



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: May 7, 2020

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Proposed Entrance Alterations</b> 726 Jackson Place, NW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 8164
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> United States General Services Administration	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.32(00.00)45108
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of preliminary site and building plans
	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve preliminary site and building plans with comments
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Consent Calendar

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted preliminary site and building plans for proposed entrance alterations at 726 Jackson Place, NW in Washington, DC. The project will relocate the primary entrance of the New Executive Office Building (NEOB) from 17th Street, NW to its original (1969) location at 726 Jackson Place, NW. The buildings are connected by a central courtyard. NEOB and the adjacent townhouses hold the offices of various Executive divisions and agencies, including the Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality. The improvements are intended to enhance the security of the facility and consolidate screening and entry into one controlled location.

The ground floor of 726 Jackson Place was originally an open-air breezeway, but it currently operates as a secure entrance and checkpoint for the White House Conference Center. The proposed design will modernize and expand the checkpoint to accommodate employee and visitor access. A glass and steel structure will be added to the rear of the townhouse to provide additional room for screening and circulation. The three entrance doors on Jackson Place will be modified to provide a visitor check-in window for those awaiting credentials prior to entering NEOB.

The NEOB entrance on 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW will serve as an emergency exit only. Additionally, entrances to the historic Jackson Place rowhouses would be used only for emergency egress, as all screening for the Jackson Place-NEOB complex will be handled through the upgraded 726 Jackson Place entrance. Other alterations are proposed in the courtyard to improve accessibility.

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## KEY INFORMATION

- The NEOB and the adjacent townhouses hold the offices of various Executive divisions and agencies, including the Office of Management and Budget and the Council on Environmental Quality.
- Currently, NEOB can be accessed from 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW or through Jackson Place. A central courtyard connects the complex. Adjacent townhomes which house federal offices can be accessed directly from Jackson Place. The complex includes both original (historic) townhomes and infill townhomes from the 1960s.
- The purpose of the project is to consolidate entry and screening for the complex into one location at 726 Jackson Place. The entry location is preferred due to the minimal vehicular traffic on Jackson Place, increased visibility, and a reduced threat due the building's smaller size. The 17<sup>th</sup> Street entrance will become an emergency exit only.
- Lafayette Square to the east, as well as President's Park, is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS).
- Architect John Carl Warnecke developed a master plan for new federal buildings around Lafayette Square, and in 1963 designed the NEOB and courtyard. In the late 1960s, infill townhomes for 718, 722, 726, 740, 744 Jackson Place were also constructed.
- The original historic Lafayette Square Townhouses are contributing resources to both the Lafayette Square National Historic Landmark and National Register Districts.
- NEOB and the Warnecke-designed townhouses are contributing resources to the Lafayette Square National Register District only.
- 708 and 734 Jackson Place, along with Decatur House, also located within the block, are individually listed National Historic Landmarks.

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary site and building plans for the proposed entrance alterations at 726 Jackson Place, NW in Washington, DC.

**Notes** the applicant has worked closely with the consulting parties, including NCPC, the DC State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service, and the Commission of Fine Arts to simplify the design and minimize impacts to the existing buildings.

**Requests** the applicant consider options to create a more generous and inviting landing at the entrance to the new addition from the courtyard side. Design options could improve pedestrian circulation by relocating the light poles, widening the landing, or widening the accessible ramp, to help create a more inviting and functional space.

**Requests** the applicant evaluate the use of plantings or vines to help soften the height of the courtyard wall, and to help mitigate the loss of the magnolia tree.

**Notes** the proposed design does not preclude the NEOB 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW entrance from being reopened in the future, if conditions allow.

**Recommends** the applicant consider options to improve the streetscape along 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW as a way to enhance the pedestrian experience, including new landscaping within the existing building planters.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	- None
<b>Remaining actions (anticipated)</b>	- Review final site and building plans

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

The NEOB complex, located just northwest of the White House, includes a number of Executive agencies and divisions. The proposed project will consolidate entry and screening into one location at 726 Jackson Place. This location provides security benefits in that it is located on a street with limited traffic, unlike 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. The location also allows for higher visibility of visitors approaching the entrance, as the 17<sup>th</sup> Street entrance is set back. 17<sup>th</sup> Street also has limited space to prescreen visitors before they enter the main building. Jackson Place was originally the primary entrance to NEOB, and project will restore that function. Accessibility improvements within the courtyard will also be beneficial to employees and visitors. Overall, the exterior alterations are relatively minor, and the small addition within the courtyard is simple and compatible with the existing architecture. Therefore, given the goals of the project and limited intervention proposed, staff recommends the **Commission approve the preliminary site and building plans for the proposed entrance alterations at 726 Jackson Place, NW in Washington, DC.**

### Analysis

The ground floor of 726 Jackson Place was originally an open-air breezeway, but it currently operates as a secure entrance and checkpoint. The proposed design will modernize and expand the checkpoint to accommodate increased employee and visitor access to the NEOB complex. The current interior will be demolished and replaced with contemporary security and screening equipment. The portals facing Lafayette Square will be updated with new entry/exit doors and glazing. The central portal will include a visitor window for those needing assistance or badges to enter the facility.

The design approach to the façade is simple and restrained. The full height glazing is intended to preserve the open feeling of the original breezeway. Overall, staff finds the vertical orientation of the glazing highlights the important entry function of this portion of the façade, while respecting the scale and composition of the original townhome design. Further, the applicant has worked closely with the consulting parties, including NCPC, the DC State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service, and the Commission of Fine Arts to simplify the design and minimize impacts to the existing buildings.

After employees and visitors pass through screening, they will be able to either exit into the NEOB courtyard or circulate to elevators that access the White House Conference Center. A glass and steel structure will be added to the rear of 726 Jackson Place (the courtyard side) to provide space for a secondary screening room as well as circulation and a waiting area for those requiring an escort. Overall, the small addition appears distinct but compatible with the existing townhouse design. The footprint has been minimized to accommodate the program, while the height maintains a consistent ceiling and remains below existing windows on the second floor. The color palette is also intended to be compatible with the existing context. During their April 16, 2020 review of the project, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts suggested GSA continue to evaluate the color selections for the steel frame and the interior elements visible inside the addition. GSA has indicated it will further study the colors to help minimize any extreme contrast between the components.

The building addition will require extending the existing raised plinth into courtyard. The existing steps which lead down to the center of the courtyard and its fountain will be shifted to the west to accommodate the expansion. The paving pattern will also be adjusted. As part of the project, a new accessible ramp will be added to allow for access down to the courtyard. The ramp will be located on the south side of the plinth, immediately to the left of the exit from the screening area. After reviewing the plans and renderings, staff believes additional space may be necessary to accommodate pedestrians and those in wheelchairs in the landing area (upon exiting from screening). The door swings, light pole locations, and entry to the accessible ramp are all located in close proximity which may impact pedestrian flow. As such, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant consider options to create a more generous and inviting landing at the entrance to the new addition from the courtyard side. Design options could improve pedestrian circulation by relocating the light poles, widening the landing, or widening the accessible ramp, to help create a more inviting and functional space.**

The final project component includes raising the height of the wall located on the north side of the courtyard. The wall separates the space from the Decatur House which is occupied by the White House Historical Association which is not within the secure perimeter of the facility. Currently, the wall is about twelve feet tall as measured from the NEOB courtyard, but only six feet tall from Decatur House. The wall will increase this height to twelve feet (or 20-24 feet as measured from the NEOB courtyard). In addition, a magnolia tree adjacent to the wall will be removed due to the expansion and to eliminate the potential for individuals to use the tree to scale the wall.

