

2015 CEFPI NORTHEAST REGION EXHIBITION OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

# LITTLE RED ELISABETH IRWIN

NEW YORK, NY | HIGH SCHOOL | RENOVATION/ADDITION





# LITTLE RED ELISABETH IRWIN

NEW YORK, NY

In this top-to-bottom transformation, Little Red Elisabeth Irwin (LREI), one of New York City's leading progressive private schools, doubled its size to offer students a much greater range of programs and updated its image as a vibrant, 21st century center for learning.

The original 1912 school facility needed a dramatic overhaul to keep pace with changes in teaching and learning, as well as new technology, and to house the projected enrollment. It became apparent that the school had to take bold steps to hold its own.

This renovation and 22,000-square-foot addition reoriented LREI from an inward centered institution to one focused outward. The resulting campus-like setting, which includes three outdoor courtyards, lets students anticipate the university life most will move on to. Its energized interior spaces promote a sense of community while also providing private places for individual quiet time and private conversations.

Because LREI is in a landmarked district, all changes occurred without altering the buildings' street facades. Intended as a single project, once the economy faltered in 2008 the work was spread over four phases with a different financing and fundraising strategy. The project called for community involvement, legal engagement and environmental study, and each phase happened with minimal disruption to the school's academic calendar.

The scheme introduced separate 'pavilions' devoted to science, the arts, and humanities. Each provide a host of new learning spaces including traditional classrooms, seminar rooms, science labs, an art studio, 3D art space, a media lab, and a music classroom with additional private practice rooms. There is also a student lounge, improved student services, an expanded auditorium and a larger cafeteria. The project introduced full ADA accessibility and provided a facelift for the main lobby, signaling the school's revitalized identity upon entrance.





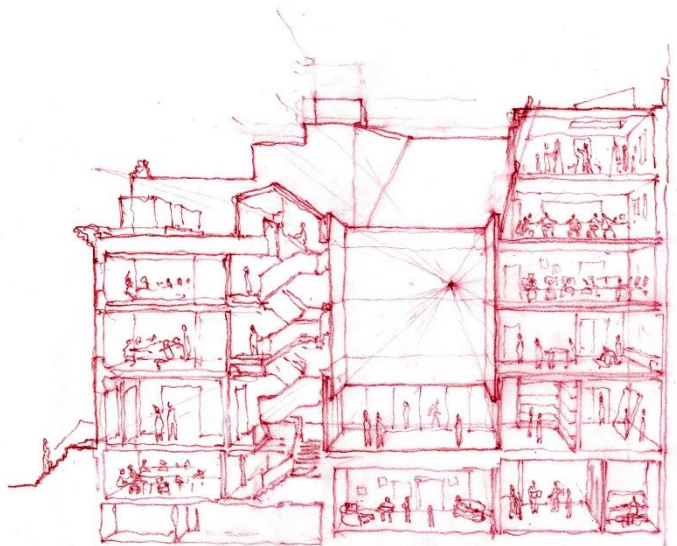


## LITTLE RED ELISABETH IRWIN

Doubling the size of the school and adding outdoor areas called for a careful addition and subtraction of spaces. This included joining an adjacent townhouse, adding two floors to the top of the school building, and removing a portion of the back of the existing 1843 townhouse in order to create the principal courtyard which would be defined by a new Arts Pavilion.

