

# APEX HIGH SCHOOL

A4LE LEsolutions Design Award  
EXCEPTIONAL PLANNING







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# 1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“What I love about the design team is that I know they care deeply about this school, not just because it’s their project, but because they know of the **incredible meaning and significance this school has to its students, staff, and the Apex community.** We are finally able to be Cougars again and claim this breathtaking building as our own.”*

**ELAINE HOFFMAN**, PRINCIPAL  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY, CONNECT TO THE PAST, PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE.

Designing for an existing school community requires a delicate balance of both respecting the past and responding to current and future demands of 21st century education. At Apex High School, this design scenario warranted input from a broad range of stakeholders to most effectively identify key community values. With a primary goal to listen, learn, and provide knowledge-based solutions, the team established a continuous feedback loop present through every stage of project development. **Over the course of four years, community engagement resulted in a responsive design that promotes ownership and community pride.**

Celebrating the school's history, its place in the community, and its goals for educational environments of the future emerged as priorities in the design of the new facility. A reinvigorated brand, student art, and the central courtyard reflect the character of the existing school community; while a variety of collaboration spaces and thoughtful classroom organization creates an environment that aligns with the school district's mission. These spaces provide an engaging atmosphere that supports the development of collaborative, creative, communicative, and critical thinkers.

# 2 | SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

*Even in its run-down state, the [existing] school instills pride in its students. Their fondness for their school is evident in the way they joke about the water in the band room, the smell in the auditorium, and the insects sharing the hallways with them: “**Although the school is old, and there are lots of things that we make fun of, those same things have bonded the students together.**”*

**BOBBY GUNSHEFSKI**, STUDENT  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL





## SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

Apex High School was originally constructed in 1975, later receiving extensive additions in 1988 and 1997. After more than four decades of use, renovations to the campus were long overdue. The design team and their associated consultants were commissioned to perform a conditions assessment as a precursor to any major renovation and additions. The primary goal of this assessment effort was to verify code compliance and alignment with the district’s educational program specifications while validating the recommendations of an earlier assessment. The original report had identified which of the newer buildings could possibly remain, along with which areas would require major renovations, repairs, and additions. Although the physical condition of the finishes and systems were generally poor and outdated, the most concerning areas of the facility were the extensive building and life safety code deficiencies. **As they were, the facilities were unable to safely support the demands of 21st century learners.** After a structural evaluation, the team identified extensive foundation settlement and damage to the new additions from the 1990s which meant even the most recently constructed buildings would need significant repairs if they were to remain.

The design team developed multiple schemes that explored alternatives for addressing these concerns. The alternatives considered relative cost implications of major renovation, additions, or replacement, with each warranting a longer construction period and time off site than the school system had initially planned.

After thorough consideration and logistical modifications at the district level, it was determined that a replacement facility would be designed and constructed on the existing 50-acre site. The existing building would be fully demolished, and construction would occur over a two-year period from May 2017- August 2019.

<b>Owner:</b> Wake County Public School System	<b>Building Area</b>
<b>Location:</b> Apex, NC	<b>Main Building:</b> 385,000 SF
<b>Grades:</b> 9-12	<b>Auxiliary Structures:</b> 125,000 SF
<b>Student Capacity:</b> 2,262	- Tabletop Parking Deck
<b>Budget:</b> \$81,578,687	- Greenhouse
<b>Bid Cost:</b> \$78,767,187	- Stadium Pressbox
<b>Construction Cost:</b> \$92,109,162*	- Baseball Pressbox
<b>Cost / SF:</b> \$129 / SF	- Visitor Concessions / Toilet
<i>*additional scope added for site improvements due to unanticipated conditions</i>	- Ticket Booth
	<b>Total Area:</b> 510,000 SF
	<b>SF / Student:</b> 170 SF / Student

# 3 | SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*"[Involvement in the design process gives students the opportunity to] appreciate and honor what this community has and what our school has, and they should be proud to be a part of Apex."*

**SHAWNDA ROSSI**, ART TEACHER  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL





## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Apex High School is a cornerstone of the community of Apex, North Carolina.** This rapidly growing town of over 40,000 people takes pride in maintaining its “small town” feel. The campus itself is bounded by a major cross-county highway, an established neighborhood, and a railroad. In fact, this railroad was an influential factor in naming the town “Apex,” which occupies the highest point on the Chatham Railroad line running from Richmond, VA to Jacksonville, FL. Through a series of engagement sessions, it became evident that the identities of both the town and the school are strongly tied to this history, which would later become a defining principle of the new design.

### STAKEHOLDERS

The existing school community emerged as one of the most influential parts of our project team. Consistent community engagement continued from the early stages of existing conditions assessment, through concept development, and into the construction phase. During a period of discovery and assessment, the design team heard from a variety of stakeholder voices: students, staff, school administration, maintenance staff, neighbors, and alumni. Community meetings were held to reach residents of neighboring properties, while staff, parents, and student representatives participated in a series of hands-on engagement sessions. **Each of these interactive sessions assisted the design team in identifying existing school values and defining goals for the project.** In addition to these early sessions, small focus-group sessions were held with each of the academic departments during the development stage to refine the design and tailor the spaces to existing programmatic needs.

Impromptu and informal conversations held with faculty and staff during the initial site investigations revealed invaluable information that was not always immediately evident. Team members engaged with individual teachers about the challenges of their spaces, which were often a catalyst for receiving important deficiency and functional information about the existing school.

During the construction phase, school administrators attended weekly progress meetings and served as liaisons to continue communication as the project vision was implemented. The principal connected the design team to the arts department, generating a student artwork competition for the new mascot rendering and organizing a focus-group to make decisions regarding the renewed school color scheme. The architect and arts department also worked together to develop the concept for the cafeteria feature wall and bring it to life. **This strong line of communication facilitated opportunities for student ownership, allowing them to leave their mark on the new school.**

### DEFINING OUR VALUES

Participants in the top, left photo were allowed 10 seconds to choose an image that spoke to them about the culture of the Apex High School community. Images chosen described values such as “keeping Apex unique”, celebrating the “neighborhood school integrated into the community, full of character”, and the desire to “maintain a connection to nature”.

### KEEP / TOSS / CREATE

In the photo below, participants used sticky notes to identify areas on the existing campus that were working well, that were not working, or that could be created. From this activity the design team learned the importance of the courtyard.



VALUE | keep Apex High School unique



VALUE | maintain connection to outdoors



VALUE | neighborhood school, integrated into the community, full of character





# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## UNDERSIZED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

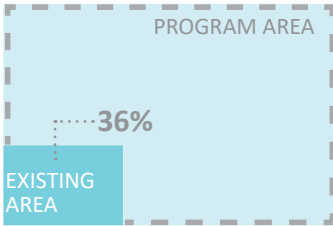
The existing campus consisted of multiple buildings constructed at various times over the span of nearly 80 years. Because of the age of the buildings, the sizes of the spaces within was not in compliance with the current needs of the school. A typical classroom was undersized by 20% compared to a classroom that would be provided in a new high school. Similarly, **large spaces such as the theater, media center, electives classes, and gym were all significantly undersized**, leading to an overall building at 75% of the size of a newly constructed high school.

The site, which is constrained on all sides and pinched by environmental buffers, emerged as a major challenge for this project. The campus is bounded by neighborhoods, a major highway, and a railroad, with no opportunity for expansion. At 50 acres, the site is only 70% of the typical Wake County Public High School site size. A Neuse River stream and a dedicated Resource Conservation buffer bisect a portion of the site, further reducing the available usable area. Compounding these size issues is the roughly 40 feet of elevation change across the site, which created accessibility and safety issues. For the new design, the team worked with the existing grades to embed a table-top parking deck into the site. This effectively increased the available surface area for parking and provided an alternate location for band practice—both of which were concerns identified in the preliminary community engagement sessions.

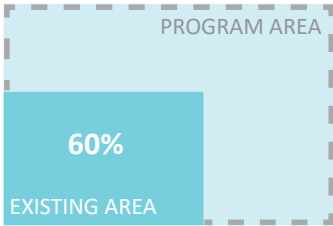
The size of the site also impacted the time students would need to remain off campus. Initially, the school system had only accounted for alternate facility accommodation for one school year. However, after careful consideration of site logistics and safety, it was recommended that students remain off campus for two years. Despite the imposed delay of the design schedule, it was most important for the school system to weigh these difficult factors in order to make the best decision for the campus and its students.



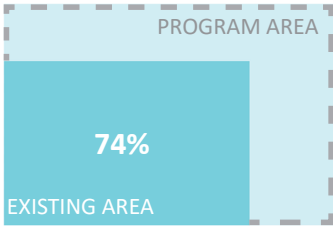
The theater in the existing Apex High School, shown at left, had a 250 seat capacity and was undersized by 64%. By contrast, the theater constructed in the new school, shown below, can seat 850 people. It also accommodates ADA compliant seating and travel paths to the front of the theater as well as onto the stage.



