

Expansion Study Balmer School

Northbridge Public Schools
Northbridge, Massachusetts

Original Dated August 31, 2001

Re-Presented by Interim Superintendent
Henry O'Donnell on November 12, 2008

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Scheme A

Scheme A places the new building to the northeast of the existing school, creating a shared exterior space between the two buildings. The new building consists of a two-story wing housing the first and second grades and a one-story wing containing the kindergarten classrooms. At the center of the U-shaped two-story wing is a large cafeteria/auditorium space, with other shared spaces, such as the art and music rooms, housed above. The existing school is expanded to create a bigger kitchen, cafeteria, and gym, as well as to provide a larger library located beside the gym.

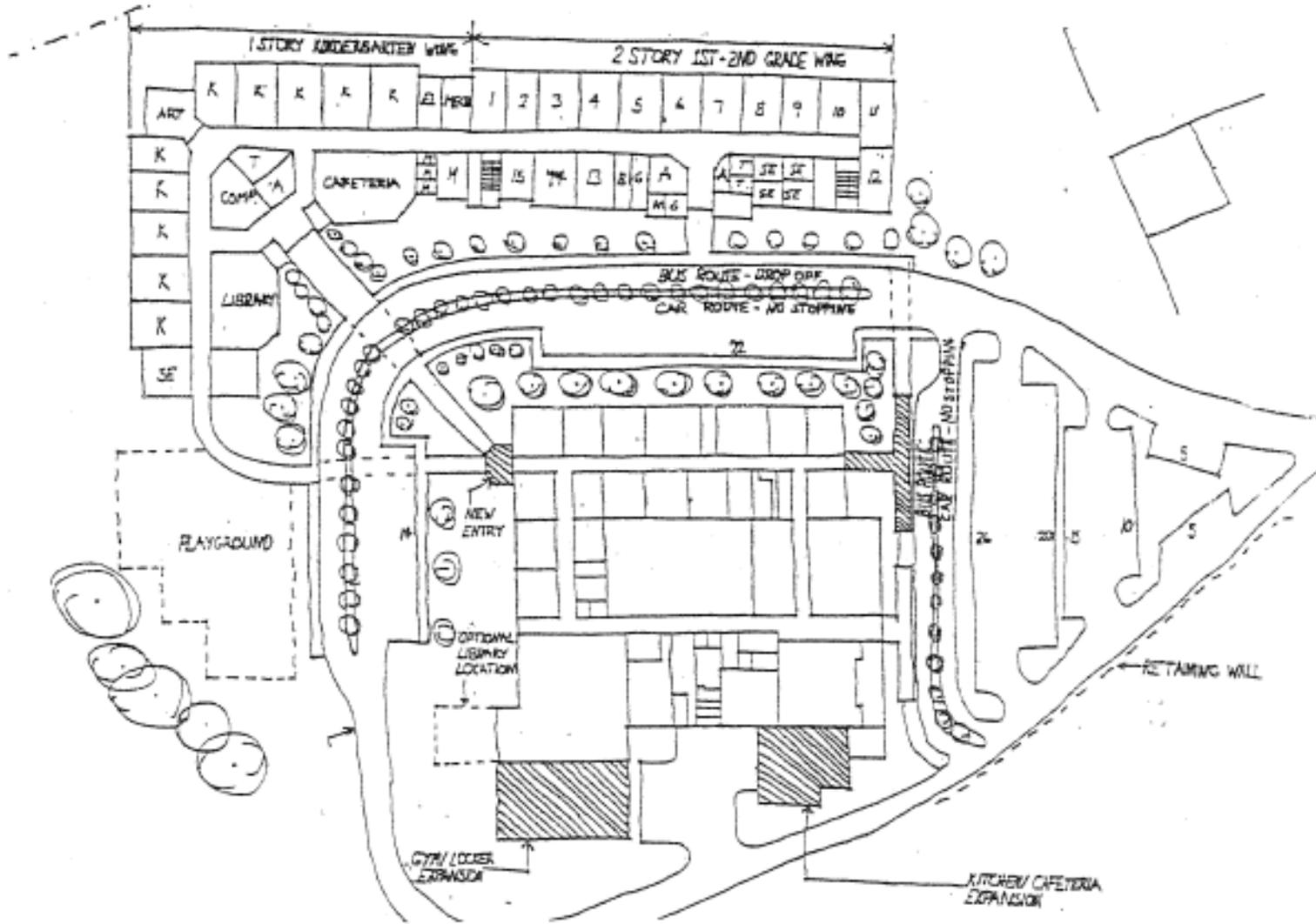
This scheme creates a strongly defined exterior space that provides a connection between the spaces shared by both schools: the library, gym, and cafeteria/auditorium. The layout of the classrooms in the new building is flexible enough to accommodate multiple arrangements of grades, teams, and subjects, while the shape of the building itself breaks down the forty classrooms into smaller, more intimate groupings. The new building is relatively compact, allowing parking space for 110 cars and a playground adjacent to the baseball fields.

