



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: November 7, 2019

PROJECT

Banneker Academic High School

925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

NCPC FILE NUMBER

8122

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER

31.20(38.00)45020

SUBMITTED BY

District of Columbia Department of General
Services

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Approval of comments on concept
plans

REVIEW AUTHORITY

District Projects in the Central Area
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e)

PROPOSED ACTION

Approve comments on concept
plans

ACTION ITEM TYPE

Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The District Department of General Services (DGS), in coordination with DC Public Schools (DC PS) has submitted concept plans for the new Banneker Academic High School to replace the former Shaw Junior High School in northwest Washington, DC. The goal of the project is to provide an inspiring facility worthy of the high academic rigor of the school, design spaces that complement the school's educational and cultural goals, and create a 21st-Century school that fosters the next generation of environmental stewards. Banneker Academic High School is open to students in all wards of the city through an application process, and does not have neighborhood boundaries. The existing school is located at 800 Euclid Street, NW and has outgrown its current location. As such, it will be relocating to the site of the existing Shaw Junior High School. The project will include the complete demolition of the existing Shaw building, located at 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, and the construction of an all new high school.

The project is bounded by R Street, NW to the north, 9th Street, NW to the east, Rhode Island Avenue, NW to the south, and 11th Street, NW to the west. Cardozo Park, a District Parks and Recreation (DPR) site is located immediately to the west. The fields of Cardozo Park will be renovated as part of the school construction, and a joint-use agreement between DCPS and DPR will be created. The site has served DCPS since the Shaw Junior High School was constructed in the early 1970s. The existing Shaw Junior High School building is three stories tall with a full story basement below. The school was closed in 2008 and has remained abandoned. The new Banneker Academic High School will be four stories tall, or approximately 56 feet in height, and about 179,000 gross square feet in area.

KEY INFORMATION

- The new Banneker Academic High School will replace the existing Shaw Junior High School at 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW.
- The proposed project includes the new school and reconfiguration of adjacent recreational facilities at Cardozo Park
- The project site includes the historic L'Enfant Plan rights-of-way for 10th Street, NW and a small segment of Q Street, NW.
- The existing Shaw Junior High School was constructed in the early 1970s. The building is three stories tall with a full story basement. The school was closed in 2008 and has remained abandoned.
- The existing Banneker Academic High School is located at 800 Euclid Street NW, in a 1930s era building originally built for a middle school program. The school has outgrown its current location, and will be relocating to the Shaw Junior High School site.
- Cardozo Park is immediately west of the school and will be renovated as part of the project. A joint-use agreement between DCPS and DPR will be developed for the park spaces.
- NCPC has a review and approval authority for the project as it is located within the Central Area, which includes Shaw Urban Renewal Area and the project site.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Finds the primary federal interests related to the project include conformance with the Height of Buildings Act and the preservation of the historic L'Enfant Plan rights-of-way.

Notes the proposed design generally meets the Height of Buildings Act.

Requests that at preliminary review the applicant provide a stormwater management plan, lighting and signage plans, and a landscape plan that identifies any tree removal and replacement.

Requests the applicant explores opportunities to formally denote the 10th Street corridor reflecting the original L'Enfant right-of-way. Strategies could include the use of framing elements such as an allee of trees, and by ensuring that no vertical elements obscure the view.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	None
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Review of preliminary and final site and building plans

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff has evaluated the concept plans for the new Banneker Academic High School project by determining its consistency with the relevant policies contained within the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the primary federal interests related to the project are compliance with the Height Act and the preservation of historic L'Enfant Plan rights-of-way.

Analysis

Overview

The proposed new Banneker Academic High School will replace the former Shaw Junior High School in northwest Washington, DC. The project will include the complete demolition of the existing building, located at 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, and the construction of an all new high school. The goal of the project is to provide an inspiring facility worthy of the high academic rigor of the school, design spaces that complement the school's educational and cultural goals, and create a 21st-Century school that fosters the next generation of environmental stewards. Banneker Academic High School is open to students in all wards of the city through an application process and does not have neighborhood boundaries. The existing school has outgrown its current location, and as such, it will be relocating to the site of the existing Shaw Junior High School.

The project team worked with the existing students to shape the design concept and to frame the major design principles. These included Community and Culture, Wellness, and Sustainability. The first principle reflects the idea that students want to maintain a sense of togetherness and comfortable feeling at the school. The second principle includes a desire to provide access to views and natural light, inclusion of nature and access to outdoor spaces, as well as a variety of open, community spaces and individual quiet rooms. Finally, sustainability included both sustainable design, but also the idea that students should be engaged throughout the design process. In addition, DCPS formed a School Improvement Team (SIT), which is a working group of 10-15 stakeholders that includes teachers, school administration, parents, and neighbors to help guide the process.

Site and Building Orientation

The site is bordered by residential scale R Street, NW, lined with two- and three-story town homes. Midrise multifamily building can be found to the east and west on 9th and 11th Streets, respectively. The original 10th Street NW is interrupted by the school parcel, but the corridor still informally functions for some pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Rhode Island Avenue NW provides the southern edge of the site and serves as a major thoroughfare. Seaton Elementary School is located just south of Rhode Island, NW and is set back from the road. The adjacent open space includes a large field, dog park, skate park, and basketball courts. These are expected to be replaced and/or enhanced as part of the project.

According to the applicant, the building orientation is based on net-zero design principles and enhancing pedestrian access and the connect to the Shaw - Howard Metro Station which is located just to the east. As such, the building occupies the northeastern portion of the site, with the main entrance located near the corner of R Street and 9th Street, NW. An urban plaza at this location will also help welcome and orient students and visitor. The remainder of the site to the west is left open for public and school-related site programming. A community-focused entrance is also provided on this side.

