

**Honorable City Planning Commission  
Cincinnati, Ohio**

**November 3, 2023**

**SUBJECT:** A report and recommendation on a proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan of Planned Development #43 (PD-43), *The Banks*, to accept proposed signage deviating from the established sign standards located at 175 Joe Nuxhall Way in the Central Business District (CBD).

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

**Location:** 175 Joe Nuxhall Way, Cincinnati, OH 45202

**Applicant:** Cincinnati Reds in partnership with BetMGM and Nation Restaurants

**Request:** The City Planning Commission will review a proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan for Planned Development #43 (PD-43) *The Banks* in the Central Business District (CBD). The proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan is for the new tenant signage package that deviates from the established sign standards within PD-43 Phase 1.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Provided in addition to this report are:

- Exhibit A – Location Map
- Exhibit B – Application Letter
- Exhibit C – Proposed Signage Package

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 17, 2006, the City Planning Commission approved a zone change on property now known as The Banks from Downtown Development-Riverfront (DD-D) to Planned Development #43 (PD-43). The Hamilton County/Cincinnati Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan was to serve as the Concept Plan and Development Program Statement for PD-43. This plan would provide the conceptual baseline on which future development plans for *The Banks* would be reviewed and approved.

On May 15, 2009, the City Planning Commission approved the Final Development Plan for a portion of Phase 1A for the structural steel and concrete only. This approved phase was approximately 3.35 acres in size and encompassed the north, east, and south edges of Lot 26 and the north and west edges of Lot 16, both of which are located in the blocks between Walnut Street and Joe Nuxhall Way (formerly known as a portion of Main Street). Two six-story residential buildings on top of one level of retail were approved, including approximately 60,000 square feet of apartments, totaling approximately 300 rental units.

On January 8, 2010, the City Planning Commission approved the Final Development Plan for a portion of Phase 1A (Phase 1A.2) of PD-43 for the exterior facades of the retail and residential structures only, the updated construction schedule, and the transfer of air rights from the City and County to Riverbanks Renaissance, LLC. On February 19, 2010, the City Planning Commission approved the Final Development Plan for the signage regulations for Phase 1 of PD-43.

On October 6, 2023, the Cincinnati Reds submitted a new signage package for the subject tenant space previously home to Galla Park – Gastro and located along the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Cincinnati Bell Connector stop. The new signage will represent the new tenant, BetMGM and Nation. This will be a sportsbook and restaurant concept directly adjacent to Great American Ball Park, home to the Cincinnati Reds. There are seven (7) new signage locations along the building frontage of Joe Nuxhall Way and Second Street, which consist of wall signs, window signs, awning signs, and one projecting sign.

**SIGNAGE REGULATIONS FOR PHASE 1 OF PD-43, THE BANKS:**

On January 8, 2010, the Banks Developers submitted signage regulations for Phase 1 of PD-43. The Developers selected the Downtown Development District signage ordinance as the most applicable regulations for *The Banks* development. They also requested exceptions and additional sign types. City Planning staff then recommended multiple changes to the original signage request.

On February 5, 2010, the City Planning Commission discussed and tabled the proposed signage regulations for Phase 1 of PD-43. The Commission directed staff to have the City's Law Department review and approve the entire document, especially considering any signage with the potential to be in the right-of-way before the Commission would approve it.

The regulations detailed below are the applicable portions of the final Signage Regulations for Phase 1 of PD-43, *The Banks*, as approved by the City Planning Commission on February 19, 2010:

**Signs.**

Signs located in Planned Development District #43, *The Banks*, Phase 1 must comply with the following regulations and with Chapter 718, Revocable Street Privileges, of the Municipal Code. Every sign erected, constructed, painted or maintained for which a permit is required, must be plainly marked with the name of the person erecting, painting and maintaining such sign, and must have affixed the number corresponding to the permit issued for the sign. The absence of a reference to a permit number is prima facie evidence that the sign or advertising structure is being displayed in violation of this section. Any signage located in the public right-of-way is subject to requirements and regulations by Chapter 723 – Streets and Sidewalks, Use Regulations – of the Cincinnati Municipal Code.

Permitted signs allowed per this section include projecting signs, street-level wall signs, wall signs and awning signs. Projecting signs are permitted to 3.5 feet in width by 16 feet tall, including a ten-foot clearance above the sidewalk. Wall signs and street-level wall signs are permitted to be 3.5 feet tall with a maximum display area of 1-square foot for each one-foot of business frontage on the street to be faced by the sign. Awning signs are considered street-level wall signs and may not exceed 12 square feet of total surface area and the letters may not exceed 12 inches in height.

**ADJACENT LAND USE AND ZONING:**

The existing zoning and land use surrounding the subject site is as follows:

**North:**

Zoning:	Downtown Development District (DD)
Existing Use:	Interstate 71/highways and Cincinnati Bell Connector stop

**East:**

Zoning:	Downtown Development District (DD)
Existing Use:	Great American Ball Park, Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame

**South:**

Zoning:	Planned Development (PD-43)
Existing Use:	Central Riverfront Garage, Holy Grail Tavern & Grille, and other commercial uses

**West:**

Zoning: Planned Development (PD-43)  
 Existing Use: Planet Fitness and other commercial uses

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED SIGNAGE:**

The approved Final Development Plan regarding the signage allowances were based off the Downtown Development District (DD) zoning district, providing exceptions and additional sign types approved by City Planning Commission in 2010 (See Section “Signage Regulations for Phase I of PD-43, *The Banks*”). The sign ordinance was specifically approved for this specific Planned Development to allow for flexibility.

The following chart outlines the requested signage from this submission.

<b><u>East Frontage</u></b> Joe Nuxhall Way		<b>Type</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Sq Ft</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Total Sq Ft</b>
<b>A</b>	BetMGM Backlit Lionhead Awning Sign	Awning	2’ 4”	17’ 3”	40.25	1	40.25
<b>B</b>	Nation Kitchen & Bar Backlit Awning Sign	Awning	1.0’	29’ 4”	29.34	1	29.34
<b>C</b>	Nation Vinyl Window Sign	Window	1’ 8”	5’ 2”	8.61	1	8.61
<b>D</b>	Nation Hanging Blade Sign	Projecting	1’ 6”	2’ 4”	3.50	1	3.50
<b>I</b>	Nation Vinyl Window Sign	Window	3’ 6”	7”	2.04	1	2.04
<b>Total</b>						<b>5</b>	<b>83.74</b>

<b><u>North Frontage</u></b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street		<b>Type</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Width</b>	<b>Sq Ft</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Total Sq Ft</b>
<b>E</b>	Nation Kitchen & Bar Backlit Wall Sign	Street Level Wall Sign	3’ 4”	3’ 6”	11.67	1	11.67
<b>F</b>	BetMGM Backlit Lionhead Wall Sign	Street Level Wall Sign	15’	2’ 4”	35.0	1	35.0
<b>Total</b>						<b>2</b>	<b>46.67</b>
<b>Total for Both Frontages</b>						<b>7</b>	<b>130.41</b>

**PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVAL OF FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:**

The City Planning Commission may approve a Final Development Plan for a development in a PD District (§ 1429-15) on consideration of the following:

- (a) **Consistency.** The Final Development Plan is consistent with the purpose of the Planned Development District Regulations; specifically:
- It allows for a more efficient and economically feasible development of property.
  - It ensures an orderly and thorough planning and review, which has produced quality design and development.
  - It provides for more creative development through flexibility in the design.

