

# Walter Netsch: Education, Sound, Urban Space & Mobility

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# U of I in Chicago



Although the university promised in the late 1800s to open a branch in Chicago, it was not until the Navy Pier campus opened in 1946 to accommodate returning veterans that U of I had a place in the city.

# U of I in Chicago

Walter Netsch was asked to design an “instant campus.”

Four sites possible

Meigs Field

Garfield Park

Miller Meadow (site of Checkerboard Field)

South Loop - chosen by Mayor Daley

Design principle was based on a center, or classical forum, with concentric circles

Central density helps buffer sound from expressway

Granite readily available from a quarry

# U of I in Chicago



Walter Netsch: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, designed USAF Academy, Regenstein Library, numerous buildings at Northwestern, among other projects.

# U of I in Chicago



# U of I Chicago



On Feb. 22, 1965, University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus opened.  
Before, Chicago did not have a degree-granting public university.

# U of I Chicago

Netsch: “What... put the aesthetics together was the concept of the drop of water, the center, the forum, the exedra... people went to school in the plaza, and they went to the library, and they went to church. We didn’t have a church, but we had a student center.”

# U of I Chicago





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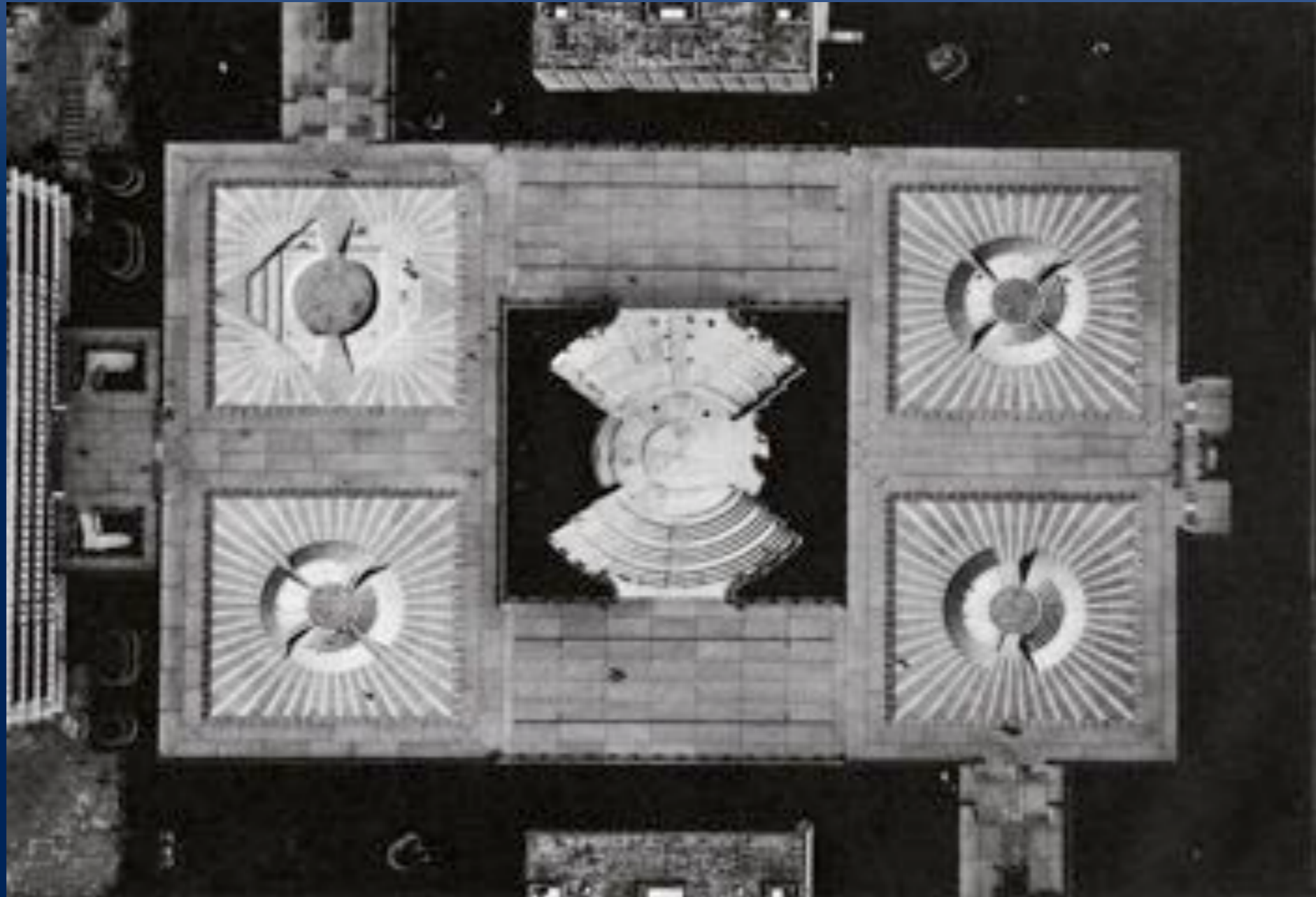




