

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN RESPECT OF THE
RENOVATION WORKS FOR THE WEST WING OF THE
FORMER CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES FOR OFFICE USE BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND
LAW-RELATED ORGANISATIONS**

BACKGROUND

In December 2012, the Government decided to adopt a re-use plan for the West Wing of the former Central Government Offices (CGO West Wing), under which the main body of the West Wing will be preserved and renewed for use by the Department of Justice (DoJ) to accommodate its offices that cannot be relocated to the Main and East Wings of the former CGO, as well as for use by law-related organisations (LROs).

2. CGO West Wing was completed in 1959 with later additions, including a dental clinic on the 7th floor constructed shortly thereafter, the 13th floor in 1964 and an Annex comprising a Lift Tower, Lobby and Carport at the east end of the 7th floor in 1998 to improve access for the Office of the Chief Secretary for Administration which was subsequently accommodated on the 12th floor. The West Wing had been used as government offices for over 50 years until late 2011. The location plan of the former CGO and proposed site boundary of the West Wing project is shown in **Figure 1**.

3. CGO West Wing was accorded Grade 1 status by the Antiquities Advisory Board on 17 December 2012.

4. A separate Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) was previously conducted in respect of the renovation works for the Main and East Wings of the former CGO, which was allocated to DoJ for use as offices, and was endorsed by the AAB in June 2012. The renovation works for the Main and East Wings commenced in July 2013. It is expected that the renovation works will be substantially completed in March 2015.

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

5. The former CGO was constructed in the 1950s to replace the Old

Government Secretariat Building which was built in 1847. The whole site consists of three buildings, namely: Main Wing, East Wing and West Wing. West Wing comprises a 13-storey L-shaped structure accessible from Queen's Road Central and Ice House Street at the ground floor level and from the forecourt from Lower Albert Road on the 7th floor.

A. Historic and Social Significance

6. The former CGO had been the principal government office since the colonial times. Many important policies and decisions contributing to the development of Hong Kong were made therein.

B. Architectural and Aesthetic Significance

7. Architecturally, the former CGO is regarded as one of the best preserved examples of 1950s Modernist Functional architecture in Hong Kong and in the region. The building height was carefully designed in low-lying level to preserve the view from Government House to Victoria Harbour.

8. The West Wing was designed in modern utilitarian style by government architects of the then Public Works Department. The building was designed mainly on a form-follows-function basis. The exposed concrete frame design and the slim profile universal Crittall style steel frame windows avoid unnecessary decorations and allow maximum natural sunlight and ventilation into the internal spaces. The broad use of granite block cladding surfaces in the West Wing relates to the East Wing elevation materials, but without the influence of the Art Deco styling of the latter.

9. Although the West Wing has undergone numerous additions and alterations, the building has served as a government office since its completion and many of its exterior character defining features are intact and in the original building design condition.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. In accordance with Development Bureau Technical Circular (Works) No. 6/2009 and Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO)'s Guidance Note to HIA Submission, an HIA has been carried out to examine the impact of the proposed

works on the CGO West Wing and to devise mitigation measures if adverse impact is unavoidable.

A. Conservation Principles to Conserve the Cultural Significance of CGO West Wing

11. The recommended conservation principles for devising and implementing necessary mitigation measures to conserve the CGO West Wing are as follows –

a) Building Fabric

- (i) The key character defining elements (CDEs) identified should be preserved, repaired or reinstated with minimum intervention.

The CDEs which should be preserved, repaired or reinstated include –

EXTERIOR

- The original design of all elevations, including the exposed white concrete frame design, the finely dressed granite cladding surfaces, granite rubble plinth, the universal design of steel frame windows, and the entrance connecting to the 1st floor Banking Hall (former shroff office of the Treasury) at the end of the short block;
- The projecting windows in the original canteen on the 7th floor;
- The projecting balconies and stairs between the 5th and 7th floors;
- The external signage at the main entrance at Queen's Road Central; and
- The overall flat roof design with curved corner projecting main lift core and tapered upper elevation at Ice House Street that responded to early shadow area development constraints imposed by the Building Regulations of the day.

INTERIOR

- The original main open staircase conjoined with the lift lobby at each floor level at the west end of the building;

- The original fire escape staircase with old fittings and setting, terrazzo dado finishes and timber railing at the end of the short block; and
 - The beech hardwood doors and frames in some offices which are characteristics of the period.
- (ii) Typically most of the original internal building fabric has been removed over time. Further alteration to the original building fabric that has been identified as having a high level of heritage significance should be kept to the minimum. All new additional works should be properly placed to minimise physical damage to the original structure and visual impact. New elements should be of compatible design and distinguishable from the existing building fabrics.

b) Building Services

- (i) The exposed building facilities on the roof surface will be removed and a new chiller plant will be placed on the top of the main lift core. All replacement pipes etc. will be tidied up and covered to reduce visual impact. Green roof will be erected on the roof surface subject to technical feasibility;
- (ii) The exposed building services that have been added to the surface of the building facing public areas and streets will be removed and relocated in a less conspicuous manner; and
- (iii) Obsolete louvres and screens will be removed and replaced by new windows matching the original design. Required louvres for new building services will be installed but the original steel window geometry will be retained to match the design intent.

c) Documentation and Monitoring

- (i) Cartographic and photographic surveys to record the building will be conducted before the conversion works. Monitoring checks and surveys will also be conducted during the construction period. A set of record drawings will be prepared and furnished to the AMO after the conversion works; and

- (ii) Any renovation and maintenance works during the conversion and in future operation should be properly documented for record and should follow the principles laid down in the HIA report.

B. Key Design Proposals

12. The key proposed works for conservation, restoration and conversion, as well as enhancements to facilitate future office use by DoJ and LROs are as follows –

(a) Project Scope

- (i) The project is to renovate and enhance the existing West Wing to accommodate the offices of DoJ and LROs. Proposed floor plans are at **Figures 2 to 17**;
- (ii) Comprehensive conversion works for general office accommodation and ancillary facilities, including general offices for various DoJ Divisions, lifts and lobby areas, supporting function and conference rooms, a library and a mini-library, a mock court, training rooms, multi-purpose function rooms, building management offices, storage facilities, carpark and other office supporting facilities;
- (iii) Basic conversion and refurbishment for the areas to be occupied by LROs and related common facilities as well as areas for circulation;
- (iv) Removal, replacement and provision of all building services installations including the replacement of all lifts for improved performance and energy efficiency;
- (v) Enhancement works to improve fire safety and provide a barrier free environment in compliance with prevailing building codes;
- (vi) Demolition of obsolete facilities that are considered inconsistent with the proposed use and/or project objectives; and
- (vii) Provision for vehicular passage through the site to cater for access to the former French Mission Building and St. John's Cathedral.

(b) Conservation Works

EXTERIOR CONSERVATION

- (i) External elevations and original finishes will be preserved and restored as appropriate and general repairs will be carried out, including cracked or debonding finishes, spalled concrete, and replacement of waterproof membranes, etc;
- (ii) Rehabilitation works will be carried out for the steel windows, including refurbishment, alteration and/or replacement as appropriate, to match the original profile and geometry and to enhance energy efficiency, acoustic and weatherproof performance;
- (iii) The marble cladding on the elevation of the main entrance on the ground floor facing Queen's Road Central will be removed and replaced with appropriate mosaic tile materials matching the original design intent;
- (iv) The original entrance connecting to the 1st floor Banking Hall at the end of the short block will be preserved, restored and repaired as appropriate;
- (v) The existing projecting balconies and stairs between the 5th and 7th floors (including finishes and character of the open metal railings) will be preserved, refurbished and repaired as appropriate; and
- (vi) The external signage on the exterior wall will be preserved, repaired and cleaned as necessary. Any new signage will avoid covering the old building name and will be of a compatible design.

INTERIOR CONSERVATION

- (i) The existing main staircase will be preserved, involving repairs and refinishing of timber railings and reconstruction of the existing painted metal balustrades that are later alterations to the original building. The enclosure that was a later addition separating the stair from the lift lobbies, which were originally conjoined, will be removed as appropriate;

- (ii) The existing fire escape staircases at the end of the short block and to the lift machine room and roof adjacent to the main lift core will be refurbished, including repairs to terrazzo dado panels, timber railings and painted steel balustrades;
- (iii) Part of the original canteen on the 7th floor is proposed to be renovated to provide a publicly-accessible corridor to connect the new public lift to the 7th floor, and subject to further study, the corridor is proposed to provide space as a public gallery for display of items with heritage value;
- (iv) The beech hardwood doors and frames will be salvaged and reused as far as practicable; and
- (v) The existing metal caging at the original strong rooms on the ground floor will be retained.

