



MARY E. BRANCH HERITAGE CENTER

REVITALIZATION VISION

Farmville, VA
September 25, 2025

Credit: Tillotson College memorial image

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was performed through an A/E term contract for professional services provided by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) through the Office of Remediation Programs (ORP). The project was supported by the dedicated staff of the Town of Farmville, Virginia.

Successful brownfields reuse and redevelopment depends on the consideration of a range of potential reuses for each brownfield site. Local community priorities, market conditions, infrastructure availability, environmental contamination, public health issues, and local ordinances shape brownfield site reuse opportunities. Grounding the site reuse vision in these local conditions will directly influence how the site is characterized, assessed, and cleaned up.

Recipient:

Town of Farmville, Virginia
Mary E. Branch Heritage Center



Site Address:

632 South Main Street
Farmville, VA

Disclaimer:

This report was developed for the Town of Farmville and Mary E. Branch Heritage Center under Virginia DEQ A/E Term contract for professional services. This is a contractor-prepared report and does not represent the Virginia DEQ's position. Any publication, distribution, or use of this report beyond the stated purpose is outside of DEQ and Contractor's control.



DEQ Consultant Team:

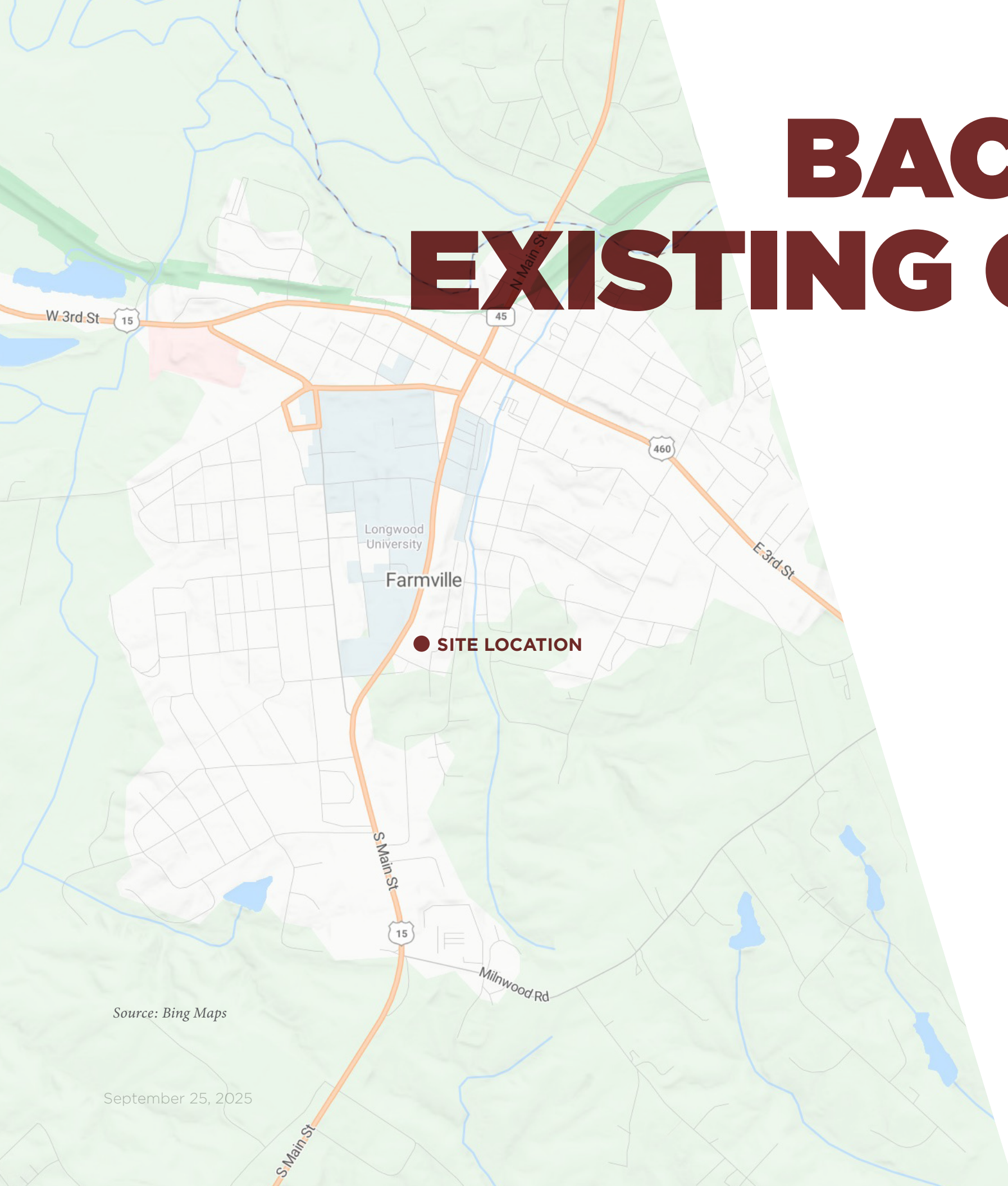


121 W Tazewell St.
Norfolk, VA 23510

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BACKGROUND & EXISTING CONDITIONS



MARY E. BRANCH HERITAGE CENTER GOAL

Efforts are underway to transform the historic Mary E. Branch School building into the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center. This initiative aims to preserve the building's rich history while fostering community engagement through educational and recreational programs.

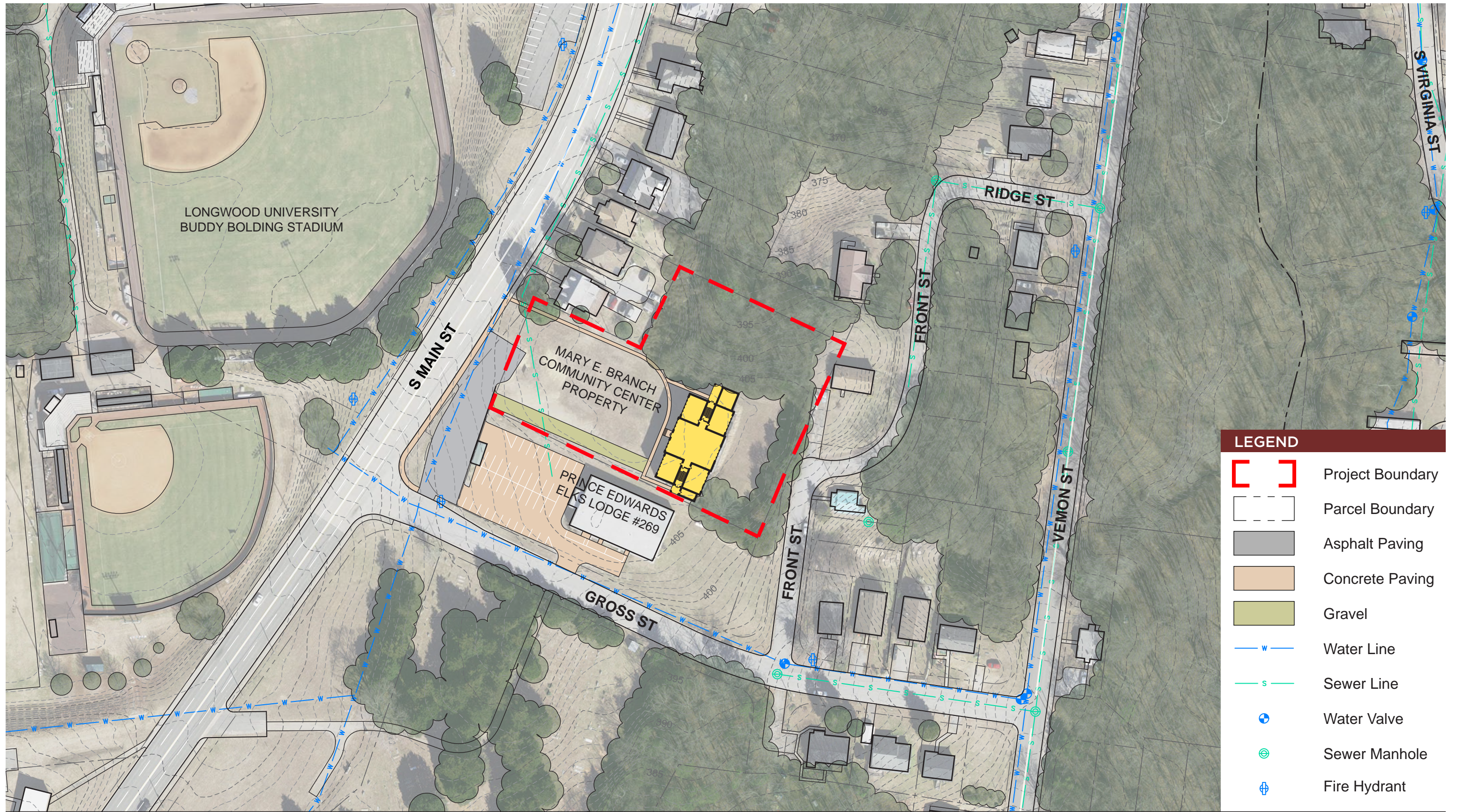
The Mary E. Branch Heritage Center's goal includes:

- **Revitalizing** the property and stabilizing and preserving the building rear walls as a historic resource/artifact..
- **Honoring** the legacy of Mary E. Branch and her contributions to education.
- **Recognizing** the site's important role in the desegregation of African American education.
- **Honoring** local hero's and leaders in the Farmville, Virginia area.











