



**PALACIO  
DEL  
CENTRO  
ESPAÑOL , west tampa, florida**





feasibility study

# palacio del centro español

1906 n. howard avenue  
west tampa, florida

october 1979



credits:

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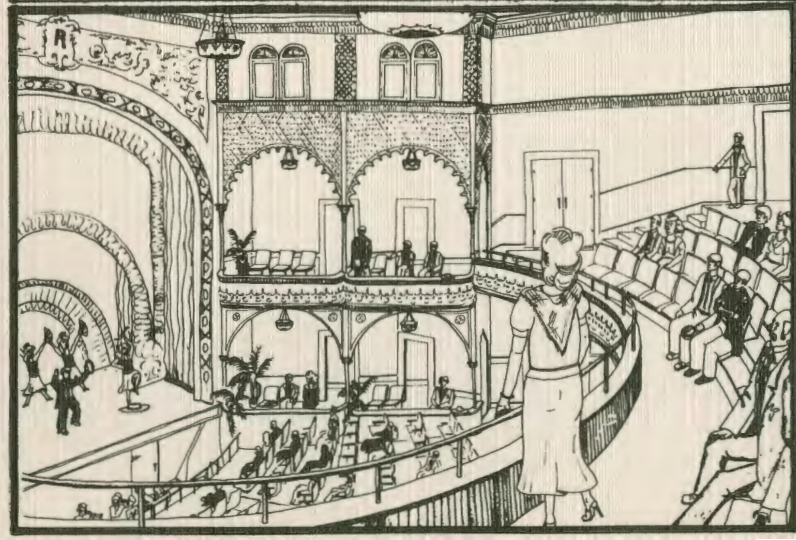
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a. historical outline



## ● MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES — HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the last half of the Nineteenth Century, a steady stream of Spanish immigrants were arriving in Cuba by the hundreds every month. They were hoping to find a better way of living in the largest and richest of the Spanish Colonies left after the collapse of the Spanish Colonial Empire in the first half of the Century.

They came primarily from the Northern Provinces and the Canary Islands. They were young, ambitious and hard working people, but for the most part, were unskilled and illiterate.

They flooded all major Cuban cities and towns, and went to work as carriage drivers, maids, store clerks, waiters, cooks, seamstresses, etc. Their employers were Colonial Officials and Loyalist Refugees who had come to Cuba after the Latin American Colonies had gained independence, bringing with them their business and professional skills, and much of their capital.

The Cuban Colonial Government favored this mass immigration, in an effort to increase the proportion of the population loyal to the establishment in a Colony which had been in a state of chronic insurrection for many years.

The Colonial Government, however, did not see as one of its functions, the need to provide public services for the newly settled. There was no effort to provide medical or educational facilities, not to mention housing, or recreation.

The immigrants were quick to adapt to their new environment, became skilled at businesses and the trades, and by the 1880's had formed a solid economic force of small merchants and tradesmen. They began to group in associations along regional lines. Thus the CENTRO GALLEGO (for Galitians); CENTRO ASTURIANO (for Asturians); CENTRO CASTELLANO (for Castellians), etc. were founded.

These organizations grew very quickly. From their original purpose, which was to provide the immigrants with a framework to maintain their regional identity, they went on to provide them with high-quality/low-cost medical, dental, educational, social and recreational services. They became true MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES with their own community owned, non-profit hospitals, schools, theatres, recreation halls and grounds, cemeteries and savings and loan associations.

Of particular importance to this study was the creation of a Mutual Aid Society that was not founded along regional lines, but for all workers and employees of the business trades.

This was the ASOCIACIÓN DE DEPENDIENTES DEL COMERCIO (Association of Commercial Clerks); called CENTRO DE DEPENDIENTES for short. This Society accepted not only Spanish immigrants, regardless of regional origin, but also native Cubans, immigrants from other nations, and even non-Catholics. All participants were, of course, loyal to the Colonial Government.

The Centro Español of Tampa was moulded after this Association and started as a branch of its Havana counterpart.



The Spanish Mutual Aid Societies are, historically, an example of successful community action to overcome inadequate social conditions. Their strength was such that they would survive Cuban Independence and the Spanish American War, and continue to serve the needs of the community to this date.

## ● EL CENTRO ESPAÑOL IN TAMPA

During the 1880's political and economic conditions in the Island/Colony had become so oppressive, that the immigration stream was quickly altered. Immigrants started pouring out of Cuba to settle in Key West, Tampa and New York. In a similar manner, many of those leaving Spain at this time turned their hopes to Florida rather than the once desirable island community.

Thus a sizable Spanish-speaking colony was formed in the Tampa Bay area. Although deeply divided in political views, it managed to develop the strong cigar industry which survives to this date in the region.

The new immigrants brought with them the idea of the MUTUAL AID SOCIETIES, and in 1891 the CENTRO ESPAÑOL was founded, on the same lines as the CENTRO DE DEPENDIENTES in Cuba. The guidelines were still fairly



broad, encompassing predominantly Spanish peoples regardless of regional origin. However, the word "loyal" was inserted in the original charter to mean, at the time, supporters of the Spanish rule in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Nevertheless, the Centro never officially pursued or endorsed any political persuasion. Even during the Spanish American War, after having their properties occupied and shut down by the U. S. military, the Centro's officers managed to convince the authorities that they were strictly a non-political, welfare organization, and were allowed to continue rendering beneficial services to the Spanish Colony throughout the crisis.

From the beginning the Centro was a success, receiving generous moral and financial support from the wealthier sector of the community. Soon land was acquired and the first social palace was erected in 1891. It was a handsome wooden structure, comfortable and well appointed. It stood in the heart of Ybor City where most of the large cigar factories were located.

As the Nineteenth Century came to a close, plans to build a sanatorium were begun. These plans, however, would not come to fruition for some years.

Despite the divisive effect of the Cuban Revolutionary War (1895-98), and the Spanish American War (1898), the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century were times of great material progress and prosperity in the Tampa Bay Region.

From humble beginnings, the City of West Tampa grew very fast in those first twenty years. It developed into a strong Spanish-Italian community with its own cigar factories and commercial establishments.



By 1910, it was obvious to all that the Centro Español Building in Ybor City was inadequate for its membership. Shortly thereafter, a decision was made to build two new social halls each with its own theatre, ballroom and cantina. One was to replace the original structure in Ybor City. The other hall was to be built somewhere in West Tampa.

Plans were drawn, land was acquired, and in 1912 the new West Tampa Palace opened its doors.

While these new palaces were being built, the CENTRO CUBANO of Ybor City, the Cuban Nationalist counterpart of the CENTRO ESPAÑOL, offered its facilities for use by CENTRO ESPAÑOL members. Obviously, the wounds left by the Cuban Revolution and the Spanish American War had healed by this time.



#### ● THE WEST TAMPA PALACE – FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

The West Tampa Palace, in its functional conception and lay-out, gives a true reflection of the Spanish social interactions that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century.

The building's main entrance opens up into a large room flooded with light, capturing the day's gentle breezes. Here, day to day business was transacted by businessmen while playing cards, dominoes, or similar table games. Directly across the room from the entry, a grand stairway passed to the large ballroom above. Ladies were allowed into this room on weekends and special occasion balls, but only under the close attention of their mothers or appointed chaperones (one per girl).



Adjacent to the ballroom is the women's powder room with a spacious lounge where the young ladies would have gossiped about their suitors. Adjoining the opposite end of the ballroom is a bar where the men would similarly have gossiped and consulted with each other about their dance partners. Doors open onto a perimeter balcony that surrounds the ballroom on two sides; this was the only place where couples were allowed some privacy, in the sense that they could freely talk to one another, but being under constant public scrutiny could not get too friendly.

The theatre is totally separated from the two main social halls, reflecting the fact that popular Spanish Theatre of the time was spicy and piquant. The Spanish ZARZUELA AND OPERETTAS of the time were loaded with sexual overtones and were not fit for the eyes and ears of young unmarried girls. Even such classical work as that of CERVANTES, CAMPOAMOR and LOPE DE VEGA were considered quasi-sinful, as they dealt with subjects such as adultery, incest, convent scandals, etc., in classic Castillian, full of harsh words and cursing.

The social palaces of the Mutual Aid Societies were designed to perpetuate the culture of a particular social group. They tried to achieve this by:

- a) Providing an environment where the heads of families (men) would gather routinely to transact business in a leisurely, relaxed manner, sipping wine, playing dominoes or performing other social activities characteristic of their culture. Thus the group would be kept together through constant social and business interaction.
- b) Providing opportunities for the young, unmarried of the community to socially interact with one another and form new families, thus continuing the social group.
- c) Providing family entertainment and recreation while emphasizing the society's cultural heritage and tradition, thus binding all group members together with a strong cultural identity.

The West Tampa Palace successfully fulfilled all of these goals.

#### ● THE WEST TAMPA PALACE — STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

The West Tampa Palace was built in a strikingly advanced manner for its time. Its designers took advantage of the latest construction technology available in 1912, such as:

- a) Steel reinforced concrete for the exterior balconies.
- b) Wide flange steel beams on steel pipe columns for the structural system over the cantina.
- c) Plasterboard finish throughout, instead of the standard gypsum plaster on wood lath most commonly used.
- d) A very sophisticated lighting system in the theatre, including indirect lighting and an aisle lighting system built into the concrete slab.

All of the above mentioned systems were in the experimental stages at the time of construction and they are indeed unusual in the Tampa Bay Region for a building of that period.

The rest of the structure is more typical of its time and place, consisting of typical brick exterior bearing walls and hard pine, wood trusses with bolted connections. Roofing is Spanish clay, barrel tile on sloping surfaces, and built-up roofing over flat areas, all on a wood plank roof deck.

The details throughout are eclectic, giving a definite Spanish/Moorish flavor inside and out. On the exterior, all the brick piers, panels and wainscots necessary for structural purposes were exploited by the architect to provide an appropriate scale and rhythm along the various facades. All major functional elements of the building are distinctly expressed by the treatment of their structural walls, roofs and windows. These major internal divisions of the building find clear expression on the exterior form.

Exterior exposed brick is dark red or buff. Buff brick is used to accent openings, entrances and horizontal elements, while red brick forms the field.

Interior decorations are rather simple, consisting of multi-colored cast plaster mouldings with an arabesque motif.

#### ● FUNCTIONAL OBSOLESCENCE

Mutual Aid Societies rose to fulfill a number of social services much needed by a particular community and not readily available otherwise. As the years passed, many of these services became functions of civil government. Historical events changed the structure of the social group, and slowly the societies began to lose their original vigor.

For the Centro Español, the main causes of obsolescence were due to the social and cultural changes brought about by the Prohibition, the Recession and World War II.

The prohibition was a hard blow on the Spanish community. Social drinking is as much a part of Spanish culture as guitars and yellow rice. Businessmen went somewhere else to transact their business, still sipping wine and playing dominoes, but in the back rooms of each other's homes, or in clandestine establishments. The cantina, hurt severely, had been the most profitable operation at the social palaces, usually paying for the maintenance and upkeep of entire facilities. The weekly balls also ceased to be profitable without bar revenues.

The quality of the entertainment, such as theatre and music, had to be lowered and the building's upkeep lax; as a result, attendance dropped sharply. The old brilliance and vigor of social events disappeared. At the West Tampa Centro, the theatre was turned into a movie house in an effort to generate more revenue, but did so with marginal success.

