

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):

☒ Building – New Construction or Addition

☐ Encroachment in/over ROW

☒ Building – Renovation or Repair

☐ Signage (Reconsideration)

☒ Plaza/Park/Playground

☐ Streetery (Reconsideration)

☐ Public Art

☐ 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: 1/14/26

Level of Review:

☐ Concept Review ☒ Final Review If Final, specify date of preceding Concept Review: 12/10/25

☐ 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

December 30, 2025

Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch St., 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Via Email to: 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 Carousel House project was presented to the Art Commission on December 10, 2025, and subsequently received Concept approval. The project team is now seeking to present the project for final approval from the Art Commission at the January 14, 2026 Meeting.

As reviewed with the Art Commission during the 12/10/2025 meeting, 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.

As requested by the Art Commission, the project team will be presenting supplemental information for the project's final approval consideration:

- Parking design including vehicle and van accessibility and EV parking.
- Site furnishing design accessibility specific to game tables, picnic tables, and trash receptacles.
- Location of on-site bike racks.
- Architectural design intent at viewpoint from the intersection of Avenue of the Republic and Belmont Avenue.

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

Respectfully,



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

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



CAROUSEL HOUSE



January 14th, 2026

Rebuild and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

ART COMMISSION SUBMISSION

DESIGN TEAM



ARCHITECT



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



CIVIL ENGINEER + GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER



STRUCTURAL ENGINEER



MEPFP ENGINEER



LIGHTING DESIGN



POOL CONSULTANT



ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT



SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT

EVAN MILLS ENVIRONMENTAL,LLC

ENVIRONMENTAL(PUMP STATION) CONSULTANT



ENVIRONMENTAL + HAZMAT CONSULTANT



COST ESTIMATING



ARBORIST



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANT



ENCLOSURE CONSULTANT



ACOUSTICAL CONSULTANT

LONGGREENSPECS

SPECIFICATIONS CONSULTANT



Scale: 1 inch = 100 feet
0 25 50 100

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

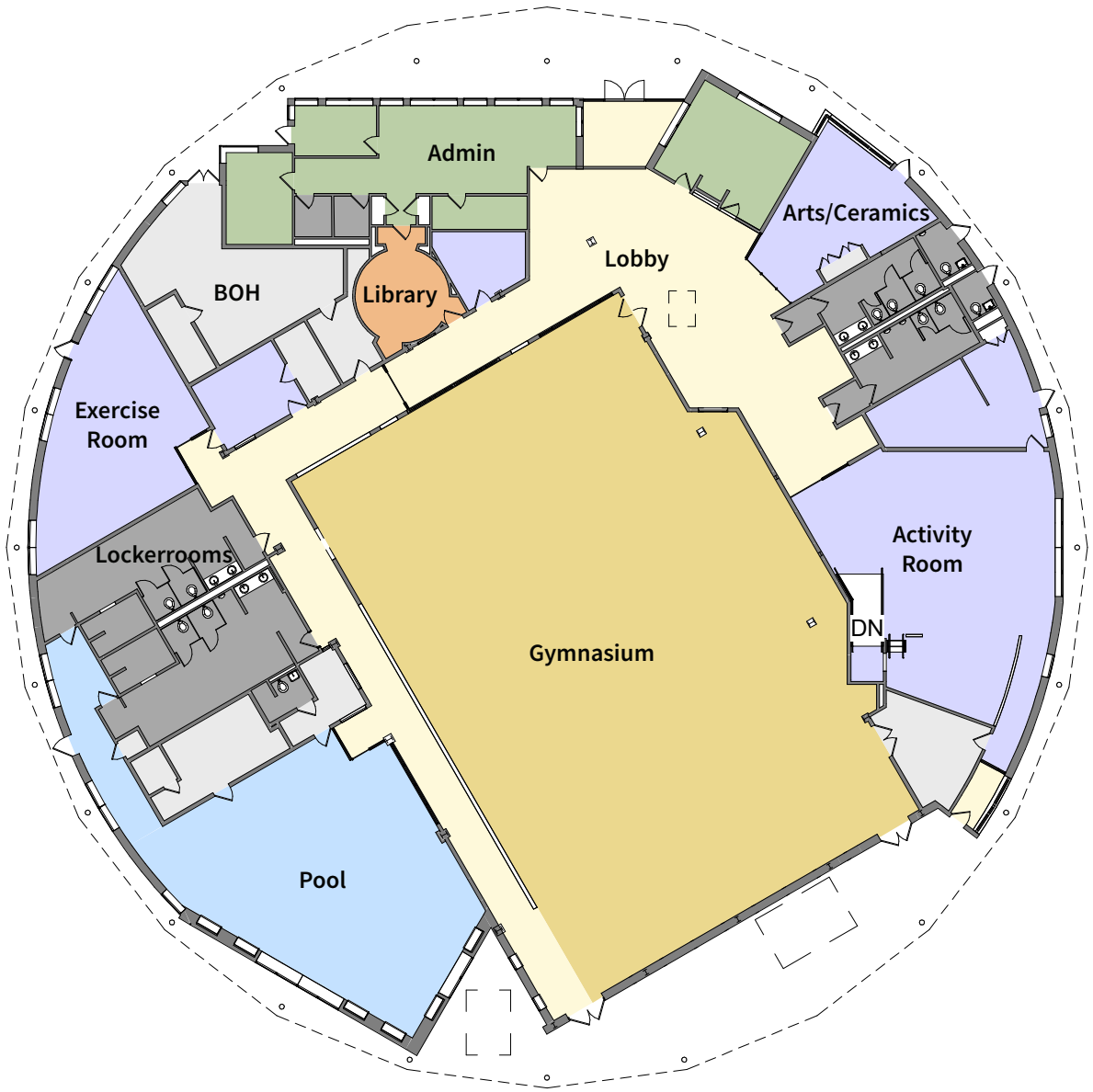


2 View of gymnasium looking south toward mural

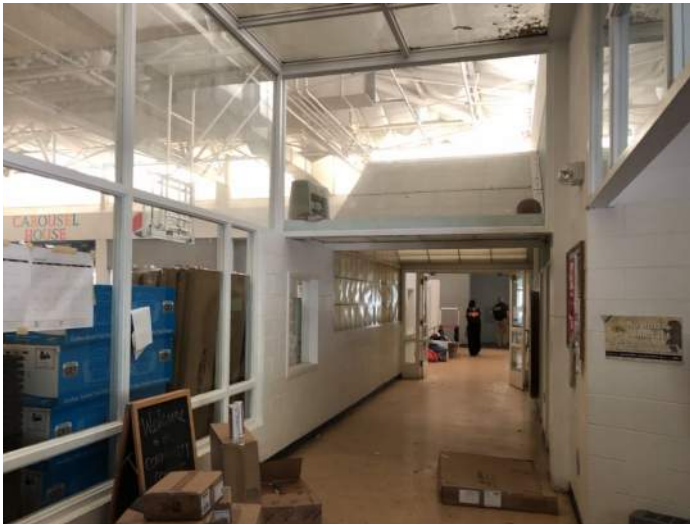


3 View of pool

Scale: 1 inch = 30 feet
 0 15 30



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

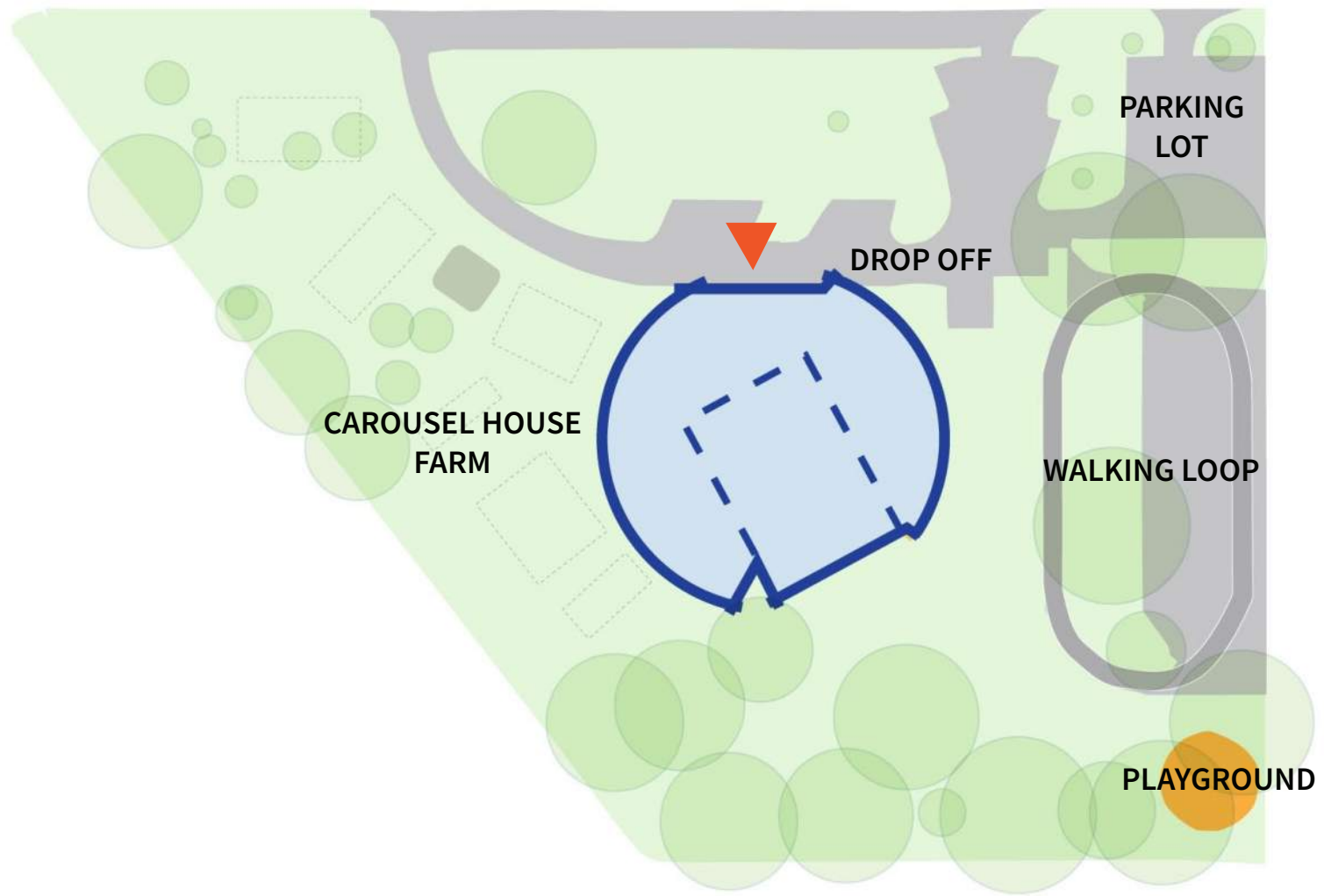
- Accessibility and inclusion should be considered in design decisions from parking to programming.
- Safety and wayfinding should be intuitive, well-lit, and welcoming.
- Design should be sensory-friendly, vibrant, and human-scaled, not institutional.
- Preserve and celebrate the culture and history 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

