

## **Excel Academy Charter School, Project Summary**

### **3 March 2014**

Excel Academy is proposing to build a campus on Bremen Street in East Boston for a new High School and Middle School. The High School will serve the three Excel Middle Schools in East Boston and Chelsea, as well as the Orient Heights school which will relocate to the proposed campus. The High School and Middle School have two separate entrances. The middle school and shared spaces will be located on the first floor, and the high school will occupy the second and third floors.

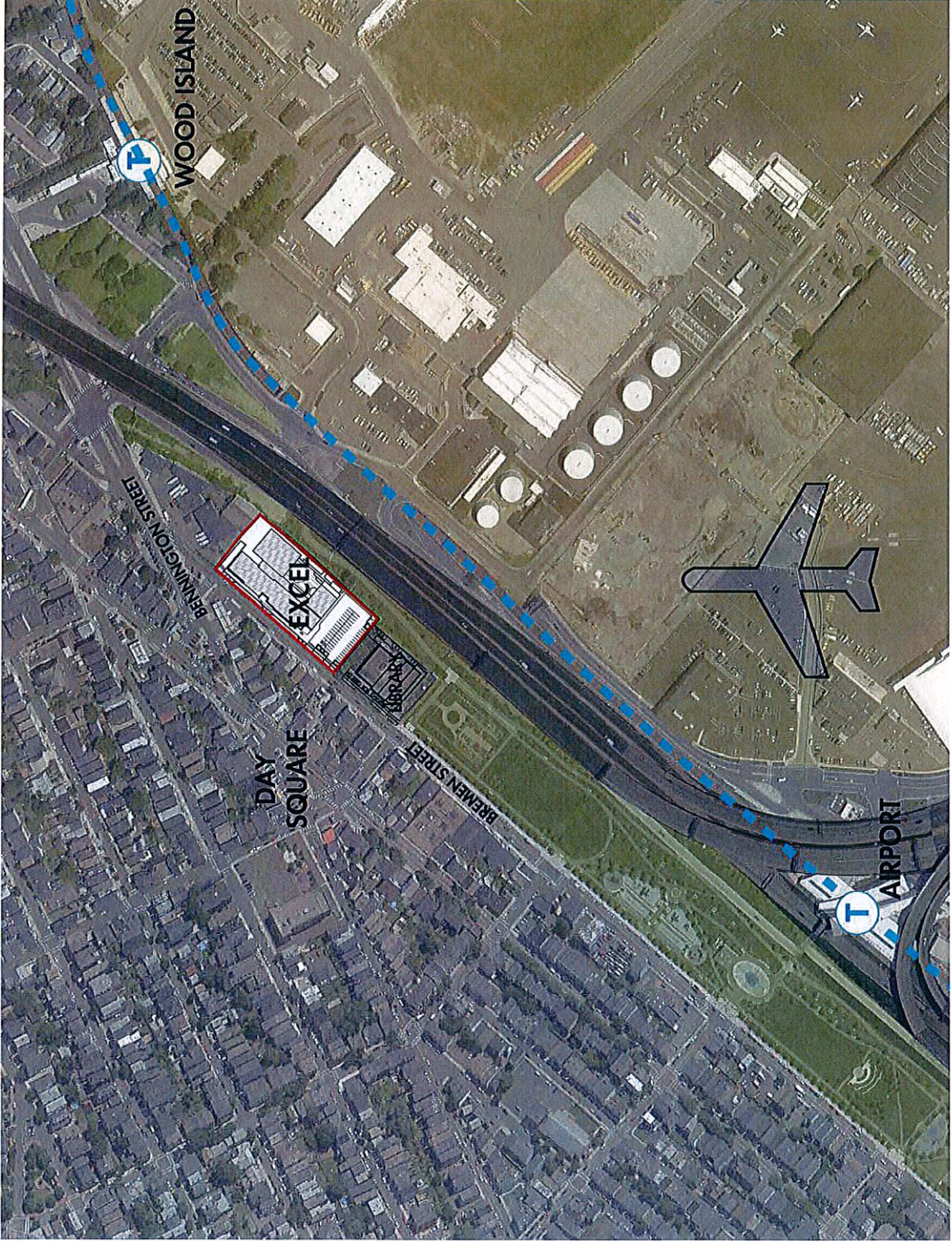
The two-acre site is the former Paul's Airport Parking, and it entirely paved. The site is located near the Airport Station MBTA on the Blue Line, just behind the new East Boston Branch of the Boston Public Library, with the Bremen Street Park beyond. The site abuts the elevated Route 1A / Massachusetts Turnpike Extension to the south, the Library's parking and mechanical plant to the west, with a gas station, dense two- and three-story residential properties and an automobile repair shop to the north. To the east is an unused, undeveloped paved parcel. A zoning variance is required to allow for educational use.

