



NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	Urban Design Record #26086
APPLICATION TYPE	Certificate of Appropriateness
ADDRESS/LOCATION	1400 K Street
HEARING DATE	August 28, 2026
ADDITIONAL MEETINGS	July 24, 2026
APPLICANT	Travis Barrett, Clark & Enersen
STAFF CONTACT	Collin Christopher, 402-441-6370, cchristopher@lincoln.ne.gov

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Summary of Request

St. Mary's Catholic Church is currently in the process of completing a façade restoration project along the K Street side of the church and as they progress, they are exploring site/streetscape improvements as well. In the initial phase, the improvements include a combination of landscaping and pedestrian-focused enhancements that aim to highlight the restored façade and create more people-friendly spaces along the south side of the building. This includes curbed landscape beds, added shade trees, and new concrete with simple scoring patterns.

In the second phase, the church has asked the city to explore the viability of a bump out at the intersection that would eliminate the awkward switchback that exists at this corner today. City staff are generally in support of this modification, as long as proper slopes can be reasonably achieved. If approved, staff will set aside funding for further development of this proposal.

In July, the applicant received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Commission for the conceptual design of the improvements, with the understanding that final approval would be required as plans were developed further. The Commission asked the applicant to explore the following as they worked through their design process:

- Look at potentially simplifying the planting plan a little.
- Continue to explore the best solution for seating, including the consideration of the best placement and orientation of any seating, the consideration of whether a seat back is needed or not, and the inclusion of skate deterrents in the design of the seating.

The updated proposal in front of the Commission has addressed both of these items in one form or another. The updated landscape plan is in fact simplified, while still maintaining enough diversity to allow for seasonal interest. In addition to a reduced number of plant species, the new plan relies more heavily on woody shrubs and less on perennials.

Regarding the seating, it has been removed from the updated proposal, eliminating the need to discuss this further.

The applicant is now asking for a final Certificate of Appropriateness for Phase 1 improvements.

Compatibility with the Design Standards

Given that this is a streetscape/street frontage project directly in front of Capitol Square, adherence to the standards is especially important. What follows are the most relevant standards and guidelines:

Design Standard 2: Proximity

The nearer a property is to the Capitol, the greater responsibility it bears in the District. Buildings and other improvements facing Capitol Square shall meet very high standards for design, construction, and maintenance. Improvements facing the Capitol Malls shall also meet high standards. Other improvements within the District but not facing the Square or the Malls shall not intrude upon the Capitol's setting and shall contribute to the overall quality of the District.

Design Standard 18: General Landscape of All Malls

The landscape of the Capitol Malls should enhance the Capitol setting and vistas:

- by providing canopy and definition at the mall edge, but leaving the centers of the malls more open, allowing on-axis views of the Capitol,
- by creating a sense of organization and unity through form, color, texture, and spacing that may be lacking in the adjacent architecture,
- by establishing a rhythm of visual and physical movement leading ultimately to the Capitol,
- by providing seasonal change and interest.

There is a delicate balance between a landscape that enhances and one that overwhelms—color and form changes should be in large sweeps and masses to avoid creating small, distracting focal points. The landscape should be bolder and more colorful closest to the Capitol.

Facing Capitol Square and the Malls, front yards shall not contain mechanical equipment, above-ground utilities, docks, or unscreened ramps. Architectural or planted screenings may be offered, with maintenance requirements.

Active use of the Malls should be encouraged by the selection and placement of landscape elements such as seating.

Guideline 18.2:

Provide seating in as many locations as appropriate. Benches should:

- be of high quality, refined materials,
- have backs,
- be readily available commercially or easily repaired in-house,
- be of neutral colors,

https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-Boards/Shared Documents/Boards/NCEC/REPORTS/2026/08-August/UDR26086/UDR26086_Staff Report.docx

- be placed along edges to take advantage of shade and allow pedestrians to be close to circulation but not in it.

To provide seating opportunities for conversation, combine benches, trash cans, ash urns and small tables of similar construction and installation.

Guideline 18.3:

Encourage the use of wide, seating-height caps on retaining walls or edge definers, including pools and fountains.

Guideline 18.5:

Use high quality pavement that is durable, neutral or natural color, able to be matched or replaced locally or regionally; nonslip but not too rough for high heels; textured or patterned subtly. Asphalt or asphalt pavers are not acceptable. Design paved areas to allow replacement or repair to occur in sections that maintain the established pavement pattern.

