

Art Commission Review – Submittal Form

(Applicant complete below section)

Project Name: Friends Select School Backlot Transformation

Project Address: 1600-1640 Race Street **On Public Property?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

Total Budget: \$8 million **Utilizing City Funds?** ☐ Yes (specify amount): _____ ☒ 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.: Tarkett Sports Construction Design Lead (firm): Metcalfe Architecture & De

Other: _____

Primary Contact for Project Communications:

Name: Richard Gallagher

Affiliation: Project manager, Metcalfe

Email: [REDACTED]

(Art Commission staff complete below section)

Art Commission Meeting Date of Project Review: October 14, 2026

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):

This project received Concept Approval in January 2024, returning for Final in September 2026. Following a decision to Continue the review, the item is returning for Final Approval.

To:
Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

September 30, 2026

Re: 1600-1640 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Friends Select School – Back Lot Transformation

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Friends Select School, we respectfully request the Art Commission's review of revisions made to the design since our last presentation on 9/9/2026, during which a continuance was granted. The Commissioners requested a revised approach to the Welcome Center booth design, as well as additional detail on ground surface materials in proximity to proposed trees, and soil compaction will be avoided around trees.

Please note that **signage will be submitted separately** for Signs and Streeterly review; signage shown in this application is included for context only.

Welcome Center

The design of the Welcome Center has been adjusted to feel more welcoming to pedestrians approaching the Back Lot. The proposed changes to the form, color, and graphic treatments are meant as a reflection of the dynamic character of the larger elevated structure. Angles – like those seen throughout the space – are incorporated to help guide visitors toward the entry. Colors and materials of the gates, windows, and floor of the breezeway have been revised to help the entry experience feel lighter and more inviting. Window graphics will be incorporated to help soften the aesthetic of the windows fronting Race Street.

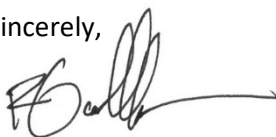
These changes are intended to strike a balance between presenting a welcoming face to the public and the pragmatic need to provide safety and security for the school's students. As the primary point of entry for students on this side of the campus, as well as an opportune moment for the public to interact with students, providing a visible presence at this threshold is critical to the school's ability to use the Back Lot safely and effectively.

Tree Protection Details

Details for tree installation and protection have been developed. This includes surface treatments to allow for water infiltration and discourage excessive foot traffic. Subsurface treatments, including a combination of structural soils and soil cells, are also included to help avoid damage to root systems in the event of foot traffic.

For any questions about this application, please feel free to reach me directly at 215.806.3891, or at richg@metarchdesign.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard Gallagher, AIA
Project Manager



1600-1640 RACE STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL BACKLOT TRANSFORMATION

PAGE 1

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | OCTOBER 14, 2026



The Philadelphia Art Commission Decision Form

The Philadelphia Art Commission

Established 1911

Katherine Liss, AIA, AICP
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Philadelphia Art Commission

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Vice Chairperson

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Rebecca Segall

Octavia Howell
Deputy Director for Planning and
Zoning, Department of Planning
and Development

One Parkway Building
1515 Arch Street
13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

215-683-4636
artcommission@phila.gov

File #: 185-26
Commission Meeting Date: 09/09/2026

Name: Rich Gallagher
Metcalf Architecture & Design
234 Market Street, 5th Fl
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Project Name & Location: Friends Select School - Backlot Transformation
1600-1640 Race St

Proposal: This proposal is for the demolition and redesign of the backlot to allow for an increase in play space and a decrease in vehicle traffic. Site upgrades include, playground equipment, play structures, elevated pedestrian pathway, asphalt replacement asphalt painting, entrance gate and security booth at vehicle entrance.

Commission Decision: CONTINUE

Remarks: This project has changed significantly since it received Concept Approval in January 2024 (05-24). Commissioners requested the applicant to return with a revised approach to the welcome center booth design and paver details showing where the pavers meet the trees, as well as details showing how soil compaction will be avoided around the trees.



Octavia Howell
Deputy Director for Planning and Zoning,
Department of Planning and Development

Art Commission approval is not an endorsement for any approval, exception or variance that the proposal might require from any other department, board or commission.

234 Market Street, 5th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19106

To:
Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

September 30, 2026

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Friends Select School – Back Lot Transformation

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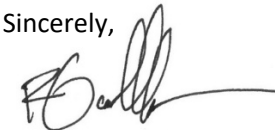
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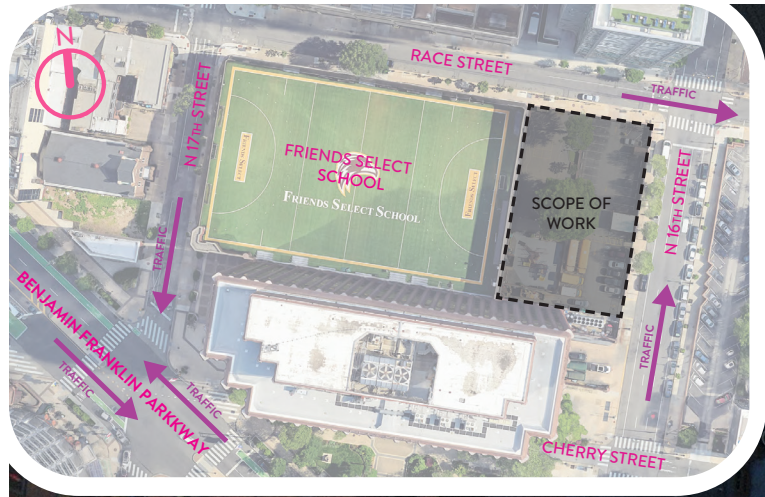
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Sincerely,



