

Boston city hall analysis essay

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Designed by Gerhard M. Kallmann, Noel Michael McKinnell and Edward F. Knowles, Boston City Hall, City Hall Plaza, is one of Boston's landmarks with a futuristic and permanence architectural form depicted by the thick poured concrete and hard blocks which combine to produce a strong blocky structure. Built in the 1960's, it is one of the architectural structures that combine elements of imagery to the public and formal elements without leaving out the historical allusion. The design of this structure depicts the attempt to create a lively city plaza and a building form that would represent: both in visual design and the individual structural component and organization of the building interiors, the government and in a humanistic and appealing fashion, become an architecture for the general public.

Apart from obvious inspiration from works such as those of Le Corbusier and Louis I. Kahn, Boston City Hall does not easily portray its visual meaning. It may require looking beyond the thick, big, heavy and "brutal" volumes of concrete and taking note of the subtle and metamorphic elements with characteristics from classical, renaissance, medieval and even ancient architecture. This is clearly understood with actual and prevalent moments inside the building itself.

The Boston City Hall Square is laid out in a trapezoid form of plan with red brick as a surface. The continuity of the plane of the square is interrupted vertically by variegating levels and stairs. It seems that the building changes its superposition relative to the place where the visitor is standing. Alteration of levels expresses itself with staircase leading to the Faneuil Hall, sloping terrain and setbacks.

The form of the building possesses a versatile detail of shifting and fluctuating volumes of concrete masses. Based on the plans, elevations and structural view, one could say that it was a rectangle that went through a process of refining, conversion, pushing, pulling and stacking. This is in essence what Kallman called an “action architecture”

It is evident the intention of portrayed by the architect work was to create an urban pedestrian walkway which would also encompass a lively and appealing city plaza. The program of the building follows a complicated form; the form is the representation of the objective. (In this sense, it can be pointed out that Luis I. Kahn and his works inspire the logic.) Evidently seen in the sloping terrain with the first two floors buried under the ground. This is the location of all the mechanical and computer spaces –and hidden away from public eyes. The second and third floors are the ones frequently used by the public. All of the ceremonial spaces, like council chamber, Council Offices and Mayor’s office project out of the facade underlying their importance.

When it comes to plan, Boston City Hall seems monumental. How the outer sections of the building are divided and partitioned, helps understand the building from an analytical point of view. The truth is that Boston City Hall is supposed to be viewed from a distance or analyzed by fragments.

Looking at the massing of the building, the idea of a Greek column comes into the mind, the brick part being the, the body of the building the shaft and the top, sculptural part with brise soleil is the cornice.

Observation of the elevation brings to mind a lack of garnish but with indepth, it is evident that the ornamentation is present and further suggests a double meaning of the architectural design approach. The rectangular, slightly carved-in, purely decorative elements on the horizontal portions of the “ cornice” prove the hypothesis of Greek antiquity inspiration.

Entrance to the building is vividly marked and visible from the T- station. While in front of the entrance, a very clear view of the building helps to see further into the building and this gives an opportunity to discover the volumes and voids layed out beneath the huge masses of concrete Columns. From the distance, the city hall is a compacted mass but with actual visit to the structure and keen observation of the building, it is evidently revealed that the mass is not as compacted as but there is indeed porosity in the mass. With these observations, certain thoughts croos the mind, one, that the architects involved were inspired by renaissance and medieval Italian squares by creating an arcade that also serves as a view frame looking onto the Faneuil Hall.

While walking the building along the edge of the Congress Street one can observe the massive brick elements that meet the ground, creating a buffer between the street and the building. There is a point at the corner of Northeast portion of the Hall, where the building, disappears behind the brick wall. This monumental effect reminds of pylons of Egyptian temple or medieval city walls.

Bringing the analysis to the other side of the spectrum and thinking about the building differently than from a functional point of view, it's clearly

stipulated in some organic moves behind the brise soleil and also the brick base. On the border, with Czech Republic and Poland, there is a part of Telpicko-Adrszpackie range of mountains that is a vast rocky formation weathered by frequent floods. Water shapes the rock into various landforms: valleys, canyons and leaves an imprint of its level. The variations of levels, with which the brick is penetrating the building reminds of the same condition. As to brise soleil, its repetition and proportions resemble the cell organization in a plant tissue.

Boston City Hall, with its numerous meanings, metaphoric notions and direct representation of designing techniques and principles of Kahn and Le Corbusier is a definite landmark and a lively urban structure. Architects Kallmann, McKinnell and Knowles, succeed to combine both function and accessibility notwithstanding visual richness of the form. In that, Boston City Hall; serves its objective of a government building opened to those ready to get involved with it.