In general, staff understands the rationale for increasing the wall height. The applicant has noted that the wall of the south side of the courtyard (adjacent to Blair House) is similar in height. Shrubs

or vines may be one way to help soften the size and scale of the wall. An existing planter bed adjacent to the wall could be used for new plantings. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission request the applicant evaluate the use of plantings or vines to help soften the height of the courtyard wall, and to help mitigate the loss of the magnolia tree.**

Staff notes the proposed design does not preclude the NEOB 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW entrance from being reopened in the future if conditions allow. In the meantime, there may be opportunities to create a more pleasant walk along this side of the building, even if the entrance is no longer active. The applicant could work with the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District Department of Transportation to see what may be feasible. Therefore, staff suggests the **Commission recommend the applicant consider options to improve the streetscape along 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW as a way to enhance the pedestrian experience, including new landscaping within the existing building planters.**

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

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

Staff has reviewed policies from the Federal Workforce, Urban Design, and Historic Preservation Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The analysis and recommendations include in this report are intended to support consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

GSA and NCPC each have an independent responsibility to comply with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). GSA initiated consultation with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) in 2015. Four consulting parties meetings have been held to date, and the consultation process is ongoing. NCPC is a consulting party, along with the National Park Service, White House Historical Association, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The Section 106 review process will be completed prior to final review and approval of the project.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

GSA and NCPC each have an independent responsibility to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA is not required to be completed until prior to final review. At this time, GSA has determined that the project qualifies for a categorical exclusion related to “repair and alteration projects, involving but not adversely affecting, properties listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, when there is no evidence of community controversy or other environmental issues.” For the purposes of NCPC NEPA compliance, staff has determined that categorical exclusion #6 may apply, which applies to the “Approval of federal and District government agency proposals for new construction, building expansion, or

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improvements to existing facilities, when all of the following apply: (i) The new structure and proposed use are in compliance with local planning and zoning and any applicable District of Columbia, state, or federal requirements. (ii) The site and the scale of construction are consistent with those of existing adjacent or nearby buildings. (iii) The proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles in the vicinity of the facility. (iv) There is little to no evidence of unresolved resource conflicts or community controversy related to environmental concerns or other environmental issues.”

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

Without objection, at its April 15, 2020 meeting, the Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposed preliminary site and building plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The DC SHPO coordinated contingent upon finalizing and executing a draft Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement. The participating agencies were NCPC; the DC SHPO; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT); the District Department of Energy and Environment; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

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

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the concept plans for the project at their April 16, 2020 meeting. A copy of the approval letter is attached.

## **ONLINE REFERENCE**

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

- Submission Package
- GSA Categorical Exclusion
- Project Synopsis

Prepared by Matthew Flis  
05/1/2020

## **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

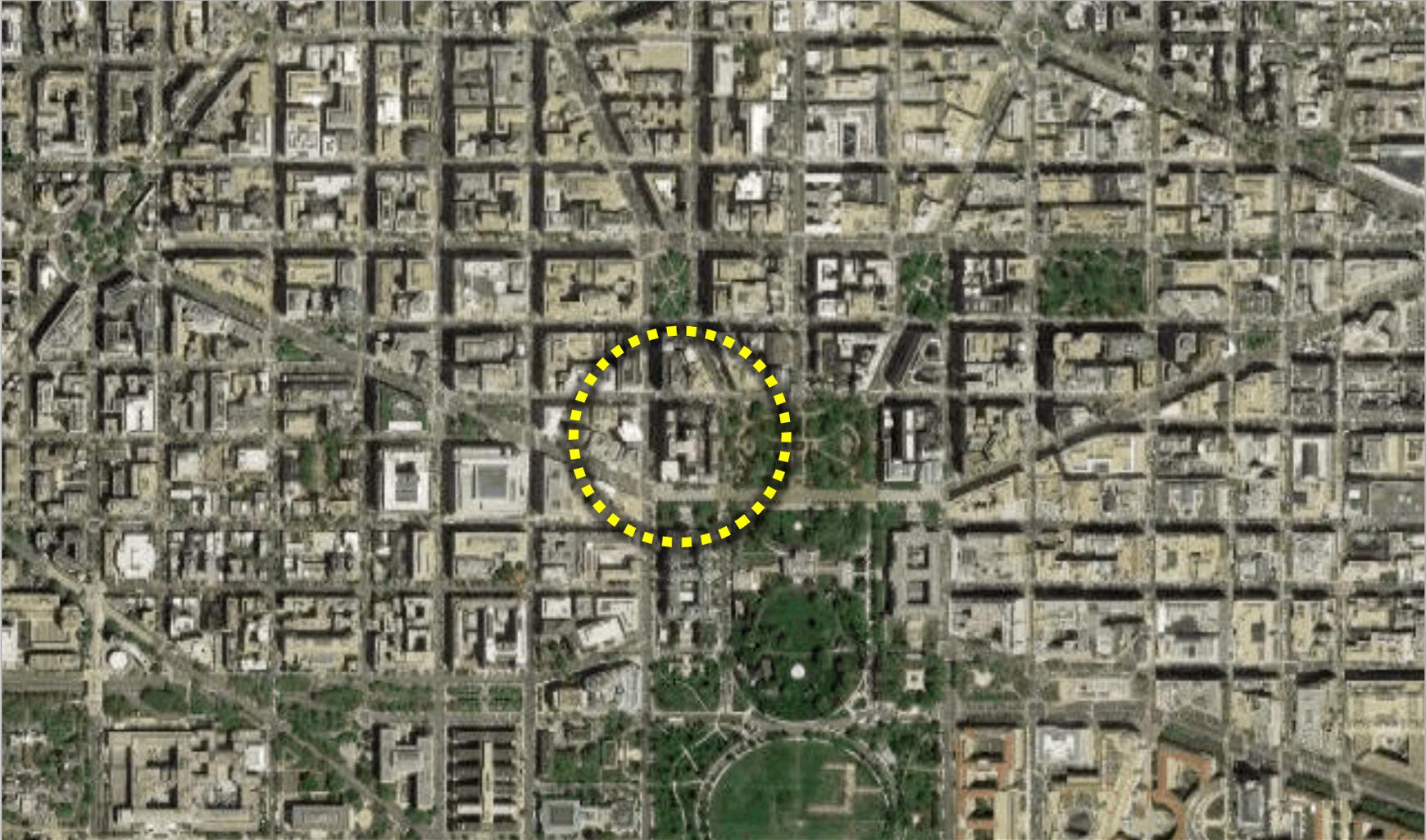
# Proposed Entrance Alterations at 726 Jackson Place, NW

726 Jackson Place, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

United States General Services Administration

# Site Location

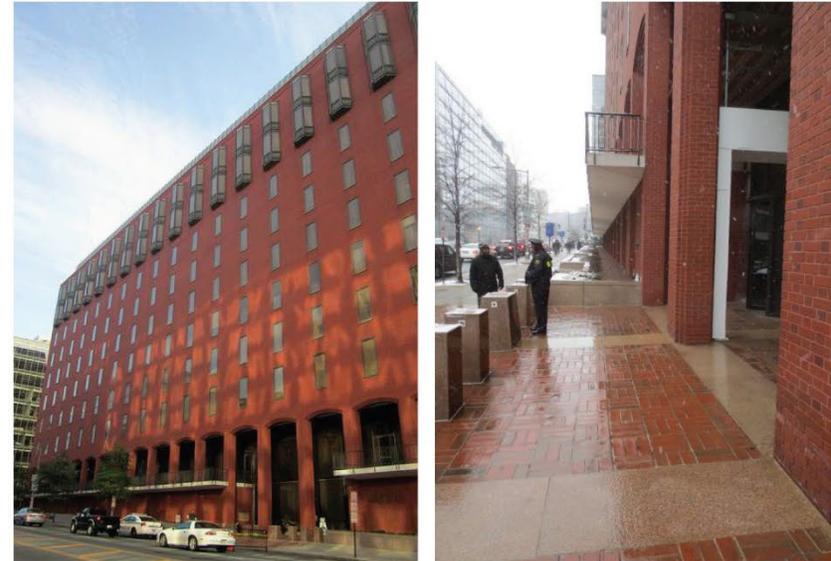


Location Map

# History

## SITE and BUILDING HISTORY

- John Carl Warnecke plan for new federal buildings around Lafayette Square
- 1963 - NEOB and courtyard designed by Warnecke
- Late 1960s - design of 718, 722, 726, 740, 744 Jackson Place
- Historic Lafayette Square Townhouses are contributing resources to both the Lafayette Square NHL and NR Districts
- NEOB and Warnecke Townhouses are contributing resources to the Lafayette Square NR District only
- 708, 734 Jackson place and Decatur House are individually listed National Historic Landmarks.



