

Pieper High School

San Antonio, Texas



Executive Summary

This comprehensive high school is interconnected to its hill country neighbors and relates to its surroundings in proportion, scale, and materiality. The design respects the intrinsic value of the landscape and doesn't fight against site constraints.

The building is in harmony with its surroundings with a compact design that belies its size, and an interior plan structurally designed to adapt to future needs easily.

Everything about this design is thoughtfully considered, adaptable, and synergistic. Beginning with the site that this campus shares with its feeder school.

In 2024, the first graduating class will have benefitted from the innovative design that includes:

- academic flexibility for pedagogy and enrollment shifts,
- prominent display of CTE,
- and full athletic and fine arts programming.





Scope of Work and Budget

Cost: \$123.7M

While planning the middle school, (bottom of photo), the design team considered what would work best for a future high school that would one day share the site. Shared components like the stadium and the adjacent parking lots were planned at this early stage to save the district time and money—and the shared resources would build a strong 6-12 community.

That forethought paid dividends when the high school was assigned, and the team began implementing the guiding principles into a built environment that, while carefully planned for, would need to be compact, limited height, and materially appropriate.

The 425,234 SF campus blends seamlessly into the site with easy pedestrian access from the upper parking lot, down the 90' fall to the stadium. The components were situated to save as many heritage trees as possible and retain as much of the natural grade as the site elements would allow.

Creating opportunities for students and teachers to engage in new experiences is central to this design; like connecting the library to the stadium, academics to athletics, exposing each to the other, and building confidence for the athlete who would be a scholar and inspiring the scholar who could be an athlete.

School & Community

This campus reinforces community—with the surrounding neighborhoods, yes, but also with the middle school that shares the site. The team thought about both schools as part of a whole—sharing elements, which meant sharing costs and a common culture—creating a seamless transition for rising ninth graders.

The designers considered scale and context when nestling the 430,000 GSF campus into the hillside—making it blend gracefully into the surrounding communities. Deciding to go vertical also meant we could develop an efficient footprint and terrace the design to create unexpected opportunities to connect with the community and the environment.

Another consideration for this new community is forming traditions. The juxtaposition of the middle school to this high school helps build that community through the educational experience which builds community pride and can become a platform for student success—adding value to the community and the student experience.

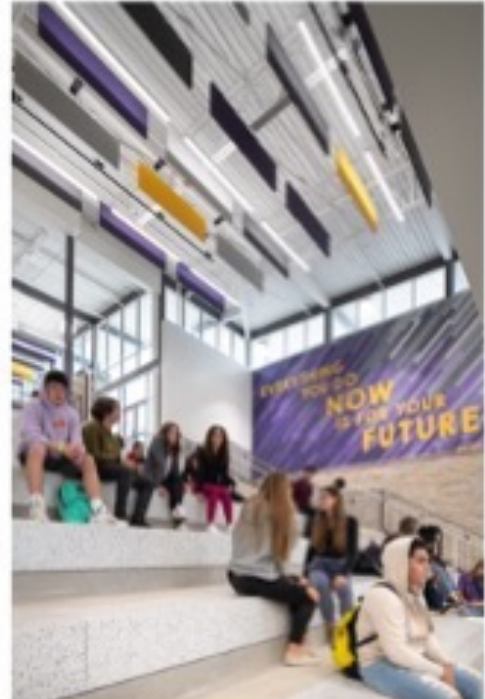


Standing at the plaza looking down to the field and
the middle school beyond produces an emotional,
almost visceral reaction.
This is my community.
This is my house.

