



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee
Wednesday, July 29, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.
Conference Room A, City Hall*
1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH**

AGENDA

1. Review and Approval of 6/17/2026 Meeting Minutes
2. Project Status Update
3. Concept C Revisions – Summary of Changes
4. MEP Approach Update
5. Public Feedback Draft Process
 - a. Draft FAQs
 - b. Farmer's Market City Tent Dates 8/1, 8/29
 - c. Rendering/Concepts in City Hall Entrance
 - d. Public Input Poll – Simple questions, what do you like, what could be improved?
 - e. Connors Cottage Informational Session TBD
6. Next Steps and Meetings
7. Public comment

**A Zoom link is available for members of the public. Please register in advance of the meeting using the link below:*

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BpP0kPXVT1GSsg9hoWYu_A

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Conference Room A, City Hall

1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Councilor John Tabor (Co-Chair), Councilor Kate Cook (Co-Chair), Councilor Andrew Bagley, Deputy City Manager Carl Weber (seated for City Manager Karen Conard*), Police Commissioner Buzz Scherr, Police Chief Mark Newport, Planning Board Chair Rick Chellman, Peter Weeks, Susan Sterry, and John O'Leary

Committee Members Not Present: City Manager Karen Conard*, Cameron Horack, Renee Plummer

Members of the Public: Bob Corash

Staff Present: Department of Public Works Director Peter Rice, Facilities Manager Joe Almeida, Deputy Police Chief Michael Maloney, Executive Assistant Jackie Burnett (minute taker), Richard Martz (JSA), North Sturtevant (JSA), Sarah Hodge (JSA); joining via Zoom: Rodney McManus (ADG), and Mark Moeller (JSA)

Roll Call 3:02 PM

I. Review and Approval of 4/29/2026 Meeting Minutes

Peter Weeks moved to approve the minutes; seconded by John O'Leary. Motion passed (10-0-2). Of the 12 members, 10 voted in favor and 2 were absent).

II. Project Status Update

Deputy City Manager Carl Weber thanked the Committee for its participation and input throughout the planning process, noting that committee feedback helped refine the concepts presented, including improvements to public service access. Weber also reported that swing space options had been identified to help minimize operational disruptions and costs during construction. Preliminary cost estimates and phasing information were presented to provide a rough order of magnitude for evaluating project scope, tradeoffs, and implementation strategies.

Richard Martz of JSA reviewed the configuration and advantages of Concept C. He noted that elements of previous concepts A and C had been combined into the preferred approach and that Concept B, which included a second story above the proposed sally port, was no longer considered because it did not provide sufficient overall benefit to the City.

III. City Department Updates

- a. **School Department – Possible Relocation of School Department Administrative Office to Portsmouth High School in FY28**

IV. Concept Planning

Concept Refinement and Floor Plan Review

A primary project goal remains improving public access and customer service while addressing long-standing deficiencies within both City Hall and Police Department operations. The proposed layout emphasizes a centralized point-of-service model, placing high-traffic functions such as the City Clerk's Office adjacent to the main lobby to improve wayfinding and simplify interactions for residents.

Basement

The design team noted that basement construction provides significant value relative to above-grade construction costs and allows the City to capture needed storage and support space efficiently. No major changes were proposed for the basement level.

First Floor

The first floor includes the new secure Police Department sally port addition. The court-related functions have been relocated toward the front of the building as part of a partial build-out strategy.

Committee members discussed the impact of the sally port addition on parking. It was confirmed that the addition would eliminate four Police Department parking spaces but would not reduce public parking availability. Visitors to the Police Department would continue utilizing the primary public parking areas.

The project team reiterated that the sally port is a critical operational improvement that addresses longstanding Police Department needs for secure prisoner transport and processing.

Second Floor

The second floor contains the most significant proposed changes and generated substantial discussion.

The proposed School Department relocation would allow Human Resources to move upstairs to the fourth floor and would preserve the co-location of Health, Social Services, and Welfare functions. Assessing services would relocate to the second floor, where Human Resources is currently, making it closer to the main public service areas, improving customer convenience and efficiency.

The design team emphasized that Clerk and Tax functions account for approximately 75–80% of day-to-day public traffic, reinforcing the importance of locating these services near the primary entrance and lobby.

The Council Chambers renovation concept would create a flexible, multi-functional space capable of being subdivided into smaller meeting or training rooms when needed. Additional conference and training space would be provided above the court area, accommodating multi-day training programs and other departmental needs.

Councilor Cook asked how building entry elevation changes would be addressed. The design team explained that an entrance ramp is planned and that a snow-melt system is being considered to improve accessibility and winter safety.

Discussion also included:

- Possible modifications to Clerk/Registrar space to create staff-only work areas.
- Ongoing review of vault locations, break room placement, and other secure-space requirements.

Third Floor

Committee members noted the large number of conference rooms shown in the concept plan. The design team explained that departments on this floor routinely conduct private meetings requiring confidential meeting space. The relocation of Social Services functions to the second floor was also discussed as a means of improving operational efficiency and public accessibility.

Fourth Floor

The relocation of School Department functions would create opportunities to reorganize Finance, Legal, Human Resources functions on the upper floors. The design team stated that the overall floor plan is beginning to feel cohesive and that the departmental relationships are working well within the proposed layout.

General Discussion

Committee members expressed appreciation for the design team's responsiveness to previous feedback and the incorporation of committee recommendations into the revised plans.

Discussion included the project's accessibility strategy, including the placement of elevators and stairways near the main entrance to improve visitor access to upper floors and reduce travel distances within the building. The existing Seybolt elevator may ultimately become a staff-only elevator.

Police Chief Newport stated that the proposed plan generally meets the operational needs of the Police Department but noted that accommodations for the Animal Control Officer has not yet been incorporated into the design. He also explained that the preliminary

office layout may be adjusted as planning progresses to better balance access to natural light for occupied workspaces while locating storage and other support functions in areas that do not require window access.

Additional discussion focused on:

- Potential reconfiguration of basement fitness and support spaces.
- New storage opportunities created by the sally port addition.
- Potential relocation and enhancement of locker room facilities.
- Overall confirmation from the design team that sufficient space exists to accommodate all required functions.

Committee members commented favorably on the progress made to date. Several members stated that the revised concept represented a significant improvement over earlier iterations and remained consistent with the project's budget objectives.

V. Phasing and Rough Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate

Cost Overview

The design team presented an updated phasing plan and rough order of magnitude cost estimate. It was emphasized that current figures remain conceptual and will become more refined as the project advances toward construction documents and bidding. The primary objectives remain:

- Addressing Police Department operational deficiencies.
- Improving public service delivery.
- Following a "move once" philosophy that minimizes departmental disruption during construction.

The committee discussed the importance of leveraging major building system upgrades—including HVAC, mechanical, and infrastructure improvements—while construction is underway. Members noted that the current concept appears capable of addressing Police Department needs, City Hall needs, and deferred building maintenance within a budget framework similar to previous estimates for police and mechanical improvements alone.

Project Timeline and Escalation

Committee members reviewed the proposed bid-year schedule and escalation assumptions. The design team clarified that the dates shown represent anticipated construction start years and are intended for planning purposes only. Initial phases are currently projected for approximately the 2028–2029 timeframe, though members stressed that these dates remain subject to change based on design development, procurement methods, construction manager input, and City Council approval.

Discussion included:

- Annual escalation assumptions.
- Soft cost projections.
- Alignment of project timelines with the City's fiscal year structure.
- Procurement methods, including the potential use of a construction manager approach.
- The possibility of utilizing different contractors for different phases.

Committee members requested future schedules include estimated construction durations for each phase.

Bonding and Financial Considerations

Members discussed the importance of evaluating the project within the context of the City's bonding capacity and long-term financial planning. Committee members expressed support for understanding how the phased project would align with existing debt obligations and bonding limits. Several members noted that the phased approach provides flexibility by allowing future phases to be delayed if necessary while still achieving critical operational improvements. The committee emphasized the importance of avoiding future funding surprises and ensuring City Council remains informed throughout the process.

