



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: July 11, 2019

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Exterior Lighting and Revised Gate at Planet Word</b> 925 13th Street, NW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7932
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 21.00(38.00)44963
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> District Projects in the Central Area per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of revised final site and building plans
	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve revised final site and building plans
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Staff Presentation

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development has submitted revised final site and building development plans to rehabilitate and modernize the Franklin School for use as Planet Word. The Franklin School is located at 925 13<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, across from Franklin Square. Currently, the site is being maintained by the District of Columbia. The property line is the exterior building wall on the south, north, and west sides and at the face of 1200 K Street, NW on the east side.

The Commission reviewed and approved the preliminary and final site and building development plans at the March 7, 2019 Commission meeting, and previously provided comments on the concept design at its Commission meeting in December 2017.

The current application for revised final site development plan reviews includes exterior building lighting and a revised design for the entry gate to the new plaza from K Street. During the previous review discussion, Commissioners requested the applicant consider making changes to the proposed entry gate off K Street, to make it less aggressive in its design and also to ensure that it provided the necessary security functions when closed, in terms of its height and scale.

### KEY INFORMATION

- The Franklin School was constructed in 1869, and designed by Adolf Cluss, who designed many public buildings in Washington, between 1860 and 1890. Cluss characterized the architecture of the school as “Renaissance” Revival, yet it also demonstrates elements of both Romanesque and Gothic style details as well.

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- The Franklin School was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, and became a National Historic Landmark in 1996. It is also listed as an individual landmark on the DC Inventory of Historic Places as of 1964. While there are over 90,000 listings on the country's National Register of Historic Places, only about 2,500 are recognized as National Historic Landmarks.
  - Once completed, the Franklin School was one of eight modern urban public-school buildings constructed in Washington to house the District of Columbia's comprehensive system of universal public education. In 1925 the school was discontinued, and it became the Franklin Administration Building occupied by the Board of Education until 1968. From 2002 to 2008, the building was used by the District as a homeless shelter.
  - A 1990s project replaced all the exterior windows, replaced missing exterior details and window hoods, and the gable in the mansard roof.
  - On December 7, 2017, the Commission reviewed the concept plans for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School and supported the District of Columbia's vision to rehabilitate and modernize the Franklin School to provide a new experiential museum use for the public.
  - The Commission approved the preliminary and final site and building plans for the Franklin School rehabilitation project at its March 7, 2019 meeting.
  - The Commission is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Under NCPC's new NEPA regulations, staff has determined that the level of work does not trigger a full NEPA review and is applying a categorical exclusion.
  - During August 2018, prior to the conclusion of the Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation process and without proper building permits, the applicant removed significant amounts of interior historic fabric from the Franklin School including all original plaster wall and ceiling finishes in the classrooms, several original brick structural walls including former classroom and cloakroom walls, all historic wainscoting (except for a small section on the third floor main hall), the majority of the baseboard, picture-rail and related trim, all pressed tin ceilings, the ceilings and floor structures above the third floor, and large areas of flooring.
  - The un-authorized work resulted in the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) issuing a stop-work order on August 31, 2018, following a site visit on August 30, 2018, by the Section 106 consulting parties, including the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), National Park Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and DCRA inspectors, to review the amount of historic fabric removed.

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- In consultation with the DC SHPO and Consulting parties, NCPC determined that the removal of historic fabric and other aspects of the project constituted adverse effects on the Franklin School, as documented in the Notification of Adverse Effect Determination Letter, dated September 20, 2018.
  - To address the extensive removal of interior historic fabric and character-defining materials and floorplan spaces prior to the completion of the Section 106 process, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was prepared in consultation with the consulting parties to mitigate the adverse effects resulting from the removal of interior historic fabric and floorplan elements, and requires the replication of some of the character-defining features that were removed, including replication of original classroom and administrative office features, and replication of design details including wainscoting, trim, flooring, and wall surfaces.
  - The MOA was executed on December 10, 2018 amongst the DC SHPO, ACHP, NPS, Franklin School Development, and NCPC, and includes the process and steps necessary for further consultation regarding ongoing design review, including the new entrance plaza, signage, and exterior lighting, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effects to the historic Franklin School.
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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the revised final site and building plans for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School, consisting of exterior lighting and a revised entry gate off K Street, NW.

**Notes** that based on Commission discussion at the March meeting, the applicant revised the entry gate off K Street to include a design that relates to the Speaking Willow Sculpture in the new entrance terrace.

**Notes** that any improvements in public space will require a public space permit and coordination with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation Public Space Regulation Division

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>December 7, 2017</b> - Approval of comments on concept plan.</li><li>- <b>March 7, 2019</b> – Approval of preliminary and final site and building development plans.</li></ul>
<b>Remaining actions (anticipated)</b>	– None.

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## PROJECT ANALYSIS

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is proposing to rehabilitate the Franklin School, located at 925 13<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, into Planet Word, an experiential museum. In order to rehabilitate and modernize the Franklin School as an adaptive use for the museum and future restaurant, modifications to the building require altering original features, primarily of the interior of the building.

On December 7, 2017, the Commission reviewed the concept plans for the rehabilitation and supported the project. On March 7, 2019, the Commission reviewed and approved the preliminary and final site and building development plans. The exterior lighting strategy was not a component of this approval, with the Commission noting that the approved monument signs were not internally lit and that the applicant would submit all exterior lighting (for both the building and signs) for consultation per the MOA and to the Commission for review and approval once it has been developed. During Commission discussion at the March 7 meeting, Commissioners also requested the applicant to consider revisiting the design of the entry gate off K Street, to attempt to make it less aggressive in appearance while providing the necessary security functional requirements when closed.

### *Lighting*

The exterior lighting proposed consists of flushed inground mounted lighting for the approved monument and banner signs, and flood lighting for the west façade of the Franklin School, mounted in the existing areaway, stair landing, and planters, all on the west elevation of the building. The approved signs and the proposed lighting for the signs and the west façade of the building are located outside of the building property line and in public space. Therefore, staff notes that any improvements in public space will require a public space permit and coordination with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation Office of Public Space.

Overall, staff believes the lighting approach is appropriate and sensitive to the design of the building. It is minimal in its approach by only providing focused lighting to the three signs and to the main façade of the building, facing Franklin Park.

### *Revised Entry Gate*

The previous entry gate design was intended to resemble a book opening and closing. The Commission had previously commented on the heaviness of that design, and questioned whether the low point in the gate “fan” would allow someone to easily climb over, posing a security issue. Overall, the Commission supported relating the design of the gate to aspects of the museum mission.

Based on the Commission discussion at the March 7 meeting, the applicant has revised the gate design. The new design now relates to the vocabulary of the Speaking Willow sculpture located in

the new terrace and provides both security and transparency to appreciate the sculpture and space when Planet Word is not open. The abstracted organic tree pattern borrows on the regular rhythm of the existing railings in the school without being a literal re-interpretation. The panels are of the same aluminum powder coated water jet cut material and color as the previously approved gate. Thus, staff notes that the revised entry gate off K Street includes a design that relates to the Speaking Willow Sculpture in the new entrance terrace.

The gate is comprised of three sliding panels that retract behind a fourth fixed panel when opened. No component of the gate is directly attached to the historic building. It is also not connected to the building at the east end of the site. The sliding panels open away from the entry stair and ramp landing when in the open position. When retracted, the panels screen the mid landing of the ramp while retaining an open sense for the terrace. The Speaking Willow is visible and framed both while the gate is open. When the gate is closed, passers-by can see still the Speaking Willow and the rest of the courtyard, avoiding the feeling of a gated community.

Overall, the gate design appears somewhat more inviting than the previous design. The issue of scaling the gate also has been addressed, according to the applicant. The lighting approach is also appropriate and sympathetic to the building design. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission approve the revised final site and building plans for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School, consisting of exterior lighting and a revised entry gate off K Street.**

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

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

The rehabilitation and modernization of the Franklin School is consistent with policies in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the project now meets the goals and objectives of the Federal Historic Preservation Element which encourages the management of historic properties.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

The Commission is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). During August 2018, prior to the conclusion of the Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation process and without proper building permits, the applicant removed significant amounts of interior historic fabric from Franklin School including all original plaster wall and ceiling finishes in the classrooms, several original bricks structural walls including former classroom and cloakroom walls, all historic wainscoting (except for a small section on the third floor main hall), the majority of the baseboard, picture-rail and related trim, all pressed tin ceilings, the ceilings and floor structures above the third floor, and large areas of flooring.

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The un-authorized work resulted in a stop-work order being issued by the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) on August 31, 2018, following a site visit on August 30, 2018, by the Section 106 consulting parties, including the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), National Park Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and DCRA inspectors, to review the amount of historic fabric removed.

