

East Liberty Project Final Report: Saints Peter and Paul Church Redevelopment



Team C: Sophie Abo, Nathan Sawyer, Clara Torres
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I. Summary

The redevelopment of the Saints Peter and Paul Church represents an exciting opportunity for economic development and continued growth in the East Liberty neighborhood. Rooted in community engagement, the highest and best use for the site is utilizing the existing church shell as an event hall that is connected to a new auxiliary space servicing the main hall and providing outdoor covered circulation, as well as constructing an adjacent new conference center. This use will generate revenue to support the maintenance and operations of the historic church building, while bringing much needed gathering and party space to the area. The site will most likely need to be rezoned before development begins, because of the outdated and inconsistent current zoning. The site will also require green infrastructure, including previous pavement and bioswales, to appropriately manage the stormwater. Building on the momentum of the recently completed Liberty Green Park and Cornerstone Apartments, the market potential for this site continues to increase.

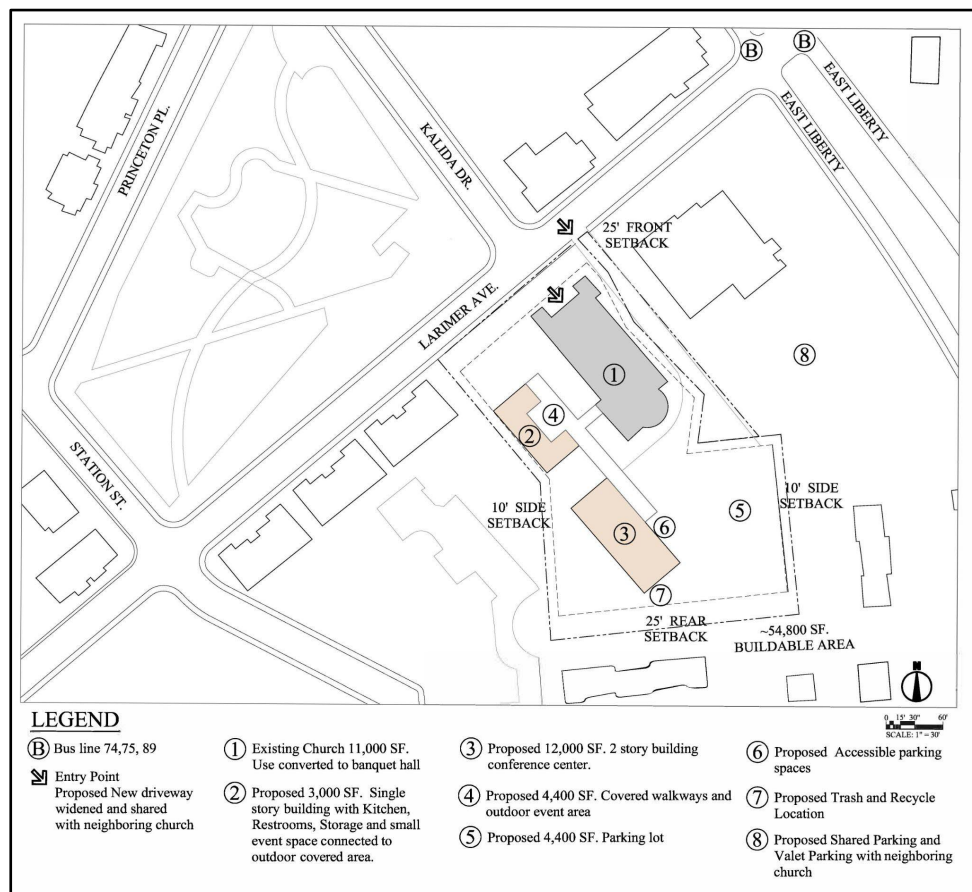


Figure 1. Proposed Site Plan

II. Research

Neighborhood Demographics

	East Liberty	Larimer	City of Pittsburgh
Population	5,812	1,562	300,286
Area (mi ²)	0.581	0.445	55.37
Median Household Income	\$39,693	\$39,723	\$48,711
Average Persons per household	2.9	4.3	2.02
Median Gross Rent	\$707	\$647	\$958
Population Below the Poverty Level	17.4%	43.4%	20.5%
Race (Black)	40.1%	58.5%	23.0%
Race (White)	37.4%	18.3%	66.8%
Race (Hispanic or Latino)	2.4%	7.5%	3.2%
Median Age (Male)	34.1 years	30.9 years	-
Median Age (Female)	38.9 years	36.7 years	-

Sources: City-data 2019 and Census Bureau 2020

Target Market

To create a financially self-sustaining event hall, the redeveloped church will need to draw business from across the greater Pittsburgh region. This multi-purpose event space will be appropriate for many types of events - local community gatherings, music recitals, weddings and more. Therefore the demographic target market will be people in the greater Pittsburgh region of all races and ages, who are in need of historic event space. ELDI should work with local event planners to understand how to best market the space.

Competitors

To understand the market feasibility of the proposed event hall in the Pittsburgh region, the following potential competitors were identified. The competitors were recognized based on

similar occupancy size, historic buildings, and available outdoor space. Overall, further analysis will be required to understand true event hall demand.

	<u>Union Project</u>	<u>Grand Hall at the Priory</u>	<u>Aspinwall Riverfront</u>	<u>The Circuit Center and Ballroom</u>	<u>St. Nick's Cathedral Room</u>
