

52 PLYMPTON STREET - SELDC - DESIGN REVIEW

Proposed Demolition & New Construction in the Protection Area

Tuesday, May 05, 2026

APPLICANT:

52 Plympton Street MKJB, LLC

555 East Second Street

Boston MA 02127

ARCHITECT:



STACK
ARCHITECTURE



PROJECT OVERVIEW



APPLICANT

52 Plympton St MKJB, LLC
555 East Second Street
Boston MA 02127

LEGAL COUNSEL

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SURVEYOR

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152 Hampden St.
Boston, MA 02119
(617) 357-9740

Welcome & Project Overview

We are pleased to present this proposal for Design Review by the South End Landmark District Commission. The project is located at 52 Plympton Street, within the Protection Area of the South End Landmark District.

The proposed development consists of a 7-story, 44-unit residential building, including 8 affordable live-work units reserved for artists at the ground level. The project also includes a publicly accessible gallery space, designed to activate the street edge and contribute to the creative and cultural fabric of the neighborhood. The proposed project is designed to comply with the dimensional requirements of zoning, including particularly maximum building height and floor area ratio.

The design seeks to balance contemporary performance goals with sensitivity to the South End's architectural context through thoughtful material selection, massing, and street-level engagement. The building's expression is enriched by the use of masonry cladding combined with wood accents and warm, muted tones that evoke the texture and rhythm of the surrounding fabric.

Purpose of this Presentation:

The purpose of this presentation is to address the comments provided by the South End Landmark District Commission (SELDC) during the advisory review held on December 2nd, 2025. Specifically, this presentation will:

1. Revise façade design and detailing of balcony recessed apertures to reinforce vertical hierarchy consistent with the character of the South End Landmark District Protection Area.
2. Change on the window proportions to taller and narrower apertures that emphasize the vertical hierarchy.
3. Show additional views of the material detail assembly at the Plympton Street facade



PREVIOUS ADVISORY REVIEWS



MAIN COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION:

August 5, 2025

- Alignment of ground floor windows with the the rest of the facade apertures.
- Replace all Glass railings with Metal Railings.
- Reconfigure ADA Ramp at the entry of the building.

October 7, 2025

- Emphasize verticality on the front facade and increase hirarchy between apertures.
- Inclusion of double doors at the main building entry.

December 2, 2025

- Recessing of the "Spandrell" elements infront of the balconies to have an increased vertical hierarchy.
- Emphasize the horizontal terminus at the top of the masonry facade.



**CURRENT DESIGN PROPOSAL
MAIN DESIGN UPDATES.**

- Elimination of masonry spandrell at balconies to emphasize vertical hierarchy.
- Increase presence of the horizontal band at the top of the masonry facade.
- Change on the window proportions to taller and narrower apertures that emphasize the vertical hierarchy.

DESIGN EVOLUTION COMPARISON



August 5, 2025



MAY 5, 2026

2" X 4" METAL
GUARD RAIL

8" METAL FASCIA TO
CAP THE TOP OF
MASONRY FACADE.

COVER BRICK
CLADDING.

STEEL METAL ANGLE
TERMINATING THE
COVER BRICK.

METAL GUARD RAIL

WOOD FASCIA
COVERING BALCONY

WOOD CLADDING
AT BALCONIES



CLOSE UP VIEW OF BALCONY

EXTERIOR MATERIALS



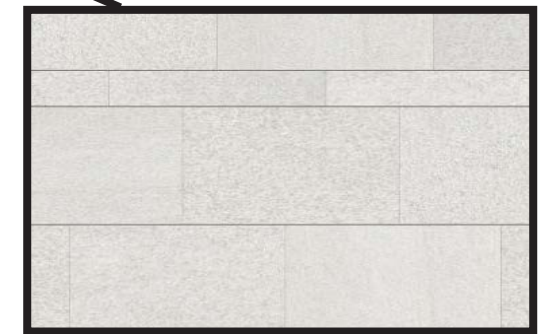
PETERSEN COVER BRICK



FIVER CEMENT LAP SIDING



WOOD CEILINGS



GRANITE BASE

THANK YOU



APPENDIX

52 PLYMPTON ST

52 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118

**NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

REFUSAL SET

PROJECT NUMBER: 25012

ISSUE DATE: 11/14/2025

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

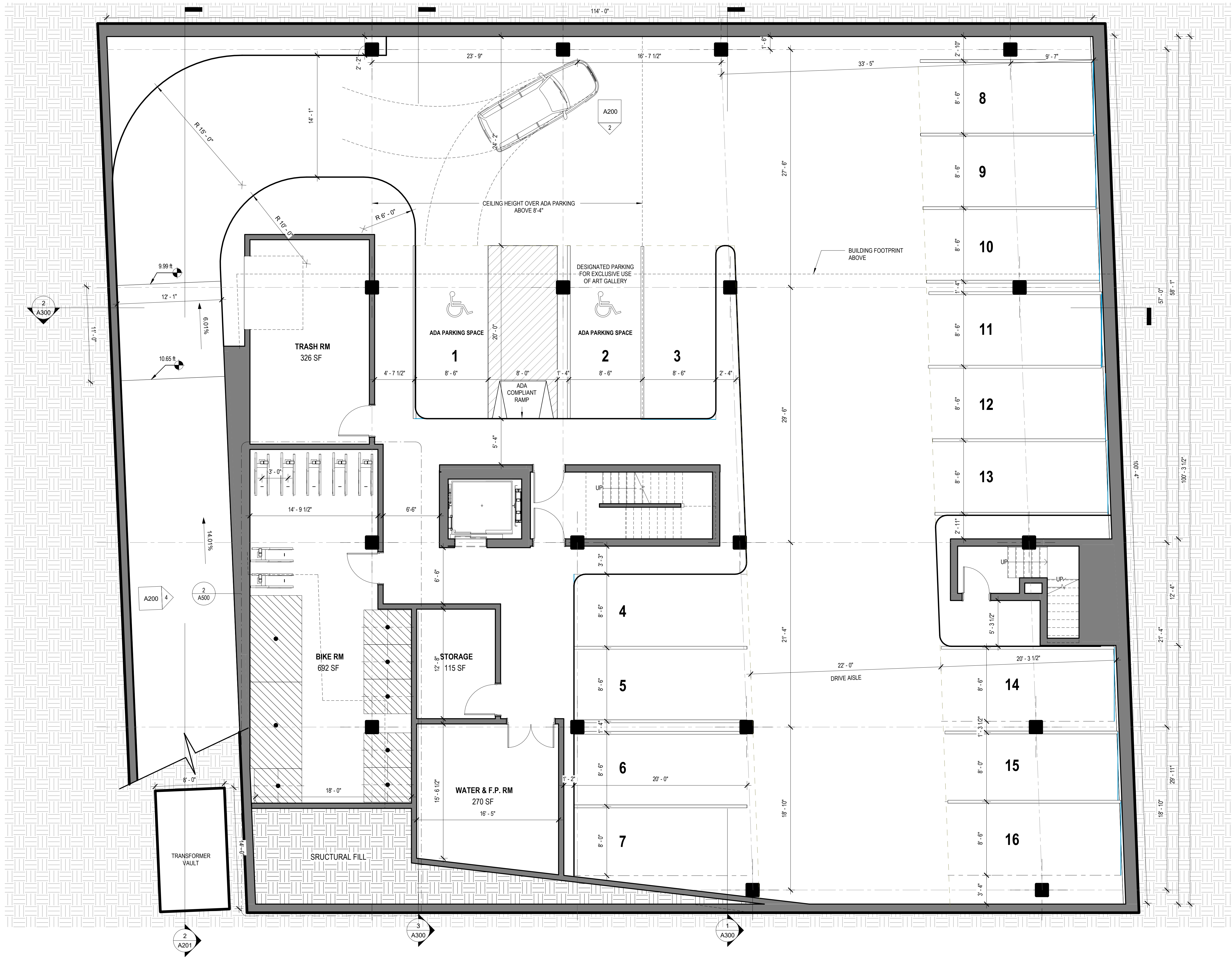
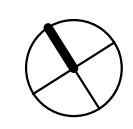
REVISION:

DRAWING NAME:

**FLOOR PLAN -
BASEMENT**

DRAWING NUMBER:

A100



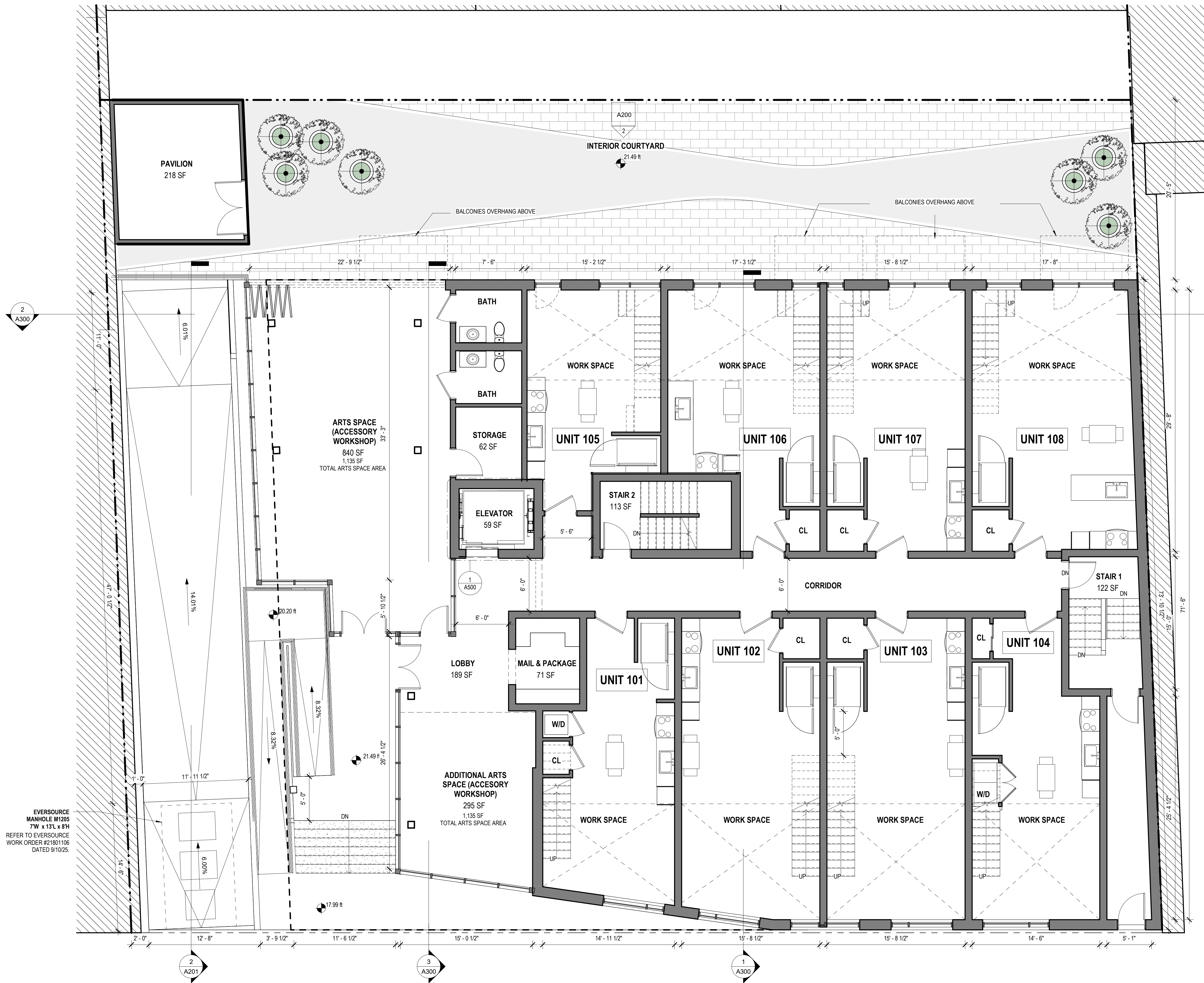
**NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

REFUSAL SET	
PROJECT NUMBER:	25012
ISSUE DATE:	11/14/2025
SCALE:	3/16" = 1'-0"
REVISION:	

DRAWING NAME:
**FLOOR PLAN -
GROUND FLOOR**

DRAWING NUMBER:

A101



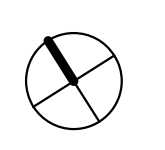
2
A300

EVERSOURCE
MANHOLE M1205
7'W x 13'L x 8'H
REFER TO EVERSOURCE
WORK ORDER #21801106
DATED 9/10/25.

2
A201

3
A300

1
A300



52 PLYMPTON ST

52 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118

**NOT FOR
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REFUSAL SET

PROJECT NUMBER: 25012

ISSUE DATE: 11/14/2025

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

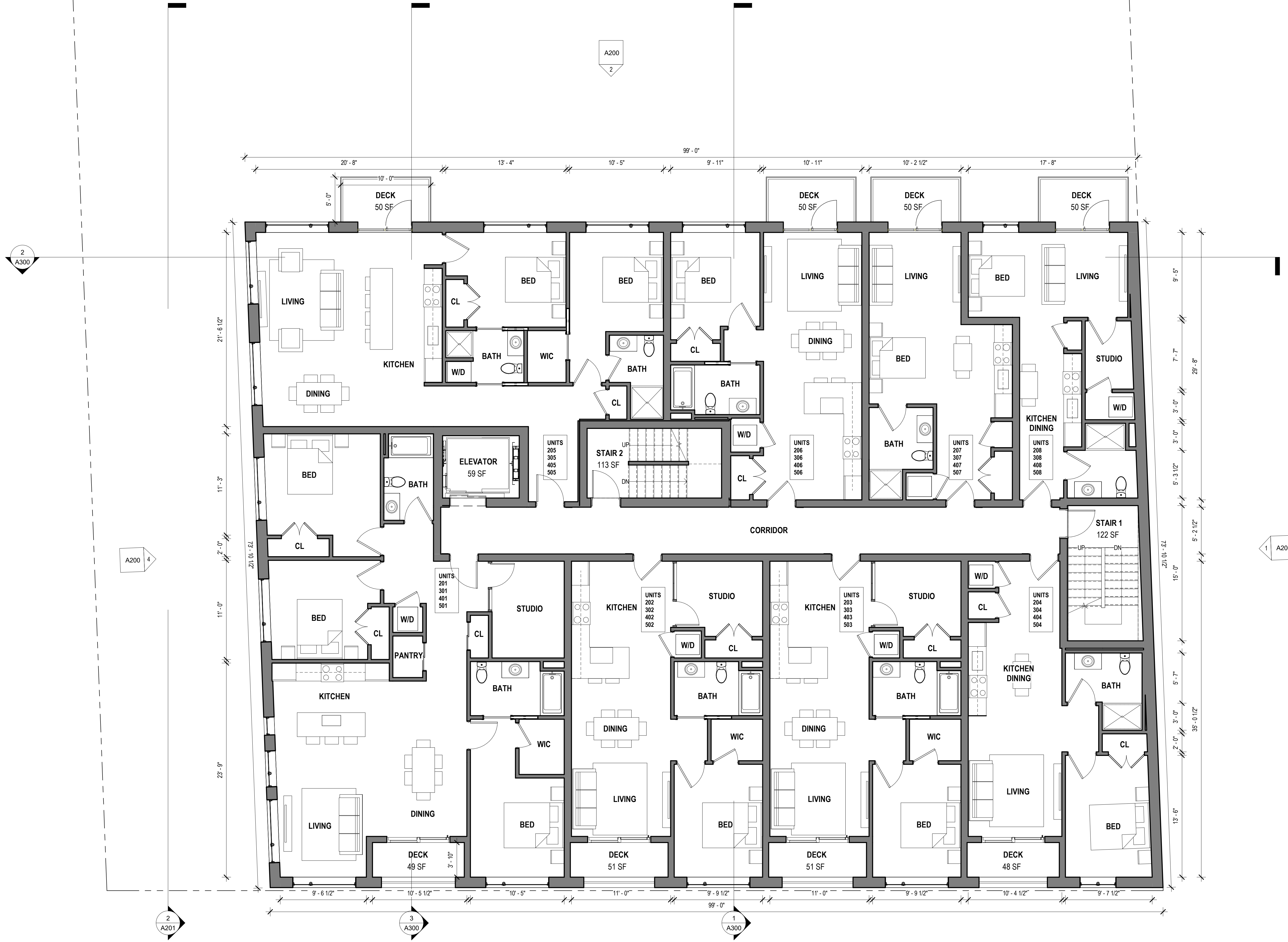
REVISION:

DRAWING NAME:

**FLOOR PLAN - LEVELS
2 TO 5**

DRAWING NUMBER:

A103



52 PLYMPTON ST

52 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118

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REFUSAL SET

PROJECT NUMBER: 25012

ISSUE DATE: 11/14/2025

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

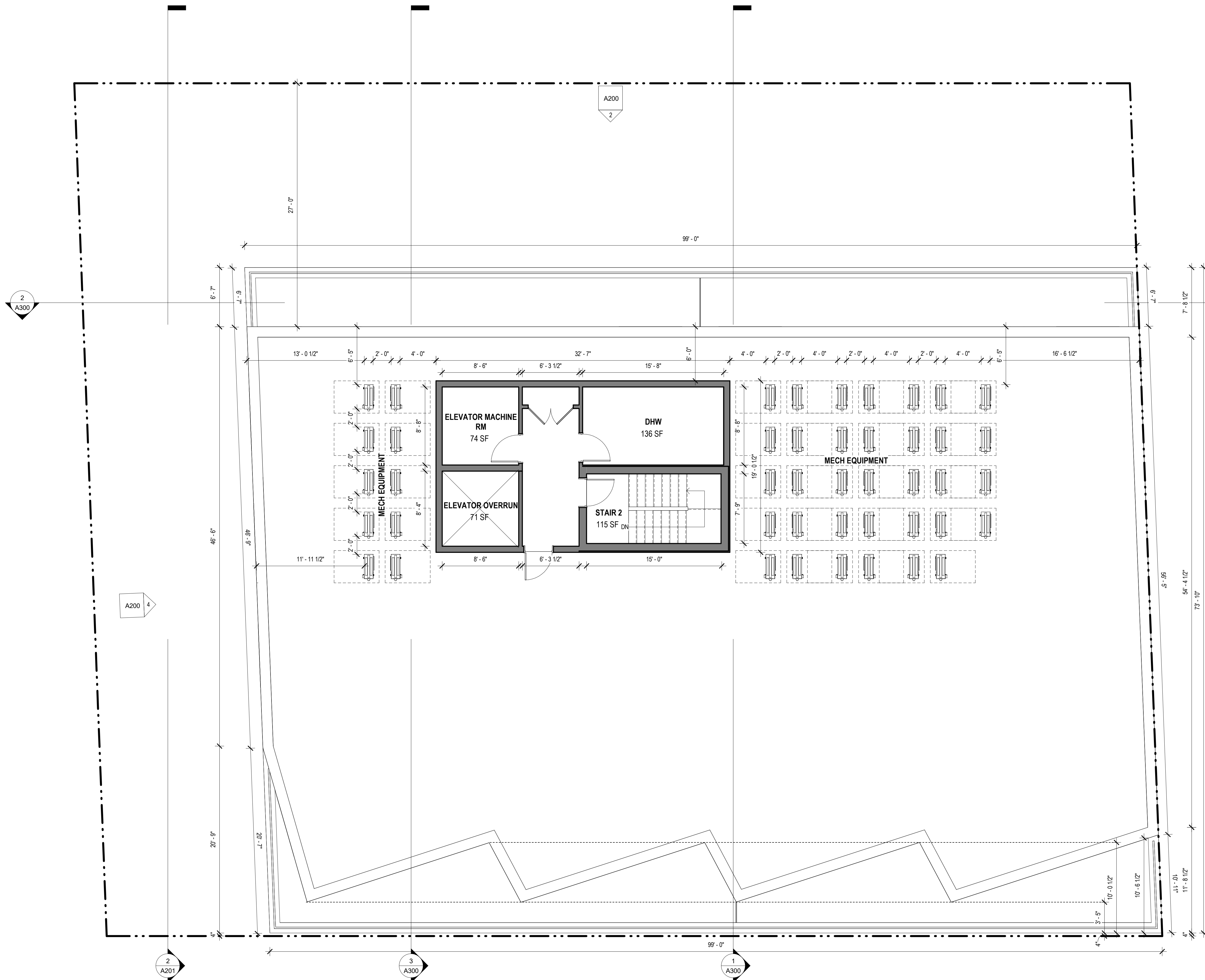
REVISION:

DRAWING NAME:

ROOF PLAN

DRAWING NUMBER:

A107



52 PLYMPTON ST

52 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118

**NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

REFUSAL SET	
PROJECT NUMBER:	25012
ISSUE DATE:	11/14/2025
SCALE:	3/16" = 1'-0"
REVISION:	

DRAWING NAME:
FLOOR PLAN - LEVEL 6

DRAWING NUMBER:

A106



**NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

REFUSAL SET

PROJECT NUMBER: 25012

ISSUE DATE: 11/14/2025

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"

REVISION:

DRAWING NAME:

**EXTERIOR
ELEVATIONS**

DRAWING NUMBER:

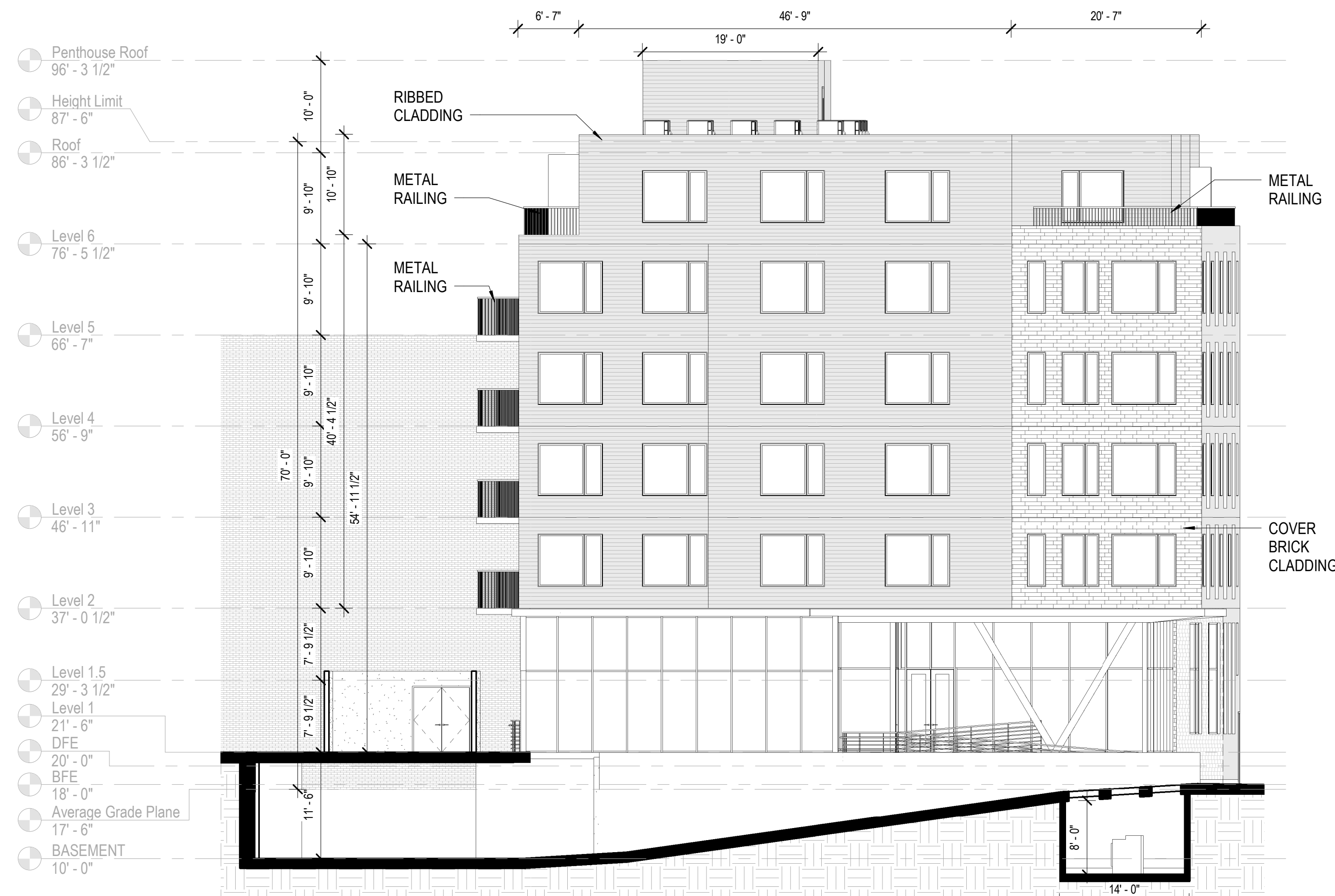
A200



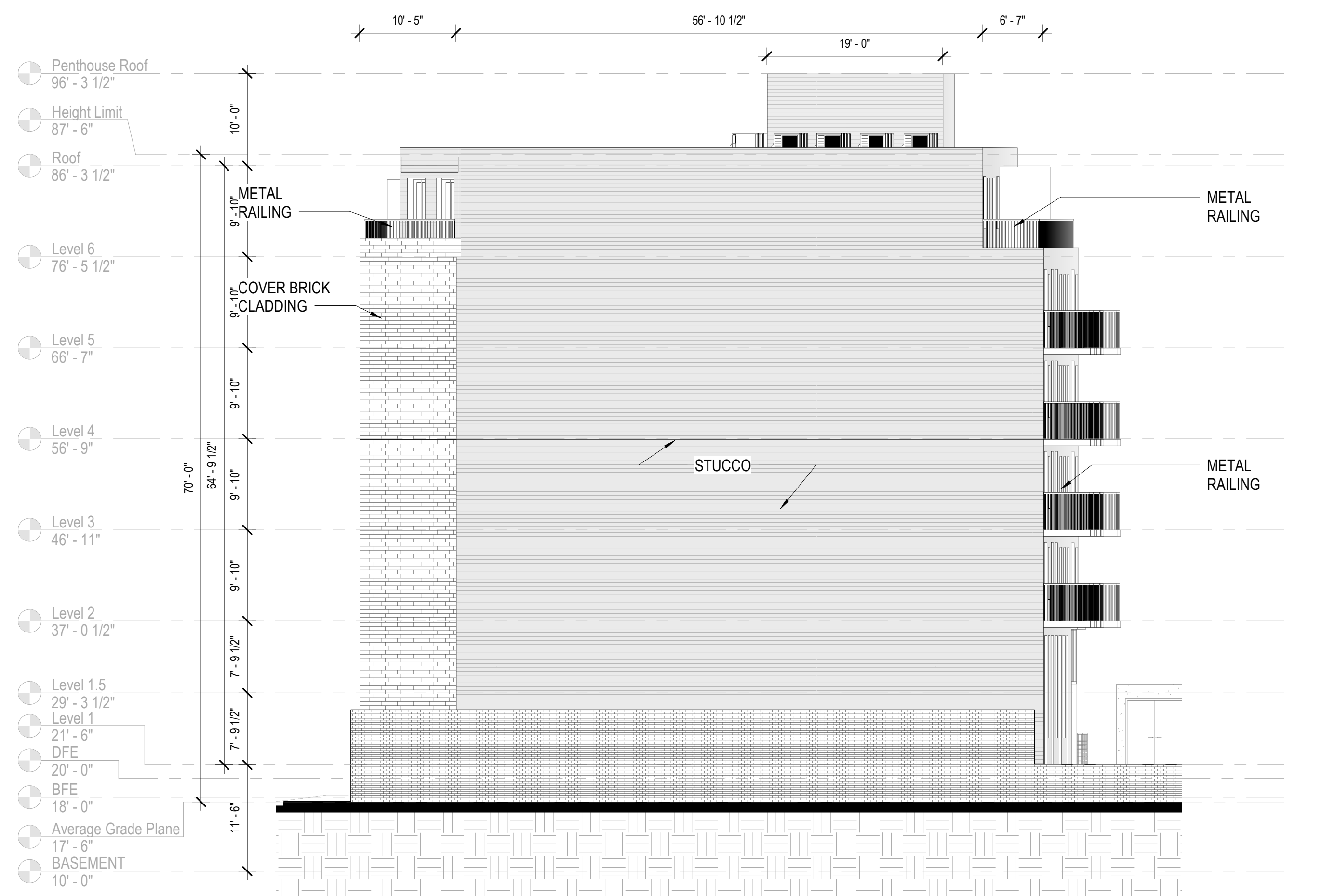
③ South Elevation
1" = 10'-0"



② North Elevation
1" = 10'-0"



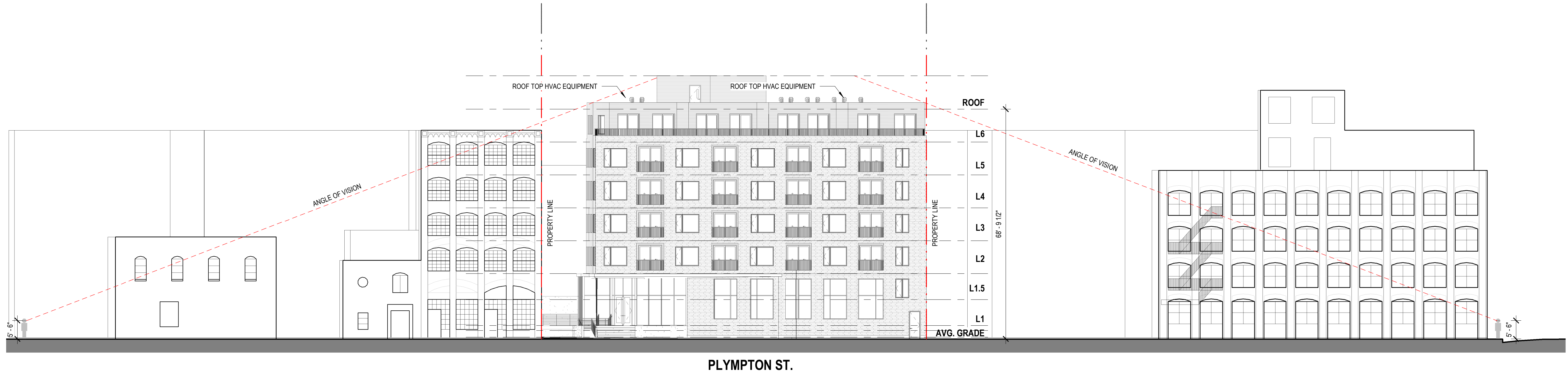
④ West Elevation
1" = 10'-0"



