

American University in Bulgaria

*Campus Master Planning
Fact-Finding Report: June 1, 2023*



Discovery



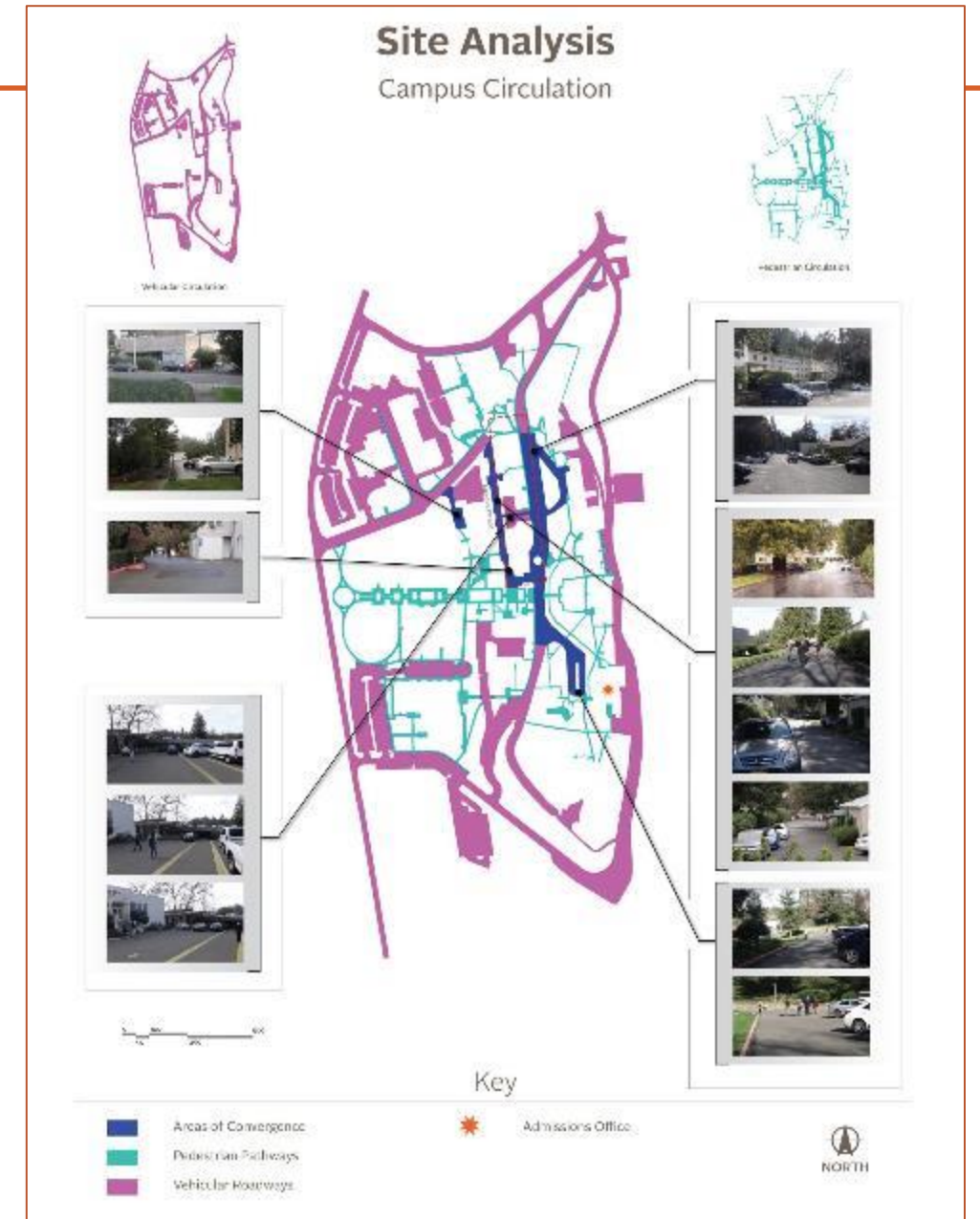
What capital resources do you have and how are you using them?

Review of existing plans, guidance, and planning parameters

Site, facilities, and interior space assessment

Inventory of current use of space, either focused or campus-wide

Kick-starter projects



Goals Parameters Guidance

1. Relocate functions from Main Building to Skaptopara campus
2. Align spaces and places with the desired student experience.
3. Determine space requirements to support strategic growth.
4. Consider relocation and repurposing opportunities.
5. Facilitate the integrative role of the Center for Information, Democracy, and Citizenship.
6. Ensure that what is valued is preserved.

Thematic Observations

Your **distinction is your challenge**, regardless of size:

- English language, American-style university
- Modeling democracy, open information, citizenship, and the value of strategic growth
- Residential liberal arts, embracing community, diversity, and inclusivity
- Valuing creativity and entrepreneurship as contributors to student learning and the growth of the region
- In a city with few English speakers or partnerships/collaborations
- And a building (Main) that is a standing contradiction

Continue **what you are doing well**.

- Campus identity: scale, density, edges, vocabulary of materials
- Student learning support location and transparency
- Building community, especially with events in the sports hall and clubs

Student housing is the pivot point

- Impacts percentage of international students and diversity
- Can impact demand for on-campus parking
- Drives campus life, especially on weekends
- Is related to perceived academic quality, brand, and prestige

Emerging Themes and Strategies

DRAFT

EMERGING THEMES

CONTEXT FOR IDENTITY

The campus needs to look and feel like the AUBG brand, which is distinctive and highly valued.

CAPACITY AND GROWTH

Strategic growth starts with understanding existing and needed capacity and potential opportunities.

LIFE ON THE CAMPUSES

All AUBG facilities should provide opportunities for visible and engaging living and learning experiences.

COMPONENTS

- Residential liberal arts means relationship rich.
- Information, democracy, and citizenship in action need to be visible.
- Highlight what AUBG does well now.
- Focus on housing.

- Determine the capacity of the two campuses.
- Identify pinch points between growth and the valued experience.
- Create options for best use of existing and new space.

- Increase student and faculty presence in the Main Building.
- Enhance the academic character of the Skaptopara campus.

STRATEGY EXAMPLES

- Create more continuity between the campuses with interior design, banners, signs, amenities.
- Highlight meeting rooms and activity spaces, especially for student clubs and governance.
- Preserve the visibility of student success spaces.

- “Shake the rug” and put things back with the student experience and efficiency in mind.
- Identify relocations and space reallocations for student-centered experience.
- Use new space for unmet qualitative and quantitative needs.

- Create inviting third spaces in the Main Building.
- Enhance quality and fit (pedagogy and size) of learning spaces.
- Build connections with the town and region.

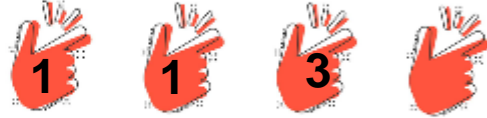
Town Hall results

The AUBG welcome

Find



Navigate



See-feel-hear

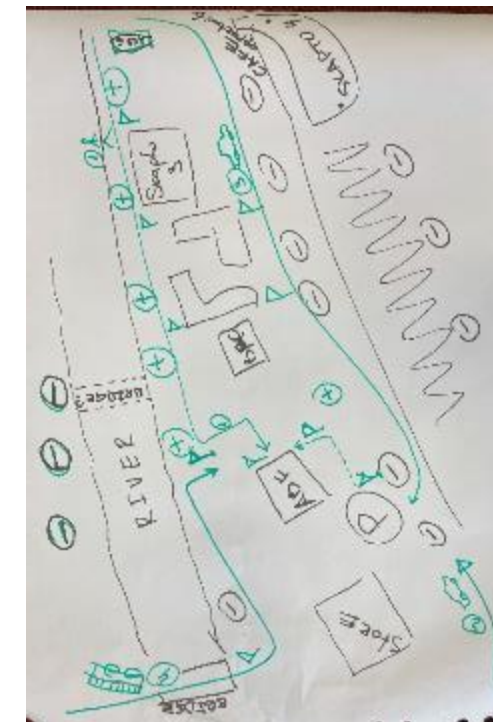


Student Success

PLACES	RATING				
STUDENT SERVICES SEAMLESS AND INVITING	POOR	1	2	3	4 GREAT
ACADEMIC SUPPORT STUDENT CENTRIC	POOR	1	2	3	4 GREAT
RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE ATTRACTS CAMPUS LIVING	POOR	1	2	3	4 GREAT
PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP PUBLIC AND PERMEABLE	POOR	1	2	3	4 GREAT

Relationship rich spaces

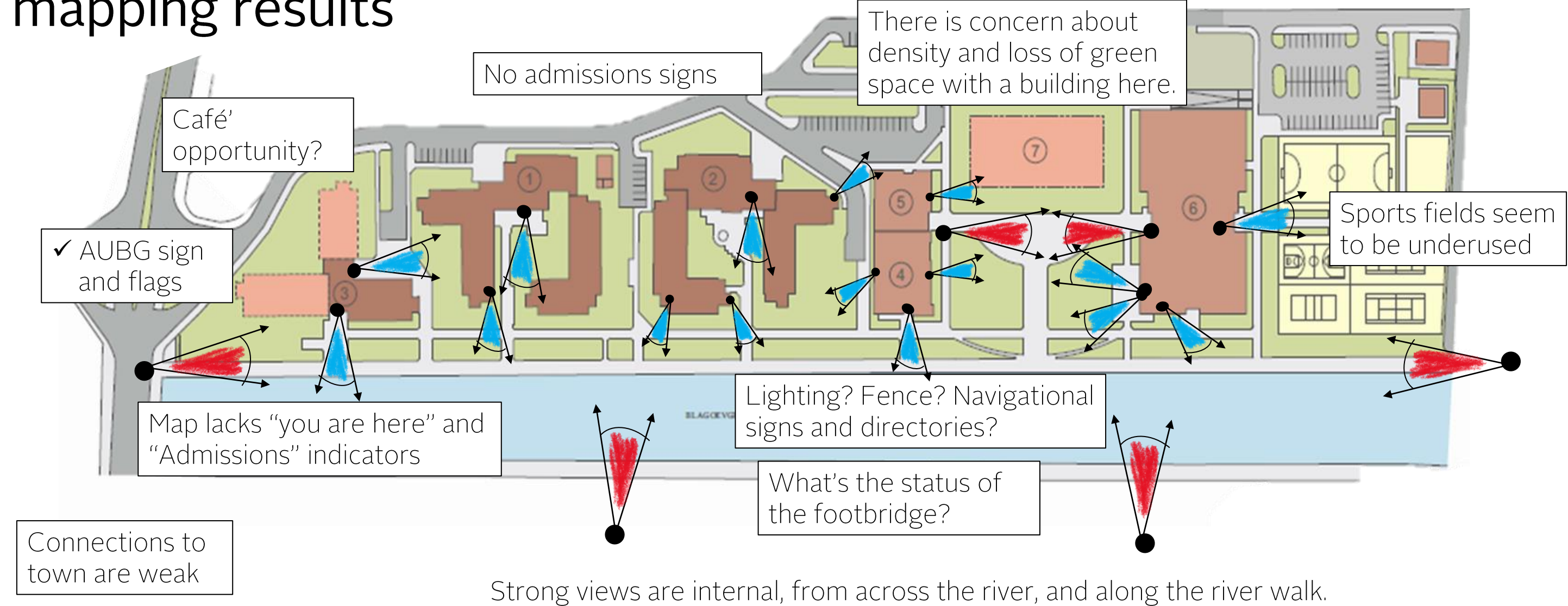
The general impression is that there are few but they are heavily used. There are none at the Main Building.



Town Hall mapping results

“Wild west park” or “Classic Bulgaria side”

Poor presence, connection, entry and appearance at this end



Main Building is primarily classes and student/club accounts “business”

Other emphases: Energy efficiency (Main Bldg.)
Classrooms- actual vs pedagogy
Campus feels empty

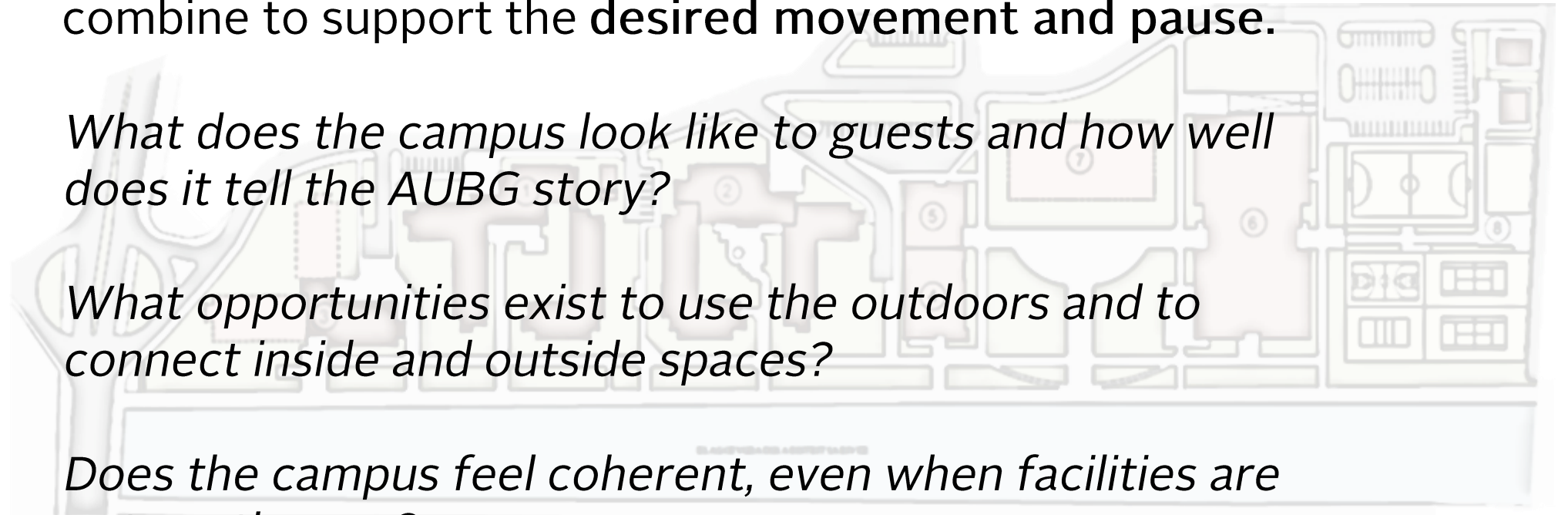
Site Assessment

A focus on how the natural and built environment combine to support the **desired movement and pause.**

What does the campus look like to guests and how well does it tell the AUBG story?

What opportunities exist to use the outdoors and to connect inside and outside spaces?

Does the campus feel coherent, even when facilities are not contiguous?



Skaptopara

- The campus is easily distinguished from the surrounding properties (except the river walks).
- The linear arrangement is nicely connected by pedestrian paths.
- Long views across campus and from campus to the mountains afford place identity.
- The areas between the academic and student center buildings support both planned and organic engagement.
- These qualities contribute to a pedestrian scale that is at once compact but uncrowded.