Guideline 18.6:

Retaining walls, seating walls, planters, and other vertical landscape features should be constructed of durable materials, preferably masonry; neutral or natural colors; horizontal lines; no exposed form lines or form-tie holes.

Guideline 18.11:

Use high quality, permanent landscape materials for edging, containing, and paving in neutral or natural colors. Use of masonry or stone is appropriate where edging or containment is needed. Exercise caution in designing any above-ground planters or planting beds, that they be of sufficient size to support healthy growth of plant materials. Remove undersized planters from existing trees and replace trees as necessary.

Guideline 18.12:

Utilities, dumpsters, service areas, and the like should be located as inconspicuously as possible, and screened from Capitol Square and the Malls with permanent materials which are compatible with the adjacent buildings.

The proposed project meets these standards and guidelines in full.

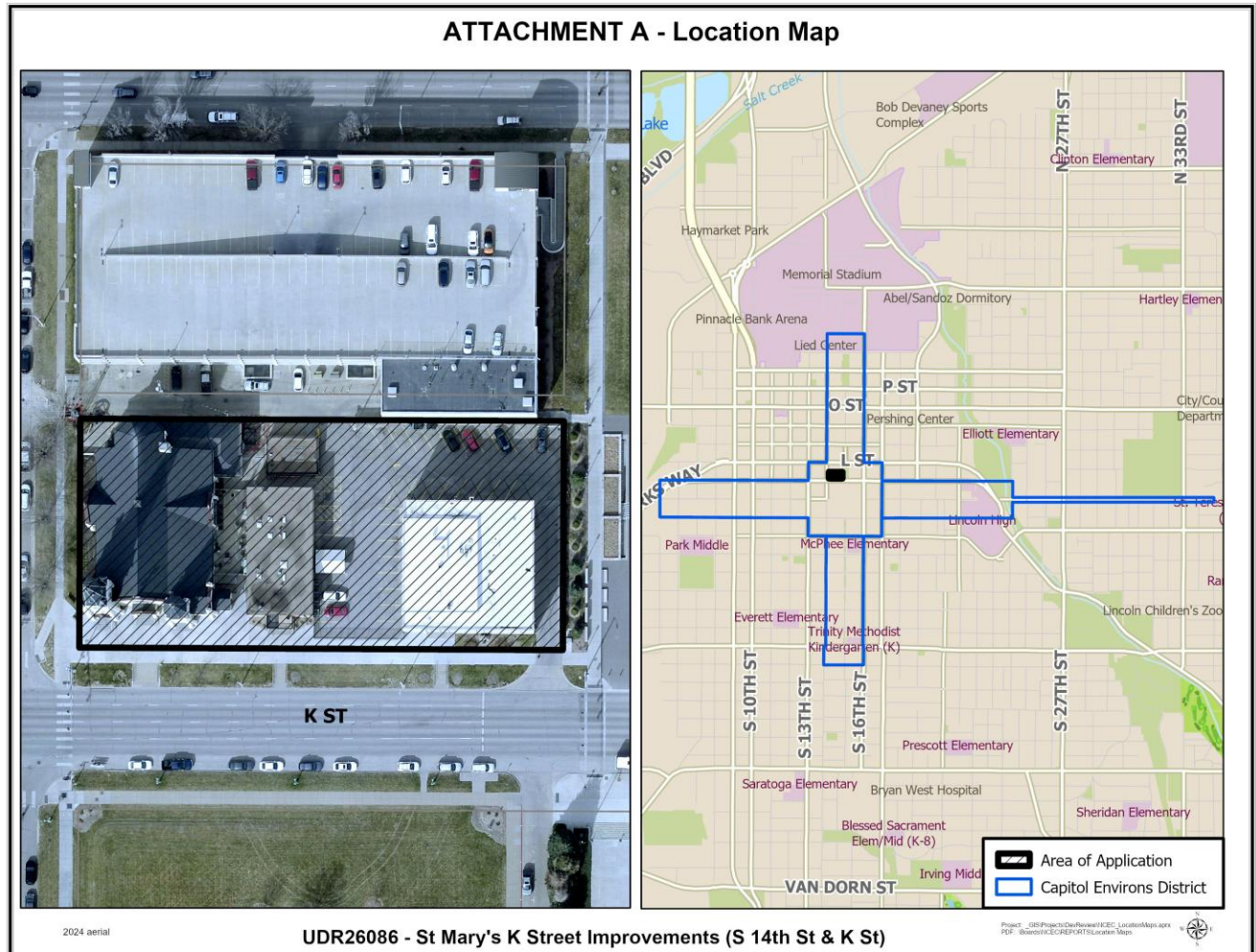
Recommendations/Action

Staff is excited to see the continued reinvestment in St. Mary's and looks forward to working with their leadership on potential intersection improvements in the future. Regarding the proposed Phase 1 improvements, staff believe they will complement the ongoing façade restoration on the K Street side and further beautify a block directly fronting the Capitol.

Recommended finding: The proposed Phase 1 improvements at 1400 K Street meet the intent of the relevant Capitol Environs Design Standards.

Recommended action: Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for site and streetscape improvements along K Street at 1400 K Street.

