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A Convention Center for Albuquerque, New Mexico

David Edward Werner

A CONVENTION CENTER - WERNER

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A CONVENTION CENTER

FOR

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture

University of New Mexico

Submitted by
David Edward Werner

May 21, 1968

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THE PROBLEM

The following program will verbally state the scope of the problem: A Convention Center for the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico to be designed in conjunction with the proposed redevelopment of downtown Albuquerque. This redevelopment is now in the preliminary study phase by the Planning Department of the City, and therefore many things being proposed by the department will be assumed as becoming a reality.

The Center is to be designed so as to cater to the needs of small local organizations, larger state organizations, and a certain percent of national and international organizations. It will contain a theater-styled auditorium, a banquet hall, an exhibition hall, and several meeting rooms of various sizes.

In addition to this, the Chamber of Commerce and Industrial Development offices will be provided.

THE NEED

According to Western Management Consultants of Phoenix, Arizona, Albuquerque has the market potential for increasing its convention business by more than 100 per cent, providing that adequate facilities and services are available.

The new business potential, if adequate facilities and services are available, is estimated to be at least 200,000 delegate days per year.[1] This potential is in addition to the convention business that Albuquerque has been drawing, which is estimated to have averaged 187,000 delegate days per year for the period 1964-67.

Two prime sources provide the new business potential:

1. Regional and national organizations presently oriented to convention sites in the Southwestern and Southern Rocky Mountain States which have not met in Albuquerque - at least in recent years - account for 93 per cent of the 200,000 delegate days potential; and
2. New Mexico, or in-state organizations which would experience the larger attendance if adequate facilities were available (estimates of this increased attendance account for 7 per cent of the 200,000 delegate-day potential).

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[1] Number of delegates convening times number of days attending times the frequency of meetings held in any one city.

Once the need for a Convention Center has been established, the element of timing must be considered.

There are four interrelated factors with respect to timing:

1. Albuquerque's sister cities of the Southwest are busy. New facilities are forthcoming in Amarillo. Denver, Fort Worth, Phoenix, and San Antonio. Unquestionably, these facilities will cut seriously into Albuquerque's convention business unless she can keep pace.

2. In-state facilities, while far more modest, have already begun to attract a portion of Albuquerque's convention market.

3. The facilities of the University of New Mexico have played an important role in attracting conventions to Albuquerque. Since 1964, the University has hosted more than 22 per cent of all Albuquerque conventions. These facilities, however, are being increasingly pre-empted by the University for its ever-expanding needs, and consequently are less and less available to outside groups.

4. Most conventions, especially in the regional and national categories, arrange convention dates and meeting places one to five years in advance (some as much as ten yards ahead). Even if firm plans were announced within a few months and construction started soon thereafter, it would be several years before the impact of a new Albuquerque convention center could be felt. Existing conventions, trade shows and other

events would of course take up some of the slack; but the time-lag problem remains a serious one especially with regard to early years' revenues. During this time period, moreover, competing cities are forging ahead with their new facilities; so that the longer Albuquerque delays, the more the time-lag problem is compounded.

These four timing factors emphasize the benefit to Albuquerque of prompt action.

To emphasize the impact of a drastic increase in delegate days, the economic benefits to the City should be considered. The following is taken directly from the "Market Study and Feasibility Analysis for a Convention Facility for Albuquerque, New Mexico" prepared in February, 1968, by Western Management Consultants:

Few convention centers consistently report a profit from operations. Among those few that do, a significant proportion use accounting techniques that ignore certain operating costs altogether, reflecting the municipality's policy in subsidizing or absorbing those expenses. As examples, water and other utility costs when provided by the municipality frequently are not reported, nor are interest payments or service fees on the bonded indebtedness.

While complete operating statements would show few centers that are truly profitable, the justification for their existence is to be found in the very real dollar benefits to a community that result from expenditures made by delegates and their families during both the convention period and, very often, the extra days spent in the host city for sightseeing, sports activities, or relaxation.

Delegate Expenditures

Estimates of the amounts expended in this way have been made by individual cities and they tell a remarkable story. For example, 380 meetings were held in San Diego in 1964, during which time delegates spent an estimated $22 million. In 1965, with a new $21.5 million facitlity, delegates attended 410 meetings there and spent $39 million. Expenditures rose to $44.6 million in 1966, and slightly over $42 million in 1967.

