

FRIENDS SELECT

Back Lot Transformation



Friends Select School is embarking on the creation of a state-of-the-art, outdoor learning space that would revolutionize the school's educational opportunities for all students and families, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community. In creating a dynamic open-air environment for lower, middle, and upper school, the Back Lot Transformation would fundamentally re-envision the Parkway Building's back lot and playground, resulting in a multi-use, multi-level green space with endless possibilities for play, learning, socialization, collaboration, and enjoying nature. The Back Lot Transformation would also prioritize universal accessibility and campus security in creating a multi-level structure that would be ADA-compliant, adding elevator access to the school's rooftop athletic field and event space, benefiting both Friends Select's community and the city of Philadelphia.



For over 330 years, Friends Select has had a symbiotic relationship with Philadelphia, with the city acting as classroom, playground, and laboratory for Friends Select students and educators. As a publicly visible component of the school's campus, the Back Lot Transformation would bring the school's continuing physical transformation to the surrounding sidewalks and streets while strengthening the connection between Friends Select and Philadelphia. By reimagining the 16th Street frontage, the school hopes to reintroduce itself to the city in a way that breaks down physical barriers and ensures that Friends Select is an institution that is in the city and of the city. This space would provide new opportunities for engaging children and families from across the Philadelphia area and beyond.



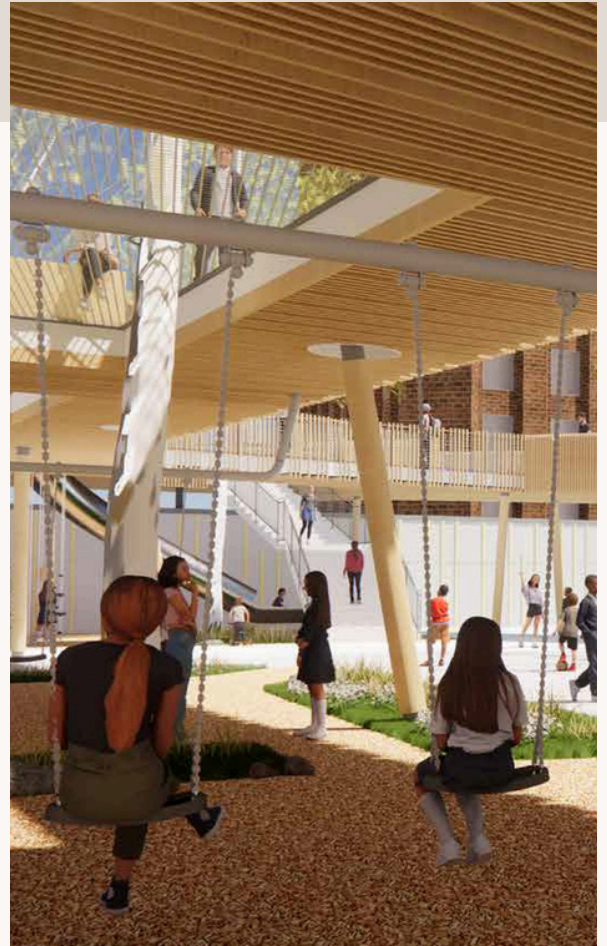
Above (left): An equestrian show from the 1930s, facing 16th Street. Above (right): Looking toward 17th Street. Below (left): Meeting with architects from Metcalfe Architecture & Design, Studio Ludo, and OLIN.



