



# The Sumner School

## Feasibility Study & Conceptual Analysis

Fig. (000).

## Introduction

In May 2022 the Sumnerite Association's Board of Directors retained the Mills Group of Morgantown, WV to undertake a Feasibility Study to develop options for the future development of the Sumner School campus in Parkersburg, WV.

This one-half-acre property, located in the Avery Street Historic District, has one remaining building of 11,000 square feet.

The Sumner School, founded in 1862, was the first school south of the Mason-Dixon line for Blacks. It served as an outstanding school and community center for Black children and their families for nearly a century. Sumner closed its doors when Parkersburg's schools were integrated shortly after the Supreme Court's Brown vs Board of Education decision in 1954.

At that time the original school building was razed and only the gymnasium (constructed in 1926) remained. This building was reconfigured soon thereafter and was used as a school for children with disabilities for several decades, and more recently as a museum and multipurpose center.

In the past few years, the building has been inactive, has been vandalized, and has fallen into disrepair.

The Sumnerite's Board of Directors and community leaders--government, business, and interested citizens--recognize the importance of preserving and honoring Sumner's historic, inspiring, and courageous legacy.

In response to this mandate, Mills Group offers three options for the Sumner and Parkersburg communities to consider.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Mills and Stephen DeNeui

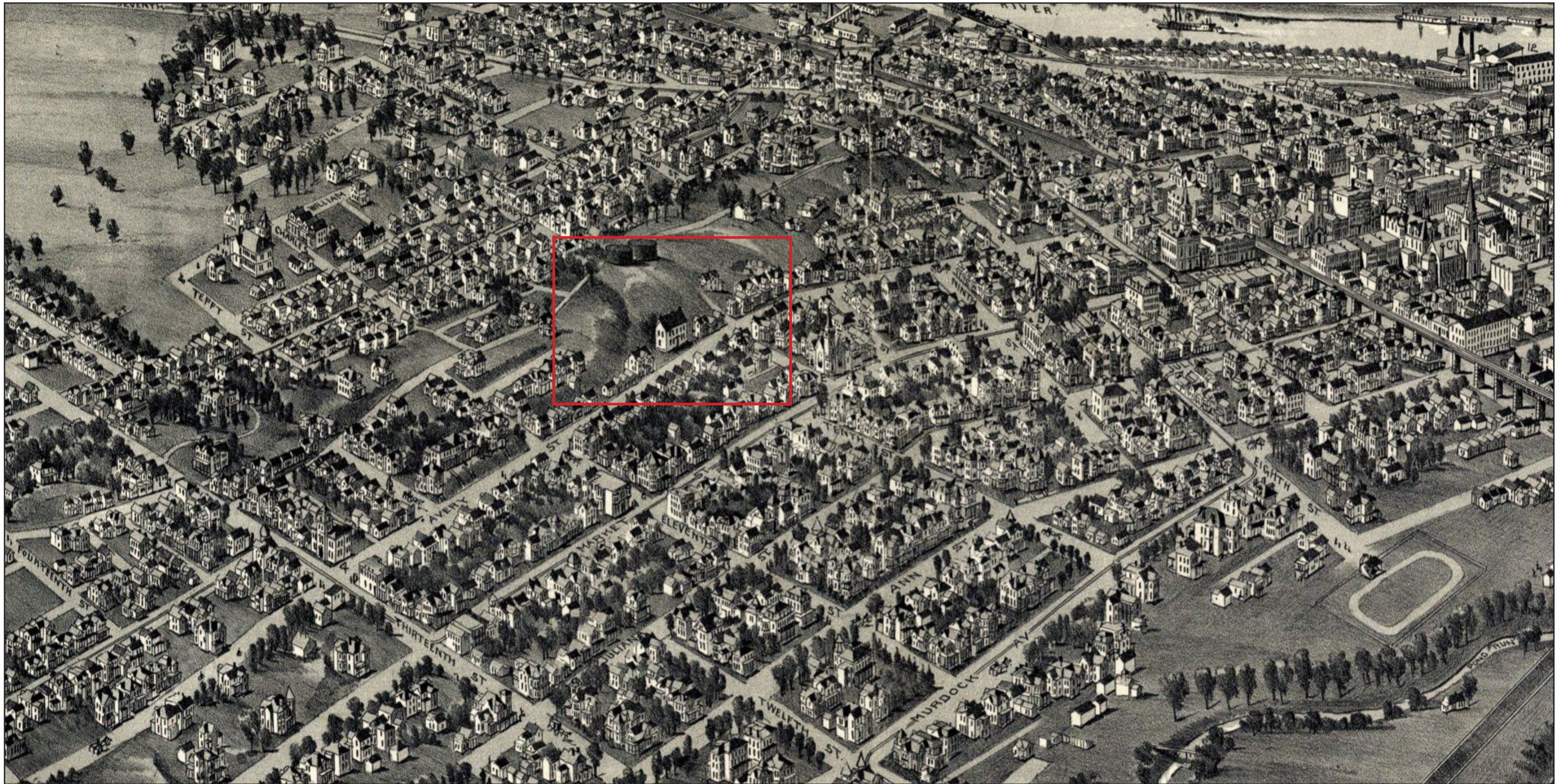
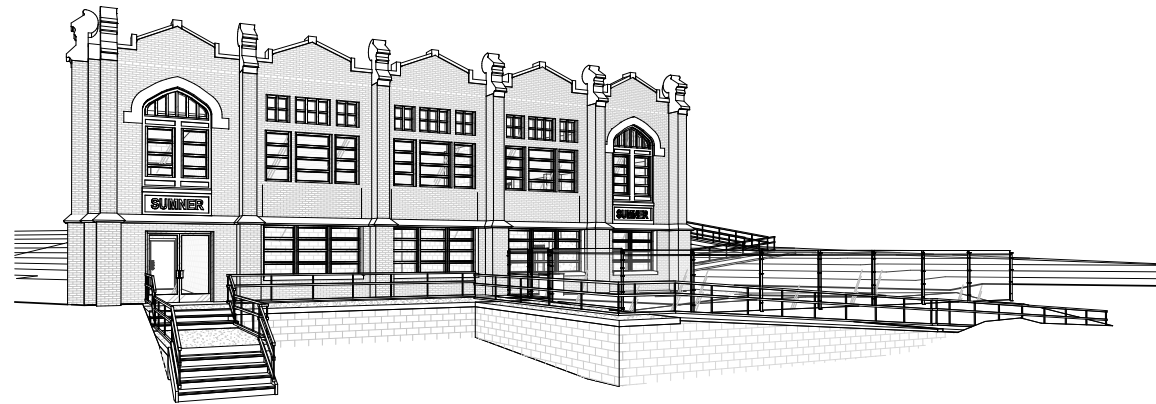


Fig. (001).  
This 1899 bird's eye view drawing of Parkersburg features an early rendering of the original school house before any additions or alteration.

