



# ALSUP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Commerce City, Colorado

PROJECT DOSSIER

A4LE LEsolutions Awards 2022

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alsup Elementary School was an existing school community located in Commerce City, Colorado. The building's replacement project had the foremost goal of preserving its tight-knit family atmosphere in the new space. During the design process, the central theme of "Community" emerged as a key priority.

The challenge given to the design team was to recognize what made the Alsup community special and to find ways to enable and enhance those attributes through the built environment. Extra care was given in order to receive vision and input from all facets of the community, including hearing from teachers and students, as well as community members and neighbors.

In addition to meeting the program requirements of designing a Preschool through 5th grade elementary school for 600 students, opportunities to design deliberate space for community connections was prioritized. A dedicated flex space named the Community Room, a larger gym able to be used after hours by the neighborhood, and enhanced outdoor amenities such as a community softball field display the outcomes of this theme in the overall building design.

# SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET

The scope of work for this project was to design and construct a replacement elementary school to accommodate preschool through fifth grade students (including exterior playground areas, parking, and bus dropoff) to replace the existing school built in 1959. The new school is located three blocks south of the existing school on a vacant site previously occupied by the District's old high school. The full 27-acre site has been master planned to include a future middle school and track in addition to the new elementary school. The area of work for the elementary site is 13 acres.

Design Capacity:	600 Students
Design Gross SF:	76,279 GSF
Total Budget:	\$33,879,541
Construction Budget:	\$27,337,658

The school opened for the 2021-22 school year and had a 14-month construction schedule.





# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH/ENGAGEMENT

## THE DESIGN PROCESS

Starting in January 2019, the school district formed a design advisory group (DAG) and an architectural review committee (ARC). The DAG, formed from Alsup teachers, community members, and school administration staff, served to set a guiding trajectory for the school. The DAG consisted of approximately 30 members and met bimonthly. After dreaming and visioning sessions to cast a vision for the project, the DAG participated in exercises, provided input to the design options, and critiqued the results of the ongoing design process in order to shape a design that met the needs, priorities, and future trajectory of the school.

The ARC, comprised of eight individuals formed from Alsup and Adams-14 School District staff, serves as a final decision making and verification entity which confirms the direction given by the DAG. The ARC met bi-monthly on alternating weeks with the DAG. These groups gave the design team a direction that corresponded with the goals and vision of the elementary school and district. Heavy emphasis was placed on the design of the school serving as a guiding precedent for future schools to be built in the district.

### One of the first collaborative tasks with the DAG was to develop a set of Guiding Principles for the Project:

1. STUDENT-FOCUSED/BRAIN-BASED/INDIVIDUALIZED
2. HEALTHY/SUPPORT HOLISTIC NEEDS
3. TECHNOLOGICAL/21ST CENTURY/FUTURE READY
4. FLEXIBLE/SPACIOUS/COMFORTABLE
5. EFFICIENT, ORGANIZED, DURABLE
6. SAFE/SECURE
7. INSPIRATIONAL/ENGAGING
8. WELCOMING & SUPPORTIVE OF COMMUNITY & PARENTS
9. DIVERSE/CULTURAL/MULTI-LINGUAL
10. CONNECTED TO NATURE/OUTDOOR LEARNING

### Building Design Program:

The DAG was tasked with determining the critical adjacencies for the programmed spaces. To aid in determining the critical adjacencies, the design team led an exercise in which the DAG placed foam blocks which represented the



major programmed spaces. Four groups organized foam blocks into a preliminary building diagram. From each of the group results, several critical adjacencies were recognized:

1. ECE is to be separated from the rest of the building, but in close proximity to the main entrance.
2. The gym should be in close proximity to the main entrance and easily separated from the rest of the school for after-hours access.
3. The specials (Music, Art, P.E., etc.) should be grouped together.
4. The kitchen and service area should be located at the back of the building.
5. The learning labs should be centrally located within

