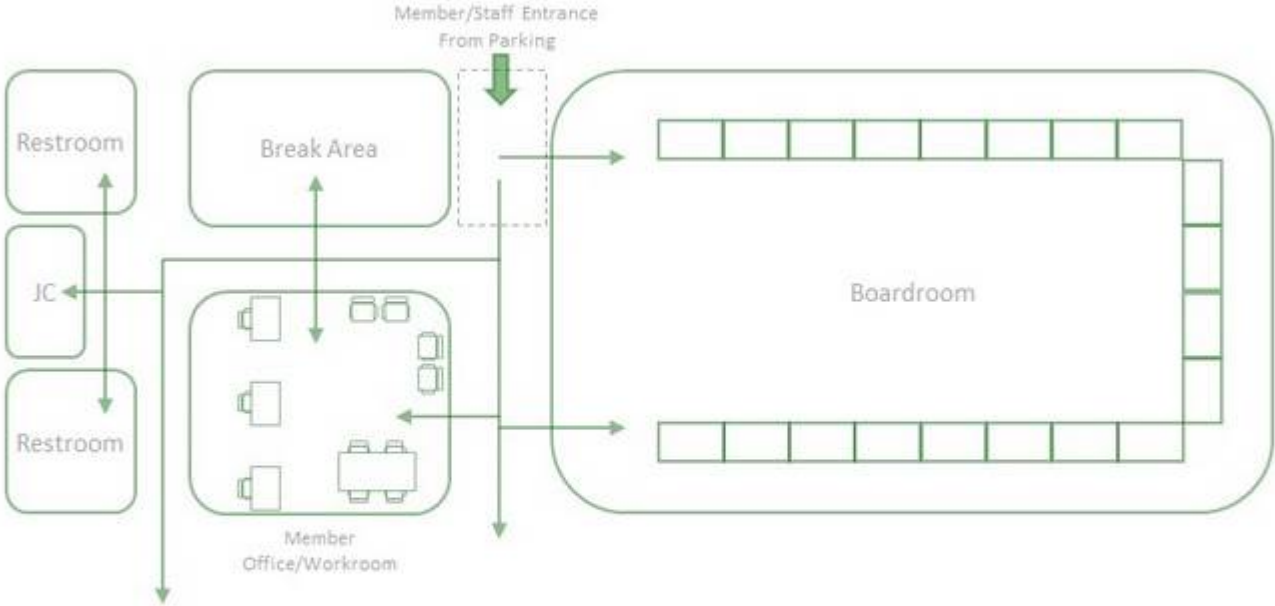




Building Space Needs, Utilization & Space Reuse Study

December 2017



Isothermal Planning & Development Commission



Building Space Needs, Utilization & Space Reuse Study

December 2017

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the findings of a space needs assessment of the office building currently housing the staff of the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission, located in downtown Rutherfordton, North Carolina.

The Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) is the regional Council of Governments for State Region C which consists of Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford counties in Western North Carolina and the included 23 incorporated municipalities within. IPDC functions to aid, assist and improve the capabilities of local governments in areas such as administration, planning, fiscal management and development. Each member government is entitled to the services provided by the Commission. IPDC is involved in a range of activities which, directly or indirectly, affect the lives of Region C residents.

IPDC serves its members and their citizens by fostering regional collaboration, and by providing professional and technical expertise. The office building houses the major program units which include Administration, Finance, Area Agency on Aging, Housing, and Community, Economic & Workforce Development (CEW).

Reportedly, the impetus to conduct an independent assessment of the quantity and quality of existing space, arose from staff observations of space needs and the desire to improve efficiencies; as well as member agency comments, suggestions and voiced concerns.

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing building is a two-story, nondescript, brick clad structure on the corner of West Court and Main Streets in Rutherfordton. It is reported to have been originally built in the 1940's wherein it served as a grocery store for many years. IPDC is said to have occupied the building since the late 1970's. There are currently two occupied levels with work space assigned to a total of 32 full and part-time employees.

Words to best describe the initial impression of the building following a cursory walkthrough of the two occupied levels would include, "old", "dim", and overall, an "unattractive" place in which to work.

Upon further inspection of the building and its included spaces, as well as observation of the activities occurring within, the following comments summarize the conditions found:

- The building is not ADA compliant.
- Plumbing problems appear to be ongoing.
- Functionality of space is impacted negatively by structural elements.
- There is a considerable lack of natural light available within/to either floor level.
- The installed lighting on the main floor is awful.
- Staff spend a lot of time going up and down stairs.
- Functionality of individual and common spaces is poor.
- The size of individual work spaces often did not correspond to responsibilities assigned.
- Adjacencies of and circulation between program/work units are poor.
- Adjacencies of staff spaces within individual work units are poor.
- Adequate member meeting and work space is lacking.
- Storage is "anywhere & everywhere" and typically not convenient to those requiring access.
- "Stuff" in corridors, walkways and open areas contributes to impression of clutter.
- Musty odors, assumedly mildew, noted on lower level.

Member Survey

To coincide with this study, IPDC staff created and distributed a survey to member counties and municipalities seeking observations and opinions regarding the building. Responses to the following question are summarized in the accompanying table.

Question:

“Select any of the following features that should be improved at our headquarters to better meet your needs.”

Feature	Response
Lighting Improvements	65%
Location Change	5%
Appearance	70%
Meeting Space	65%
Equipment	20%
Layout	60%

And, while the number of survey responses received was not overwhelming (22); the improvements suggested of those that were received were quite consistent; i.e. appearance, better lighting and meeting space, and building layout. Among the more pointed remarks offered in the comments section of the survey were the following:

- *The current state of the headquarters is dilapidated, outdated, unwelcoming and uncomfortable.*
- *Sell the building and relocate to a more modern and appropriate location. Use this (new) location as an opportunity to “re-brand” the organization and present it in a new light to help attract more interest and reinvigorate the membership.*
- *When compared to other Councils of Government (Western Piedmont, High Country, Land of Sky, Southwestern) IPDC is woefully below standards. The building, facility and overall aesthetic impression of the organization is impacted by the current building situation.*
- *Need co-working space for members and partner agencies and meeting space capable of hosting regional training activities*
- *Replacing the carpets would be a start but given the space, it would be better to start over in a different location.*

