



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 1, 2015

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation – Phase 1</b> National Mall Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7421
	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.43(38.00)44225
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> National Park Service	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Preliminary and final approval of site and building plans
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve with comments
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Staff Presentation

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens. Located between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, Constitution Gardens was designed as a pastoral landscape with a natural lake and was intended as an oasis that was separate from the remainder of the National Mall and the surrounding city. Within a few years of opening, the conditions of the lake and trees began to decline as poor soil conditions kept many of the trees from reaching full maturity.

The purpose of the proposed project is to rehabilitate Constitution Gardens to improve the functionality, ecology, visitor services, and accessibility of the area. The rehabilitation plan has been developed by NPS in partnership with the Trust for the National Mall. The Trust for the National Mall organized a national design competition in 2012 and selected PWP Landscape Architecture to design the project.

Phase 1 focuses on the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, NW and includes both permanent and temporary improvements. The permanent work includes the relocation and rehabilitation of the Lockkeeper's House, a new entry plaza adjacent to the Lockkeeper's House, and the construction of a perimeter garden wall. The temporary work includes an arcing path which will lead from the new entry plaza to the existing plaza located on the east end of the lake as well as plantings on both sides of the new path. During Phase 2, a pavilion will be built where the existing plaza is located and due to an elevation change, the path and plantings will need to be re-constructed. The intention is to reuse much of the planting material and stone used for Phase 1. In addition, benches and lights that will be installed along the path as part of Phase 1 will be re-used when Phase 2 is constructed.

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## KEY INFORMATION

- Constitution Gardens was dedicated in 1976 to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial and is a contributing site of the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District, a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The National Mall Plan recommended that Constitution Gardens be a pleasant place for visitors to the National Mall and provide opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation.
- The Commission, in its October 2014 review, supported the concept designs for the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens and supported the alternative that combined ecological functions with socially vibrant spaces to create an accessible, flexible, and sustainable park.

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation Constitution Gardens.

**Notes** that the introduction of a varied planting palette will provide visual interest and establish a new character to the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, one of the primary entry points to Constitution Gardens.

**Notes** the importance of improving pollinator health and incorporating the relevant guidance and recommendations that have resulted from the Presidential Memorandum, *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*; and **encourages** NPS and the Trust for the National Mall to prioritize pollinator health during Phase 2 of the Rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

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<b>Previous actions</b>	<b>October 2012</b> – Information Presentation <b>October 2014</b> – Concept Review
<b>Remaining actions</b> (anticipated)	Preliminary and Final Review of Phase 2

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## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Phase 1 of the Constitution Gardens rehabilitation project will improve the conditions at the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue, NW and will establish a new visual presence and serve as a main entry point for the park. The improvements included as part of Phase 1 are consistent with policies in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* as well as the vision in the National Mall Plan of Constitution Gardens as a restful, high-quality, multipurpose destination. As part of the project, the Lockkeeper's House will be relocated and also undergo a full rehabilitation in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The building will be used for visitor education, park management, and donor recognition. The building has not been used for many years and is in need of rehabilitation work to ensure its long term preservation. The new plaza will provide gathering space for groups and the landscape design introduces a new planting palette within the framework of the National Mall. The scale of the plantings and species selection will provide visual interest throughout all seasons of the year and will increase the visibility of the corner at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. Overall, staff supports the project and recommends that **the Commission approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation Constitution Gardens.**

### Analysis

Staff analyzed the project against the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* and the National Mall Plan. As noted below, the project is consistent with policies in the Preservation and Historic Features Element, the Visitors Element, and the Parks and Open Space Element. The project will improve the appearance of the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue and establish an entrance or threshold to Constitution Gardens from the remainder of the National Mall and surrounding urban environment. The project promotes high quality design and sustainability principles while also preserving open space on the National Mall and providing visitor amenities and educational opportunities.

One of the primary components of the Phase 1 improvements is the relocation and rehabilitation of the Lockkeeper's House. The Lockkeeper's House is currently not being used, requires preservation work and its location impacts pedestrian visibility and safety. The Lockkeeper's House, built in 1837, was originally located to the east of its current location and jutted out into 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The building was moved in 1915 to its current location and as part of the proposed project will be moved to the southwest of its current location. A full rehabilitation of the building according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, will allow the building to be put back to use and will help to ensure its long term preservation. The building will be incorporated into the new entry plaza and also reprogrammed for visitor education and park management. Donor recognition will be located on the interior of the building. As part of the Section 106 mitigation, NPS will provide interpretation of the Lockkeeper's House, 17<sup>th</sup> Street Wharf, and the Washington City canal, thereby providing a new visitor amenity and educational experience. NPS will also interpret the locations of the Lockkeeper's House by

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providing inlay paving to mark its original location (1837) and current location (1915). Moving the building will improve pedestrian visibility and safety. In its current location, it can be difficult for vehicles turning onto 17<sup>th</sup> Street to see pedestrians crossing the street.

Along with the relocation of the Lockkeeper's House, Phase 1 improvements include the construction of a new arrival plaza and associated landscaping. The new arrival plaza will be framed by a perimeter wall which will be 17 inches tall and 36 inches wide. The wall will provide an edge to the plaza and will ultimately extend along Constitution Avenue as part of Phase 2 of the project. The wall will provide a place for visitors to sit and rest prior to entering the park and will provide a gateway or threshold to Constitution Gardens signaling that you have entered a space that is separate from the city and surrounding memorials. On the south side of the entry plaza, a matching "u" shaped garden wall will provide additional seating and frame the south side of the plaza. At the center of the "u" shaped wall there will be a break to provide access to the historic mounting block, which was found near the Lockkeeper's House. A larger willow oak will shade the plaza. The plaza will provide a gathering space for larger groups. A bus drop off is located nearby along Constitution Avenue, and the plaza will provide an amenity for those visitors to gather. The plaza has been designed in a manner that is compatible with the setting of Constitution Gardens and the Lockkeeper's House. The selection of the paving material for the plaza (Ticonderoga Granite) and perimeter wall responds to the color of the stone at the Lockkeeper's House.

An arcing path is proposed from the new entry plaza to the existing plaza on the east end of the lake. The path will be 18 feet wide in order to accommodate a large number of visitors, but also to function as a the future fire access to the pavilion which will be constructed as part of Phase 2. The path will be concrete at the center and flanked by stone bands. The materials selection helps to break down the scale of the path and make it pedestrian friendly. A line of overcup oak trees will provide shade and also emphasize the curve of the path. Along the path, there will be 10 benches and a Washington Globe light fixture between every other tree. This lighting level will provide sufficient light to illuminate the path, but not overwhelm the setting of Constitution Gardens or the Lockkeeper's House. Other lighting included in Phase 1 includes two Washington Globe fixtures at the plaza, small uplights around the willow oak, and a dimmable wash of light on the sides of the Lockkeeper's House.

