

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FILE NAME: 240 East Fourth Street – parking lot

DATE OF APPLICATION: May 19, 2016

APPLICANT: Kaas Wilson Architects, Ryan DuPuis

OWNER: Oaks Union Depot LLC, Norman Bjornnes

DATE OF PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW: June 9, 2016

CATEGORY: Vacant (parking lot) WARD: 2 DISTRICT COUNCIL: 17

INVENTORY NUMBER: not assigned

CLASSIFICATION: Pre-Application Review

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Spong

DATE: June 2, 2016

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The site proposed for new construction has been a vacant lot that is used as a parking lot. The parking lot is fairly level but the site slopes down from the north to the south and is roughly a quarter of the block. The west and alley (south) sides of the parking lot have retaining walls and some of the historic stone remaining are believed to be the foundations of earlier buildings that were located here. Five buildings take up the remaining three fourths of the block.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant is proposing to construct a six to seven-story apartment building with basement-level parking that will be accessed from the alley. The project will allow for 89 apartment units with the at-grade level having community spaces for the tenants. The main materials proposed are: light colored brick, cast stone veneer, metal panels in both gray and copper tones and bronze-toned storefronts, windows and doors.

C. THE MEETING FORMAT FOR PRE-APPLICATION REVIEWS

Typically, the HPC allows for 20-30 minutes for review of each project. The informal review

format is as follows:

- *Staff will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) identifying issues that should be addressed by the HPC.*
- *The applicant will make a brief presentation (5 minutes) describing the historic preservation design considerations pertaining to the project scope.*
- *The HPC will discuss the project and consider whether the project is consistent with the applicable design review guidelines and the SOI. While committee members may discuss the appropriateness of a design approach in addressing the guidelines or SOI, their role is not to design the project. Given the nature of some large rehabilitation projects, the HPC may suggest that the applicant retain a preservation architect.*
- *At the end of the review, the HPC Chairperson will summarize the issues that were identified, the position of the committee members, and list all recommendations for revisions. The summary includes majority as well as minority or split opinions. The summary should cite all applicable design guidelines and Standards.*

Although the HPC works to provide comments that will result in a project that will be recommended for approval by the HPC, the discussion is preliminary and cannot predict the final recommendation of staff, public comment, and the decision of the full HPC during the Public Hearing Meeting. If final plans do not incorporate direction provided during the HPC pre-application review, approval is not likely.

It is assumed that one pre-application review will take place prior to a project being submitted for an HPC Public Hearing Meeting. On certain occasions, the HPC may recommend that an additional pre-application review take place. If another pre-application review is scheduled, then neighboring property owners may be notified of the review within at least 350 feet from the project site.

D. BACKGROUND:

Staff met once with the architects and developer in April 2016 and discussed the overall proposal, making some suggestions for revisions. Those concept plans are attached for reference.

E. GUIDELINE CITATIONS:

Sec. 74-112. - Preservation program.

The preservation program for this heritage preservation district is stated as follows:

Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District

The following guidelines for design review will serve as the basis for the heritage preservation commission's permit review decisions in the Historic Lowertown Heritage Preservation District.

The guidelines define the most important elements of the Lowertown District's unique physical appearance and state the best means of preserving and enhancing these elements in rehabilitation or new construction. These guidelines are not hard and fast regulations. They are flexible criteria. Their purpose is to provide assurance to property owners that permit review will be based on clear standards rather than the taste of individual commission

members. The guidelines will be interpreted with flexibility depending on the particular merit of the building or site under review. Consideration will also be given to availability of historical materials. When applying the guidelines the commission will also be considerate of clearly defined cases of economic hardship or deprivation of the owner or reasonable use of his/her property.

Guidelines for Design Review

I. New construction. *The basic principle for new construction in the Lowertown area is to maintain the scale and character of present buildings. New construction refers to totally new structures, moved in structures, and new additions to existing structures undergoing restoration and rehabilitation.*

Architectural diversity is characteristic of Lowertown. When first confronted with this variety, it is easy to overlook the overall thread of continuity of the area. Generally, any structure should provide height, massing, setback, materials and rhythm compatible to surrounding structures. The reproduction of historic design and details is expensive, artificial, and is recommended only for some cases of infill or other small scale construction. Guidelines for new construction focus on general rather than specific design elements in order to encourage architectural innovation.

A. Setback—Siting. *There should be no major variation in setback from the building line. Minor variations for bays and entrances are permissible. The proportion of built edge to open space should preserve the plane of the street wall, particularly along the streets facing Mears Park and the Farmer's Market.*

B. Massing, volume and height. *The buildings of the district built before 1900 are generally small to medium in volume and up to seven (7) stories in height. Sometimes several buildings are grouped. Buildings constructed after 1900 are generally large in volume and up to eight (8) stories in height, with the Burlington Northern Building being thirteen (13) stories. The structures of the district are distinguished by their boxy profiles; preservation of this aspect is the most essential element for maintaining the unity of the district. New construction should be compatible with the massing, volume, height and scale of existing adjacent structures.*

C. Rhythm and directional emphasis. *The rhythm and directional emphasis is Lowertown*

can be found both in the relation of several buildings to each other and in the relation of the elements on a single building facade.

Rhythm between buildings is usually distinguished by slight variations in height, windows and doors, and details, including vertical and horizontal elements. Rhythm may, as in the case of Park Square Court, be accentuated by slight projections and recessions of the facade, causing the scale of the building to match that of its neighbors. The rhythm and directional emphasis of the new construction should be compatible with that of existing adjacent structures.

- D. Roofs, caps and cornices.** *New roof, cap and cornice designs should be compatible with existing adjacent structures. Generally roofs in the district are flat. It is important for roof cornices and roof edges to relate in scale, proportion and detailing.*
- E. Materials and detail.** *The materials of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing adjacent buildings. New buildings in the district should provide more detailing than typical modern commercial buildings, to respond to the surrounding buildings and to reinforce the human scale of the district. Walls of buildings in the district are generally of brick, or occasionally of stone. All non-masonry surfaces, if painted, should be of colors compatible with the masonry character of the district.*
- F. Windows and doors.** *Windows should relate to those of existing buildings in the district in terms of solid to opening ration, distribution of window openings, and window setback. In most of the buildings in the district, the area of openings is between 30% and 50% of the facade wall. The proportion, size and detailing of windows and doors in new construction should relate to that of existing adjacent buildings. Double-hung windows are traditional in the district, and are preferred for new construction. Window mullions should emphasize their vertical direction. Casement windows and horizontal sliding windows are not historically common, and because they were not usually used in commercial district are not preferred for new construction. Window and door frames should be wood, appropriately colored, or baked enamel finish aluminum or vinyl-clad.*
- G. Parking.** *Parking lots should be screened from street and sidewalk either by walls or plantings or both. If walls are used, their materials should be compatible with the walls of existing adjacent buildings. Walls should be at least eighteen (18) inches high.*

Walls or plantings should continue the planes of existing adjacent buildings.

