



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: May 1, 2025

PROJECT Capital One Arena Improvements 601 F Street, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8617
SUBMITTED BY District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 21.10(38.00)46006
REVIEW AUTHORITY District Projects in the Central Area per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary site and building plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve comments on concept plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and Monumental Sports & Entertainment (MSE) have submitted site and building plans for improvements to the Capital One Arena, located in downtown Washington, DC. The existing arena was completed in 1997. As part of a recent agreement with the District of Columbia, MSE will be providing a variety of improvements to the Capital One Arena. These improvements will include both interior and exterior work. The agreement includes six phases of construction that will conclude ahead of the 2027-28 season. The goal of these improvements includes a redesign of the building to visually transform the arena into a dynamic and monumental gathering location; honoring its role as a central meeting space in the District; providing a catalyst for future improvements recommended by the District's Gallery Place/Chinatown Task Force; creating more harmony between the arena and its urban context; enriching the community's connection to the space; and providing extensive interior renovations to bring these spaces in line with players' and visitors' expectations.

The seating capacity of the arena will not change. However, the project includes several interior and exterior changes within the existing footprint of the building, to help improve the visitor experience and identity of the building. For example:

- The current main entrance is too small, creating a bottleneck for visitors, and is difficult to easily find. The proposed design shifts the main entrance on F Street, NW closer to the corner at 7th Street, NW and increases its size and visibility. Other entrances will also be modernized.
- The new multi-story main entrance is shown with a wall of glass to allow more space for visitors to navigate. The applicant has indicated this new space could be ideal for a large artwork installation.

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- In addition, the design improves pedestrian access on both 7th and 6th Streets, NW.
 - The applicant is also proposing improvements to the Metrorail entrance located at the corner of 7th and F Streets, NW. The intent is to make the space more inviting and visually connected to the arena.
 - The interior changes include new food and beverage options which will be easier to access from the street.
 - The most prominent improvement is the addition of a horizontal metal mesh wrap around the top of the building. The purpose of this architectural element is to draw attention to the building and help identify the entry points where the wrapping lifts to expose the walls of glass at the new entrances.
 - The proposed design also includes street-facing digital screen displays and lighting.

The applicant has continued to modify design elements in response to agency and stakeholder feedback. As the applicant and stakeholders work through the design review and Section 106 processes, the applicant is continuing to evaluate the impact of the proposed changes, not just on the historic fabric of the immediate area, but on the larger neighborhood area as well.

KEY INFORMATION

- The original arena was constructed in 1997 through a partnership with the District of Columbia and the Pollin Group, the owners of the Washington Capitals and Wizards at that time.
- The arena building is not historic, but is located near the Downtown Historic District, a central location within the L'Enfant Plan, and is adjacent to two National Historic Landmark buildings.
- In 2024, the District of Columbia entered into an agreement with Monumental Sports and Entertainment to acquire the site and building, and lease the building back to Monumental with the stipulation that they invest in improvements to the building.
- The applicant team gave an information presentation to the Commission at the February 2, 2025 meeting, and the Commission provided general support for the project and some design feedback regarding the veil.
- NCPC is the lead federal agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- NCPC staff initiated Section 106 of the NHPA on February 4, 2025 and has hosted two consulting parties meetings.
- The applicant is planning the construction in six phases to conclude before the start of the 2027-28 season.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Supports the project objectives to extend the functional life of the arena and reinforce its urban presence within downtown Washington, DC by improving access, enhancing wayfinding and the arrival experience, enlivening the arena exterior to make it a must-see building for residents and visitors, and activating the arena as an entertainment venue in the heart of the city.

Notes that Capital One Arena is in a central location of the historic L'Enfant City Plan; is surrounded by L'Enfant streets including 7th, F, and 6th Streets, NW; adjacent to the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District, the Downtown Historic District and two National Historic Landmark buildings: the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture (the Reynolds Building) and the General Post Office (the Hotel Monaco).

Notes the Reynolds Building (originally the Patent Office Building) is considered one of the most significant buildings in Washington with its porticoes modeled after the Parthenon in Athens. It sits prominently within the 8th Street axis anchored by the Carnegie Library to the north and the National Archives and the National Gallery Sculpture Garden to the south.

Notes the setting of the Reynolds Building is unique in that the block in which it sits extends beyond adjacent blocks and allows for more public space, elevating the building's significance, especially on F and G Streets. This allows for more expansive views of the building and its setting.

Finds the redesigned arena will appear prominently in this setting, especially the wrapped veil and new entrances at the corner of 7th and F Streets, and if designed well, can positively impact how people view the Reynolds Building and experience the public space.

Finds that while there is ample opportunity for a modern approach that unifies and elevates the design of the arena, it must also be complementary of both the Reynolds Building and the General Post Office Building, and be deferential at key viewpoints to preserve the settings of these National Historic Landmarks.

Building and Site Design

Finds that since the Information Presentation in February and the initial Section 106 Consulting Parties meeting in March, the applicant has made the following changes to the building design:

- Increased the transparency of wall areas on 7th Street, 6th Street with new glazing that provides greater views into the building, as well as opportunities to experience the veil from the interior.
- Updated the materials to include a limestone base, glazing, composite wood and articulated metal panels that better define the horizontal and vertical massing.
- Added new street level elements such as integrated artwork on 7th Street, and the Team History Wall on F Street, and additional street-oriented retail space.
- Improved integration between the veil and the base façade.
- Replaced the reflective glass tile around the base of the Metro station entrance with a continuous limestone material around the base of the façade.
- Added a new information board adjacent to the new main entrance on F Street.

- Increased the transparency of the proposed veil element and scaled back the veil at Gallery Place Way.

Supports the design changes made to-date, especially the increased glazing, improved streetscape engagement elements, updated materials, and the additional viewshed studies.

Notes the project seeks to reduce congestion and queuing during events by enhancing the arena entrances and incorporating modern ticketing/screening capabilities.

Encourages the applicant to continue to explore opportunities for additional street-facing uses, including retail, to help activate the pedestrian realm particularly when the arena is not in use.

Notes the proposed design includes a veil which is intended to unify the building's varied facades and establish a singular architectural identity, replacing the fragmented and visually inconsistent existing façade.

Finds that while the veil provides a singular architectural identity for the building, the overall composition of the design (including the building, large LED display boards, newly-introduced LED band, and veil) could be further integrated, elevating the overall design and reflecting the arena's importance within downtown, and its prominent location adjacent to two National Historic Landmarks.

Requests the applicant continue to refine and unify the composition of all elements (building, display screens, and veil) to better respect the setting of the National Historic Landmark buildings.

Notes the proposed design reduces the number of LED screens, but consolidates them into larger LED displays, specifically at the corner of 7th and F Streets which reflect upon the National Historic Landmarks buildings.

Recommends eliminating or reducing the proposed LED band, particularly at the corner of 7th and F Streets to minimize visual and lighting impacts on the setting of the National Historic Landmarks.

Finds the existing streetscape lacks tree canopy and greenery and the proposed plan further reduces vegetation that could impact pedestrian comfort.

Requests the applicant submit as part of the next review the following:

- A complete lighting plan with the location and specification of building lighting including foot candles, lumens, color temperature, and hours of operation, including all elements that create exterior light including but not limited to the digital boards and bands, the information board, the veil, the interior lighting inside the large glazing walls, the pedestrian level lighting, and any exterior uplighting.
- A daytime street view from the area around F and 9th Street, NW to better understand the impact of the veil on the surrounding area.

- A plan that shows additional landscaping on F Street, NW where there currently appears to be none.
- Additional details on how the new building design combined with pedestrian management will improve pedestrian safety and the user experience at the entry points.

Requests the applicant continue to coordinate with consulting parties in preparation of the Memorandum of Agreement for the project, as part of the Section 106 process.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	February 6, 2025 – Information Presentation
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Preliminary and Final Site and Building Plans

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

In 2024, the District of Columbia entered into an agreement with Monumental Sports & Entertainment (MSE) for the District to purchase Capital One Arena with the stipulation that MSE would invest in interior and exterior improvements to the arena. The purpose was to retain the arena venue as host to the Washington Capitals and Wizards, among others, and to reenergize the area around the arena. Capital One Arena, with a seating capacity of approximately 20,000, supports a wide range of event types, including professional sports, concerts, and civic functions. The facility, while operational, exhibits conditions typical of arenas constructed in the late 20th century with circulation spaces constrained, particularly within concourses, limiting the efficient movement of patrons during peak periods. Existing infrastructure, including vertical circulation, accessibility provisions, and building systems do not meet current standards for contemporary sports and entertainment venues. The applicant provided an information presentation to the Commission on February 2, 2025. Generally, the Commission was supportive of the project and its goals, but recommended the applicant keep working on the design of the veil and its impact on surrounding historic buildings.

Since that time, the applicant has worked to refine the design and continues to coordinate with stakeholders on the project through the Section 106 process to reduce impacts to the historic fabric. The primary components of the project have continued to improve, although further refinement will be necessary as the design advances.

Analysis

The Capital One Arena, built in 1997, is a key building in downtown Washington, DC. The arena is located on the block bounded by 7th, F and 6th Streets, NW with Gallery Place Way to the north.

This area is central to the historic L'Enfant City Plan and is partially within the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District and adjacent to the Downtown Historic District. In addition, the building is adjacent to the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture (the Reynolds Building) and to the southwest is the General Post Office (the Hotel Monaco), both of which are National Historic Landmark buildings. The Reynolds Building (originally the Patent Office Building) is considered one of the most significant buildings in Washington with its porticoes modeled after the Parthenon in Athens. It sits prominently within the 8th Street axis anchored by the Carnegie Library to the north and the National Archives and the National Gallery Sculpture Garden to the south.

To achieve the project goals of improving operational efficiency, enhancing the guest experience, and reinforcing the arena's civic identity, the applicant proposes a comprehensive, multi-phase modernization of both the building's exterior and interior. Specifically, the improvements focus on expanding entry points, including introducing an accessible entry on 6th Street; upgrading player and fan facilities; and reimagining the arena's façade. In addition, significant interior improvements will be made to circulation and wayfinding, seating and suites, and fan programming, including food and beverage options. On the exterior, new cladding is proposed on the arena's base envelope and increased glazing will be introduced to improve visual connectivity with the surrounding context. Consistent with the arena's original intent to have a modern aesthetic that reflects its function as a sports and entertainment facility, a new sculptural rain screen system with integrated lighting will be installed over portions of the arena's base envelope to re-anchor the building within the context of a rejuvenated neighborhood. Staff recommends the **Commission supports the project objectives to extend the functional life of the arena and reinforce its urban presence within downtown Washington, DC by improving access, enhancing wayfinding and the arrival experience, enlivening the arena exterior to make it a must-see building for residents and visitors, and activating the arena as an entertainment venue in the heart of the city.**

NCPC Review

NCPC has approval authority over the project as it is a District project in the Central Area, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(e). The Commission previously reviewed and approved the project plans for the arena in 1995. The Commission is the lead agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Staff initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DCSHPO) regarding the Section 106 process. For the initial arena project, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed to complete the Commission's Section 106 responsibilities, with the NCPC, DCSHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as signatories. While the arena is not historic, it is adjacent to several historic areas and properties, including Downtown Historic District, the Hotel Monaco (former General Post Office), which is under General Services Administration (GSA) ownership, and the former Patent Office Building, now the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture (the Reynolds Building), administered by the Smithsonian Institution. Both of these buildings are National Historic Landmarks. In addition, the adjacent streets are all within the L'Enfant Plan, which requires consideration of impacts to these corridors and important viewsheds.

Arena Access

A major component of the renovation includes improvements to visitor access. The arena currently has three dedicated entry points for ticketed events, but due to modern security screening requirements, three exit stairwells are utilized to manage ingress—something never intended in the building's original design. Through the transformation, MSE is replacing these entries with four fully-dedicated, properly designed entrances: a new ADA-accessible entrance on 6th Street, an improved entry at 7th & F, the existing 7th Street entrance, and an improved entrance via the Gallery Place expansion. The current main entrance will shift westward along F Street NW, closer to the intersection of 7th Street, NW, and will be expressed through a multi-story glass volume.

All entries will streamline ingress and egress, reduce crowd congestion during events, and provide improved visibility from key pedestrian corridors. The new entries, along with other portions of the facade, will utilize new glazing systems that include blast impact mitigation security lamination in some areas. Since the information presentation, the applicant has updated the glazing of walls on 7th and 6th Streets to further increase the transparency, provide better opportunities for views into the building and for arena guests to experience the veil from the interior.

The project seeks to better balance the use of nearby Metro station entrances by enhancing the prominence of the north side of the facility through improvements to Gallery Place, the alley, and the atrium, and on the east side of the facility through the new accessible entrance on 6th Street. The F Street entrance will be located closer to the Metro entrance at the corner of 7th Street. Currently, this entrance is constrained by an elevator bank which is located immediately inside the main doors. This results in a bottleneck for visitors. As a result of moving the entrance further to the west, the entry experience will no longer be encumbered, allowing visitors to move through screening and ticketing more quickly and efficiently, supported by the latest security and ticketing technology. The applicant has indicated that currently, more than 70% of fans enter through the 7th and F Street side of the building. They expect the entry patterns to shift to a more balanced 50/50 split between the north and south sides, reducing pressure on any one entrance. Overall, the more functional entry opportunities around the arena will give visitors additional options and reduce congestion. Staff notes these entrances will also accommodate visitors from a number of different Metro exits, include the Portrait Gallery exit to the west, the Chinatown exit to the north, and the Gallery Place exit.

Building Cladding and Exterior

The re-cladding of the arena seeks to re-establish the presence of Capital One Arena as a standalone structure, rather than a composite of appended office-like components. Since the information presentation, the applicant has updated the exterior materials to utilize more contextual materials for buildings in the area, such as limestone and textured metal panels. The south, west, and north facades include new limestone-clad walls that will be a mixture of honed and textured panels. Within these sections of stone, the applicant has incorporated pedestrian-level interest including integrated artwork, a wall of Legendary Performers and Team History, and digital information boards. This materiality transitions to a different format on the east facade, as it is cut in a custom brick form. The north façade also includes a design feature using composite wood in a rainscreen

panel that matches the appearance of the interior atrium design, extending the lobby design outdoors.

To unify the building's façade and establish a singular architectural identity, the design introduces an ETFE (ethylene tetrafluoroethylene) veil that will wrap the upper portions of the arena. The veil will create a cohesive exterior expression touching all elevations, replacing the fragmented and visually inconsistent façade treatments that currently exist. The ETFE system will feature strategically-placed openings to preserve existing views and access points while signaling primary entrances and areas of activity. The veil serves both an aesthetic and performative function, providing improved daylight modulation, building envelope consistency, and a recognizable identity for the arena within the city's architectural landscape. The ETFE veil material is lightweight, durable, and highly transparent construction that will have a custom frit with a slightly reflective appearance, 50% transparency and will be integrated with LED lighting.

