

NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL AT STRATFORD

PROPOSED INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK
AND CONCEPT DESIGN SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

In February of 2017 Arlington Public Schools and Quinn Evans Architects engaged Main Street Design to provide interpretive planning and design services in conjunction with the renovation and expansion of the former H-B Woodlawn School, located on Vacation Lane in Arlington, Virginia.

The purpose of this concept-level exercise was to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of providing public interpretation and commemoration at the site of the events of 2 February 1959 — when four young African-American students entered the school, then known as Stratford Junior High School, and took their seats in classrooms, making this the first integrated public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia and effectively ending the state’s policy of “massive resistance” to school desegregation — and to develop preliminary planning and design directions for that interpretation.

As part of this effort, Arlington Public Schools Superintendent formed a special committee, including Michael Jones, one of the four children who integrated Stratford in 1959 and several other community representatives with direct personal experience of the period of desegregation, to guide and review the interpretive planning process. Main Street Design met with the Stratford Historic Committee on four separate occasions, and this iterative and collaborative interaction was essential to our work. The committee’s comments are captured in the letter provided in the appendix.

This report documents the outcomes of an interpretive concept development and design process that spanned multiple months. Included are a review of the planning and design process; site and building plans showing the proposed locations of interpretive components; sketches and reference images that illustrate conceptual design directions for each component; a narrative description of the overall visitor experience; proposed content outlines; and a discussion of implementation phasing options.

We are honored to have been selected to assist the Arlington Public Schools with the interpretation and commemoration of this extraordinary story. Our involvement with the Stratford School legacy has been enlightening, invigorating, and inspiring, and our collaboration with the members of the Historic Committee and with your project team has been enormously rewarding. Thank you very much.

Main Street Design, Inc.
January 2018

INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS SUMMARY

Our initial meeting with the Historic Committee was devoted to reviewing the essential history at the heart of this project and sharing preliminary ideas about project priorities, opportunities, and constraints. We discussed the specific qualities that earned the Stratford School campus its designation as a Historic District, both in terms of the social history of desegregation at the school and the architectural history of the original school building, constructed in 1950 and designed by noted International Style architect Rhee Burket, Sr. In particular, as part of this discussion, we came to understand that the school building was notable not only for its architectural features — characterized by the extensive use of stone, glazed brick and tile, and glass block — but because its commissioning by the County was a powerful and visible symbol of Arlington’s increasingly progressive social values, values which led directly to the city’s central role in defeating “massive resistance.”

At our second workshop we worked with Quinn Evans Architects, representatives of Arlington Public Schools and the Historic Preservation Program, and members of the Historic Committee to identify and evaluate potential locations for interpretive experiences on the Stratford School campus and within the school building, and to review and discuss a wide range of possible interpretive methodologies and techniques and design styles. The outcome of this exercise was a shared vision for a preliminary framework of promising interpretive opportunities, as well as a mutual understanding of the Stratford team’s stylistic preferences.

The work of the next two workshops centered around reviewing and refining the project interpretive framework and advancing preliminary design directions for core project components. The overall interpretive framework endorsed by the Historic Committee, described in greater detail elsewhere in this report, is briefly outlined below:

Heroes Welcome Interpretive Gateways

These monumental elements, to be located at four key entry points onto the Stratford School campus, are intended to “mark the corners of the site,” identifying it at a glance, even for vehicles passing on Old Dominion Drive, as a special and significant place. Interpretation associated with the Gateways will welcome and orient visitors, introduce core content and themes, and honor and celebrate the four African- American seventh-graders — Michael Jones, Gloria Thompson, Lance Newman and Ronald Deskins — who first integrated Stratford Junior High School.

Historic Path Interpretive Trail

This sequence of linked interpretive installations and hardscape elements proceeds down the steep hillside from Old Dominion Drive to the school, roughly tracing the route of the original pathway that the four students took on their way to school. The focus here will be on exploring the events of 2 February 1959; the local, regional and national context in which they occurred; the experiences of the four integrating students; and the lasting meaning and impact of their courageous action.

Heart of School Heritage Wall

Located on a major wall within the new multistory lobby on the school’s south side, a key circulation space for students and staff, this large-scale interpretive graphic element will offer a dynamic timeline of the Civil Rights era in the United States, roughly spanning a forty year period from 1940 to 1980, interweaving national and local events and presenting historical information whenever possible in a first person “voice,” showcasing the reflections and recollections of those involved.

Celebration of Diversity Mobile

Rising through three stories of the vertical circulation core in the new lobby, this dynamic, kinetic, visually striking assemblage of interacting and intersecting images will serve as a powerful reminder both of the vital place the Stratford School occupies in the history of the American Civil Rights movement and of the enduring importance of the ideals that movement embodied. Mixing images of the four pioneer students and Arlington and Stratford during the period of desegregation with contemporary images illustrating the multicultural character of the community today, it will be a celebration and a reminder of the essential interrelationship between historic events and contemporary, universal experiences.

Stratford Self-Portrait

To accomplish the larger mission of Stratford School interpretation, it is important that the events of 2 February 1959 not be treated solely as “past” but rather

INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS SUMMARY, CONT.

as a central part of the life of the school today and on into the future. As a partial means of achieving this goal, changeable displays of artworks on themes of inclusiveness and diversity created by students as part of their school curriculum will be mounted at intervals along primary hallways, including a major digital “media wall” across from the school library.

Time and Place

Outside the south facade of the original 1950 building, at a location where students will gather while waiting to be picked up after school, a series of touchable models accompanied by exterior interpretive graphics will trace the evolution of the site and the building over time, identifying character-defining architectural features while exploring ideas of “progressive architecture for a progressive community.”



INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE

Arriving at the south gateway, where the school's new entry drive meets Old Dominion Drive, we are greeted with a universal symbol of welcome: a large-scale stylized sculptural "doorway" with doors flung open wide. Rendered in a simple, strong material such as weathering steel and deliberately somewhat abstracted, the door frame serves as a symbolic portal into the Stratford School experience, with a granite threshold to cross and a lintel overhead. Metaphorically, of course, it also honors the four integrating students for having "opened the doors" that countless others have passed through since.

The doors themselves are impressively large, but lightened by their perforated metal surfaces which allow light and air to pass through them. They are imprinted with images of the four brave children taken during their first week at the school. Three boys and a girl, dressed in the Sunday best, bravely marching down the path toward the school. Each panel also displays a brief quotation from one of the students, harking back to their feelings during that uncertain time more than a half century ago. We are moved by their images, and by their words.

From the gateway, a flight of oversized tumbled pink granite stepping stones meanders down the hillside toward the school. The steps are rough, widely spaced, and set somewhat randomly, individually and in pairs,

as if following the long ago footsteps of the four young students. The stones play off one another, creating a sense of tension and interaction. They are imprinted with simple but powerful words etched into their rough surfaces — hope, joy, fear, anger, pain, kindness, respect — meant to evoke the emotions of the four civil rights pioneers as they walked down that hill, but also the feelings of young adolescents everywhere as they navigate the complicated social and emotional landscape of middle school. The steps are large enough to climb and play on but also scaled to serve as a means for able bodied persons to climb or descend the hill, twice crossing the more circuitous route of the gentler ADA-accessible pedestrian path.

At these locations, where wide benches have been carved into the hillside, and also at the top and bottom of the trail, interpretive installations consider core project themes: the progressive qualities of the Arlington community that positioned this rapidly growing and changing city to take a leadership role in the fight for school desegregation in Virginia, and to commission a proudly modern design for their new school (visible in the background, thoughtfully engaged and set off by the new Quinn Evans addition); the emergence of school desegregation as a high-profile national issue and a potent symbol of the struggle for civil rights, as symbolized by the landmark US Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*; the events of

2 February 1959, as remembered and interpreted by Michael Jones, Gloria Thompson, Lance Newman and Ronald Deskins; and finally, the lasting necessity and value of committing ourselves to respecting the dignity and rights of every human being.

Three of these interpretive installations are deliberately understated: tastefully designed graphic panels mounted to natural surface split-face granite columns, matching the look and feel of the interpretive trail pavers. By contrast, the installation midway down the trail that is devoted to telling the stories of Arlington's four heroes is more complex and robust. Here, near life-sized bas relief bronze portraits of the four children are presented in a loose grouping as we approach, inviting us to walk among them and mingle, as if we were joining them on their march down the hill. Graphic panels mounted to the rear of these columns portray the former students as they look today, and offer their personal memories of the historic events.

The bottom of the trail, adjacent to the school's new southwest entrance, opens into a sheltered courtyard furnished with groupings of low stone benches, again made from the same soft pink granite as the interpretive trail pavers. On most days, after school, these seats are occupied by clusters of students engaged in animated conversation, alive with enthusiasm, curiosity, and excitement.

INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE NARRATIVE, CONT.

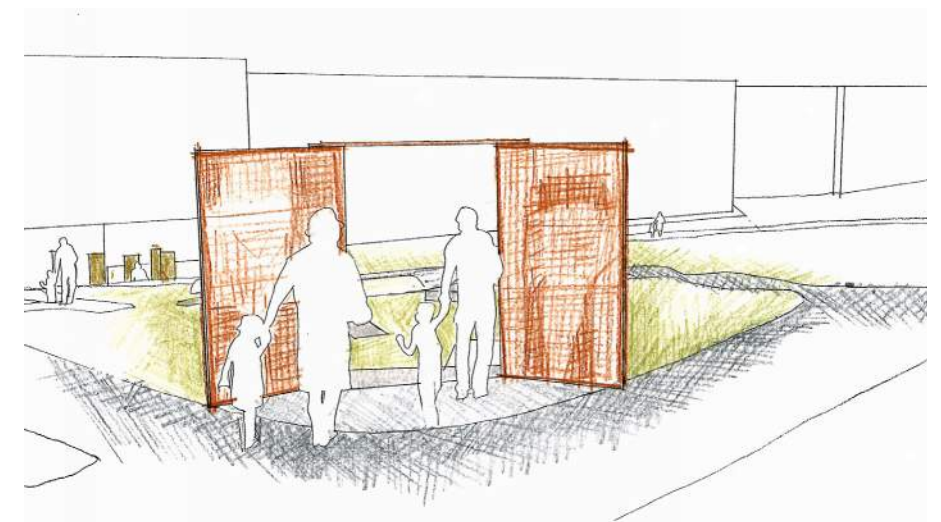
Inside the light-filled lobby, students and staff throng the floor and stairwell, moving to and fro, filling the space with human energy. The west wall of the open stairwell is clad in colorful triangular raised panels, creating a richly textured backdrop for the bright, intricate, constantly moving pictorial mobile that occupies the center of the lobby, rising some thirty feet above the ground floor. Four strands of double-sided panels slowly rotate on slender, almost invisible spindles, gently intersecting and crossing one another's paths, creating an ever-changing composition of historic and contemporary images and translucent tinted planes. In the historic images, Caucasian and African-American students and community members interact, coming together, separating, and then coming together again. Contemporary photographs illustrate the cultural and ethnic diversity of Arlington today, a complex polyglot melange. And as these modern images rotate on their axes they also engage their historic counterparts, past and present participating in a carefully choreographed conversation about the future.

On a long wall below the diversity mobile, personal stories of adversity and accomplishment take pride of place. Anchored by a clear and accessible timeline and animated with images, multi-layered and multi-colored graphic panels, and embedded video displays, this content-rich installation offers a deep dive into the

powerful history of the US Civil Rights movement, and Arlington's prominent roles in that struggle, through the eyes of the people whose courage and commitment made it possible. Sampling at random, we meet both familiar prominent historical figures and unsung heroes, gaining greater insight into well-chronicled events while learning of smaller but equally pivotal moments we never knew about. These exhibits seem to be specially designed to appeal to today's younger audiences, packaged in accessible and engaging "small bites," so that students absorb morsels of information every time they pass through, as if by osmosis.

Making our way down a long hallway toward the building exit, lined with classrooms on both sides, we are surprised and heartened to see that a new generation of Stratford students have taken the lessons of their forebears to heart. In one prominent display, a group of sixth graders have created photo-composite self-portraits that grapple with questions of identity. In each, individuals confront their impressions of how they are perceived: "Just because I don't like sports doesn't mean I'm boring." "Just because I'm quiet doesn't mean I don't have friends." "Just because I'm a Muslim doesn't mean I am a terrorist." "Just because I like girls doesn't mean I don't like boys." Bold, brave and insightful, this display seems fitting testament to the lasting importance of the events of 2 February 1959.

On the way back to our car after leaving the school we pause at an outdoor exhibit, alongside the main pathway that runs parallel to the school's main wing, that calls our attention to the architectural significance of this building — and to how this site has changed over time. Touchable bronze models arrayed at table-height trace the evolution of the Stratford school campus from wooded countryside to YWCA camp to newly built modern school, and through a series of additions and alterations to that building, to the present day. It is a simple yet memorable distillation of the essential message of the Stratford School story: that we all live in a state of constant change, moving through time, building upon the lessons of the past as we set our sights on the future.



INTERPRETIVE CONTENT GUIDELINES

Outlined below are preliminary content guidelines for proposed interpretive components. Additional, more extensive and detailed content development will take place during the project's design phases.