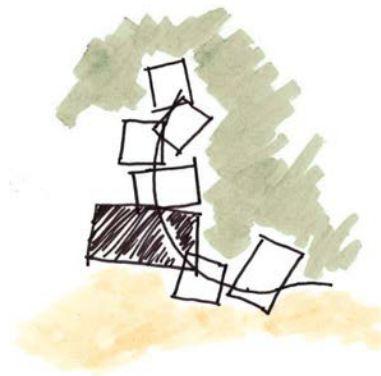
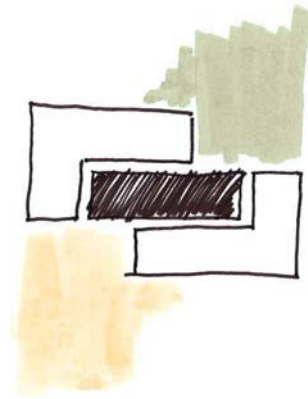
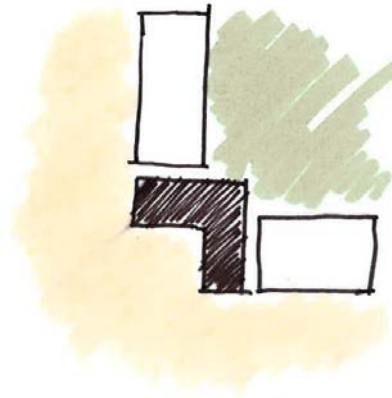
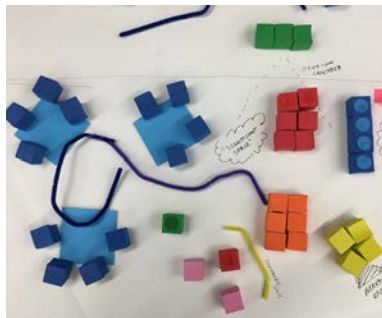
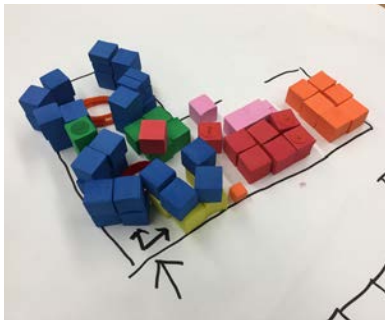
the classroom areas.

6. K, 1, and 2 grade levels and 3, 4, 5 grade levels should be grouped together.

### Three themes from the four groups emerged:

1. **Central plaza** – a central gathering area with strong emphasis on the collective community
2. **The hinge** – a point in the building in which two wings 'hinge' around the focal point of the building.
3. **Meandering path** – a path of discovery; the areas of the building are not immediately known.