Richard Gallagher, AIA
Project Manager



EXISTING CONDITIONS

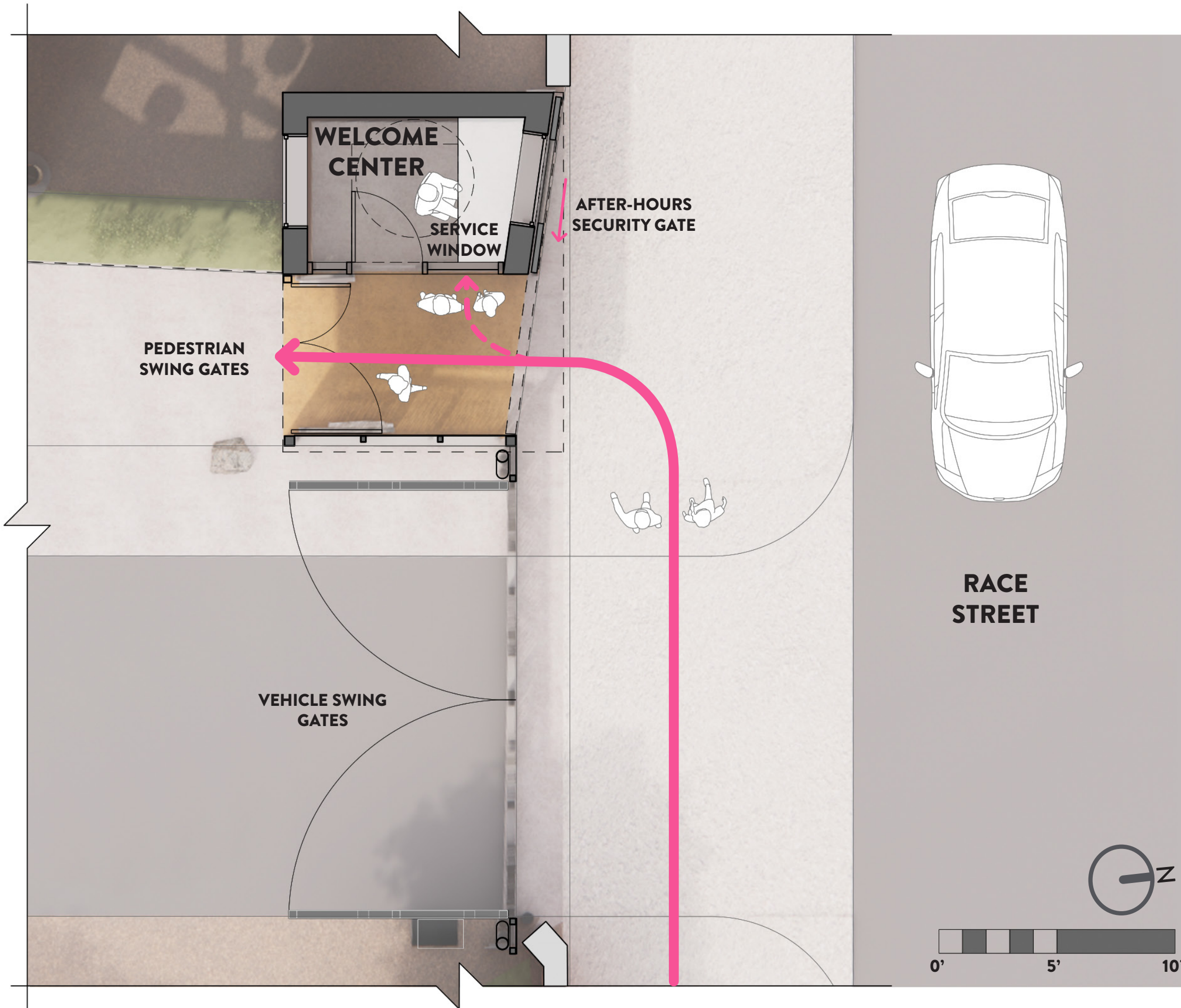


OVERHEAD VIEW

PROPOSED BACKLOT DESIGN

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | OCTOBER 14, 2026





PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

- MAXIMIZE PLAY VALUE (MINIMIZE BOOTH SIZE)
- PROVIDE WELCOMING PRESENCE ON RACE ST.
- PROVIDE SAFER ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL PROCESS
- PROVIDE SECURITY FOR STUDENTS WALKING BETWEEN CAMPUSES
- FIT UNDER ELEVATED STRUCTURE (MINIMIZE HEIGHT)
- PROVIDE LATERAL STABILITY (MINIMIZE OPENINGS)









CLOSED



OPEN



CLOSED



OPEN



TREEHOUSE & WALKWAY



ENTRY ADDITION



PREVIOUS (9/9)



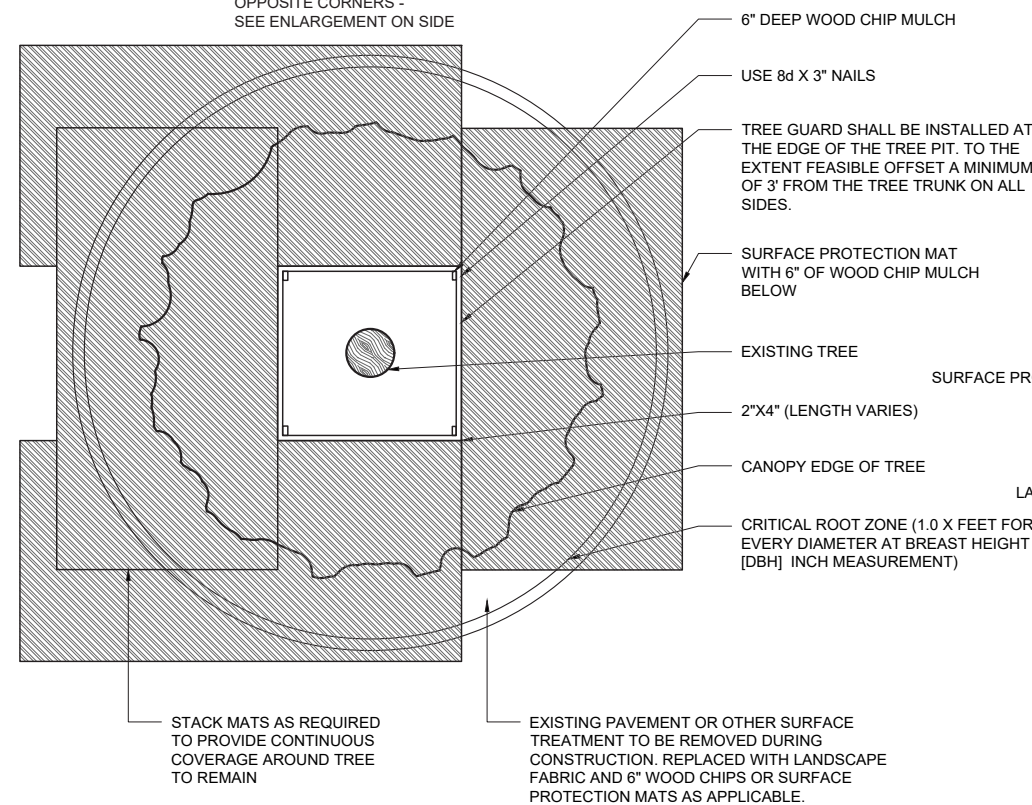
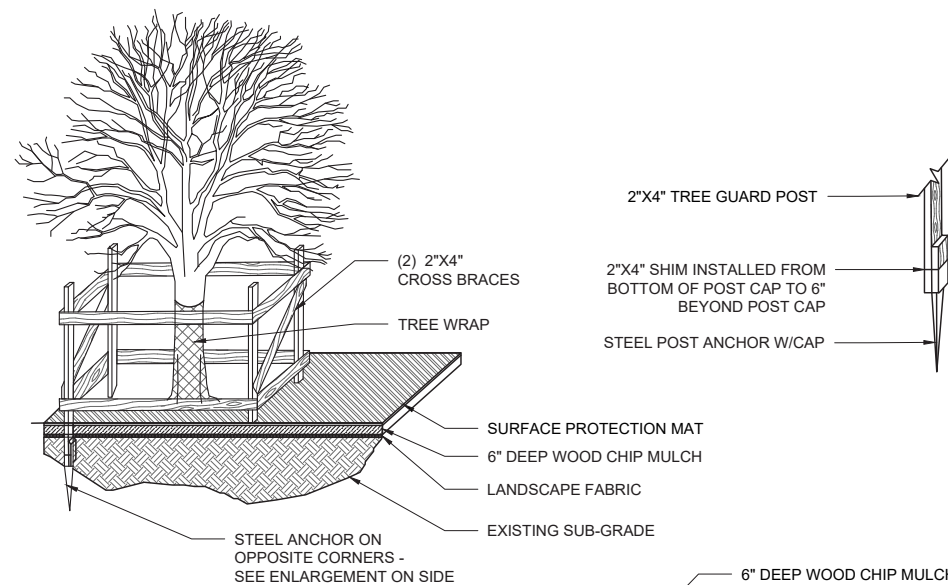
CURRENT (10/14)