Size (sq ft)	4,300	-	-	8,000	-
Occupancy	240	350 seated 500 standing	250 seated 400 standing	450 seated 700 standing	525
Pricing	\$625 / 4 hrs \$5,000 wedding reception	\$12-21 per person	\$3,000 Sat \$2,000 Fri and Sun.	Per person based on food	\$2,000 - \$3,000
Kitchen/ catering	Kitchen available	Yes	Catering available	Catering by Fluted Mushroom	Yes
Stage and Equipment	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parking	Street	-	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking lot

Funding Sources

To close the development financing gap, some governmental or nonprofit financing sources will be required. One possible source is the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Keystone Communities Program. Nonprofit economic development or community development organizations, like ELDI, are the intended applicants for this program. This funding source can be used for a "variety of uses including planning activities, façade grant programs, accessible housing programs, and development grants." Two of the most relevant Keystone funding types are the planning grants and the development grants.

- Planning Grants: "Implementing a business development survey in preparation of a business development strategy and/or preparation of the business development strategy. These grants may not exceed \$25,000."
- Development Grants: "Rehabilitation or restoration of older or under-utilized buildings for immediate reuse supporting other community development goals.. redevelopment of an

anchor building in a community... This grants may not exceed \$500,000 or 30% of project costs, whichever is less.”

To confirm eligibility and grant terms, ELDI should contact Johnna Pro (jopro@pa.gov) (Keystone Communities Program).

Stormwater & Natural Conditions

The study site has a generally flat topography. The eastern edge of the adjacent Pentecoastal Church site has a slope greater than 25%, sloping down to the road. However In East Liberty more broadly, there are 47 properties with a greater than 26% chance of being severely affected by flooding over the next 30 years, which represents 3% of all properties in the neighborhood. With this in mind, there is a chance of flooding at the site (Flood Risk Overview for East Liberty). It is recommended that before development commences, architects and engineers assess the specific stormwater dynamics of the site. Specifically, they should explore whether the existing church floods and if stormwater pools in certain places throughout the larger site.

Transportation

The Saint Peters and Paul Church is situated at the intersection of many bus routes. This is advantageous for the site. Visitors and attendees can access three bus lines within a 5 minute walk of the site, and an additional twenty-three bus lines within a 10 minute walk of the site. Please visit the [Saints Peter and Paul Bus Access Map](#) for further information.

