

## Art Commission Review – Submittal Form

*(Applicant complete below section)*

**Project Name:** Carousel House Recreation Center

**Project Address:** 4300 Avenue of the Republic **On Public Property?**  Yes  No

**Total Budget:** \$44 million **Utilizing City Funds?**  Yes (specify amount): \$7,297,193.59  No

**Project Type** (check all that apply):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building – New Construction or Addition | <input type="checkbox"/> Encroachment in/over ROW    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building – Renovation or Repair         | <input type="checkbox"/> Signage (Reconsideration)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plaza/Park/Playground                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Streetery (Reconsideration) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Art   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                |

**Project Team:**

Agency/Org.: City of Phila./CPO/PPR Design Lead (firm): DIGSAU (Architect)

Other: Ground Reconsidered (Landscape)

**Primary Contact for Project Communications:**

Name: Ryan Drummond, AIA

Affiliation: DIGSAU (Architect)

Email: [REDACTED]

*(Art Commission staff complete below section)*

**Art Commission Meeting Date of Project Review:** 12/10/25

**Level of Review:**

Concept Review  Final Review If Final, specify date of preceding Concept Review: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative Review (for projects with minimal visual impact on public realm)

**Staff Notes (Optional):**

Project is part of City's Rebuild initiative

JULES DINGLE FAIA  
JEFF GOLDSTEIN FAIA  
MARK SANDERSON AIA  
JAMIE UNKEFER AIA

November 24, 2025

Philadelphia Art Commission  
1515 Arch St., 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
Via Email to: [artcommission@phila.gov](mailto:artcommission@phila.gov)

**Re: Site & Building Improvements to the Carousel House Recreation Center**

Dear Art Commission Members,

The City of Philadelphia, Capital Program Office (CPO), Rebuild, and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR), is coordinating the design and construction of improvements to the Carousel Recreation Center building and site, located at 4300 Avenue of the Republic in West Philadelphia. The project team is seeking to present this project for approval from the Art Commission at the December 10, 2025 Meeting.

Located in West Fairmount Park, the existing Carousel House Recreation Center's site boundary covers approximately 4.85 acres, including a small playground at the southeast corner, as well as a parking lot and walking loop. The existing Recreation Center building, uniquely circular in plan, was built in the 1980's as an innovative recreation center with a focus in serving people with disabilities. The Carousel House has been a landmark of inclusion and community since then, unfortunately closing to public access in 2020.

In partnership with the local Community, the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department, the Capital Program Office, and Rebuild Philadelphia, the design team has undertaken a comprehensive building, site, and programming assessment to revitalize and expand the facility. Building off of those findings, a set of project drivers were refined through a series of community engagement sessions spanning from 2021 to 2025, and through a concept/schematic design phase, in order to identify how such improvements can contribute to the continued legacy of the Carousel House facility:

- Improve site access and connections for a variety of means and approaches;
- Update outdated infrastructure and create consistent accessibility across the site and building;
- Focus on an inclusive approach that builds upon the legacy of the center's connection to the disability community;
- Optimize the building to function for continuing, new, and expanded uses;
- Provide a place and spaces that resonate with joy and community, while celebrating the culture and history of the Carousel House.

The project team has proposed the following improvements:

- Renovation and alteration of the existing circular Recreation Center building from the 1980's, with inclusion of program spaces, multi-purpose rooms, administrative functions, and support spaces.
- Addition of a new double-court basketball Gymnasium.
- Addition of a new two-pool Natatorium.
- Comprehensive site improvements, including a new Playground, and pedestrian and vehicular pathways and connections.

We look forward to presenting this exciting project and seeking the Commission's approval.

Respectfully,

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

Ryan Drummond, AIA, LEED AP  
*Associate, Project Manager*  
DIGSAU  
(215) 627-0808  
[rdrummond@digsau.com](mailto:rdrummond@digsau.com)

Cc: Pedro Pinto (CPO), Angelina Castro (CPO), Francesco Cerrai (CPO), Jules Dingle (DIGSAU)



# CAROUSEL HOUSE



December 10th, 2025

Rebuild and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

**ART COMMISSION SUBMISSION**

# DESIGN TEAM



# DIGSAU

ARCHITECT

**Ground Reconsidered**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

# LANGAN

CIVIL ENGINEER + GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER

**KH KEAST & HOOD**  
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

**db | HMS**

MEPFP ENGINEER

the   
lighting  
practice

LIGHTING DESIGN

 **Counsilman-Hunsaker**  
AQUATICS FOR LIFE

POOL CONSULTANT

**studiopacifica**

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

**DATA | BASED+**  
db | HMS

SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT

## EVAN MILLS ENVIRONMENTAL, LLC

ENVIRONMENTAL(PUMP STATION) CONSULTANT

 **BrightFields, Inc.**  
Environmental Services

ENVIRONMENTAL + HAZMAT CONSULTANT

**DHARAM**  
CONSULTING

COST ESTIMATING

 **Morris Arboretum  
& Gardens**  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

ARBORIST

 **Community Capacity Builders**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANT

**RWDI**

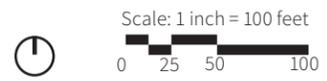
ENCLOSURE CONSULTANT

 **HARRISON**  
ACOUSTICS

ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT

## LONGGREENSPECS

SPECIFICATIONS CONSULTANT



PROJECT SCOPE BOUNDARY

CAROUSEL HOUSE | ART COMMISSION SUBMISSION

EXISTING AERIAL PLAN



Dedication of the First Handicap Center, photograph by Don Camp, 1973.  
From the Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.



Bird's Eye View of Centennial Buildings, 1876. Photo of poster by Carol M. Highsmith.  
From the Library of Congress, via West Philadelphia Collaborative History.



South West Philly, 1993, photograph by Ron Tarver.  
From The Long Ride Home: Black Cowboys in America (excerpt), The Philadelphia Citizen, 2024.



Carousel House Community Design Workshop, 2022.  
From the City of Philadelphia, Rebuild Philadelphia Initiative.



Carousel House, photograph by Tinney, 1978.  
From the Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.

The Carousel House has long stood as a landmark of inclusion and community in Fairmount Park. Originally built to serve as an accessible recreation center for people with disabilities, it became a hub for adaptive sports, social gatherings, and cultural expression. Rooted in a legacy of public engagement and civic pride dating back to the Centennial Exhibition, the site reflects Philadelphia's evolving story of accessibility, equity, and community care. Today, its reimagining honors that history, continuing the spirit of belonging and empowerment that has defined it for generations.



Carousel House Gym, Date Unknown.  
From the City of Philadelphia, Rebuild Philadelphia Initiative.



Carousel House Pool, Date Unknown.  
From the City of Philadelphia, Rebuild Philadelphia Initiative.



Carousel House Wheelchair Basketball, Date Unknown.  
From the City of Philadelphia, Parks & Recreation Department.



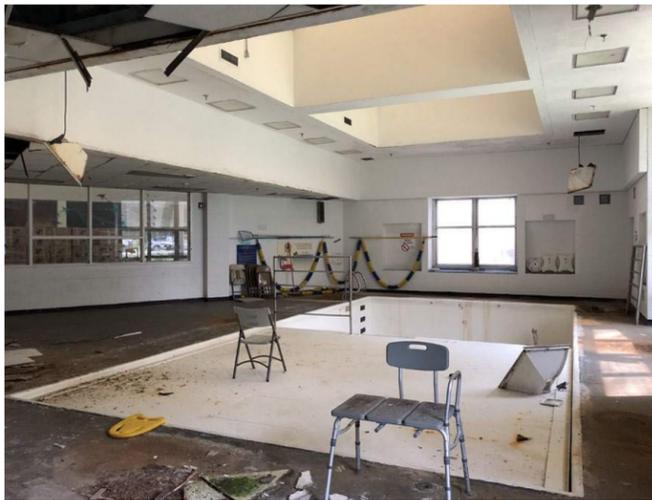
Carousel House Playground, Date Unknown.  
From the City of Philadelphia, Rebuild Philadelphia Initiative.



1 View of lobby and gym entry looking towards Carousel Horse



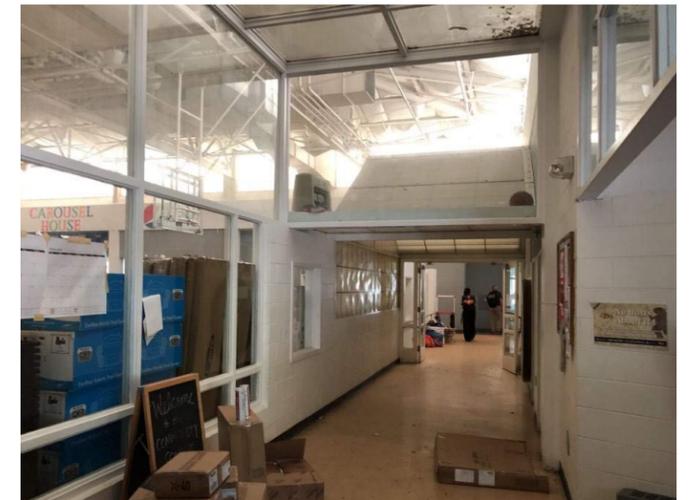
2 View of gymnasium looking south toward mural



3 View of pool



4 View of exercise room



5 View of circulation corridor



6 View of stage and activity room

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT October 2021, February 2022, June 2022, September 2022, March 2023, November 2023, February 2024, October 2025



## ATTENDEES

- Carousel House staff, Advisory Council, participants, and activity leaders
- Service providers and advocates
- Mayor's Commission for People with Disabilities
- Parkside organizations, businesses, institutions, and resident leaders
- Local political leaders
- PPR and others involved in the Centennial District Plan