The existing school building is three stories tall. The new Banneker Academic High School will be four stories tall, or approximately 56 feet in height, and about 179,000 gross square feet in area. As the project abuts Rhode Island Avenue, which has a width of 120 feet, the Height of Building Act permits a maximum building height up to 130 feet. As such, the design is within the limits set forth by the Height Act. The project is also below the 90 feet limit set forth for the site in the Shaw Urban Renewal Plan. The building massing has been articulated to respond to the scale of the rowhomes located to the north across R Street. Internally, the building is organized around a central “learning commons” or central atrium that helps link a variety of academic and gathering spaces, while providing daylighting and circulation into the core.

The remainder of the project includes a reconfiguration of Cardozo Park, a District Parks and Recreation (DPR) site located immediately to the west. The fields of Cardozo Park will be renovated as part of the school construction, and a joint-use agreement between DCPS and DPR will be created. The proposed design includes a new athletic field, dog park, basketball courts, and skatepark. A plaza space and landscaped entry will provide access to the site from Rhode Island Avenue. A small amount of staff parking will be accessed off R Street, NW.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The comments and analysis proved above are intended to support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, staff suggests the **Commission request that at preliminary review the applicant provide a stormwater management plan, lighting and signage plans, and a landscape plan that identifies any tree removal and replacement.**

National Historic Preservation Act

Due to NCPC’s approval role over the project, NCPC has independent review responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. NCPC initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) on October 21, 2019 with a tentative determination that there would be no adverse effects to historic properties, subject to

continued consultation regarding archaeology and the treatment of the historic 10th Street right-of-way.

While it is unlikely that 10th Street, NW will be reopened as part of the project, there may be opportunities to express the historic L'Enfant Plan extension of 10th Street. This may include framing the corridor with trees and plantings, defining a new pedestrian circulation along the corridor, and avoiding new vertical elements that block the viewshed. As such, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant explores opportunities to formally denote the 10th Street corridor reflecting the original L'Enfant right-of-way. Strategies could include the use of framing elements such as an allee of trees, and by ensuring that no vertical elements obscure the view.**

National Environmental Policy Act

Due to the project's location within the Central Area, NCPC has approval authority and therefore, NCPC has an independent responsibility to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). No NEPA is required at this time, however compliance completion is required at the time of final approval. Staff is evaluating the environmental document prepared by DGS to determine whether a categorical exclusion or environmental assessment is necessary.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its October 16, 2019 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 Department of Energy and Environment; the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO); the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The DC SHPO noted their coordination was subject to completion of the Section 106 consultation process.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts approved the concept design at its September 19, 2019 meeting. A copy of their most recent action is attached.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Project Synopsis
- Submission Package

