



Municipal Complex Advisory Committee

BRIEFING BOOK

July 2026
V3

MAYOR HELENA MORENO
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

May 19, 2026

Members of the Municipal Complex Advisory Committee:

Thank you for your willingness to serve on the Municipal Complex Advisory Committee and for committing your time, expertise, and leadership to this important effort on behalf of the people of New Orleans.

The City's current municipal facilities have served generations of New Orleanians, but they are increasingly challenged by aging infrastructure, operational inefficiencies, deferred maintenance, and limitations that impact both public service delivery and the daily experience of employees, residents, and visitors. As outlined in Executive Order HM 26-08, this committee has been tasked with helping the City thoughtfully evaluate the future of our civic infrastructure and determine whether a new City Hall, Civil District Court building, or consolidated municipal complex represents the best path forward for our city.

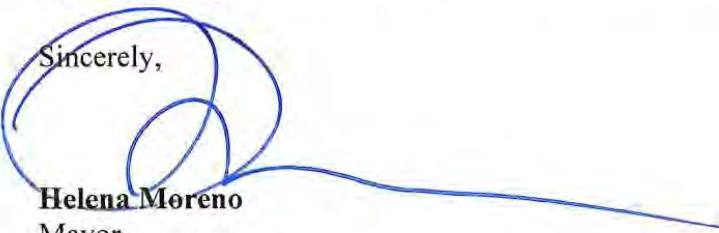
This work is about far more than buildings. It is about how government functions, how residents experience public services, how we steward public resources responsibly, and how we position New Orleans for the future. It is also a generational opportunity to imagine civic infrastructure that reflects the values, aspirations, and resilience of our city.

The responsibility before this committee is significant. Your role is to bring independent judgment, thoughtful analysis, and a long-term perspective to a process that must balance operational realities, fiscal responsibility, public trust, and civic ambition. The recommendations that emerge from this work have the potential to shape the physical and functional heart of city government for decades to come.

This briefing book is intended to serve as a foundational resource as the committee begins its work. It is designed to provide context, background research, precedent examples, and key considerations to help inform discussion and decision-making throughout the process. While it does not prescribe outcomes, it is intended to support a rigorous, transparent, and informed evaluation of the opportunities and challenges ahead.

I encourage each of you to approach this process with curiosity, openness, and a shared commitment to the long-term interests of the City of New Orleans. I am grateful for your service and look forward to the work ahead.

Sincerely,



Helena Moreno

Mayor
City of New Orleans





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Executive Summary

The purpose of a civic complex has evolved over the past century as public needs and government roles have changed. Once designed as monumental structures of separated functions, today's civic spaces must foster accessibility, collaboration, and belonging while also honoring history. **In New Orleans, this evolution will guide the work of the Municipal Complex Advisory Committee,** convened as a strictly advisory body to review and recommend a process for the development of a new municipal complex for New Orleans. In addition to reviewing possible new construction on Duncan Plaza, the administration would like the committee to compare this option alongside renovation of the existing structures, adaptation of existing office building space to accommodate City Hall and CDC functions, or a hybrid model involving new construction of ceremonial space with administrative functions housed in a renovated office building. Additionally, the Mayor has asked the committee to consider and recommend the scope and location of a City Hall annex in New Orleans East.

The creation of this Committee reflects the City's recognition that its primary municipal buildings, City Hall and the Civil District Court, present operational inefficiencies, space limitations, technology constraints, long-term maintenance challenges, and growing misalignment with modern safety, accessibility, and service delivery needs. The Committee's work is intended to inform decisions regarding service delivery, continuity of operations, public access, fiscal sustainability, and the broader civic role of a consolidated municipal complex in downtown New Orleans.

Across its more than 300-year history, New Orleans has had only three City Halls—each reflecting a distinct era in the city's civic identity, from the 18th-century building on Chartres Street to Gallier Hall on St. Charles Avenue, and the current mid-century structure completed in 1957 as part of the Civic Center plan. As historian Richard Campanella [notes](#), each transition marked a generational redefinition of how government relates to its citizens—underscoring that **our decisions today will likely shape the city's civic landscape for the next century.**

Building on this legacy, the work of the Advisory Committee comes at a pivotal juncture for the city, as the limitations of the city's existing civic facilities have become undeniable. City Hall and the Civil District Court (CDC) were both constructed in the 1950s as part of a mid-century Civic Center plan that displaced a dense working-class neighborhood in order to create a centralized government district. Today, both City Hall and CDC suffer from deferred maintenance, noncompliance with modern building codes, outdated systems, and lack of accessibility features. Independent appraisals indicate that renovation costs exceed projected value by wide margins, and market demand for reuse of 1950s-era government office structures is weak.

These broad assessments are reinforced by detailed programmatic studies that document how the facilities fall short of modern requirements. For City Hall, consultants identified outdated infrastructure, poor air quality, and limited collaborative space as major deficiencies, alongside goals for a modern workplace emphasizing accessibility, flexibility, health, and sustainability. For the CDC, studies highlight the need for expanded and secure circulation, modern records management and additional courtroom space, concluding that gut renovation would be cost-prohibitive relative to new construction. Cost estimates for renovation of both facilities range from approximately \$275 million to \$370 million, with disruption compounded by the need for temporary relocations. By comparison, new construction of a municipal complex would likely cost upwards of \$500M, but offers efficiencies, risk mitigation, purpose-built layouts, and alignment with modern standards.



Executive Summary, Cont'd

In light of these findings, the City and NOBC have also examined relocation alternatives. Multiple options have been evaluated, with pros and cons identified for each. New construction on Duncan Plaza has emerged as a viable option, enabled by a 2024 land swap between the City and State that gave the City ownership of the entirety of Duncan Plaza and the HEAL Garage. While new construction on Duncan Plaza would require loss of open space, it offers purpose-built design, modern systems, and adjacency to key CBD assets and corridors. The site also carries symbolic weight, once a Black working-class neighborhood cleared in the name of 1950s urban renewal, and provides an opportunity to reimagine a civic space that is inclusive, accessible, and future-focused. The Committee will consider this option alongside other alternatives.

Looking beyond New Orleans, peer city precedents show that these challenges are not unique. Cities that have recently developed or reconstructed civic centers, such as Sunnyvale, CA, Long Beach, CA, San José, CA, Portland, OR, Las Vegas, NV, and Raleigh, NC provide valuable lessons. Their experiences reveal that broad and sustained community engagement is essential; financing must earn public trust; delivery models must match project goals and complexity; and outcomes often extend beyond new facilities, catalyzing downtown renewal and civic identity. Some of these projects demonstrate the importance of understanding the broader urban context of a civic center within larger master planning efforts. Sunnyvale, CA, Long Beach, CA, and Raleigh, NC civic complexes were all born out of early master planning efforts of their surrounding areas. New Orleans' existing civic core was also born out of a similarly intentioned urban planning effort to create a downtown hub in the area. In addition, lessons from cities such as Denver, CO and Atlanta, GA highlight the unique strategies cities nationwide have deployed to ensure operational vs. ceremonial functions are effectively represented across the municipal complex footprint.

These precedents are offered for the Committee's consideration as it formulates its recommendations for this project. What can the Committee learn from these precedents about integrating community input, transparent financing strategies, governance clarity, and intentional planning and design? While each precedent reflects its own context and objectives, together they underscore the importance of early alignment, clear scope definition, disciplined decision-making, and long-term operational sustainability. Input from current administration officials reinforces these same priorities. Ultimately, the decision is not only about replacing outdated facilities but about creating a civic complex that embodies shared values, strengthens government services, and redefines the role of public space in New Orleans.

This is a pivotal moment to advance a new Municipal Complex, not only because of the limitations of the current facilities, but because of the opportunity to align with significant downtown development already underway and planned in the years ahead. As the downtown area evolves, a thoughtfully coordinated Municipal Complex can serve as a catalytic hub, strengthening connections and shaping a more dynamic future for New Orleans' central business district.



SECTION 1:

About this Committee

- Advisory Committee Overview
- Advisory Committee Charter



1. Advisory Committee Overview

In January 2026, the Mayor of the City of New Orleans established the Municipal Complex Advisory Committee (“Advisory Committee”) by Executive Order HM 26-08 pursuant to Section 4-104 of the Home Rule Charter. The Advisory Committee was created to review matters related to the potential development of a new Municipal Complex and to provide counsel and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council. The Advisory Committee’s function is limited to counsel and advice. It does not possess independent authority to approve, fund, or implement development decisions.

Advisory Committee Scope

Consistent with the Executive Order, the Advisory Committee will:

- Review current conditions of the City Hall and Civil District Court buildings;
- Review the previously prepared City Hall Facility Programmatic Study;
- Review any available programmatic studies for the Civil District Court building and facilities occupied by other City agencies considered for potential co-location;
- Review previously considered options, including renovation of existing facilities, acquisition and renovation of alternative facilities, or construction of new facilities;
- Study Duncan Plaza as a potential site for a new Municipal Complex;
- Recommend an appropriate process for development of a new Municipal Complex;
- Identify potential financing options for the development and construction of a new Municipal Complex; and
- Examine the role that a new Municipal Complex may play within the context of downtown revitalization and redevelopment efforts.

The administration would also like the committee to compare the option of construction on Duncan Plaza alongside renovation of the existing structures, renovation of existing office building space to accommodate City Hall and CDC functions, or a hybrid model involving new construction of ceremonial space with administrative functions housed in a renovated office building. Additionally, the Mayor has asked the committee to consider and recommend the scope and location of a City Hall annex in New Orleans East.

The Committee may also perform other related activities assigned jointly by the Mayor and City Council.

The Advisory Committee is required to provide a written report of its findings and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council within one hundred eighty (180) days of its first meeting, unless the deadline is extended by the Mayor. In accordance with the Home Rule Charter, the Advisory Committee can serve for no more than one year from the date of appointment, unless reappointed.



Membership Function & Expectations

The Advisory Committee consists of eleven (11) members. Five (5) members are appointed by the Mayor, five (5) members are appointed by the New Orleans City Council (with each City Council district member appointing one member), and one (1) member is appointed by the Judicial District Court Building Commission. Members are selected based on meaningful professional experience or subject matter expertise relevant to the Advisory Committee's scope of work. Members may not be currently serving as elected or appointed government officials. At its first meeting, the Advisory Committee will elect a Chair and Vice Chair by majority vote of its members.

Meetings will generally be held at Union Passenger Terminal and will conform to Louisiana public meeting law, including opportunities for public comment. Committee members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings, review materials in advance, and actively participate in discussions. Members must remain independent by avoiding any financial interest in the project and refraining from outside communications about this project with interested parties except during Advisory Committee meetings. The Advisory Committee will be supported by NOBC staff and consultants throughout its work, including facilitation, note-taking, deliverable creation, and project management.

Advisory Committee Members

- **Dr. Joseph Bouie Jr.**, Chancellor, Southern University at New Orleans
- **Kim M. Boyle**, Partner, Phelps Dunbar LLP
- **Cynthia ("Cindy") Connick Varisco**, Senior Associate, Connick & Associates; Past CEO, New Orleans Building Corporation
- **Jasmine Brown DeRousselle**, Chief External Affairs Officer, GNO, Inc.
- **Paul Flower**, Chief Executive Officer, Woodward Design+Build
- **Roy A. Glapion, PE**, Professional Engineer
- **Andy Kopplin**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Greater New Orleans Foundation
- **Zachary H. Kupperman**, President, Kupperman Companies
- **Dr. Reynold Verret**, President, Xavier University of Louisiana
- **Dominic Willard**, Principal / Owner, Willard Design Group
- **Sharonda Williams**, Vice President, Regulatory & Public Affairs, Entergy New Orleans

Contact Information

- **New Orleans Building Corporation:** Annie McBride, CEO
- **Trepwise:** Lauren Siegel, Managing Director; Jacqueline Cooke, Advisor
- **MCAC Landing Page:** <https://nola.gov/next/municipal-complex-advisory-committee/home/>
- **MCAC Email Address:** MCAC@nola.gov



2. Advisory Committee Charter

ARTICLE 1 ESTABLISHMENT

The Municipal Complex Advisory Committee (the "**Committee**") was established by the Mayor of New Orleans pursuant to Executive Order HM 26-08. At a meeting of the Committee on **August 6, 2026**, this Charter was adopted to provide a governance structure for the Committee.

ARTICLE 2 PURPOSE

2.1 **Purpose.** The purpose of the Committee is to review and recommend a process for development of a new municipal complex for the City of New Orleans, consisting of a new City Hall, Civil District Court building, and other amenities, with a focus on the recently acquired Duncan Plaza as a potential site (the "**Municipal Complex**"). In accordance with Home Rule Charter § 4-104, the function of the Committee is limited to counsel and advice, and it has no authority over development of the Municipal Complex.

2.2 **Responsibilities.** The Committee will have the following primary responsibilities and may perform any other activities, consistent with this Charter, as the Committee may determine to be necessary or appropriate:

- (a) Review current conditions of City Hall and Civil District Court buildings;
- (b) Review the previously prepared City Hall Facility Programmatic Study;
- (c) Review programmatic studies for the Civil District Court building and for facilities occupied by other City agencies considered for co-location in the Municipal Complex;
- (d) Review previously considered options for City Hall and Civil District Court, including renovation of existing facilities, acquisition of existing building(s) for redevelopment, and options to construct new facilities;
- (e) Study Duncan Plaza as a possible site on which to construct a new Municipal Complex;
- (f) Recommend an appropriate process for development of a new Municipal Complex;
- (g) Identify potential financing options for the development and construction of a new Municipal Complex;
- (h) Examine the role that development of a new Municipal Complex facility might play within the context of efforts to revitalize and redevelop surrounding downtown properties; and
- (i) Perform any other related activities assigned jointly by the Mayor and City Council.

The Committee will work with and will be supported by the CEO, staff, and consultants of the New Orleans Building Corporation ("**NOBC**") in performing its duties.



2. Advisory Committee Charter, Cont'd

2.3 **Final Report.** Within 180 days of the date of the Committee's first meeting, following the conclusion of its regular meeting schedule, the Committee will prepare and adopt a final report describing its findings and recommendations with regard to the development of the Municipal Complex (the "**Final Report**") and provide the Final Report to the Mayor and City Council. This deadline may be extended by the Mayor.

2.4 **Term of the Committee.** In accordance with Home Rule Charter § 4-104, the Committee shall be constituted for a term of not more than one year from the date of appointment, but may be appointed from year to year. After expiration of such term, this Charter will cease to have any further force or effect.

ARTICLE 3 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 **Appointment; Qualifications.** The Committee will consist of eleven (11) members, appointed as follows: Five (5) members shall be appointed by the Mayor, five (5) members shall be appointed by the City Council (with each City Council District Member appointing one of those five members), and one (1) member shall be appointed by the Judicial District Court Building Commission. Appointees shall have meaningful professional experience or subject matter expertise in areas related to one or more of the topics to be covered by the Committee, including the fields of construction, architecture, legal, public and private project financing, real estate development, city planning, and public-private partnerships. No appointee shall be a currently serving elected or appointed government official.

3.2 **Length of Service.** Members will serve on the Committee through the term of the Committee, or until their earlier death, resignation, or removal.

3.3 **Expectation of Members.**

- (a) **Attendance.** Except for emergencies, Committee members are expected to attend all meetings of the Committee.
- (b) **Participation.** Members have been selected to serve on the Committee because of their expertise and knowledge in areas affecting development of the Municipal Complex. Therefore, members are expected to (i) promptly review and respond to email communications related to the Committee, as necessary; (ii) come prepared to each meeting, having reviewed the discussion and research materials disseminated in advance of the meeting; and (iii) actively participate in discussion.
- (c) **Disinterest and Independence.** While serving on the Committee, and until the Committee's dissolution, no member, or any immediate member of the member's family or any legal entity in which the member has a substantial economic interest, may bid on, enter into, or have a substantial economic interest in any contract, subcontract, or other transaction related to the Committee. If, following the Committee's dissolution, any member, or any legal entity in which the member has a substantial economic interest, bids on or proposes to enter into any contract, subcontract, or other transaction related to the Municipal Complex, then such member's service on the Committee must be disclosed to the contracting authority in writing in the bid submission or prior to the execution of the contract, as applicable.



2. Advisory Committee Charter, Cont'd

- (d) **Public Communications.** While serving on the Committee, and until the Committee is dissolved, except during a meeting of the Committee, each Committee member should refrain from any communications regarding the Municipal Complex with any party that the Committee member knows may have a financial interest in its development. The Final Report shall constitute the official findings and recommendations of the Committee. No Committee member shall be authorized to make any public statements on behalf of the Committee, and any statements made by a Committee member outside of a Committee meeting shall include the qualification that such statements are the personal opinion of the Committee member and not statements of the Committee as a whole.
- (e) **Committee Materials.** Committee materials are intended to be used only in the course of Committee business. Members should refrain from using the Committee materials for any other purpose and from disseminating Committee materials to anyone, except as may be required by applicable law.

3.4 **Removal.** Each member shall serve at the pleasure of the authority that appointed him or her to the Committee (*i.e.*, the Mayor, City Council member, or the Judicial District Court Building Commission); and such appointing authority may, in writing, remove and/or replace any of its appointed members of the Committee at any time. Appointments, removals, and replacements shall be made by written letter to the appointed or removed member and the other appointing authorities.

3.5 **No Compensation.** The members of the Committee shall not be paid. However, City employees appointed to the Committee may participate in Committee activities during regular office hours so long as the activities of the Committee are reasonably related to their public duties.

ARTICLE 4 OFFICERS

4.1 **Chair.** At its first meeting, the Committee shall, by majority vote, elect a chair (the "**Chair**") and a vice chair (the "**Vice Chair**"), who shall each be subject to removal and replacement by a majority vote of the Committee at any time. The Chair will preside at all meetings of the Committee and will have such other powers and perform such other duties as are customarily held and performed by a board chairperson. If the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, the Vice Chair will preside. If the Chair and Vice Chair are unable to attend a meeting, a substitute will be appointed in advance by the Chair or otherwise voted on and appointed by the Committee at the meeting.

4.2 **Other Officers.** Other officers of the Committee may be appointed at the Committee's discretion.



2. Advisory Committee Charter, Cont'd

ARTICLE 5 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

5.1 **Location.** The first meeting of the Committee will be held in the meeting space at **Union Passenger Terminal** at the following address (or at such other location as NOBC's CEO may designate in writing in advance):

1001 Loyola Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70113

5.2 **Schedule.** At the Committee's first meeting, the Chair, in collaboration with the Vice Chair and NOBC, shall set dates, discussion topics, and locations of regular meetings of the Committee. The dates, times, and discussion topics may be changed at the discretion of the Chair in accordance with the notice provisions set forth in Section 5.4 below.

5.3 **Approval of Final Report.** One or more special meetings may be called by the Chair to discuss, finalize, and adopt the Final Report. Additional special meetings of the Committee may be called by the Chair to address such topics as may be set forth in the call of the meeting. Notice of special meetings will be given in accordance with Section 5.4 below.

5.4 **Notice of Meetings or Changes.** Special meetings of the Committee may be convened at the discretion of the Chair upon not less than forty-eight (48) hours' advance notice. Any change to the dates, times, or discussion topics of regular meetings shall be communicated to all Committee members at least forty-eight (48) hours' in advance of the rescheduled meeting date and time, or at least forty-eight (48) hours' in advance of the meeting date and time set forth above if the change pertains only to the discussion topic. Notice of meetings may be delivered to members via electronic mail.

5.5 **Public Meetings.** All meetings of the Committee will conform to applicable Louisiana law relative to meetings of public boards. The Committee will provide an opportunity during each meeting for the public to address the Committee on matters relevant to the items on a given meeting's agenda. Public comments will be limited to two (2) minutes per individual. The Chair (or other presiding officer) may grant or deny speakers additional time, subject to reversal by a majority vote of the Committee members present. Members of the public may also submit written comments, provided that such comments are received by the Committee at MCAC@nola.gov no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to such meeting. Written comments will be placed in the record of the meeting and may be read aloud in the sole discretion of the Chair (or other presiding officer).

ARTICLE 6 MEETINGS

6.1 **Rules for Conduct.** The Committee will have the power to adopt rules for the conduct of its business with respect to all matters not provided for in this Charter.

6.2 **Materials.** Discussion and research materials relevant to a meeting's topic of discussion will be disseminated in advance of each meeting.



2. Advisory Committee Charter, Cont'd

6.3 **Agenda.** Members will be provided an agenda in advance of each meeting.

6.4 **Minutes.** The Committee will keep minutes of its meetings. The minutes will be circulated in draft form to all members and will be considered for approval by the Committee at a subsequent meeting. Approved minutes will be maintained by NOBC.

6.5 **Remote Participation.** In-person attendance and participation are vital to the conduct of Committee business. Members may, as required by La. R.S. § 42:17.2.1, or in exceptional circumstances with the consent of the Chair, remotely participate in a meeting by telephone or video conference call. Except as permitted by La. R.S. § 42:17.2.1, attendance by telephone or video conference call will not be considered attendance in person. If a member is unable to attend a scheduled meeting in any capacity, they may submit written comments for consideration on relevant agenda topics, provided that such comments are received by NOBC's CEO no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to such meeting. Written comments may inform, but not substitute, for being present during deliberations of the Committee.

6.6 **Quorum.** A majority of the total number of Committee members must be present at a meeting to constitute a quorum and to take any official actions at such meeting. For clarity, members may engage in informal discussion in the absence of a quorum, including review and consideration of Committee materials.

6.7 **Vote.** All official actions of the Committee will require the affirmative vote of a majority of the Committee members present and voting at a properly-called meeting where quorum is achieved.

ARTICLE 7 AMENDMENT

The Committee may, from time to time, amend this Charter by action at any meeting.



SECTION 2:

Current State of Civic Facilities

- Section Summary & Key Briefing Points
- Historical Background and Significance of City Hall and Civil District Court
- City Hall Condition Assessment
- Civil District Court Condition Assessment
- Environmental Sustainability
- Property Valuation
- Facilities Lease Payments
- Summary Assessment of Civic Facilities
- Recent Feedback on Facilities from City Employees
- References & Source Materials



Section 2: Current State of Civic Facilities

Section Summary

The New Orleans City Hall and Civil District Court (CDC) buildings were constructed in the 1950s as part of a mid-century Civic Center development intended to consolidate government functions within the Central Business District. The Civic Center was conceived as a five-building government complex designed to promote administrative efficiency and serve as a symbol of post-war civic renewal. City Hall, completed in 1957, spans approximately 330,735 square feet across ten stories and a basement. The Civil District Court building, constructed in 1960, contains approximately 117,000 square feet over four stories. Both buildings were designed in the modernist architectural style, and remain in continuous public use today.

Neither facility has undergone comprehensive renovation since construction, and **both buildings suffer from physical deterioration, functional obsolescence, and persistent operational constraints.** Notable issues include outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; noncompliance with current building codes; lack of ADA accessibility features internally and externally (e.g. sidewalks); rigid internal layouts; and environments that are increasingly misaligned with modern operational, safety, and service expectations. These conditions have prompted a series of evaluations to assess their condition, potential for reuse, and redevelopment value.

In 2019, the City Hall building was the subject of a programmatic study conducted by PACE Group LLC, in partnership with Woodward and Gensler. This assessment identified significant deficiencies in the building's structural design, including a 30% shortfall in lateral resistance when measured against 2015 International Building Code standards. **City Hall renovation costs are estimated to range from \$212 million (w/ VA as swing space) to \$295 million (w/ 85,000 sq ft new building addition).**

The Civil District Court building presents similar operational challenges. A 2025 Space Needs Assessment by DLR Group identified **material degradation, security deficiencies, and operational inefficiencies that cannot be remediated through renovation.** The study concluded that modern-day court operations, requiring space for 478 personnel, 18 courtrooms, and updated security standards, necessitate an entirely new 283,902 square foot facility to replace the existing structure and consolidate operations. **Renovation costs for CDC are estimated to range from \$63.9 million to \$73.9 million.**

In 2020, JLL Valuation & Advisory Services completed a comprehensive appraisal of the full municipal block encompassing City Hall, the CDC, and an associated parking structure. It evaluated the site across three scenarios: (1) as-is; (2) post-renovation; and (3) as vacant land for redevelopment. Using both the Sales Comparison and Income Capitalization approaches, along with a Highest and Best Use analysis, JLL concluded that **the buildings, in their current state, contributed no market value.** The appraised land value of the full 6.5-acre site, net of demolition costs, was determined to be \$42.3 million. Post-renovation stabilized value for both buildings was estimated at \$28.8 million to \$37.3 million, resulting in **a feasibility gap of hundreds of millions of dollars when considering cost estimates for renovation.**

These documents conclude that both City Hall and Civil District Court buildings are functionally and physically obsolete. The supporting analyses emphasize that continued use or renovation would require substantial capital investment with little to no market return. They also highlight that **the highest and best use of the property lies not in the rehabilitation of the existing structures, but in redevelopment of the site for mixed-use purposes.**

Note: dollar values have been adjusted for inflation (2025).



Key Briefing Points:

- **City Hall and Civil District Court were completed in 1957 and 1960, respectively**, as part of a modernist Civic Center plan; neither has undergone comprehensive renovation.
- **City Hall (330,735 SF)** suffers from outdated MEP systems, a 30% shortfall in lateral wind resistance under modern code, ADA non-compliance, and potential presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos, lead paint, and mold.
- **Civil District Court (117,000 SF)** faces even greater deficiencies: obsolete MEP systems, inadequate courtrooms and support spaces, no ADA compliance, poor security separation, and a lack of modern technology infrastructure, essentially requiring full gutting and reconstruction.
- **Renovation costs:** City Hall renovation costs are estimated to range from \$212M (w/ VA as swing space) to \$295M (w/ new 85,000 sq foot building addition).
- **City Hall and the CDC face severe environmental performance limitations**, including outdated or nonexistent building control systems, constant equipment runtimes, leaky building envelopes, and HVAC systems operating past useful life.
- **Public safety and law enforcement stakeholders identified additional operational risks** associated with current facilities, including limited fire suppression systems in evidence areas, inadequate spaces for investigations or interviews, and building layouts that do not safely separate public, staff, and detainee movement.
- **A 2020 property valuation (City Hall and CDC) showed a large feasibility gap:** JLL found post-renovation market value at between \$28.8 and \$37.3M, leaving a feasibility gap of hundreds of millions of dollars given the estimated cost of renovation.
- **Civil District Court faces similar per-SF renovation costs as City Hall** and has significant deferred maintenance and deterioration.
- **Appraisers concluded that the highest and best use of the site (City Hall and CDC) is redevelopment**, not rehabilitation, with land alone valued at approximately \$42.3M net of demolition costs.
- **The City is spending nearly \$3.8M annually (as of 2025) on off-site leased office space** to house employees displaced from inadequate civic facilities, highlighting the ongoing operational costs of delay. Employees report that fragmentation across multiple facilities limits real-time coordination, reinforces departmental silos, and creates a disjointed experience for residents navigating City services.

Note: dollar values have been adjusted for inflation (2025).

Key Questions for Consideration:

- Is there a rationale for investing in renovations of the existing buildings? Is there a rationale for instead marketing the site for redevelopment?
- What are the risks of continuing to operate from the existing facilities?
- How do current facility conditions affect public safety operations, evidence management, emergency coordination, workforce morale, and resident confidence in City government?
- What are the benefits of operating city government from safe, sound new buildings compliant with modern environmental, design, and accessibility standards?
- What criteria should guide decision-making in weighing the options for a new municipal complex?
- ***What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?***



1. Historical Background and Significance of City Hall and Civil District Court

1.1 Construction and Original Purpose

The current New Orleans City Hall and Civil District Court (CDC) were constructed as part of a post-war urban planning initiative aimed at consolidating key governmental functions within the Central Business District (CBD). **The initiative was part of a broader Civic Center Master Plan, which envisioned a cluster of modernist buildings as symbols of governmental efficiency and modernization.** The plan was supported through a \$1,000,000 municipal bond issue approved by voters in 1947, supplemented by federal funding.

