

Federal Way High School

Federal Way Public Schools | Federal Way, WA



Executive Summary

Before the malls and restaurants, before the libraries and the aquatic center, before even the city itself, there was Federal Way High School.

The City of Federal Way would not exist independently until almost 60 years later, but in 1928, as the seat of a new school district and the home of its first school, Federal Way was on the map, and a sense of ownership and pride of place was born.

The vision of the new Federal Way High School was to honor its history and significance to the community, to reclaim and redefine its presence, and to enable it to adapt as that community evolves.

To achieve that vision, the design process followed three fundamental principles.

Make a Place

Over time, Federal Way's sense of place had gotten lost in a tangle of suburban sprawl, transient work populations, and economic disparity. People referred to Federal Way High School as the "ghetto school," and cited it among the bad aspects of Federal Way. The building had fallen into a state of disrepair and no longer presented the face of an enterprising young community, but the students, staff, and teachers at Federal Way High School did not for one moment lose their pride. They are passionate, spirited, loyal. They are innovators. They are pioneers just like those who came before them.

The design team couldn't help but be inspired by this spirit, and strove to make a place that would allow it to thrive, provide a home away from home for its diverse population of students, families, and neighbors, and cultivate a sense of belonging in a safe and secure environment.

The new facility is a source of pride for its graduates and an appropriate

tribute to the community it helped to shape and who will continue to shape it for years to come.

Amplify Connections

The new Federal Way High School pays homage to the District's history, as then and now it is the flagship school. It's presence on the street is resurrected by updating the scale and siting of the building to match the density of the modern city and the pace of the Pacific Highway (which is must faster than 1928!). The building utilizes traditional materials with contemporary installation techniques, and the original high school entry is recreated in the site treatment. The site is planned for use by its regular inhabitants and the larger community. The open boundaries invite visitors to the ball fields, walking paths, and storm pond habitat.

Plan for Change

Over its 90-year history, the Federal Way School District has become comfortable with change. They take inspiration from colleges,

design studios and tech start-ups, seeking not only the best learning environment for today but looking toward the learning environment of the future by experimenting with new educational models and pedagogies.

The building has a functional life of 50 or more years, but the educational planning horizon may be as little as five years, and the technology planning horizon may be considerably less. A goal defined early in design was to let the building allow for change, both day-to-day and over time, thus the concepts of flexibility and adaptability became primary design drivers for everything from structural modules to paint colors. Rather than a collection of unique and specialized spaces, the first priority was to make great space with universal appeal suitable for many uses, and an environment that can be modified by each user.

**SPECT TO EVERYONE. AIM HIGH. ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. BE
ESS. DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE YOURSELF. LIFE IS A JOURNEY
YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL, NOT WHAT OTHER PEOPLE WANT
MEET NEW PEOPLE. DON'T EVER JUDGE SOMEONE BEFORE YOU
MILY, THE SCHOOL IS YOUR NEST, RESPECT THEM BOTH. EVEN
T YOU, GIVE IT YOUR ALL AND NEVER GIVE UP. YOU CAN BE AN
CHANCE. EVERYONE IS EQUAL NO MATTER WHAT. THE WOR
NG PEOPLE. WE ARE A FAMILY. THERE IS STRENGTH IN OUR D
S IT LOOKS. EVERYONE HAS POTENTIAL TO BECOME SOMETHI
OW TO LEARN. CHOOSE YOUR OWN PATH. MAKE EVERY MOM
L BETTER. ALWAYS STAY POSITIVE. ONCE AN EAGLE ALW
ATED. THE SMALLEST THINGS COUNT IN EVERYTHING AND EFFO
HERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTUR
ST WITH EVERY ONE OF THEM. THE ONLY THING IN THE WAY OF
ANT TO DO IS DOING IT. THROUGH HARD WORK AND DEDICATIO
LE IS TO FAMILY. BE PROUD WHO YOU ARE. LET
EFFE THAT YOU DO MATTERS. YOU
D RT EB RS**



Scope of Work & Budget

“There is always just enough money to do everything that is important.”

Rod Leland, retired Director of Facility Services, Federal Way Public Schools

This quote became a mantra against which to judge all design decisions. It would be just as much of a transgression to leave money on the table as it would be to go over budget, but every dollar had to be spent wisely and in service of the District’s educational mission. By combining innovation with ruthless scrutiny, the team was able to deliver a project that serves that mission at a bid price that left room in the budget to accommodate several major scope additions and unforeseen conditions during construction.

During concept design, the team determined that the ideal location for the replacement school was on the southeast corner of the site, right on top of the existing school. This location creates the best integration of the new building with existing on-site facilities, establishes a strong presence on the street, and initiates a long-term plan to accommodate future growth. And though there were additional expenses associated with building in this location, the District agreed that it best supported the project goals.