Prepared by Matthew Flis
10/30/2019

ATTACHMENTS

- Powerpoint
- CFA Letter

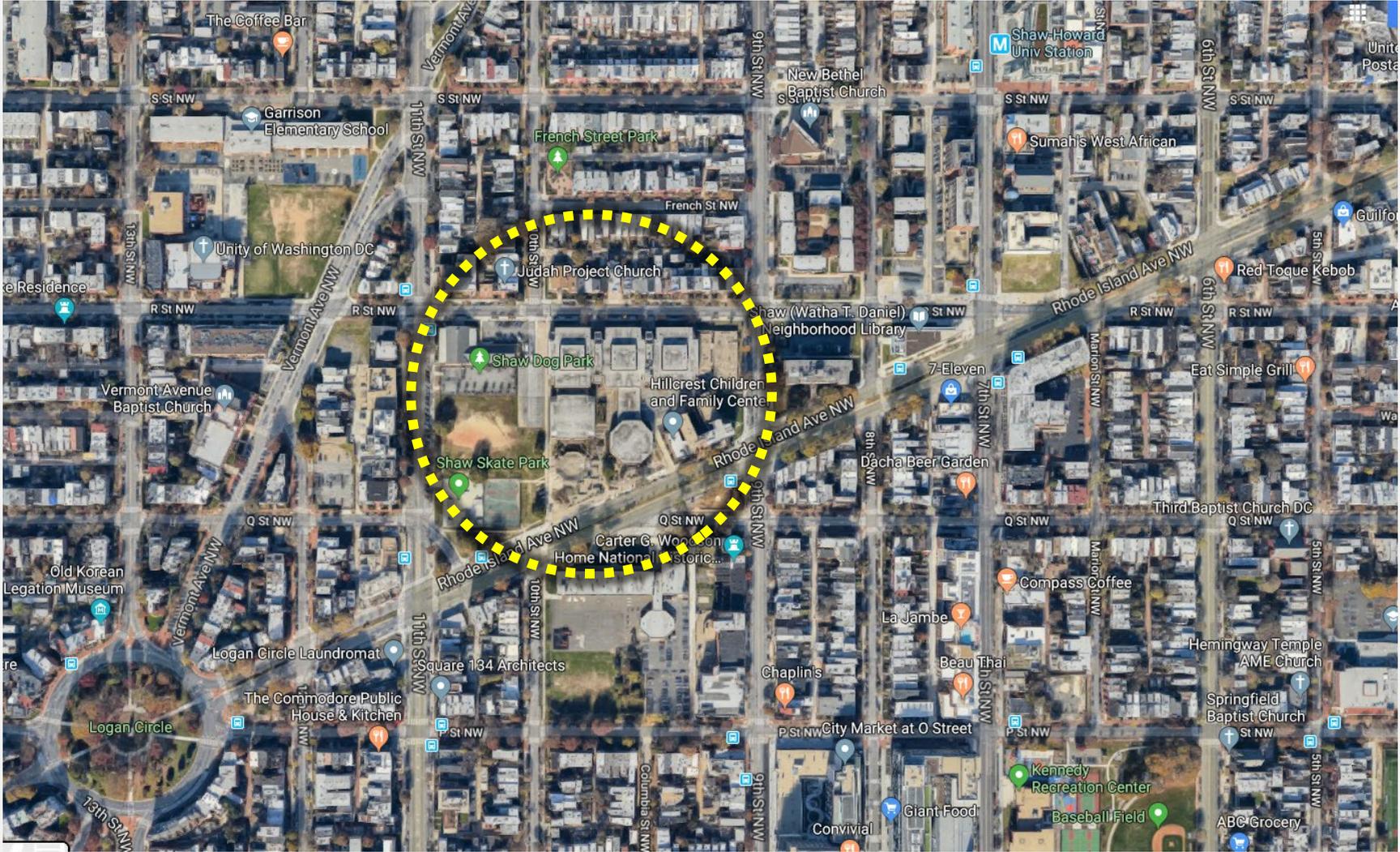
Banneker Academic High School

925 Rhode Island Avenue, NE, Washington DC

Approval of Comments on Concept Plans

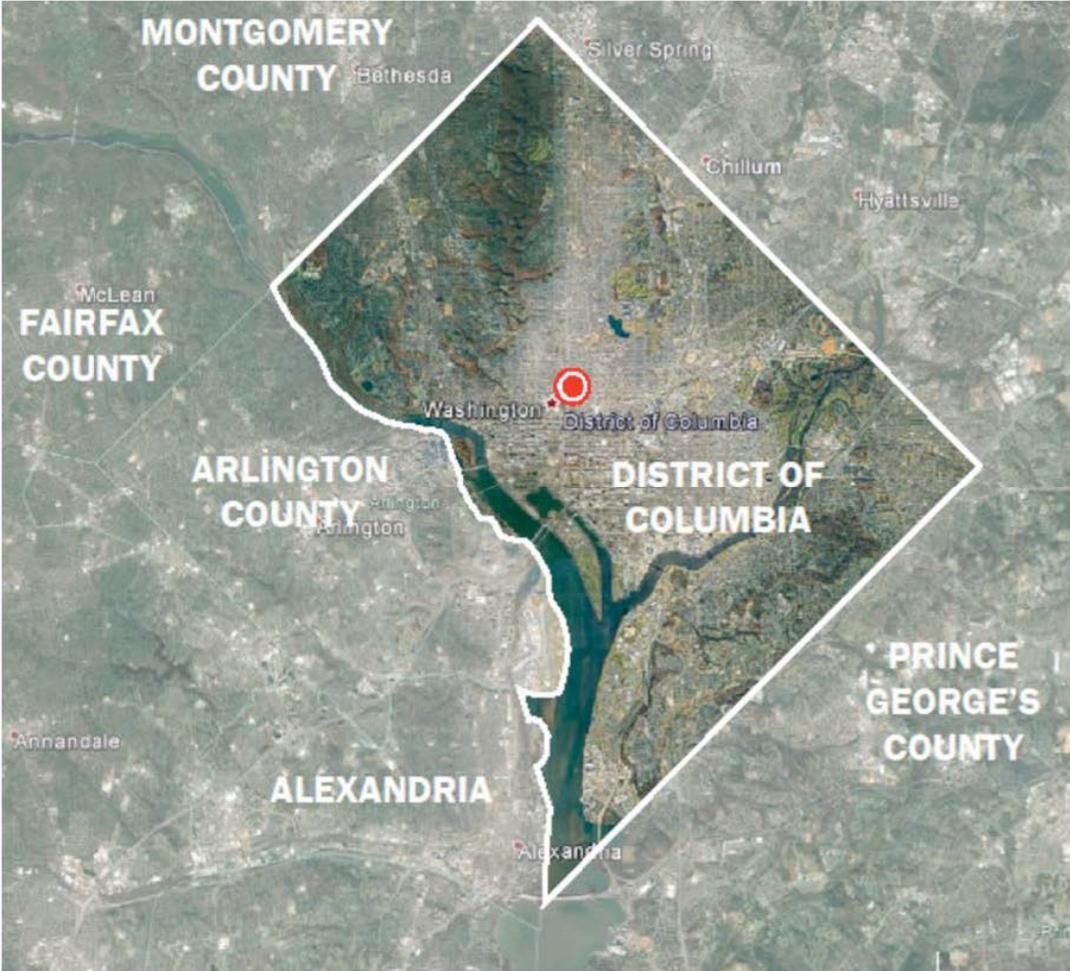
District of Columbia Department of General Services