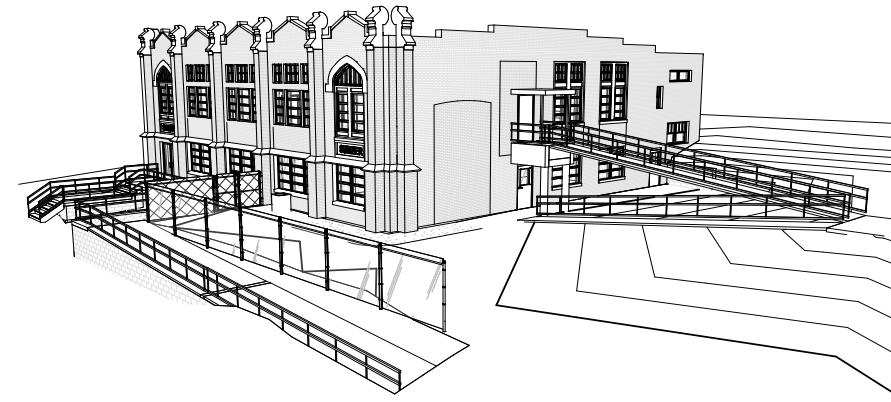
Assessment and Observations of the Existing Sumner Building (Constructed Circa 1926 as a Gymnasium; Converted to Existing Conditions Circa 1958)

Building Size: Approximately 11,000 sqft

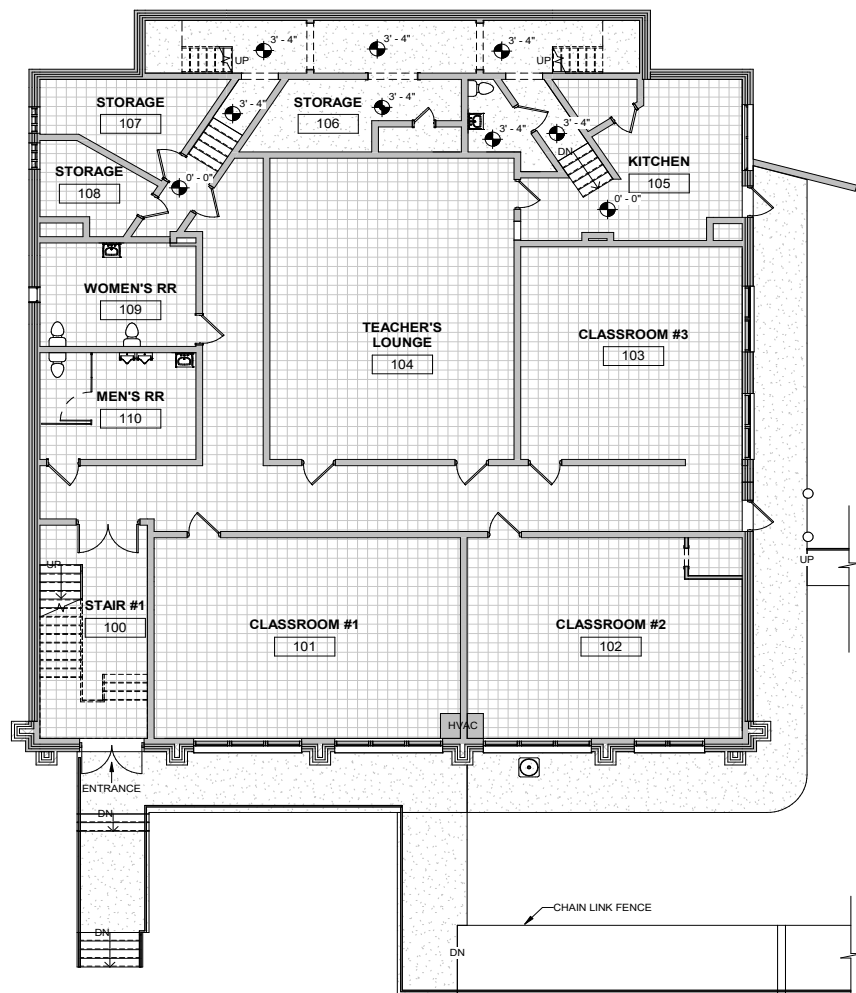
Lot Size: Approximately 1/2 Acre



4] EXTERIOR VIEW 1

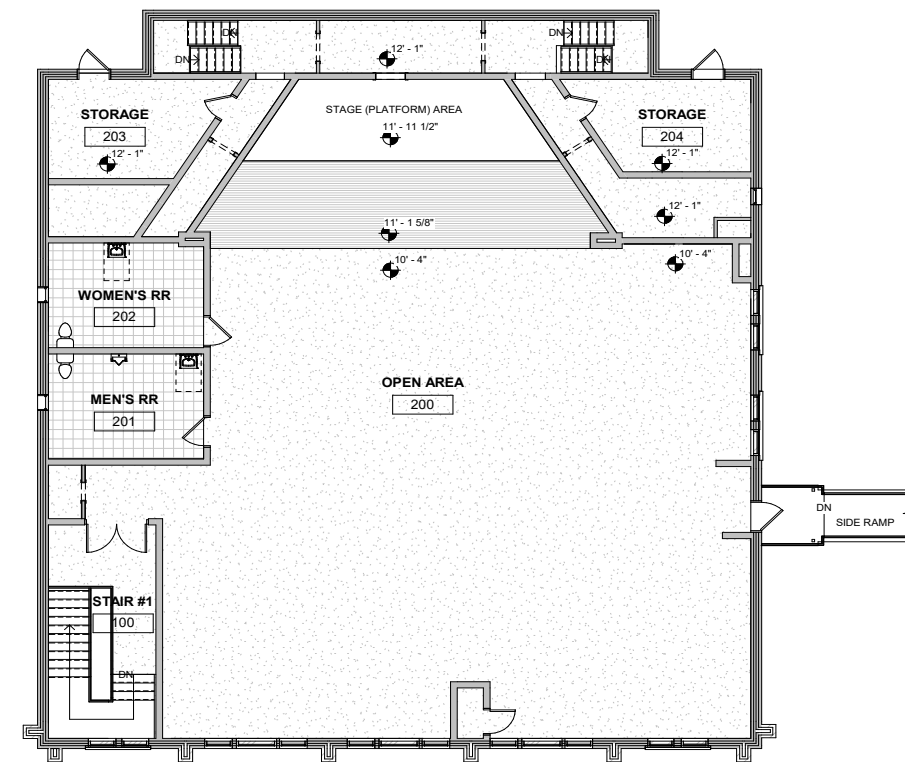


3] EXTERIOR VIEW 2



1] LEVEL 1 - EXISTING

Drawings Not To Scale



2] LEVEL 2 - EXISTING

Drawings Not To Scale

## Existing Building Survey Observations



Fig. (003).

