

FRAMING THE
FUTURE
OF THE
ROUNDHOUSE

March 2023
City of Philadelphia
Department of Planning and Development



March 2023

There can be no recovery or reimagining without reckoning. There can be no reckoning without intentional listening and engagement. The Roundhouse presents the City with a unique opportunity to put these words into action.

With the development of the new Public Services Building at 400 North Broad Street, the City now has the opportunity to rethink the redevelopment of the former Police Administration Building, commonly referred to as the Roundhouse.

The Roundhouse was originally designed to inspire a professional, community service-oriented police department. Unfortunately, in the intervening 60 years, the Roundhouse came to symbolize the brutalities of urban renewal and discriminatory policing practices.

The Department of Planning and Development recognizes and acknowledges the role of the planning profession in creating and perpetuating racial inequity. When the police moved to their new headquarters on North Broad Street, a window was opened for the City to examine how the Roundhouse site could better serve the community and possibly redress some of the harm caused by urban renewal.

So, we started with active, intentional listening and engagement.

A process must be trustworthy to be trusted, and it must be given the time needed to build this trust. It must reach people where they are and do so sensitively. Before issuing a Request for Proposals for redevelopment or putting a dollar value on the land, the City needed to hear from Philadelphians.

The Department of Planning and Development worked with a group of artists, designers, and engagement specialists to gather input from Philadelphians about their experiences with the building and their hopes for its future.

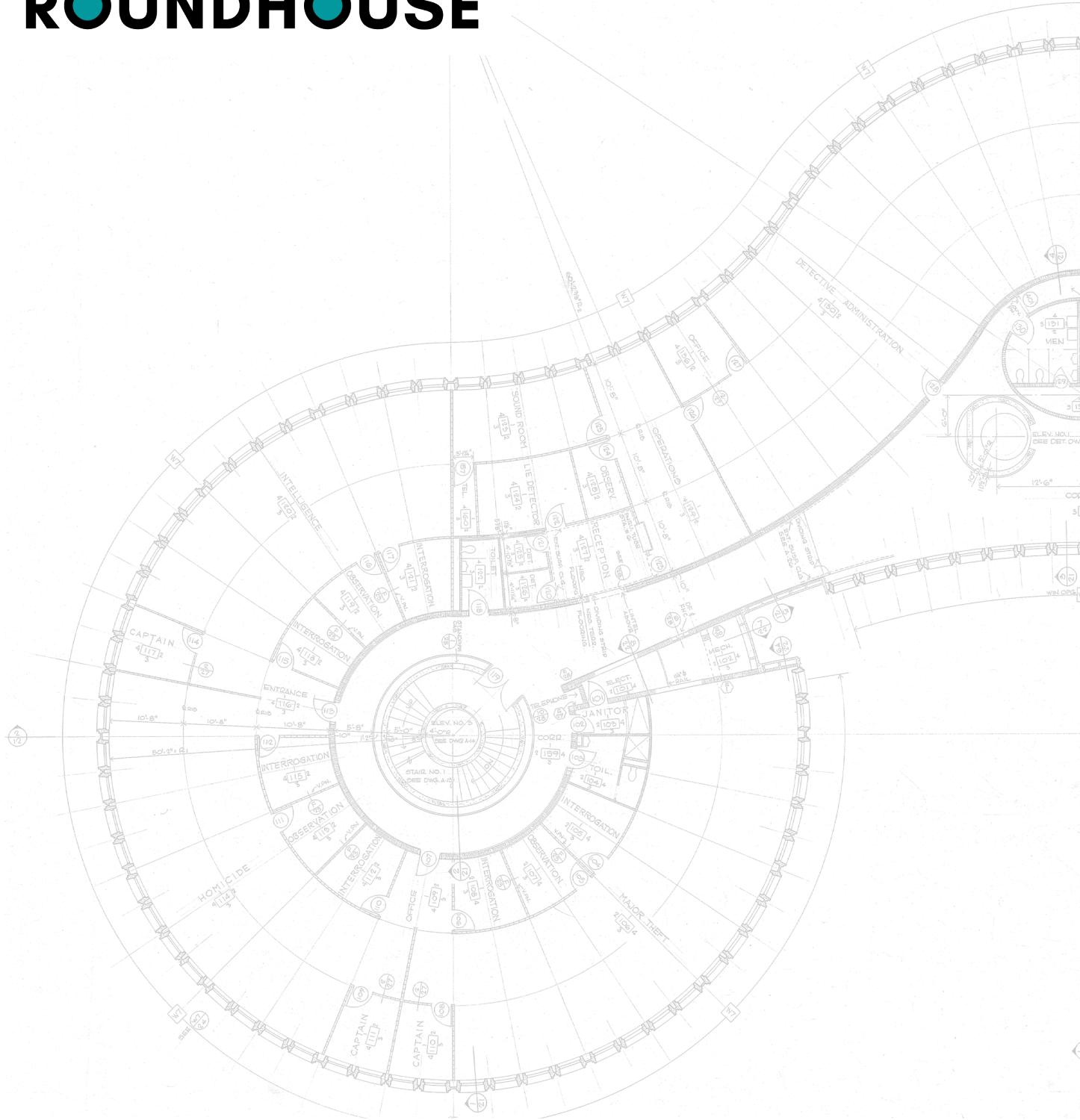
I am pleased to deliver this report about the **Framing the Future of the Roundhouse** public engagement process. We learned much about the site's many meanings to the public and the overwhelming need and desire for the site to become a place for the community to reconnect and to heal.

For many Philadelphians, the Roundhouse is a symbol of the harm caused by urban renewal and police misconduct. For others, the curved, concrete structure is an architectural and engineering milestone worthy of preservation. We hope that the future of this site is one that can bring Philadelphians together in community, and we will work with our greatest resource, our residents, to achieve this end.