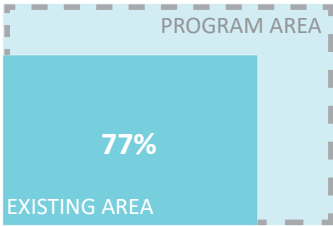
THEATER



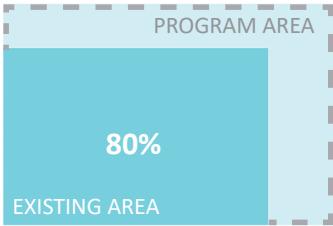
MEDIA CENTER



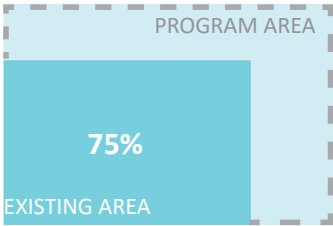
BAND ROOM



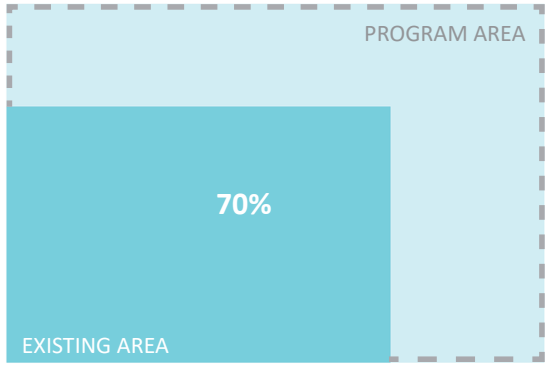
MAIN GYM



TYPICAL CLASSROOM



OVERALL BUILDING



OVERALL SITE



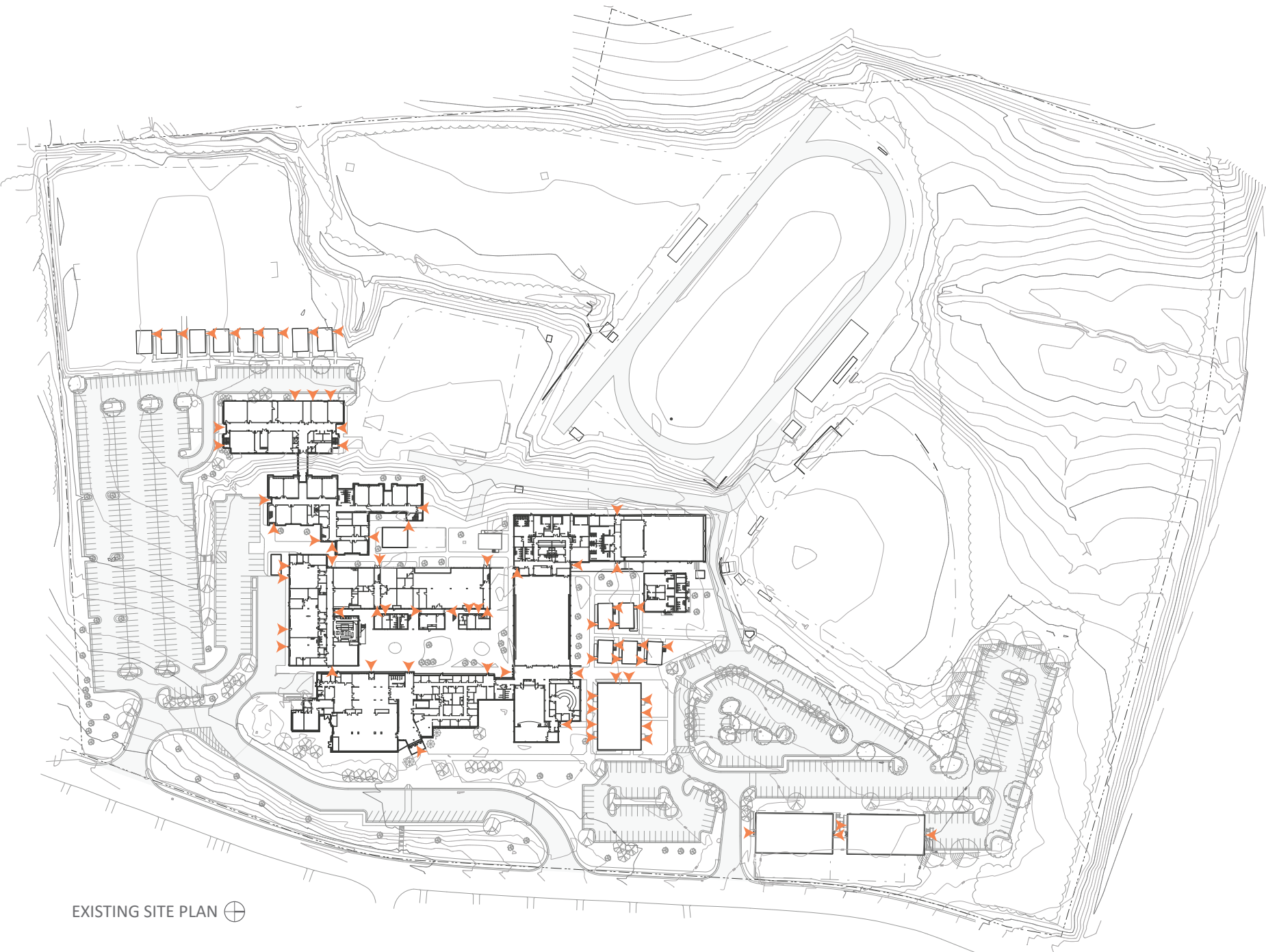
# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

Security of the existing campus was a big concern. As a result of the various additions over the years, the campus consisted of five different classroom buildings, each with multiple entry points. Mobiles were also present on site in many different locations to supplement the existing classroom space. School administration could not effectively “lock down” the building during the school day to restrict points of entry without hindering student circulation between classrooms. **In the existing school, there were 59 exterior points of entry to student occupied spaces.** In addition, visitors had access to any of these entry points throughout the day. The existing campus with its disparate buildings and numerous corridors lacked clear sight lines for appropriate supervision of students or potential intruders.

Safety became a defining principle of the new design and ultimately weighed heavily into the decision to replace the existing structures on this campus. Access points into the new school are significantly reduced, with clear signage indicating main entry, gymnasium, and theater arts. The single main entry provides a controlled access point for visitors through a sequence of video monitored vestibule doors. The organization of the school into four wings around a courtyard affords long, clear sight lines and increased visual control of the corridors during the school day.

“The courtyard says “APEX.” The cafe is nice and airy. We are not so “open” the way we were before - so visitors cannot just roam the campus without checking in first.”  
- Anonymous, from post-occupancy survey



EXISTING SITE PLAN ⊕



# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS

More than 40 years of instruction at the existing facility led to the development of an award-winning Career and Technical Education department, as well as the distinctive Academy of Information Technology. While not every existing space was a part of the district’s current program standards, rather than eliminate them altogether, the school system elected to support incorporation of all existing programming into the new design. **The design team embraced these programmatic assets as an opportunity,** finding ways to incorporate and celebrate these existing programs that distinguish Apex High School in its community. For example, a standard new high school in the area accounts for two Career and Technical Education (CTE) laboratories. The design team developed spaces in the new design to support all four existing CTE programs including Auto Tech, Carpentry, Agricultural Education, and Culinary Education. Also incorporated into the new design was an orchestra classroom, as well as additional art classrooms and locker rooms that were beyond district standard programming, but existed in the original school building. Stakeholder sessions with existing program staff allowed the team to understand the demands of these spaces while envisioning opportunities to improve.

