

Whittier Elementary School Modernization

6201 5th St NW, Washington, DC

Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

District Department of General Services

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: September 3, 2026

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

Applicant Request: Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

Session: Review Exception

NCPC Review Officer: Stephanie Free

NCPC File Number: 8807

Project Summary:

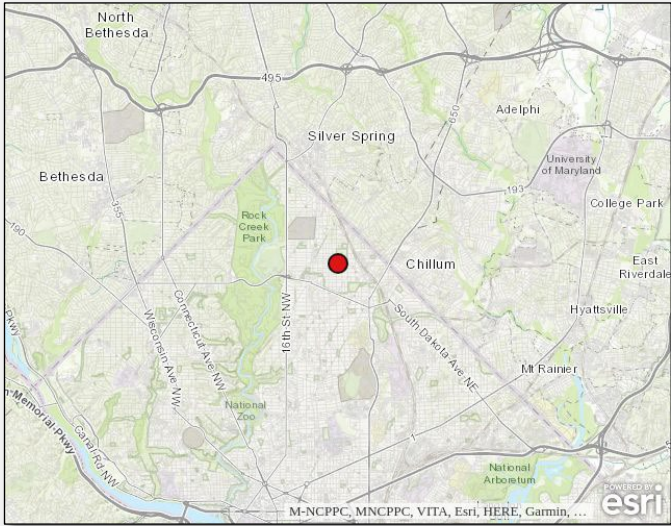
The District Department of General Services has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the modernization of Whittier Elementary School, located at 6201 5th Street, NW in Washington, DC. This Pre-K through 5th grade neighborhood school had a 2023-2024 school year enrollment of 413 students and is on an upward trend with approximately 450 students in the current school year. The projected design capacity for the new project is 489 students and will accommodate growth in the elementary school-aged population in the neighborhood and anticipated higher attendance from within the school boundary.

The various wings of the Whittier Elementary School comprise the only building on the block. The central, original portion dates from 1926 and faces Sheridan Street. An addition dating from 1961 was built on the east side of the site along 4th Street, with a bridge that connects the second floor of the addition to the first floor of the original building. This bridge serves as the only interior connection between the two structures. A dining hall addition was constructed in 2012 along the south-east portion of the original building. The combined gross square footage of the buildings is approximately 69,000 square feet.

The proposed modernization would retain the original school building and demolish the 1960's wing and 2012 dining addition and construct a new east-side addition. The addition sits on a neutral tones brick base with more traditional red brick above to compliment the existing brick of the historic building. The top floor is set back and clad with gray metal panel. The central brick massing is positioned as a focal point within the four-story facade, and is clad with decorative copper metal paneling at windows spaced at a regular rhythm to create a strong civic character that allows the existing building to maintain its presence and the addition to serve as a revitalized extension of its architectural expression.

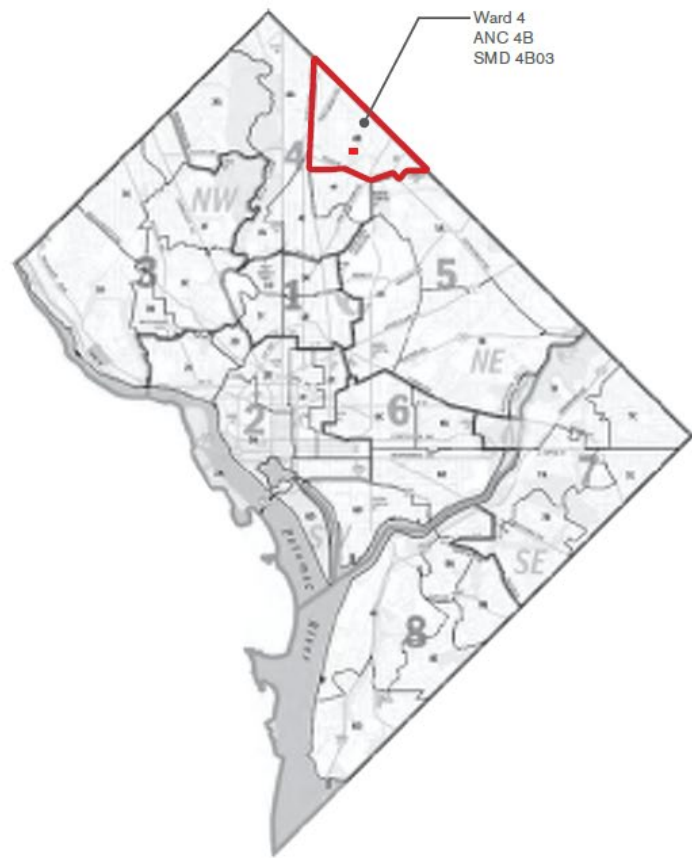
This District project is located outside of the Central Area and is not adjacent to federal property.

Site Location

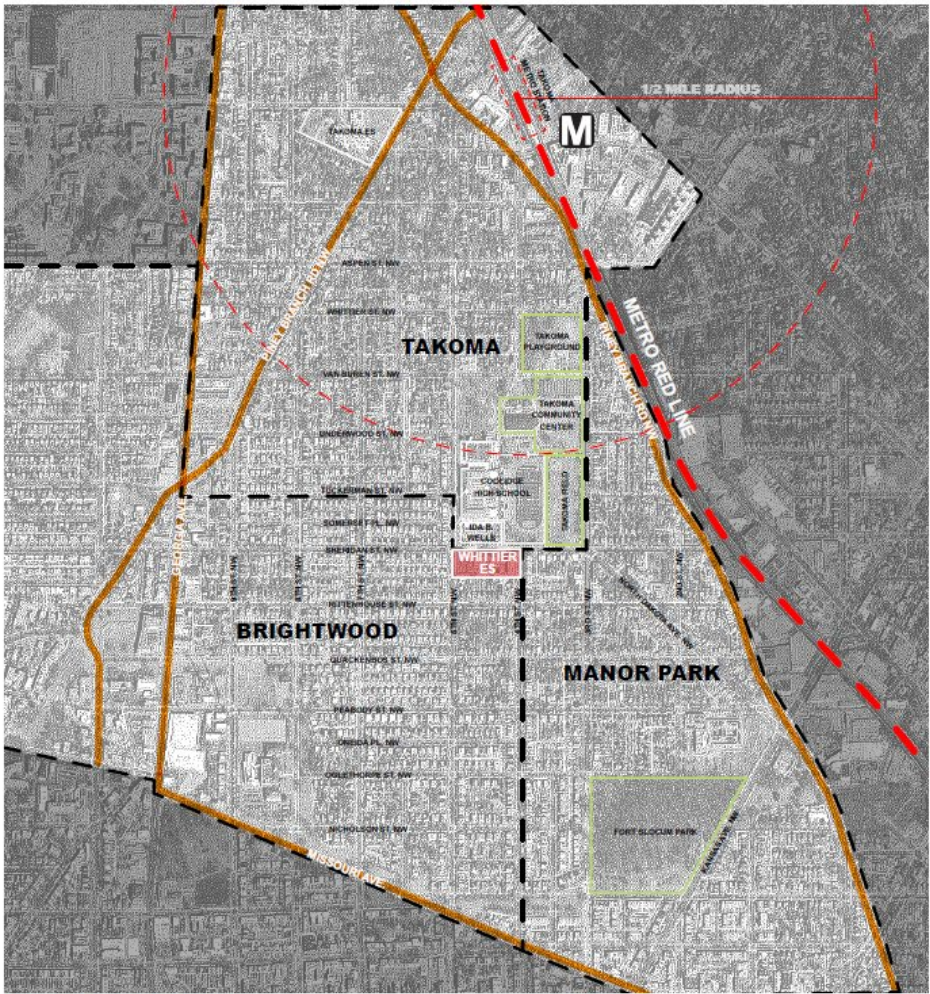


Location Map

Site Location



District of Columbia Ward Map



Whittier ES Site Location Map

Site Analysis – Existing Site Plan

Site Area:

1.83 acres

Parking:

Existing: Approx. 20 spaces

Service/ Bus Drop Off Zone:

Service entrance is along the alley at the west side of the multipurpose room. The drop-off for special education students occurs at the corner of the alley and 4th street near the east side of the site.