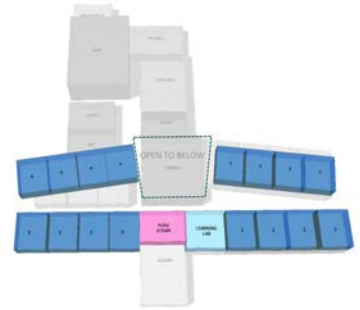
# SCHOOL & COMMUNITY RESEARCH/ENGAGEMENT



## THE HINGE

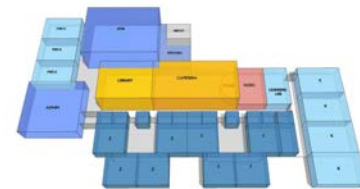


MAIN FLOOR

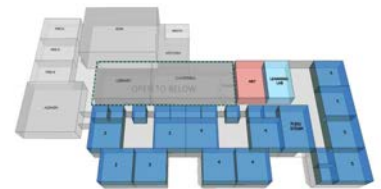


SECOND FLOOR

## CENTRAL PLAZA



MAIN FLOOR

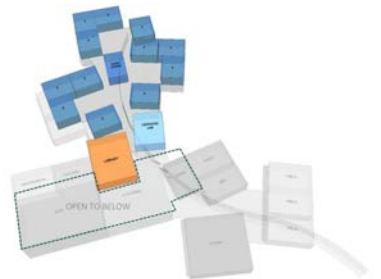


SECOND FLOOR

## MEANDERING PATH



MAIN FLOOR

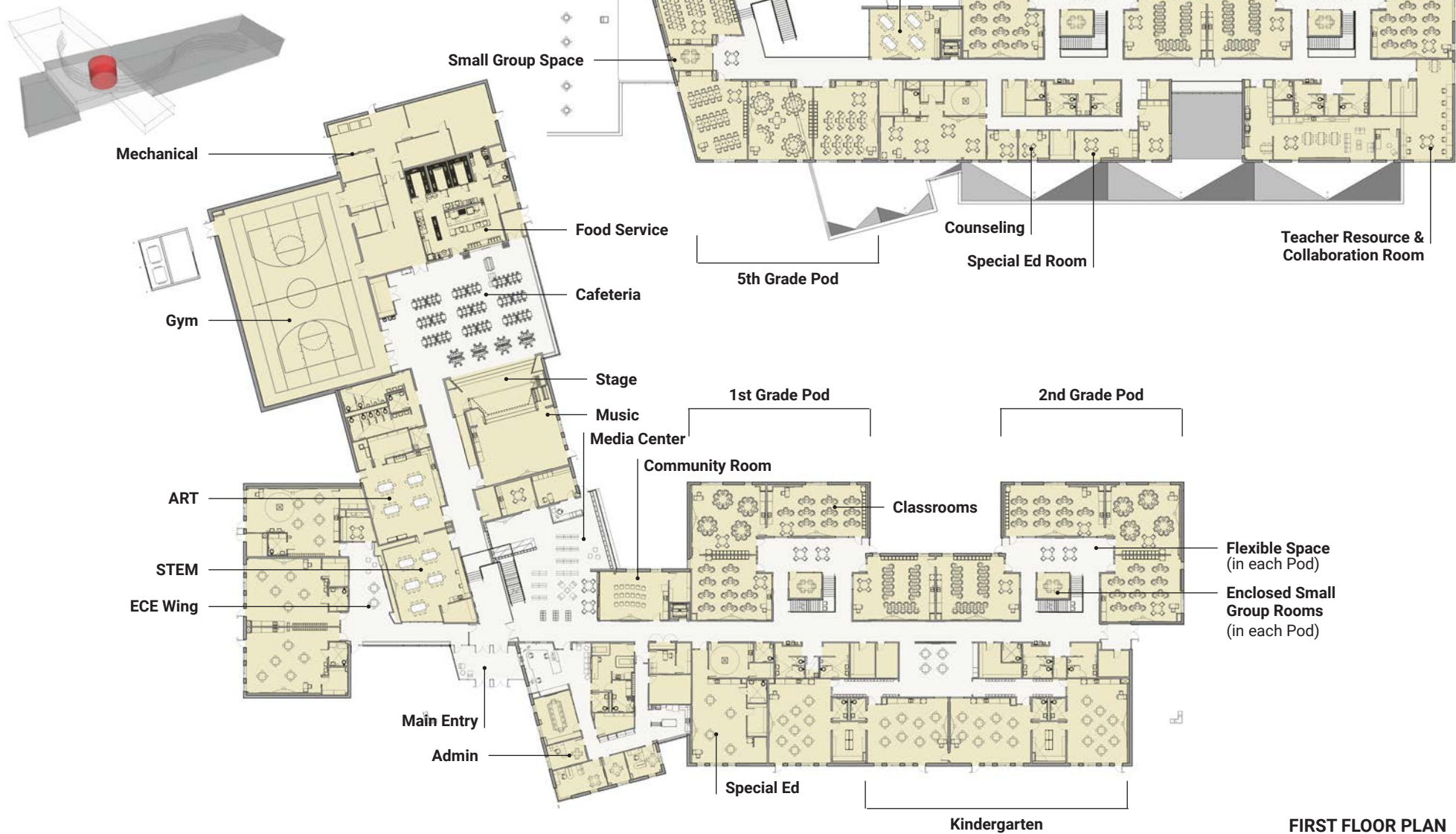


SECOND FLOOR



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Once the three themes were fully explored, a singular design concept was developed that incorporated the most important attributes of each into one layout. The proposed design has a central “plaza” at the heart of a two-winged “hinge” building that is connected along a “meandering path” of spaces and hallways.