By preserving and repurposing this historic site, the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center aims to inspire future generations while honoring an important chapter of Farmville's history.

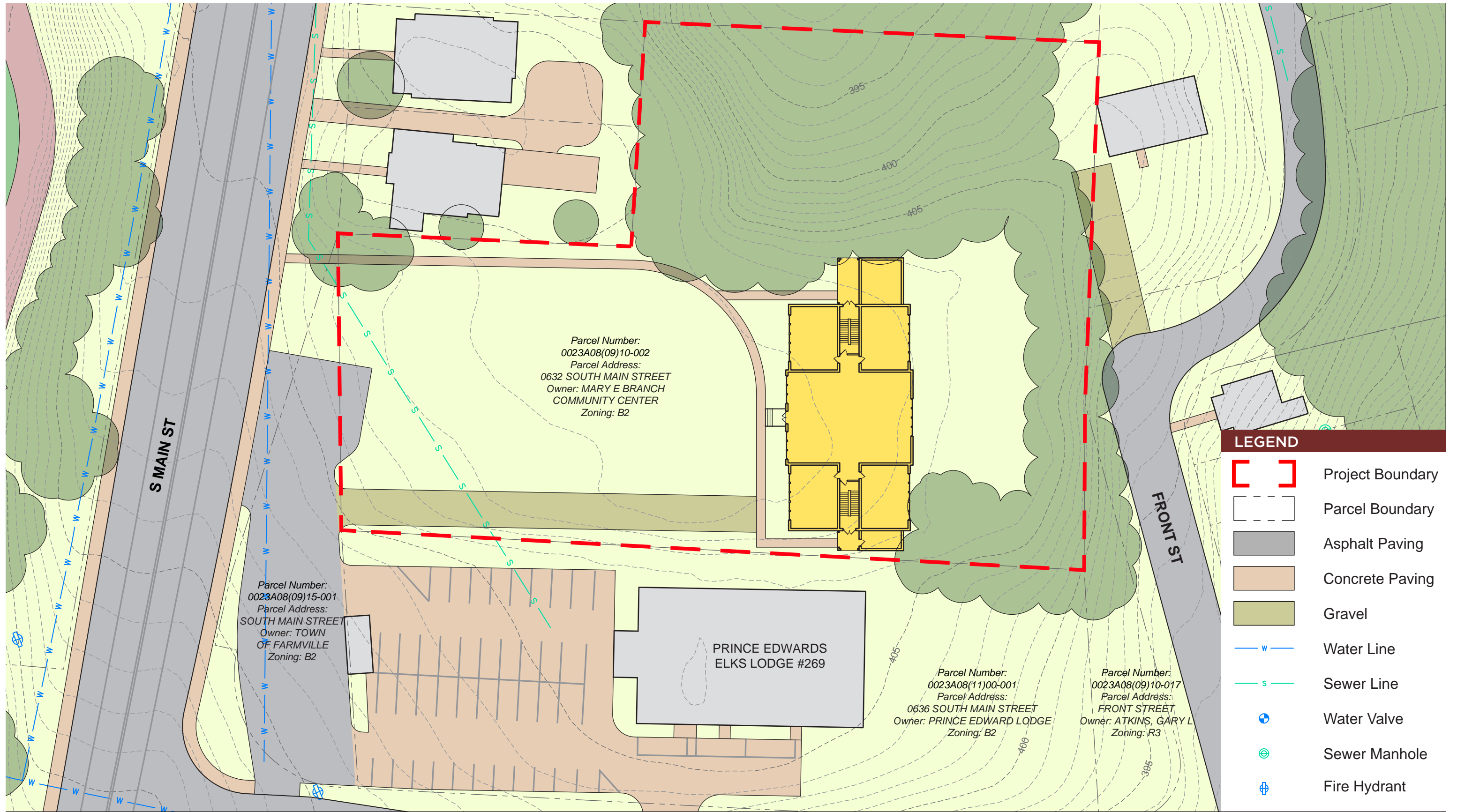
Source: Bing Maps

September 25, 2025



LEGEND

-  Project Boundary
-  Parcel Boundary
-  Asphalt Paving
-  Concrete Paving
-  Gravel
-  Water Line
-  Sewer Line
-  Water Valve
-  Sewer Manhole
-  Fire Hydrant



Parcel Number:
0023A08(09)10-002
Parcel Address:
0632 SOUTH MAIN STREET
Owner: MARY E BRANCH
COMMUNITY CENTER
Zoning: B2

Parcel Number:
0023A08(09)15-001
Parcel Address:
SOUTH MAIN STREET
Owner: TOWN
OF FARMVILLE
Zoning: B2

PRINCE EDWARDS
ELKS LODGE #269

Parcel Number:
0023A08(11)00-001
Parcel Address:
0636 SOUTH MAIN STREET
Owner: PRINCE EDWARD LODGE
Zoning: B2

Parcel Number:
0023A08(09)10-017
Parcel Address:
FRONT STREET
Owner: ATKINS, GARY L
Zoning: R3

LEGEND	
	Project Boundary
	Parcel Boundary
	Asphalt Paving
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Figure 1: Existing birds eye view looking west from S. Main Street

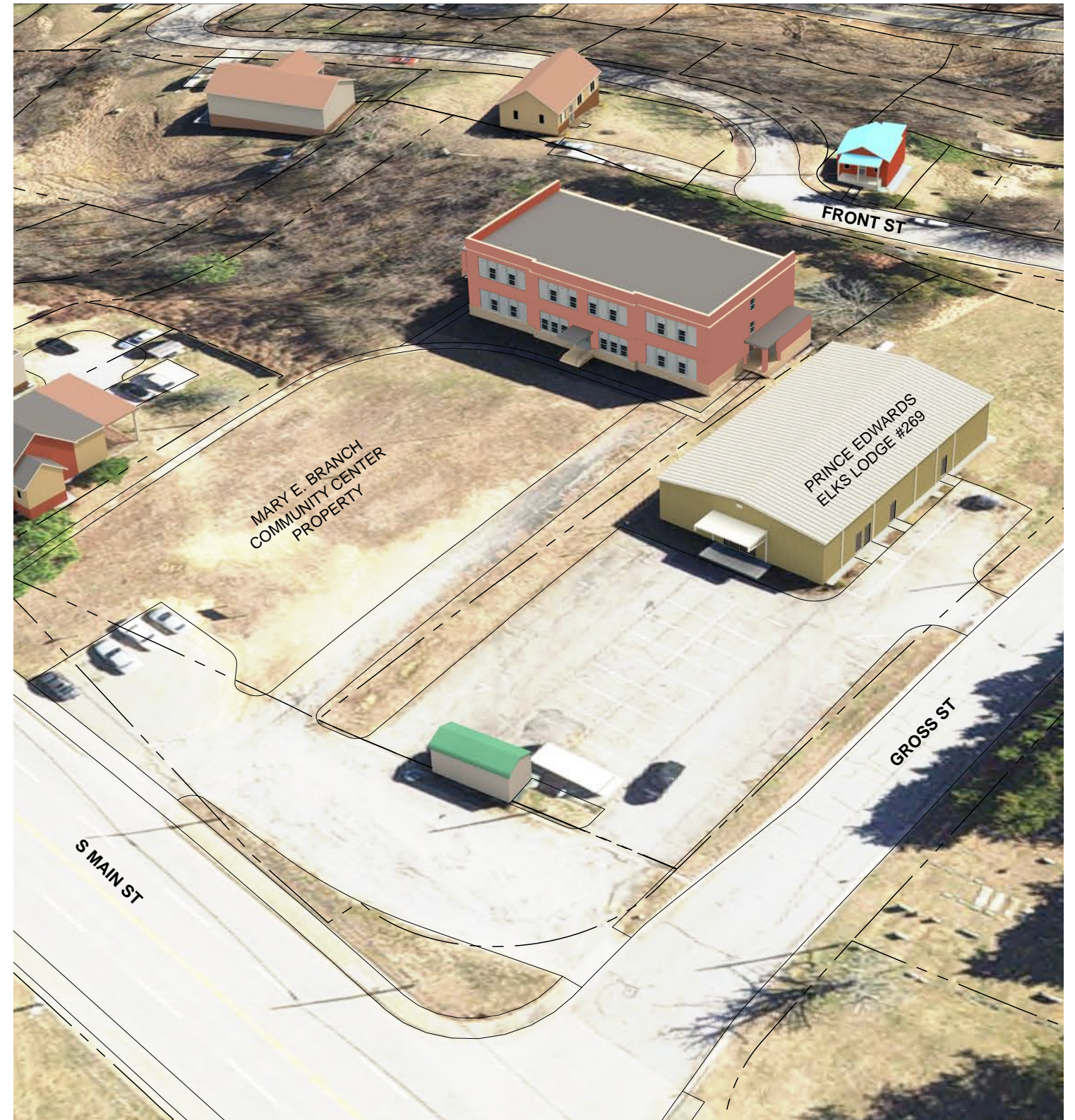


Figure 2: Existing birds eye view looking northwest from the intersection of S. Main St. and Gross St

