

PROJECT CARES PITTSBURGH  
**PLANNING COMMISSION PRESENTATION**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

# ABSTRACT

Project Cares is a sanctuary and support facility for people experiencing homelessness in downtown Pittsburgh. Motivated to create opportunities for those among us who are most vulnerable, a diverse team of corporate and community experts has coalesced around a deliberate approach to the planning design and operation of a facility to be located on Second Avenue adjacent to the Liberty Bridge. Working together over the past four months with input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, this team has established consensus around a vision for Project Cares and has proposed a program of functions and services to be incorporated.

**Project Cares invites and encourages access among people experiencing homeless, to sanctuary, support and resources that enable and empower individuals to greater self-sufficiency on a path to a safe and secure quality of life.**

This vision, the program of functions and services, and the approach to planning and design has been informed by research on best practices and lessons learned from comparable facilities across the country, and by the experts on the team who are addressing homelessness daily and understand our specific local circumstances. These experts include individuals representing local healthcare, government, public safety, social services, NGO and professional services (design & construction) organizations.

Project Cares has been conceived as a year-round “low barrier” shelter accepting men and women but not children, with wrap-around services to address the myriad and complex issues confronting people experiencing homelessness. As such Project Cares functions and services include the following key components:

- + Intake: customary coordinated entry functions to accept clients.
- + Client Services: including Case Management to assess the needs and navigate to appropriate resources, and Supportive Services as a small clinic for health and mental health consultation.
- + Drop-in Center: offering personal hygiene and client services to individuals experiencing homelessness but who are not staying at the facility. (Approximately 40 people at one time)
- + Congregate Sleeping & Hygiene Center: 125 beds (95 base + 30 overflow) in group sleeping rooms with dedicated personal hygiene facilities.
- + Community Space and Amenities: a commons area to include lounges, a library and computer room, kitchen, dining and outdoor space.

These accommodations result in a facility of approximately 45,000 gross square which can be assembled in a five-story building on the Second Avenue site. Full design and construction activities are expected to proceed imminently. Among the drivers of design and the delivery of services are dignity, personal control, security and privacy, harm reduction, flexibility, trauma informed care and design and flexibility. Project Cares will track and measure its success seeking results that reduce chronic homelessness in Pittsburgh.

# SITE & BUILDING DESIGN

## Design Concepts

Project Cares has a distinct site with many unique challenges as well as opportunities. It is urban space with a towering bridge, jail, parking garage, and courthouse as neighbors. The proximity of the bridge poses many challenges, such as complying with Right of Way and Aerial Easement requirements and obtaining a Highway Occupancy Permit.

Economy and long-term maintenance and care of the site and building materials and fixtures is essential and following the principles of Trauma Informed Design is paramount.

The site is hemmed on 3 sides by First Avenue, Second Avenue and Municipal Courts Drive (MCD). The Liberty Bridge spans over about a quarter of the usable site and above MCD. There is relative peacefulness below, and it provides a significant protection from the weather. The design team has incorporated those features into the project's architecture.

## Public Engagement

Presentations to community groups is not required in the Riverfront District. However, the design team and the Project Cores Committee (stakeholders) have approached and introduced the proposed development to a number of Pittsburgh private and public organizations that are in the proximity or are direct neighbors of Project Cares.

## First Avenue

At the First Avenue level the area is a bit more secured with limited access. This area has been designed for staff and lower activity as well as loading and service traffic. Outdoor landscaped seating area provides a place for rest. The plaza will be vegetated with shade trees, shrubs, and perennials. For the residents there is a secured dining patio that will be only accessible from the interior. At this level there are bike racks available and 5 parking spaces. The loading area at the southeast corner of the building is the only curb cut proposed for the project. A screened emergency generator is tucked at the far southeast corner of the building.

## Second Avenue

The walkway along Second Avenue is lined with new trees, and further animated by gravel strip and planter boxes. The walkway is generous as there will be pedestrian traffic along the sidewalk and from the adjacent parallel parking spaces. At the building's north-west corner, we propose bike racks and a fix-it station. The transitional or "movement zone" of brushed concrete walkways will be interrupted by a pavement change to highlight the accessible entry plaza. At that point the change in pavement material and proposed building signage will announce the end of the sidewalk "movement zone" and the the entryway into the Project Cares realm making the corner a distinct pedestrian entrance.

## Municipal Courts Drive

Along the walkway at Municipal Courts Drive the area lacks enough water or sun light under the bridge to sustain any type of vegetation. However, as an alternative we are proposing a mix of gravel and boulders to cover the open earth area below the entry plaza to keep it visually interesting. As one walks down from Second Ave to First Avenue one finds a dog park. This area will provide a secured location for persons experiencing homelessness to take a companion pet and be protected by the bridge from the elements. This area is accessible from the lower plaza.

## The Entry Plaza

Also referred to as the building's outdoor living room this space is an essential feature of the project. The entry plaza spills out to Second Avenue and we have enhanced the MCD corner by expanding the walkway to the travel lane. This will help emphasize the corner of the building and help those crossing Second Avenue to have a shorter length to traverse traffic. The plaza will have benches, tables, and chairs to accommodate both small and large group seating arrangements. This will allow residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors in protected setting. This outdoor living room is also a key programmatic element. It welcomes people in and provides an opportunity for staff to engage with persons experiencing homelessness. Thusly a human connection may be established before people enter the building enclosure - an important principle in trauma informed design.

