

TRAFFIC STUDY
ROBERT F. KENNEDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Providence School Improvements

City of Providence, Rhode Island



PREPARED FOR:

Tecton
ARCHITECTS

PREPARED BY:



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October 2025



October 30, 2025

Jeffrey J. Wyszynski
Principal
Tecton Architects
Hartford CT

Subject: **Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School Study**

Dear Mr. Wyszynski:

GM2 Associates Inc. (GM2) is pleased to submit the attached Traffic Study of the Robert F Kennedy Elementary School, completed based on the scope of services provided and communications between GM2 and the project team during the study period. Note the final scope varies from the initial scope.

GM2 conducted field observations in June of 2025, collected traffic data, reviewed site conditions, and, using our engineering judgement, analyzed the existing conditions at the site and the immediate vicinity, all of which are included in the attached report.

In summary, the area is compact, and operations are confined due to the nature of the neighborhood street layout, limited street width, and few viable off-street parking options. There are no major safety deficiencies but there is a lack of existing operational efficiency. The addition of more students to the school may further erode opportunities to maximize efficiency, as there is expected to be an increase in traffic.

GM2 was also asked to review the school and the proposed building improvements as shown in documents released to us to provide any insight into potential impacts and expected conditions as a result of the proposed improvements.

GM2 recognizes this study is one of the steps in achieving the Team's desired goal of demolishing the existing school in order to construct a brand-new elementary school at this site and we look forward to assisting you in reaching that goal in any manner as needed.

We look forward to your review of the study and are available to discuss at your convenience.

Respectfully,

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1.0 Project Purpose and Description

This study has been prepared by GM2 Associates, Inc. (GM2) to examine the potential traffic impacts associated with the to-be-constructed Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School, proposed to be built at the site of the existing school which is scheduled to be demolished in the summer of 2025. Located in Providence, Rhode Island, the elementary school site is in the Elmhurst neighborhood between Eaton Street and Smith Street to the north and south, and between Nelson Street and Jastram Street west and east respectively. The following image serves to show the general location within the City:



Figure 1: Study Area
(ESRI – Imagery Date Spring 2024)

2.0 Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School

The existing Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School is located at 195 Nelson Street and occupies the majority of the block bounded by Eaton Avenue to the north, Smith Street to the south, Jastram Street to the east and Nelson Street to the west. The school is in the middle of an urban neighborhood characterized by narrow streets lined with sidewalks, houses, small shops, and a park. A site map is provided in the following figure:



Figure 2: Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School Site Location Map
(ESRI – Imagery Date Spring 2024)

2.1 Existing Conditions

Street Network

Eaton Street runs along the north side of the school and is a two-way roadway described as an urban collector with one lane in each direction, lined with sidewalks on both sides. Curb radii at intersecting streets are typically very tight and larger vehicles exiting side streets must encroach

into the opposing lane to exit or enter to/from Eaton Street. Sidewalks vary in width and type, with some areas providing a grass strip, tree wells, or neither and simply abut properties at the back. Sidewalk conditions vary in the vicinity of the school but were generally fair. Note that areas are not entirely ADA compliant due to wheelchair ramp slopes or passable widths.

Smith Street runs along the south side of the block and is classified as an urban principal arterial and includes wider travel lanes with on-street parking along both sides. Curb radii are generally larger at intersecting side streets and sidewalks are generally 5-feet wide or greater and are typically in good condition in the vicinity of the school.

Nelson Street is a typical Providence side street, lined with single family homes, small driveways and on-street parking allowed on one side only, in this case the west side. Sidewalks are generally 4-feet wide and in poor to fair condition with many areas not passable for a wheelchair. Traffic on Nelson Street is restricted to northbound only during school drop-off and pick-up periods and a crossing guard has the south end at Smith Street lined with cones to block motorists from entering. Only school buses are allowed in during these periods.

Jastram Street mirrors Nelson Street with parking along the east side only. The sidewalk width varies between Eaton Street and Smith Street with a grass strip and trees provided in the southern portion and a simple wide sidewalk in the north area. Traffic on Jastram Street is designated as one-way southbound only at all times. Note that an approximate 125-foot cut-out area is provided on the west side adjacent to the school parking lot to allow drop-off and pick-up parking/stopping.

