

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

June 21, 2023

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2023-223  
**COMMON NAME:** 1304 E HOUSTON ST  
**ADDRESS:** 1304 E HOUSTON ST  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 574 BLK B-13 LOT 31 MERCHANTS SUBD  
**ZONING:** D  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 2  
**APPLICANT:** Andrew Douglas/Douglas Architects  
**OWNER:** Pat Kennedy Jr./TPB Merchants MM, LLC  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Construction of a parking structure  
**APPLICATION RECEIVED:** June 02, 2023  
**60-DAY REVIEW:** August 01, 2023  
**CASE MANAGER:** Edward Hall

## REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting conceptual approval to construct a 6-level parking structure at 1304 E Houston Street. This property is located within the Downtown Design Guide area. The proposed new construction will be bounded to the north by E Houston, to the east and south by private property and to the west by Union Pacific railway tracks.

## APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

*Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 3, Ground Floor Treatment*

### A. GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT: NON RESIDENTIAL STREETS IN DOWNTOWN

Design ground floor space for retail or other active uses, orienting tenant spaces to the street and maximizing storefronts and entries along the sidewalks to sustain street level interest and promote pedestrian traffic.

1. Locate active uses along the street façade to enhance the building's relationship to the public realm. Uses include: lobbies, dining rooms, seating areas, offices, retail stores, community or institutional uses, and residences.
2. Ground floor retail space shall be provided to a depth of at least 25 feet from the front façade and shall include an average 14 foot to 0 inch floor-to-ceiling height, with heights above 14 feet being very desirable.
3. The primary entrance to each streetlevel tenant that does not have its frontage along a public street shall be provided from a pedestrian paseo, courtyard or plaza, which is connected to the public street or alley.
4. Wall openings, such as storefront windows and doors, shall comprise at least 70 percent of a commercial building's street and river level façade as seen in Figure 3.2.
5. Clear glass for wall openings, i.e., doors and windows, shall be used along all street-level commercial façades for maximum transparency, especially in conjunction with retail and hotel uses as illustrated in Figure 3.3. Dark tinted, reflective or opaque glazing is not permitted for any required wall opening along commercial street level facades
6. A building's primary entrance, defined as the entrance which provides the most direct access to a building's main lobby and is kept unlocked during business hours, shall be located on a public street or on a courtyard, plaza or paseo that is connected to and visible from a public street or the River Walk.
7. At least one building entrance/exit, which may be either a building or tenant and resident entrance, shall be provided along each street frontage.
8. Use clear windows and doors to make the pedestrian level façade highly transparent and accessible. Along retail streets, provide a nearly continuous band of windows. Ensure doorways in glass walls exhibit sufficient contrast to be clearly visible.
9. The facades on downtown commercial streets should be detailed as storefronts, except where the proposed ground floor use is live and work units, residential units or other non-commercial building types as seen in Figure 3.1.
10. Where non-residential streets intersect, the ground floor retail space should wrap the corner onto the intersecting streets wherever possible.

11. Residential units with separate entries should include windows or glass doors on the ground floor that look out onto the street.
12. If a residential unit's individual entry along the street is the unit's primary entry, it should be accessible from the sidewalk.
13. More public entrances than the minimum specified by code, including building and or tenant and resident entrances are highly encouraged.

Incorporate a pedestrian-oriented scale at the street and river level.

1. Awnings and canopies shall be fabricated of woven fabric, glass, metal or other permanent material compatible with the building's architecture
2. Street wall massing, articulation and detail, street level building entrances and storefront windows and doors, as well as the use of quality materials and decorative details should be used to promote pedestrian -scaled architecture along the street. (Fig 3.5)
3. Architectural features that reinforce the retail character of the ground floor street and river wall and/or help define the pedestrian environment along the sidewalk, such as canopies, awnings, and overhangs, are encouraged and should be integral to the architecture of the building.
4. The design of the ground floors of hotels should exhibit a series of public space and entries that equally welcome the general public as well as guests. The first floor should be as transparent as possible. Hotel uses such as bars, lounges, restaurants, cafes, spas and other uses open to the public should exhibit a direct pedestrian connection from the public right of way whenever possible.

Don't waste valuable street frontage on "back of house" uses.

5. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment and other equipment should not be located along the ground floor street wall.
6. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment, other equipment, enclosed stairs, storage spaces, blank walls, and other elements that are not pedestrian -oriented should not be located within 100 feet of the corner property line as seen in Figure 3.6 or visible from public right -of-way.

#### *Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Parking and Access*

### **B. STAND-ALONG PARKING STRUCTURES**

#### **Architectural Treatment**

Parking structures may exhibit the same principles as great building design noted in previous sections. Providing an exterior screen comprised of high quality materials that screen the underlying concrete structure can elevate the building's stature and contribute to the overall quality of Downtown's built environment.

1. Parking structures shall have an external skin designed to improve visual character when exposed to prominent public view. Notwithstanding development standards incremental to Section 35-384: Parking Lots as Primary use, this can include heavy-gage metal screen, precast concrete panels; live green wall (landscaped) laminated glass or photovoltaic panels. Figure 4.6 illustrates an unacceptable external skin.
2. Vertical pedestrian circulation cores (elevator and stairs) should be located on the primary pedestrian corners and be highlighted architecturally so visitors can easily find and access these entry points, in order to eliminate pedestrians using the vehicular ramps.
3. Parking structures should integrate sustainable design features such as photovoltaic panels (especially on the top parking deck), renewable materials with proven longevity, landscaping and storm water treatment wherever possible.
4. Treat the ground floor along active pedestrian oriented public streets as specified in Chapter 3: to provide active ground floor uses along the street frontage of the garage; on all other streets the ground floor treatment should provide a low screening element that blocks views of parked vehicle bumpers and headlights from pedestrians using the adjacent sidewalk. Additional treatments such as "live" green walls similar to a Chia Pet provides for a more aesthetic and pleasing façade

5. Signage and way finding should be integrated with the architecture of the parking structure as seen in Fig 4.7.
6. Integrate the design of public art and lighting with the architecture of the structure to reinforce its unique identity. This is especially important for public parking structures to aid in visitors finding them upon arrival and getting oriented to downtown Fig 4.8.
7. Interior garage lighting should not produce glaring sources towards adjacent residential units while providing safe and adequate lighting levels per code.

#### Landscape Treatment

8. In most circumstances, the streetscape elements and landscaping should complement the building design. If a parking structure is well-designed, it does not need to be fully screened by dense landscaping in an urban setting.
9. Alternatively, an additional row of evergreen columnar trees may be provided in a minimum eight (8) foot wide setback and staggered with the street trees. In combination, the setback and street trees should screen the parking structure from view.