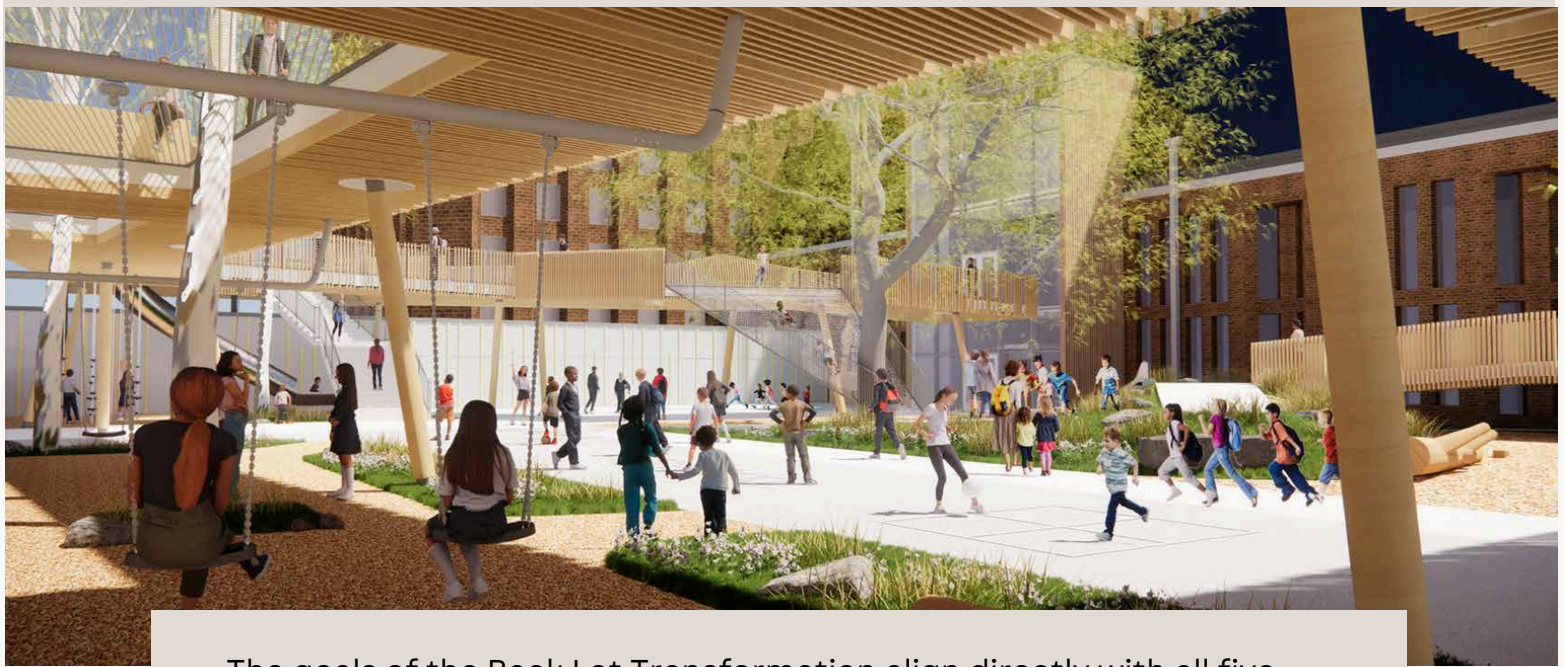
For this project, a team of architects from Metcalfe Architecture & Design, Studio Ludo, and OLIN incorporated thoughtful input from Friends Select students, faculty, and staff to create a beautiful conceptual design that symbolizes an inclusive Quaker community. The result is unlike any space in Center City. The Back Lot Transformation is designed to serve all students, creating a green space that welcomes users to socialize, connect, and build community. It is a demonstration of an inclusive Quaker community—a welcoming, multi-use place for all.

Conceptual Design Highlights of the Back Lot Transformation

- The ground level would include various play styles for all ages, from swings to climbing mounds, as well as a court for organized games and free play.
- A second level, created with ramps, climbing areas, and hammock-style netting, would offer fully accessible opportunities for play, social engagement, and learning, around existing trees that emerge through the structure.
- An urban tree house with views of the city could be used for solitary play, while also appealing to older students seeking a place to meet with their peers.
- The design would prioritize nature by eliminating much of the blacktop surface, incorporating an existing oak tree (which our students advocated for!), and adding new plantings.
- The 16th Street entrance would be transformed into a glass-paneled connection to the Parkway Building. Additionally, it would provide convenience for those walking to classes in the upper school STEAM Building.
- The reimagined entrance would improve circulation and security in the Parkway Building with fully accessible entry points to the first and second floors, as well as a new reception area for guests to check in before entering the building.