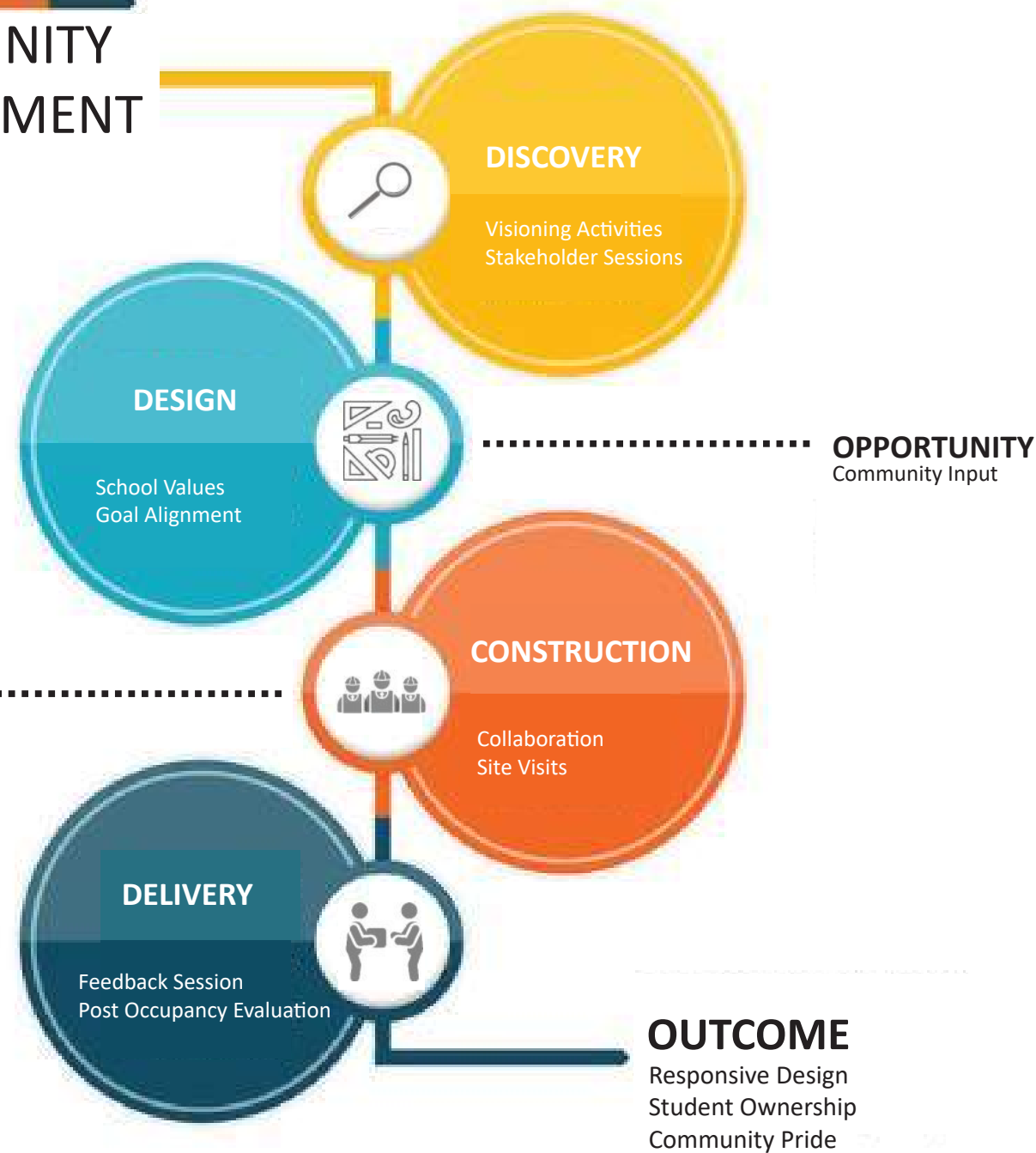


Apex High School was allowed over **15,000 SF** of additional programmed space compared to a typical new high school due to established programs in Career and Technical Education, Music and Arts, and Athletics.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### CONTINUOUS COMMUNITY INPUT

Celebrating school history became a primary community value embedded in the new school design. From the school colors, to the preservation of the courtyard, to the integration of feature walls, the design team prioritized Apex High School’s rich history and put it on display.

Throughout the design process, input from alumni, students, and staff was highly valued. The community conveyed that there were elements of the existing school character and functionality that must remain intact in the new school building. For example, the original campus had a central courtyard that served as a functional and social hub for the school. Students, staff, and alumni all identified this space as the “heart” of the school, despite its clear need for improvement. The design team incorporated this organizational element into each proposed design iteration, ultimately arranging four wings around an activated courtyard. Students and alumni were delighted to see this iconic, inviting outdoor space reflected in the new school design. **“The students immediately flocked to the courtyard,” commented Assistant Principal, Jeannette Hill. “Before school, during lunch, even after school there are kids who are out there talking and hanging out. It’s really the center of the school.”** The new courtyard remains valuable to the school community, promoting opportunities for outdoor learning, dining, performances, and general thoroughfare. Post occupancy evaluations revealed that the courtyard is the most commonly identified “favorite space” in the new school design. As a result of these early conversations and continuous involvement, the school community felt heard and valued.



Visioning Session: Defining Our Values



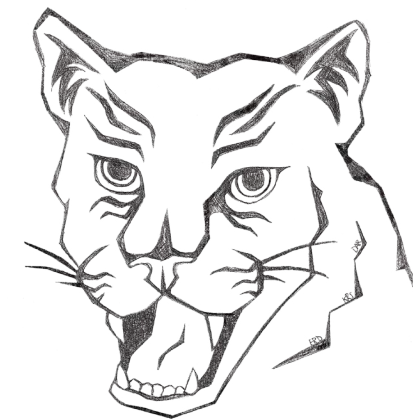
Visioning Session: Keep / Toss / Create



## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### CELEBRATING HISTORY

Looking into the school's history, when Apex High School and Apex Consolidated High School merged, the school colors were green (representative of ACHS) and gold (representative of AHS). Over the years, the green color fell out of use in school graphics and eventually disappeared. **Hearing and recognizing the importance of this history to school identity, the design team worked to reincorporate the original "Apex green" into rebranded graphics and the reimagined school logo.** The art students held a competition to develop a new mascot image. The design team then converted the winning design, a hand-sketched graphite on paper collaboration between three students, into a vector graphic file which ultimately appeared on the safety wall pads behind each basketball goal. The iconic Apex "A" now also includes a band of green, appearing as a terrazzo inlay that greets visitors in the entrance lobby. It is also painted as an oversized center court graphic in the main gymnasium.



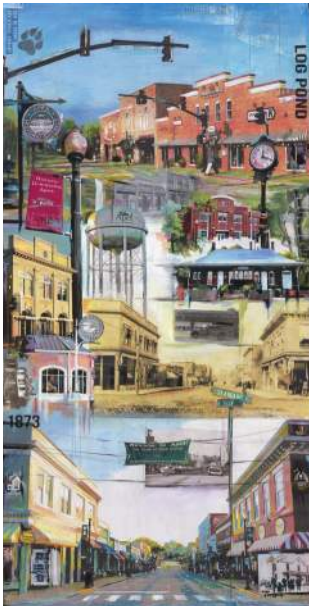




## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### HISTORY ON DISPLAY

Another opportunity for student ownership and engagement resulted from carefully planning two feature art walls that flank the cafeteria with dramatic views to the common courtyard. This series of 14 custom, plastic laminate panels incorporates original student artwork. Apex art students, with the leadership of local artist, Jane Wolfgang, and teacher, Shawnda Rossi, committed an entire semester to developing the mixed media original artwork depicting artifacts, photographs, and handwritten letters. The design team facilitated the process of having the original work scanned and converted to high-pressure laminate panels, providing a durable surface that will reflect this school's history for decades to come. **These panels became a defining feature of the new school, capitalizing on student engagement and generating a sense of pride for this community.**





# 4 | EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

*“Because we are an existing school community and have such a rich history, our new facility has been designed to include dedicated spaces for the arts, CTE program labs/classrooms, and athletics. The design will integrate all of these spaces with a courtyard and display spaces to share our many trophies and awards. **Upon entering any one of our lobbies, visitors will know they are at the home of the Apex High School Cougars!**”*

DIANN KEARNY, FORMER PRINCIPAL  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL





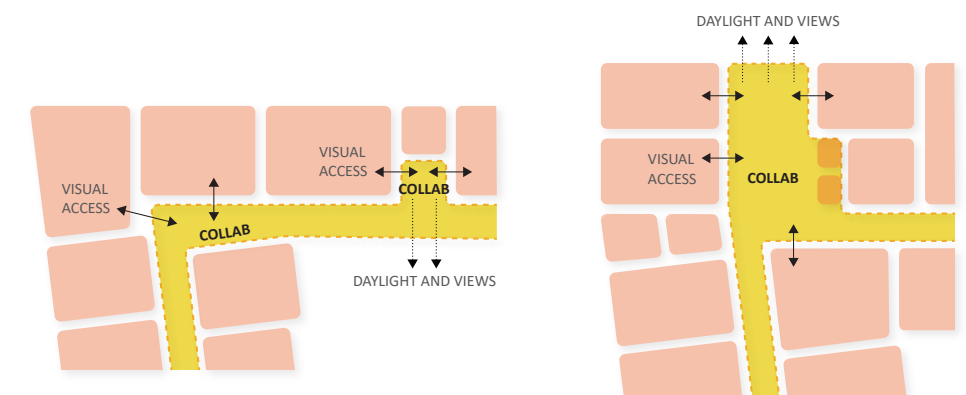
## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS

Throughout the planning and design process, the design team prioritized incorporating the vision and mission of the Wake County Public School System Strategic Plan. As described in the visioning statement, “All Wake County Public School System students will be prepared to reach their full potential and lead productive lives in a complex and changing world.” The mission galvanizes this statement, with a focus on providing relevant, engaging education and inspiring students who are collaborative, creative, effective communicators, and critical thinkers.

### COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

As a direct response to the WCPSS Strategic Plan, the design team integrated 10,000 SF of collaborative educational environments of varying size, location, and privacy levels throughout the school. **These flexible spaces are distributed between classrooms, along corridors, within each wing, and at every level of the building.** Acknowledging the direct correlation between visibility and intended use, each collaborative space is strategically positioned to maintain a strong visual connection from multiple classrooms. These spaces also support individual task work, small groups, or, if necessary, larger group tasks. The sizes of the collaborative areas vary from a small gathering bench that takes advantage of corridor space, to large, break-out spaces capable of hosting entire class meetings. Some spaces are open or partially enclosed by banks of low lockers with a countertop, while others are more intimately designed with a full enclosure for privacy and focus.





# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

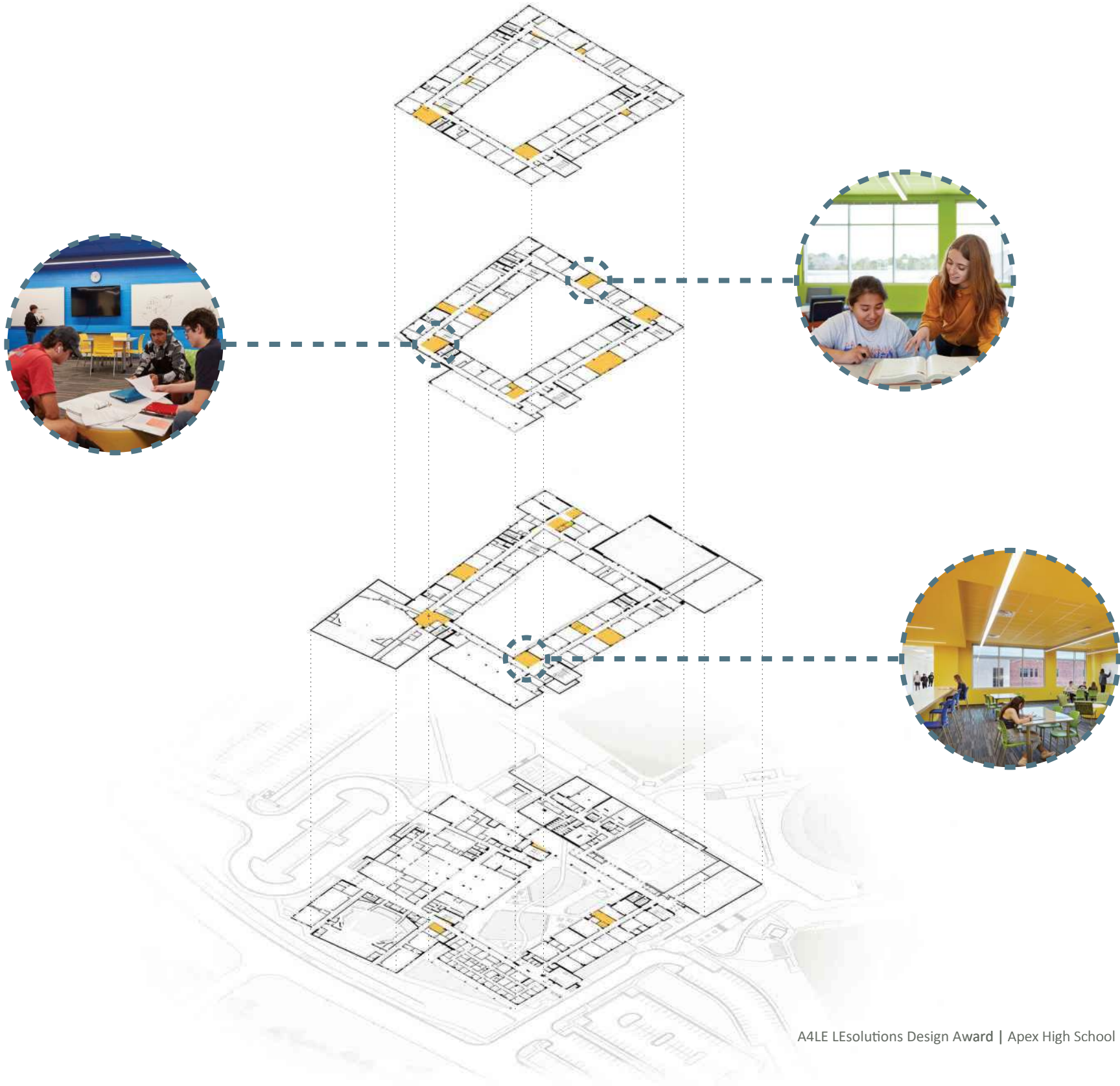
## SPACES FOR ALL LEARNING AND TEACHING STYLES

Large, light-filled classrooms and ancillary collaboration spaces support a variety of learning and teaching styles. There is sufficient space in general classrooms to hold traditional lecture-style courses or arrange tables and seating for collaborative group work. Flexible furniture, often on wheels, facilitates reconfiguration and customization. The career and technical education laboratories also support project-based and hands-on learning activities. Outdoor educational spaces further support an alternative to traditional classrooms, creating an active and engaging environment for 21st century learning.

## ADAPTABLE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The collaborative spaces distributed throughout the building play an important role in engaging students to utilize more project-based and student directed learning activities. Having a variety of sizes and enclosure levels for students to collaborate accommodates a greater degree of flexibility and increases opportunity for use. As previously mentioned, flexible furniture is also critical to enable teachers to adapt the classroom environment quickly based on students’ needs.

This future-oriented planning is also reflected in the career and technical education environments. These flexible, hands-on learning spaces incorporate easily modifiable systems infrastructure for flexible power reconfiguration. Active learning environments like carpentry, auto tech, agriculture education, and culinary arts engage students in realistic and relevant educational opportunities.



# 5 | PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

*“The students immediately flocked to the courtyard. Before school, during lunch, even after school there are kids who are out there talking and hanging out. **It’s really the center of the school.**”*

JEANNETTE HILL, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL



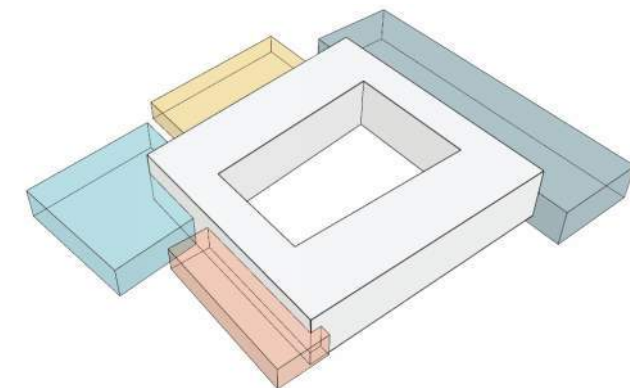


## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

**Apex High School houses four stories of classroom spaces organized in a ring around a central courtyard, the defining element of the former and the new school.** Major program pieces including the media center, theater arts, cafeteria, and athletics are plugged into this “donut”, forming an organizational hierarchy that facilitates wayfinding and clear circulation paths.

Three primary entries are defined and occupy separate corners to ease pedestrian traffic flow and facilitate better crowd control during special events, another direct response to community feedback. Beneath a prominent media center jewel box, sits the administrative and student services suite. On the ground floor, the primary circulation corridor from the main visitor entry to the north to student entry at the south is highlighted with warm wood wall paneling that becomes a double height theater lobby to the south. The arrangement of the performing arts wing on the site offers direct access for set material deliveries, while immediate proximity to the upper level parking deck offers the marching band an unimpeded space to practice. Career and technical education classes occupy the southernmost bar, flanking the cafeteria that opens onto the common courtyard. The athletics wing to the west houses two gyms, six locker rooms, and associated weight and training rooms. Visual arts classrooms in the north wing capture ample natural light as they face south and open to the courtyard for outdoor learning opportunities.

Light colored metal panel and wider expanses of glazing balance the primary mass of brick. A playful rhythm of openings, grouped and subtly recessed, punctuates the brick cladding. As determined by daylighting calculations and studies, all south and east facing glazing received aluminum sunshading devices to mitigate glare. At the media center and cafeteria, for example, roller shades are installed at the larger expanses of glazing, offering glare control and ultimate user flexibility to transform these multi-functional spaces. The gymnasiums also benefit from natural daylight from a series of clerestory windows and roof monitors.