By the addition of a new convention facility and hotel, Boston's revenue from meetings jumped in two years from $16 million to $30.1 million. Dallas reports annual expenditures from delegates in excess of $75 million.

The International Association of Convention Bureaus (I.A.C.B.) recently released survey findings from a study of the habits of 1,029,267 delegates at 734 conventions in 46 cities. These findings are considered by bureau officials to be representative of delegate spending, on an average, for all sections of the country.

The national average daily expenditures is $34.27 per delegate. The average length of stay is 3.93 days. In 1957, by contrast, delegates spent $30.89 per day, and stayed 3.84 days.

According to the I.A.C.B.'s president, Mr. Lew Pavel, the figures obtained are "the best available," yet reflect only part of the story. Says Pavel: "The total figure is conservative considering the fact that it represents delegate spending in the convention city only and does not include a delegate's registration fee or his travel expenses. Neither does it include the exhibitor's expenses for displays, personnel, and customer entertainment at

the convention nor the outlay by the convening groups in physically ataging the events."

Eleven business classifications shared the daily delegate expenditures in the following percentages:

Category	Per Cent
Hotel rooms and incidentals	33.69
Hotel restaurants	12.90
Other restaurants	12.60
Beverages	5.59
Retails stores	11.92
Local transportation	4.09
Theaters	1.03
Sightseeing	1.50
Night clubs - sports events	4.89
Car, oil, gas, service	5.99
Other items	5.80
	100.00

Some variations between individual cities can be expected with respect to both the average amounts spent per delegate and the allocation of those expenditures among the major business classifications. Recognizing these variations, the I.A.C.B. estimates nevertheless provide a useful guide to forecasting Albuquerque's likely receipts from convention delegate spending, and are utilized herein for that purpose.

Applying the average daily expenditures of $34.27 (assuming constant dollars) to the number of delegate-days Albuquerque will host in a typical year (1975) reveals the following:

1. With no new convention center but with additional motel facilities available in Albuquerque, delegate expenditures would reach nearly $8.6 million, compared with an estimated $6.4 million in 1967.

2. The moderate size facility could attract additional delegates spending another $2.9 million.

Consideration has not been given at this point to the spending which may be produced by trade and consumer product shows because most of the attendance at these events will probably be of local origin. They would therefore probably not result in an appreciable flow of new dollars into the community.

Impact of Delegate Expenditures

Like other "exports," the expenditures of convention delegates generate employment and income, stimulate new investment, and augment tax revenues in the immediate locale. These expenditures, furthermore, give rise to a chain effect in the local economy of income-expenditures-income. The total impact upon local income is a combination of initial direct effects following the expenditures by delegates plus subsequent indirect effects, as those groups in the community who initially benefited from income increases produced by delegate expenditures use their additional income to increase their purchases of local goods and services, which in turn set off subsequent rounds of increasing income and purchases.

The complex nature of this multiplier process and the lack of data on its operation has usually meant that assumptions concerning its probable magnitude in a particular situation have had to be substituted for actual measurement. It is possible, however,

to give some indication of the probable magnitude of the multiplier effect of the expenditures of the convention delegates upon the economy of Albuquerque as a result of a comprehensive study of the interrelationships among economic activities within New Mexico by the Bureau of Business Research in the College of Administration of the University of New Mexico.

Based upon this input-output study, it is estimated that each dollar spent by the convention delegates in Albuquerque would generate on the order of 80 cents of new personal income within the community. "Personal income" as used here includes primarily wage and salary payments, proprietor income, and income from property.

Analysis of the potential convention market and delegate expenditure for Albuquerque has indicated that a new facility of the moderate size could be expected to generate delegate expenditures by 1975 at the level of $9,668,000 over and above that which would be generated if a new convention center were not built. These expenditures would then increase the annual personal income of the residents of Albuquerque by $7,734,400 assuming that each dollar of delegate expenditures created 80 cents of income for local residents.

The influx of new money into the local economy, and particularly the additional personal income generated must rank as one of the major justifications for a new convention center.

Another important benefit will accrue to the community from the actual construction of the new facility on the assumption that competitive bidding will result in a large proportion of the multi-million dollar contracts being allotted to local firms. These dollars then will be, to a significant extent, locally earned

earned and locally re-spent.

In addition, of course, is the business stimulation resulting from daily operation of the convention center itself, paying for its goods and services out of revenues which are largely in the form of "export" receipts.

