Lake City Community School

Est 1880's | Renovated 2020

The original school was constructed in 1986, on the site of the original 1880's brick school house, the Lake City Community School is a PK-12 school serving students in Hinsdale County, CO. Nestled in a remote location in a historic mountain town, this renovation project faced many challenges. In 2015, the community voted down a bond measure to provide a gym and safety improvements for the cramped old school building, fearing the addition of a gym would clash with the historic neighborhood. After exploring their options, the community brought on the architect to help the community explore their options to create a 21st century learning environment that could adapt to the community's needs. After three public meetings, the architect helped the community arrive upon an addition and renovation design that prioritized multi-functional elements and enhanced security and health concerns while honoring the historic neighborhood. With the community united behind the plan, the district won a $3.95 million bond to fund the project.

Planning Process and Project Goals

A community-based planning process identified these goals for the addition and renovation:

- Critical safety and security upgrades, including the relocation of the administrative offices, a monitored and secure entrance with a keyless entry system, fire code compliance, gas shut-off switches for the science and mechanical rooms, public announcement and surveillance systems, visual paging announcement system for the deaf/hard of hearing, and an enlarged commons area adjacent to the administrative offices.
- Construction of a gymnasium and stage/music room
- Construction of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) classroom
- Construction of a commercial kitchen to support a hot lunch program where none had existed before and provide options for culinary arts classes.
- HVAC upgrades to improve air quality and climate control issues.
- The addition of a nurse's room

Learning Environment

The learning environment is designed around flexibility. Classrooms were reorganized to relocate elementary school classrooms with better playground access and group secondary classrooms near the gym. The Commons was designed to double as a learning space, lounge and cafeteria. The former science classroom was transformed into a CTE space with room for large projects. Library and arts rooms were arranged close together to be used by both elementary and secondary students.

Physical Environment

In the planning process, it was noted that high levels of Co2 combined with poor air circulation made the air quality in the school very dangerous. New ventilation and recirculation elements have been paired with sustainable design to maximize efficiency and health. Classrooms have daylighting access, and solatubes distribute daylight while reducing electricity use. Colors mimic the town's natural surroundings and local beetle-kill pine adorns the ceilings. Biophilic elements such as natural materials, earth tones and ample daylighting are used wherever possible.

Community Environment

The school is a pillar of the local community and the architect wanted to honor that. The new gym boasts community pride with murals from local artists and garage doors open to a massive lawn to host large community functions. The community and local historical society were involved with the extensive communal planning process, and the school's flexible spaces are designed with public events in mind.

The 1880's cupola originally decorated the stables of Hiram Kelley Estate in Cheyenne Wyoming and arrived in Lake City in 1986. Since then, the cupola has crowned three renditions of the Lake City School. To honor the community's history and commitment to education, the cupola was carefully preserved and relocated to the top of the renovated building where it will continue standing as an icon to the historic Lake City community.