Scheme B

Scheme B places the new building to the east of the existing school. The new building is L-shaped, with a two-story wing of first and second grade classrooms and a one-story wing containing kindergarten classrooms and the various larger shared spaces the school requires. The existing school is expanded to the west to accommodate a larger kitchen, cafeteria and gym. The arrangement of the buildings creates an open-ended exterior space behind the existing school where a playground and parking area are located. The two buildings are linked across this exterior space, and a new entryway is added at the back of the existing two-story wing of classrooms.

This scheme creates a visual and formal similarity between the two-story classroom wings facing each other across the bus route. This interplay between the buildings is reinforced in the exterior space in back, where a physical connection is made between the main entry of the new building, the new entry of the existing building, and the playground between the buildings. Within the new school, administrative facilities are placed close to the entrances to provide security over the building. The larger support spaces are centrally located, minimizing foot traffic through the first and second grade wing. The placement of the kindergarten classrooms is problematic, however, for they are too spread out and too centrally located.

Scheme B



Scheme C

Scheme C places the new building to the east of the existing school. The new building consists of a two-story first and second grade wing connected to two single story 'pods' of kindergarten classrooms by a one-story piece housing all of the shared support facilities. These facilities form the main entrance of the building and continue the axis of an existing east/west circulation route. A new entrance in the existing building and a covered walkway are added to connect the two buildings and reinforce this circulation axis.

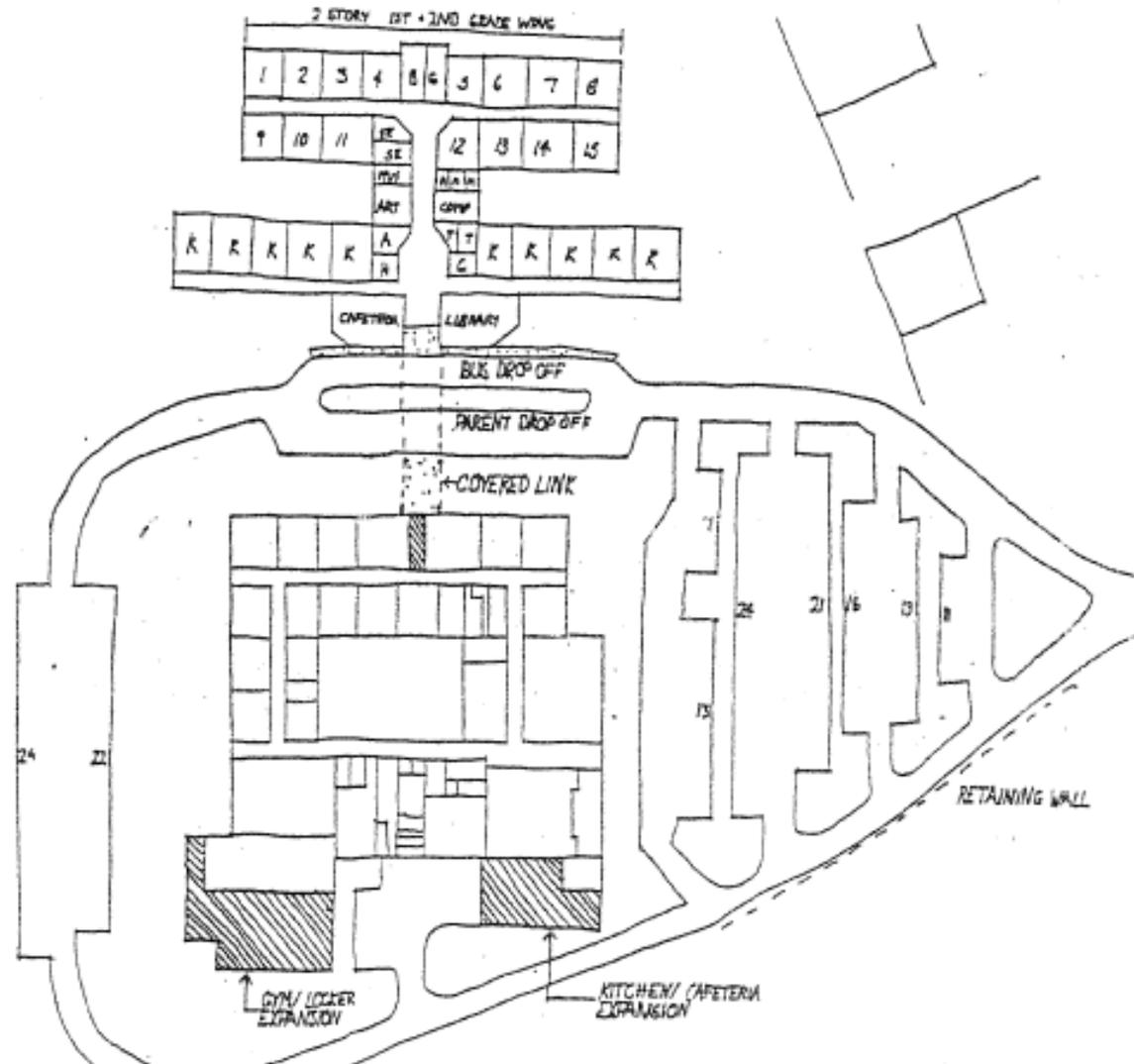
This scheme creates a new building that emphasizes the community within the school. By grouping the larger support spaces together, a 'main street' is created, focusing the foot traffic and noise of the support spaces into an inviting, communal area. Conversely, the classroom wings branching off of this central area are more secluded, minimizing traffic and disruption and creating an atmosphere more conducive to learning.

