



# MAURICE ABRAVANEL HALL

MASTER PLANNING DOCUMENT  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

14 MAY 2024

PREPARED BY: SPARANO+MOONEY  
ARCHITECTURE

FOR:  SALT LAKE  
COUNTY

## ABRAVANEL HALL HISTORY

Maurice Abravanel Hall is an architectural, acoustic, and artistic landmark in downtown Salt Lake City. Created as part of the 1975 Bicentennial Bond approved by voters, Abravanel Hall opened in 1979 to great acclaim. Designed by local firm FFKR with acoustics by acclaimed acoustician Dr. Cyril Harris, Abravanel Hall is the home of the renowned Utah Symphony.

Since its opening, the programming in the Hall has expanded beyond traditional symphony performances. Still the home of the Symphony, it now also functions as a live event space for both acoustic and amplified performances, including spoken-word events, pops concerts, films, and other events.

Over time, venue staff and users have identified significant renovations needed to address modern accessibility requirements, aging infrastructure, upgrades to essential building systems, technology enhancements, and additional space for patrons and presenters. The County has worked closely with the Symphony and other stakeholders on several major projects to improve the venue without compromising the architecture or acoustics.

- 1998 – Two-story addition including patron restrooms, a ticket office, and the First Tier Room, a heavily-used reception space.
- 2008 – An Abravanel Hall Lobby renovation was one of 19 recommended projects in the County's first Cultural Facilities Master Plan.
- 2011 – Installed a new sound system in the hall to enhance and improve amplified symphony and spoken-word performance acoustics.
- 2015 – Renovated outdoor plaza to complement original architecture to address public safety after finding several unrepairable water leaks under the fountain.
- 2016-17 – Lobby renovations to address accessibility and lobby circulation, including installing a new escalator, carpet replacement, and reconfiguring the concessions, merchandise, and customer service counters.

From 2013 to 2016, Salt Lake County worked with the Utah Symphony, HKS Architects, and other stakeholders, including a representative from the original architect FFKR, to create a masterplan for the venue's future over the next 50 years. The plan outlined various projects that could be completed in any order, depending on urgency, priority, and funding availability. However, while it identified several necessary upgrades, it did not fully address essential issues such as improving venue accessibility, addressing key safety and maintenance concerns, and upgrading technology to support the growing variety of live events.

In response to the changing landscape of live events, especially post-COVID, and to address pressing facility infrastructure, accessibility, support space design, system and technology needs, the County enlisted Sparano + Mooney Architecture in 2023 to update the Abravanel Hall masterplan and provide a more complete vision for how the hall can better serve our artists and patrons in the next 50 years. This updated masterplan includes a comprehensive series of recommendations aimed at guiding Abravanel Hall into the future.



## PROCESS OVERVIEW

The masterplan team was led by Salt Lake County and included:

- Sparano+Mooney Architecture and their consulting team, including Theatre Projects and Kirkegard Acoustics, both internationally-renowned experts in their fields.
- Utah Symphony | Utah Opera – Primary resident of Abravanel Hall and key stakeholder in defining current and future needs of the hall.
- Salt Lake County Arts + Culture – Operator of Abravanel Hall with primary responsibility for venue scheduling, event and technical management, and day-to-day operations and maintenance.
- Salt Lake County Community Services Department – Liaison with County Facilities, Arts + Culture, and Mayor’s Office.
- Salt Lake County Facilities Department – Oversight and management of County facilities for code compliance and construction and renovation projects.

