



New First-Year Housing

Historic Review Commission
May 20th, 2026 Submission
June 3rd, 2026 Presentation
July 1st, 2026 Hearing & Action



From the outset, our design has aimed to make a positive contribution to the Oakland community, enhance the University of Pittsburgh campus, and create a building that reflects the tradition of great architecture being built in Pittsburgh. To achieve this, we focused on several key measures of success, foremost among them adherence to the Design Guidelines for the Oakland Civic Center Historic District. The primary elements of those guidelines include the following:

New Construction

- The general aim of the guidelines for new construction is to encourage the visual compatibility of new construction with the character and quality of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings that give the district and the adjoining Schenley Farms Historic District their historic architectural significance and visual character. This does not require, although it also does not forbid, replication of the styles of the existing buildings in the district. The review of the design of a new structure will take into account the immediate context of the buildings that surround it, as well as the historic and architectural character of the district as a whole.
- **MATERIALS:** Materials should be of a similar color, texture, and scale to building materials in the district’s contributing buildings.
- **SCALE, MASSING, RHYTHM, AND SITING:** The scale, massing, and rhythm of a new building and its individual elements (e.g., windows, doors, roof, and ornamentation) should be compatible with the forms found among the contributing buildings in the district. In addition, the Commission will review the spatial relationship of a new building to the open spaces and buildings around it. The ratio of wall surface to openings, and the proportions and direction of the door and window openings, should be consistent with those of the contributing buildings. Glass curtain walls and horizontal strip windows along the principal facades should be avoided, as well as large, flat wall surfaces unbroken by openings, setbacks, or moldings.
- **DETAILING:** The detailing of new buildings should correspond to the kinds of detailing found on contributing buildings in the district. This does not require replication of the degree of ornamentation found in those buildings but should generally include the following: a cornice or other definition of the roofline; a distinctive main door surround; window sills and lintels, or other distinctive detailing at the openings; and ornamental features such as moldings.
- **ACCESSORIES:** The Historic Review Commission will usually approve all signs for new buildings that conform in size and material to the sign regulations of the Zoning Ordinance. Signs should not be installed in such a way as to obscure architectural features of the building; they should not be installed on the roof of the building; and they should not be internally-illuminated box signs (channel-letter signs may be approved by the Commission on a case-by-case basis). Awnings on new buildings should be sloping and triangular in section, in most cases (although arched windows should have rounded awnings); they should be made of canvas or canvas-like materials; and they should not be internally-illuminated. Exterior lighting should be mounted in an inconspicuous and non-destructive manner, and screened from adjoining residential use.
- **ROOFTOP ELEMENTS:** Structures on the roofs of new buildings, such as elevator or other mechanical housings or devices, vents, utilities, and skylights, should be designed so that they are inconspicuous from the public streets.

Our design is intended to reflect both the spirit and intent of the Historic District guidelines while continuing to evolve through ongoing collaboration and input. Influenced by key historic structures such as the Music Building, the Cathedral of Learning, Clapp Hall, and Ruskin Hall the design responds through compatible massing, materiality, rhythm, and fenestration. Most importantly, it seeks to respect the historic context while contributing a timeless and aspirational architectural expression appropriate for the 21st century.

Specifically:

- **MASSING:** Drawing from the strong horizontal lines of the Music Building and the vertical proportions of the Cathedral of Learning, the design establishes a clear base, middle, and top. This composition allows the building to be understood at a distance while still contributing positively to the pedestrian experience at street level. Other contributing buildings including Alumni Hall and Clapp Hall also include similar strategies and features.
- **MATERIALITY:** Because the building wraps the Music Building and Annex on two sides, the design treats this historic structure as a “jewel” at the corner. A complementary palette predominantly of stone and brick creates an elegant backdrop and a significant improvement over the existing parking frontage along Fifth, Ruskin, and Bellefield Avenues.
- **RHYTHM:** Given the scale of the building, the design introduces visual interest through a strong vertical fenestration pattern inspired by the Cathedral of Learning, utilizing mullions and spandrel panels that extend continuously from top to bottom. Vertically aligned window groupings within the brick façade, including references to the 2-story window groupings on the adjacent Clapp Hall and Alumni Hall, combined with offset spandrel panels, create variation and texture while reinforcing the building’s scale and expressing the organization of interior uses.
- **DETAILING:** The adjacent historic buildings are distinguished by architectural elements that create depth and shadow within their façades including notably the Cathedral of Learning and Clapp Hall. The design responds through the use of cornices, canopies, and undulating brick panels that introduce similar depth and articulation in a complementary contemporary expression. The stone terrace walls tie visually to the Music Building while evoking references to the low walls surrounding the Student Union, Soldiers and Sailors, and Pittsburgh Athletic Center. Rooftop mechanical equipment is thoughtfully located on the North Wing of the building adjacent to Ruskin Hall to minimize the impact on the adjacent streets. Equipment will be screened with architectural metal screening as shown. Notably, both the Mellon Institute and Clapp Hall have rooftop equipment that is prominent and not screened. We believe our strategy is appropriate for a new building of this time in this district.
- **OPEN SPACE/SPATIAL RELATIONSHIP:** The design extends beyond the building itself to include a cohesive landscape and streetscape strategy. A public terrace at the base negotiates the grade along Ruskin Avenue while rising slightly above the street, allowing for landscape buffering and views over traffic. Virtually all of the contributing buildings have addressed the street level with similar strategies. Plantings and site access are carefully integrated and continue to be refined. Loading and bicycle storage areas are conveniently located and thoughtfully designed, allowing Ruskin Hall and the new residence hall to share loading dock functions in a clever and efficient manner that reduces the overall impact on the site. While we are not seeking approval for accessories at this time, their design will be consistent with the direction of the design guidelines and will be shared with the commission at a later date.