HISTORY OF THE MARY E. BRANCH SCHOOL

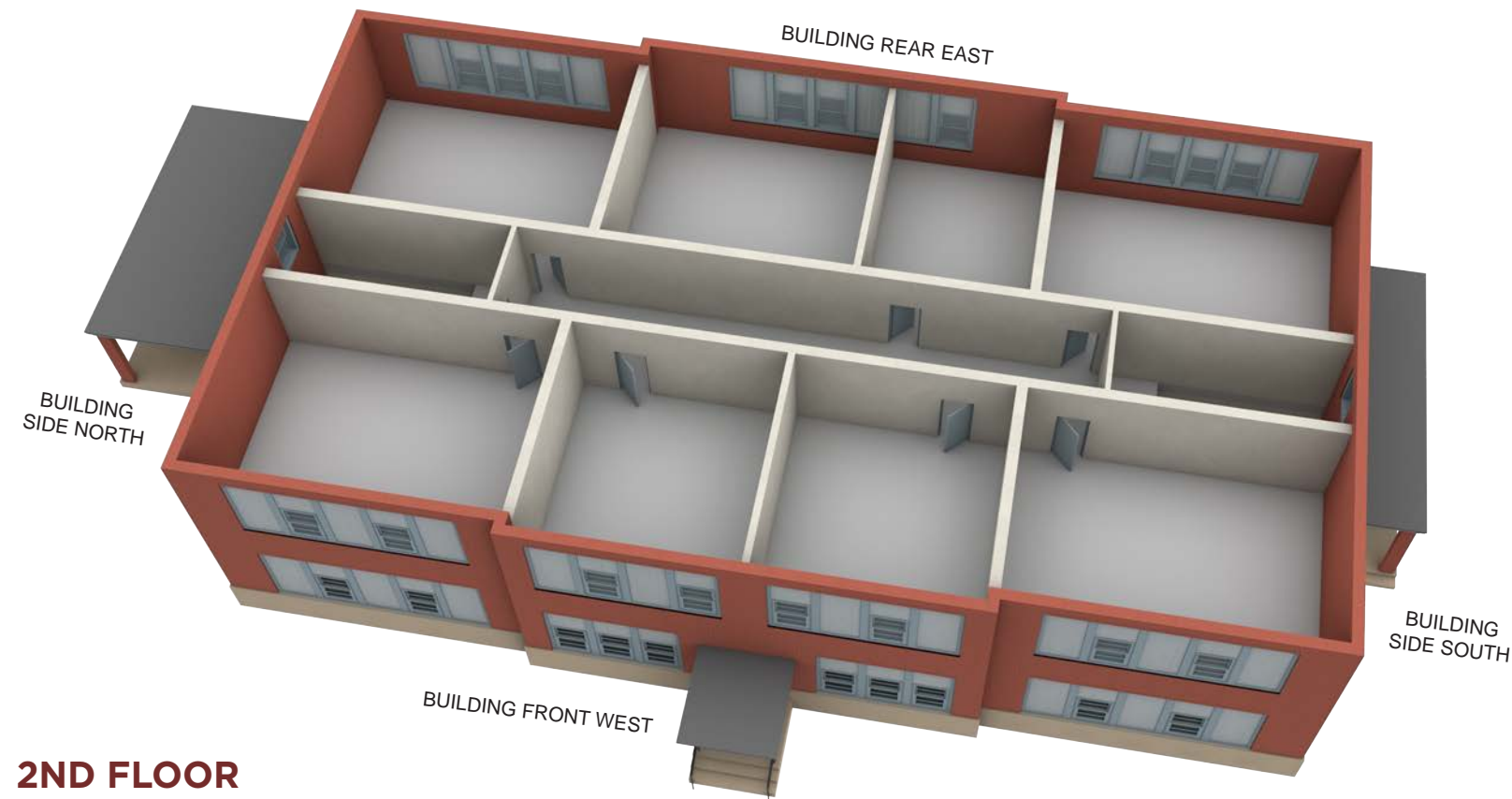
The school building, built in 1926 as an elementary institution, expanded to serve higher grades and was renamed Robert Russa Moton High School in 1931. In 1939, it was renamed in honor of Mary E. Branch. During the 1963 school crisis, the Prince Edward Free School Association, with federal support, leased the building to educate African American children left without schooling. Today, efforts are underway to transform the historic building into the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center.

First floor net area: 6,545 square feet

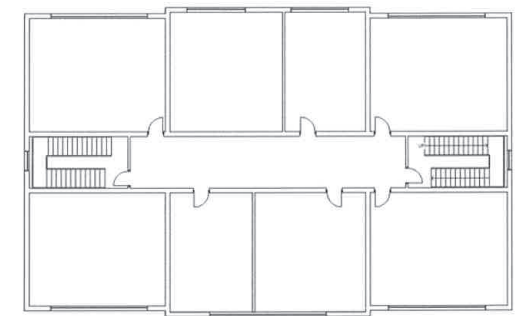
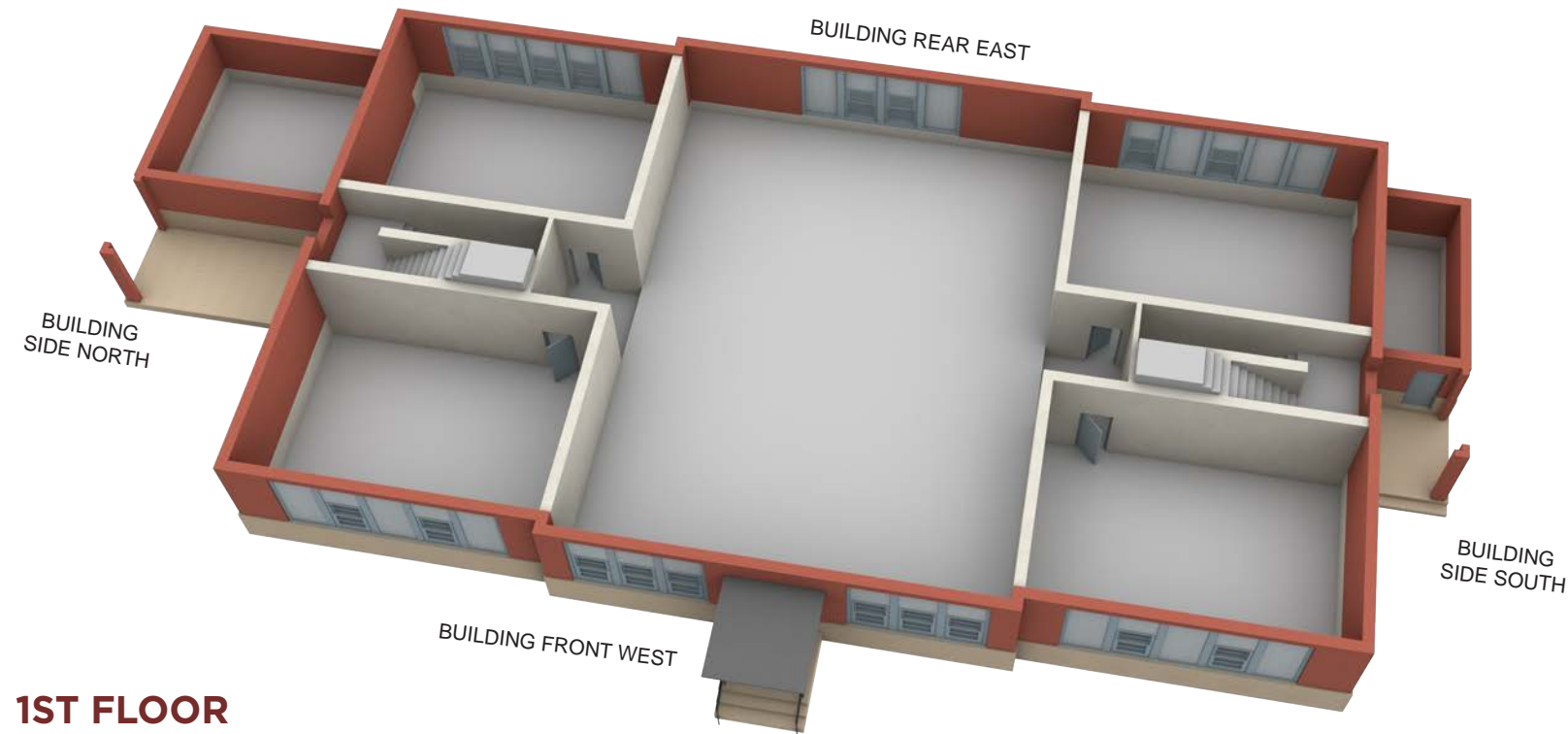
Second floor net area: 5,965 square feet