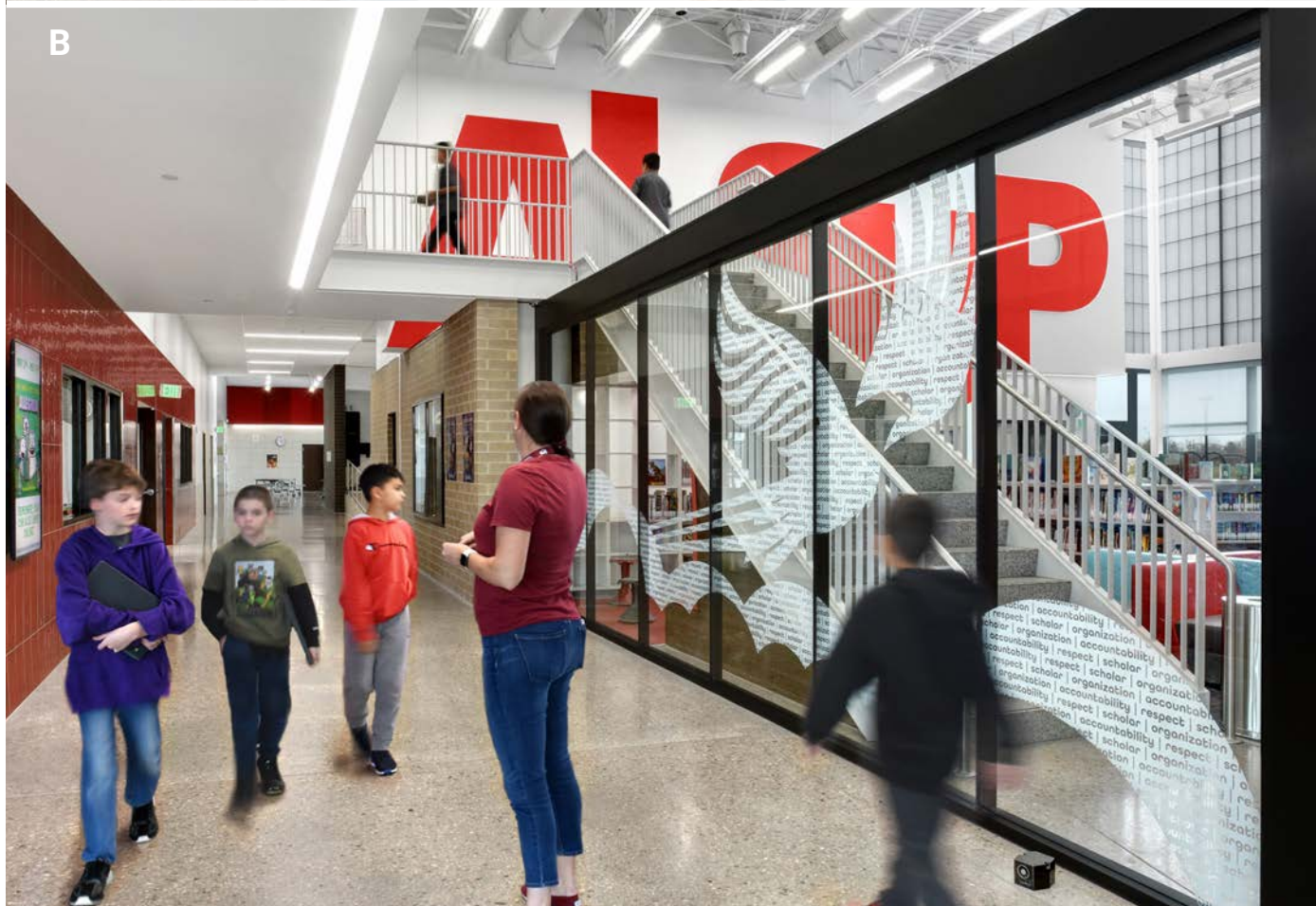


FIRST FLOOR PLAN



## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

After students, staff and visitors pass through the **exterior community courtyard (A)** and through the secure entry vestibule, they are immediately welcomed into **the heart of the building with a two-story space that includes the media center and community resource spaces (B)**. At this point, the two main wings of the school are clear with the activity wing including the cafeteria and specials spaces to the north and the classroom wing to the east. To the west is an alternate entry to the Early Childhood pod and the administration suite is to the south adjacent to the main entry doors. The central plaza is full of activity and excitement with students studying in the media center, parents interacting in the community room and people moving from space to space throughout the day.





# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

The **Technology Studio/STEAM Room (A)** is also showcased in this area, and is **visible from the exterior (B)** at night. Students have the opportunity to work collaboratively and creatively on STEAM projects in this studio and are able to display projects to all who pass through the central plaza.

Proceeding down the activity wing, the Art Studio, Music Studio, Gym and Cafeteria come into sight. The **Music Studio (C)** has the capability to open up to the Cafeteria by way of a movable wall on the Stage. The **Cafeteria (D)** can accommodate both small and large performances and assemblies. The Cafeteria also opens directly to the main playgrounds for easy access and supervision during recess.