Cathedral of Learning and Music Building



Music Annex and Music Building



Music Annex



Ruskin Hall and Music Annex

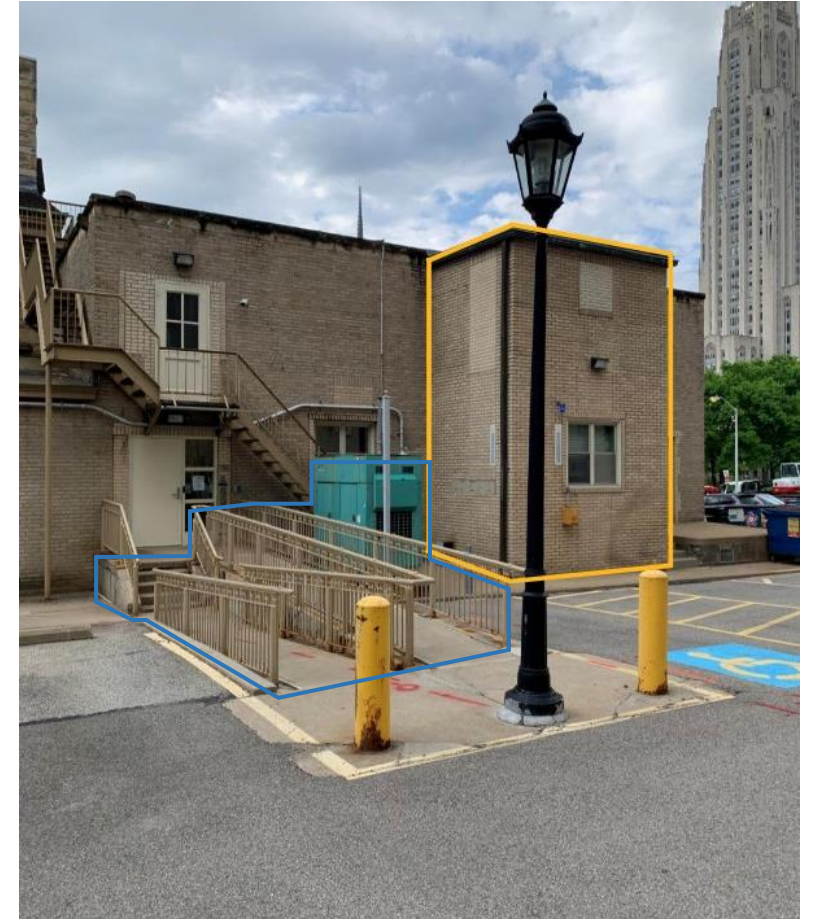
Existing Site Context

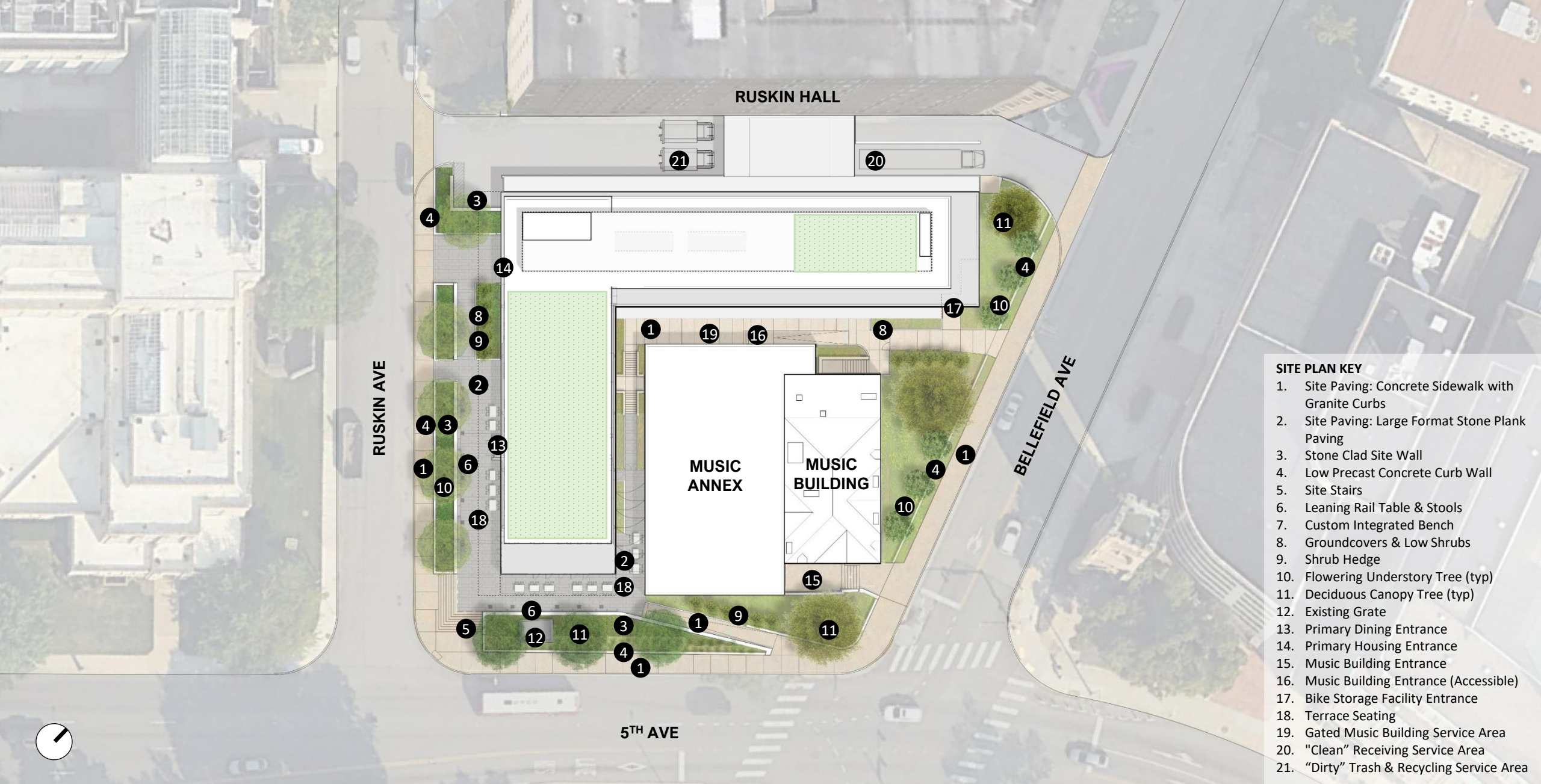


Our approach to demolition reflects the spirit and intent of the Historic District guidelines. To provide access to the site, the proposed demolition is limited to the removal of a 110 square foot office addition on the Music Annex facing the existing parking lot, along with the removal of the existing access ramp and generator. Importantly, is an addition to the Music Annex (which itself is an addition to the original 1884 Music Building) and is not considered contributing to the historic or architectural significance of the district as a whole. Moreover, the portion to be demolished is not an addition to a contributing building. The proposed work preserves the original 1884 Music Building while allowing the site to evolve in a thoughtful and compatible manner.

Specifically:

- **LIMITED SCOPE OF DEMOLITION:** To provide access to the site, the proposed demolition is limited to the removal of a 100 square foot office addition on the Music Annex facing the existing parking lot, along with the removal of the existing access ramp and generator.
- **NO HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:** The portion of the building being demolished is an addition to the Music Annex (which itself is an addition to the original 1884 Music Building) and is not considered contributing to the historic or architectural significance to the district as a whole. No primary historic fabric or character-defining elements are impacted by the proposed work.
- **NO CONTRIBUTION TO DISTRICT CHARACTER:** The portion of the building being demolished does not meaningfully contribute to the architectural character, material quality, or historic streetscape established by the contributing buildings within the district because it is in the rear of the building and not substantially visible from the public right of way, has no architectural significance, and is comprised of nondescript materials. Its removal will not adversely affect the integrity or perception of the historic district.
- **SITE ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS:** The proposed demolition and reconfiguration improve access, circulation, and functionality for the site add without impacting any contributing buildings within the historic district.
- **PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC FABRIC:** The demolition scope has been intentionally limited to avoid impacts to significant historic elements or character-defining features of the original 1884 Music Building.