Sincerely,

Anne Fadullon
Director, Department of Planning and Development

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ROUNDHOUSE



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HOW WE GOT HERE

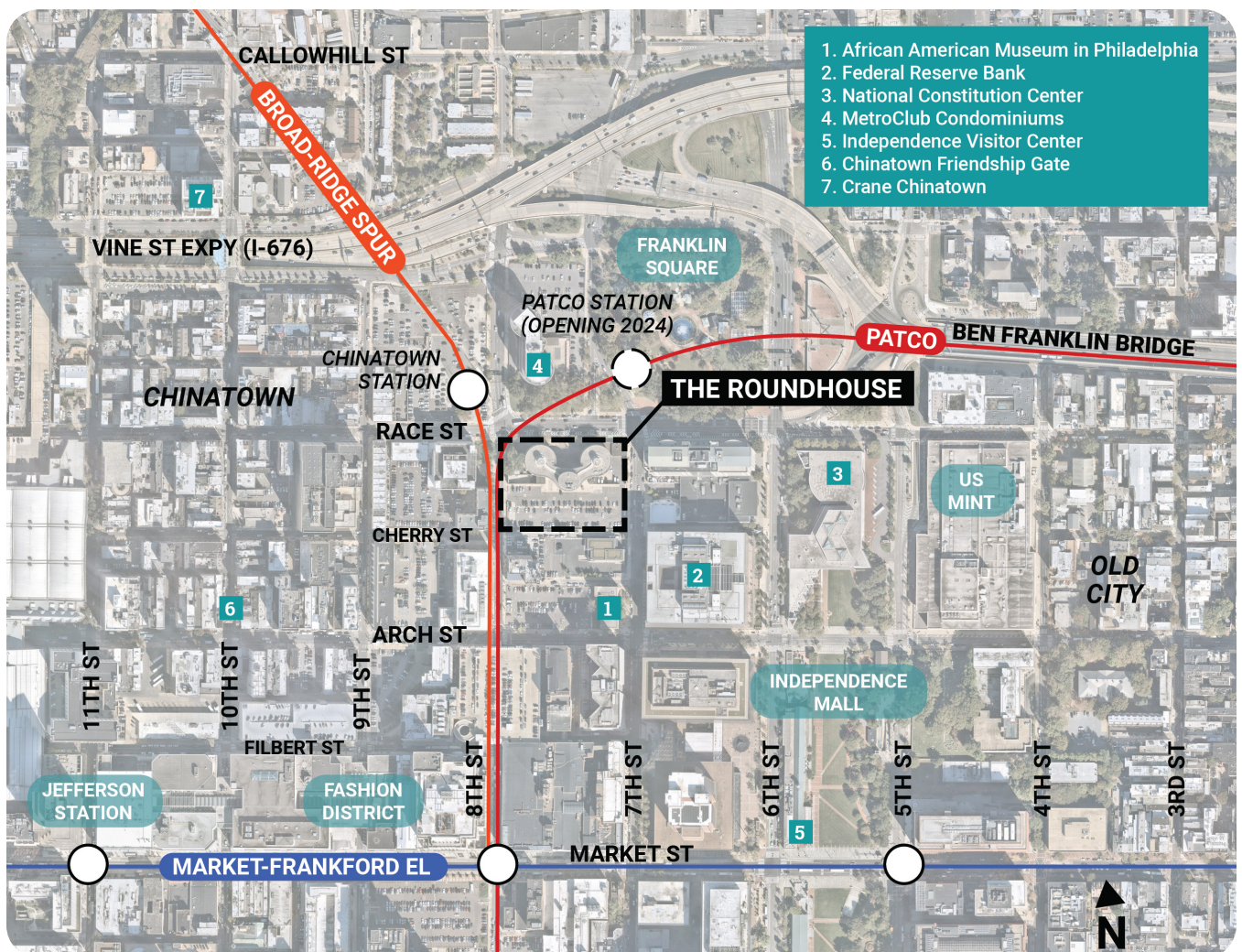
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THE OPPORTUNITY

The Philadelphia Police Administration Building, commonly referred to as the Roundhouse, was designed by notable Philadelphia architecture firm Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham to house the Philadelphia Police Department. The building was occupied by the police department from 1963 until 2022, when the department moved its headquarters to the Philadelphia Public Services Building at 400 North Broad Street.



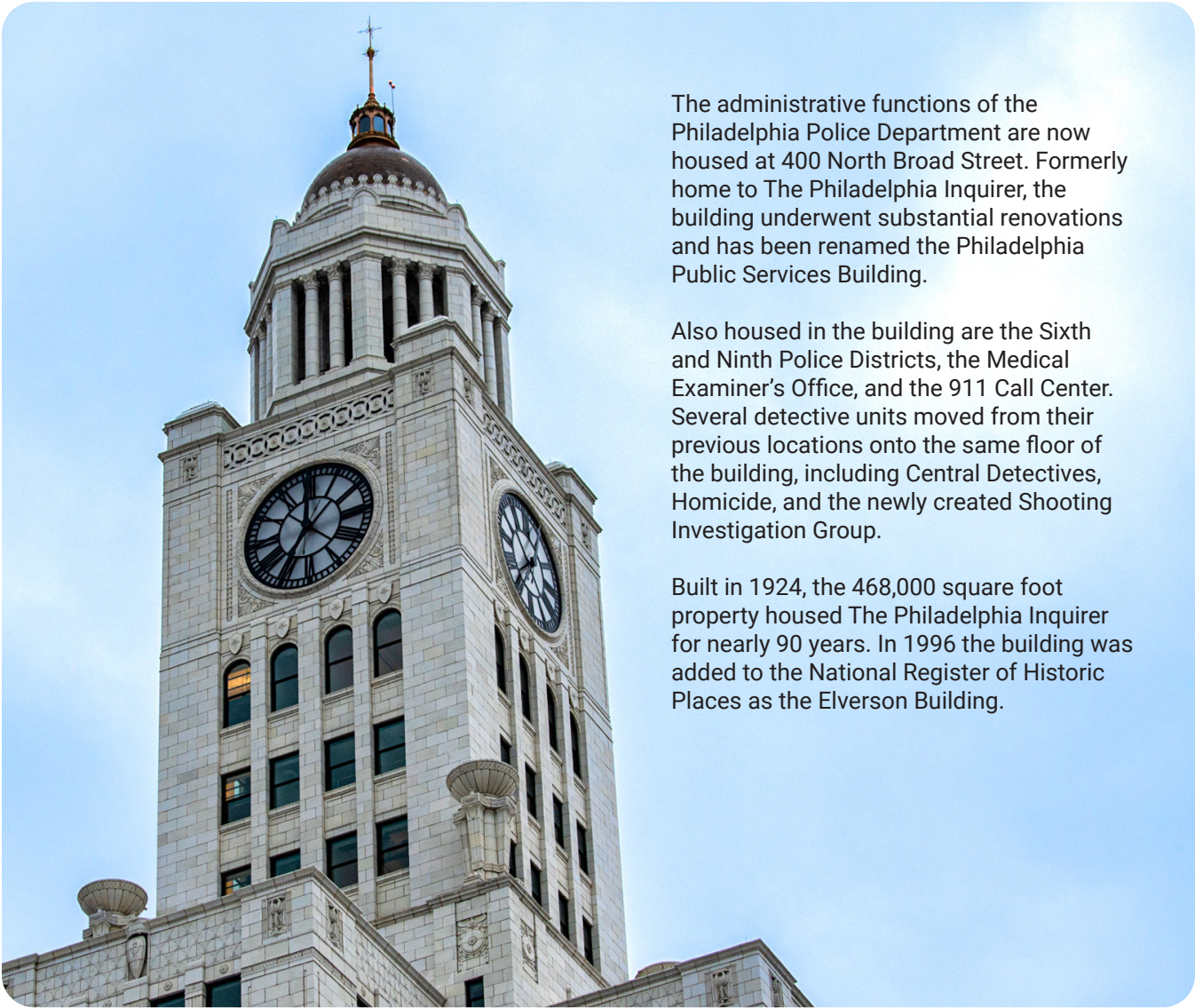
This move presented an opportunity for the City to approach the disposition and redevelopment of the Roundhouse in a more community-focused way. As a first step, city leaders undertook a public engagement campaign to hear from Philadelphians about their experiences with the building and their hopes for its future. This report details the public engagement process and next steps.



The administrative functions of the Philadelphia Police Department are now housed at 400 North Broad Street. Formerly home to The Philadelphia Inquirer, the building underwent substantial renovations and has been renamed the Philadelphia Public Services Building.

Also housed in the building are the Sixth and Ninth Police Districts, the Medical Examiner's Office, and the 911 Call Center. Several detective units moved from their previous locations onto the same floor of the building, including Central Detectives, Homicide, and the newly created Shooting Investigation Group.

Built in 1924, the 468,000 square foot property housed The Philadelphia Inquirer for nearly 90 years. In 1996 the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the Elverson Building.



