



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 1, 2020

PROJECT Proposed Entrance Alterations 726 Jackson Place, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8164
SUBMITTED BY United States General Services Administration	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.32(00.00)45197
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of final site and building plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve final site and building plans with comments
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted final 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 Commission reviewed and approved the preliminary site and building plans in May 2020.

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 17th 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.

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 17th 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 17th 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.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

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

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

Notes the applicant has responded to the Commission's previous comments regarding landscaping and pedestrian access.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	- Preliminary site and building plans approved – May 2020
Remaining actions (anticipated)	- None

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 17th Street, NW. The location also allows for higher visibility of visitors approaching the entrance, as the 17th Street entrance is set back. 17th 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 final 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. Staff supports GSA's proposed approach to the glazing which is compatible with the existing façade. 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 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. 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. At preliminary review, the Commission requested the applicant consider options to create a more generous and inviting landing at the entrance to the new addition from the courtyard side. In response, the applicant has revised the design to show inward-swinging doors and a proposed light pole has been relocated out of the path of travel. These changes allow a more open area for pedestrian movement.

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). At preliminary review, the Commission requested the applicant evaluate the use of plantings or vines to help soften the height of the courtyard wall. In response, GSA notes the base of the wall now includes an area for planting that will help screen the wall. The applicant has indicated that a number of plants species will be considered for the area.

Finally, the Commission previously recommend the applicant consider options to improve the streetscape along 17th Street, NW as a way to enhance the pedestrian experience. GSA has indicated that improvements along 17th Street, NW are not a part of the project scope or budget. However, GSA does maintain a robust planting program for the building planters along the street and continues to provide seasonal plant rotations to help make the area more attractive. Further improvements may be explored in the future when they align with a project proposal for this part of the complex.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Overall, the project is generally consistent with the policies set forth in 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 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 were held. 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. GSA prepared a memorandum of agreement (MOA) in coordination with NCPC and the DC SHPO to complete the Section 106 process. NCPC designated GSA lead and is a signatory to the MOA.

National Environmental Policy Act

GSA and NCPC each have an independent responsibility to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). GSA 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 determined that categorical exclusion #6 applies, which pertains to the “Approval of federal and District government agency proposals for new construction, building expansion, or 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.” Staff determined no extraordinary circumstances were present before applying the categorical exclusion.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

Without objection, at its September 9, 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 the 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 General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The District Department of Energy and Environment stated that coordination was necessary with GSA regarding the stormwater management requirements for the project. Since that time, GSA has worked to confirm with DOEE that the improvements are all located on top of structure.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the final plans for the project at their September 17, 2020 meeting.