The planting plan for the project will establish a new plant palette for this portion of the National Mall. Both the scale of the planting and species selection represent a departure from the existing conditions of this area as primarily a turf/open lawn interspersed with trees. The proposed idea is to diversify the plant palette which improves the ecological function of the park and introduces a new aesthetic to Constitution Gardens for visual interest throughout the seasons. Staff supports improving the ecological function and introducing native flowering understory trees, native grasses, and meadow plantings. Accent drifts of flowering perennials and ferns will be interspersed throughout the meadow. The species will be evaluated for their performance within the National Mall, and if successful, NPS anticipates continuing and building upon the plant palette for Phase 2 of the project. While the new planting palette will introduce a new visual character and alter the original setting of Constitution Gardens as primarily an area of turf with trees, the planting plan will contribute to making Constitution Gardens a distinct destination. Staff recommends that **the**

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**Commission note that the introduction of a varied planting palette will provide visual interest and establish a new character to the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, one of the primary entry points to Constitution Gardens.**

Staff also analyzed the planting palette with respect to the June 2014 Presidential Memorandum, *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*. This memorandum highlighted the importance of pollinators to the economy of the country and directed the heads of executive departments and agencies to create a federal strategy to promote the health of pollinators. The memorandum directs federal departments and agencies to evaluate and use their resources, facilities, and land management responsibilities to expand knowledge of pollinator health and to increase habitat quality and availability. Since the issuance of the Presidential Memorandum, the Council on Environmental Quality and the U.S. General Services Administration issued guidance on landscape design and maintenance to promote the national pollinator strategy. In addition, in May 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior issued a draft report on best management practices for executive departments and agencies to enhance pollinator habitat on federal lands. A few of the plant species included as part of Phase 1 planting plan are pollinator friendly and include *Cercis Canadensis*, *Asclepias*, *Coreopsis*, *Echinacea*, and *Rudbeckia*. Staff recognizes the efforts of NPS and the Trust for the National Mall (Trust) to incorporate these plant species, and also encourages NPS and the Trust to continue to identify additional plant species and strategies into Phase 2 of the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens to improve pollinator health. Therefore, staff recommends that **the Commission note the importance of improving pollinator health and incorporating the relevant guidance and recommendations that have resulted from the Presidential Memorandum, *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*; and encourages NPS and the Trust for the National Mall to prioritize pollinator health during Phase 2 of the Rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens.**

## **CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE**

### **Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital**

Phase 1 of the Constitution Gardens rehabilitation project is consistent with policies in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the project meets the objectives of the Preservation and Historic Features Element which promotes the preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties. The project is also consistent with policies in the Visitors Element which encourages the government to highlight cultural resources to the public while also providing an enjoyable and educational experience. In addition, the project meets several policies in the Parks and Open Space Element which promotes the preservation of open space and protection of historic landscapes.

### **National Mall Plan**

The National Mall Plan seeks to rehabilitate and refurbish the National Mall so that very high levels of use can be perpetuated and the needs of all visitors and users can be met in an attractive,

high-quality, energy-efficient, and sustainable manner. The plan establishes a framework to protect memorials and landscapes while maintaining large areas of un-programmed open space. The plan seeks to balance contemporary uses while respecting the planned historic landscapes of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans.

In terms of Constitution Gardens, the National Mall Plan called for a pleasant place for pedestrians to relax as they visited the National Mall. The National Mall Plan called for Constitution Gardens to be a restful, high-quality, multipurpose visitor destination that would provide food service and opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation. The National Mall Plan envisioned that the Lockkeeper's House could be relocated and reused for visitor services including exhibits, a bookstore, retail sales, recreation equipment rentals, and space for NPS partner activities. The improvements to the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, NW are consistent with the ideas put forward in the National Mall Plan for Constitution Gardens.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Both NCPC and NPS have an independent responsibility under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The National Park Service's undertaking is the implementation and construction of the project. NCPC's undertaking is the approval of the project.

NPS initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation in May 2014 and held consulting party meetings between May 2014 and June 2015. Through the Section 106 process, NPS, the DC SHPO, NCPC, and the consulting parties determined that the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens would have adverse effects on the Constitution Gardens Cultural Landscape and the Lockkeeper's House. To resolve the adverse effects, NPS, DC SHPO, NCPC, and the Trust for the National Mall entered into a Memorandum of Agreement in August 2015. By entering into the MOA, NCPC designated NPS as lead agency for Section 106 compliance. The MOA specifies that Phase 1 mitigation includes the following: an update to the 1994 Historic American Building Survey documentation on the Lockkeeper's House; interpretation for the Washington City canal and the Lockkeeper's House, the 17th Street Wharf, Tiber Creek Sewer outlet along 17th Street, and the Potomac Park Levee; work on the Lockkeeper's House and its new immediate surroundings will be done in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for Historic Properties*; inlay paving will mark the locations of the Lockkeeper's House; and NPS will update the National Register Nomination for the Lockkeeper's House.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

Both NCPC and NPS have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NCPC's responsibility stems from its approval authority over the project. NPS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens. There was a public comment period on the EA from June 22, 2015 to July 24, 2015. The EA analyzed a no action alternative, Alternative 1 – Sustainable Garden, Alternative 2 – Social Garden, and the Preferred Alternative – Regenerative Garden. Topics analyzed in the EA include: natural resources, cultural resources, visual resources, visitor use and experience and safety, traffic

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and circulation, and park management and operations. NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Preferred Alternative – Regenerative Garden on August 27, 2015.

NCPC staff reviewed the EA and determined that for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens the information and analysis provided meets the standards for an adequate EA as set forth in NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. NCPC staff determined that a FONSI was warranted for Phase 1 of the project based on the information contained in the EA. On September 21, 2015, the NCPC Executive Director issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens on the Preferred Alternative – Regenerative Garden.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its September 9, 2015 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that it has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the plans for Phase 1 at its September 17, 2015 meeting and approved the project.

## **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Submission Package
- Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement
- NCPC Finding of No Significant Impact

Prepared by J. Hirsch  
September 24, 2015

## **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

# Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation – Phase 1

National Mall

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Submitted by the National Park Service

