

HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT TRAVIS COUNTY PALM SCHOOL BUILDING

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Architecture + Planning + Interiors + Graphics

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We would also like to thank the Travis County Historical Commission for their support.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Travis County Palm School Building, also known as Palm Square, located at 100 N Interstate 35 Frontage Rd. Austin, TX 78701, is owned by Travis County and offices the Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services Departments. The historic building and site are positioned in a prominent portion of the southeast Austin Downtown district. Sitting on the corner of E. Cesar Chavez and I-35 Frontage Road, it is a major gateway into the downtown area from the east side of Austin.

Travis County is planning to move the departments occupying the Palm School building to their North Campus on Airport Boulevard by 2020. The Palm Square site will no longer be needed for County services in the future; however, it is an important historic icon for Travis County and the City of Austin and considerations for its future use must be thoroughly explored. Not only is the Palm School and part of its site a designated City of Austin Historic Landmark, but there is also a large community interest in the site as it has been educating the citizens of Austin for almost a century and is an integral part of the immediate neighborhood area.

Therefore, Travis County at the urging of the Travis County Historical Commission, has requested that data be collected on the Palm School site and facility to provide a detailed condition assessment of the property and of the historic fabric that remains at the site. The data collected by our team over the last several months has been organized and recorded as a Historic Structure Report (HSR) following the guidelines of Preservation Brief 43: The Preparation and Use of Historic Structure Report by the National Park Service. This Historic Structure Report provides the county with documentation of the historical background of the site and facility along with detailed information regarding the present condition of the property to assist County officials in decisions concerning the property's future.

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

The historical overview discusses in detail all information discovered about the history of the Palm School. This information was gathered by conducting archival research and the physical survey of the facility, without destruction of materials, for evidence of ghosting and historic material remnants. Through this methodology, it has been discovered that the Palm School building had five major renovations/additions that changed the appearance of the building and site over time. The original brick structure, which served as the foundation for the other five additions, was constructed in 1892. The plan was symmetrical, a square with two short wings toward the north side extending east and west, with two stories. The school was named the Tenth Ward School, and its front entry faced south toward 1st Street (now Cesar Chavez).

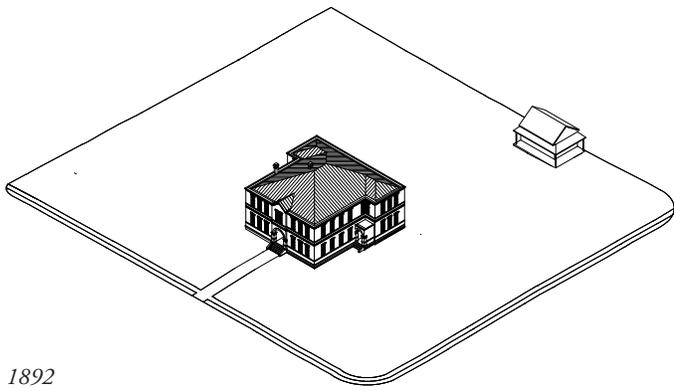
1910 – The first addition to the original structure was the extension of the east wing with two floors above ground and a basement. This also included the addition of the tall chimney on the north side of the west wing.

1924 – This addition made the structure symmetrical again by extending the west wing to match the east. A large addition was also placed at the south face of the building covering up the original south façade and entry. At this time the building was also finished with stucco, giving it a closer appearance to what we see today.

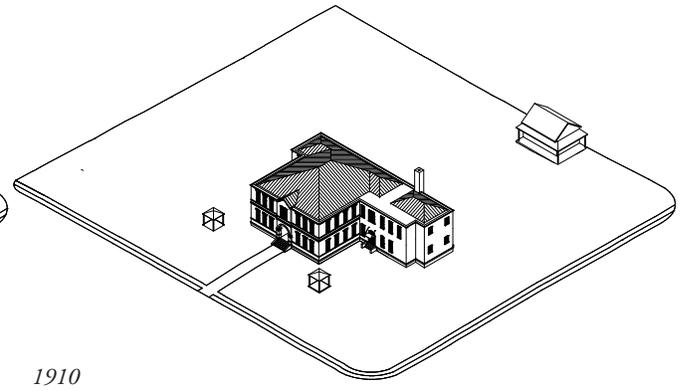
1936 – A large three story addition was added to the north side of the building. It extended from the center of the north façade along the central axis. The top two floors aligned with the original two stories. The third level extended downward but because of the steep land grade behind the building this floor was still above ground.

1949 – A single story annex was added to the southwest corner of the site and connected to the west wing of the Palm School. This addition made that Palm School building non-symmetrical and did not match the structure stylistically.

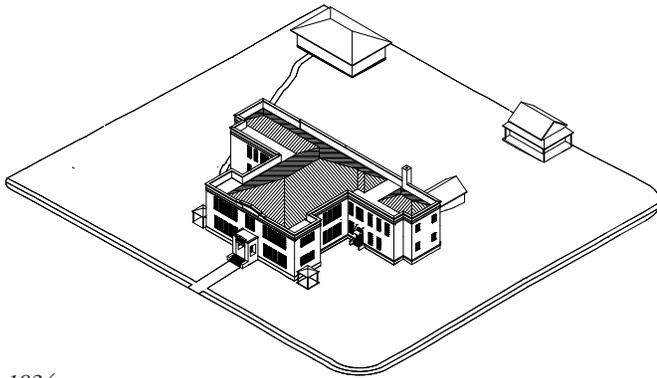
1980 – The final renovation to the structure was mostly interior additions and site changes to adapt a school building for office use. This included the construction of an atrium space on the east side of the building, between the original north façade and the 1936 addition, which became the new front entrance for the building. The site changes consisted of the addition of stairs and ramps to entries, creating hardscapes and planting beds for beautification, and a large extension of the parking lot surface over the northern side of the site.



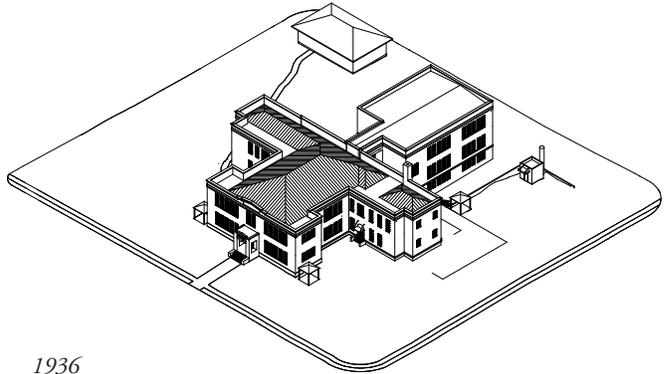
1892



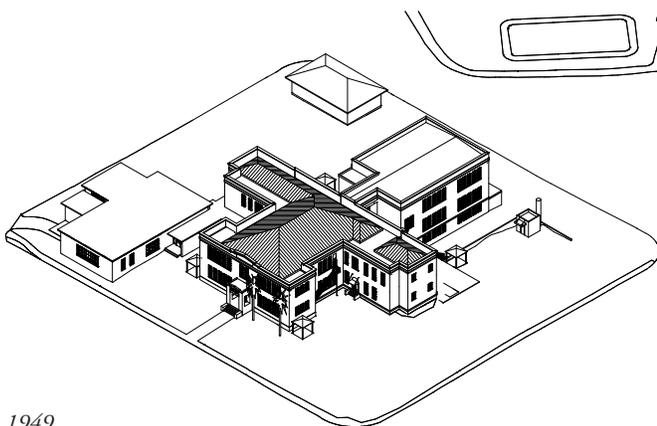
1910



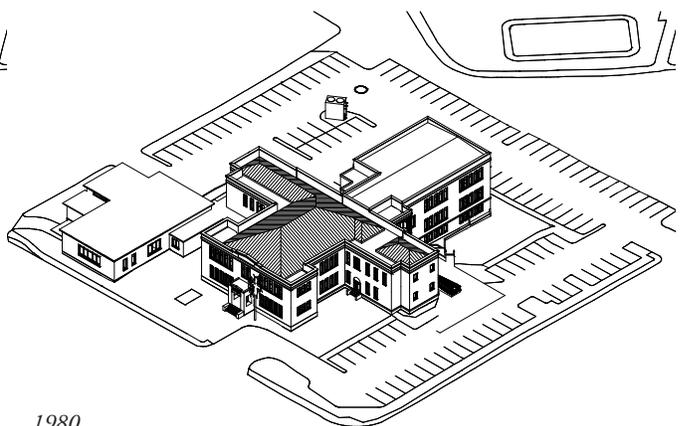
1924



1936



1949



1980



CONTEXT

Research conducted through the City of Austin and Travis County online resources reveals that the Palm School site is currently zoned GR-H, a Community Commercial District combined with Historic Landmark Combining District designation. It also has zoning overlays, the most important of which are the Convention Center and Transit Oriented Development overlays.

Directly to the north of the Palm School site is the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park. Though the Park is unzoned, a Capital View Corridor overlay runs over a major part of the park to I-35 restricting the future development of the Park. This helps preserve sweeping views of downtown skyline from the Palm School site. Waller Creek that crosses through the park is also the focus of a major improvement project that is positioned to attract the locals and tourists alike with pedestrian and bike paths linking Lady Bird Lake to the University of Texas.

The other neighboring properties are zoned as Central Business District (CBD) with unrestricted height and a Floor to Area Ratio [FAR] of 8:1. The recently completed Fairmont Hotel to the west, at 37 floors and 580 feet of height, is one of Austin's tallest hotels. The property to the south of the Palm School site is currently a large unpaved surface lot and restaurant. However, it is also zoned CBD with unlimited development height and a FAR of 8:1. The Palm School's GR-H zoning carries a height limitation of only 60 feet and a FAR of only 1:1 dramatically limiting its development potential.

In Accordance with the Downtown Austin Plan and the most recent draft of CodeNEXT, we recommend that a designation of CBD-H (soon to be known as DC-H) that would allow the property to respond more appropriately to its surroundings in terms of urban density and better integrate with the surrounding fabric of this rapidly developing part of downtown Austin. We also recommend seeking opportunities to strengthen the axial relationship from the original Palm School front door to the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park and exploring ways to collaborate with the current development of the Waller Creek Corridor.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

A consulting team of engineers and architects was engaged to survey the Palm School Building over a two week period in late September of 2017. A laser scanning team visited the facility prior to this survey to collect 3D data so that plans and elevations could be available for the consulting team's use. Travis County Health and Human Services provided escorts during the survey effort as the facility is fully staffed and actively serving members of the community. This physical survey of the facility and site informed our understanding of the current configuration of the building and its surrounding landscape.

The Site as it exists today is largely occupied by surface parking lots with the exception of the south lawn, portions of which have been designated as part of the City of Austin Landmark. The site is well served by utilities and readily accessed by multiple modes of transportation. The Landscape is dominated by paved areas that lack adequate tree coverage for shading, but is otherwise well treed with mature specimens.

The Palm School Building is a large load-bearing masonry structure with multiple additions evident, large window openings with dark glass fixed aluminum windows installed throughout. As the site slopes down toward the north, this portion of the facility is three stories tall, while the core of the main building is two stories. There is a one story addition in the south west corner of the property. The hipped roof of the core building is distinctively finished with red standing seam metal, while the remaining roofs are flat with built-up bituminous waterproofing systems.

All exterior walls of the facility have a coarse stucco finish applied over their original finishes. A large dark glass east-facing atrium oriented toward I-35 serves as the main entrance with secondary entrances on the north and west elevations. All entrances include nearby ADA parking with extensively ramped approaches.

The interior of the facility consists largely of modern light gauge metal framed gypsum partitions that subdivide larger original classrooms and corridors into smaller private offices. Suspended acoustic ceiling systems throughout the facility conceal remnants of original finishes and newly inserted mechanical systems. These ceiling are typically as much as three feet below the top of the windows with tall sloped gypsum board transition between the ceiling and window head. Floor finishes consist mostly of commercial grade carpet over the original wood flooring with areas of vinyl composite tile, ceramic tile, and quarry tile used as well.

CONDITION ASSESSMENT

The consulting team of engineers and architects condition assessment of the site, landscape, facility, structure and systems was conducted during a two week period in late September of 2017. No destructive testing was undertaken during the course of the survey.

Site Conditions

The civil site assessment conducted by JQ Infrastructure found that generally the condition of the site is good with overall site drainage appearing to drain away from the building apart from various low points around the exterior of the building where drainage flows toward the building. On site parking pavement consists of asphalt and is in good condition in most areas and fair in other locations due to traffic wear and cracking. There are no issues notable with the site drainage, but various building roof drains do not directly connect to the underground storm pipes sticking out of the ground. This has caused some minimal erosion to occur in set locations around the perimeter of the building. Many of the existing light poles are broken or are in need of repair. Discrepancies were noted in the representation of the property boundaries that should be properly verified as this will likely impact available on site parking and the available land for future use.

Landscape Conditions

According to the landscape survey conducted by Studio dwg, the landscape is in generally good condition and is largely code compliant. All of the plant beds are in poor condition with very low plant diversity and little sign of mulching. In the planting beds that also contain Live Oak trees, dense shade prevents sun loving shrubs from healthy growth. The grass lawn seems to be well maintained, through there are a few areas of balding lawn due to incorrect topography sloping for site drainage. Site drainage problems are more pressing on the south side of the site, where the topography allows water to drain toward the building. The hardscape on the site seems in good condition with few cracking areas. The site meets most of the City of Austin's Environmental Criteria except for the need of more trees over the parking lot area and more variety in tree species.

Facility Conditions

Generally, the building appears to be in fair to good physical condition. Historic preservation consultant, Limbacher & Godfrey Architects stated that it appears to suffer from the typical physical forces of water infiltration at the walls and roof, expansion and contraction of materials and constant use by an ever growing occupancy. Exterior stucco finishes show cracking and delamination in spot locations. Many of these cracks have been repaired with sealant, which is an inappropriate treatment. Small cracks should be coated with a stucco slurry or other coating material. Large cracks and delaminated areas should be cut out and replaced with a full thickness of new stucco finish, applied by an experienced professional plaster contractor. Most of the interior finishes and doors have been in place well over 30 years are in need of repair or replacement. The fixed aluminum window systems with insulated glazing are in poor condition with evidence of leakage being common. The standing seam roof is in good condition; however the flat roofing systems are in need of replacement.

Structural Conditions

A general structural assessment, based on visual observations of the building, was conducted by Structures PE, LLC. The engineers found the structural systems to be in generally good condition, with isolated cracking noted in select locations. In some instances, the cracking is apparently due to damaged or missing elements of the roof drainage system. Other locations exhibit cracking consistent with differential foundation movement, although none of these conditions appear to be active or sources of moisture migration in the building walls. Exterior cracks should be further reviewed by a building envelope specialist to confirm that the building envelope is performing as intended. Future modifications or additions need to consider the existing foundation type and provide new foundations that address the potential for differential movement between existing and new construction.

Systems Conditions

The systems documentation, survey and assessment were performed by TG&W Engineers Inc. From this survey process, they have determined that the water source heat pump system and natural gas-fired boiler are well beyond their service life. The building lacks any ventilation system to introduce fresh air into the facility. This is a code violation that should be addressed. All plumbing systems above the slab will require replacement to meet current code requirements. It should also be expected that most, if not all of the underground plumbing components will also need to be replaced due to age or location. Electrically, any increase in utility needs will require a new onsite Austin Energy electrical vault so that the site can tie into the downtown network area. Interior lighting does not meet current energy code requirements, and emergency egress lighting is insufficient and not code compliant.





ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

This assessment of Accessibility issues is based on a physical survey conducted over three days by I.H.S. Design Studio. We expect that past renovations complied with the Codes enforced at the time of their construction; however, this report documents compliance of the facility today with the current versions of regulatory Codes.

Site Issues

Both the Civil Engineer and Accessibility consultants noted that the primary East Entrance, and both secondary North and West Entrances appear to have provided accommodations for an accessible route from their associated, signed accessible parking spaces. However, due to non-compliance of elements of each of the three ramps and the parking spaces themselves, no entrances were found to be on an accessible route.

Building Issues

The most recent significant renovation of the Palm School building was in 1980 which predated the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], so it is no surprise that numerous violations of the current regulations were noted. Protruding object violations were noted at drinking fountains, wall-mounted defibrillators, and reception counters. Door hardware to operate a majority of the doors on all floors was not accessible. Wheelchair clearances violations for door approaches and maneuvering were noted. All restroom facilities were found to have clearance and reach range violations. Correction of accessibility violations should not require the removal of any existing historic elements.



CODE REVIEW

During the survey of the Palm School building in late September of 2017, field information was collected with regards to construction materials and emergency egress components by Antenora Architects LLP. This information was supplemented by additional visits in November to verify certain field conditions as the Life Safety and Building Code evaluation and was conducted. We expect that past renovations complied with the Codes enforced at the time of their construction; however, this report documents compliance of the facility today with the current versions of regulatory Codes

Atrium Issues

While the Facility was found to be compliant with regard to building height, stories above grade, and maximum allowable building areas for its occupancy and construction type, several violations were noted with regard to the Atrium at the East Entrance. Automatic sprinkler protection throughout the entire building and the implementation of a Smoke Control system are necessary elements to comply with current building code requirements.

Egress Issues

The ability to escape a building in the event of an emergency is quite simply the most vital aspect of Code compliance. Most of the work done during the 1980 and subsequent renovations has sought to mitigate much of the risk to life safety by introducing new, non-combustible egress stair structures within the facility, although when evaluated against the current Building Code in the City of Austin, many violations remain. Correcting noted violations with regard to stairs, ramps, ramp slope, handrails, guards / barriers, fire-resistance labeled door assemblies and Exit stair enclosures will all be necessary to comply with the current Building Code.

PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

Based upon the research and findings presented in this study, we have identified three preservation priority zones for the Palm School building.

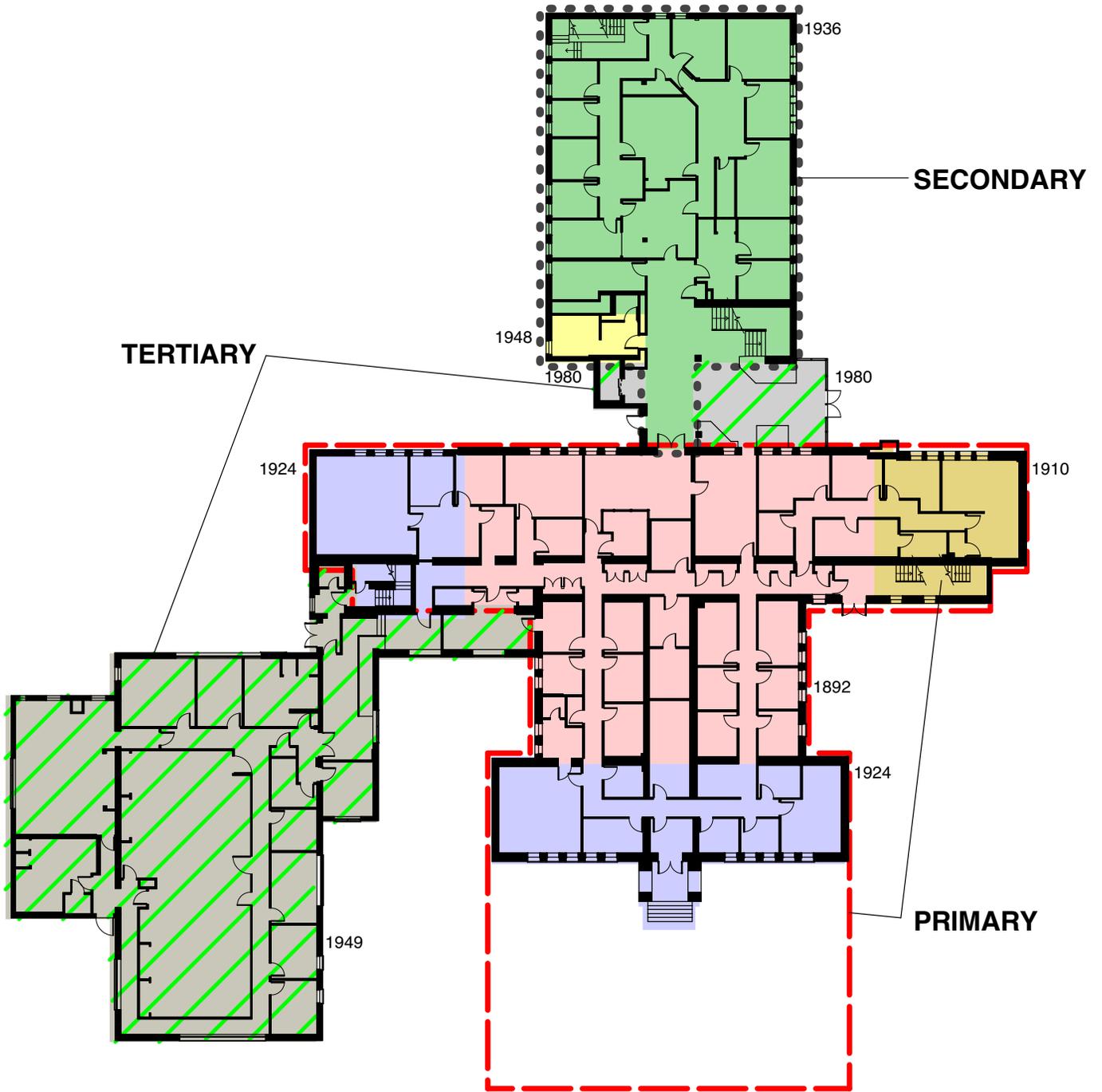
- **Primary:** 1892/1910/1924 Building Area and Associated Street Yard. This is the oldest portion of the building and it retains stylistic integrity to the 20th century appearance, even though the original window sashes have been removed. Good photographic documentation exists to allow for the restoration of the window sash in this portion of the building. Written documentation of the interior configuration also exists and physical evidence of modified elements remains behind contemporary surfaces, to aid a rehabilitation project of this Primary historic core area.
- **Secondary:** 1936/1948 Building Area. This portion of the building is largely a WPA/Relief Era structure, a period of significant history of Austin. It relates closely to the development of Palm Park, also a WPA/Relief Era construction. Limited documentation exists, and rehabilitation projects of this portion of the building would be more challenging.
- **Tertiary:** 1949/1980 Building Area. Although it is more than 50 years old, the 1949 addition is not physically or stylistically compatible with the earlier building phases. This was surely recognized by the Historic Landmark Commission when the demolition permit was granted for this wing. The 1980 addition, clearly contemporary construction, is also not compatible with the historic core. In particular, the original entry axis is destroyed.

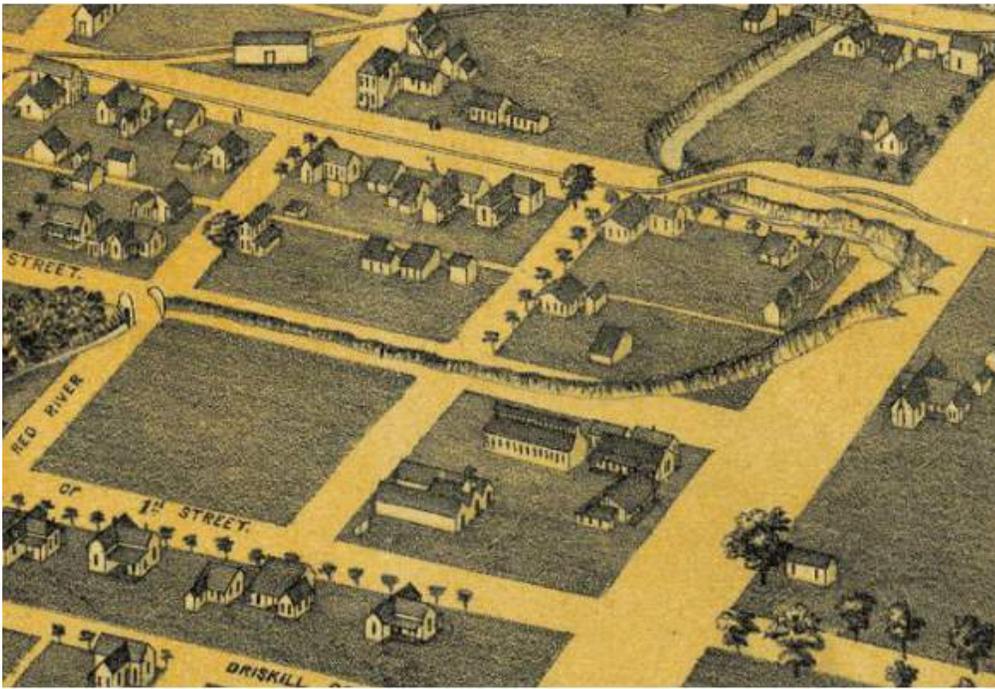
Historic Designations

The Palm School building has been designated as a historic landmark at the city level, and may be eligible for national or state designations, if additional designation is desired. Historic designation may qualify properties for grant funding or tax credits for qualified restoration projects. Depending on the type of designation, there may be additional review or permitting requirements for change contemplated at the property.

Recommendations

As the space program is developed for the historic school, consideration should be given to the rehabilitation of historic classroom spaces. Every effort should be made to restore the historic ceiling profile and material, which will need to be coordinated with the re-design of the mechanical system. If it is not possible to fully restore the original ceiling configuration, the heights should be raised as much as possible and the materials changed, to better evoke the historic ceilings. Lastly, as noted in the exterior conditions description, the historic windows are significant, character defining features of the building, but were removed in the 1980 remodeling project. Photographic documentation exists of the historic windows, and would inform a replacement project with compatible, multi-paned wood window sash and frames.