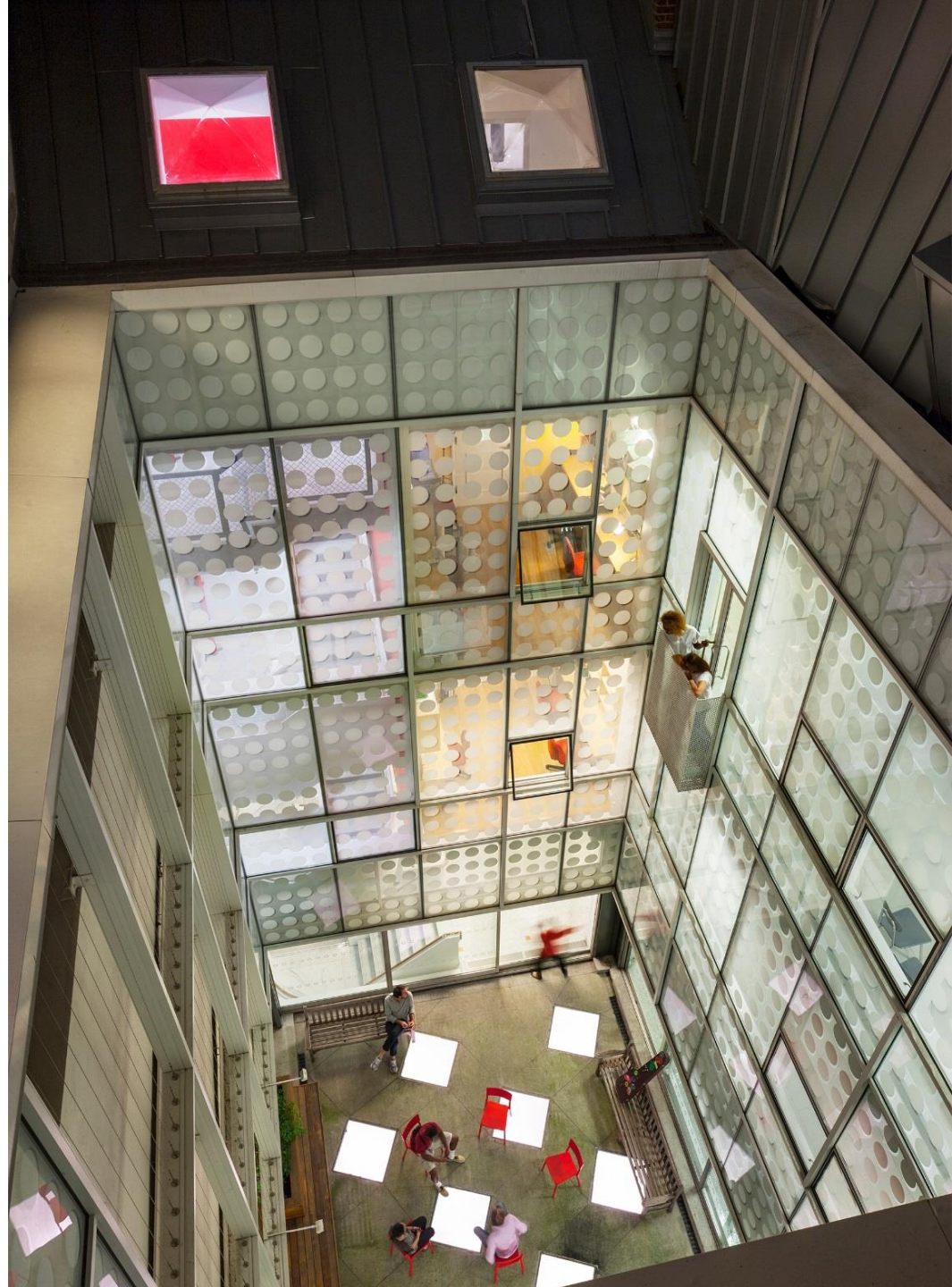
Since the school is within a landmark district, the facades of the two buildings -- the Diocese school from 1912, and the townhouse from 1843 -- could not be altered. That also meant that all additions to the top of the building had to be set back so that they weren't visible from street level.





## CREATIVITY WITHIN CONSTRAINTS

An institution does not always have the luxury of growing in a well ordered manner. More often, necessary expansion requires surveying existing buildings and identifying those parts that can evolve. The jewel of this project is the new interior courtyard, which added an outdoor gathering space by selectively carving away at previous additions to the original buildings. This courtyard is the new focal point of the school, strengthening the sense of campus community while bringing coherence to a multi-faceted expansion. Views across the courtyard into the newly created Arts Pavilion made the institution's program more visible and gave it a prominence that reinforced its pedagogical role.

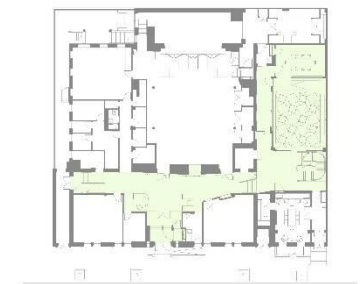






## NAVIGATING ADOLESCENCE

High school is as much about social growth as it is intellectual achievement. Creating community at LREI means collective spaces with open flexible programmatic intentions, both outdoors and indoors, where students can gather, share experiences and build relationships. But teenage students also need alone and private time. Corridor nooks throughout the school allow students to have individual quiet time and private conversations to balance the other vibrant environments for group interchange.





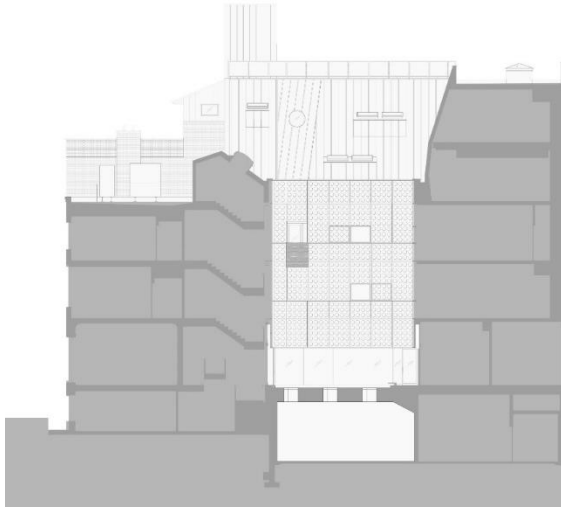
## PLANNING FOR FLEXIBILITY

Recent advancements in technology, coupled with an ever-expanding variety of new disciplines, generate new ways of teaching and learning. We provided spaces for LREI that would support both these emerging pedagogic models, as well as time-tested classic academic settings, delivering students and faculty active, adaptable learning spaces. Multi-functional facilities—from classrooms to labs or libraries—offer increased programmatic density, making them both more efficient and more effective.