H. Landscaping and street furniture. *When lots are used for green space or parking, a visual hole in the street "wall" may result. Landscape treatment can eliminate this potential problem by avoiding a wall of enclosure for the street. Traditional street elements of the area, such as granite curbs, should be preserved. New street furniture should complement the scale and character of the area.*

III. Signs and accessories. *Signs should be compatible with the character of the District, and blend with the character of the structures on or near which they are placed. Signs should not conceal architectural detail, clutter or detract from the intended facade; but rather complement the overall design of the building and the period in which it was built.*

A. Materials. *Sign materials should complement the materials of the related building and/or the adjacent buildings. Surface design elements should not detract from or conflict with the related structure's age and design in terms of identification symbol (logo), lettering, and related patterns or pictures. Materials used should be the same as those used for signs during the period of the building's construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, and metal grill work. Newer materials such as extruded aluminum and plastics may not be appropriate.*

B. Types. *The sign type should enhance the building's design and materials. New billboards are not permitted in the Lowertown District.*

C. Location and method of attachment. *There should be no sign above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall. Signs should not disfigure or conceal architectural details. Painted signs of pedestrian scale may be permissible on glass windows and doors. The facade should not be damaged in sign application except for mere attachment. The method of attachment should respect the structure's architectural integrity and should become an extension of the architecture. Projecting signs should have a space separating them from the building. (Protection of architecture in method of attachment shall be regarded as a basis for granting variance of the normal zoning code prohibition against guy wire supports for projecting signs).*

D. Lighting. *Location of exterior lights should be appropriate to the structure. Signs should generally be lit from on the site. There should be no flashing, blinking, moving,*

or varying intensity lighting. Subdued lighting is preferred. Backlit fluorescent or exposed neon are generally inappropriate.

E. Grills, exhaust fans, Etc. *Grills, exhaust outlets for air conditioners; bath and kitchen exhaust fans should be incorporated into filler panels and kept out of principal facades, if possible. They may be painted the same color as the filler panel.*

(Ord. No. 17120, § 2, 3-22-84)

E. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:

1. **The category of the property.** The property is a parking lot and is not categorized within the Lowertown Historic District. The buildings that were located here originally, were razed well before the Lowertown Historic District was established. There may still be some remnants of earlier stone foundations or walls and those should be verified prior to a public hearing application. The HPC may require some level of documentation prior to any removal.
2. **Setback - Siting (Sec. 74-112.1.A).** The setbacks comply with the guidelines that state *“The proportion of built edge to open space should preserve the plane of the street wall, particularly along the streets facing Mears Park and the Farmer’s Market.”* Staff would also add that the plane of the street wall should also be preserved or reestablished around the Union Depot Plaza, just west of this site. This proposal reestablishes the street wall for both Fourth and Wacouta streets. The Fourth Street elevation is canted (about 4%) and follows the curb line; the street grid was modified here to accommodate the Green Line tracks in 2010. A sharper angle may not be appropriate given the “boxy” character of the District, but given this angle is minimal, staff believes the new building will still read as “boxy.”
3. **Massing, Volume and Height (Sec. 74-112.1.B).** The proposed building covers the whole site and generally complies with the guidelines for massing and volume. There are some slight differences between the submitted renderings and the elevations with the height and how it relates to the nearby historic building. The floor levels appear to generally line up with the neighboring floor levels, and those proportions should be included in the

application to the HPC for a final public hearing and decision. The National Register Nomination states that the pre-1900 buildings were generally of mixed use and therefore had storefronts for retail or office space, while the post-1900 buildings were more utilitarian and designed for single use (including raised basements for internal loading docks). Those are characteristics important in Lowertown.

The building setback from the neighboring historic building is proposed at five feet. It is important that this new building not compromise the long-term use and viability of the historic building by requiring any closure of existing openings. There are also faded signs of early uses and advertisements since this building's secondary façade was exposed and visible for many decades. There shall be enough room to access and make repairs to the masonry wall and openings and any historic signs.

4. ***Rhythm and Directional Emphasis (Sec. 74-112.I.C.)*** Rhythm is created by window and door spacing, bays and detailing. The building has a boxy appearance which is recommended by the Lowertown Guidelines. The building also has a vertical emphasis and is horizontally organized by the storefront base, the shaft and the upper floor. This is somewhat consistent with surrounding structures. However, the use of materials also impacts the rhythm and directional emphasis and given that brick is only used at the shaft, and very minimally in the upper "cornice", the boxy massing is somewhat diminished. Visually, the storefront bays should line up with the shaft and upper two floors. The use of color can be used to reinforce rhythm and directional emphasis-rather than having too many contrasting materials, the materials could be more similar in tonal qualities.
5. ***Roofs, Caps, and Cornices (Sec. 74-112.I.D.)*** The guideline states "*It is more important for roof edges to relate in size and proportion, than in detailing.*" The cornice does not have any detailing or projection but the horizontal band of brick across the top serves as a simplified cornice. Given the recess of the top two floors, the upper brick band has some projection. The applicant should demonstrate how the cornice does or does not relate to adjacent historic structures in size and proportion.

6. *Materials and Details (Sec. 74-112.I.E.)* New construction in the historic district should reinforce the unique qualities and character of Lowertown without mimicking the historic buildings exactly. The use of materials in new construction is paramount and can mean the difference in complying with the guidelines or not. One way to reinforce the existing character of Lowertown with new construction is to simplify the number of materials present on primary elevations. Brick and stone are the dominant materials in Lowertown and should be for new construction. While brick is the dominant material, the colors of the brick vary and the detailing in the brick is what makes each structure important.

The introduction of the metal panels on the primary elevations may not comply with the guidelines as brick should be the predominant material in the middle and cornice areas. However, if appropriately detailed and colored could be compatible with surrounding buildings and the guidelines.

Metal windows are not recommended by the guidelines and have been approved on a case-by-case basis in the Lowertown Historic District. The material being proposed may not necessarily compromise the overall quality of the design, as long as the windows are appropriately colored and detailed. The guidelines state that "*Window and door frames should be wood, appropriately colored or bronze-toned aluminum or vinyl-clad.*" The bronze tone proposed is acceptable.

Balconies are not addressed specifically in the guidelines but have been approved for new construction projects and for non-primary elevations on historic buildings. Balconies are proposed for non-primary elevations and will have minimal impact. The dark metal railing design generally complies with the guidelines for the district.

The guidelines call for materials to be used that are most prevalent in the District which is natural brick usually of dark red, yellow or brown colors and that more detailing be incorporated with new construction than in typical modern commercial buildings. The guidelines do not distinguish between primary and non-primary elevations when addressing materials and detail, however, as with traditional buildings the detailing and material often changes for non-primary elevations. Typically a common brick would be

used for these elevations. The current proposal calls for cast stone and metal panels on secondary elevations. Large spans of blank wall on the foundation alley side are interrupted by window and auto openings. Some panels with a painted finish have also been accepted in new construction in the District; however, extruded aluminum and some metals would not be appropriate.

7. ***Windows and Doors (Sec. 74-112.I.F.)***. The guidelines state “*Windows should relate to those of existing buildings in the district in terms of solid to opening ration, distribution of window openings, and window setback. In most of the buildings in the district, the area of openings is between 30% and 50% of the facade wall. The proportion, size and detailing of windows and doors in new construction should relate to that of existing adjacent buildings.*” The windows are punched but do not have similar depth from the wall as the historic buildings. Staff did not measure the solid to void ratio of the middle section, but there appears to be more “void” than “solid” proposed than compared to nearby historic buildings, with the possible exception of the buildings across from Union Depot on Fourth Street, where there are very large windows. The guidelines state “*Double-hung windows are traditional in the district, and are preferred for new construction. Window mullions should emphasize their vertical direction.*” Double-hung windows are not proposed but rather fixed panes with a lower operable window. Mullions do have a vertical orientation.
8. ***Parking (Sec. 74-112.I.G.)***. The parking access is on the alley elevations and complies with the guidelines.
9. There should be no large vents located on the two primary elevations.
10. ***Landscaping and Street Furniture (Sec. 74-112.I.H.)***. The use of planter boxes, as proposed along the alley elevation, if maintained, can add to the character and quality of life for the District.
11. **Other Considerations.** The HPC should consider how the current proposal architecturally complements the Union Depot. It has been several decades since a building was located here and its location, reestablishing a street wall around the Union Depot plaza and

façade, is significant. After Union Depot was completed, a design competition was held for a new unified façade across Union Depot on Fourth Street. The series of late 19th Century buildings had 20 feet of their facades removed. The original design by Clarence Johnston was featured in the 1926 St. Paul Pioneer Press and stated:

“Visitors to St. Paul will gain their first impression of the city after reaching the Union Depot from a beautiful façade to cover all of the buildings on the north side of Fourth street between Sibley and Wacouta streets, plans for which have been approved by a committee of downtown business men interested in the development....Under the arrangement a beautiful front conforming architecturally with the Union Depot will cover all of the old buildings...”