Detail view showing the Arsenal Block and Waller Creek. Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, 1887, Augustus Koch. PICA 22983, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

EARLY YEARS

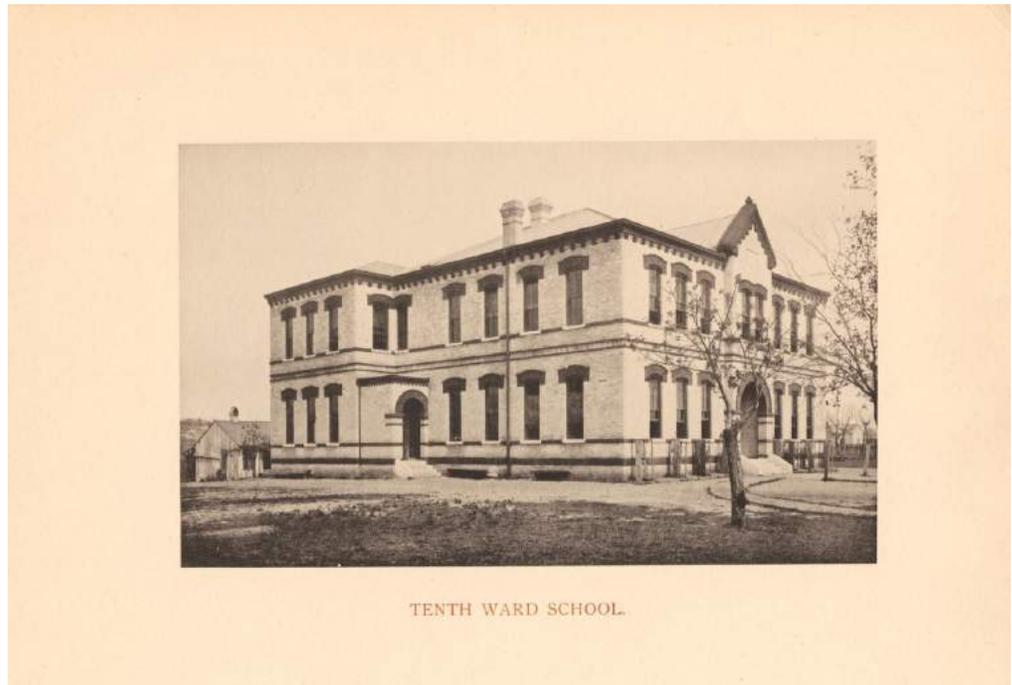
The Austin Public Schools date from 1880, when the city residents voted to create a public school system overseen by a board of elected trustees. The public schools began operation in the fall term of 1881 with 500 students and 26 teachers and eleven buildings across the city. Three buildings were owned and the remainder were in leased sites. Students were assigned to schools by grade level and ward location, and there were segregated schools for white and black students. By the end of the term, the enrollment had increased to 1,328, and the demand for more public school facilities was clear.¹

The Tenth Ward School began in 1883 in a small frame structure located somewhere east of the current Palm School site. In 1888 Miss Florence Ralston Brooke was appointed the principal of the school, and would remain at the school until 1912 when she transferred to Austin High School. The Primary level school taught first through fourth grades, although the ages of the pupils ranged from seven to seventeen, according to Miss Brooke.²

In 1888, Congress authorized the Secretary of War to transfer the “Arsenal Block” to the city of Austin for educational purposes. In Edwin Waller’s 1839 plan of the city of Austin, the block was reserved for use as an armory, and had housed Republic of Texas and federal military installations since that time. Located in the southeast corner of the city, bounded by Second Street on the north, East Avenue on the east, First Street on the south and Sabine Street on the west, Waller Creek flowed along the north boundary of the Arsenal Block. While the School Board wanted the land as a school site, the City Council rejected the offer in a record vote, in an effort to keep the army post in Austin. The issue was ultimately settled by state Attorney General James Stephen Hogg, who sided with the School Board and the land transfer proceeded.³

The Austin Public School system continued to grow and by 1890 had an enrollment of 2,710 students and a faculty of 28 teachers, and the facilities were becoming ever

Tenth Ward School, 1894, as shown in Art Work in Austin. PICA 1704, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

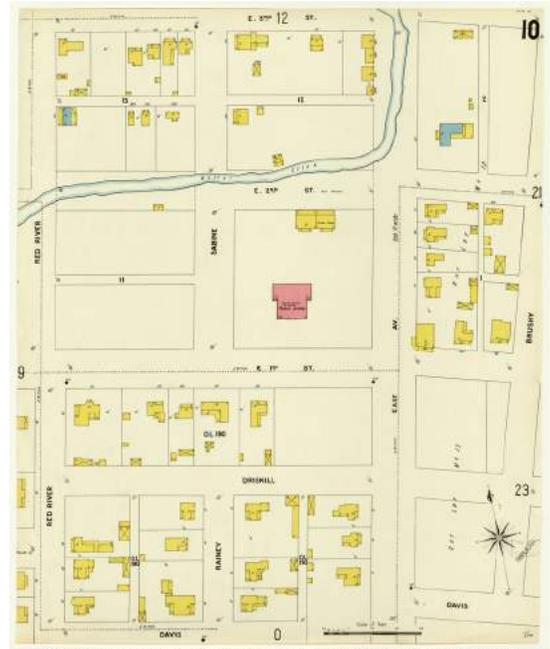
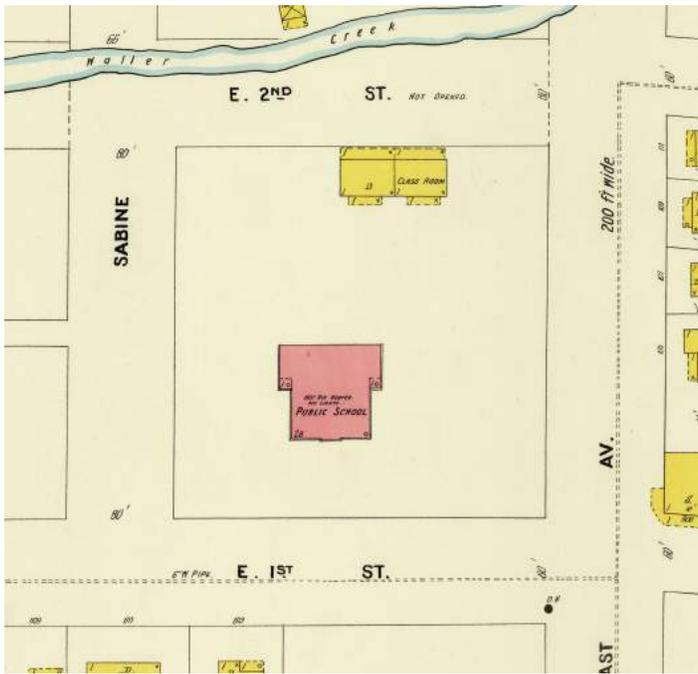


more crowded. Within a few years, three new school buildings were built across the city, including an eight-room school on the Arsenal Block, built in 1892 at a cost of \$9,201.65. The construction progress was followed closely by the newspaper, which described the building as one of the handsomest in the city:

The new Tenth ward school building is rapidly nearing completion. The roof is now being put on and the inside is receiving the finishing touches, and the architect, Mr. Watson, says it will be in readiness for the fall term. It is one of the best arranged and most commodious of any of the public free school buildings, containing eight rooms 23-1/2 by 36 feet in the clear, well lighted and thoroughly ventilated. There is a wide main hall running south through the building with two side halls projecting therefrom. There is a broad staircase in each of these side halls leading to the second story. There are three wide vestibules in the building and all doors open into them, making egress at all times the simplest. The building is supplied throughout with fire hydrants and the basement is arranged for hot water fixtures. In the second story, besides class rooms, there is an apparatus room and also one for the principal of the school. The whole making a building that Austin can well be proud of.⁴

The building was designed by Arthur O. Watson, a young architect who studied at Texas A&M and came to Austin to work. He initially worked as a partner to Jacob Larmour, a prominent architect who worked in the city and across the state as the state architect. In 1892, Watson began an independent practice, and the Tenth Ward school was one of his early projects. He went on to design courthouses, churches, schools and residences, including the All Saint's Episcopal Chapel (1899), the Caswell House (1900) and the first Austin High School (1900, burned 1956) at Ninth and Trinity, all in Austin.⁵

The Tenth Ward School was a noteworthy addition to the public school system, attended by the children of many prominent families who lived close to the school. The principal, Miss Brooke, encouraged the literary, theatrical and musical talents of



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

the children, and they gave regular performances of plays, musicales and recitations at venues in the city. The performances also raised money for improvements to the school programs and furnishings, such as the library and a piano. The performances were very popular and closely followed by local reporters, who wrote detailed articles about the events in the newspapers.⁶

Sanborn Map Company, Austin 1900 Sheet 10, map, 1900; New York. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.

The handsome masonry building was apparently well-built and served the school system well, with only minor repairs or improvements made in the early years of use. The heating system needed minor repairs in 1895. The heat was provided by a furnace or boiler system with a live fire, which was started early each morning by the on-site janitor. In 1898, the janitor rose at 4 a.m., and noted a small fire that had been set in one of the classrooms. He acted quickly to put the fire out and the school was not damaged. Even with the janitor's early morning preparations, though, the school was apparently cold in the winter. In early 1899, the heating system froze up and could not be thawed out, so the school was closed for a day until temporary stoves could be installed in the building.⁷

The early plumbing system was apparently limited, and there were outdoor "closets" or privies at the site. In 1900, the school board created a committee on hygiene and sanitary conditions, which recommended connecting the outhouse closets to the sanitary sewer system, provision of individual drinking cups for the students, suitable heating and ventilating apparatus, proper arrangement of benches to provide the best light for study and the provision of shade trees and benches on the school grounds. For the Tenth Ward School, the committee noted repairs to the outhouses, gravel for walks to the closets and repairs to the wooden fences at the school yard. In 1902, a new fence was built at the school, and in 1903 the school board purchased a fumigating machine to disinfect the schools with formaldehyde and arranged for repairs to the boiler.⁸

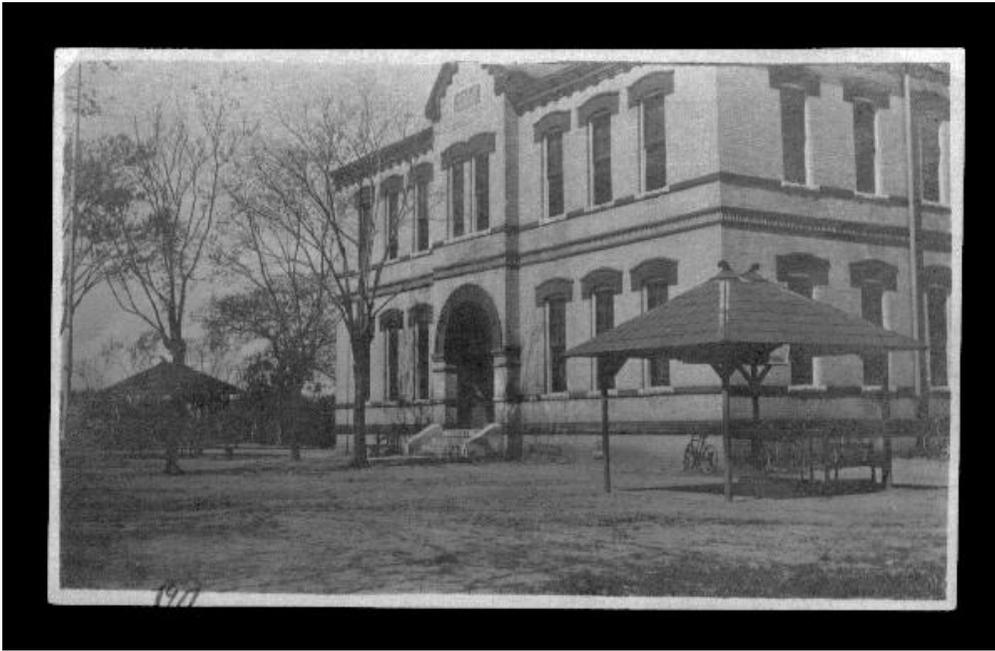
The name of the school was a source of debate, and it was sometimes called the Arsenal Block School instead of the Tenth Ward School. In 1899, the school board considered a question of changing the name, although the proposed change wasn't clear, but



Eighth grade classroom at Palm School, ca. 1905. Miss Brooke is the teacher, noted as F.R.B. Photo courtesy AISD.

postponed action on the item at that time. In 1902, the question was again considered when a trustee proposed naming city schools after prominent men in education or those worthy of honor, including several governors and Swen Jaensson, known as Swante Palm. The board appointed a committee to study the question further, and after several months' work they recommended a slate of school names of "prominent men of educational affairs." Palm was recommended as the new name of the Tenth Ward School. The board voted in favor of the name changes in August 1902, and appropriated \$36 to pay for painting signs on the schools with the new names. The issue arose once more in 1906, when a suggestion to change the name to the Arsenal Block school was made, apparently related to the need to name a new school under construction, but later the board assigned a new name to the new school only and continued with the names assigned in 1902 at the existing schools.⁹

Swen Jaensson was born in Sweden in 1815 and immigrated to Texas in 1838, joining a nephew who had settled in La Grange. He took the name Swante Palm, and worked in his nephew's general store and as postmaster of La Grange. In 1850, his nephew moved the general store to Austin, the new state capitol, and Palm joined him. In addition to business ventures with his nephew, he held a number of diplomatic and public service posts, including as county justice of the peace, city alderman, meteorologist of the Texas Geological and Agricultural Survey and Austin postmaster. In 1866 he was appointed as vice consul for Norway and Sweden by the Swedish government, and worked to encourage Swedish immigration to Texas. From a young age, he had an interest in learning and books, and as an adult had a large library of roughly 12,000 volumes. He donated many of his books to the University of Texas in 1897, which increased the size of the university library by over 60 percent, and worked as an assistant librarian to help with cataloguing and use of the library. He died in Austin in 1899.¹⁰



View of Palm School from the southwest, showing the drinking fountain pavilions, ca. 1917. Photo courtesy AISD.

By 1904, the school board had taken further action to address the concerns about hygiene and sanitation, and had begun to connect schools across the city to the sanitary sewer system. In September, the board contracted for construction of new “closet” buildings at Bickler, Pease and Palm schools. The board hired a separate contractor to complete the plumbing and sewage work, and also a special engineer to supervise the work. The work was completed within a few months, and was included in a supportive newspaper editorial touting the good works of the school board.¹¹

The Palm School Mothers Club was formed in the fall of 1908, and the group took up the cause of fundraising, improvements to the school facilities and encouragement and support of the faculty and students. For their first effort they installed sanitary drinking fountains at the school. To raise funds, they held several entertainment events featuring musical performances and readings by the school children and Miss Brooke. The club purchased porcelain fountains with nickel plated drinking cups and cement block bases and hired plumbers to install them and also had concrete walks and pavilions installed over the fountains. The newspapers followed their progress in detail, and reported on the acceptance of the fountains by the school superintendent in the spring of 1909.

Four fountains have been erected. Two on the boys' side of the yard, with two separate sheds over them, two together on the girls' side, under one canopy. The cost of the fountains alone was \$192.32. With the three canopies, cement walks and other improvements, the complete expense was \$329.06.¹²

Along with the improvements at the school, the enrollment increased dramatically over the early years. When the school opened in 1892, there were five teachers and classes for the first through sixth grades. The enrollment for mid-year 1893 was 334 students. By 1895, there were nine teachers at the school and classes for the first through eighth grades, with two third grade classes. By 1898, there were 363 students at the school, and although the average number of students per room was 40, a few teachers had many more. The largest class had 72 students, and another had 63. The enrollment continued to increase, and even when the school offered classes for first through seventh grades, there were more than 400 students at the school.¹³

Overcrowding was an issue across all the schools in the system, and some students sat two to a desk, while other schools went to half-day sessions so that one grade could attend in the morning and another in the afternoon. In 1906, the voters turned down a proposal to increase the tax rate paid to support the public school system. By early 1910, the overcrowding and short school days jeopardized the educational preparation of the students, and the superintendent warned that if more funding wasn't directed to the schools the term would end early, with no graduation and students would not be eligible to attend college the following year. City leaders set a \$75,000 bond election for March, which was passed by the voters. The school system set to work planning renovation and expansion projects at the existing schools, as well as the design of two new schools.¹⁴

1910 - TWO NEW CLASSROOMS

Although the bond election was held in March, the bonds were apparently not sold until several months after that time. In an effort to complete construction work over the summer break, the school board began design work on the renovation and expansion projects of existing schools immediately with funds in hand. The design of the two new schools, one in Hyde Park and one in South Austin, proceeded at a slower pace and construction would not begin on those projects until the bond funds were available.¹⁵

At Palm School, work proceeded with a two classroom addition, for use by the second and third grades. Most of the construction was done over the summer break, but the work was not complete at the beginning of the fall term. The work was almost complete at the end of the fall term and may have been put into use immediately, according to a newspaper article at the time.

The substantial addition to the Palm school is now complete and is being used for the first time this week for class room purposes, said Superintendent McCallum yesterday. The addition consists of two large class rooms, one above the other, and a basement underneath, the cost being \$5,500. It is thoroughly modern, and is well constructed, in the opinion of those who have examined it. The building has not yet, however, been formally accepted by the school board.¹⁶

Little documentation beyond the newspaper description and the existing building itself was located for the 1910 addition. From the reference to a basement, it is likely the addition was made to the northeast corner of the original 1892 building, since a basement exists under the two levels above at this location.

The demand for educational facilities in Austin continued to grow, and the new space was immediately put to good use. By this time, a night school had begun at Palm School, the second one established in the public school system. Three teachers conducted the school, with classes offered three evenings a week in bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, penmanship, grammar, composition and spelling. The night school was well-attended, with about thirty students on the first evening, despite a heavy downpour. The following term, the night school was offered again, and new desks and furniture were provided to accommodate the adult students. In June 1911, summer school was also offered at Palm School.¹⁷

The Palm School Mothers Club began a new fundraising campaign to furnish a restroom to be provided in space vacated in the existing building. The restroom was

furnished with rugs, a couch, easy chairs and table and a lavatory, and was intended for use by a tired teacher or indisposed student. The Club also raised funds for additions to the school library.¹⁸

In 1912, the school board began preparations for another bond election, to provide more improvements in the schools, including new heating equipment at Palm School.

*The heating plant at this school is insufficient. Old-fashioned stoves should not be used in the public schools of Austin any longer. We erected two new rooms at this school last year at a cost of \$5,267.25, and arranged for a boiler room in the basement of this addition, and a proper heating apparatus, with automatic temperature regulations and with mechanical ventilation, should be installed.*¹⁹

Page Brothers, Architects was engaged to design the new heating system, to be the same kind as used on the new Hyde Park and South Austin schools, which was a combination steam and hot air system. At the time, C.H. Page was working on improvements to Wooldridge School, and may have designed the improvements to existing schools completed in 1910. A newspaper account of expenditures for the 1910 bond projects lists payments to Endress & Walsh, the architects for the two new schools built under that bond, and to C.H. Page and Brothers. No other architects are listed in the article, so it is likely that Page Brothers designed the renovation and expansion projects done under the bond, including the addition to Palm School.²⁰

Page Brothers, Architects was started in 1898 by brothers Charles Henry Page and Louis Charles Page. The firm did work in Austin and across the state, including many schools and courthouses. The brothers were born in St. Louis and arrived in Austin in 1886 when their father, an English mason, came to work on the construction of the Texas Capitol. In 1903 the brothers designed the Texas Building at the St. Louis World's Fair. The firm designed the Littlefield Building (1910, 1915) and the Travis County Courthouse (1930).²¹

As the heating system project was developed, two other items were apparently added to the bid documents -- a new stairway and an office for the principal. The locations for these are unclear, but they were noted in a newspaper description of the bids received.

*Bids were opened last night by the City School Board on....a steam heating system and stairway at the Palm School. The direct steam heating system was adopted for the Palm School, this being very considerably cheaper than the fan system, and the contract went to Donnelly & White at \$3,342. The bid of John L. Martin on the same character of heating was \$3,478. An additional stairway, deemed necessary to the safety of the children, was let in connection with an office for the principal, to Brydson Bros. at \$240. The bid of R.C. Lambie was \$300...*²²

One other description of the addition was given in a 1912 article about a club for sixth and seventh grade boys organized by Miss Brooke, called the Knights of the Round Table or the Court of King Arthur. The club met in the new basement, which may have been damp, if the following club member description is to be believed.

*Our castle hall is the basement in the new wing at school and it looks like the real thing, with its concrete floor and rock walls, against which rest the spears of the pages. We descend many stone steps to the drawbridge of the castle, and in wet weather when the draw fails to work (which is all the time) a long plank makes a realistic drawbridge for it rests in water black enough to suggest great depth.*²³

HISTORIC

Composite Plan Diagram
(Conjectural)

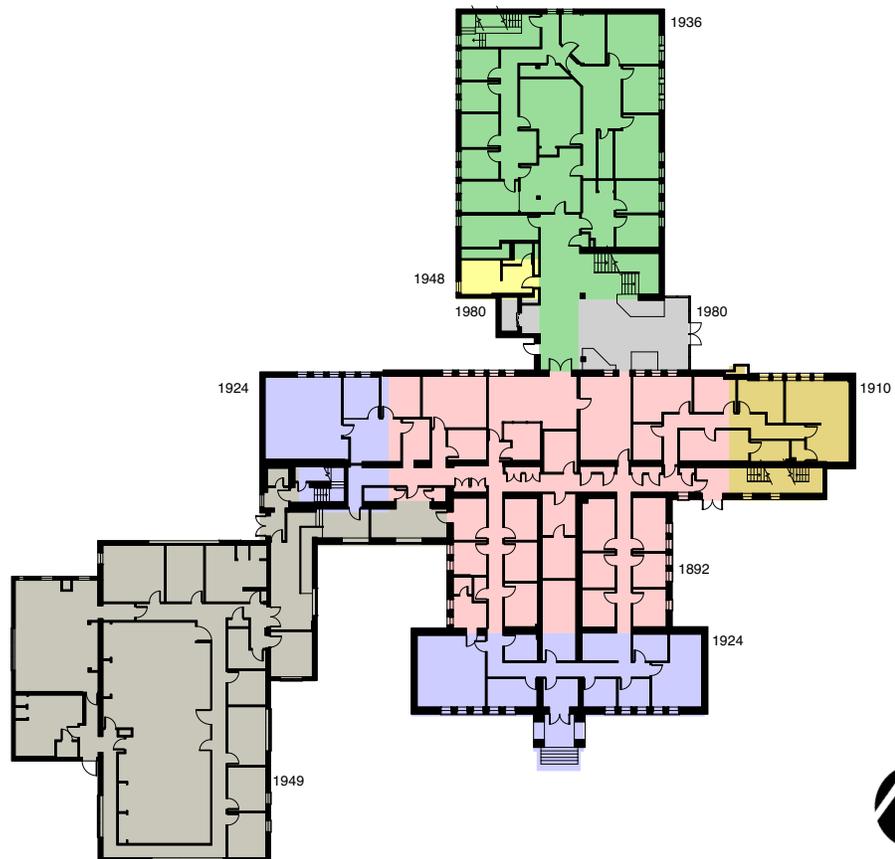
The plan diagram shows the likely configuration of the historic classrooms, based on descriptions given in newspaper accounts and partial bearing walls remaining in the existing building. The major building periods are shown shaded in different colors.

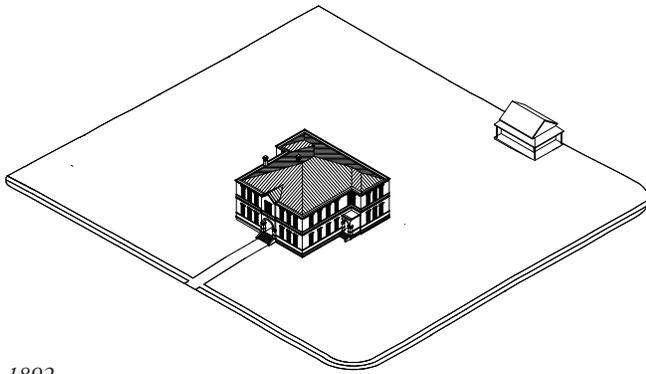


EXISTING

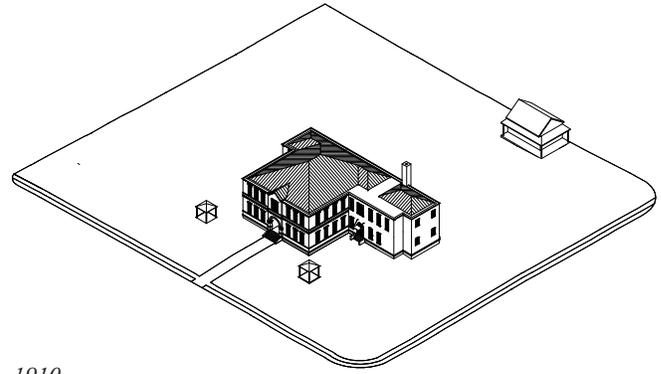
Composite Plan Diagram

The plan diagram shows the existing interior rooms, which have been extensively modified with infill wall construction. The major building periods are shown shaded in different colors.

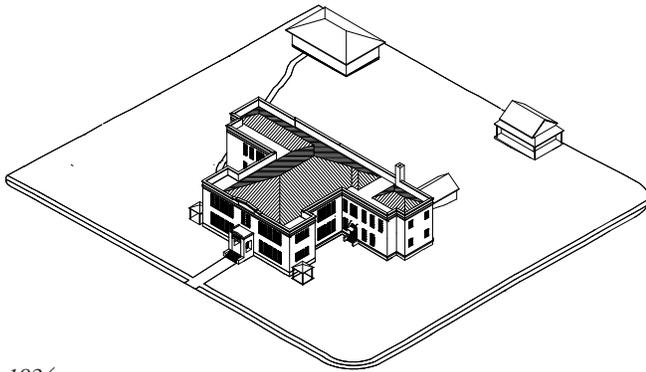




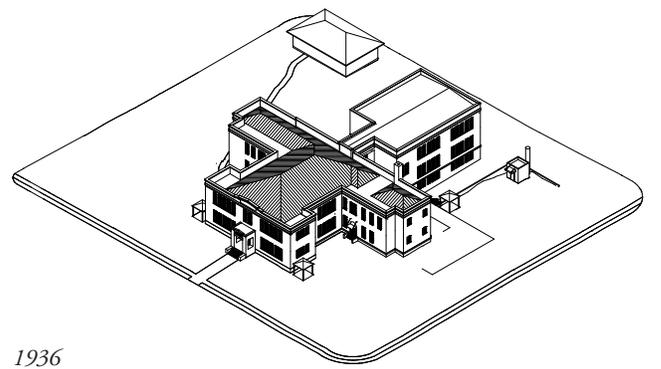
1892



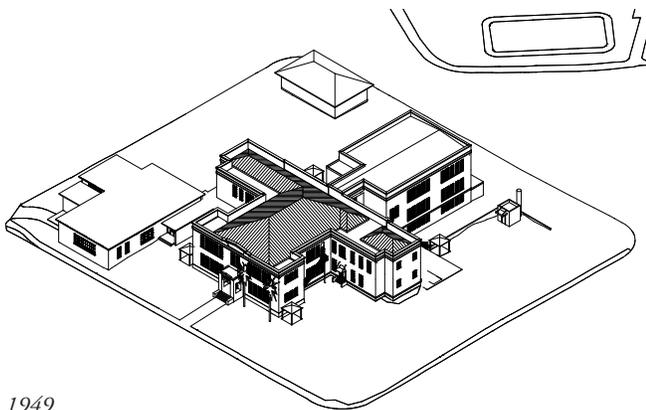
1910



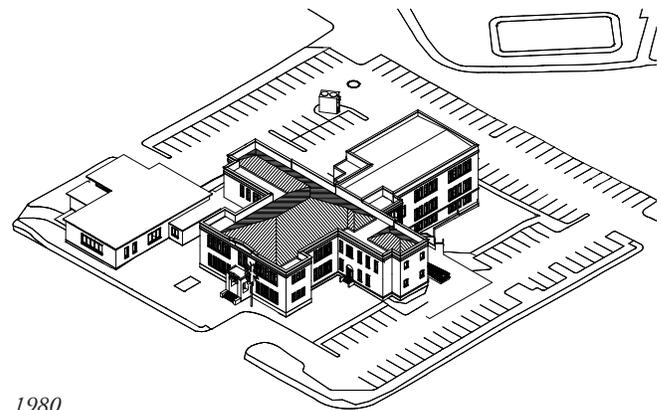
1924



1936



1949



1980

PALM SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

1892 The historic core of the school was built, and was a two-level, eight-classroom masonry building, shaded pink in the plan diagrams.

1910 The first major expansion was made to the east side of the school, a two-level, two-classroom addition with a basement level mechanical room below, shaded tan in the plan diagrams.

1924 The second major expansion was made, a two-level addition of six classrooms were added to the front and west side of the original building, shaded blue in the plan diagrams.

1936 The third major expansion was made to the north side of the school, a three-level addition with six classrooms above a cafeteria and auditorium on the ground level, shaded green in the plan diagrams.

1948 A small restroom addition was made to the north wing, shaded yellow in the plan diagrams.

1949 A new cafeteria and commercial kitchen were added, shaded taupe in the plan diagrams.

1980 The school building was remodeled for office use, and an elevator and atrium added, shaded gray in the plan diagrams.