Preliminary and Final Site and Building Plans

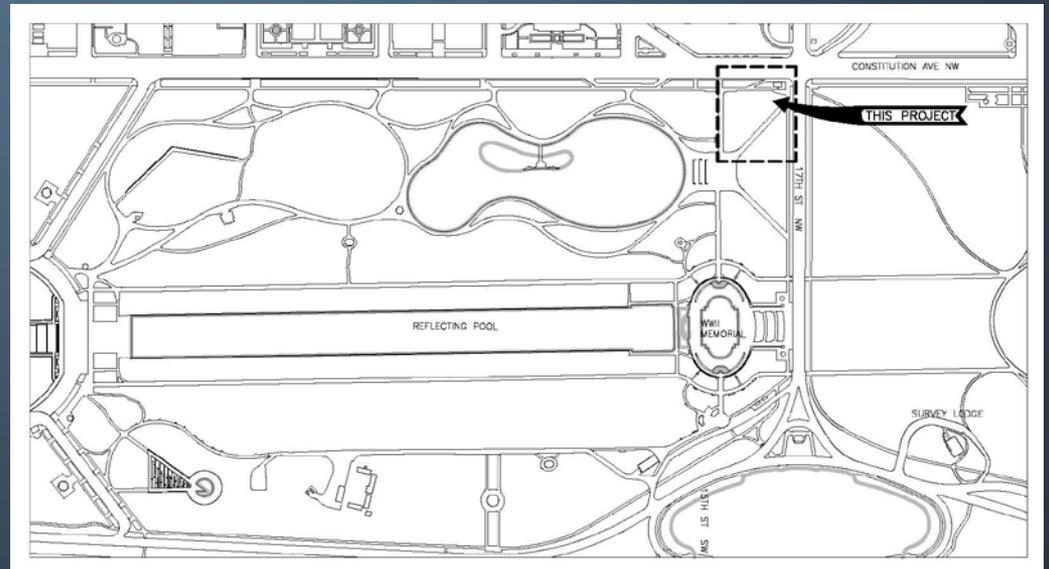


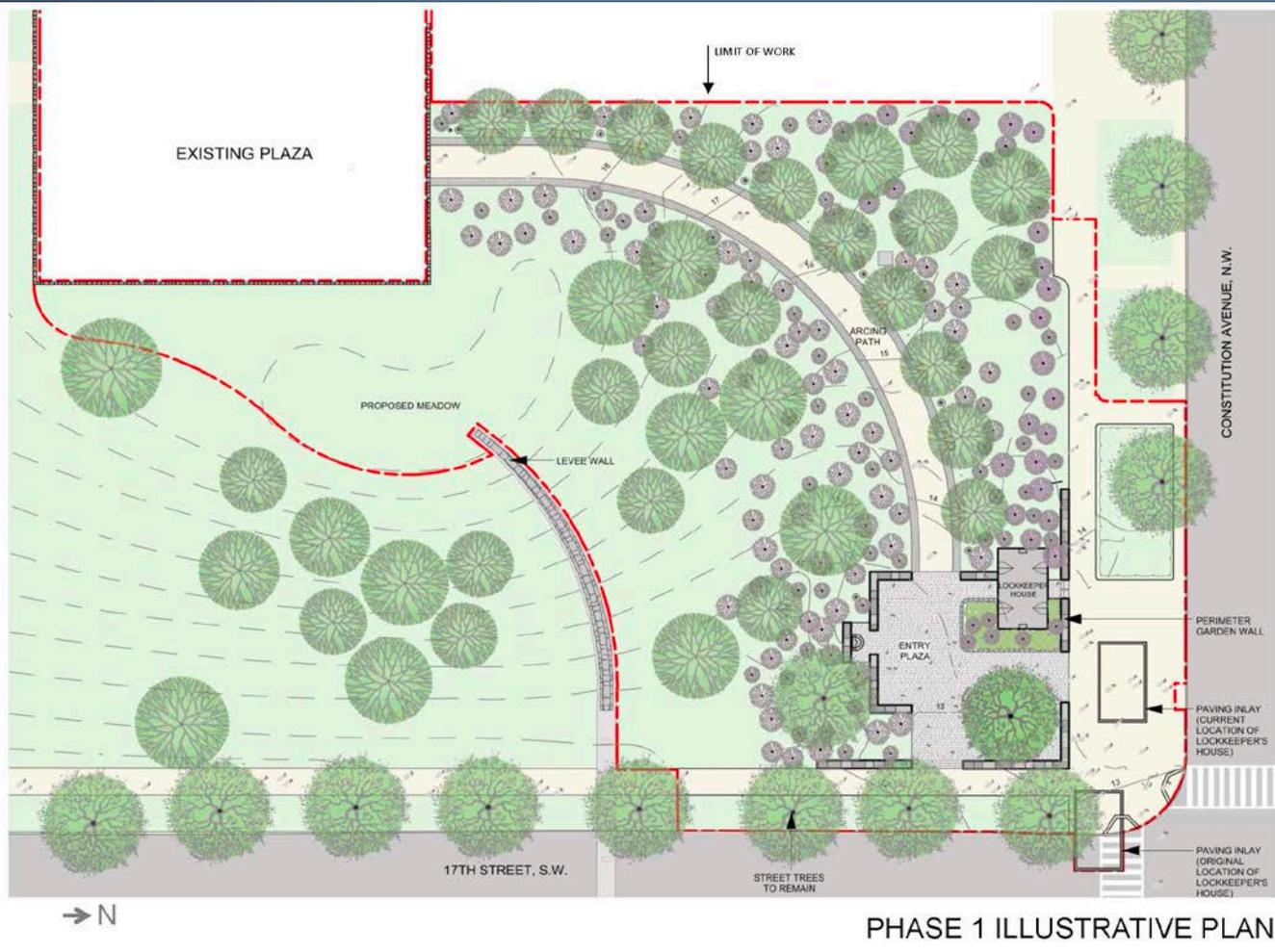


Project limits – Phases 1 and 2



Phase 2 – Constitution Avenue and 17<sup>th</sup> Street

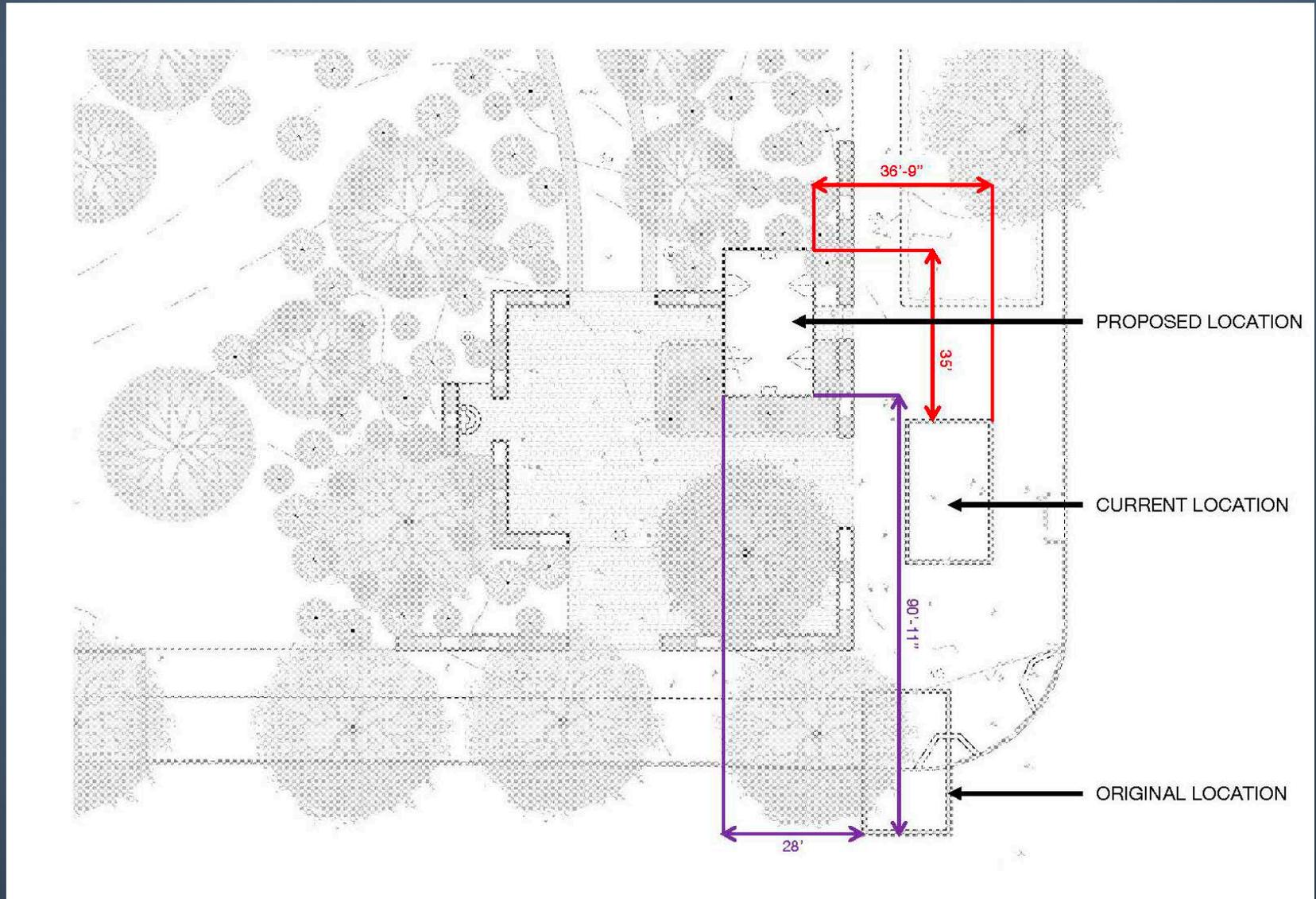




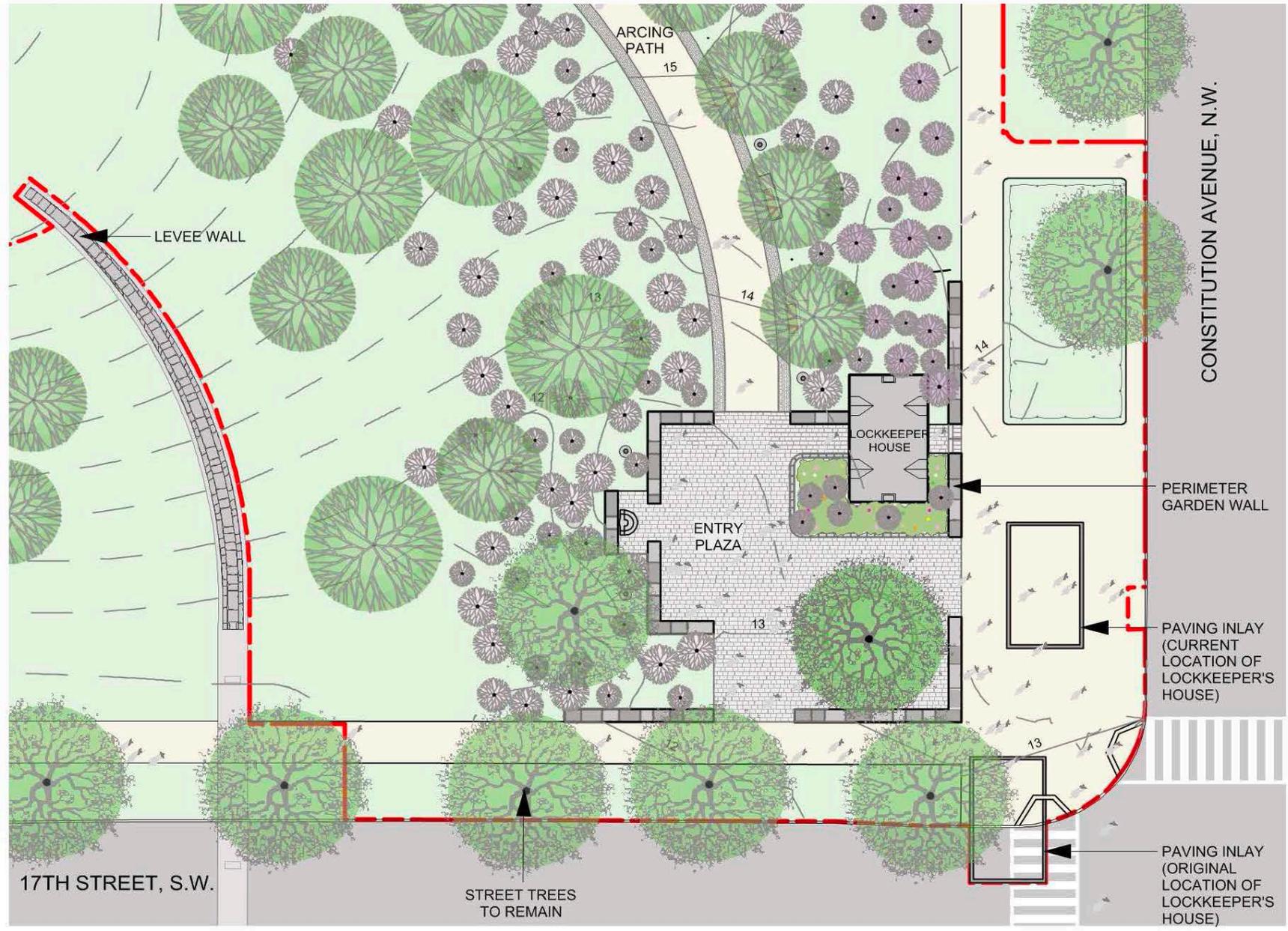
PHASE 1 ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN



PREVIOUS PHASE 1 LIMIT OF WORK









View from Constitution Avenue looking south



