



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

2000 14TH STREET, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20009  
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# DUKE ELLINGTON SCHOOL OF THE ARTS MODERNIZATION

1680 35th STREET NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20007

## ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 2E - CONCEPT SUBMISSION

DECEMBER 19, 2013

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MODERNIZATION

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## Introduction

Duke Ellington School of the Arts (DESA) – founded in 1974 – is not only ranked as one of the top DC Public Schools, as a magnet school it is one of the premier high schools in the nation with a focus on the Arts. Its reputation is national and international, but its facilities are woefully inadequate and Ellington now has the opportunity to – in its own words – create a world-class school and center for the arts.

DESA occupies the structure originally built 115 years ago for Western High School in 1898, and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2003. This historic structure designed in the Classical Revival style is a grand, but significantly aging and outmoded structure and last underwent a modest modernization 30 years ago. Its condition and space configurations fall far short of Ellington’s unique program and special requirements and the existing area is significantly undersized for Ellington’s current and future needs.

Through an international design competition the DC Department of General Services shortlisted and engaged four firms to prepare design proposals – which took two rounds over a six month timeframe, with the LBA/CGS JV team being awarded the commission in August 2013. This approved design formed the baseline with which to move forward into the formal design phases. By its constrained nature a Design Competition Proposal, although well developed, is based on limited input from the site, stakeholders, client or user – with the design team having to make many initial assumptions. What might otherwise have been a “start from scratch” first phase - called the Concept Design - in a traditional RFP awarded project was consequently a backwards approach of confirming and expanding the Competition Proposal and clarifying many of those assumptions. Thus our process during the Concept Design Phase (submitted in mid October) was as follows:

1. Existing Conditions Documentation
  - a. Collect existing drawings and documents from various sources, organize and archive
  - b. Develop existing plans and elevations on CAD
  - c. Conduct site visits to verify conditions to appropriate level of detail
  - d. Complete a full civil site survey
  - e. Complete historic documentation
2. Educational Specifications (ES) and Floor Plans - Confirm and revise DGS provided RFP version
  - a. Conduct interviews and workshops with all key user groups
  - b. Update ES based on user input and as approved by DGS – highlight differences
  - c. Update building area requirements
  - d. Revise competition plans as required/appropriate per updated ES
3. Review and Approvals – Begin the Agency and Stakeholder Engagement Process
  - a. Review Competition Design unofficially with major review agencies – CFA and HPO

- b. Review Competition and Concept Design with ANC’s, SIT and Community

4. Substantiate Competition Design
  - a. Based on above input and as approved by DGS update design as appropriate
  - b. Complete Code Compliance Review
  - c. Provide Concept level Construction Budget

## Design Narrative

This submittal reflects a “progress” view at the midpoint of the Schematic Design Phase – which will be completed by February 4, 2014. Some issues raised during the previous Concept Phase process were not resolved, or in some cases even able to be addressed, and were thus moved into the current Schematic Design Phase. At the end of this submission is what we call the SIT/Community Issues List that we have been using as tool to document the issues that have been raised at the presentations/meetings, and the status and current responses/actions that have been taken to address them in the ongoing design development process. These will continue to be updated and, as approved by DGS, incorporated in the design as we progress through Schematic Design and Design Development.

The existing pre-modernized building area is approximately 176,000 sf., and the current design provides for 237,000 sf of program space and 33,000 sf of garage space for approximately 100 cars.

The major decisions made by the design team in the Design Competition Phase in Rounds 1 and 2, which have been reinforced and refined are as follows:

- a. Transform this iconic structure and site - so intricately connected to Ellington’s identity – to continue to serve as its home through a creative contemporary modernization and expansion design that fully meets its ambitious world-class program, while respecting its historic integrity.
- b. Leave the Field Site to remain as the open, recreational, public asset that it is.

Our “Arts Machine” design parti seeks to express what goes on inside this vibrant facility, to internally and externally promote awareness and collaboration. The design revolves around the power of this core, the new Duke Ellington Theater that is the heart and soul of the institution, which we have envisioned as an iconic sculptural form suspended in the middle of a light-filled atrium – the “jewel in the crown” that occupants will constantly be aware of throughout the facility. The walls surrounding this four-story atrium will be transparent, allowing connection and communication between these multi-levels and Ellington’s diverse and interdisciplinary programs.

The essential elements of the design are:

## Site



The complex is composed of interconnected structures dating from 1898 with additions in 1910 and 1925 – all protected historic structures - organized with the bulk of the space in a four floor front bar and a three floor back bar, with the Auditorium connecting them in the middle with low, 1-story structures flanking either side between the bars. The core elements of our design approach are built around the following:

1. Preserve and enhance the large front lawn, remove surface parking and green the limited side and rear yards.
2. Relocate the entrance from the residential side of R Street to the original east location at the front Portico on two levels. Students would access a new entrance on the Ground Floor level and visitors and patrons would enter on the floor above at the original entrance doors, thus reserving – and preserving the integrity - of the historic lobby and adjacent galleries for the public. The student entrance would tie in with a new “piazza” and amphitheater for gathering and outdoor events/performance.
3. Remove the circa 1982 interventions to the front entrance of ramps, stairs and urns, restore the stairs and landing to be more sympathetic to the original 1910 configuration and provide a more discrete and compatible accessible ramp to the side of the Portico to gain access to this level.
4. In addition to being unattractive, the limited site areas currently used at the sides and back of the property could never provide for the minimum 80 spaces needed for the school, and the front lawn was not considered for parking. Thus the design proposes a new underground garage in the lowest level of the new construction in the middle of the complex between the front and back bars. The design proposes the garage entrance be from Reservoir Road, which is at the same level as the proposed garage and below the lowest existing floor level. The areas currently parked on around the site will be returned back to landscaped green space.
5. Re-configure the service dock and provide cover with the building overhang.
6. Give consideration to designated visitor parking adjacent the building entrance; a limited parking area is proposed close to the building at the NE corner with a single curb cut.

#### **Front Bar**

1. Maintain and restore the original ornate and iconic front bar as the highest value asset, which has the first and greatest impact upon entering the campus.
2. Recreate the original balustrade, which was damaged by fire, removed and replaced by a metal cornice cover in 1914.
3. Assign smaller academic and administrative spaces to the front bar to best utilize the existing double loaded corridors, column and bearing wall layout.