A



C



D



B



# EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

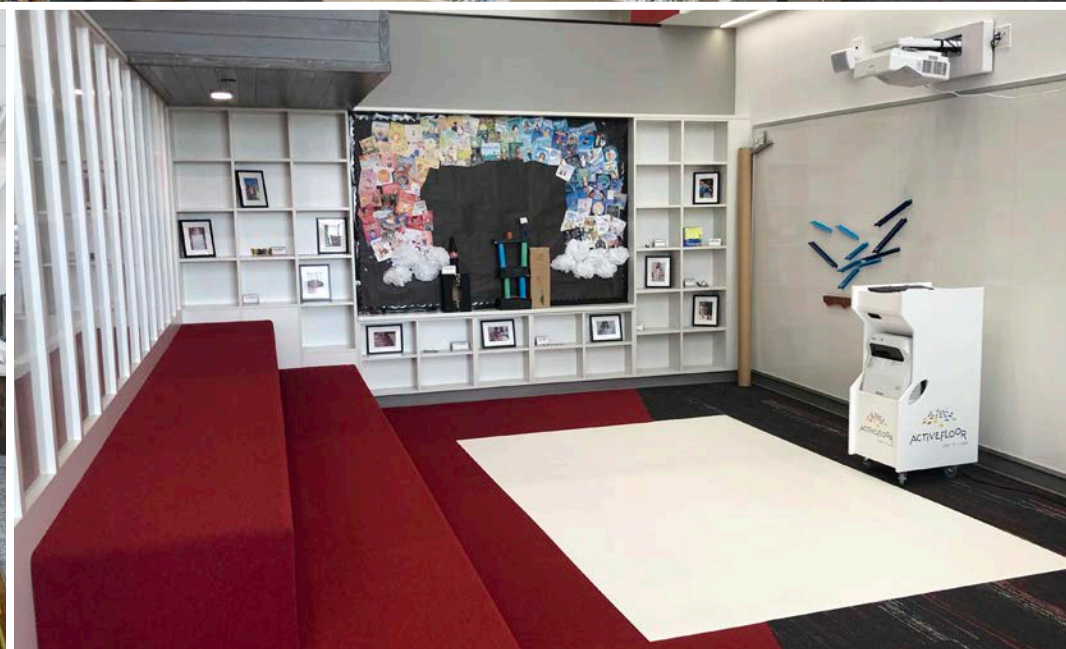
The classroom wing consists of many intimately scaled spaces. On the first floor, the approach through the building takes you past a small special needs suite and the primary level classrooms for Kindergarten through second grade. Each grade level has their own **small group space (A)** and storage area and each classroom will include a projector, white boards, cabinets and coat hooks, bulletin boards, Wifi access and new flexible furniture. **Small breakout and presentation spaces (B)** are available along the path.

The second floor of the classroom wing includes classrooms for third through fifth graders, a special needs suite and a **staff resource and collaboration area (C)**. Two stairways and an elevator connect the second floor with convenient access to the Special Needs Suite.