OWNER

Federal Way Public Schools

LOCATION

Federal Way, WA

OCCUPATION

Phase 1: October 2016

Phase 2: April 2018

Phase 3: December 2018

STUDENT CAPACITY

1,600

GRADES

9-12

BUILDING AREA

237,000 SF

SITE AREA

38.6 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST

Budget: \$71 M

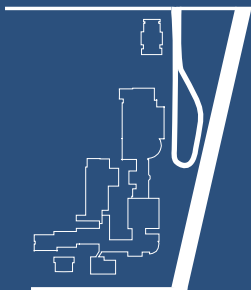
Bid: \$66.5 M

Final Project Cost: \$74 M

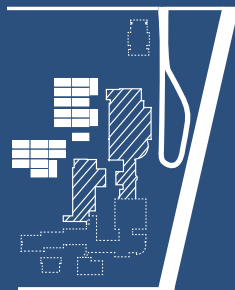
COST / SF

\$260 / SF

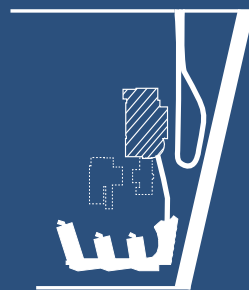
PHASING



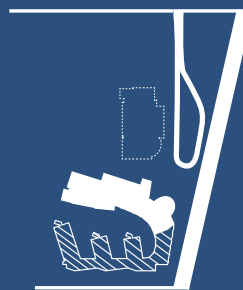
Existing campus



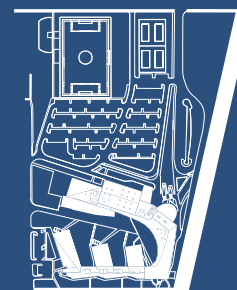
Build interim campus



Construct phase 1 building



Construct phase 2 building



Construct phase 3 site work

School & Community Engagement

The people of Federal Way believe in where they live, and its potential to continuously grow and thrive. Their nostalgia for time past is balanced by a fierce desire to keep improving in the present and future.

Community Spirit

These passionate folks are inherently protective of their collective best interest, and demand involvement in decision-making processes and an active role in planning what comes next for their city. For many, Federal Way High School represents the legacy of this relatively young community. Throughout the design process, we were treated to stories from alumni, staff, students, and administrators about their important moments, their fond memories, the relationships they'd built and were continuing to foster, all that started with their time at Federal Way High School.

But in the summer of 2012, they were disillusioned.

Building Trust & Relationship

By 2012, the Federal Way Public School District had tried and failed twice to get a bond approved to replace Federal Way High School. It was clear that the building deficiencies could no longer

be repaired or ignored, but the community felt that they had been left out of previous plans and needed assurance that the District would spend taxpayer dollars wisely. The first and most critical step in our design process was to engage the community in a candid and accessible way, and to rebuild their faith.

The first several months of the project were spent gathering information, hosting open houses for staff, students, parents, alumni, and the community at large. Key questions prompted stakeholders to share their experiences with Federal Way High School, their fears and hopes for the new school, and to inform how the District would communicate and interact with them from that point on.

Community Commitment

The District and design team distilled that input into three essential promises that the Community needed in order to support the project.

- The existing Memorial Stadium is to remain on site.

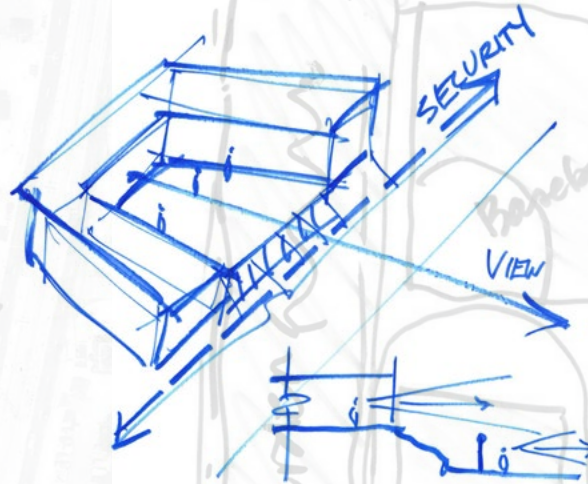
- Students will be kept on site throughout construction.
- The project will reuse historic building components in some way.

These three commitments provided challenges and opportunities to honor the past, present, and future of a unique place in Federal Way and guided major project decisions from scope and phasing to application of interior materials.

The District was rewarded with a successful bond vote, not only to fund this project and others in 2012, but their newly-strengthened relationship and restored trust of the community enabled them to pass a bond for several more projects again in 2017.

Planning Process and Stakeholder Engagement

From day 1, planning for the project emphasized engagement and outreach to the full spectrum of stakeholders to reveal how this project could meet each of their most critical needs and become an asset for all members of the broader Federal Way community.



STUDENTS

What do you need from your new school?

STAFF / FACULTY

What is the learning environment of your future?

SUPPORT

What is working now and how can we make it even better?

COMMUNITY

What is the number one thing you need to know to support this levy?



Educational Environment

Federal Way Public Schools is a leader in exploring and adopting pedagogies that are unconventional or unique - from the Small Schools Initiative to community-partnered and self-directed leaning typologies. We found common ground in our desire to explore novel solutions, to provoke discourse and even disagreement to arrive at the most gratifying results.

The Learning Environment of the Future

The project's goal-setting process involved the usual cast of stakeholders and designers, as well as invited "disruptors" to challenge ideas and bring thought leadership about the learning environment of the future. Participants from community college presidents to urban planners informed early discussions about the vision for the school. The District's Vision & Curriculum Committees toured global projects and brought back inspiration for how the new school could look forward in its form and function. These sessions generated the criteria for the project's success: a campus that is Comfortable, Connected, Collaborative, and Inspires Creativity.