ONLINE REFERENCE

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

- Submission Package

Prepared by Matthew Flis
09/24/2020

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

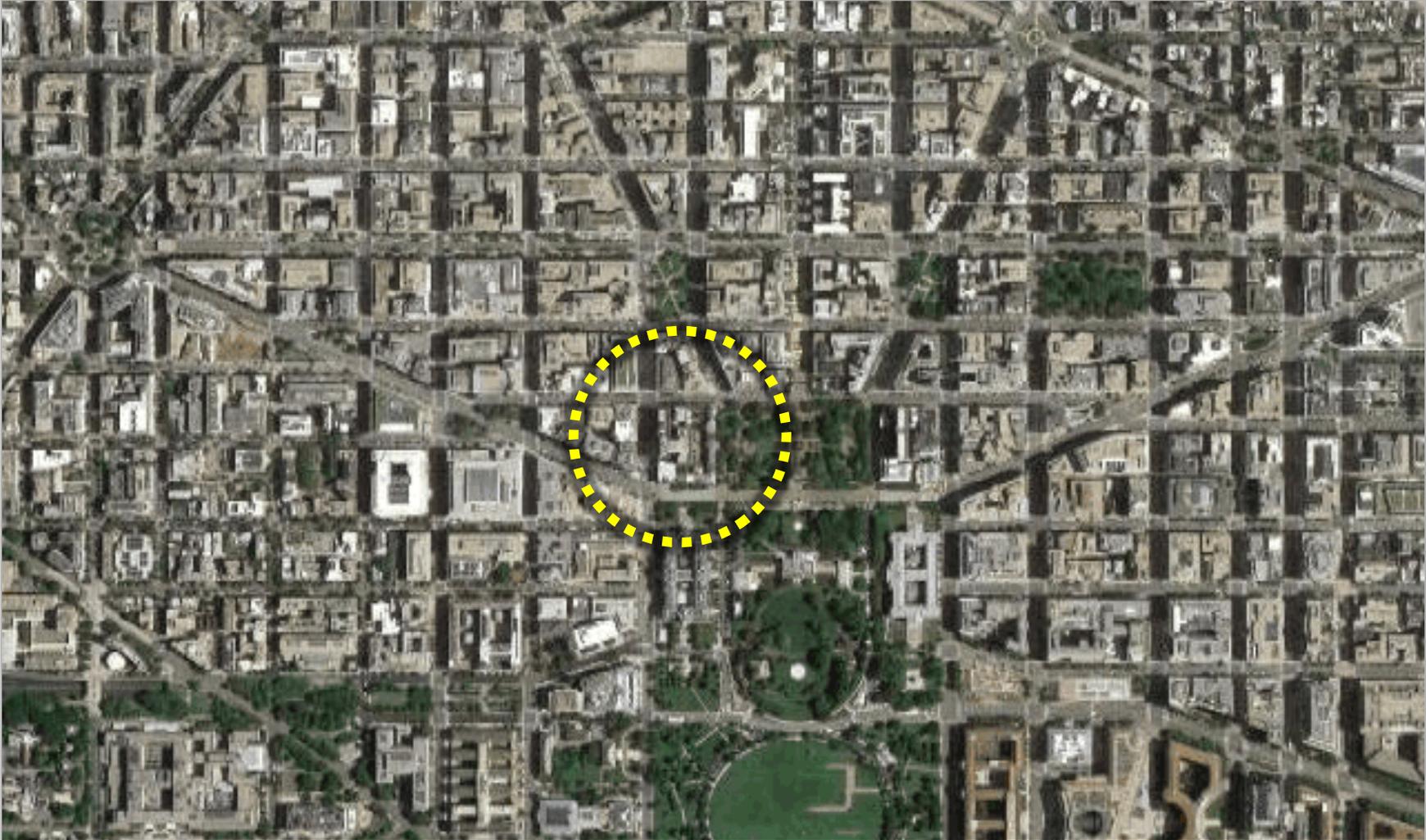
Proposed Entrance Alterations at 726 Jackson Place, NW

726 Jackson Place, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Final Site and Building Plans

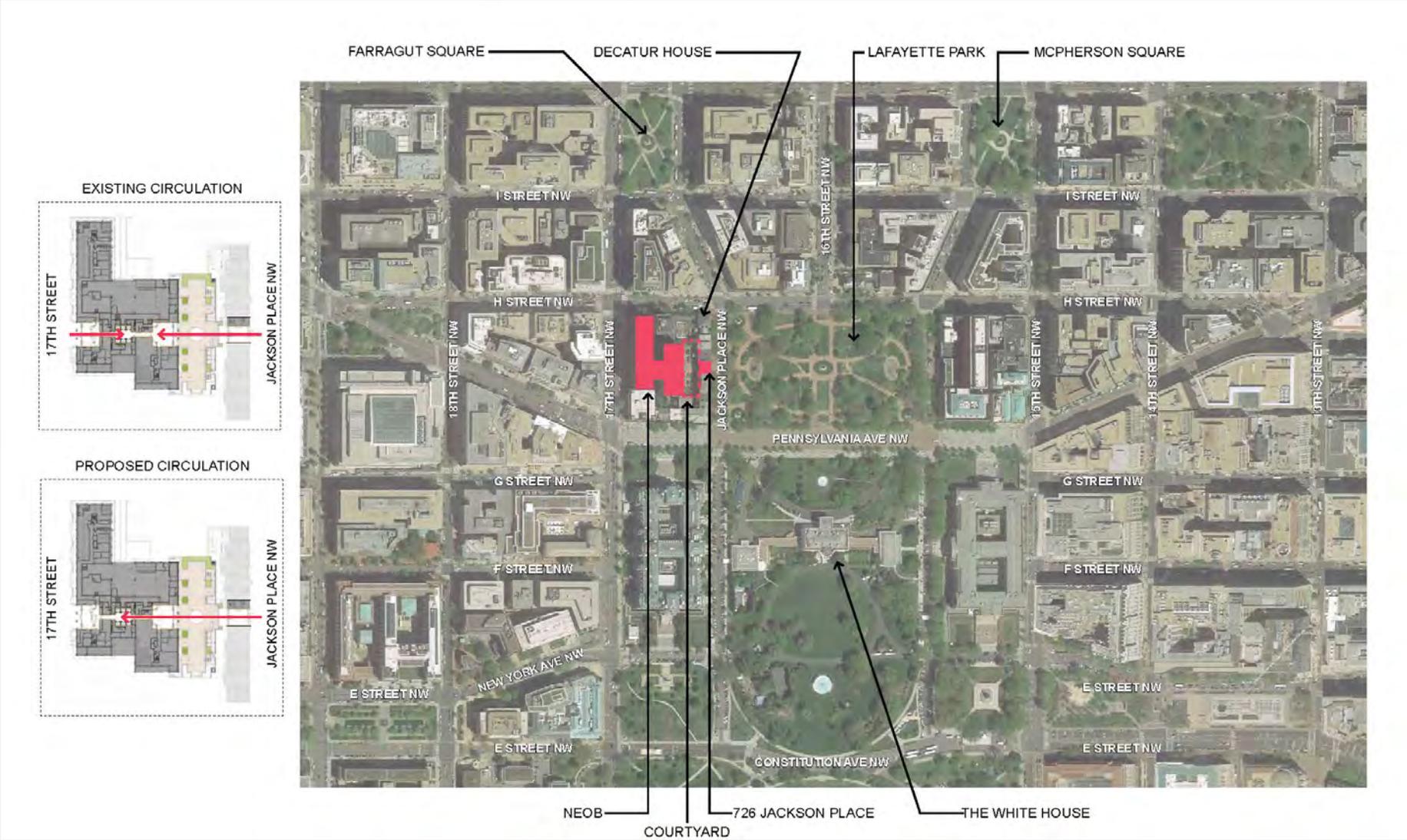
United States General Services Administration