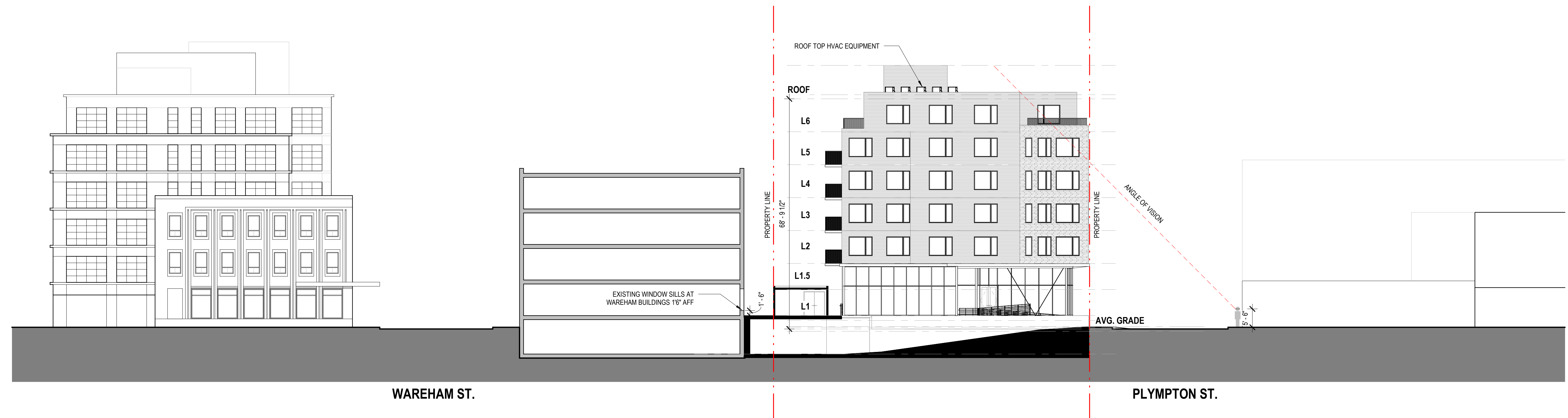
① East Elevation
1" = 10'-0"

52 PLYMPTON ST

52 Plympton St.
Boston, MA 02118



1 PLYMPTON ST WALL ELEVATION VIEW
1/16" = 1'-0"



2 STREETWALL SECTION ELEVATION VIEW
1/16" = 1'-0"

**NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

REFUSAL SET

PROJECT NUMBER: 25012

ISSUE DATE: 11/14/2025

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

REVISION:

DRAWING NAME:

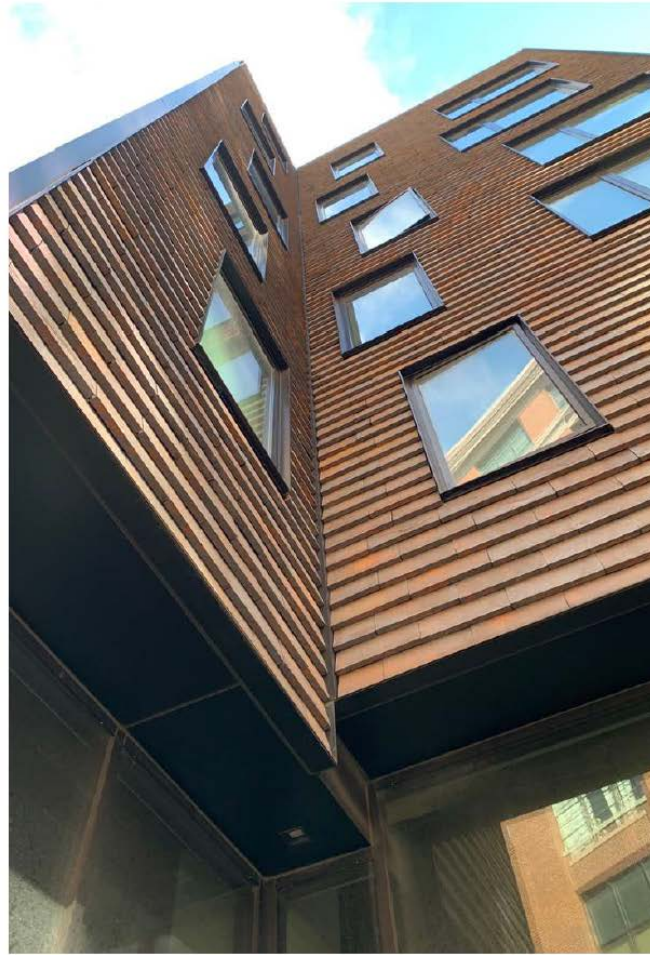
**STREETWALL
ELEVATIONS / ROOF
TOP EQUIPMENT
VISIBILITY**

DRAWING NUMBER:

A201

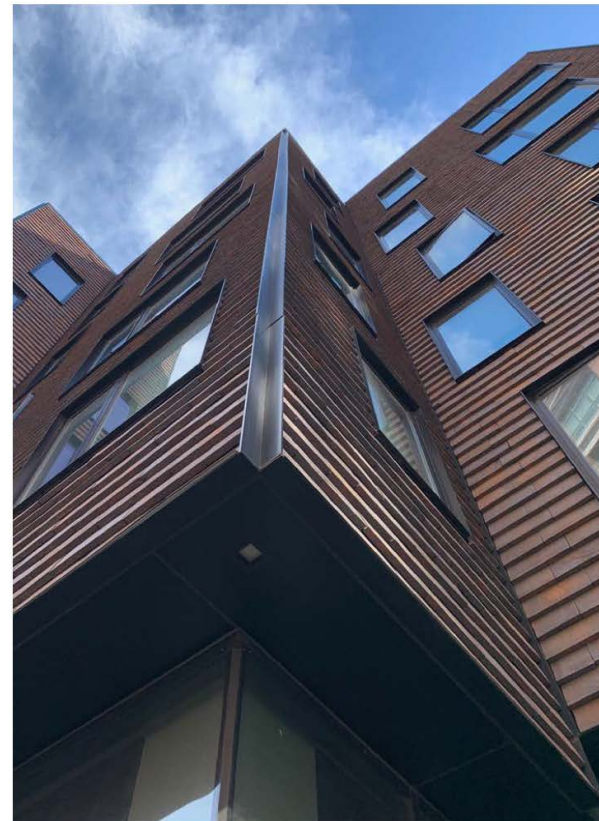
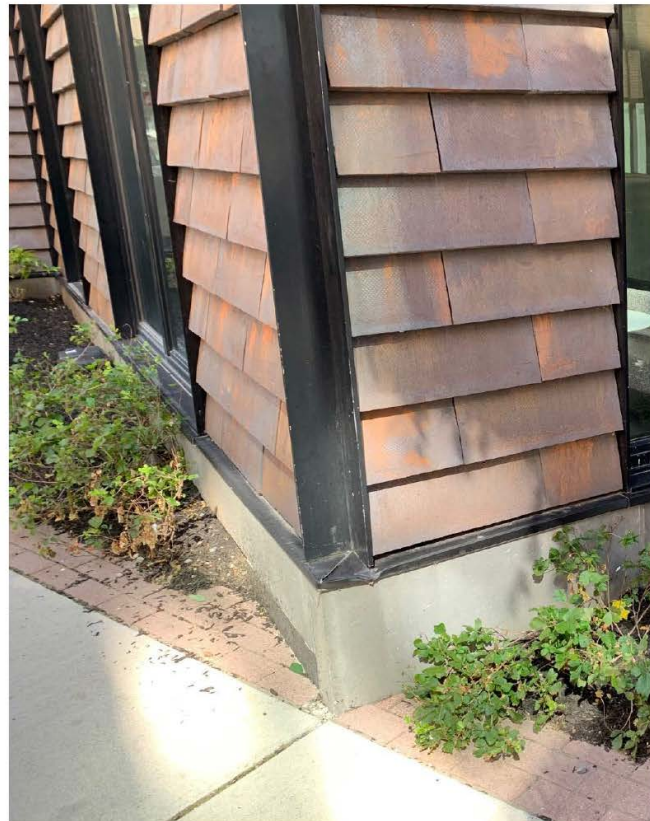
BUILDING MATERIALS