# SITE & BUILDING DESIGN

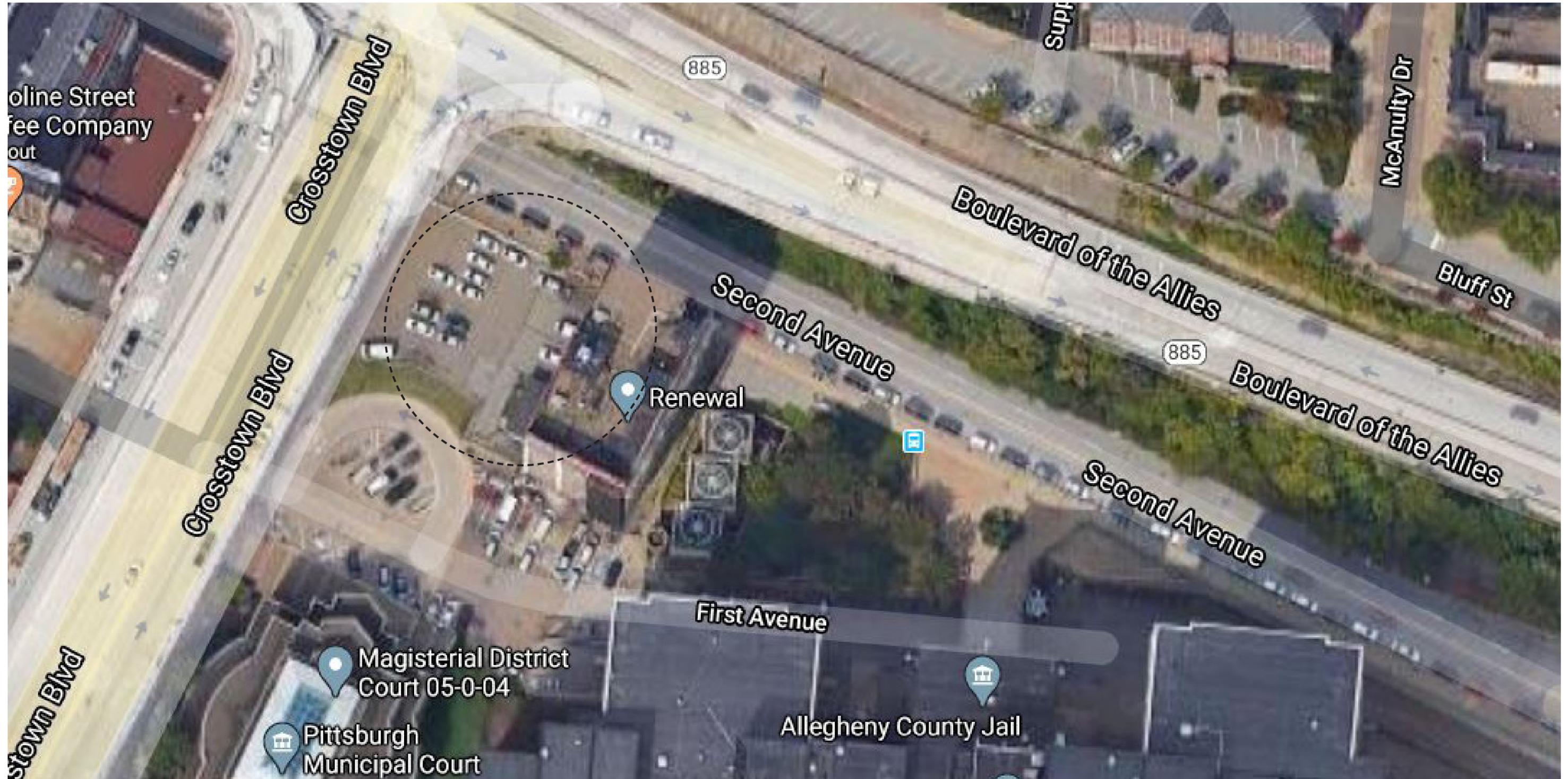
## Building Architecture

The building volume is articulated by a projecting ground floor volume along the proposed Entry Plaza, balanced by a cutout in the floor above that makes room for a terrace. A corner recess defines the project main pedestrian entrance at 2nd Avenue and Municipal Courts Drive. A single-story projecting stair volume book ends the building ground plane along 2nd Avenue. A full height stair tower rises high in the south-west, and a cantilevered canopy over the outdoor dining area provides a horizontal accent. The architecture of the building facing south is dynamic with its three-story volume and U-shaped upper floors. The building has a consistent 4' tall parapet. Three roof top air handling units that project roughly 4' above the parapet are screened with metallic silver perforated ribbed metal panels.

At ground floor level, the building façade engages pedestrians and activates the public realm by introducing cleanly detailed composite metal panels and a transparent design with large panes of storefront constituting more than 50% of the building wall along 2nd Avenue and the Entry Plaza along Municipal Courts Drive.

The building body is clad in a combination of brick and fiber cement panels. The tan color of the brick is balanced by blue and two tones of gray introduced in the fiber cement panels. Gray brick courses are used sparingly. Wood-look fiber cement panels accent the building corners and south façade. The lower building floor glazing is clear anodized aluminum and the upper residential floors have operable fiberglass windows in a complimentary light gray color. Subtle projections and recesses and changes of color between planes of brick and fiber cement panels provide visual relief along lengths of building façade.

# PROJECT SITE LOCATION



# CONTEXT IMAGES | 2ND AVENUE



2nd Avenue facing existing building and Allegheny County Jail (Southeast)



2nd Avenue under Liberty Bridge



2nd Avenue facing Liberty Bridge (Southwest)