Scheme D

Scheme D places the new building to the east of the existing school, across the bus and auto drop off zone. The new building is organized around a central axis, which houses the major support spaces. Off of this central circulation route are the more secluded classroom wings. The kindergarten wing is a single-story, single loaded corridor, the first and second grade wing is a two-story, double loaded corridor. The new building is connected to the existing school by a covered walkway leading to a new entryway inserted into the existing classroom wing.

This scheme, like Scheme C, creates a 'main street', which consolidates much of the foot traffic into an inviting, bustling area, while leaving the classroom wings free of disruption. The cafeteria, auditorium and library spaces at the front of the building provide convenient access for users from both buildings, as well as create an inviting facade showcasing the communal spirit of the school. The two-story wings at the end of each building create a visual similarity between the existing and the new, helping to tie both buildings together.

Scheme D

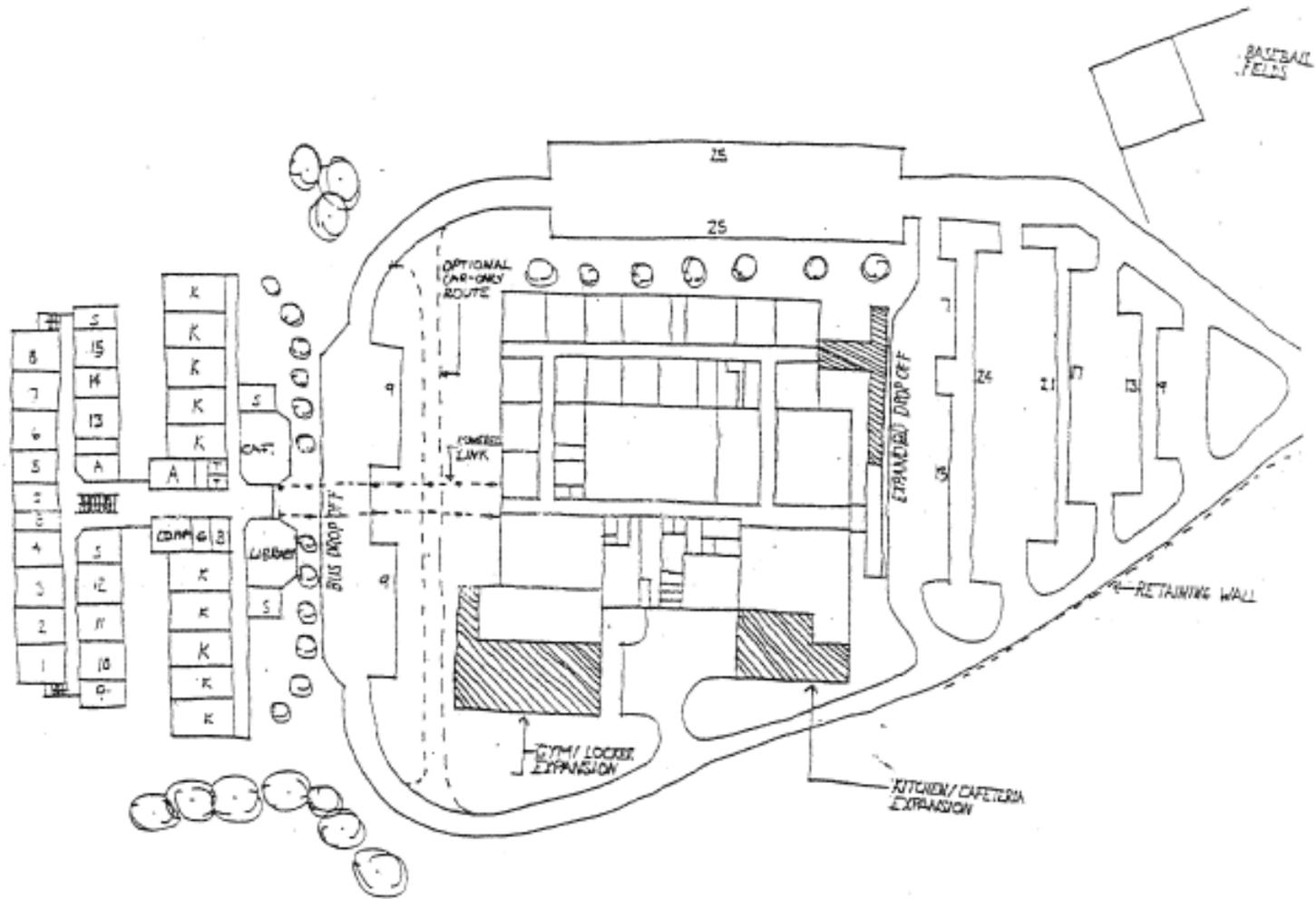


Scheme E

Scheme E places the new building to the north of the existing school, across the bus and auto drop off zone. The new building is organized around a central axis, which houses the major support spaces. This central axis is a continuation of the main north/south axis of the existing school. Off of this central circulation route are the more secluded classroom wings. The kindergarten wing is a single-story, single loaded corridor, the first and second grade wing is a two-story, double loaded corridor. The new building is connected to the existing school by a covered walkway leading to the existing entryway by the gym.

This scheme creates a strong central circulation axis that extends through both buildings. All of the major support spaces of both buildings are along this axis. This results in a 'main street' that extends through both buildings, starting at the expanded cafeteria in the front of the existing building and culminating at the grand staircase at the back of the new building. All of the more secluded classroom wings are then organized off of this main axis.

