7TH STREET APARTMENTS

WRITTEN REPORT | 05.10.2023

PART OF GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CITY OF LA CROSSE

GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

At the intersection of 7th and Cass Street—within walking distance of a burgeoning downtown—the proposed 7th Street Apartments are being designed as a site-specific addition to the La Crosse housing stock. Adjacent to a significant intersection, the site is part of a gateway to downtown, and is an important transitional link between urban businesses and established neighborhoods; Presently, the site is severely underutilized in this regard. Designed to its fuller potential, the site can negotiate the vitality of downtown and the tranquility of neighborhoods, striking an architectural balance between the two. This project is poised to do that, providing a much-needed housing option for young families, individuals with disabilities, and the growing numbers of people who wish to live close to downtown La Crosse.

Site Design

Rather than a conventional "big-block" apartment scheme, the site is configured as a trio of four-story structures attuned to the scale of a traditional residential neighborhood. Together, the site's three-building strategy totals thirty-seven apartments and works to achieve several important goals, the first of which is the clear delineation of vehicular and pedestrian realms; While vehicular circulation occurs along the rear perimeter of the site and is screened by the apartments, pedestrian activity is concentrated along the street front and in the site's community green space, which itself becomes a defining feature; This unique community green, much like a traditional courtyard or garden, is internalized as the car-free space *between* apartment buildings, and is imbued with a sense of privacy and shelter amidst urban surroundings and outside noise. It is designed to provide outdoor respite for residents, but will also enhance La Crosse's urban fabric much like a "pocket park." With the slim profile of each apartment building, residents can move freely—along sidewalks, around or through buildings, to and from the community green. By prioritizing the pedestrian experience, the site promotes an intimate sense of community, safety and connectivity amongst its neighbors.

The breaking-up of the block into three courtyard-style buildings also allows greater amounts of natural light to enter each apartment unit. Rather than the "big-block" approach in which every apartment may have one or occasionally two exterior walls with window access, the courtyard approach ensures that the vast majority of units harness daylight and views from two or three different directions. Moreover, most living spaces are intentionally positioned at the corners of buildings, and so open to the outside in multiple directions; In a few cases where this doesn't happen, apartments are expanded vertically to become two-story "loft-style" units with double-height windows. The site's lived experience is designed to be light and airy, while the density of living is also great enough to meet many urban goals.

Downtown Living

At a density of approximately 43 units per acre, the site design is decidedly urban. In fact, a defining characteristic of the site is its walkability to and from downtown La Crosse (Figure 02). Conducive to those who wish to live a less car-dependent life, or those who simply prefer walking, the site is within a 5-minute walk—a quarter mile—of numerous day-to-day destinations and employers, including grocery stores, healthcare providers, religious institutions, public and private schools, children's activities, public parks and the public library. Expanding scope to a 10-minute walk, much of downtown La Crosse is

accessible by foot from the site, including such destinations as the La Crosse Center, Grand River Station, Aquinas High School, Viterbo University and Mayo Clinic. With great walkability, residents of the site are empowered to become active citizens and neighbors in downtown La Crosse, not to mention regular patrons of local businesses that thrive on neighborhood activity.

In addition to its walkability, the site is within a quarter mile of at least seven public transit stops, which connect the area via bus in virtually all directions—to and from downtown, North La Crosse, Losey Boulevard, Valley View Mall, East La Crosse, South La Crosse and further to La Crescent. Proximity to such transit is an immense perk for residents of the site. Likewise for La Crosse (and for the planet), the prospect of increased public transit ridership is itself a value to the greater community, consistent with the principles of contemporary urban planning and the La Crosse Climate Action Plan.

Considering its walkability to downtown and access to public transit—not to mention the possibility of underutilized parking in the vicinity—the site's on-site vehicular parking is reduced accordingly. Rather than previous standards of one parking space per bedroom, the proposed design adopts a standard of one-half parking space per bedroom (equating to one parking space per two-bedroom apartment). More than a third of vehicular parking is enclosed in garages, and open surface parking is minimized. As a supplement to reduced vehicular parking, the site offers increased bicycle parking—more than fifty spaces, some of which are secured indoors and all of which are covered and convenient to entries.

Environmental Performance

Apart from the extent to which the site is being designed to *perform*—in the theatrical sense of the word—for its residents and for downtown La Crosse, it is also being detailed to maximize technical efficiencies. Going beyond baseline performance and energy standards, the project is utilizing several significant energy strategies; All building functions will be fully electric from day one, including heating and cooling systems for each apartment. Furthermore, the owner and design team are in the process of configuring on-site rooftop photovoltaics, with the intent of utilizing solar power as the primary energy source for electric needs in the site's communal spaces (hallways, elevators, outdoor areas, etc.). Each apartment will also benefit from heightened thermal efficiency and resultingly low monthly energy bills.

Summary

Apart from the significant environmental benefits of reduced car dependence and walkable living, this project is working to take full advantage of the experiential, day-to-day benefits of a medium-density urban approach. That is to say, as a result of the design choices described here, residents and neighbors will experience a greater degree of tranquility—characteristic of traditional neighborhoods—as a result of reduced vehicular presence, noise and hazard. These choices have enabled, amongst other things, increased access to a greater number of apartments, exceptional daylighting for each apartment, and high-quality green space to be shared amongst the resident community.

01) SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed 7th Street Apartments site measures 0.86 acres, or approximately 37,000 square feet. The combined footprint of its three buildings occupies 35 percent of the site, and 42 percent of the site is a combination of vehicular drives, parking, covered areas and pedestrian paths. The remaining 23 percent of the site is designated as open, permeable green space, which equates to approximately 8,500 square feet. Of this green space, twenty-five percent (approximately 2125 square feet) will be designed specifically for bioretention (infiltration), incorporating minor topographic depressions and specific plantings to process stormwater.