Cover Brick Assembly & Finishes



The "Cover Brick" comes in a variety of colors. The final selection of the color may be the subject of a future filing /meeting.

Detailing Examples - 35 W 2nd St, Boston, MA

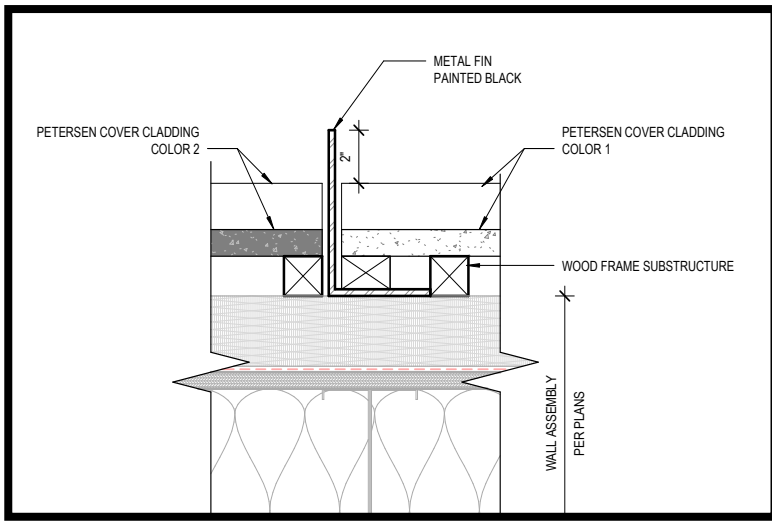


CLT Structural Framing

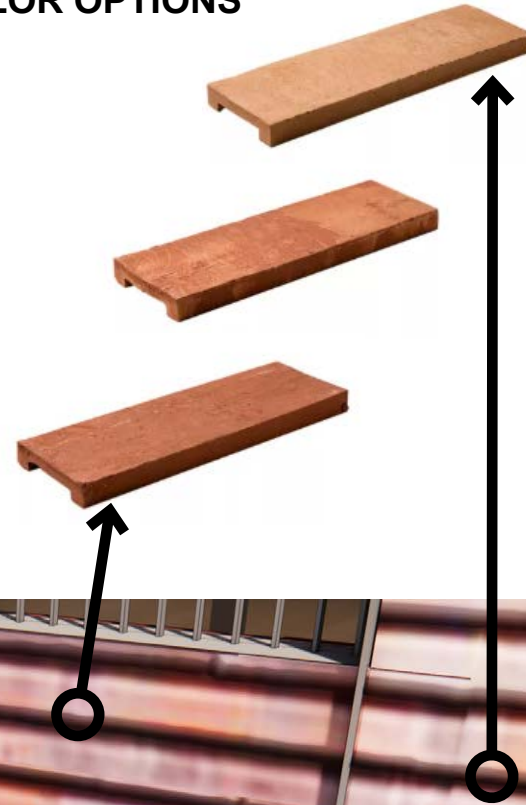


Wood Clad Entry Soffit





COLOR OPTIONS



EDGE DETAIL AT COLOR TRANSITION



CLOSE UP VIEW OF BALCONY



PROPOSED PLYMPTON ELEVATION VIEW

To enhance the vertical hierarchy of the balcony apertures, a projecting steel angle will frame the openings in a continuous vertical gesture that extends across most of the building's elevation. This metal edge will share the same black painted finish as the balcony railings and parapet copings.

Corner Entry Design



BUILDNG ENTRY 8/05/2025

In the original scheme, the public Art Gallery occupied the building's corner, while the lobby entrance was placed between the gallery and the ground-floor artist units.



CURRENT BUILDING ENTRY

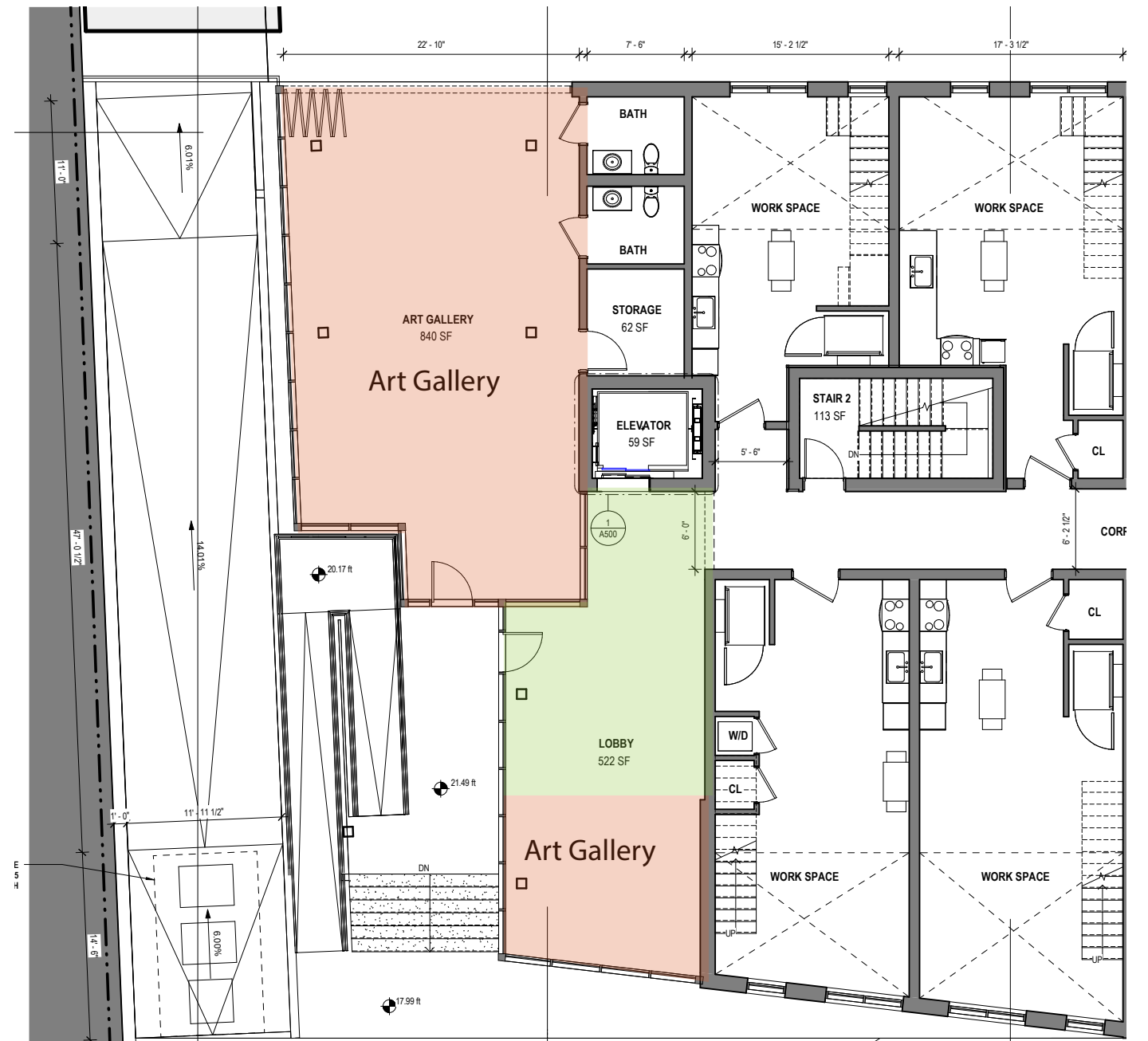
In the current scheme, the lobby entry has been relocated to the corner, establishing a clear and visible destination from the street. Both the Lobby and Art Gallery are enclosed by glass on approximately 75% of their perimeter, allowing visual connections through the building and into the Interior Courtyard. To support this level of transparency, lateral structural loads are resolved through a distinctive "V" column configuration, which provides bracing while forming a strong and welcoming architectural gesture.

