

### **Program Summary:**

Historic renovation and restoration of a 1960 Mid-Century Modern Theater for an Abbey and Seminary College listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Program Statement:**

This Mid-Century Modern Abbey and Seminary College stands as a testament to theological education, nurturing both students and seminarians alike, fostering their intellectual and spiritual growth.

The building underwent a transformative renovation in response to various significant factors: a catastrophic flood in 2016, a notable increase in enrollment in 2009, and long-term deferred maintenance. In response, our team sensitively addressed all storm-related damages while reimagining the space to better reflect the institution's mission.

Built in the late 1950's and recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the theater was thoughtfully restored to now accommodate academic lectures, musical performances, graduations, and other events while honoring its original architectural details. Additionally, the space was strategically reimagined to include expanded restrooms to meet current plumbing codes, an expanded lobby, creation of a new gift shop / monastic museum, and a welcome center for visitors.

Coordination with regulatory authorities was crucial, as the theater qualified for federal and state historic tax credit programs. By preserving the original mid-century campus features, we have not only returned the space to its intended use but also enhanced its functionality and restored its historic significance.

# RR-290.01

Building Area: (sf)  
**10,175 SF**

Cost per Square Foot:  
**\$219.91**

Construction Cost  
**\$2,237,562**

Date of Completion:  
**March 21, 2023**



c. 1960

# RR-290.02

## INTRODUCTION

Originally designed by a renowned New Orleans Architect, this Mid-Century Modern Abbey and Seminary College stands as a testament to theological education, nurturing both students and seminarians, fostering their intellectual and spiritual growth.

In 2009, the Owner embarked on a strategic plan, resulting in a notable increase in enrollment and subsequent demand for enhancements to its existing academic infrastructure built in the late 1950s. Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the structures had fallen behind contemporary standards, no longer adequately supporting their occupants and failing to reflect the dignified mission of the institution as a whole.



c. 1960





# RR-290.03

## CATASTROPHIC FLOODING

In 2016, a catastrophic flood inundated the entire campus, causing substantial water damage to the historic theater. The building's interior faced additional stress due to insensitive repairs by a previous disaster recovery team, nearly compromising its historic integrity.

Given the compounded issues of deferred maintenance and exacerbated water damage in the outdated facility, the Owner chose to undertake a comprehensive renovation to enhance the campus environment for its occupants.



# RR-290.04

## A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH

Our design directives encompassed a multi-faceted approach:

1. Sensitive addressing all storm-related damages.
2. Transforming the existing theater into a state-of-the-art lecture hall, enhancing its capabilities for musical performances, graduations, and other related events.
3. Reimagining the theater building to meet the demands of 21st-century theological education.
4. Coordinating seamlessly with key authorities, including FEMA, Federal and State Historic Tax Credit programs, and the National Register of Historic Places, to ensure successful implementation.





# RR-290.05

## INTERIOR DAMAGES

The theater's interior, damaged by the inadequacies of a previous disaster recovery team's effort, remained in an unusable state at the outset of our project. Extensive testing revealed the presence of asbestos, prompting a thorough abatement and remediation process. The entire theater ceiling had to be replaced.

This posed a new challenge: our team had to rectify the shortcomings of prior renovations, address additional interior damage, and sensitively preserve the space's intrinsic character. Additionally, the theater's eligibility for federal and state historic tax credit programs necessitated meticulous coordination with regulatory agencies.





Before



# RR-290.06

## EXTERIOR RENOVATION & RESTORATION

The existing façade underwent new grout tuckpointing, while the original exterior signage was meticulously restored.

Existing glazing was removed and replaced with Guardian Ultra Clear Sun Guard SNX62/27 glass. The curtainwall replacement required matching of the profiles to the original glazing system.

Compliance with FEMA regulations mandated the installation of elevated platforms for HVAC units, discreetly screened to preserve the uninterrupted view of the building's south elevation.

The exterior pre-cast concrete wall panels were restored and waterproofed, with special attention given to reconstructing all joints between panels to faithfully replicate the original detailing.