Intersection of 2nd Avenue and Municipal Courts Drive

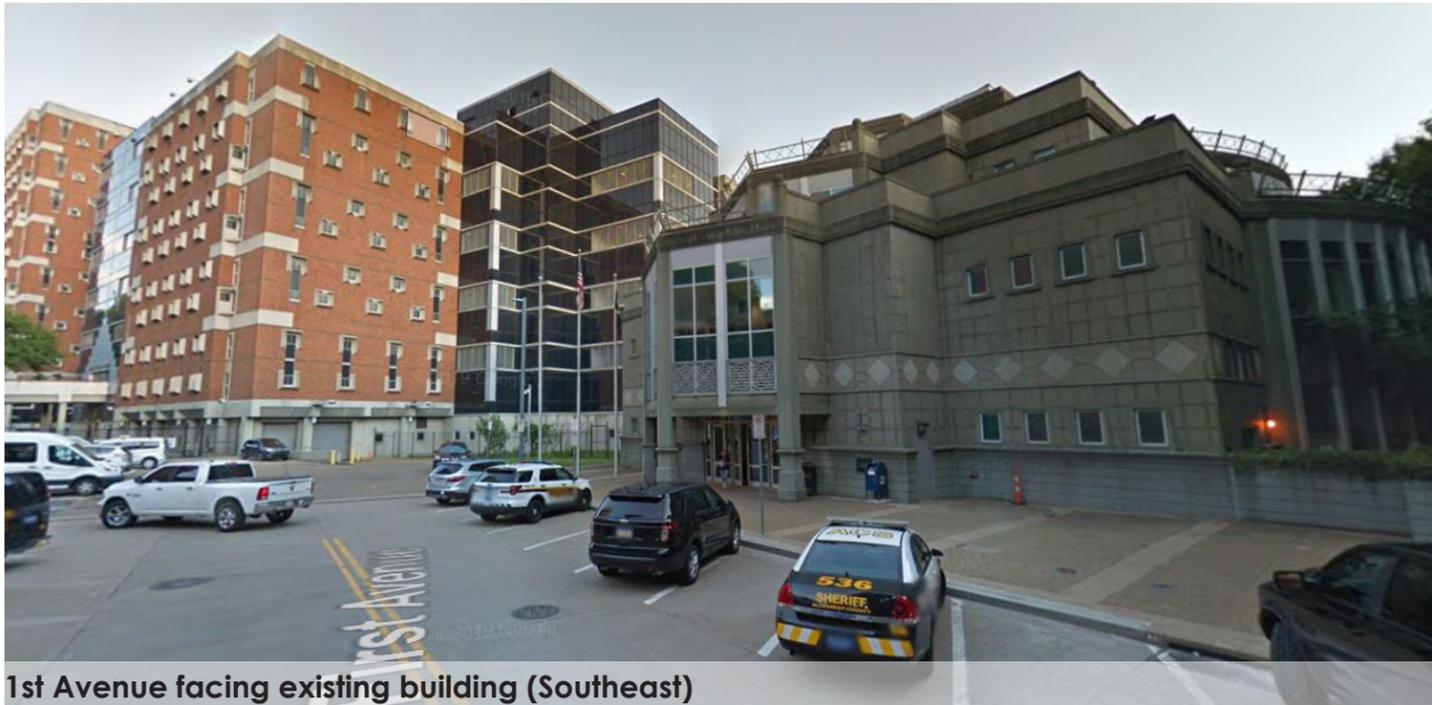
# CONTEXT IMAGES | MUNICIPAL COURTS DR. & 1ST AVENUE



Municipal Courts Drive facing West



1st Avenue facing Northwest



1st Avenue facing existing building (Southeast)



1st Avenue facing Liberty Bridge

# FLOOR PLANS | LEVEL 1

## ASSETS AND FEATURES

- **Dining / Program Room / Overflow**
  - + Seating for 42 occupants
  - + Handwash station
  - + Storage for mattresses and tables
- **Outdoor dining**
- **(22) Staff Lockers**
- **Bike parking**
- **Pet wash area**
- **Indoor vehicle drop-off**
  - + Drive-in & back out



# FLOOR PLANS | LEVEL 2

## ASSETS AND FEATURES

- **Third Space**
  - + Seating for 18
- **Waiting Area**
  - + Seating for 6
- **Commons**
  - + 5 computer workstations
  - + Resource and library area
  - + Reading Table
  - + Snack and Drink Station
  - + Seating for 31
- **Lockers:**
  - + 22 lockers
  - + 40 Amnesty Lockers
- **Hygiene Area**
- **Laundry**
  - + 7 stacked washer / dryer combo units
  - + 1 accessible washer and 1 accessible dryer
- **Mailboxes:**
  - + 70 in Common area
  - + 88 in Intake Support Area
- **5 Private baths with showers**
  - + All accessible - wheelchair and transfer-type
  - + Hamper area
- **Staff Area**
  - + 8 workstations
  - + 3 touch down stations
  - + Staff work area / kitchenette



# FLOOR PLANS | LEVEL 3 - SHELTER

## ASSETS AND FEATURES

- 92 beds
  - + Min: 58 with no bunks
  - + Max: 116 with all bunks
- Lockers
  - + Provided in rooms (approximately one per bed)
  - + 57 single-high
  - + 114 double-stacked
- Storage Room
  - + Linens, beds, mattresses
- Soiled linen holding room
- Handwashing Stations in corridors
  - 2 stations
- Living Room
  - + Seating for 14
- Private Staff Quiet Room and Support Space



# FLOOR PLANS | LEVELS 4 - SRO's

## ASSETS AND FEATURES

- SROs
  - + 22 on Level 4, 21 of Level 5
  - + 43 total (Level 4 & Level 5)
  - + Microwave, mini fridge and closet per room
- Shared Lounge
- (4) Private Baths
  - + Additional sink area outside restrooms



