

Briefing

**1.BDA-2025-12059**

108 N. Dithridge Street

Oakland Civic Center Historic District

North Oakland Neighborhood

**Construction of new rear garage**



November 25, 2025

RE: **Bishop's Residence (LGA #25460)**  
**Historical Review Narrative**

Dear Historical Review Committee:

We have been asked by the Diocese of Pittsburgh to help adapt the existing rectory at St. Paul's Cathedral, located in the Oakland Civic Center, for the new bishop. With such a historic building, we wanted to approach the design with respect while trying to ensure the needs of the bishop, including security. There are three exterior alterations/additions in this project.

First is the addition of a handicap ramp to the front of the building. With it in such a prominent spot, we wanted a subtle design that would blend into the existing building. The ramp itself would be located behind a new pony wall clad in stone to match the existing building. The wall's purpose is to screen the ramp while providing a backdrop for new shrubs. Since the rise from grade to existing first floor is under 30", we do not need guardrails for the ramp, just handrails, which helps keep the design minimal. Because the new landing height is at the first-floor height (currently it is 5" below first floor height), we'll need to reconfigure the stairs to ensure uniform risers, per building code. They will be replaced as similar in appearance to what's existing as possible.

For the second item, the bishop has requested a new two-car garage with roof deck for study and prayer. Security is a high concern for us with this design, as well as making sure that this new building looks like it fits with the other buildings in the St. Paul complex. We initially looked at the building taking design elements from rectory, but the peaks seemed too high. Instead, we took design elements from the garage entrance of Synod Hall. This gave us a more subdued peak that didn't try to compete with the rectory, more fitting for a garage. The wall heights for the roof deck were established at a height so that a person walking down Fifth Street or North Dithridge Street would not be able to see a tall person on the roof deck. Also, while on the roof deck, the layout is such that it frames the western entrance of the cathedral as a backdrop for the bishop's prayer and contemplation.

The wall design and window layout are to match the rectory as close as possible, so it feels like the garage grew out of the rectory. Part of this will be achieved by extending the courtyard to provide a private path from the bishop's garage to the rectory, and having those walls carry on lines established from the rectory.

The last item is a simpler one. On the north entrance of the rectory, there is an existing 3' tall rot iron gate. To enhance the security at that entrance, we'd like to replace it with an 8' tall rot iron gate, styled as close to the existing gate as we can.