Two weeks later in the same newspaper, an updated drawing was posted and stated:

“This drawing shows how the block on Fourth Street opposite the Union station will look after a unified front has been constructed. The front will be constructed of brick and Bedford stone [same as Union Depot] to harmonize with the best structures in that district. Modern copper store fronts will add to its beauty.”

11. Final construction level plans submitted to the HPC for review at a public hearing should incorporate revisions to features/elements identified in the findings and direction provided by the HPC at the pre-application review. Plans not reflecting HPC direction will likely not be approved.

F. ATTACHMENTS

1. Original schematic drawings discussed with staff
2. Excerpt from St. Paul Pioneer Press, May 16 and 30, 1926
3. HPC Design Review Application
4. Plans

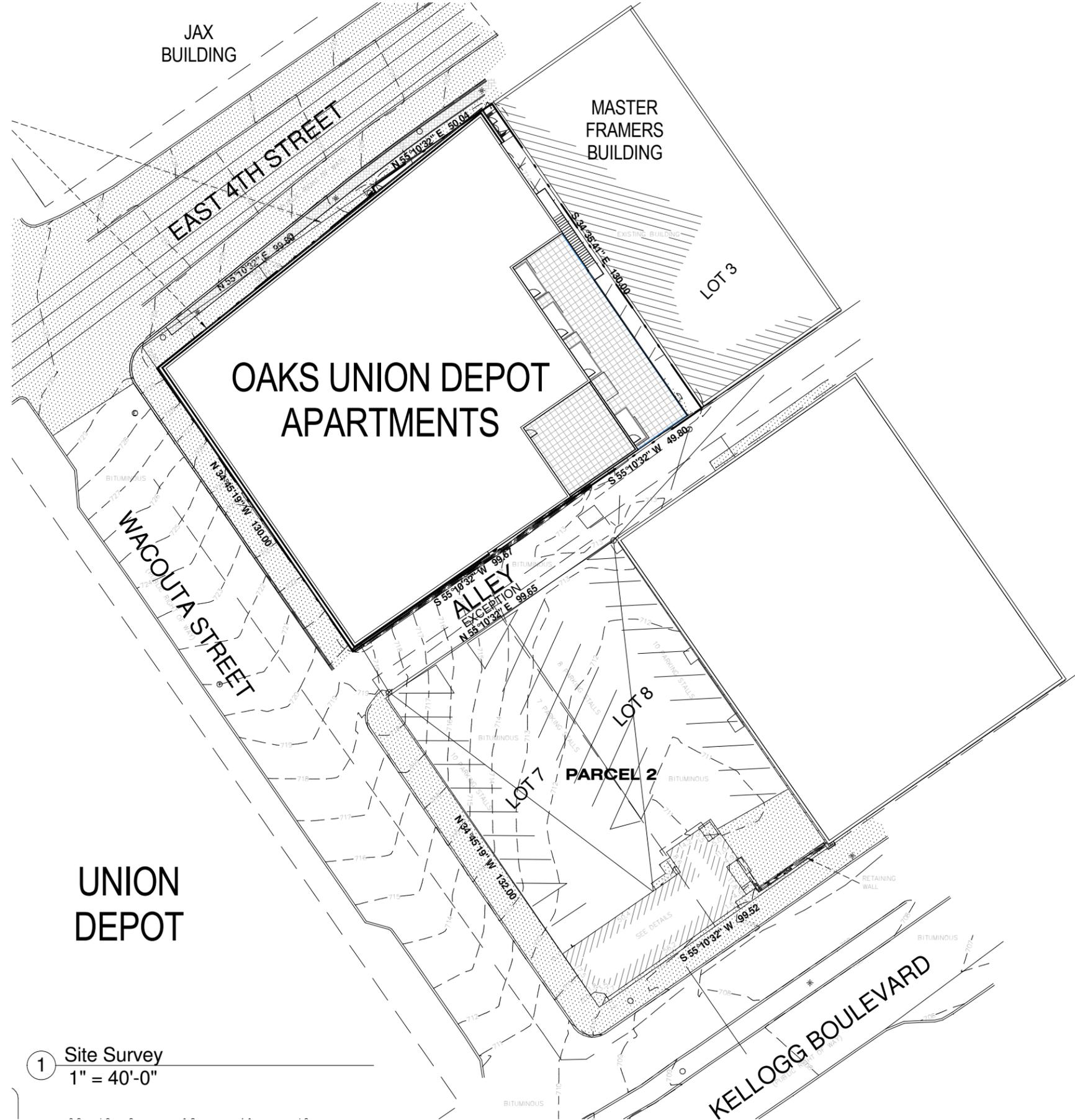
Oaks Union Depot Apartments

240 4th Street East, St. Paul, Minnesota

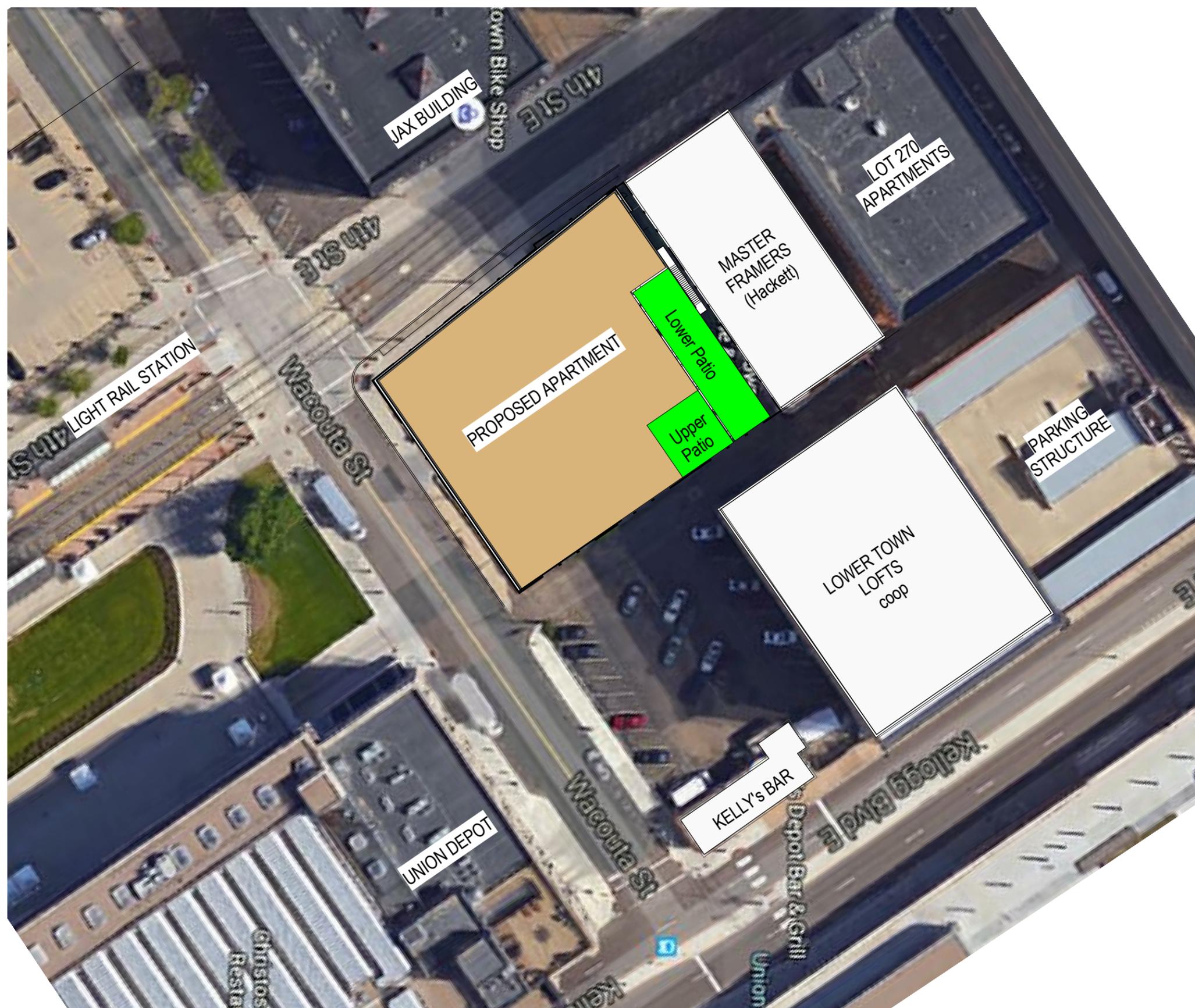






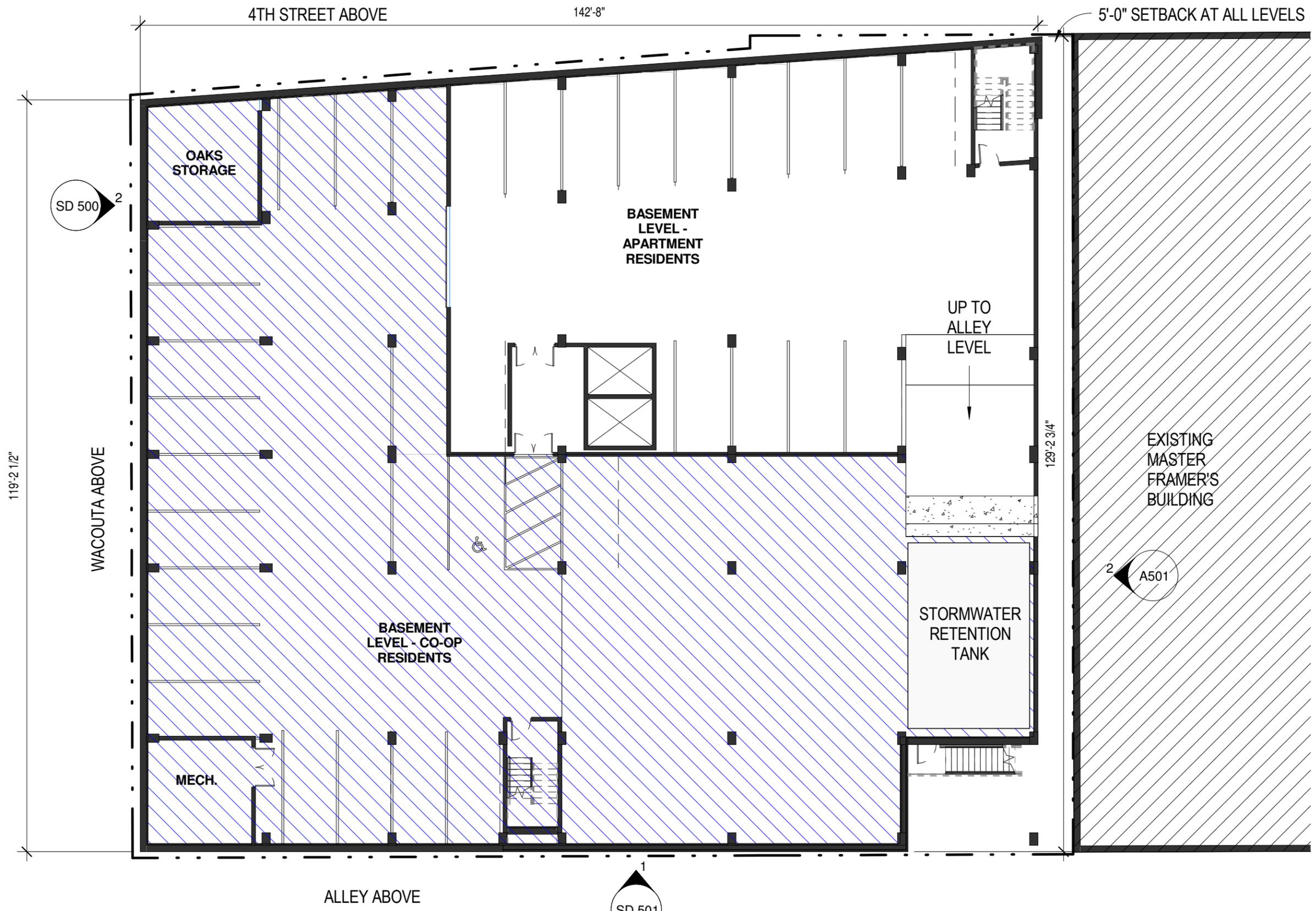


① Site Survey
1" = 40'-0"