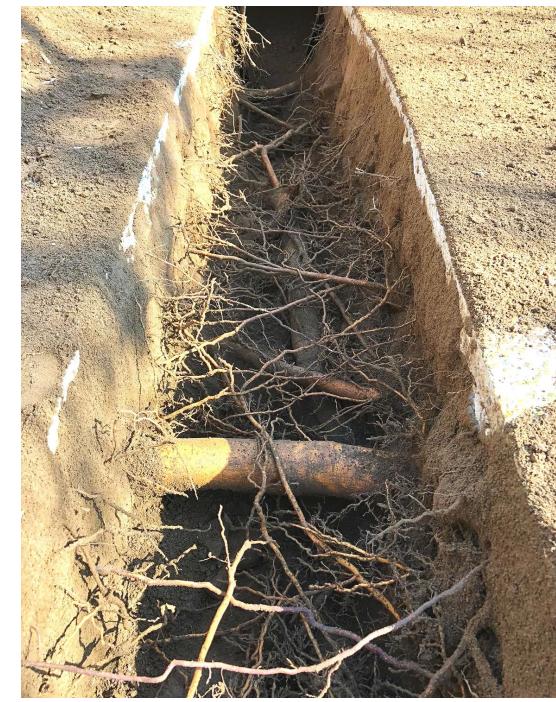
PREVIOUS (9/9)



CURRENT (10/14)



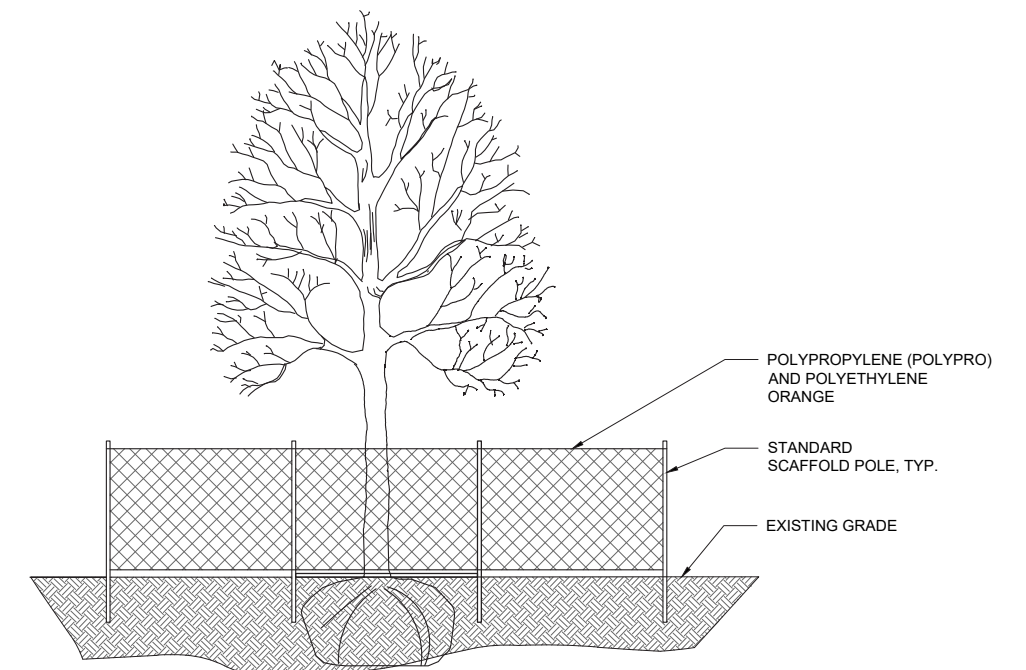
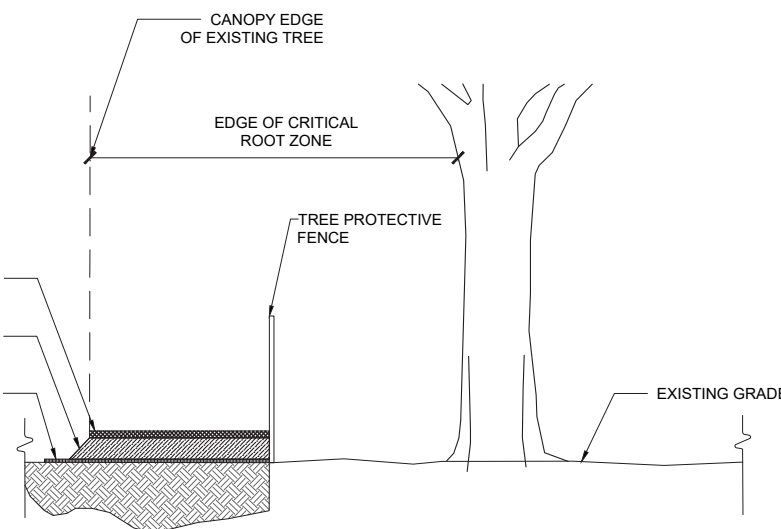
TEMPORARY TREE PROTECTION (EXISTING TREE)



AIR-SPADING TO PROTECT EXISTING ROOTS



HELICAL PILES TO MINIMIZE GROUND DISTURBANCE



TEMPORARY TREE PROTECTION (NEW TREE)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



APPENDIX

- PREVIOUS PRESENTATION (9/9/2026)





To:
Philadelphia Art Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

August 26, 2026

Re: 1600-1640 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103
Friends Select School
Back Lot Transformation

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Friends Select School, we respectfully request the Art Commission's approval of the project described herein as a prerequisite to the issuance of a building permit. The property is situated within the Center City Overlay District - Parkway Buffer. While the project is to be partially funded by a Local Share Account (LSA) grant, funding from the City of Philadelphia is not being pursued. The project budget is \$8 million.

Please note that this project was **previously reviewed by the Art Commission on January 10, 2024 (file # 5-24), and was granted conceptual approval.** That review requested additional information on lighting, a tree protection plan for the existing oak tree, and additional information on the proposed gates. These items have been further developed in the current drawings. **Signage will be submitted separately** for Signs and Streeterly review; signage shown in this application is included for context only.

Project Mission

In converting the Back Lot from an entirely paved, vehicular-focused space to a multi-use, multi-level learning environment, Friends Select will gain much more than a "playground". The space will be a state-of-the-art educational facility, offering endless possibilities for play, learning, socialization, collaboration, and education.

The project is designed to support the school's mission and Quaker values, including the promotion of community, peace, equity, and environmental stewardship. As an institution "in the City and of the City", a goal of the project is to break down physical barriers between the school and the broader community. The Back Lot is intended to become the school's "front porch", and offer opportunities to engage with children and families from across Philadelphia.

The new space will offer amenities for the entire Friends Select community. Play equipment and space for sports and games will be geared toward Lower and Middle School students, while spaces to sit, relax, and socialize will accommodate older users. Opportunities for outdoor learning will be available to students of all ages. Practical upgrades to security and vehicle infrastructure will support the school at large.

Existing Conditions & Demolition

The entire Back Lot – the existing open space situated at the corner of North 16th and Race Streets – is intended to be updated. With specific exceptions, all existing paving, equipment, walls, furnishings, and plantings are intended to be removed.

An existing Oak tree in the middle of the space is intended to remain, and every effort will be made to preserve the tree's health during construction and for the foreseeable future. The existing brick perimeter wall is intended to remain, with the exception of some selective removal at the new Welcome Center on Race Street.

Proposed Outdoor Spaces

The redesigned outdoor space is designed around an elevated walkway that springs from the ground along a compacted berm, meanders around and over the space, grows to a "treehouse" at the southeast corner, and connects to the existing building at the level of the stair landing between the first and second floors. The spaces on and below this elevated structure will offer a variety of moments for play, socialization, and learning.

At grade, a new Welcome Center will help control pedestrian and vehicular traffic into the site. A mixture of paving and other surface materials, along with landscaping, will create a dynamic environment while directing pedestrians toward the building entry. An asphalt driveway connecting the existing vehicular entries on Race and 16th Streets, as well as the loading zone at the southwest corner of the site, will accommodate buses and other vehicles when not in use by students for sports and other play activities.