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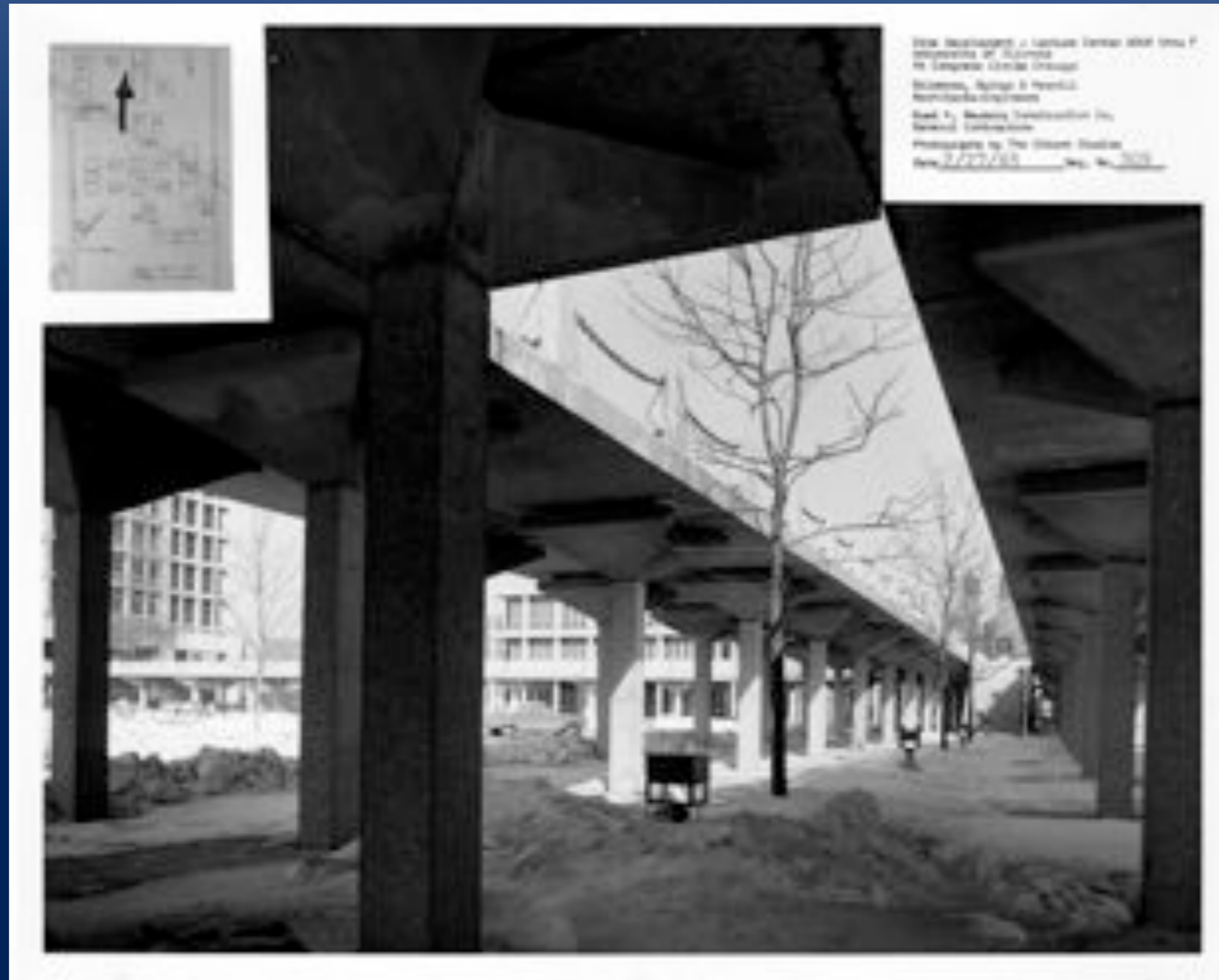
Netsch: "...the lecture halls were underneath... The idea was to build a big roof, then to build a city under it."