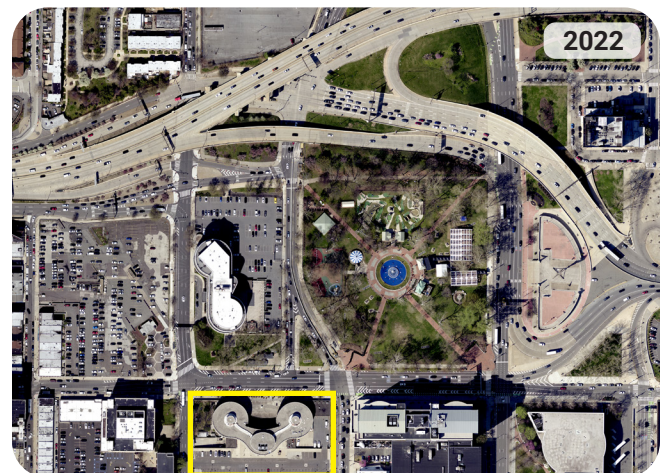
URBAN RENEWAL

In the middle of the 20th century, city leaders faced a declining population and a changing economy. With the support of the federal government, they attempted to grow and modernize the city through urban renewal. Urban renewal refers to the process of seizing and demolishing private property for redevelopment. This practice often ignored the needs of existing communities, resulting in widespread displacement of low-income and minority residents, business closures, and destruction of historic properties.

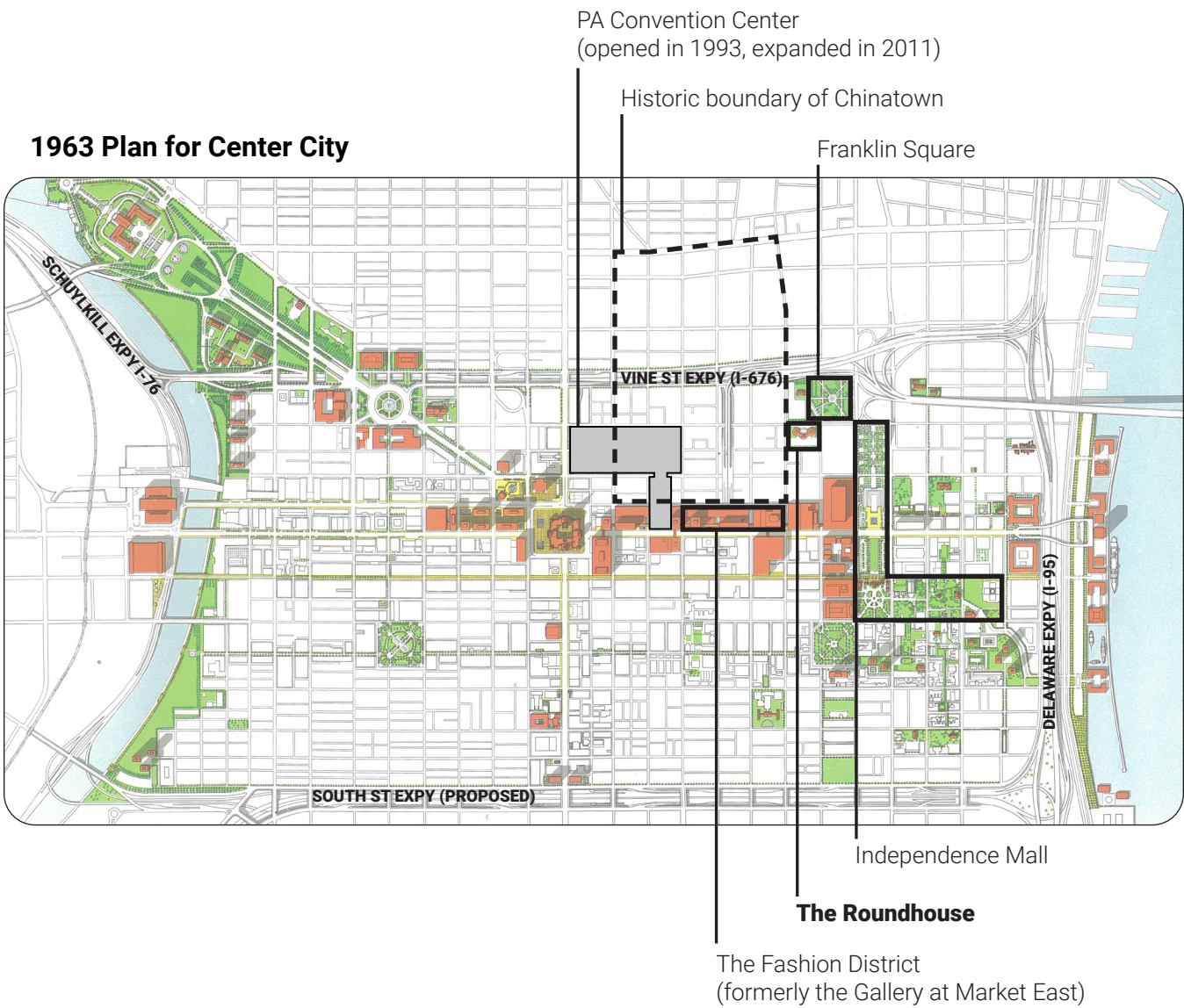
The Roundhouse is next to one of Philadelphia’s largest urban renewal projects, Independence Mall. Much of the area for Independence Mall was cleared by 1959, the same year Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, and Cunningham received the design commission for the Police Administration Building. It is one of two major buildings commissioned by the City to house government agencies. The other is the Municipal Services Building.

The Roundhouse opened in 1963, the same year that the Philadelphia City Planning Commission released the 1963 Plan for Center City. This plan included a proposal to encircle Center City with expressways. Ultimately, expressways were built on three sides of Center City, with the plan for a South Street Expressway never coming to fruition. The Vine Street Expressway was built through the heart of Chinatown.

The Roundhouse, Vine Street Expressway, and the Pennsylvania Convention Center displaced and disrupted large numbers of residents and businesses in Chinatown and adjacent communities resulting in cumulative community impacts. Today, the Roundhouse is surrounded by parking lots, highway ramps, and wide streets.



1963 Plan for Center City



ARCHITECTURAL VISION

The design of the Roundhouse was a collaborative effort between the architects and Estonian-American engineer August Komendant. The building was one of the first in the United States constructed using an innovative Dutch system, called *Schokbeton*. Nearly every part of the building is made of concrete panels that were molded in a factory and assembled on site.

The building's repetitive geometry is intentional. This design limited variations among the panels. The load-bearing facade and floor panels were installed with a crane and tied together with steel cables.

The police moved from City Hall to the Roundhouse, creating distance between politicians and police. The new building was intended to inspire a professional, community service-oriented police department. The rounded form was intended to convey a softer police presence, while the generous front entry plaza signaled welcome to the community.



1

2

1. Installation of the facade panels, 1961
2. August Komendant visiting the site, 1961

LIVED EXPERIENCE

The architects' progressive objectives were never realized. The police department added a concrete perimeter wall shortly after the building's completion, negating the design intent. The public entrance on Race Street was closed in 1972 and moved to the rear parking lot. Further, some Philadelphians think the building's form evokes the shape of handcuffs. The architects of the building said this notion never factored into their design.

In the minds of many Philadelphians, the Roundhouse is associated with brutal, biased, and discriminatory police practices. The police department's strained relationship with minority groups was on display as recently as 2020 during the Black Lives Matter protests. Citizens and police engaged in violent confrontations throughout Philadelphia. The Roundhouse and the Municipal Services Building were flashpoints during the protests.