When the depression hit, it hit Tampa's Spanish community hard. Cigars were a luxury commodity, and therefore many cigar factories, the main source of community jobs by far, had to either close down or sharply reduce their production. Many lost their jobs, and as a result were no longer able to maintain their Centro dues. Many simply moved out of the community to look for new jobs. The physical neighborhood deteriorated much during the decade of the 30's.





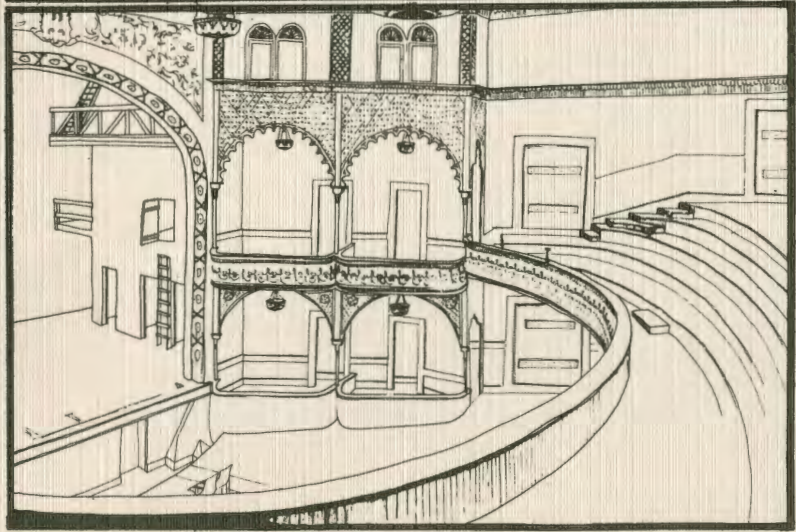
The Centro Español social palaces became a memory full of nostalgia for the older members and the symbol of a cultural heritage for the younger ones. The palaces, however, were no longer the focus of social interaction of a well defined community.

Of as great a blow to the Centro Español was the establishment of the Social Security System. It made some of the social services offered by the Centro obsolete. Furthermore, a new U. S. immigration policy almost stopped dead the flow of new immigrants. West Tampa itself ceased to be a city in its own right, and in 1925 became incorporated into the City of Tampa.

World War II laid the final heavy blow; it took many of the children from the tightknit Spanish community and mixed them with the rest of the population in the armed forces. At the end of the war, prosperity had returned to West Tampa. However, it found many vacant factory buildings and many of the frame residences unpainted and in disrepair. With the new prosperity, the Spanish families that still formed the majority of the population in the area, began to move to the suburbs seeking better housing, and they were soon integrated even more into the general population. They left behind their old family homes to be rented, sold, or simply stand vacant. The Spanish community of Tampa was no longer a closed society.

The old cigar factories were quickly converted into other types of uses; such as garment and sundries manufacturing. These new industries were attracted to the area by the opportunity of buying large bankrupt structures for a very reasonable price. They were manned by lowly paid, unskilled labor, which quickly moved into the area filling the vacuum left by the Spanish community.





**b. existing conditions**



## ● WEST TAMPA TODAY

Today, West Tampa is a marginal urban neighborhood with all its evils, such as dilapidated structures and substandard housing. There still remain, however, some very strong signs of its Spanish-Italian past, such as can be seen through various specialty stores, markets and restaurants, and most definitely in the still imposing social palaces of the Centro Español and its Italian counterpart.

Many homes in the area also reveal their Latin influence. Homes have ample front porches that press close to the street. Latin families sat on these porches to spend their evenings commenting on the day's happenings while the young girls kept an eye on the young men parading by. Through the quality and design of the houses, it is evident that West Tampa was never a rich town, but a town of laborers and small businessmen, who led a modest but pleasant life within the context of their Latin cultural heritage.



## ● CENTRO ESPANOL OF WEST TAMPA — ANALYSIS OF PRESENT CONDITIONS

The Palace of the Centro Español in West Tampa is a handsome brick structure with a Spanish/Moorish air, still beautiful and intricate. Of its three main functional elements, the first floor cantina, second floor ballroom, and two story theatre, only the cantina is in use today. The other two elements have been abandoned for several years and show signs of neglect.



The building is divided into two clearly defined structural elements. The social halls, including the first floor cantina, and second floor ballroom, face Howard Avenue where the main entrance is located; the theatre, located to the rear of the structure has a separate entrance on Cherry Street. Both elements are separated by a fire wall. Presently, only one doorway permits communication between them.

### PRESENT CONDITION OF THE SOCIAL HALLS:

#### a) STRUCTURAL

Exterior brick masonry walls are in excellent structural condition, free of cracks and any sign of irregular foundation or structural settlement. The first floor structure is a concrete slab on compacted fill with ceramic tile finish in the public areas. All of the slabs appear to be in excellent condition, free of settlement cracks and any other imperfections.

Second floor framing consists of wide flange steel beams on steel pipe columns with hard pine joists running in a north/south direction. The structure appears sound with no visible signs of settlement or structural distress.

Roof framing consists of hard pine, bolted wood trusses spanning the east/west direction. Although some trusses show damage by water penetration, no extensive rot is evident. This portion of the structure is heavily termite infested; damage at the present time, however, is of no structural consequence.



**b) FINISHES**

First floor finishes are generally in good condition, with only minor cracks and blemishes.

Second floor finishes are in poor condition. Wood floors show extensive termite damage. The damage appears to be superficial. No case was found where it extended through the floor planks. The floor surface, however, is non-repairable, but planks could remain as subfloor for new finishes. Wood bases are also termite infested. Plaster ceilings show water and humidity damage at various spots throughout. In the ballroom, there is one area where the plaster has fallen; this area is approximately twenty feet square.

**c) DOORS AND WINDOWS**

All doors and windows are wood. There are no signs of termite infestation, indicating that they may be cedar, cypress or treated wood. First floor openings are all operable and appear in reasonably good condition, except that all finish hardware is obsolete and non-secure, and therefore should be replaced.

The sash on the second floor doors and windows are in fairly good condition, but the glazing is broken or missing in many places, thus allowing water penetration. Finish hardware is generally non-operable.



**d) ROOFING**

Roofing over this portion of the building is barrel-type clay tile. The tile field is in excellent condition, with very few cracked units. The underlayment and flashing, however, are badly deteriorated. A leak exists in the area over the front entrance parapet.

Because of the poor condition of the flashing and underlayment, plans should be made to remove and reinstall the existing tile after replacing the underlayment and flashing.

Although no damage was directly observed at the points of access, it is very probable that the roof deck is termite infested or rotten where leaks now exist, or existed in the past.

**e) HEATING, VENTILATING AND AIR CONDITIONING**

Except for some ceiling fans in the cantina, and one portable heater, there is no HVAC system in the cantina and ballroom.

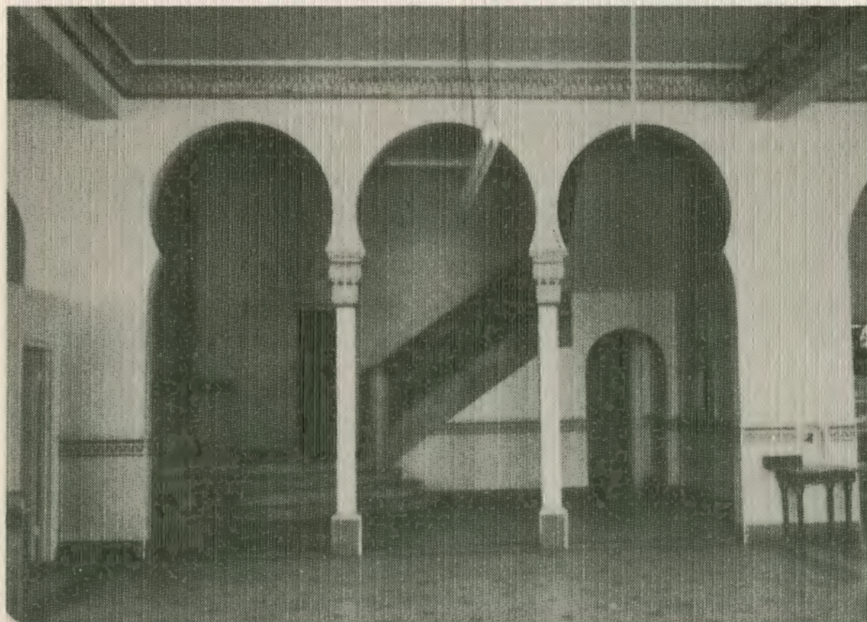
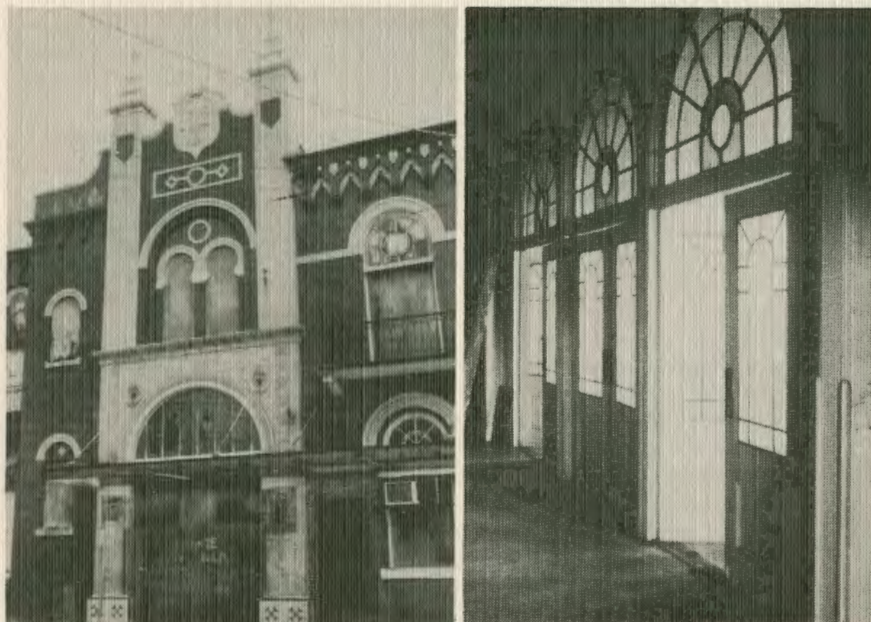
**f) PLUMBING**

All plumbing lines and fixtures appear to be the original ones. Toilet facilities are inadequate, consisting of one men's room on the first floor, and a ladies' room on the second. The ladies' room has no operable fixtures. Men's room has two operable urinals which are leaking, and some of the existing toilets are not operable.

Other plumbing in the building consists of one kitchen sink and a small sink in the cantina.







**g) ELECTRICAL**

The electrical system on the first floor cantina has been updated, and appears adequate for present needs. The electrical panel, however, located on a wall near the stairs to the ballroom, is of the pull-switch, fuse type, antiquated and dangerous.

The second floor electrical system appears also to have been updated, but at an earlier date than the cantina downstairs. Power is now completely cut off on the second floor.

**PRESENT CONDITION OF THE THEATRE :**

**a) STRUCTURAL**

Exterior brick masonry walls are in excellent condition, free of cracks and signs of irregular foundation or structural settlement. The balcony structure consists of wood joists supported on bearing brick walls or on a continuous steel beam, supported by steel pipe columns. About 10% of the structural members are severely rotten from water damage caused by roof leaks. The structure is, however, in no danger of collapse, except locally in the water damaged areas.