Scheme E

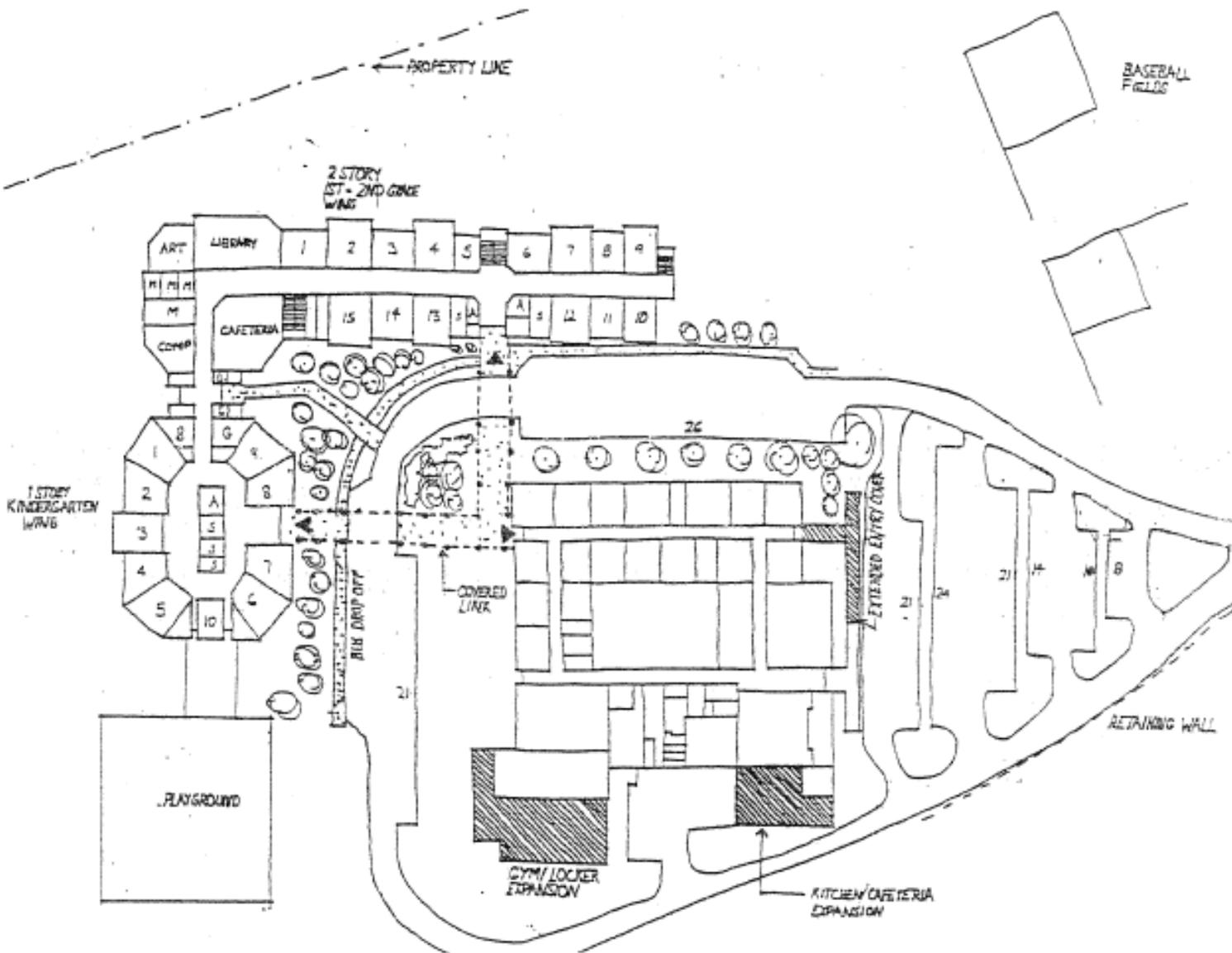


Scheme F

Scheme F places the new building to the northeast of the existing school. The building consists of a two-story double-loaded wing of first and second grade classrooms connected to a single large 'pod' of kindergarten classrooms by the group of large support spaces. The new building has an L-shaped covered walkway connecting the two new wings of classrooms to the existing classrooms. A new entry cover is added to the front of the existing classrooms to accommodate the major axis running between the two buildings.

This scheme provides a high degree of security for the new building, as the two major entrances through the more secluded classroom wings are in clear view of administrative offices. While the covered walkway between the schools provides a strong link to each building as well as the shared playground and exterior space, the increased traffic through the classroom areas becomes problematic, creating excessive noise and disruption.