ATTACHMENT A – LOCATION MAP

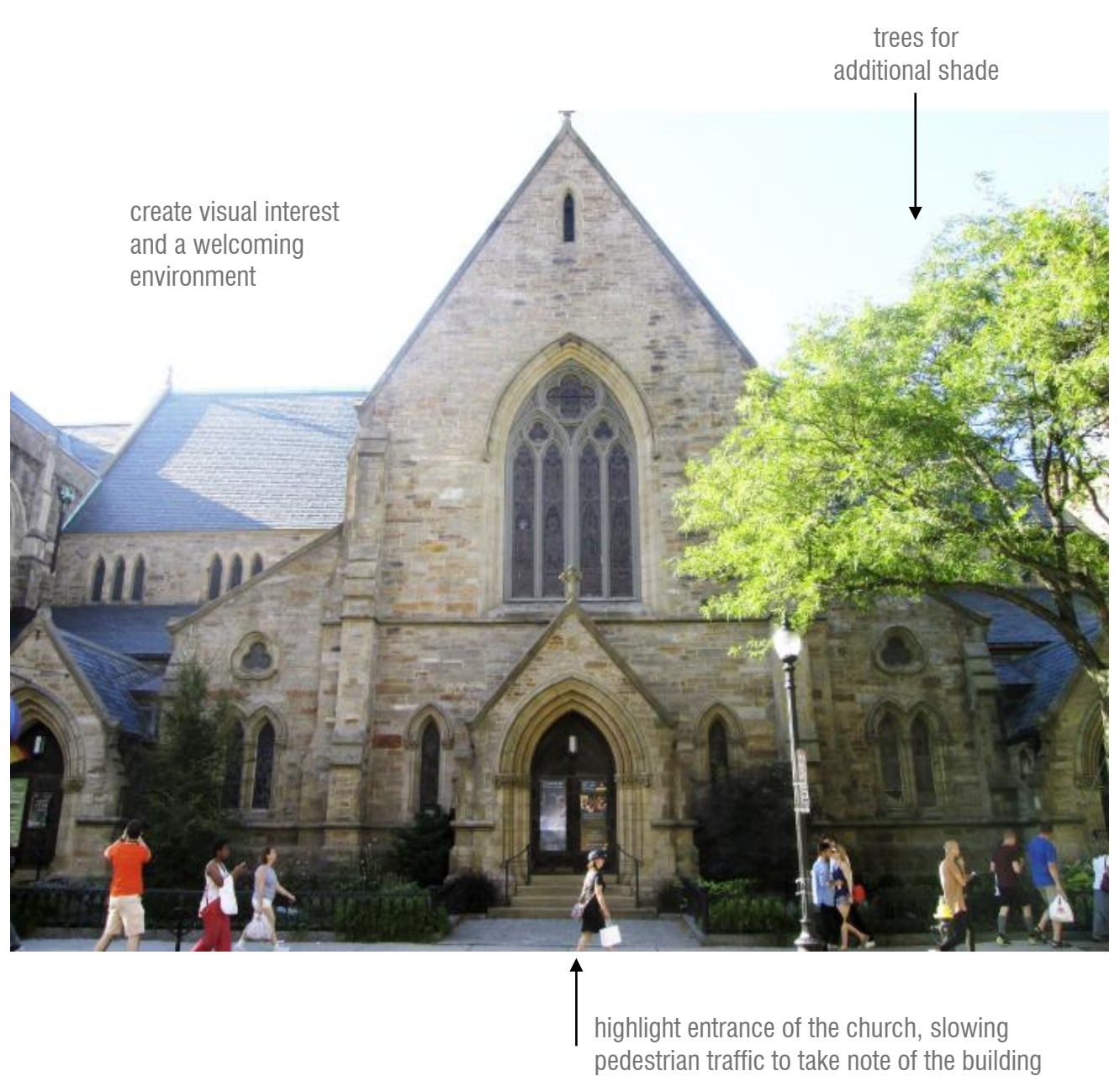
