

*Friends of the*  
*Embassy Theatre*  
**Lewistown, Pa.**

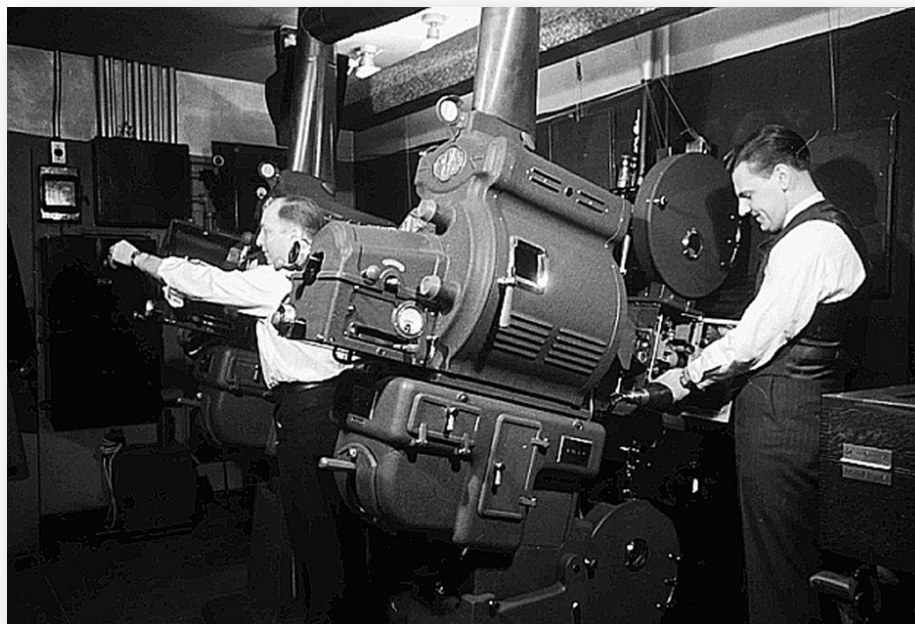


**EMBASSY THEATRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**PHASED REHABILITATION PLAN**

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*Photo 1: Projection Booth at the Embassy Theatre, Lewistown, PA, Circa 1940.  
Photo Credit: Luther Kepler, photographer, courtesy of grandson Forest Fisher.*

# Embassy Theatre Development Plan

## Phased Rehabilitation Plan

### Embassy Theatre

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Lewistown, PA 17044

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*On the cover: Original Builder's Photo of the Embassy Theatre. Photo Credit: The Philadelphia Athenaeum.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Study Summary

There are few buildings in Mifflin County today that hold a special place in the minds and hearts of so many citizens. Fewer still are buildings that are recognized as significant to the historical fabric of the community. The Embassy Theatre is special to many. Older residents remember their days of youth at the theatre. Younger people who never experienced the Embassy are fascinated by the opulence of the space, even in its current state. They want to see this place alive again, and to be able to make special memories within its walls, as their parents and grandparents did. Lewistown and the region have a unique opportunity to bring back to life this last surviving example of the days of the theatre in the area.

This Phased Rehabilitation Plan is an important part of that rebirth. It details the work necessary to rehabilitate the theatre, the philosophy behind that work, and recommendations on the order of work. Working together, the community can bring back this once proud part of our community.

## Project Data And Team

This report describes the phases of work needed to return the theatre to active use. Additional sections of the report include marketing and business plans prepared by SEDA-COG.

The original project team that contributed to this report includes: A. Raymond Goodman, architect, Altoona, Pa.; Tom Grbenick, Community Resource Center, SEDA-COG (Susquehanna Economic Development Authority-Council of Government). Lewisburg, Pa.; and Paul T. Fagley, President, Friends of the Embassy Theatre, Inc. , Lewistown, Pa. Structural analysis was conducted by a team of engineers from Pyramid Engineering of Hollidaysburg, Pa.

