

# School Without Walls at Francis-Stevens Modernization

2425 N St NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

District of Columbia Department of General Services

# Project Summary

**Commission Meeting Date:** October 6, 2022

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

**Applicant Request:** Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

**Session:**

**NCPC Review Officer:** Carlton Hart

**NCPC File Number:** 8401

## Project Summary:

The Department of General Services (DGS) in conjunction with DC Public Schools (DCPS) has submitted preliminary site and building plans to modernize the School Without Walls at the Francis-Stevens (SWWFS) School, 2425 N Street Northwest located in Washington, DC adjacent to Rock Creek Park. DGS notes this project is to provide an inspiring facility that showcases the best of the historical elements of the original 1920s and 1950s architecture, while simultaneously providing both modernized and new learning spaces that complement the school's educational and cultural goals. The design strives to be a model of how sustainable, net-zero energy, and WELL design can be gracefully integrated within a historic existing building, creating a 21st-century school that fosters and inspires the next generation of environmental stewards.

SWWFS occupies the Francis-Stevens Junior High School building, located at 2425 N Street, NW, which has been a civic institution in DC's West End neighborhood since the first portion of the building was completed in 1927. The building gained a north wing and a third floor on its existing two story wings a few years later, then got a sizable east wing addition in the 1950s to house a cafeteria and a more traditionally sized gymnasium. The school has remained in continuous use throughout its history.

# Project Summary

DGS notes that during the public engagement process, the project team developed nine (9) design principles, which summarize the aspirations of the various stakeholders into unified goals for the project's design. These Design Principles will continue to serve as guidelines for how to make the best decisions for the project and the community for future phases of the process.

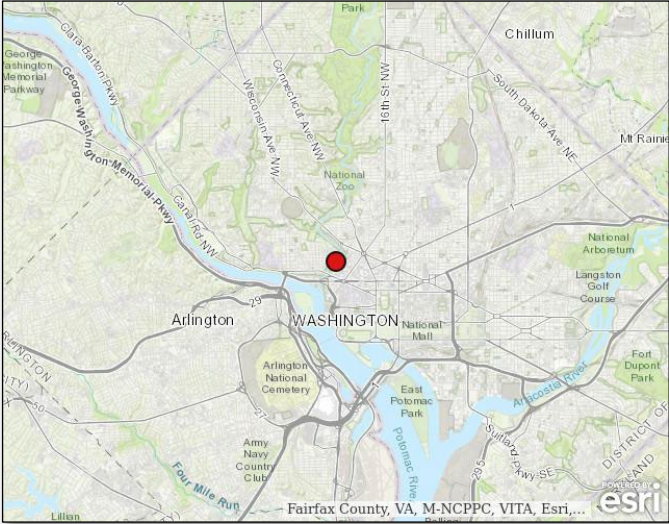
For School Without Walls - Francis Stevens, the design principles outline what the project team hopes to achieve, with a focus on civic presence, sustainability, high quality learning and working environments and—most importantly— creating/maintaining strong connections within and without the building.

The renovation expands the building area of Francis Stevens by about 30%. Some of this additional space comes from an extension of the existing east wing and the enclosure of what is now a service courtyard between the 1950s wing and the 1920s building, but the bulk of the new space is being added in a new 3-story academic wing on the west side of the existing building. Connecting corridors are provided to improve circulation throughout the expanded building footprint. The building size will increase from 109,000 sq.ft. to 126,000 sq.ft., which includes a new gymnasium, additional classroom space, early childhood space, and redesigned library.

This proposal includes an addition on the west side of the building and expansion/infill of the east side of the building around a newly renovated and expanded gymnasium. The proposal also seeks to meet the Net Zero Energy goal with the installation of solar panels at the site, improving performance of the windows and walls, and possibly installing geothermal system. This building will also seek a LEED rating.

Site work and landscaping includes a new parking area east of the building with student drop off area, new playgrounds and bio-retention areas.