Site Amenities:

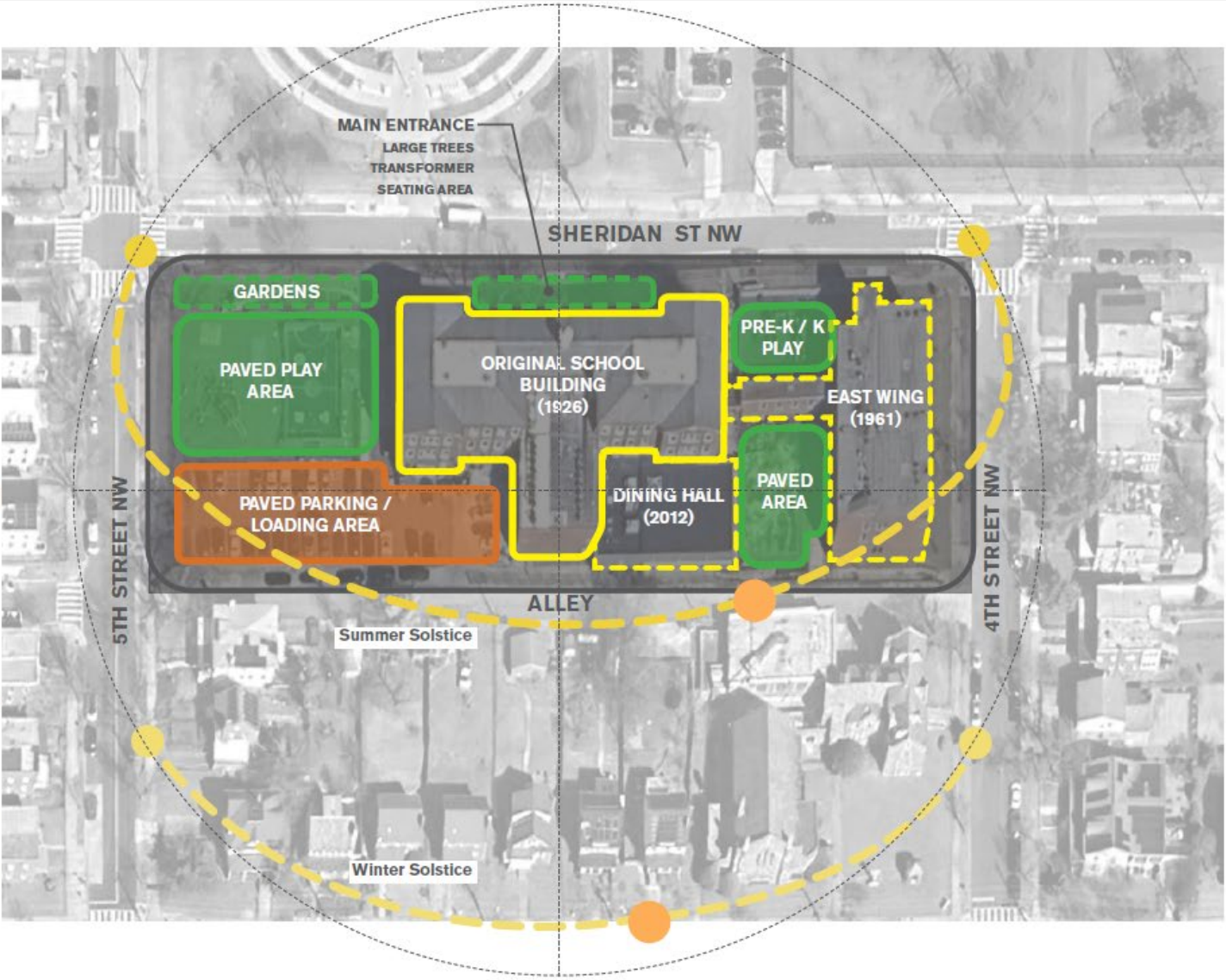
Pre-K / Kindergarten playgrounds. Paved play area next to parking lot. Food Prints gardens are located along the north-west portion of the site along Sheridan Street.

Site Grade/ Slope:

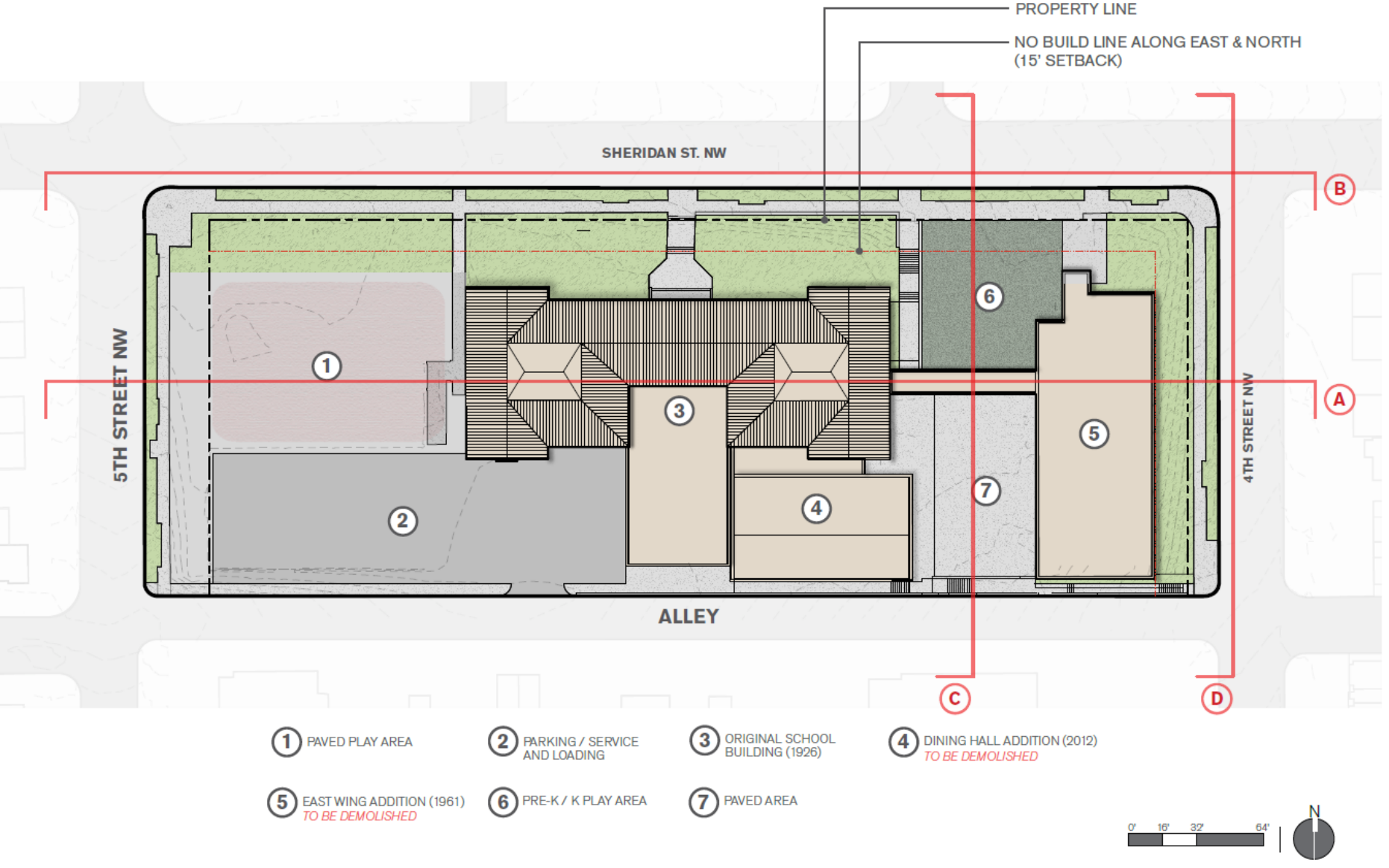
The west portion of the site is mostly level along Sheridan Street at the corner of 5th Street. As one moves east along Sheridan Street and reaches the east end of the original building, the topography drops roughly 12 feet as it reaches 4th Street.