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# TREATMENT/WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

## Historic Preservation Objectives

Part of the function of the *Phased Rehabilitation Plan* is to establish an architectural preservation philosophy for the work to be performed on the Embassy Theatre building. This is based on the adherence to the federal “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties” as it related to buildings entered on the National Register of Historic Places. These standards and related guidelines are detailed in the Preservation Briefs published by the National Park Service. These are available in printed form or on the Internet at the National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/>.

### Approaches To Treatment

Over time, all buildings change. Advancements in technology, new uses for obsolete spaces, and wear and tear take their toll on any building. So too, décor is changed to reflect changes in style and tastes. This is a fact of life. When considering the “rehabilitation” of a historic property, several considerations must be made. For instance:

- Is the intent to return the structure to a specific period in time?
- Can the property still support its original use, or must it be adaptively converted for a modified or other use?
- How can changes (whether for adaptive reuse, handicapped accessibility, building/fire codes, etc.) be made effectively and yet remain sensitive to the original architecture?
- How can modern technologies and “creature comforts” be incorporated for today’s taste and still have the property convey the intent of the original architect?

Basically, there are four types of work, or “approaches to treatment” applicable to any historic property. While these terms are often considered and used interchangeably, the generally accepted definitions are as follows:

- **Preservation:** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- **Rehabilitation:** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
- **Restoration:** is undertaken to depict a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- **Reconstruction:** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive

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purposes. (From: *Preservation Brief #43*)

Research into the building's past, detailing a chronology of development, and investigation of the building itself is used to determine original building elements and those that have been changed, altered, or removed in the intervening time. Sometimes new information is found during the creation of the *Historic Structure Report*. In this case, the significance should be re-evaluated in light of new evidence.

The results of the previously mentioned research become the basis for developing the scope of work to be undertaken on the historic property. It also allows the understanding of which interior spaces are significant to the historic fabric, so that the project goals and treatment direction can be formulated. In addition, the current physical condition of the building, especially in relation to deterioration and needed repairs are brought into the project goals. Attention is given to the identification of changes necessary for safety and code considerations, since these changes are necessary, especially in a historic building. Finally, conditions are also identified that could, at a future date, pose safety risks, loss of historic fabric, or loss of performance.

## **Selection Of Treatment Approach**

In the *Historic Structure Report*, it is important to select a treatment approach for the structure. Usually, one treatment is selected, as it avoids inappropriate combinations of work. For instance, restoring a historic house while adding a new addition. While one overriding treatment may be employed, such as Rehabilitation, other treatments may be employed for specific segments of the building.

## **Development Of Work Recommendations**

The work recommendations are central to the report. They are the final piece to be developed, based on the research and goals already established. The work recommendations need to consider the treatment approach, potential/planned uses, and historic elements. Also, they need to take into account building, safety and fire codes, functional requirements, energy conservation, abatement of hazardous materials, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The recommendations are also guided by the current condition of the building, available and potential funding, and other fiscal constraints. Cost estimates are given to help in the budget process.

All of these elements of the report are designed to provide the framework for the work to be performed to bring the historic property back as a viable entity of the community.

## **Development Goals**

The best treatment approach for the Embassy Theatre would be to REHABILITATE the structure. This is based on the recent market assessments that were done in combination with this report, a survey of community needs, and the demand for additional facilities in the Mifflin-Juniata County area. As part of the study, consideration was given to the theatre, its original uses, proximity and accessibility to potential users, and the condition and spatial layout of the building. Public attitudes and support for the proposed facility were also weighed in determining the feasibility for the project.

It is well understood that the Embassy can no longer support itself strictly as a first-run single screen movie house. Few of these types of theaters survive today. However, the theatre and its auditorium can



support a variety of uses compatible with the original space. In order to support multiple functions, some modifications of the auditorium will be necessary, but these can be done in a way that does not destroy or damage the features within the building that are important in defining the historic character of the theatre. By rehabilitating the theatre, important elements can be preserved and restored, yet allow contemporary uses for the building. This approach to the Embassy is not unique. In fact, most historic theatres are rehabilitated to include uses not originally intended. The three theatres that the Embassy team visited all were rehabilitated, and the final result is that the theatres still have the look, feel, and ambiance of their historic past, while accommodating new uses. Details of these visits can be found in the companion *Marketing Survey*.