# Site Location



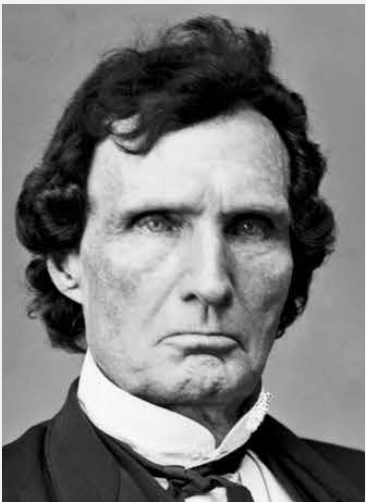
Location Map

# Historical Figures – School Namesakes



Dr. John R. Francis

- Born free in Washington, DC in 1856
- His father was a successful businessman and one of the wealthiest African Americans in this area.
- Lived in DC nearly all his life
- Distinguished educator and medical practitioner



Thaddeus Stephens

- Born in Vermont, 1792
- Well known abolitionist
- U.S. Representative (PA), first elected in 1848
- Opposed slavery, and worked to reduce the distinctions between rich and poor
- Championed “free schools for all” in DC.
- WEB Dubois called Stevens “a leader of the common people”

# School History

Albert Harris designed this building and served as the DC Municipal Architect from 1921 to 1933.

Stevens Elementary School and Francis Junior High School were both historic schools in the District of Columbia.

- Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School was located at 1050 21st St NW, in the West End neighborhood of the District. The Stevens School was built in 1868 as one of the first publicly funded schools for African-American children, and before its closing in June 2008, it was the city's oldest school in continuous operation. The Stevens School was added to the DC Inventory on June 20, 1972, and the National Register on July 12, 2001.
- Francis Junior High School, located at 2425 N Street, NW, was built in 1927 to serve poor African-American students whose families lived in the swampy area of the District known as Foggy Bottom, as well as African-American students from Georgetown. With the exception of the addition of a gymnasium in the 1950s, the Francis school today is the same as it was in the 1920s. After promoting its last class of 9th graders at the close of the 2006-2007 school year, Francis became a middle school as DC Public Schools decided to move all 9th graders out of junior highs to the senior high schools.



[https://sova.si.edu/details/NMAH.AC.0618.S04.12?s=0&n=10&t=K&q=\\* &i=0#ref475](https://sova.si.edu/details/NMAH.AC.0618.S04.12?s=0&n=10&t=K&q=* &i=0#ref475)