The benefits of a new convention center in Albuquerque would not be limited to these direct dollar inputs. The new facility could become, as well, a center for many types of community activities --- a need which will undoubtedly grow as existing facilities at the university and elsewhere are either no longer available or no longer adequate for local cultural and entertainment events. In addition, the image of the city would be improved (as it is with a new stadium, museum or similar facility). Major endeavors of this sort, designed to spur the local economy, are attractive to industry. And, finally, depending on the site chosen, a new facility of this type can have important repercussions in revitalizing the surrounding area, improving property values and giving its citizens even greater pride in their city.

Should the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, the City of Albuquerque, and the County of Bernalillo decide to exploit the new convention market potential, estimated to be a minimum of 200,000 delegate days per year, the necessary studies and planning should be initiated without delay.

THE SITE

The site selected is located in downtown Albuquerque bounded by Central Avenue on the south, the Marquette Overpass to the north, tracks to the west and Broadway Street to the east.

Western Management Consultants made the following evaluation of this site:

The downtown Central Avenue site has the advantage of being close to the commercial activity of Albuquerque, to retail shopping, to banks, and especially to existing and future hotels. Convention overflow could probably be accommodated by the motels and hotels along Central Avenue and in the core area.

The Marquette Overpass, when completed, will provide ready access by freeway to this area. This location is fairly close to Old Town, its gift shops and restaurants. The downtown location is also closest by freeway, to the airport. Public parking revenue, to the extent that it becomes an important adjunct to convention center income, can probably make its best showing here.

Property values, however, are high, and both the acquisition cost and site development costs would probably be expensive. This would necessitate and increase in debt servicing.

There are other negative features of this property at the present time, features which are correctable by a planned improvement program: obsolete street patterns, traffic congestion, an undesirable mix of land uses, an incohesiveness and lack of strong

identity throughout the general area.

Recent commercial construction, however, has underscored the basic health of the downtown area, and it is not unreasonable to assume that proper environmental characteristics will come into prominence with a concerted effort to revitalize this area in conjunction with construction and operation of a new convention center.

One undesirable feature that will remain a problem is the railroad trackage which would probably be prohibitively expensive to depress underground.

A further advantage of this site is that it is the only site located within the boundaries of the Urban Renewal program. This would eliminate the burden of paying the high land costs and would be the only practical way in which Albuquerque could hope to finance such a project as the bonding capacity of the city has been reached and the likelihood of a bond issue for this facility being passed if it could legally be proposed is very remote.

The City, in its effort to renew and revitalize the core area would hopefully eliminate most of the other negative features of the site, as mentioned above. In this renewal plan, the Albuquerque Planning Department has proposed a transportation terminal and car parking structure directly across the railroad tracks from the proposed site which would serve the Convention Center and a new shopping mall where Copper Avenue now exists. This would greatly enhance the access to the convention center as well as eliminate the parking problem.

The concluding paragraph on site considerations in Western Management Consultants survey reads as follows: "There is, finally, the possibility of a new convention center as an integral part of the proposed downtown urban renewal program. If this would

of the proposed downtown urban renewal program. If this should materialize, the problem of convention site selection would thereby be resolved."

THE CONCEPT

The greatest attraction which Albuquerque has to offer is its climate. This is not unique to this locale, but it is not common to many convention cities. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on taking full advantage of the outdoors whenever possible.

A facility of this nature has an everchanging pedestrian traffic pattern. Not only is it unpredictable, but it is a problem involving large masses of people moving from one area to another. This must be achieved quickly and without confusion as most conventions are run on tight schedules.

In an attempt to solve both these problems, a large central patio would serve as a circulation route of a nondirectional nature and would also provide an opportunity to gather outdoors before and after the various functions. It could also be used for cocktail parties and other more formal functions.

The chances of a convention center paying for itself or even its maintenance and upkeep are very remote, so it is important that it be kept at a high rate of use so as to begin to defray the fixed costs and also to fulfill its basic function to the highest possible degree, that of bringing in conventions from out of town so as to boost the economy of the city.

In order to do this, the complex must first of all provide the spatial requirements of groups of various sizes with varying needs. Flexibility is thus very important. A convention group should not be required to rent the entire complex if it needs

only a few meeting rooms. The ideal situation would be to entertain more than one convention simultaneously.

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

The following conclusions were based on a preliminary report to the city of Albuquerque by Western Management Consultants of Phoenix, Arizona, who is now in the process of doing a feasibility study for a Convention Center for Albuquerque. This report indicates that hotels and restaurants are a very important requirement to any Convention Center of this size, However, I will not include these into the scope of my design. Rather, it will be assumed that land immediately adjacent to the Convention Center site will be reserved for such development by private enterprise.