Flexibility & Adaptability

Rather than a traditional programming process, the team spent several months on a detailed precedent study, dissecting the defining characteristics of various pedagogical models, how space supported each one, and asking "what's the least we could

build," knowing that anything built on the assumptions of today could be an impediment to the ideas of tomorrow.

As a result, Federal Way High School's design readily lends itself to the adoption of new learning models. Its two halves express the dual concepts of flexibility and adaptability. One half houses adaptable learning space, where rooms are not described as classrooms, labs, and shops, but as places for presentation, quiet work, or tinkering, and by their infrastructure requirements. Permanent core and shell elements like structure, stairs, elevators, and exterior walls are co-located out of the way of learning space. Structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are modular to allow "plug and play" of new uses as the interior buildout changes over time.

Fixed spatial requirements - such as the size of a basketball court - drive the gyms and auditorium housed in the other half of the building. Each of these types of features was intended to be a "two-fer" - able to do at least two things. The stormwater detention pond is a place for environmental

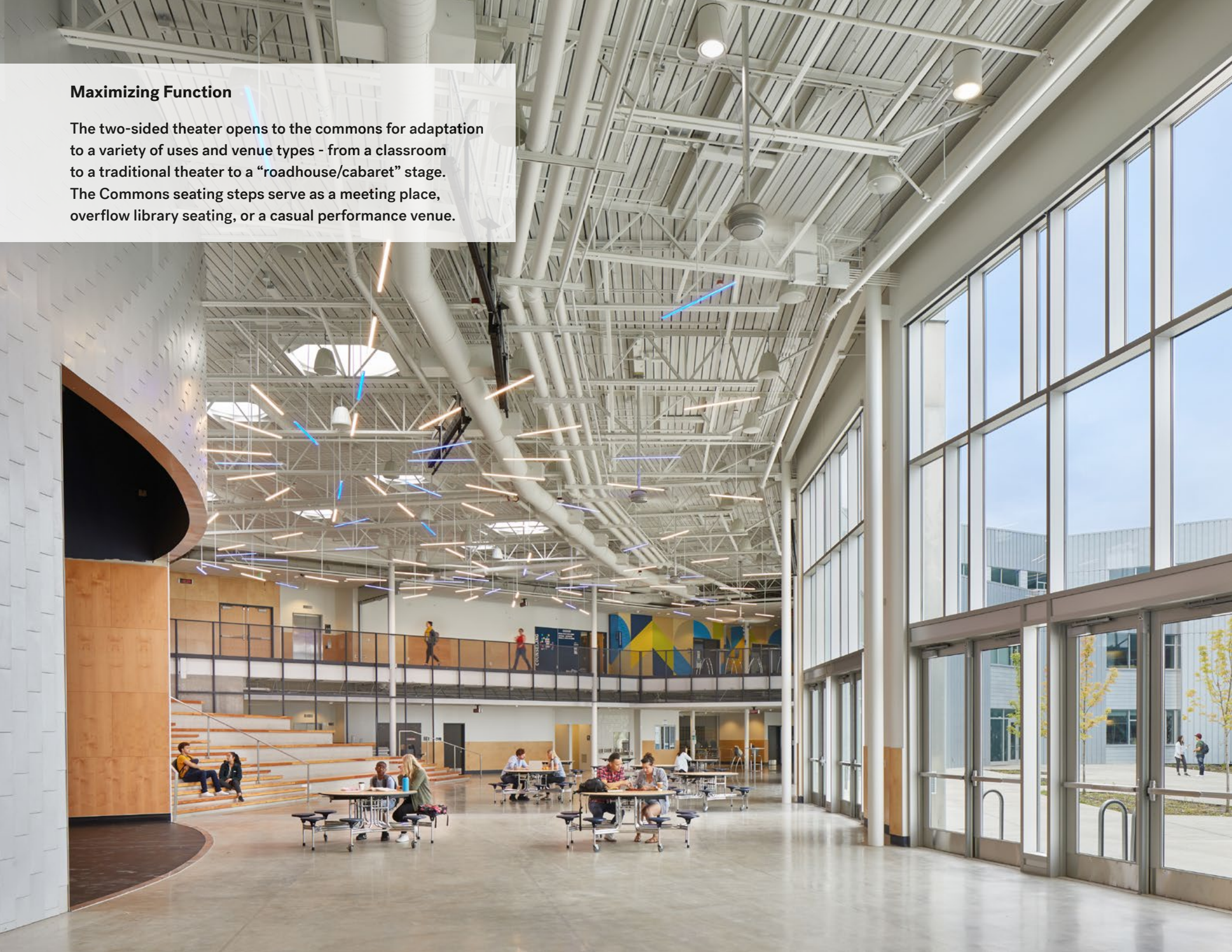
study; group rooms throughout can be study rooms, conference rooms, shared offices, or outposts for visiting resources; activity rooms in a variety of sizes and fit outs accommodate a "fitness for all" mindset.

Student-Centered Space

Federal Way students are passionate champions of their school and boldly speak up for their needs. The building meets each of these needs by providing ample space for student gathering, exploration, and autonomy. A synaptic network of communal spaces connecting the building's two halves produces opportunity for students to "see and be seen" by their peers. A variety of Third Places identified throughout the building create forums for sharing ideas and forming relationships. From breakout zones in widened hallways to glass-walled small group rooms - third places support the concept of educating the whole child - socially, emotionally, and academically.