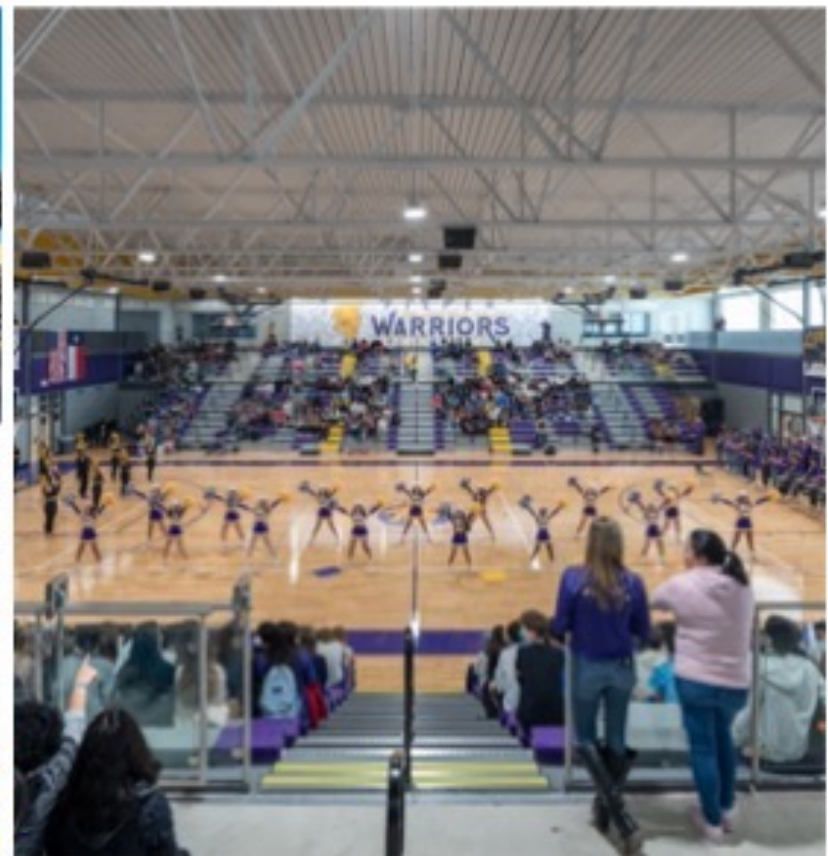


Creating a school community means providing space for students to interact, communicate, and build bonds.

By intentionally designing spaces within spaces the design provides opportunities for students to connect, share values, and build traditions.



Planning for athletics and fine arts creates opportunities to bring the local community on campus. Accessibility and making a pleasant user experience is essential.



Educational Environment Design

The design respects the interconnectedness of the high school experience.



The major design elements incorporated into this campus were connection to the outdoors,, efficient use of space, and connectivity.