#### **FINDINGS:**

- a. The applicant is requesting conceptual approval to construct a 6-level parking structure at 1304 E Houston Street. This property is located within the Downtown Design Guide area. The proposed new construction will be bounded to the north by E Houston, to the east and south by private property and to the west by Union Pacific railway tracks.
- b. **CONCEPTUAL APPROVAL** – Conceptual approval is the review of general design ideas and principles (such as scale and setback). Specific design details reviewed at this stage are not binding and may only be approved through a Certificate of Appropriateness for final approval.
- c. **FAÇADE DESIGN** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.1. notes that parking structures shall have an external skin design to improve visual character when exposed to prominent public view. The Downtown Design Guide notes that this can include heavy-gauge metal screen, pre-cast concrete panels, live (landscaped) walls, laminated glass or photovoltaic panels. The applicant has proposed for the primary façade, facing E Houston to feature spandrel glass, clay block, framed metal panel screens, brick columns, and board-form concrete. The east and west facades feature those materials, plus metal fins (east façade) in limited locations. The south façade is currently void of additional façade materials. Generally, staff finds the proposed materials to be appropriate; however, staff finds that additional façade elements should be added to both side facades (east and west) and the rear façade. Vertical façade elements should be incorporated along the full length of each façade.
- d. **PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.2. notes that vertical pedestrian circulation cores (elevators and stairs) should be located on the primary pedestrian corners and be highlighted architecturally so visitors can easily find and access these entry points in order to eliminate pedestrians using vehicular ramps. The applicant has located vertical pedestrian towers at the northwest, northeast and southeast corners. Staff finds this to be consistent with the Downtown Design Guide.
- e. **GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.4. notes that ground floor treatment of parking structures should activate pedestrian oriented public streets as specified in Chapter 3; active spaces should be used along streets. On all other streets the ground floor treatment should provide a low screening element that blocks views of parked vehicle bumpers and headlights from pedestrians using the adjacent sidewalk. The intent of the Downtown Design Guide is for retail space to be located at the ground level of all new construction. Staff finds that the E Houston Street façade at the ground level should be fully designed to appear as an active space. Storefront systems should extend along the E Houston façade at the street level, particularly beneath the pedestrian canopy that has been proposed. If storefront systems are not designed to be appear as active spaces, staff finds that the applicant should incorporated a greater street setback and street trees, as noted in finding i.
- f. **SIGNAGE** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.5. notes that signage and wayfinding elements should be integrated into the architecture of the parking structure. Staff finds that the applicant should adhere to this section of the Downtown Design Guide regarding building and wayfinding signage.
- g. **PUBLIC ART** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.6. notes that public art and lighting should be integrated into the architecture of parking a parking structure to reinforce its unique identity. The applicant should adhere to this section of the Downtown Design Guide regarding public art and lighting.
- h. **BUILDING LIGHTING** – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.7. notes that interior garage lighting should not product glaring sources towards adjacent residential units. Staff finds that lighting on the top

level should be provided via lighting sconces attached to garage walls and not from poles to prevent light pollution.

- i. LANDSCAPING – The Downtown Design Guide, Chapter 4, Section B.8 and 9 address landscaping. These sections note that landscaping should complement the building design and should be used as a screening element. The Downtown Design Guide notes that an additional row of evergreen trees may be provided in a minimum eight (8) foot wide setback and staggered with the required street trees to be used to screen parking structures.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends conceptual approval based on findings a through i with the following stipulations:

- i. That vertical façade elements be added the complete length of each façade, as noted in finding c.
- ii. That the E Houston Street façade be fully designed to appear to feature active space at the ground level, as noted in finding g. Storefront systems should extend the E Houston Street façade, particularly beneath the proposed pedestrian canopy. An alternative solution would be to install evergreen street trees as a screening solution as noted in finding i.
- iii. That signage and public art be developed as specified in the Downtown Design Guide, as noted in findings f and g.
- iv. That building lighting be designed in a manner that does not produce light pollution. Top level lighting should be supplied via wall sconces and not light poles.
- v. That all landscaping elements adhere to the Downtown Design Guide.