The roof structure consists of bolted wood trusses spanning north/south over the auditorium, and east/west over the stage area. Structural members show heavy termite infestation. Although termite damage appears to be superficial and of no structural consequence, major trusses should be closely examined on a one by one basis to ascertain their exact condition. If any new loading to these members is proposed, such as new air conditioning equipment, this inspection is mandatory.

**b) FINISHES**

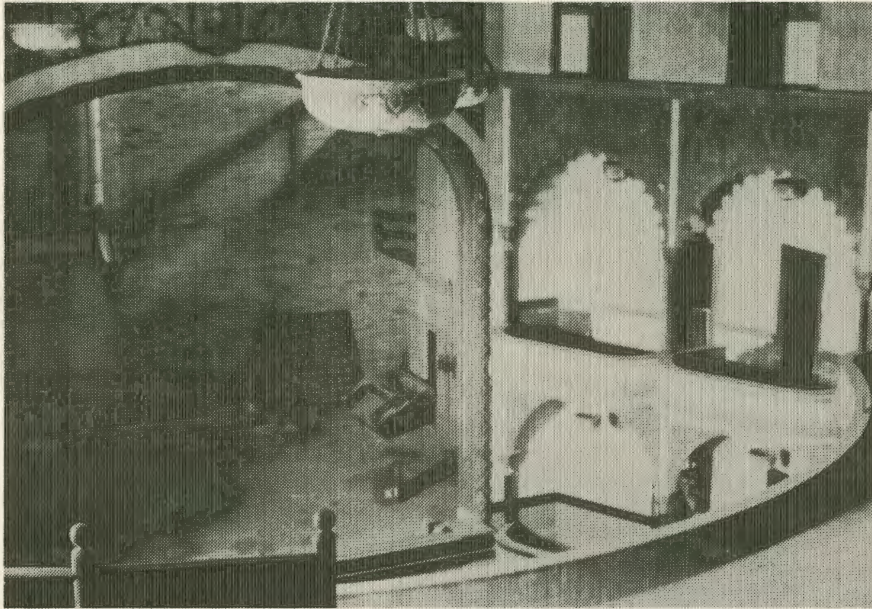
Concrete floors in the auditorium and vestibule sections appear to be in excellent condition, without cracks.

Wood floors on the balcony and stage areas are severely infested with termites. Some planks are practically eaten through. Surface boards have also rotted through, in areas where roof leaks occur. The same applies to the flooring on all stairs and stage lofts.

At least 20% of the wood floor area in the entire theater will have to be replaced. The remainder, although termite damaged, may remain as a subfloor for new finishes.

Plasterboard wall finishes are severely damaged where the large roof leaks occur. Large areas of the plaster ceiling (about 5% of the total surface) have fallen down, carrying with them, sections of the adjacent cast plaster mouldings.





**c) DOORS AND WINDOWS**

Existing doors and windows show no signs of termite infestation, indicating they may be made of cypress, cedar or treated wood.

Glazing is no longer existent, as most windows have been boarded up with plywood or sheet metal.

Finish hardware is non-secure and non-operable, except for door hinges.

**d) ROOFING**

Roofing over this entire area is in very poor condition. Built-up roof areas have completely deteriorated through the wood deck. The flashing has rusted away and has disintegrated along many ridges.

The clay tile field is in fair condition and shows evidence of numerous patchings and repairs throughout the years.

There are four main areas with extensive leaking at the present time; one over the center of the stage, one over the upper balcony stairs, one over the southern wing of the balcony towards the middle, and one over the northern half of the auditorium near the stage. At the first two locations listed, daylight can be seen from inside.

**e) HEATING, VENTILATING, AND AIR CONDITIONING**

There is no heating system in the theatre. Ventilation is achieved through roof vents as hot air rises into the attic space, through open plaster lattice work around the ceiling light fixtures.

There exists a primitive air conditioning system, consisting of a lead-lined water reservoir and a spray nozzle bank, which cooled circulating air and blew the cooled air through a large fan.

There are two identical systems, one at each side of the stage at the second floor level. The systems are not original to the building, but were added later when the theatre was converted into a movie house.

**f) PLUMBING**

All plumbing is obsolete and appears to have been inoperative for many years, except for two small toilet rooms, one on each corner of the auditorium east wall. These rooms appear to have been remodelled sometime during the 1940's. Presently they are inoperative, and the toilet room at the southeast corner shows extensive water damage from the leaking roof.

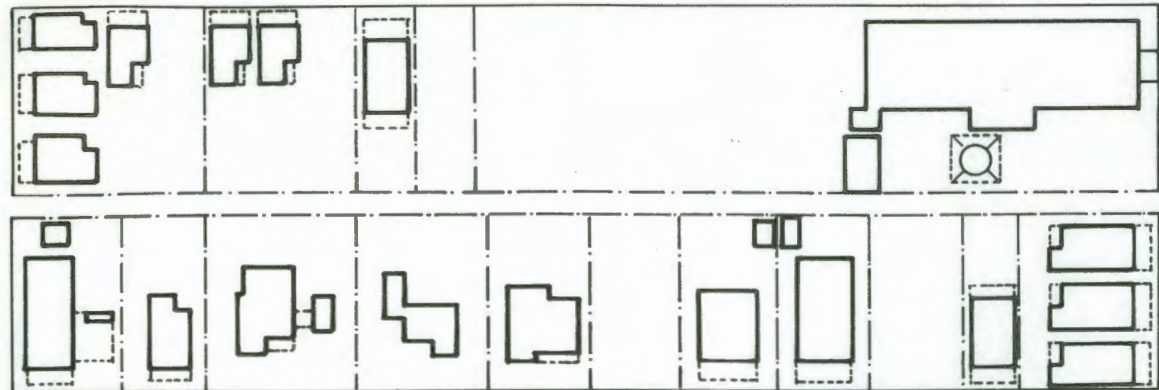
**g) ELECTRICAL**

Although the original system was quite sophisticated for its time, the existing condition is poor, inadequate and obsolete. Some updating has been done since the original installation, probably when the theatre was converted into a movie house, but even these portions are obsolete by today's standards.

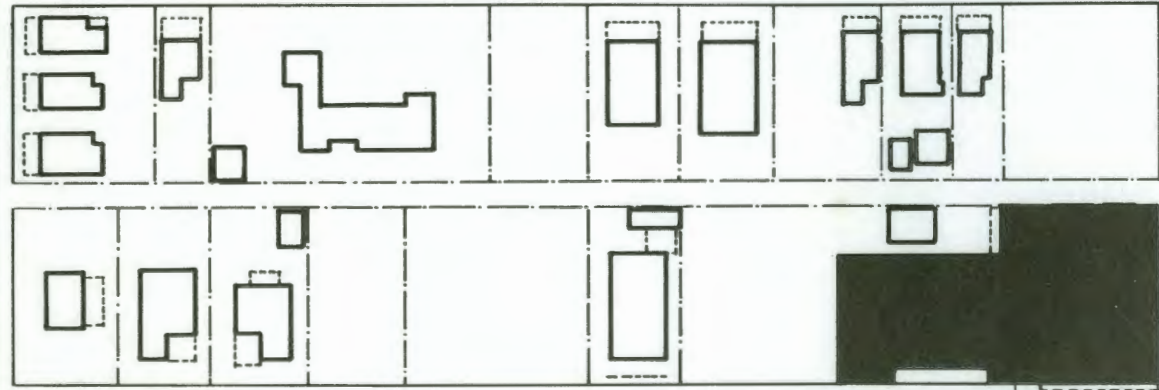


BEACH

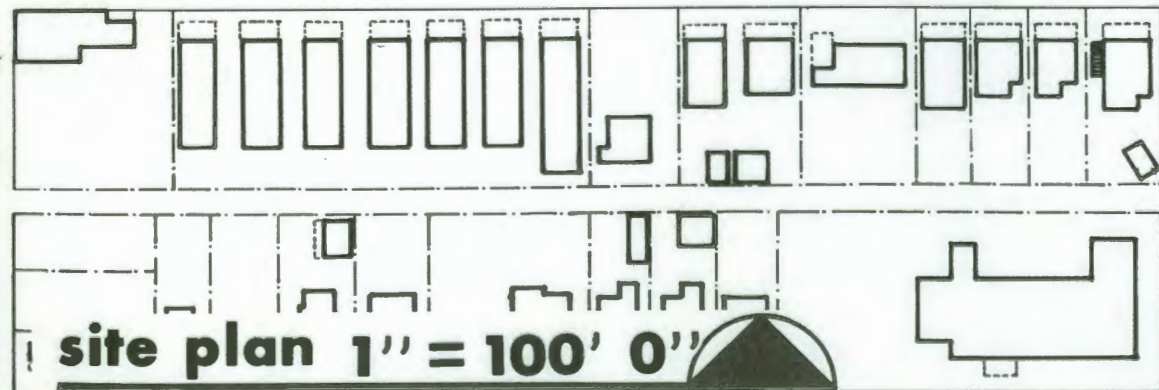
AVENUE



PALMETTO



CHERRY

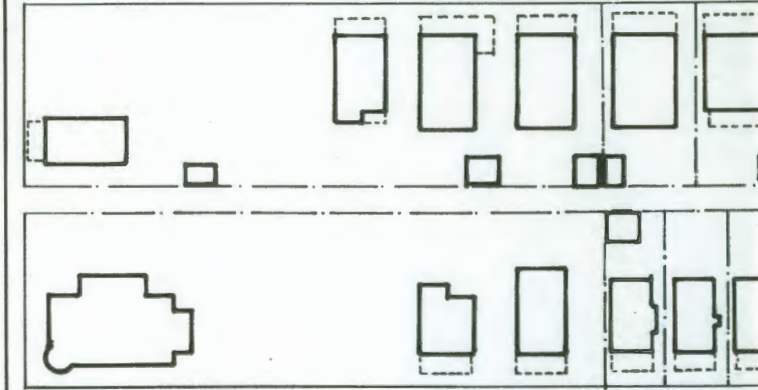


site plan 1" = 100' 0"

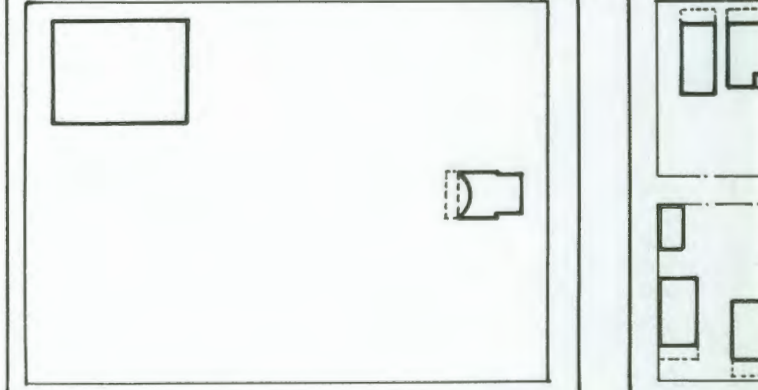
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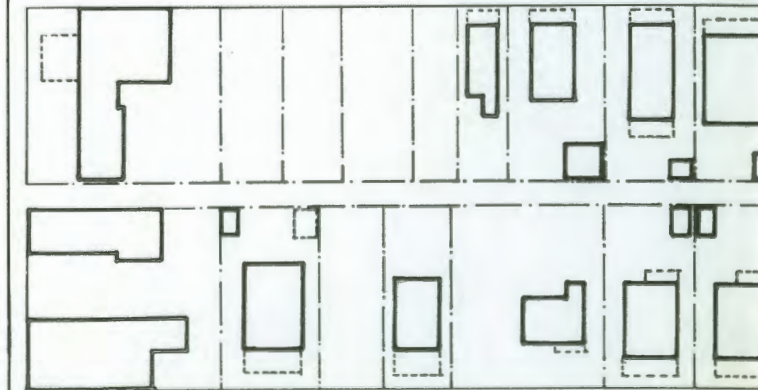
STREET