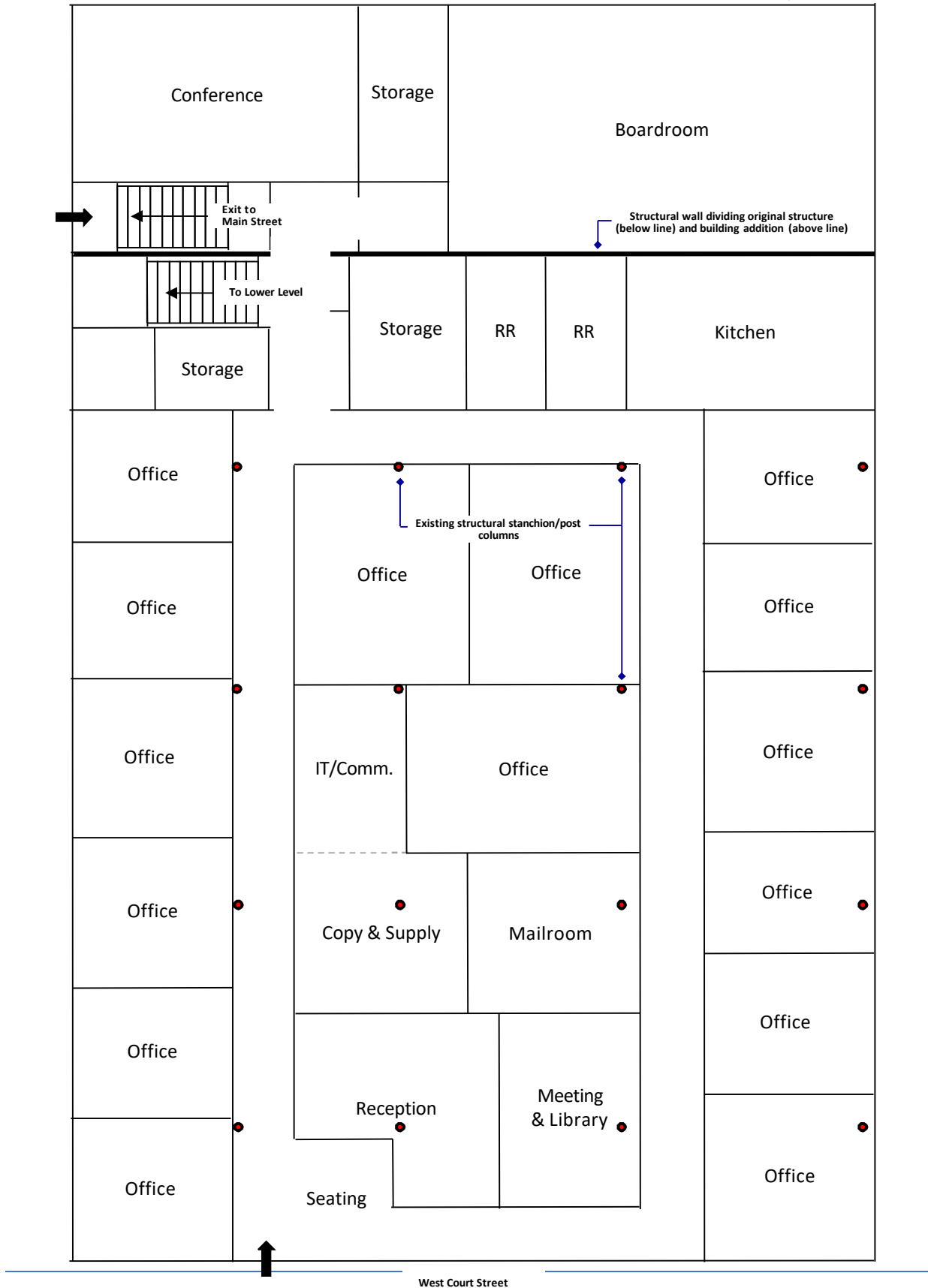
Available Space

The interior overall “footprint”; i.e. Interior Gross Square Feet (IGSF); of the building’s two occupied levels were physically measured and determined to include 5,428 square feet on the main level and 5,290 square feet on the lower level for a total of 10,718 square feet. Note that these space totals *included* stairways, corridors, restrooms, built partitions, mechanical spaces, structural columns, and load bearing walls; in other words, the *interior gross square feet (IGSF)*-all space within the exterior walls of the building.

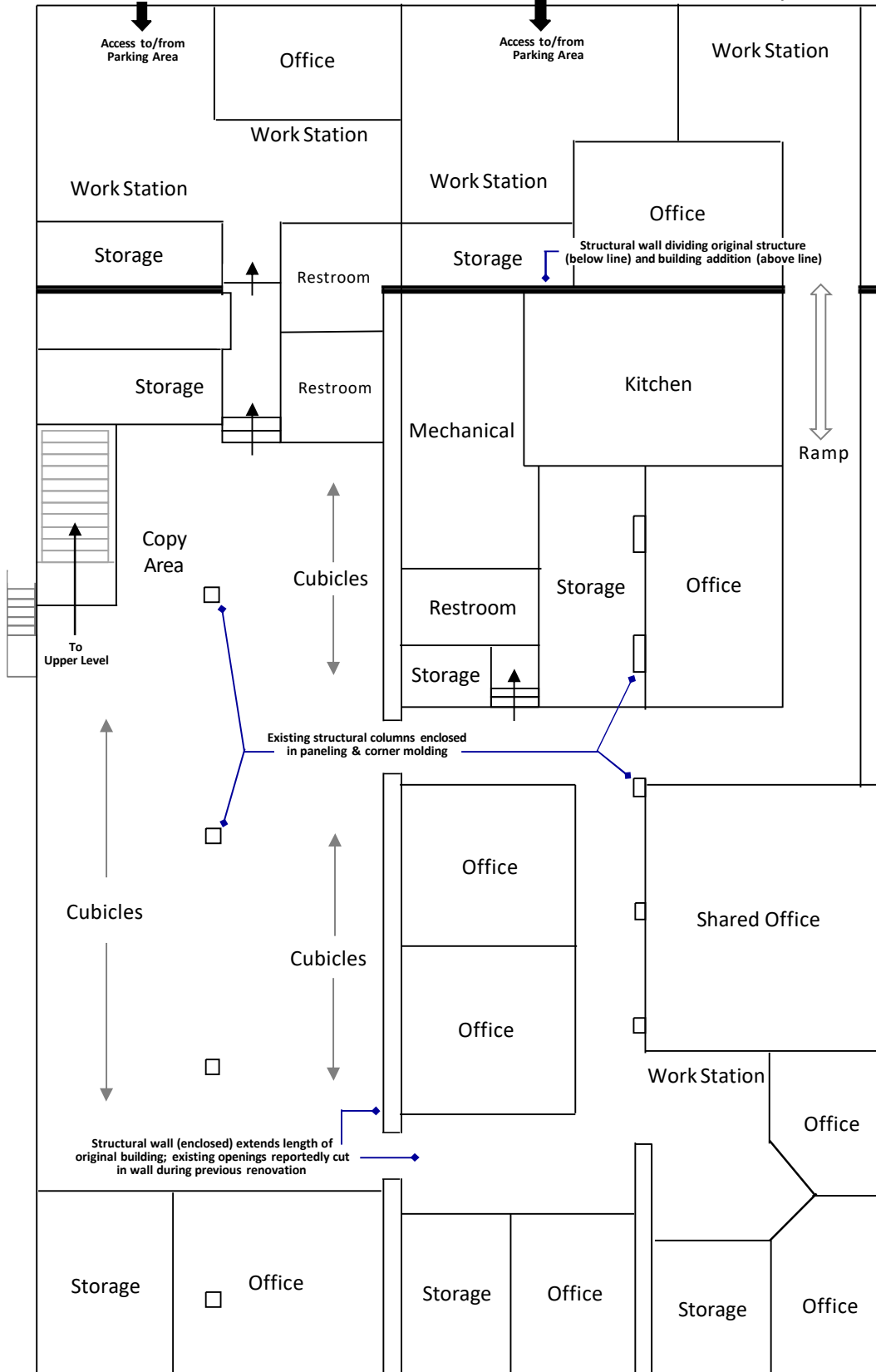
The layout of each floor level, including the current designated purpose of the included spaces are illustrated in the pages that follow.

MAIN FLOOR-Existing Layout

5,428 IGSF



LOWER FLOOR-Existing Layout **5,290 IGFSF**



2. SPACE NEEDS

Determining the space needs of a building requires the assessment and documentation of the "gaps" that exist between the current conditions found (in this case amount and type of space) and the conditions desired that would more adequately facilitate performance objectives; i.e. type, quantity, location and functionality of space.

