



**2022 JAMES D.  
MACCONNELL AWARD**  
**ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

JUNE 2022



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education in the K-12 world is rapidly evolving in significant social, cultural, and pedagogical directions. Innovative schools take on a wide range of social and cultural challenges in their ultimate mission to prepare students for a dynamic future. Incorporating new technologies, reaching out to support under-served or disenfranchised groups, nurturing creative thinking, and engaging the business community are just some of the ways that creative schools are re-defining public education.

Today's approach to K-12 innovation is all about flexibility and change. School architecture is driven by pedagogy, which is itself profoundly affected by the fluid development of information and classroom technologies. Learning, subject to this type of wide-ranging evolution, calls for the architecture itself to be less about a building and more about an operable, adaptable platform.

We designed a dramatic new academic complex that transforms Santa Monica High School's (SAMOHI's) North Campus. Benefiting both school and the surrounding community, the complex elevates educational, cultural and recreational pursuits; improves campus access and circulation; and supports whole child development and diverse learning styles.

From arts and athletic facilities to larger, light-filled classrooms, enhanced support spaces to reorganized outdoor spaces, the five-story, 280,000 square foot complex fosters social interactions and strengthens the sense of community on SAMOHI's campus.

Wrapped around an open entry courtyard, this innovative structure is designed as an "open building," with a flexible, open-column grid, raised floor and non-load bearing walls which can be reconfigured over time. Sustainable as well as flexible, the new complex features displacement ventilation, photovoltaic and solar thermal arrays and a two-story living green wall.

Redefining traditional classrooms and taking full advantage of the California climate, large shade trees and landscape rooms also serve as teaching, dining and gathering spaces. Outdoor classrooms—including a rooftop hydroponic garden and science classroom—connect students with the natural world, supporting experiential, hands-on learning.

Interior classrooms are organized around common spaces, building on this sense of belonging, identity and interconnectivity. Supporting diverse teaching and learning styles in the present, the classrooms easily adapt to evolving pedagogical approaches and uses, thanks to the structure's flexible, innovative open building concept and operable glass walls.

Additional features include a publicly accessible 50-meter pool, a central kitchen and dining facility, medically fragile suite and labs and parking. A maker space and career tech labs support SAMOHI's "Project Lead the Way" program.

Replacing the existing science and technology buildings, the new complex joins the recently completed Innovation Building in transforming the SAMOHI campus, serving the school community and surrounding region—flexibly and sustainably—for years to come.



**SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET**

**District Background**

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District is located in Los Angeles County and encompasses both the City of Santa Monica and the City of Malibu. The District serves approximately 11,000 students and operates sixteen school sites and various other facilities throughout the District.

Samohi is located near the center of Santa Monica and serves approximately 3,100 high school students. The District has embarked on a multiple phase program to modernize or replace most of the buildings on the Samohi campus to meet current and future needs.

**Key Programs**

- Classrooms with adjoining Commons
- Project Lead The Way / Physical Science Labs
- Collaboration Classrooms
- Medically Fragile Classrooms
- Makerspaces
- Computer Labs
- Admin Offices
- Campus Café Dining Facility
- Kitchen and Distribution Center for SMMUSD
- Rooftop Science Classroom
- 50 Meter Pool

\*detailed program shown on the following pages

**Budget**

Tasks	Cost
Construction	\$156,512,144
Insurance	\$3,300,000
PLA Admin	\$250,000
Design	\$9,000,000
Permitting/Misc.	\$2,400,000
CM	\$3,500,000
Inspection/Testing	\$2,800,000
Centralized	\$2,000,000
Swing Space	
Demo	\$9,619,757
Haz Mat	
FFE	\$4,400,000
AV	\$2,200,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$195,981,901</b>



OLYMPIC BLVD.

AQUATIC CENTER

DISCOVERY BUILDING

INNOVATION BUILDING

ATHLETIC

MUSIC

BARNUM HALL

LIBRARY/STUDENT CENTER

MICHIGAN AVE.