This team reviewed existing building systems, technology, and front- and back-of-house spaces; studied previous masterplans and project plans; and conducted an extensive acoustic study. We also conducted comprehensive community outreach sessions with key stakeholders. This vital information we collected along with relevant industry standards and best practices informs the priorities of this 2024 Abravanel Hall Masterplan and the measures of success for future planning and design.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We conducted extensive community outreach with Abravanel Hall stakeholders including:

- Utah Symphony staff, musicians, and board
- UMOCA and the Salt Palace with whom the Hall shares space, utilities, a loading dock, and significant visitor overlap
- Regular and potential users of Abravanel Hall, including commercial and nonprofit clients
- Arts & Culture staff
- Abravanel Hall neighbors – businesses, residents, and other organizations
- Key community stakeholders

We held in-person focus groups, interviews, venue and acoustical tours, and virtual listening sessions designed to gather vital insights from these key stakeholders. Comprehensive online surveys were conducted with those who were unable to attend in-person sessions. At each meeting we conducted Strength, Weakness, Threats, and Opportunity (SWOT) assessments to build a baseline understanding and ensuing discussions focused on both the presenter experience and the patron experience inside the Hall, including the questions of what works well, what isn’t working, and what is missing?

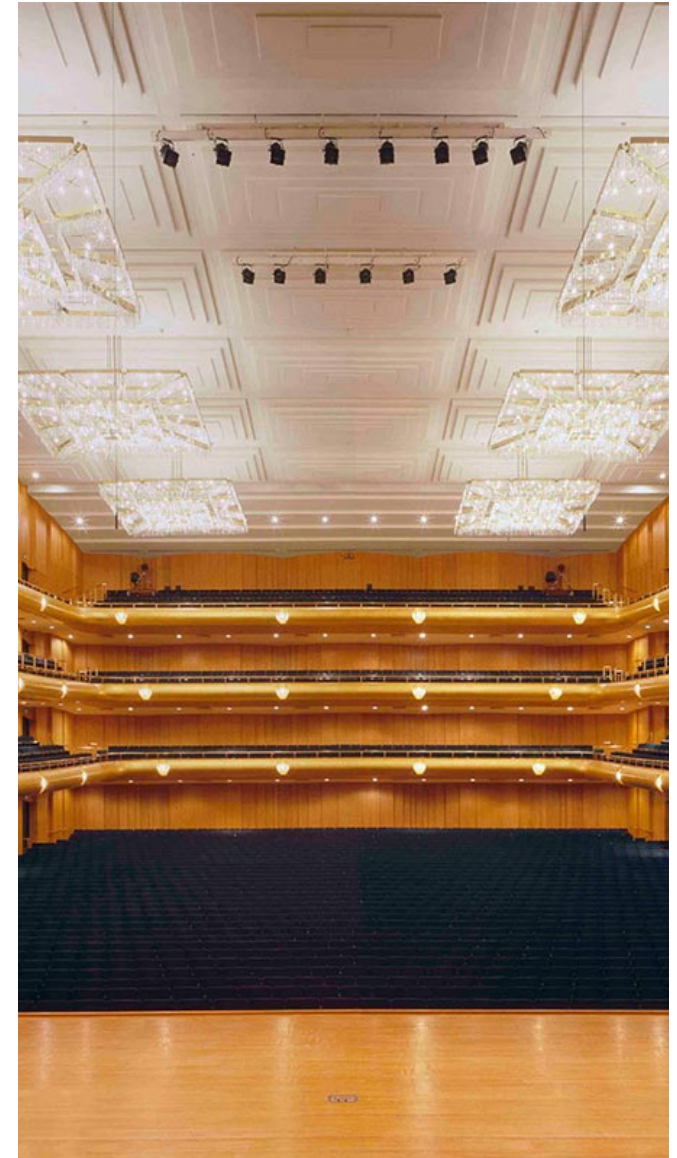
All of the findings, including meeting notes, SWOT analyses, and survey results, are included in the appendices of the 2024 Master Plan (2024 Plan).



## KEY FINDINGS

Several key themes emerged through the community outreach process and are summarized below. These themes guide the masterplan direction and recommendations.