The major activities undertaken and the basis for the previous summary comments regarding the building's existing space included, but were not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Physical audits of all accessible internal spaces.
- Physical measurement of all included building spaces to determine size and intended use.
- Above ceiling inspections to identify extent & location of bearing walls.
- Personal observations of current assigned work spaces, and staff activities occurring within each.
- Interviews with agency personnel, including program Directors, regarding space limitations, operational concerns, efficiency issues, and current and assigned duties and responsibilities.
- The consultant's personal experience in having evaluated the functional requirements and corresponding office/work space requirements of over 1,100 local government buildings and the resultant data base acquired during same.

The critical accompaniment to these activities was a series of meetings held with each Unit and Program Director and their available staff to discuss the type of space needed, the activities that would be occurring within, the expectations for that space with regards to how it should "perform", and the location of that space within the individual unit. Only after these meetings, which focused on unit functionality, efficiencies, and internal communications; i.e. operations; was the subject of the size of individual spaces discussed.

Space Lists

The space lists that follow resulted from these discussions and identify those spaces necessary to accommodate the operational requirements identified for each major program area. Each list corresponds with its companion adjacency diagram. The space list column headings are provided to clarify and support the square footage called for. These headings include:

"Area/Space"-Identifies the program or activity area for which the space is designated.

"Max #/Space"-refers to the *typical* maximum number of adults that might be expected to occupy or be present in the referenced space at any one time.

"NSF"-the *interior* dimensions of the space designated; NOT including wall thicknesses, common circulation areas, etc. and expressed as *net square feet* or NSF.

"# Spaces"-the *number of spaces* of the type designated; for example, Restroom, Meeting, etc.

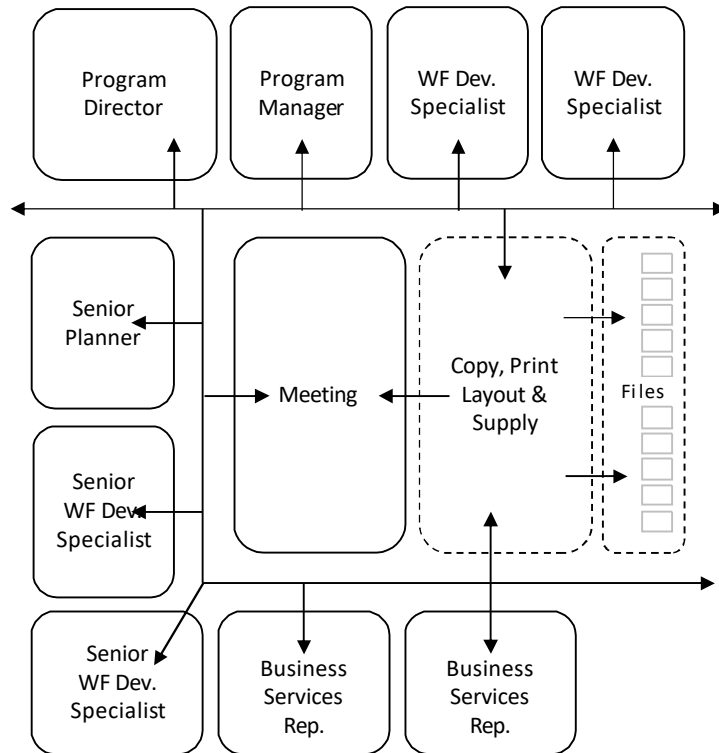
"Total NSF"-the product of the *"NSF" and the "# Spaces"*; for example, two (2) Restrooms @ 70 net square feet (NSF) each = 140 "Total NSF"

Adjacency Diagrams

The drawings accompanying the space lists are conceptual and intended to illustrate the relationship of one space to another within a given functional unit or program area; as well as the characteristics of the space or spaces with regards to accessibility to/from the area and circulation between internal spaces.

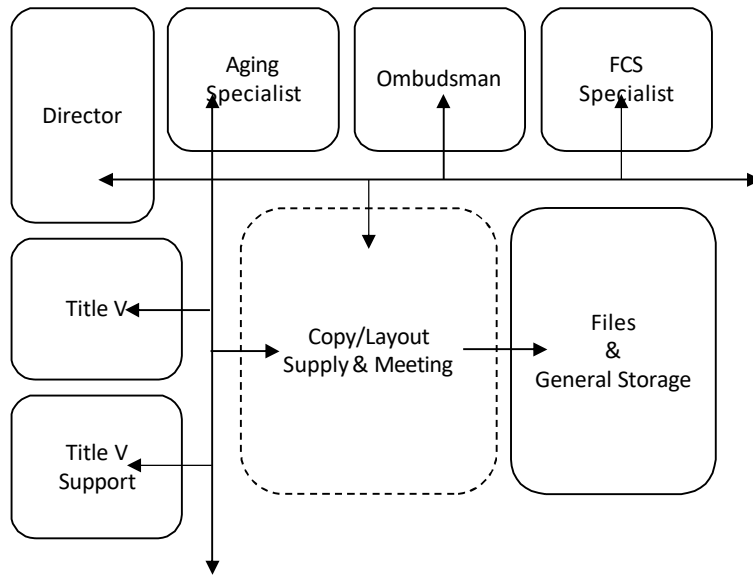
CEW OFFICE CONCEPT

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Director	5	144	1	144
Senior Planner	3	120	1	120
Program Manager	3	120	1	120
Business Services Representative	3	120	2	240
Senior WF Development Specialist	3	120	2	240
WF Development Specialist	3	120	2	240
Meeting	10	264	1	264
Copy, Print, Layout & Supply	2	264	1	264
Files	1	132	1	132
			12	1764



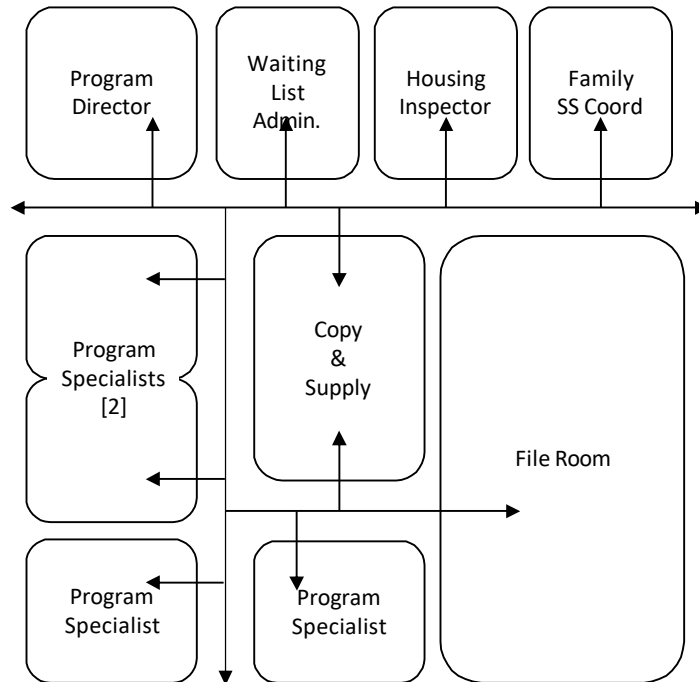
AGING-OFFICE CONCEPT

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Director	5	144	1	144
Aging Specialist	3	120	1	120
Ombudsman	3	120	1	120
FCS Specialist	3	120	1	120
Title V	3	120	1	120
Title V Support	3	120	1	120
Copy, Layout, Supply & Meeting	2-3	360	1	360
Files & General Storage	2	288	1	288
			8	1392



