Atrium Evaluation Criteria: While providing gathering spaces which are attractive to many users, atriums come at a high cost to the building. Before deciding to incorporate an atrium, the users and AE team need to evaluate some basic criteria:

1. A net to gross analysis.
2. Energy consumption evaluation for the increased volume.
3. Maintenance of high areas and equipment.
4. Natural lighting.
5. Smoke evacuation.

Net to Gross Evaluation: Atriums add significant cost to a building by dramatically increasing the gross square footage without providing net assignable area.

Energy Consumption: Increased energy use for the space must be included in the energy model.

Maintenance: When atriums and other areas with high ceilings are incorporated, light fixtures and other devices requiring periodic maintenance shall be installed at lower elevations (e.g. by wall mounting) so as to be easily maintainable. If wall mounting is not feasible, then lighting may be accessed by the use of winches to lower the fixtures to a workable location, or by means of catwalks. High ceilings and walls shall be as maintenance-free and as accessible for maintenance as possible. If there is any equipment or fixture that cannot be accessed by the above described means, then the project shall pay for a lift. An appropriate storage location shall also be provided for the lift.

Natural Lighting: Use of skylights shall be avoided or minimized due to their propensity to leak. No skylight should be planned since 309 TF may not repair/replace in the event of failure.

Fire/Smoke Protection: Consideration shall be given to limiting the height of the space to avoid special or additional requirements for fire and smoke protection systems. Atrium smoke control systems shall be designed in accordance with the most current adopted editions of the NFPA Life Safety Code and the International Building Code.
Communications: Consideration shall be given to the installation of voice and data outlets and wireless access connections in public gathering spaces. Power outlets shall also be provided at each communication outlet. The location of the communication outlets shall be coordinated with the furniture plan.