Hallways, stairs and other circulation spaces would be fitted with areas for casual interaction, making lighting, acoustical treatment and accessibility to power integral parts of the basic design.







## CULTIVATING CREATIVITY

Schools are exceptional communities and their environments should be as well. This student lounge doubles as a teaching space for increased programmatic density. The design encourages expression and a rich exchange of ideas through the use of flexible furnishings and teaching resources. Skylights from the courtyard above turn this cellar room into a bright and playful space.







## A VARIETY OF TYPES

Classroom sizes and layouts vary according to the activity and optimum number of students. It was our goal to provide the most effective background for each subject classroom which led to a wide variety of program driven classroom designs, in addition to more flexible, multi-functional spaces throughout the school.



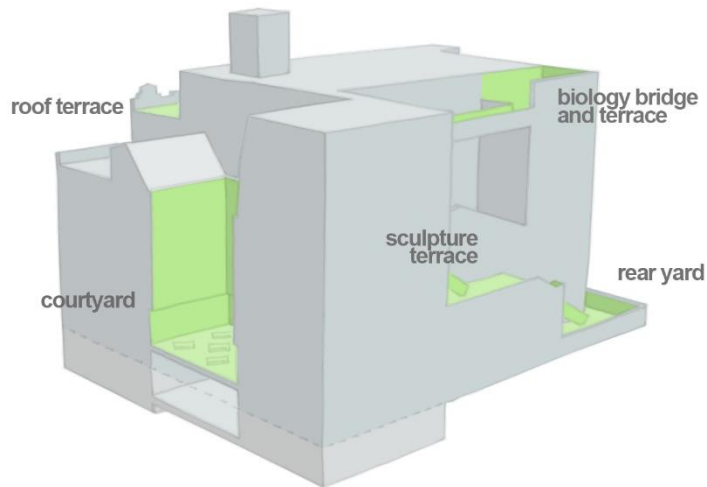


## SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

Additional floors were integrated into the dense urban landscape, while still providing an intimate learning environment within. This fully-equipped seminar room encourages collaboration and reinforces the school's progressive New York City identity with a framed view of the cityscape to the north.







## NATURAL LIGHT, FRESH AIR

Urban schools are exciting places to learn, but they also face unique conditions that require special consideration. Our goal was to let sunlight and fresh air into all of the classrooms and public spaces, fulfilling a desired connection with the natural world. In time, a green wall will bring plant life and its seasonal process into the heart of the school. A sophisticated frit pattern establishes a layering of perception and social connection both here and at the south elevation, also functioning to control sunlight and heat gain.

Throughout the school, materials were chosen for high recycled content and low-VOCs. High-efficiency HVAC systems, window shading control systems, energy saving lighting and recycled construction waste are several other energy-conscious aspects of the design and construction process.