- **City Hall**, completed in 1957 as part of the mid-century Civic Center plan, is the city's third seat of government since its founding in 1718. With **330,735 sq ft across 10 stories plus a basement**, it was designed to house core municipal administrative functions under one roof, a marked departure from the earlier dispersion of city departments across multiple locations.
- **Civil District Court**, completed in 1960, comprises approximately **117,000 sq ft across four stories** and was designed to accommodate the city's civil judicial court system, including courtrooms, administrative offices, and records storage.



Completed Civic Center Complex, mid-20th Century New Orleans

1.2 Architectural and Cultural Significance

Both buildings are constructed in the mid-century modernist style, emphasizing functionality, rational design, and geometric clarity. City Hall, in particular, is recognized by architectural preservation groups as one of the few remaining large-scale modernist government buildings in New Orleans.

- Of the five original Civic Center buildings, only three remain: City Hall, CDC, and the Main Public Library. The State Office Building and the State Supreme Court building once located on Duncan Plaza have been demolished.
- The Civic Center was intended not only to consolidate government operations but also to spur development in the CBD and symbolize a forward-looking civic identity. This architecture embodied the belief that efficient, progressive rational design would produce efficient, rational, progressive governance.
- The site chosen for the Civic Center displaced a dense working-class neighborhood. According to historian Richard Campanella: "A key part of modernizing governance was an idea conceived by Brooke Helm Duncan, a real estate developer and the first director of the City Planning and Zoning Commission, to centralize public offices and courts for the convenience of citizens. Involving city and state facilities and perhaps federal as well, a gleaming new Civic Center would be all the better if it replaced working class neighborhoods — which, to many people, meant the back-of-town."
- Designers intentionally oriented City Hall along the Loyola–Basin corridor so that its glass façade would present a modern, monumental "face" of government to those approaching downtown from Mid-City and Tremé.
- Although originally intended to anchor broader CBD revitalization, over time the area experienced both disinvestment and architectural reappraisal. As historian Richard Campanella notes, the concentration of single-use government functions ultimately limited street-level activity, leaving the area active only during business hours and contributing to its long-term isolation and stagnation.
- Stakeholders such as Docomomo US/NOLA, AIA New Orleans, and the Preservation Resource Center have flagged the buildings (particularly City Hall) as architecturally endangered.



2. City Hall Condition Assessment

2.1 Physical Profile

- Location: 1300 Perdido Street
- Zoning: CBD-4 (Exposition District)
- Floor Area Ratio (FAR): Current ~1.2; maximum permitted is 12.0
- Size and Configuration:
 - Total gross square footage: ~330,735 SF
 - Height: 10 stories plus basement
 - Construction: Reinforced concrete

2.2 Notable Features

Building Condition and Systems

Mechanical, Electrical, & Plumbing (MEP)

- Equipment is serviced on a failure-response basis rather than through preventive maintenance.
- Tripping hazards and boarded-over windows exist in mechanical areas.
- Computer technology to monitor MEP in the building is outdated and in some cases involves a paper log.
- City Hall's HVAC systems are obsolete and lack modern building controls; while some retrofits have occurred, significant inefficiencies remain. Achieving deeper efficiency gains would require opening walls and ceilings to address decades of ad-hoc renovations and undocumented piping runs.

Structural Integrity

- The building lacks modern lateral resistance features such as shear walls or X-bracing, rendering it vulnerable to wind and storm events.
- The design live load ratings are below modern thresholds: 50 psf for general floors, and 80–100 psf for corridors and lobbies.

Environmental

- Potential challenges related to environmental abatement (pending results of any formal testing)
- Anecdotal reports of rats, mold, sewerage leaks, lack of functional restrooms, and other health and safety concerns
- The building envelope is extremely leaky, allowing warm, humid air to infiltrate and requiring systems to run continuously. This infiltration contributes to mold risk and prevents the City from reducing overnight system operation.

Operational and Service Delivery Constraints

- **Work Environment and Operations:** The building's outdated and inflexible interior layouts, characterized by compartmentalized offices and corridors, limit efficient space utilization, coordination, and service delivery. Many areas suffer from uncontrolled heat gain, leading to persistent hot zones (notably on the 5th and 7th floors) that affect comfort, productivity, and employee experience.
- **Emergency response and coordination gaps:** Existing facilities are not purpose-built for incident command or extended emergency operations (e.g., limited dormitory space, backup power constraints), reducing effectiveness during critical events.
- **Evidence management risk:** Current facilities present potential risks to evidence storage and integrity, including insufficient fire suppression and space constraints, which could impact legal proceedings if not addressed.
- **Recruitment and retention challenges:** Facility conditions were described by stakeholders as a deterrent to recruitment and a contributor to morale challenges, particularly when compared to peer cities with modern, purpose-built facilities.
- **ADA Accessibility:** City Hall does not meet modern accessibility standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Areas identified as non-compliant include: entrances and vertical circulation (elevators and stairways); restrooms; corridor dimensions and signage; and, external access (e.g. sidewalks). Required upgrades (to be completed in consultation with disability advocates and with civil rights as a north star) include, but are not limited to, ADA-accessible restrooms, ramps, elevators, tactile signage, compliant egress features, and ADA accessible sidewalks.



2. City Hall Condition Assessment, Cont'd

2.3 IT Assessment

City Hall's IT environment is defined by aging infrastructure, limited electrical and cooling capacity, and fragmented systems that strain daily operations. Much of the cabling dates to the 1990s–2000s, with insufficient redundancy and inconsistent Wi-Fi and fiber connectivity. A portion of the City's data center remains on-site despite outdated equipment and space constraints, while most operations were shifted to an external facility following Hurricane Ida. Collaboration is further hindered by dispersed IT staff across multiple buildings and the absence of unified standards for system design, procurement, and maintenance.

Aging Infrastructure and Building Constraints

- Cabling dates to the 1990s–2000s, and electrical capacity cannot support modern equipment or collaborative technologies.
- Physical constraints, including low ceilings, fragmented office layouts, and a broken freight elevator, make upgrades and equipment movement difficult.

Data Center and Network Constraints

- The City operates a partial data center at City Hall (about 25% of total operations), with the remainder off-site since Hurricane Ida. The in-building infrastructure is aging, with limited redundancy and single points of failure due to insufficient fiber pathways and cooling.
- The network operations center monitors 127 remote sites, but system reliability remains challenged by fragmented connectivity between departments and facilities.
- Rack space and cooling are inconsistent; the data center's UPS and AC have failed; and a malfunctioning Halon system has rendered parts of the area unusable.
- Wi-Fi coverage is inconsistent, with bandwidth problems during high-traffic events.

Security Gaps

- Physical and cybersecurity functions are divided: Homeland Security oversees access control, while IT manages networks.
- Badge systems vary by building, there is no unified identity management, and malfunctioning readers mean critical areas can sometimes be accessed without verification.
- CCTV systems are not centrally integrated, and no full-time staff member manages citywide credentialing. Departmental silos in data management (e.g., HIPAA compliance) further weaken overall security consistency.

Organizational and Staffing Challenges

- The IT department is distributed across multiple locations (City Hall, VA building, 1615 Poydras), complicating communication and collaboration.
- IT is often engaged late in capital projects, leading to rework and outdated specifications.
- The City has no unified standards for IT procurement, design, or ongoing coordination.
- Technology planning should begin early and continue throughout design and implementation. Because workforce patterns, digital service delivery, and operational technology may change significantly over the project timeline, future facility planning should prioritize flexibility rather than fixed current-state assumptions.
- Staffing gaps, especially in roles tied to security credentialing and network management, are a notable issue.

Cross-Functional Integration Constraints

- City Hall and the Civil District Court operate on independent networks and data storage systems. Coordination typically flows through the Assessor's Office, even though roughly 90% of City business depends on linked property and land data.
- Inconsistent systems and access policies create delays in record processing, maintenance, and response to outages across facilities.



3. Civil District Court Condition Assessment

3.1 Physical Profile

- Location: 421 Loyola Ave #402, New Orleans, LA 70112
- Zoning: CBD-4 (Exposition District), with a permitted Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 12; the current FAR (including the City Hall building) is ~1.2
- Size and Configuration:
 - Total gross square footage: 117,000 SF
 - Height: 4 stories
 - Construction: Reinforced concrete

3.2 Current Features and Limitations

Building Condition and Systems

Mechanical, Electrical, & Plumbing (MEP)

- Existing MEP systems are obsolete and no longer in compliance with current codes and regulations.
- All heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing and electrical systems need servicing or complete replacement.
- Current systems do not meet design requirements for integrated and energy efficient MEP systems.
- HVAC system alterations completed in 2004 were maintenance-type work only, not comprehensive upgrades. CDC lacks any modern controls system, causing HVAC equipment to run essentially 24/7 with no ability to modulate loads.
- The building has no redundant chiller.
- Building requires systematic review of continued viability of existing MEP and Life Safety Systems.

Structural Integrity

- Building foundation and structural system are structurally sound.
- Structural framing can accommodate adding additional floors to increase overall square footage.
- Existing structural system and column grid can be updated to accommodate modern courthouse construction.

Environmental and Sustainability

- Building envelope requires updating for energy efficiency and modern building performance.
- Modern stormwater or water-efficiency features are not technically feasible without whole-building reconstruction.
- Environmental systems are not compliant with current environmental codes.

Operational and Service Delivery Constraints

Work Environment:

- Current building is cramped and current quarters are outdated.
- Lacks basic facilities, such as adequate conference rooms where lawyers can meet with their clients.
- Inadequate support spaces for modern court operations including evidence storage, jury facilities.
- Courtrooms do not meet current space standards (existing vs. required 1,700+ sq ft per courtroom).

Technology Infrastructure:

- Current infrastructure cannot support computers, photocopy machines, and other electronic devices.
- IT Technology Department requires dedicated spaces that don't currently exist.
- No adequate infrastructure for courthouse training room, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs, or modern communication systems.



3. Civil District Court Condition Assessment, Cont'd

3.2 Current Features and Limitations, Cont'd

Operational and Service Delivery Constraints, Cont'd

ADA Accessibility:

- Building does not meet modern safety and handicapped-access standards
- Elevators and circulation systems require upgrades for ADA compliance

Public Interface:

- Public waiting areas, snack bars, Clerk of Court counters, and reception areas are inadequately sized and located

Security:

- Current design lacks separation between public and private judicial circulation
- Inadequate security screening and controlled access systems

4. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental System Obsolescence:

Studies and anecdotal evidence conclude that both City Hall and CDC contain equipment well past service life. Many systems are operated manually or left running continuously due to lack of building automation controls. CDC lacks redundant chillers. City Hall's airflow has been compromised through decades of interior modifications.

Energy Inefficiency:

The resilience office's historical energy audits and retrofits show that modern control systems can reduce energy usage by >20%. However, implementation of such systems would require extensive invasive work and would be constrained by leaky envelopes and outdated infrastructure.

Climate Goal Misalignment:

The City's climate action plan calls for a 40% emissions reduction from municipal buildings by 2030. Existing buildings cannot reach this target, even with substantial capital investment, due to design constraints and envelope leakage.

Resilience Limitations:

Neither building can support modern solar + battery backup systems at scale without significant roof redesign. This prevents the City from adopting resilience strategies that could support short-duration grid outages during storms. Stakeholder input also highlights the need for emergency-ready infrastructure, including reliable backup power, dedicated coordination space, and facilities capable of supporting extended operations during crises.

Opportunities for Near-Term Investment to Increase Environmental Sustainability

The City has secured a \$50M EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grant. This funding is available to implement limited energy-efficiency upgrades at both City Hall and CDC through 2029. Potential upgrades supported by this funding may include new control systems and limited solar installations on eligible buildings.



5. Property Valuation

In October 2020, JLL Valuation & Advisory Services (JLL) prepared a full appraisal of the 6.5-acre municipal block encompassing City Hall, the CDC, and an associated parking structure. The appraisal was commissioned with the stated purpose of supporting strategic decision-making around the site's redevelopment potential.

Leveraging data from the 2019 Programmatic Study, the 2020 appraisal by JLL concluded that **continued use or renovation of City Hall and the CDC is economically unjustifiable, and that the greatest long-term value lies in the redevelopment potential of the land itself.**

JLL considered three scenarios, adjusted for inflation:

1. The property as-is: the buildings themselves contribute \$0 market value in their existing condition.
2. The property post-renovation: \$28.8M–\$37.3M.
3. The site as vacant land prepared for redevelopment: \$42.3M (after demolition adjustment)

The Civil District Court building would face similar if not higher costs per SF due to greater interior deterioration and smaller scale (fewer economies of scale). JLL found that the highest and best use of the 6.5-acre site was full demolition and redevelopment as a dense, mixed-use project, citing favorable zoning and adjacent investment activity.

JLL used two primary property valuation methodologies to assess the valuation post-renovation:

Sales Comparison Valuation (Post-Renovation):

The appraisers analyzed comparable sales of Class B office buildings in downtown New Orleans. Comparable properties were adjusted for differences in size, condition, and location. Based on this analysis, they concluded that if City Hall and the CDC were fully renovated, they would be expected to trade at ~\$60/sq ft, yielding **a market value of \$28.8M across the two facilities (adjusted for inflation).**

Income Capitalization Valuation (Post Renovation):

JLL modeled the potential Net Operating Income (NOI) the buildings could generate if fully renovated and leased at market rates. They projected gross rental income of ~\$5.8 million/year, operating expenses of ~\$2.85 million/year, and net operating income of ~\$2.95 million/year. Applying a 10% capitalization rate yielded **a market value of \$37.3M across the two facilities (adjusted for inflation).**

To determine the underlying land value, JLL used five comparable CBD land sales between 2016 and 2020, adjusted for parcel size, market timing, and development potential. These comparables ranged from \$124.77 to \$236.88 per square foot unadjusted. JLL reconciled the adjusted value at \$130 per square foot, applied to the 283,140 square foot parcel. After deducting \$3.36 million in demolition costs, the final “as-is” land value was determined to be \$42.3 million (adjusted for inflation).

*“These estimated capital expenses quickly overwhelm the estimated value of the [municipal] properties as office.”
– JLL Appraisal*



6. Facilities Lease Payments

The following table reflects facilities leased by City Hall and CDC-related employees in 2025 to house employees:

Contract #	Square footage	Paid in 2025	Vendor	Facility/Site Name
5887/7703	12,946 sq ft	\$166,506	East Skelley LLC	1515 Poydras, Suite 950 (NOPD RECRUIT/DA)
3229	35,973 sq ft	\$503,622	Orleans Tower LLC	1340 Poydras, Suites 410;420;500; 900A
3227	64,656 sq ft	\$905,184	Orleans Tower LLC	1340 Poydras, Suites 900B;1000;1100;1800
4715	10,527 sq ft	\$149,132	Orleans Tower LLC	1340 Poydras, Suite 1900
3261	19,701 sq ft	\$320,206	Orleans Tower LLC	1340 Poydras, Suite 800
5844	68,759 sq ft	\$1,152,794	1615 Poydras Tower LLC	1615 Poydras, Suites 500;1700;1800
6357	1,913 sq ft	\$36,000	4747 Earhart BLVD LLC	2025 Lease Payment
7659	3,688 sq ft	\$64,540	1615 Poydras Tower LLC	1615 Poydras, Suite Rent 2120 Feb-Dec 2025
4824/7243	4,279 sq ft	\$91,611	East Skelley LLC	1515 Poydras, Suite 1170 (Health)
5830	33,254 sq ft	\$215,680	Kurt Maloney; Julie Maloney; Robert Maloney Jr; Craig Maloney	1116 Magnolia St
5605/7352	5, 950 sq ft	\$92,031	New Orleans Family Justice	701 Loyola, Lease 2025
5831/7415	2,965 sq ft	\$55,500	7500 Bullard LLC	OMV Lease
6405	1,703 sq ft	\$12,000	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary	3901 Chef Menteur, NOPD Special Investigations

\$3,764,806



7. Summary Assessment of Civic Facilities

Based on existing studies of the buildings, the following summary reflects the range of improvements (both deferred/required maintenance and modernization) required to fully renovate civic facilities.

- **MEP Systems:** Comprehensive replacement or modernization of obsolete mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) systems, including installation of modern building automation and controls
- **Safety Systems:** Systematic review and upgrade of life safety systems to meet current code requirements, including fire suppression, alarm, and emergency systems
- **HVAC Systems:** HVAC system modernization, including load modulation capability, redundancy, and correction of decades of ad-hoc alterations that impair performance.
- **Electrical Systems:** Electrical capacity upgrades to support modern IT, courtroom operations, and collaborative technologies.
- **Accessibility:** Full ADA accessibility upgrades, including compliant entrances, vertical circulation (elevators and stairs), restrooms, signage, and egress improvements.
- **Interior Footprint:** Reconfiguration or full interior renovation to address inefficient layouts, inadequate support spaces, undersized courtrooms, and operational constraints that limit modern service delivery.
- **Security:** Modernized security systems, including integrated access control, credentialing, screening, and CCTV systems.
- **Informational Technology:** Replacement and modernization of aging IT infrastructure, including cabling, fiber redundancy, Wi-Fi coverage, data center reliability, UPS and cooling systems, and unified network standards across facilities.
- **Structural:** Structural evaluation and reinforcement to address lateral load deficiencies (City Hall exhibits ~30% deficiency under modern IBC standards) and ensure wind resilience.
- **Building Envelope:** Building envelope improvements to address significant air infiltration, energy inefficiency, and moisture intrusion.
- **Environmental and Sustainability:** Environmental remediation and compliance work, including management of lead-based paint, potential mold risk, possible asbestos, and non-compliant environmental systems and energy efficiency and resilience upgrades necessary to support climate goals, including installation of modern controls, potential solar + battery systems, and storm-related resilience improvements.

Feasibility Assessment of Renovation

Based on date and stakeholder interviews, the scale of required improvements at both City Hall and the Civil District Court is so extensive that renovation would approach full building reconstruction. Traditional maintenance is no longer a viable strategy; the accumulated deficiencies necessitate either comprehensive gut renovation or new construction, with any future facility planned around long-term maintainability, ease of systems access, operational continuity, and lifecycle cost control. Incremental, piecemeal repairs would fail to resolve core structural, systems, accessibility, and operational issues and would likely prove economically inefficient. While renovation cost estimates vary by study and timeframe, projected costs for City Hall range from \$212.8 million to \$295 million, and for the Civil District Court from \$64 million to \$74 million. By contrast, the estimated post-renovation market value of the property is only \$28.8 million to \$37.3 million. Therefore, **a feasibility gap of hundreds of millions of dollars exists between projected investment and resulting asset value.**

Not reflected are additional costs associated with lease payments and O&M to maintain an aging facility. **Stakeholder input suggests these costs should also be understood in operational terms:** recurring maintenance failures, fragmented locations, inadequate public-facing access, and facility conditions that may affect staff effectiveness, public safety operations, emergency coordination, and resident confidence.

A detailed assessment of renovation and rebuilding scenarios is included in Section 3 of this report.



8. Recent Feedback on Facilities from City Employees

As part of the Municipal Complex Advisory Committee planning process, Trepwise facilitated four focus groups with current City Hall and Civil District Court (CDC) employees to capture firsthand perspectives on working conditions and the case for a new municipal complex.

Trepwise spoke with nearly 60 team members, including supervisors and frontline staff, to understand their experiences working in these buildings. Across all four sessions, themes of physical deterioration, diminished morale, and impact on public service were consistent.

8.1 Summary of City Hall Employee Feedback

- Persistent temperature, power, and water issues force staff out of the building and disrupt service delivery.
- There are not adequate spaces for collaboration, breaks, or private meetings.
- Staff report being discouraged from eating lunch where the public can see them, with no alternative space provided.
- Physical conditions directly impact recruitment and retention; staff describe the building as an active barrier to hiring and a driver of turnover.
- Accessibility challenges, including parking and elevator concerns, affect both employees and constituents trying to access services.
- Vermin, ceiling damage, and general disrepair create an environment that staff describe as embarrassing and demoralizing.

8.2 Summary of CDC Employee Feedback

- Structural issues include a separating north wing, a roof leak that has never been repaired, persistent mold, and unresolved air and water quality problems dating back decades.
- Electrical systems have been assessed as unrepairable without full rewiring; asbestos in flooring tiles cannot be replaced.
- Elevator failures are frequent; when combined with a broken stairwell door handle, access to parts of the building is compromised entirely.
- Staff report physical health symptoms such as headaches, eye irritation, and respiratory issues. They attribute this directly to air quality and mold conditions in their workspace.
- Court closures due to failed water pressure affect not only staff but litigants, attorneys, and jurors who travel specifically for court dates.
- Security risks are a serious concern: judges lack dedicated, private elevator access and parking, leaving them exposed to the public they preside over, and creating potential for threatening situations.

"We are people too, we have to go to work like everybody else, and we deserve to have a building that isn't falling apart."

"We have workers quit all the time. Our building looks like trash."

"We work our butts off every day, many people are doing 4 people's jobs. We aren't looking for anything lavish—just comfortable and functional."

"We are presiding over cases of people who are dealing with health complications from work conditions just like the ones in our very same building."

"The day I got hired they were talking about getting a new building ... and that was 33 years ago."



References & Source Materials

The following works were reviewed in preparing this section:

- [City of New Orleans, Mayor's Briefing: New City Hall, Preliminary Site Selection Comparison, 2023](#)
- [City of New Orleans New City Hall - State Capital Outlay Request, 2024-25](#)
- [City of New Orleans Power BI Employee Database](#)
- [City of New Orleans Programmatic Study, 2019](#)
- [Feasibility Study and Assessment of the Civil District Court Building, 2016](#)
- Interview: Cynthia Connick, Former CEO of NOBC, 2025
- Interview: Howard "Trey" Nobles, Director of Property Management, CNO, 2025
- Interview: Judge Omar Mason, Chair of Judicial Building Commission, 2025
- Interview: Julio Miguel Viteri, Project Manager of CNO Capital Projects, 2025
- Interview: Kim Walker LaGrue, Chief Information Officer, 2025
- Interview: Greg Nichols, Chief, Deputy Chief Resilience Officer, 2025
- Interview: Anne Kirkpatrick, Superintendent, NOPD, 2026
- Interview: Dr. Jennifer Avegno, Deputy Mayor, Health & Human Services, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Jonathan Wisbey, Chief Information Officer, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Steve Nelson, Deputy CAO Infrastructure, CNO 2026
- Interview: Jamie Parker and Theron Levi, Sewerage & Water Board, CNO 2026
- Interview: Jerry Harris, Director of Capital Projects, CNO 2026
- Interview: Joe Giarrusso, Chief Administrative Officer, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Darrick Hasson, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Kevin Ferguson, Deputy Mayor, CNO 2026
- Interview: Dr. Jenny Mains, Jeffrey Schwartz, Courtney Stuckwisch Wong, and Charlayne Dorsey, CNO, Office Economic Development, 2026
- Interview: Mike Karam, CNO, Parks and Parkways, 2026
- Interview: Erroll Williams, CNO Assessor; Devin Johnson, Administrative Director, CNO Assessor's Office, 2026
- Interview: Emily Painton, New Orleans Public Library, 2026
- [Orleans Parish Civil District Court Architectural Program Final Report, 2013](#)
- [Orleans Parish Civil District Court Space Needs Assessment, 2025](#)
- [Pricing Comparison, Renovation of City Hall and Former VA Hospital, 2024](#)
- [Valuation Advisory, 1300 Perdido Street, 2020](#)
- [Moving New Orleans City Hall: A History Across Three Centuries, 2021](#)
- [City Hall: Preserve It or Move It?, 2020](#)



SECTION 3:

Programmatic & Space Requirements

- Section Summary & Key Briefing Points
- Consolidated Summary of Cost Estimates
- 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study
- Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies
- Gap Analysis: Existing Facilities vs. Required Space & Functionality
- References & Source Materials



Section 3: Programmatic & Space Requirements

Section Summary

In 2019, the City of New Orleans commissioned PACE Group, Woodward Design Build, and Gensler to conduct a comprehensive programmatic study of City Hall. The study was designed to define the spatial needs of municipal departments and evaluate options for either renovating the existing building, adapting another facility, or constructing a new City Hall. Through tours, surveys, focus groups, and benchmarking, the consultants identified broad goals: create a civic workplace that reflects city culture, improves accessibility and public engagement, strengthens collaboration and service delivery, and incorporates flexible, health-focused, and sustainable design principles. Feedback from employees highlighted major dissatisfiers such as outdated infrastructure, poor air quality, and lack of collaborative or break spaces, while noting positives like location, colleagues, and access to green space. **The 2019 Programmatic Study recommended the following for City Hall: simplified space standards, elimination of departmental silos, shared collaborative areas, digital record management, and improved public-facing amenities.**

Based on projected staffing of 1,300 and 432,889–456,647 gross square feet, **two scenarios were presented: a “stay” model that would require costly and disruptive renovations with temporary relocation, and a “go” model for a new facility that could incorporate sustainable systems, modern layouts, and long-term efficiencies.**

Several similar assessments were undertaken for the Civil District Court (CDC). A 2013 study by the National Center for State Courts projected the need for a 218,896-square-foot courthouse, expanding the total footprint to 293,896 square feet when including parking and retail, to serve 320 employees by 2030. Key criteria included security through separated circulation paths, flexible courtroom design, technology integration, and compatibility with a Central Business District location.

A 2016 feasibility study by Yeates & Yeates Architects concluded that the existing CDC, though structurally sound, was “beyond its useful life.” Comprehensive renovation would require gutting the interior, replacing all MEP systems, and potentially adding two to three floors—raising questions about cost-effectiveness compared to new construction. The range of total square footage requirements for the 5 spacing scenarios (all renovations of the current CDC building) range from 188,638 - 218,794.

In 2025, DLR Group and Manning Architects prepared an updated space needs assessment, consolidating multiple off-site offices into a single complex and addressing long-standing inefficiencies. **The report identified persistent problems with CDC’s security, records management, and circulation, and recommended a three-zone approach to separate public, staff, and in-custody circulation.** Programmatic needs included 15 Civil District Court courtrooms, 3 First City Courtrooms, 18 judicial chamber suites, a 200-person jury assembly room, attorney-client meeting spaces, centralized records storage, and secure parking for judiciary and staff. **Total requirements for CDC anticipate 283,902 sq. ft. of space for 18 judges and approximately 460 staff, with flexibility for moderate population growth and technological change.**

Detailed cost estimates are presented in full within subsections 3.1 and 3.4 of this report.

Taken together, the City Hall and CDC programmatic studies underscore the obsolescence of current facilities and the scale of unmet spatial and functional needs. **All involved consultants concluded that extensive renovation of the existing City Hall and CDC would be disruptive, expensive, and ultimately insufficient, while purpose-built new facilities offer opportunities to align municipal and judicial operations with contemporary standards for efficiency, security, accessibility, and civic identity.**



Key Briefing Points:

- **2019 City Hall Programmatic Study** (PACE, Woodward, Gensler) found that the existing facility is outdated, siloed, and poorly aligned with modern government needs. Recommendations emphasized flexible layouts, shared collaboration areas, universal accessibility, and digital record management.
- **Employee feedback** underscored dissatisfaction with air quality, temperature control, leaks, and lack of collaborative and break spaces, while highlighting positives such as colleagues, location, and access to green space.
- **Space demand for City Hall** was projected at 432,000–456,000 gross square feet to accommodate ~1,300 staff, requiring significant reorganization of adjacencies and consolidation of support spaces.
- **“Stay” vs. “Go” scenarios** were analyzed: renovation would require full relocation during construction, a double move, and stormwater abatement upgrades; a new facility would allow purpose-built design, modern systems, and potential sustainability gains.
- The “Go” model for a new City Hall building **could consolidate several currently off-site City departments and functions** to allow for stronger efficiency and collaboration.
- Recent stakeholder interviews reinforce **co-location as a priority for administrative, leadership, coordination, and public-facing functions**, while recognizing that certain field-based, clinical, utility, patrol, and other operational functions will remain distributed.
- **2013 Civil District Court (CDC) study** projected long-term needs of ~294,000 GSF to serve 18 judges and 460 staff, with design criteria including flexible courtrooms, technology integration, and secure separation of circulation paths.
- **2016 CDC feasibility study** determined that while the structure was sound, the building was functionally obsolete. Gut renovation and replacement of all MEP systems would essentially create a new building within the existing shell.
- **2025 CDC space needs assessment (DLR/Manning)** consolidated multiple off-site offices into one facility and identified priorities: operational efficiency, three-zone circulation (public, staff, in-custody), centralized records storage, and secure parking.
- **Programmatic requirements for a new CDC** include 15 Civil District Court courtrooms, 3 First City Courtrooms, 18 judicial chambers, a 200-person jury assembly room, attorney-client spaces, and modern IT.
- Across both facilities, consultants concluded that **renovation is technically feasible but disruptive, costly, and insufficient**—while **purpose-built new construction provides the opportunity to meet modern standards for security, accessibility, efficiency, and civic identity**.