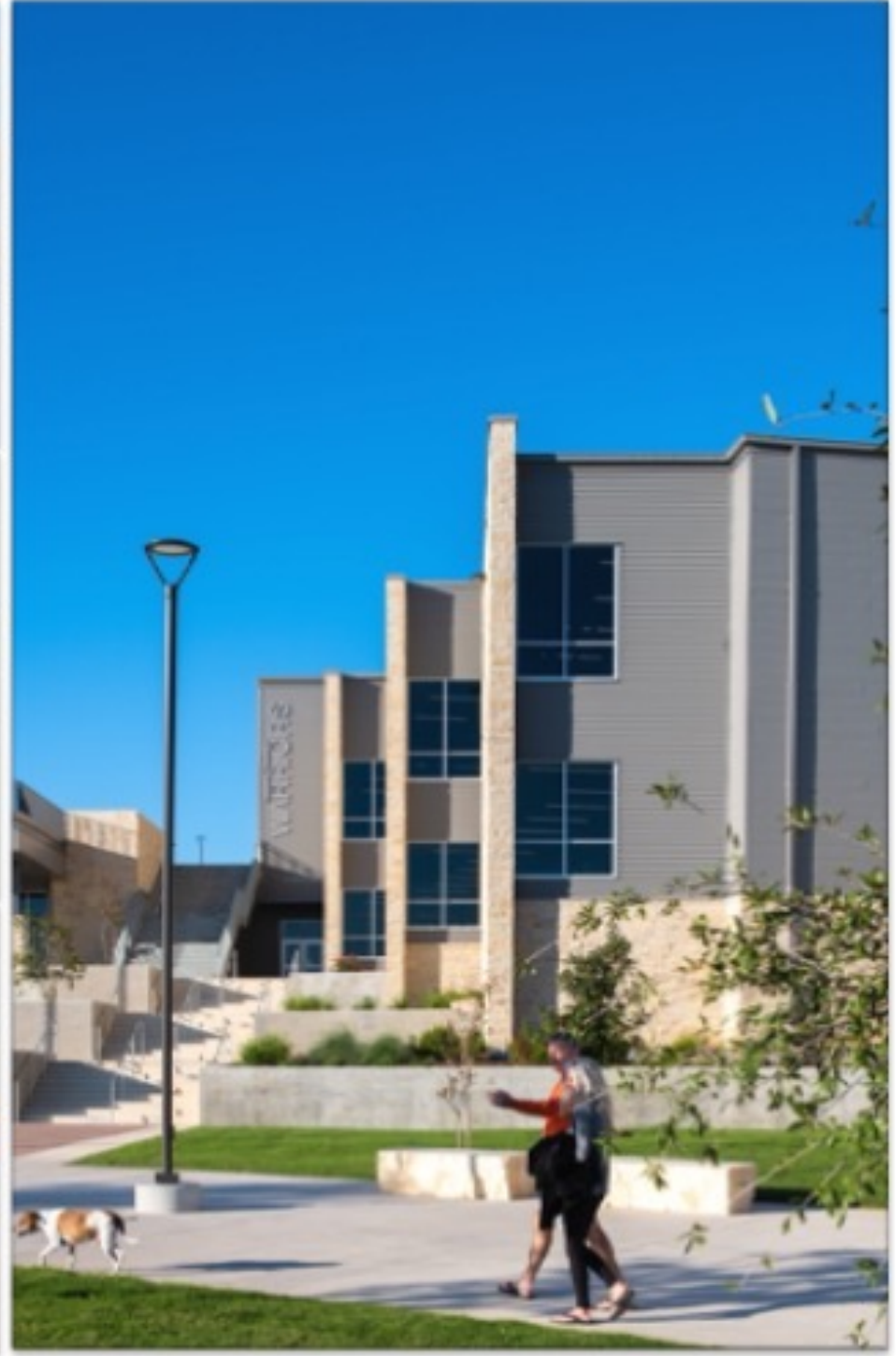
The neighborhood design means each pod and collaborative space are self contained. Each have views of and/or access to the outdoors, and each can be closed off at the student commons for security or for those times the school will be open to the community.

The student commons is lined by spaces programmed for CTE.



THE USER EXPERIENCE was the soul of this project from the very beginning.

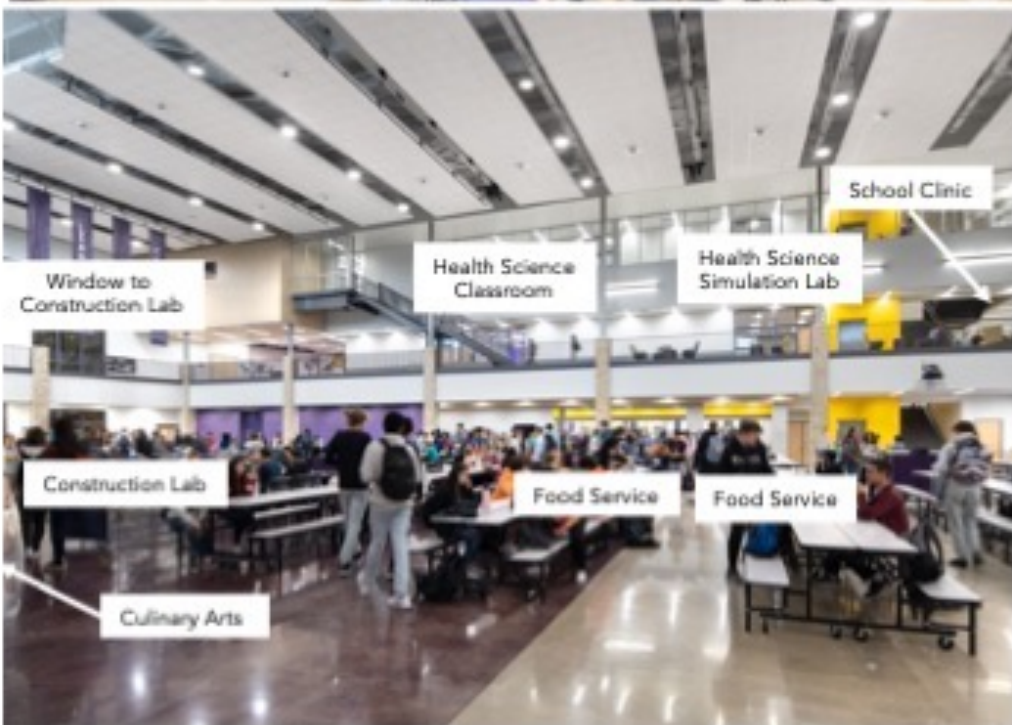
- Distance, time, and activity spaces informed the design to make student and faculty circulation patterns efficient.
- The classroom wings are under one roof—connected at the second level.
- Class changes can also use the plaza on the third level.
- The community as a user means the space is welcoming and accessible.