Total Building gross area: 13,810 square feet (does not include basement)

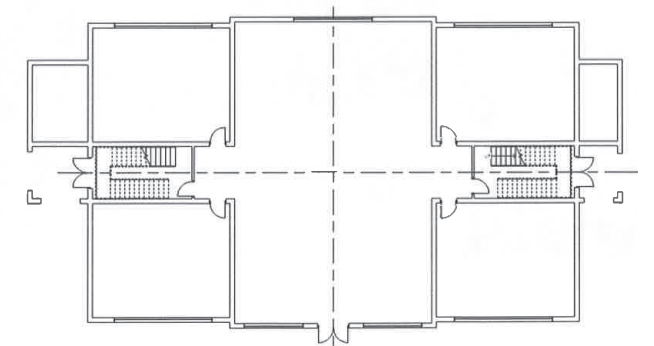
2ND FLOOR



1ST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR DIAGRAM



FIRST FLOOR DIAGRAM

Credit: Existing floor plan as-built drawings prepared by Moseley Architects were used to build the existing floor plan model.

EXISTING BUILDING FACADE (CIRCA 2022)

The illustrative renderings of the building front and rear facade are based on existing site photos, highlighting its red brick exterior, blue window shutters, concrete foundation, and a central entrance with steps and a canopy.



Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center



Source: Stantec - Photographic log



Source: Civil Rights Walking Tour, Framville, Virginia
Credit : Andrew Feiler



Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.



Figure 3: Illustrative rendering of existing facade - Front



Source: Stantec - Photographic log



Source: Stantec - Photographic log



Figure 4: Illustrative rendering of existing facade - Rear

REVITALIZATION VISION



REVITALIZATION VISION

HONORING HISTORY & LEGACY

The Mary E. Branch Heritage Center envisions a revitalization plan that preserves and uplifts the legacy of Mary E. Branch, Virginia State University, and Farmville’s local African American heroes. Mary E. Branch was a pioneering educator who dedicated her life to advancing education for African Americans. She achieved great success in leading Vashon High School, one of the largest schools for African American girls in the U.S., and was instrumental in transforming Tillotson College into a fully accredited university, setting groundbreaking standards for African American higher education. Beyond academics, she championed equal access to educational resources, including libraries and scholarship programs that supported African American students.

Echoing this legacy, the future Mary E. Branch Heritage Center will celebrate the significance of Mary E. Branch’s achievements in advancing educational equality while continuing her mission by ensuring access to education, fostering community learning, and creating opportunities for future generations.



Figure 5: Juneteenth Event 2024.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.



Figure 6: Juneteenth Event 2024.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.

EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

The Heritage Center will host and sponsor annual events that bring the community together while honoring Farmville’s history and heroes:

- **Winter: Black History Month Celebration** – Recognizing local African American educators, history-makers, and leaders.
- **Spring: Community Fish Fry** – A tradition that fosters community connections through food and fellowship.
- **Summer: Juneteenth Celebration** – Commemorating freedom with a growing annual event in downtown Farmville.
- **Fall: Sultown to Motown Fundraiser** – A lively community dance event supporting the center’s programs.

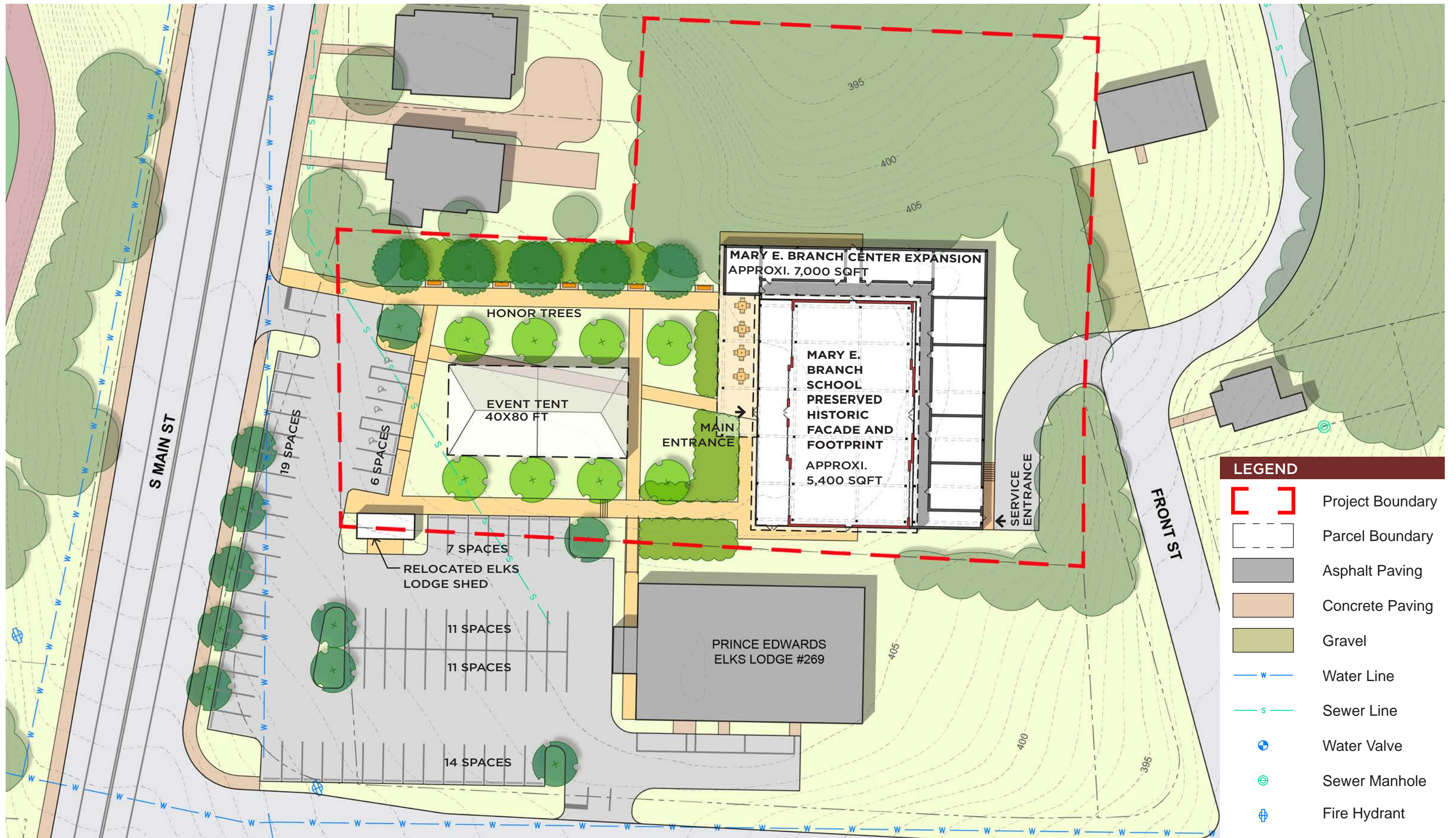
The revitalization vision plan provides both an outdoor Heritage/Honor Green and an indoor large Multi-Purpose Room contained within the historic school structure, providing spaces to host these events while reinforcing the site’s role as a cultural and historical hub.