### Mechanical Damage

Several areas of structural deterioration were examined during the on-site survey. These range from punctures in the roof, broken windows, and cracked concrete to failing masonry on the exterior of the structure. Any existing building schemes must address these structural concerns before moving forward.



Fig. (005).

### Security

A series of break-ins have affected the building's health and safety. Vandalism and stripping away of salvage materials by scappers have left the building in disarray. In addition to a deep renovation of the building, The Sumnerite Association and Community Leadership must address the security of the building to prevent future break-ins.

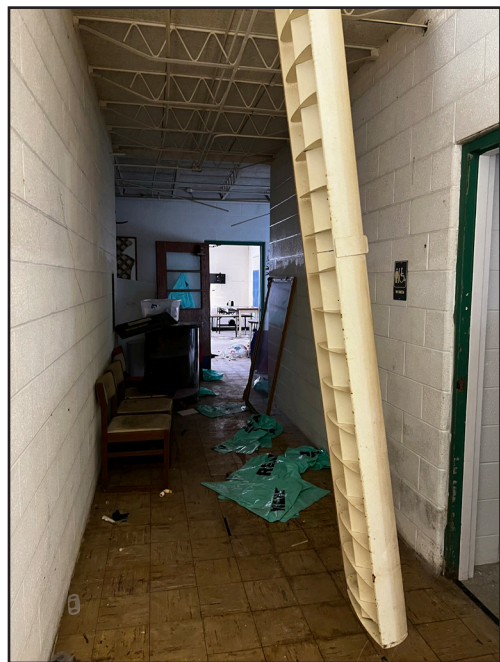


Fig. (004).

### Habitability Systems

A severe loss of material has been caused by vandalism and scrapping. Any new concepts utilizing the existing building will require the reintegration of lighting, power, water, and sewer. This will likely be labor-intensive, but also affords an opportunity to install modern sustainable systems.



Fig. (006).

### Accessibility

The current site features a series of two switchback ramps to arrive at the second level. These ramps require maintenance and prohibit internal building mobility. Any new work on the structure will require more elaborate means of access as per the contemporary legal framework surrounding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).



Fig. (007). Instance of vandalism in first level classroom.



Fig. (009). This broken window on the first level has become a primary access for intruders.



Fig. (011). Destruction to HVAC ductwork on second level.

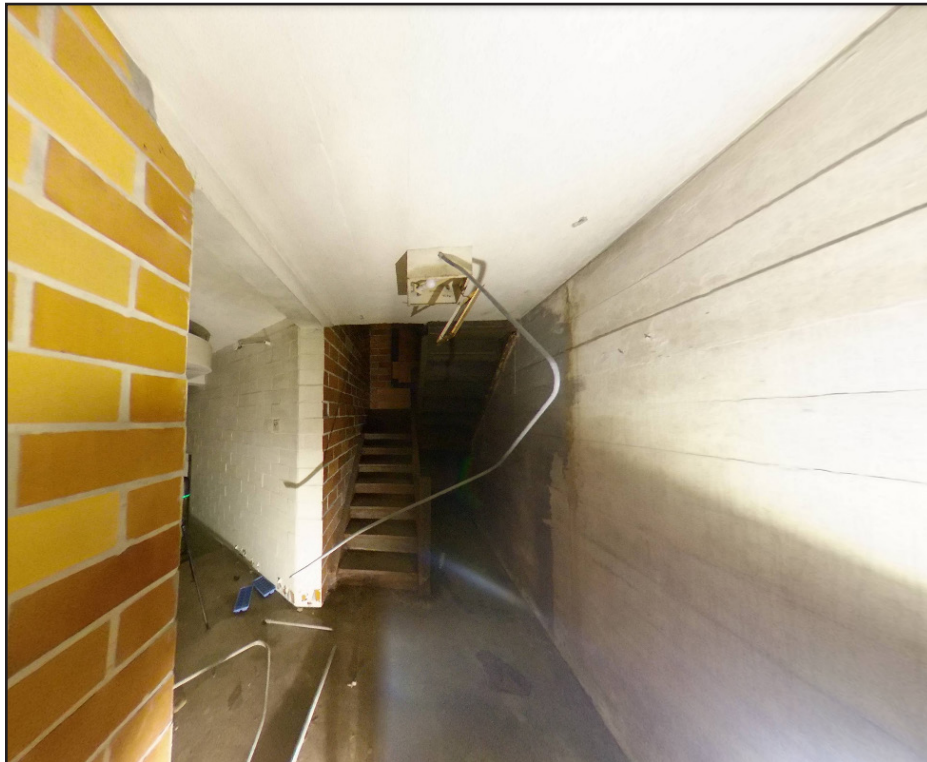


Fig. (008). Copper wire stripped from conduit dangling in hallway.



Fig. (010). Destruction of acoustic ceiling tile grid over stage.



Fig. (012). Removal of plumbing fixtures in second level restrooms.



Fig. (013). Instance of vandalism in first level classroom.



Fig. (015). Existing teachers' lounge ceiling.



Fig. (017). The ramp landing on the south side of the building.



Fig. (014). Hallway full of debris.



Fig. (016). Street-facing elevation. Notice the open windows on the second level.



Fig. (018). The south elevation. Notice the overgrown vines on the east side of the building.



4 EXTERIOR VIEW 1  
Fig. (019).

## CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

This approach applies a sensitive hand to enhance the existing structure for contemporary use. By strategically rearranging selected interior walls, this scheme will create rooms for museum/history/digital displays; community gatherings/receptions; performances; food preparation; individual and group meetings; an administrative office; restrooms; storage; and mechanical systems.

## BENEFITS

- Honors the Sumner legacy by retaining the existing building.
- Provides the opportunity to educate and inspire the greater community of the Sumner legacy.
- Retains a contributing building to Parkersburg's Avery Street Historic District.
- Provides an opportunity for Sumner to partner with local businesses or other non-profits to create an attractive venue for community gatherings/receptions and performances.
- Possibility of receiving federal and state funds by preserving an historic building.
- Could qualify for individual, state, and federal tax credits
- Could potentially attract crowd fundraising both local and national.

## CHALLENGES

- The estimated cost of \$4 Million.
- Identify, catalog, and organize Sumner's historical artifacts/pictures, records et al. to develop the program for the museum/display areas of the building.
- Recruit and retain a sufficient number of committed volunteers to serve as board members; strategic advisors; committee members (program, buildings and grounds, finance, advancement/fundraising) to oversee a project of this complexity and scale.
- Recruit and retain a salaried executive director to work with the board and the volunteers to ensure the project's success.
- Develop a comprehensive and realistic business plan for the annual operating costs of maintaining the building; the expenses of personnel and the program; and the creation of a building reserve fund to ensure its proper maintenance.