4TH STREET

ADMIN/STUDENT SERVICES

GREEK AMPHITHEATRE

EXPLORATION  
(Career Tech)

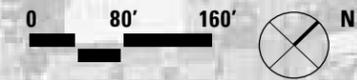
VISUAL ARTS

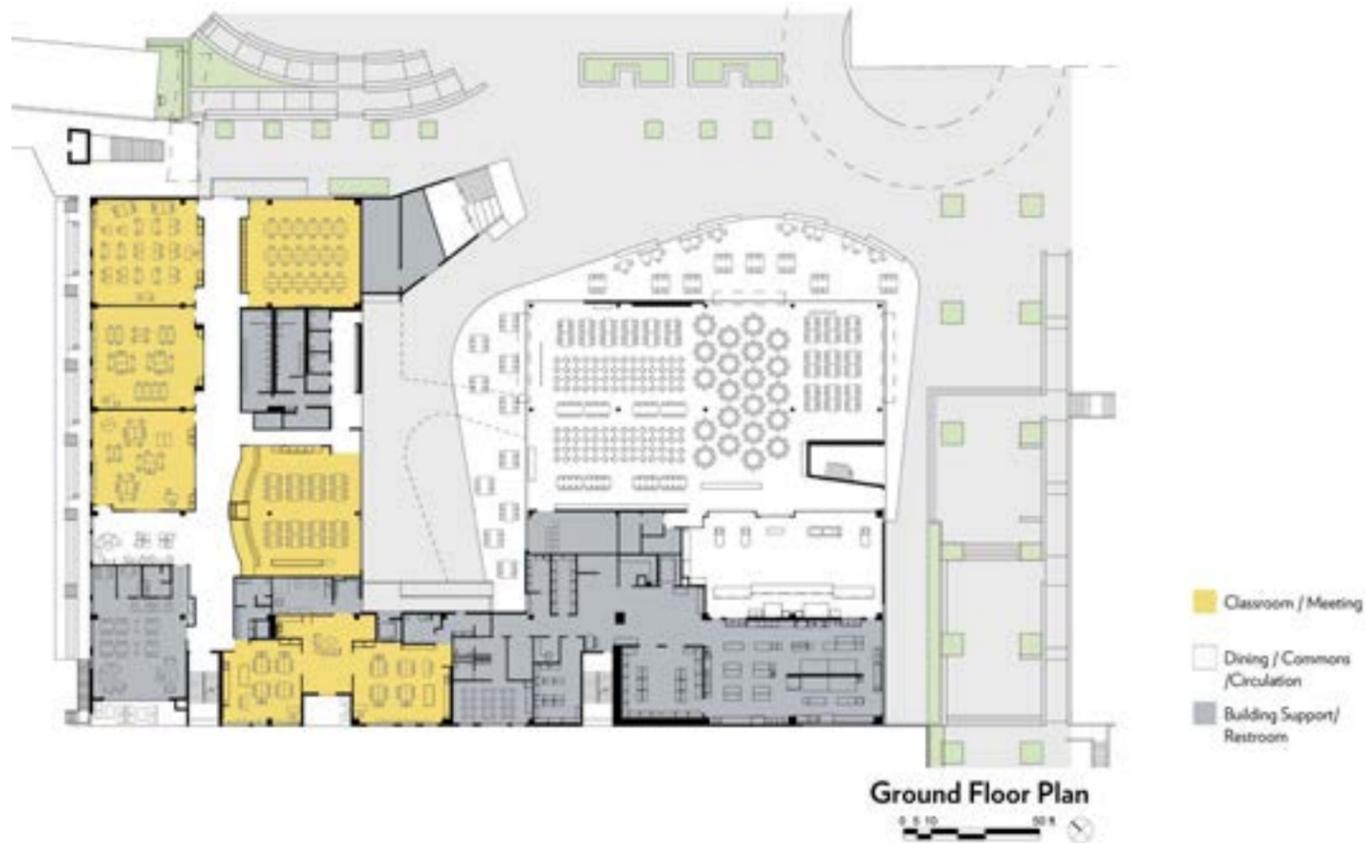
GOLD GYM

DANCE

LANGUAGE ARTS

PICO BLVD.





## OPEN BUILDING CONCEPT

### Future-proofing your buildings to allow for ongoing, incremental change.

As founding members of the Council on Open Building, we are advocates of normalizing the principals of designing for change so that educational facilities can be dynamic opportunities for user engagement and innovation. Open Building is not about universal space or “multi-useless” spaces that try to accommodate to many different activities and do so unsuccessfully. Each design is a unique combination of adaptable systems and permanent features that are sustainable and resilient. We will bring this forward-thinking approach and philosophy to your projects in order to help ensure lasting value.