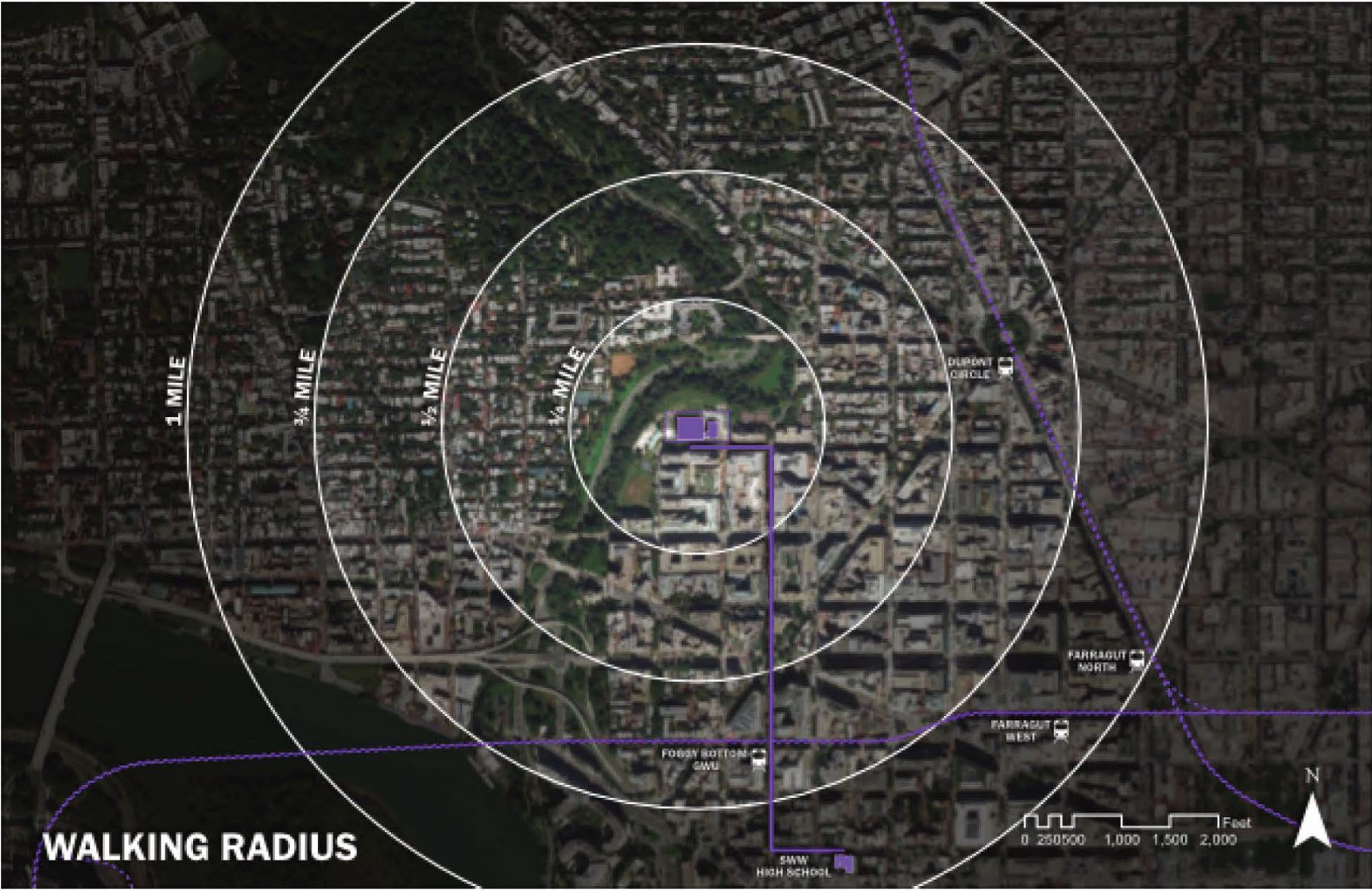
[https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/ead\\_component:sova-nmah-ac-0618-s04-12-f829?q=%22francis+junior+high+school%22&record=7&hiterm=%26quot%3Bfrancis%2Bjunior%2Bhigh%2Bscho%26quot%3B&inline=true](https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/ead_component:sova-nmah-ac-0618-s04-12-f829?q=%22francis+junior+high+school%22&record=7&hiterm=%26quot%3Bfrancis%2Bjunior%2Bhigh%2Bscho%26quot%3B&inline=true)

