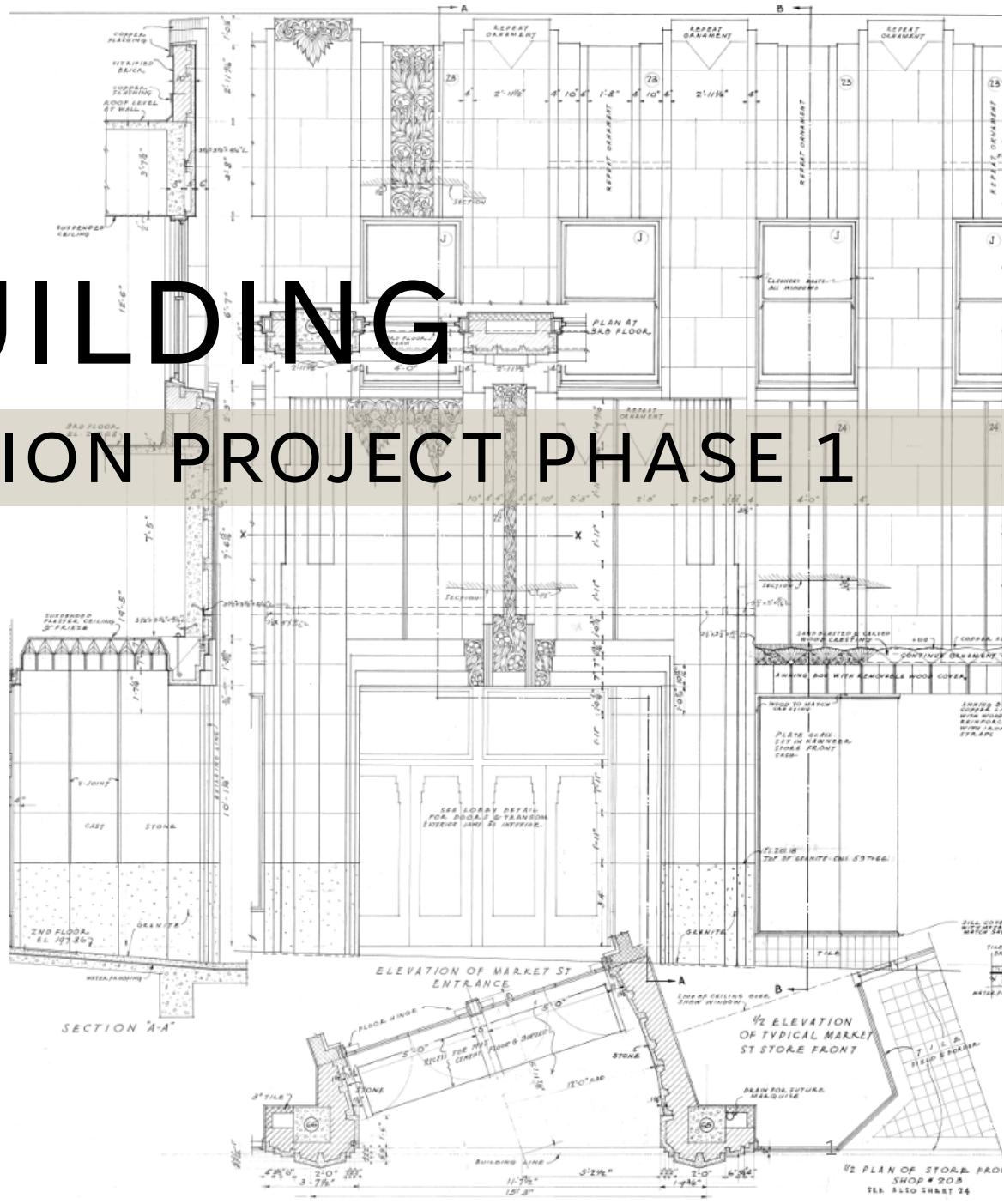
TACOMA MUNICPAL BUILDING

EXTERIOR PRESERVATION PROJECT PHASE 1

MARCH 26, 2025



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Background

- Officially dedicated January 29, 1931, as the Rhodes Medical Arts Building.
- Designed by John Graham, Sr.
- The City purchased the building c. 1976.
- Listed on the Tacoma and National Register of Historic places in 1978.
- The first City Council meeting was held on December 18, 1979.

Credit: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library, (TPL-6966), 1931

Background

- Prior to City ownership the building was sandblasted multiple times for cleaning.
- Sandblasting removed the smooth finish, which caused the cast stone to become more porous.
- Leading to accelerated deterioration, including organic growth, water intrusion, cracking and spalling.

Before Sandblasting

After Sandblasting

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Assessments

- The City has conducted various assessments of the building exterior to identify cleaning and preservation needs.
- Assessments have utilized swing stages, drone videos, and GigaPan high resolution images for inspection and documentation of refurbishment needs.
- Materials observed included cast stone, windows, copper panels, sealants, wood trim, granite cladding and exterior doors.

Credit: City of Tacoma

Assessments

- Condition Ratings:
  - Cast Stone: Good to Critical
  - Sealants: Fair to Critical
  - Windows: Fair
  - Copper Panels: Fair
  - Wood Trim: Fair
  - Granite Cladding: Good
  - Exterior Doors: Good

Cast Stone Condition
Credit: WJE Associates, Inc.

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Assessments

- Based on the completed assessments full refurbishment of the building exterior is anticipated to exceed $20 million.
- Preservation of the building exterior will be completed through a phased approach.
- The City has allocated $4.5 million for the first phase, with ongoing efforts to secure additional funding for future phases.
- WJE is currently developing construction documents for the Phase 1 work.

GigaPan photo of east façade (St Helens)
Robotic panoramic high-resolution imagery
Credit: WJE Associates, Inc.

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Phase 1 Overview

- Cleaning and sealing.
- Repoint joints with cracked, debonded, and missing mortar.
- Replacement of cast stone units beyond repair.
- Displaced cast stone units will be reset.
- Supporting shelf angles will be cleaned preserved and reinforced.
- Old and failing patch work will be removed.
- Exposed steel will be treated.

East façade (St Helens)

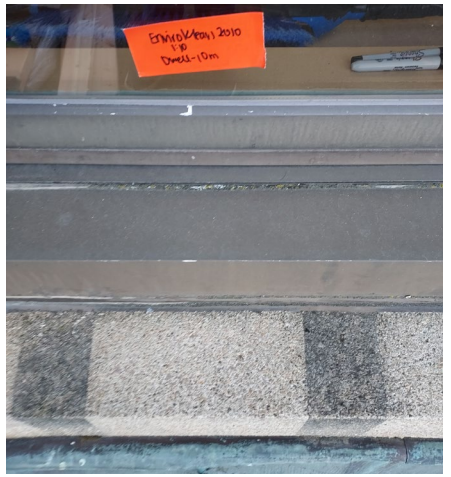
Credit: Richaven, 2019

West façade (Market Street)

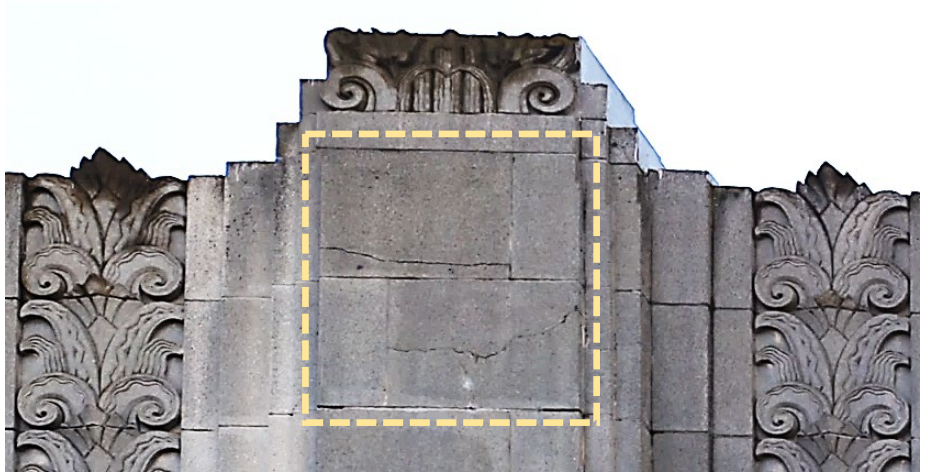
Phase 1 Overview

- Cleaning methodology:
  - WJE completed cleaning mock-ups on north façade.
  - Finalizing Cleaning Trial Memo.
- Cast Stone Replacements:
  - New cast stone units to replace those beyond repair.
  - Primarily at shelf angles.

Cleaning Enclosure



Cleaning Example



Example of Area Needing New Cast Stone Units (West Façade Garage)

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Phase 1 Overview

- Phase 1 work will not address all the rehabilitation needs but will mitigate accelerated deterioration to the cast stone.
- The east and west façades will be preserved in a maintainable state, allowing for a continuation of future phase as funding becomes available.
- The initial phase is scheduled to advertise for competitive solicitation spring 2025.

Credit: City of Tacoma

Next Steps/Phases

- Phase 1 work is scheduled to start summer 2025 and is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026.
- Knowledge gained will inform scope of future phases. Including means and methods, refined quantities, durations and estimated costs.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities to implement Phase 2, including the State Heritage Capital Projects (HCP) grant program.
- Phase 2 will prioritize cleaning and preservation work on the south and north façades.

Credit: Northwest Room at The Tacoma Public Library,(BU-10657), 1930

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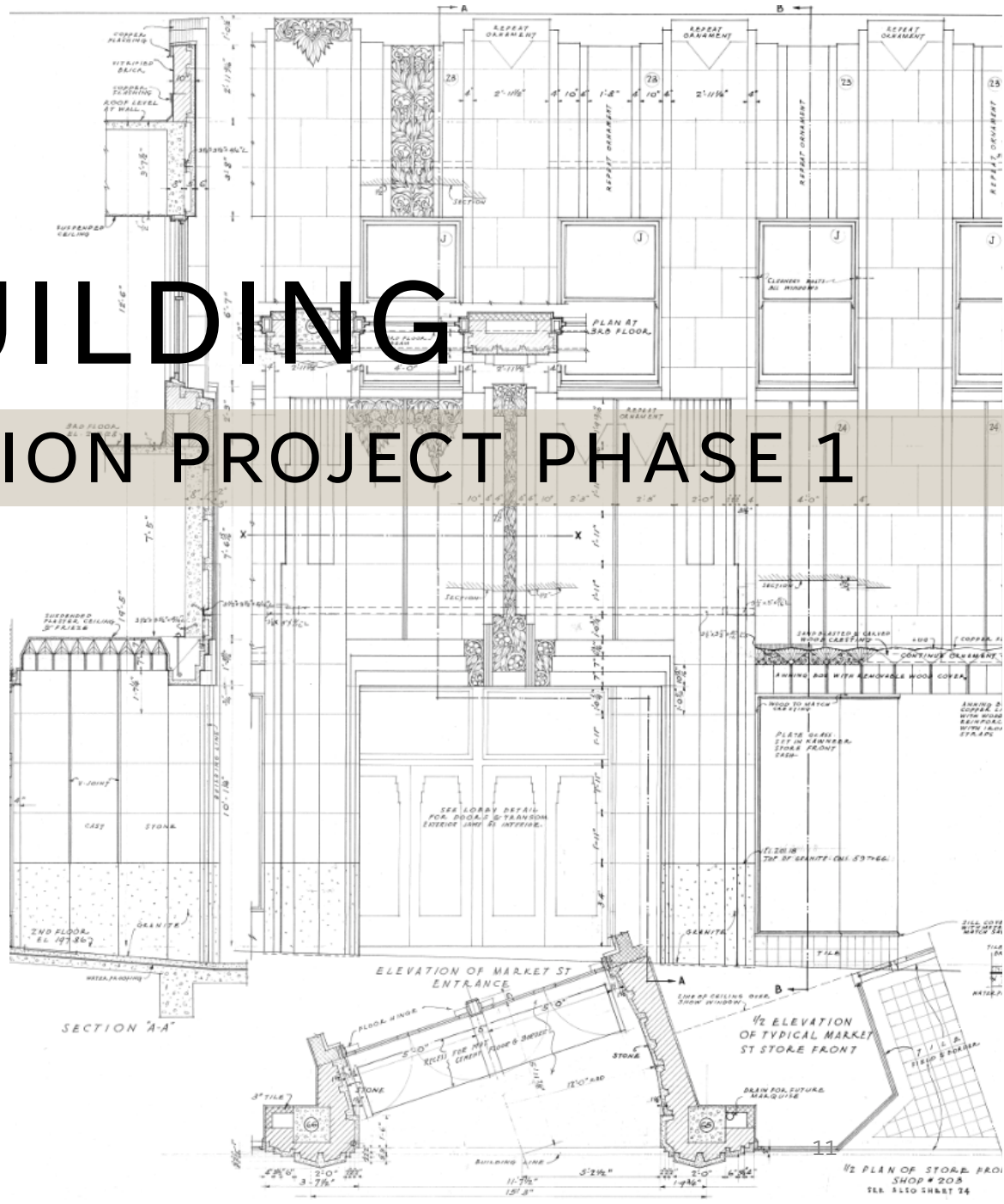
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