



BLACKWELL BLUEPRINT

*Collaborative Ideas Workshop for
Blackwell School National Historic Site*



MARFA
visitmarfa.com



“THIS SITE IS A POWERFUL REMINDER OF OUR NATION’S DIVERSE AND OFTEN COMPLEX JOURNEY TOWARD EQUALITY AND JUSTICE. BY HONORING THE LEGACY OF BLACKWELL SCHOOL, WE RECOGNIZE THE RESILIENCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE LATINO COMMUNITY IN OUR SHARED HISTORY.”

Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland
July 2024



BLACKWELL SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Blackwell School was a segregated school for Mexican and Mexican American students from 1909-1965. It is a significant example of the practice of “separate but equal.”

Blackwell School is now a National Historic Site where all can learn and reflect on this important part of American History.



Art by El Paso artist Jesus “Cimi” Alvarado

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FOREWORD

“History is the story of what happened. You can erase it, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen. Just like every other page in American history. It’s got its black spots and this and that, but it happened. And that’s what we’re trying to do, save it for future generations.”

Lionel Salgado, Blackwell School Alum



American history is complex, and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) believes national parks must reflect its full diversity.

Through enhanced storytelling, support for the creation of new parks, and deep community engagement, NPCA works to ensure parks are welcoming and inclusive spaces for all. The Blackwell School National Historic Site in Marfa, Texas, a segregated school for Mexican American children from 1909 to 1965, exemplifies this vision by challenging historical narratives and honoring the ongoing struggle for belonging and inclusivity.

From early preservation efforts in the 1960s to the establishment of Blackwell School National Historic Site in 2024, Blackwell School alumni and Marfa community members have led the way. And their continued involvement remains essential to shaping the park’s future.

Blackwell Blueprint is the result of a shared vision to center community voices, reimagine what national park storytelling can be, and utilize community perspectives to identify and implement equitable access to the park. It also promotes responsible development that guides the visitor to Blackwell and strengthens neighborhood connectivity.

NPCA is grateful for the support of two co-sponsors in developing this vision. The Blackwell School Alliance and Visit Marfa have been important groups in this effort. We look forward to the years ahead working with them to make the *Blackwell Blueprint* vision a reality.

With the help of professional planners, architects, engineers, scholars, and tourism experts, NPCA convened a three-day workshop with Blackwell School alumni - people whose lives are entwined with the Blackwell School story - Marfa residents, government officials, business owners, artists and educators to envision what this new national park site needs to be successful.

Workshop participants envisioned how Blackwell School National Historic Site can better the local neighborhood; create a strong and meaningful sense of place; connect visitors to other sites and attractions in Marfa and the Region; and tell its story outward from the school to communities across the nation.

Blackwell Blueprint is not intended to be an academic study. Instead, it offers tangible ideas supported by visuals, strategic recommendations, and an action plan that outlines high-priority projects and initiatives. It is designed to cultivate collaboration among organizations connected to Blackwell, as well as with the City of Marfa, Presidio County, and the State of Texas.

Blackwell Blueprint honors the past while building a more inclusive and connected national park site. It invites continued collaboration, creativity, and community ownership to ensure that Blackwell School National Historic Site is protected and preserved for future generations.

National parks are also economic drivers that generate millions in visitor spending and support thousands of jobs in surrounding communities. As a newly established unit of the National Park

Service, Blackwell School National Historic Site has the potential to bring similar benefits to Marfa. By attracting visitors, supporting local businesses, and creating new opportunities for heritage tourism, the site will serve as a catalyst for economic growth.

NPCA is committed to the success of Blackwell School National Historic Site, and to the support of Blackwell School alumni and the Marfa community. Their stories matter. By telling fuller American stories, ensuring parks are for everyone, and helping parks thrive, we are shaping a stronger future for all.

*Cristóbal López, Texas Field Representative
National Parks Conservation Association*



ABOUT BLACKWELL

BLACKWELL SCHOOL



For 56 years, the Blackwell School in Marfa, Texas, was the place where Mexican and Mexican American children went every day. The original 1909 school building stands today as a tangible reminder of when “separate but equal” dominated education and social systems in the U.S.

During its history, the small three-room adobe school, which accommodated 125 children on many days, was expanded to provide more space. A small playground was added, and new buildings were built for the middle school grades.

The newer buildings were demolished or moved long ago. But the stories of segregation by prejudice, rather than law, and the stories of Blackwell’s students, families, and teachers are

symbolic of how Latino residents struggled to maintain their culture and way of life.

Children as young as first grade were instructed to lose their language and speak only English. School children would write Spanish words on slips of paper and put them in a box that was buried on the school grounds in a mock funeral ceremony.

Marfa was but one of more than 120 school districts in Texas operating segregated schools for students of Mexican descent. When the Blackwell School National Historic Site Act was signed into law in late 2022, it ensured that the history of segregation and the stories of these children will be protected and remembered forever.



Photo Credits: Blackwell School Alliance, Marfa and Presidio County Museum

BLACKWELL TODAY

Blackwell School is part of a thriving city. And although many of the school's campus buildings are no longer there, the original schoolhouse and band hall remain to tell the stories. But these buildings needed to be protected from destruction and restored.

In 2006, Blackwell School alumni formed the Blackwell School Alliance and signed a 99-year lease agreement with the Marfa School District to preserve the buildings. The Alliance gradually transformed the dilapidated school into a museum to tell the story of segregated education in Marfa and chronicle the lives and stories of Blackwell students.

To truly preserve the buildings and the important stories they tell, the Blackwell School Alliance and community partners sought permanent protection for the site by making it part of the National Park System. In fall of 2022 their hard work paid off when the school and grounds were designated as the Blackwell School National Historic Site.

Today, the National Park Service owns and operates the site with the help of the partners that worked establish it.

It was the dedication of Blackwell alumni and their families, Marfa residents, and many other people that ensured that this important piece of America's history is protected for the future.



Photo Credits: Sarah M. Vasquez;
Blackwell School Alliance

NPS AND BLACKWELL



It takes years to establish, staff and launch a new national park. The National Park Service relies on help from outside its own ranks.

At Blackwell, the same advocates that worked to secure protection for the site are dedicated to

the next phase of standing Blackwell up for success. New partners and advocates will also be necessary to deliver on its full potential.

For Blackwell School National Historic Site to succeed in welcoming visitors and to amplify its stories into the city and region, it will need dedicated NPS staff to be onsite. NPS has labeled new national parks, like Blackwell, “partnership parks,” meaning that dedicated partner groups are critical to a new park’s success.

This vision, or blueprint, for Blackwell contains many projects and ideas that need strong partner support and advocacy to realize.



Photo Credits: Sarah M. Vasquez; Blackwell School Alliance; NPS

COLLABORATION AND GATHERING OF IDEAS

BLACKWELL BLUEPRINT

Blackwell School National Historic Site is a must-see and experience for visitors to Marfa and West Texas. The stories contained in this small school built at the beginning of the twentieth century are just waiting to be told. But the buildings and grounds need a lot of work.

The site is Marfa’s only national park and since Blackwell was designated there have been many questions about what comes next and what the site might mean for the city and the region.

To help answer those questions, the National Parks Conservation Association, Blackwell School Alliance, and Visit Marfa hosted a three-day workshop at Blackwell School in October 2024. The purpose was to engage people in discussions with volunteer architects, planners, and historians for enhancing the necessary visitor improvements while using this new national park to advance important community development goals.

About 40 people from Marfa and throughout Texas participated in the workshop in person at Blackwell School. In addition, the project team conducted more than two dozen interviews to capture all the ideas people were willing to offer. Visitors to the national historic site also happened by during the workshop – including several Blackwell alumni – and offered their ideas, experiences, and thoughts about how these

stories should be presented, what their days were like at Blackwell, and even confirming where the original buildings and outhouses were located.

The results of these conversations are contained in *Blackwell Blueprint*. The project team refined the input and feedback from the workshop and created the content of this “ideas book” of recommendations.

Blackwell School is already welcoming visitors from around the globe because of its new national park status. Advocates are ready to move forward on the enhancements and ideas that will position Blackwell for success.

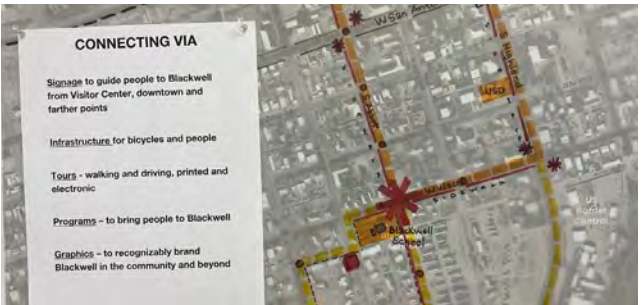
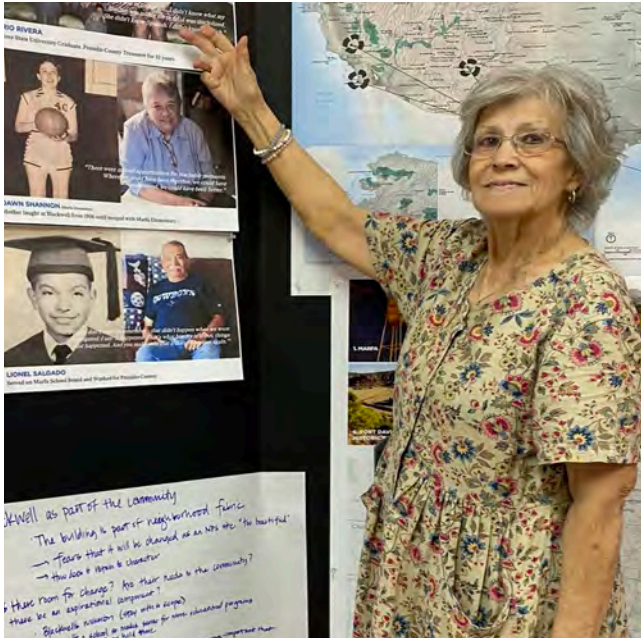


Photo Credits: NPCA, AS+GG

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE

“Well, first of all, we need to protect the school building in order to tell the stories.”