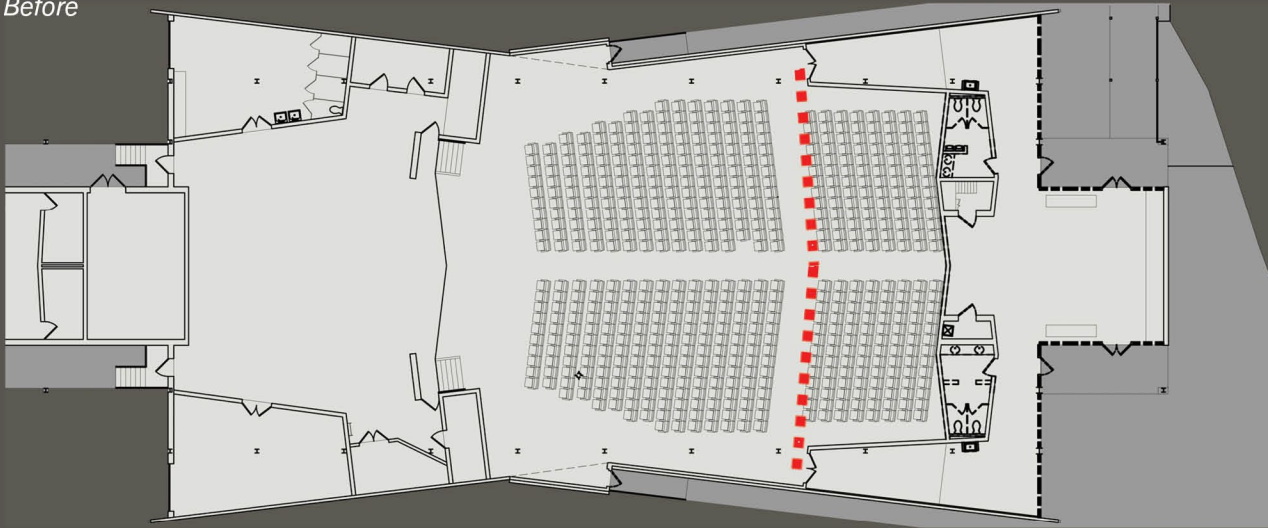
After



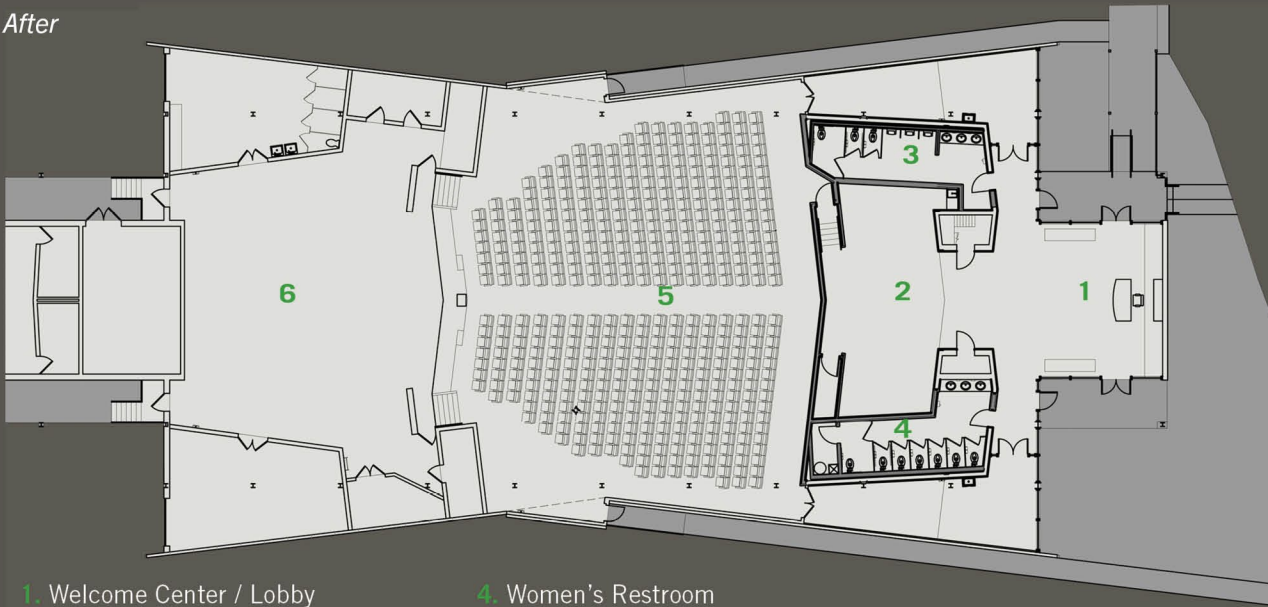
After



Before



After



- 1. Welcome Center / Lobby
- 2. Lobby Extension / Exhibit Space
- 3. Men's Restroom