3 EXTERIOR VIEW 2  
Fig. (020).

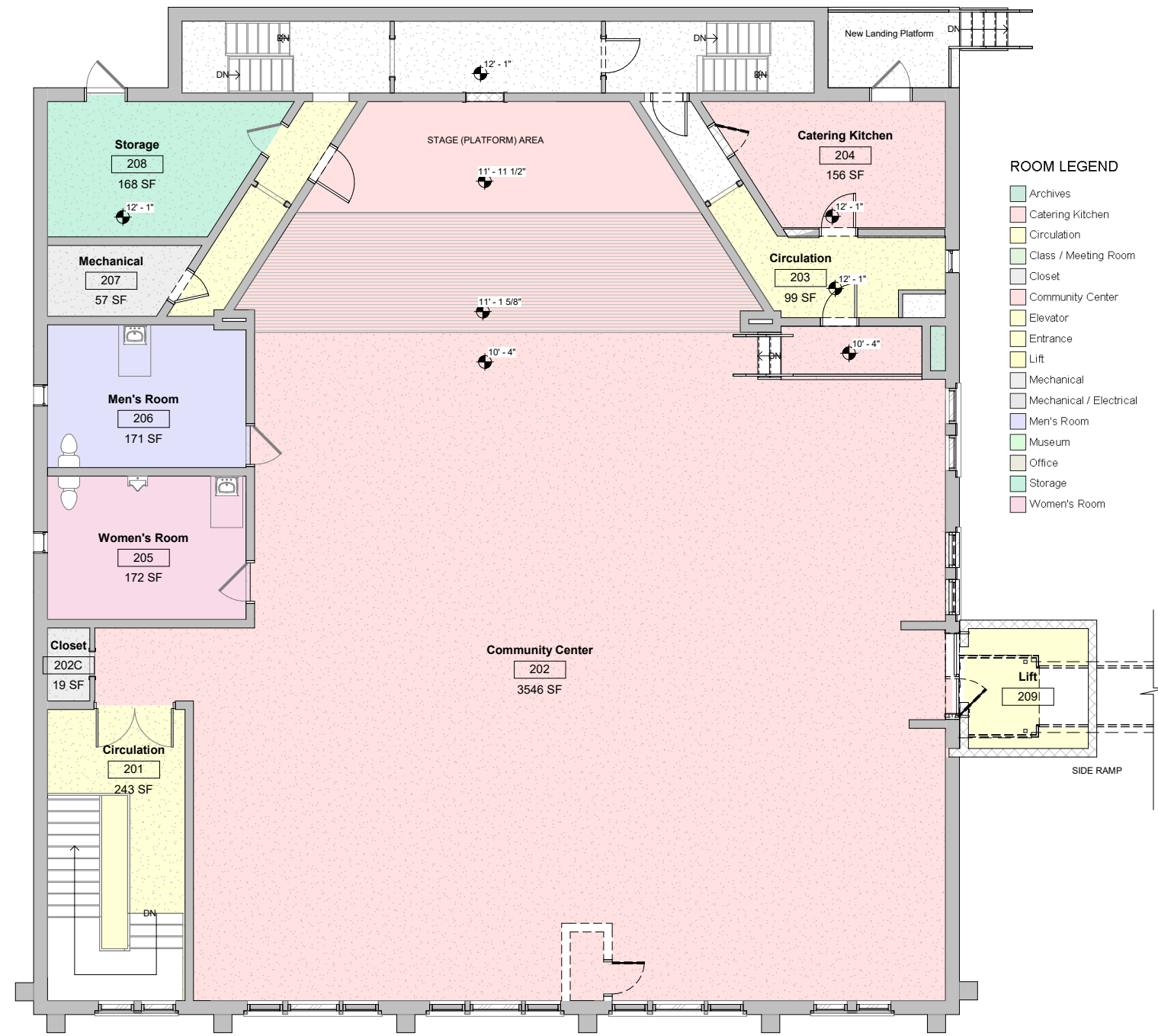
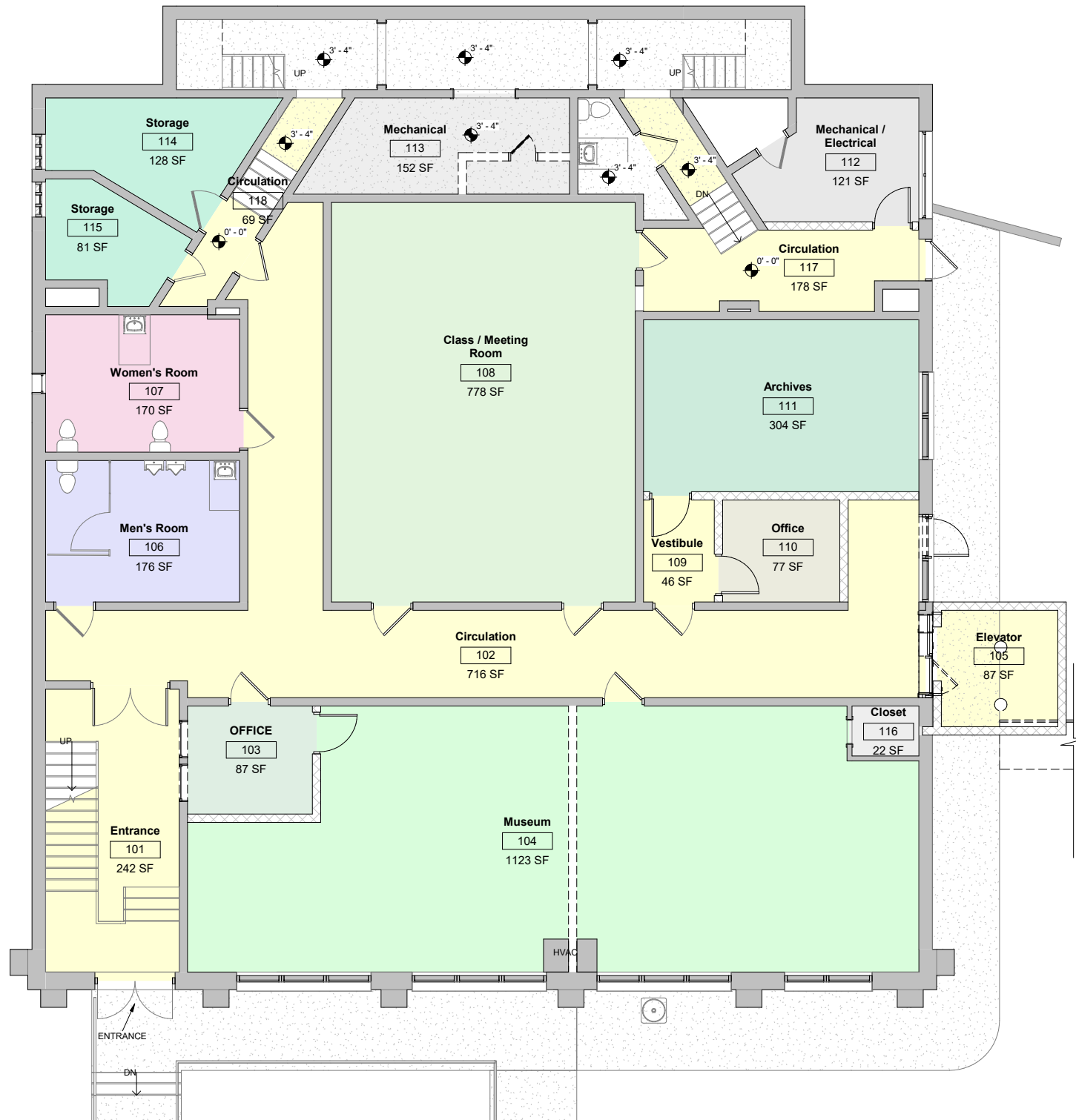
## PHASING

