

# 15<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE AND HIGH STREET

## WEST OF HIGH STREET MASTER PLAN

100% REPORT



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 14, 2016

## Steering Committee

### Owner

#### **The Ohio State University**

Physical Planning and Real Estate  
McCracken Power Plant Suite 200  
2003 Millikin Road, Columbus, OH 43210  
614.688.3715

#### **OSU – Physical Planning and Real Estate**

Keith Myers, Associate Vice President  
Bernard Costantino, University Architect  
Paula Melchert, Project Coordinator  
Carolyn Staskiewicz, Director of Space Utilization  
Steve Volkman, University Landscape Architect

#### **OSU – Office of Administration & Planning**

Amy Burgess, Director of Planning

#### **OSU –Office of Academic Affairs**

Mark Shanda, Professor of Theatre, Faculty Fellow

#### **OSU – Capital Planning & Regional Campuses**

Jennifer Evans-Cowley, Vice Provost

#### **OSU – College of Arts and Sciences**

Peter Hahn, Divisional Dean  
Rich Hall, Associate Executive Dean of Facilities

### OSU - Key Stakeholders

#### **The Wexner Center for the Arts**

Jack Jackson, Deputy Director of The Wexner Center

#### **The School of Music**

#### **The Department of Theatre**

#### **The Department of Dance**

#### **University Libraries**

#### **Department of Art**

## Project Team

### Design Team

#### **Westlake Reed Leskosky**

Architecture, Engineering,  
Theatre Specialist, Programming

1422 Euclid Avenue, Suite 300  
Playhouse Square  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
216.522.1350

Phil LiBassi, FAIA, Principal in Charge  
Paul Westlake, FAIA, Design Principal  
Tom Dieterle, AIA, Project Manager  
Chris Tilton, LC, Assoc. IALD, Theatre Specialist

#### **Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP**

Architecture, Planning  
460 West 34<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10001  
212.967.5100

Graham S. Wyatt, AIA, Partner  
Kevin M. Smith, AIA, Partner  
Silas Jeffrey, Associate, Project Manager

### Consultants

#### **Dynamix**

Mechanical Engineer  
855 Grandview Ave  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Kurt Fansler, PE

#### **OLIN**

Landscape Architect  
150 South Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
Hallie Boyce, ASLA

#### **EMH&T**

Civil Engineer  
5500 New Albany Road  
Columbus, OH 43054  
Travis Eifert, PE



## **Table of Contents**

Section 1: Executive Summary

Section 2: Programming Report

Section 3: Planning Report

Section 4: Appendix

## 1.1 Purpose Statement

### Unifying the Arts at the Ohio State University's Front Door

The West of High Street Master Plan envisions the redevelopment of the Ohio State University's land at the intersection of 15th Avenue and High Street. The master plan responds to the primary tasks to reimagine the public spaces at the gateway to the University and to consolidate the Arts programs within the District. The District Block (DB) is the site bounded by West 17th Avenue to the north, 14th Avenue to the south, High Street to the east, and College Road to the west. It is currently home to the Wexner Center for the Arts, Mershon Auditorium, the School of Music (in Weigel Hall and Hughes Hall), and Sullivant Hall. Roughly a mile from the DB and on the edge of the Olentangy River, the Department of Theatre is housed in the Drake Performance and Event Center. The building is currently assumed to be demolished during phase II of the University's Cannon Drive realignment project. As part of the effort to unify the Arts programs, the Department of Theatre will be relocated to the DB. The emerging Moving Image Production program will also be hosted in the DB. The master plan considers the renovation, expansion, and demolition of the existing facilities in the DB, and the redevelopment of the site as a whole. The designs have been guided by the planning principles established from the beginning.

### Planning Principles

Based on these objectives, the following Planning Principles have been defined to guide the planning process:

1. Link to and embrace the Oval
2. Improve the gateway to the University
3. Create an active and programmable open public space that spans High Street
4. Strengthen the campus and urban edge along High Street
5. Reinforce the institutional identity of the University and its campus
6. Create a unified destination for Arts education
7. Increase interaction among academic disciplines

The recommendations of this report are underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of **Program (Section 2)** and achievable **Planning Options (Section 3)**.