Key Questions for Consideration:

- How might programmatic models weigh on the committee's recommended actions and process?
- How, in the continuation of the development process, would we like to pursue an updated understanding of current programmatic needs from the users of City Hall and the CDC?
- How might it be feasible from a spacing perspective to develop both a City Hall building and CDC structure on the same municipal campus?
- Which administrative, public-facing, emergency coordination, enterprise-support, investigative, and leadership functions should be considered for co-location, and which functions should remain distributed across the city?
- *What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?*



1. Consolidated Overview of Cost Estimates

Over the past ten years, multiple cost estimates have been defined for renovation of existing municipal buildings and construction of new buildings. These cost estimates reflect various assumptions and methodologies. The information presented in this briefing book reflects a holistic view of the estimates and, whenever possible, adjusts old estimates to account for inflation as of 2025. These figures are not intended to serve as a basis for planning and policymaking and it is recommended that additional rigorous feasibility studies be undertaken to establish definitive cost estimates.

The table below summarizes the cost estimates reflected in this briefing book:

FACILITY	EXPENSE	COST ESTIMATE	YEAR ESTIMATED	2025 INFLATION ADJUSTMENT	SOURCE	NOTES
City Hall	Renovation	\$155.4 M	2019	\$196.3M	Programmatic Study	Includes contingency and new building addition
City Hall	Renovation	\$164.5M - \$181.2M	2019	\$208.5M - \$228.9M	Programmatic Study	Includes contingency, building addition, relocation expenses, potential hazardous material abatement, demolition/gutting, and stormwater infrastructure
City Hall	Renovation	\$200M - \$282M	2023	\$212M - \$295M	Mayor's Briefing Memo	Utilizing the VA for swing space or with new building addition
City Hall	New Build	\$171.3M	2019	\$216.5M	Programmatic Study	Includes contingency
City Hall	New Build	\$285M	2023	\$301M	Mayor's Briefing Memo	Includes hard/soft costs & contingency
City Hall	New Build	\$349M	2026	N/A	Capital Outlay Request	Includes planning, construction, potential hazardous materials abatement, contingency, and equipment
CDC	Renovation	\$47.5M - \$54.9M	2016	\$64M - \$74M	Feasibility Study & Assessment	Range reflects multiple renovation schemes to add one or more floors to the existing building
CDC	New Build	\$195.8M	2024	\$205M	Extrapolated	Estimate is extrapolated based on 2024 City Hall per square foot cost for new construction



2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study

2.1 Overview & Intent

In 2019, the City contracted [PACE](#) (New Orleans-based engineering firm), [Woodward](#) (New Orleans-based construction company), and [Gensler](#) (global architecture, design, and planning firm) to conduct and publish a programmatic study. **The purpose of the study was to define the activities and spatial needs of identified City of New Orleans departments and functions to physically reorganize or re-stack the organization through any one or combination of the following:**

- Renovation of current structure(s);
- Renovation of an existing structure yet to be identified; and,
- Design and construction of a potential new structure.

The consultants provided two models for programming: “Stay” and “Go”. Each model offers a consideration of the layout of each floor of the facility, as well as how departments might be colocated to benefit workflow and collaboration.

A study of an organization’s *program* generally refers to a deep understanding of a client’s vision, organization, and workplace today and tomorrow to inform the way space is allocated and designed. The study was comprehensive and pulled qualitative and quantitative information from:

- Tours and architectural scans;
- A visioning workshop, focus groups, interviews, and surveys to engage departmental leaders and their employees, including a questionnaire to department leaders on quantitative factors, like: headcount, space, technology, and adjacency requirements (spatial relationships between departments who work together to accomplish shared tasks);
- Review of organizational charts by department to understand hierarchies and relationships;
- Study of trends and benchmarking around workspace design and usage; and,
- Utilization study on planned routes to identify and analyze utilization, activity types, and settings data.

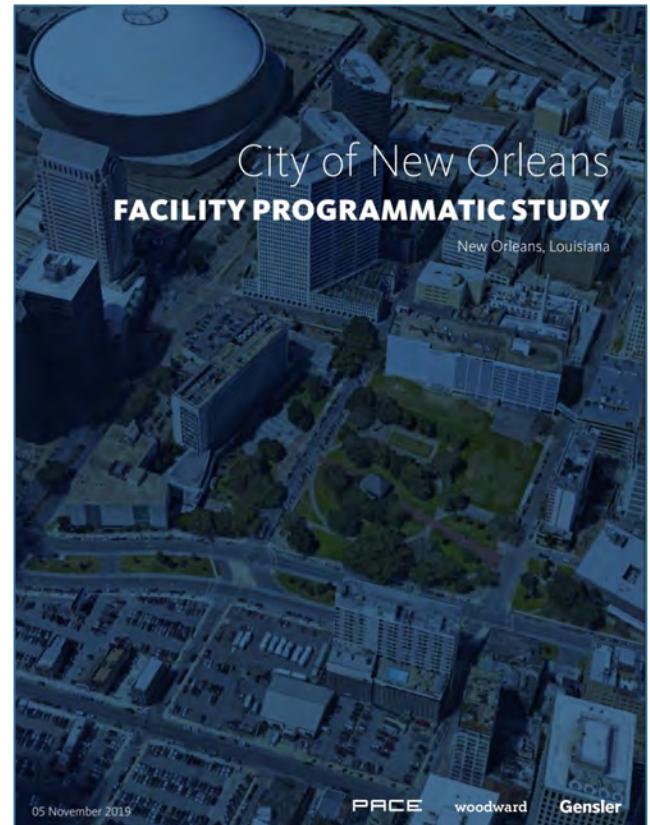


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2.2 Glossary and Definitions

CIRCULATION

All pathways connecting programmatic spaces, including offices, workstations, support spaces, entry and elevator lobbies, and egress locations.

HEADCOUNT

The total number of employees including full-time, part-time, interns, and contractors that work at designated location defined by the scope of the project.

ENCLOSED VS OPEN

An enclosed workspace generally refers to an office or shared office setting in which the workspace is fully surrounded by full-height partitions. Open refers to the workstations in an open plan environment with minimal partitions between work settings.

SPACE ALLOCATION RATE

The total usable area of an organization divided by the total number of headcount or total number of seats.

SPACE ALLOCATION RATIO

Proportion of space measured Usable Square Feet (USF) dedicated to personnel, dedicated support, shared support and special/mission-specific support spaces.

SPACE STANDARDS

A standard unit area of a workspace or support space assigned by a defined criteria.

Example: All directors receive a space standard of a 225 square foot office.

Example: One standard 120 SF huddle room will be assigned per every 20 workstations.

UTILIZATION RATE

Average usage of a space, often measured as a percentage of the total period that the space is available for use, such as the organization's business hours.

COLLABORATION SPACE

Space dedicated to facilitate face-to-face collaboration (scheduled or unscheduled). This includes conference rooms, huddle rooms, and areas for open collaboration.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Term used to describe a holistic approach to the design of buildings and environments to make them as accessible as possible for all users.

ADJACENCY

The spatial relationship between two or more functional areas or rooms within a building or site which collaborate regularly to complete common tasks.

WORKSTATION

An individual desk, workspace, or cubicle in an open environment with varying degrees of enclosure, functionality and furniture solutions.

SPACE TYPES

A categorical breakdown of program into the following terms:

PERSONNEL

Programmatic space that includes all individual and shared offices and workstations.

DEDICATED SUPPORT

Programmatic support elements that are dedicated or assigned to a specific department and not commonly shared between organizational entities. Dedicated support elements commonly include department-dedicated file rooms, storage rooms, and work rooms.

SHARED SUPPORT

Programmatic support elements that are shared between multiple organizational entities. Shared support elements commonly include huddle rooms, meeting rooms, print stations, mothers rooms, and break areas. Shared support excludes spaces considered building core or building common.

SPECIAL / AMENITY SUPPORT

Programmatic support elements with special or mission-specific requirements. These can include fitness centers, cafeterias, or conference centers.



2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

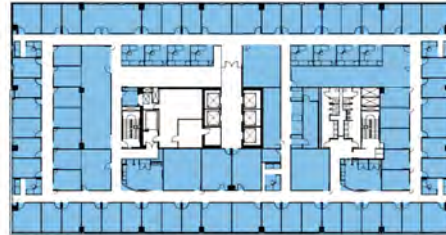
2.2 Glossary and Definitions, Cont'd

NET SQUARE FEET (NSF)

The total unit area of a workspace, dedicated support, shared support, and special support element. Net square feet does not include circulation space, toilets, and areas considered building core or building common. The NSF measures the area contained within the outline of each identified program space.

Example: The net area of a 10' x 12' office is 120 NSF.

Example Diagram: NSF



USABLE SQUARE FEET (USF)

The area occupied by a tenant, department, or organizational entity, including circulation space. USF excludes vertical shafts, toilets, and areas considered building core or building common.

Example Diagram: USF



RENTABLE SQUARE FEET (RSF)

The area measured by a building owner or landlord in defining the terms of a lease. It includes restrooms, mechanical rooms, and a prorated/negotiated share of building core or building common spaces like the main building lobby and loading dock.

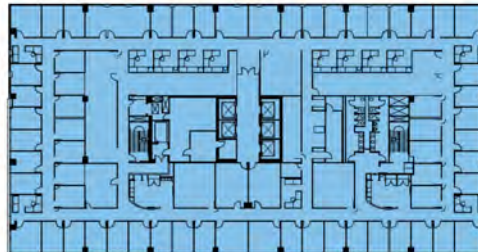
Example Diagram: RSF



GROSS SQUARE FEET (GSF)

The total area built environment, measured from the outside of face of the building envelope. It includes the usable area, rentable area, and areas considered building core, building common, or building service spaces. This term is commonly used to describe the entire footprint of the building and typically used by contractors for pricing purposes.

Example Diagram: GSF





2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.3 Project Goals & Strategy

Several goals for a City Hall building emerged throughout the project process. These remain salient for today and relevant to upcoming recommendations, decisions, and developments (with an acknowledgement that significant changes to workplace norms and worker preferences have emerged post-pandemic).

- 1. Lead by example with a workplace emblematic of our city culture and civic purpose.**
 - a. Provide a safe and intuitive experience for all employees and visitors.
 - b. Embrace universal design concepts to improve accessibility, public engagement, and strengthen our “first impression” and user experience.
 - c. Improve our adjacencies, branding, wayfinding, and signage strategies to help connect people with the right resources
- 2. Build a culture of engagement, service and productivity.**
 - a. Strengthen business and functional performance through thoughtful adjacencies (public-facing and internal functions).
 - b. Eliminate unnecessary barriers to face-to-face interactions between employees and the public, when appropriate.
- 3. Improve and enhance settings for focus, collaboration, learning, training, and socializing.**
 - a. Provide more meeting spaces with a variety of technology (public-facing and internal).
 - b. Accommodate touchdown workspace for visiting city employees.
 - c. Provide shared, communal spaces to come together.
- 4. Leverage flexible planning concepts to accommodate an effective and efficient workplace.**
 - a. Simplify office and workstation standards to better maintain and manage space occupancy.
 - b. Make space assignments that support job function, not hierarchy.
 - c. Explore opportunities to better manage furniture, equipment, files/records, supplies, etc.
- 5. Attract and retain passionate people.**
 - a. Be the employer of choice in New Orleans.
 - b. Explore opportunities to improve amenities (food, parking, etc.).
 - c. Adopt emerging workplace trends that will attract the next generation of talent.
- 6. Design for choice and wellbeing.**
 - a. Offer opportunities for environmental comfort through individual settings and controls.
 - b. Equip spaces with ergonomic workspace furniture.
 - c. Explore mechanisms to improve air quality and temperature control.
 - d. Apply natural/daylighting concepts and transparency.
 - e. Introduce more options for healthy amenities.
 - f. Provide wellness and mothers rooms.



2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.4 Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder feedback had strong implications of the future culture of City Hall and, therefore, how space sets the stage for that culture.

In a visioning session, departmental leaders shared their hopes for a future City Hall facility:

Current State	Desired Future State	Ensure a Balance of:
Traditional	Modern	Playful and Serious
Practical	Experimental	Formal and Casual
Oldschool	Trendy	Passionate and Pragmatic
Hierarchical	Direct	
Retro	Futuristic	

Overall, City Hall employees rate their workplace experience at 55/100. Positives include: their colleagues, private offices, the location of City Hall, proximity to team members, natural light, views, and paid parking. **Most dissatisfiers refer to the space: the state of the building (dirty, outdated, air quality, temperature control, leaks, visible mold, decay, smell), lack of maintenance, not enough supplies or resources, distractions/interruptions/noise, management issues, not enough space for breaks or social connection, not enough private work space for some, decor/design outdated.** Positives shared by leaders included: passion of people, closeness to green space, wifi and email access, and face-to-face interaction with others and the public. Dissatisfiers shared by leaders included: a lack of connection, lack of accessibility (as it relates to both getting to and from the building and to people with disabilities interacting with the building), and disjointedness from each other and from the public. They mentioned other issues like limited parking, food options, age of building, adaptability, etc.

2.5 Program Recommendations

Major program recommendations from the report are listed below and continued on the next page. A visual representation of the program is also included.

- Implement simplified and consistent space standards:** Standards for who gets what (overall space, furniture, quality of items and spaces) with parity across departmental spaces and level of role or function, keeping the ideal culture in mind.
- Eliminate departmental suite boundaries unless legally required:** Have a more physically connected workspace across all of the City to increase communication, transparency, and natural light; maintain security where necessary; and, reduce silos.
- Provide shared areas for collaboration and meeting space:** Make it easy for anyone to meet when needed, from employees to guests and the public, and any size group; eliminate territorialism over spaces and equip spaces with comparable technology and features; and, create efficiencies by sharing meeting resources across a floor.
- Introduce alternative settings to support a variety of work activities:** Give employees and visitors more choice in where they work, eat, and take breaks; free up conference rooms for group work.
- Provide centralized, shared support spaces for common office functions:** Centralize printing, copying, scanning, and other equipment into a shared common space with proper security requirements.
- Dramatically reduce file storage on-site:** Increase usable space across the building by implementing best practices on physical document management (i.e., digitization in accordance with security standards and applicable regulation), organization of documents, and prioritization of access to what is needed most frequently.

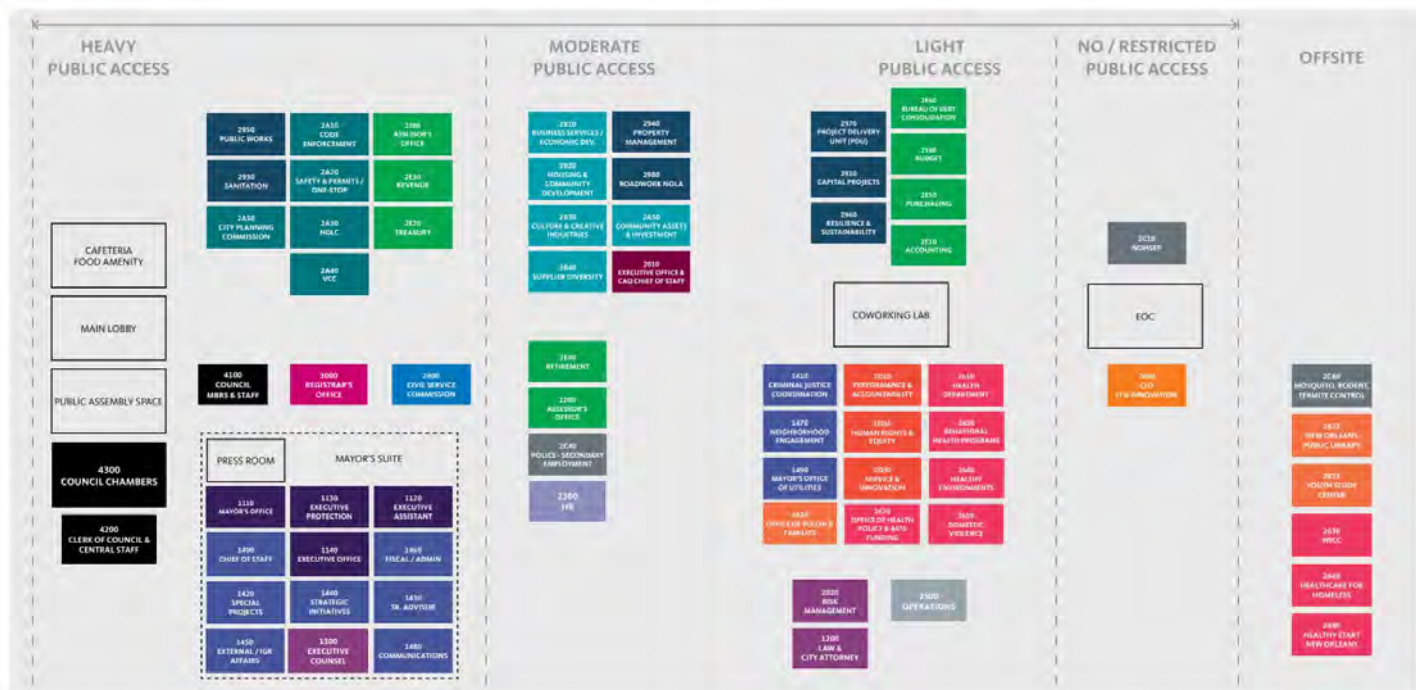


2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.5 Program Recommendations (Cont'd)

7. **Improve constituent access and customer experience:** Focus on the experience and navigation of public guests.
8. **Leverage adjacencies and the building layout to enhance security and control public access:** Design with safety and security in mind, like putting more sensitive functions on upper floors, while locating public facing functions on lower floors to facilitate accessibility.
9. **Provide employees with access to more convenient amenities:** Enhance amenities to accommodate routine needs (e.g. dining), public events and hearings, and emergency/disaster needs.

Below is a map of program adjacencies as drafted by the consulting team.



2.5.1 Assumptions

The document goes on to detail the **assumptions on projected needs for 2022** (3 years post-publishing):

- Personnel count (1,300)
- Usable square footage (378,178)
- Utilization
- Layout and open to close (with permanent or modular walls) workspace ratio
- Different types of rooms and spaces and the % of City hall usable space estimated for each type
- Important adjacencies (points of collaboration between departments necessary to complete a task) and implications on where they are located



2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.5.2 Stacking & Blocking

Stacking refers to the design of building layers or floors, while blocking addresses the groupings of spaces within each layer. The stacking and blocking section demonstrates the **strategic usage of lower floors for departments, activities, and spaces that experience heavy usage, lighter security needs, and high public access (including the Mayor's suite and City Council chambers). Middle floors should have moderate public access mixed with several more secured areas with limited access. The highest floors of a city hall should contain areas that require the most security and provide little to no public access.**

2.5.3 Square Footage Needs

As a result of this programmatic study, based on the adoption of the recommendations in combination with specific department requests outlined in the report, **Gensler found that the City of New Orleans would require approximately 432,889 - 456,647 gross square feet** (depending on which scenario is selected) to support the activities and functions of the government functions related to the scope of this project.

2.6 Program Scenarios: Stay vs. Go

Consultants presented two scenarios to achieve the recommended program for City Hall: a 'Stay' scenario and a 'Go' scenario.

Program Scenario 1: Stay

In a pro/con analysis of the Stay scenario, consultants pointed to the prominent location and familiarity/recognition of the building, while the cons list was much greater and rooted in building conditions and the physical limitations of the current space.

- Would require relocation in totality during renovation
- A temporary space would require usage of multiple buildings which could come at the detriment of collaboration and effectiveness, and the public would need to visit multiple locations to get their needs met, perhaps on the same matter.
- Staying would require the cost and time of two moves: move out and move back in.
- An updated stormwater code would require stormwater abatement on the property that does not currently exist (expected 180,590 gallons capacity for abatement). While there is a "pay in lieu" clause in the code, the report indicates City Hall would most likely not qualify due to ample space available for stormwater capture.
- The Stay cost estimates do not include added parking.

Key Considerations: Stay



- + Prominent location, centrally located Downtown New Orleans
- + Sense of public familiarity, civic legacy and presence as a recognizable architectural landmark
- Limited access to adjacent parking
- Limited space for organizational growth
- Building age and condition would require significant renovation
- Renovating in place will severely disrupt business operations
- Challenges abating lead, mold, and other hazards while renovating in place
- Isolating and segmenting building systems while occupying
- Complex occupancy planning would require a combination of temporary swing space, organizational compression, and multiple moves

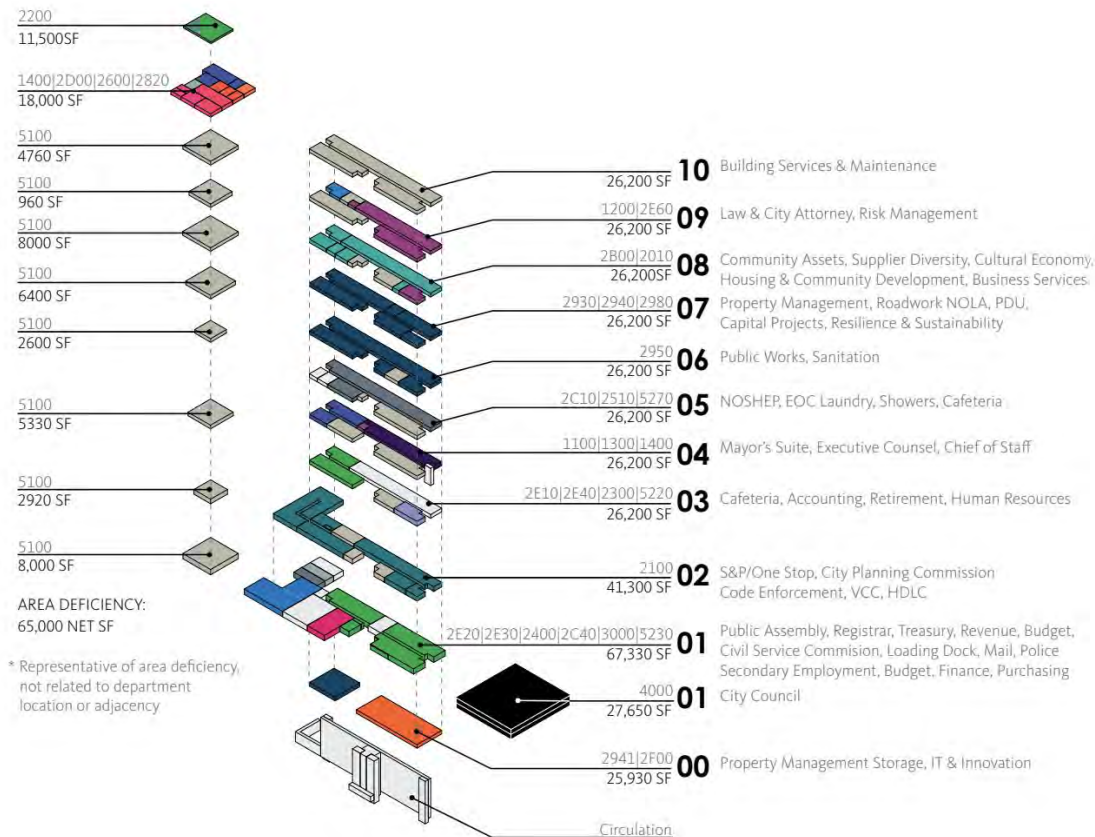


2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.6 Program Scenarios: Stay vs. Go (Cont'd)

Program Scenario 1: Stay, Cont'd

STAY Model for stacking (i.e., location of programmatic functions):



Cost Estimate - Renovation (Stay Scenario)

Construction costs only. No FF&E or other soft costs included.

DESCRIPTION	AREA/SF	COST/ SF	2019 COST	
Construction Renovation	360,000 Gross sf	\$310	\$111.6M	
Construction New Addition	85,000 Gross sf	\$350	\$29.7 M	
Contingency (10%)	-	-	\$14.1M	2025 COST
Total			\$155.4 M	\$196.3M

Note: This estimate does not include all costs described in the report, including:

- Relocation of all current employees and departments and storage during construction
- Hazardous material abatement
- Demolition + Gutting
- Stormwater management infrastructure

The total estimated renovation cost including those additions was \$164.5M to \$181.2. **The current (2025) inflation-adjusted cost would be \$208.5M - \$228.9M.**

EXCLUSIONS: The costs indicated for both a renovation scenario and a new construction scenario do not account for the possibility of added parking facilities. Accounting for any new parking is based on a variety of factors such as number of employees, working hours, the potential for public amenities, real estate availability, and other factors that are not known and thus outside of this analysis.



2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.6 Program Scenarios: Stay vs. Go (Cont'd)

Program Scenario 2: Go

In a pro/con analysis of the 'Go' scenario, consultants identified numerous positives involving programming, financial, and logistical dimensions. Though the Study did not anticipate possible locations for a new City Hall building, users mentioned City Hall's neighboring green space as a highlight of the building. Therefore a primary con of Go Scenario development on Duncan Plaza is the loss of green space in the area.

- Offers opportunity to monetize old building.
- Offers potential for sustainable building: renewable energy, reduced lifecycle costs, and building automation and monitoring systems, all of which can contribute to maintenance and energy savings
- The report offers layout and department placement diagrams by floor
- It also details the current FF&E and square footage of all spaces by department.

Cost Estimate - New Construction (Go Scenario)

Construction costs only. No FF&E or other soft costs included.

DESCRIPTION	AREA/SF	COST/SF	2019 COST	
Construction New Addition	445,000 Gross sf	\$350	\$155.7M	
Contingency (10%)	-	-	\$15.5M	2025 COST
Total			\$171.3M	\$216.5M

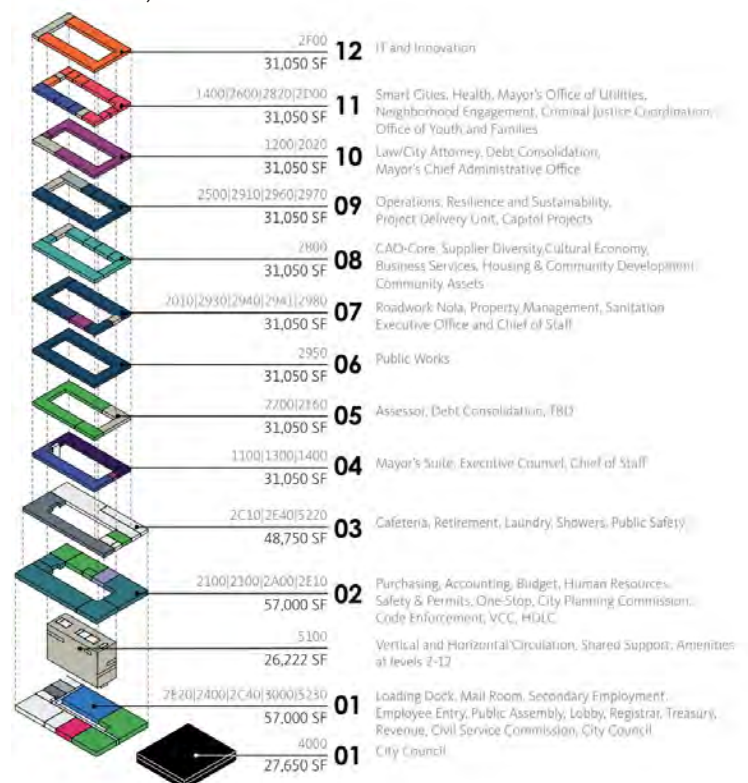
EXCLUSIONS: The costs indicated for both a renovation scenario and a new construction scenario does not account for the possibility of added parking facilities. Accounting for any new parking is based on a variety of factors such as number of employees, working hours, the potential for public amenities, real estate availability, and other factors that are not known and thus outside of this analysis.

