Saint Martin is a Catholic coeducational high school located in the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. The school was founded in 2003 as a response to a survey of resident need in the neighborhood. The school is located in an area that is poor and predominantly a minority population and the administration is focusing on ways in which the school can be a larger partner in the surrounding neighborhood, providing health services, meeting spaces, and distance learning for adults as a way to improve the social framework in which their students live. In order to provide funding for the students, who all are living in households below the poverty line, a partnership was developed with local businesses. Students job share and work one day a week in local businesses throughout the city of Cleveland, and the businesses fund the students tuition.

The administration, staff and architects engaged in a collaborative process to assess student + teacher need and design a new high school dedicated to supporting a differentiated and cooperative project based learning pedagogy. The goals of the engagement or programming process was to first understand emerging trends and theories related to collaborative learning, and discover integrated ways of engaging facility to support student based learning opportunities. Second, develop the strategies necessary to understand community need and best practices for developing the facility into a community supportive environment. The following principles guided the building design:

- Education spaces supporting critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication;
- Flexibility of furniture to allow for a variety of grouping formats and lesson types;
- Establish learning zones for collaboration, making, and independent learning;
- Flexibility in space to accommodate large group projects and grade level projects;
- Integration of technology;
- Teachers as facilitators including collaborative work spaces for teachers;
- Wellness spaces + wrap around services to provide care for the whole person + the surrounding community;
- Develop the school as the center of the community through collaborations with the local government and neighborhood groups to provide community meeting spaces, wellness and learning opportunities.

The completed building realizes the goals established by the guiding principles. Entering on the ground floor the students are presented with a large informal seating area and an open three story glass and steel staircase orienting them to the building and visually connecting all floors of the building. A reception desk welcomes students to the Commons, a bright open space with flexible seating and a stage for presentations. On the instruction floors, instruction spaces surround a learning commons that will provide the opportunity for flexible learning zones supporting student directed learning.
LOCATION
The school has been operating since 2003 in a school building originally constructed as a K-8 facility and was a challenge for the high school age students to use. Additionally, the traditional style of double loaded corridors did not meet the project based pedagogy of the school.

BUILDING
The building is a multi-phase project construction on Phase I began in 2016 and Phase II was completed in 2021.

PHASE I - Construction 2016-2018
AREA - 44,000 SF
COST - $13.8 Million

PHASE II - Construction 2020-2021
AREA - 32,000 SF
COST - $8.4 Million

OCCUPANCY
STUDENTS - 420
FACULTY - 80

SCOPE
- Restoration of a Local Historic Register Building for Art + Music Rooms, and Offices.
- Construction of a two 3-Story Wings surrounding the historic building.
  - Student Commons
  - Full Commercial Kitchen
  - 16 Learning Studios,
  - 1 Maker “Da Vinci” Studio
  - 4 Learning Commons
  - 4 Teacher Collaboration Areas
  - 8 Small Group Rooms
  - 12 Reading Nooks
  - Chapel
  - Health + Wellness Clinic
  - Outdoor Classroom + Collaboration Areas
  - Rain Garden Ecosystem
  - Sustainable Features meeting LEED Silver requirements
COMMUNITY
The neighborhood surrounding the school developed as a response to the heavy industry that developed along the rail lines and lake. The densely populated area that was originally home to eastern European immigrants largely from Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania, and Croatia. The post World War 2 demographic shift of people to the suburbs and industry to southern states lead to a decline in the neighborhood and by 2014 79 percent of the neighborhood is African American and median income is $17,668. All of the students at the school are from economically and social disadvantaged families, and the school relies on funding from a series of corporate partners that provide work study opportunities for the students.

STAKEHOLDERS
The stakeholder group consisted of the school community (administration + board of directors), faculty, students, their families, the local neighborhood development corporation, council persons, neighbors and corporate partners.

CHALLENGES
The neighborhood is severely limited in institutional resources that are able to provide a foundation for the community. The students and their families are living below the poverty line which results in poor access to health care, trauma, poor nutrition, unstable living environments and financial distress. Resources and support from the city is focused on crime prevention, aging infrastructure and basic services.

Additionally, the community suffers from stagnant wages, occupational segregation, high unemployment in communities of color, as well as wage + racial discrimination.

