

Program Summary:

This new high school campus in New Orleans' Algiers neighborhood reflects a resilient response to post-Katrina recovery, environmental challenges, and social equity in public education.

Program Statement:

The design team was tasked with creating a state-of-the-art high school on a site with complex existing conditions and strict budgetary parameters. The solution demanded inventive spatial planning, resilient material strategies, and the integration of informal learning environments to enrich student life without inflating costs. Prioritizing long-term value, the team chose durable finishes, solar-conscious orientation, and a massing strategy that minimized structural and operational inefficiencies. The result is a layered environment that feels at once grounded and open—built for learning.

Designed to accommodate 1,200 students, the project delivers a LEED Gold-certified, future-facing campus within a constrained budget, while elevating the student experience through community-driven, durable, and adaptable design. The project balances civic presence with contextual relevance and learning innovation with pragmatic planning.

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Building Area: (sf)
160,900 SF

Cost per Square Foot:
\$303/SF

Construction Cost
\$45,894,000

Date of Completion:
August 2020



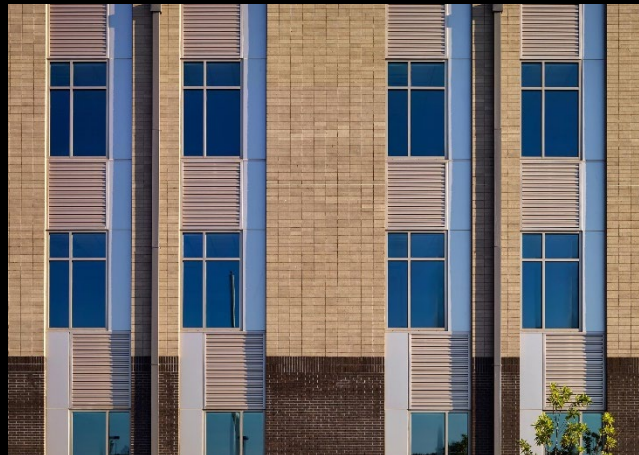
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Constraint as a Design Driver

Working within a constrained budget, the design team focused on high-impact strategies that delivered value through simplicity and performance.

Materials were selected for their durability and cost-efficiency, contributing to both longevity and LEED Gold certification.

The architecture prioritizes restraint without sacrificing spatial richness. Every design move was calibrated to elevate the student experience within fiscal limits.



A260.03

Expanding the Learning
Environment Outdoors

With limited available square footage, the design introduces a system of covered porches, terraces, and courtyards as active components of the learning environment.

These spaces function as extensions of classrooms, supporting informal learning, collaboration, and reflection. Inspired by porches seen in New Orleans' vernacular architecture, the outdoor rooms also reduce mechanical load and increase usable area. Shaded and flexible, they respond to both climate and culture.



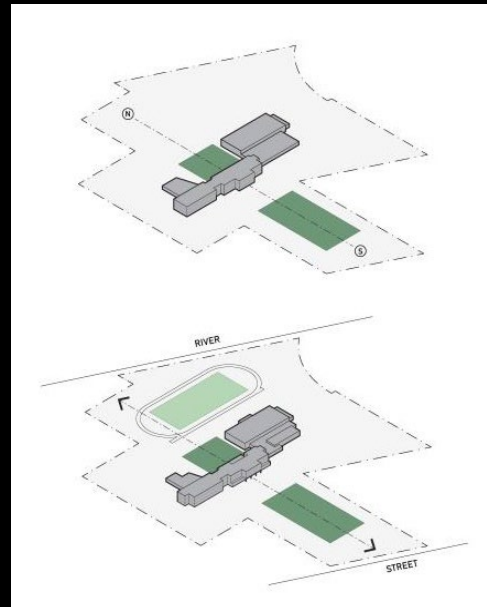
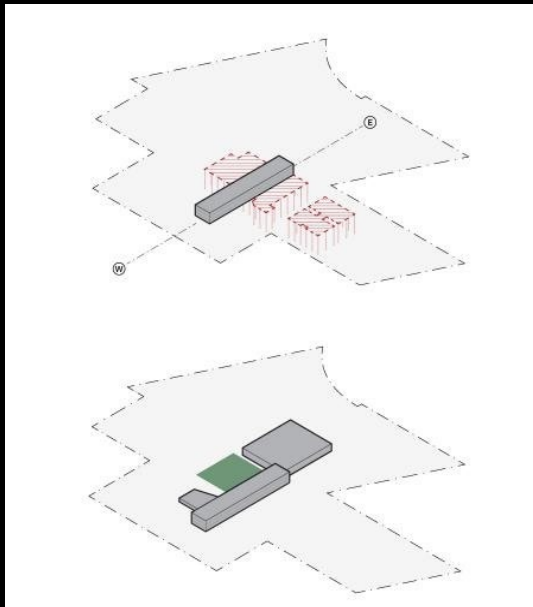


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Leveraging Existing Site Conditions

The new school was sited atop the remains of a former hospital, where existing pilings dictated placement and geometry. Instead of removing them, the team strategically designed around the piles—reducing foundation costs and minimizing site disturbance.