Vegetation:

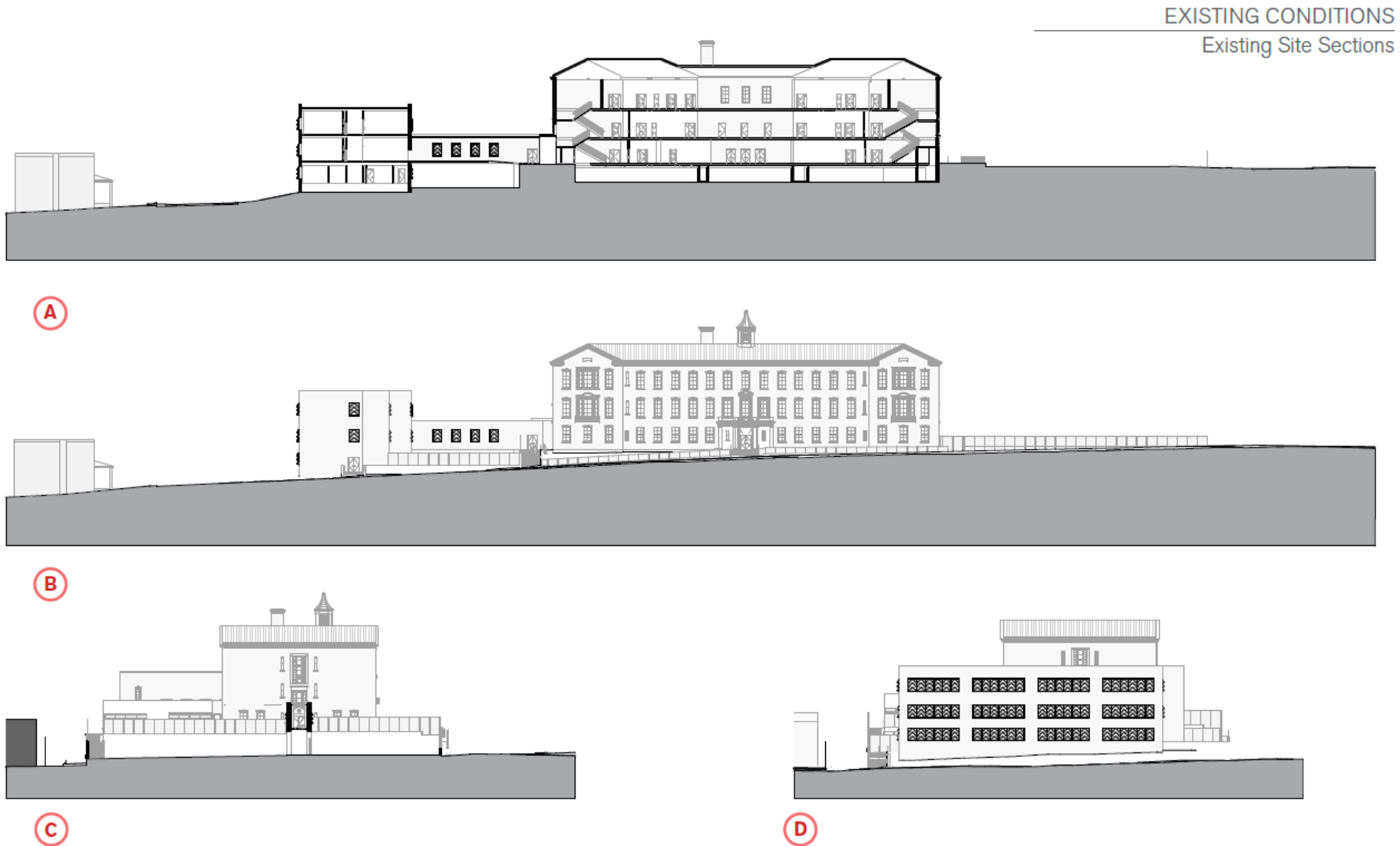
The landscaped areas are confined to the north side of the site along Sheridan Street and are mostly in front of the original school building. Trees are located along the site perimeter. Several larger trees are located at the front entrance.