- I. **Stabilize the Building 15%**
  1. Retain an architectural firm to develop a stabilization scheme.
  2. Patch the roof; brace the masonry/concrete; remediate any environmental issues; repair windows and increase security.
- II. **The Plan 15%**
  1. Retain an architectural firm to develop construction documents.
  2. At the same time retain a building firm to work with the architectural firm to value engineer the construction documents and develop the project budget.
- III. **Complete the Renovation and Site Work 70%**

## TOTAL COST ESTIMATE

\$4 Million





**ROOM LEGEND**

- Archives
- Catering Kitchen
- Circulation
- Class / Meeting Room
- Closet
- Community Center
- Elevator
- Entrance
- Lift
- Mechanical
- Mechanical / Electrical
- Men's Room
- Museum
- Office
- Storage
- Women's Room

2 LEVEL 1 - CONCEPT 1

Drawings Not To Scale

Fig. (021).

1 LEVEL 2 - CONCEPT 1

Drawings Not To Scale

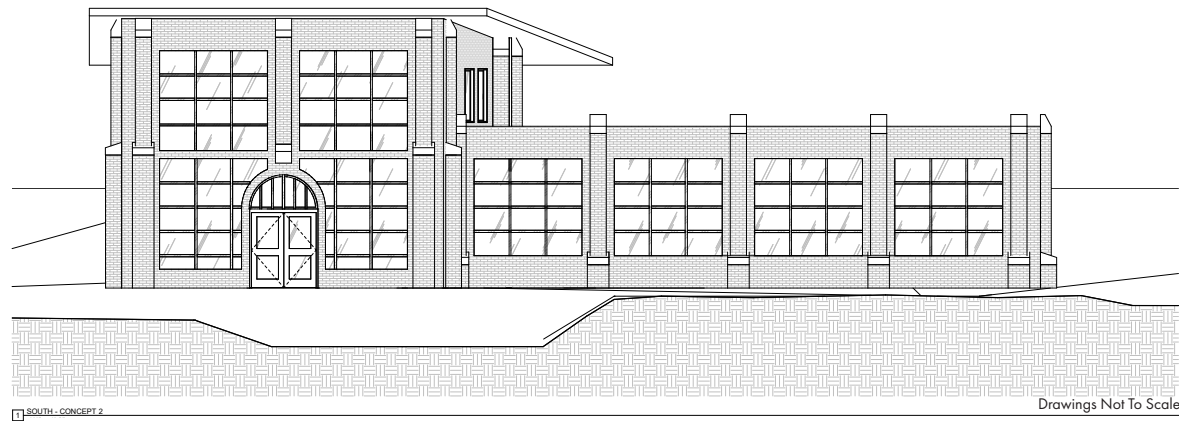


Fig. (022).

## CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

This approach leverages the site's legacy in developing a sensitive new one-story building (3,000 square feet). This structure would be inspired by the historic Sumner architecture and designed for contemporary needs.