### 1.1.1 AERIAL PHOTO

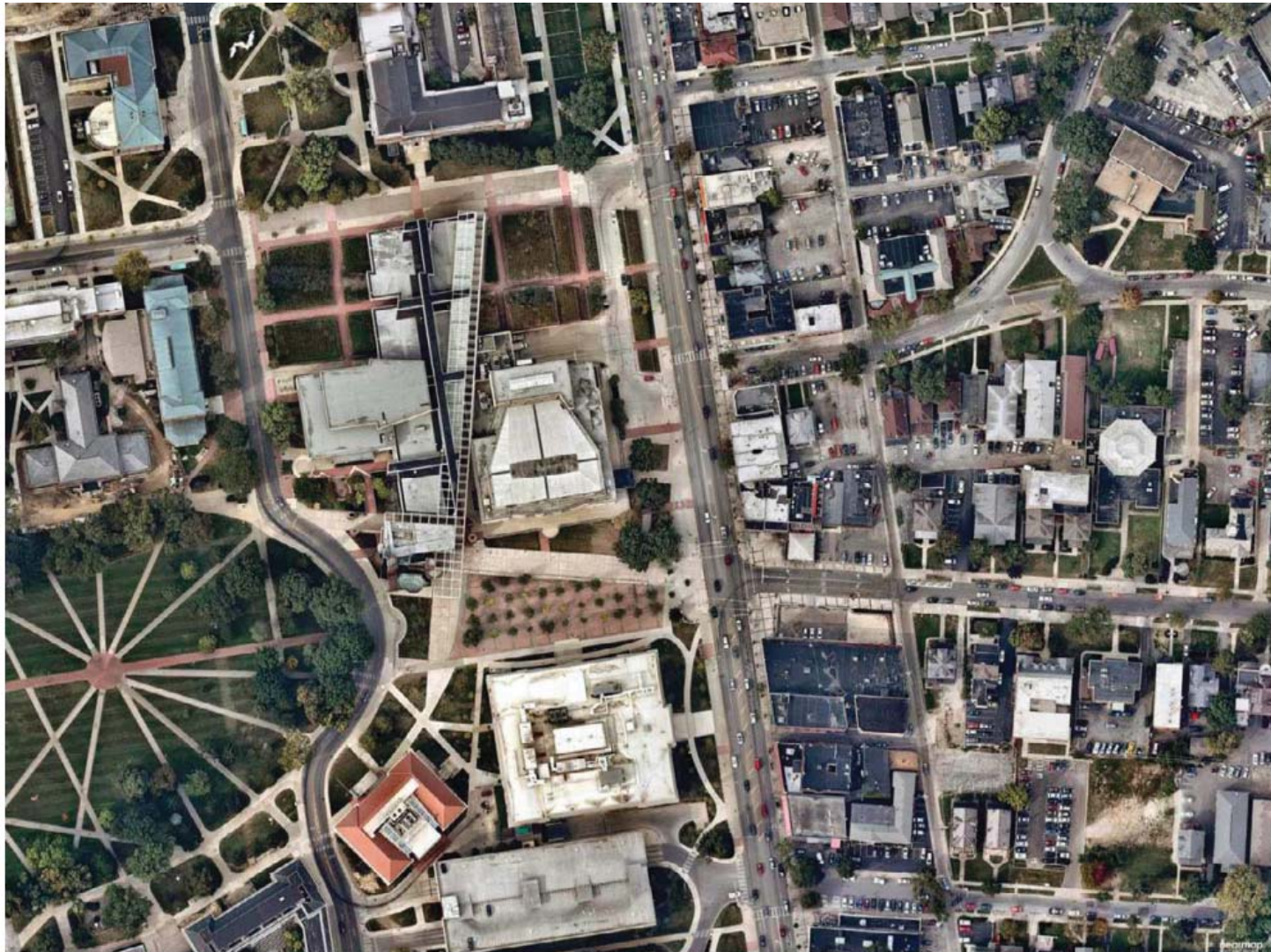




Figure 1.2.1  
The Oval



Figure 1.2.2  
The Wexner Center for the Arts

## 1.2 Programming and Planning

The stakeholders include the Department of Theatre (DoT), the Wexner Center for the Arts (WCA), the School of Music (SoM), the Department of Dance (DoD) and Moving Image Production (MIP), and all have participated throughout this process. Through discussions with stakeholders and an assessment of current spaces and buildings (Section 2.8), quantitative and qualitative space requirements were graded into the following categories: ‘needed’ (first priority) and ‘desired’ (lower priority). A thorough utilization analysis of current venues was used to evaluate the space requests. A study of synergistic opportunities both within the University and related Arts organizations in the greater Columbus region also helped cull the space requests.