- 4. Women's Restroom
- 5. Auditorium - 450 Seats
- 6. Stage

11,616 square feet

# RR-290.07

## STRATEGIC RECONFIGURATION OF THE THEATER

The original 614-seat theater was disjointed, lacking cohesion and failing to support its intended purpose.

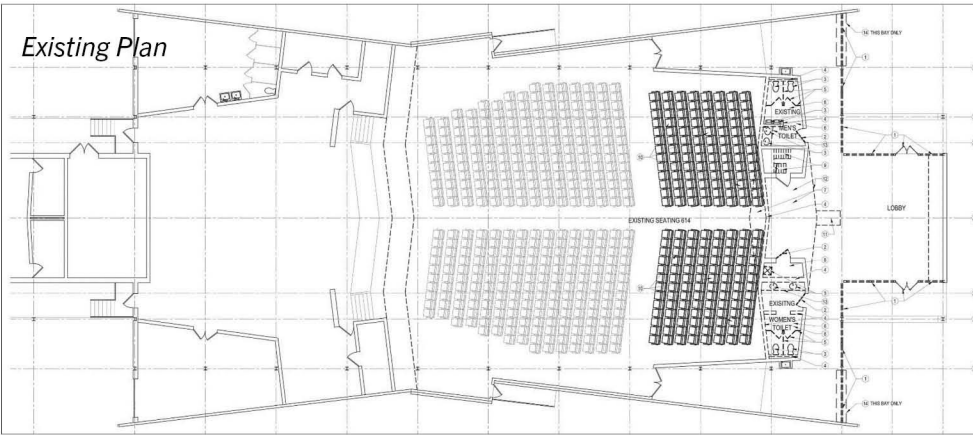
Collaborating closely with the community, we determined an optimal seating capacity aligned with the institution's needs, resulting in a reduction to 450 seats.

This deliberate reduction fosters a more intimate atmosphere within the auditorium, thereby enriching the overall experience for attendees.

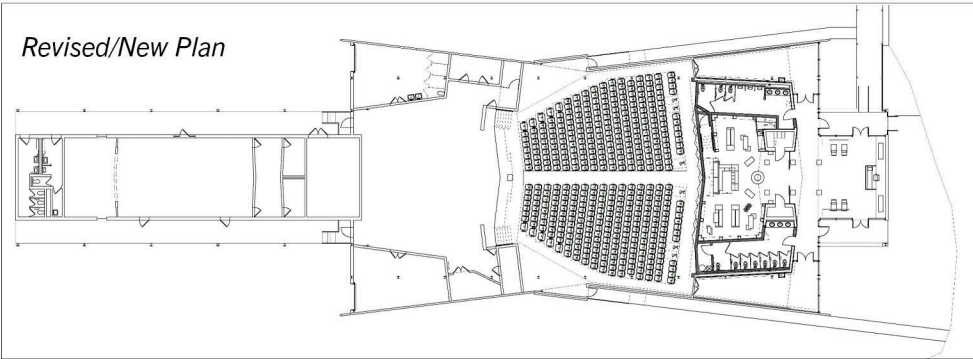
By scaling down the seating capacity, we were able to allocate space for upgraded bathrooms, a new exhibit area, a visitor center, a gift shop, and a museum, enhancing the facility's amenities and functionality.