The design threads CTE around the cafeteria, the campus core, like shops in a mall creating opportunities for students to explore potential interests and expand their future educational and career options.

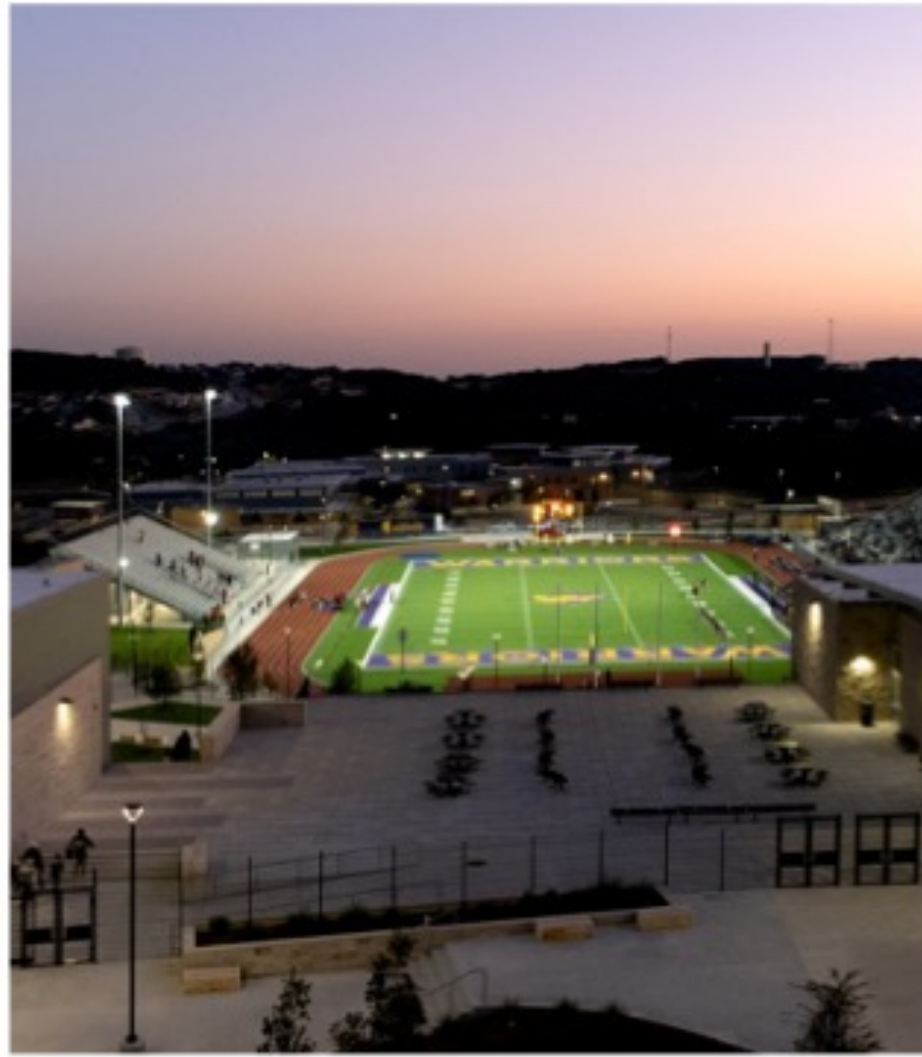
The compact footprint creates spaces that foster and encourage student interaction like collaboration spaces that connect each classroom.



