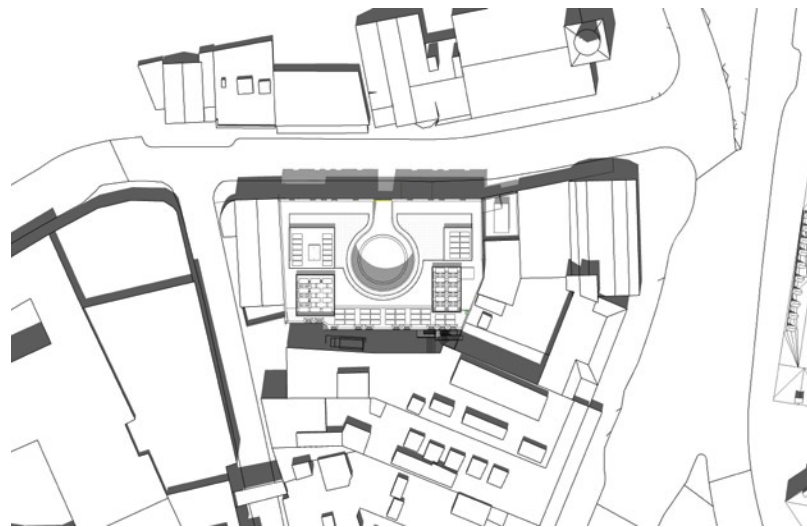


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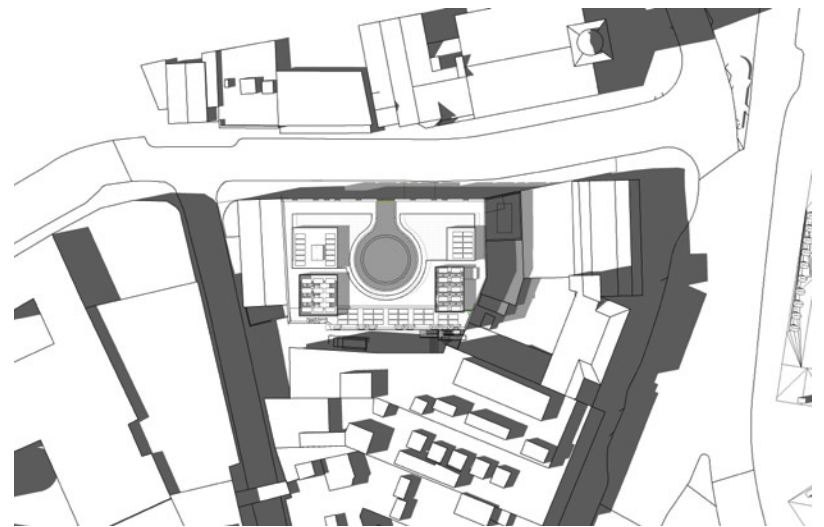
**Shadow Study**  
June 21st



9:00 AM

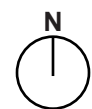


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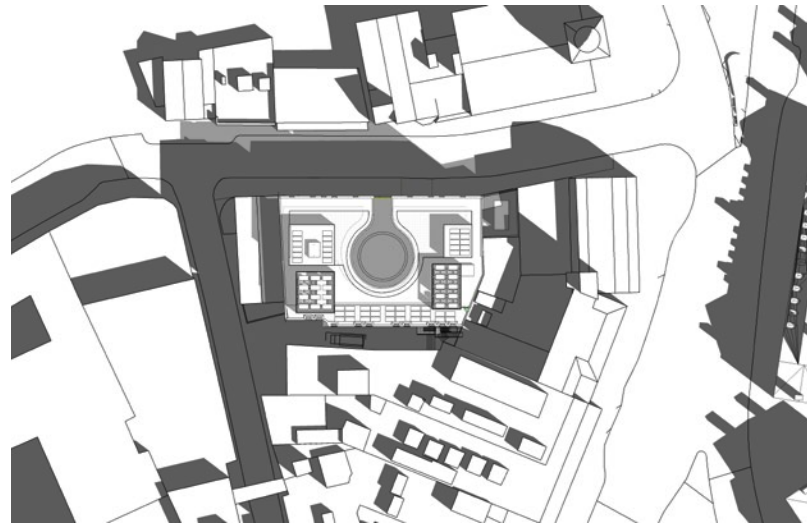


