

Montgomery County Historic Preservation

Staff Report

<p>ADDRESS: 8412 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring</p> <p>RESOURCE: Silver Spring Post Office (Master Plan Site #36/11)</p> <p>APPLICANT: Mitchell Herman (Nick Mroczkowski, Architect)</p> <p>REVIEW: Preliminary Consultation</p> <p>CASE NO.: 1149247</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Partial demolition and construction of rear additions</p>	<p>MEETING DATE: 6/10/2026</p> <p>REPORT DATE: 6/3/2026</p> <p>PUBLIC NOTICE: 5/27/2026</p> <p>TAX CREDIT ELIGIBLE: No</p> <p>STAFF: Laura DiPasquale</p>
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the applicants make any revisions required by the HPC and return for a HAWP.

Architectural Description

Significance: Individually-Listed Master Plan Site: Silver Spring Post Office (#36/11)

Date: 1937

Style: Georgian Revival

Excerpt from Places from the Past:

The Works Progress Administration built the Silver Spring Post Office in 1936-7. Located in the heart of the Georgia Avenue commercial district, the post office represents the strong influence of the American Renaissance and revived classicism on Depression-era architecture. The post office is contemporaneous with the similarly traditionally styled Falkland Apartments, built in part with Federal funds, and barely predates the modernistic Art Deco buildings that have come to characterize Silver Spring, including the Silver Theatre and Shopping Center. The U.S. Postal Service vacated the Georgia Avenue building in 1981.

The mural from the post office, titled “The Old Tavern” by Russian artist Nicolai Cikovsky, was installed at the Silver Spring Public Library in 1997.

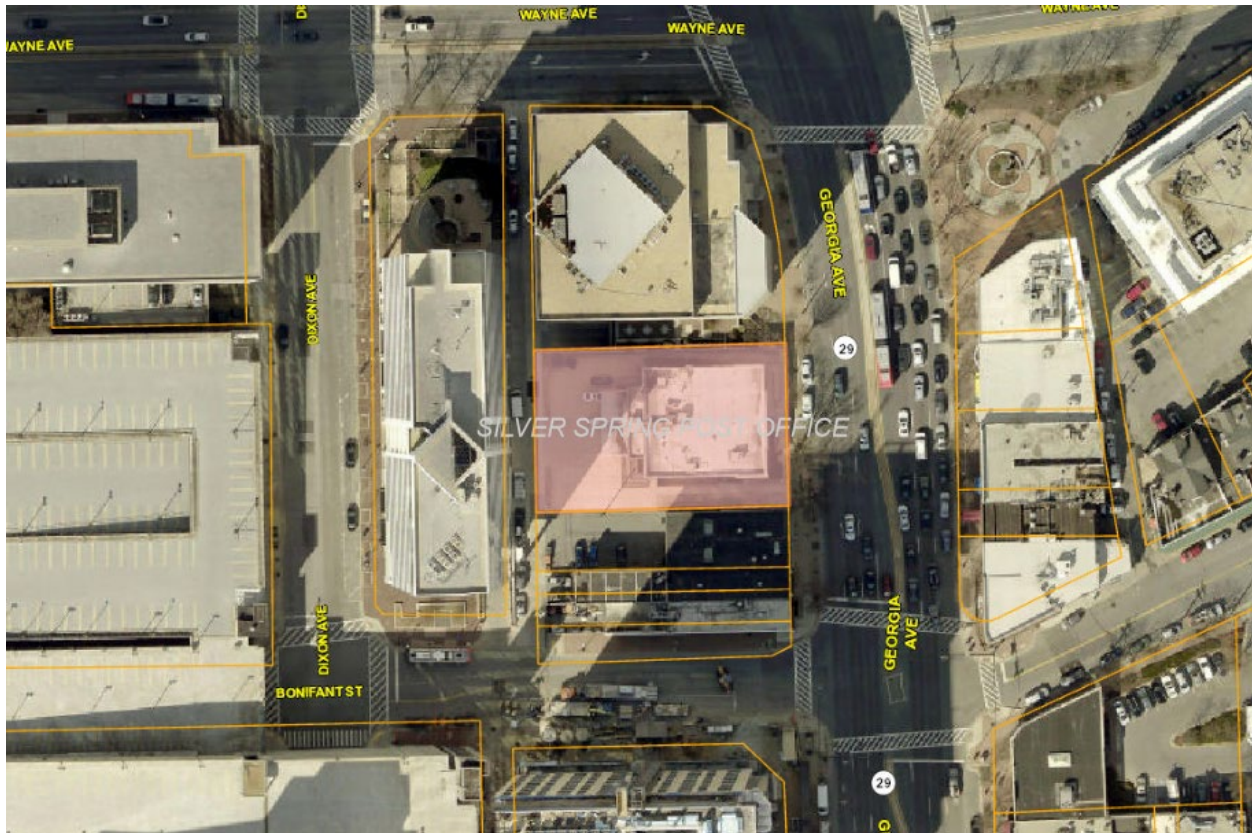


Figure 1: The location of the subject property (shaded in red) on the west side of Georgia Avenue in downtown Silver Spring.



Figure 2: Front and partial north side elevations of 8412 Georgia Avenue (May 2026, Historic Preservation Division).

Proposal

The applicants propose to construct two one-story additions at the north and south corners of the rear elevation on either side of an existing loading dock. On the north side, the applicants propose to remove an existing open stair landing and steps to accommodate a new egress stair addition. On the south side, the applicants propose to remove an existing areaway, remove three existing windows, infilling one of the openings and cutting the other two flush with the finished floor levels, to provide access to a new elevator. The new additions would be approximately 19-feet 8-inches long by 12 ½-feet wide by 16 ½-feet tall, with a 6-inch reveal along the rear elevation. The applicants propose cladding the additions in grey and buff brick with light grey precast stone bases, dark grey/bronze aluminum coping and awnings, and commercial aluminum doors and transom windows.