A COMMUNITY EDUCATION COMPLEX

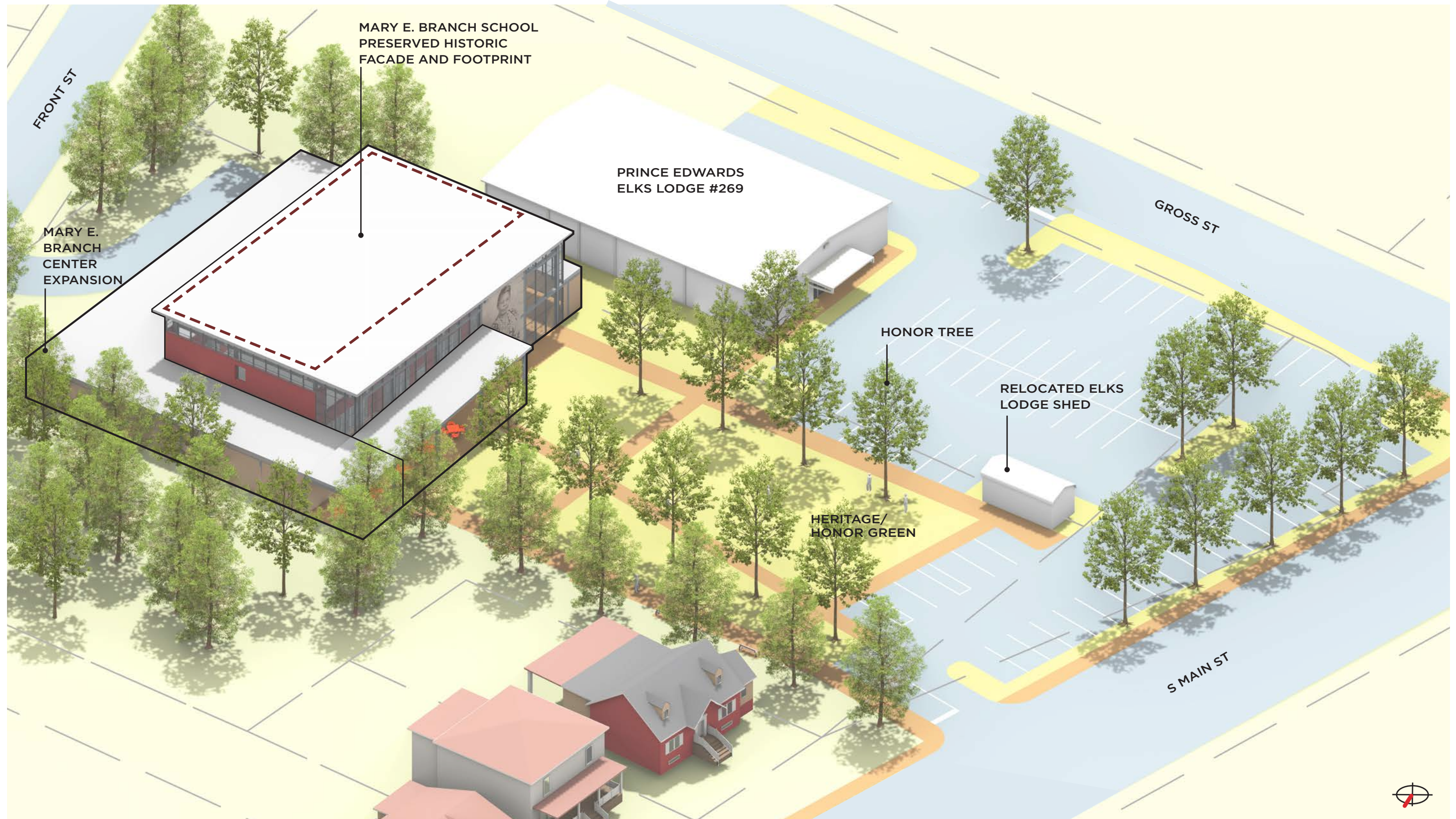
The revitalized Mary E. Branch Heritage Center will serve as a **community-driven educational complex**, providing programs and resources tailored to all generations. Its facilities and programming will include:

- **Community Events** – A kitchen and multi-purpose room for hosting public meetings, food drives, veterans’ nights, and Thanksgiving dinners.
- **Educational Initiatives** – Four classrooms offering multi-generational learning, from youth enrichment programs to senior technology workshops.
- **Life Skills & Workforce Development** – Providing education in financial literacy, STEM/STEAM learning, family health, and career skills.
- **Private & Revenue-Generating Events** – A multi-purpose room for weddings, reunions, and movie nights, supporting the center’s long-term sustainability.

Different from the local YMCA, which focuses on fitness and athletics, the Mary E. Branch Heritage Center will be dedicated to education, history, and community empowerment. Through its building and site preservation and community programs, the center will become a vital space for learning, cultural celebration, and connection, ensuring that the history and spirit of Mary E. Branch live on for future generations.



LEGEND	
	Project Boundary
	Parcel Boundary
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HERITAGE/HONOR GREEN

The Heritage/Honor Green offers approximately 10,400 square feet of flexible lawn space, designed to accommodate a variety of events. It can support a 40x80 ft event tent, which can host approximately 200 people.

Positioned between the building entrance and the South Main Street site entrance, eight honor trees will be arranged in two rows to form a welcoming space leading visitors to the building. Each year, these trees will serve as dedicated honor stations, rotating honorees for Black History Month celebrations. As each year passes and as these trees grow, the honor stations will help foster a sense of stewardship and generational community building, strengthening the connection between past, present, and future generations.

The History Gallery and Heritage/Honor Green are envisioned to be spaces that have rotating annual exhibits and information about local Farmville hero's and leaders in the African American community. This document records and recognizes the following honoree names who should have a place of dedication as part of the revitalization vision for the proposed Mary E. Branch Heritage Center.

1st Annual Black History Month celebration -2024's event honored honoring retired educators:

- Mrs. Patsy Franklin (French Teacher) - Prince Edward High School
- Mrs. Ernestine Herndon (Elementary Teacher) - Prince Edward Elementary
- Mr. James E. Scott - (Health Physical Education, Driver Education, Varsity Boys Basketball Coach) - Prince Edward High School

2nd Annual Black History Month celebration - 2025's event will honor local heroes (educators, history-makers, and trailblazers), including:

- Rev. Dr. J. Samuel Williams - Pioneer for justice
- Mr. Armstead Reid - Vice Mayor
- Mrs. Mary Brown - Century citizen (102 years old)
- Mr. James Baker - Coach
- Mr. Travis Harris - First African American sheriff
- Mr. Ernest Miller - Lifetime Achievement Award, VSU
- Farmville Allstars - Legendary baseball team
- The Royal Supremes - Gospel Group (47 years)

EXISTING VIEW OF SITE FROM SOUTH MAIN STREET



Figure 7: Juneteenth Event 2024.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.



Figure 8: People Gathering in front of the Building.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.



Figure 9: People sitting on the central entrance steps.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.



Figure 10: Juneteenth event tent.
Source: Mary E. Branch Heritage Center Facebook page.

PROPOSED HERITAGE/HONOR GREEN FOR COMMUNITY GATHERINGS



MULTI-PURPOSE EVENT & COMMUNITY ROOM

The Indoor Multi-Purpose Room will preserve and restore the historic facade and footprint of the Mary E. Branch School (approximately 5,400 sqft). A new structural system will support the historic facade while integrating a transparent glass front facade, allowing the original red brick exterior to remain visible—highlighting and preserving the school building’s historical significance.

This revitalized space will serve as a multi-purpose event venue, featuring upgraded lighting and equipment to accommodate a variety of uses, flexible seating and configurations for community meetings, celebrations, and private events, and preserved historical elements to celebrate the legacy of the Mary E. Branch School.