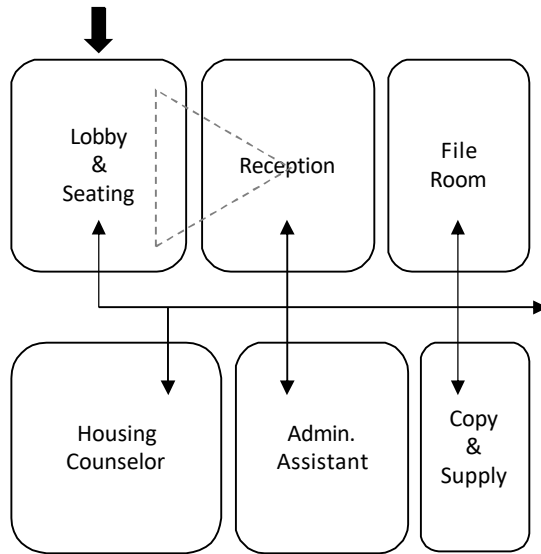
HOUSING-OFFICE CONCEPT

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Director	5	144	1	144
Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator	3	120	1	120
Program Specialists [2]	4	240	1	240
Program Specialist	3	120	2	240
Waiting List Administrator	3	120	1	120
Housing Inspector	3	120	1	120
Copy & Supply	3	204	1	204
File Room	1	480	1	480
			9	1668



HOUSEING- FIELD OFFICE CONCEPT [Within Building]

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Entrance Lobby & Seating	6	120	1	120
Receptionist	2	120	1	120
Housing Counselor	3	144	1	144
Admin. Assistant	2	120	1	120
File Room	1	108	1	108
Copy & Supply	1	84	1	84
			6	696



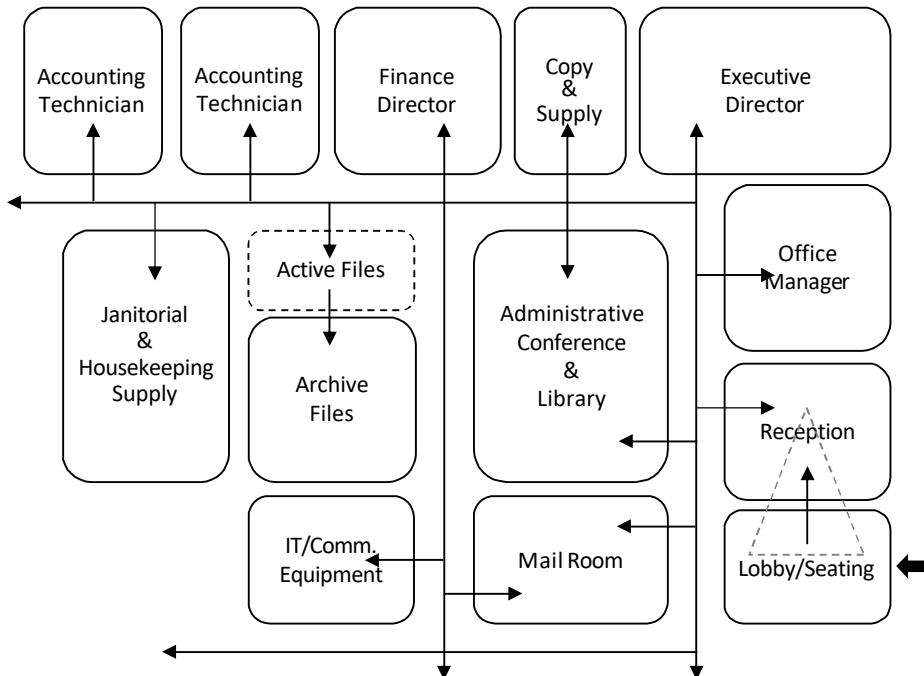
COMBINED ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE OFFICE CONCEPT

Administration & Support

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Execurtive Director	6	216	1	216
Office Manager	3	144	1	144
Admin. Conference & Library	8	264	1	264
Copy & Supply	1	96	1	96
Receptionist	2	120	1	120
Entrance & Seating	4	108	1	108
Mail Room	2	132	1	132
IT/Communications	1	120	1	120
			8	1200

Finance

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Finance Director	5	144	1	144
Accounting Technician	3	120	2	240
Active Files	1	72	1	72
Archive Files	1	144	1	144
Janitorial & Housekeeping Supply	1	216	1	216
			6	816



Support Space

The preceding adjacency diagrams and space lists addressed the current IPDC work units and programs; i.e. Administration, Finance, CEW, Aging and Housing. In addition, there are several common/shared spaces and previously referenced space deficiencies that also need to be addressed. These areas include the following:

Staff & Building Support

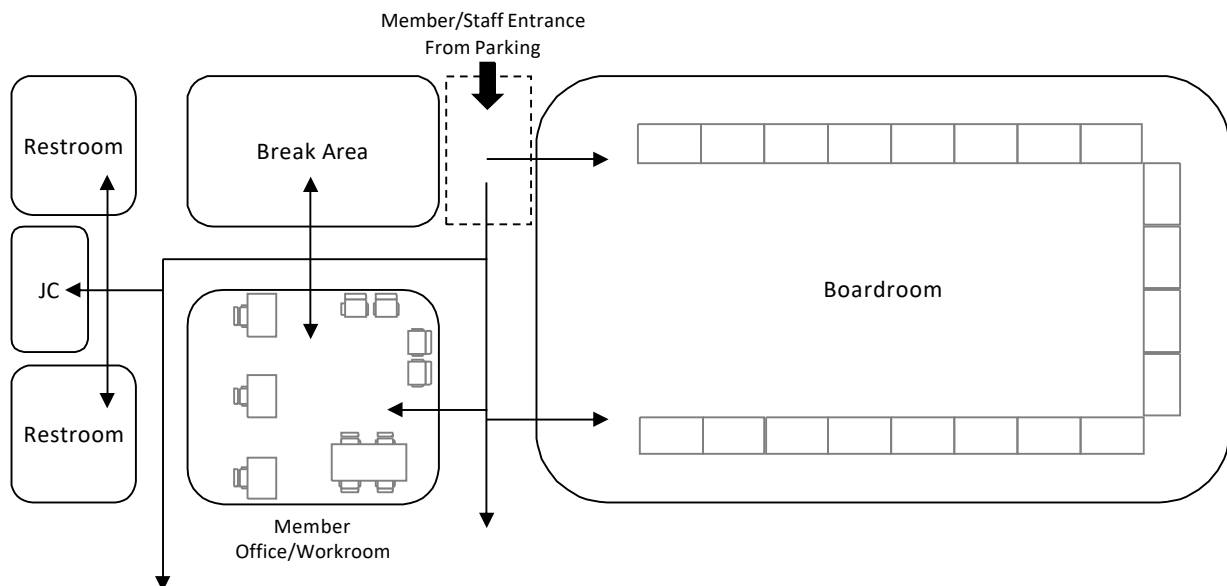
Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Public Restrooms	1	70	2	140
Staff Restrooms	2	110	4	440
Break Area	6-10	264	1	264
Custodial Space	1	60	2	120
General Storage	2	400	1	400
			10	1364

Member Space

Area/Space	Max #/Space	NSF	# Spaces	Total NSF
Boardroom	40	1900	1	1900
Restrooms	2	110	2	220
Office/WorkSpace	6-8	300	1	300
			4	2420

The staff and building support, and member spaces identified, would not necessarily be grouped in a single cluster or adjacency diagram, but rather located throughout the building where appropriate.

This adjacency diagram illustrates an example of one such combination of spaces that was discussed with IPDC staff that would simultaneously address the stated needs of both in-house staff as well as Region C representatives and Board members that responded to the survey.



Calculating Total Space

As previously noted, the interior, usable dimensions of a space or work area constitute the area’s net square feet or NSF. When interior and exterior wall thicknesses, stairwells, common circulation areas, and interior mechanical spaces are considered; i.e. added; the total building area that results is referred to as the total “Gross Square Feet”, or GSF.

