



Community Meeting #2

Benjamin G. Brown School

Somerville, MA

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Design Schedule
- Review of Community Meeting 1
- Schematic Designs
- Questions for Discussion

Wednesday, March 11, 2020



PROJECT OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTIONS

City of Somerville

Arn Franzen, Senior Project Manager, Public Space & Urban Forestry

CBA Landscape Architects LLC

D.J. Chagnon, Principal-in-Charge

Kaila Bachman, Principal, Project Manager

Liz Thompson, Staff Landscape Designer

Preliminary Community Meeting (December 2018, held by the City): Collect community input about desires for the schoolyard redesign.

Community Meeting 1 (November 18, 2019): Present site analysis and precedents. Present rough conceptual designs based on previous community input process by the City, and develop wish list to guide Schematic Designs for future meetings.

Community Meeting 2 (March 11, 2020:) Present Schematic Design Alternatives based on first meeting input. Community review and discussion, with the goal of developing a final Preferred Design Plan.

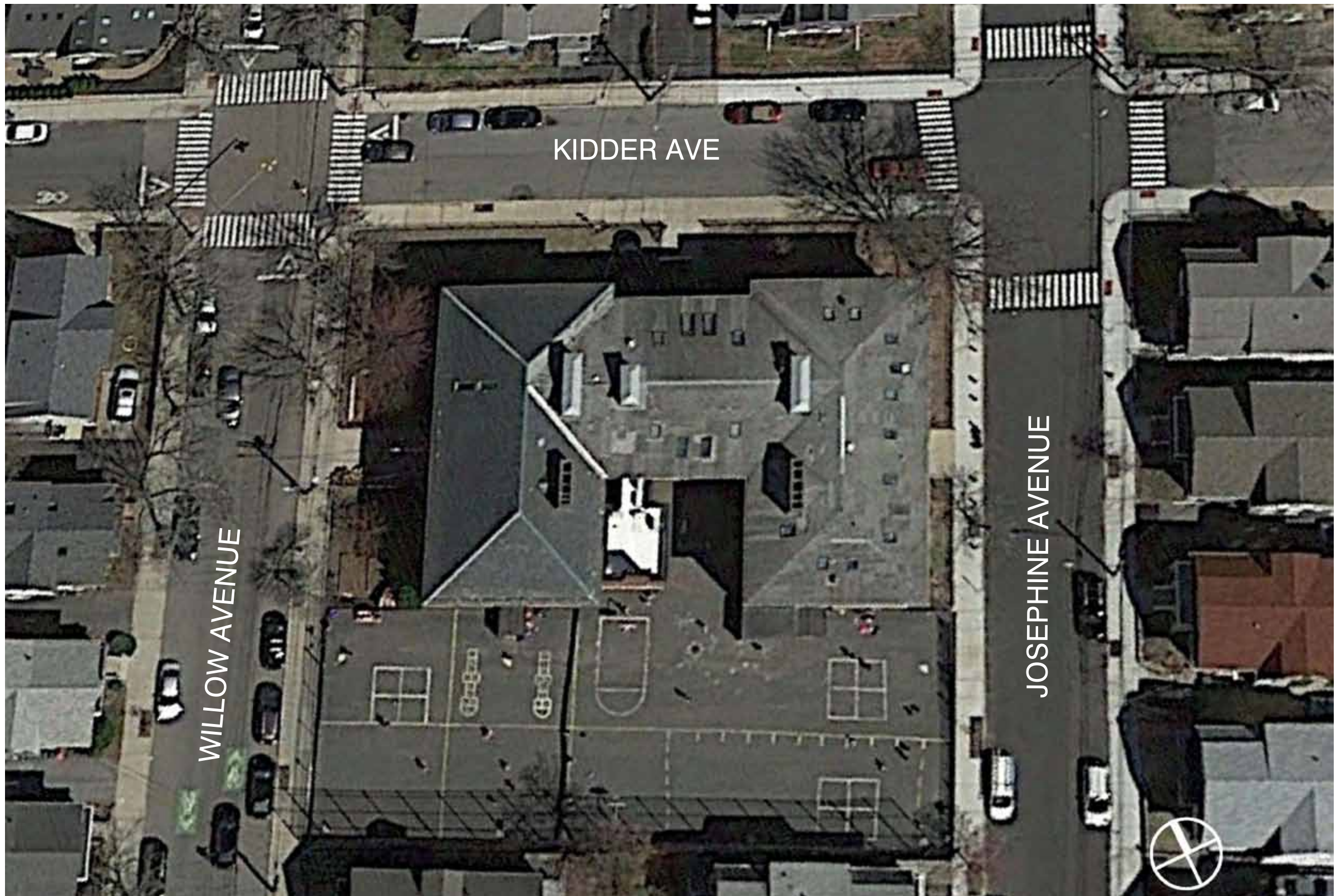
Community Meeting 3 (Late April 2020): Present Definitive Design for Schoolyard construction, including features and site furnishings based on community discussion at Meeting 2. With community input, discuss project budget, bidding process, suggested Alternates, and prioritize strategy to maximize budget.