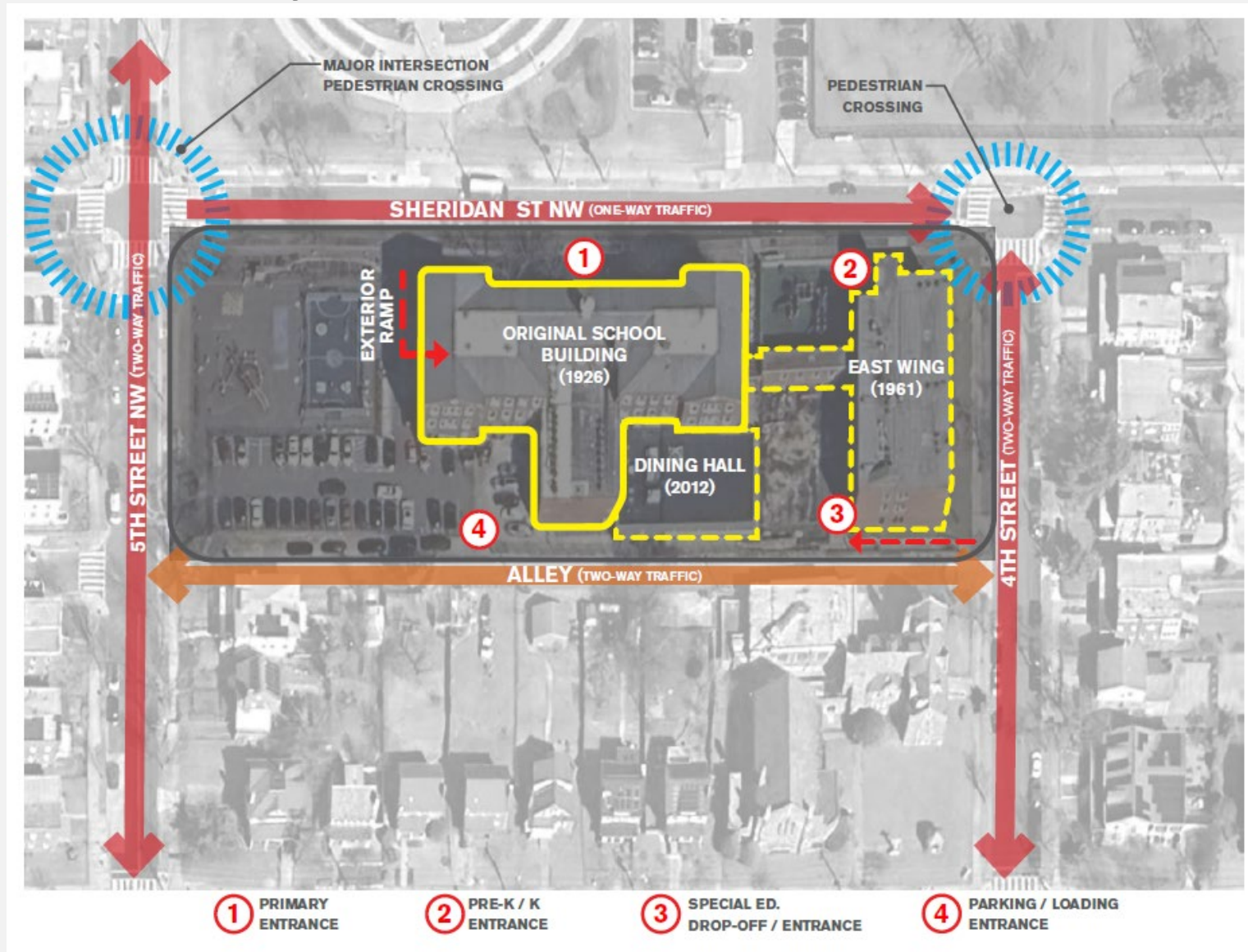
Site Analysis – Existing Site Plan



Site Analysis - Existing Site Sections



Site Analysis - Circulation



Site Analysis – Site Photos



1. Corner of Sheridan St & 4th Street



2. Pre-k / K Play Area



3. Main Entrance along Sheridan St.



4. Alley from 5th St.



5. Alley / Dining Hall Addition



6. Alley from 4th St.



7. Paved Area / Special Education Entrance



Key Plan

DCPS Whittier Elementary School

Site Analysis – Context Photos



1. Corner of Sheridan St & 4th Street



2. 4th Street Looking North West



3. Alley / 4th Street Looking North East



4. 5th & Sheridan Looking North



5. 5th & Sheridan Looking South



6. Alley from 4th St.



Key Plan

DCPS Whittier Elementary School

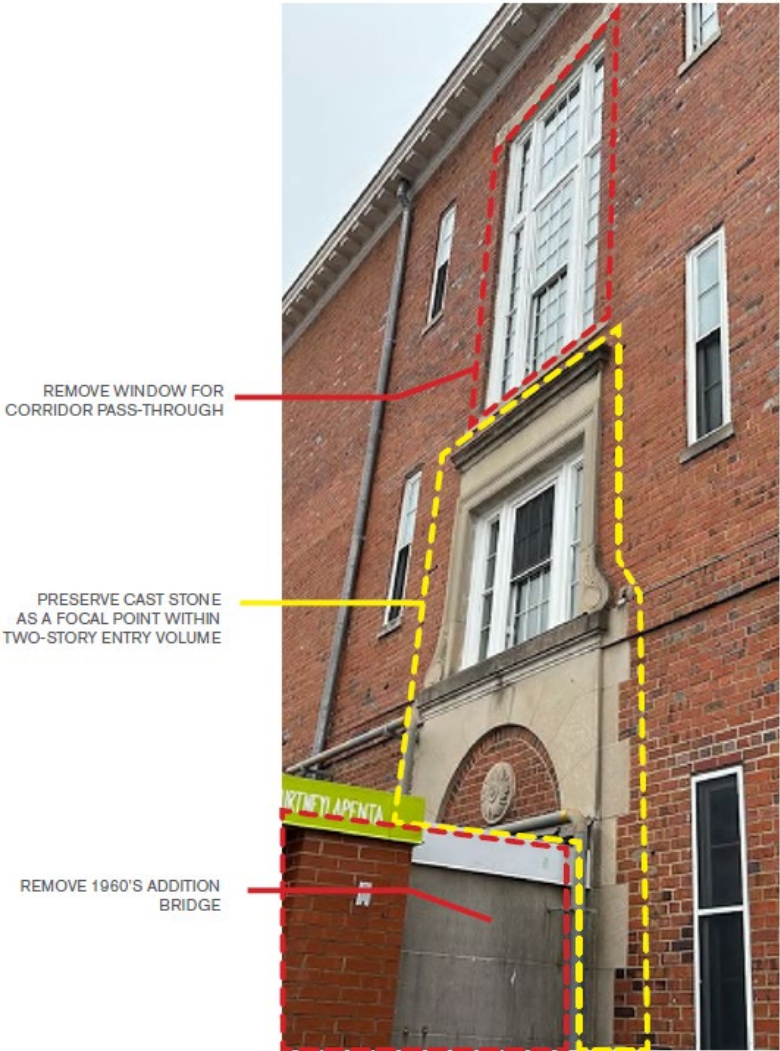
Site Analysis – Historic Fabric and Preservation



Paint TO BE REMOVED from Front Facade Cast Stone



Historic Cast Stone on West Facade



Historic Cast Stone on East Facade

Site Analysis – Historic Fabric and Preservation



Historic School Building, ca. 1948, showing 12 over 12 lites in windows



Current Windows w/ 16 over 16 lites.

The proposed design will return to the 12 over 12 pattern from the historic photo.

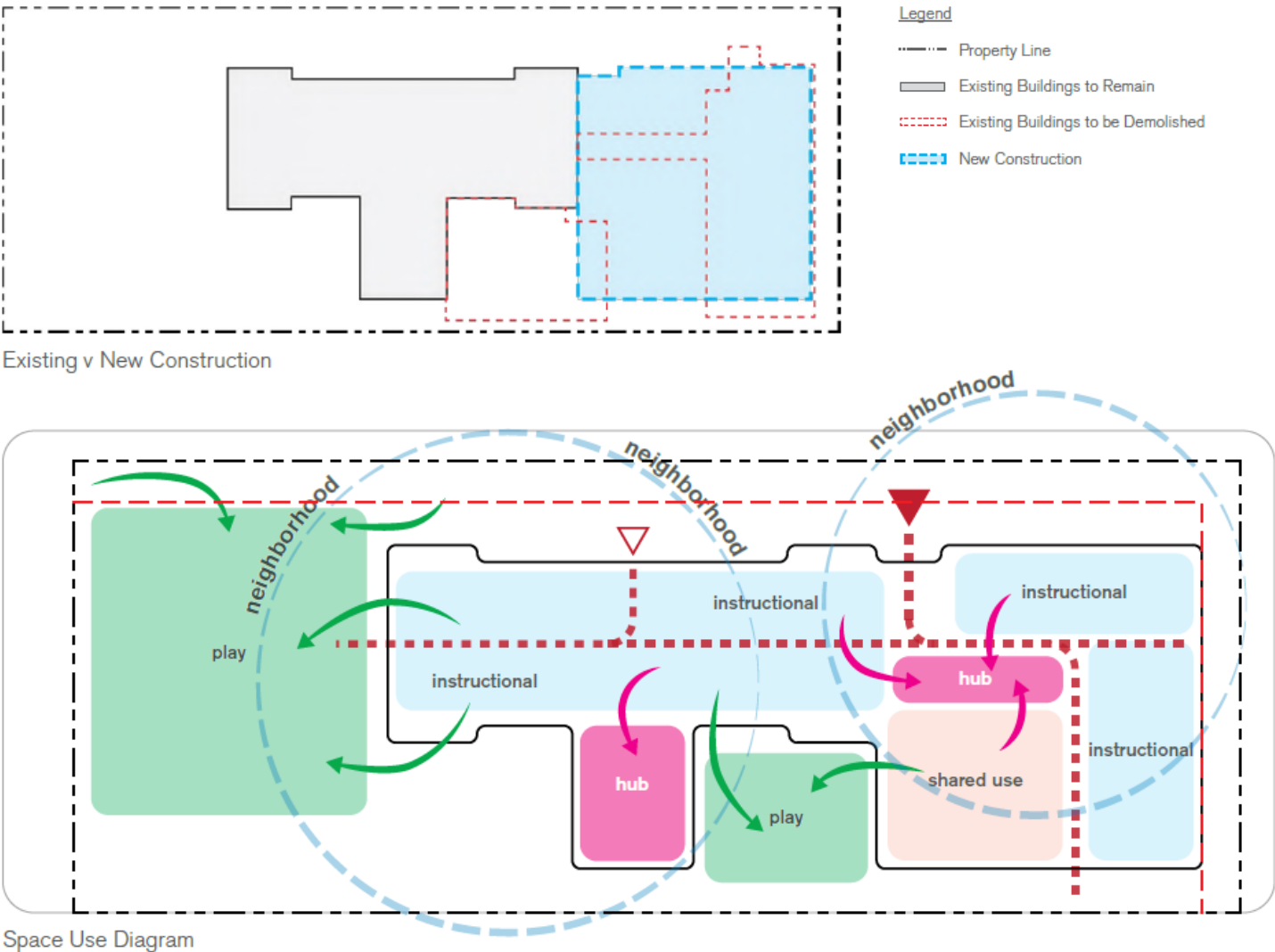
Addition - Concept Diagram

The Neighborhood Hub Concept utilizes the slope of the site, creating a new ground level as part of the addition on the east. The ground level provides a separate entrance for the dining area that is located on the exterior wall along Sheridan, within the secured outdoor learning area. This separate entrance also provides extracurricular access.

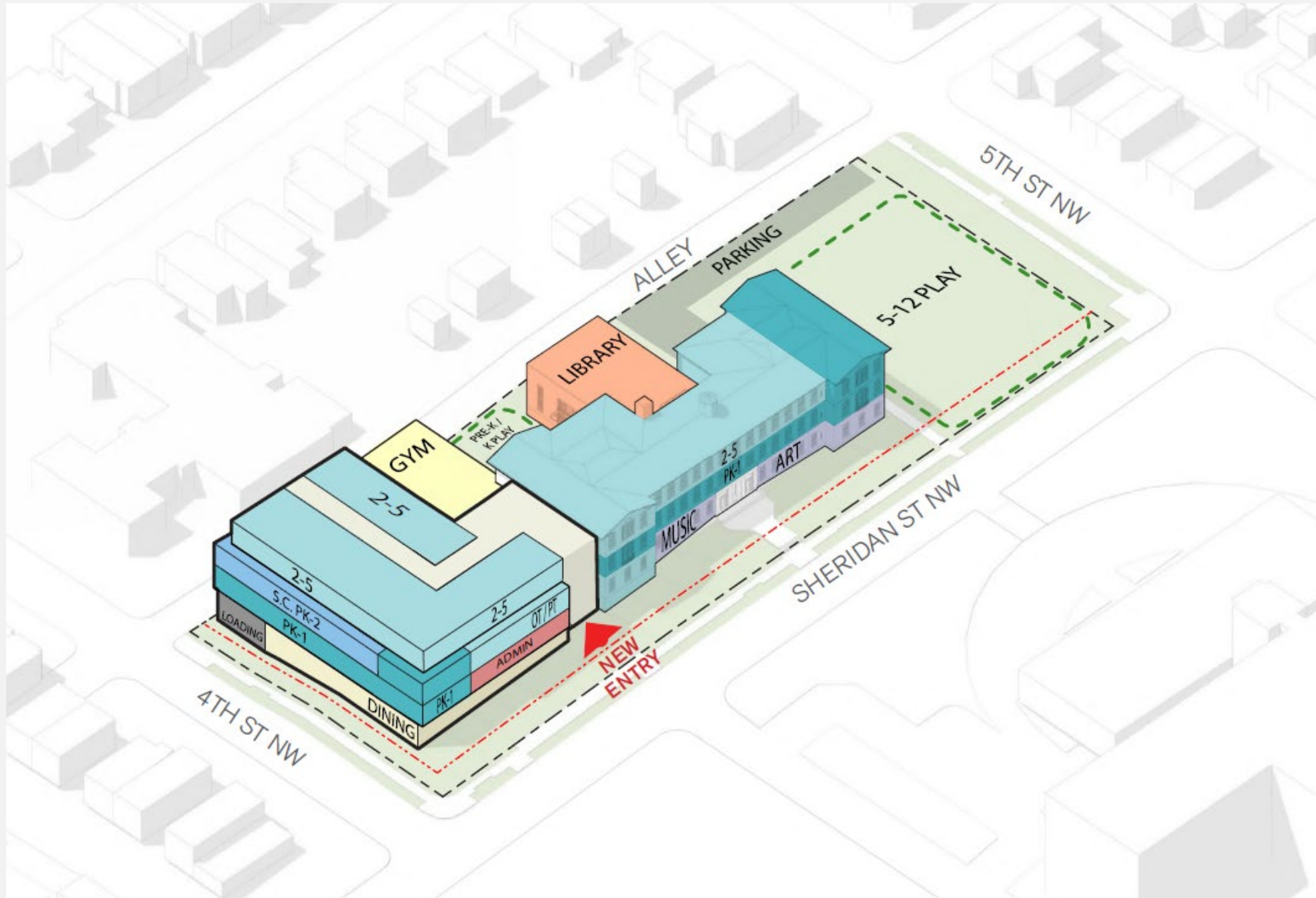
The first floor of the existing building is renovated to become specials classrooms and health suites with the library and related programming occupying the original multipurpose room. In the addition on the east, a cluster of Pre-K classrooms and admin suite surrounds a centrally located new main entrance, gymnasium, and stage platform space, creating a point of arrival that orients students, teachers and visitors.