NEW EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING ENTRANCE ON 17TH STREET NW



726 JACKSON PLACE FRONT FACADE

# Project Overview

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Consolidation of entry and security screening for the NEOB and 726 Jackson Place
- Interior rehabilitation of the NEOB elevator lobbies (this work was completed in 2019)
- Interior rehabilitation of the NEOB double-height entry lobbies at 17th Street, NW and the courtyard
- Construction of a small addition to 726 Jackson Place located in the courtyard.



COURTYARD VIEW TOWARD NEOB



NEOB LOBBY - BEFORE



NEOB LOBBY - AFTER

# Project Goals

## ENTRY AND CIRCULATION GOALS

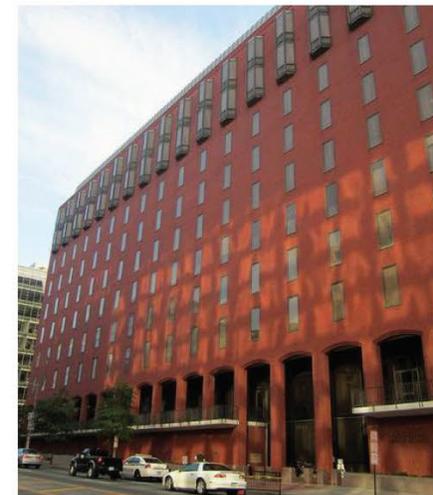
- Establish single point of entry and screening at 726 Jackson Place
- Revitalize courtyard and improve accessibility
- Security Advantages include:
  - » Increased visibility
  - » Vehicular restriction along Jackson Place
  - » Threat reduction due to smaller building
  - » Controlled access and screening for Jackson Place townhouses



COURTYARD OVERALL VIEW FROM NEOB



ENTRANCE TO 726 JACKSON PLACE



FRONT ENTRANCE AT NEOB

# Project Goals

## DESIGN GOALS

- Minimize intervention along Jackson Place
- Restore the “breezeway” character at the 1st floor of 726 Jackson Place
- Create a small, restrained addition that complements the architecture of the historic courtyard
- Design the addition to continue the “breezeway” character of the original structure and open up views into the courtyard
- Design the addition so it is “of its time”



JACKSON PLACE VIEW

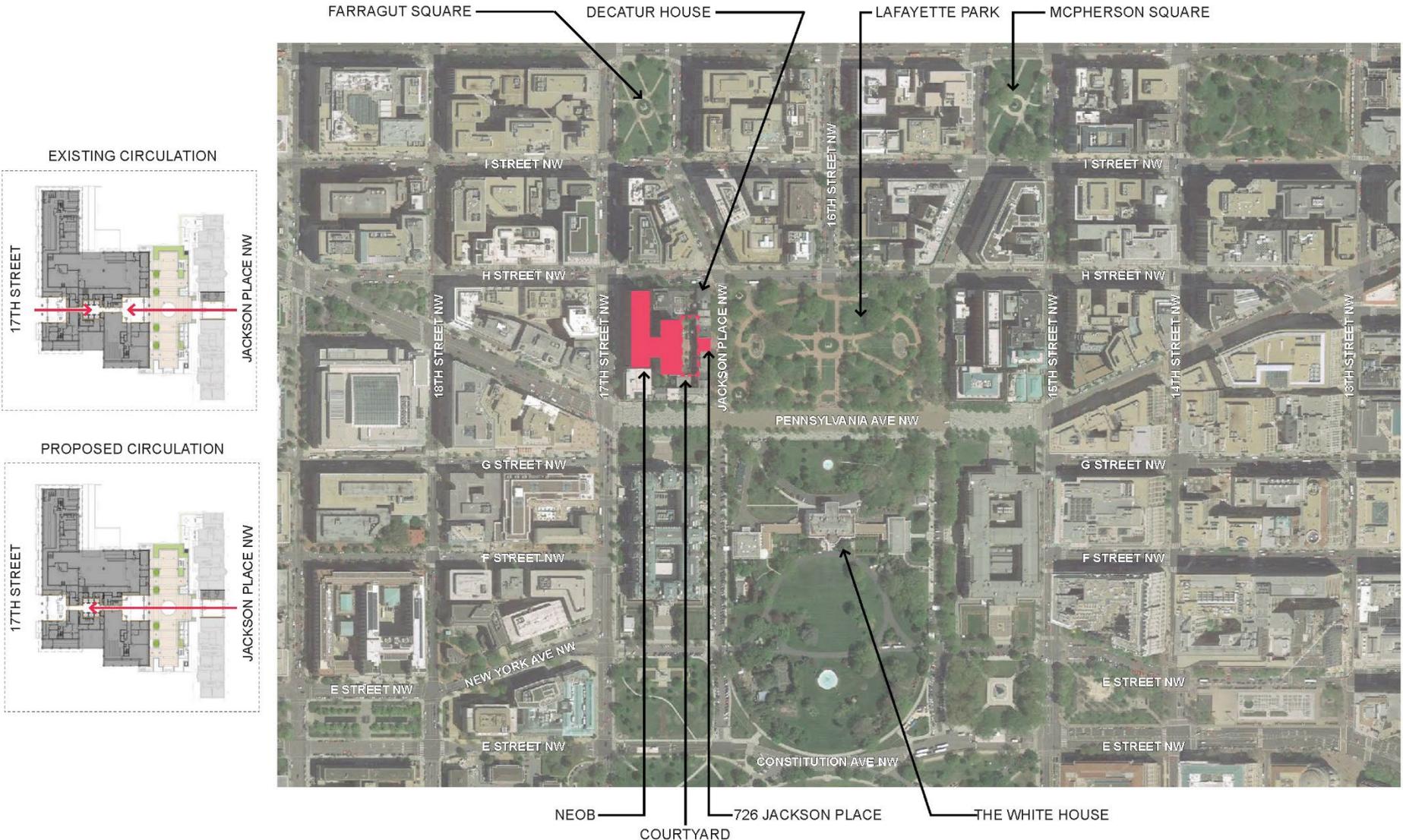


COURTYARD VIEW LOOKING TOWARD REAR OF ROWHOMES AT JACKSON PLACE

# Site Context / Axonometric



# Site Context / Plan



# Existing Conditions – Key Plan



# Existing Conditions



NEOB FRONT FACADE ON 17TH STREET NW



726 JACKSON PLACE FRONT FACADE



COURTYARD



COURTYARD, LOOKING TOWARD REAR OF 726 JACKSON PLACE



COURTYARD, LOOKING TOWARD NEOB



COURTYARD, LOOKING TOWARD 726 JACKSON PLACE STEPS



COURTYARD, LOOKING NORTH TOWARD DECATUR HOUSE



COURTYARD, EXISTING NORTH WALL AND TRELLIS NEAR DECATUR HOUSE

# Existing Conditions



726 JACKSON PLACE INTERIOR



726 JACKSON PLACE INTERIOR



726 JACKSON PLACE INTERIOR



NEOB ELEVATOR LOBBY, 1ST FLOOR



NEOB LOBBY 17th STREET



NEOB LOBBY AT COURTYARD



NEOB LOBBY AT COURTYARD

# Jackson Place Elevation and Proposed Modifications

## LEGEND

-  EMERGENCY PUSH TO RELEASE BUTTON MOUNTED INSIDE ON FLAT WALL ADJACENT TO DOOR
-  S KEY CARD READER INSTALLED ON OUTSIDE OF DOOR
-  MAIN ENTRANCE AND EXIT
-  CONTROLLED ACCESS AND EMERGENCY EGRESS ONLY



726 JACKSON PLACE FACADE



JACKSON PLACE TOWNHOUSES



EXTERIOR CARD READERS TO BE INSTALLED IN RETURNS TO REDUCE VISIBILITY. IN MASONRY, INSTALL IN MORTAR JOINTS USING STAINLESS STEEL ANCHORS.