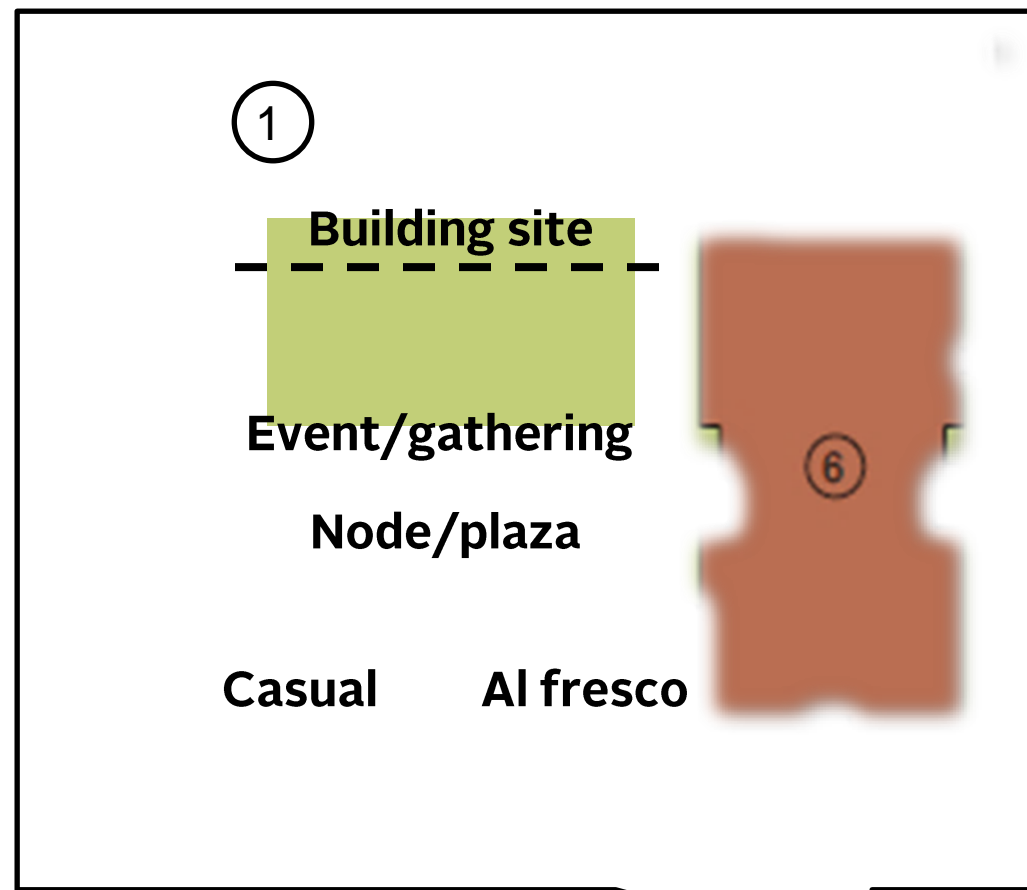


Admissions guest experience

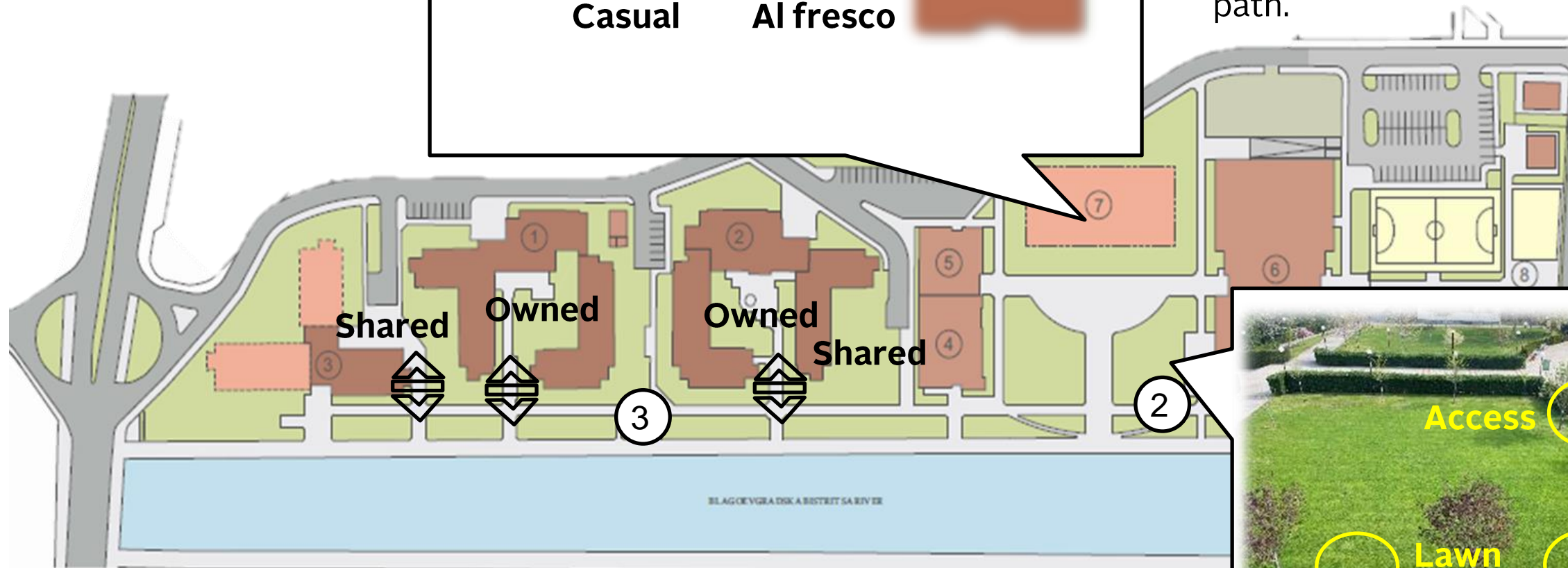


6. Mark dedicated admissions guest spaces with view to green. Add campus map. Identify building entrance.
5. Clarify **admissions guest parking** entrance; pave the lot.
4. Add accent color banner or flags at gym to create visible destination.
3. Trim hedge to allow view of student center from car.
2. Directional sign for admissions to avoid confusion with canopy.
1. Add admissions signs in special accent color.

Outdoor space organization

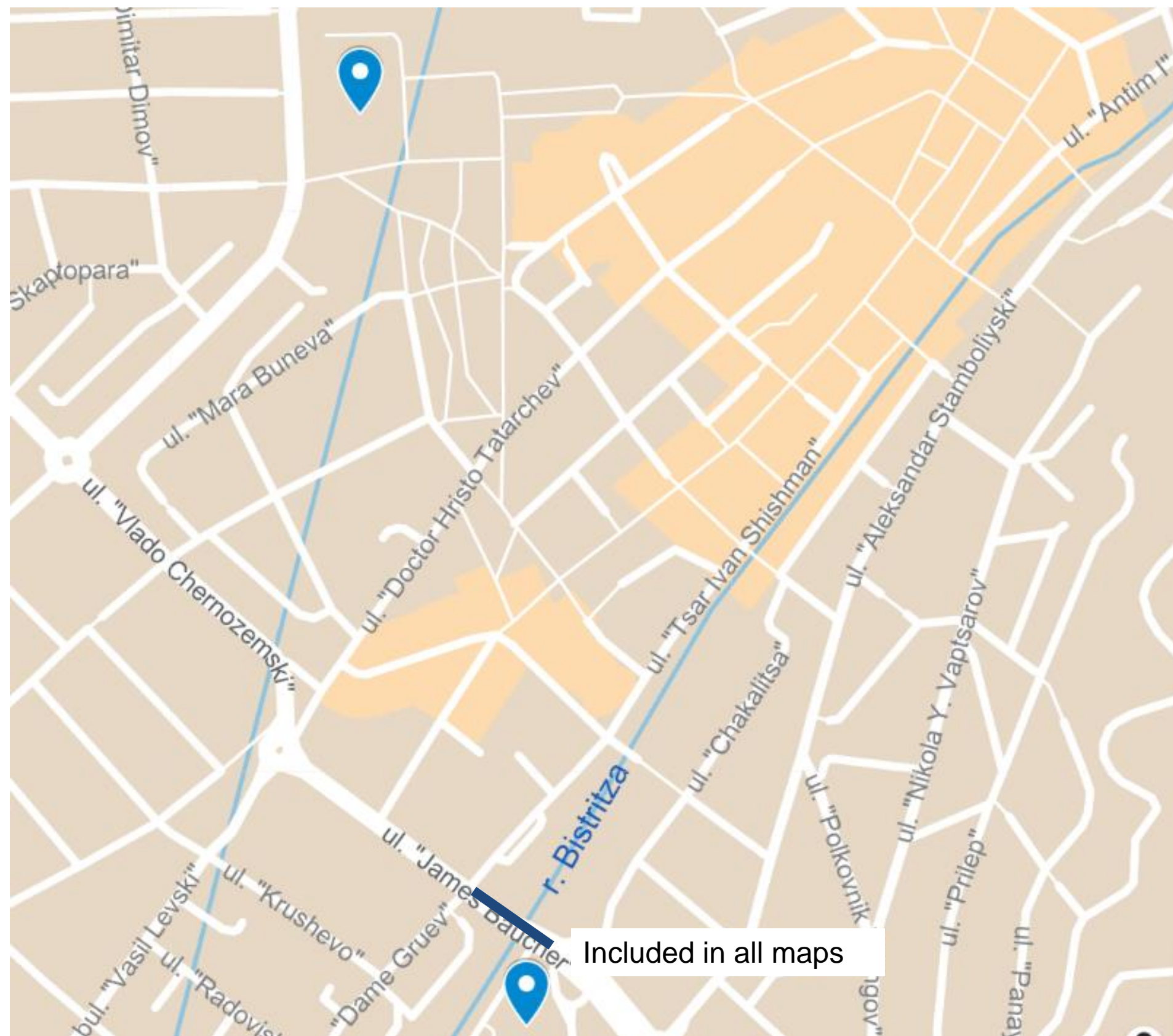


1. Long-term use of the green should be based on multiple, intentionally designed zones.
2. The zones nearest the river need access from the plaza, through the existing hedges.
3. The design of the residence halls allows for outdoor spaces that can feel both “owned” by residents and shared and for branded thresholds from the pedestrian path.



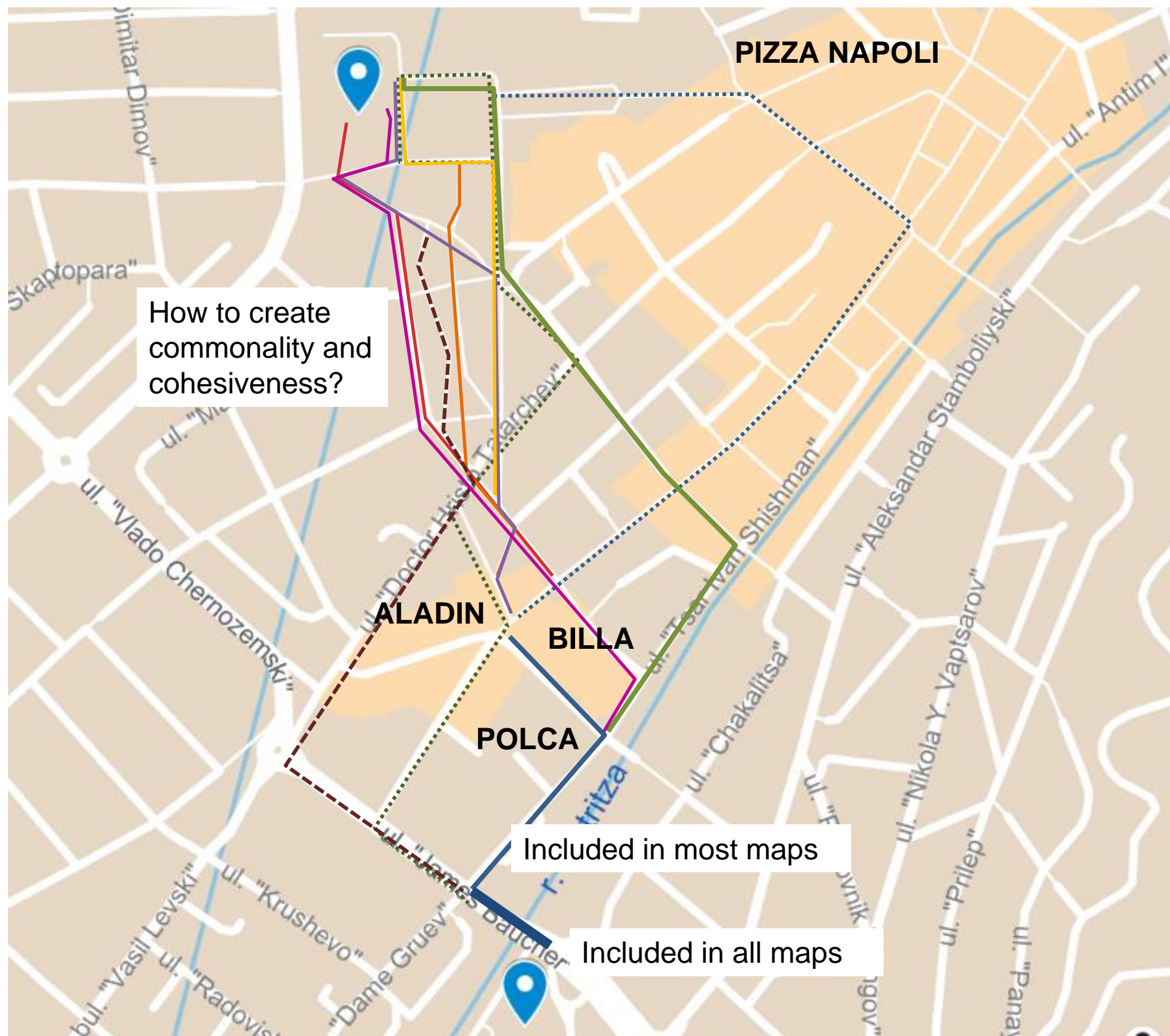
Skapto – Main Routes Used by Project Team

- Primary
- - - Secondary



Skapto – Main Routes Used by Project Team

- Primary
- - - Secondary



How to create commonality and cohesiveness?

Included in most maps

Included in all maps

Skapto - Main



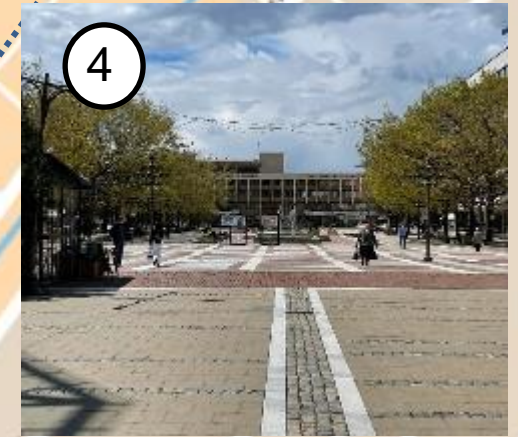
1. Create a "Discover Blago" map and directory on back of campus map (sponsors?)
Example from Tiffin University.



5. Color, flags, banners at Main Building façade toward plaza.



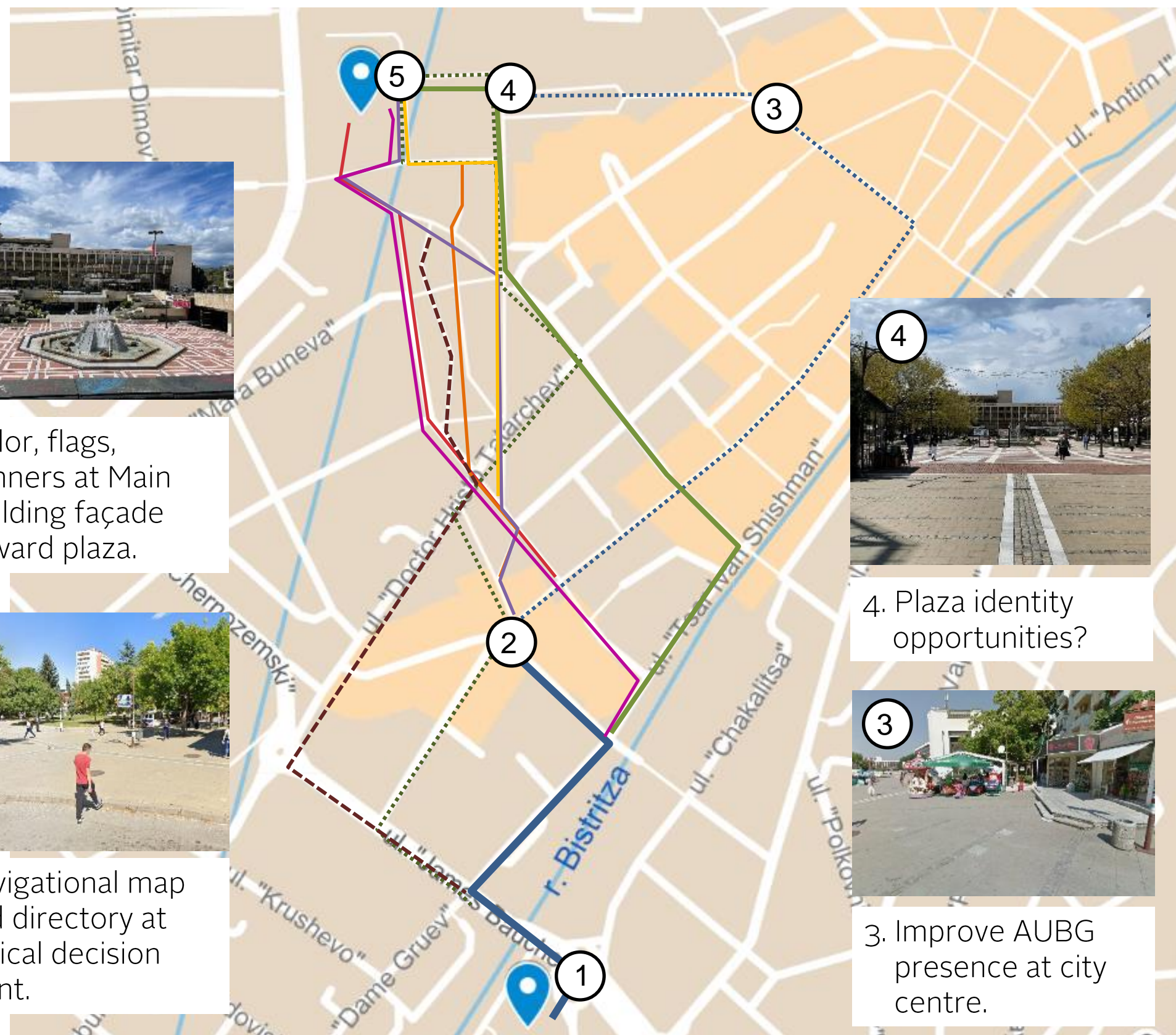
2. Navigational map and directory at critical decision point.