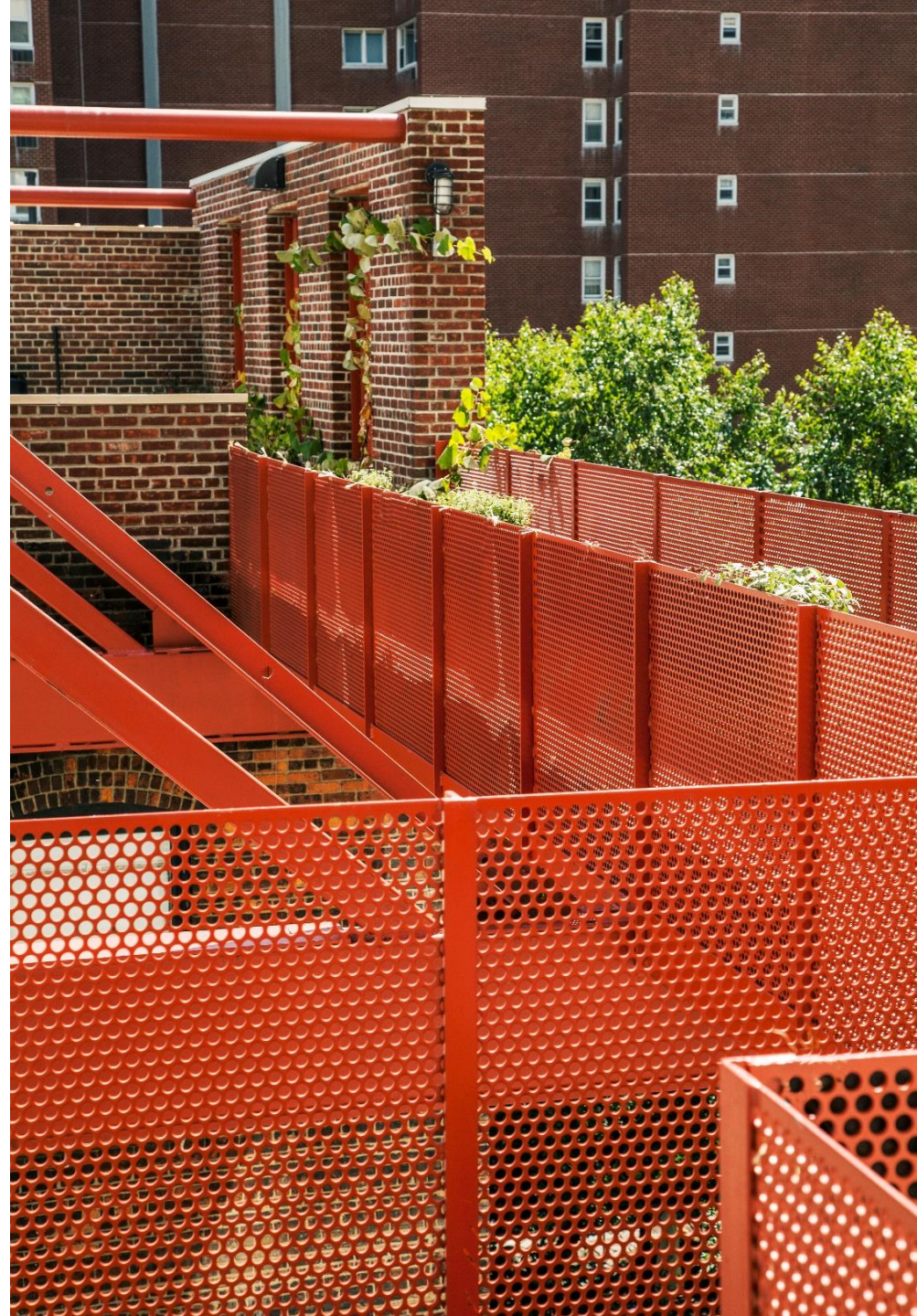




## RE-DIRECTING OUTWARD

Reorienting the school from being inward to outward-centered supports its progressive philosophy. Students have a continuing connection with the world outside because of the new outdoor areas and views from those spaces. The bio-terrace and adjacent lab facilitate a hands-on learning and teaching environment with a connection to the new Arts Pavilion.

Multiple circulation routes moving inside and outside of the school means students can move as part of a group or find a more private path. The design of the school was premised on allowing for more nuanced experiences of control, observation, and privacy between the students and the adults.





## REVITALIZING TIRED SPACES

Finding ways to enliven oft-neglected spaces is not just a smart use of funds—it is essential to creating and maintaining a supportive community environment. This humble egress route, previously unused roof space, has been transformed into a sculpture terrace and informal multi-level gathering space. Visual connectivity between spaces serves to enhance a sense of community, while glass pavers bring daylight to the interior auditorium space below.



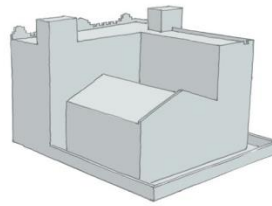


## GROWTH AND CONTINUITY

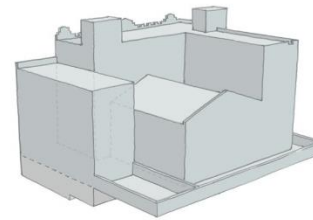
The planning process at LREI began about 5 years before ABA joined the team. The school was not attracting the families of the K-8 lower school, which had double the enrollment per grade, as well nor that of other area middle schools. The decision was made to either close or double the size, making the high school a larger and better learning environment. The Board of Trustees voted for the latter and began looking for a way to expand, either through the development of their existing building or by finding a new site.

Our solution was to work very closely with the Head of School to develop a strategy that turned the building inside out, making the experience centered on community spaces, both interior and exterior. The Head of the School, Phil Kassen, and the Chief Financial Officer, Michel de Konkoly Thege, helped us create an enhanced program that stressed multi-functional learning spaces, flexible community gathering areas, and program-specific classroom designs. There were extensive meetings with the faculty at large, as well as with specific subject teachers, to ensure that the classrooms would be as efficient as possible, responding to a progressive pedagogy of group learning with seminar-like classrooms.

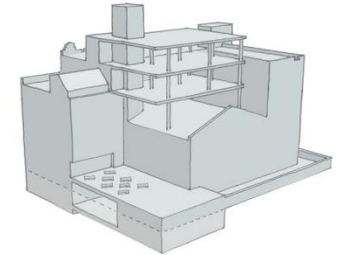
Being in a Landmarked District in New York City, a considerable amount of time was spent working with the neighborhood to ensure that the building addition would be a good neighbor and not adversely affect the quality of the street or the interior of the block.