Key Considerations: Go



- + Opportunity to monetize 1300 Perdido after move to offset cost of construction
- + New building infrastructure and systems with current standards in performance (technology, security, sustainability, etc.)
- + Proper planning and design to reduce operation and maintenance costs over the lifecycle of the building
- + Purpose-built design to accommodate organizational growth and contemporary workplace trends that better support how departments work today
- + Opportunity for local development under a public-private-partnership (PPP) and provide access to commercial amenities that are privately managed (food/bev, fitness, etc.)
- + From a change management perspective, new physical space is an opportunity to implement organizational change
- + New construction triggers 1 move for staff and departments can move in a phased approach that minimizes business disruptions
- Loss of familiar, historic location in Downtown New Orleans

GO Model for stacking (i.e., location of programmatic functions):





2. 2019 City Hall Programmatic Study, Cont'd

2.7 Project Implications

Achieving the goals outlined in the programmatic study will require a fundamental reimagining of how City Hall space is used, alongside significant changes to departmental programming. Reported data on square footage, space utilization, and circulation, both current and projected, will serve as critical inputs in determining the ultimate scope of facility needs.

The study identified several opportunities to increase efficiency through the consolidation of communal functions, such as meeting rooms, print and copy areas, and document storage. These efficiencies, paired with thoughtful consideration of how space flows across lower and higher floors, underscore the importance of adjacencies in shaping overall workflow and organizational effectiveness. Current City Hall stakeholders further emphasize the need for adjacencies, as well as for increased staffing, and therefore square footage, to increase City effectiveness and excellence.

Implementing the “Go” model in a future space would create both positive and negative disruptions for employees and the public. While modernized layouts and shared amenities offer opportunities to enhance collaboration and service delivery, the transition process would introduce unforeseen, but inevitable challenges. Development of a new municipal complex will therefore require intentional planning to anticipate key moments of disruption, with strategies to mitigate negative impacts while maximizing long-term benefits.

Recent stakeholder input cautions that a new facility alone will not improve service delivery and must be paired with operational redesign. At the same time, stakeholders emphasized that current facilities actively constrain core functions, including investigations, evidence management, emergency coordination, public navigation, and internal coordination. Facility planning should therefore be linked to how residents access services, how departments coordinate, how digital tools reduce unnecessary in-person visits, and how shared spaces are governed.

The following departments and functions were included in the 2019 Programmatic Study for City Hall: Mayor, Law & City Attorney, Executive Counsel, Chief of Staff, Mayor’s Chief Administrative Office, Budget, Assessor’s Office, Human Resources, Civil Service Commission, Operations, Health Department, CAO - Chief of Staff, Infrastructure, Land Use, Community & Economic Development, Public Safety & Homeland Security, CTO & Smart Cities, CFO & Finance, CIO & Information Technology, Registrar of Voters, City Council, and Shared & Specialty Support Spaces. The study also noted that several departments not currently co-located in City Hall were excluded from the program analysis. However, headcount from functions that are expected to remain separate or offsite was included to ensure adequate accommodation for visiting staff. Space allocations have been planned to support regular visitors from groups such as the Equipment Management Division, WIC Clinics, Healthy Start New Orleans, the New Orleans Public Library, Youth Study Center, NOFD, EMS, and OPCD. **The programming approach in general reflects a balance between centralizing core functions and maintaining flexibility to serve cross-departmental needs.**



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies

3.1 2013 CDC Architectural Program Study Goals & Criteria

In 2013 the [National Center for State Courts](#) provided a comprehensive architectural programming study for the Orleans Parish Civil District Court (CDC) facility. The purpose of the study was to explore requirements to overcome long-standing space deficiencies in the existing courthouse. The study was developed through extensive stakeholder interviews, data collection, and analysis of court operations, staffing levels, case filing trends, and space utilization patterns.

The project goals were as follows:

1. To determine the planning goals and criteria for the various components and occupants of the courthouse to inform the development of a new courthouse;
2. To identify the space requirements for a new court facility that will allow effective and safe operations now and in the future;
3. To determine the scope of the building project in terms of total square footage to form the basis for courthouse funding implementation; and,
4. To identify conceptual building massing alternatives and potential site impacts given the proposed use and unique building needs of the various courthouse occupants.

The consultants also defined key criteria to guide space needs and building concepts:

- **Long-term growth capacity:** The space needs for all agencies and departments located within the building will be based on current staffing levels.
- **Courtroom/Chambers Relationship:** The arrangement of courtroom and chambers will be determined based on a ratio of one chamber for every one courtroom. In addition, the ratio between jury deliberation suites and jury trial courtrooms will be less than 1:1. This reflects a declining trend of jury trials observed in Orleans Parish and across the nation.
- **Courtroom Concepts:** The planning of courtrooms should be determined using a unified space standard which may flexibly accommodate various proceedings.
- **Future Technology Impacts:** The planning of the courthouse should account for existing work processes and records management systems that are currently in place while also making provision for a future electronic environment.
- **Courthouse Circulation and Security:** Two distinct zones of circulation for the public and staff should be provided in order enhance security and to limit unwanted contact between staff and public visitors.
- **Central Business District (CBD) Site Considerations:** Planning for the courthouse should respond to the urban environment and context of the CBD where the new facility will be located.



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.2 2013 CDC Study: Staffing and Space Projections for 2030

The program established detailed space requirements for all courthouse occupants including the Civil District Court (14 judges), First City Court (3 judges), clerks' offices, Sheriff's Civil Division, Constable, and supporting agencies. The study projected facility needs through 2030 based on post-Hurricane Katrina population recovery projections and recommended a **218,896 gross square foot courthouse with additional retail and parking components, totaling 293,896 square feet. Staffing projections anticipate 320 employees by 2030.**

The tables below and to the right demonstrate a breakdown of required square footage, staffing projections, and courtroom and chambers spatial requirements.

Department	Current FTE
Civil District Court	
Judges	14
Judge Support Staff	14
Clerk of Civil District Court	152
First City Court	
Judges	3
Judge Support Staff	3
Clerk of First City Court	17
Sheriff's Office Civil Division	85
Constable	15
Judicial Administration - JEF	17
Total	320 FTE

New Orleans Civil District Court Area Summary	
Public Lobby and Support Areas	7,020 DGSF
Building Support Spaces	8,425 DGSF
Civil District Court	61,510 DGSF
First City Court	15,581 DGSF
Shared Judicial	2,015 DGSF
Holding	702 DGSF
Sheriff's Office Civil Division	7,521 DGSF
Constable	2,389 DGSF
Judicial Administration - JEF	5,938 DGSF
Information Technology	2,774 DGSF
Clerk of Civil District Court	61,263 DGSF
Total Departmental Gross Square Feet	175,117 DGSF
Grossing Factor @ 25%	43,779 SF
Total Courthouse Structure Gross Square Feet	218,896 BGSF
Other Construction	75,000 BGSF
Ground Floor Shelled Retail	20,000 BGSF
Parking Garage (3 levels, 150 cars)	55,000 BGSF
Total BGSF with Retail and Garage	293,896 BGSF

Civil District Court and First City Court Courtroom and Chambers Summary		
Civil District Court		
Standard Courtroom	10	1,700 SF ea.
Domestic Court Courtroom	3	1,700 SF ea.
Complex Litigation Courtroom	2	2,000 SF ea.
Civil District Court Judge's Office	15	280 SF ea.
First City Court		
Standard Courtroom	3	1,700 SF ea.
First City Court Judge's Office	3	280 SF ea.



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.3 2013 CDC Study: Massing Concepts & Objectives

Building massing refers to the general shape, form, size and logic of a structure and aims to provide a strategic overview of how to conceptualize building projects. After an analysis of various building factors, including: design, function, accessibility, security, technology, and sustainability, **consultants provided two alternative massing concepts for a new CDC building according to the needs and projections uncovered during the study. Both massings were performed on Duncan Plaza.**

Massing Alternative 1:

- 8 story court tower
- Linear court floor configuration
- Ground floor retail on site
- Three-level structured parking garage on site with 150 spaces
- Site requirement: 310' x 330'



Massing Alternative 2:

- 9 story court tower
- Double loaded corridor with quad-courtroom configuration
- Ground floor retail on site
- Three-level structured parking garage on site with 150 spaces
- Site requirement: 265' x 335'





3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.4 2016 CDC Feasibility Study & Assessment

In 2016 Yeates & Yeates Architects performed a feasibility study to assess the needs and requirements for renovation of the Civil District Court building. The 2016 feasibility study reveals a courthouse in need of repair. Built in 1960, the Civil District Court Building has reached the end of its functional life after nearly 70 years of service. While the basic structural system remains sound, many other building components have failed or become obsolete. The facility suffers from cramped conditions, outdated quarters, inadequate security, and non-compliance with modern building codes. All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems require replacement, and the building cannot accommodate current judicial operations effectively. **Although renovation is technically possible, it would require completely gutting the interior and rebuilding everything except the structural frame, essentially creating a new building within the old shell while adding 2-3 additional floors to meet space requirements.**

3.5 CDC Building History & Current Conditions in 2016

The Civil District Court building was constructed in 1960, making it nearly 60 years old at time of the Yeates & Yeates study. The building was part of a major public works program including the main library and Supreme Court building. The building has had multiple additions since the original construction:

- **1970:** Addition to rear of building for additional courtrooms/ancillary spaces
- **1984:** Judge's Conference Room, Jury Pool Room, additional courtrooms on upper floors
- **2004:** HVAC system alterations (maintenance-type work only)

According to the study, the existing building is "beyond its useful life" and "inadequate" for current needs. **The facility no longer meets nationally acceptable standards, according to best practices for courts.** Project consultants describe the building as "cramped" with "outdated quarters," and noncompliant with the current building code. Therefore, the findings present that the building needs substantial improvement or complete replacement.

The current building is hindering efficiency and effectiveness of judicial operations. There are not enough courtrooms to manage caseload. Facilities, especially conference rooms, do not provide adequate space for client / attorney meetings. Security and circulation are also an issue in maintaining proper function; there is not adequate space or design functionality to accommodate secure areas and public areas, leading to overlap. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) systems are obsolete and noncompliant with code. This translates to suboptimal operations of elevators, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, plumbing and electrical systems, which need servicing or complete replacement.

3.6 2016 CDC Future Needs Assessment

The study identified critical needs for:

- Enhanced judicial security
- Code and regulation updates and compliance
- Relocation/collocation of certain departments for better service
- Segregation of court types (Domestic, Civil, First City)
- Separation of public areas from private judicial services
- Increased square footage to reduce overcrowding
- 18 individual courtrooms with proper judicial suites
- Modern technology integration
- Proper circulation patterns separating public, secure, and service areas
- Updated MEP systems for energy efficiency and code compliance



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.7 2016 CDC Renovation Needs

As the scope of the study was to assess the feasibility of renovation, related recommendations resulted. **While it is possible to renovate the building, there are significant caveats.** Several factors support the possibility of renovation including:

- The building foundation and structural system are sound enough to support additional floors.
- Structural framing can accommodate expansion with the proper engineering.
- Column grid system allows for modern courtroom construction.

However, a complete gut of the building will be required to bring it up to standards:

- Only the structural system (foundation, columns, floors) would remain in any renovation-based scenario.
- All MEP, interior systems, and finishes must be completely replaced.

3.8 2016 CDC Renovation Schemes

The report presented five plausible renovation schemes, should decision-makers choose renovation. The schemes all presented one or more additional floors to the top of the existing buildings and several presented two proposed building additions/expansions: one along Poydras St. and a second on the opposite side of the building along Loyola Ave. The square footage and cost of each scheme is presented below, as estimated in 2016.

- Scheme A: 188K SF, \$47.5M, \$252/SF
- Scheme B: 188K SF, \$47.5M, \$252/SF
- Scheme C: 188K SF, \$47.5M, \$252/SF
- Scheme D: 234K SF, \$58.8M, \$251/SF
- Scheme E: 219K SF, \$54.9M, \$251/SF

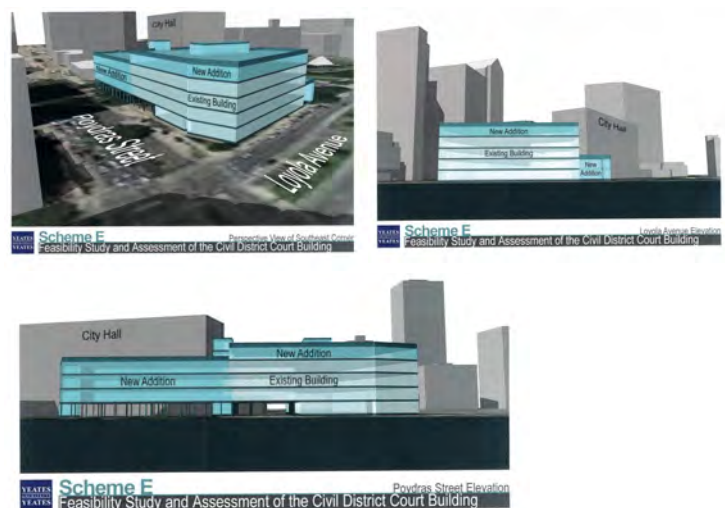
The figures presented at left are 2016 estimates. For purposes of this report the inflation adjusted (2025) range for renovation of CDC is **\$64M - \$74M.**

Diagrams for both the smallest scale renovation (Scheme A) and largest renovation (Scheme E) are included below.

Scheme A (Smallest Scale Renovation) - Various Views



Scheme E (Largest Scale Renovation) - Various Views





3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.9 2016 CDC Study Implications

The 2016 assessment essentially found a building that is structurally salvageable but functionally obsolete, requiring renovation so extensive it raises legitimate questions about whether new construction might be more cost-effective, though that analysis was outside the study's scope.

3.10 CDC Space Needs Report 2025

In March of 2025 DLR Group, Inc. (Architect of Record) and Manning (Associate Architect) generated an updated space needs report for the CDC. This Space Needs Assessment examines the requirements for a potential replacement facility for the Orleans Parish Civil District Court. The intent is for this Program information to be utilized as a basis for future design efforts in the planning, massing, siting, and coordination with other stakeholders for a facility that can meet the needs of the Orleans Parish Civil District Court for decades to come.

The architects leveraged a combination of methods to conduct the study. Stakeholder engagement helped them understand user needs from multiple perspectives, and visual and spatial assessments helped architects understand the current status of space in the CDC. Architects held two workshops to review preliminary results and concepts with user groups to gain input and feedback along the way.

The study demonstrated the following issues affecting the existing courthouse structure: material degradation, security problems with overlapping circulation paths (e.g. judges riding elevators with litigants, unsecure judge parking), and operational inefficiencies from decades of incremental renovations. Additionally, the report consolidated multiple offices currently housed off-site into a single facility, including Civil District Court, First City Court, Clerk offices, Tax Assessor, Sheriff's Office Civil Division, Constable offices, Judicial Administration, and Information Technology. The assessment provides quantifiable space requirements to support contemporary operations sized for stable New Orleans population growth while ensuring security for all users.

The report defined three types of square footage calculations:

Net Square Feet (NSF): This is the basic component in which the program is based. These areas are based on the space standards and represent the actual square feet in a room or the area needed to perform a task. These areas do not include wall thickness for interior or exterior walls.

Departmental Gross Square Feet (DGSF): This is the total area of a department and is calculated by multiplying the sum of departmental net areas by a departmental grossing factor. This factor is intended to account for the thickness of walls necessary to enclose rooms and to account for departmental circulation around the net areas. The grossing factor varies from department to department depending on the amount of circulation required. In general, larger areas require proportionally less circulation than smaller areas.

Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF): This is the total of all the departmental gross areas multiplied by a single building grossing factor. The grossing factor accounts for major interior circulation corridors needed to connect the departments on a given floor and building components such as stairs, elevators, mechanical rooms, and exterior wall thickness. The building grossing factor used for this project is 1.3.



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.11 CDC Space Needs Report 2025 (Continued)

At a very high-level summary, a replacement Orleans Parish Civil District Courthouse will require the following square footage to locate a projection of 18 judges and 460 staff members considering moderate growth for the future:

Dept Code	Department Name	Courtroom Quantity	DGSF	BGSF
1.0	Public Lobby & Staff Entry Areas		7,517	9,396
2.0	Building Support Spaces		8,725	10,906
3.0	Civil District Court	15	67,084	83,855
4.0	First City Court & Clerk	3	17,532	21,915
5.0	Shared Judicial Spaces		1,717	2,147
6.0	In-custody Transfer & Holding		3,294	4,118
7.0	Sheriff's Office Civil Division		9,402	11,752
8.0	Constable First City Court		4,157	5,197
9.0	Judicial Administration - JEF		10,855	13,569
10.0	Information Technology		3,845	4,807
11.0	Clerk of the Civil District Court		70,556	91,723
12.0	Tax Assessor		19,616	24,520
	sub-total	18	224,300	283,902

3.12 2025 CDC Report Guiding Considerations

Throughout the course of meetings, interviews, and discussions, key stakeholders prioritized **the following needs in the development of a future courthouse:**

- Exercise fiscal responsibility;
- Utilize the program data to “right-size” and modernize a facility to provide good working conditions;
- Consolidate services and offices housed off-site to be collocated under one roof;
- Consolidate departmental office areas for efficiency;
- Consolidate records storage and be efficient (i.e. high-density filing systems);
- Create efficiency for records retrieval;
- Locate high-volume public areas for ease of access;
- Anticipate future tech advances and automation that could reduce costs;
- Consider shared judicial spaces and feasibility thereof, as well as adequate judges chambers and offices;
- Consider future growth may not be inevitable with the possibility of scaling down;
- Consider parking availability; and,
- Analyze what is urgent versus what is needed versus what is desired.



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.13 2025 CDC Report: Programming Needs and Priorities

Through a process of iteration and feedback, **CDC stakeholders identified core planning principles for validating the programming and design of an updated CDC building:**

- Operational efficiency;
- Security and circulation;
- Flexibility over time; and,
- Right-sizing for current growth estimates.

Summaries of issues and program recommendations addressing these priorities follow:

Operational Efficiency: Consolidating disjointed operations will provide certain efficiencies to the CDC. The program aims to integrate operations currently at 421 Loyola Avenue and 1340 Poydras Street into a single facility. Similar to the City Hall program, this report recommends **housing public-facing services on the first floor or on low floors to increase accessibility and enhance user experience.** Records management is currently an issue that slows down work efficiency and effectiveness, as documents are stored across various locations. The program aims to **unify files into one centralized storage system, which will require a large amount of square footage of climate controlled and some refrigerated storage.**

Security and Circulation: In addition to efficiency, security is another chief concern in the current building(s). **Current circulation patterns (the way people move through spaces) pose potential security risks. A three-zone approach would separate public, restricted (judicial/staff), and secured (in-custody) circulation paths.** Additionally, the report calls for single-point entry in a new building to provide one main security checkpoint with metal detector and x-ray screening. There are also security enhancements needed for custody operations, namely a dedicated sally port (fencing to transfer individuals in custody securely to/from vehicles), central holding, and a secure elevator system for limited civil in-custody needs. Finally, the program recommends **60 dedicated spaces of secure parking for judiciary and key personnel with separate staff entry.** There are additional needs for staff, juror, and public parking as well.

Flexibility: The CDC houses a vast array of users and activity. With an eye towards the future, **the building must provide flexibility and accommodations for different user demands.** This need will be addressed through several key considerations and enhancements:

- Civil District Court: 15 courtrooms including specialized domestic relations and complex litigation spaces
- First City Court: 3 courtrooms with large public waiting areas for high-volume landlord-tenant proceedings
- Judicial Chambers: 18 complete chamber suites with dedicated private circulation access
- Department Specific Needs: Varying departmental functions require varying amounts and types of spaces
- Jury Services: 200-person jury assembly room with supporting amenities (quiet areas, lockers, wellness rooms)
- Support Spaces: Attorney-client conference rooms, jury deliberation rooms, and public wellness facilities
- Technology Infrastructure: Dedicated server rooms, training facilities, and A/V support throughout

Growth: Architects also considered **moderate population growth for New Orleans which drives moderate expected increases in caseload.** To accommodate these changes, adaptable furnishings, shared spaces, and infrastructure planning for automation technology are essential.



3. Civil District Court (CDC) Programmatic and Feasibility Studies, Cont'd

3.14 CDC Comparison of Needs Over Time

The table below presents a summary comparison of CDC needs over time as detailed in the studies and reports from 2013, 2016, and 2025.

	2013 CDC Architectural Program Study	2016 Feasibility Study & Assessment of CDC Building	2025 Orleans Parish Civil District Court Space Needs Assessment
Planning Horizon	2030	2030 - 2035	Not Specified
Anticipated Personnel (Judges + Staff)	320	Not Specified	478
Anticipated Square Footage	218,896 - Courthouse Only (293,896 w/ retail and parking)	188,000 - 234,305 (range from 5 design schemes)	283,902 (not including parking)
Scope of Study		Expansion of current building	Spatial needs to consolidate and overcome current issues

4. Gap Analysis: Existing Facilities vs. Required Space & Functionality

While there is significant historical value in current municipal buildings, they continue to deteriorate. **This deterioration has resulted in costly repairs, work interruptions and downtime from maintenance work.** In many ways, the buildings have outlived their useful lives.

While renovation would preserve the architectural integrity of building facades, they require nearly complete interior overhauls and additions. Additionally, **renovations may resolve some maintenance issues, but may not optimally prolong the useful life of these buildings, considering renovation costs.**

With new buildings there is opportunity to create a centralized municipal 'campus' that benefits the public, employees, and leaders. **A new complex provides functional efficiencies and adjacencies by housing most core City functions under one roof.** From a cost perspective, new construction will provide considerable investment up-front, but **increases energy efficiency savings and reduced maintenance cost requirements over time.** Finally, a new complex gives the City the **opportunity to impact all of its users in inspiring and exciting ways**, such as leveraging creative infrastructure for stormwater management, green spaces, etc.



4. Gap Analysis: Existing Facilities vs. Required Space & Functionality, Cont'd

	Current Spaces			Programmatic Vision		
	City Hall	CDC		City Hall	CDC	Total Gap
Square Footage	330,735	117,000		432,889–456,647	283,902	269,056 - 292,814
Personnel Capacity	1150	320		1330	478	338
Parking*	371	50		205 fleet spots ~1300 staff spots	60 secure spots 418 staff parking	1,562
Security	Not enough secure file storage	Mixed circulation with public, staff, and litigants		Added security for files, secure access-only upper floors and areas	Added security infrastructure	Major security issues for staff and public
Public Access	Some consolidated public access points (One Stop Shop)	Disjointed access to, and poor condition of, public spaces		Public lower floors, Secure limited access upper	Separate public access	Gaps in public, staff, and interdepartmental experience, including confusing navigation, fragmented access points, and limited integration between in-person and digital service delivery.
Adjacencies	Lack of adjacencies causing major workflow inefficiencies	Lack of adjacencies causing major workflow inefficiencies		Colocation of departments to benefit public and staff	Colocation of department to benefit public and staff	Major gaps in government and court efficiencies
Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing	Replaced on a break/fix policy, inefficient, and outdated	Obsolete and noncompliant		Significant upgrade or replacement	Full replacement	Significant issues in employee experience
RENOVATION				NEW BUILD		
Latest Cost Estimate	2023 Estimate: \$200M - \$282M	2016 Estimate: \$47.5M - \$54.9M		2026 Estimate: \$349M	2026 Estimate** \$217M	Numbers pulled from different years, so not comparable
Inflation Adjusted Cost Estimates	\$212M - \$295M	\$64M - \$74M		\$349M	\$217M	\$197M - \$290M

* Parking figures do not account for overflow parking, which is accommodated at the VA Garage and additional nearby parking facilities.

** CDC new build estimates not available. Estimates are extrapolated based on 2024 City Hall per square foot cost for new construction.



References & Source Materials

The following works were reviewed in preparing this section:

- [City Hall Civic Center Complex, Year Unknown](#)
- [City of New Orleans New City Hall - State Capital Outlay Request, 2026-27](#)
- [City of New Orleans, Mayor's Briefing: New City Hall, Preliminary Site Selection Comparison, 2023](#)
- [City of New Orleans Programmatic Study, 2019](#)
- [New Orleans Water and Infrastructure, 2015](#)
- Interview: Cynthia Connick, Former CEO of NOBC, 2025
- Interview: Howard "Trey" Nobles, Director of Property Management, CNO, 2025
- Interview: Judge Omar Mason, Chair of Judicial Building Commission, 2025
- Interview: Julio Miguel Viteri, Project Manager of CNO Capital Projects, 2025
- Interview: Anne Kirkpatrick, Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department, 2026
- Interview: Dr. Jennifer Avegno, Deputy Mayor, Health & Human Services, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Jonathan Wisbey, Chief Innovation Officer, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Steve Nelson, Deputy CAO Infrastructure, CNO, 2026
- Interview: Jamie Parker and Theron Levi, Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, 2026
- Interview: Darrick Hasson, Office of Coordination and Emergency Management, CNO, 2026
- [Orleans Parish Civil District Court Architectural Program Final Report, 2013](#)
- [Feasibility Study and Assessment of the Civil District Court Building, 2016](#)
- [Orleans Parish Civil District Court Space Needs Assessment, 2025](#)
- Site Visit: City Hall & Duncan Plaza, July 2025



SECTION 4:

Municipal Site & Facilities Alternatives

- Section Summary & Key Briefing Points
- Site Alternatives: Overview
- City Hall Site Alternatives: Comparison & Key Trade-Offs
- Duncan Plaza Overview
- References & Source Materials



Section 4: Municipal Site & Facilities Alternatives

Section Summary

The City of New Orleans has undertaken successive efforts over the past decades to evaluate alternatives for replacing or relocating City Hall and the Civil District Court (CDC). A summary of these efforts is outlined in this section. However, the section focuses mainly on the alternatives for City Hall explored in the last decade.

In 2021, the City explored relocating City Hall to the Municipal Auditorium in Treme, supported by FEMA recovery funds. That proposal was ultimately withdrawn following strong community opposition tied to the cultural significance of Congo Square and Armstrong Park, as well as zoning restrictions later adopted by the City Council prohibiting government use of the site. Following the rejection of the Municipal Auditorium plan, attention shifted to other downtown options. Beginning in 2022, the New Orleans Building Corporation and Capital Projects Administration evaluated ten sites, narrowing to six:

- 1615 Poydras Street
- 650 Poydras Street / Gallier Hall
- 1515 Poydras Street
- 1601 Perdido Street (former VA complex)
- Renovation of the existing City Hall
- New construction on Duncan Plaza, including the HEAL Garage site

Comparative analyses highlighted trade-offs across these sites. The evaluations conclude that reuse of existing office towers along Poydras Street provide adequate floor area but present challenges associated with irregular floorplates, tenant relocation, and structural modifications. The former VA complex offers substantial space without acquisition cost, but is located on a less prominent street and requires complete infrastructure replacement. Renovation of the existing City Hall was estimated at \$200–282 million and flagged as highly disruptive due to potential hazardous material abatement and the need to maintain operations during construction.