EXISTING BUILDING FIRST FLOOR



PROPOSED MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

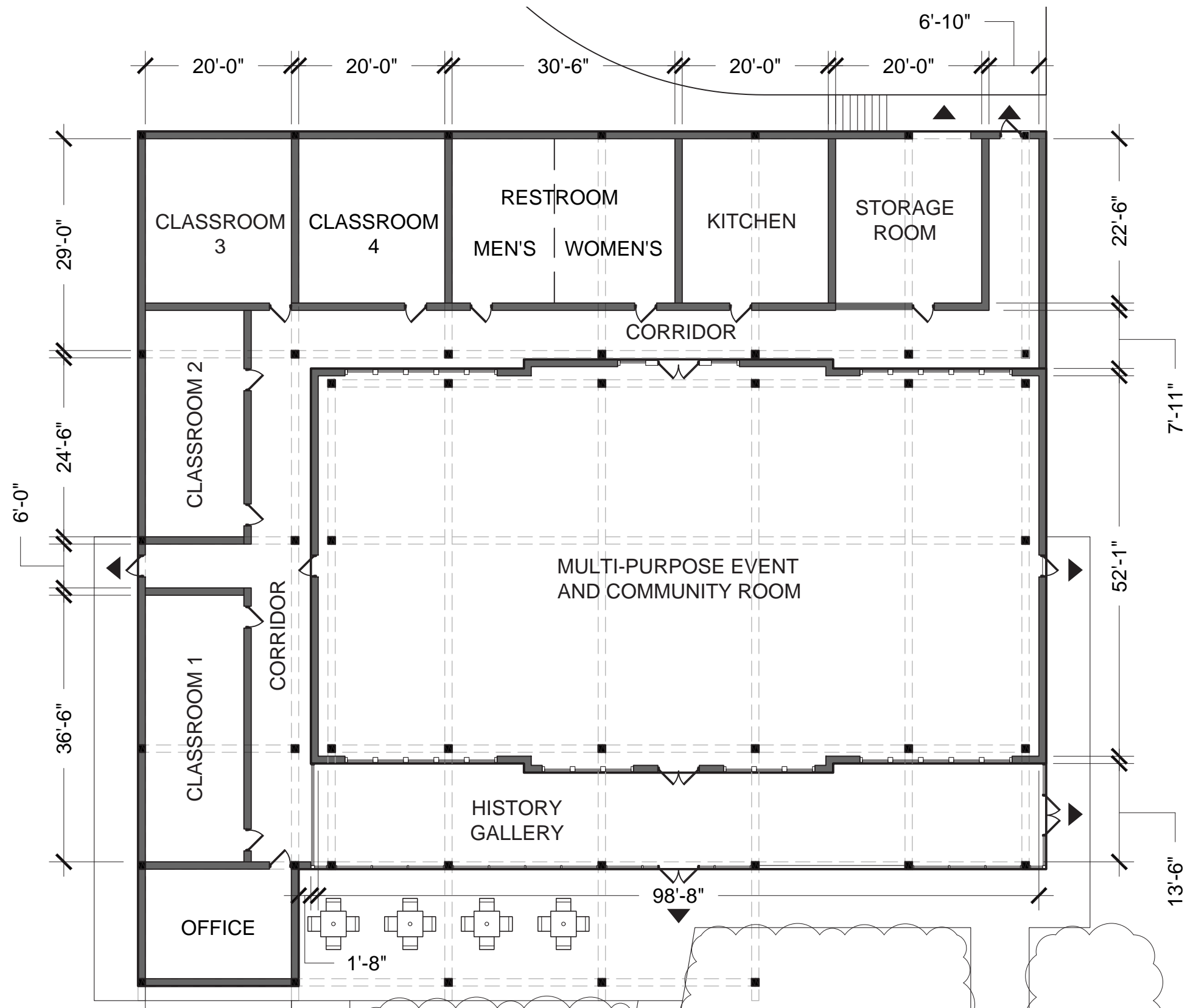




PRINCE EDWARDS
ELKS LODGE #269

INDOOR & OUTDOOR PROGRAM AREA

Indoor Program Area	
Multi-Purpose Event And Community Room	5,400 sqft
History Gallery	1,320 sqft
Office	300 sqft
Classroom 1	490 sqft
Classroom 2	420 sqft
Classroom 3	450 sqft
Classroom 4	450 sqft
Restroom	690 sqft
Kitchen	450 sqft
Storage Room	450 sqft
Outdoor Program Area	
Event Tent 40X80	3,200 sqft (200 people)
Heritage/Honor Green	10,400 sqft
Additional Parking Lot	25 parking spaces (4 handicap spaces)
Parking Lot Renovation	43 parking spaces



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APPENDICES



September 25, 2025

HISTORIC BUILDING FACADE (CIRCA 1969)

The historic building facade lacks official documentation, so the illustrative rendering is an interpretation based on the existing facade and window placements.



Credit: Tillotson College memorial image



Credit: Tillotson College memorial image



Figure 11: Illustrative rendering of historic facade - Front



Figure 12: Illustrative rendering of historic facade - Rear

PROPOSED BUILDING FACADE (CIRCA 1999)

The proposed building design was developed by Calloway Johnson Moore & West, P.A. in 1999. The illustrative rendering is based on the first and second-floor plans, which proposed a multi-purpose room, kitchen, administration, and dining room on the first floor, with classrooms on the second floor.

