



BLACKWELL

COMMUNITY CHARRETTE

ELBERTON, GA
MARCH 26-29, 2015



THE EASTSIDE'S BLACKWELL COMMUNITY

The Granite City Life Skills Foundation and the Elbert County government are interested in redeveloping the six-acre Blackwell Memorial High School property into an after-school program.

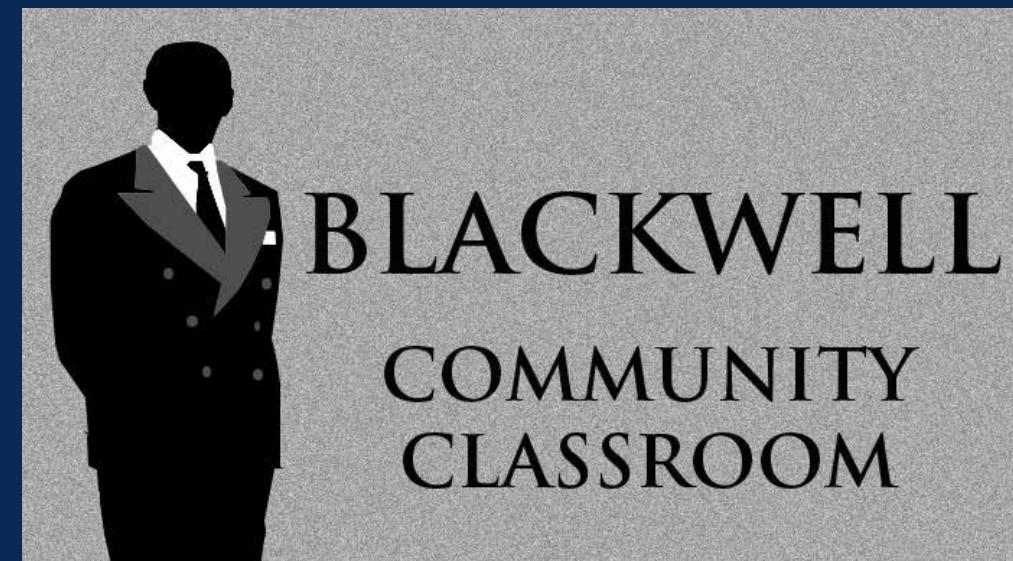
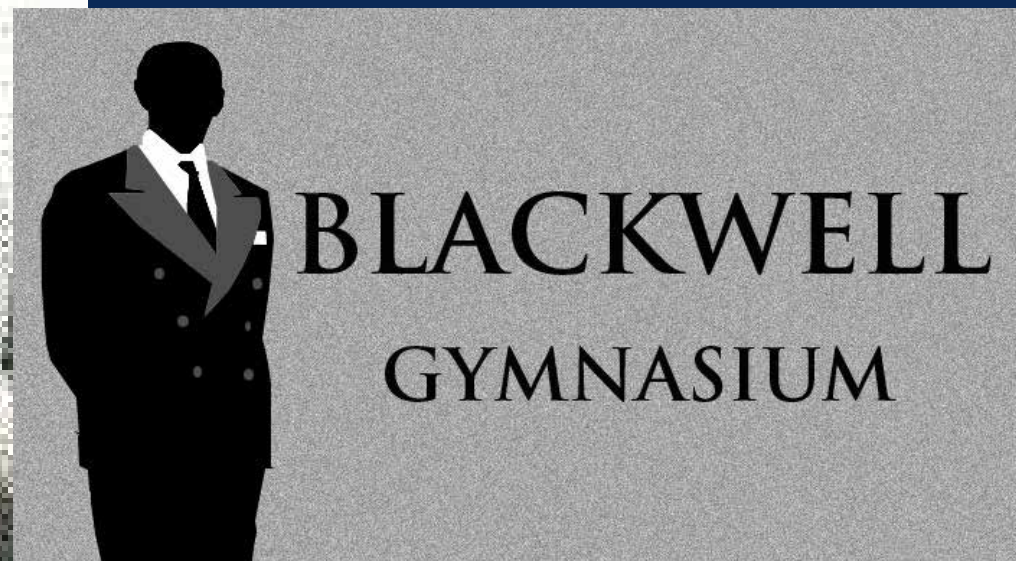
The "equalization school" complex originally consisted of two parallel classroom wings bracketed on either end by a Gymnasium and a Shop building.

The two central wings were demolished in 2014 but the two remaining buildings are to be considered for rehabilitation into after-school space.

The large, open site the buildings occupy and the tightly-knit historic neighborhood surrounding the school could benefit from the creation of passive and active recreation space and safer pathways for walkers and bikers.