# City of San Antonio One Stop



June 16, 2023

1:1,000

## drawGraphics\_poly



User drawn polygons

CoSA Addresses



Community Service Centers



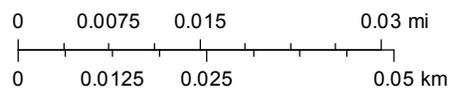
Pre-K Sites



CoSA Parcels



BCAD Parcels

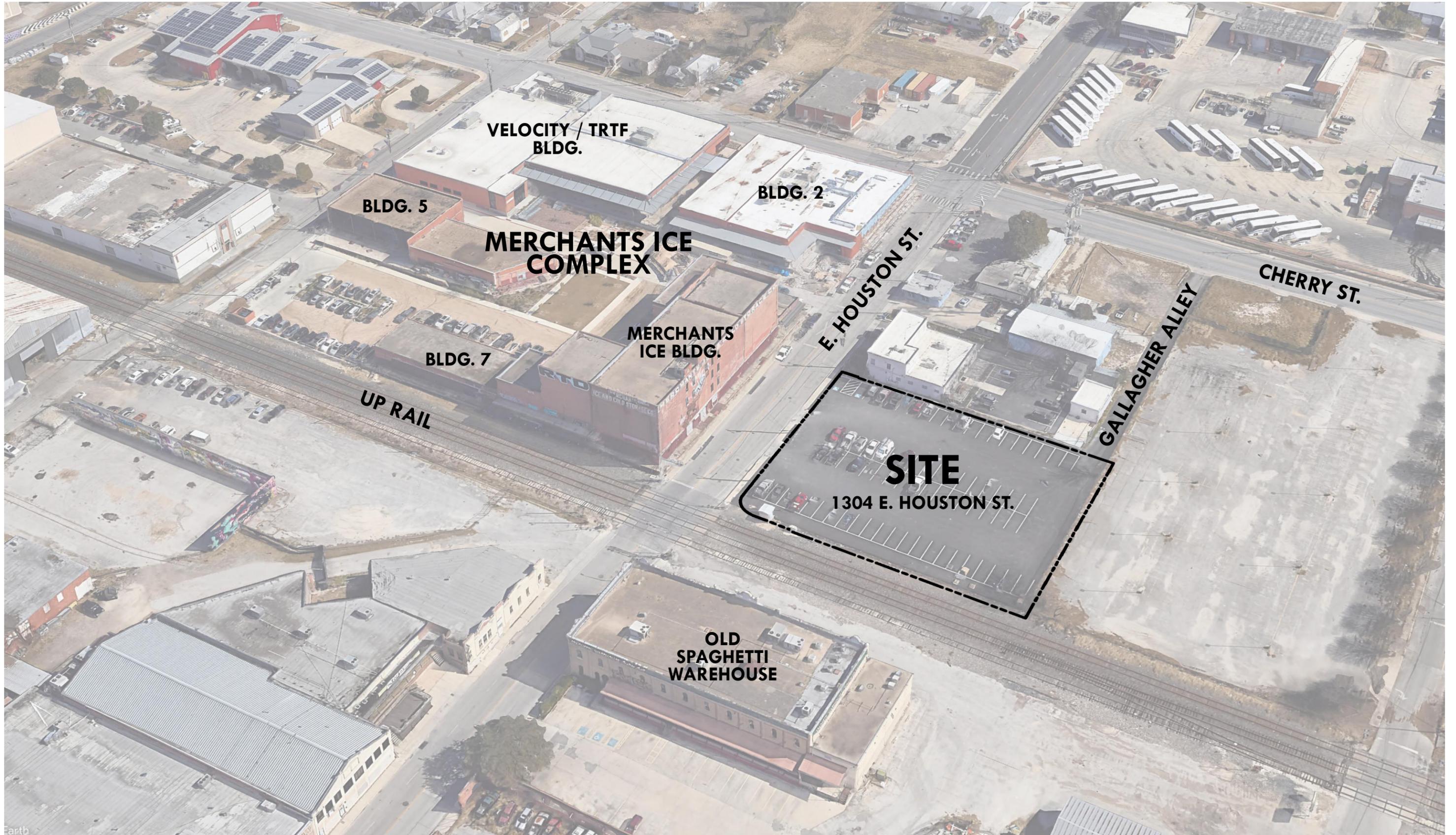


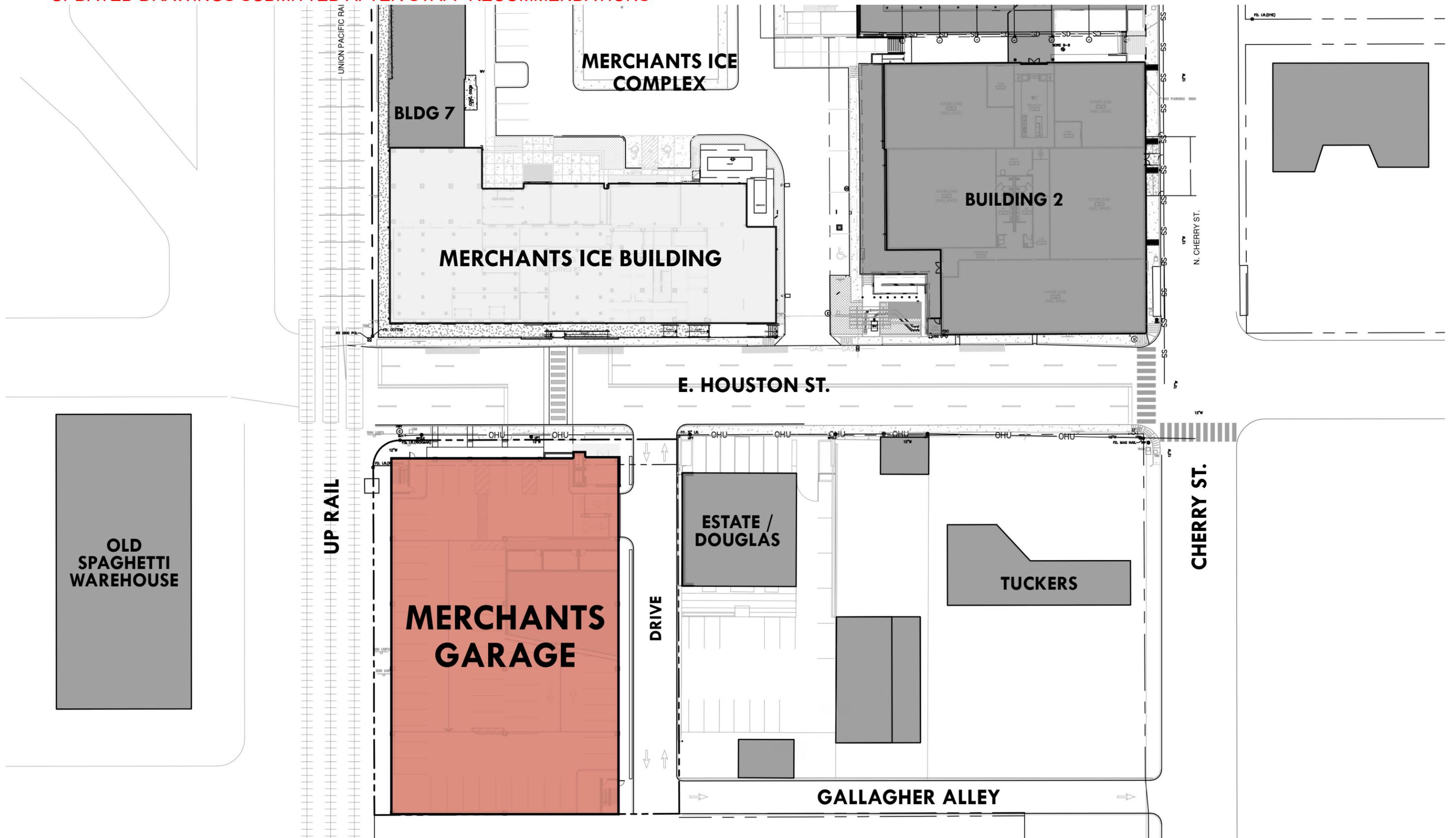


# MERCHANTS ICE GARAGE

HDRC REVIEW FOR CONCEPTUAL APPROVAL

JUNE 21, 2023





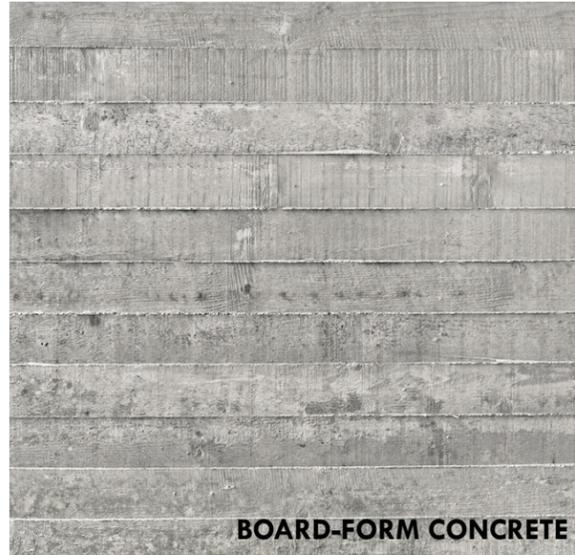
UPDATED DRAWINGS SUBMITTED AFTER STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