# FLOOR PLANS | LEVELS 5 - SRO's

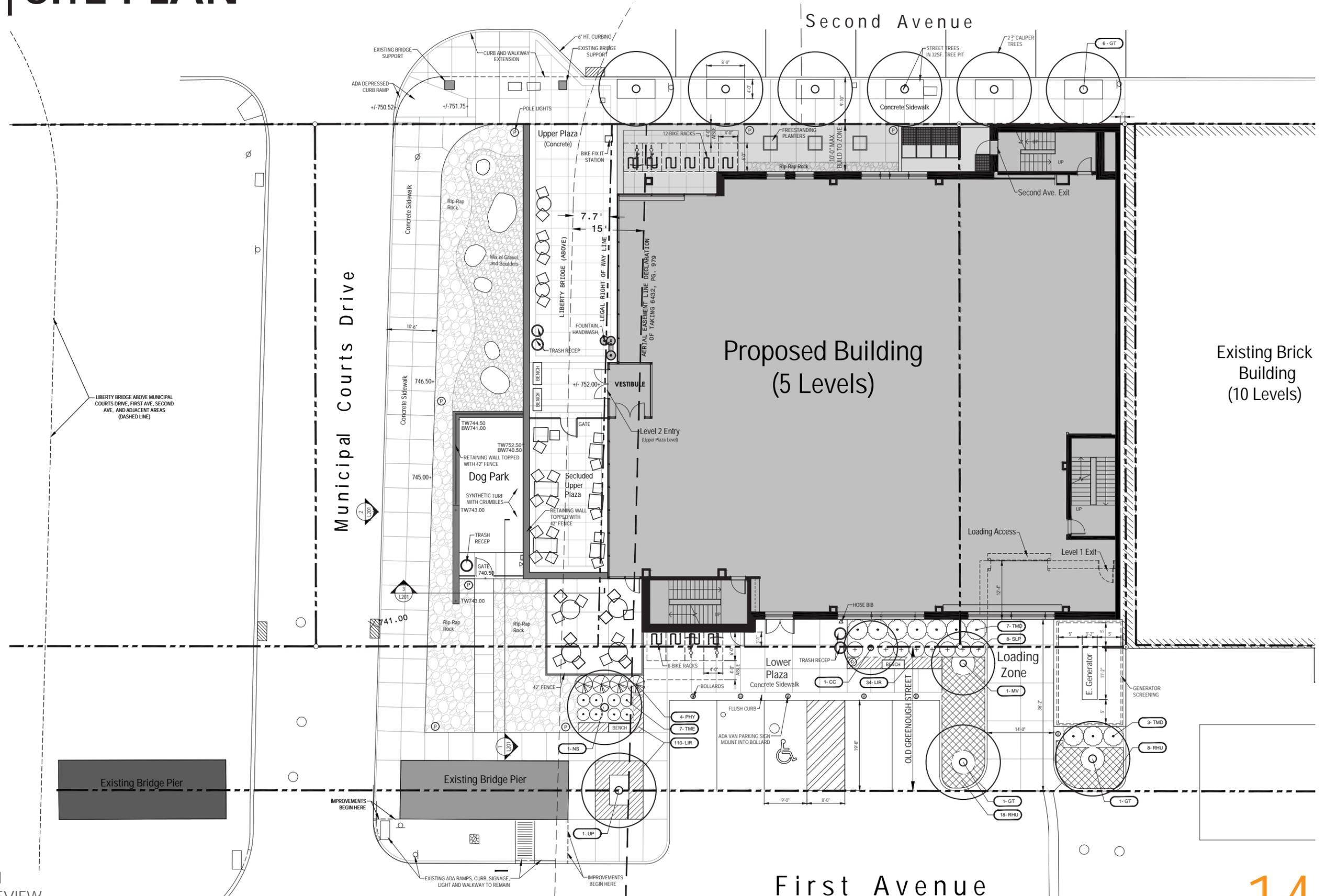
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# EXTERIOR | SITE PLAN