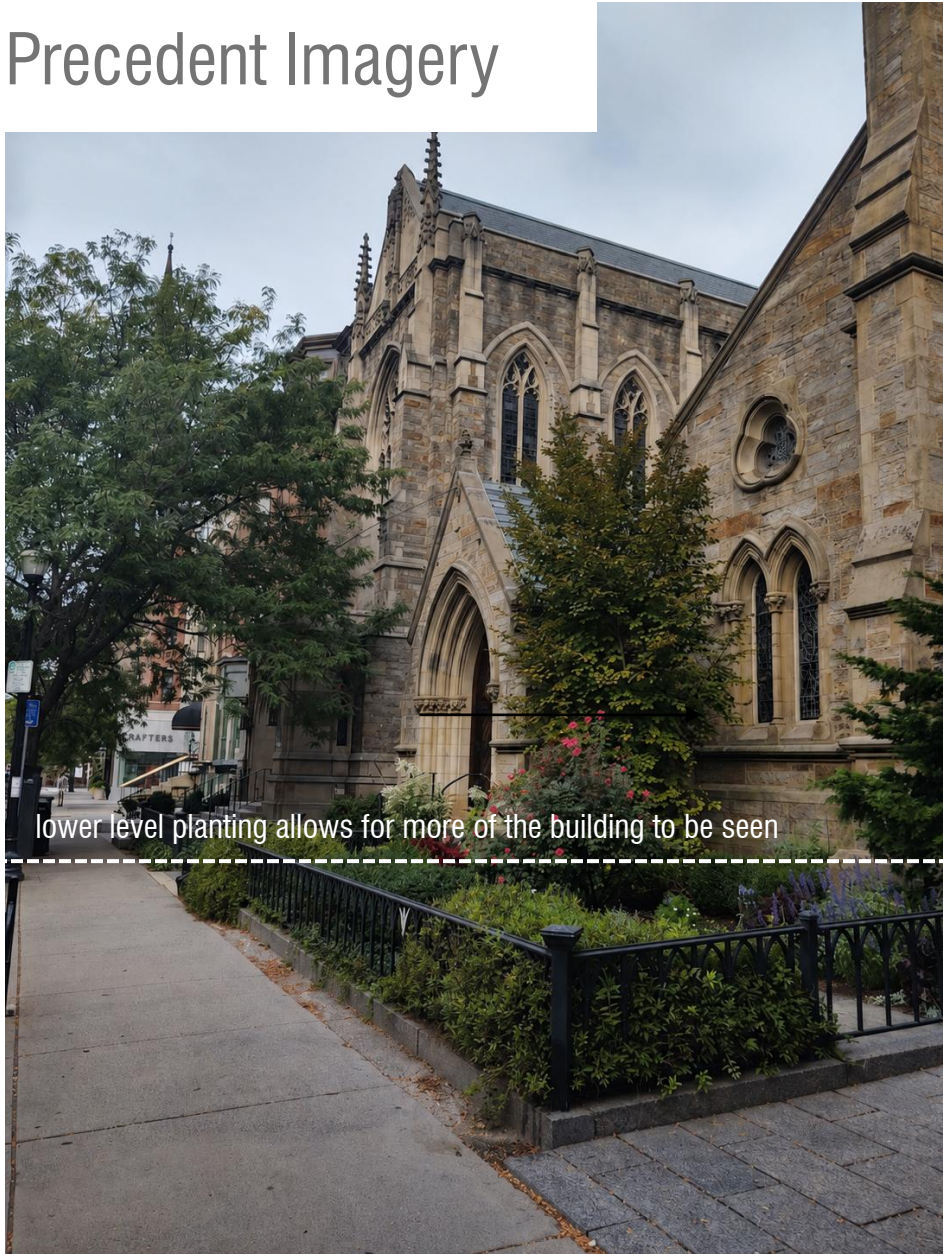