(c) Restoration Works

- (i) Original Covered Plaza Design on the 7th Floor –
The dental clinic enclosures and some plant rooms, which were later additions, are proposed to be demolished to reinstate the original covered plaza design with some greenery features on the 7th floor as far as practicable; and
- (ii) Additional Lift Tower, Lobby and Covered Carport at the East End of the 7th Floor –
The lift tower, lobby and covered carport at the east end of the 7th floor, which were later additions in 1998, currently restrict the north-south views between the Main Wing and the West Wing. It is proposed to demolish these structures, and the original external finishes will be repaired as necessary to restore the original design intent in 1959.

(d) Conversion Works to Comply with Statutory Requirements, Operational Needs of the Users and Improvements to Current Day Standards

- (i) Compliance with Statutory Requirements
 - A new fire escape stair at the centre of the long block to comply with maximum travel distances and allowable separation between

stairs;

- A new fire escape stair and fireman's lift adjacent to the main lift core as the existing staircase does not comply with relevant prevailing requirements;
- Alterations to the internal and external access ramps at the ground floor main entrance to comply with barrier free access requirements; and
- Alterations to all existing railings at stairs and balconies with intent to minimise any change to the basic geometry and design characteristics of the original material.

(ii) Enhancement Works to Lift Service

- A new fireman's lift at the east side of the lift core adjacent to the single existing lift to reduce the waiting time of users compared with the existing arrangements;
- Two new lifts to serve the floors of the LROs;
- One new passenger lift to allow a separate and independent means of access by the public including disabled persons to the open space at the 7th floor level from the ground floor facing Queen's Road Central; and
- Extension of lifts to serve the 13th floor short block level for barrier free access compliance and operational convenience.

(iii) Conversion Works for Improvements to Site Planning

- Replacement of the existing tarmacadam surfacing at the open area and covered plaza on the 7th floor with granite type pavers that are more friendly to pedestrian use; and
- Provision of a new two-way vehicle ramp to the 6th floor carpark and access to the former French Mission Building and St. John's Cathedral to facilitate improved safety and an efficient two-way traffic route through the site, and to demolish the existing one-way ramp at the south side of the site and reinstate it as pavement for a

wider vehicular access on the 7th floor.

(iv) Improvement Works to Roof

- A green roof and installation of non-reflective solar panels will be erected to enhance greenery space and improve building environment. The new design will preserve the flat roof setting and will not impose excessive loading to the roof surface; and
- Addition of a glass canopy over the existing deck at the short block on the 13th floor to provide rain and solar protection to users, and replacement of external windows to new steel frame glass doors with matching profile and geometry to improve access to the existing outdoor deck space.

(v) Structural Strengthening Works

- Additional internal concrete shear walls will be constructed to improve the stability of central long block structures; and
- Steel reinforcement will be provided to floor slabs at areas that are to be allocated for storage of heavy materials such as additional plant rooms, file storage rooms, library and green roof areas where planting will be necessary.

C. Mitigation Measures for the Conservation Works

13. For areas where possible impact of the conversion works could not be avoided, the following mitigation measures will be implemented based on the conservation principles stated above –

- (i) A condition survey will be conducted to record the existing condition of the buildings for future reference. The result will be submitted to the AMO for record;
- (ii) Regular site monitoring and precautions measures will be implemented to protect the CDEs against damage;
- (iii) The proposed steel platforms supporting new building facilities and the green roofs will not impose excessive loading to the roof surface;

- (iv) The construction method will be reversible without causing any irreversible damage to the existing building envelope, so the building envelope can return to its original setting in future when the need arises;
- (v) New building services installations will be carefully designed in order not to affect the CDEs and the exterior outlook. They will be placed in less prominent locations. Existing openings for the building services will be utilised as far as possible. Any internal service ductworks and machinery will be placed at inconspicuous locations;
- (vi) The proposed new lifts and staircases will be of a compatible design with the original building structure; and
- (vii) Any newly added window or altered window will match the existing design intent and cause no negative visual impact to the building exterior.

ARRANGEMENT OF RAILINGS

14. As far as the West Wing project is concerned, there is one fence at the top of escarpment along Lower Albert Road. In the HIA report, one of the conservation policies is that the modern security railings around the site should be lowered or removed and where necessary replicas of the original lower railings should be reinstated, similar to the recommendation of the HIA report conducted previously on the Main and East Wings¹.

15. In respect of the Main and East Wings project, DoJ has previously planned to remove the fences on the site which would not be necessary, and in future members of the public would be able to access the main entrance of the DoJ from the pavement. However, to allow the arrangements for the gates and fences in the three wings of the former CGO to be considered holistically with the planning of the open compound between the Main Wing and West Wing, as well as to provide more time for DoJ to assess the security of the offices in the three wings, DoJ will withhold the lowering of the fence and removal of the gates

¹ In the HIA report for the CGO Main and East Wings project, it was recommended that the metal railing along Lower Albert Road be replaced by a lower railing with compatible design, and the two car entrances (with gates) and guard houses facing Lower Albert Road will be replaced by new drop bars and new guard house for vehicle control.

on the site of the Main and East Wing project². By the same token, DoJ will also preserve the modern security railing around the West Wing site in the interim notwithstanding the suggestion in the HIA report. However, DoJ will continue to allow free public access to the main entrance of the DoJ offices, and the gates concerned will only be closed in case of security need. DoJ will revisit the arrangements for the gates and fences in the three wings of the former CGO when the planning of the open compound between the Main Wing and West Wing is taken forward, so that the overall design and arrangement of the railings in the CGO complex can be considered in a holistic manner, having regard to the principle to facilitate public access to the area while ensuring the security of the offices of DoJ and LROs to be housed in the Main, East and West Wings of the former CGO.

CONCLUSION

16. The HIA has concluded that the proposed works to convert the CGO West Wing into offices of the DoJ and LROs is feasible by proper conservation of the building. The works also respect the history of the building by retaining the offices for government and related use.

Architectural Services Department
March 2015

² Of the three gates within the Main and East Wings site, the gate at the entrance of the East Wing carpark has already been demolished for compliance with fire safety requirement, and the gate at the top of the stairs from Battery Path will be preserved together with the metal fence along the boundary of the northern slope and facing St John's Cathedral for public safety reason.