Site Location

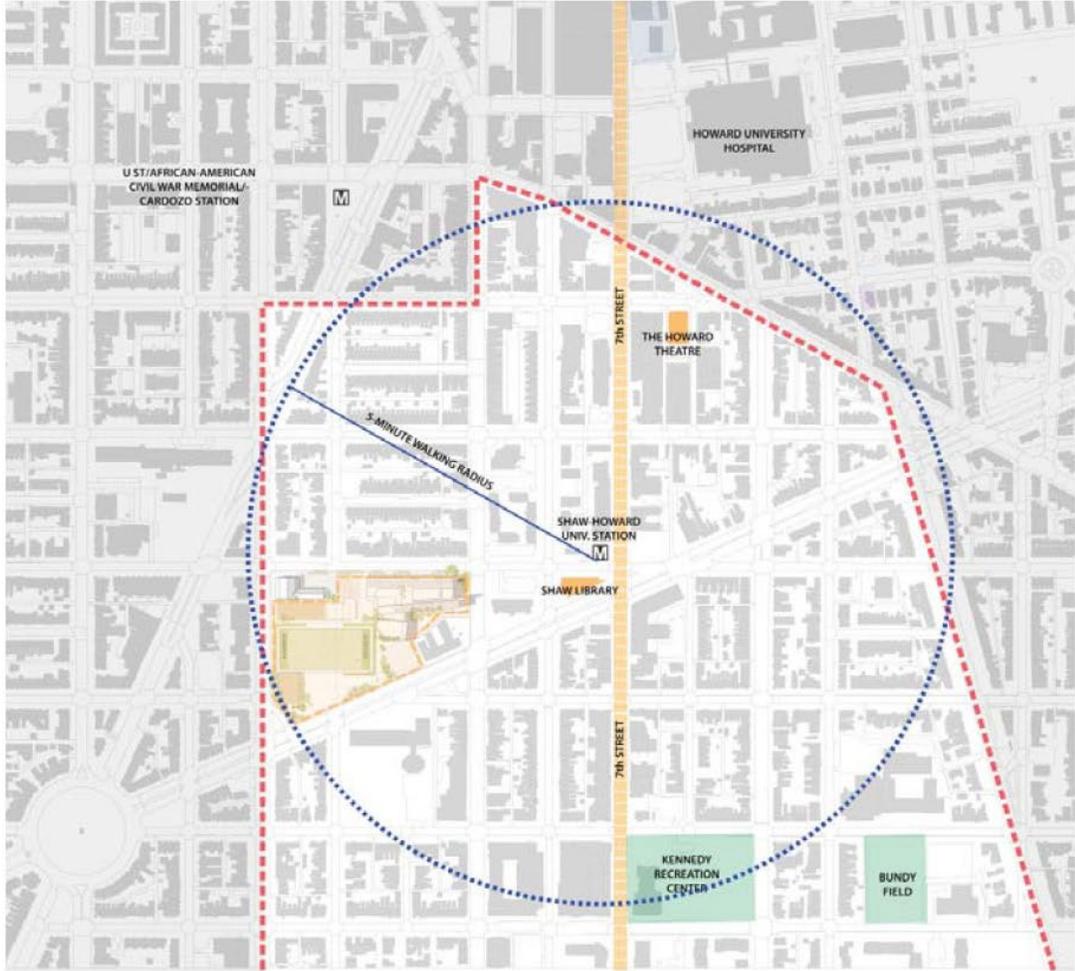


Location Map

Site Analysis

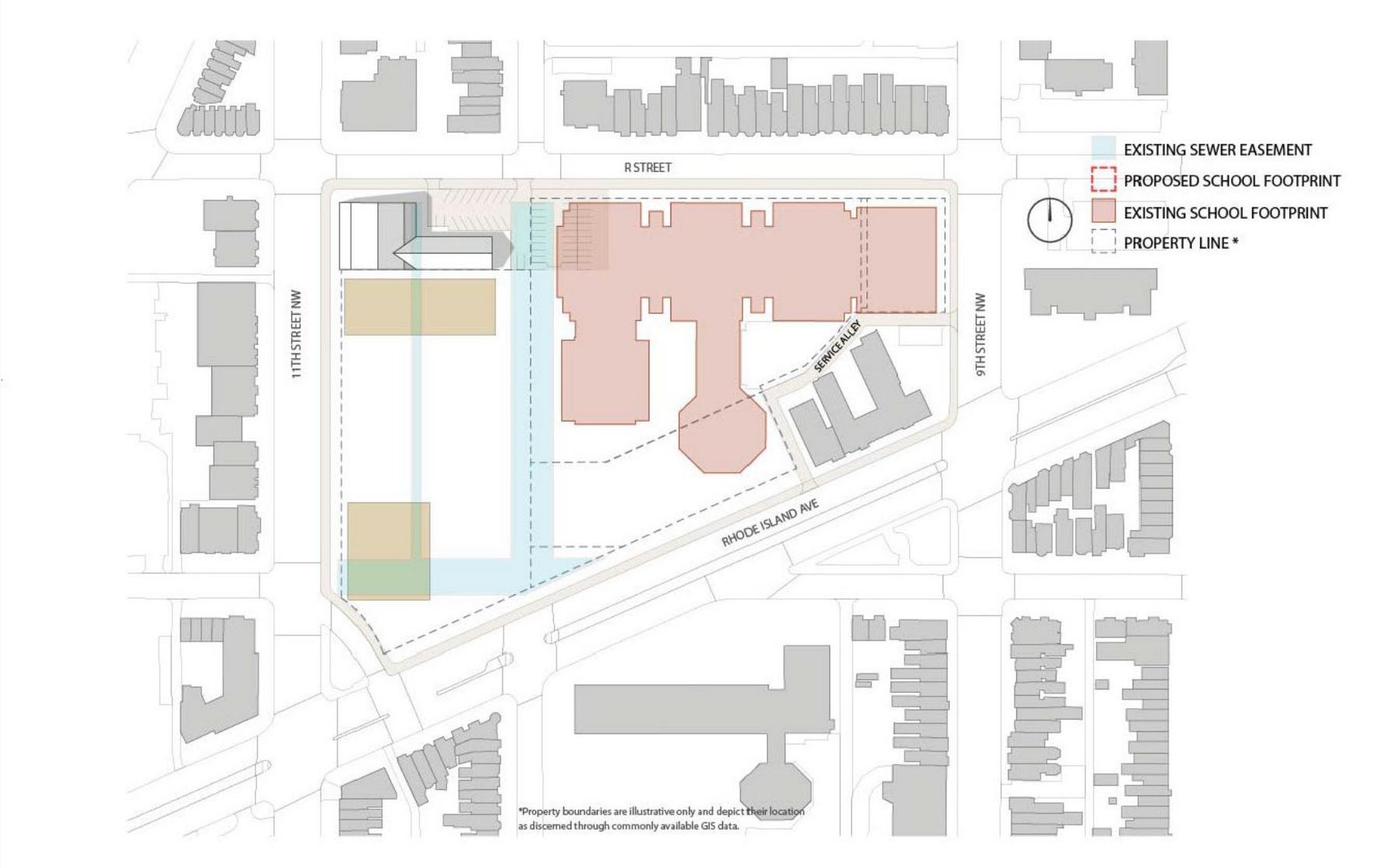


Site Location in DC/MD/VA region

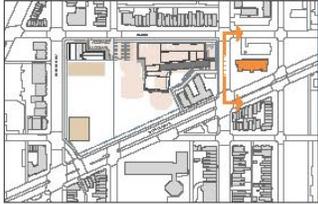


Site Neighborhood Context and Walking Radius

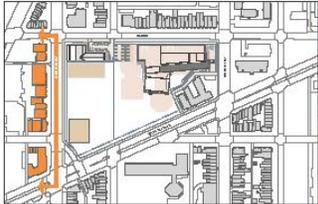
Existing Site Plan



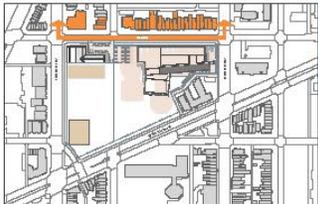
Site Context Images



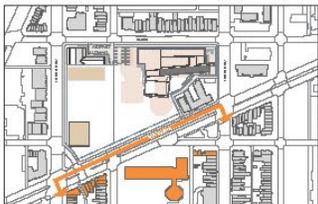
9th Street



11th Street



R Street



Rhode Island Ave

Existing School



Existing School



View from 9th Street and R Street



View from 10th Street and R Street



View from Rhode Island Ave and 10th Street



View from Rhode Island Ave