- 1** Acoustics for unamplified sound are a defining feature, key enhancements are needed to address:
  - Inconsistent sound across the stage for musicians
  - Inconsistent sound for patrons in the hall, especially on the first and second tiers
  - Amplified sound is challenging, adding enhanced deployable acoustic curtains would significantly improve sound
- 2** A key strength of Abravanel Hall is its location in the downtown core. The location can be leveraged to welcome new audiences, artists, producers and presenters, although significant challenges exist for connectivity to adjacent amenities, facilities and services, such as the Salt Palace and UMOCA.
- 3** Abravanel Hall is often seen as exclusive or “not a place for me” by both patrons and potential users. It is important to use the architecture and design to engage the community and demonstrate that the venue is an inclusive and vital cultural asset in our community.
- 4** As currently designed, the building presents significant design challenges and certain building systems are in need of replacement and/or upgrades to meet accessibility, safety, and the needs or current and future performances and patrons.
  - Accessibility is a particular concern. It is important that the venue is brought up to current ADA standards to meet accessibility codes and best practices for all community members.
  - Many key facility systems are approaching or have surpassed their useful life or no longer meet current safety standards. Systems need replacement or upgrades to avoid significant and costly operational disruptions.
  - The venue’s current technology does not support modern symphony, presenter, or patron needs and expectations, and limits the types of events that could be presented.
- 5** The backstage and lobby spaces are significantly undersized for the types of support needed for modern presenters and performances and do not provide adequate room for artists, staff, and other event needs. The lobby size limits patron circulation and space for patron amenities (concessions, merchandise, pre-show lobby activities, etc.), and the *Olympic Tower* sculpture by Dale Chihuly occupies a large footprint in the space. Renovation options should be considered to allow it to complement the lobby without hindering patron circulation.
- 6** The existing venue wayfinding and patron circulation is outdated and needs to be updated to meet modern standards for improved circulation and to allow clear messaging for the patron experience, supporting brand messages, and promoting upcoming shows/events, and should be designed to support the County’s diversifying population.
- 7** The plaza is underutilized given its prominence as a downtown public space. A physical reconfiguration of the outdoor plaza could help engage (and connect the building with) the community, people attending events, and passers-by, as well as make active and passive activations both effective and feasible.



# PROJECT SCOPE OVERVIEW

This masterplan builds upon previous planning efforts, consolidates proposed projects into five functional areas, and prioritizes accessibility and safety, building systems and maintenance, and technology and infrastructure to address the new realities of live entertainment in the post-COVID era.

| BUILDING SYSTEMS   | PERFORMANCE HALL  | FRONT OF HOUSE  | BACK OF HOUSE  | SITE + PLAZA  |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install fire suppression system to meet code requirements</li> <li>• Update HVAC systems and disconnect portions from Salt Palace based on detailed HVAC study</li> <li>• Modernize access controls to address significant safety and security issues</li> <li>• Upgrade lighting throughout building to energy-efficient LED fixtures</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update accessibility to current ADA standards for people with disabilities and improve seating</li> <li>• Add forestage lifts and seat wagons to significantly improve speed and reduce costs of turnovers</li> <li>• Upgrade production infrastructure and capabilities including screen projection, amplified sound, and video capture</li> <li>• Integrate retractable curtains in the auditorium to improve acoustics for amplified performances and improve speed of deployment</li> <li>• Lightly modify walls and proscenium zone to improve orchestral hearing conditions and patron listening experience</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update and increase restroom facilities to better serve patrons</li> <li>• Add new elevators for improved accessibility to the tier levels</li> <li>• Expand and reconfigure lobby to improve pedestrian flow, accessibility, and wayfinding</li> <li>• Reorganize service counter to allow for alcohol service and to solve patron flow issues</li> <li>• Add and expand ancillary event spaces for better audience engagement and rental opportunities</li> <li>• Improve overall visibility and community connection</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfigure loading dock and fix non-compliant floor slopes</li> <li>• Update and expand back-of-house support spaces to better accommodate musicians, guest artists, chorus, etc.</li> <li>• Update and expand A+C venue staff and Resident office spaces for modern staffing needs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve production and programming capabilities of the plaza</li> <li>• Improve upon current east plaza landscaping and provide places for informal activities</li> <li>• Introduce connectivity to the Salt Palace from Abravanel Hall, including the addition of a shared event space on the roof of UMOCA</li> <li>• Improve overall visibility and community connection of campus</li> </ul> |