Since the information presentation, the applicant has modified the veil element to increase transparency and the way the veil wraps the corner at Gallery Place Way. Other revisions have also been positive. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find that since the Information Presentation in February and the initial Section 106 Consulting Parties meeting in March, the applicant has made the following changes to the building design:**

- **Increased the transparency of wall areas on 7th Street, 6th Street with new glazing that provides greater views to the interior and opportunities to experience the veil from the interior.**
- **Updated the materials to include a limestone base, glazing, composite wood and articulated metal panels that better define the horizontal and vertical massing.**
- **Added new street level elements such as integrated artwork on 7th Street, and the Team History Wall on F Street, and additional street-oriented retail space.**
- **Improved integration between the veil and the base façade.**
- **Replaced the reflective glass tile around the base of the Metro station entrance with a continuous limestone material around the base of the façade.**
- **Added a new information board adjacent to the new main entrance on F Street.**
- **Increased the transparency of the proposed veil element and scaled back the veil at Gallery Place Way.**

Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission supports the design changes made to-date, especially the increased glazing, improved streetscape engagement elements, updated materials, and the additional viewshed studies.** Regarding ground floor activation and the pedestrian experience, the applicant should continue to strive for uses that can help engage the pedestrian realm regardless of whether the arena is in use and exterior design elements that improve pedestrian comfort. This is particularly important for both visitors and residents. As such, staff recommends the **Commission encourage the applicant to continue to explore opportunities for additional street-facing uses, including retail, to help activate the pedestrian realm particularly when the arena is not in use.**

As the applicant has modified the plans and materials, and provided additional analysis of the impact of the updated building on the surrounding context, staff recommends the **Commission find the redesigned arena will appear prominently in this setting, especially the wrapped veil and new entrances at the corner of 7th and F Streets, and if designed well, can positively impact how people view the Reynolds Building and experience the public space.** The primary focus of the impacts has been on the Reynolds Center and the view of the arena at the corner of 7th and F Streets, NW. The setting of the Reynolds Building is unique in that the block in which it sits extends beyond adjacent blocks and allows for more public space, elevating the building's significance, especially on F and G Streets. This allows for more expansive views of the building and its setting. Staff recommends the **Commission find that while there is ample opportunity for a modern approach that unifies and elevates the design of the arena, it must also be complimentary of both the Reynolds Building and the General Post Office Building, and be deferential at key viewpoints to preserve the settings of these National Historic Landmarks.**

Design Development

As noted previously, the proposed design includes a veil which is intended to unify the building's varied facades and establish a singular architectural identity, replacing the fragmented and visually inconsistent existing façade. In addition, the applicant is proposing to modify the existing large format digital displays, and incorporate a digital band, along with a street level digital information board, among other lighting elements. The existing digital displays were not approved by the Commission, but installed at the direction of the Council of the District of Columbia through specific legislation permitting the signage package. The proposed design reduces the number of LED screens, but consolidates them into larger LED displays, specifically at the corner of 7th and F Streets which reflect upon the National Historic Landmarks buildings. The LED band does not appear to contribute to the overall building design. As such, staff suggests the **Commission recommend eliminating or reducing the proposed LED band, particularly at the corner of 7th and F Streets to minimize visual and lighting impacts on the setting of the National Historic Landmarks.**

The arena is an important public facility in a prominent location in central Washington, DC. The design should reflect the aspirational goals as outlined by the applicant and submission. As such, the various elements, including the building, proposed veil, and signage/ screens, require careful consideration. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission find that while the veil provides a singular architectural identity for the building, the overall composition of the design (including the large LED display boards, newly-introduced LED band, and veil) could be further integrated, elevating the overall design and reflecting the arena's importance within downtown, and its prominent location adjacent to two National Historic Landmarks; and finds the existing streetscape lacks tree canopy and greenery and the proposed plan further reduces vegetation that could impact pedestrian comfort; and request the applicant continue to refine and unify the composition of all elements (building, display screens, and veil) to better respect the setting of the National Historic Landmark buildings.**

Additional information has been provided by the applicant regarding views of the building and lighting, but staff recommends the **Commission request the applicant submit as part of the final review the following:**

- **A complete lighting plan with the location and specification of building lighting including foot candles, lumens, color temperature, and hours of operation, including all elements that create exterior light including but not limited to the digital boards and bands, the information board, the veil, the interior lighting inside the large glazing walls, the pedestrian level lighting, and any exterior uplighting.**
- **A daytime street view from the area around F and 9th Street, NW to better understand the impact of the veil on the surrounding area.**
- **A plan that shows additional landscaping on F Street, NW where there appears to be none.**
- **Additional details on how the new building design combined with pedestrian management will improve pedestrian safety and the user experience at the entry points.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The comments provided as part of the analysis are intended to support consistency with policies set forth in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, staff considered policies related to Urban Design and Historic Preservation.

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC is the lead federal agency responsible for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. NCPC initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) in February 2025. As part of the Section 106 process, NCPC hosted two consulting parties meetings in March and April. During consultation, the area of potential effect (APE) was determined and includes a section of the National Register of Historic Places listed Downtown Historic District, the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site, and Mount Vernon Square, containing the National Register of Historic Places listed Carnegie Library. The proposed APE boundaries are 3rd Street, NW to the east, New York Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue, NW, including Mount Vernon Square, to the north, the grounds of the Treasury Building to the west, and E Street, NW and parts of Constitution Avenue to the south.

NCPC has been coordinating with the applicant team and the DC SHPO on the identification of adverse effects and potential mitigations in anticipation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The primary adverse effect is to the Patent Office, now home to the Donald W. Reynolds National Portrait Gallery and National Museum of American Art (Reynolds building). The Reynolds building is considered to be one of the finest Greek Revival structures in the nation and was designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1965 in recognition of the buildings impact on American history. In addition, there are adverse effects to the General Post Office (the Hotel

Monaco), also an NHL. National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture and illustrate important contributions to the nation's historical development. Projects adjacent to NHL's should be deferential in design so as not to draw attention away from the NHL or its setting. As such, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant continue to coordinate with consulting parties in preparation of the Memorandum of Agreement for the project, as part of the Section 106 process.** The development of the MOA is required in advance of the final review by the Commission, which is anticipated in July 2025.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC is the lead agency responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For the proposed preliminary site and building plan, NCPC staff is recommending the use of a categorical exclusion, namely 601.12 (e) which pertains to the (e) Approval of an action proposed by a District of Columbia agency which the agency has determined is not a major action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment or is designated an exclusion in accordance with the requirements and procedures of D.C. Code. 8-109.06 and any regulations adopted to implement the referenced statutory provision. A final determination regarding NEPA compliance will be made prior to final approval.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its April 9, 2025 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed site and building plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated with all participating agencies. SHPO is coordinating conditioned upon completion of the Section 106 review process, including preparation and execution of a Memorandum of Agreement to resolve the adverse effects that will result from the project. The District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) noted that its coordination is ongoing. CFA will review the project at its April meeting. The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) asked if the arena sponsor branding will have signs hanging off the building like now. In response, NCPC showed two images of the anticipated branding, and CFA noted that it will also be on the 6th Street side. WMATA noted that the images do not accurately reflect Metro signage and branding, but that it is coordinating with the design team and will provide information once it is available. There won't be new Metro branding, but the updated images will reflect what is there now. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office; the National Park Service, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The applicant gave an information presentation to the Commission at the February 20, 2025 meeting. In their discussion, the Commission members found that the proposed modifications to the existing arena may not achieve the stated urban design and architectural goals for the project. A copy of the comment letter is attached.

Subsequently, the applicant presented the concept plan for the improvements to the Commission at their April 17, 2025 meeting. The Commission did not take an action, and provided a series of comments regarding aspects of the design, including the veil, the street level retail, the overall lighting, the scale, and the Metro entrance treatment, to be considered before the next submission. A copy of the comment letter is attached.

ONLINE REFERENCE

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

- Submission Package
- Section 106 Documentation

Prepared by Jamie Herr
04/25/2025

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

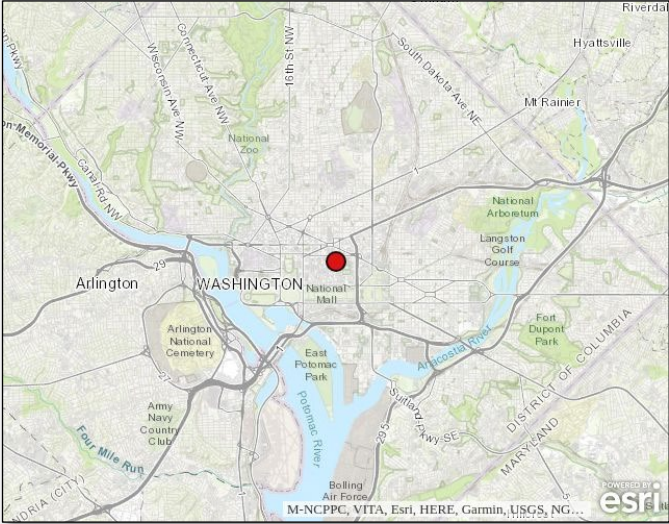
Capital One Arena Improvements

601 F Street, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

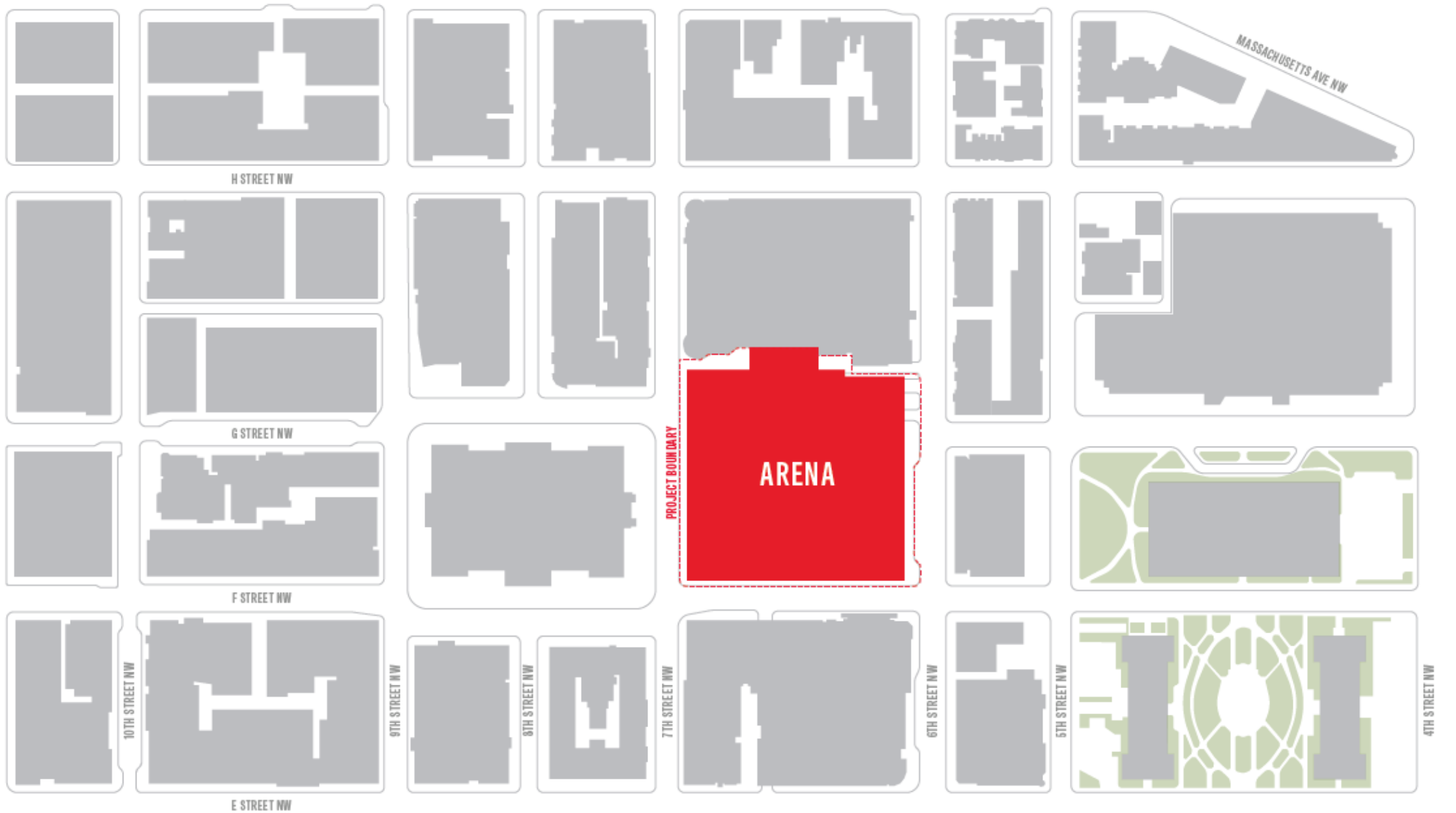
District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

Site Location



Location Map

Site Location



Existing Conditions



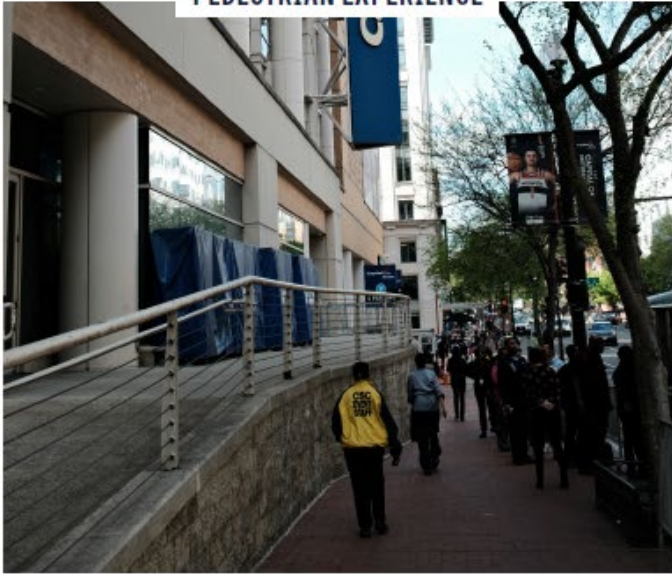
ENTRY EXPERIENCE



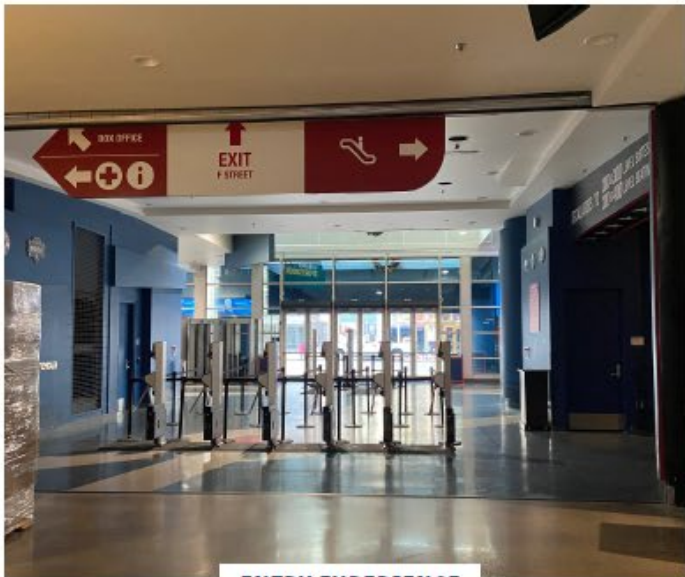
PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE



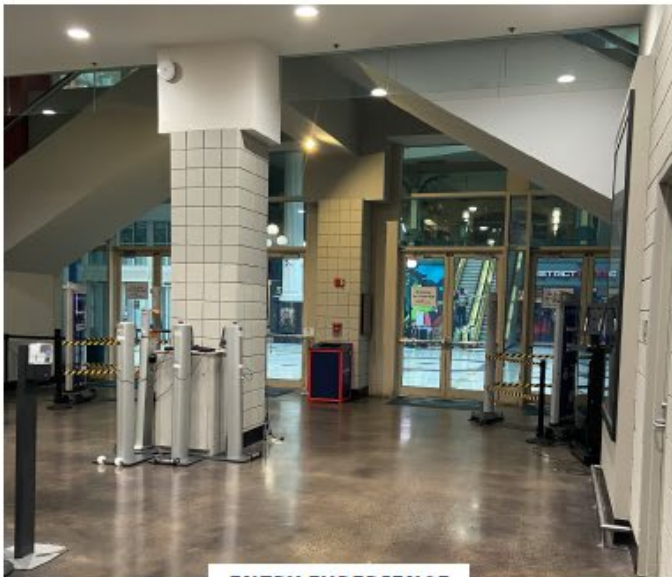
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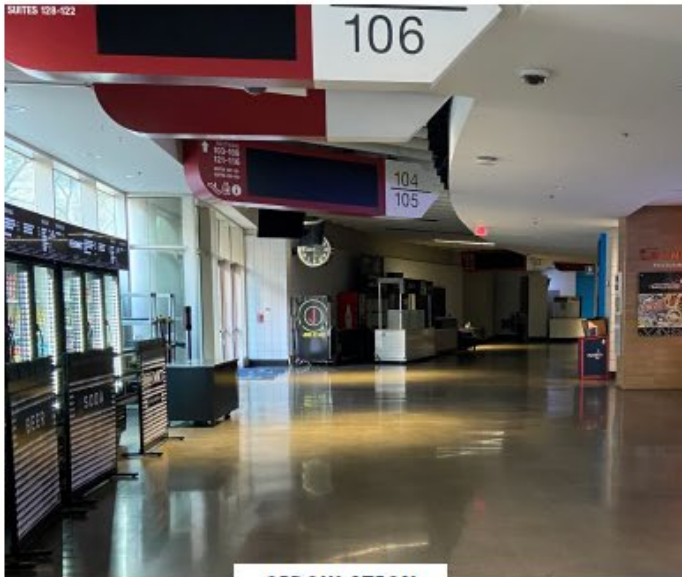
Existing Conditions



ENTRY EXPERIENCE



ENTRY EXPERIENCE



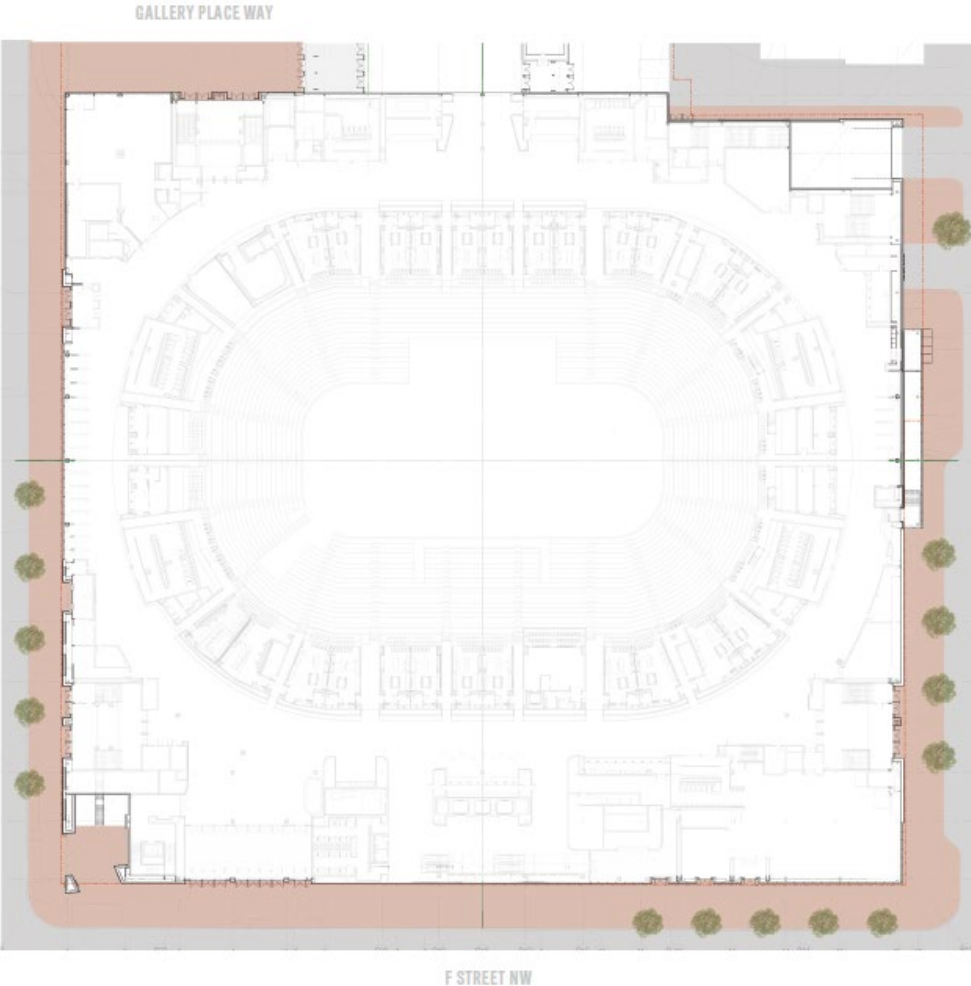
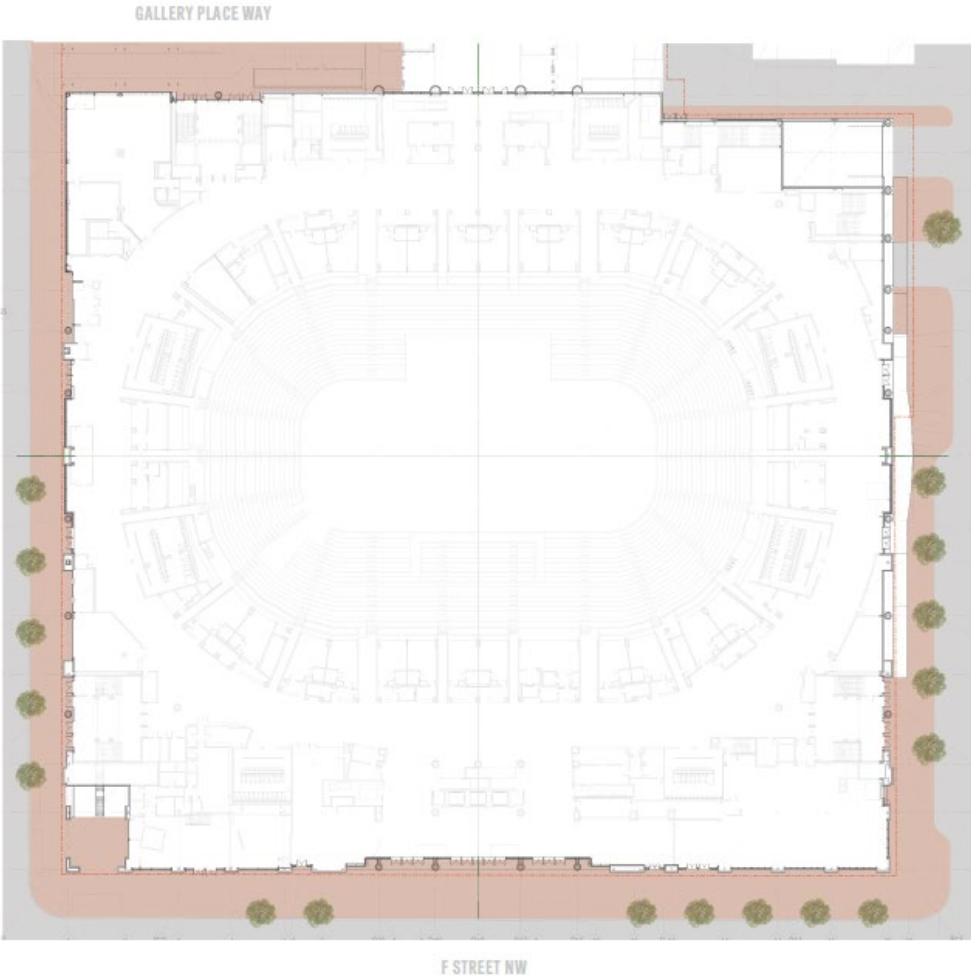
CIRCULATION