STREET



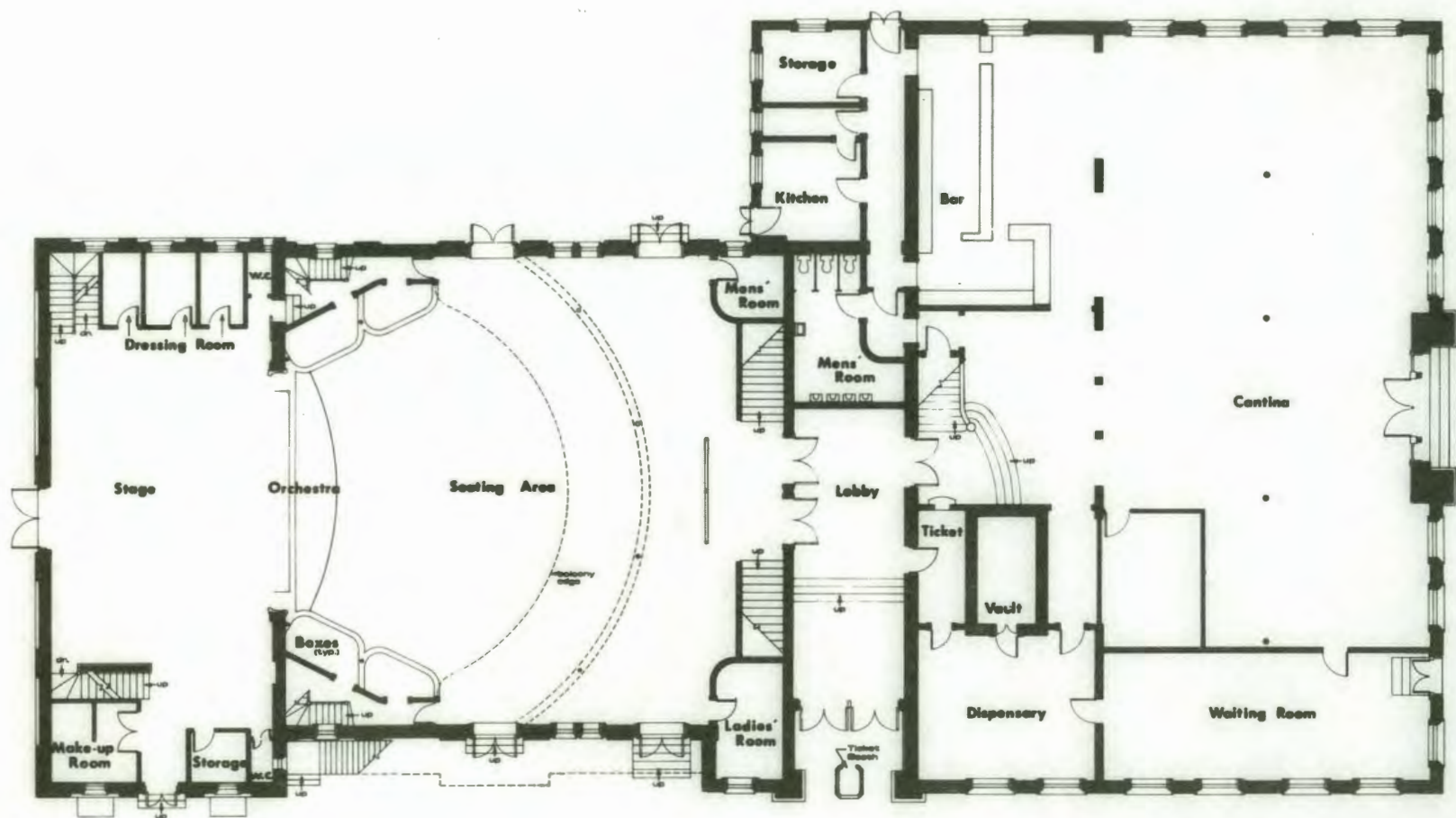
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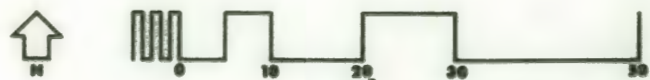
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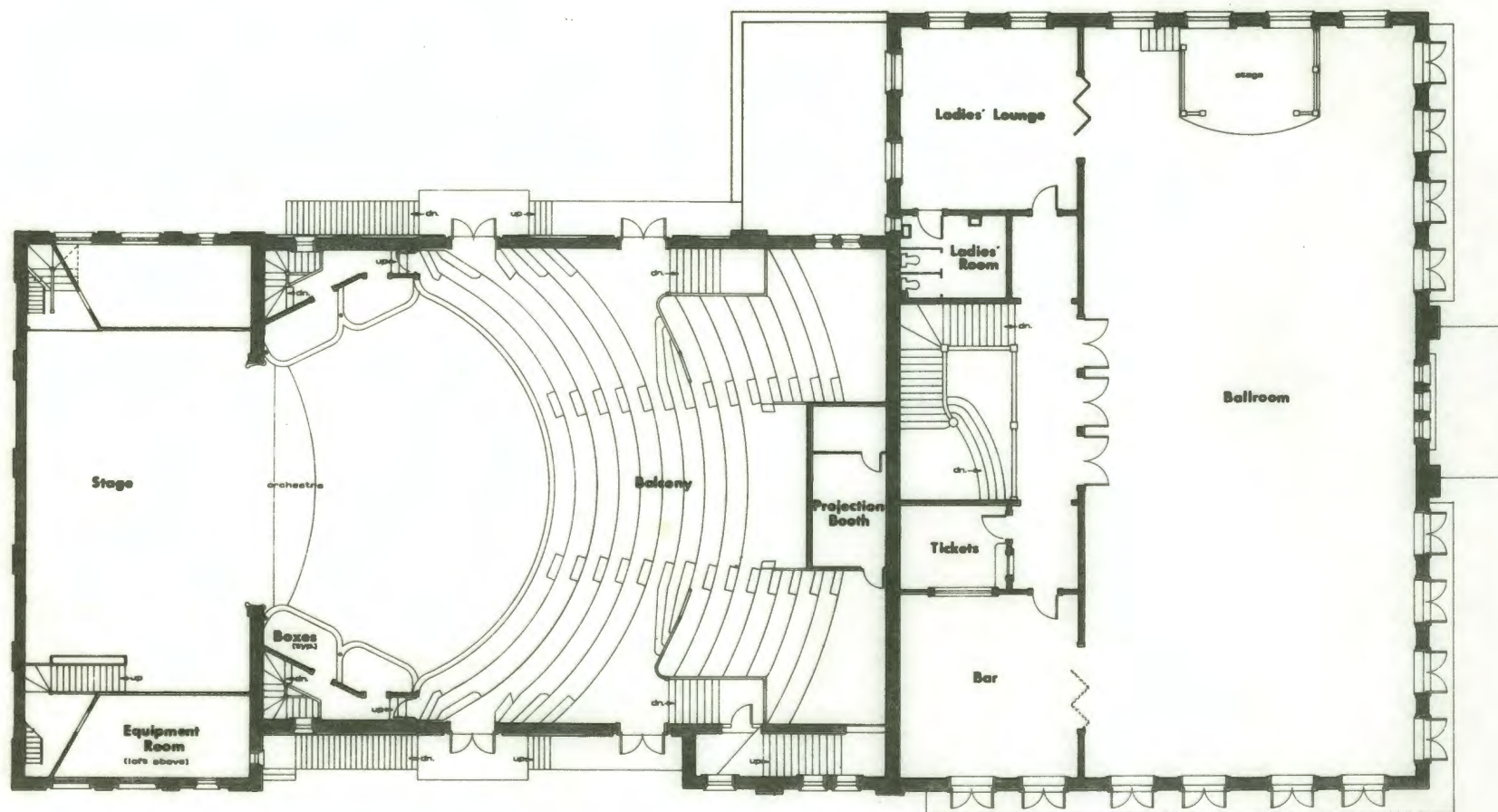