Heroes Welcome Interpretive Gateways

- Images of four students taken during initial week of integration
- Quotes from four students

Historic Path Interpretive Trail

- Arlington as an emerging progressive community in the years prior to integration, as symbolized by county's decision to commission a noted modern architect to design its new junior high school
- The emergence of school desegregation as a national issue and a central focus of the accelerating Civil Rights movement, as symbolized by the Supreme Court's pivotal 1954 Brown v. Board decision
- The events of 2 February 1959, as remembered by the four integrating students
- Profiles of the four students
- The events leading up to and following 2 February 1959
- Exploration and affirmation of universal human rights values: inclusion, respect, equality of opportunity

Heart of School Heritage Wall

- History, heritage, and meaning of civil rights movement
- Exploration and celebration of Stratford School's role in desegregation of Virginia schools
- Discussion of contemporary human rights issues relevant to present and future Stratford students
- Focus on 40 year Civil Rights era timespan, roughly 1940 - 1980
- Selected national/international history and culture events as "markers"
- History of school segregation and desegregation in Virginia
- Social history of Arlington, evolution of progressive thinking in city
- Reflections/recollections of four students
- Reflections/recollections of Stratford students and staff and community members during period of desegregation

Celebration of Diversity Mobile

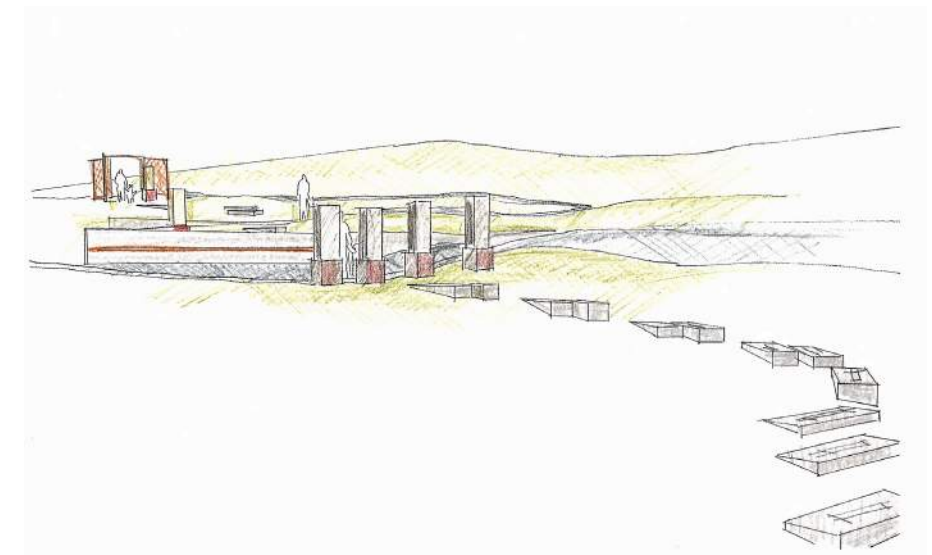
- Historic images of four students
- Historic images of Stratford and Arlington at the time of desegregation
- Contemporary images illustrating multicultural character of Stratford School and Arlington today

Stratford Self-Portrait Changing Exhibits

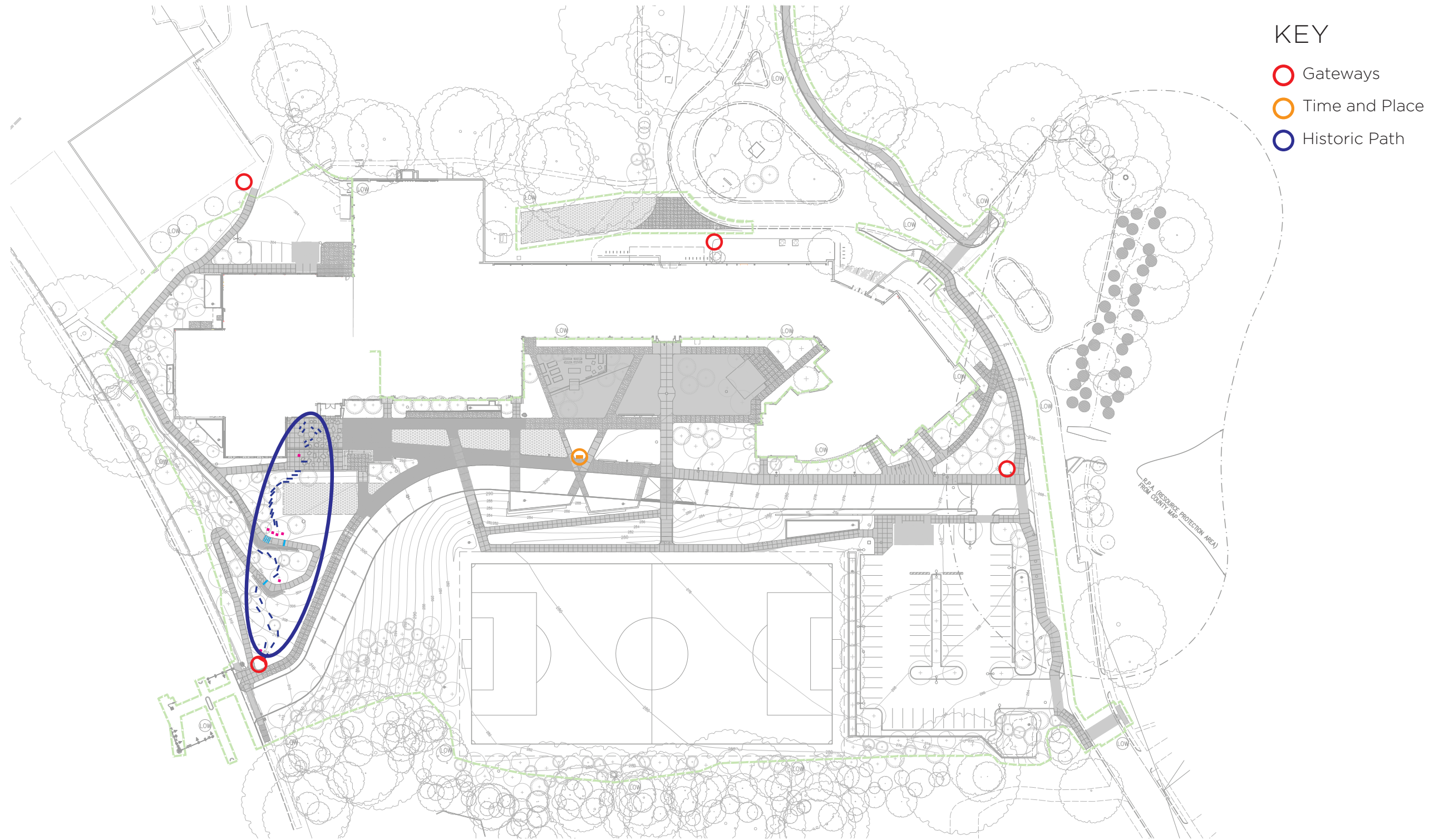
- Changing displays of student-created artworks celebrating the Stratford School community

Time and Place Architectural History Exhibit

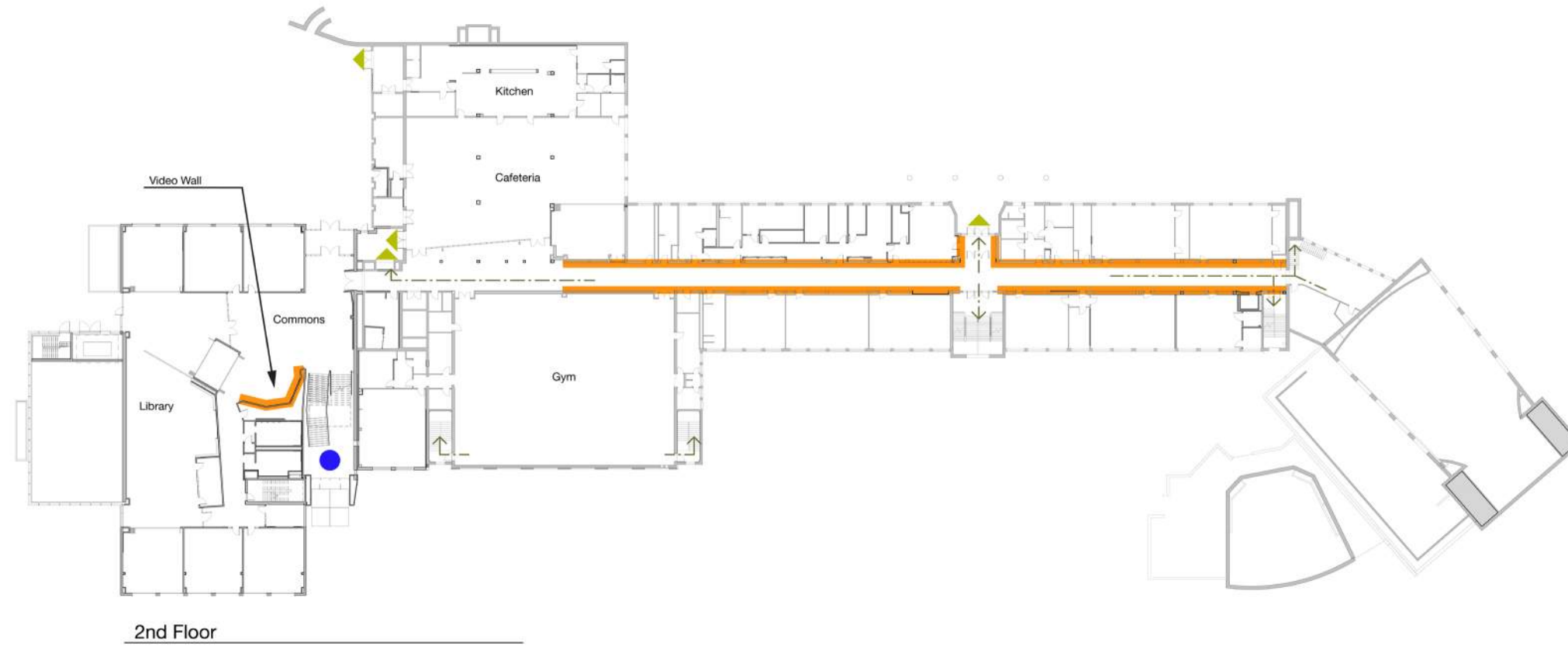
- Progressive architecture for a progressive community: history of "progressive movement" in education, and its impacts on school design
- Site as un-built native landscape; as YWCA camp; Stratford as originally built; as altered/added to, and current building (after renovation and expansion)
- Identification and interpretation of character-defining features of building



INTERPRETIVE COMPONENT LOCATION PLAN DIAGRAMS

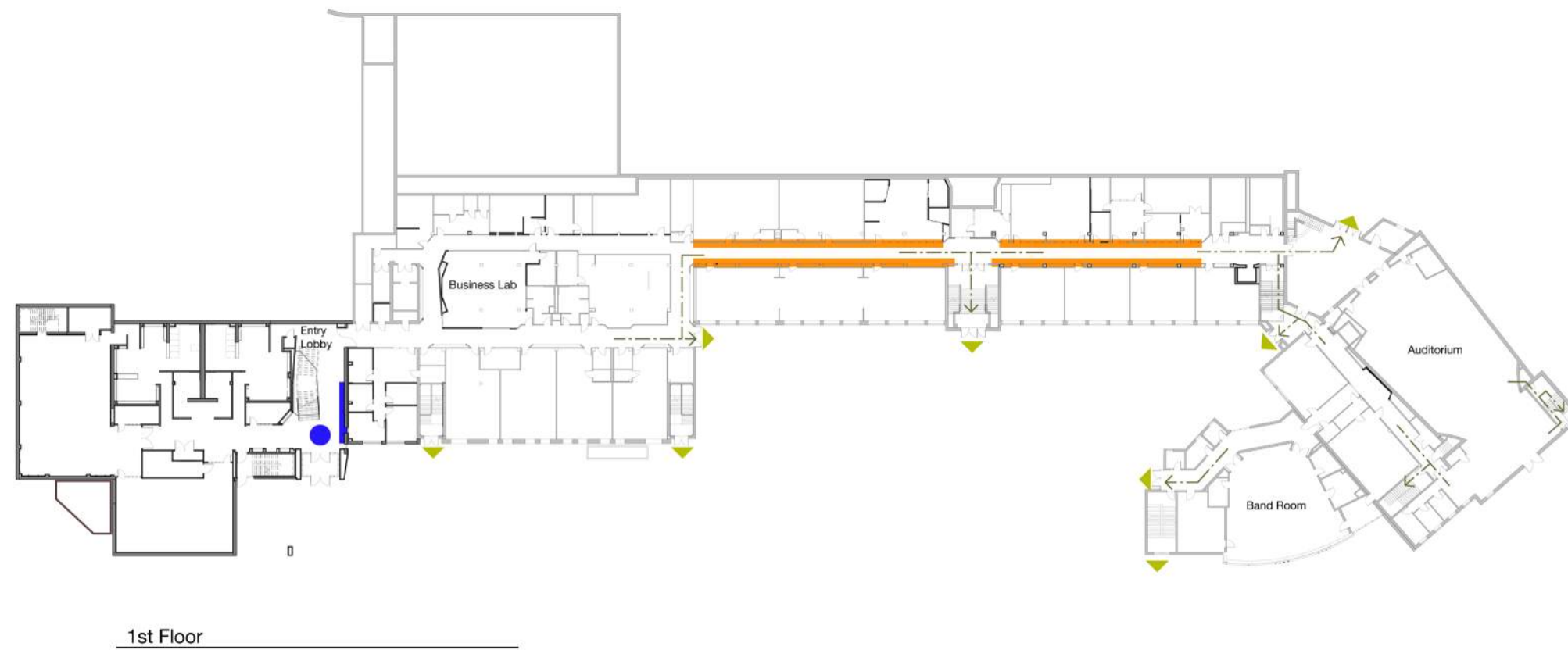


INTERPRETIVE COMPONENT LOCATION PLAN DIAGRAMS, CONT.