The second floor houses an OT/PT suite as well as clusters of kindergarten and self-contained classrooms in both the existing building and new addition. These classroom "neighborhoods" surround discovery commons spaces serving the entire level for shared collaboration. The third floor utilizes a similar layout with grades 2-5 classrooms extending into the addition. Classrooms are located along the south corridor for optimal daylighting and views.

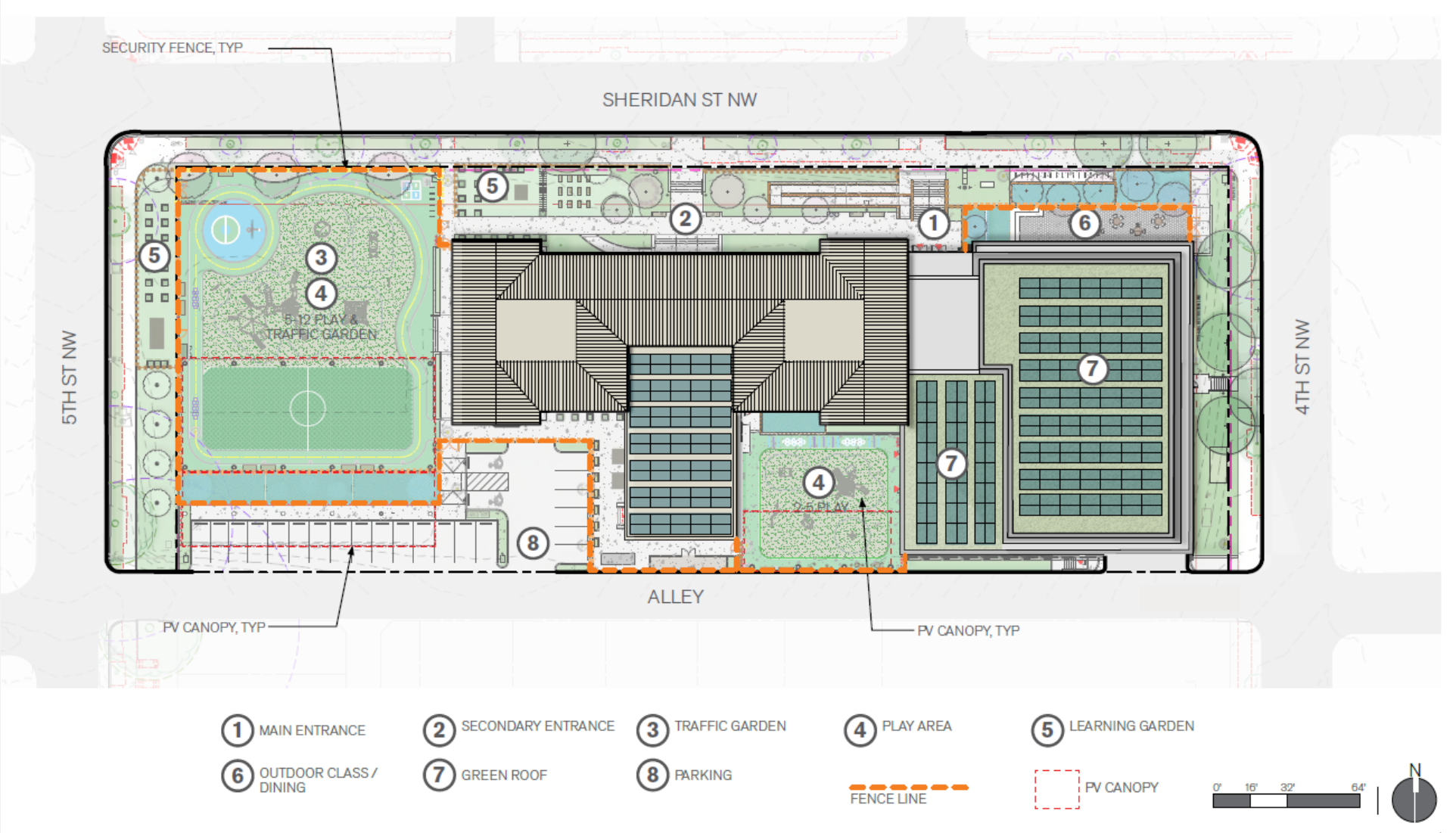
The Neighborhood Hub allows for the main play and parking areas to be in approximately the same location as the site exists currently, although play space has been maximized. This could benefit community members, students, and staff as all site amenities would be in a familiar space.