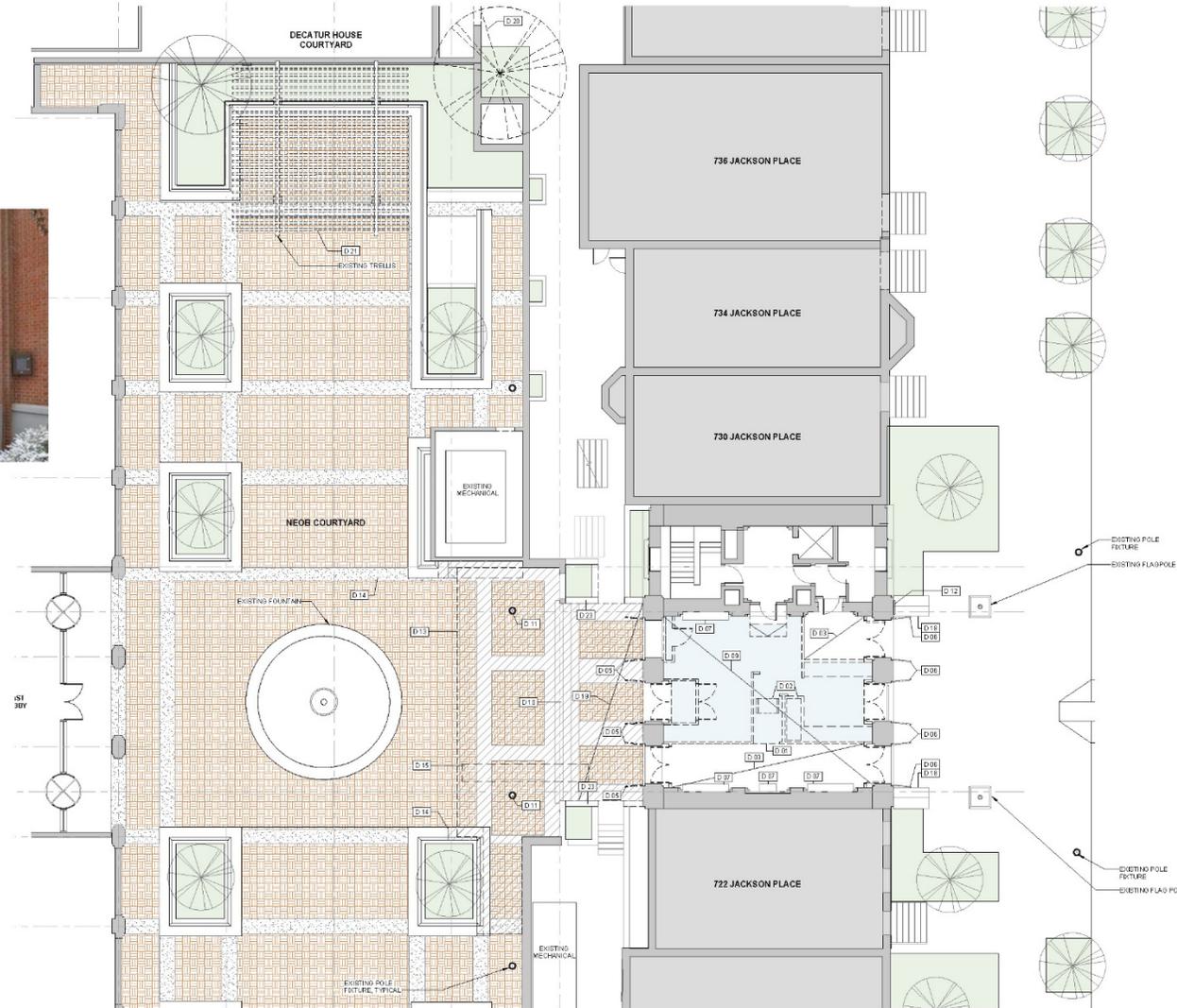
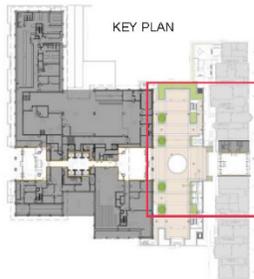
Elevation rendering courtesy of GSA