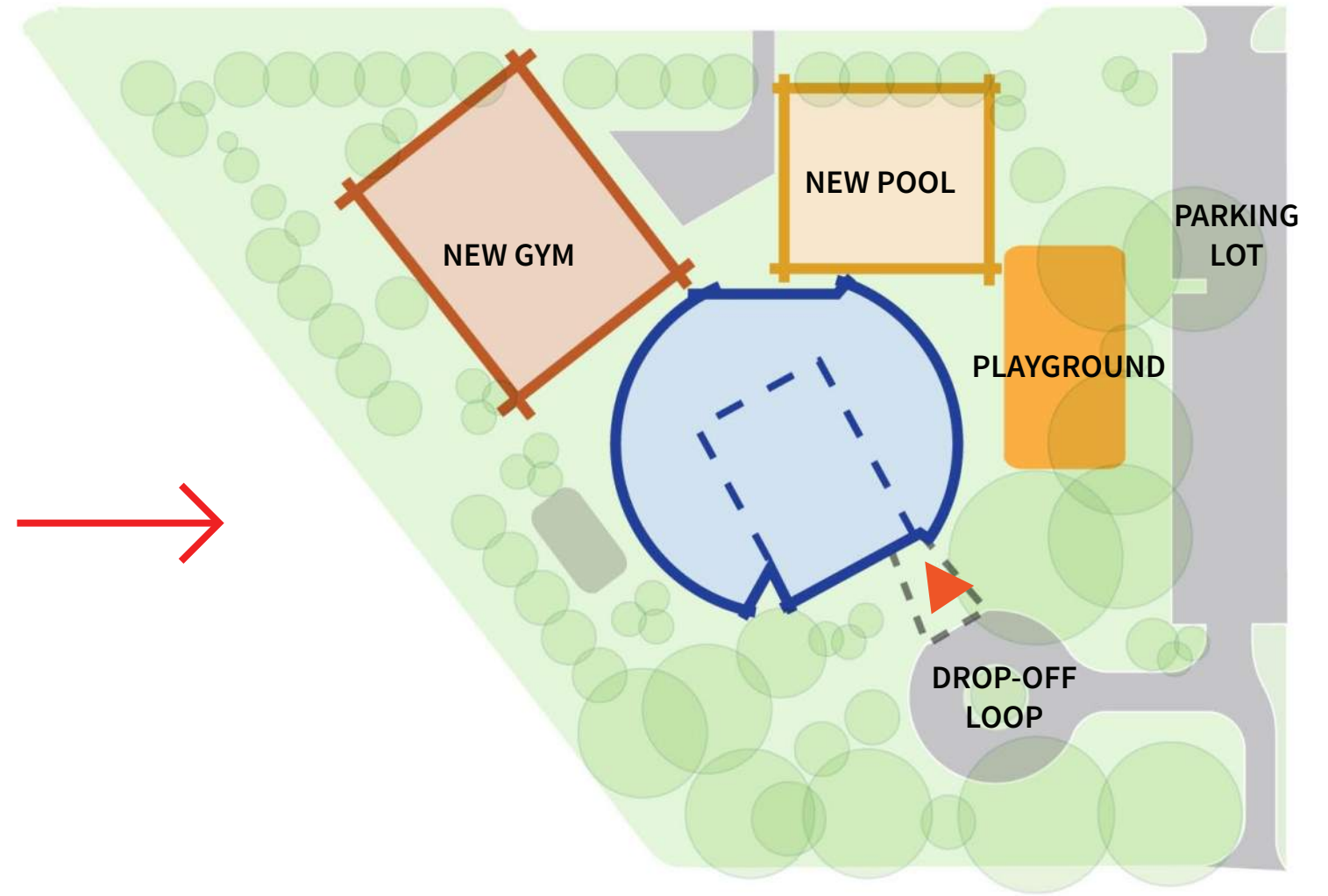
Identified Needs & Issues



- 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



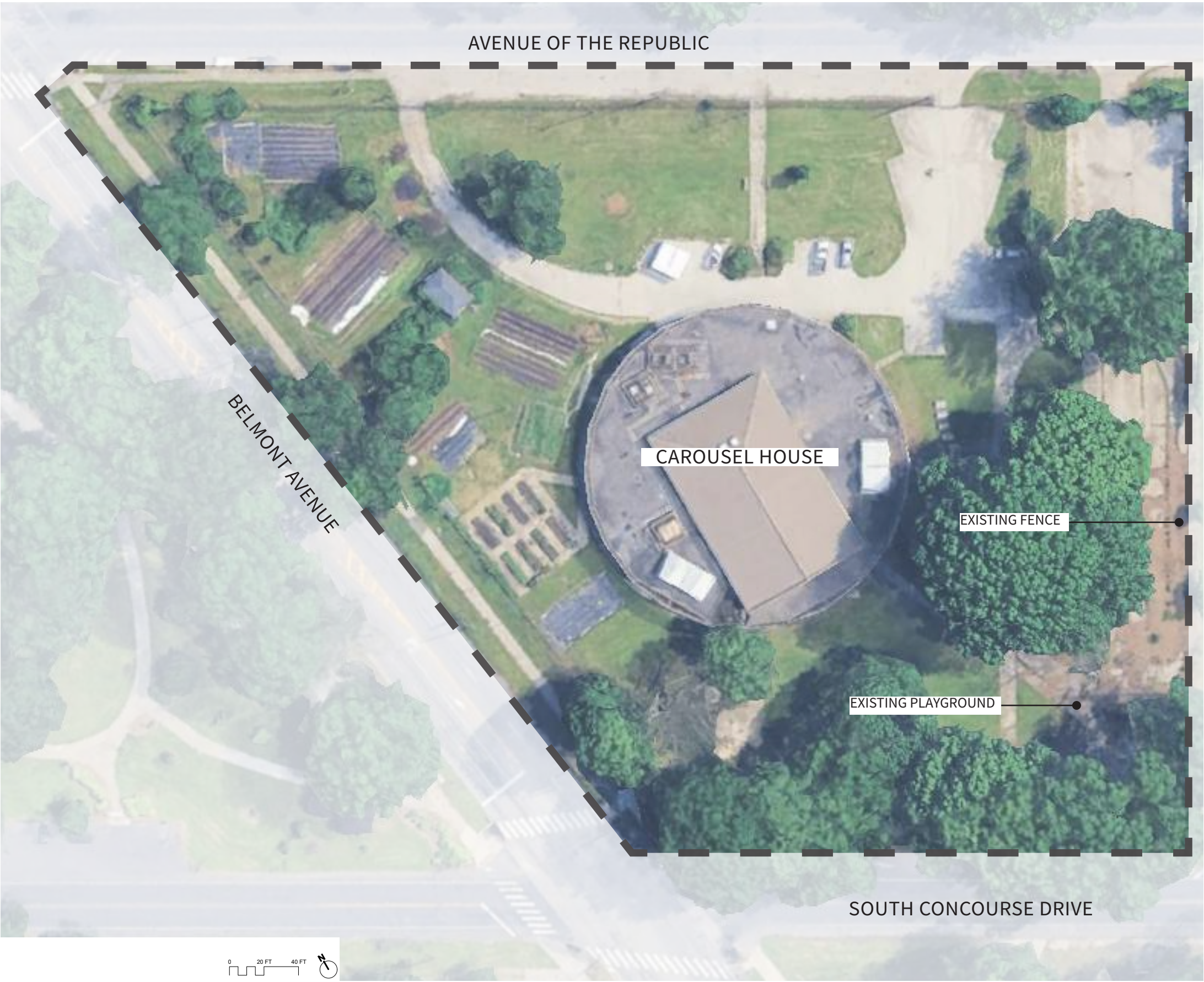
Existing Tree (Poor Condition)