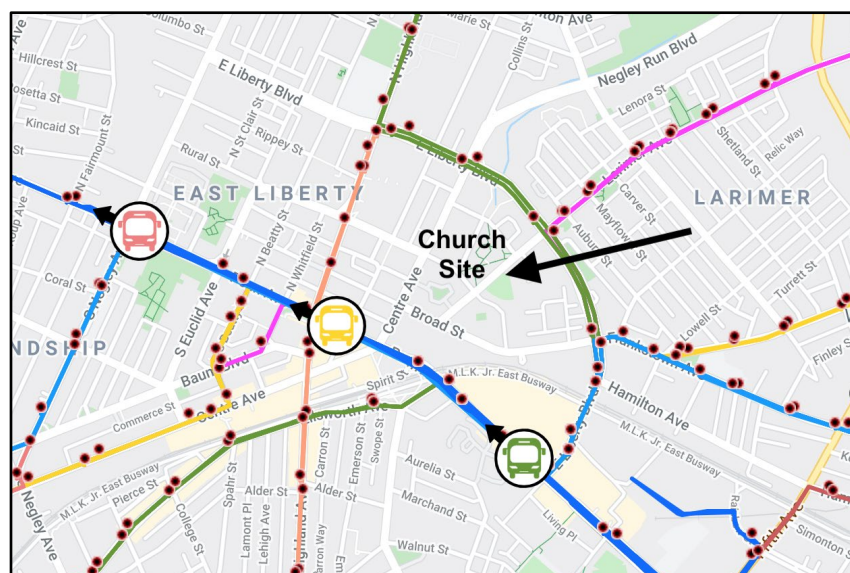


Figure 2. Site Public Transportation Accessibility

III. Recommendations

Proposed Site Plan

- 3,000 square foot single-story building with a kitchen, restrooms, storage, and a bit of covered event space (bride's dressing room etc.)
- 12,000 square foot two-story building that could be a conference center
- 4,400 square foot covered walkway and outdoor event area.