(b) **Adequate Streets.** N/A

(c) **Adequate Infrastructure.** N/A

(d) **Covenant.** N/A

(e) **Release of Covenants.** N/A

(f) **Compatibility.** See “Analysis” section of this report which outlines the professional opinion of staff and that the signage being proposed is consistent, harmonious, and compatible with the surrounding land uses.

(g) **Sufficiency of Legal Documents.** N/A

(h) **Sufficiency of Provisions for Maintenance of Common Areas.** N/A

#### **FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS:**

Cincinnati Zoning Code § 1429-21 Final Development Plan Amendments states that Final Development Plans may be amended as either Minor Amendments or Major Amendments. § 1429-21(b) Major Amendments specifically states that “Amendments to any final development plan other than a minor amendment may be approved only by the City Planning Commission, provided, however, that the City Planning Commission determines that such adjustments do not substantially alter the concept or intent of the approved final development plan.” The new signage package is not considered a minor adjustment, engineering change, or structural change making it ineligible to be considered a Minor Amendment, approved by the Director of City Planning and Engagement. As a Major Amendment, the new signage for the joint tenant space does not alter the concept of intent of the approved Final Development Plan, thus not needing additional approval by City Council.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT AND NOTIFICATION:**

The Department of City Planning and Engagement held a virtual public staff conference regarding the proposed Final Development Plan Major Amendment on Thursday, October 26, 2023. There were no members of the public in attendance. Notice of the public staff conference was sent to all property owners within 400-feet of the subject property including the Downtown Residents Council. No additional correspondence has been received as of October 27, 2023.

#### **DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW AND COMMENTS:**

The subject request was not required to go through the City’s Coordinated Site Review (CSR) process, as it is only for signage. Permits for the signs will need to be approved by the City’s Department of Buildings and Inspections as part of the regular building permit process. All building mounted signs (specifically projecting Sign D) that overhang the right-of-way require a Revocable Street Privilege; the applicant has been made aware of this requirement.

#### **CONSISTENCY WITH PLANS:**

*Plan Cincinnati* (2012)

The proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan is consistent with the Compete Initiative Area of *Plan Cincinnati* (2012), particularly within the Goal to “Cultivate our position as the most vibrant and economically healthy part of our region” (pg. 114), specifically “Focus development on the existing

centers of activity by developing compact walkable mixed-use districts and better connect them to residential areas” (pg. 116). *The Banks* is a mixed-use development which serves as a pedestrian-oriented experience for the indoor/outdoor entertainment venues adjacent and around the Planned Development and Smale Riverfront Park.

This request is additionally consistent with the goal to “Become nationally and international recognized as a vibrant and unique city” (pg. 121) and would “Provide support to businesses that focus on our City’s historic heritage of...the arts and other cultural traditions” (pg. 123). Baseball, among other sports, is a treasured tradition within Cincinnati.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan does not substantially alter the concept or intent of the approved Final Development Plan. The proposed signage package closely matches the standards set forth in the approved signage ordinance for this Planned Development. The proposed signage plan indicates exactly what types of signs will be built and where on this tenant space, which was not included in the previously approved Final Development Plan as it was not yet anticipated what signage was needed at that time.

This is the third signage package submitted to City staff for this specific tenant space. The applicant team has worked with Department of City Planning and Engagement staff and revised their signage package based on staff’s feedback. The proposed signage conforms to the definitions of projecting signs, street-level wall signs, and wall signs except for Sign F, the BetMGM backlit wall sign that will be positioned on the northern side of the building, facing 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. According to the signage ordinance that was approved for PD-43, Sign F is considered a street-level wall sign. Street-level wall signs are permitted to be only 3.5-feet tall and currently Sign F is 15-feet tall, thus resulting in an overage of 11.5-feet. Staff finds this request to be comparable and consistent with entertainment venues found throughout the City and *The Banks*.

Street-level wall signs and wall signs permit a total maximum display area of 1-square foot for each 1-foot of business frontage on the street to be faced by the sign. The subject tenant space currently has a frontage of 125-feet along Joe Nuxhall Way and 26.25-feet along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, totaling 151.25 square feet, which would be the maximum permitted by right of display area. The total square footage of signage being proposed is 130.41 square feet. The tenant space, that sits on the corner directly adjacent to Great American Ball Park and positioned conveniently along a streetcar stop, will have both entertainment and restaurant/bar elements. Staff appreciates that the applicant adheres to the maximum square footage permitted at this location and finds that Sign F is more suitable on the northern side of the building as it would be easier to be seen from I-71 and Downtown. Signs A and B that are technically considered awning signs, are both too large in surface area, but the total signage square footage on the Joe Nuxhall Way side is 83.74 square feet compared to the permissible 125 square feet.

### **FINDINGS:**

Upon review of the plans and specifications submitted in support of the proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan, and in consideration of the provisions of §1429-15 as outlined on pages 3-4 of this report, staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement finds that the proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan does not substantially alter the concept or intent of the approved Final Development Plan and substantially conforms to the Concept Plan and Development Program Statement.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

The staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement supports the proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan based on:

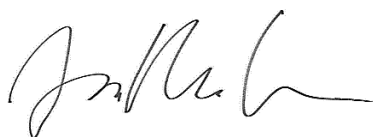
1. The proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan for new signage does not substantially alter the concept or intent of the approved Final Development Plan.
2. Ensures orderly development and thorough planning and review procedures that lead to quality design and development.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The staff of the Department of City Planning and Engagement recommends that the City Planning Commission take the following actions:

- 1) **ADOPT** the Department of City Planning and Engagement findings and analysis detailed on page 5 of this report, and
- 2) **APPROVE** the proposed Major Amendment to the Final Development Plan of Planned Development #43 (PD-43), *The Banks*, to accept proposed signage deviating from the established sign standards located at 175 Joe Nuxhall Way in the Central Business District (CBD).