Existing Playground



Existing Carousel Poles

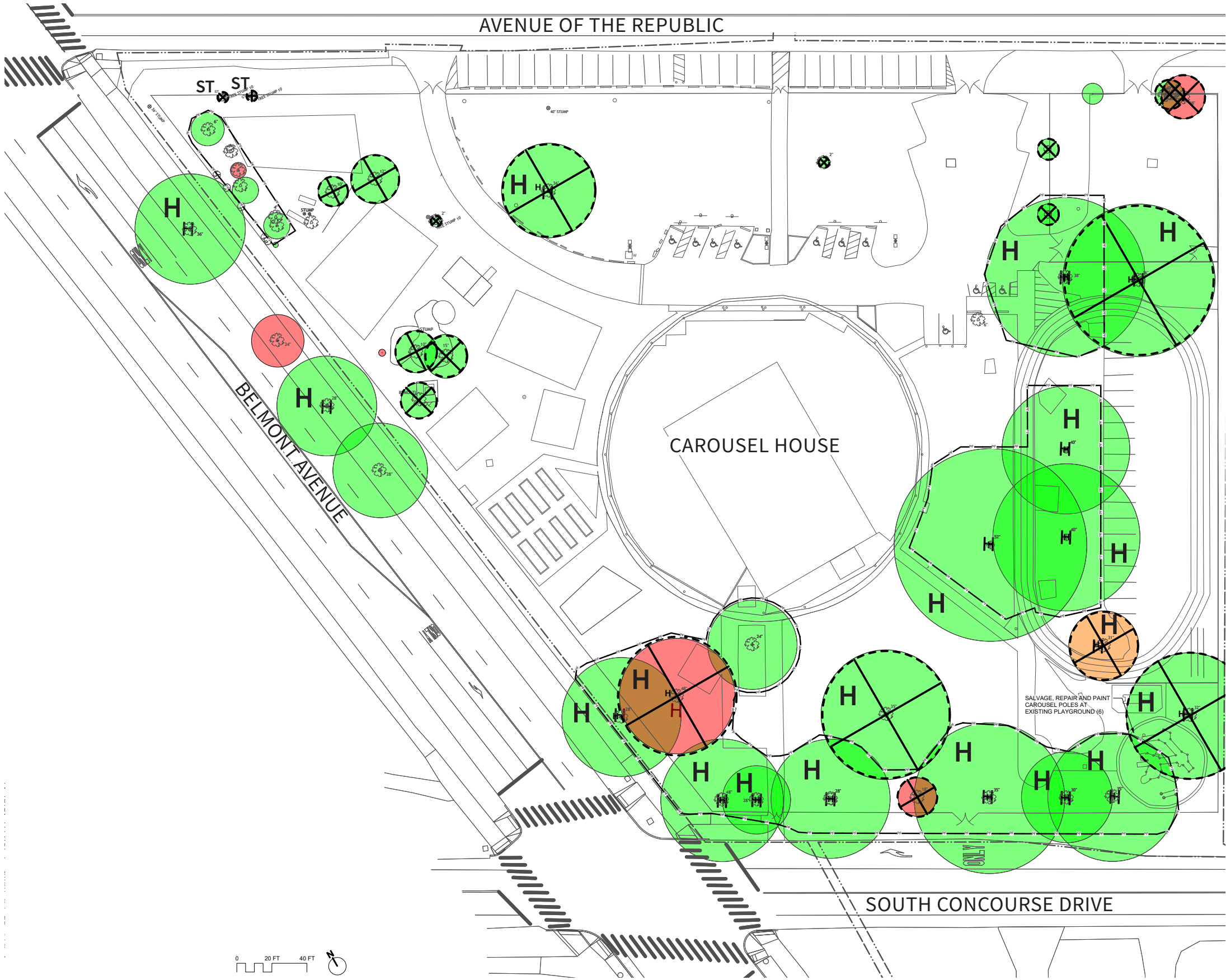


Demolition Legend

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

Tree Health Legend

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

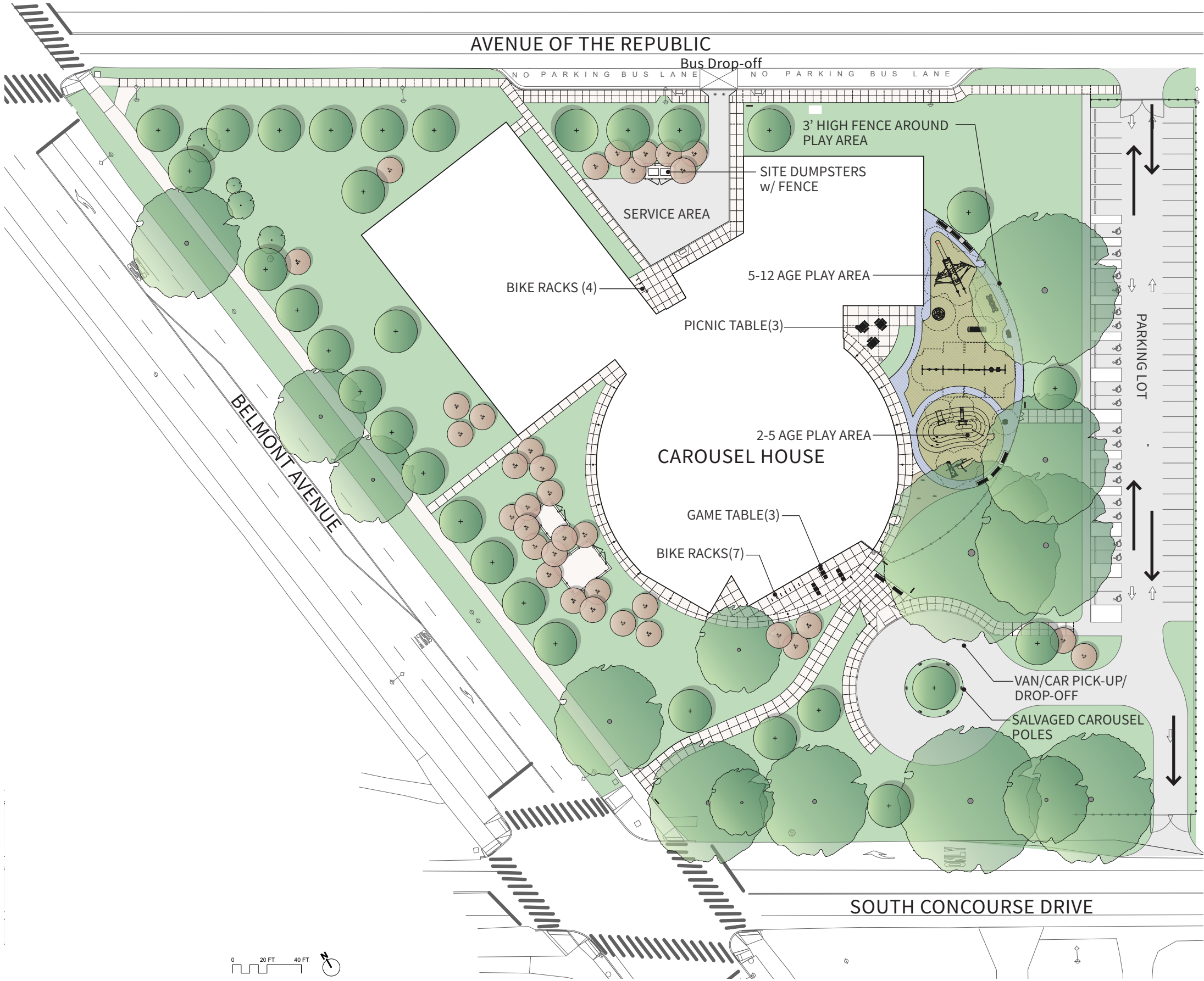


Materials Legend

- Asphalt Paving
- Concrete Paving
- Rubber Safety Surface
- Table
- Bench
- Bicycle Rack
- o

Bollard
- o T

Trash Receptacle
- Existing Tree
- Proposed Canopy Tree
- Proposed Ornamental Tree

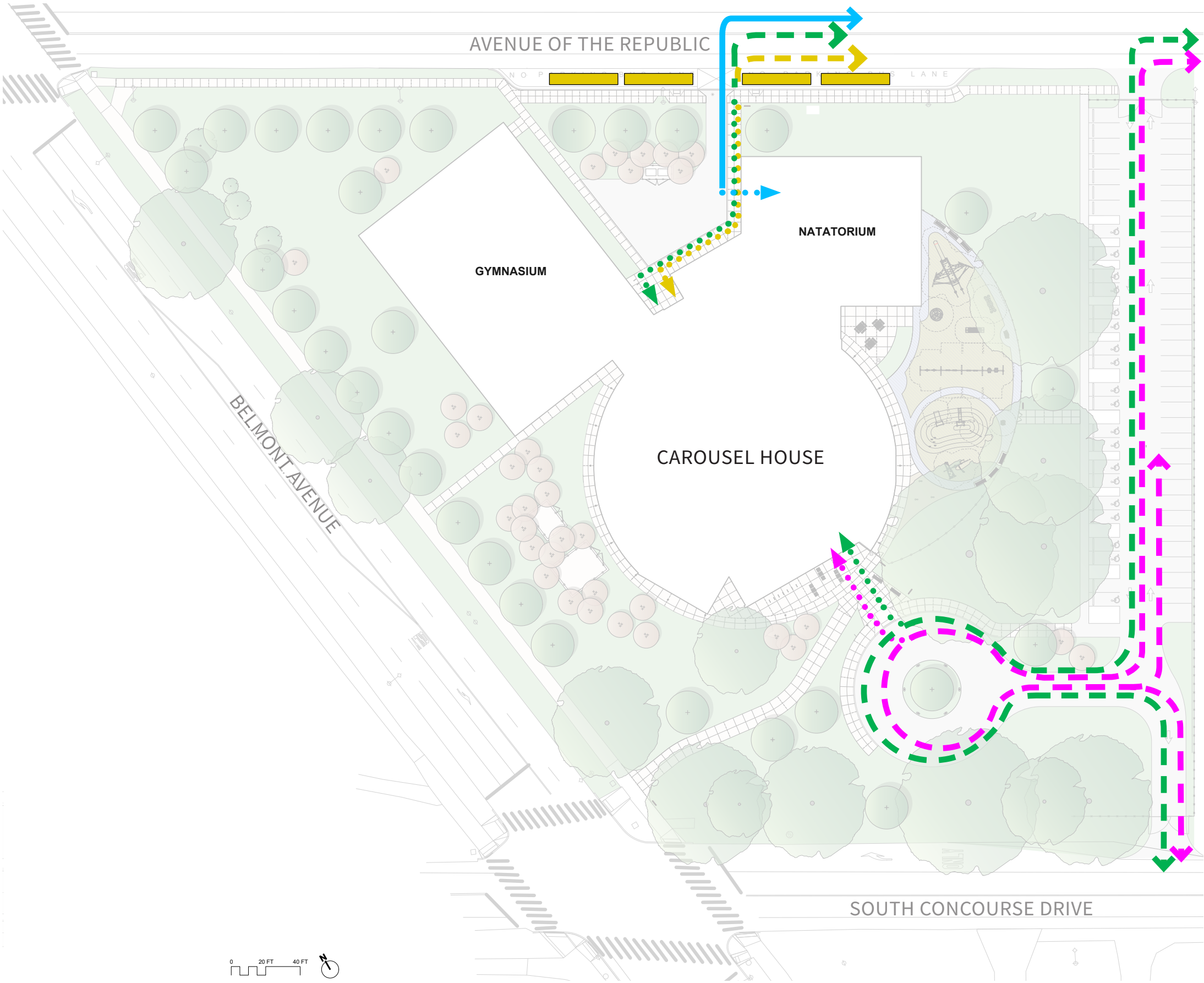


Circulation Legend

- 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)

Parking Breakdown

- Accessible Car Spaces (11)
- Accessible Van Spaces (9)
- Non Accessible Spaces (40)
- Total Spaces (60)
- EV Charging Spaces (4)