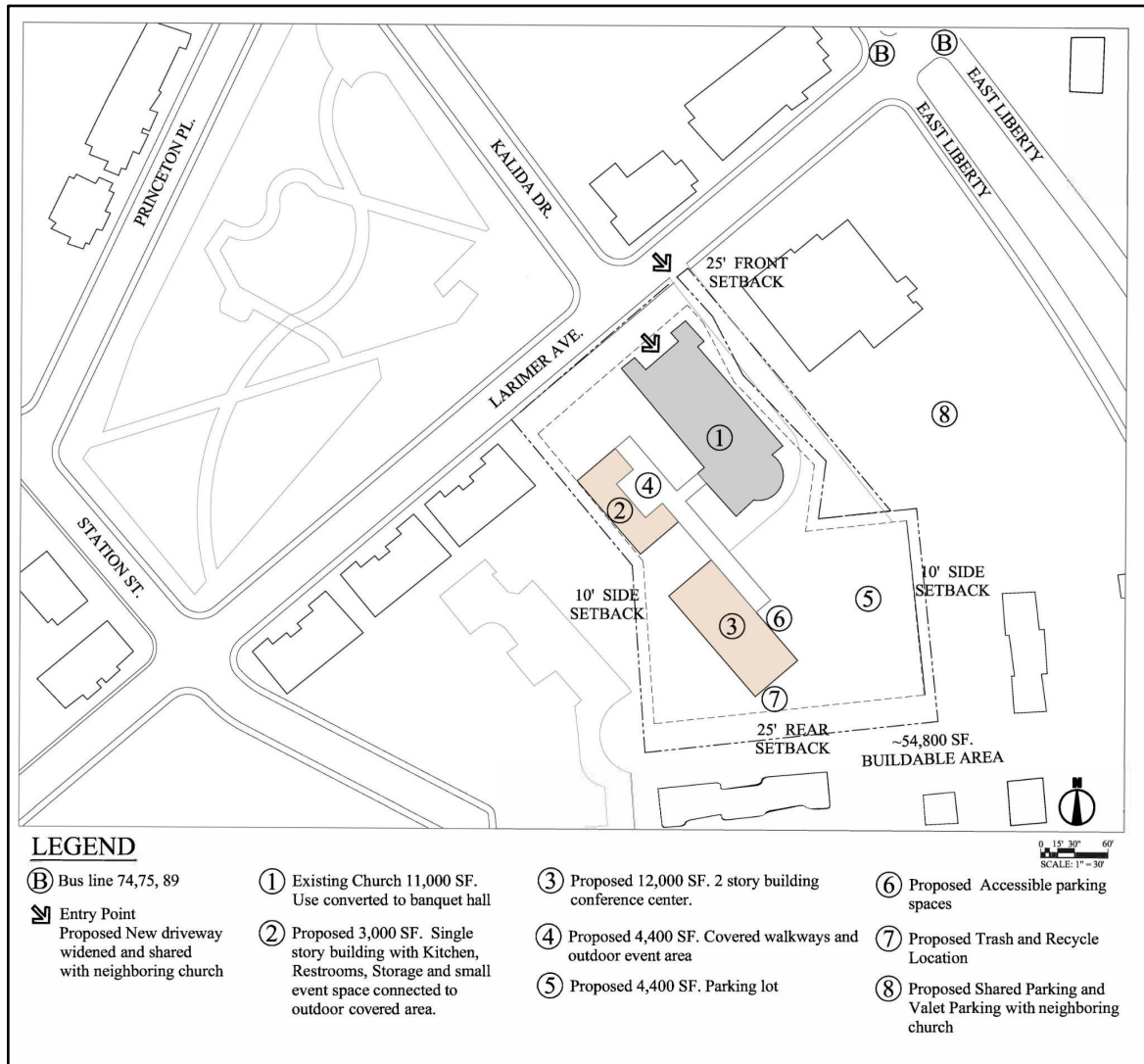


Figure 3. Proposed Site Plan

Parking

The proposed site plan includes 37 total parking spaces, with 4 handicap spaces located right in front of the “conference center.” The proposed site plan also has bike parking on the north-eastern side of the existing church. We also recommend that the church event hall space

establish a parking-sharing agreement with the adjoining Pentecoastal Church. This agreement will be beneficial for the Pentecoastal Church as well, due to the impending impervious surface stormwater tax. Considering the adjacent church's parking area, there will be a total of 113 parking spaces available on the site. For events that require additional parking space, event attendees can park on the street or hire shuttles.