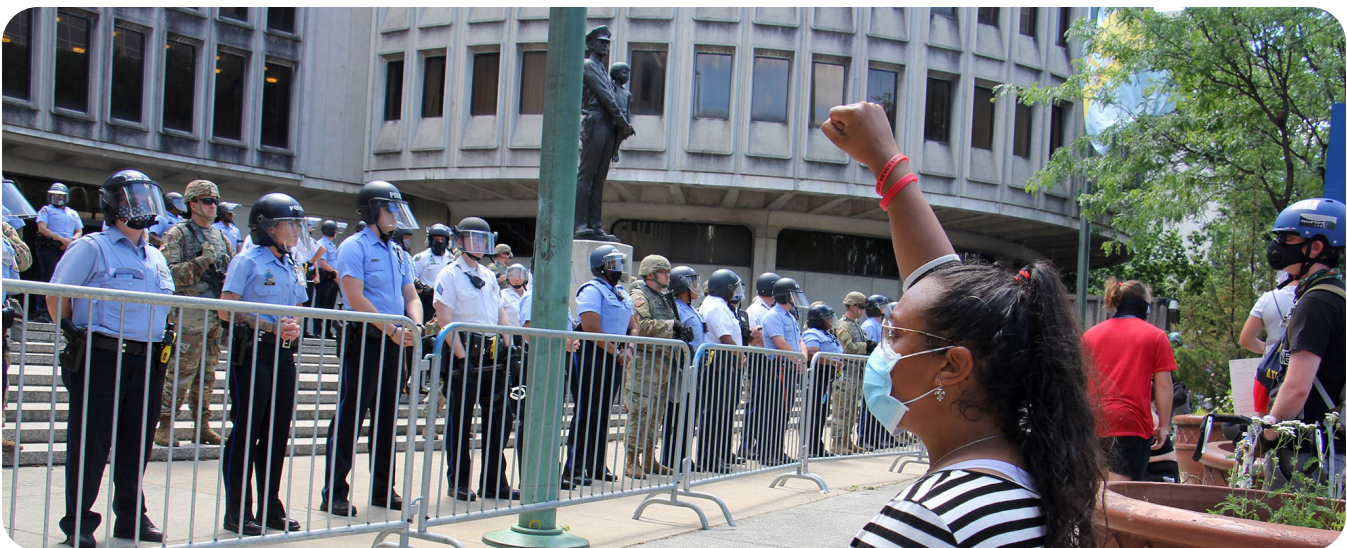


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- 1. Perimeter wall on Race Street
- 2. Holding cells in the basement of the Roundhouse
- 3. Police and the National Guard secure during a protest, 2020

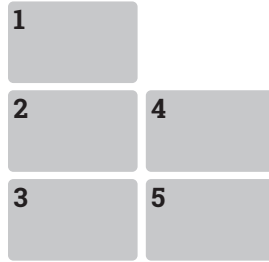


THE ROUNDHOUSE TODAY

The four-story Roundhouse contains 125,000 square feet of floor space. Together with a 56,000 square foot surface parking lot, the Roundhouse occupies a 2.7-acre parcel that spans the block bounded by 7th, Race, 8th, and Cherry Streets. The site is adjacent to the Chinatown SEPTA station and the future Franklin Square PATCO station, scheduled to open in 2024.

The structure, enclosure, and dominant architectural features are all precast concrete. Although much of the interior has been modified, the Roundhouse retains its significant character-defining features.





- 1. Fourth floor lobby
- 2. Ground floor clerestory windows
- 3. Ground floor lobby and elevators
- 4. Open office area
- 5. Private office





Building

APPRENTICESHIP
TRAINING
CENTER

Soup
Kitchen
for PPI
needed.

Sports
Program

MUSEUM

Library

THE BUILDING

Rafe Cooks

Spidey

MASTERS STROKE
PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY

ARTS
PART

Faculty

W.C. Young

W.C. Young

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PROJECT TEAM

This project was designed to set the stage for the future of the Roundhouse by engaging Philadelphians as active participants in the process. The engagement leads, Connect the Dots and Amber Art and Design, were selected pursuant to a publicly issued Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP was issued by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) on January 19, 2022 (see Appendix).

Department of Planning and Development

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Naomi Roberson Reid | Equitable Engagement Director, Mayor's Office

PIDC

Troy Mandy | Director of Real Estate Services

Engagement Leads

Connect the Dots

Amber Art and Design

Advisors and Working Partners

Ones Up

SITIO

University of Orange

WSP

Engagement Advisory Board

Yue Wu | Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC)

Andrew Emma | City of Philadelphia, Parks and Recreation

Harry Leong | Philadelphia Suns

Manuel Portillo | The Welcoming Center

Andy Toy | Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC)

Mary Enoch Baxter | MoMA PS1

Hitomi Yoshida | Coordinator of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Programs, University of Pennsylvania

Rodney Camarce | Asian Arts Initiative

Nina Bell | African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP)



Connect
the Dots



AMBER ART AND DESIGN



SITIO
architecture + urbanism



METHODOLOGY

The project team designed the engagement strategy to reach both Chinatown and the city at large. By design, the Department of Planning and Development undertook this process prior to any action pertaining to the redevelopment of the site.

The team stressed that a reimagination of the site alone cannot wholly repair the legacies of systemic racism, police misconduct, and urban renewal that make redeveloping the Roundhouse a contentious project.

The engagement process focused on **Naming and Framing** the lived experiences of people connected to the Roundhouse and launching a **Meaningful Placemaking** process for healing.

Meaningful Placemaking uncovers values and memories of a space and connects those memories to other memories that branch out from the site and connect to the community.

Roundhouse stories are painful and hopeful: painful for people who worked or were detained there, hopeful for people who saw innovations in architecture and construction come to life there. The building holds both of these perspectives simultaneously.

Naming and Framing
the lived experiences of people
connected to this space.

What's your story related to the
Roundhouse?

What do you want people
to remember about the
Roundhouse?

Launching
Meaningful Placemaking
for the healing of the site.