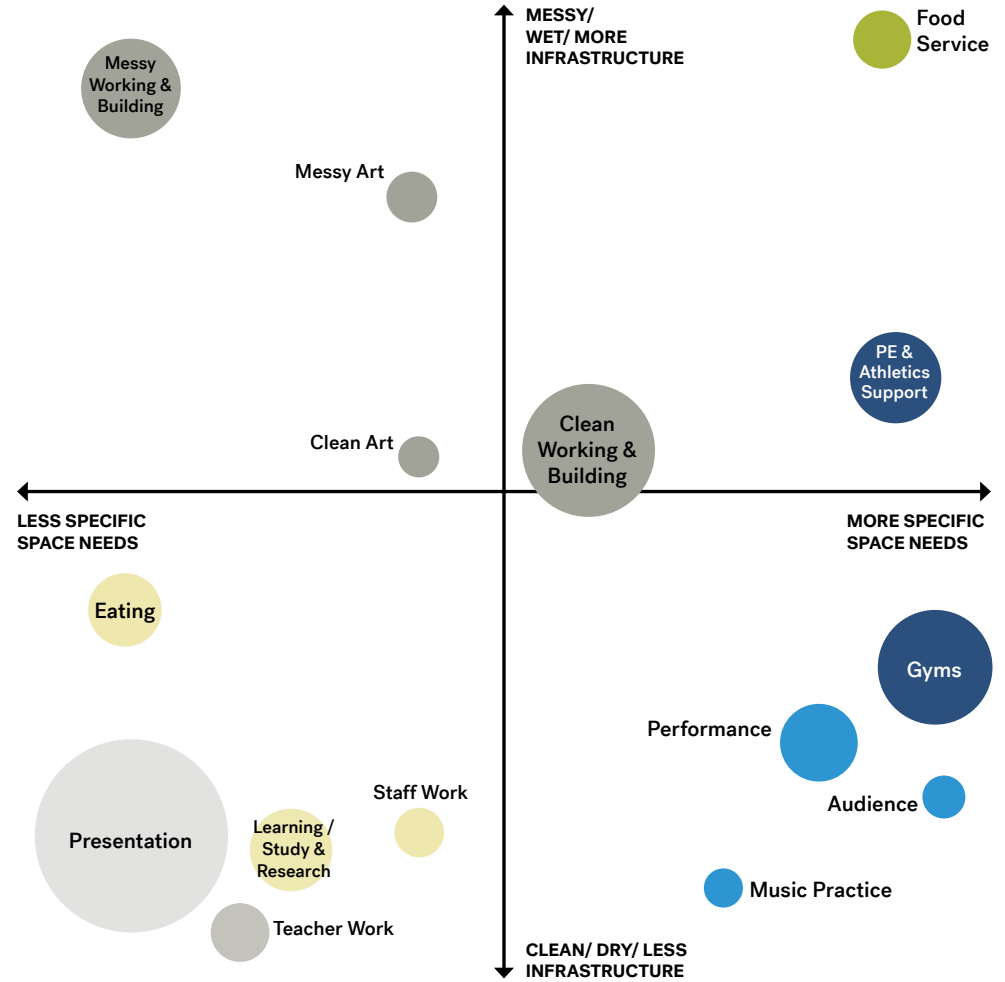
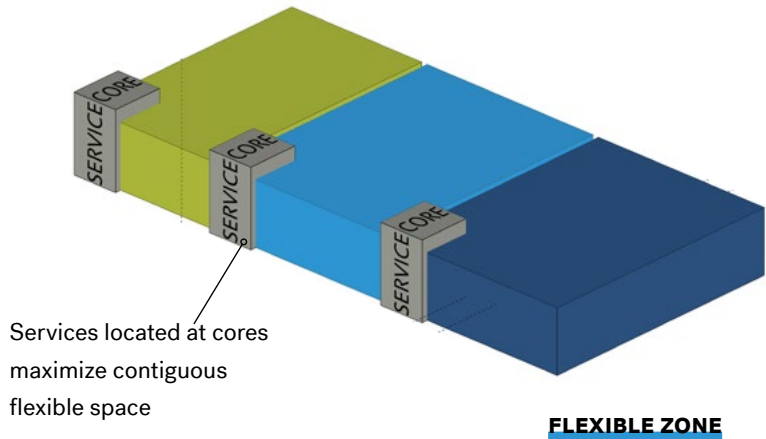
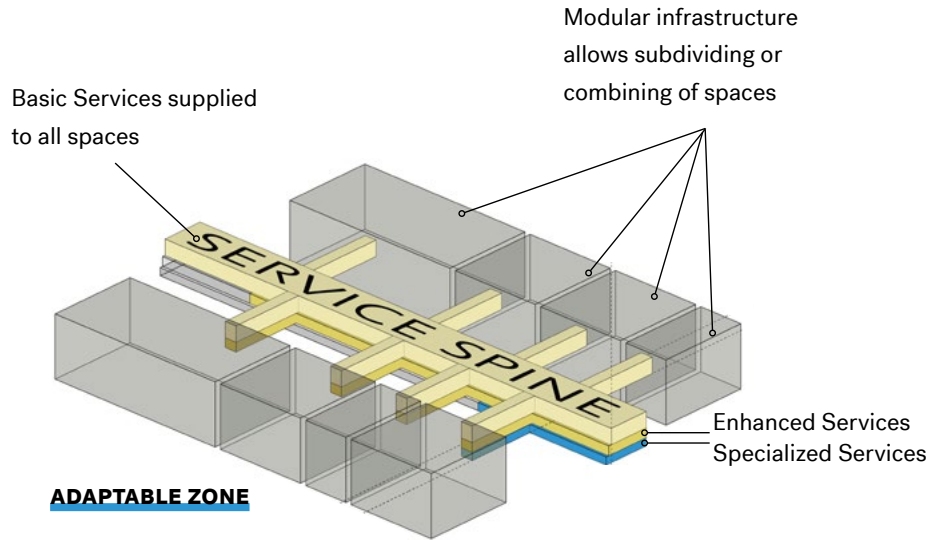
Maximizing Function