02) ESTIMATED DEVELOPMENT VALUE

While cost and rental estimates have yet to be conducted for these apartments, their design attributes—square footage, ceiling heights, material finishes, etc.—are being consciously tailored to suit a mid-range market. In other words, the apartments are being designed with a combination of generosity and modesty, and are intended to strike a financial balance appropriate to working- and middle-class individuals and families. The project is seen as a much-desired addition to local housing options.

03) ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The property is currently and will remain owned by John Desmond, who will act as landlord and assume all general upkeep responsibilities related to the site and its structures.

04) PROPOSED DEPARTURES

Site design to this point has been consistently informed by *City of La Crosse Multifamily Design Standards Handbook* (MDS), as well as *A Model Ordinance for Traditional Neighborhood Development* (TND) and *City of La Crosse Climate Action Plan* (CAP). While much of the design meets or exceeds recommendations, the following is a list of notable departures.

Reduced Vehicular Parking

Whereas MDS C.10 recommends one off-street parking space per bedroom and TND suggests 0.75 spaces per bedroom, this project accommodates one-*half* (0.5) parking space per bedroom, or one parking space per two-bedroom unit. The rationale for this design decision involves walkability, nearby public transit, reduced car dependence and related urban contexts addressed in the General Project Description above. The impact of reduced vehicular parking is further offset by increased bicycle parking and improved pedestrian comfort and safety.

Reduced Site Setbacks

MDS C.4 generally prescribes a 15-foot landscape buffer between buildings and parking. However, due to the site's configuration of alley-style parking and tuck-under garages along the rear of the site, which enable undisturbed green spaces and pedestrian entries elsewhere, this recommendation is not met by—or is rather incompatible with—the proposed design. The intent of the recommendation is fully appreciated by the design team, and is otherwise embodied in the site's delineation of vehicular and pedestrian experiences.

Additionally, in the proposed design, the site's side and rear setbacks are reduced to virtually zero in accommodating surface parking. This conflicts with MDS C.5, which suggests a 5-foot setback from all property lines excluding alleys. However, it is worth noting two distinctions in this departure; First, the site's western boundary (currently bordering Goodyear Auto Service) is in fact a vacated alley. Second and more importantly, the site design notes the addition of a vegetated fence (four to six feet in height) along the entirety of these zero-setback site boundaries. These fences will be designed to ensure adequate privacy for the site and both of its immediate neighbors, and will be visually attractive in accordance with related MDS recommendations.

Multiple Buildings on a Single Consolidated Parcel

In the case that the project's six parcels become consolidated into one as requested, the site design will likely result—technically speaking—in the presence of more than one "primary structure" on a single parcel. The design team views this as a negligible technicality, but nonetheless wishes to recognize it.

05) PROJECT TIMELINE

As illustrated in Figure 04 and Figure 05, the project is designed to be carried out in two phases.

Phase 01 encompasses Building A and its accompanying parking and site features; It is the intent of the owner that Phase 01 construction begin within the 2023 calendar year and conclude by the start of 2025.

Phase 02 encompasses the demolition of three existing structures and the construction of Buildings B and C. Its start date is contingent on the renter-demand demonstrated by the opening of Building A. In the case that Building A achieves full occupancy with ease, Phase 02 is intended to begin soon after.

06) SITE LAYOUT PLAN

See attached Figures 03, 04 and 05 for general site information, Phase 01 and Phase 02 respectively.

07) LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES

A written description provided as part of a 2021 survey of the property reads as follows:

Lot 1, 2, and 3 together with the east half of vacated alley, lot 4, the north 9.32 feet of lot 5 of block 12 and part of the Steven's Reserve, all in the Steven's Addition to the City of La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, parcel described as follows:

Beginning at the northeast corner of said Lot 1, thence along the west right of way line of 7th Street South S00°11'31"W 251.51 feet to the south line of the north 9.32 feet of said Lot 5; Thence along said south line N89°41'41"W 119.18 feet to the east line of Lot 12 of Colwell Court Addition; Thence the next 2 calls along said Lot 12, 1) N03°15'13"E 9.34 feet; 2) S89°42'16"W 23.13 feet to the east line of the vacated alley; Thence along said lot 12, N00°12'27"E 60.74 feet to the southwest corner of said lot 3; Thence along the south line of said lot 3 extended west S89°30'45"W 10.03 feet to the west line of said vacated alley; thence along said west line N00°14'39"E 181.49 feet to the south right of way line of Cass Street; Thence along said south right of way line S89°49'13"E 151.66 feet to the point of beginning. Said parcel contains 0.86 acres and is subject [to] the easements shown on the map as well as all other easements or restrictions, implied or recorded.

Note: Lots 1, 2, & 3 of block 12 had been split and conveyed as "the east 65 feet…" and the "west 85 feet…". The lots, platted as 150 feet wide actually measure more than platted distance, creating a gap. A quiet title action is recommended to correct title.

08) NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The proposed apartments are immediately adjacent to the traffic circle intersection of 7th and Cass Streets, the former being a collector street and the latter a segment of State Highway 16; The intersection is recognized as a *district gateway*, or as a *gateway to the city*. Both streets are existing bike routes, and Cass Street is part of the Parkway System Plan promoting expanded bike access and safety.