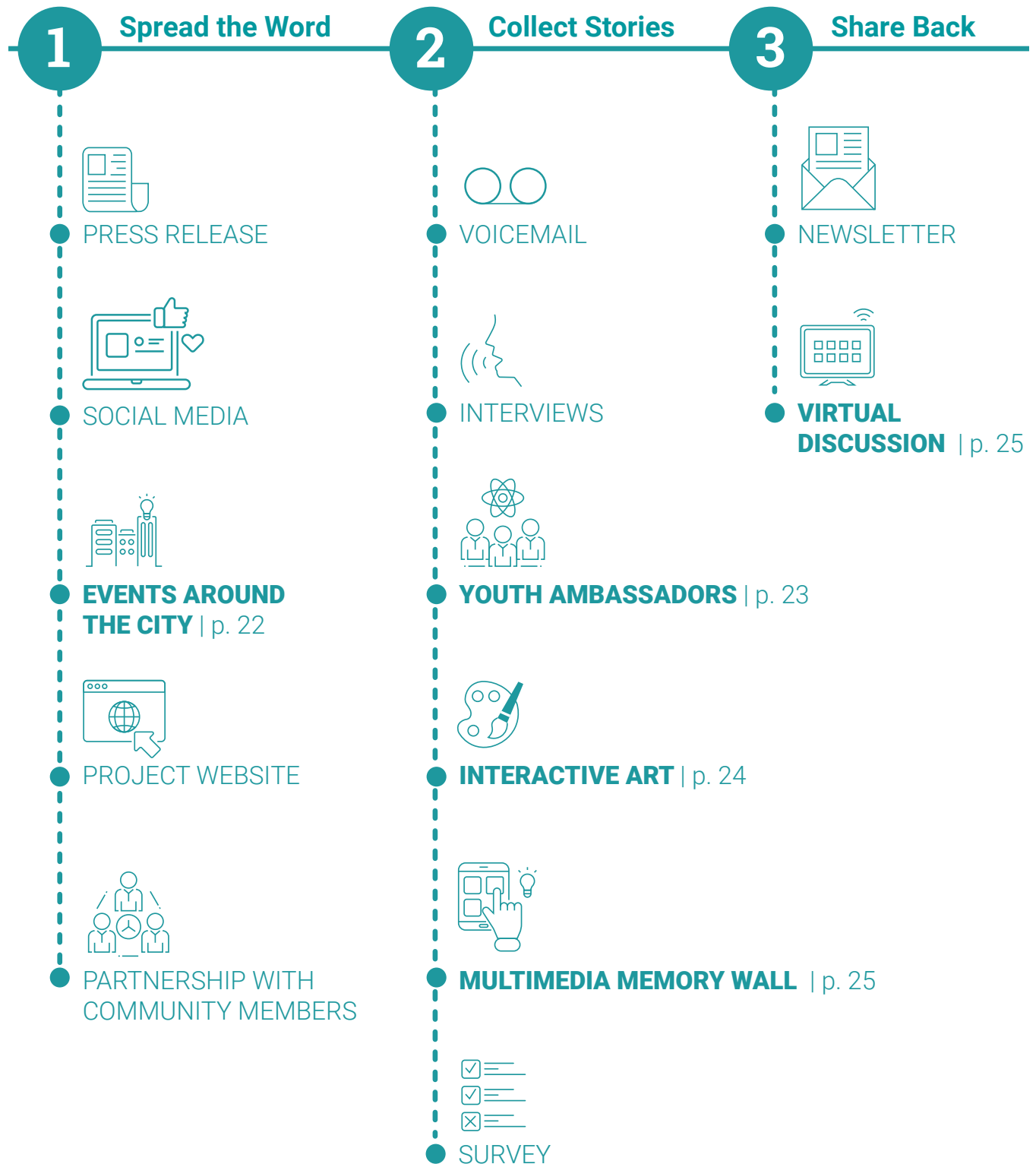
What values should the future of
the site embrace?

How can we move forward with
the site transformation?

What role should the site
play in the future for the local
community and the city at large?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The project team used a mix of tactics to create an accessible and inclusive engagement process. The tactics were designed to account for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Outreach took place between June and December 2022, both in-person and online.



When people think about the stories related to the Roundhouse, they **think about the building.**

When people think about how to move forward, they think about the role of the site in the **future of the neighborhood.**

Even those who were indifferent to the preservation or demolition of the Roundhouse emphasized the need to **heal the wounds** associated with the building.

Transformation of the building could lead to healing by reconnecting the building to the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Events Around the City

The project team hosted a series of events and pop-ups throughout the city from Kensington to West Passyunk, Kingsessing to Cherry Street Pier. The pop-up events allowed the team to interact with people from different parts of the city. Spanish and Chinese interpreters were on hand to help reach a wider audience.



Franklin Square
August 4, 2022
200 N 6th Street

Cobbs Creek Trail Summer Celebration
August 13, 2022
Cobbs Creek Environmental Center
700 Cobbs Creek Parkway

PCDC Community Food Distribution
August 26, 2022
Crane Community Center
1001 Vine Street

Youth Art & Self Empowerment Project
August 27, 2022
The Cedar Works
4919 Pentridge Street



Feria Del Barrio
September 11, 2022
Taller Puertorriqueno
2600 N 5th Street

Cherry Street Pier
October 7, 2022
121 N Christopher Columbus Boulevard

Roundhouse
October 15, 2022
750 Race Street

Harvest Festival
October 29, 2022
Mitzie MacKenzie Playground
225 North 10th Street

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Youth Ambassadors

The engagement team included a group of youth ambassadors (ages 16-21) from around the city tasked with organizing their peers and communities. The youth ambassadors held six events, creating a safe space for conversations about the meaning of the Roundhouse in the lives of Philadelphia youth and their families.



North
 September 10, 2022
 Ones Up
 2611 Germantown Avenue

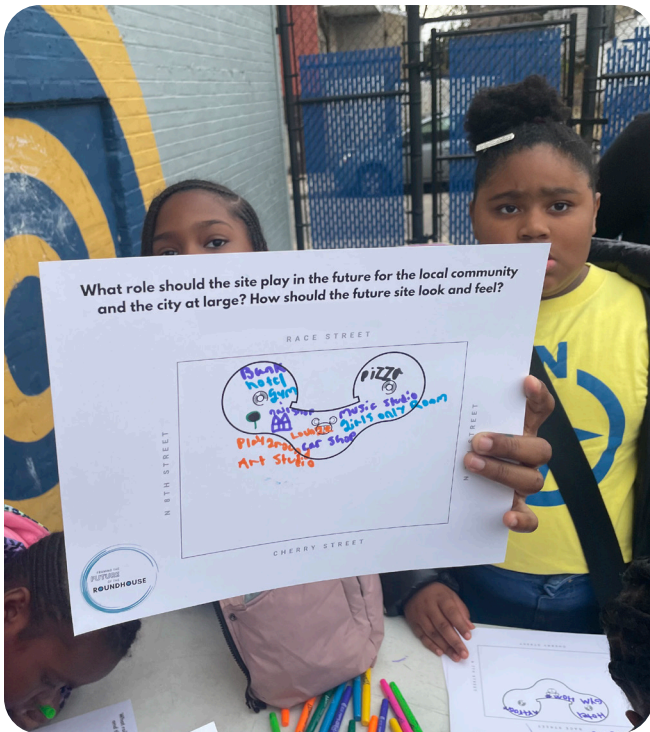
West
 October 1, 2022
 Lil' Filmmakers Inc.
 4310 Lancaster Avenue

South
 October 8, 2022
 Unity in the Community
 1529 S 22nd Street

Southwest
 October 22, 2022
 Francis Myers Recreation Center
 5801 Kingsessing Avenue

South
 November 5, 2022
 Ford Recreation Center
 609 Snyder Avenue

Center City
 November 19, 2022
 Youth Art & Self-Empowerment Project
 924 Cherry Street



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Interactive Art

Interactive Drawing

A simple visual tool that elicited respondents' thoughts while drawing and discussing the Roundhouse site.

The most popular iteration of this tool was a coloring page with an outline of the building's footprint. Many respondents added illustrations of what they imagined for the future of the site while talking about the meaning of the Roundhouse with others at the table. Other versions of this activity provided opportunities to express ideas and feelings about the site's future through drawing, writing, collage, and similar art-making activities.



Mini Mural

A collaborative engagement tool that invited participants to draw or write about a memory or future use of the Roundhouse site.

Using a mural cloth prepared with a colorful design, participants used paint markers to share stories and hopes for the site. The same mural cloth was used across events, accruing more and more responses, and sparking new conversations as respondents interacted with it. As part of the naming and framing strategy to capture the Roundhouse's legacy, this method provided a respectful, creative medium that encouraged reflection and illuminated the lived experiences of the site.

Podium

A wooden installation at events invited participants to stand up and voice their histories and opinions as they relate to the Roundhouse site.