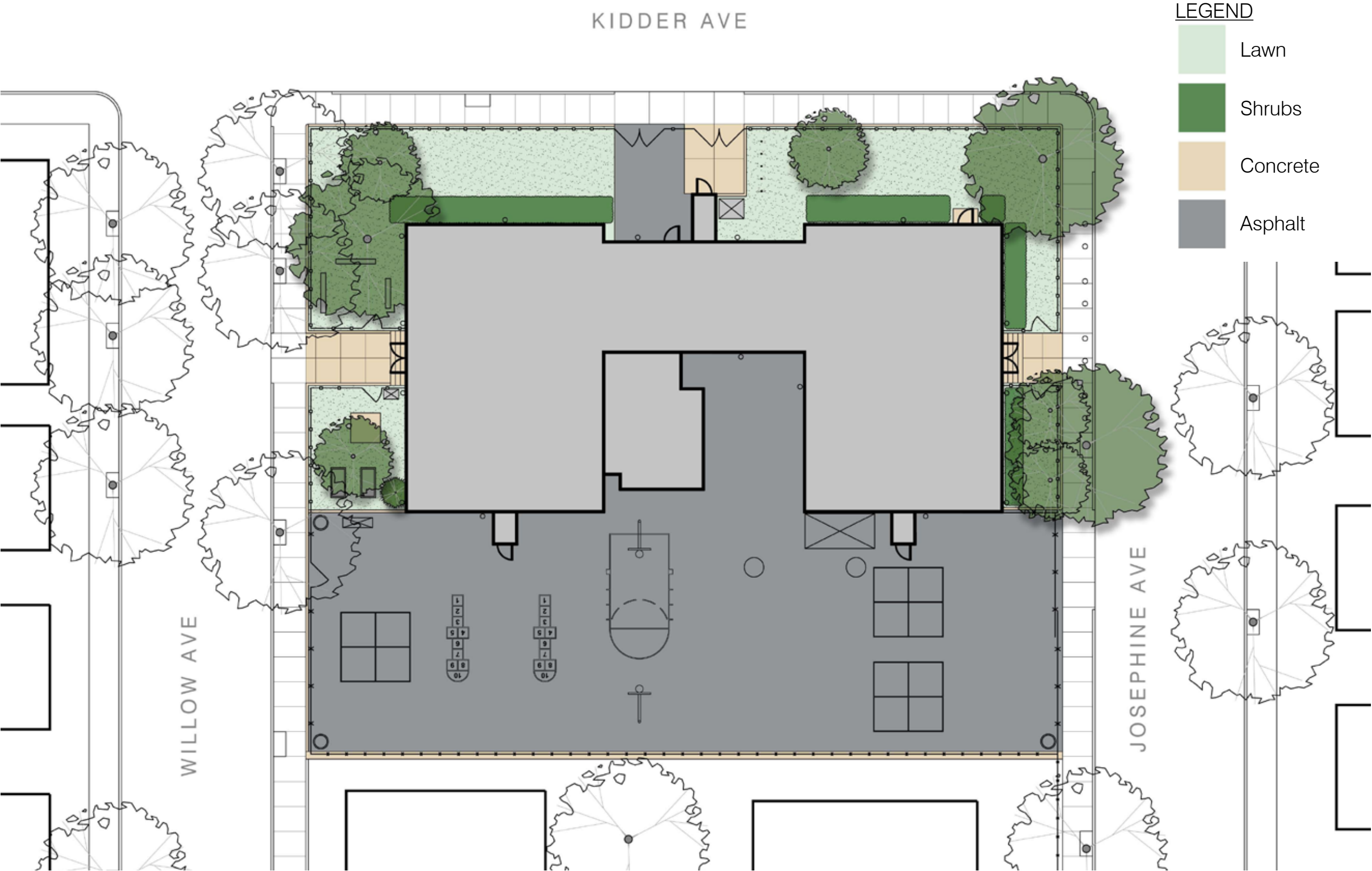
Construction Documents (Summer 2020): CBA will finalize Definitive Design and suggested Alternates into detailed Construction Documents suitable for bidding purposes.