Space Needs Summary

Area/Space	NSF
Administration	1200
Finance	816
Housing	2364
Aging	1392
CEW	1764
Staff & Building Support	1364
Member Space	2420
Total Area NSF	11320

The *Area/Building Multiplier* used to calculate the net-to-gross difference in a building will vary depending on the type of building and the complexity of its design requirements. In this instance, i.e. an “office building”; a multiplier of 30% would be common.

Hypothetically then, should IPDC choose to build a new Headquarters facility, using the total net space needs identified (11,320), the total estimated space of the “built” building would be 11,320 x 1.30, or 14,716 GSF.

On the other hand, were IPDC to consider renovation & reuse of the existing building’s two occupied levels, the exterior walls would already be in place. This would reduce the area/building multiplier, typically, by 15-20%. This, in turn, would reduce the total space available to be built within the existing walls to between 13,018-13,584 interior gross square feet or IGSF.

The dilemma of course is clear: How is 13,018-13,584 square feet going to fit within the 10,718 square feet available.

3. SPACE REUSE

As noted in the title of this report, an additional charge within the study’s scope included an assessment of building “reuse”. Notwithstanding the already identified difference between documented space needs and actual space available, due diligence suggests that reuse options be studied. If nothing else, to identify any immediate changes that could occur within the existing building to improve space utilization; and, in doing so, perhaps stimulate ideas that may be considered if eventual options for additional space are considered other than, or in addition to, the current building.

Initial reuse concepts evaluated involved rearranging individual offices, moving individual departments from one floor to another to determine if more effective utilization of space was achievable, and repurposing existing spaces. For example, converting the breakroom to a meeting room, combing lower floor offices to create a single central storage space, and converting the current boardroom to component area offices.

The difficulty with these initial studies was that each time one problem or issue was addressed or corrected, another problem was created. The limitations of the building’s existing internal built spaces, as well as the permanent structural elements present, became barriers to creativity and change.

Subsequently the final concept(s) that were evaluated considered a scenario that “gutted” the building of all but the major/necessary structural elements on both floors, as well as the server room on the main

floor and two restrooms and the mechanical room on the lower floor. The results are illustrated in Figures 1 and 3 in the pages that follow.

Next, the component area adjacency diagrams illustrated on pages 8-12 were scaled to coincide with the scale of the main and lower floor diagrams originally portrayed on pages 5 and 6. Numerous variations were tried, placing and maneuvering these component area diagrams on both the main and lower floors. Examples of two scenarios that came close to accommodating the existing component areas (only) are illustrated in Figures 2 and 4. The order of the diagrams are:

Figure 1- Main Floor-Vacant of all but the major structural elements and server room.

Figure 2-Scaled concept that locates Administration, Finance, and CEW on the main floor.

Figure 3- Lower Floor- Vacant of all but the major structural elements, two existing restrooms, and the mechanical equipment room.

Figure 4-Scaled concept that locates Housing (including Field Office) and Aging departments on the lower floor.

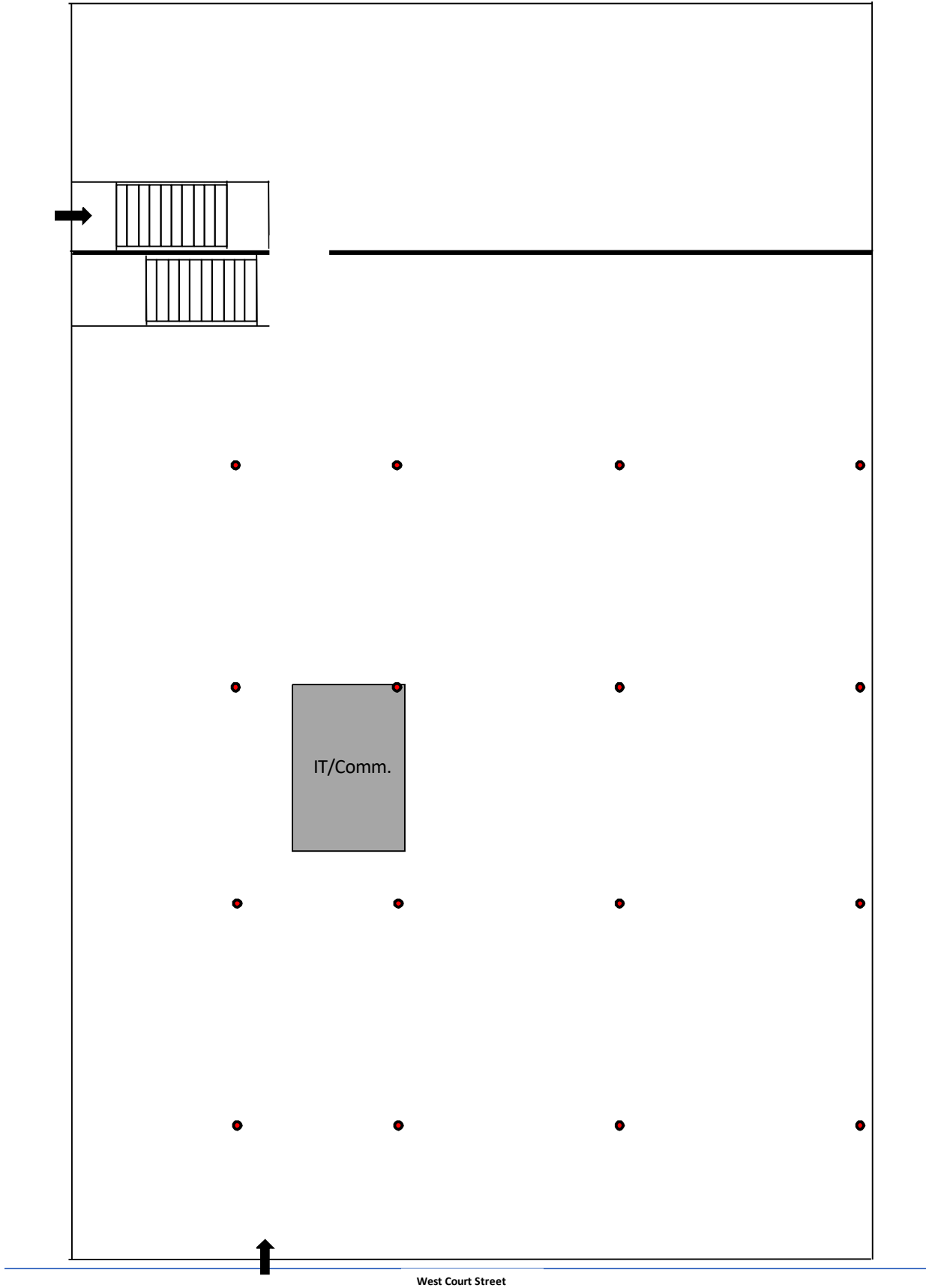
Comments regarding the reuse options illustrated as well as the reuse issues of concern regarding the building itself follow these diagrams.