The following themes emerge as common ground for designing educational facilities embodying Open Building principals:

- Design the base building and infill systems to anticipate and **accommodate ongoing pedagogical change.**
- Employ a design process that seeks to involve multiple stakeholders and even different design professionals to complete the facility’s development.
- Ensure that **learning is not confined to conventional classrooms**; the planning of space is determined by an understanding of a range of activities rather than the multiplication of a standard classroom as building block. Provide choice in spatial configurations.
- Design circulation zones to be **flexible learning / studying environments**; avoid dedicated corridors.
- Provide access to natural light in all learning spaces as a design priority.
- Deploy a simple versatile structural system with a minimum of load bearing or shear walls to allow the **reorganization of spaces over time.**
- Establish a clear distinction between shell and core and infill systems in anticipation of the shaping of space by multiple users at different levels of control.
- Create floor footprints that are deeper than usual, typically exceeding the width required for a typical double loaded corridor with classrooms on either side. This allows for more **variation in the clustering of learning spaces** of different shapes, sizes, and activity.

The Open Building Movement:  
The Significance for 21st Century  
Learning Environments  
by John Dale

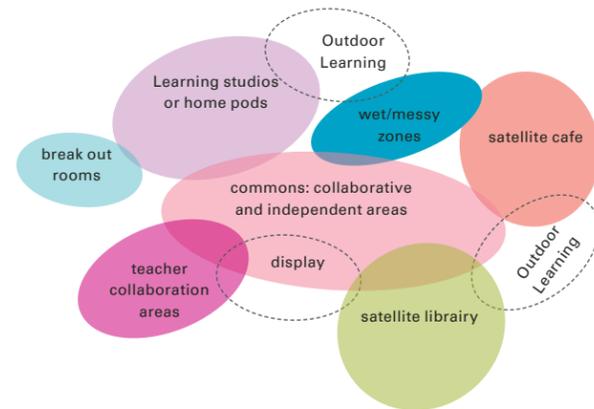


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READ FULL ARTICLE

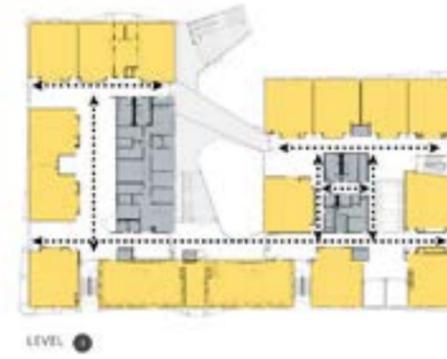


### EXCERPT | What is Open Building?

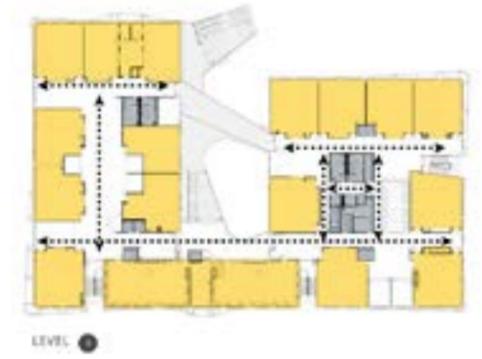
The term “Open Building” originated at the Technical University of Delft in the 1980s, the result of a research program exploring the practical implementation of the theories of Dutch architect and educator, John Habraken. The basic idea of Open Building is simple: built environments need to undergo constant renewal because human living / working requirements keep changing and evolving. We need to strategically plan buildings and their supporting systems to support this reality.



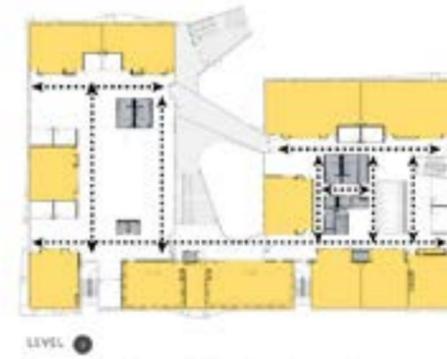
The DNA of a Learning Community:  
Shaping Activity Zones to Support Project  
Based Learning and Design Thinking



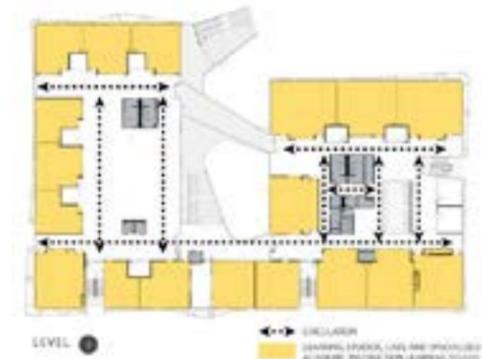
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3