Art Gallery Configuration



GROUND FLOOR PLAN 8/05/2025

In the initial design, the art gallery was a narrow space flanked on two sides by the lobby and amenity area, with the intent that art exhibits could extend into the amenity space and flow outward into the Interior Courtyard.



CURRENT GROUND FLOOR PLAN

In the new scheme, the gallery has been expanded and organized into two distinct areas separated by the Lobby. A smaller gallery fronts the street to showcase artwork to the public, while a larger gallery is positioned directly adjacent to the Interior Courtyard. This larger space features a retractable glazed wall, allowing it to open fully to the courtyard and seamlessly accommodate larger art exhibits and events.

Façade and Window Alignment.



Exterior Elevations 8/05/2025

In the original design, the ground floor and mezzanine artist units were not vertically aligned with the floors above, and this was expressed on the façade through an intentional offset between the ground-floor and upper-level windows.



Current Exterior Elevations

In the new proposal, the size and placement of all apertures have been reorganized to achieve a consistent vertical alignment between windows on the ground floor and the upper levels. This approach brings the façade into better harmony with the architecture of the adjacent buildings and aligns with the overall character of the Protection Area.

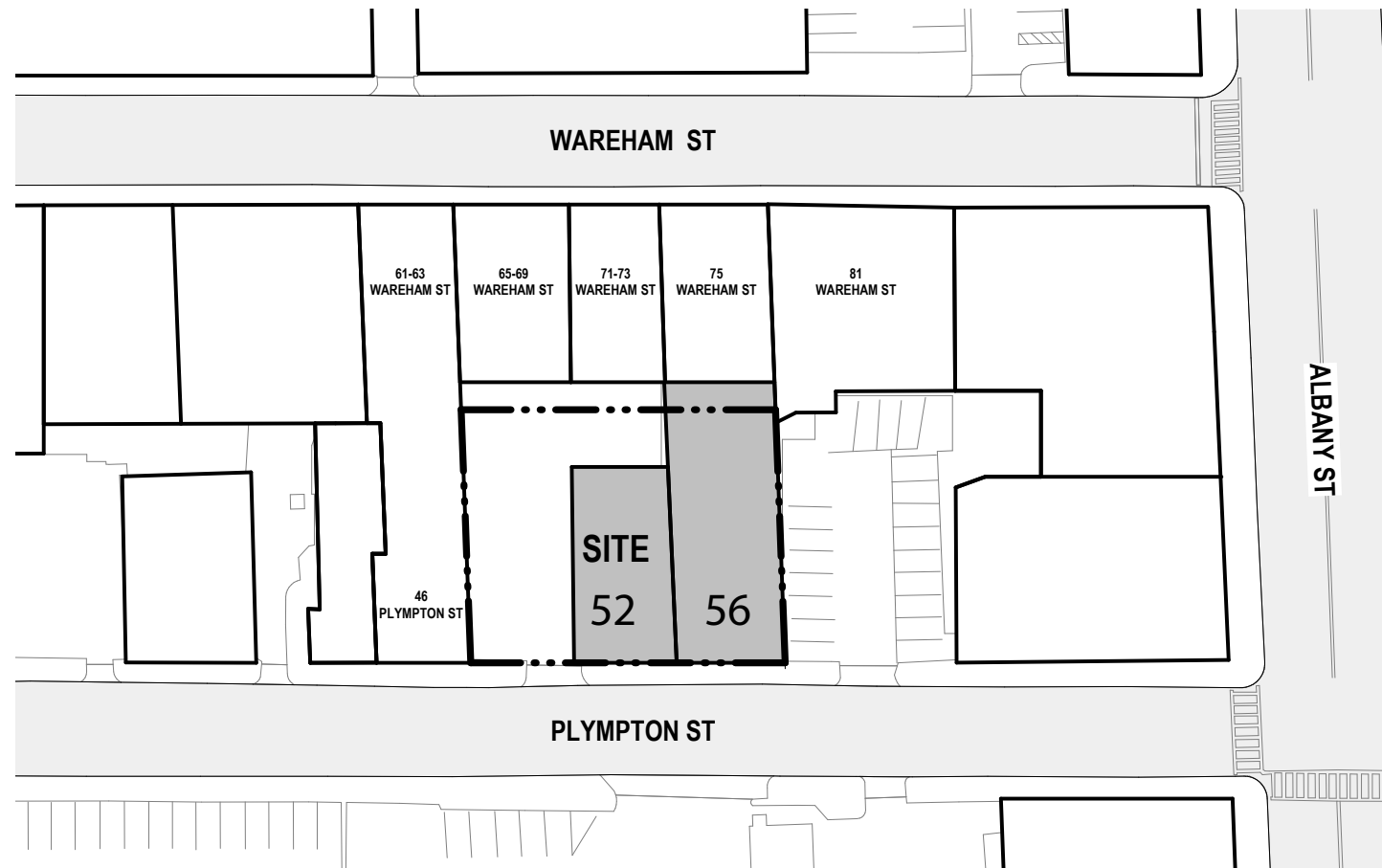
EXISTING STRUCTURES AND SITE BOUNDARIES

The project site is comprised of two adjacent parcels of land, identified as 52 Plympton Street (Parcel ID: 0801144000) and 56 Plympton Street (Parcel ID: 0801143001). Together, they form a single development site with a total area of 11,098 square feet and frontage along Plympton Street.

As previously documented, this combined lot is currently occupied by two structures:

- 3-story building at 52 Plympton Street: Constructed of timber-and-brick circa 1895, according to the attached MACRIS Inventory Form.
- 1 story garage at 56 Plympton Street: Of utilitarian design, built c. 1920 per the City Assessors records. It has no MACRIS form and is typical of light-industrial infill structures.

As will be detailed in the following section, both buildings show significant evidence of deterioration, and previous alterations have diminished their architectural integrity.