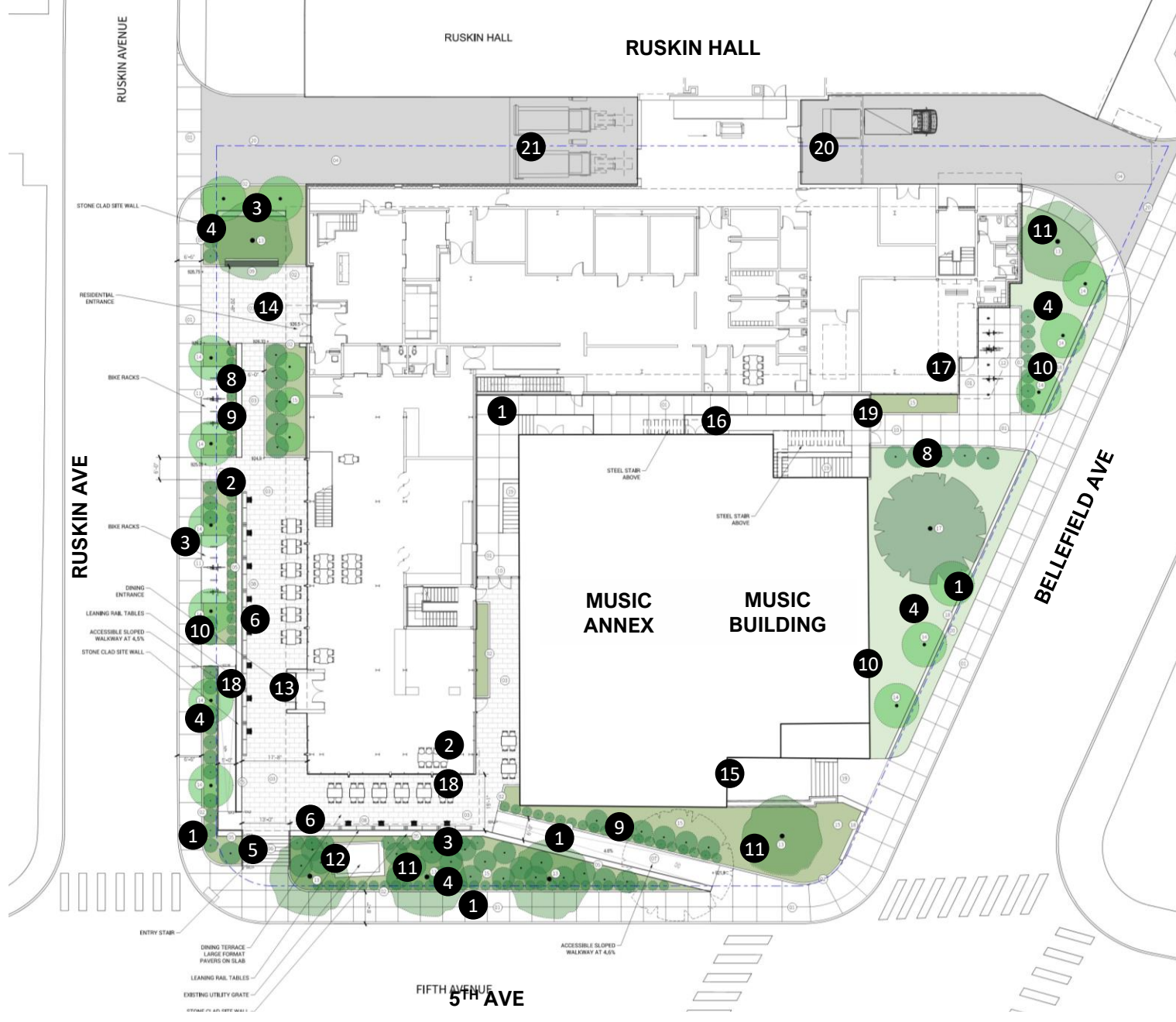




- SITE PLAN KEY**
1. Site Paving: Concrete Sidewalk with Granite Curbs
 2. Site Paving: Large Format Stone Plank Paving
 3. Stone Clad Site Wall
 4. Low Precast Concrete Curb Wall
 5. Site Stairs
 6. Leaning Rail Table & Stools
 7. Custom Integrated Bench
 8. Groundcovers & Low Shrubs
 9. Shrub Hedge
 10. Flowering Understory Tree (typ)
 11. Deciduous Canopy Tree (typ)
 12. Existing Grate
 13. Primary Dining Entrance
 14. Primary Housing Entrance
 15. Music Building Entrance
 16. Music Building Entrance (Accessible)
 17. Bike Storage Facility Entrance
 18. Terrace Seating
 19. Gated Music Building Service Area
 20. "Clean" Receiving Service Area
 21. "Dirty" Trash & Recycling Service Area

