

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: ROOSEVELT URBAN REVITALIZATION AREA PLAN AMENDMENT FOR 921 – 9TH STREET (FORMER ROOSEVELT SCHOOL AND NEW CITY PARK)

BACKGROUND:

On November 12, 2013, the City Council adopted an Urban Revitalization Plan and designated the former Roosevelt School site and the City of Ames park, located at 921 9th Street, as an Urban Revitalization Area (URA). This was done in support of the adaptive reuse of the former Roosevelt School into condominiums.

In December, 2014, City staff conducted an inspection of the site and the building exterior for conformance of the improvements with the adopted Roosevelt URA Plan. After the inspection staff determined that parts of the buildings and site improvements did not substantially conform to the adopted Plan. **If a project does not substantially conform to an approved URA plan, a property owner would not be eligible to apply for and receive property tax abatement as is intended within the URA.**

Staff asked the applicant to propose amendments to the URA Plan (as described in this report), and/or physical changes to the building improvements and the site landscaping to ensure that the current residents of the Roosevelt would be eligible to request tax abatement for their 2015 taxes. **At this time, Dean Jensen, representing RES Development, Inc. is requesting that the City Council approve amendments to the approved URA Plan** (*Attachment A, Request for Amendments*).

The City Council is asked to decide if the proposed changes to the Urban Revitalization Plan are acceptable in accordance with the Plan's adopted criteria, which were intended to support the adaptive reuse of the former Roosevelt School. At this time Council is not asked to make a determination of whether the individual property owners are eligible for tax abatement. The individual requests for tax exemption will be considered by the City Council on February 10, 2015 as part of the annual city-wide determination of tax abatement conformance.

The amendments to the URA Plan requested by the developer are summarized as follows:

Reduced Number of Units. At the time of approval of the Roosevelt URA Plan, 23 units were planned in the adaptive reuse of the building. Since that time, the owner has worked with buyers of the units to customize the layout and amount of floor area included in each unit. Some of the new owners were interested in expanding the size of their unit beyond what was planned. This has resulted in a reduction in the total number of units from 23 to 20.

Parking Structure Reduced Size. The number of parking spaces in the attached parking structure as shown on the approved URA Plan is 31. The developer has constructed a parking structure with 25 parking spaces. Reasons given by the developer for the reduction in spaces is that fewer parking spaces are needed with the reduction in the number of units, the total number of parking spaces complies with minimum zoning requirements, and there is a “pedestrian orientation” of many of the unit owners. As identified by the developer, a benefit of reducing the overall size of the parking structure by six spaces is the increase in the amount of open space on the site.

Atrium Materials. The atrium in the approved Plan was shown as glass panels (*Attachment B, Approved Building Elevations*). The atrium as constructed includes glass panels and steel siding materials (*Attachment D, Atrium as Constructed East and West Sides*). The atrium is an important transitional element from the historic school building to the new, attached garage to the rear. In his request for amendments, the developer describes a balance of design considerations with structural engineering requirements for the 2-story stairwell. Such was the case with the reduction of glass surface area in the atrium area as the necessary approach to effectively connecting the new and existing structures together. According to the developer’s explanation, the use of steel siding provided the most viable visual and engineered solution for this area while allowing for soaring glass exposure in the atrium.

Parking structure windows. A parking structure and atrium have been constructed and attached to the north side of the existing building. The adopted URA Plan included windows on the north and east walls of the parking structure to tie the design into the windows of the school building and to increase the aesthetic appeal of the garage facades. As approved in the URA Plan, the north wall is to have three groupings of three windows in each grouping, the east wall is to have two individual windows, and the west wall no windows (*Attachment B, Approved Building Elevations*).

As constructed, the north wall has two window openings filled with thirty glass blocks arranged in three rows of ten, and an air vent in between the two glass block windows (*See Attachment C, As-Builts and Attachment H Photographs*). The developer added windows to the side elevations. The east wall has two groupings of three windows in each grouping, and the west wall has a single window on either

side of the overhead garage door. Each window has the appearance of 24 individual panes and a center horizontal meeting bar that are compatible with the main school building.

The developer explained that, as construction of the project evolved, it became clear that the west elevation of the parking structure would be the most viewed by unit owners and the east elevation the most viewed by park patrons. **The developer states that, “Conversely, the north elevation is primarily only seen by quickly passing automobile traffic, with no visual tie-in to the rest of the Roosevelt building and its design themes.”** The developer believes the enhancement of the side elevations compensated for the reduction in detail on the north façade.