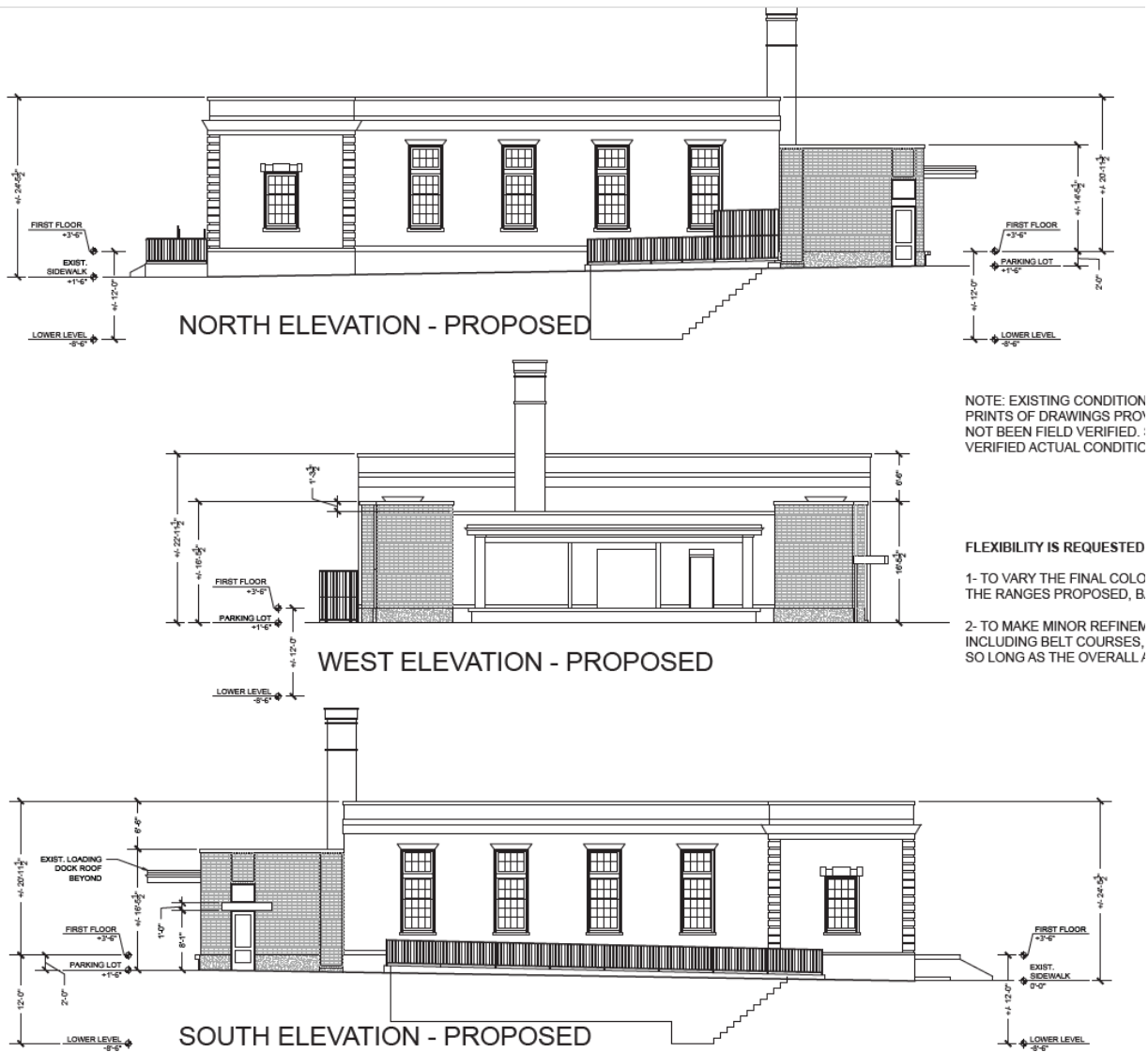


Figure 3: Proposed north, west, and south elevation drawings. The proposed additions are shown in grey.

Applicable Guidelines

In accordance with section 1.5 of the Historic Preservation Commission Rules, Guidelines, and Procedures (Regulation No. 27-97) (“Regulations”), in developing its decision when reviewing a Historic Area Work Permit application for an undertaking at a Master Plan site the Commission uses section 24A-8 of the Montgomery County Code (“Chapter 24A”), the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation* (“Standards”), and pertinent guidance in applicable master plans. [Note: where guidance in an applicable master plan is inconsistent with the Standards, the master plan guidance shall take precedence (section 1.5(b) of the Regulations).] The pertinent information in these documents, incorporated in their entirety by reference herein, is outlined below.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8

- (a) The commission shall instruct the director to deny a permit if it finds, based on the evidence and information presented to or before the commission that the alteration for which the permit is sought would be inappropriate, inconsistent with, or detrimental to the preservation, enhancement, or ultimate protection of the historic site or historic resource within an historic district, and to the purposes of this chapter.
- (b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to ensure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:
 - (1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
 - (2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter.
 - (3) The proposal would enhance or aid in the protection, preservation and public or private utilization of the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district in a manner compatible with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value of the historic site or historic district in which an historic resource is located; or
 - (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied; or
 - (5) The proposal is necessary in order that the owner of the subject property not be deprived of reasonable use of the property or suffer undue hardship; or
 - (6) In balancing the interests of the public in preserving the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district, with the interests of the public from the use and benefit of the alternative proposal, the general public welfare is better served by granting the permit.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Staff Discussion

Staff conceptually supports the construction of rear additions on the subject property of the proposed size and scale, but recommends changes to the form, rhythm, fenestration, and materials of the proposed additions, which will have some visibility from the Georgia Avenue public right-of-way and high visibility from the rear along Bonifant Street.



Figure 4: View of the south elevation of the historic building (May 2026, Historic Preservation Division).



Figure 5: View of the front (east) and north elevations of the historic building (May 2026, Historic Preservation Division).



Figure 6: View of the rear of the subject property across a driveway and parking lot from Bonifant Street (May 2026, Historic Preservation Division).

Partial Demolition/Removal of Historic Fabric

Staff finds that the design of the historic Georgian Revival building is characterized by strict symmetry and Classical detailing and proportions. The building also reflects a hierarchy in its detailing, with the greatest level of ornamentation reserved for the façade and first bays of the side elevations, with more restrained, but equally symmetrical detailing, for the remaining four bays of the side elevations and along the rear. Staff finds that the proposed project does not alter the front or side elevations of the historic building and limits removal of historic material to three rear windows on the southwest side of the historic building, in keeping with *Standards 2 and 9*. The proposal would cut down the sills of the basement and first-floor windows on the rear elevation, but leave intact and exposed the flat arch brick header of the first-floor window.

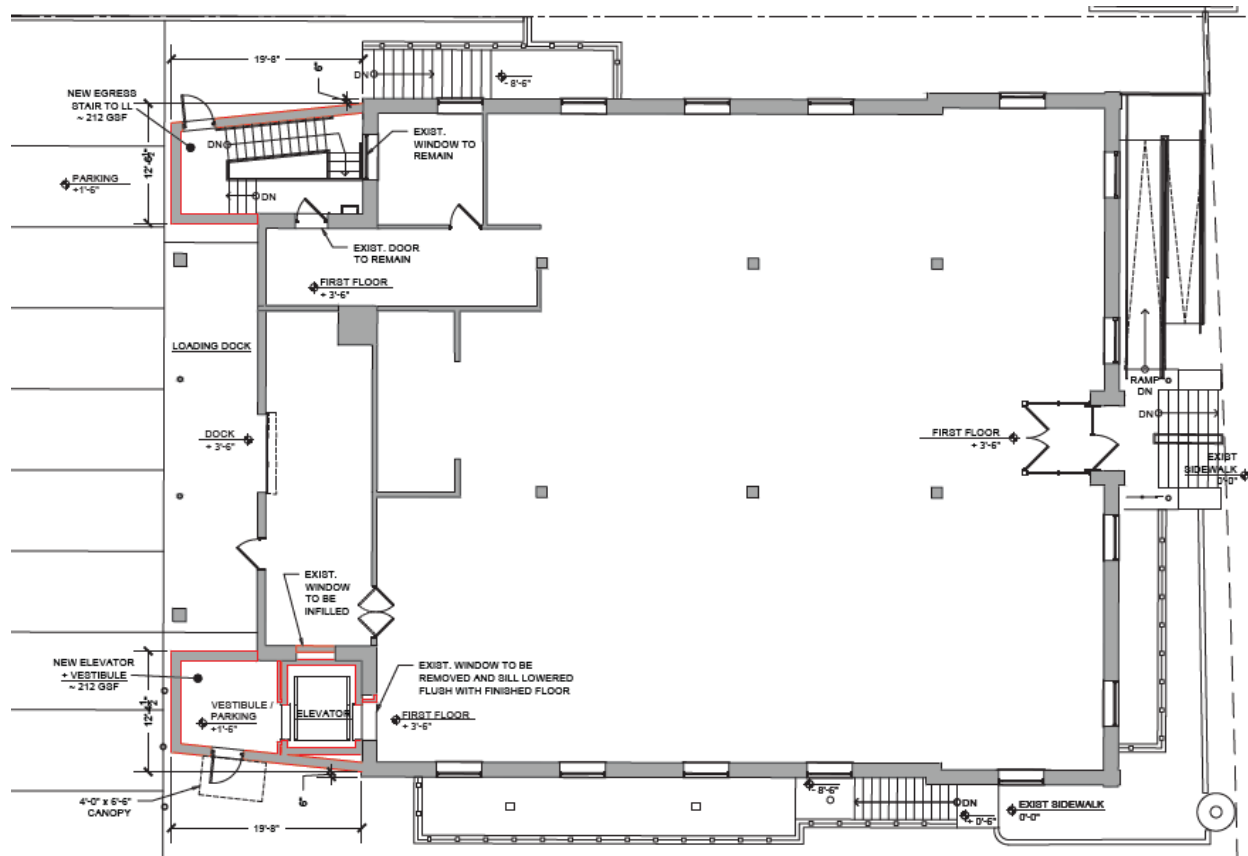


Figure 7: Proposed first-floor plan.



Figure 8: View of the south and rear (west) elevations of the subject property (May 2026, Historic Preservation Division).