- By adding an elevator and making Friends Select's second floor and rooftop athletic field fully accessible, this project would align with our school's Quaker values.
- The addition of an elevator to the rooftop athletic field also has the potential to make this a premier rental event space for the wider Philadelphia community.
- This project would reorient how Friends Select faces its surrounding community and the unbreakable relationship between the school and the city.



The goals of the Back Lot Transformation align directly with all five pillars of Friends Select’s strategic plan. As a central project of the *Advance Friends Select: Transformation Campaign*, the Back Lot Transformation would further the school’s commitments to:

Excellence in Teaching & Learning

- The re-envisioned back lot would provide a dynamic outdoor space, ideal for play which is essential in learning.
- In addition to newly designed and constructed play structures such as swings, slides, and hammock-like netting for climbing around a tree, the space would be ideal for middle and upper school students to spend time outdoors reading, studying, and socializing. These structures are also fully accessible to individuals of all abilities.
- There would be dedicated spaces for faculty to teach students outdoors.
- Enhancing the ability of students, faculty, and staff to spend vital time outdoors on our campus has the potential to increase the overall well-being of our community, especially considering the connection between spending time in nature and wellness.
- By transforming the 16th Street Parkway Building entrance, Friends Select would be able to add a much-needed gathering space and lounge area for middle school, where students can meet, study, and spend time together.



Financial Stability & Endowment Growth

- The reimagined back lot would be highly visible to our Center City neighbors and anyone passing along 16th Street, making known our deep commitment to educating for “the whole of life.”
- Providing tours of the new space to prospective students and families has the potential to drive new enrollments and increase the retention of current students and families.
- An elevator, providing access to the rooftop, would improve the ability for the school to provide rooftop access for everyone and to rent out our space when it is not in use, an exciting opportunity for revenue generation and to boost the visibility of Friends Select.



Use of Space

- Transforming the current asphalt-based back lot into a multi-level outdoor space, complete with enhanced security, green space, a ball court, quiet places, and more, is an essential step in maximizing the use of Friends Select's urban footprint as a school.
- The Back Lot Transformation would tie together key elements of the completed projects—from the rooftop athletic field and events space on the Parkway Building to the brand-new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Building—to unify our campus and redefine how Friends Select experiences the city as a classroom.





Strategic Partnerships & Relationships

- Friends Select has hired three architects for this project: Metcalfe Architecture & Design, Studio Ludo, and OLIN. Each brings a wealth of knowledge and a unique perspective to the project, including Studio Ludo's focus on the science of play.
- Anchor Management will be the contractor on this project, with whom Friends Select has worked successfully on all other phases of the Transformation Campaign.
- Accessing the rooftop for event rentals welcomes new visitors to the Friends Select campus and opens the possibility for new partnerships in the city.
- We look forward to the new partnerships we can forge with our neighbors in Center City once the project is complete.
- We look forward to engaging children and families from the Philadelphia area and beyond in this exciting space.



Environmental Sustainability

- The conceptual design would add much-needed drainage while incorporating natural elements, including existing trees and new plantings, to help safeguard Friends Select's campus from the dangers of climate change.
- Sustainability would also be prioritized during the construction of this project, just as it has in all previous Transformation Campaign projects.



The Parkway Building's rooftop field is currently used as a learning space (above, left), for athletics (above, right), and for events like the 2024 Welcome Party for new and current FSS parents and guardians (right), which included music from the Dave Brodie Trio.

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The Back Lot Transformation is an exciting next step in continuing to transform Friends Select School to serve the needs of our students and community into the future.



Join Us in Transforming the Back Lot

To make a gift or pledge to support the Back Lot Transformation, please contact Christine Jefferson, chief development officer (215-561-5900 x3141 or chrisj@friends-select.org). Pledges of support may be paid over a period of 2-4 years.

Visit our website friends-select.org/transformation for more information about the Back Lot Transformation and the *Advance Friends Select: Transformation Campaign*.