**first floor plan**



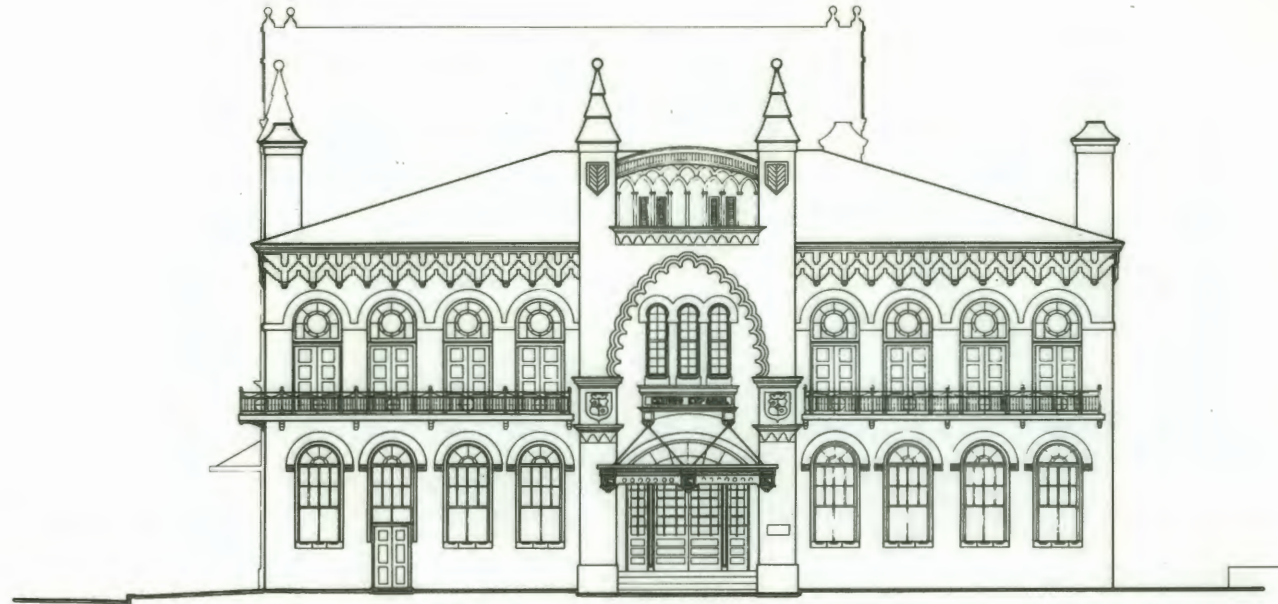




**second floor plan**





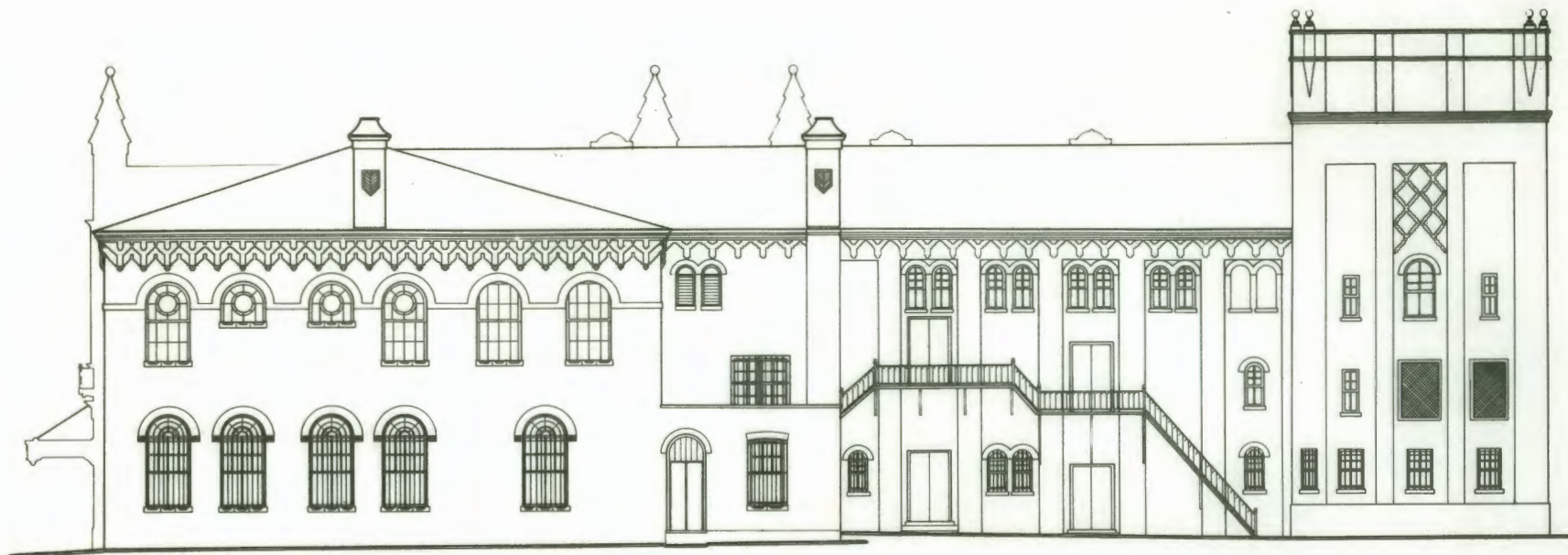


**east elevation**

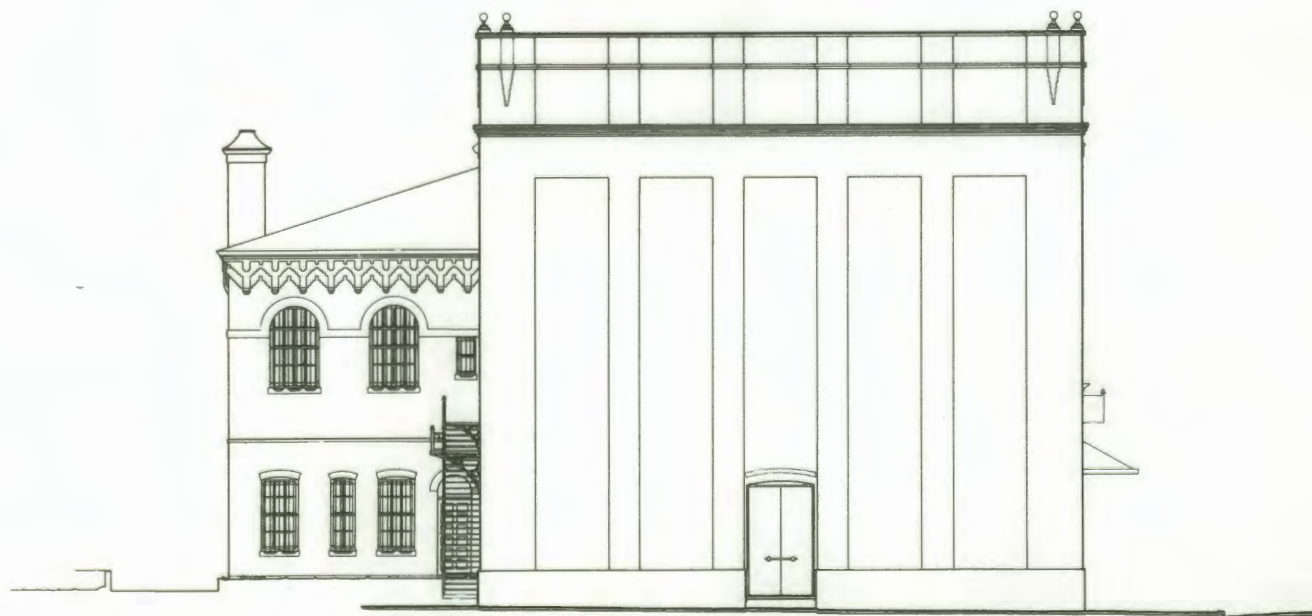


**south elevation**



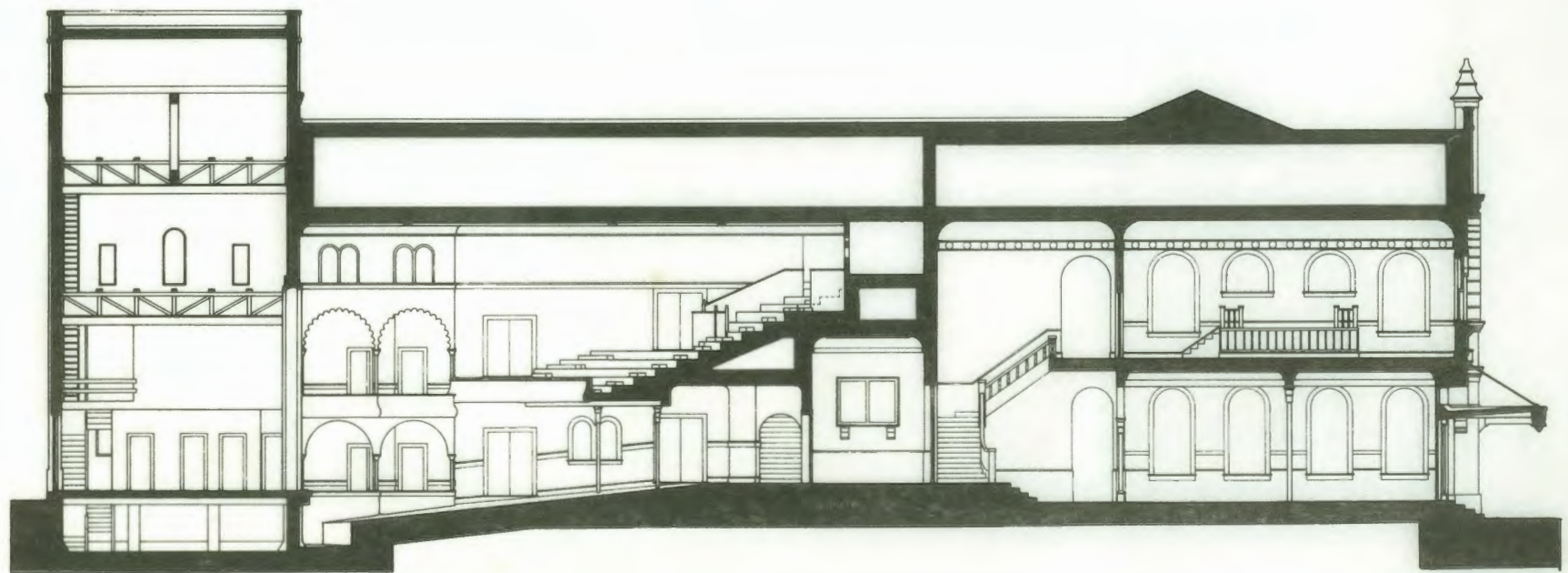


**north elevation**



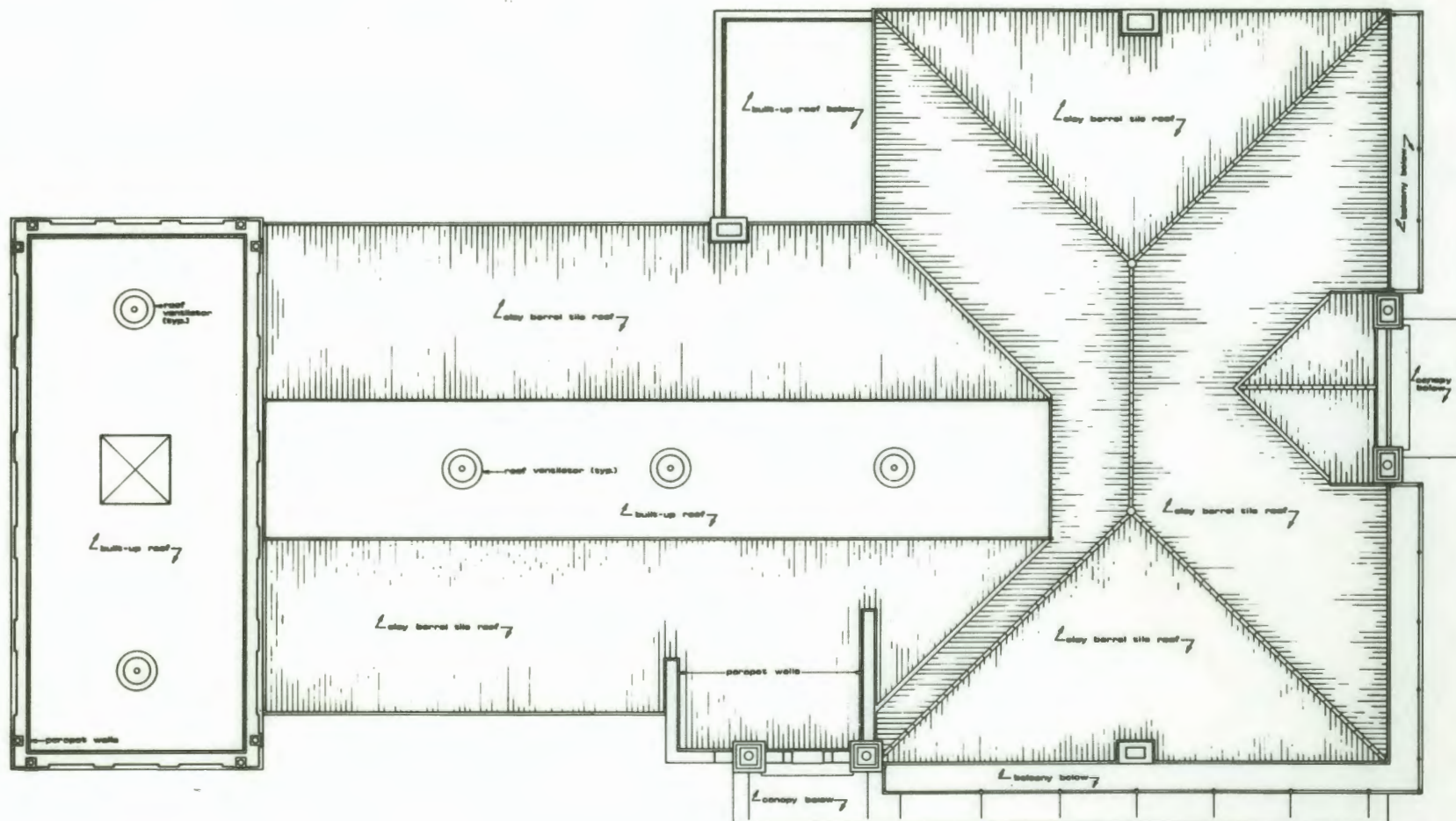
**west elevation**





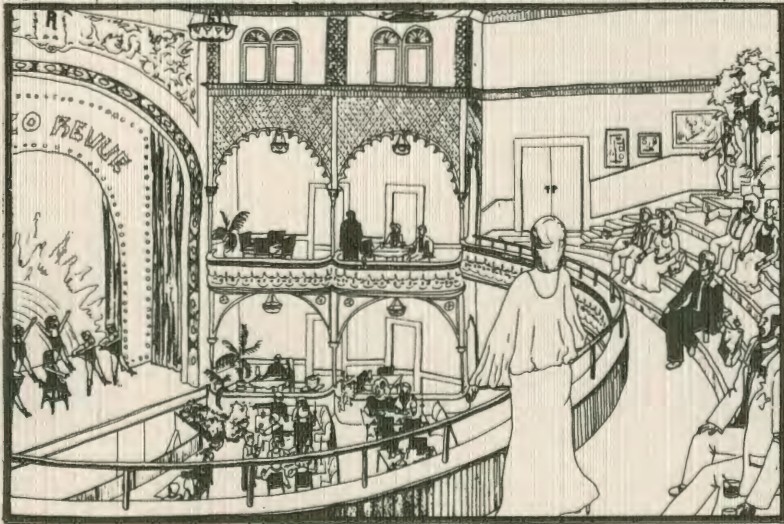
**longitudinal section**





**roof plan**





**c. renovations  
and feasibility**



## ● CRITERIA

In the previous parts of this study, the significance of the structure has been established:

- a) As a monument to our Spanish heritage in Florida.
- b) As a reflection of the ideals, mores and technology of an important social group in our region at a particular time in history.
- c) As a physical landmark giving identity to its surrounding neighborhood.
- d) As a handsome large structure, basically sound, economically restorable and capable of continued service for many years to come.

That the structure should be preserved and given adaptive uses, should be evident.

Renovation work and the ultimate adaptive uses, however, need to respect and, wherever possible, enhance those factors which make preservation desirable as opposed to demolition and re-use of the land. Thus goals need to be established to be met by any ultimate solution to the preservation effort.

First, the architectural integrity of the building's exterior and major interior spaces must be maintained. Major spaces are THE CANTINA, THE BALLROOM, and THE THEATRE, including its stage and balcony. Destruction of the architectural fabric, scale, or character of any of these elements would also destroy their significance and seriously damage the project as a whole.

Second, the adaptive uses should be compatible with the original building's functions so as to be able to work successfully without disturbing the original fabric, and to provide for continuing maintenance of the structure once the restoration work is completed.

Third, the adaptive uses should be able to function within the deteriorated present conditions of the surrounding neighborhood while at the same time, they should make the structure a new focus of activity and economic vitality that might spur further development within the area, and begin an urban revitalization process.

To summarize, the goals for a successful preservation effort shall be:

- a) TO PRESERVE THE HISTORICAL INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING'S EXTERIOR AND MAJOR INTERIOR ELEMENTS.
- b) TO MAKE THE RESTORED STRUCTURE FUNCTIONAL AGAIN, WITH ADAPTIVE FUNCTIONS WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE ORIGINAL ONES AND WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WILL PRODUCE SUFFICIENT REVENUE TO GUARANTEE THE CONTINUING MAINTENANCE OF THE PROJECT.
- c) TO MAKE THE RESTORED PROJECT A VITAL CENTER OF ACTIVITY CONDUCIVE TO FURTHER REVITALIZATION EFFORTS IN THE AREA, AND YET BE ABLE TO FUNCTION WITHIN PRESENT CONDITIONS.

In addition to the stated goals we should consider two very important factors in the development of criteria upon which to develop a workable plan.



The first factor is the ownership/administration of the completed project. The second is the public service/private commercial type of development.

The building has been the property of the Centro Español since 1912 and the CANTINA is still in use by the membership. However, some of the membership are of the opinion that the building should be sold and be restored by a private developer. Since the scope of this study is to establish the feasibility of the restoration effort, it should be noted that regardless of ownership, restoration is feasible. However, the structure will be eligible for a number of governmental grants, guaranteed loans and grants designated for minority, ethnic and cultural groups, should the Centro organization retain ownership.

On the other hand, a private developer will be entitled to certain tax exemptions and other governmental assistance programs for profit making organizations.

Either way, prior to setting up a definite course for the preservation effort, a decision must be made by the Centro Español to either sell the property, or make a commitment to keep the building, proceed with the restoration work and manage and maintain the project. If so, the Centro may opt to lease those restored portions of the building not used by the membership to private entrepreneurs, and use the revenue to maintain the facility. Or, if the building is sold, the Centro may lease a portion of it for its West Tampa membership. All considered, it would be very beneficial for the success of the total project if the Centro Español maintained a presence in the building, as this would lend an air of continuing tradition and respectability to the structure, thus enhancing its appeal to private investors.



On the question of public service/private commercial development, the project is also feasible either way.

Public service functions such as a health center, community recreation, educational facilities, etc., have the advantage of ready availability of funds, once the need for them is established. However, they are geared to provide services for the present population, which at this time is primarily the poor and the elderly. The type of facilities required for such services generally would require extensive partitioning and renovation work, which might work against the preservation of the architectural fabric.

On the other hand, commercial development might make a center of activity more lively and conducive to further development in the area, but it is subject to the ups and downs of the economy and thus might fail to provide the stable source of income necessary to insure continuing maintenance. The best solution then, would appear to be one which would take advantage of each possibility mentioned, while cancelling the negative aspects as much as possible.

## ● THE FUNCTIONAL PLAN

On finding adaptive uses that will achieve the stated goals, the structure will be divided into its three major functional elements, THE THEATRE, THE CANTINA, AND THE BALLROOM. Each could function as an entity independent from the others. However, the final development of the total project should house functions that are mutually supportive of each other, compatible with one another, or at least non-conflicting.

### A. THE THEATRE

As seen in Part B, the theatre is, by far, the functional element in worst physical condition and thus is the most expensive to restore. There are extensive leaks, rotted timbers, heavily damaged plaster finishes on ceilings and walls, and severe termite infestation.