The apartments will become neighbors to a variety of downtown uses, including in their immediate vicinity a combination of multifamily residences, city-owned housing, and commercial businesses. Some neighboring properties are already zoned as TND, either actively or in future land use; Other nearby zoning designations include C2 commercial and R6 residential. Notably, the site is partly encompassed within the Washburn Neighborhood—is in fact edging between Washburn and Downtown—and so holds an appreciable relationship to the Washburn community to its south and east; the design team is scheduled to meet with the Washburn Neighborhood Association this month to share and discuss the details of the project.

09) SITE RESOURCES

The site design is comprised of three apartment buildings, an alley-like vehicular drive, a central community green space and peripheral bioretention elements. For further description of each of these items, refer to previous sections of this document and to attached Figures 04-06.

10) SOIL CHARACTERISTICS

The exact makeup of site soils has yet to be determined. The design team will investigate and confirm the appropriateness of soils as part of ongoing work, and will communicate relevant details as needed.

11) EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY

The site is—relatively speaking—very flat, with approximately three feet of local relief, most of which occurs along its eastern edge abutting the 7th Street sidewalk (Figure 03). No part of the site is in a designated floodplain. A more precise topographic survey of the site has yet to be conducted, but will likely be a part of ongoing design work and will be shared with interested parties once available.

12) GENERAL LANDSCAPING TREATMENT

The design of the site includes two distinct types of landscaped zones, the first being the community green space and the second being vegetated bioretention areas. The community green is being envisioned as a combination of flat, recreational lawn grass, medium-scale trees (consistent with MDS guidelines) and interspersed native plantings. The bioretention areas will, by necessity, contain a variety of plantings to help absorb and filter incoming stormwater. Street fronts of the site will incorporate additional street trees as appropriate. Plantings will be low-maintenance and native wherever possible.

END OF WRITTEN REPORT

REFER TO FIGURES 01-12

FIGURE 01 _ **COVER SHEET + AERIAL VIEW**

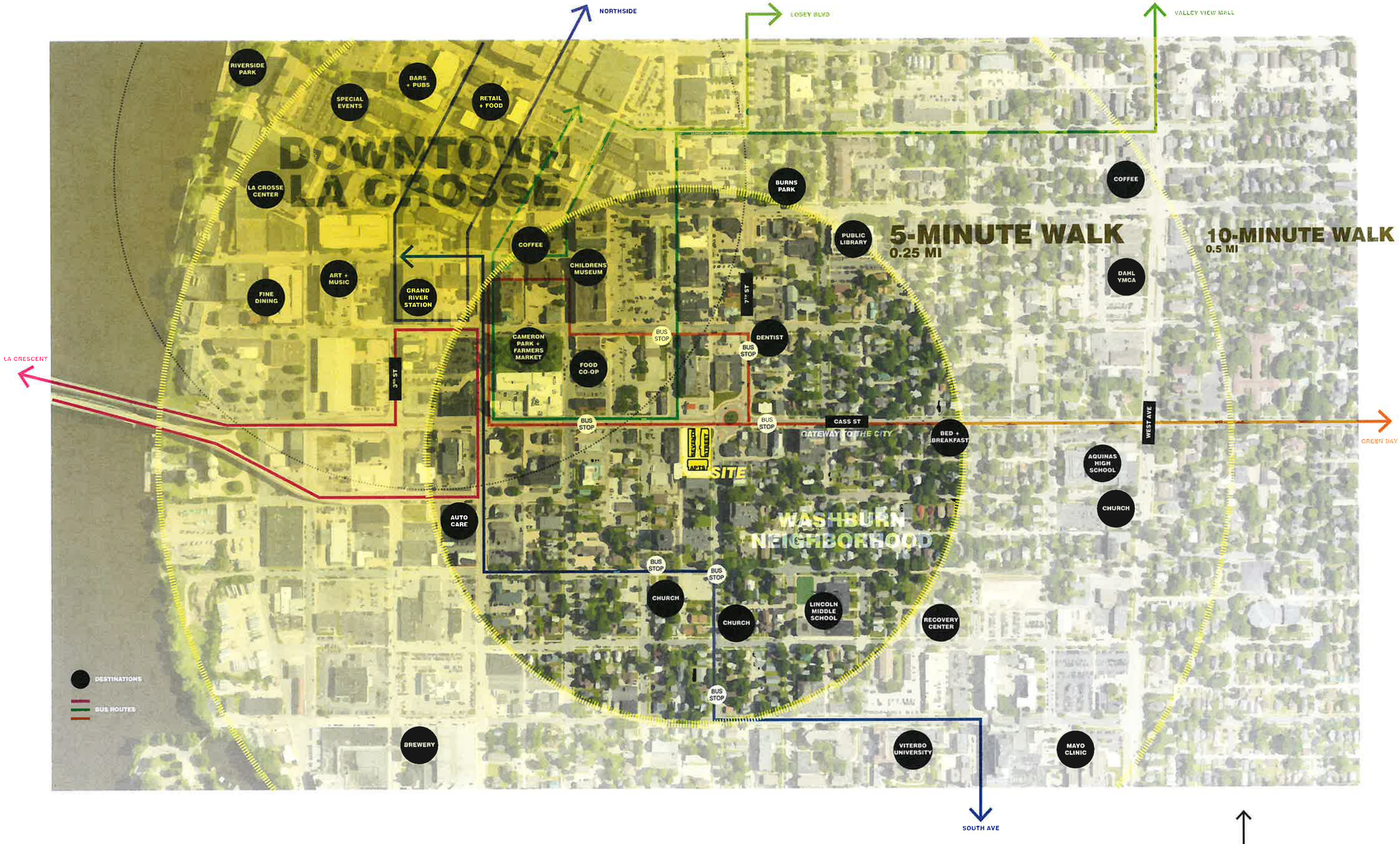


FIGURE 02 _ **LOCATION + PROXIMITY MAP**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