I. Building Components

A. Exhibition Hall

B. Banquet Hall

C. Multi-use Auditorium and Meeting Rooms

D. Administration and Service Facilities

II. Description of Multi-use Areas

A. Exhibition Hall

The main exhibition hall would be used primarily to house information and display booths approximately 8' x 10' in size. It may also be used for trade shows and similar events. Portable seating for large groups of up to 10,000 people should be provided if possible.

B. Banquet Hall

Should be capable of seating a maximum of 3500 for banquets or broken up to be used as meeting rooms, and a limited amount of exhibition space.

amount of exhibition space.

C. Auditorium and Meeting Rooms

The Auditorium must be the most flexible of the spaces. It should be designed so as to be used for concerts, lectures, movies and slides, stage performances and generally as wide a variety of events as possible. Its primary use will be for general meetings of convention bodies of up to 4,000 people maximum. The seating arrangements should be flexible as should the maximum seating capacity, because in 90 per cent of the cases where a certain space is undesirable for a particular function due to its size, it is because it is too large rather than too small. The meeting rooms should be directly accessible from the Auditorium. The Meeting Rooms should be so designed as to be divided from large rooms into smaller ones.

III. Detail Requirements and Areas

A. Exhibition Hall

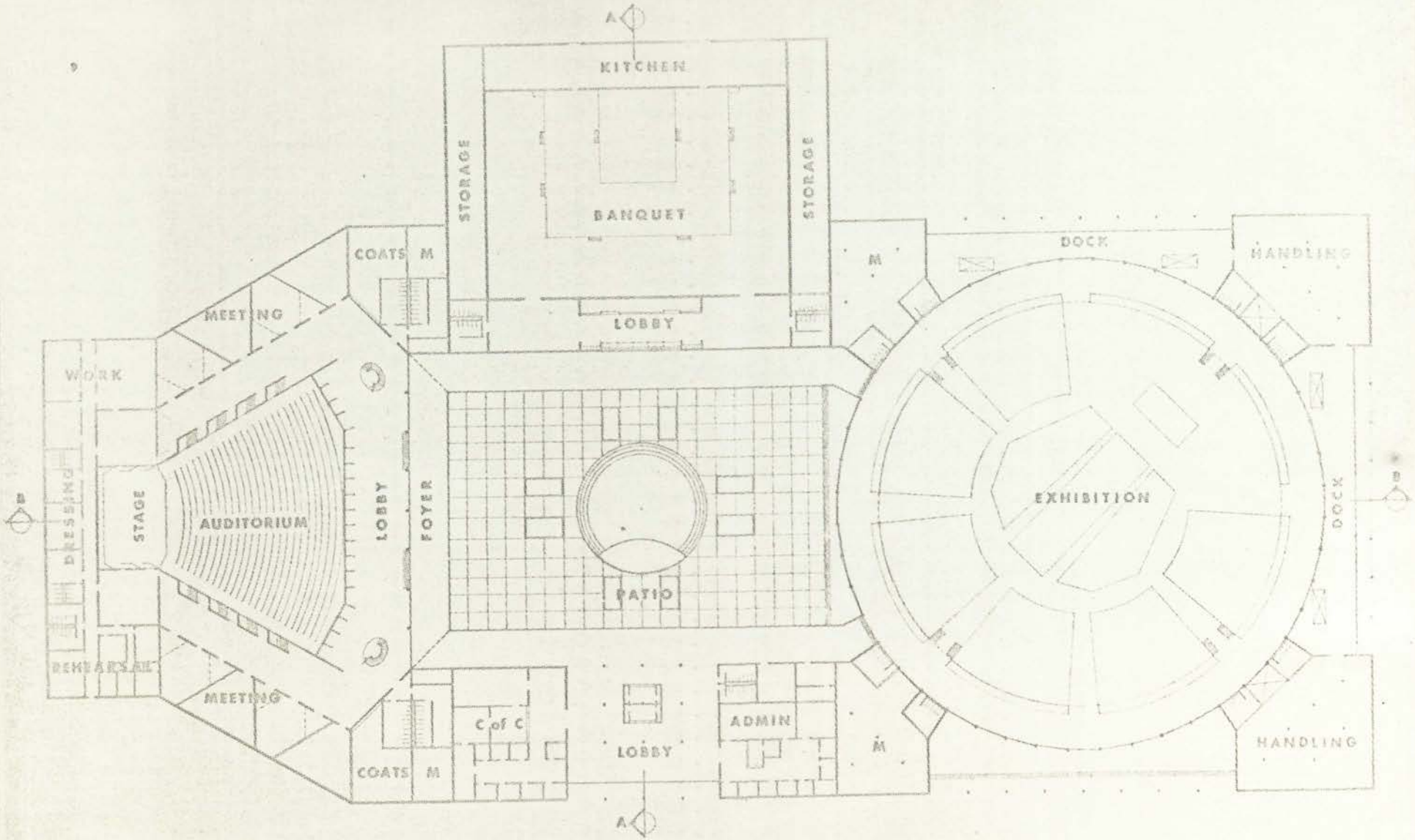
1.	Main exhibit hall . . .	80,000 sq. ft.
2.	Storage . . .	80,000 sq. ft.
3.	Loading and Handling . . .	15,000 sq. ft.
4.	Rest-rooms 8 @ 400 sq. ft. . . .	3,200 sq. ft.
	Total	178,200 sq. ft.