New construction on Duncan Plaza emerged as an alternative not constrained by existing structural layouts, though this option would require the loss of existing public open space. Preliminary estimates placed costs at least \$285 million, with advantages including purpose-built design and alignment with modern security, technology, and sustainability standards. To facilitate consideration of this alternative, the City and State pursued a land swap supported by equalization payments, which was approved by the City Council in March 2024. **With land control of Duncan Plaza now established, that site can be further evaluated alongside other scenarios as part of a structured decision-making process to determine the most appropriate long-term solution for New Orleans’ municipal complex.**

Duncan Plaza History, Current Conditions, and Opportunities/Challenges

Duncan Plaza has undergone multiple phases of transformation, from its origins as part of an 18th-century plantation to its development as a mid-20th-century civic space through urban renewal. **The site was cleared in the 1950s to establish the Civic Center, displacing a dense working-class neighborhood. Since then, it has served as a location for government functions, public gatherings, and, more recently, temporary encampments.**

Today, Duncan Plaza and the HEAL Garage are publicly owned by the City of New Orleans. Although the site includes existing civic infrastructure, **it is currently locked for public access, and in general is underutilized and subject to overlapping jurisdiction by several public and nonprofit entities.** Redevelopment presents opportunities to improve connectivity and reinforce civic identity given the site’s history as a cleared neighborhood.



Key Briefing Points:

- **Civic leaders have long recognized the need for new city hall and civil district court facilities**, undertaking several efforts to relocate these facilities over the past three decades.
- **Multiple relocation options have been studied since 2019**, with six primary alternatives emerging: three downtown office towers (1615, 1515, and 650 Poydras), the former VA complex at 1601 Perdido, renovation of the existing City Hall, and new construction on Duncan Plaza.
- **The Municipal Auditorium proposal for City Hall was abandoned in 2021** after community opposition tied to the cultural and historic significance of Congo Square and Armstrong Park, followed by zoning changes prohibiting government use of the site.
- **Existing office towers along Poydras Street and the old VA offer space for a new City Hall but evaluations of these sites have identified challenges**, including inefficient floorplates, major modifications required for the Council Chamber, and aging infrastructure, and a less visible location (old VA).
- **Renovating the current City Hall was estimated to range from \$218M to \$300M**, with high disruption from potential hazardous material abatement and the difficulty of maintaining government operations during construction.
- **New construction of a Municipal Complex at Duncan Plaza is estimated at \$300M+**, with advantages including purpose-built design, modern systems, lifecycle cost efficiencies, and potential for organizational transformation, but at the cost of losing a portion of one of downtown's few remaining green public spaces.
- **Duncan Plaza has deep historic resonance**, from neighborhood displacement during urban renewal, to serving as a stage for presidential speeches and civil rights marches, to its recent role as a gathering place for unhoused residents and civic demonstrations.
- **Redevelopment of Duncan Plaza offers both opportunities and challenges**: it could reinforce civic identity and reconnect the street grid, but also may invite public scrutiny around displacing unhoused individuals and removing an inclusive community space.

Key Questions for Consideration:

- Does the long-term value of a purpose-built municipal complex on Duncan Plaza outweigh the cultural and community costs of losing a key public space? How might the City offset these losses with other changes to create a valuable community asset in the heart of the Central business District?
- Is renovation of the existing buildings realistic given its high costs, disruption, and limited long-term return?
- Do office tower conversions along Poydras offer a viable civic identity and functional fit, or are their design constraints too limiting? What are the benefits and downsides of retrofitting an existing office tower?
- How should equity, history, and current community uses guide the decision on Duncan Plaza's future?
- How should parking, vehicular access, transit access, emergency access, and event-related traffic be evaluated as core feasibility criteria rather than secondary design considerations?
- Are there other locations beyond those previously considered that should be considered as part of this analysis?
- *What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?*



1. Site Alternatives: Overview

1.1 Context for Site Evaluation

City leaders have conducted a series of evaluations over the past several decades regarding site alternatives for both City Hall and CDC. Highlights since the early 2000s have included:

- **2009-10:**
 - Mayor Ray Nagin pursued the acquisition of 935 Gravier Street as the site of a new City Hall; however, the proposal was ultimately rejected by the City Council.
 - Act 900 of the Louisiana Legislature established the Judicial District Court Building Commission and authorized it to fund and plan a new civil courthouse through additional court fees. The legislation currently requires public bids for construction of a new facility to be let by August 15, 2031.
 - Act 768 authorized the State Commissioner of Administration to enter into a CEA with the City, identifying the state-owned portion of Duncan Plaza as a potential site for a new City Hall and CDC.
- **Charity Hospital:**
 - The Landrieu administration advanced plans to relocate both City Hall and the Civil District Court to Charity Hospital and commissioned multiple studies to evaluate the concept.
 - These plans were ultimately shelved due to cost and funding constraints.
- **Subsequent CDC Studies:** Studies commissioned by the CDC judges concluded that Charity Hospital could not feasibly function as a courthouse. In response, the judges championed construction of a new courthouse on Duncan Plaza.
- **2013:** Act 227 authorized a CEA between the BioDistrict and the Commissioner of Administration to facilitate development of the state-owned portion of Duncan Plaza as the site of a new Civil District Court.
- **2015:**
 - An updated space needs and site analysis commissioned by the CDC judges evaluated five potential locations and identified new construction at 1550 Canal Street as the preferred option. The Judicial District Court Building Commission later terminated the project.
 - In late 2015, the Judicial District Court Building Commission entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City outlining a vision for a future municipal complex on Duncan Plaza should the City ever obtain ownership of the entire site.
- **Municipal Auditorium:**
 - In 2021 Mayor LaToya Cantrell proposed relocating City Hall to the Morris F.X. Jeff, Sr. Municipal Auditorium in Tremé, leveraging \$38 million in FEMA funds for renovations.
 - The plan touched off widespread controversy, particularly over concerns about preserving the cultural integrity of Congo Square and the surrounding Louis Armstrong Park.
 - In response, the New Orleans City Council unanimously voted to pause the plan, putting it on hold while public opposition grew. In late 2021, the Council effectively killed the proposal by amending the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) to establish a thorough vetting process for any proposed relocation of City Hall anywhere in the City and to prohibit City Hall being moved to Armstrong Park.



1. Site Alternatives: Overview, Cont'd

Other recent steps to identify a new home for City Hall have included:

- Preliminary site selection comparisons led by the New Orleans Building Corporation (NOBC) and the Capital Projects Administration;
- Feasibility studies on specific sites, especially 1615 Poydras;
- Cost analyses from Woodward Design Group and other consultants; and,
- Legal counsel from Stone Pigman to inform required property exchanges, approvals, and financing pathways.

1.2 Recent Evaluation of Site Alternatives for City Hall

After eliminating four undersized options (Federal Reserve at 525 St. Charles, F. Edward Hebert building at 600 Maestri, Fifth Circuit Courthouse at 600 Camp, and 500 Poydras), **the following seven alternatives were evaluated in greater detail:**

- Renovation of Existing City Hall (1300 Perdido)
- 1615 Poydras Street (DXC Technology building)
- 650 Poydras / Gallier Hall
- 1515 Poydras
- 1601 Perdido (Old VA Complex)
- Old Charity Hospital
- Duncan Plaza / HEAL Garage (Build-to-Suit new construction)



2. City Hall Site Alternatives: Comparison & Key Trade-Offs

The following estimates were sourced from a 2023 briefing to the Mayor of New Orleans:

Property	Profile	Pros*	Cons
1300 Perdido (Existing City Hall) 	• <u>Footprint</u>: 360,000 sf + 85,000 sf addition • <u>Year Built</u>: 1956 • <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: \$212M (w/ VA as swing space) - \$295M (w/new building addition).	• Prominent location, centrally located downtown. • Sense of public familiarity, civic legacy, and presence as a recognizable architectural landmark.	• Limited access to adjacent parking. • Limited space for organizational growth. • Building age and condition requires significant renovations. • Renovating in place severely disrupts operations. • Challenges abating hazardous material while renovating in place. • Challenges isolating and segmenting building systems while occupying. • Complex occupancy planning would require a combination of temporary swing space, organizational compression, and multiple moves. • Aging structure (69 years old).
1615 Poydras (DXC Building) 	• <u>Footprint</u>: 507,000 sf, 29 floors • <u>Year Built</u>: 1984 • <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: \$237M (\$53M purchase + \$184M buildout)	• Familiar Geographical Location- close to existing City Hall. • Close proximity to ample parking at the old VA. • Regarding accommodation of City Council Chamber specifically, refer to separate study. • Sufficient square footage.	• Floor Plan presents space planning challenges (rounded portions of floorplate present some inefficiencies and challenges for efficient planning). • A study by Woodward concluded that the Council Chamber could not fit on the ground floor. The second floor could house the Chamber but only with major interventions and structural modifications, including removal of the third-floor slab to create a double-height chamber, and installation of a monumental stair in the lobby. • Aging structure (41 years old).
650 Poydras w/ Gallier Hall  	• <u>Footprint</u>: 453,000 sf, 27 floors, plus Gallier Hall • <u>Year Built</u>: 1983; 1853 • <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: Cost not fully pursued; buildout ~\$173M	• Prominent location, centrally located downtown. • Office tower is directly adjacent to green space as well as Gallier Hall. • Sufficient square footage.	• Floor Plan of 650 Poydras presents space planning challenges (long and narrow section opening into triangle shaped floorplate presents inherent inefficiencies and challenges for efficient planning). • Aging structures (40 and 172 years old).

Notes: Dollar values have been adjusted to account for inflation from 2023 to 2025; for any new location, there is an opportunity to monetize 1300 Perdido after the move.



2. City Hall Site Alternatives: Comparison & Key Trade-Offs, Cont'd

Property	Profile	Pros	Cons
1515 Poydras 	● <u>Footprint</u>: 530,000 sf, 27 floors ● <u>Year Built</u>: 1982 ● <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: Did not pursue costs	● Familiar Geographical Location-adjacent to existing City Hall. ● Sufficient square footage.	● 1 Floor Plan presents space planning challenges (sharp, irregular corners of rhombus-shaped floorplate presents inherent inefficiencies and challenges for efficient planning). ● Aging structure (43 years old).
1601 Perdido (Old VA Buildings) 	● <u>Footprint</u>: 1,000,000 sf, 11 floors ● <u>Year Built</u>: 1960s-80s ● <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: \$231M	● No building acquisition or land acquisition costs. ● More than sufficient square footage.	● Challenging existing building conditions. ● Located on a minor-appearing street ● Requires upgrade to all MEP systems ● Aging structure (40-70 years old)
Old Charity Hospital 	● <u>Footprint</u>: 1,000,000 sf, 17 floors ● <u>Year Built</u>: 1939 ● <u>Renovation Estimate</u>: \$285M+	● Repurposing a historic building and reduction of blight. ● Structural framework and foundation are sound and capable of reuse with relatively minor reinforcement needed for modern code compliance. ● More than sufficient square footage.	● Challenging existing building conditions. ● The façade poses a significant safety risk, as multiple stone panels have detached. ● Requires upgrade to all MEP systems. ● Facility is owned by LSU, with plans for Tulane to lease a sizable portion of overall square footage.
Duncan Plaza (including the HEAL Garage) 	● <u>Footprint</u>: N/A ● <u>Year Built</u>: N/A ● <u>Development Estimate</u>: \$325M+	● Maintains prominent location, centrally located downtown. ● New building infrastructure and systems with current standards in performance. ● Proper planning & design to reduce O&M costs over life cycle of building. ● Purpose-built design to accommodate organizational growth and contemporary workplace trends. ● Opportunity for local development under a public-private partnership (PPP). ● New physical space is an opportunity to implement organizational change.	● Loss of public green space. ● Preservation concerns.

Notes: Dollar values have been adjusted to account for inflation from 2023 to 2025; for any new location, there is an opportunity to monetize 1300 Perdido after the move.



3. Duncan Plaza Overview

3.1 Duncan Plaza History

Overview: Duncan Plaza's history reflects New Orleans' broader story of urban transformation, displacement, and renewal. Originally part of Bienville's 1719 land concession, the site evolved from a working-class neighborhood into the centerpiece of the mid-20th-century Civic Center. Over the decades, it has hosted parades, civil rights demonstrations, and presidential visits, while also facing periods of decline, redesign controversies, and post-Katrina challenges.

1719–1763: Colonial Foundations

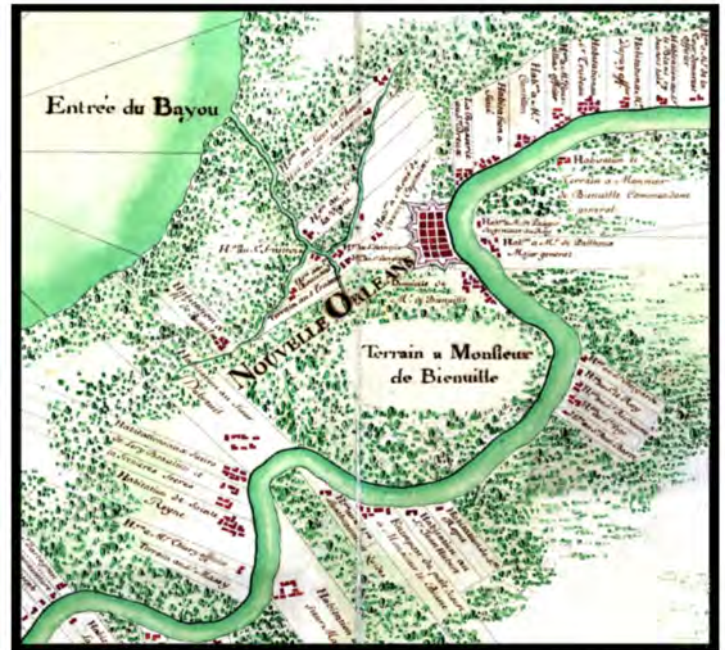
- Duncan Plaza's location began as part of Bienville's 1719 land concession, which was ceded to the Jesuits in 1726. Their plantation extended across what is now central New Orleans, relying on enslaved labor to cultivate the land.
- After the Jesuits' expulsion in 1763, the land was secularized and subdivided into urban plots, leading to the creation of Faubourg Ste. Marie, the city's first suburb.

1790s–1830s: Canal Construction and Industrial Encroachment

- The Carondelet Canal (1794–96) and New Basin Canal (1831–38) provided drainage and shipping access but physically isolated the neighborhood and introduced public health hazards.
- The New Basin Canal, dug largely by Irish immigrants, saw thousands of deaths due to disease and brutal working conditions.
- By the mid-1800s, Duncan Plaza's vicinity had become a logistical node, attracting industrial facilities and working-class housing.

Mid-1800s–Early 1900s: Back-a-Town and Working-Class Life

- The neighborhood became known as Back-a-Town, home to Irish, German, Sicilian, and Black communities living in shotgun houses, boarding houses, and corner stores.
- Despite public narratives of "blight," the neighborhood supported a vibrant cultural life with churches, street culture, and deep community ties. The presence of the New Orleans Gas Works imposed environmental risks, but the area retained its character and resilience.



The Sieur de Bienville land grant encompassed most of present-day Uptown New Orleans. Anon., "Carte Particulière du fleuve [fleuve] St. Louis dix lieues au dessus et au dessous de la Nouvelle Orléans" ca. 1723. [Anonymous, 1723]



The turning basin of the New Orleans (New Basin) Canal terminated at South Rampart Street between Julia and DeLord (Howard) Streets. The townhouses on the right were situated on South Rampart Street. Although the photograph shows several schooners, companies transported goods on the canal with small steamboats and barges pulled by mules. [State Library of Louisiana 1929]



3.1 Duncan Plaza History, Cont'd

1834–1939: Growth of the Medical District

- Charity Hospital relocated to Tulane Avenue in 1834 and continually expanded. By 1939, it was a 2,680-bed WPA-funded Art Deco facility, forming the heart of a growing medical district.
- In 1893–94, the city constructed a Criminal Courts and jail complex at Tulane Avenue and Saratoga (now Loyola) Street, replacing several residential and mixed-use lots and reinforcing the area's shift toward civic and institutional uses.
- This institutional expansion displaced residential blocks and deepened the tension between civic infrastructure and working-class housing

1940s–1950s: Planning, Clearance, and Civic Center Proposals

- The 1946 Civic Improvement Plan and 1957 Civic Center master plan envisioned a government complex anchored by Duncan Plaza. Mass demolition followed, displacing mostly Black renters with no meaningful relocation plans.

1957: Duncan Plaza Dedicated

- Duncan Plaza was established as the green heart of the Civic Center, named for City Planner Brooke Duncan.
- Framed by City Hall, the State Office Building, State Supreme Court, the Main Library, and Civil Courts, it symbolized rational urban design ideals.

1959–1963: Civic Ceremonies & Protests

- Hosted Mardi Gras parades (1959–63).
- In 1962, President John F. Kennedy addressed a crowd of over 80,000 at the Plaza.
- In 1963, a major civil rights march drew thousands, reinforcing its civic significance.

Late 1970s–1986: Unrealized Projects and Redesign

- A proposal to build the world's largest aviary was rejected following public pushback.
- In 1986, Duncan Plaza underwent a major redesign, introducing berms and a central pavilion intended to improve safety and usability. Instead, these interventions were criticized for reducing visibility and accessibility.



The present Charity Hospital (center right) built 1939. The existence of the Gas Works (center, lower edge) and the Back of Town (lower right-hand corner) dates the photograph to before 1951 [NOPL]



Duncan Plaza on Mayor Moon Landrieu's Inauguration Day, 1972 [NOPL]



Mayor Ernest Morial's Youth Rally, Duncan Plaza, Undated [NOPL]



3.1 Duncan Plaza History, Cont'd

2005–2007: Post-Katrina Encampment

- The State Office Building and Court were severely damaged during Hurricane Katrina and were later demolished. Duncan Plaza became a major homeless encampment.
- The plaza was cleared and closed in 2007, deepening its perception as a troubled and underutilized space.

2010s: Reimagining Civic Use

- Discussions began about the role of the plaza, with increasing use for protests, art, wellness programs, and civic gatherings.

2017–2018: Tactical Urbanism and Community Activation

- The Downtown Development District (DDD) and the Arts Council, with support from the Southwest Airlines “Heart of the Community” grant, launched a temporary revitalization of Duncan Plaza.
- Amenities included: a dog park, wellness classes, food trucks, and public art.
- The project increased public recognition of the plaza from 17% to 63% by its conclusion in September 2018

2021: Proposal for Stewardship Partnership

- A formal proposal was submitted by DDD, NORD, and the Arts Council to establish a long-term public-private partnership for maintaining and programming Duncan Plaza.
- The plan (not formally adopted) emphasized sustainable maintenance, inclusion, and historical acknowledgement.



Post-Katrina encampments prior to clearing, 2007 [Houston Chronicle]



DDD Plans for Duncan Plaza, 2018 [WWL]



Protesters in Duncan Plaza, 2020 [Twitter via AP]



3.2 Current Conditions

Overview: Duncan Plaza is currently underutilized, with limited daily activity aside from periodic public gatherings. The site is designated as parkland/open space and a 2024 environmental review found it suitable for redevelopment but flagged social equity concerns. Historically home to several statues, the plaza today retains a mix of monuments and pedestals, though many original figures have been removed.

Public Usage

- The plaza was recently closed to public access outside of special events and gatherings. Prior to this time, the plaza was being used to host periodic public gatherings and demonstrations, as well as unhoused individuals, but otherwise saw relatively low daily use. The Office of Homeless Services (now under HHS) assisted the small number of individuals living on the premises of Duncan Plaza and moved them into shelters and permanent housing, while providing comprehensive support services.
- Public safety concerns, a lack of programmed activities, and limited amenities contribute to its underutilization.

Zoning and Environmental Assessment

- Duncan Plaza is designated as “Parkland and Open Space” on the City’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM), with a goal of preserving areas for recreation, green infrastructure, and passive use. The designation emphasizes uses like stormwater management, cultural facilities, and programming that aligns with park character.
- The site is currently split-zoned: CBD-7 Bio-Science District, which allows City Hall as a Conditional Use; OS-N Neighborhood Open Space, which prohibits City Hall. However, the city could apply for a zoning change consistent with the underlying FLUM designation that would permit city hall as a conditional use.
- A 2024 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) found no hazardous materials, tanks, or Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs), deeming the site environmentally suitable for redevelopment. However, the census tract encompassing Duncan Plaza was identified as having high social vulnerability and low community resilience, indicating that residents in the surrounding area may face greater challenges adapting to change or recovering from disruptions, underscoring the importance of equitable and inclusive redevelopment.
- No Phase II ESA was deemed necessary, but further environmental review could be warranted in the event of redevelopment.

Statues & Monuments

Historically, Duncan Plaza included statues of figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Henry Clay, and Jefferson Davis, relocated to the Civic Center area during mid-20th-century redevelopment. The Jefferson Davis statue was removed in 2017 as part of the City’s broader Confederate monument removal process. As of September 2024, the following statues, plaques, and monuments exist in Duncan Plaza:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Edward Douglas White Statue | • Morrison Memorial Statue |
| • Brook Duncan (Pedestal Only) | • John McDonogh (Pedestal Only) |
| • Duncan Plaza Redevelopment Plaque | • Striding Man Statue |
| • The Pythian Temple | • War Flag Pole |



3.3 Duncan Plaza Opportunities and Challenges for Consideration

Overview:

As the Committee evaluates alternatives for the future of City Hall and the Civil District Court, it will consider the opportunities and challenges associated with each option. Several potential considerations related to new construction on Duncan Plaza are outlined below. **How does building new on Duncan Plaza compare with the other alternatives under consideration, and what opportunities and challenges does it present?**

Opportunities

Civic Identity and Continuity

- Duncan Plaza has long served as a civic commons. Originally the centerpiece of the 1950s Civic Center plan, it is framed by City Hall, Civil Court, and the Main Library, and remains symbolically linked to government activity in New Orleans.
- As a site of major civic moments, including presidential speeches, civil rights marches, and citywide protests, the plaza holds historic relevance as a space of public voice and governmental presence.

Centrality and Access

- The site is directly accessible via Loyola Avenue and Poydras Street and within walking distance of the CBD, French Quarter, public transit (streetcar and bus lines), and government buildings.
- It is familiar to residents as a civic anchor, making it a natural location for essential city services and administrative access.

Public Space with Existing Infrastructure

- Duncan Plaza already functions as a rare green public space within the downtown core. Recent improvements include seating areas, tree plantings, shade structures, and drainage work.

Opportunity for Urban Design Correction

- The plaza's existing design reflects mid-century superblock planning, which limits circulation and transparency. Indeed, a 1951 City Planning & Zoning Commission plan required adjustment of the street grid to accommodate Duncan Plaza and the Civic Center. Re-envisioning the site for a new municipal complex could create a more permeable, pedestrian-oriented civic center, with opportunities to reconnect the street grid depending on the design. Doing so would align with modern urban design principles, which recommend integrating new developments into existing street grids.

Potential for Commemorative and Educational Integration

- The site overlays a complex history: from its origins as a Jesuit plantation worked by enslaved labor, to a 19th-century industrial neighborhood (Back-a-Town), to a cleared working-class neighborhood under Urban Renewal.
- This offers the opportunity to incorporate interpretive elements, memorials, or cultural storytelling features that acknowledge displacement and community loss while creating a new civic future and presenting an opportunity to implement best practices for municipal buildings.

Existing Ownership and Jurisdiction

- As City-owned land, the site avoids private acquisition costs or legal uncertainty. This simplifies certain aspects of procurement and capital planning.
- Zoning and municipal use designations are already aligned with public functions, though a conversion from park to civic building use would require community input and formal approvals.



3.3 Opportunities and Challenges, Cont'd

Challenges

Displacement Legacy and Public Trust

- The area was cleared in the 1950s under Mayor Chep Morrison's Civic Center vision, displacing residents of a dense, multi-ethnic working-class neighborhood.
- Any redevelopment, especially of a highly visible public building, must directly acknowledge this history to avoid reinforcing public mistrust in top-down planning and displacement.

Current Park Uses and Community Value

- The plaza is currently closed to public access outside limited special events. In recent years prior to its closure, Duncan Plaza became a hub for unhoused individuals and a low-barrier public space downtown. Community organizations regularly used the plaza for outreach and support services. Removing or altering the park may be seen as eliminating one of few inclusive downtown gathering spaces, especially for vulnerable populations.
 - Efforts to fence off the park during design discussions or encampment sweeps have often generated public criticism and highlighted the need for inclusive engagement and equitable, human-centered solutions.
 - Stakeholders emphasized that any redevelopment strategy will need a credible plan for unhoused residents and service providers currently connected to the site, not simply a communications strategy after decisions are made. In recent years, the Office of Homeless Services (now under HHS) assisted the small number of individuals living on the premises of Duncan Plaza and moved them into shelters and permanent housing, while providing comprehensive support services.
- The park is one of the last green public spaces in the downtown core. Replacing open space with a building will likely face public scrutiny, even if offset by new greenspace investments elsewhere.
- The plaza has existing hardscape and infrastructure that would likely need to be demolished to make way for a new municipal complex, adding to project costs.

Layered Stewardship and Stakeholders

- A geotechnical exploration was completed by Gulf States Engineering in 2026. The results demonstrated the presence of multiple subsurface obstacles consistent with foundations of structures sited on Duncan Plaza prior to its current use. In the event of construction, these subsurface features would need to be cleared to accommodate new building foundations.
- Consolidating authority for redevelopment could prove politically and operationally complex, particularly if public-private partnerships, the federal government, or philanthropic funders are involved.



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SECTION 5:

Lessons from Other Cities

- Section Summary & Key Briefing Points
- Comparative Assessment Methodology & Highlights
- Municipal Facility Projects: Comparison Table
- In-Depth Peer City Case Studies
- Ecosystem Engagement & Master Planning
- Precedents of Ceremonial vs. Operational City Halls
- Themes and Strategic Questions for Committee Consideration
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Section 5: Lessons from Other Cities

Section Summary

Across the United States, cities are rethinking the role of the city hall and civic complexes generally within the broader civic and urban system. Rather than treating city hall as a single-purpose administrative building, many jurisdictions are developing civic complexes that integrate government services with public space, cultural functions, and economic activity. These projects are responding to changing expectations around transparency, accessibility, workforce needs, and downtown vitality.

This approach reflects a return to long-standing civic principles. Historically, civic life centered on shared public spaces where governance, commerce, and community intersected. Contemporary city hall and civic complex projects reinterpret this model for modern conditions, balancing symbolic civic presence with operational efficiency, flexibility, and long-term performance.

These initiatives are not simply about replacing aging infrastructure. Across the 23 peer city projects assessed, cities pursued a set of recurring objectives:

- **Improved service delivery:** consolidating services to make government easier to access and navigate
- **Workforce consolidation and modernization:** replacing dispersed, outdated offices with facilities designed for collaboration and flexibility
- **Civic identity and public presence:** reinforcing city hall as a visible symbol of government and community life
- **Downtown and economic development:** using civic investment to support activity, investment, and placemaking
- **Sustainability and resilience:** incorporating high-performance design, energy efficiency, and long-term adaptability
- **Financial discipline:** aligning funding, phasing, and delivery models with fiscal capacity and risk tolerance
- **Modern delivery approaches:** using CMAR, design-build, or P3 models to manage complexity and lifecycle performance

Across the peer set, many cities also made a deliberate distinction between ceremonial or political functions and day-to-day municipal and administrative operations, shaping how facilities were programmed, sized, and communicated to the public.

Building or relocating city hall and civil district court is therefore more than a construction project. It is a statement of civic values, a tool for improving how government works, and a long-term investment in the city's physical and institutional fabric. This section assesses 23 comparable projects, including new construction, major renovations, adaptive reuse, and multi-phase civic complex developments, across cities both larger and smaller than New Orleans.

Recent stakeholder interviews both locally and in peer cities validate the need for disciplined scope, early alignment across agencies and branches of government, realistic cost expectations, and a resident-facing value proposition grounded in service improvements.

Taken together, peer research demonstrates that the success of a municipal complex project can be influenced by a variety of planning, operational, financial, and governance considerations.