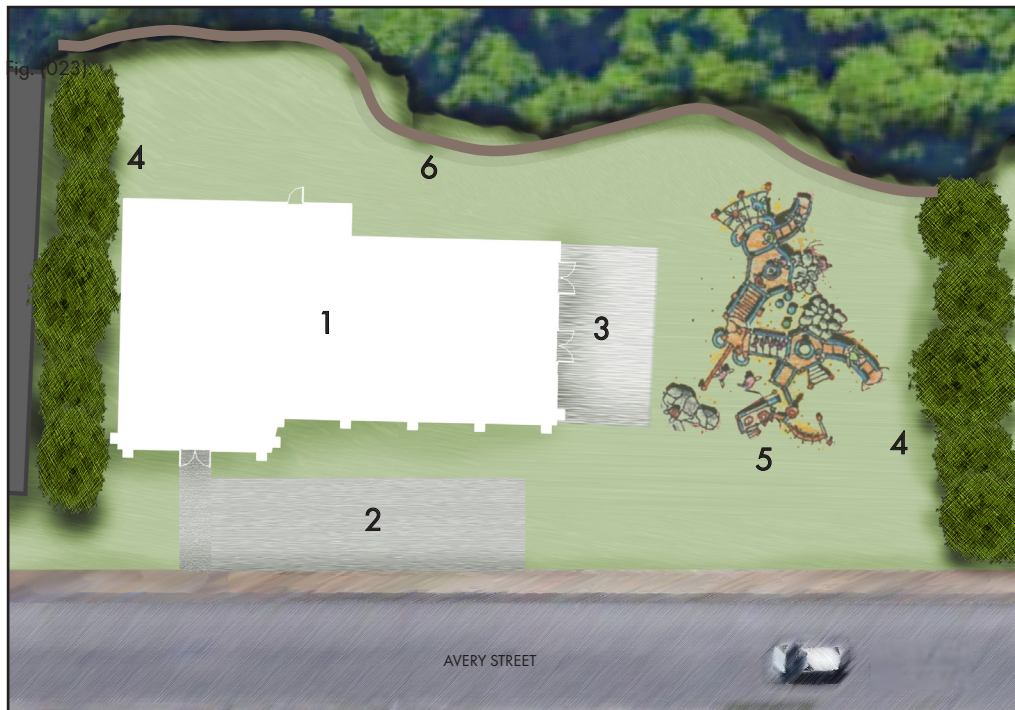


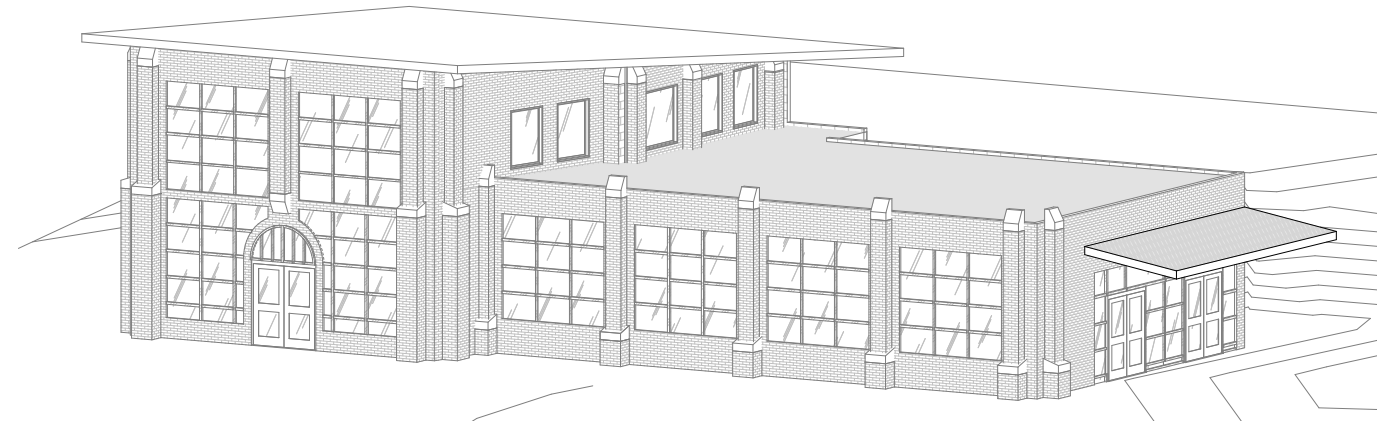
Fig. (023).

## Key

- 1 New Building
- 2 New Parking Area
- 3 New Patio
- 4 Privacy Screen
- 5 Playground Equipment
- 6 Retaining Wall

## BENEFITS

- Honors the Sumner legacy by basing the new design on the existing building's architecture.
- Provides the opportunity to educate and inspire the greater community of the Sumner legacy.
- Provides a historically sensitive building to Parkersburg's Avery Street Historic District.
- Provides an opportunity for Sumner to partner with local businesses or other non-profits to create an attractive venue for community gatherings/receptions and performances.
- Sustainable materials and energy planning (solar power) could provide greener stewardship of the site.
- The new building would require significantly less maintenance and funding to run.
- Could potentially attract crowd fundraising both local and national.



Drawings Not To Scale

Fig. (024).

## CHALLENGES

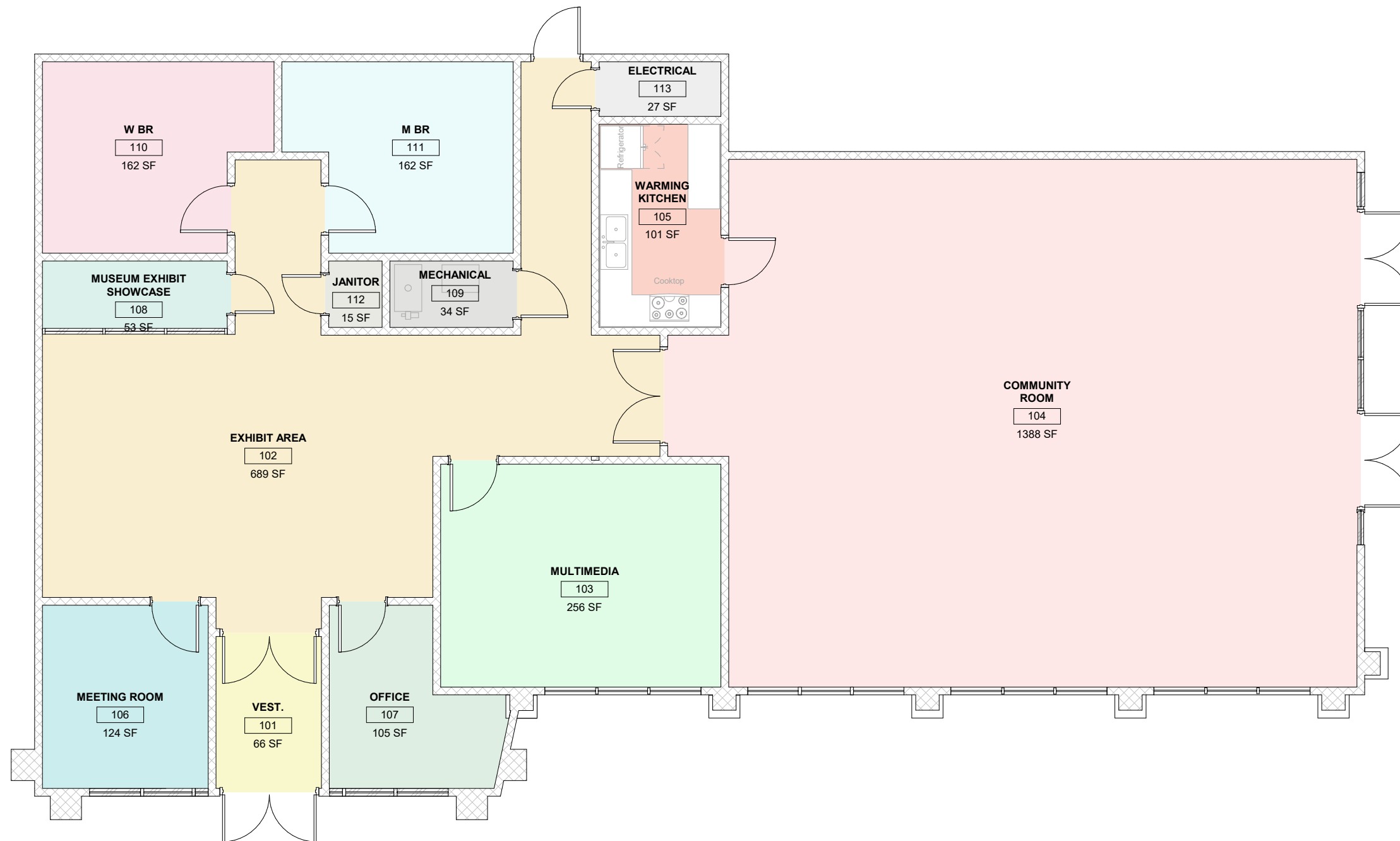
- The estimated cost of \$2 Million.
- Identify, catalog, and organize Sumner's historical artifacts/pictures, records et al. to develop the program for the museum/display areas of the building.
- Recruit and retain a sufficient number of committed volunteers to serve as board members; strategic advisors; committee members (program, buildings and grounds, finance, advancement/fundraising) to oversee a project of this complexity and scale.
- Recruit and retain a salaried executive director to work with the board and the volunteers to ensure the project's success.
- Develop a comprehensive and realistic business plan for the annual operating costs of maintaining the building; the expenses of personnel and the program; and the creation of a building reserve fund to ensure its proper maintenance.
- This new building could be interpreted as an erasure of an important historic structure and legacy.
- This concept could potentially complicate raising support and grant funding due to the demolition of the historic building.
- This new building would not be provided any historic incentives or protection.