#### **Back Bar**

1. Add an additional floor, set back and distinctly different from the existing preserved façade and smoke stack.
2. Build an addition at the back of the existing back bar which will also conceal the loading dock

#### **Middle Structure**

After detailed and careful analysis by the Design Team – particularly by our Performing Arts experts at FDA – it was determined early on that there was no feasible way to remake the current Auditorium to approach even the minimum of what Ellington needs, let alone reach its world class aspirations. The basic acoustic volume – essentially a high school auditorium - is insufficient for the diverse and multi-purpose needs of Ellington’s program and the major elements of the Stage and Fly are significantly under-sized. Moreover it is also a space that has been substantially modified in 1982 from its original 1925 condition. The low one-story structures to either side are the original boy’s and girl’s gyms, partially below-grade and a level below the main lower level rendering them difficult to utilize. The conclusion to which the Design Team came was that the mid section was the perfect opportunity to accommodate Ellington’s unique big box needs and resolve the parking issues as well.

By removing the internal structure in this mid section we are able to go down one level below existing to accommodate the parking and then come up with new floors behind and above the preserved one-story facades that were once the upper walls of the original below grade gyms. The new floors surround a sky-lit atrium with the new Ellington Theater suspended in this space and accessed from multiple levels.

#### **Arrival and Orientation**

The main entrance to a public school serves as a gesture of invitation, akin to an extended hand of greeting. It performs the social and cultural functions common to all “front doors,” including the welcoming and receiving of visitors. It symbolizes not only the significance of the school’s place in the community, but also the community’s place in the school. It reinforces the vital school-community connection.

The arrival experience is often heightened through formal procession. Avenues, vistas, landscapes and forecourts help to create a sense of order and anticipation, and strengthen the connection between the school and its physical site. In public schools, it is important to clearly express through the architecture that different entrances serve different functions and various spaces within.

Once inside, the functional zoning of the school should be made readily apparent.



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Locating public-oriented uses away from instructional areas reinforces an appropriate message to visitors about where they should be in the building. Planning concepts such as “main street,” “town square” and “crossroads” are commonly employed to create spatial hierarchies that differentiate user settings and behaviors.

Ellington in fact, has one of the most impressive approach and entrance sequences anywhere in Washington, with its sweeping great front lawn, gentle curving walkways and classical entrance portico. It has since been abandoned as the school entrance and now serves only public access for Ellington performances and events.

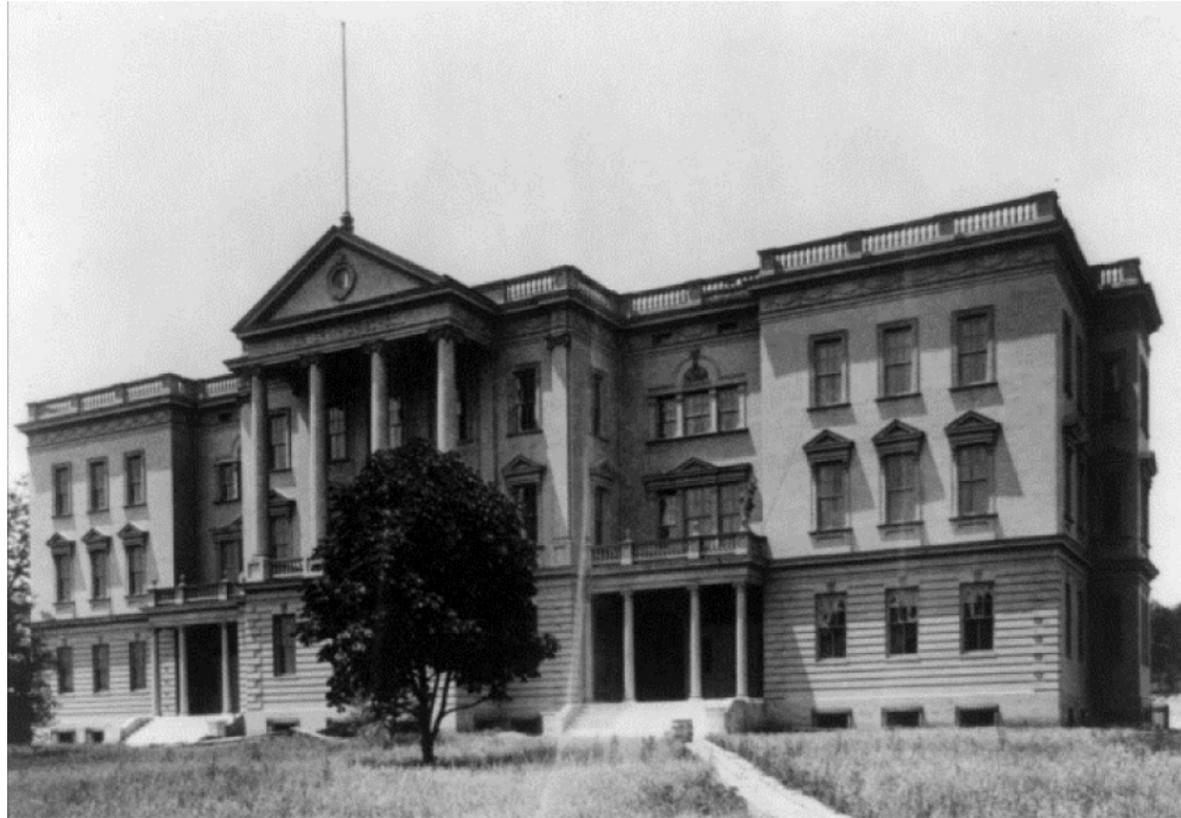
Our design respects the original design intent by restoring the school entry point back to the front door, buffering the busy and active entrance from the adjacent residential neighborhood by removing it from the side street, and separating students from visitors. The new student entrance is introduced a level below the formal portico and is accessed from the new “piazza” / outdoor amphitheater directly to the atrium level / ground floor where major student commons spaces are located. During Concept Design we have studied and revised the student entrance in an effort to make it more open and inviting through widening the entry point and making it more transparent.

Visitors and patrons will enter a floor above through the formal entrance where they can process through and experience the galleries, access the administration functions and enter directly into the Ellington Theater.

The design also proposes a unique contemporary sculptural “lantern” element (the Media Center Reading Room) poised delicately within the historic (now unused) portico terrace above these entrances, providing a visible and welcoming beacon.