At the start of the 1912 fall term, it was announced that there would be a new principal at Palm School. After more than 20 years as principal, Miss Florence Ralston Brooke had taken a teaching position at Austin High School. Miss Brooke taught Advanced English Grammar to the upper level students and a class of Print Shop English to a tough, challenging group of high school students. She took her interest in literature and performance to her new position and was the sponsor of the Shakespeare and Chaucer Club at the school. She also studied at the University of Texas and received a Master of Arts degree in 1931, when she was 73. She continued to teach at Austin High School until 1942, when she retired at age 84. She died in 1944.²⁴

Mr. J. P. Simmons was appointed the new principal, and there were ten teachers at the school, one for each of the classrooms in the building. The enrollment in 1912 was particularly large, and even with the recent building addition the school was overcrowded. The school board met in October and ordered the immediate construction of a temporary building for use by the lower first grade class.

Notwithstanding the substantial addition to the Tenth Ward or Palm School building made not so very long ago, the opening of the present session has demonstrated that this building is inadequate to accommodate the children attending. This crowded state of affairs was responsible for the calling of a special meeting of the City School Board at the Superintendent's office yesterday afternoon, which resulted in a decision to erect immediately a temporary building for the accommodation of the low first grade. The enrollment already in the grade is seventy-eight, and this will grow to ninety, it is estimated, before the term is gone. The board's building committee was directed to have a building 24 x 32 feet in size completed, if possible, within ten days. It will cost \$300 to \$350.²⁵

The Palm School Mothers Club continued their efforts to improve the school facilities, with a focus on athletics and playgrounds. They raised funds for improvements to the tennis court at the school, gymnasium equipment and an outdoor playground. They learned about organized athletics in public schools from the director of the University YMCA, and embraced the “playground movement” as their primary interest. They added a basketball court to the playground and continued to add new equipment to the playground and beautify the school grounds. They also supported hiring a supervisor of play for city schools. Related to the interest in outdoor play and activity areas, the City added a third block to the “parked” area of the esplanade in Lower East Avenue in 1913, adjacent to the school site.²⁶

In 1913, the Palm School Mothers Club took an interest in school lunches, with a talk given by a teacher from the domestic science department of the high school on the topic. A lunch room had recently been opened at the high school as an experiment, and it was found to be beneficial to both the students who worked there and those who ate lunch there. The Club discussed the possibility of starting a lunch room at Palm School and in early 1915 the new lunch room was opened at the site. The lunch room was likely located in a separate outbuilding on the site, and is depicted in that way on the Sanborn map of 1935.²⁷

By now, there were a number of outbuildings on the school yard site, some remaining from the earlier Arsenal use and some erected by the school system. In 1918, the Palm School kindergarten classes were moved from 502 E. First Street, two blocks west of the school site, to the former officers residence building on the north edge of the site. The Palm School kindergarten was the first free kindergarten in Austin, and was as

distinctive and illustrious as the other classes at the school. The school set up a Kindergarten Band, with 35 children all under 6-1/2 years of age as members. The band performed at events at the school and around the city for years, raising money for the school piano. A newspaper account of 1924 describes the band as very accomplished, having performed for John Philip Sousa that year. It also notes the band had representatives of six nationalities among its members, all loyal Americans.²⁸

By 1914, the enrollment at the school was 600 students, and overcrowding was such an issue that children were turned away for lack of room. The school janitor, who lived in a small dwelling unit on the site, moved out and the space was converted to use as classrooms. More seats were added to other classrooms and all the children were accommodated. The superintendent expressed relief that they would not need to shorten school hours and have double teaching shifts to handle the overflow.²⁹

The same year, the school system held a clean-up competition among the schools, and inspectors visited and evaluated each school site. Palm School did moderately well in the competition, but did not win due to some deferred maintenance issues.

Palm School was well ventilated, well lighted well heated, well supplied with water. The toilet was in the customary unsatisfactory condition, but not worse than the average. One thing that certainly should be corrected was a hole in the floor of one of the upstairs rooms. This hole was big enough for a small child to step through. The Palm School narrowly missed consideration as one of the winning schools and it is partly on account of its district.³⁰

Perhaps in the course of repairing the hole in the floor, the school system hired non-union carpenters to install flooring. This became an issue in 1916 when the school system arranged for repairs to the masonry walls at the window arches. The union bricklayers who were hired to do the work protested the use of non-union labor for the carpentry repairs, and refused to do the work. The board considered hiring more non-union labor, and may have prompted more protest. A later newspaper account notes complaints filed against a contractor making improvements at Palm School for working men over eight hours in a day and paying them less than the union scale.³¹

Through the efforts of the Mothers Club, the teachers, students and school board, Palm School continued to excel. A boys baseball field was prepared in an unused area of the East Avenue esplanade, and it was hoped that cars accustomed to driving through the field would instead drive around it. The children contributed to a fund to plant fifty mulberry trees on the school ground, and some baby silk worms were installed in the trees for the students to observe. The lunch room was expanded, and the Mothers Club hired a woman to run it for them. The lunch room provided free soup daily to students and also meals to the teachers. The playground equipment was improved and a moving picture machine was purchased for the school. There are newspaper references to an auditorium at the site beginning in 1917, although the location is not clear.³²

A 1922 article on the history of Austin public schools described the Palm School as one of the best in the city.

This school plant consists of a main brick building of eight rooms erected in 1893, to which were added later two excellent rooms on the east, making ten rooms, with four buildings on the grounds housing four primary grades and the largest kindergarten of Austin.



View from the southwest of the expanded school, 1924. CO 3709, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

This kindergarten is the first to be organized among those of the city public schools and occupies the original officers' home when the military authorities occupied the grounds. Recently an excellent lunchroom has been added on the north side of the main building.³³

Enrollment at the school continued to increase and by 1923 had hit 660 students, which strained the capacity of the ten classrooms at the school. As part of the public schools building and expansion program of 1916, three new schools had been built, including Metz Elementary School, a mile east of Palm School. The district boundaries for Palm School were changed to end at Chicon, and children who lived between Chicon and Chalmers could choose to attend either Palm or Metz School. Even so, Palm School remained overcrowded.³⁴

In the fall of 1923 the School Board petitioned the City Council for a \$500,000 school bond election. The Council supported the Board in this request, and added a city bond for water filtration and incinerator work, with the election scheduled for mid-December.³⁵

1924 - SIX NEW CLASSROOMS

The scope of the bond work included expansion and improvements for Palm School, including new classrooms, renovation work and additional land, at a projected cost of \$40,000. It is not clear whether any additional land was purchased at this time, but the other work was implemented. During a design review meeting with the Board the Palm School work was discussed.

The improvements contemplated for Palm School are the construction of two rooms on the west wing and four rooms in front of the present building which is to be symmetrical in plan. This building will also be completely modernized and equipped with fireproof halls and stairways and when completed will be stuccoed.³⁶



View from the southeast of the expanded school, late 1920s. The 1910 addition shows clearly on the right end of the building. CO 3746, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

The School Board hired Hugo Kuehne, a local architect, for the improvements work at Palm School and several other school sites. He earned a degree in civil engineering in 1906 from the University of Texas, and a degree in architecture from MIT in 1908. Kuehne founded the school of architecture at the University of Texas in 1910, and served as a professor until 1915. He practiced architecture in Austin from 1915 until 1961 and designed a wide range of notable residential, commercial and public buildings in the city. He served on the city planning and zoning commission, and the park board.³⁷

Bids were received and construction contracts awarded in the spring of 1924 with the costs coming in about five percent higher than the budget carried in the bond funds. The contracts were awarded to one general contractor and five subcontractors.

Palm School: General construction, J. J. Wattinger, \$34,425; painting, T.S. Hill, \$2,919; plumbing, Harper & Linscomb, \$1,552; wiring, J.O. Andrewartha & Co., \$783.91; heating, Donnelly & White, \$2,820. Total, \$42,500.91.³⁸

The construction work proceeded immediately, and by mid-September the Board discussed small bits of added work to complete the improvement project.

The board also voted to construct a sidewalk in front of Palm School, the walk to be about 350 feet long and costing approximately \$300. Plans for landscaping the campus by planting trees and flowers, preferably palms, were deferred until a future meeting.³⁹

The fall 1924 term began on October 1, a few days later than normal, because the construction work was not quite ready on time.

The Palm School PTA was pleased with the improved school building, which they toured during their first meeting of 1924. However, the group was becoming



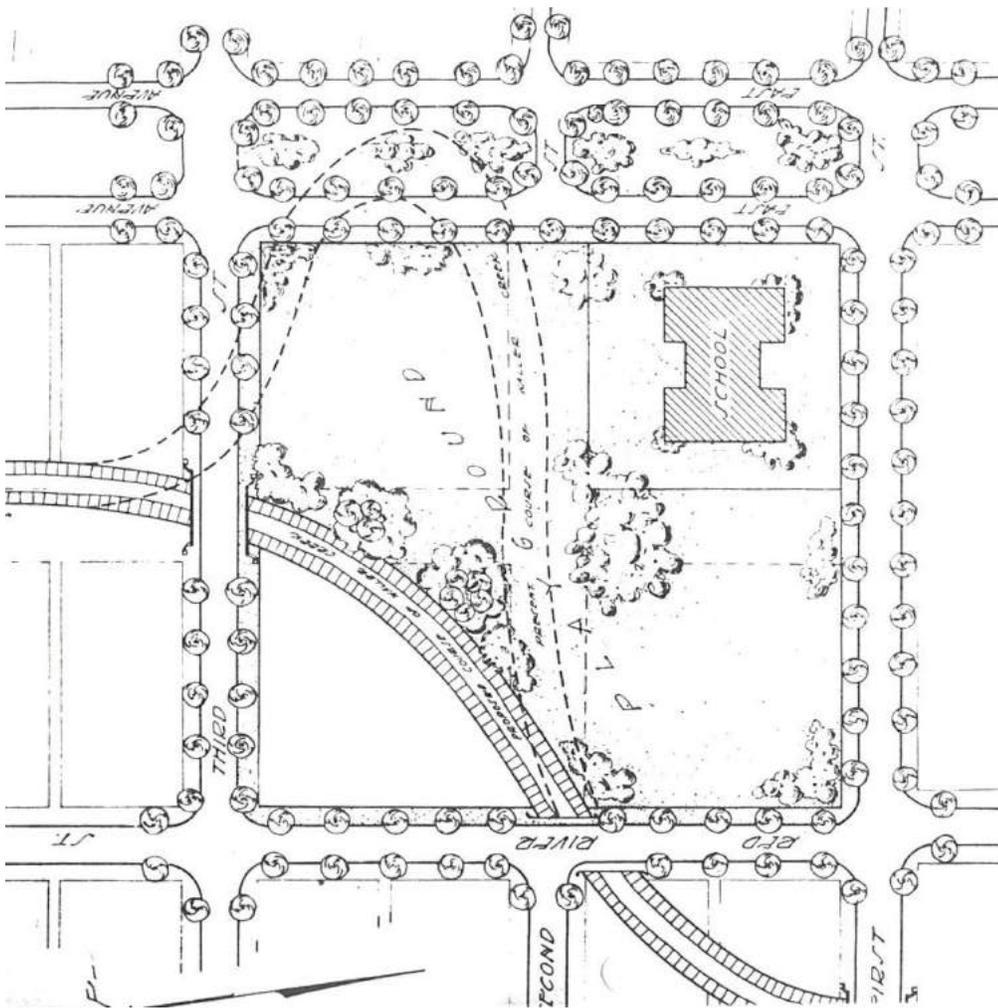
Aerial view of Palm School and Waller Creek, before the creek was re-routed, ca. 1930. PICA 21043, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

concerned about speeding motorists near the school. In 1924, they met with the School Board to express their concerns, but no action was taken. In 1926, W. L. Darnell, the Palm School principal, asked the City Council to provide signs for members of a student crossing guard group to use when escorting younger children across the busy streets at the end of the school day. The Council agreed to meet with the school staff to further discuss the issue, but not to purchase the signs. Crossing the busy streets would continue to be a concern to the PTA and the School. Newspaper accounts of injuries to children as they crossed the streets near the school appeared regularly in the late 1920s.⁴⁰

Perhaps related to the overall growth and urbanization of the city, the City Council commissioned the first city plan for Austin, completed in 1928 by Koch & Fowler Consulting Engineers, of Dallas. The plan made recommendations for locations and types of parks, schools, city facilities, urban transportation and roadways and property zoning. It recommended an expansion of the park and recreation spaces in the city, and also recommended that playgrounds be provided in connection with school grounds, when possible. At Palm School, the plan made a very specific recommendation to re-route Waller Creek from the north edge of the school grounds to the northwest, to create a large playground for use by the school.⁴¹

Waller Creek had always been a barrier between the Palm School site and a natural playground area to the north. It was also a potential destructive force to the buildings and plantings on the property. Major floods had occurred in 1900, 1915 and 1919, and the outbuilding used for the kindergarten classes had been almost entirely covered with water at one time. Nine bodies of flood victims were found in the school yard after the waters cleared. In the 1919 flood, the stone bridge over the creek at Second and Red River, built by the US government in 1861 when the arsenal was established on the Palm School site, was washed out.⁴²

The City Council adopted the City Plan for Austin in January 1928 and immediately

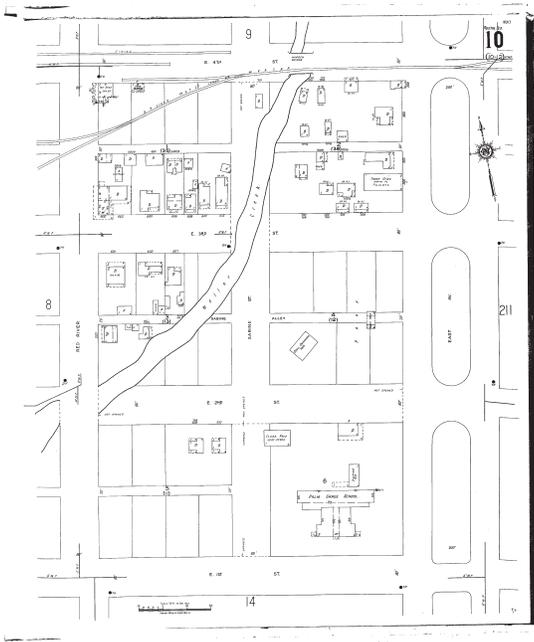


*Proposed Playground,
Palm School, cropped view.
Plate 14, A City Plan for
Austin, Koch & Fowler, 1928.*

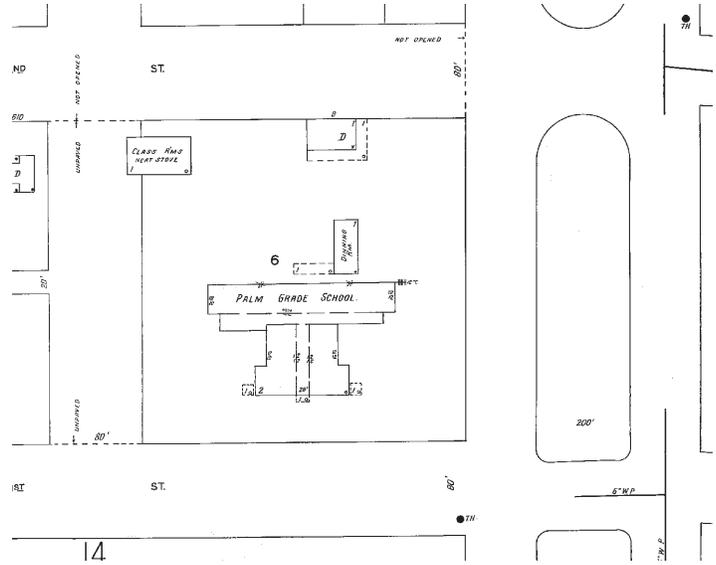
set about implementing the recommendations. The Recreation Department was created in the spring, and \$4,250,000 in improvement bonds were passed by the city, \$700,000 of which was devoted to parks and playgrounds. By May, arrangements to purchase and lease land for the Palm School playground were made and \$11,500 earmarked for the site. The land purchases were completed in 1929, as bonds were sold and funds became available. Street grading, paving and sanitary sewer work was done across the city, and the fill removed from that work was used to infill the Waller Creek channel. By 1932, the site was ready for the installation of the new playground, which included a swimming pool, a play shelter and a double tennis court. The park was opened to great fanfare in May 1933.⁴³

The massive city bond package also included \$300,000 in school improvements, and Palm School was set to receive a four room addition, including an auditorium, at a cost of \$22,500, as discussed in 1928 City Council meetings and newspaper accounts. It is possible that the bond funds were spent on other projects, though, because by 1929, the last school work contract was begun, and there were \$1,000 in improvements to the Palm School auditorium included, but no added rooms or new auditorium.⁴⁴

Other improvements and services were provided at the school, including a free dental clinic for the school children in 1932. They were apparently in need of this service, since the first examination showed that 319 of the 505 pupils checked were in immediate need of dental work. In 1934, C. N. Avery offered to sell the school board the



Sanborn Map Company, Austin
1935 Sheet 10, map, 1935;
New York. Austin History
Center, Austin Public Library.
Environmental Data Resources.



adjacent block at First and Red River for \$15,000. The school board was not in a position to make the purchase, and Mr. Avery noted he had an offer from a service station and garage for the property.⁴⁵

In the summer of 1935, there was another major flood in Austin. By then, the Waller Creek channel had been re-routed and stabilized, and there were no reports of damage to the school buildings or the park. The public health department noted an uptick in mosquitoes and typhoid as the main issues emerging from the flood.⁴⁶

As the Great Depression deepened, the federal government created relief era agencies and made funding available for public works projects across the country. The city of Austin proposed a range of projects under the Public Works Administration programs, including a number of new school and school addition projects.⁴⁷

1936 - SIX NEW CLASSROOMS

The Austin Independent School District and the City of Austin worked together on several PWA supported projects to build or expand schools, including a project at Palm School. In October 1935, the City Council adopted a resolution accepting a PWA grant of 45% of the cost of the school projects, in the amount of \$286,363. The provide the required 55% matching funds, an election for the issuance of \$350,000 in bond funds was held on November 14, 1935, and was passed with 92% support by the voters.⁴⁸

The work proceeded very quickly, and local architects Giesecke & Harris were hired to do the design work for a range of new school buildings, additions and renovation projects, including an addition to Palm School. The addition was needed to address continued overcrowding at the school, and also a change in the use of the nearby Bickler School, sending students from Bickler to Palm. Although the architectural drawings were not located in the course of this study, newspaper accounts describe the project as a six classroom addition, which included an auditorium and cafeteria and associated equipment. The existing building was to be painted throughout and the roof and heating plant repaired. The projected construction cost was \$45,420.⁴⁹



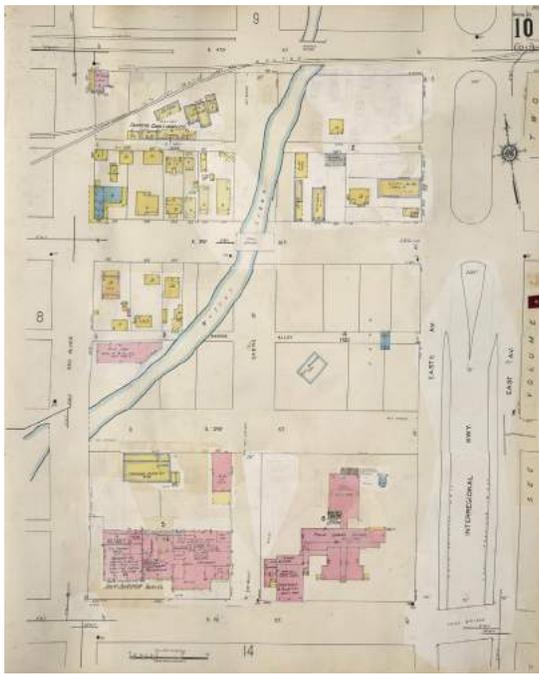
Palm School children watching the last streetcar that ran by the school, February 7, 1940. PICA 15136, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Architects Bertram E. Giesecke and August Watkins Harris practiced in Austin with several different firms over the years of their long careers. Giesecke & Harris was in operation from 1921 to 1941. Giesecke had a degree in architecture from Texas A&M and a degree in architectural engineering from the University of Texas. Harris also had a degree from the University of Texas, and the two met while attending school in 1912. Giesecke designed the Austin High School (1915), while with Giesecke & Walsh. Giesecke & Harris designed the Queen Theatre (1926), Norwood Tower (1929), Zavala Elementary School (1936) and Becker Elementary School (1936).⁵⁰

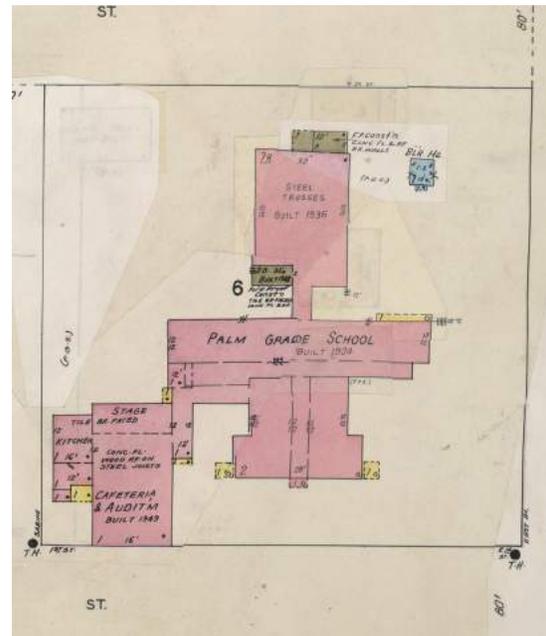
Within a few months of the initiation of the PWA projects, the architects had completed the plans for the schools, and bids were received on December 5, 1935. The Palm School addition project was awarded to W. J. Schwarzer, general contractor, Fox & Schmidt, plumbing and electrical and Young & Pratt, heating, at a cost of \$42,372, a bit under the projected cost. The entire project, though, was over budget, and the work planned at Govalle School was deleted from the PWA project to bring the costs into control. In 1936, after the larger construction project was completed, a smaller PWA project was awarded to Parker Roofing for roof repair work at Palm School.⁵¹

The new addition was located on the north side of the school building, on the center-line of the north wall. The older outbuildings on the site, including the freestanding lunch room and old officers residence, were removed to clear the site for the new addition. The center, north-south corridor in the existing building was extended to connect the new addition to the existing school building. The new addition had three floors. The upper two floors aligned with those of the existing building, and the lower floor was tucked below, taking advantage of the natural grade change to the north of the site.

The new addition was ready for use in the fall term of 1937. Three new teachers were assigned to Palm School, to handle the added students transferred from Bickler School, and the northern boundary of the Palm School area was extended from 4th Street to 11th Street. A reunion of students who attended the school prior to 1917 was planned



Sanborn Map Company, Austin 1961 Sheet 10, map, 1961; New York. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History.



Sanborn Map Company, Austin 1935 Sheet 10, map, 1935. (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph575186/m1/1/>, accessed January 26, 2018), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu.

for November, with reminiscences, singing and old photographs. Miss Brooke, the former principal, and Tom Miller, Austin mayor and a Palm School alumnus, also attended. The students, teachers and PTA also arranged a towel shower for the Zavala School, recently opened as a related PWA project. Many of the Zavala students had attended Palm School previously, and the Palm students were particularly pleased to help out their old fellow classmates.⁵²

The new auditorium was immediately put to use, with the presentation of a play with song and dance interludes in December. The new lunchroom was also well used, but attracted a few burglary attempts in the early years, despite the installation of a burglar alarm. The dental clinic originally located in an outbuilding in 1932 remained at the school, and was moved into the main school building, across from the principal's office. Attendance at the school continued to grow, with an increase of 110 reported for 1938. Concerns about traffic and school children crossing the busy streets remained, and in 1943 the student safety patrol was expanded to provide more crossing guards before and after school and during the noon hour.⁵³

A newspaper account in March 1942 notes that painting work, including puttying and painting the wood window sash and frame, had begun at Palm School. The article also describes a renovation in the old auditorium area, to remove the stage floor and create a new teacher restroom, but the location of this work is not clear. It likely occurred somewhere in the original construction area or the 1924 addition.⁵⁴

Enrollments across all of the Austin schools continued to increase, and in 1946 a bond election was passed, intended to fund the construction of seven new schools and the renovation and enlargement of existing schools. However, materials and manpower were limited, due to the drain of World War II, and only maintenance and renovation work was done at the time. The work perhaps included infilling a small notch in the southwest corner of the 1936 addition. The lack of restrooms, conveniently located in all the wings of the school, was apparently an ongoing issue. The small area was enclosed with new exterior walls to create a new restroom on the upper two floors of



Palm School under renovation in the late 1940s. The 1924 wing shows on the right of the image, and the 1936 wing shows on the left. The new restrooms appear to be under construction in this view. PICA 26920, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

the 1936 wing. The new construction is noted on the 1961 Sanborn map of the building, with a construction date of 1948. It also shows in a construction photograph on the west side of the building from the late 1940s.⁵⁵

The school district worked with Jac Gubbels, a landscape architect and planner who had done some of the planning and design work on the Austin parks system as it was begun in earnest in 1928, on a master plan for a 20-year expansion program, in the meantime. Gubbels recommended a number of sites for new junior high schools, including the conversion of Palm School for use as a junior high school, with an expansion of the sports facilities in the adjacent Palm Park. Gubbels recommended sites for elementary, junior high and high schools across the city, coordinated with anticipated expansion of the roads and transportation networks. Many of the recommendations were subsequently implemented, but the proposal for Palm School was not accepted.⁵⁶

1949 - NEW CAFETERIA ADDITION

By 1948, Austin schools were getting the first wave of the “baby boom” after the war, and the newspaper reported on the importance of every student and family participating in the scholastic census, to capture the related portion of the state school fund. As facilities became more crowded, the school district authorized \$610,000 from the building fund for use on school renovations, including \$125,000 for renovations and a cafeteria addition at Palm School. The cafeteria would have a modern, commercial kitchen, and was apparently an improvement over the cafeteria installed in the 1936 addition.⁵⁷

Jessen, Jessen, Millhouse & Greeven was hired to design the new addition. The firm began in 1938, when Harold (Bubi) and Wolf Jessen, brothers who earned architecture



*Cafeteria and auditorium addition, ca. 1950.
PICA 03346, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library*

degrees from the University of Texas, began working together. Bubi had worked with C. H. Page & Son, but left that firm to work together with his brother shortly after Wolf graduated from college. The brothers designed the terrazzo floors installed in the Texas Capitol in 1936. In 1946, Charles Millhouse, also a University of Texas architecture graduate, and Alton Greeven, a self-taught architect, joined the firm as partners. Other notable projects of the firm include the Texas Supreme Court Building (1956) and Palmer Auditorium (1959) with Crume Page Southerland Page.⁵⁸

The new cafeteria wing was located on the southwest corner of the site, and was connected to the existing school building by a new corridor at the first floor level, constructed on the south wall of the west wing of the 1924 addition. The new cafeteria was outfitted with a raised stage at the north end of the room, and the commercial kitchen was on the west side of the cafeteria. The project also included the addition of a small boys' shower room on the ground level of the north end of the 1936 addition.

The new cafeteria wing was ready for use during the 1949 fall term. An open house of the new wing was held and was well attended by parents and students. Although it does not show on the plans for the cafeteria addition, a newspaper article reporting on the open house noted renovation of the lower level of the 1936 wing was apparently also completed, to provide four new classrooms and a physical education room in the old cafeteria and auditorium spaces.