4. Plaza identity opportunities?

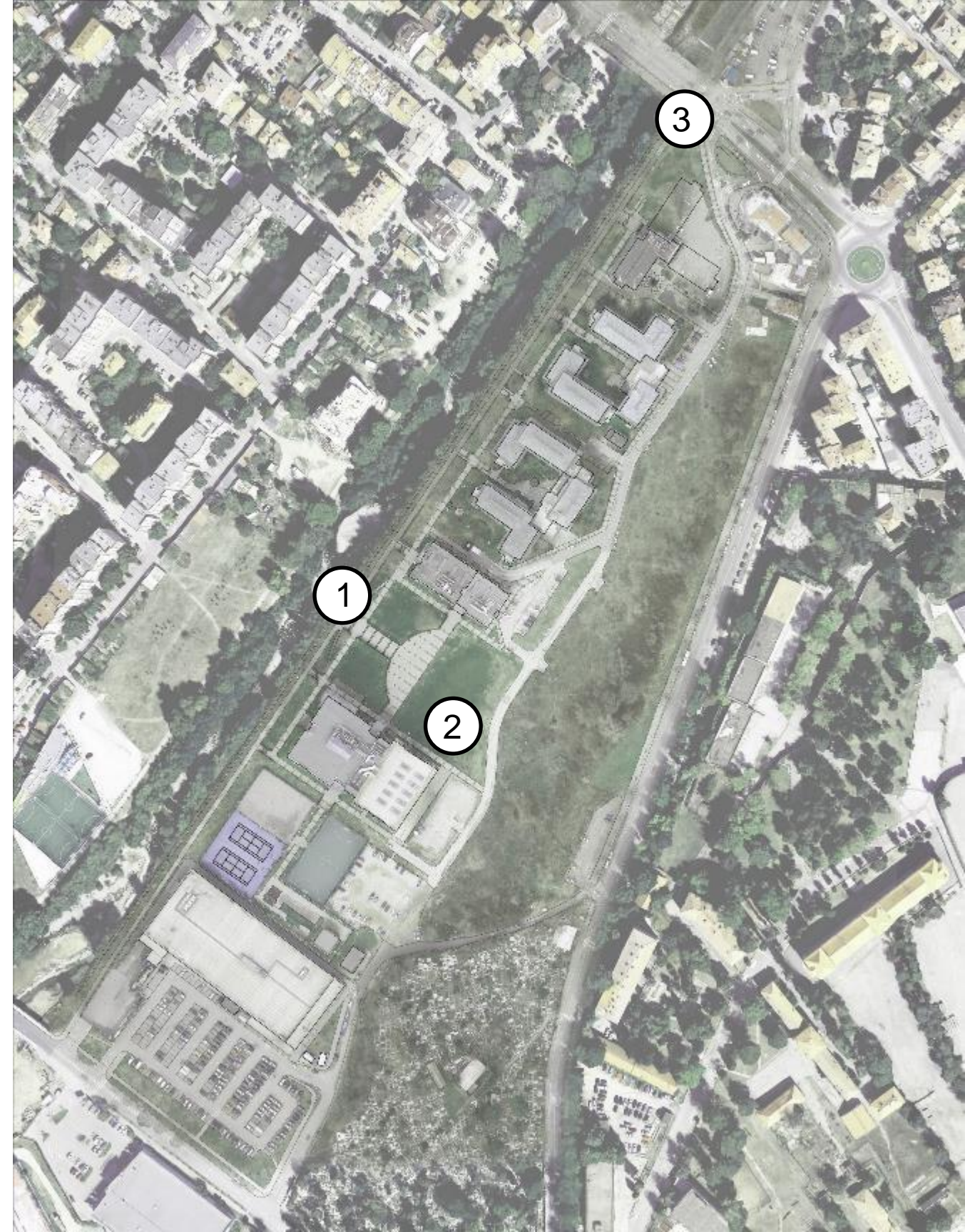


3. Improve AUBG presence at city centre.



Site Discussion Items

1. How open to pedestrian traffic along the river does AUBG wish to be? What is the appropriate level of control?
 2. The green comprises multiple functional zones. How should each of those be used?
 3. How can connections to town and to the Main Building be strengthened while maintaining campus identity? How can we improve continuity between the campuses?
- How can we ensure that growth does not increase density of space (and experience)?
 - What is the best building site?



Facilities Evaluation

Successful spaces within well-designed and maintained facilities with minimal intervention required

Program functions and/or facilities require targeted attention to operate at optimum level

Program functions and/or facilities do not align with goals or the site has higher potential

Experience Level

A high-level examination of **building conditions and contribution** to space needs.

What buildings can we rely on and where are the risks?

*Do the spaces serve students and programs well?
Are functions in the right place on campus?*

What are the expansion, repurposing, or renovation opportunities?

What would we do differently next time?

Space Assessment

A qualitative look at existing and needed spaces.

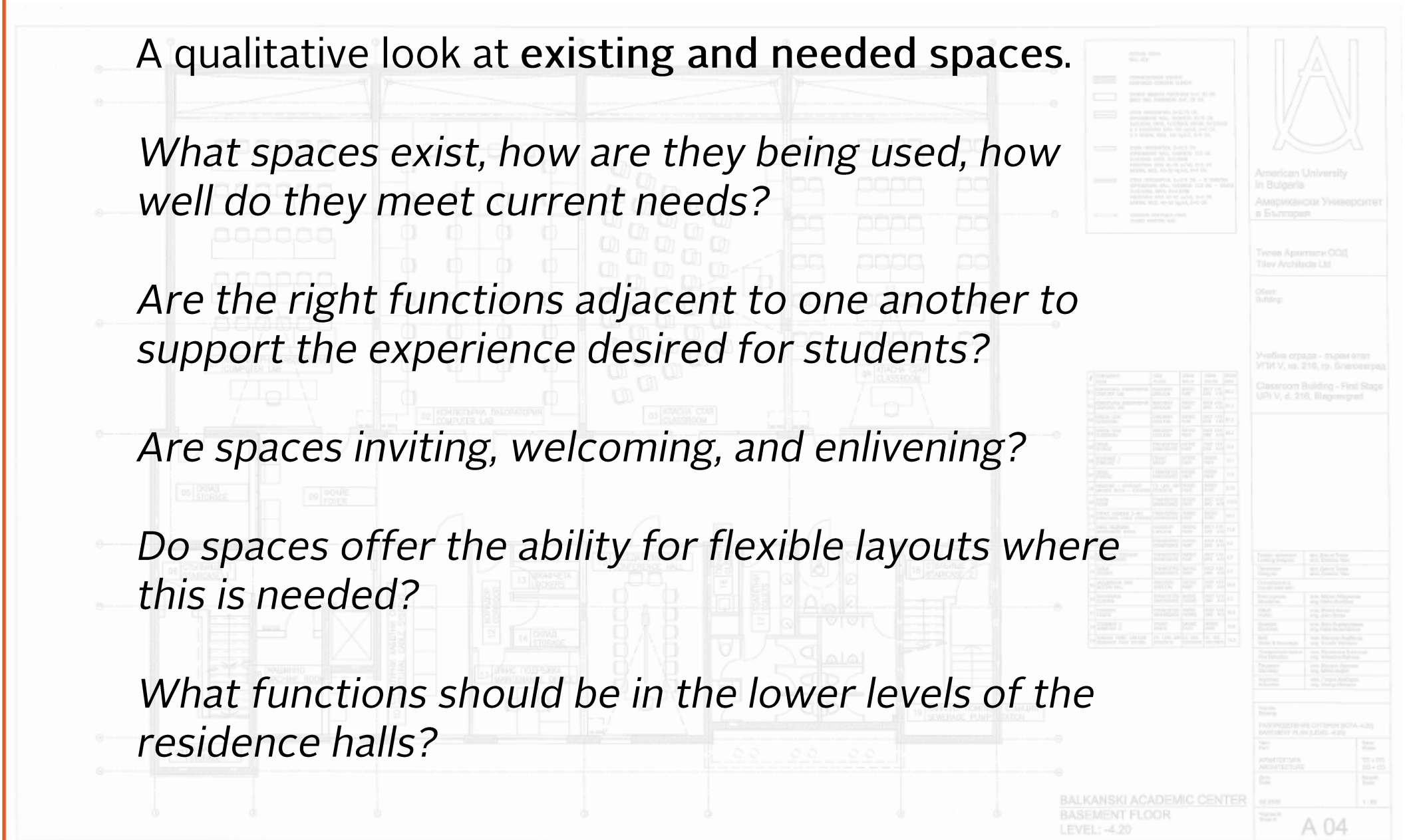
What spaces exist, how are they being used, how well do they meet current needs?

Are the right functions adjacent to one another to support the experience desired for students?

Are spaces inviting, welcoming, and enlivening?

Do spaces offer the ability for flexible layouts where this is needed?

What functions should be in the lower levels of the residence halls?



Main Building



Description:

- 7-story, concrete frame building with metal and glass panels, white marble floors, travertine and dark wood walls.
- International flags are displayed in the monumental stair, creating a natural AUBG brand and stunning entrance view.
- AUBG leases 11,000 square meters of space, of which about 5,500 square meters is actually assigned; one floor of the building is used by another university
- The mechanical system is connected to the performing arts building across the plaza; the windows are old.
- The new Red Room on the 7th floor has been added.
- Current expenses need to be compared to renovation and construction costs.

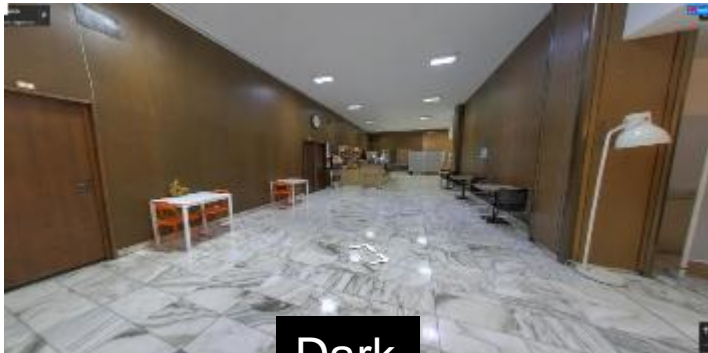
Main Building



Observations:

- The building is not energy efficient; the windows should be replaced for long-term use.
- Streets, plazas, and stairs combine to create a confusing set of options for entering and exiting; creating a clear preferred route between campuses, with landmarks and branding, can reduce the perceived distance.
- The building functions primarily as an academic center but the finishes, lighting, furniture, need to be updated using the AUBG design language.
- The large gathering is used for testing but is too austere and spread out for instructional use.
- The campus plan should inform the amount of space needed in the lease.

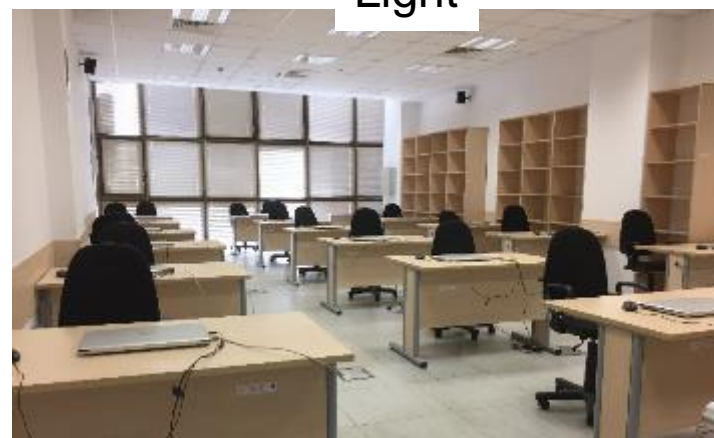
Main Building



Dark



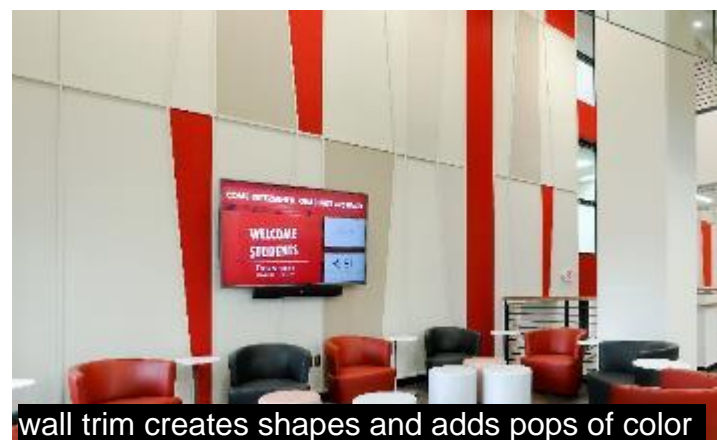
Light



Observations:

- Classroom furniture is light colored and offers some moveability, consistent with BAC.
- Some interiors feel “heavy” due to the dark wood paneling.
- Use the accent palettes in Main Building classrooms to create a consistent AUBG design language.
- Explore alternatives that may be allowed to alleviate the darkness of the dark wood paneling – artwork by students, graphics (we’ll look at other options also).

Main Building



Observations:

- The flags are colorful and lively.
- More colorful and lively branding and graphics are recommended both inside and outside to make AUBG's presence more visible and welcoming.
- AUBG should be branded at each entrance.
- Environmental graphics add color, are relatively inexpensive, and removable.

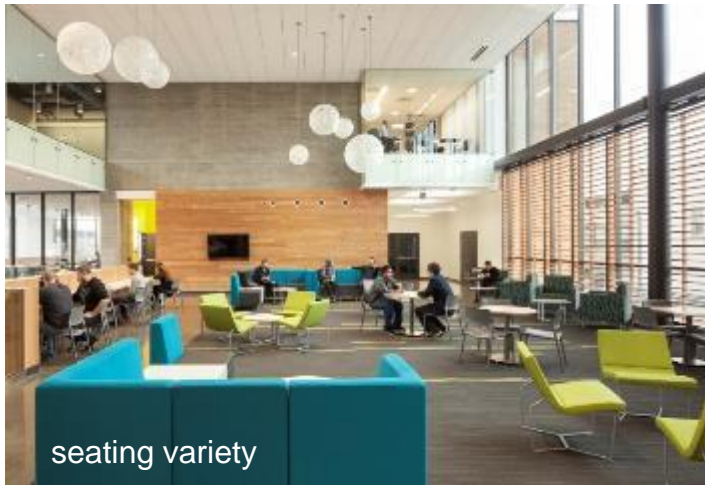
Main Building



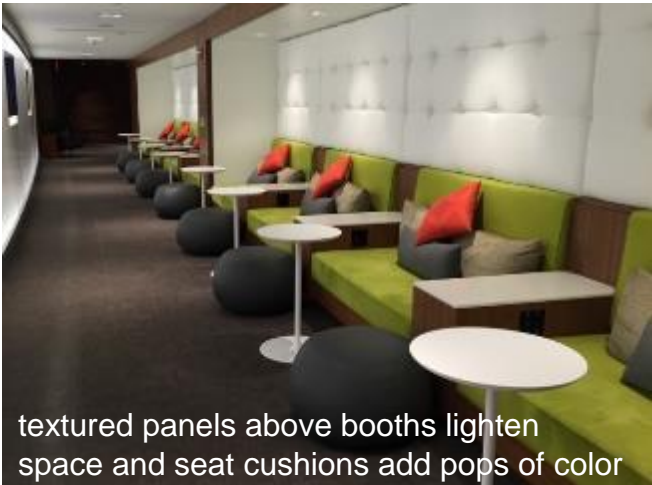
Observations:

- The Red Room offers a mix of collaboration and flexibility for different activities and room layouts.
- Ideas to create excitement and awareness of the new Red Room: Branding to create awareness of the Red Room throughout Main Building and the Skapto campus, holding events that invite involvement, other?
- When available, add pictures of Red Room activities in other AUBG areas of the building.
- Assess the experience of getting to the room.
- Public areas are wide and open. Furniture variety should include soft seating, booths in the sofa nooks, tables and chairs.

Main Building character images



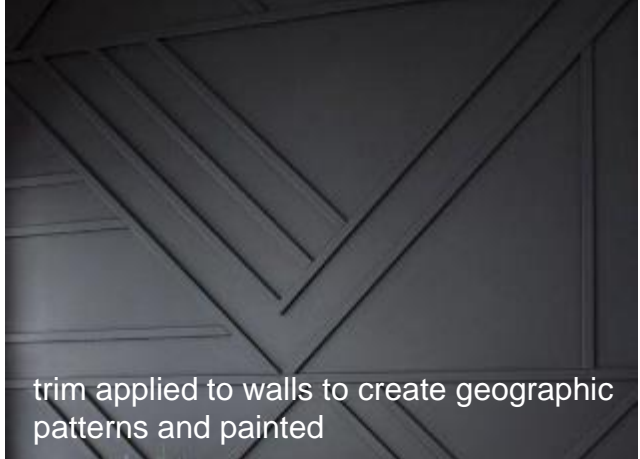
seating variety



textured panels above booths lighten space and seat cushions add pops of color



bands of color identify group study pods



trim applied to walls to create geographic patterns and painted

Skaptopara Residence Halls



Description:

- Now 26 and 33 years old, Skapto I and II have 3 wings (3, 4, and 5 stories).
- The design creates outdoor courtyards and terraces that connect the wings.
- The room layout features two doubles sharing a bathroom.
- Each floor has student lounges and/or reading/study rooms.
- Exteriors and windows are being replaced during summer breaks to achieve better energy efficiency.
- Bottom floors include a significant amount of unassigned common space.
- Skapto III currently consists of one, six-story wing; it was designed and constructed to allow expansion.