Size, Scale, and Massing

The Secretary of the Interior’s *Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, which extrapolates on the more succinct *Standards for Rehabilitation*, provides guidance on new exterior additions and related new construction, explaining that “generally, a new addition should be subordinate to the historic building. A new addition should be compatible, but differentiated enough so that it is not confused as historic or original to the building.” These guidelines also offer recommended and not recommended treatments for new additions, which can be found in the chart below.¹

Staff finds that the overall scale, massing, and location of the proposed additions—which are lower in height than the historic building, at rear of the property, and set in from the rear wall plane of the historic rear wall—do read as subordinate and secondary to the historic building, in keeping with this guidance.

¹ Pages 156-158: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/treatment-guidelines-2017-part1-preservation-rehabilitation.pdf>

NEW EXTERIOR ADDITIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND RELATED NEW CONSTRUCTION	
RECOMMENDED	NOT RECOMMENDED
New Additions	
Placing functions and services required for a new use (including elevators and stairways) in secondary or non-character-defining interior spaces of the historic building rather than constructing a new addition.	Expanding the size of the historic building by constructing a new addition when requirements for the new use could be met by altering non-character-defining interior spaces.
Constructing a new addition on a secondary or non-character-defining elevation and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.	Constructing a new addition on or adjacent to a primary elevation of the building which negatively impacts the building's historic character.
Constructing a new addition that results in the least possible loss of historic materials so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.	Attaching a new addition in a manner that obscures, damages, or destroys character-defining features of the historic building.
Designing a new addition that is compatible with the historic building.	Designing a new addition that is significantly different and, thus, incompatible with the historic building.
Ensuring that the addition is subordinate and secondary to the historic building and is compatible in massing, scale, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and color.	Constructing a new addition that is as large as or larger than the historic building, which visually overwhelms it (i.e., results in the diminution or loss of its historic character).
Using the same forms, materials, and color range of the historic building in a manner that does not duplicate it, but distinguishes the addition from the original building.	Duplicating the exact form, material, style, and detailing of the historic building in a new addition so that the new work appears to be historic.
Basing the alignment, rhythm, and size of the window and door openings of the new addition on those of the historic building.	
Incorporating a simple, recessed, small-scale hyphen, or connection, to physically and visually separate the addition from the historic building.	
Distinguishing the addition from the original building by setting it back from the wall plane of the historic building.	
Using the same forms, materials, and color range of the historic building in a manner that does not duplicate it, but distinguishes the addition from the original building.	Duplicating the exact form, material, style, and detailing of the historic building in a new addition so that the new work appears to be historic.
Basing the alignment, rhythm, and size of the window and door openings of the new addition on those of the historic building.	
Incorporating a simple, recessed, small-scale hyphen, or connection, to physically and visually separate the addition from the historic building.	
Distinguishing the addition from the original building by setting it back from the wall plane of the historic building.	
Ensuring that the addition is stylistically appropriate for the historic building type (e.g., whether it is residential or institutional).	
Considering the design for a new addition in terms of its relationship to the historic building as well as the historic district, neighborhood, and setting.	

Figure 9: Secretary of the Interior's Rehabilitation Guidelines for New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings and Related New Construction.

Rhythm, Materials, Features and Color

Staff finds, however, that the proposed design is out of keeping with the character of the resource in terms of form, rhythm, relationship of solids to voids, materials and color. Staff finds that, while a modern design is appropriate in differentiating the new from the old, the asymmetrical, angled form of the proposed additions is out of keeping with the highly-symmetrical, rectilinear form of the historic building. Staff recommends that the angled walls of the additions be removed and the additions be made rectangular. This could also allow for an increase in the setback of the additions from the rear wall plane from 6-inches to perhaps a foot or greater.



Figure 10: Proposed north elevation drawing.

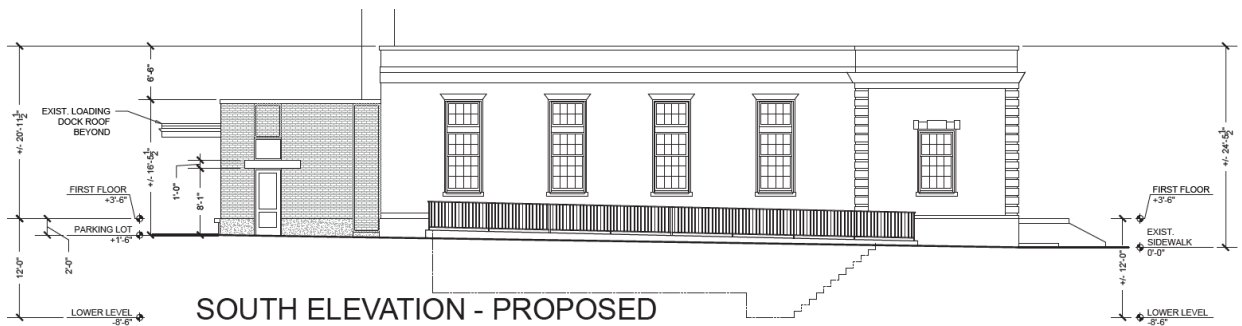


Figure 11: Proposed south elevation drawing.

Staff finds that the asymmetrical fenestration and awnings are also incompatible with the character of the historic building. Staff recommends that the applicants base the alignment, rhythm, and size of window and door openings on the additions with those of the historic building and continue the rhythm and proportions of the solid to void spacing along the side elevations of the historic building in the new additions.

Staff further finds that the use of solid masonry materials reads as overly heavy when directly connected to the historic building. In discussions with the applicants, staff recommended that the additions be constructed of a structural glass/storefront system to reduce their visual weight and create greater opacity. The applicants rejected this suggestion, citing safety concerns. Staff continues to hold that recommendation, but recommends that, at a minimum, the applicants utilize a bay of opaque structural glass or beige/cream metal panel recessed from the plane of the side elevation of the addition to create a small-scale hyphen to physically and visually separate the addition from the historic building before

transitioning to weightier masonry materials, which should be in the same color range as the limestone features on the historic building. Staff recommends the HPC require on-site samples of the proposed materials on site in relationship to the historic brick and limestone and recommends that the HPC condition approval upon the proposed materials being in the same warm beige/buff color range as the limestone features and pointing of the historic building when cleaned. Staff finds that, as submitted, the grey brick and precast stone appear overly cool-toned in relationship to the warm tone of the historic building.

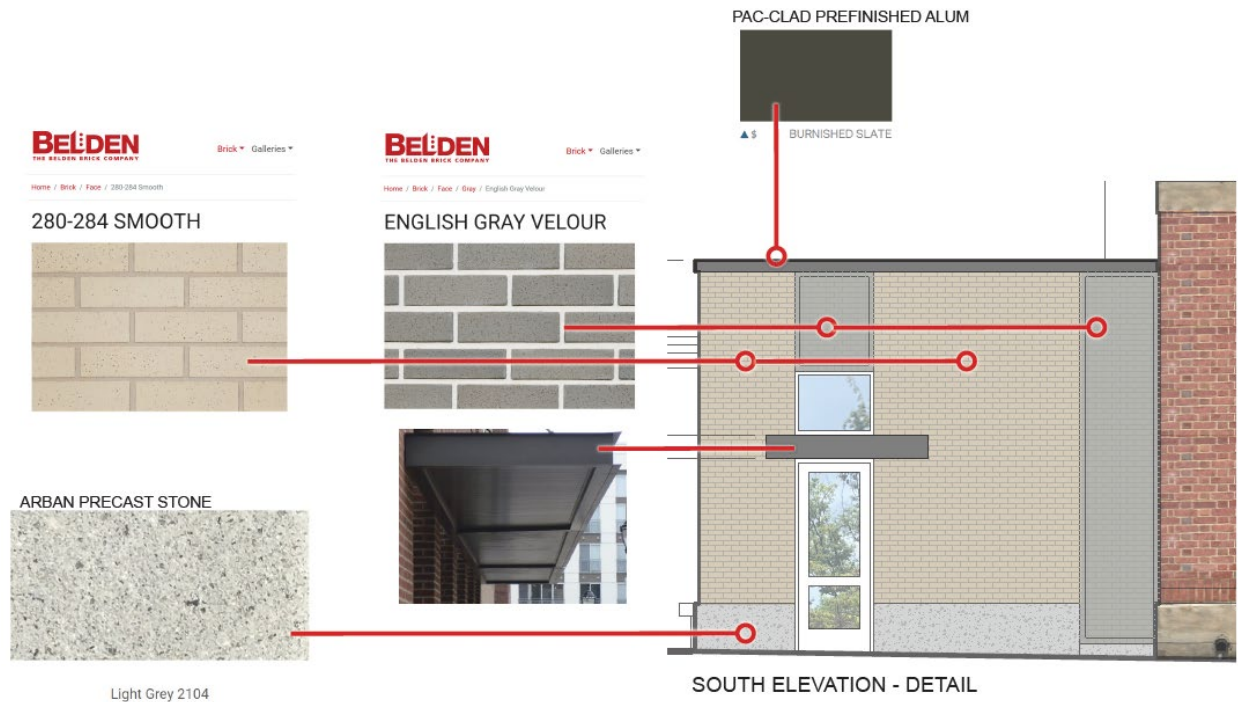


Figure 12: Rendering showing the proposed materials and colors on the southern addition.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the applicant make any revisions based upon the HPC’s comments and return for a HAWP.