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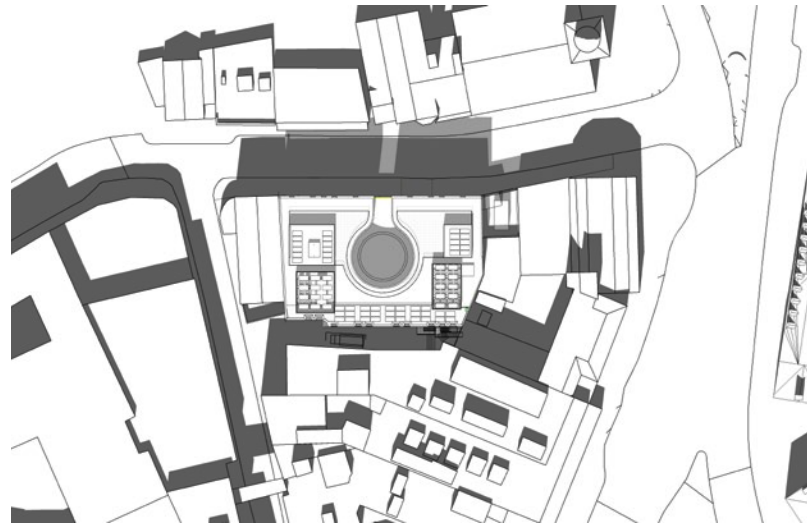
Existing Shadows  
New Shadows