Site Plan

Existing

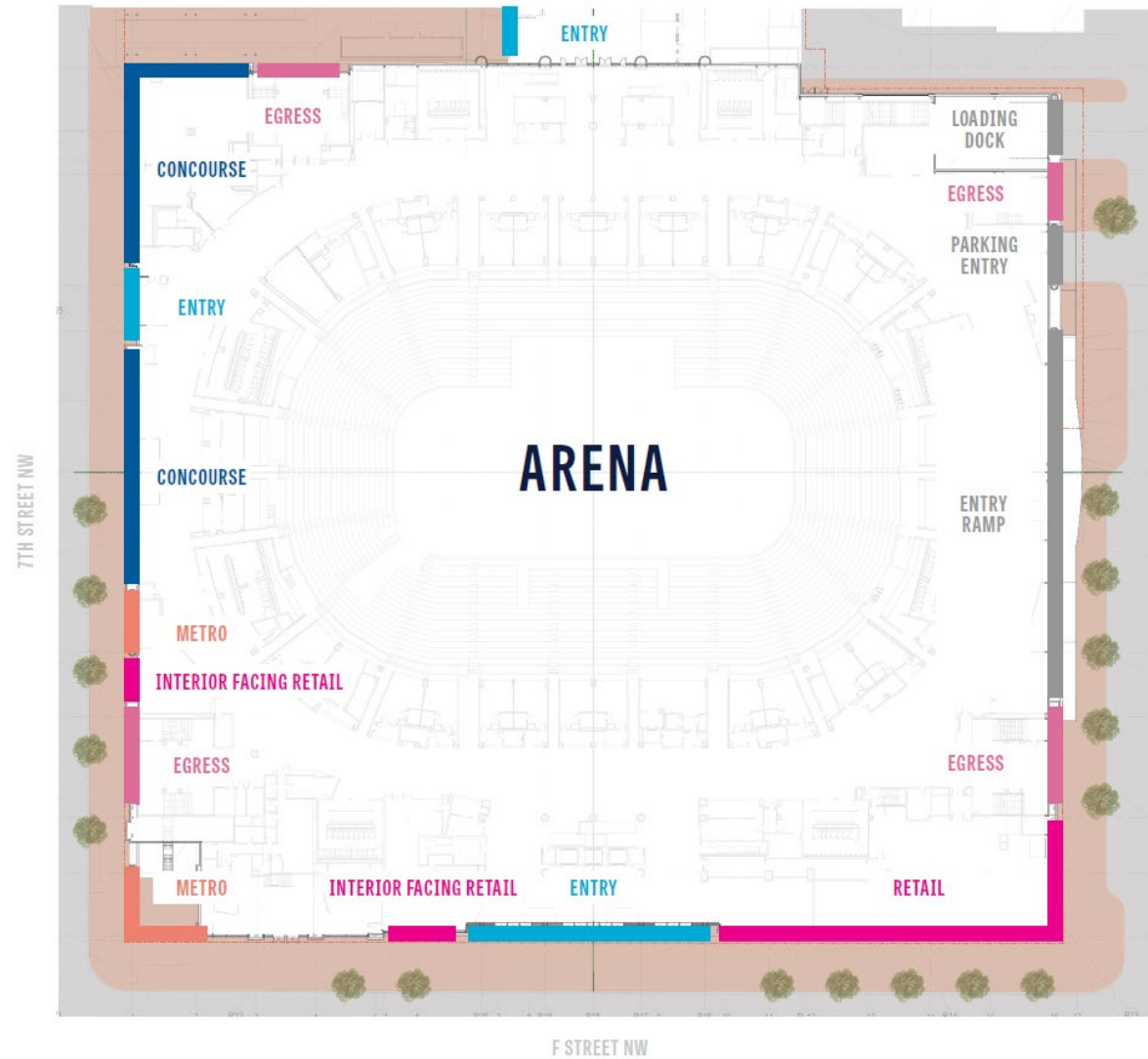
Proposed



Street Level Activation

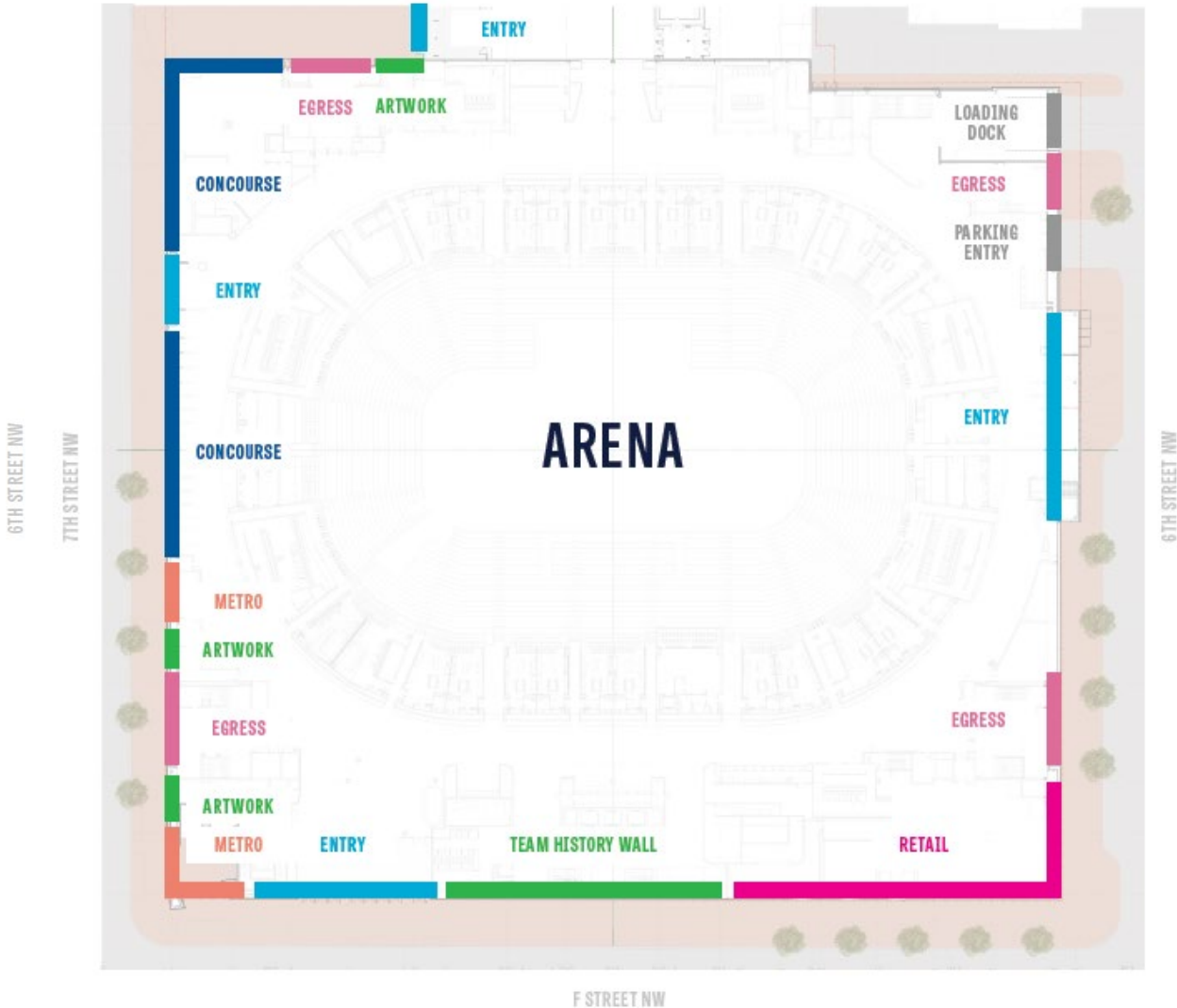
Existing

GALLERY PLACE WAY



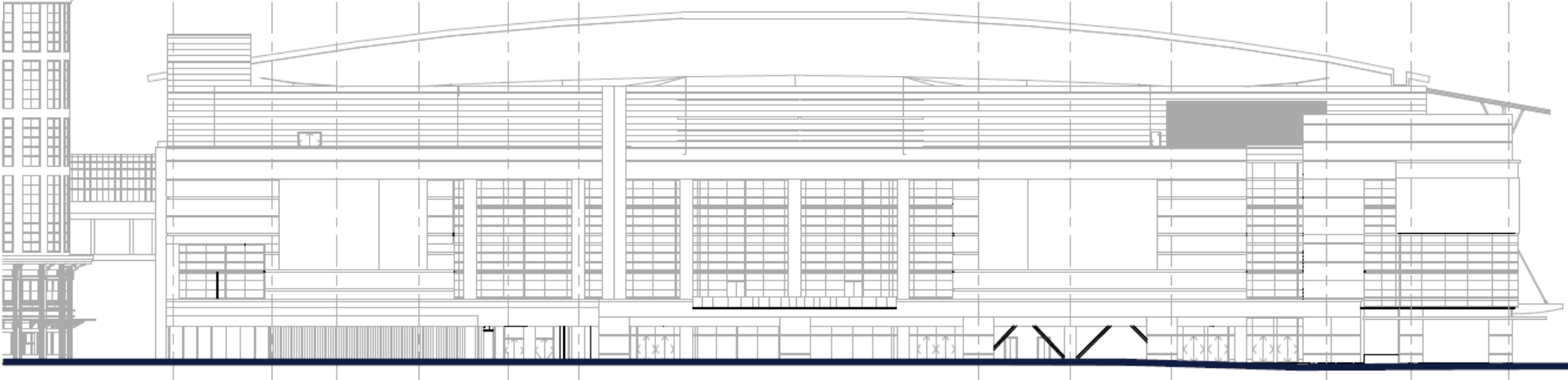
Proposed

GALLERY PLACE WAY

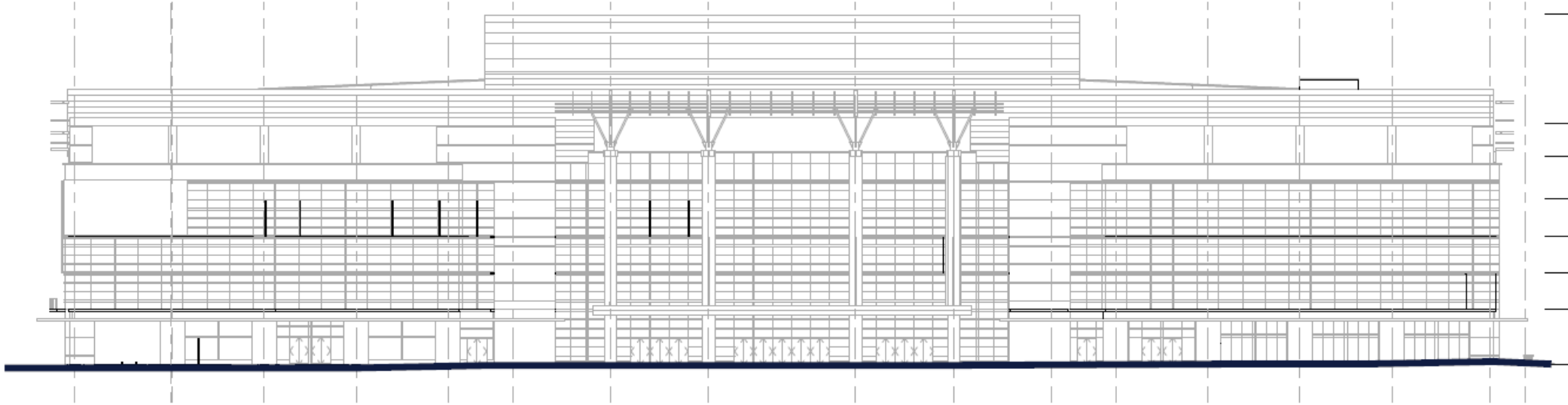


Existing Elevations

West

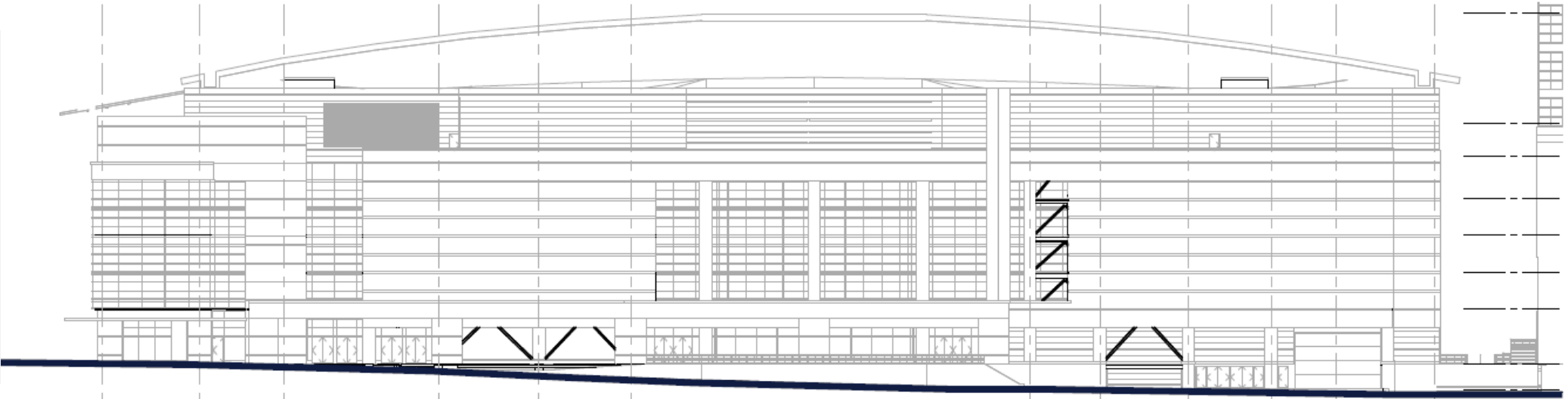


South

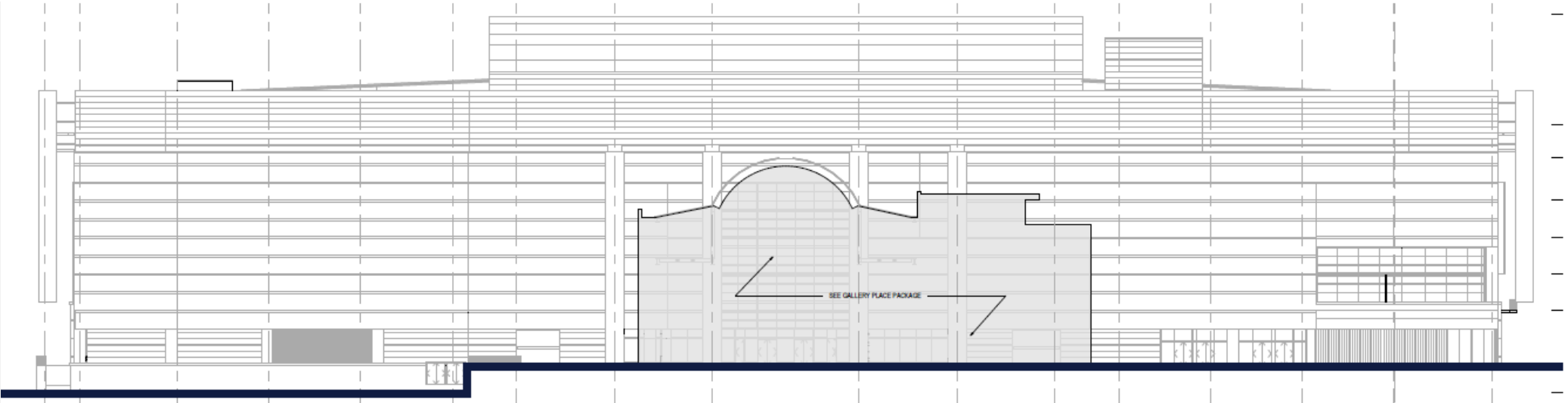


Existing Elevations

East



North



Proposed Materials



ETFE

- » Ethylene tetrafluoroethylene rain screen
 - » Integrated LED lighting
 - » Smooth and textured expressions
- » Custom frit with a slightly reflective appearance and approximate 50% transparency



METAL PANEL

- » Dimensional metal panel rainscreen system
- » Thermally-broken structural connections will penetrate this system to support ETFE



GLAZING

- » Aluminum Curtainwall Systems (ACWS) with integrated steel for blast requirements
- » Point supported structural glazing at South Entry



LIMESTONE

- » Limestone (large panels) with a mixture of honed and textured finishes at the pedestrian level
- » Integrated artwork, information boards, and team history walls at the pedestrian level
- » Limestone (brick) changes scale at east facade

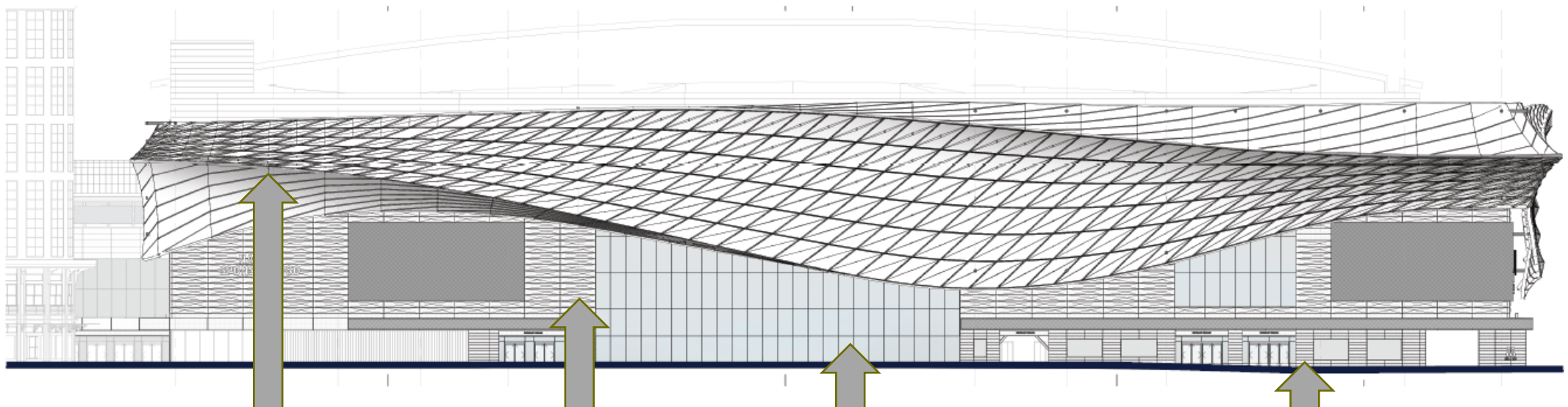


COMPOSITE WOOD

- » Resin panel with wood veneer and coating
- » Matches interior wood at atrium to continue expression into Gallery Place Way.