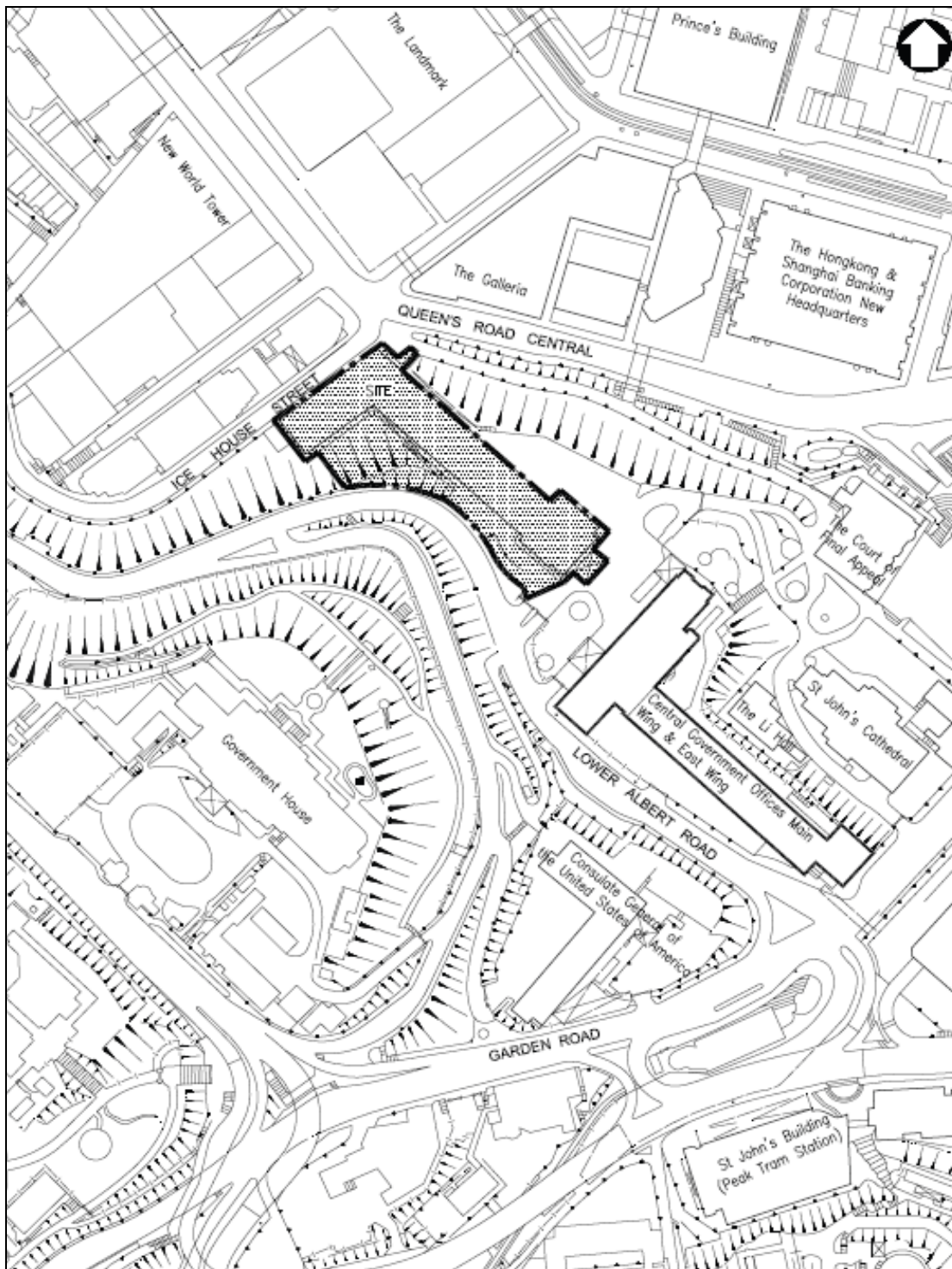


Figure 1 Location Plan

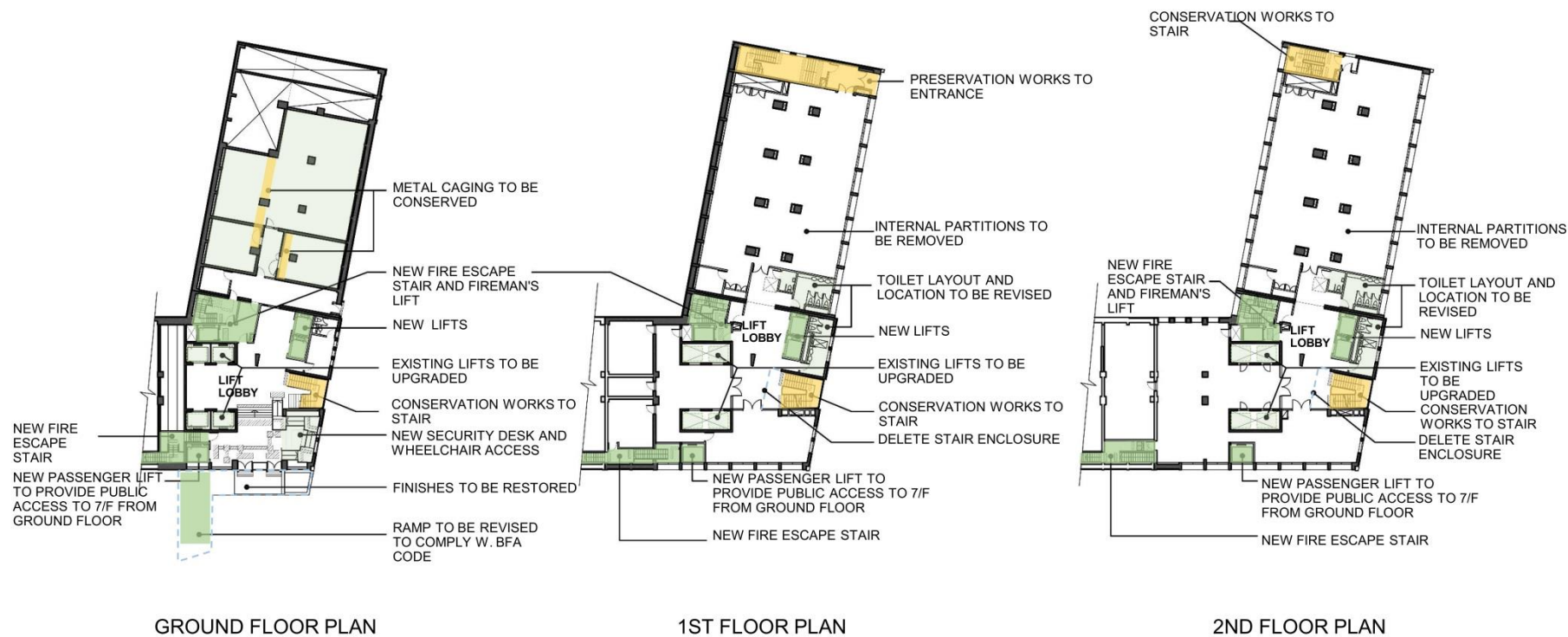
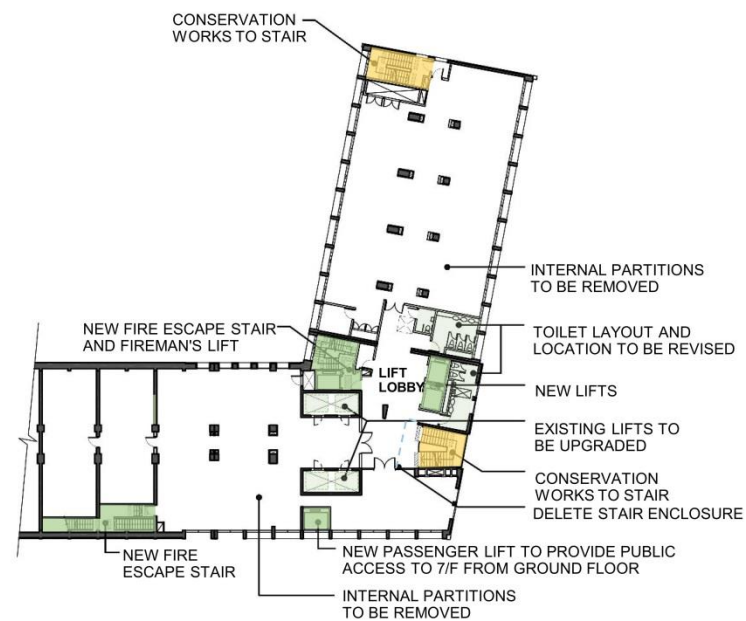