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EAST FACADE CIRCA 1900



EAST FACADE CIRCA 1909-1920



HARRY DAVIS - 1897-1898



SNOWDON ASHFORD - 1910-1915



ALBERT HARRIS - 1925



ARTHUR COTTON MOORE RENOVATIONS - 1982



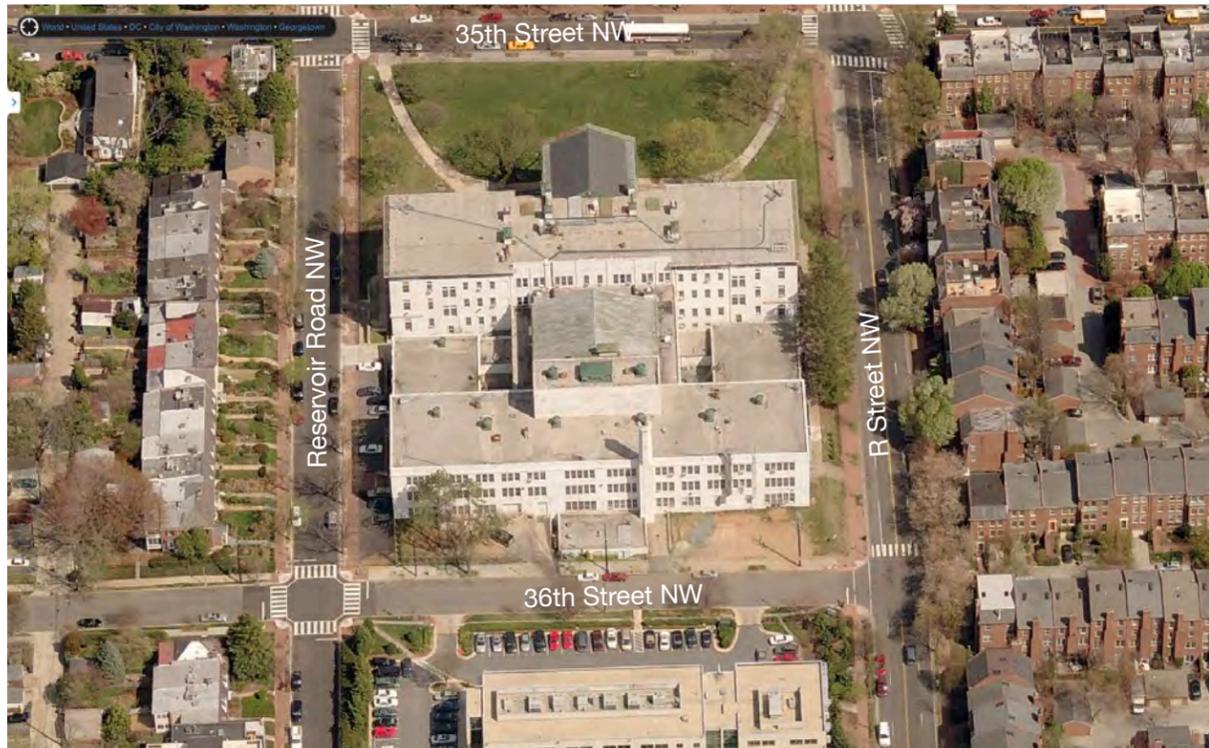
DUKE ELLINGTON  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS  
MODERNIZATION



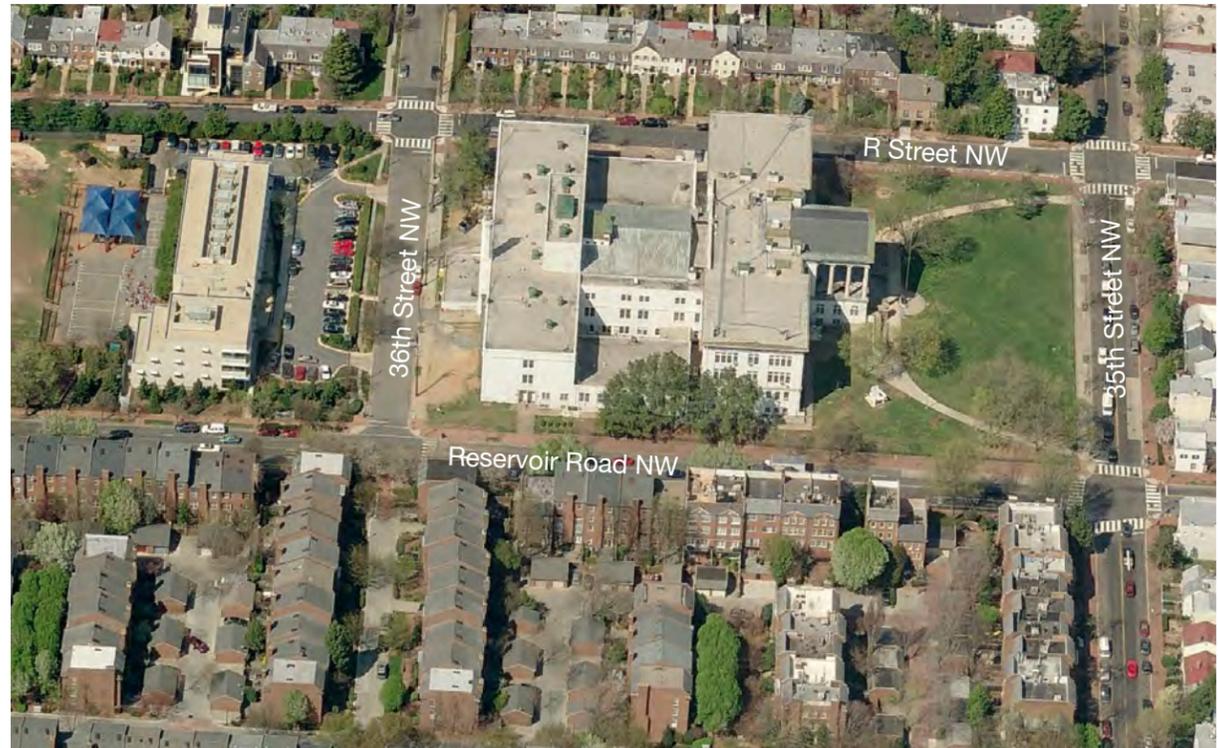
AERIAL VIEW FACING WEST



AERIAL VIEW FACING SOUTH



AERIAL VIEW FACING EAST



AERIAL VIEW FACING NORTH



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VIEW EAST FROM LAWN TOWARD 35TH STREET