# EXTERIOR | IMAGE AND CHARACTER



# EXTERIOR | IMAGE AND CHARACTER



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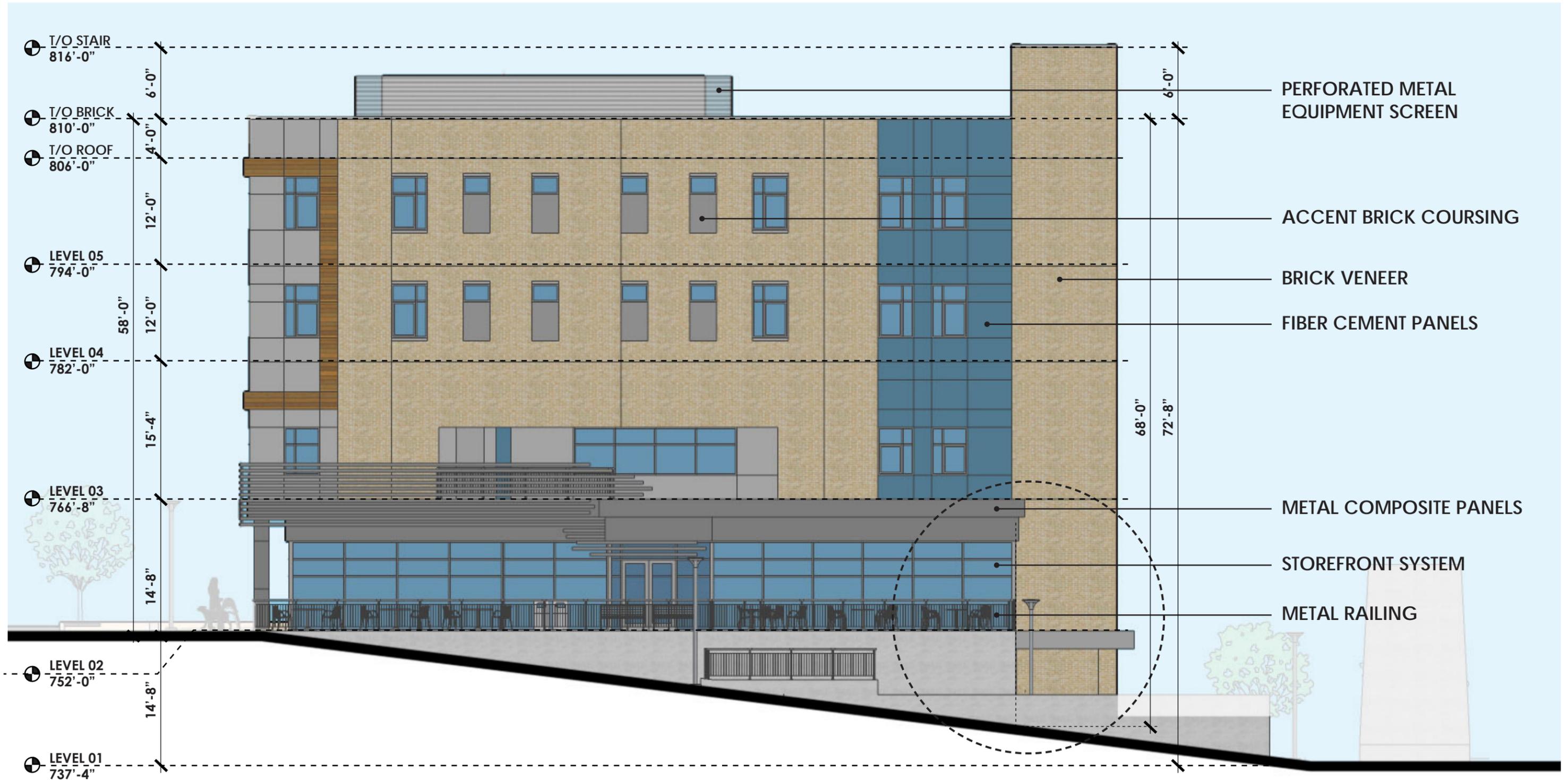
# EXTERIOR | IMAGE AND CHARACTER