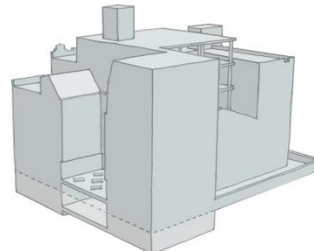
1941-2007



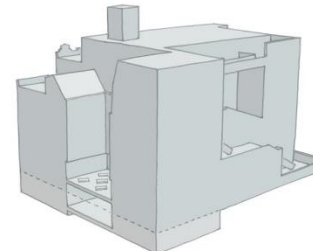
2007



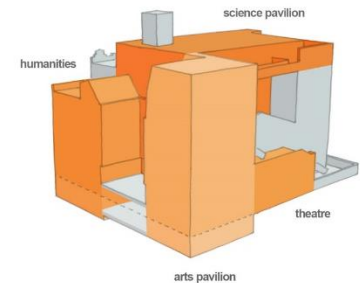
2008



2010



2014



- 1941-2007
- ORIGINAL 1912 DIOCESE BUILDING
- 2007
- PURCHASE OF ADJACENT TOWNHOUSE
- 2008
- NEW SCHOOL IMAGE AND IDENTITY
- PARTIAL DEMOLITION OF TOWNHOUSE
- SCIENCE PAVILION STRUCTURE
- SUBGRADE EXPANSION
- 2010
- NEW 5-STORY ARTS PAVILION
- COURTYARD COMPLETION
- 2014
- SCIENCE PAVILION COMPLETION
- THEATRE EXPANSION





## A NEW IMAGE

When the financial crisis of 2008 struck, the Board of Trustees decided to postpone the project. The Head of School, the Chief Financial Officer, and ourselves worked through a plan that allowed the school to build out the full project through five different phases. The school chose to start with the lobby and primary courtyard, foregrounding the school's new image to the visitor and getting the community excited for new things to come.

A complex interweaving of existing and new elements finds a full expression, along with acoustical treatments that allow comfortable occupation and multi-functionality of public areas. A subtle inflection of an interior wall leads the visitor in the sequence to the interior courtyard, which acts as a campus quad.