Proposed Building Addition

A one-story addition is proposed adjacent to the existing building entry. This new space will add a lobby and reception area to this entrance, as well as restrooms that will support the Back Lot. Being adjacent to the existing stair tower, the construction of the addition will provide a fire-separation so that the existing path of egress is maintained. The roof of the addition will also serve as the entry landing where the elevated structure connects to the upper level of the building.

Contact Information

The owner's representative is Tarkett Sports Construction (dba Anchor Management Group). Notice of the commission's decision can be provided to:

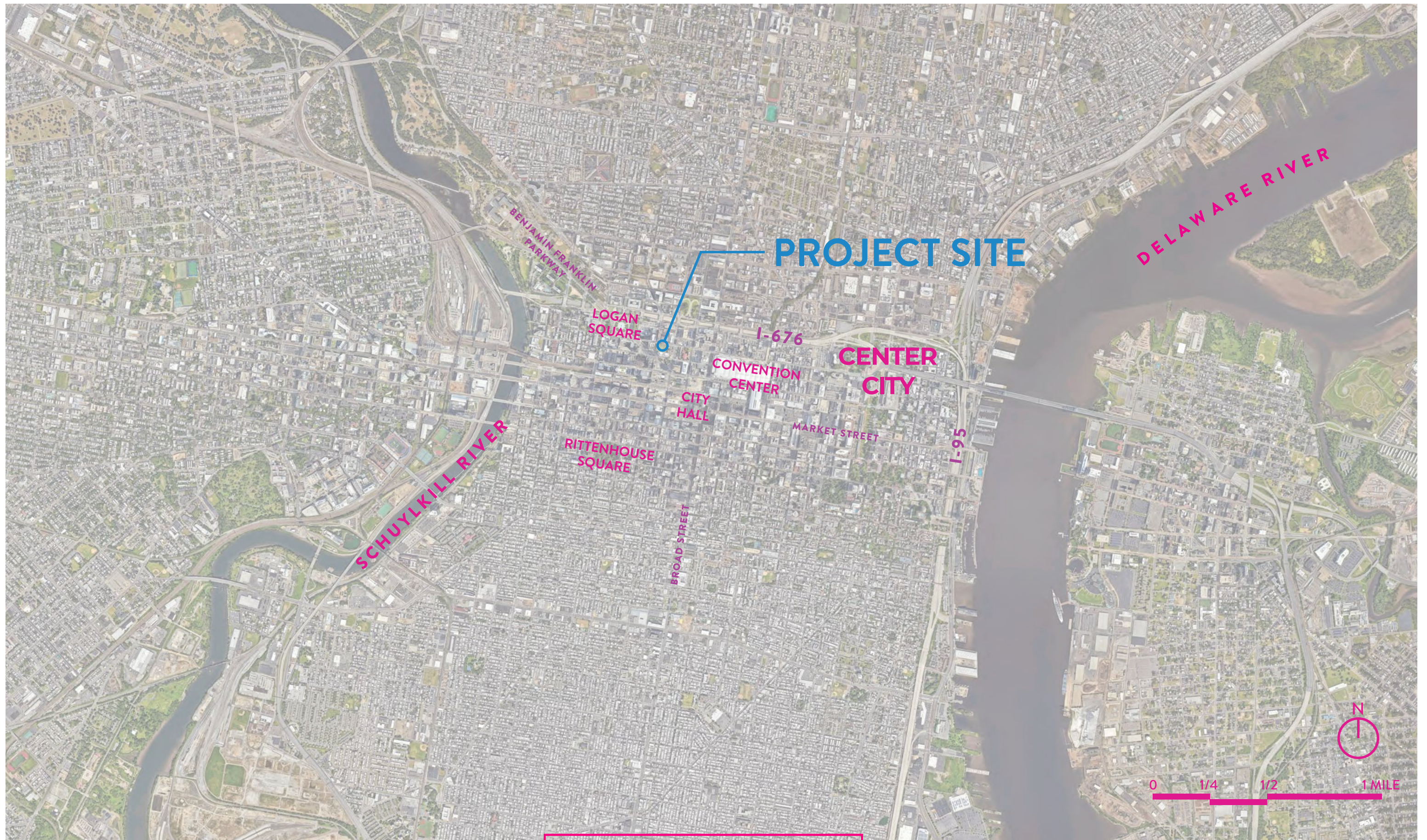
Brian Johnson, Director of Preconstruction
1000 Conshohocken Road, Suite 201
Conshohocken, PA 19428
Brian.johnson@tarkettsports.com

For any questions about this application, please feel free to reach me directly at 215.806.3891, or at richg@metarchdesign.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