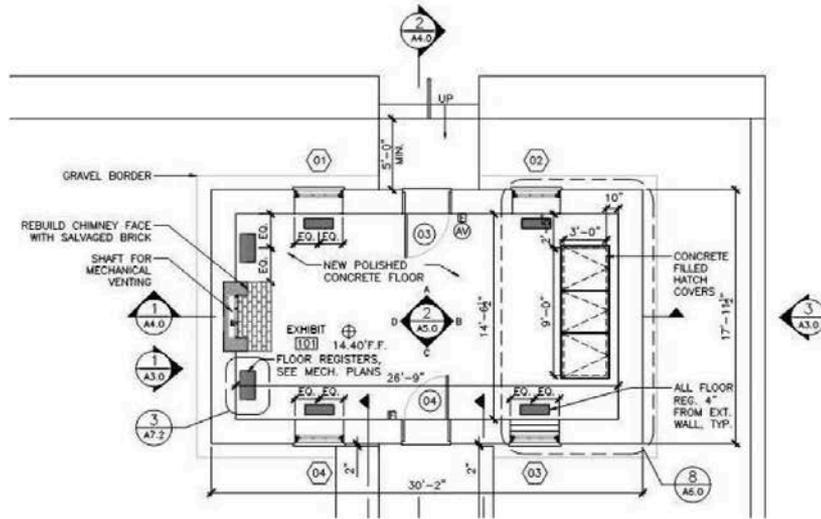
View from 17<sup>th</sup> Street looking west



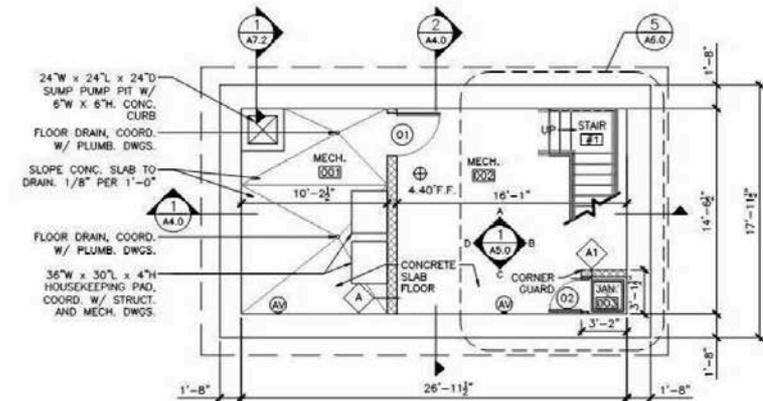


CONSTITUTION GARDENS | ELEVATION CONSTITUTION AVENUE  
MARCH 18, 2015

PWP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'



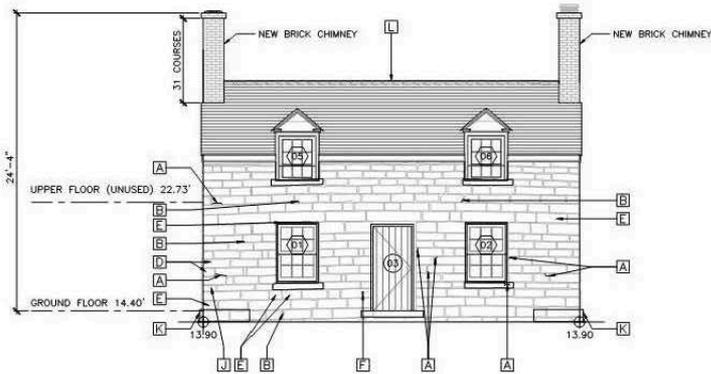
FIRST FLOOR PLAN –  
EXHIBITS, DONOR RECOGNITION



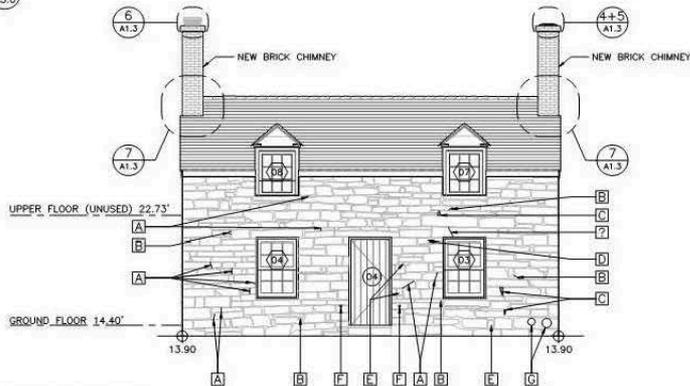
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN –  
STORAGE AND MECHANICAL