The University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design conducted a design charrette for the Blackwell community to bring recognition, appreciation and attention to the African-American school history and to Principal Paul J. Blackwell, to prepare the Granite City Life Skills Foundation to begin fundraising for phased rehabilitation work on the Blackwell Memorial High School site and buildings, and to explore design improvements for the Blackwell Cultural Center and the Burke Street Gym to better connect all three sites physically and socially. The charrette recommendations are phased into Short-Term (low cost, volunteer labor), Intermediate (funded repairs essential for functionality), and Long-Term (changes for enhancement).

PROPOSED SIGNAGE



Principal Paul J. Blackwell's legacy has been perpetuated by naming several of the Eastside's educational sites and buildings in his name. To further unify the buildings as a cultural district, we suggest developing iconic signs with a silhouette of Mr. Blackwell as a logo etched into Elberton granite to further distinguish each place.



THIS OUTREACH PROJECT WAS CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA COLLEGE OF ENVIRONMENT + DESIGN.
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FINAL PRODUCTS FROM THE CHARRETTE AVAILABLE HERE: <http://tinyurl.com/CCDPfeaturedcharrettes>



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BLACKWELL MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

The Blackwell Memorial High School is in the center of the Eastside neighborhood and is very meaningful to alumni and local residents. Everyone knows the site – those who attended school there and then personally experienced the transition to integrated schools, those who witnessed the mysterious of the original Colored School across the street, those who watched the recent demolition of the classroom wings, and the younger generation who know the site as just another vacant building they pass on their way to the Burke Street Gym. The school site will be an ideal setting for much-needed afterschool programs, an indoor recreation facility that local youth and adults can walk and bike to, and a venue for adult fitness classes, community events such as movie nights, reunions and weddings, and as flexible classroom space.

GYMNASIUM RECOMMENDATIONS



SHORT-TERM: Make doors and windows secure. Repair roof to keep out water and vermin. Remove all debris from interior rooms. Wash concrete sidewalks and building with a gentle pressure wash. Repaint entrance doors, scrape paint from windows or temporarily repaint.

INTERMEDIATE: Upgrade plumbing, electrical and HVAC to code for functionality; repair floors where needed. Repair broken windows. Repair stage area to ensure safety first and functionality second. Ensure basketball goals are functional, then upgrade as needed. Paint interior, including adding large black-and-white murals of historic school photographs on the gym walls. Install benches, hooks and mirrors in locker rooms. Purchase sports equipment for kids programming, as well as fridge/microwave for minimal kitchen facilities.

LONG-TERM: Expand concessions area into adjacent storage area to include a commercial kitchen facility for expanded afterschool meals, community events and catering opportunities. Purchase kitchenware, dining ware, tables, chairs and linens for event use. Outfit stage for performances, including lighting, proscenium curtains, and audio-visual equipment.



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HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM: Maintain turfgrass. Mulch at trees to prevent cars from parking on top of roots. Patch any potholes or cracked asphalt in parking areas. Repair concrete pathways and skim-coat the concrete foundation remaining from the education wing, allowing for flexible outdoor such as markets.

INTERMEDIATE: Grade the area of the front-most demolished building to allow for continued use as a multipurpose lawn. Manage, restripe and reconfigure existing asphalt parking areas around school as shown, including removing parking from behind the school where the mature canopy should be protected and used as picnic space.

LONG-TERM: Redevelop the space formerly occupied by the front classroom building as a memorial garden of flowering trees. An alley of trees such as Purple Leaf Plums (*Prunus cerasifera*) should be planted in parallel rows, spaced to allow for full growth. Outline the edge of the former foundation with granite curbing, set flush with the ground.