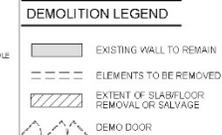
# Existing Plan / Proposed Demolition



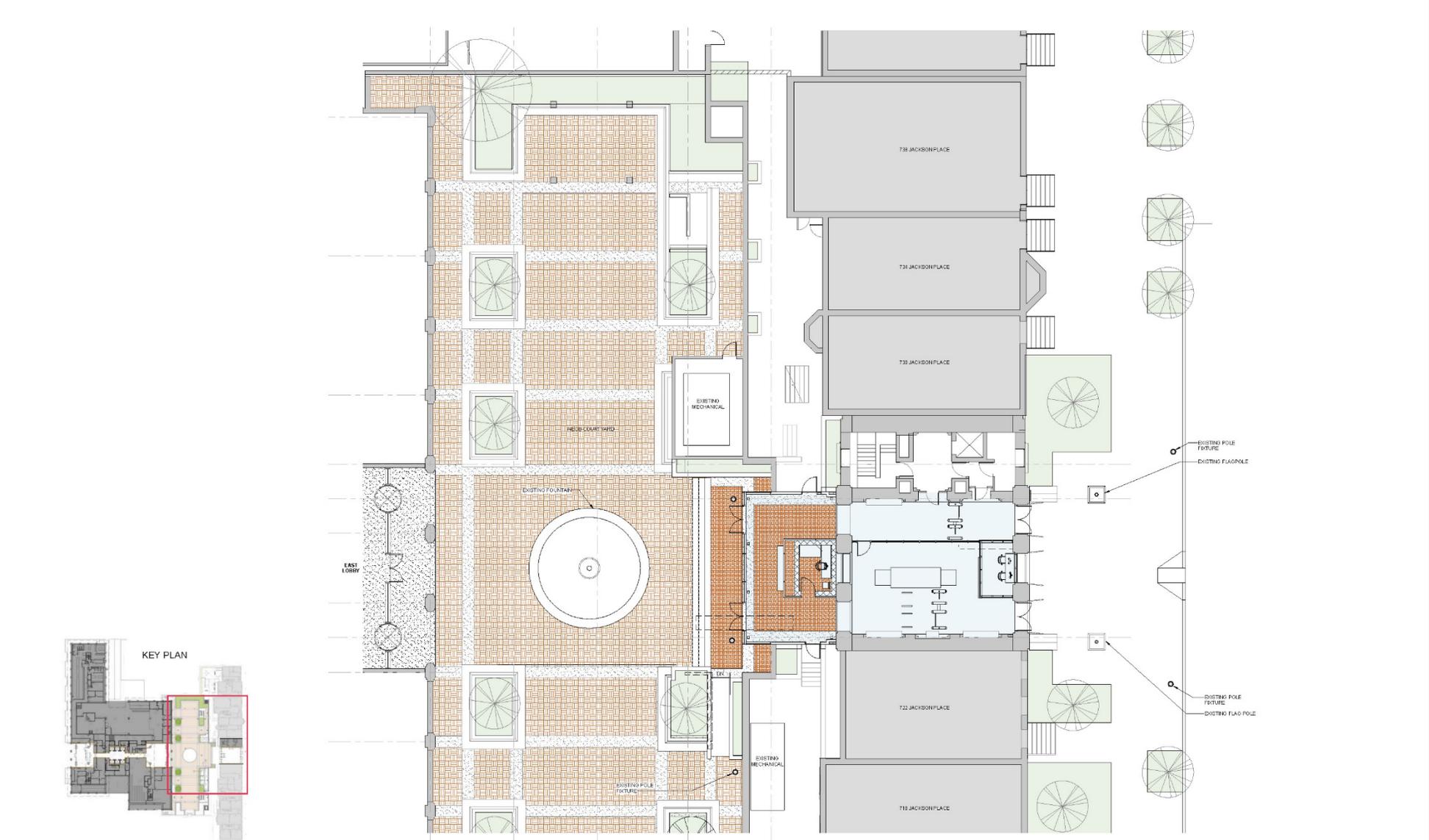
EXISTING ENTRY TO 726 JACKSON PLACE



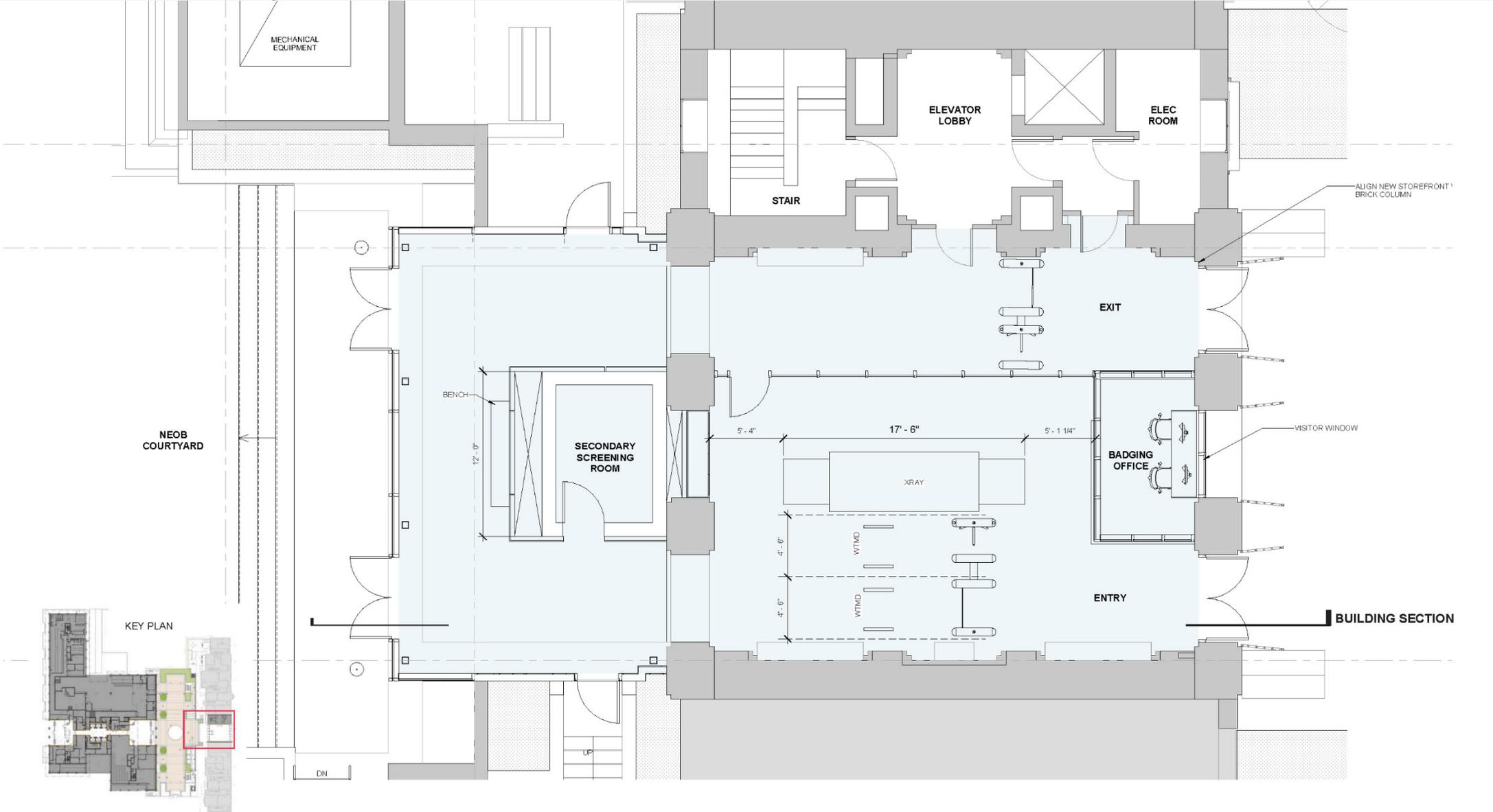
- D-01 REMOVE EXISTING RAISED PLATFORM FLOOR, ASSOCIATED STRUCTURE AND RAMP IN HATCHED AREA
- D-02 REMOVE EXISTING SECURITY EQUIPMENT RETURN TO OWNER
- D-03 REMOVE EXISTING CARPET, ASSOCIATED WALL BASE AND ACCESS. EXISTING BRICK FLOOR WILL BE EXPOSED IN NEW WORK
- D-05 REMOVE EXISTING FLOOR GATES AT NEOB COURTYARD SIDE. RETURN TO OWNER
- D-06 SALVAGE EXISTING PAINT TRUCK GATES AT JACKSON PLACE SIDE. GATES TO BE REINSTALLED IN NEW WORK
- D-07 PROTECT IN PLACE EXISTING WALL LINING AND RECESSED LAMP FIXTURES
- D-08 REMOVE EXISTING RECESSED CEILING
- D-10 SALVAGE CEILING STRIPS TO THE EXTENT THAT NEW ADDITION CAN TIE TO EXISTING JACKSON PLACE FLOOR LEVEL
- D-11 REMOVE EXISTING CEILING FOLDS. SALVAGE IF OR REINSTALLATION
- D-12 PROTECT IN PLACE EXISTING BUILDING PLUMBING
- D-13 REMOVE EXISTING BRICK PAVERS AND DRIVEWAY PAVING IN AREA IN HATCHED AREA TO CONCRETE SLAB LAYER. SALVAGE BRICK PAVERS FOR REINSTALLATION
- D-14 CAREFULLY SAW CUT AND REMOVE HATCHED PORTION OF EXISTING GRANITE PLANTERWALL AND BENCH COORDINATE WITH NEW WORK
- D-15 REMOVE EXISTING METAL RAMP. RETURN TO OWNER
- D-16 PROTECT IN PLACE EXISTING CONCRETE PLUMBING
- D-19 REMOVE PAVERS AND CONCRETE SLAB SALVAGE PAVERS FOR RE-USE IN NEW WORK. COORDINATE WITH STRUCTURE
- D-20 REMOVE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE TREE
- D-21 CAREFULLY DEMANTLE PORTIONS AS INDICATED FOR USE TO BRICK WALL FOR RECONSTRUCTION
- D-23 REMOVE PORTION OF EXISTING MASONRY WALL