Site Location



Location Map

Project Context



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

Circulation 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

Design 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

Townhouse 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



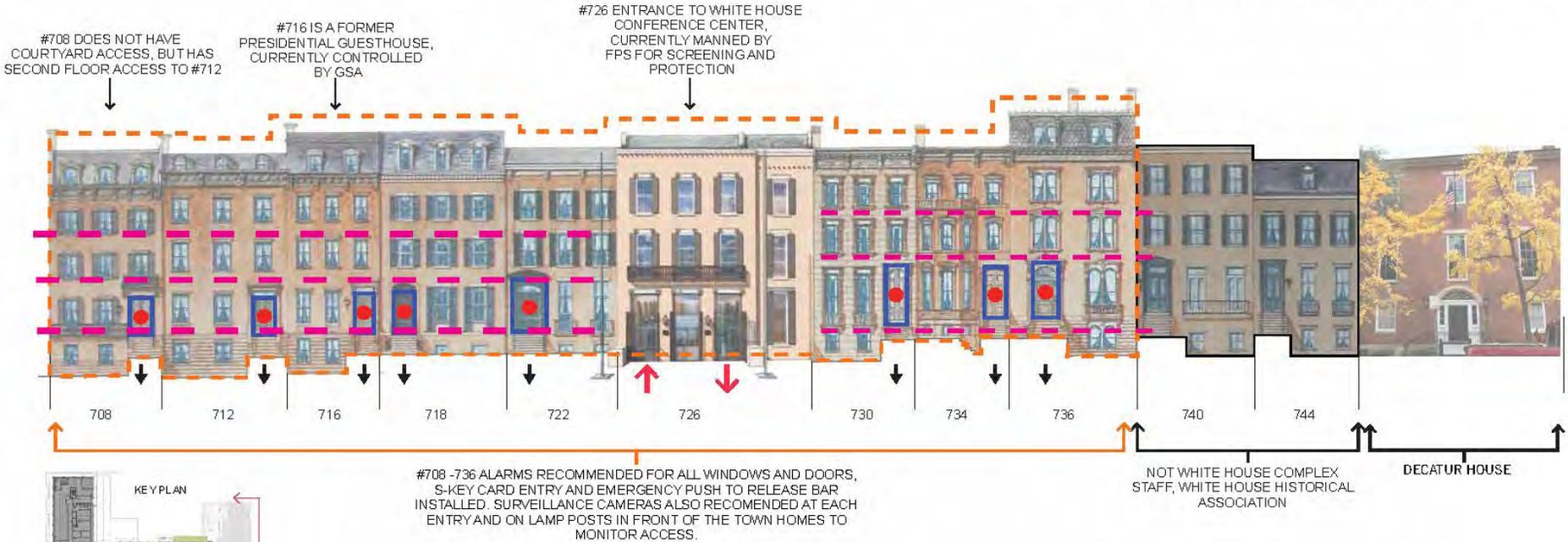
726 JACKSON PLACE FACADE



JACKSON PLACE TOWNHOUSES