INTERSECTION OF 35TH & R STREET, LOOKING EAST



INTERSECTION OF R & 35TH STREET, LOOKING SOUTH



LOOKING NORTHWEST ON R STREET



INTERSECTION OF R & 36TH STREET, LOOKING NORTHWEST



INTERSECTION OF 36TH & R STREET, LOOKING SOUTH



LOOKING NORTHWEST AT INTERSECTION OF RESERVOIR ROAD  
& 36TH STREET



LOOKING WEST AT INTERSECTION OF RESERVOIR ROAD & 36TH  
STREET

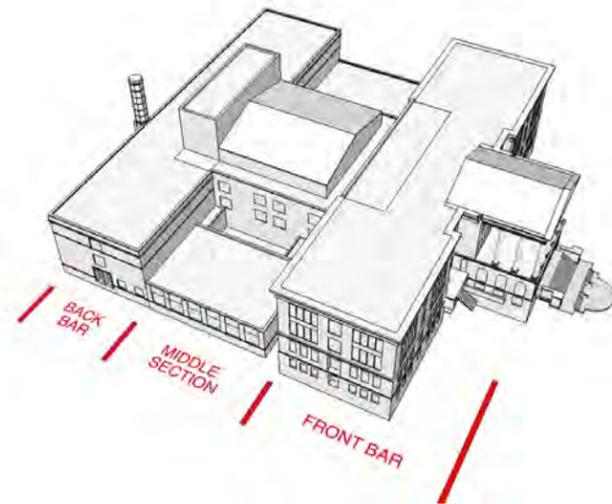


RESERVOIR ROAD LOOKING EAST

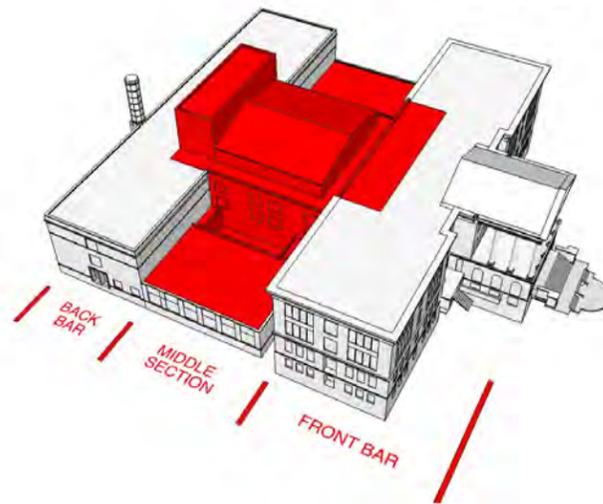




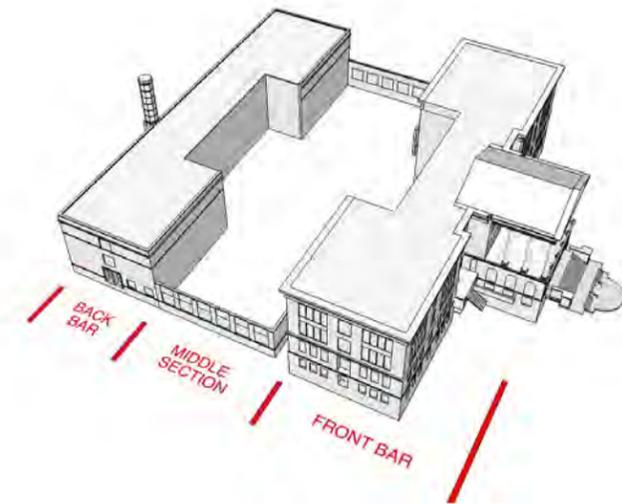
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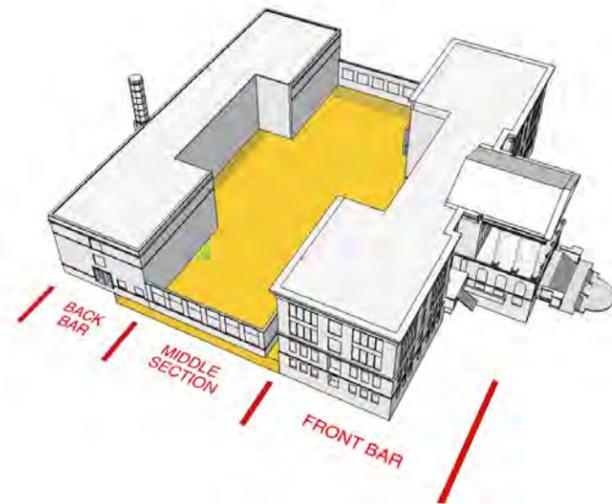
EXISTING STRUCTURE