KEY

- Heart of School Gallery
- Stratford Self-Portrait



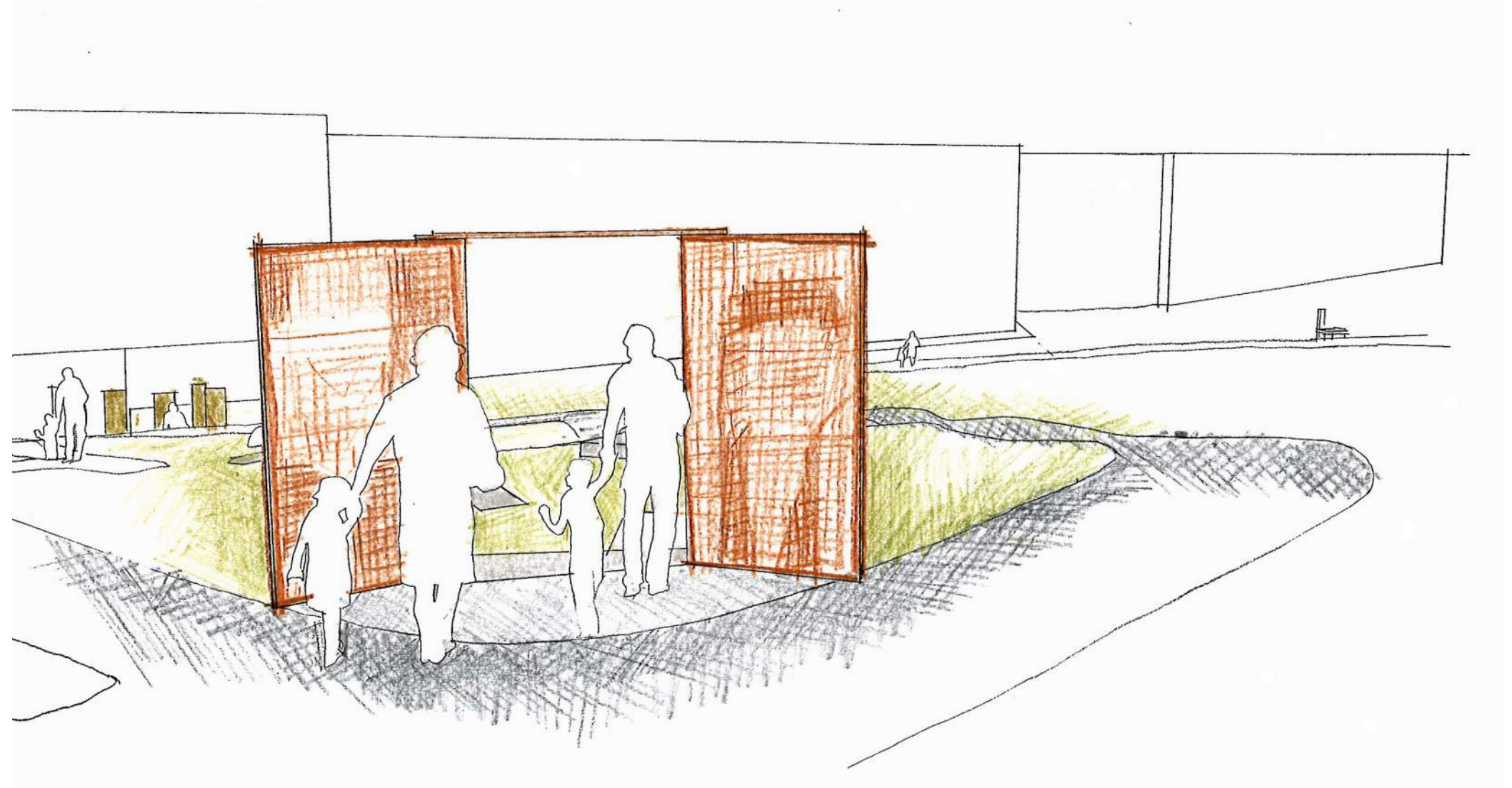
HEROES WELCOME INTERPRETIVE GATEWAYS

Objectives

- Mark and celebrate Stratford campus as historic site
- Create visually striking, conceptually accessible expression of essential meaning of events of 2 February 1959
- Provide welcome and orientation
- Introduce core content/themes

Content

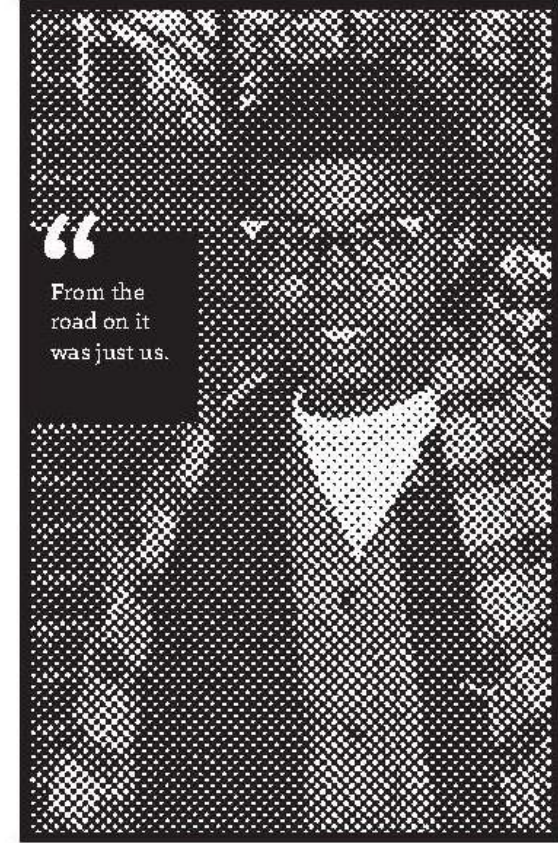
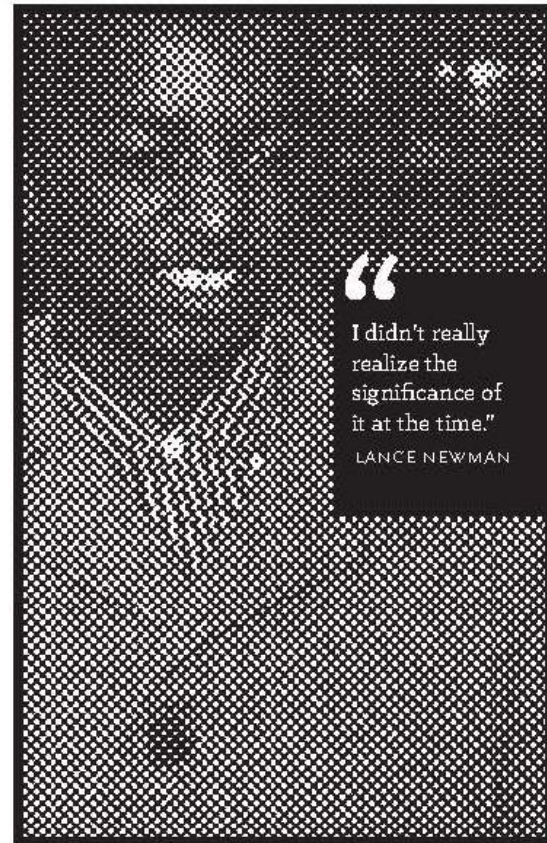
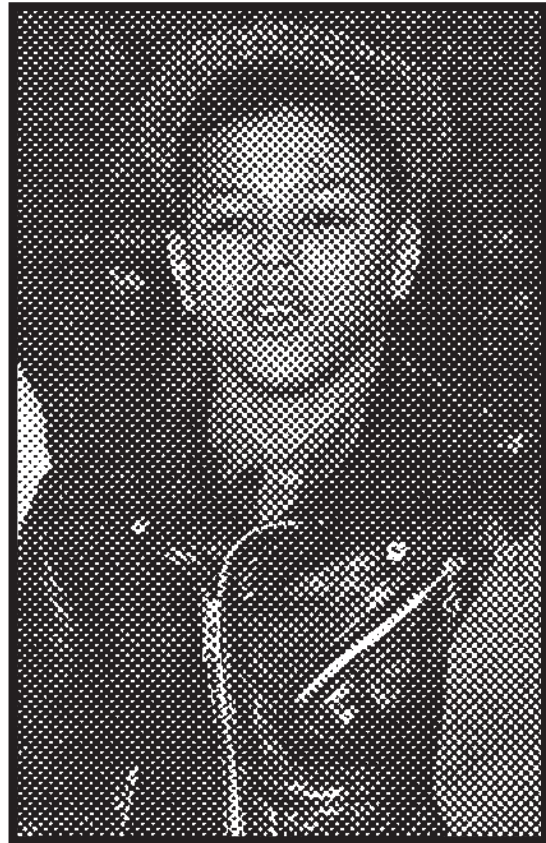
- Personal statements from four students
- Images of four students



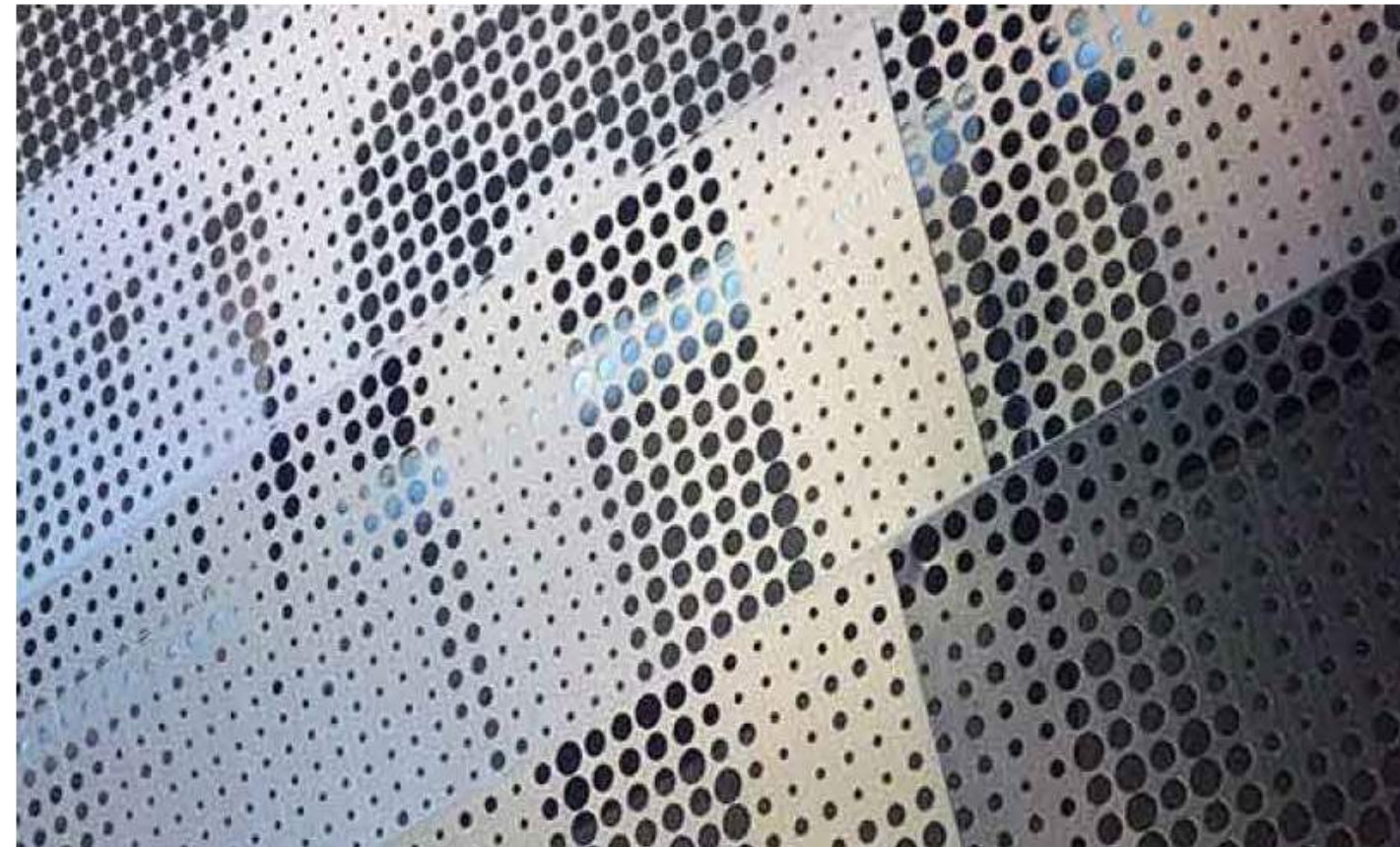
Interpretive Gateway Concept Sketch

Powerful, visually arresting images of four students flank conceptual portals, creating welcoming entrances onto Stratford campus.