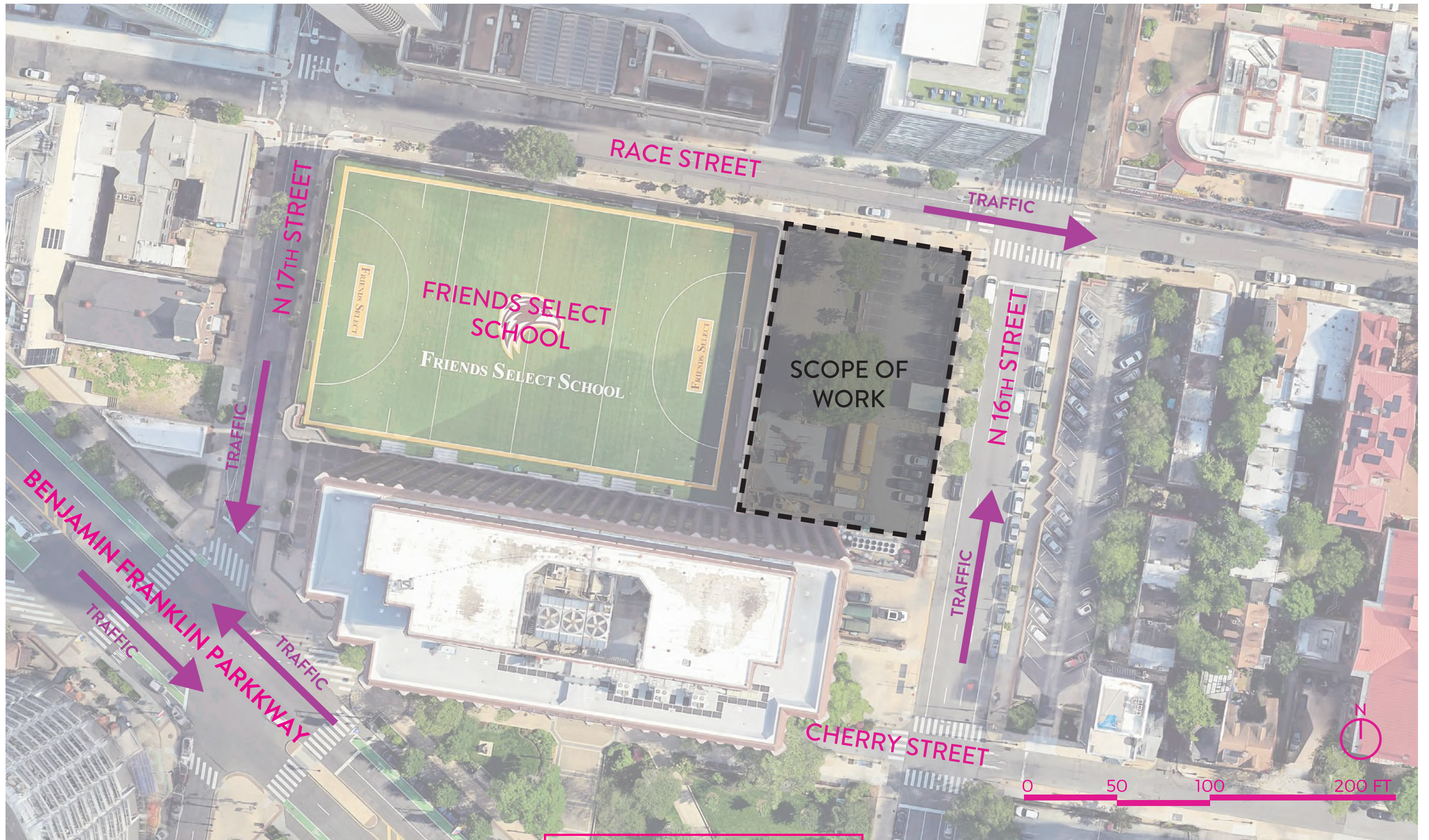


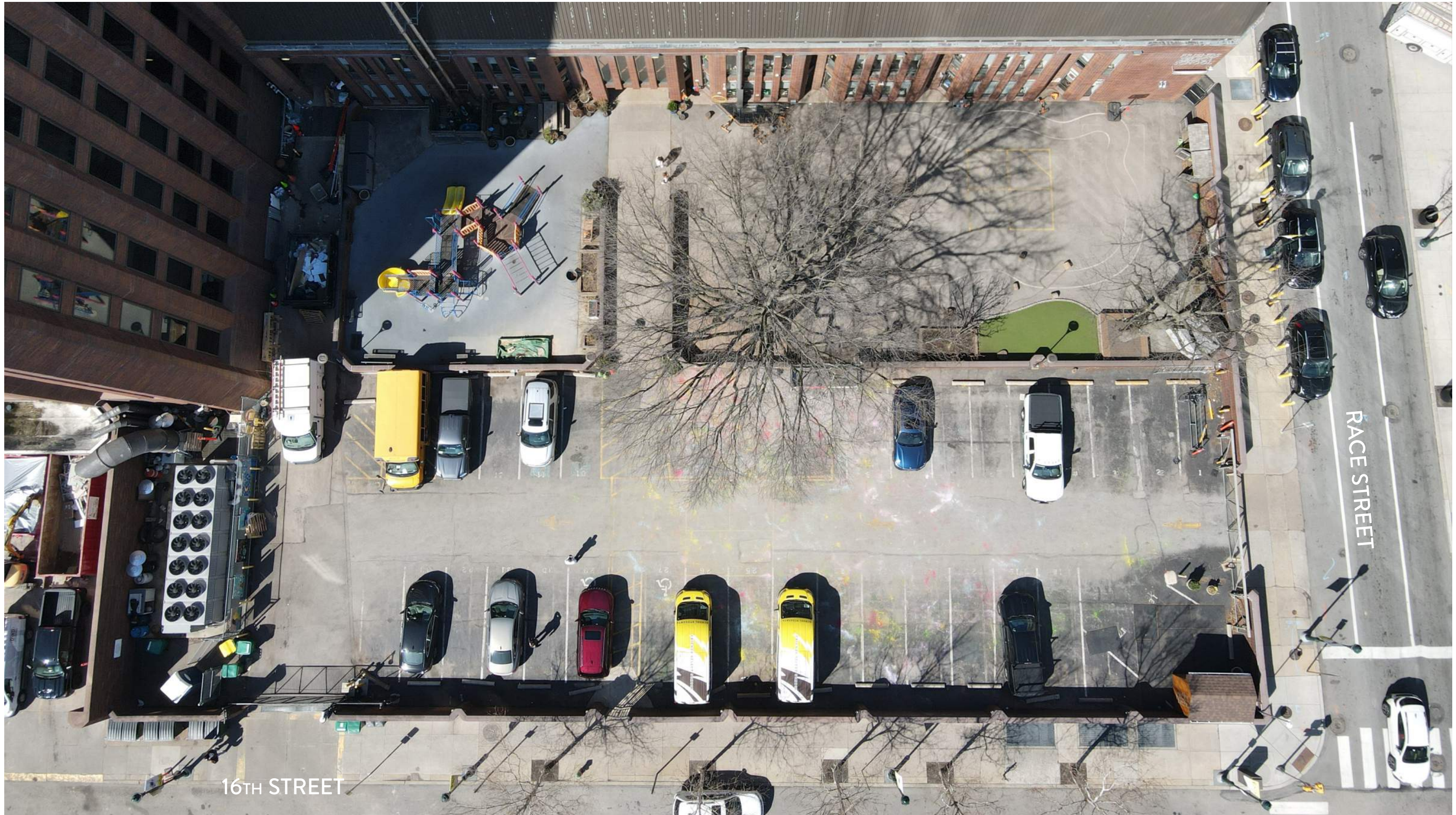
Richard Gallagher, AIA
Project Manager



SITE LOCATION

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026





OVERHEAD VIEW

EXISTING CONDITIONS

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026 PAGE 5





16TH STREET AND CHERRY STREET LOOKING NORTHWEST



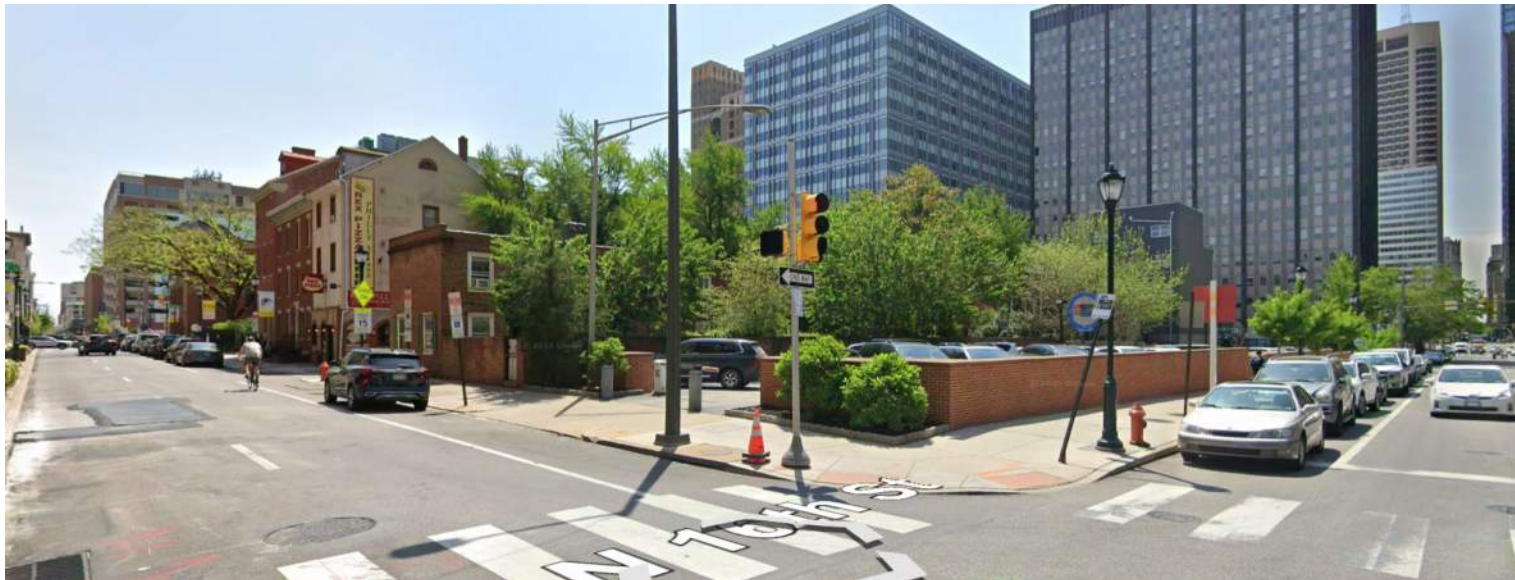
16TH STREET LOOKING WEST



16TH STREET AND RACE STREET LOOKING SOUTHWEST



16TH STREET AND RACE STREET LOOKING WEST



16TH STREET AND RACE STREET LOOKING SOUTHEAST (ACROSS FROM SITE)