This constraint drove a narrow massing concept with strong solar orientation. East-west alignment enhances daylighting and energy performance across academic spaces.



PRELIMINARY DESIGN



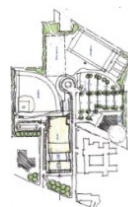
SITE PLAN



SCHEME 1.0
A two-story scheme with a large footprint. Centralized entry fronting a half-size lawn, which may compromise band practice. A generally north-south arrangement of layered elements forming multiple courtyards. Optimum field orientations.



SCHEME 2.0
A more compact three-story scheme (as are all others that follow). Central courtyard has views to ball field. Parking at back of site with optional connection to Patterson Dr.



SCHEME 3.0
Most forward of any scheme. Nonexistent front lawn space. Maintains full rear of site for parking and play fields. Allows for possible re-use and expansion of existing parking lot.



SCHEME 4.0
Gracious courtyard scheme; excessive perimeter. Immediate access to front lawn from school; compromised traffic patterns. Building footprint completely avoids existing building footprint. Compromised solar orientation of some upper-floor classrooms.



SCHEME 5.0
Another courtyard scheme with only slight impact in existing building piles. Service court near neighbors. Football field in compromised orientation.



SCHEME 6.0
Classroom wings have parallel orientation with street. Mid-block access points to school. Parking next to residential neighbors.

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Orientation and Site Planning

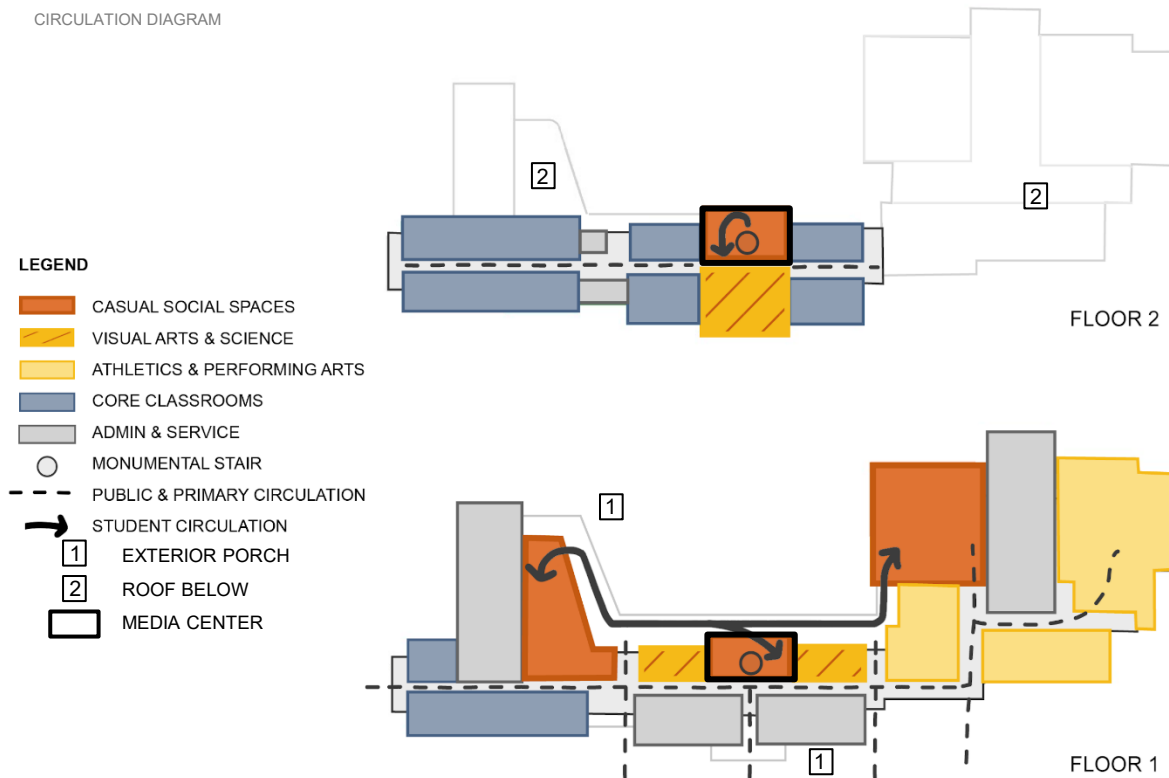
The school engages its context with two distinct frontages—one civic-facing and formal, the other oriented toward the Mississippi River and student life.

Vehicular circulation is relegated to the site's edges, maintaining pedestrian safety and preserving the central lawn. Staff and service zones are positioned out of view, giving the school a strong public presence.

The building mass wraps a central courtyard, creating an internalized landscape for gathering and orientation.

Several schemes were developed to negotiate the building and field positions. The final site orientation resulted in front lawns for the school and the two existing buildings. This selection allows a north-south classroom orientation, and an athletic field near the river.

CIRCULATION DIAGRAM



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Circulation as Social Infrastructure: Program Anchors and Spatial Hierarchy

Three primary anchors define the U-shaped plan: media center at the core, athletics and performing arts to the east, and dining and social commons to the west. These programmatic hubs are connected by a circulation spine that frames a central courtyard. The layout promotes intuitive wayfinding, balanced adjacencies, and separation of public and academic zones.