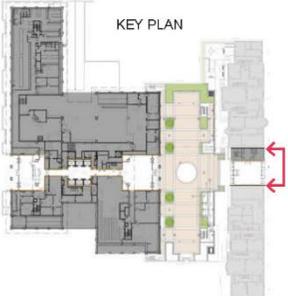
# Proposed Plan



# Proposed Entry Area Plan



# Proposed Elevation

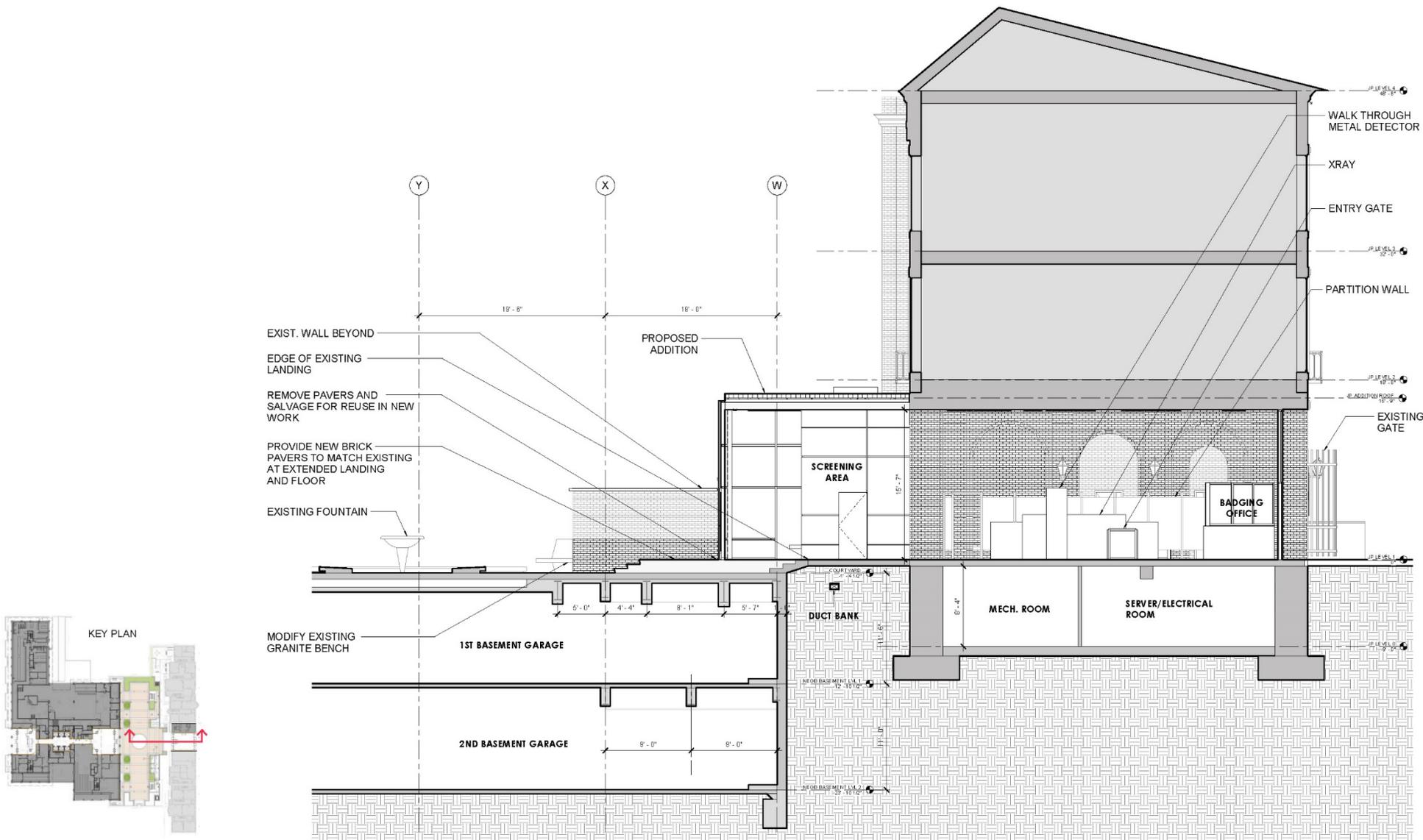


ELEVATION

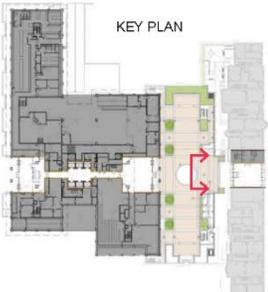


SIDEWALK VIEW

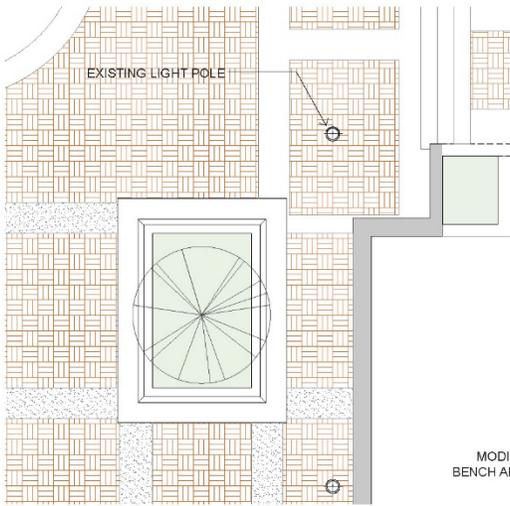
# Proposed Section – Looking North



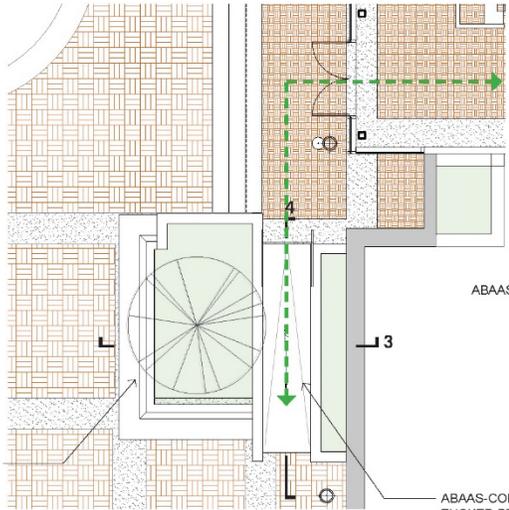
# Proposed Addition at Courtyard



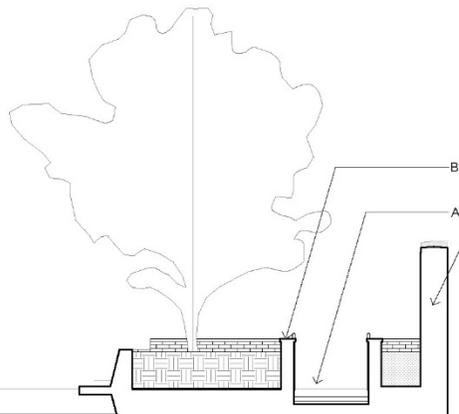
# Accessibility Improvements at Courtyard