In consultation with the DC SHPO and Consulting parties, NCPC determined that the removal of historic fabric and other aspects of the Project constituted adverse effects on the Franklin School, as documented in the Notification of Adverse Effect Determination Letter, dated September 20, 2018.

To address the extensive removal of interior historic fabric and character-defining materials and floorplan spaces prior to the completion of the Section 106 process, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was prepared in consultation with the consulting parties to mitigate the adverse effects resulting from the removal of interior historic fabric and floorplan elements, and requires the replication of some of the character-defining features that were removed, including replication of original classroom and administrative office features, and replication of design details including wainscoting, trim, flooring, and wall surfaces.

The MOA was executed on December 10, 2018 amongst the DC SHPO, ACHP, NPS, Franklin School Development, and NCPC, and includes the process and steps necessary for further consultation regarding ongoing design review, including the new entrance plaza, signage, and exterior lighting, to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effects to the historic Franklin School. As part of the executed MOA, NCPC staff conducts a monthly site visit to the Franklin School to ensure that the on-going work is in conformance with the MOA.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

The Commission is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Under NCPC's new NEPA regulations, staff has determined that the level of work does not trigger a full NEPA review and is applying a categorical exclusion, specifically #6 for improvements to District government agency proposals that meet applicable criteria.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

The Committee forwarded the proposed final site and building plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies, with the exception noted here. DDOT stated that the size of the signs in public space did not meet public space requirements, and further discussion would be necessary for with the Public Space Committee.

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

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is not submitting the project to CFA for review because it sits outside the Shipstead Luce boundary and because the District has leased the building to a private organization for a 99-year lease. CFA participated in early consultation meetings.

### **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov):

- Submission Package

Prepared by Lee Webb  
06/18/2019

### **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

# Exterior Lighting and Revised Gate at Planet Word

925 13th Street, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Revised Site and Building Development Plans

District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

# Project Summary

**Commission Meeting Date:** July 11, 2019

**NCPC Review Authority:** 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e)

**Applicant Request:** Approval of Revised Site and Building Development Plans

**Session:** Staff Presentation

**NCPC Review Officer:** Lee Webb

**NCPC File Number:** 7932

## Project Summary:

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is requesting approval of revised final site development plans to rehabilitate and modernize the Franklin School for use as Planet Word. The Franklin School is located at 925 13<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, across from Franklin Square. Currently, the site is being maintained by the District of Columbia. The property line is the exterior building wall on the south, north, and west sides and at the face of 1200 K Street, NW on the east side.

The project reviewed a final site and building development approval at the March 7, 2019 Commission meeting, and previously concept comments from the Commission in December 2017. The current application for revised final site development plan reviews includes exterior building lighting and a revised design for the entry gate to the new plaza from K Street.

# Project Summary

The exterior lighting proposed consists of flushed inground mounted lighting for the approved monument and banner signs, and flood lighting for the west façade of the Franklin School, mounted in the existing areaway, stair landing, and planters, all on the west elevation of the building.

In terms of the revised entry gate from K Street, the revised gate design relates to the vocabulary of the Speaking Willow sculpture featured in the new terrace and provides both security and transparency to appreciate the sculpture and space when Planet Word is not open.

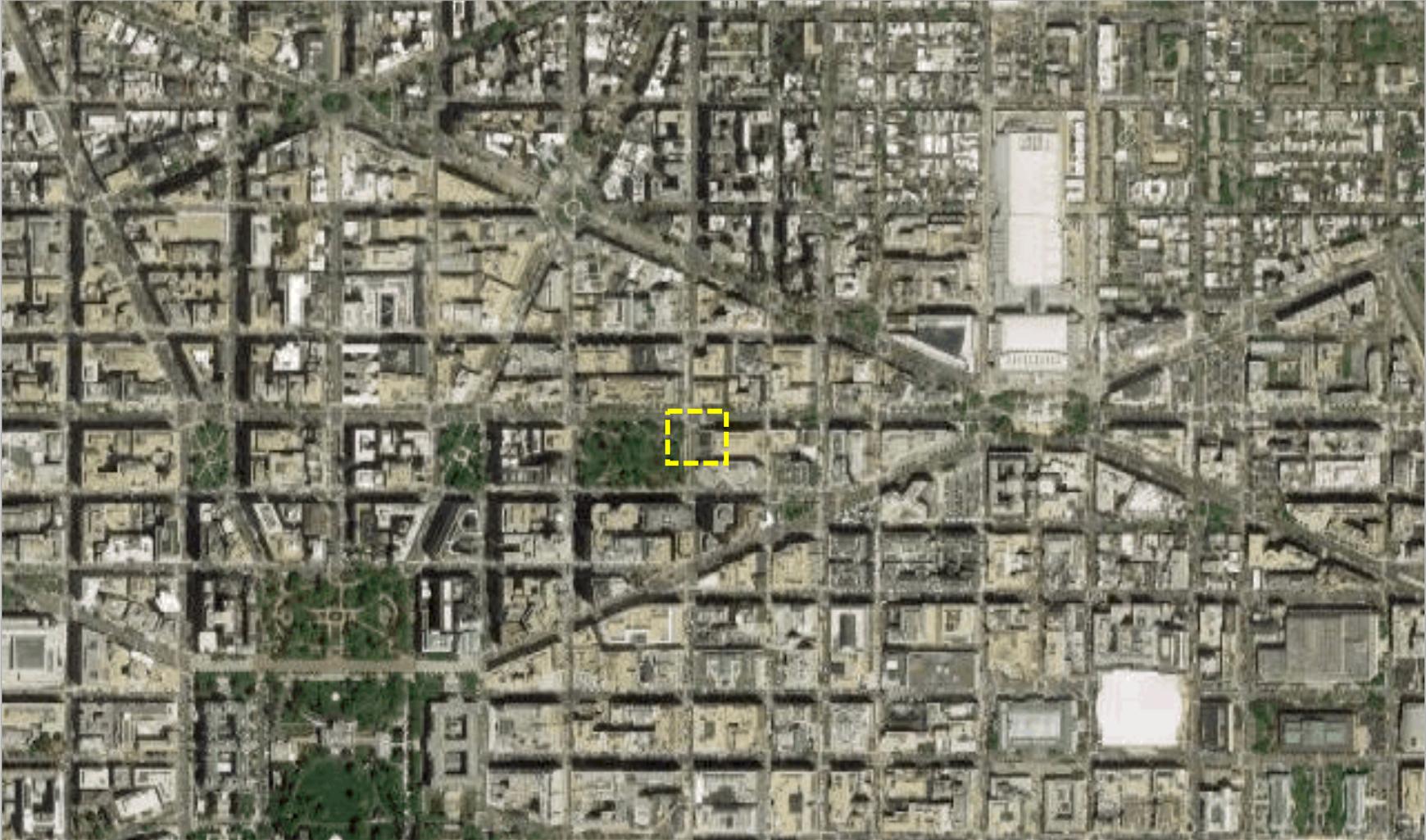
The gate is comprised of three sliding panels that retract behind a fourth fixed panel when opened. No component of the gate is directly attached to the historic building. It is also not connected to the building at the east end of the site. The sliding panels open away from the entry stair and ramp landing when in the open position. When retracted, the panels screen the mid landing of the ramp while retaining an open sense for the terrace.

The Speaking Willow is visible and framed both while the gate is open. When the gate is closed; the passers-by can see the Speaking Willow and the rest of the courtyard, avoiding the feeling of a gated community. The abstracted organic tree pattern borrows on the regular rhythm of the existing railings in the school without being a literal re-interpretation. The panels are of the same aluminum powder coated water jet cut material and color as the previously approved gate.