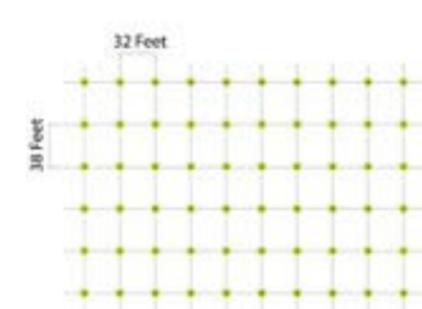


LEVEL 4

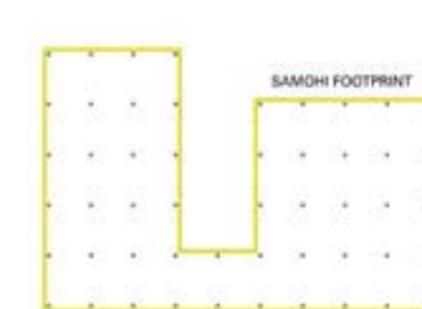
Open Building - Flexible Floor Plans

LEGEND  
CIRCULATION  
GENERAL LEVELS ARE UNOCCUPIED  
GENERAL LEVELS FOR GENERAL STUDY  
COMMONS AND SHARED RESOURCES  
BUILDING CORE AND SERVICES

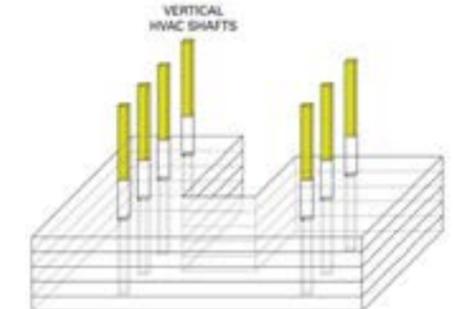
Discovery Building conceptual diagrams illustrating Open uilding features



Flexible Structural Grid



Deep Building Footprint for Natural Light



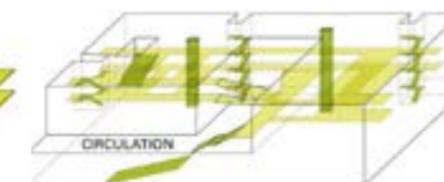
Distributed Vertical HVAC Shafts



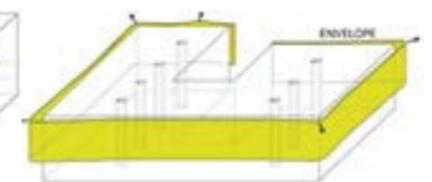
Raised Floors for Power, Data, HVAC



Flexible Horizontal Circulation



Building Envelope – Place Making



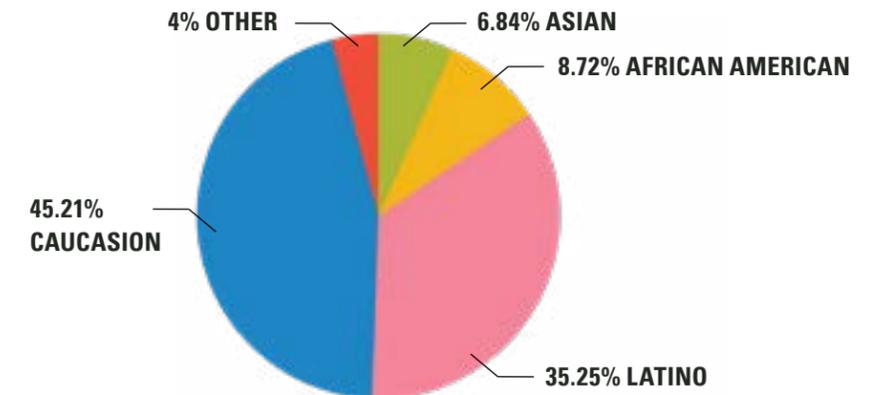


## SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Describe the Community

Since 1891, Santa Monica High School (Samohi) has been an integral part of the City of Santa Monica. Its students have a one-of-a-kind experience during their four years. Samohi offers an abundance of strong and diverse curriculum, clubs, activities, and sports to support members of our Viking family. Each student that walks this campus brings to it his or her own personality, which creates the valued experience that so many embrace. The District has implemented social justice standards, reflecting the larger community, while working toward becoming more culturally responsive in the District's teaching and learning.