Existing Site Plan



Parcel ID: 0801144000
Address: 52 Plympton St
Classification Code: 0317 (Warehouse)
Property Type: Commercial
Living Area: 7,980 sf
Year Built: 1895 (MACRIS)



#1481 BOS.1481
Pl. SOUTH END
USUS-8057.3
SE24 B
Area AD

ADDRESS 52 Plympton COR. Pl. SOUTH END
 NAME present original
 MAP No. 22-12 SUB AREA AD
 DATE 1890s Building Permit source
 ARCHITECT Nathan O. Hart Building Department source
 BUILDER Benjamin F. Dewing Building Department source
 OWNER original present
 PHOTOGRAPHS SE-5-B-6-88

TYPE (residential) single double row 2-fam. 3-deck ten apt:
(non-residential)

NO. OF STORIES (1st to cornice) 3 plus _____

ROOF flat cupola dormers

MATERIALS (Frame) clapboards shingles stucco asphalt asbestos alum/vinyl
 (Other) brick stone concrete iron/steel/alum.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION 1880s, three-story, red brick industrial structure with loading doors framed by cast iron columns and stone lintel. Structure is heavily altered, and is missing its cornice.

EXTERIOR ALTERATION minor (moderate) drastic

CONDITION good (fair) poor LOT AREA 3,074 sq. feet

NOTEWORTHY SITE CHARACTERISTICS _____

SIGNIFICANCE (cont'd on reverse)

The South End Industrial District is a largely intact grouping of late 19th to early 20th century brick industrial buildings with related tenements and worker housing. Many of the industries, attracted here by the proximity of rail and wharf facilities, were engaged in woodworking, stonecutting, shoe, piano and organ manufacturing, and related industries. These buildings form a remarkably cohesive built environment, an industrial corollary to the adjacent South End residential district.

This building contributes to the streetscape of the South End Industrial District and shares historical and architectural characteristics with other industrial structures in the district.

A



Parcel ID: 0801143001
 Address: 56 Plympton St
 Classification Code: 0332 (Service Garage)
 Property Type: Commercial
 Living Area: 4,128 sf
 Year Built: 1920 (Assessors)

PHYSICAL CONDITION

The two structures on the site have significantly deteriorated. The three-story timber-and-brick building at 52 Plympton shows evidence of deterioration and settlement, which has been partially disguised by facade repointing. Key architectural features of this building have been removed or inappropriately altered, including the original cornice and upper floor lintels. Furthermore, two of the building's storefront bays were converted into loading docks, compromising the original design and character of the ground floor. The adjacent one-story service garage is a utilitarian structure with no significant architectural merit.



Figure X: Front facade of 52 & 56 Plympton Street. Note the following critical conditions that diminish the building's architectural and structural integrity: The removal of the original historic cornice and the upper-floor window lintels. The conversion of two original storefront bays into loading docks, compromising the structure of the ground floor. Significant masonry deterioration and evidence of settlement across the facade, which has been partially disguised by repointing.



Figure Y: Rear facade of 52 Plympton Street. The rear facade exhibits significant structural issues consistent with the building's overall state of decline. This includes widespread masonry deterioration and evidence of structural settlement. These conditions, which will be further detailed in a forthcoming structural engineering report, contribute to the building's compromised integrity and the infeasibility of its restoration.

COST OF REUSE

The project's viability depends on fully utilizing the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 4.0, staying below 70 feet in height and providing ample bike and vehicle parking in a code compliant building. Several key factors render adaptive reuse of the existing buildings at 52 Plympton Street financially and functionally infeasible:

Code Compliance Issues – Floodplain Elevation and Egress

The site at 52 Plympton Street falls within Boston's Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay District (CFROD), which imposes specific elevation requirements to mitigate flood risk. To comply, the building's ground floor must be elevated at least 4 feet above street level. The existing building's ground floor currently sits only 3 feet above street level, 1 foot below the regulatory threshold. Raising the existing structure to meet CFROD requirements would require significant structural intervention and impose a substantial cost burden on the project, without resolving other fundamental site and building constraints.

In addition to elevation issues, the project is designed to utilize cross-laminated timber (CLT) construction, which supports a more efficient structural system, allows for 7 stories, and keeps the floor-to-floor height below 9'-6", (a critical parameter to remain under the 70-foot high-rise building code height limit). The existing building, however, was not constructed with this constraint in mind. Its floor-to-floor heights are inconsistent with CLT standards, and any attempt to retrofit the structure would not only be cost-prohibitive, but would have misaligned floor heights and window apertures. In many locations, the proposed floor slab intersects or cuts across the existing window openings, making architectural reuse unfeasible.

Inefficient Parking and Circulation:

The project's viability depends on achieving a minimum parking ratio of approximately 0.5 spaces per residential unit, as well as secure bicycle storage to meet zoning and livability expectations. At-grade parking would present urban design challenges and would consume valuable building volume needed to achieve the allowable 4.0 FAR.

The only feasible solution is to accommodate parking below grade. However, the original brick-and-timber structure sits on shallow foundations in the middle of the site that cannot span over or integrate with a functional basement parking layout. Excavating beneath or around the existing foundation would require underpinning or structural intervention so extensive that it would approach the cost of full reconstruction without resolving other code, access, and life-safety deficiencies inherent in the current structure.

Limited Development Capacity

The allowable FAR of 4.0, which cannot be reached without new construction; the existing buildings on the site have an FAR of only approximately 1.1. Even if the existing 3-story building were to be retained and parking were to be eliminated or substantially reduced, the constraints imposed by the current structure's location in the middle of the site, footprint, irregular layout, and required setbacks would significantly reduce the usable floor area, resulting in a total FAR well below what is needed for feasibility, in addition to the expense of upgrading the existing building to meet current life-safety, accessibility, energy, and structural codes.

Preservation of the Façade Alone

While retaining the existing façade as a preservation strategy may be technically feasible, it is not practical or architecturally coherent within the context of the proposed building. As previously noted, the existing window apertures do not align with the floor-to-floor heights required for the new structure, particularly one using CLT construction to remain below the high-rise height limit. In multiple locations, the existing floor levels intersect proposed window openings, rendering the façade incompatible with the layout and function of a new building.

Modifying the internal structure to align with the preserved façade would require significant structural gymnastics and compromise the efficiency, usability, and feasibility of the project. The result would be an architecturally compromised hybrid that satisfies neither preservation goals nor modern building performance standards. For these reasons, we do not believe façade preservation alone is a viable strategy.

Comparative elevation showing the existing and proposed buildings.



IMPROVED CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROTECTED AREA

We believe our proposed redevelopment of 52 Plympton Street offers a more meaningful and enduring contribution to the Protection Area than is currently possible with the existing structures. The project has been carefully conceived to align with the goals of the South End Landmark District by addressing scale, urban character, and long-term public benefit.

Key aspects of the proposed design include:

Contextual architectural response: The new building draws from the South End's material and massing traditions, using a brick, limestone, and wood palette, while stepping back at the upper floor to align with neighboring cornices and reinforce the street wall. While the zoning limit of this area is 100', this proposed project sits just below 70' which is aligned with the maximum height in the SELDC Standard and Criteria.

Public realm improvements: A widened sidewalk, new plantings, and permeable paving enhance the



52 Plympton Existing Conditions

pedestrian environment, while a transparent, double-height gallery and lobby create visual interest and active ground-floor frontage. Accessible building access is provided via a ramped entry wrapping the ground-floor art gallery and lobby.

Sustainable design and community benefit: The project will be constructed using mass timber and designed to meet Passive House standards, with 100% electric systems and future solar readiness. Eight income-restricted artist live-work units contribute directly to the cultural and economic diversity of the neighborhood.

Our intent is to demonstrate that the new construction offers a higher architectural, environmental, and civic value than the reuse of the deteriorated existing buildings. In accordance with the Protection Area Demolition Policy, we understand that if demolition is approved, the Commission may review the new construction using the same criteria that apply within the Landmark District. The design presented here is intended to meet that higher standard.



Proposed Project