Staff Requested HPC Feedback

- The appropriateness of proposed removal of historic fabric;
- The appropriateness of the size, scale, and massing of the proposed additions;
- The appropriateness of the design, features, and fenestration of the proposed addition;
- The appropriateness of the proposed materials and color;
- Any other comments.

Staff-recommended materials to be submitted for a HAWP:

- Updated and annotated architectural plans and elevations.
- Updated materials specifications and on-site sample comparisons.

Description of Property: Please describe the building and surrounding environment. Include information on significant structures, landscape features, or other significant features of the property:

Description of Work Proposed: Please give an overview of the work to be undertaken:

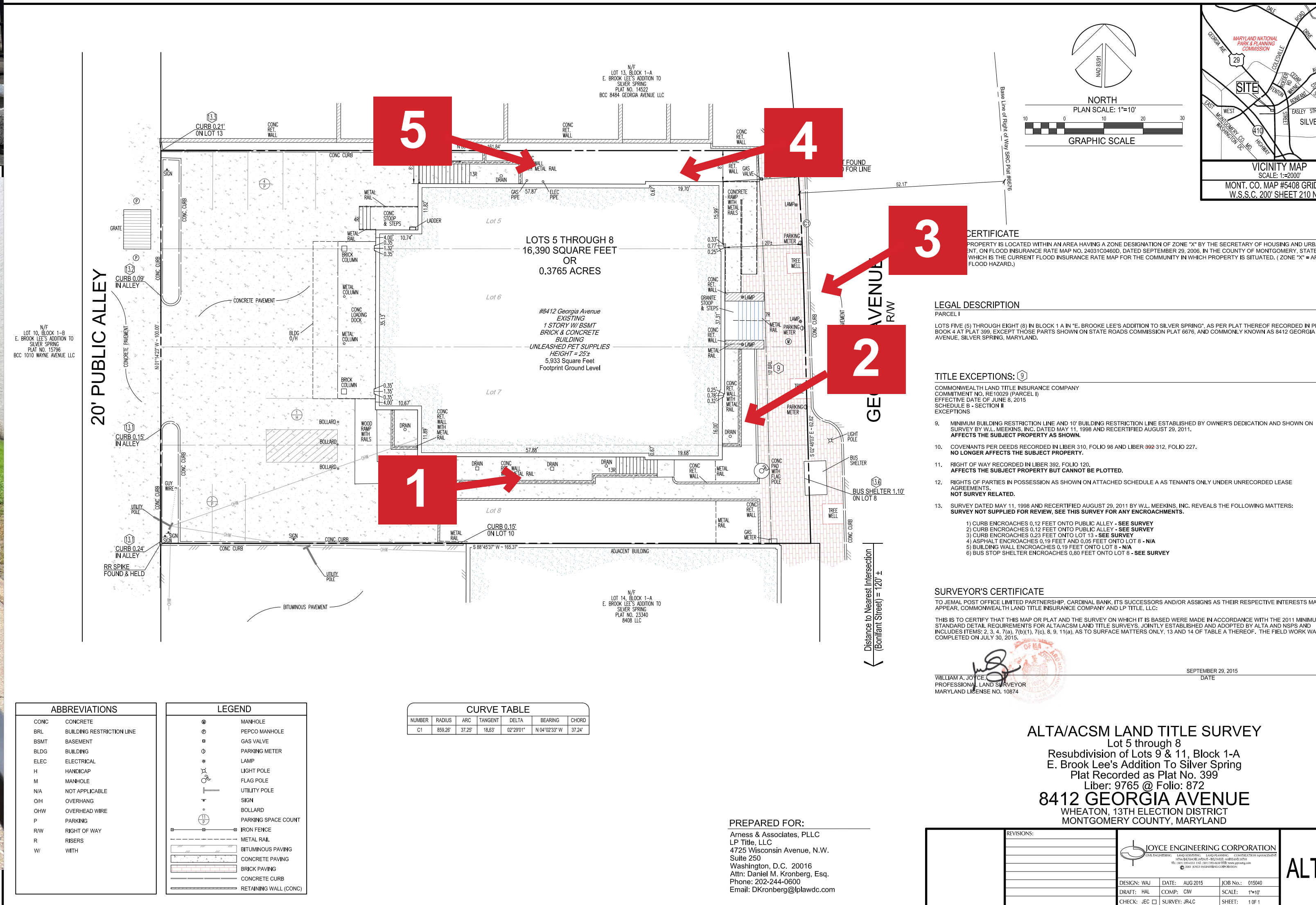
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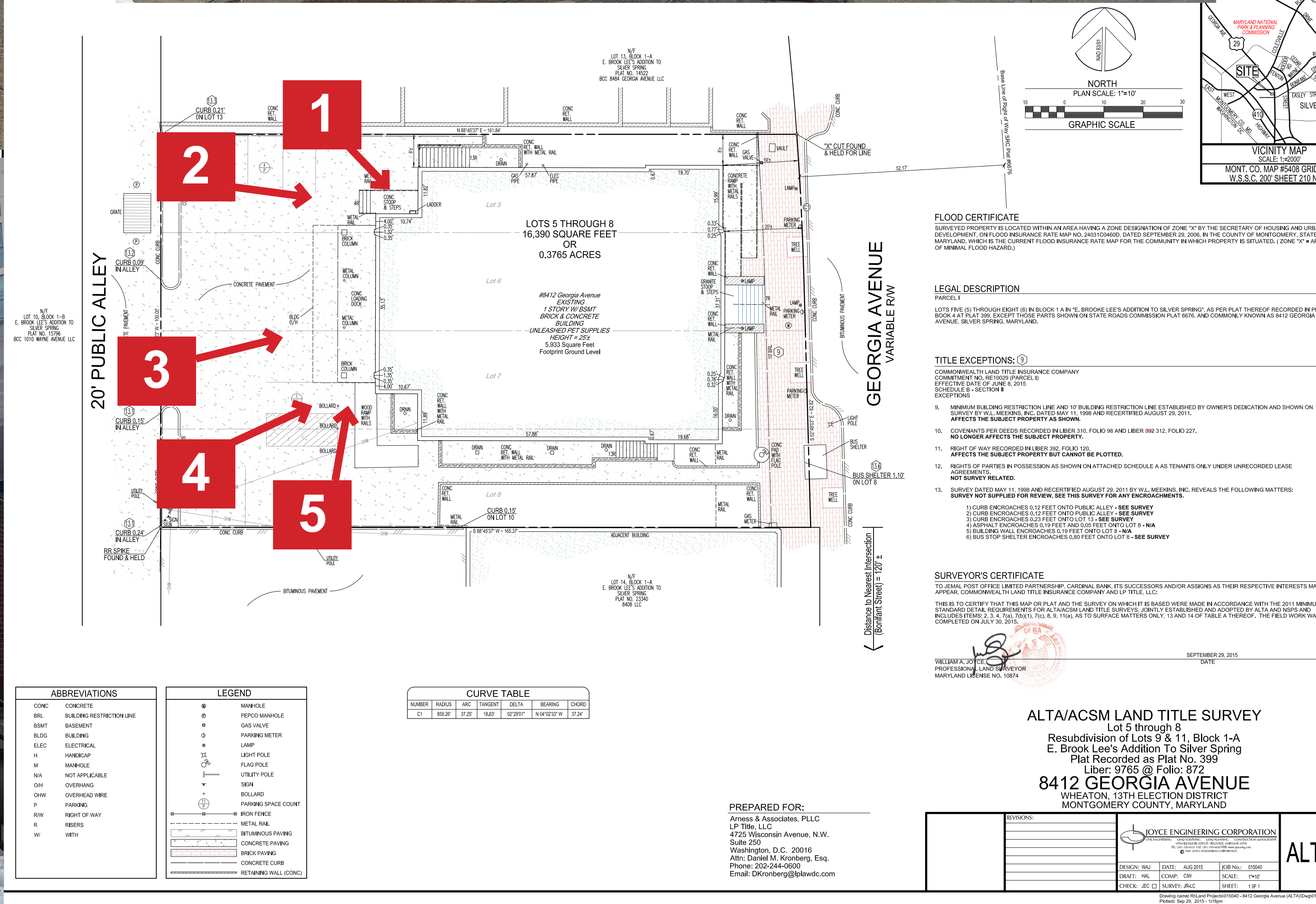
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Work Item 3: _____	
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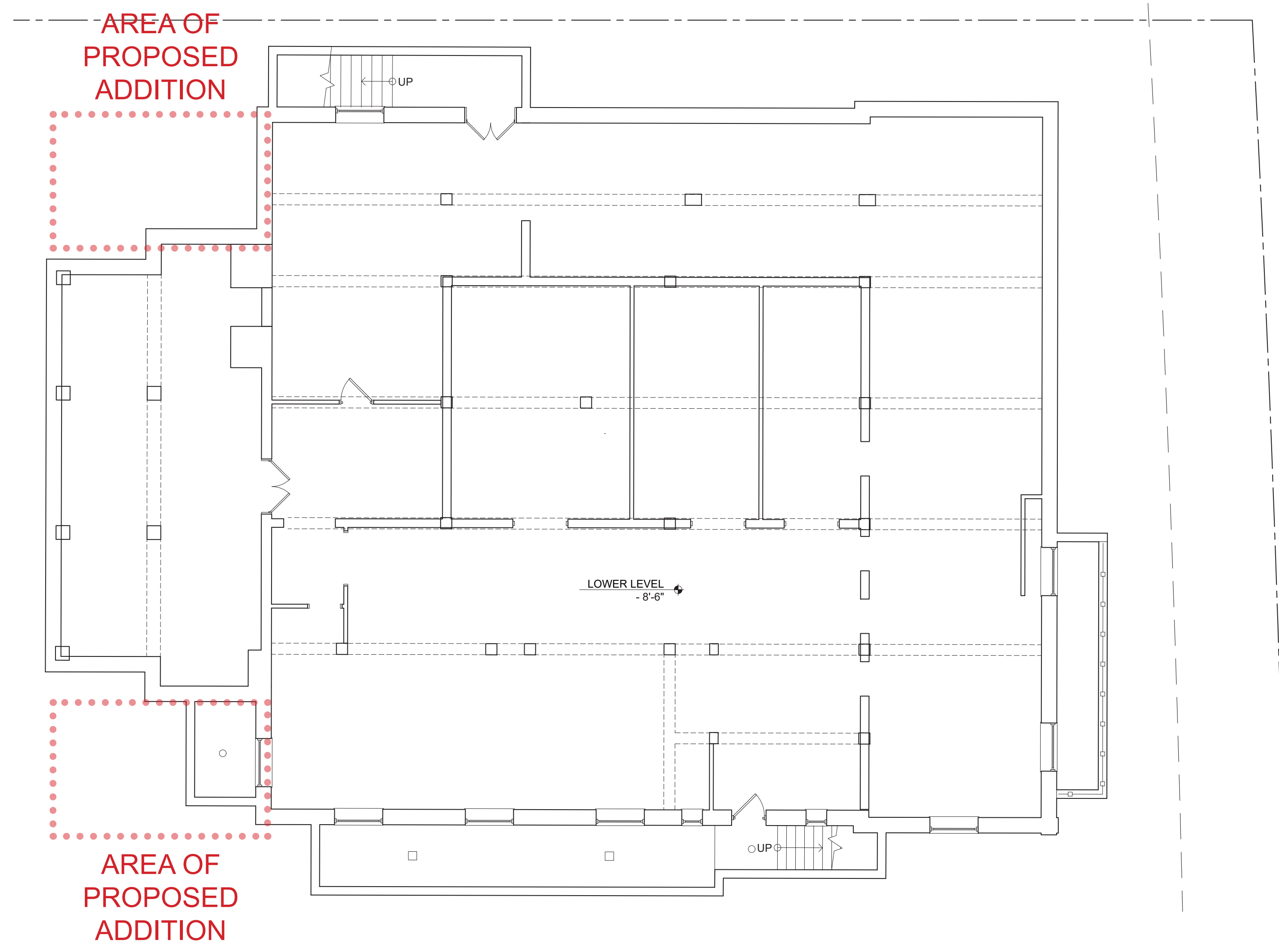
**HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT
CHECKLIST OF
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