The two-sided theater opens to the commons for adaptation to a variety of uses and venue types - from a classroom to a traditional theater to a "roadhouse/cabaret" stage. The Commons seating steps serve as a meeting place, overflow library seating, or a casual performance venue.



Designing for Flexibility

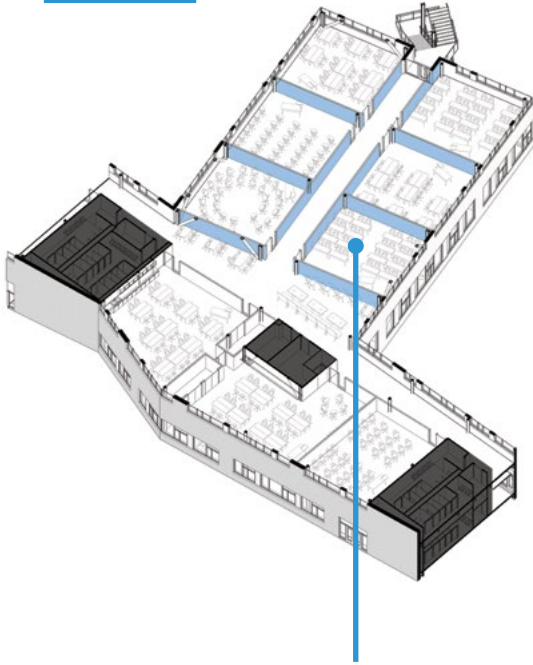
Program types were plotted on axes to determine their relative needs and capacities for flexibility and adaptability. Flexible spaces are served by an infrastructure core, while adaptable spaces are modular and can adapt by plugging into or tapping off of a service spine.



Adaptable Classroom Design

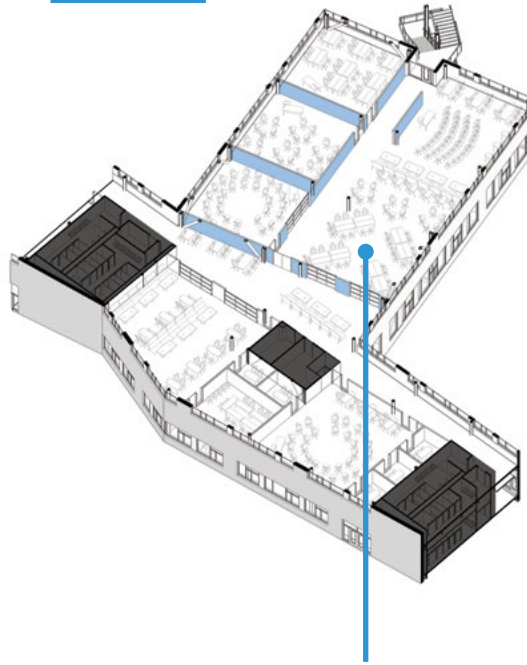
Several educational models were tested for adaptability to future scenarios, some of which are shown here. The end result was not to suggest what particular pedagogical idea was best suited for the school, but to prove that the building would accommodate a variety of activities over time.

TRADITIONAL



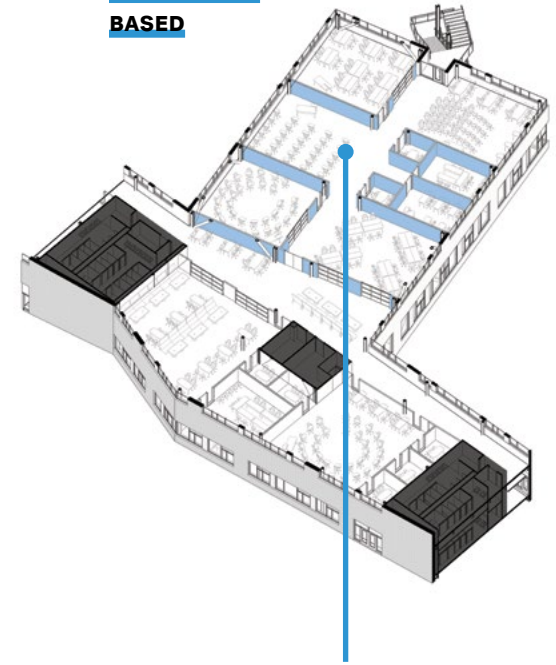
This scenario provides separately enclosed education spaces. By outfitting these spaces with furniture that is fast and easy to reconfigure, this model supports varying teaching strategies and classroom configurations.