The combination of enclosure and materials led to some interesting sonic challenges, though the consideration of acoustics seemed to have been in relation more to external and not internal environments.

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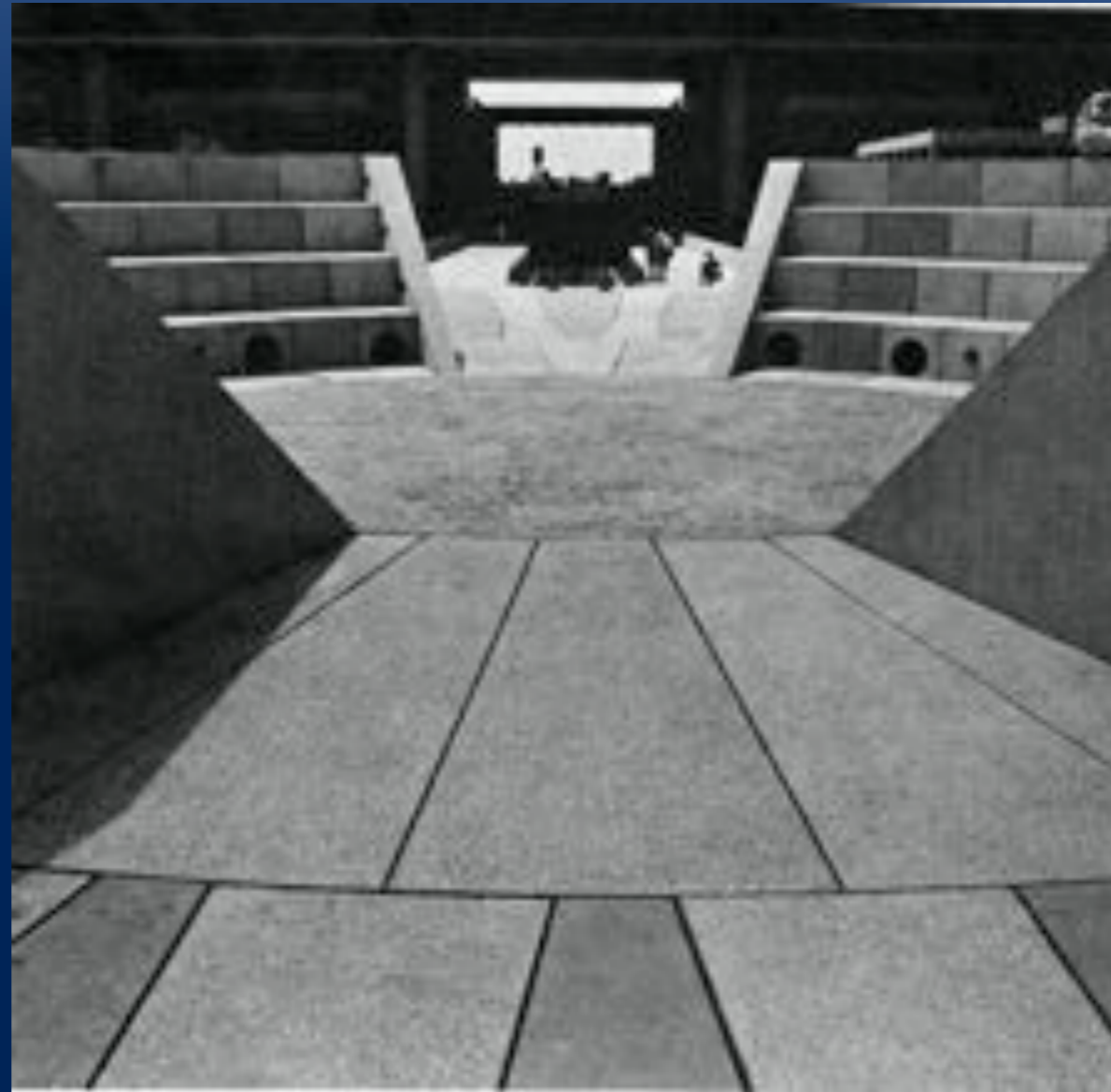
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Although the campus seems designed on the basis of big geometric shapes, the double helix was a major influence in its design (though it has been subsequently made less prominent).