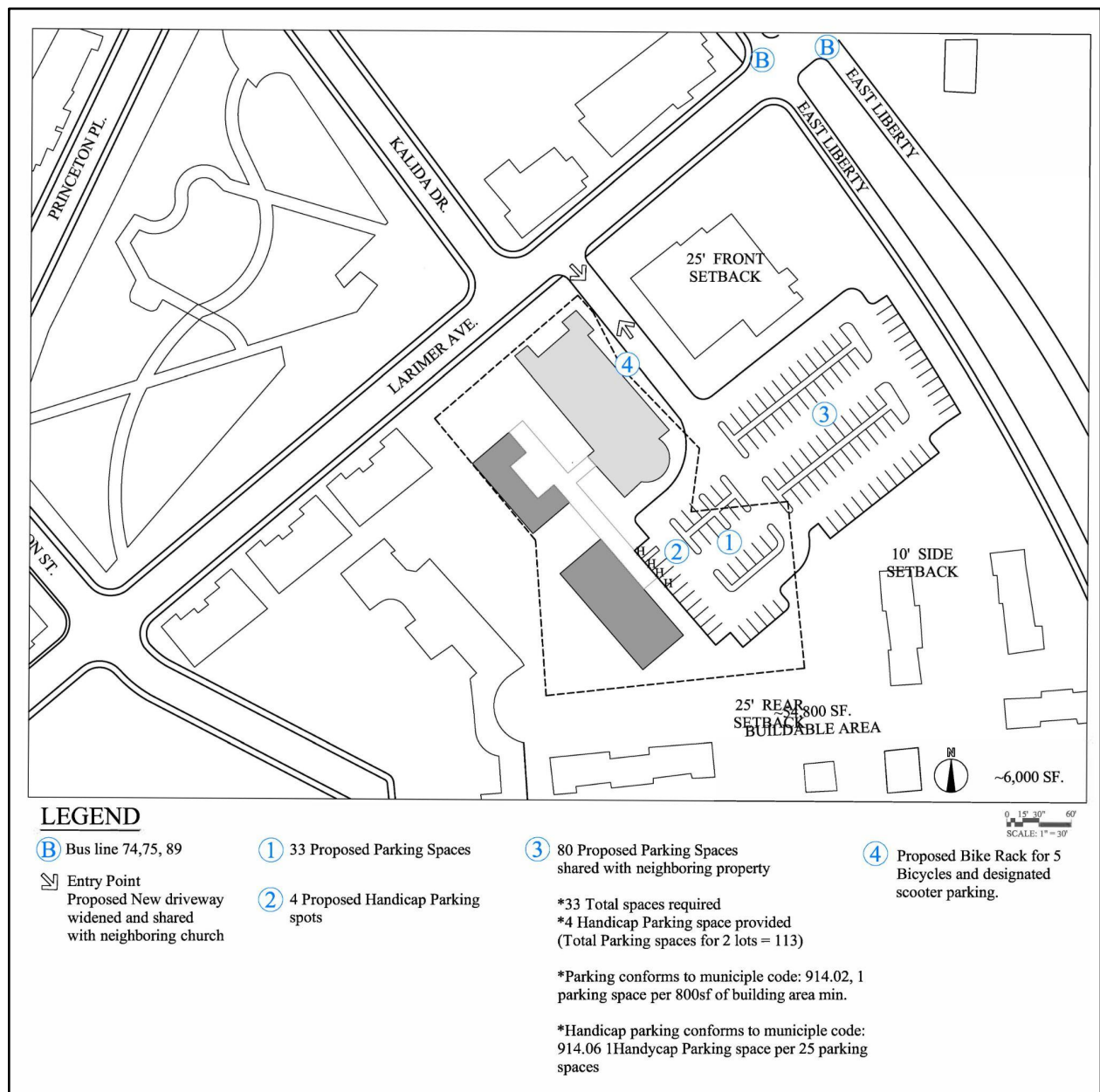


Figure 4. Proposed Parking Plan

Stormwater

To manage the anticipated stormwater challenges and reduce flooding in the Negley Run Watershed, we recommend including green infrastructure as part of any future development. Our proposed stormwater management features for the site include bioswales and adding pervious pavers to the parking lot. In addition, the event space managers must maintain regular upkeep of storm drains and curbside gutters, including removal of fallen branches.