Mario Rivera, Blackwell School Alum

RECOMMENDATIONS

“Creating a Sense of Place” means ensuring visitors know that they have arrived at a site that holds an important place in history.

As visitors arrive they should see and experience a “stepping back in time” to when the school was in session for Marfa’s students.

and experience parts of the larger campus that are no longer there.

Participants in this group talked about necessary work to preserve and protect Blackwell School from further damage; how to make it universally accessible; and how to help people understand

They also noted the importance of maintaining and improving the playground and seating areas behind the school as welcoming places for neighborhood residents and visitors on a day-to-day basis, as well as for special events.

REPAIR, RESTORE, AND INTERPRET THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL BUILDING, GROUNDS, AND CAMPUS

- **Address the structural and mechanical issues that put the building at risk of further damage.**
 - Protect the school building by fortifying the structure, repairing the exterior stucco, and installing period-appropriate doors and windows at historic locations.
 - Protect the school from fire by replacing outdated electrical systems; install fire detection and alarm systems; and upgrade mechanical systems, such as cooling.
 - Provide universal accessibility between the school and band room buildings.
- **Develop a comprehensive mid- and long-term design for improvements to the school grounds and playground.**
 - Plan an appropriate landscape design for the site.
 - Design playground and school grounds enhancements; determine outdoor restroom location and configuration.
 - Design visitor parking, walkways, and signage improvements appropriate to the site.

- **Fund and implement the comprehensive building and site plan in phases.**
 - Develop a private philanthropy campaign to help fund the projects.
 - Capitalize on government funding streams to ensure that the plan can be accomplished.

INTERPRET THE LARGER CAMPUS THAT BLACKWELL SCHOOL HISTORICALLY OCCUPIED

- **Interpret the Blackwell campus buildings that no longer exist through creative means.**
 - Develop a Blackwell campus key map with historic photos and descriptions.
 - Consider interpretative graphics display in southwest corner of the playground.

IDENTIFY AND CONNECT PLACES IN MARFA TO THE BLACKWELL STORY

- **Interpret pathways to places, such as Hunter Gym, that are associated with a part of the Blackwell story.**
 - Develop a city key map with historic photos and descriptions.

BLACKWELL SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE VISION



RESTORED FEATURES OF
THE 1909 SCHOOLHOUSE

NEW INTERPRETIVE FEATURE TELLS
THE BLACKWELL CAMPUS STORY

NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
AND SUN SHADES

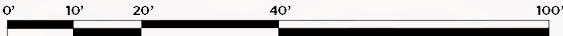
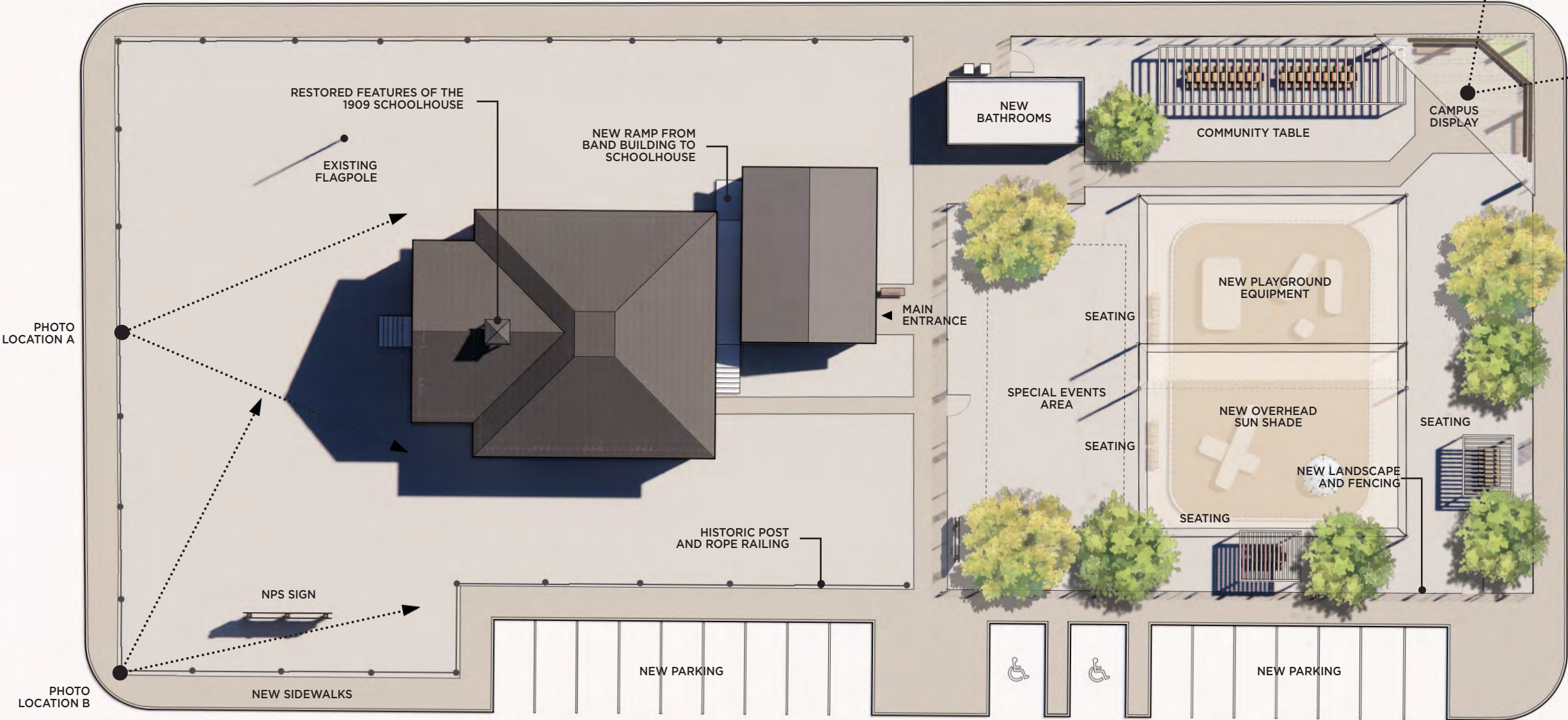
NEW LANDSCAPE, SEATING,
FENCING AND SIGNAGE