Parking

Staff parking is provided in a 38-space lot on the Jastram Street side and a smaller lot is located on the Nelson Street side. The lot off Jastram Street contains the majority of the on-site parking with two ADA spaces. The smaller lot off Nelson Street is mostly used for deliveries and contains two ADA parking spaces along with the school's dumpsters. There are vehicles parked in the smaller lot at times despite there being no parking stalls striped.

Buses only use Nelson Street and park door-to-curb adjacent to the school with sufficient parking for the 6 observed buses.

Parent/guardian parking is limited to Jastram Street in the immediate vicinity of the school and includes the well-used cut-out area that typically accommodates 5 vehicles. Other motorists park over the sidewalk on the school side both north and south of the gate and cut-out area and will also park adjacent to the curb on the east side.

Sidewalks

All surrounding streets do provide sidewalks on both sides of the road. The sidewalks are in poor to fair condition depending on the area and vary in ADA compliance. Sidewalks in some areas do include a grass strip and or trees but typically range from 4 to 5 feet wide around the school.

Crosswalks



Figure 3: Crosswalk Locations
(ESRI – Imagery Date Spring 2024)

Robert F. Kennedy Elementary School currently includes crosswalks in all directions at the intersections on Eaton Street at Academy Ave, Nelson Street, Jastram Street, and Sharon Street. There are crosswalks in all directions at the intersections on Smith Street at Academy Ave and Nelson Street, with two mid-block crosswalks west of Jastram Street. Note there is an RRFB located in this area at the intersection of Eaton Street and Jastram Street, on the east side of the intersection crossing Eaton Street. There is a second RRFB located mid-block on Smith Street just west of Sharon Street (street east of Jastram Street).

Received Information

GM2 received estimated numbers from Tecton Architects regarding enrollment and transportation numbers comparing current and proposed populations as shown in Table 1. These numbers include different grades and bus eligibility with an assumed 1.5-mile radius around the school. The school is expected to add two additional grades (7th and 8th) that would bring the total number expected students to 840, from Pre-K to 8th grade, with an estimated 46 staff members.

	Estimated Number of Students	Estimated Number of Staff Members
Pre-K	60	6
Grades K-5	468	24
Grades 6-8	312	16
Total	840	48

Table 1: Estimated School Population

Flow of Traffic

Traffic patterns during school morning and afternoon periods are restricted. Nelson Street is normally one-way northbound, restricted to bus-only traffic from 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and again from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on school days. Jastram Street is one-way southbound, and Smith Street and Eaton Street are both two-way with one lane in each direction. Both the large and small parking lot have one driveway access to their respective street.



Figure 4: Flow of Traffic
 (ESRI – Imagery Date Spring 2024)

2.2 Traffic Volumes

Vehicular traffic volumes were not formally collected by GM2 staff during either morning or afternoon periods. This is due to the time of year that the traffic study was conducted, with LaSalle and Mount Pleasant seniors out of school, and Providence College also out of school at this time. The weather can also be a contributing factor due to more parents/guardians choosing to walk to the school. The majority of the vehicular traffic was observed on Jastram Steet during both morning and afternoon periods, with the same being said for bus traffic on Nelson Street.

The peak morning period occurs between 8:45 a.m. and 9:05 a.m., with buses arriving as early as 8:38 a.m., and pedestrians generally arriving between 8:45 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on Nelson Street. On Jastram Street, approximately 85 cars were observed arriving during the peak period. Cars were parked as early as 8:30 a.m. in the curb cut-out.

The peak afternoon period occurs between 3:15 p.m. and 3:35 p.m. with two buses arriving as early as 3:10 p.m. The afternoon period followed the same procedure of flow of traffic as the morning, with bus traffic on Nelson Street and parent/guardian traffic on Jastram Street. By 3:20 p.m., Jastram Street was fully occupied with cars parked on both sides of the street (including sidewalk).

GM2 staff counted pedestrians during the morning and afternoon observations on Nelson Street, whether they came from/went to Smith Street or Eaton Street. A summary of these counts is noted as follows:

- AM Pedestrian Counts (Nelson Street)
 - From Smith Street = 32 pedestrians
 - From Eaton Street = 5 pedestrians
- PM Pedestrian Counts (Nelson Street)
 - To Smith Street = 45 pedestrians
 - To Eaton Street = 17 pedestrians

Note: GM2 found conflicting information regarding afternoon dismissal time, noting the website stated 3:20 p.m., the crossing guard stated 3:25 p.m., and the parent handbook sstated3:31 p.m. The dismissal time on the day of observation was found to be 3:20 p.m. for the pre-k class and 3:25 p.m. for the remaining students.