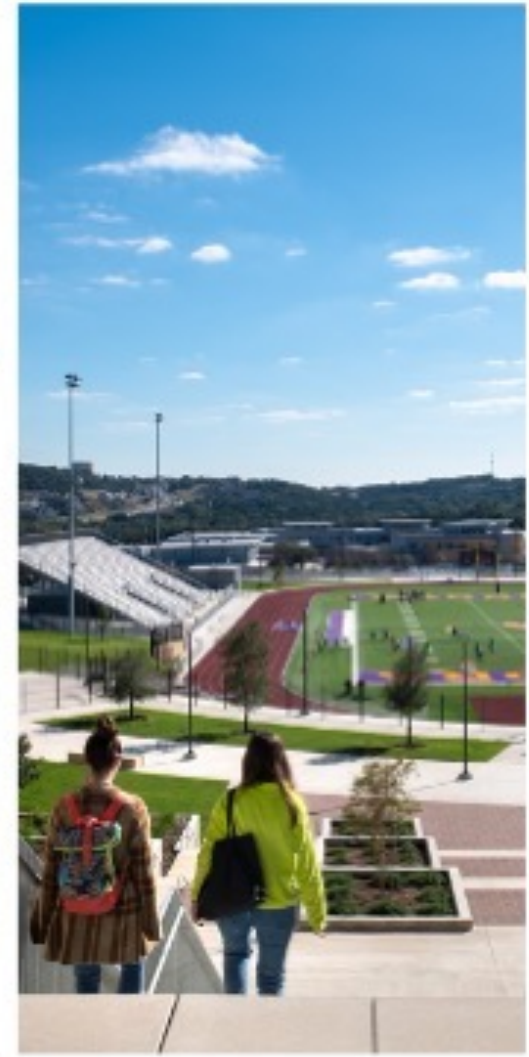
New ways to do old things.



These banners are hanging from stage rigging. Batons can be lowered 40', banners/flags/posters inserted, then electronically hoisted to be visible throughout the school.



The district required the building be under a single roof which would have created a massive structure. To soften the façade, take advantage of incredible views, and improve circulation, we created a plaza on the roof of the library for usable outdoor space. The terraces provide views of the lawn and stadium, can be used for passing periods, and provides outdoor educational and recreation space.



Circulation here is vertical as well as horizontal, both indoors and out. Stairs inside take students from one neighborhood to another, while stairs outside provide stadium and parking access for the band, gyms, and fine arts.

Physical Environment Design

SHARED SITE ADDS VALUE TO THE CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY.

BUILDING MATERIAL SELECTION

- quicker selection
- cohesive design
- meshes with the surrounding planned communities

IMPROVE SITE CIRCULATION

- traffic flow simple & efficient
- simplifies gating with access at two points

SHARED FACILITIES

- middle school access to high school venues
- high school access to middle school parking lots
- cost was shared on stadium and parking
- All site parking has access to the stadium, auditorium, and gym.