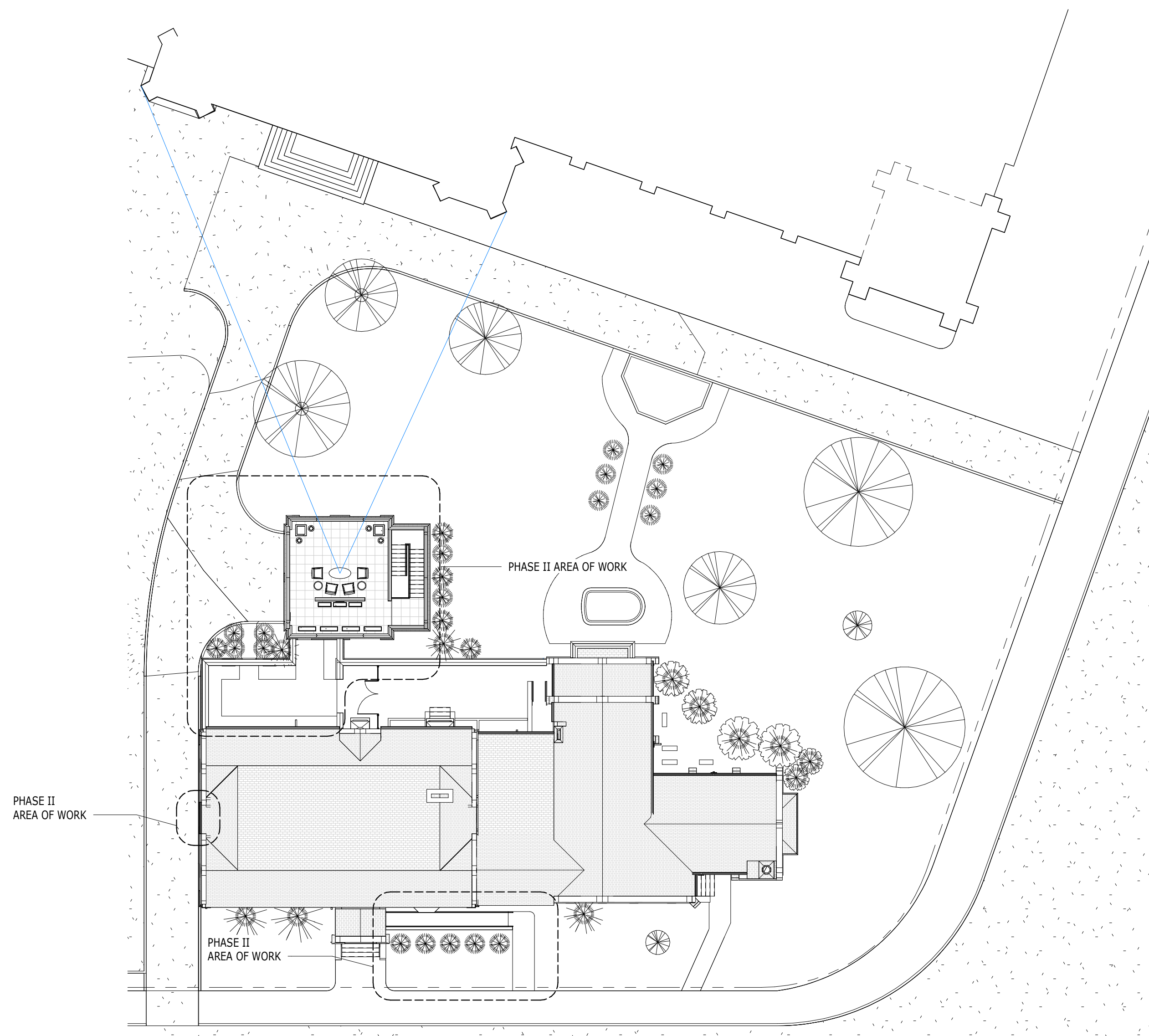


We hope that you find our efforts respect such a historic part of Pittsburgh, while adding capabilities that expand the usefulness of the building.