NEW PARKING

NEW SIDEWALKS AND
CROSSWALKS

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

S ABBOT ST



CURRENT CONDITIONS

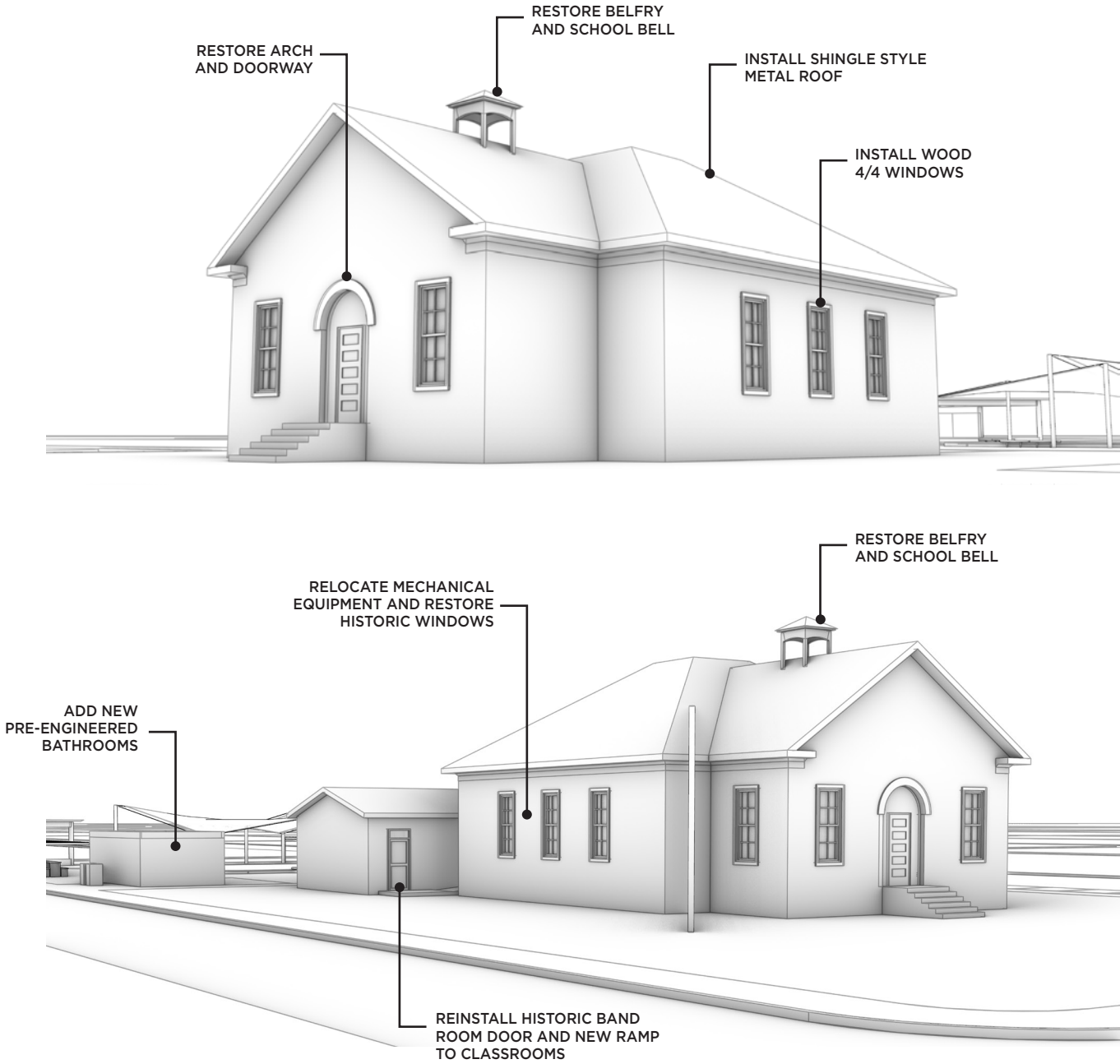


CURRENT CONDITIONS

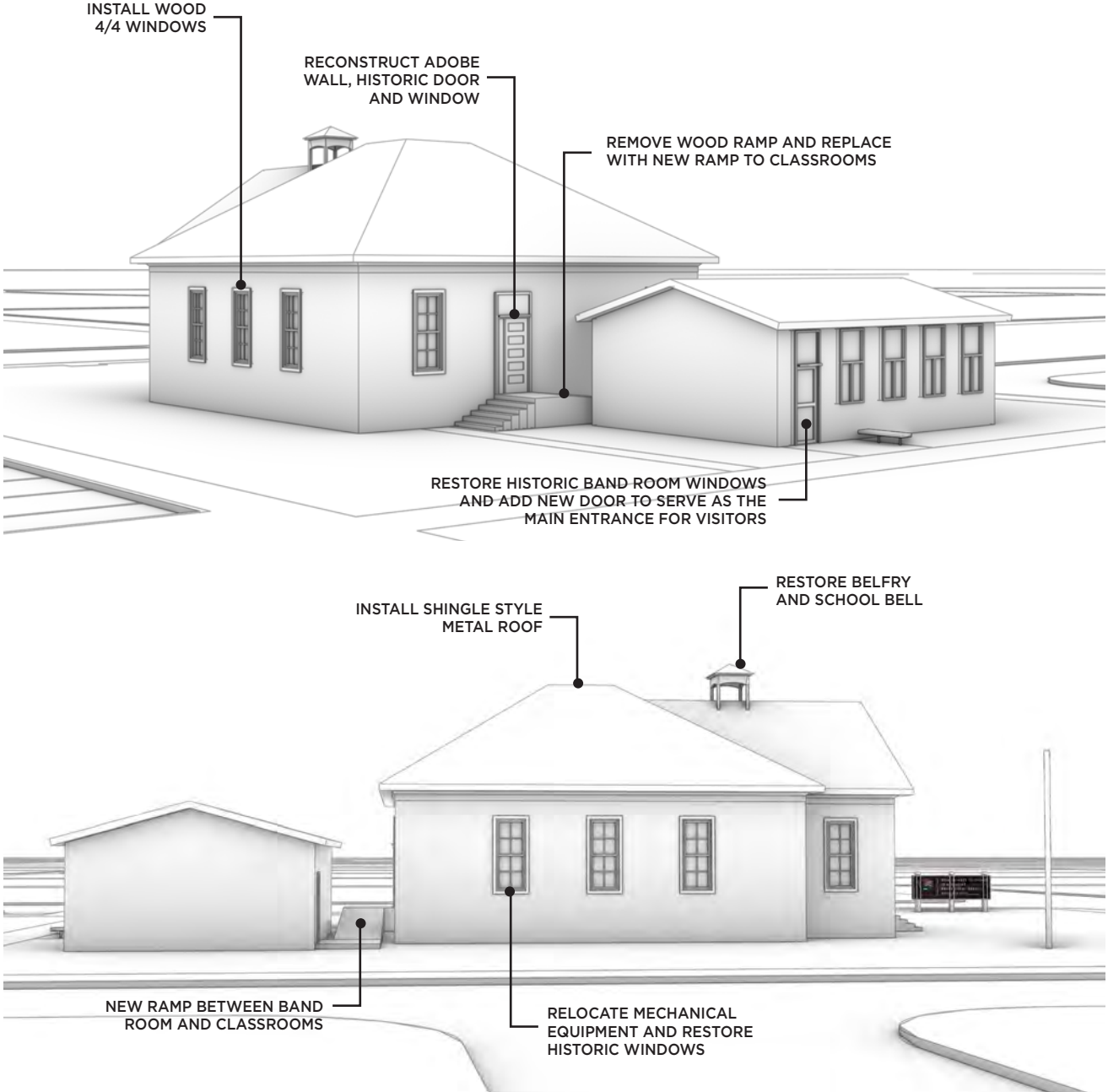


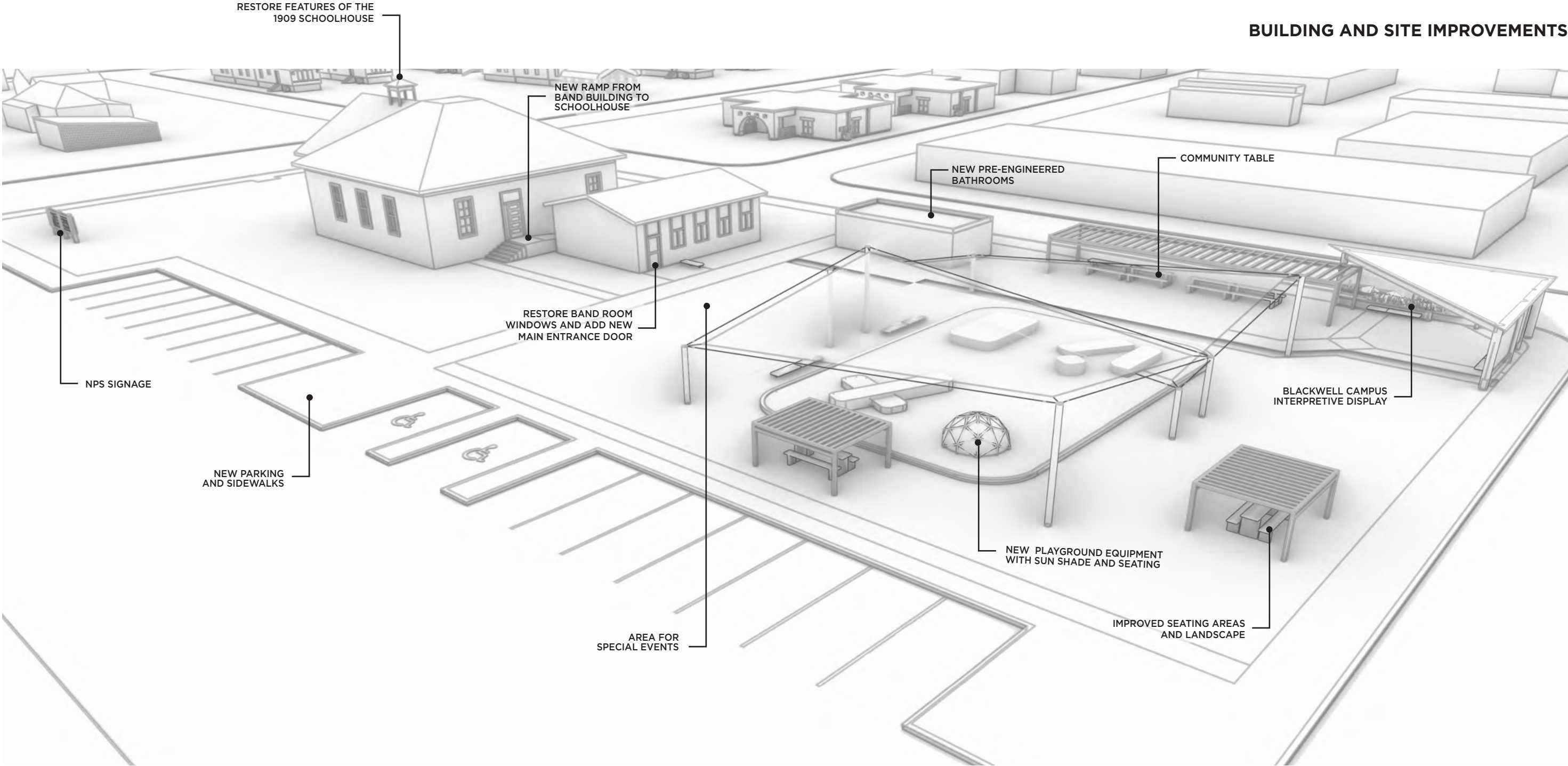
Photo Credits: AS+GG

BUILDING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS



BUILDING AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS





RESTORE FEATURES OF THE
1909 SCHOOLHOUSE

NEW RAMP FROM
BAND BUILDING TO
SCHOOLHOUSE

RESTORE BAND ROOM
WINDOWS AND ADD NEW
MAIN ENTRANCE DOOR

NPS SIGNAGE

NEW PARKING
AND SIDEWALKS

AREA FOR
SPECIAL EVENTS

NEW PRE-ENGINEERED
BATHROOMS

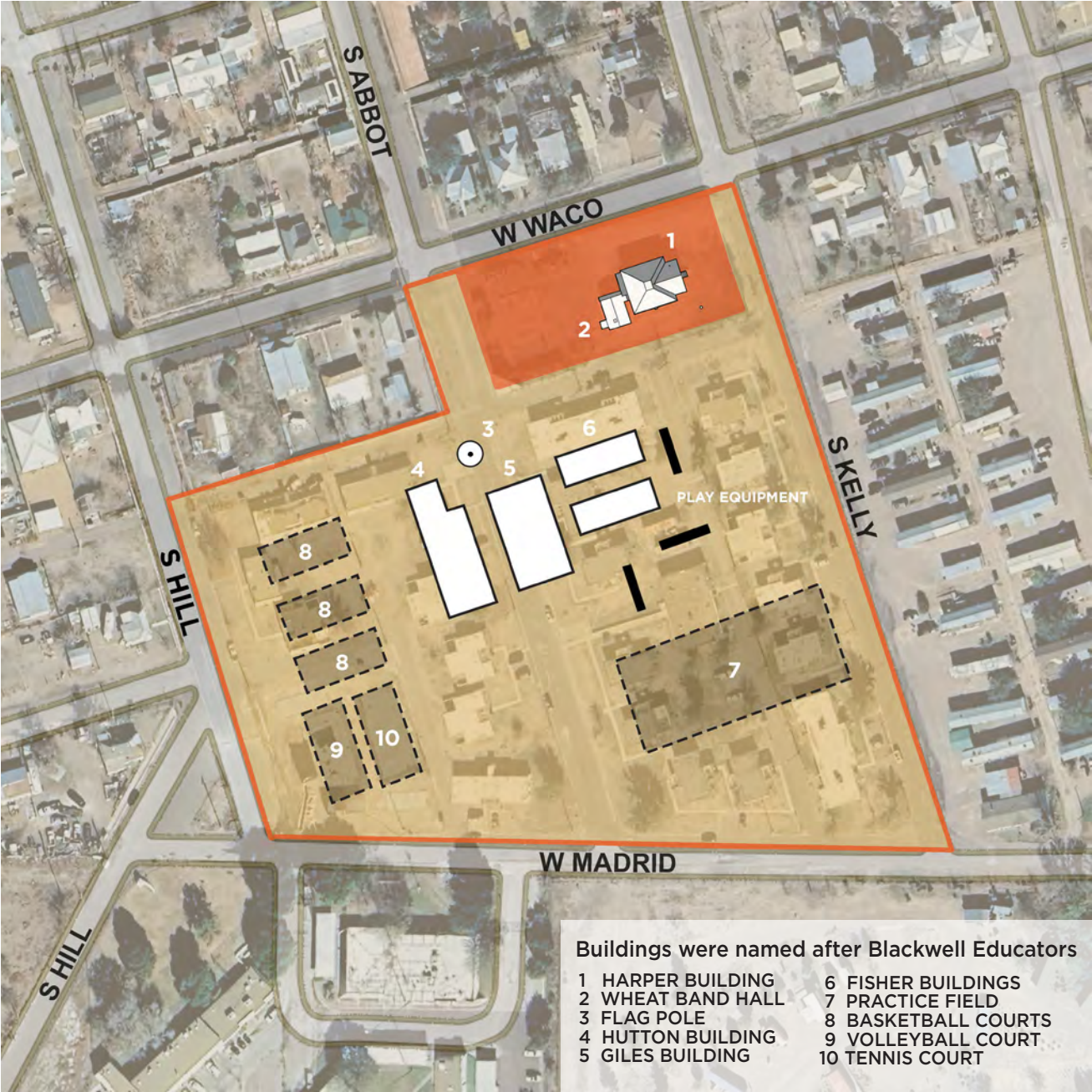
COMMUNITY TABLE

BLACKWELL CAMPUS
INTERPRETIVE DISPLAY

NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
WITH SUN SHADE AND SEATING