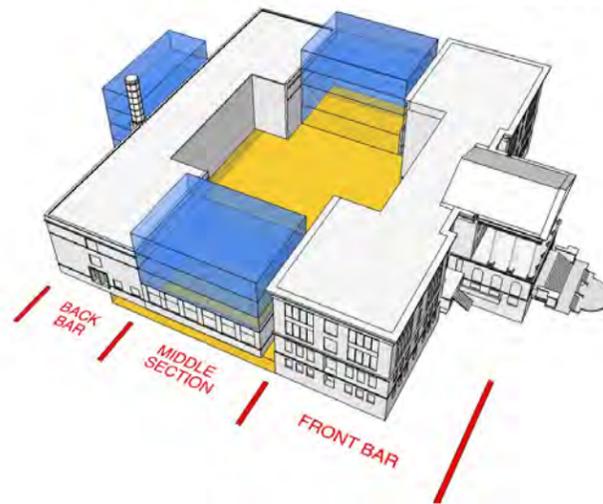
REMOVE EXISTING THEATRE AND GYMNASIUM



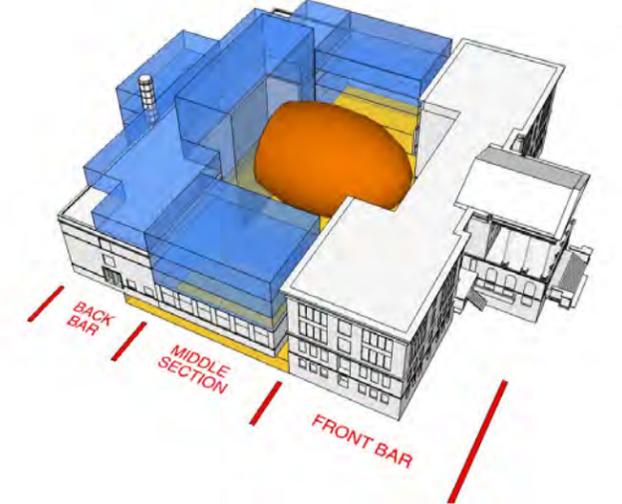
FRONT BAR AND BACK BAR REMAIN



ADD PARKING



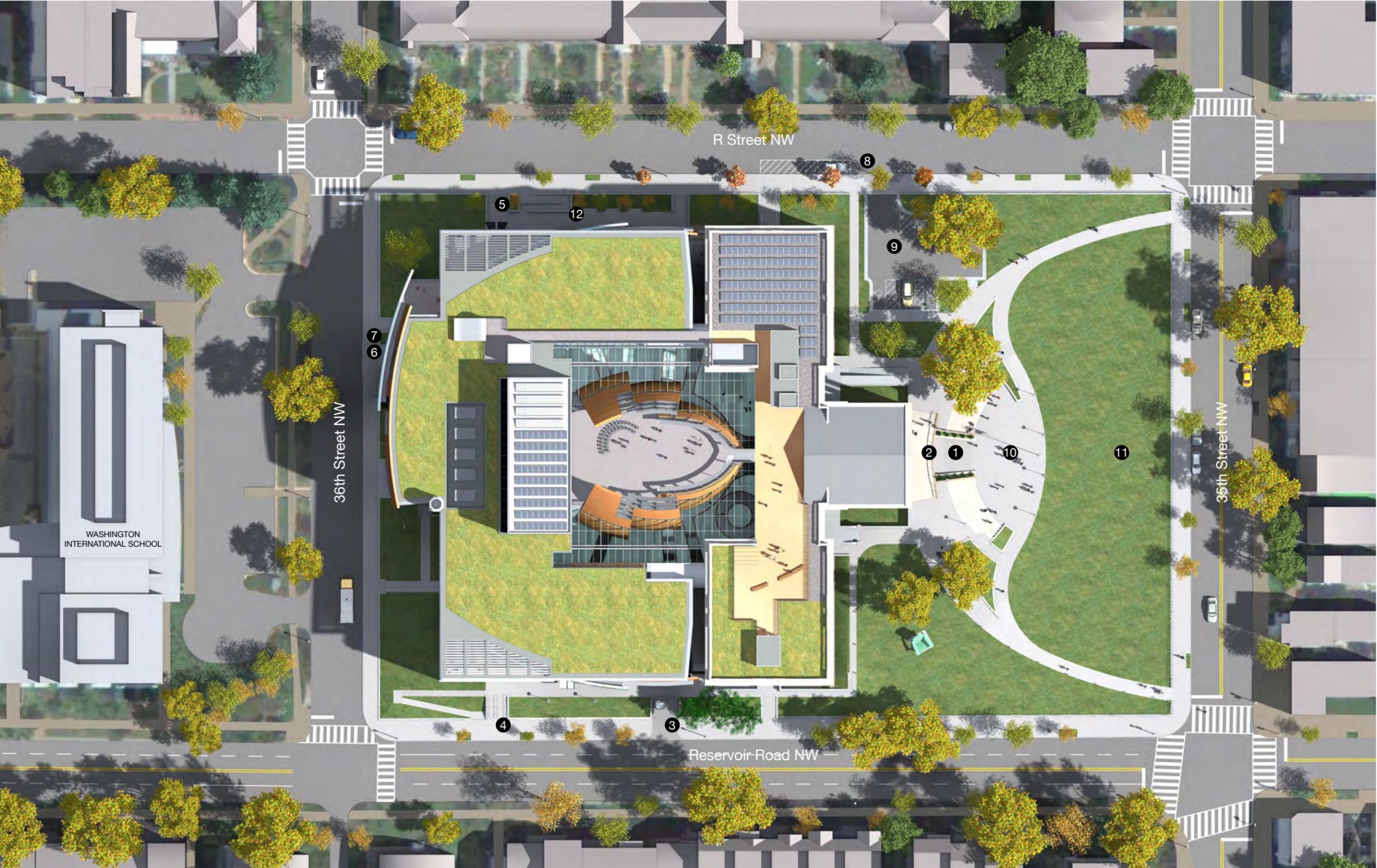
INFILL AND ADDITION CREATE ATRIUM



SUSPEND ELLINGTON THEATRE IN ATRIUM



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Key

1	Student Entrance
2	Visitor's Entrance
3	Parking Garage Entrance
4	Small Performance Entrance
5	Fitness Center Entrance
6	Loading Dock
7	Trash/Recycling
8	Drop-Off
9	Visitor's Parking Lot
10	Amphitheater
11	Ellington Lawn
12	Terrace

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PROPOSED SITE  
PLAN





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MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
- Dance
- Instrumental / Vocal Music
- Museum Studies / Media & Communications
- Common Areas
- Theater
- Visual Arts
- Media Center / Cyber Cafe
- Theater & Technical Design Program
- Physical Education
- Administration
- Student Services
- Student Dining & Food Service
- Maintenance & Custodial
- Central Commons Spaces
- Building Systems
- Expansion Space
- Circulation
- Outdoor Commons Spaces
- Parking

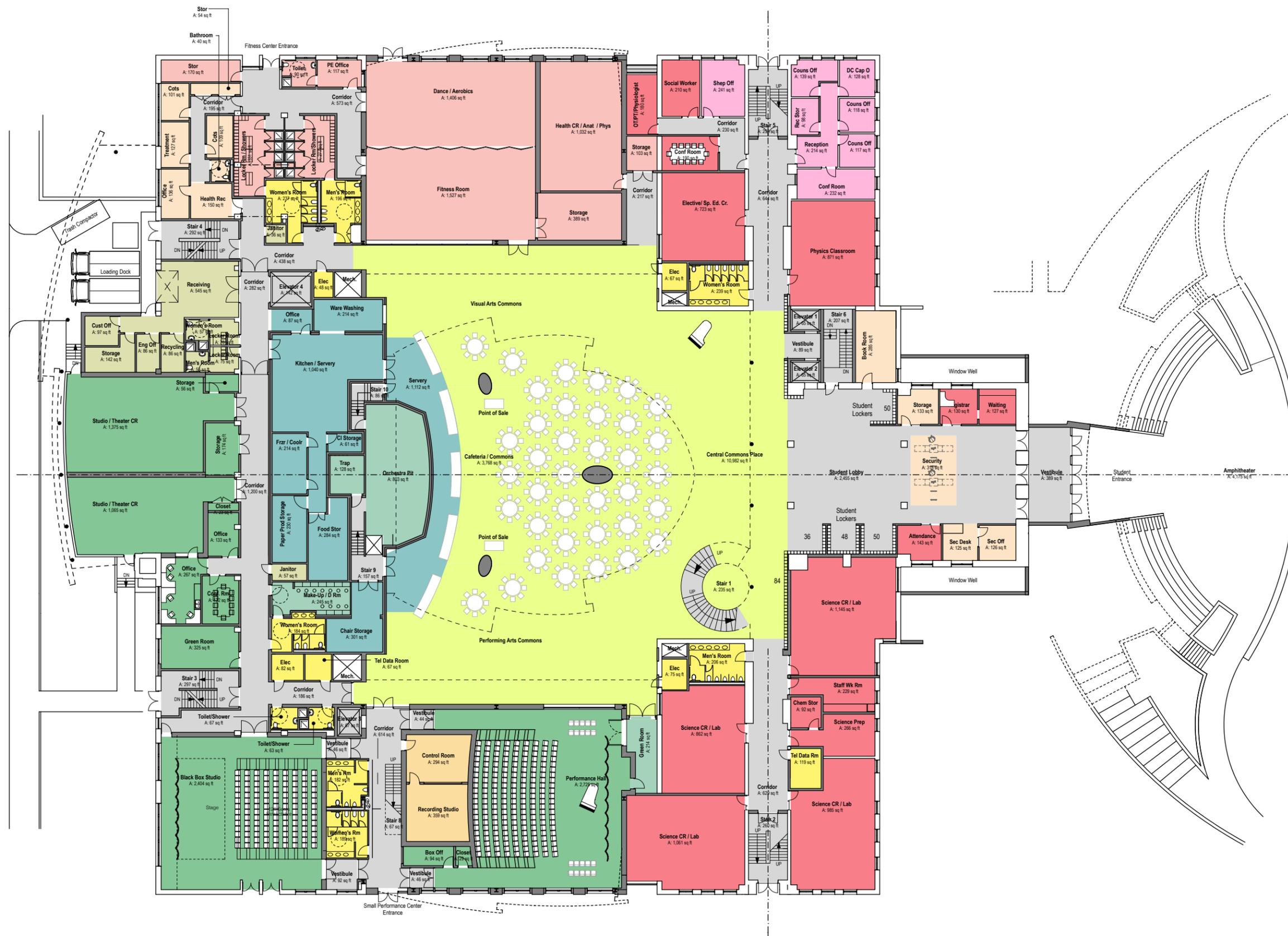
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PROPOSED  
LOWER LEVEL  
FLOOR PLAN