Other features of the building are the four new classrooms completed during the last school year and the complete remodeling done over the rest of the building. The old cafeteria has been turned into a playroom for physical education classes. In other parts of the building walls were painted light colors for better lighting and water fountains were installed low enough for first graders to drink easily.⁵⁹

The enrollment in Austin schools continued to increase, but for the first time, Palm School showed a small decline in enrollment in 1950. The new cafeteria was used not only for daily lunches, but also for the spring "Fiesta" held at the school, which raised



*IH-35 construction, 1960.
Palm School is on the right.
Photo courtesy Texas
Department of Transportation.*

money for new fans for the classrooms. In 1963, a Diamond Jubilee celebration was held at the school to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the original building. Former students and principals attended to reminisce and admire the expanded school facilities.⁶⁰

1976 - PALM SCHOOL CLOSES, SANCHEZ ELEMENTARY OPENS

In 1964, Austin voters passed a \$24.5 million school bond with great support. The bond included funds to air condition existing schools, among other things. There are no records of improvements made to Palm School, and by 1968 concerned parents began to attend school board meetings to advocate for replacement of the school building. The parents described broken plumbing fixtures, splintered wood flooring, broken windows, falling ceiling tiles, exposed heating pipes and a crowded library. The district had been poised to add a 3,000 square foot gymnasium to the school, but instead focused on making repairs at the school. Over the spring and summer of 1968, \$31,471 in repairs were made at the building, but the parents group remained concerned about the aging plumbing, the cramped playground area, fire protection and traffic. They suggested a committee of the board plan a tour of the school, along with parent representatives and Dr. George Sanchez, a University of Texas professor.⁶¹

The group toured the school in May 1968, and reported the chief complaints were noise, lack of air-conditioning, old steam-radiator heating, lack of security on unscreened windows, general deterioration of the interior, the location next to the highway and the lack of an outside playroom. After the tour, the committee reported to the full board their unanimous support for a new school to replace Palm School. The board took the recommendation under advisement, and began to investigate the potential for funding assistance under the Model Cities Program, initiated by the federal government in 1966.⁶²

The school board worked to identify an appropriate site for a replacement school, one that was closer to the residential area on the east side of IH-35. Over the years since

*View of Palm School
from the south. 1971.
PICA 25082, Austin History
Center, Austin Public Library*



1893, when Palm School was originally built, most residential uses in downtown proper had been replaced by commercial uses, and the children who attended Palm School had to cross the highway or busy First Street to get to school. The parents group was also hopeful that a site with a minimum of existing residences be selected for the new school, to displace as few families as possible. The parents group preferred a former fish hatchery site owned by the federal government on Haskell Street, for this reason. The fish hatchery site had been deeded to local interests exclusively for health services, and was to be used for a senior housing and support facility.⁶³

A site at Waller and Holly was selected in 1970, and the Model Cities Program assisted families displaced by the new school. Architect C. A. Lopez, a Palm School graduate, was selected as the architect for the new school in 1971, and the architectural plans were completed and approved by 1973. The construction work was delayed while a court order related to a desegregation case against the Austin schools was considered by the U.S. District Courts. The work finally proceed after a few years delay, and Palm School was closed at the end of the school year in May 1976. Sanchez Elementary School, named for George I. Sanchez, the champion of the replacement school effort, was opened at the start of the following school year in August 1976.⁶⁴

1981 - NEW USE AS PALM SQUARE

After Palm School was closed, the building sat empty for several years. In 1977, the school district was cited by the City of Austin for maintaining the old Palm School as a substandard building, with broken windows, a leaky roof and overgrown grounds. The school district was considering a possible sale or lease of the property, or a renovation for use as a replacement site for the Kealing Learning Center. Within a few months of the citation, the district approved a 25-year lease with The Family Place, Inc.⁶⁵

The Family Place was a joint effort of the Junior League of Austin, the Austin Evaluation Center and Child and Family Service. The group proposed to use the building as a children's museum, a counseling center, a parent information center and a medical

and social evaluation center. The group hired Pfluger-Polkinghorn Architects to prepare plans for the preservation of the building. The work included new wiring, roof, windows and plumbing, with a projected cost of \$850,000. The Family Place began a fundraising campaign, with commitments of more than \$150,000. The group was not successful with the full fundraising goal, though, and did not proceed with the project after all.⁶⁶

In 1980, the school district sold the property to Barry Gillingwater and Jim Berkey, of Gillingwater Investments, for \$410,000. The new owners sought a historic designation for the building at the local, City of Austin, level, based on the cultural and historical aspects of the building and site. The area of the building and the street yard immediately in front of the building was included in the historic zoning designation, which was granted in the summer of 1980.⁶⁷

The new owners remodeled the building for use as office space. Pfluger-Polkinghorn Architects was hired to do the design work for the project, and all work was completed under the Certificate of Appropriateness review and approval process of the Historic Landmark Commission. The first phase of work included demolition of the boy's shower room, added to the north end of the 1936 addition in 1949, and removal of the water fountains installed by the Palm Mothers Club in 1909. The exterior doors and windows were replaced with contemporary, aluminum single-lite units and two exterior fire stairs were removed and replaced with window sash. The remodeling also included the addition of a new building entrance in an atrium built at the connection of the 1936 wing to the north wall of the 1924 addition, on the east side of the building, and an entrance ramp on the west side of the building. The roof was replaced, the 1949 cafeteria addition stuccoed and the exterior painted a tan color. The site was paved with asphalt to create a parking lot on the east, north and west sides of the old school building.⁶⁸

In 1984 the new owners submitted a request to demolish the 1949 cafeteria addition, and a preliminary proposal to construct a three-level parking garage, topped by a three-story office building, on the north and west sides of the site. The Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the cafeteria addition was granted on a unanimous vote of the Historic Landmark Commission. However, the Gillingwater group did not proceed with the demolition or the proposed parking garage and office building addition. In 1985, the group made another application to the Historic Landmark Commission for the demolition of the cafeteria addition and the proposed new parking garage and office building, but the case was never presented to the Commission.⁶⁹

In fact, the Gillingwater group's plans changed dramatically, and they conveyed the property to Travis County on January 6, 1985. The County continues to occupy the old Palm School building, and provides community and social services at the building, through the Health and Human Services Department. The building is used as the Travis County Community Center at Palm Square.⁷⁰



Palm School, after the school was closed, 1976. PICA 17422, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

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CONTEXT

LOCATION AND VISIBILITY

The Palm School Building is prominently situated in Austin's rapidly evolving Central Business District. Located on the very southeast corner of the Austin Downtown district, Palm School is on the north corner of E. Cesar Chavez and southbound I-35 frontage road. Adjoining the Palm School property are two recent and ongoing developments. The Fairmont Convention Center Hotel, at 37 floors and 580 feet of height, is one of the city's tallest structures, while the ongoing redesign of the Waller Creek Corridor, passing through Palm Park, is positioned to attract the locals and tourists alike with pedestrian and bike paths linked from Lady Bird Lake to the University of Texas. Within a two block radius are the Austin Convention Center, Rainey Street Historic District, and the Downtown MetroRail Station with the new Plaza Saltillo Retail / MetroRail Station and Sixth Street Historic District just beyond. The value of the Palm School's location is immense.

While views of the Property from its surroundings are plentiful, this view from the 1936 Addition roof looking across downtown Austin doesn't disappoint. Capital View Corridor limitations will likely preserve this view to the north for the foreseeable future.



This location affords the Palm School Building a high degree of visibility from northbound I-35, the southbound I-35 frontage road, and both east and westbound Cesar Chavez Street between Sabine Street and I-35. It also appears prominently over the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park.

While the Palm School certainly seems less barren that it was in 1957, its surroundings have changed dramatically.



MetroRapid bus stop located at the southwest corner of the Palm School Property.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to the Palm School is readily accommodated by car, bus, rail, and bicycle or by foot. Cars are well served by the many areas to park at and near the Palm School building. There is street parking available on Driskill Street one block south of E. Cesar Chavez, along Red River Street where it crosses E. Cesar Chavez, and on 3rd Street on the north side of Palm Park. Several parking garages and surface lots are also available near the site, the closest being a paid unpaved surface lot for parking on the south corner of E. Cesar Chavez and Red River Street. The Palm School building and site does have a surface lot for approximately 123 cars. If you choose to travel to the site by mass transit, there is a MetroRapid bus stop at the corner of the site near the intersection of Cesar Chavez and Sabine streets.

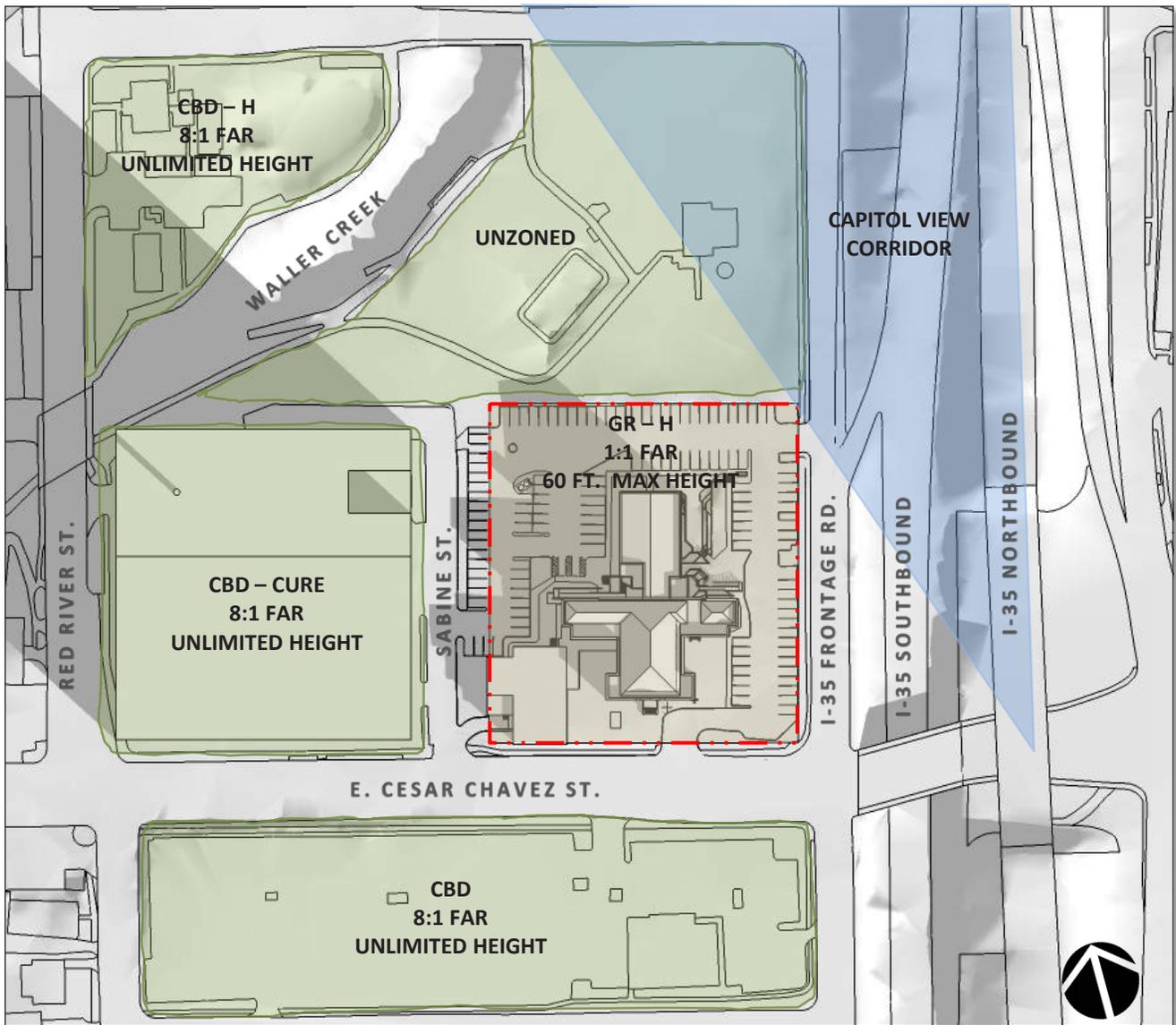
The closest rail stop is the MetroRail Downtown station is located on 4th Street on the north side of the Austin Convention Center. Austin downtown is also bicycle and pedestrian friendly, with bicycle lanes and sidewalks, if you choose to park farther away and travel to the Palm School site in that fashion. The Waller Creek Greenbelt Trail also loops through the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park as it follows Waller Creek between Lady Bird Lake and the University of Texas Campus. The Palm School site has a sidewalk on the south and east sides.

Palm School as seen from Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park. The concrete sidewalk is part of the Waller Creek Greenbelt Trail.



ZONING

Per City of Austin Zoning District information, the Palm School site is designated GR-H. According to the City of Austin Guide to Zoning, this is a Community Commercial District (GR) for development of office or other commercial uses that serve the neighborhood and community needs and are generally accessible from major traffic ways. The site development standards for this zoning allow a maximum floor area ratio of 1:1 with a maximum building height of 60 feet. The H of GR-H is a combined zoning district and represents Historic Landmark Combining District. The purpose of this is to protect, enhance, and preserve individual structures or sites that are of architectural, historical, archaeological, or cultural significance. For a property or



structure to obtain this zoning, the property must be at least 50 years old, or defined as of exceptional importance by National Register Bulletin 22, National Park Service, and retain sufficient integrity of materials and design to convey its historic appearance. Palm School building and part of its site meet these criteria and are designated an Austin Historic Landmark.

According to the City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department, the Neighborhood Planning Areas are meant to provide opportunity for community member to shape the neighborhoods where they live, work, or own property, while addressing land use, zoning, transportation and urban design issues. There are five stages of Neighborhood Planning Area status implemented across Austin, these are: plan approved, planning underway/approved to begin, suspended, future planning area, and non-neighborhood planning area. The City of Austin has designated around 65 Neighborhood Planning Areas, most of which are in the plan approved stage. The Palm School building and site fall within the downtown Neighborhood Planning Area which, along with four other Neighborhood Planning Areas located in the central Austin area, is designated as a Non-Neighborhood Planning Area.

The 60' height limitation on the Palm School stand in stark contrast to the unlimited heights allowed to the south and west. Fortunately the site is unhindered by the Capitol View Corridor.

*Rising recent developments
in the Rainey Street Historic
District as seen from the roof of
the 1910 Addition.*



The Austin Convention Center is located just a couple blocks to the west of Palm School and falls under the Convention Center (CC) overlay district. The purpose of the CC is to protect and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of the public, to promote pedestrian activity and vitality in the Convention Center area, and to protect the existing character of the area.

An additional and possibly questionable zoning overlay for the Palm School property is the Residential Design and Compatibility Standards. In the City of Austin Municipal Code this is covered in Subchapter F of the zoning ordinance and it states that this standard is intended to minimize the impact of new construction, remodeling, and additions to existing buildings on surrounding properties in residential neighborhoods by defining an acceptable buildable area for each lot within which new development may occur. It is also meant to protect the character of Austin's older neighborhoods by ensuring that new construction and additions are compatible in scale and bulk with existing neighborhoods. The ordinance boundary covers most of the City of Austin area and has many exceptions that make it non-applicable to the downtown area. Section 1.3.4. states that this subchapter does not apply to a property zoned Downtown mixed use (DMU), Central business district (CBD), East Riverside Corridor (ERC) district, or transit oriented development (TOD) district. By this definition, the Palm School does not fall under this ordinance because it is already under the TOD ordinance.

The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) ordinance was introduced to the City of Austin around 2005 to establish districts around select transit stops for the Capital Metro MetroRail and Park & Ride locations linking MetroRapid bus stations. The TOD zoning overlay is applied to the Palm School site because of its proximity to the MetroRail downtown station located on 4th Street between Trinity Street and Red River Street. In the City of Austin municipal code, TOD is the functional integration of land use and transit via the creation of compact, walkable, mixed-use communities within walking distance of a transit facility. It is meant to bring together people, jobs, and services with a mind toward efficiency, safety, and convenience to travel on foot, by bicycle, transit, or car.

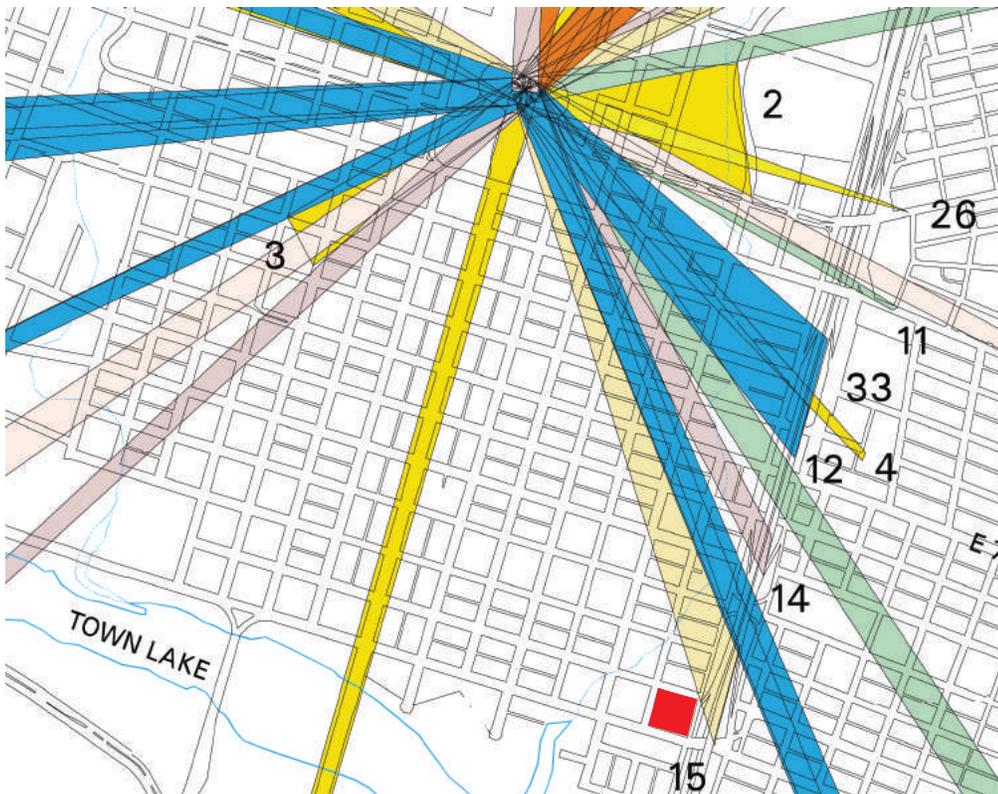
There are currently nine TOD classified districts in the City of Austin and the Palm School site falls within the Convention Center TOD. The TOD districts are further divided into classifications according to location and zones of varying development

intensity. These are directly related to the proximity of the nearest transit station. The Palm School site falls within the downtown classification TOD which is a highly urbanized area with average density of more than 75 dwelling units per acre and includes condominium residential, multifamily residential, large retail, office, and mixed use development. The site also falls within the gateway zone of the TOD which is the area immediately surrounding the rail station platform and land that is about 300 to 500 feet from the edge of the platform.

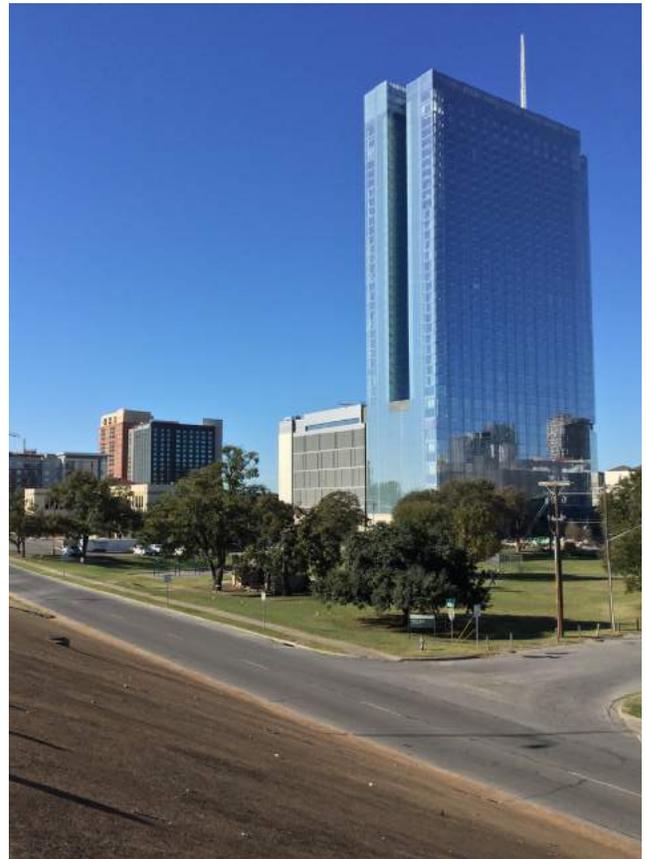
Although the Capitol View Corridor (CVC) overlay district does not directly apply to the Palm School site, it does apply to Palm Park directly north of the site. The purpose of the CVC overlay district is to preserve the view of the State Capitol Building by limiting the height of structures located in the capitol view corridors. A capitol view corridor runs across the northeast corner of Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park to northbound I-35, as depicted in this graphic.

SURROUNDING LAND USE

The surrounding land zoning is Central Business District (CBD) which is for office, commercial, residential, or civic use located in the downtown area. The maximum floor area ratio for CBD zoning is 8:1 with no minimum height restrictions but site development has to be compatible with cultural, commercial, historical, and governmental significance of downtown to preserve select views of the Capitol. Further, the CBD zoning designation is intended to promote a lively downtown district for business, promote pedestrian travel, respect historic features and green spaces, and consider topography and circulation patterns in the downtown area.



The Palm School property (marked in red) is fortunate to be unlimited by any of the State or City of Austin defined Capitol View Corridors. Information provided by City of Austin.



All zoned properties surrounding the Palm School are zoned CBD with a floor area ratio of 8:1 and unlimited height.

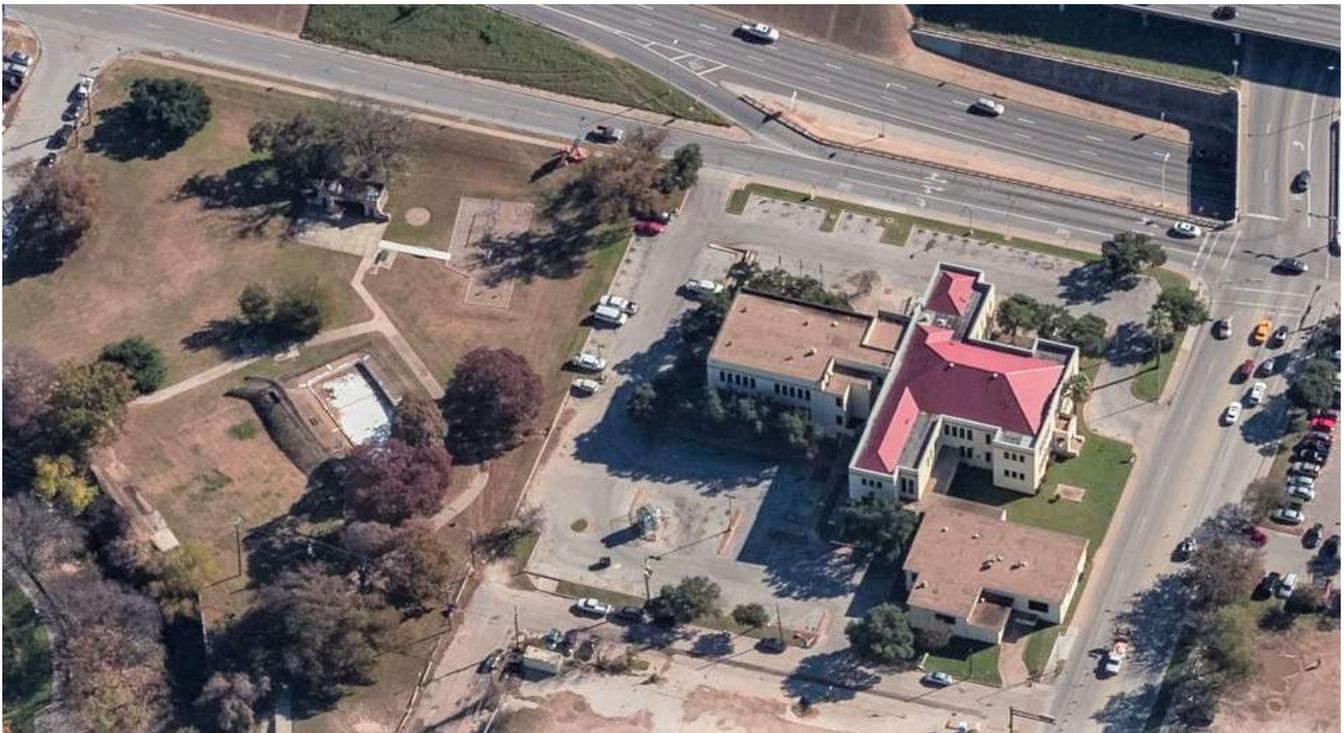
RECOMMENDATIONS

The complex setting of this property will require a multifaceted response if future development is to assure the viability of the Palm School's preservation. Addressing the stark contrast in heights with its neighbors while being respectful the historic kinship with the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park and Waller Creek will challenge future stewards of this Historic Landmark.

Zoning: The GR-H zoning is unduly restrictive in its floor area ratio and height limitations. CBD-H would allow the property to respond more appropriately to its surroundings in terms of urban density.

Historic References: Recreate the axial relationship from the Palm School's original front door through the facility and into the Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park as it was first envisioned in the 1928 City Plan.

Future Development: Seek to collaborate with the current development of the Waller Creek at Sir Swante Palm Neighborhood Park to best engage Austin's citizens and tourists in this gateway setting.



ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

Palm School site aerial view from southwest. Image captured from Bing Maps by Microsoft, February 2, 2018.

ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

Site

Site Information:

- Lot Size = 2.086 acres
- Building Footprint~ 20,300 SF
- Asphalt paving and parking ~ 46,000 SF
- Total existing parking spaces ~ 123
- ADA Parking Spaces = 11
- Concrete sidewalk ~ 2,000 SF
- Concrete curb & gutter ~ 1,700 LF
- Maintained landscape ~ 12,000 SF (irrigated)

The Palm School Site, south of Palm Park and bounded by I-35, Cesar Chavez, and Sabine Street is just over 2 acres in size. The Site has a grade change of approximately 10 feet from the high point along the south boundary at Cesar Chavez Street down toward the north boundary of the property at Palm Park. All major public utilities, including gas, electric, water, sanitary, and storm are available and service the property. No adverse easements are noted on the site.

However, a review of the existing documentation of the site boundary records indicates that the west parking lot extends over 20 feet into the Sabine Street Right of Way (ROW). This could affect 22 or more of the 123 parking spaces currently in use. The City of Austin did vacate a small strip of this ROW (less than two feet wide) to accommodate the existing footprint of the 1949 Addition. The history of this discrepancy in the width of the Sabine Street ROW is unclear. The ROW was shown as being in 80' on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps dated 1900 and 1935, but then shown as 70' in the 1961 version of the same map. However, the currently recorded ROW is 80'. See Appendix B for the full Civil Engineering assessment.

Landscape

The landscape surrounding the Palm School building today is predominantly composed of asphalt parking lot with concrete sidewalks, lawn areas, and small hardscape areas near building entries. Historic photos indicate that the site was predominantly lawn with scattered trees and hardscapes only around entries. As the school developed with time, more sidewalks were created to connect paths of travel on the site. Sidewalks were added along East 1st Street (now Cesar Chavez) and the south-bound I-35 access road as the roadway system in Austin developed. Sidewalks from the school connected to the pedestrian walkway from the main central school entry on the south side of the building, the south entry of the 1949 addition to the school, and east entry from the 1936 addition.