Project Design Principles



1 Inspire life-long learning



2 Activate Interdisciplinary Learning



3 Expand the Learning Commons as the Heart of the School



6 Compliment the Civic Center of Shaw



7 Design for Net Zero Energy



8 Achieve Net Positive Education

Project Design Principles



4 Celebrate the legacy of Benjamin Banneker



5 Sculpt memorable & interactive outdoor spaces



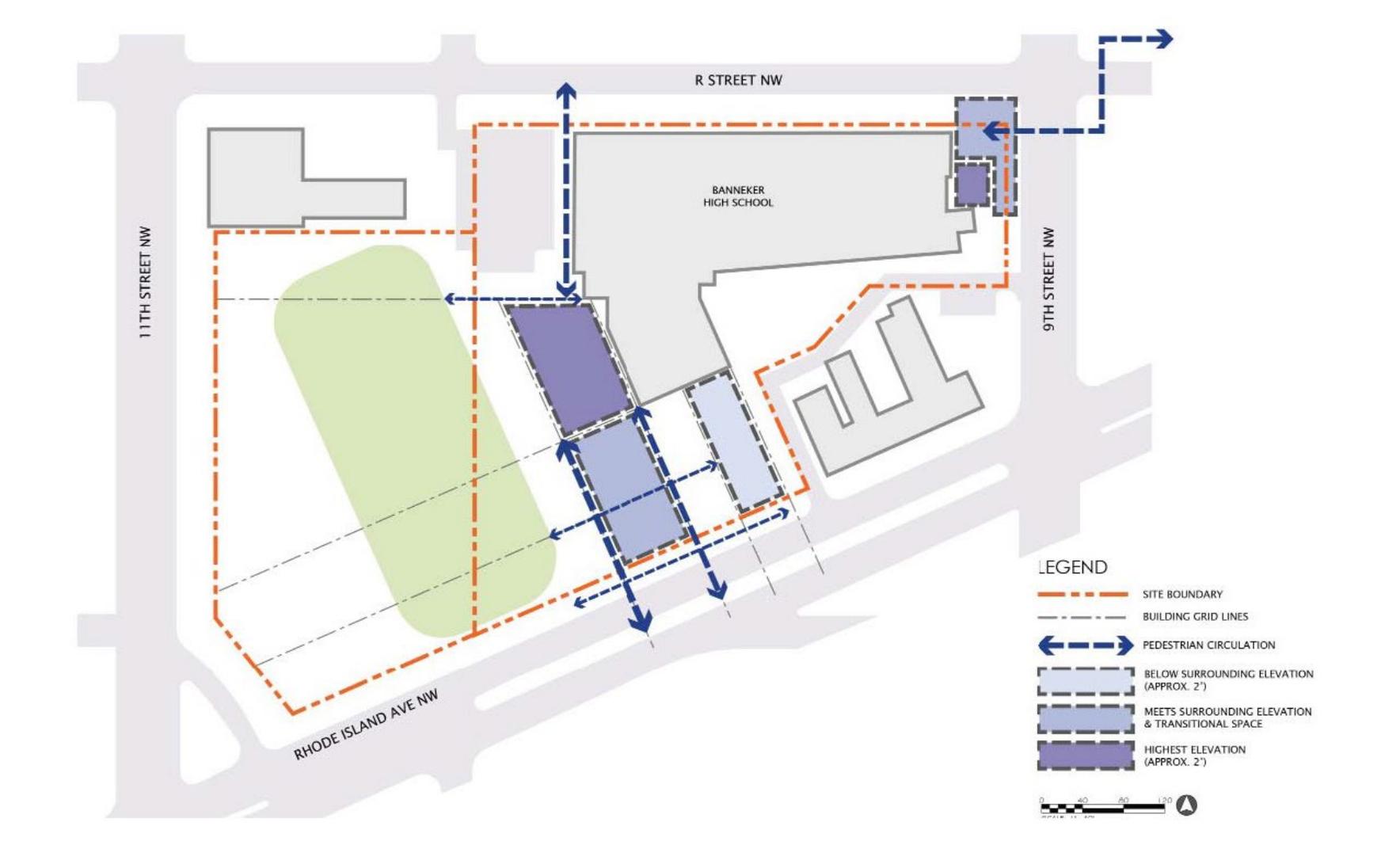
9 Be a Good Neighbor

During the public engagement process, the project team developed nine (9) Design Principles which summarize all of the aspirations of the various stakeholders into unified goals for the project's design.