Proposed Elevations

West



ETFE



METAL PANEL



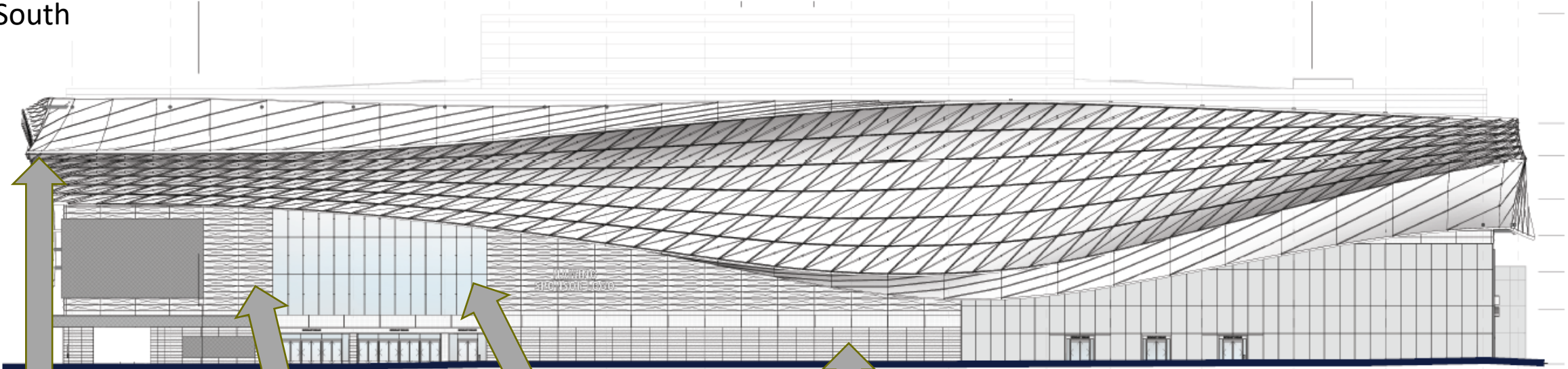
GLAZING



LIMESTONE

Proposed Elevations

South



ETFE



METAL PANEL



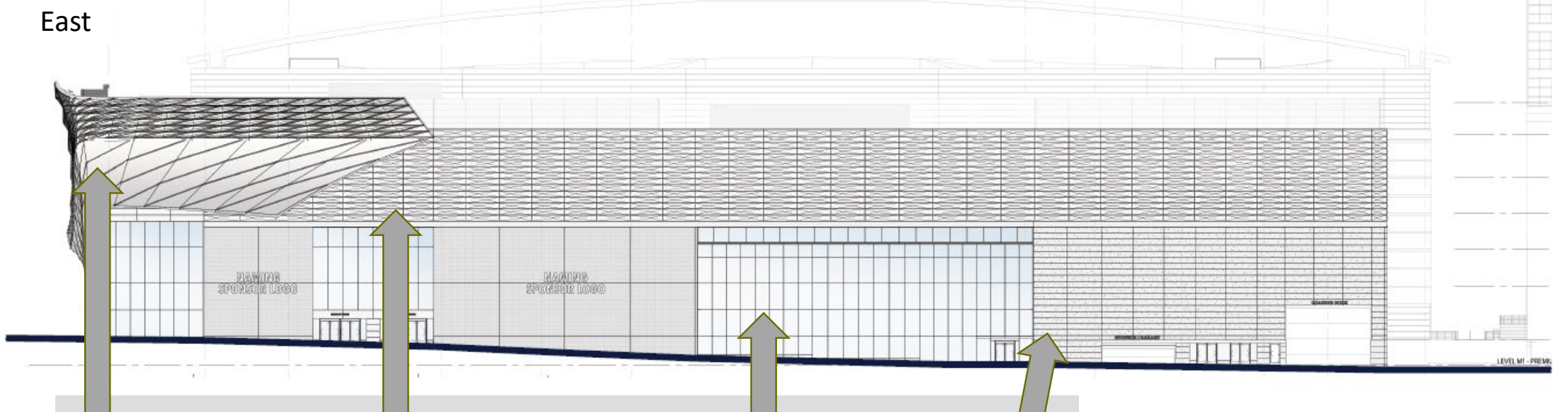
GLAZING



LIMESTONE

Proposed Elevations

East



ETFE



METAL PANEL



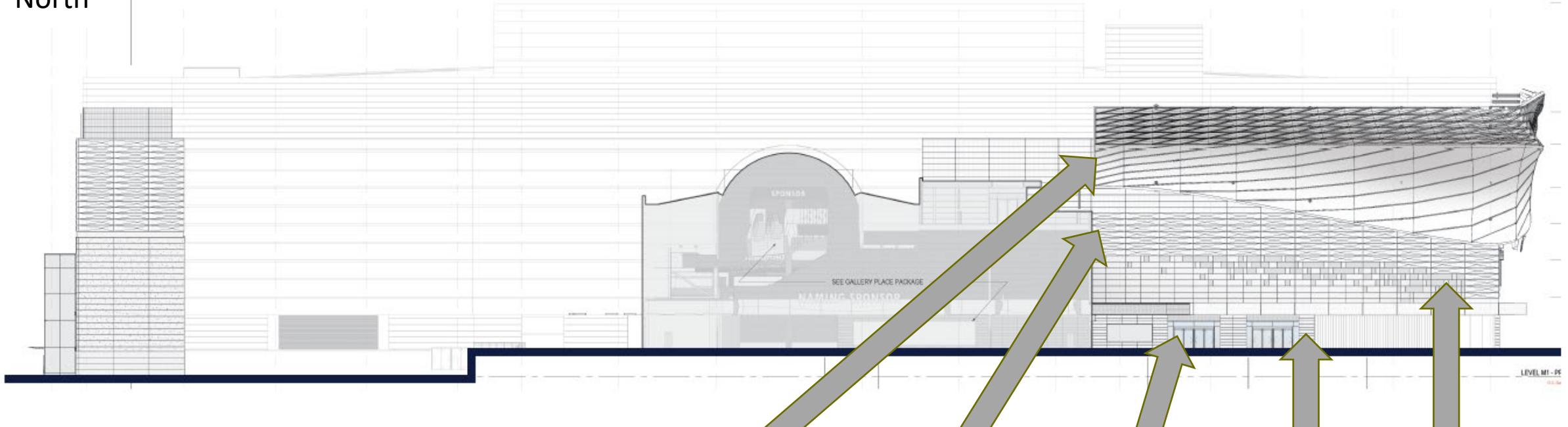
GLAZING



LIMESTONE

Proposed Elevations

North



ETFE



METAL PANEL



GLAZING



LIMESTONE



COMPOSITE WOOD

Existing View

**EXISTING VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING NORTHEAST
PERSPECTIVE AT STREET LEVEL**



Rendered View – Updated

**PROPOSED VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING NORTHEAST
PERSPECTIVE AT STREET LEVEL**

IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY THAT EXPANDS
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE VEIL FROM INTERIOR

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN
VEIL AND BASE FACADE



INTEGRATED ARTWORK AT PEDESTRIAN LEVEL

WIDENED FOR IMPROVED METRO ACCESS

INFORMATION BOARD AT PEDESTRIAN LEVEL

TEAM HISTORY WALL AT
PEDESTRIAN LEVEL

Rendered View - Updated



Rendered View - Previous

**PREVIOUS VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING EAST
METRO AND SOUTH ENTRIES AT 7TH ST NW**



Rendered View - Updated

**PROPOSED VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING EAST
METRO AND SOUTH ENTRIES AT 7TH ST NW**

IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY THAT EXPANDS OPPORTUNITY
TO EXPERIENCE VEIL FROM INTERIOR

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE



Rendered View - Updated

PROPOSED VIEW AT F STREET LOOKING NORTH
METRO AND SOUTH ENTRIES AT F ST



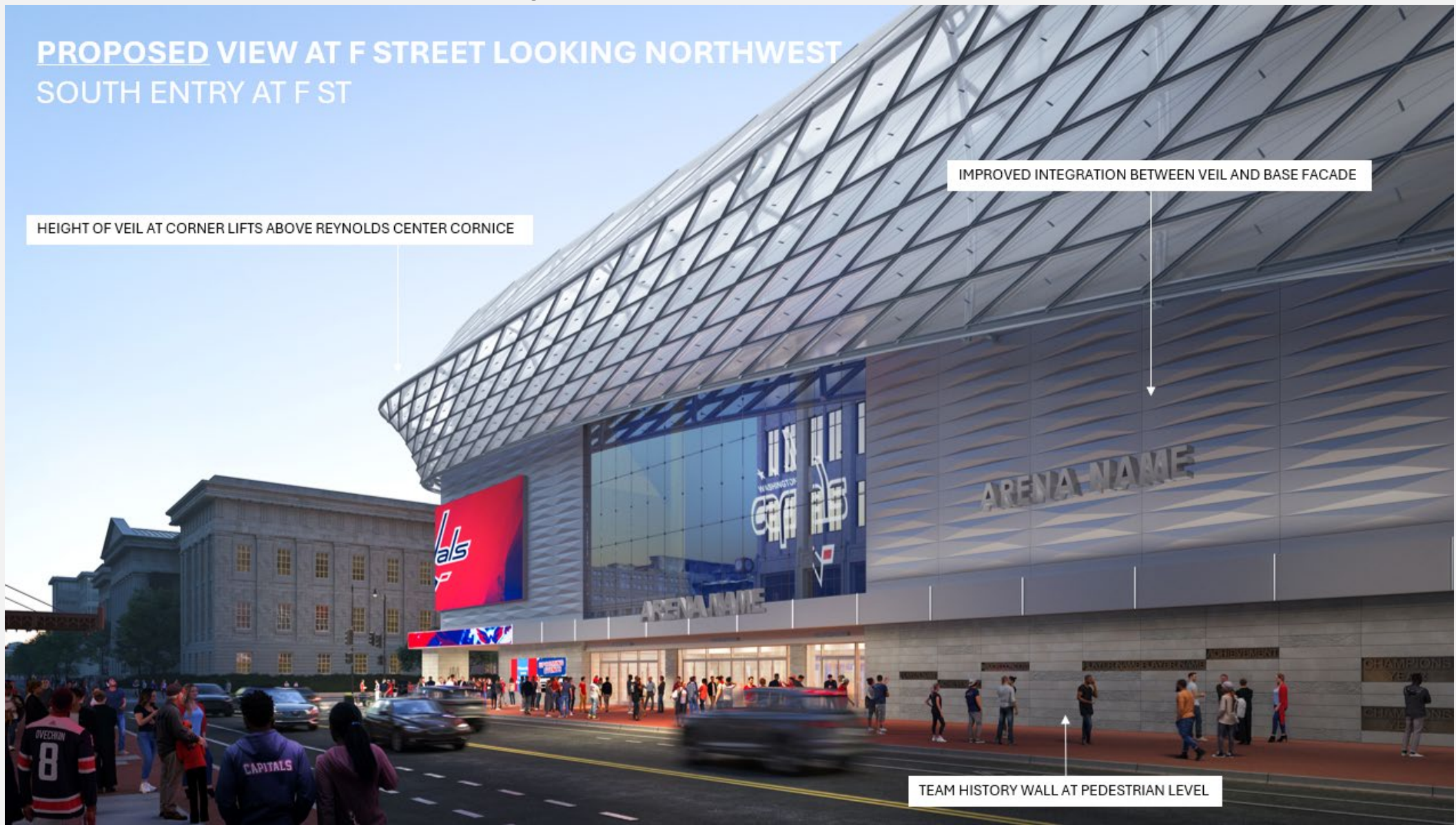
Rendered View - Updated

PROPOSED VIEW AT F STREET LOOKING NORTHWEST
SOUTH ENTRY AT F ST

HEIGHT OF VEIL AT CORNER LIFTS ABOVE REYNOLDS CENTER CORNICE

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE

TEAM HISTORY WALL AT PEDESTRIAN LEVEL



Rendered View - Previous

PREVIOUS VIEW AT F STREET LOOKING NORTHWEST
GLAZED CORNER AT 6TH ST NW



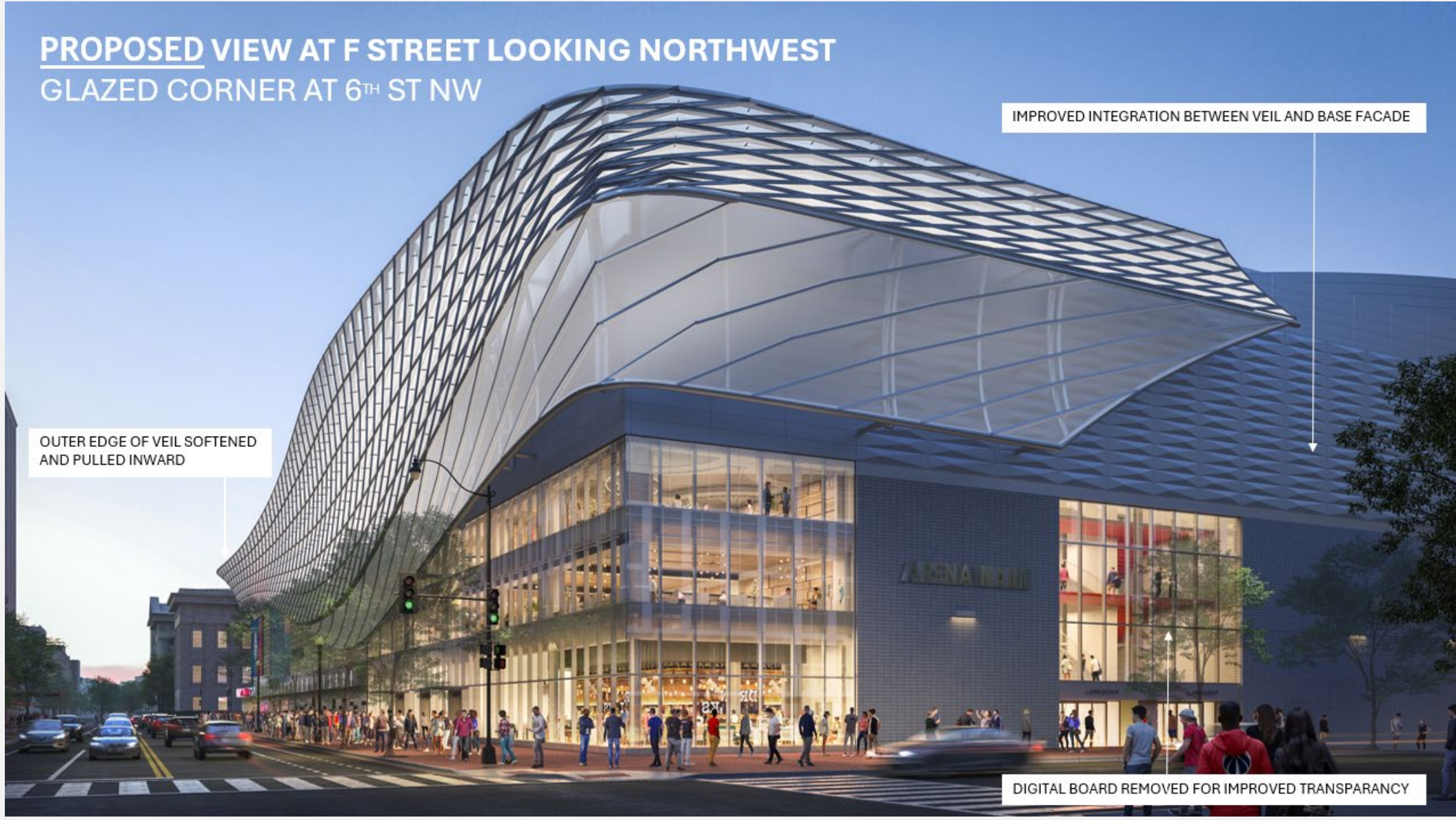
Rendered View - Updated

PROPOSED VIEW AT F STREET LOOKING NORTHWEST
GLAZED CORNER AT 6TH ST NW

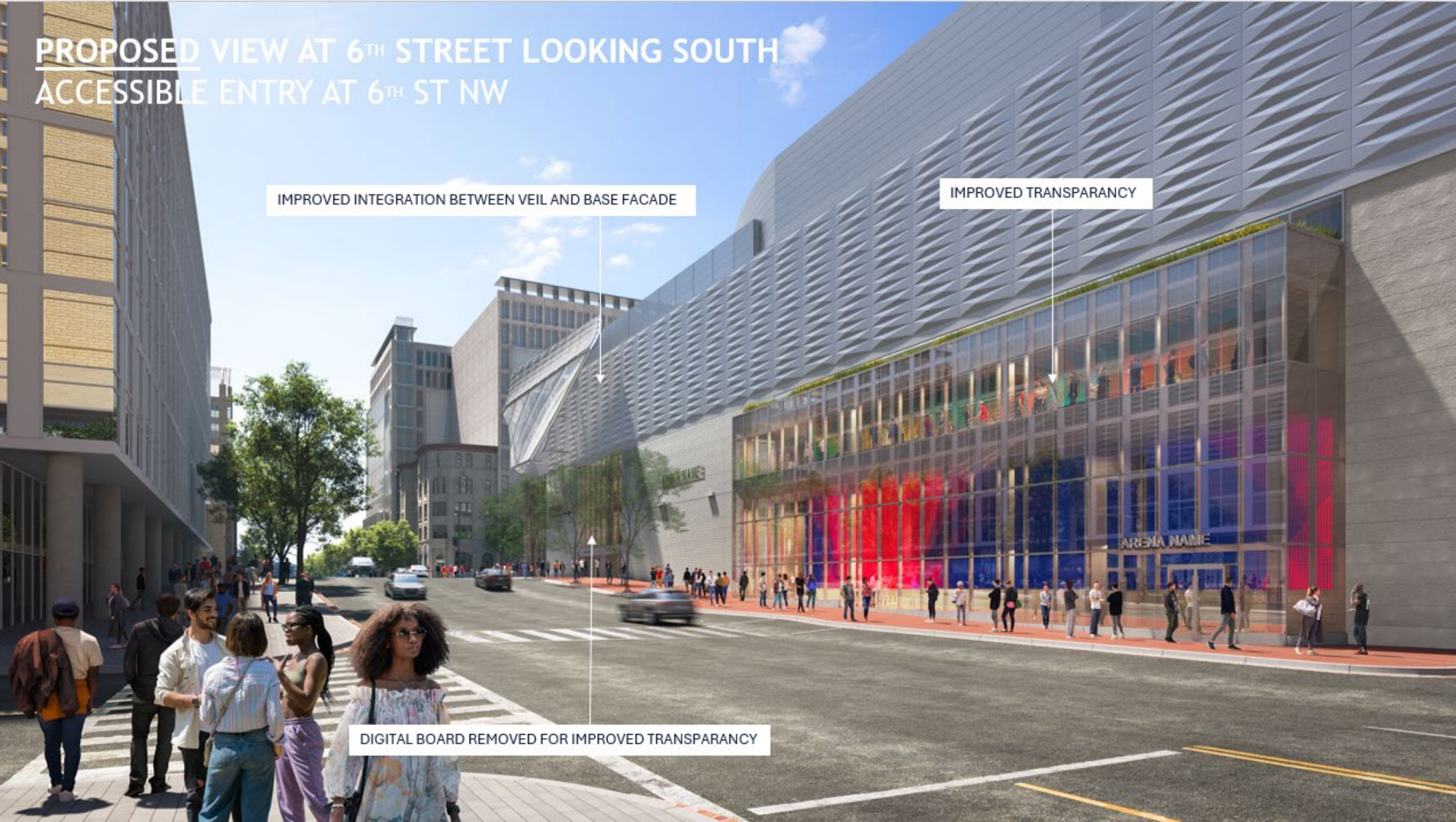
IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE

OUTER EDGE OF VEIL SOFTENED
AND PULLED INWARD

DIGITAL BOARD REMOVED FOR IMPROVED TRANSPARANCY



Rendered View



Rendered View - Previous

PREVIOUS VIEW AT 6TH STREET LOOKING SOUTH
ACCESSIBLE ENTRY AT 6TH ST NW

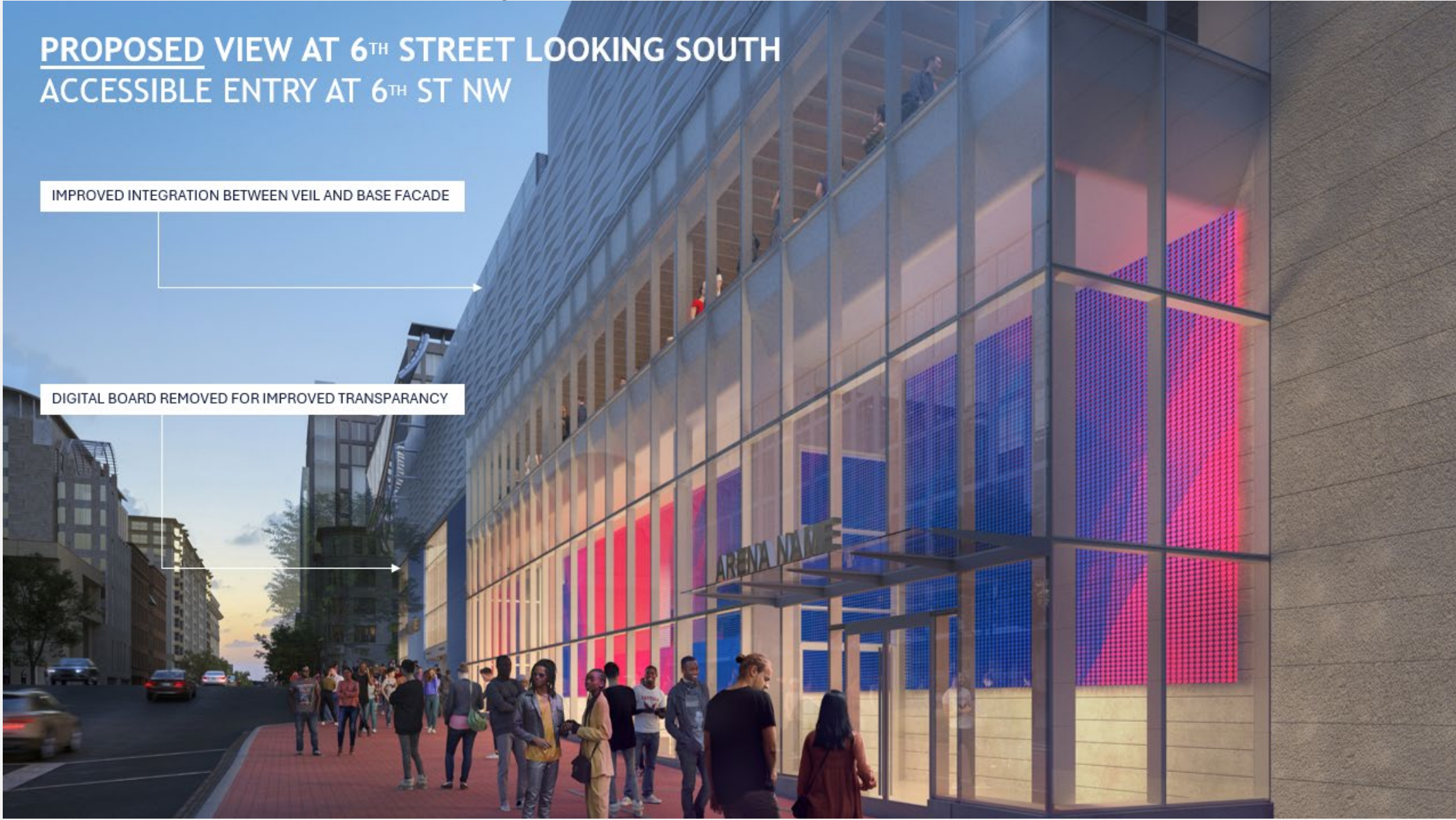


Rendered View - Updated

PROPOSED VIEW AT 6TH STREET LOOKING SOUTH
ACCESSIBLE ENTRY AT 6TH ST NW

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE

DIGITAL BOARD REMOVED FOR IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY



Rendered View - Updated



Rendered View - Updated



PROPOSED VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING NORTH
STREETScape ACTIVATION AT 7TH ST NW

IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY THAT EXPANDS
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE VEIL FROM INTERIOR

INTEGRATED ARTWORK AT
PEDESTRIAN LEVEL

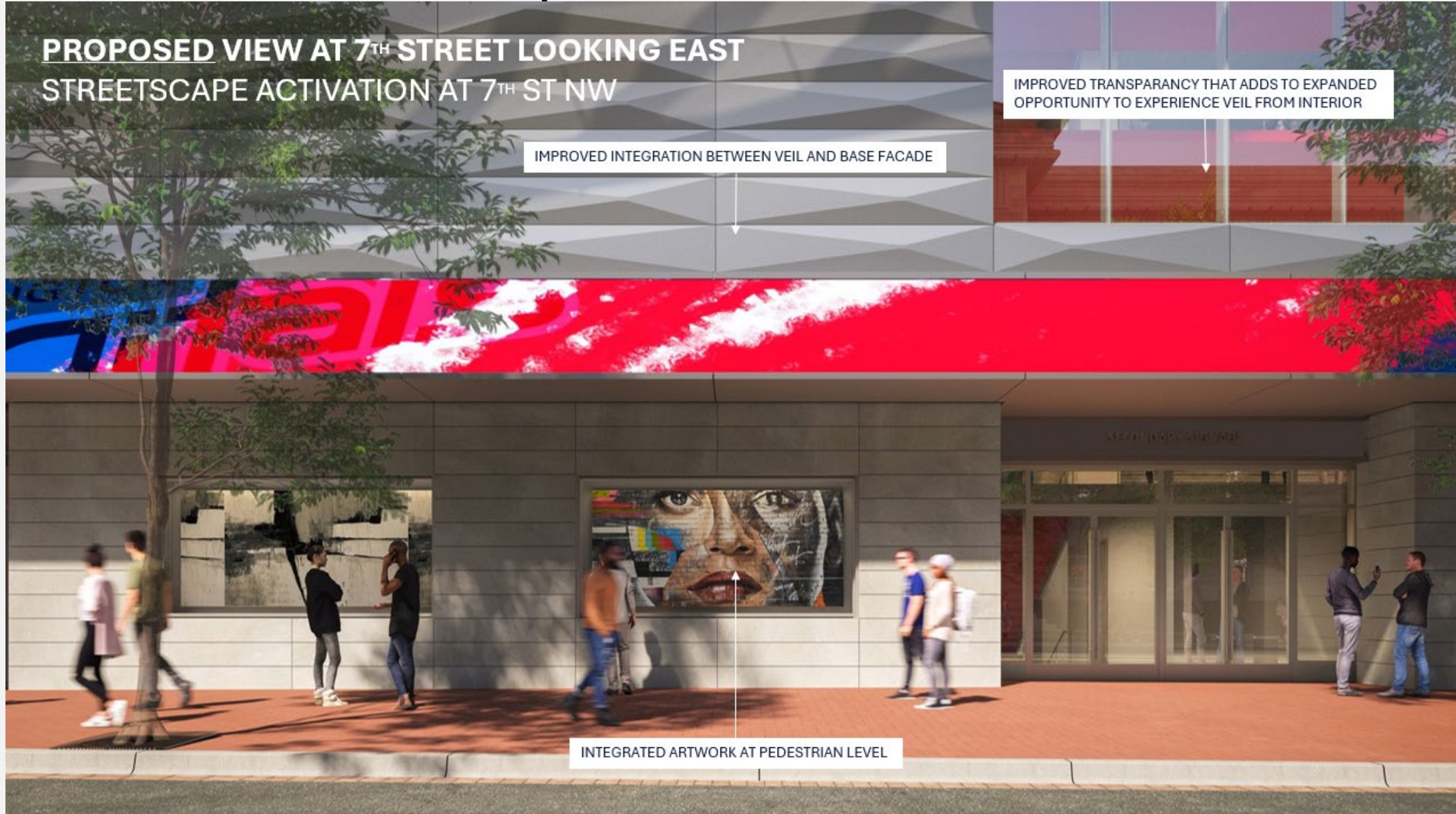
Rendered View - Updated

PROPOSED VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING EAST
STREETScape ACTIVATION AT 7TH ST NW

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE

IMPROVED TRANSPARENCY THAT ADDS TO EXPANDED OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE VEIL FROM INTERIOR

INTEGRATED ARTWORK AT PEDESTRIAN LEVEL



Rendered View - Previous

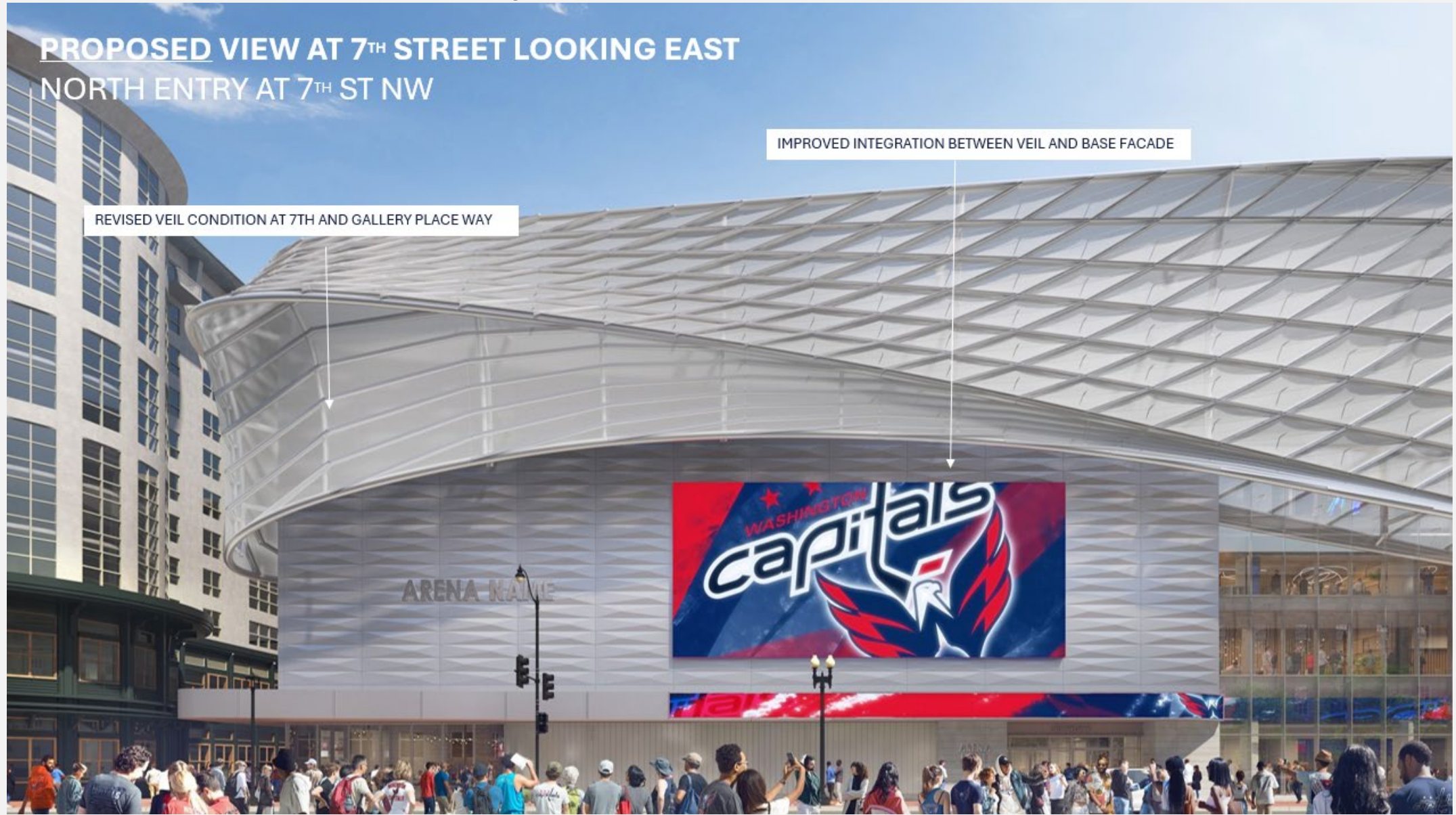


Rendered View - Updated

**PROPOSED VIEW AT 7TH STREET LOOKING EAST
NORTH ENTRY AT 7TH ST NW**

REVISED VEIL CONDITION AT 7TH AND GALLERY PLACE WAY

IMPROVED INTEGRATION BETWEEN VEIL AND BASE FACADE



Rendered Views - Previous



Rendered Views - Updated



Rendered View - Updated



Viewshed Diagram

F Street Looking west



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

7th Street Looking south



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

G Street Looking east



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

6th Street Looking south



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

F Street Looking northeast



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

F Street Looking west



Existing



Proposed

Viewshed Diagram

7th Street Looking north



Existing



Proposed

Lighting Analysis



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis



Existing Nighttime Photograph



Existing Luminous Mapping



Proposed Lighting Enhancements (Render)

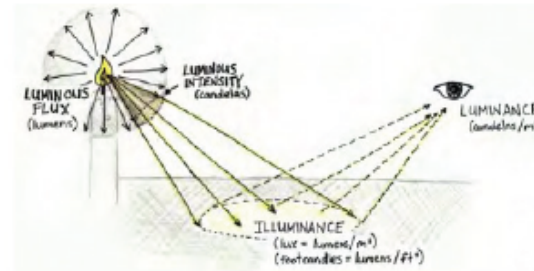


Calibrated Luminous Map of Proposed Lighting Enhancements (Render)

HDR photography aims at capturing the nighttime environment at a high range of luminous values, showing the full contrast of the captured image. It provides the design team a contextual brightness map that is view dependent. These were achieved for this project through:

- Photography from the existing site
- Calibration of Luminance levels based on other similar applications of video boards, facade lighting and glass atriums, etc.