DUKE ELLINGTON  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS  
MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
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- Student Dining & Food Service
- Maintenance & Custodial
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- Building Systems
- Expansion Space
- Circulation
- Outdoor Commons Spaces
- Parking

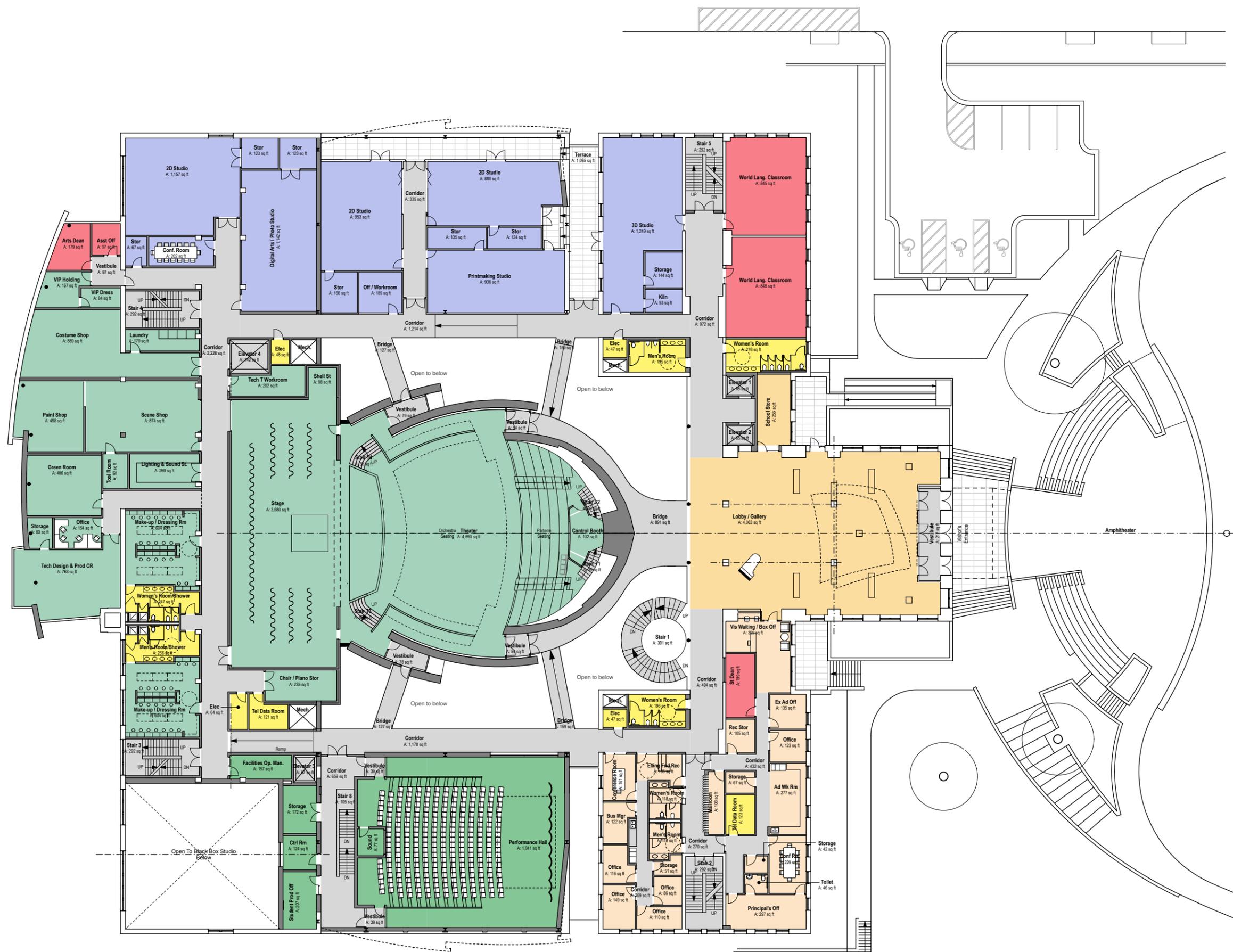
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PROPOSED  
GROUND FLOOR  
PLAN





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SCHOOL OF THE ARTS  
MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
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- Parking