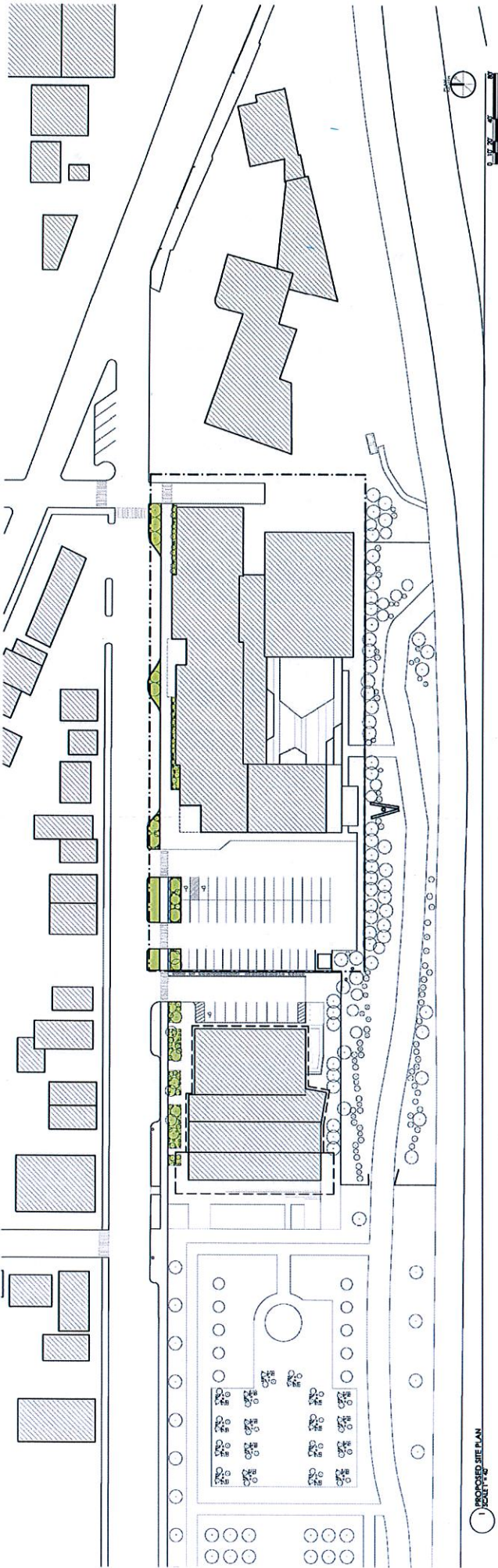
The site is part of a former railroad and industrial zone re-developed as community spaces, including the East Boston Greenway, the Library and the YMCA. Excel Academy would contribute an important educational institution to this continuous development of public buildings and services, and the broader revitalization of the neighborhood. It will also serve as a critical buffer between the residential neighborhood and the elevated highway.

Excel's campus is planned for 70,000 SF, including a three-story classroom building completing the street wall of Bremen Street, and a two-story cafeteria and a gymnasium framing a courtyard opening onto the Greenway beyond. The site plan includes a dedicated bus bay, school parking adjacent to the existing Library parking, and a car pick-up /drop-off. The sidewalk and planted beds of the Library extend along Bremen Street through the school site. Between the courtyard and the elevated highway, the existing Greenway plantings provide densely planted screening. A gate is proposed from the courtyard to the Greenway provide access to the pedestrian and bike path, linking the Bremen Street Park to the Airport and Wood Island T Station.

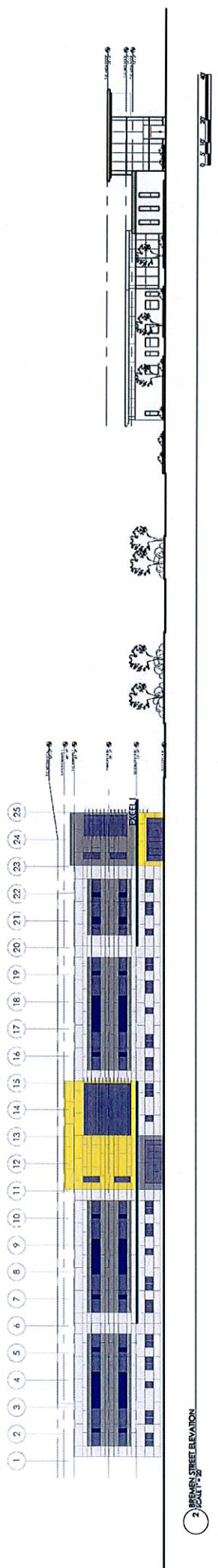
The proposed design divides the long elevation into bays the scale of the residential buildings across Bremen Street. Design elements of the library, including overhangs and louvers, are incorporated into the major entrances and public spaces. The cladding is high-density fiber cement accented with the school colors of blue and gold.