## PHASING

- I. **Demolish and Remove the Existing Building. 10%**
- II. **The Plan 10%**
  1. Retain an architectural firm to develop construction documents.
  2. At the same time retain a building firm to work with the architectural firm to value engineer the construction documents and develop the project budget.
- III. **Site Work & Landscaping 10%**
- IV. **Construction of New Building 70%**

## TOTAL COST ESTIMATE

\$2 Million



- ROOM LEGEND**
- COMMUNITY ROOM
  - ELECTRICAL
  - EXHIBIT AREA
  - JANITOR
  - M BR
  - MECHANICAL
  - MEETING ROOM
  - MULTIMEDIA
  - MUSEUM EXHIBIT SHOWCASE
  - OFFICE
  - VEST.
  - W BR
  - WARMING KITCHEN

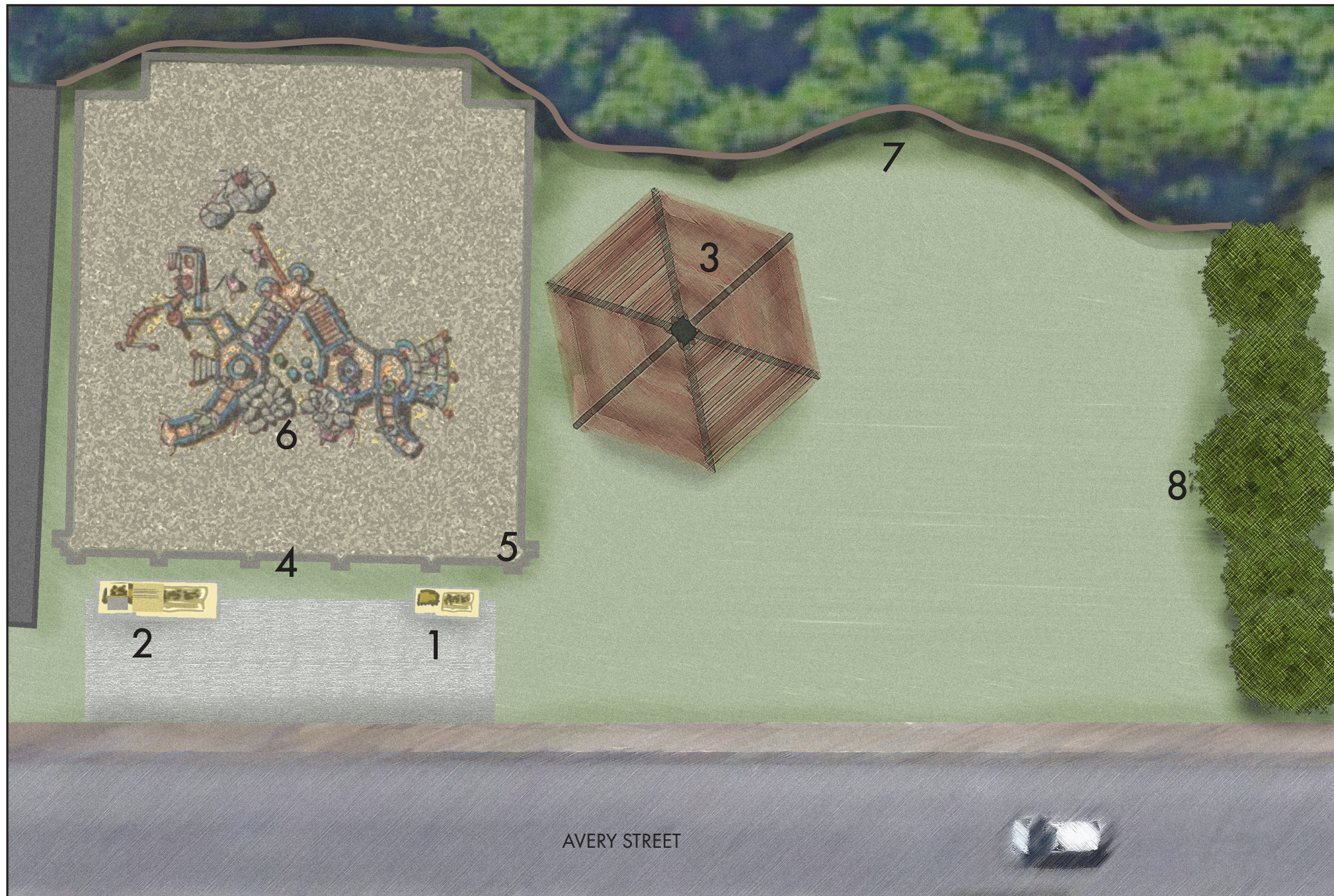


Fig. (026).

<b>Key</b>											
1	Bronze Sculpture	2	Legacy Storyboards	3	Outdoor Classroom/Pavilion	4	Existing Building Footprint	5	Retained Historic Fabric	6	Playground Equipment
7	Retaining Wall	8	Privacy Screen								

### CONCEPT DESCRIPTION

This approach would create a Park honoring the vision, courage, and commitment of the Founders --The Sumner Seven-- as well as the contributions that Sumner's principals, teachers, students, and parents have made to their local and national communities throughout the school's history.

### BENEFITS

- Honors the Sumner legacy by memorializing the footprint of the existing building and the original school-house which was razed in the 1950s when Parkersburg schools were integrated. Materials from the existing building would be utilized in framing the parameter and creating an entrance for the park.
- Provides the opportunity to educate and inspire the greater community, most importantly, today's children of the Sumner legacy.
- Provides an opportunity for Sumner to partner with local businesses or other non-profits to create an attractive venue for community gatherings/receptions and performances.
- Creates an attractive greenspace in the Avery Street Historic District just below the Quincy Street Park/Possibility of developing a larger neighborhood greenspace.
- Invites and encourages the greater community to be involved in the development and maintenance of this park.
- See the Thoughts and Ideas section for additions to the park.
- Offers potential economic benefits:
  - Possibility of receiving federal and state funds by preserving elements of the historic building.
  - Could qualify for individual, state, and federal tax credits.
  - Could potentially attract crowd fundraising both local and national.
  - Overall lower cost than other concepts both in implementation and maintenance

## CHALLENGES

- The estimated cost of \$1 Million.
- Identify, catalog, and organize Sumner's historical artifacts/pictures, records et al. to develop the legacy signage, graphics, and markers for the park.
- Partner with a local museum where the artifacts, not suitable for outdoor exhibiting, could be displayed.
- Recruit and retain a sufficient number of committed volunteers to serve as board members; strategic advisors; committee members (program, buildings and grounds, finance, advancement/fundraising) to oversee a project of this complexity and scale.
- Recruit and retain a salaried executive director to work with the board and the volunteers to ensure the project's success.
- Develop a comprehensive and realistic business plan for the annual operating costs of maintaining the building; the expenses of personnel and the program; and the creation of a building reserve fund to ensure its proper maintenance.
- The lack of a finished building prevents the site's year-round programming potential.