1 Site Plan Marketing
1" = 50'-0"





1 Level -2 Marketing
 1/16" = 1'-0"

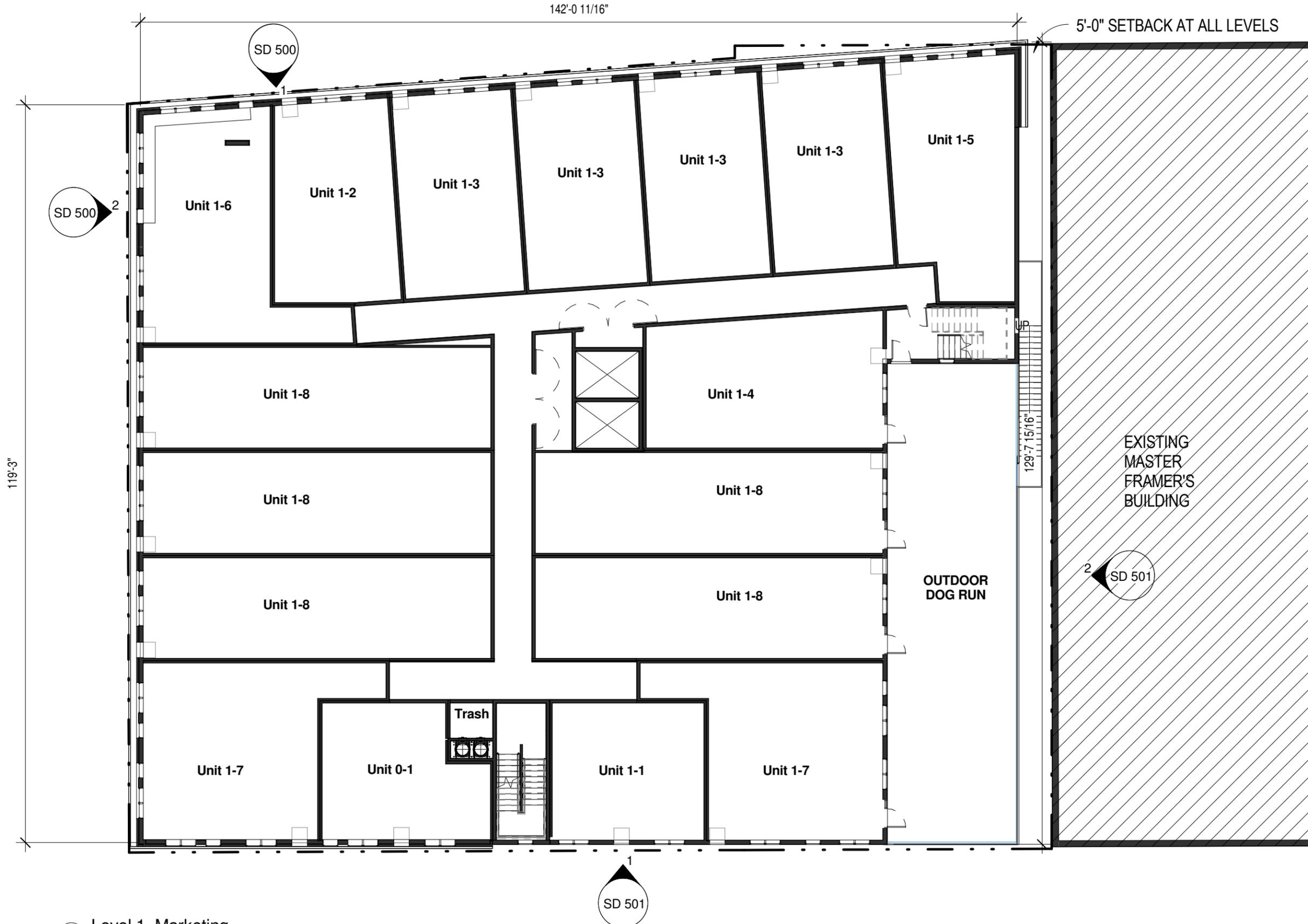


Oaks Union Depot Apartments
 240 4th Street East, St. Paul, Minnesota

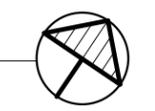
SD 300
 BASEMENT LEVEL PARKING PLAN