	Required Attachments						
Proposed Work	I. Written Description	2. Site Plan	3. Plans/ Elevations	4. Material Specifications	5. Photographs	6. Tree Survey	7. Property Owner Addresses
New Construction	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Additions/ Alterations	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Demolition	*	*	*		*		*
Deck/Porch	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fence/Wall	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Driveway/ Parking Area	*	*		*	*	*	*
Grading/Excavation/ Landscaping	*	*		*	*	*	*
Tree Removal	*	*		*	*	*	*
Siding/ Roof Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Window/ Door Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Masonry Repair/ Repoint	*	*	*	*	*		*
Signs	*	*	*	*	*		*

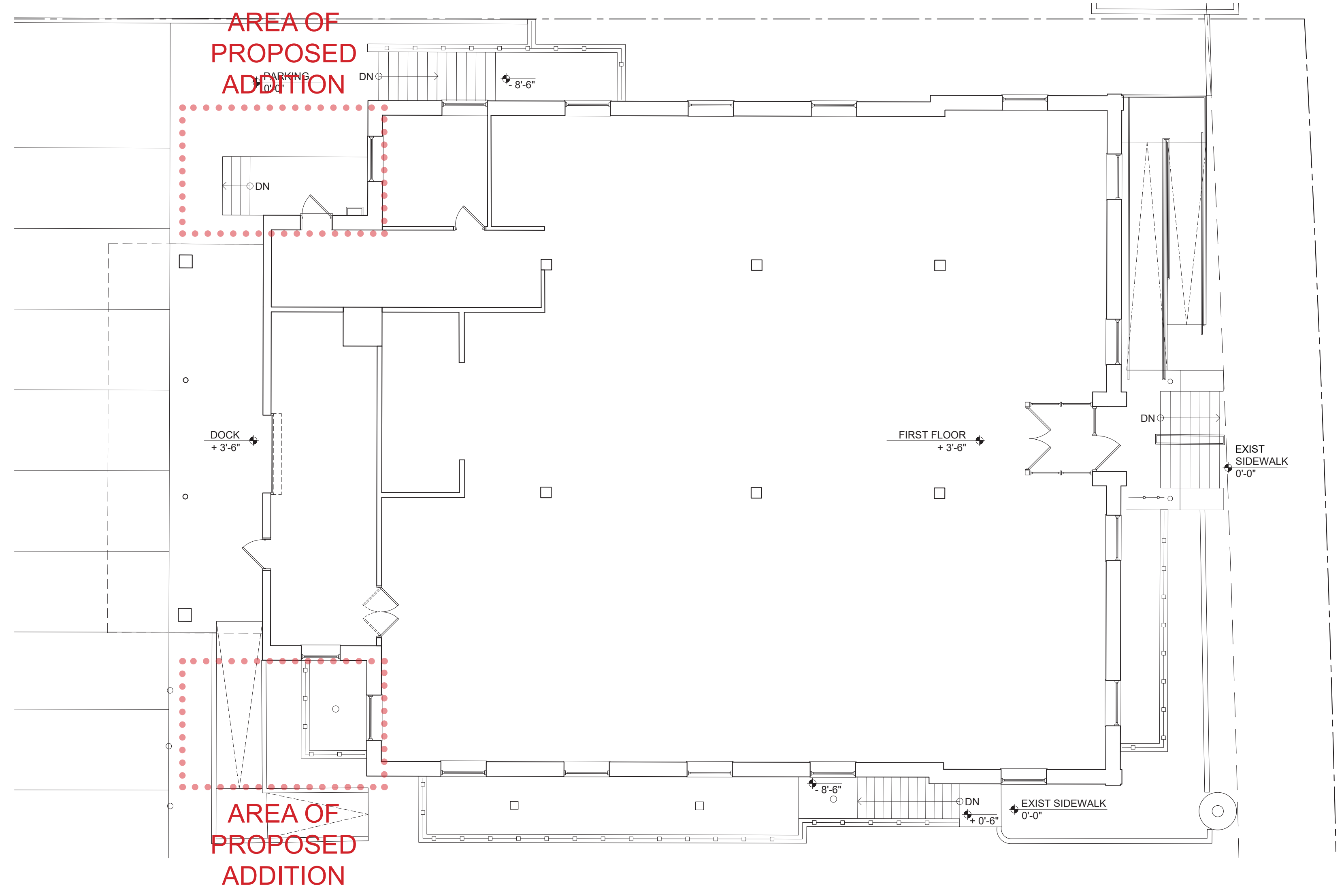




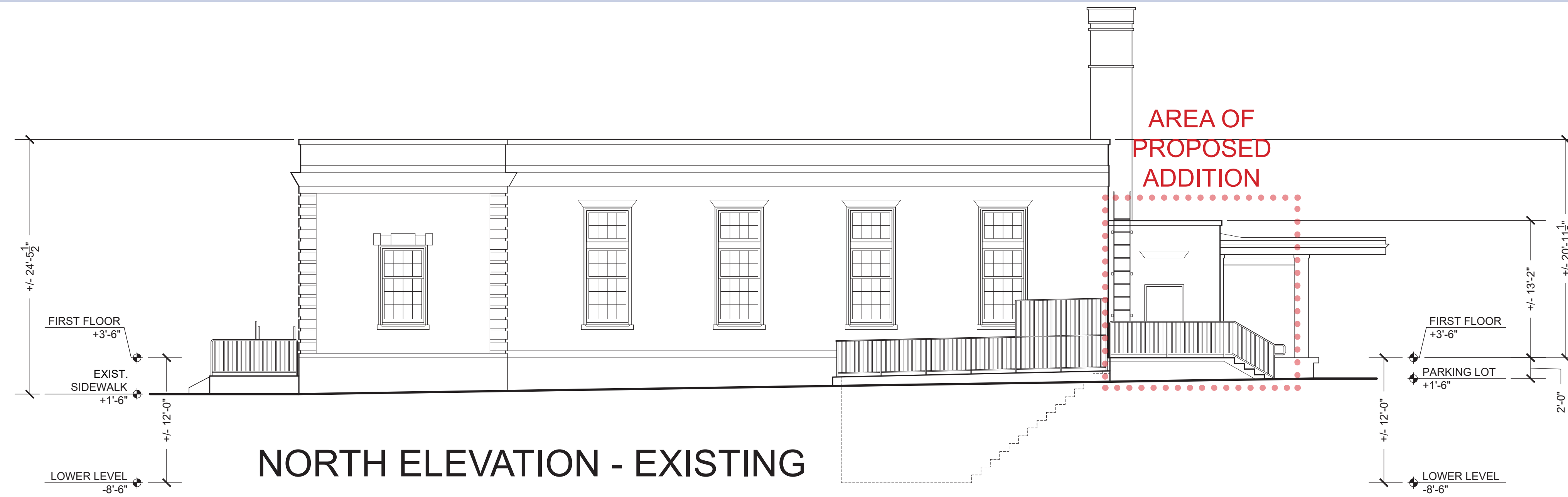
NOTE: EXISTING CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN DERRIVED FROM DIGITAL PDF PRINTS OF DRAWINGS PROVIDED BY THE BUILDING OWNER AND HAVE NOT BEEN FIELD VERIFIED. SOME MINOR ADJUSTMENTS BASED ON FIELD-VERIFIED ACTUAL CONDITIONS MAY BE NECESSARY.



LOWER LEVEL PLAN - EXISTING



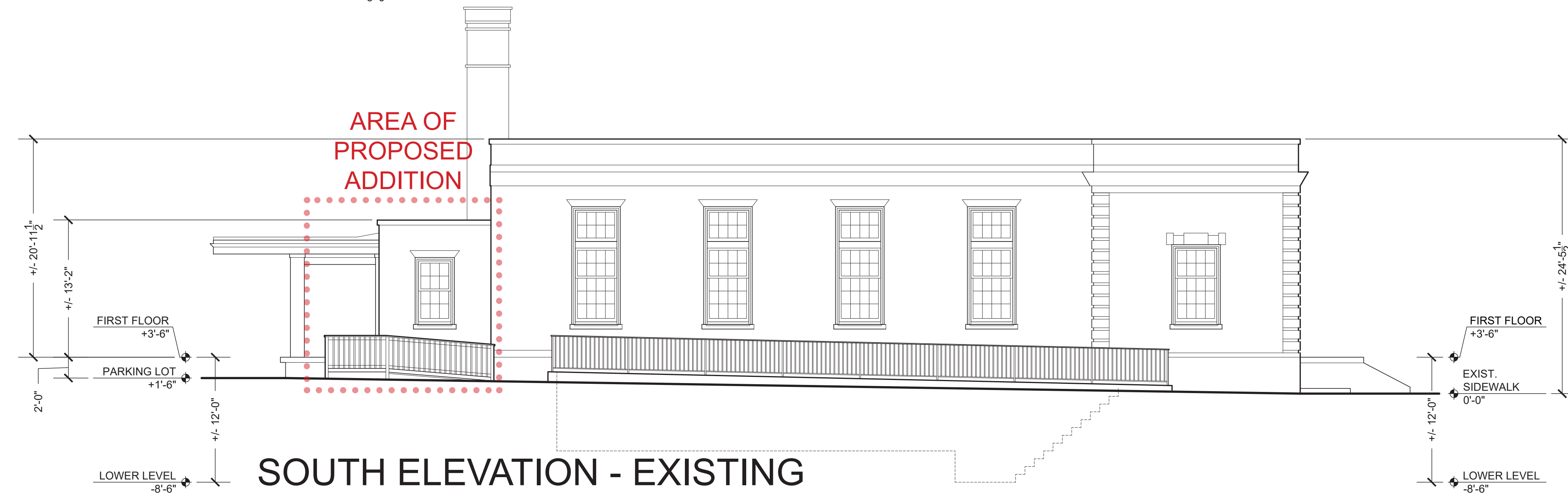
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - EXISTING