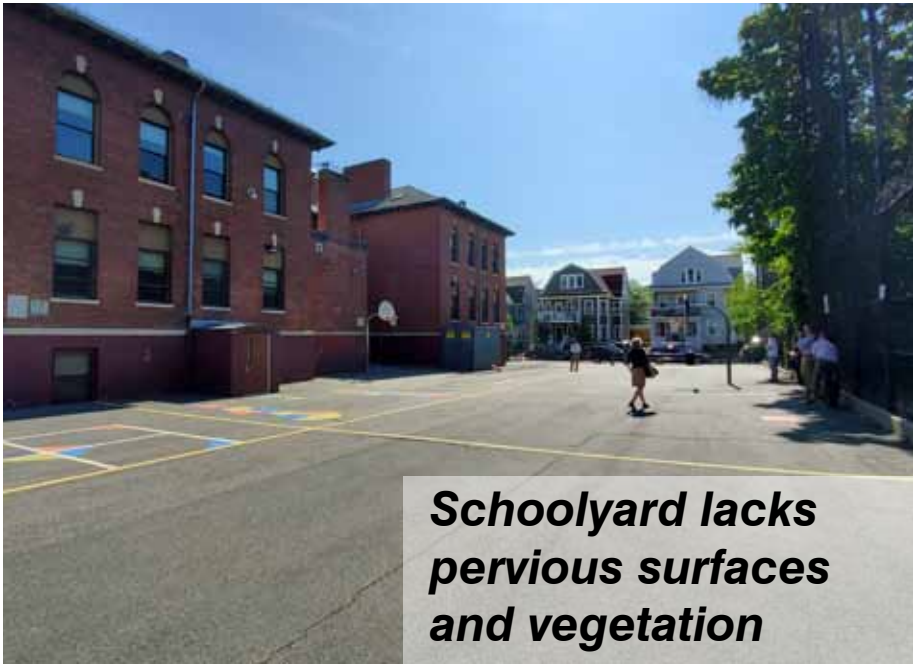
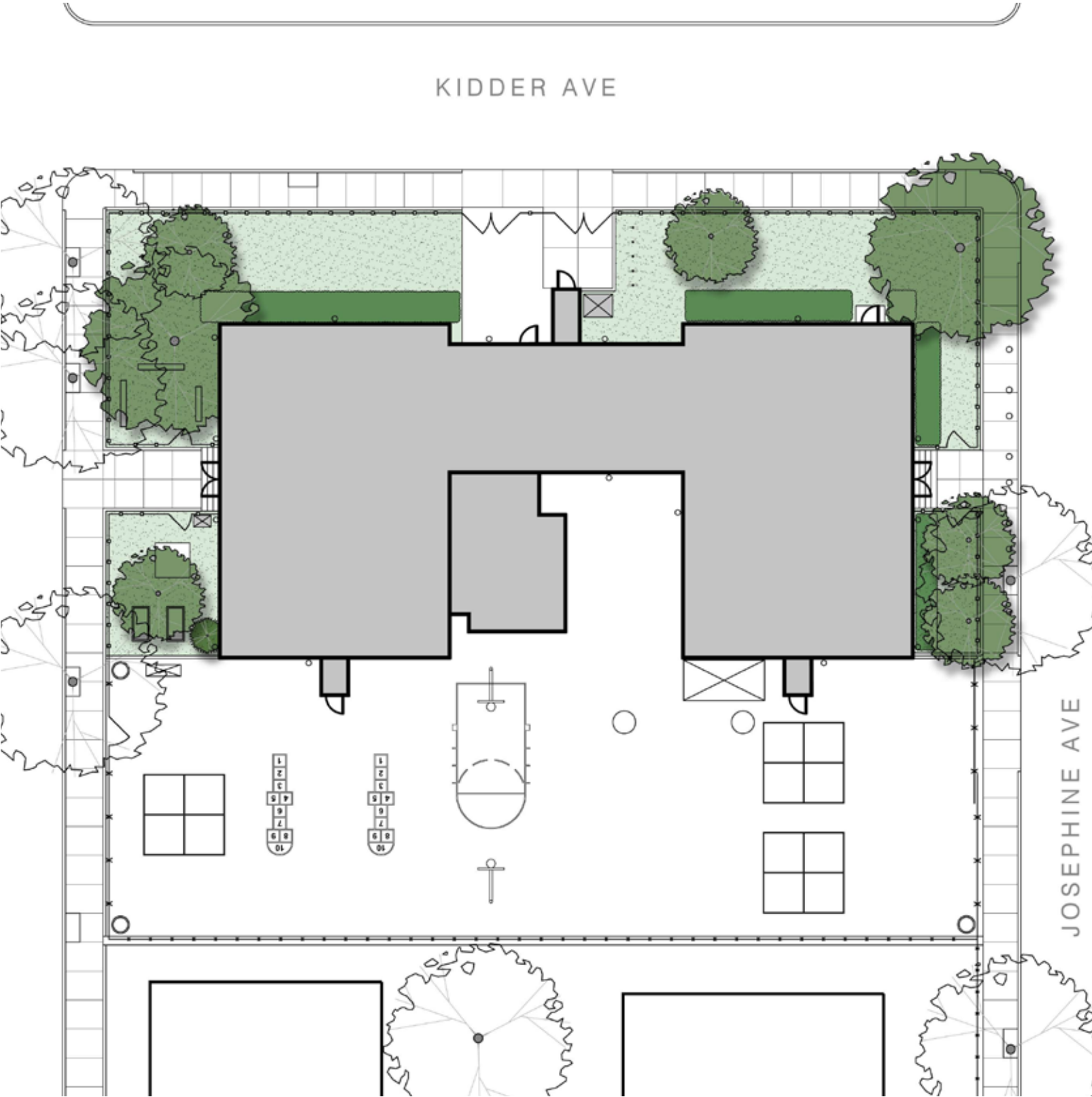
Construction Start: Schedule to be determined by funding availability.

The background image shows a large, multi-story brick building with arched windows, likely a school. In the foreground, there is a paved courtyard area with yellow and blue geometric patterns painted on it. A few people are walking in the distance, and there are trees and other buildings visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY MEETING 1