OPEN STUDIO



This configuration operates similarly to an open office layout but is distinguished by enclosed meeting rooms. These shared collaboration spaces are of varying sizes to accommodate many teaching and learning situations.

COMMUNITY BASED



This layout locates common space along the main corridor. This emphasizes external connections and encourages interaction amongst learning communities.

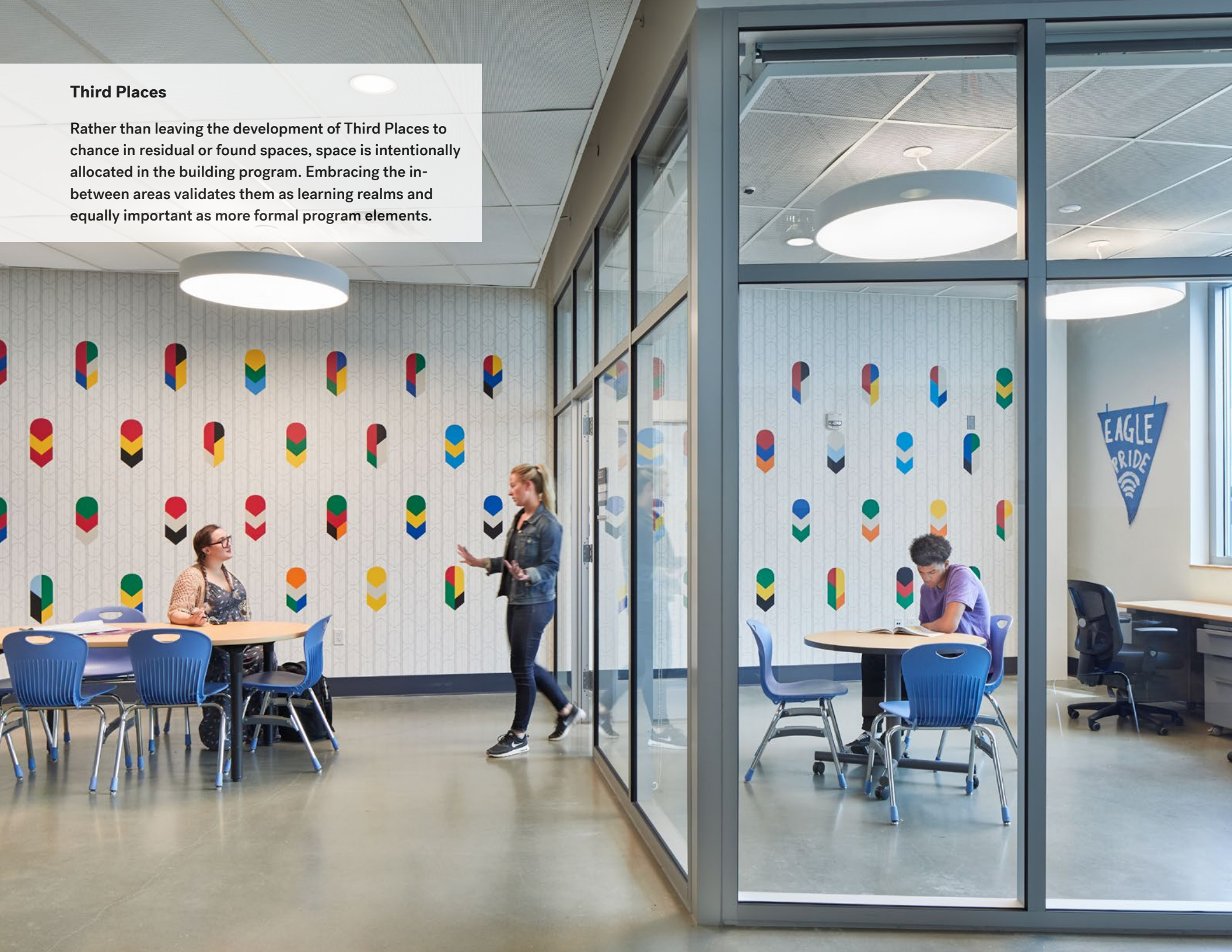


Planning for the Future

In vocational spaces, glazed garage doors allow classes to spill out onto adjacent hardscape areas and overhead electrical bus bars enable modification of equipment layouts. Conceived during design as a more traditional wood shop consistent with existing program, the space's modular infrastructure facilitated the District's implementation of its new Engineering, Manufacturing, and Technology tract.

Third Places

Rather than leaving the development of Third Places to chance in residual or found spaces, space is intentionally allocated in the building program. Embracing the in-between areas validates them as learning realms and equally important as more formal program elements.



Physical Environment

The school's physical presence and configuration expresses its values and reinforces the educational experience it offers. It is immediately recognizable as a safe, inclusive place; one with the longevity to maintain the institution's significant position in city history and to add its own chapters to the story.

Take Back the Corner

The existing building had become increasingly less visible and less integrated into the fabric of the city. A single-story, sited 15 feet below street level and separated from the sidewalk by underutilized yards, its scale no longer matched that of its setting. The rallying cries of the site design became to “take back the corner” and “get it out of the hole,” to reclaim its rightful position as a positive influence on the neighborhood.