Thank you for your time,

Aaron Dornsmith





**SITE PLAN W/ VIEW RANGES**

# RAMP & GARAGE SITE PLAN



## BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

108 N. DITHRIDGE ST.



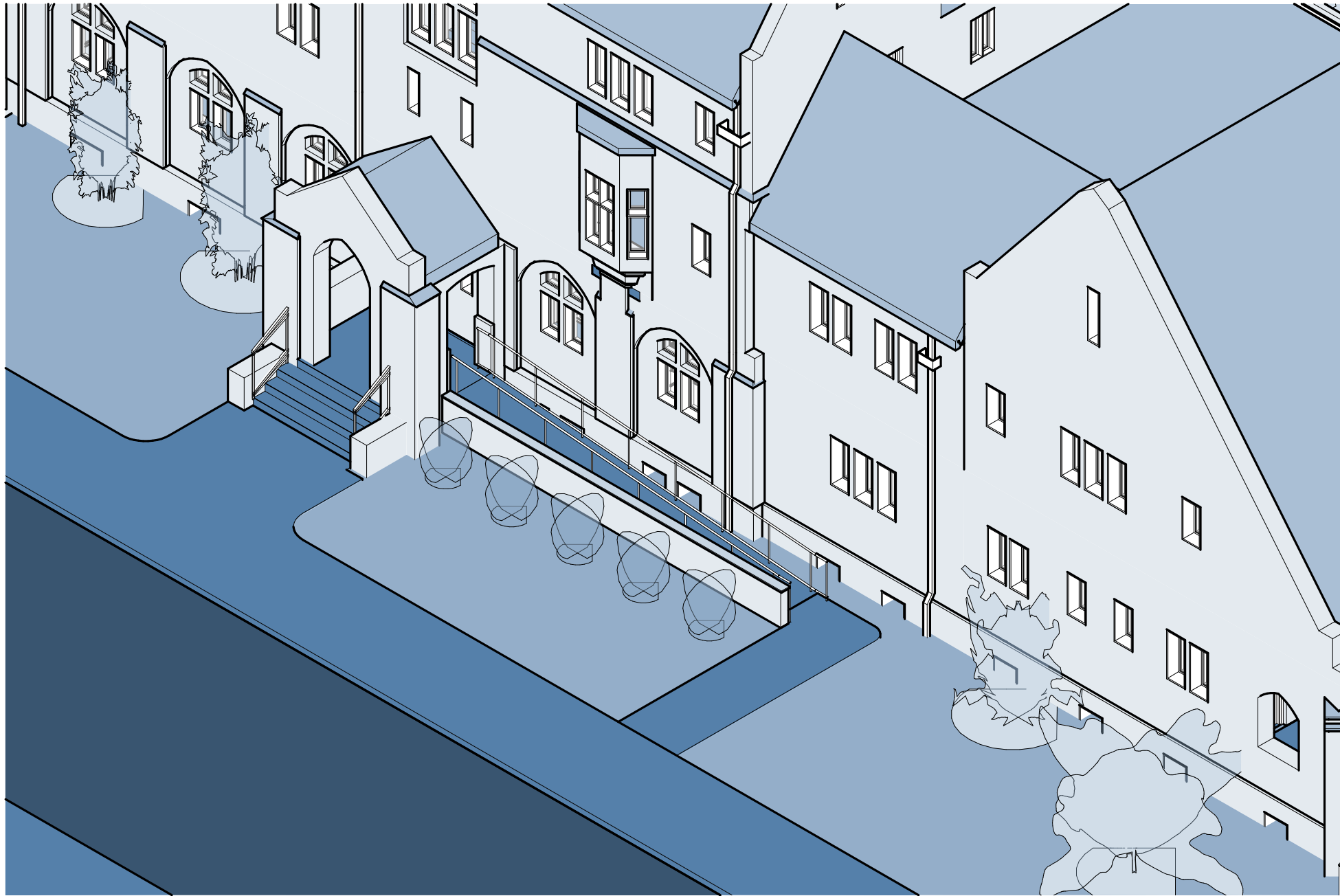
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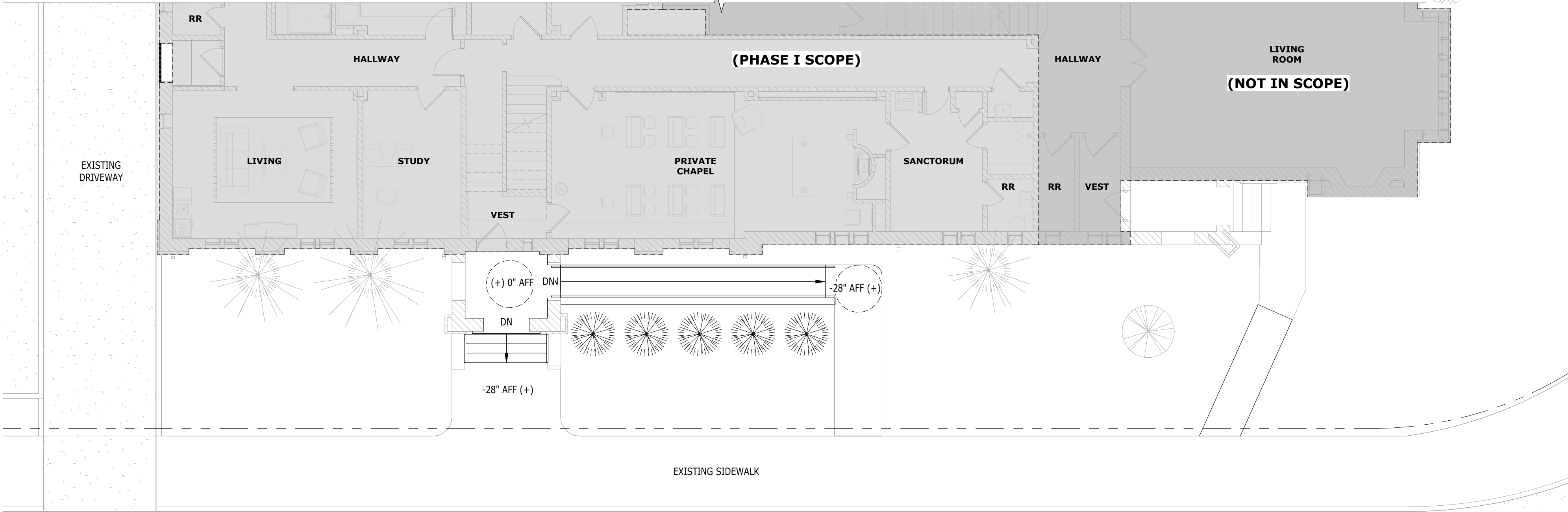