Process & Project

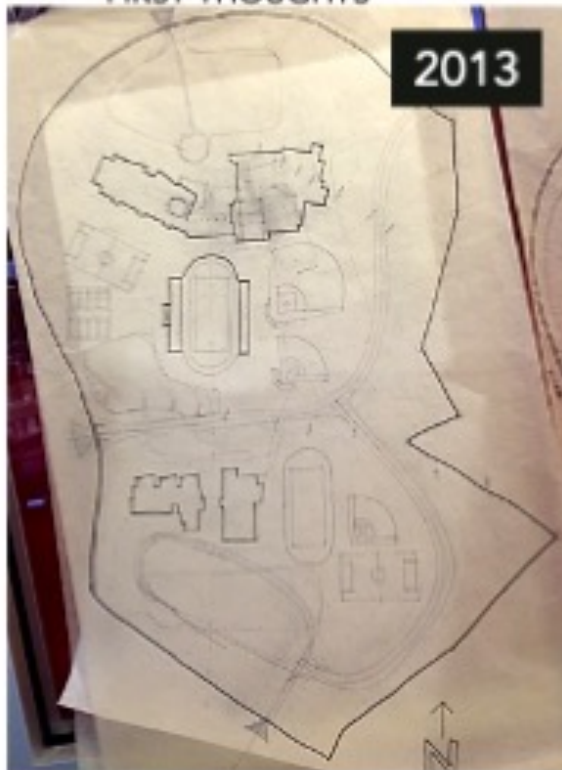
THERE IS INTRINSIC VALUE in respecting the land and minimizing encroachment on the landscape.

Terracing the site to create flat surfaces, preserving heritage trees, and designing the school to nestle into the crest of the hill add value for this community.

The design lives in harmony with its surroundings while being highly functional and efficient.



FIRST THOUGHTS



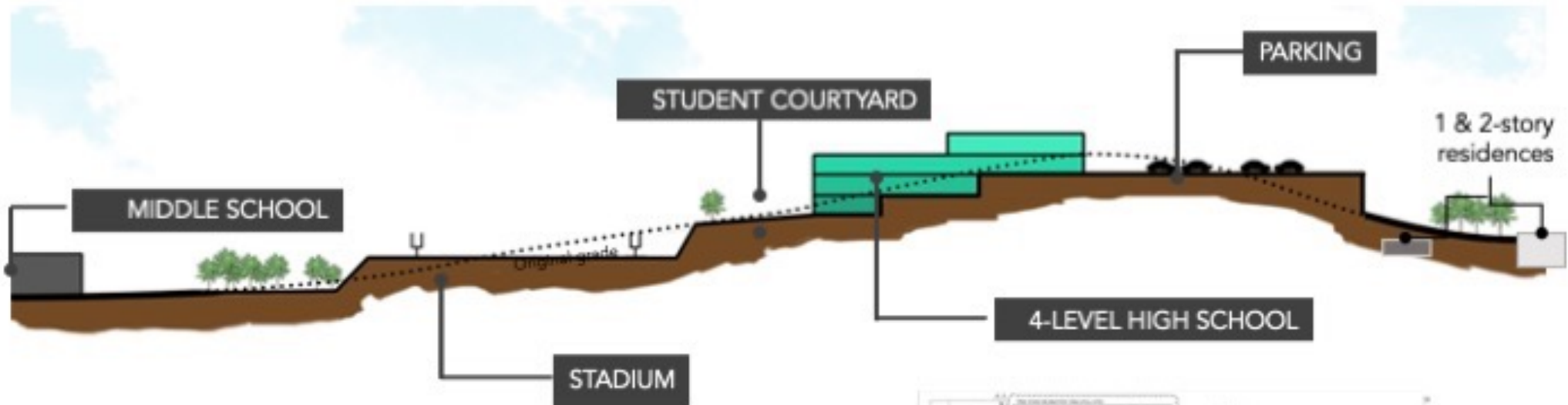
MIDDLE SCHOOL REALIZED



THE FULL SITE DESIGN: COMPLETE



Sustainability and Wellness



Balancing the site allowed us to lower excavation costs by reshaping the site soil to create flat areas for construction.

Additional benefits of minimizing cut & fill

- Keep the natural slope for water runoff.
- Smaller and fewer retaining walls.
- Beautiful views from multiple levels.
- Walk-out terraces provide connection to the outdoors.
- Terraced seating options around the stadium provide additional ways to enjoy campus sports and special events.



In addition to indoor daylighting, clerestories and views from every collaborative neighborhood, efficient electronic HVAC systems with highly rated MERV filters, durable finishes, we worked with our landscape architect to save as many heritage trees as possible.