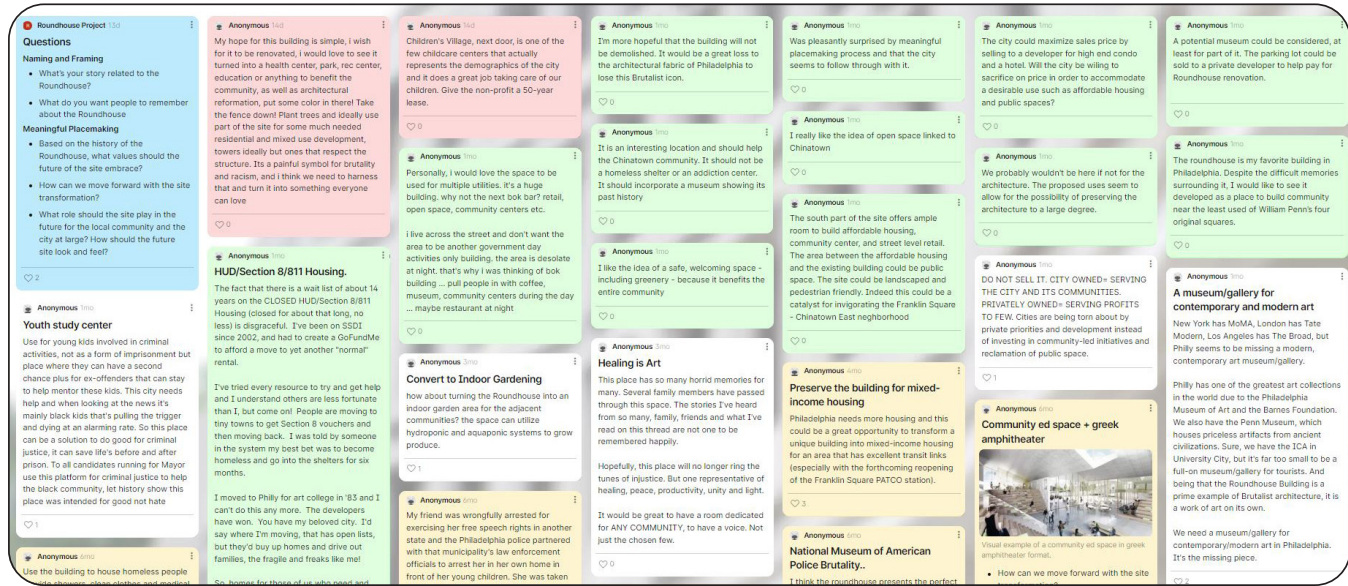
The podium elevates the speaker, imbuing them with authority. This created a speaker-audience dynamic in an otherwise unstructured activity. Speeches were free-flowing, and participants had the option to record their messages via a QR code on the podium lectern. Recorded speeches appeared on the project website's multimedia memory wall.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Multimedia Memory Wall

An interactive page was hosted on the project website where the public could submit anonymous stories, insights, opinions, ideas, and preferences for the site's future. The multimedia wall attracted text posts, image posts, and video posts, as well as links to other web pages. Intended to be an online iteration of the mini mural, it became a message board for people far and wide to engage in discourse. The multimedia memory wall was accessible in English, simplified Chinese, and Spanish.



Virtual Discussion

To conclude the engagement period, the project team hosted a virtual event to share back what they learned from six months of gathering and studying public sentiment about the Roundhouse and its future. The event included a discussion between Mindy Fullilove, MD and Dan Rothschild, FAIA, on the topic of **meaningful placemaking**. Dr. Fullilove, a consultant on the engagement team, researches the ways social and environmental factors affect community health. Dan Rothschild, an architect, uses concepts like meaningful placemaking to involve communities in the design process.

WHAT WE HEARD

Naming and Framing the lived experiences of people connected to this space.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY RELATED TO THE ROUNDHOUSE

The police and the building are linked in the minds of many people.

Many people's associations with the Roundhouse involve the police in some capacity—in some cases the experience of being arrested, in others simply being aware that the building was occupied by the police.

Others positively associate the Roundhouse with its **architecture**.



"I was brought there once many years ago and held in a cell before being moved somewhere else. **Wasn't there for long but it was an unpleasant experience** and I hope to never go back. You don't have your freedom, locked down behind bars, tightly packed into cells, it's no place to be."

"I was curious about the Roundhouse after I first saw it when visiting Philadelphia for the first time. **The building is striking and has a unique presence**. When I learned what it was used for, I was saddened to think that such a progressive building was used for such regressive and oppressive purposes."

WHAT WE HEARD

Naming and Framing the lived experiences of people connected to this space.

One perspective on the Roundhouse is that **it is an architecturally exemplary building**. The participants with this perspective primarily wanted people to know about the original intent of the architects: to create a building that would foster a more transparent, modern, and trusting relationship between the police and city inhabitants. Many people felt the building should be brought back to these ideals through redevelopment.

Another perspective views the Roundhouse building as **a reminder of the harm caused to communities through policing**.

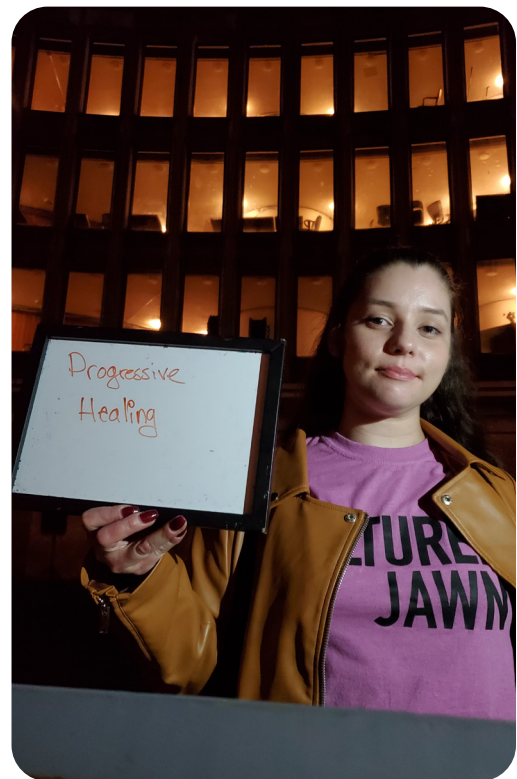
WHAT DO YOU
WANT PEOPLE TO
REMEMBER ABOUT
THE ROUNDHOUSE

"It was a place of oppression, but the ideals of the architect were to make it airy and progressive. **We can restore that purpose, connect the building to the park and make it light and airy.** Let's bring back its idealist roots!"

"The fact it was a site representative of **police brutality cannot be forgotten.**"

"It is a reminder of the ways that **the system of penal control has harmed my family and my students** without providing them the true support that they needed."

"**It was designed to engage the community, not to barricade itself from its neighbors.**"



WHAT WE HEARD

Launching **Meaningful Placemaking** for the healing of the site.

BASED ON THE HISTORY OF THE ROUNDHOUSE, WHAT **VALUES** SHOULD THE FUTURE OF THE SITE EMBRACE

The values named most often were creating **positive public benefit** and **community**.

The general theme of **healing** through connecting the community emerged as well.



"Hospitality - **invert the past by making it a place people feel welcome to enter and pass through while walking through this part of the city** ... make connections to Franklin Square, Chinatown, etc."

"I think it would be great to think about how you can take something that was not transparent and not open and **allow it to become a space for healing**. In thinking about the building and overall site, we can provide a balance in terms of accessibility, transparency, and economics. I think the social connection to the surrounding neighborhoods is going to be a key piece of this, because it does feel like it floats on its own island."

"Hopefully, this place will no longer ring the tunes of injustice. But one **representative of healing, peace, productivity, unity, and light**."

"I want it to **become something positive**."

WHAT WE HEARD

Launching Meaningful Placemaking for the healing of the site.