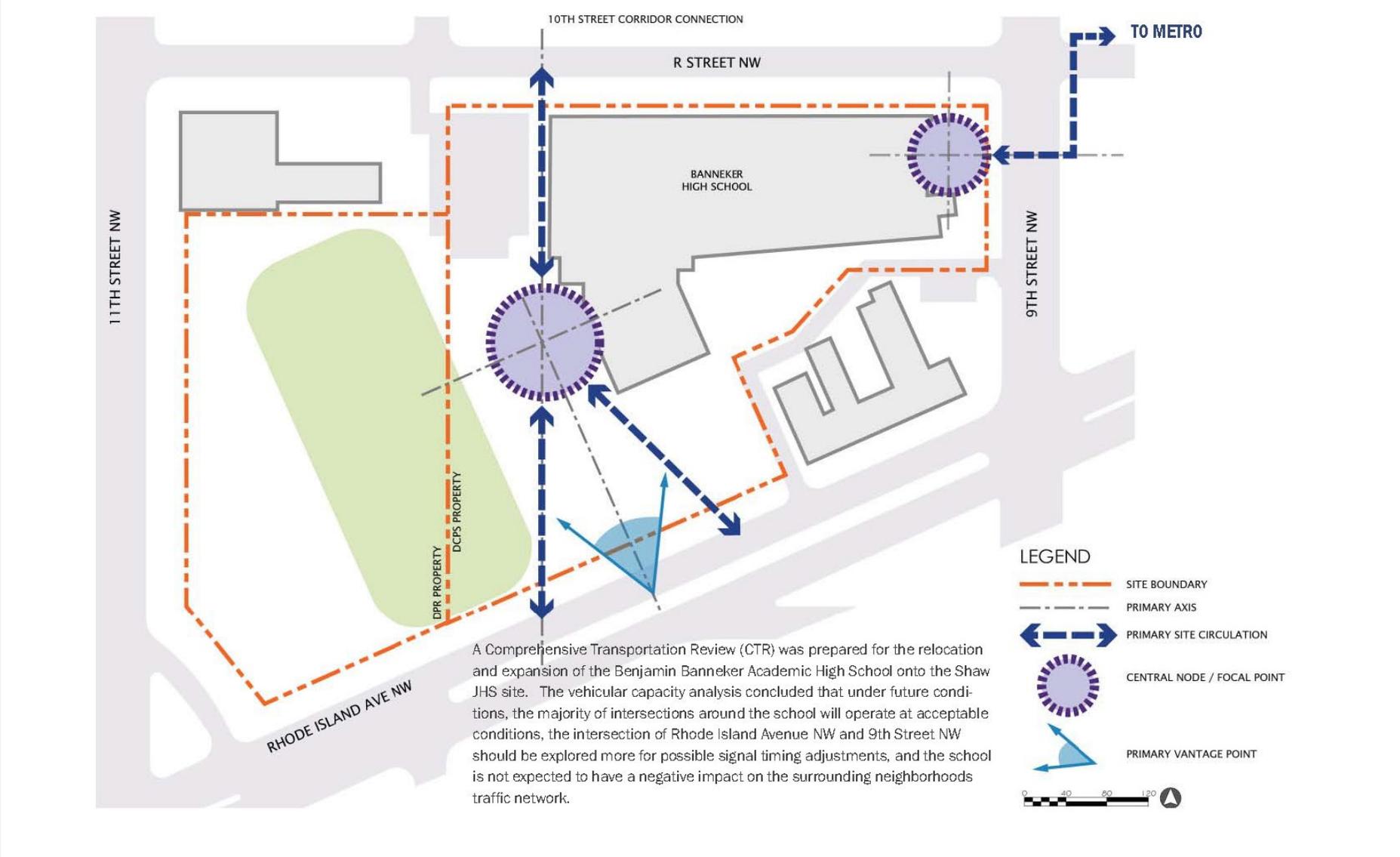
These Design Principles will continue to serve as guidelines for how to make the best decisions for the project and the community for future phases of the process.

For Banneker Academic High School, the design principles outline what the project team hopes to achieve, with a focus on civic presence, community connectivity, and—most importantly—the student experience. Ultimately, these principles will support the team's overarching goal of creating a high-performance 21st-century learning environment.