Each wing supports specific student experiences while reinforcing a cohesive whole.

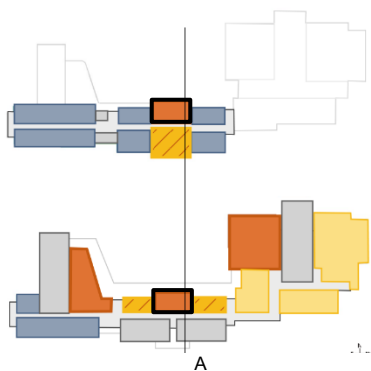
Along corridors, deliberate interruptions invite social pause and connection, avoiding institutional monotony. These moves enhance spatial hierarchy while reinforcing safety, flexibility, and transparency.





WEST SECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE - A

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LEGEND

- CASUAL SOCIAL SPACES
- SPECIALTY CLASSROOM: VISUAL ARTS & SCIENCE
- SPECIALTY CLASSROOM: ATHLETICS & PERFORMING ARTS
- CORE CLASSROOMS
- ADMIN & SERVICE
- MONUMENTAL STAIR
- PUBLIC ENTRY/PRIMARY CIRCULATION
- STUDENT CIRCULATION
- MEDIA CENTER



A260.07

A Composed Massing Strategy

The three-story scheme minimizes footprint and roof area while allowing academic spaces to rise above the more active ground floor.

Vertical cores are placed to segment the mass and establish intuitive transitions across the building.

Massing articulates public zones and learning environments through shifts in scale and material. A central narrowing of the building form defines the courtyard and maximizes light and air penetration.

The school's vertical and horizontal circulation strategies create clear thresholds between program zones.

The result is a composition that balances performance, cost, and clarity.



A260.08

Outdoor Space as Program

Outdoor environments were treated as primary program space, not ancillary. The building form creates protected outdoor porches, shaded seating zones, and spill out areas adjacent to key classrooms.

These environments support varied teaching styles and promote wellness by extending learning beyond the envelope.

Passive shading and breezeways further reduce energy demand while fostering community.





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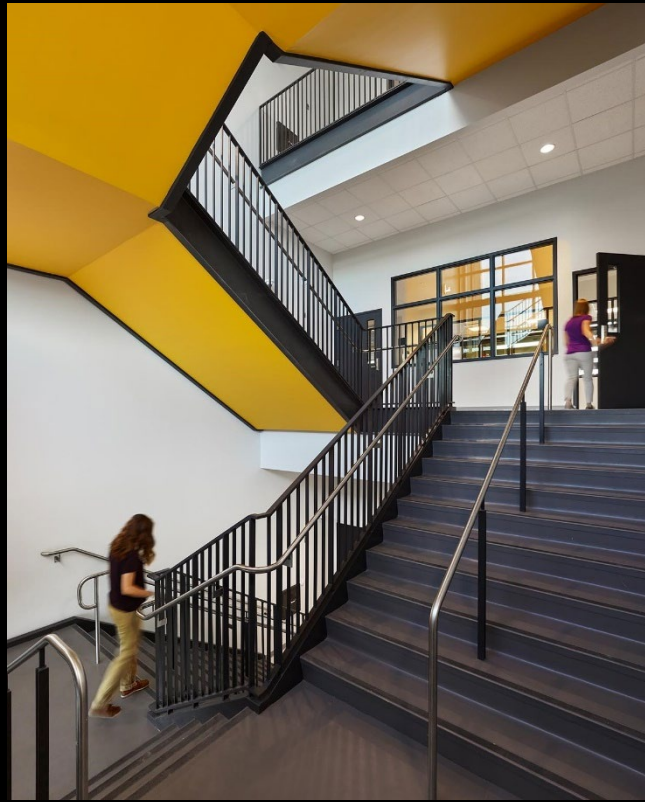
Designed to balance their legacy Athletics and Theater department.

With the school's previous auditorium at the heart of the building, it was important to design for flexibility to ensure both departments had the facility they needed.

The design includes two gymnasiums. The "convertible" nature of the second gym contains a full-size basketball / volleyball court is separated from a dedicated music classroom by means of a moveable wall.

Opened, this wall reveals a stage, with performance lighting and extended bleacher seating for fine arts performances.





A260.10

A Flexible, Layered Ecosystem

The architecture supports a spectrum of learning—from structured classrooms to open lounges and breakout zones. Informal study areas are visually connected to academic zones, promoting both supervision and autonomy.

Vertical adjacencies, such as the library and student lounge, create continuity across floors.

The layout encourages flexibility, interaction, and a deepened sense of belonging.



A260.11

Since the High School's reopening, they have received the top distinction from the Louisiana Department of Education's School Performance assessment, in addition to their football team claiming four consecutive state championship titles.

Despite project delays, cost escalation and the challenges of completing construction during a worldwide pandemic, the design team – a deeply collaborative effort between local architects knowledgeable of local culture, and national education experts – remained motivated by a school community that displayed resilience and a steadfast desire to see this project to reality.

