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**ICOMOS Heritage Alert**  
**Philadelphia Police Administration Building**  
(aka Roundhouse, Police Headquarters Building), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Philadelphia Police Headquarters (PPHQ) is internationally significant as a mid-century Expressionist public building, a product of an exceptional collaboration between the architects, structural engineer, and the application of state-of-the-art architectural concrete precasting building technology. The PPHQ represents progressive social aspirations for community-based public safety services, and exceptional design based on international influences and state-of-the-art concrete precasting technology. Designed and constructed using virtually all architectural/structural precast concrete, the building pioneered the use of new and daring structural concrete reinforcing techniques of pre- and post-tensioning which were essential in achieving the building’s architectural character.

The PPHQ was designed by a collaborative team, unusual for a period before the advent of computer aided design, that included the internationally, nationally, and regionally recognized firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham; renowned Estonian structural engineer, August Komendant who worked with Louis Kahn on most of his important buildings; and the engineers from Eastern Schokbeton deploying an innovative Dutch concrete precasting technology.

Philadelphia’s Independence Mall Redevelopment Plan assigned a prominent site to the PPHQ, across the street from Franklin Square, one of the original five parks in William Penn’s plan for the city. At the time, Philadelphia was trying to reform its government, modernize and professionalize municipal services, and root out corruption and political influence. The City leadership’s goal for the new police headquarters building was that it should serve as a symbol of modern, professional, community based public safety services. The building’s soft circular welcoming shape, fenestration, expansive front plaza, and generous interior public spaces provided transparency reflecting the progressive objective for policing in the City of Philadelphia.

Regrettably, because of political change soon after the building’s completion, the vision of a compassionate, engaged, transparent community-based policing that inspired the building design was not realized in practice. Brutal, discriminatory, and biased law enforcement behaviors accelerated under notorious Police Commissioner and subsequently Mayor Frank Rizzo. In the minds of some Philadelphia citizens and leaders, the PPHQ has become a physical symbol of the inappropriate police actions and the community disruption caused by urban renewal programs at midcentury, neither of which are associated with the aspirations for the building’s contribution to the City and the inspiration for its design.

The PPHQ is now vacant, and the City has announced its intent to sell the building and site to a developer. From cursory observation, the PPHQ building itself is in very good condition. There has been minimal alteration to the original building and its significant features. Currently, a community engagement program funded by the City is canvassing citizens for input regarding the future of the building and site.

**The overriding goal for the future of the PPHQ is for it to be protected by deed or easement in perpetuity, appropriately rehabilitated to Secretary of Interior Standards, and sensitively adapted for compatible uses.**

Ideally, standing alone or as part of a larger development project, the PPHQ will be used to realize the progressive civic objectives for which it was designed, community services. For example, the building can accommodate a ground floor restaurant/café, offices for non-profit organizations and an educational space that recognizes and interprets the trauma of an era of brutal policing and urban renewal displacement with the overriding objective to learn from the past to achieve a better future.

The rear half of the site, the original parking lot for the building, holds the potential for a new structure without the need to modify or otherwise hinder the preservation and adaptation of the PPHQ. This might include compatible uses such as affordable housing, landscaped public spaces, and a pedestrian-friendly corridor for easy access to nearby Franklin Square from adjacent neighborhoods, particularly the Chinatown neighborhood.

If the PPHQ is incorporated into a request for developer proposals (RFP), the RFP should:

1. establish an easement and/or deed restriction on the sale of the property that requires the building's appropriate preservation treatment and maintenance over the long term and adapts the building for new uses that are compatible with the building's significant historic qualities over the long term; and
2. give substantial weight in developer selection for their creativity and ability to do so.

Until such provisions are incorporated by the City of Philadelphia into the approach to disposition this unique and exceptional internationally acclaimed mid-century icon to a developer, the potential of disfiguration or, worse, demolition by an insensitive developer remains a distinct and worrisome possibility.

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**1.0 Identity of Building/Artifact/Object/Place**

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**1-1 Current name and original name**

**Philadelphia Police Administration Building** (also known as the Philadelphia Police Headquarters (PPHQ) and "The Roundhouse")

**1-2 Location**

750 Race Street, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, USA 19106

**1-3 Classification/ Type of place**

City of Philadelphia Public Building

**1-4 Current Heritage Protection Status**

***Unlisted and Unprotected.*** The PPHQ does not have officially recognized local, state, or national designation or listing for historic significance. The City of Philadelphia has not acted on an application for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places prepared by concerned citizens/advocates. The application was recently updated for a second submittal to the City of Philadelphia for consideration. The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) issued a determination of eligibility in 2020 for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. However, the City has yet to initiate a nomination for the PPHQ.

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## 2-0 Statement of Significance and History

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### 2-1 Statement of Significance

The significance of the PPHQ is enumerated in subsections 2-1-1 to 2-1-8 below

#### **2-1-1 Architectural Design**

The PPHQ's circular forms and generous front plaza present the PPHQ as a distinct public place in a sea of orthogonal brick and glass corporate and residential buildings. Its geometry and three-hundred-and-sixty-degree exposure communicated that the building and its occupants were transparent, approachable, and welcoming. The generous entry plaza facing Race Street embraced the, unrealized, aspirations of Philadelphia planners for a transit/pedestrian oriented urban environment. Surface parking was subordinated to the building's rear.

The PPHQ design is classical in its composition with a base, shaft, and capital and modernist in its execution. The base, the first floor, is a greater height than each of the upper floors and recessed twelve feet, a gesture to the modernist concept of piloti. Expanses of glass on the first level — at the front and rear entries and at the dining courtyard — were to create a sense of openness and public accessibility. The shaft, the upper three floors of load-bearing precast panels of exposed quartz stone in white concrete are detailed to express each floor, with a window in a sculpted recess. In addition to the unique custom kit of sculpted parts, the building was held together using an exceptionally daring and innovative engineering and construction feat at that time: the post-tensioned second floor that included a twelve-foot cantilever carrying the three-story structural and architectural panels above and the weight of the three floors and roof. The capital is a precast parapet with an open center slightly tilted inward, classical but subordinated to the dramatic presence of the base and shaft below.

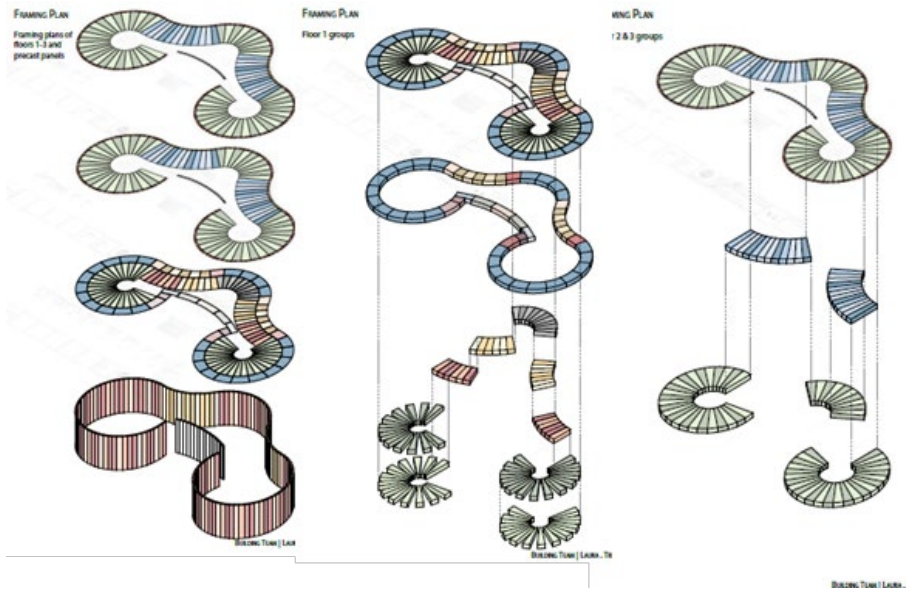
The interior of the PPHQ is as significant and exceptional as the exterior. The interior finish is predominantly exposed smooth finished precast concrete. The exceptional attention to architectural and structural detailing of the precast concrete is evident on the interior as well as the exterior. The structurally coffered floor/ceiling panels constitute the finished ceiling throughout the building. Light fixtures and floating ceiling acoustical panels were custom designed to conform with the wedge profile of the ceiling coffers. Electrical conduit was embedded in the precast panels to eliminate exposed wiring. Raceways for heating and air conditioning were cast into the ceiling profiles and covered with discrete custom perforated metal panels. The interiors of the exterior walls were profiled to seamlessly receive an under-window fan unit. The lobby, public corridors, and executive offices feature elegant and warm walnut paneling accents. Public corridors are polished concrete; offices were carpeted.

The PPHQ possesses all the qualities that define the work of the "Philadelphia School" of architects (see below) and is exceptional in the wholistic embrace of design and new concrete construction technology to produce a unique piece of architecture.

#### **2-1-2 Building Technology**

The PPHQ is significant for its use of, then, state-of-the-art precasting technology newly imported to the USA from the Netherlands in 1960. This technology could produce building components with exceptional precision, strength, and complexity for custom architectural designs. The PPHQ is virtually all precast concrete (over 90%). Precast concrete is used as structure, enclosure, and architectural finish. A precast concrete vertical Vierendeel-like lattice, positioned between the open bay workspaces and the public corridor on each floor, supports the floor and roof structure on the upper floors, a novel structural detail by engineer August Komendant. Post-tensioning at the second-floor slab holds together the building's upper floors, another daring Komendant gesture. While there were other significant buildings of the same period using architectural precast concrete, none captured the full functional and aesthetic potential of precasting technology to the extent achieved in the PPHQ. The export to the USA and use of the Dutch precasting system is one of the PPHQ's internationally significant attributes.

The following images illustrate the precast assembly that makes up the PPHQ. The building is comprised of over one thousand pieces of precast concrete.



*Exploded Axonometric Drawing of PPHQ Precast Components, Georgia Tech Student Presentation*

**2-1-3 Architectural, Engineering and Contractor Team**

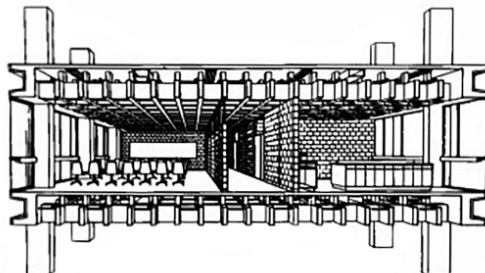
***Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham***

Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC) was a member of the influential “Philadelphia School” of architects. The American Institute of Architects awarded GBQC the national “Firm of the Year” award in 1979. GBQC won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize out of 233 entries in the Sydney Opera House competition in 1955, 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Vienna South (Austria) New Community Competition in 1971, and 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Birmingham (Alabama) Civic Center competition in 1974. The firm designed the U.S Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Its Moore School of Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania was an award-winning concrete frame building that featured material connections as a primary design element.

The professional team that produced the PPHQ was exceptional individually as well as collaboratively. The individual significance of the team members is summarized below.



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*Moore School of Electrical Engineering,  
University of Pennsylvania, 1959*



1Permission for use of Image, Jack Pyburn

*Institute of Advanced Studies  
Dining Commons, 1972*

**Robert Geddes, FAIA (1923- )**

Robert Geddes, a 1950 graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, was a student of Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, both proponents of modularization and prefabrication. A founding principal of the architectural firm Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham (GBQC), with his partners, are associated with the “Philadelphia School” of internationally recognized architects that also included Louis Kahn, Romaldo Giurgola, Ehrman Mitchell, John Bower, and Robert Venturi.



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Geddes was active internationally throughout his professional career. He participated in international CIAM (Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) meetings in 1953 and 1956. He was actively involved in the progressive and internationally recognized urban planning work in Philadelphia led by the director of city planning at the time, Edmund Bacon.

Geddes was professor of architecture and civic design at the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania from 1951 to 1965. He was appointed Dean of the Princeton University School of Architecture in 1965 and served in that position until his retirement in 1982. During his tenure at Princeton, Geddes was a leader in a national initiative considering the future of architectural education.

Robert Geddes and his firm GBQC produced numerous exemplary works of architecture. Under his leadership and in collaboration with his partners, the PPHQ is one of the most significant, ground-breaking works for its success in harnessing the design potential of building technology in precast architecture.

Geddes possessed a sustained interest in the round form in architecture in his early explorations of architectural and urban design. His Harvard Graduate School of Design thesis project was a mixed-use redevelopment concept for downtown Providence, Rhode Island that had as its centerpiece a round-form building. After taking a position on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, Geddes, his University of Pennsylvania faculty colleague George Qualls, and his Harvard classmate, Mel Brecher, entered the Sydney Opera House competition (1955). The team received the second prize out of 233 entries. An examination of the conceptual renderings of the Geddes/Qualls nautilus-inspired scheme strongly suggests a building that would have been produced in concrete. The repetitive profile of primary building elements implied concrete as a likely primary material in the design concept capturing the aesthetic and economic potential of architectural concrete precasting. Toronto City Hall Competition (1958) employs a circular concept to accommodate the required program for use. The PPHQ was the first opportunity to produce a building using the circular form.

**Warren (Barney) Cunningham, FAIA (1922-2013)**

Barney Cunningham was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture. After graduation he and classmate Ehrman B. (Mitch) Mitchell, FAIA, took positions in the U.K. to work on the retrofit of airbases to accommodate the special requirements of jet aircraft. On returning to the U.S., Cunningham joined Mitchell and Romaldo Giurgola, under the firm name of Mitchell/Giurgola/Cunningham, to undertake the design of a visitor center for the Wright Brothers National Memorial, a project in the US National Park Service's Mission 66 Program, a national effort to upgrade National Park visitor accommodations throughout the USA. Barney Cunningham was the principal in charge of that cast-in-place building, now recognized as a National Landmark. The success of the project was in no small part due to Cunningham's experience working with concrete.

Cunningham joined GBQC as principal in charge of the PPHQ after completing the Wright Brothers Visitor Center project. His knowledge and experience were pivotal in the successful design and construction of the PPHQ due to his understanding of both the requirements for designing in concrete and his understanding of concrete construction. This expertise was particularly important as all precast building components were fabricated over 60 miles from the construction site itself.

**August Komendant, PE, Structural Engineer (1906-1992)**

August Komendant, an Estonian-born structural engineer, is best known in the USA for his work with Louis Kahn on the Richards Research Building on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (Texas), the Salk Institute in La Jolla (California), and the International Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (India). Komendant also was the structural engineer for Moshe Safdie's structurally and architecturally daring precast housing project, Habitat, at the 1967 World's Fair in Montreal (Canada).

August Komendant's interest, exploration, and experience not only with concrete and precasting but also with pre-stressing were essential contributions to the all-precast design concept of the PPHQ. Komendant's concept

for an interior vertical Vierendeel-like truss to support one end of the building's wedge-shaped precast floor panels allowed continuous open spans of workspaces, making the PPHQ as much as 10% more efficient than the typical office building, the primary function of the PPHQ. His concept for post-tensioning the sectioned second-floor slab elements to create a cantilever which carried at its outer most end three floors and a roof above was daring, exact, and successful.

***Donald Rothenhaus, PE, Precaster (1927-2003)***

Donald Rothenhaus was a civil engineering graduate of Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, New York, USA. He completed a tour of duty in the Navy, working in the Pentagon for a period as a quantity surveyor. He then took a position with North Atlantic Constructors assigned to construct the then top-secret Thule Airfield project (Blue Jay) in Greenland, with the responsibility for receiving shipments of precast concrete from the Schokbeton Precasting Company fabrication plant in Kampen, Netherlands.

Rothenhaus returned to the US in 1955 to direct Precast Building Section, Inc., a fledging precasting company developed by prominent New York architect Grosvenor Atterbury. Using the advanced knowledge and capability he acquired working with the Dutch precasting system in Greenland, and using the rudimentary technology of the Atterbury system, Rothenhaus directed the prefabrication of the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford, CN (Wallace Harrison, Architect and Felix Samuely, Structural Engineer), one of the first all-precast buildings in the USA and one of the few in the world at the time.

Rothenhaus joined with several business partners to establish Eastern Schokbeton in 1959, the first licensee of the Schokbeton precasting system in the USA. Just prior to the PPHQ project, Eastern Schokbeton cast the lake folly at the Glass House estate for Philip Johnson. The PPHQ was one of the first major projects Eastern Schokbeton received.

**2-1-4 Design and Construction Collaboration**

As described above, the key project team members each had exceptional architectural academic and practice experience, both domestically and internationally. Given the exceptional challenges of the design and construction concept for the PPHQ, it was the design and construction team's collaboration from the outset of the design process through construction that led to the project's success.

The pre-computer architecture/engineering/contractor collaboration to produce the PPHQ was not only exceptional for the time, but also foreshadowed the disciplinary collaboration that would come to be essential in the age of digital design and construction that lay ahead.

**2-1-5 Association with the "Philadelphia School" of architects**

The "Philadelphia School" was an informal coalition of architects involved with the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture, including Louis Kahn, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Venturi, and Robert Geddes and his partners at GBQC. The work of the Philadelphia School architects possessed common guiding principles, as described in a 2017 exhibit at the UPenn Archive: (i) engagement in context, (ii) influence of social analysis and urban planning, and (iii) treating the building as a complex machine." The collective work of the Philadelphia School architects was recognized to be significant internationally for the group's buildings, teaching, and writing. The PPHQ dramatically and distinctively combines these three principles in a single building.

**2-1-6 The international influence on the design and construction of the PPHQ**

The international influence in the design and construction of the PPHQ is discussed above, and in summary represents direct connections to Australia (Sydney), Estonia, the Netherlands, Greenland (Denmark), and Great Britain.

**2-1-7 Association with land use planning and urban renewal at mid-century**

Architects, planners, and public policy makers around the world had major concerns in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the declining condition of the urban environment, including a shortage of decent housing, coupled with a rapidly growing population. The British New Town movement and the international urban planning of Constantinos Doxiadis, among others, exemplified this international interest in rejuvenating urban environments.

Philadelphia became one of the national leaders in the movement, adopting urban planning and design to address real issues of deteriorating housing conditions in inner-city areas, abandonment, absence of investment, poverty, and crime. Beginning in the 1950's, the urban planning and urban renewal initiatives in Philadelphia, under the leadership of city planner Edmund Bacon, with contributions from the prominent Philadelphia architects of the day, were held up as one of the exemplary renewal efforts in the USA. During Bacon's tenure, the city developed plans for Penn Center, Market Street East, Penn's Landing, Society Hill, Independence Mall, the Center City Connector, and the Far Northeast.

Unfortunately, urban renewal programs failed to meet their stated objectives and created unintended consequences. The programs demolished buildings and historic neighborhoods, destroyed small-scale businesses, and displaced and dispersed long standing communities and social groups. The programs failed to provide replacement housing, as most residents were simply displaced to poor-quality housing in other impoverished areas. The urban renewal programs had a disparate impact on vulnerable communities: African Americans, Chinese Americans, immigrants, and other economically, politically, and socially powerless groups.

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the immediate area around the PPHQ site was characterized as being a "skid row" of indigents, brothels, saloons, and burlesque houses. The ethnic enclave of Chinatown lay a few blocks to the west. Bacon and the City of Philadelphia saw this area as a prime opportunity for urban renewal with all its promised benefits.

The Independence Mall Redevelopment Area Plan was a key component of the city's renewal efforts, in anticipation of the 1976 Bicentennial celebration and Philadelphia's pivotal role in the founding of the country. The plan created a large public mall anchored by Independence Hall and Washington Square to the south, running northwards to Franklin Square. The objectives of the Independence Mall Redevelopment Area were to create a historic area around Independence Hall and other historic buildings that form Independence National Historical Park; to link with Society Hill to the south, the Old City to the east, and Chinatown to the west; to draw in tourists; and to attract private investment.

The Independence Mall Redevelopment Area Plan sited the PPHQ prominently on Franklin Square, one of the five squares in the original William Penn plan for the city. The PPHQ has been tainted by its association with the Independence Mall Redevelopment Area Plan. There is no question that the PPHQ site is linked with the urban renewal planning and implementation for the Independence Mall Redevelopment Area. However, it was the Independence Mall Redevelopment Area Plan that was responsible for the demolition of the area, not the decision on where to site PPHQ itself. Demolition would have occurred whether the PPHQ had been located at its site or not.

### **2-1-8 Its importance to the social history of Philadelphia associated with the PPHQ**

Philadelphians elected the city's first progressive administration in 1952, with Joseph Clark as mayor and Richardson Dilworth as district attorney. Dilworth launched a reform of the district attorney's office by professionalizing the staff, rooting out political influence and corruption, promoting civil rights, and ending oppressive treatment of African Americans and other minorities.

Elected mayor in 1958, Dilworth set out to modernize municipal services. His administration commissioned the design and construction of the Municipal Services Building in the Center City district of downtown, allowing city offices to move out of the City Hall and rental space scattered around the city into a modern, efficient building. The building itself was intended to symbolize a modern, progressive city administration serving the needs of Philadelphia citizens. As progressive senator Humbert Humphrey remarked at the building's dedication ceremony:

*"We can and will rid our cities of the ugliness of slums and the ugliness of intolerance and create instead not only beauty of design but beauty of spirit."*

Mayor Dilworth set his sights on modernizing and reforming the police department, just as he had modernized the district attorney's office. First, he wanted a modern, efficient, central police headquarters. The new building would house the police commissioner, administrative offices, a central communications center, detectives' offices, forensic laboratories, records storage and management, a small arraignment courtroom, an auditorium, jail cells for short-term use before and after booking, a cafeteria, and a public lobby for public information and exhibits.

Second, Dilworth wanted a police headquarters that would both create and symbolize transparency and openness in policing and break up the cronyism between the police and politicians by being open to journalists, the public, lawyers, and citizen advocacy groups. Quite simply, Dilworth wanted to let the light shine in. These



objectives led to a design that included a welcoming front plaza facing Franklin Square, a transparent ground floor, a central public lobby and elevator core, and a cafeteria open to the public. Note that the police later filled in ground floor glass panels, closed the front entrance due to lack of pedestrian activity and moved the entrance from the front plaza to the rear parking lot.

Unfortunately, the progressive goals that informed the design of the PPHQ could not arrest the oppressive and racist policing that continued after occupancy that indeed accelerated under Frank Rizzo, first as police commissioner then as mayor. The negative perceptions of the police department continue to taint the public view of the PPHQ and represent an expressed consideration in the City's decision to sell the property to a private developer.

**2-2 History of place**

See section 2-1-7.

**2-3 Date of project / Date of construction / Finishing of work**

Construction Completed and Dedicated: **1963**

**2-4 Architect/Designers**

- **Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham**, Architects, Philadelphia, PA, USA
- **August Komendant**, Structural Engineer, Philadelphia, PA, USA
- **David Bloom**, Structural Engineer
- **Cronheim and Weger**, with **Edward P. May**, Mechanical/Electrical Engineers

**2-5 Architect/Designers still living: Residence, country of birth, contact details**

**Robert Geddes, FAIA** (1923- ) is the last remaining living member of the original architect and contractor team associated with the project. He can be contacted through his son, David Geddes

**2-6 Original and current use of building/place**

The original use of the building was as the headquarters of the City of Philadelphia Police Department. Most of the building was devoted to office space, with portions of the building used for centralized functions such as courtrooms, public information centers, communications center, forensics laboratories, records storage, cafeteria, and jail holding cells. The building is currently vacant.

**2-7 Changes, additions**

There have been no significant changes to or loss of original building fabric or features since completion of construction in 1963.

**2-8 Current condition and use**

Recent visual evidence indicates the building is in very good condition structurally and architecturally. The building needs deferred maintenance and systems upgrades, such as exterior concrete cleaning and upgrades to key systems to support a new use and enhanced energy efficiency afforded by modern systems.

**2-9 Original design intent and use**

The progressive Philadelphia mayor, Richardson Dilworth, elected in 1958, established the original design intent for the PPHQ. The Dilworth administration was undertaking significant police reform and proposed a new police headquarters building that would be in the community, for the community, and distanced from political influence. The new headquarters building was to be a physical manifestation of a progressive public interest goal to have law enforcement be a community service in collaboration with the community.

The program for the building included offices for the police administrators, forensic laboratories, detective offices, records storage and management, central communications, jail facilities for central booking to stop political manipulation of charges in remote precinct stations, a small arraignment courtroom/ auditorium, a cafeteria, and a public lobby for public information and exhibits, etc.

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### ***3-0 Description (history and technology)***

#### **3-1 Physical description**

The PPHQ is a 125,000 square foot four story plus basement structure constructed of all precast concrete. Each floor is 25,000 square feet. Structure, enclosure, and dominant interior finishes are exposed precast concrete. Walnut paneling provides accents to public corridors and primary spaces such as the auditorium, courtroom, and executive suite. Acoustical ceiling coffer inserts, lighting and signage are custom designed and extant.

The building's shape responds to the design objective with an open and inviting circular form within the formal street grid of the city and the efficiency of precasting realized in a circular geometry. One mold can cast all panels of the same radius.

The upper floors of the PPHQ contain 480 identical three-story load-bearing structural and architectural precast panels. Floors are trapezoidal precast units. The second floor is post-tensioned to create a 12-foot cantilever that supports the three-story structural and architectural exterior wall panel above.

The designed profiles of the precast structural/architectural building components fully integrate the mechanical and electrical systems. Likewise, the floor design integrates state-of-the-art radiant floor heating and data/voice raceways.

#### **3-2 Construction system used**

The PPHQ is one of the most complete precast buildings of its time, internationally. The construction system for this building is 90% precast concrete including architectural and structural precasting, pre-tensioning, and an exceptional application of post-tensioning. Individual precast units are structural and architectural. Precast concrete is used as a finish material on the interior and exterior. The construction system used is integral to the building's historical and architectural significance.

#### **3-3 Physical context/setting**

The present setting of the PPHQ reflects the intrusive impacts of urban renewal era demolition. The area surrounding the PPHQ site is characterized by parking lots, wide streets, and expressways to accommodate traffic flow into and out of the city center from surrounding suburbs. Incremental new construction has occurred over time. The historic Chinatown community lies a few blocks west of the PPHQ site. A city subway stop is located across Race Street and adjacent to Franklin Square. Independence Mall, bounded on two sides by Independence Hall and a National Constitution Center and Museum and on two sides by corporate buildings of the redevelopment period is one block from the PPHQ site.

#### **3-4 Social and cultural context and value**

As described in section 2-1-7, the PPHQ was sited in an urban renewal zone, the Independence Mall Redevelopment Area. Consequently, negative perceptions of the redevelopment projects have tainted associations of the building with the impacts of urban renewal. The redevelopment alienated the Chinatown community, the only remaining identifiable ethnic residential community remaining in center city Philadelphia.

As described in section 2-1-8, policing throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Philadelphia had a reputation for corruption and brutality, particularly against ethnic communities and more specifically Philadelphia's Black citizens. In fact, the very concept for the PPHQ moving out of City Hall in 1963 was an acknowledgement of the city's policing problems in a period of progressive leadership. However, the PPHQ was no sooner occupied by the police under the optimistic light of community betterment and community policing than political leadership and policing leadership changed under the tenure of Commissioner Frank Rizzo. Rizzo became not only the chief of police directing a continued practice of aggressive policing against Blacks and other minorities, but he also became a symbol of police brutality for decades after he was no longer in office and to this day.

The value of the PPHQ starts with an awareness that the building was designed to support a progressive, community-based policing where the community and the police worked together to maintain public safety and a quality of life for all Philadelphia citizens. The location of the PPHQ facing Franklin Square, one the five squares in William Penn’s original plan for the city is a demonstration of the significance of the building to the city and the role of citizen involved policing to the quality of city life.

The PPHQ was designed to open to the park and the community. The first floor of the PPHQ was designed to include functions for community access and engagement with kiosks for information, a cafeteria with outdoor courtyard and space for rotating exhibits. The curved volumetric characteristics of the PPHQ were intended to provide a softer, more open and inviting image for the police department than stark angular volumes would have created. The openness on the ground floor at the plaza and the 480 windows on the upper three floors presented a transparency of the circumference of the building that was to communicate the aspirations for more transparency in police/community relations.

**3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function**

See sections 2-1-1, 2-1-2, 3-1, 3-2, and 3-6.

**3-6 Aesthetic value**

The PPHQ is of high aesthetic value for its circular forms set in the grid of Philadelphia’s street layout; the building’s texture produced by repetitive modular units and its exposed white quartz aggregate precast concrete panels; and its synthesis of planning, design, and technology into a unique piece of architecture.

**4-0 Source of Alert**

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**4-1 Proposer(s) of Heritage Alert, contact details**

- ICOMOS International

**4-2 Groups supporting Heritage Alert**

- ICOMOS International
- ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage
- ICOMOS US
- ICOMOS Estonia
- Docomomo/International
- Docomomo/US
- Docomomo/US/Philadelphia
- National Architectural Museum of Estonia

**4-3 Groups potentially against protection and preservation of the PPHQ**

The City of Philadelphia owns the site and has announced an intent to offer the PPHQ building and site for sale to a private developer. The City is yet to communicate its position on the protection and PPHQ. The City could adopt a development strategy that would preserve the building as a public asset adapted to provide community services. The City could, with the primary goal of maximizing revenue, sell the property to a developer with few conditions attached. This would greatly threaten the disfiguration or, worse, demolition of the building. The City could sell the property with sufficient deed/easement provisions that would assure the PPHQ is properly

preserved and maintained in perpetuity and adapted with uses compatible with its character defining characteristics.

Some in the community groups likely associate the building with the history of police brutality. For them, the demolition of the building would be a reasonable form of retribution. For others, adaptive reuse of the building to address past social injustices would be an appropriate form of restorative justice.

The Chinatown community may oppose preservation because the urban renewal and highway construction initiatives since 1950 have typically ignored the needs of the Chinatown community. However, a development plan that addresses specific needs of the Chinatown community may garner the community's support. In particular, affordable housing, landscaped public spaces, and pedestrian access to Franklin Park are on the Chinatown community agenda.

As is the case with too many buildings of this period, there are some who view the building as not architecturally significant, and/or dislike "Brutalist" architecture.

**4-4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place**

- Gold Metal, Philadelphia Chapter, American Institute of Architects, 1963
- Silver Metal, Pennsylvania Society of Architect, 1963
- Exhibition of Modern Architecture, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1963
- Philadelphia Preservation Alliance Legacy Award, 2022

**4-5 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.**

- Multiple articles by Inga Saffron, Architectural Critic, Philadelphia Inquirer
- Multiple articles by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

**4-6 Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.**

- *Progressive Architecture*, October 1960, p. 186-191
- *Architectural Forum*, February 1963, p. 120-125
- *Process Architecture*, No. 62, Principals and Precedents: Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham, October 1985. Dedicated issue to the work of GBQC.

**4-7 Time constraints for advocacy (immediate action/delayed action)**

Winter and Spring of 2023 is the critical time for action, as we anticipate that the city will be preparing an RFP for developers.

**5-0 Recommended Action**

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**5-1 Heritage Alert: international/national distribution via ICOMOS**

**5-2 Heritage Alert Letter sent to City of Philadelphia Elected Officials**

**5-3 ICOMOS National or Scientific Committee, or international Website upload**

**5-4 Affiliated organization distribution**

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**6-0 Desired Outcomes**

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**6-1 Legal protections or improved existing legal protection that would support preservation and reuse**

- Listing on National Register of Historic Places, National Park Services. Listing on the National Register will make the developer investment in preservation of the PPHQ eligible for Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credits.
- Listing on City of Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.
- Easement on Property to preserve its exterior and significant interior features.
- Deed Restrictions in the sale of the property to preserve its exterior and significant interior features.

**6-2 Priority Options for Outcomes**

It is understood that the City intends to sell the PPHQ property. The desired outcomes are that the City of Philadelphia:

1. properly list the Roundhouse on the local and national register of historic places, not only an essential recognition of its importance but also a prerequisite for access to the state and national historic preservation tax credit programs that can meaningfully support private sector investment in its proper treatment and reuse;
2. place an easement and/or deed restrictions on the sale of the property that protects the exterior character and significant interior features of the building; and
3. develop substantive criteria for the selection of a purchaser that will give meaningful credit to the purchaser's demonstrated intent, experience and creative approach to preserving and sensitively reusing the Roundhouse and to the creative and respectful development of the rear of the site.

Until the provisions described above are incorporated into an approach to disposition of the PPHQ, risk of disfiguration, irreversible damage and/or loss of character defining features that make the building internationally significant or, worse, demolition remains a possibility and a serious concern.