Figure 2 – Ground to 2nd Floor Plan



3RD FLOOR PLAN



4TH FLOOR PLAN



Figure 3 – 3rd to 4th Floor Plan



5TH FLOOR PLAN



Figure 4 – 5th Floor Plan

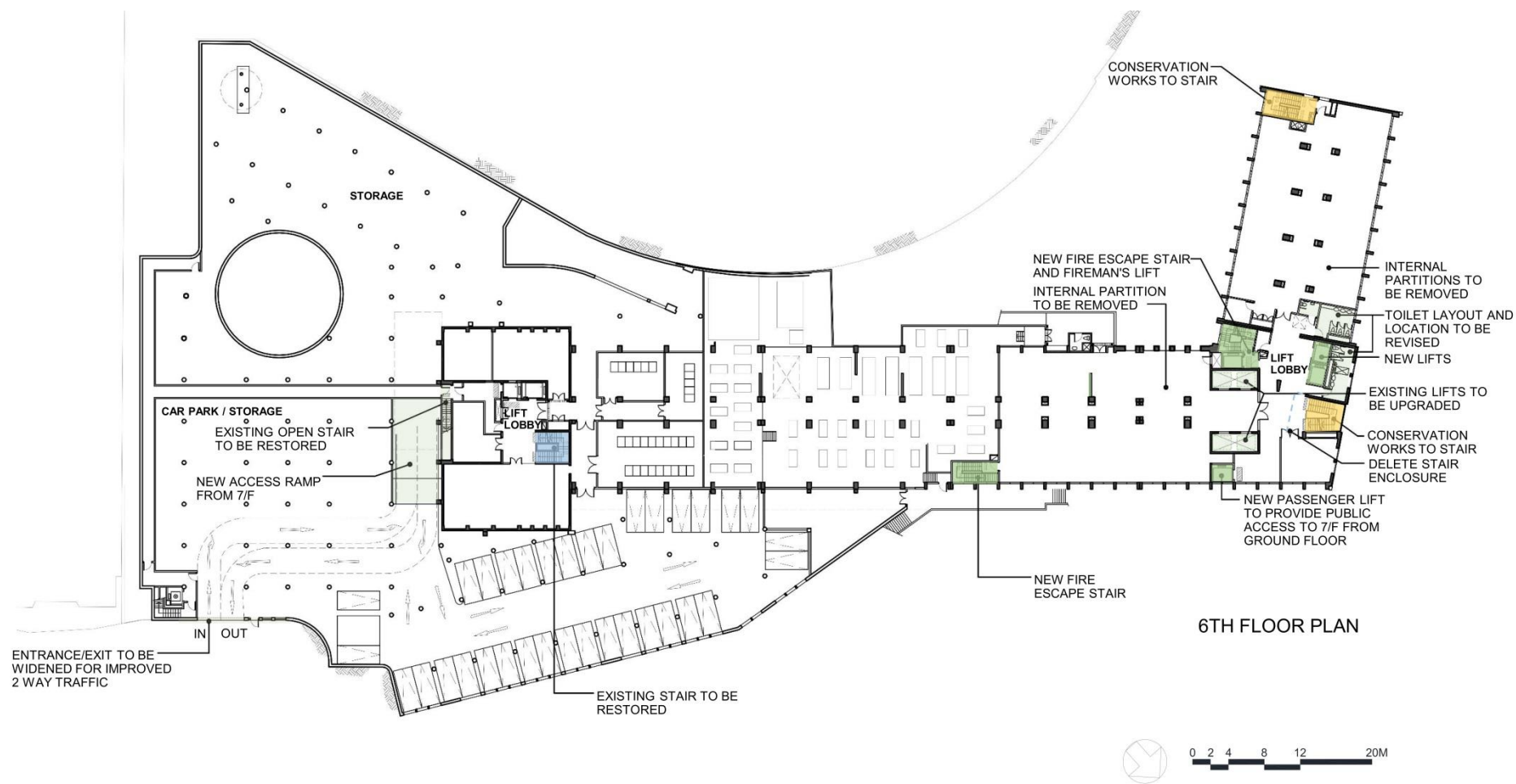


Figure 5 - 6th Floor Plan

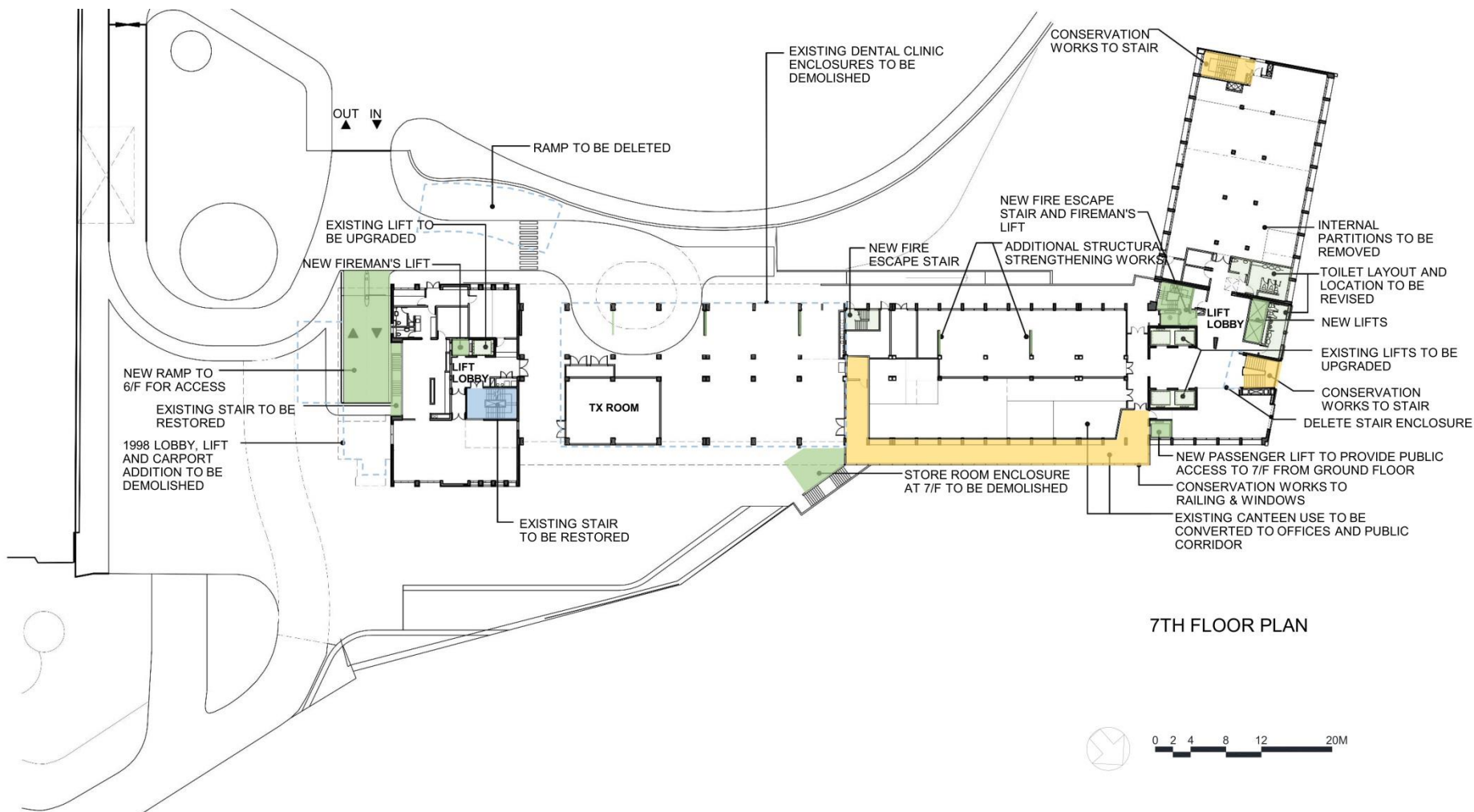
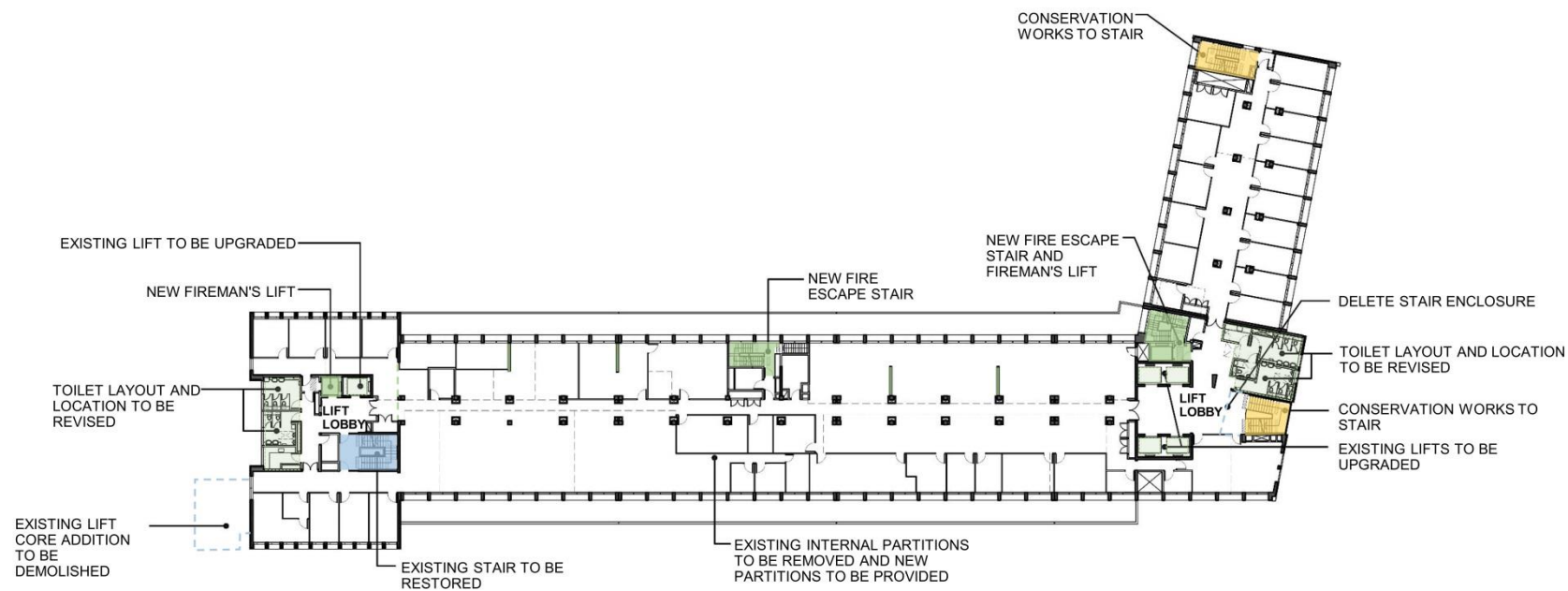