Which of these factors should carry the greatest weight in the Committee's evaluation?

What will be required to deliver a municipal complex that meets the City's needs and maintains public trust?



Key Briefing Points:

- **The analysis reviewed 23 peer city projects**, spanning new City Halls, civic center redevelopments, adaptive reuse, and phased campus strategies, to compare financing, delivery models, engagement approaches, and outcomes.
- **Cities increasingly approach civic facilities as part of a broader civic strategy**, integrating government functions with public space, cultural uses, and downtown development rather than isolating municipal facilities.
- For these precedents, **master planning is a critical success factor**, providing a framework to define vision, test alternatives, establish success criteria, and support phasing and funding decisions.
- **Many cities explicitly distinguish between ceremonial functions and operational headquarters**, influencing building size, location, security, and public interface.
- **Phased implementation is commonly used** to manage cost, align scope with funding capacity, and adapt to changing workforce and service needs.
- For these precedents, **public and internal engagement shapes both project legitimacy and funding viability**, particularly where voter approval or long-term political support is required.
- **Cities employed a wide range of financing tools**, often in combination, to balance upfront cost, long-term affordability, and risk.
- **Alternative delivery models such as CMAR, design-build, and DBFOM** were frequently used to manage complexity, control schedules, and clarify accountability.
- **Technology and digital infrastructure are increasingly treated as core civic assets**, shaping workplace design, flexibility, and long-term resilience.
- **Successful projects align civic identity with operational performance**, recognizing that public confidence depends on how well government functions day to day.

Key Questions for Consideration:

- What insights from case studies are the most important for New Orleans to consider?
- What delivery model best ensures efficiency, accountability, and alignment with project goals?
- How might master planning be utilized to inform municipal complex redevelopment?
- Should/could ceremonial vs. operational elements of municipal facilities be separated? If so, how?
- How can early and sustained stakeholder engagement be structured to secure trust and voter support?
- What are our broader goals for the CBD and how can this project help the City realize them?
- How should New Orleans balance public engagement with the need for a disciplined, time-bound decision process that avoids unnecessary delay?
- ***What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?***



1. Comparative Assessment Methodology & Highlights

To understand how other cities have developed municipal facilities, the team conducted preliminary review of 23 municipalities ranging from small cities to major urban centers. Our assessment focused on municipalities with potential lessons for New Orleans related to municipal facility development, master planning, and use of space for ceremonial and operational purposes. The initial assessment included the following municipalities:

- Alpharetta, GA
- Atlanta, GA*
- Boston, MA
- Chandler, AZ
- Denver, CO*
- Fort Worth, TX
- Huntsville, AL
- Las Vegas, NV*
- Long Beach, CA*
- Los Angeles, CA*
- Maricopa, AZ
- McKinney, TX
- New York, NY*
- Pasadena, TX
- Philadelphia, PA*
- Portland, OR*
- Raleigh, NC*
- San Diego, CA
- Seattle, WA*
- Snoqualmie, WA
- Sunnyvale, CA*
- Surprise, AZ
- Washington, DC*

A more in-depth assessment was then conducted for the following six cities: Sunnyvale, Long Beach, Raleigh, Portland, Las Vegas, and San José. These cities were identified as particularly relevant examples for how cities chose to pursue municipal facility development.

In addition, specific insights are presented around master planning and use of municipal facilities for ceremonial and operational purposes.

While our initial research included an evaluation of all 23 cities, details for only those 12 cities asterisked (*) above have been included in this briefing book, both for brevity and due to the quality of insights for New Orleans.

As a conclusion, we identified 10 themes to inform the Committee's recommendations:

1. Early and Robust Community Engagement
2. Master Planning to Set Direction Before Committing Resources
3. Clearly Defined Function for the Municipal Complex
4. Focus on Workforce Consolidation and Effectiveness
5. Phasing for Managing Cost, Timing, and Uncertainty
6. Alignment Between Financing and Long-Term Affordability
7. A Delivery Model that Balances Complexity and Capacity
8. Integration of O&M and Technology From the Start
9. Clear Governance and Decision Authority
10. Civic Presence Balanced with Operational Performance



2. Municipal Facility Projects: Comparison Table

	Sunnyvale, CA	Long Beach, CA	Raleigh, NC	Portland, OR	Las Vegas, NV	San José, CA
Population	145,302	450,901	499,825	635,749	653,843	1,013,000
Lot Size (acres)	26	22	1.45	1	2.8	32
Building Size (sq ft)	120K*	620K	370K	360K	310K	530K
Project Type	New Construction + Renovation	New Construction	New Construction	Renovation	New Construction	New Construction
Community Amenities	Park, trails, amphitheater	Library, Port headquarters, meeting space, park, plaza	Service center, council chambers, conference facilities, wellness space	Public meeting rooms, public art	Plaza, Municipal Court, Civic Center (leased to tenants)	Civic plaza; council chambers; public meeting rooms; integrated IT infrastructure
Funding/Financing	City lease-revenue bonds, land-sale proceeds, reserves	Lease-leaseback (cost-neutral), private capital via DBFOM	Limited-obligation bonds backed by City funds	City-issued bonds, limited tax revenue bonds, repaid through internal service-fund rentals	RDA lease-revenue bonds, Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds, New Market Tax Credits, sale of old City Hall	Limited-obligation bonds (Certificates of Participation backed by the general fund)
Delivery	Design-Bid-Build	Integrated Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain (DBFOM)	Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR)	Progressive Design-Build	Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR)	Design-Bid-Build
Years to Complete	5	5	Ongoing	3	4	5
Year Completed	2024	2019	2027 (est.)	2020	2012	2005
Notable Outcomes	Phased Civic Center Master Plan with integrated City Hall and public safety; strong focus on sustainability and accessibility	Delivered new City Hall, library, Port headquarters, and civic plaza; reduced operating costs; catalyzed downtown revitalization	Positioned City Hall as service-oriented, modern facility; maintained budget discipline; strengthened civic identity	On time and budget; repayment of debt via bureau rent payments; exceeded equity goals; long-term tech savings	LEED Gold City Hall; consolidated departments; created earned revenue opportunities; Zappos reuse of old City Hall; boosted downtown identity	Centralized government operations in a tech-enabled civic campus
Total Project Cost (\$M)	\$315*	\$520	\$206 (Project Budget - Ongoing)	\$214	\$146	\$284
Adjusted 2026 Cost with Inflation (\$M)	\$334	\$650	\$206	\$261	\$204	\$469
Adjusted Cost per Square Foot (2026)	\$2780*	\$1050	\$560	\$725	\$660	\$885

*The 120,000 sq ft figure refers only to the City Hall building; the broader project included extensive site and public-realm work (civic plaza, landscaping, stormwater management), resulting in a total project cost well beyond what the building size alone would suggest.



3. In-Depth Peer City Case Studies

3.2 Sunnyvale, California

The City of Sunnyvale's recent Civic Center Master Plan provides important lessons for the City of New Orleans as it evaluates whether to relocate and construct a new City Hall or develop a broader civic center. **Sunnyvale began its planning process with an ambitious vision to build a new City Hall, library, and public safety headquarters in a single comprehensive project.** However, financial constraints, operational considerations, and evolving community priorities ultimately led the City to phase its implementation, creating a model of strategic planning and community alignment that New Orleans can learn from.

At the heart of Sunnyvale's success has been its recognition that large civic projects require both financial feasibility and public trust. Initially, the City planned to deliver all three facilities simultaneously, but early cost estimates highlighted funding gaps and prompted leaders to pursue a phased approach. This decision allowed Sunnyvale to prioritize its most critical needs while maintaining flexibility to adjust future phases based on community input, financing availability, and operational demands.

Rather than relying on private financing or a voter-approved general obligation bond, **Sunnyvale funded its first phase through City-issued lease-revenue debt supported by land sales, reserves, and internal enterprise-fund allocations.** This publicly financed approach allowed the City to advance its most critical facilities—City Hall and the Public Safety Headquarters—while maintaining fiscal discipline and setting the stage for later phases such as the new Main Library, which remains in planning and will require additional funding to proceed following the failure of a 2024 general obligation bond measure.

One of the most significant lessons from Sunnyvale is the role of community outreach and engagement in securing voter support for future funding measures. While the initial phase relied on City financing, the proposed second phase—the Main Library—was placed before voters in November 2024 as a \$290 million bond measure. Although 59 percent of voters supported it, the measure fell short of the two-thirds supermajority required under California law. In response, Sunnyvale has continued its outreach through surveys, stakeholder workshops, and engagement at farmers' markets and community events to build deeper trust and understanding. For New Orleans, where future municipal complex funding will likely depend on voter-approved bonds, early and continuous engagement will be essential to securing buy-in and ensuring project success.

Sunnyvale's experience also demonstrates the value of establishing clear goals and success criteria early in the process. During master planning, city leaders defined priorities such as achieving LEED Platinum certification, meeting net-zero energy targets, and improving customer-facing service delivery. These priorities shaped every design and financing decision, ensuring alignment between city leadership, project teams, and residents.



Source: City of Sunnyvale Civic Center Master Plan

The new City Hall was conceived as a truly public space, placing the “one-stop-shop” permitting center and customer-facing services on the first and second floors, while ensuring that council chambers, meeting rooms, and community spaces were easy to navigate.

How might New Orleans benefit from defining its own set of non-negotiable objectives at the outset—whether focused on project cost, long-term maintenance, sustainability, accessibility, technology integration, or economic development?



Sunnyvale’s planning also prioritized flexibility and accessibility in design. **The new City Hall was conceived as a truly public space, placing the “one-stop-shop” permitting center and customer-facing services on the first and second floors**, while ensuring that council chambers, meeting rooms, and community spaces were easy to navigate. This intentional design enhances civic participation and public experience, an approach New Orleans may consider replicating to create a facility that serves not only government operations, but also the broader community.

Sunnyvale learned the importance of public outreach including surveys, workshops, engagement at community events to build public trust and buy-in. For New Orleans, early and continuous engagement will be essential to securing buy-in and ensuring project success.

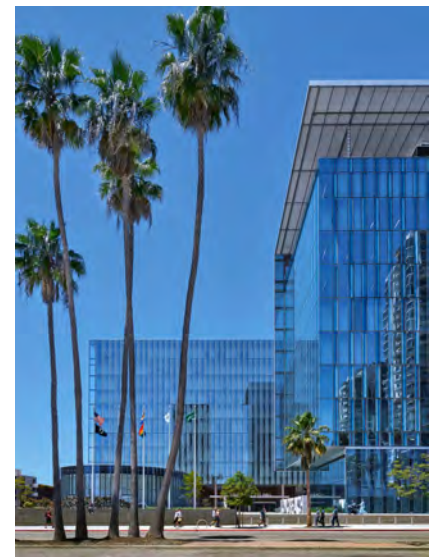
Finally, Sunnyvale’s experience highlights operational and delivery lessons, particularly the need to involve stakeholders such as facilities management, IT, and security teams early in the process. By coordinating these perspectives during planning rather than after construction, Sunnyvale reduced costly retrofits and operational inefficiencies.

In sum, Sunnyvale’s Civic Center Master Plan offers a compelling example of how cities can balance ambition, community priorities, and financial realities. Its lessons emphasize the importance of strategic phasing, clear success criteria, early public engagement, and thoughtful design to support operational efficiency and strengthen voter confidence.

3.3 Long Beach, California

The City of Long Beach demonstrates how financing, risk management, and community engagement can align. Facing a seismically unsafe and costly City Hall, the City pursued a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain (DBFOM) public-private partnership for its new Civic Center, drawing on lessons from the nearby Governor George Deukmejian Courthouse, the first major U.S. civic building delivered through a long-term DBFOM model. This approach aligned the developer’s financial incentives with long-term performance, maintenance, and community outcomes.

The project was financed through a 40-year lease-leaseback structure, with the City contributing approximately \$40 million in cash and land and committing to annual lease payments of about \$15 million—comparable to what it had been spending to operate and lease its outdated facilities. **This made the project effectively cost-neutral to the City and its taxpayers**, enabling the replacement of unsafe buildings without increasing the City’s annual budget or raising taxes.



City of Long Beach City Hall

The inclusion of operations and maintenance in the DBFOM model directly addressed the City’s deferred maintenance challenge. The private partner is responsible for maintaining the facilities throughout the 40-year term and must return them to the City with at least 80% of their useful life remaining, ensuring long-term stewardship and predictable lifecycle costs. The project also demonstrated how multiple agencies can successfully share a single civic campus. The City leases its new City Hall, while the Port of Long Beach owns its headquarters outright, creating a unified campus with distinct financial and governance structures.



Equally important was the City's approach to community engagement. Over the course of the project, 126 public meetings were held across all council districts, complemented by additional outreach and communications to build trust and sustain public support. This strategy of proactive engagement functioned as a deliberate risk management tool, strengthening transparency and ensuring broad buy-in.

Ultimately, the project did far more than deliver new facilities. It spurred economic activity, created jobs, and infused downtown Long Beach with renewed civic energy, demonstrating the multiplier effect of well-planned, financially disciplined public investment.

3.4 Raleigh, North Carolina

Raleigh's journey toward a new Civic Campus offers a compelling illustration of how financing, political dynamics, and project management intersect in civic development. **Unlike many cities that rely on voter-approved bonds, Raleigh chose to finance its project through limited obligation bonds.** This decision allowed the City to avoid raising property taxes and bypassed the uncertainties of a public referendum, made possible because leaders had the foresight to earmark debt capacity early in the process. With Phase 1 of construction now underway (the East Civic Tower, a.k.a. City Hall), Raleigh is advancing on a solid and sustainable financial foundation.

The political context in Raleigh continues to pose challenges as the civic campus project advances. With council terms lasting only two years, staff have had to repeatedly brief new administrations and rebuild momentum. Maintaining continuity has required clear, consistent messaging and visible champions who can articulate the project's long-term value, underscoring how political turnover can complicate even well-planned initiatives.

City leaders have found success by framing the project not as an extravagant new complex but as an opportunity to improve customer service. By emphasizing how the new Civic Campus would enhance the resident experience streamlining everyday interactions like paying water bills, obtaining permits, or attending public meetings they built broad support by both staff and the public. This message shifted the conversation away from cost alone and toward tangible improvements in service delivery.

Raleigh also learned valuable lessons about scope and team composition. The City emphasized the need for a multidisciplinary team from the start, but initial delays in embedding IT consultants and facilities staff led to complications later in the design process. **Leaders stressed the importance of incorporating comprehensive technical expertise early, ensuring that the building would meet operational needs and be maintainable over time.**

A similar lesson emerged in the City's approach to public art. Raleigh committed to allocating one percent of the budget to art, but because artists were not integrated into the design process early, the result was more complicated than intended. The experience **underscored the need to align cultural goals with architectural and operational planning from the outset.**



Rendering: Raleigh East Civic Tower, Phase 1 of its new Civic Campus

Raleigh highlights the importance of strategic financing, political perseverance, resident-focused messaging, integration of technical and cultural priorities, and continuous communication.



For Raleigh, communication and transparency have proved critical. The City has installed construction cameras and maintained a public-facing website to share progress, generate excitement, and counter mischaracterizations of the project as a “Taj Mahal.” These **efforts are helping sustain public trust.**

In sum, Raleigh’s experience highlights the importance of strategic financing, political perseverance, resident-focused messaging, early integration of technical and cultural priorities, and continuous communication. Together, these factors have helped turn a potentially controversial undertaking into a project positioned to redefine civic service and strengthen community identity.

3.5 Portland, OR

The City of Portland’s reconstruction of the Portland Building illustrates the challenges of modernizing a civic facility under financial, technical, and political constraints. Importantly, this municipal building did not house City Council chambers or Council offices. Rather, it was the administrative hub for more than 1,300 employees, adjacent to City Hall but separate from the City’s political center. Completed in 1981, the postmodern landmark quickly revealed major flaws: chronic water infiltration, seismic risks, and outdated systems. By the early 2010s, the City faced a choice: demolish and rebuild in place, relocate, or reconstruct in place. While the building’s historic significance mattered, the decisive factor was cost. Reconstruction was initially estimated at \$175 million, and Council ultimately capped the budget at \$195 million compared to more than \$300 million for new construction.

The project was financed primarily through City of Portland full faith and credit bonds authorized in 2016 for up to \$195 million. In 2018, Council added \$18.3 million in limited tax revenue bonds for tenant improvements and furnishings, bringing total borrowing to roughly \$213 million. **Debt service was repaid through rents charged to tenant bureaus, spreading costs across departments instead of raising new taxes. Including financing expenses, the all-in project cost was about \$225 million. This approach leveraged the City’s general fund and bureau rent streams, avoiding the need for voter-approved levies.**

City considered six options, ultimately selecting reconstruction as least costly

Option	Estimates	
	April 2014	September 2015
* Reconstruction	\$95 million*	\$175 million
Deconstruction and build new on existing site	\$316 million	\$320 million
Sell and buy elsewhere	\$128 million	\$210 million
Sell and build new elsewhere	\$214 million	\$220 million
Sell and permanently lease elsewhere	\$347 million	\$260 million
Sell and build new with partner elsewhere	Depends on partner	Not applicable

Source: City project records. Auditor has not made any adjustments for inflation.

* When estimated at \$95 million, referred to as an “improvements” option.

Strong governance proved decisive. **Council delegated full authority over execution to the Chief Administrative Officer, insulating the project from political gridlock.** Portland also used a progressive design-build model, selecting its contractor team based on experience, design, and equity commitments rather than lowest price. Co-locating the contractor and City staff enabled integrated decision-making, keeping the project on time and within its guaranteed maximum price.

“I can’t overemphasize how critical the governance model was for Portland. If you get that right—clear authority and decision rights—you’ll be able to solve problems as they come up.”

- Tom Rinehart, Former City Administrator

Equally important was change management. More than 1,300 employees were relocated during construction and returned to smaller, standardized workspaces. Anticipating resistance, **the City held nearly 90 staff meetings to build buy-in.** Employee engagement proved far more critical than broader public outreach, as the project drew limited public attention.



Interior view of the reconstructed Portland Building



Portland's equity goals were ambitious and largely met, supported by breaking large bid packages into smaller contracts accessible to local and emerging firms. A late-stage addition—a standardized technology and furniture package—was controversial but ultimately saved money over the long term and positioned the building well for hybrid work during the pandemic.

In sum, Portland's reconstruction underscores that civic projects require more than cost control. **Civic projects demand governance clarity, innovative procurement, strong employee engagement, and forward-looking equity and technology strategies.**

3.6 Las Vegas, Nevada

In the early 2000s, Las Vegas launched a long-term initiative to consolidate government services, revitalize the downtown core, and establish a clear civic identity. The centerpiece of this effort was the construction of a new City Hall, completed in 2012, which reinforced downtown as the seat of city government and catalyzed adjacent private investment.

City leaders viewed City Hall not as a stand-alone facility, but as a strategic public investment tied to broader economic and community outcomes. Civic development was intentionally linked to job creation, cultural activity, and long-term urban vitality. This approach unfolded in phases, with later investments building on the foundation established by City Hall. These include the Municipal Court, completed in 2020, and the Las Vegas Civic Center and Carolyn G. Goodman Plaza, completed in 2025.

City Hall (2012): Civic Anchor and Catalyst

Completed in 2012, Las Vegas City Hall served as the initial catalyst for downtown transformation. City leadership framed the building as both a functional government facility and a visible signal of long-term public commitment to downtown reinvestment. The approximately \$185 million project was financed primarily through lease-revenue bonds issued by the City's Redevelopment Agency and backed by downtown tax increment revenues. This structure allowed the City to proceed without direct voter approval while tying repayment to growth in property values. Federal subsidies and energy-efficiency incentives, including Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds and New Market Tax Credits, further reduced net costs and supported long-term operating savings. **Together, these tools limited general fund exposure and aligned financing with redevelopment objectives.** The building's design reinforced its civic role. A transparent public lobby, a prominent council chamber, and a one-stop customer service center emphasized accessibility and visibility of government functions. Architectural features such as programmable LED panels and solar elements positioned the building as a symbol of innovation and sustainability.

Following the City's relocation, the former City Hall was sold for approximately \$18 million and renovated for more than \$40 million by Zappos to serve as its corporate headquarters. Completed in 2013, this adaptive reuse anchored private reinvestment and helped reposition downtown as a center for technology and entrepreneurship.



City of Las Vegas City Hall

The project stands out for its integration of sustainability, community access, technological infrastructure, and its proximity to hotels, cultural attractions, and public transit.



Solar Panels, City of Las Vegas City Hall



Las Vegas Civic Center and Carolyn G. Goodman Plaza

Las Vegas Civic Center (2025): Expansion and Consolidation

Building on the foundation established by City Hall, the City of Las Vegas completed the Las Vegas Civic Center and Carolyn G. Goodman Plaza in 2025. The Civic Center was conceived as an expansion and consolidation project, not a renovation or replacement of the 2012 City Hall. **From the outset, it was designed as a two-building campus with distinct purposes: one building dedicated to municipal operations and workforce needs, and a second building designed for leased civic and economic development uses.** The project responded to continued population growth, rising service demands, and post-COVID space pressures. As city departments expanded and operations became increasingly dispersed across leased facilities, leadership identified the need to consolidate services downtown while also leveraging civic real estate to support economic development. Alongside City Hall and the Municipal Court, the Civic Center completes a multi-phase civic district in downtown Las Vegas.

One Civic Center building is fully occupied by the City of Las Vegas and houses departments that were displaced or overcrowded over time. It is dedicated exclusively to municipal operations and includes no external tenants. This building was financed through city-issued bonds approved by City Council and supported by existing revenue streams. The second building was intentionally designed as a leased civic and economic development asset.

Its tenants include the Vegas Chamber of Commerce, the Nevada Secretary of State, and Workforce Connections, and it incorporates ground-floor retail and restaurant space open to the public. This building was financed using Redevelopment Agency funds, with long-term leases structured to recover tenant improvement costs and generate ongoing revenue. The Civic Center was delivered using a Construction Manager at Risk model, providing schedule certainty and cost control. **As with City Hall, Las Vegas emphasized long-term operations and maintenance planning through an internal service fund model with per-square-foot lifecycle budgeting.** Communications followed a consistent narrative focused on completing the civic campus, consolidating services, and improving efficiency for residents.

Las Vegas illustrates the value of sequencing civic investment over time. City Hall established a civic anchor and redevelopment catalyst, while the Civic Center expanded capacity to meet growth, workforce, and service needs through a differentiated approach. Separating municipal operations from revenue-generating civic assets limited general fund exposure and strengthened downtown economic activity. Together, these investments show how civic facilities can function as coordinated components of a long-term urban development strategy rather than isolated capital projects.



3.7 San José California

When San José City Hall opened in 2005, it consolidated city government offices into a modern 18-story tower and associated campus in downtown San José. From the beginning, the project treated IT infrastructure as foundational: the new building replaced a scattered network of leased offices, enabling consolidation of operations under a unified facility footprint.

In 2016, the city formally adopted a Smart City Vision: a strategic plan to make San José a “global leader for civic innovation,” leveraging data, IoT, broadband expansion, and digital services across departments.

As part of that strategy, San José launched a Digital Inclusion and Broadband Strategy to address widespread connectivity gaps: in 2015–2016, city estimates found tens of thousands of residents lacked home internet access or adequate devices. To close that divide, the city committed to expanding broadband infrastructure, providing public-private grants, and building service-delivery platforms accessible to underserved communities.

Most recently (2023–2025), the city has launched several initiatives to operationalize generative artificial intelligence (AI) across its workforce and civic systems. Although some research organizations and public analysts have expressed cautions for municipal adoption, namely the risk of service quality degradation, privacy risks, and a decrease in public trust, San José has been at the forefront of implementing the technology into its workflows. To implement AI safely, effectively, and responsibly, the city has taken the following actions:

- **Published a formal AI policy framework** to govern municipal use of generative AI, requiring that city staff use only city-approved AI tools, treat outputs as draft content (subject to human review), avoid inclusion of private or sensitive data, and log instances of use.
- **Created an AI Upskilling Program** in partnership with San José State University, offering a 12-week training course that teaches municipal employees how to build and use custom AI assistants to support daily tasks.
- **Helped establish the GovAI Coalition**, a national network of local, state, and federal agencies designed to share tools, lessons learned, and open-source resources for government AI deployment.
- **Created the AI Incentive Program**, one of the first city-led AI grant programs in the United States, supporting startups working on public-interest challenges including maternal health, food systems, and sustainable computing.
- **Began applying AI to operational areas** such as permitting and 311 service categorization, demonstrating an emphasis on practical, high-volume municipal workflows.

From the beginning, San José treated informational technology infrastructure as a foundational element of its project to build its new city hall.

Taken together, these efforts illustrate how San José is operationalizing AI within a broader digital modernization agenda that began with its consolidated civic campus and foundational IT infrastructure. The city continues to expand its capabilities through structured governance, workforce training, and targeted operational pilots, positioning AI as an incremental extension of existing systems rather than a standalone initiative.



4. Ecosystem Engagement & Master Planning

Across multiple peer city case studies, one consistent lesson emerges: **successful municipal complex projects are not standalone building efforts, but the result of comprehensive master planning that defines long-term vision, phasing, financing strategy, urban integration, and performance expectations before construction begins.** In Sunnyvale, Raleigh, Long Beach, and Las Vegas, master planning provided a structured framework for comparing alternatives, sequencing implementation, aligning civic investments with broader downtown strategies, and embedding lifecycle and sustainability goals into decision-making.

While community engagement was an important component in each case, it functioned within a broader planning structure. Cities used workshops, surveys, and stakeholder forums not as ends in themselves, but as tools to inform site selection, open-space design, phasing priorities, and funding strategy. In several cases, early transparency and structured engagement strengthened political legitimacy and positioned projects for successful bond measures or innovative financing approaches.

Together, these examples demonstrate that master planning serves as the bridge between civic vision and capital execution, by translating long-term urban goals into implementable, defensible, and financially viable municipal investments.

4.1 Community Outreach & Engagement in the Master Planning Process

How can New Orleans engender public confidence and institutional alignment around its municipal complex initiative?

Peer cities suggest that engagement is most effective when it is:

- **Structured and Criteria-Driven:** Establishing clear vision statements, success metrics, and evaluation criteria before design decisions are finalized.
- **Alternative-Based and Transparent:** Presenting defined options, cost implications, and trade-offs to inform public and Council decision-making.
- **Integrated with Phasing and Financing:** Linking engagement outcomes directly to implementation sequencing and funding strategy, including voter-supported bond measures where applicable.
- **Connected to Broader Urban Goals:** Framing civic facilities as part of a larger downtown ecosystem, including public space activation, connectivity, and economic development.

What opportunities does master planning present for New Orleans?



4.1 Sunnyvale: Master Planning Highlights

What the master planning process did

- **Established a 20-year, multi-phase roadmap:** Sunnyvale’s Civic Center Master Plan is explicitly framed as a 20-year, multi-phased vision to modernize the 26-acre civic campus, with Phase 1 (new City Hall and Public Safety addition), Phase 2 (new Main Library), and Phase 3 (future Public Safety HQ).
- **Created clear “success criteria” and engagement structure early:** Before locking into a preferred scheme, Council approved a vision statement, success criteria, needs assessment, and a community engagement plan (2015). Those criteria and the engagement framework then guided:
 - Multiple community workshops and charrettes
 - Surveys on alternative site layouts (e.g., “Alternative 1 – Plaza” vs. “Alternative 2 – Larger Open Space”), including an online survey with 279 responses used to inform the preferred option.
- **Structured a public, alternative-driven decision.** The city ran an “Open City Hall” survey and broader outreach to compare two master plan alternatives, then used that input plus cost estimates to take a formal report to Council. Council selected “Option 1 – Plaza” as the preferred master plan alternative, with a program EIR prepared before final adoption.
- **Linked policy decisions to specific project choices.** The master plan’s adoption (2018) was paired with Council direction to pursue a Net Zero, LEED-Platinum City Hall and to phase the campus so the city could start with City Hall and a Public Safety addition while deferring later pieces.