The Excel Academy design embodies the school's mission to be a strong contribution to the neighborhood community. The new campus will join a series of important community institutions in a revitalized urban fabric.



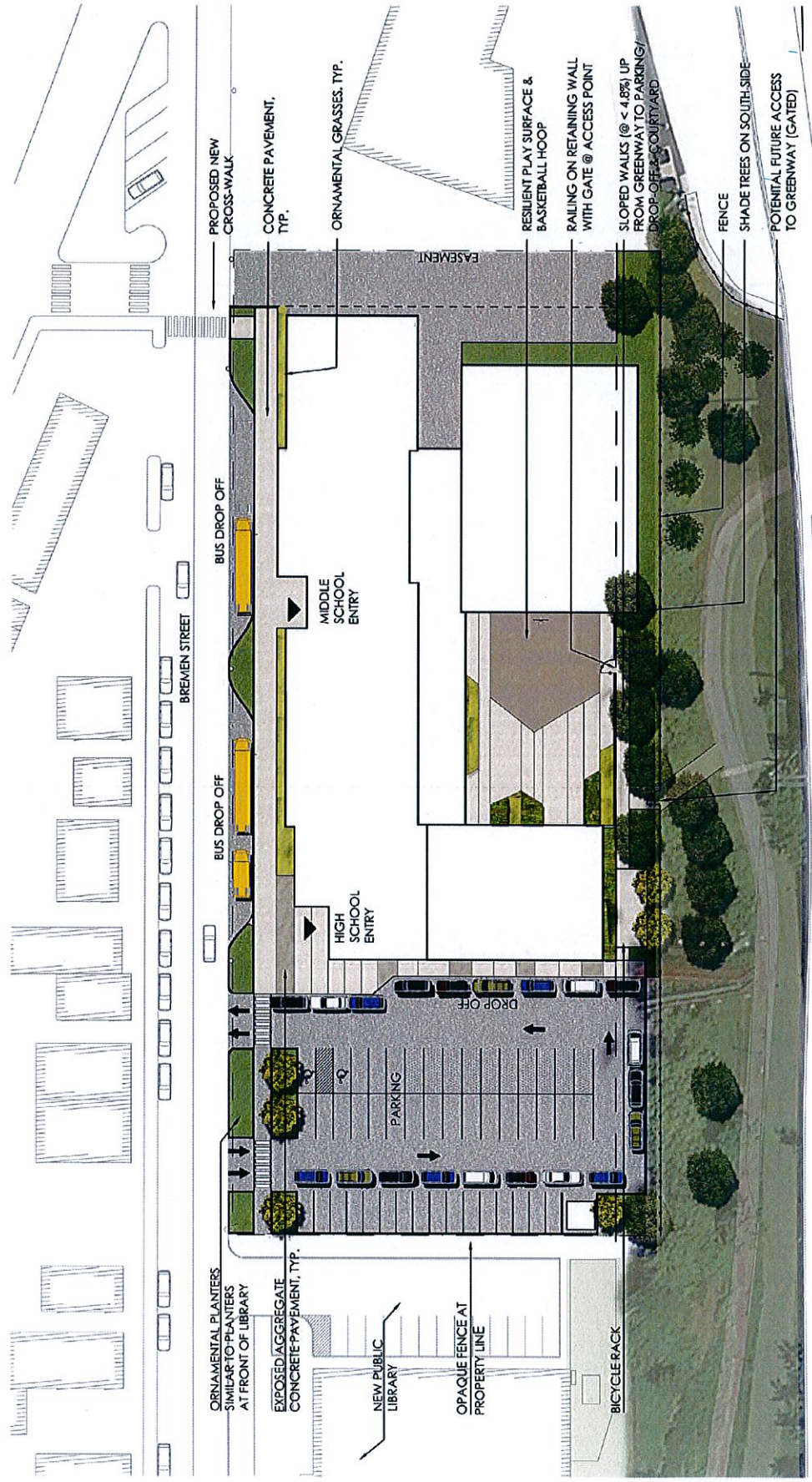


1 PROPOSED SITE PLAN



2 BREMEN STREET ELEVATION

**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
 BDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
 Site Plan & Bremen Street Elevation  
 Scale: NTS