HEROES WELCOME GATEWAY GRAPHIC CONCEPT



HEROES WELCOME GATEWAY REFERENCE IMAGES



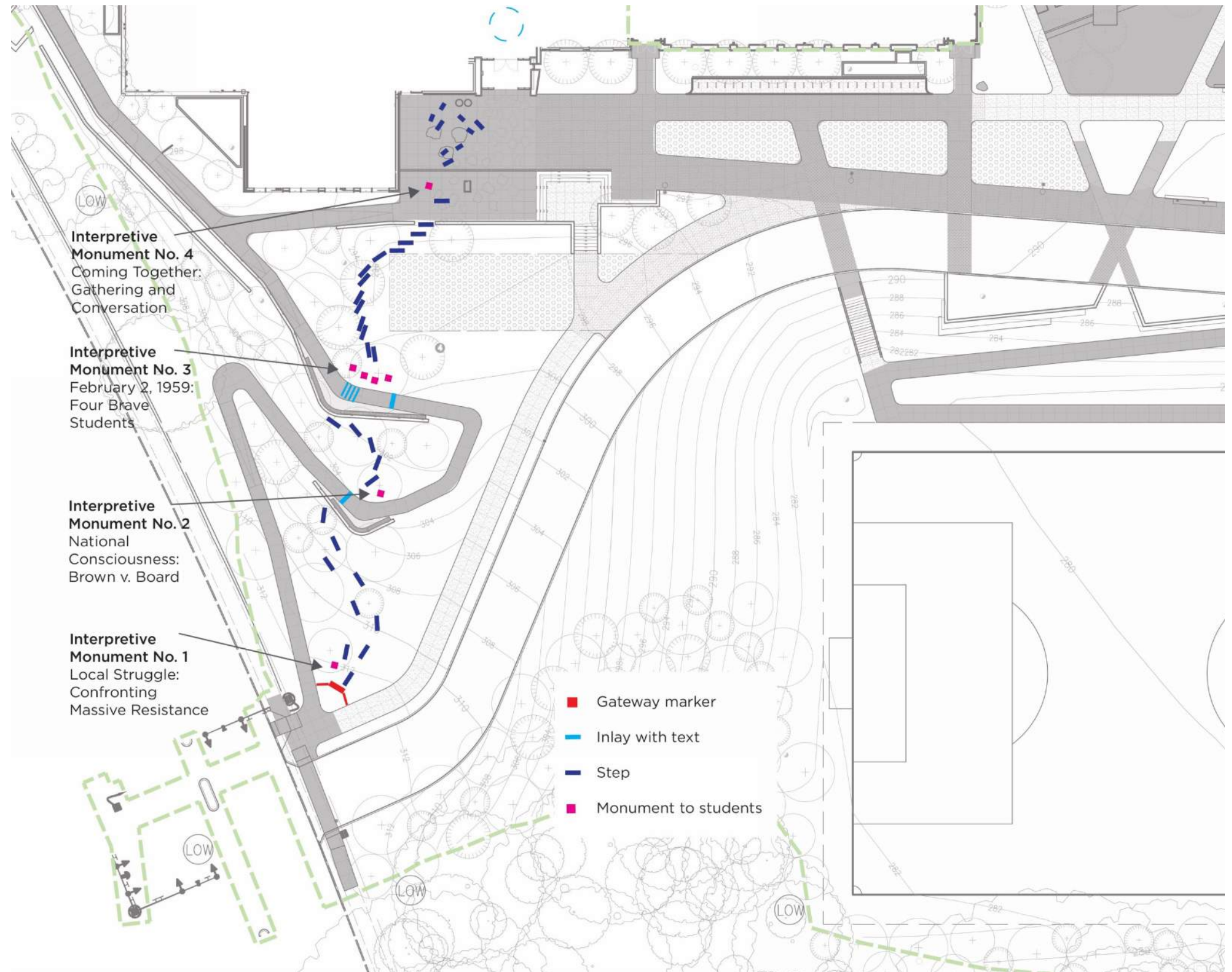
HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

Objectives

- Tell story 2 February 1959
- Place events of 2 February 1959 in historical context
- Make events meaningful for present and future Stratford students
- Honor and celebrate four heroes
- Create distinctive, memorable “whole body” interpretive experience

Content

- Arlington as a progressive community, symbolized by decision to commission noted modern architect to design a new school
- Emergence of school integration as a national issue and a central focus of the accelerating Civil Rights movement, symbolized by Supreme Court 1954 Brown v. Board decision
- Events of 2 February 1959, featuring profiles and recollections of students
- Affirmation of universal values: inclusion, respect, equality of opportunity
- Expression of universal emotions: joy, fear, excitement, anticipation, anxiety, pride, hope, etc.



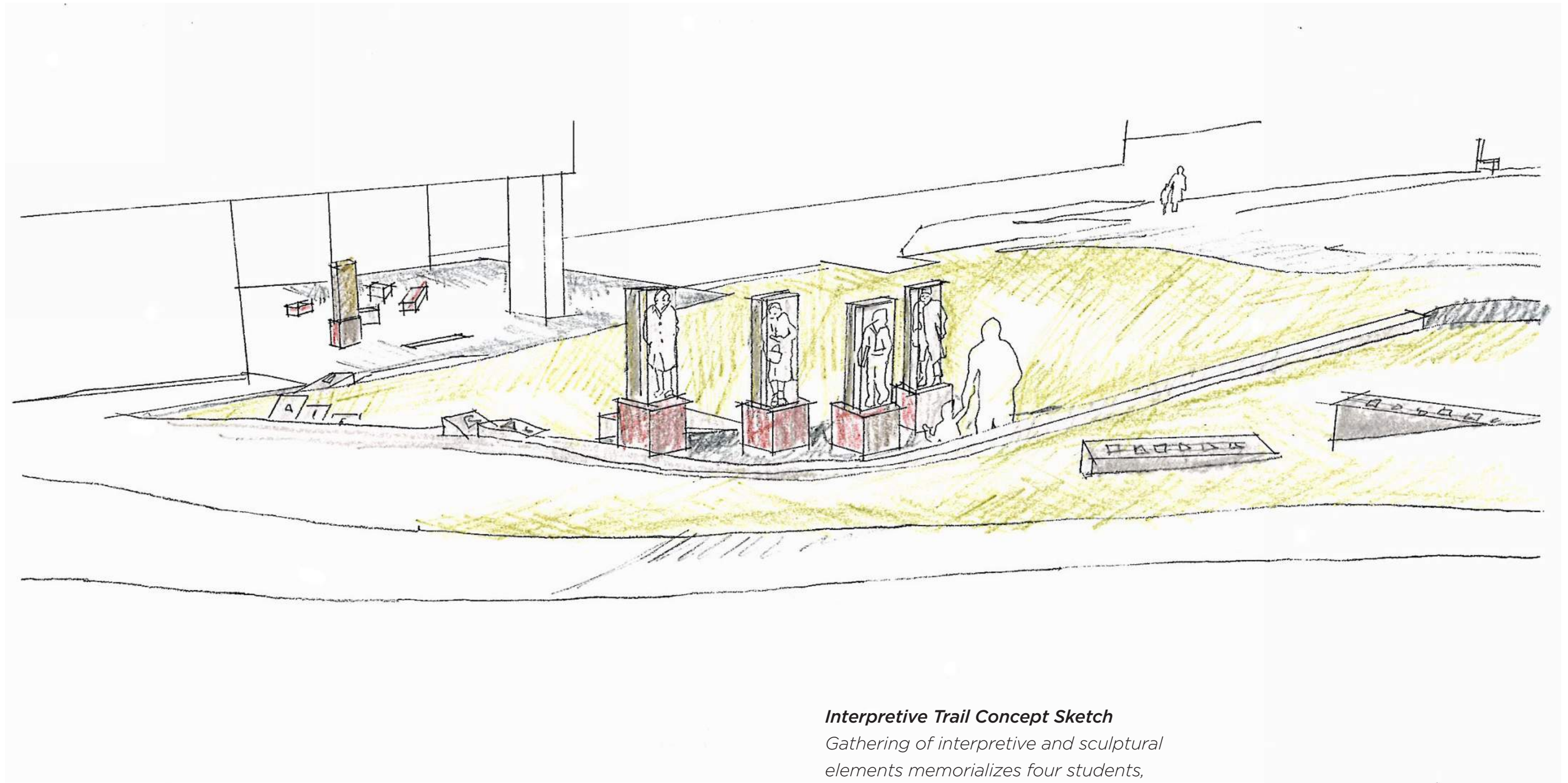
HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL CONCEPT SKETCH



Interpretive Trail Concept Sketch

Seating and interpretation are provided where interpretive trail intersects new ADA accessible pathway.

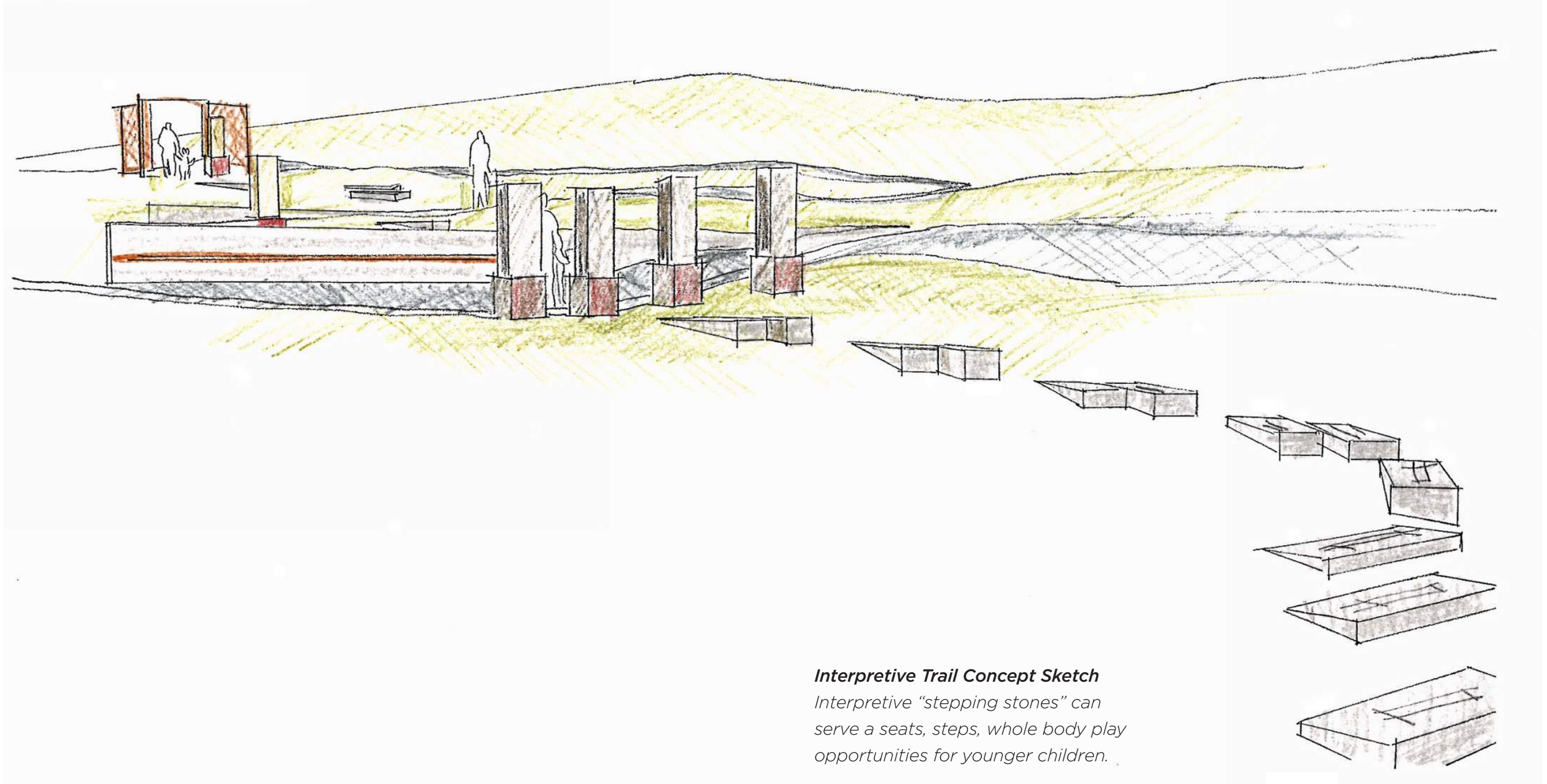
HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL CONCEPT SKETCH



Interpretive Trail Concept Sketch

Gathering of interpretive and sculptural elements memorializes four students, recalls events of 2 February 1959 in their own words.

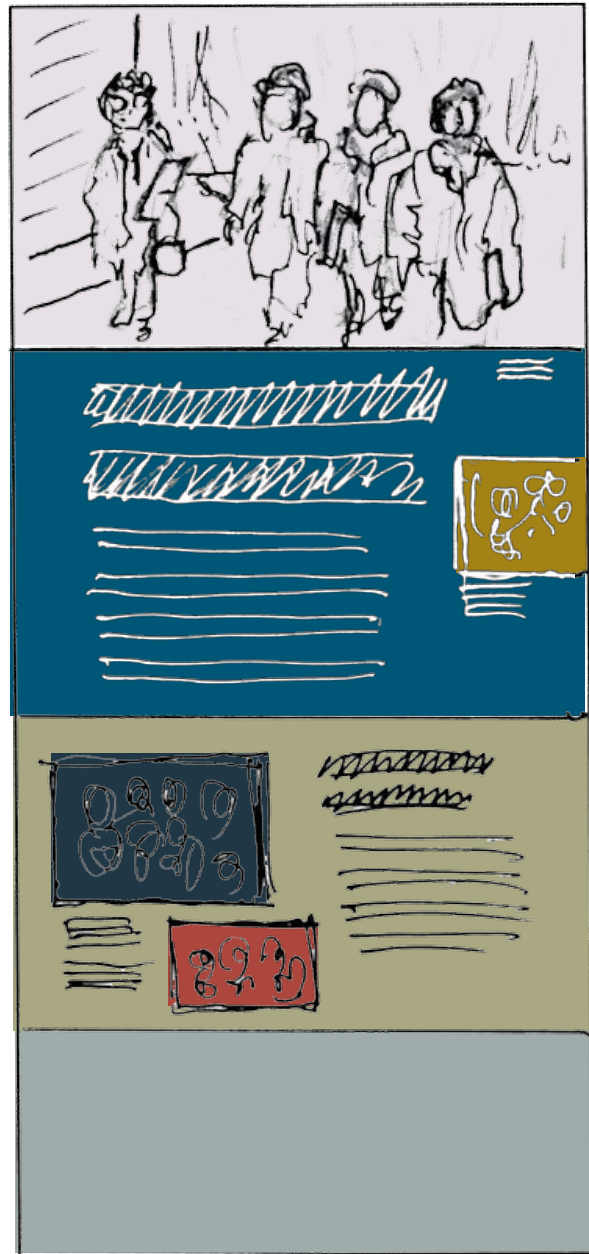
HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL CONCEPT SKETCH



Interpretive Trail Concept Sketch

Interpretive "stepping stones" can serve as seats, steps, whole body play opportunities for younger children.

HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL GRAPHIC CONCEPTS



rage
fear

bravery

pride
hope

curiosity

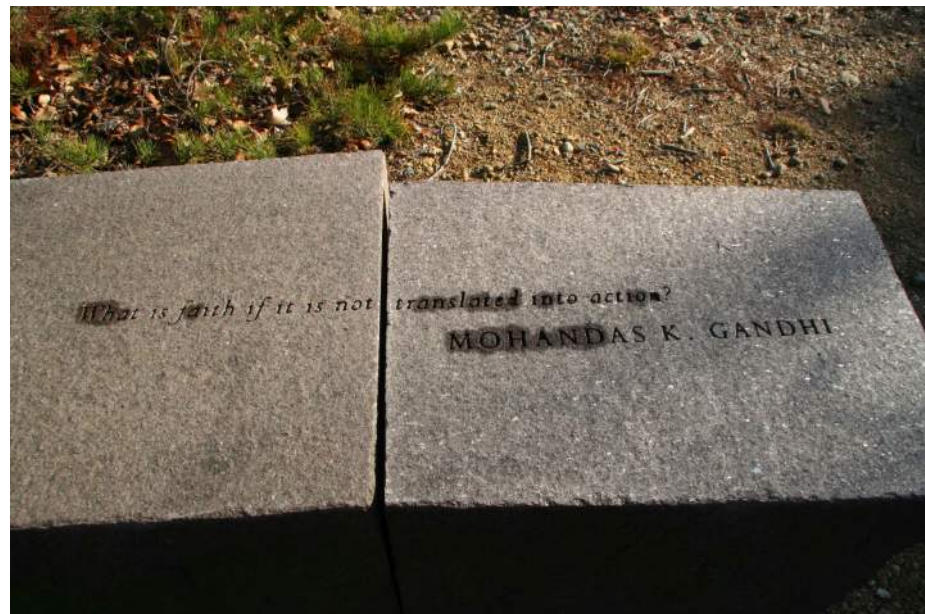
doubt

uncertainty

Left:
Graphic panels are affixed to rear sides of bas relief sculptures of students.

Above:
Simple "feelings" words etched into granite pavers evoke universal emotions.

HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL REFERENCE IMAGES



HISTORIC PATH INTERPRETIVE TRAIL REFERENCE IMAGES



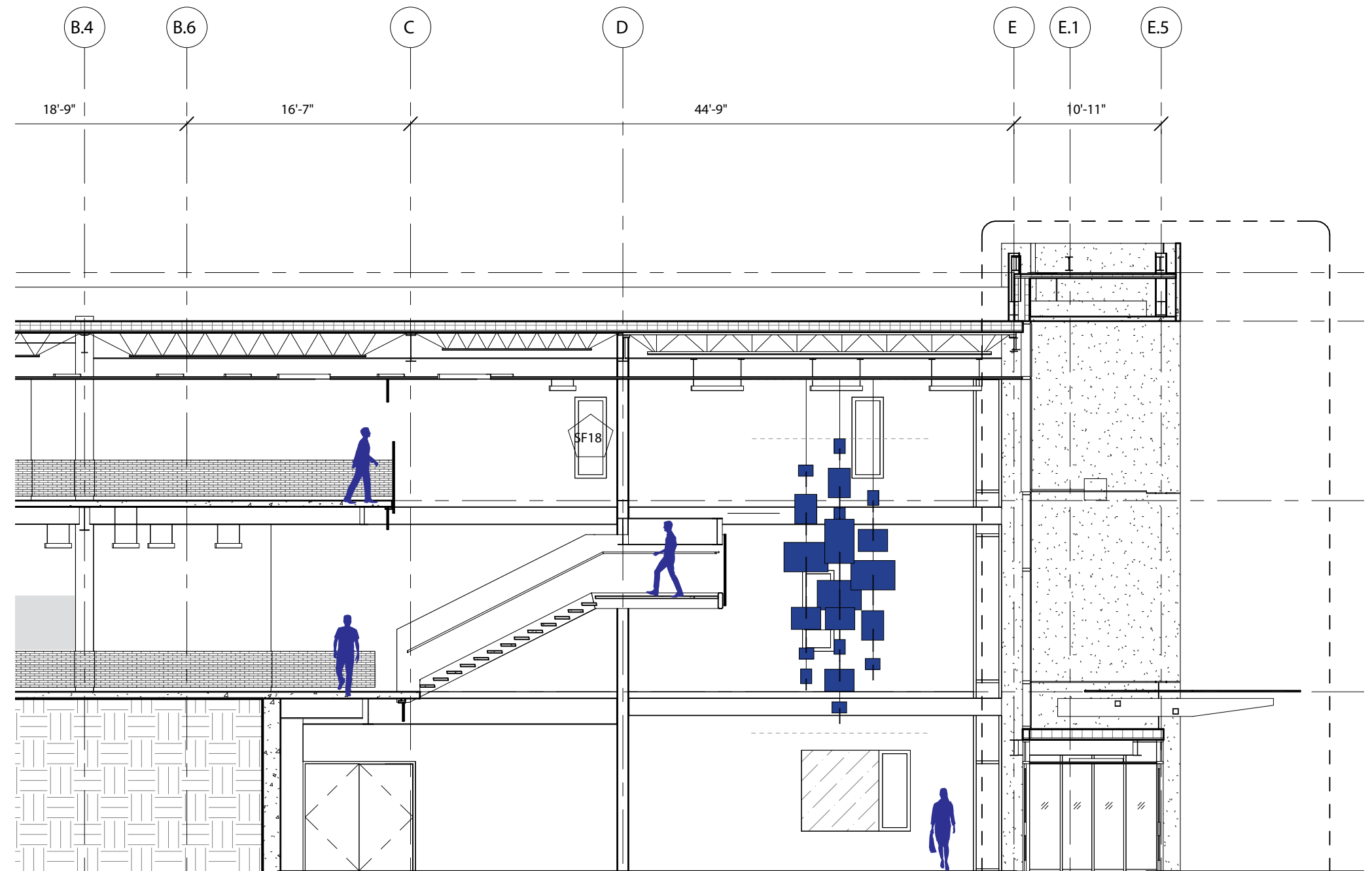
CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY MOBILE ELEVATION

Objectives

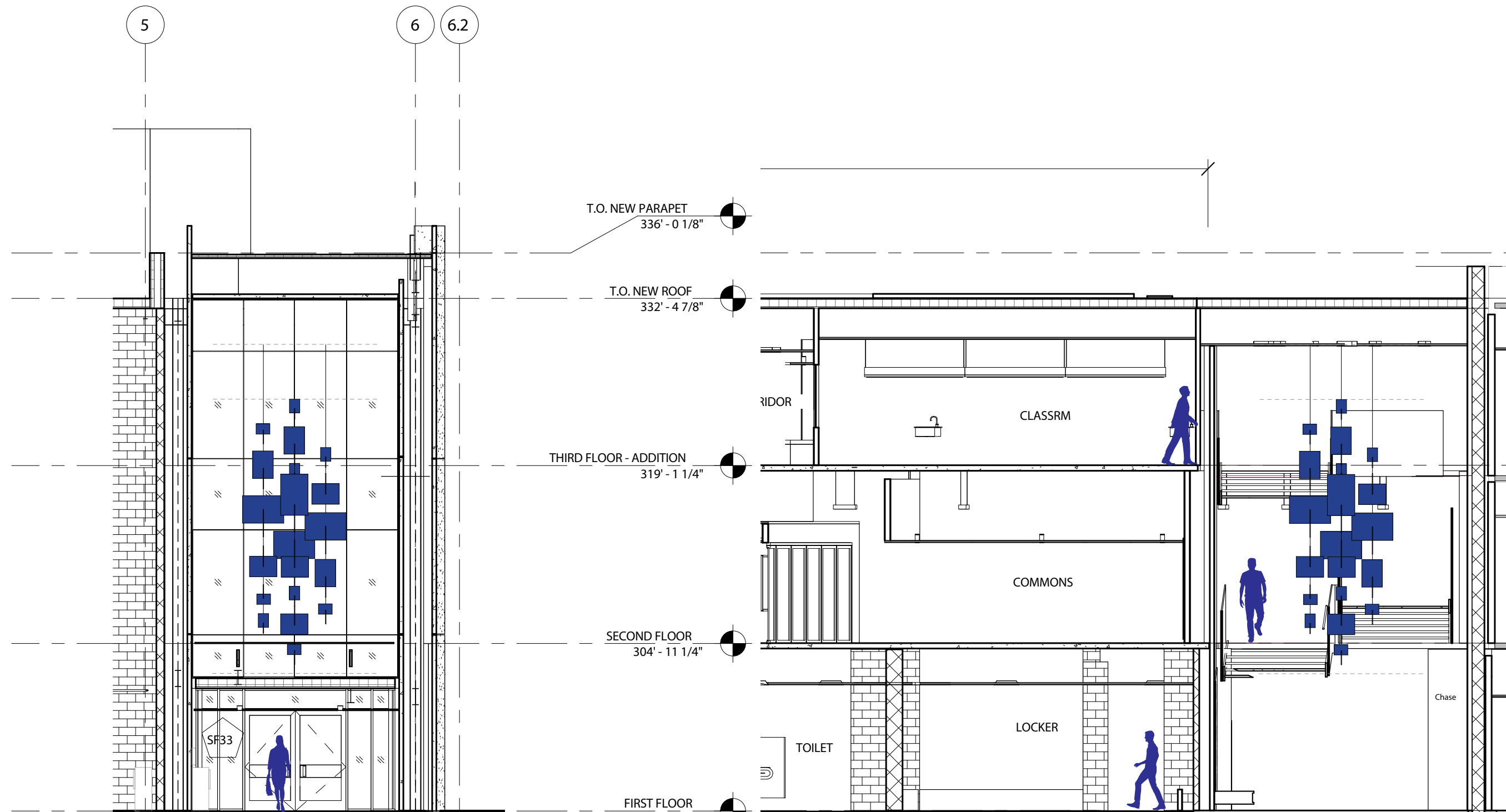
- Provide a visually striking, dynamic, and conceptually meaningful centerpiece for new “heart of school” lobby

Content

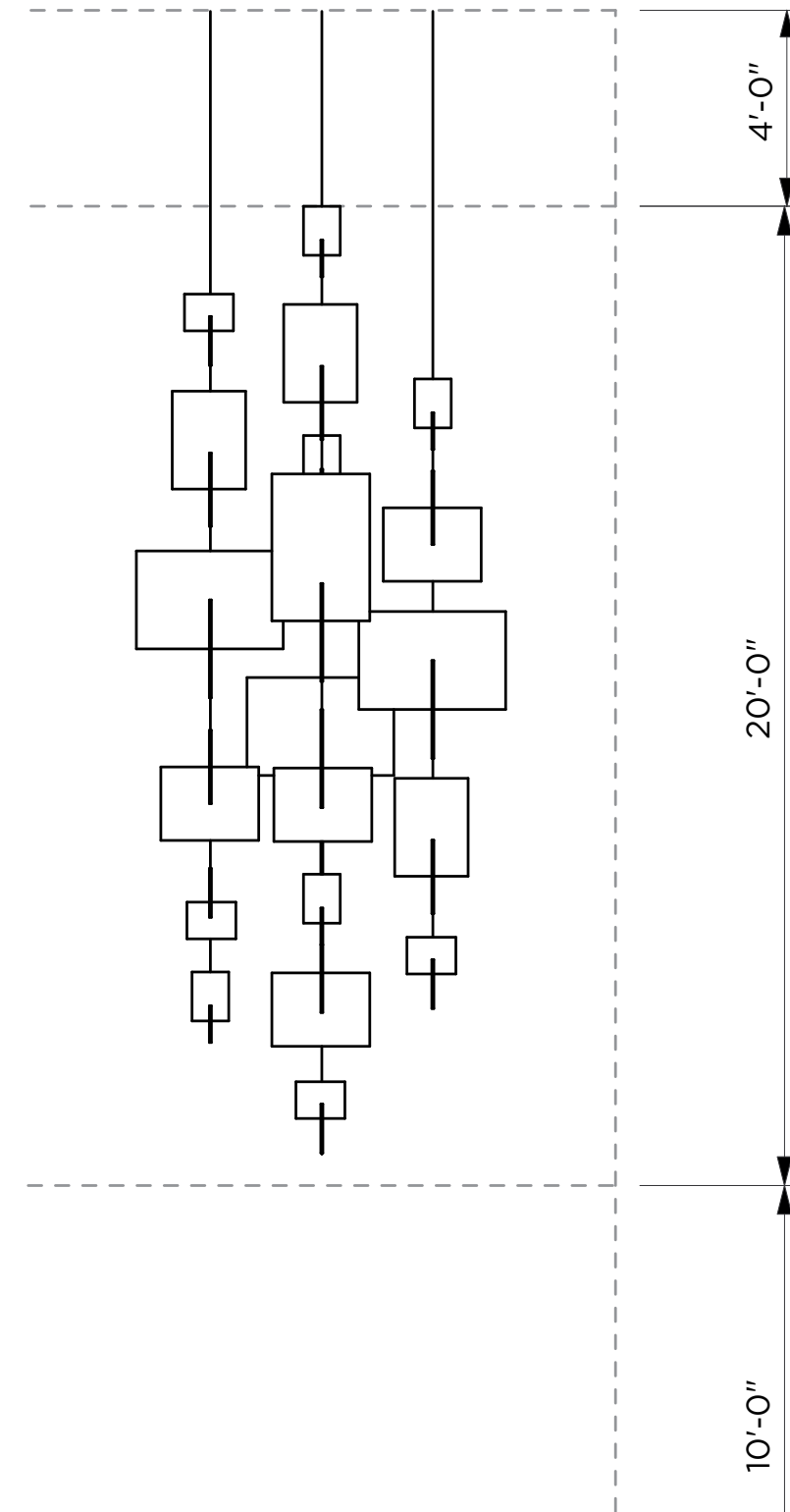
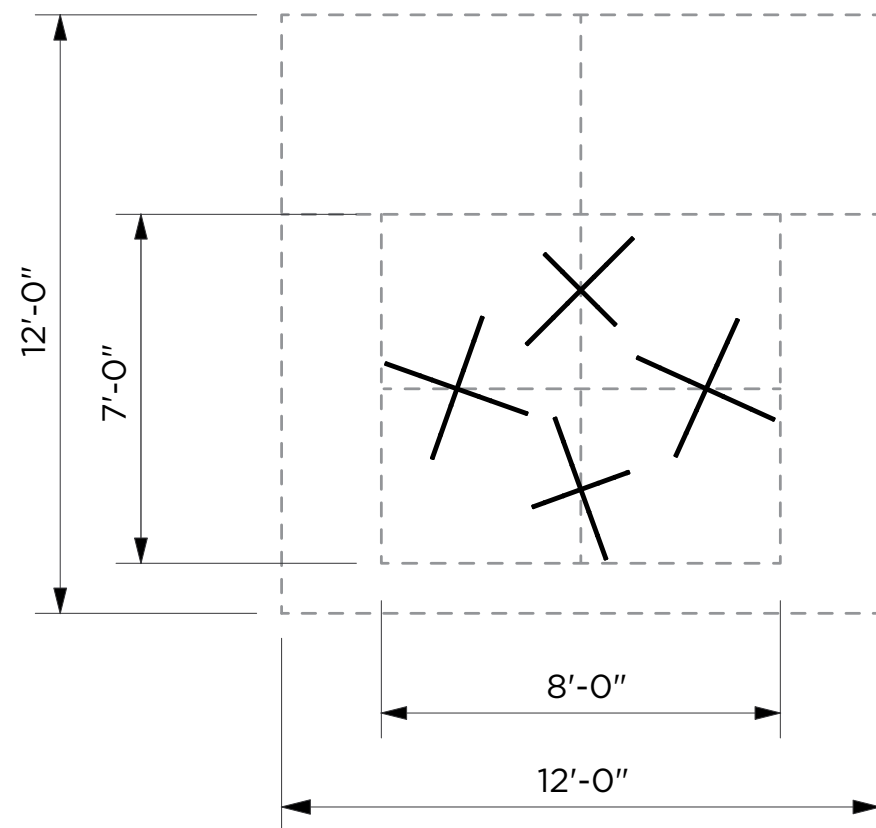
- Large-scale kinetic mobile composed of interlocking, intersecting image panels
- Historic images of Stratford and Arlington during period of desegregation
- Historic images of four students and events of/around 2 February 1959
- Contemporary images illustrating multicultural/heterogeneous character of Stratford students and community today



CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY MOBILE ELEVATIONS



CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY MOBILE PLAN AND ELEVATION



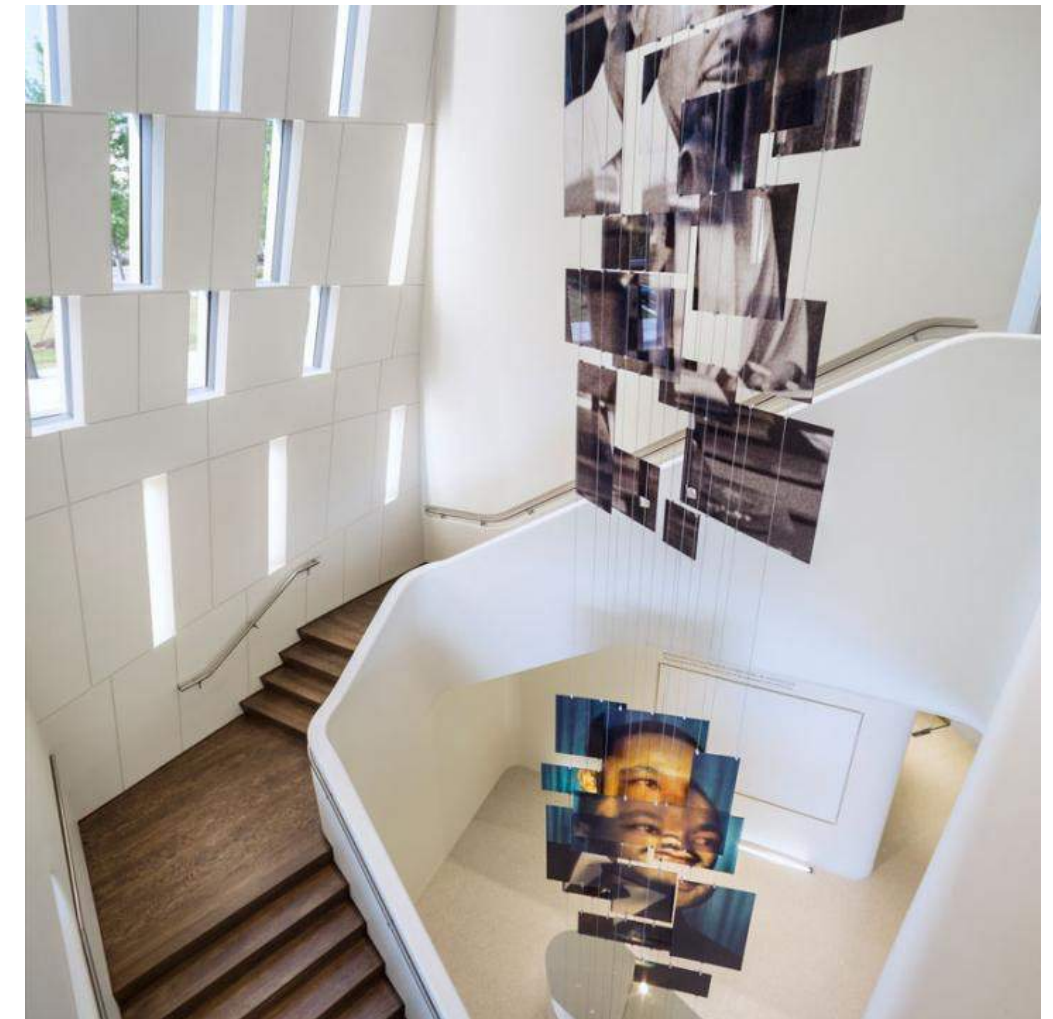
CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY MOBILE GRAPHIC SKETCHES



Color Study



Concept Sketch



Reference Image

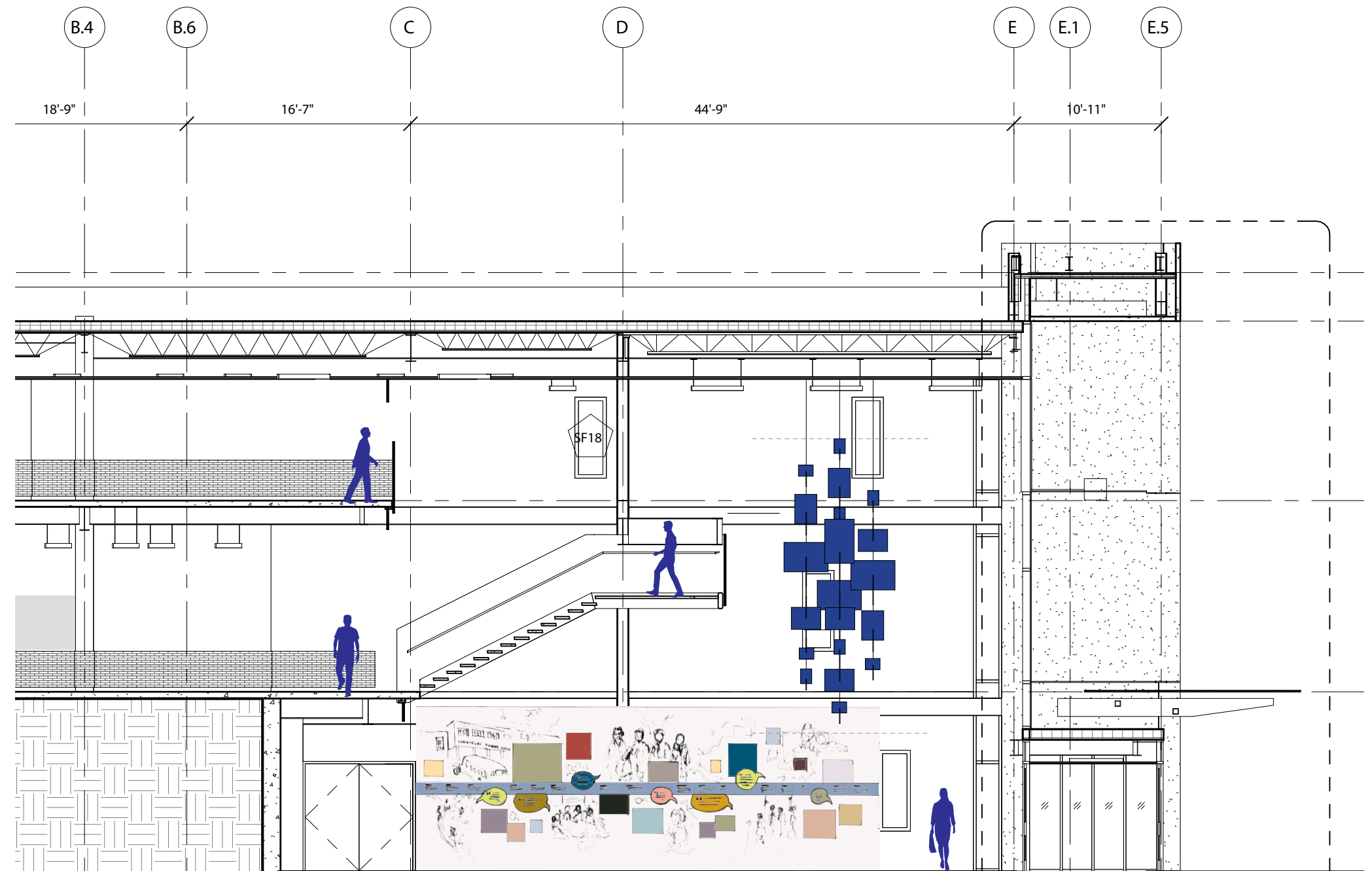
HEART OF SCHOOL HERITAGE WALL ELEVATION

Objectives

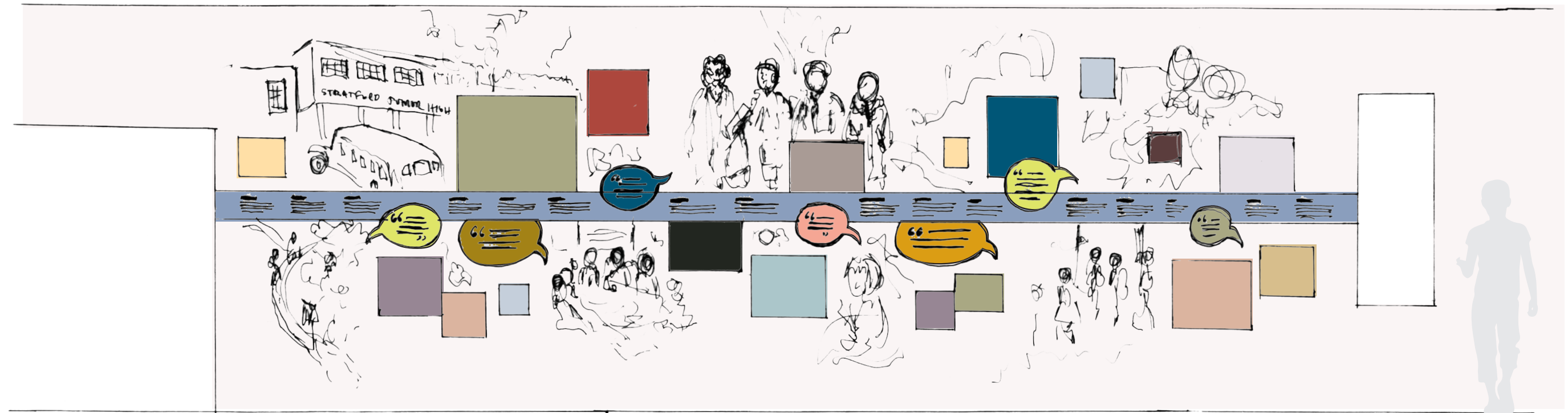
- Commemorate history, heritage, and meaning of civil rights movement
- Honor and celebrate Stratford's role in desegregation of Virginia schools
- Highlight ongoing importance of tolerance, inclusion, etc.