Additionally, some functions can no longer be housed within the original building. These include restrooms, mechanical space, and concession areas. Restrooms today must be physically larger and have more fixtures than earlier eras. Mechanical space is critical for easy access and repair. The old cellar in the theatre does not and cannot be made to meet code. Concession areas were unheard of when the Embassy was built, and simply blocking some of the entrance doors to place it where it was later located is not an option. The best option for these spaces is to build an annex onto the side of the theatre. This can be done in a way that does not detract from or compete with the historic façade, as the Standards require. Since the Friends own land beside the theatre (i.e. the “Taft Lot”), no additional land acquisition would be required.

Therefore, the following development goals have been established for the Embassy.

1. To rehabilitate the historic Embassy Theatre into a viable multi-use theatrical facility fitted for a variety of community and programming uses.
2. To preserve for future generations one of the key cultural icons of Mifflin County.
3. To “restore” the Embassy Theatre’s unique small-town architecture and to preserve it for future generations.
4. To add a “annex” to the existing building on the north face in the “Taft Lot” to house restrooms, mechanicals, dressing rooms, and other necessary support functions for the theatre. Such annex’s façade shall be compatible with the general architecture of the Monument Square area but shall not compete with the Embassy’s unique architecture.
5. To eventually develop the remaining portion of the adjacent “Taft Lot” for commercial development to financially support the theatre.

## **Requirements for Work**

The Embassy will need to meet several new codes that were not even thought of 80 years ago when the theatre was built. The building will need fire egress lighting (e.g. emergency lighting, generator), a sprinkler system, abatement of any asbestos and lead paint found in the building, and made accessible according to the Accessibility Guidelines for Historic Structures. Details of these requirements will be dealt with at the proper time during rehabilitation. Also, some code variances may be sought, based on the recognition of the theatre as a historic structure, to allow features that make the building unique be preserved.

## **Work Recommendations and Alternatives**

The theatre building is in need of overall general rehabilitation. Since funding will probably be available in increments, it is in the best interest of the owners to consider a phased plan for the rehabilitation. The plan allows for the stabilization and rehabilitation of the building in the early phases, and then proceeds through to a limited operation phase (as a means of continued fund-raising). The final phases will bring the theatre back to full operation.

The Rehabilitation Plan includes three phases, with each phase having several sub-phases. The costs offered for each of the phases are schematic estimates that will need to be adjusted upward to compensate for inflation between the publication date of this report and the time of implementation of the selected phase.

The work for each phase is generally described. When a phase is selected for implementation, detailed construction documents will be required that dovetail with future and completed phases of the project.

Should a significant amount of money become available at one time; it should be used to complete Phases 1 and 2. Completion of these two phases would allow limited use of the theatre by the public.

It is the desire of the owners to return the theatre to a multi-use performance facility. Since a theatre should be designed ideally for one specific use such as stage plays or movies, it is important to recognize that when it is constructed for multiple types of presentations, system compromises in lighting and sound will occur. Efforts should be made to keep the system compromises as discrete as possible.

# PHASES OF REHABILITATION

*NOTE: Some items are listed in more than one phase. This happens because those items need to expand and continue to completion as the rehabilitation of each phase of the theatre progresses. This is not meant to be a detailed list of work, only a general outline of work.*

## Phase I – Work Completed – PRIOR TO THIS PLAN

Over the years, the Friends have completed much work on the building. This is a list of those projects completed as of the revision date of this document. Generally, this work was completed before the original edition of this plan was created.

### EXTERIOR WORK

- *Front door and box office restoration, completed 1999.*
- *Front façade restoration, including windows, except for the base marble, completed 2001*
- *Replication of the marquee, completed 2003.*
- *Replication of original walnut display cased, completed 2006.*
- *Sidewalk replacement, done by the Mifflin County Planning Commission, completed 2008.*

### INTERIOR WORK

- *Paint and decorative artwork analysis, completed 2009, however, conservator has not provided a copy of the report to the architect, and does not respond to emails or phone calls. Will have to perform again.*

### OTHER WORK

- *Original completion of the Embassy Theatre Development Plan, including the Historic Structure Report, Marketing Surveys, and Phased Rehabilitation Plan, completed 2007.*

## Phase II – Stabilization / Initial Work

The obvious next phase should be to stabilize and rehabilitate the building shell. This will protect the future interior work. Some preparatory work on key building systems could be done in this phase. The first phase work should include the following items.