RACE STREET LOOKING EAST



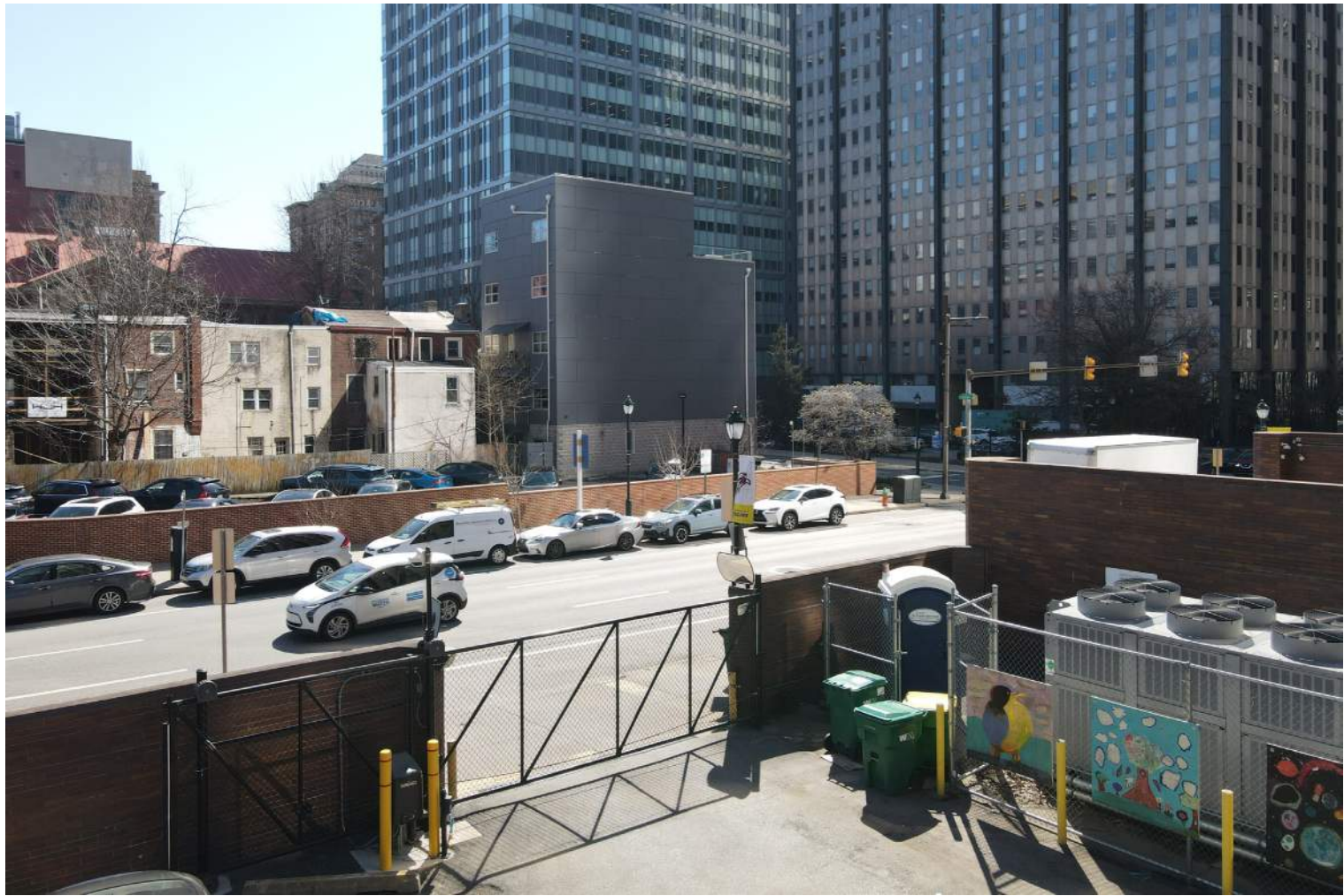
VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING NORTH



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING NORTHEAST



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING NORTHWEST (STREET LEVEL)



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING SOUTHEAST



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING NORTHWEST (ROOF LEVEL)



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING SOUTHWEST TOWARD SCHOOL

EXISTING CONDITIONS



PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026

PAGE 9





PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED CONCEPT (2023)

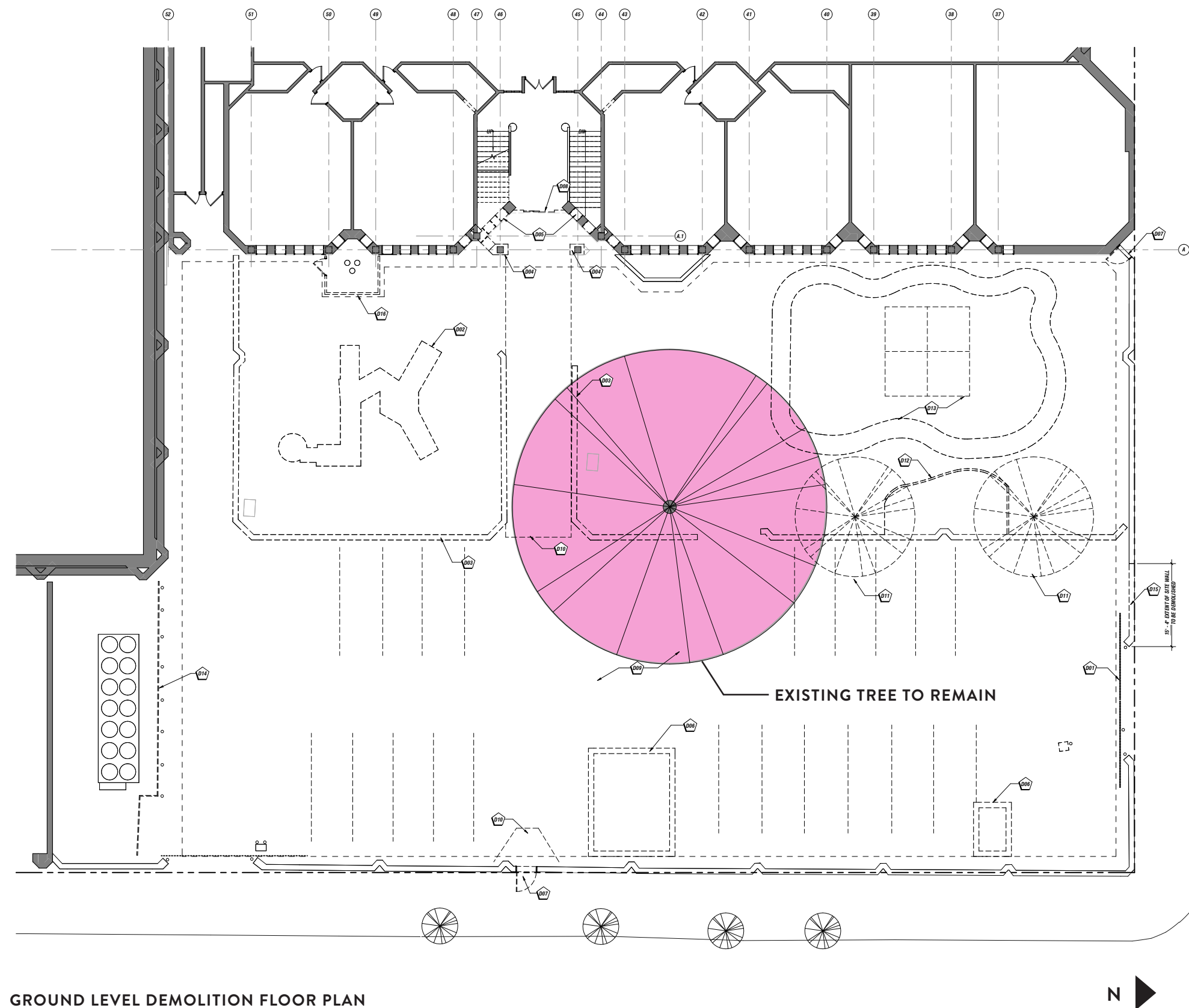
FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026
PAGE 11