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



Serenity Spot



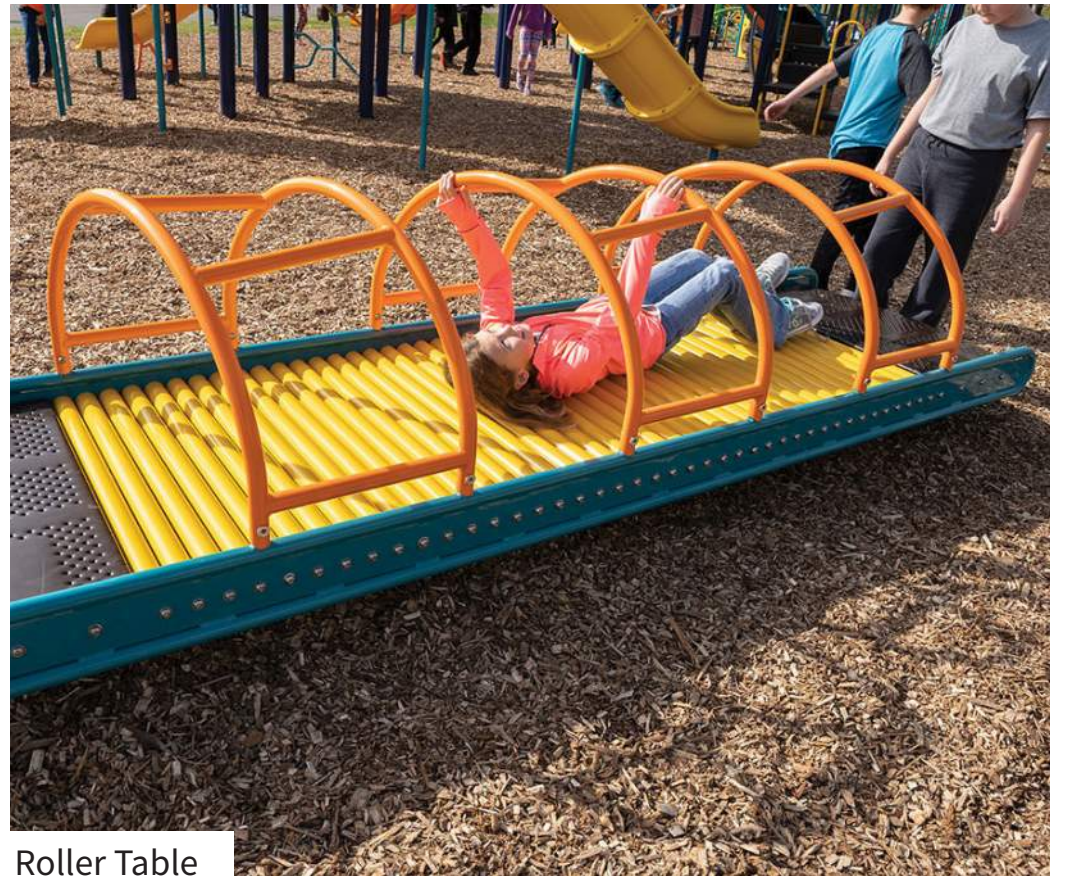
Communication Board



Orb Rocker



Nido Spinner



Roller Table



Level X Extreme



Level X Launch



Musical Play | Congas



Double wide slide



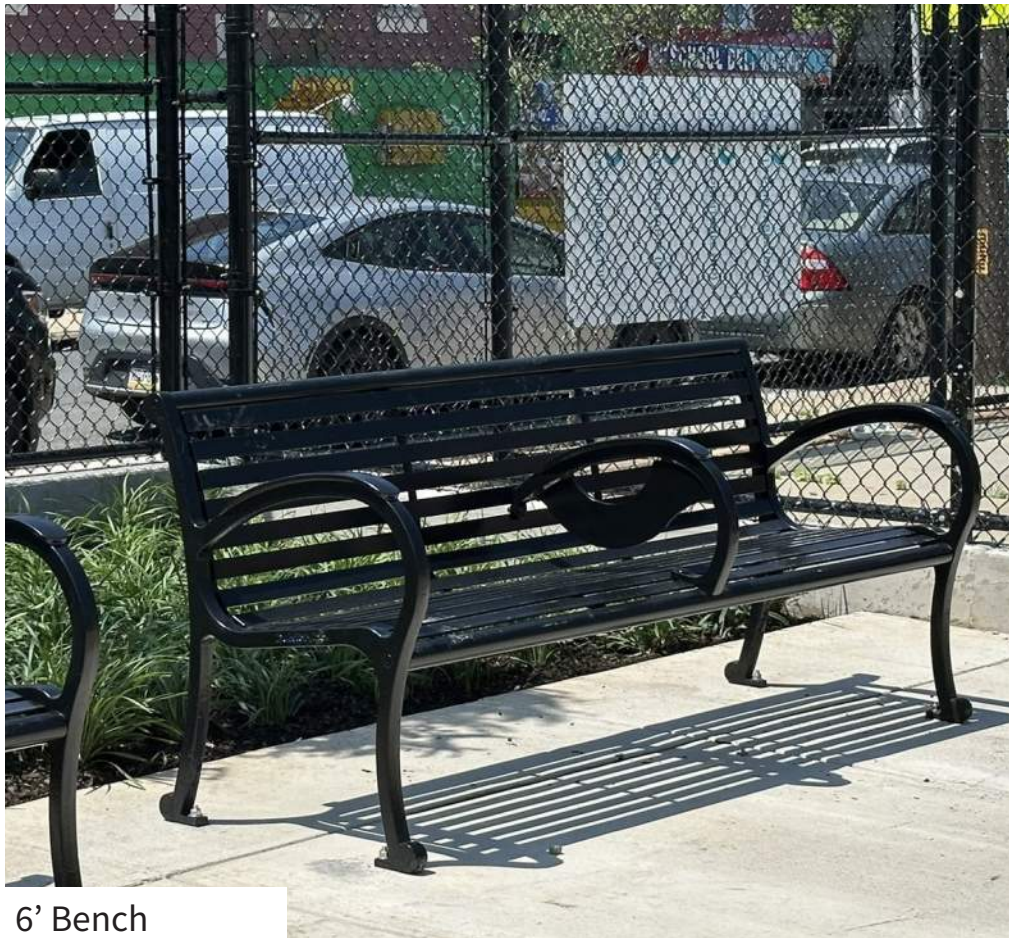
Steel slide



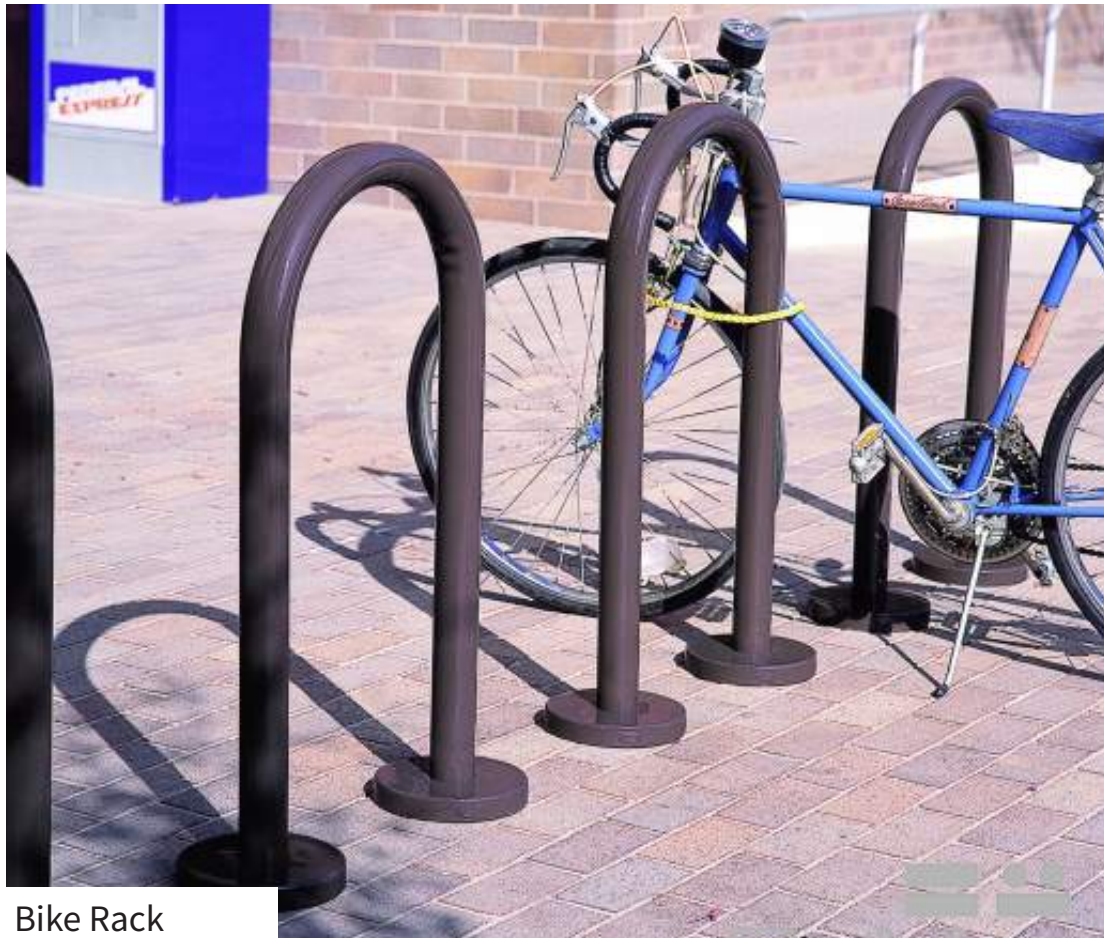
Mound Slide (Example)