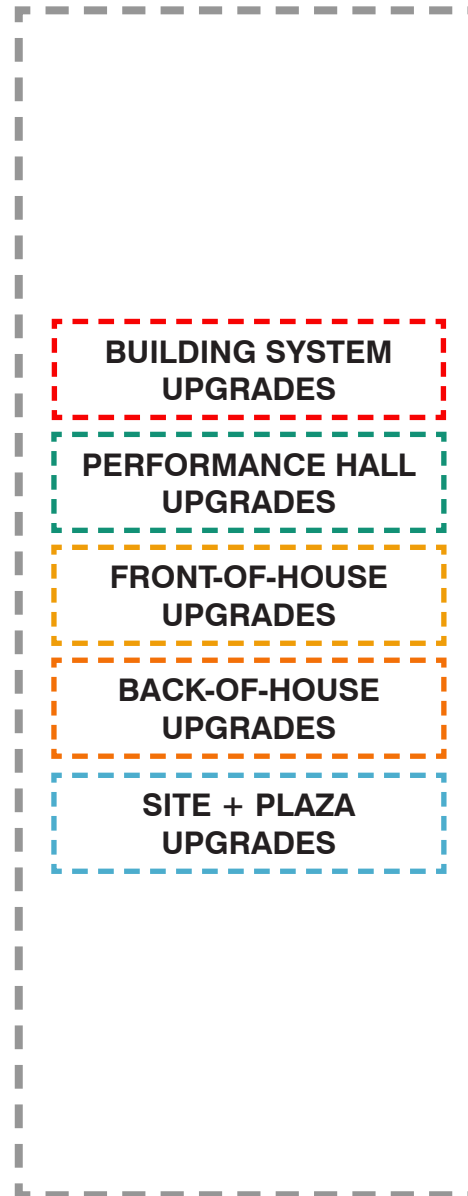
## PROJECT PHASING

The 2024 Plan recommends completing the necessary work at Abravanel Hall simultaneously, to minimize disruption to the Symphony and to maximize construction efficiency and cost effectiveness. Projects are categorized in specific project areas, but many projects impact two or more categories. In contrast, the 2016 Plan divided renovations into smaller, non-sequential projects. Although this approach tackled urgent problems, it didn't fully address the Hall's fundamental issues.

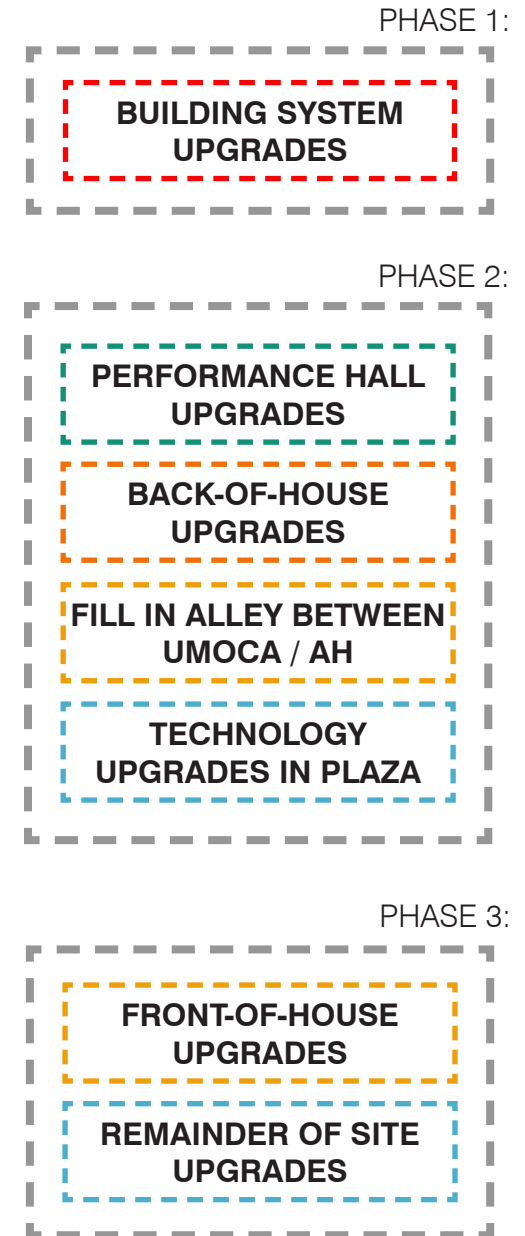
If a phased approach is necessary, a proposed sequence is outlined below:

1. For every major phase of construction, there will be separate mobilization costs that are not included in the estimates contained within this document.
2. If the projects are broken into phases, this structuring may increase the amount of time Utah Symphony will be displaced from the Hall during construction and the venue cannot be rented out at all to other frequent users.
3. The most likely staging area for construction will be the plaza, which would require it to be rebuilt after each separate construction effort. Alternatively, "just-in-time" material management practices would need to be implemented, or the County would need to secure an off-site staging area for the duration of construction. Each of these scenarios has its own cost implications beyond the estimates within this document.
4. Some of the work required for one construction phase may overlap with work required in a different phase, and splitting the work required will cause inefficiencies. For example, fixing the front-of-house ADA access in the auditorium also requires new accessible ramps to be constructed in the back-of-house areas of the building.
5. The public perception of money spent versus incremental public improvements will need to be coordinated across all phases.

### RECOMMENDED APPROACH:



### PHASED APPROACH:



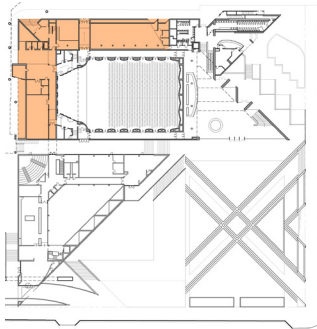
# COST PROJECTIONS

To maintain flexibility for future work, cost estimates are divided into multiple items, with detailed estimates provided in the narrative. The main cost categories are: (1) Performance and Performance Spaces; (2) Front-of-House Upgrades and Additions; (3) Event Space Addition; (4) Alley Infill; and (5) Plaza Upgrades.

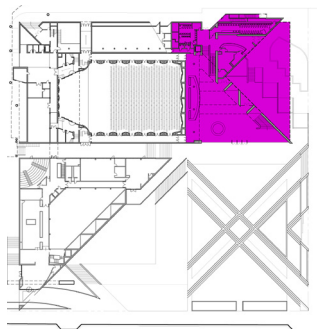
These estimates do not include expenses for a phased construction approach or any seismic upgrades. For budgetary purposes, a 10% increase should be expected for seismic costs. For accurate seismic estimates, Tier 2 and 3 seismic analyses are necessary.

|         |                               |  |              |             |
|---------|-------------------------------|--|--------------|-------------|
| GROUP 1 | PERFORMER + PERFORMANCE SPACE | Back-of-house demo and upgrades                | \$52,505,000 | \$744/gsf   |
|         |                               | Performance hall                               | \$58,390,000 | \$1,753/gsf |
| GROUP 2 | FRONT-OF-HOUSE + ADDITION     | Option A: expand lobby into north plaza        | \$66,075,000 | \$1,427/gsf |
|         |                               | Option B: expand lobby into east plaza         | \$44,975,000 | \$2,405/gsf |
| GROUP 3 | EVENT SPACE ADDITION          | Option A: event space as third tier room       | \$6,150,000  | \$1,130/gsf |
|         |                               | Option B: event space on UMOCA rooftop         | \$18,395,000 | \$1,374/gsf |
| GROUP 4 | ALLEY INFILL                  | Fill in alley between UMOCA and Abravanel Hall | \$25,905,000 | \$1,080/gsf |
| GROUP 5 | PLAZA UPGRADES                | Technology upgrades only                       | \$2,050,000  | --          |
|         |                               | Full plaza rework (includes technology)        | \$16,310,000 | --          |