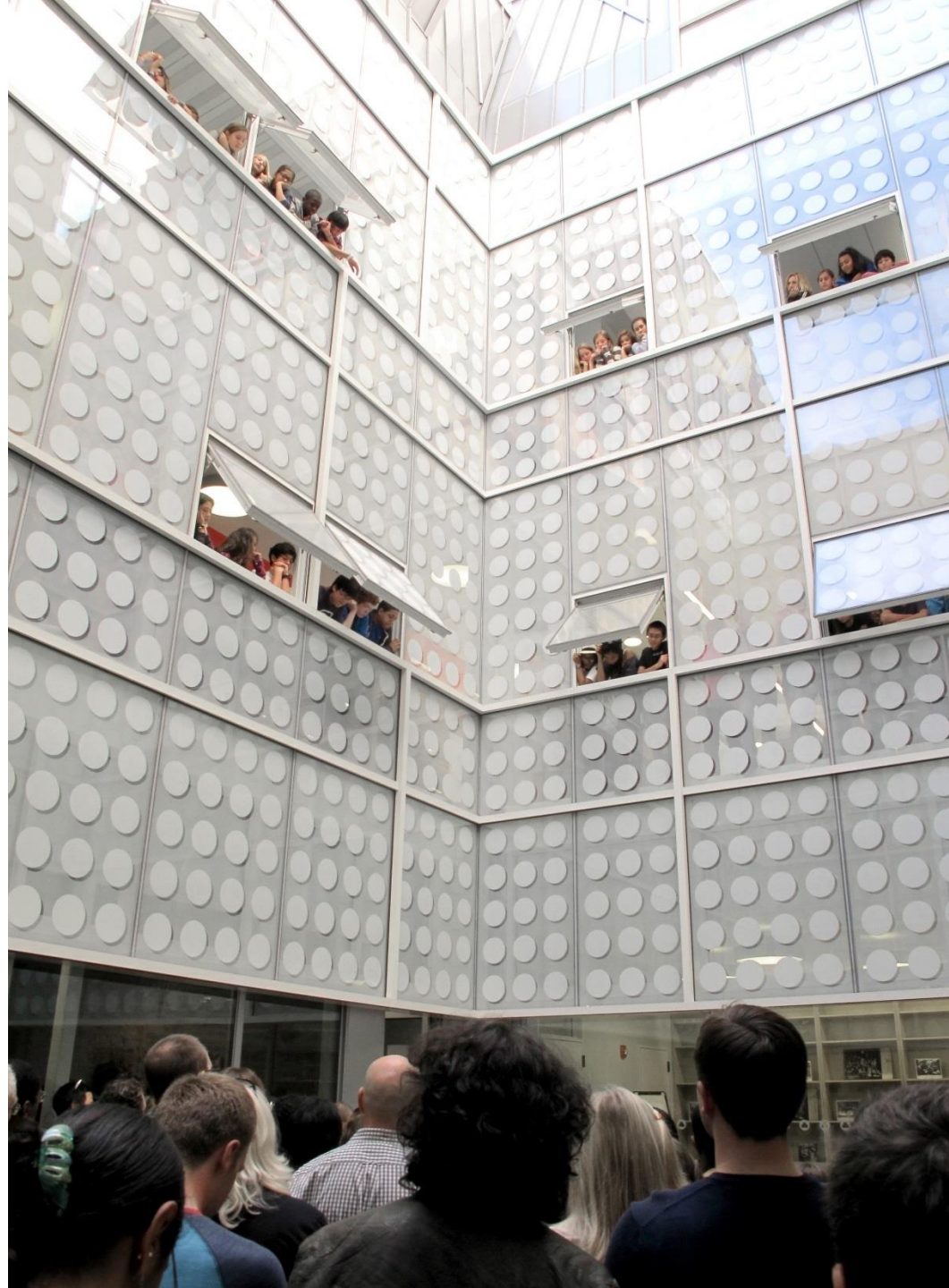




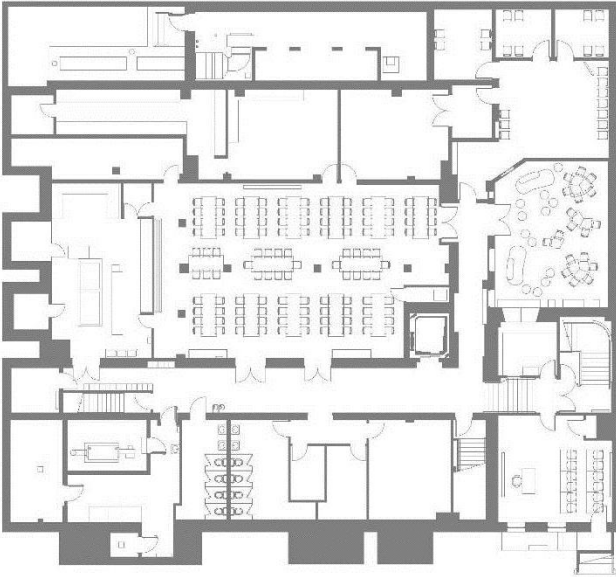
## ARCHITECTURE AS INSPIRATION

The overall concept of building a campus-like plan, with pavilions organized by discipline, was developed with the Head of School, approved by the Board, and refined by the faculty. The focus on community space was part of the collective progressive vision of building a school that shared spatial qualities with that of a college. There was considerable thought on privacy and observation and the individual's experience in a community.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Arts Pavilion and completion of the courtyard brought the school community together in celebration of their new space. This remains the heart of the school and a delight for students and teachers.