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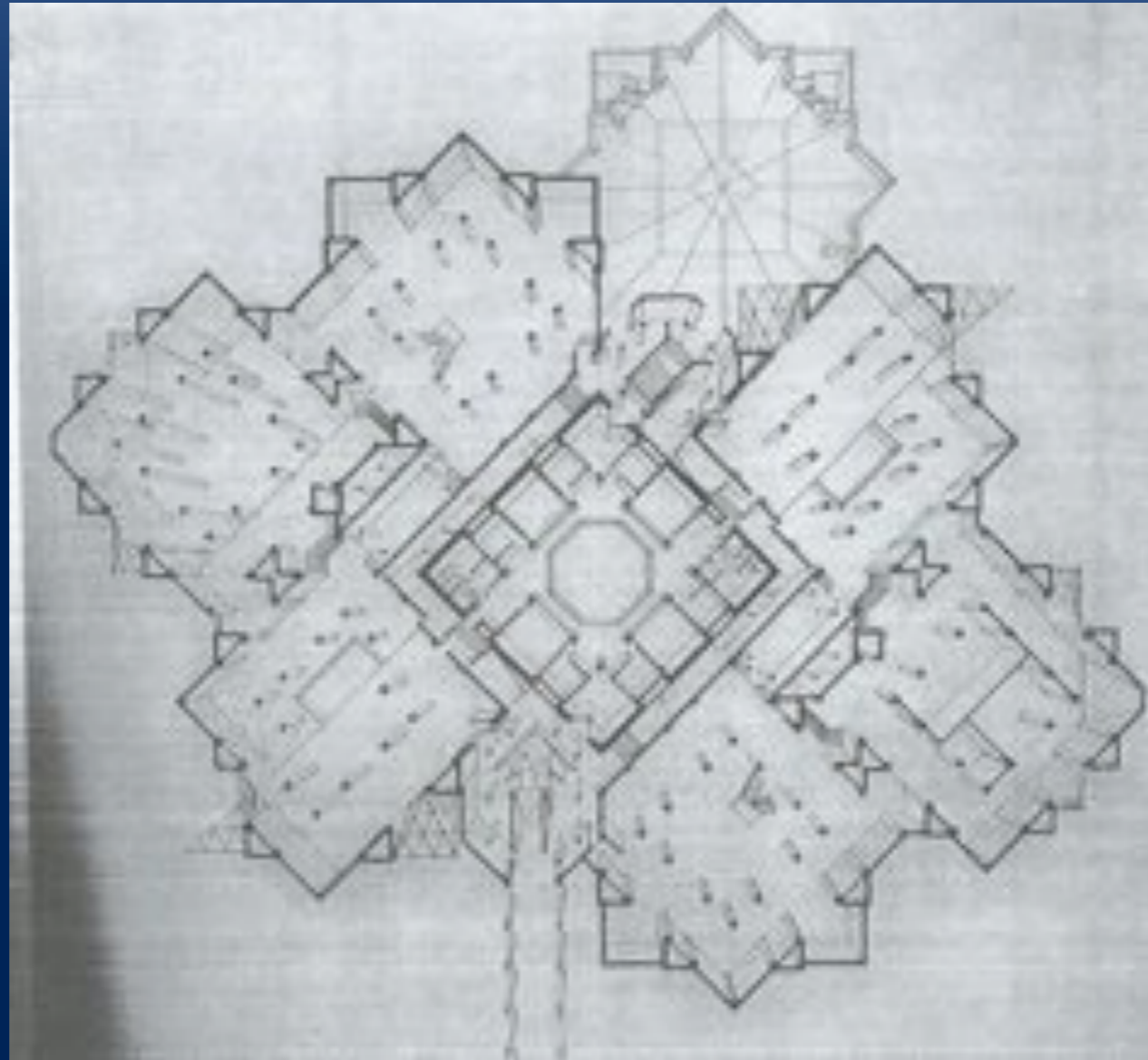


# Phase 1, Phase 2...

Once the central campus core was completed additional buildings were to follow “a physical form based on the philosophy or the methodology of the teaching program” (Netsch).

Thus Art & Architecture, Behavioral Sciences Building, Science & Engineering Laboratory shared a design principle but interior form followed function.