Structurally however, all components are basically sound and able to continue functioning for many years, provided steps are taken to prevent further deterioration. As a whole, the theatre function has long been obsolete for use by the Centro Español, as the society discontinued entertainment for its membership many years ago.

Since the theatre element is the most costly one to renovate and is of no use to the Centro's membership, it appears that this is an element to be leased and renovated for profit, to generate the revenues necessary to maintain the total structure, regardless of ultimate ownership of the building.

Functionally, the theatre contains three sub-functional elements: a stage tower with a structure of its own; the orchestra seating floor, a large room with a sloping concrete slab and an orchestra pit; and a semicircular balcony on a steel and wood frame structure overhanging the orchestra floor.

Each of these sub-functional elements could be developed by itself, or as part of a general scheme for the theatre as a whole.

## THE STAGE

A structure by itself, this element contains a full basement, the stage floor, and former dressing rooms with three levels of lofts at each side of the stage opening.

Visually, it forms a dramatic, four floor, vertical space with exposed brick surfaces all the way to the top, exposed wooden roof structure and wood frame structure for the side dressing rooms and lofts.

The following are some functions which could work successfully without much alteration of the existing architectural fabric:

- a) An entertainment center which may include dancing, live shows, dining, cocktails, pinball machines, etc.
- b) A small restaurant which may feature live entertainment, a cocktail lounge and private areas for dinner parties on the lofts.
- c) An art center renting private studios on the lofts and dressing rooms, with a main gallery on the stage floor for exhibition and sales.
- d) An arena-type small theatre, with a central stage area and seating around and on the loft spaces. This could also double as a drama or dance school. Musical performances could be held here.
- e) An operating stage.

Other possible functions will be studied when dealing with the development of the orchestra seating area, if this element is developed in conjunction with the stage.

## THE ORCHESTRA SEATING AREA

The orchestra seating area is the largest space in the whole structure with a two-and-one-half story ceiling height within which the balcony overhangs for about one half of the floor area.

It has an orchestra pit and a sloping concrete floor, on which about four hundred theatre seats existed. The space is imposing in its proportions and is heavily decorated with multi-colored ornaments of an arabesque motif.

In order to function as a separate unit by itself, this space could be separated from the stage rather easily by closing the stage opening with a sound and fire proof partition which could be permanent or demountable. Separation from the balcony element however, will be difficult without damaging the architectural fabric and scale of the whole space.

The following are some functions which fit comfortably within the existing fabric:

- a) A performing arts center, if developed in conjunction with the stage and balcony. Total seating capacity could be up to eight hundred persons. The stage would then have to be overhauled with up-to-date equipment. This function could work together with a restaurant and cocktail lounge, and become a dinner theatre.



- b) A movie theatre, where the stage opening closure would serve as a screen. Food and cocktails could be served. The balcony could then become a cocktail lounge and serve sandwiches or snacks. The stage could then function independently.
- c) A sports arena for events such as boxing, wrestling, etc. with the balcony as a cocktail lounge and the stage closed off for a different function.
- d) A skating rink for either ice or roller skating, with the balcony functioning as a concession area.
- e) An entertainment center featuring dancing, pinball machines, billiards, cocktails and perhaps dinner or sandwiches.

All of the above functions could work successfully with a minimum of disturbance to the original architectural fabric. There are other functions possible, but they would require more extensive renovation, or would be unlikely to produce enough revenue to maintain the completed project, such as a bowling alley, gymnasium, or a Church.

#### THE BALCONY

The balcony lends itself best to a function supportive of the orchestra seating area. Originally, it had a flat platform area toward the rear, which still exists under the projection booth and rear seating area, which were built at the time when the theatre was converted to a movie house.

The original platform has ample floor area for a bar-type serving counter at which food and/or drinks could be served and seats with small tables or simply cushions on the floor could accommodate the patrons.

This element of the theatre would make an excellent cocktail lounge or concessions area for whatever ultimate function is given to the orchestra seating area below.

Physical separation from the orchestra seating would be very difficult to achieve without destroying the scale of the space as a whole. However, it is not impossible and it could then function as:

- a) A cocktail lounge.
- b) A sandwich shop or any other food serving function.
- c) A boutique or gift shop with merchandise exhibited on the seating tiers.

All of the above functions would require extensive renovation.

#### B. THE CANTINA

This first floor space is by far the best preserved within the structure and it is still in use by the Centro's membership. It now functions as a bar/lounge with table games.

This space could be developed in conjunction with the others as a total complex or as a unit by itself. It is a large space, approximately 90 feet long by 60 feet wide containing a bar area, a vault, a ticket room and the grand marble stairs leading to the ballroom above.

By itself, this space could become:

- a) A restaurant and cocktail lounge, perhaps with an area for dancing.
- b) A cocktail lounge with a dancing area and/or a recreation area with pinball machines, billiards, etc.
- c) A boutique or specialty shop.
- d) A community recreation center in connection with the community center now existing across the street, featuring table games, arts and crafts, etc.
- e) A community service center in connection with city and state social services.
- f) A private clubroom such as exists at the present time, combined with historic exhibits of the building and West Tampa.
- g) A combination of 1, 2, 3 and 6 above, serving as a waiting area for the theatre in the event it assumes a theatre or cinema function.