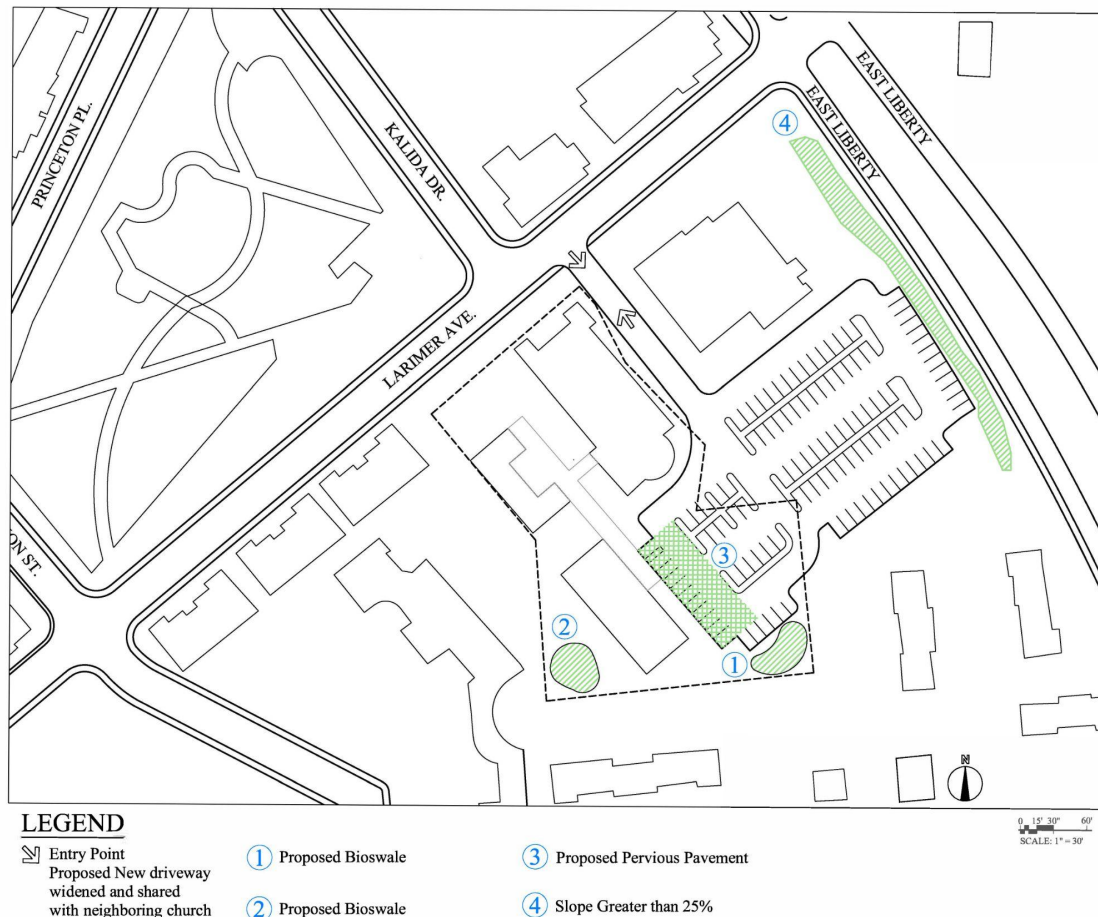


Figure 5. Proposed Stormwater Management Features

Event Hall and Conference Programming

In order for the event hall space to be successful and generate revenue, creative and strategic programming will be essential. As mentioned above, this space will be designed to maximize flexibility. Possible event ideas include: weddings, b'nai mitzvahs, fundraisers, holiday parties, choir performances, large birthday parties, food truck festivals in the parking lot, small concerts, and athletic classes like yoga and martial arts.

Our proposed site plan also includes a two story, 12,000 square foot conference center, with 6,000 square feet on each floor. This building type could cater to the tech companies in the surrounding area that need additional space to hold conferences and large meetings. The general public could also utilize this space for neighborhood meetings and other community gatherings. The 12,000 square foot space could be a modular layout that meets the needs of several groups at a time, or open up with movable walls to accommodate large groups or gatherings. Small zoom conference rooms / mobile office space for visiting professionals to reserve could be offered when space is available.

Next Steps

Listed below are several next steps that ELDI can take to further understand the market feasibility of the event hall and conference center development.