Making the space feel **safe, open, and welcoming** was a major priority for many respondents and seen as the bare minimum for site transformation.

There was widespread support for tearing down the concrete wall around the building and reducing the amount of asphalt in the parking lot. People wanted to add more greenery, trees, and light to the space.

Involvement of the surrounding community, particularly Chinatown, in the site transformation was seen as important. Many expressed concern that gentrification of the area as a result of redevelopment would push out surrounding communities.

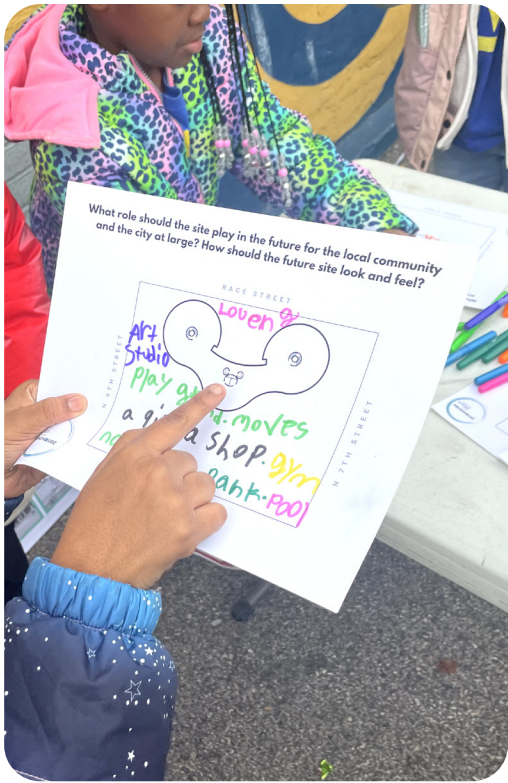
“The site’s imposing feel would be transformed by cleaning the dingy facade and removing the high concrete wall that was not part of the original design. The concrete expanses should be turned to beautiful landscaping such as was done at Dilworth Park -- another formerly foreboding location (and former home of the city police HQ and jail!) that is now a lively gathering spot for all Philadelphians.”

“I hope development will be managed in a way that is **inclusive of the Chinatown community**, not as a vehicle for gentrification.”

“It shouldn’t be walled off, it should be completely walkable through the site and not just around it, full of trees and greenery to contrast with the current concrete look.”

“It should be integrated into an open and welcoming landscape with as much greenery as possible. Having it open to the public for community use and events would also help.”

HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD WITH THE SITE TRANSFORMATION



WHAT WE HEARD

Launching Meaningful Placemaking for the healing of the site.

WHAT ROLE SHOULD THE SITE PLAY IN THE FUTURE FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE CITY AT LARGE

Many people proposed mixed-use redevelopment.

The most common proposal for the future site was affordable housing.

People were also interested in repurposing the property for recreation,

proposing options including a recreation center, museum, and community gathering or event space. There was interest in the property serving as a place to go for other community resources as well.

There was considerable interest in using the space to **educate the public about police brutality**. Some wanted the whole site turned into a museum, others called for incorporating a memorial or exhibit into a separate primary use, and still others proposed a simple plaque.

There is widespread support for redevelopment to benefit Chinatown

and be integrated into the Chinatown community. Many people were interested in having a mixed-use space of business, recreation, and art.



WHAT WE HEARD

Launching Meaningful Placemaking for the healing of the site.

“The simplest thing to do is to find a developer who would open up the ground floor and use the offices for institutions concerned with human well-being.”
- Robert Geddes *

“We’ve seen too many buildings demolished lately just because they can be. We can save the building and memorialize and acknowledge that this was a place where people of all races, ethnicities and religious beliefs were imprisoned. With the current rethinking around diverting people from going to jail in the first place, **we will need reminders for the next generations to show them how regressive their ancestors were.** A public exhibit in a renovated building can help us do that.”

“It should help the Chinatown community, especially the elderly. **The future site should look warm and welcoming by having activities that can engage the community.** “

“My children attend Children’s Village, which is next to the Roundhouse. They also frequent Franklin Square nearby, and their grandparents live in Chinatown. Chinatown to Franklin Square is our second home in Philadelphia. **The site should contribute to the Chinatown community and help connect Chinatown with Franklin Square** (its only real local park and playground).”

“**It should be a symbol of justice, evidence and police professionalism.** The appearance of the site does not need to be too gorgeous. To be simple and plain will be fine. The main thing is that harmonious relationship between people will make the site popular and inclusive.”

“Partner with an organization like Eastern State Penitentiary to **become a cultural institution that can discuss the dual sided nature of the history of the building.** That doesn’t just erase the history of the place and that enables people to learn, contemplate, and advocate.”

“**It should continue to be a public asset** with a focus on bringing people to a location that is often a dead zone between Chinatown and Franklin Square. At minimum the concrete walls should all be torn down, with some repurposed like a sort of Berlin Wall-like exhibit. In addition, Cherry Street should be made much more pedestrian friendly as well as **a direct east-west connector to Chinatown.**”

“**Would love to see the Roundhouse and its open space be redeveloped to benefit the Chinatown community.** Chinatown is a hub for Asian-Americans around the city, but there aren’t any free, public spaces where friends can meet up without having to buy something. More housing, businesses, and public space at the Roundhouse would also help connect Chinatown with Franklin Square, the only playground in the area.”

* <https://www.inquirer.com/news/roundhouse-philadelphia-architect-robert-geddes-20220911.html>



MOVING FORWARD

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The team recommends the City include an acknowledgement of the history of the site during the redevelopment process. The team also recommends the redevelopment process prioritize proposals that transform the site into a more welcoming and accessible place that is better connected to the surrounding community.

For those that view the building as an internationally significant example of mid-century expressionist architecture, redevelopment makes it possible for the building to be returned to its original ideals. For those who view the building as a reminder of pain, such a transformation can be healing. Regardless of whether the building is a painful reminder or a preservation-worthy work of architecture, **removal of the concrete walls surrounding the building and addition of green space is a priority. The future site should be open to the public.**

The public needs the painful past that is linked to the police to be acknowledged. Core suggestions for how to do this include transforming the site into a space that is community focused, safe, and welcoming - as a start to healing. Popular proposals included a recreation center, affordable housing, a community center for gathering or community events, a public plaza, or a museum/memorial.

Young people don't have the same painful stories related to the site as some other residents. They want a safe space in the area to gather. Respondents are enthusiastic about reconnecting the site with the surrounding community, especially youth. **Incorporating youth programs or recreation into the site would provide a place for young people to gather and would help make the site a place of healing.**

The selected development team should continue to involve the public in the redevelopment of the Roundhouse.



NEXT STEPS

This report documents the community engagement process. It will inform the historic nomination and property disposition processes for the Roundhouse building and its site. Many things must happen before this property is removed from the City’s portfolio. The disposition itself requires a publicly issued Request for Proposals (RFP). The building’s architectural and historic significance will be reviewed and possibly protected by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. These processes take time and have multiple steps.

Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

The Roundhouse was nominated to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2022. The nomination will be considered by the Philadelphia Historical Commission after this report is issued.

- 1. Review by Historical Commission staff**
Commission staff will review the nomination for correctness and completeness.
- 2. Review by the Committee on Historic Designation**
At a public meeting, the committee will consider the nomination and decide if it meets one or more criteria for designation. The committee will also hear testimony from the nominating party, commission staff, the property owner, and the public.

The committee then makes a recommendation to the Historical Commission.