B. Banquet Hall

1.	Main hall . . .	35,000 sq. ft.
2.	Lobby . . .	4,000 sq. ft.
3.	Cloak rooms . . .	2,000 sq. ft.
4.	Rest-rooms . . .	1,500 sq. ft.

	5. Kitchen	. . .	5,000 sq. ft.
	6. Storage	. . .	6,000 sq. ft.
	Total		53,500 sq. ft.
C.	Auditorium		
	1. Seating for 3,500	. . .	35,000 sq. ft.
	2. Stage house	. . .	1,500 sq. ft.
	3. Lobby and Vestibule	. . .	25,000 sq. ft.
	4. Dressing rooms	. . .	2,000 sq. ft.
	5. Rehearsal rooms	. . .	2,000 sq. ft.
	6. Work rooms	. . .	1,200 sq. ft.
	7. Green rooms	. . .	800 sq. ft.
	8. Cloak rooms	. . .	1,500 sq. ft.
	9. Rest rooms	. . .	1,000 sq. ft.
	Total		65,000 sq. ft.
D.	Meeting Rooms		
	8 seating 25	. . .	2,000 sq. ft.
	4 seating 60	. . .	2,800 sq. ft.
	4 seating 100	. . .	4,000 sq. ft.
	2 seating 150	. . .	3,000 sq. ft.
	1 seating 250	. . .	2,500 sq. ft.
	1 seating 700	. . .	7,000 sq. ft.
	Total		21,300 sq. ft.
E.	Main Lobby		
	1. Lobby	. . .	10,000 sq. ft.
	2. Hospitality room	. . .	750 sq. ft.