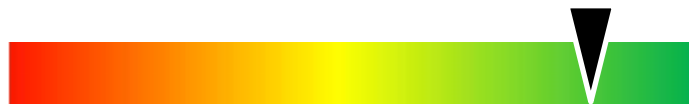
Skaptopara Residence Halls



Observations:

- The courtyards and connections to the riverside walks are opportunities for creating both “owned” space and community space.
- The lower-level gathering spaces are bright and in good condition but are underused; a high priority should be placed on making these available for club use and some renovation to add vibrancy.
- There are attic spaces in Skapto I and II, but using that space would require an elevator and, possibly, structural work.
- The current strategy for Skapto III is to construct two wings with 310 beds and 40 subterranean parking spaces.
- The main lobbies have different ceiling heights and other features that are used to create different seating areas. Renovation can offer more seating variety for different activities and interactions.
- The physics lab in Skapto II lower level uses space that does not need windows.

Balkanski Academic Center (BAC)



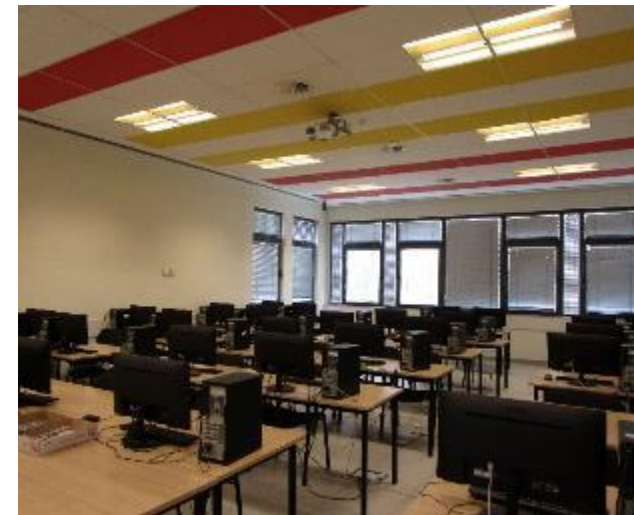
Description:

- This four-story building is the only academic space on the Skaptopara campus; it is connected to the Panitza Library but passage between the two is limited to the main level.
- The primary orientation is south, facing the campus green; secondary entry is from the west and the pedestrian walk.
- The building is less than 20 years old and has an inviting, contemporary look and feel.
- The exterior material palette is stucco-like with punched aluminum window and curtainwall systems.
- It has a built-up, low slope flat roof.
- The mechanical system is a heat pump system.
- There are toilet rooms on each floor; an elevator and exit stairs serve each floor, as well.
- The envelope and systems are all in good condition and well-maintained.

Balkanski Academic Center (BAC)

BAC lower-level classrooms

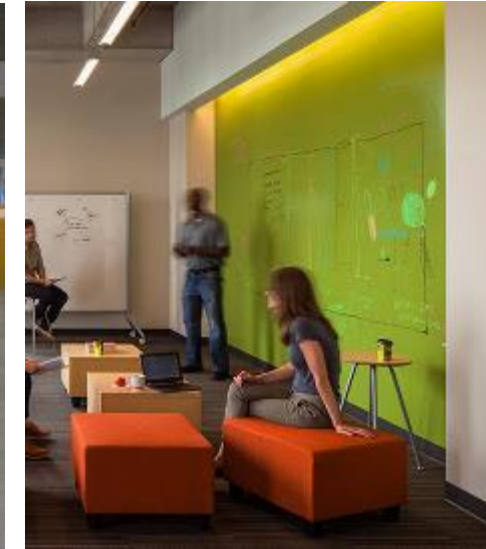
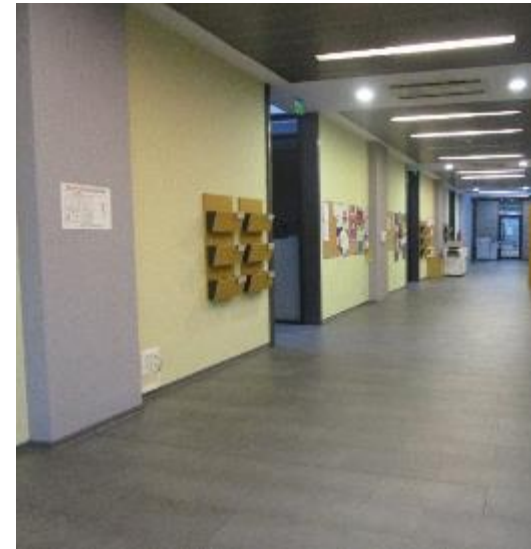
- Below-grade classrooms always require extra attention. See slides at end of report.
- Window treatments at light wells can disguise the concrete while letting in daylight .
- Accent color on walls or ceilings and artwork add focal points in classrooms.
- Improve collaboration layouts with tables and chairs on casters; relocate current furniture to Main Building/ELI.



Balkanski Academic Center (BAC)

BAC – upper levels

- Apply accent paint and/or art in classrooms.
- Test the impact of replacing office blinds with vinyl privacy film.
- Relocate mailboxes and bulletin boards to add seating and writing walls for faculty/ student interaction.
- The location of the main level offices restricts use of the green area south of the BAC (the area labeled “casual” on slide 11). This should be a quiet zone.



Panitza Library



Description:

- The Library is a 4 -story concrete and steel structure with one of the floors below grade
- The exterior material palette is stucco-like with punched aluminum window and curtainwall systems and a built-up, low slope flat roof.
- The mechanical system is a heat pump system.
- There is one main entrance on the south side facing the green.
- The lower-level houses books in stacks and compact shelving.
- The first level contains the main entrance, library offices, circulation desk, and reading area with some stacks. It is also used for events.
- The upper floors have additional library offices, reading areas, study rooms, and some stacks. There are toilet rooms on each floor; an elevator and exit stairs serve each floor, as well.
- The envelope and systems are in good condition and well-maintained.

Panitza Library



Observations:

- Library staff have nicely combined inviting study, presentation, and collection functions in relatively limited space.
- The Panitza is home to the largest English language collection in the country; this should be called out on the web site.
- We recommend continuing to move collections from open stacks to compact shelving in order to create more student study space. (The library and student center are the only group study locations on the Skaptopara campus.)
- A new palette of paint colors is recommended (slides at end).
- Continue to assign space along the south side windows, facing the green, to student use to emphasize visible activity (see and be seen).

America for Bulgaria Student Center (ABF)



Description:

- The Student Center is a 4-story concrete and steel structure with one of the floors below grade.
- The exterior material palette is stucco-like with punched aluminum window and curtainwall systems and a built-up, low slope flat roof. The mechanical system is a heat pump system.
- Main entrances are on the south and north sides, which connects to the green and sidewalk/plaza and the Library.
- The below grade level houses parking, vehicular access to storage and the load in for the auditorium and kitchen, and the fitness center with adjacent locker rooms and offices. Vehicular access is by a ramp located on the eastern side of the building.
- The main floor contains the entry lobby/lounge, bookstore, café, auditorium, multi-purpose hall and support. The café has outdoor seating on the north side facing the quad.

America for Bulgaria Student Center (ABF)



Description:

- The second level has the running track in the multi-purpose hall, admission and financial aid, registrar, student services center, common areas and support.
- The third level is dining, meeting rooms, art studio, marketing and events offices, and lounge spaces with adjacent support space. All spaces have views of the surrounding campus. There is a terrace off the dining area with views of the campus and city beyond.
- There are toilet rooms on each floor; an elevator and three sets of exit stairs serve each floor. A monumental staircase bisects the upper floors and helps filter light from a skylight above.
- The envelope and systems are all in good condition and well-maintained.

America for Bulgaria Student Center (ABF)



Observations:

- This is a shining example of permeable, thick, and sticky spaces. The ABF is inviting, encourages lingering, and provides multiple, highly visible and accessible opportunities.
- Overall, the organization of functions is well-thought out.
- Especially noteworthy is the second-floor location of student services, which comprises the major components of student success: advising, writing, tutoring. The center also brings together international services, Erasmus, and career services.
- Visibility through, into, and from the building is important as is its location on the green.
- The gym is a major indoor gathering spot for athletics/recreation, celebrating campus community, and international connections.
- The student center and residence halls combine to make the Skaptopara campus easy to identify as the student life center of AUBG.

America for Bulgaria Student Center (ABF)



Observations:

- Dining layout allows open seating throughout the day. The kitchen seems well-designed to be efficient.
- The separate seating areas provide different seating types and allow a portion of the space to be used for events separate from other student dining.
- Lounge seating and the dining seating was occupied throughout the day so prospective students can be part of the campus life right away.
- The one area where this permeability is a bit strained is the ASPIRE space on the first floor, where meeting, presentation, work, and campus store functions collide.
- The offices for Marketing and Conferences have appropriate adjacencies to other departments and used spaces, but should their location serve a more student-focused function?

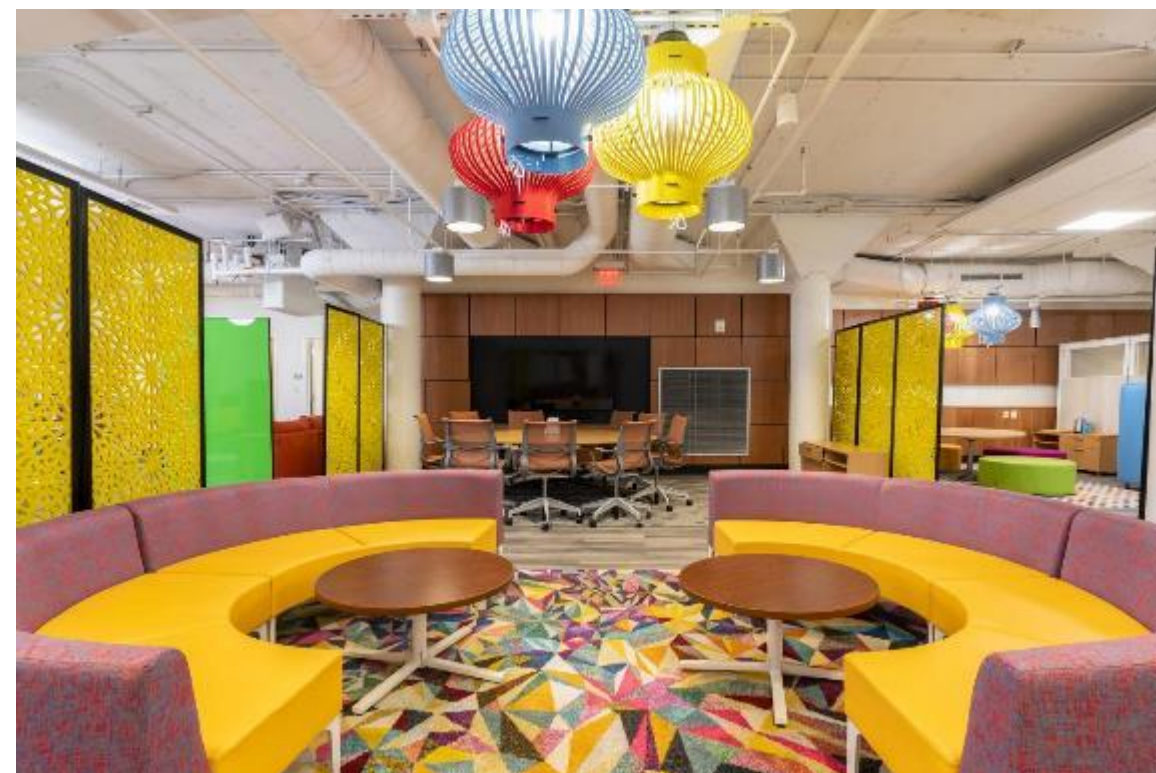
Quick wins

Celebrating Student Cultures and Shared Experiences

- Look for opportunities to showcase student cultures thru art or other mediums, study abroad or other experiences, student stories; Student Services is one location.
- Identify places where students can recognize friends that may be studying off campus or from different homelands.



Student
Orgs /
Diversity
Center
character
images



Quick wins

Assume you will need to use the Main building for the near future.

- Rename and rebrand
 - City centre?
 - Blago Centre?
 - Naming contest?
- AUBG branding
- Lighting
- Color
- Texture
- Furniture

Focus on things that can move to new space later.

An immediate goal is to reduce the perception that Skaptopara means campus life and Main means academics



Quick wins

- Off-campus housing specialist
- Lists/directory of English-friendly businesses nearby
- Greenspace hedge, hammock park, add yard dining furniture
- Create outdoor zones
- Proximity lock on gate to fields
- Courtyard gateways
- Signage



Crazy ideas

- Parking strategies
 - Policies regarding who can bring cars to campus?
 - Parking fee structure
 - Negotiating with city on the lots north of the fields
 - Remote parking for freshmen
 - Tie parking policies to best practices in student success – keep freshmen on campus on weekends
- Partnering opportunities?
 - Buildings
 - Retail – for example the “Skapto 4” cafe
- Learn to ask why and why not rather than accept the status quo.

Further Learning

Need to learn more about...

- Student orgs, location for gathering and working
- Diversity/ Culture Center – need, define it for AUBG?
- Student Services integrations
- Pedagogies, faculty/student out-of-class interactions
- Ideas for lower floor of res halls
- Admissions operations
- Campus events and traditions
- Registrar, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts interactions with students and operations crossovers
- Residence Life experience goals
- International student services
- Desired work environments
- English Language Institute



Next Step: Analysis



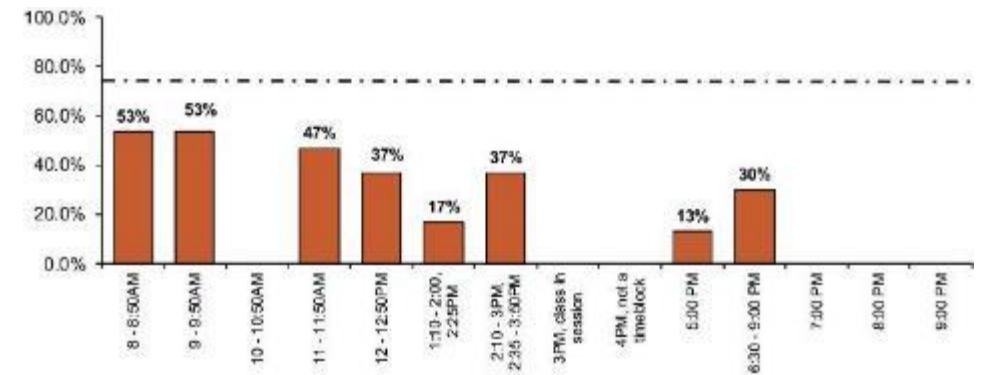
How much space will you need, for what, and where?

Projected number of classrooms of different sizes to meet planned enrollment, schedule, and average section size goals

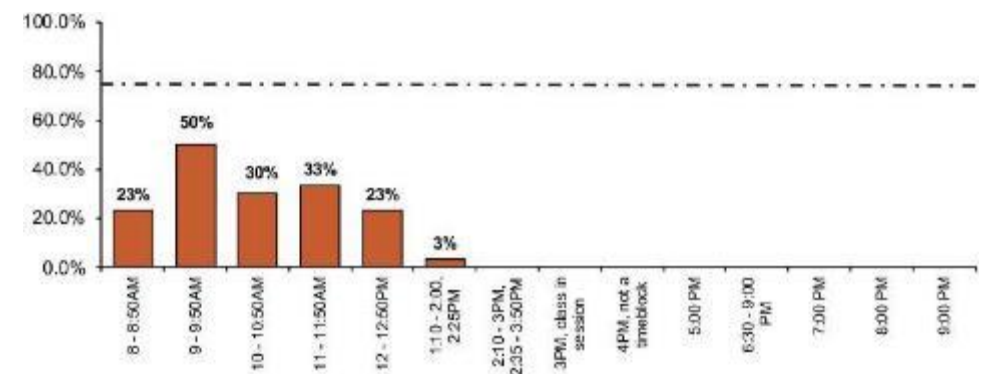
Key user group (stakeholders) interviews and space program showing your current and projected space needs by size and use based on our experience and best practices

Identify possible projects - “early contenders” – that could address those projected needs

Tuesday General Classroom Use by Hour



Friday General Classroom Use by Hour



Questions Suggestions Next steps



1. Ongoing data collection and analysis (includes classroom list and faculty survey)
2. Class schedule and parameters (enrollment, average group section size, schedule)
3. Food service numbers
4. Key user group interviews

Appendix

Design aids for Panitza Library and Balkanski Academic Center. We will add to these slides as appropriate throughout the project and shared with the Project Leadership Team.