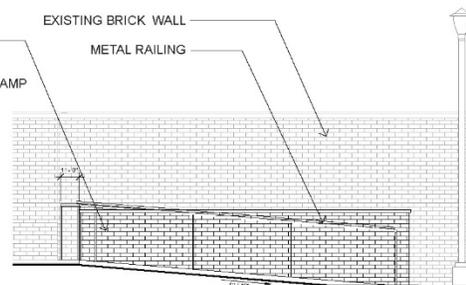
1. ENLARGED PLAN - EXISTING COURTYARD CONDITIONS



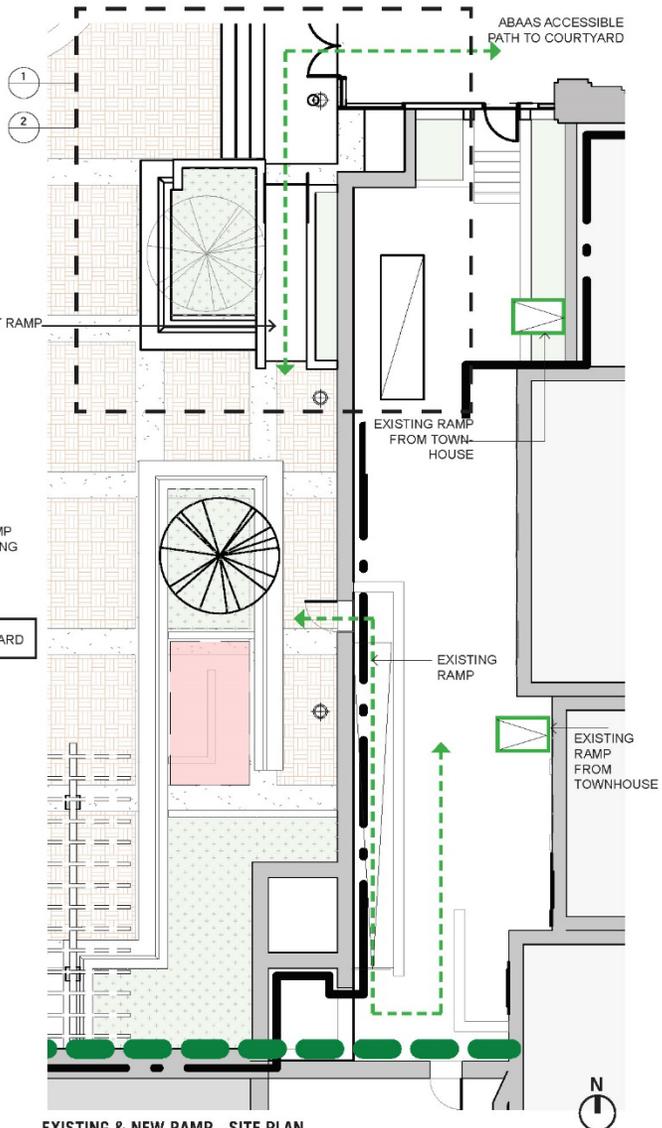
2. ENLARGED PLAN - PROPOSED COURTYARD CONDITIONS



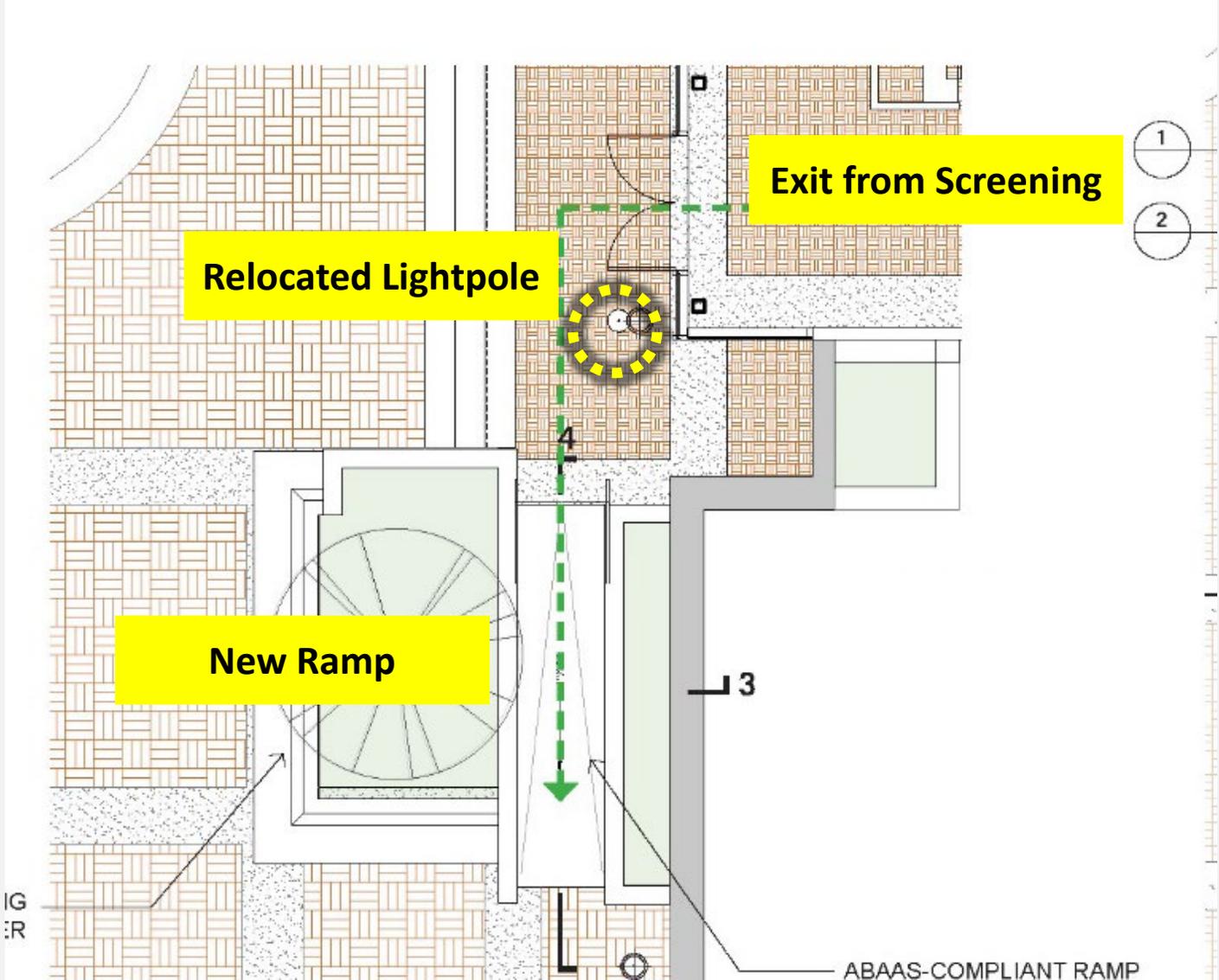
3. PROPOSED RAMP SECTION



4. PROPOSED RAMP SECTION



# Accessibility Improvements at Courtyard



# Existing Courtyard Views



DECATUR HOUSE SIDE OF EXISTING NORTH COURTYARD WALL



NEOB SIDE OF EXISTING NORTH COURTYARD WALL



NEOB SIDE OF EXISTING SOUTH COURTYARD WALL



NEOB COURTYARD LOOKING NORTHWEST

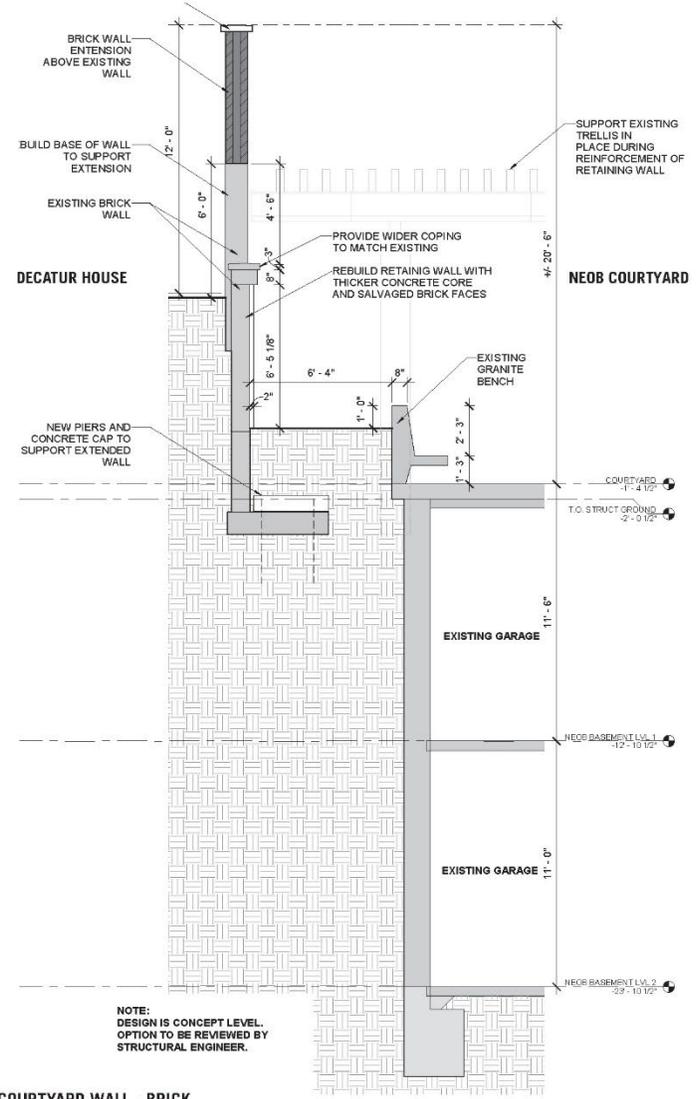
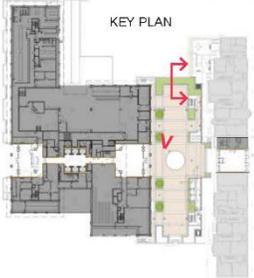