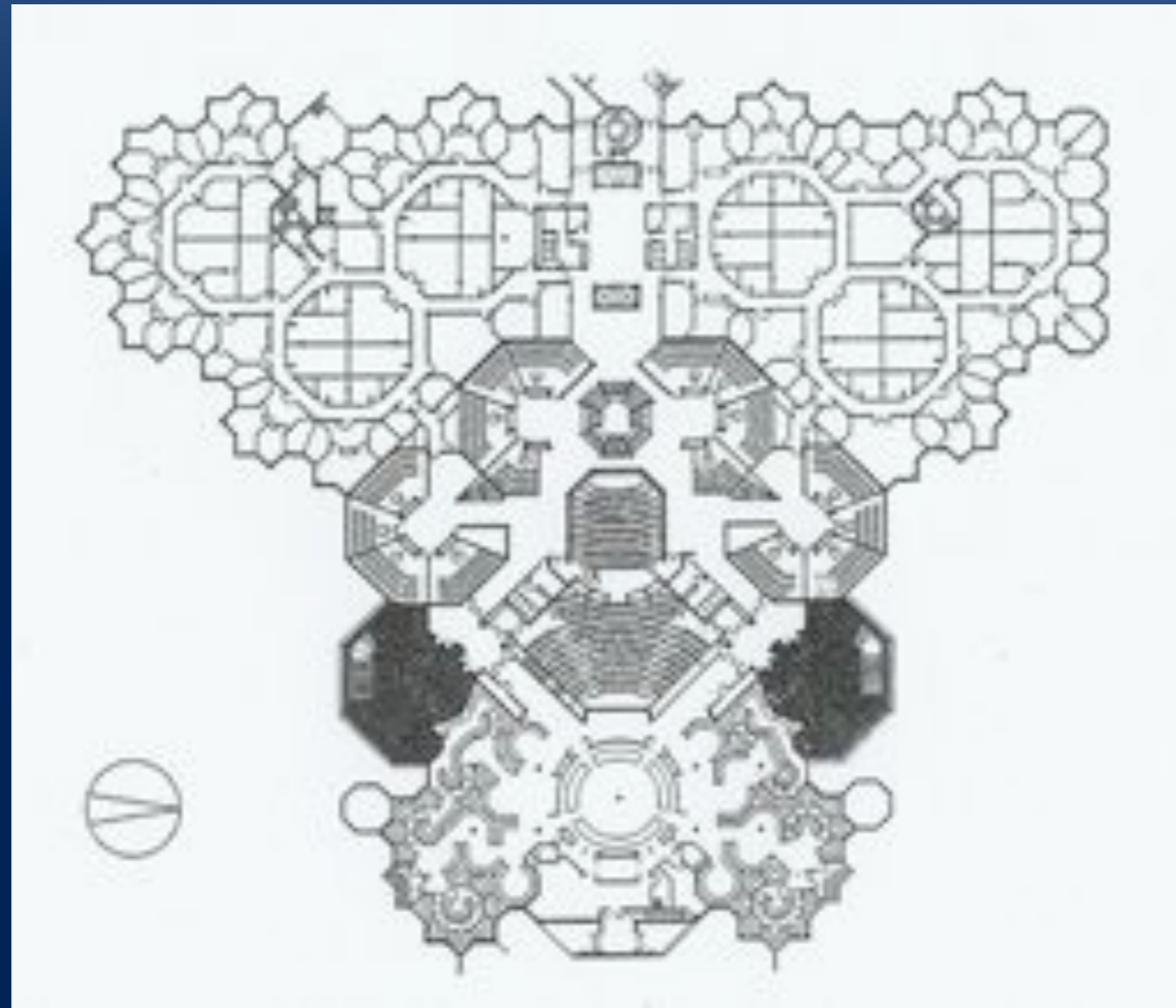
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# ...No Phase 3, Phase 4

The campus has changed over the years for a variety of reasons. There is no longer an “underneath,” the walkways, walls, fences, are gone.

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# Urban Space, Flow and Sound

Student movement is by and large the same as it was, and the central forum is still widely used as a meeting and event space.

The sounds of the city intrude in interesting ways as spaces have been opened up.

The sounds of the campus have changed in no small part due to mobile devices and media.

# Mobility, Mobile Media & Sound

Student movement *vis a vis*:

Mobility

Sociability/Etiquette

Intimacy

Privacy

Security/Safety

Surveillance

Availability

Learning

Each of these has direct connections to, and consequences for, sound

# Acknowledgements

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Image source: UIC University Library.

# For More Information

## Websites

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Thank you!