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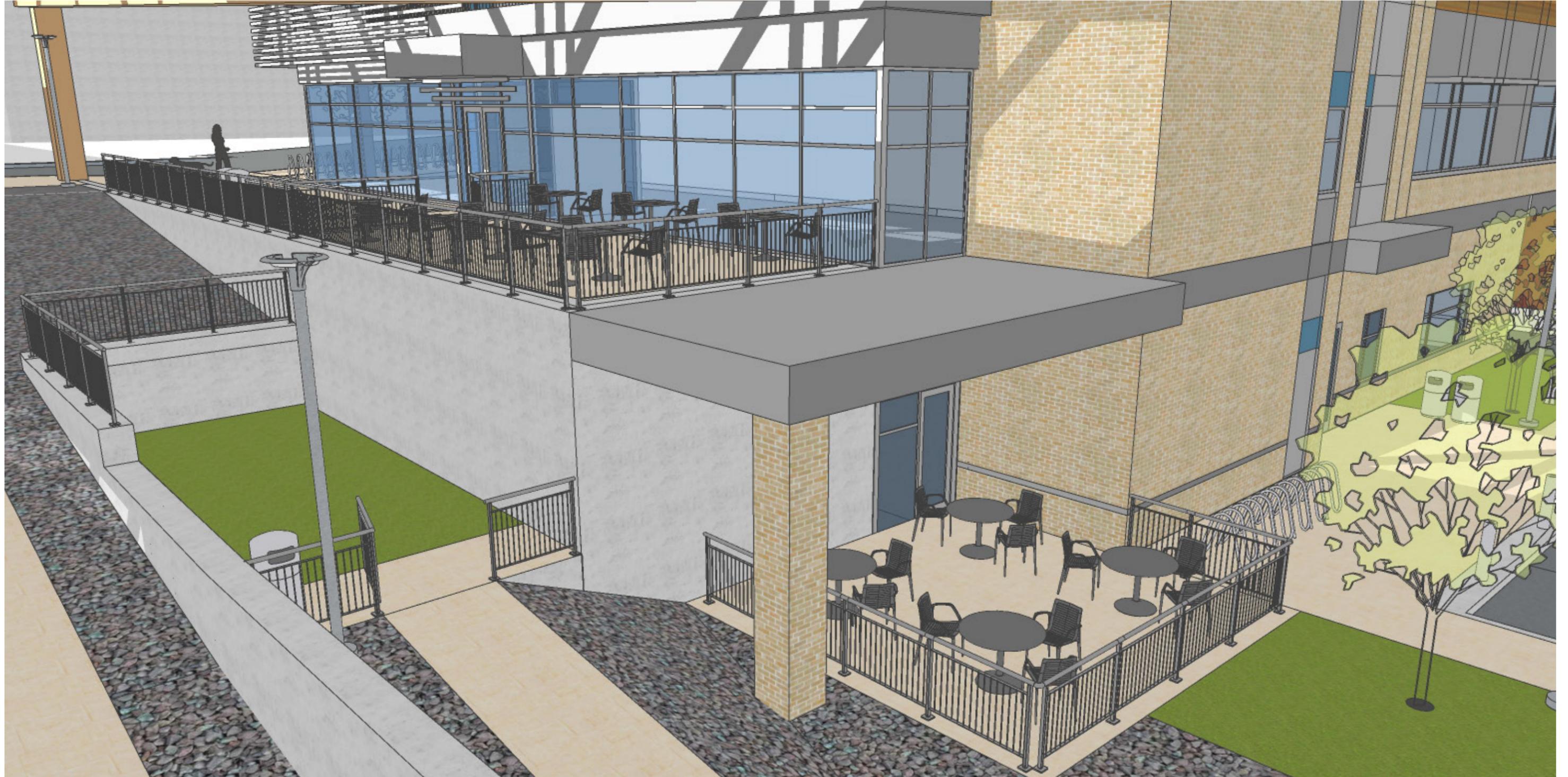
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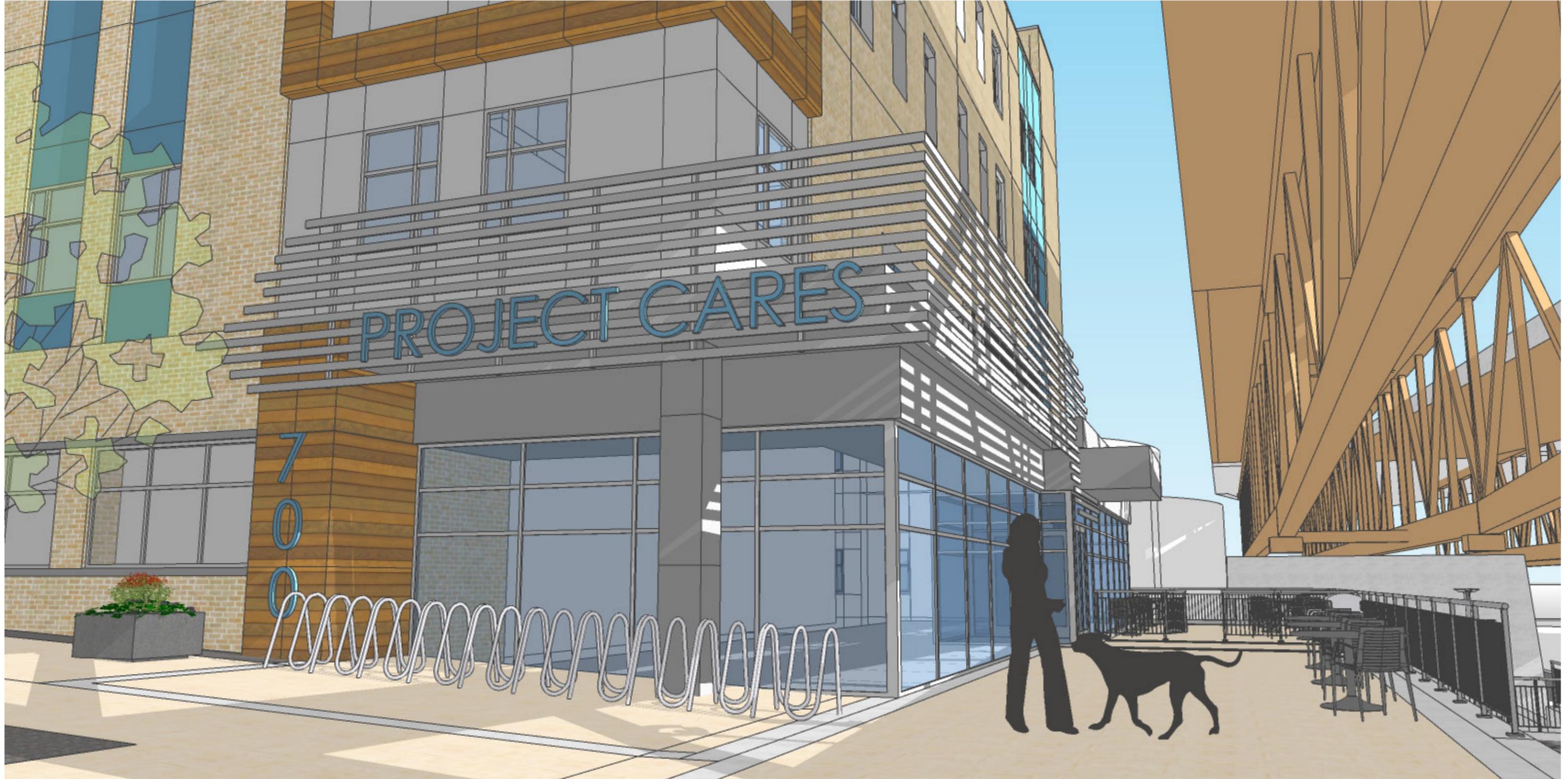
# EXTERIOR | VIGNETTES