## TAKEAWAYS

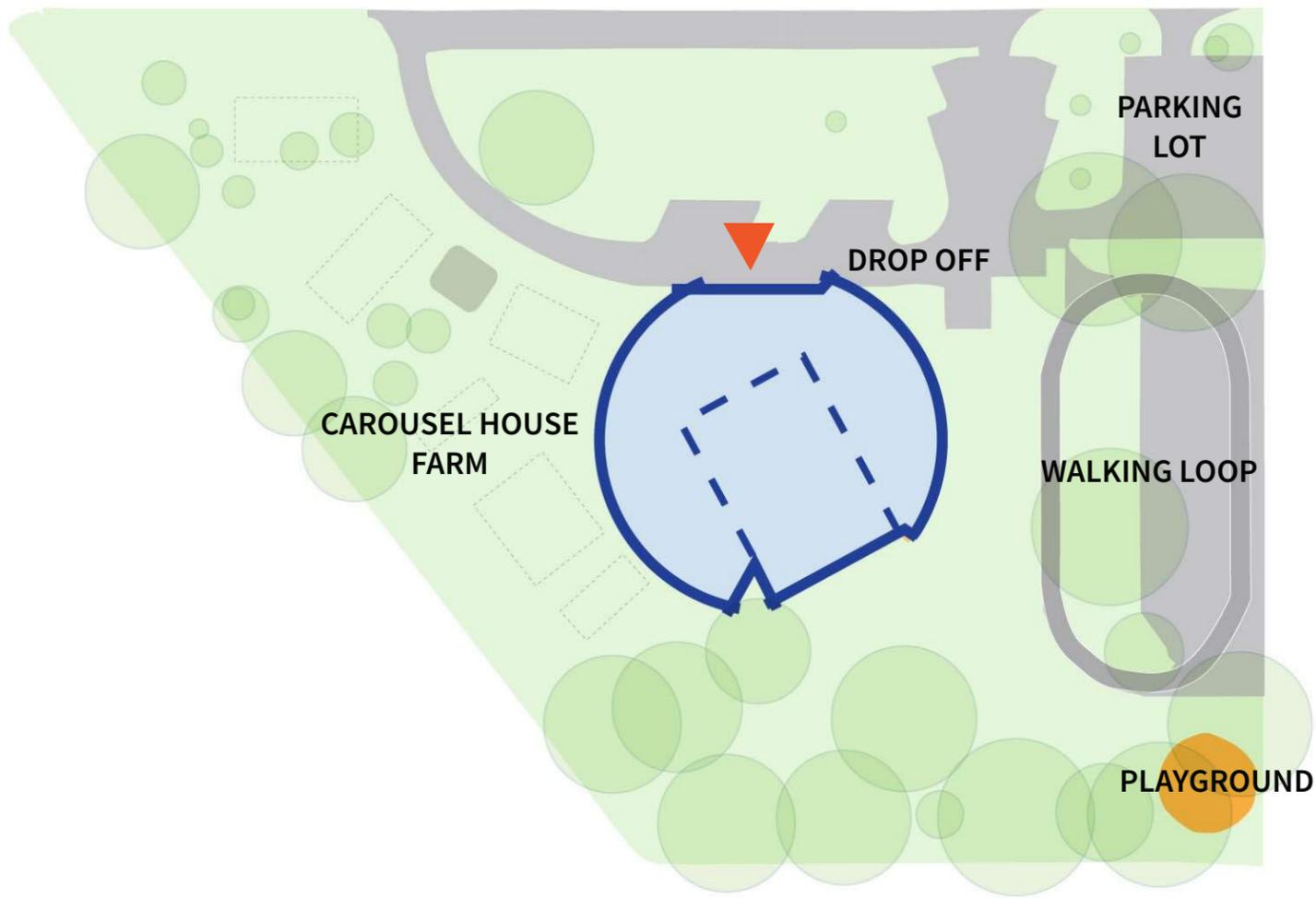
- Accessibility and inclusion should be considered in design decisions from parking to programming.
- Safety and wayfinding should be intuitive, well-lit, and welcoming.
- Design should be sensory-friendly, vibrant, and human-scaled, not institutional.
- Preserve and celebrate the culture and history of the Carousel House, including the carousel horse and murals.
- Outdoor areas should extend the sense of community.
- Program should support adaptive sports, arts, and intergenerational connection.
- The new design should feel like home, a joyful, restorative place built with the community, not just for it.

# EARLY FINDINGS

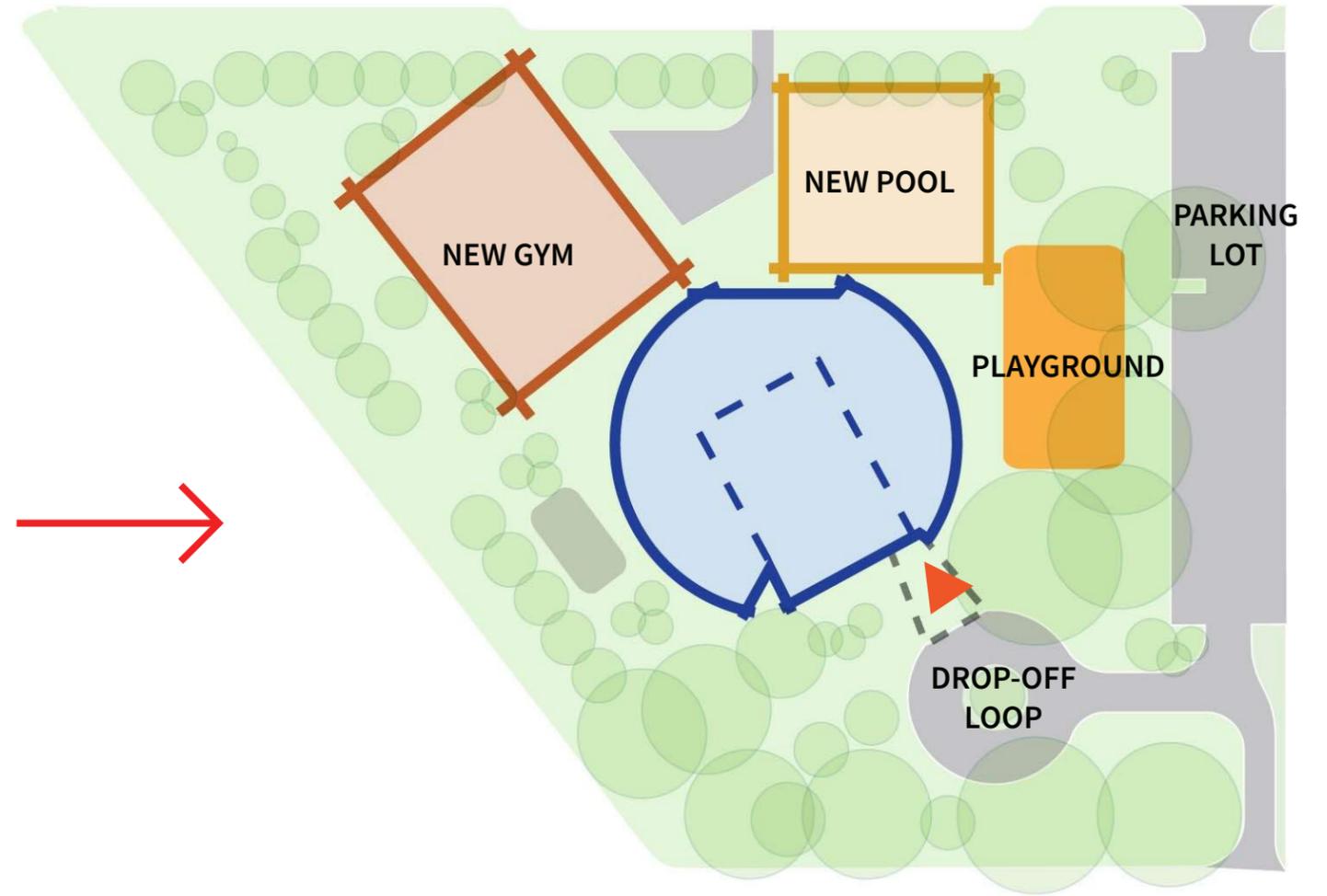
## Identified Needs & Issues



- Limited accessible parking and difficult site access (especially for CCT, buses, and wheelchairs).
- Outdated infrastructure and inconsistent accessibility across the site and building.
- Lack of safe pedestrian connections and clear signage.
- Desire for more inclusive and adaptive programming that reflects the disability community.
- Concern about maintaining the facility's legacy and sense of ownership.
- Need for updated restrooms, locker rooms, and sensory accommodations.
- Calls for improved safety, lighting, and secure boundaries.



EXISTING



PROPOSED





Existing Fence



Existing Tree (Poor Condition)



Existing Playground



Existing Carousel Poles

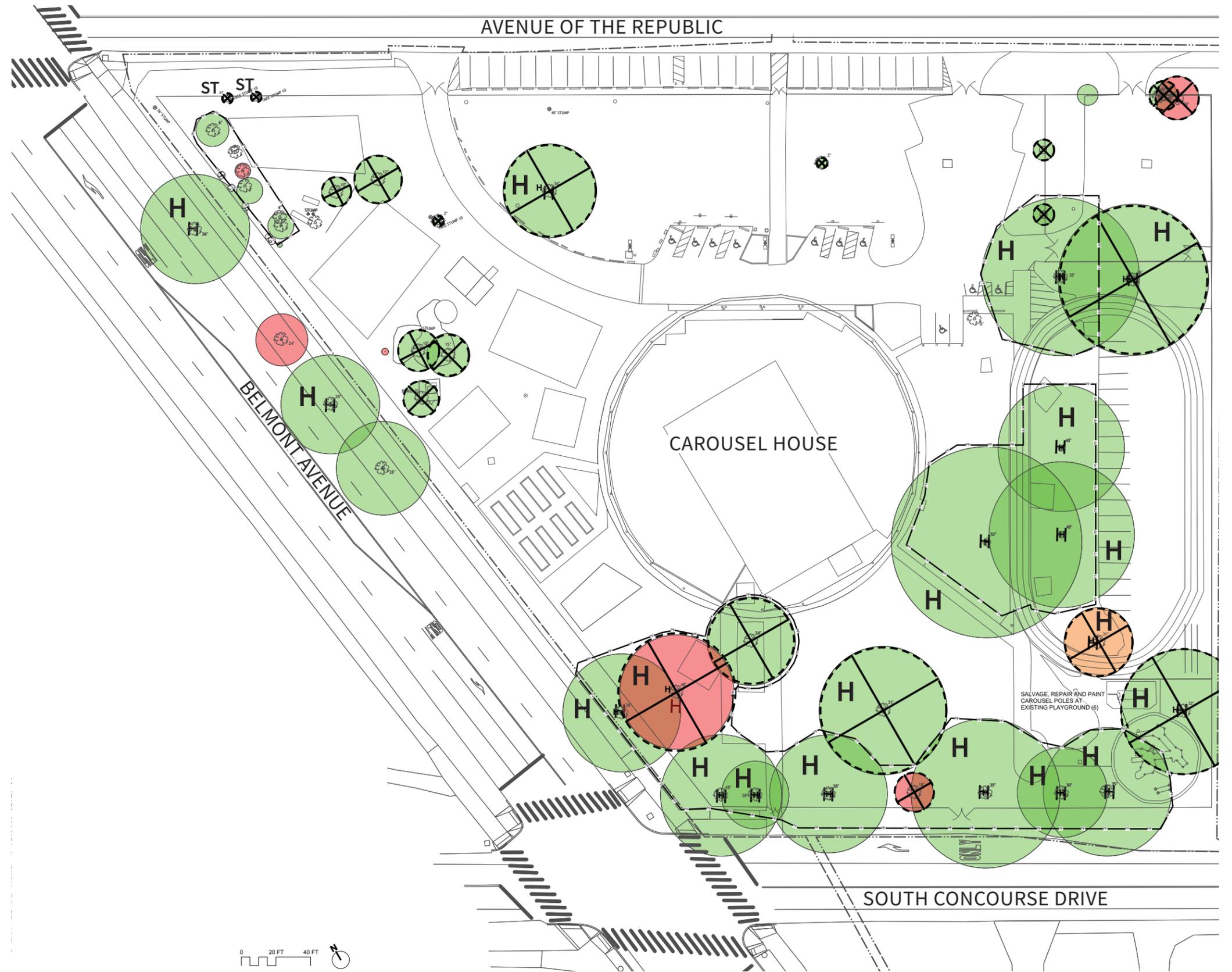


### Demolition Legend

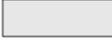
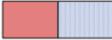
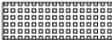
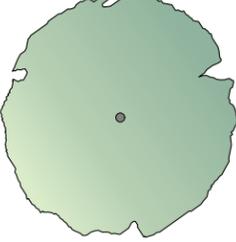
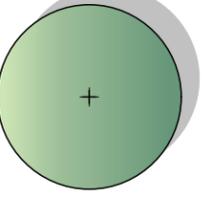
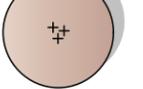
-  Limit of Work
-  Tree Protection Fence
-  Tree to be Removed
-  Stump to be Removed
-  Heritage Tree