 American University in Bulgaria

Design Aids

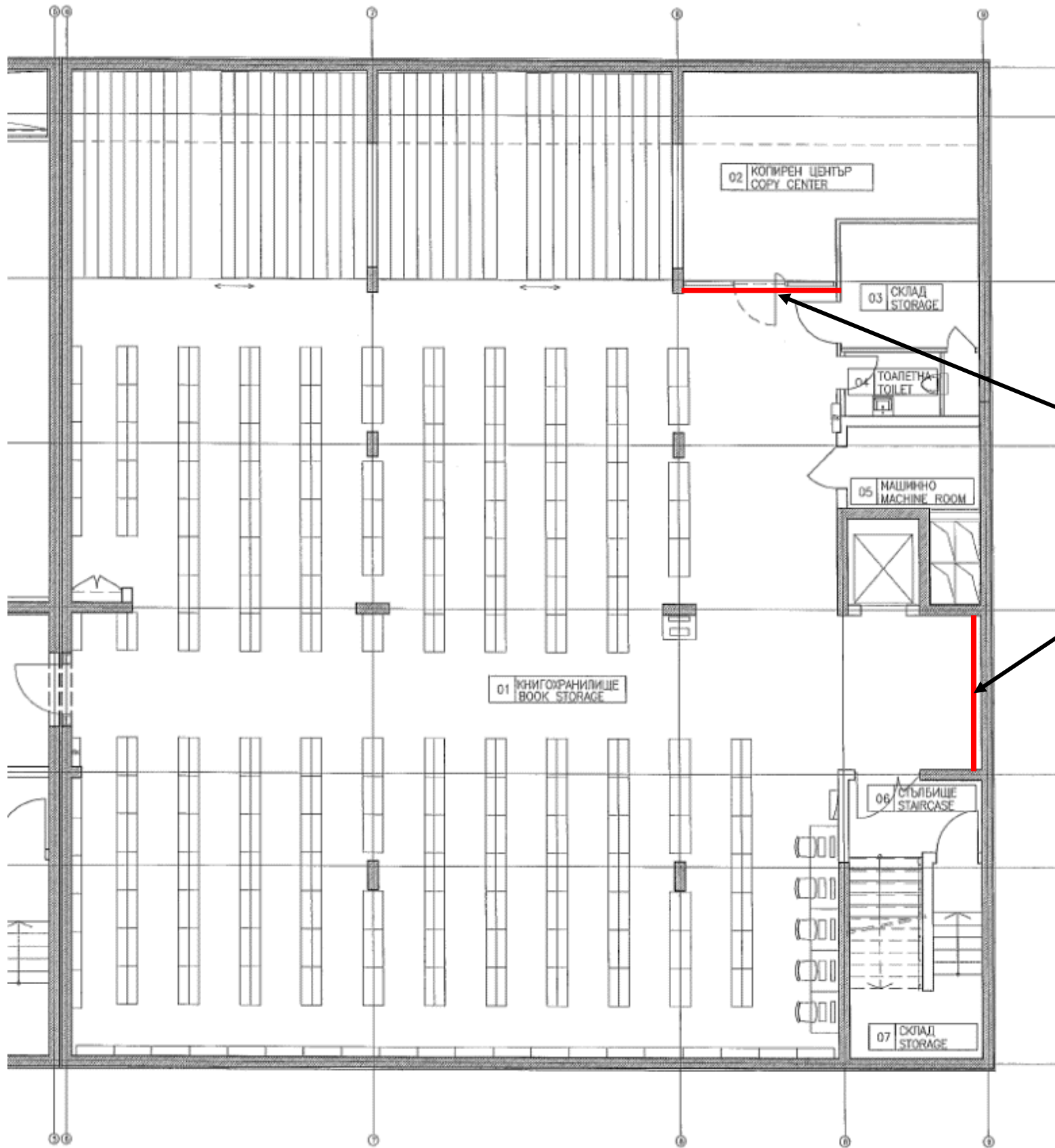


Panitza Library



- Basement





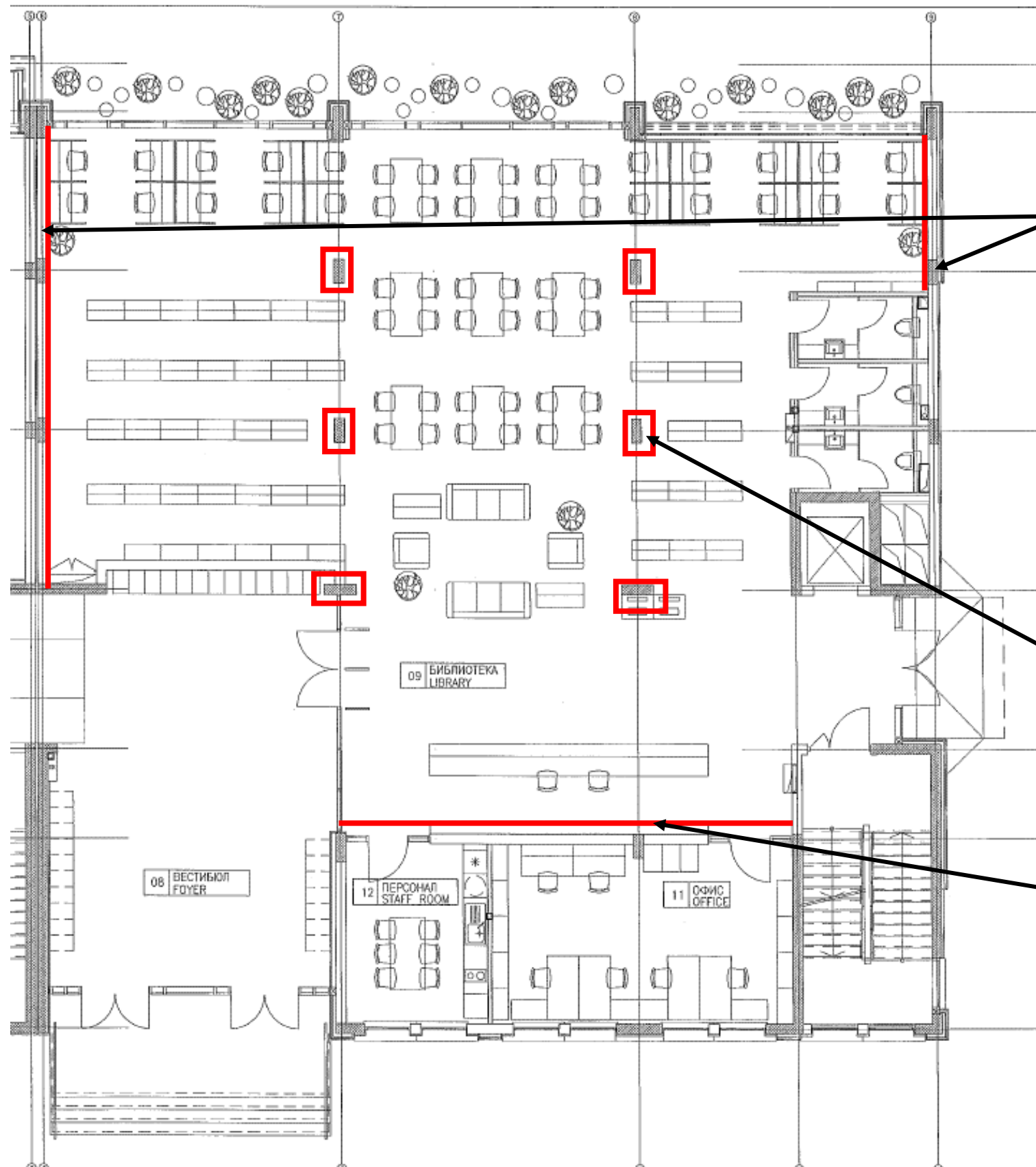
Paint Accent #1

Paint Accent #2

Note: Columns could be painted, however moving stacks to paint may not be realistic.

• 1ST FLOOR





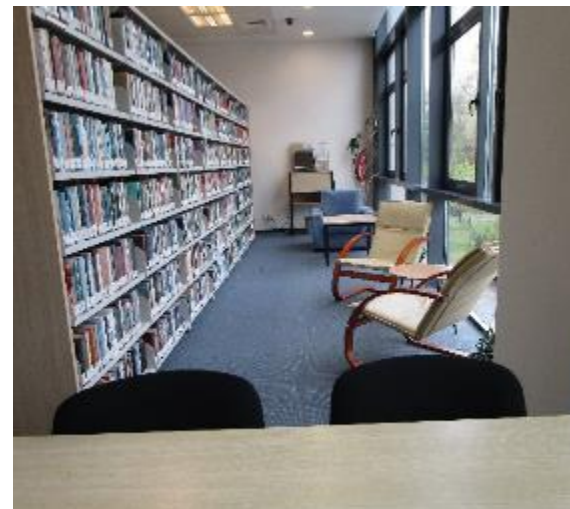
Paint Accent #1

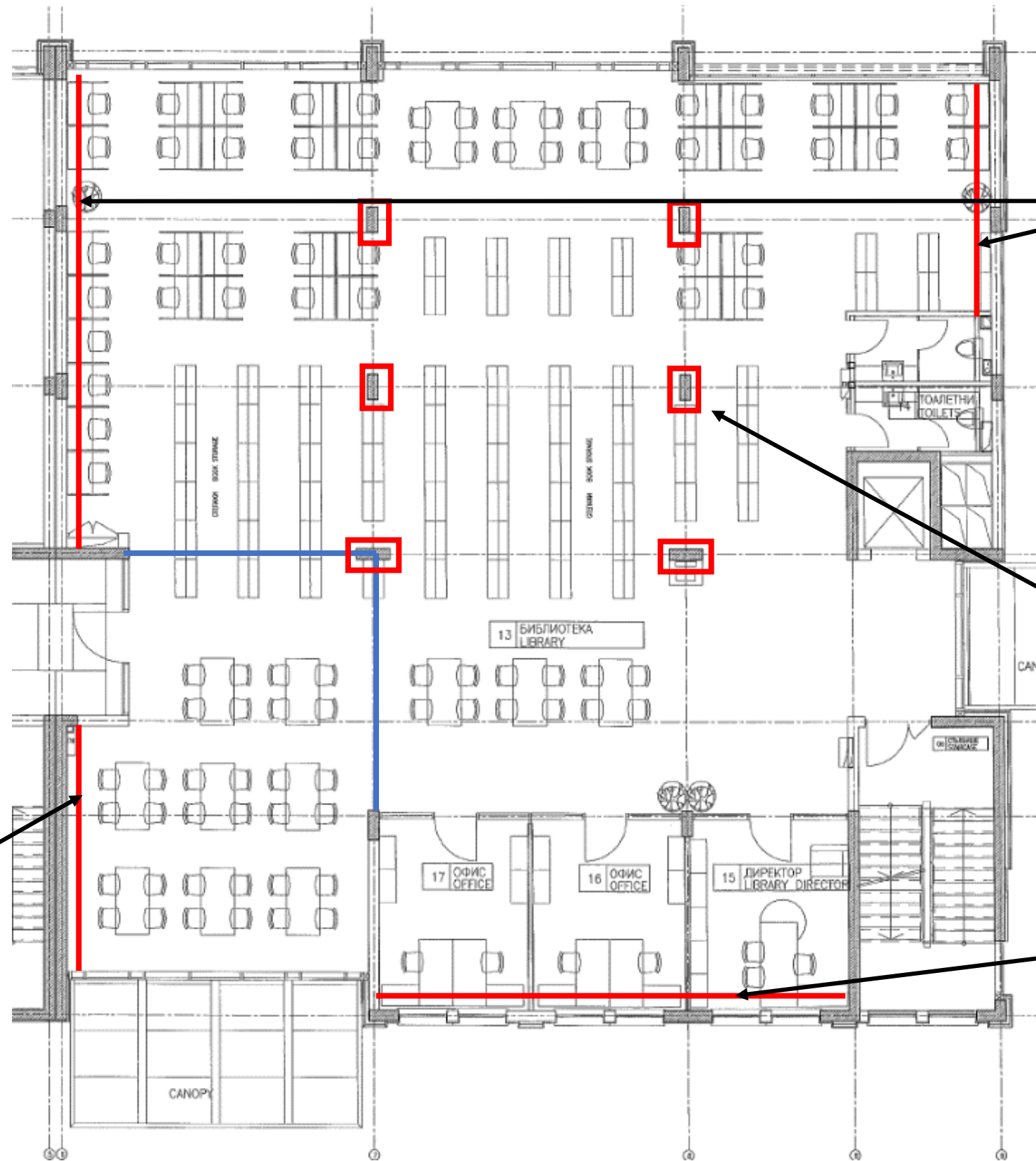
Paint Accent #2
(darker neutral typical
@ all Columns on all
floors)

Paint Accent #3

1ST FLOOR

- 2ND FLOOR





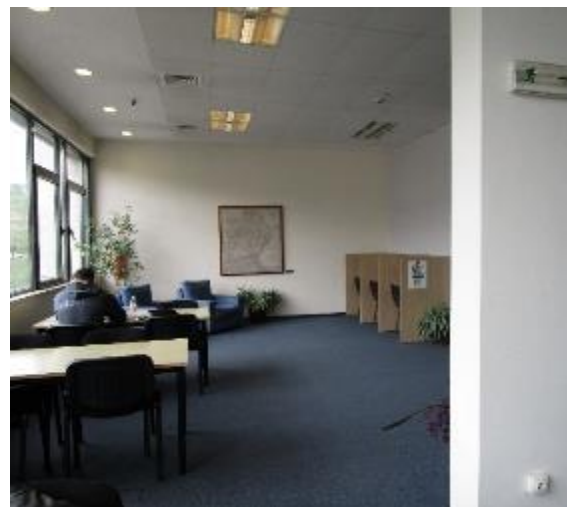
Paint Accent #1

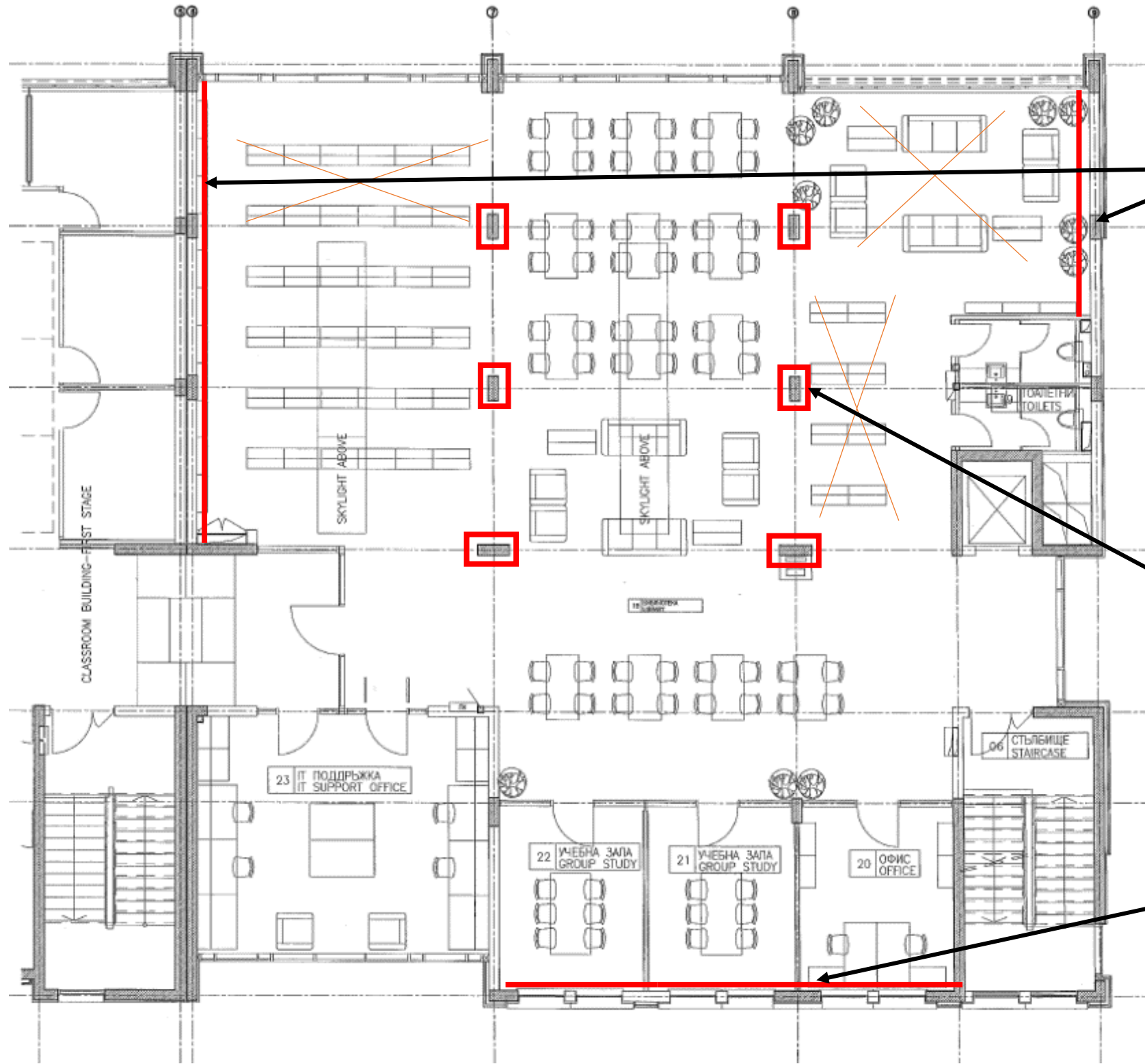
Paint Accent #2
(darker neutral typical
@ all Columns on all
floors)