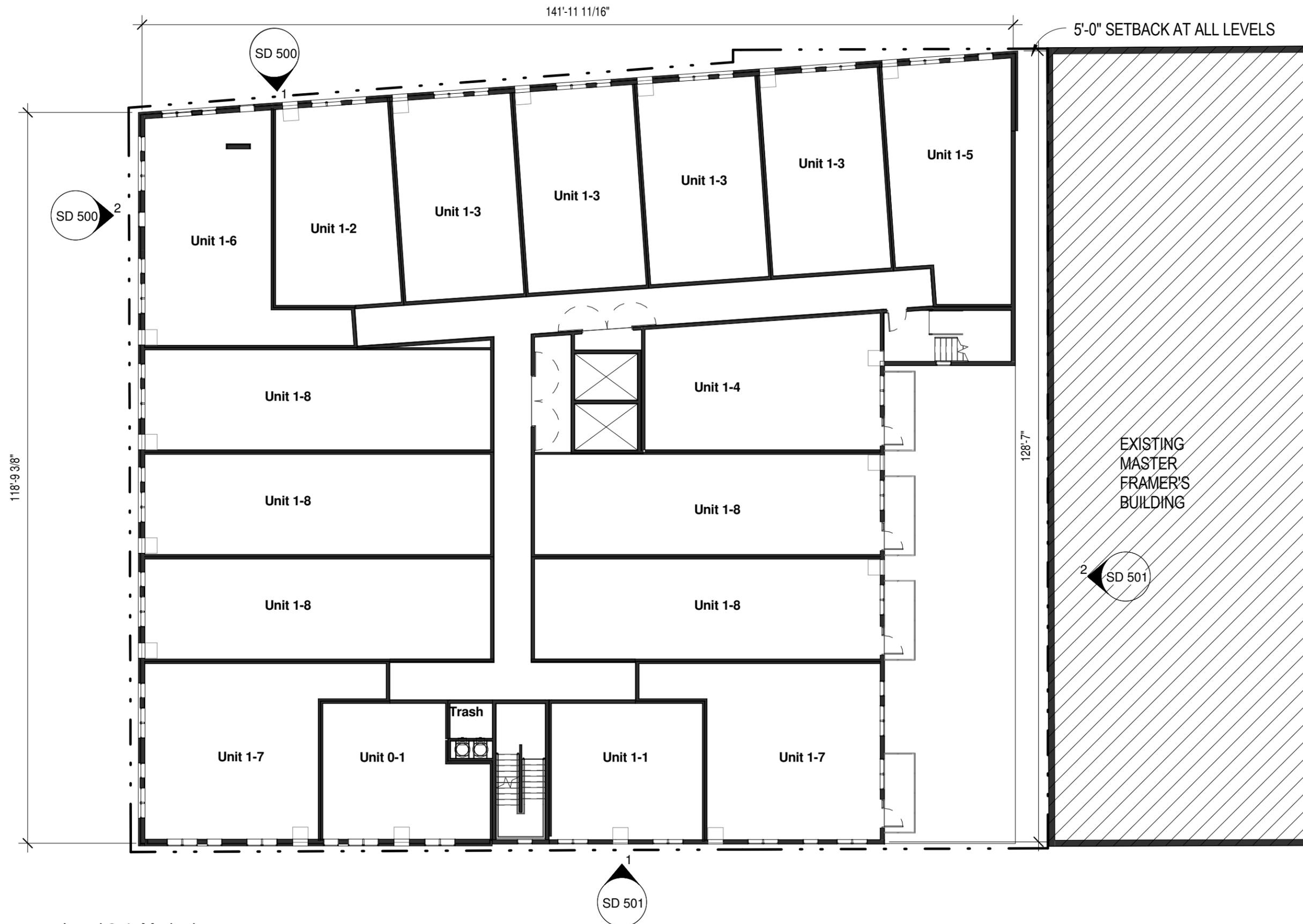


1 Level 0 Marketing
1/16" = 1'-0"



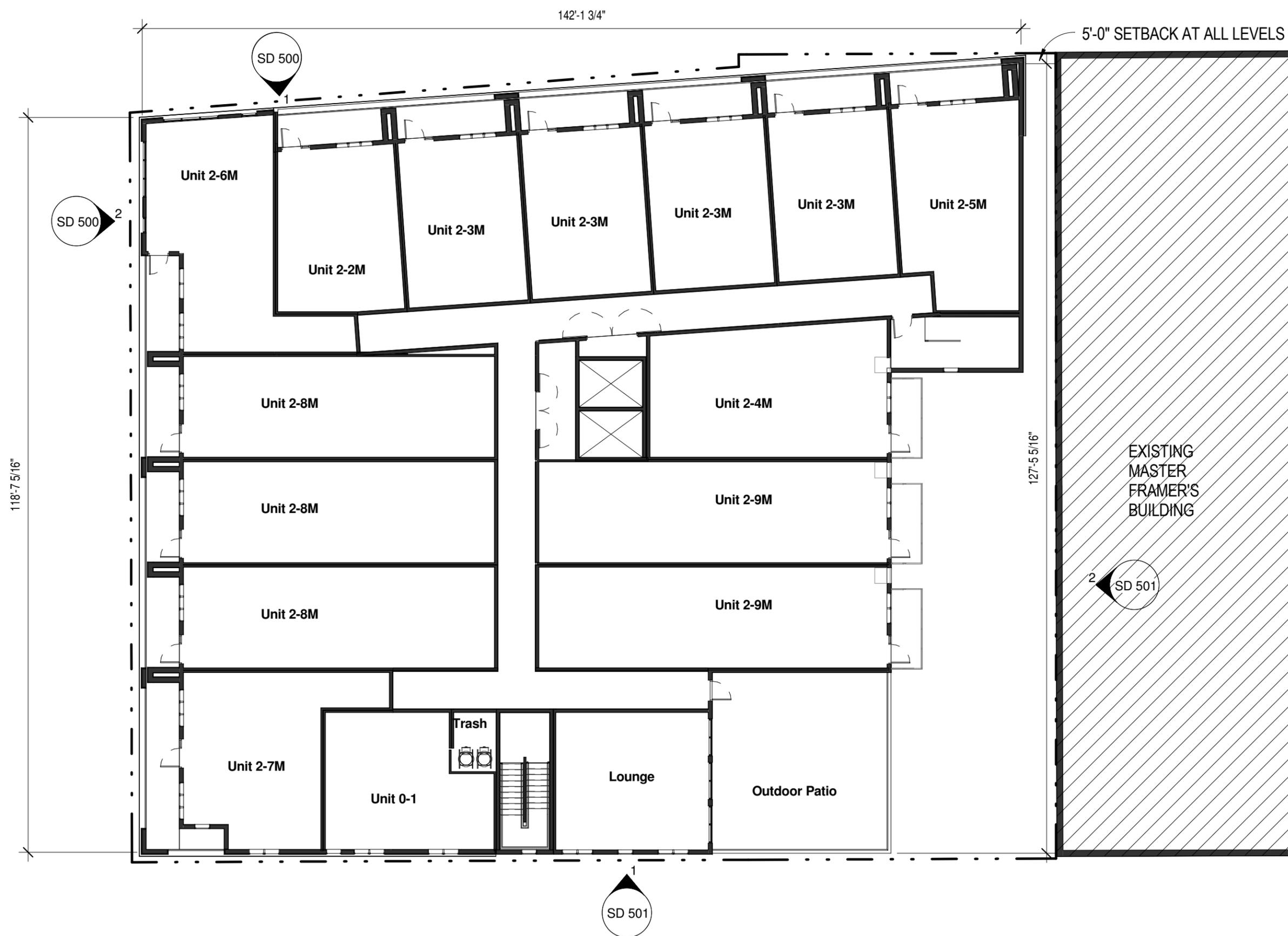
1 Level 1_Marketing
1/16" = 1'-0"





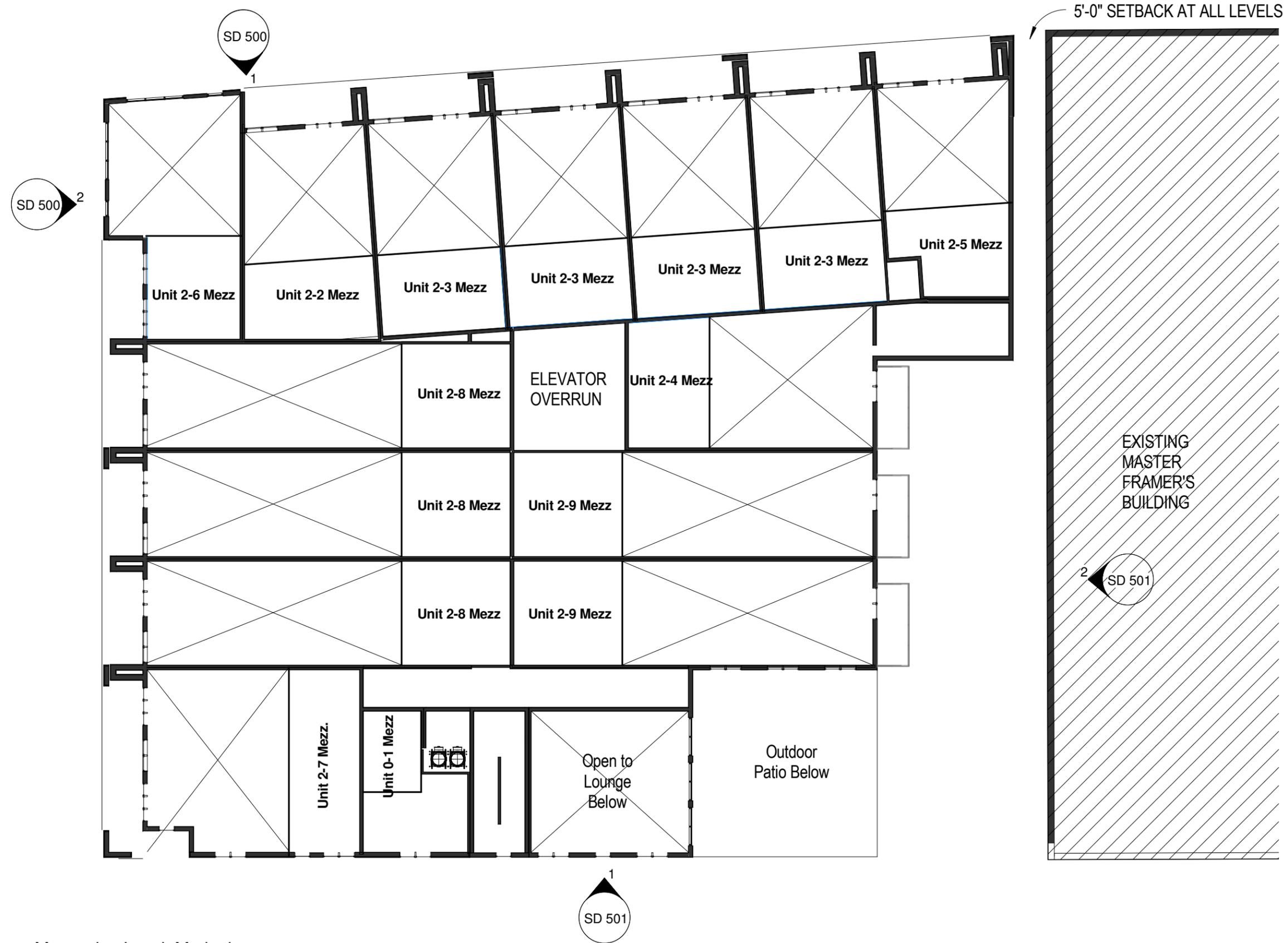
① Level 2-4 Marketing
1/16" = 1'-0"