Landscape Plan. The approved Landscape Plan (*Attachment E Approved Landscape Plan*) has been altered by the changing the layout of sidewalks on the site, reducing the number of trees to be planted, eliminating the gardens on the north side of the garage from the Plan, adding planting beds between the building and the City park to the east, and adding a brick patio west of the building (*Attachment F, Revised Landscape Plan*). Additionally, the developer has not completed installation of all landscaping, and requests a provision in the URA Plan to allow to defer planting until Spring. This is allowed under the Zoning Ordinance, and the developer has posted financial security for completion of the revised landscape plan.

Adopted “Qualifying Criteria” for Designation of the Roosevelt School Site as an Urban Revitalization Area. On June 11, 2013, the City Council adopted the following “Qualifying Criteria” and incorporated the approved site and architectural plans of the Adaptive Reuse Plan for the URA Plan:

- A. The property includes a former public school building that is no longer used as a school; and,
- B. The National Park Service has determined that one or more of the properties has a structure that meets the National Register Evaluation Criteria; and,
- C. The renovation and remodeling of structures will not destroy or obscure essential architectural features. In addition, such architectural features must be enhanced to the extent that it is feasible and prudent to do so.

Staff has concluded that most of the proposed project amendments can be found to be consistent with the intent for adaptive reuse and the adopted “Qualifying Criteria.” This includes reductions in the number of units, reduction in the size of the parking structure, changes to the materials for the atrium, additions of windows to the side façades (east and west) of the parking structure, and modifications to the Landscape Plan. The changes to unit count, parking, and landscaping are consistent with

Zoning standards and fit the owner preferences for the site without affecting the historic character of the Roosevelt school building.

Changes to the Atrium are significantly different than what was proposed with a substantially less amount of glass. Staff believes these changes meet the standards for historic preservation of transitioning from the old to the new in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The atrium changes are visible from the neighboring homes to the east and from 10th street, but are set well into the site and appear compatible, even with the modern metal materials.

In staff's assessment, the one exception to consistency is the alteration to the north façade of the garage building along 10th Street. Even with the reduction in overall garage size and enhancements to the side facades, **the proposed amendment to approve less windows made of glass block for the north façade of the parking structure, as installed, is not consistent with "C" of the Qualifying Criteria.** Architectural features are to be enhanced if it is feasible and prudent to do so. The divided glass panels and air vent on the north façade do not enhance the architectural features of the building nor fully support the complementary design of the garage to the main building. Furthermore, as a highly visible façade along the street, staff felt that the approved plan with enhanced architectural detailing treated this façade as a transition to the low density neighborhood to the north.

The developer states that the north elevation of the parking structure is primarily only seen by quickly passing automobile traffic (*Attachment H, North Façade of Parking Structure*), with no visual tie-in to the rest of the Roosevelt building and its design themes. This assessment discounts the visual and aesthetic impact of the parking structure's north façade on the neighborhood it faces. The street abutting the north property line of the site is 10th Street. Marston Avenue and 10th Street form a "T" intersection directly north of the parking structure. As the public travels south on Marston toward 10th Street and the Roosevelt site, the north wall of the parking structure is clearly visible from properties on both sides of Marston, between 10th and 11th Streets.

This building was approved through an adaptive reuse plan as a multiple-family structure with an architectural design that is compatible with the single-family character of this neighborhood. Many of the houses built in the surrounding neighborhood have features consistent with architectural styles of the early to mid 1900's. Façades of these homes do not include large expanses without traditional window and door openings. Although the length of the north wall was reduced, the lack of significant window areas or other detailing creates a blank wall that provides very little architectural interest or ties into the other architectural features of the garage windows or school windows.

Modifications could be made to the north façade to improve its aesthetic impact compared to the constructed appearance. Should City Council wish, options include (1) not approving the amendment and requiring the original windows to be added, (2) approving an amendment to the URA Plan requiring additional windows to be added similar to the original design or of glass block, or (3) amending the URA Plan with requirements to soften the façade with enhanced landscaping, including coniferous trees and ground cover consisting of planting beds of perennials, and shrubs (*Attachment I, Landscape Area North of Parking Structure*).