HOLYOKE CENTER

Holyoke center, Harvard square despite its size, encompasses within it a mixed-use complex of offices, shops, health center and parking and notwithstanding manages to have a human scale. The H-shaped high-rising structure is set back from Mount Auburn Street and Massachusetts Avenue to form small, nicely organized and pleasant pedestrian plazas which connect with the two-storey pedestrian way which runs through the site linking the two streets. The facades organized around a human-scaled mode of clear and also translucent panels; are placed by taking into concern the

needs of individual occupants of the offices inside. Fins, sunscreens and varied concrete finishes are vividly used to enrich the structure's form.

The Holyoke center, which is a complex comprising of shops, health centers, music stores, bookshops is organized in a manner in which every section of the structure is fully optimized to serve its purpose. The health deck is located in the fourth floor where it is well articulated behind the sunscreens to serve its purpose smoothly. The organization of program in the center is appropriately done in order to manage meeting the demanding nature of the complex. The seminar rooms are at the top of the buildings and the building comprises of an underground parking garage which serves conveniently for the customers doing their shopping, also for many who come to view the many attractions at Harvard square and the ones visiting the arcade.

Located around the Harvard square, Holyoke center is sited in a location where a lot of activity takes place. This is a site where not only a big number of learners frequent but also business people, tourists, patients and many other types of persons with different objectives and destinations. This is also a location where there is a busy network of roads. Basically, it is a site where many destinations converge. These combinations of factors give Holyoke center the perfect place for the complex activities.

Designed by Luis Sert, the ten-storey structural form of the Holyoke center is mainly comprised of a H-shaped concrete structure. One wing of the structure stretches from the Massachusetts Avenue to the Auburn Street. The central portion sets back from both Dunster Street and Holyoke Street. This structure consists of two glass main entrances to the building and an

underground parking. The structure's facades are designed in a manner in which the glass windows are spread randomly held by metal frames. The concrete building also has gone through several expansions since it was first constructed. This is due to its high-rise nature which was of cast-in-place concrete which could not hold it leading to crumbling in its initial years¹. This structure currently also encompasses the use of steel bars that run in all sides of the facades.

The materials used during the initial construction of Holyoke center were mainly concrete. The structure currently has a combination of glass, concrete and steel. The windows around the façade are glass with steel frames holding them firmly into the concrete. The building has yellow, brick red and orange bars around it.

The design of Holyoke center is laid out in a plan which appropriately caters for different aspects of the weather. The placing of the thin fins around the facades of building provides relief during the summer from the sunny rays. The building is designed in an urban plan whereby all the sections of the building are articulated well to their functions. This reduces the general perception of office buildings.

1“ Holyoke Center, Harvard University,” last modified March 2nd, 2011 at 8:01 PM, <http://banuerdim.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/holyokecenter/>

Inside the Holyoke center, there are numerous artistic works. They include colorful paintings which are spread around the buildings enclosures. These artistic works and paintings portray the different stages that the building has undergone in its development over the years. The enclosure also is marked

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with concrete wall panels that nicely furnish the interiors in the inside of the mall.

The entrances to the Holyoke center are two glass main entrances that serve to cater for the building. The glass entrances serve to articulate the building in a good way such that the initial appearance to the public and its appealing look.

Holyoke center is organized in such a way that every space inside the building is optimally utilized. This is evident as the history of the building's construction period reveals. During the initial periods of its construction, the arcade used to serve as only a link to the main entrances. The shops did not exist and in the 1980's, the need to cater for the remaining space arose. Thus the arcade and the shops became a necessary inclusion to the building. The functions of the arcade and shops are to vividly serve the ever busy center. In the interior also, the articulation of different departments into their functions is very evident. This also is portrayed with the location of the health services at the lower sections of the building.

The circulation system runs throughout the building from the infirmary to the hotels and through the offices and shops. It is a complex network of pipes and it is fitted through the concrete. During the initial years of building, the circulation system was fitted in the old system of plumbing. This also did not cater for the changes and expansions which would come about later.

Currently, the circulation system runs through to the outside of the building from the inside and connects the shops, the health center, the mall and also the arcade.

The interior functions of the building are wisely articulated in the plan by enhancing easy methods of organization of the structure. The seminar rooms at the top of the building fit well to the function due to the enough space and the hospital center at the bottom of the building is easily accessible by patients. This is due to the fact that the patients may be in an emergency hence being easily accessed at all times. The building is also well linked to the road system and easily accessible through different routes. The Auburn Street and Massachusetts Avenue nicely provide for accessibility to Holyoke center.

Thus the Holyoke center is very well suited to its complex nature. Having many different services merged into a single building which is directly linked to a road network makes it optimally the perfect centre for business, pleasure, recreation, and fun and health service center.

References

“ Holyoke Center, Harvard University,” last modified March 2nd, 2011 at 8:01 PM, <http://banuerdim.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/holyokecenter/>