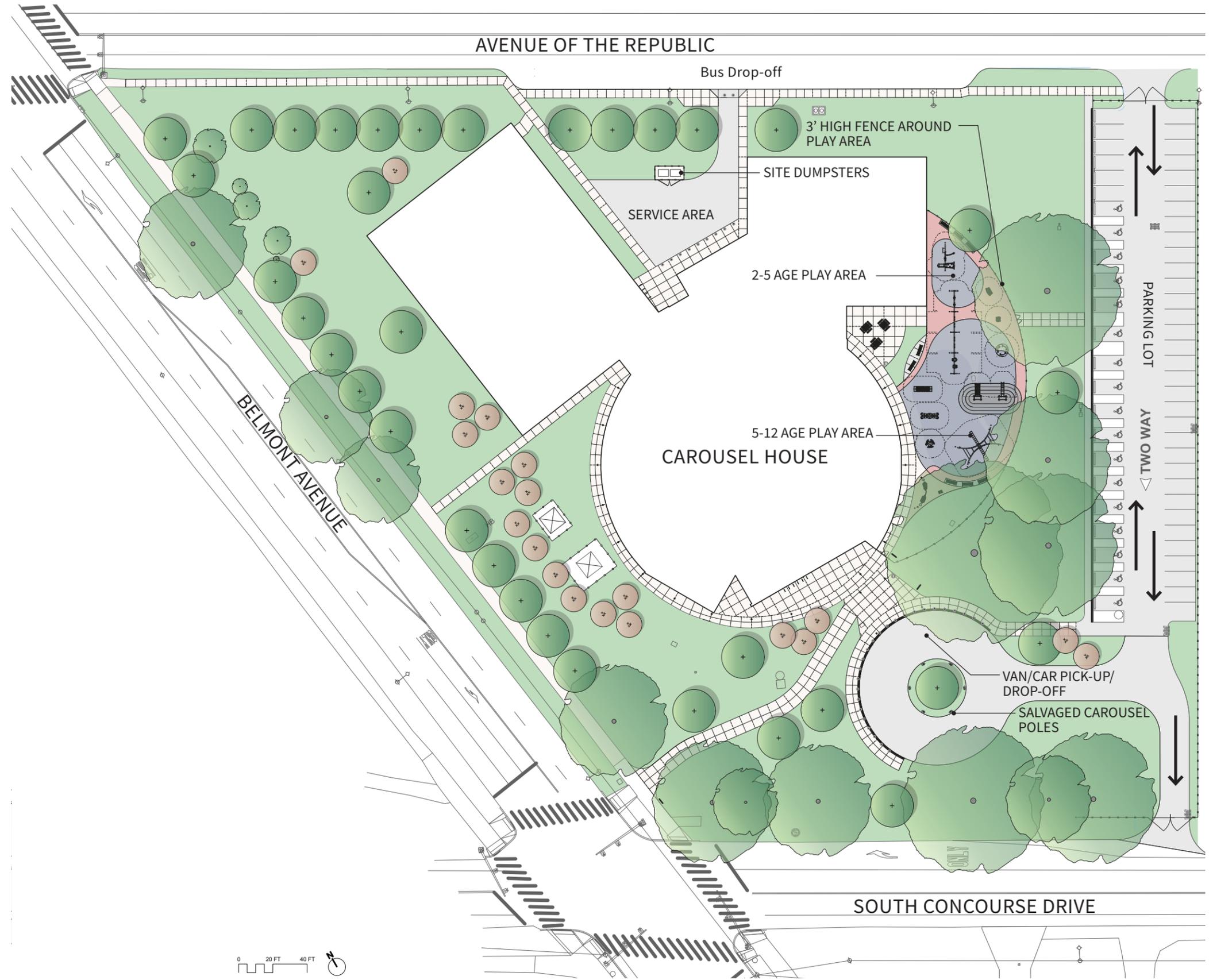
### Tree Health Legend

-  Dead or Diseased
-  5 Years or Less
-  Greater than 15 Years



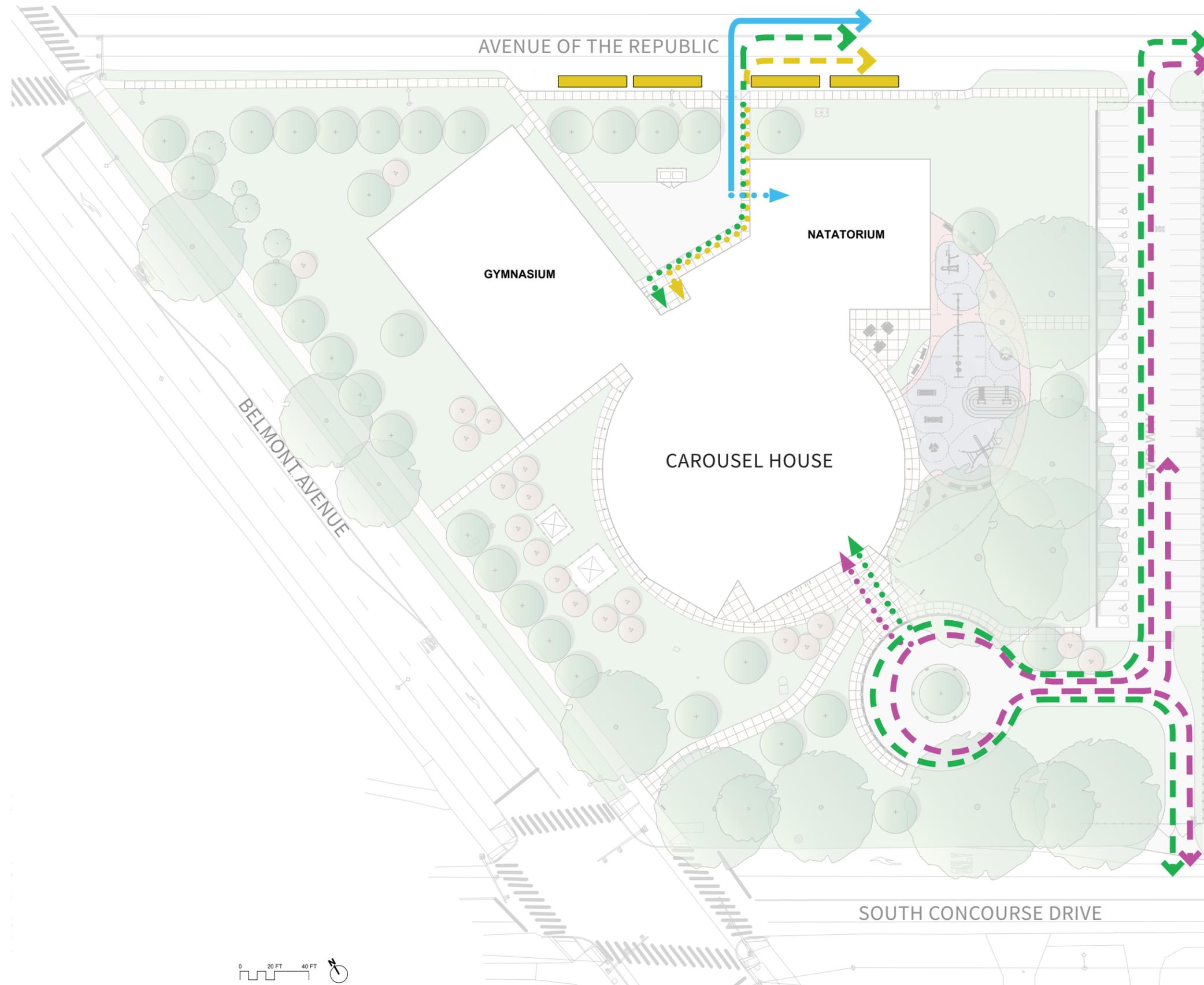
# Materials Legend

-  Asphalt Paving
-  Concrete Paving
-  Rubber Safety Surface
-  Detectable Warning Surface
-  Table
-  Bench
-  Bicycle Rack
-  Bollard
-  Trash Receptacle
-  Existing Tree
-  Proposed Canopy Tree
-  Proposed Ornamental Tree



### Circulation Legend

-  Bus (45')
-  Bus Route (Vehicle)
-  Bus Route (Pedestrian)
-  Delivery Route (Vehicle)
-  Delivery Route (Pedestrian)
-  Pool Maintenance (Vehicle)
-  Pool Maintenance (Pedestrian)
-  Van Route (Vehicle)
-  Van Route (Pedestrian)