Respectfully submitted:



Jesse Urbancsik, Senior City Planner  
Department of City Planning and Engagement

Approved:



Katherine Keough-Jurs, FAICP, Director  
Department of City Planning and Engagement

# Proposed Major Amendment to FDP at 175 Joe Nuxhall Way in Downtown





# CINCINNATI REDS™

Great American Ball Park, 100 Joe Nuxhall Way, Cincinnati, OH 45202-4109, Phone: 513.765.7000, Fax: 513.765.7342, [www.reds.com](http://www.reds.com)

October 6, 2023

Stacey Hoffman  
City Planning Division Manager  
City of Cincinnati  
Department of City Planning and Engagement  
Two Centennial Plaza  
805 Central Avenue, Suite 720  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Stacey:

The Cincinnati Reds, along with our partners BetMGM and Nation restaurants, have become the new tenant at 175 Joe Nuxhall on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Joe Nuxhall. We are transforming the old Galla Park restaurant into a new sportsbook and restaurant concept to serve the community.

This establishment will convert one of the primary corners of the Banks from a tradition of unsuccessful establishments to an exciting destination that will be beneficial to the other businesses, residents, and visitors of the Banks.

One of the important design elements for the site is the exterior signage that is proposed to face both 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Joe Nuxhall. To be successful, it is imperative that the signage can be seen from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and the adjacent sidewalks along Joe Nuxhall. It has been designed to be aesthetically pleasing while identifying the location as a new destination. We are aware that the proposed signage is larger than the established standards in the Final Development Plan but believe that we have a case for an amendment to the plan.

Specifically, we are requesting:

- East Elevation (facing Joe Nuxhall Way): Increased the signage size on top of the exterior awning in both square footage and maximum height. The awning that we plan to install will extend the length of the establishment on Joe Nuxhall, to provide the necessary coverage for external dining. The current proposed signage does meet the requirements for size and maximum dimensions if it were to be considered a wall sign. Additionally, if we could be granted the amendment, the signage would meet the regulations for typical 'street level wall mounted signage' in lieu of 'awning signage'.





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# ***REDS GAMING FACILITY***

BETMGM SPORTBOOK - NATION GRILL @ THE BANKS  
**EXTERIOR SIGNAGE & RSP**

October 2023



MSA

SPORT

# ***SIGNAGE***



MSA

SPORT

INSTALLATION SITE:

BETMGM Sportsbook -  
Nation Grill @ The Banks  
175 Joe Nuxhall Way  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

SIGN DIMENSIONS:

		DIMENSIONS	SQ FOOTAGE
EAST	A	2'-4" X 2'-4" & 2'-4" X 14'-11"	40.25 SQ FT
	B	1'-0" X 29'-4"	29.34 SQ FT
	C	1'-8" X 5'-2"	8.61 SQ FT
	D	1'-6" X 2'-4"	3.50 SQ FT
	I	3'-6" X 7"	2.04 SQ FT
NORTH	E	3'-4" X 3'-6"	11.67 SQ FT
	F	15'-0" X 2'-4"	35.00 SQ FT

CALCULATIONS:

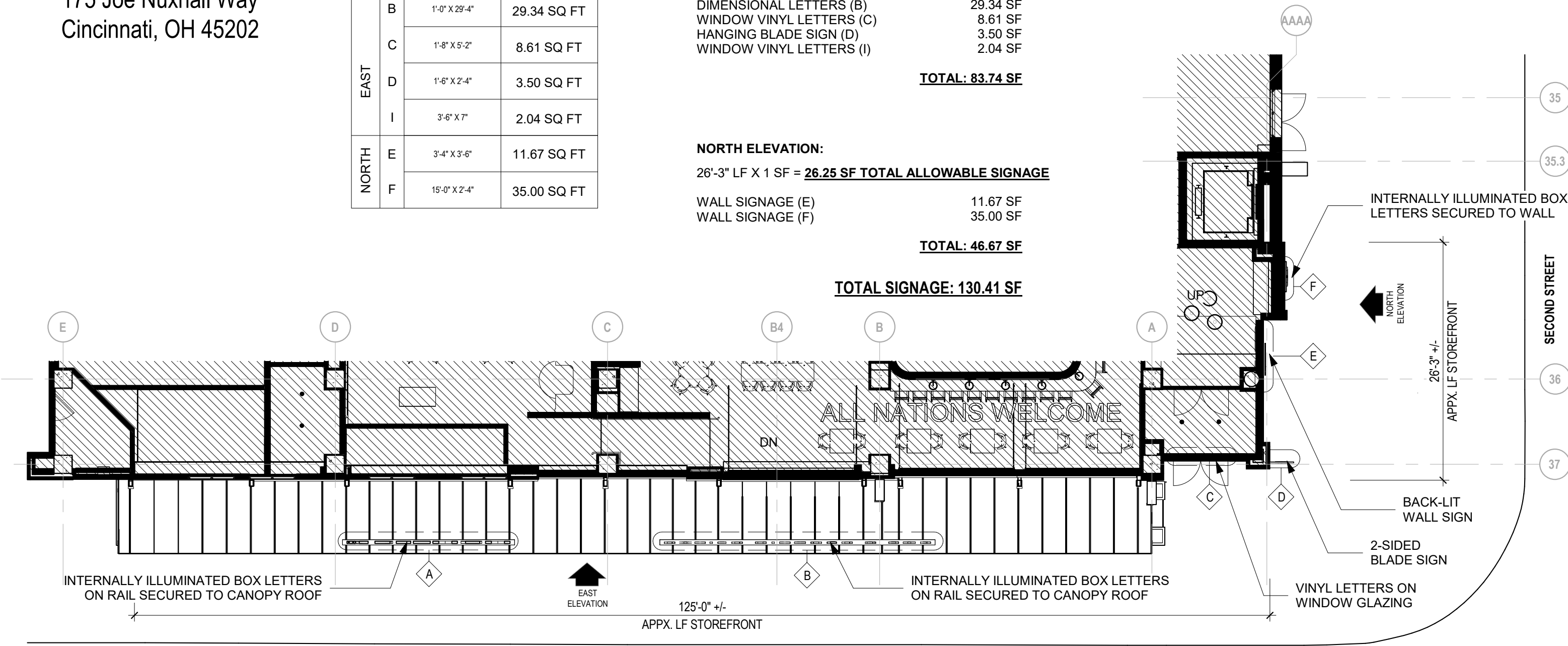
**EAST ELEVATION:**  
125'-0" LF X 1 SF = **125 SF TOTAL ALLOWABLE SIGNAGE**

DIMENSIONAL LETTERS (A)	40.25 SF
DIMENSIONAL LETTERS (B)	29.34 SF
WINDOW VINYL LETTERS (C)	8.61 SF
HANGING BLADE SIGN (D)	3.50 SF
WINDOW VINYL LETTERS (I)	2.04 SF
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>83.74 SF</b>

**NORTH ELEVATION:**  
26'-3" LF X 1 SF = **26.25 SF TOTAL ALLOWABLE SIGNAGE**

WALL SIGNAGE (E)	11.67 SF
WALL SIGNAGE (F)	35.00 SF
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>46.67 SF</b>