# Design Principals

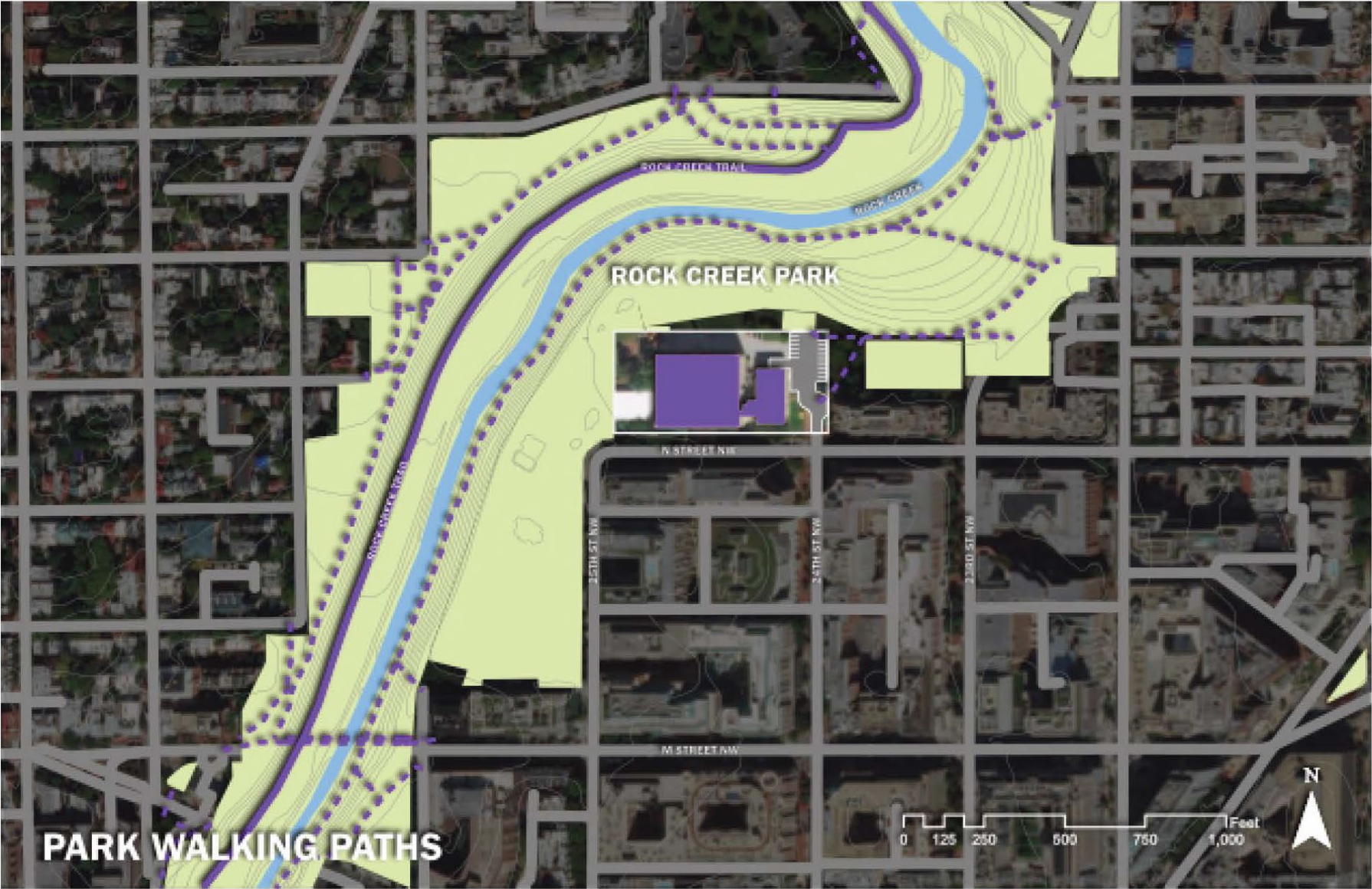
1. Enhance and celebrate connection to the outdoors
2. Reinforce the relationship with Rock Creek Park
3. Provide a place that enhances the sense of community
4. Demonstrate a high-performance, healthy learning space
5. Defer to the civic presence of the historic structures
6. Create opportunities for connections between grades
7. Put learning on display
8. Embrace equitable student-centered spaces
9. Create a professional nurturing environment