Phasing Strategy

The overall phasing strategy is guided by three priorities:

1. Address Police Department needs first.
2. Improve public point-of-service functions second.
3. Move departments only once whenever possible to minimize disruption.

Because the building will remain occupied during construction, the committee acknowledged that phasing will require significant coordination and will present challenges for both staff and the public.

Phase 1

- Relocate Building and Planning functions to DPW facility to create temporary office and flex space.
- Renovate the detective area.
- Relocate School Department to Portsmouth High School.
- Begin site work activities.

The project team noted that parking and temporary accommodations at DPW will pose a challenge.

Phase 2

- Renovate Police Department operational spaces after detectives relocate into temporary accommodations/third floor wing.
- Begin renovation of portions of the first floor.

Phase 3

- Construct the sally port addition.
- Renovate the Police Department lobby while maintaining public access (two-part project).

Phase 4

- Renovate evidence processing, booking, intake, and basement locker room areas.

Phase 5

- Renovate second-floor point of service areas.
- Complete remaining Police Department court-related functions.
- A-D Strategy: Address point of service addition, vault, accessibility, and circulation improvements.

The design team indicated that this phase will likely be the most complex and time-consuming because it includes major additions and regulatory review requirements, including State Fire Marshal involvement.

Construction impacts during this phase are expected to be significant both inside and outside the building (parking, Farmer's Market, etc.). Temporary meeting locations and alternative public accommodations may be required.

Phase 6

- Renovate Council Chambers to create multi-purpose training and meeting spaces.
- Complete most remaining public-facing improvements.

Phases 7–9

- Complete remaining second floor renovations.
- Renovate fourth floor and fifth floor spaces.
- Complete third floor renovations.

Committee Discussion

Committee members highlighted several project benefits, including:

- Secure two-stall sallyport for safe prisoner processing.
- Improved evidence storage and custody functions.
- Enhanced patrol and detective workspaces.
- Improved recruitment and retention opportunities for the Police Department.
- A centralized and more accessible point-of-service model for residents.

Members also discussed overall project affordability and noted that, when viewed over the life of a long-term bond, the projected investment appears manageable within the City's broader financial picture. However, members emphasized that the community will ultimately determine whether the project merits the expenditure.

Public Engagement

Committee members requested that the Police Commission review the updated plans and provide feedback regarding their support.

The committee also discussed the importance of engaging the City Council before advancing too far into future design phases. Staff indicated a willingness to provide a Council work session to review project status, costs, and potential public engagement strategies.

The committee agreed that broader public engagement should become a larger focus of upcoming meetings, with additional discussion anticipated in July.

A verbal update to the City Council is expected to focus on project scope, costs, and overall feasibility.

Conceptual Building Appearance

The design team presented conceptual images to illustrate the project's architectural direction. The proposed additions are intentionally understated and designed to complement the existing building. Design goals include:

- Maintaining important view corridors.
- Drawing inspiration from mid-century architectural character.

- Incorporating references to historic local buildings.
- Utilizing a muted color palette and limestone-colored trim.
- Softening the appearance of the sally port and other additions.

Committee members discussed lessons learned from the previous project proposal, noting that building massing and public perception will remain important considerations as public outreach advances. The design team emphasized that specific exterior materials have not yet been selected but stated that future design development will focus on creating an attractive civic building that avoids an institutional or bunker-like appearance.

VI. Review of Prior Questions

No prior questions were reviewed.

VII. Next Steps and Meetings

The committee confirmed its next meeting for **July 29, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.** in Conference Room A at City Hall. Councilor Cook indicated she will participate remotely by telephone. The committee discussed scheduling a City Council work session to review the project concept plans and cost estimates. Tentative dates include July 13 and August 3, 2026.

Consultants and City staff will lead the presentation, with committee members attending in support. Councilor Cook will coordinate scheduling with the City Council. Work sessions are typically held from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

John O’Leary noted that he may participate remotely in the September 9, 2026, committee meeting.

VIII. Public Comment

No public comments were offered.

IX. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by John O’Leary; seconded by Planning Board Chair Rick Chellman. Motion passed (10-0-2).

Meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.



Portsmouth Municipal Building Improvements Project Blue Ribbon Committee Memo for 7/29/2026 Meeting

Date: 7/24/2026

Dear Committee Members,

Please use this memo as a guide to the primary points for our forthcoming conversation on 7/29. Additional supporting information is included on the following pages and is referenced with the appropriate page numbers in the table of contents and sections below.

Table of Contents

Content	Pages
Guiding Memo	1-3
Conceptual Space Planning – Concept C Floor Plans	4-8
Existing Facility Floor Plans	9-13
Frequently Asked Questions Draft	14-20
Blue Ribbon Committee Questions and Answers	21-23

Summary of JSA/City Staff Work Since Last Meeting

Since our last meeting the teams first effort was the preparation and report to the City Council during the 7/13 work session.

Secondly, the team is working towards an updated package of information to provide our estimating team at the end of July. This includes updated conceptual plans, which we will review today, as well as supporting information on sitework, utilities, engineering systems, architectures, and other items. Estimating will occur in August and will be reviewed with the committee during our September 9th meeting.

Conceptual Space Planning

Since our last meeting we have made a series of updates to the space planning concepts.

Sallyport and PD Main Entrance

- The latest plans reflect shifting the Sallyport an additional 8' further from the parking lot and drive aisle (from 6' off the existing building to 14'). This adjustment relieves pressure on the exit drive aisle from the main parking lot, which otherwise would likely need to be reworked.
- The Basement level of the Sallyport has been reduced slightly to simplify constructability. The adjustment ensures there is no basement space beneath outdoor paving. While the later is possible, this simplifies construction and waterproofing.
- The plan shows removing and rebuilding the very front portion of the PD lobby. This existing condition is a 1 story slab on grade. Building the new basement beneath it is not viable, while having the new basement follow around the existing footings would affect the layout and require complex foundation work to extend existing footings. The most viable option is to rework that area.

Seybolt Stair

- At the end of the Seybolt wing is an existing fire escape that will need to be demolished and a code compliant stair built in it's place. This has been noted on past plans reviewed.
- Constructing a new, compliant stair in this location will be substantially difficult due to the proximity to the property line and the existing retaining wall there that accommodates 6'-10' of grade change between the existing fire escape and abutting property.
- By locating the stair around the corner we can avoid the construability issues, scope required to likely rebuild the retaining, and still accommodate the program internally.

Tax, Clerk, and Assessing

- Since the last meeting we have met with the City Clerk, Registrars, Tax, and Assessing. From those meetings we have made smaller room adjustments to better accommodate staff workflows.
- These includes co-locating the Clerks office with staff in lieu of the Vault, a small meeting space for the registrars, and a wellness room adjacent to the point-of-service.

The square footages for Main floor Addition and Basement/Extra Floor have been updated to reflect the adjustments to the Sallyport and a relocated Seybolt Stair (724 sf at 4 floors). Please note that the cost to rebuild the Seybolt is already within the estimate, but we are now reflecting it as an addition given the revised location.

Please refer to pages 4-8 for Concept C Floor Plans and pages 9-13 for existing facility plans as a reference.

Update on Engineering

The engineering team has been evaluating different approaches to building infrastructure, with a particular focus on Heating, Cooling, and Ventilation strategies. We will speak to high-level points on the recommended strategy for the project.