IMPROVED SEATING AREAS
AND LANDSCAPE

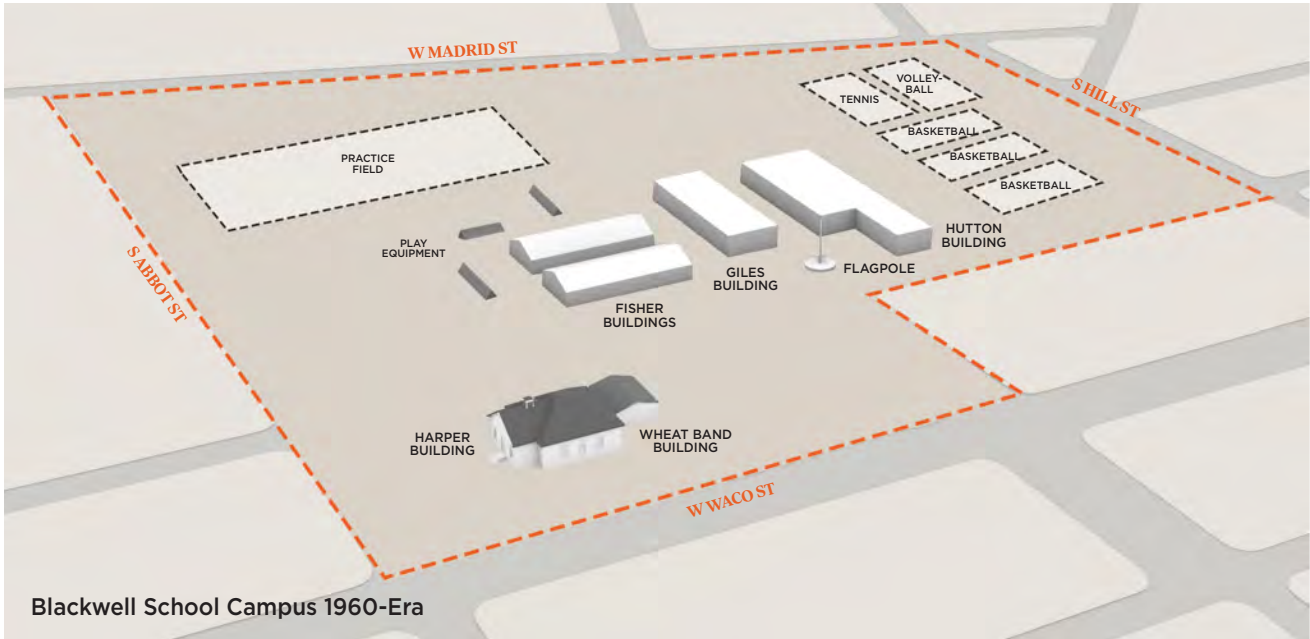
BLACKWELL SCHOOL CAMPUS 1960-ERA



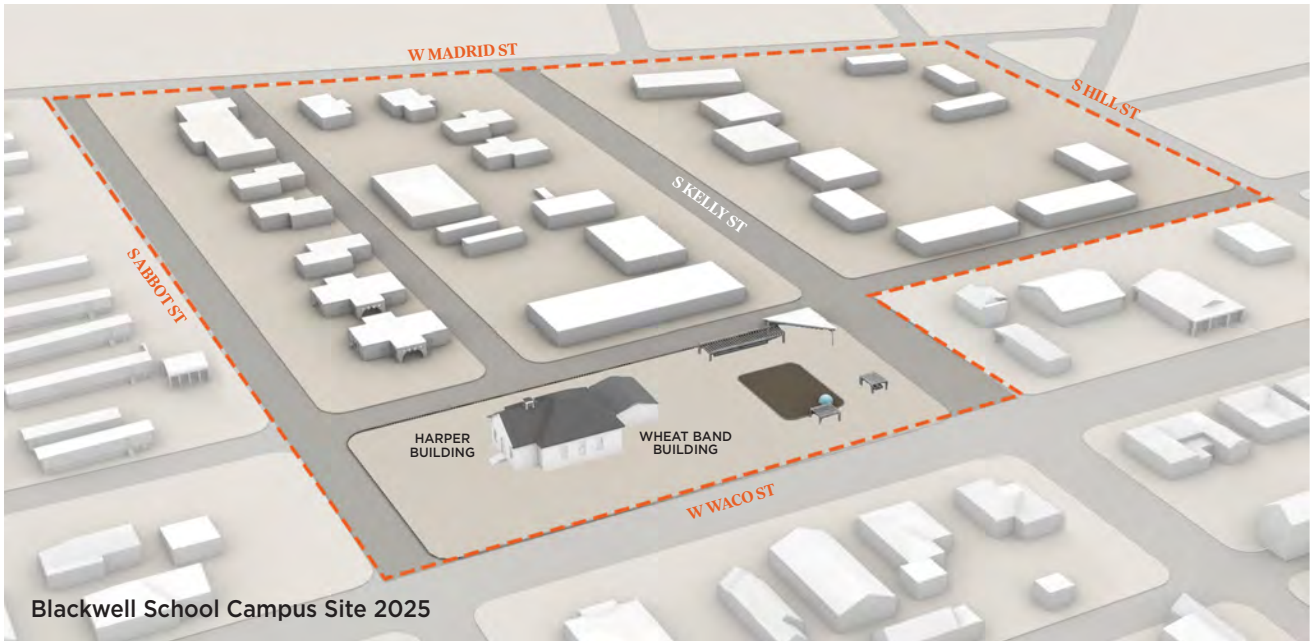
BLACKWELL SCHOOL CAMPUS 2025



UNDERSTANDING THE BLACKWELL CAMPUS



Blackwell School Campus 1960-Era



Blackwell School Campus Site 2025

UNDERSTANDING THE BLACKWELL CAMPUS



Photo courtesy of the
Marfa & Presidio County
Museum

School Children at Flagpole Ceremony



Blackwell Campus Buildings

Photo Credits: Marfa and Presidio County Museum

CAMPUS INTERPRETIVE DISPLAY



Campus Buildings and Historic Flagpole Locations



Campus Interpretive Display Concept

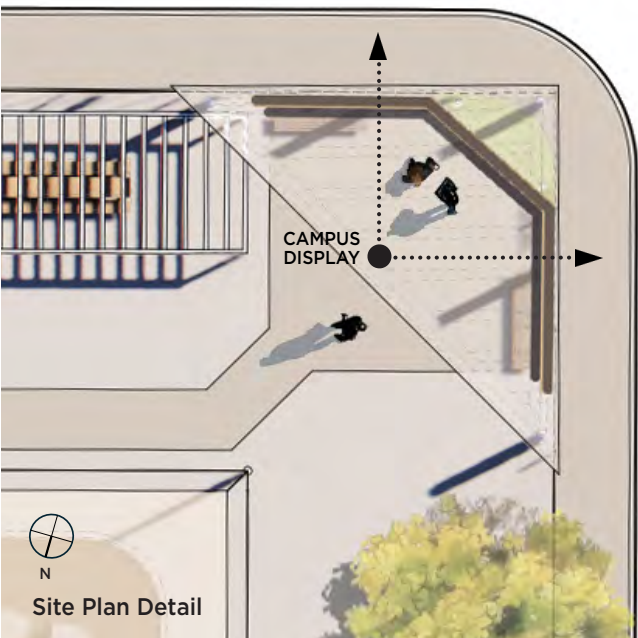
The southwest corner of the playground presents an opportunity to help visitors understand the location of the historic Blackwell School campus buildings that are no longer there.

The top image to the left depicts the shapes of the 1960-era campus buildings in yellow, and the historic flagpole in orange, that children would have seen when standing in this location.

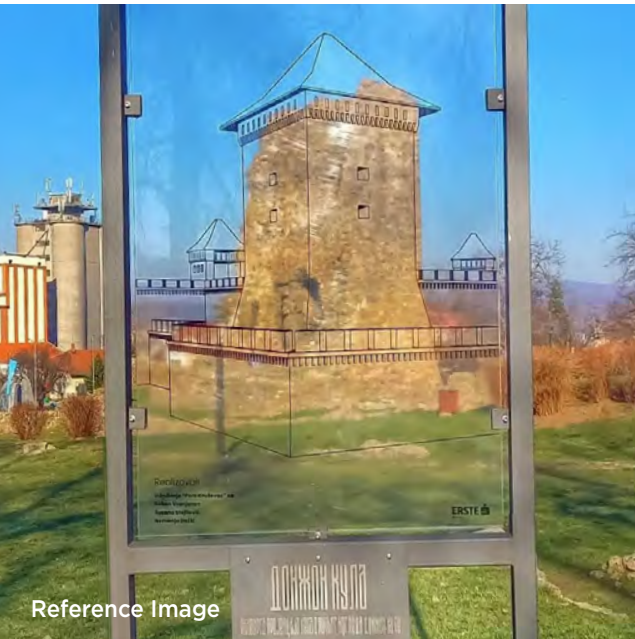
The bottom image to the left depicts the concept of an interpretive display that utilizes graphic techniques, such as that shown in the reference image below, to explain the layout of the campus buildings, the recreation areas, and the activities that occurred there.

The mural currently in this location is a beautiful piece of artwork that could be relocated within the playground.

CAMPUS INTERPRETIVE DISPLAY



Site Plan Detail



Reference Image



Existing Mural

BUILDING THE BLACKWELL EXPERIENCE

“People need to experience the complete and truthful story here. How that truth makes them feel, is up to them.”

Gabe Chavarria, Blackwell Advocate

RECOMMENDATIONS

For visitors and residents to experience the Blackwell School stories, this new national park site must be open for business.

It is only with a reliable mix of staff and volunteers that NPS and its partners can bring the Blackwell experience alive.

Participants in this group offered thoughts on ways to strengthen advocacy for the park.

They also focused on ways to document Blackwell stories and share them with visitors; how Blackwell stories can come alive outside the school walls; and the strength that these stories can achieve by connecting to other Latino heritage sites.

FOCUS THE BLACKWELL EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE ICONIC BUILDING AND ONTO THE STORY

- Gather, archive, and make publicly available oral histories from alumni, families, teachers, and others.
- Develop interpretation that reflects first-person accounts from students using displays and sound; allow visitors to experience the school through the eyes of the students.
- Formalize continued research through oral histories to follow students – where they went after school and in life beyond Blackwell.

EXTEND THE BLACKWELL STORY THROUGH THE REGION AND BEYOND BY CONNECTING TO OTHER LATINO HERITAGE SITES, STORIES, AND EVENTS

- Research and formalize a National Park Service National Latino Heritage Trail that connects the national parks with Latino history.
- Develop story maps, online resources, and other ways to connect visitors to the Blackwell story, to the NPS Latino heritage sites, to Texas and southwest Mexican segregated schools, and to regional Latino heritage sites.
- Scope feasibility of a research education center in Marfa for visitors and scholars to learn and talk about America’s Mexican segregated schools and current issues.

ESTABLISH FULL-TIME STAFF AT BLACKWELL AND LAUNCH A RELIABLE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- Advocate for a well-staffed National Park Service site and an increased park budget to operate and restore the school and grounds and tell Blackwell stories.
- Develop and support a strong park friends’ group to be the philanthropic partner and to recruit and manage volunteers.



To understand Blackwell, we need to understand what **happened** there, acknowledge what people **experienced**, and allow visitors to embrace their feelings as they leave the national park.

The school should tell the stories of the students and their lives. Where did they go after school? What did they do? Where did they end up after Blackwell? And the best way to understand is through the student's own words. Exhibits in the school and beyond should focus on oral histories by advancing the following actions:

- Launch a Blackwell alumni and families oral history project. Collect and archive all existing oral histories, identify other alums to provide stories, and archive all oral histories together for public access and reference.
- Using the oral histories, extract information about where students lived, how they got to school, where they gathered, and what they did after they graduated.
- Develop story maps and audio components that will give life to the stories outside of the school walls.

Photo Credit: Sarah M. Vasquez

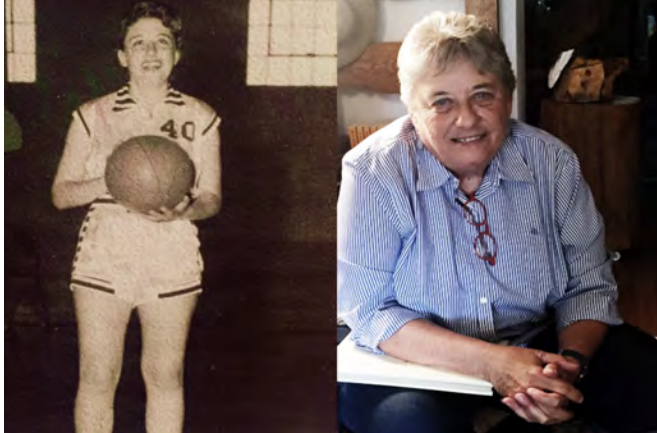


"When I was in first grade... I didn't know what my teacher was telling me to do... I was disciplined. She didn't know Spanish. I didn't know English."

MARIO RIVERA
Sul Ross State University graduate.
Presidio County Treasurer for 32 years.

"People don't want to remember - that didn't happen when we were segregated - I say 'it happened.' That's what history is about, things that happened. And you make sure that it doesn't happen again."

LIONEL SALGADO
Served on Marfa School Board and worked for Presidio County.