PROPOSED NEW CROSS-WALK  
 CONCRETE PAVEMENT, TYP.  
 ORNAMENTAL GRASSES, TYP.  
 RESILIENT PLAY SURFACE & BASKETBALL HOOP  
 RAILING ON RETAINING WALL WITH GATE @ ACCESS POINT  
 SLOPED WALKS (@ < 4.8%) UP FROM GREENWAY TO PARKING/DROP-OFF & COURTYARD  
 FENCE  
 SHADE TREES ON SOUTH SIDE  
 POTENTIAL FUTURE ACCESS TO GREENWAY (GATED)

EASEMENT

BUS DROP OFF

BUS DROP OFF

MIDDLE SCHOOL ENTRY

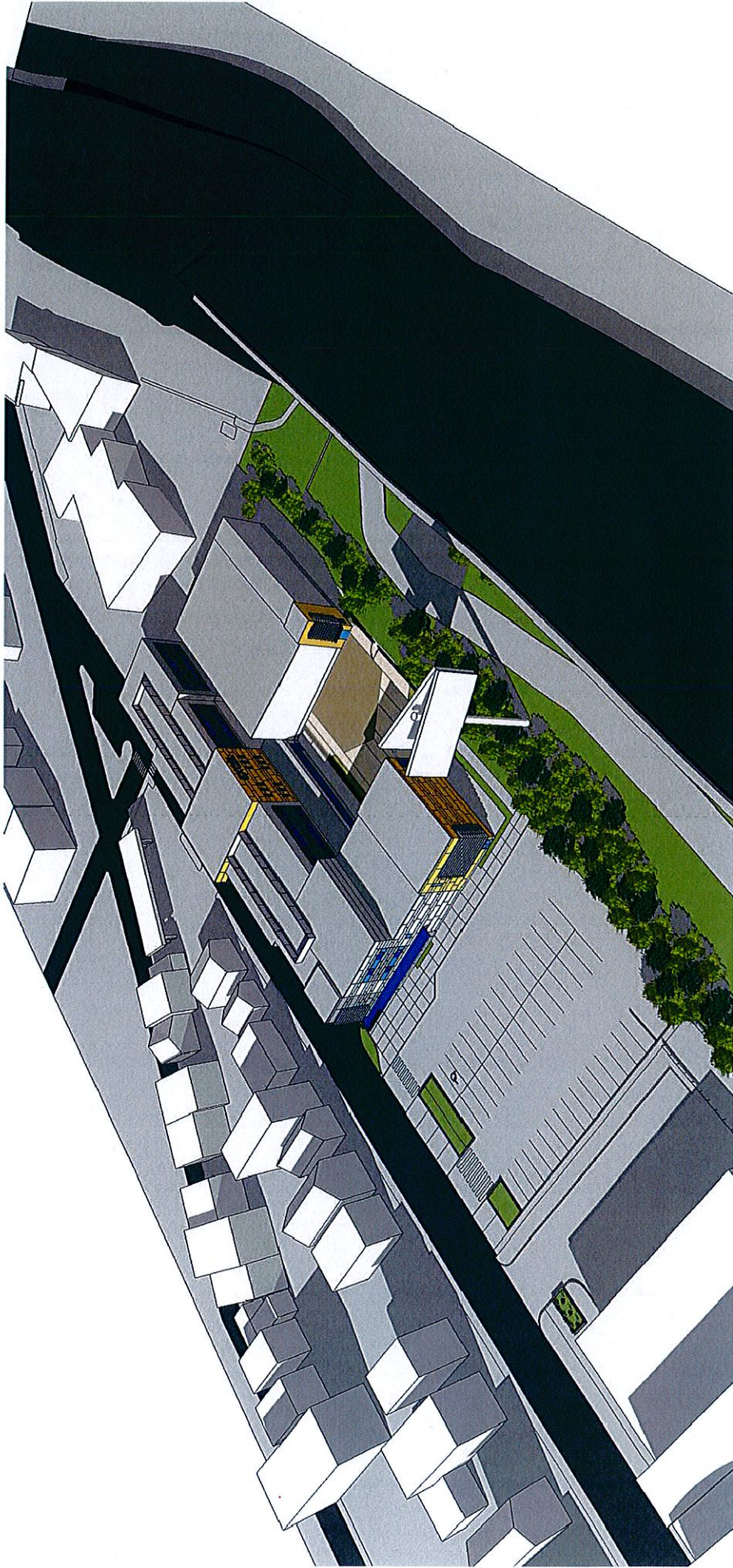
HIGH SCHOOL ENTRY

DROP OFF

PARKING

ORNAMENTAL PLANTERS SIMILAR TO PLANTERS AT FRONT OF LIBRARY  
 EXPOSED AGGREGATE CONCRETE PAVEMENT, TYP.  
 NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY  
 OPAQUE FENCE AT PROPERTY LINE  
 BICYCLE RACK

**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
 BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
 Site Plan Rendering  
 Scale: NTS