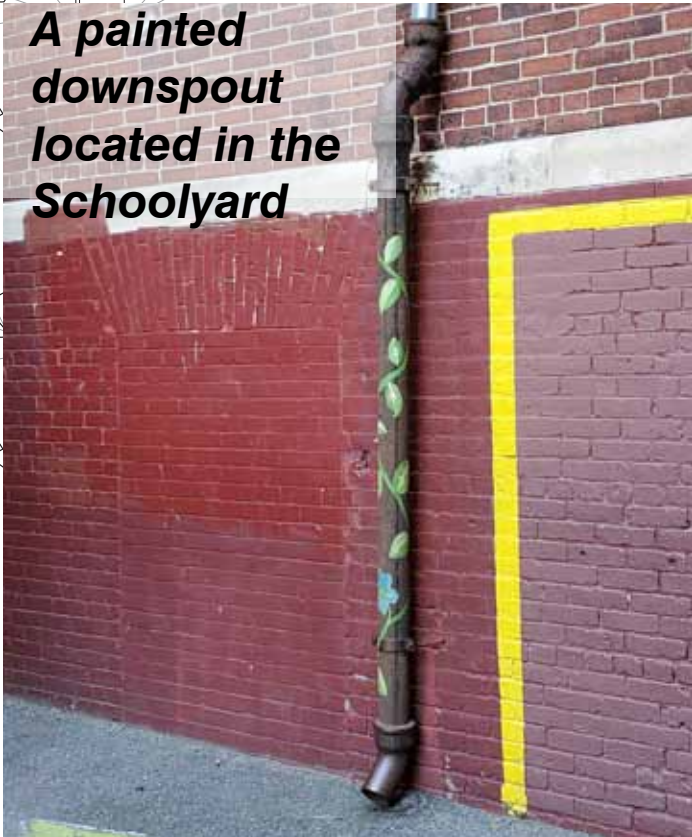
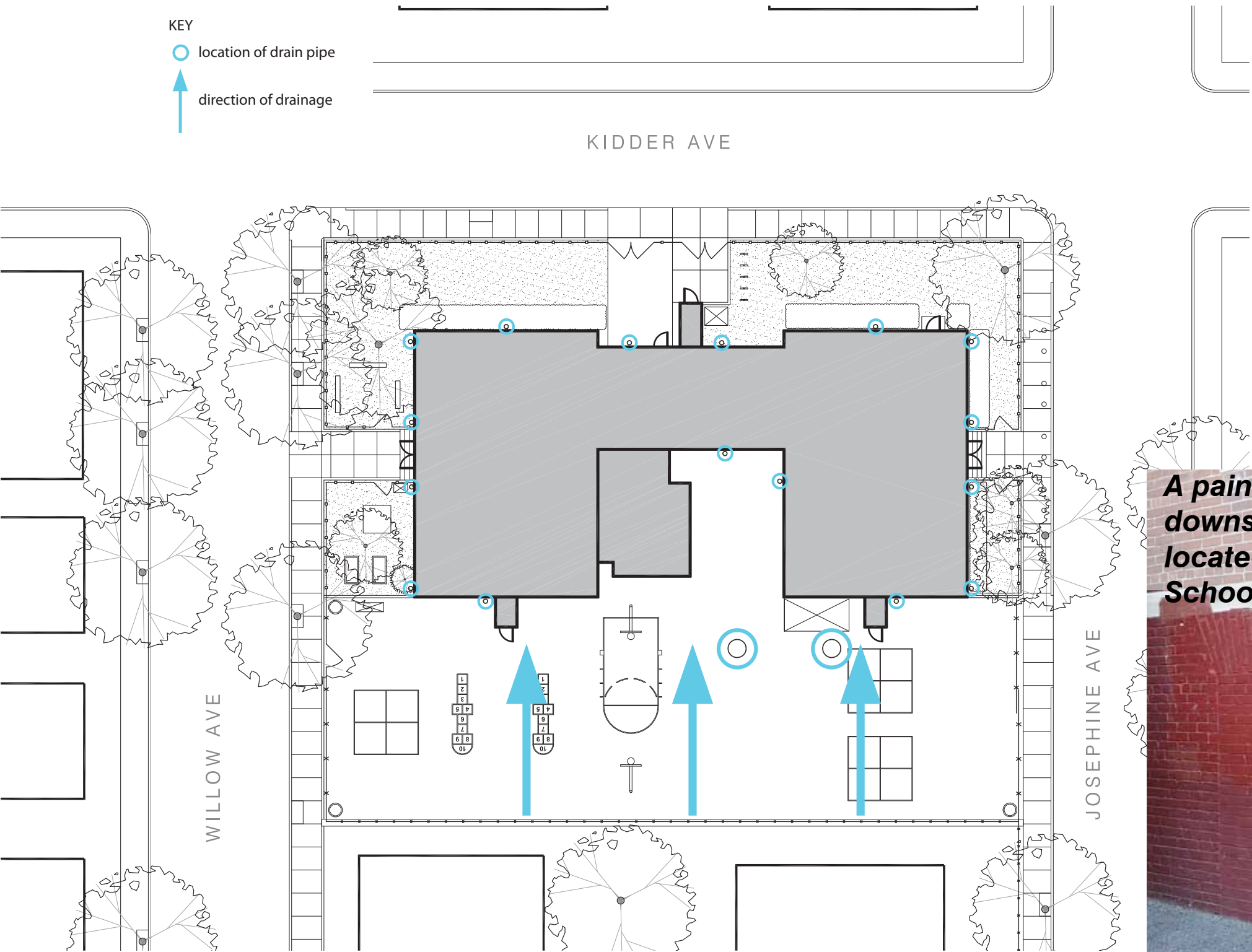