Scheme F

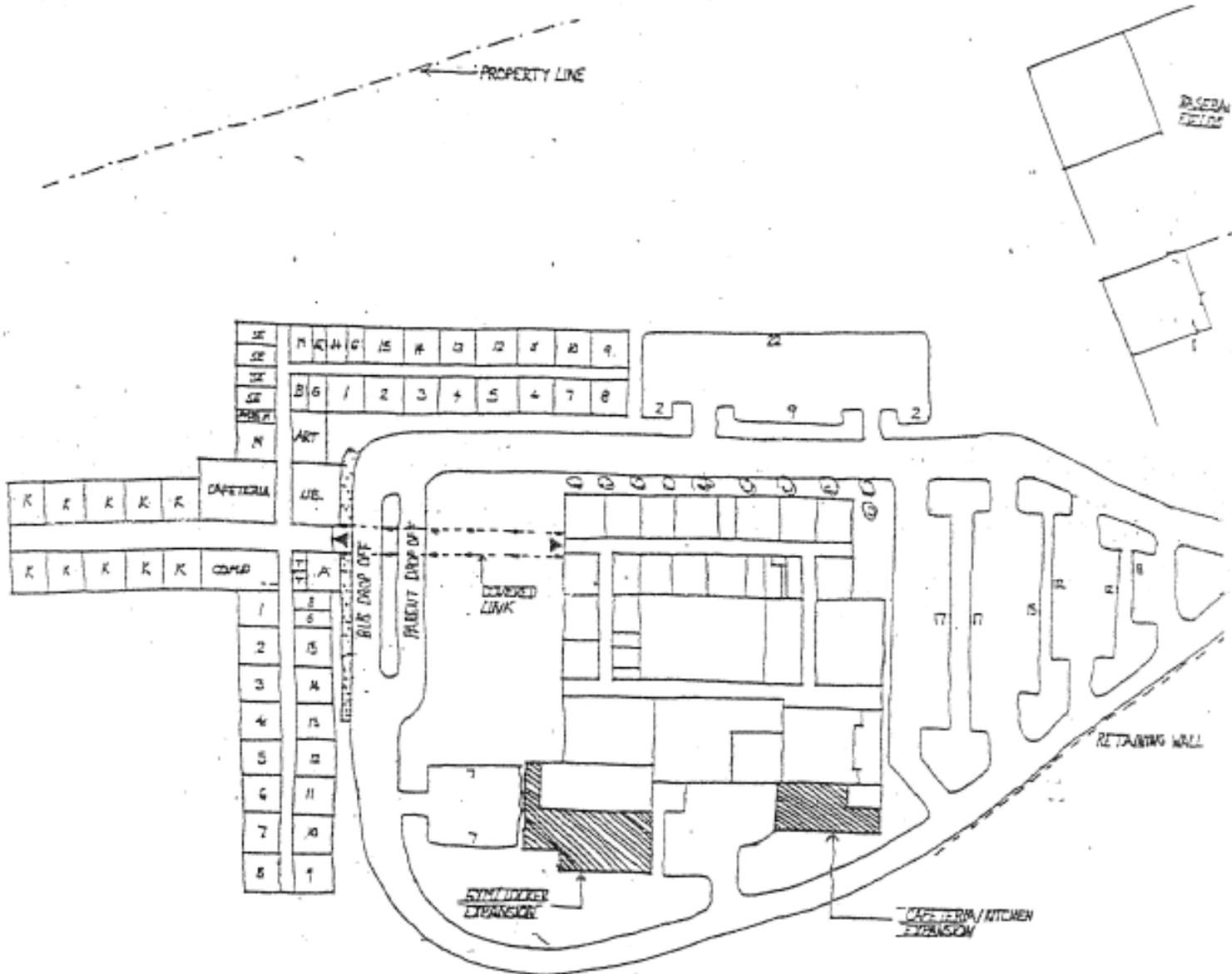


Scheme G

Scheme G places the new building to the north of the existing school, creating a shared exterior space in between. The new school is a single story structure centered on the shared support spaces, with double loaded classroom wings, one for each grade, branching off of the center. A covered walkway connects the main entrance of the new building, located at the center of the group of support spaces, with the entrance at the back of the existing classrooms.

This scheme creates a well-defined exterior space, which could be used as a playground shared by both schools. The organization of the new school creates an inviting communal area for the school while minimizing the disruption of excessive foot traffic within the classroom wings. However, the length of each wing creates an anonymous, impersonal feel for each classroom as well as a long travel time between parts of the school. The link between buildings is problematic as well, as it connects the communal spaces of the new school with the more private classrooms of the existing school.