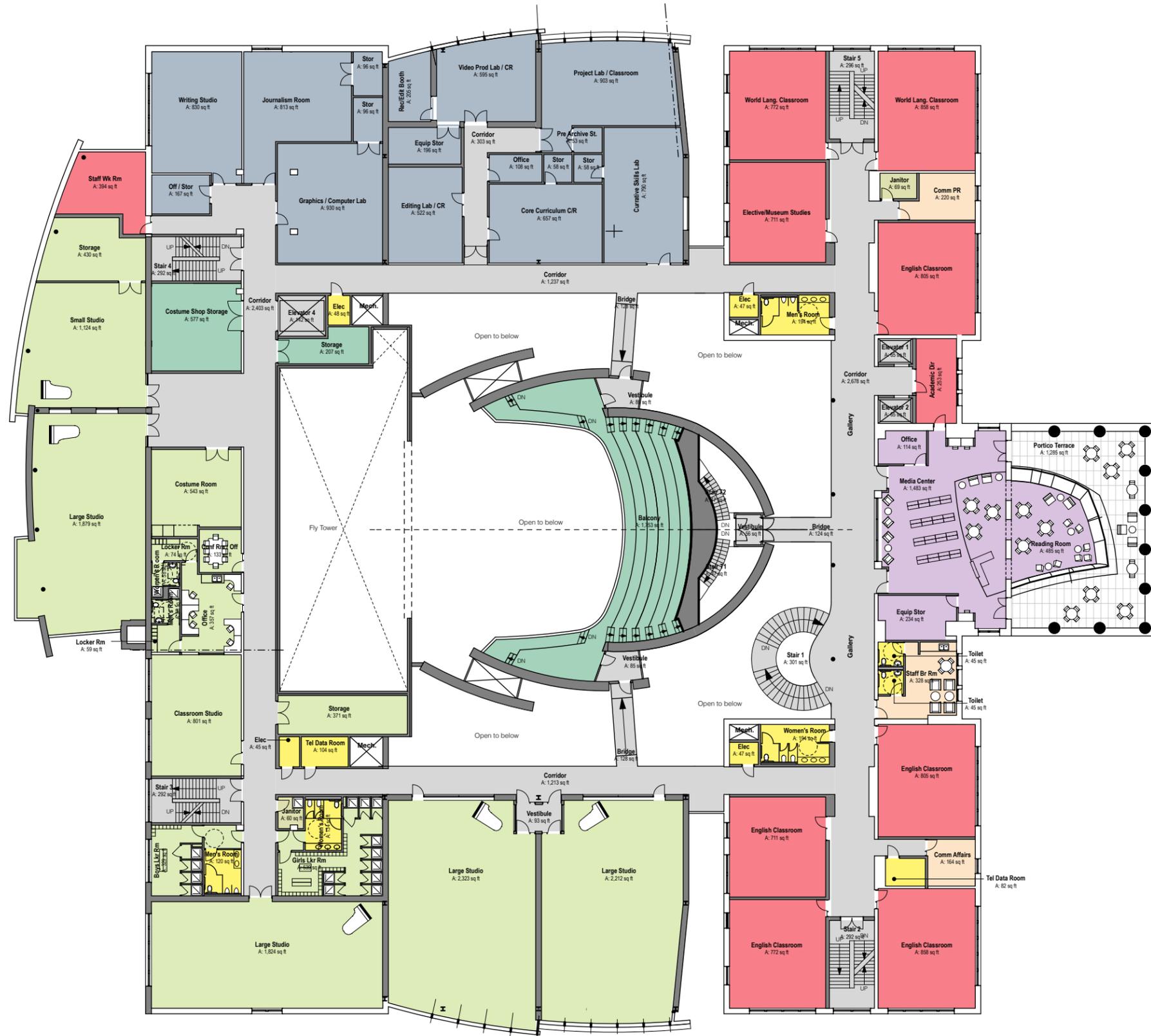
12

PROPOSED  
FIRST FLOOR  
PLAN





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SCHOOL OF THE ARTS  
MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
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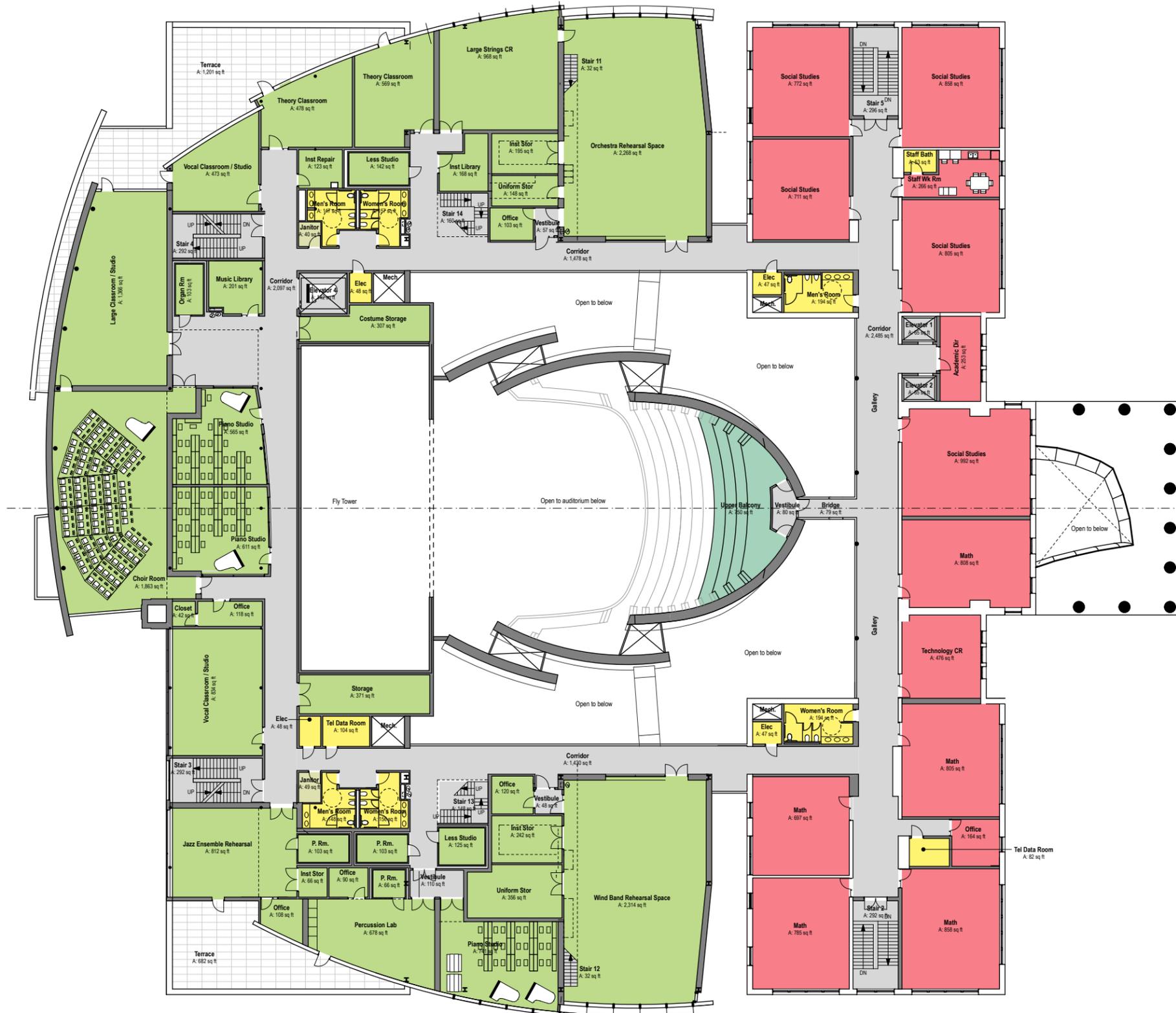
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PROPOSED  
SECOND FLOOR  
PLAN