Notice. Public notice has been published and action is now requested on amending the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area (URA) Plan. The URA includes the information required by Code of Iowa Section 404.2(2), as well as the site plan. In addition, the owners of residential units in the Roosevelt URA Area, those who own property to the west as far as Northwestern Avenue, the owners of property along the north side of 10th Street adjacent to this site, and the owners of property along the east side of Roosevelt Avenue adjacent to this site have been sent letters through the mail describing the proposed amendments and providing information on the date, time, and location of this City Council meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve a resolution amending the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area Plan, **as requested by RES Development, Inc.**, if it finds the amendments are consistent with the Qualifying Criteria for the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area.
2. The City Council can approve a resolution amending the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area Plan, as requested by RES Development, Inc., with additional modifications to the North Façade Windows. **This alternative will require the installation of additional windows similar to the original design.** This also will include conditions that RES Development, Inc. provide an updated window plan of the North Elevation to the Planning and Housing Department for administrative approval of final details, and provide the following items to the City Clerk's Office by January 31, 2015:
 - A. Financial security in the form of a Letter of Credit, cash, or check in the amount of the cost of the materials and labor for the installation of two groupings of windows with three windows in each grouping on the north façade of the parking structure of the dimensions and spacing, as approved on the plans for which a building permit was issued to construct the parking structure,
 - B. An itemized estimate of the cost of materials and labor for the installation of the windows, described in Condition A; and,

- C. A letter committing to complete the window installation on the north façade of the parking structure no later than May 1, 2015.
3. The City Council can approve a resolution amending the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area Plan, as requested by RES Development, Inc., with modifications to require **additional landscaping be added to the North Façade**. This would include conditions that RES Development, Inc. provide a landscaping plan to the Planning and Housing Department for administrative approval of final details, and provide the following items to the City Clerk’s Office by January 31, 2015:
- A. A Landscape Plan that includes five trees, either White/Concolor Fir, Blue Spruce, or a combination of both, together with planting beds of perennials and shrubs, distributed throughout the open area between the parking structure and the property line along 10th Street; with the White Fir and/or Blue Spruce trees a minimum of six feet in initial height, at the time of planting, evenly spaced in the open area between the building wall and the property line; with the existing Crabapple tree in this space to remain.
 - B. An itemized estimate of the cost of the materials and labor to install the required trees, shrubs, and perennials, and financial security in the form of a Letter of Credit, cash, or check for the amount of the cost estimate; and,
 - C. A letter committing to complete the installation of trees, shrubs and perennials along the north façade of the parking structure no later than May 1, 2015.
4. The City Council can choose not to amend the Roosevelt Urban Revitalization Area Plan if it finds the amendments are inconsistent with the Qualifying Criteria.

MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The developer, RES Development, Inc. has proposed amendments to the adopted Roosevelt URA Plan that are consistent with the “Qualifying Criteria” for the URA area, with the exception of the amendment proposed for the north façade of the attached parking structure. The north façade is a significant element of the project’s design and transition to its surroundings that warrants the use of features that harmonize its appearance with the surroundings.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative #2, thereby amending the Roosevelt URA Plan with the conditions described in this report to include additional windows on the north façade of the building.

Attachment A – Request for Amendments – Pg. 1

RES DEVELOPMENT, INC.



Honorable Mayor and City Council Members,

January 20, 2015

This letter is a request to amend the Urban Revitalization Plan for 921 9th Street. Starting in April of 2013, RES Development, Inc., set off on an ambitious journey to repurpose a vacant but historically significant school building and produce a high quality urban infill development. As of today, we have substantially completed the renovation and redevelopment of the old Roosevelt School. The reality of adaptive reuse is that due to a number of valid reasons, many complex decisions are necessarily decided verbally in the field by qualified individuals rather than in more traditional meeting room settings with paper and pen. Below is a list of minor changes that were required to accomplish our goals of seeing Roosevelt Reimagined:

1. Reduced number of units: Always designed as owner occupied units, we gave residents an opportunity to customize their living space. The result is that it reconfigured our unit count from 23 to 20 condos.
2. Parking structure size reduction: Given the reduced number of units (see above), and the “pedestrian orientation” of many of the unit owners (due in part to the Roosevelt’s conveniently close location to downtown, ISU, bus lines and Mary Greeley facilities) the number of parking structure spaces was correspondingly reduced from 31 to 25 which is compliant with city parking capacity code. In addition to reducing the demand for potentially underused building size and materials, one direct benefit of the reduction was a resulting increase in usable green space on the east/park side of the structure.
3. Parking structure windows: As construction of the project evolved it became clear the west elevation of the parking structure would be the most viewed side by unit owners and the east elevation the most viewed side by park patrons. Conversely, the north elevation is primarily only seen by quickly passing automobile traffic with no visual tie-in to the rest of the Roosevelt building and its design themes. However, simply by moving the windows originally planned for the north elevation around to the west and east sides, a natural tie in to the west and east facades of the original Roosevelt school building and its new large windows was created and provided enhanced architectural continuity.
4. Atrium materials: Balancing design considerations with structural engineering requirements, sometimes not apparent until construction has begun, often requires significant compromise. Such was the case with the reduction of glass surface area in the atrium area as the necessary approach to effectively connecting the new and existing structures together. Use of steel siding, complimentary in color and design to all connected structures, provided the most viable visual and engineered solution for this area while still allowing for soaring glass exposure in the atrium.

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Attachment A – Request for Amendments – Pg. 2

5. Landscape plan. Maintaining harmony with the new city park to the east of the Roosevelt while also forming a subtle, tasteful, yet clear boundary between public and private lands was a primary goal in the modified landscape plan. This new plan incorporates these minor modifications without substantially changing the original plan.

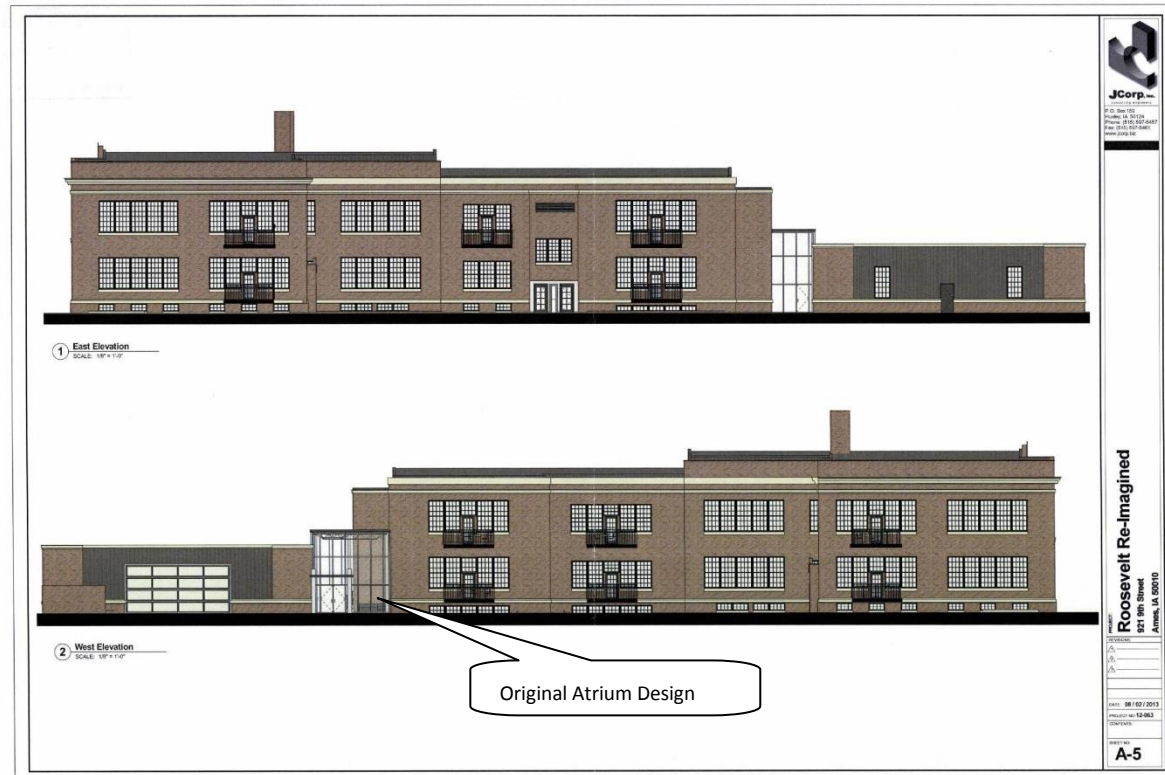
We appreciate your consideration of approving these changes within the demanding context of adaptively reusing a historically significant building and look forward to cooperatively working with you in the future as the project continues to evolve.