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MAIN FLOOR

Figure #1

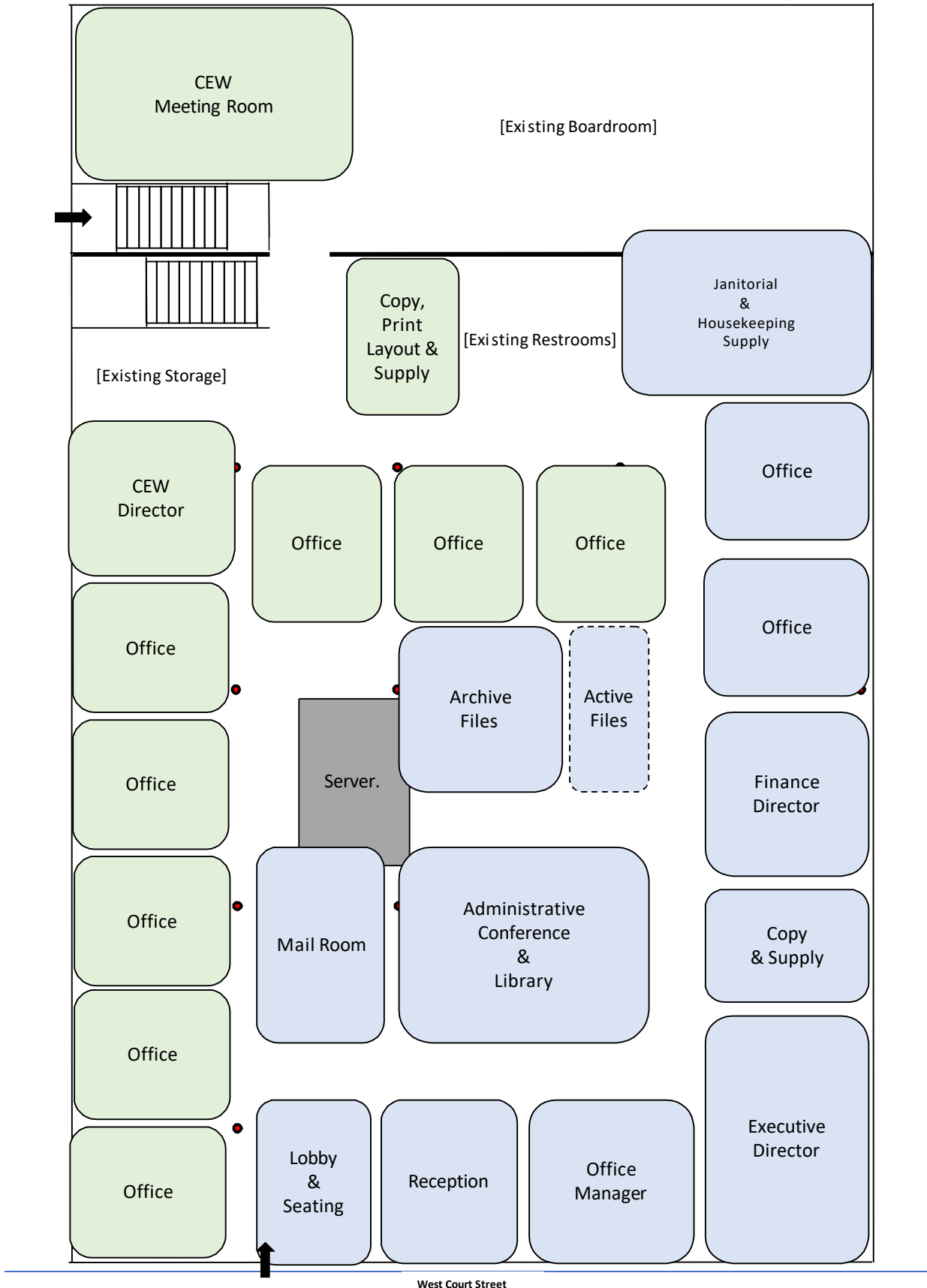
5,428 IGSF

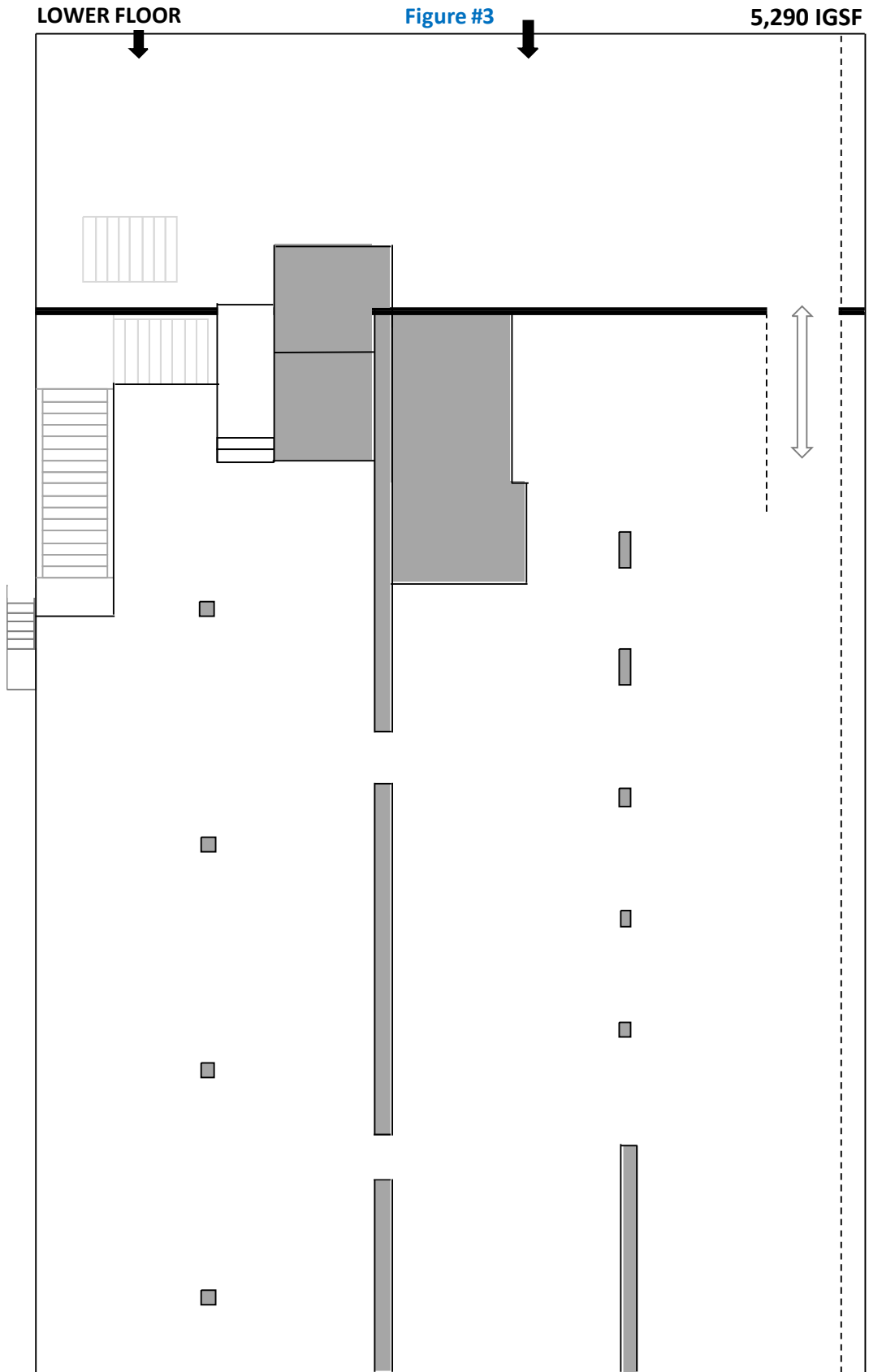


MAIN FLOOR

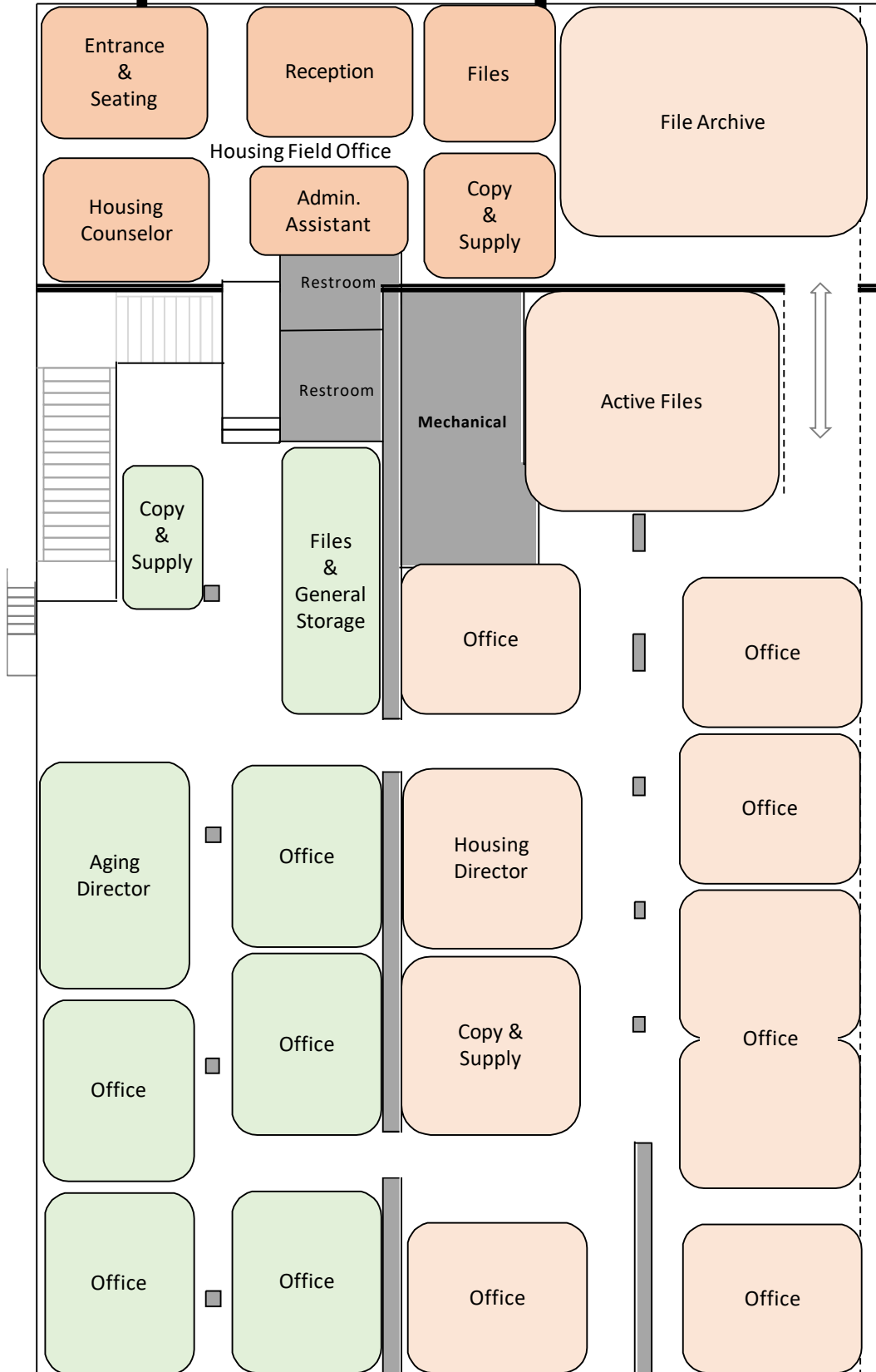
Figure #2

5,428 IGSF





LOWER FLOOR **Figure #4** 5,290 IGFS



Space Reuse-Summary Comments

Figure #2

- The preferred adjacency for the combined Administration/Finance components fit snugly into the lower left corner of Figure #2.
- CEW's entire staff is now on this level, versus having staff on two levels as is currently the case.
- However, CEW's preferred adjacency concept has changed significantly; i.e. a classic case of "the need/operation having to adjust to the building versus the building accommodating the need".

Figure #4

- Housing remains on the lower floor, however, without being able to accommodate the preferred adjacencies.
- Space available to accommodate active and archived files does nothing to improve accessibility to and from several offices.
- The Housing Field Office is in space that, for the most part, can accommodate its preferred internal space requirements.
- The space shown as occupied by the Aging program bears no resemblance to the preferred concept diagramed, that would have improved communications and accessibility to common and shared work spaces.
- The activity support areas (copy, supply, file, storage) have had to be decreased to the point that it would be *less efficient* than current space, versus much *more efficient*, as diagramed.

General

- Staff will still be spending a lot of time going up & down stairs.
- None of the Member Space identified was able to be located within the existing space.
- The only remaining location for a Staff Break Area is on the main level in space currently designated as the Boardroom.
- Numerous survey comments were critical of the Boardroom's size and accommodations; the configurations illustrated in Figures 2 and 4 leave no room within the building to accommodate a larger, more efficient Boardroom.
- Overall, of the reuse options studied and considered, few would have significant impact on the current issues of concern to IPDC staff.
- As well, none were able to address the additional needs identified for members.

In summary, the consensus shared by IPDC Board members, member agency representatives, and IPDC internal staff is that this is a lousy building; for many reasons. ***Options need to be considered.***