Samohi's diverse school community consists of over 2,800 students, who speak a variety of languages, representing many countries from around the world. The student body reflects the following ethnic backgrounds: 6.84% Asian (from various Asian countries), 8.72% African American, 35.25% Latino (from various regions of the Americas), 45.21% Caucasian (of European and Middle Eastern ethnicity), and 4% Other. Some students are of multi-generational American descent; others are first-generation Americans. The families of students at Samohi all levels of socioeconomic status. Thirty-two percent of the student body participate in the federal National School Lunch Program.



\*Data taken from [prepscholar.com](https://prepscholar.com) 2022

As a result of its cultural diversity, the High School is always at the forefront of social justice issues. The Samohi experience cannot be replicated; its students are academically successful, musically talented, athletically thriving and intellectually flourishing.

The school enjoys the strong support of a 7,000-member Alumni Association as well as the citizens of Santa Monica and Malibu. Samohi is organized into five Small Learning Communities, called Houses. Each House is comprised of approximately 600 students, one administrator, and two advisors.

Santa Monica High School placed in the top 20% of all schools in California for overall test scores (math proficiency is top 20%, and reading proficiency is top 5%) for the 2018-19 school year. The percentage of students achieving proficiency in math is 56% (which is higher than the California state average of 40%) for the 2018-19 school year. The percentage of students achieving proficiency in reading/language arts is 81% (which is higher than the California state average of 51%) for the 2018-19 school year.

The student:teacher ratio of 20:1 is lower than the California state level of 23:1. Minority enrollment is 61% of the student body (majority Hispanic), which is lower than the California state average of 77% (majority Hispanic).

\*Data taken from <https://www.smmusd.org/>



### Identify stakeholders

Santa Monica and Malibu are engaged communities that are committed, vocal and impassioned. The design of the Discovery Building was a highly participatory process which entailed numerous stakeholders throughout the design process and even in the construction phase as the inherent flexibility of the building was more fully understood. The following are the key stakeholders that the design team collaborated with to achieve the final project.

- District Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
- Chief Operations Officer and Facility Improvement Projects Staff
- School Principal, House Principals, Administrative Staff, Faculty, and Students
- Community Representatives
- City of Santa Monica Planning Staff
- Board of Education Members
- Peer Architectural Reviewers
- Bond Oversight Committee

### Name challenges

- The Samohi Campus is over 100 years old; the majority of buildings are outdated and inadequate for current needs, requiring drastic renovations or replacement.
- The campus houses over 2800 students in about 26 acres
- The undersized classrooms are crowded and rigid, the meeting spaces inadequate
- Administration offices are too few and too small
- Inadequate, aging athletic and physical education facilities do not meet the needs of the student population.
- Inadequate parking puts pressure on limited land resources and the accessibility of facilities intended to be available to the public.
- Congested pedestrian circulation network lengthens travel time between classes.
- The District is experiencing declining enrollment.
- The District is also faced with threat that Malibu and Santa Monica may someday split into two separate school districts undermining the diversity of students and community resources.

### Describe available assets

Despite the challenges faced by Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, it is blessed with a remarkably committed and supportive community that wants a progressive and well-equipped educational experience for its students. The key assets for this school district are:

- A diverse, highly educated and committed community, administration, staff, faculty and students
- Wide consensus around a progressive pedagogical approach now transforming education across the District
- Central, prominent site in the heart of the city
- Ongoing financial commitment on the part of the community for improving school facilities resulting from a highly effective series of local bond campaigns, the most recent of which raised over half a billion dollars.
- The campus includes some memorable landmarks – the Greek Theater (outdoor amphitheater) and Barnum Hall – a wonderful Art Deco auditorium and stage – that frequently serve the public as well as local student events

### Describe value of process and project to community at large

To fully understand the progressive program goals of the School and the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, the team's design process was based on a series of workshops with teaching and administrative staff. These meetings reinforced a hybrid approach to the use of open commons versus discrete spaces and allowed educators to actively test different teaching models against the capacity of the shell and core being developed by the design team before any walls were fixed in place.



## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

### Explain the Educational Vision and Goals of the School

The focus of Samohi is to increase college and career readiness through implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum, incorporating academic language and evidence-based writing, and implementing student engagement strategies. The three main educational goals of the school are:

1. All graduates are socially just and ready for college and careers. School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) Page 2 of 70 Santa Monica High School
2. English Learners will become proficient in English while engaging in a culturally and linguistically responsive standards-aligned core curriculum.
3. All students and families engage in safe, well-maintained schools that are culturally responsive and conducive to 21st century learning.

Specific indicators for **goal #1** are students will utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, and students will communicate clearly, effectively, and with evidence-based reasons. To support these indicators, the staff engages in the cycle of inquiry within Professional Learning Community (PLC) teams, focused on problem solving, communication of ideas, and future ready skills. The teams in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and World Languages will engage in norming of grading rubrics and practices. All staff will work on strategies to incorporate learning experiences and engagement for students using technology. Additionally, a team of teachers actively participates in the CARPE College Access Network. This network's focus is to improve college access for traditionally underrepresented students. The team learns and applies evidence-based ways to increase FAFSA completion and Cal Grant awards, enhance the college application/selection process, foster a sense of belonging, and decrease "summer melt".

The specific indicator for **goal #2** is students will be able to use academic language to access the content area and engage in evidence-based writing (move from speaking to writing). The staff practices that will foster this goal is incorporation of academic talk strategies, use of sentence frames, and incorporation of academic word banks.

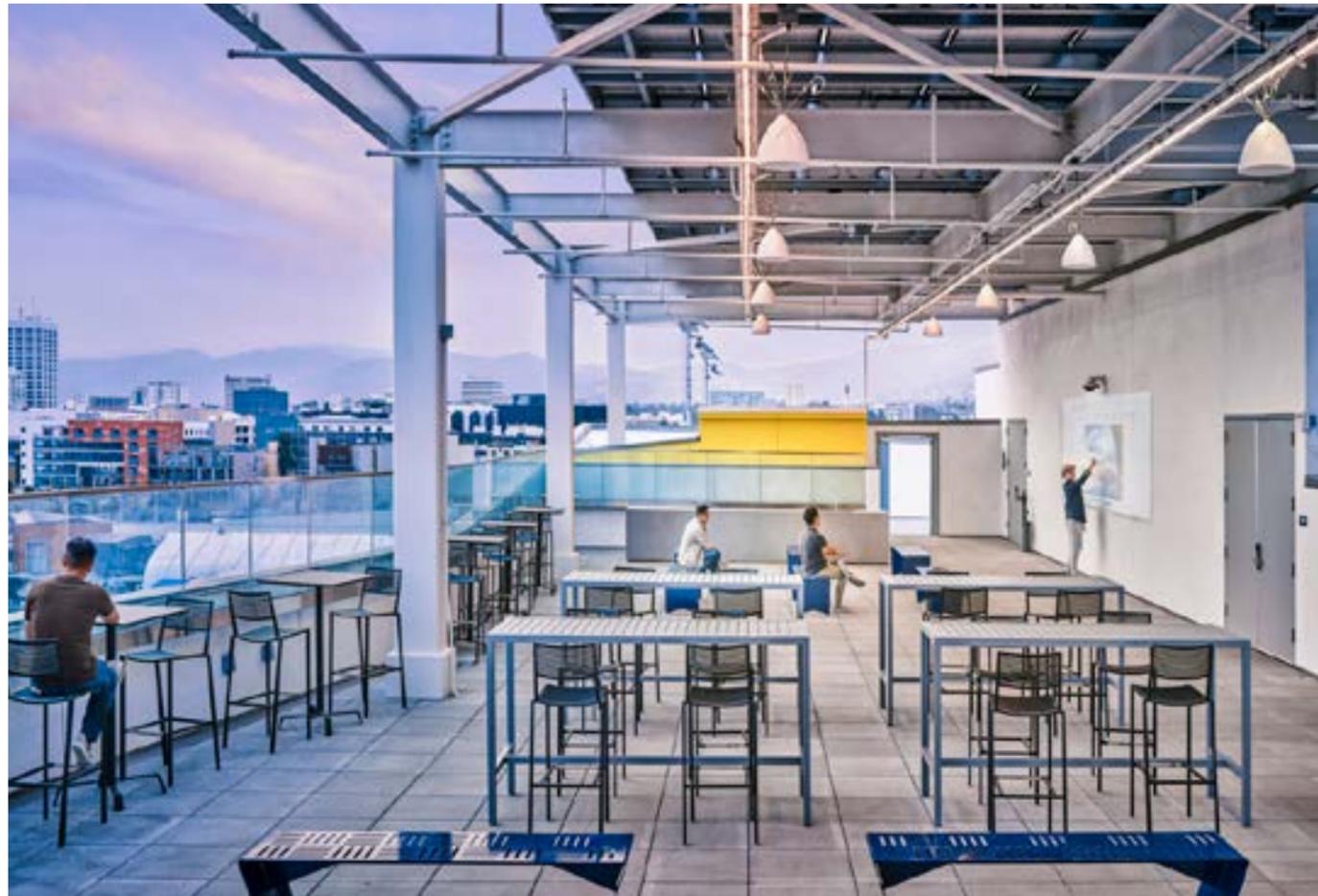
For **goal #3**, the first specific indicator is students will feel safe at school and in their classes to take risks and engage in learning. The staff practices for this indicator include restorative justice training, utilizing community building strategies, and incorporation of student-oriented instruction activities. An additional specific indicator is students will have a balanced workload and supports for stress and time management. The staff practice fostering this part of the goal is first and foremost, the development and implementation of