Frequently Asked Questions Draft

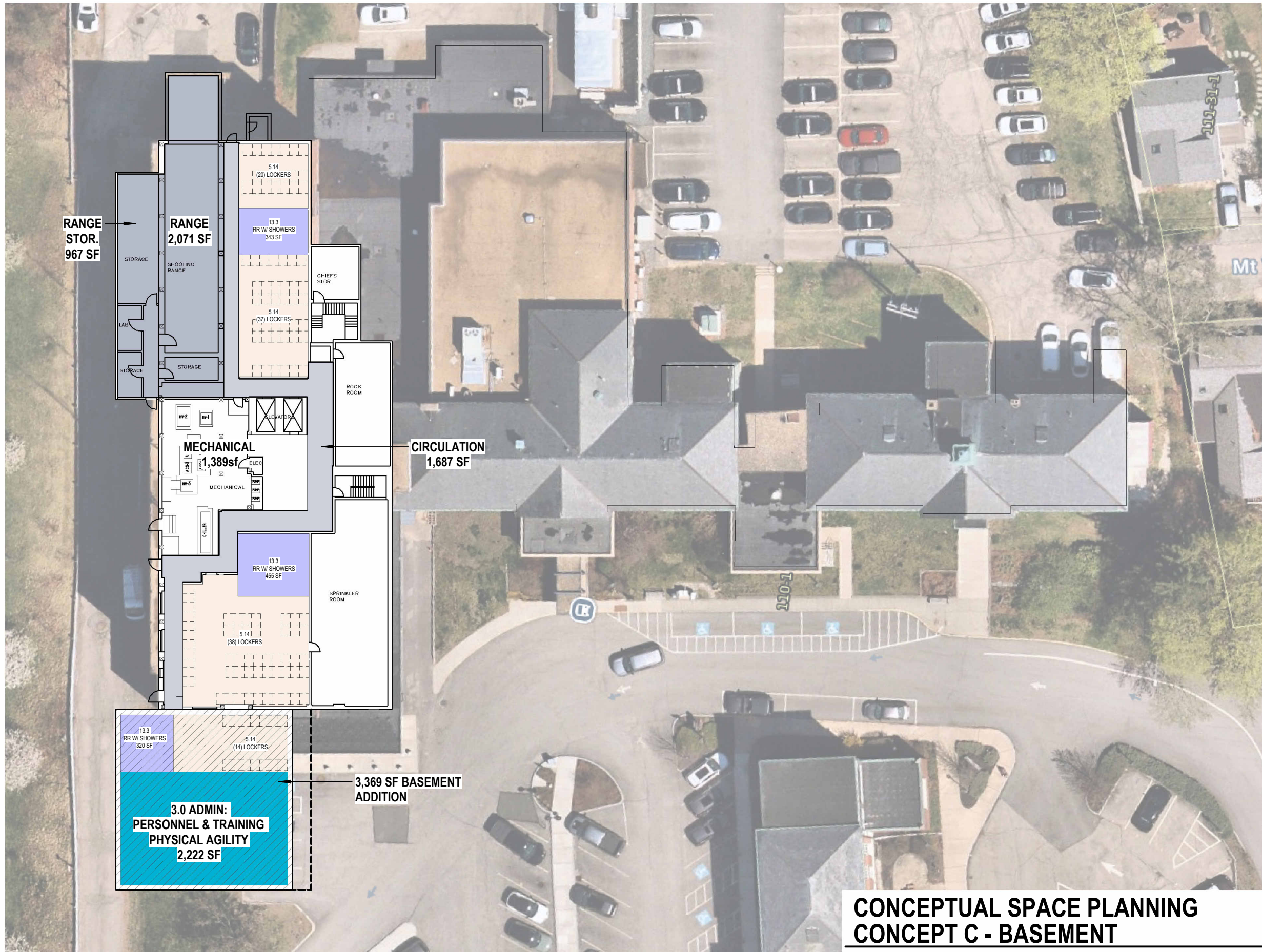
Please refer to pages 14-20 for a draft of the “Municipal Building Improvements Project - Frequently Asked Questions”.

Review of Prior Questions

Please refer to pages 21-23 for the Blue Ribbon Committee Questions and Answers sheet for a discussion.

Next Steps

- August
 - Refined Cost Estimating with phases
 - Booth at the Farmers Market on August 1st and 29th
 - Proposed Blue Ribbon Meeting Date: September 9
- Additional meetings past 9/9/2026 to be determined



DEPARTMENT LEGEND

PATROL

ADMIN: TRAINING

FACILITY SUPPORT

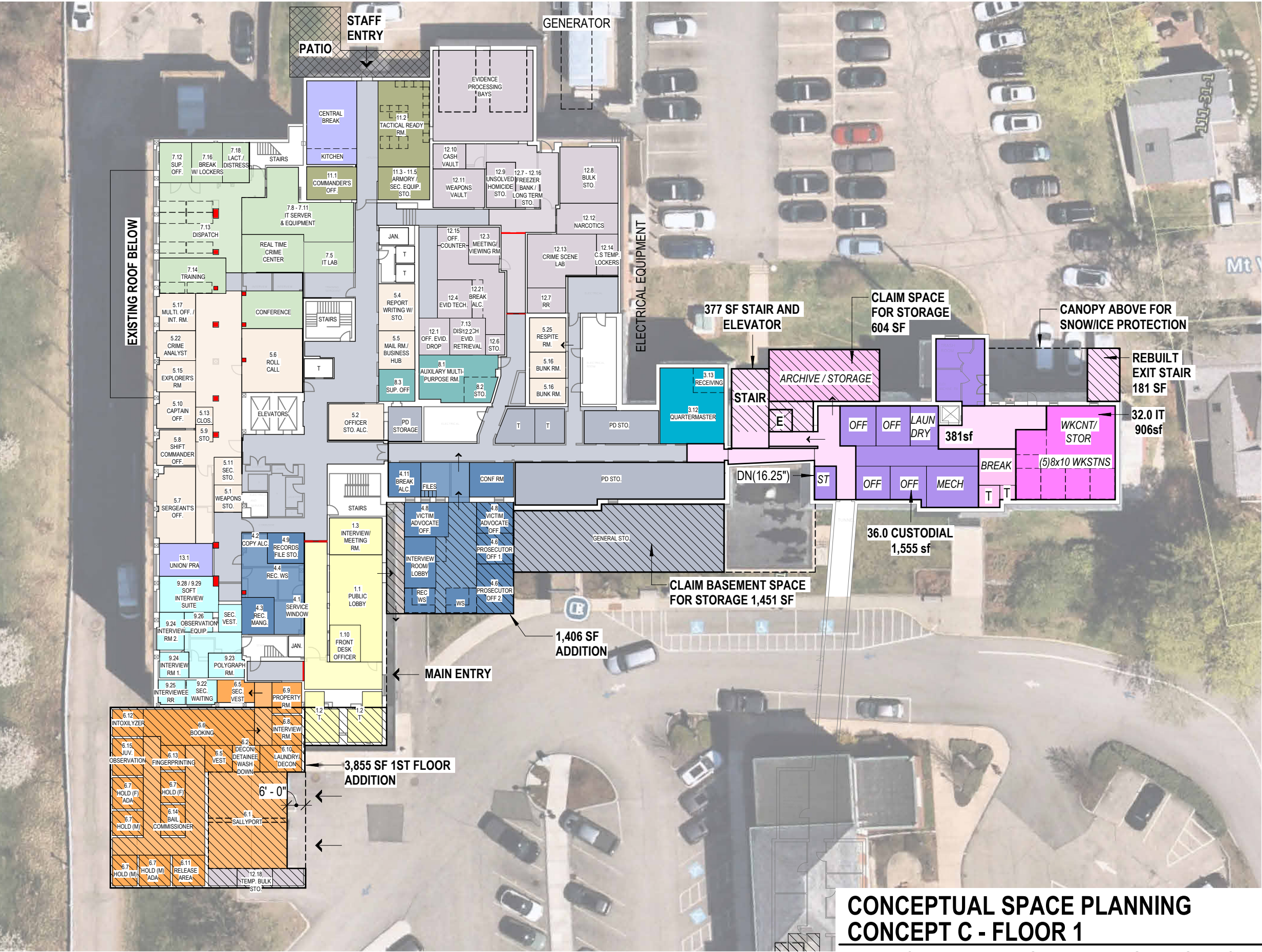
PD

T = TOILET
O or OFF. = OFFICE
CONF = CONFERENCE ROOM
A = ALCOVE
BR RM = BREAK ROOM
REC = RECEPTION

CONCEPT C KEY POINTS

- Addition totals:
 - 1. Main floor = **9,410 SF**
 - 2. Basement/Extra floor = **6,830 SF**
- All departments remain in the facility, except Water/Sewer Billing and a portion of the school department have been moved off campus.
- PD and Municipal lobbies seperated
- Level of renovation is dependent on final design.