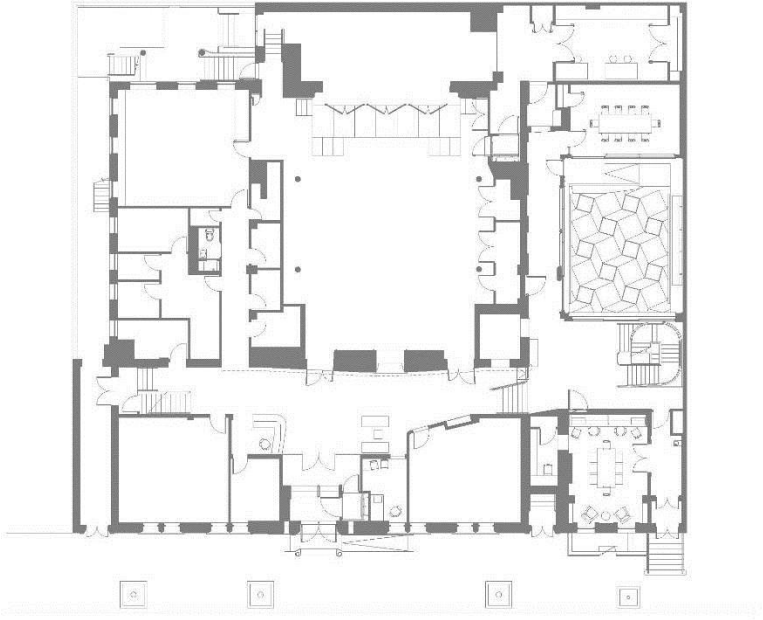






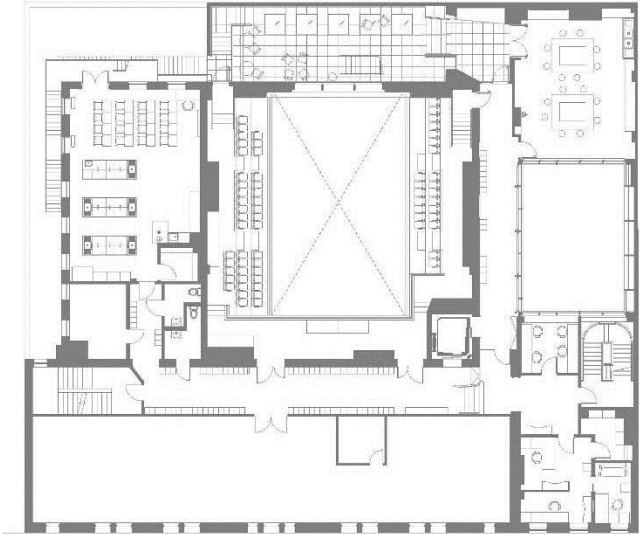
Cellar





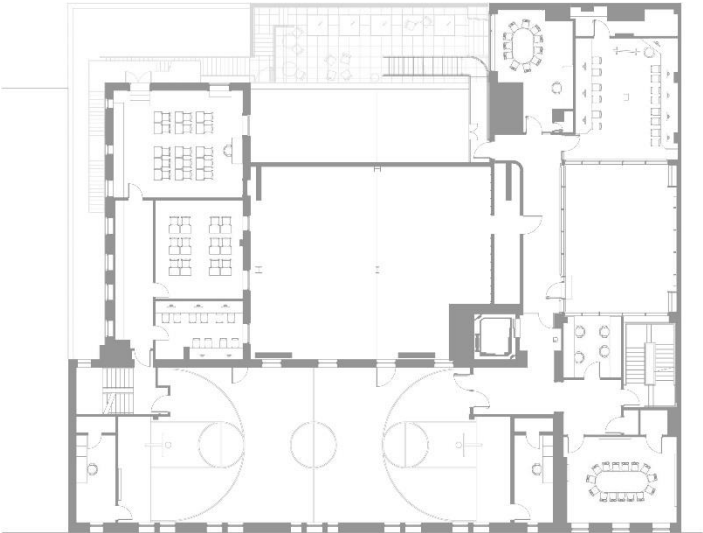
First Floor





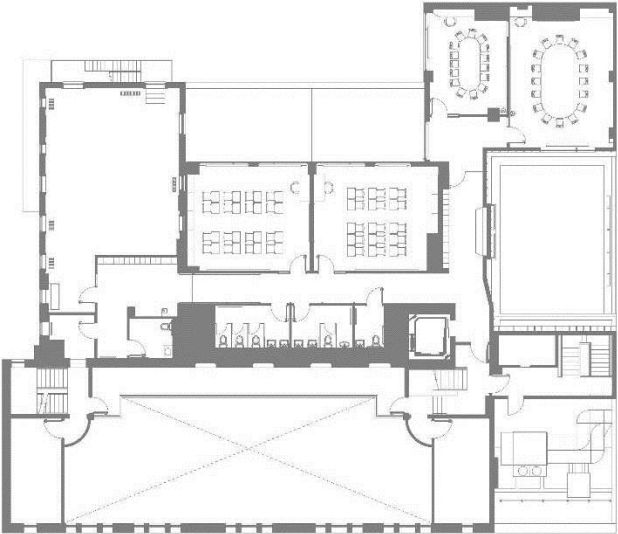
Second Floor





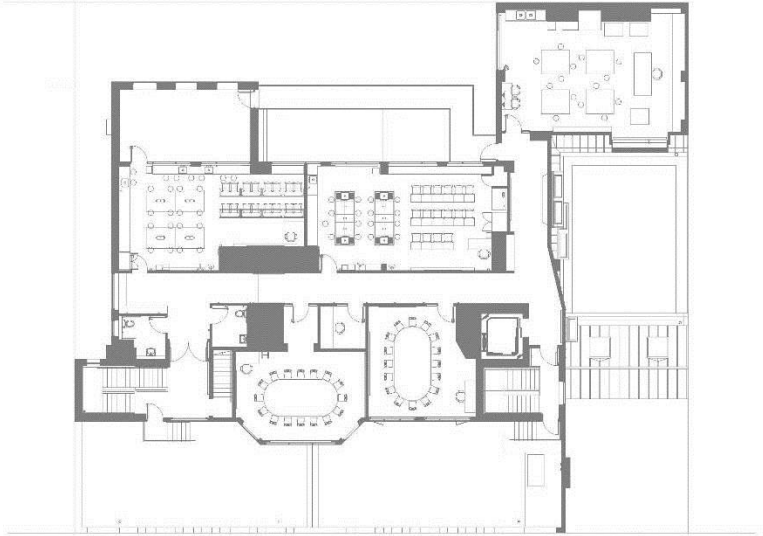
Third Floor





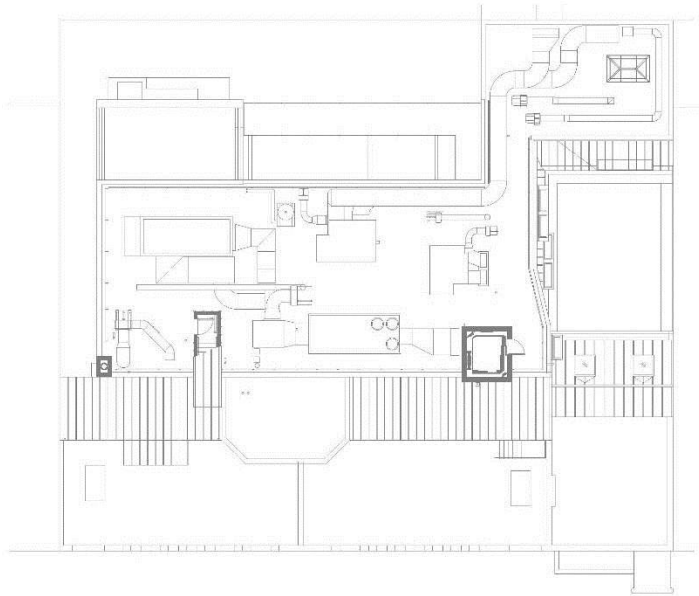
Fourth Floor





Fifth Floor





Roof



## EXHIBITION OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE 2015 PROJECT DATA

<b>Submitting Firm :</b>	<b>abastudio</b>
Project Role	Architect
Project Contact	Andrew Bartle
Title	Principal
Address	37 W 20 <sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1201
City, State or Province, Country	New York, NY
Phone	212-206-8929 ext 103
<b>Joint Partner Firm:</b>	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