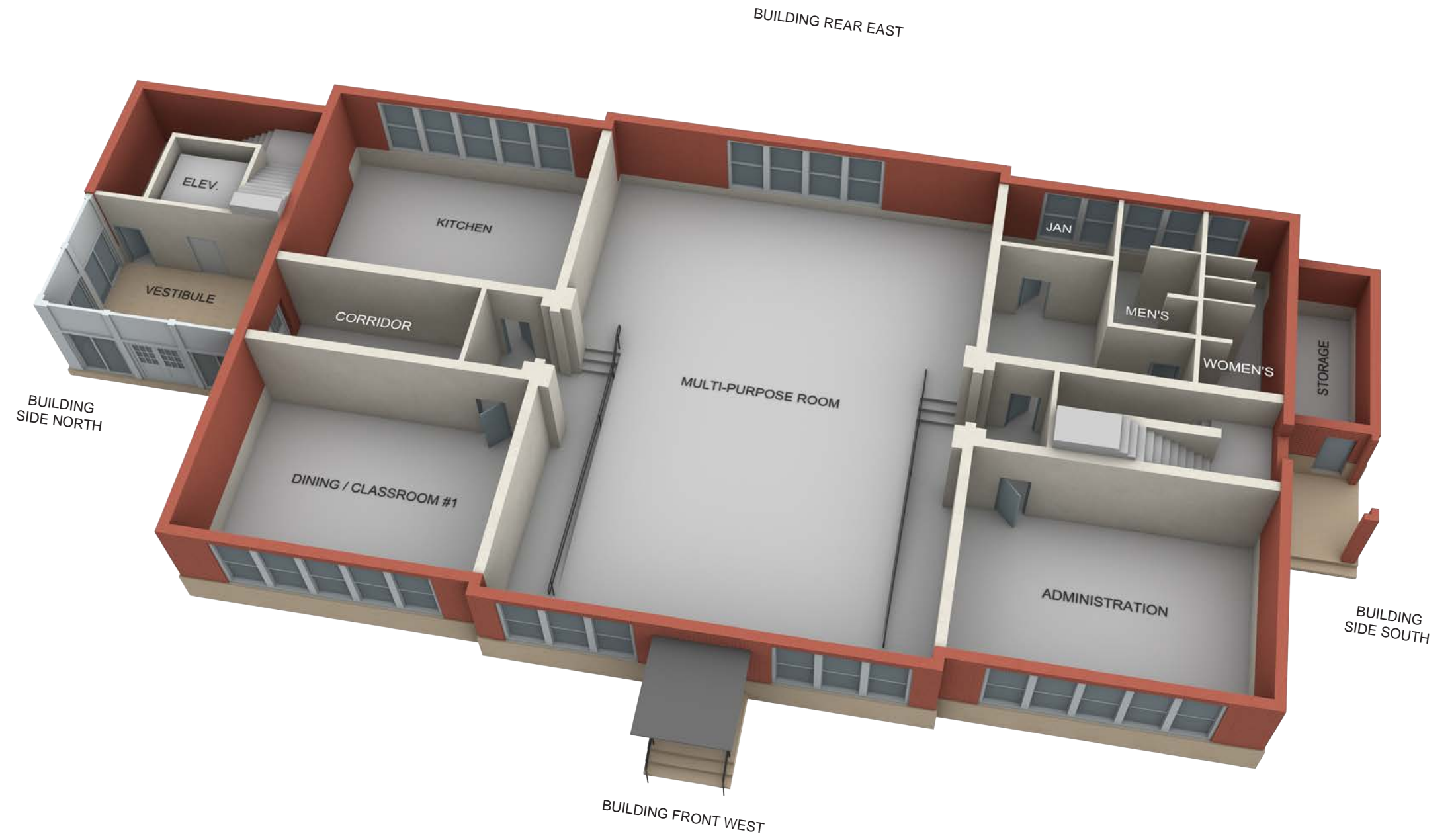


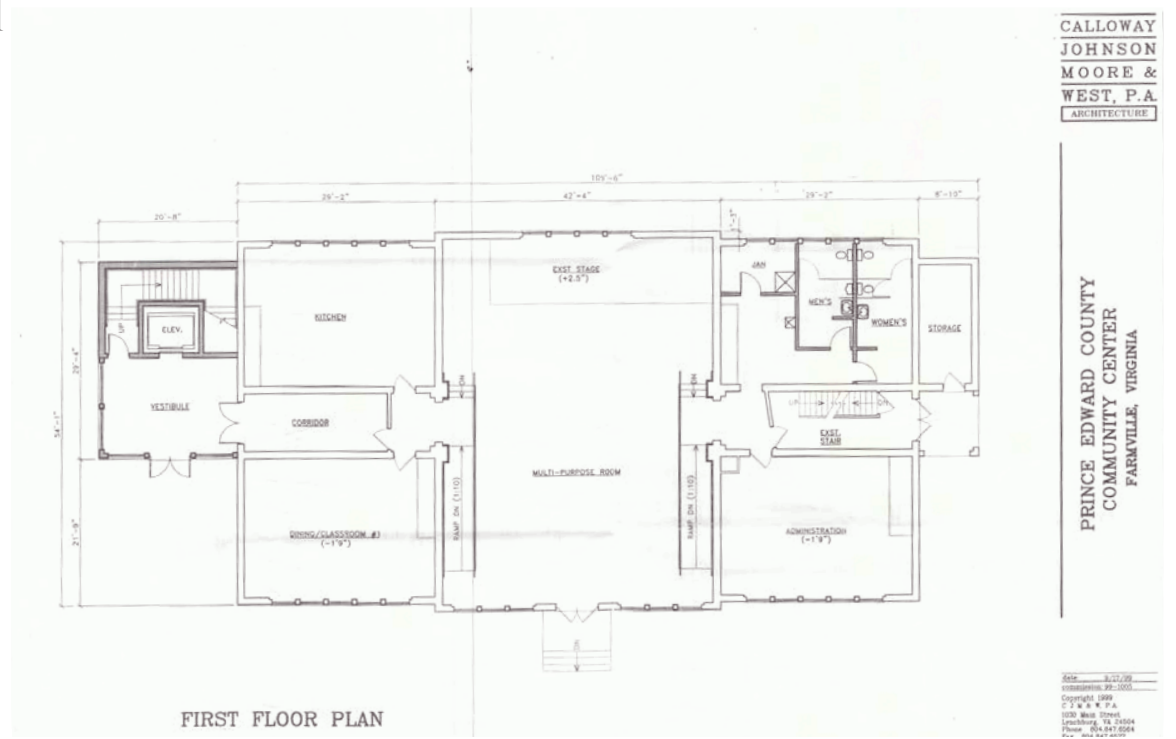
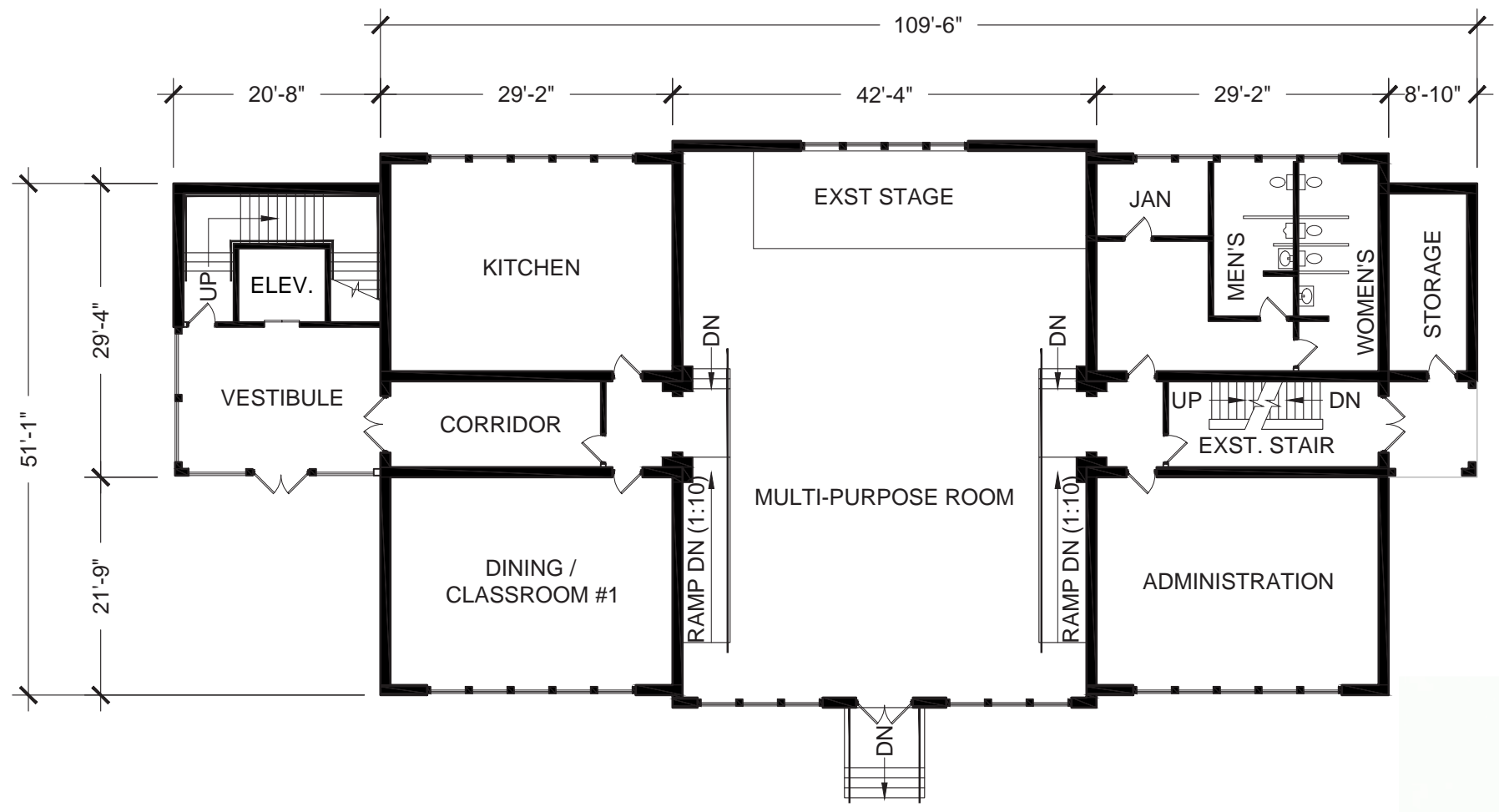
Figure 13: Illustrative rendering of proposed facade 1999 - Front



Figure 14: Illustrative rendering of proposed facade 1999 - Rear

**CALLOWAY JOHNSON
MOORE & WEST, P.A.
PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS -
1ST FLOOR (CIRCA 1999)**





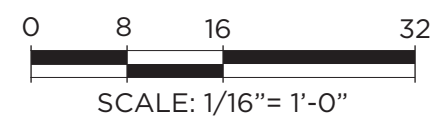
CALLOWAY
JOHNSON
MOORE &
WEST, P.A.
ARCHITECTURE

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY
COMMUNITY CENTER
FARMVILLE, VIRGINIA

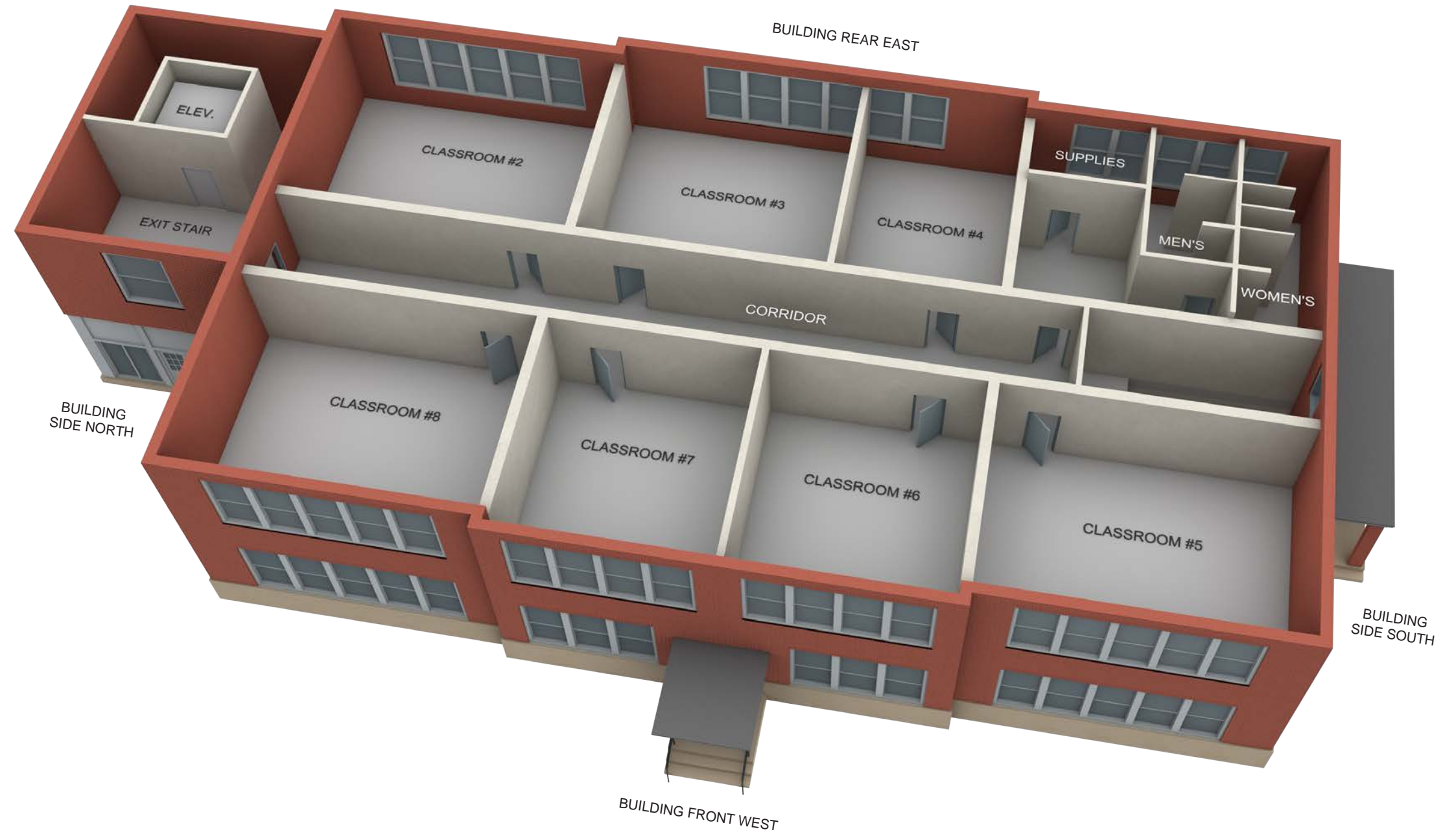
DATE: 2/17/25
DRAWING NO.: 25-001
Copyright © 2025
C.J.M. & P.A.
100 Main Street
Leesburg, VA 22084
Phone: 541.247.0284