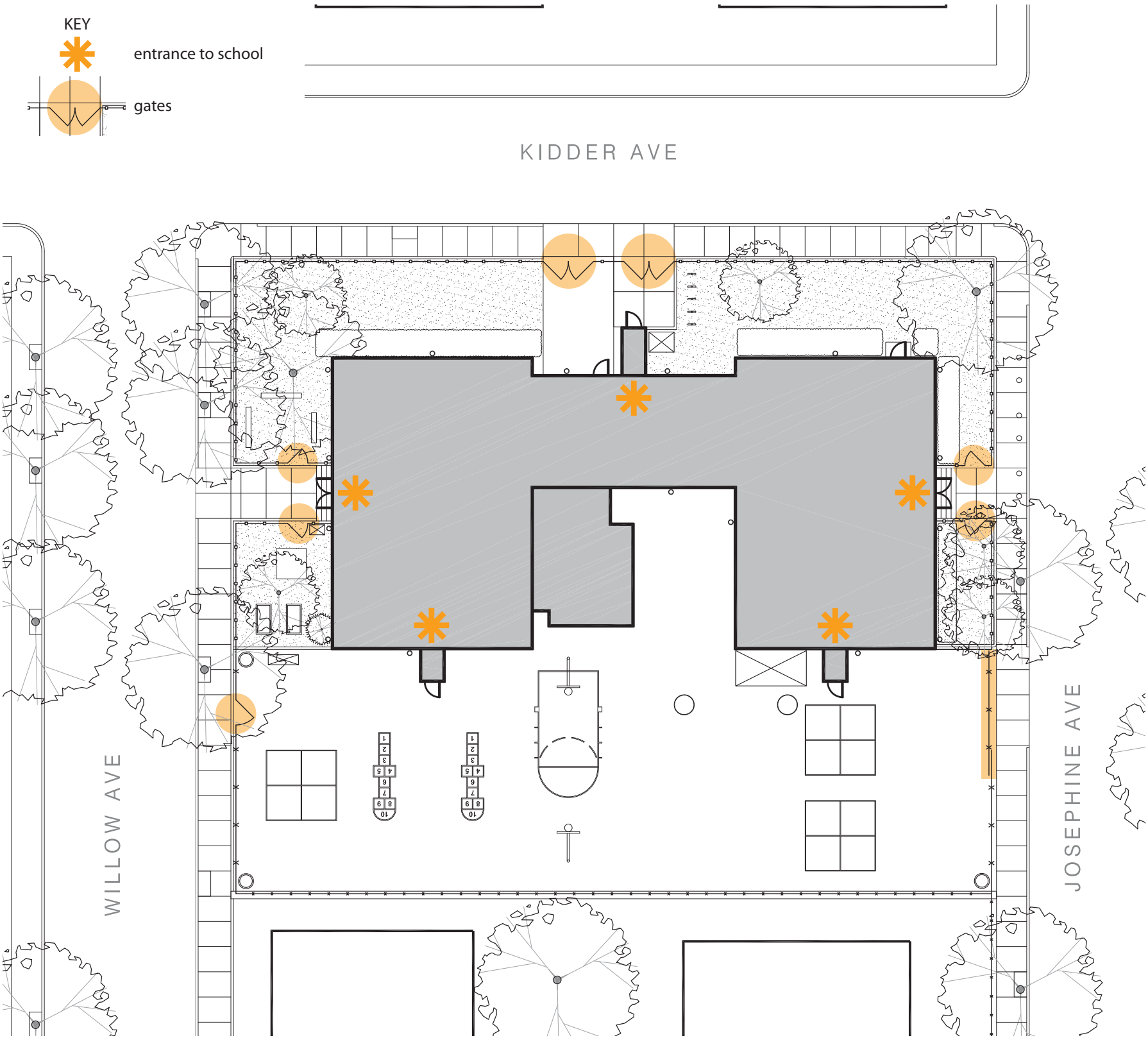
DRAINAGE

EXISTING CONDITIONS & SITE ANALYSIS



ACCESS & ENCLOSURE

EXISTING CONDITIONS & SITE ANALYSIS



Most-used access points, on Willow Avenue (shown) and Josephine Avenue, are not ADA accessible

ACCESS & ENCLOSURE

EXISTING CONDITIONS & SITE ANALYSIS



***Accessible Entry
on Kidder Avenue***



***A nook between the
wings of the school
offers shade***



***Ornamental fencing along
Willow, (shown) Kidder,
and Josephine Avenues***



***Sliding vehicular gate
at Josephine Avenue***

Flexibility of Space:

- Maintain and maximize open space
- Flexibility is the key
- Movable equipment may be useful
- Open flexible space as “a set of blocks” rather than scripted use

Multifunctional Space:

- The schoolyard serves as the school’s gym, gathering space, and multifunctional area; all these uses need to be part of the new design.
- Outdoor classroom space is important to consider
- Consider space to eat outside
- Alley as a gathering area?
- Overlapping-use program is key due to the small schoolyard area
- Consider the entire site, not just blacktop area.
- Remember space is open to neighborhood outside school hours.

Green Space:

- Garden Space should be included, in a sunny spot with access to water
- Trees, including additional street trees, to add shade
- Maximize natural materials and areas
- Nature Education is a possibility

Imagination Space:

- Play should incorporate creativity
- Kids often do imaginary games during recess - play area should encourage this

Sports:

- Keep basketball - explore adjustable hoops to maximize age range
- Running-around-room, gym space, foursquare, etc - needs to be level
- Consider parkour / exercise equip’t
- Strong support for synthetic turf - emphasis on safe technologies

Structured Play:

- Climbing Structures (fit narrow, tall space)
- Explore climbing walls
- Early grades need playstructures; older kids often stop using them

Arts:

- Incorporate public / community art
- Consider murals, etc on the back wall

Inclusive Design:

- Involve kids in the design process - STEAM education opportunity
- Space should be appropriate for all ages - neighborhood park outside school hours
- Improve ADA accessibility around site and upgrade ADA entrance to building

Fencing:

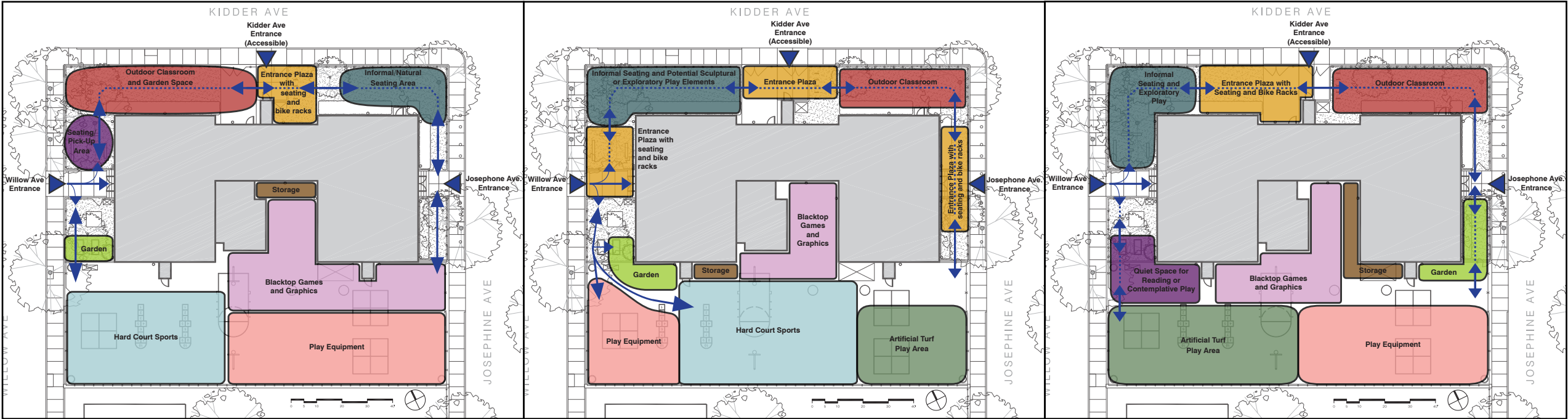
- Chain link fencing is institutional; consider alternatives
- Fencing around green spaces has sharp picket tops and other issues and should be replaced.
- Access from playground area to side yards is important - add gates
- Need to keep balls from going out the sides - both above and below fences

Other Features:

- Lighting is a big priority
- Additional bike & scooter parking
- Gathering area for parents at pickup/dropoff times
- Drinking fountain / bottle filler
- Consider snow issues, including falling off sloped roofs into play area
- Sustainable drainage, stormwater, heat island reduction, etc.
- Explore what has worked at other sites and schools in the City and elsewhere

Future Goals:

- Consider possible future alterations to the building - atrium in the alley? Upgrades to structure? etc.
- Improve parking situation / opportunities in the neighborhood, not the schoolyard



PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES



Multipurpose Synthetic Turf Field



Hard Court Space



Blacktop Graphics



Gathering Space



Outdoor Classroom



Dramatic/Imaginative Play



Play Equipment



Green Infrastructure



Water Fountain / Bottle Filler

Logistics / Site Layout:

- When considering the alley space – all proposed plans for future ADA upgrades / elevator addition to the building have been assuming it would go in this location, so nothing should be placed there that couldn't be relocated or removed at a later date.
- Storage space is in high demand.
- Assembly space for parents should be added near pickup and dropoff locations at the Willow and Josephine Ave stairs.
- Multifunctional spaces will be key to design success – school yard is used simultaneously by gym and recess.
- Corner of Willow & Kidder is loudest area.
- Outdoor classroom located near the Kindergarten end (Kidder & Josephine corner) would have easy access.