Site Plan





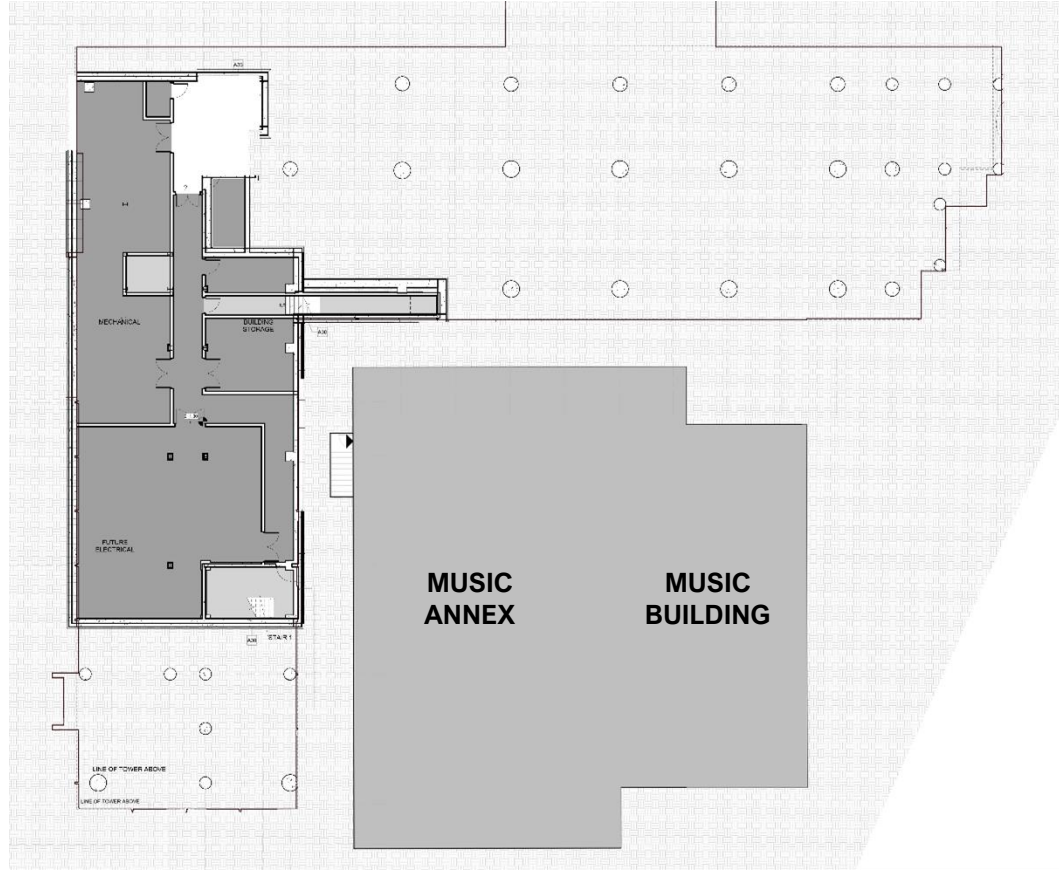
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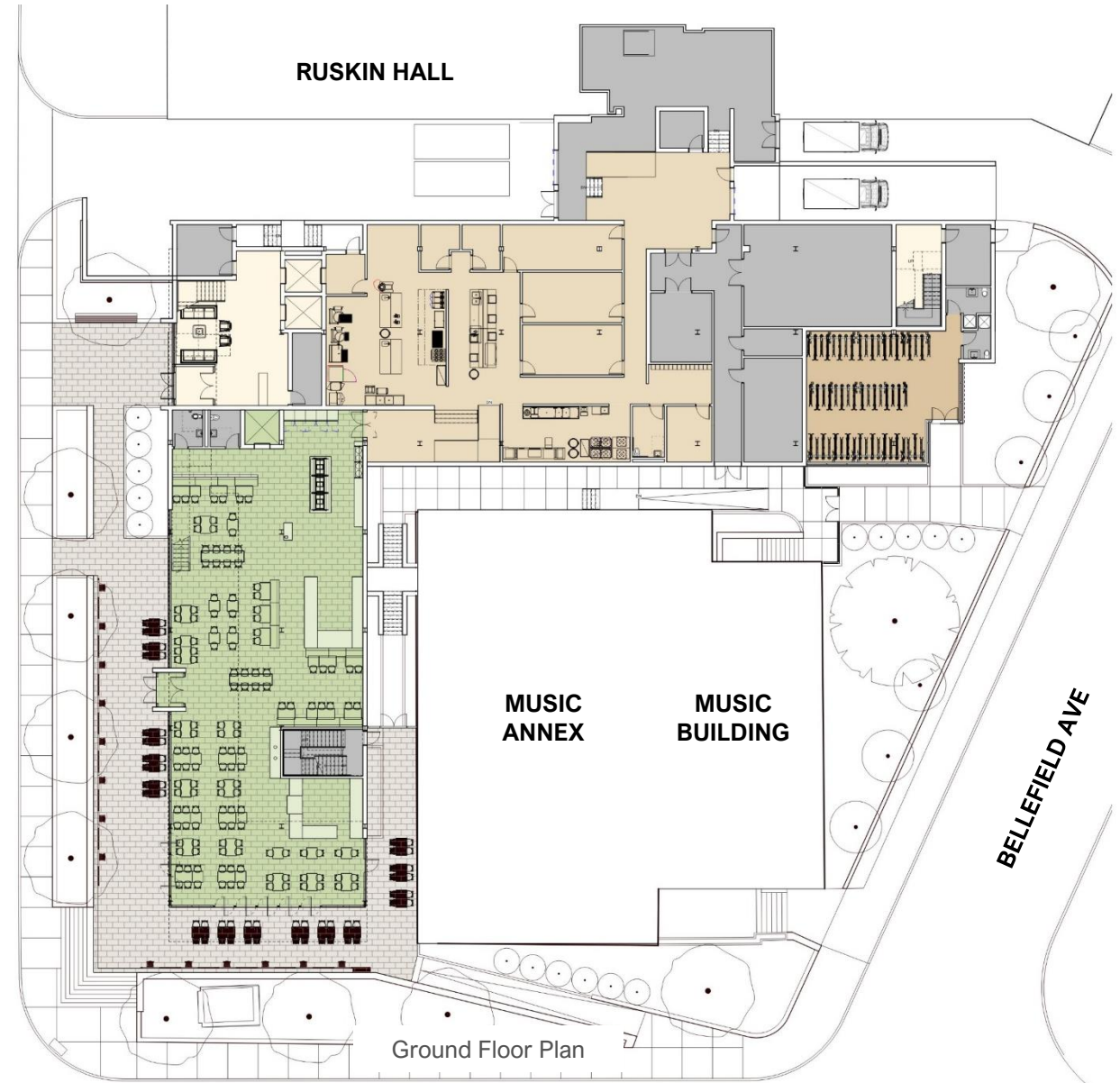