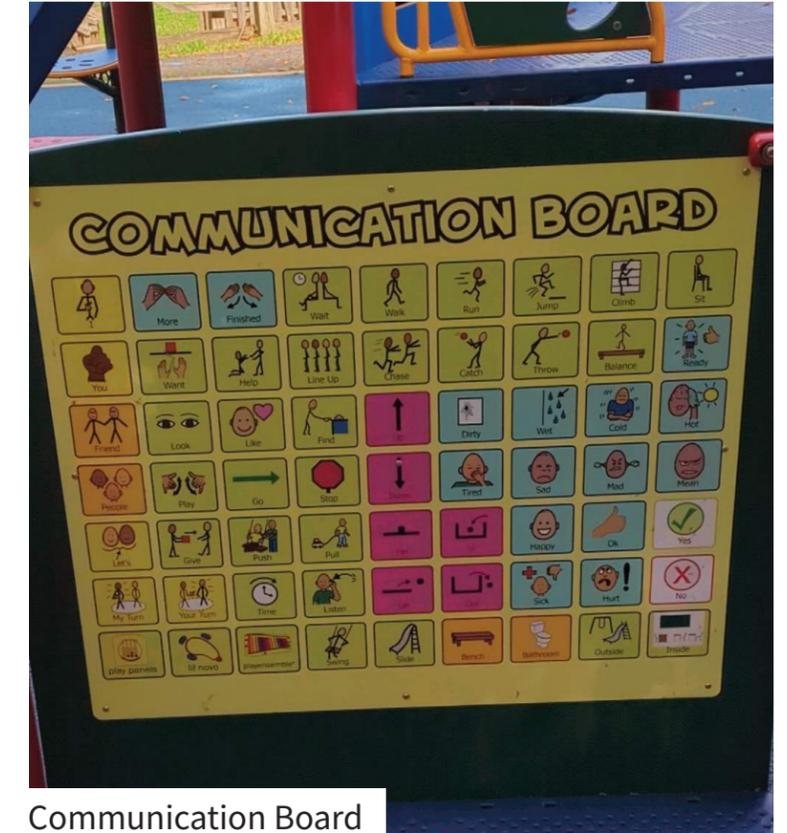
Arch Swings: Belt swing (2), Freedom swing (1), Konnection swing (1), Toddler swing (2)



Serenity Spot



Communication Board



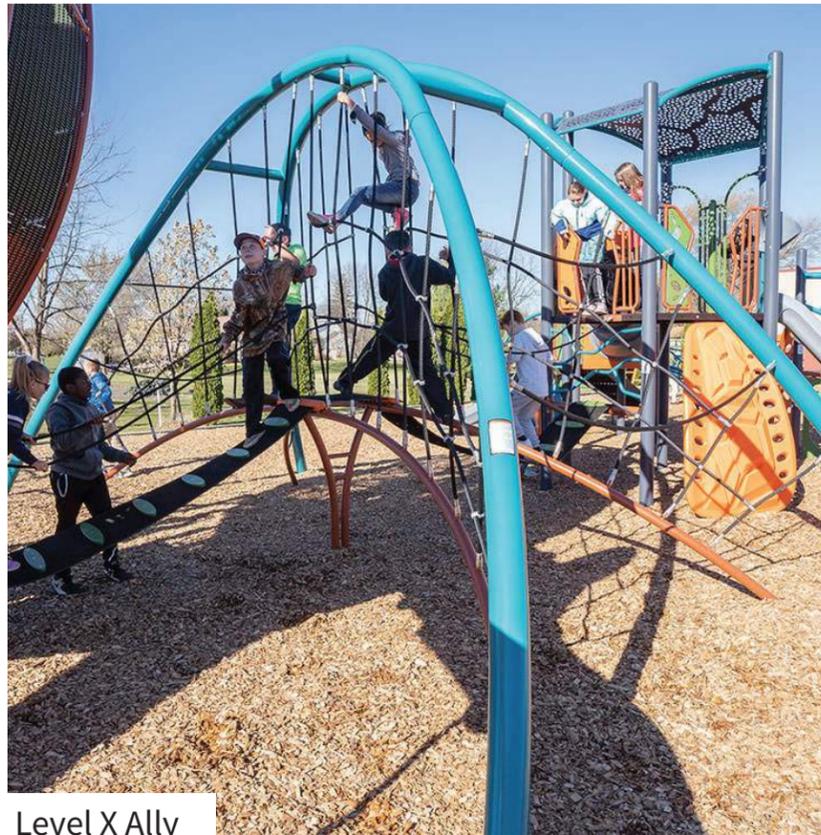
Orb Rocker



Nido Spinner



Roller Table



Level X Ally



Level X Launch



Musical Play | Congas



Roller slide



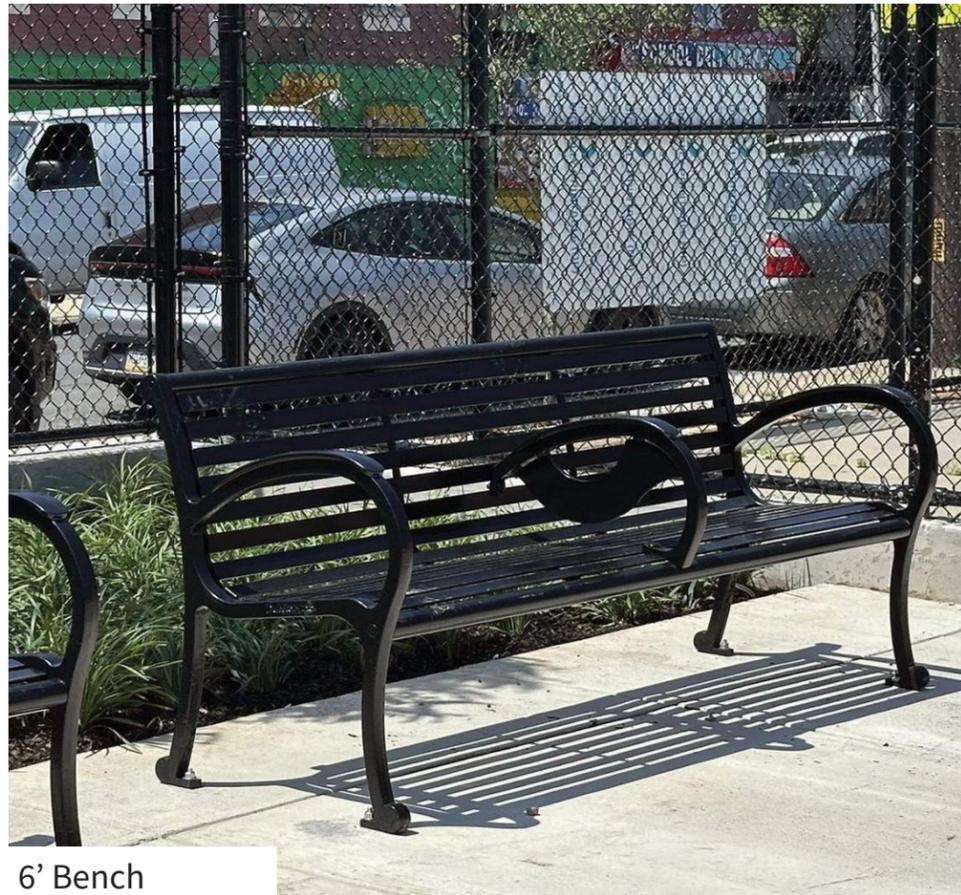
Steel slide



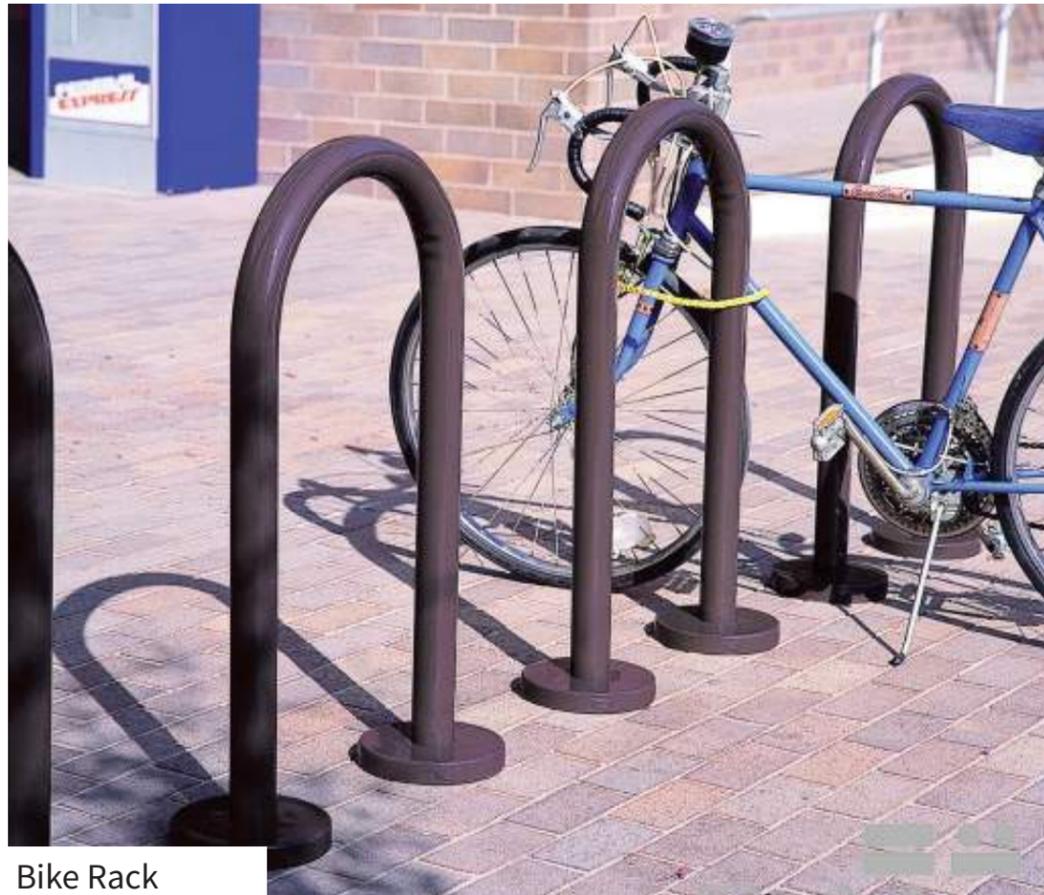
Mound Slide (Example)