Content

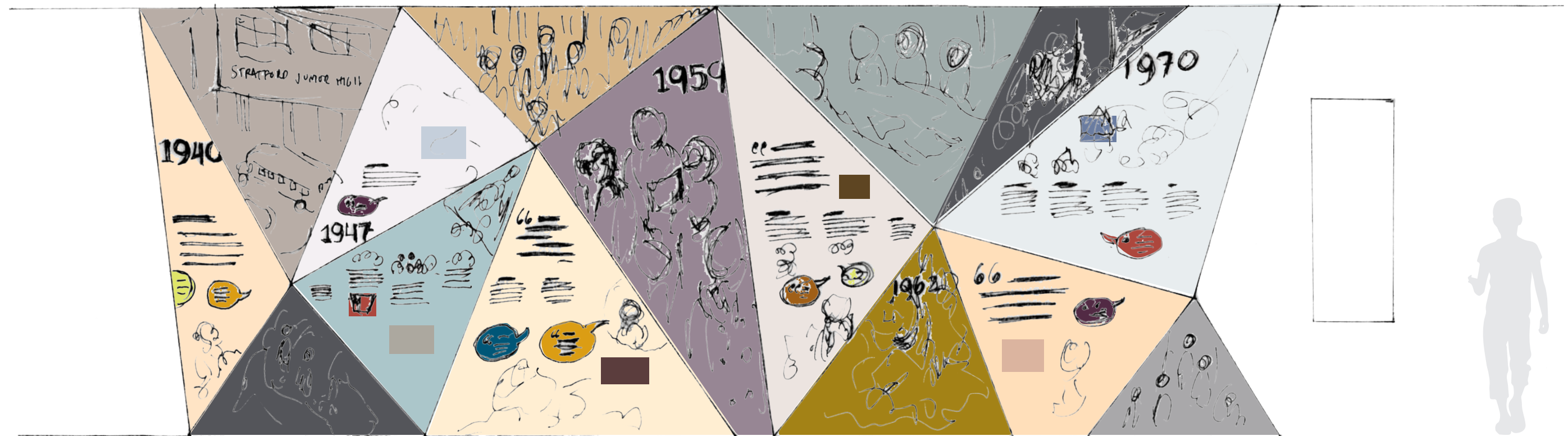
- Focus on 30 - 40 year Civil Right era timespan, roughly 1940 - 1980
- History of school segregation and desegregation in Virginia
- Social history of Arlington, evolution of progressive thinking in city
- Reflections/recollections of four students
- Reflections/recollections of Stratford students and staff and community members during period of desegregation
- Include present day human/civil rights issues
- Include recognizable national/international history and cultural events as "reference points"



HEART OF SCHOOL HERITAGE WALL CONCEPT SKETCH



HEART OF SCHOOL HERITAGE WALL CONCEPT SKETCH



HEART OF SCHOOL HERITAGE WALL REFERENCE IMAGES



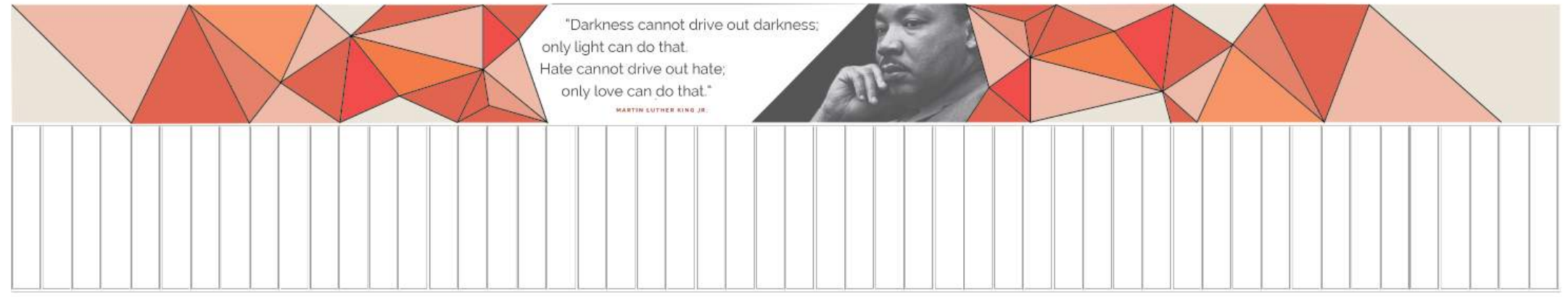
STRATFORD SELF-PORTRAIT CONCEPT SKETCH

Objectives

- Changing displays of student-created artworks celebrating and documenting the Stratford community, installed at specific locations along hallways.

Content

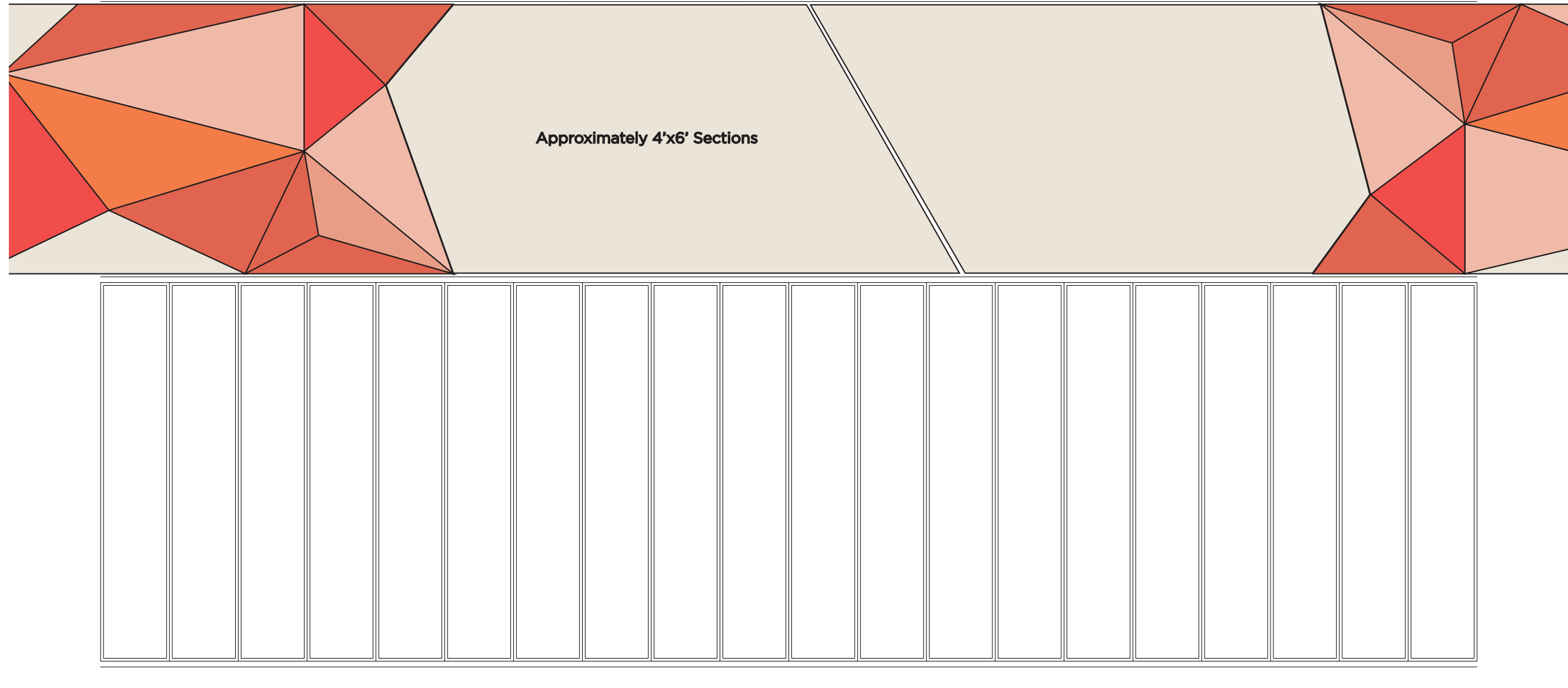
- Celebration and ongoing documentation of "Stratford experience"



LOCKER STUDY



STRATFORD SELF-PORTRAIT CHANGEABLE FRAME TYPICAL ELEVATION



Custom-designed and fabricated frame system would enable students artworks to be easily mounted for temporary display, then removed and archived.

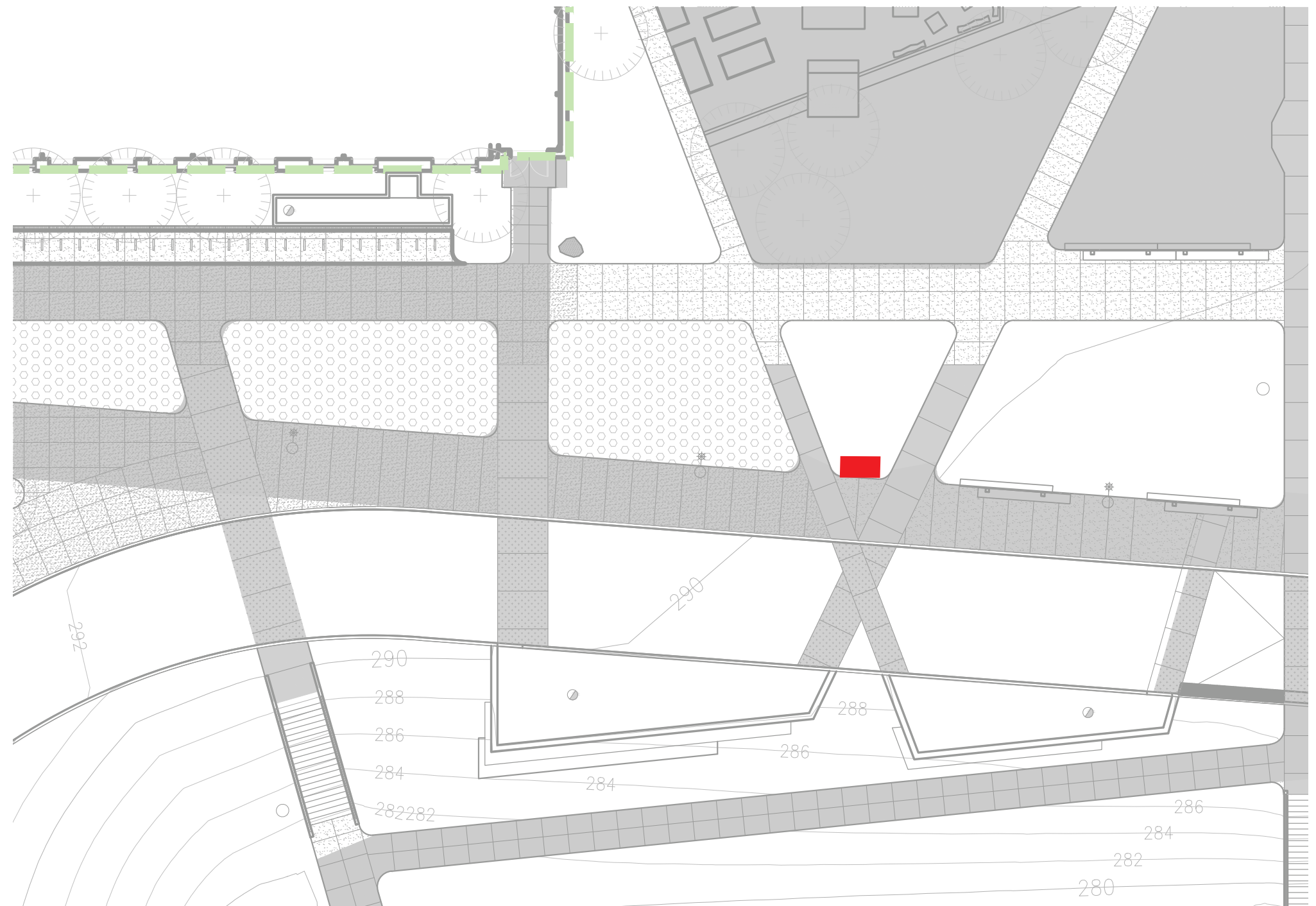
TIME AND PLACE PLAN

Objectives

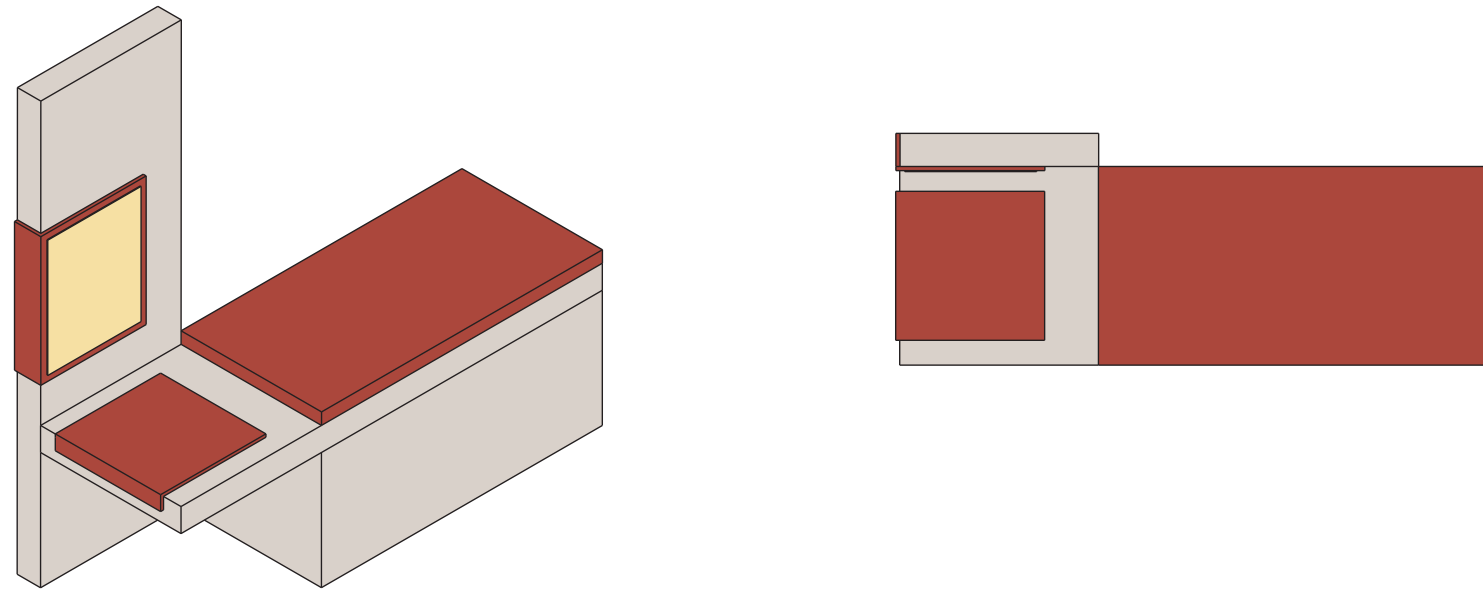
- Architectural significance of original Stratford building
- Evolution of site and building over time (19th Century - Present)
- Touchable models/bas reliefs and graphics