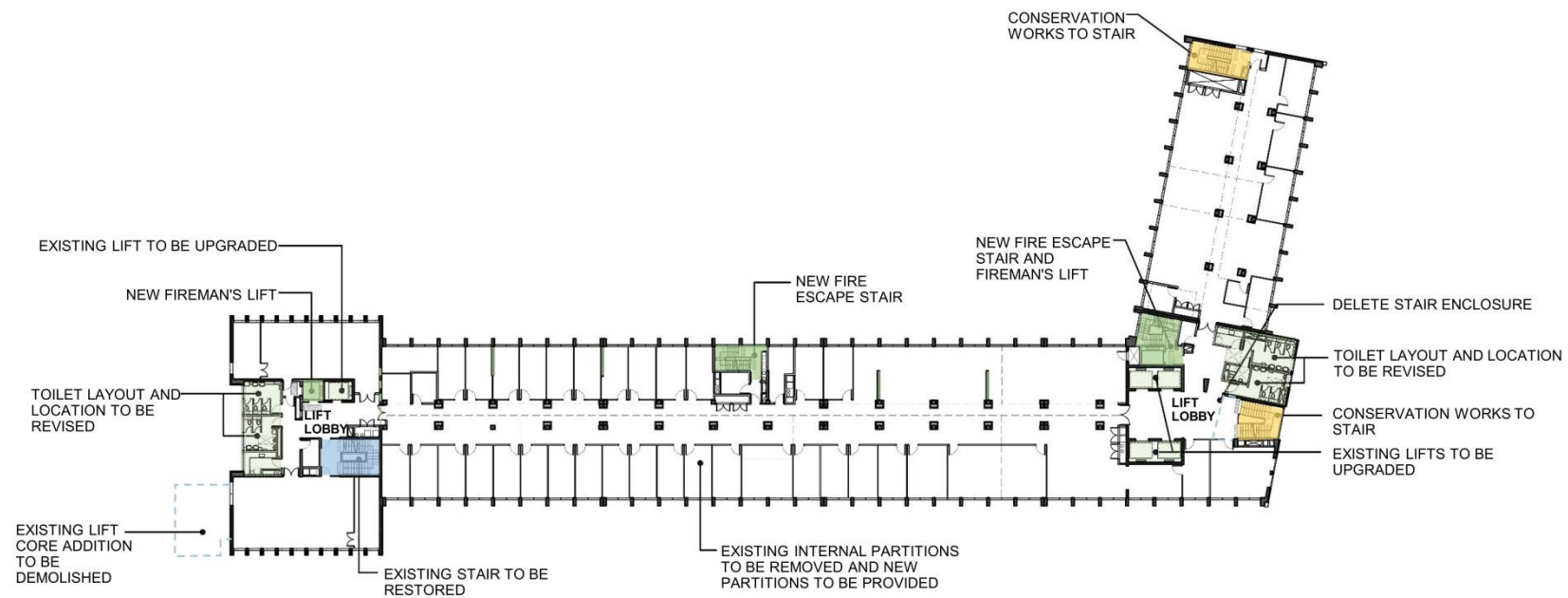
Figure 6 - 7th Floor Plan



8TH FLOOR PLAN



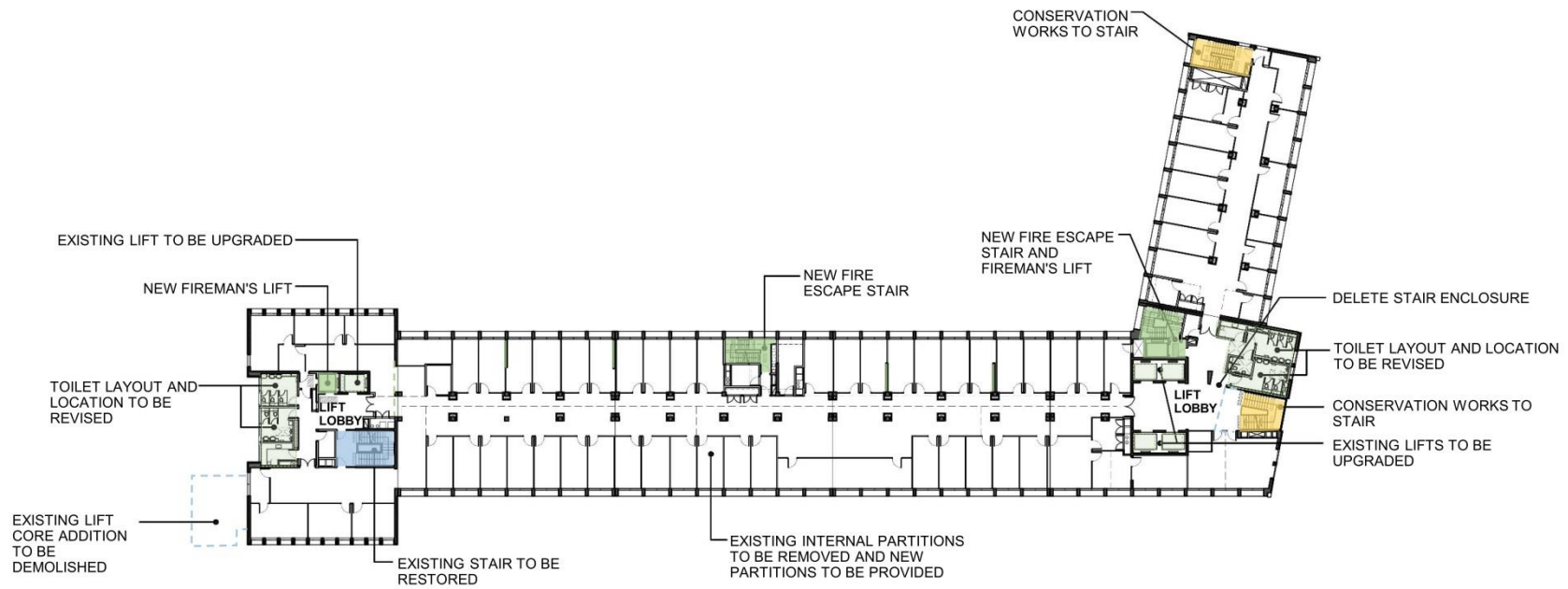
Figure 7 – 8th Floor Plan



9TH FLOOR PLAN



Figure 8 – 9th Floor Plan