OUTDOOR MARKET



Existing



Skim-coat concrete and paint plywood



Host outdoor markets and events



Repair windows and add signage



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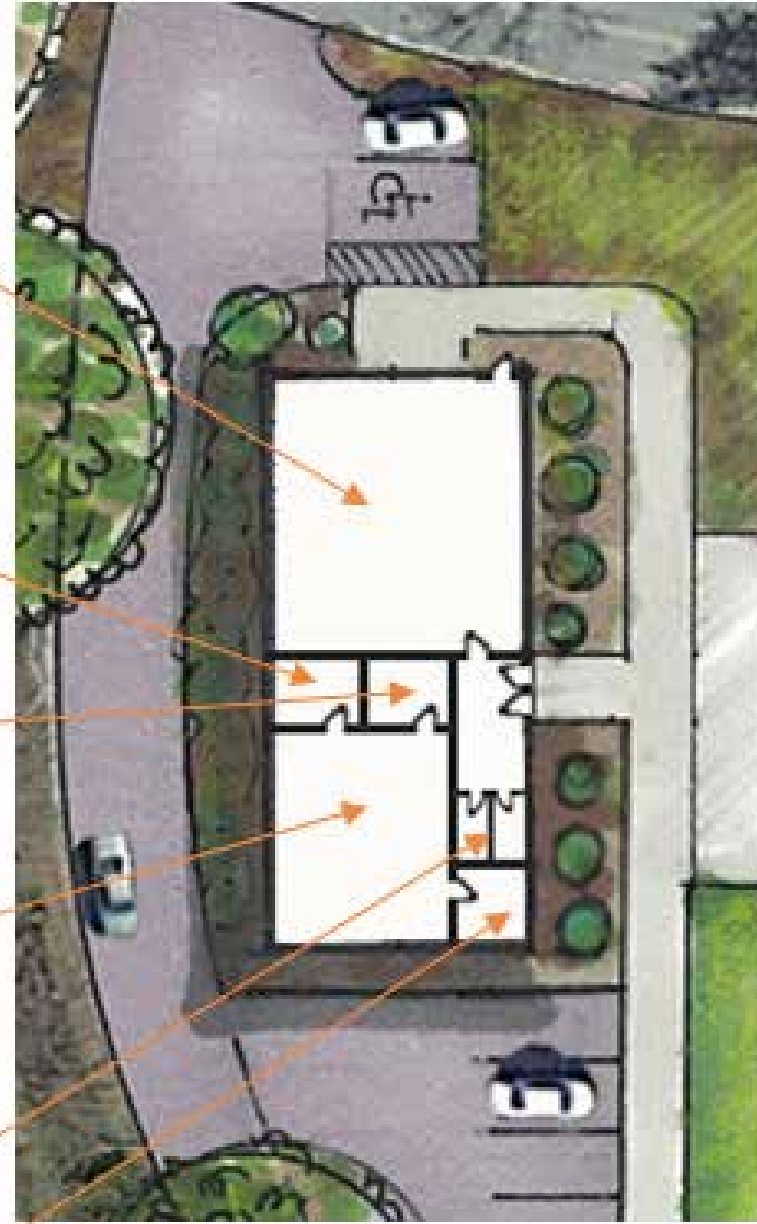
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COMMUNITY CLASSROOM

- Computer Lab
- Library
- Classes
- Meeting space
- Recording studio
- Office
- Childcare
- Art classes
- Restrooms
- Storage



Above: This illustration shows the former Shop building repurposed as a Community Classroom.
Right: The original metal casement windows are intact behind the plywood - repair/restore rather than replace.



SHORT-TERM: Make doors and windows secure. Repair roof to keep out water and vermin. Remove all debris from interior rooms. Wash concrete sidewalks and building with a gentle pressure wash. Repaint doors, paint plywood covering windows (see below).



SHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERMEDIATE: Upgrade plumbing, electrical and HVAC to code; repair floors where needed. Paint interior, and uncover original metal casement windows and repair/reglaze as needed. Install new lighting to match original fixtures. Rebuild central interior wall to allow for two separate classroom spaces. Install Ethernet connection and Wi-Fi capabilities. Purchase tables and chairs to allow for arrangement of individual and group workspaces for multi-use programs.

LONG-TERM: Replace the windows that were removed and filled with concrete block with new windows that match the original windows on the opposite wall. Replace the garage door with a custom glazed opening to allow for handicap-accessibility and increased natural light. Customize the classrooms to serve unique functions as needed. Spaces should accommodate an array of activities, from childcare to art classes, or even a recording studio/radio station.