### Part 1 – Initial work to secure building – COMPLETED JULY 2013

#### EXTERIOR WORK (Completed under PHMC Project ME# 60607-1)

- *NOTE: The façade of the theatre has already been completely rehabilitated, except for the base marble and sidewalk.*
- *Replaced marble base at front elevation with a close matching new marble.*
- *Salvaged enough original marble that was refinished and placed on box office.*
- *Replaced deteriorated or missing brick veneer on side and rear walls.*

- *Repointed missing and deteriorated mortar joints.*
- *Removed all discontinued anchors or fasteners used to secure electrical wires and signage.*
- *Restored and repainted original wood ventilation grilles, placed black painted plywood on interior side to seal the interior from outside air.*
- *Repaired coping on parapet by carefully removing, installing aluminum capping, and reinstalling original terra cotta over top to maintain historic look.*
- *Closed in large “horn room” opening in rear wall above stage floor with material that provides weather protection but is removable for future stage expansion.*
- *Replaced existing roof membrane with new rubber matrix with 6 inches of high density foam insulation. Roof has 20 year warranty.*
- *Installed new ventilators on peak of roof that replaced vents removed several years ago.*
- *Installed new, more secure roof hatch in new area that meets code.*
- *Installed new fire exit doors with panic hardware. Three installations were permanent, with raised panel design doors. Three were temporary installations, with flush design doors.*
- *Rehabilitated side wall windows.*
- *Refinished all painted and varnished exterior surfaces on façade.*

## **Part 2 – Initial Restoration Work of Foyer**

As work begins inside of the building, much of it is relegated to the more mundane items like stabilization, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems. However, many theatre preservation specialists recommend restoring small portions of the interior to the intended original look, to show the public the potential for the full interior restoration. For the Embassy, the front Foyer offers a small enough space to conduct the full restoration, in a reasonably economic matter at this point in the project.

### **FOYER RESTORATION**

- *Restore original wall marble by polishing, and resetting pieces that are loose or out of place.*
- *Polish and repair terrazzo floor.*
- *Install thresholds and re-fit front doors to compensate for the frost heaving of the new sidewalk that is preventing the doors from opening.*
- *Restore and repaint eh plaster vaulted ceiling.*
- *Install period appropriate light fixtures matching the written descriptions as much as possible, as no photographic or physical evidence is known to survive.*
- *Install period-looking brass push/pull plated and handles on all doors. Original plates long since removed.*
- *Install door trim as needed.*

## **Part 3 – Stabilization Work in Auditorium**

- *Stabilize damaged plaster in auditorium to make it safe for use. This may involve repair and/or temporary shielding to make it safe for use.*

## **Part 4 – Initial Mechanical Systems Work**

### **HEATING, VENTILATING, and AIR CONDITIONING (*Hereafter HVAC*)**

- *No HVAC work except to remove old system components still in place.*

## **PLUMBING**

- *The existing sanitary system needs further investigation. The main that runs through the building from the square should be capped and a new sanitary system should be installed. The sanitary lateral connecting to the public sewer system should serve only the theatre.*
- *The water service may remain during this phase of construction but will most likely need to be upsized during a later phase.*
- *The storm system should be replaced when the roof is replaced.*

## **ELECTRICAL**

- *Install emergency generator and wiring and emergency lights in the house.*
- *Install temporary lighting and electrical outlets as needed.*
- *No other electrical work.*

**NOTE:** At the end of Phase 2 of the rehabilitation, the theatre could be used for limited activities that would confine the public to the main floor.