Volta Spinner



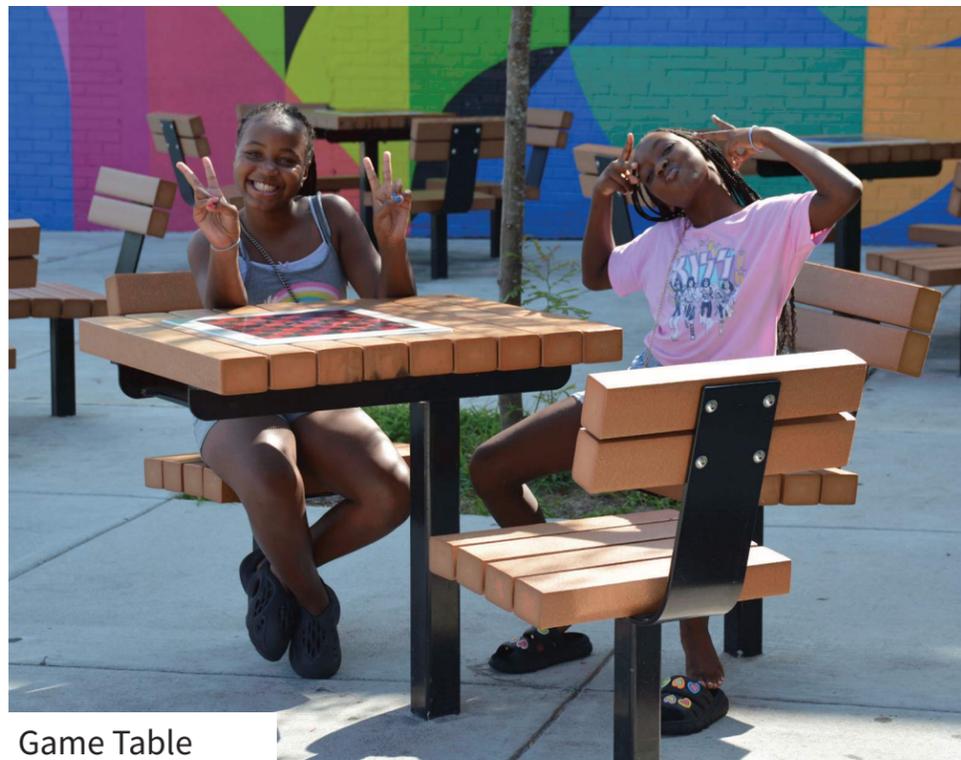
6' Bench



Bike Rack



Bollard



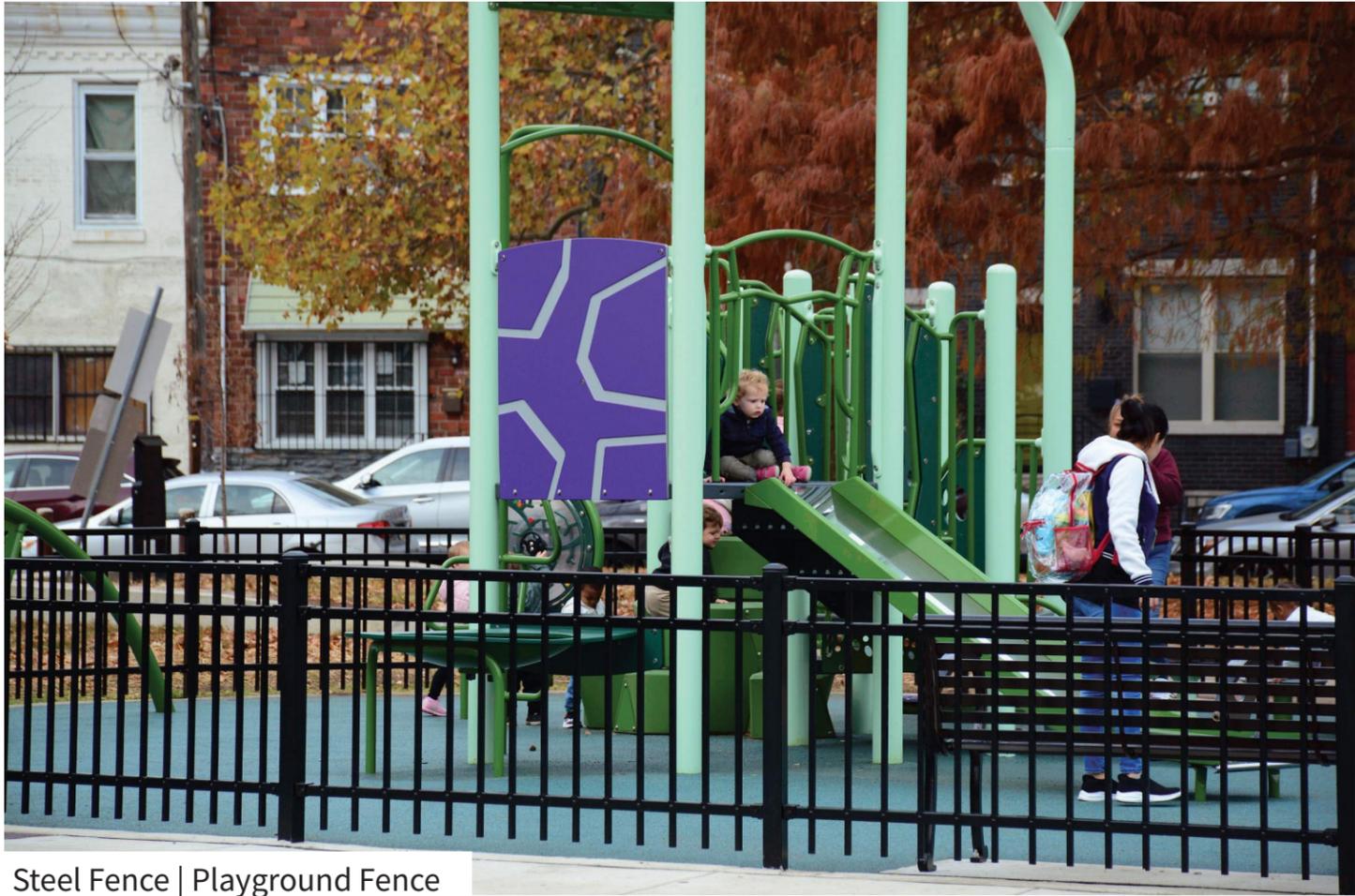
Game Table



Picnic Table



Trash Receptacle



Steel Fence | Playground Fence

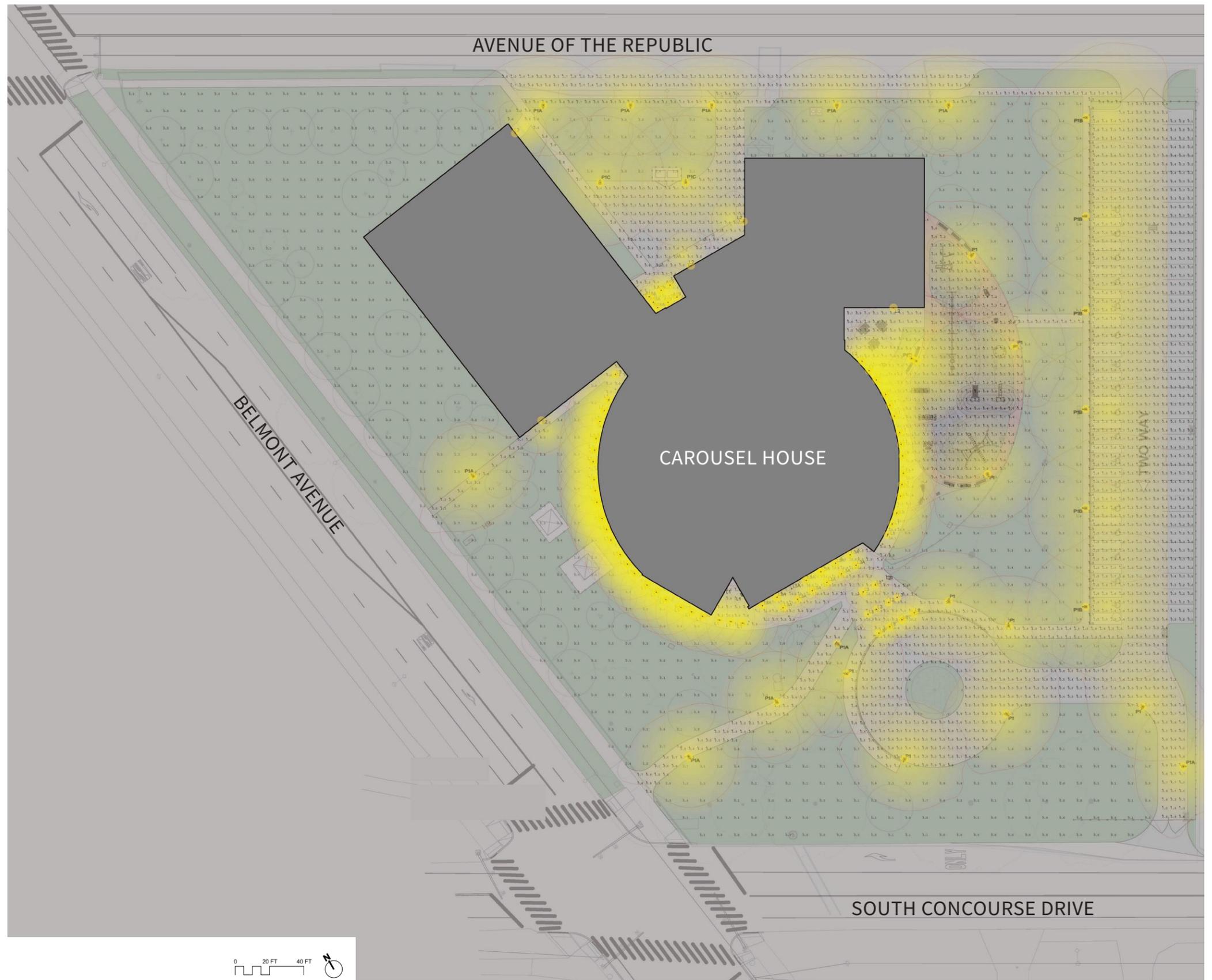


Welded Wire Fence | Utility Fence

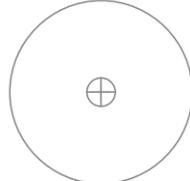
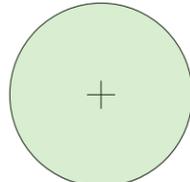
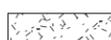
# Site Pole Light