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

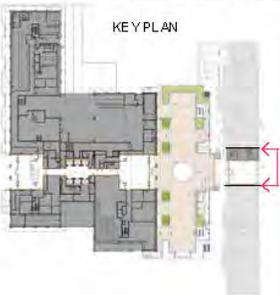


Front Elevation - Proposed



SIDEWALK VIEW

Front Elevation – Alternative 1

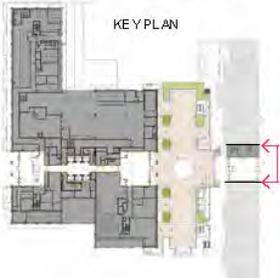


ELEVATION



SIDEWALK VIEW

Front Elevation – Alternative 2



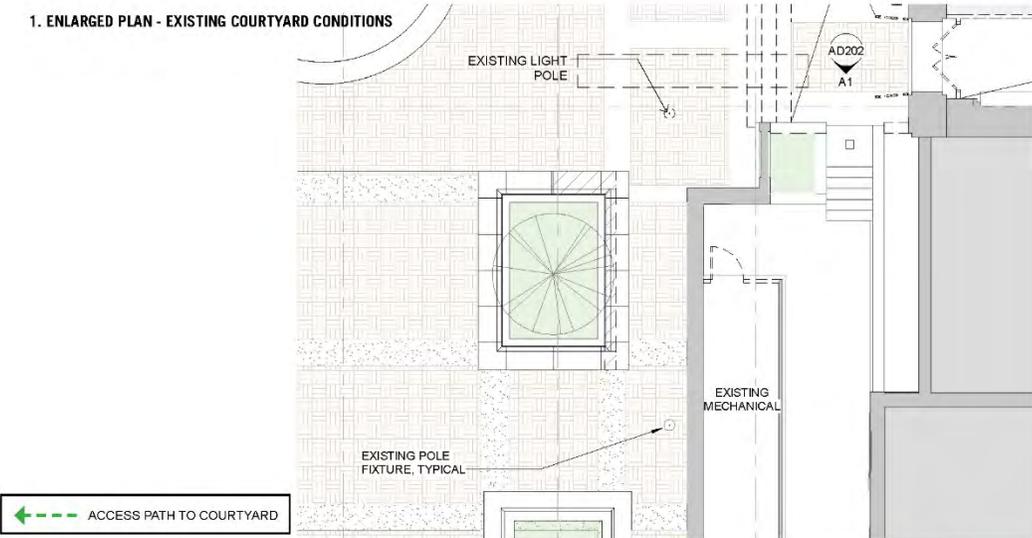
ELEVATION



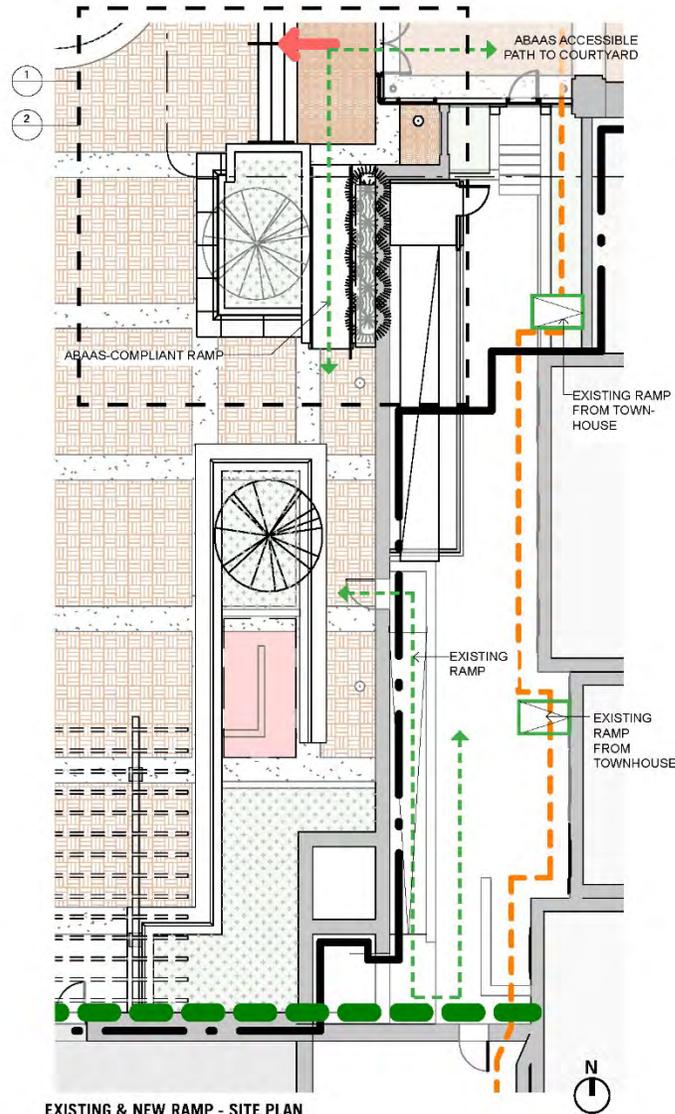
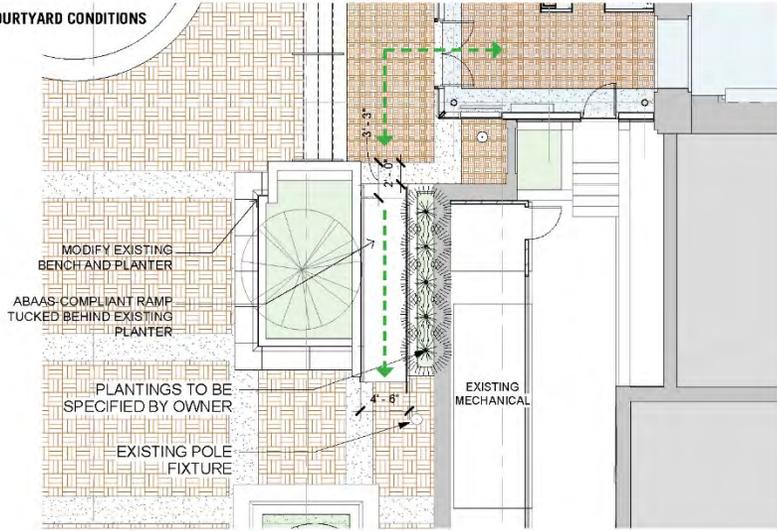
SIDEWALK VIEW