Respectively yours,

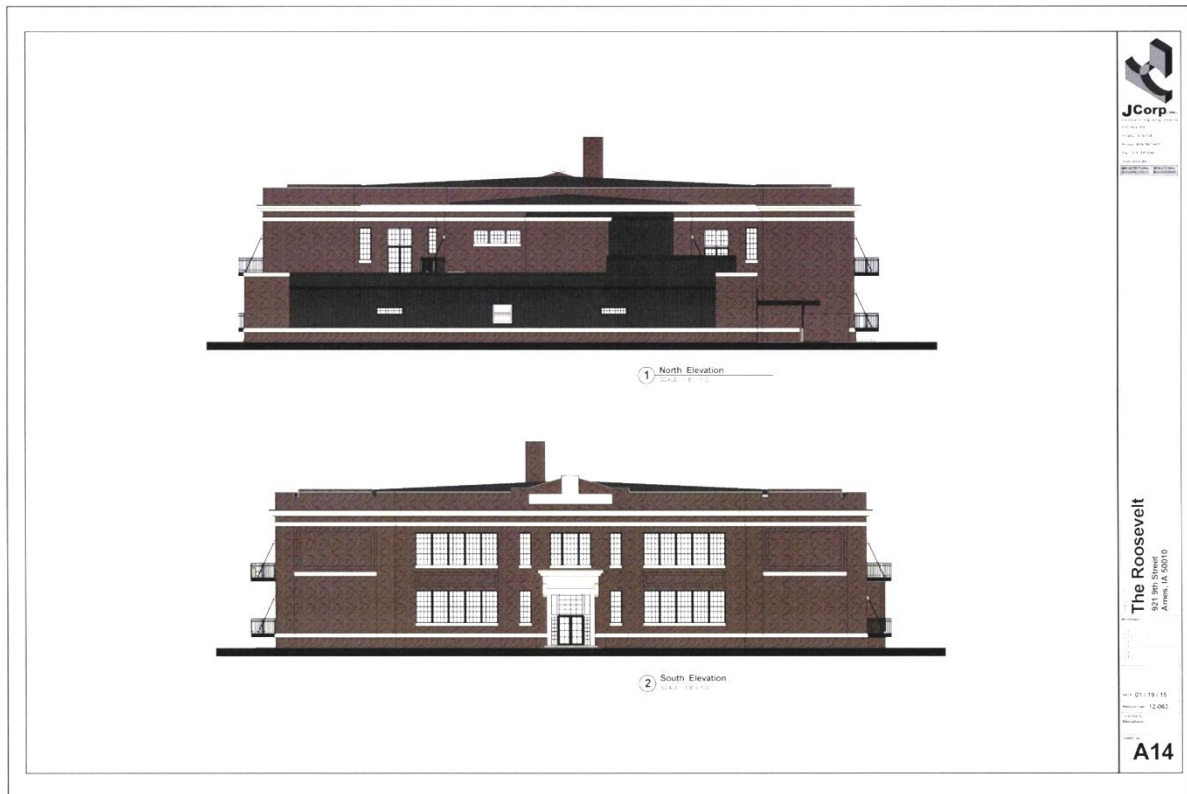
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dean Jensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dean Jensen
RES Development, Inc.
2519 Chamberlain – Suite 101
Ames, IA 50010

Attachment B – Approved Building Elevations



Attachment C – As-Built Building Elevations



Attachment D – Atrium as Constructed (West and East Sides)