How master planning enabled the success of municipal building development

- **Gave the city a defensible path for an ambitious, sustainable building.** Because “vision + success criteria” were adopted before design, staff could justify a more expensive but higher-performing net-zero City Hall and LEED-Gold EOC as delivering on community-endorsed goals rather than “nice-to-have” add-ons.
- **Made phasing politically and fiscally workable.** The master plan explicitly defined what belonged in each phase and how the campus would function as pieces came online, letting Council approve **Phase 1** (City Hall + EOC + site public realm) with a clear understanding that library and other components would follow as funding and support allowed.
- **Built legitimacy through visible engagement.** A formal engagement plan, documented workshops, and measurable survey participation (279 responses) created a record that the campus form and open-space strategy came from a structured public process, which is important for defending big civic investments.

4.2 Raleigh: Master Planning Highlights

What the master plan process did

- **Started from a citywide strategic plan objective.** Raleigh’s 2015 citywide Strategic Plan called for aligning facilities, staff, and technology and planning a centralized civic campus to provide easier access to city services. Council then authorized a Civic Campus Master Plan study in 2016, culminating in master plan approval in 2018
- **Defined a three-phase Civic Campus on the Upchurch block.**
 - The approved Civic Campus Master Plan lays out a 3-phase build-out on the Avery C. Upchurch (“municipal”) block:
 - Phase 1 – East Civic Tower (new City Hall): 17-story tower consolidating staff and public-facing functions, while existing municipal buildings remain operational.
 - Phase 2 – West Building: eventual replacement of the existing Raleigh Municipal Building with a second tower and central plaza tying both buildings together.
 - Phase 3 – Mixed-use public-private development on the former parking deck site.



4.2 Raleigh: Master Planning Highlights, Cont'd

- **Used master planning to quantify “do-nothing” vs. “rebuild.”** The civic campus master plan documentation highlighted that simply maintaining scattered, aging municipal buildings downtown would cost an estimated \$245M over 30 years just to maintain the status quo, helping justify the investment in a consolidated campus.
- **Tied building form to urban design and connectivity goals.** The plan frames the campus as a mixed-use, walkable destination with strong pedestrian connections along Hargett and Morgan Streets, linking Nash Square, the Warehouse District, and Fayetteville Street, and drawing on the 2015 Downtown Plan’s streetscape vision.
- **Embedded community communication and information sessions.** Raleigh’s City Hall project page points to 2019 information sessions on the Civic Campus as part of the project’s history and resources, showing that the master plan process included outreach about goals, phases, and impacts before construction.

How master planning enabled the success of municipal building development

- **Enabled consolidation without service disruption.** By planning the East Civic Tower as Phase 1 while keeping the Raleigh Municipal Building and parking deck in operation during construction, the master plan gave a clear phasing logic that let the city modernize facilities without shutting down core services.
- **Created a long-term cost and service narrative.** The master plan’s “cost of doing nothing” analysis plus the strategic objective of a consolidated campus gave a strong storyline: a single, more efficient tower would reduce long-term operating and maintenance burdens, improve security, and provide more convenient one-stop customer service.
- **Positioned the project as an urban catalyst, not just a building.** Because the master plan explicitly considered connectivity to Nash Square and surrounding districts, and reserved a later phase for mixed-use private development, it framed the Civic Campus as part of a **broader downtown revitalization strategy**, which tends to help with political and community support.

4.3 Long Beach Master Planning Highlights

What the master plan process did

- **Reframed an aging superblock as a 22-acre mixed-use district.** The Long Beach Civic Center Master Plan by SOM was charged with transforming an outdated, 1970s “megablock” civic complex into a welcoming, walkable district, with a new City Hall, Port of Long Beach HQ, Billie Jean King Main Library, and a reactivated Lincoln Park. The plan also sets design guidelines for new residential and commercial development and ties the site into the city grid, bike network, buses, and the Metro Blue Line.
- **Integrated public realm, buildings, and long-term operations from the start.** The master plan emphasizes plazas, promenades, and a re-programmed Lincoln Park (with a “cultural loop” of artistic and historical elements) as integral components rather than add-ons, with civic buildings opening onto a shared Civic Plaza.
- **Sat on top of an existing downtown plan and program EIR.** Long Beach officials note that they already had an adopted Downtown Plan with a programmatic EIR, which they leveraged to accelerate entitlements for the Civic Center project by roughly 18 months, effectively using prior planning work as a foundation for this more detailed civic master plan and P3 procurement.
- **Structured the project as a 40-year DBFOM under a comprehensive master plan.** The city chose a Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain (DBFOM) concession with Plenary Properties Long Beach: the consortium designed, built, and financed the new civic center and will operate and maintain it over a 40-year term, after which the city gets the facilities back at a specified condition standard.



4.3 Long Beach Master Planning Highlights, Cont'd

- **Coupled civic facilities with monetized development opportunities.** Within the master plan footprint, the city contributed land for private development as “trade bait,” which the private partner could monetize (e.g., residential). This helped make the numbers work while still delivering the core civic program (City Hall, port HQ, library, park, plaza).

How master planning enabled the success of municipal building development

- **Made lifecycle performance non-negotiable.** Because the DBFOM agreement requires the civic center to be returned in near-new condition at the end of the 40-year term, the private partner is incentivized to design and maintain buildings with long-term performance in mind, not just initial cost. The master plan, financial model, and performance requirements were developed together to support this.
- **Turned a failing complex into a downtown anchor.** The existing civic center had serious seismic and maintenance issues and sat on a 15-acre superblock disconnected from the finer downtown grid. The master-planned redevelopment put new streets through the site, created a more permeable, street-oriented urban fabric, and repositioned the area as a civic + residential + commercial node, which was key to Council support and external awards.

4.4. Last Vegas Master Planning Highlights

What the master plan process did

- **Established a long-range civic and downtown vision to guide public investment.** The City of Las Vegas adopted formal citywide and downtown master planning frameworks to define land use, public space, mobility, and infrastructure priorities for the urban core, explicitly positioning civic facilities as anchors of downtown revitalization rather than standalone buildings.
- **Linked civic facilities to broader downtown redevelopment goals.** Downtown master planning articulated how public buildings, plazas, streetscapes, and private development should work together to increase walkability, activate public space, and support economic diversification beyond tourism.
- **Created a policy and regulatory framework to implement the vision.** The downtown master planning process informed updates to zoning and the adoption of a form-based code for Downtown Las Vegas, aligning building form, public realm design, and street activation with long-term civic and urban design objectives.
- **Emphasized public engagement and measurable outcomes.** Both citywide and downtown planning efforts incorporated structured community engagement and articulated goals related to public access, open space, transportation, and service delivery, creating a shared reference point for evaluating major public investments.

How master planning enabled the success of municipal building development

- **Positioned City Hall as a civic anchor rather than an isolated capital project.** Although Las Vegas City Hall was completed in 2012, subsequent master planning reinforced its role within a broader downtown civic district, strengthening the rationale for continued public investment and expansion around an established government presence.
- **Enabled phased and sequenced civic investment over time.** The presence of a long-range planning framework allowed the City to pursue additional civic and public-realm projects incrementally, aligning timing, funding, and scope with evolving needs while maintaining consistency with the adopted downtown vision.
- **Improved alignment between municipal facilities and economic development objectives.** By embedding civic buildings within a master-planned downtown strategy, Las Vegas leveraged municipal facilities to support street-level activity, adjacent private development, and long-term downtown vitality, extending the impact of City Hall beyond internal government operations.



5. Precedents of Ceremonial vs. Operational City Halls

Across major U.S. cities, it is common to distinguish between city hall as a civic symbol and municipal office buildings as functional workplaces. Historic or purposefully designed city halls typically serve as the ceremonial and political heart of local government, housing the mayor’s office, council chambers, and spaces for public convenings, while most day-to-day administrative work occurs elsewhere. In New York City, City Hall is both the symbolic seat of government and a national landmark, while the Manhattan Municipal Building was constructed to relieve space constraints and consolidate agency staff. Seattle follows a similar model through its civic campus, with City Hall designed as a public-facing space and the Municipal Tower housing departmental offices.

This approach balances symbolic continuity with operational efficiency. In Denver, the City and County Building anchors Civic Center Park as a ceremonial landmark, while the Wellington E. Webb Municipal Office Building addresses crowding and modern workspace needs. Portland treated the reconstruction of the Portland Building as a long-term investment in modernized administration, and Atlanta preserves its historic City Hall as the civic core while relying on an adjacent annex for high-volume customer services. Together, these examples reflect a consistent municipal strategy: maintain city hall as the public face of democracy, while situating large-scale operations in buildings designed for flexibility and scale.

5.1 Comparison Snapshot: Ceremonial vs. Operational City Halls

City	Ceremonial / Symbolic Facility	How the Split Works
Atlanta	Atlanta City Hall (1930 tower, historic landmark, mayor/council presence)	Tower maintains ceremonial identity; Annex handles day-to-day operations, permitting, licensing, and staff workspace.
Denver	City and County Building (historic civic anchor, symbolic government seat)	City Beautiful civic core preserved for ceremonial/leadership functions; Webb Building provides modern administrative workspace.
Los Angeles	LA City Hall (symbolic tower, mayor and council)	City Hall is leadership/ceremonial; adjacent buildings house the majority of operational staff and public counter services.
New York City	New York City Hall (mayor, council, landmark building)	Historic City Hall serves symbolic and leadership roles; Municipal Building consolidates most agency staff and public services.
Philadelphia	Philadelphia City Hall (iconic historic building, leadership functions)	City Hall remains symbolic/political core; MSB functions as centralized operations and public-service hub.
Portland, OR	Portland City Hall (mayor, council chambers, civic meetings)	City Hall remains legislative/ceremonial; Portland Building is the primary workplace and customer-service center.
Seattle	Seattle City Hall (public-facing, civic “living room,” council functions)	Master-planned Civic Center; City Hall is ceremonial/public-facing while the Tower houses large department workforces.
Washington, DC	John A. Wilson Building (designated City Hall, mayor + council)	Wilson Building is ceremonial/political center; agencies operate from separate modern office facilities.



5.2 How and Why Cities Create the Split

1. Space & functional constraints

- NYC explicitly built the Manhattan Municipal Building because New York City Hall had “run out of space” and many agencies were renting scattered offices; the new building consolidated those functions.
- Portland constructed the Portland Building as administrative offices because existing civic buildings could not accommodate all city bureaus.

2. Preserving historic / symbolic value

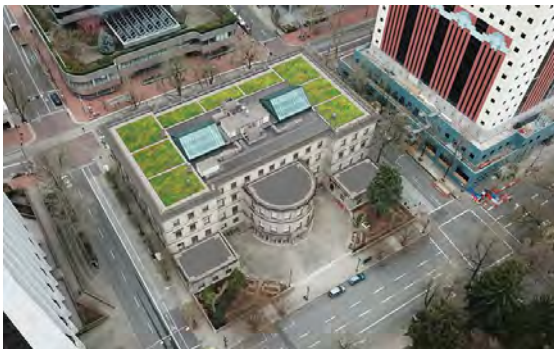
- Denver’s Civic Center (including the City and County Building) was deliberately designed as a City Beautiful civic ensemble to be the ceremonial focus of government and culture.
- New York City Hall is a designated city and national landmark; tours and ceremonial uses are emphasized in official descriptions.

3. Security, building performance, and modernization

- Portland’s reconstruction of the Portland Building involved full exterior replacement, seismic upgrades, major MEP replacement, and a new interior workplace to better support staff while maintaining the landmarked exterior.
- Los Angeles City Hall has undergone seismic retrofits to remain functional after major earthquakes, but many operational departments are located in surrounding office buildings rather than concentrating all staff in the historic tower.

4. Public interface vs. back-of-house operations

- Philadelphia’s Municipal Services Building is described as the “official hub for city government information and services,” where residents come to pay bills and access multiple departments—functionally a one-stop operations center separate from the ceremonial City Hall.
- Portland’s City Hall, also recently gut renovated and equipped with green features, is home to council chambers, administrative offices, and the mayor’s office, while the Portland Building houses bureaus and staff.



Left:
*Portland City Hall
and the Portland
Building (right)*

Right:
*Atlanta City Hall
(tower) and Annex
(foreground)*



Left:
*Denver City and
County Building
and Webb
Building (right)*

Right:
*Philadelphia City
Hall and
Municipal Services
Building (left)*





6. Themes and Strategic Questions for Committee Consideration

Drawing from peer city experiences, several overarching lessons emerge that may inform New Orleans' approach to planning and delivering a new municipal complex.

1. Early and Robust Community Engagement

Across cases, funding success depended on trust. Cities that communicated clearly, explained tradeoffs, and engaged early were better positioned to secure voter or political support.

How might New Orleans approach engagement as an ongoing effort tied to decision points, not a one-time exercise?

2. Master Planning to Set Direction Before Committing Resources

Peer cities show that master planning is the phase where vision, scope, cost, and feasibility are aligned. A strong master plan clarifies alternatives, establishes success criteria, and provides the foundation for phasing and funding decisions.

How might New Orleans benefit from master planning before major capital commitments are made?

3. Clearly Defined Function for the Municipal Complex

Cities that explicitly distinguished between ceremonial purposes, community functions, and day-to-day operations made better decisions about size, security, access, and programming.

How might New Orleans define what belongs in a centralized municipal complex or campus environment versus what should remain distributed across the city, including how ceremonial, administrative, public-facing, investigative, emergency coordination, and digital service functions should relate to one another?

4. Focus on Workforce Consolidation and Effectiveness

Many cities used municipal building projects to consolidate scattered departments and modernize the workplace. Doing so improved efficiency, collaboration, and employee experience while reducing long-term costs.

How might New Orleans ground planning in realistic workforce needs and future work patterns?

5. Phasing for Managing Cost, Timing, and Uncertainty

Strategic project phasing allowed peer cities to move forward while preserving flexibility as funding, politics, and needs evolved. It also helped separate core government functions from later civic or complementary investments.

How might New Orleans treat phasing as a strategic tool, not a fallback?

6. Alignment Between Financing and Long-Term Affordability

Peer cities used a range of financing tools, often in combination. The most successful approaches evaluated not only upfront cost, but long-term operating and maintenance obligations.

How might New Orleans assess financing options through a full lifecycle lens?



6. Themes and Strategic Questions for Committee Consideration, Cont'd

7. A Delivery Model that Balances Complexity and Capacity

Alternative delivery models helped manage schedule and cost, but only when aligned with internal capacity and clear governance.

How might New Orleans select a delivery approach that supports accountability, continuity, and informed decision-making?

8. Integration of O&M and Technology From the Start

Cities that planned early for facilities management, IT, security, and emergency operations avoided costly retrofits and operational issues. Modern municipal facilities support flexible work, digital service delivery, resilient systems, and long-term maintainability.

How might O&M and IT requirements shape how New Orleans scopes, designs, procures, and budgets from the outset?

9. Clear Governance and Decision Authority

Major civic projects can span multiple administrations. Peer cities that defined roles, authority, and escalation paths early were better able to maintain momentum and control scope.

How might New Orleans set governance structures during planning to ensure continuity over time?

10. Civic Presence Balanced with Operational Performance

Successful municipal developments combined symbolic value with practical function. While civic identity matters, public confidence ultimately depends on how well government works.

How might New Orleans pursue a municipal complex that reflects civic pride while delivering measurable improvements in service and efficiency?



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SECTION 6:

Financing & Funding Strategies

- Section Summary & Key Briefing Points
- Financing & Funding Options
- Recap: Financing Approaches Used by Other Cities
- Financial Trade-offs: Impact Analysis
- References & Source Materials



Section 6: Financing & Funding Strategies

Section Summary

Municipal financing for large-scale civic projects such as a new City Hall and Civil District Court typically relies on some mix of debt, Public-Private Partnerships (P3), grants, and capital reserves. A common tool in previous New Orleans-based capital projects has been the General Obligation (GO) bond, a tax-backed bond requiring voter approval and overseen by the Board of Liquidation. **GO bonds provide stable financing but depend heavily on public trust and willingness to support new tax obligations.** An alternative method, Limited Obligation bonds - secured by capped revenue streams or tax rates, represents a riskier but faster option since these bonds generally do not require voter approval. Stakeholder interviews suggest that **public support will likely depend on whether the City can clearly explain the cost of inaction**, the long-term maintenance strategy, the funding source, and tangible resident benefits such as easier access, faster service, better coordination, and improved accountability.

Cities increasingly turn to Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) to supplement or replace traditional debt. **Under these arrangements, private partners assume borrowing risk and deliver capital more quickly than municipal procurement processes allow.** A more expansive model, Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain (DBFOM), bundles responsibility for development, financing, operations, and maintenance into long-term contracts. While legally complex, DBFOM deals allow governments to pursue larger-scale projects without direct tax increases, shifting risk to private entities in exchange for performance-based payments.

Other sources include **reserve funds, which cities can accumulate through budget surpluses or capital allocations.** These may be restricted for specific projects or drawn from general reserves, but they are typically a limited supplement rather than a sole source of financing, and also require advance planning.

Maintaining existing facilities, renovating current buildings, and constructing a new municipal complex each present distinct costs, benefits, and tradeoffs.

As the Committee evaluates these alternatives, how should considerations such as long-term costs, operational effectiveness, workforce consolidation, public access, facility disruptions, and future needs be weighed?

In assessing financing options and project impacts, what factors should be balanced, and what lessons can be drawn from other cities regarding the importance of financing strategies, stakeholder engagement, and transparency in building public trust and sustaining project momentum?



Key Briefing Points:

- **General Obligation (GO) Bonds are New Orleans' primary financing tool** for major projects; they require voter approval and are overseen by the external Board of Liquidation.
- **Limited Obligation Bonds rely on a capped tax or revenue stream, avoid the need for voter approval, but carry higher risk due to limited repayment flexibility.**
- **Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) allow the City to access private borrowing capacity more quickly,** shifting financial risk to private partners, but often result in the City being a tenant of a private developer.
- **DBFOM models (Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain) extend P3s into long-term contracts, reducing government risk and aligning private payment with performance,** though they are legally complex.
- Under the **IRS 63-20 Ruling, public entities can partner with nonprofit benefit corporations** to gain P3 funding for construction. The public entity then leases the building from the nonprofit corporation.
- **Reserve funds can supplement financing through surplus dollars or capital allocations,** but are generally limited and not sufficient as a sole funding source.
- Peer city precedents leverage a mix of funding for various reasons to customize funding for their needs and situations.
- Federal and State administered **grants are often helpful for funding pieces of project** in which these governments have interest, such as environmental improvements, job creation, hazard mitigation, and more; although the availability of government grants is shrinking under current federal and state administrations.

Key Questions for Consideration:

- Which funding options are most politically and financially viable given the City's financial health and public sentiment?
- How can the City communicate the cost of inaction, funding source, long-term maintenance obligations, and direct resident benefits in a way that is understandable and credible to the public?
- What short-term vs. long-term costs are manageable for the City?
- What opportunity costs and tradeoffs should be considered when comparing the available alternatives?
- *What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?*



1. Financing & Funding Options

Governments generally leverage one or multiple funding mechanisms for capital projects. While the options below are not exhaustive of every funding possibility, they describe the mechanisms most recently and commonly used.

General Obligation (GO) Bonding

A general obligation bond is a municipal bond secured by a city's ability to levy taxes. Repayment often comes in the form of municipal taxes or revenue. Leveraging a general obligation bond to fund municipal development requires approval by a majority of voters. While general obligation bonds are commonly funded by taxes over time (potentially through a millage), municipalities may also leverage revenue to cover the bond. Bonds help municipalities spread repayment for major capital projects across future generations that will ultimately benefit from those improvements.

This method of financing is the most commonly used in the City of New Orleans to fund major projects. GOs are a helpful debt mechanism for municipalities. To oversee the city's GO bonds, the state of Louisiana established a Board of Liquidation, an independent body that oversees all matters related to the issuance and repayment of the City's general obligation bonds. Any projects funded by GO bonds must be reviewed and approved by this Board.

Limited Obligation Bonds

A limited obligation bond is government bond where repayment funding is limited to a pre-dedicated revenue source or a capped tax rate. These bonds are therefore more risky than unlimited GO bonds because the government entity cannot raise taxes beyond the set limit to cover debt payments, if revenues fall short. This type of funding does not generally require a public vote and therefore may be easier to secure without public support.

Public Private Partnership (P3)

A public private partnership (P3) is a funding mechanism by which a government entity partners with a private-sector organization to access debt funding from a private lender. They may be used to fund development/construction, operations, and/or maintenance.

P3s place the onus of financial risk on the private partner as the borrower. P3s give access to funding quicker than municipal bonds, meaning that work can begin sooner and move faster by eliminating the bureaucracy of government procurement. The process of forming a P3 involves clear visioning work up-front (e.g., strategic plans and feasibility studies) to solicit a selection of partners who align with the vision. Once a private partner is selected, there is a great deal of legal work to be done to finalize the parameters of the agreement. Additionally, a P3 can lead to significant annual burden for the city to repay construction costs plus interest, in addition to annual operational and maintenance costs.

Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain (DBFOM)

DBFOM is a type of P3 where a group of private sector companies form a consortium to provide multiple development services to a government entity. Specifically, the group of companies designs, builds, finances, operates, and maintains the project. These type of deals greatly reduce financial risk to the government entity.

DBFOM's can be legally complicated, however they generally empower a government entity to take on a much larger scale and cost of project than possible through other funding methods. Because they're privately financed, DBFOM projects can be structured so that they do not require voter approved bond measures. The Operate and Maintain segments of the deal are often performance based (based on positive operational metrics and maintenance standards) rather than completion-based.



1. Financing & Funding Options, Cont'd

63-20 Financing

63-20 is an IRS ruling that provides tax-exempt financing for public projects, including transportation projects, municipal buildings, and more. This funding option empowers nonprofit public benefit corporations to issue tax-exempt bonds for the purpose of financing construction projects on behalf of a public agency. Therefore, it is a type of public private partnership (P3). The 63-20 option allows a government to benefit from private development and tax-exempt status without issuing debt directly, which can help avoid state debt limits and certain political hurdles, like a public vote. In this type of arrangement, the nonprofit owns the facility and leases it to the public entity until the bonds are retired, at which point title often reverts to the public entity. Several standout projects financed via 63-20 include: LA County Department of Mental Health Office Building (\$350M 100% financed via 63-20) and the Las Vegas Monorail.

In practice, 63-20 structures are often implemented through specialized development partners that integrate financing with project delivery. The Committee's due diligence included review of approaches used by firms such as Provident Group and Veyron, which demonstrate how these arrangements can combine tax-exempt financing with design-build delivery, while structuring long-term lease agreements that preserve public sector control and ownership over time.

Reserves

Similar to an individual, governments can put aside money over time to save up money for a project. These reserves can be restricted (legally reserved for a specific purpose), designated (funds set aside by city council for a named project), or unassigned (general funds able to be spent on any purpose). Reserve funds are generally a wise use of funds for cities in good financial standing (without a financial shortfall).

Cities often save budget surplus dollars into Capital Reserve Funds, which can be leveraged to pay for part or the entirety of capital improvements.

Grants

State and federal governments often present opportunities for public entities to access grant funding for specific components of building and development projects. For example, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), issued by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), may be used for public improvements, building renovation services, and economic development activities that primarily benefit low- to moderate-income areas and/or create jobs. Other examples of government grants include FEMA grants for construction related to disaster mitigation and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield grants to cover the cost of hazard/pollution mitigation to develop unoccupied land. While some grants are administered at the federal level, others are managed by state departments. In New Orleans, initial funding for the redevelopment of the Municipal Auditorium came from an EPA Brownfield grant. Some of these grants were cut back or terminated at the Federal and State levels in 2025.



Funding Building Maintenance and Upgrades Over Time

While many of the funding models above aim to raise money for initial construction, some of these precedents also offer sample methods for funding continued maintenance of a municipal complex. One of the possible pitfalls of a public construction project is a lack of funds to maintain or upgrade the building in the future.

Several of the P3 funding models listed allow a public entity to rent back a new building from a private “owner” until the long-term lease expires and ownership transfers back to the public entity. This arrangement is beneficial, since it puts the onus of maintenance on the private lessor during the leasing period. In some cases, as in Long Beach, the lease included maintenance stipulations that required the private lessor to maintain a certain standard for the building. Failure to do so would result in fines, in turn providing funding for the public entity to invest in deferred maintenance and upgrades upon regaining ownership of the building at the end of the leasing period. Additionally, a lease arrangement allows a public entity to negotiate a payment rate that is financially feasible over time. Looking at the Long Beach Civic Center once more, the annual rental rate was set based on previous Long Beach City Hall annual maintenance costs (\$12.6M, adjusted for inflation, over 40 years). The ability to set recurring and predictable payments makes P3 funding models attractive to public entities.

2. Recap: Financing Approaches Used by Other Cities

Below is an overview of the various funding sources used by several identified precedents.

<i>Precedent</i>	General Obligation Bonds	Limited Obligation Bonds	Public Private Partnership (General)	Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain (DBFOM) (P3)	IRS Ruling 63-20 (P3)	Reserves	Grants	Other Funding
New Orleans - Various Projects	x	x	x			x	x	
Sunnyvale, CA Civic Center		x				x		x
Long Beach, CA Civic Center			x	x				
Raleigh, NC City Hall		x						
Portland, OR Portland Building (Reconstruction)		x						
Las Vegas, NV		x	x					x
San José, CA	x							



3. Financial Trade-offs: Impact Analysis

This page includes a description of the types of costs associated with various scenarios: status quo vs. renovate vs. build new. Where estimates exist, the most recent cost projections are listed here. The comparison should be used to develop an understanding for the types of costs necessary for each scenario. More accurate and up-to-date estimates for the City Hall / CDC project specifically may need to be procured as a next steps in the process through additional studies. These cost dynamics are influenced not only by construction costs, but also by how each scenario allocates maintenance responsibility, lifecycle risk, lease obligations, operational disruption, and future flexibility

Cost Category	Status Quo	Renovate in Place	Renovate an Existing Office Tower	Build New
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE	Maintenance costs increase over time as building ages and new components need total replacement	Increased investment in construction and FF&E but some maintenance savings over time	Increased investment in construction and FF&E but potentially some maintenance savings over time (depending on lease terms)	Most significant initial construction cost with most cost savings for maintenance over time, resulting in a building that has a longer useful life
ADDITIONAL LEASES	Lease payments may stay the same and increase in the longer term due to continued need to lease additional spaces to house growing staff	Lease payments may stay the same and increase in the longer term due to continued need to lease additional spaces to house growing staff	To be determined based on considered space options	Lease payments will decrease due to co-location of certain departments and agencies
PRODUCTIVITY	Productivity disruptions increase due to large scale break-downs, repairs, and maintenance and as a result of age-related weather damage (wind, water)	High initial productivity disruption and cost increases associated with move-out, temporary space leases, storage, and return move-in, but should temper over time	Moderate initial productivity disruption and cost increases associated with moving	Moderate initial productivity disruption and cost increases associated with the move
ENERGY EFFICIENCY	No cost savings due to older systems that run inefficiently and provide less control over usage	Potential cost savings with updated MEP systems	To be determined based on considered space options	Significant cost savings with brand new energy efficient MEP systems
OTHER IMPACTS	Low to no opportunity for additional impact	Moderate opportunity to streamline user experience in some way (adjacencies, floor access, security features)	Uncertain ability to grow staff size given fixed footprint	High opportunity to streamline user experience and enhance other features , like public and green spaces, stormwater management, transportation, etc.