**TOTAL SIGNAGE: 130.41 SF**



SITE PLAN - SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

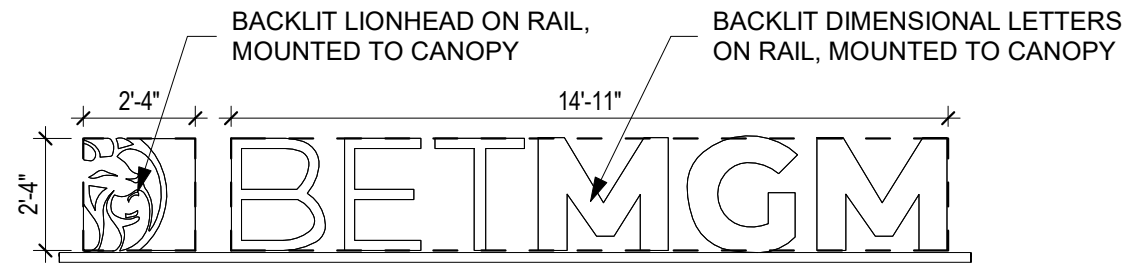


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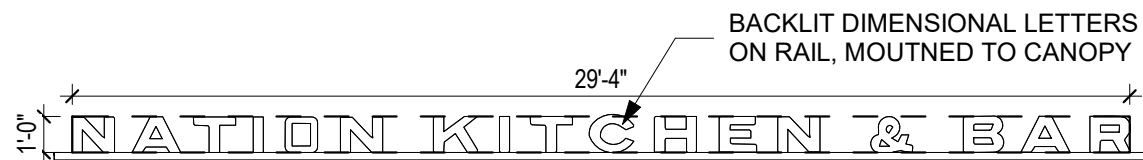


S1



**AWNING SIGN A**

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



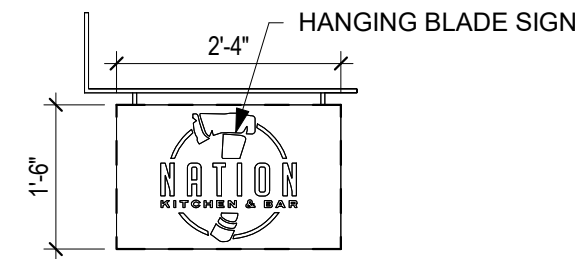
**AWNING SIGN B**

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"



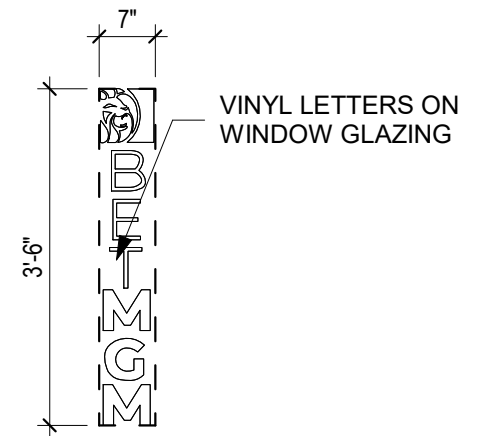
**WINDOW SIGN C**

SCALE: 3/8" = 1'-0"



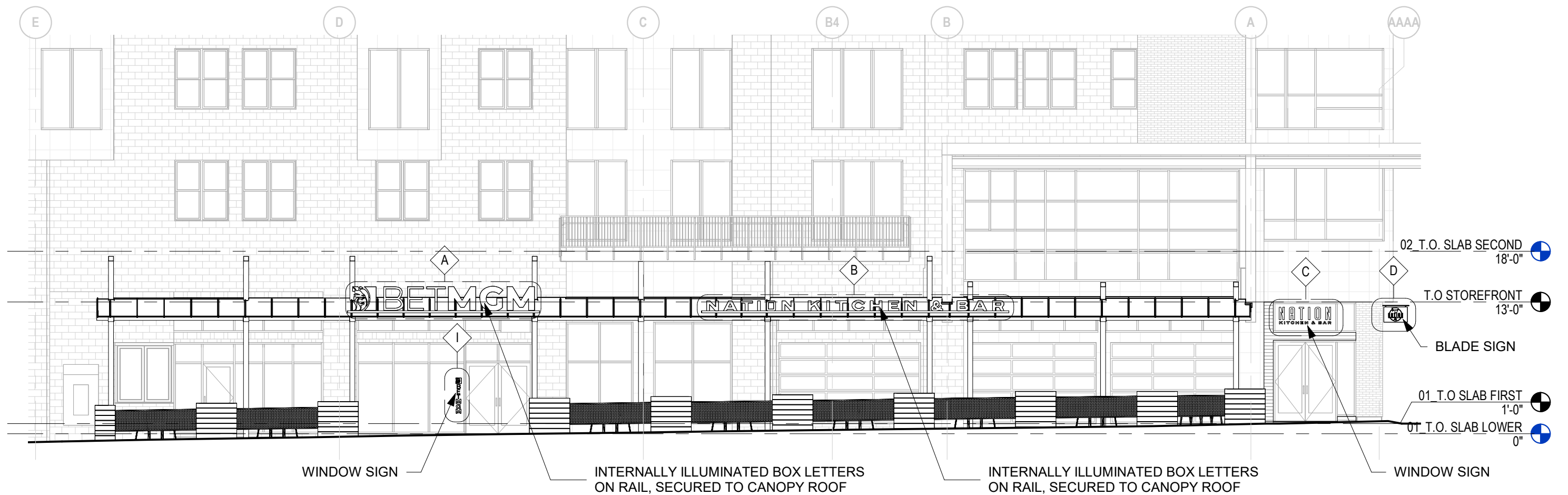
**BLADE SIGN D**

SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



**WINDOW SIGN I**

SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"



**EAST ELEVATION - SIGNAGE LOCATIONS**

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"