MERCHANTS ICE HISTORIC PHOTO



MERCHANTS ICE NORTH ADDITION



BOARD-FORM CONCRETE



MERCHANTS ICE - BLDG. 1 PAINTED HISTORIC SIGN



MERCHANTS ICE - BLDG. 3



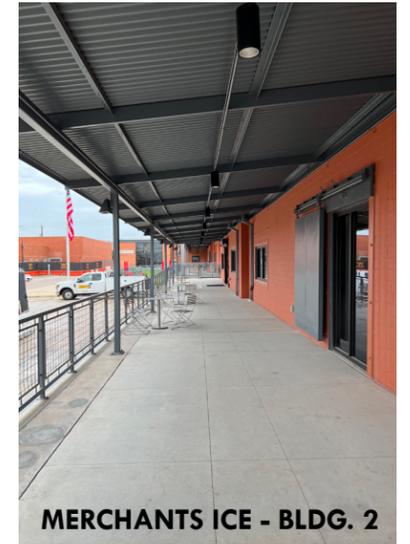
MERCHANTS ICE - BLDG. 5



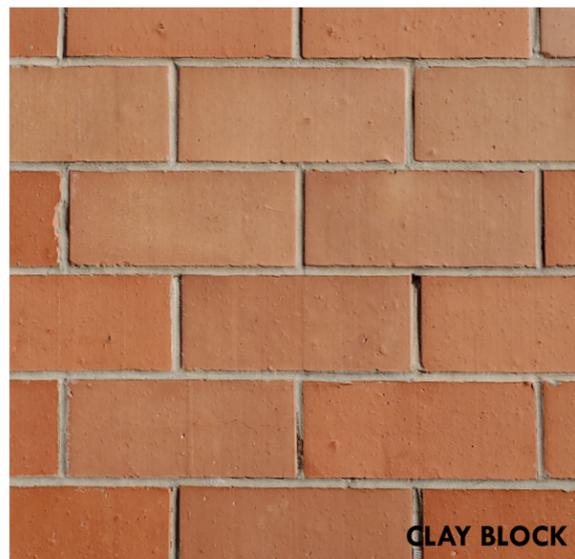