ASSETS
Over the last several years, the school has acquired land on the block adjacent to their current building, and has developed a number of very important partnerships with local businesses and leaders who have become generous supporters of the school. Additionally, the students and their families and the surrounding neighborhood are committed to the success of the students and aiding them in breaking the cycle of poverty in the community surrounding the school.

VALUE of the PROCESS
Initial meetings with the Board, Corporate Sponsors, and Civic Leaders were instrumental in taking the vision the school had in serving as an anchor institution in the neighborhood and building the outreach necessary to have meaningful engagement with the residents surrounding the school.

A number of community forums were developed where neighbors were given the opportunity to express the needs of the community, services they desperately needed and ways in which the school and community could partner for the betterment of the neighborhood. The school already operated a food bank, but the opportunity to understand the needs of their neighbors focused the school on not just being an educational institution, but understanding they could also provide a critical health and wellness component the neighborhood desperately needed. The development of the building program began at these meetings prior to the development of the academic program and was important to the success of the building as a center of the community.

community research|engagement
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + TEACHER WORKSHOPS

The Project Team worked collaboratively with the Saint Martin community in a process to evaluate the pedagogy and student learning styles involving Administration, Staff, Board Members, Parents + Students Community Leaders, and Other Stakeholders to gain input and consensus. In addition, we employed online surveys and project blogs to provide many avenues for input.

Student + teacher workshops clarified initial concepts and provided a forum to discuss best practices in education to ensure the planning aligned with school values and project goals.

feedback through surveys informs decision making

critical tools for a successful charrette
establishing key goals

working through priorities

brainstorming session

establishing project principles
VISION + GOALS
Saint Martin de Porres High School prepares students for post-secondary success in education and work through a mutually transformative learning experience sustained by 21st century skills (communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking), good work habits and a commitment to justice and peace. Saint Martin de Porres High School prepares their scholars for lifelong success in a multicultural society by embracing diversity to build a strong, equitable and inclusive learning community.

The School supports student success through the following:
- Focus on the academic growth of each student;
- Guiding its young women and men to post-secondary and career pathways that will enable meaningful participation in Cleveland’s transformation;
- Serving as an anchor institution in the St. Clair-Superior Neighborhood;
- Establishing long term sustainability through a commitment to its people, planet and prosperity;
- Invite students to actively participate in a challenging, rewarding and joyful community learners;
- Provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their development to increase self-awareness and autonomy;
- Find appropriate evaluation tools that will enable the systemic use of qualitative and quantitative data to personalize goal-setting and track personal and academic achievement;
- Create spaces that enable teachers to thoughtfully plan and interact with students according to their individual need;
- Innovate to provide programs that meet the individual needs of its top students, those who struggle, and all those that fall in between;
- Provide its students with adult mentors that will feed their passions and increase the interests of its students.

PEDAGOGY + DESIGN
In order to align the curriculum and ensure the learning spaces supported their vision, studioTECHNE and the school leadership spent a week at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education working with visionaries in the field of education to review future trends + best practices as it related to the design of the new building. The focus of the visit was to discover ways in which instruction and instructional spaces provide barriers to learning.

The building is designed to support teachers and students in a student directed project-based curriculum where students have the opportunity to think in depth and actively apply learning to build knowledge. The school required flexibility and variety of instruction spaces where teachers become facilitators, leading students through a process where they engage in thinking, problem solving, making, leadership, collaboration, and project-based learning.

PLANNING + DESIGN
The facility was planned around one primary goal — to improve the experience of learning by supporting collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills required by students to thrive in today’s world. We are architects, but more importantly, we are change agents advocating for creative learning communities.

We approach every project with innovative strategies based on 21st century learning principles where students master content while producing, synthesizing, and evaluating information from a wide variety of subjects and sources. Students demonstrate the three R’s, but also the three C’s: creativity, communication, and collaboration.

The design of the learning spaces focused on “learning occurs everywhere”, and spaces were then developed to support the type of learning students need to be engaged with to learn.