river ARCHITECTS

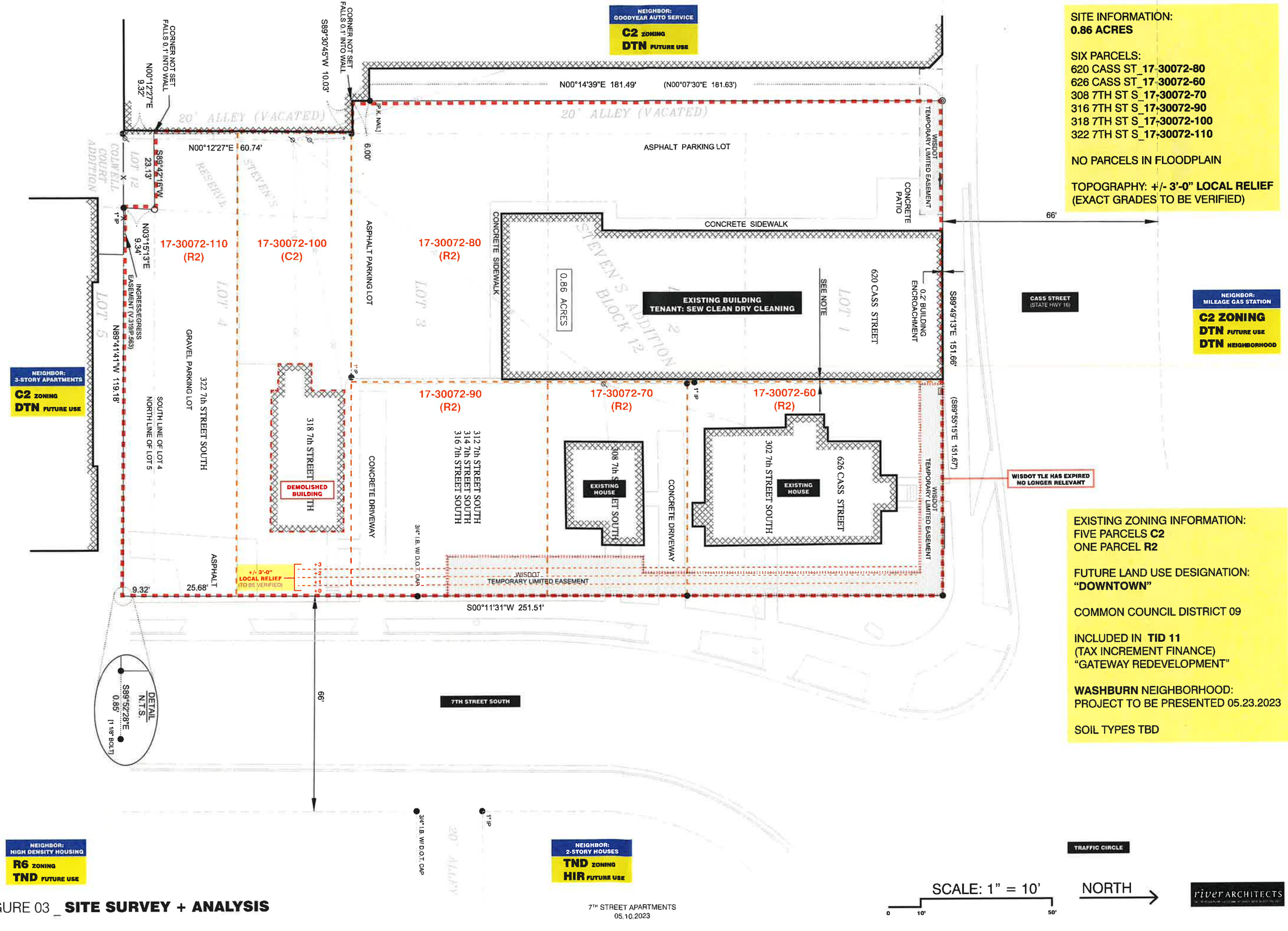


FIGURE 03 _ **SITE SURVEY + ANALYSIS**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