FRIENDS SELECT

ANCHOR
MANAGEMENT GROUP

metcalfe
www.metarchdesign.com



GROUND LEVEL DEMOLITION FLOOR PLAN

TREE PROTECTION NOTES:

- The existing pin oak tree is to be protected throughout the demolition and construction process
- A Root Protection Zone (RPZ) will be established equal to one foot for every inch of trunk caliper at breast height
- The RPZ to be protected by a hard barrier to avoid equipment entering, or material staging within
- All demolition, excavation, grading, or construction activities to occur within the RPZ will be observed by an arborist
- Excavation occurring within the RPZ to be done with hand-digging and/or air-spading, to protect existing roots
- Roots that are exposed during excavation and construction will be watered and protected until backfilling can occur
- Deep root soil compartments to be provided over the root zone, where new construction/grading overlaps with the RPZ
- No pruning of the tree or cutting of roots shall occur without prior approval of the observing arborist
- Ongoing observation and maintenance to be provided after construction to ensure the continued health of the tree



VIEW FROM BACKLOT LOOKING NORTHWEST (ROOF LEVEL)



OVERHEAD VIEW

PROPOSED BACKLOT DESIGN

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026
PAGE 13





OVERHEAD VIEW FROM 16TH STREET AND RACE STREET

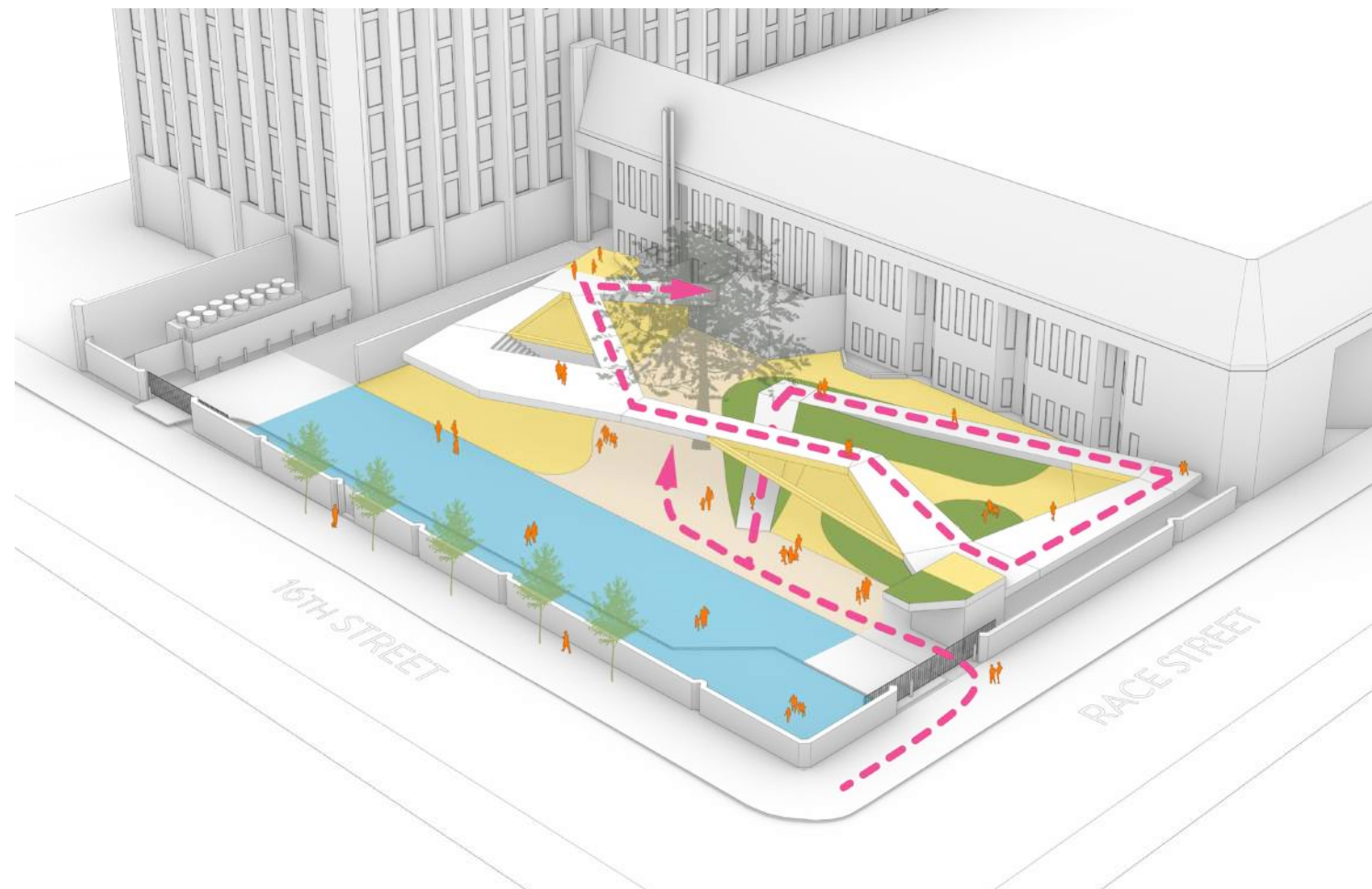
PROPOSED BACKLOT DESIGN

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

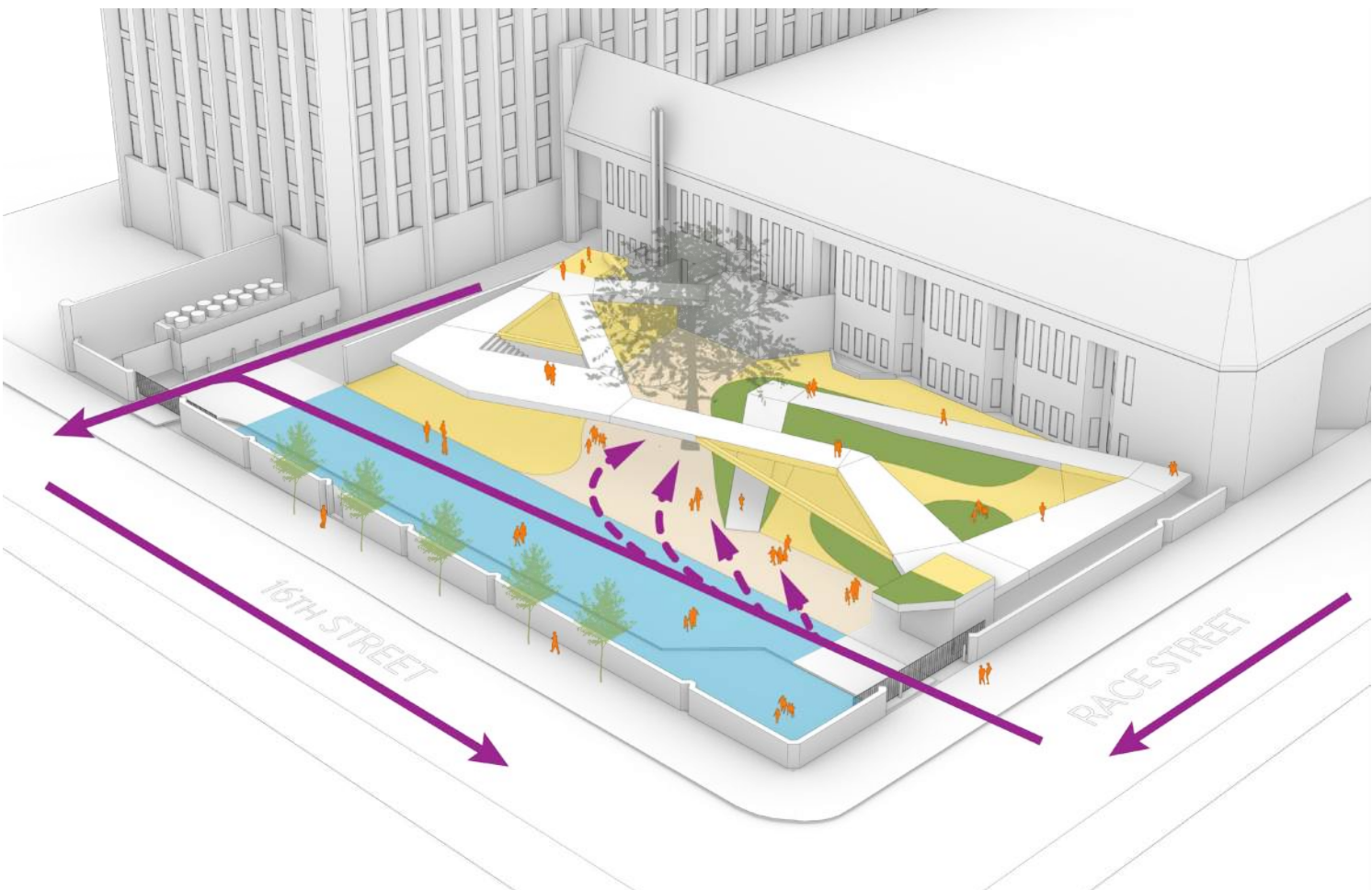
PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026

PAGE 14





PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION



PROPOSED VEHICULAR CIRCULATION



PROPOSED RACE STREET ENTRANCE



PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE AND "WELCOME CENTER"