PLAN LEGEND

- PLAZA
- COMMON PUBLIC SPACE
- BIKE STORAGE
- FOOD SERVICE/DINING
- FOOD SERVICE/ KITCHEN



Basement



Ground Floor Plan









5th Ave

NOTE: PLANS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

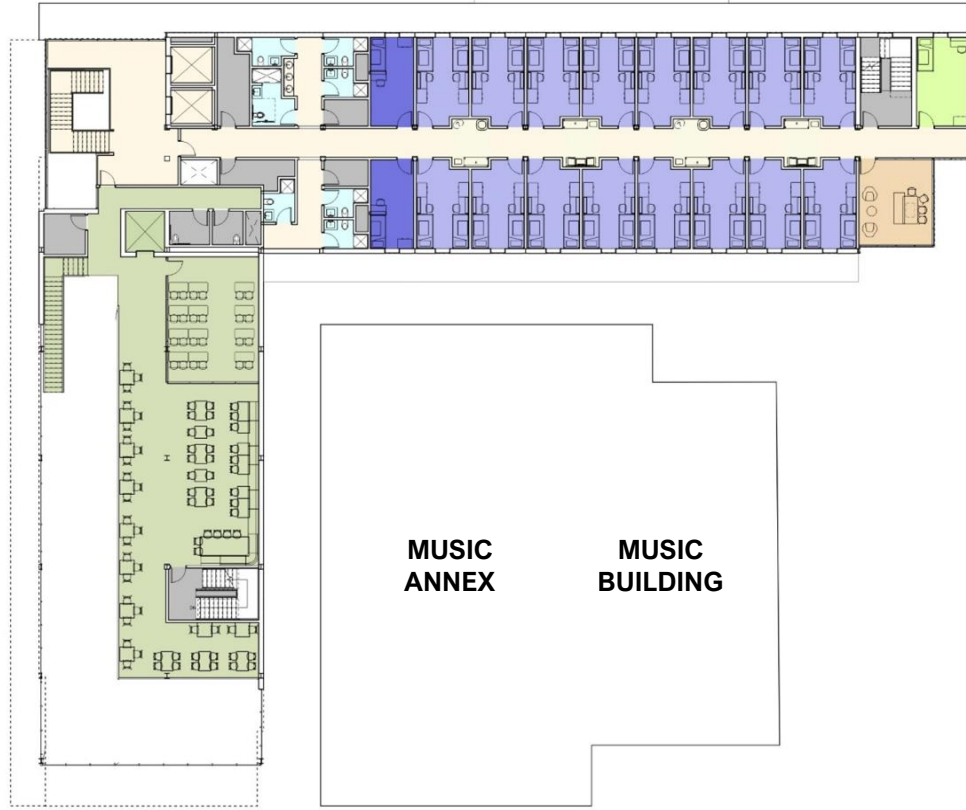
Basement & Ground Floor Plan



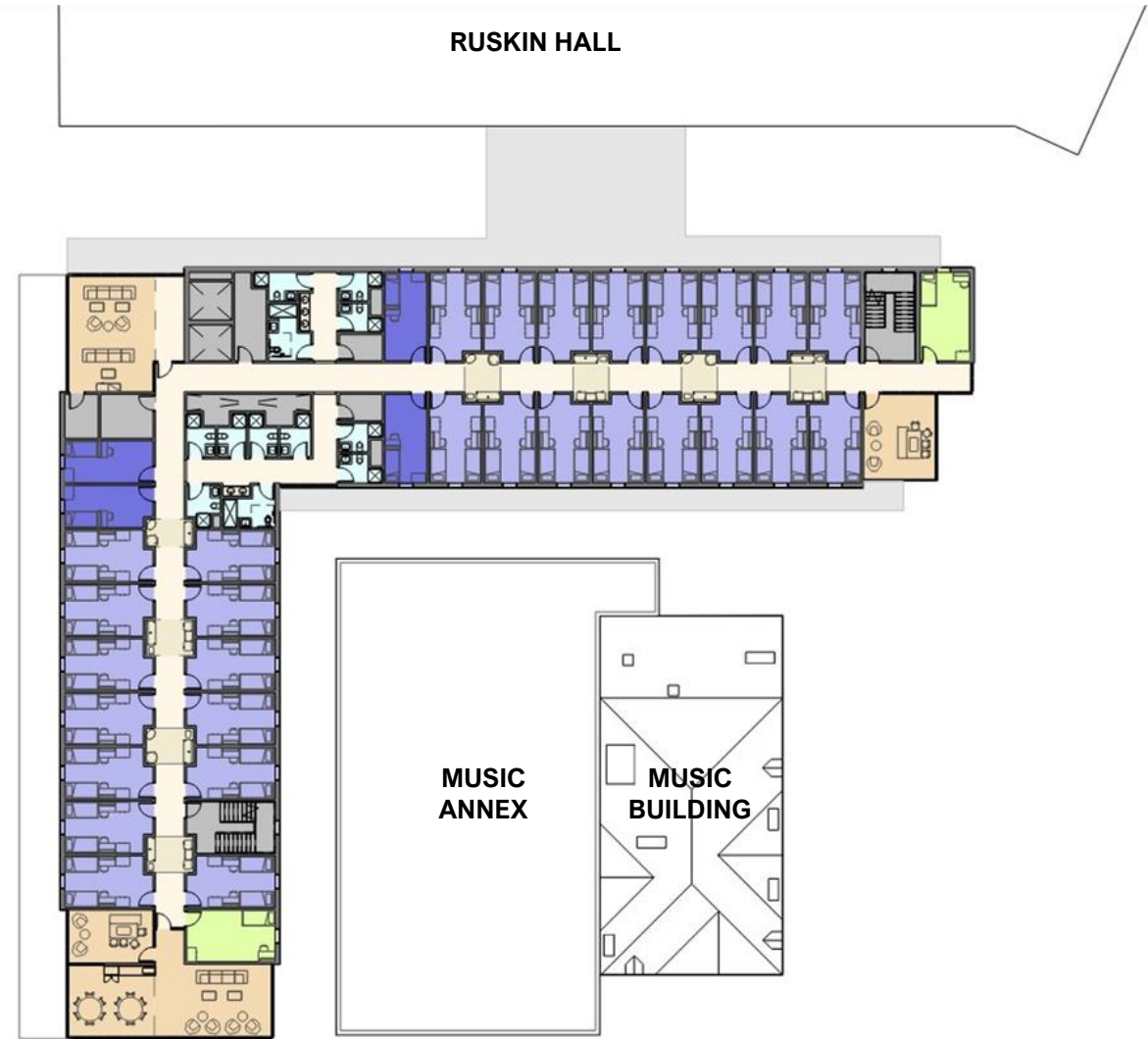
PLAN LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  PLAZA |  BIKE STORAGE |  COMMON RESIDENTIAL SPACE |
|  FOOD SERVICE/DINING |  COMMON BATHROOM |  DOUBLE DORM ADA |
|  COMMON PUBLIC SPACE |  SINGLE DORM |  MEP/CIRCULATION |
|  FOOD SERVICE/ KITCHEN |  DOUBLE DORM | |

Dining Mezzanine



Level 2














Typical Levels 3-8

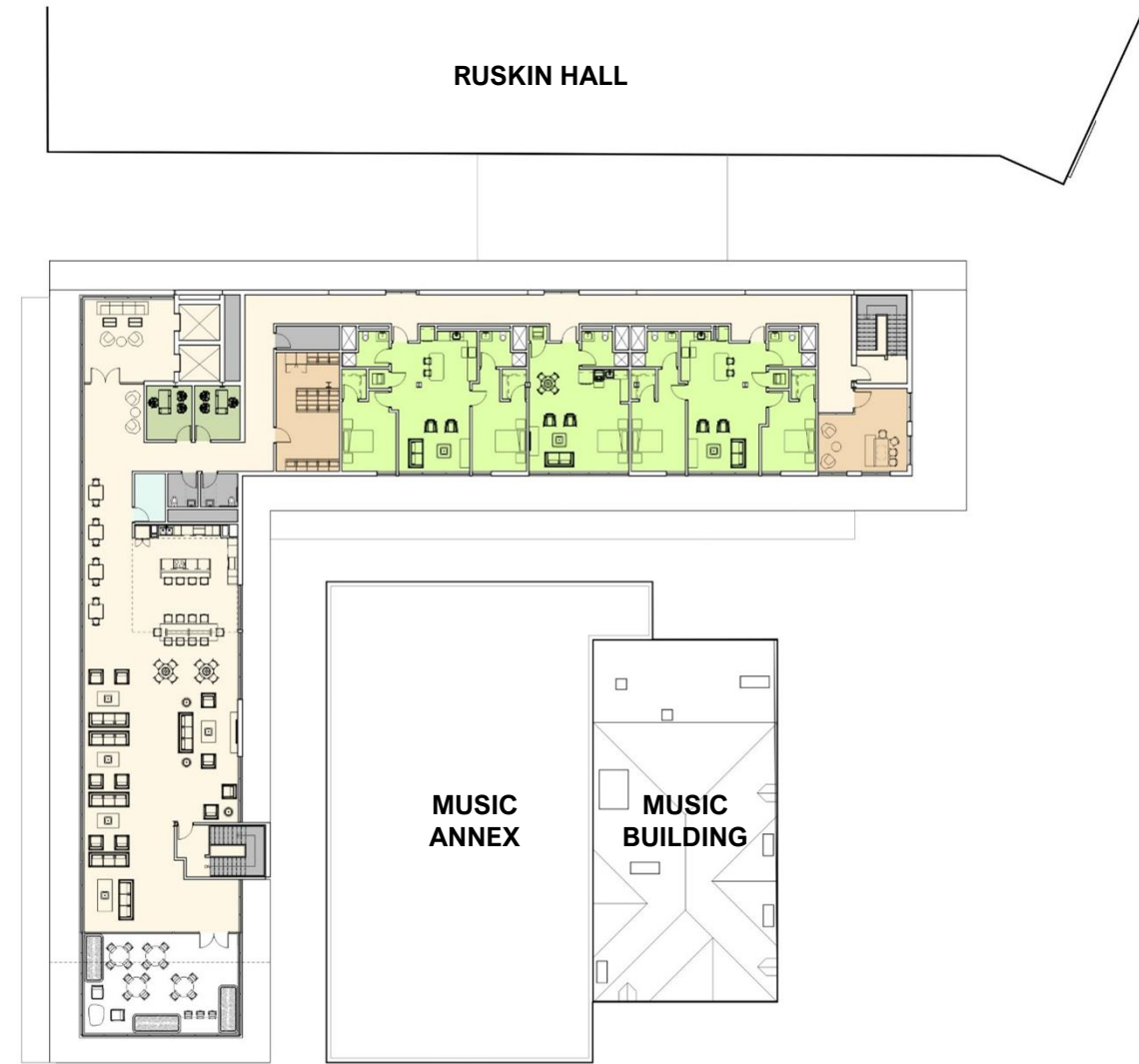
NOTE: PLANS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Level 2 and Typical Floor Plans