# EXTERIOR | VIGNETTES



# EXTERIOR | VIGNETTES



# EXTERIOR | MATERIALS PALETTE



BRICK VENEER (PRIMARY)



BRICK VENEER (ACCENT)

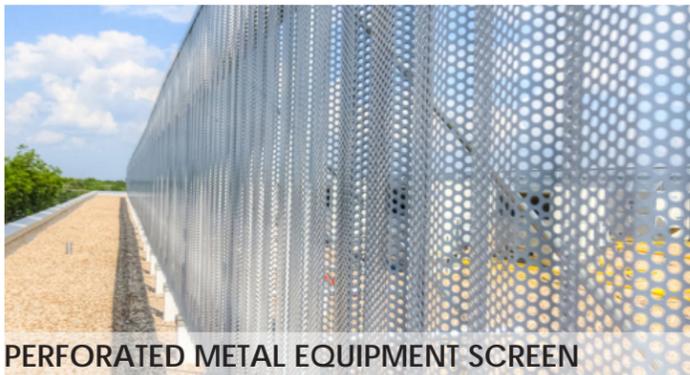


LIGHT GREY

MED. GREY

BLUE

FIBER CEMENT PANELS



PERFORATED METAL EQUIPMENT SCREEN

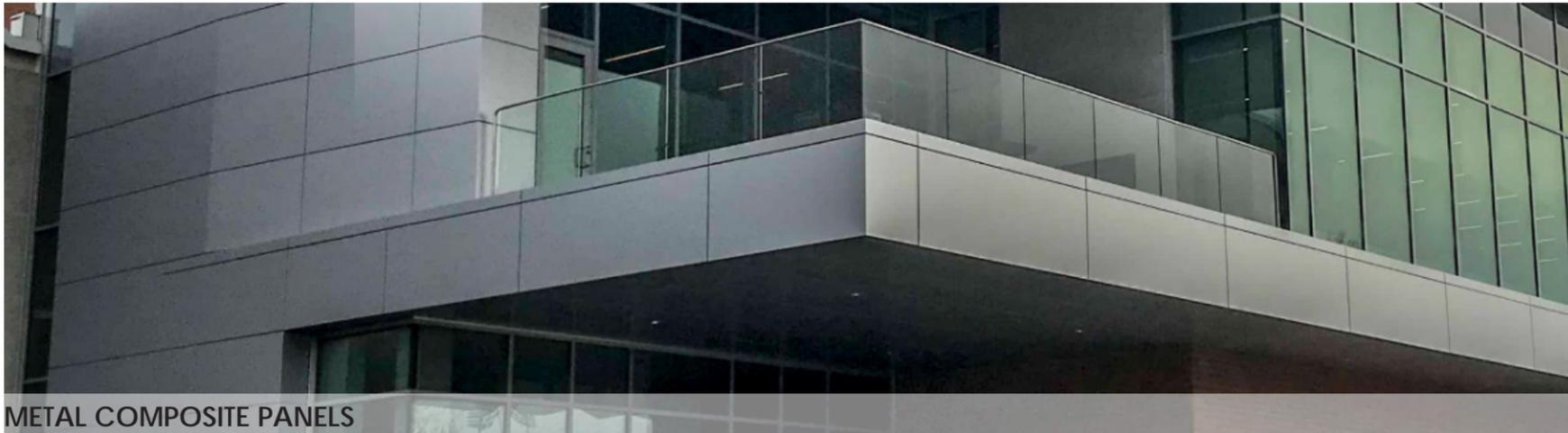


METAL SUN SHADES

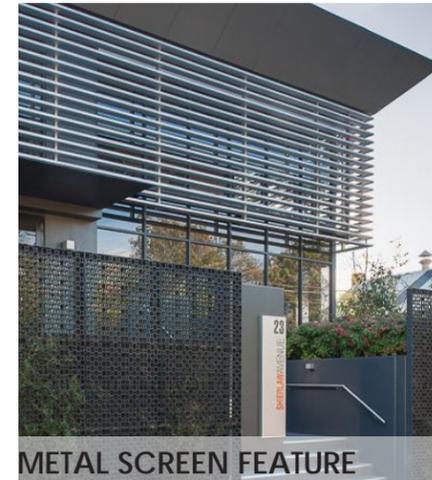


ALUMINUM STOREFRONT (CLEAR ANOD.)

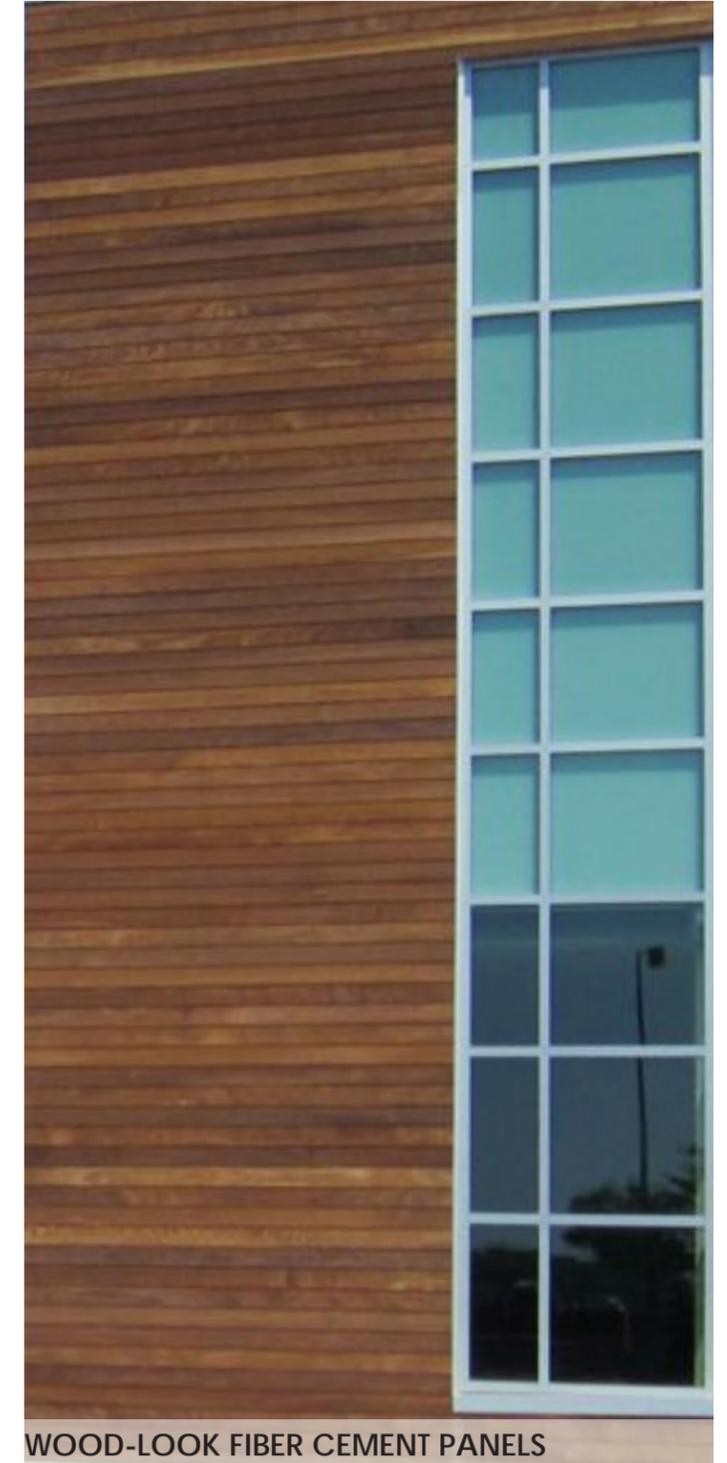
FIBERGLASS WINDOW (GREY)