The discussions that follow address first, *Development Options*; how the existing building's issues can be corrected via built, re-built, or replacement options, and the probable costs to do so.

Next, follows a discussion of *Organizational Options*; which challenges the IPDC to revisit and question its organizational purpose and mission; both current and future; and consider, within the context of that discussion, what the physical building represents, and what role it should assume, to best serve the organization and its members in the years to come.

4. DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

The most apparent options for the development of new and improved IPDC office space are to either renovate the existing building, find another building, or build new space. The bullet points that follow offer brief notes for consideration as each option is evaluated.

1. Renovate the existing building

The existing buildings' limitations dictate that any effort short of a "major", top-to-bottom renovation would be a waste of money. Subsequently, among the major tasks expected would first be, the retention of an architect and licensed engineer to conduct a structural analysis of the building; and, assuming positive results:

- Gutting the two lower levels of the building.
- Removing ceilings at both levels.
- Constructing a full floor level above the current main floor.
- Installing an elevator.
- Installing windows in the Court Street and Main Street sides of the building.
- Adding new plumbing, electrical & mechanical (HVAC) systems.
- Find a temporary location for staff to work for 12-14 months of construction.
- Significant renovation of a building of this age and substructure will very likely cost (per square foot) at least 70%, to as much as 80-85%, of the square foot cost of a new building constructed from the ground up. (Refer also to the Probable Costs section that follows).

2. Find another building

- Do not consider anything less than 15,000 square feet of occupiable space.
- Retain an architect to assess the applicability and adaptability of the space identified in this report, with the space of the building(s) being considered.
- In addition to purchase/lease costs of the building; anticipate design and renovation costs necessary to adequately address the space needs and operational objectives identified in this report.

3. Build a new facility

- Retain an architect.
- Locate a site; recommend no less than one (1) acre.
- Anticipate 4 months to design, 1 month to bid, and 12 months to build.