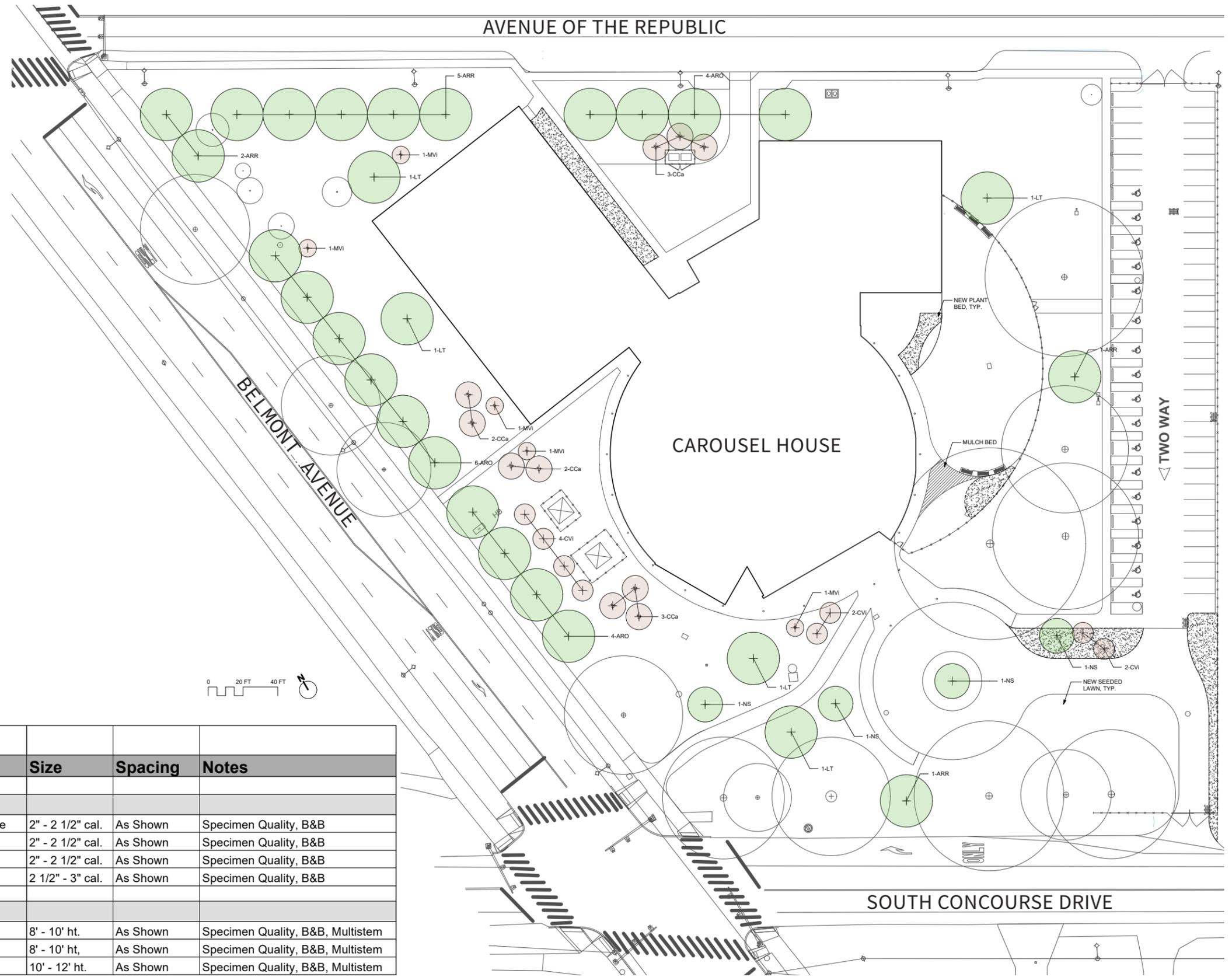


P1 - Discera



# Planting Legend

-  Existing Tree
-  Proposed Canopy Tree
-  Proposed Understory Tree
-  Mulch Bed
-  Plant Bed



PLANT SCHEDULE						
Qty	Id	Botanical Name	Common Name	Size	Spacing	Notes
<b>Canopy Trees</b>						
14	ARO	<i>Acer rubrum 'October Glory'</i>	October Glory Red Maple	2" - 2 1/2" cal.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B
9	ARR	<i>Acer rubrum 'Red Sunset'</i>	Red Sunset Red Maple	2" - 2 1/2" cal.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B
5	LT	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tulip Tree	2" - 2 1/2" cal.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B
4	NS	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Blackgum	2 1/2" - 3" cal.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B
<b>Understory Trees</b>						
10	CCa	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern Redbud	8' - 10' ht.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B, Multistem
8	CVi	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	Fringe Tree	8' - 10' ht.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B, Multistem
5	MVi	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweet Bay Magnolia	10' - 12' ht.	As Shown	Specimen Quality, B&B, Multistem

Canopy



*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory'  
October Glory Red Maple



*Acer rubrum* 'Red Sunset'  
Red Sunset Red Maple



*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
Tulip Tree



*Nyssa sylvatica*  
Blackgum

Understory



*Cercis canadensis*  
Eastern Redbud



*Chionanthus virginicus*  
Fringe Tree



*Ilex opaca*  
American Holly



*Magnolia virginiana*  
Sweet Bay Magnolia

Perennials



*Allium 'Gladiator'*  
Giant Allium



*Allium x 'Pink Planet'*  
Ornamental Onion



*Allium schoenoprasum 'Snowcap'*  
Chives

Grasses



*Carex pennsylvanica*  
Pennsylvania Sedge



*Carex woodii*  
Wood's Sedge

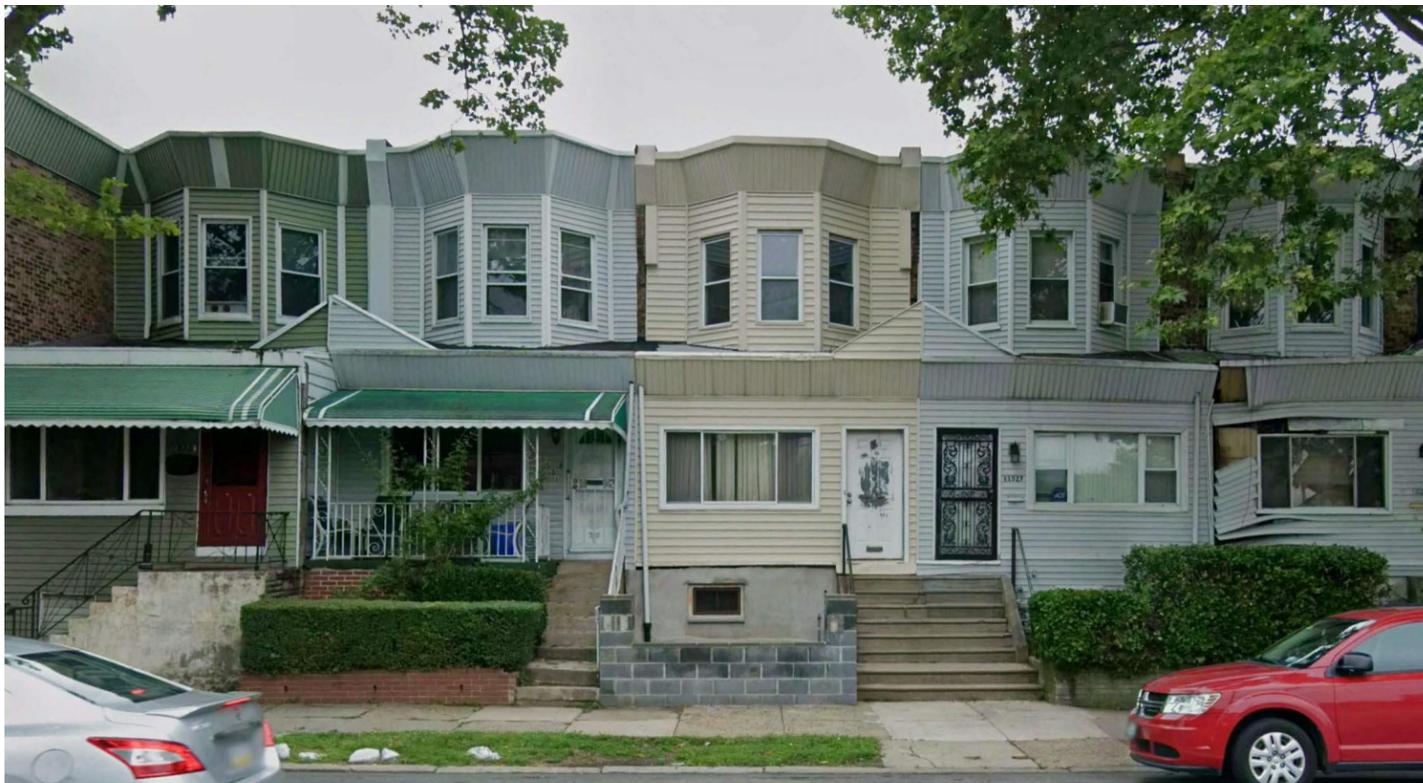




Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center



Please Touch Museum



Neighborhood Row homes



Neighborhood Homes on Parkside Avenue

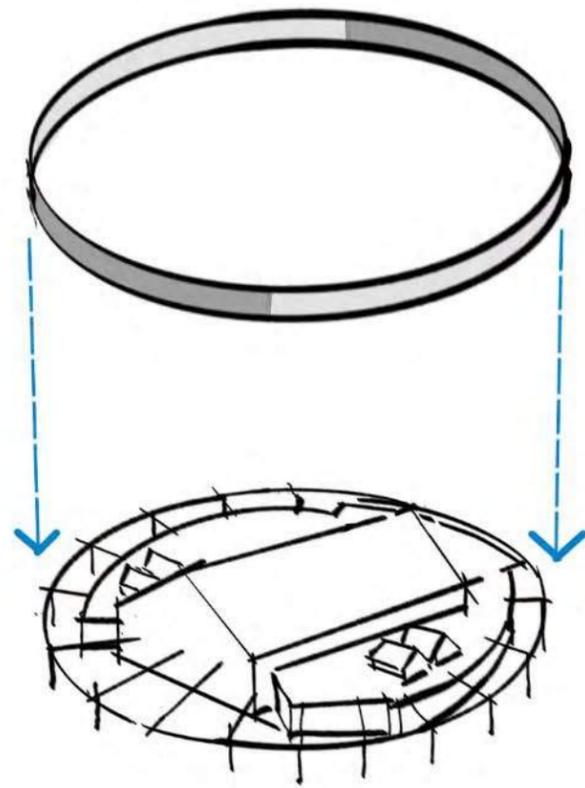


1 View of Carousel House standing from the Southwest corner looking north near the South Concourse Drive and Belmont Avenue corner.