St. Mary's Catholic Church

Pedestrian Experience & Landscape Design

August 28, 2026

Precedent Imagery



Historical Images



Materiality + Details

to be complementary with restoration and improvements to the church building



existing church facade



concrete scoring

Materiality + Details

to be complementary with restoration and improvements to the church building



historic planter curb



existing west façade planter cap



chamfered planter edges

Plant Palette

- St Mary’s blue
- variation of greens
- multi-seasonal interest
- salt and heat tolerance

spring	winter berry holly blooms lilac muscari
summer	butterfly bush
fall	gro-low fragrant sumac
winter	winterberry holly red twig dogwood

ivory silk lilac tree



muscari



butterfly bush



lilac



red twig dogwood (summer / winter)



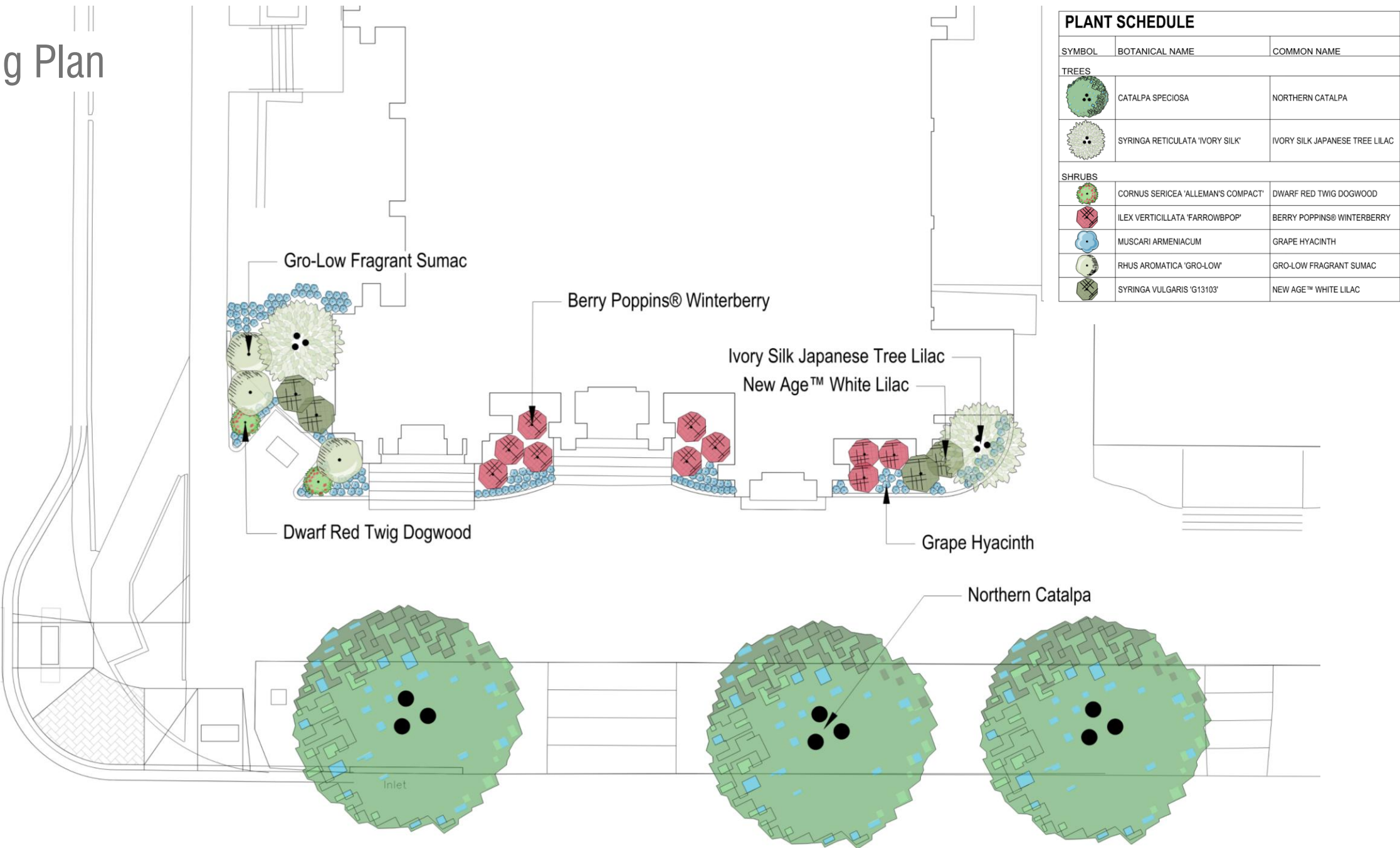
gro-low sumac (summer / fall)



winterberry (summer / winter)