Addition Axonometric



Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Plant Palette

STREET TREE



Gleditsia triacanthos inermis / Honeylocust



Ulmus americana 'Jefferson' / Jefferson Elm

UNDERSTORY / ORNAMENTAL TREE



Amelanchier laevis / Allegheny Serviceberry



Magnolia virginiana / Sweetbay Magnolia



Prunus yedoensis / Yoshino Cherry

SHRUB



Cephalanthus occidentalis / Buttonbush



Fothergilla gardenii / Dwarf Fothergilla



Hydrangea 'Annabelle' / Annabelle Hydrangea



Ilex glabra / Inkberry



Itea virginica / Virginia Sweetspire

PERENNIAL / ORNAMENTAL GRASS



Amsonia hubrichtii / Bluestar



Asclepias tuberosa / Butterfly Weed



Aster 'October Skies' / Aromatic Aster



Carex stricta / Tussock Sedge

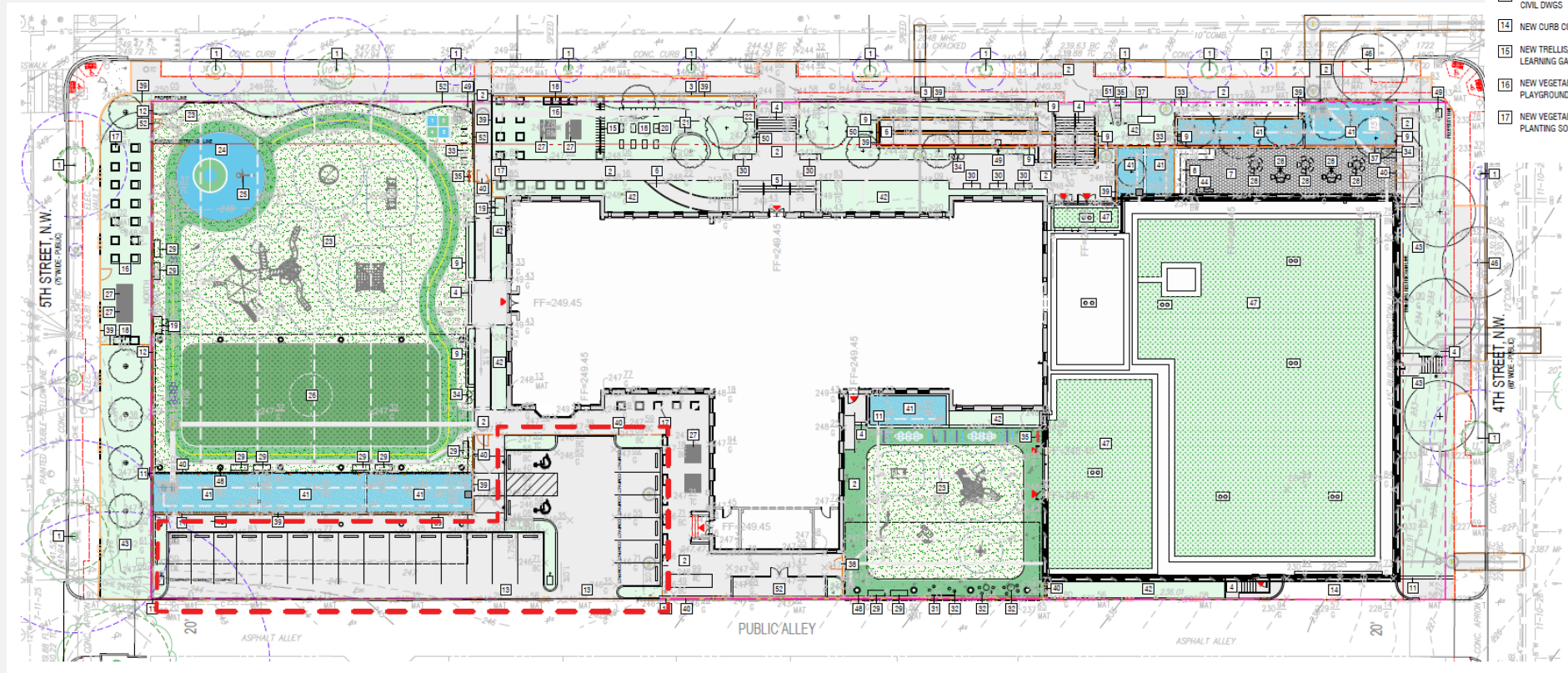


Rudbeckia fulgida / Black Eyed Susan

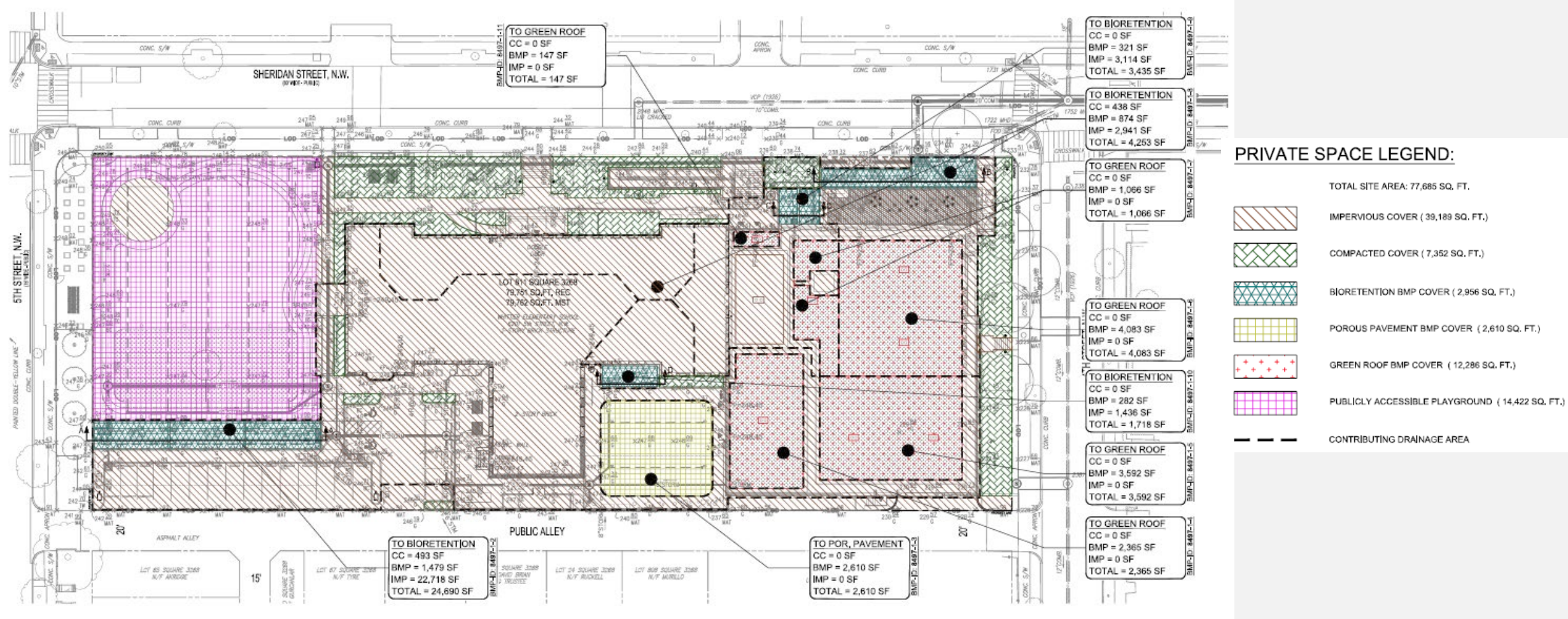
Landscape Site Plan

KEY LEGEND:

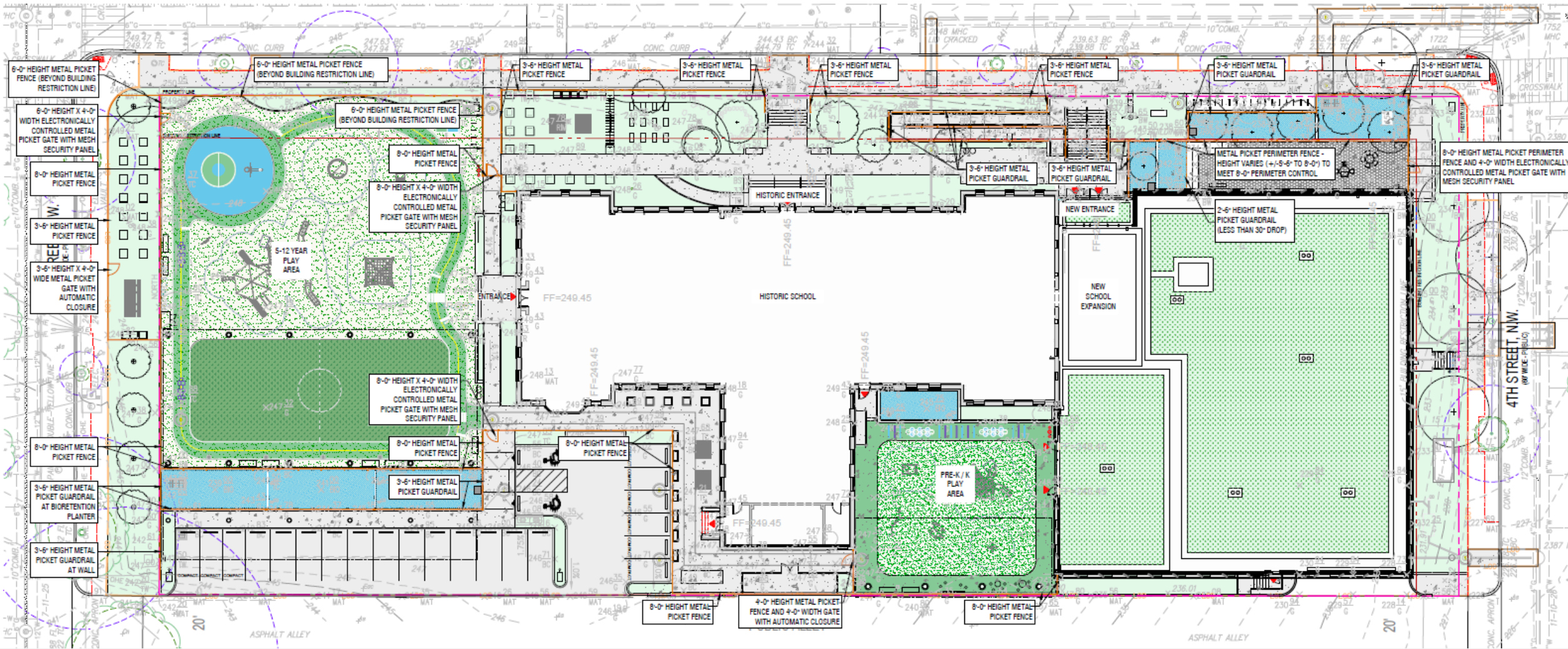
- | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | EXISTING TREE TO BE PROTECTED AND RETAINED, SEE ALSO CIVIL DWGS | 18 | NEW GARDEN COMPOST BINS, SEE 05/L0604 | 36 | NEW FLAGPOLE (OR RELOCATE EXISTING), SEE 03/L0604 |
| 2 | NEW SAWCUT CONCRETE PAVING, SEE ALSO CIVIL DWGS | 19 | NEW GARDEN SHED, SEE 08/L0604 | 37 | NEW SIGN, SEE ARCH DWGS |
| 3 | NEW ROUNDED CONCRETE CURB, SEE 03/L0601 | 20 | NEW LOG SEATING, SEE 11/L0604 | 38 | NEW 4FT METAL PICKET FENCE, SEE 08/L0601 |
| 4 | NEW CONCRETE STAIR, SEE 03/L0602 | 21 | NEW NATURAL BOULDERS | 39 | NEW 3'-0" METAL PICKET FENCE AND GUARDRAIL, SEE 08/L0601 |
| 5 | EXISTING STAIR AND ENTRY TO BE RESTORED, SEE ALSO 01/L0602 | 22 | NEW FLAGSTONE STEPPING STONES | 40 | NEW 8FT METAL PICKET PERIMETER FENCE WITH 4'-0" ELECTRONICALLY CONTROLLED AUTOMATIC CLOSURE GATE (PER DCPS STANDARDS), SEE 09/L0601 |
| 6 | NEW CONCRETE ADA RAMP AND HANDRAIL, SEE 04/L0602 | 23 | NEW PLAY AREA - POURED IN PLACE SURFACING, SEE 05/L0601 | 41 | NEW BIORETENTION PLANTING AREA, SEE ALSO CIVIL DWGS |
| 7 | NEW UNIT PAVES, SEE 04/L0601 | 24 | NEW ASPHALT PAVING WITH GRAPHIC PATTERN, SEE 07/L0601 | 42 | NEW LAYERED PLANTING, SEE ALSO L0401-L0402 |
| 8 | NEW PLATFORM SEATING AT OUTDOOR CLASSROOM, SEE 02/L0603 | 25 | NEW BASKETBALL HOOP | 43 | NEW SODDED LAWN |
| 9 | NEW MASONRY WALL, SEE 01/L0603 | 26 | NEW ARTIFICIAL TURF, SEE 06/L0601 | 44 | NEW WHITE BOARD AT DINING TERRACE, SEE 02/L0605 |
| 10 | NEW 12" CONCRETE WALL, SEE 03/L0603 AND ALSO STRUCTURAL DWGS | 27 | NEW PICNIC TABLE, SEE 07/L0604 | 45 | NEW SURFACING PATTERN AT PRE-K/K PLAY AREA, SEE 04/L0605 |
| 11 | NEW 10" CONCRETE WALL, SEE ALSO CIVIL AND STRUCTURAL DWGS | 28 | NEW DINING TABLE, SEE 08/L0604 | 46 | NEW STREET TREE |
| 12 | NEW 8" CONCRETE CURB | 29 | NEW BENCH AT PLAYGROUND, SEE 09/L0604 | 47 | NEW GREEN ROOF, SEE ALSO CIVIL AND ARCH DWGS |
| 13 | NEW ASPHALT PARKING AREA, SEE CIVIL DWGS | 30 | NEW BENCH AT ENTRY, SEE 10/L0604 | 48 | NEW SOLAR CANOPY, SEE ARCH DWGS |
| 14 | NEW CURB CUT - SEE CIVIL DWGS | 31 | NEW CHALKBOARD MOUNTED TO FENCE, SEE 01/L0605 | 49 | NEW POLE LIGHT, SEE MEP DWGS |
| 15 | NEW TRELLIS/WHITE BOARD AT LEARNING GARDEN, SEE 04/L0603 | 32 | NEW LOG TABLE AND TREE STUMP SEATING, SEE 11/L0604 | 50 | NEW BOLLARD LIGHT, SEE MEP DWGS |
| 16 | NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN AREA WITH PLAYGROUND LAWN OR MULCH | 33 | NEW SHORT TERM BIKE RACK, SEE 01/L0604 | 51 | NEW UPLIGHT, SEE MEP DWGS |
| 17 | NEW VEGETABLE GARDEN BEDS WITH PLANTING SOIL, SEE 04/L0604 | 34 | NEW TRASH AND RECYCLING RECEPTACLES, SEE 02/L0604 | 52 | BIKE STORAGE, SEE ARCH DWGS |
| | | 35 | NEW DRINKING FOUNTAIN, SEE MEP DWGS | 53 | 6'-0" HEIGHT METAL PICKET FENCE BEYOND BUILDING RESTRICTION LINE |