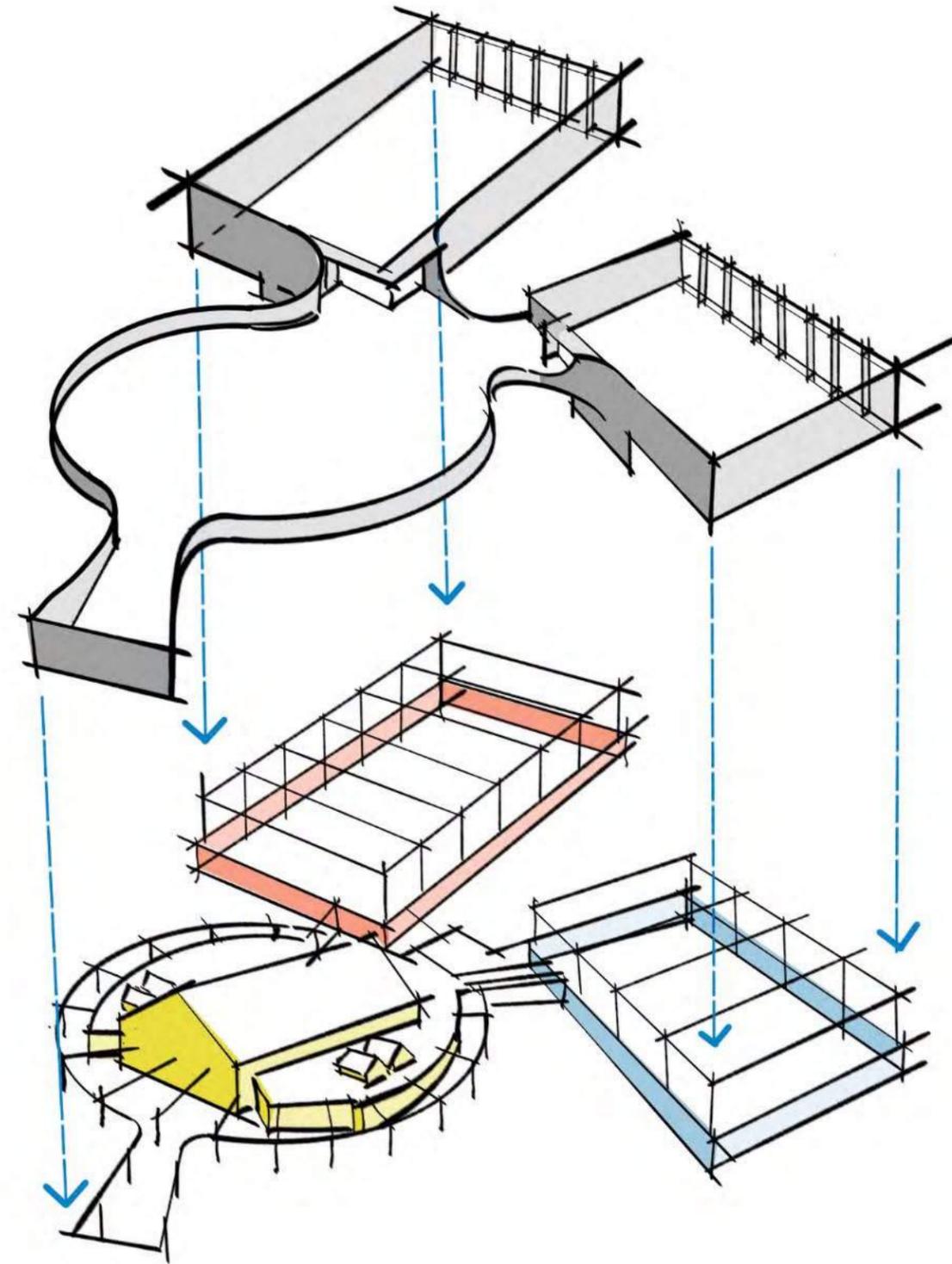


2 Aerial drone view of North exterior of existing Carousel House





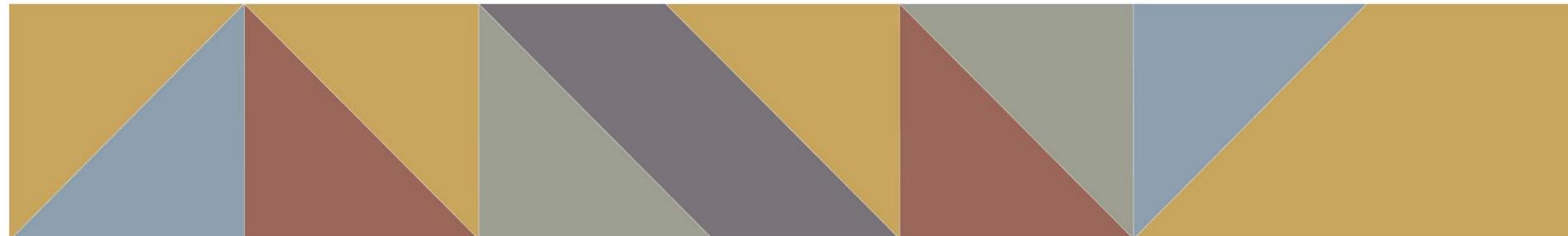
EXISTING



PROPOSED



The blues, yellows, and reds in the existing building's features...



inspired the color and pattern on the outside of the new building



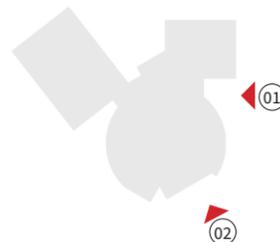
01 East

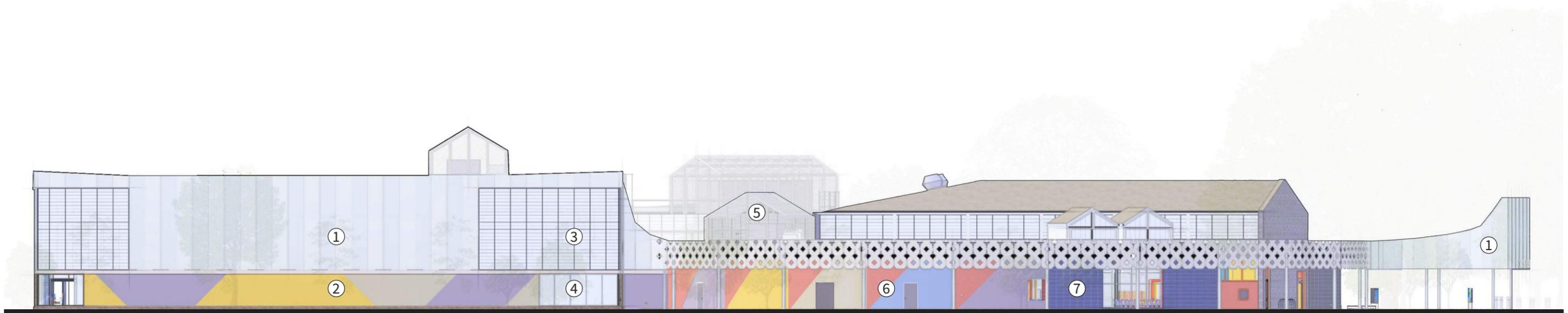


02 South

**MATERIALS LEGEND**

1. ULTRA HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE PANELS
2. PAINTED CMU
3. TRANSLUCENT WALL SYSTEM
4. EXTERIOR STOREFRONT SYSTEM
5. ROOF MECHANICAL SCREEN
6. STUCCO
7. CERAMIC TILE





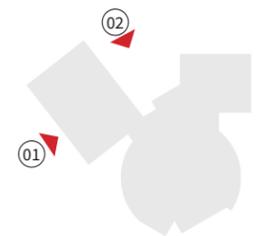
01 West



02 North

**MATERIALS LEGEND**

- 1. ULTRA HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE PANELS
- 2. PAINTED CMU
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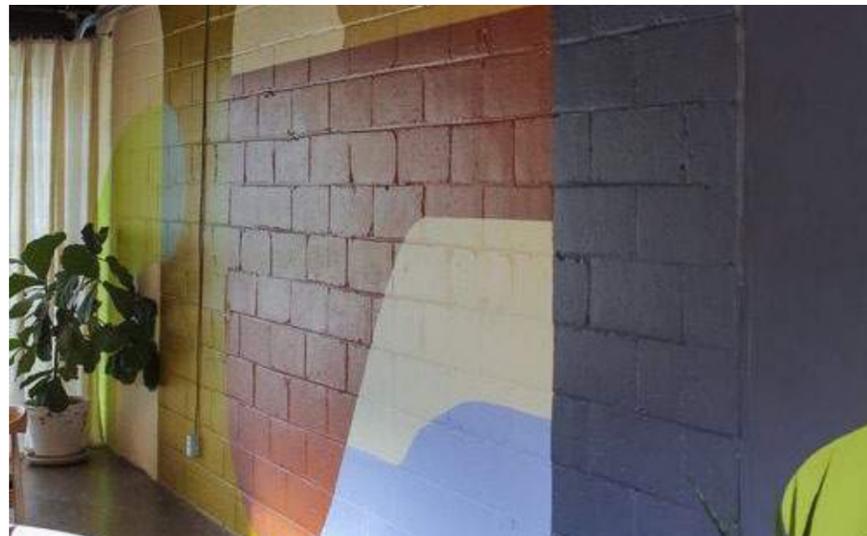




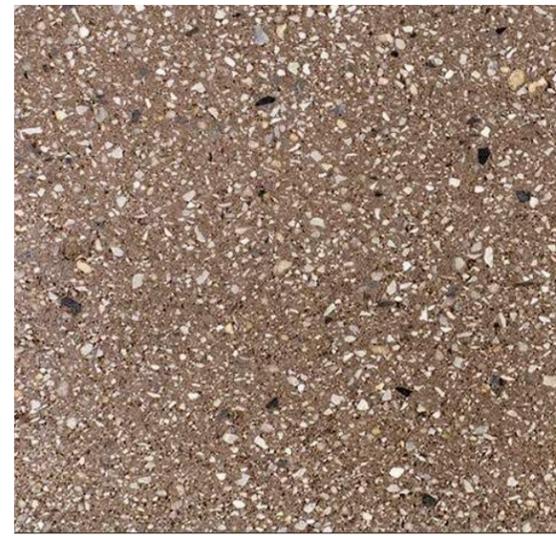
ULTRA HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE PANELS