Planting Plan



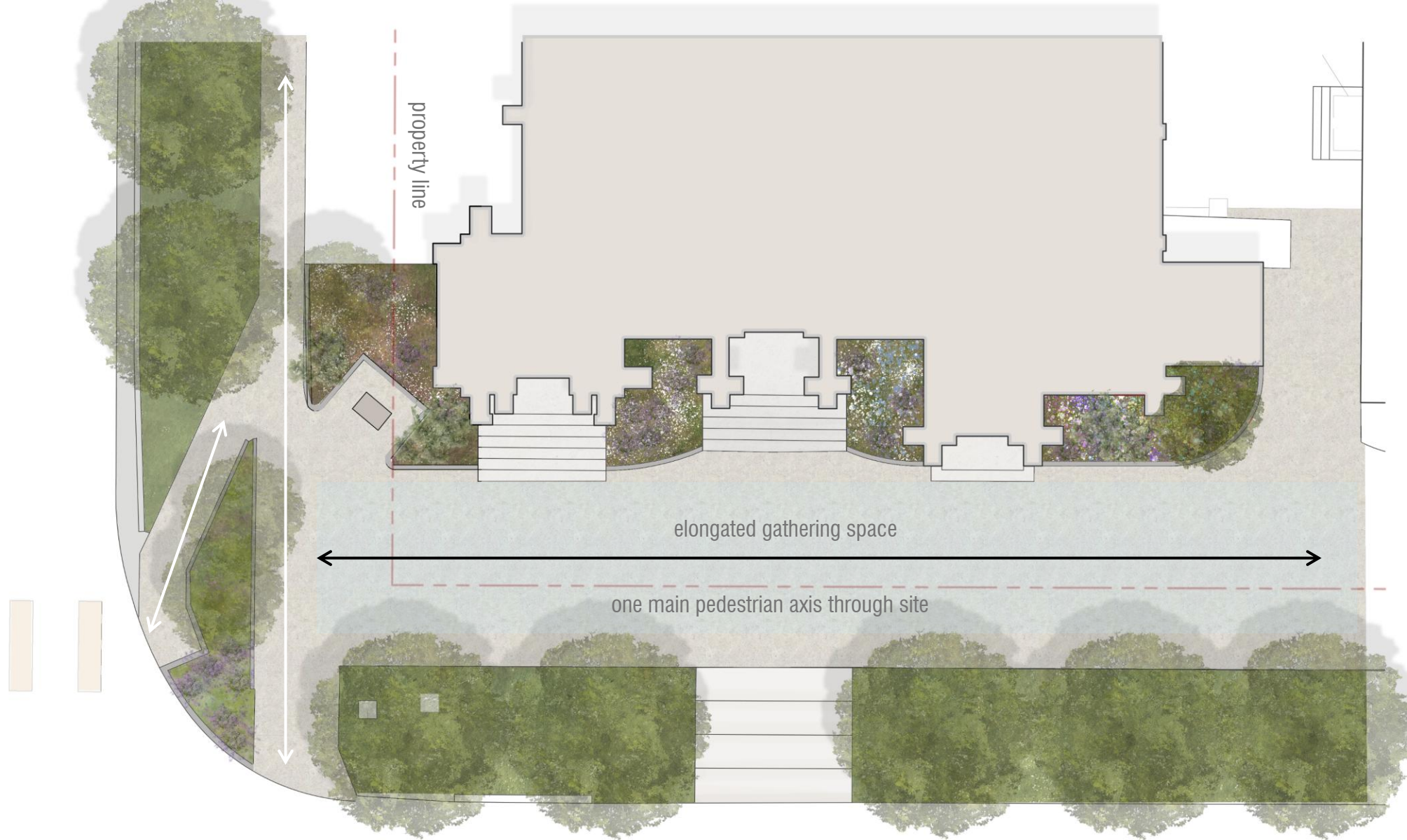
- Simple concrete scoring
- Chamfered planter curb
- Revised plant palette
- No benches proposed