Volta Spinner



6' Bench



Bike Rack



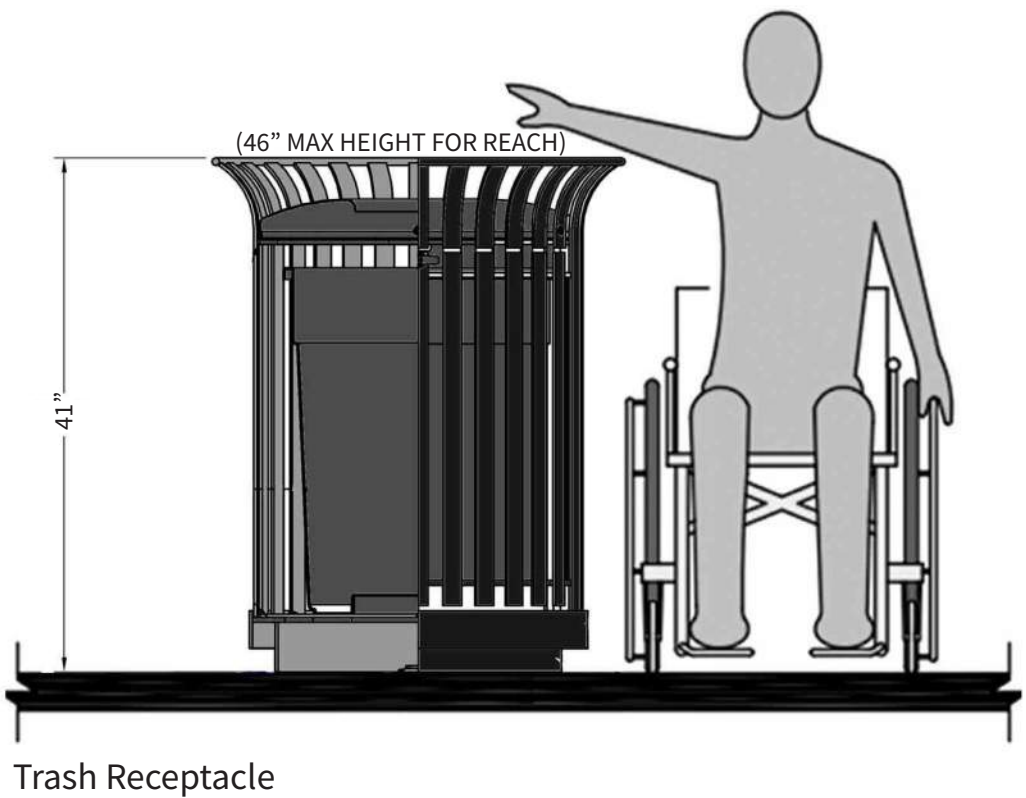
Bollard



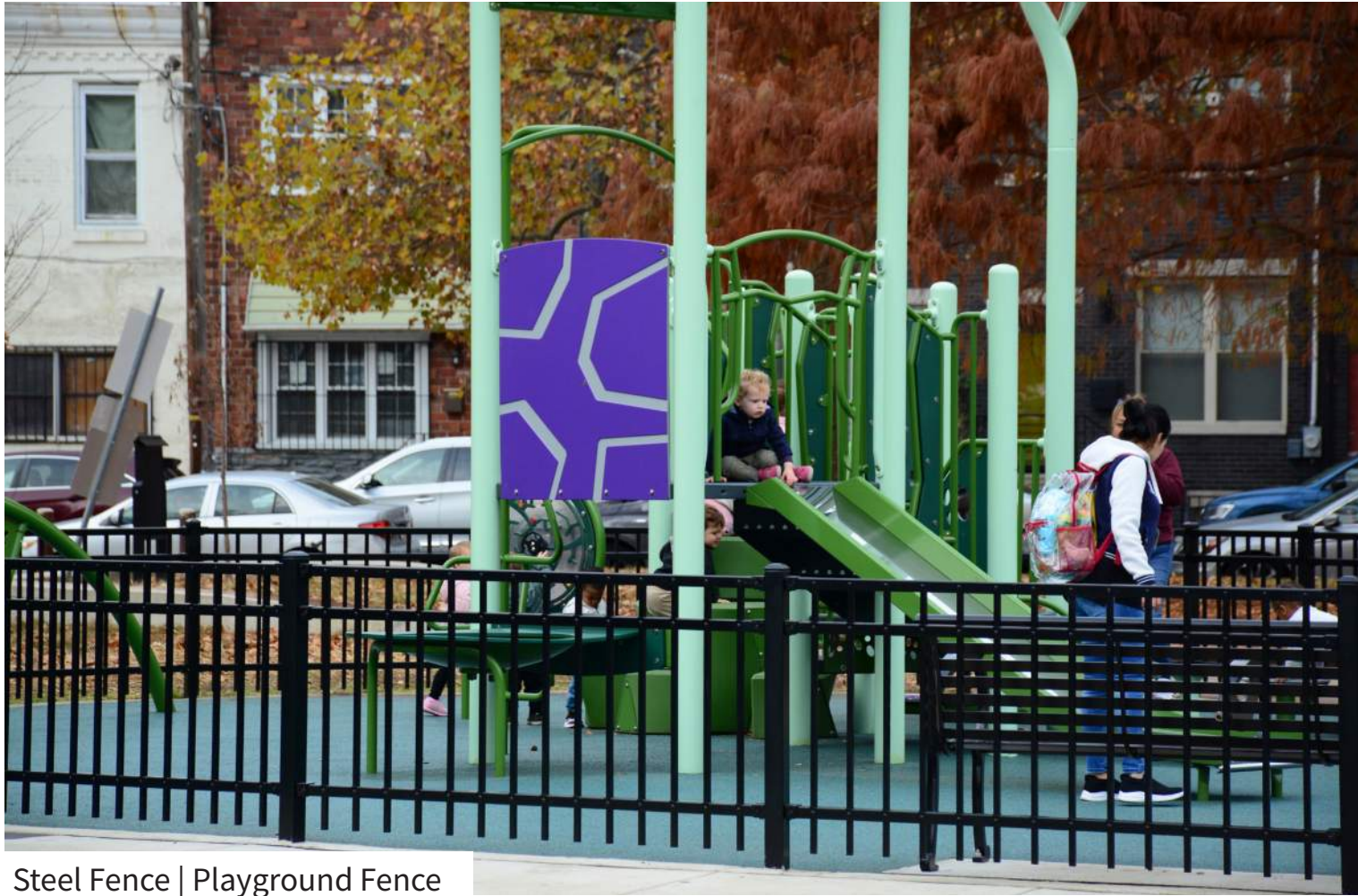
Game Table



Picnic Table



Trash Receptacle



Steel Fence | Playground Fence

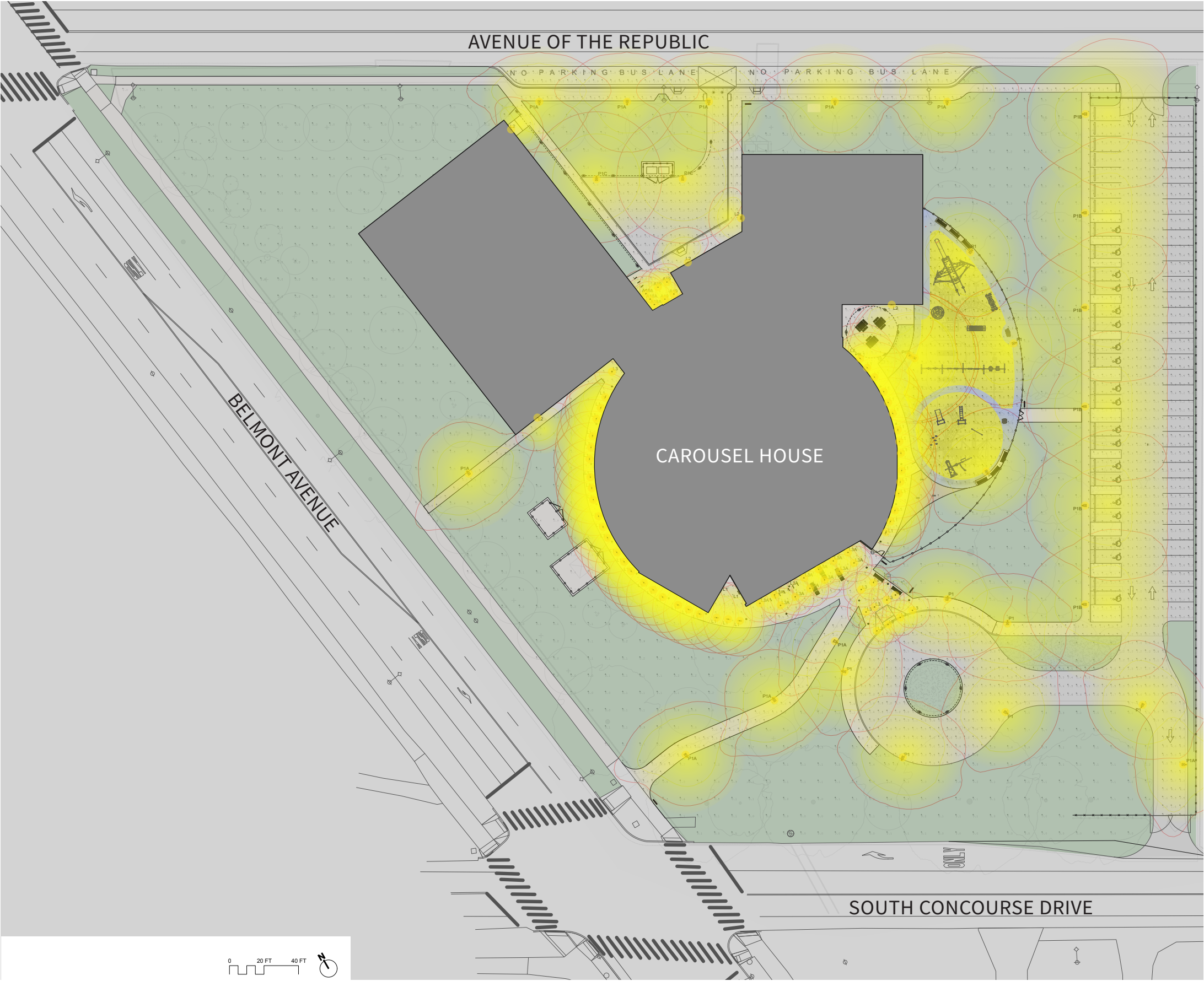


Welded Wire Fence | Utility Fence

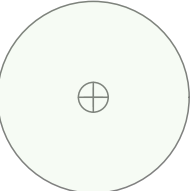
Site Pole Light



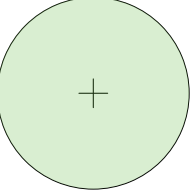
P1 - Discera



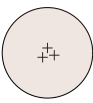
Planting Legend



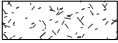
Existing Tree




Proposed Canopy Tree



Proposed Understory Tree

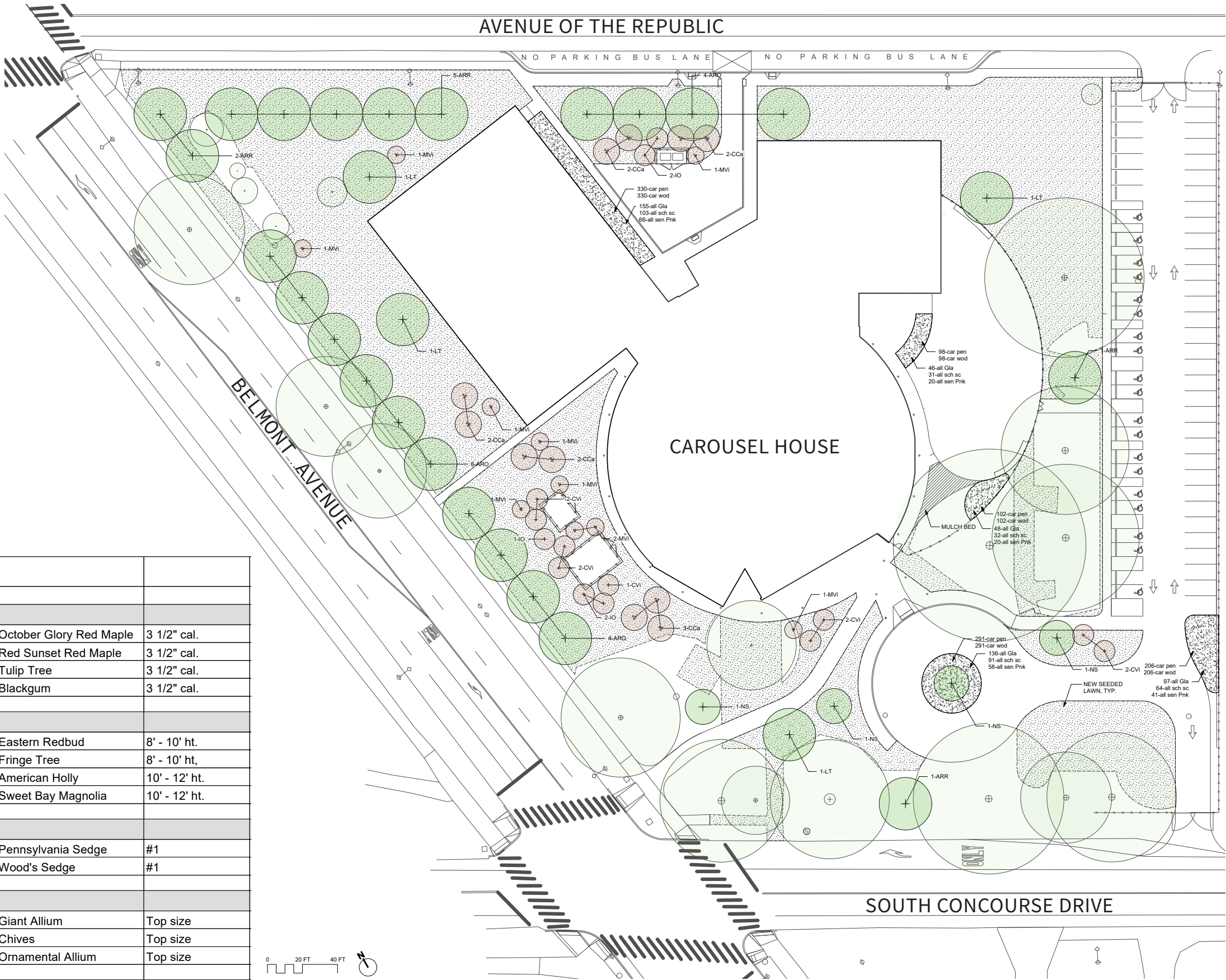


Plant Bed



Mulch Bed

PLANT SCHEDULE				
Canopy Trees				
14	ARO	<i>Acer rubrum 'October Glory'</i>	October Glory Red Maple	3 1/2" cal.
9	ARR	<i>Acer rubrum 'Red Sunset'</i>	Red Sunset Red Maple	3 1/2" cal.
4	LT	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tulip Tree	3 1/2" cal.
4	NS	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Blackgum	3 1/2" cal.
Understory Trees				
11	CCa	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern Redbud	8' - 10' ht.
9	CVi	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	Fringe Tree	8' - 10' ht.
5	IO	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	American Holly	10' - 12' ht.
10	MVi	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweet Bay Magnolia	10' - 12' ht.
Ornamental Grasses				
1317	car pen	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania Sedge	#1
1317	car wod	<i>Carex woodii</i>	Wood's Sedge	#1
Bulbs				
482	all Gla	<i>Allium 'Gladiator'</i>	Giant Allium	Top size
321	all sch sc	<i>Allium schoenoprasum 'Snowcap'</i>	Chives	Top size
205	all sen Pnk	<i>Allium senescens 'Pink Planet'</i>	Ornamental Allium	Top size