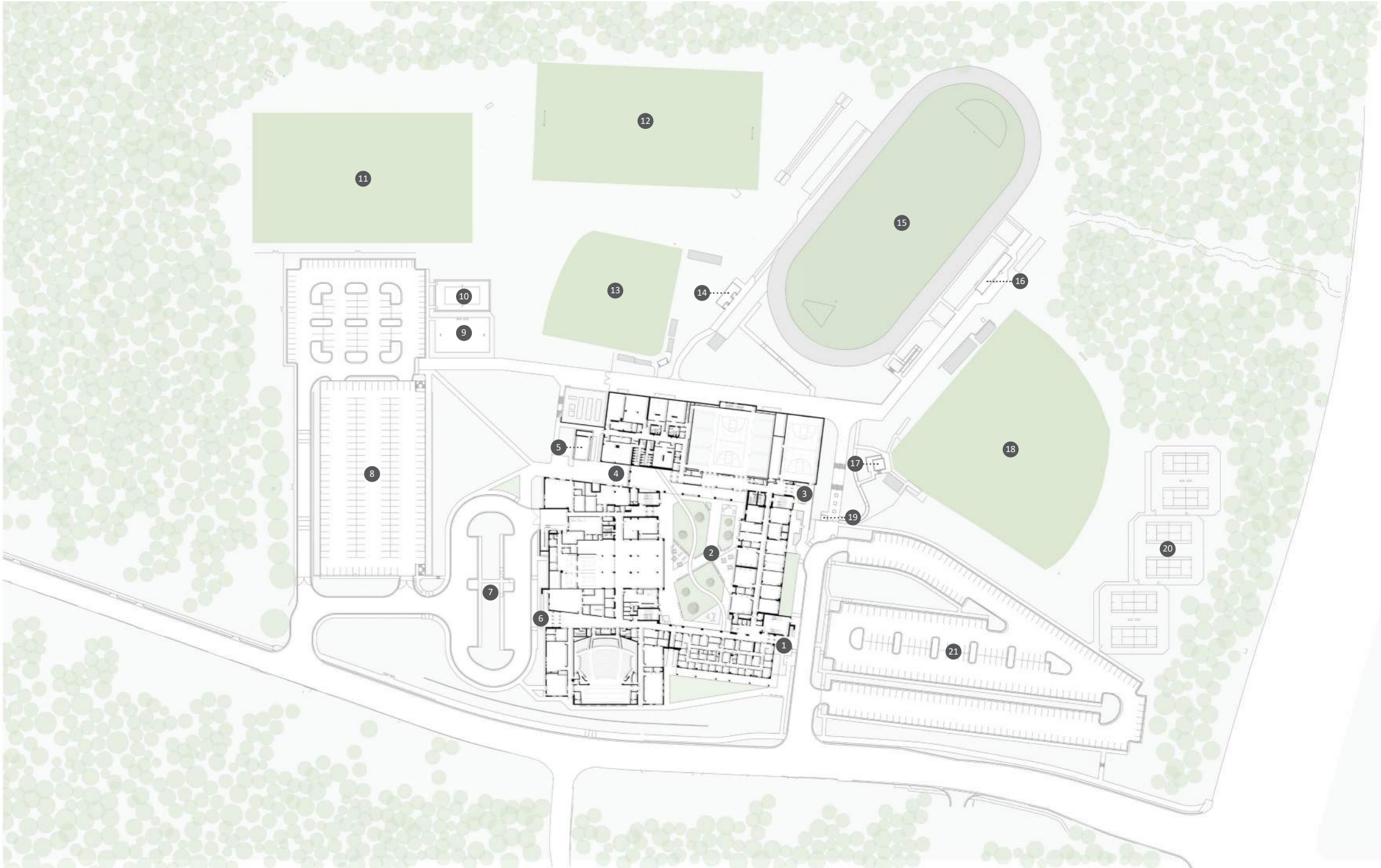




# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## NEW SITE PLAN ⊕

- 1 Main Entry
- 2 Courtyard
- 3 Athletic Entry
- 4 Courtyard Entry
- 5 Greenhouse
- 6 Theater Entry
- 7 Bus Loop
- 8 Tabletop Parking Deck
- 9 Basketball Court
- 10 Volleyball Court
- 11 Soccer Field
- 12 Practice Field
- 13 Softball Field
- 14 Visitor Concessions
- 15 Football Field
- 16 Stadium Press Box
- 17 Baseball Press Box
- 18 Baseball Field
- 19 Ticket Booth
- 20 Tennis Courts
- 21 Staff / Visitor Parking





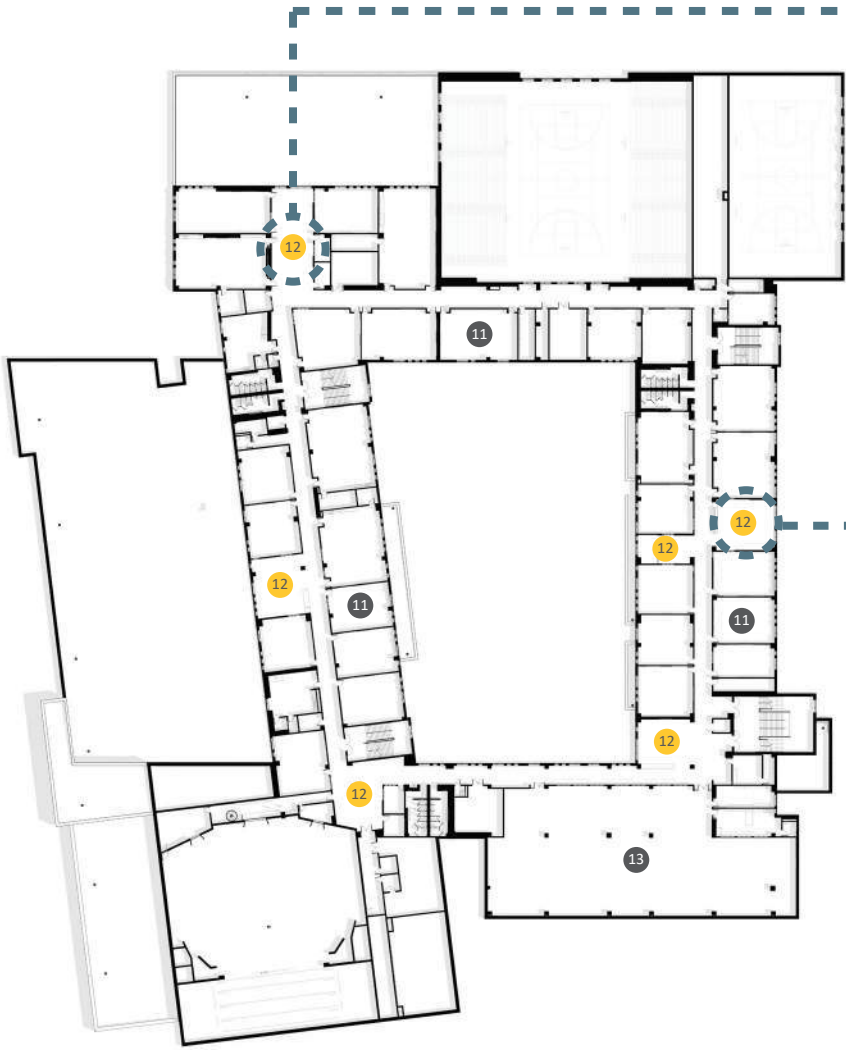
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

FLOOR PLANS

- 1 Main Lobby
- 2 Admin / Student Services
- 3 Theater
- 4 Theater Lobby
- 5 Music / Arts
- 6 Cafeteria
- 7 CTE
- 8 Athletics
- 9 Gymnasium
- 10 Athletic Lobby
- 11 General Classrooms
- 12 Collaboration
- 13 Media Center
- 14 Science Classrooms



LEVEL 1



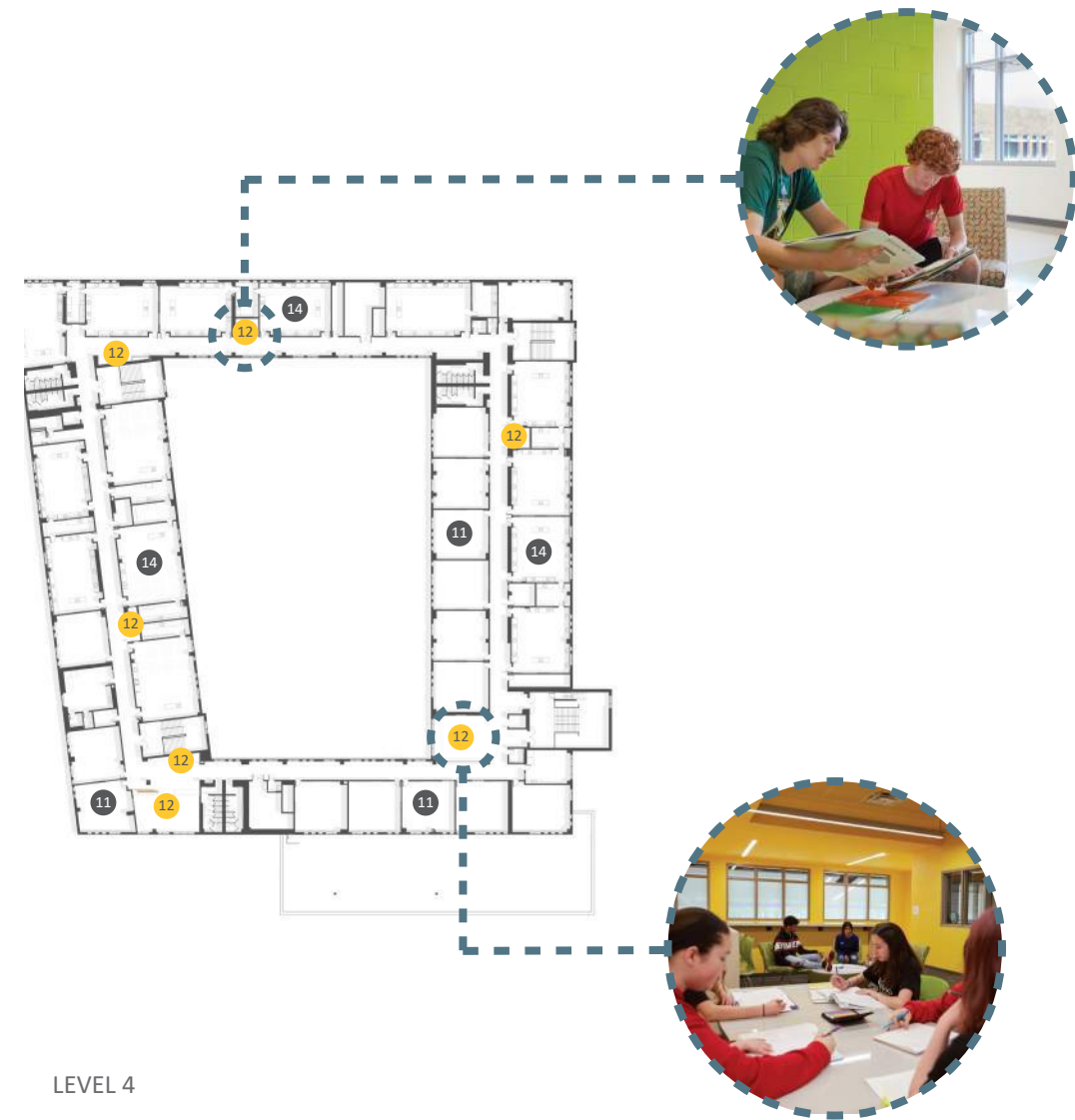
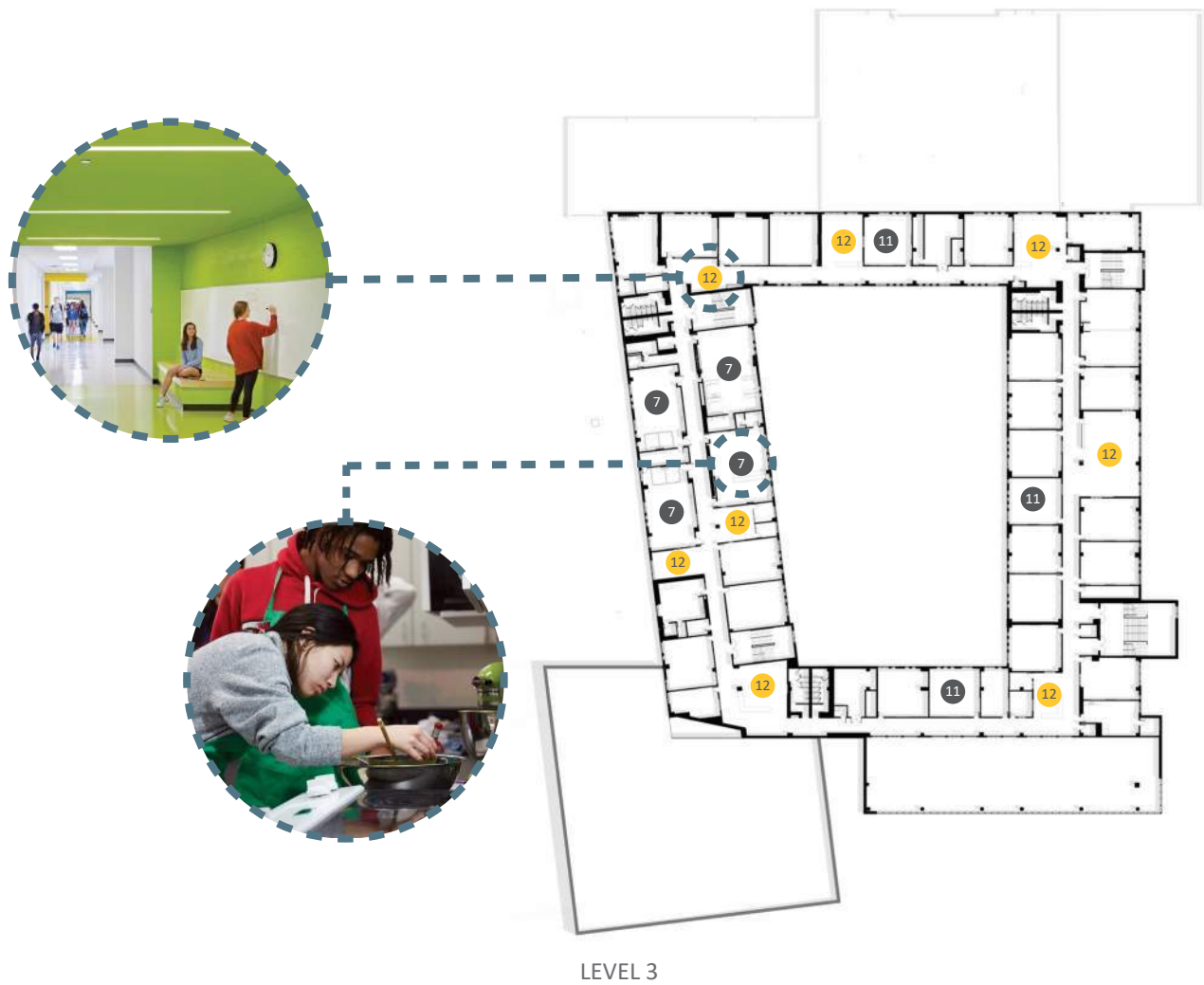
LEVEL 2



# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## FLOOR PLANS

- 1 Main Lobby
- 2 Admin / Student Services
- 3 Theater
- 4 Theater Lobby
- 5 Music / Arts
- 6 Cafeteria
- 7 CTE
- 8 Athletics
- 9 Gymnasium
- 10 Athletic Lobby
- 11 General Classrooms
- 12 Collaboration
- 13 Media Center
- 14 Science Classrooms



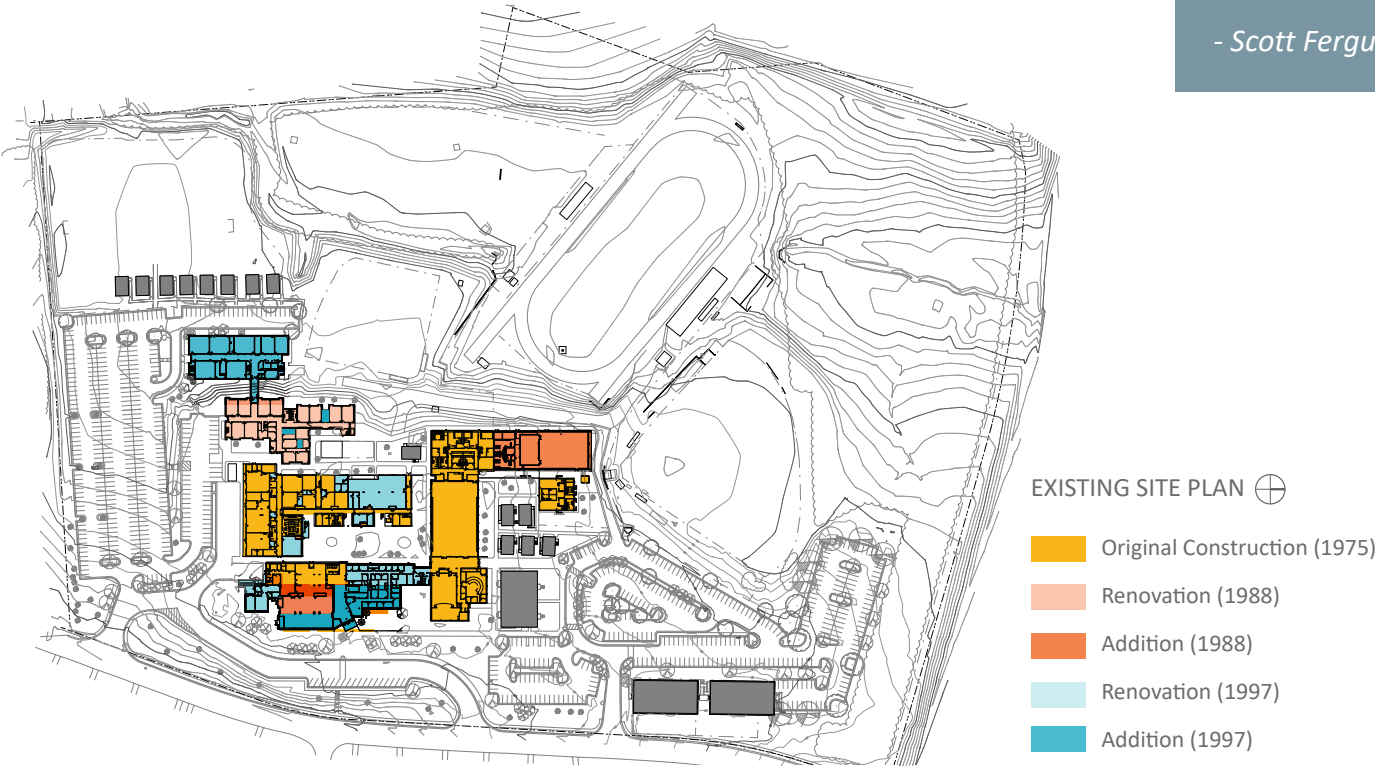


# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

## COMMUNITY PRIDE

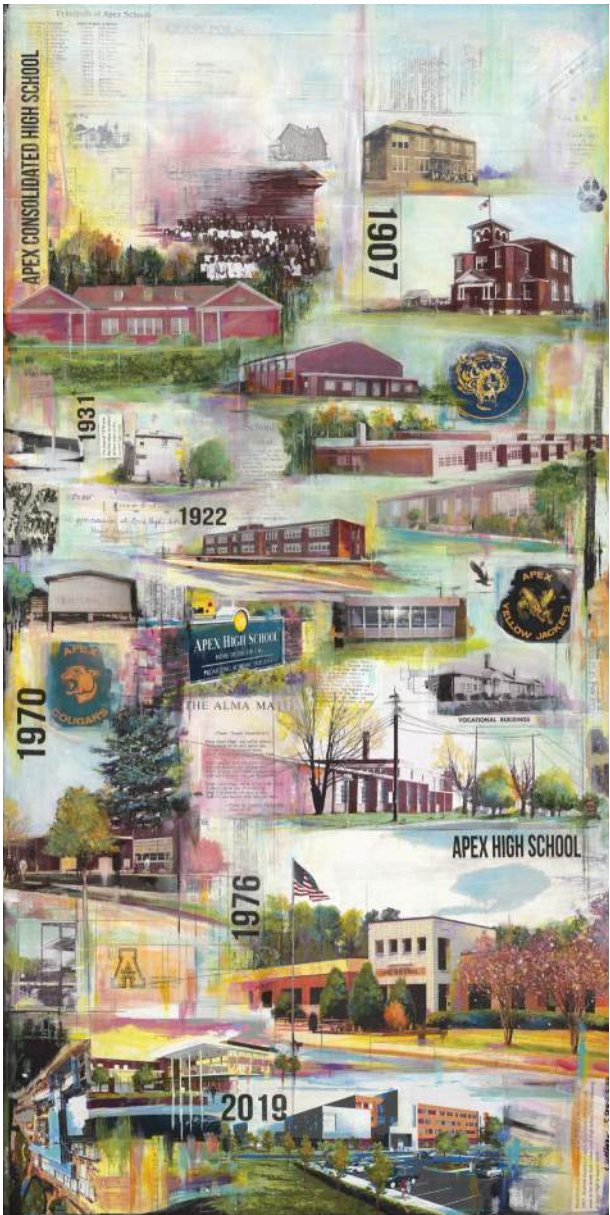
While there are now three public high schools in this town, Apex High School remains the original high school, which was founded in 1907. The campus at Laura Duncan Road was developed in the early 1970s, following a period of racial desegregation and consolidation of the once all-white Apex High School and all-black Apex Consolidated High School. The campus evolved over time, sprawling in several directions with new additions and a sea of mobile units parked on top of tennis courts and parking lots. Despite the deteriorating state of the existing facilities, the inherent pride and strong base of community support for the school remains strong.