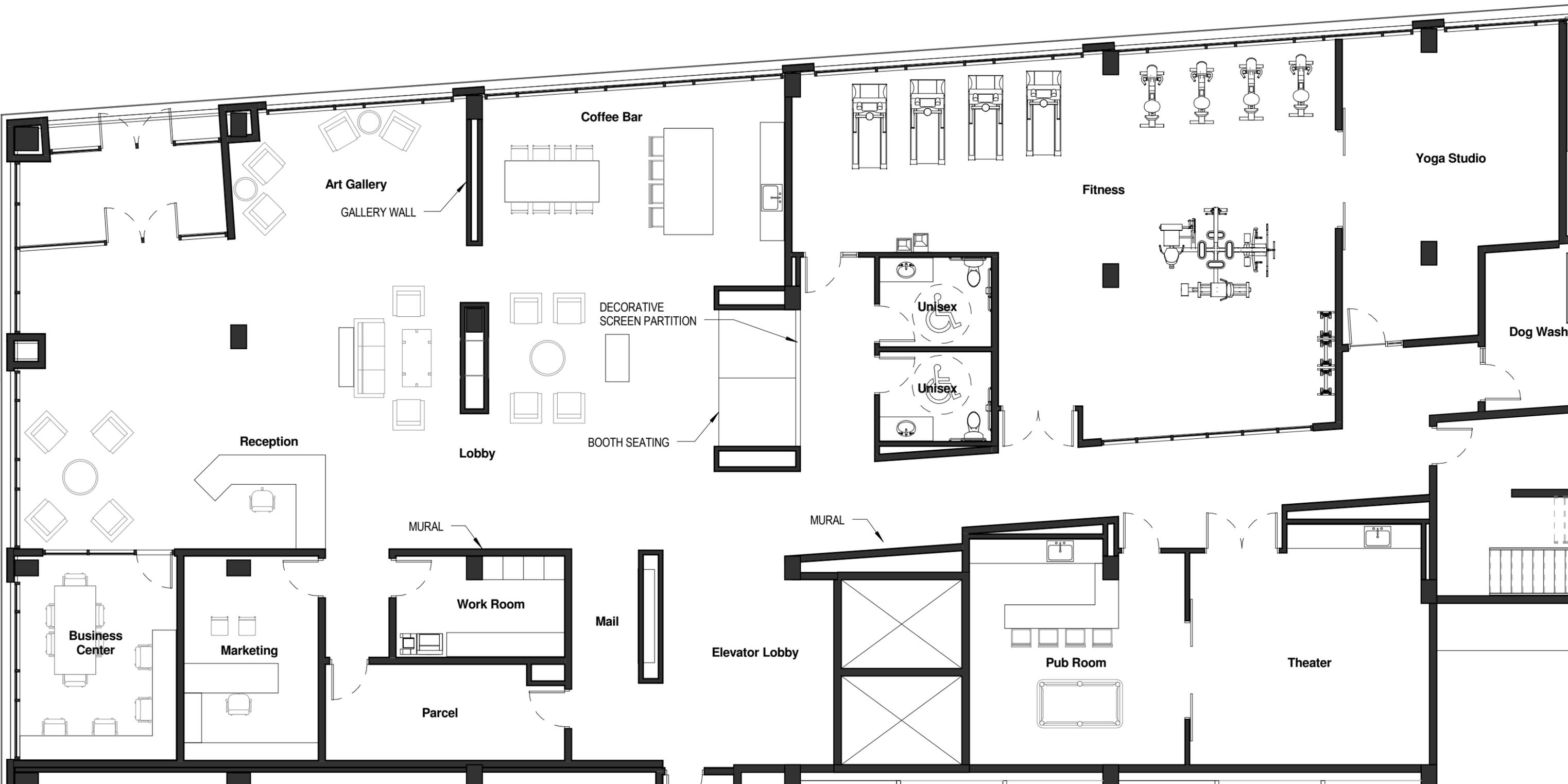


1 Level 5 Marketing
 1/16" = 1'-0"





1 Mezzanine Level_Marketing
1/16" = 1'-0"





② Elevation - West (Wacouta Street)
3/64" = 1'-0"



① Elevation - North (4th Street East)
3/64" = 1'-0"



② Elevation - East (Plaza)
3/64" = 1'-0"



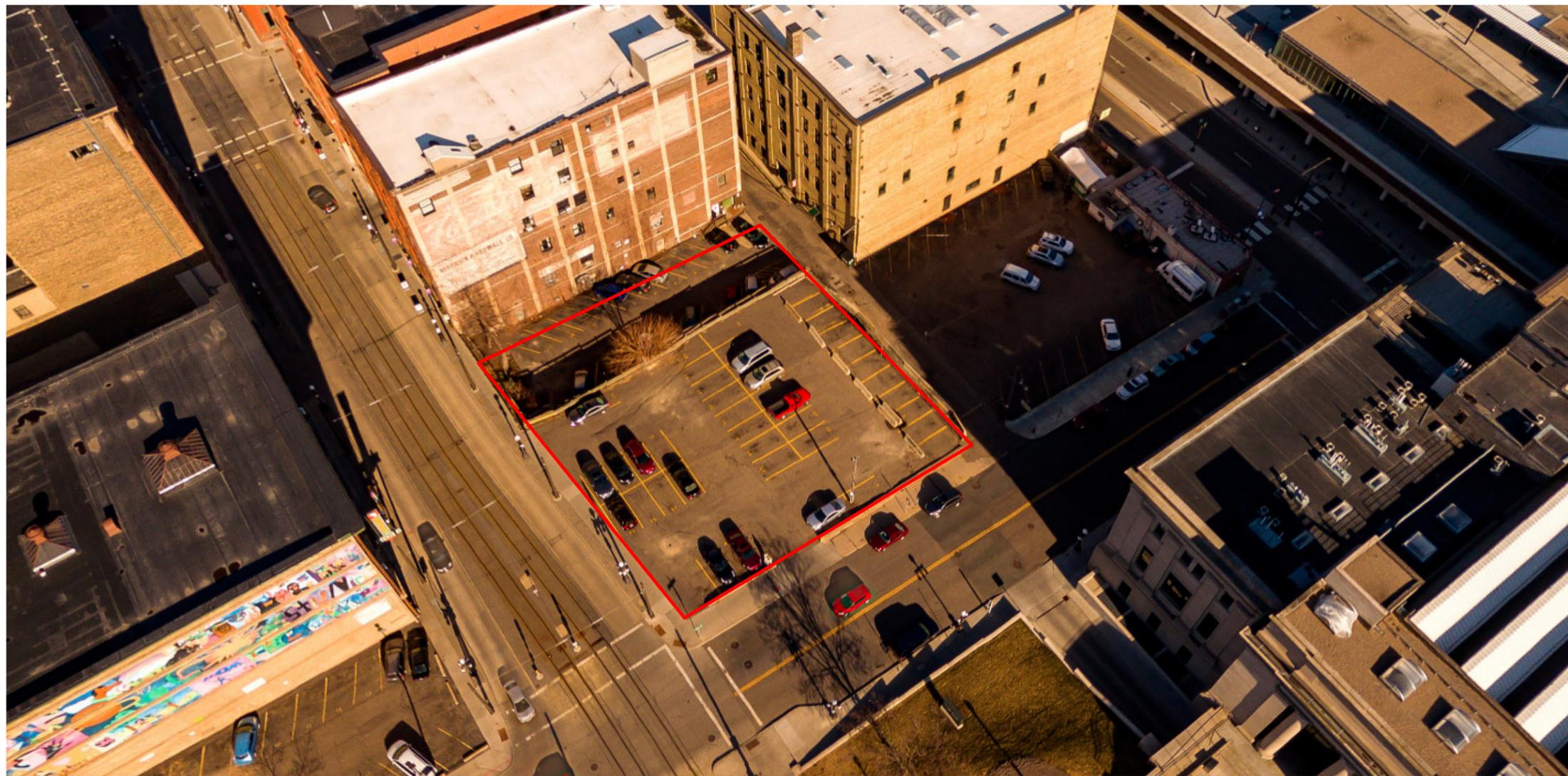
① Elevation - South (Alley)
3/64" = 1'-0"