2.3 Field Observations

GM2 staff members were on site on Wednesday, June 11, 2025, for both the morning and afternoon periods. GM2 staff members were standing on both Nelson Street and Jastram Street to witness bus, parent/guardian, and pedestrian traffic. Observations and applicable photos are provided in the following sections.

2.3.1 Morning Period

In general, the activity can be described as intense for a short period of time, with most of the activity occurring in a 20-minute period. Students are not permitted on-site until 8:45 a.m. and the first bell rings at 9:05 a.m.

The two crossing guards arrive by 8:30 a.m. and set up at their respective locations.

Bus traffic is directed to the west side of the school while parent vehicular access is provide on the east side. Pedestrians arrive from all directions. There were no cyclists observed during GM2's field reviews.

Jastram Street traffic, restricted to southbound flow only, will generally form a 3-lane section with on-street parking on the left, a travel lane in the middle and either sidewalk or curb cut-out parking on the right. It appears to be common practice to park halfway over the sidewalk to allow pedestrians to still pass on one side and vehicle to pass on the other.

Parents were observed stopping in the middle of the road, dropping students off and proceeding when the cut-out was full and parking on the left was occupied. As expected, the concentration of parking and drop-offs occurs at the gate opening in the vicinity of the main school entrance. Amidst this activity are pedestrians, typically parents, walking students to the gate and in many instances, to the door.

A key observation involved parents parking vehicles in the cut-out area and exiting the vehicle, leaving it unattended for a few minutes, despite the signage indicating this is prohibited. This practice reduces the efficiency of the cut-out as fewer cars can now enter/exit this small area.

Additional notes are as follows:

- The morning drop-off occurred in two areas as mentioned. The bus traffic occurred on Nelson Street and the parent/guardian traffic occurred on Jastram Street. Pedestrians were observed coming from all directions and can enter the school grounds from either Nelson Street or Jastram Street. All students were observed entering the building through the main office door in the blacktop area on the south side of the school.



- Cars were observed parked in the curb opening as early as 8:30 a.m. Cars also were observed parked on the sidewalk in areas where street parking is not permitted in order to still allow cars to pass, since designated street parking is only allowed on the east side of the street (left in photo).



- Buses were observed parking and dropping off on Nelson Street, just at the fence opening near the south side of the block/school building. At most, three buses were observed parked on Nelson street at the same time. All buses unloaded at time of arrival, regardless of whether or not another bus in front was also unloading at that time. The buses extended out their stop signs while students exited the bus.



- A crossing guard is stationed at the intersection of Smith Street and Nelson Street with traffic cones. Only buses and other school vans are allowed up Nelson Street during the morning period. Once all bus traffic is gone, one cone will be removed to allow late parent drop-offs on Nelson Street, at the direction of the crossing guard. This process is the same for the afternoon period. There is a second crossing guard stationed at the intersection of Nelson Street and Eaton Street.



- Cars were observed on Jastram Street occupying the entire width of the street at the curb opening, with cars parked inside the curb cut-out and on the east side of the street.



- The curb cut-out on Jastram Street typically accommodates 4 to 5 cars at a time, depending on the size of the vehicle and where they are parked. Vehicles were observed parked on the sidewalk to avoid blocking any street traffic coming down Jastram Street, which is typical behavior observed along the west side.



- The southerly approach of Jastram Street to Smith Street experiences delays and queues that vary from one to two vehicles to 7 or 8, which is near the school entrance gate/cut-out area.



- Cars were observed forming a 3-lane section, occupying the entire width of Jastram Street during the drop-off period, with students exiting vehicles and walking on the street around cars during this time.

2.3.2 Afternoon Period

The afternoon activity varies from that of the morning, as is typical of most school. In general, the activity is more intense for a shorter period of time, with most of the activity occurring in a 10-minute period. Students are dismissed in several waves towards the exits/streets/care.