# Franklin School

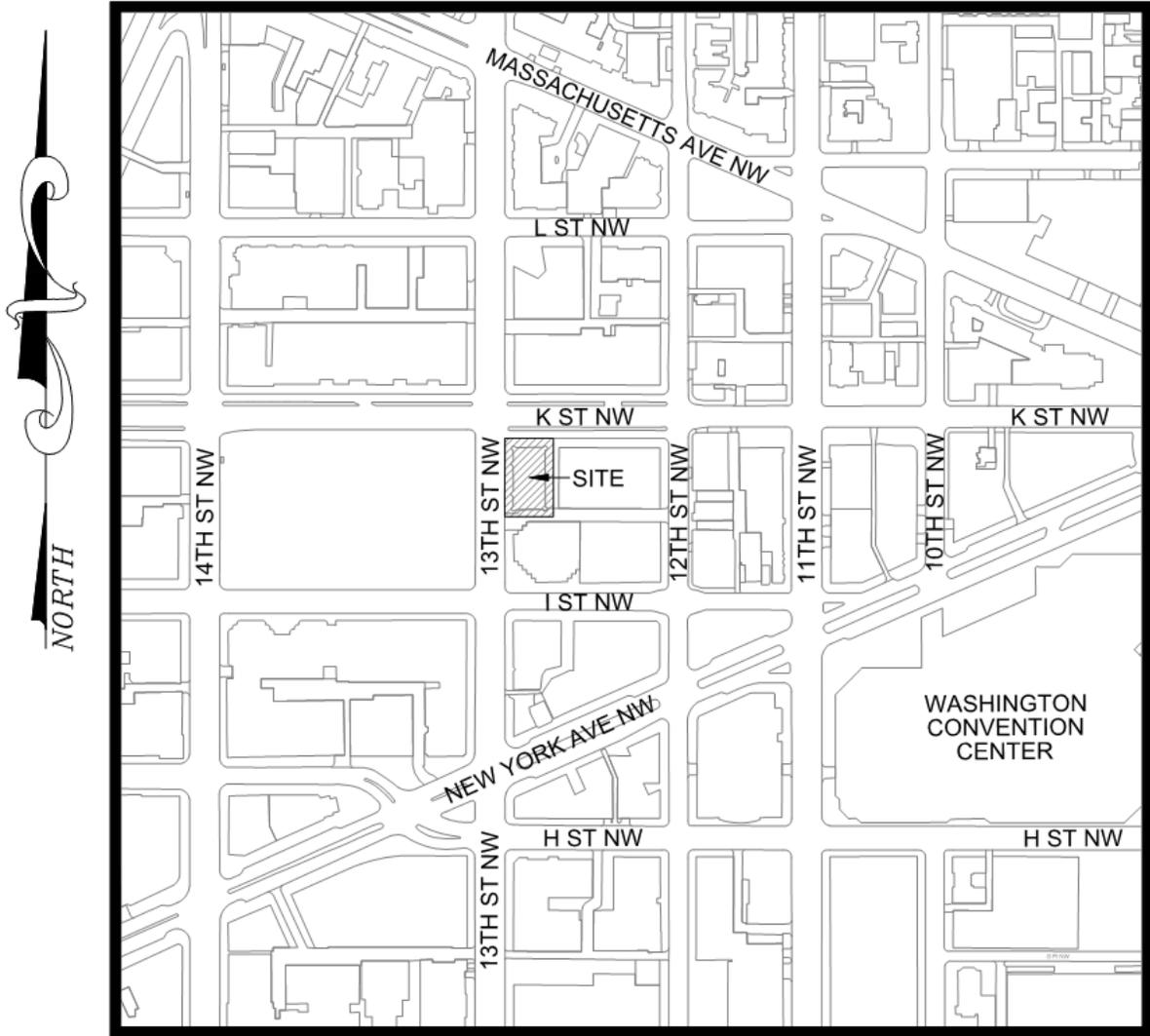


# Site Location



Location Map

# Location Map



VICINITY MAP

# Existing View , South at I Street Alley along 13<sup>th</sup> Street



Existing View, South approach from I St along 13th St NW

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# Existing View, Looking East from Franklin Square



Existing View, Looking East from Franklin Square

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# Existing View, Looking East from Franklin Square



Existing View, Looking East from Franklin Square

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# Existing View, Looking East at Corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and K Streets



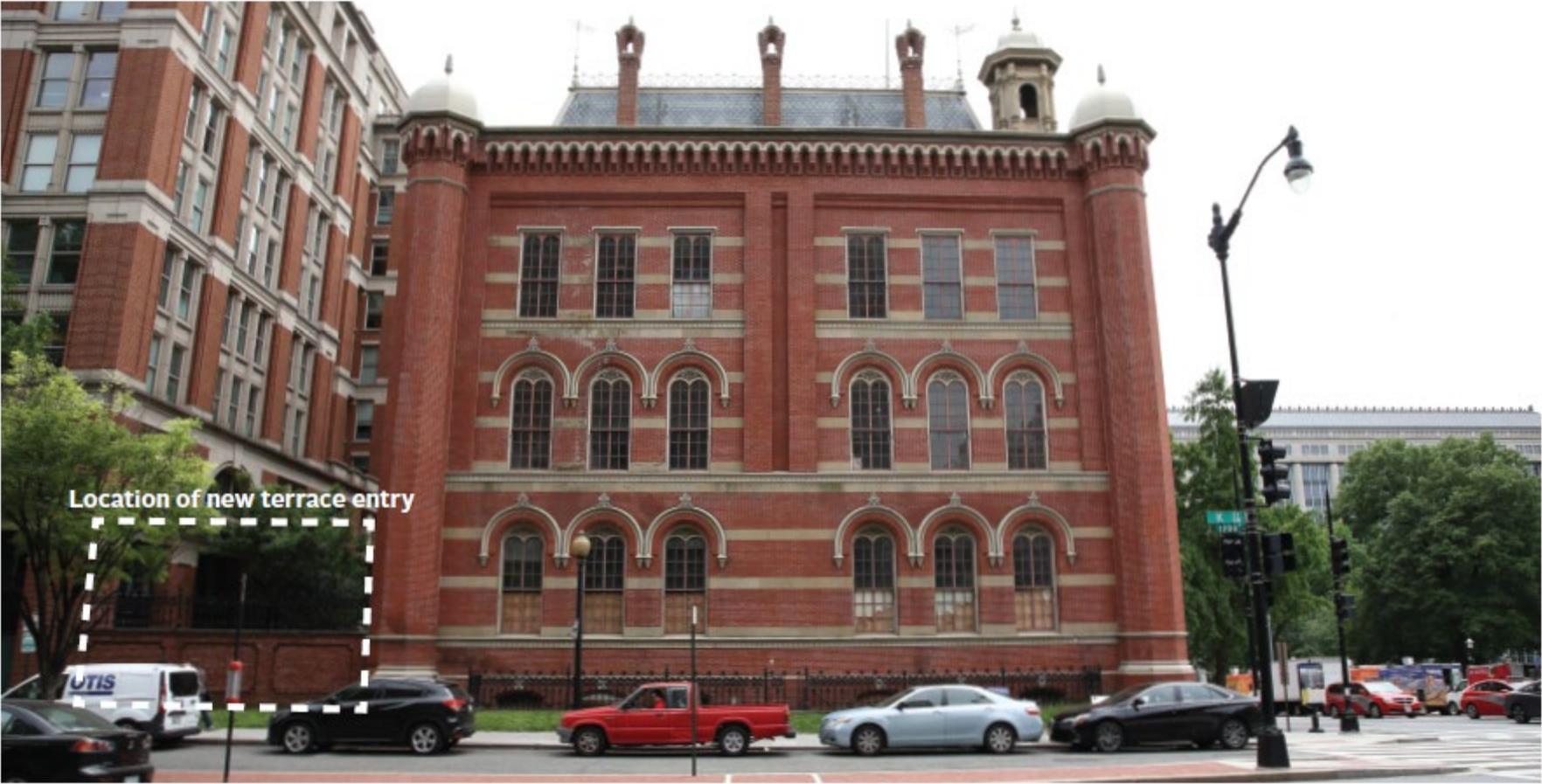
Existing View, Looking East from Franklin Square at corner of 13th and K St NW

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# Existing View, Looking South from Opposite K Street, NW