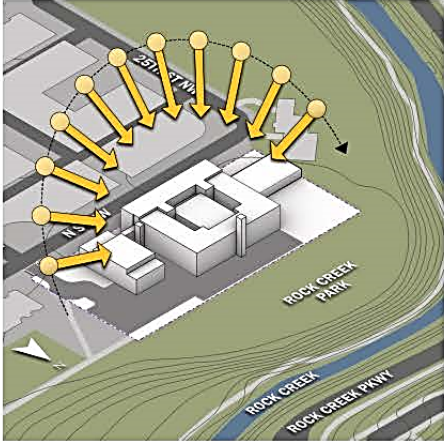
# Site - Walking Radius



# Site Location

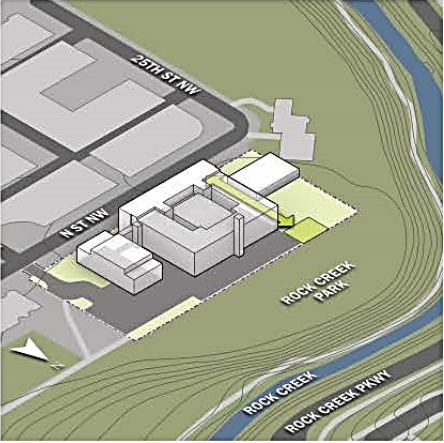


# Site Analysis



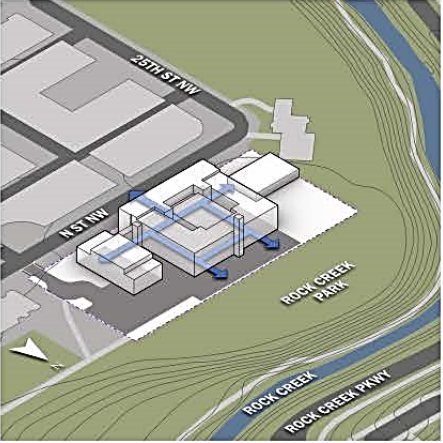
**SUN PATH**

The building is situated such that the secondary facades receive the most direct sun. The 1955 addition receives the most direct light in the morning, providing some minor shading to the original building beyond it. The front facade receives consistent sun to the south, but is partially shaded by the tall buildings across the street. There is considerable exposure along the western facade occurring in the afternoon hours. Overhead sun provides daylighting into existing classroom courtyards.



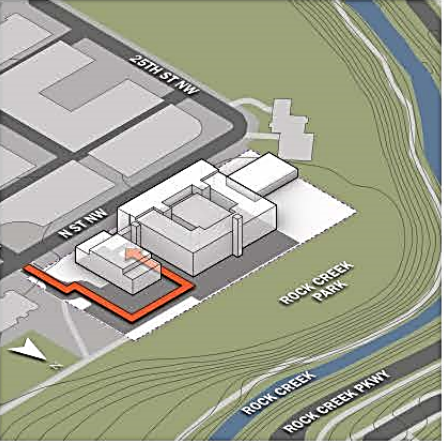
**GREEN SPACE**

The majority of on-site green space is situated along the western part of the property. Numerous trees have been removed to make room for auxiliary classroom trailers. An informal pathway connects the primary play space with the street front. While there is limited green space on site, Rock Creek Park to the North includes an expansive open area currently used by the school.



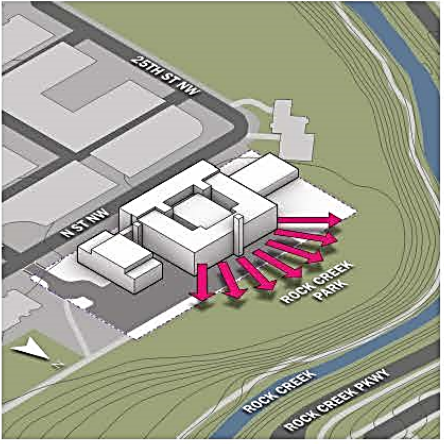
**BUILDING CIRCULATION: INTERIOR**

The original Francis-Stevens Elementary school used a simple circulation pattern that was intended to facilitate expansion. Circulation follows three single-loaded corridors surrounding a central auditorium. This circulation pattern has been continued in previous additions and has proven to be an effective strategy.