Jastram Street is typically full of parked vehicles prior to the first (pre-k) dismissal bell at 3:20 p.m. In the short time between then and the next bell at 3:25 p.m., many families in parked vehicles leave, creating space for the next group of parents to park.

Unlike the morning period where students enter the main door, they exit via several doors in the afternoon period. Bus students exit via both the main door and another door on the Nelson Street side whereas most of the other student exit the main door and either head towards the vehicles on Jastram Street or in whatever direction they are headed on foot. Note that the pre-k students exit at their classroom door slightly north of the cut-out area on Jastram Street.

- The afternoon period experienced similar traffic flow as the morning, with buses on Nelson Street and parent/guardian on Jastram Street, and pedestrian traffic coming from all directions.



- Buses were observed parked on Nelson Street as early as 3:10 p.m. Students exit the school from the third door down from Eaton Street on Nelson Street. Buses arrived between 3:10 p.m. and 3:42 p.m. The fifth bus arrived at 3:40 p.m. and was running late, typically arriving earlier. The last bus(6th) is typically always late and arrives at 3:42 p.m.



- Cars were observed parked on both sides of the street by 3:20 p.m. This appeared to be the dismissal time of the pre-school, which exits onto the concrete platform just off of Jastram Street near the north end of the school (right side of the picture above).
- As previously noted, Jastram Street parking is only permitted on the east side of the street (left in the picture above). Cars will park on the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street before and after the curb opening in order to not block any vehicles traveling through Jastram Street.



- Afternoon procedures on Jastram Street mirror the morning observations, with cars parking in and out of the curb opening and street/sidewalk parking. Students were also observed using the main door on the south side of the school, in which they enter in the morning as well.



- At the south end of Jastram Street, cars were observed parking on both sides of the street, with cars also parking on the sidewalk, similar to the top of the street, and also parking in the business parking lot at the end of the street along Smith Street. There is a small park at the end of Jastram Street on the east side (left in the picture above). Approximately 20 students were observed going to the park after pick-up, with some cars still parked on the east side of the street.



- A bus was observed making a drop-off at 3:33 p.m. on Smith Street just east of Nelson Street. This bus was presumed to be unrelated to RFK school and just a stop on another school bus route.

2.3.3 Signing and Striping



- RRFB located across Eaton Street on the west side of the intersection Jastram Street. There is also another RRFB located across Smith Street just after Sharon Street. Note height of the RRFB as well the tree wells.



- Speed Limit Photo enforcement with restrictions signs are located at various locations around the school property on the nearby roadway network. This sign series are located:
 - The north part of Nelson Street prior to the intersection with Eaton Street.
 - The eastbound approach of Eaton Street in two locations between Academy Avenue and Nelson Street
 - The eastbound approach of Eaton Street just prior to Sharon Street.



- A school speed limit sign with restriction hours can be seen in various locations of the nearby roadway network surrounding the school. These locations are:
 - The south side of Nelson Street just after the Smith Street intersection.
 - The north side of Jastram Street just after the intersection with Eaton Street.
 - The westbound approach of Eaton Street just after the intersection of Sharon Street.

- The eastbound approach of Eaton Street just after the intersection of Academy Avenue
- The southside approach of Academy Avenue between Eaton Street and Smith Street.



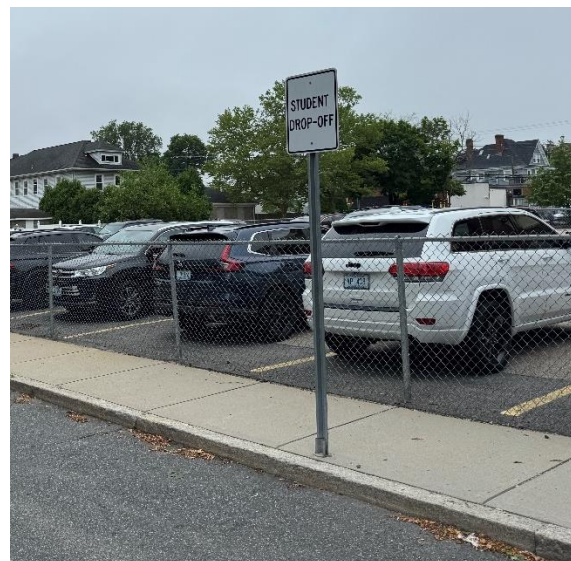
- A “DO NOT ENTER” sign with restriction times and no parking signs are located at the bottom of Nelson Street at the intersection of Smith Street. Nelson Street is typically a one-way in this restricted direction but is to allow for bus-only travel during peak morning and afternoon periods on school days and prevent cars from using this street for drop-off and pick-up procedures. There is one of these sign series places on both sides of the street at this location.