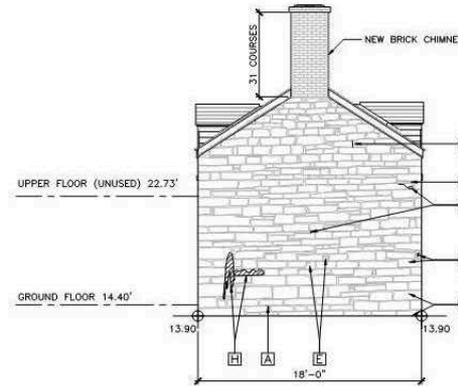
Exterior Space for Group Education



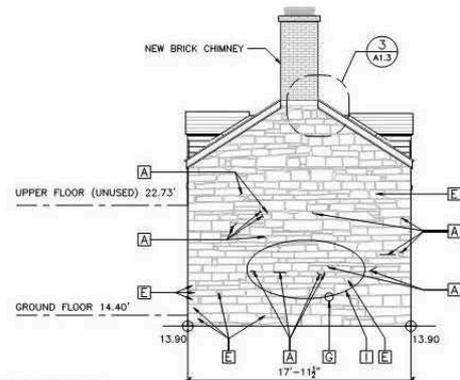
4 NORTH ELEVATION  
A3.0



2 SOUTH ELEVATION  
A3.0



3 EAST ELEVATION  
A3.0



1 WEST ELEVATION  
A3.0

**GENERAL NOTES**

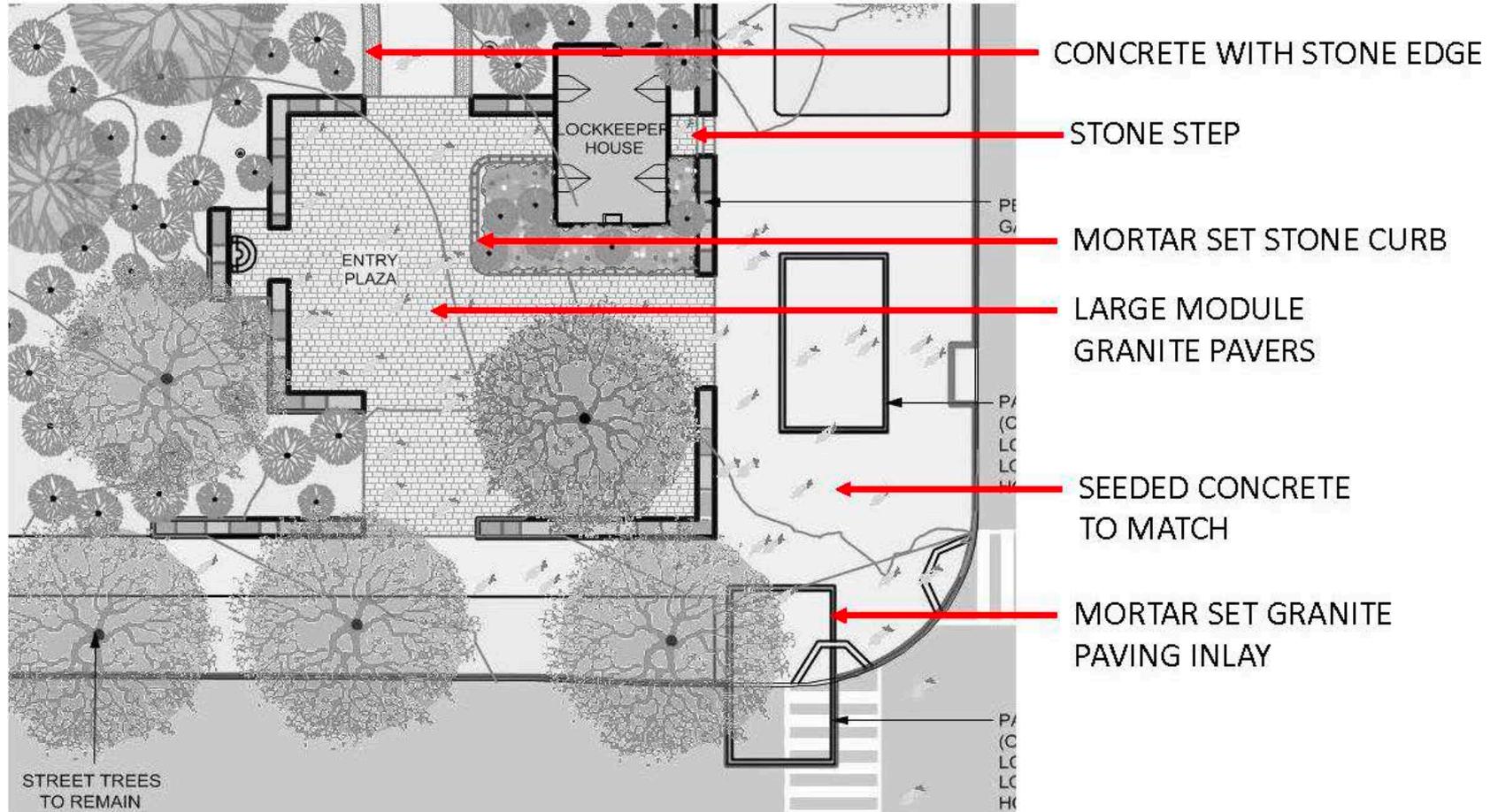
- 1) REPOINT ENTIRE BUILDING FOLLOWING RELOCATION. MATCH HISTORIC MORTAR IN COMPOSITION AND COLOR. SEE DETAIL OF STRIKE PROFILE.

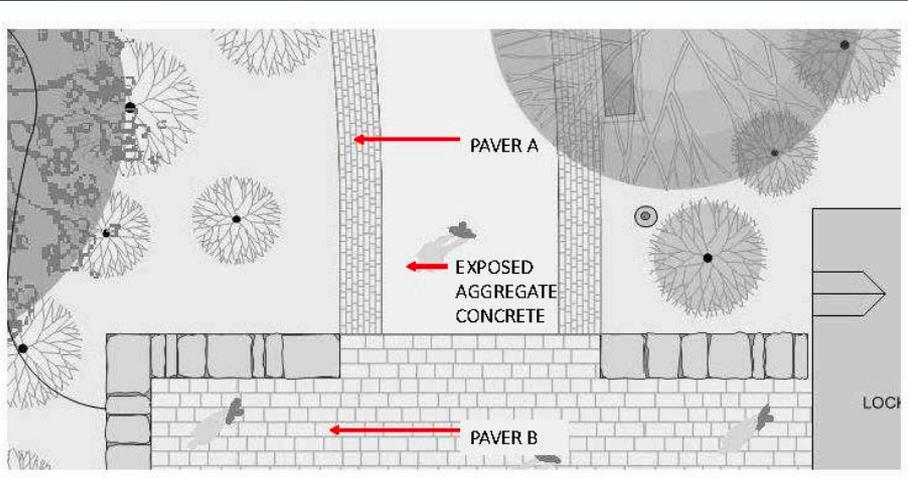
**REPAIR KEYNOTES**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A | REPOINT HAIRLINE CRACK.   |
| B | REPOINT LOOSE STONE PIECE.  |
| C | REMOVE BAD PATCH, APPLY NEW PATCH.  |
| D | SAND STONE.   |
| E | UNSTABLE SANDSTONE. PERFORM CEMENTITIOUS MORTAR REPAIR.   |
| F | PATCH HOLE.   |
| G | CLEAN EXCESSIVE MORTAR, DO NOT DAMAGE STONE.  |
| H | CLEAN CEMENTITIOUS WASH.  |
| I | CLEAN PAINT REMOVAL RESIDUE.  |
| J | CLEAN PAINT SPLATTER.   |
| K | CLEAN BIOLOGICAL GROWTH.  |
| L | REMOVE EXISTING SHINGLE ROOF. REMOVE PLYWOOD SHEATHING BELOW. INSTALL NEW CYPRESS SHINGLE ROOF. |