VIEW OF TREEHOUSE FROM EXISTING 16TH STREET GATE



VIEW OF TREEHOUSE FROM 16TH STREET

PROJECT RENDERINGS - EXTERIOR VIEWS AND ENTRANCES

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026



SPORTS AREA



SWINGS



BUS PARKING +SOCCER AREA + GAGA PIT

PROJECT RENDERINGS - GROUND LEVEL PLAY

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026



VIEW OF TREEHOUSE AND UNDER ELEVATED WALKWAY





VIEW OF BERM, SLIDES, AND ROCK SCRAMBLES



PLAY AREA UNDER WALKWAY



BERM PATHS FROM GROUND LEVEL TO ELEVATED WALKWAY



ELEVATED WALKWAY AND PLANTERS

PROJECT RENDERINGS - ELEVATED WALKWAY ASCENT

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026



WALKWAY AND HAMMOCK NETTING



ELEVATED WALKWAY TOWARD TREEHOUSE



TREEHOUSE AT GROUND LEVEL FROM NEW ADDITION



TREEHOUSE GROUND LEVEL

PROJECT RENDERINGS - GROUND LEVEL AROUND TREEHOUSE

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026





TREEHOUSE UPPER LEVEL



TREEHOUSE PERCH



TUBE SLIDE AND SEATING



TREEHOUSE AND ELEVATED NETTING



VIEW UNDER WALKWAY TOWARDS ENTRANCE ADDITION



ENTRANCE ADDITION



APPROACH TO ADDITION ROOF AND LANDING ENTRANCE



VIEW FROM ENTRANCE ADDITION ROOF

PROJECT RENDERINGS - ENTRANCE ADDITION

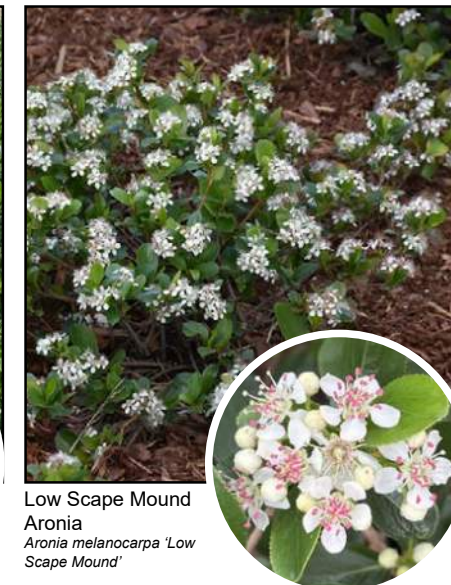
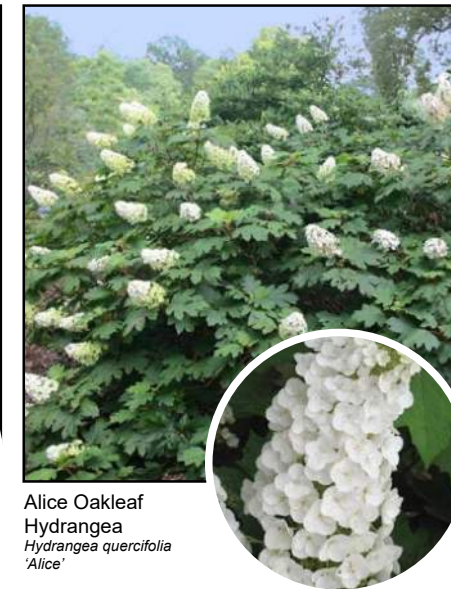
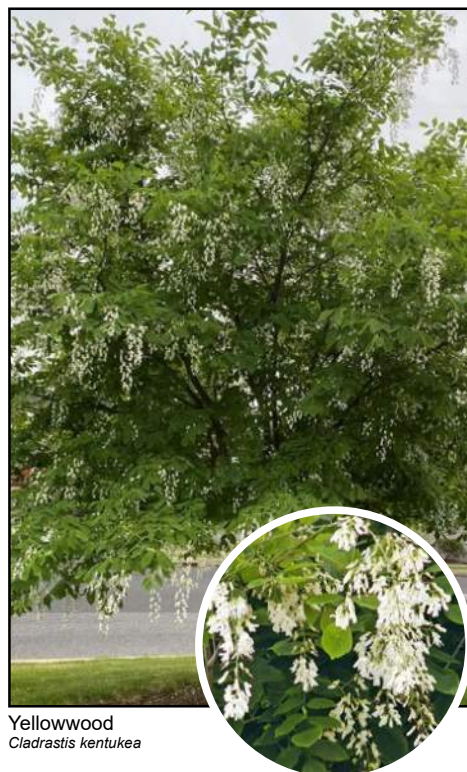
FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026

PAGE 21



BACK LOT PLANT PALETTE



PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026





UPPER LEVEL TREE HOUSE LIGHTING CONCEPT



UPPER LEVEL TREE HOUSE LIGHTING CONCEPT



TREE HOUSE EXTERIOR LIGHTING CONCEPT

LIGHTING CONCEPTS

FRIENDS SELECT SCHOOL | PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

PREVIOUS PRESENTATION
9/9/2026

PAGE 24

FRIENDS SELECT

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