OLD BRICK



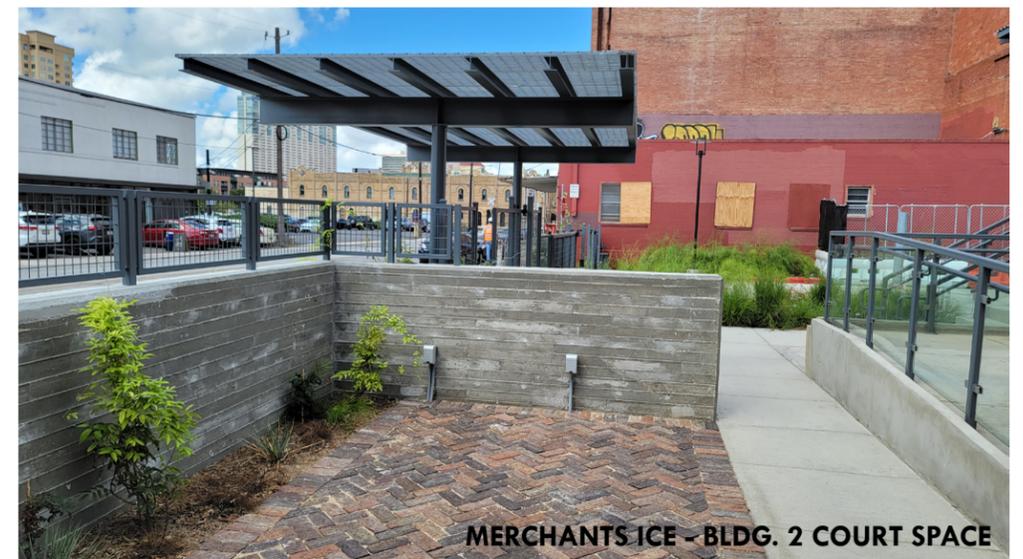
MERCHANTS ICE - BLDG. 3 ENTRY



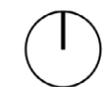
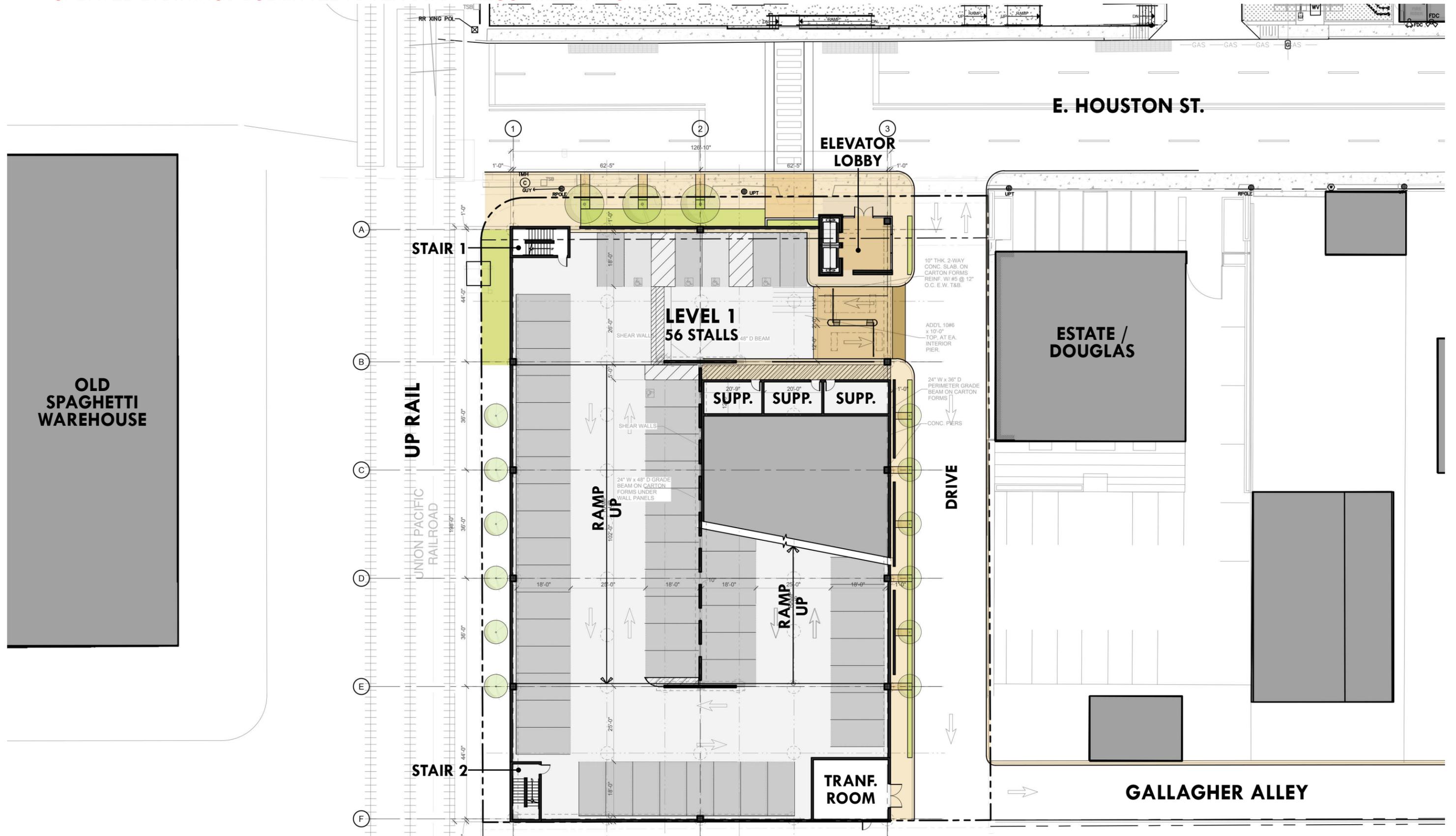
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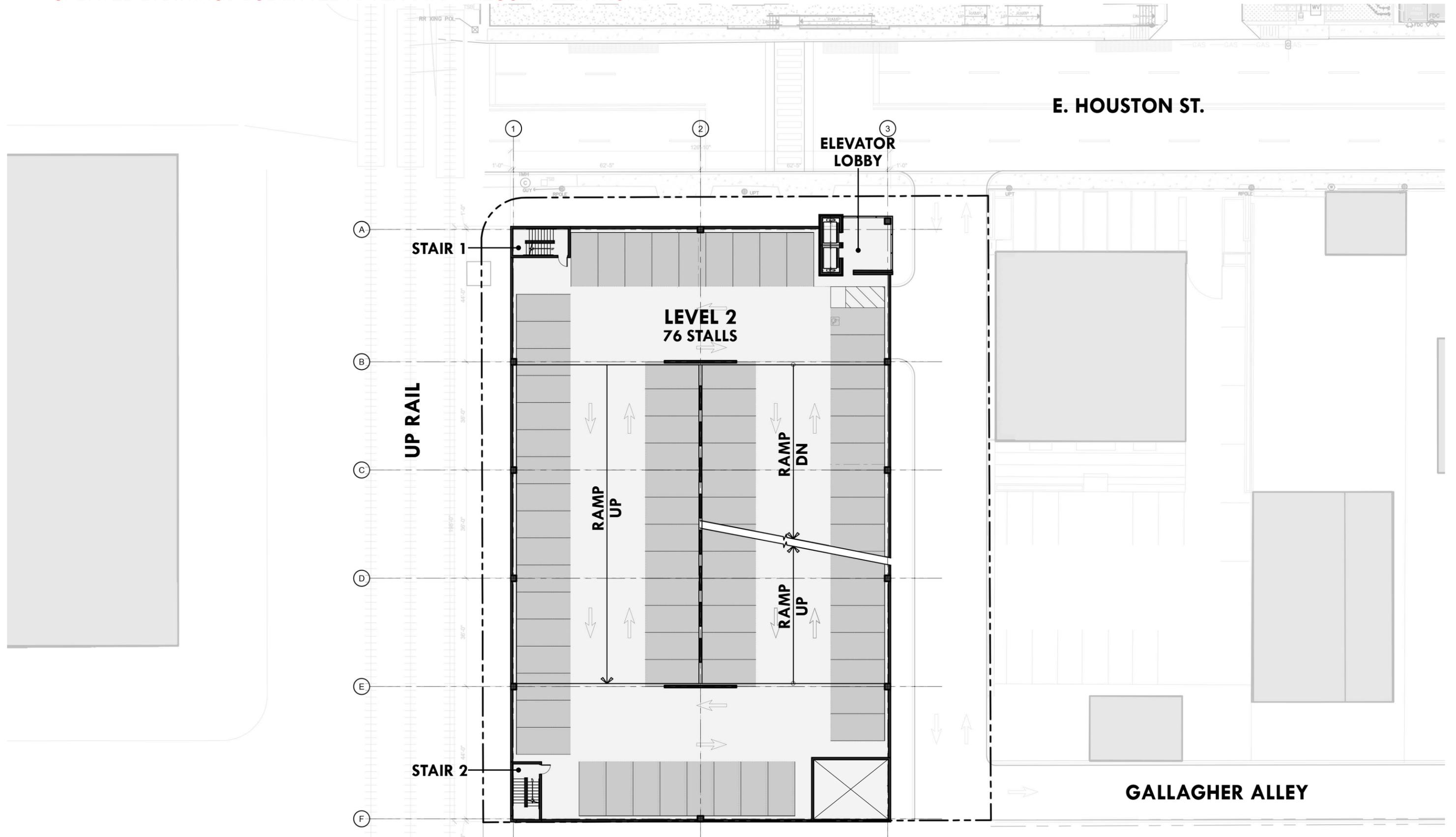