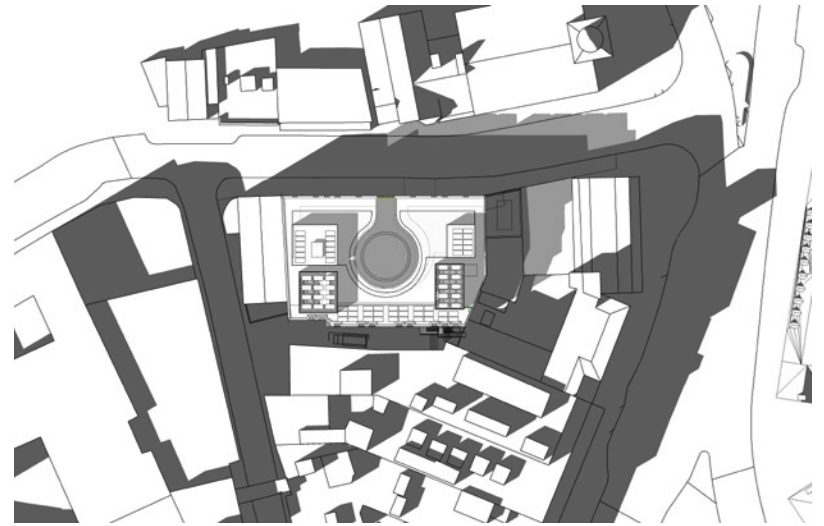
**Shadow Study**  
September 21st



9:00 AM

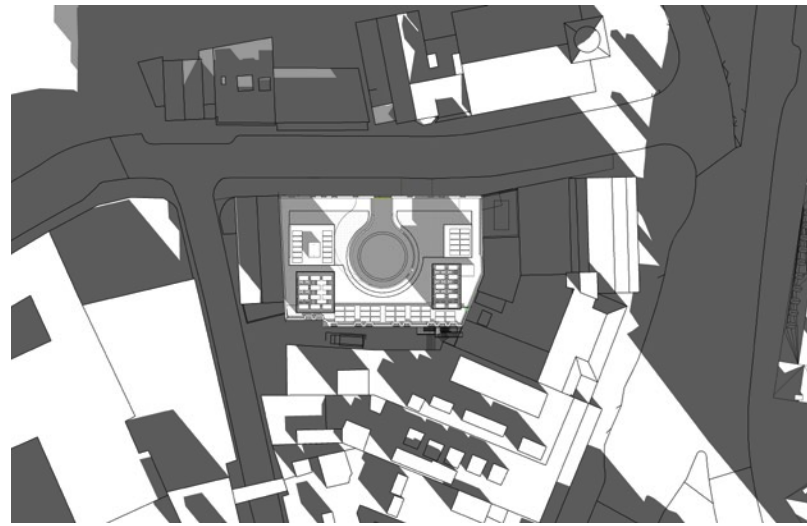


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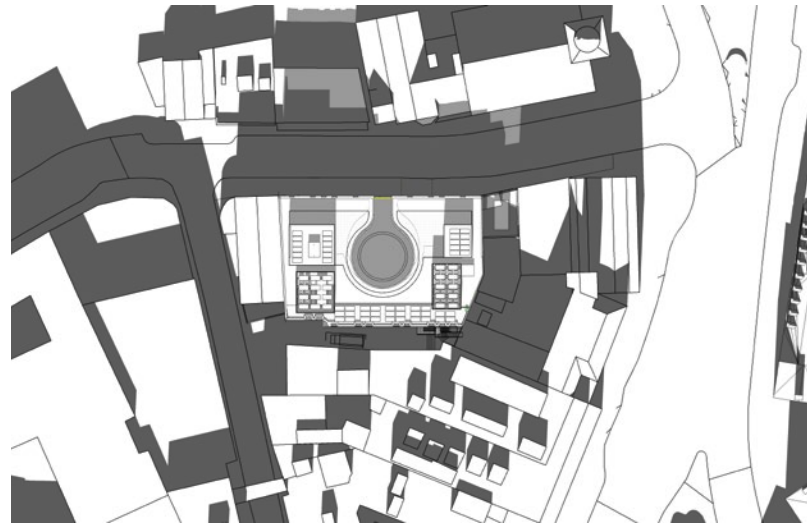


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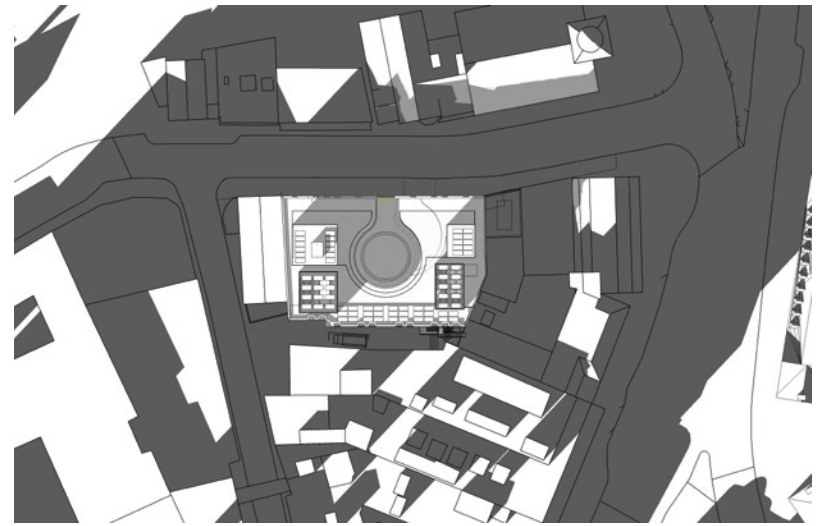
**Shadow Study**  
December 21st



9:00 AM



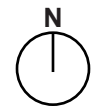
12:00 PM



3:00 PM

Legend:

- Existing Shadows
- New Shadows



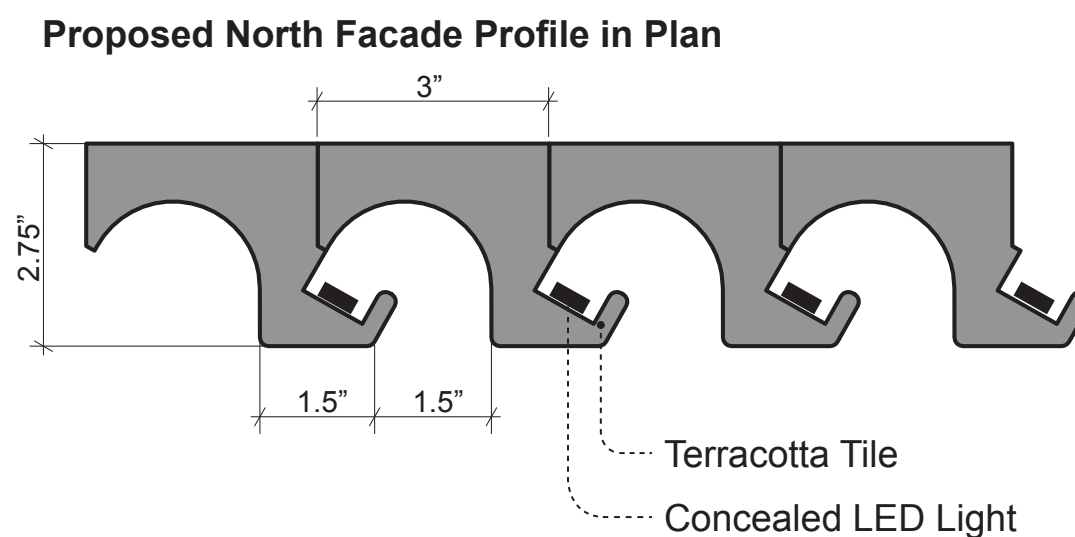
## Proposed Church St Facade

### Goal

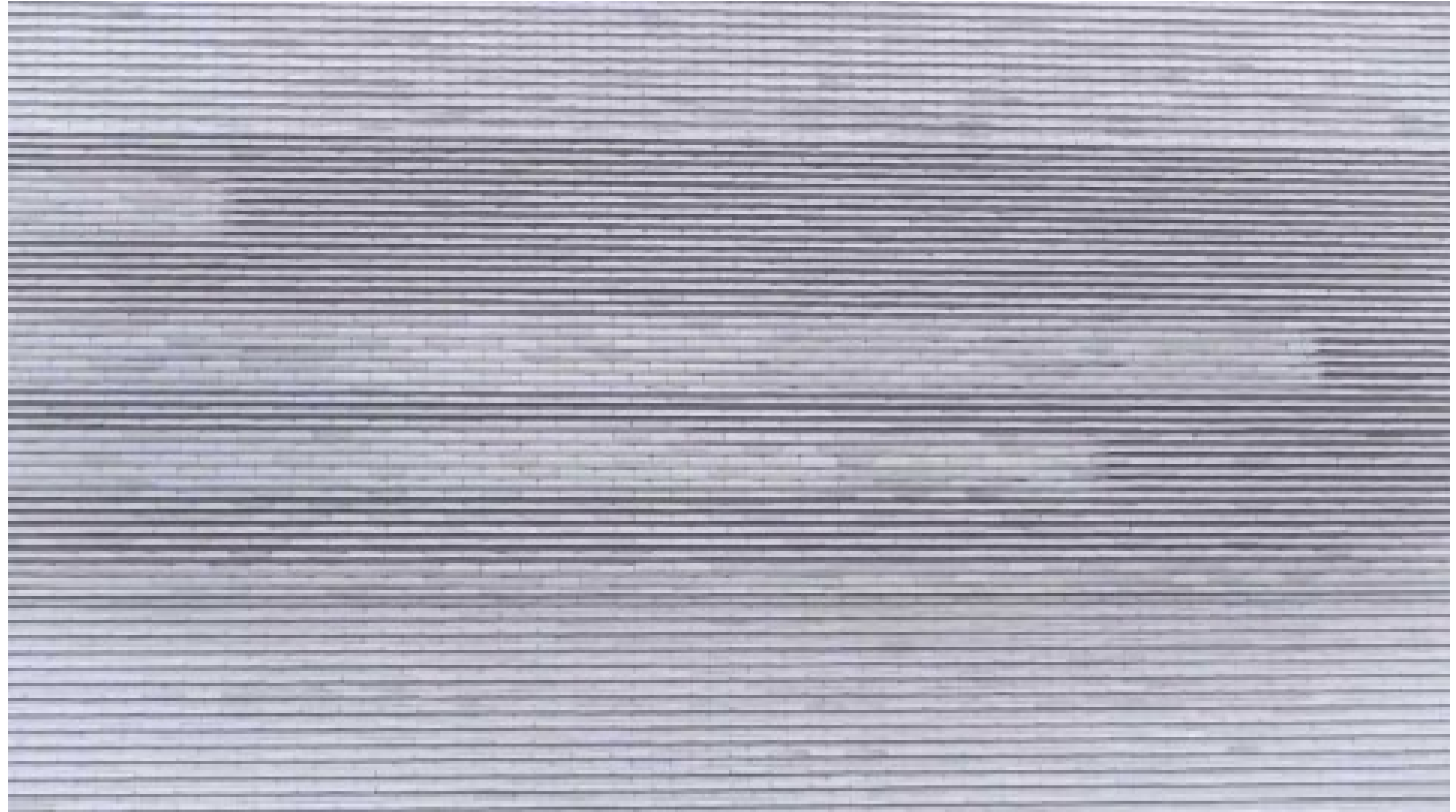
- Create a dynamic platform for community engagement

### Considerations

- Indirect, completely dimmable lighting
- Slow to no movement
- Low contrast
- Low energy use
- No advertising
- No overhang in public right of way
- Limited hours of operation
- Beautiful facade whether LEDs are on or off







**Kunstmuseum Basel, Illumination Precedent**

(Click on image above to play video)



**Proposed Perspective from Across Church Street showing Indirectly Illuminated Facade**

(Click on image above to play video)



**Proposed Perspective from Across Church Street showing Indirectly Illuminated Facade**

(Click on image above to play video)

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