NEOB SIDE OF EXISTING NORTH COURTYARD WALL

# Proposed Wall Extension – North Side

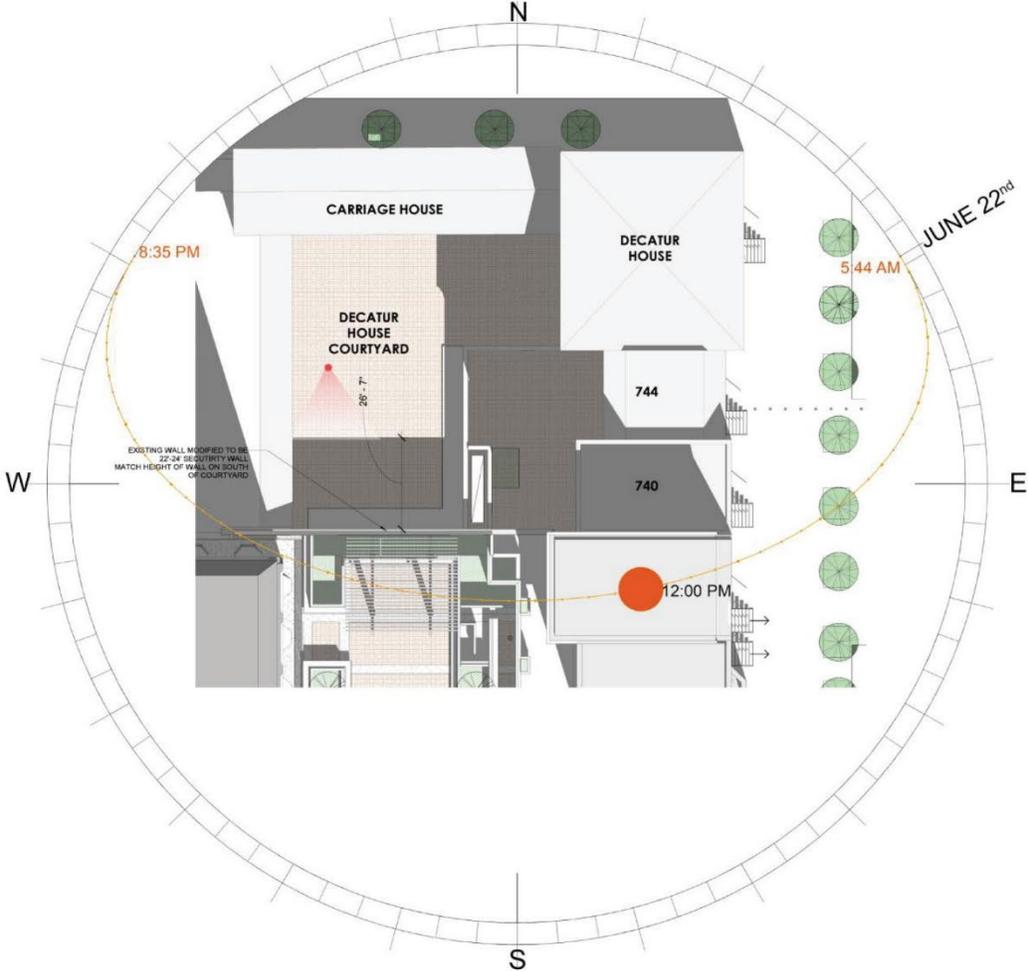


BRICK WALL EXTENSION MATCH HEIGHT OF WALL ON SOUTH SIDE ADJACENT TO BLAIR HOUSE



COURTYARD WALL - BRICK

# Wall Extension – Shadow Study



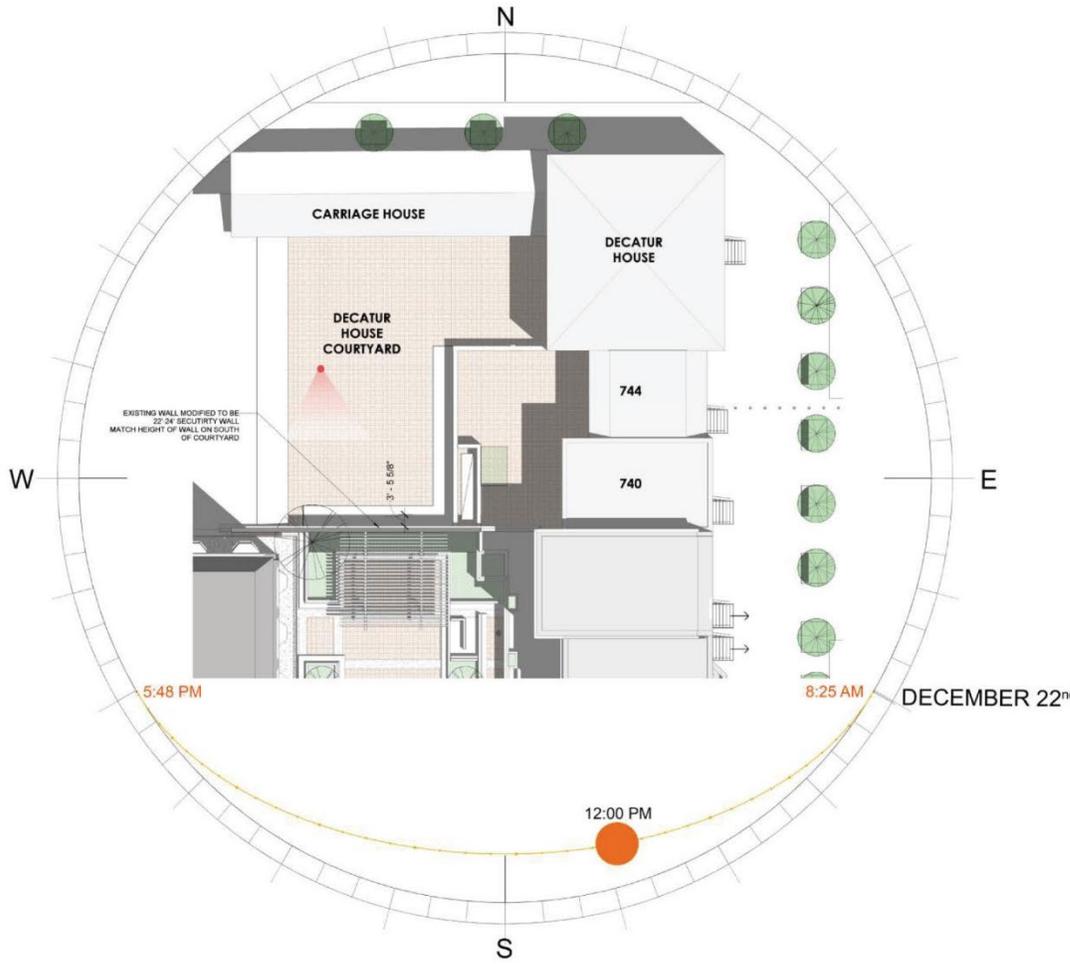
SUN/SHADOW STUDY AT WINTER SOLSTICE



3D DIAGRAM SHOWING THE EFFECT OF SHADOW CAST AT WINTER SOLSTICE - 26'



# Wall Extension – Shadow Study



SUN/SHADOW STUDY AT SUMMER SOLSTICE



3D DIAGRAM SHOWING THE EFFECT OF SHADOW CAST AT SUMMER SOLSTICE - 3'



DECATUR HOUSE COURTYARD SHOWING EXISTING WALL HEIGHT

# U. S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

23 April 2020

Dear Ms. Wright:

In its public meeting of 16 April conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept design for security-related alterations to the east entrance and courtyard of 726 Jackson Place, NW, part of the New Executive Office Building (NEOB) complex on the west side of Lafayette Square. The Commission approved the concept with the following comments.

The Commission members expressed support for the proposal to improve the security and access to the NEOB complex, including the extension of the raised terrace into the courtyard in order to accommodate an expanded security screening facility and a relocated barrier-free ramp leading from the south side of the terrace down to the courtyard level. However, they observed that the ramp's upper landing appears constrained and could be difficult to negotiate; they recommended creating a more generous entrance sequence by extending the landing further west and creating a wider, more gradually sloped ramp that wraps around the planter adjacent to the terrace. They also suggested considering alternatives for the relocation of the existing pair of light standards, perhaps moving them into the courtyard plaza to be less intrusive on the barrier-free route and more consistent with their original setting.

For the architectural components, the Commission members questioned the contrast of the dark bronze color of the addition's exterior glass framing with the light color proposed for the cladding of the interior secondary screening room enclosure, which would be prominently visible from the courtyard. They advised studying the balance of these colors to avoid a sharp contrast, and they expressed support for using the inner wall to display art, observing that the presence of artwork might also affect the perception of the colors. Finally, they suggested further study of the mullion pattern for infilling the entrance portals on Jackson Place in relation to the other facades along this street, including consideration of subdividing the larger glass panels above the doors.

The Commission looks forward to review of the next submission for this project. As always, the staff is available to assist you in the development of the design.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Mina Wright, Director  
Office of Planning & Design Quality  
General Services Administration, National Capital Region  
1800 F Street, NW, Suite 4400  
Washington, DC 20405

cc: Anath Ranon, Quinn Evans Architects