Content

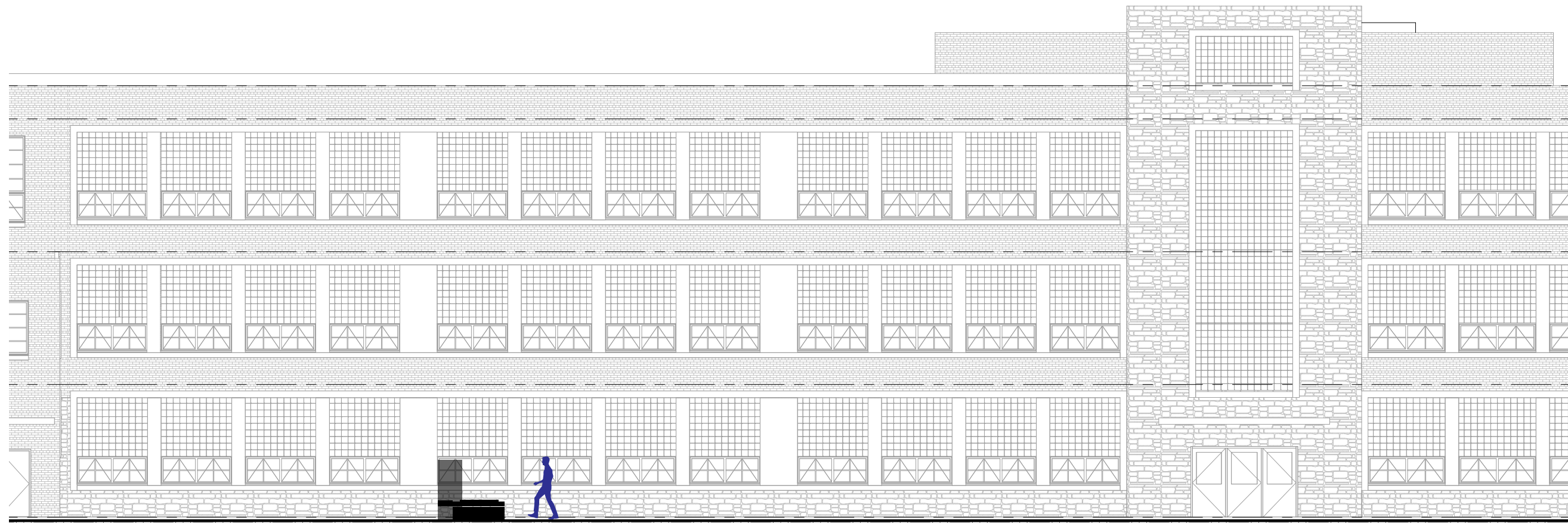
- Progressive architecture for a progressive community: history of “progressive movement” in education, and its impacts on school design
- Site as un-built native landscape; as YWCA camp; Stratford as originally built; as altered/added to, and current building (after renovation and expansion)
- Identification and interpretation of character-defining features of building



TIME AND PLACE ELEVATION AND CONCEPT SKETCHES

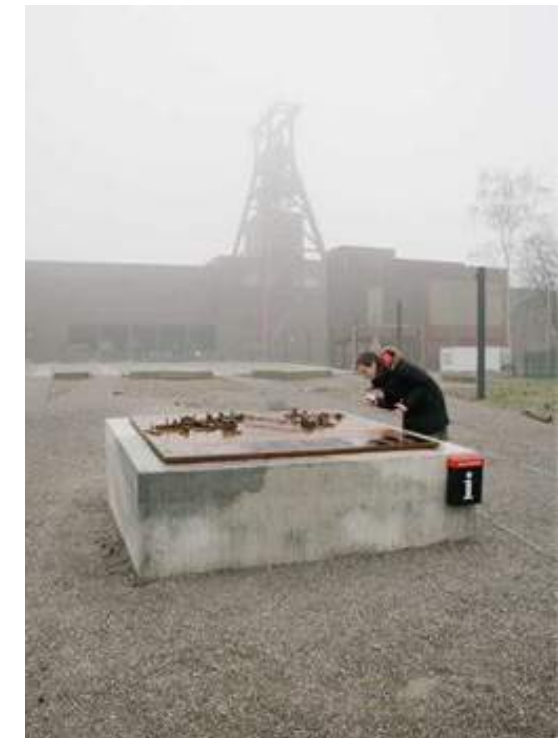


Concept Sketches



Elevation

TIME AND PLACE WALL REFERENCE IMAGES



February 23, 2018

Dr. Patrick Murphy and Dr. Barbara Kanninen
Arlington Public Schools
1426 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, Virginia 22207

Re: Stratford School Commemoration Recommendations

Dear Dr. Murphy and Dr. Kanninen:

We write to share the recommendations of the Superintendent's Special Committee on Historic Interpretation at the former Stratford Junior High School ("Committee").

Summary

Our Committee supports the staff recommendations in the *Proposed Interpretive Framework and Concept Design Summary*, and respectfully recommends that the School Board and Superintendent commit to ongoing support and funding to further interpret these and other historic events with and for our students and community.

Recognizing that budgets are tight during this generational investment in school and county facilities, we recommend the initial investment prioritize (1) commemoration of the specific events of February 2, 1959 over the building's architectural history, and (2) large scale exterior interpretation elements over interior displays.

Beyond the immediate investment in the built environment at Stratford, we strongly recommend a sustained effort and future investment in interpretation inside the school and in tandem with other civil rights and other community history across Arlington. To this end, several committee members offered to support fundraising and programmatic collaboration if needed.

Background

In late 2016 Dr. Patrick Murphy formed the Superintendent's Special Committee on Historic Interpretation at the former Stratford Junior High School to discuss the most appropriate way to spend the \$250,000 set aside by the School Board to commemorate the historic events that took place at the site during the week of February 2, 1959, when Stratford became the first public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia to become racially integrated.

Following the May 17, 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling that a separate but equal school system was unconstitutional, "Virginia Commonwealth officials had little intention of implementing any desegregation program pursuant to the Brown ruling...Governor Thomas B. Stanley stated that he 'would use every means at my command to continue segregated schools in Virginia.' In 1956, the Virginia General Assembly passed a referendum giving local school boards the authority to manage student placement, while reserving the right to close any Commonwealth school where integration occurred – establishing Virginia's policy of 'massive resistance' to school integration.

Arlington then approved a gradual and limited desegregation plan that would permit integration at only a few elementary and junior high schools and one senior high school over the course of three academic years, from 1956 to 1958. ... In response, the Virginia General Assembly voted in 1956 to strip the county of its right to an elected school board and replaced it with a more conservative county-appointed board. The first tentative steps towards an integrated Arlington school system were abruptly ended."

Arlington citizens, with support from the NAACP and other national leaders, continued to work toward fulfilling the Supreme Court's ruling. Stratford played a critical role in two tense, but peaceful moments, when integration was attempted, first unsuccessfully by three students (Edward Leslie Hamm, Jr., Joyce Marie Bailey, and George Tyrone Nelson) on September 5, 1957, and then successfully 15 months later when: "On Monday morning, February 2, 1959, under the protection of approximately eighty-five Arlington police officers, Ronald Deskins, Michael Jones, Lance Newman, and Gloria Thompson entered and were admitted to Stratford Junior High School without incident, making Stratford the first public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia to desegregate."¹

Committee Engagement Process

Our committee included one of the four students who integrated Stratford, African-American community leaders with intimate knowledge of Arlington's school desegregation journey, and representatives from the Arlington County Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), Arlington County Historic Preservation Program, APS Department of Teaching and Learning, APS Facilities and Operations, and Stratford Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC).

We deeply appreciate both the opportunity to serve in this way and your leadership and commitment in honoring the important civil rights events at Stratford. As County Board Chair Katie Cristol highlighted this month, we are invited to "translate Arlington's history, our community values" to modern times. 'To tell the old story' of Arlington is to tell of the fight for inclusion: Defiance of Massive Resistance and integrating our schools; waves of immigrants and refugees shaping the County's culture and economy." As community historian Dr. Alfred Taylor reminds us, "We have to understand where we are coming from so that we can appreciate where we are going." Bringing the Stratford story to life will help us understand the Arlington, Virginia and the United States today and how we all shape our communities for the future.

The Committee met six times between January and November 2017, working closely with APS staff and consultants, including a specialty interpretive planning and design consultant. Together we engaged in a collaborative and iterative process of establishing priorities, reviewing inspirational images, and commenting on various proposed concepts prepared by APS design consultants. We heard the first-hand testimonials of the community members who integrated the school in 1959, leaders who nurtured the slow but steady desegregation across decades, and others who are deeply invested in sustaining both the story and the meaning for future students and community members. It was an inspiring and often breathtaking experience to revisit the

¹ [HALRB.Stratford-Local-Historic-District-Designation-Report.6.11.2015.pdf](#).

stories and their meaning for our past, current and future community. Throughout, we challenged, encouraged, frustrated and inspired each other as we sought to translate the essence of the history and its meaning into the built environment, art and programmatic elements.

Out of this process we identified two major priorities:

- **The primary focus should be on the week of integration and the four students** who successfully integrated Stratford on February 2, 1959. The unique architectural history, while interesting, is not the focus of the current effort.
- The Stratford Junior High School history and place should be **linked to other local and national civil rights events and places**, in a way that is both visible and tangible for community members and engaging, thought-provoking and relevant for students. For instance, a walking tour, common signage or site furnishings and materials could connect multiple sites along Lee Highway². Family and community sacrifices, overcoming injustice and bias, persistence, compromise, hope and collaboration are important parts of the story.

Recommendations

The Committee's work is reflected in the the *Proposed Interpretive Framework and Concept Design Summary* report, which describes interpretive elements throughout both the exterior site and the interior building. Each proposed element contributes to one or more of the Committee's goals:

- Recognize and honor the four then-7th grade students who successfully integrated Stratford Junior High School;
- Explore the specific events of February 2, 1959 within the local, regional, and national context in which they occurred, while considering the lasting meaning and impact of that event, and relevance for students and community members today;
- Reflect the enduring ideals that the desegregation movement embodied and celebrate the resulting multicultural character of the community today;
- Provide opportunities for future middle school students to reflect on the themes of inclusiveness and diversity through engagement with others, display of original artwork, and storytelling; and
- Document the evolution of the site and building over time, focusing on the character-defining features of the existing building which clearly illustrate a "progressive architecture for a progressive community".

Since the initial cost estimates to implement the entire framework would exceed the available funding set aside by the School Board, the Committee carefully **prioritized the exterior elements** of the hero's welcome gateways and historic path interpretive trail as most urgent.

Our criteria included:

- Meets the spirit of the committee charge (e.g., emphasize integration over architectural history);

² Nearby sites include Hall's Hill neighborhood and segregation fence, High View Park, Fire Station 8, Langston School/Langston-Brown Recreation Center, Calloway United Methodist Church, Lee Highway sit-in locations at #3515, #4700 and the intersection with Old Dominion

- Most visible and accessible to the greatest number of people (exterior and large scale); and
- Logically integrated into the concurrent construction project (e.g., phasing, materials, site disturbance, placemaking, wayfinding, lighting)

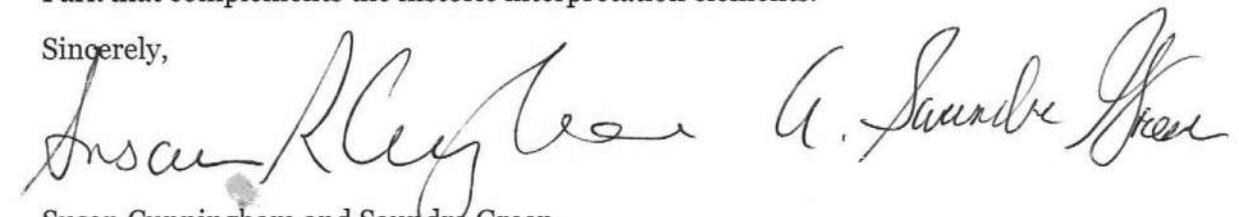
While we are unanimous in our prioritization of these first efforts, we recommend that APS and Arlington County Government **implement the entire framework over time**. This should include **pursuing grant funding** or other opportunities for additional funds from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other sources to both interpret and maintain the site, for instance restoration of the historic glass block classroom window that are currently completely covered on the classroom interiors.

The remaining framework elements can be funded separately and added later. This future effort could explicitly support the new school community and culture development, while building connections to other local and national partners. As part of these continued investments, the Committee recommends that APS, in collaboration with Arlington County:

- Continue to **develop site-specific and district-wide curriculum** to support Arlington's role in the international story of racial integration, specifically around the events of February 2, 1959;
- **Host a commemorative 60-year anniversary event in 2019** – before or in conjunction with the reopening of Stratford as a neighborhood middle school; and
- **Install additional interpretive signage at the Vacation Lane** main entrance to commemorate the earlier, failed attempt at integration on September 5, 1957.

Finally, though not directly related to the Committee's charge, the Committee would support a School Board decision to **name the school Stratford Middle School** (or Stratford Junior High School), to maintain a clear connection to the school's former name at the time of integration. As part of this naming and the rebranding of the school, we recommend **additional wayfinding and signage** on campus, on surrounding streets and in Stratford Park that complements the historic interpretation elements.

Sincerely,



Susan Cunningham and Sandra Green

Co-chairs, Superintendent's Special Committee on Historic Interpretation at the former Stratford Junior High School

CC:

Committee Members: Drew Costley, Michael Jones, Joan Lawrence, Sharon Monde, Karen Nightingale, Craig Syphax, Frank Wilson

School Board Members: Reid Goldstein, Monique O'Grady, Tannia Talento, Nancy Van Doren;

Past Board Members: Emma Violand-Sanchez, James Lander, Abigail Raphael, Noah Simon

APS and County Staff: Rebecca Ballo, John Chadwick, Jeff Chambers, Ben Burgin, Theresa Flynn, Bill Herring, Cynthia Liccese-Torres