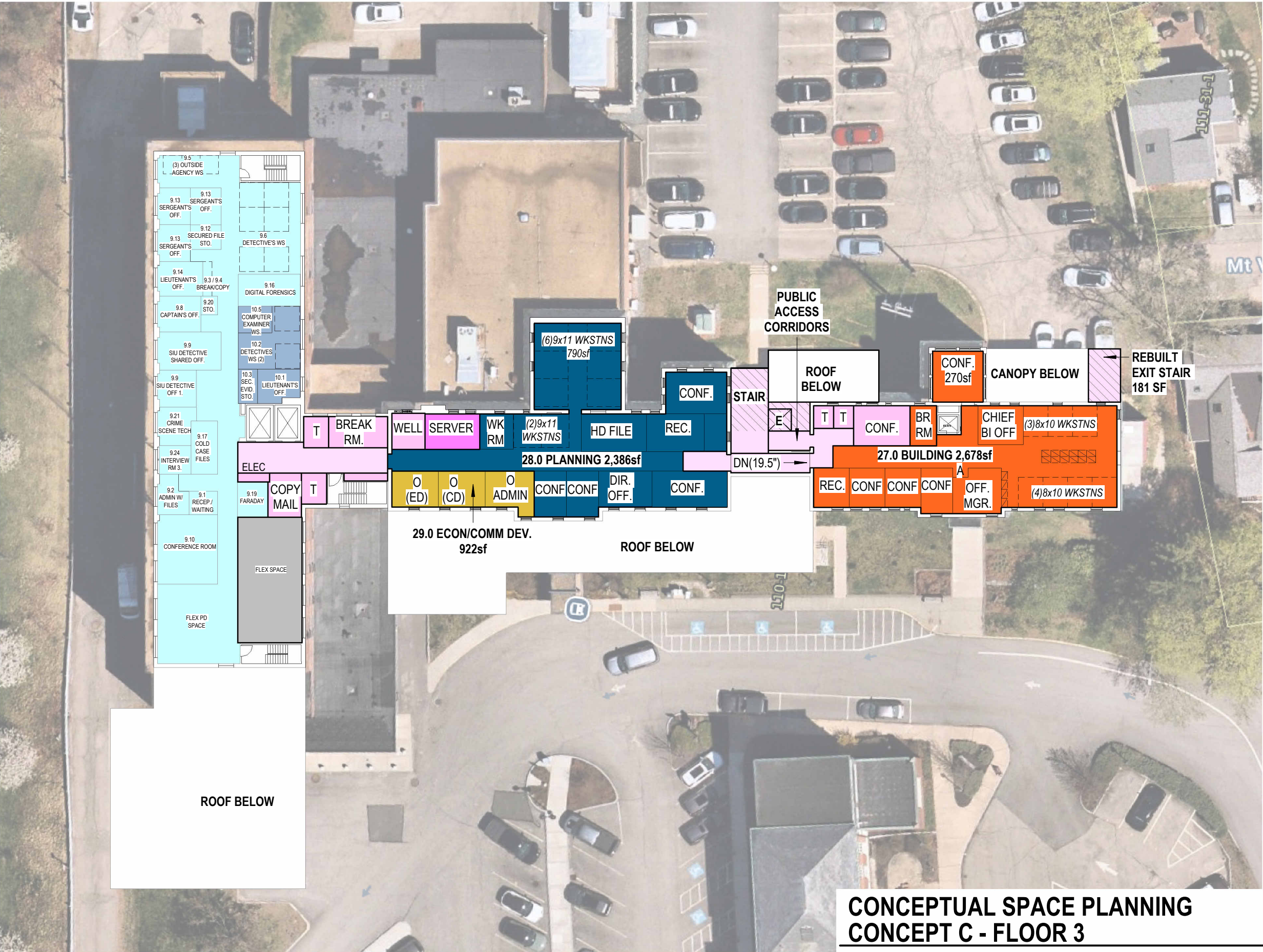
Note: #'s at beginning of department names correlate to previously provided SNA



DEPARTMENT LEGEND			
	PUBLIC ACCESS		IT
	PATROL		CUSTODIAL
	COMMS. & IT		SERT
	DETECTIVES DIVISION		FACILITY SUPPORT
	PROPERTY & EVIDENCE		AUXILIARY
	RECORDS & COURTS		ADDITIONS
	BOOKING & INTAKE		COMMON CIRCULATION
	COMMON AREAS		

T = TOILET
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DEPARTMENT LEGEND

DETECTIVES
DIVISION

COMMON
AREAS

BUILDING

PLANNING

COMMON CIRCULATION

ECON/COMM DEV

INTERNET CRIMES

IT

FLEX SPACE

T = TOILET
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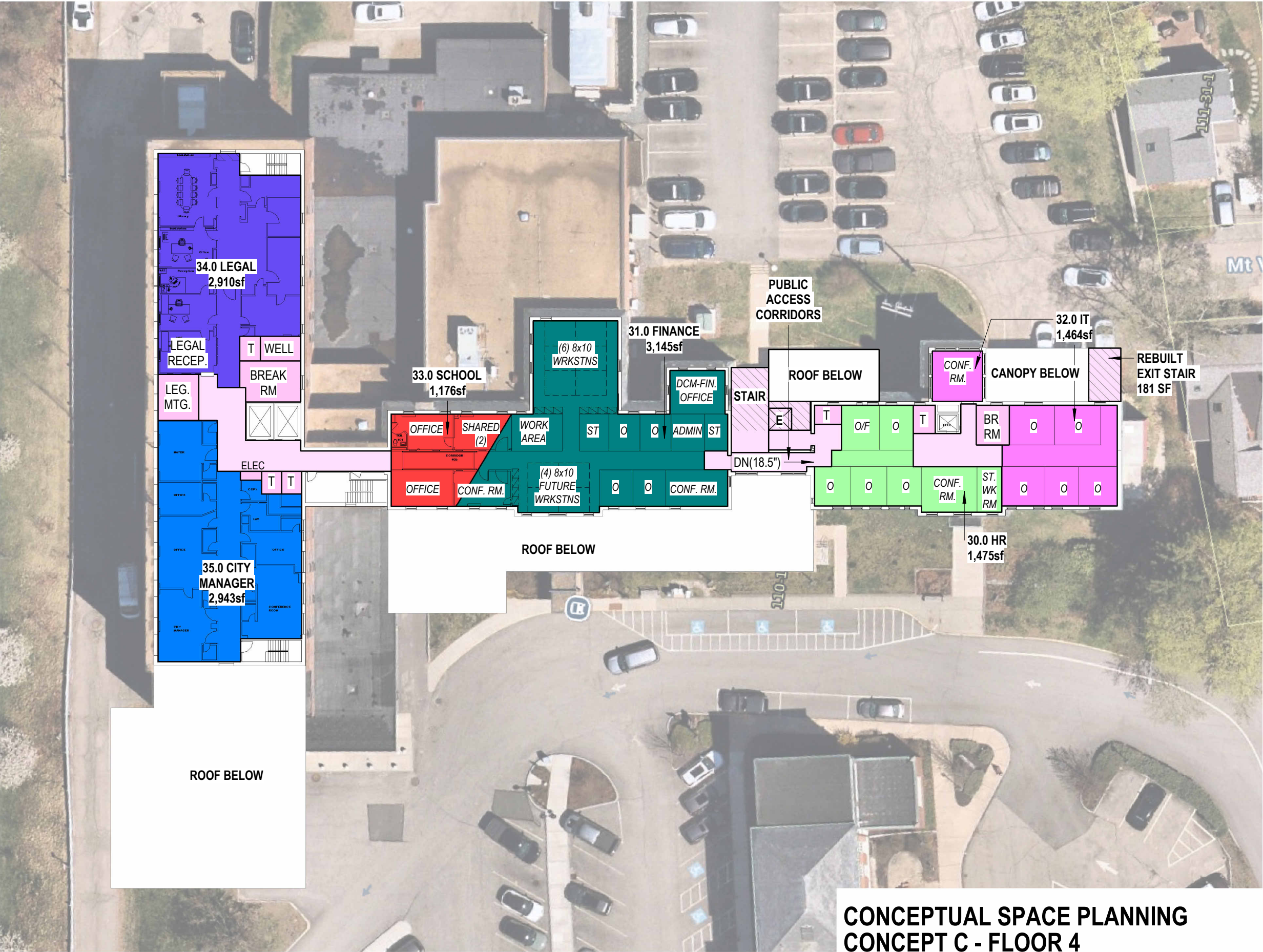
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Note: #'s at beginning of department names correlate to previously provided SNA