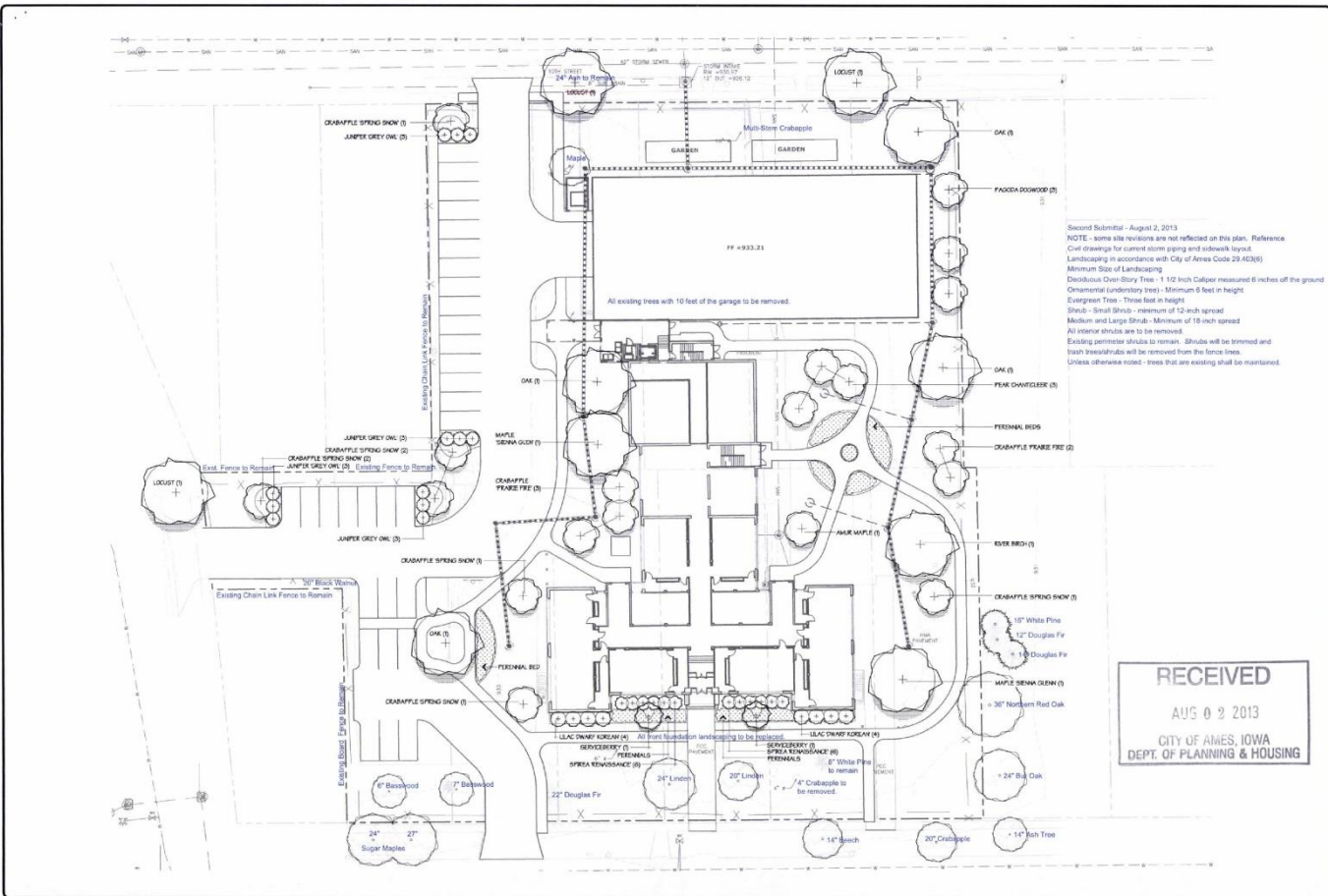
Attachment E – Approved Landscape Plan

SHEET L.01



AMES, IOWA

ROOSEVELT SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT

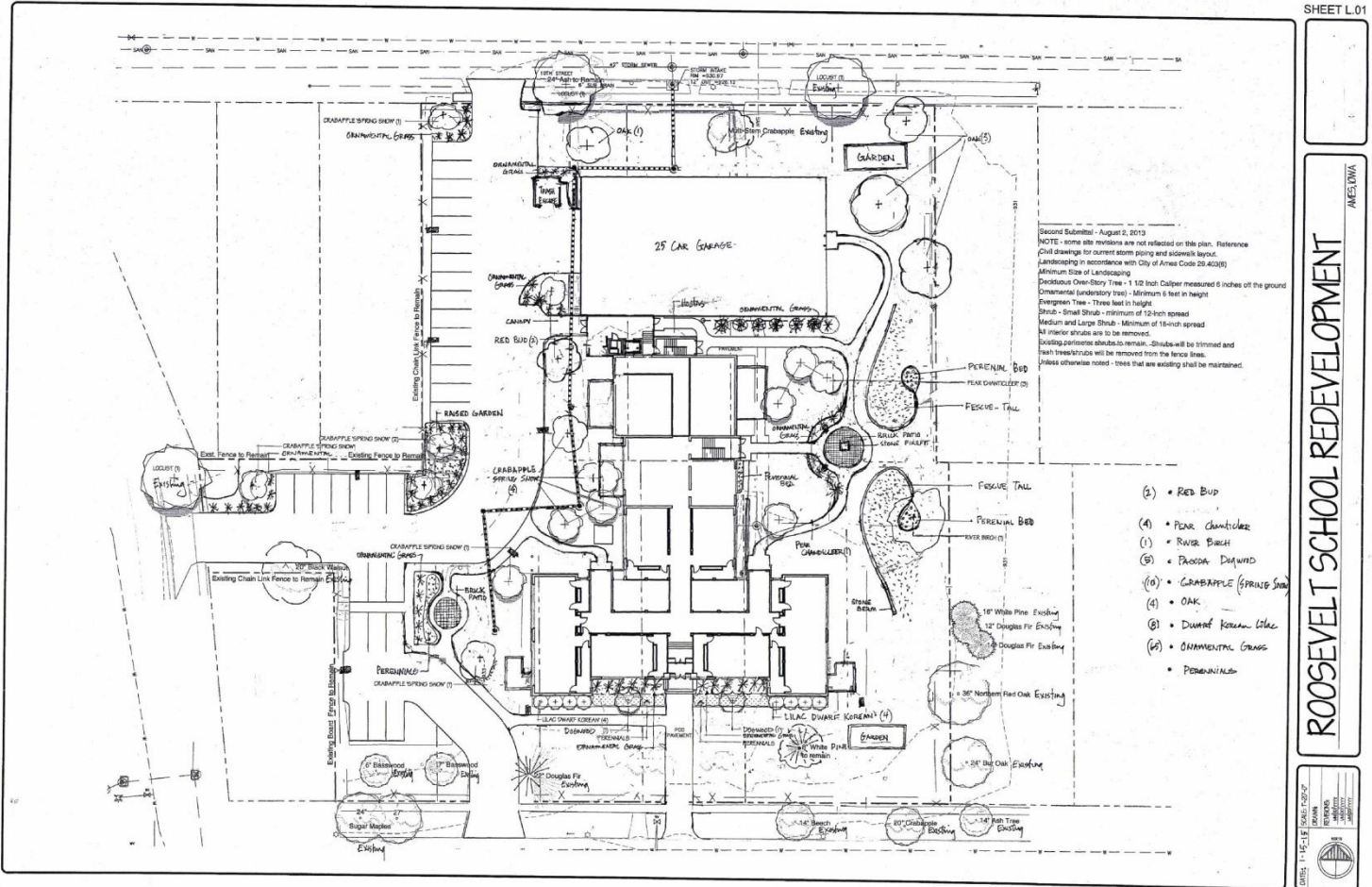


Second Submittal - August 2, 2013
 NOTE: some site revisions are not reflected on this plan. Reference Civil Drawing for current storm piping and sidewalk layout. Landscaping in accordance with City of Ames Code 29.4C(3)(5) Minimum Size of Landscaping
 Deciduous Over-Story Tree - 1 1/2 inch Caliper measured 6 inches off the ground
 Ornamental (understory tree) - Minimum 6 feet in height
 Evergreen Tree - Three feet in height
 Shrub - Small Shrub - minimum of 12 inch spread
 Medium and Large Shrub - Minimum of 18 inch spread
 All interior shrubs are to be removed.
 Existing perimeter shrubs to remain. Shrubs will be trimmed and lawn areas/mulch will be removed from the fence lines.
 Unless otherwise noted, trees that are existing shall be maintained.

RECEIVED
 AUG 02 2013
 CITY OF AMES, IOWA
 DEPT. OF PLANNING & HOUSING

Attachment F – Revised Landscape Plan

SHEET L.01



ROOSEVELT SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT



Attachment G – East & West Parking Structure Facades



Attachment H – North Façade of Parking Structure



Attachment H – North & East Façades of Parking Structure



Attachment I – Landscape Area North of Parking Structure