NORTH ELEVATION - EXISTING



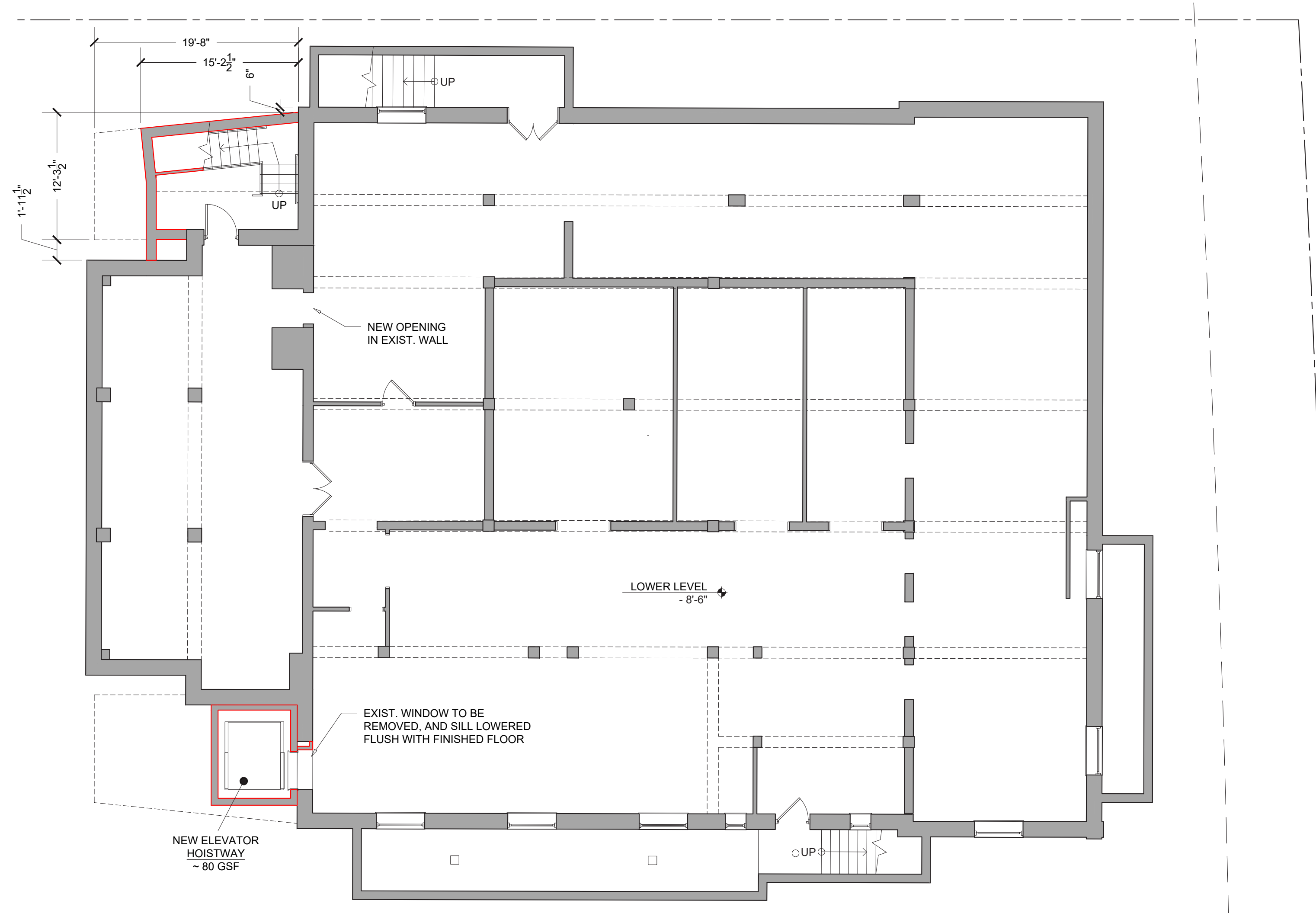
WEST ELEVATION - EXISTING



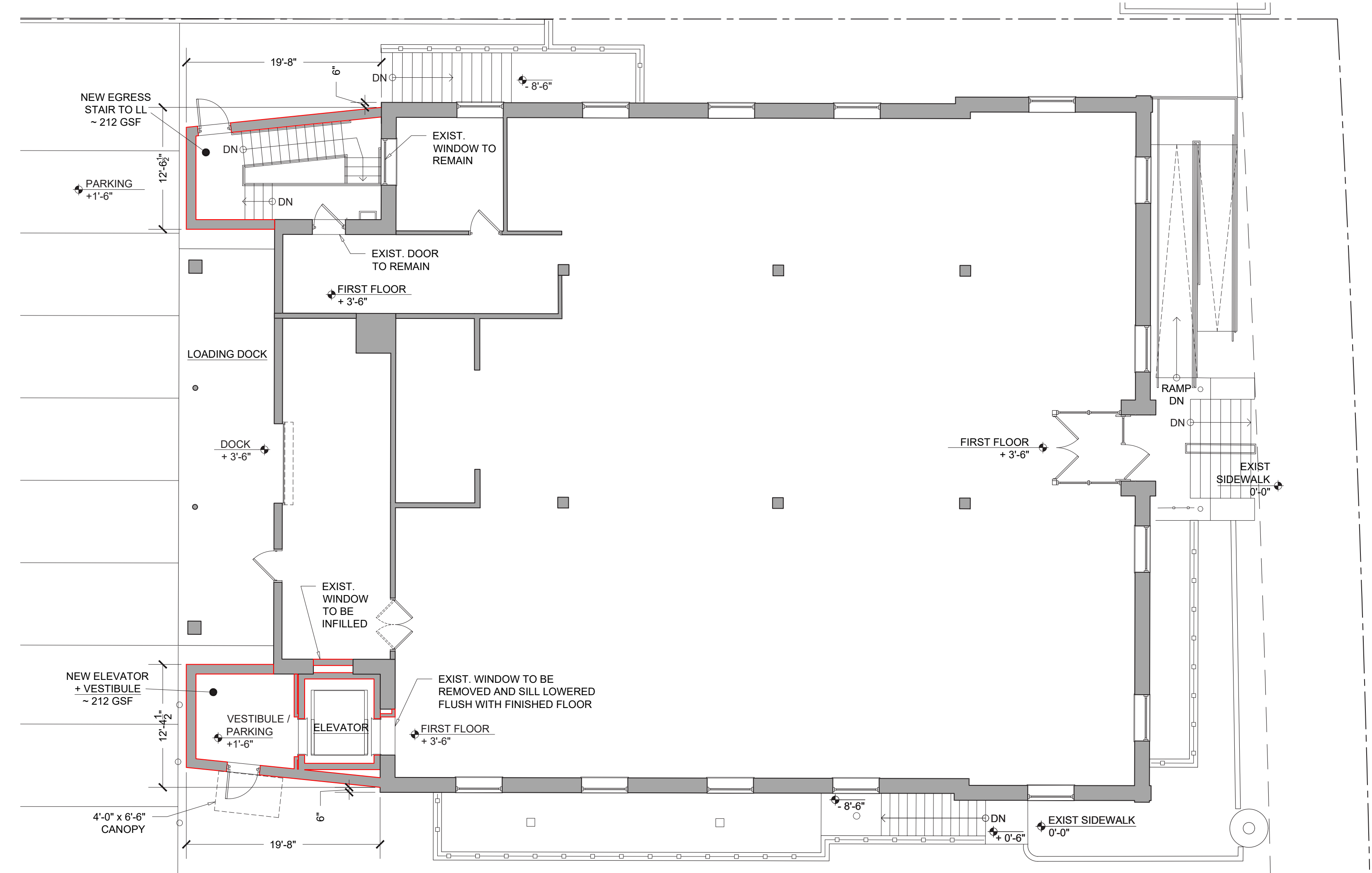
SOUTH ELEVATION - EXISTING

NOTE: EXISTING CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN DERRIVED FROM DIGITAL PDF PRINTS OF DRAWINGS PROVIDED BY THE BUILDING OWNER AND HAVE NOT BEEN FIELD VERIFIED. SOME MINOR ADJUSTMENTS BASED ON FIELD-VERIFIED ACTUAL CONDITIONS MAY BE NECESSARY.

