

Description of NSC and its History

In the early twentieth century, International Institutes were established in 55 cities across the United States. Originally founded as the International Institute of Philadelphia as part of this growing movement, Nationalities Service Center (NSC) was started in 1921 to assist immigrant women in acquiring language proficiency and gaining citizenship. During its initial years, the organization provided English language instruction, recreational activities, and assistance with employment and housing problems. As the landscape of immigration changed with legislation such as the 1924 Quota Act and the movement of displaced people after the world wars, NSC began connecting immigrants to appropriate legal assistance and serving both women and their families. Since its founding, NSC has expanded and transformed to meet the changing and increasingly complex needs of immigrants and refugees. Despite programmatic and structural changes, NSC's dedication to serving all immigrants and refugees and the philosophy of providing comprehensive services in one location have remained the same for more than 90 years. Since our establishment, NSC has never wavered from our founding commitment to assist all newcomers with building a solid foundation for a self-sustaining and dignified future.

Today, NSC serves 5,000 immigrants and refugees each year from over 100 countries around the world. We are the largest non-sectarian organization in the Greater Philadelphia area which provides comprehensive services in the areas of language access and proficiency, legal protections and remedies, community transition and integration, access to health and wellness, and job readiness training to immigrants and refugees. Each of our clients has a unique story and a complex journey to Philadelphia: the unaccompanied child from Honduras who needs legal support to file an asylum claim so he isn't deported to his hometown that is plagued by gang violence in which he will be forced to participate; the mother from the Democratic Republic of Congo who witnessed the murder of her husband and has survived the last 15 years in an overcrowded refugee camp, who needs the support of competent and compassionate trauma counselors; the young woman from Burma who arrived as a refugee in her teens and needs additional support to gain English proficiency to secure employment; and the man who fled from Eritrea to safety here and now needs legal documents translated so he can bring his family to join him in Philadelphia. In recent decades, the geopolitical situation has evolved into one that is increasingly complex and has uprooted millions of people as a result of war, government-sanctioned violence, and economic depressions. In the face of these challenges, the United States has stepped forward to provide a place of safety for these families, and today, the U. S. hosts more refugees each year than all other receiving countries combined. Of the 11.7 million refugees under the care of UNHCR (2013), only 1 percent are resettled, and the United States has set an admissions ceiling of about 70,000 in recent years. As the needs of the vulnerable people we serve have become more complex, the services at NSC have evolved and expanded to meet those needs with dignity and compassion for every individual who walks through our doors. Our long history of adaptability in the face of social and legal change has readied us to meet the challenges facing immigrants and refugees in the years to come and to continue as part of a U.S. tradition of freedom and opportunity.

While legal priorities have changed vis-à-vis immigrants and refugees (i.e., comprehensive immigration reform, Executive Action, refugee admission ceiling and allocation), NSC has remained committed to serving the most vulnerable populations and to providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Nationalities Service Center continues to maintain its mission to help

immigrants and refugees participate fully in American society, with the goal of preparing and empowering them to build a solid foundation for a self-sustaining and dignified future. To execute our mission, our staff work to ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to the necessary legal services, empower them on a path toward social adjustment and help strengthen immigrant communities, advocate for fair and humane immigration policies, and promote the value of diversity in the Philadelphia region.

Purpose of the Grant

Needs and Capabilities:

For any non-profit organization that serves a high volume of walk-in clients, securing and maintaining a headquarters which provides a culturally appropriate, safe and suitable space for clients to receive high quality service while giving staff and volunteers a working environment that lends itself to productivity and optimism is a formidable challenge. When NSC staff and volunteers moved from their old location at 1300 Vine Street to its current hub at 1216 Arch Street, 4th floor in 2006, the organization was intending to create such an environment. Becker Winston Architects worked to reconfigure the purchased space in a manner that would meet the needs of its present client base and allow for growth over time. And while the building did improve the organization's outlook greatly at the time, the ensuing fiscal calamity of 2008 virtually eliminated the opportunity to budget for capital improvements and upgrades so that the space could grow and hold its own in tandem with the significant growth of the organization.