The **Program Report**, which defines space needs, is included in **Section 2** of this document and is summarized as follows:

- With a significant presence in the District, the replacement or renovation of the underutilized Mershon Auditorium was explored (refer to Sections 2.5 + 2.7). This report recommends the renovation of Mershon Auditorium because this strategy is less expensive, easier to implement, and gives a clearer identity for the Department of Theatre (DoT) and the Wexner Center (WCA). Upon completion, the audience chamber will be a versatile 1,400 seat venue and front of house support will be dramatically changed. The stage house, though retained in structure, will be refurbished to current standards.
- For the School of Music (SoM) this report recommends that Hughes Hall, which does not satisfy the acoustic needs of the SoM program, be repurposed for new academic or administrative functions. The SoM will occupy newly constructed space conjoined with Weigel Hall which will include a new recital hall, practice facilities, faculty studios, and rehearsal spaces.

- Due to the planned demolition of the Drake Performance and Event Center, The Department of Theatre must relocate. Current program will be replaced, including four performance venues (the 500, 300, and 80 seat venues in Drake and a 100 seat venue in Mount Hall), rehearsal and support facilities, and theatre faculty offices.
- To accommodate the space requirements of the SoM and DoT, the raised planters to the north of the site on either side of the Wexner Center will be demolished. Spaces that are affected by this, such as the Fine Arts Library, will be relocated.
- Wexner Center program that is currently below grade, such as the film theatre, café and bookstore will be relocated to street level.
- Moving Image Production (MIP) program includes a new black box and studio space.
- The Department of Dance is located in Sullivant Hall and will remain in its current configuration with the exception of the costume shop and storage that will be combined with similar Department of Theatre facilities. Sullivant Hall will remain as currently configured, including Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy, Advanced Computer Center for Art and Design (ACCAD) and the Barnett Center for Integrated Arts and Enterprise.
- Proposed planning concepts recommend an improved and activated street presence along High Street, College Avenue, and West 17th Ave, including defined entrances for each stakeholder, controlled vehicular and service access, and clear visual cues to the Oval viewed across a re-imagined plaza.
- Quantitative and Qualitative Space Programs developed for each stakeholder are included in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 respectively.
- The West of High Street Master Plan has been developed concurrently with the master plan for the east side of High Street. Academic functions will generally remain west of High Street. Administrative and/or ancillary university programs may be located east of High Street. These programs are outlined in Section 2.6.



Figure 1.2.3  
Mershon Auditorium



Figure 1.2.4  
Weigel Hall

### 1.3 Planning Options

**Section 3** presents the master plan options developed for the District Block. The section begins with the analysis of the District's history and existing conditions (Section 3.1-3.5). After a thorough evaluation of the program and site, it became apparent that the shaping of the District Block hinges on whether or not Mershon Auditorium is retained. Following this observation, two design options were developed and evaluated: "Replace Mershon" and "Renovate Mershon."