**LEGEND**

- |  |       |
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|  | STAIN |
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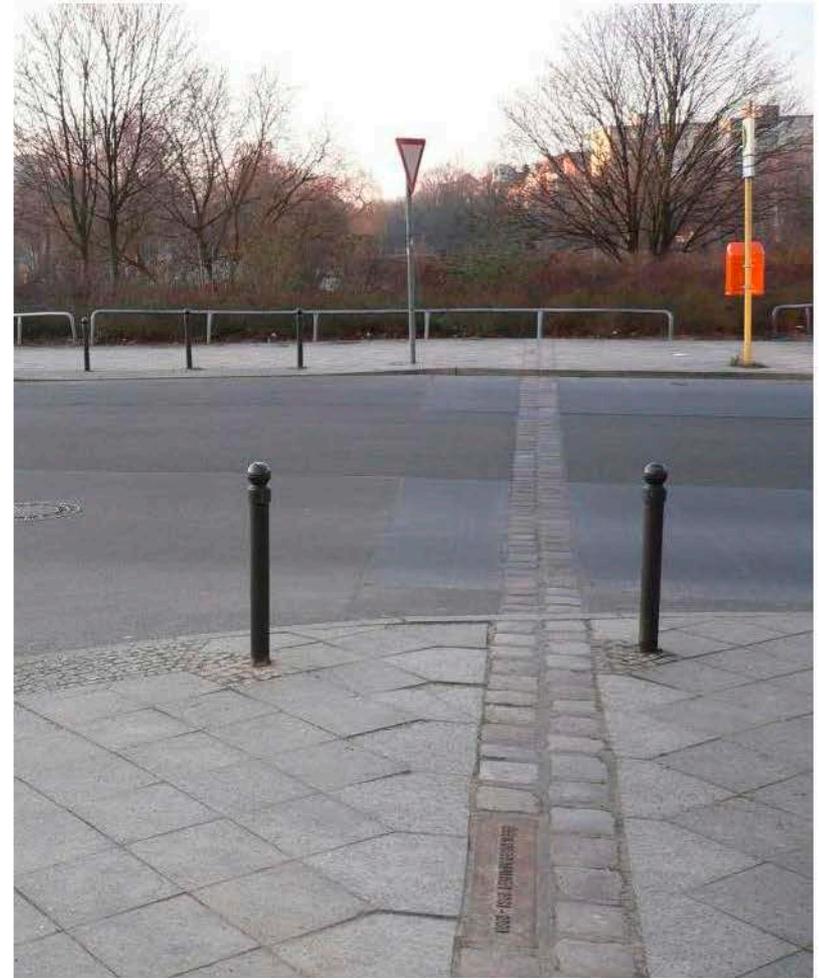




TICONDEROGA

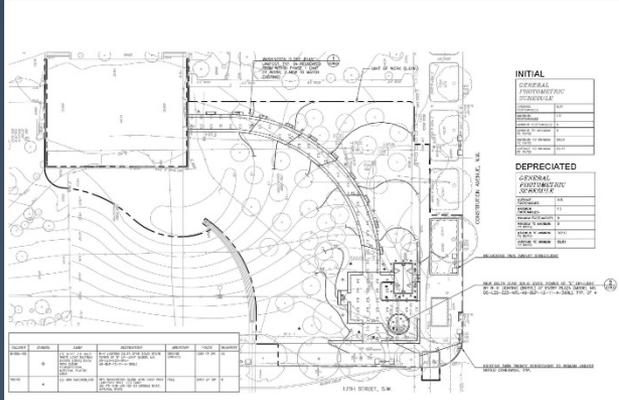
SILVER CLOUD

# Inlaid Paving – Lockkeeper’s House Locations



Example of inlaid paving to mark Lockkeeper’s House former locations

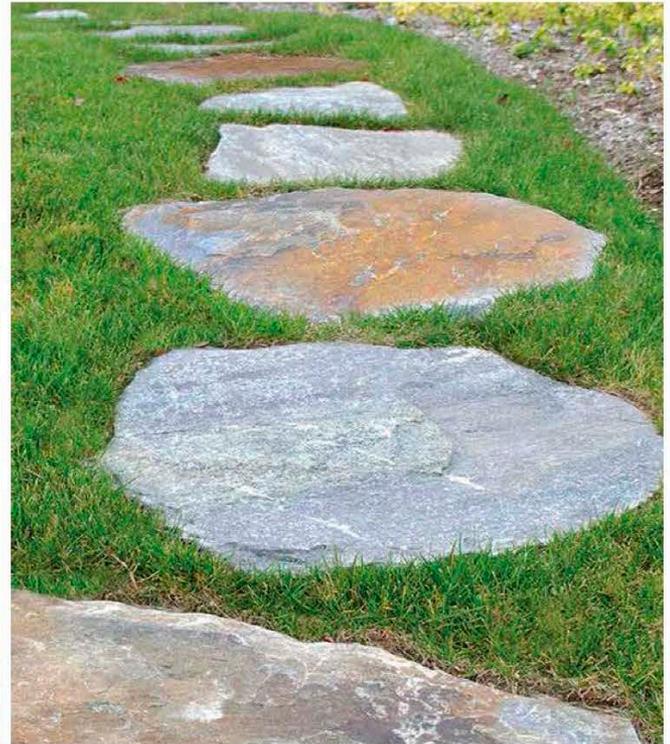
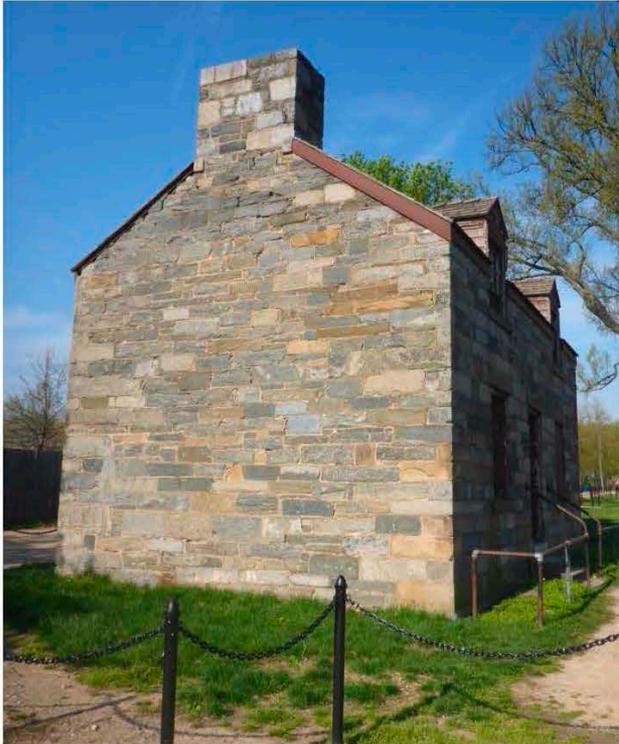