Site Organization



Site Transportation and Circulation



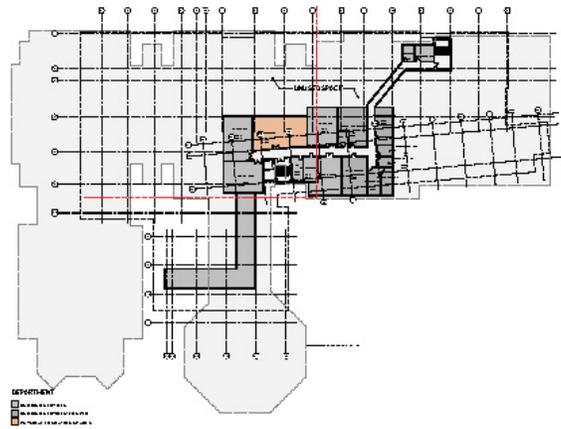
Proposed Site Plan



First Floor Plan



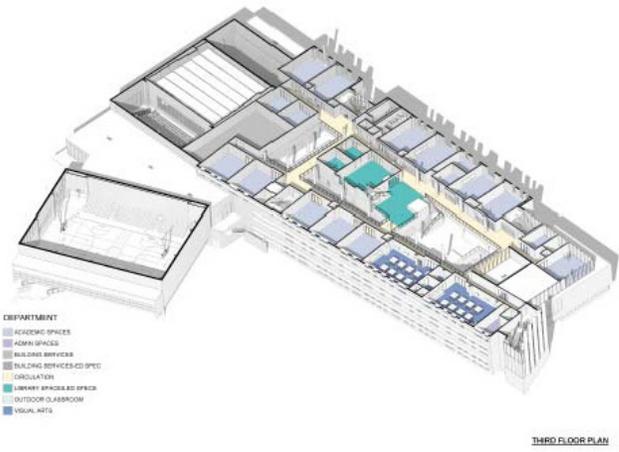
Other Floor Plans



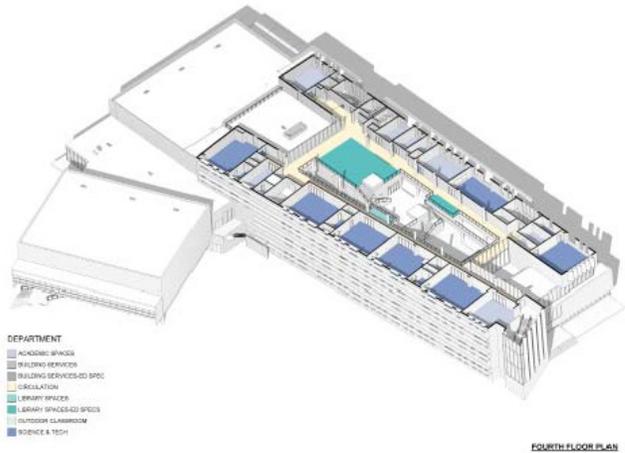
Basement Plan



Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan

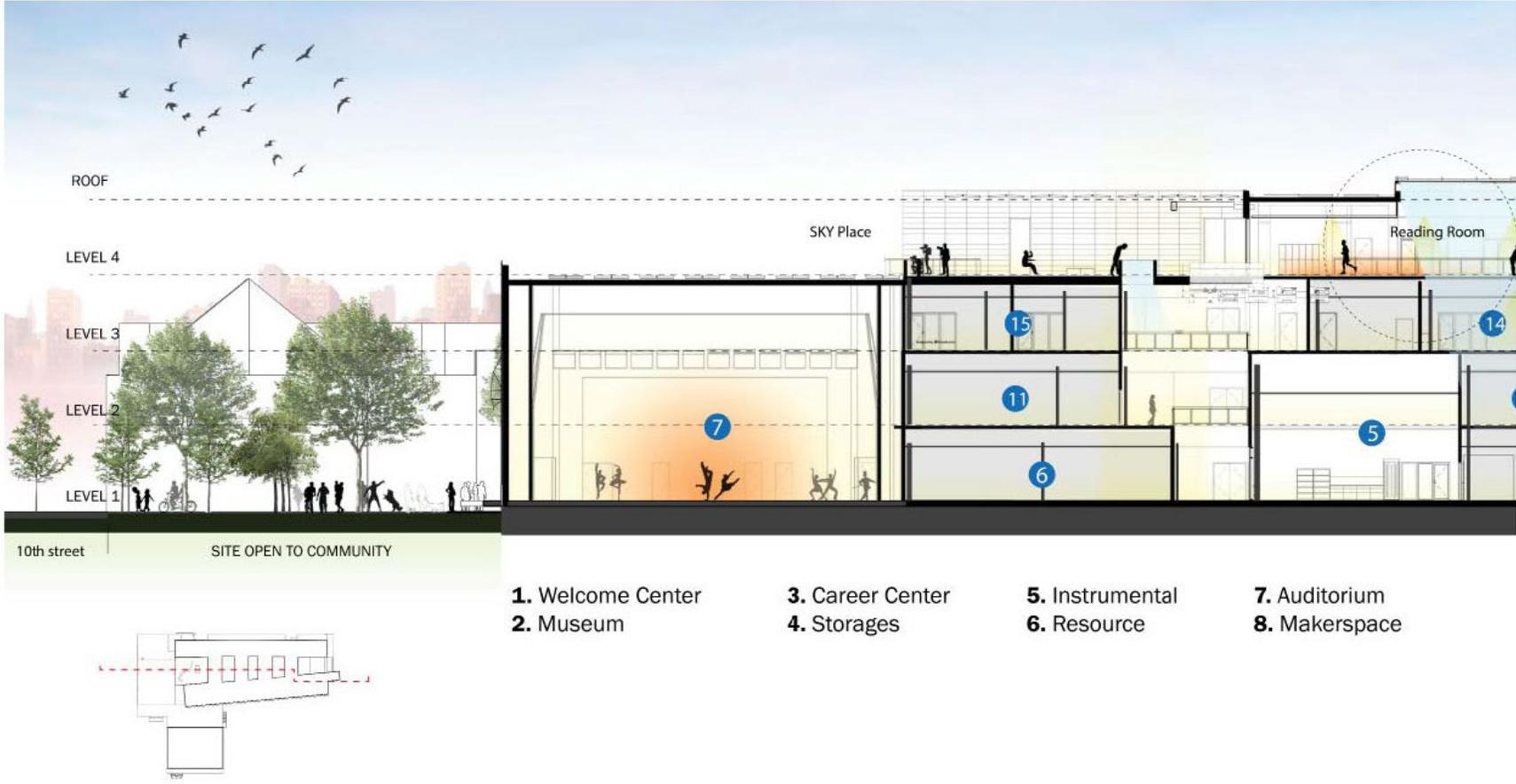


Fourth Floor Plan

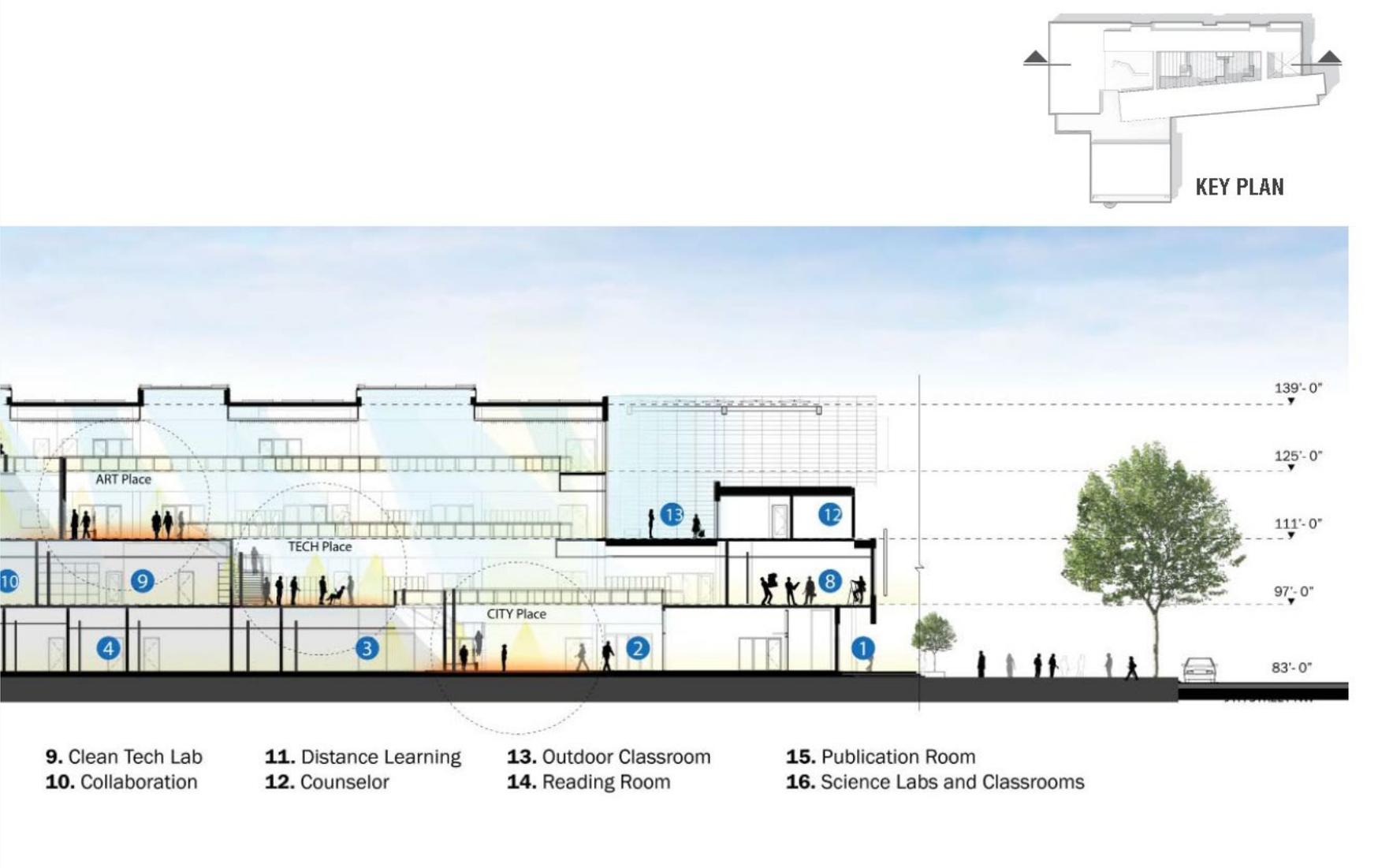
Longitudinal Section

Note: The preliminary building sections presented in this report are not to scale and are intended to suggest general design intent for building massing and spatial relationships. Material color selections are not final.

Refer to Schematic Design drawing set, issued in conjunction with this report, for scaled architectural drawings.



Longitudinal Section



View looking Northeast



View looking Southwest



9th Street Entrance



View down R Street



View from Rhode Island Avenue



Approach from Rhode Island Avenue



CFA 19/SEP/19-6

LOCATION:

925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW (site of the former Shaw Junior High School)
Washington, DC

OWNER:

D.C. Department of General Services

PROPERTY:

Benjamin Banneker Academic High School

DESCRIPTION:

New (replacement) school building

REVIEW TYPE:

Concept

PREVIOUS REVIEW:

[CFA 18/JUL/19-3](#)

Letter

27 September 2019

Dear Mr. Anderson:

In its meeting of 19 September, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a second concept submission for a new building and site design for Benjamin Banneker Academic High School, which is proposed to be relocated to the site of the former Shaw Junior High School at 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW. The Commission approved the concept, providing the following comments for the development of the design.