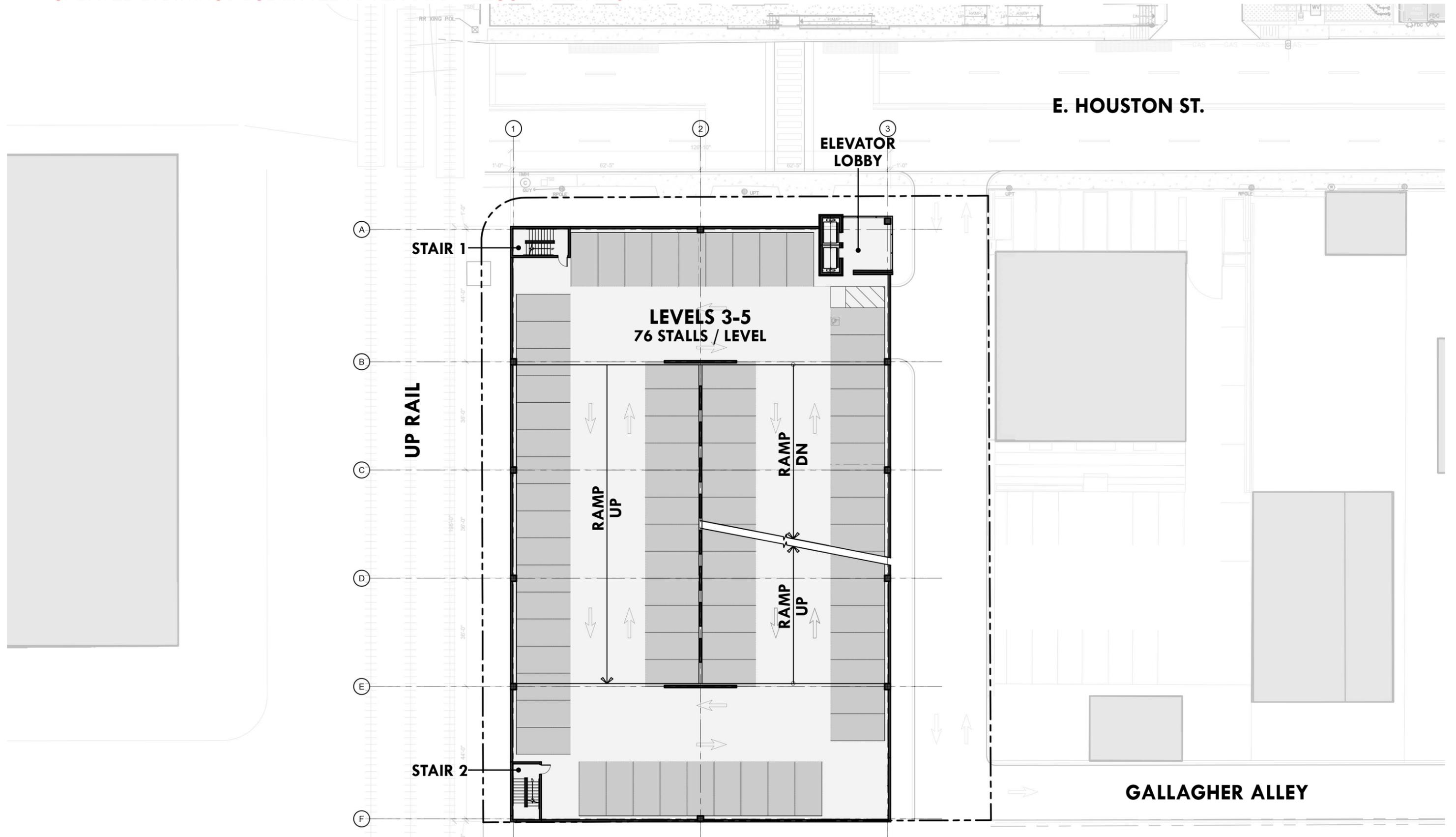
CLAY BLOCK

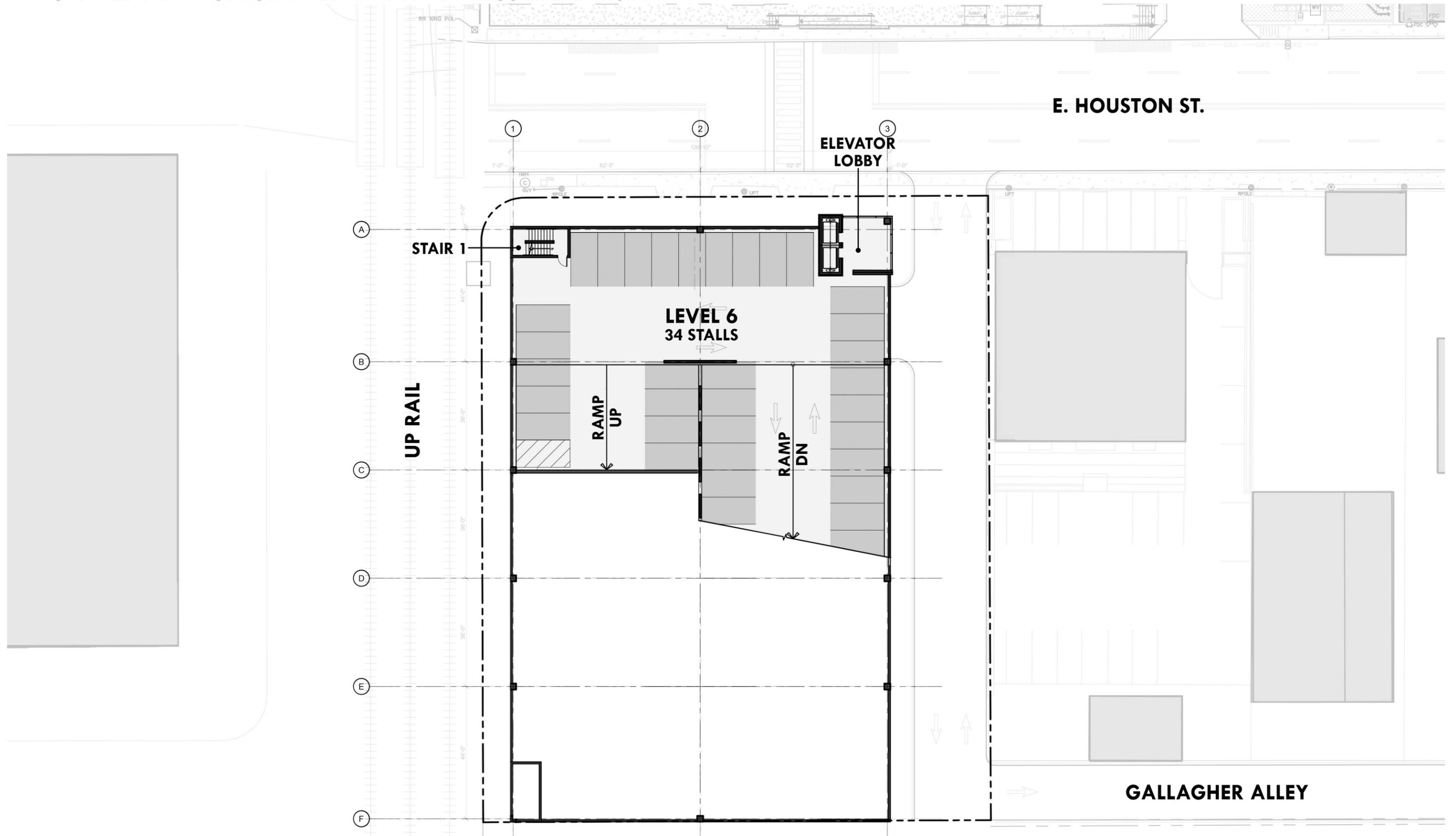


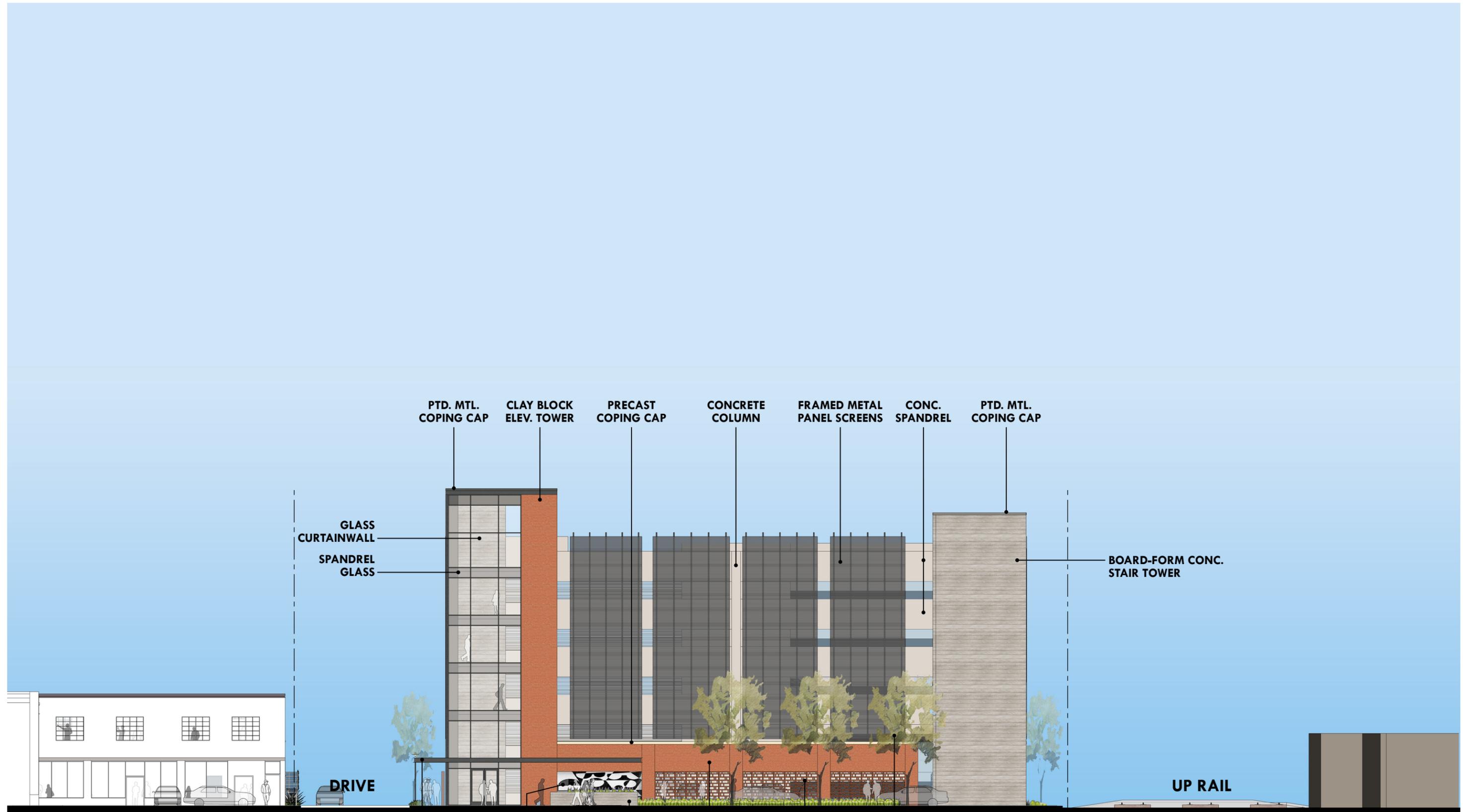