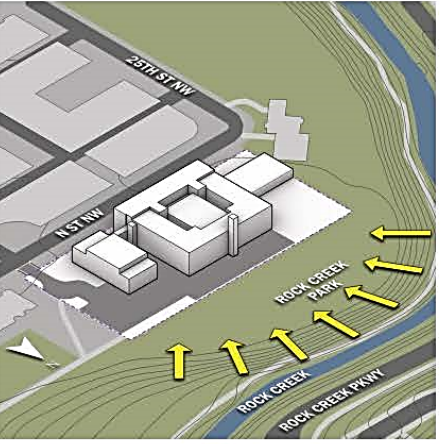
**SERVICE ACCESS**

Service entry is located between the 1955 addition and the original school building. Vehicles can only access this area through a driveway off of the rear parking lot. No on-grade entrances or ramps are provided for this service access.



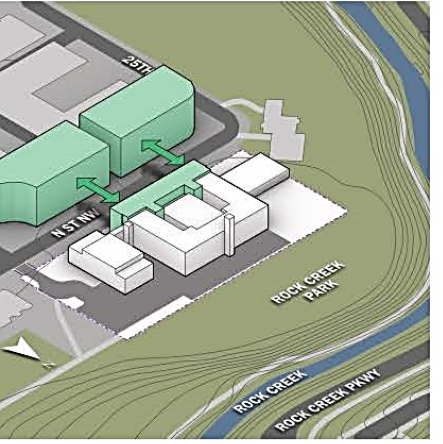
**VIEWS OUT**

The abutting Rock Creek Park provides ample views from the classrooms along the north side of the building. This is noted as an important feature to preserve and enhance in additional building construction.



**VIEWS IN**

The building is situated at the top of a hill rising up from Rock Creek, Rock Creek Parkway and Rock Creek Trail. The building is visible to pedestrians and motorists in these areas, especially during the winter months.



**CIVIC PRESENCE**

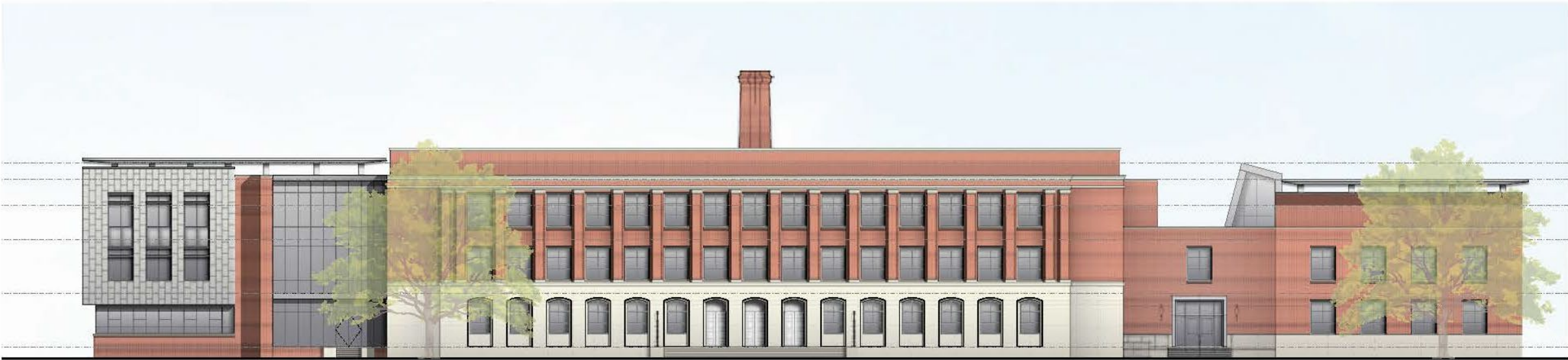
The character of the surrounding neighborhood is defined by several mid-rise residential and office buildings. The existing school facade maintains a presence along N street, however, the school defers to other buildings in terms of civic presence.