PLAN LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
|  PLAZA |  BIKE STORAGE |  COMMON RESIDENTIAL SPACE |
|  FOOD SERVICE/DINING |  COMMON BATHROOM |  DOUBLE DORM ADA |
|  COMMON PUBLIC SPACE |  SINGLE DORM |  MEP/CIRCULATION |
|  FOOD SERVICE/ KITCHEN |  DOUBLE DORM | |



Level 9

NOTE: PLANS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

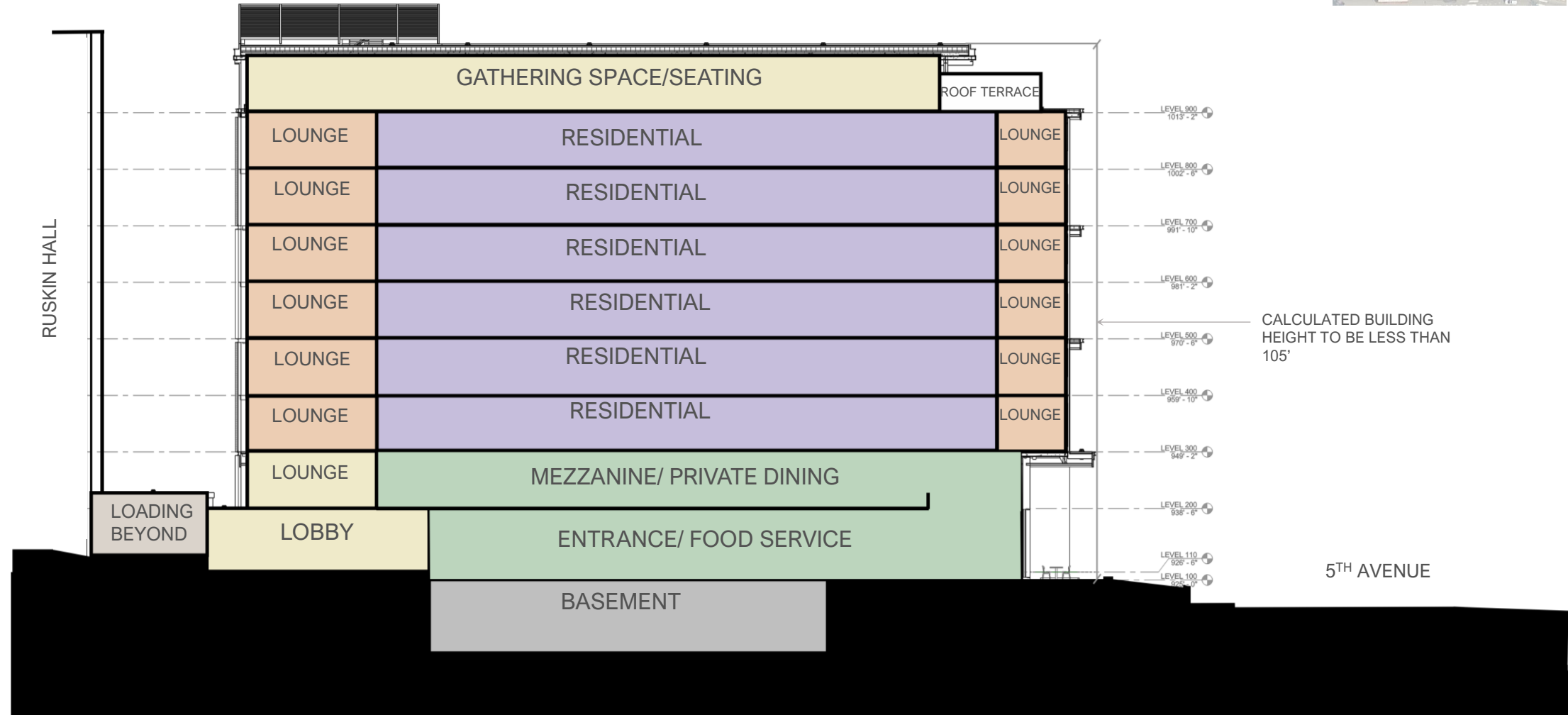
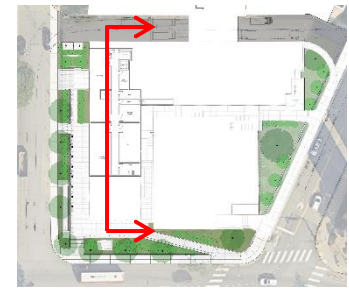


Level 9 Floor Plan



PLAN LEGEND

- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMON RESIDENTIAL SPACE
- COMMON PUBLIC SPACE
- MEP/STORAGE
- FOOD SERVICE/DINING
- LOADING DOCK
- ROOFTOP TERRACE