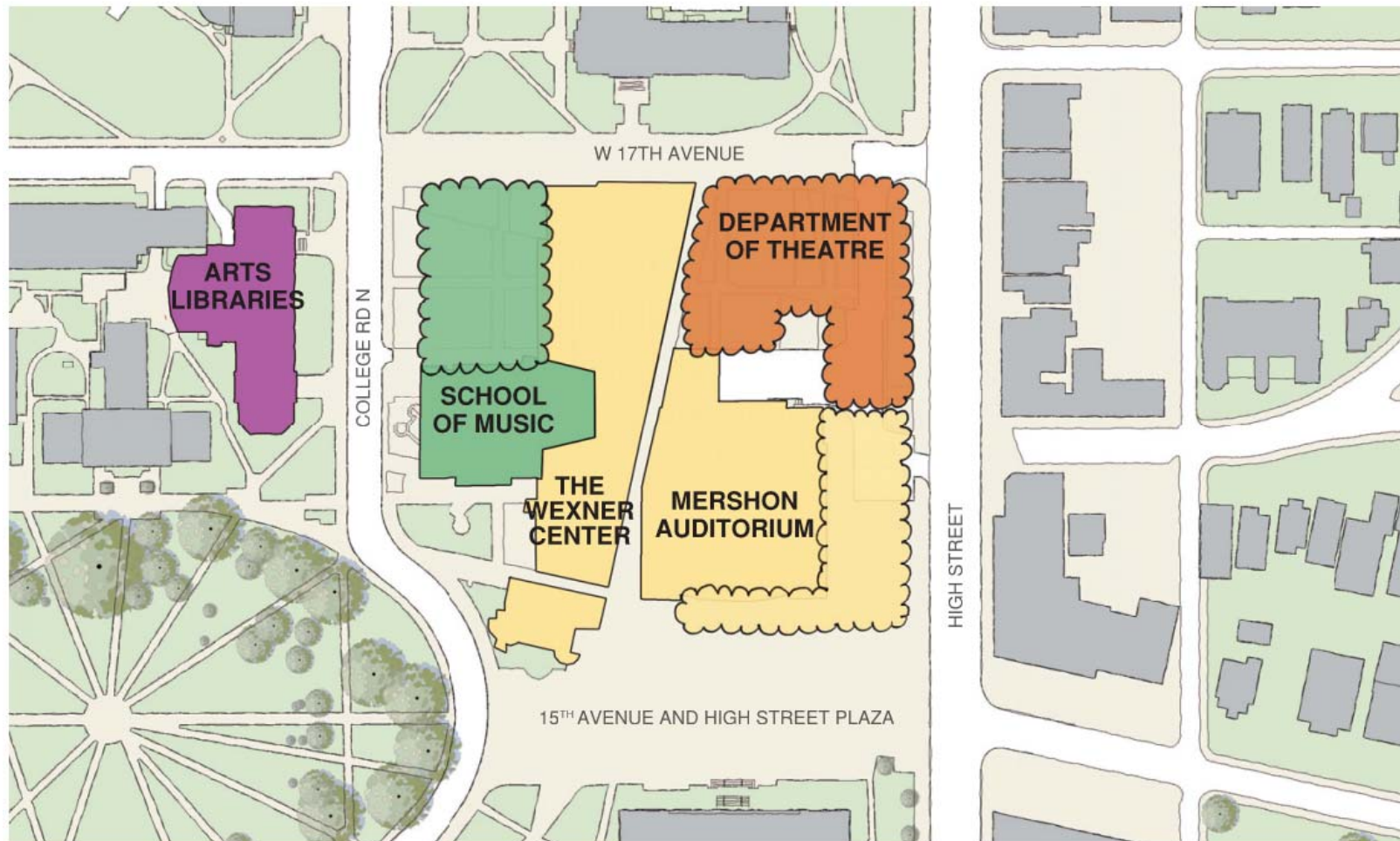
In options, the Department of Theatre, the Wexner Center, and the Moving Image Production departments occupy the eastern portion of the site. The organization of these departments varies by option. The proposed addition to Weigel Hall for the School of Music is the same for both options. A detailed analysis of each option is located in Sections 3.7 and 3.8.

#### Recommendation

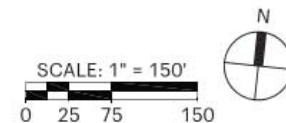
The District Planning team recommended and the Ohio State University senior administration and trustees approved moving forward with the "Renovate Mershon" option because it:

- Is less expensive,
- Is easier to phase,
- Maintains clearer physical identities for the Department of Theatre and the Wexner Center,
- Includes a new 1,400 seat venue with a stage that doubles as a black box theatre for the Wexner Center.