Program Requests / Items:

- Roxana Caro (PTA) shared a wish list prepared by Brown School students. Key items not included elsewhere were: monkey bars, balance beams, seesaws, a trampoline, space/loop for bike and scooter use, and quiet reading spaces.
- The community expressed strong support for adding a drinking fountain / bottle filler.
- Lighting is needed, especially for after school programs during winter when the

sun goes down earlier.

- Basketball hoops should be featured.
- Wall Ball is very popular.

Synthetic Turf:

- Is it possible to play basketball on synthetic turf? A variety of turfs work fairly well for hard-court sports.
- Has the City encountered misuse of the synthetic turf fields at other schools? None so far – they're heavily programmed and frequently used informally.

Fencing:

- The fencing that separates the side yards of the school from the back, and from the entrance areas at Willow and Josephine, breaks up the space too much – at the very least, gates should be added.
- Currently the school uses movable foam dividers to split the space in half for gym and recess - potentially still should be used within the proposed design.
- The open feeling of the space is important – avoid having lots of fencing within the schoolyard (as opposed to perimeter).

Play Elements:

- The school has a lot of vertical surfaces – vertical elements like a climbing wall should be considered.

- There was a suggestion to look into a “Wallholla” type of structure. There are possible concerns with how adults / caregivers would access the interior of the structure to assist kids if needed.
- Upper body / obstacle-course style equipment and parkour-type uses are a possibility.
- Flexibility of the space needs to be maintained, don't put in too much equipment that takes up a lot of space.
- Look for ways to expand play elements around to the other sides – is there space along the Kidder Ave side for less “active” play or sensory play, or kindergarten-oriented elements such as dramatic play or smaller structures.

The Transformer:

- Community members expressed that the proposed transformer placement is disruptive to the use of the space.
- CBA stated that when this project gets to construction, it may be possible to relocate the transformer, provided that the budget and site design allow for it.

IDEAS FROM 1/22/20 FACULTY MEETING

EXISTING CONDITIONS & SITE ANALYSIS

Logistics/ Site Layout:

- Gates and pathways should be located so students are kept within school property when going out for gym and recess.
- Recess takes place with two classes at a time. There need to be open sight lines to supervise students in the schoolyard.
- Schoolyard snow plowing should be considered, especially for the placement of the artificial turf and play structure locations. Since the school has no gym, this is the only recreation space the students have available, and at least part of it should be plowable.
- Strong support for formal seating plaza at Willow Avenue entrance.
- The features used to flatten the grades in the schoolyard should be seatwalls or another feature that students can use or interact with.
- The schoolyard is very sunny so having more shade would be beneficial.

Play Elements:

- A large play structure was discouraged since it would limit open space and “running-around room” in the schoolyard.
- Concerns were expressed about adult access to a walholla-like play structure to help a child who is hurt or in distress.
- Most teachers discouraged incorporating a play structure for ages 2-5 within the

schoolyard since it either wouldn't be used by students or it was likely to be used inappropriately.

- There was strong support for play equipment with a smaller footprint.

Garden Beds:

- Garden beds are used during school hours by classes.
- Strong support was expressed for moving the garden beds to the Josephine Avenue side of the school for more sun and a quieter environment.
- Window locations should be confirmed at the lower floor of the school to ensure that the plant beds will not block the windows.

Outdoor Classroom:

- An outdoor classroom would get used and needs to seat at least 25 students.
- The outdoor classroom needs to be separated from the gym class and recess areas. There was strong support for having an outdoor classroom on the Kidder Avenue side of the school.
- Teachers liked the idea of having outdoor chalkboards in the outdoor classroom space.

Climbing Wall:

- Strong support for a climbing wall within the alley.

Storage:

- The faculty strongly supported having more outdoor storage space.
- Using the alley for storage, especially the “back” of the alley closest to the building, would eliminate spaces that are hard to monitor.
- Storage needs include: gym class equipment, recess equipment, and after-school program equipment.

Basketball:

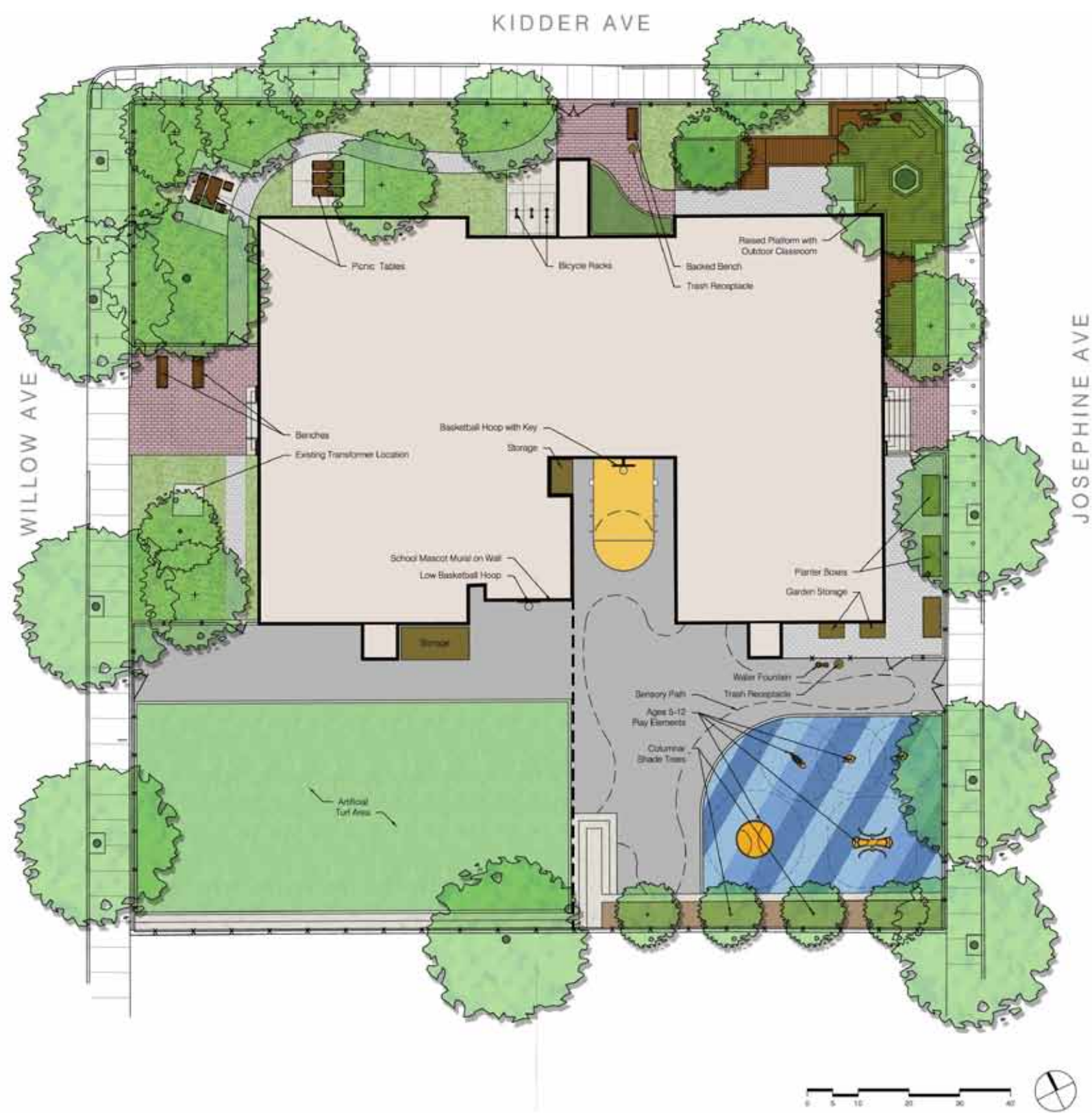
- Basketball hoops should be on opposite ends of the school yard, so that students and residents can play a game and so that posts are not in the middle of the schoolyard where they pose a hazard.
- It was discussed that the basketball court surfacing could be on a safer surfacing; not necessarily asphalt. Alternate surfacing should be explored, but any surface other than asphalt will require special snow removal. The City and CBA will speak with DPW.
- There was strong support for a blacktop area that is easily plowed and supports open-ended use.
- Basketball hoops should be adjustable.

The background image shows a large, multi-story brick building with arched windows, likely a school. In the foreground, there is an asphalt courtyard with yellow and colorful geometric markings. A basketball hoop is visible in the middle ground. Several people are walking in the courtyard. The sky is clear and blue.