## PHASING

- I. **The Plan 15%**
  1. Retain an architectural firm to develop construction documents.
  2. Determine the core materials of the building to be retained for the construction of the park.
  3. At the same time retain a building firm to work with the architectural firm to value engineer the construction documents and develop the project budget.
- II. **Retain Park Construction Materials Then Remove the Majority of the Existing Building 15%**
  1. Identify and retain materials from the building for the construction of the park.
  2. Remove what remains of the existing building.
- III. **Site Work & Landscaping 70%**
  1. Level site to continuous grade.
  2. Install landscaping
  3. Install core elements.

## TOTAL COST ESTIMATE

\$1 Million



Fig. (027).

### Connection to Quincy Park

This concept could work in harmony with Quincy Park which is obliquely adjacent to the site. There is already a series of paths, stairs, and sidewalks that connect the two sites. Over time these parks could become part of a growing network of Parkersburg's greenspace.

# Thoughts and Ideas for Founders Park



Fig. (028).

## Bronze Sculpture of the Sumner Buildings

A 3-dimensional scale model executed in bronze would allow visitors to touch and experience the site's buildings in a tangible way. This hands-on concept allows children as well as those who are visually impaired to gain an understanding of the site's architecture.



Fig. (029).

## Legacy Graphics & Signage

Drawing upon the resources of the site's museum, a group of curated panels could be constructed to tell the story of The Sumner Seven and the school's history.



Fig. (030).

## Outdoor Classroom/Pavilion

Selected portions of the existing building's bricks could be re-purposed into piers for the construction of an outdoor classroom/pavilion. This structure could provide shelter for outdoor gatherings and field trips as well as bestow a sense of continuity with the historic fabric of the Sumner School.

Notice the retaining of the historic structure in a stabilized ruin behind this pavilion in the accompanying photograph.



Fig. (031).

## Outlining of The Historic Schoolhouse and Existing Building Footprint

These buildings' footprints could be marked with an intentional hardscape that incorporates important dates and names into the paving. The existing name blocks in the building's street-facing elevations could be reused in this scheme.

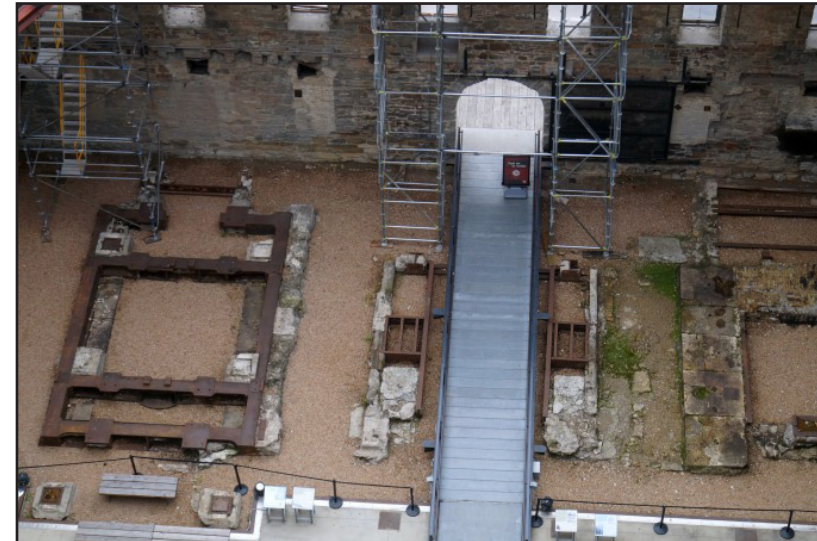


Fig. (032).

## Memorialization of the Site Through Stabilized Ruin

Architectural elements of the school could be stabilized and retained for the purpose of memorialization. Preserving a tangible portion of the site's historic fabric would bestow continuity to the site and allow visitors to touch a portion of the past. This approach allows for low maintenance while still honoring the legacy and power of this historic place.



Fig. (033).

## A Playground/Discovery Zone

Honoring the site's legacy by transforming it into a park means allowing children to enjoy it as a place of discovery and memory. A playground that incorporates memorialized architectural elements of the site's historic fabric could create a powerful and imaginative space where children learn about the significance of Sumner's history while building memories of their own.

## Funding Phasing & Crowdsourcing

The Sumner School's legacy and prominence could push its funding toward national attention. Teaming up with The National Trust and leveraging Crowdsourcing platforms such as **Kickstarter**, **Indiegogo**, **GoFundMe**, and **Mightycause** could provide a wide array of press and funding that traditional methods may not be capable of delivering.

## SOURCES

Fig. (000). Sumner School Parkersburg WV. <https://www.mackeysclockrepair.net/more%20%20old%20pictures.html>

Fig. (001). Parkersburg Map from 1899. <http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/484189/Parkersburg+1899+Bird+s+Eye+View+24x39/Parkersburg+1899+Bird%27s+Eye+View/West+Virginia/>

Fig. (027). Google Earth. <https://earth.google.com/web/search/39.26875788263204,+81.55334732534332/@39.2687579,-81.5533473,205.35111744a,795.81640372d,35y,0h,45t,0r/data=CmkaPxI5GVSFq6hmokNAIR01ywpqY1TAKiUzOS4yNjg3NTc4ODI2MzlwNCwgLTgxLjU1MzM0NzMyNTM0MzMyGAlgASImCiQJuiSrpL6cN8ARSk4Tl8NOMAZC6nUX916YMAh4e-Zhp-KYMAoAg>

Fig. (030). Centennial Rotary 43 Pavilion. <https://www.pueblo.us/2564/City-Park-Pavilions>.

Fig. (032). Discover The History of Flour at Mill City Museum in Minneapolis. Greta Brinkley. <https://www.gretasday.com/mill-city-museum-in-minneapolis-mn/>.

Fig. (033). Leavesden Country Park. <https://www.thechildrensplayground.com/playgrounds-near-me/leavesden-country-park>.

Fig. (002)., (003)., (004)., (005)., (006)., (007)., (008)., (009)., (010)., (011)., (012)., (013)., (014)., (015)., (016)., (017)., (018)., (019)., (020)., (021)., (022)., (023)., (024).,(024)., (025)., (026)., (028).,(029)., and (031). Created by Mills Group, LLC.