Building Section





Music Building



Soldiers and Sailors



Bellefield Hall



Webster Hall & Mellon Institute

Existing Surrounding Context





Heinz Memorial Chapel



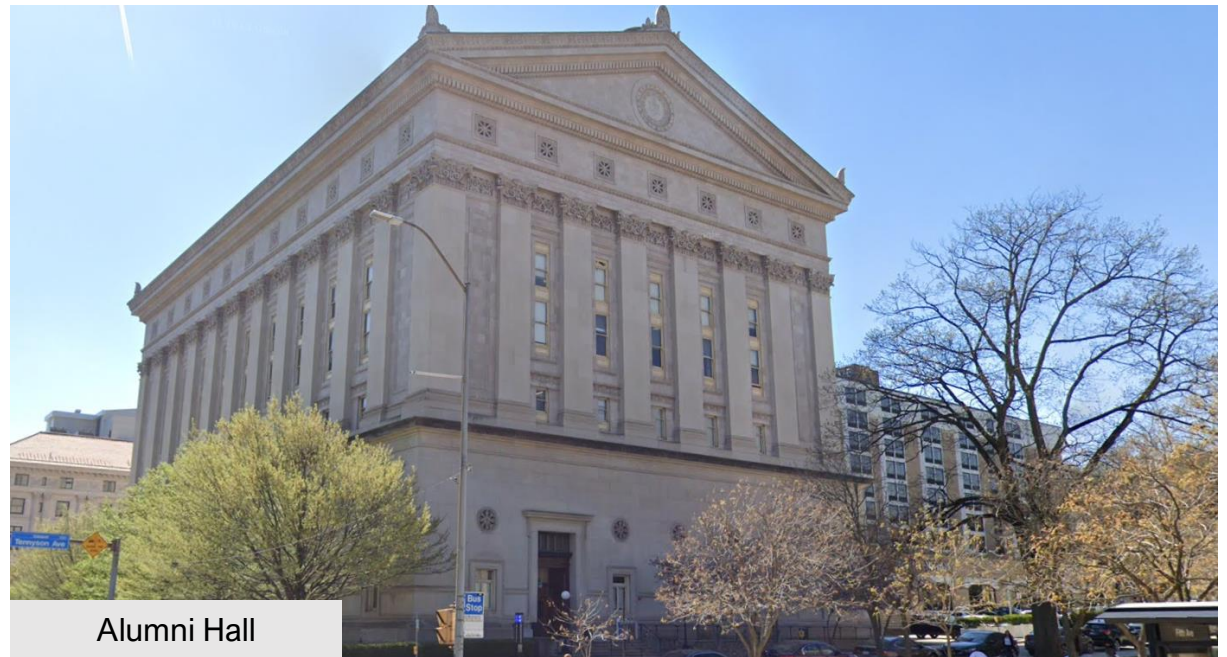
Cathedral of Learning



Heinz Chapel & Cathedral of Learning



Clapp Hall



Alumni Hall

Existing Surrounding Context



ARTICULATION



Cathedral of Learning, 1926
Collegiate Gothic Revival



Hotel Schenley | Pitt Student Union, 1898
Beaux-Arts



Clapp Hall, 1950s
Functionalist

COMPOSITION



Webster Hall, 1926
Art Deco Classicism



Ruskin Hall, 1922
Neoclassical



Music Building, 1884
Richardsonian Romanesque

MATERIALITY



limestone with deep tracery
Cathedral of Learning



ashlar sandstone w/ beaded mortar
Music Building



tan brick with raked joints
Ruskin Hall

Articulation

- Rhythm and window/wall ratios of the design approach are compatible with adjacent contributing buildings, including the Pitt Student Union.
- The design approach picks up on the vertical grouping of windows (every 2-stories) of the Student Union and adjacent Clapp Hall, and the Union's horizontal banding.
- The design approach relates to the vertical emphasis of the Cathedral's window tracery, and sense of depth.

Composition

- The design approach draws from the base/middle/top composition of adjacent Ruskin Hall, and its overall sense of verticality.
- Like the adjacent Webster Hall, the design approach's "top" is set-back from the primary facades, helping the building scale to the surrounding context.

Materiality

- Materials for the design approach have been selected generally to be of similar color, texture, and scale to building materials in the district's contributing buildings, including a primary use of tan brick & stone cladding (particularly at the ground floors)
- The design approach picks up on the dark accents of the adjacent Music Building, particularly for window surrounds and the top



Labeled buildings are contributing buildings of the Oakland Civic Center Historic District

Height & Massing

The height, scale and massing of the design approach is compatible with surrounding contributing buildings, including Ruskin Hall, Clapp Hall, and Webster Hall.

Roof Form

The design approach features a low slope roof, with an inset (stepped-back) top floor to help the architecture scale to the context, compatible with the adjacent Clapp Hall, Ruskin Hall, Webster Hall, and Mellon Institute. Webster Hall and the Mellon Institute have similar inset top floors.

Rooftop Elements

The design approach includes a rooftop screen device to help major rooftop equipment and appurtenances to be inconspicuous from the public streets. Adjacent Clapp Hall, Ruskin Hall, Webster Hall, and Mellon Institute all have rooftop appurtenances.

Open Space & Landscape

As an infill project, the design approach addresses 5th Avenue, Bellefield Ave, and Ruskin Ave with new fronts. The project helps to frame the Cathedral Lawn and enhances the streetscapes with sidewalks and landscape similar to adjacent Alumni Hall and Clapp Hall. In addition, the landscaping intent is to preserve large trees currently located on the Fifth Avenue and N. Bellefield frontages.

Detailing

Detailing of the design approach, including roofline definition, door surrounds, and windows, draws from contributing buildings and reinterprets them for visual compatibility.



East Elevation along Bellefield Ave

Cathedral of Learning

Cathedral Lawn
(Pitt Student Union in distance)

5th Ave

Music Building

Ruskin Hall

First Baptist
Church

Bayard St

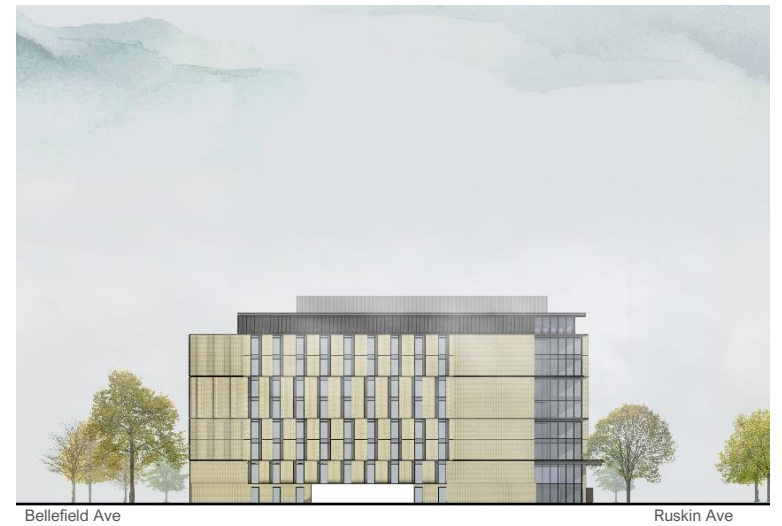
Elevations in Relation to Contributing Buildings



Drawing from adjacent Ruskin Hall, the design approach is composed of a base/middle/top, with an overall vertical emphasis. The rhythm of building elements draws from Ruskin Hall and Webster Hall. The top floor is stepped back and inset to scale to context, similar to Webster Hall.