# **Phase III – Annex and Basic Work**

This phase involves the construction of an addition to the theatre in the form of a masonry shell two stories high with basement to house mechanical equipment, handicap accessible toilets and new exit stairs. This shell is to be located parallel and attached to the right side of the existing theatre on open portion of the ground beside the theatre. A future long-term phase would surround this addition with a larger multi-use addition that would occupy the open ground between theatre and Monument Square. Space should be available in the new mechanical room for a heating and cooling unit, should the owner desire a stage house at a future time.)

## **Part 1 – Construction of Annex Shell**

### **NEW CONSTRUCTION**

- *Construct basic shell of annex with minimal finish work inside.*

### **HVAC**

- *Provide for adequate space (roof or interior mechanical room) to house new centralized HVAC equipment.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *The existing sanitary system should be replaced with a new lateral entering the building in the annex.*
- *The water service should be replaced with a new supply entering into the annex.*
- *The storm system should be replaced when the roof is replaced.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Provide for adequate space to house new electrical equipment including switchboard, panel boards, automatic transfer switch, and telephone termination backboard and emergency*

*generator.*

- *Provide temporary lighting and receptacles required for the construction project.*

## **Part 2 – Theatre Electric & HVAC**

- *Install main electrical switchgear of a size to handle all future additions such as a stage house. Provide Phase 1 panel for general illumination.*
- *Install conduit encased branch wiring to basic fixture package.*
- *Install heating unit with provisions for future air conditioning. Install ductwork sufficient to heat house portion of the building.*

### **HVAC**

- *The HVAC system will be installed as part of Phase 3 construction. The proposed new HVAC system will use chilled and hot water as a source for heating and cooling the theatre.*
- *Install a new air-cooled chiller and piping distribution system to distribute chilled water. Terminal units to condition the main lobby, balcony, vestibules and main toilet facilities will use this chilled water.*
- *Install a new hot water boiler and piping distribution system. This new boiler plant will serve as a means for providing hot water to the same terminal heating and cooling units.*
- *Install new air handling units with both heating and cooling coils. These units will provide the main heating and air conditioning for the theatre, and will be located in the new addition and or in the vacated mechanical loft spaces.*
- *Install new distribution piping from the air-handling units to the chiller and boiler plant.*
- *Install new main duct runs from each air-handling unit to the house and stage areas.*
- *Install roof-mounted exhaust fans to serve toilet rooms, to maintain adequate building pressurization (relief air), and to serve storage rooms.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *Run gas piping to the new heating equipment.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Provide adequate space to house new electrical equipment including switchboard, panel boards, automatic transfer switch, telephone termination backboard, and emergency generator.*
- *Provide temporary lighting and receptacles required for the construction project.*

## **Part 3 – Emergency systems**

- *Install remaining house ductwork.*
- *Fireproof stair towers from balcony and repair mezzanine stairs as required*
- *Install sprinkler system.*

### **HVAC**

- *Install the remaining distribution branch ductwork for the house and stage areas.*
- *Install piping branch lines to serve terminal units on the first floor, balcony and near vestibules.*
- *Install terminal heating and cooling (fan coil) units to provide for spot heating and cooling. Install fan coil units to serve the projector room (if it remains), vestibules, storage rooms and stage storage areas.*

- *Install a simple Direct Digital Control (DDC) building temperature control system. The system would monitor the new HVAC equipment and the spaces they serve. The DDC system could automatically start and stop HVAC equipment based on scheduled occupancy. This would prevent equipment from operating during unoccupied periods, saving energy costs.*

#### **PLUMBING**

- *Provide new sprinkler system to protect entire facility. The sprinkler system shall be installed per NFPA 13.*
- *Provide a standpipe system at the stage. The standpipe system shall be installed per NFPA 14.*
- *Provide for adequate space to house new electrical equipment including switchboard, panel boards, automatic transfer switch, and telephone termination backboard and emergency generator. Provide temporary lighting and receptacles required for the construction project.*

#### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Install a new emergency generator and emergency lights.*
- *Install a new fire alarm system meeting NFPA 72, ADA, Pennsylvania UCC and International Fire Code.*

### **Part 4 Stage Fitting/ Electrical equipment**

- *Install minimal stage lighting package.*
- *Construct new stage floor.*
- *Trench house floor for use as cable trough from stage to sound system location at the center of the rear seating area.*
- *Complete general wiring in building.*