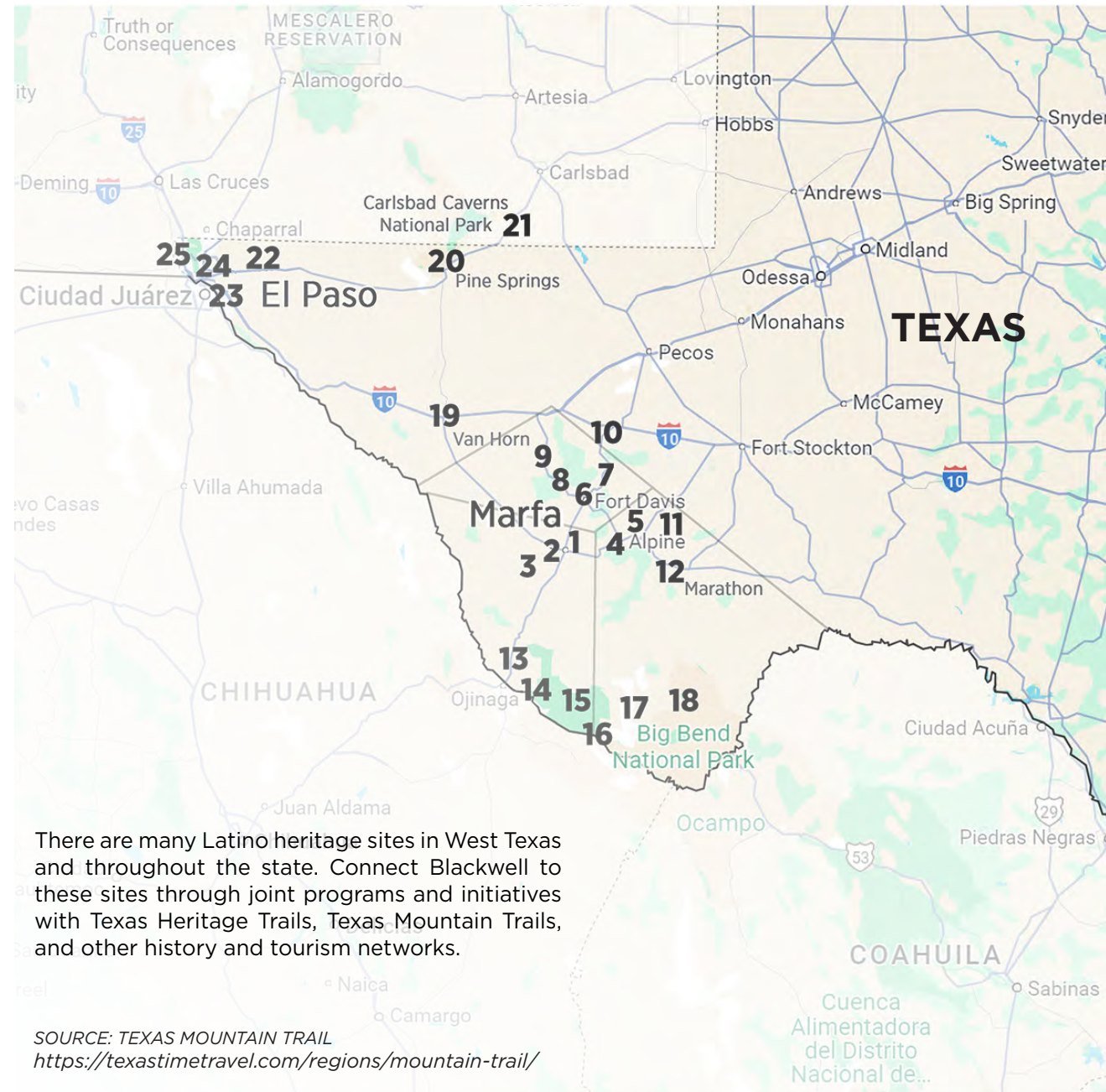


"There were missed opportunities for teachable moments. Where we could have been together, we could have understood, we could have been better."

DAWN SHANNON (Marfa Elementary)
Mother taught at Blackwell from 1956 until merged with Marfa Elementary.

Photo Credits: Mario Rivera; Lionel Selgado; Dawn Shannon; Diana Nguyen of Marfa Public Radio

LINK TO REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

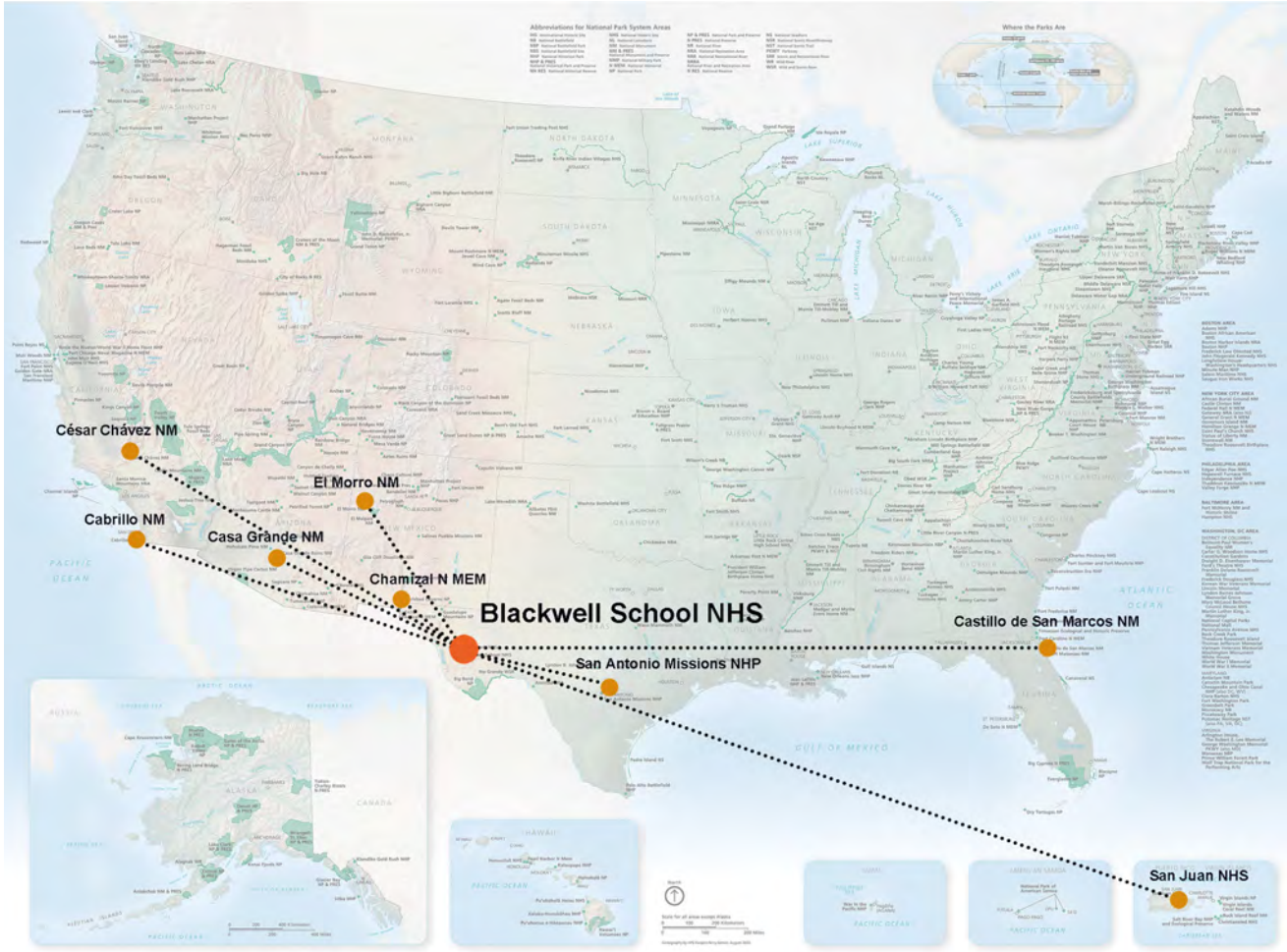


LINK TO REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS



*Photo Credits: Texas Mountain Trail;
Chinati Foundation; NPS*

LINK TO NATIONAL PARK LATINO HERITAGE SITES



Blackwell School National Historic Site is now part of the National Park System, which includes many sites that are rich with Latino history. NPS has formed a workgroup to better leverage the stories at these sites in helping shape America's rich cultural narrative. Blackwell is part of this heritage and advocates should work to formalize a national trail of Latino heritage sites for visitors to navigate as they learn about our nation's past.



Photo Credit: Texas Historical Commission, University of North Texas Libraries

LINK TO NATIONAL PARK LATINO HERITAGE SITES



CÉSAR CHÁVEZ NATIONAL MONUMENT



CABRILLO NATIONAL MONUMENT



CASA GRANDE NATIONAL MONUMENT



EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT



CHAMIZAL NATIONAL MEMORIAL



SAN ANTONIO MISSIONS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS NATIONAL MONUMENT



SAN JUAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Photo Credits: NPS; NPCA; Go San Diego; Arizona Tourism; Western National Parks; St Augustine Adventure

PARK SERVICE ADVOCACY

It was through the power of many voices coming together that Blackwell School became a unit of the National Park System. Now the future of Blackwell is dependent on advocates coming together again to ensure its success.

Blackwell School needs dedicated staff members to ensure visitors and residents can connect with the place and stories more frequently than they can now with the park’s limited hours. Advocates must work to ensure that Blackwell has an adequate park budget to operate the school, restore the grounds and tell Blackwell stories.

At the same time, advocates should speak up for an increase in the National Park Service budget overall. In recent years, the agency has experienced severe budget cuts resulting in staffing shortages across the system. As funding increases for all national parks, Blackwell will benefit.



Photo Credit: Shannon Sims, NPCA

OFFICIAL NATIONAL PARK FRIENDS GROUP

National Park friends groups are critical partners for a national park site. As the philanthropic partner, they provide support to help the park meet visitor expectations. These groups recruit and train volunteers and offer expertise, which is especially valuable to a new national park site.

The Blackwell School Alliance has for many years been the caretaker of the Blackwell stories. They hold events for Blackwell alumni, archive oral histories, photos, documents, and memorabilia, and have saved the historic 1909 school, its additions, and grounds from destruction.

With a strong, committed board and expanded purpose, the Alliance is a natural to become the official Blackwell friends group. Their expertise will be important to help raise awareness for the park, provide reliable volunteers, recruit other partners, and raise funds toward important park projects.



Photo Credit: NPCA

CONNECTING BLACKWELL TO THE COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

*“The pieces are all there. They just need
to be connected.”*

Ann Dunlap, City of Marfa

RECOMMENDATIONS

Whether on foot, driving, or biking, visitors need to be able to find Blackwell School National Historic Site.

Marfa continues to grow as a tourist destination with visitors coming from all over the world to explore the city. Whether on foot, driving, or biking, people will need visual clues to find Blackwell School, and those who may not know that Marfa has a national park site will need inspiration and guidance to get there.

Participants in this group discussed how to connect the school to the points where the people are; how to place “breadcrumbs” for visitors to follow to the site; and how to build improved access to Blackwell into plans already being discussed at local and state levels.

INCREASE ACCESS FOR MARFA VISITORS AND RESIDENTS, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO “DISCOVER BLACKWELL”

- Understand the relationship between Blackwell and the neighborhood. Locate and mark places of interest that contributed to the Blackwell experience.
- Develop a system of walking routes with intersection markers from highly visited Marfa places of interest to Blackwell, including downtown, the Chinati Foundation, the USO Building, and other cultural sites.
- Take Blackwell to the people with pop-up kiosks in high traffic areas, displays in vacant storefronts, public art, and in other ways.
- Formalize joint marketing efforts with Visit Marfa and local attractions and events.

IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL ACCESS FOR VISITORS AND RESIDENTS TO THE NATIONAL PARK

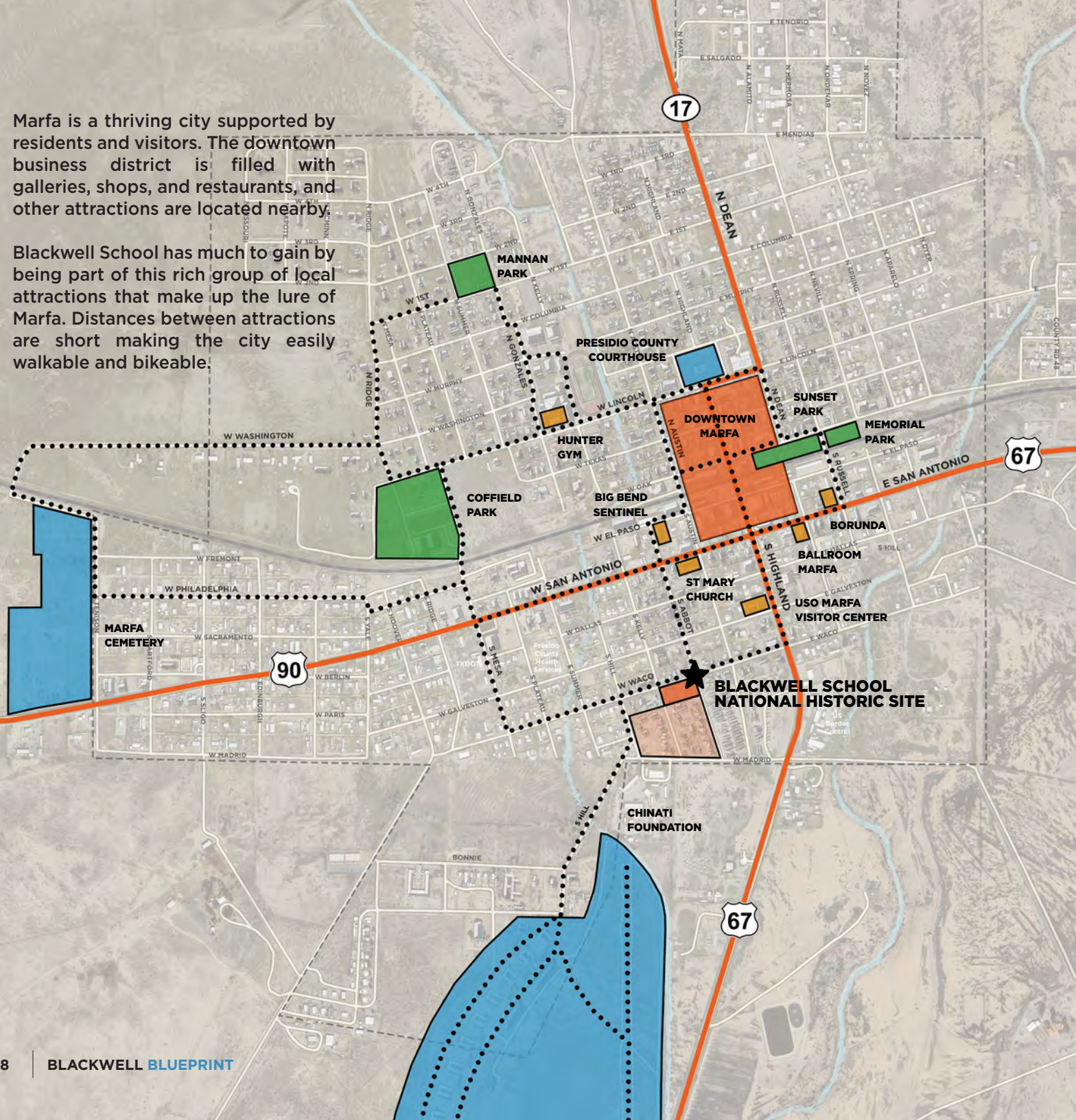
- Connect sidewalk fragments and install new sidewalks to Blackwell in high-traffic areas, and from Blackwell to other areas.
- Develop crosswalks and other pedestrian safety features, including signage and audibles, leading to the site.
- Improve bike infrastructure with bike lane striping on San Antonio and Highland Streets and bike racks on the Blackwell grounds.

INCREASE AWARENESS OF BLACKWELL SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AMONG REGIONAL VISITORS

- Install brown highway signs on Routes 67 and 90 so visitors know there is a national park in Marfa; add Blackwell to existing highway signage featuring other cultural and recreational sites in the region.
- Develop educational, timed audio driving tours for west Texas for regional visitors on their way to national and state parks, recreation, and cultural sites.

Marfa is a thriving city supported by residents and visitors. The downtown business district is filled with galleries, shops, and restaurants, and other attractions are located nearby.

Blackwell School has much to gain by being part of this rich group of local attractions that make up the lure of Marfa. Distances between attractions are short making the city easily walkable and bikeable.



LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



PRESIDIO COUNTY COURTHOUSE



HUNTER GYM



DOWNTOWN MARFA



USO MARFA VISITOR CENTER



BALLROOM MARFA



ST MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

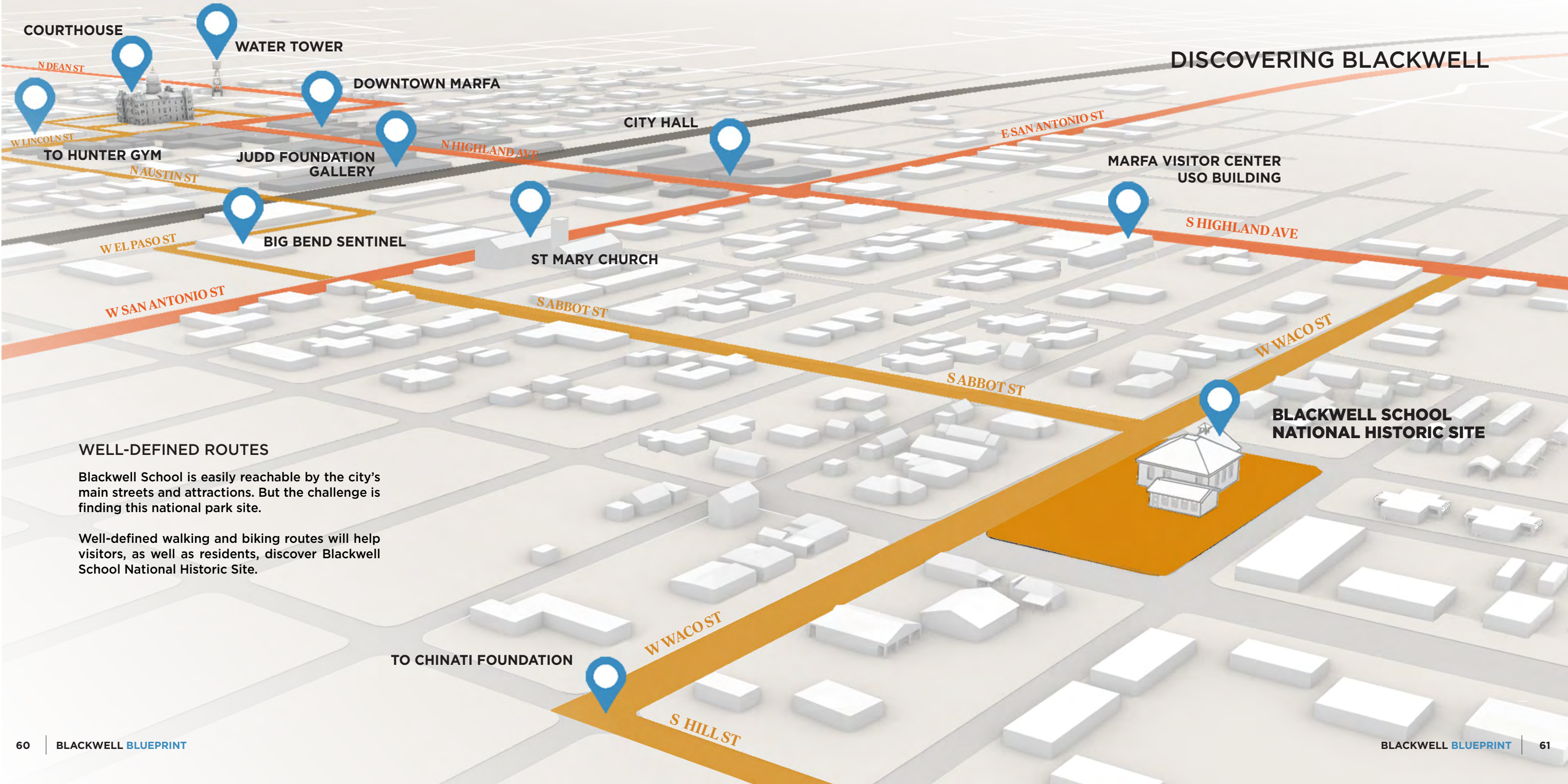


CHINATI FOUNDATION



MARFA CEMETERY

Photo Credits: Visit Marfa; Sarah M. Vasquez; Chinati Foundation; NPCA; David Pillow | Dreamstime.com



DISCOVERING BLACKWELL

WELL-DEFINED ROUTES

Blackwell School is easily reachable by the city's main streets and attractions. But the challenge is finding this national park site.

Well-defined walking and biking routes will help visitors, as well as residents, discover Blackwell School National Historic Site.