**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
Aerial View  
Scale: NTS



**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
View from Bremen Street  
Scale: NTS



**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
View of High School Entry  
Scale: NTS

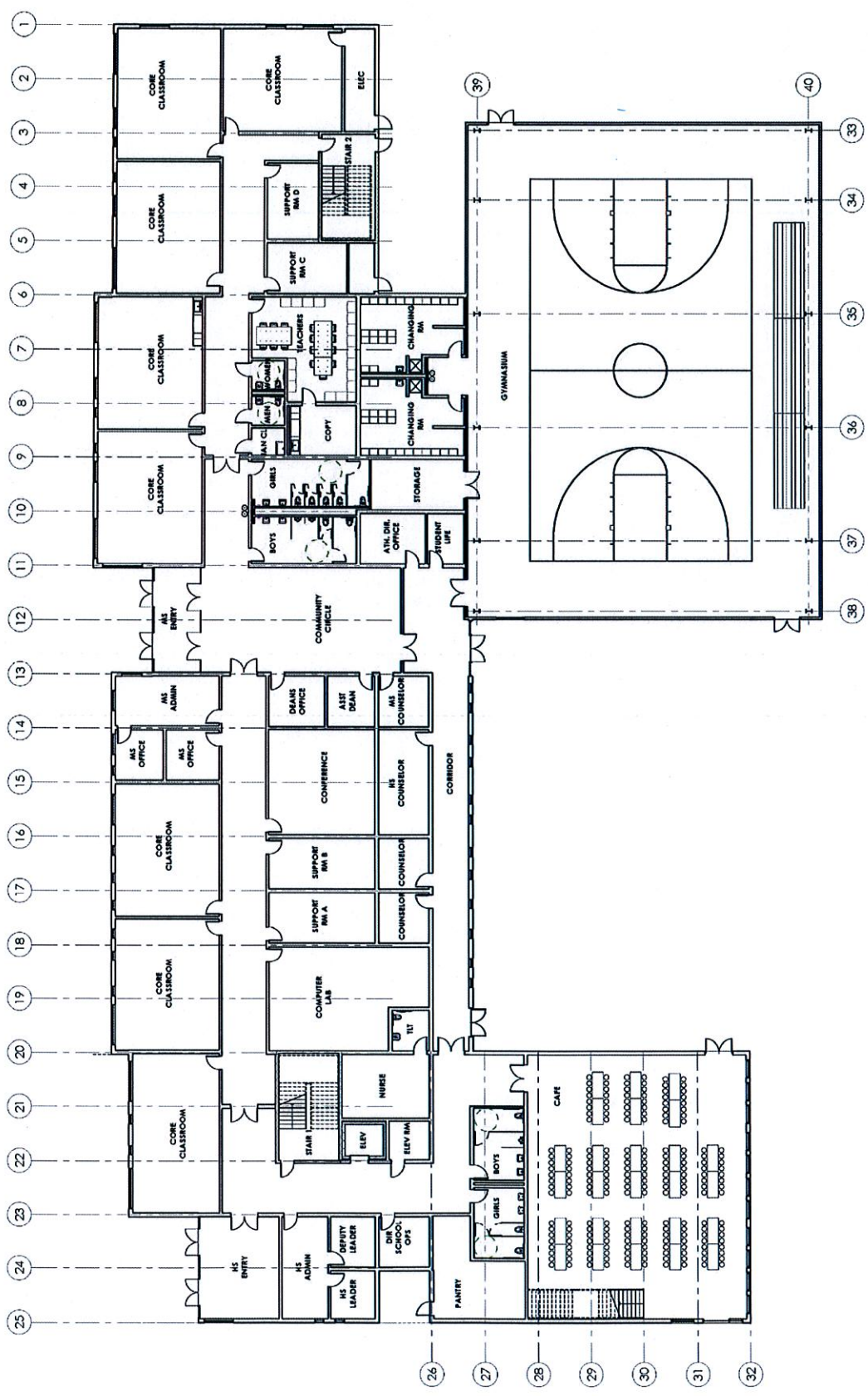


**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
View from East Boston Greenway  