* See Appendix for more in-depth study of how extrapolated values were achieved



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking Northeast Along F Street

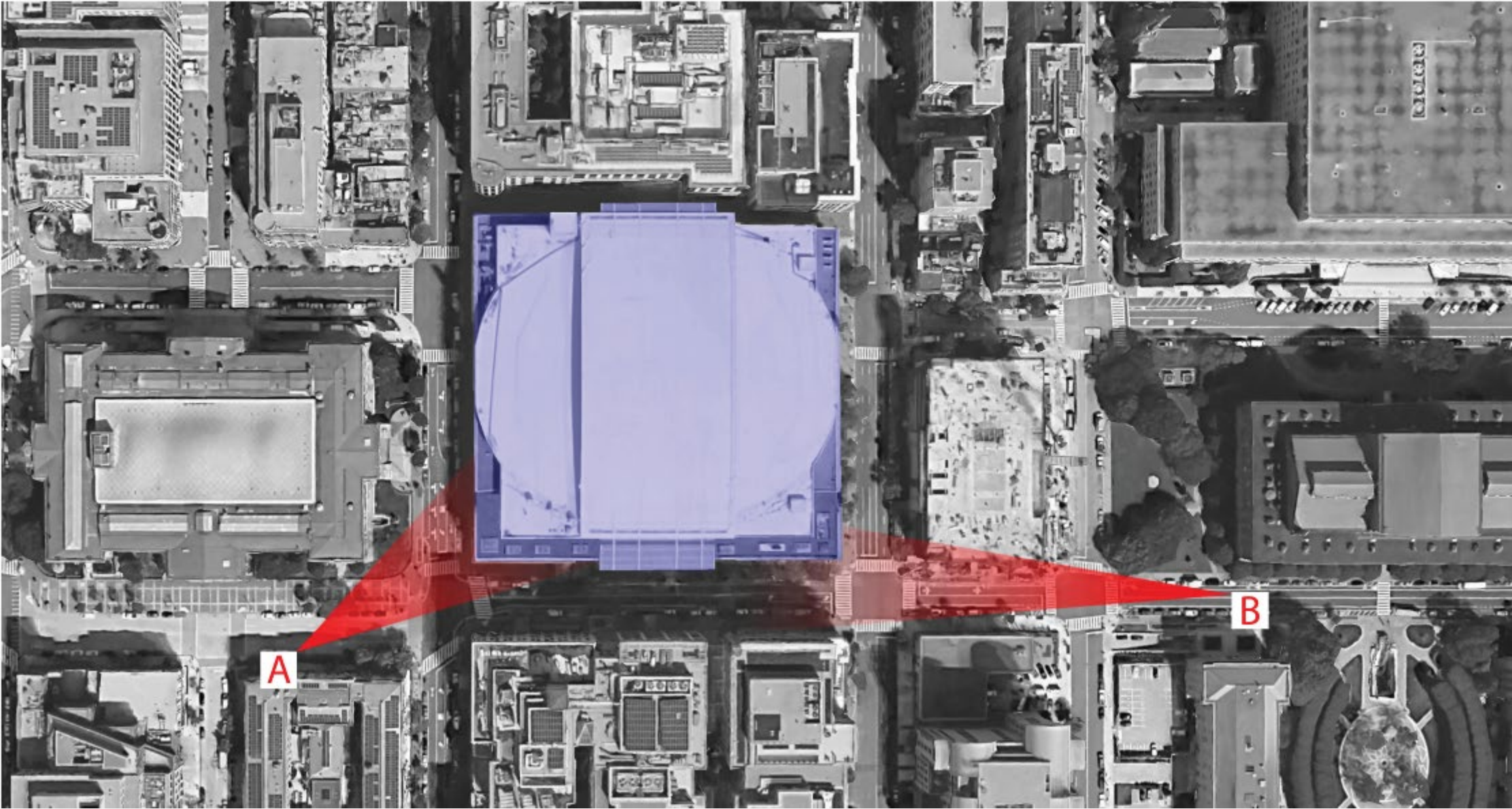


Existing



Proposed

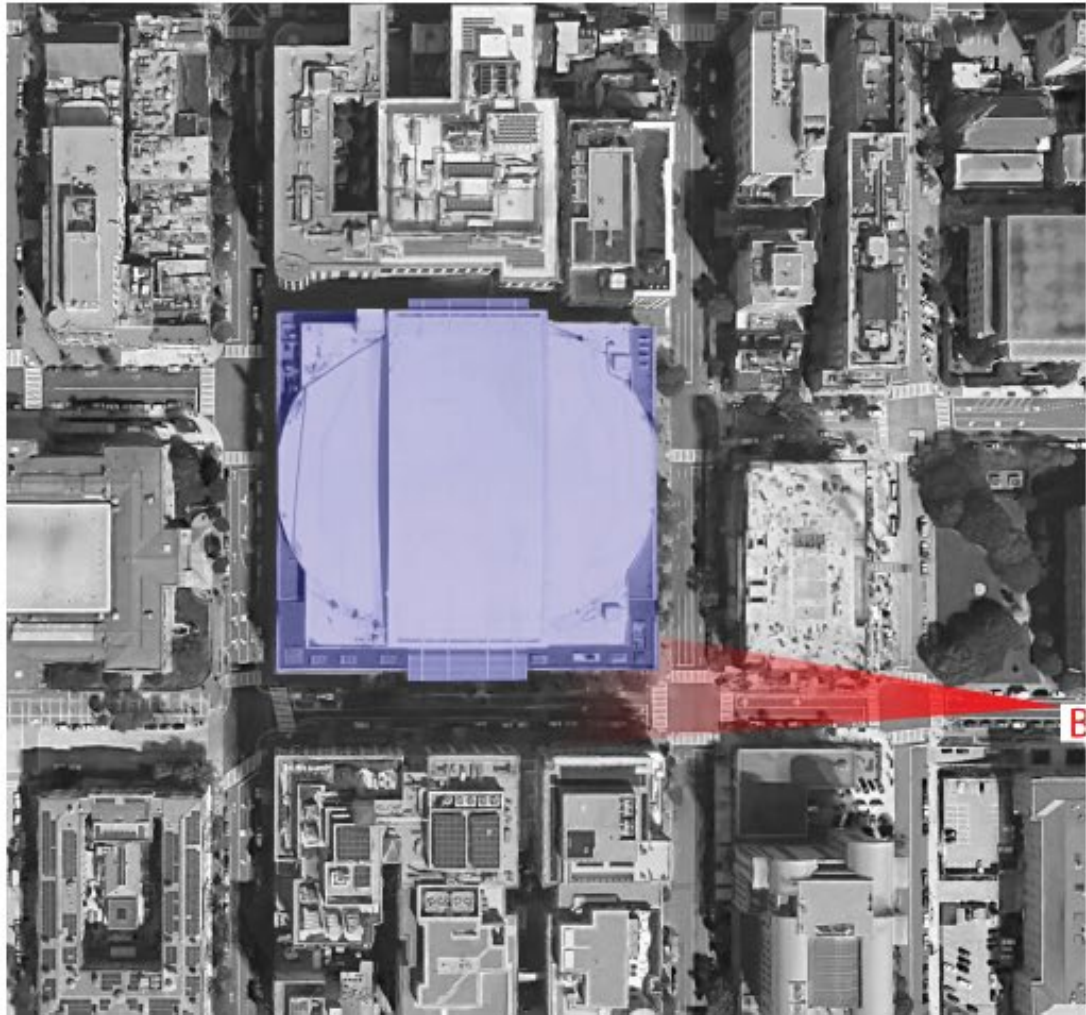
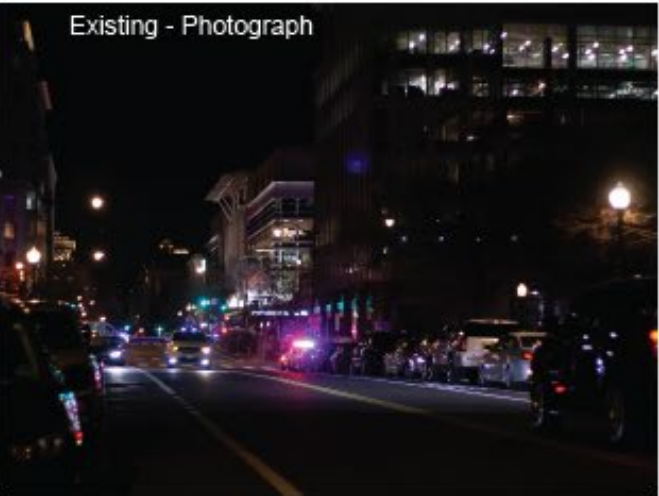
Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis



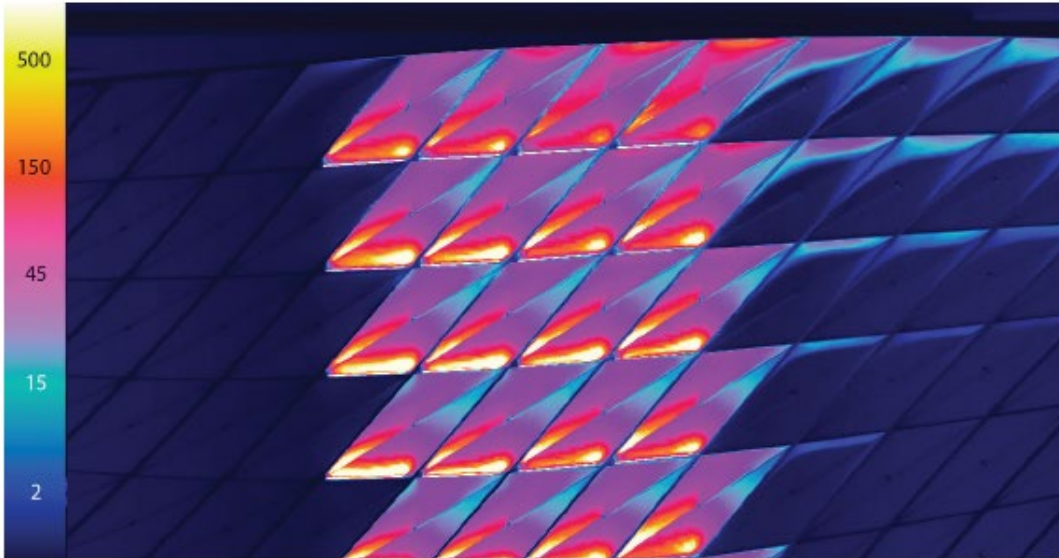
Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

EXISTING NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking Northeast Along F Street



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

ETFE Veil



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

PROPOSED NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking Northeast Along F Street



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED COMPARISON— Looking Northeast Along F Street