river ARCHITECTS

PHASE 01

14 APARTMENTS

16 VEHICLE SPACES
(6 GARAGES + 10 SURFACE)

28 BIKE SPACES

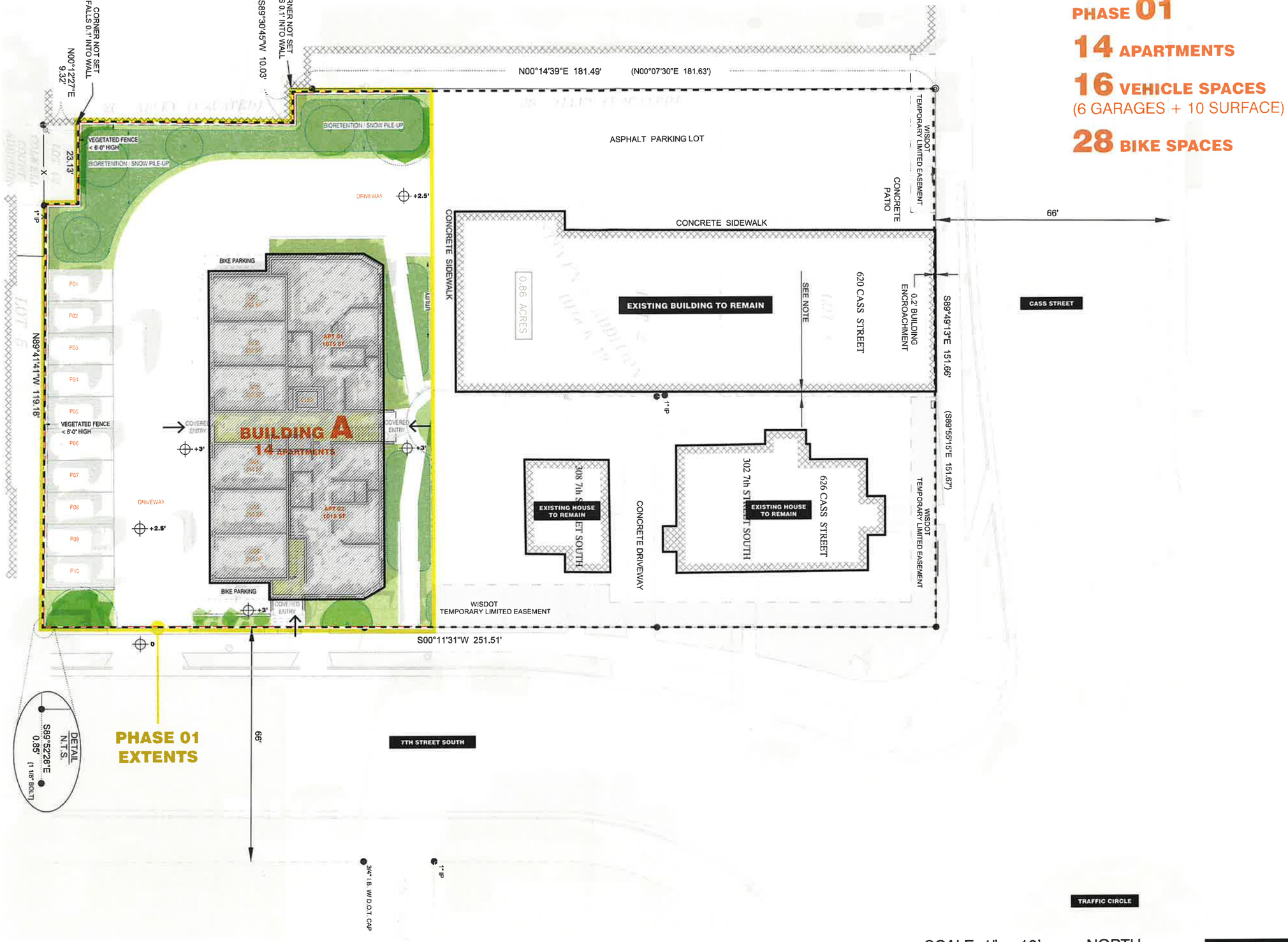


FIGURE 04 _ **PHASE 01 SITE PLAN**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

SCALE: 1" = 10'
0 10' 50'

NORTH

river ARCHITECTS

PHASE 02 (COMPLETE)

37 APARTMENTS

37 PARKING SPACES
(14 GARAGES + 23 SURFACE)

50+ BIKE SPACES

FIGURE 05 _ **PHASE 02 SITE PLAN**

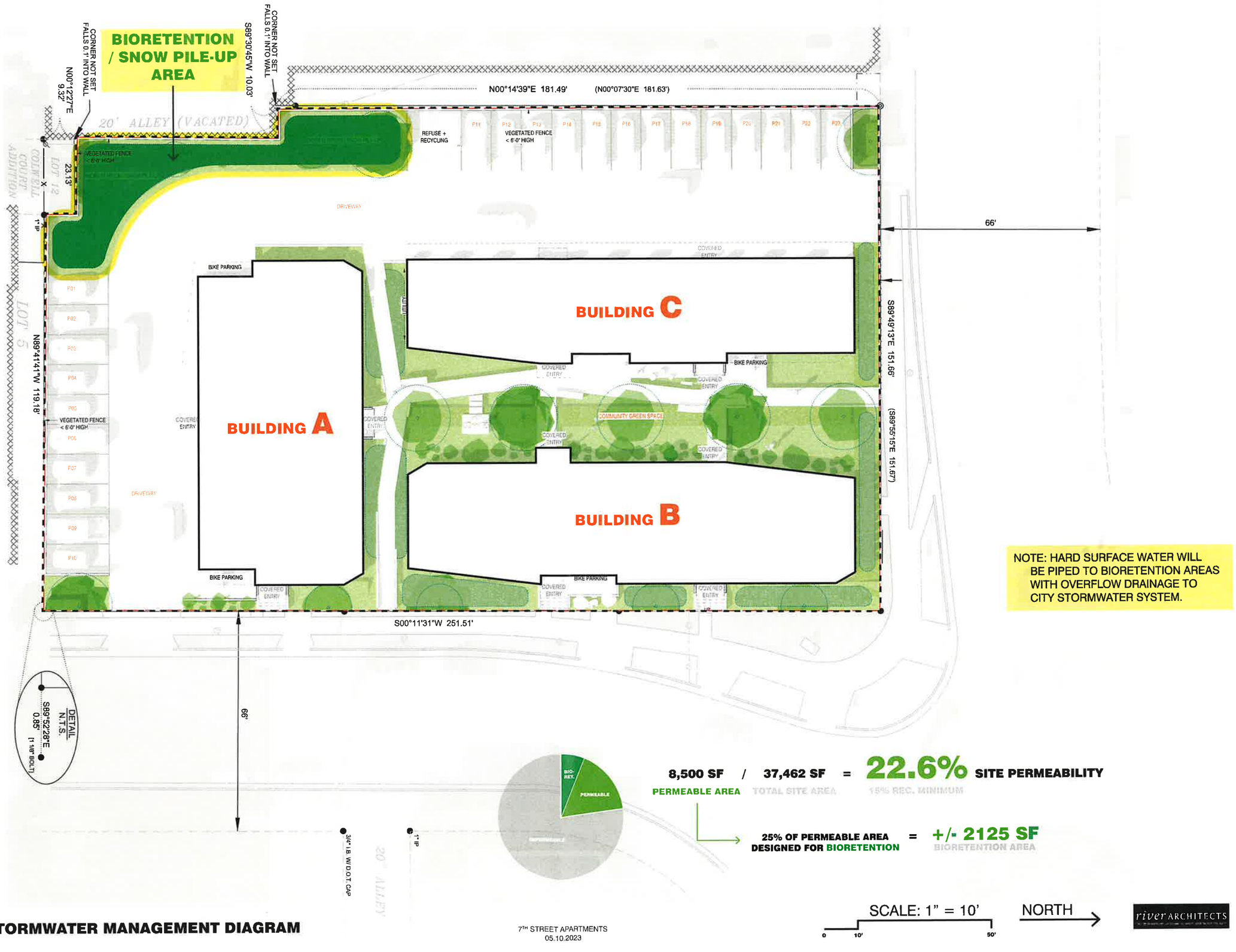
SCALE: 1" = 10'