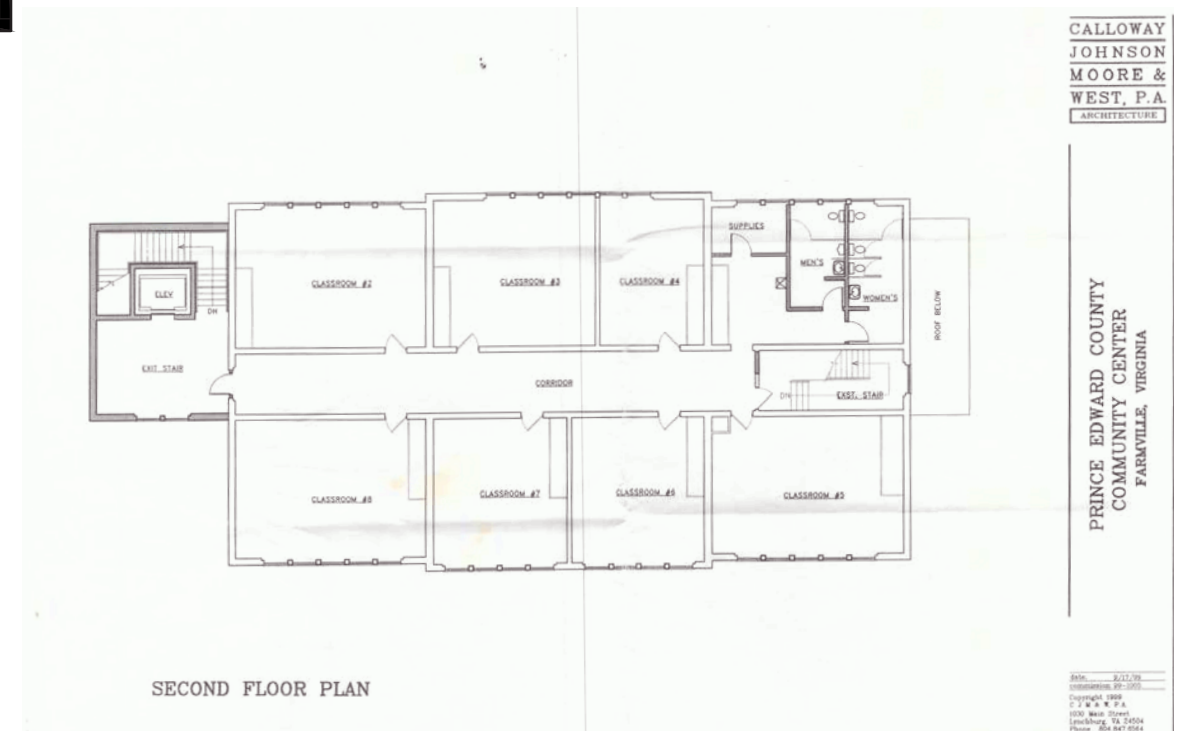
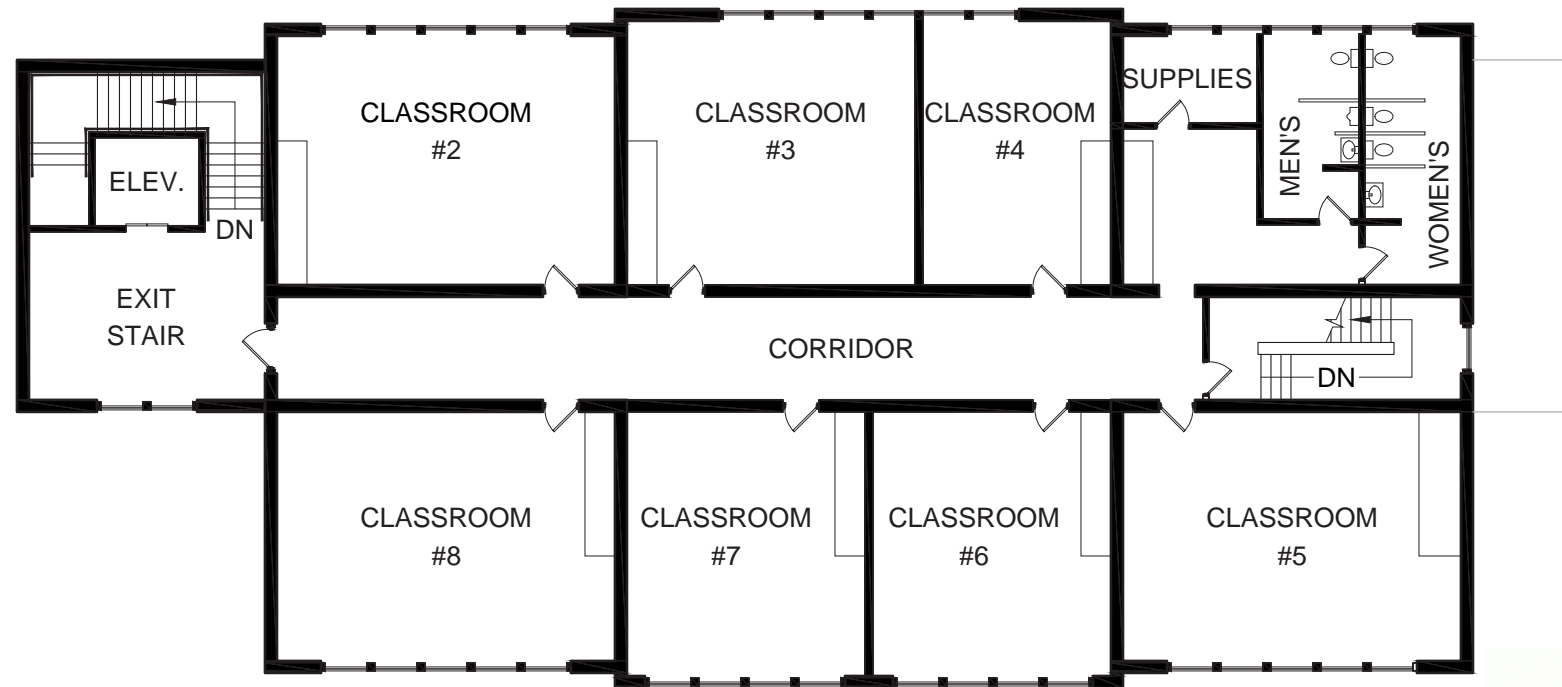
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

**MARY E. BRANCH CENTER
PROPOSED 1ST FLOOR PLAN**



**CALLOWAY JOHNSON
MOORE & WEST, P.A.
PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS -
2ND FLOOR (CIRCA 1999)**





CALLOWAY
JOHNSON
MOORE &
WEST, P.A.
ARCHITECTURE

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY
COMMUNITY CENTER
FARMVILLE, VIRGINIA

DATE: 2/17/25
DRAWING NO.: 22-202
DRAWN BY: JMM
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1030 Main Street
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