- A school/crossing sign, stop ahead sign and no parking sign are placed on Eaton Street between Jastram Street and Sharon Street. There is a 4-way stop on Eaton Street with Sharon Street.



- A “SPEED HUMP” sign is placed on the eastbound approach of Eaton Street along the north side of the school building. A “NO PARKING OR STANDING ANYTIME TOW ZONE” double arrow sign is also placed at this location. This particular no parking sign is placed at different locations along Eaton Street. Note there is no speed hump.



- The curb opening on Jastram Street has a sign that does not permit street parking during school hours on school days (pictured left above). The curb opening also has a sign that states it is a student drop-off zone (pictured right above).



- Nelson Street has a “SCHOOL” word pavement marking near the southwest side word marking and the fence opening at this corner of the building. Other than the handicap parking, there is no parking allowed on the east side of Nelson Street at any time.

2.3.4 On-Site Interviews

GM2 staff had an opportunity to discuss our observations with the two crossing guards and several parents. Based on these discussions, the following points are noted:

- If the crossing guard stationed at Smith Street and Nelson Street is out, the crossing guard at Nelson and Eaton is moved to that location, and there is no substitute for Eaton Street.
- Many parents will park their cars on Jastram Street and walk their student to the blacktop/front door due to there being no faculty/guards stationed anywhere on Jastram Street or beyond the fence opening.
- Parents/guardians are not told that they can't park their cars in the curb opening. They are only told that they are not allowed to park in either the small or large parking lot on-site.
- Eaton Street can be backed up sometimes due to Providence College traffic. The LaSalle high school does not directly interfere with traffic given the different schedule of the day.
- Jastram Street can be put into grid-lock depending on the traffic on Smith Street with the signal just after Nelson Street. This can cause no one to be able to leave Jastram Street and either pick-up or drop-off to come to a halt.
- Many parents stated that the afternoon is a lot worse than the morning.
- Nobody ever really tries to park on Eaton Street due to the limited space of the roadway width and sidewalk obstructions.
- Residents on Jastram Street will complain because cars will park and block their driveway and walk away from their vehicles.
- A crosswalk at the end of Jastram Street before Smith Street was asked for, but the city has installed one in a nearby area not on Jastram Street in the requested location.

2.4 Potential Concerns

At the time of observation, the traffic flows during the drop-off and pick-up periods, while not efficient, were not an immediate concern. Given the space that is available, there are limited options to what can be used for arrival and dismissal procedures. Based on GM2's observations the following potential concerns are noted:

- Cars park on the sidewalk during both morning and afternoon. If this were not the case and parked along the curbline, there would be little to no room to get down Jastram Street.
- There is no guard attending both drop-off and pick-up procedures on Jastram Street to assist students from exiting their vehicles and onto the sidewalk, with some crossing the street if parked on the opposite side, this leading to main reason why many parents/guardians will park and walk their student to the front door.
- If traffic is congested on Eaton Street, no vehicles will be able to pass, and all nearby streets will be lined with cars.
- Speed humps were installed on Jastram Street but there is none

2.5 Crash Data Review

Crash data requests to the Providence Police Department previously required a waiting period of nearly 30 days from the time of request. In the spring of 2023, the Providence Streets Coalition created an interactive city "Crash Map" assembled from data requested to and provided by the City of Providence Police Department. Note that the Rhode Island Department of Transportation does not contribute to this effort.

For the purposes of this study, GM2 conducted a preliminary review of the available data to screen the number of reported crashes to determine if an official request was necessary. Based on the plotted data, there were only two (2) crashes reported during the 3-year period of 2022, 2023, and 2024. While limited information is provided on crash cause, there did not appear to be any correlation between the crashes or locations. As such, no further investigation into crash data was pursued.