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

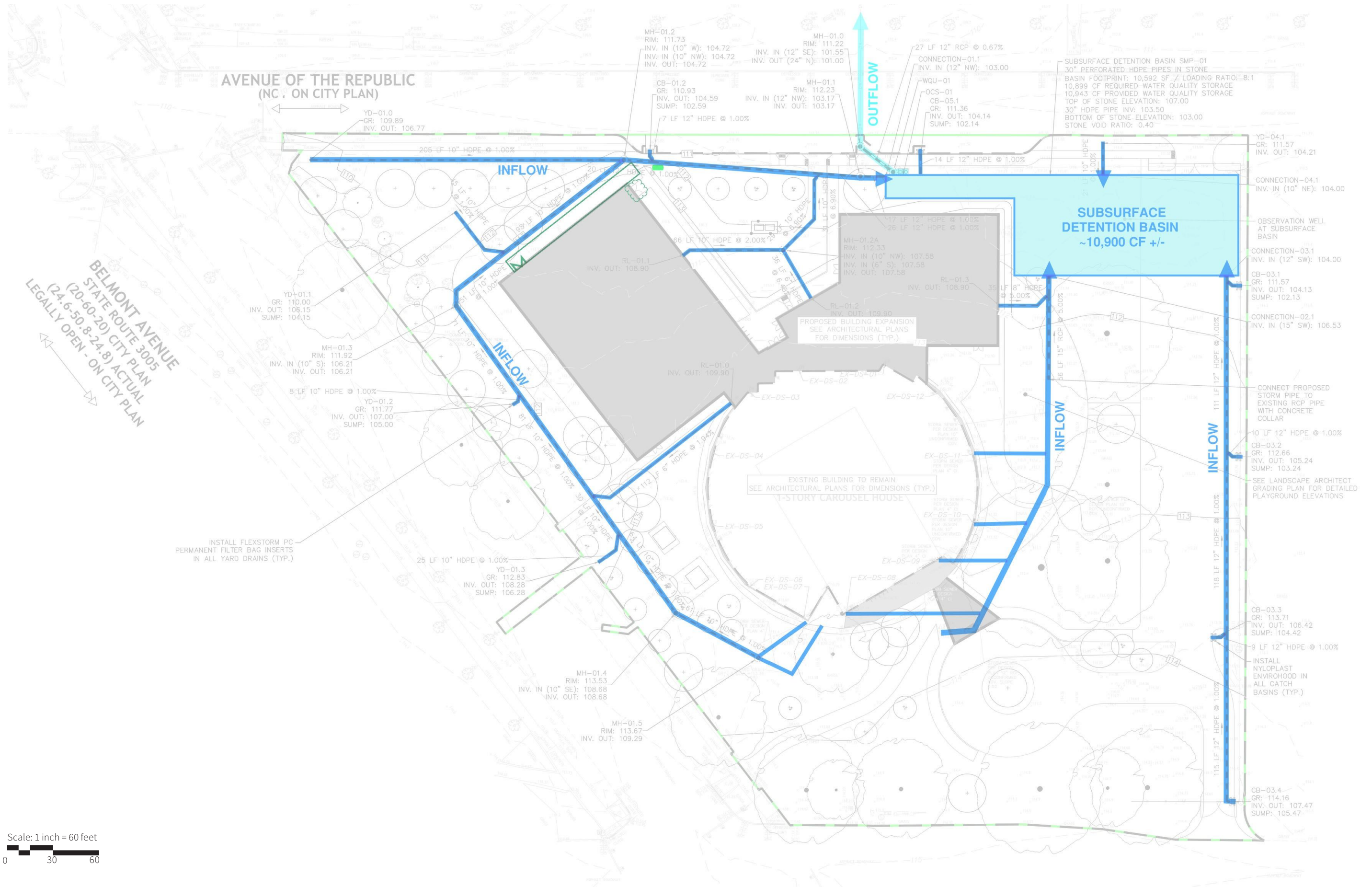
Grasses



Carex pensylvanica
Pennsylvania Sedge



Carex woodii
Wood's Sedge

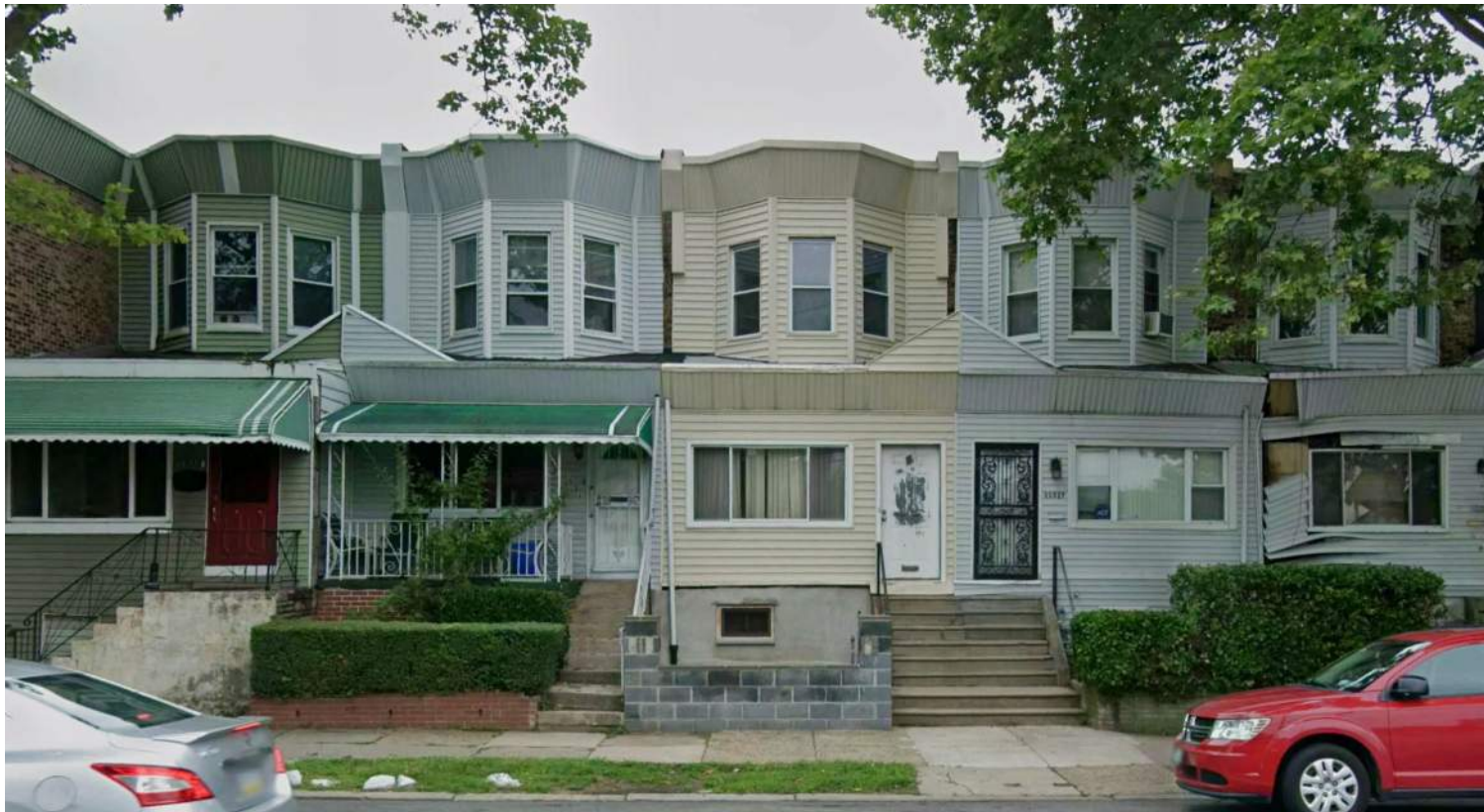




Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center



Please Touch Museum



Neighborhood Row homes



Neighborhood Homes on Parkside Avenue

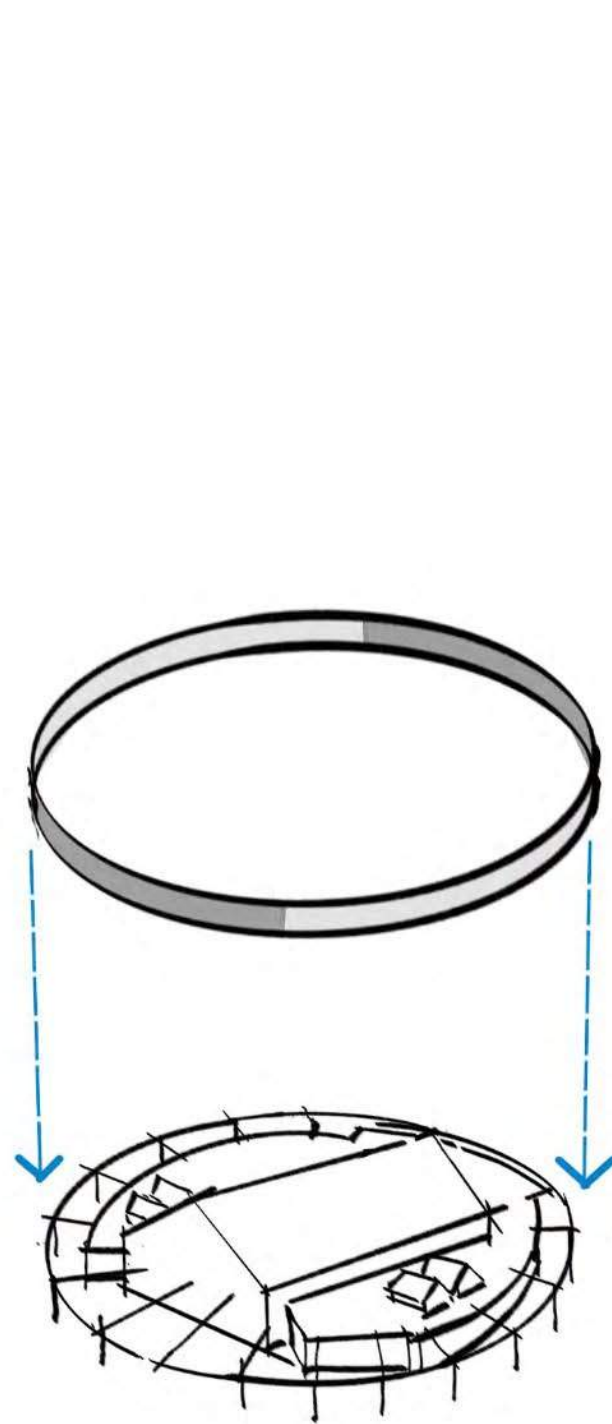


1 View of Carousel House standing from the Southwest corner looking north near the South Concourse Drive and Belmont Avenue corner.