As such, we are currently challenged as an organization by the safety concerns, growth constraints and lack of suitably dignified client meeting, training and restroom space at our current HQ. Because we need to continue to stabilize our operational funding sources and shore up our reserves that took a hit during the recession, we are not in a position to launch a full-scale "soup to nuts" renovation of the 1216 Arch Street condo. Instead, we are looking to launch a more manageable and triaged building improvement project to address our current cultural adaptation, safety, training/work space and storage needs. We launched the fundraising portion of this effort in 2014, and we will break the project out in four phases to make it more manageable and give us the time needed to raise the remaining necessary funds. The organization bought its current HQ space with the proceeds of the sale of its previous base of operations. While the organization has not embarked upon a large scale capital campaign in the past, its newly appointed Executive Director has worked on several capital improvement campaigns during her nearly 14 years with the American Red Cross of Southeastern PA as Manager of Grant Funding, Chief Program Officer and Interim CEO. Ms. O'Sullivan more recently held a position with The William J. Clinton Foundation and has a very strong knowledge base in the area of fundraising and project execution.

Goals and Activities:

Through an initial pro-bono and now contractual partnership with Meyer Design, a highly-regarded space planning and architectural design firm based in Ardmore, PA, we are building upon initial space planning documents to finalize construction drawings. Based on this more detailed view of the project, we are in the process of securing 3 new bids with general contractors to address the following needs.

<p><u>Phase I - Ensuring ADA Compliance of Restrooms and Building out of More Legal office space</u></p>	<p><u>Phase II - Floor to Ceiling Renovation of both Public Bathrooms</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovation of front office restrooms to ensure ADA compliance; build out of offices near those restrooms for additional and multi-purpose offices and work spaces for the Legal Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reconfiguration of public bathrooms for clients; Install of a culturally appropriate toilet alternative/handicap access stall in Women's bathroom to accommodate both differences in religious practices and/or culture (e.g. for use by women who have experienced ritual mutilation in their country of origin and have resulting discomfort when using Western styled bathrooms); Explore install of hoses attached to standard toilets in men and women's public restrooms for use by those more comfortable with this method of cleansing.
<p><u>Phase III- Reconfiguration of Waiting and Reception area, Mitigation Sound Bleed, Expansion of Training Space and Improvement of Existing Training Space</u></p>	<p><u>Phase IV - Perimeter Expansion of Work stations, added storage & install of staff rest area</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of the physical safety of existing space for both staff/volunteers and clients, most especially involving the safety of the waiting area where access to offices is not restricted; provide receptionist with secure positioning and provide immediate access to emergency services/personnel if required in a crisis situation; • Improvement of the quality and square footage of existing six training rooms, with better fit out of attendant storage space for training supplies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of usable office space to accommodate programmatic growth; • Creation/design of a staff/volunteer lunch room/break area (no such area exists at present); • Increase in suitable storage and file space to mitigate threats of fire and evacuation challenges; • Expanded perimeter work spaces to accommodate current growth trajectory and ease internal staff conflicts over resources.

Timeline:

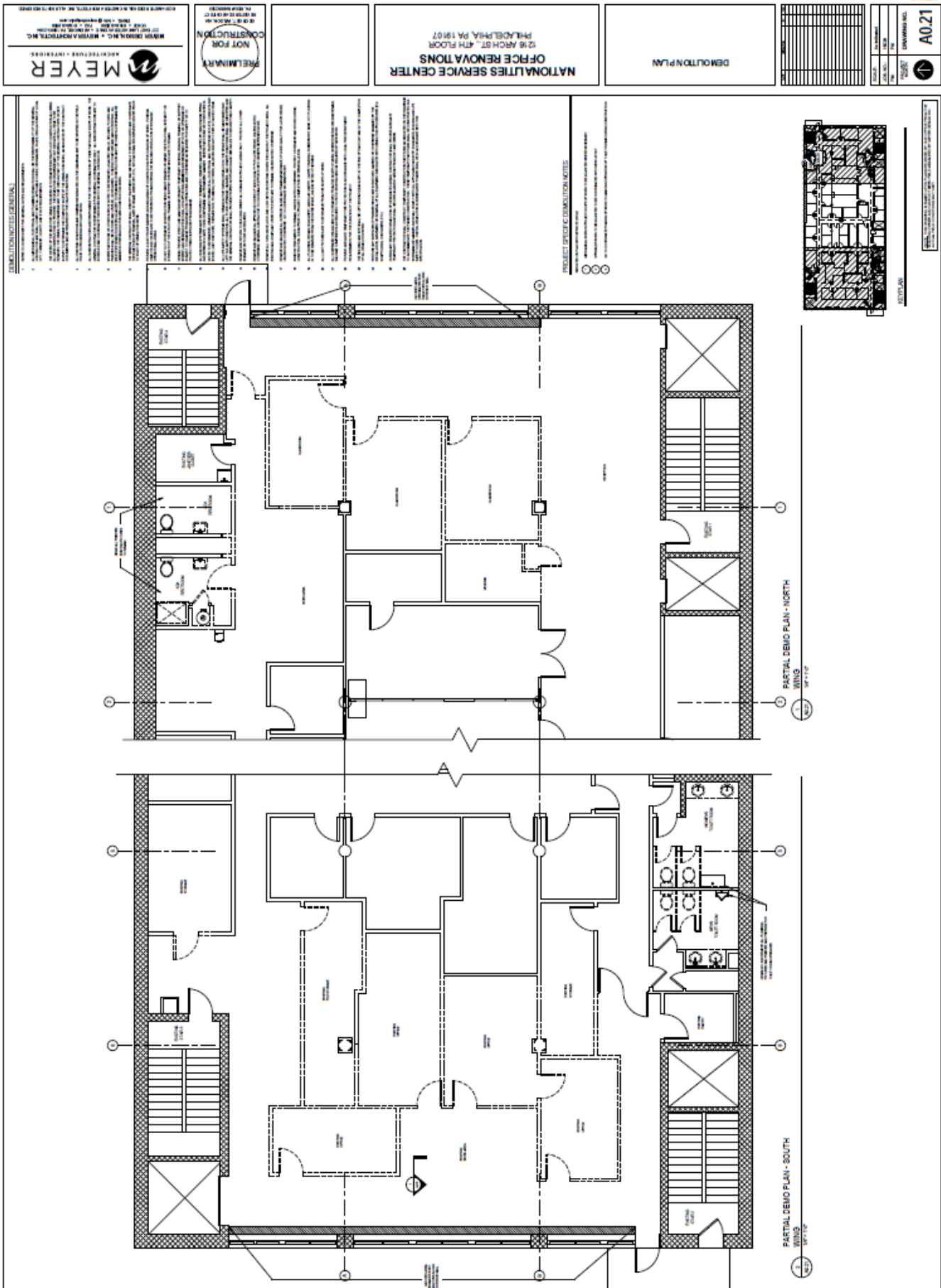
We are currently in the process of fundraising for this project. We expect to break ground on Phase I in July 2015 with a project timeline that spans a 4 month period.

Impact of these Activities:

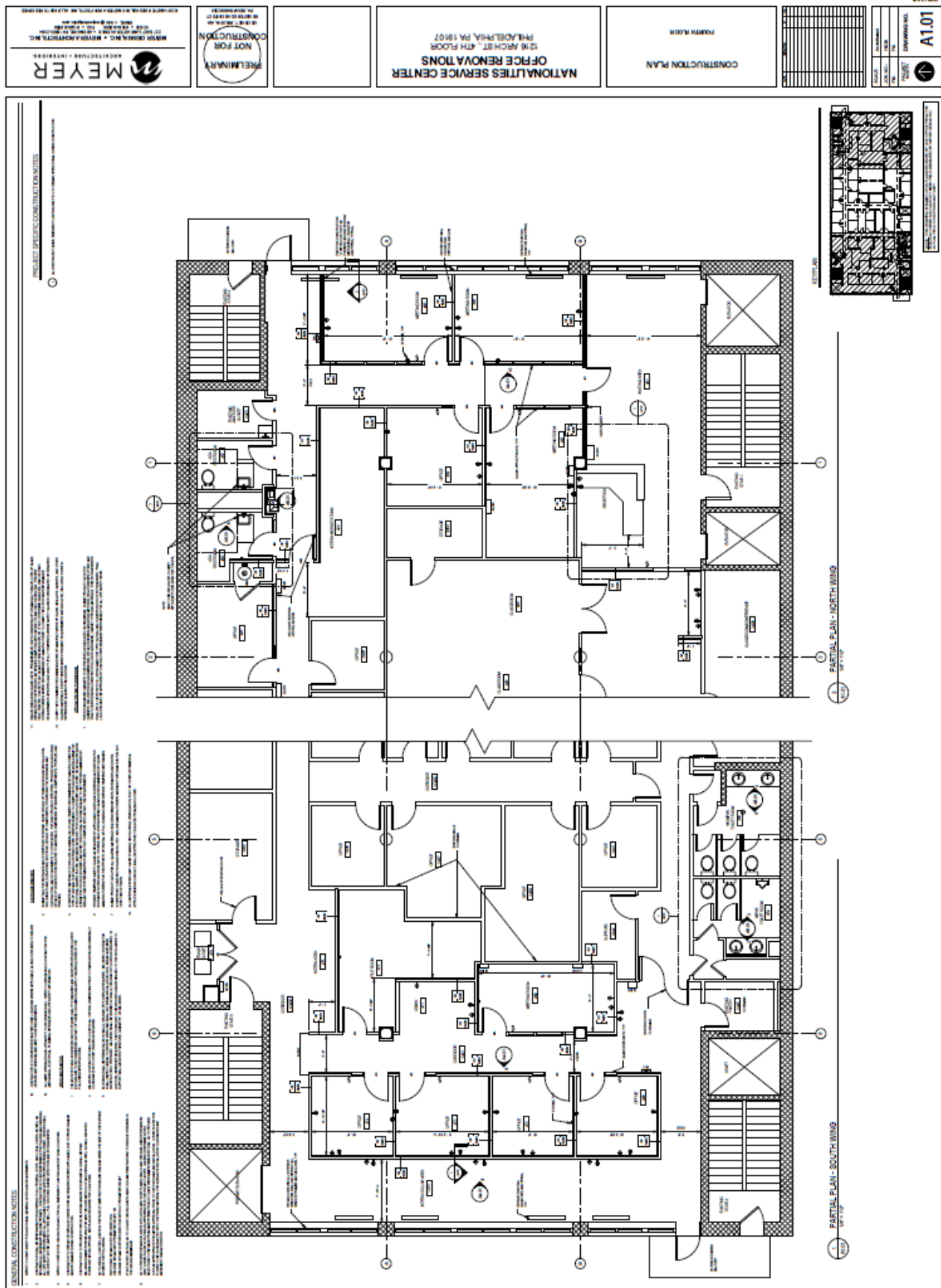
The Improvements to NSC's 1216 Arch Street Headquarters would have a transformative on our operations. Specifically, the proposed renovations/improvements would:

- Provide our clients Bathroom space that is clean, well lit and dignified with cultural adaptations which will attempt to demonstrate respect for the wide range of cultures that we serve;
- Provide a waiting area space for our clients that is suitably comfortable for them to use while waiting for legal consultations and employment readiness meetings;
- Provide safety barriers and emergency response readiness for front desk staff who are currently left vulnerable by the open space place for the welcoming area and the concern that emerges when traumatized clients become extremely agitated and/or at risk to themselves or others;
- Provide English learners, employment class participants, victims of torture program participants, legal clients and other members of the NSC community with decent, soundproofed meeting and training space that insures the confidentiality of what is discussed and minimizes distractions from the outside world;
- Convert additional space along the front perimeter of the property to additional training space which will ease the current “beyond capacity” status and meeting space that our staff and volunteers have to juggle each day;
- Additional workstations will provide NSC with some breathing room with regards to growing programs and adding staff;
- Consideration and attendant fit out of staff resting/eating space will boost staff morale and provide staff, volunteers and interns with a space to not only eat but to take a moment away from the often daunting work lives that they lead.

Current Floor Plan (Front and Back of Office)



Proposed Floor Plan (Front and Back of Office)



Proposed Floor Plan (Full Office)