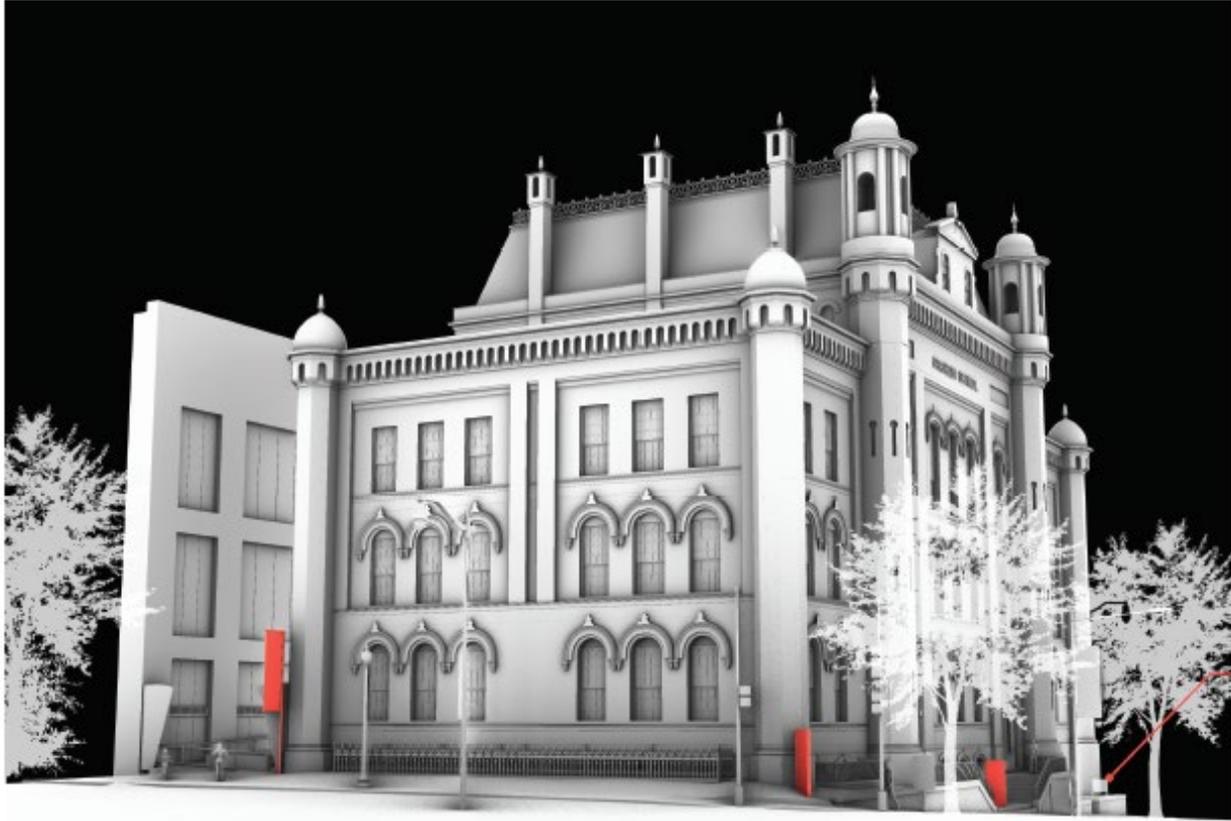
Existing View, Looking South from opposite K St  
Future terrace entrance on left where existing brick non-historical wall is located

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# Previously Approved Exterior Signage Locations



Placeholder for Restaurant Signage

Previously approved exterior signage locations

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# Detailed View of Approved Signage from 13<sup>th</sup> Street



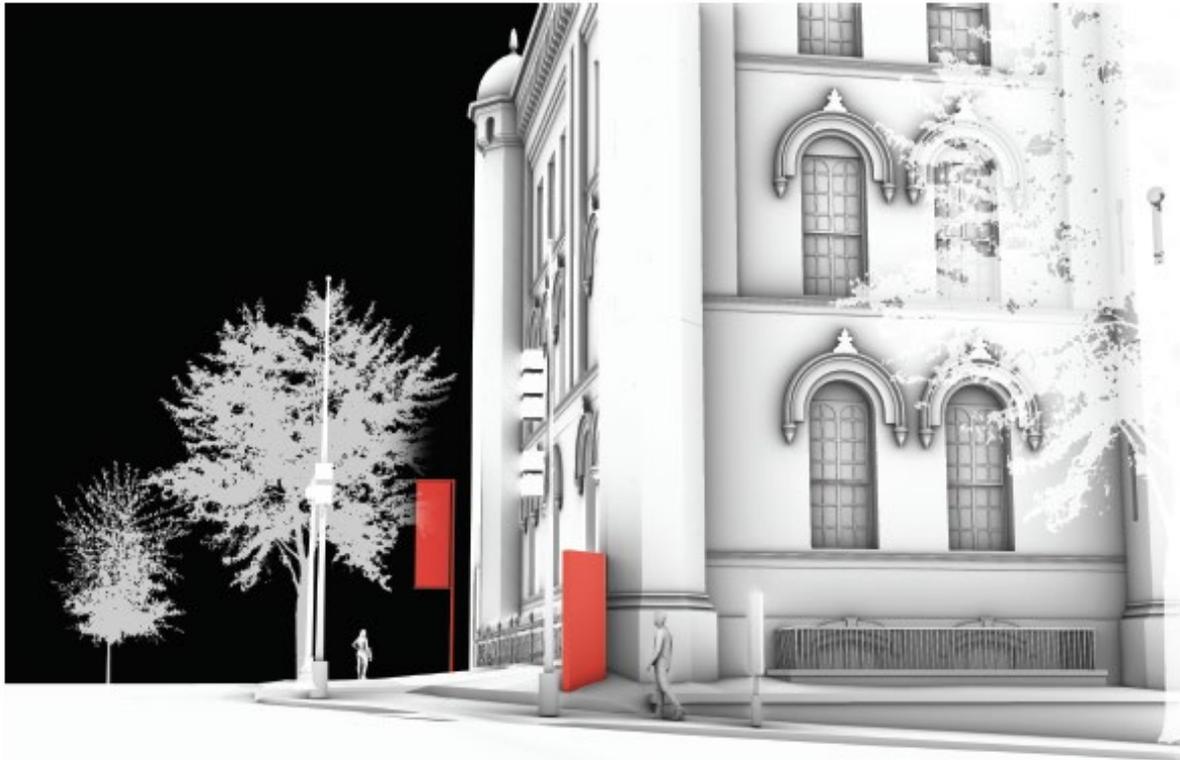
Detailed view of approved signage from 13th Street NW looking north to K Street NW

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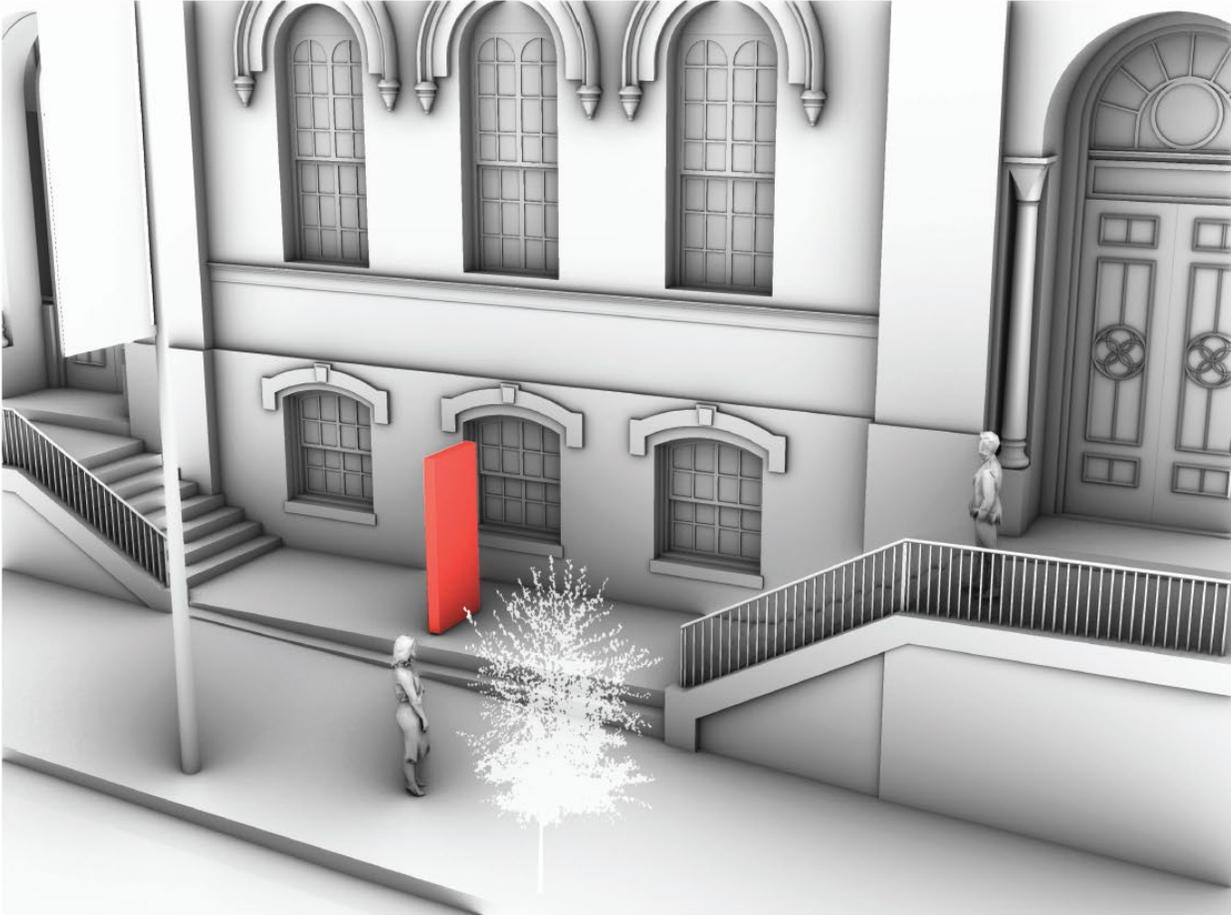
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# Detailed View of Approved Signage from Corner of K and 13th