Stormwater Management Plan



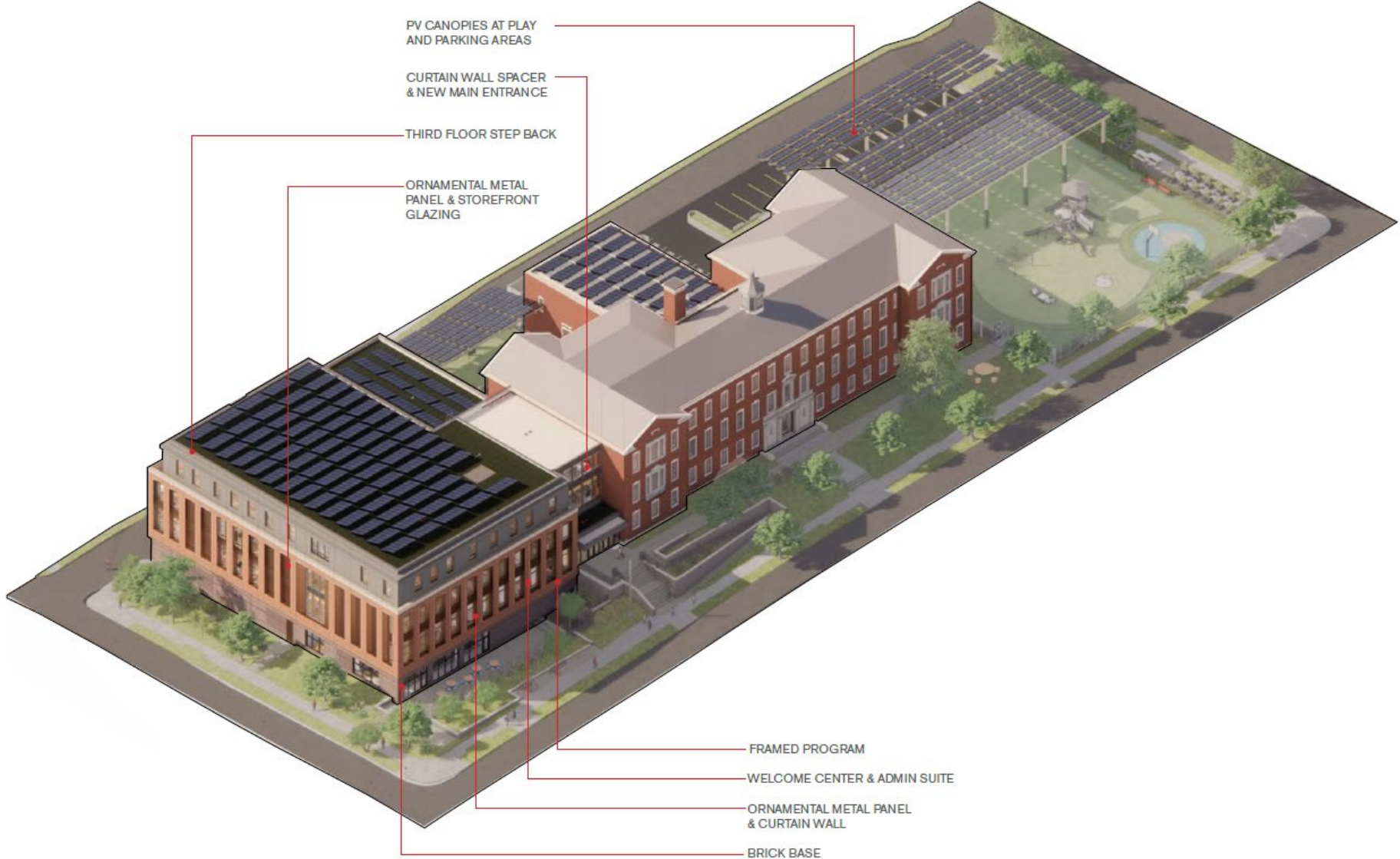
Perimeter Fence Plan



Proposed Building Materials



Design Diagrams



Proposed Elevations



NORTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED



SOUTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED



EAST ELEVATION - PROPOSED



WEST ELEVATION - PROPOSED

Project Renderings



INTERIOR - MAIN ENTRANCE LOBBY

*Interior finishes to be finalized

Project Renderings



NORTH ELEVATION PERSPECTIVE

Project Renderings



NEW ENTRANCE



Project Renderings

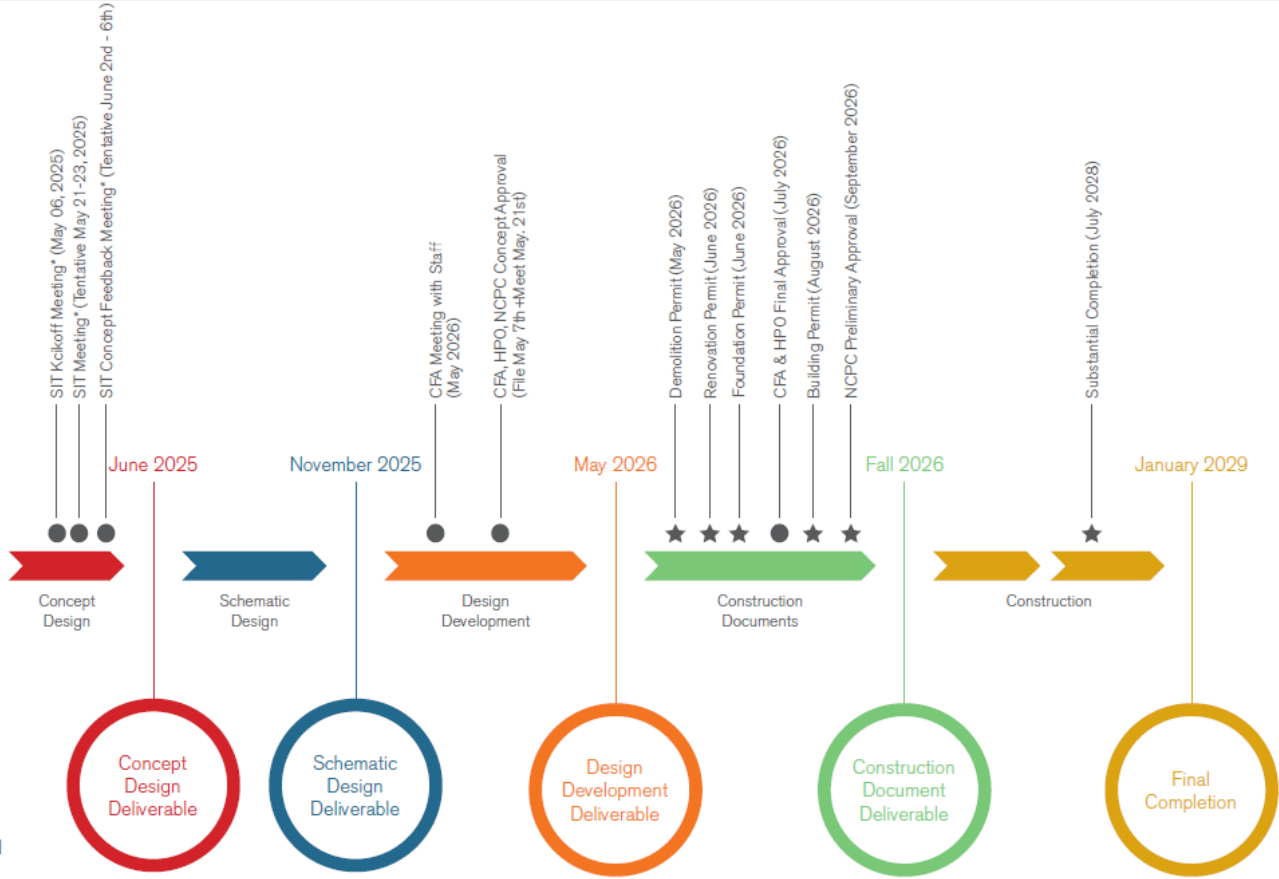


Project Schedule

The Whittier Elementary School Modernization is planned as part of the FY 24-29 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and overarching Master Facilities Plan (MFP). As outlined in the MFP, the minor expansion to the building in 2010 was considered Phase 1, with Full Modernization slated for 2027. The CIP goes on to specify August 2028 for construction completion, to be occupiable for SY 28-29. This is the timeline the project continues to adhere to. The MFP lists estimated enrollment for SY 27-28 at 489, with the Ed Spec specifying 556 as the designed building capacity. As of the CIP, the estimated full funding cost is \$97,506,131.

The diagram at right illustrates the proposed project schedule. With construction documents delivered in the fall of 2026 and occupancy in the summer of 2028, the schedule encompasses approximately 4 years. This schedule will allow for meaningful stakeholder engagement, comprehensive agency coordination and deliberate, thorough construction. The planned move of the Whittier school into swing space, in the summer of 2026, will allow for more in-depth site investigations.

Following the concept design submission, DCPS reviewed the schemes provided by HCM and selected the Neighborhood Hub concept, which places the entire addition on the east side of the site. The selection was made taking into account community feedback and the desire to have more outdoor space for play, community garden areas, and for the various festivals and events held by the school. DCPS also provided an updated program which was incorporated throughout the design process.



* Additional SIT Meetings to be scheduled throughout the duration of the project

Public Engagement

Initial Feedback

FEEDBACK FROM SIT COMMITTEE MEETINGS MAY, 2025

WHAT WE ASKED



- What is the School's Motto?
- How would we want the facility to support school culture?
- How is the school building used as a learning tool?



- Describe the role you would like to see the school play in the community.
- What community activities currently take place on campus?
- What spaces does / could the school share with the community?



- What extracurricular activities take place on campus that are important to the school's culture?
- Does the location, layout, and current use of the playground work well?
- What weekend activities take place at the school?

WHAT WE HEARD

The Whittier Way:

Be respectful, be responsible, be ready to learn

- Support students with english as a second language and provide a space for engagement
- The school should support continuous growth and inquiry based activities such as Foodprints, Art, and STEM
- Provide a hub for teachers, breakout spaces, and group rooms
- Dedicated wings that group grade levels together.
- Visual connections / Openness for common spaces (Art, Library, etc.)
- Dedicated auditorium for plays, graduation, ceremonies, and quarterly / yearly events.
- Continue to have science labs outfitted with lab equipment.
- Sensory spaces for self-contained classroom program.

- The school should support the community activities that currently take place on site.
- Provide space that could be used for the Farmer's Market on the weekends
- A space for Fall / Spring festivals, and Hispanic Heritage festivals which need to move inside during inclement weather (i.e. Auditorium)
- The auditorium should have a robust AV system to support performing arts. The school hosts plays each semester.
- Prioritize safety but keep spaces engaging and welcoming, creating a family environment.
- Whittier is a community within a community.

- Need space for different types of athletic activities and sports. The students at the school love to play soccer.
- Update playground space and equipment that has slides and areas for creative play. The current space has a lot of asphalt surfacing and limited equipment.
- The playground area lacks shade and gets very hot during the day.
- Chess club and National STEM Honors Society are other activities that are important to the school.
- Currently there is no library or places for students to sit and read comfortably.

Agency Coordination



Coordination with key District and federal review agencies has been ongoing throughout the design process for the modernization of Whittier Elementary School. The project is being developed in close collaboration with DC Public Schools (DCPS) and the Department of General Services (DGS), who continue to provide project oversight, operational requirements, and stakeholder coordination. The design team has worked closely with these agencies to advance the modernization scope, educational program, sustainability objectives, and project schedule.

The project has undergone review and coordination with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (HPO) regarding the treatment of the original 1926 school building and proposed site improvements. Ongoing coordination has focused on preservation of character-defining historic elements, appropriate treatment of the existing structure, and integration of the new addition and landscape improvements. The project has also been reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and has received final design approval following presentation of the proposed architectural, landscape, and site design.

Coordination with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is ongoing through the federal design review process. The Preliminary Review submission represents the next step in agency coordination and incorporates feedback received during prior discussions with review staff. The design team will continue to coordinate with NCPC as the project advances toward Final Review.

The project team is also coordinating with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) regarding streetscape improvements, public space modifications, pedestrian circulation, and associated right-of-way work along Sheridan Street NW, 4th Street NW, and 5th Street NW. In addition, coordination with the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) is ongoing to ensure compliance with applicable stormwater management, environmental, and sustainability requirements. The project incorporates green infrastructure measures, including bioretention facilities, green roofs, permeable paving, and enhanced landscaping, to satisfy District stormwater management objectives and support broader sustainability goals.