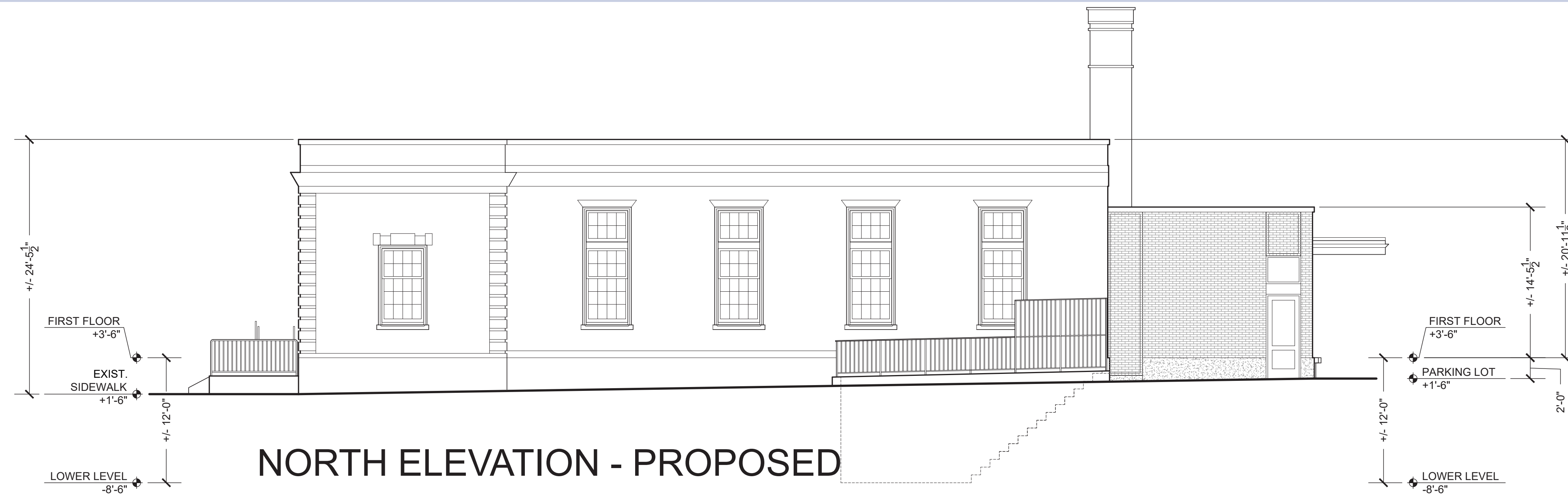
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LOWER LEVEL PLAN - PROPOSED



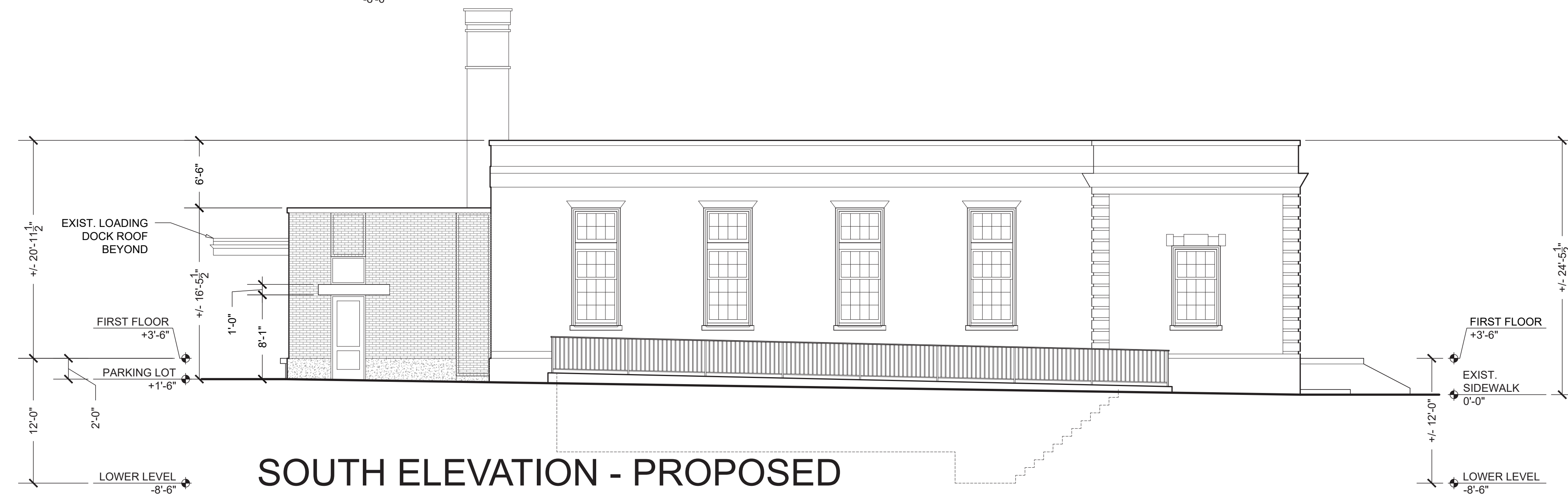
FIRST FLOOR PLAN - PROPOSED



NORTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED



WEST ELEVATION - PROPOSED



SOUTH ELEVATION - PROPOSED

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280-284 SMOOTH



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Home / Brick / Face / Gray / English Gray Velour

ENGLISH GRAY VELOUR



ARBAN PRECAST STONE



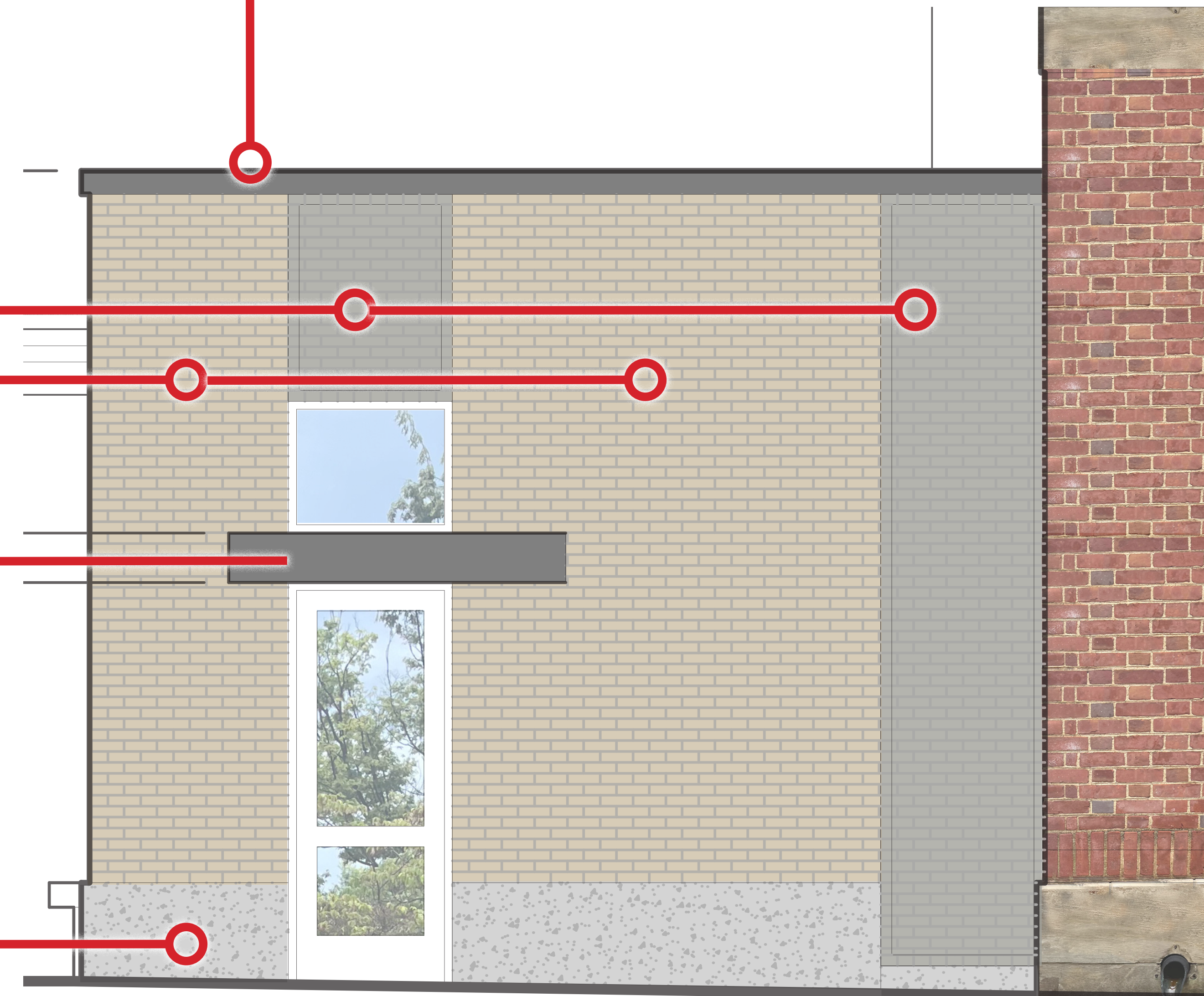
Light Grey 2104



PAC-CLAD PREFINISHED ALUM



▲ \$ BURNISHED SLATE



SOUTH ELEVATION - DETAIL