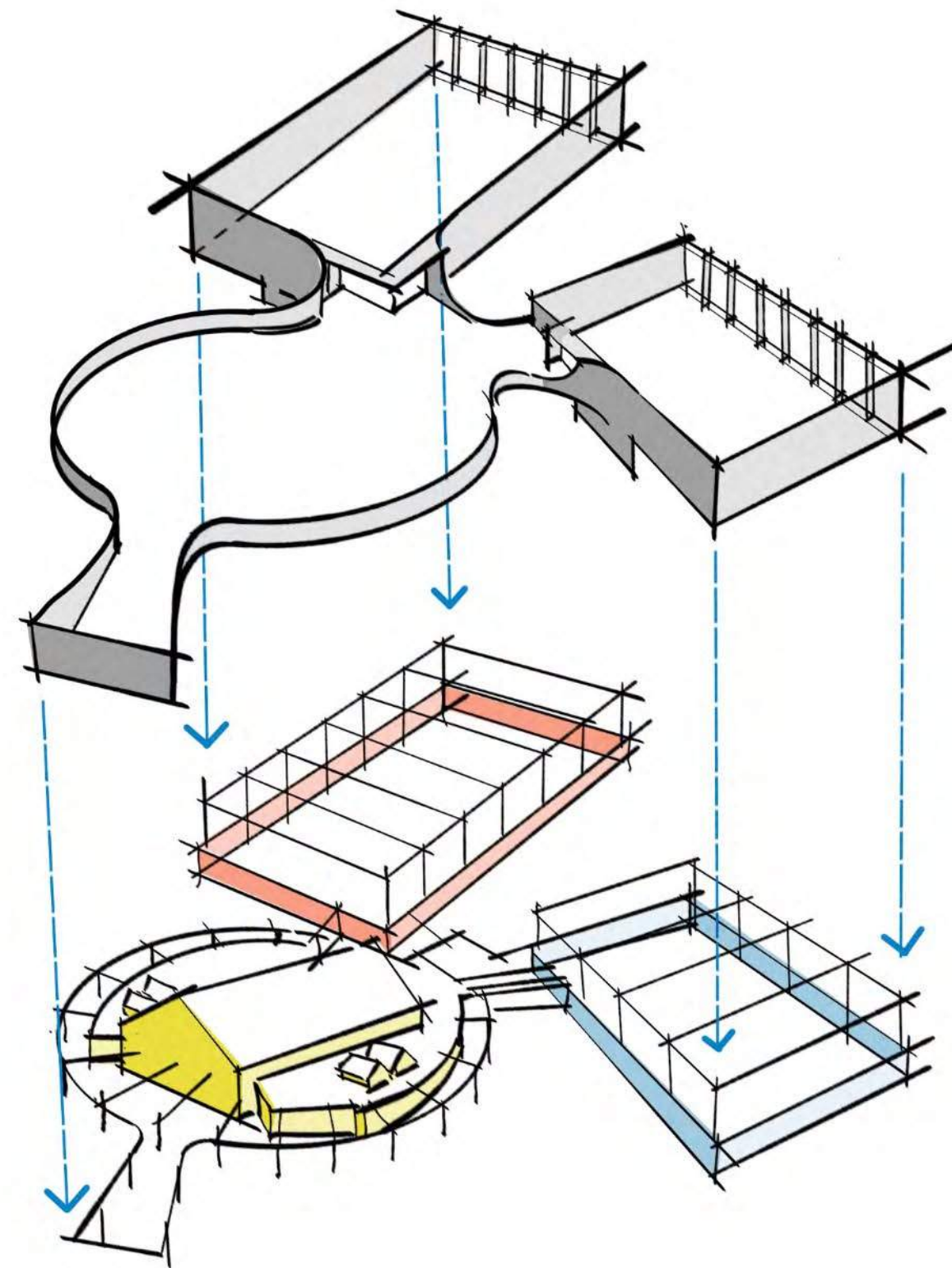


2 Aerial drone view of North exterior of existing Carousel House





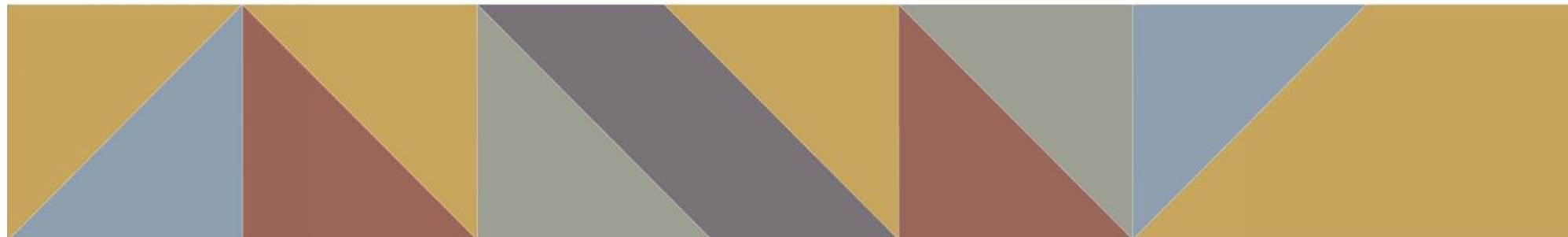
EXISTING



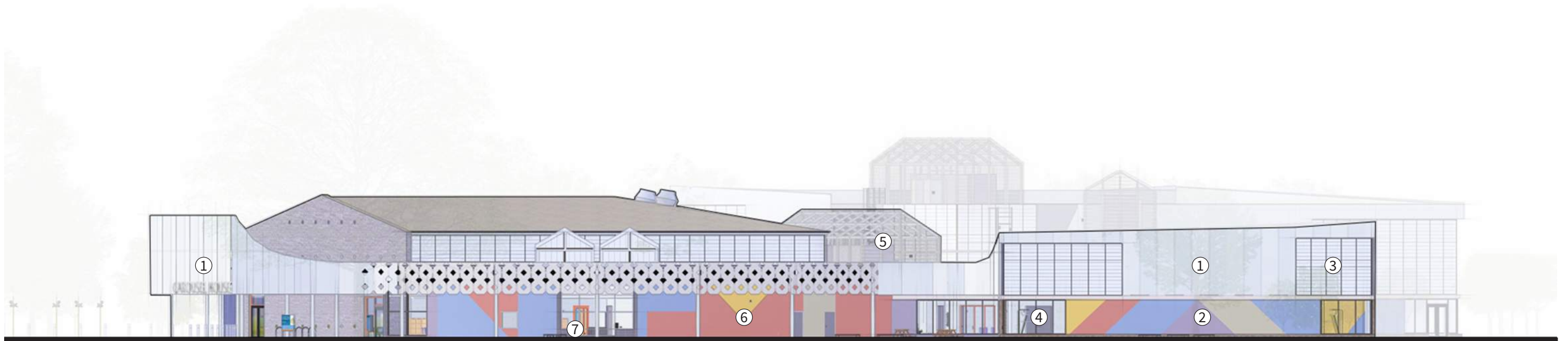
PROPOSED



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



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



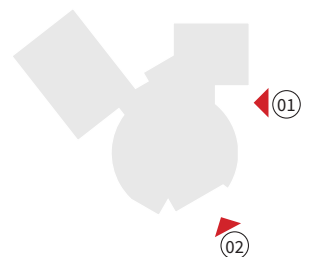
01 East

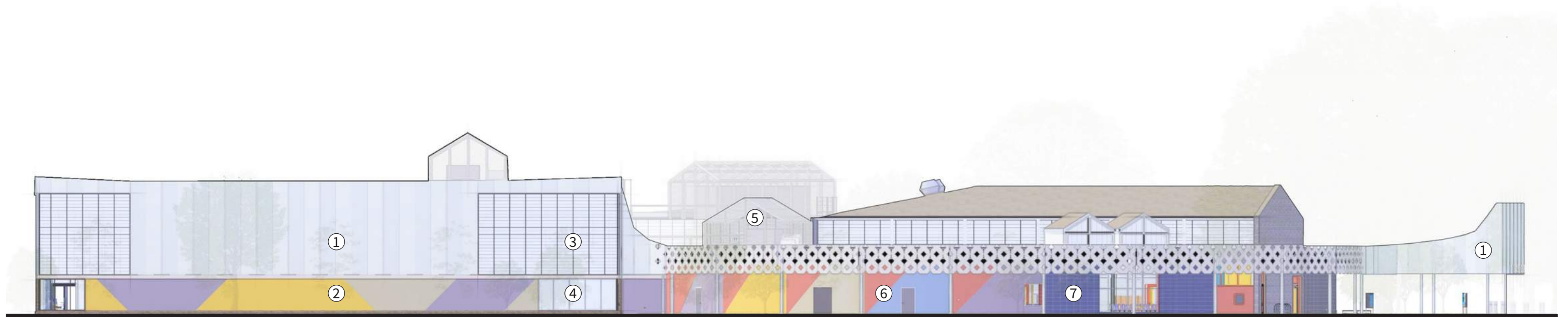


02 South

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





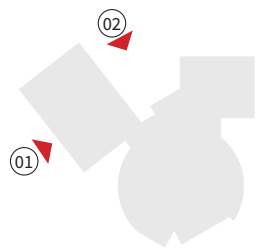
01 West



02 North

MATERIALS LEGEND

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