Concrete pad, remnant infrastructure - source unknown. Photo provided by DWG



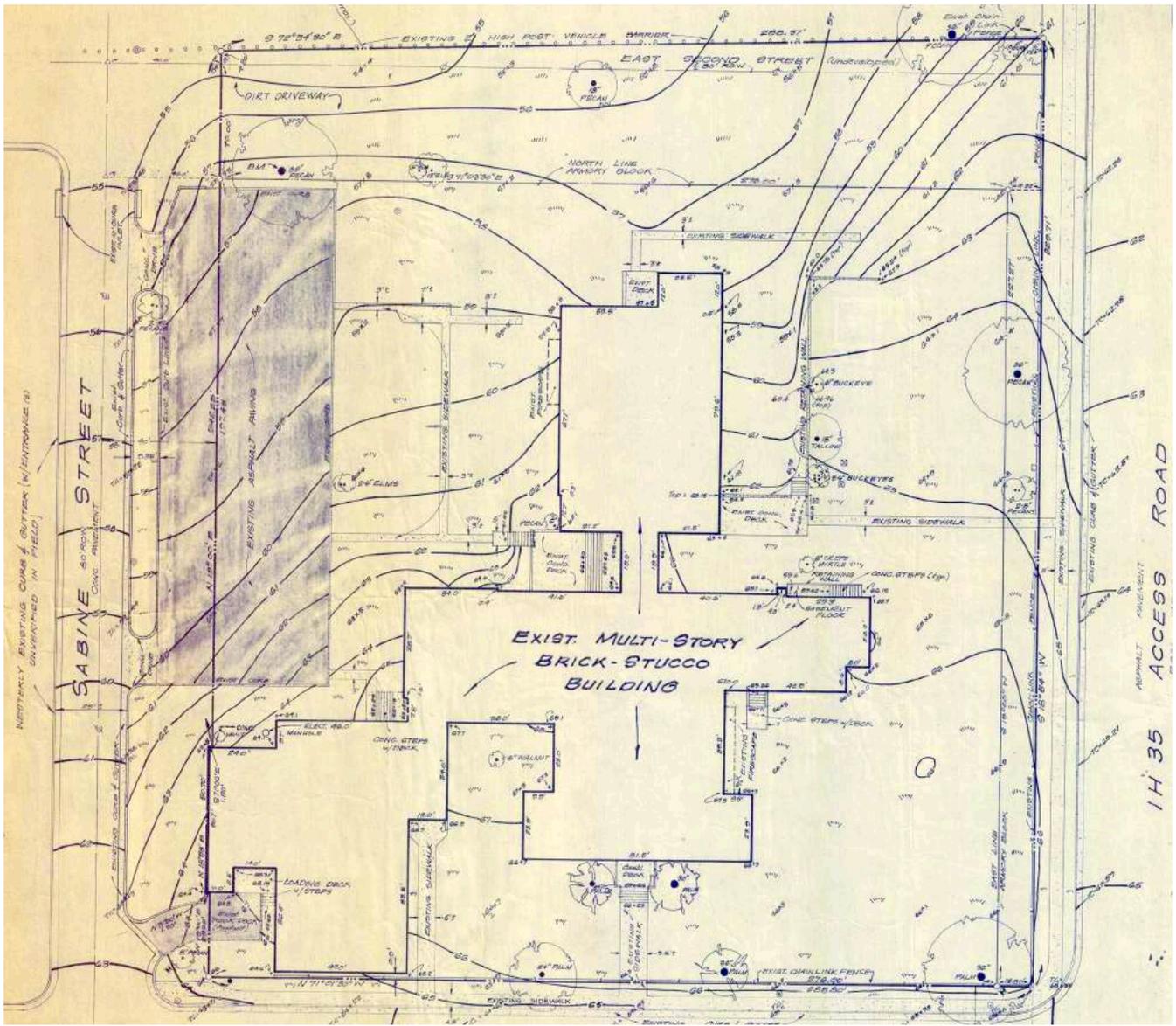
Empty planting bed and stained concrete wall within courtyard. Photo provided by DWG



Bare planting bed on West side of northern most building. Photo provided by DWG



Empty planting bed and eroded lawn space on North side of building. Photo provided by DWG



1980 site survey conducted by Bryant-Curington Inc.

View of the courtyard from the north side.

The landscape around Palm School continued to develop hardscapes with time. Though the timeline is uncertain because of the lack of documentation, it can be deduced that the first surface lot on the site was put in while Palm School was still in service as an educational facility. This is based on a site survey conducted in 1980 by Bryant-Curington Inc., which shows a relatively large area of the west site as existing asphalt paving with two curb cuts from Sabine Street.

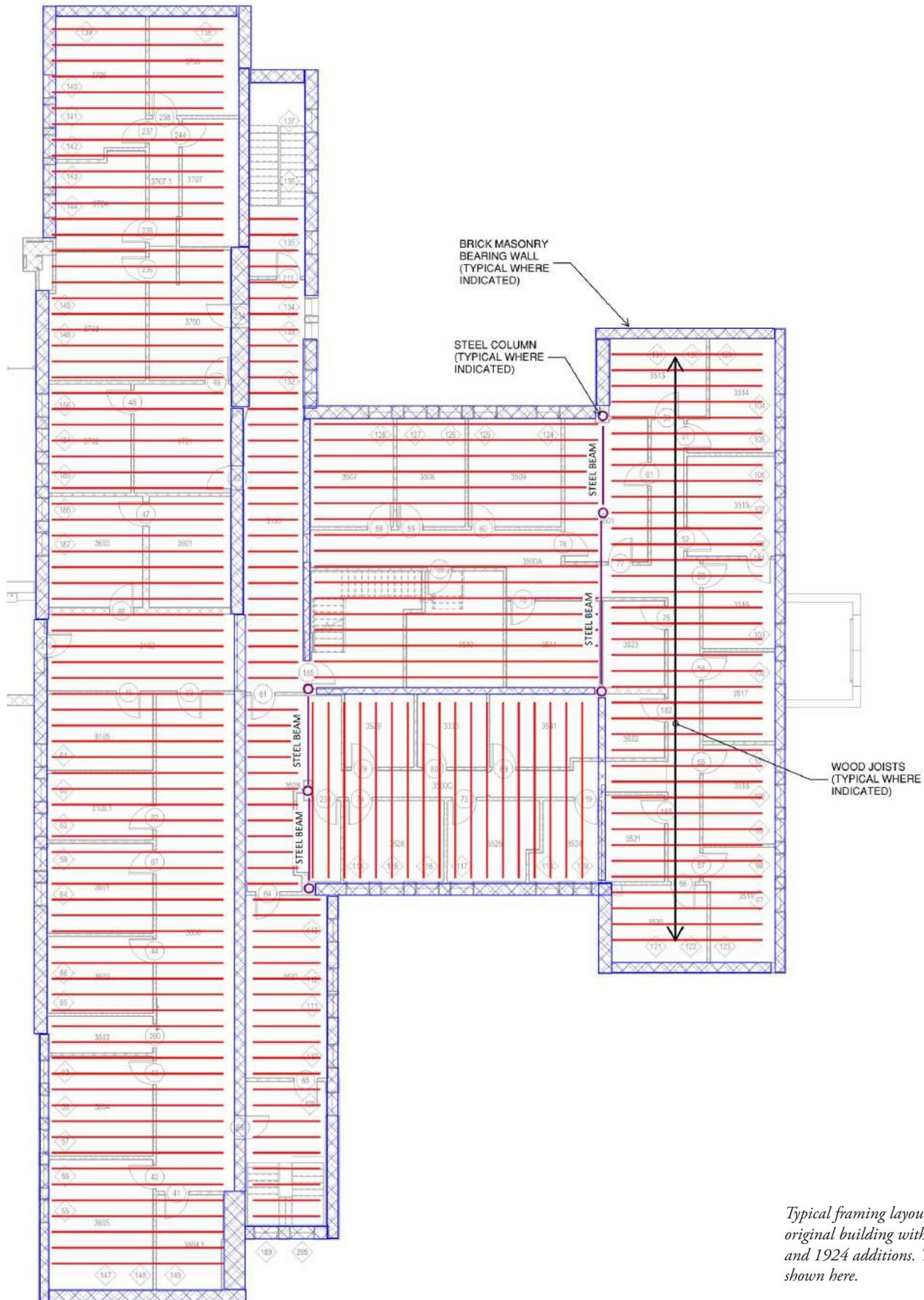
In the 1980's, several conceptual site plans were created for the Palm School site for the purpose of converting the building for office use which required a larger surface parking lot. Since the mid-1980's, the Palm School site has had an asphalt parking lot starting from the original paved lot on the west side, extending along the north boundary of the property and wrapping around the east side of the site.

There are three vehicular entrances to the site; from Sabine Street on the west side, from the I-35 Frontage Road at the northwest, and from E. Cesar Chavez on the south side. There is also a loading dock access on the southwest corner of E. Cesar Chavez and Sabine Street that ties into the 1949 addition.

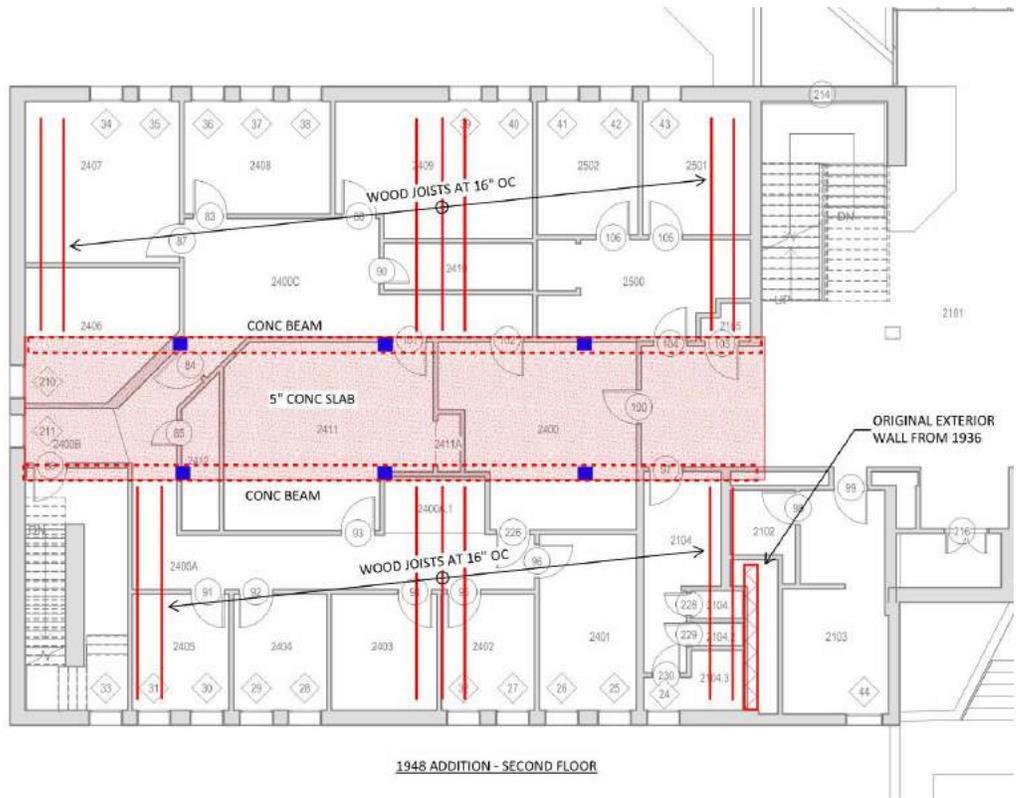
The main entry of the building was moved in the 1980's to the east side and both of the sidewalk connections, to the public sidewalk, on the south side of the building were removed. A continuous concrete sidewalk follows the inside edge of the parking lot all the way around the building. At the main entry, there are stairs and a long ramp that assist people into the building.

To the right of the entry a short stair which leads down into a courtyard area that stretches the entirety of the east side of the 1936 addition. The courtyard consists of multiple staggered concrete plant beds, most of which lack plantings, flanking two large trees in the center. The presence of tiled finishes and plumbing along the east side of the concrete planters suggests that this was likely a water feature when constructed. The central trees are accentuated by decorative pavers and wood decking.

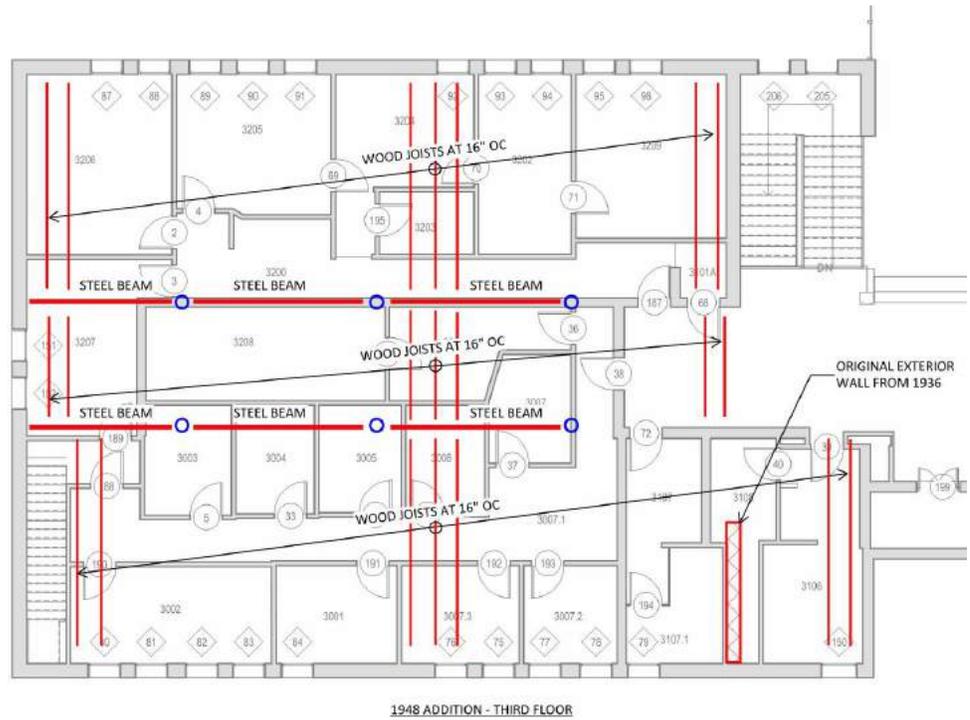
Following the sidewalk from the courtyard to the north side of the building, the central entry to the 1936 addition is marked as Accessible with ramps from ADA spaces in the parking lot. The landscape along north face of the building has two trees and a few small shrubs. The sidewalk continues around the corner of the building to the west side of the 1936 addition where it follows parallel until reaching another concrete stair and ramp to another point of entry to the building. The ramp that connects to the 1936 addition, from the west side, continues all along the north side of the original 'T' portion of the building, winding its way around the corner on the west side to the entry access at the north side of the 1949 addition. This access point is accompanied by stairs that meet up with the sidewalk which follows the ramp around the corner. The sidewalk turns east from the stair and leads into the south portion of the west parking lot. The southern portions of the site against the building are grass lawn. There are many trees on the site with the majority of them surrounding the 1936 addition. No evidence supports that any of the original 1892 landscape remains. However, visible from historic photographs as early as the 1920's, the front lawn of the Palm School did have palm trees and most notably the two flanking the main entry, to coincide with the change of the school's name. Only two of these distinctive palms appear to remain today in the south yard. See Appendix C for the full Landscape Architecture assessment.



Typical framing layout for the original building with the 1910 and 1924 additions. Third floor shown here.



1936 addition second floor framing.



1936 addition third floor framing.

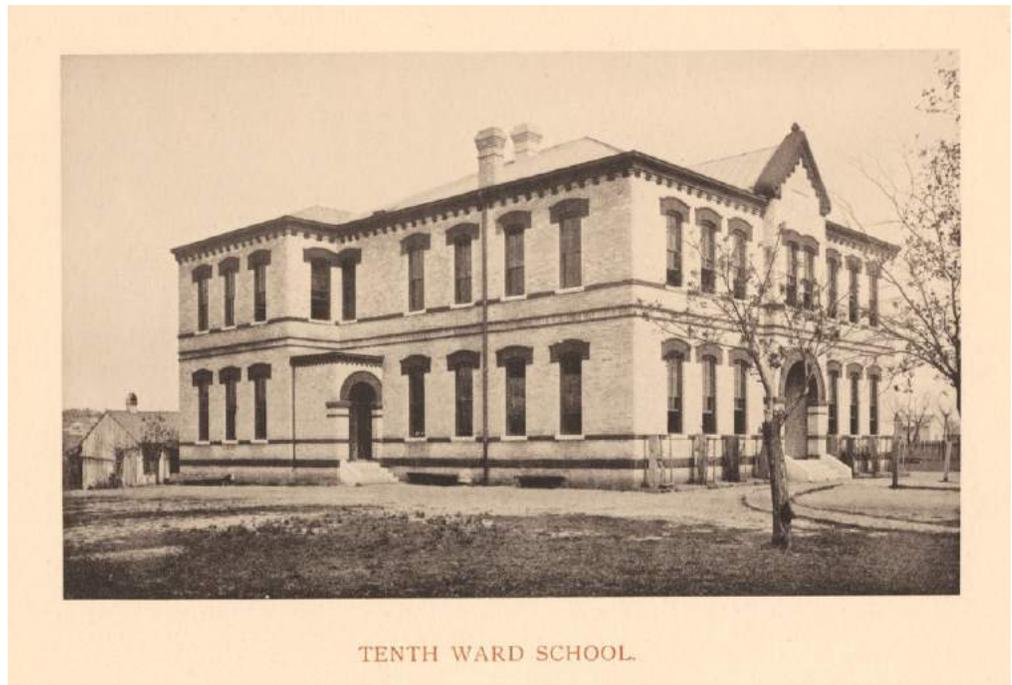
STRUCTURAL OVERVIEW

The existing Palm School facility is the culmination of several additions and renovations that have taken place since its original 1892 construction. The original building was documented in the 1900 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map as having two stories and a basement. We found no evidence that any basement remains within this original footprint, or if it does it lacks any means of access. Additions to the original two-story building have been built on all four sides over its 126 year history. In 1910 an addition to the east side consisted of two stories plus a basement. In 1924 the original building was expanded with two-story additions on the south, and west sides. In 1936, a three-story addition was built to the north and joined to the original building with slender three-story connecting structure that provided stairways and central halls along the facility's central axis. In 1948 a small three story addition in the southwest corner of the 1936 structure was built to house a new mechanical room on the first floor and restrooms on the second and third floors. A one-story "Cafetorium" addition built on the southwest corner of the property was completed in 1949. This addition ties in to the west side of the original building as well as the 1924 addition. The final addition to the building was constructed in 1980 and included the addition of an elevator and an Atrium on the north side of the original building.

The structure of the original building along with the 1910 and 1924 additions consist of interior and exterior masonry walls supporting wood floor and roof framing. The observed framing resembles traditional floor joists spanning between the masonry walls and topped with wood decking. The roof is framed with a combination of wood trusses and conventional wood framing utilizing rafters and ceiling joists. The site-built roof trusses are constructed to create the hip roof profile while providing a large central attic space. Wood decking runs over the top of the roof trusses and rafters and is covered by a standing seam metal roof.

The 1936 addition is a hybrid structure built with a combination of wood, concrete, and steel. The exterior walls as well as the walls adjacent to the stairs are load-bearing masonry supporting wood floor framing, similar to that found in the original building. There are two interior columns lines running down the center of the building. The columns at the basement level are 12" concrete columns, while the columns at the upper levels are 4" diameter steel columns. At the second level, the floor in the center bay is a structural concrete slab approximately 5 inches thick spanning between concrete beams. The concrete beams run north-south between the concrete columns below. Wood floor joists with wood decking make up the floor structure in the bays on each side of the concrete slab, spanning between the concrete beams and the exterior walls. At the third level, there are steel wide flange beams measuring 16" deep by 5-1/2" wide that span between the steel columns down the center of the building. The entire floor at this level is framed with wood joists and wood decking. The roof structure could not be observed in this area of the building. Above the dropped ceiling tiles, ceiling joists were observed with what appeared to be insulation between and over the top of them. The ceiling joists have wood members nailed to the side of them at regular intervals which extend up vertically past the insulation and out of view. These members appear to be hangers suspending the ceiling structure from the roof structure above. See Appendix D for the full Structural Engineering assessment.

Tenth Ward School, 1894, as shown in Art Work in Austin. PICA 1704, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library



EXTERIOR / INTERIOR DETAILING AND STYLISTIC ELEMENTS

Photos of the Tenth Ward School as early as 1894 depict a very bold masonry structure, clearly built for permanence. Its style could best be described as Richardsonian Romanesque. Notable components of this style are the half-round arches formed of red brick at each entrance and the rough faces stone masonry window sills. The windows were tall with double-hung sash in what appears to be a four over four glazing pattern. The quality of the masonry appears to be exceptional. The use of decorative banding along the façade with specially shaped brick set vertically in a soldier course is also distinctive of the period. Likewise, the use of contrasting brick colors with red being used for dentils and, cornice, arched windows head, banding aligned with rough stone window sills and the broad decorative water table above the schools foundation.

These accents are quite bold against the putty grey brick used for the balance of the facility and were quite stylish in their day. The roof was hipped with a cross gable above the main south entrance. This decorative peaked gable included a masonry finial and scrolled eave. Two tall masonry chimneys with decorative corbeled details are shown projecting well above the roof roughly centered on the west roof. Presumably another two are mirrored on the east-facing roof. The roof was finished in raised seam metal, as would have been expected of this “fireproof” building. The form of the building is more classically organized and symmetrical about its central north-south axis. The front yard was shown to include a symmetrical arced footpath lined in stone presumably extending to the edge of Water Street, now known as Cesar Chavez Street. Also prominent in early photos are the two symmetrically located pavilions to provide shade over the drinking fountains. This element of axial symmetry has persisted for the most of the facility’s history.

Little is known of the original interior finishes except for those shown in the few photos that remain. These depict tall raised panel wood doors with operable transoms above to encourage natural ventilation. Black boards lined the walls to a height of

approximately six feet and were trimmed in wood. The walls and ceiling appear to have a plaster finish.

The 1910 Addition is far less well documented. Presumably it continued the tradition of exposed masonry, but was then finished with stucco in the next building campaign in 1924. The basement windows that remain today are arched and had rough stone sills as the original windows did however there is no evidence that the level of decorative rigor used in 1892 was continued. The south-facing windows photographed in the 1920's show double hung sash glazed in a four over four pattern. One element of note is the closely spaced grouping of north-facing windows of the third floor. This orientation and concentration of glazing would have provided an abundance of daylight to this teaching space without the glare of direct sun.

The roof over this addition was hipped and did not join the hipped roof of the original construction. Another element that persists today is the large rectangular masonry smokestack that rose above the northeast parapet and is visible in numerous historic photos. However it appears to have been decommissioned and lowered by 1957 as it no longer appears higher than the parapet in a 1957 snap shot. One aspect of this addition was that it was asymmetrical and created more of an L than a T configuration for the school, but provided new classrooms at a time of need.

In 1924, the single most transformative addition in the school's history was undertaken. The scope of this construction effort largely erased most of the distinctive stylistic elements that had defined the school's original construction. In its massing, the addition added a large two-story classroom addition in front of the original south entrance, bringing the schools front door approximately twenty-two feet closer to the street. The orientation of the classrooms were perpendicular to the central hall, thus the new south addition was wider than the original building. Note the location of the drinking fountain pavilions before and after this addition. It is though they were the bookends for the new south addition. The second addition component was a two-story west wing that reestablished the symmetry of the facility about it central north-south axis.

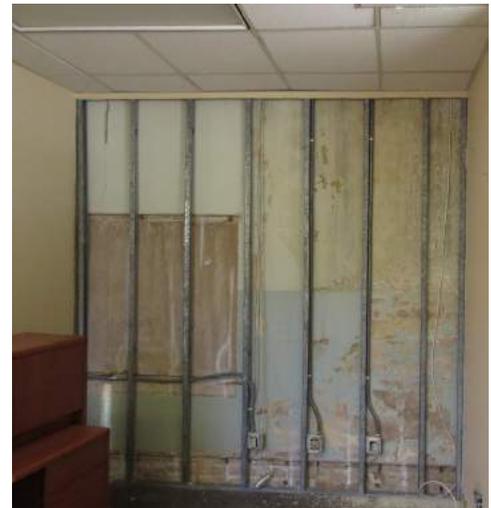
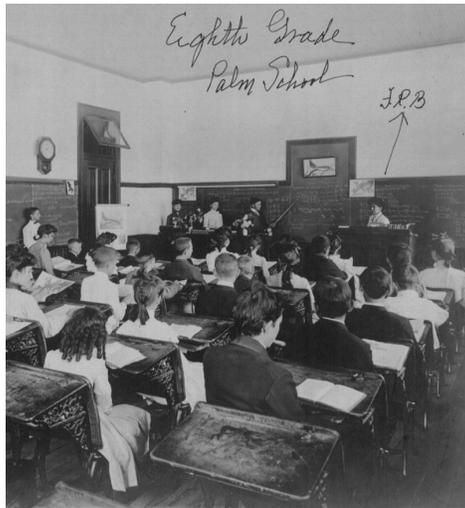
These changes in the schools massing were significant, however there were two other modifications to the original facility that were equally transformative. The first was the relocation of the east and west facing windows. Careful study of the historic photos makes it clear that on both the first and second floors of the original facility, the size and location of windows were changed. This is not a small undertaking in a load-bearing masonry building, and would indicate that this was in response to interior reconfiguration of the spaces. Consequently, no evidence of those original windows remains today. The second significant aspect of this building campaign was that the entirety of the facility was finished in stucco, presumably to "modernize" and homogenize its new more Neoclassical style.

This new Neoclassical style was typical of more established institutional education facilities. However, almost every trace of the original style elements was obliterated in the process. Window heads for the double-hung nine over nine sashes were now flat rather than arched with smooth, square masonry sills that were continuous among window groupings. Most decorative banding was abandoned for more a monochromatic, continuous band above the upper windows, and a darker band at the water table and extending to the ground. The new style introduced continuous masonry parapets

These red brick fragments located above the ceiling in the corridor between rooms 2020 and 2020A are believed to be from an original 1892 window head.



Interior finish repairs underway in room 2015 during our survey reveal that evidence of the locations of blackboards, baseboard, and finish patterns remain below contemporary finishes.



These remaining rough finished stone sills used for the 1910 Addition were likely used to match those used in the original 1892 construction.





The hipped roof of the 1910 Addition.



The north-facing windows of the 1910 Addition were much more closely spaced than those facing south, likely to maximize favorable daylight.



View from the southeast of the expanded school, late 1920s. The 1910 addition shows clearly on the right end of the building. CO 3746, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

with a truncated pediment and flagpole above the new south entrance portico. The prominent cross gabled front wall was deconstruction and the remaining roof is now fully hipped. The extent of the roof extension to protect the new south and west additions is clearly visible in the attic framing.

Over view of the attic framing as it appears today, and a detail showing the original 1892 roof decking to the right and the more random boards of the 1924 extension to the left.



The transom over the 1924 entrance may be the only remnant of glazing from that period.

The destructive nature of this 1924 addition in terms of the effect on the preceding fabric continued in subsequent construction efforts. The unfortunate result is that the only known remnant of the windows used in the 1924 work that remains is the transom above what was then the main south entrance.