West Elevation along Ruskin Ave



North Elevation along Service Access



South Elevation along 5th Ave

Elevations in Relation to Contributing Buildings





Rendered Elevated View above 5th Ave





Rendered Elevated View above 5th Ave





Rendered View from 5th & Ruskin





Rendered View from 5th & Ruskin





Rendered View from 5th & Ruskin





View of “East Gateway”, 5th & Bellefield





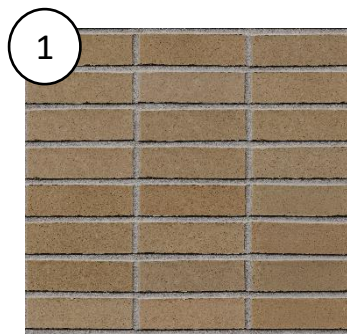
View of “East Gateway”, 5th & Bellefield



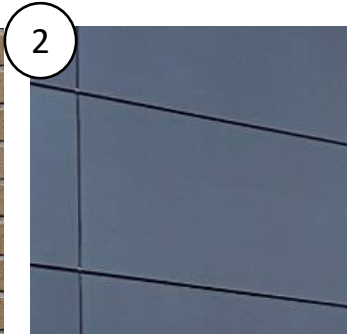


Rendered Elevated View Facing Cathedral

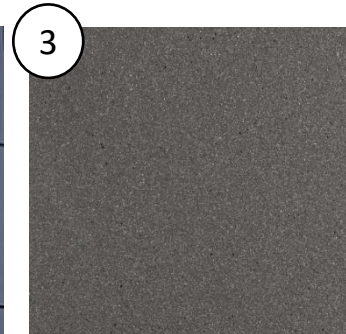




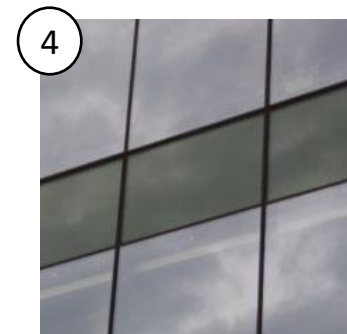
1
Brick – Tan/Buff, Stacked Bond



2
Metal Composite Material



3
Concrete Rain Screen



4
Clear Insulated Glass, Spandrel Glass Panel, & Dark Mullions



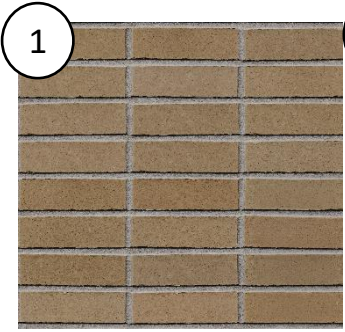
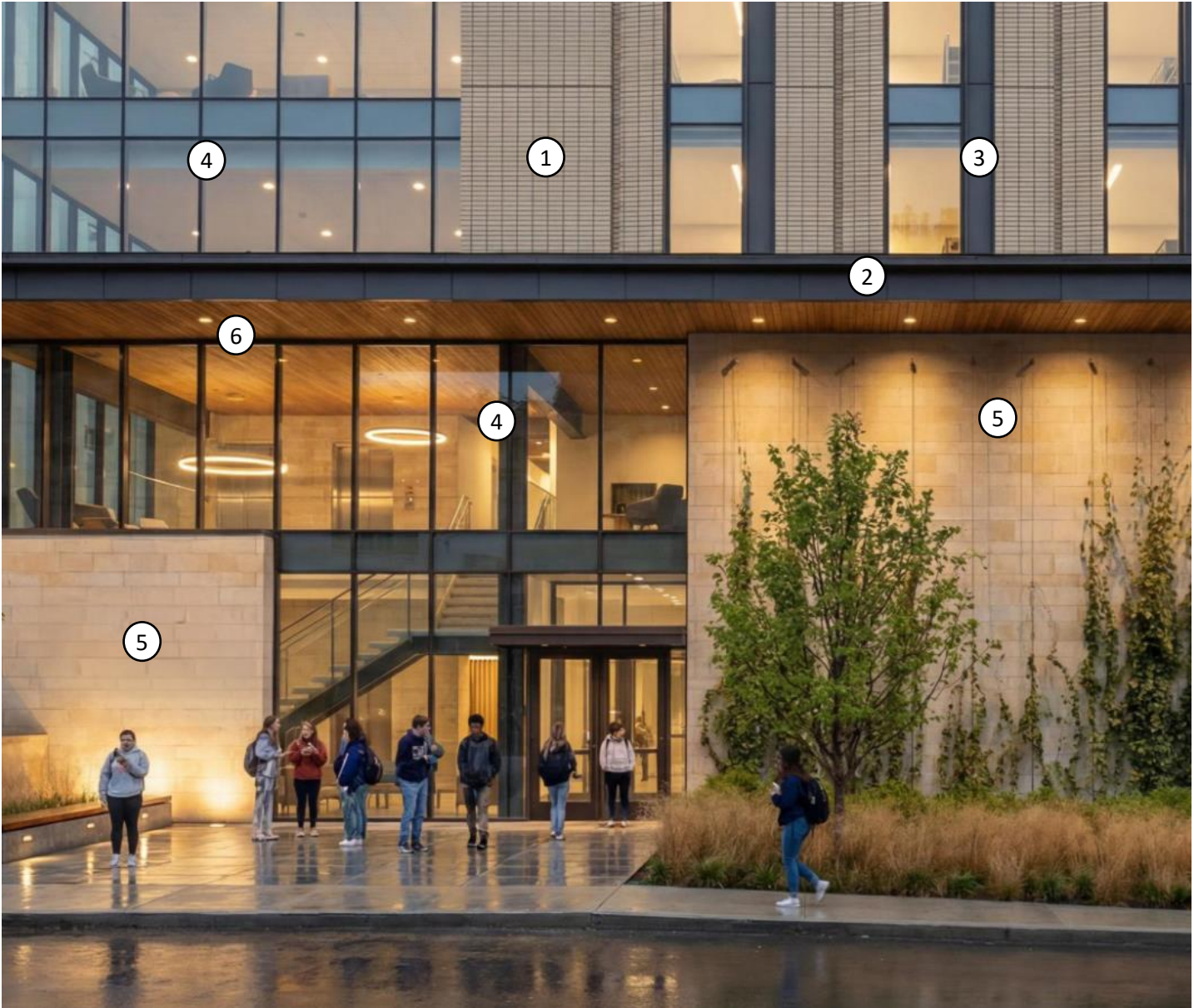
5
Natural Contextual Stone



6
Wood-Look Metal Soffit

Exterior Material Board

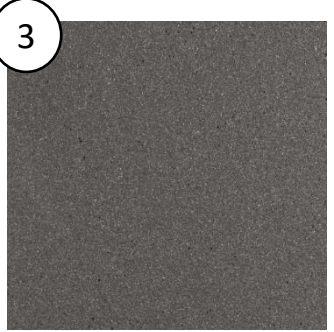




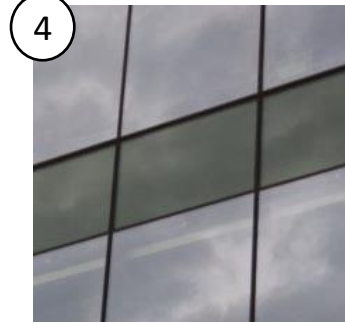
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Thank you!
Questions?