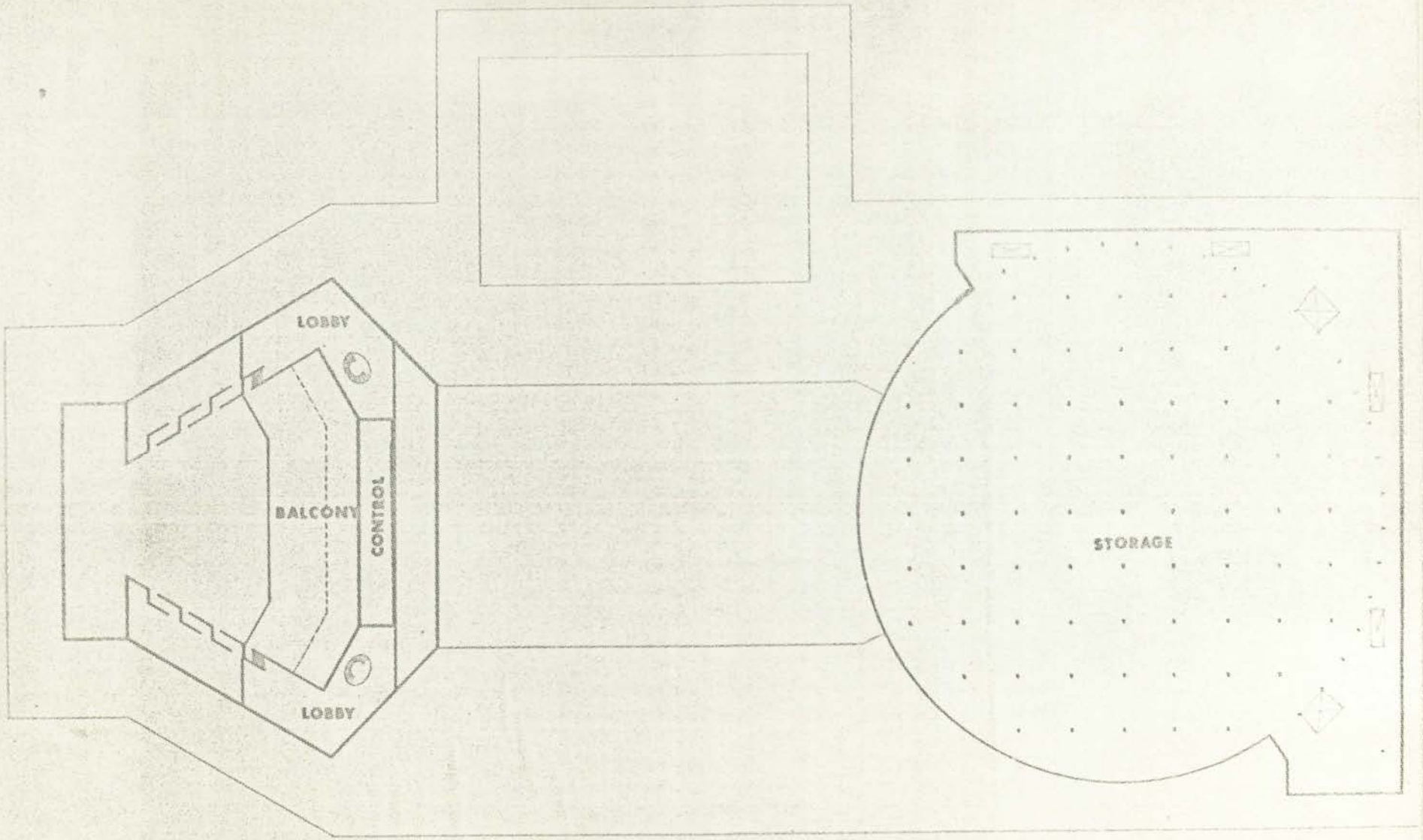
	3.	Information desk	. . . 300 sq. ft.
	4.	Communications desk	. . . 300 sq. ft.
	5.	Rest-rooms	. . . 500 sq. ft.
		Total	11,850 sq. ft.
F.	Offices		
	1.	Chamber of Commerce	. . . 7,000 sq. ft.
	2.	Industrial development	. . . 7,000 sq. ft.
		Total	14,000 sq. ft.
G.	Press Room		
	1.	Lounge	. . . 300 sq. ft.
	2.	Work room	. . . 200 sq. ft.
		Total	500 sq. ft.
H.	Mechanical Rooms		. . . 15,000 sq. ft.
J.	Patio		. . . 30,000 sq. ft.
		Total (less patio)	359,350 sq. ft.