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SECTION 7:

Downtown Development Visioning

- Section Summary
- The Importance of Coordination
- Major Takeaways
- Summary of Concurrent Developments & Plans
- References & Source Materials



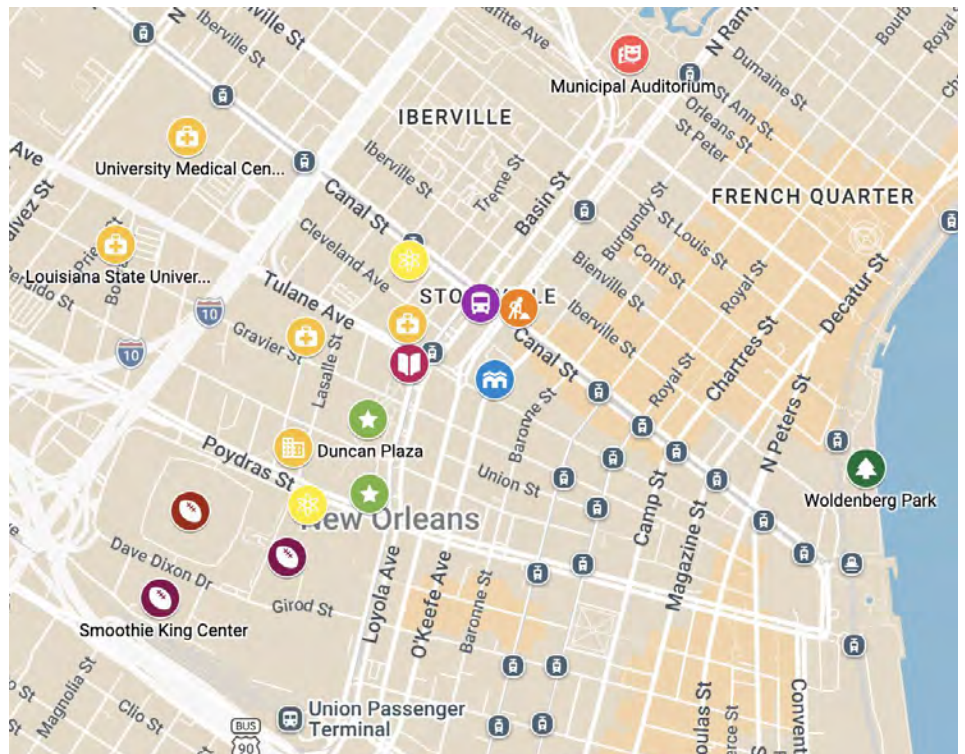
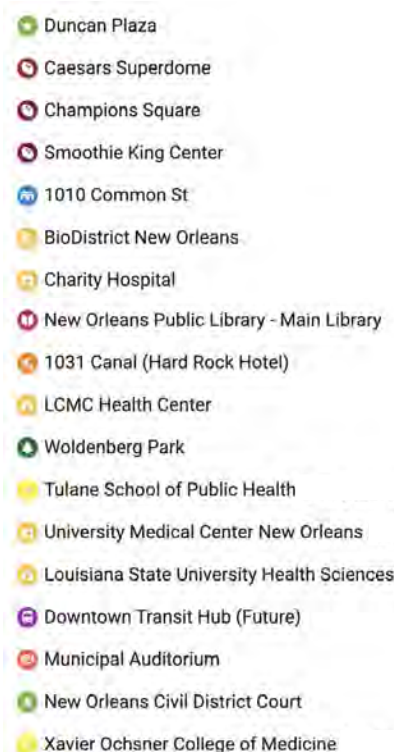
Section 7: Downtown Development Visioning

Section Summary

The City's Civic Core, including City Hall, the Civil District Court complex, Duncan Plaza, and the main library, exists as a central point within six major downtown systems: New Orleans' traditional civic core (government, courts, and libraries), the Central Business District, the Superdome-Sports District, the Riverfront, the BioDistrict, and the French Quarter/Canal Street tourism zone. This geographic centrality provides important context as the Committee evaluates alternatives for the future of municipal facilities.

Multiple concurrent projects, totaling hundreds of millions of dollars in investment, are reshaping downtown New Orleans. These include the Charity Hospital redevelopment anchored by Tulane University, the River District's housing and mixed-use development near the Convention Center, potential Sports District investments tied to a 2031 Super Bowl bid, the proposed Downtown Transit Center at Loyola and Canal, the proposed Omni redevelopment at the former Sugar Mill site, climate resilience investments associated with the Urban Water Plan and Big Green Easy parks strategy, and activation initiatives outlined in the State of Downtown 2025 vision and Night Time Economy Plan. Collectively, these projects illustrate the scale of potential transformation currently underway.

This section examines the major projects and plans shaping downtown New Orleans and provides context to inform the Committee's evaluation of alternatives.





Key Questions for Consideration:

- How can future municipal facilities support their highest and best use within the broader context of downtown New Orleans' growth, redevelopment, and long-term vision?
- How should the timing and sequencing of municipal facility investments be evaluated in relation to other major public and private projects underway across downtown?
- What opportunities exist to coordinate municipal facility investments with other downtown initiatives, and what benefits, risks, or tradeoffs should be considered regarding shared infrastructure, mobility, design, operations, and other complementary investments?
- What opportunity costs or unintended consequences should be considered if municipal facility investments proceed independently of broader downtown initiatives? What are the costs of inaction?
- Are there additional projects, plans, or emerging initiatives that should inform the Committee's evaluation?
- How might we ensure a development process that is well-informed by the public, takes into account lessons from past failures, and is timely?
- ***What else would we like to know on this subject to make our considerations more comprehensive?***



Section 7: Downtown Development Visioning

1. The Importance of Coordination

1.1 Why Ecosystem Context Matters

Multiple downtown projects are currently in planning or early implementation phases, creating a rare alignment of activity and investment downtown. Understanding how a new municipal complex connects to these concurrent developments reveals three critical opportunities: shared infrastructure investments that reduce individual project costs (transit access, utilities, green infrastructure, and public safety coordination); aligned design standards that create a cohesive downtown experience (streetscape, wayfinding, lighting, and pedestrian connections); and operational partnerships that strengthen service delivery (DDD security/maintenance, event management, and crisis response coordination). The municipal complex has the opportunity to serve as connective tissue between these systems if coordination happens during the planning phase.

System Components

- Factors that make up each system
- Drive opportunity around complex

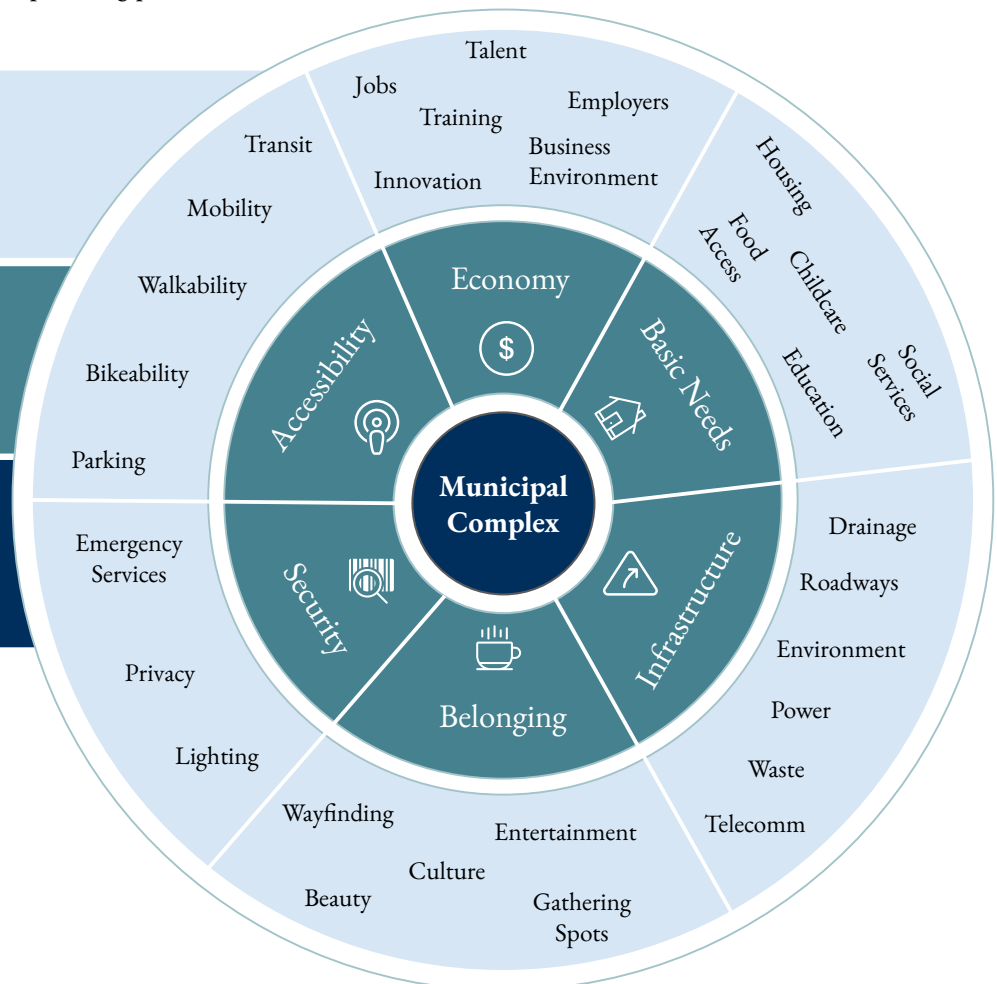
System Forces

- Connected areas shaping the ecosystem surrounding development of the complex

Municipal Complex

- City Hall & Colocated City Offices
- Civil District Court

Decisions regarding the future of municipal facilities intersect with a broad range of systems, investments, and priorities across New Orleans. This framework identifies potential connections across related sectors and provides context for a comprehensive evaluation of alternatives.



1.2 The Benefits of Coordination

Coordinating municipal facility investments with other major downtown projects may create opportunities for integrated planning, shared infrastructure investment, and alignment around funding, capital priorities, and implementation timelines. As a major public investment, municipal facilities development may also influence surrounding development and broader efforts to strengthen downtown activity and economic growth.

From the Committee's perspective, what may be the benefits of coordination?



2. Major Takeaways

An analysis of downtown's current and upcoming developments and planning initiatives identifies several critical themes to consider when making decisions about the municipal complex. These themes highlight opportunities for coordination, design considerations that respond to downtown's evolution, and the importance of transparent community engagement throughout the process.

2.1. The Municipal Complex as Connective Tissue

Beyond serving as a workplace and location for public services, municipal facilities may also influence how agencies, institutions, and investments interact with one another. Potential opportunities for collaboration and coordination may include:

- Co-locating interdependent services and supporting them through shared protocols, governance structures, coordination spaces, and digital tools that improve service delivery and reduce unnecessary handoffs.
- Partnering with downtown stakeholders on shared infrastructure and operational priorities, such as transit access, security systems, public realm improvements, event management, crisis response, and maintenance.
- Coordinating with entities actively planning and investing downtown, including the Downtown Development District, BioDistrict and Charity Hospital redevelopment, Regional Transit Authority and Downtown Transit Center, Sports District, and River District, to identify opportunities for alignment and collaboration.

To what extent should future municipal facilities serve as a connector within the broader civic, economic, and institutional ecosystem? How might the City seize the coordination window given plans being actively pursued by other entities?

2.2 Design for Downtown's Evolution

Beyond 9-to-5 activation. Downtown New Orleans is evolving from a "place to work" to a "place to live, work, visit, and play." The State of Downtown 2025 report and concurrent residential developments signal this fundamental shift, which has direct implications for how the municipal complex functions.

What are the risks of creating a municipal complex that only operates 9-5? What are the benefits of activating beyond business hours?

Event-resilient design. Potential considerations may include how municipal facilities interact with major event venues and destinations throughout downtown, including the Sports District, Convention Center, and riverfront.

How might municipal facilities function during periods of increased activity, traffic, and security demands associated with major events? What opportunities exist to coordinate transportation, security, and operations with neighboring venues?

Accessibility. The Committee may also wish to consider the role municipal facilities play in shaping how the public accesses and experiences local government.

How might municipal facilities promote an accessible and people-centered civic environment? What opportunities exist to strengthen connections between surrounding districts and encourage public engagement?



2. Major Takeaways, Cont'd

2.3 Infrastructure as Public Benefit

Transit as strategic priority. Transit is an important consideration in the future of downtown New Orleans. Existing transit infrastructure includes multiple transfer points, varying pedestrian conditions, and ongoing challenges related to circulation and congestion. The proposed Downtown Transit Center at Loyola and Canal presents an opportunity to rethink how municipal facilities connect to the broader transportation network. Considerations may include bicycle access, curb management, pedestrian amenities, wayfinding, and connections to regional transit services.

How might transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access factor into the Committee's evaluation of alternatives? What opportunities exist to improve access to civic services while supporting broader mobility goals for downtown?

Green infrastructure integration. The Urban Water Plan promotes hybrid "grey + green" stormwater management, the Big Green Easy emphasizes parks as climate infrastructure, and the Climate Action Plan requires LEED Gold certification for new city facilities.

How might a new municipal complex align with these plans to demonstrate how civic buildings support water management and reduce urban heat as New Orleans moves towards a greener, more sustainable future?

Safety through coordination. Safety is essential to any new downtown development, and the municipal complex has a responsibility to provide secure public space. The NOLA Coalition Public Safety Plan emphasizes inter-agency collaboration, while the Downtown Development District has expanded security and maintenance services through partnerships like the BioDistrict arrangement.

How might a new municipal complex integrate with these coordinated strategies through lighting, activation, infrastructure, and operational partnerships?

The intersection of public safety and social services also raises co-location opportunities. The Main Library currently serves as a hub for people in crisis, and homelessness response increasingly involves coordination across multiple agencies (Health Department, Office of Homeless Services and Strategies, law enforcement, sanitation functions, etc.).

How might thoughtful co-location of these services transform the municipal complex into a true hub for coordinated crisis response?



2. Major Takeaways, Cont'd

2.4 Building Trust Through a Transparent Process

Learn from Past Failures. Previous attempts to relocate City Hall and the Civil District Court complex faced public and stakeholder resistance, and the current condition of municipal buildings, as well as experiences such as the Hard Rock collapse, may shape public perceptions about the City's ability to manage major projects and facilities responsibly. These experiences highlight the importance of considering how community engagement, transparency, and public communication are incorporated throughout the process.

What lessons can be drawn from past efforts in New Orleans and from cities that have undertaken similar projects?

How should public engagement and transparency be incorporated into the evaluation and decision-making process?

Earn Public Buy-In. Public understanding and confidence may play an important role in the success of any future municipal facility investment. Depending on the alternative selected and the financing approach pursued, public support may influence the feasibility of implementation. For example, a general obligation bond issuance would require voter approval, while Public-Private Partnerships may depend on revenue generation from parking, retail, or other sources that require public understanding and acceptance.

Moreover, lessons from peer cities suggest that successful municipal facility projects often made community engagement central rather than peripheral, frequently through broader master planning efforts and ongoing communication regarding financing, timelines, benefits, and decision-making. Throughout the process, a variety of questions may emerge from residents and stakeholders, including:

- How can the City justify this investment given current financial constraints?
- Where will funding come from, and how will facilities be maintained over time?
- How might municipal facility investments benefit neighborhoods throughout the city, not just downtown?
- Will supplier diversity be required during development?
- What will happen to the existing City Hall and Civil District Court buildings?
- How will the history of Duncan Plaza be honored and acknowledged?

What additional questions or concerns should the Committee anticipate and address?

Maintain a Disciplined, Time-Bound Process. Stakeholder input also highlights the importance of a disciplined and time-bound process for evaluating alternatives. While public engagement may be an important component of the process, overly extended or loosely structured efforts can create uncertainty, delay decision-making, and increase project risk. Clear milestones, defined decision points, and strong executive leadership are among the approaches identified by stakeholders for maintaining momentum while preserving opportunities for meaningful public participation.

How should the Committee balance broad stakeholder engagement with the need for timely decision-making?

What process elements are most important to maintaining transparency, accountability, and momentum throughout the evaluation process?



3. Summary of Concurrent Developments & Plans

3.1 Major Planned Developments

Project/Plan	Project/Plan Summary	Implications for Municipal Complex
BioDistrict & Charity Hospital Redevelopment	- Tulane University officially committed funding for phased redevelopment of historic Charity Hospital as an anchor for Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine campus; BioDistrict New Orleans (state-created district) serves as a coordinator between City, State, universities, hospitals, and private partners. - Development includes research facilities, educational space, mixed-income housing, infrastructure upgrades (streets, utilities), and beautification; phased approach with Tulane as long-term anchor tenant.	Strengthens downtown presence with increased daytime population; may benefit from coordination on shared transit demand, public safety systems, and public improvements between municipal complex and medical/research corridor.
River District	- Mixed-use neighborhood development near the Convention Center: 220+ housing units (market rate, workforce, and affordable), retail, stormwater park, and potential full-service grocery. - Infrastructure completion expected mid-2026; housing construction to begin 2026; major tenant uncertainty following Topgolf withdrawal; 1.5-2 miles from Duncan Plaza.	New residential hub proximal to downtown creates potential for micro-transit connections, potential coordination around the green infrastructure/stormwater management approach, and construction sequencing considerations to mitigate traffic.
Sports District (Superdome Area)	- Potential area reimagining tied to 2031 Super Bowl bid; \$560M Superdome transformation completed for Super Bowl LIX (Feb 2025). - Growing event travel trends (Hondo rodeo, Fit Fete/Hyrox); conjecture of an MLS soccer stadium.	Requires municipal complex designed for event resilience, including traffic management that doesn't disrupt daily operations, coordinated security with neighboring venues, and potential revenue opportunities through parking or event-related services.
Audubon Riverfront Development	- Woldenberg Park improvements completed 2025 (\$5.39M); marsh-themed playground (rare kid-friendly downtown attraction). - Broader Riverfront for All timeline uncertain due to Audubon budget constraints; potential Crescent Park management needs ~\$1.5-2M; ~1 mile from Duncan Plaza.	Enhanced downtown brand and visitor movement patterns proximal to downtown; coordination needed on emergency operations during major riverfront events and potential competition for City parks/public space funding.
Hard Rock Site (1031 Canal St.)	- Cleared site designated as local historic landmark (July 2025) for dual significance: 1960 Woolworth's sit-in and 2019 collapse. - City completed public infrastructure reconstruction (utilities, roadways, sidewalks, ADA ramps) 2024-2025; no formal redevelopment plans yet.	Raises public expectations for construction safety and quality; Canal Street gateway location means any municipal complex must demonstrate responsible stewardship and design excellence.
Omni New Orleans - Convention Center Headquarters Hotel	- A planned \$600 million, 1,000-room "headquarters" hotel located directly across the street from the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. - Anticipated to open in 2030, it is the first convention center hotel built in the city in over 40 years.	Positions New Orleans as highly competitive convention destination and place to do business. A municipal complex must be a professional place to host business leaders, as well as support related economic growth from within the region.



3. Summary of Concurrent Developments & Plans, Cont'd

3.2 Infrastructure & Systems Plans

Project/Plan	Project/Plan Summary	Implications for Municipal Complex
Transit Plans & Projects	- Downtown Transit Center (Loyola/Canal): applied for federal grant 2022, would consolidate scattered regional transfer points; \$31.25M total cost, \$900K annual O&M. - BRT planning (AECOM hired for design Dec 2025); RTA Strategic Mobility Plan network redesign; bike infrastructure goal of 75 miles by 2025.	Site design opportunity for civic complex to support local transit hub through high-volume bike parking, EV charging, managed curb space, sheltered waiting areas, and coordinated wayfinding; construction must minimize disruption to existing bus routes.
Urban Water Plan	- Hybrid "grey + green" stormwater approach: retain/improve traditional drainage while adding rain gardens, bioswales, permeable surfaces, water plazas. - Benefits beyond drainage: cooling, habitat, air quality, public space; addresses growing stormwater fee considerations.	Duncan Plaza can serve as a flagship demonstration of how civic buildings support stormwater management and heat mitigation through integrated bioswales, permeable surfaces, and functional green infrastructure.
Climate Action Plan (Net Zero by 2050)	- Net-zero emissions by 2050; 50% reduction by 2035; mandatory LEED Gold for new/substantially renovated City facilities. - Key targets: 50% non-auto trips by 2030; 15 additional green infrastructure projects diverting 80M gallons by 2035; solar on 8 city buildings by 2024.	Mandatory LEED Gold certification, rooftop solar integration, green infrastructure design, and transit-oriented site planning to align with citywide emissions reduction and non-auto trip goals.
Big Green Easy (Parks Master Plan)	10-year investment plan; scorecard audit of all greenspaces with focus on equitable access and parks as climate infrastructure (shade, cooling, stormwater). - Major focus on addressing parks deficit in underserved neighborhoods.	Provides policy framework for greenspace goals at Duncan Plaza; public will expect net environmental benefit despite building footprint; the design must demonstrate functional green infrastructure beyond ornamental greenspace.
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) 2026-2030	- City's 5-year program for permanent physical improvements; ~\$4B in requests, \$465M in recommended bond funding for 115 projects. - Proposed \$510M GO bond: \$415M infrastructure, \$50M drainage/stormwater, \$45M affordable housing; key priorities include State of Good Repair for city facilities and Criminal Justice Complex strategy.	Civic complex planning must align with "State of Good Repair" narrative and CIP cycle; coordination needed to ensure civic complex doesn't delay other priority projects.
Downtown Parking Studies	- Key finding from 2017 DDD study: curb space (not garage capacity) is the real downtown constraint. - Parking garage costs at historic highs; need updated 2026 study before determining civic complex parking needs.	Updated parking demand study needed before finalizing civic complex parking requirements; design must prioritize curb management (drop-offs, pickups, pedestrian safety) and consider revenue generation potential plus park-and-ride function for neighboring areas.



3. Summary of Concurrent Developments & Plans, Cont'd

3.3 Strategic Plans & Initiatives

Project/Plan	Project/Plan Summary	Implications for Municipal Complex
Nighttime Economy Plan	- Citywide strategy (2025) for after-dark functions: safety, nighttime workers, culture/business/quality of life balance, data-driven coordination, formal nighttime governance structure. - Emphasis on coordination between City services, transit, public safety, cultural activity rather than crisis response.	Civic complex must be designed for activation beyond 9-5 with lighting, safety features, and public access that support evening/weekend activity and nighttime worker needs.
State of Downtown 2025 / Future of Downtown (DDD)	- Downtown shift from "place to work" to "place to live, work, visit, and play"; active coalition programming and development focus. - DDD expanding security/maintenance services outside district (e.g., BioDistrict partnership); recent mixed-use developments (1010 Common, hotels).	DDD security/maintenance service extension could support civic complex area through partnership; design should support downtown's evolution to "live, work, visit, play" rather than 9-5 only.
GNO Future (Economic Development Plan)	10-year plan (Q4 2020) focused on six industries: trade/logistics, advanced manufacturing, energy, digital media/technology, health sciences, environmental management. - Regional economic development strategy with workforce development and talent attraction focus.	Growing industries (health sciences, digital media/tech, manufacturing) will require efficient City services such as permits, property access, and safety coordination.
NOLA Coalition Public Safety Plan	- Violence prevention alliance; neighborhood-level counseling and crisis services; inter-agency cooperation (public safety + human services); support for humane homelessness policy. - Emphasis on coordination between agencies serving common needs.	Civic complex should integrate with coordinated safety strategies through lighting, activation, and operational partnerships; potential to serve as hub for inter-agency collaboration on public safety and human services.
Housing Plans & Policy	- Housing NOLA (33,600 units goal); GNOHA Housing for All (2025); current need estimated at 50,000-55,000 affordable units. - City Planning Commission recommended ending unit allocation policy (2025); Housing Trust Fund updates pending.	Major downtown investment raises questions about displacement and gentrification; civic complex planning should consider how it relates to citywide housing affordability challenges.
Celebrate Canal	- Citizen-led coalition; active programming with increasing emphasis on physical redevelopment (not just beautification). - City Canal Street study update (Oct 2025); coalition "first full year" coverage (Nov 2025).	Canal Street as primary connector between visitor activity and civic core requires coordinated improvements on wayfinding, streetscape standards, lighting, and pedestrian experience between Canal and the City's Civic Core.
BGR Briefing on Homelessness / Home for Good Initiative	- New Orleans Home for Good: goal of low/no unsheltered homelessness by end 2025; house/stabilize 1,500 people - Direct-to-Housing Encampment Decommissioning Model (4-8 week street-to-housing cycle); frames homelessness as public health issue requiring inter-agency coordination	Co-location planning potential: which agencies (Health Dept, OHSS, law enforcement, sanitation) could be adjacent to streamline crisis response and improve coordination with library's current social services role.



3. Summary of Concurrent Developments & Plans, Cont'd

3.4 Key Context

Project/Plan	Project/Plan Summary	Implications for Municipal Complex
Municipal Auditorium	• Launch of Armstrong Park and Municipal Auditorium Strategic Master Planning Process in 2026 • Historic building in Armstrong Park/Treme; City invested in stabilization 2025 to prevent further damage; former Mayor established 2024 agreement with Save Our Soul community group. • Controversial due to previous failed attempt to relocate City Hall to Armstrong Park (public resistance)	Civic complex design and decision-making must prioritize transparent community engagement, honor Duncan Plaza history, and demonstrate accountability to rebuild public trust.
New Orleans Public Library (Main Branch)	• Adjacent to Duncan Plaza; houses City archives; currently serves as hub for social services and people in crisis; fence built due to after-hours access issues. • Construction on Duncan Plaza will disrupt library, surrounding streets, transit access.	Co-location planning needed to determine if library's social services role should continue or if civic complex should include dedicated crisis services space.



References & Source Materials

The following works were reviewed in preparing this section:

CITY/PUBLIC PLANS

- [Big Green Easy – Citywide Parks & Recreation Master Plan, 2024](#)
- [City of New Orleans Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\) 2026–2030](#)
- [City of New Orleans Plan for the 21st Century \(Master Plan / 2030\)](#)
- [Greater New Orleans Urban Water Plan, 2013](#)
- [Net Zero by 2050: Climate Action Plan Update, 2022](#)
- [New Orleans Nighttime Economy Strategic Plan, 2025](#)

DOWNTOWN / DISTRICT PLANS

- [Armstrong Park and Municipal Auditorium Master Planning Process, 2026](#)
- [Audubon Riverfront – “Riverfront for All” / Woldenberg Improvements, 2025](#)
- [Bid for 2031 Super Bowl may prompt major changes around the Superdome, 2026](#)
- [Celebrate Canal – Canal Street Study Update & Coalition Work, 2025](#)
- [Convention Center board approves \\$600M redesigned Omni headquarters hotel](#)
- [Ernest N. Morial Convention Center - HQ Hotel](#)
- [Hard Rock Redevelopment / 1031 Canal Site, 2025](#)
- [Municipal Auditorium Redevelopment \(Armstrong Park\), Phase 1 2024-2025](#)
- [River District \(LGD / Convention Center Adjacent Development\), 2025](#)
- [State of Downtown 2025 – Downtown Development District \(DDD\), 2025](#)

TRANSIT & MOBILITY

- [Downtown Parking Studies \(DDD Supply & Demand Study\), 2017 with updates](#)
- [Downtown Transit Center \(Basin St. / Loyola Corridor\), 2022-2025](#)
- [RIDE New Orleans – State of Transit, 2025](#)
- [RTA Strategic Mobility Plan, 2022](#)

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

- [BGR Breakfast Briefing – Addressing Homelessness, 2024](#)
- [Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance – Housing for All Plan, 2025](#)
- [HousingNOLA – 10 Year Plan, 2015 with updates](#)
- [Home for Good – Sustaining an End to Unsheltered Homelessness, 2025](#)

PUBLIC SAFETY & GOVERNANCE

- [NOLA Coalition Public Safety Plan, 2024-2025](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- [GNO Future – Greater New Orleans, Inc., 2020](#)

BIODISTRICT / HEALTH CORRIDOR

- [BioDistrict New Orleans, Board Materials 2025-2026](#)
- [LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans, Ongoing](#)
- [Tulane Downtown Expansion / Charity Hospital Redevelopment, 2024-2025](#)
- [University Medical Center \(LCMC Health\), 2025](#)



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