Enlarged Courtyard Plans

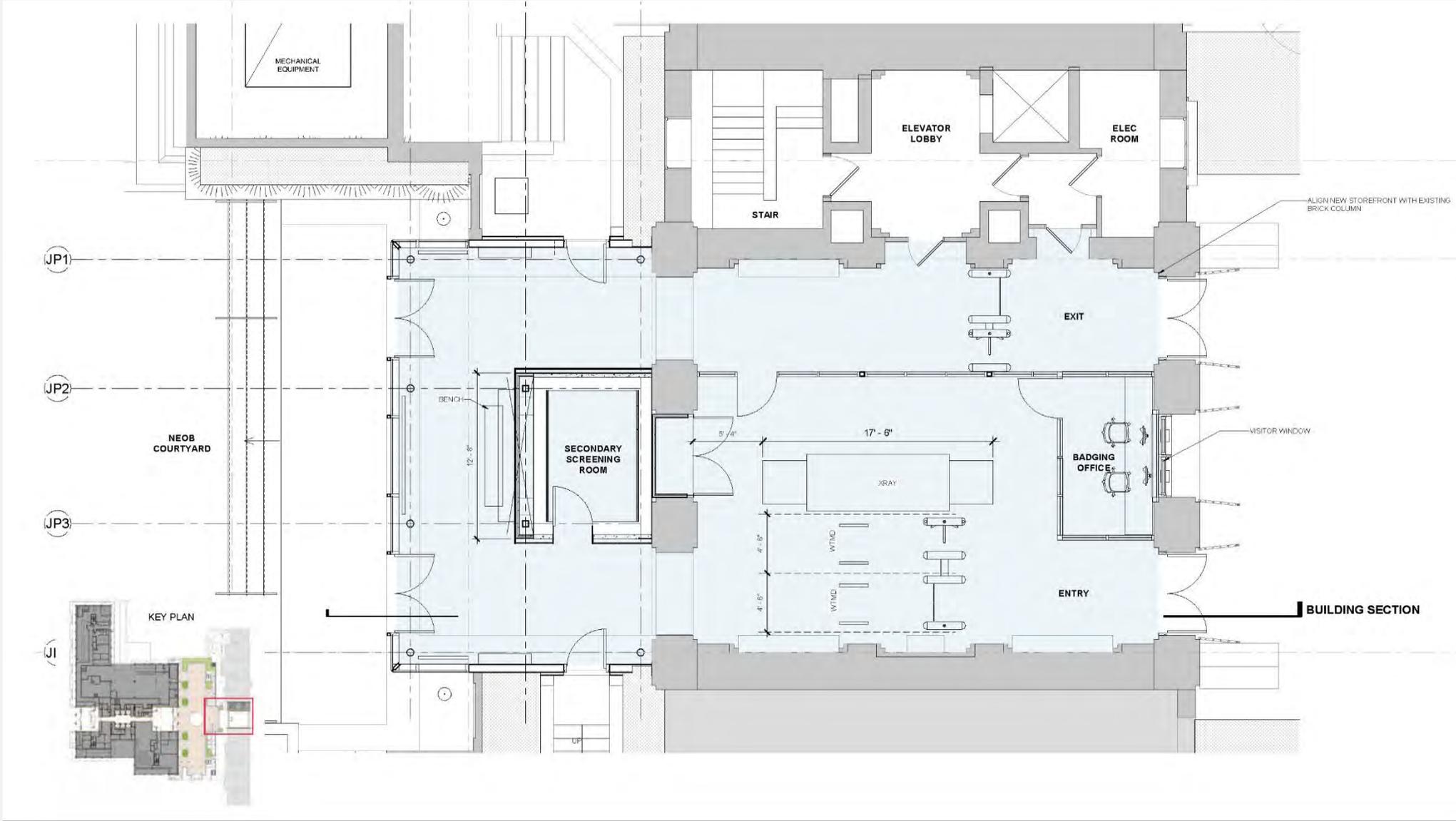
1. ENLARGED PLAN - EXISTING COURTYARD CONDITIONS



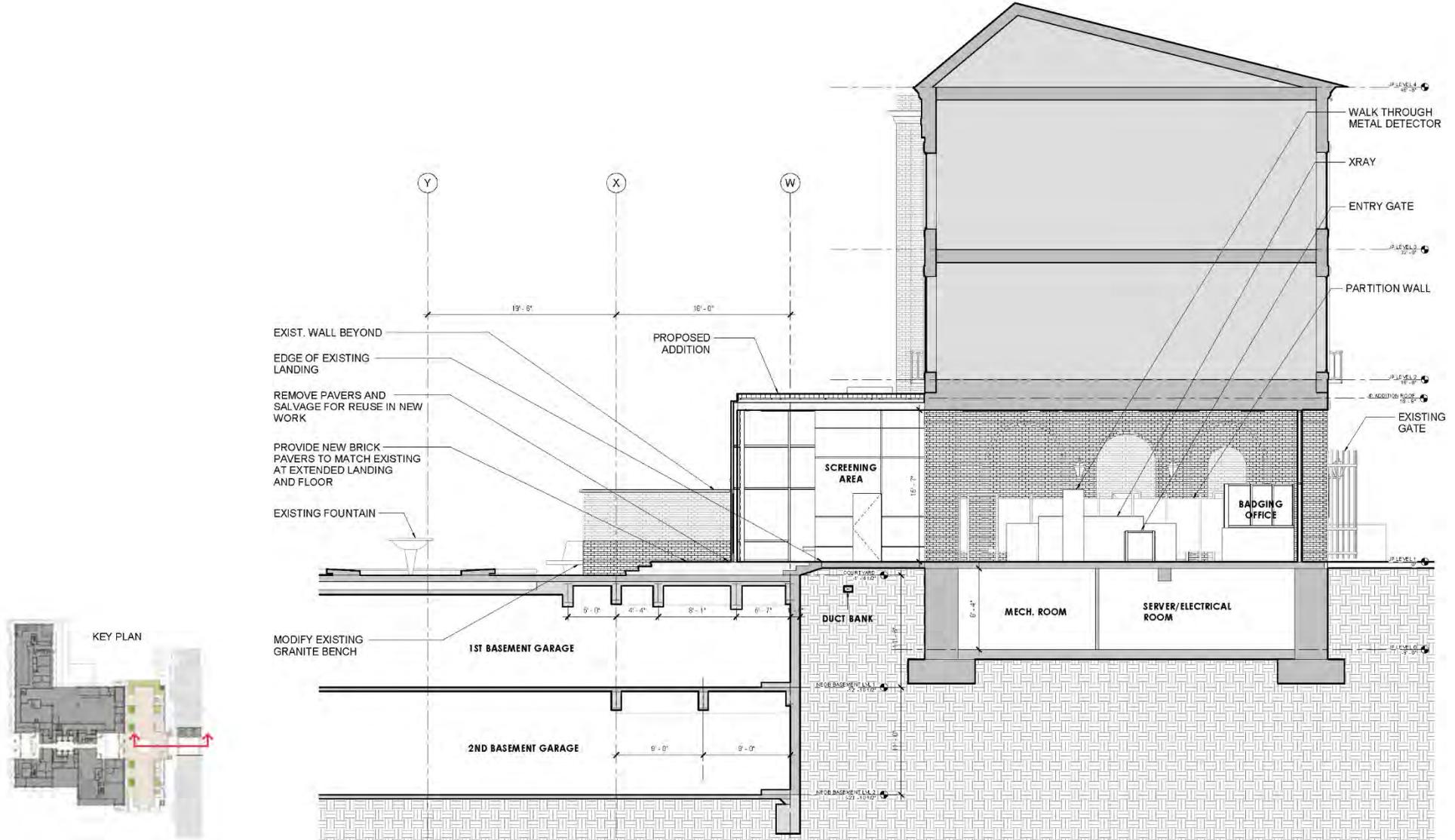