The Commission members expressed appreciation for the revisions to the site and building design, particularly the rotation of the gymnasium volume to align with Rhode Island Avenue, and the resulting clarity in the configuration of the outdoor spaces. In general, they requested further exploration of breaking down the seemingly hard edges between these outdoor spaces to create more inviting and functional places for students and the community. For example, they recommended further refinement of the edges of the west plaza, perhaps by creating a stepped seating area on its western side that would better address both the plaza and the athletic field. In addition, they suggested further study of the proposal to locate a sculpture at the northern end of the west plaza, which they identified as an important juncture in the site circulation, and they suggested giving a stronger bridge character to the design of the walkway over the bioretention area leading to the tennis court. As the concept is further developed, they suggested that the same strong, contemporary architectural language proposed for the school building also inform the design of site elements, such as the perimeter gates and fencing. Finally, they recommended refinement of the fenestration on the R Street facade to have a more compatible relationship with the residential buildings across the street.

Noting the robust school District-wide construction program now underway, the Commission members advised the development of a broader initiative to articulate a clear vision for the civic architecture of the D.C. public schools and their role in their neighborhoods and the larger city; this initiative could be seen as analogous to the one undertaken for the D.C. public libraries over the last decade to dramatically transform its existing and new facilities.

The Commission looks forward to further review of the building and landscape details of this important project. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

/s/Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Keith A. Anderson, Director
D.C. Department of General Services
2000 14th Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

cc: Omar Calderon, Perkins Eastman DC
Sharon Bradley, Bradley Site Design