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MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
- Dance
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- Building Systems
- Expansion Space
- Circulation
- Outdoor Commons Spaces
- Parking

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PROPOSED  
THIRD FLOOR  
PLAN





DUKE ELLINGTON  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS  
MODERNIZATION



Plan Key

- Core Academic / Science / Special Education
- Dance
- Instrumental / Vocal Music
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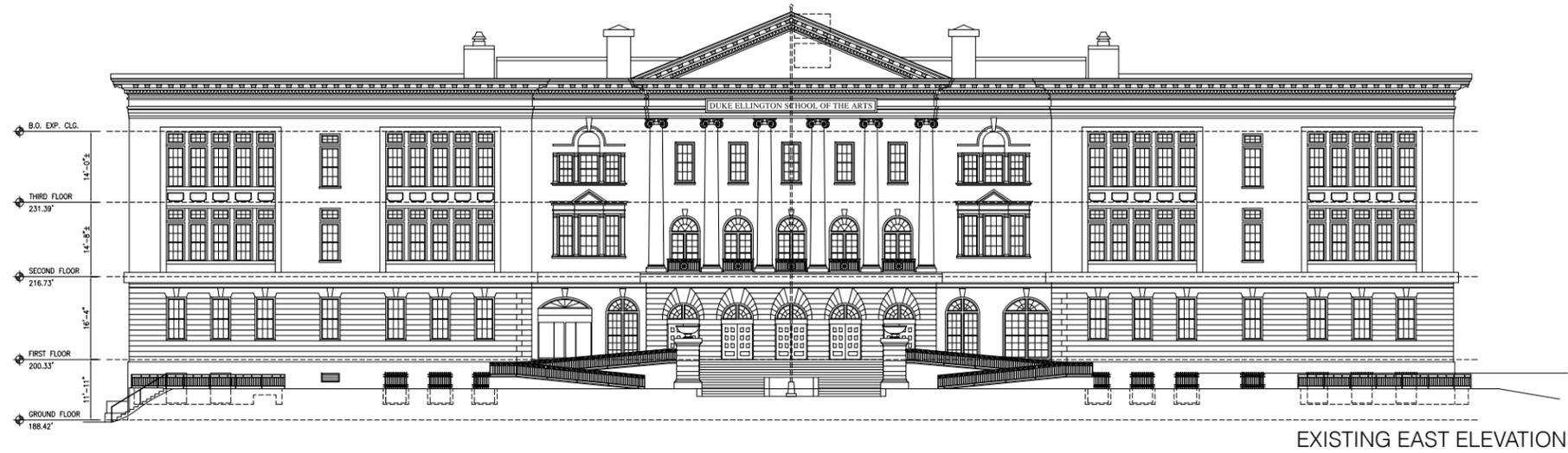
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PROPOSED  
FOURTH FLOOR  
PLAN





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MODERNIZATION



PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION

16

EAST  
ELEVATIONS





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EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION

17

SOUTH  
ELEVATIONS





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MODERNIZATION



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION

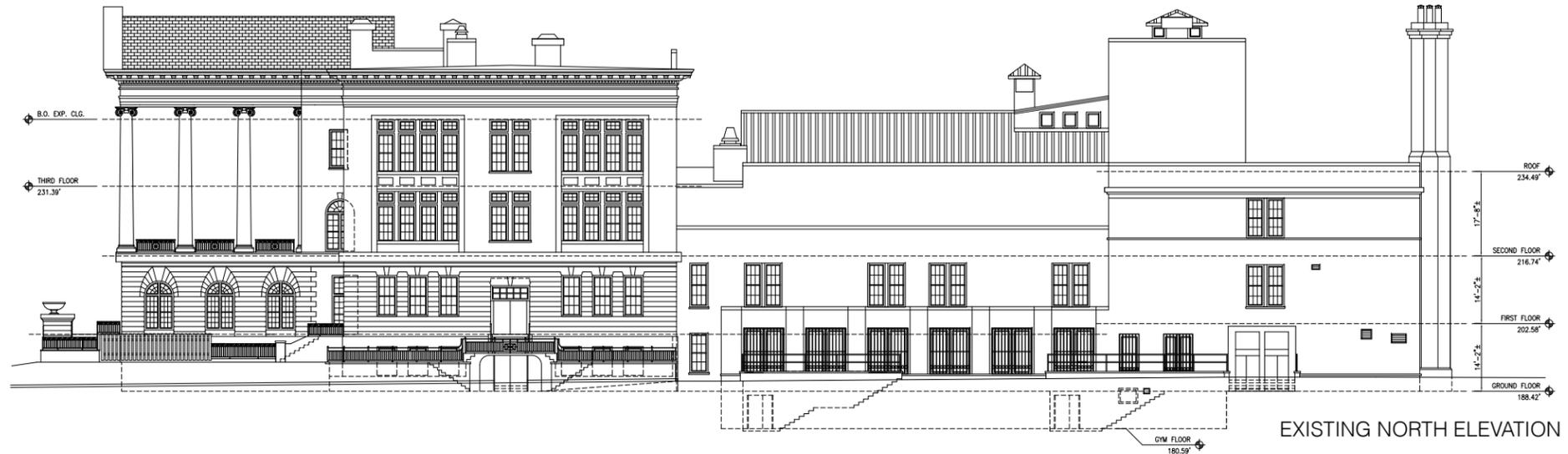
18

WEST  
ELEVATIONS





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PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION

19

NORTH  
ELEVATIONS





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AERIAL VIEW FROM NORTH EAST

**20**

EXTERIOR  
PERSPECTIVE  
VIEWS





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AERIAL VIEW FROM SOUTH EAST





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AERIAL VIEW FROM NORTH WEST



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MODERNIZATION



AERIAL VIEW FROM SOUTH WEST

23

EXTERIOR  
PERSPECTIVE  
VIEWS