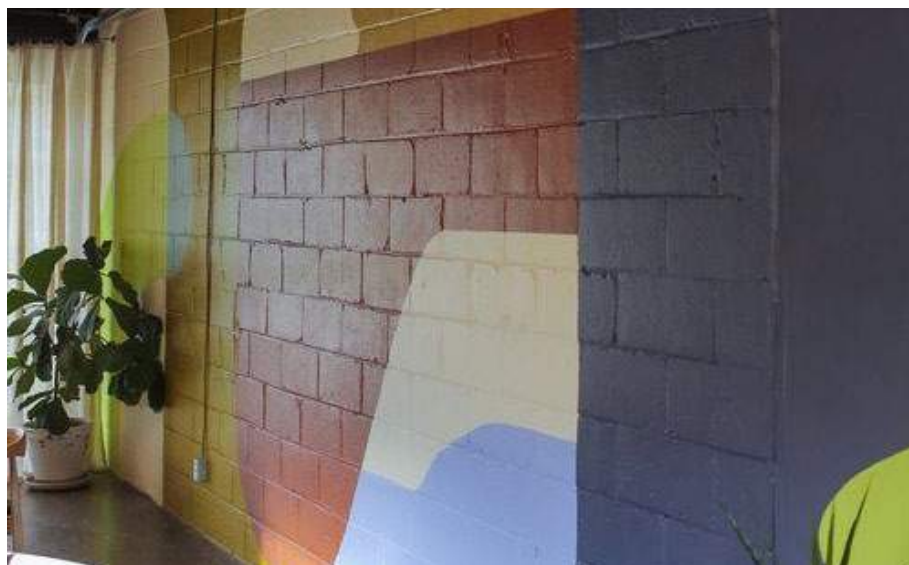




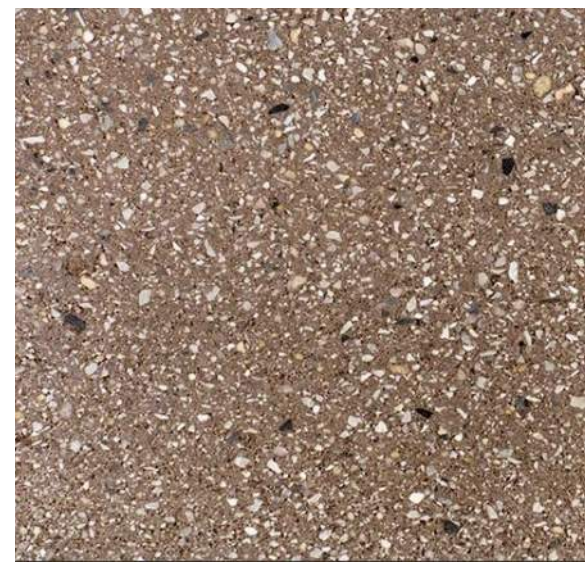
ULTRA HIGH PERFORMANCE CONCRETE PANELS



TRANSLUCENT WALL SYSTEM



PAINTED CMU BLOCK



CONCRETE MASONRY UNITS

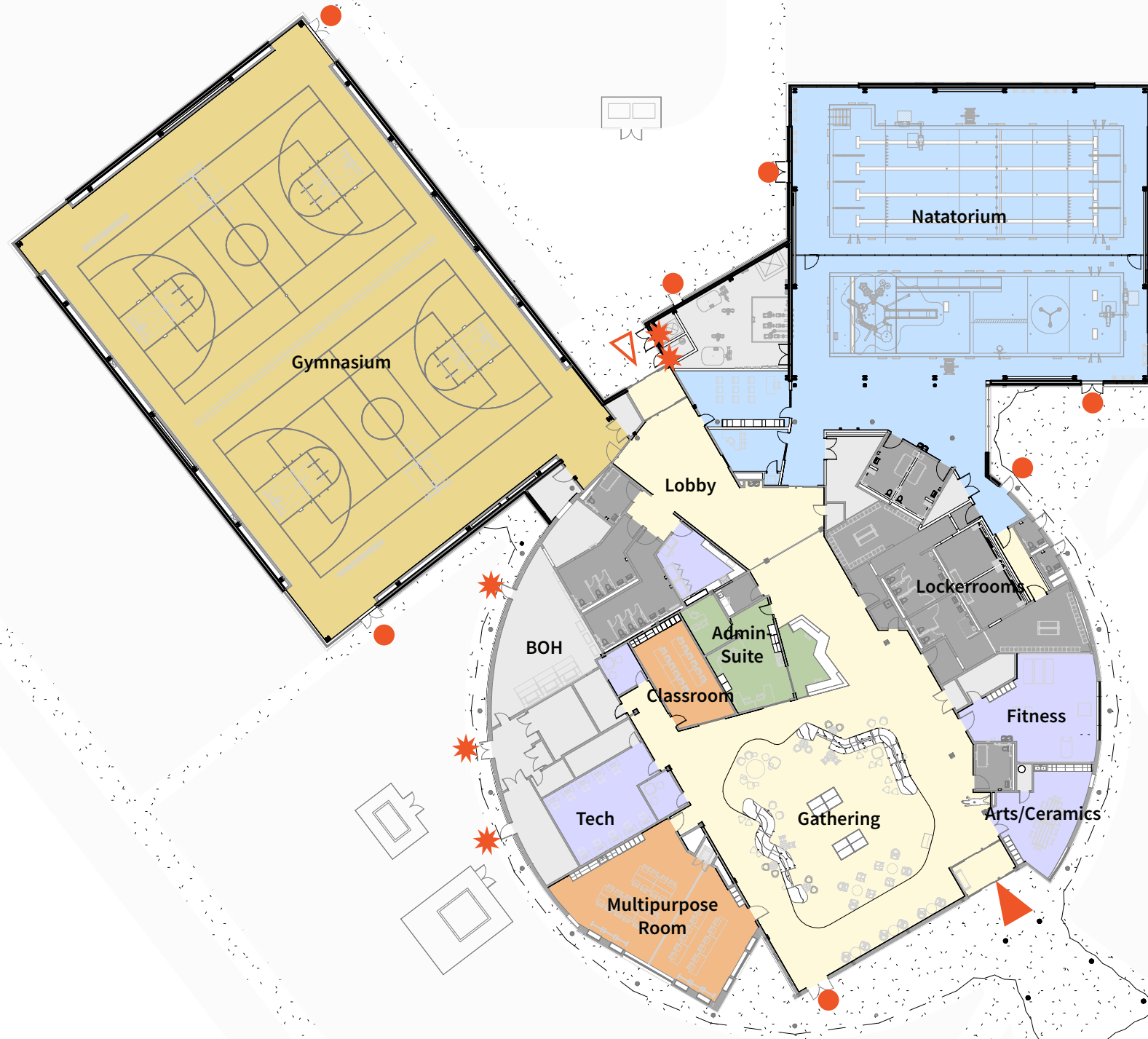


STUCCO









LEGEND

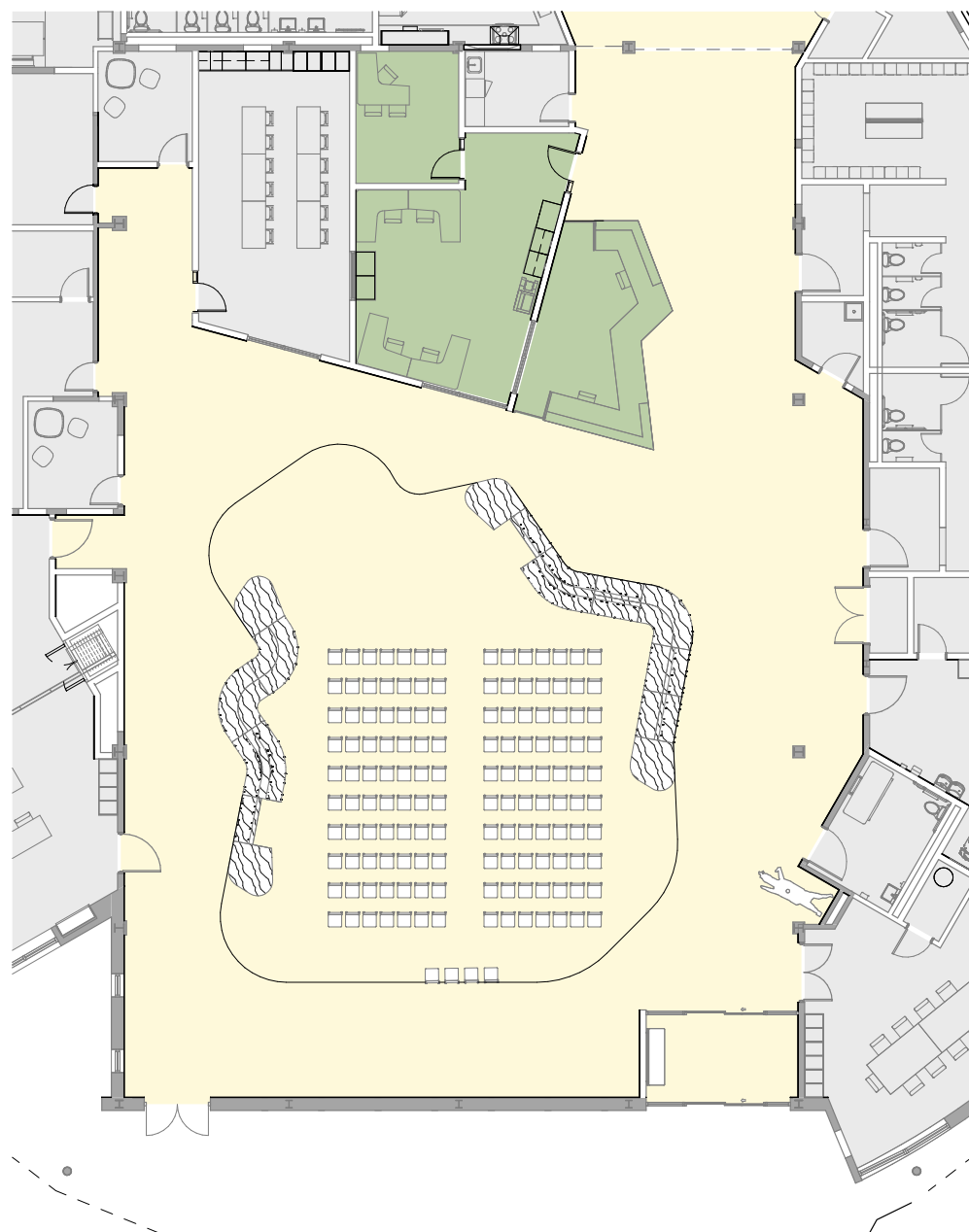
- Shared Space
- Natatorium
- Gymnasium
- Recreation
- Classrooms
- Administrative Spaces
- Restrooms + Locker Rooms
- Support Space
- Primary Entry
- Secondary Entry
- Service Access
- Exit Only

Scale: 1 inch = 40 feet

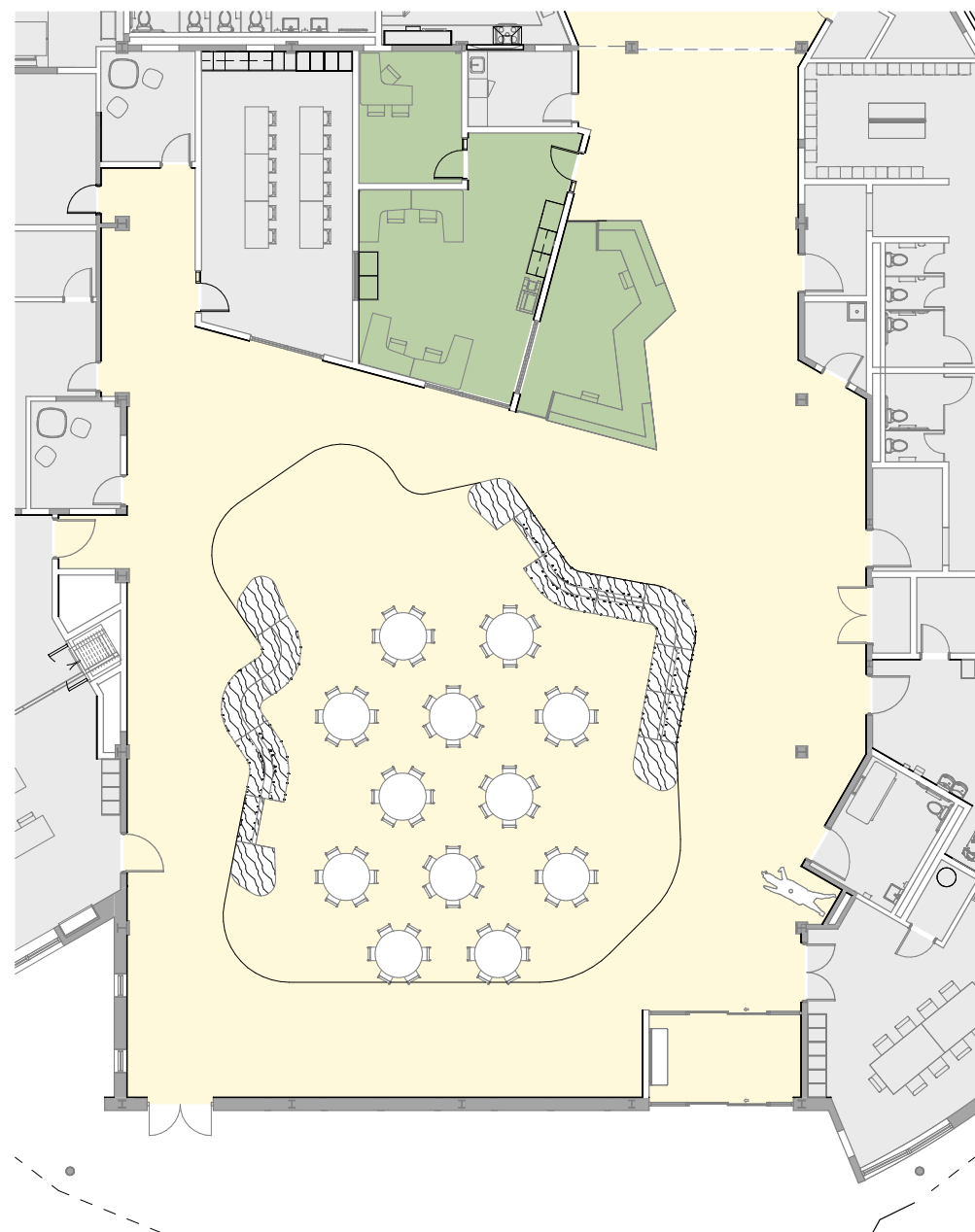
0 10 20 40



1 Typical Day to Day Recreation



2 Lecture



3 Banquet