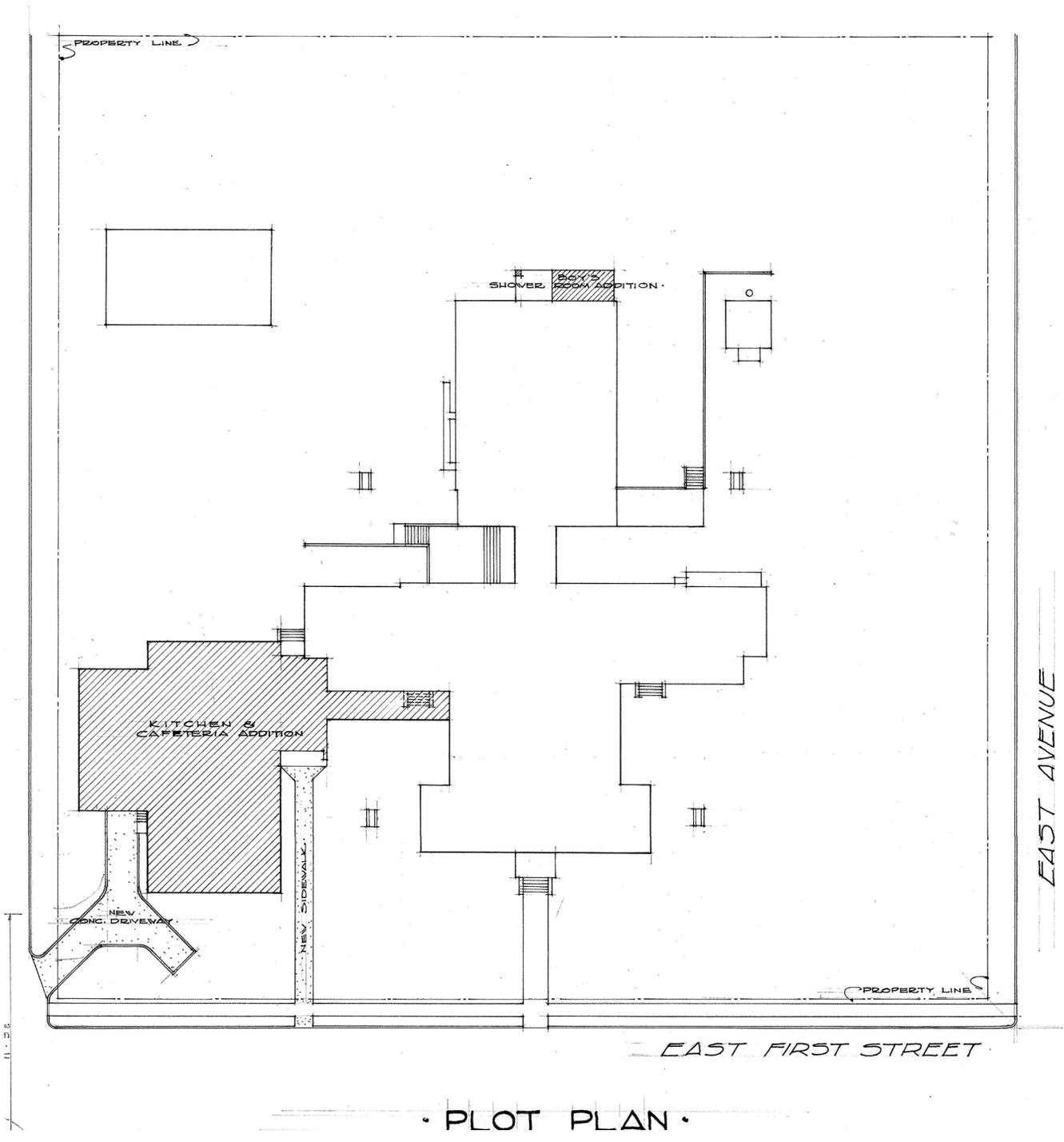
The 1936 addition was by far the largest in terms of square footage added to the facility. Its three-story massing was organized symmetrically along the center axis and main hall of the existing building and presumably extended this central hall through the north wall of the building on both floors. The topography of the site played a key role in the planning of this addition. The first floor of the facility up until this time was approximately three feet above grade at the south entrance. However as the site slopes down toward the north, this new addition included a lower level with an entrance at grade centered on the north elevation. This bottom level is referred to as the first floor, as the 1910 “basement”. Likewise the floor levels above are second and third floors which align with those in the original facility that were known as the first and second. While slightly confusing, this is how the floors are identified today.

The extent of this 1936 addition is well represented in the 1961 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, as well as a simple “Plot Plan” included in the 1948 construction drawings for a subsequent project. These represent this addition as having three-story load bearing brick masonry walls roughly one foot thick with a parapet height to a few feet taller than that of the existing facility. It was the stylistic twin of the 1924 architecture, with a monochromatic stucco finish and tall double-hung windows with a nine over nine glazing pattern. The exterior steps represented in the “Plot Plan” suggest that entrances were provided from the east facing interior stairway and the west side of the slender connector structure that tied the addition to the existing facility.

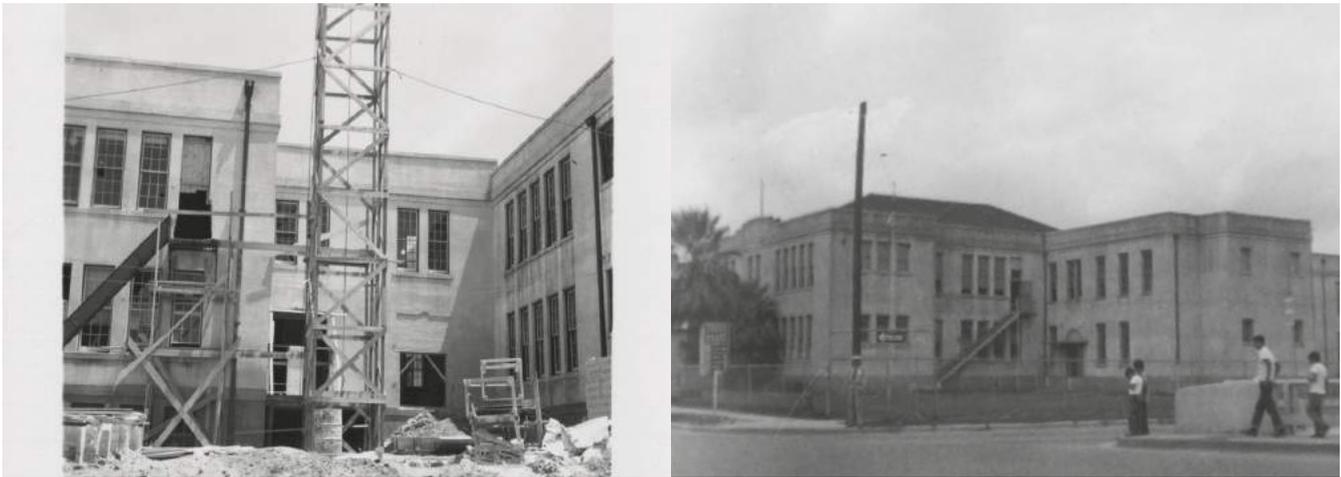


Original exterior wall of the 1936 Addition visible in a plumbing chase between the men’s and women’s restrooms added in 1948.

A remnant of the original 1936 exterior wall, presumably as it was originally finished with stucco is visible inside a plumbing chase between the men’s and women’s restrooms added in 1948. This minor 1948 addition also provided an enlarged mechanical room on the first floor and continued the same architectural style as was present in the 1936 work. This addition seems to have included the addition of exterior fire escapes from upper story classrooms through former window locations. While none of these remain today, they were visible in historic photos.



1948 Plot Plan showing an early version of the 1949 Addition shows site features helpful in our understanding of the 1936 Addition.



Palm School under renovation in the late 1940s. The 1924 wing shows on the right of the image, and the 1936 wing shows on the left. The new restrooms appear to be under construction in this view. PICA 26920, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

A 1957 snapshot of Palm School from the southeast corner shows a fire escape,

The next major change was the 1949 Cafeteria, Auditorium addition. This addition included dining hall, stage, kitchen, loading dock, and a ramp up to the floor level of the original school two and a half feet above this new “Cafetorium”. This single story load bearing masonry structure was a dramatic departure from the status quo. It had a distinctive Post-War style with industrial inspired steel windows and doors in a clearly more modern exposed brick shell with a flat roof. There is no attempt to emulate the previous architectural styles or formal symmetrical principles. What is more invasive is that in its attachment to the west wing of the 1924 addition, the prominent entry doors from that period and several adjacent windows are removed, infilled and completely obscured by the construction. If a presumably complete set of the construction drawings had not been found for this addition, one might be tempted to assume that its design was simply lifted from that of another brand new school. Its use of glazed structural tile on the interior and steel windows throughout were very popular and quite typical of new schools, however as is often the case, subsequent renovations have removed or obscured even these most basic architecturally distinctive features.

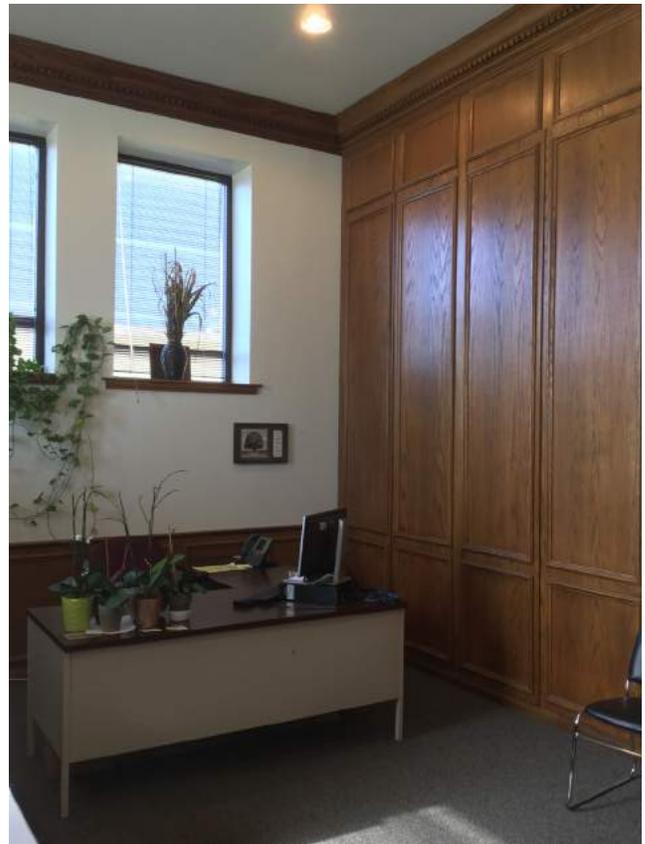
The decline of the property over the next two decades was a point of contention between the parents and school board up until the school’s closure in 1976. After a period of vacancy in the 70’s and a failed lease attempt, the property was purchased and renovated for business use.

While the facility was in a poor state of repair, the extent of the renovation was no less destructive than previous projects. Most notable among the material losses was the removal of all of the original double hung as well as the steel windows in the Cafeteria addition. However another key change was to the front door that had faced south for almost a century. With the removal of the pair of glazed wood doors and the installation of steel fire doors, this entrance became an emergency exit. The main entrance was shifted to a newly constructed Atrium facing I-35 to the east. With this change and the infill of the central hall along the original north-south axis of the facility with offices and storage room, much of the organizational logic of the facility was obscured.

Another aspect of this renovation was the application of a new, coarser stucco finish on all surfaces of the exterior; wall and trim alike. Even the broad wood soffits of the 1949 addition were coated with this spray-applied pebbled finish. While its intention was certainly to encapsulate failing finishes of the past and homogenize the appearance of the facility it is a difficult finish to clean and maintain.

The window systems installed throughout the facility are so darkly tinted that they appear black from the exterior. The same is true of the Atrium, which as an east-facing glass box without the benefit of solar shading, has its own set of challenges in terms of heat gain and intense glare in the mornings. This mode of replacing original windows was common in the 1980's and was often in the name of more energy efficient glazing options, but the stylistic loss is substantially detrimental to the appreciation of the facility as a whole.

The impact on the interior was equally severe. With few exceptions, the reconfiguration of the interior created smaller offices with dropped ceilings that were as much as four to six feet lower than the original ceiling. Two of those exceptions are Rooms 2007 and 2020. Each of these offices are larger than the average office and essentially the full height of the original space. The trim and finishes are new, and are unlike what was would have been used in the school; however it does present a better understanding of how nicely the facility could be finished.



These full-height office spaces offer examples of more attractive interior solutions for the Palm School.



View from the northeast, toward the entrance atrium added in 1980 for Palm Square, 2017. Antenora Architects

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Although the original 1892 Palm School building has been almost completely surrounded by later additions, much of the historic building fabric has survived intact. While there have been significant changes to the original building, due to the large additions made over the years to house the expanding student enrollment, the building remained in continuous use as a school for over 80 years. The overall building form and placement of doors and windows is largely intact.

When the building was renovated for use as office space in 1980, the existing windows and doors were replaced with contemporary, aluminum units. The primary entrance to the building was shifted from the south to the east side of the building, to relate to the new parking lot that was added at the time. The interior of the building was also heavily renovated and dropped ceilings, infill walls, wall furring and contemporary finishes were installed throughout the building.

While there have been significant changes to the building, due to the large additions and interior remodeling projects, the building has architectural, cultural and historical significance, and the continued preservation of the building is of great importance. Future maintenance, repair and change to the building should be carefully considered to ensure that the work is compatible and consistent with the historic character and significance of the building.

Generally, the building appears to be in fair to good physical condition. From the references in the historical record and from a visual site review, it appears to suffer from the typical physical forces of water infiltration at the walls and roof, expansion and contraction of materials and constant use by an ever growing occupancy.

Exterior Conditions

The exterior walls are load-bearing masonry throughout, although a range of different



Palm School as expanded in 1924. The entire building was stuccoed at that time. CO 3709, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.



Palm School in 2017. The stucco was applied to the 1949 addition during a remodeling project done in 1980.



The stucco shows cracking and delamination in spot locations, The cracks in the parapet wall have been repaired with sealant, an inappropriate treatment.



Some of the cracks in the stucco are large, and allow moisture to travel behind the stucco coating and to the masonry wall substrate.



The stucco is cracked and deteriorated at projecting masonry window sills.



Vertical cracks in the stucco occur adjacent to the tall window openings in many locations.

structural systems is represented in the building, reflecting the wall systems typical of the time of construction of the original construction and later additions. The earliest portions of the building are multi-wythe masonry, with brick wythes at the exterior and interior faces. Rusticated stone sills were used at the window sills, and jack and half-round masonry arches formed the heads of the window and door openings on the exterior. The 1910 and 1924 additions are also load-bearing masonry, although the window heads are squared and not arched, so steel lintels were likely used in these walls. The entire exterior was finished with a stucco coating over the masonry substrate in 1924, perhaps to cover the different colors and types of brick masonry used on the building and to modernize the appearance of the original structure, which had brick banding and trim in different colors.

The 1936 addition is also load-bearing masonry, with some concrete and steel structural elements used in interior areas to give a large, open space at the ground level for use as the cafeteria and auditorium functions described in the newspaper accounts of this wing. Stucco was also used as the exterior finish over the masonry substrate in the 1936 addition.

The 1949 addition is also load-bearing masonry, although it employs more modern construction practices, with concrete reinforced cells and collar beams. The exterior masonry was originally exposed as the exterior finish of the 1949 addition walls, but is now stuccoed. This was a later modification, made during the 1980 renovation project. The 1949 wing has a shallow crawl space below the floor slab, which was originally ventilated with thru-wall foundation vents. These vents have been removed, and there may be high humidity or moisture levels in the crawl space, without ventilation as originally designed. This condition should be further investigated, if the 1949 addition wing is retained in future use scenarios for the building.

The stucco finish remains on these exterior walls, although it may have been replaced with a more modern formulation during the 1980 renovation project. The stucco shows areas of spot patching and also cracking and deterioration in some spots. Cracking and delamination of the stucco finish should be regularly maintained and repaired, as open cracks allow moisture to migrate behind the stucco finish and cause more deterioration to the stucco and also to the mortar joints or masonry substrate. Small cracks should be coated with a stucco slurry or other coating material, and not treated with caulking or joint sealant compounds which will weather and expand at different rates than the stucco coating. Large cracks and delaminated areas should be cut out and replaced with a full thickness of new stucco finish, applied by an experienced professional plaster contractor. Refer to Appendix I for the condition assessment on building elevations.

The original 1892 building had a hipped, standing seam metal roof, and the 1910 addition also had a hipped, standing seam metal roof, independent of the original roof and separated by a flat roofed area. When the 1924 addition was made, the hipped roof forms were retained and extended to the new walls. A masonry parapet was added, extending about 36" above the base of the hipped roof, and through-wall scuppers were installed to direct the roof drainage to exposed downspouts on the exterior walls. The backs of the parapet walls have been flashed with membrane roll roofing panels and metal cap flashings. The roof levels do not appear to have a secondary drainage system, as would be required by current code. To address this, a set of secondary roof drains might be installed; the addition of new scuppers and downspouts should be avoided because they would be inappropriate additions to the historic facades.



Detail view of the west wing of the 1924 addition, showing the configuration of the multi-lite window sash, entrance door and transom. CO 3709, Austin History Center.



Detail view of the east wing of the 1910 addition, showing the configuration of the multi-lite window sash, entrance door and transom. CO 3746, Austin History Center.



A masonry parapet was added in 1924, around the hipped metal roof forms remaining from the 1892 and 1910 construction.



In 1980, the multi-lite window sash, doors and transoms were replaced with single lite sash and flush panel doors, which changed the pattern and texture of the building.



The roofs over the 1936 and 1949 additions are built-up asphaltic roofs with gravel topping.



Small through-wall scuppers drain the roof surfaces to the downspouts. Note the cracked, brittle roofing mastic and the lack of overflow drainage.

The membrane roofing is aging and brittle, and the particulate coating is breaking down, allowing for accelerated weathering and brittling. The roofing membranes are nearing the end of their service life and should be replaced, to guard against roof leaks.

The roofs over the 1936 and 1949 wings are built-up asphalt with gravel topping, a more contemporary roofing material. The roof surfaces show signs of ponding in spots and should be further investigated, to identify areas of deterioration, bubbles or delamination of asphaltic membrane layers and refurbished or replaced as required. The 1936 wing roof is also enclosed with a masonry parapet, and does not appear to have a secondary drainage system, as required by current code, and secondary roof drains should be considered for this wing, as well.

The original multi-lite wood window sash and frames on the 1892, 1910, 1924 and 1936 wings have been replaced with contemporary aluminum, single-lite windows, installed in the 1980 renovation project. The steel hopper windows on the 1949 wing have also been replaced with contemporary aluminum, single-lite windows. The historic masonry openings appear to be intact, which is significant. The historic wood and steel window sash were important, character defining features of the building, and gave it texture and scale that was lost with the installation of the single-lite windows. Although only limited architectural drawings were located for the 1949 wing of the building, many of the historic photographs that were located show the configuration of the window sash clearly. The historic photographs and original masonry openings are useful documentary tools to inform the restoration of the multi-lite window sash. Restoring the configuration of the windows to match the historic windows would return to a character defining feature and improve the appearance of the building.

The original exterior doors have also been replaced with contemporary aluminum and glass units or painted hollow metal units. The original doors on the 1924 addition were wood stile and rail doors with multi-lite glass panels, and a multi-lite transom above. No documentation for the original doors of the 1936 wing was located, but typical doors of that time period were similar to those used in 1924. The original doors on the 1949 addition were hollow metal with horizontal glass lites in the upper half. The original doors are also important, character defining features of the building and gave texture and scale. Future rehabilitation of the building should include replacement of the existing doors with new units compatible with the original door types.

Structural Conditions

A general structural assessment, based on visual observations of the building, was conducted by Structures. The early phases of the building (1892, 1910 and 1924) are constructed of masonry walls supporting wood framed floor and roof structure. The 1936 addition has a hybrid structural system, with load-bearing masonry walls and wood framed floor and roof structure, in combination with concrete columns, partial concrete floor slab, steel columns and steel beams in select locations. The structural drawings for the 1949 addition show a concrete foundation supporting masonry walls and steel roof joists.

From the visual observations, the engineers found the structural systems to be in generally good condition, with isolated cracking noted in select locations. In some instances, the cracking is apparently due to damaged or missing elements of the roof drainage system. Other locations exhibit cracking consistent with differential foundation movement, although none of these conditions appear to be active or sources of moisture migration in the building walls.

The summary recommendations of the structural assessment are:

- General: Few observed signs of structural distress were noted and no areas of significant structural concern require immediate attention.
- Exterior Cracks: Exterior cracks should be further reviewed by a building envelope specialist to confirm that the building envelope is performing as intended. Future modifications or additions need to consider the existing foundation type and provide new foundations that address the potential for differential movement between existing and new construction.

For the full structural assessment overview, please refer to Appendix D in the supporting documents section of this report.

Site and Grounds

The character of the site and grounds have changed dramatically since the site was in active use as a school, when palm trees, playground equipment and outdoor drinking fountains dotted the park-like setting. When the building was sold to private owners and renovated for use as offices, most of the site was made in to a surface parking lot. The building entrance was shifted from the original south location, symmetrical with the historic core of the school building, to the east side of the building, to relate to the parking lot. As the building is redeveloped, consideration should be given to rehabilitating the plantings and park setting on the site, to complement the handsome historic school building.

The civil site assessment conducted by JQ found that generally the condition of the site is good with overall site drainage appearing to drain away from the building apart from various low points around the exterior of the building. Onsite parking pavement consists of asphalt and is in good condition in most areas and fair in other locations due to traffic wear and cracking. Parking marked as Accessible was found to be largely in violation of ADA/TAS with regard to access aisles, accessible paths to the facility, allowable slopes, signage placement and handrails. Refer to the Accessibility Assessment for additional details.

The discrepancy with the Sabine Street Right of Way (ROW) as recorded with the city is of concern. Available drawings call out the property ROW in one location while the Travis County Appraisal District property maps show the ROW approximately 10' further east and 12' further north. This makes approximately 24 existing parking spaces, as well as a significant portion of the southwest 1949 building expansion extending into part of another property lot.

There are no issues notable with the site drainage, but various building roof drains do not directly connect to the underground storm pipes sticking out of the ground. This has caused some minimal erosion to occur in set locations around the perimeter of the building. Many of the existing light poles are broken or are in need of repair.

The summary recommendations of the civil site assessment are:

- Property Boundaries: Verification of the true property boundaries and allowances for this site should be obtained as soon as possible, and the resulting parking count and available land for future use confirmed.
- Parking: While only minor repairs are necessary at this time, the impact of the Sabine Street ROW could adversely impact the parking needed for the site.

- **Site Accessibility:** Substantial effort is needed to meet the requirements of the current ADA/TAS. These will include corrections to provide required access aisles at accessible parking, code compliant parking signs, ramp slopes, and handrail/guard systems.
- **Site and Storm Drainage:** Assure that all downspouts are secured to their associated storm drains to prevent further erosion along the building foundation. Regrade the site away from the building to prevent water from collecting against the foundation.

For the full civil site overview and the accessibility assessment, please refer to the Appendix B in the supporting documents section of this report.

According to the landscape survey conducted by Studio dwg, the landscape is in generally good condition and is largely code compliant. All of the plant beds are in poor condition with very low plant diversity and little sign of mulching. In the planting beds that also contain Live Oak trees, dense shade prevents sun loving shrubs from healthy growth. The grass lawn seems to be well maintained, though there are a few areas of balding lawn due to incorrect topography sloping for site drainage. Site drainage problems are more pressing on the south side of the site, on the Cesar Chavez side, where the topography is not sloped well and water drains toward the building. The hardscape on the site seems in good condition with few cracking areas. The site meets most of the City of Austin's Environmental Criteria except for the need of more trees over the parking lot area and more variety in tree species.

The summary recommendations of the landscape site assessment are:

- **Hardscape:** Repair and replacement of the pavers and pavement within lower courtyard.
- **Street Yard:** The number of trees is adequate, but greater diversity in plantings is required to satisfy the City of Austin's Environmental Criteria Manual.
- **Landscape in Parking Lots:** Additional trees are required in the parking lots, particularly to meet the 50' from parking space to tree criteria required by the City of Austin.

For the full landscape survey overview, please refer to the Appendix C in the supporting documents section of this report.

Interior Conditions

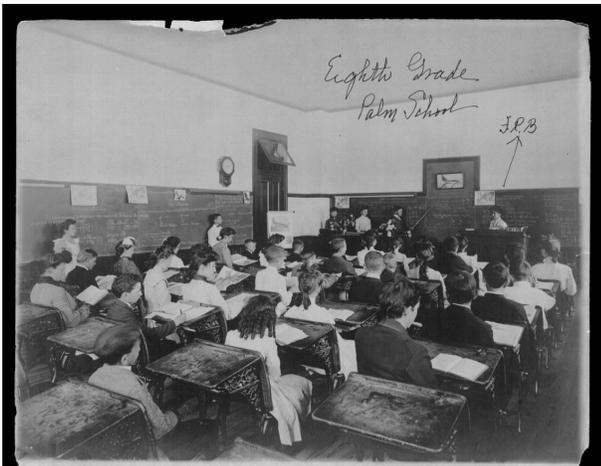
The interior character of the building has been dramatically transformed by the 1980 remodeling to convert the historic school to office use. The large, open classrooms were infilled with new partitions to create smaller, private office spaces. Suspended acoustic tile ceilings were installed, to conceal new mechanical units and ductwork added to provide central heat and air conditioning in the building. The suspended ceilings are several feet lower than the historic ceilings were, and are below the window heads, changing the pattern of natural light in the building. Original interior walls were removed in select locations, to work to the new office floor plans, and were furred out with new wall finishes in other locations. The wide main corridor on the central north-south axis of the historic core of the building has been infilled with partitions and office spaces, and new corridors created in the original classrooms. New finish flooring materials have been installed over the original wood flooring in the classroom and corridor spaces.



In the 1980 remodeling, suspended acoustical ceilings were installed, often below the heads of the windows.



The above ceiling space holds a wealth of detailed information about the original configuration and finish of the school.



View of a classroom interior in around 1900. Note the wood mouldings and chalkboards.



Behind the contemporary wall furring, there is a wealth of information about the wall trims, chalkboard locations and paint colors used in the classrooms.



Detail view of an above ceiling condition, showing a beaded board ceiling, ghost of ceiling moulding and paint colors.



Detail view of an above ceiling condition, showing a beaded board ceiling and an early steel beam, installed where a wall was removed.

In the course of site visits to conduct the room-by-room survey of the building interior spaces, the project team also spent time investigating above ceiling spaces and wall chase areas, to help piece together the original configuration of the building and evidence of later modifications. In the ceiling spaces, evidence of original beaded board ceilings remain above the suspended acoustical ceilings. The locations of original door openings and evidence of removed wall locations also remain. In a few areas, bits of the original wood flooring is exposed. It is likely that the original volumes, wall placement, fenestration patterns and flooring remain in many locations, behind the wall furring, beneath the contemporary flooring and above the suspended ceilings. These remaining original materials behind the new replacements, provide good documentation for future rehabilitation of the original conditions, should that be desired.

Preservation Program

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, produced by the US Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, establish professional standards and guidelines for treating historic properties. The documents are the professional norm for the practice of architectural preservation, and are used by federal, state and municipal regulatory authorities as the compliance measure for appropriate preservation treatment.

The Standards identify four treatments for historic buildings, each with its own set of standards and guidelines. Before undertaking any work on a historic structure, an appropriate preservation treatment should be determined and the respective set of standards and guidelines consulted. An abbreviated description of the four treatments is given below; the italicized text is taken directly from the Standards and the National Park Service description of the Standards. The treatment terms are often used interchangeably and inaccurately, which can lead to confusion, and it is useful to review the definitions in the context of a discussion of a preservation program for the historic courthouse.