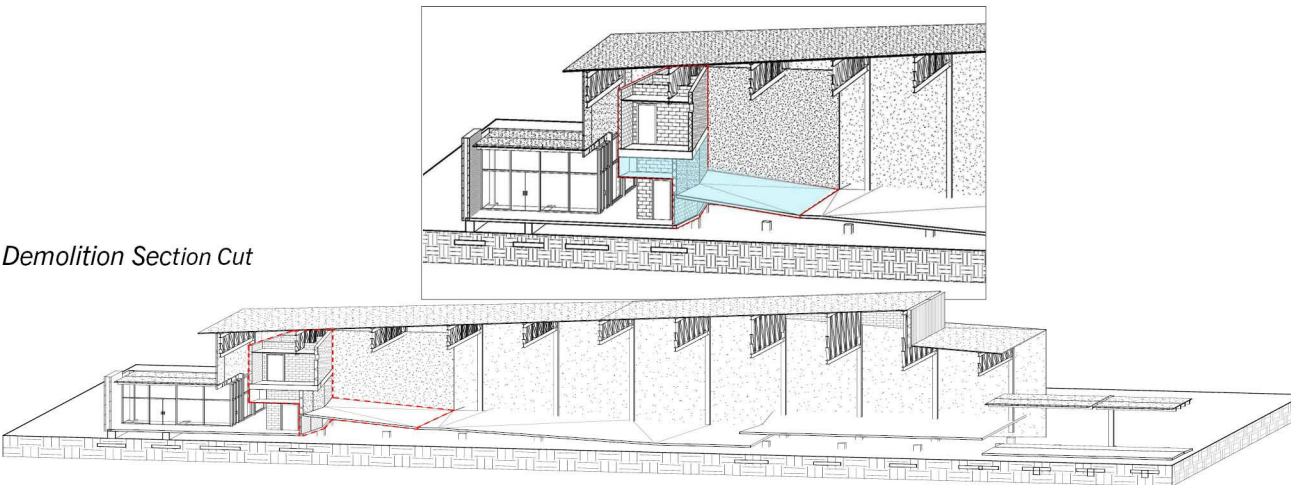
*Existing Plan*



*Revised/New Plan*



*Demolition Section Cut*



# RR-290.08

## STRATEGIC RECONFIGURATION OF THE THEATER

There were an inadequate number of restroom facilities in the theater – only four toilets servicing the 614-seat hall.

In adherence to the National Plumbing Code and to address this deficiency, the upper rake of the auditorium was removed, the rear wall was moved forward, and a new slab on grade was added to support the expansion.

The former projection room was preserved and repurposed to accommodate storage and the mechanical room. The angular profile of the wall remains.

Comprehensive improvements were made to lighting and audiovisual systems throughout the facility, enhancing both functionality and ambiance.



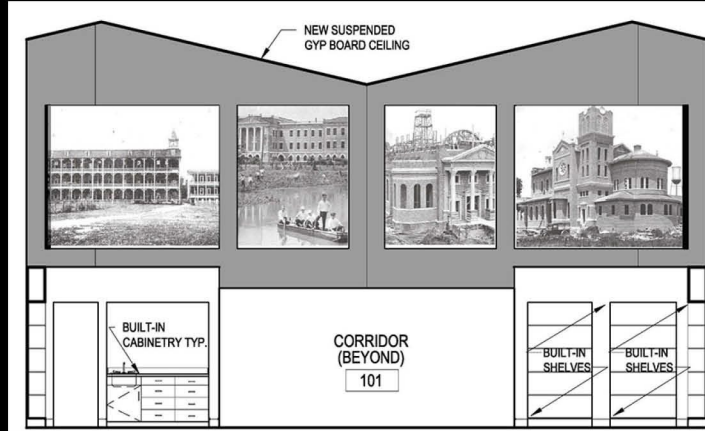
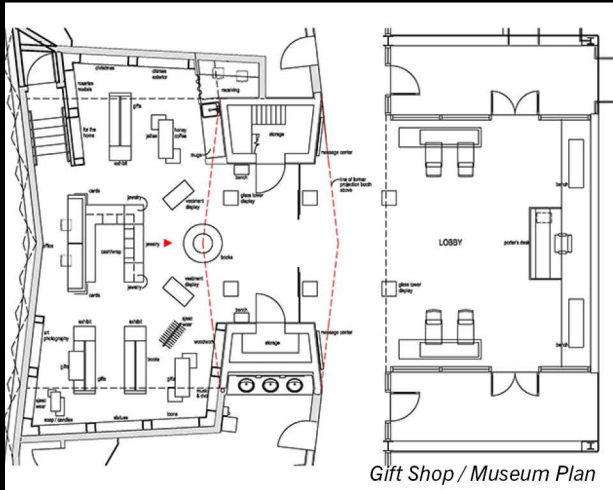


# RR-290.09

## GIFT SHOP & MONASTIC MUSEUM

The newfound space presented an exciting opportunity for the inclusion of a gift shop and monastic museum.