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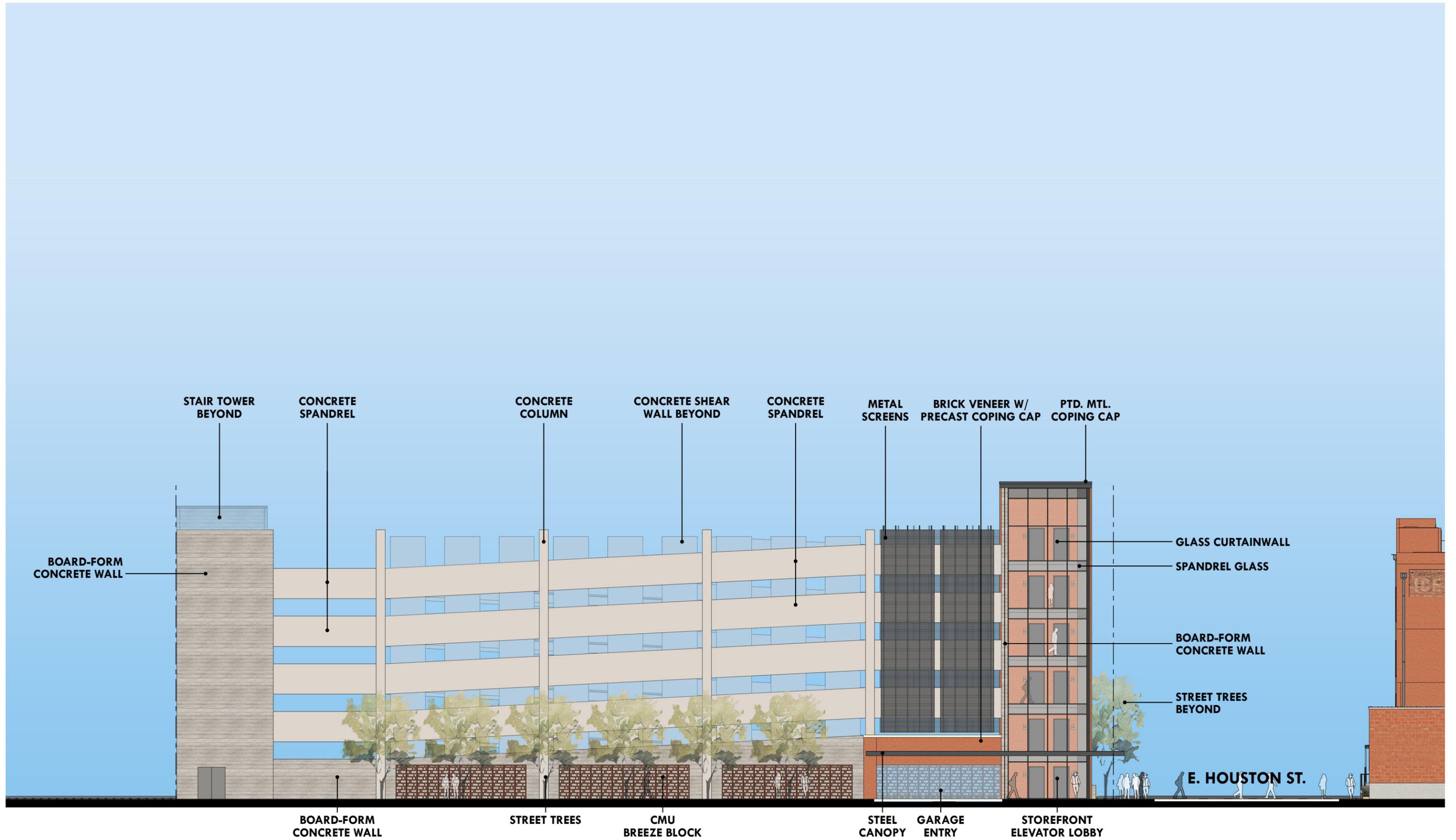