TRANSLUCENT WALL SYSTEM



PAINTED CMU BLOCK



CONCRETE MASONRY UNITS



STUCCO

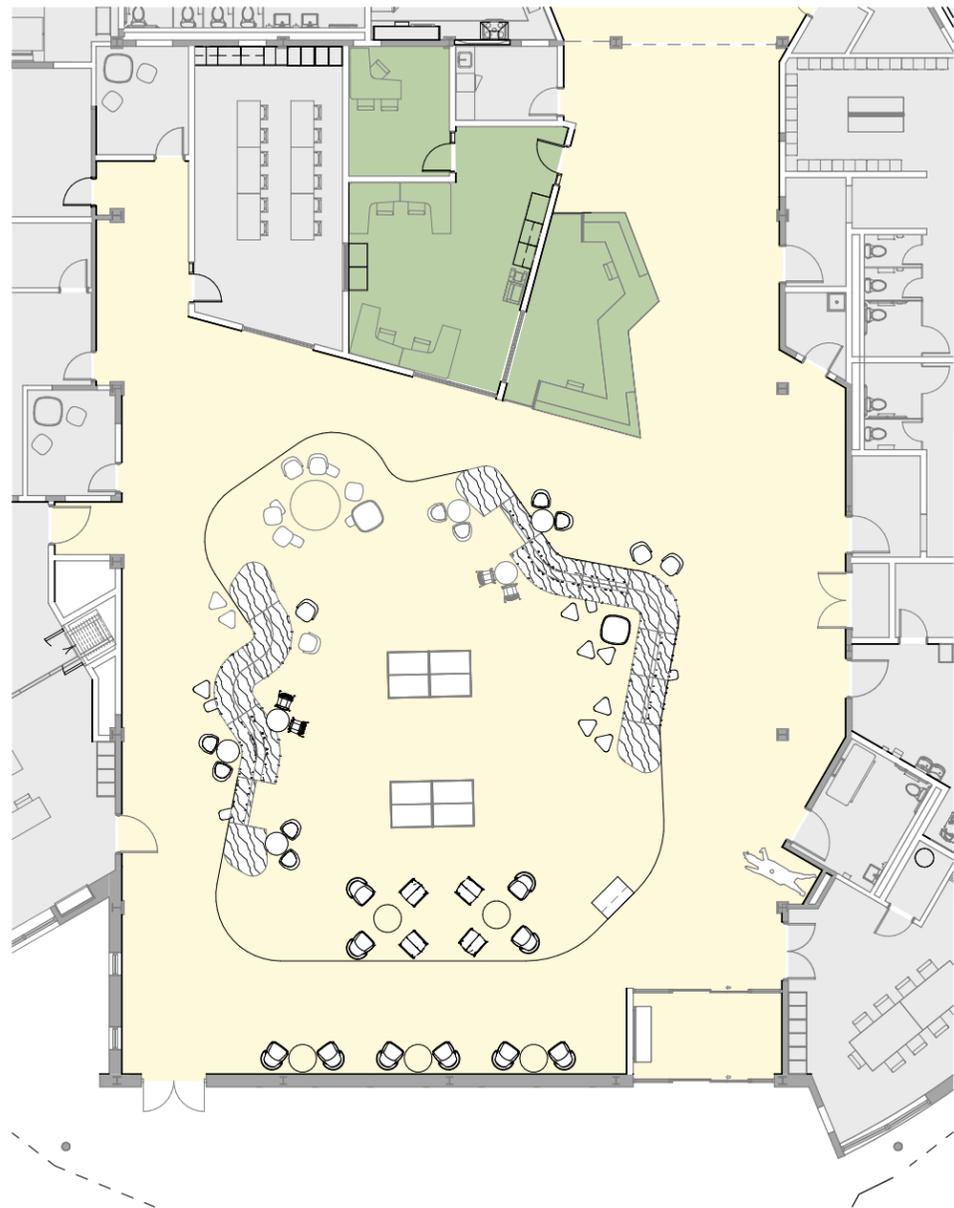




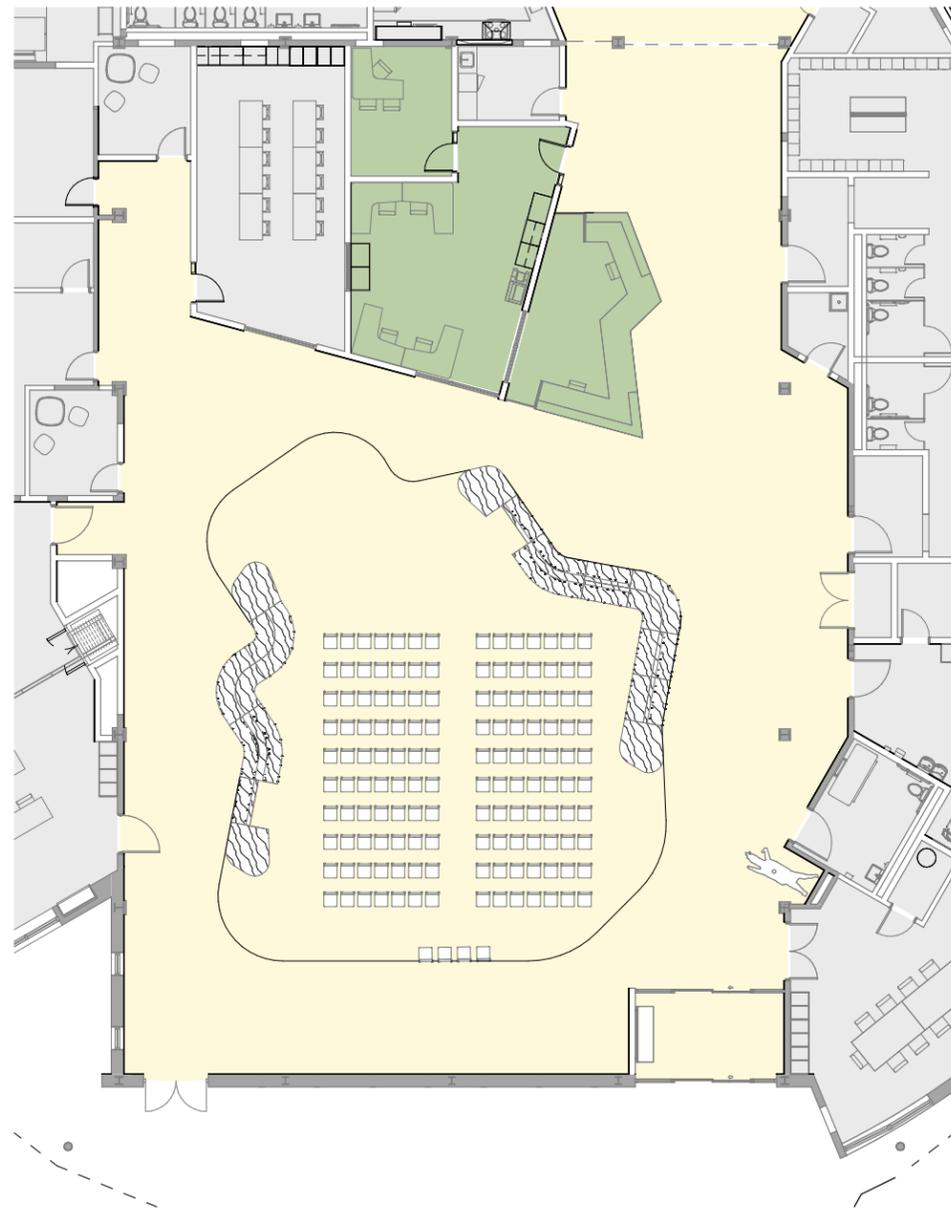


- LEGEND**
- Shared Space
  - Natatorium
  - Gymnasium
  - Recreation
  - Classrooms
  - Administrative Spaces
  - Restrooms + Locker Rooms
  - Support Space
  - Primary Entry
  - Secondary Entry
  - Service Access
  - Exit Only

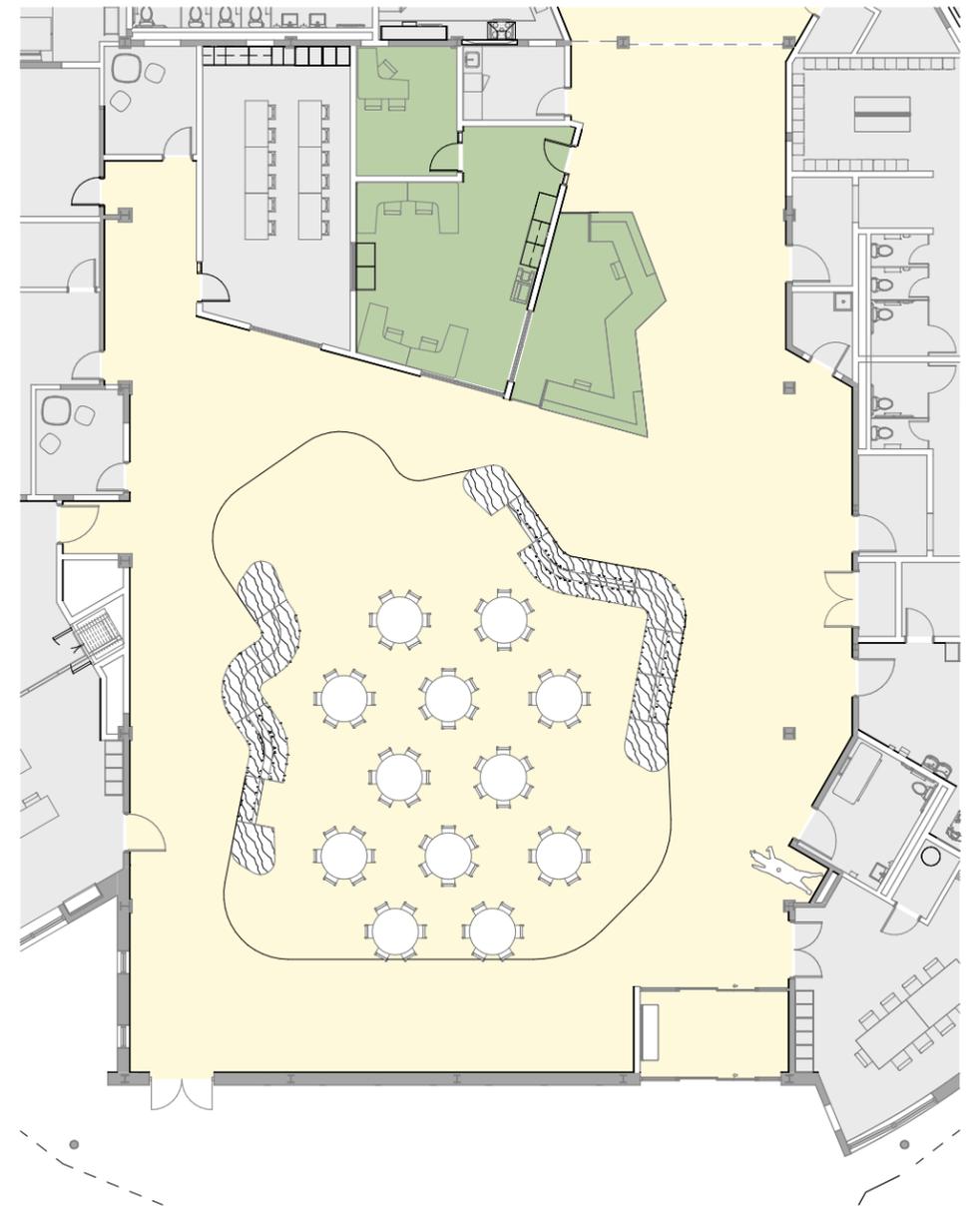
Scale: 1 inch = 40 feet  
 0 10 20 40



**1** Typical Day to Day Recreation



**2** Lecture



**3** Banquet