#### **HVAC**

- *No HVAC work.*

#### **PLUMBING**

- *No plumbing work.*

#### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Provide for adequate space to house new electrical equipment including switchboard, panel boards, automatic transfer switch, and telephone termination backboard and emergency generator.*
- *Provide temporary lighting and receptacles required for the construction project.*

### **Part 5 – Architectural Work in Auditorium**

- *Basic architectural interior work with small amount of decorative painting.*
- *Repair house floor, finish and set seating.*

#### **HVAC**

- *No HVAC work.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *No plumbing work.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *No electrical work.*

## **Phase IV – Final Work**

### **Part 1 – Wiring and HVAC**

To be completed whether or not if new stage house is constructed.

- *Install all wiring for the house and stage lighting.*
- *Complete ductwork for heating and future air conditioning.*
- *Install sound system for stage and movies.*

### **HVAC**

- *No HVAC work.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *No plumbing work.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Complete all wiring, lighting and power installation not completed during Phase 5 for the house and building addition.*
- *Provide a complete stage lighting system including spots, fresnels, boarder lights, dimming rack and remote control board.*
- *Provide additional house lighting.*
- *Provide a sound system including system rack, speakers and remote control board.*

### **Part 2 – Stage rigging, decorations**

- *Install stage and fire curtain and minimal rigging package sufficient to support a large movie screen and a few lights.*
- *Complete the decorative finishes.*

### **HVAC**

- *No HVAC work.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *No plumbing work.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Provide wiring required for the movie lights.*



## **Part 3 -- Completion**

- *Do all required repairs to make the balcony and loge usable.*
- *Repair and update projection booth if movies are planned. If not, remove for more balcony seating.*

### **HVAC**

- *No HVAC work.*

### **PLUMBING**

- *No plumbing work.*

### **ELECTRICAL**

- *Provide wiring required for the movie lights.*
- *During these various phases of construction, the owner should work with adjacent landowners to acquire additional property at the rear of the building. If ground is purchased, Phases 5, 7, and 8 will need to be revised in scope and timing since a stage house would become a priority for construction.*

## **Possible Future Phases**

### **Stage House Expansion**

The “stage house” is an item that was discussed during the preparation of this report. If in the future the current owners can acquire additional property behind the theatre and the theatre patrons are willing to support modest stage productions, this item can move from discussion to reality.

The estimated cost to remove the rear wall of the theatre and expand the stage depth and fly space and provide additional mechanical and electrical systems would be approximately \$800,000. This number does not include purchase price of additional ground.

Inclusion of this expansion does not in any manner indicate that this is the plan at this point in time. It is only presented as a possibility years down the road, as the theatre becomes usable and financially stable and able to support expansion. It was presented here only to show the possibility of expansion.

# COST ESTIMATES

These costs would be construction only and not include design and other costs such as insurance and furnishings. Design costs will total about ten percent of the cost of construction, and may vary depending on selected firm and time of implementation.

<b>Phase/Part</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Ph II Pt 1	\$300,000	\$152,259.83
Pt 2	\$190,000	
Ph III Pt 1	\$620,000	
Pt 2	\$300,000	
Pt 3	\$200,000	
Pt 4	\$220,000	
Pt 5	\$200,000	
Ph IV Pt 1	\$150,000	
Pt 2	\$200,000	
Pt 3	\$620,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>	<b>\$152,259.83</b>

**Note:**

Average cost per phase. Accurate costs would be developed at time of implementation based on availability of funding and market costs of materials. Phases may need to be revised to satisfy the value of a particular grant or financial gift

## Conceptual Master Plan Update

In February 2014, the architectural firm Westlake Reed Leskosky completed a Conceptual Master Plan. Part of that plan included more detailed cost estimates for restoration, more so than the vague estimates above. For the plan, Westlake Reed Leskosky subcontracted with Weber Fox Murphy in State College to complete the cost estimating. Therefore, the Conceptual Master Plan supersedes the Cost Estimates in this plan. Readers should refer to that document for more accurate estimates.