NORTH

0 10' 50'

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

river ARCHITECTS



NOTE: HARD SURFACE WATER WILL BE PIPED TO BIORETENTION AREAS WITH OVERFLOW DRAINAGE TO CITY STORMWATER SYSTEM.

8,500 SF / **37,462 SF** = **22.6%** **SITE PERMEABILITY**

PERMEABLE AREA — TOTAL SITE AREA — 15% REC. MINIMUM

25% OF PERMEABLE AREA DESIGNED FOR BIORETENTION = **+/- 2125 SF** BIORETENTION AREA

SCALE: 1" = 10'

NORTH

FIGURE 06 _ **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT DIAGRAM**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

river ARCHITECTS

VEGETATED FENCE
< 6'-0" HIGH

REFUSE +
RECYCLING

VEGETATED FENCE
< 6'-0" HIGH

BIKE PARKING

G01
250 SF

G02
250 SF

G03
250 SF

APT 01
1075 SF

UTILITY

ELEV

VEGETATED FENCE
< 6'-0" HIGH

UNTL

RISER

G04
250 SF

G05
250 SF

G06
250 SF

APT 02
1015 SF

BIKE PARKING

UTILITY

G07
325 SF

G08
250 SF

G09
250 SF

G10
250 SF

G11
250 SF

G12
340 SF

BIKES

UTILITY

ELEV

G13
250 SF

G14
340 SF

BIKE PARKING

APT 03
1150 SF

APT 04
1250 SF

RISER

ELEV

APT 05
1100 SF

BIKE PARKING

FIGURE 07.1 _ **LEVEL 01 FLOOR PLAN**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

SCALE: 1" = 16'

0 16' 80'