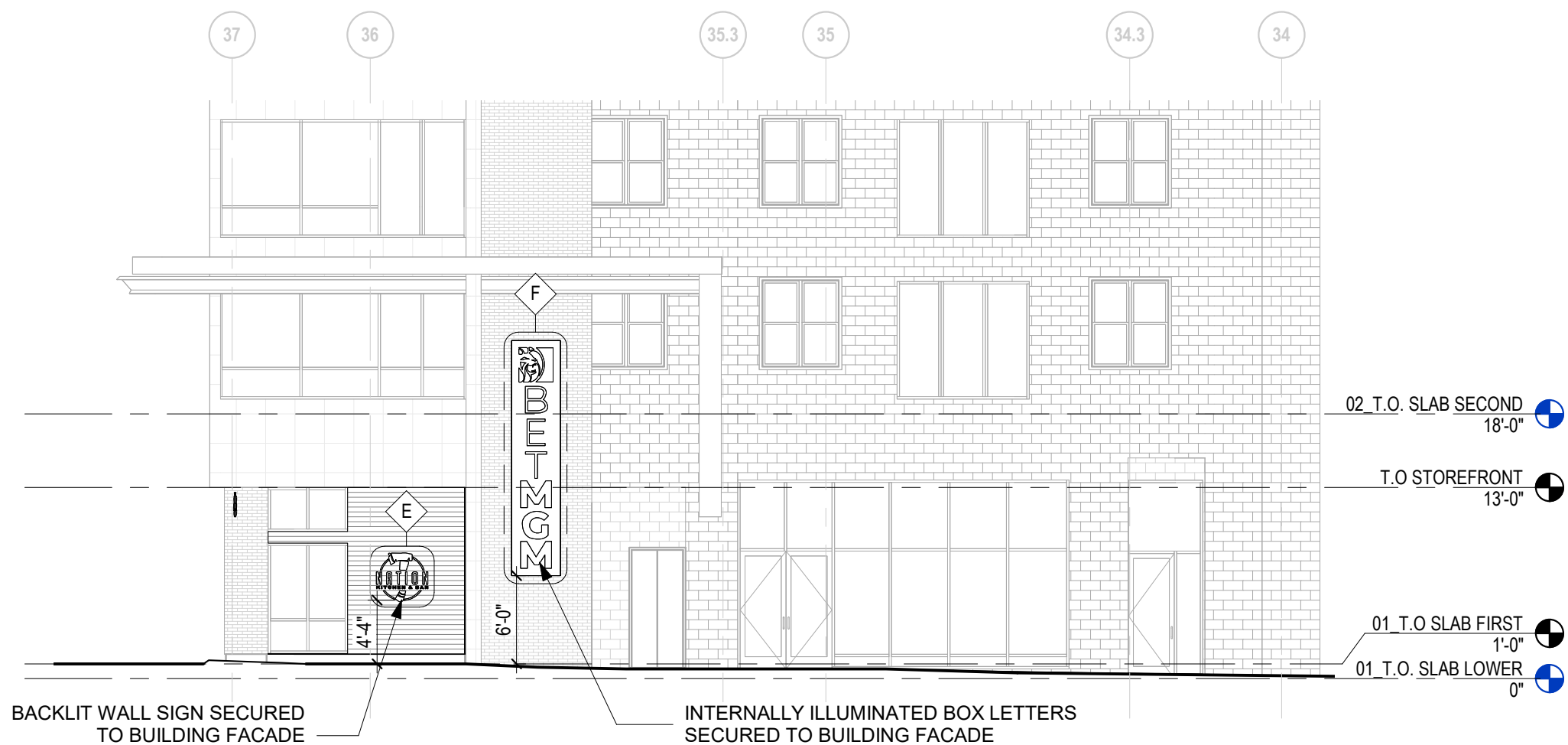


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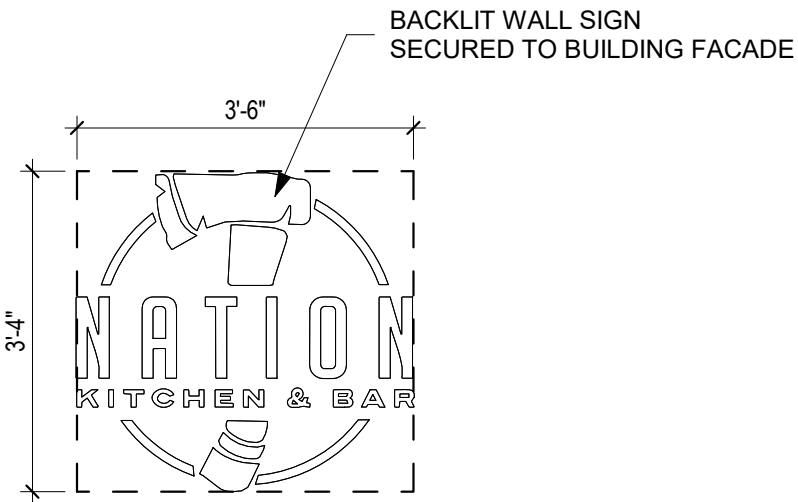
**S2**





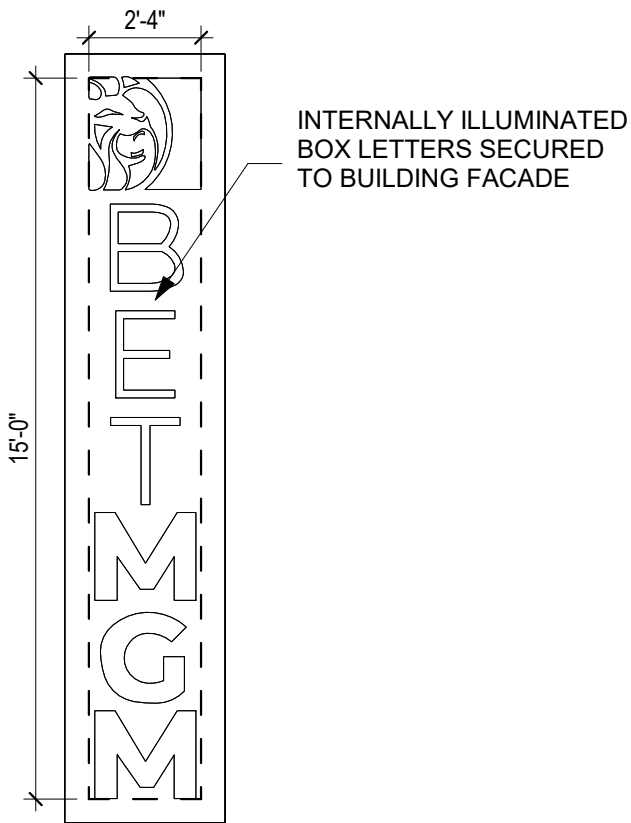
**NORTH ELEVATION - SIGNAGE LOCATIONS**

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"



**WALL SIGN E**

SCALE: 3/8" = 1'-0"