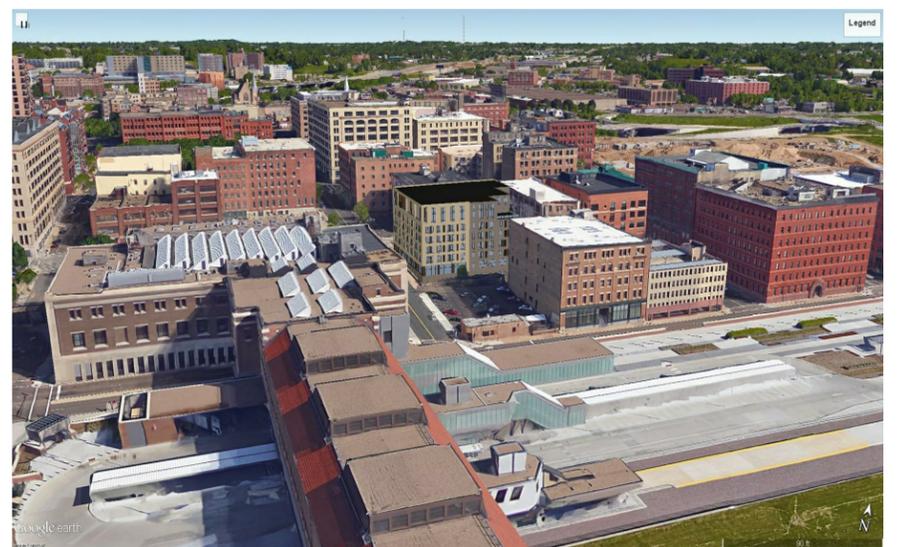
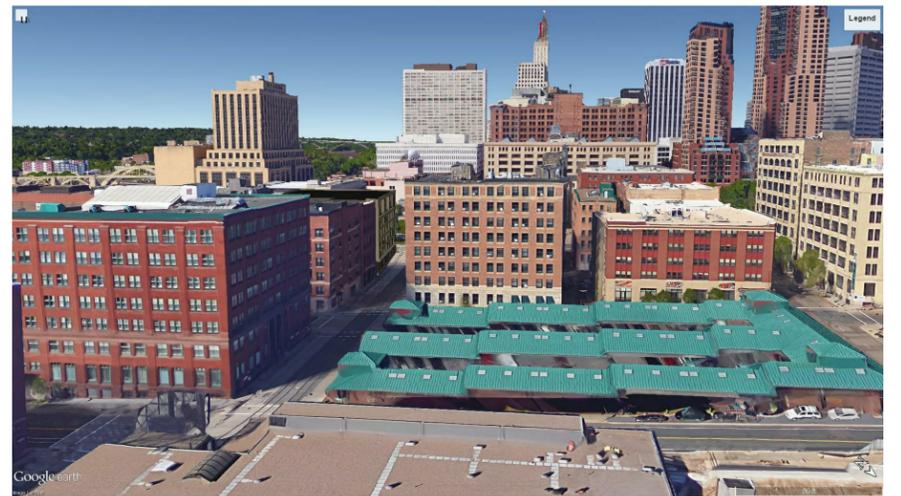


Section Perspective Along Wacouta



Section Perspective Along 4th







BRICK VENEER



METAL PANEL 1



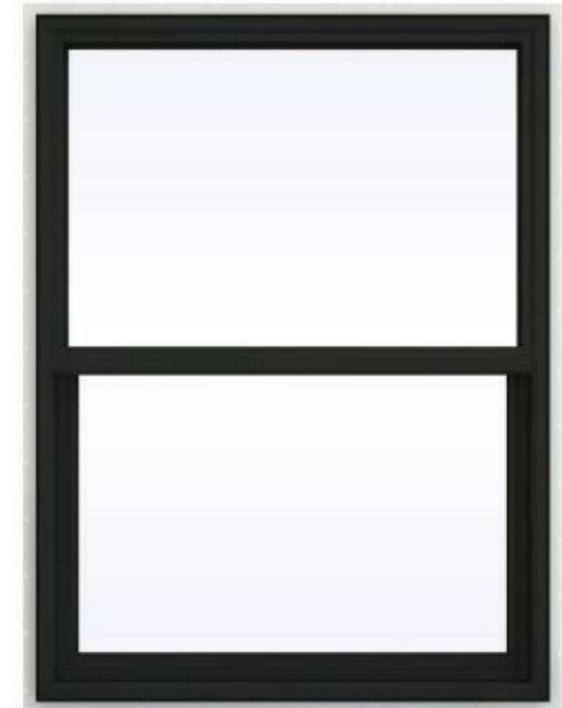
BRONZE TONED STOREFRONT



CAST STONE VENEER



METAL PANEL 2



BRONZE TONED WINDOWS AND PATIO DOORS



KELLY'S
FAMILY
PUB
BAR AND GRILL

Depot
Bar & Grill

27



KELLY'S
FAMILY
PUB
BAR AND GRILL

Kelly's
Depot
Bar
& Grill

Wacouta St
300N



EDWALL CO.

SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
StPaulArtCrawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24

KELLY'S
FAMILY
PUB
BAR AND GRILL



SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
SPACrawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24

Chalk

WATERWALL CO.



SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
SPAAACrawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24

WEDWALK CO.



SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
StPaulArtCrawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24





Depot
Bar & Grill

SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
@SaintPaulArtCrawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24



ST PAUL ART CRAWL
Crawl.org Apr. 22, 23, 24

CC BY-NC-SA

10

ROCKY



SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL
StPaulArtCrawl.org Apr. 22, 23

LOFTS
ARTIST

NO PARKING
10





ANDERSON & HEDWALL CO.

267
EAST FOURTH STREET

DISTRICT ENERGY
ST. PAUL



ANDERSON & HEDWALL CO.

267
EAST FOURTH STREET


DISTRICT ENERGY
ST. PAUL



ANDERSON & HEDWALL CO.

282
EAST FOURTH STREET

Wacouta St
330 N

5
MPH

H

SECURITY PATROL





ART CRAWL

Depot Bar & Grill

ON DEPOT



ANDERSON & MEDWALL CO.

262
ART FOURTH STREET

C
150



BOOKS FOR AFRICA
253 64TH

115

ANDERSON & HEDWALL CO.
282
1ST FOURTH STREET





A

ANDERSON & HEDWALL CO.
282
4th STREET

282 4th Street

ink





WALL CO.
5th STREET



8'6"



262 East Fourth Street

Wine & Spirits

MASTER FRAMES
PICTURE FRAMING
RESTORATION

262



262 East Fourth Street

Lowertown

Wine & Spirits

MASTER FR
PICTURE FR
RESTORA

STOP

→

OPEN



262 East Fourth Street

Lowertown

Wine & Spirits

MASTER PICTURE RESTORATION

STOP

OPEN



262 St Fourth Street

VEH. TRAVELING IN THIS ZONE MUST STOP AT RED LIGHT



5 MPH



262 East Fourth Street

Lowertown

Wine & Spirits

FRAMERS
FIRE FRAMING
RESTORATION







Handwritten graffiti on a sign: "KISS ME"

Sign on building: "SAINT PAUL ART CRAWL"

Yellow utility box with handwritten text: "L-4"

License plate of silver sedan: "184-011"

License plate of white car: "1234567"



4th St
Wacota St

We Deliver For You.

Walmart
New & Used



ANDERSON & MEDWAL CO.

268
WEST FOURTH STREET

4th St
Waco, TX

1520362

5
MPH

WACO STREET CRAWL



BOOKS

AFRICA

ANDERSON & HEDWAL CO.
222 EAST FOURTH STREET

5 MPH

No Parking

No Parking





Depot
Bar & Grill

Depot Bar & Grill

393-KEB





Kellogg Blvd
2402

Guinness
LIGHT

Guinness

Corona



Kelly's
Depot
Bar
& Grill

255

COFF PUBLIC

255