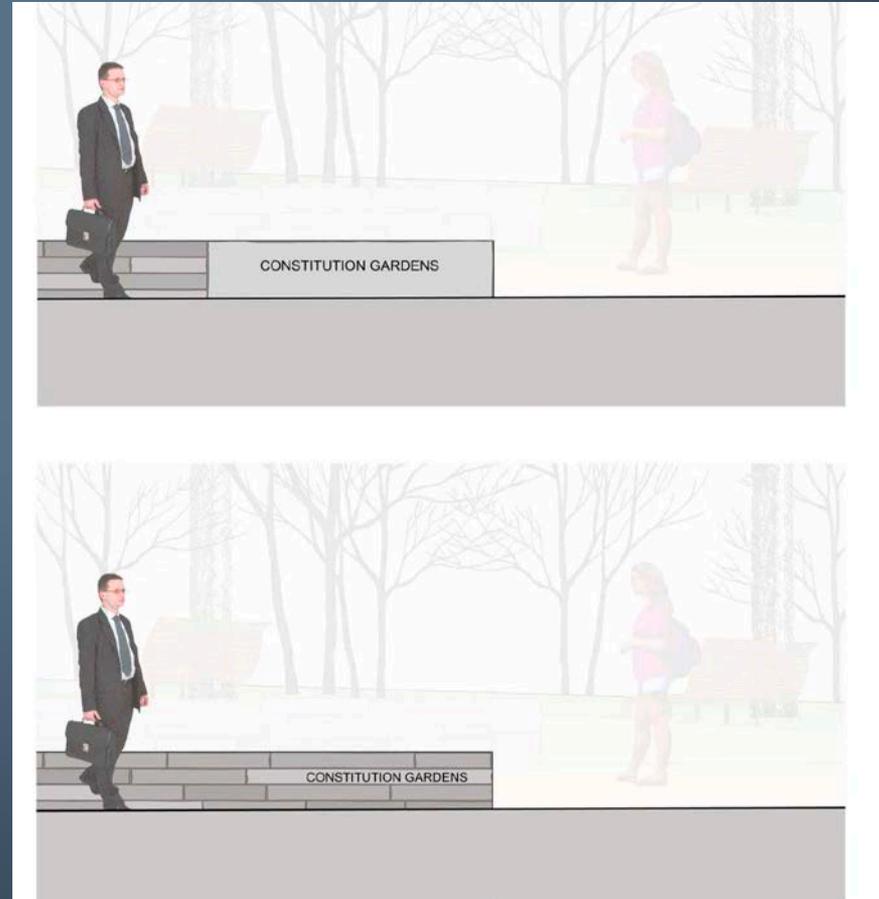
PHASE 1 - PHOTOMETRIC PLAN



# Stone Wall – Granite Selection





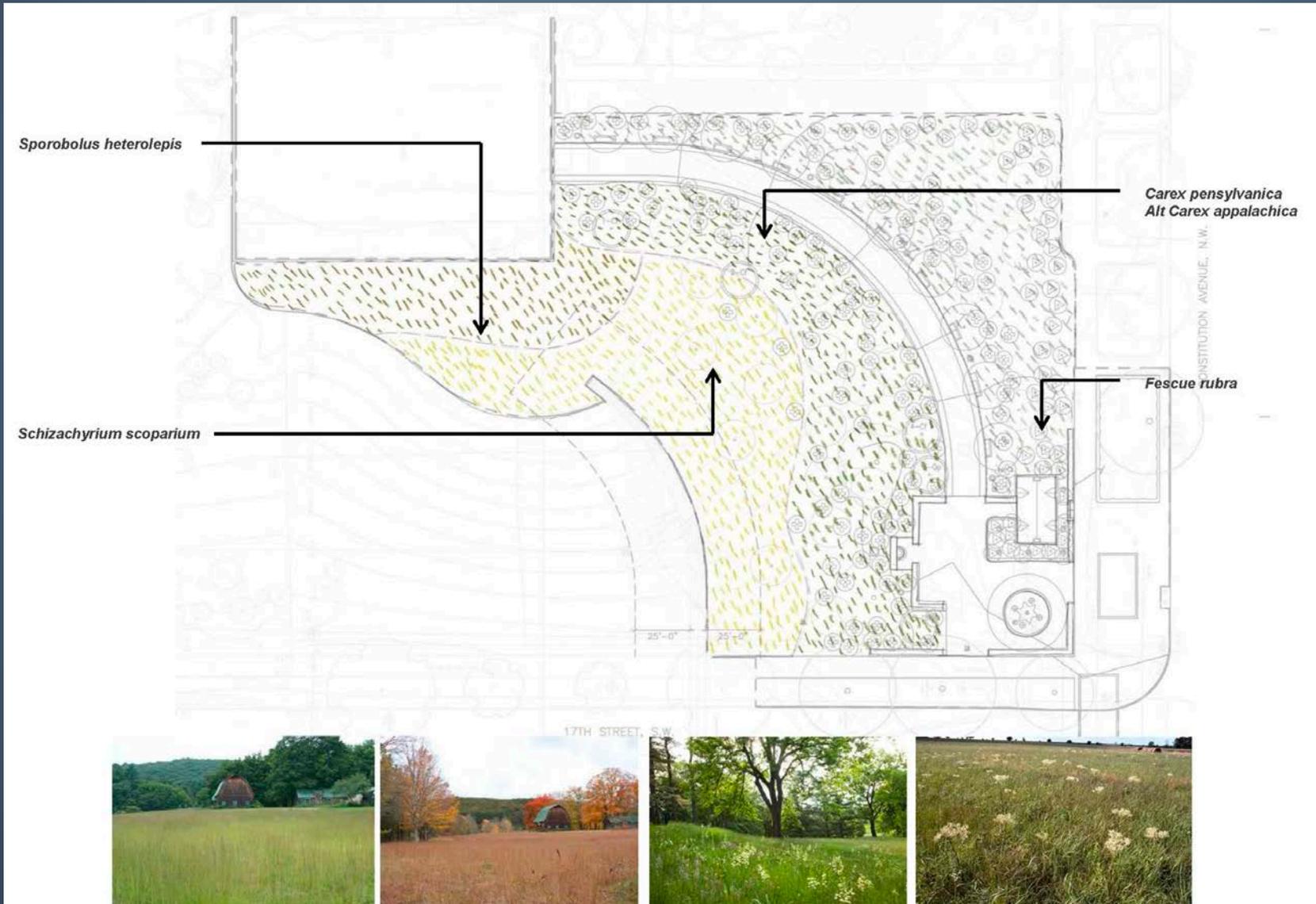




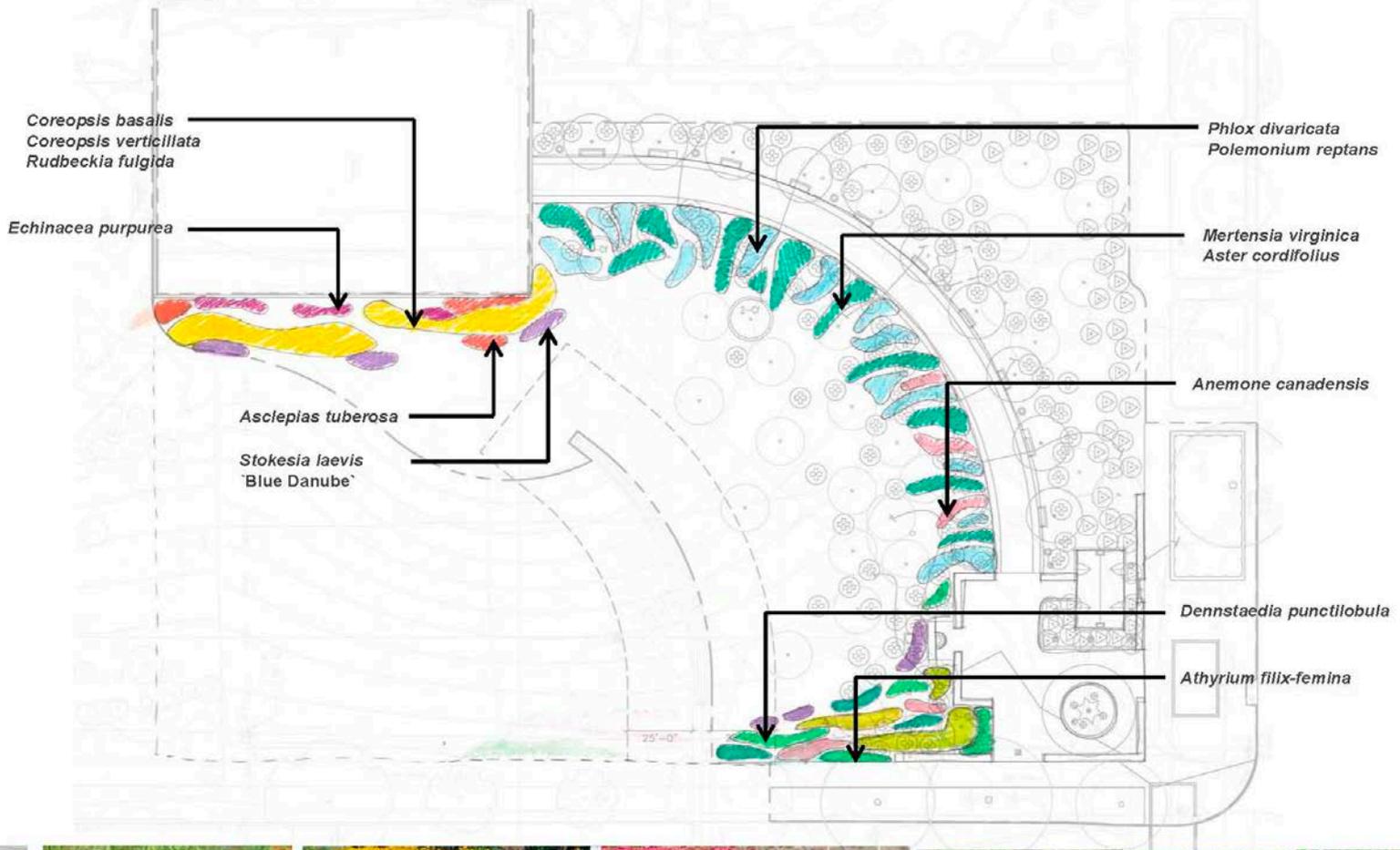
ENHANCED CANOPY AND FLOWERING UNDERSTORY TREES



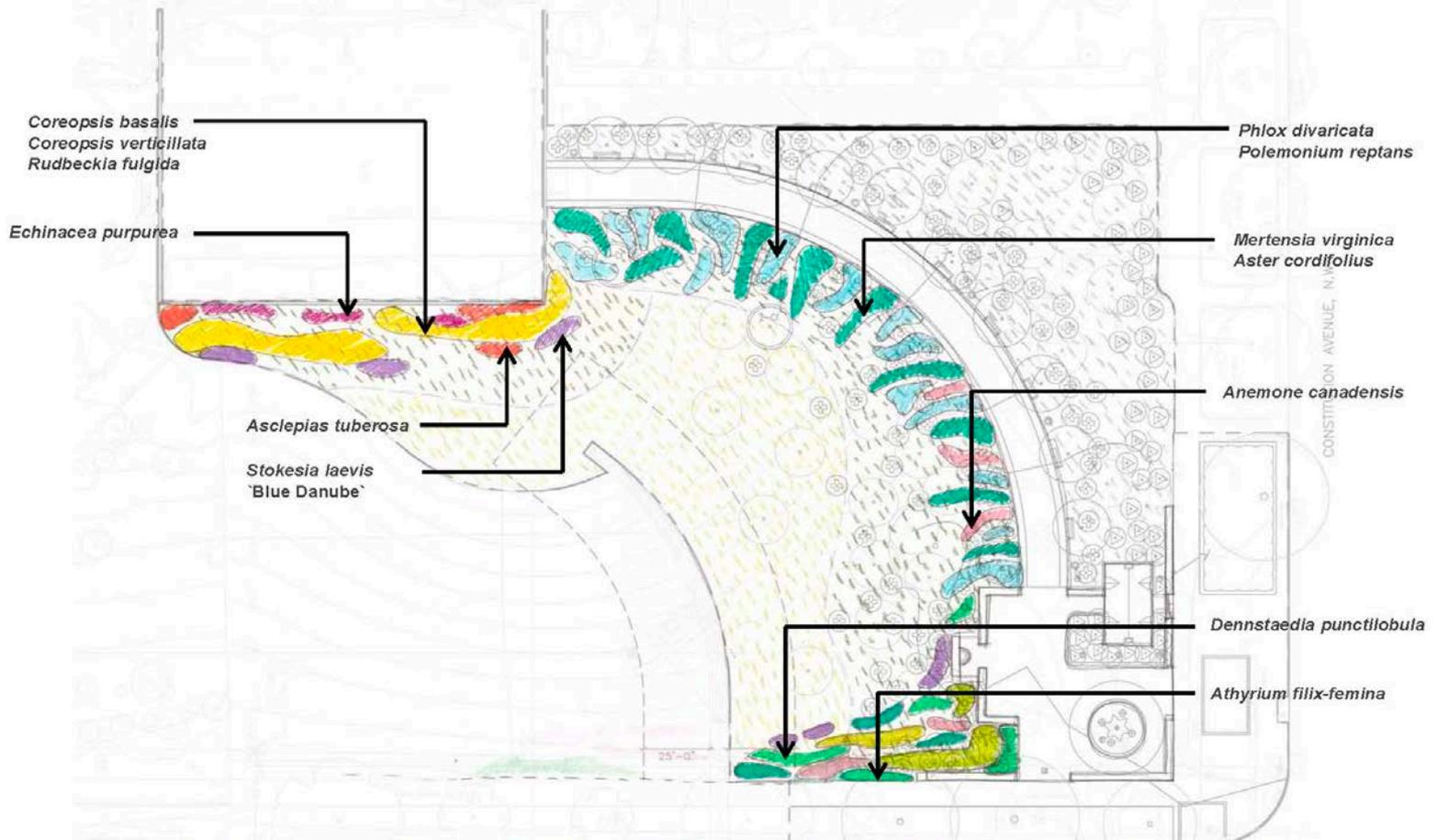
PLANTING – UNDERSTORY TREES



BASE MEADOW PLANTING – NATIVE GRASSES



MEADOW PLANTING – HIGHLIGHT DRIFTS



MEADOW PLANTING – HIGHLIGHT DRIFTS WITHIN MEADOW BASE



FESTUCA RUBRA – NO MOW FESCUE



CAREX APPALACHICA



CAREX PENNSYLVANICA



SCHIZACHYRIUM SCOPARIUM – LITTLE BLUESTEM



SPOROBOLUS HETEROLEPIS - TUFT GRASS





RUDBECKIA FULGIDA  
VAR. FULGIDA



ASCLEPIAS  
TUBEROSA



COREOPSIS  
BASALIS



COREOPSIS  
BASALIS



COREOPSIS  
VERTICILLATA



COREOPSIS  
VERTICILLATA



STOKESIA  
LAEVIS  
'BLUE  
DANUBE'



STOKESIA LAEVIS 'BLUE  
DANUBE'



ECHINACEA  
PURPUREA



ECHINACEA  
PURPUREA



PHLOX DIVARICATA  
'BLUE MOON'



PHLOX  
DIVARICATA  
'BLUE  
MOON'



MERTENSIA  
VIRGINICA



MERTENSIA  
VIRGINICA



POLEMONIUM REPTANS  
'STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN'



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POLEMONIUM REPTANS  
'STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN'



ANEMONE  
CANADENSIS



ANEMONE  
CANADENSIS



ASTER CORDIFOLIUS  
'AVONDALE'



DENNSTAEDTIA  
PUNCTILOBULA



DENNSTAEDTIA  
PUNCTILOBULA



ATHYRIUM FELIX  
FEMINA



ATHYRIUM FELIX  
FEMINA