Phase 1: Switchback



- Simple concrete scoring
- Chamfered planter curb
- Revised plant palette
- No benches proposed

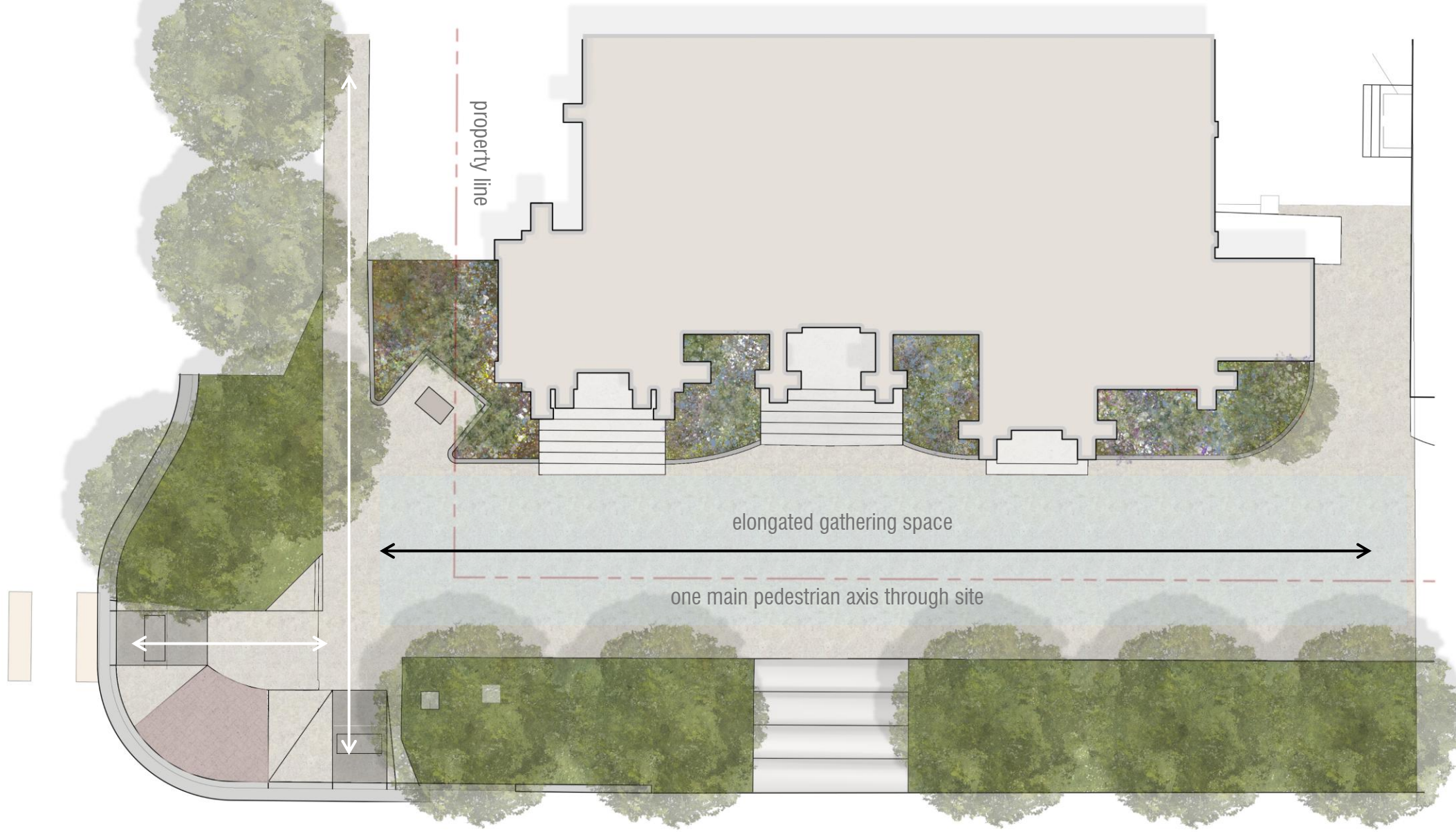


Phase 1: Switchback



Phase 2: Bump Out





Phase 2: Bump Out



Previous Plan