2. ENLARGED PLAN - PROPOSED COURTYARD CONDITIONS



Enlarged Entry Plan



Building Section

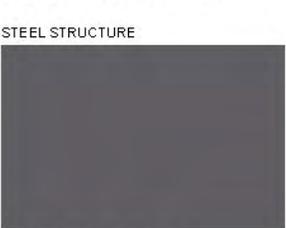


Courtyard Addition

SCREENING ROOM CLADDING



SWISSPEARL NOBLIS SAPPHIRE 7061



STEEL STRUCTURE



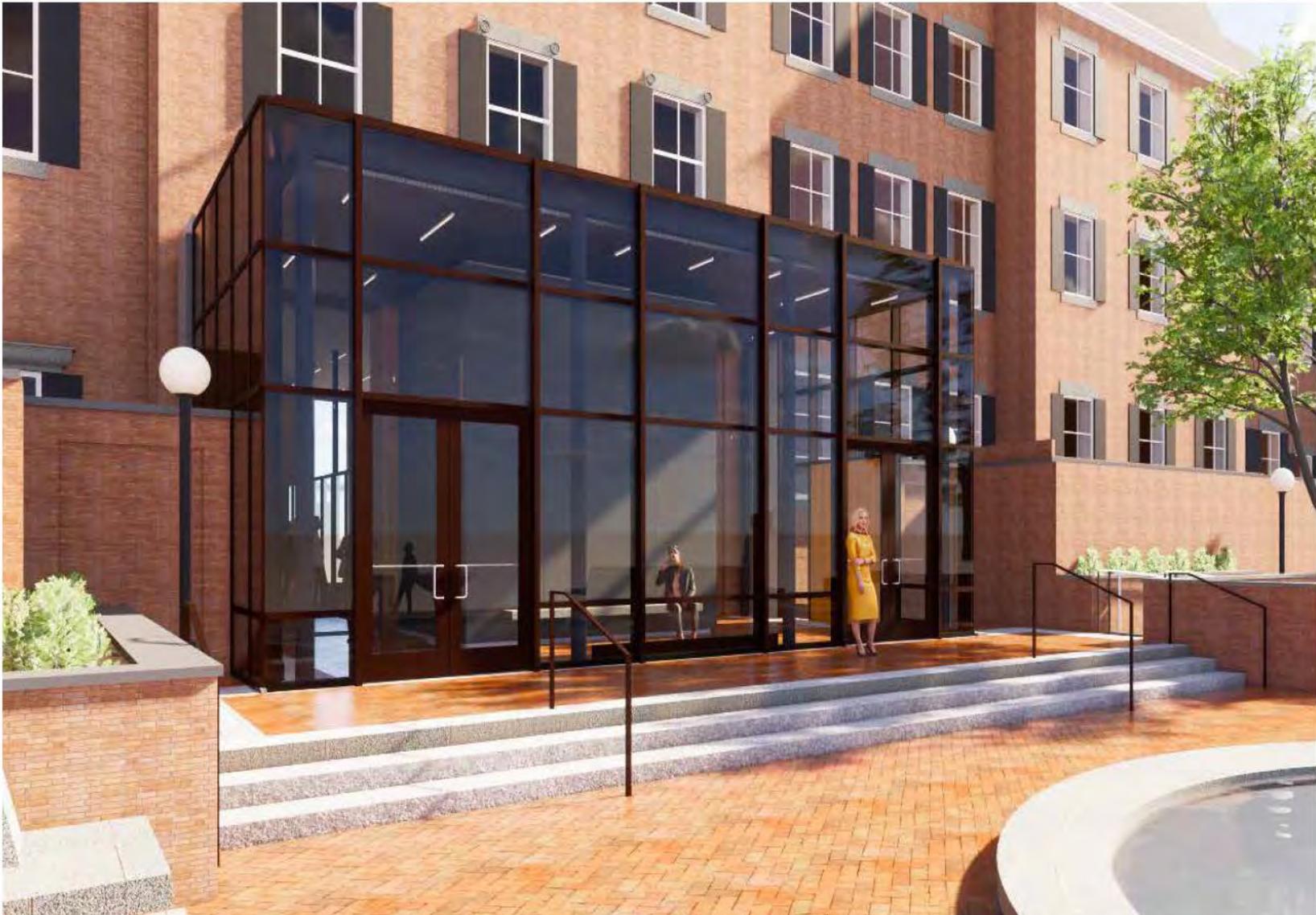
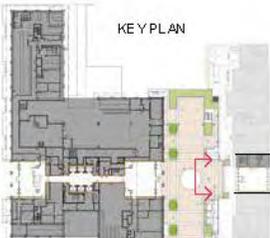
SHERWIN WILLIAMS SW6278