**WALL SIGN F**

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



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**S3**

BETMGM SPORTSBOOK - NATION GRILL @ THE BANKS  
EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE - JOE NUXHALL WAY



BETMGM LETTING

NATION KITCHEN & BAR LETTERING



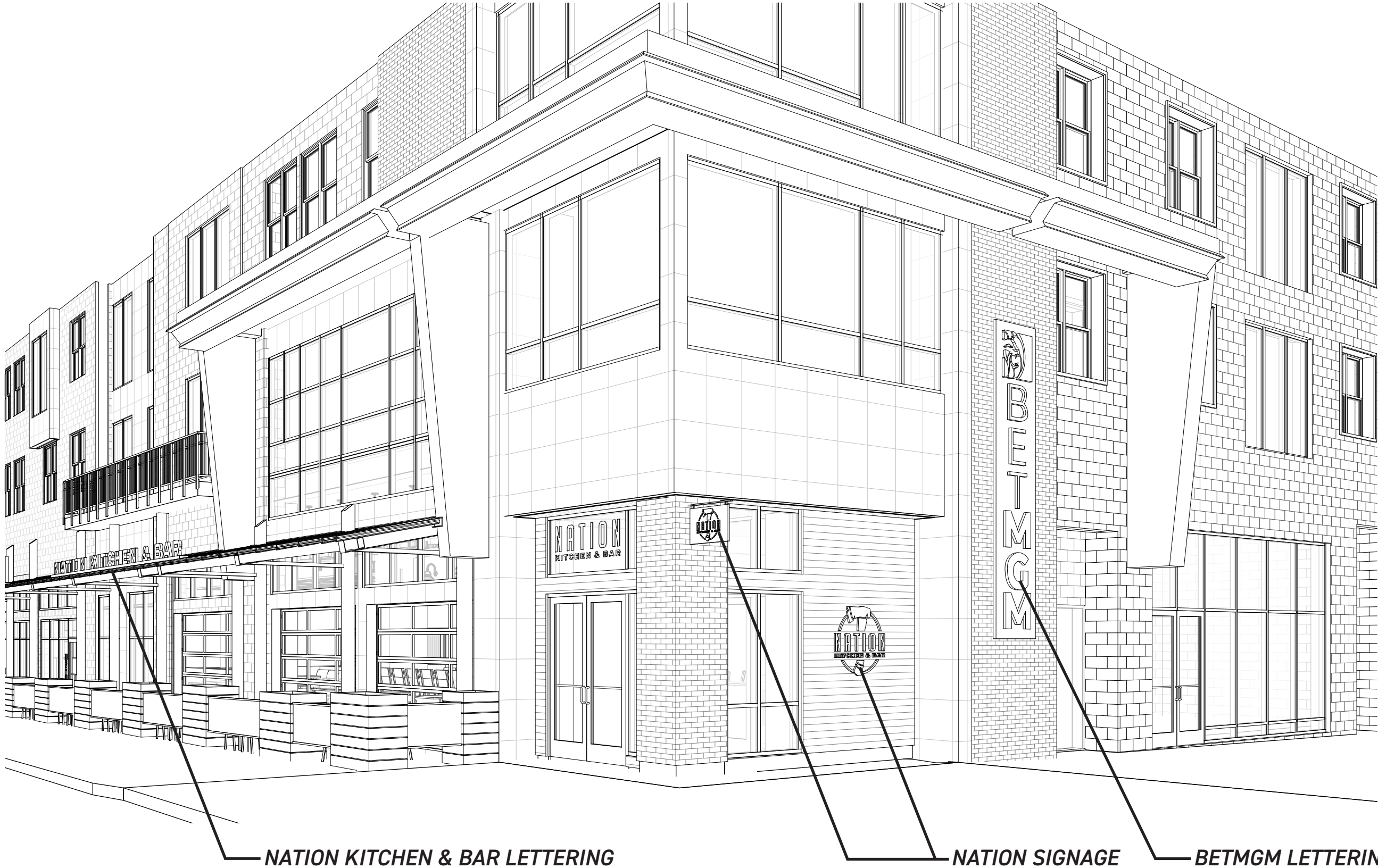
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SPORT

S4



BETMGM SPORTSBOOK - NATION GRILL @ THE BANKS  
EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE - SECOND STREET



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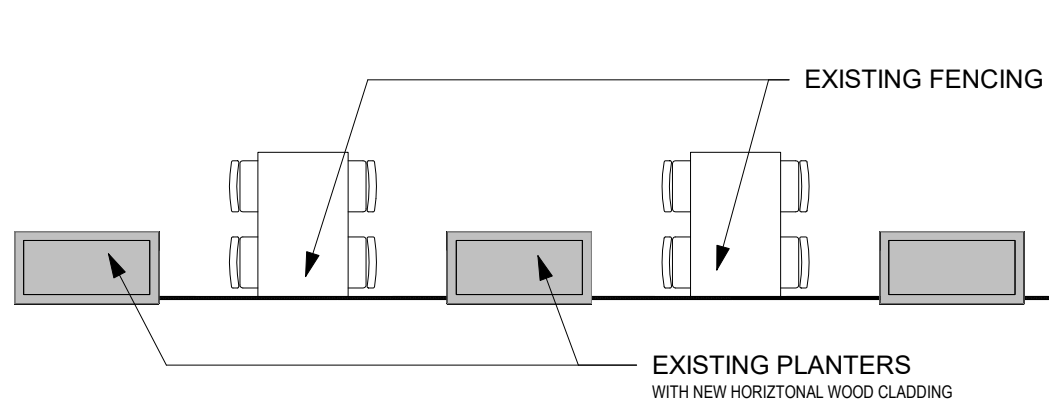
SPORT