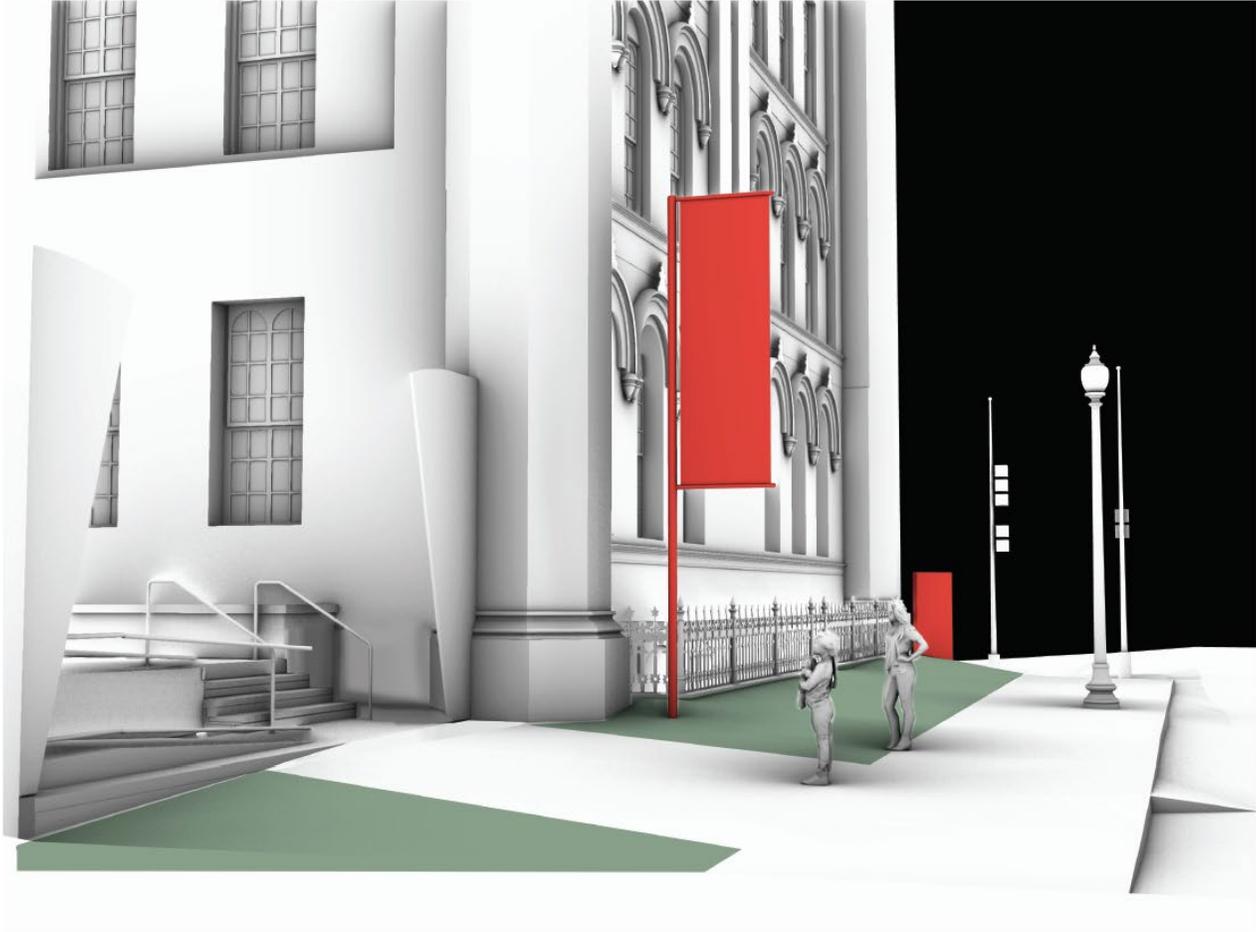
Detailed view of approved signage from the corner of 13th and K Streets NW looking east

# Detailed View of Approved Signage at Historic Entrance



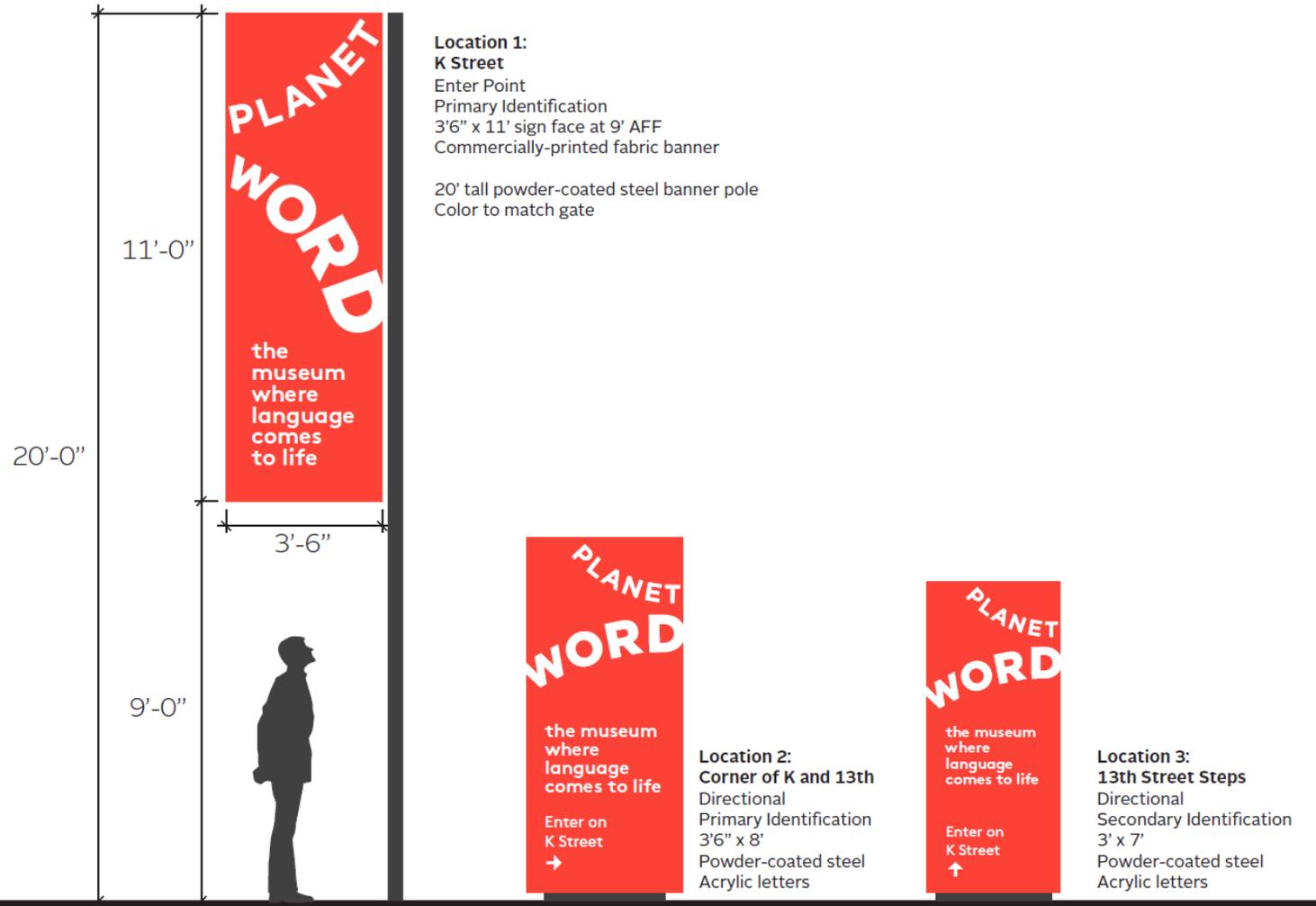
Detailed view of approved signage at historic entrance