DESIGN FOR THE WHOLE STUDENT
Knowing that students only spend part of their day at the school, Saint Martin sought ways to support the families of the students as well as the community. A partnership with a local hospital brought funding for a health center accessible on nights and weekends. The clinic allows students, their families and members of the community to receive health + wellness check-ups, mental health and wrap around services. The school is unconditionally committed to the students success the clinic allows them to include all of the regular daily activities critical to the healthy development of all children and families.
ORGANIZE PROGRAM FOR ADJACENCY

DEFINED COMMUNITY NEED - SOCIAL + CURRICULUM
IDENTIFY LEARNING ZONES

ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS CURRICULUM

SPACES FOR LEARNING FROM AN EXPERT (campfires)

SPACES FOR SHARING + COLLABORATING (wateringholes)

SPACES FOR FOCUSED THOUGHT (caves)

EXPANSION OF SPACES INTO COMMONS LRG. PROJECT SUPPORT

ACCESS TO VIEWS + DAY-LIGHT

Saint Martin de Porres High School
DIFFERENTIATE THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS LEARNING MODALITIES
ENVIRONMENT IS CUSTOMIZABLE BY THE STUDENTS
INSPIRING + MOTIVATING

“Education and training are the keys to the future. A key can be turned in two directions. Turn it one way and you lock resources away; turn it other way and you realize resources and give people back to themselves.”

-Sir Ken Robinson

Students find inspiration and meaning when the educational space respects them as learners and can be experienced as meaningful. The spaces designed for Saint Martin de Porres provides the opportunity for engaged learning in spaces they can adjust and change to meet their needs. Spaces support the variety of ways in which they need to engage their subject matter, informed lecture, peer to peer discussion, small and large group interactions and independently for deep learning. Additionally the building provides support for them as a complete person. Spaces in the Wellness Suite allow a student who needs to isolate form the community to reflect or recovery from a difficult situation. Outdoor spaces support a connection to nature and access to fresh air and sunlight in a neighborhood where it is not always safe for them to be outdoors. Overall, the Saint Martin Community is inspired by the abundant natural light and openness of the building and the knowledge that the community believed enough in them to construct this wonderful place.
PROPOSED PROJECT SITE
(PARCEL OWNED BY ST. MARTIN)

EXISTING SCHOOL LOCATION
(PARCEL OWNED BY ST. VITUS CHURCH)

EXISTING COMMUNITY GARDEN
(PARCEL OWNED BY ST. MARTIN)

EXISTING MODULAR CLASSROOMS
(PARCEL OWNED BY ST. MARTIN)

CONTEXT MAP - SCHOOL LOCATED IN A DENSE URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD
BUILDING EXTERIOR ST. CLAIR AVENUE
PROPOSED COURTYARD MATERIALS

1. Corten Steel Planters
2. Corten Steel Grass Edging
3. Inset Grass
4. Site Lighting - Courtyard; Lumenpulse Inground Recessed Light
5. Site Lighting - Courtyard; Forms + Surfaces Light Column w/ Perforated Shield
6. Custom Gabion Benches
7. Custom Gabion Site Walls
8. Field Pavers
9. Field Pavers
10. Crushed Limestone

CONTEXT - SITE DETAILS

Saint Martin de Porres High School
OUTDOOR EDUCATION SPACE
3RD FLOOR CLASSROOM - INFORMATIVE LECTURE SET-UP

Saint Martin de Porres High School
CLASSROOM SHOWING INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION NICHES

Saint Martin de Porres High School
CONCLUSION
The project began with the following principles:

- Education spaces supporting critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication;
- Flexibility of furniture to allow for a variety of grouping formats and lesson types;
- Establish learning zones for collaboration, making, and independent learning;
- Flexibility in space to accommodate large group projects and grade level projects;
- Integration of technology;
- Teachers as facilitators including collaborative work spaces for teachers;
- Wellness spaces + wrap around services to provide care for the whole person + the surrounding community;
- Develop the school as the center of the community through collaborations with the local government and neighborhood groups to provide community meeting spaces, wellness and learning opportunities.

Through an intensive process that focused on the students as whole individuals a program emerged that brought educational goals together with the social well being of the students and their families. The main student commons hosts monthly city council meetings and a variety of other community functions; the wellness suite extends its hours to evenings and weekends so that families can receive the care and services they need.

Educational spaces are flexible, are focused on student centered learning and support a variety of learning objectives and modalities. 100% of the students graduate, 90% of graduates directly enroll in college, the class of 2020 earned over $6 million in scholarships. The building is a small part of this success, its role is to provide a supportive environment and prepare the students for the learning environments they will encounter at the college level.