Existing



Proposed

Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking West Along F Street



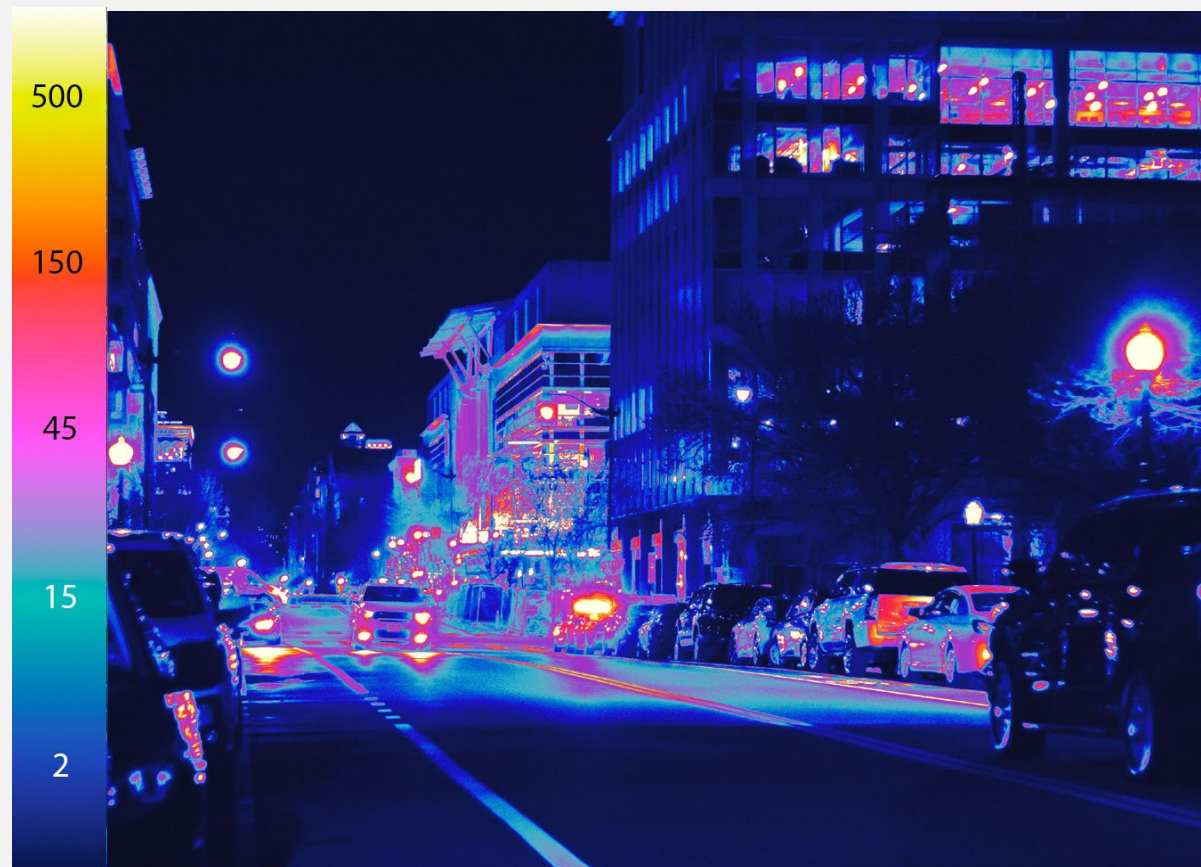
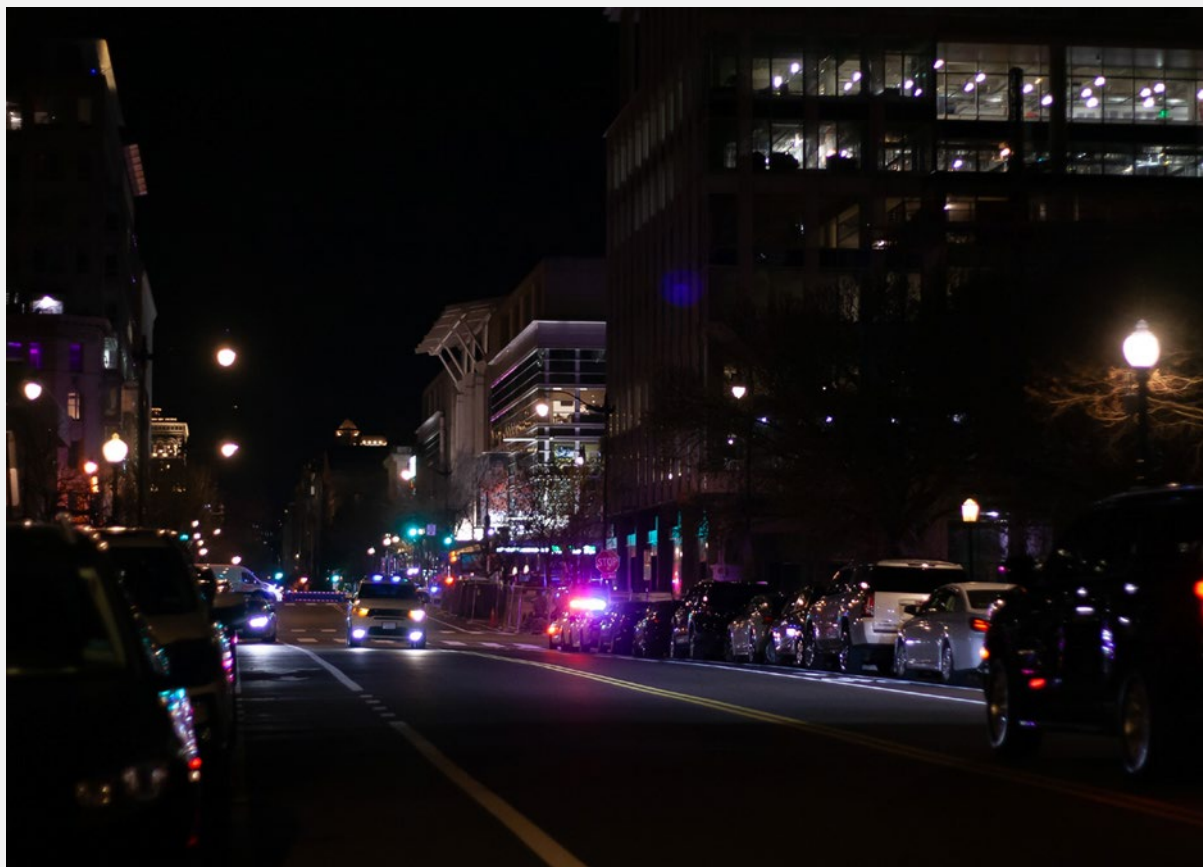
Existing



Proposed

Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

EXISTING NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking West Along F Street



Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

PROPOSED NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED – Looking West Along F Street



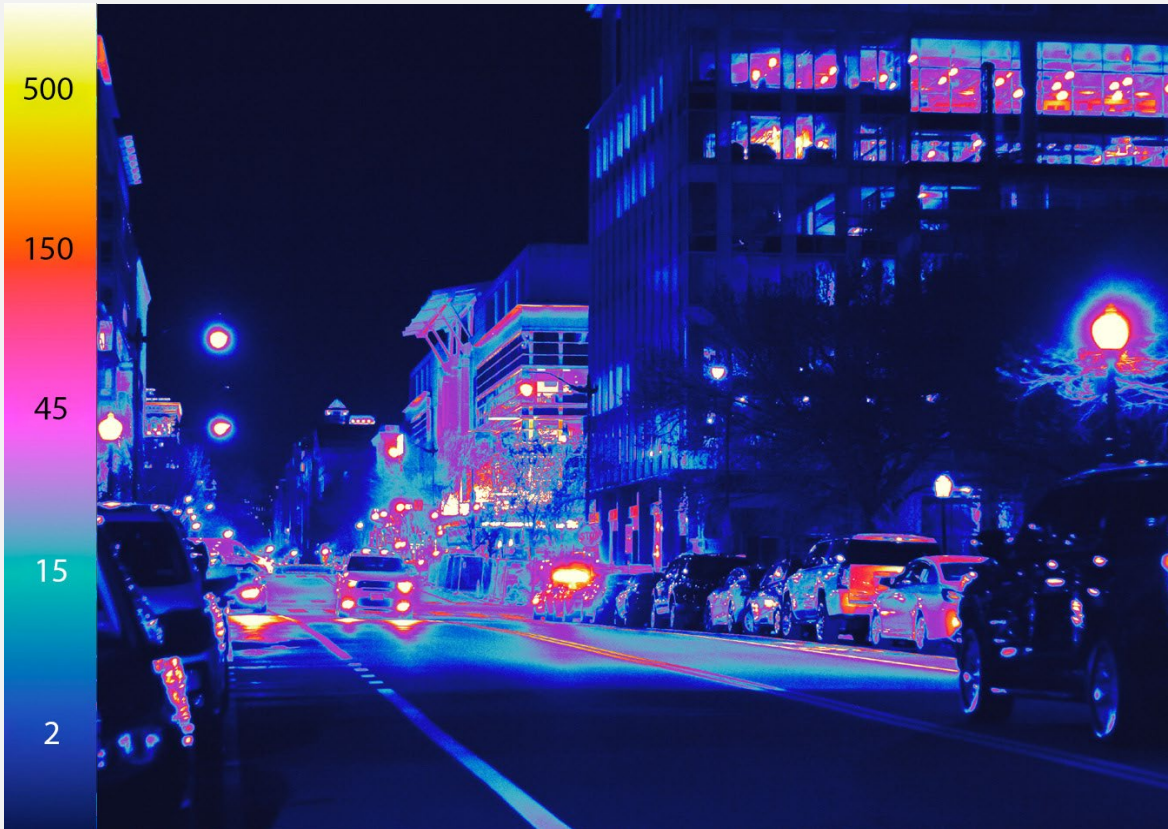
Existing



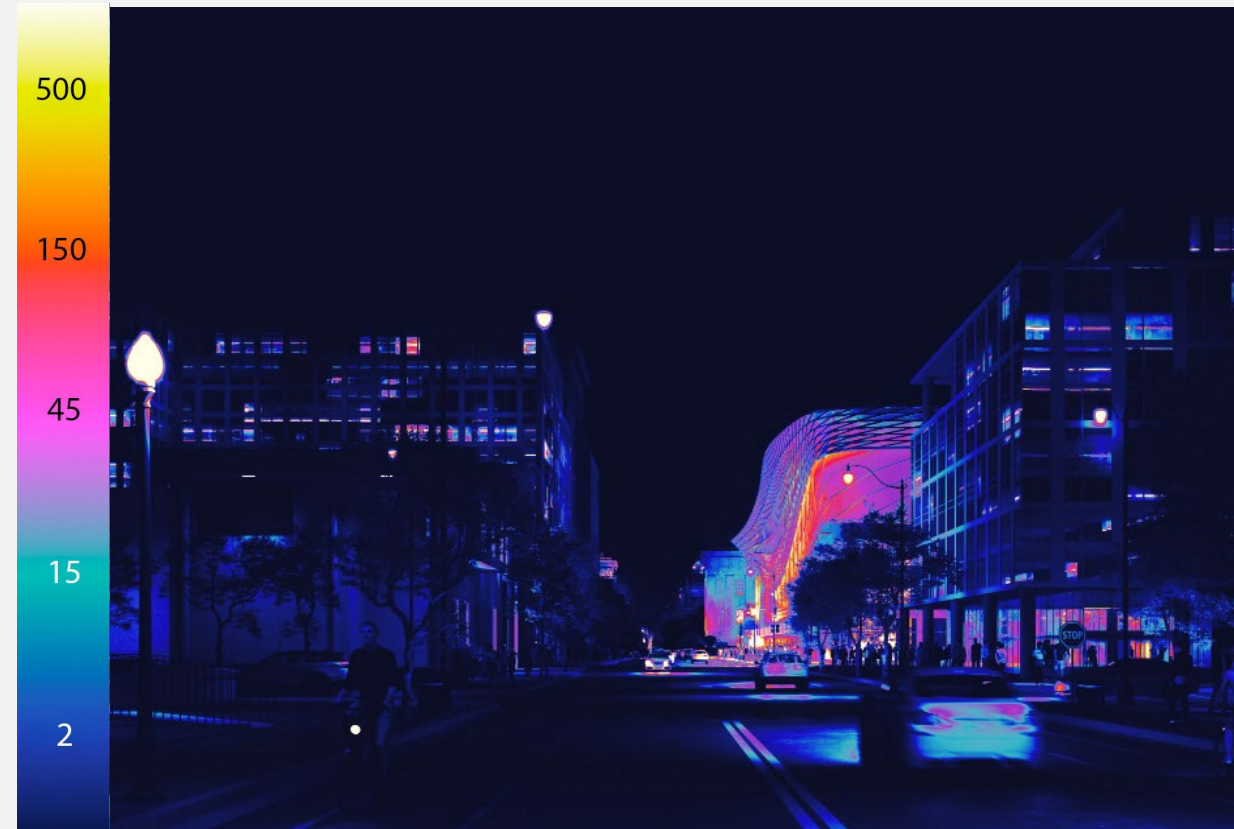
Proposed

Nighttime Lighting Viewshed Analysis

NIGHTTIME VIEWSHED COMPARISON – Looking West Along F Street



Existing



Proposed

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 2025

Dear Ms. Albert:

In its public meeting of 17 April conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept design for extensive alterations to the Capital One Arena, located at 601 F Street, NW. The Commission expressed appreciation for the presentation but did not take an action, providing the following comments for the development of the design.

The Commission members cited the great opportunity provided by this substantial investment of public and private resources at an important site, and they reiterated their previous advice that the goals for the project should be rebalanced to favor the arena's role as a public facility contributing to the daily life of its neighborhood and the planning framework of the city. Accordingly, they continued to raise concerns regarding several components of the proposal and the impact on both the street-level experience of the arena and on the larger urban realm.

Regarding the proposed undulating, illuminated ETFE building wrap at the upper stories, the Commission members found that this highly prominent element—intended to unify the building and to screen the roof structures—may not be achieving these design goals. They also continued to find that the relationship of the undulating wrap with the building facades is not well resolved; they advised further study of the wrap's function and form, including at its abrupt termination near the corner of 6th and F Streets. They supported the proposed inclusion of artwork on the exterior facades but did not find the current proposal successful; they recommended working with public artists to develop engaging and informative installations.

For the street-level interventions, the Commission members again emphasized the importance of enlivening the neighborhood with daily activity by providing outward-facing retail spaces along the building perimeter—perhaps in spaces with shallow floorplates that would still allow the accommodation of the interior retail program. They commented that relocating the arena's mid-block F Street entrance to be closer to the Metrorail entrance may exacerbate circulation conflicts between transit riders and arena visitors within the constrained sidewalk space at the corner of 7th and F Streets; they also questioned whether the reconfigured Metrorail entrance would be sufficiently wide. In addition, they said that the large street-level digital information board proposed for this same location would create further distraction at this busy urban corner, and they advised reconsideration of this element. While they expressed appreciation for the reduced extent of digital signage on the proposed projecting horizontal band above the storefront level, they found that the continuous band itself would compromise the desirable pedestrian experience of variability and articulation; they recommended reconfiguring this element to provide more variety in responding to program needs along the building's extensive perimeter—for example, signage, weather protection, and architectural gestures at entrances.

Finally, consistent with the above guidance, the Commission members encouraged consideration of the issues discussed in the public comment letter from the Committee of 100 on the Federal City regarding the proposal, including further design development of the entrances and other glazed openings; the art, signage, and commemorative program; and the exterior lighting and video display screens. To better document the design intent, they requested additional street-level renderings showing the appearance and character of the arena at ordinary, non-event times.

The Commission looks forward to further review of the concept design for this important project. Please continue to consult with the staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Batcheler', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Batcheler, AIA
Assistant Secretary

Nina Albert
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317
Washington, DC 20004

cc: Jordan Goldstein, Gensler
Monica Dixon, Monumental Sports & Entertainment

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

28 February 2025

Dear Ms. Albert:

In its public meeting of 20 February conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts was pleased to hear an information presentation on the proposal for significant alterations to the Capital One Arena, located at 601 F Street, NW. The Commission expressed general support for the initiative to revitalize this important civic facility and provided the following comments for the development of a concept design.

In their discussion, the Commission members agreed that the arena occupies a crucial site in both the historic and contemporary urban design framework of Washington, significantly reshaping the downtown neighborhood since its construction in 1997. While acknowledging the current challenges facing the facility and the neighborhood, they found that the proposed modifications to the existing arena may not achieve the stated urban design and architectural goals. They commented that the lower twenty to thirty feet of the building will significantly shape the pedestrian experience, and they expressed concern that the proposed strategy of removing existing exterior-facing retail spaces in favor of improved access and amenities for scheduled arena events would compromise the daily vitality of the surrounding urban fabric. They cited the recent Hudson Yards development in New York City, a large-scale complex with few openings or uses along the sidewalk, that has detrimentally affected the vibrancy of the adjacent avenue. Therefore, to achieve the intended activation of public space around the arena, they advised reconsideration of the mixture of inward- and outward-focused entrances and retail spaces, as well as the proportions and variations of opacity and transparency at the ground-level frontages.

Regarding the proposed modifications at the upper levels of the building, the Commission members commented that the precedents cited for the draped ETFE wrap—the National Portrait Gallery’s courtyard, the exterior scrim of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the atrium of the U.S. Institute of Peace—are coherent forms that create occupiable spaces integral to the experience of their respective buildings, rather than being merely applied elements. They said that the wrap appears episodic and random, lacking the coherence necessary to shape the urban realm or unify the building. In addition, they commented that the relationship between this new formal gesture and the massive rectilinear video screens is poorly resolved; they also advised that the extensive proposed lighting program alone cannot achieve the goal of neighborhood activation if these larger architectural and urban planning issues are not addressed. In conclusion, they emphasized that the proposal would benefit from a rebalancing of priorities so that this important facility can meet its operational and business goals while continuing to contribute to the vitality of the city’s invaluable civic spaces.

The Commission looks forward to the future review of a concept design for this important project. Please continue to consult with the staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Luebke', with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Nina Albert
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 317
Washington, DC 20004

cc: Jordan Goldstein, Gensler
Monica Dixon, Monumental Sports & Entertainment