10TH FLOOR PLAN



Figure 9 - 10th Floor Plan

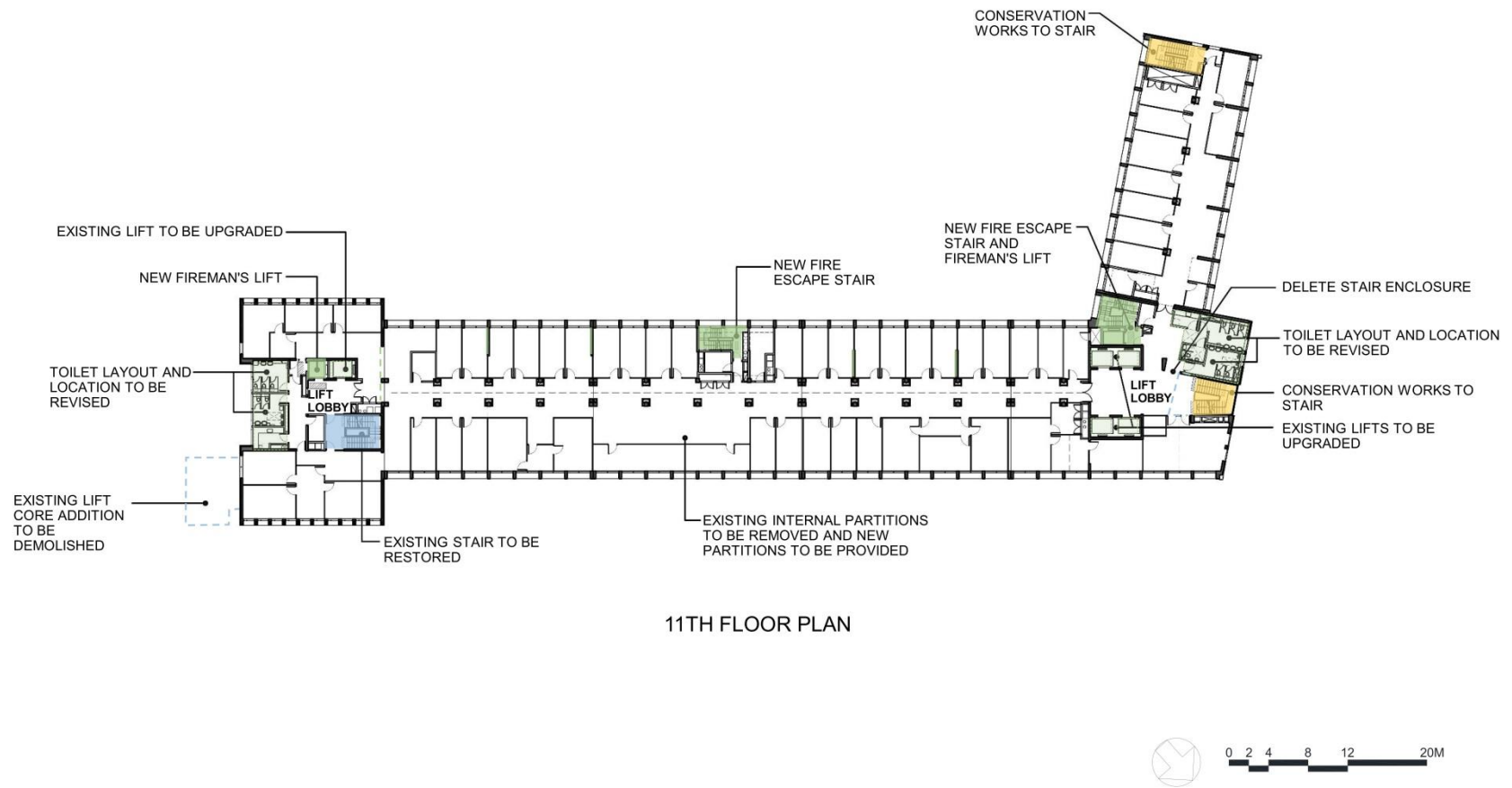


Figure 10 - 11th Floor Plan

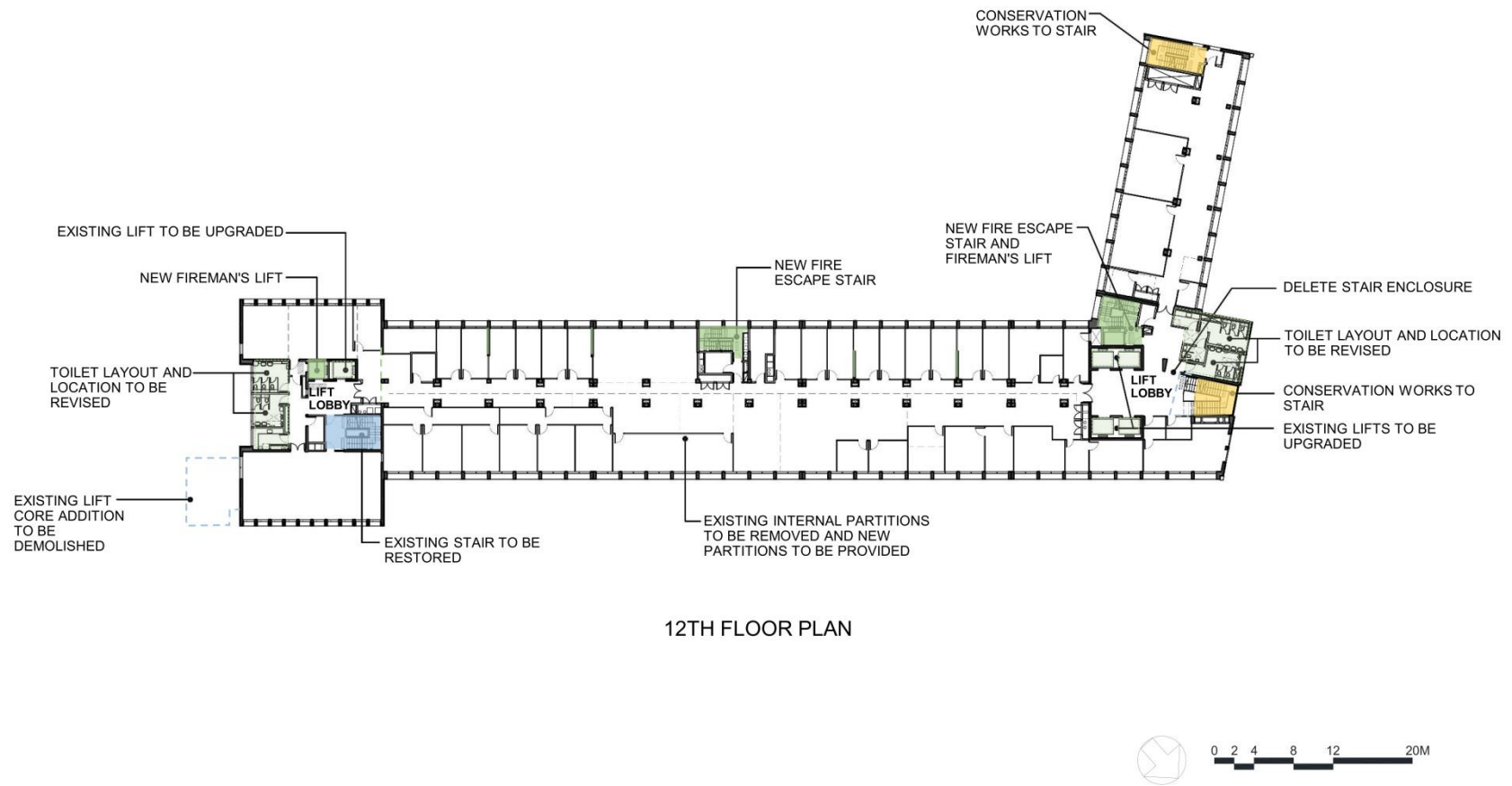
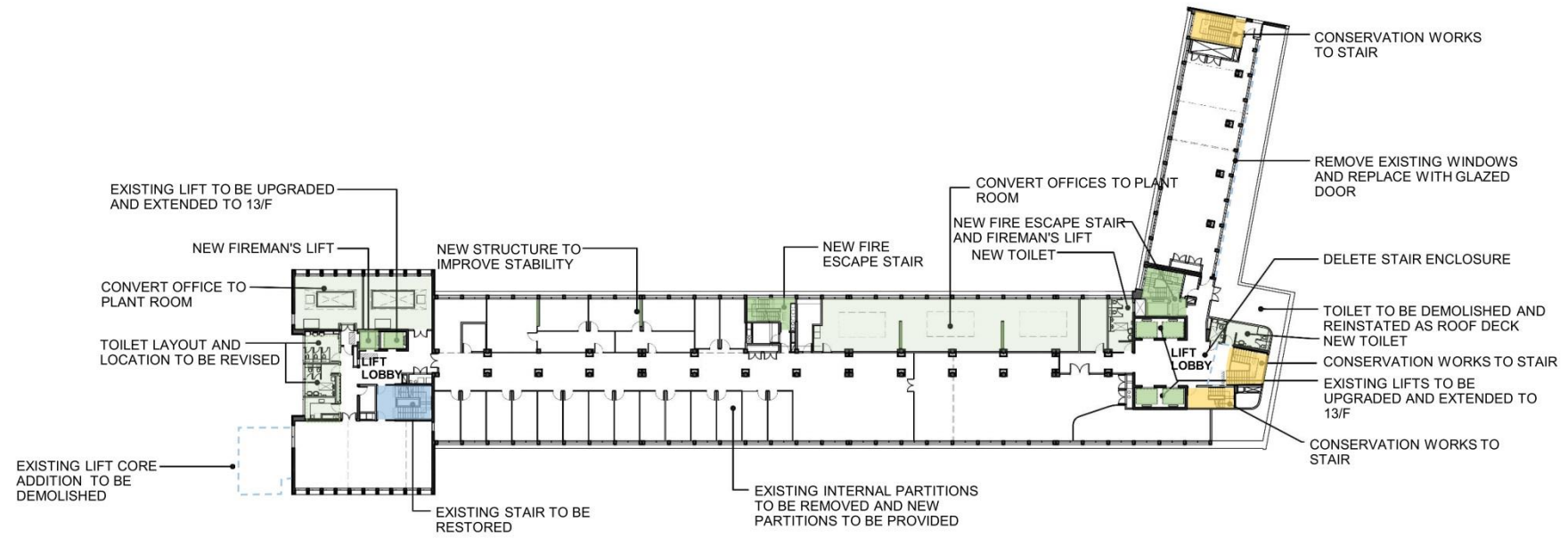