Scale: NIS

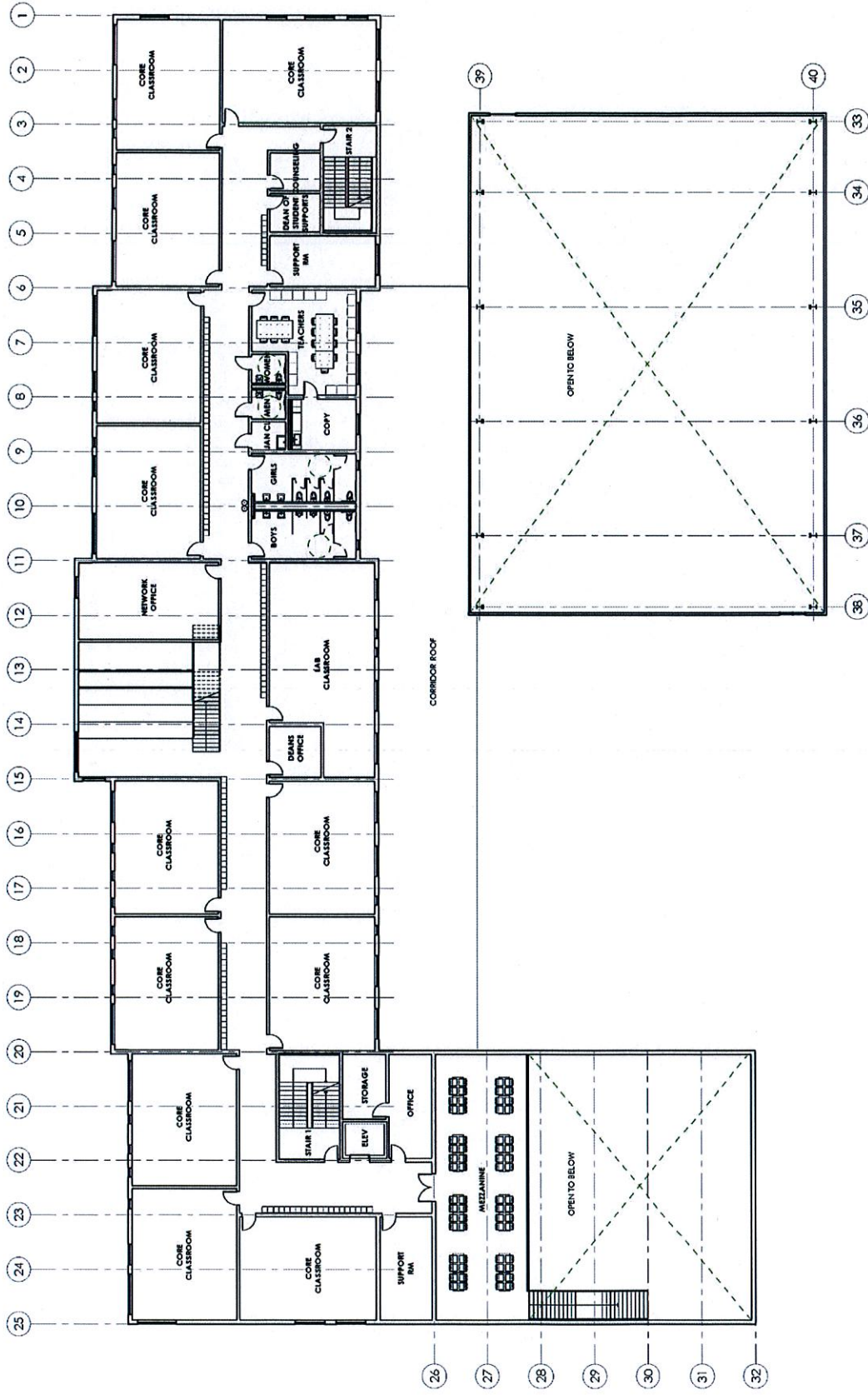


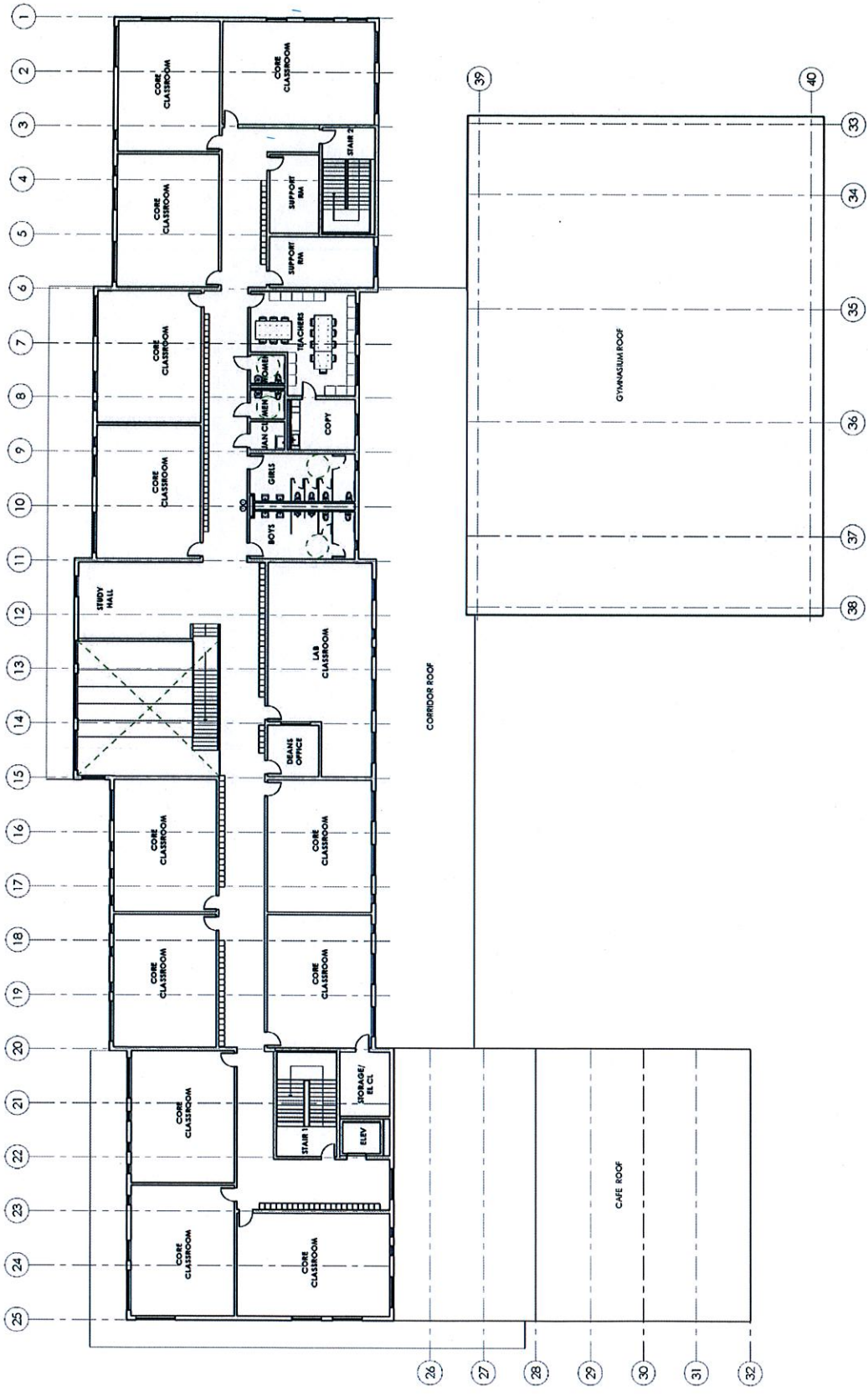


**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
View from Day Square  
Scale: NTS



**Excel Academy, Bremen St., Boston**  
 BCDC Meeting - 03/04/14  
 First Floor Plan  
 Scale: NTS





## MEMO

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**To:** Boston Redevelopment Authority  
**From:** Excel Academy Charter School  
**Date:** March 6, 2014  
**Re:** Excel Academy Middle – High School Project, 413 Bremen Street

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Please accept the following as Excel Academy's response to comments made on the school's Article 80 Project Notification Form submitted December 2, 2013.