The site link is provided as follows: <https://pvdstreets.org/crash-map/>

A screenshot of the data location is provided as follows:

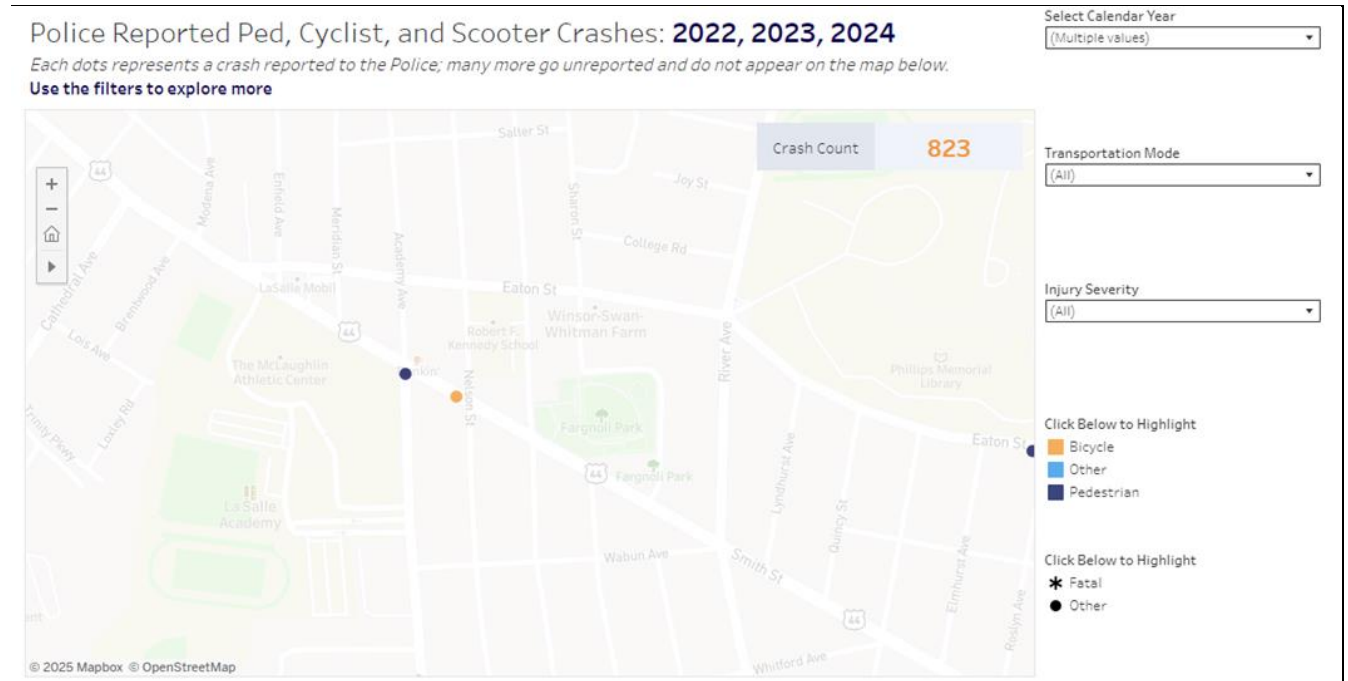


Figure 5: Crash Data Map
(pvdstreets.org/crash-map)

Note the Crash Count value applies to the three-year period for all of Providence (reported), not the location occupied by the window boundary.

3.0 Robert F Kennedy Elementary and Middle School

GM2 also received a schematic 30% design of the latest plans for the new building in October of 2025. The figure below showcases the landscape plans of the proposed new building/site. The new building is proposed to be four floors and take up the majority of the property. The existing parking lot is being moved from the east side of the building to the south side of the building, with the entrance along Nelson Street.