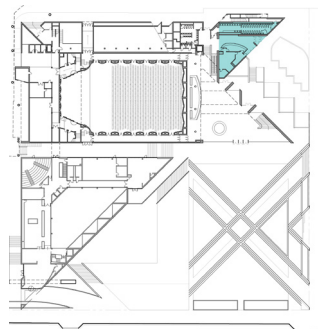
GROUP 1:



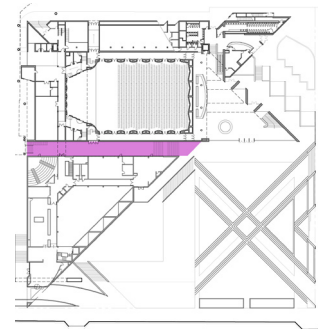
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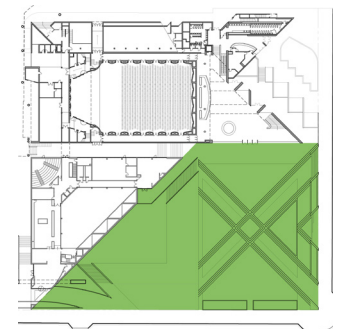
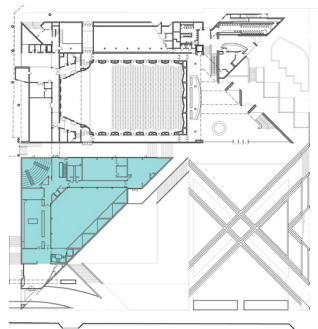
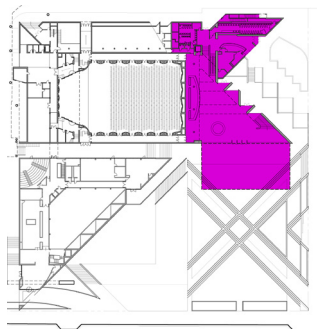
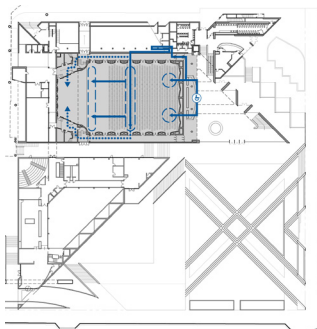
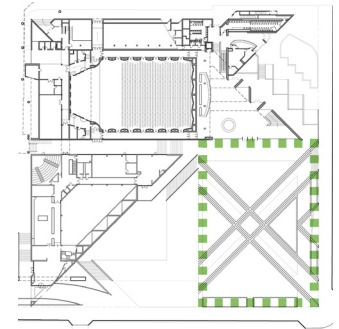
GROUP 3:



GROUP 4:



GROUP 5:



# SUSTAINABILITY

In accordance with Salt Lake County Design Guidelines, the facility should be geared to achieve or contribute towards meeting the requirements of a minimum Gold certification under the USGBC LEED BD+C Rating System.

All building systems will be designed for the best possible efficiency and performance, and architectural elements will be carefully considered to comply with LEED requirements.

It is anticipated that the project will pursue, at minimum, the following LEED credits to achieve the required certification:



## LEED v4.1 BD+C Project Checklist

| Y        | ?         | N        |                                    |  |           |
|----------|-----------|----------|------------------------------------|--|-----------|
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Integrative Process                          | 1         |
| <b>0</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>Location and Transportation</b> |  | <b>16</b> |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | LEED for Neighborhood Development Location   | 16        |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Sensitive Land Protection                    | 1         |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | High Priority Site and Equitable Development | 2         |
|          | 4         |          | Credit                             | Surrounding Density and Diverse Uses         | 5         |
|          | 5         |          | Credit                             | Access to Quality Transit                    | 5         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Bicycle Facilities                           | 1         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Reduced Parking Footprint                    | 1         |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | Electric Vehicles                            | 1         |
| <b>0</b> | <b>7</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>Sustainable Sites</b>           |  | <b>10</b> |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Construction Activity Pollution Prevention   | Required  |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Site Assessment                              | 1         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Protect or Restore Habitat                   | 2         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Open Space                                   | 1         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Rainwater Management                         | 3         |
|          | 2         |          | Credit                             | Heat Island Reduction                        | 2         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Light Pollution Reduction                    | 1         |
| <b>0</b> | <b>9</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>Water Efficiency</b>            |  | <b>11</b> |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Outdoor Water Use Reduction                  | Required  |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Indoor Water Use Reduction                   | Required  |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Building-Level Water Metering                | Required  |
|          | 2         |          | Credit                             | Outdoor Water Use Reduction                  | 2         |
|          | 6         |          | Credit                             | Indoor Water Use Reduction                   | 6         |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | Optimize Process Water Use                   | 2         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Water Metering                               | 1         |
| <b>0</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>Energy and Atmosphere</b>       |  | <b>33</b> |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Fundamental Commissioning and Verification   | Required  |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Minimum Energy Performance                   | Required  |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Building-Level Energy Metering               | Required  |
| Y        |           |          | Prereq                             | Fundamental Refrigerant Management           | Required  |
|          | 6         |          | Credit                             | Enhanced Commissioning                       | 6         |
|          | 18        |          | Credit                             | Optimize Energy Performance                  | 18        |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Advanced Energy Metering                     | 1         |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | Grid Harmonization                           | 2         |
|          |           |          | Credit                             | Renewable Energy                             | 5         |
|          | 1         |          | Credit                             | Enhanced Refrigerant Management              | 1         |

Project Name:  
Date:

| 0 | 11 | 0 | <b>Materials and Resources</b> |  | <b>13</b> |
|---|----|---|--------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Y |    |   | Prereq                         | Storage and Collection of Recyclables        | Required  |
|   | 3  |   | Credit                         | Building Life-Cycle Impact Reduction         | 5         |
|   | 2  |   | Credit                         | Environmental Product Declarations           | 2         |
|   | 2  |   | Credit                         | Sourcing of Raw Materials                    | 2         |
|   | 2  |   | Credit                         | Material Ingredients                         | 2         |
|   | 2  |   | Credit                         | Construction and Demolition Waste Management | 2         |

| 0 | 11 | 0 | <b>Indoor Environmental Quality</b> |   | <b>16</b> |
|---|----|---|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Y |    |   | Prereq                              | Minimum Indoor Air Quality Performance          | Required  |
| Y |    |   | Prereq                              | Environmental Tobacco Smoke Control             | Required  |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Enhanced Indoor Air Quality Strategies          | 2         |
|   | 3  |   | Credit                              | Low-Emitting Materials                          | 3         |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Construction Indoor Air Quality Management Plan | 1         |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Indoor Air Quality Assessment                   | 2         |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Thermal Comfort                                 | 1         |
|   | 2  |   | Credit                              | Interior Lighting                               | 2         |
|   |    |   | Credit                              | Daylight  | 3         |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Quality Views                                   | 1         |
|   | 1  |   | Credit                              | Acoustic Performance                            | 1         |

| 0 | 1 | 0 | <b>Innovation</b> |                              | <b>6</b> |
|---|---|---|-------------------|------------------------------|----------|
|   |   |   | Credit            | Innovation                   | 5        |
|   | 1 |   | Credit            | LEED Accredited Professional | 1        |

| 0 | 1 | 0 | <b>Regional Priority</b> |  | <b>4</b> |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|--|----------|
|   | 1 |   | Credit                   | Regional Priority: Access to Quality Transit | 1        |
|   |   |   | Credit                   | Regional Priority: Specific Credit           | 1        |
|   |   |   | Credit                   | Regional Priority: Specific Credit           | 1        |
|   |   |   | Credit                   | Regional Priority: Specific Credit           | 1        |

| 0 | 79 | 0 | <b>TOTALS</b> |  | Possible Points: <b>110</b> |
|---|----|---|---------------|--|-----------------------------|
|---|----|---|---------------|--|-----------------------------|

**Certified:** 40 to 49 points,  
**Silver:** 50 to 59 points,  
**Gold:** 60 to 79 points,  
**Platinum:** 80 to 110