<b>Other Firm:</b>	
Project Role	
Project Contact	
Title	
Address	
City, State or Province, Country	
Phone	

<b>Construction Firm:</b>	<b>Orian Construction</b>
Project Role	General Contractor
Project Contact	Andy Frankl
Title	Owner
Address	One Whitehall Street
City, State or Province, Country	New York, NY 10004
Phone	646-366-6200

## EXHIBITION OF SCHOOL PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE 2015 PROJECT DETAILS

<b>Project Name</b>	Little Red Elisabeth Irwin
<b>City</b>	New York
<b>State</b>	New York
<b>District Name</b>	Private
<b>Supt/President</b>	Phil Kassen
<b>Occupancy Date</b>	2010 to 2013
<b>Grades Housed</b>	9-12
<b>Capacity(Students)</b>	300
<b>Site Size (acres)</b>	0.27 Acres
<b>Gross Area (sq. ft.)</b>	50,000 SF
<b>Per Occupant(pupil)</b>	166 SF
<b>gross/net please indicate</b>	Gross
<b>Design and Build?</b>	No
<b>If yes, Total Cost:</b>	
<b>Includes:</b>	
<b>If no,</b>	
<b>Site Development:</b>	0
<b>Building Construction:</b>	\$16,200,000
<b>Fixed Equipment:</b>	\$1,250,000
<b>Other:</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	\$17,450,000



## ADDITIONAL IMAGES



## ATTRACTING STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Attracting ambitious students and a successful faculty means having the kind of facilities where they can do their best work within a socially supportive environment. A vibrant and cohesive built environment builds community, anchoring and promoting the school's unique mission.





## ADDITIONAL IMAGES



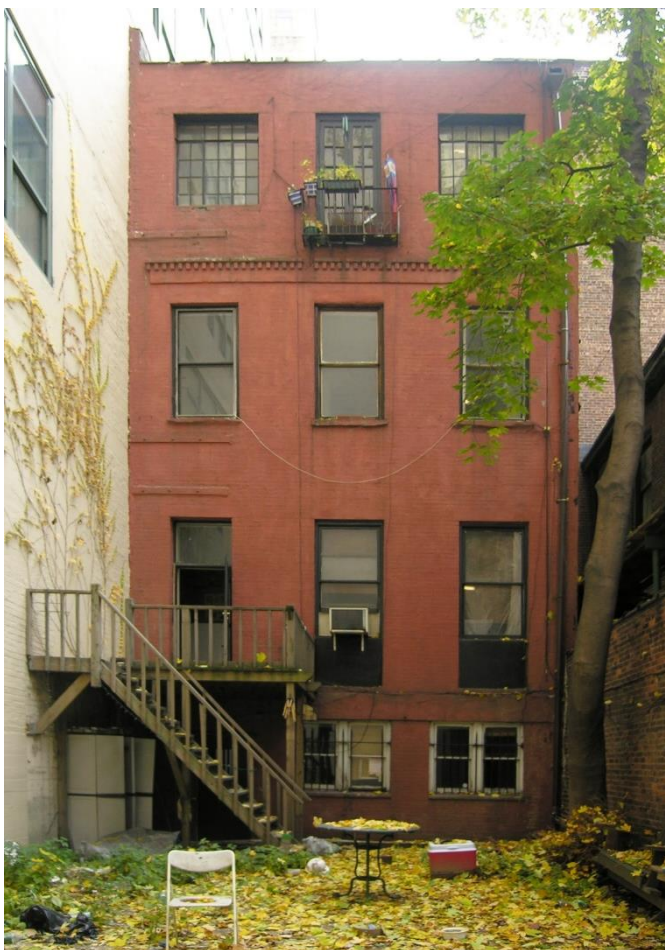
## NEW AND OLD

When balancing new and old, our approach was to keep the overall unity in the foreground. Working in older buildings brings unique challenges; inadequate or nonexistent mechanical systems, neglected structure, and decaying finishes all demand precious budget dollars. In some cases, the building's original typology is unsuited to its new role, only increasing the project's complexity. In our renovation of the newly acquired 1840's townhouse, we chose to restore the original plaster and stone details where possible, retaining some of the older, characteristic elements, while providing updated and modern finishes throughout.





## ADDITIONAL IMAGES



## BEFORE AND AFTER

What was once an overlooked rear yard space has become one of the most vital center points for the school community.







## URBAN CONTEXT

The top two floors of our addition looked directly across at a 12-story building just 30 feet away. To ensure an appropriate level of privacy, we designed light wells that provide protection from unwanted gazes and create bench seating within.