# Detailed View of Approved Signage at New ADA Entrance



Detailed view of approved signage at new ADA entrance

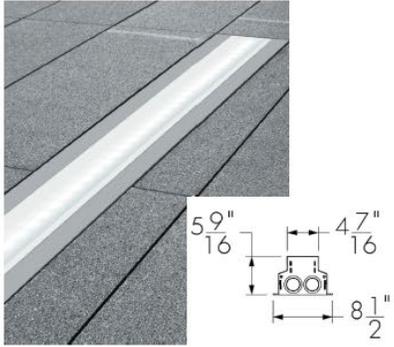
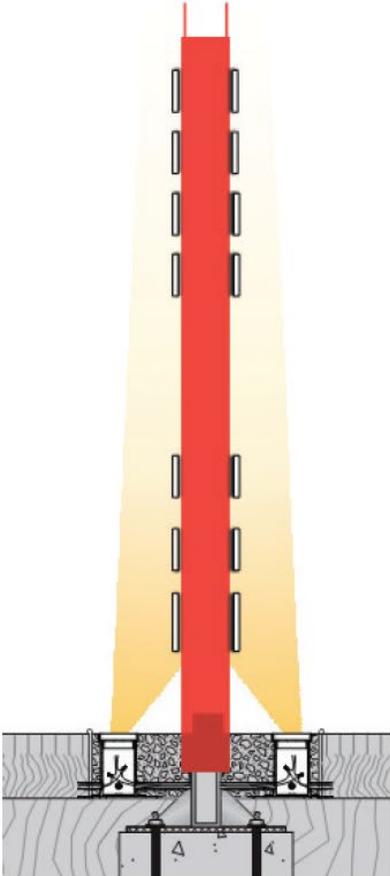
# Detailed View of Approved Signage



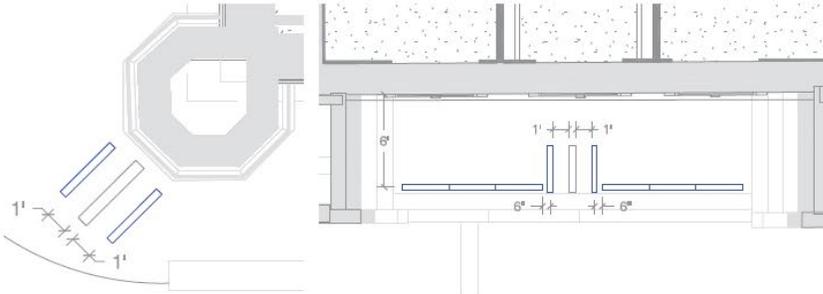
Detailed view of approved signage

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# Proposed Flush to Grade Lighting for Monument Sign

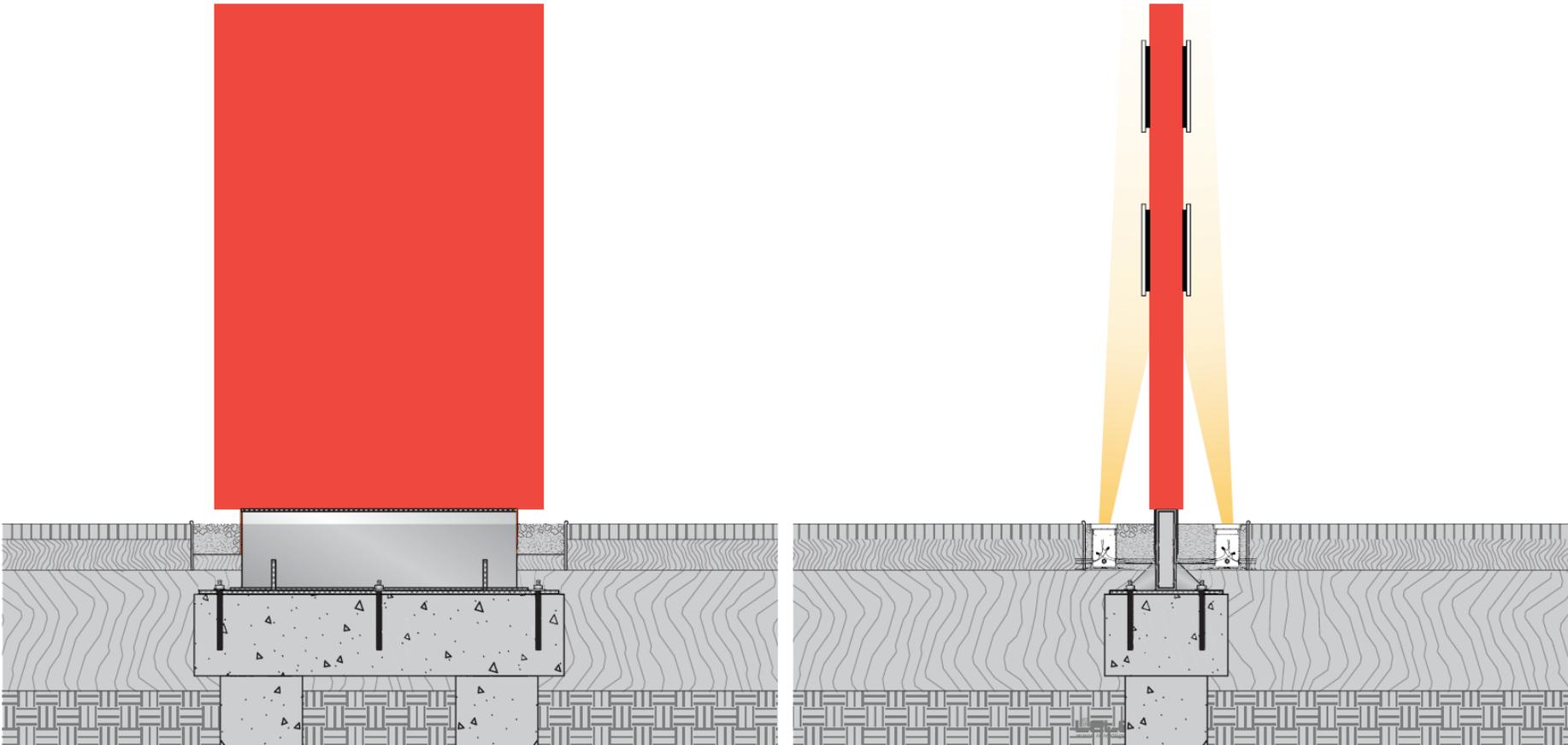


Flush linear ingrade uplighting for sign and building



Proposed flush to grade lighting details of monument sign at paved entry

# Proposed Flush to Grade Lighting for Monument Sign

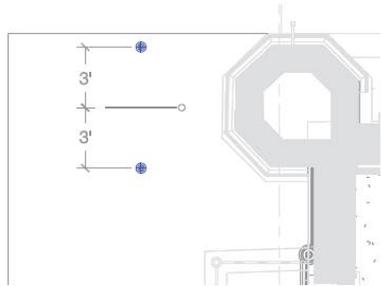
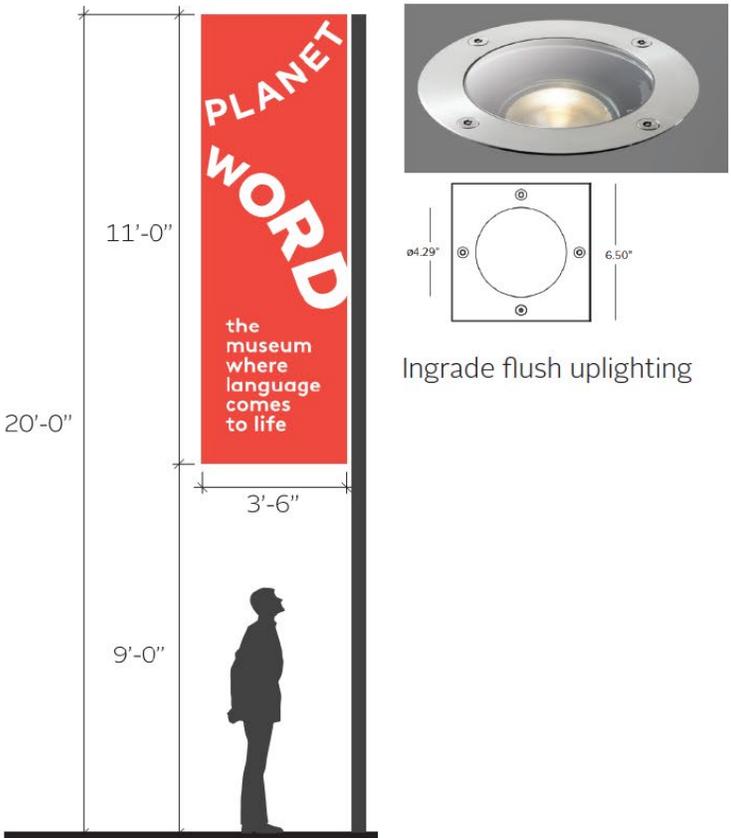
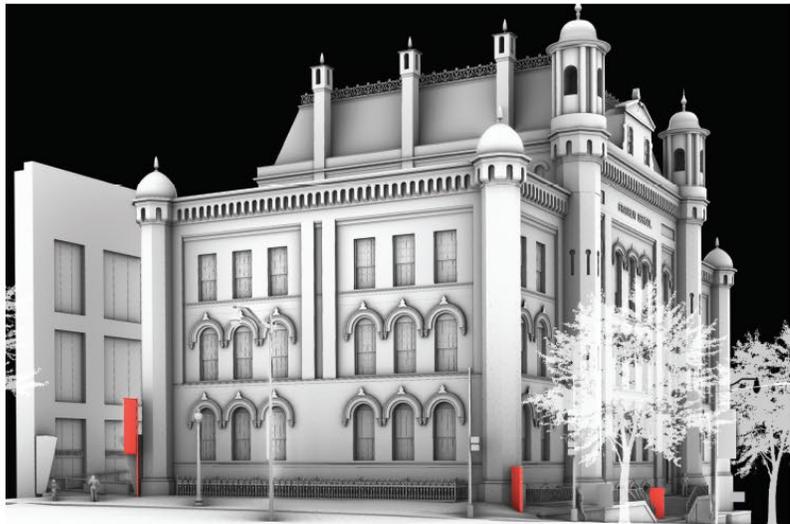