DEPARTMENT LEGEND

- LEGAL
- COMMON AREAS
- CITY CLERK
- SCHOOL
- CITY MGR
- FINANCE
- HR

T = TOILET
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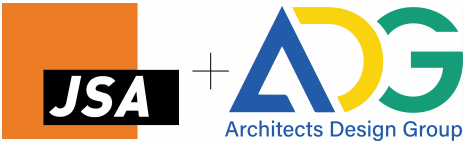
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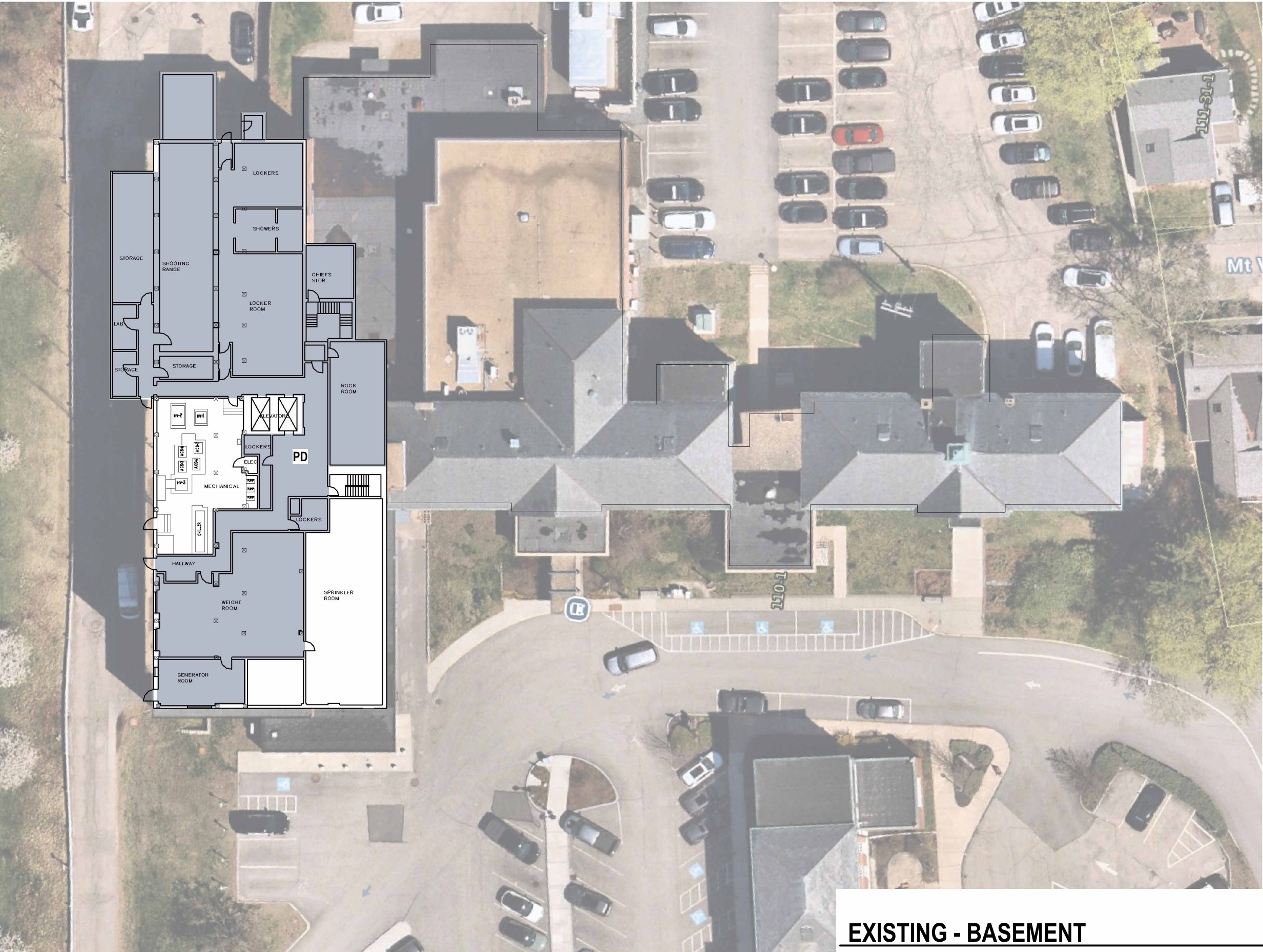
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CONCEPTUAL SPACE PLANNING
CONCEPT C - FLOOR 4
MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCALE: As indicated
7/23/2026





DEPARTMENT LEGEND

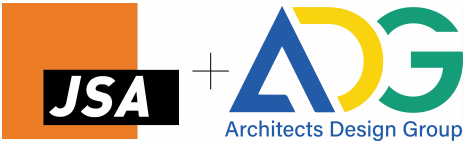
TAX	HR
ASSESSOR	FINANCE
CITY CLERK	IT
WELFARE	SCHOOL
HEALTH	LEGAL
BUILDING	CITY MGR
PLANNING	CUSTODIAL
ECON/COMM DEV	PD
COMMON AREAS	ADDITIONS

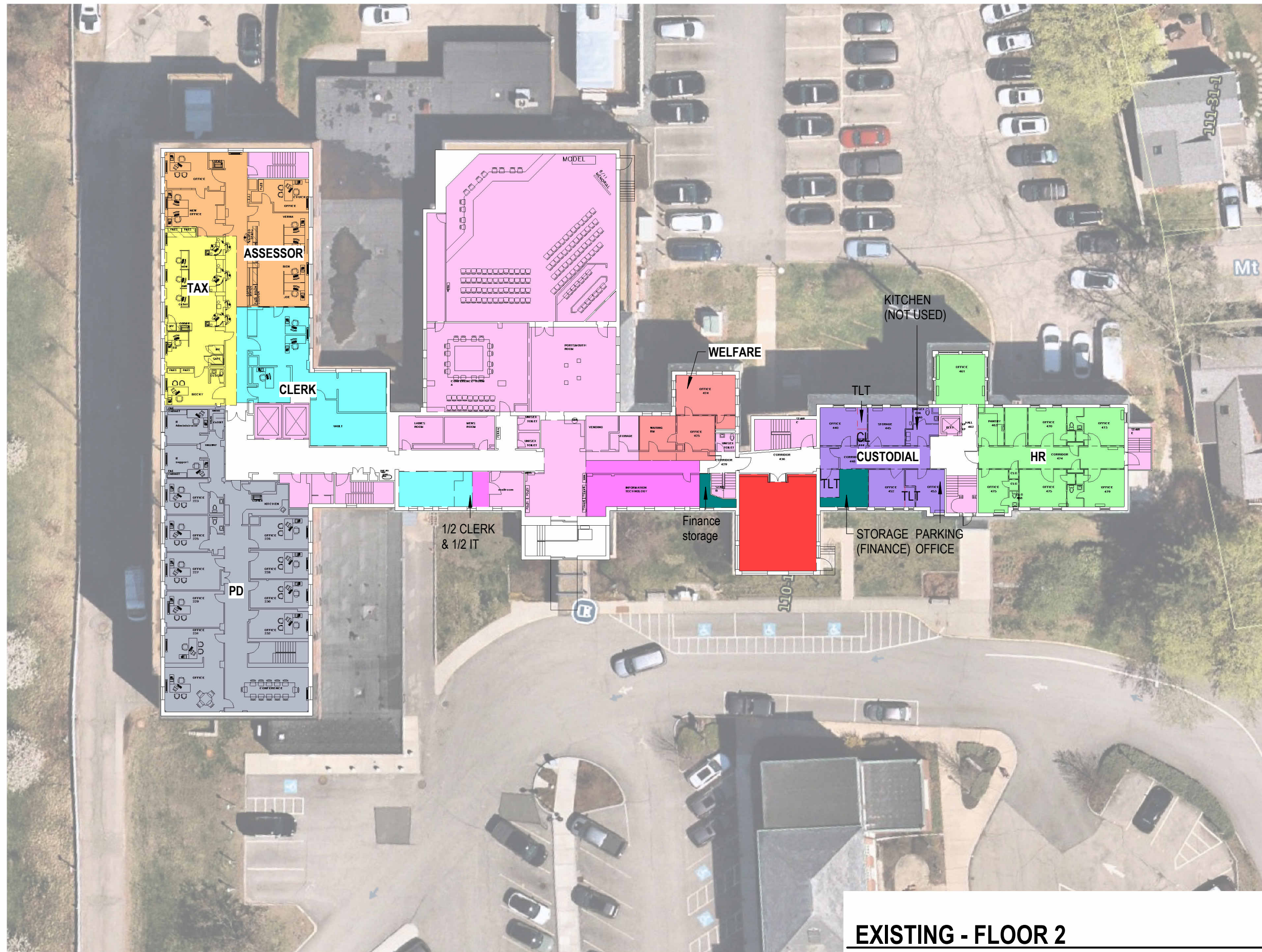
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EXISTING - BASEMENT

MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCALE: As indicated
7/23/2026



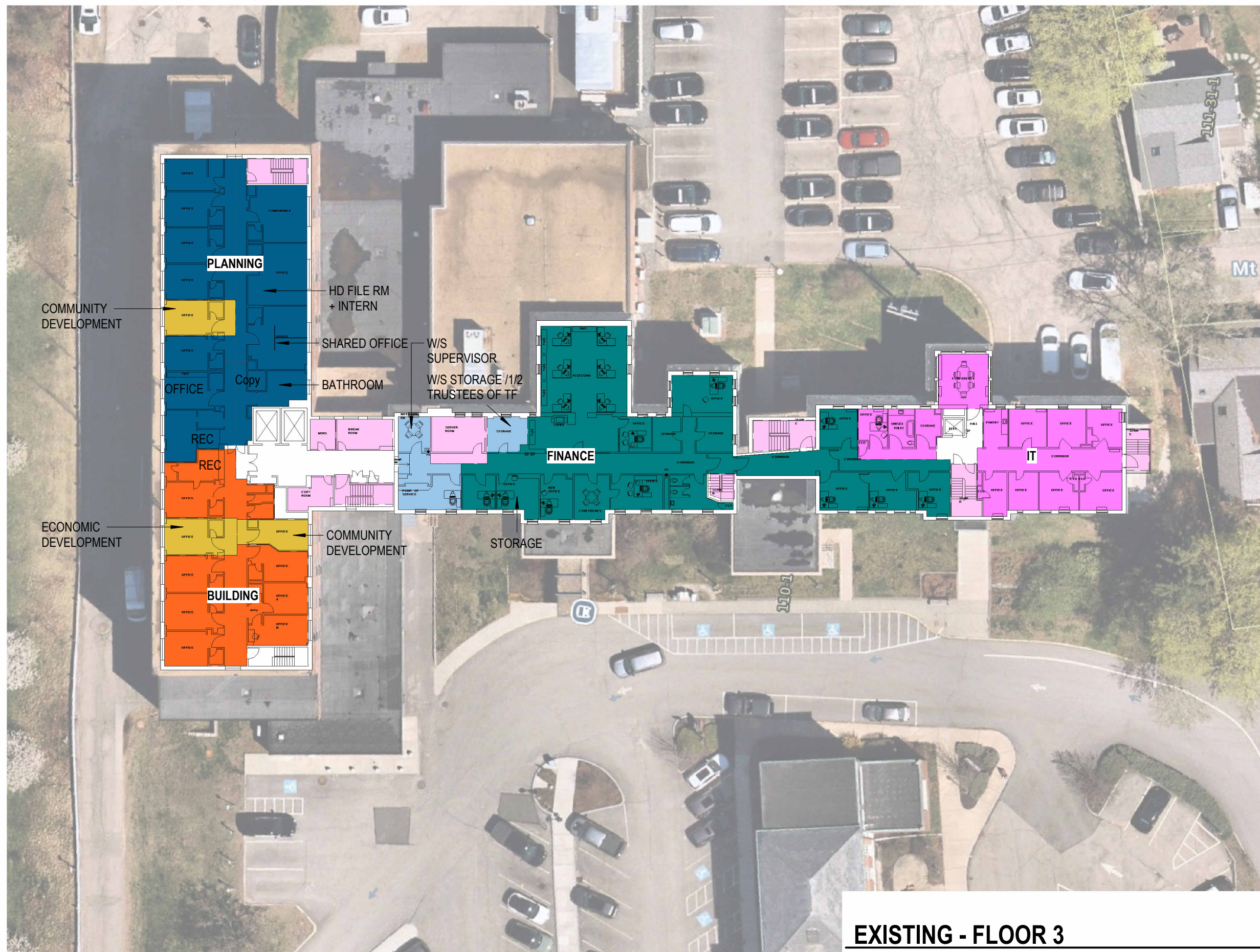


DEPARTMENT LEGEND			
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	HEALTH		LEGAL
	BUILDING		CITY MGR
	PLANNING		CUSTODIAL
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	COMMON AREAS		ADDITIONS
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EXISTING - FLOOR 2

MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCALE: As indicated
7/23/2026