Scheme G

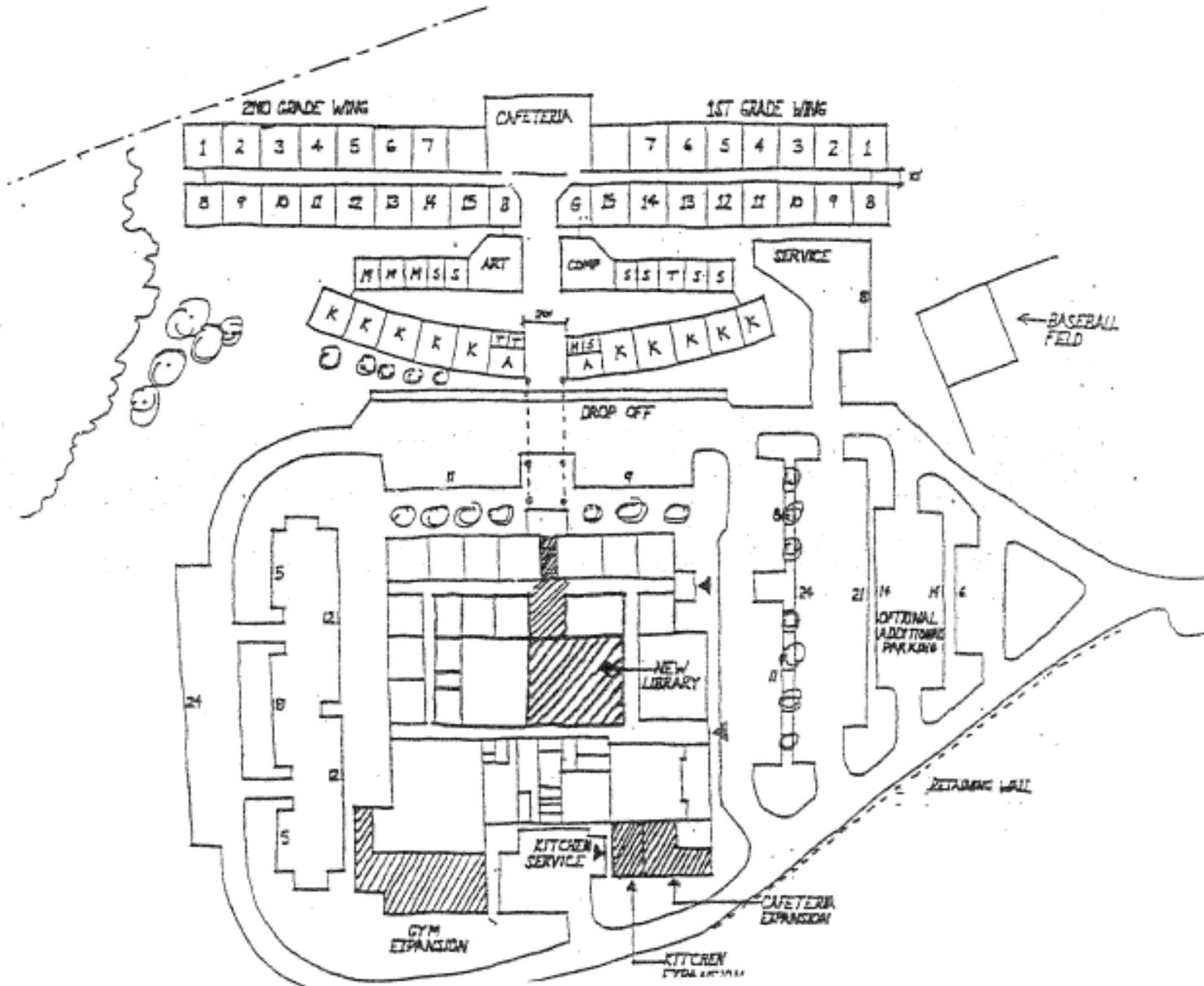


Scheme H

Scheme H places the new building to the east of the existing building. The new school is comprised of single story classroom wings organized around a central axis of the larger support spaces. The new building is connected to the existing school by a covered walkway leading to a new entrance inserted in the existing classroom wing. This entrance continues the central axis of the new building to a new library inserted in a portion of the existing courtyard.

This scheme creates a grand axis, or 'main street', that connects the shared spaces of both buildings, the library in the existing school and the cafeteria/ auditorium in the new school. Off this main street, the more secluded classroom wings are free of disruption. Like all of the single story schemes, the classroom wings are too long to create an intimate classroom setting, yet the curve of the kindergarten wing counteracts its length by turning its corridor into a more enjoyable communal space.

Scheme H



Scheme I

Scheme I places the new building to the north of the existing school. The new school is comprised of classroom wings organized around a central axis that houses all of the larger support spaces of the building.

The main entrance of the new school is flanked by the library and cafeteria/auditorium, and is linked to the existing school by a covered walkway connecting to a new entrance besides the expanded gym.

This scheme places the three main spaces shared by schools, the gym, the library, and the auditorium, in close proximity to each other, facilitating easy access between them. While the central axis of the new building focuses the foot traffic of the building in one area, the wings are too long to create an intimate classroom setting. However, the secluded curving kindergarten wing utilizes its circulation space to create a more communal feel to the wing.

Scheme I