**Examine surrounding intersections with respect to safety of students walking to school.**

*Excel is committed to the safety of its students and will use a variety of methods to ensure the safety of students walking to school as well as to mitigate the impact those students have on the surrounding neighborhood, including:*

- *Assigning school staff to key intersections during morning and afternoon opening and dismissal times,*
- *Continuing to work with the Boston Transportation Department to identify key roadway, signage, and signalization improvements in the area and advocate for funding of said improvements,*
- *Improvement of existing and construction of new sidewalk on Bremen Street.*

**Mitigate construction impacts on neighboring residents and businesses.**

*Excel is aware of the hardship that Bremen Street residents and businesses have recently endured as a result of the East Boston Branch Library construction and substantial Bremen Street road and utility improvements. Excel believes that it will have very limited public way construction work, but also realizes the impact of any major construction project. A Construction Management Plan will be submitted to the BRA which includes specific commitments related to construction traffic, construction worker parking, times of construction, maintenance of Bremen Street as an open public way, noise and dust mitigation, and appropriate neighborhood communications and notifications.*

**Coordinate access to and usage of the abutting Greenway with other users and organizations vested in this community asset.**



*Excel has met and/or spoken with the East Boston Greenway Council, Massport, and Boston Parks Department to discuss the school's proposed use and impact on the Greenway. These discussions will continue throughout the project planning, construction, and occupancy phases. Some specific items of discussion include:*

- Provision of a new pedestrian access way from Day Square to the Greenway at the north of the school building. Excel is agreeable to this potential use of the common drive at this location, but ownership and rights of this drive are shared with the property owner to the north, thus specific action needs to await development plans for that parcel and the school cannot speak for other owners.*
- Proper landscape design and buffering of the Greenway. Through a series of design revisions, Excel has added landscaped areas abutting the Greenway, pulled back parking from the Greenway at the south corner, and integrated its plaza design with the Greenway. Design coordination with the BRA and above mentioned Greenway constituencies will continue.*

**Be aware of and mitigate impacts of noise from Logan Airport.**

*Excel met with Massport officials who clearly described the operations of Runway 15R/33L, the proximity of the school site to the Runway, and how this location would be subject to noise levels above what the Federal Aviation Administration deems appropriate for school use. Massport officials have kindly notified Excel when the Runway was in use and Excel staff has visited the site during take-off and landing periods in order to observe the noise levels. Excel fully understands the frequency of Runway 15R/33L use, understands that patterns of usage can change, and accepts that it is choosing to locate a school facility at a location that will be subject to said airport related noise levels. Excel has directed its design team to incorporate sound mitigating features into the facility design consistent with the intent of the recommendations included in the January 6, 2014 comment letter from Massport.*

**Improve design of building façade and massing along Bremen Street with respect to colors, entrances, and scaling.**

*In response to comments from members of the project Impact Advisory Group and the BRA Urban design staff, the exterior cladding materials, fenestration, entrances, coloring, and exterior architectural detailing of the building have been significantly revised. In addition, the new design incorporates reuse of a portion of the historic WPA wall onsite. Excel believes that the resulting design is a substantial improvement and addresses the concerns reflected in the comments.*



**Provide community access to some of the facility amenities.**

*Excel has agreed to work with the direct neighbors and East Boston community groups to establish policies for sharing of certain school facilities during non-school hours, including:*

- *Use of the parking lot by residential neighbors and library patrons*
- *Use of gymnasium by community athletic groups/leagues*
- *Use of meeting space by community groups*

*The policies for shared use of these amenities will be based on the premise that the school must have full unimpeded access to its facility as needed to achieve its mission, the school will not be expecting to profit from community usage of its facility, and any incremental operating costs associated with outside community use should be borne by those users.*

**Manage vehicular traffic circulation to avoid blocking Bremen Street.**

*Excel has consulted with the Boston Transportation Department and believes it has designed a plan that will accommodate all private vehicles and school buses on-site during pick-up and drop-off periods. In addition Excel is committed to utilizing on-site and off-site staffing and management processes as necessary to minimize off-site traffic impacts, including:*

- *Staggered arrival and dismissal periods*
- *Fully staffed loading zones in the afternoons and mornings*
- *Radio communication to coordinate student dismissal from the building with corresponding vehicle arrivals*

This document does not respond directly to every comment received, but please do not interpret that to mean that Excel will be nonresponsive to such comments.

- With respect to many of the comments made by City of Boston Departments, Agencies and Committees, the school knows that the follow-on permitting processes will address these comments more specifically.
- With respect to the many valuable suggestions and ideas heard from the community, and in particular those from IAG member Ileana Cintron, regarding the school's enrollment, curriculum, special education programs, and diversity outreach, Excel is committed to a meaningful and continued collaboration with community leaders and organizations in order to best achieve these mutual goals.