HANDICAP RAMP PERSPECTIVE



HANDICAP RAMP AXON

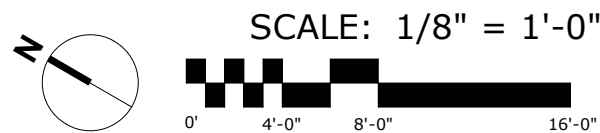
- FULL HEIGHT WALL
- FULL HEIGHT WALL TO REMAIN
- PARTIAL HEIGHT WALL
- NEW DOOR
- EXISTING DOOR TO REMAIN
- AREA NOT IN SCOPE / WORK AREA



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

# HANDICAP RAMP FLOOR PLAN & EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVES

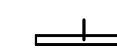
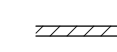
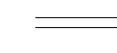
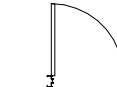

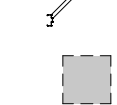
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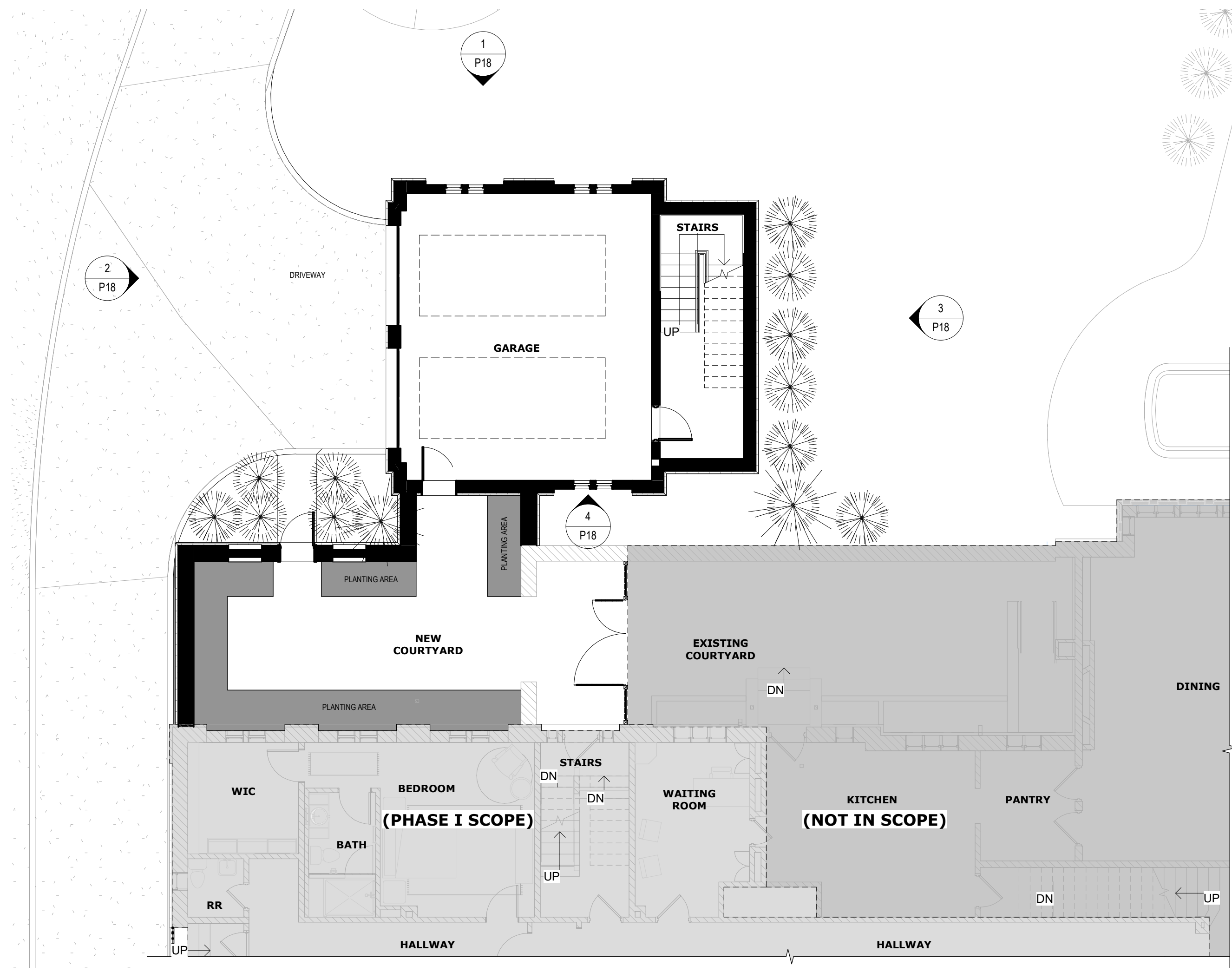


## BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

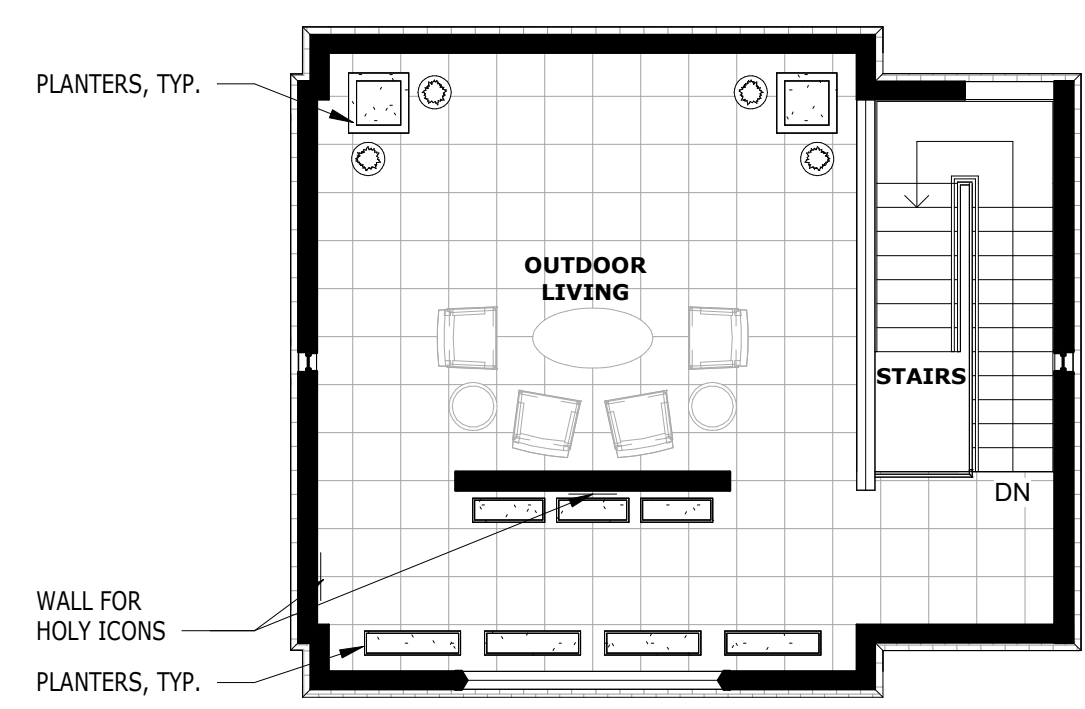
108 N. DITHRIDGE ST.



-  FULL HEIGHT WALL
-  FULL HEIGHT WALL TO REMAIN
-  PARTIAL HEIGHT WALL
-  NEW DOOR
-  EXISTING DOOR TO REMAIN
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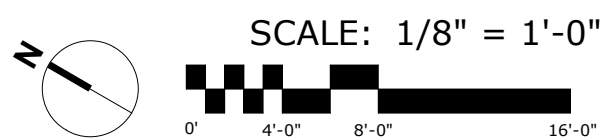