METAL COMPOSITE PANELS

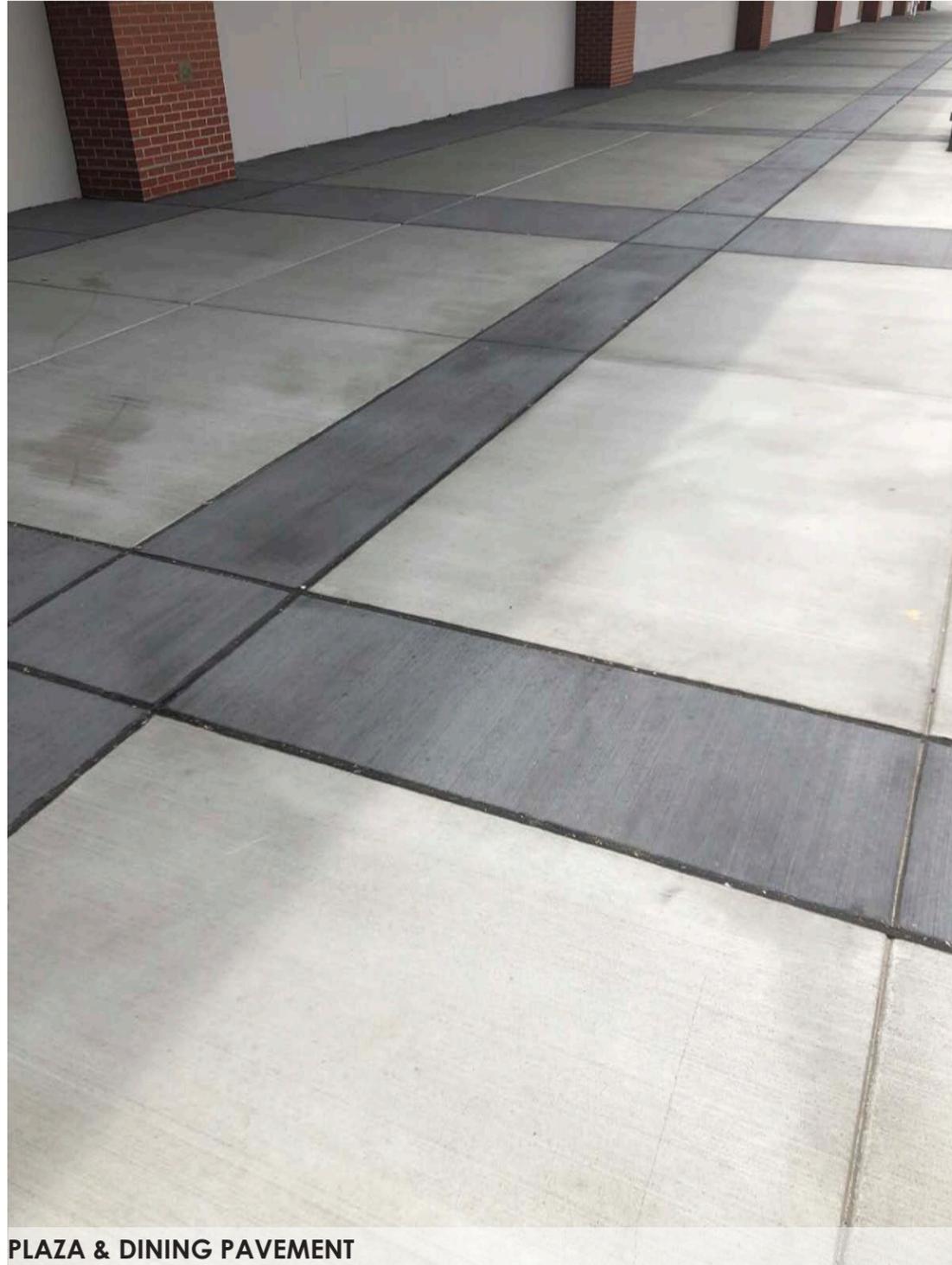


METAL SCREEN FEATURE



WOOD-LOOK FIBER CEMENT PANELS

# EXTERIOR | MATERIALS PALETTE



PLAZA & DINING PAVEMENT



CONCRETE RETAINING WALL & METAL RAILING



DOG PARK



DOG PARK TURF



ROCK & GRAVEL



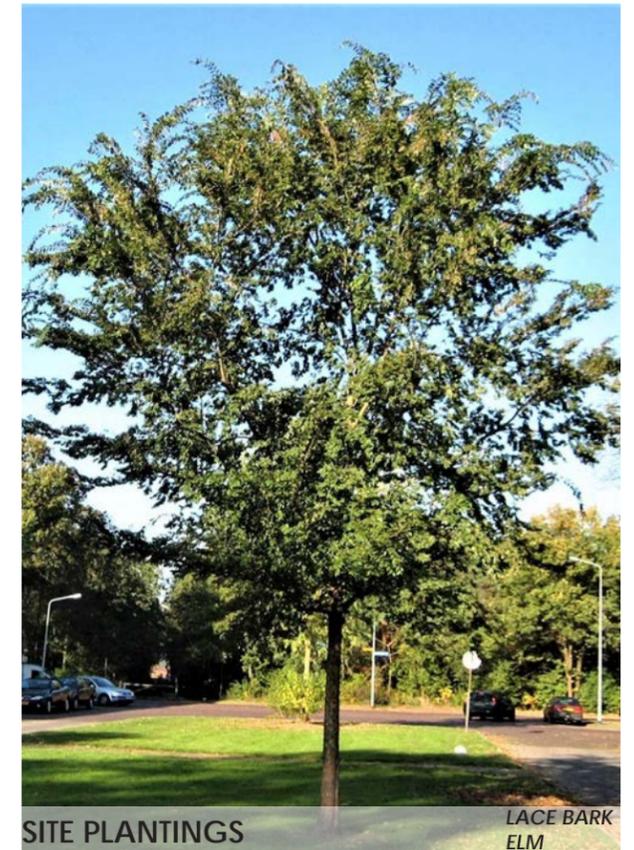
ROCK & GRAVEL



THORNLESS HONEY LOCUST

BLACK GUM

EASTERN REDBARK



SITE PLANTINGS

LACE BARK ELM

# EXTERIOR | SITE COMPONENTS



BENCHES



DRINKING FOUNTAIN



BIKE RACKS



TRASH RECEPTACLES



POLE LIGHTING



HOSE BIBB



BOLLARDS



PLANTERS



OUTDOOR CHAIRS



FREE STANDING TABLES



FREE STANDING TABLES