Sign Cabinet: Fabricated metal closed pan sign construction powder coated orange

Lettering: Brushed satin stainless st externally illuminated from in-grou linear LED fixture

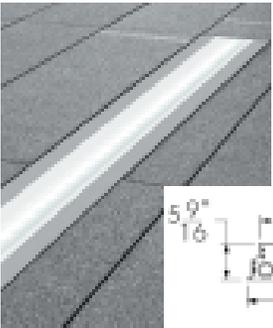
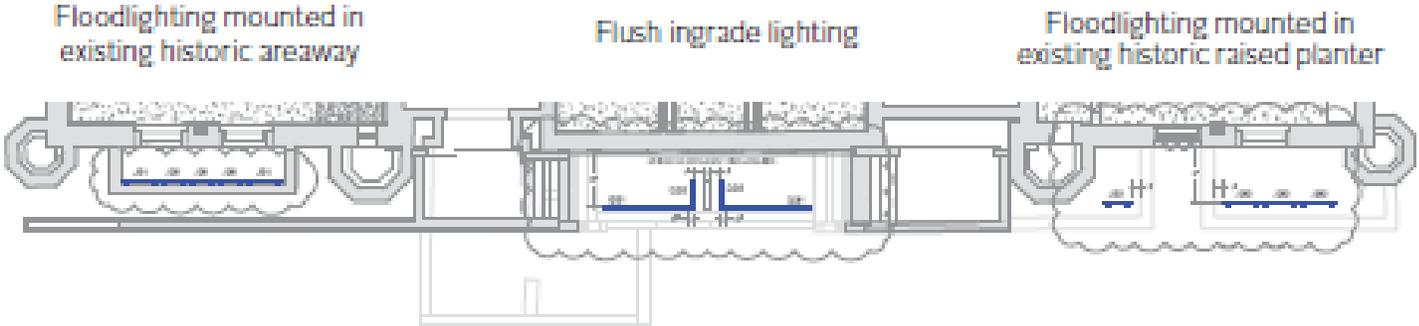
Proposed flush to grade lighting details at grass area

# Proposed Flush to Grade Lighting for Banner Sign

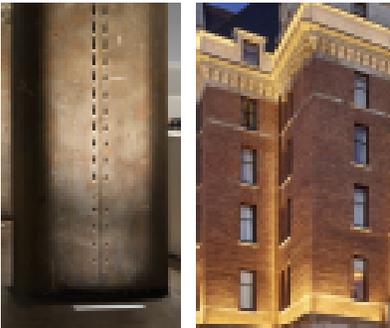


Proposed flush to grade lighting details at banner sign in grass area

# Proposed Lighting for West Façade of Franklin School



Flush in-grade lighting



Floodlighting mounted in existing historic areaway



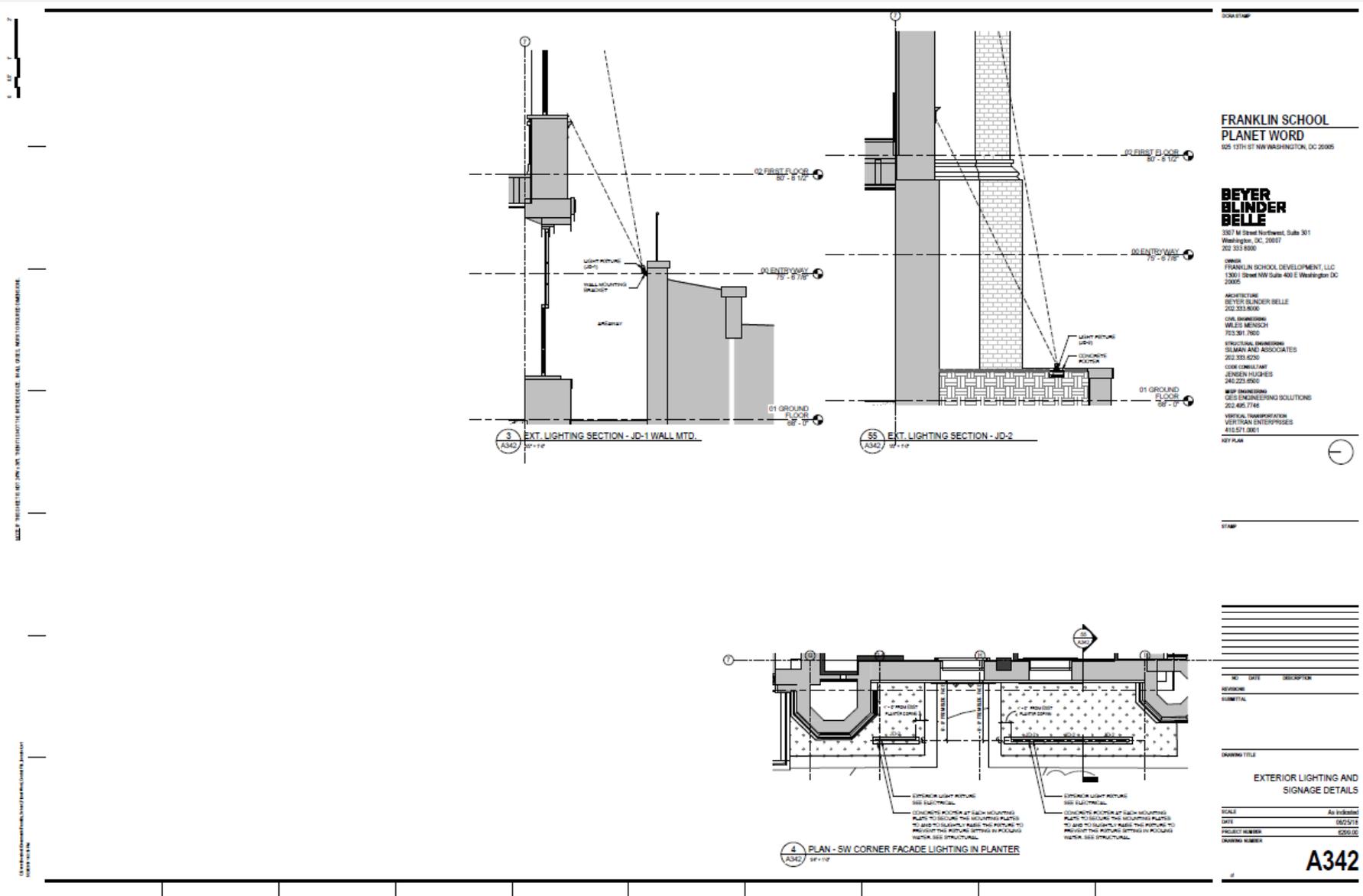
**BEYER BLINDER BELLE** Proposed West Façade lighting - all proposed flush at grade or hidden inside the northwest area way as shown on the partial plan  
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# Details for Lighting





# Description of Revised K Street Entry Gate

## PROPOSED REVISED ENTRY GATE

The revised gate design relates to the vocabulary of the Speaking Willow sculpture featured in the new terrace and provides both security and transparency to appreciate the sculpture and space when Planet Word is not open.

The gate is comprised of three sliding panels that retract behind a fourth fixed panel when opened. No component of the gate is directly attached to the historic building. It is also not connected to the building at the east end of the site. The sliding panels open away from the entry stair and ramp landing when in the open position. When retracted, the panels screen the mid landing of the ramp while retaining an open sense for the terrace.

The Speaking Willow is visible and framed both while the gate is open. When the gate is closed; the passers-by can see the Speaking Willow and the rest of the courtyard, avoiding the feeling of a gated community.

The abstracted organic tree pattern borrows on the regular rhythm of the existing railings in the school without being a literal re-interpretation. The panels are of the same aluminum powder coated water jet cut material and color as the previously approved gate.