# *OUTDOOR DINING*



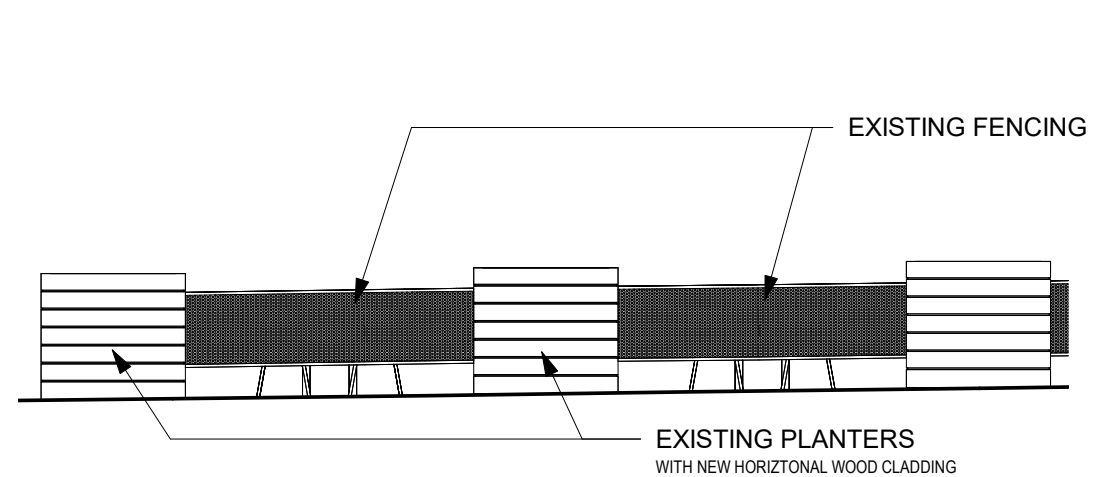
MSA

SPORT



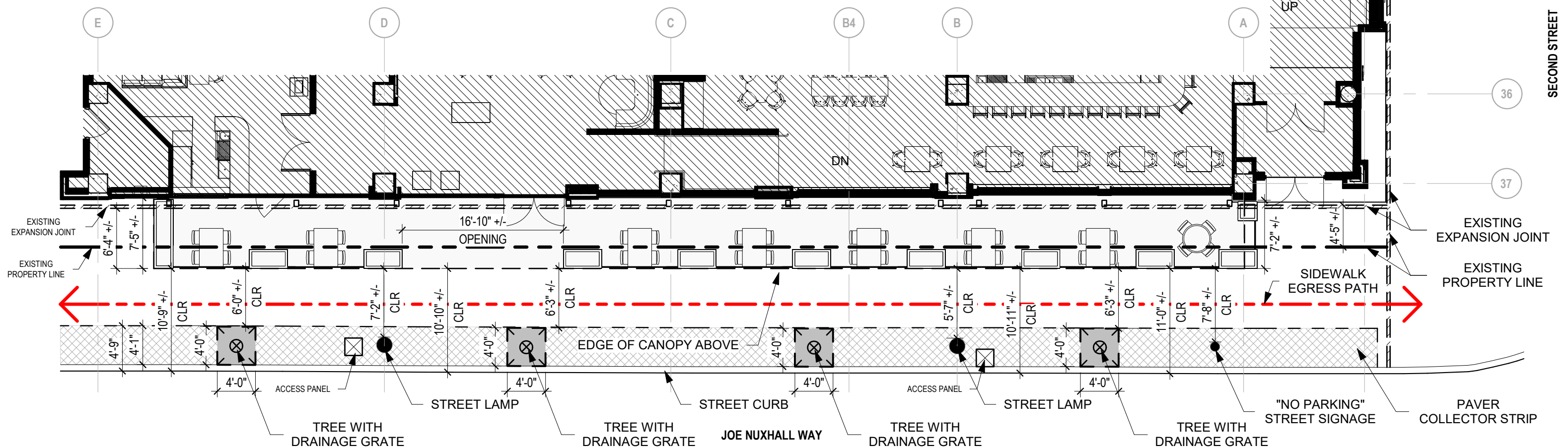
### ENLARGED PLAN - OUTDOOR SEATING BAY

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"



### ENLARGED ELEVATION - OUTDOOR SEATING BAY

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"



### FLOOR PLAN - OUTDOOR SEATING AREA

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"



MSA

SPORT

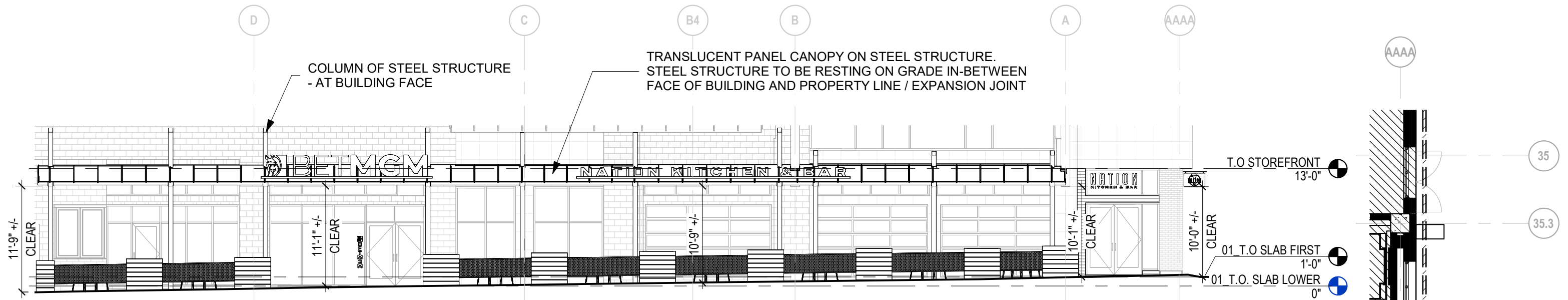
# *CANOPY*



MSA

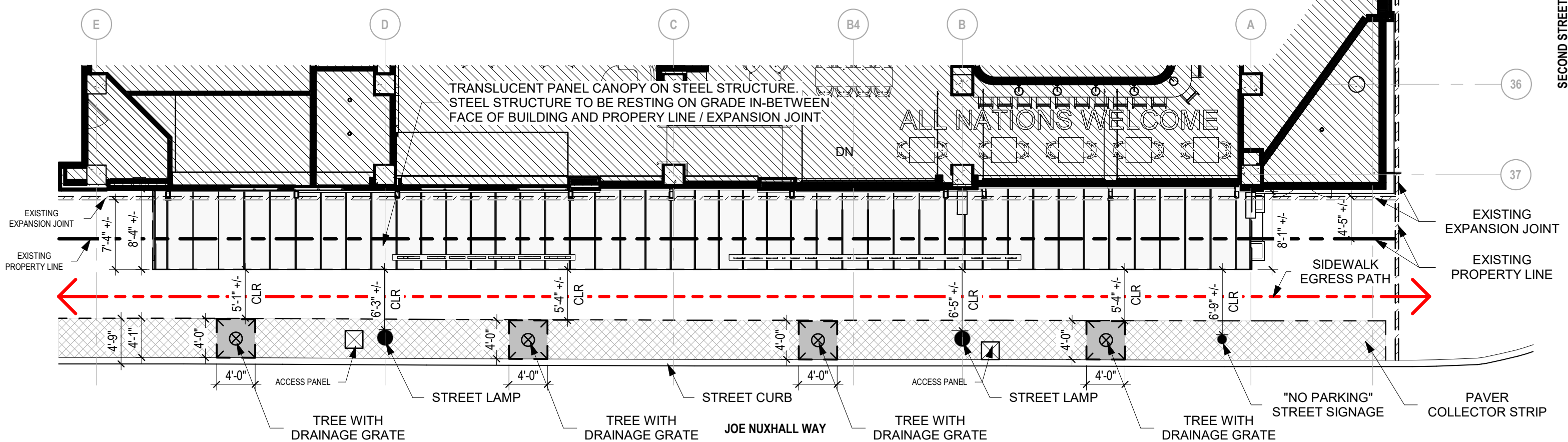
SPORT





EAST ELEVATION - OUTDOOR CANOPY AREA

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"



SITE PLAN - OUTDOOR CANOPY AREA

SCALE: 1" = 10'-0"