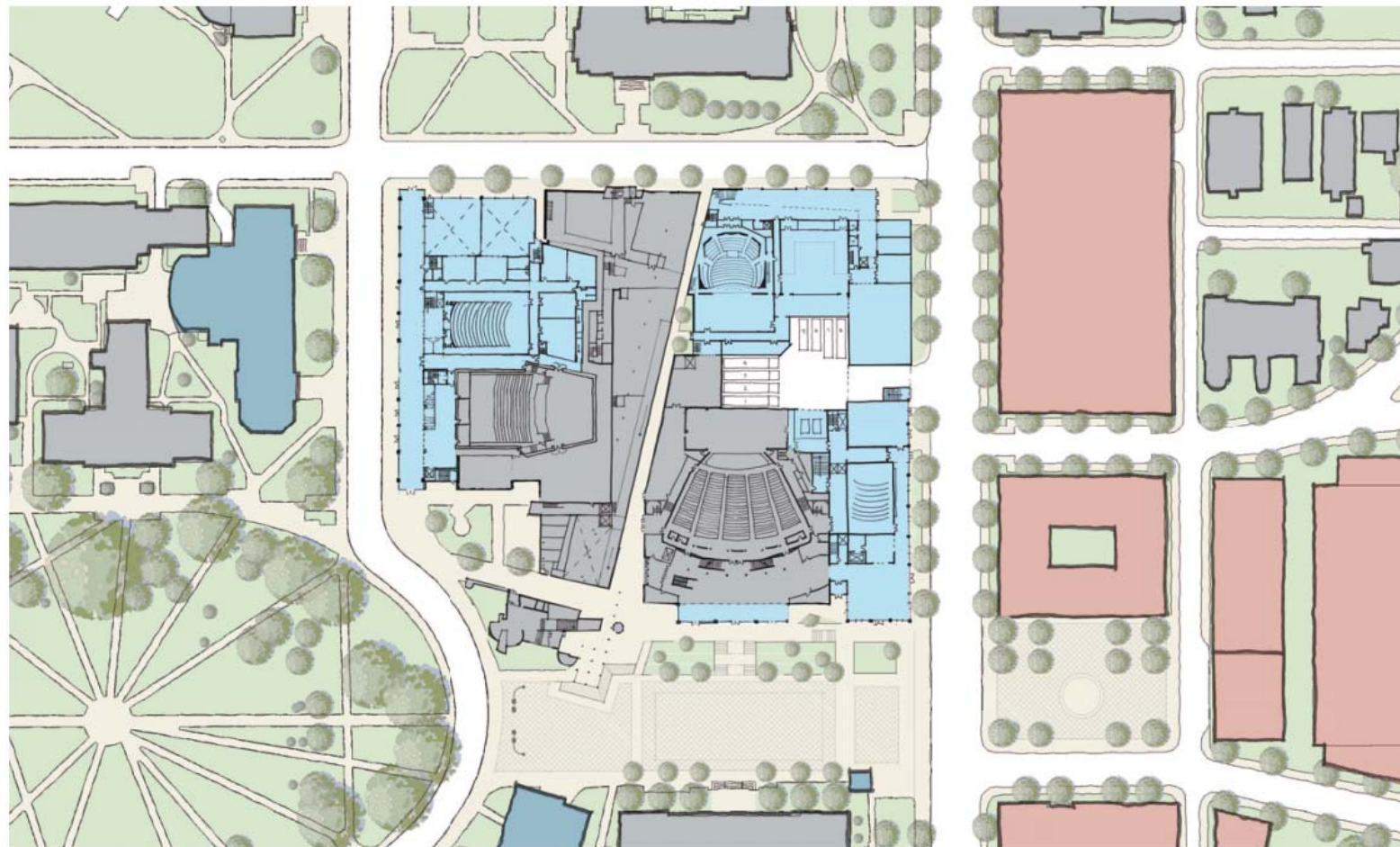
### 1.3.1 RENOVATE MERSHON



Renovating Mershon takes advantage of the existing venue and rehearsal spaces. In this option, Mershon is extensively renovated and wrapped by a new lobby and liner building fronting on High Street. The Department of Theatre occupies the northeast quadrant of the site, and the Wexner Center expands into the southeast quadrant to front High Street. Hughes Hall's School of Music program moves across the street into the addition to Weigel Hall. Hughes Hall is renovated to accommodate the Arts Libraries.

