The derivation of panels:
The original façade of the Watson’s played a major role in creating its identity. The divisions in the grid forming the doors to the balcony, the door framing elements and the balcony railings together gave a certain texture to the façade. While the actual divisions have changed due to haphazard additions and alterations to the façade, due to certain rigid elements like the secondary framing elements and the main structural framing, the texture has survived through time. This texture arising out of the basic ordering system that is the grid and the secondary framing elements is what I was interested in carrying forward in the new design. I started with the original divisions of the façade and extruded them on different panels, glass and solid, which lie in different planes. This formed the new front façade which derives from the base ordering system of the original and has a similar texture but does not read the same as the original façade. This juxtaposition of elements with the grid is also representational of the fact that the grid has stood through time with changing building elements around it. But since it has always stayed amongst chaos and clutter, with elements almost sticking to it in a haphazard manner, it now separates itself from these elements to stand out: distinct and uninterrupted.
As you move along the XZ axis, the cut-outs in the floor plates at various levels result in alternating single level spaces enclosed within the panels and open-outs where you can see glimpses of panels and the grid elements juxtaposed at various levels. At certain points you can see as far as the glass roof on top.

The system arising out of the arrangement of building elements along these two axes creates an alternation of confined and larger spatial volumes. While the more confined spaces reveal the grid at the point of details the larger volumes display the interaction of a set of grid elements with the newer building elements.
This is a photograph of an installation by Robert Irwin. It was called the 'Black Line Volume'. In a room with a column at its centre, a single line of black tape was installed along the edge of the floor at the Museum of contemporary art, Chicago. Irwin noted that four people who had been working at the museum asked him whether he had built the structural column in the center as a part of the installation. I was quite excited to read about this story. I thought it was a beautiful example that showed what a simple installation done in a certain manner around an existing element can do to reinforce its presence.
The photograph above shows a part of the existing balconies that form continuous horizontal bands on the east and north facades.

In the new design, the narrow space formed between the glass façade on the east and the opaque panels, with the existing cast iron columns in between forms a similar viewing gallery to the outside.

Details:

The adjoining section and the part elevation below, show some of the details that were crucial to the new design.

The connections between the new building elements like the floor and the existing frame are expressed highlighting the separation between them while those between two new building elements are concealed.

The design of the brackets that support the glass fins is derived from the existing details at the junctions of the columns and beams as shown in the drawing below.
Coming back to the description of the first spatial condition, one of the panels in the system separates out from it, twists and aligns itself in the direction of the Rampart Row road. As described earlier, the Rampart row is the main spine of movement and holds a lot of open-air exhibits and events during the annual art festival. Due to the way development has taken place in the area, the Rampart row has also become an axis from where one can view the building from a distance. The twisted panel forms a ‘window’ to the Rampart row, in an effort to reinforce this relationship of the building with the road from the inside as well.
Light and material contrast:

Juxtaposition of the newer elements and the grid not only celebrate or bring forth the grid through framing views but also create an interesting play of light and shade that enhance the experience of the viewer. The softness of the wooden floor, the fragility of glass and the smooth paint finish of the solid panels stand in contrast to the rugged edges and the rawness of the cast iron and wrought iron members of the grid. The sharp shadows of the solid panels against the relatively muzzy shadows formed by the crude edges of the cast iron frame highlight this contrast in a subtler manner.
The sketch shows the continuation of the grid as the wall stops at a railing height at the top level opening out the view to the rest of the building.
The spatial condition – 'point' is bordered at its edge by a wall that separates this condition from the rest of the structure. Horizontally it stops about a bay and a half away from the end of the grid on the side of the adjoining Army Navy Building. Towards the south side of the condition, at the first level, as the wall ends one can see the grid emerge out of the numerous panels and continue further into the rest of the building. The stopping of the wall at the railing height of the top level also allows one to observe the continuity of the grid when seen from that level.

Another reason for stopping the wall where it does on the south end is to create a visual gap between Watson’s and the Army Navy Building. Currently the two buildings almost touch each other. This visual separation allows for the viewer to see the side façade of the Army Navy building as also observing the continuation of certain lines from Watson’s into the Army Navy Building.
Geometrically, this spatial condition explores the grid elements in one floor level. The rhythm of the repeating elements almost as if they would extend to infinity, is the quality of the grid that I have tried to capture here.

While the previous condition explores a dialogue of building elements with each other as well as the outside, this condition looks more inwards into the building. It serves as a prelude to the climax of the third condition which would expose the entire volume of the grid and encompass it into a single space, a full height volume with a glass skin.

This condition is housed in the volume of the grid that surrounds the east side of the atrium.
The floor plate is divided into solid wooden flooring and structural frosted and clear glass flooring. The clear glass flooring surrounds the columns. As a result one can see the nodes or junctions of the column and beams and can see the column continuing on to the next level. So while one is in that space and can see the entire grid at that level, one still feels the presence and the depth of the grid that actually extends beyond that space. The nodes are further highlighted by the light filtering from the levels above due to the clear glass flooring. The discontinuous wooden flooring is broken by the insertion of frosted glass floor. The resulting rhythm of light penetrating from the floors above and the repeating floor elements (which also form the ceiling for the level below) resonates with the rhythm of the repeating elements of the grid.

The divisions are again derived from the same units as the first condition that were in turn derived from the divisions in the front façade in the original design of Watson’s hotel. In spite of the rawness and the crudeness that the grid would embody in its original state, in this condition, with its arrangement of elements, material and light, it possesses a very soft and peaceful quality.

The part of the floor around the columns that is made of structural clear glass rises half an inch higher than the rest. This space would be a default demarcation for sculptural exhibits. This would also result in a movement of people around the exhibits and therefore the columns. This movement radius that is generated with the columns as the pivot enhances the presence of the grid.
The second spatial condition on the whole is inward-looking. It is bound by the wall that stands in-between this and the first condition, that I have already described, on the east side. A sheet of frosted glass separates it visually from the circulation core. Furthermore, the space it is bounded by the Army-navy Building on the south side. A continuous cut-out on all floor levels at the eastern and northern edges of this condition allows for a sheet of light to filter into the space as well as provides an opportunity where one can get a glimpse of the vertical plane of the grid. Originally Watson’s hotel overlooked the garden on the south side, the present site of the Army Navy Building. In the new design the building yet again opens on the south side now overlooking something else: The concealed façade of the Army Navy Building.