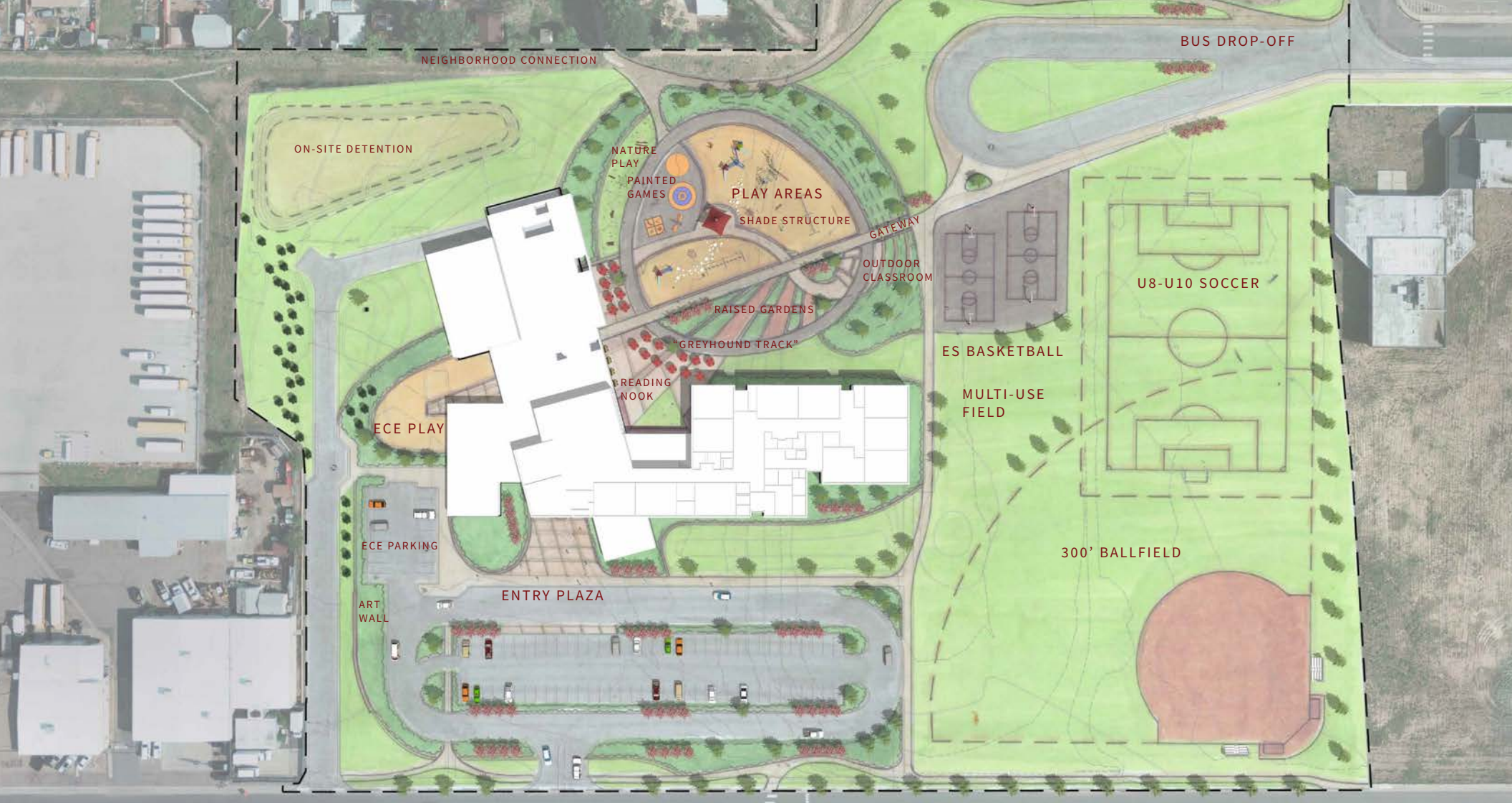
The facility is designed to limit walking distances, provide natural light and give options for flexible and diverse teaching environments. Integrated technology is available throughout the school.











## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Site design focused on neighborhood connections, efficient pedestrian and vehicular circulation, age-appropriate and innovative play, water-wise native planting, athletic fields, open gathering spaces and educational outdoor opportunities. Landscape and site elements echo architectural components of the new school building, reflect the surrounding environment, and compliment the community's identity. Thematic concepts are also incorporated into the site plan; a track

surrounding the core outdoor space connects with the community history and reminds residents of a time when the greyhound track was a feature of the City.

Play areas are located to the north of the building, providing protection from the parking and drop-off areas. A separate ECE play area is located adjacent to the ECE wing.

Common spaces are abundant not only inside the building but also throughout the site. A bermed outdoor classroom and stage with boulder seating, an outdoor learning garden, shaded outdoor reading nooks, plaza space with picnic tables and benches, and play areas that incorporate natural elements are all integral to the site.



# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DESIGN







## RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

The new Alsup Elementary School delivers a fresh, innovative, and imaginative new learning environment for students in Adams 14 School District. It incorporates a variety of sizes and types of flexible learning spaces for each learner to thrive in the environments in which they learn best. Indoor/outdoor connections through daylighting, views, and abundant outdoor educational opportunities connect students to their world throughout the day as well as from season to season. The building

is organized with increased safety and visibility site lines to provide the administration with access control. Materials are sustainable and durable making the indoor environmental quality high and maintenance responsibilities low. Unique design details connect students to the local history.

Alsup is truly a community resource, providing whole family support for students and their families.