- Interview potential users and event planners about event hall demand, amenities, and pricing
- Perform more extensive market research on the conference center concept
- Discuss a parking sharing agreement with Pentecostal Church
- Inquire about and apply for a variance from the city to get a read on viability

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V. Appendix

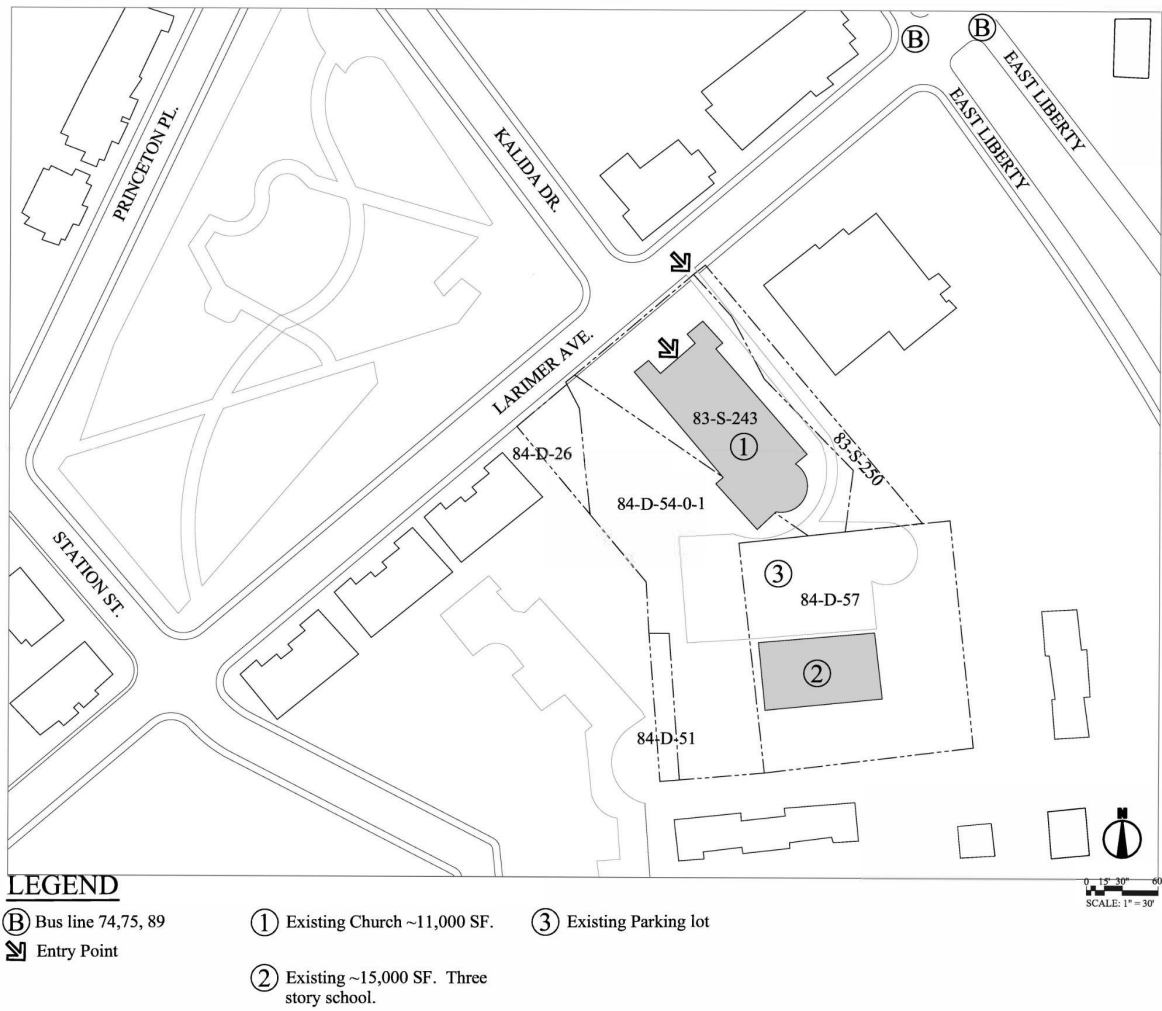


Figure 6. Existing Site Plan