- 3. Review and action by the Historical Commission**
Usually, the Committee on Historic Designation’s recommendation is presented at the Historical Commission’s next monthly meeting. The commission will review the nomination and hear public testimony.

The commission will then vote on the nomination. If approved, the property will be listed on the register and subject to laws that govern historic designation.

Property Disposition

The redevelopment of the Roundhouse is an important step in knitting the area around the site back into the physical and social fabric of the city.

The city will begin the property disposition process by issuing an RFP. The goal is to find a development partner who can balance economic development, historic preservation, and the perspectives of the community at large.





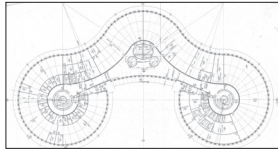
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CREDITS

All images and graphics courtesy of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission / Department of Planning and Development except the following:



p. 4-5

*Philadelphia
Department of Public Property*



p.9, top image

Erin Blewett for Billy Penn



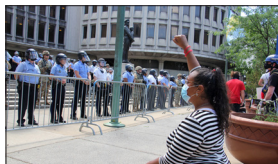
p.12, image 1

*Estonian Museum of Architecture
courtesy of Miracles in Concrete:
Structural Engineer August
Komendant, Edited by Carl-Dag
Lige*



p.12, image 2

*The Architectural Archives,
University of Pennsylvania
courtesy of Miracles in Concrete:
Structural Engineer August
Komendant, Edited by Carl-Dag
Lige*



p.13, image 3

Emma Lee for WHY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Community Engagement: A New Vision for the Roundhouse

Issue Date: January 19, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philadelphia Department of Planning and Development and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation ("PIDC"), on behalf of the City of Philadelphia (City) seek a community engagement consultant to lead a city-wide engagement campaign to inform the redevelopment of the site of the Police Administration Building, more commonly known as the Roundhouse. The Philadelphia Police department will be vacating the Roundhouse in 2022; at which time the City will seek proposals for redevelopment and/or adaptive reuse of the building and site. The results of this community engagement effort will inform the redevelopment process so that the City can balance economic development with the perspectives of the community at large.

The Roundhouse Engagement Team will oversee this project and the selection process. This Team will include staff from the Department of Planning and Development, PIDC, the Department of Public Property, the Commerce Department, and other relevant City agencies.

II. SITE HISTORY

The Roundhouse was designed to house the Philadelphia Police Department by notable Philadelphia Architecture firm Geddes, Brecher, Qualls & Cunningham in 1959. The building was dedicated in 1963 and the Philadelphia Police have resided at the Roundhouse ever since. At the time of the Police Administration Building's construction, the City of Philadelphia, with support from the Federal Government, was undergoing a period of vast urban renewal. These urban renewal projects left scars which remain to this day.

The Roundhouse is most notable for its undulating, curvilinear form, comprised of concrete panels, with three floors cantilevered above a solid concrete podium. The Roundhouse is almost entirely precast concrete panels or cast-in-place concrete. While it is a unique representation of the brutalist style, these features make redevelopment challenging.

Though the building was designed to appear as inviting as possible, the City recognizes that for many residents it is a physical reminder of the trauma inflicted by urban renewal. The architectural significance of the building cannot be separated from the negative associations it holds for many members of the community.

III. THE OPPORTUNITY

Present-day public perceptions of the Roundhouse, outside of the architecture and preservation professions, are primarily negative and stem from the building's design and function, as well as the often-strained relationship between the Philadelphia Police Department and minority communities in the City of Philadelphia. Many see the building as a symbol of pain and despair.

As the first and most significant step in preparation for redevelopment, the City of Philadelphia wishes to solicit input from the city's many stakeholders, inclusive of race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, and income,

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through an engagement process focused on repairing the damage caused by urban renewal and police brutality.

A successful engagement program is one that ultimately gives a voice to communities, while managing expectations about the redevelopment process. The outcome should be a vision plan that provides community-driven, realistic guidance to the City for how best to incorporate community desires into the redevelopment of the Roundhouse site. The outcome must address the City's need to recapture much-needed financial resources as it recovers from the considerable financial and budgetary implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This process is an opportunity to hear from and build trust with Philadelphia's communities, during a period of unprecedented attention to the issue of what it means to be inclusive and what it means to be truly heard. This engagement is a critical component of a larger dedication to meaningful community involvement in the development of the city.

IV. PROJECT TIMELINE

January 31, 2022:

RFP Questions Deadline

February 7, 2022:

Responses to RFP Questions

March 14, 2022:

RFP Response Deadline

March 2022:

Consultant Selection

April 2022:

Finalize Outreach Program and Schedule

May - October 2022:

Community Engagement Activities

November 2022:

Draft Report

December 2022:

Issue Final Report

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V. BUDGET

\$200,000 has been allocated to this project.

VI. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals in response to this RFP must include the following:

1. **Project Understanding:** Provide a narrative outlining your understanding of the project and your approach to this sensitive subject.
2. **Team:** Provide a description of your team and its organizational structure, including titles, roles, and resumes for each team member.
3. **Qualifications:** Describe your team's experience with the following:
 - Trauma informed public engagement
 - Planning for racial equity
 - Outreach to multiple constituencies
 - Conflict resolution
 - Experience with public engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic
 - Translation services, including but not limited to, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish
 - Real estate economics
 - Public space design and programming
4. **Relevant Experience:** Describe three (3) relevant completed projects. Projects should, to the extent possible, provide examples of community engagement experience, including a brief description of engagement methods and final project outcome(s).

Corresponding project references, one per project, including name, title, phone number, and email address should also be provided.

Please highlight any experience where the team worked to include a variety of stakeholders to find an equitable plan for redevelopment of a contentious site. Experience navigating municipal ownership hierarchies and working with disenfranchised populations should be included

5. **Community Engagement Program:** Based on the team's previous experience and project understanding, please summarize your general expectations of how your team will approach the outreach campaign.

Existing Registered Community Organizations (RCOs), Citizens Planning Institute (CPI) graduates, City Council Offices, and neighborhood leaders and influencers can all be engaged to understand the process and be partners in sharing events and the opportunities for public feedback. In the past, the City has asked respondents to include in their proposals the ways in which they plan to engage and compensate organizations for their time and effort to support a successful engagement campaign.

6. **Project Schedule:** Provide a detailed project schedule adhering to the timeline set forth above.

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- 7. Detailed Cost Proposal:** Provide the Team’s anticipated budget with all projected costs itemized (including, but not limited to, meeting materials, space rental, interpretation services, digital engagement tools, and travel costs) and the consultant fee (including billable rate and anticipated hours per team member and anticipated hours / fee per task).

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

Consultant selection will be based on the following:

1. Team
2. Qualifications
3. Relevant Experience
4. Summary of Community & Civic Engagement Program
5. Cost Proposal

VIII. HOW TO SUBMIT

Submit an electronic response to this RFP (with the subject line **Roundhouse RFP Response**) in PDF format no later than 5:00 PM EST on March 14, 2022 to:

Ian Litwin
Central District Planner
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Department of Planning and Development
Ian.Litwin@phila.gov

RFP QUESTIONS

Questions about this RFP should be submitted to Ian.Litwin@phila.gov (with the subject line **Roundhouse RFP Questions**) by 5PM EST on January 31, 2022. Answers will be provided by 5PM EST on February 7, 2022.

APPENDIX: MAP & PHOTOS



FREEDOM

The RoundHouse site
Should feel and look like
HOME. A PLACE TO FEEL
SAFE!

FRAMING THE
FUTURE
OF THE
ROUNDHOUSE



Department of
Planning and Development
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA