

1. Agenda

Documents: [CSRSGAGENDA052213.PDF](#)

2. Staff Memo

Documents: [CSRSGMEMO052213.PDF](#)

CITY OF PORTLAND NOTICE OF MEETING

CONGRESS SQUARE REDESIGN STUDY GROUP

DATE: Wednesday, May 22, 2013
TIME: 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
LOCATION: City Council Chambers,
Portland City Hall

A G E N D A

1. Introduction. (5 minutes)
2. Presentation of Congress Square Plaza proposal by representatives of the *Westin Portland Harborview* – for Study Group discussion and possible action. (20 minutes)
3. Presentation of Planning Staff assessment of proposal. (10 minutes)
4. Questions and answers from Congress Square Study Group. (15 minutes)
5. Public Comment.
6. Motion / Discussion / Vote on recommendation to Housing and Community Development Committee
7. Housing and Community Development Committee meeting: May 29, 2013, 5:30pm
8. Adjourn.

Kevin Donoghue
City Councilor, District 1

Memorandum
Planning and Urban Development Department
Planning Division



To: Congress Square Redesign Study Group

From: Alex Jaegerman, Planning Division Director, Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer

Date: May 17, 2013

Re: Congress Square Plaza proposal assessment

Meeting Date: Wednesday, May 22, 2013

I. Introduction

On April 24, 2013 Rockbridge and Canal 5 Studio presented a new proposal for Congress Square Plaza to the Housing and Community Development Committee and the general public in a workshop session. Since that presentation on April 24th revisions have been made to the proposal. The Planning staff since then has requested the drawings for that revised proposal in order to assess them according to the City of Portland's Urban Open Space standards as well as the New York City Plaza Standards for Privately Owned Public Space. That analysis is the subject of this memorandum. Additional comments regarding the May 16, 2013 revisions can be found in section V. May 16 Revision.

II. City of Portland Plaza Design Standards

The Design Manual for the City of Portland contains a section for Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (Appendix 1) which, although written for review of private development proposals, also provides useful guidance for design elements within public open spaces, but not for the design of the overall space. While the guidelines in the section "I. Relationship to Pedestrian Environment" do address sidewalks and open space, the guidelines are not prescriptive when it comes to dimensional requirements.

Standard: The design of publicly accessible sidewalk and open space shall complement the general pattern of the Downtown pedestrian environment, conform with special City of Portland streetscape programs described in the Technical and Design Standards and Guidelines, and enhance the attractiveness, comfort security, and usability of the pedestrian environment.

Our guidelines for Urban Open Space call for the following:

- a) **Variety in Size:** Variety in size and character of Downtown open space
- b) **Variety of Activity:** Opportunities for varied activities (ranging from sitting quietly reading a book to joining together with large numbers of people engaged in or observing some performance)

- c) **Accessibility:** Should be readily accessible from both sidewalks and surrounding buildings to assure maximum pedestrian circulation
- d) **Visibility:** Should be so located and designed to readily allow views from the sidewalk, streets, and surrounding buildings into the open space as well as outward views from within the space
- e) **Amenities:** Including seating, lighting, artwork, trash receptacles, etc. provided
- f) **Environmental Design:** Solar access, wind protection, and landscaping should combine to enhance pedestrian comfort and provide variety of sunny and shaded areas.

Based on these criteria, the proposal:

- a) **Size:** The size of the plaza space would be approximately 4,836 square feet. The other prominent plaza spaces along Congress Street include City Hall Plaza (4,100 square feet), Monument Square (22,000 square feet), and Longfellow Square (3,000 square feet). This plaza provides a variation in plaza size compared to those along Congress Street.
- b) **Activity:** The current proposal does not cover this component of the plaza design.
- c) **Accessibility:** The plaza is accessible from all sidewalks as well as from the proposed building which has doors and an operable wall.
- d) **Visibility:** The plaza has good visibility from both streets and sidewalks, within the plaza, into the buildings adjacent, and from the adjacent buildings into the plaza.
- e) **Amenities:** The current proposal does not cover this component of the plaza design.
- f) **Environmental Design:** The plaza remains south-facing providing for good solar access throughout the year. The wing walls and canopy allow for wind protection and sun shading for a portion of the plaza space. Landscaping is not a part of this proposal.

The proposal that is before us concerns the size and dimensions of the plaza and not the design of the plaza itself. While the Design Manual describes the intent and character desired for public space, it does not currently provide specific, dimensional design guidelines. It is for this reason that we recommended using the New York City Public Plaza Standards from 2009 (which are applicable to privately owned public spaces) to further assess the proposal. The spirit and intent in the NYC guidelines is in keeping with those of the City of Portland's Design Guidelines.

III. Proposal reviewed by NYC Public Plaza Standards

Because the proposal provides public plaza amenities, such as the planter, bench, wing walls, and canopy, the proposal has been assessed using the edge of glass to determine the line between the public and private realm. This assessment does not include the sidewalk or potential additions to sidewalk area in its calculations.

- a) **Dimensions:** Minimum area is **2,000 square feet**

Meets Requirement: Proposal is for 4,836 square feet (Diagram 1)

- b) **Configuration:** Major portions of public plazas are required to have average width and depth of **40 feet**. Up to **20%** of the plaza area may be less than 40 feet in depth.

Meets Requirement: The entire area of the plaza is set back 48 feet from the property line and therefore meets the 40 foot depth requirement for 100% of the park area. (Diagram 2)

- c) **Locational Restrictions:** Public plazas may not be located within **175 feet** (measured along street line) of other plazas or parks.

Meets Requirement: Congress Square Plaza is considered a part of the whole Congress Square which includes the plazas in front of the art museum as well as the plaza in the intersection. The next-closest plaza is Longfellow Square which more than 175 feet away.

- d) **Restrictions on Orientation:** South-facing plazas are generally preferred. In no cases are plazas permitted to be only north-facing.

Meets Requirement: The plaza as proposed is primarily south and south-east-facing.

- e) **Visibility:** Public plazas are required to be completely visible when viewed from any adjacent street frontage. To maintain design flexibility for plazas that are located on corners where streets do not meet at 90 degree angles, the visibility requirements only require complete visibility from one street frontage and at least **50% visibility** from the other street frontage.

Meets Requirement: The proposal does not have streets at right angles and therefore is subject to the 50% visibility minimum which it meets at 90.3% visibility from the street frontage as demonstrated in (Diagram 3).

- f) **Permitted Obstructions:** Public plazas are generally required to be open to the sky and unobstructed, except for certain permitted obstructions such as planting, seating, and other plaza amenities. Plazas less than 10,000 square feet have a maximum obstruction of **40%** of the plaza area. Plazas with permitted open air cafes are allowed an additional **10%** of the plaza area in obstructions. Elevated planters are typically considered obstructions for the purpose of calculating the amount of obstructed area in a public plaza.

Meets Requirement: The planter associated with the proposal occupies 3.3% (159 square feet) of the total plaza area. There are no other obstructions in this proposal.

- g) **Seating:** Not applicable at this time – this requirement will be applicable in the design of the plaza space itself which is not a part of the current proposal.

The proposal contributes one type of seating towards the two types needed to meet this requirement.

- h) **Planting and Trees:** Not applicable at this time – this requirement will be applicable in the design of the plaza space itself which is not a part of the current proposal. The proposal contributes 3.3% towards the 20% total area of plantings required.

IV. Comparison to Previous Proposals

There are two primary differences between the August, 2012 proposal and the current proposal. First, the size of the proposed event center building has been reduced from 11,100 square feet to 9,400 square feet leaving more of the parcel to remain public plaza space. The previous proposal allowed for 3,500 square feet of plaza space compared to the current proposal which accommodates 4,836 square feet for public plaza. (Diagram 4) The second difference between the two proposals is the architecture of the building itself, specifically, the building is contextual and interfaces with the public realm. In the recent proposal, the building has a glass façade with habitable and hopefully interactive space bringing activity and visibility to the plaza whereas the previous proposal had blank and solid walls facing the plaza (Diagram 5). The additional advantage to the recent proposal is the gallery-like space which may include art and public function space. The lighting of the glass gallery at night can bring added interest and safety to the plaza.

V. May 16 Revision

Assessment of the revised (May 16) proposal (Diagram 7) compared to the April 24th proposal (Diagram 6) shows that the plaza meets all of the NYC Plaza Standards. The distance from property line to edge of glass has been increased to 48 feet resulting in an increase of 536 square feet to the plaza. The new position of the building also increases visibility to and within the plaza. The wing walls, canopy, and benches associated with the proposal have been reduced in size. Staff feels that the quality of the public plaza is enhanced by further iteration and design development of the proposal. For example, with the setback of the building to 48 feet the proposal creates a space more hospitable for a sidewalk café for the neighboring retail business. Increased physical access by making the glass wall operable potentially increases interaction between the public and private realm.

Attachments:

- Diagram 1 – Total Area of Plaza
- Diagram 2 – Configuration: 40 foot depth
- Diagram 3 – Visibility: 50% from street
- Diagram 4 – Comparison to previous proposal
- Diagram 5 – July 10, 2012 plan
- Diagram 6 – April 24th proposal
- Diagram 7 – May 16th proposal

HIGH STREET

PROPERTY LINE

CONGRESS STREET

RE-LOCATED CURB

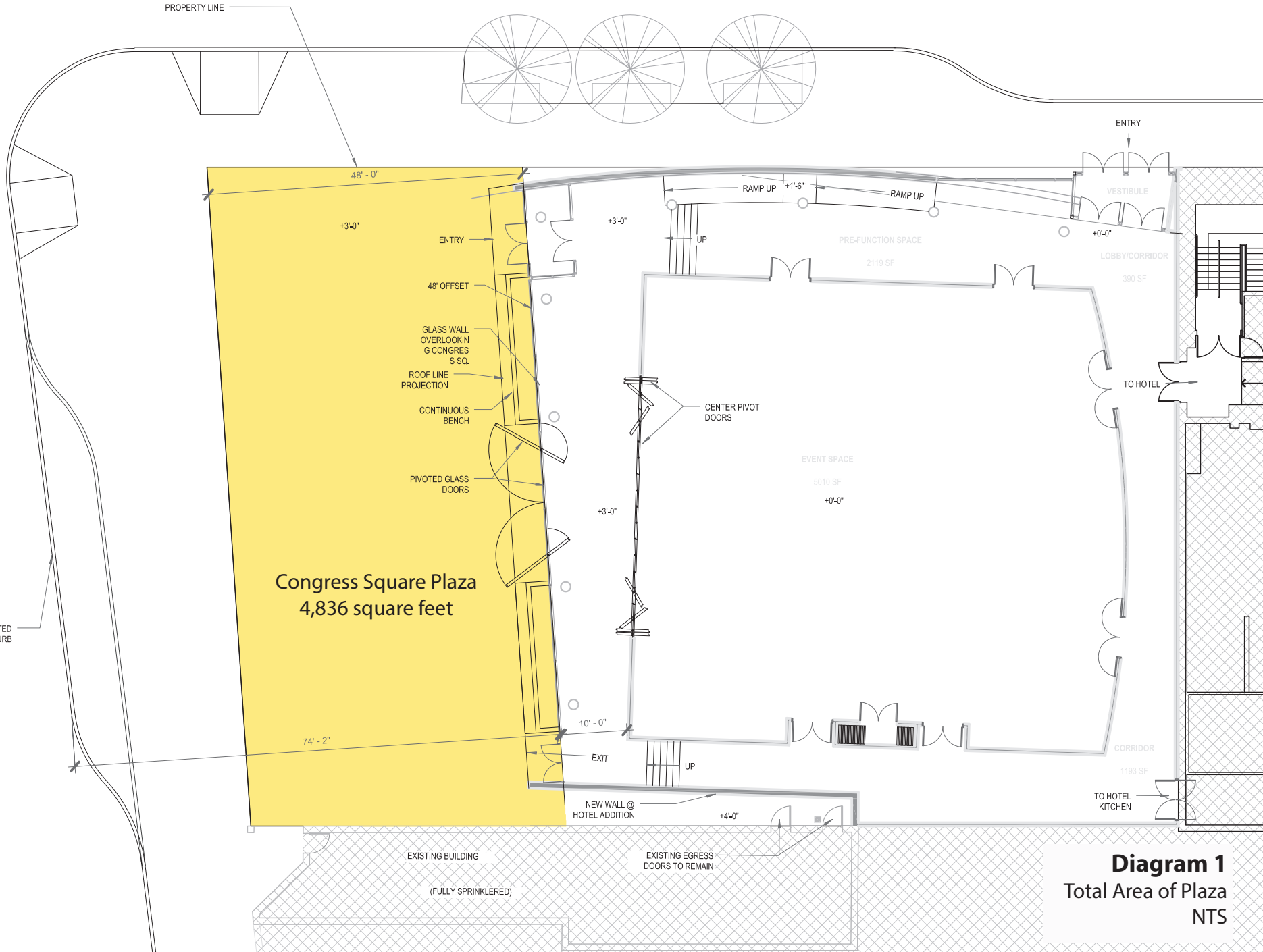


Diagram 1
 Total Area of Plaza
 NTS

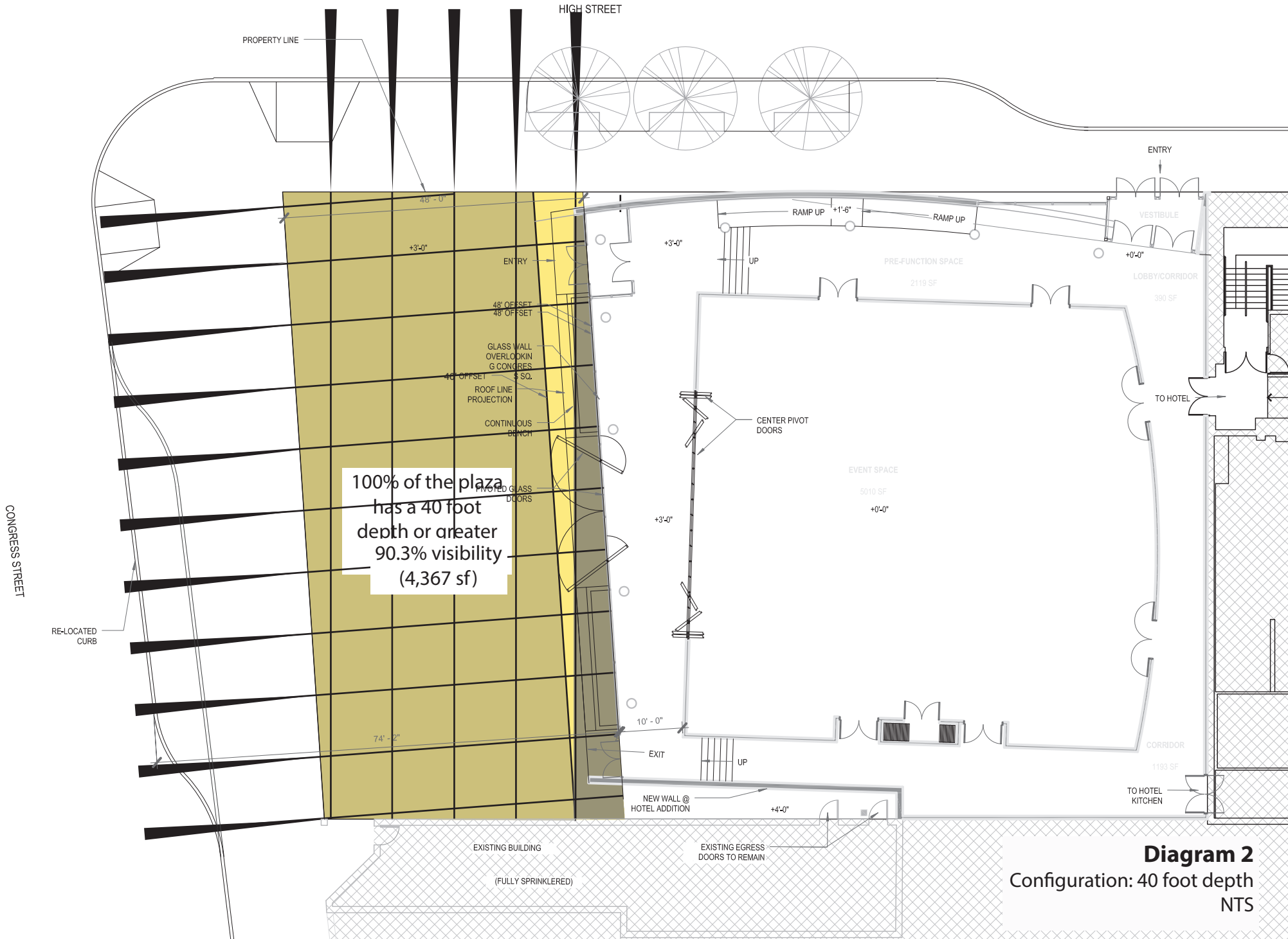


Diagram 2
 Configuration: 40 foot depth
 NTS

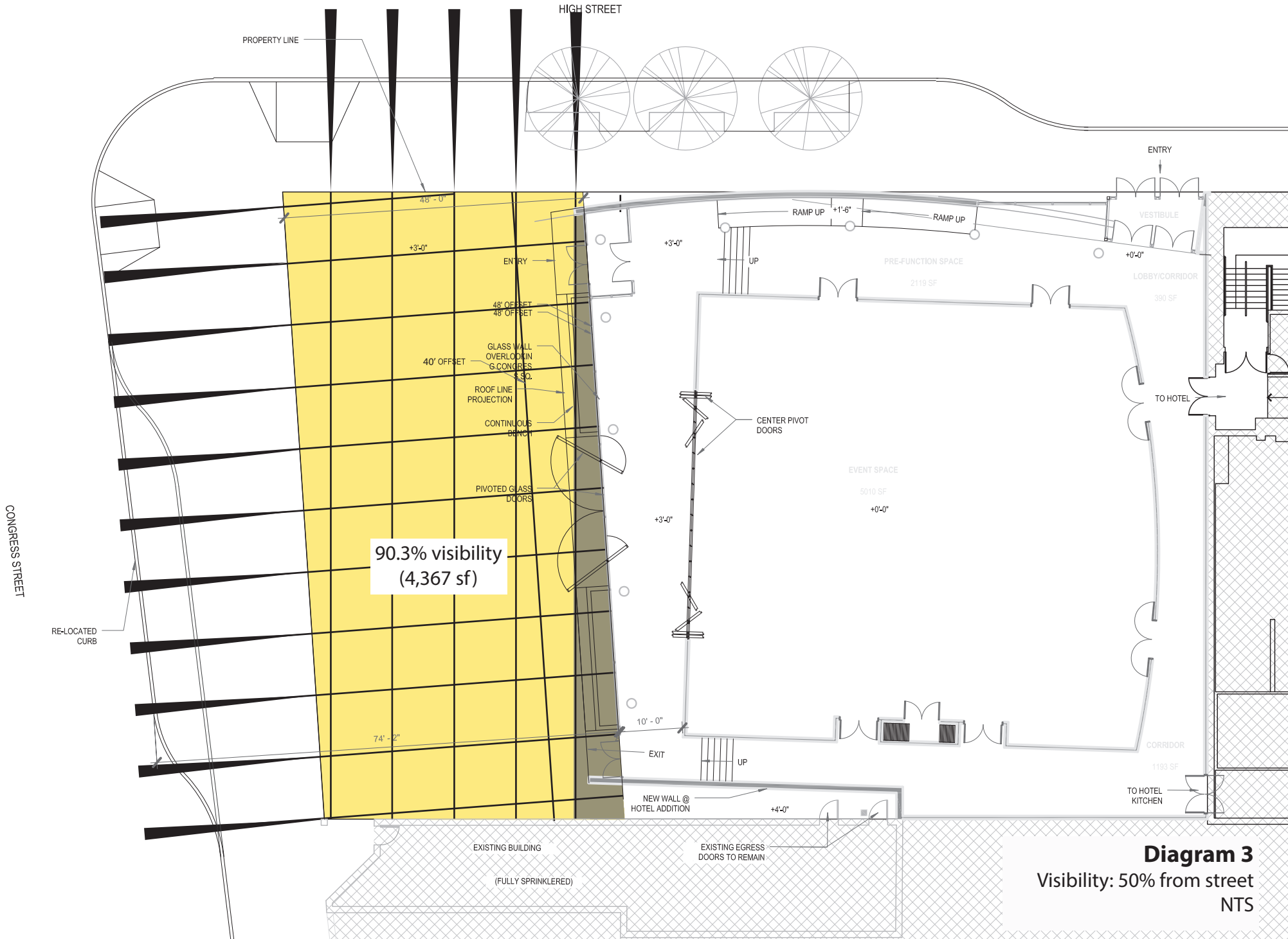
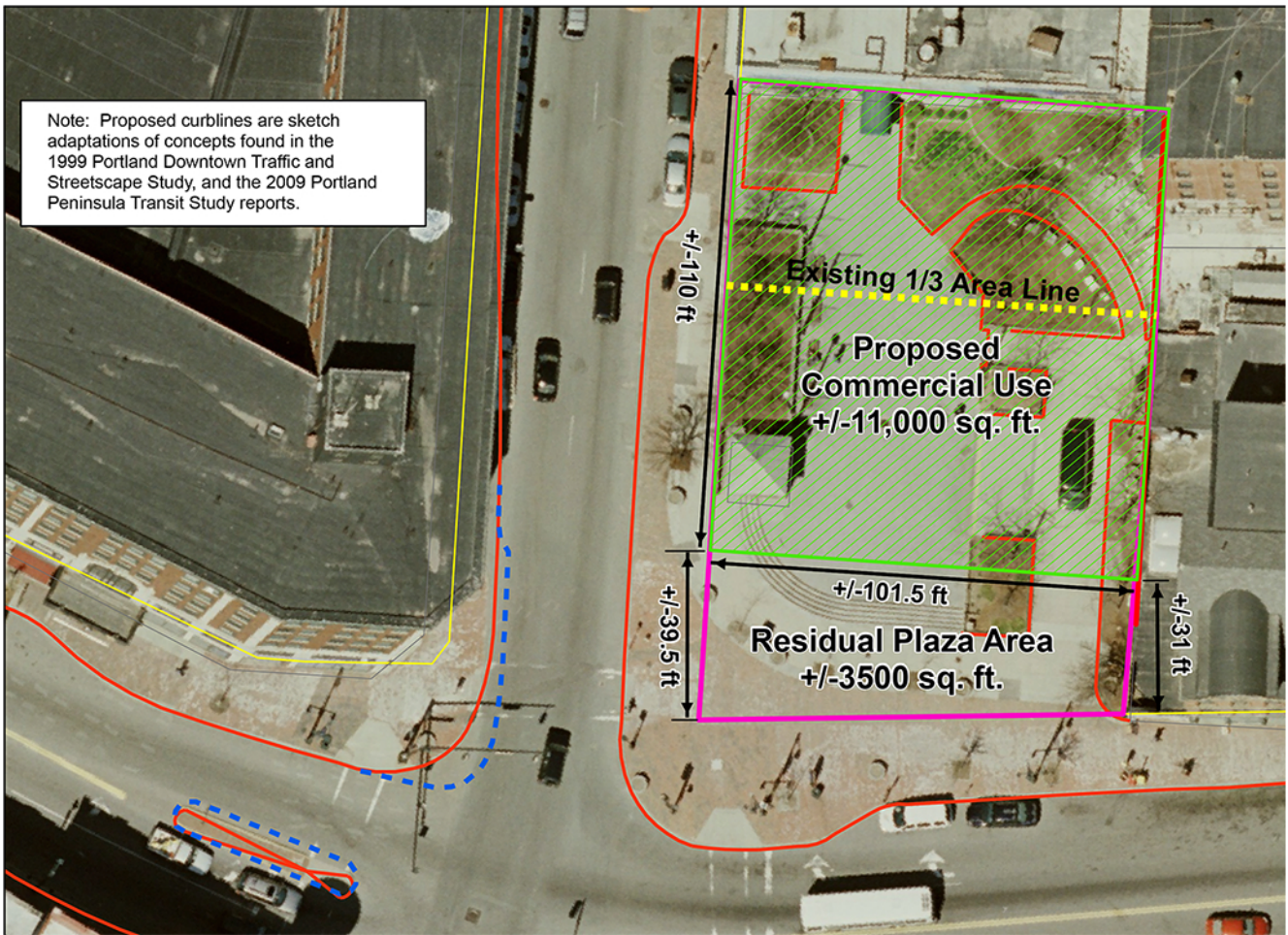
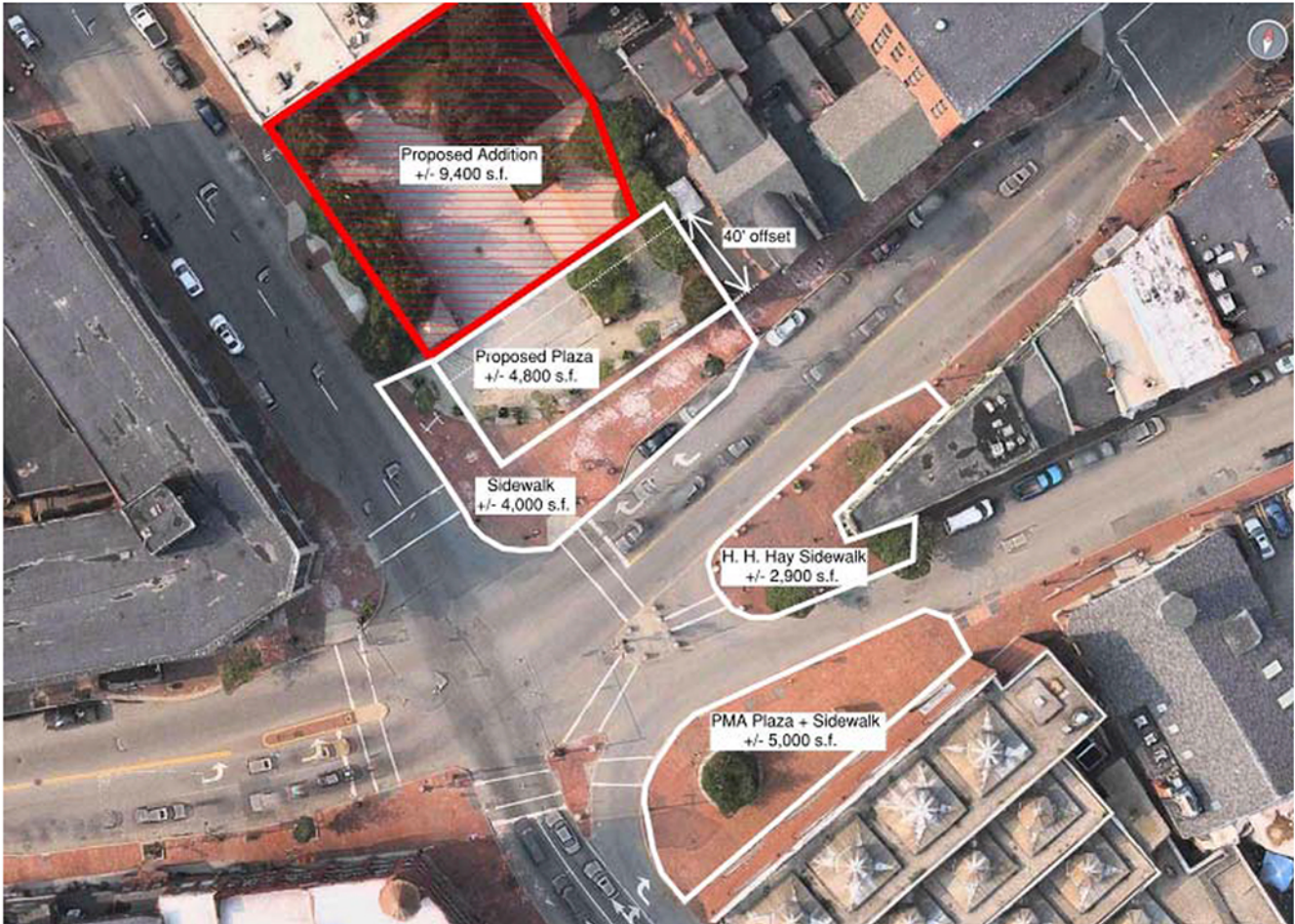


Diagram 3
 Visibility: 50% from street
 NTS

Note: Proposed curblines are sketch adaptations of concepts found in the 1999 Portland Downtown Traffic and Streetscape Study, and the 2009 Portland Peninsula Transit Study reports.



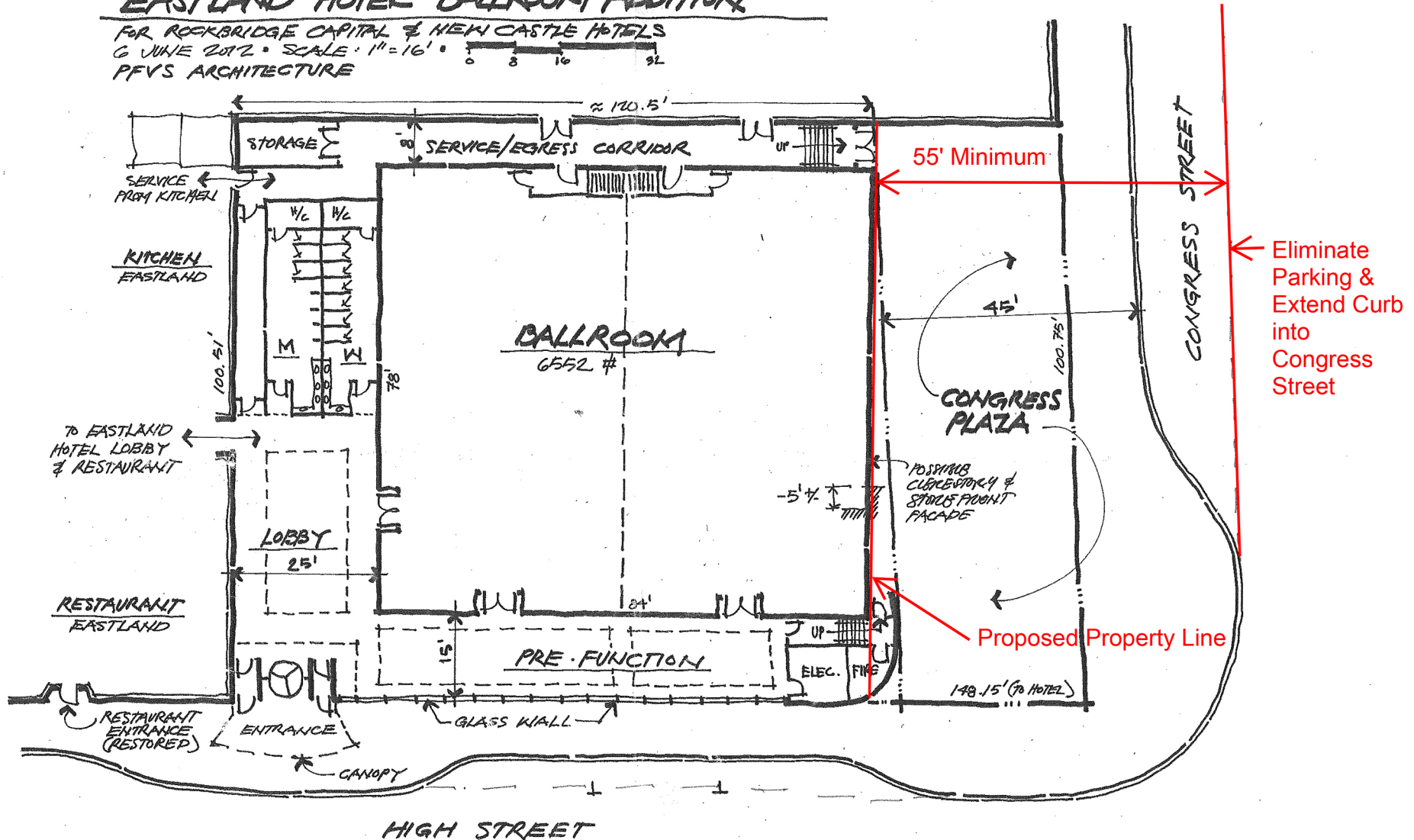
August 2012 Proposal



May 2013 Proposal
Diagram 4

EASTLAND HOTEL BALLROOM ADDITION

FOR ROCKBRIDGE CAPITAL & NEW CASTLE HOTELS
 6 JUNE 2012 • SCALE: 1" = 16' • 0 8 16 32
 PFVS ARCHITECTURE



Eliminate Parking & Extend Curb into Congress Street

Proposed Property Line

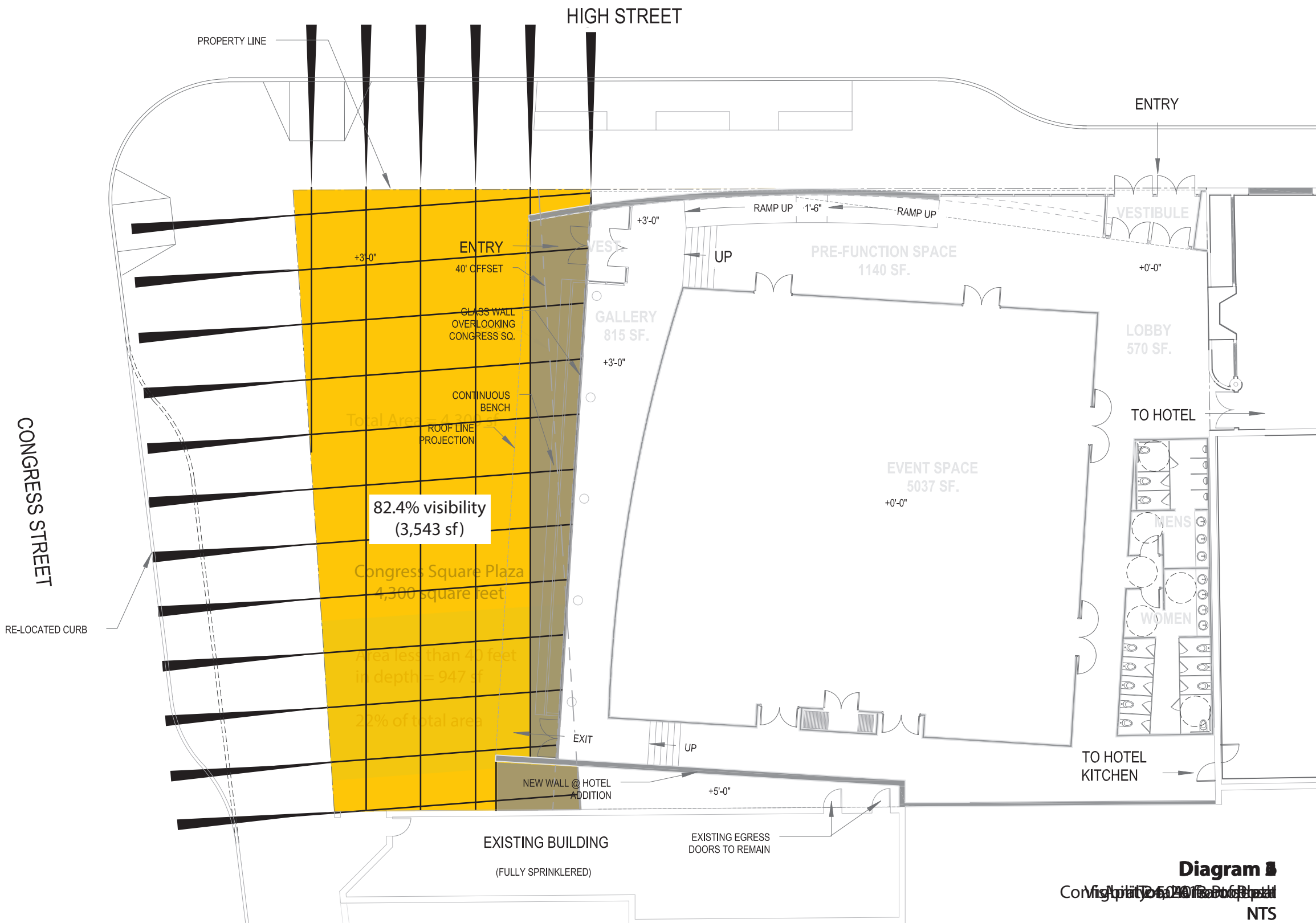


Diagram 1
 Visibility Analysis of Proposed
 NTS

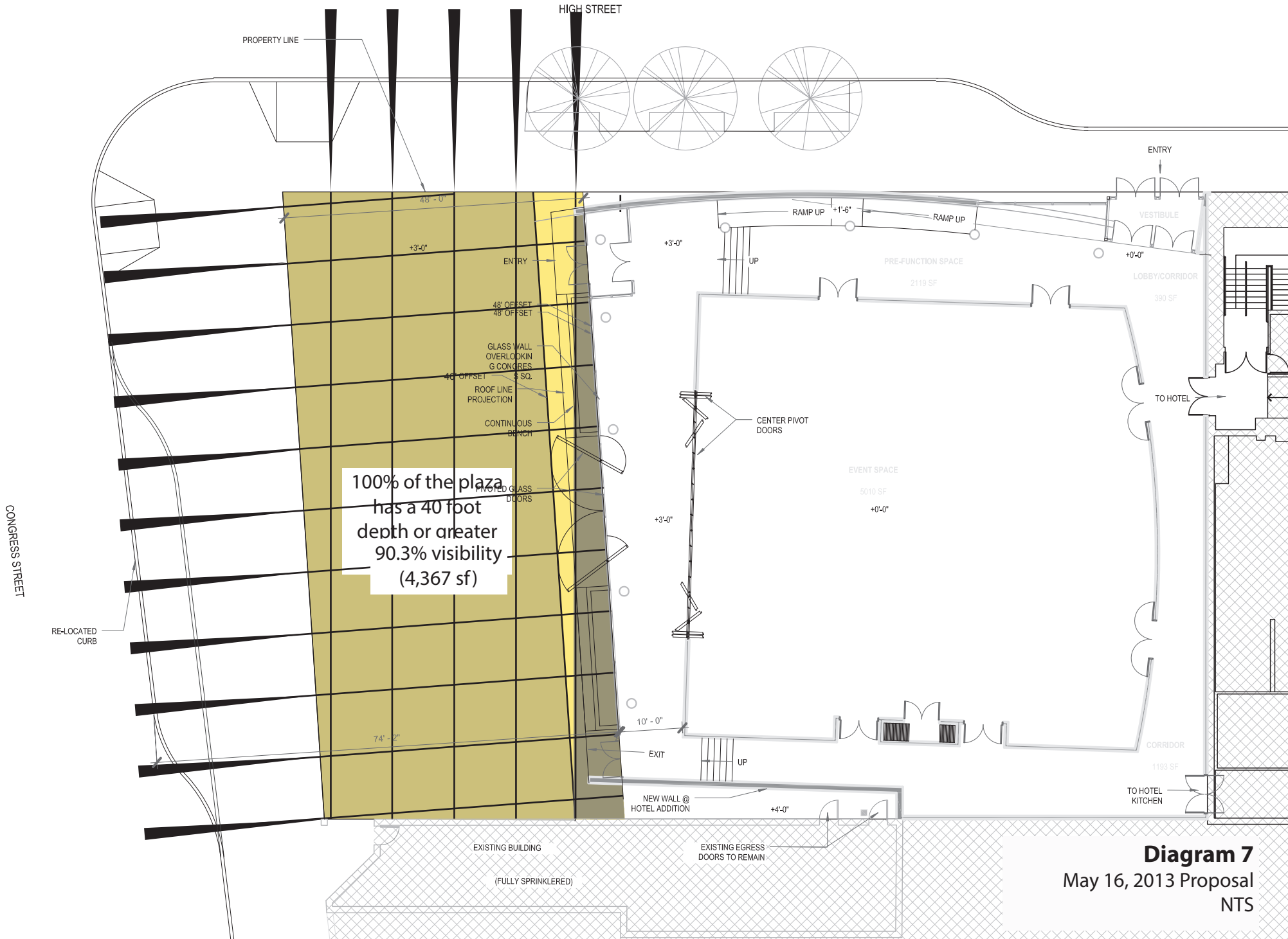


Diagram 7
 May 16, 2013 Proposal
 NTS