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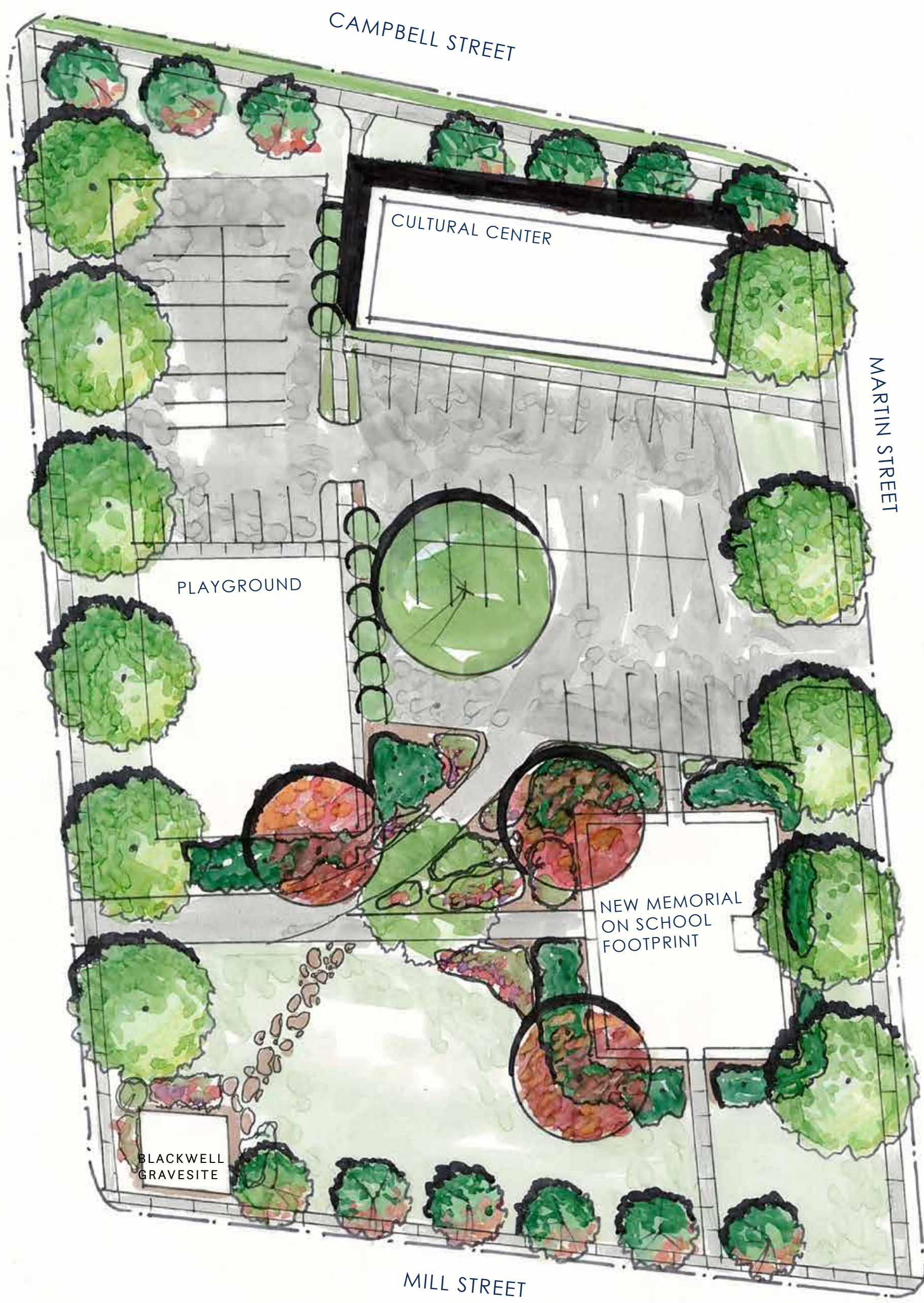
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Long-term improvements to Cultural Center site

In the heart of the community is the Blackwell Cultural Center, located on the site of the Elberton Colored School. The school's annex that originally housed second and third graders is used as offices, meeting space and special functions. This site also contains the gravesite of Principal Paul J. Blackwell. A new veteran's memorial has recently been erected on the site as well.

CULTURAL CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS:

SHORT-TERM: Remove signs from playground that use negative language to list rules, as it gives the appearance that the playground is risky and uninviting. Replace with more inviting signage. Consider adding a play structure that echoes the design of the original school building, thus referencing the legacy of the site on a child's level (see image, right).



INTERMEDIATE: Continue the legacy of memorials at the site by adding an additional tribute to the original school by uncovering the exposed remnants of its building foundation. Move the Veteran's Memorial to the middle of the outline of the old foundation and place plantings and benches within the space. Construct a new path in the same location as the original front walk that led to the school from Mill St. Additional paths should connect to Mr. Blackwell's gravesite and the driveway.

LONG-TERM: Add additional shrubs and trees to the periphery of the block and increase the parking spaces on the kitchen side of the Cultural Center. Eventually, relocate the playground across the street to the Blackwell Memorial High School site to support the children's afterschool programming that will be in place there.