All of the above functions, except e which might require extensive partitioning, could work successfully with a minimum of alterations to the original architectural fabric.

#### C. THE BALLROOM

The ballroom occupies the second story on the front part of the structure (east side). It covers the same area as the cantina below and contains a large 35 foot by 90 foot dancing floor with band stand, a bar area, a ticket room and toilet facilities with adjoining lounging area.

The dancing room's decor is imposing even today, with a continuous row of french doors along the east and south walls opening to a balcony; each door having a multi-colored glass transom.

The following are some functions which should work well in this space without damage to the original architectural fabric:

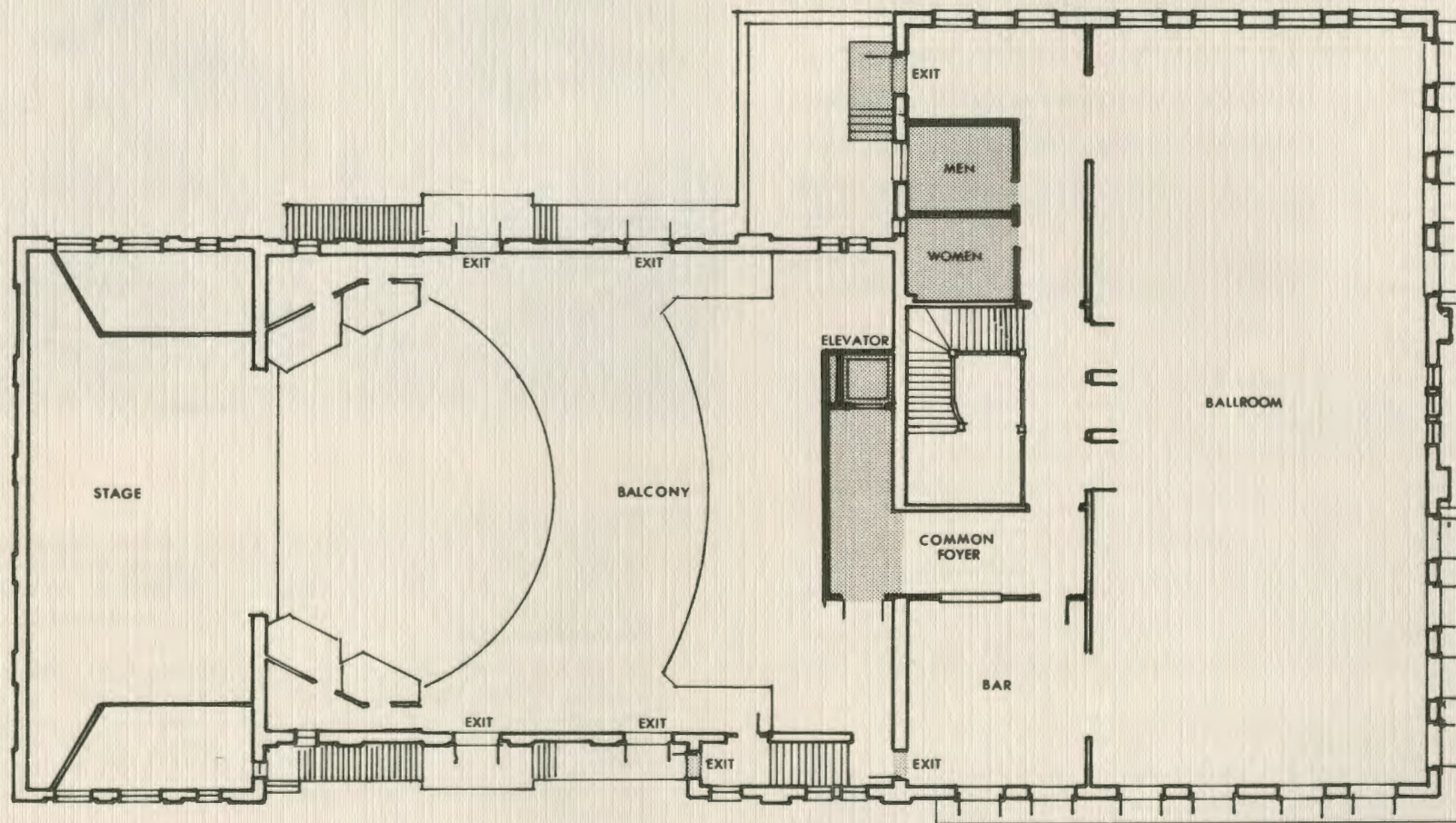
- a) A rental banquet hall/ballroom in connection with a restaurant somewhere else in the premises.
- b) A private club with bar and table games. This could be similar to the cantina functions that the Centro now maintains on the first floor.
- c) A health club where the dancing hall could be used for exercise room, dance and personal defense classes, etc.
- d) A boutique or specialty shop selling antiques, collectors items, etc.
- e) A cultural center for the Spanish heritage of Florida including a library, museum, and Spanish language classes under one of various Federal and State programs for that type of facility.

#### SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

There are many possible uses for the various elements within the structure, and only a few have been presented. Most of them would meet the stated goals as separate functions or working together as a complex. The support functions necessary shall now be presented.

Support functions such as toilet facilities, vertical transportation, etc. can be provided for each separate element, or can be contained in one central core accessible to all elements as shown on the following plans. Such a functional plan may be achieved mostly within existing service areas, and will not necessitate major alterations to any of the main elements.





**RENOVATED CENTRAL CORE**  
**second floor plan**



In essence, the plan provides for complete access to all elements by handicapped people, either by ramp or elevator. It provides two separate means of egress for the ballroom and foyer and also toilet facilities for both sexes on each floor.

These are basic code requirements that must be met regardless of the ultimate development. The stage, of course, will not participate in this common core if developed as a separate entity. It would need its own toilet facilities, etc.

The floor plans shown illustrate one possible solution which would accomplish the following:

- a) Provide common toilet facilities for each sex at each floor, accessible to all main functions.
- b) Provide access for handicapped persons to all levels and the common toilets.
- c) Provide a good size service area which could accommodate a full kitchen; to serve the orchestra seating area in the theatre and/or restaurant in the cantina.

The cost estimates for the total project restoration are based on the aforementioned assumptions, and functional layout shown on the following floor plans.

#### **COST ANALYSIS**

An accurate analysis of the costs involved in the total restoration of the building is very difficult without knowing all of the specific functions for each space in the ultimate development of the complex. There are, however, a number of items of work that need to be done regardless of the ultimate use.

These costs have been computed in two separate charts. A third chart has been prepared for the possible uses listed previously. It is important to note that the charts are additive and reflect separate phases of the work.

The costs have been computed based on current information contained in various nationwide reference publications on restoration/renovation costs and the input from several contractors and tradesmen for specific items of work. The prices obtained from these sources are not consistent with one another in many cases, so the charts reflect a range of probable construction cost rather than a specific figure.

The scope of the work included on each chart is as follows:

##### **a) STABILIZATION COSTS**

Work covered in this chart includes the necessary steps to make the structure weatherproof, to protect it from further deterioration by termites, weather or vandalism, and to perform such demolition and repair work as might be necessary for public safety and the preservation of the architectural fabric. The chart assumes that new built-up roofing will be installed over the flat portions of the roof and that all tile areas will be given a new underlayment. It also assumes that the roof deck will be repaired throughout during the re-roofing operation. Existing roofing and flashing cannot be patched effectively for any extended period of time.

Included also is a temporary lighting system to permit periodic inspections of the premises and to allow prospective developers or tenants to evaluate conditions in the various spaces.



##### **b) BASIC RESTORATION COSTS**

Included on this chart are those items of work that would render the structure leaseable. That is to say, that the structure would be in compliance with current codes and regulations regarding access, egress, and public facilities, and thus each space may be leased and further developed for specific tenants.

At the end of this phase, the structure would be fully restored on the exterior. Interior restoration would be completed except for painting and those items of work which would be done after the specific tenant installs air conditioning, plumbing and lighting systems. Each major element would have new electrical and plumbing service entrances or taps, from which each tenant could develop a system suitable for the intended use.

The common core developed in the functional plan would be completed and operational at the end of this phase.

##### **c) SPECIFIC FUNCTION COSTS**

This chart is meant to serve as a guideline for prospective developers to determine the cost of restoring/renovating each space for the various possible functions mentioned in the functional plan. These costs are in addition to costs in the other charts and reflect facilities in the MEDIAN price range. For a full description of the functions listed, refer to THE



FUNCTIONAL PLAN (P. c.2) where specific functions are listed for THE STAGE, THE ORCHESTRA SEATING AREA, THE BALCONY, THE CANTINA and THE BALLROOM.

Costs on all charts have been broken down on a space by space basis, except for those items or work such as roofing, exterior cleaning, termite treatment, etc., that must be done on the entire structure at one time. Each chart also has footnotes for various items necessitating further explanation as to the work included. Numbering sequence applies to that chart only.

Site work, except for new utility lines and connections, has not been included in any of the charts, as it is very difficult to estimate the scope of the work involved without knowledge of the specific parking requirements.

Present area for parking is inadequate for any of the functional schemes listed and additional property will need to be acquired to expand present capability. The property abuts one corner lot and three interior lots, each containing a small dwelling, to the north. To the west, it abuts a residential lot with a vacant lot adjacent to it. Purchase price is estimated to be between \$15,000 and \$35,000 for each property. These lots, except for the corner lot, are zoned residential.

## ● FINANCING THE PLAN

At the present time, the structure does not generate sufficient revenue to finance any type of renovation, and the Centro Español does not have the capital required to finance the project to the point where it would begin to produce revenue for its own maintenance. A commercial loan to restore the property is very unlikely, because of the deteriorated condition of both the structure and the neighborhood.

There are a number of publicly funded programs, however, which might help in the financing. These programs have been established to achieve very specific goals of the agencies involved, and thus each has a number of conditions that must be met. Some of the programs that might be helpful are:

### U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

#### Economic Development Administration, Public Works Impact Projects

This program offers direct project grants to projects providing immediate useful work to unemployed and underemployed persons in designated low income areas. Only government agencies and non-profit organizations are eligible for assistance.

### U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

#### a) Public Health Services

This office has a number of programs offering direct project grants for medical facilities and services in medically underserved areas, such as Community Health Centers, Drug Abuse Programs, etc. Only governmental agencies and non-profit organizations are eligible.

#### b) Office of Education

This office has two project grant programs for which the Centro Español would be eligible. One is the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program; the other is the Bilingual Vocational Training Program. Both provide funds to governmental agencies and ethnic organizations (non-profit) to promote their heritage and offer educational programs for members of specific ethnic groups.

#### c) Office of Human Development Services

There are a number of programs offering direct project grants for Special Programs for the Aging, such as Centers of Gerontology and multi-purpose Senior Citizen's Center (Title V).

### U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

#### Community Planning and Development, Community Development Block Grants/Entitlement Grants.

This program offers formula grants through City Governments to develop construction and activities conducive to urban revitalization, including urban beautification and historic preservation. Funds from these grants would have to be obtained through the City of Tampa.

### U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

#### Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service

This office offers Grants-In-Aid for Historic Preservation through the Florida Department of State for the preservation of historic structures. These grants must be matched with either cash funds or in-kind services.

### NATIONAL FOUNDATION OF THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES

Project grants are available through the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities for the promotion of theater, museums, and folk arts.