NORTH

river ARCHITECTS

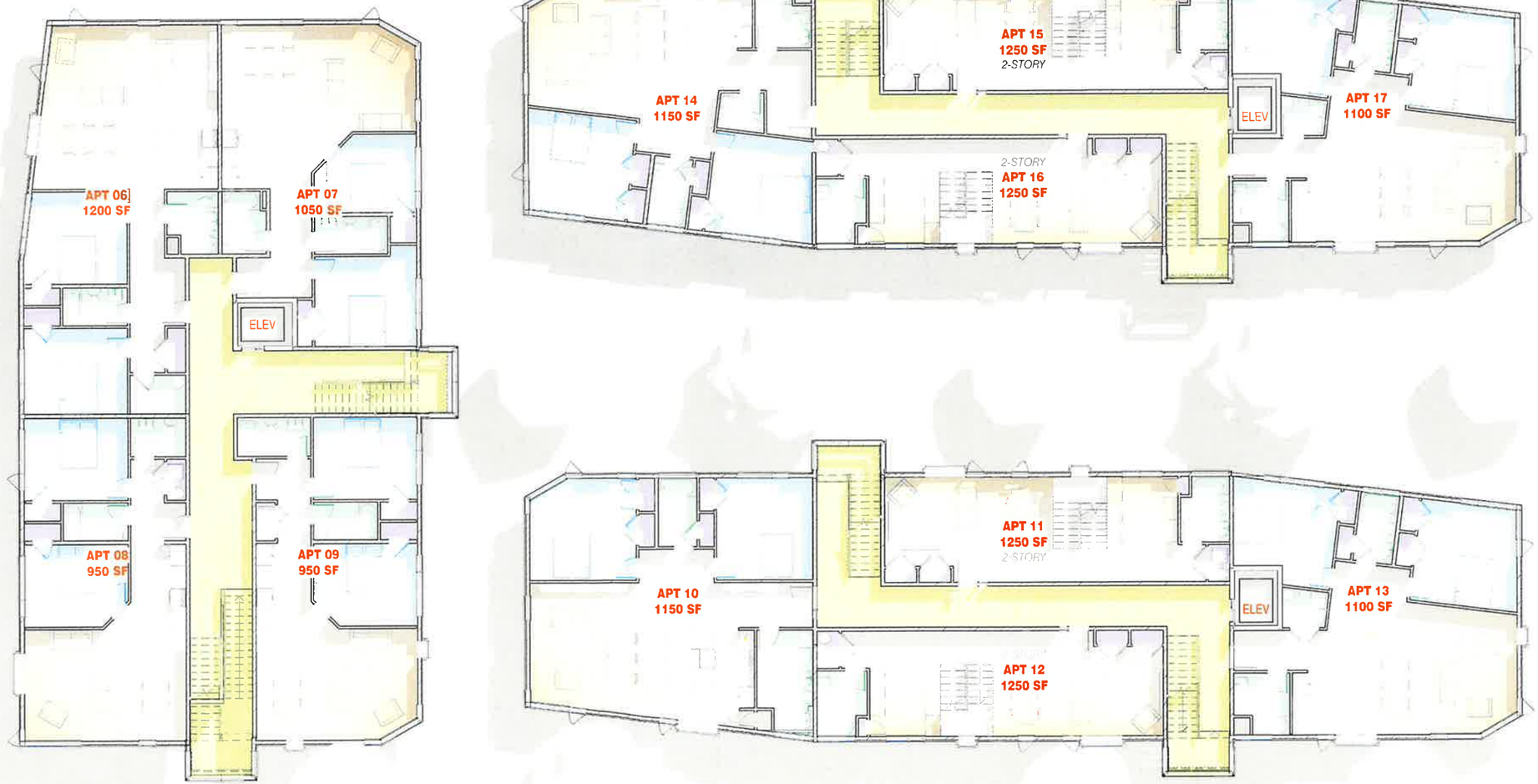


FIGURE 07.2 _ **LEVEL 02 FLOOR PLAN**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

SCALE: 1" = 16'
0 16' 80'

NORTH

river ARCHITECTS

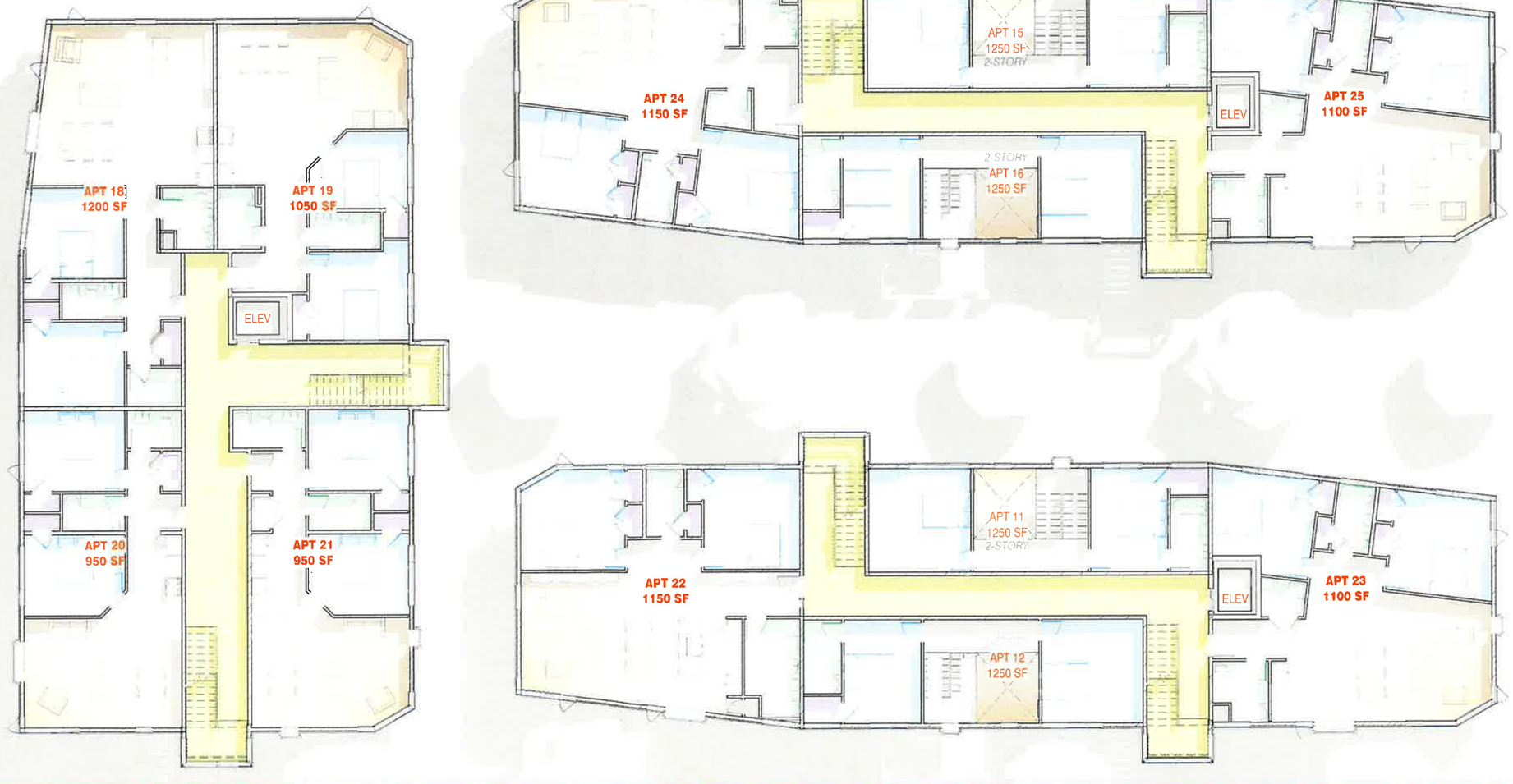


FIGURE 07.3 _ **LEVEL 03 FLOOR PLAN**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

SCALE: 1" = 16'
0 16' 80'