Existing



Paint cinderblock and plywood

BLACKWELL CULTURAL CENTER



New casement windows



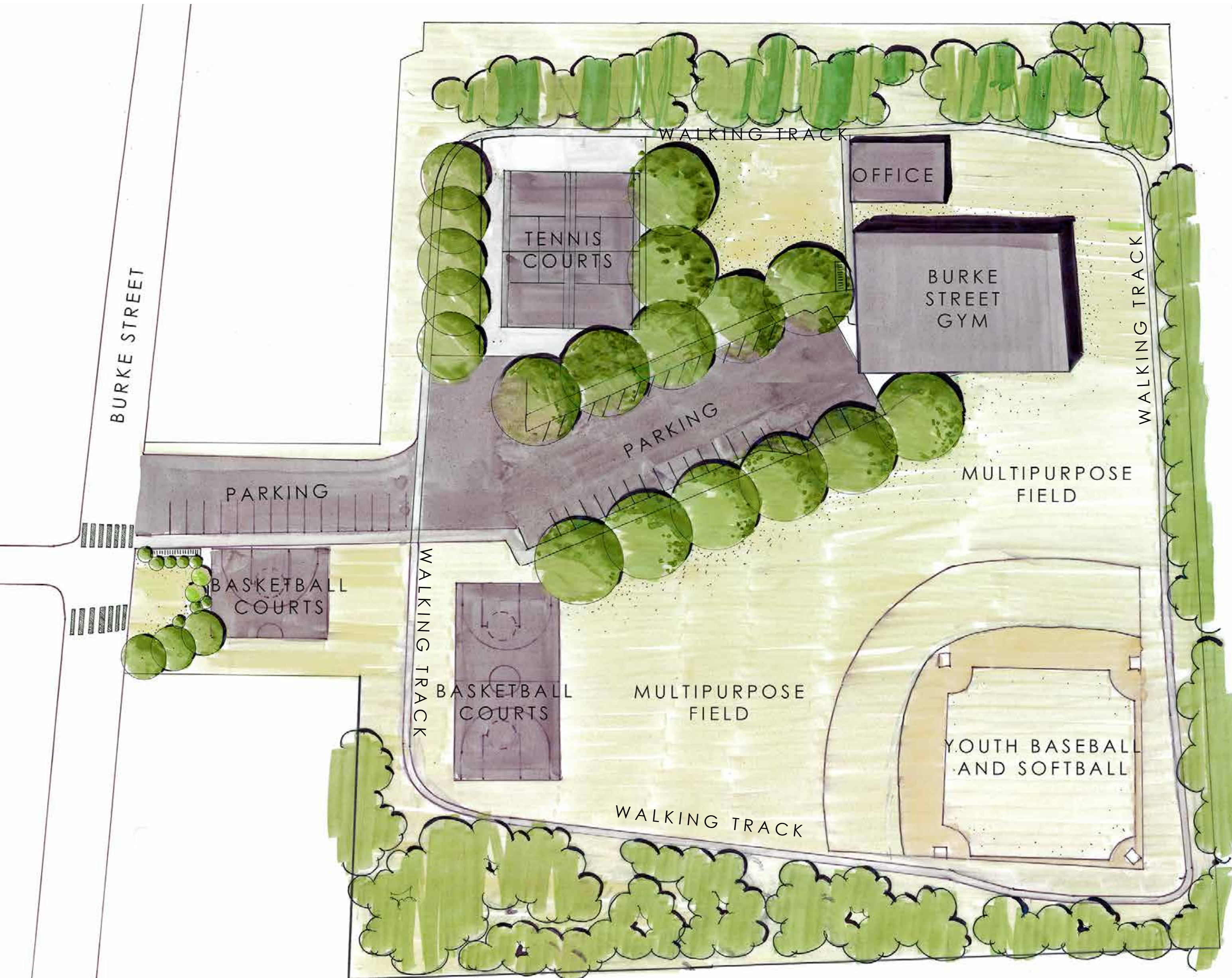
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BURKE STREET GYM RECOMMENDATIONS

SHORT-TERM: Make doors secure. Repair roof to keep out water and eliminate leaks in bathrooms.

INTERMEDIATE: Take advantage of the large "canvas" that is the metal gym building by painting a unique "supergraphic" to distinguish the facility. Sports silhouettes layered on top of the name of the gym will clearly identify the building and celebrate its use. Keep the majority of the building a light color to reflect heat and cool the interior. Repair existing sidewalk and add new sidewalk from Burke Street between basketball courts and gym parking lot. Repair tennis courts.

LONG-TERM: Reduce size of baseball field to Little League dimensions. This will allow more space for an open multi-purpose field lawn that can be used for soccer and football, and to allow the addition of a full basketball court as shown. Plant trees along the parking area and sidewalks to provide shade.



Existing



Paint



Bold graphic mural



Shade trees and paved parking lot



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