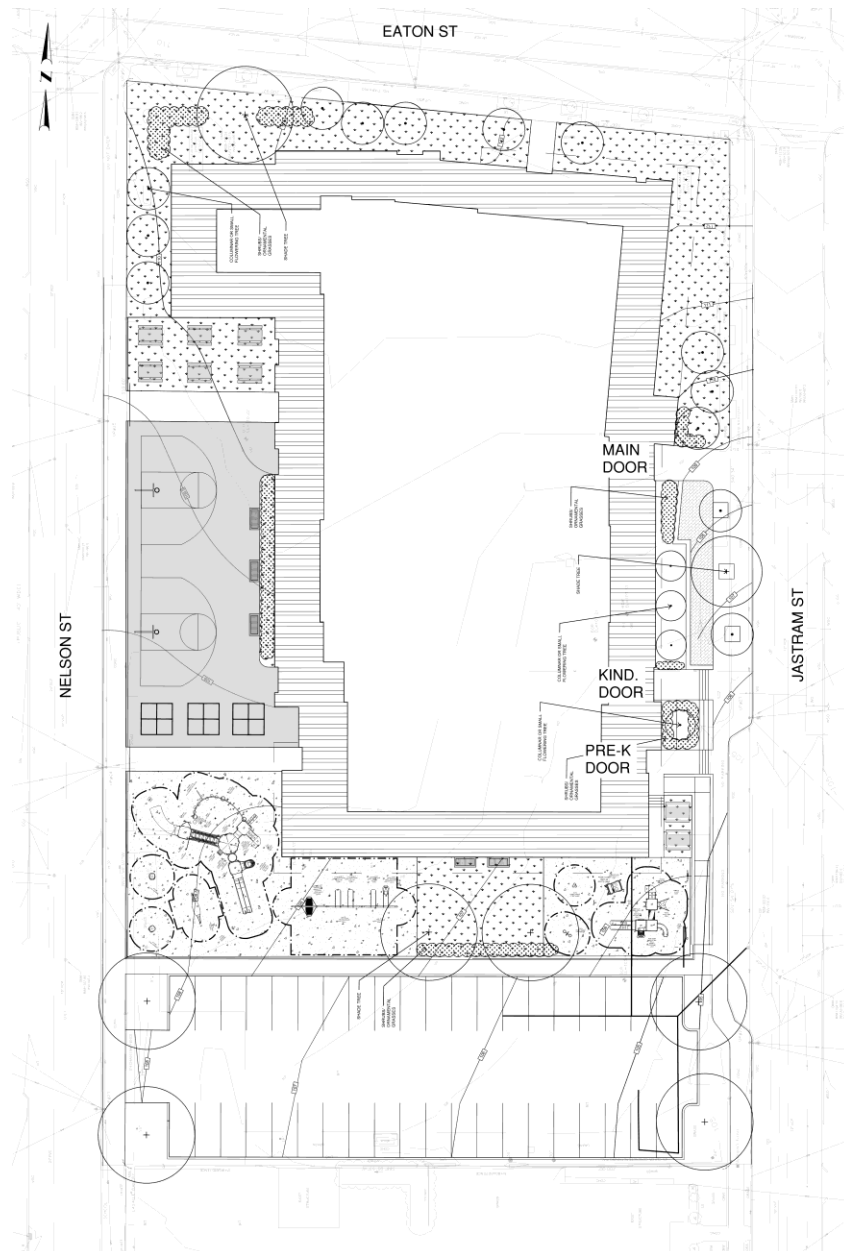


Figure 6: Robert F Kennedy Elementary and Middle School 30% Schematic Design

4.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered:

- The existing curb-cut is critical to operations on Jastram Street. This should be maintained, and if possible, expanded through some utility pole relocation or add one immediately north.
- Maintain the two-bell system in the afternoon period.
- Maintain the separate pre-k area.
- Maintain the crossing guards.
- Maintain sidewalks around the school. If possible, increase sidewalk width, eliminate tree wells if necessary. At a minimum, clear any obstructions such as trees, damaged fence, etc. Sidewalk areas should be repaired where necessary and meet pedestrian access route minimum requirements.
- Continue to allow sidewalk parking. This may require maintaining the existing curb reveal. This is an undesirable but necessary allowance at this location.

5.0 Summary

The existing site traffic already stretches the capacity of the roadway network. Any increase in vehicular traffic will further deteriorate operations in the vicinity of the school.

The sidewalk areas are critical for pedestrian accommodation and safety and should be maintained to the maximum extent possible.

The loss of any on-street parking areas would be detrimental to operations on Jastram Street. Any opportunity to increase curb cut-out areas should be examined.

Bus ridership should be maximized, even if reducing the eligible radius is required.

The challenges of an urban school setting are difficult to overcome, and the design of the new school should carefully consider the effect of losing any transportation amenities the site currently does have. The increase in students will already adversely affect the amount of available space for cars, pedestrians, and buses.