SCHEMATIC DESIGNS

CONCEPT 1

SCHEMATIC DESIGNS



Picnic Tables



Raised Platform w/Seating



Play Structure: Disk



Play Structure: Seesaw



Play Structure: Windrider



Play Structure: Spinner



Picnic Tables



Raised Wooden Platform with Seating



Play Structure: Disk



Play Structure: Seesaw



Play Structure: Windrider



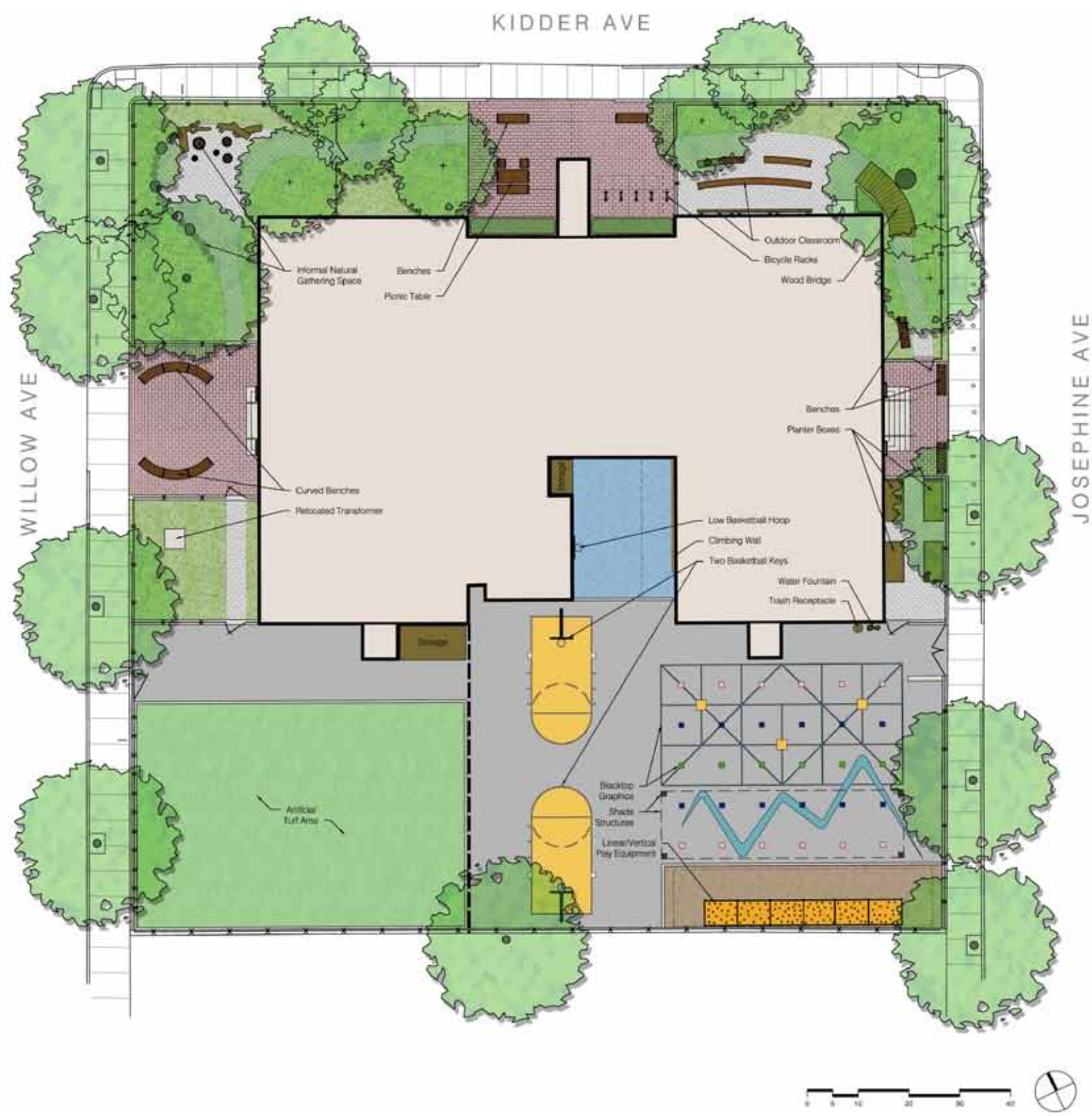
Play Structure: Spinner



Play Structure: Dish Swing

CONCEPT 2a

SCHEMATIC DESIGNS



Natural Gathering Space



Outdoor Classroom



Climbing Wall



Hard Court Space



Linear/Vertical Play Equipment



Shade Structures



Natural Gathering Space



Climbing Wall





Outdoor Classroom



Hard Court Space



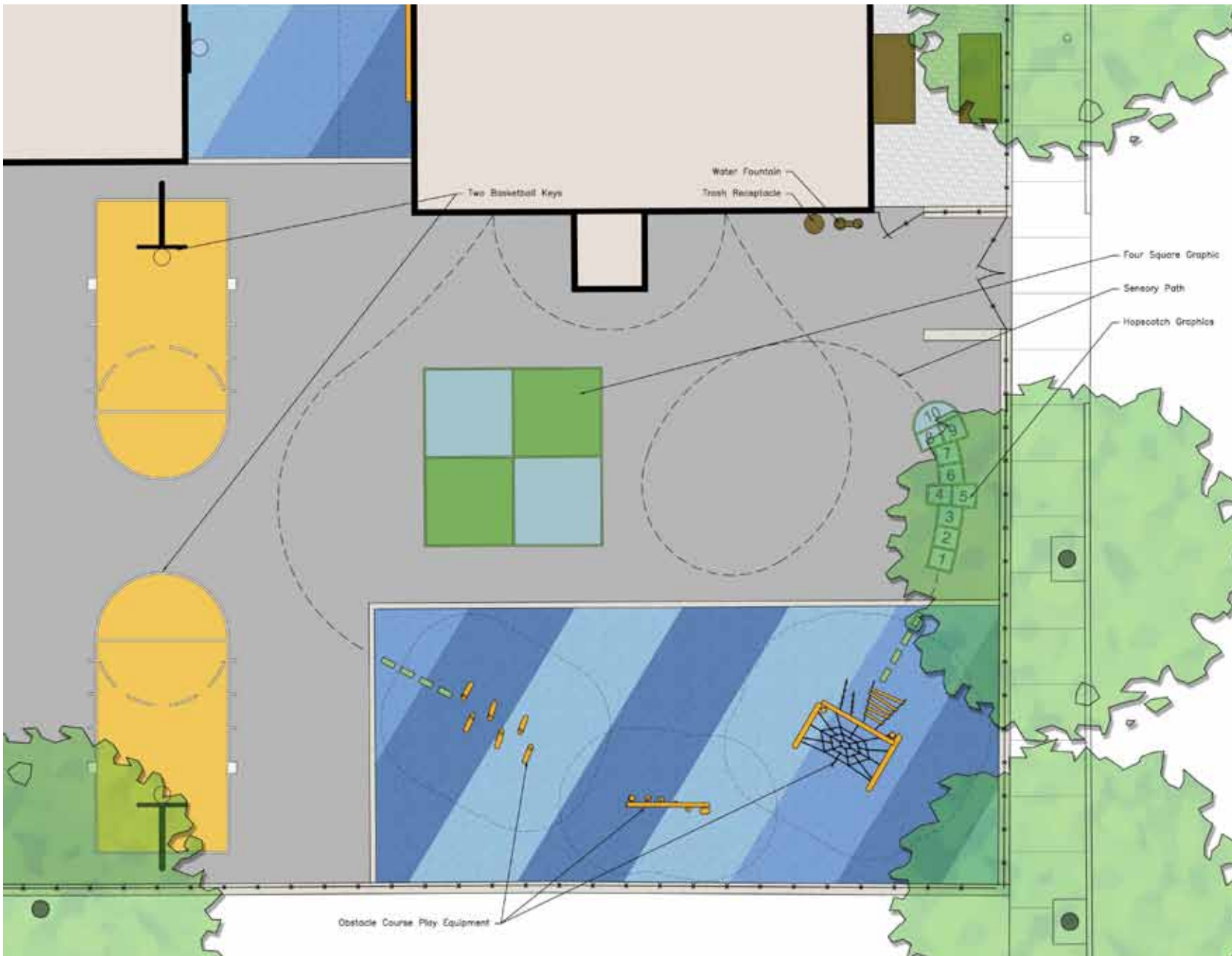
Linear/Vertical Play Equipment



Shade Sails



Shade Pergola



Obstacle Course Play Equipment



Obstacle Course Play Equipment



Obstacle Course Play Equipment

THANK YOU

Other questions, concerns, and ideas? Interested in attending future public meetings and sending more feedback? Please contact:

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email: AFranzen@somervillema.gov

Be sure to sign up for the project email list to receive updates and meeting notices, on the sign-in sheet at the meeting or by emailing Arn!



Concept 1



Concept 2a



Concept 2b