Marfa may be a walkable and bikeable city, but due to incomplete and missing infrastructure, it's difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to find their way from place to place. There are gaps in the sidewalk construction that need to be filled for people to make their way safely to and from Blackwell School and other Marfa attractions.

Bike lane striping is an inexpensive way to mark bike routes from place to place. They also provide safety for cyclists and drivers. Communities across the U.S. are developing “Art in the Right of Way” programs that combine traffic calming and pedestrian safety elements with expressions of local culture through art.

Creating a series of “bread crumbs” at intersections with signage and art will help visitors find their way from the downtown to the USO building to Blackwell School.



- NORTH ROUTES TO BLACKWELL SCHOOL
- SOUTH ROUTES TO BLACKWELL SCHOOL
- COMPLETE SIDEWALKS WHERE INDICATED
- INTERSECTION UPGRADES
- IDENTIFY LOCATIONS FOR BROWN SIGNS

Photo Credits: Gray Malin; NYC DOT



INTERSECTION OF ART

To get to and from Blackwell, or almost anywhere in Marfa, pedestrians have to cross one of two state highways on Highland Street and San Antonio Street.

There are very few crosswalks and those that are in place are not always connected to a sidewalk system.

With help from the Marfa arts community and the strong arts program in the Marfa Schools, the City and State of Texas could champion a creative crosswalk program that makes for safe streets and clearer navigation for pedestrians.

These pictures show examples from other towns where local art communities took leadership roles in public realm pedestrian safety, wayfinding and beautification projects.

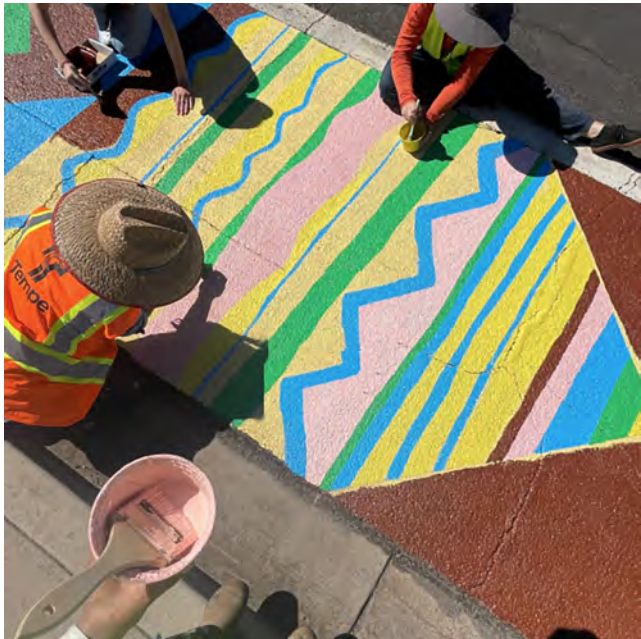


Photo Credits: Mural Mates; Gwynns Falls Trail Advocates

REALIZING THE VISION

“...it is a reality that the successful establishment of new parks is not possible without significant material support from outside the agency.”

NPS, Lessons from the Field on New Parks

ACTION PLAN

If the Blackwell Blueprint is to become a reality, it will take dedication and advocacy.

This Action Plan matrix identifies the key projects and initiatives that are recommended to achieve the vision and ideas presented in this book. They address renovation of the Blackwell School building and grounds, interpretation of Blackwell stories outside of the school walls, connection of Blackwell to other points of interest, and enhancements to provide safe public access to the Blackwell School National Historic Site.

Projects are expressed in 2025 dollars and are provided based upon information that was available at the time of the workshop.

For each project, likely lead entities, partnerships and advocates are identified. To be successful, implementation will take many dedicated people working in cooperation.



Photo Credit: Blackwell School Alliance

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	COST	LEAD ENTITIES	PRIORITY
REPAIR, RESTORE, AND INTERPRET THE BLACKWELL SCHOOL BUILDING, GROUNDS, AND CAMPUS			
1. Address the structural and mechanical issues that put the building at risk of further damage.	\$3.5 Million	NPS	1
2. Develop a comprehensive mid- and long-term design for improvements to the school grounds and playground.	\$150,000	NPS	1
3. Fund and implement the comprehensive building and site plan in phases.	\$15 Million	NPS; City of Marfa; Philanthropic Partners	2
INTERPRET THE LARGER CAMPUS THAT BLACKWELL SCHOOL HISTORICALLY OCCUPIED			
4. Interpret the Blackwell campus buildings that no longer exist through creative means.	\$250,000	NPS; Blackwell School Alliance; Marfa Art Community; other partners	2
IDENTIFY AND CONNECT PLACES IN MARFA TO THE BLACKWELL STORY			
5. Interpret pathways to places, such as Hunter Gym, that are associated with a part of the Blackwell story.	\$150,000	NPS; Friends of Hunter Gym; City of Marfa; other partners	2

Priority: 1=Near Term; 2=Intermediate Term; 3=Long Term

BUILDING THE BLACKWELL EXPERIENCE

PROJECT/INITIATIVECOSTLEAD ENTITIESPRIORITY

FOCUS THE BLACKWELL EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE ICONIC BUILDING AND ONTO THE STORY

1.	Gather, archive, and make publicly available oral histories from alumni, families, teachers, and others.	\$150,000	NPS; TX Universities; Blackwell School Alliance; NPCA	1
2.	Develop interpretation that reflects first-person accounts from students using displays and sound; allow visitors to experience the school through the eyes of the students.	\$150,000	NPS; TX Universities; Blackwell School Alliance; NPCA	2
3.	Formalize continued research through oral histories to follow students – where they went after school and in life beyond Blackwell.	\$150,000	TX Universities; Blackwell School Alliance; NPS	2

EXTEND THE BLACKWELL STORY THROUGH THE REGION AND BEYOND BY CONNECTING TO OTHER LATINO HERITAGE SITES, STORIES, AND EVENTS

4.	Research and formalize an NPS National Latino Heritage Trail that connects the national parks with Latino history.	\$150,000	NPS; NPCA; other partners	2
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PROJECT/INITIATIVECOSTLEAD ENTITIESPRIORITY

5.	Develop story maps, online resources, and other ways to connect visitors to the Blackwell story, to NPS national parks, the NPS Latino heritage sites, Texas and southwest Mexican segregated schools, and regional Latino heritage sites.	\$250,000	NPS; TX Universities; Blackwell School Alliance; Texas Mountain Trail; Big Bend Conservancy and other regional friends groups	2
6.	Scope feasibility of a research education center in Marfa for visitors and scholars to learn and talk about America’s Mexican segregated schools and current issues.	\$250,000	TX Universities; Presidio County; City of Marfa	3

ESTABLISH FULL-TIME STAFF AT BLACKWELL AND LAUNCH A RELIABLE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

7.	Advocate for a well-staffed National Park Service site and an adequate park budget to operate and restore the school and grounds and tell Blackwell stories.	\$150,000	NPCA; Blackwell School Alliance and other partners	1
8.	Develop and support a strong park friends’ group to be the philanthropic partner and to recruit and manage volunteers.	\$500,000	Blackwell School Alliance, NPCA; NPS	1

Priority: 1=Near Term; 2=Intermediate Term; 3=Long Term

CONNECTING BLACKWELL TO THE COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	COST	LEAD ENTITIES	PRIORITY
INCREASE ACCESS FOR MARFA VISITORS AND RESIDENTS, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO "DISCOVER BLACKWELL"			
1. Locate and mark places of interest that contributed to the Blackwell experience.	\$150,000	NPS; NPCA; City of Marfa; Marfa Arts Community	2
2. Develop walking routes with intersection markers from Marfa places of interest to Blackwell, including downtown, Chinati, the USO Building, and other cultural sites.	\$150,000	City of Marfa; Visit Marfa; and others	2
3. Take Blackwell to the people with pop-up kiosks in high traffic areas, displays in vacant storefronts, public art, and in other ways.	\$50,000	NPS; City of Marfa; Visit Marfa; Marfa Arts Community; Presidio County	2
4. Formalize joint marketing efforts with Visit Marfa and local attractions and events.	\$50,000	Visit Marfa; Presidio County; City of Marfa; NPS	1
IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL ACCESS FOR VISITORS AND RESIDENTS TO THE NATIONAL PARK			
5. Connect sidewalk fragments and install new sidewalks in high-traffic areas to Blackwell and from the Blackwell school to other areas.	\$250,000	City of Marfa; TXDOT; Presidio County	1

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	COST	LEAD ENTITIES	PRIORITY
6. Develop crosswalks and pedestrian safety features, including signage and audibles, leading to the site.	\$150,000	TXDOT; City of Marfa; Presidio County	1
7. Improve bike infrastructure with bike lane striping on San Antonio and Highland Streets and bike racks on the Blackwell grounds.	\$50,000	TXDOT; City of Marfa	1
INCREASE AWARENESS OF BLACKWELL SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AMONG REGIONAL VISITORS			
8. Install brown highway signs on Routes 67 and 90; add Blackwell to existing highway signage featuring other regional cultural and recreational sites.	\$150,000	TXDOT	1
9. Develop educational, timed audio driving tours for west Texas for regional visitors on their way to national and state parks, recreation, and cultural sites.	\$250,000	Visit Marfa; Visit Big Bend; City of Marfa; City of Alpine; Big Bend Conservancy; McDonald Observatory; other partners	3

Priority: 1=Near Term; 2=Intermediate Term; 3=Long Term

IN APPRECIATION

“The ideas in Blackwell Blueprint would not exist without the support and creative thinking of all who participated.”

Cristóbal López, National Parks Conservation Association

IN APPRECIATION

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