FIRST FLOOR PLAN



ROOF DECK FLOOR PLAN

# GARAGE FLOOR PLANS



## BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

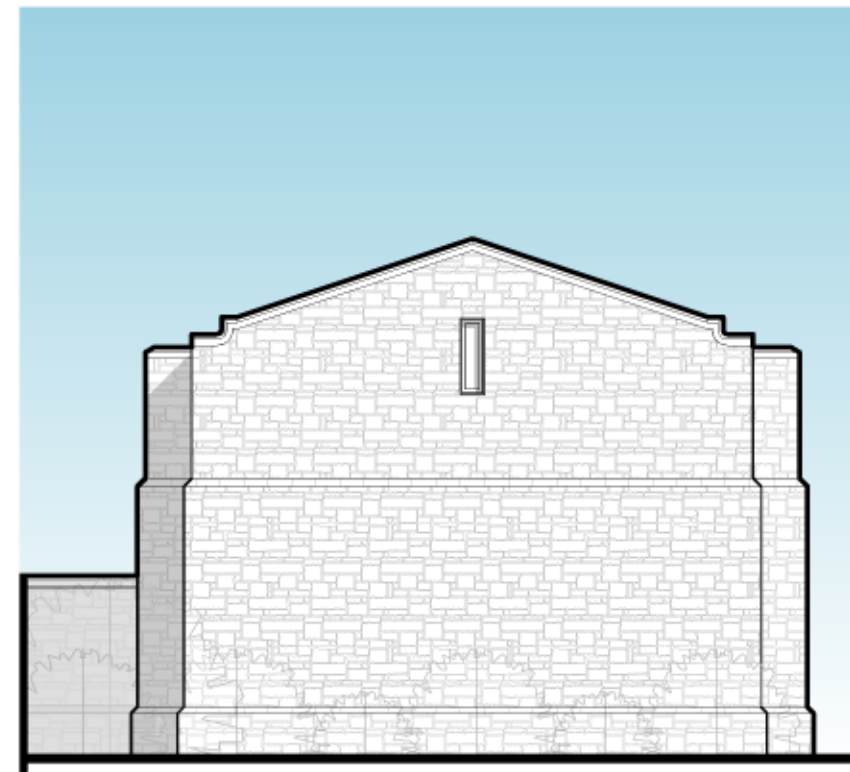
108 N. DITHRIDGE ST.