Paint Accent #1

Paint Accent #3
(Typical @ all (3)
rooms)

• 3RD FLOOR



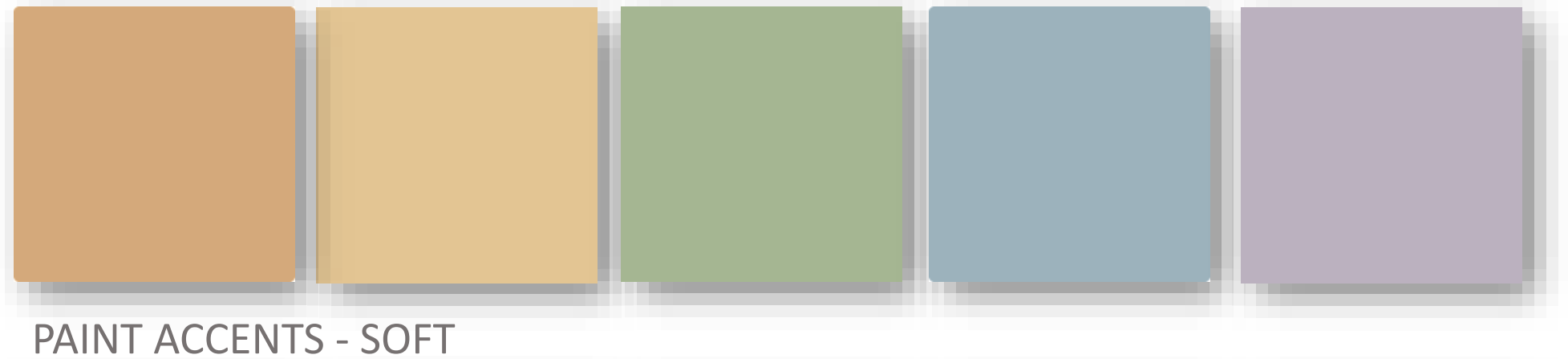
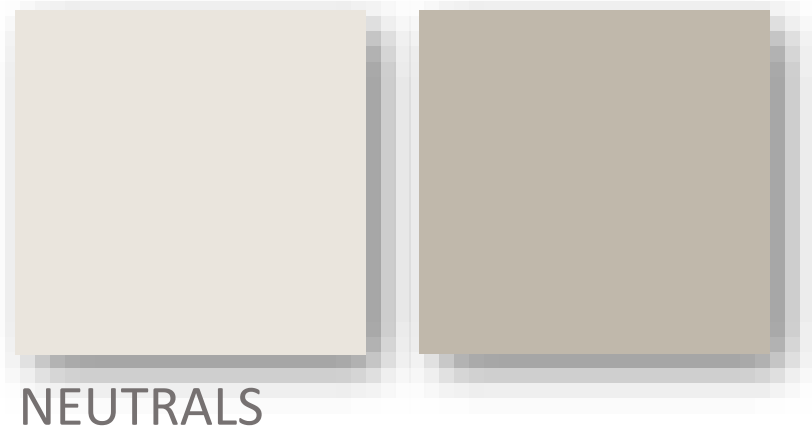


Paint Accent #1

Paint Accent #2
(darker neutral typical
@ all Columns on all
floors)

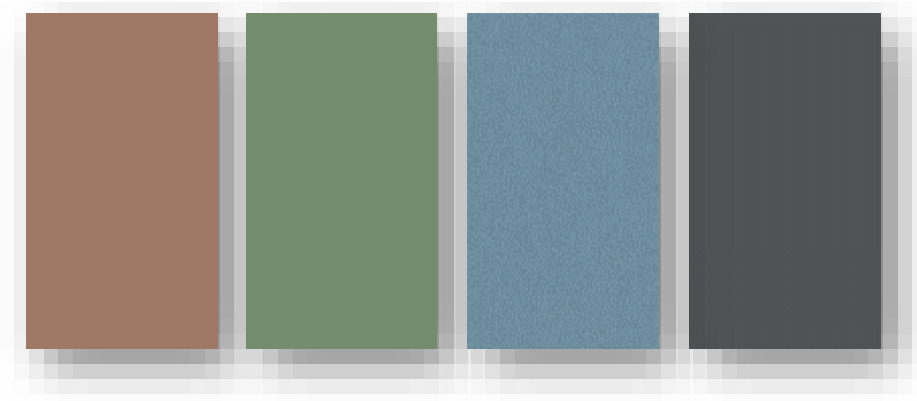
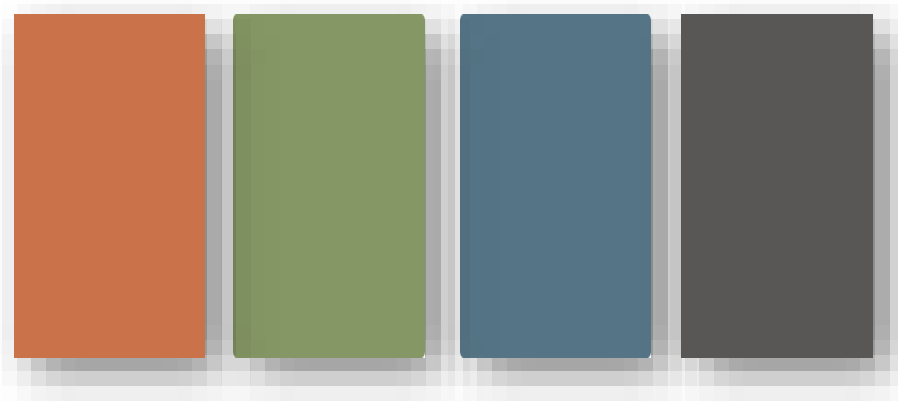
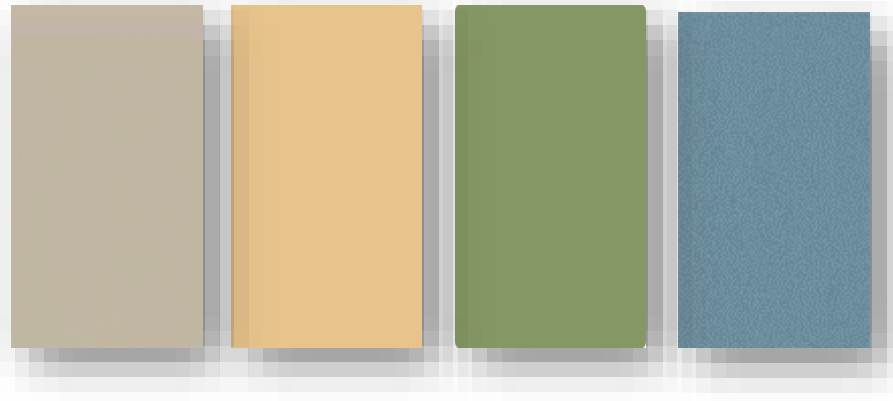
Paint Accent #3
(Typical @ all (3)
rooms)

Optional Color Palettes



The above colors are meant to give an idea of what accents could be incorporated on campus depending. We don't imagine every color be used, but rather 3-4 colors that add life and interest to the spaces. Accents can help with wayfinding and direction as much as they can be for visual interest. Colors are for concept only.

Additional Color Palettes Ideas



Color palettes taken from local attractions and nature can be effective in creating excitement and interest within a space.

Privacy Film – Offices/Meeting Spaces



WINDOW FILM – Dual Feather Gradient (60" High)



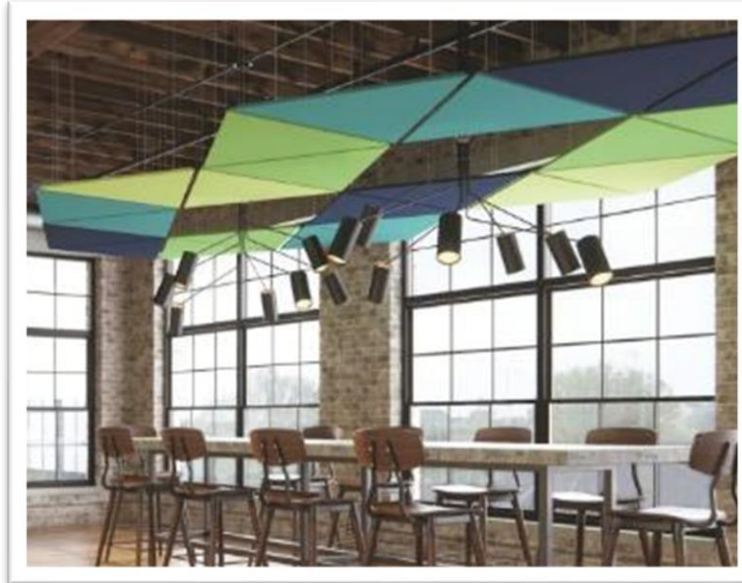
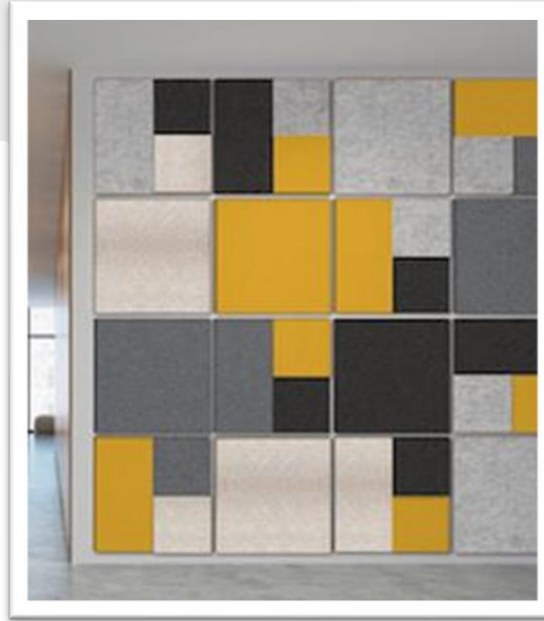
WINDOW FILM – Dual Motion Gradient (60" High)



WINDOW FILM – Isoline Dual Frost Gradient (60" High)

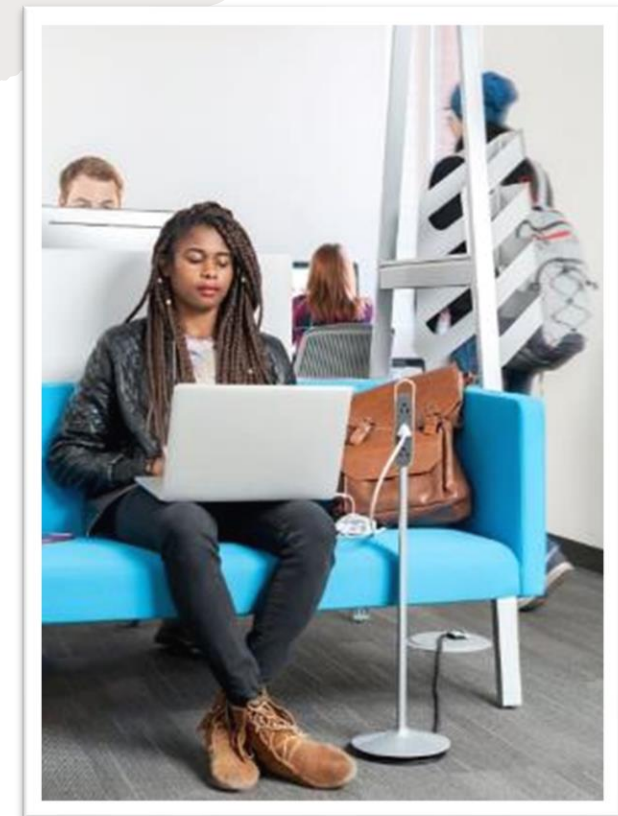
Film can be used at offices and meeting rooms to add visual privacy without sacrificing light entering the room. There are many different patterns and opacity options to choose from.

Acoustic Panels / Clouds



Applied acoustics to the walls or ceilings can help to control sound in noisy spaces like stairwells.

Under Carpet Power



Steelcase Thread distributes power under carpet or vinyl flooring without trenching or coring. The tower component can be moved and plugged in to any of the floor outlets

Balkanski Academic Center



- Basement



Paint Accent #1

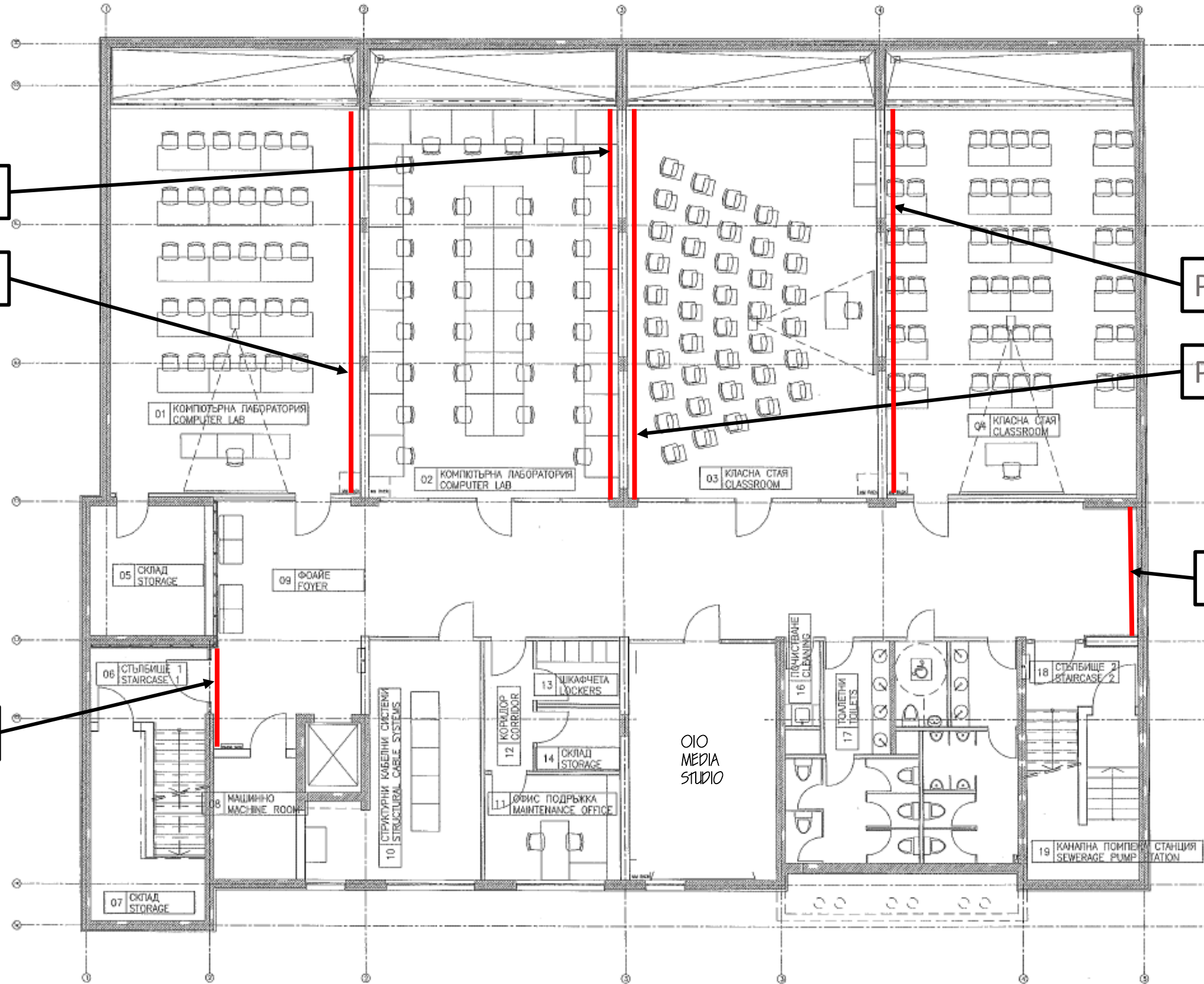
Paint Accent #2

Paint Accent #1

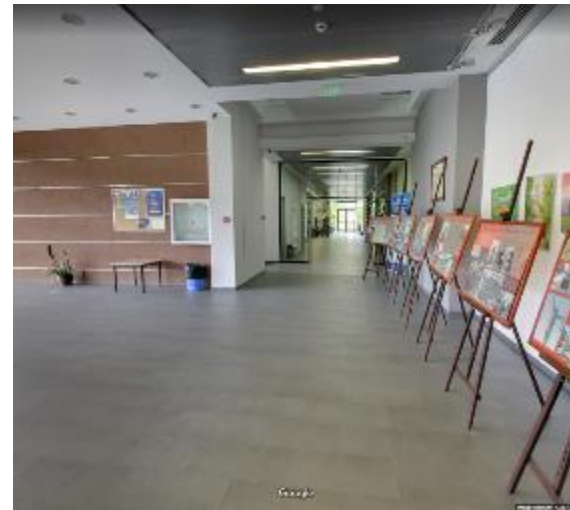
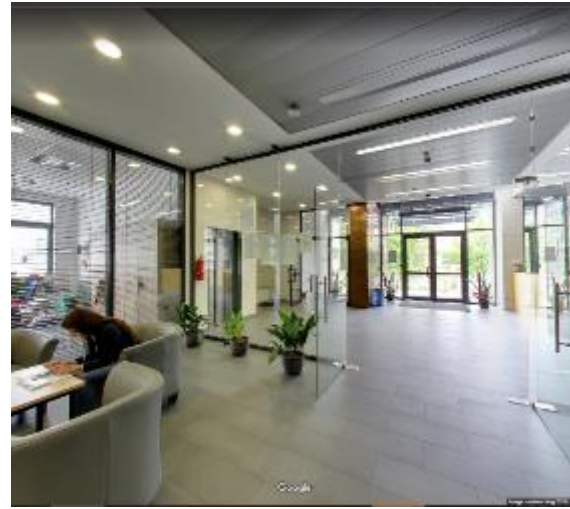
Paint Accent #2