Figure 11 - 12th Floor Plan



13TH FLOOR PLAN



Figure 12 – 13th Floor Plan

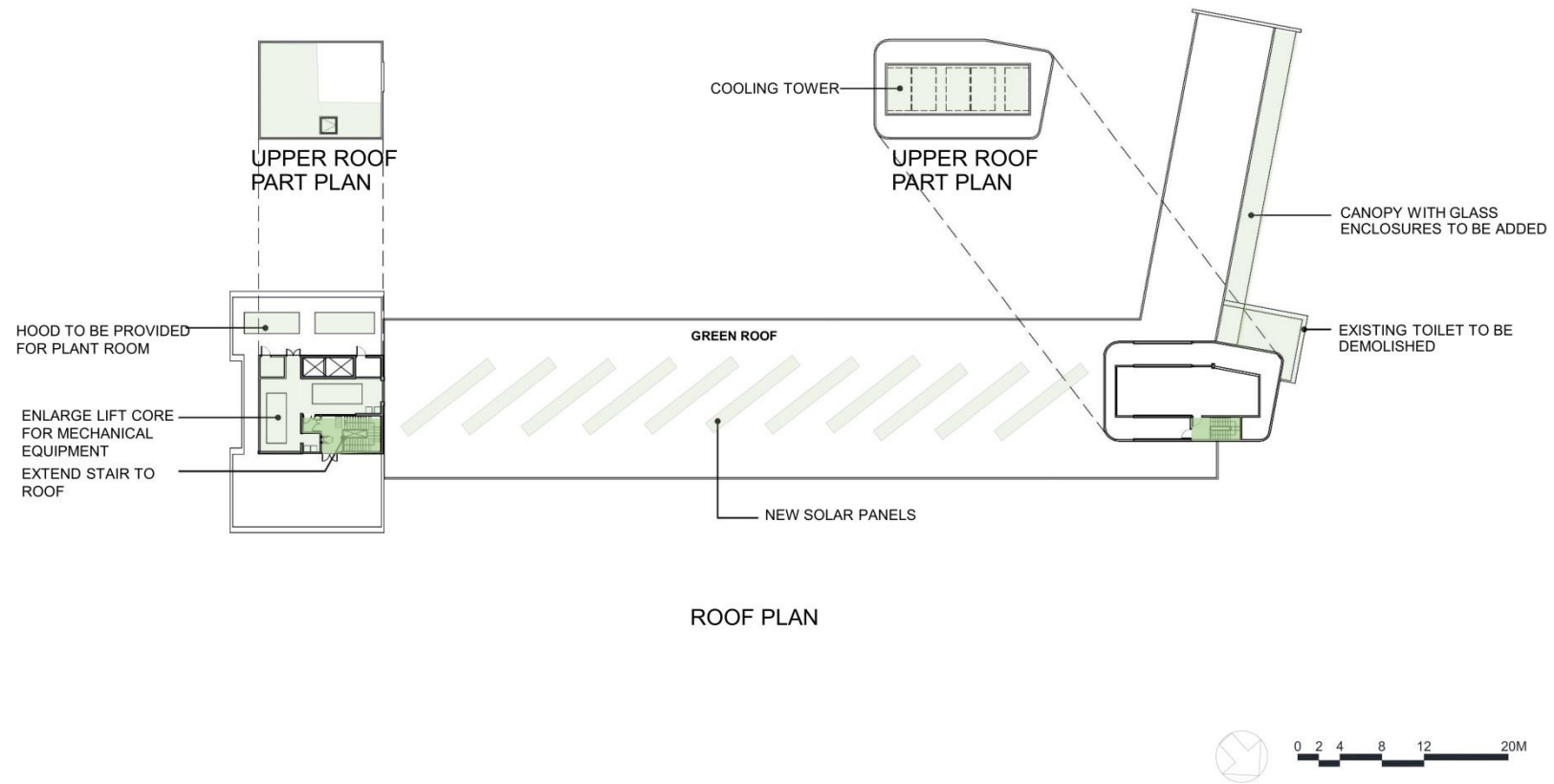


Figure 13 - Roof Plans

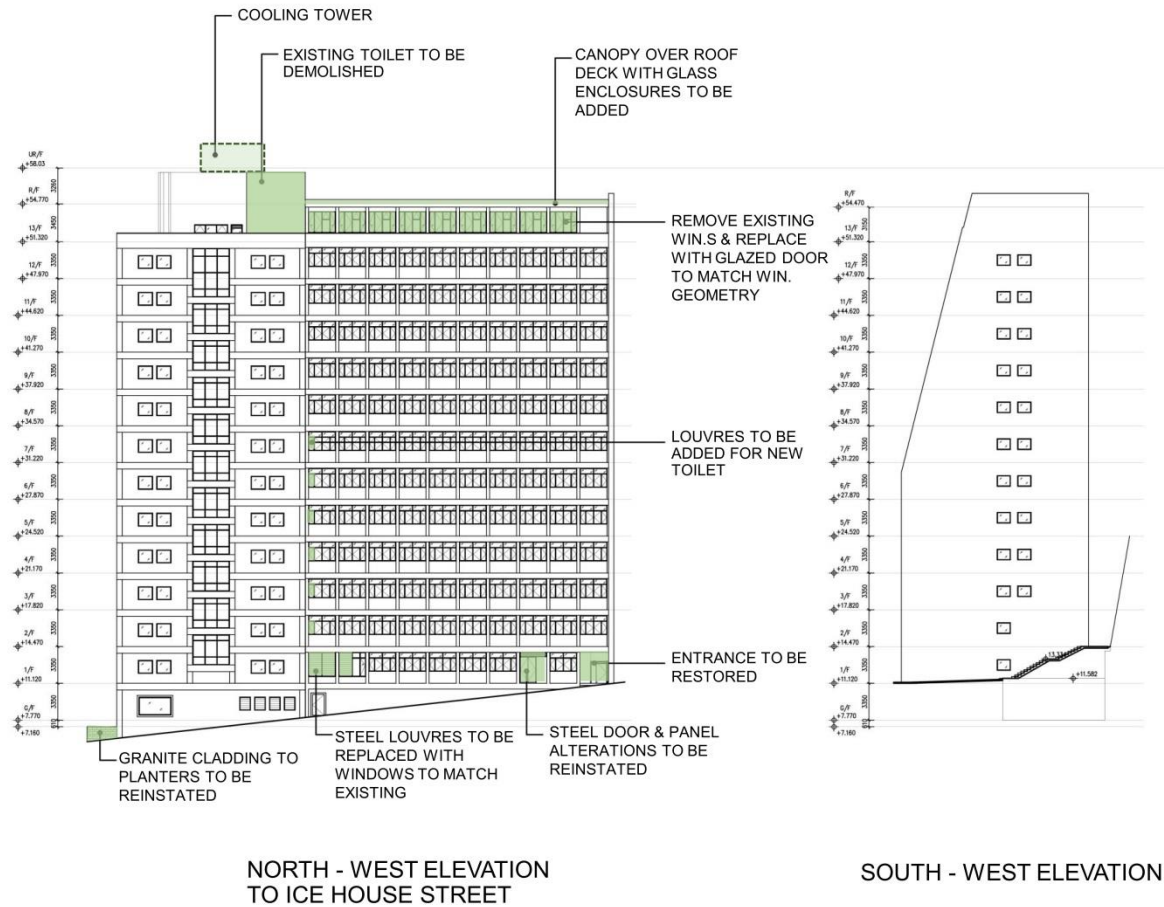
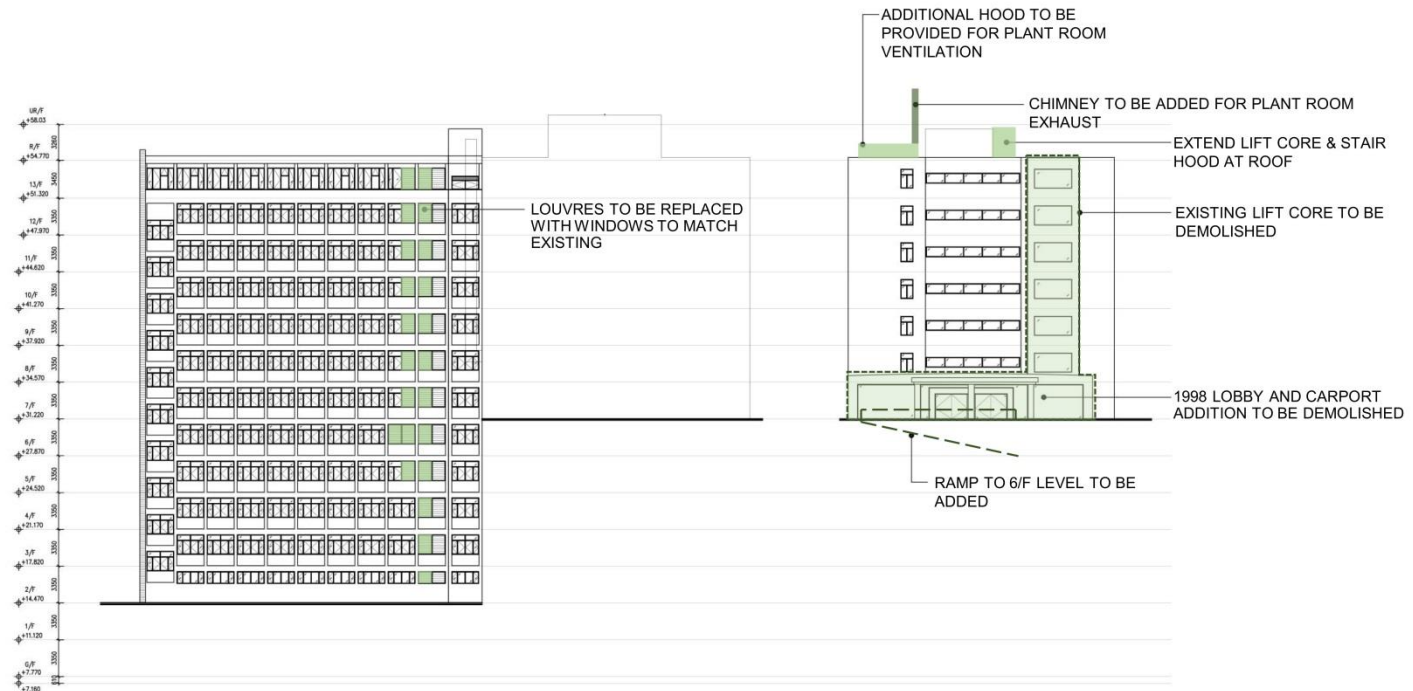