**THE SMOKESTACK**

The smokestack, a residual construct used for heating the school in its early years, still remains as a visual indicator of the building's history and identity. While not functional, this piece of the school's architecture expresses the magnitude of the school's evolution over the past 100 years.

# Proposed South Elevation



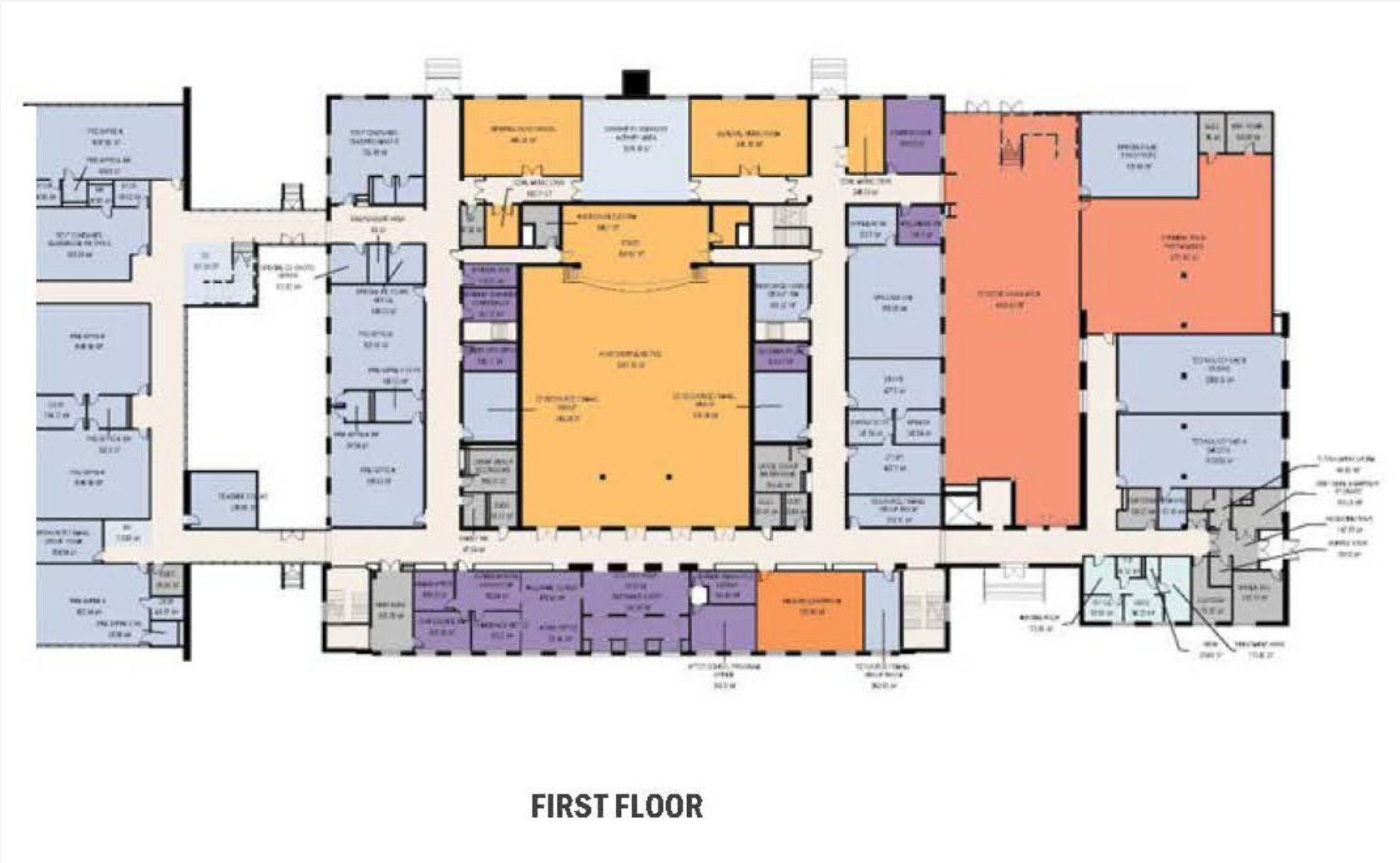
NORTH ELEVATION

# Site Plan



New Bioretention Areas

# Proposed First Floor Plan



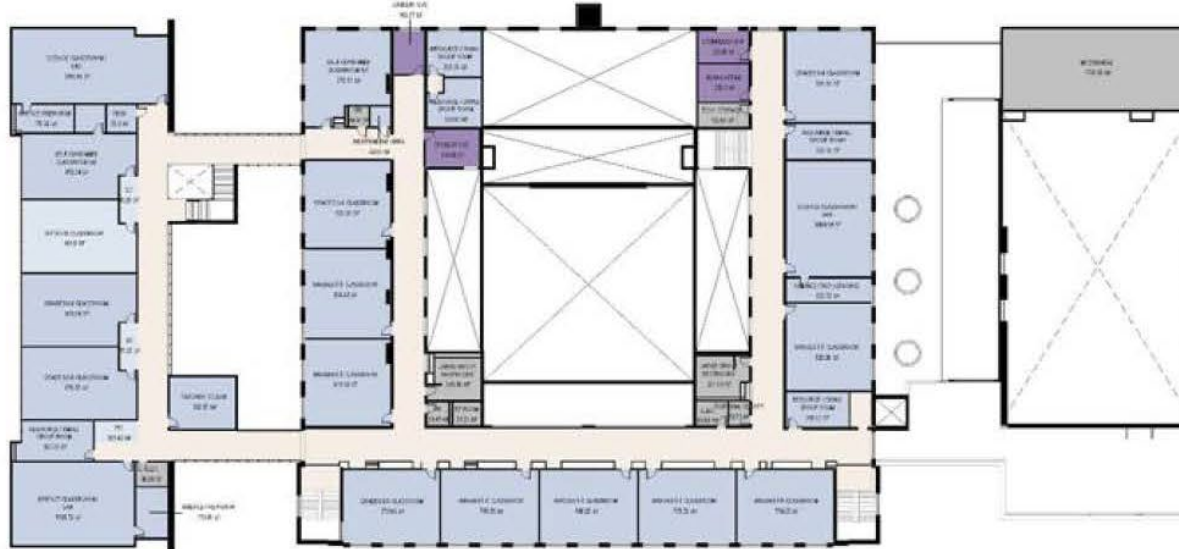
## DEPARTMENT

- Academic
- Admin
- Building Services
- Circulation
- Discovery Commons
- Health Services
- Performing Arts
- Physical Education
- Student Dining Services
- Visual Arts
- Library Spaces

# Proposed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Plan

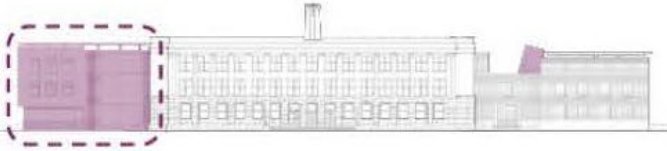


**SECOND FLOOR**



**THIRD FLOOR**

# Perspective Rendering – West Addition



# Perspective Rendering – West Addition



PERKINS EASTMAN DC | MCN BUILD | CFA CONCEPT PRESENTATION



# Perspective Rendering – East Extension

District of Columbia Public Schools | DC Department of General Services

School Without Walls - Francis Stevens | NCPC Preliminary Submission

### east gym extension - north side



### east gym extension - east side



PERKINS EASTMAN DC