- **Preservation** is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity and materials of an historic property. Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- **Rehabilitation** is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. Rehabilitation acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
- **Restoration** is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. Restoration depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- **Reconstruction** is defined as the act or process of depicting by means of new construction, the form, features, and details of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. Reconstruction re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Preservation projects may include aspects of more than one of these treatments, depending on the condition of the resource, the historic documentation available and the specific circumstances of the project. Rehabilitation is the treatment most frequently used, and would likely be the primary treatment selected for the Palm School, with some elements preserved, as appropriate.

Significant Historic Spaces and Elements

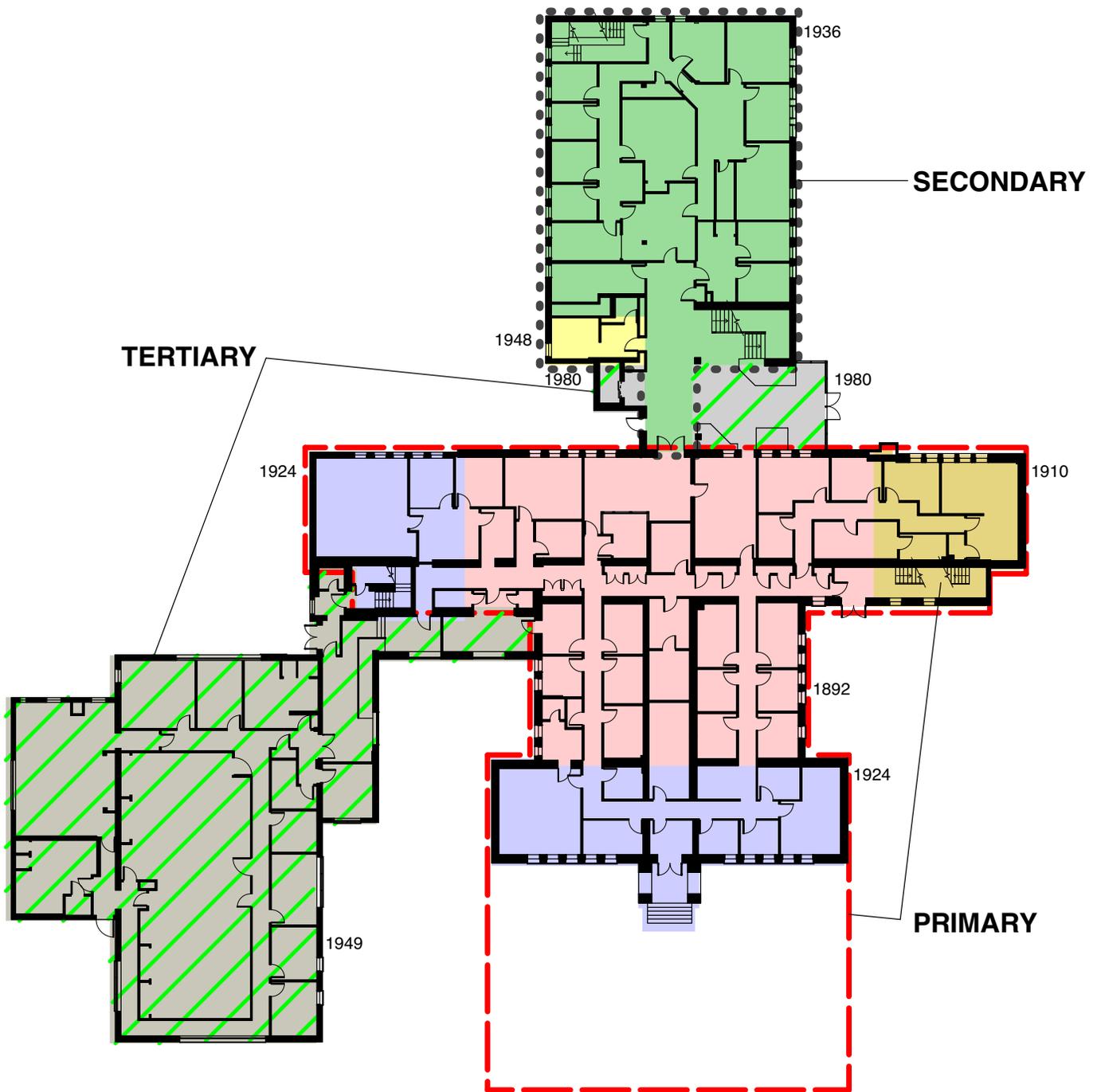
Based upon the research and findings presented in this study, we have identified three preservation priority zones for the Palm School building.

- **Primary: 1892/1910/1924 Building Area and Associated Street Yard.**
This is the oldest portion of the building and it retains stylistic integrity to the 20th century appearance, even though the original window sash have been removed. Good photographic documentation exists to allow for the restoration of the window sash in this portion of the building. Written documentation of the interior configuration also exists and physical evidence of modified elements remains behind contemporary surfaces, to aid a rehabilitation project of this Primary historic core area.
- **Secondary: 1936/1948 Building Area.**
This portion of the building is largely a WPA/Relief Era structure, a period of significant history of Austin. It relates closely to the development of Palm Park, also a WPA/Relief Era construction. Limited documentation exists, and rehabilitation projects of this portion of the building would be more challenging.
- **Tertiary: 1949/1980 Building Area.**
Although it is more than 50 years old, the 1949 addition is not physically or stylistically compatible with the earlier building phases. This was surely recognized by the Historic Landmark Commission when the demolition permit was granted for this wing. The 1980 addition, clearly contemporary construction, is also not compatible with the historic core. In particular, the original entry axis is destroyed.

As the space program is developed for the historic school, consideration should be given to the rehabilitation of historic classroom spaces. The classroom spaces were major public spaces in the original building design, were used continuously as classrooms until the school was closed in 1976, and physical remnants of missing construction are likely to remain behind contemporary finish layers to inform a compatible rehabilitation of the spaces.

Throughout the building, the ceiling plane has been modified to conceal ductwork and other utility infrastructure elements above ceiling. The ceiling height is below that of the heads of the window openings in the room, further truncating the original volume and reducing the natural light in the space. The ceiling material is typically suspended acoustical tile with exposed ceiling grid. These modifications to the ceiling plane, particularly in the historic core of the building, negatively impact the historic spaces. Every effort should be made to restore the historic ceiling profile and material, which will need to be coordinated with the re-design of the mechanical system. If it is not possible to fully restore the original ceiling configuration, the heights should be raised as much as possible and the materials changed, to better evoke the historic ceilings.

As noted in the exterior conditions description, the historic windows are significant, character defining features of the building, but were removed in the 1980 remodeling



Composite Plan Diagram



project. Photographic documentation exists of the historic windows, and would inform a replacement project with compatible, multi-lite wood window sash and frames.

Historic Designations

The Palm School building has been designated as a historic landmark at the city level, and may be eligible for national or state designations, if additional designation is desired. In evaluating the significance of properties for eligibility for historic designation, a range of criteria are considered, including the age of the property, architectural attributes and integrity, historical associations and archeological resources. Historic designation may qualify properties for grant funding or tax credits for qualified restoration projects, and identifies historic resources for communities. Depending on the type of designation, there may be additional review or permitting requirements for change contemplated at the property.

The National Register of Historic Places is a federal program, administered in Texas by the state historic preservation office (the Texas Historical Commission) and the National Park Service. A National Register listing does not impose any restriction in use or change of the property. It does ensure that all federally funded projects (such as transportation infrastructure) planned in the vicinity of listed properties are subject to additional review, to mitigate adverse impact to the historic property. It also clarifies the application of separate building and accessibility code provisions for qualified historic properties.

Properties nominated to the National Register are evaluated for significance at a national, state or local level in terms of one or more of four criteria. Eligible properties:

- are associated with historical events.
- are associated with the lives of significant people in our past.
- embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represent the work of a master.
- have or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in prehistory and/or history.

In order to be designated to the Register, properties must also be at least 50 years old and must have maintained their historical integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Designations at the state level are evaluated under similar criteria, but have more restrictive review and permitting requirements if changes are made to the property after designation. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation, a program administered by the Texas Historical Commission, requires property owners to notify the Commission 60 days prior to making exterior changes, to allow time for review and consultation with the Commission. State Archeological Landmark designation, also administered by the Texas Historical Commission, requires property owners to seek an antiquities permit from the Commission prior to making alterations. The existing local Historic Landmark designation, administered by the City of Austin, requires property owners to seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the city prior to making exterior changes.

In considering the significance of the Palm School, several of the above criteria are applicable. The building is certainly 50 years old and retains integrity of overall building form and location of doors and windows. It is a good example of late 19th and early 20th century school buildings, and of school buildings typical of the 1930s relief

era that was significant in national and local history. The historical association with the over 80 years of use as a public school would certainly be considered.

As a related item, the school is listed in the 1984 Cultural Resources Survey of the City of Austin. This survey data does not impose any regulation over the use and disposition of the structures catalogued. It was prepared primarily to provide information about the cultural and built heritage of the City of Austin, at the direction of the City Historic Preservation Office.

Historical Documentation

The historical documentation on the history and occupancy of the school is limited, based on research completed to date. These resources located in this study are available from several local archival repositories.

The office archives of the Hugo Franz Kuehne, August Watkins Harris and Jessen Associates are in the collection of the Austin History Center, which includes the construction drawings for the 1949 cafeteria addition. There are also historic photographs and snap shots of the building exterior and interior. The field report files from the office of Giesecke & Harris are on file, documenting the progress of the construction work of the 1936 addition.

The historical digital archive of the Austin American Statesman newspaper include extensive information about the original school and later modifications and additions. A summary of this information is included in the Chronology in Appendix A.

The vertical files of the Austin History Center include numerous newspaper clippings of articles about the original school and later modifications and additions, including information about the work done by AISD and concerned parents to design and occupy a replacement for Palm School in the 1960s and 1970s.

Recommendations for Further Research

Many informative and useful historic photographs were located in the Austin History Center, Texas Highway Department and Austin Independent School District archives. But, there are still mysteries and undocumented spaces and elements of the building. The search for additional historic photographs, particularly of the major public spaces, the original lighting and the original doors and windows, should continue. The county may want to make an open request to the general public for access to or donation of personal images of the school building.

The search for construction drawings and specifications for the original construction and later modifications should also be continued. The project team searched archival sources, AISD records and the remodelling architect's office files, but did not locate any construction plans beyond those for the 1949 cafeteria addition.

Prior to beginning any preservation or rehabilitation project, it would be helpful to complete a program of non-destructive probing, to search for evidence of missing or obscured finish materials and elements. There may be vestiges of original flooring under walls or trim, ghosts of original lighting on plaster surfaces, etc. Paint analysis and mortar analysis, documenting original paint treatments and colors and mortar composition and appearance, should be included in this effort.

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

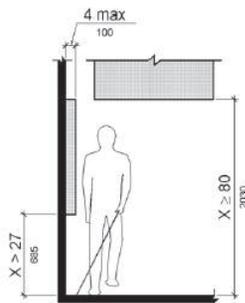
Scope

The intent of this report is to identify existing architectural barriers along the interior/ exterior path of travel to the facility entrance(s) and interior areas based on limited scope, as well as accessible parking accommodations, which do not comply with the requirements of the 2012 Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) and/or the requirements of the 1994 Texas Accessibility Standards for “Safe Harbor” status. 1994TAS-SH. We expect that past renovations complied with the Codes enforced at the time of their construction; however, this report documents compliance of the facility today with the current versions of regulatory Codes. Refer to Appendix F for the full Accessibility assessment.

Building Accessibility Violations

Drinking Fountains:

Where drinking fountains are located throughout, there were no high fountains provided for people with difficulty bending. This would consist of a fountain with a spout height between 38” and 43” above finished floor (AFF)



Protruding Objects:

The following elements present a protruding object violation along an accessible route or circulation area within the facility. They are mounted with their leading edge higher than 27” AFF and project more than 4” off the wall. TAS 307.2

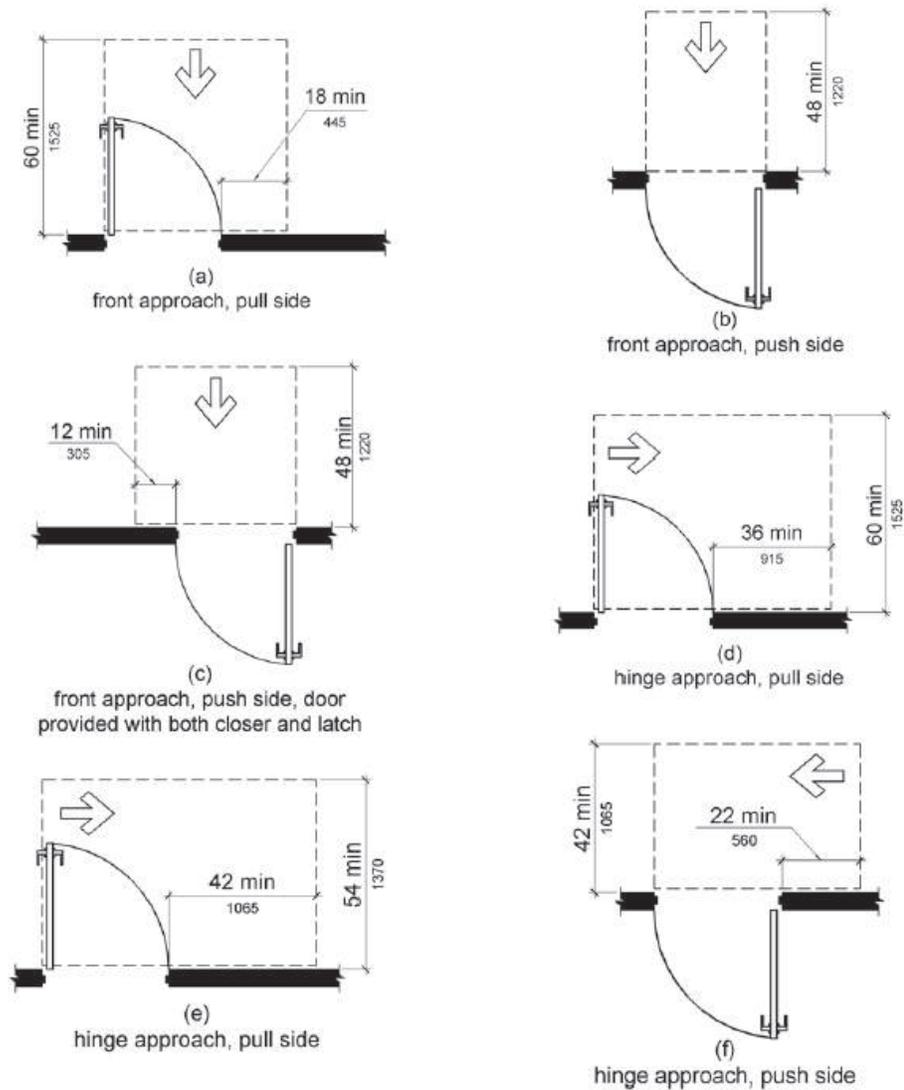
Conference Room 1001 (typical of drinking fountains throughout the building)

Drinking fountains in Corridor 2000J

Lobby 2101 - defibrillator

Room 2000 - both reception counters

Room 3501 - TV



Doors:

Doors with hardware requiring tight grasping to operate - majority of the doors on all floors in violation. TAS 404.2.7,309.4

Light switches throughout were found to be mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.3.1 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 54" AFF.

Room 1001 - the bottom 10" of the doors' surface is not smooth. TAS 404.2.10

1st floor door exiting hall 1001C into the elevator lobby - the 12" wide maneuvering clearance is less than 48" deep. TAS 404.2.4

1st floor men's and women's restrooms - the width of hall 1001E is less than 48", 48" minimum width is required when a door contains both a latch and closer and is positioned for a side approach. TAS 404.2.4

The door into hall 2000D has no maneuvering clearance on the pull side of the door. TAS 404.2.4

Same door into hall 2000D, with latch and closer, does not have a minimum clearance of 12" on the push side. TAS 404.2.4

2nd floor route within conference 2020 into the kitchen and subsequent restroom - with or without a door at this location, the clear width opening is less than 32" wide. TAS 404.2.3

Rooms 2032 and 2306 - the maneuvering clearance is less than 18" on the pull side of these doors. TAS 404.2.4

The door connecting corridors 2400A, 2400B, 2400C has a 5" maneuvering clearance on both sides of the door. TAS 404.2.4

The width of corridor 3500C is Less than 42", therefore there is no door along the corridor which provides the minimum required maneuvering clearance based on a side approach to either the hinge or latch side of a door. TAS 404.2.4

Corridor 2300 - the 2nd floor ramp has the following violations:

The running slope is greater than 8.33%. TAS 405.2

The length of the top landing is 39", 60" minimum required. TAS 405.7

Elevator:

There is no operational door re-opening device on the elevator. TAS 407.3.3

There is no tactile symbol provided adjacent to the Door Close control. TAS 407.4.7.1.3

Walking Surface:

The floor area into and out of room 3800 has a running slope greater than 2.08%. TAS 403.3

Restrooms

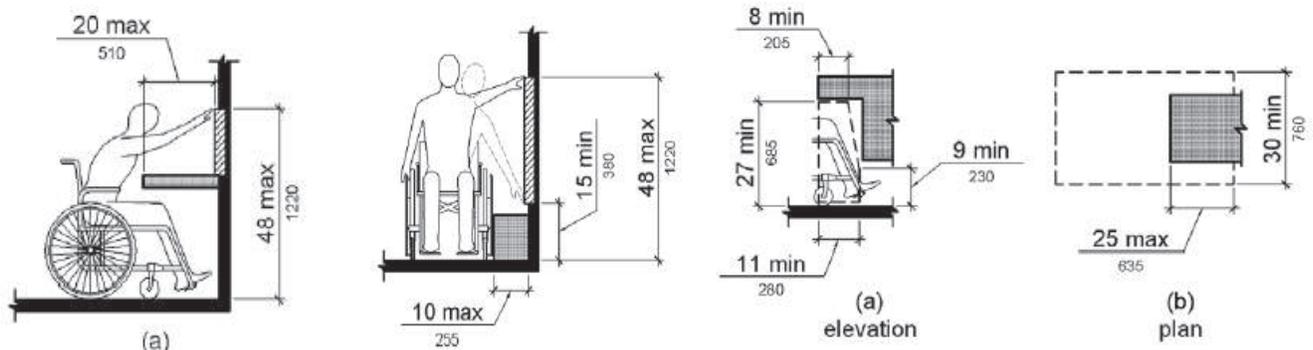
Women's restroom 1003 has the following violations:

Lavatory plumbing is not protected from contact. TAS 606.5

There is no rear grab bar provided. TAS 604.5.2

The lavatory overlaps the 60" clearance of the water closet. TAS 604.3.2

Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 36" clearance required to the edge of the lavatory.



The water closet is not mounted 16"-18" on center. TAS 604.2

The dispenser is a protruding object in the clearance of the water closet. The leading edge is mounted higher than 27" AFF and projects more than 4" off the wall and overlaps the clearance of the water closet. TAS 307.2, 604.3.2

The seat cover dispenser is mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.3.1 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 54" AFF.

Object mounted within the maneuvering clearance to exit the restroom door. TAS 404.2.4

The changing table surface is mounted higher than 34" AFF. TAS 902.3

The leading edge of the changing table is higher than 27" AFF, creating a protruding object. TAS 307.2, TM2013-15 Baby Changing Table

Light switch mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.2.2 Qualifies: 1994 TAS-SH. 54" AFF.

Men's restroom 1004 has the following violations:

Soap dispenser mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.2.2

Lavatory plumbing is not protected from contact. TAS 606.5

The mirror is mounted higher than 40" AFF to the bottom of the reflective surface. TAS 603.3

Seat cover dispenser mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.3.1 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 54" AFF.

The lavatory overlaps the 60" clearance of the water closet. TAS 604.3.2 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 36" clearance required to the edge of the lavatory.

Women's restroom 2104 has the following violations:

There is no standard accessible stall provided. There is only an ambulatory stall. TAS 213.3.1, 604.8.1.1

The pull side clearance on the ambulatory stall door is less than 18" wide. An inward swinging door would solve this issue. TAS 404.2.4

The changing table is a protruding object in open position. TM2013-15

The specific model of the paper towel dispenser is a protruding object and is located throughout the facility. TAS 307.2

Soap dispenser is mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.3.1 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 54" AFF.

Men's restroom 2103 has the following violations:

Lavatory plumbing is not insulated or protected from contact. TAS 606.5

Paper towel dispenser is a protruding object. TAS 307.2

No standard accessible stall is provided. TAS 213.3.1, 604.8.1.1

Seat cover dispenser opening is mounted at 51" AFF, 48" AFF required. TAS

308.2.2 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. 54" AFF

Spacing between the grab bar and dispenser is less than 1 1/2".

Single user restroom 2020C, through conference 2020:

There is no 30"x 48" clear floor space provided beyond the arc of the door swing. TAS 603.2.3

There is no clearance at the toilet. TAS 604.3.1

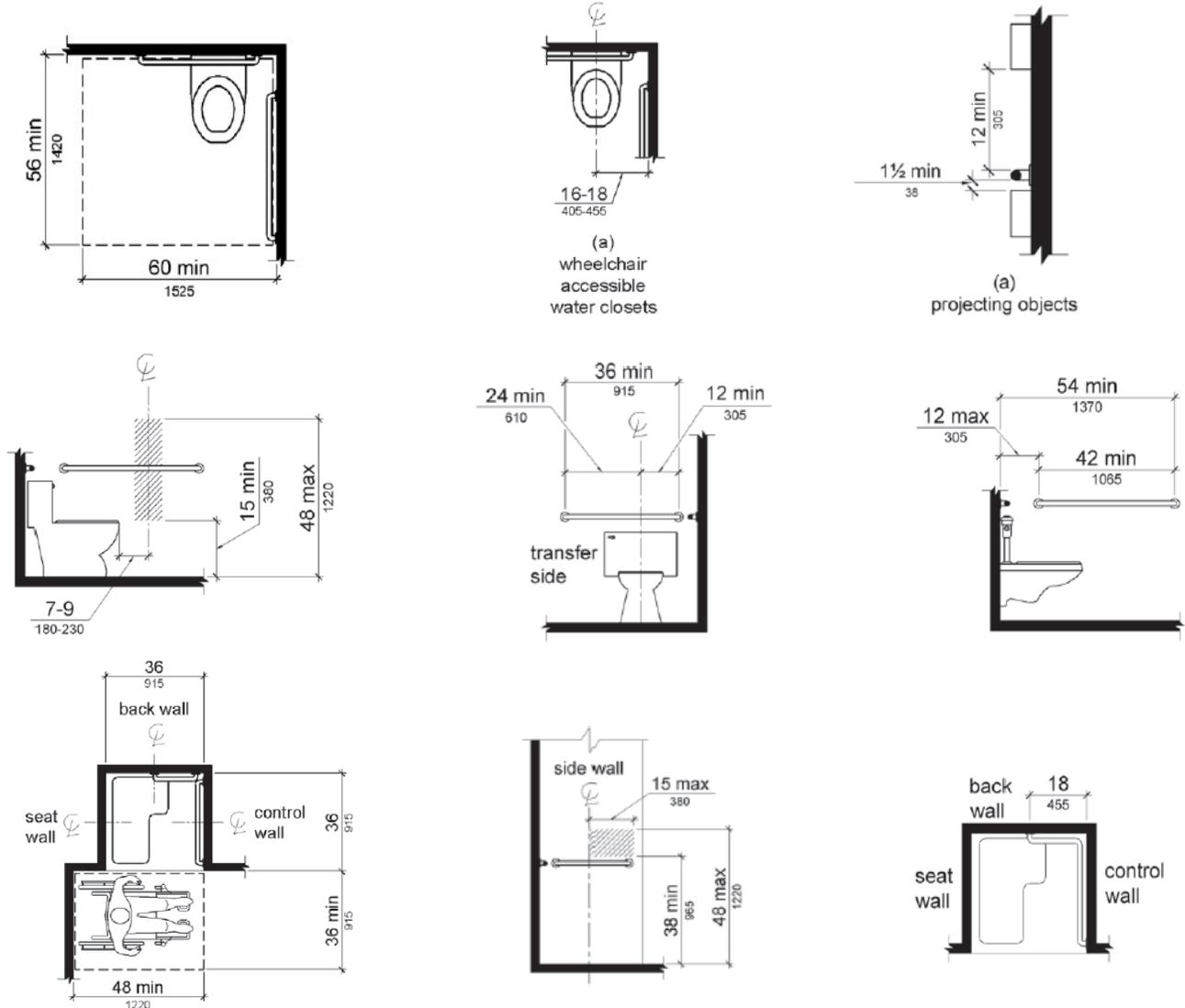
The lavatory overlaps the toilet. TAS 604.3.2

The clear width opening to enter the restroom is less than 32". TAS 404.2.3

Men's restroom 2303 has the following violations:

The width of the maneuvering clearance to exit the restroom is 36", 48" minimum required. TAS 404.2.4

Paper towel dispenser is a protruding object in the circulation space of the restroom. TAS 307.2



Note: inside finished dimensions measured at the center points of opposing sides

Toe and knee clearance are not provided at the lavatory. TAS 606.2, 306.2, 306.3

Neither shower stall is accessible - each shower stall is more than 36" deep and less than 36" wide and the stall is required to be 36"x 36". The clear opening is less the 36" wide, there are no grab bars, the shower spray unit does not have a 59" hose, and the fixed location is higher than 48" AFF. The threshold is greater than 1/2" (2" allowed in existing facilities). TAS 608.2.1, 608.3, 608.4, 608.6, 608.7

The width of the urinal alcove is 29", clear floor space at the urinal required to be at least 30"x48". TAS 605.3

The top of the urinal rim is 23" AFF, 17" maximum required. The flush valve is higher than 48" AFF. TAS 605.2, 605.4

There is no standard accessible stall provided. The ambulatory stall violations are as follows: TAS 213.2, 603.1

The seat cover dispenser is mounted at 58" AFF to the opening, 44" AFF maximum required. TAS 308.2.2

The stall width is 39", 35"-37" required. TAS 604.8.2.1

Stall hook is mounted 60" AFF, 48" AFF required. TAS 603.4, 308.2.1

Women's restroom 2313A has the following violations:

No knee/toe clearance provided at the lavatory. Paper towel dispenser is a protruding object. Soap dispenser mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 306.2, 306.3, 307.2

Maneuvering clearance to exit the restroom is less than 18" wide. TAS 404.2.4

There is no standard accessible stall provided. The ambulatory stall does not have an outward swinging door. The door is not self-closing. TAS 604.8.2.2

Seat cover dispenser mounted higher than 44" AFF to the opening. TAS 308.2.2

Neither shower stall is accessible - each shower stall is more than 36" deep and less than 36" wide and the stall is required to be 36"x 36". The clear opening is less the 36" wide, there are no grab bars, the shower spray unit does not have a 59" hose, and the fixed location is higher than 48" AFF. The threshold is greater than 1/2" (2" allowed in existing facilities). TAS 608.2.1, 608.3, 608.4, 608.6, 608.7

Women's 3107 has the following violations:

Paper towel dispenser is a protruding object. TAS 307.2

Plumbing is not insulated or otherwise protected from contact. TAS 606.5

The pull side clearance on the accessible stall door is less than 18". The door is not self-closing. TAS 404.2, 604.8.1.2

Coat hook mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 604.8.3, 308.2.1

The opening of the toilet paper and seat cover dispenser are mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 308.3.1, 308.2.1

The side grab bar does not extend a minimum of 54" forward, measured from the wet wall. TAS 604.5.1

The toilet is not mounted 16"-18" on center (OC). TAS 604.2

Men's restroom 3106 has the following violations:

Plumbing is not fully insulated or protected from contact. TAS 606.5

Coat hook mounted higher than 48" AFF. TAS 604.8.3, 308.2.1

The flush valve is mounted on the narrow side of the toilet. TAS 604.6

The toilet is not mounted 16"-18" OC. TAS 604.2

The toilet paper dispenser is not mounted 7"-9" in front of the toilet rim. TAS 604.7 Qualifies: 1994TAS-SH. Within 36" of the rear wet wall.