Paint Accent #2

Paint Accent #1



• 1ST FLOOR



Paint Accent #1

Paint Accent #2

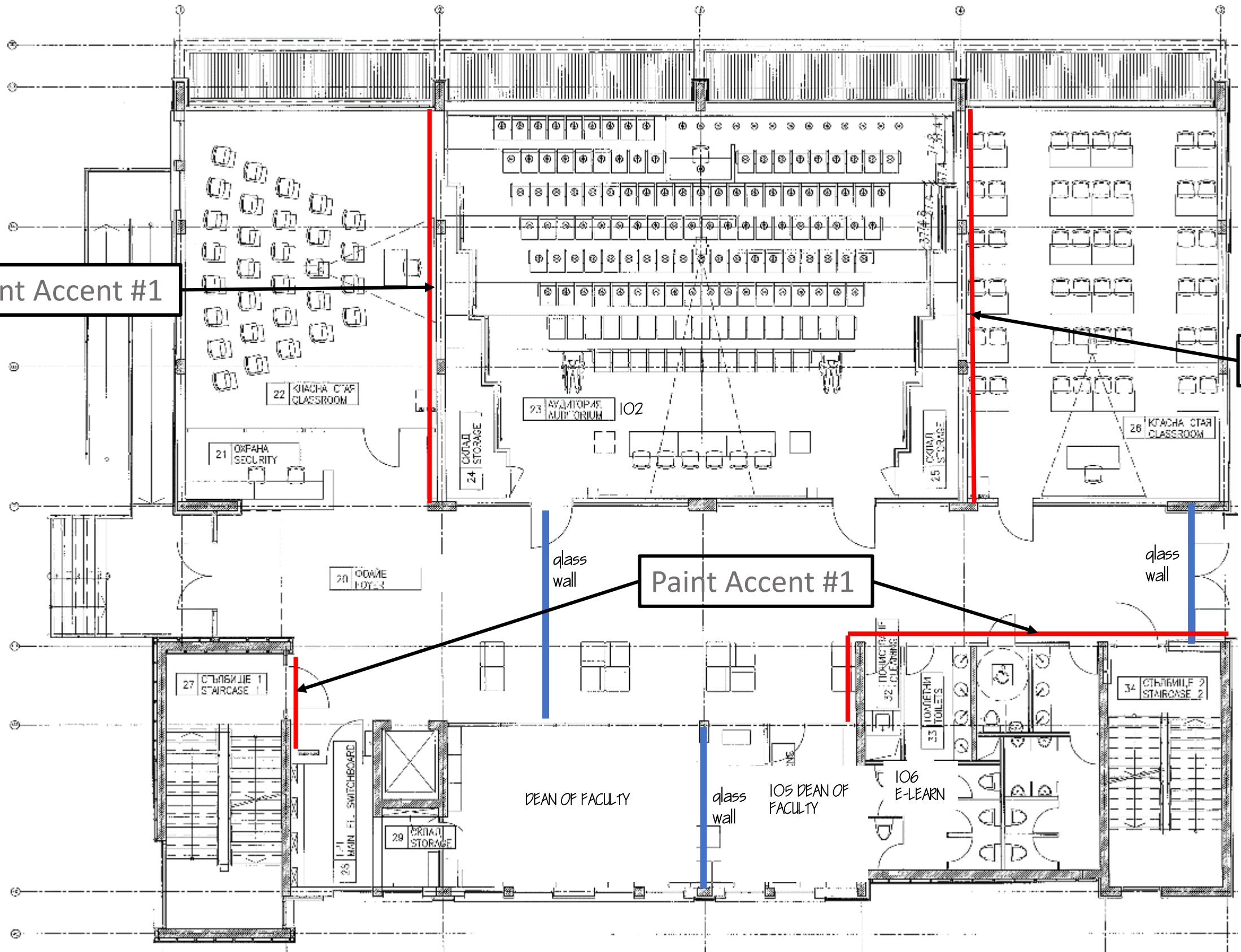
Paint Accent #1

library addition



consider adding artwork or the University logo on standoffs behind the desk

First



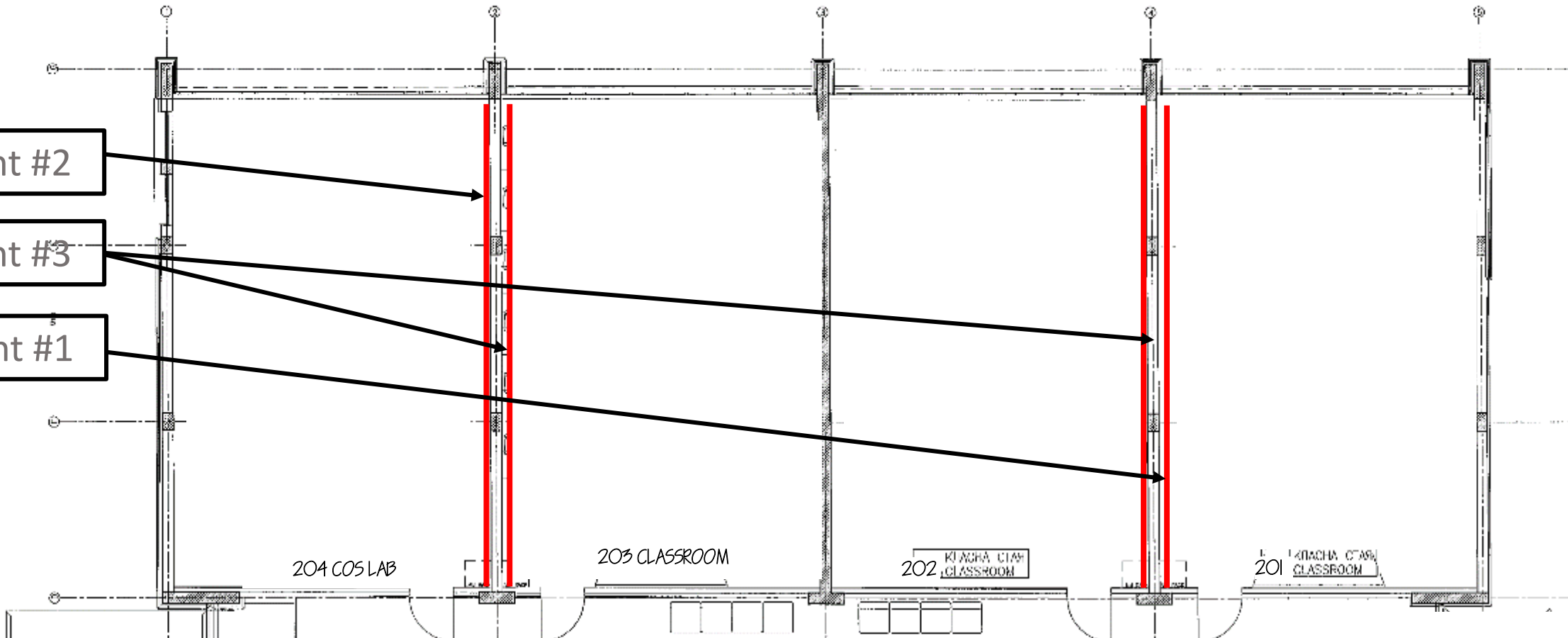
• 2ND FLOOR



Paint Accent #2

Paint Accent #3

Paint Accent #1

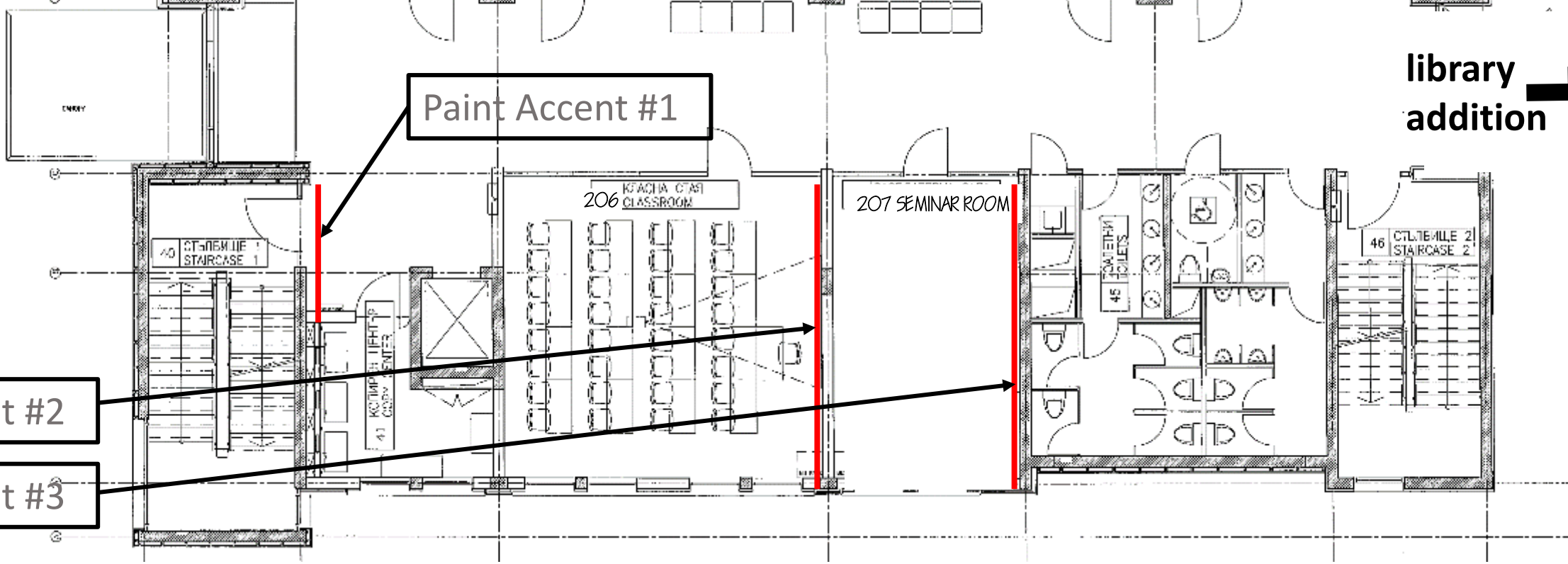


library addition →

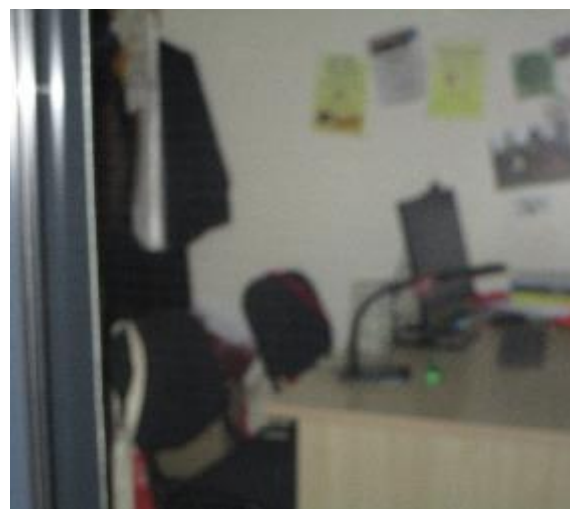
Paint Accent #1

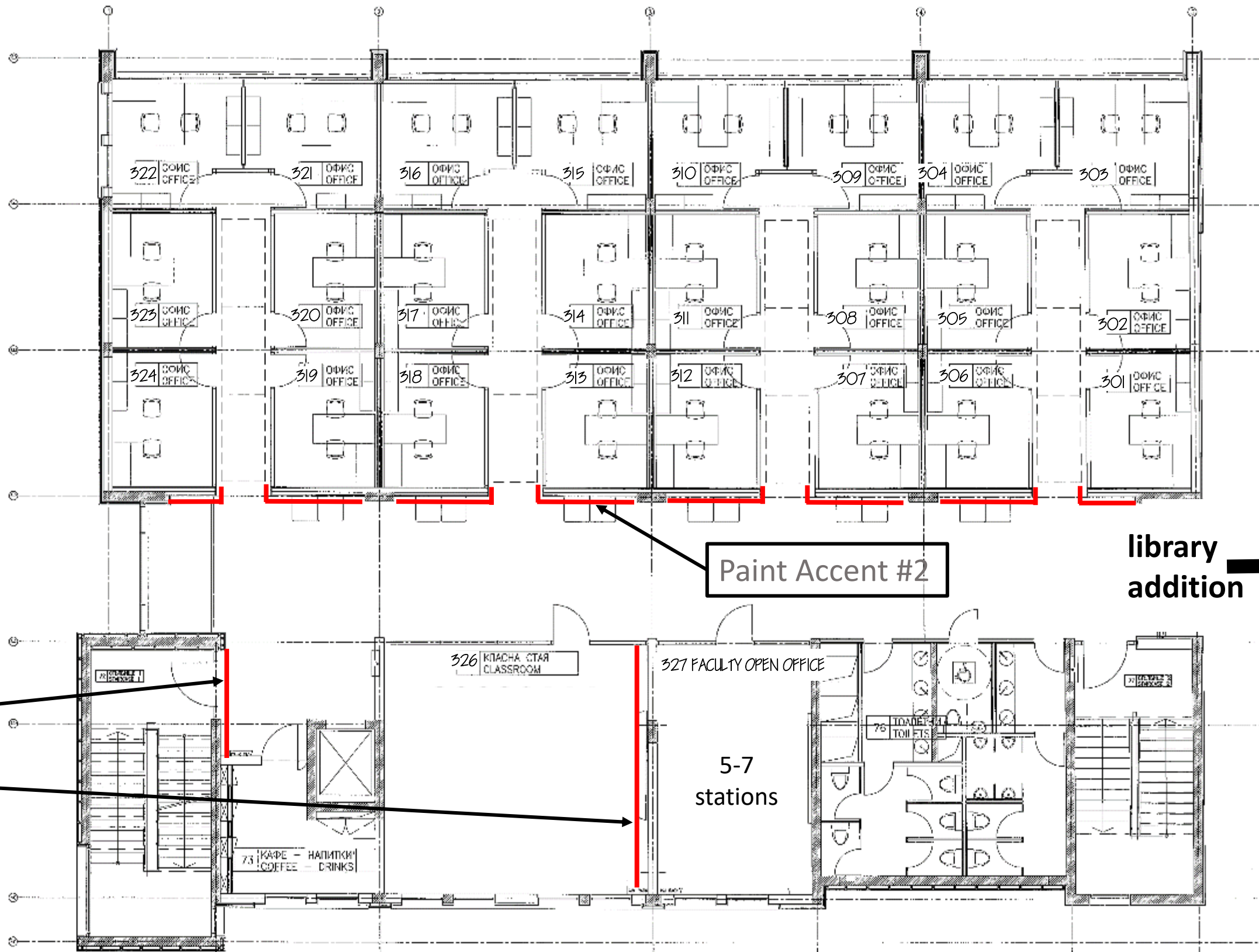
Paint Accent #2

Paint Accent #3



• 3RD FLOOR





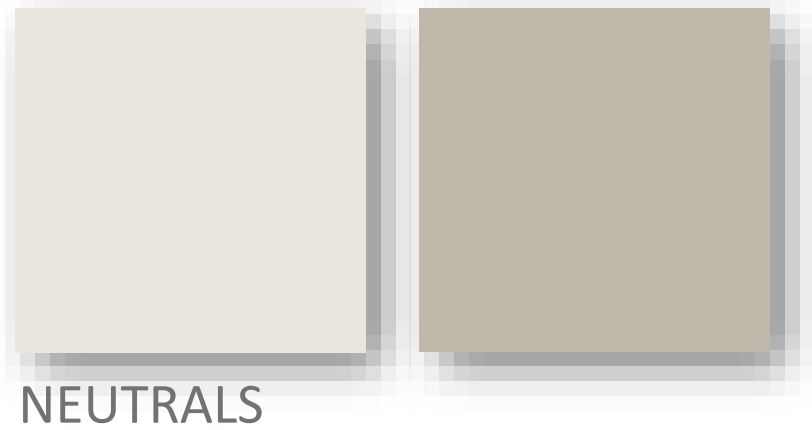
Paint Accent #1

Paint Accent #3

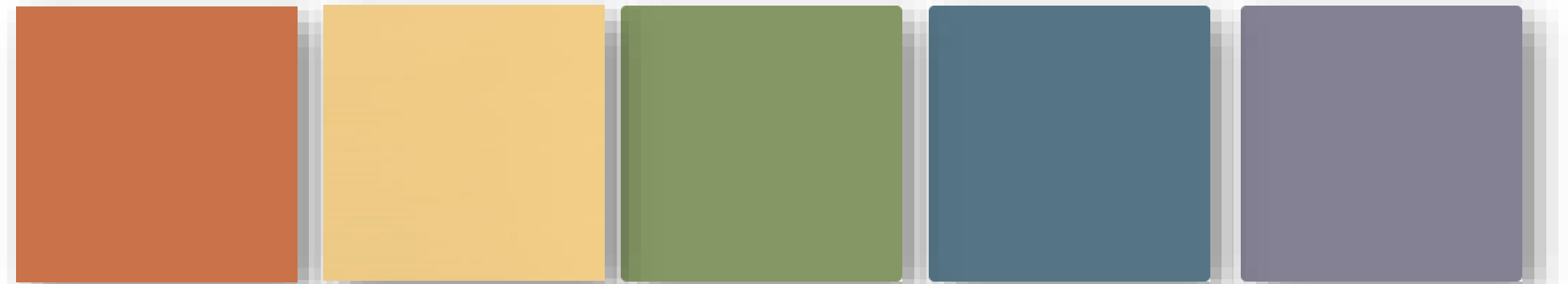
Paint Accent #2

library addition →

Optional Color Palettes



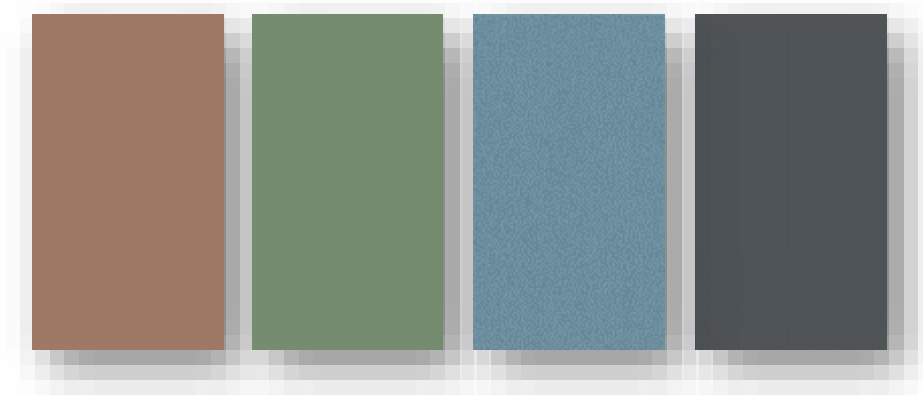
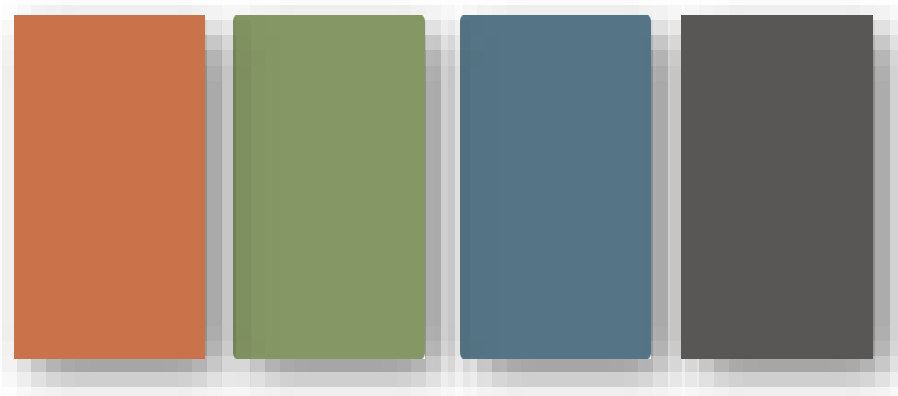
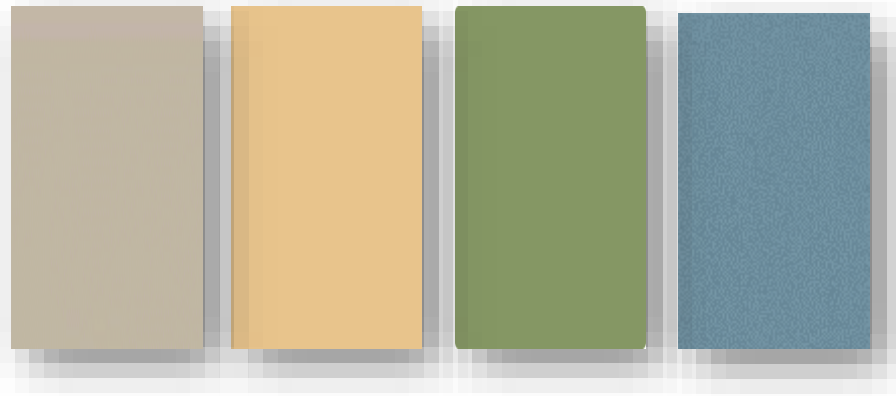
PAINT ACCENTS - SOFT



PAINT ACCENTS – BOLD

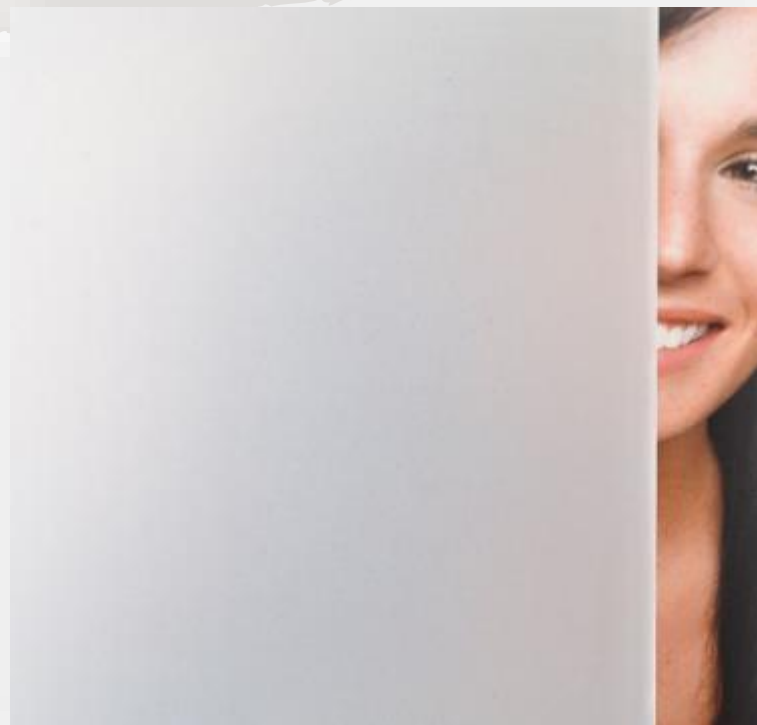
The above colors are meant to give an idea of what accents could be incorporated on campus depending. We don't imagine every color be used, but rather 3-4 colors that add life and interest to the spaces. Accents can help with wayfinding and direction as much as they can be for visual interest. Colors are for concept only.

Additional Color Palettes Ideas



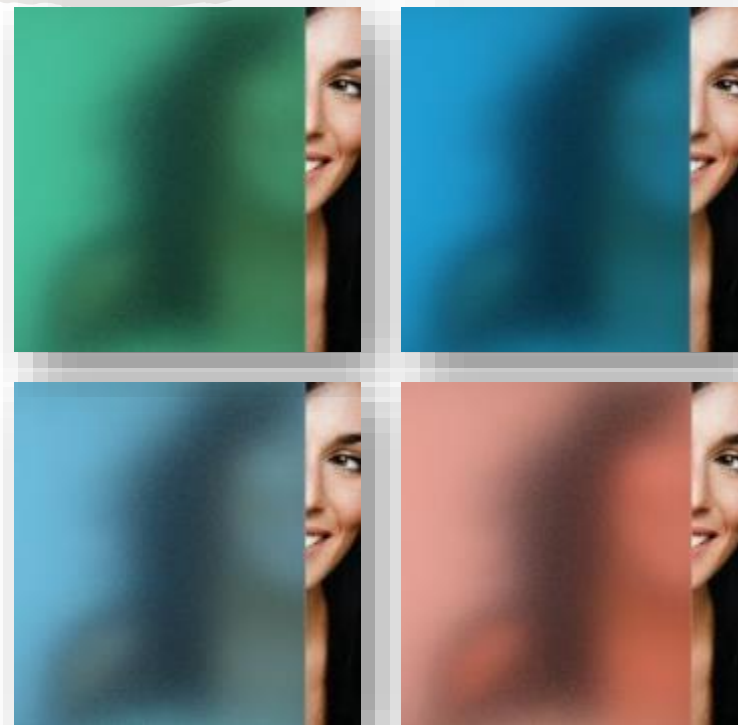
Color palettes taken from local attractions and nature can be effective in creating excitement and interest within a space.

Privacy Film – Window Wells



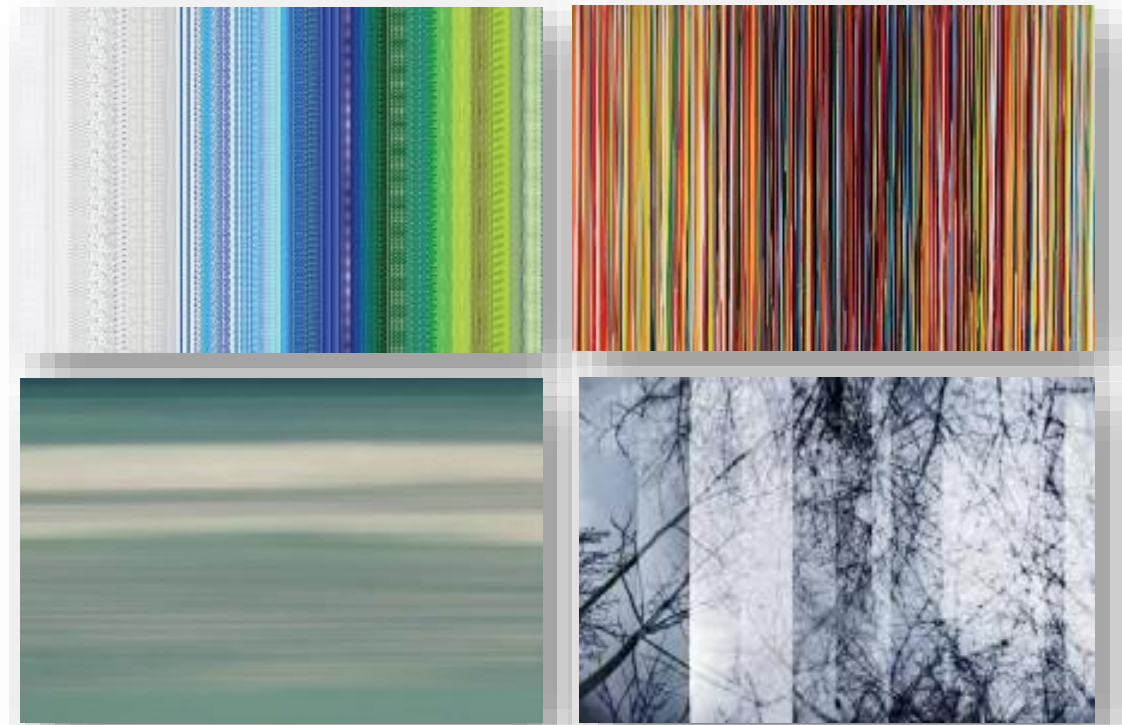
WINDOW FILM – White Sand Matte (48 or 60" High)
(Solyx Window Films)

[Decorative Films](#) | [Window Film](#) | [Stained Glass](#) |
[Privacy Windows](#) | [Window Tint](#)