# Rendering of Revised K Street Entry Gate, Opened Condition



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# Rendering of Revised K Street Entry Gate, Closed Condition



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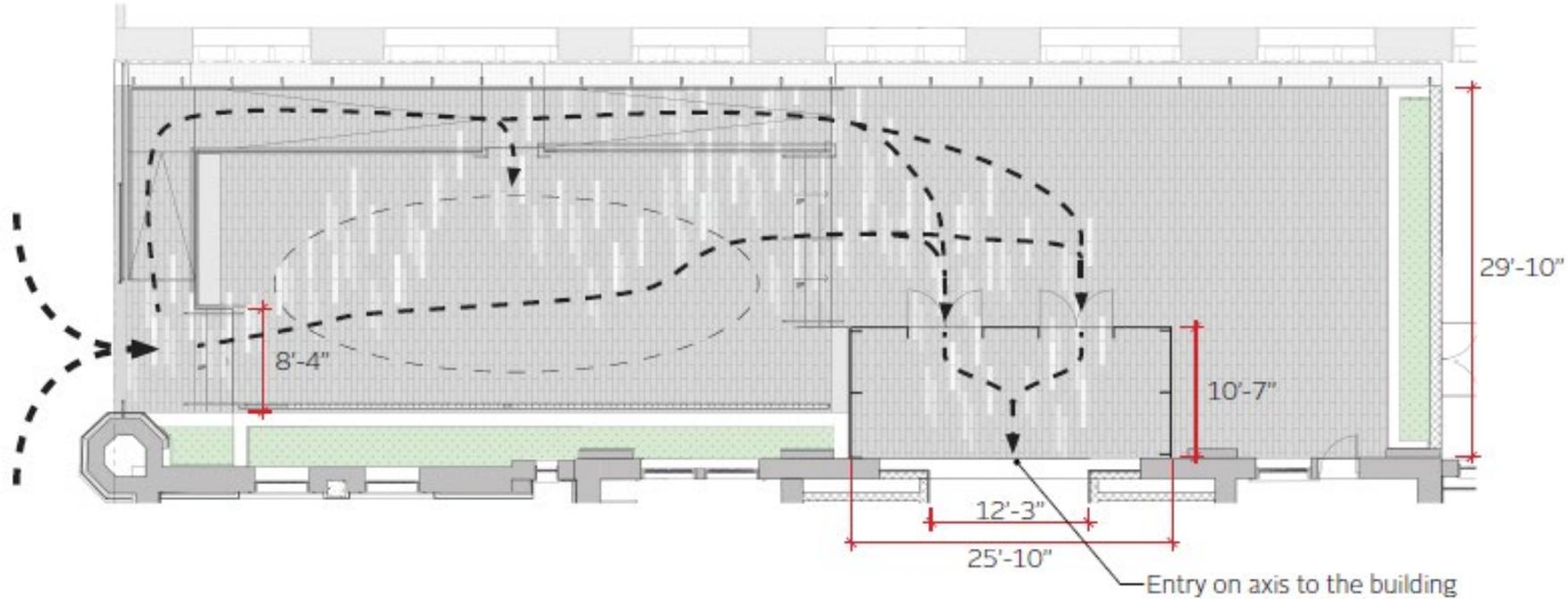
# Previous Proposed K Street Entry Gate

## ENTRY GATE

The image on this page is the previously proposed gate design.

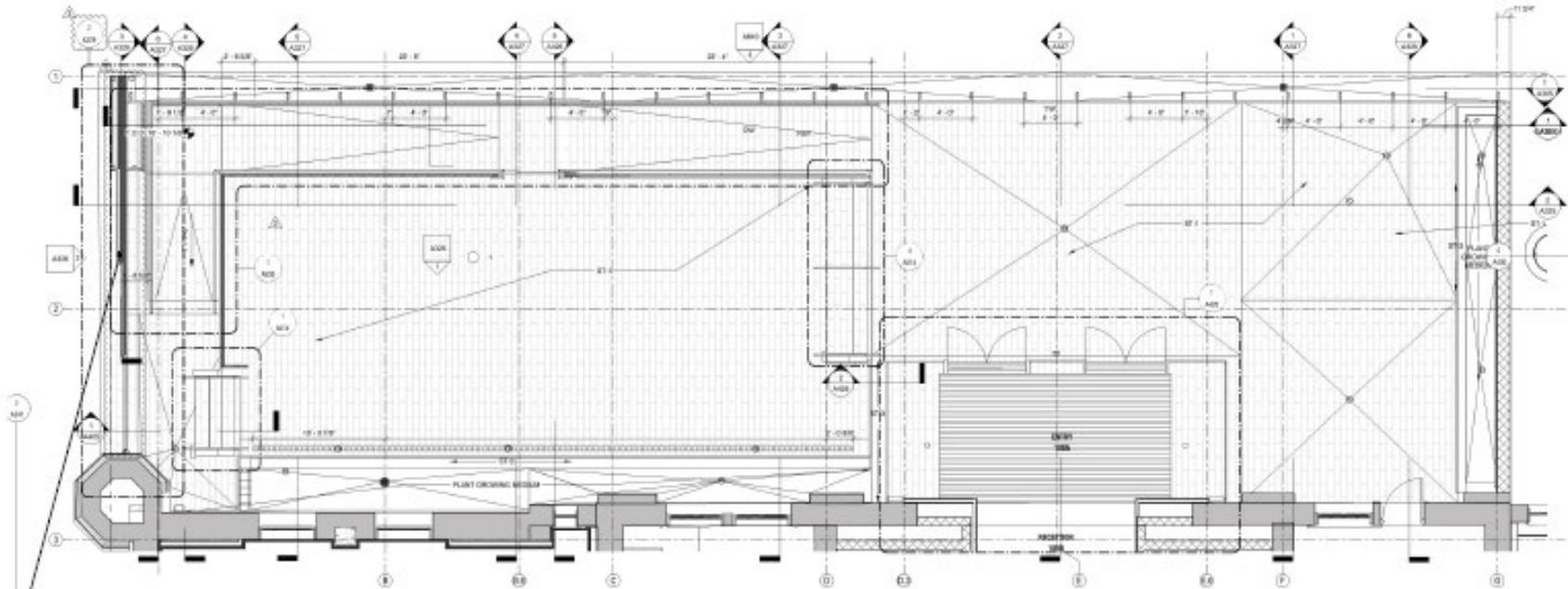


# Plaza Entry Sequence and Design, as Approved



The Plaza Entry Sequence and Design remains as previously approved

# K Street Gate, Showing Proposed Revised, Sliding Panels



Proposed Gate  
Panels slide west away from  
entry when opened.  
The gate remains unconnected  
to the historic building.

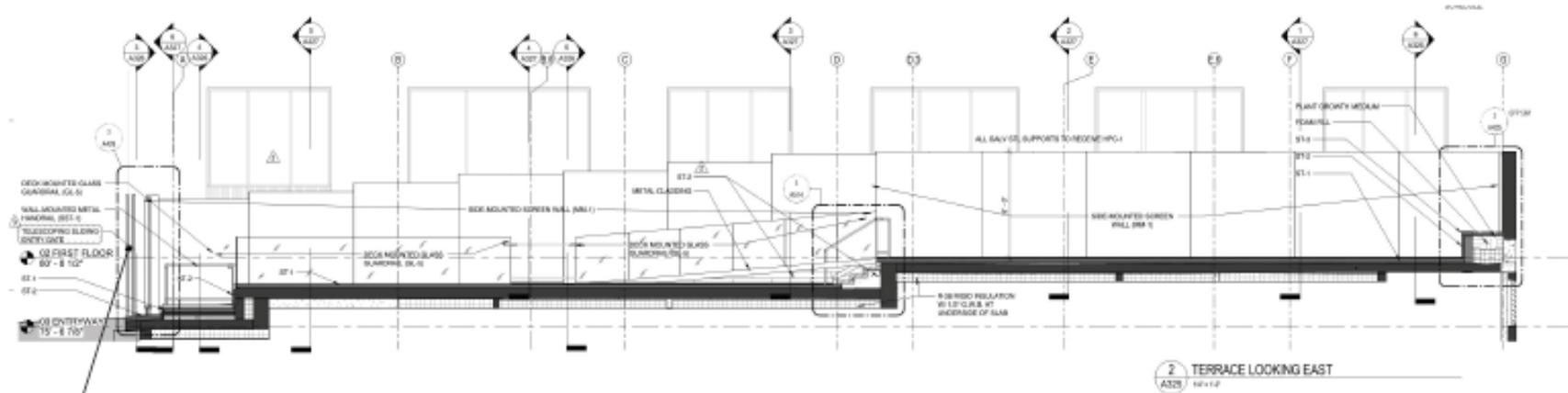
Previously Approved Plaza Plan with Proposed Gate Shown

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# K Street Gate, Approved Plaza Section with Gate



Previously Approved Plaza Section with Proposed Gate Shown

Proposed Gate

# K Street Gate Detail