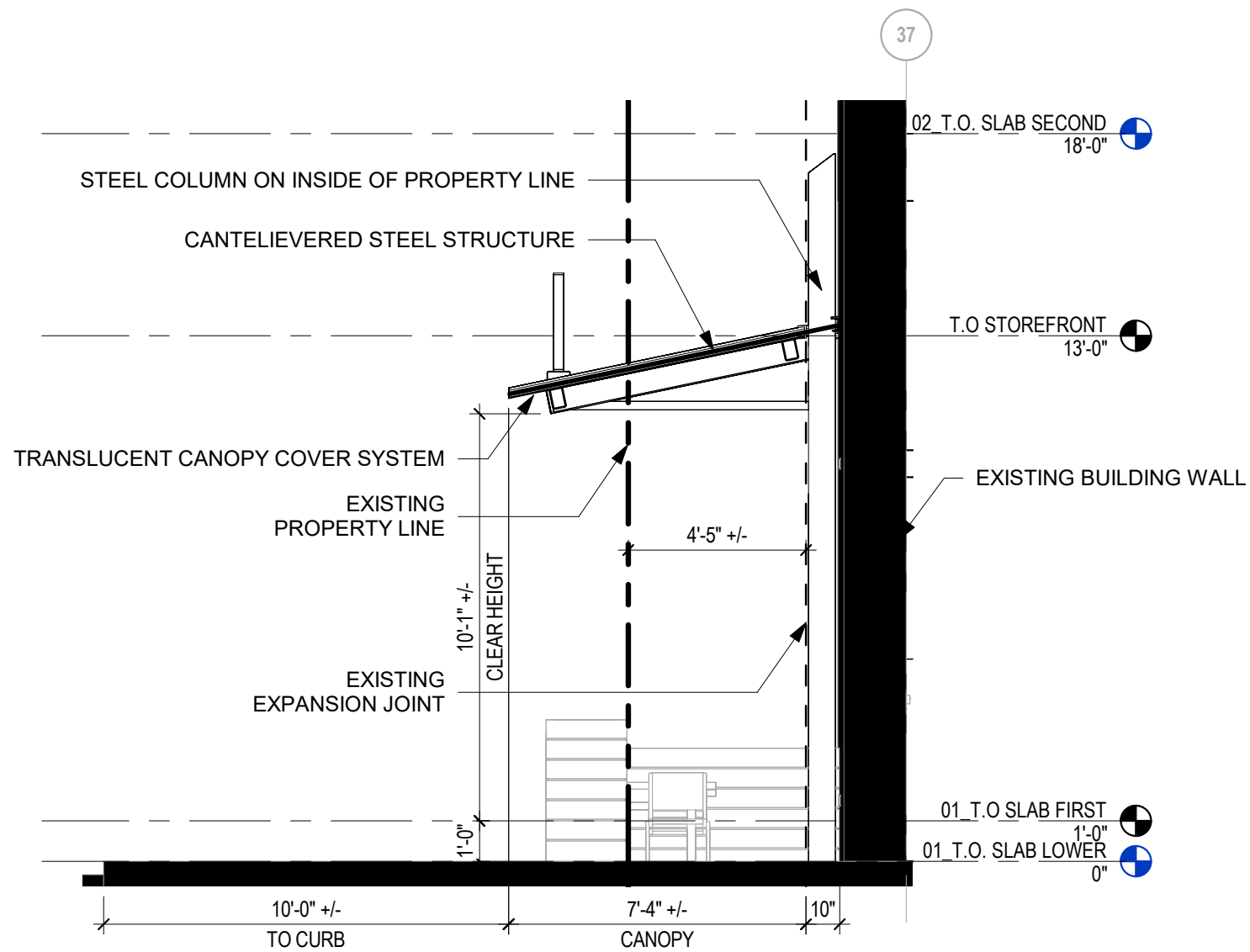


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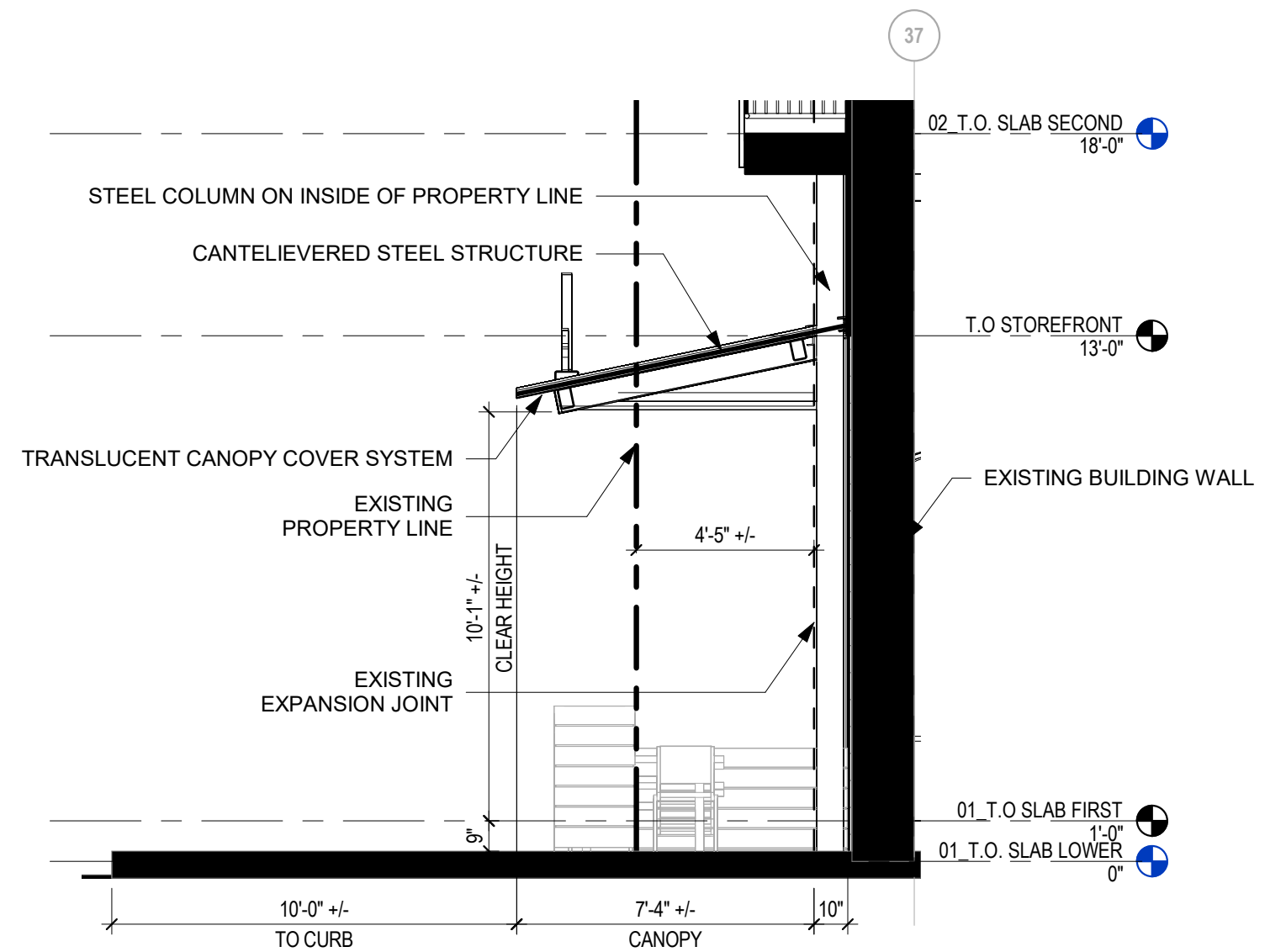


C1



**CROSS SECTION - OUTDOOR SEATING AREA (ENTRYWAY)**

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



**CROSS SECTION - OUTDOOR SEATING AREA (DINING)**

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



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C2