NORTH

river ARCHITECTS

FIGURE 07.4 _ **LEVEL 04 FLOOR PLAN**

7TH STREET APARTMENTS
05.10.2023

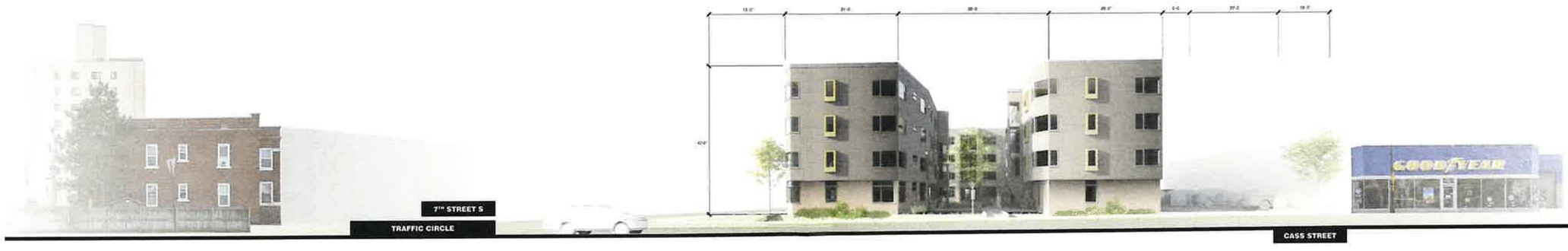
SCALE: 1" = 16'
0 16' 80'

NORTH

river ARCHITECTS

EAST ELEVATION

NORTH →



NORTH ELEVATION

FIGURE 08 _ **SITE ELEVATIONS**

WEST →

river ARCHITECTS

FIGURE 09 _ **APPROACH VIEW @ 7TH AND CASS**

river ARCHITECTS

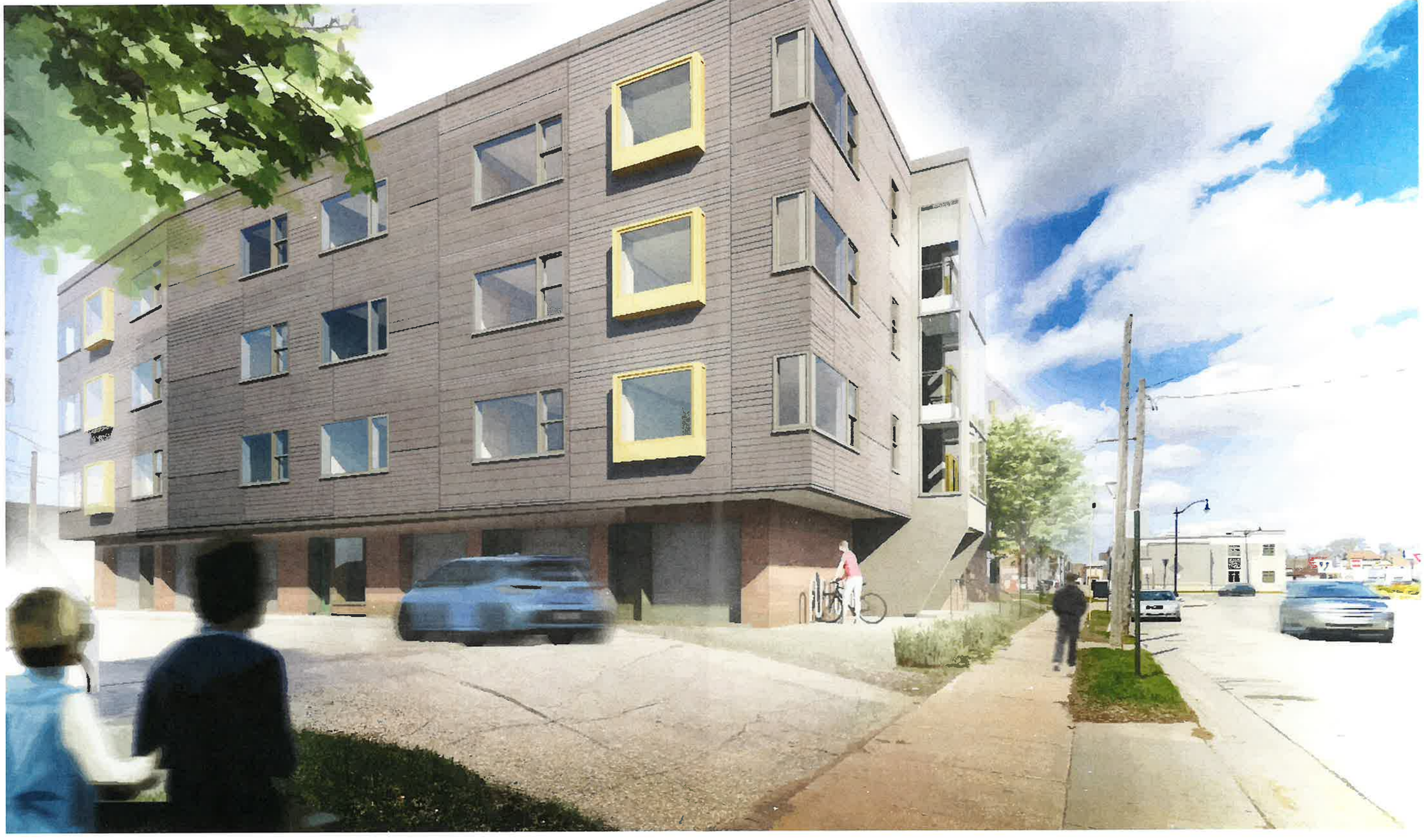


FIGURE 10 _ **APPROACH VIEW ALONG 7TH STREET**

FIGURE 11 _ **COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE**

For more information about the project,
contact River Architects at (608) 785-2217.

FIGURE 12 _ **BIRD'S EYE VIEW** LOOKING SOUTHWEST