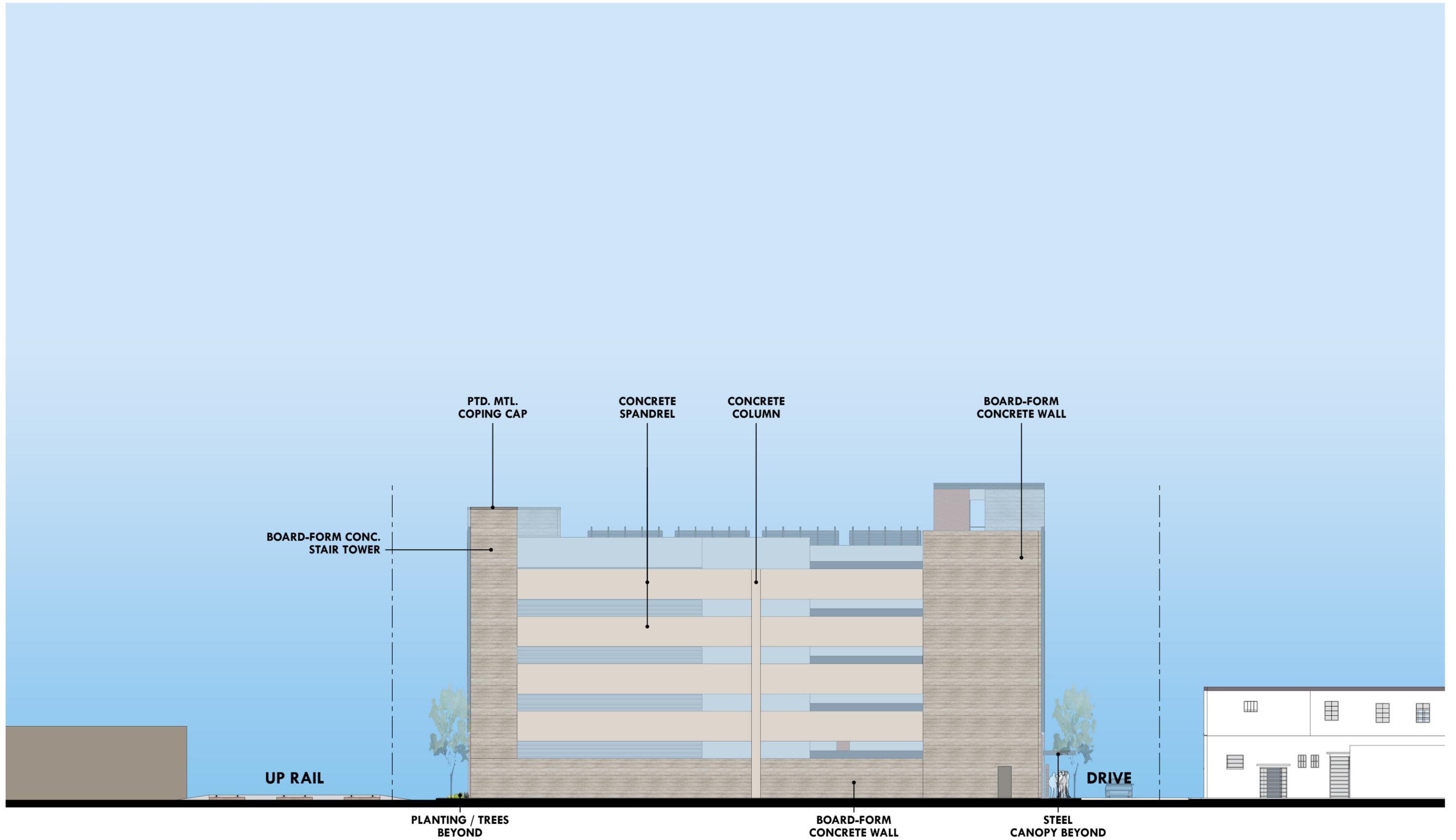


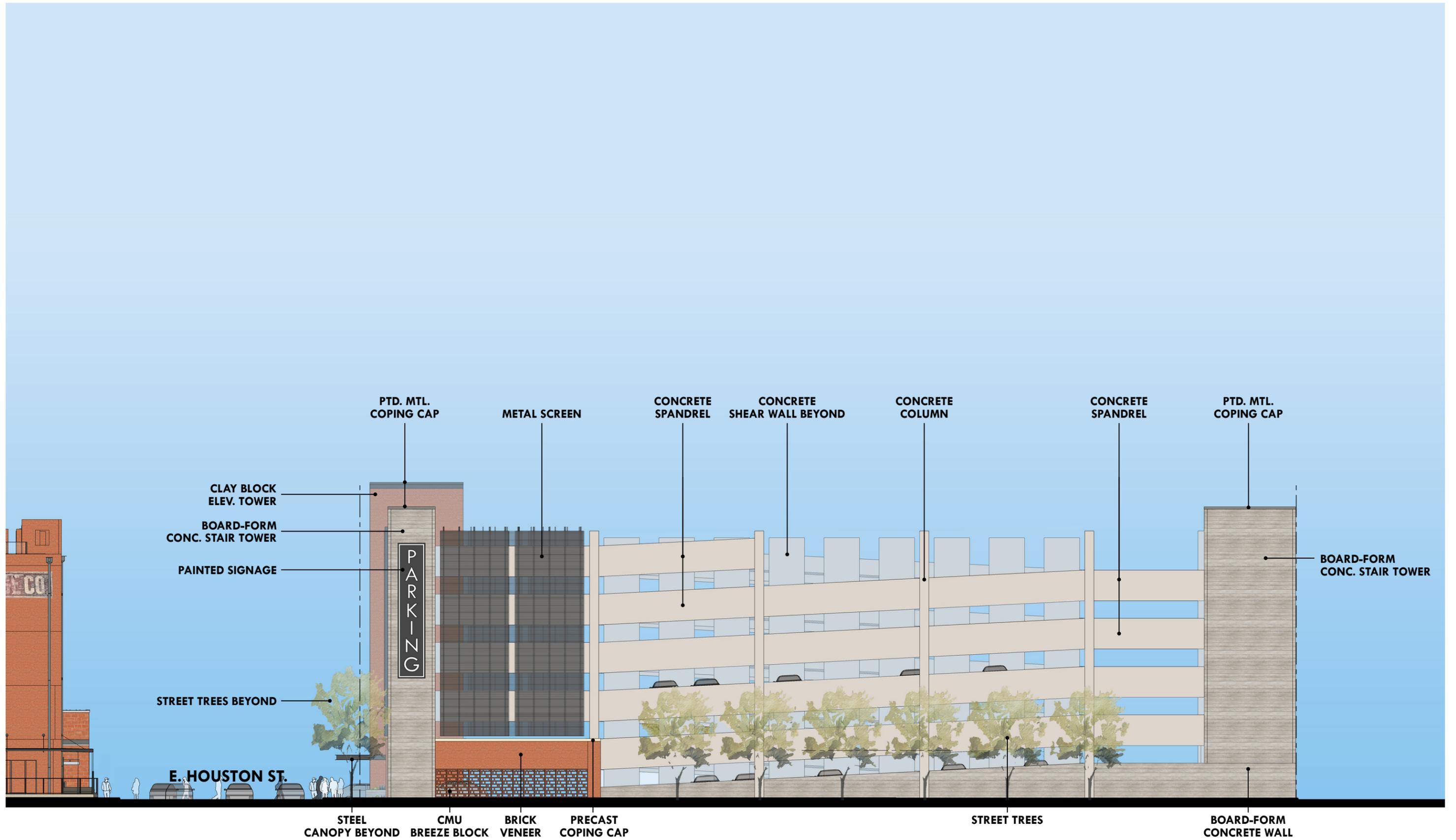
**MERCHANTS ICE GARAGE** | EAST ELEVATION

20 SCALE

JUNE 21, 2023





















UPDATED DRAWINGS SUBMITTED AFTER STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