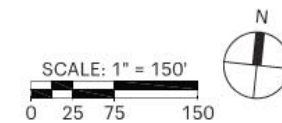


### 1.3.2 RENOVATE MERSHON – GROUND FLOOR

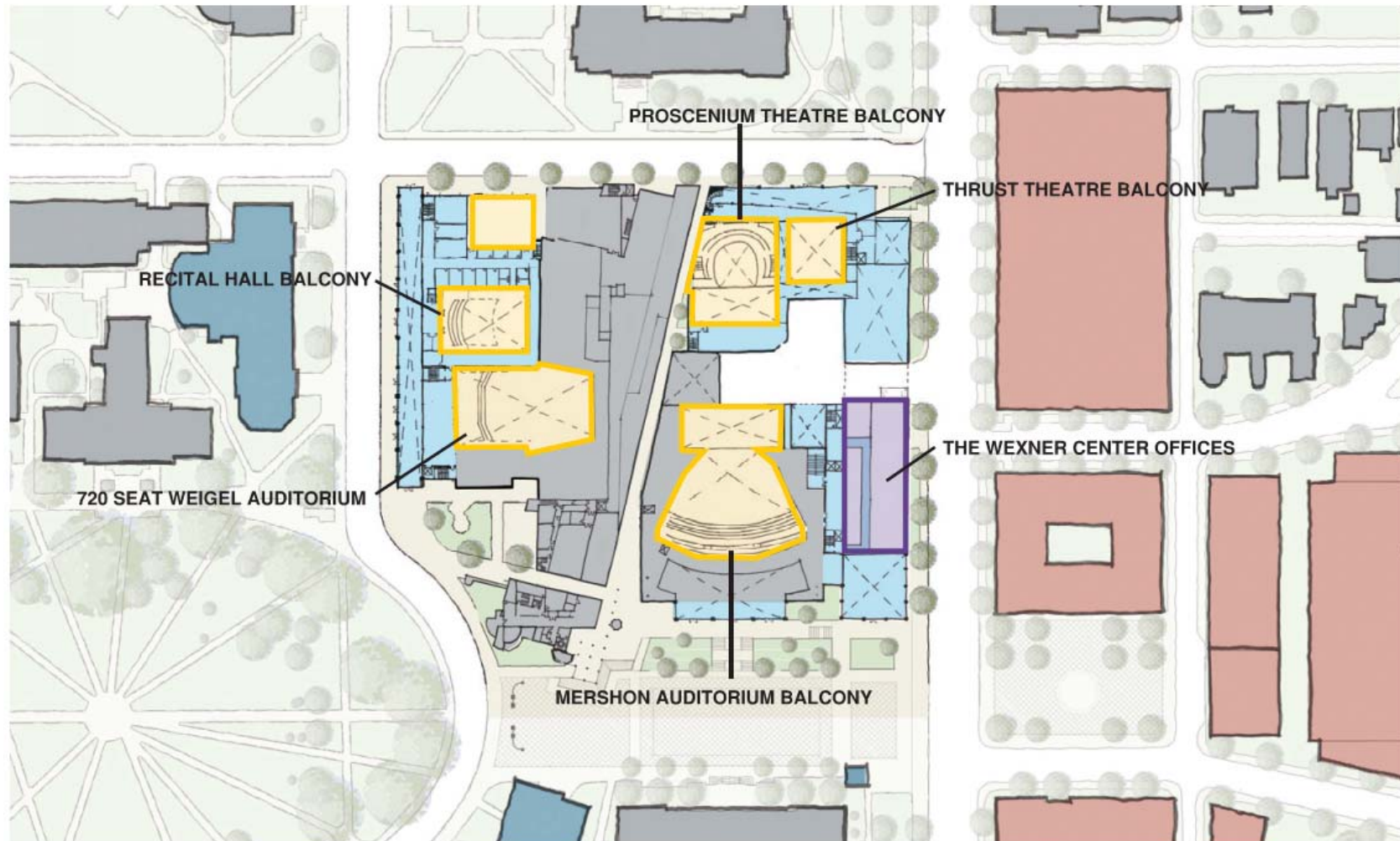


**KEY**

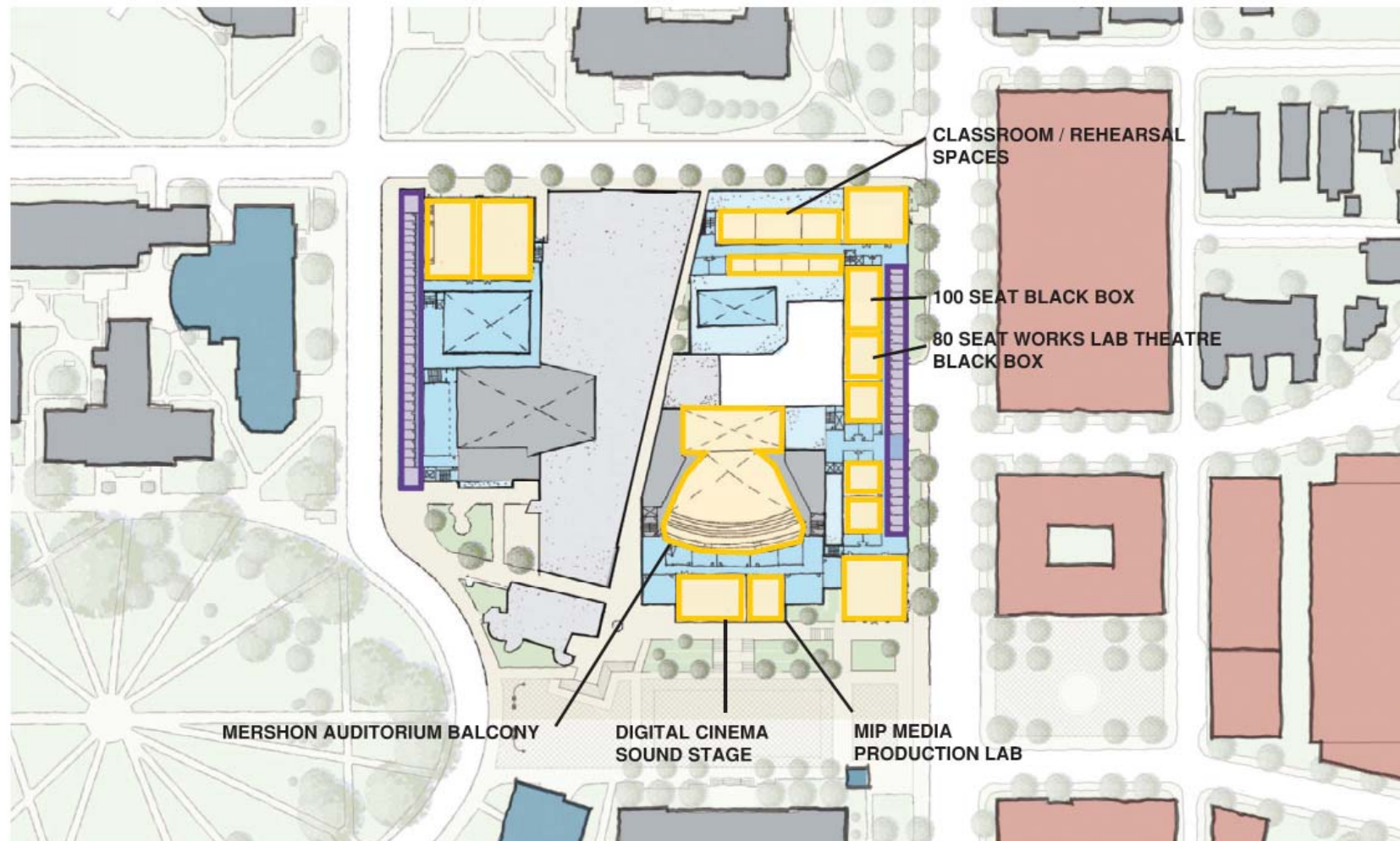
- - EXISTING
- - PROPOSED (ACADEMIC)
- - PROPOSED (NON-ACADEMIC)



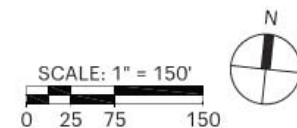
### 1.3.3 RENOVATE MERSHON – SECOND FLOOR