WINDOW FILM – Sandblast colors are available in numerous colors based on you're the color palette chosen (48" High) (Solyx Window Films)

[Decorative Films](#) | [Window Film](#) | [Stained Glass](#) |
[Privacy Windows](#) | [Window Tint](#)



WINDOW FILM – Various colored and graphic designs available based on your preferences and color palette

[Decorative Glass, Glass Whiteboards, and Smart Glass Products](#)
(skydesign.com)

Light filtering films can be used on windows @ the window wells. Films can be various opacities, patterned or colored for added interest and bringing color into the space in a different way.

Privacy Film – Office/Classroom



WINDOW FILM – Dual Feather Gradient (60" High)



WINDOW FILM – Dual Motion Gradient (60" High)



WINDOW FILM – Isoline Dual Frost Gradient (60" High)

Film can be used at rooms to add visual privacy without sacrificing light entering the room. There are many different patterns and opacity options to choose from, however, the horizontal patterns would mimic the horizontal lines of the wood accents.

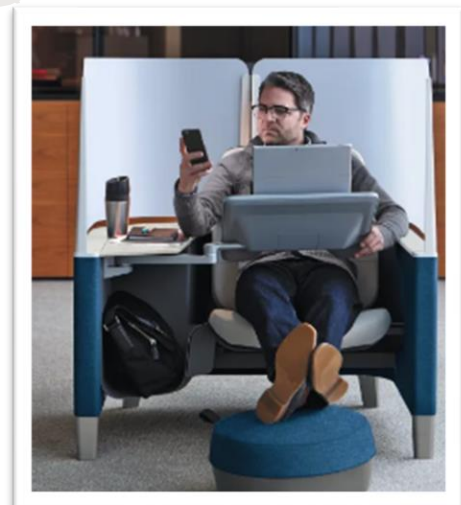
Furniture - Classrooms



Steelcase – Node & Verb Tables



Steelcase Tenor



Steelcase - Brody



Tiered Seating can be accomplished by different heights of desks and chairs/stools



Steelcase – Flex Tables



Steelcase - Move

Furniture – Lounge Areas



Steelcase – i2i

Steelcase – SW-1

Steelcase – Campfire Lounge



Steelcase – B-Free Collection



Steelcase – Await

Steelcase – Cubb Tables



Steelcase – Enea Altzo 943

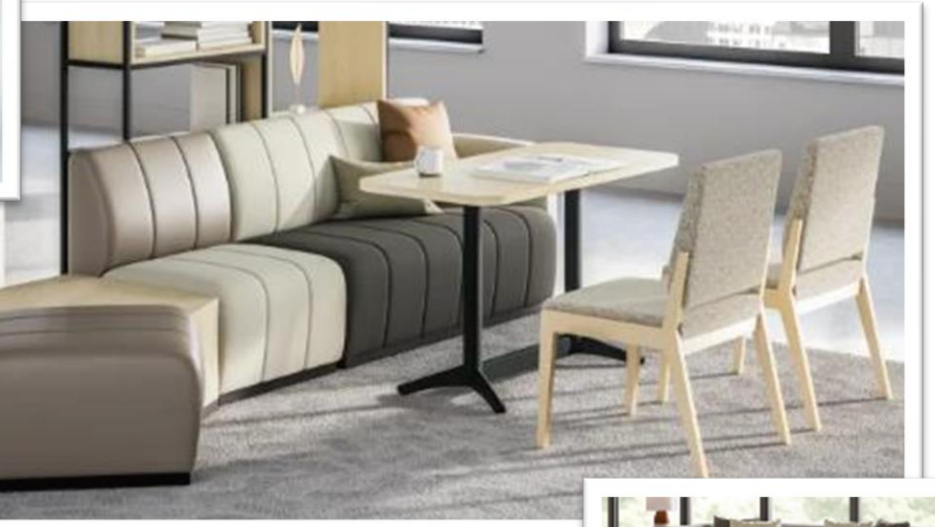


Orange Box – Away from the Desk

Furniture – Lounge Areas



National ETC - Laverick



National - Swift



Kimball - Grin



National - Fringe



National - Whimsy



National – Nate & Natty



National – Universal Tables



National - Grin