Figure 14 – North-West and South-West Elevations



SOUTH - EAST ELEVATION
SHORT WING

SOUTH - EAST ELEVATION
END BLOCK

Figure 15 – South-East Elevations

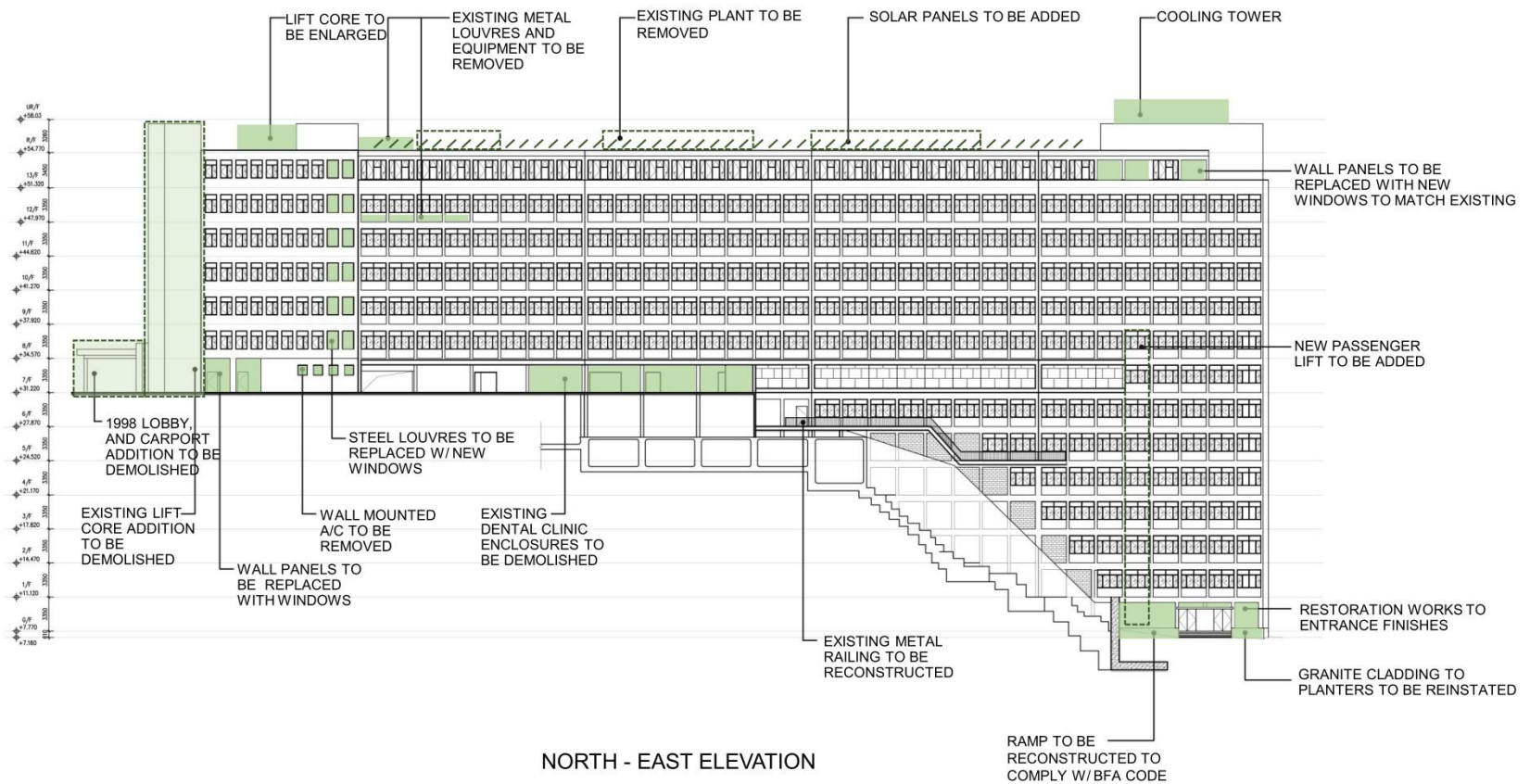
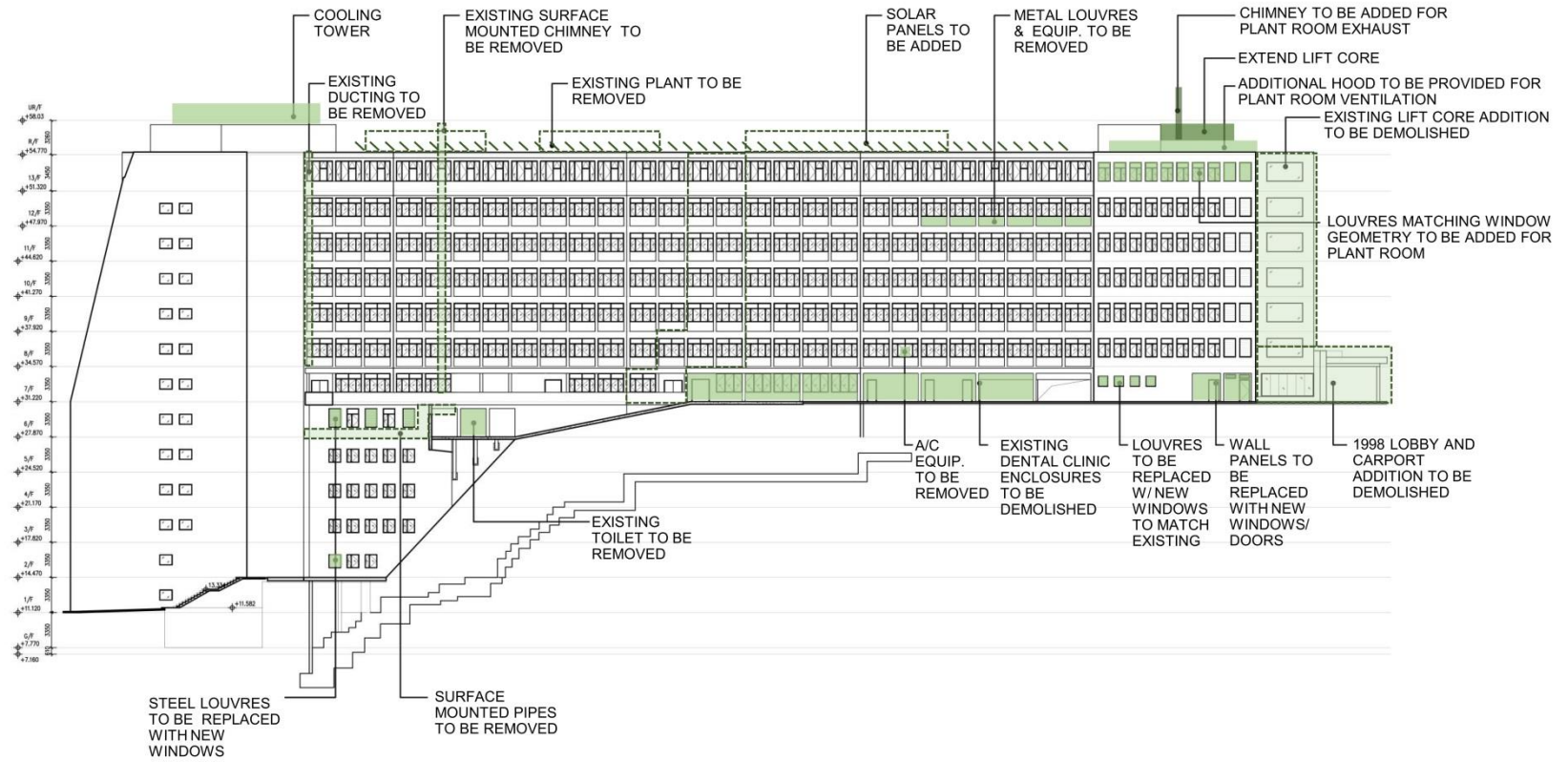


Figure 16 – North-East Elevation



SOUTH - WEST ELEVATION

Figure 17 – South-West Elevation