CURTAIN WALL MULLIONS



AAMA 611 CLASS 1 MEDIUM BRONZE



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

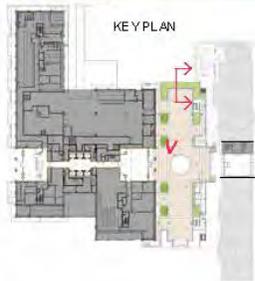


NEOB COURTYARD LOOKING NORTHWEST

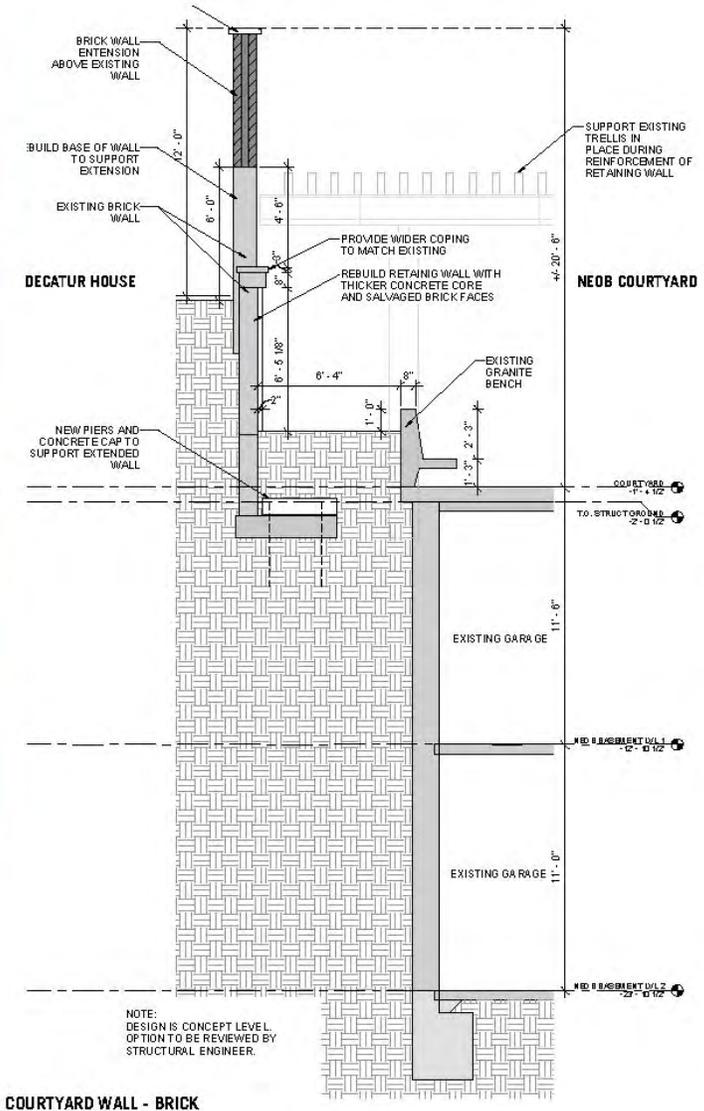


NEOB SIDE OF EXISTING NORTH COURTYARD WALL

North Courtyard Wall Extension



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



Potential Planting Palette

Aucuba japonica 'Petite Jade'



Malus 'Adirondack'



Buxus 'Dee Runk'

- Use in corner of planters against wall.
- Provide vertical accent and frame Aucuba in planter.
- 8'tall x 2' wide



Buxus 'Little Missy'

- Use under Crabapples in free standing planters.
- 2' tall x 2' wide evergreen



U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

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25 September 2020

Dear Ms. Wright:

In its public meeting of 17 September conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts approved, based on its prior review of the submission materials, the final design for security-related alterations to the east entrance and courtyard of 726 Jackson Place, NW, part of the New Executive Office Building complex on the west side of Lafayette Square.

The Commission appreciates the responsiveness of the applicant team in refining the design following its previous review. In its approval action, the Commission recommended the mullion pattern illustrated in Alternate 2 for infilling the entrance portals on Jackson Place, as shown in the submitted materials.

As always, the staff is available to assist you with future submissions.

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