The side grab bar is not mounted 54" forward, measured from the rear wet wall. TAS 604.5.1

SITE ACCESSIBILITY VIOLATIONS

Ramp at East Entrance:

The running slope is more than 8.33%. TAS 405.2

The opening of the edge protection is more than 4". TAS 405.9.2

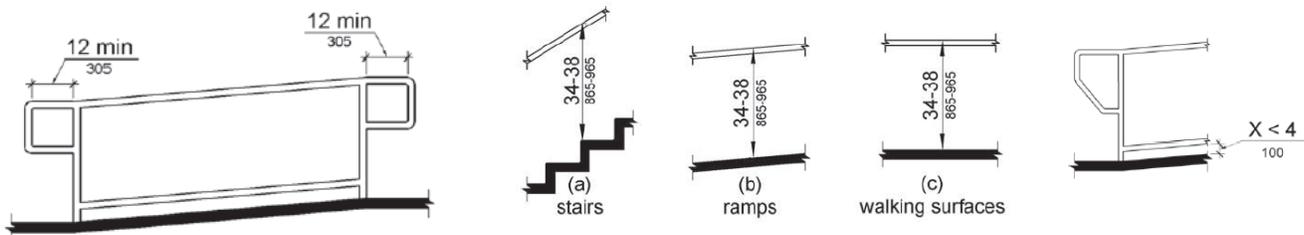
The opening in the ground surface is greater than 1/2". TAS 302.3

East Parking Lot:

Each accessible space and the access aisle have a cross slope greater than 2.08%. TAS 502.4.

Parking signage is mounted less than 60" AFF to the lowest character. TAS 502.6

Van accessible parking is not designated in the front lot. TAS 208.2.4



Five of the six spaces do not have an access aisle. TAS 502.2

There is no level landing at the top of the curb ramp. TAS 406.4

North Parking Lot:

Accessible signage is mounted less than 60" AFF to the lowest character. TAS 502.6

The slope of the curb ramp is more than 8.33%. It also exceeds exceptions allowed on existing sites. TAS 405.2

There is no level landing at the top of the curb ramp. TAS 406.4

The maneuvering clearance at the door is not level and the ramp has a running slope is more than 2.08%. TAS 404.2.4.4, 502.4

West Parking Lot (all accessible parking spaces):

Running slope and cross slope are greater than 2.08%. TAS 502.4

Parking signage is mounted less than 60" AFF to the lowest character. TAS 502.6

There is no access aisle provided at all required locations. TAS 502.2

Where there are access aisles, the access aisles and accessible parking space have running slopes greater than 2.08%. TAS 502.4

There was no accessible route found between accessible parking spaces and the ramp to the entrance. Running slopes exceeded 5% and/or cross slopes exceeded 2.08%. TAS 403.3

Opening in ground surface along route greater than ½". TAS 302.3

West Ramp:

The ramp handrail does not extend 12" past the slope of the ramp. TAS 505.10.1

Handrails are not located on both sides of the ramp. TAS 505.2

The top of the ramp gripping surface is mounted less than 34" AFF. TAS 505.4

The running slope of the ramp is greater than 8.33%. TAS 405.2

Openings in ground surface are greater than ½". TAS 302.3

No level landing at the bottom of the ramp run. TAS 405.7

The bottom landing is less than 60" in length. TAS 405.7.3

Entrances:

60% of entrances are required to be accessible and be on an accessible route. Due to non-compliance of various elements of each of the three ramps, no entrances were found to be on an accessible route. TAS 206.4, 206.4.1

CODE REVIEW

The following Code Review is an evaluation of the degree to which the Palm School Building meets, or fails to meet, the existing building code. We expect that past renovations complied with the Codes enforced at the time of their construction; however, this report documents compliance of the facility today with the current versions of regulatory Codes. The International Building Code, 2015 Edition and Local Amendments are the current building code in the City of Austin.

USE AND OCCUPANCY CLASSIFICATION

The building code requires establishment of one or more occupancy categories for a building. “Business Group B” is the single best category to describe the current use of the facility. Travis County’s use of the facility fits very well with “Civil Administration” description provided in the building code.

There are numerous conference rooms for administrative purposes throughout the facility. The building code defines a maximum size for assembly spaces, such as conference rooms, that are an accessory to the Business occupancy as 750 square feet [sf]. Given the small size of the vast majority of these rooms, the building code allows for them to continue to be defined as Group B Business occupancy.

The exception here is the multifunction room identified on our plans as #2307 which at a size of 810 square feet exceeds the code defined maximum of 750 square feet to continue to be considered as Group B occupancy. Therefore, this space would have an Assembly Group A-3 occupancy assigned. Historically this was a portion of the Cafeteria Auditorium space completed in 1949. There is also an accordion room divider between #2307 and the smaller #2309. When the room divider is open, the combined size of the spaces is 1,500 square feet. This Assembly space is surrounded by more typical business uses; however, as there is not a fire barrier between the Assembly and Business uses within this addition, the whole of the addition must be classified as the more stringent Assembly Group A-3.

There is an effective horizontal exit that separates this 1949 addition from the 1890/1924 Core structure. This allows the 1949 addition to be considered as a separate building from the balance of the facility for the purposes of life safety review.



Room 2307 / 2309 exceeds the Code defined maximum of 750 SF for a room to be considered accessory to a Business Use. It is therefore classified as Assembly A-3.

The door from this corridor to the 1949 Addition has a fire-resistance rating of three hours. This fire door assembly and the masonry construction allow the 1949 Addition to be considered as a Separate Building from the rest of the Facility.



TYPES OF CONSTRUCTION

The building code requires that buildings be classified in one of the five construction types defined in Sections 602.2 through 602.5. These classifications are defined by the fire-resistance of building elements recorded in the building code. The type of construction is then a key element in the definition of the constraints on a facility's height, number of stories, and their maximum allowable size.

Construction Type III

602.3 Type III

Type III construction is that type of construction in which the exterior walls are of noncombustible materials and the interior building elements are of any material permitted by this code.

The portions of the building constructed in 1890, 1910, 1924, and 1949 have been determined to be best defined as construction Type IIIB. The distinguishing characteristic of the Palm School Building contributing to this is the load bearing masonry used for the exterior walls throughout the facility. Within this portion of the facility the IIIB designation is selected as there is no protection of combustible framing (0 Hours of Fire-Resistance) within the interior building elements.

The 1936 addition on the north side of the facility does approach achieving a construction Type IIIA due to efforts, most likely associated with the Delgado Plans, to protect structural steel components with layers of "Type X" gypsum board. However, building code revisions since this protection's installation now require a more enhanced level of protection for horizontal assemblies, such as floors and above ceilings than the Type X product in place provides. Therefore the lesser construction Type IIIB must be used.



Space above the suspended ceiling in the third floor of the 1910 Addition shows that there is unprotected combustible material used for the interior framing. Construction Type IIIB applies as the exterior masonry walls are non-combustible, and this interior framing is unprotected.

Other Types of Construction

There are isolated areas of other types of construction in the vicinity of the atrium. The 1948 addition to the 1936 construction added a mechanical room at the first floor and toilets on the second and third floors. This was built with a more fire resistant construction Type I or Type II non-combustible materials.

Likewise the 1980 atrium and elevator installation were constructed primarily of non-combustible materials resulting in a Type I or Type II construction type, however the bulk of the adjacent historic construction is far less fire protected Type IIIB construction, therefore the building code requires the more restrictive construction type of IIIB be used.



Space above an office ceiling on the first floor of the 1936 Addition shows that gypsum board has been installed to provide improved fire resistance.

GENERAL BUILDING HEIGHTS AND STORIES ABOVE GRADE

Now that the Occupancy Classification and Construction Types have been defined, Section 504 provides the maximum building height and number of stories that are allowed.

1890/1910/1924 Core Building and 1936 Addition

The Business Group-B Use and Occupancy with a Construction Type of IIIB results in a maximum height in feet above the grade plane of 55', and 3 stories in a non-sprinkler protected building. The height is measured from the grade plane to the average height of the highest roof plane. According to our survey, Core Building is 40' high with 2 stories above grade, with one below grade, and is therefore compliant. Likewise the 1936 Addition is 45' high with 3 stories above grade, and is also compliant.

1949 Addition

The Assembly A-3 Use and Occupancy with a Construction Type of IIIB results in a maximum height in feet above the grade plane of 55' and 2 stories above in a non-sprinkler protected building. According to our survey, the height of this portion of the facility is about 22', and a single store above grade, which is compliant with the building code.



Exterior elevation graphic showing described building heights. Graphic not to scale.

MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE BUILDING AREAS

The building code Section 506 defines the maximum floor area of a building based on the type of construction, occupancy classification, whether there is an automatic sprinkler system, and the amount of the building frontage on a public way or open space. The benefit for this facility is that there is ample building frontage allowing ready access for firefighting and emergency response during a fire event. The 1949 Addition will continue to be evaluated as a separate building from the rest of the facility due to the fire barrier that exists between them.

1890/1910/1924 Core Building and the 1936 Addition

The Construction Type for the Core Building and 1936 Addition is Type IIIB. The Business Group-B Use and Occupancy with a Construction Type of IIIB in a non-sprinkler protected building has an Allowable Area of 19,000 sf (Table 506.2). The existing area of this portion of the Facility is 15,216 sf; therefore the area is compliant with the building code.

1949 Addition

The Assembly A-3 Use and occupancy with a Construction Type of IIB in a non-sprinkler protected building has an Allowable Area of 9,500 sf (Table 506.2). The existing area of this addition is 5,047 sf; therefore the area is compliant with the building code.

View of the Atrium from the third floor looking toward the north façade of the original 1892 building.



ATRIUM

The atrium introduced in the 1980 renovation provides a common area for entry, security and necessary vertical accessibility. However by today's standards, the atrium falls far short of current building code requirements defined in Section 404:

Section 404 Atrium Code Violations

404.3 Automatic sprinkler protection. An approved automatic sprinkler system shall be installed throughout the entire building.

Violation: There is no sprinkler system installed in any part of the Palm School Building

404.5 Smoke control. A smoke control system shall be installed in accordance with Section 909.

Violation: There is no smoke control system installed in the atrium. Note that Section 404.7 requiring the standby power for the smoke control system is also in violation.

404.6 Enclosure of atriums. Atrium spaces shall be separated from adjacent spaces by a 1-hour fire barrier constructed in accordance with Section 707 or a horizontal assembly constructed in accordance with Section 711, or both.

Violation: The fact that large historic window openings face the atrium and are not sprinkler-protected is a major concern. Another concern is that the doors to both the first floor mechanical room and office spaces are louvered at the atrium, which is prohibited by code.

Possible Future Exception: A fire barrier is not required between the atrium and the adjoining spaces of any three floor of the atrium provided such spaces are accounted for in the design of the smoke control system.

MEANS OF EGRESS

The ability to escape a building in the event of an emergency is quite simply the most vital aspect of Code compliance. Most of the work done during the 1980 and subsequent renovations has sought to mitigate much of the risk to life safety by introducing new, non-combustible egress stair structures within the facility, although many violations remain. It is surprising that, even in a non-sprinkler protected facility, the Code-required travel distances to reach an exit or fire-resistant exit stairwell appear to have been achieved in most cases. Life safety plans are available in Appendix H.

However, this is all based on the current Use and Occupancy Classification, Construction Type, size and occupant load. Any future changes in those aspects will require careful consideration of the resulting requirements of the building code.

Egress Violations Observed

The following conditions were observed during our survey of the Palm School Building. Please note that the scope of work for this Historic Structure Report does not include destructive testing, therefore certain assumptions regarding the rating of existing wall assemblies have been made based on the rating of Fire Rated door openings through these wall assemblies.

1010.1.6 Landings at doors: Landings shall have the length measured in the direction of travel of not less than 44”.

Violation: The door at the East Stair Exit discharge has no landing.

1010.1.7 Thresholds: Thresholds at doorways shall not exceed a height of ½”.

Violation: The door threshold at the South Exit discharge is 1 ½” to 2” tall and presents a significant tripping hazard.

1010.1.8 Door arrangement. Space between two doors in a series shall be 48” minimum plus the width of a door swinging into the space. Doors in a series shall swing either in the same direction or away from the space between the doors.

Violation: There are two doors entering the North Stair at the third floor. The landing is 48” wide; however the doors swing toward one another and obstruct the path of egress when opened simultaneously.

1011.5.2 Stair Treads and Risers: Tread depth shall be 11” minimum measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at right angle to the tread’s nosing.

Violation: Treads in the North Stair from the second floor down to the first floor were measured at 10” in depth.

1011.5.5 Nosing and riser profile: Nosings shall have a curvature or bevel of not less than 1/16” but not more than 9/16”.

Violation: East Stair from the first floor to the third lacks nosings, but may be exempt as it could be considered to be a historic stair.

1011.7.3 Rating of and Access to enclosures under interior stairways. The construction of enclosures under egress stairs must have the same fire resistance rating required for the stairway enclosure. And access to this enclosure may not be inside the stairwell.



Lack of a Code compliant landing outside the Exit Discharge from the East Stair.



The East Stair lacks a Code compliant nosing profile, graspable handrails, egress lighting, and one hour fire-resistant Exit Access Stairway enclosure.



The third floor landing inside the East Stair shows a Storage enclosure opening inside the Egress Stairway Enclosure.

Violation: Storage enclosures were observed inside / under egress stairways with access doors inside the stairway enclosure in the following locations:

- Closet at First Floor landing inside the North Stair
- Closet at First Floor landing inside West Stair
- Closet at Third Floor landing inside East Stair

1011.11 Stair Handrails: Stairways shall have handrails on each side and shall comply with Section 1014.

Violation: The following stairways do not comply as they have handrails on only one side:

- North Stair
- East Stair
- West Stair

The following stairways do not comply as they have no handrails

- East Stair Exit discharge
- South Exit discharge
- Loading Dock Exit discharge

1012.2 Ramp slope: Ramps used as a part of a means of egress shall have a running slope not steeper than one unit vertical in 12 units horizontal.

Violation: All of the ramps inside and outside of the facility were found to exceed the allowed slope. Refer to the Accessibility narrative for further details.

1012. 6.4 Ramp Landings: Where changes in direction of travel occur at landings provided between ramp runs, the landing shall be 60" by 60".

Violation: As documented in the Accessibility narrative, the two outdoor ramps converging on the west side of the facility and the indoor ramp to the 1949 Addition lack proper landings at changes in direction.

1012.5.2 Ramp Headroom. The minimum allowable headroom along any component of an egress path is 80" (6'-8").

Violation: A height of 78" (6'-6") was observed along the interior Corridor with Ramp to the 1949 Addition.

1012.8 Ramp Handrails: Ramps with a rise greater than 6" shall have handrails on both sides.

Violation: The west ramp from the Atrium exit only has a handrail on one side.

1012.10.1 Ramp barrier: Barriers shall be constructed so that the barrier prevents the passage of a 4" sphere.

Violation: The ramp barriers serving both the East and West Entrances are installed with gaps in excess of 4".

1014.1 Handrails and where they are required: As noted in previous violations in sections 1011.11 and 1012.8, required handrails are not installed at all egress stairs and the west ramp.

1014.3 Handrail graspability: To provide the ability to easily grip handrails, their perimeter measurement shall not exceed 6 1/4". Where this measurement exceeds 6 1/4" a finger recess shall be provided to enhance graspability.

Violation: The following stair and ramp handrails fail to meet the stated requirements:

- East Stair from the second to third floor
- Atrium Stair from the first to third floor
- Atrium East Entrance stairs
- Exterior Courtyard stairs
- Atrium West Entrance stairs
- Atrium West Entrance ramp

1014.6 Handrail extensions: Ramp handrails are required to extend 12" horizontally beyond the top and bottom of the ramp.

Violation: The Atrium West Entrance Ramp handrails stop several feet short the bottom of the ramp.

1015 Guards opening limitation: Required guards shall not have openings that allow passage of a sphere 4" in diameter.

Violation: Guards at the following stair and ramp fail to meet the stated requirements:

- Atrium West Entrance stairs and ramp
- West Stair Exit discharge stairs and ramp



Exit Discharge at the 1949 Addition Loading Dock shows that steps are in need of repair and lack Code compliant handrails.



The ramp to the 1949 Addition lacks Code compliant headroom, slope, and landing size for a change in direction.



This ramp from the West Entrance lacks Code compliant handrails and handrail extensions, exceeds the maximum allowable slope, and its barrier openings are greater than 4".



The handrails to the Main Entrance fail to meet the Code criteria for handrail graspability.

1017 Exit Access travel distance: The maximum travel distance allowed from any part of the building to the nearest exit for both the Business and Assembly Occupancy and Use designations without a sprinkler system is 200'. As none of the interior Exit Access Stair enclosures were found to comply with fire-resistance ratings, this travel distance must be measured through and down the stair to the Exit discharge to the exterior of the building.

Violation: The Exit Access travel distance from the following offices on the third floor to the nearest Exit to the exterior exceeds the maximum travel distance:

- 3518, 3519, 3520, 3521

1020 Corridors: Corridors shall be fire-resistance rated in accordant with Table 1020.1. The corridor walls required to be re-resistance rated shall comply with Section 708 for fire partitions. According to Table 1020.1, Corridors are required to have a fire-resistance rating of 1 hour without a sprinkler system for both Business and Assembly Occupancies. According to 708, as fire partitions, these walls shall be continuous from the floor to the deck above the ceiling.

Violation: Interior framed corridor walls throughout the majority of the facility are only slightly higher than the suspended acoustic ceiling system and do not comply with this provision of the building code.

According to section 716.5; openings in 1 hour fire partitions are required to be 20 minute fire doors and frames with labels identifying their fire resistance, and closers.

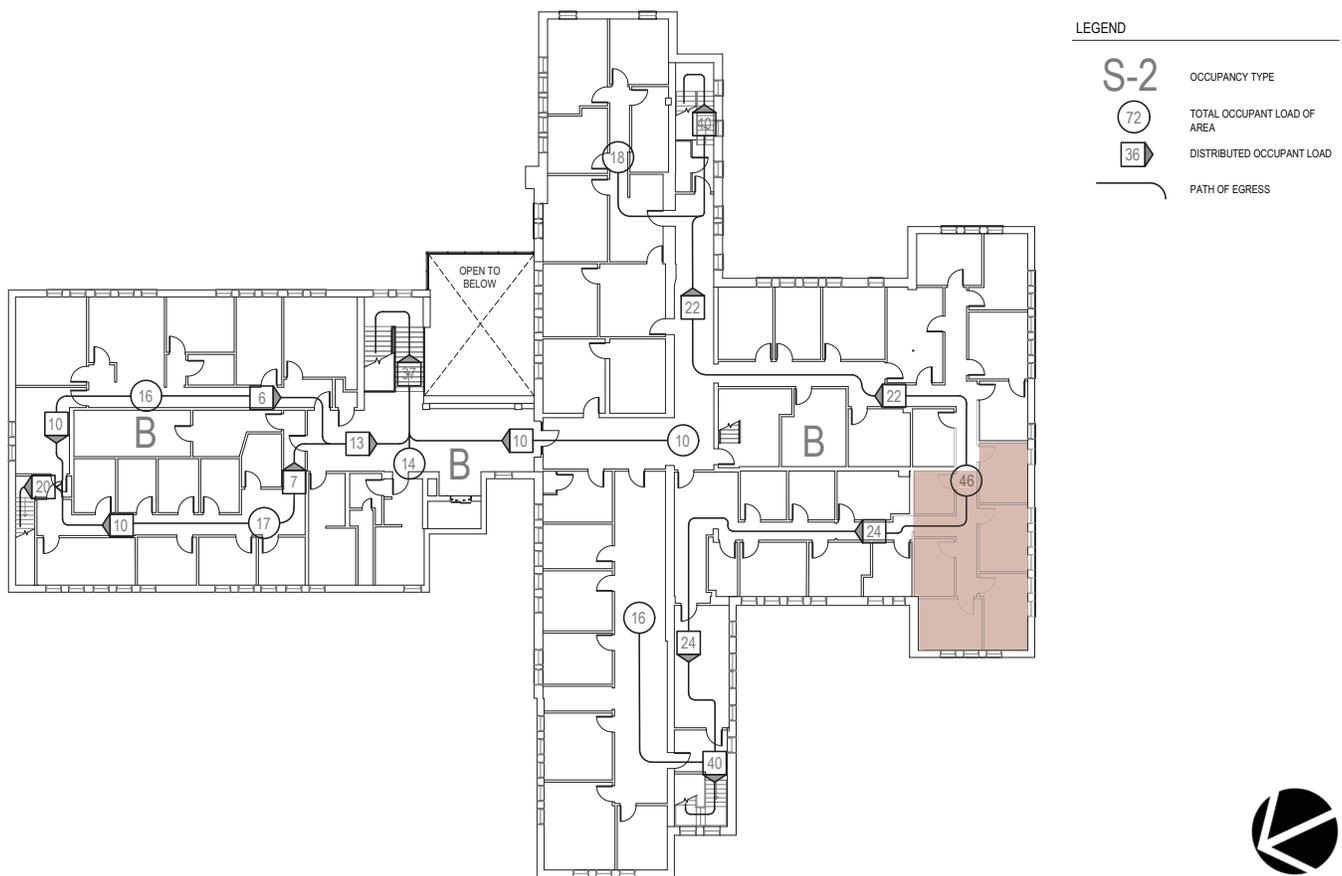
Violation: The vast majority of doors along most egress corridors fail to meet the stated requirements.

- Where closers were installed, manual doorstop devices had frequently been installed preventing the closer from functioning. Only automatic hold-opens that interface the fire alarm system are allowed.
- No corridor door assemblies were found to have fire-resistance labels on both the door and frame.

1023.2 Interior exit stairways construction: Enclosures for interior exit stairways shall be constructed as fire barriers in accordance with Section 707 and shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than 1 hour at the Palm School Building as they connect less than four stories. Section 707 further requires that openings, described in Section 716 are required to have a fire-resistance rating of not less than 1 hour. The same labeling and closer requirements noted for corridors apply as well.

Violation: The following Interior exit stairways failed to meet the stated requirements:

- North Stair: First and Second floor door assemblies are not labeled. Third floor fire doors and frames are labeled, but for only 20 minutes.
- East Stair: Basement, First and Second floor door assemblies are not labeled.
- West Stair: First floor doors assembly is not labeled.

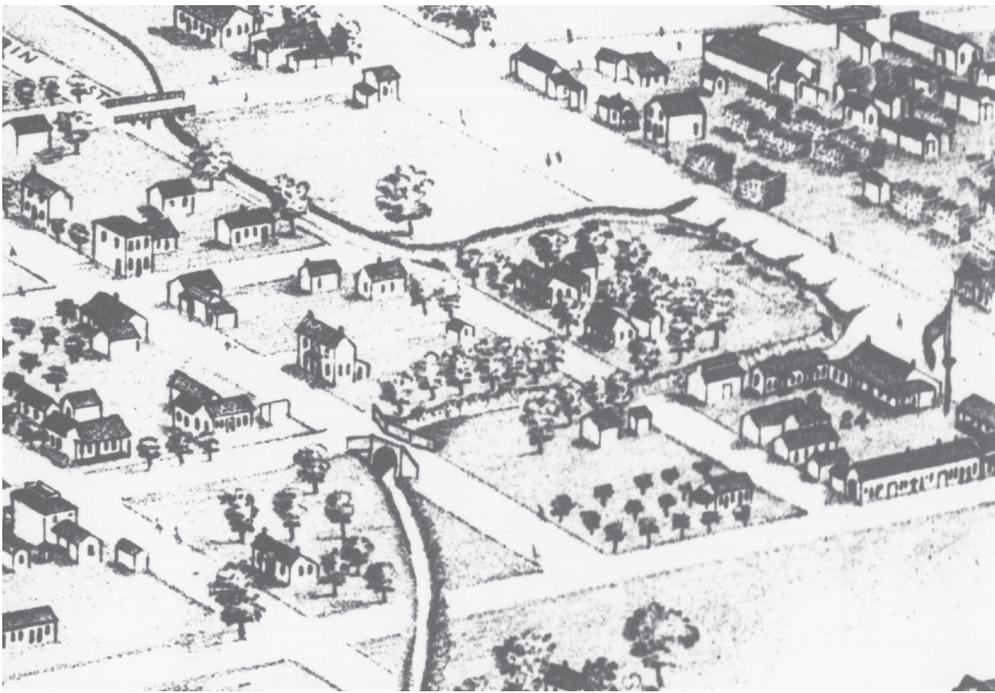


Code Recommendations

This range of observed International Building Code violations is by no means an obstacle to the long-term continued use of the Palm School Facility. Any rehabilitation of the facility will require that a new, thorough review of all applicable Codes be completed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its new occupants. There are, however the following basic recommendations that, regardless of the future use and occupancy, must be addressed:

- **Fire Suppression and Smoke Control:** The presence of the Atrium alone requires that an automatic sprinkler system be installed throughout this facility and that it be monitored by an Automatic Fire Alarm with notification capability. A smoke control system also needs to be installed in the Atrium. These are the most important ways to improve life safety for the occupants. The cultural significance of this Historic Landmark also warrants this degree of protection.
- **Means of Egress:** Getting occupants out of the building safely in an emergency is vital. Correcting noted violations with regard to stairs, ramps, ramp slope, handrails, guards / barriers, fire-resistance labeled door assemblies and Exit stair enclosures will all be necessary to comply with the current Building Code.

This graphic of the third floor is showing shaded areas where the maximum allowable travel distance to an Exit is currently exceeded.



Detail view showing the Arsenal Block and Waller Creek. Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, 1873, Augustus Koch. C00120, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORTS

The Texas Historical Commission administers the Antiquities Code of Texas. The Code, enacted in 1969, requires state agencies and political subdivisions, including cities, counties and school districts, to notify the THC of any proposed action on public land that involves five or more acres of ground disturbance, 5,000 or more cubic yards of earth moving or any other project that has the potential to disturb recorded archeological or historic sites. For these projects, the THC issues antiquities permits for archeological studies and maintains a library of investigation and completion reports associated with work conducted under an antiquities permit. The THC has not issued any antiquities permits associated with the Palm School site, and does not have any archaeological reports that include investigations or related context information prepared for the Palm School site.

Although the site is technically “disturbed” from an archaeological perspective, there is a potential for historic deposits associated with the Arsenal remaining below the existing pavement. Evidence of original building foundations may remain, along with metal items associated with the army occupancy of the site. The stretch of Waller Creek near the Palm School site has been a popular spot for enthusiasts to search for old buttons or bullets, even historic weapons, with the aid of a metal detector.

While the Antiquities Code requirements do not apply to privately owned land, future owners of the site may want to carefully strip off the existing asphalt paving and prepared base, and look for evidence of historic foundations or archeological deposits that may remain below the surface of the pavement. Any such remains would reveal useful documentation about the Arsenal that once occupied the site and about the history of Austin.

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