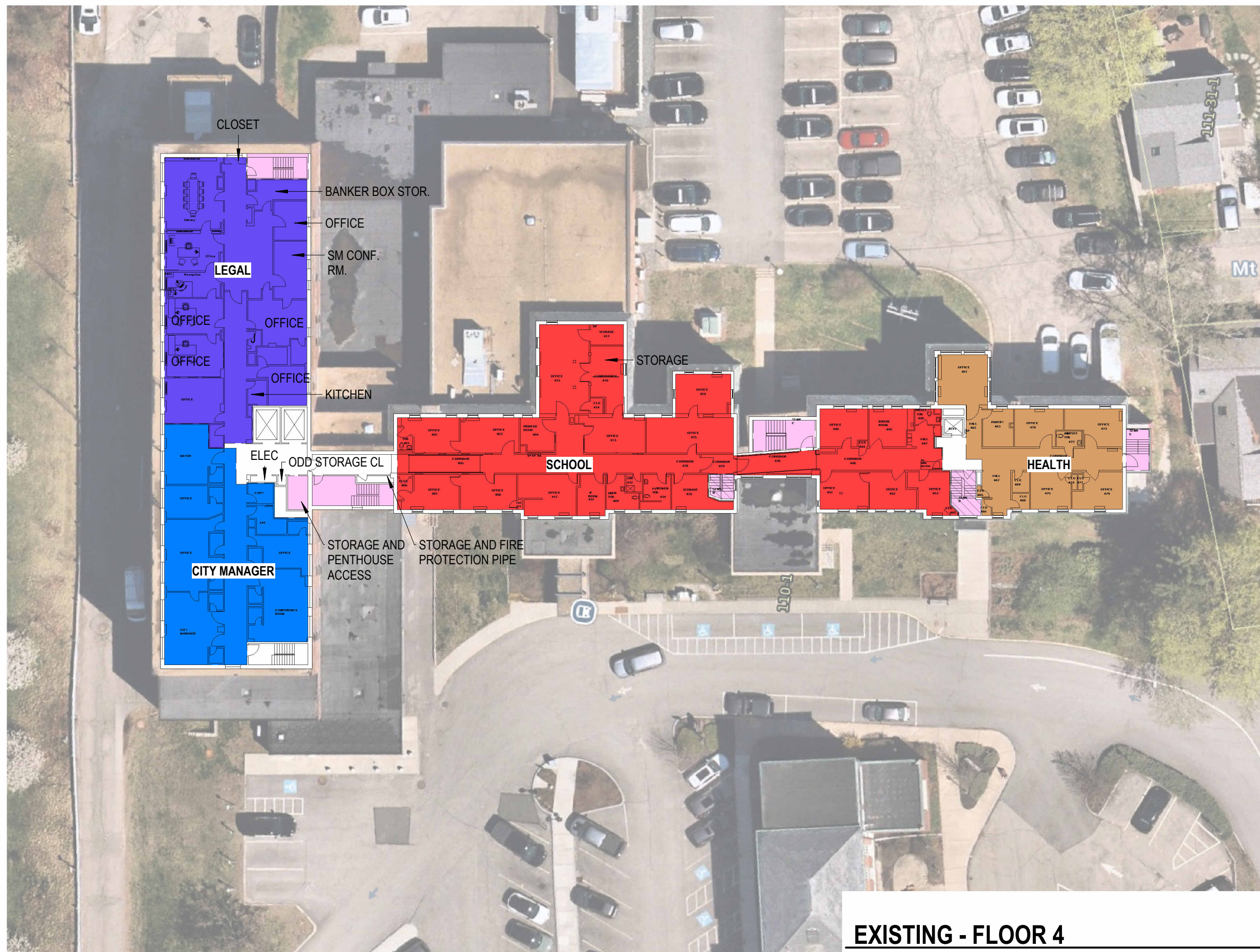


DEPARTMENT LEGEND			
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	CITY CLERK		IT
	WELFARE		SCHOOL
	HEALTH		LEGAL
	BUILDING		CITY MGR
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EXISTING - FLOOR 3

MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCALE: As indicated
7/23/2026



DEPARTMENT LEGEND			
	TAX		HR
	ASSESSOR		FINANCE
	CITY CLERK		IT
	WELFARE		SCHOOL
	HEALTH		LEGAL
	BUILDING		CITY MGR
	PLANNING		CUSTODIAL
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EXISTING - FLOOR 4

MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

SCALE: As indicated
7/23/2026



Municipal Building Improvements Project

Frequently Asked Questions – Draft for Review

*Prepared for the Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee. This is a working draft to answer common questions from the Committee, the City Council and the public. Cost and square-footage figures are preliminary and rough order-of-magnitude; they are intended to convey scale and tradeoffs, not final scope or commitments. **Last updated: July 24, 2026.***

About the project

What is the Municipal Building Improvements Project?

It is a plan to improve the City's municipal campus on Junkins Avenue, the buildings that house City Hall operations and the Police Department. The goal is to solve the Police Department's operational needs while also making City Hall more accessible and efficient for residents, within an acceptable funding level.

Where can I learn more about this project?

The Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee's resources are on the City's website at the link below:

[Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee Resources | City of Portsmouth](#)

Didn't this start as a Police Department project? Why is it now bigger?

Yes. The work began as a plan for a standalone Police Department facility. As the design team studied the campus, it became clear that for roughly the same investment the City could address both the Police Department's needs and long-overdue improvements to City Hall, turning a single-purpose project into a more complete municipal solution.

Where is the project located?

On the existing municipal campus at Junkins Avenue, utilizing the current City Hall and Police Department buildings rather than building somewhere new.

Who is working on it?

The project is guided by the Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee, working with City staff and the City's design team (architects JSA, with police-facility consultant ADG and input from an earlier, separate Police Department staffing analysis). The committee reports to the City Council.

The concepts

What are Concepts A, B, and C?

The Concepts are three design approaches the team developed and tested against the City's identified space needs and how departments relate to one another. Each takes a different approach to where additions go and how existing space is reused.

Have you chosen a final design?

No. The field has narrowed from three concepts to two: **Concept A and a refined Concept C**. Concept A remains a viable alternative although the **most recent Concept C is the most fully developed and, at this stage, the preferred alternative**.

Why was Concept B set aside?

Concept B proposed a second story built over the police sally port that impacted the viewscape and created a less-than-ideal use of space for victim/witness access and the Prosecution office. Upon further study, Concept B was determined to no longer be the right fit functionally or structurally and was set aside.

Why does Concept C look like the best option?

Two main reasons: **it has the smallest addition of the three Concepts, and it has the strongest adjacencies**. Concept C has related departments and public services located next to one another, in the way people actually use them. Its new additions total about 9,410 square feet (compared with roughly 10,334 for Concept A and 9,585 for Concept B), and it also captures usable lower-level space beneath the additions.

Do these Concepts impact the view from City Hall?

Concept A and Concept C have a one-story sally port addition in front of the existing Police Station that uses up space now occupied by parking and police and visitor vehicles. These concepts both have minimal impact on the view, which is why they are still viable concepts and provide almost no impact to the view from Connors Cottage. Concept B was set aside because it called for a second story above the sally port which would have impacted with the view.

Was there a Work Session on 7/13/2026 with the City Council?

Yes, and the discussion included all three concepts.

A link to the presentation and the meeting recording appears below.

[Microsoft PowerPoint - Council Work Session 07-13-26](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9KO0IJapmk>

Cost and funding

How much will this project cost?

Detailed, phase-by-phase estimates are being prepared over the summer; the figures presented are preliminary.

The current total project is estimated at \$58 Million (based on the rough pricing and contingencies, soft costs, and inflation escalation) **and this project delivers a fully functioning Police Station, a renovated and more accessible City Hall with a point of services for residents, a smarter reconfiguration of departments, all of the needed HVAC work, and reclaimed lower-level space.**

Isn't a comprehensive municipal project more expensive than just a new police station addition?

Not significantly, and that's the key point. The estimated cost of a Police Department expansion and renovation alone was approximately **\$42 million**, and nearly double that amount if a new police station were constructed at a different location. In addition, City Hall requires substantial HVAC (heating and cooling) upgrades regardless of any broader project, with those improvements estimated at **\$10-\$11 million**. Together that's roughly **\$52-\$53 million** the City would spend on the building over the next few years.

By comparison, the proposed comprehensive municipal project is currently estimated at **approximately \$58 million** (including contingencies and construction cost escalation). For a relatively modest additional investment, the City would receive:

- A fully modernized Police Department facility;
- A renovated, more accessible City Hall;
- A centralized customer service point for residents;
- A more efficient and functional organization of municipal departments;
- All necessary HVAC upgrades; and
- Reclaimed and improved lower-level building space.

Why are the City Hall HVAC upgrades part of the conversation?

Because they are needed with or without this project. Folding them into a single, coordinated effort avoids paying to disrupt the building twice and allows the City to address the mechanical systems and the space improvements at the same time.

What does "capturing the basement at 50 cents on the dollar" mean?

When an addition is built, excavating and finishing the space beneath it costs roughly half what conventional new construction costs – because the work is already underway

above. Building that lower level now captures usable space for future needs at a discount, rather than paying full price for a separate project later.

Is the funding already in place?

The project has an established funding framework in the City's [Capital Improvement Plan](#). The current work is about confirming the right scope and refining the cost estimate to provide the most accurate update to the existing framework.

Are the numbers final?

No. They are rough, order-of-magnitude figures meant to convey scale and tradeoffs. Refined, phase-by-phase estimating comes forward in August/September 2026.

The Police Department

Why does the Police Department need more space?

The current facility no longer meets the Department's operational needs, and the program is sized to serve the department through 2044. The plan provides properly designed space for core functions that the current building layout cannot support well.

What will the new police facility include?

A secure operational core: sally port, booking and intake, evidence, and dispatch, along with detective and investigative space sized for future needs. The new entrance includes a clear, private path for victims and witnesses off the main lobby, separate from the secure areas.

Will the Police Department stay operational and secure during construction?