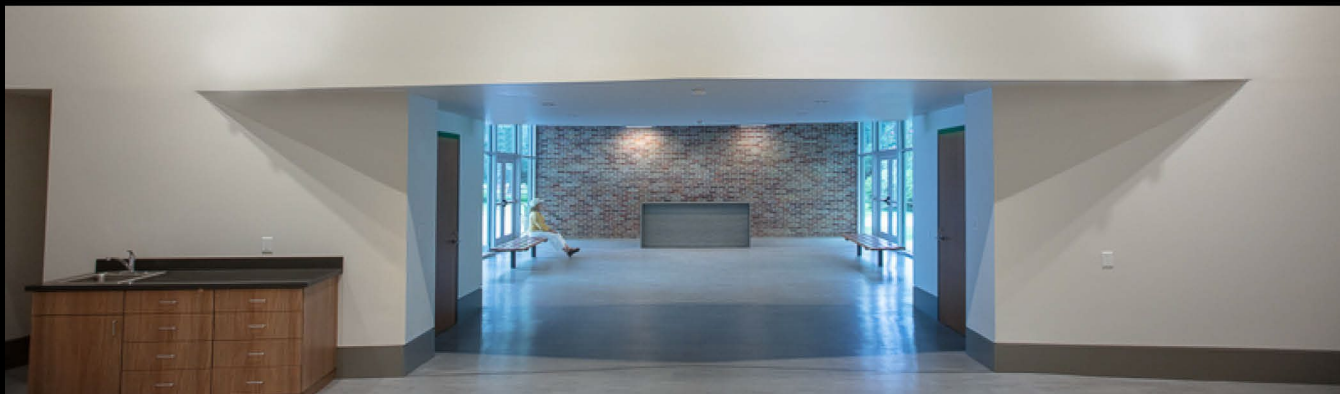
Within the gift shop and museum, the upper walls will be utilized to showcase historical photographs accompanied by text descriptions placed at eye level, providing visitors with an immersive and educational experience.



## EXHIBITION DESIGN

Inspired by state-of-the-art retail environments and exhibits at The Met, we designed the ceiling in the space to reflect and mirror the same profile as the theater.

New task and flood lighting enhances merchandise displays and exhibits.





Before



Before



After

# RR-290.10

## LOBBY INTERIOR RENOVATIONS

In the lobby, LVT flooring was installed throughout, complementing the original restored lobby benches.

Supplementary to the existing entry doors, new glass doors were introduced to provide enhanced acoustic insulation during lectures or performances.

These upgrades not only improve the visual interest but also contribute to a more seamless flow of traffic and an organic sequence of movement, enhancing the overall visitor experience within the building.



After





## RR-290.11

### MID-CENTURY ACOUSTICS

New lighting fixtures and an acoustical ceiling, consistent with the design language of the other renovations on the campus, further enhances the ambiance and functionality of the space.

Additional acoustic panels were incorporated, featuring an expanded panel design inspired by the mid-century modern aesthetics prevalent in the campus buildings of the 1960s.

Existing concrete plant containers were restored and remain within the lobby area.



# RR-290.12

## THE THEATER

After exploring all available options to rectify the water damage to the original wood slats, which were improperly repaired by the previous disaster recovery team, we trimmed the damaged bottom portion while delicately preserving and restoring the salvageable remainder.

A comprehensive new audio-visual system, including a 20'-0" screen integrated into the stage and supported in the fly loft, was installed.

Collaborating closely with acoustical and audio-visual engineers, the design team developed a distinctive deflective sound surface featuring pyramidal shapes to redirect sound towards the appropriate absorption panels.





# RR-290.13

## A BEACON OF RESILIENCE: A STATE-OF-THE-ART LECTURE & PERFORMANCE HALL

By preserving the original mid-century campus features, we have not only returned the space to its intended use but also enhanced its functionality and restored its historic significance.

The monastic community of the Benedictine Abbey treasure this building and recently debuted the reopening by hosting its 2023 seminary graduation.

The monks will soon be featuring a debut concert event with a brother monk's piano performance of J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations, which he has previously recorded on CD. This monk, currently back in the recording studio, is recognized worldwide as one of the best performers of Bach's piano compositions.