These programs, with the exception of the last two listed, are geared to provide services and facilities for the socially and financially deprived, and only governmental agencies and non-profit corporations are eligible to be recipients. Government grants and loans are public money and are meant to be spent for the public good.

Private developers interested in the rehabilitation of historic properties have available a number of tax exemptions and incentives under Section 2124 of the tax reform act of 1976 for historic structures certified by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior, which does include the Centro Español. The Revenue Act of 1978 provides a 10% tax credit for monies invested in the rehabilitation of structures that are twenty years old or older.

## ● PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

For a successful implementation of the plan, the question of ownership of the structure is very important. It is clear that, as a non-profit, public service organization, the Centro Español is in a much better position than any private corporation or individual to obtain financial help in the form of grants or guaranteed loans for the restoration of the structure.



It should be remembered that the purpose of this study has been to devise ways and means to preserve this historic building and restore it to remind future generations of the role and significance of Mutual Aid Societies in general, and the Centro Español in particular.

It should also be remembered that this study has been conducted through a Consultant Services Grant awarded to the Tampa/Hillsborough Preservation Board, acting as an agent for the Centro Espanol, at their request.

Furthermore, applications for government grants and aid are a lengthy process, requiring as much as a year from time of application to time of award, and for budgetary reasons, not all of the monies requested may be awarded in the same year; the entire process can easily take two to five years.

In this period of time, however, the structure may deteriorate to a point beyond recovery, if no immediate action is taken. It is unlikely that a private developer would be willing to invest in the stabilization costs, and then wait so long to complete the work and begin realizing profit returns. He would have to make the structure commercially viable immediately and remodel rather than restore the spaces, perhaps damaging permanently, the original architectural fabric.

With these facts in mind, it is strongly recommended that the Centro Español retain ownership of the building, or at least leadership in the restoration process through the stabilization and basic restoration phases, a process that might take as long as three years. At this time, the structure would be a much more attractive proposition to private investors, particularly since the City of Tampa plans to engage in an urban revitalization effort in West Tampa beginning in 1981.

The first step necessary for the implementation of the plan is a decision from the Centro to maintain ownership of the structure for at least the next three years. Should the Centro make this decision, the restoration process could then be carried out by either the Board of Directors, a special committee for the restoration of the West Tampa Palace, or a non-profit separate corporation created for the restoration of the structure.

Creating a non-profit corporation and relinquishing ownership to it, might prove to be the best way if Historical Preservation Grants-in-Aid are involved, as then the appraised value of the property might be used as matching funds. The corporation may be formed of members interested in the restoration of the building, and the Board of Directors could include as many deed restrictions as they wish at the time the property is transferred. Once the decision is made, and the manner in which the restoration is to be carried out determined, the responsible parties should apply for the available governmental aid determined to be best suited for the purposes intended.

While these applications are in process, a vigorous fund raising effort could take place to carry-out the stabilization work. Should the Centro decide not to retain ownership and sell the property, it is recommended that an extensive advertising campaign be carried out through newspapers and other public media, to make known to prospective investors, the building's possibilities and the available

governmental assistance programs and tax advantages involved in restoring the building.

The structure should be cleaned-up and one or more open houses held for interested parties and the general public. If restoration is desirable to the Centro's membership, deed restrictions should be established. The Centro may also consider selling the property to a public agency such as the City of Tampa, who in turn, could restore the building as part of their planned urban revitalization effort in West Tampa.

Should the Centro decide not to maintain ownership, but find it desirable to keep a presence in the structure for the West Tampa membership, consideration should be given to lowering the selling price in return for a perpetual lease.

Whichever way restoration is achieved, the process may be expected to take from 3 to 5 years to complete. In the end, however, a historically and architecturally significant landmark would have been saved for posterity, and all involved in making this happen will certainly be proud of having helped save an essential part of not only ours, but of everyone's history for the future.



### Chart A

**6.9**



		BASIC RESTORATION COST ANALYSIS Chart B	
	LOW	GENERAL DEMOLITION: Demolition work necessary to carry out the work on the Central Core (see Functional Plan) and dispose of non-original partitions in the Cantina.	
	HIGH		
STAGE	LOW	GENERAL EXTERIOR CLEANING: Steam cleaning all exterior surfaces.	
	HIGH		
ORCHESTRA SEATING	LOW	RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF EXTERIOR WINDOWS: Restoration of colored glass transoms. Replacement of sashes where rotted. Repair of operable parts.	
	HIGH		
BALCONY	LOW	RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF EXTERIOR DOORS: Replacement of exterior doors with doors matching existing design, but new, and having new hardware in compliance with current codes.	
	HIGH		
COMMON CORE	LOW	RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF INTERIOR DOORS AND WINDOWS: Interior doors between main spaces and Common Core, including restoration of glass transoms where they occur.	
	HIGH		
CANTINA	LOW	RESTORATION/REPAIR OF EXTERIOR FIRE STAIRS FROM BALCONY:	
	HIGH		
BALLROOM	LOW	RESTORATION/REPAIR OF CANTINA/BALLROOM GRAND STAIRS:	
	HIGH		
SERVICE AREA	LOW	RESTORATION/REPAIR WALL SURFACES: Restore walls to original appearance. No painting included.	
	HIGH		
TOTALS	LOW	RESTORATION/REPAIR CEILING SURFACES: Restore ceiling to original appearance. No painting included.	
	HIGH		



# STABILIZATION COST ANALYSIS

Chart A

STABILIZATION COST ANALYSIS  Chart A					
		LOW		TERMITE TREATMENT: Tent entire structure and gas poisoning.	
		HIGH			
STAGE				GENERAL DEMOLITION: Demolition of rotted stairs and timbers, loose and damaged plaster and all items in danger of collapse.	
		200			
		350			
ORCHESTRA SEATING				GENERAL INTERIOR CLEANING: Removal of all existing and demolition debris. Hose down floors, some walls. Broom clean all rooms.	
		250	300		
		370	500		
		450	635		
BALCONY				TEMPORARY STRUCTURAL REPAIRS: Secure and repair stairs. Secure roof trusses' seats. Reinforce rotted portions of joists. Cover with plywood where flooring removed.	
		500	700		
		650	900		
THEATRE FOYER				ROOFING WORK – BUILT-UP AREA: Remove existing roofing, replace rotted portions of deck. Install new built-up roofing and flashing.	
		260	380		
		380	540		
CANTINA				ROOFING WORK – TILED AREA: Remove tile and store. Replace rotted portions of deck. Install new underlayment. Re-install tile.	
		160	250		
		200	300		
BALLROOM				PROTECTION OF EXTERIOR DOORS AND WINDOWS: Board up with CDX plywood to fit opening shape. Paint exterior face, and trim joints.	
		200	300		
		320	460		
SERVICE AREA				TEMPORARY LIGHTING: An exposed cable, utility system to provide enough lights for periodic inspections.	
		100	170		
		150	235		
TOTAL  Low High				TOTAL COST	
		7500	1670		
			2470		
		11000	3570		



		BASIC RESTORATION COST ANALYSIS Chart B	
		LOW	HIGH
STAGE			
ORCHESTRA SEATING			
BALCONY			
COMMON CORE			
CANTINA			
BALLROOM			
SERVICE AREA			
TOTALS	LOW		
	HIGH		
		GENERAL DEMOLITION: Demolition work necessary to carry out the work on the Central Core (see Functional Plan) and dispose of non-original partitions in the Cantina.	
		GENERAL EXTERIOR CLEANING: Steam cleaning all exterior surfaces.	
		RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF EXTERIOR WINDOWS: Restoration of colored glass transoms. Replacement of sashes where rotted. Repair of operable parts.	
		RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF EXTERIOR DOORS: Replacement of exterior doors with doors matching existing design, but new, and having new hardware in compliance with current codes.	
		RESTORATION/REPLACEMENT OF INTERIOR DOORS AND WINDOWS: Interior doors between main spaces and Common Core, including restoration of glass transoms where they occur.	
		RESTORATION/REPAIR OF EXTERIOR FIRE STAIRS FROM BALCONY:	
		RESTORATION/REPAIR OF CANTINA/BALLROOM GRAND STAIRS:	
		RESTORATION/REPAIR WALL SURFACES: Restore walls to original appearance. No painting included.	
		RESTORATION/REPAIR CEILING SURFACES: Restore ceiling to original appearance. No painting included.	



BASIC RESTORATION COST ANALYSIS Chart B (continued)											
		RESTORATION/REPAIR FLOOR SURFACES: Includes repair/replacement of rotted-out floor and baseboards. Does not include painting or re-finishing.		RESTORATION/REPAIR ORNAMENTS AND MOULDINGS: Restoration and repair of cast plaster moulding. No painting included.		NEW CONSTRUCTION: Includes new partitioning, doors, trim restoration, exits, stairs and toilets shown on FUNCTIONAL PLAN for Common Core.		NEW SERVICES: Electrical service and plumbing lines to major spaces from which individual systems may be developed for each.		COMMON CORE ELEVATOR: Hydraulic type, door at two walls. Stops at Cantina, Theatre lobby, Ballroom, and Balcony levels.	
		LOW	HIGH								
STAGE		1695						850			
		2215						1200			
ORCHESTRA SEATING				1200				500			
				1600				650			
BALCONY		2585		2250				750			
		3385		3000				1000			
COMMON CORE						45,000					
						56,000					
CANTINA		800		250				350			
		885		350				500			
BALLROOM		2030		1200				750			
		2650		1600				500			
SERVICE AREA								450			
								600			
TOTAL	Low	7110		4900		45,000		3400		30,000	
	High	9135		6550		56,000		4700		34,000	
		TOTAL COST									
		\$193,495.00									
		\$250,310.00									



PROBABLE COST OF DEVELOPMENT FOR SPECIFIC USES COST ANALYSIS Chart C	ENTERTAINMENT CENTER Includes Cocktail Lounge	RESTAURANT Includes Cocktail Lounge	ART CENTER	PERFORMING ARTS CENTER	MOVIE THEATRE	SPORTS ARENA	SKATING RINK	COCKTAIL LOUNGE	SANDWICH SHOP
	LOW HIGH								
STAGE	52.4	67.5	50.0	53.0					
	90.8	115.0	92.5	92.5					
ORCHESTRA SEATING	79.0			67.0	62.0	75.5	64.0		
	115.0			117.5	93.0	100.8	120.5		
BALCONY				45.0	41.5	50.8		52.5	49.5
				79.0	62.5	67.8		91.5	90.0
CANTINA		135.0						67.5	
		230.0						112.8	
BALLROOM									

NOTES: See FUNCTIONAL PLAN paragraph for description of specific functions  
Figures given are in thousands of dollars



PROBABLE COST OF DEVELOPMENT FOR SPECIFIC USES COST ANALYSIS Chart C (continued)	BOUTIQUE OR SHOP	COMMUNITY RECREATION	COMMUNITY SERVICE	PRIVATE CLUB	COMBINATION RESTAURANT/COCKTAIL LOUNGE BOUTIQUE/MUSEUM	BANQUET HALL/BALLROOM	HEALTH CLUB	CULTURAL/EDUCATIONAL	
	LOW								
	HIGH								
STAGE									
ORCHESTRA SEATING									
BALCONY	28.5								
	51.5								
CANTINA		68.5	120.0	52.6	54.0				
		122.0	182.5	80.0	100.0				
BALLROOM	47.0			75.0		65.0	73.0	80.0	
	85.5			112.0		95.0	132.0	160.0	