Incorporating elements that reflect the school’s history help to more organically assimilate the new building. The overall organization around a central courtyard, the cafeteria art panels, and the renewed graphics contribute to a larger sense of community that is influenced by its revered past.



“When we were doing the logo we wanted that to represent all of Apex’s history, not just the current history. The community reached out to us in disappointment because we seemed to neglect our history, and a lot of people who still live in Apex graduated from Apex Consolidated and their kids, and we wanted to make sure that we did it right. We are trying to be inclusive of all the colors so that you will see all of them represented. When you walk into the gym at the new school you will not only see black and gold, but the hints of the green in there. **This is so our alumni from the past can come back and feel that this is their school as well.**”

- Scott Ferguson, Athletic Director





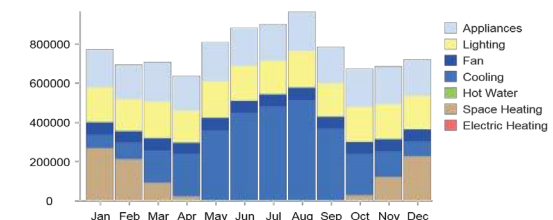


## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

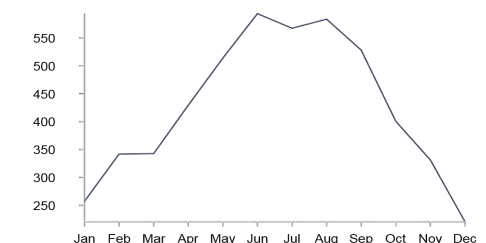
### INSPIRING AND MOTIVATING SPACES

Students and staff have validated the research regarding natural light and connection to the outdoors, which improves test scores, mood, and overall mental health. The courtyard invites numerous opportunities for students and staff to connect to the outdoor environment. Full classes, small groups, or individuals can take advantage of the lawns or sit in the shade of the breezeway overhang. **Post occupancy results indicate that the outdoor environments at Apex High School are “refreshing and calming and give a true sense of taking a break during the day.”** Large expanses of glazing afford the classrooms daylight and views to nature from the interior spaces.

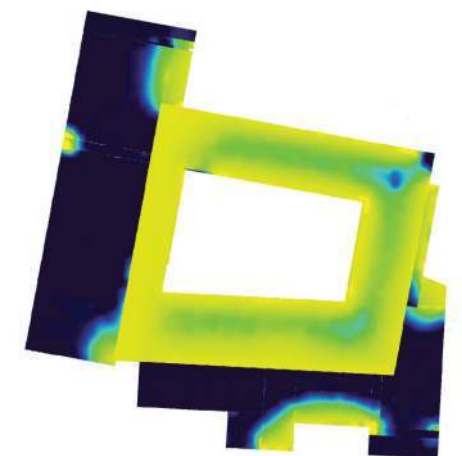
In the fall of 2019, Apex High School hosted the Wake County Green Schools Partnership Initiative, inviting community members and educational partners to share resources for reducing environmental impacts and increasing environmental literacy. Features incorporated in this school design put sustainability on display. Sustainable design efforts on this project ranged from natural, controlled daylighting to carefully coordinated, high efficiency mechanical systems. Storm water management areas throughout the site also provide opportunity for science exploration while controlling water leaving the site. **Students can visualize sustainable design as directly applied in their own learning environment**, consequently inspiring further thought and innovation for future generations.



MONTHLY CONSUMPTION (kBtu)



PEAK COOLING DEMAND (tons)



ANNUAL DAYLIGHTING



# 6 | RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

*“[The design team] sought out the input and suggestions of students, staff and community for the Apex High School Renovation. **Everyone agreed that the courtyard was the most popular feature and our team went to great lengths to include it in the design.** Since the Laura Duncan site is smaller in acreage than most high schools the team designed our new facility to fit the site. As a result, AHS will not look ‘just like’ any other existing high school in the area.”*

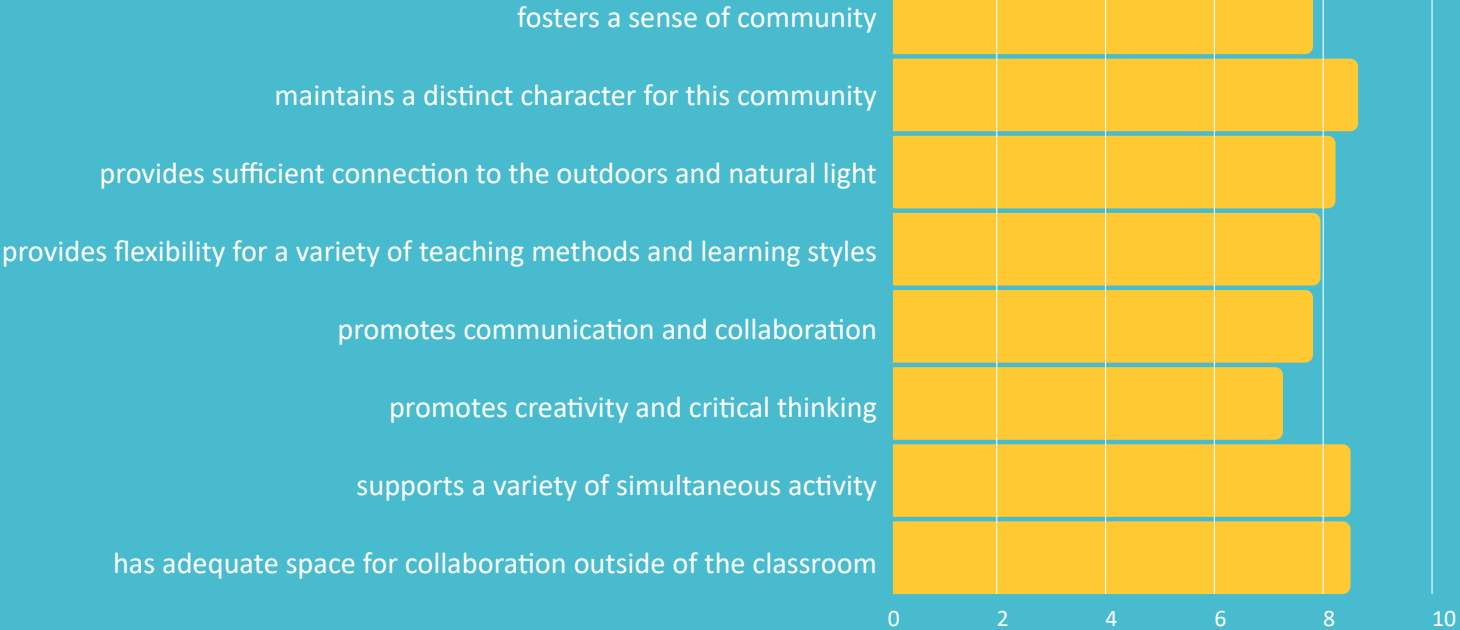
DIANN KEARNY, FORMER PRINCIPAL  
APEX HIGH SCHOOL



# POST OCCUPANCY SURVEY RESULTS

*What is the best feature of the new school?*  
“The fact that the courtyard is in the center of the school. The courtyard was such a part of the culture of the old building and I love that it is still a part of the culture now.”

*The design of Apex High School...*



## RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

### EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

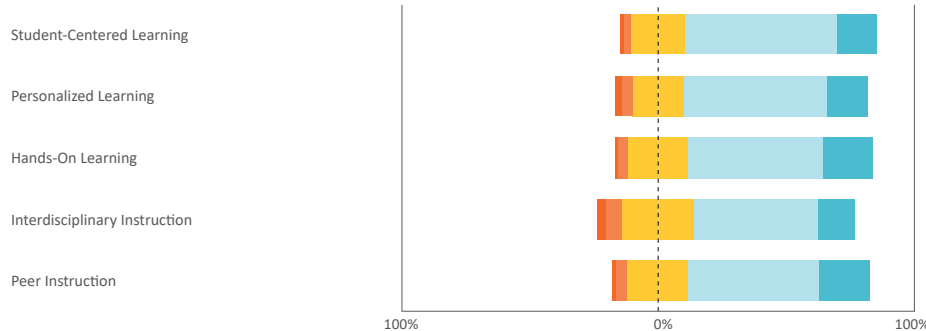
Through the new design, students at Apex High School are now fully immersed in an environment that facilitates a diverse range of 21st century learning opportunities. With flexibility in technology and a variety of furniture styles, classrooms can be rearranged to accommodate any number of orientations to best fit student-led learning, project-based learning, or lecture style classes. **With direct access to natural light and outdoor views in 99% of learning spaces, research indicates student focus and test scores will continue to rise.** Allowing students an opportunity to be a part of the design process played an integral role in the engagement and immediate ownership of the new building. A post-occupancy survey revealed that users were unanimously drawn to the outdoor environments and natural light in all spaces.

### SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

The Wake County 2020 Vision placed a strong focus on all schools within the district to provide opportunities for creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Flexible classrooms, varied collaboration and learning commons spaces, and large outdoor educational environments present ample opportunities for students and staff to meet regularly to satisfy a variety of needs. Collaboration spaces distributed throughout the building were introduced in large group, small group, or individual sized environments, inviting students and staff members to gather and learn or work together informally. Feedback sessions with staff in the months following move-in noted that the **collaboration spaces in particular were highlighted as great opportunities to allow students some controlled freedom, while maintaining visual accessibility from classrooms.**

*The Design of Apex High School supports...*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree



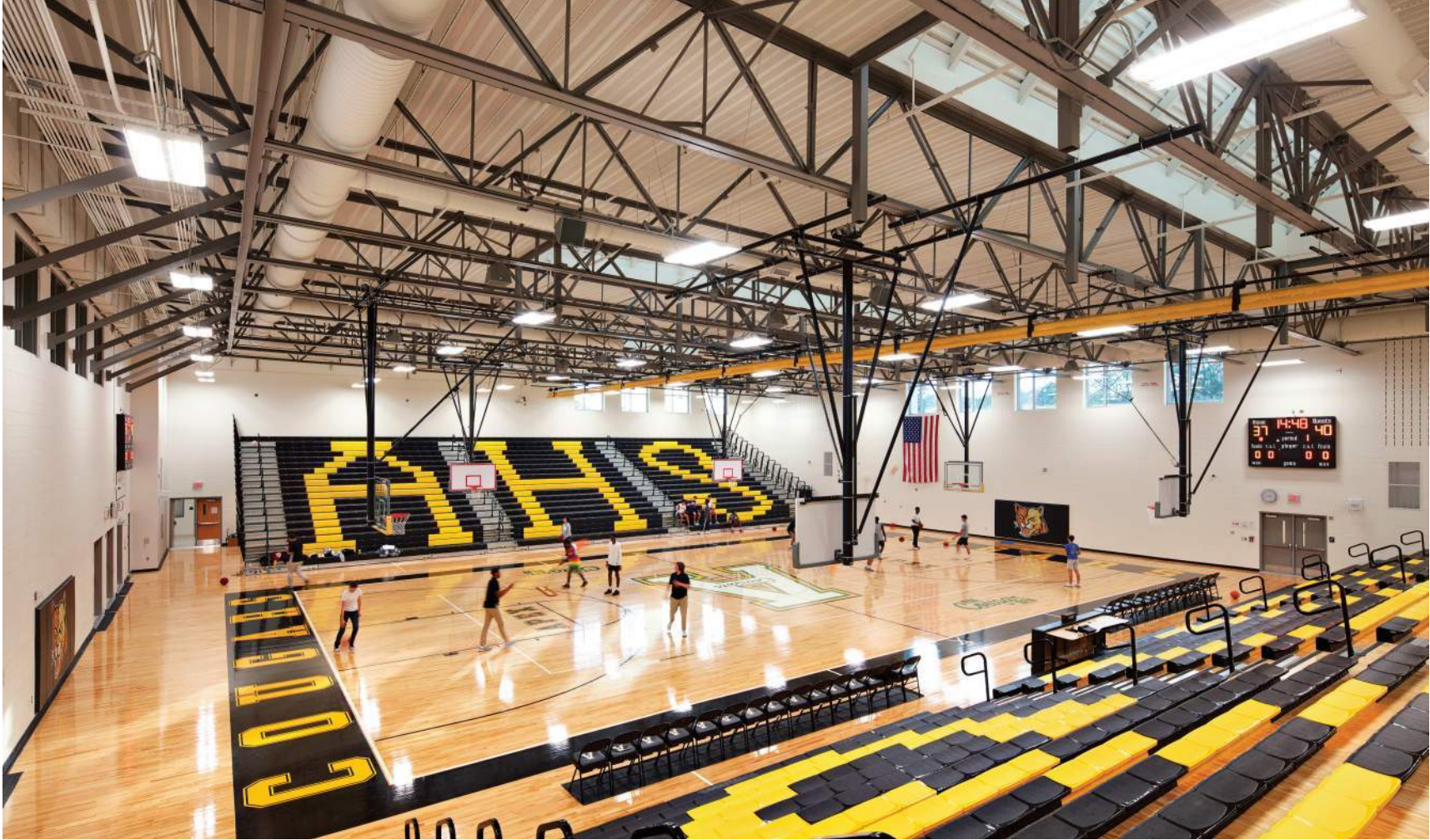


# RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

## COMMUNITY GOALS

Planning and visioning sessions were held throughout the design and construction of the project which resulted in a community-centric school. Alumni of Apex High School feel very passionately about “their” school and wanted to maintain that sense of ownership. Highlighting the history and celebrating the past while embracing the future promotes school pride among alumni and current and future students. History is on display in the cafeteria panels, showcasing art of old letters, yearbooks, and photographs. Art teacher Shawnda Rossi says that this gives students the opportunity to “**appreciate and honor what this community has and what our school has, and they should be proud to be a part of Apex.**” Also celebrated throughout the school is the reimplementa-tion of the color green in the overall branding, to celebrate the desegregation of the previous Apex High School and Apex Consolidated High School.

Community members expressed missing the sounds of school and student life while students were away for the two year construction period. This sentiment highlights just how invested the community is in the school and its history, and that they looked forward to hearing the comradery of football games and band practice. Community members were also appreciative of the new, ample parking provided on site as opposed to cars lining the yards along the neighborhood roads.




Apex High School has a strong arts program and history of student-led art projects around campus. **Not long after the school community moved into their new building, students took ownership.** Various forms of artwork, ranging from elaborate but temporary tape art to more permanent paintings began to appear in the common circulation spaces as Apex High School claimed the new space as their own.






RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT




**Daniela** @lovekopeloff19 · Sep 1, 2019  
Apex High School returning to true colors with return of green color [dvr.it/RCHJmq](#)


**APEX HIGH RETURNS TO TRUE COLORS**




**Michael Webster** @VBCoachWebster · Aug 16, 2019  
Thank you @ApexHighSchool, @ApexFerg, @WCPSS and @WCPSS\_Athletics for building at Apex High School what I think will be the model for all gyms to come and the envy of every volleyball and basketball program in the state. Who else can run three courts in one gym at the same time?




**Apex High School** @ApexHighSchool · Sep 2, 2019  
THE BIG EVENT is this Sunday from 2-5pm! We're inviting the whole community to explore our amazing new home. We'll have lots of fun stuff to do. Now, Name Those Alum! #TheHomecomingTour



**Apex High School** @ApexHighSchool · Aug 28, 2019  
Tonight at 6pm @WRAL will air a segment on Apex High School! Do you know why we're bringing back the color green? Tune in tonight to find out. @ApexFerg #historylesson #AllabouttheA #PeakProud #TheHomecomingTour




**Apex High School** @ApexHighSchool · Aug 16, 2019  
Thank you WCNC for letting us showcase how we honored our rich history in the design of our beautiful new building! #TheHomecomingTour




**Apex Legacy** @ahslegacy · Feb 6  
Apex High was awarded as best school in the county. Read this article to find out more about how we won. [peakstudentmedia.com/2020/02/06/apex...](#)

**APEX HIGH: THE BEST SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY**



Apex Legacy Retweeted  
**Mr. Ferguson** @ApexFerg · Aug 1, 2019  
We also have our tennis courts back in Laura Duncan after almost a decade with no home courts.



**Apex Legacy** @ahslegacy · Oct 2, 2019  
Do you wish you didn't have to spend the whole school day inside the building, looking outside the windows, and counting down until 2:18? Well now you don't have to. Students have the chance to enjoy their lunch break outside in... [peakstudentmedia.com/2019/10/02/apex...](#)

**APEX'S NEW AND IMPROVED COURTYARD!**

“Good to see the old green & gold again!!”

“The forest green was a part of Cougar history from '76-'99 and it's nice to see it back in action.”

“Thank you [team] for building at Apex High School what I think will be the model for all gyms to come and the envy of every volleyball and basketball program in the state. Who else can run three courts in one gym at the same time?”

“Thankful for the past, present & future Cougars!”

“Thankful to have attended the best high school. Roll Cougs!!”

“What a magical day at The Peak! Apex High School is truly thankful for all the hard work and man / woman-hours that have gone into our new home!”

“‘A’ place like no other!”

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A4LE LEsolutions Design Award | Apex High School



## RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

### WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

After four years of interaction with this community, it is evident that Apex High School operates like a family. Bringing the design team into the fold early in the process was instrumental in revealing the pivotal elements of Apex’s culture and values. The most impactful element of this entire construction process was not the building but rather, the community and culture it embodies. Apex High School was the unsolicited recipient of the 2020 WRAL.com Voter’s Choice Award, winning the recognition of best high school in Wake County out of more than 30 schools.

We are thrilled to have been welcomed into this family and are honored to work with this great community. When Apex High School returned to the campus at Laura Duncan Road after two years off site, the principal shared her thoughts. **“What I love about the design team is that I know they care deeply about this school, not just because it’s their project, but because they know of the incredible meaning and significance this school has to its students, staff, and the Apex community,”** remarked Principal Elaine Hoffman. **“We are finally able to be Cougars again and claim this breathtaking building as our own.”**



members of the design and construction teams with the AHS principal