The new building is three stories and located as close to the sidewalk as zoning allows. Its location at the primary corner of the site allows it to “see and be seen,” encouraging passive security through increased visibility, strengthening its connection to Federal Way's core, and bridging between its commercial and residential neighbors. The building's relationship to the street sets a precedent for transit- and pedestrian-oriented development and begins to fulfill the City's aspirations for a more dense, urban, and modern city.

To get the building “out of the hole,” primary entries on the first, second, and mid-levels provide grade-level access at all public faces of the building, and interior and exterior stairs are used to mitigate grade change.

Master Plan for Smart Growth

Concentrating the building into a three-story mass makes efficient use of site area and maximizes “land banks” for future growth.

The site was master-planned to strengthen neighborhood connections, integrate the district stadium, and accommodate future expansion of the school.

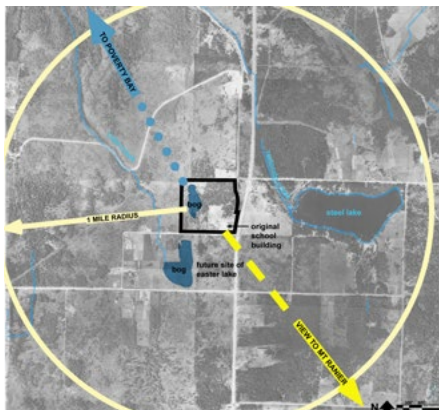
Incorporating three highly visible entries with a variety of relationships to the street allows the school to adapt to surrounding development. The north entry adjacent to the bus drop-off is currently used as the front door, as most students still arrive by vehicle. As the city comes to rely less on cars and walking or taking public transit to school become more viable options, the entry at the southeast corner of the school is equipped to take over as a main entry.

Create Ownership & Identity

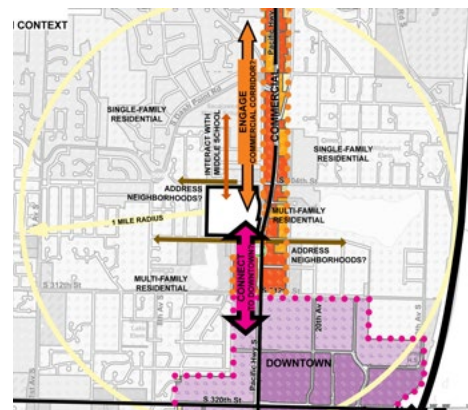
The spatial quality and materiality of the building utilize a simplicity to provide a long life, while inviting users to experiment and make it their own. The building's geometry forms a variety of spaces, large to small, intimate or generous, quiet or loud, so any group or individual can find a place that makes them feel comfortable. Quality, durable materials that are also spare and straightforward create a loft-like aesthetic that can be easily manipulated and adapted as needed. Sustainable strategies employed are low-tech, supporting the belief that the most sustainable buildings are those that simply provide good space and are easy to operate. Supplemental ventilation is used in lieu of mechanical cooling and nearly 100% of classroom and critical task areas are day-lit, prioritizing comfortable space over high-maintenance systems.