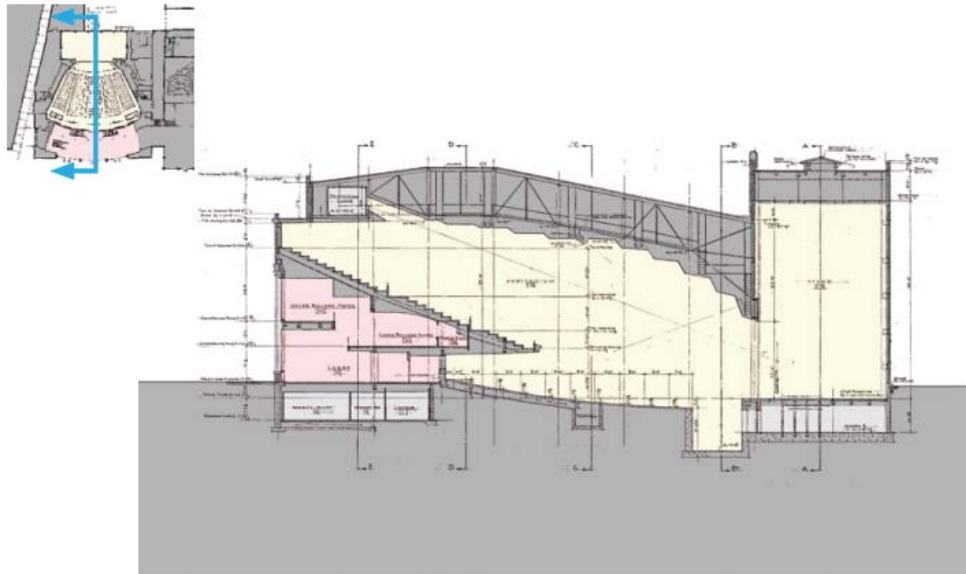
### 1.3.4 RENOVATE MERSHON – THIRD FLOOR



The third floor includes several performance and rehearsal venues for the School of Music, Department of Theatre, and Moving Image Production. Purple areas signify offices and conference rooms. The remaining space contains labs and classrooms.



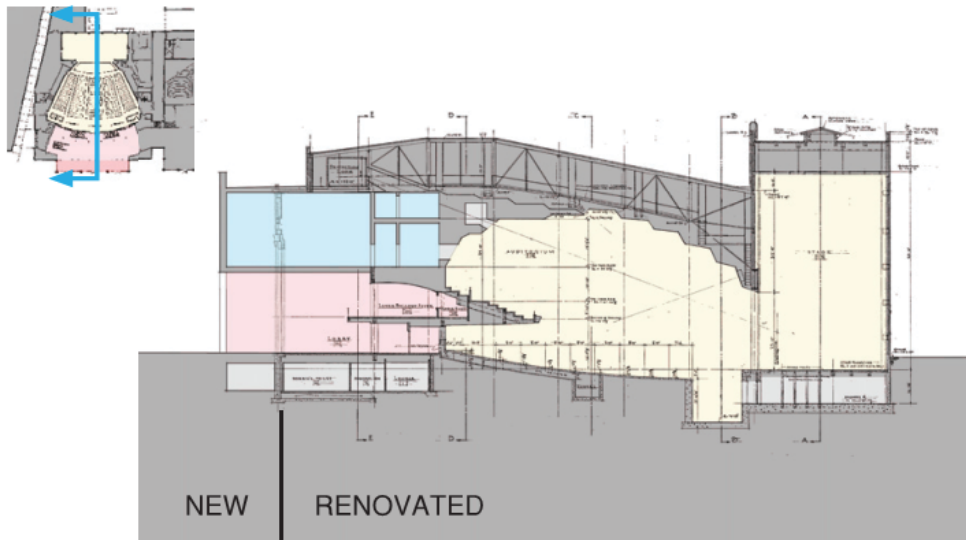
### 1.3.5 RENOVATE MERSHON – SECTION ANALYSIS



#### 1.3.6 Existing Section

The existing Mershon Auditorium has nearly 2,500 seats. The venue is too large to comfortably host the typical event size. The upper seats of the 1,500 seat balcony are undesirable.

The main lobby is accessed from the east and west entrances, and a series of intermediate lobbies serve the balconies above.



#### 1.3.7 Proposed Section

The proposed section reduces the auditorium to 1,400 seats by removing 1,100 seats from the balcony.

The lobby is extended towards the 15th Avenue and High Street Plaza, creating a new entry sequence that flows directly from the public space.

The volume above the lobby will be inhabited by the Moving Image Production program.