10 FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 30'

MAIN FLOOR

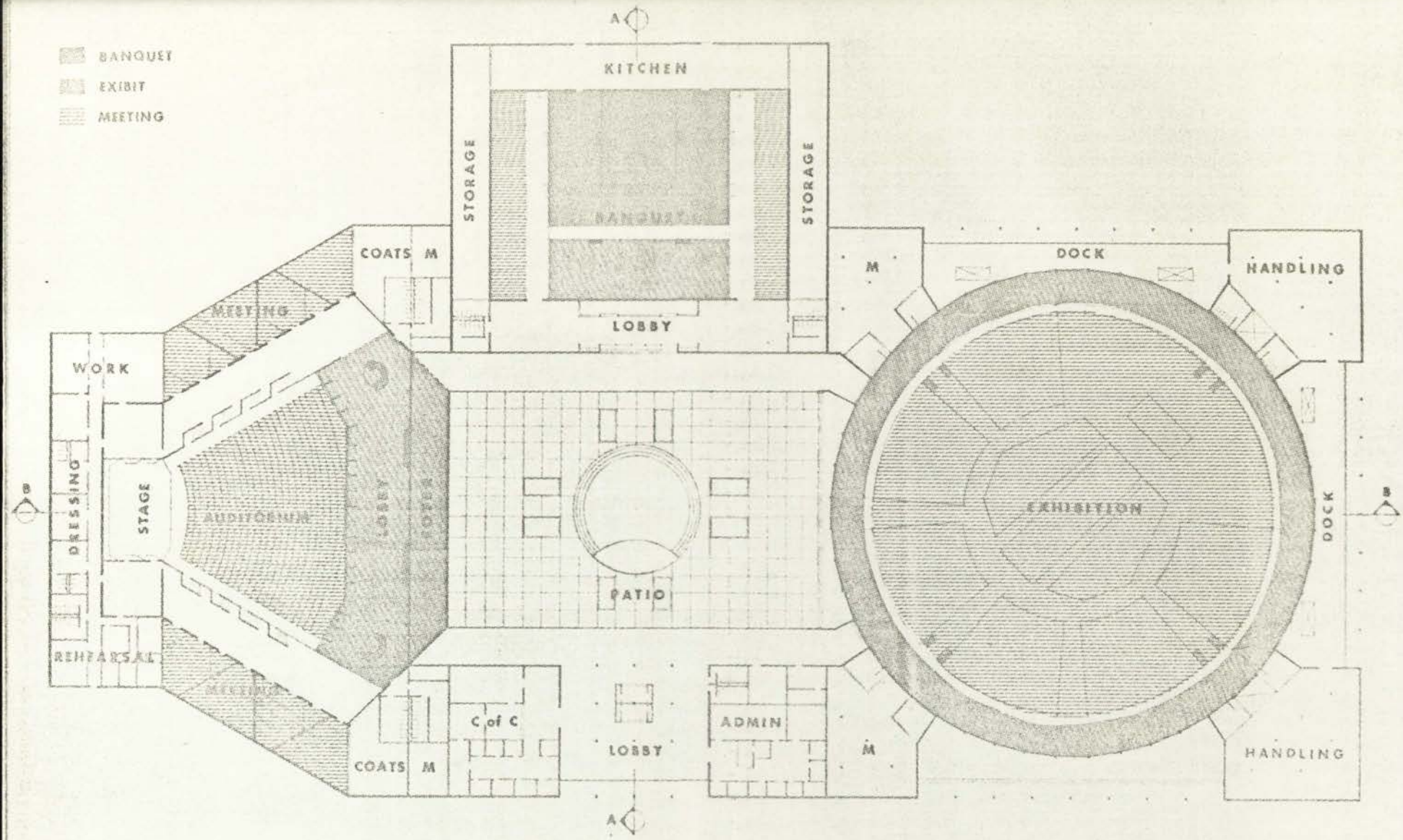


BALCONY LEVEL

BASEMENT

FLOOR PLAN

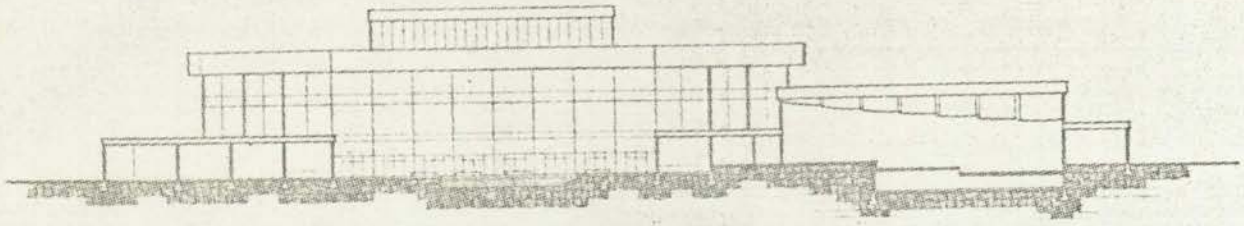
SCALE: 1" = 30'



MULTI-USE FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 30'

MAIN FLOOR



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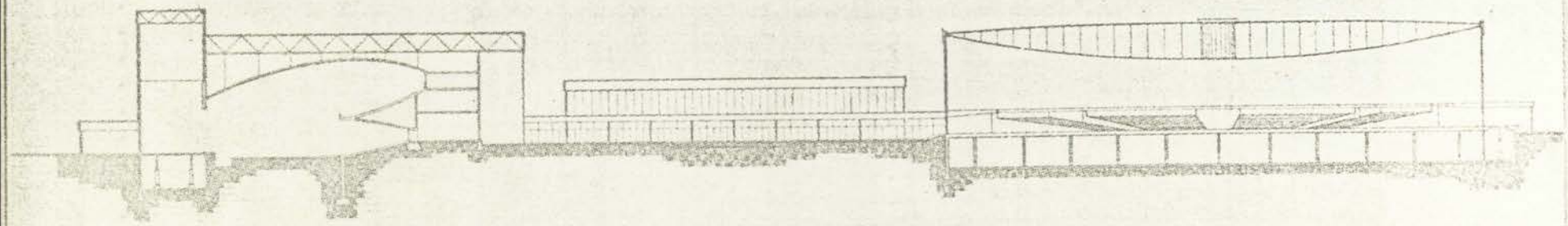