Yes. The work is phased specifically so the Police Department remains secure and on-site throughout construction. Police functions must stay in an appropriate, secure facility at all times.

Does the plan account for the future of policing, like real-time information or AI tools?

The design keeps the Department positioned for the future - for example, locating space so that tools like a real-time information center could be added as they mature. Decisions about adopting specific technologies rest with Police Department leadership; the building is simply designed to allow for those options.

City Hall and services for residents

How will this improve service for residents?

Creating a clear “point of service” at the main entrance, adding a new public elevator, improving accessibility, and grouping related services so residents can more easily access the services they need will all allow for a more efficient, user-friendly experience

What is a “point of service”?

It is a consolidated, public-facing area where residents interact with City staff. The plan brings the most frequently used services such as Tax, Clerk, and Assessing together right off the new accessible main entrance, with Health, Welfare, and Social Work close by. A new elevator in the point of service area will provide easy access to the Planning & Sustainability and Inspections Departments.

Will City Hall be more accessible?

Yes. Improving public access and accessibility including a new entrance with ramp, an elevator serving the public, and a consolidated, easier-to-navigate entrance, is a central goal of the plan.

Construction, phasing, and disruption

How will the work be phased?

In a sequence that keeps the buildings operating. The campus will not be vacated; instead, work proceeds in phases with the Police Department staying secure and on-site throughout.

What is the “move once” approach?

The phasing goal would be for a department to only relocate a single time – into its permanent home – rather than being shuffled multiple times. Moving once minimizes disruption, avoids paying for temporary space more than necessary, and helps control cost.

Will City Hall stay open during construction?

Yes. Services will continue to operate through the phased approach, with staff shifted as needed so the public can still be served. The City is currently looking at all options to ensure the public can access services during each of the phases of the project.

Will parking be affected?

There may be some short-term disruption during construction, as with any project of this kind.

What about the Farmer's Market?

The Farmer's Market may need to be relocated to the Lower City Hall Parking Lot or another location during the construction of the first phases (1-6) but might return to the Upper Lot once the project enters the latter phases.

Status of City Departments including the School Department

Is the School Department moving?

Possibly. The plan contemplates relocating most of the School Department central administrative functions to Portsmouth High School, which would free up space on the campus and support the phased "move once" approach. This is not yet decided – the School Board is expected to act by September 30, 2026.

Will any Departments leave the campus?

Under the current direction, all departments ultimately remain on the campus except Water & Sewer Billing and most of the School Department. Some departments may relocate during the construction and return when their section of the building is complete.

Process, timeline, and getting involved

What is the Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee?

A committee established by the City Council to study the project, weigh options, and make recommendations to the City Council. Its work has included reviewing the space needs and adjacencies, surveying the condition of the existing building, asking questions that have helped develop and test concepts, and providing input on the phased plan approach.

What are the next steps?

Over the summer, the team will refine the layouts and prepare detailed, phase-by-phase cost estimates (reviewed with the committee on July 29 and September 9). Planned public outreach will also occur. In the Fall of 2026, the refined project will be returned to the City Council with recommendations from the Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee.

When will a final decision be made?

No decision is being made now, and the work will continue to refine the project and direction. In the Fall of 2026, once the cost estimating and public input are complete, a recommendation will be made to the Council.

How can the public weigh in?

Public input is an important part of the process. The Municipal Building Blue Ribbon Committee will be reviewing possible options for public feedback at their next meeting on July 29 at 3 PM and again on September 9, 2026, at 3 pm in Conference Room A at City Hall.

The project will be displayed at the City's booth at the Farmers' Market on August 1, and August 29, 2026, to gather input in addition to an online poll.

DRAFT



Portsmouth Municipal Building Improvements Project Blue Ribbon Committee Questions and Answers

Date: 7/24/2026

Dear Committee Members,

Please use this as a log of questions and responses that we can reference and update as progress is made and new information is learned.

8/25 Questions Received

1. IN THE BOTTOM LEVEL OF THE POLICE STATION IS IT POSSIBLE TO ADD WINDOWS AND HVAC. COULD WE EXCAVATE AND DO A BERM TO EXPOSE THAT WALL OF THE BUILDING?
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: It is possible. As we study layouts we can assess whether this will be a benefit to the project based on what spaces will be located there. It is worth noting there are many spaces within the police program that are best away from windows and light. We would first look to locate such spaces in locations like these.
2. CAN AN ADDITION BE MADE TO THE POLICE STATION STARTING AT THE END OF THE CURRENT 2ND FLOOR OF CITY HALL AND EXTEND OUT AND DOWN TO CONNECT TO THE CURRENT POLICE STATION. TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE OF 10,000 – 12,00 SQUARE FEET OF NEW SPACE?
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: An addition in this area is possible and will be an option considered. It will be important to keep in mind differing floor to floor heights. Options for expanding to the back of the site should be considered given prior concerns to impacted sight lines. Parking and traffic flow will have to be considered.
3. CAN A 2ND ELEVATOR BE INSTALLED TO SERVE THE 3RD AND 4TH FLOOR OF CITY HALL EXISTING BUILDING

- a. 8/27 Meeting Response: It will depend on the layouts as to whether an additional elevator would be necessary. This may be driven by how the existing elevators are or are/not absorbed into the PD. If absorbed, then an added elevator may be beneficial to ensure security. We would expect public demand on the elevators to be reduced by bringing the Point-of-Service to the main floor.
4. CAN THE CURRENT PARKING LOT IN THE REAR OF POLICE STATION BE RE CONFIGURED TO MAKE IT MORE WORKABLE?
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: Possibly. It will again depend on the layouts being considered.
5. CAN A NEW ENTRANCE BE CONSTRUCTED FOR CITY HALL FOR EASIER PUBLIC ACCESS
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: Yes. We anticipate there is likely work to improve the accessibility to City Hall and the Point-of-Service
6. CAN THE WORK BE DONE IN PHASES?
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: Yes, it will be required to be. The building cannot be fully vacated. We would expect swing space being utilized and work being executed in a number of phases. It will be simpler to shift municipal staff (office space) and keep PD on-site. Police functions must remain secure and in an appropriate facility. Consideration for Clerk records must be considered.
7. CAN A STUDY BE DONE OF CURRENT SPACES NOT BEING USED BY THE CITY HALL OR POLICE STATION. AMOUNT OF SPACE BY OTHERS OR VACANT
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: Yes, that will be a part of building the space needs assessment.
8. RECONFIGURE THE CURRENT ENTRANCE TO THE POLICE FACILITY
 - a. 8/27 Meeting Response: It is possible. What that will look like will vary by the options

12/10 Questions Received

9. Were the existing buildings built to a Category IV level (at that time)? What would be required to upgrade the buildings to that level? Cost? Category 4 considerations must be resolved before advancing recommendations
 - a. 2/11/26 Meeting Response: JSA and the City are working to develop a comprehensive review of the requirements, capacity of the existing facility and what would be required to upgrade it to meet current Category 4 design criteria.
10. The committee has asked if a summary of funding can be prepared to clarify current allocations and what would need bonding.
 - a. 2/11/26 Meeting Response: The current CIP held \$42,500,000. There was a bond authorization on 04/04/2022 for \$1.4 Million for feasibility and preliminary design, \$900K in bonds have been issued leaving a balance of \$500K to be bonded. In addition, \$2.8 Million was estimated for final design, construction documents and management leaving an estimated balance of \$38.3 Million for renovation/construction.

2/11 Questions Received

11. Can approximate cost estimates be shared earlier than later to validate in the current concept(s) are within budget?
 - a. 3/18/2026 Response: Using the concepts being presented today we will working with our estimating team on a Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) estimate to review in the coming meeting. That estimate will be based on our best available information at that time. Understand there are and will be numerous details to understand and resolve which will impact the final estimate. The results of the estimates will inform scope and timing of projects.

3/18 Questions Received

12. Can views be provided showing the impact of the addition to the site lines from the Cottage Building?
 - b. 3/18/2026 Response: Yes. We will provide those views as part of the conceptual exterior design