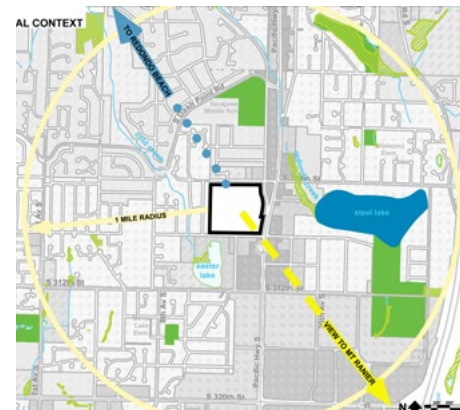
Neighborhood Analysis



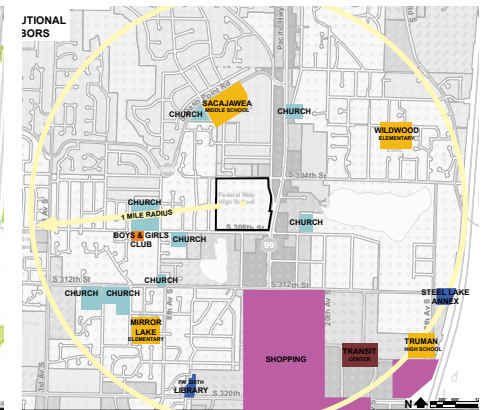
HISTORY 1936



URBAN CONTEXT

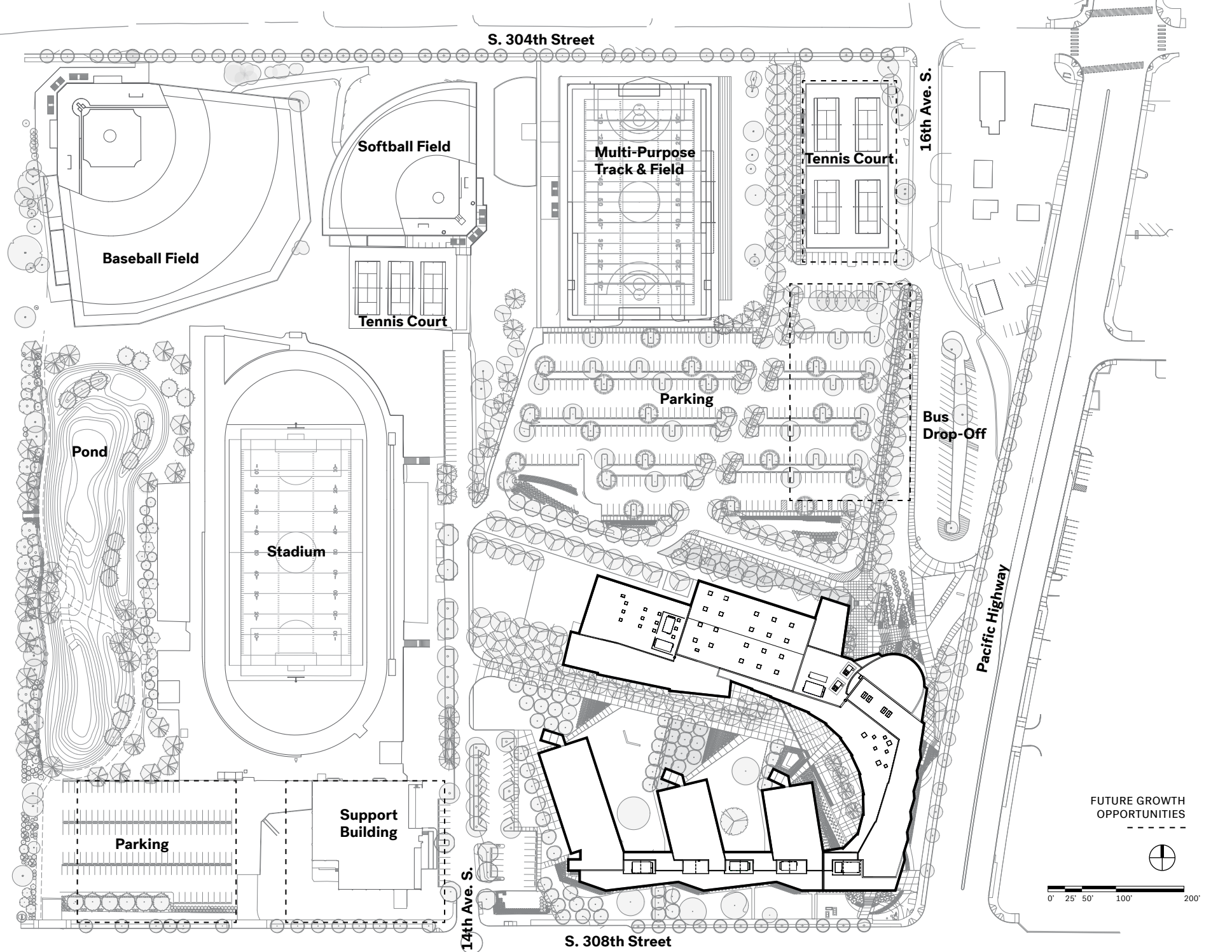


NATURAL CONTEXT



INSTITUTIONAL NEIGHBORS

Site Plan





Site Experience

Brick on the building's public sides establishes a sense of permanence and tradition, while inward-facing facades are clad in brightly colored metal to create a vibrant and youthful environment. A series of courtyards of various scale support gathering and learning opportunities by both groups and individuals. Significant trees preserved in the courtyard and along the street front contribute to the environmental and cultural character of the campus and establish landmarks to be enjoyed over the decades.





Community Identity

Graphics throughout the school incorporate ideas, language, and character contributed by the student body through a survey conducted by the design team. Vibrant murals pay homage to the school's eagle mascot and the use of feather motif in an array of applications celebrates the diverse ethnic makeup of the student body, and the spirit, identity, and traditions of Federal Way High School.



LEFT

To connect the school's history with its present incarnation, the original gym floor was salvaged and reused as wall cladding in a new gym foyer.

BELOW

The historic high school entry is reinvented by positioning a new major entry and mounting the original carved stone sign at the same location.

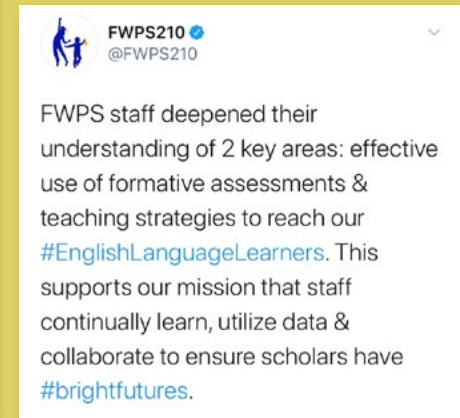


Results of the Process & Project

The Federal Way High School has since invited in the community to host district-wide events and celebrations, further serving its larger community and giving pride to the students and faculty that regularly attend.



Deija Tupua, a senior this year, appreciates the details that incorporate the memory of the previous building into this new, modern, learning environment. She said, “We’re moving forward, but we’re taking the memory of the old school with us.”



“Thank you to all who supported the Federal Way High School construction project,” Dr. Tammy Campbell shared. “Your support allowed us to build a new, state-of-the art, flagship high school, that will serve thousands of students and endure for decades to come.”