SECTION B B

SECTIONS

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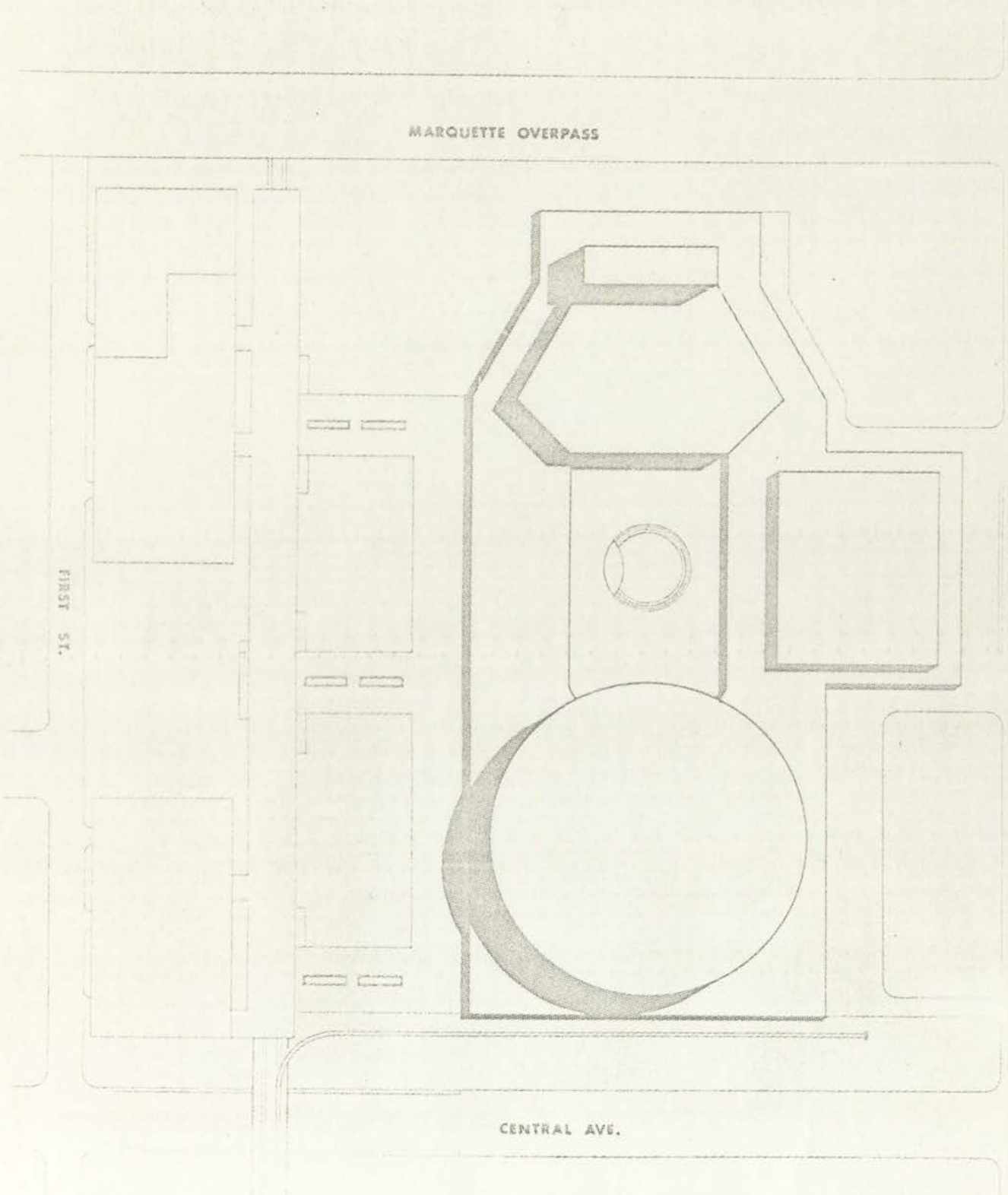

SITE PLAN

SCALE 1" = 40'