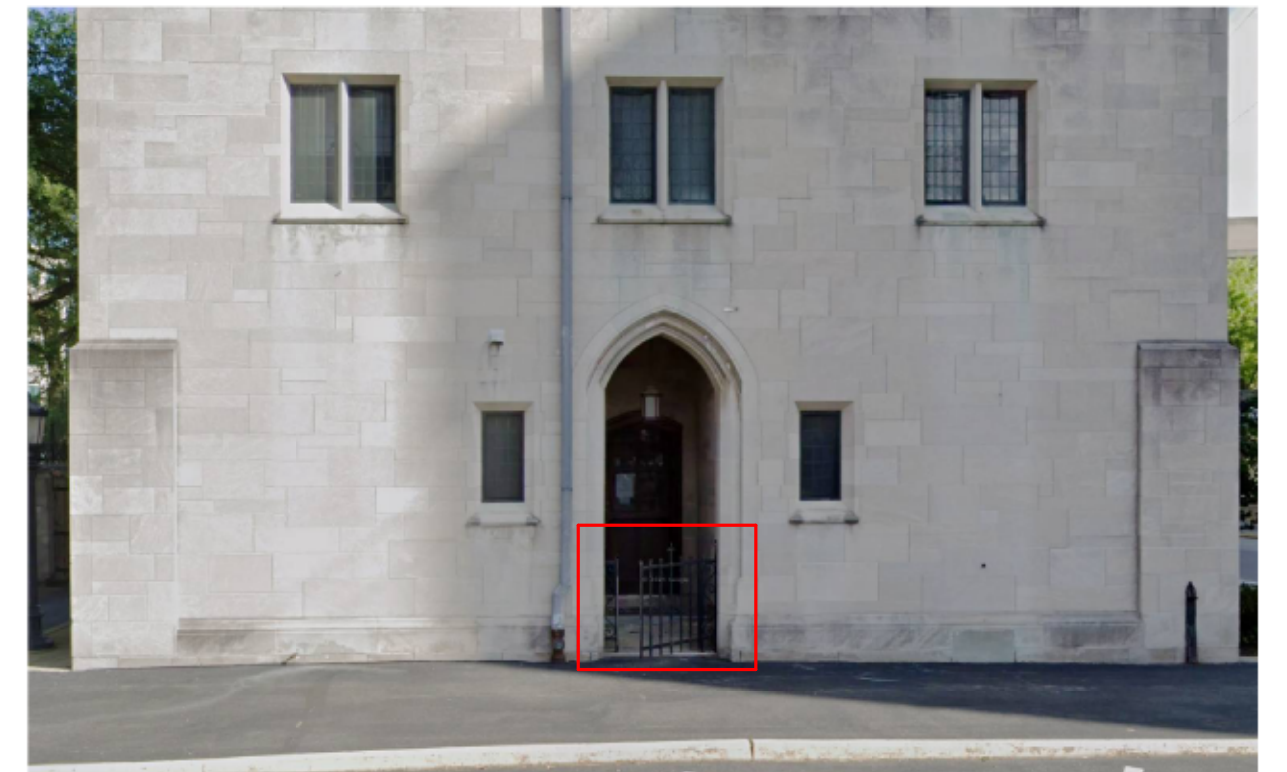




**GARAGE EXTERIOR ELEVATION - WEST**



**GARAGE EXTERIOR ELEV. - SOUTH**



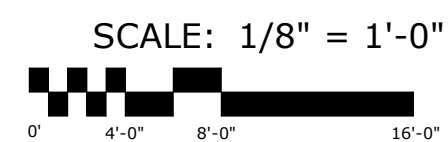
**EXISTING GATE IMAGE**



**GARAGE EXTERIOR ELEVATION - EAST**



**GARAGE EXTERIOR ELEVATION - NORTH**



# GARAGE EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

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## BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

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**GARAGE PERSPECTIVE FROM FIFTH STREET**



**DESIGN INSPIRATION IMAGE**



**GARAGE PERSPECTIVE FROM NORTH DITHRIDGE STREET**

# **GARAGE** EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVES

## **BISHOP'S RESIDENCE**

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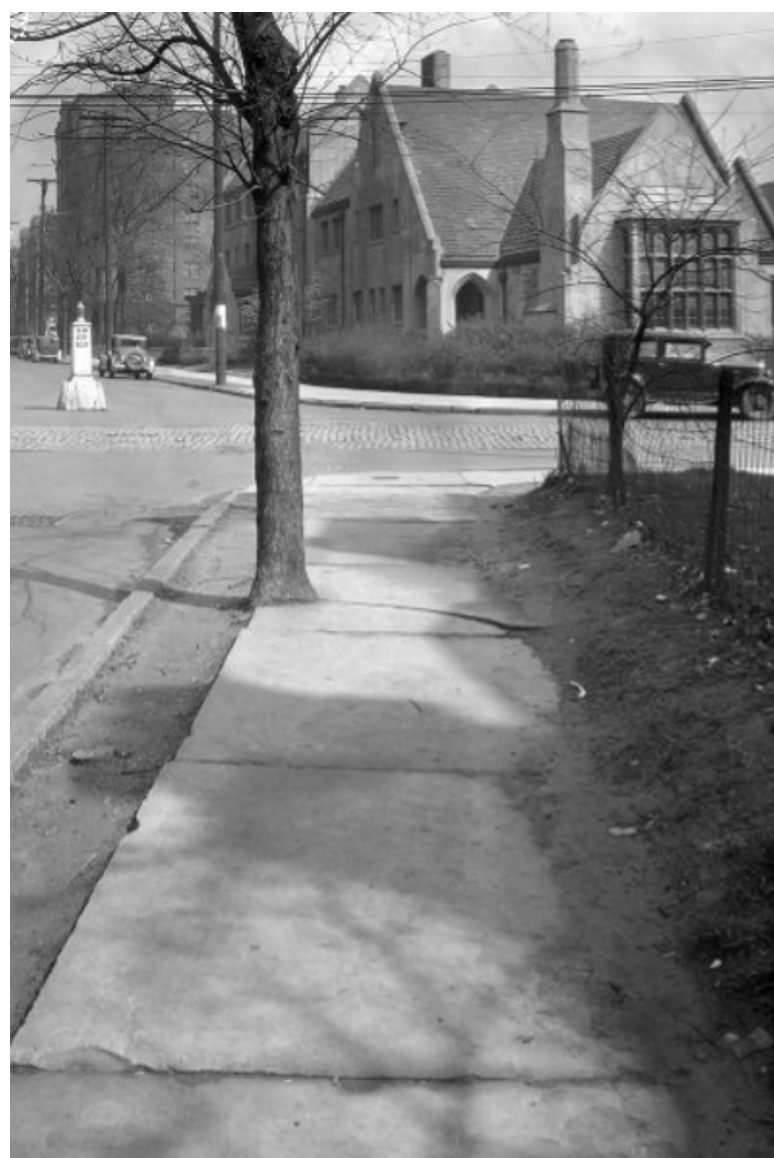




**EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION PHOTO**



**EXISTING REAR YARD PHOTO**



**HISTORIC PHOTO FROM 1933**



**EXISTING REAR ELEVATION & YARD PHOTO**

## **RAMP & GARAGE EXISTING PHOTOS**

## **BISHOP'S RESIDENCE**

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