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Probable Costs

When developing the probable costs of a public building project, particularly a new building project, it is essential for budgeting purposes that two major categories of costs be addressed. The first is *Construction Costs*, for *both* the building and the building site. The second is *Project Related Costs*; those costs that will occur before, during and immediately after construction. Further explanation of these categories is offered as follows:

Construction Costs

- *Base Construction Costs*-the brick, mortar, steel, and glass that comprises the building structure
- *Site Development*-the required grading, excavating, utilities, and paving

Project Related Costs

- *Design Fees*-architectural & engineering design fees and expenses
- *Site & Construction Materials Testing*-soil tests, concrete consistency tests, etc.
- *Printing Costs*- primarily for construction documents printed & distributed during bidding
- *Fixtures, Furnishings & Equipment*-an estimate of those items not otherwise provided by the contractor
- *Construction Escalation*-from date of estimate to the estimated date that construction will start
- *Project Contingencies*-at minimum, the set aside required by Local Government Commission for public projects

Cost Basis

The probable costs identified are based on the 2017 edition of the *R S Means Square Foot Costs* national index for a 1-story office building with a 12-foot story height, 15,000 total square feet, and the following construction characteristics:

- Sub-structure; poured concrete w/strip & spread footings
- Floor Construction; cast in place concrete columns
- Roof Construction; concrete beam & slab
- Exterior; face brick
- Roof; flat/built-up

The construction cost identified in the index was \$193.44 per square foot. However, in that the index identifies *average* square foot costs nationally, it also assigns location factors based on where the construction is to occur. In this case Rutherfordton is within the *Ashville Region* of North Carolina, and the corresponding location factor is .85; 85% of the national average of \$193.44 or, \$166.00 per square foot.

The table that follows identifies how the probable costs are likely to breakdown for the building with a total building area of 15,000 gross square feet utilizing a building construction cost per square foot of \$166.00.

Construction Costs

Cost Category	Area/Basis	Unit Cost	Cost
Base Construction	15,000	\$ 166	\$ 2,490,000
Site Development	1 acre	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
Subtotal-Construction Costs			\$ 2,550,000

Project Related Costs

Cost Category	Area/Basis	Unit Cost	Cost
Design Fees	%	0.07	\$ 178,500
Site & Construction Materials Testing	Lump Sum	lump sum	\$ 12,000
Printing Costs	Lump Sum	lump sum	\$ 6,000
Fixtures Furnishing & Equipment	%	0.04	\$ 102,000
Escalation	%	0.05	\$ 127,500
Design/Construction Contingency	%	0.05	\$ 127,500
Subtotal-Project Related Costs			\$ 553,500

Total Project Cost			\$ 3,103,500
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With regards to the costs identified:

- Certainly, site development costs cannot be determined without knowledge of the site and its characteristics; i.e. topography, availability of utilities, site paving and landscaping requirements, etc. The area noted (1 acre) and the unit cost (\$60,000) are included in the example to emphasize that whatever the cost, it is included in the total construction cost upon which the architect will base his/her fee.
- Seven (7%) percent is not an unusual design fee for a project of this size; it is also that which is identified in the index, however, design fees *are* negotiable.
- The escalation rate is based on the selected designer completing the design and bidding the project within one (1) year. This is realistic for a project of this size; however, IPDC may wish to handle or negotiate the payment of bid cost increases, due to inflation or other factors, differently than including them in the designer’s contract (and fee).
- The contingency rate of 5%; i.e. 5% of the *total* construction cost; is the minimum amount typically recommended by the NC Local Government Commission (LGC) for a public project.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS

The Isothermal Planning and Development Commission (IPDC) has been around since 1966; 51 years. Today it has a staff of 32 full and part-time employees that provide specific programs to its member jurisdictions as well as technical assistance, when requested, in specific areas of government operations; i.e. finance, budgeting, planning, etc.

In addition, published information available that addresses the benefits of IPDC membership, state that as members, participating governments will:

- Share information to solve common problems.
- Avoid duplication of efforts and better coordinate services.
- Work through a single agency to obtain and administer funds from numerous federal and state agencies, as well as from private foundations and corporations.

- Use the Commission’s professional expertise to aid in local operations.
- Promote cooperation between the public and private sector.
- Determine ways of improving our quality of life.

Subsequently, are the above benefits applicable today? Are they attainable/available to each member jurisdiction? Are changes needed? What does the future hold? How might the IPDC be providing its current services and programs 5-10 years from now? Will there be additional needs or services? How might technology impact the way services are delivered or information is shared? Ultimately, perhaps; are all the members happy with what exists?

In terms of the building, two previous member comments (page 4) suggested otherwise, in terms of “why” the building could be very important, and why more and better space is needed:

- *Sell the building and relocate to a more modern and appropriate location. Use this (new) location as an opportunity to “re-brand” the organization and present it in a new light to help attract more interest and reinvigorate the membership.*
- *Need co-working space for members and partner agencies and meeting space capable of hosting regional training activities*

In the context of this report then; “What purpose should the building serve?”

The objective of the requested study, that resulted in this report, was to determine:

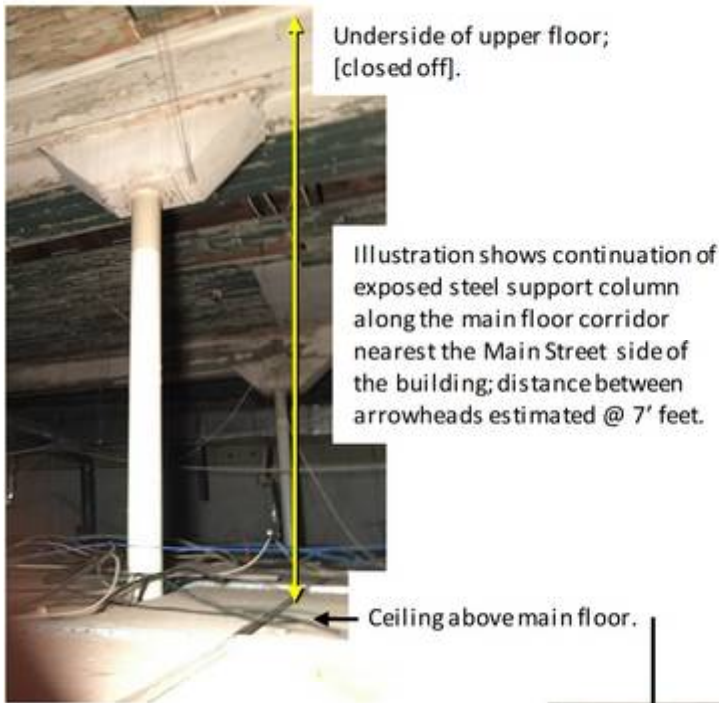
- The total space currently available.
- The adequacy of that space; size, type, & function.
- The quantification of the total space needed.
- Options to address the needs identified.

These tasks have been completed and addressed in this report. What has been added is the suggestion that IPDC consider and proactively discuss, and develop, a “picture” of its future, how it anticipates operating in 5-10 years and beyond, and HOW the services it expects to offer will/should best be provided. THEN ask; “What purpose should (*will*) the building serve?”

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APPENDIX-Building Information

During the study, a common question from IPDC staff members was, “have you found a way to get upstairs”? Observed from the outside, at least two-thirds of the building’s height (at street level) is above the approximate eight-foot main floor ceiling. Of those familiar with the history of the building, it was assumed that at least one additional level (floor) existed above what would have been the ceiling height of the former grocery store. Further, a thorough inspection of the main floor’s ceiling revealed no hatch-type door or drop-down stairs of any kind.



In order to identify and map the bearing walls and other structural elements necessary to assess reuse options for the building, above ceiling inspections were conducted which did answer several questions. There was, at one time, a stairway leading to the (obviously abandoned) top floor but at some point, it was cut off just above the main floor’s current ceiling. The approximate point of access to what remains of the stairway is indicated in the diagram below.

Secondly, the above ceiling inspection revealed that there is a considerable amount of open space between the main floor ceiling and the floor of the upper level of the building; approximately seven feet.