# SUSTAINABILITY & WELLNESS

To comply with the Colorado Department of Education BEST grant program—one of the supportive funding mechanisms for this project—Alsup Elementary School must meet the High Performance Certification Program (HPCP) which requires a certification through the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) as a 'CHPS Verified Leader' for the targeted certification level. CHPS is a sustainability certification rating system designed specifically for schools.

Strategies for sustainability at Alsup include:

## Integration and Innovation

- An integrated design approach engaged all stakeholders early in the project
- The school is designed as a teaching tool. Plaques explaining natural lighting techniques and air-flow technology located in the building. A wall cutout shows the building systems.

## Indoor Environmental Quality

- Strategies including no and low-emitting finishes, as

well as building flush-out at the end of construction were used.

- Ample natural light in nearly every occupied space.
- Well-designed acoustics for optimum sound quality in the classrooms

## Energy Efficiency

- Natural light was used in lieu of artificial, and high-efficiency HVAC units were used to reduce energy usage.
- Commissioning

## Water Efficiency

- High-efficiency fixtures were used throughout the building
- Native grass with no irrigation needs were used in many locations instead of turf grass

## Site Design

- Strategies were employed to decrease environmental degradation and increase use of alternative transportation were used

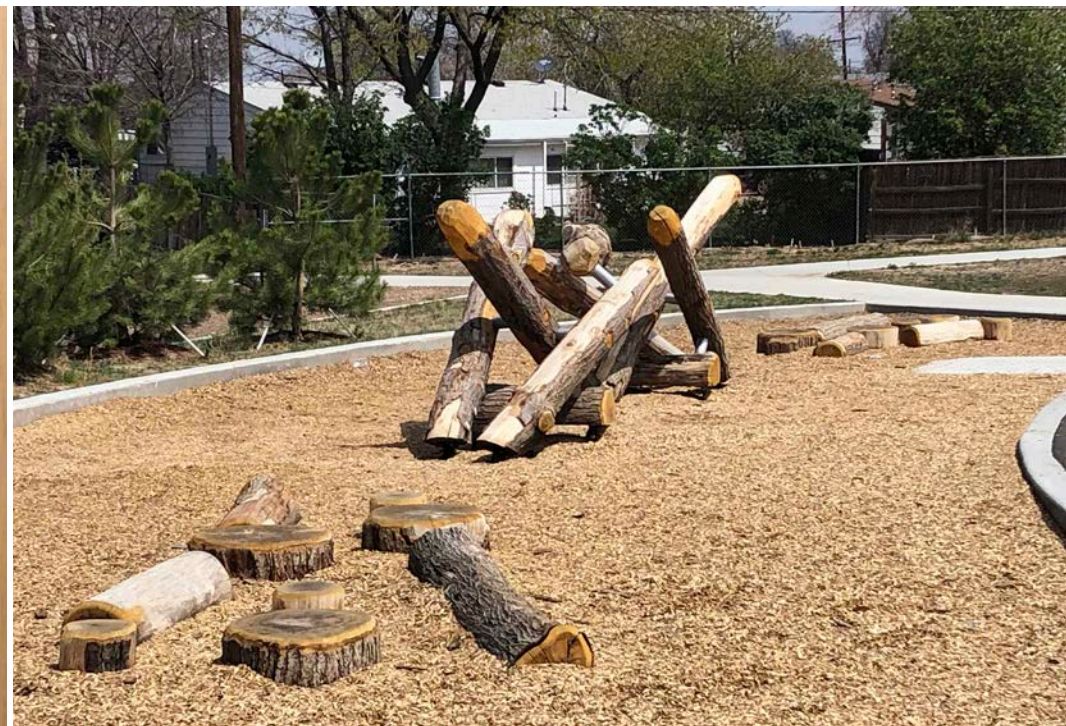
- Stormwater management systems and native landscaping were integrated into the site
- On-site learning is available for students, including a student learning garden incorporated into the playground for experimentation with growing vegetables.

## Materials and Waste Management

- Low-VOC materials were used throughout the building
- Products with recycled content and other High Performance products were used throughout the building

## Operations and Metrics

- Training, post-occupancy surveys, and performance benchmarking
- Maintenance plans were developed for the school, including an Indoor Environmental Management Plan that addressed Green Cleaning, integrated Pest Management and Anti-Idling protocols











# ALSUP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Commerce City, Colorado

PROJECT DOSSIER

A4LE LEsolutions Awards 2022