a support period in the school day which we call Flex-Time. Other practices include utilizing Google Classroom to communicate homework, deadlines, and upcoming assessments. Additionally, PLC teams will have discussions focused on grading practices and policies to normalize experiences across campus. .

### District Vision

As a community of learners, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District works together in a nurturing environment to help students be visionary, versatile thinkers; resourceful, life-long learners; effective, multilingual communicators and global citizens. We are a rich, culturally diverse community that values the contributions of all its members and strives to promote social justice. We exist to assist all students in their pursuit of academic achievement, strength of character, and personal growth, and to support them in their exploration of the intellectual, artistic, technological, physical and social expression. Santa Monica High School Mission Statement Santa Monica High School believes that all students can learn at high levels, and we are willing to do what it takes to achieve this. Santa Monica High will offer every student the experience to grow creatively, ethically and academically and will empower academically productive students who: Prepare academically productive students who:

- Read, write, speak and listen effectively
- Think critically and independently
- Identify and use available resources, including technology, to manage, research and synthesize knowledge
- Develop the habits of mind necessary to meet the challenges of the 21st century Santa Monica High School prepares ethical students who are socially aware and sensitive to the needs of others; and work democratically and collaboratively to improve school, community and society. Santa Monica High School prepares creative students who: are inspired, impassioned, and motivated while expressing a unique and perceptive vision.



**Describe & illustrate how the environment supports the curriculum**

Santa Monica High School is a U.S. News & World Report Gold Medal School, placing in the top 500 schools in the nation. It is a large four-year, comprehensive high school located in the city of Santa Monica. The student body consists of 2,800 students who represent our diverse ethnic and socioeconomic community. The staff consists of 148 certificated faculty and 74 classified staff members. Fondly referred to as Samohi, the school is supported by a 5,000-member alumni association, as well as the citizens of Santa Monica and Malibu. Santa Monica High School received a six-year accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the fall of 2017. As part of the accreditation process, goals were set for the next six years of work. In addition, a Smaller Learning Communities Grant, received in 2003 from the federal government helped to redesign Santa Monica High School into smaller, more personalized Houses, which are still going strong today. These Houses consist of randomly assigned students across all four grade levels. Once assigned to a House as an incoming ninth grader, students remain with the House, as well as their House advisor (counselor) throughout their high school years. During

ninth and 10th grade, students are primarily taught by the teachers within their House, thereby allowing students to be well-known and emotionally and academically supported by the adult members of their House.

In alignment with school and district visions, and in collaboration with the school's Instructional Planning Committee (which consists of every department chair, teacher leader and administrator), all major parent groups, and school's Site Governance committee, goals are established for the school. These goals, and the resources and steps necessary to achieve them, are articulated in the school's School Plan for Student Achievement.

**Describe & illustrate how the environment supports a variety of learning & teaching styles**

In contrast to single and double-loaded corridor layouts common in California, the six level Discovery Building has relatively deep floor plates that allow the clustering of spaces and activities in a greater variety of sizes and formats, supporting different modes of learning. In addition to generous classrooms and labs, there are a variety of breakout spaces that form a series of commons

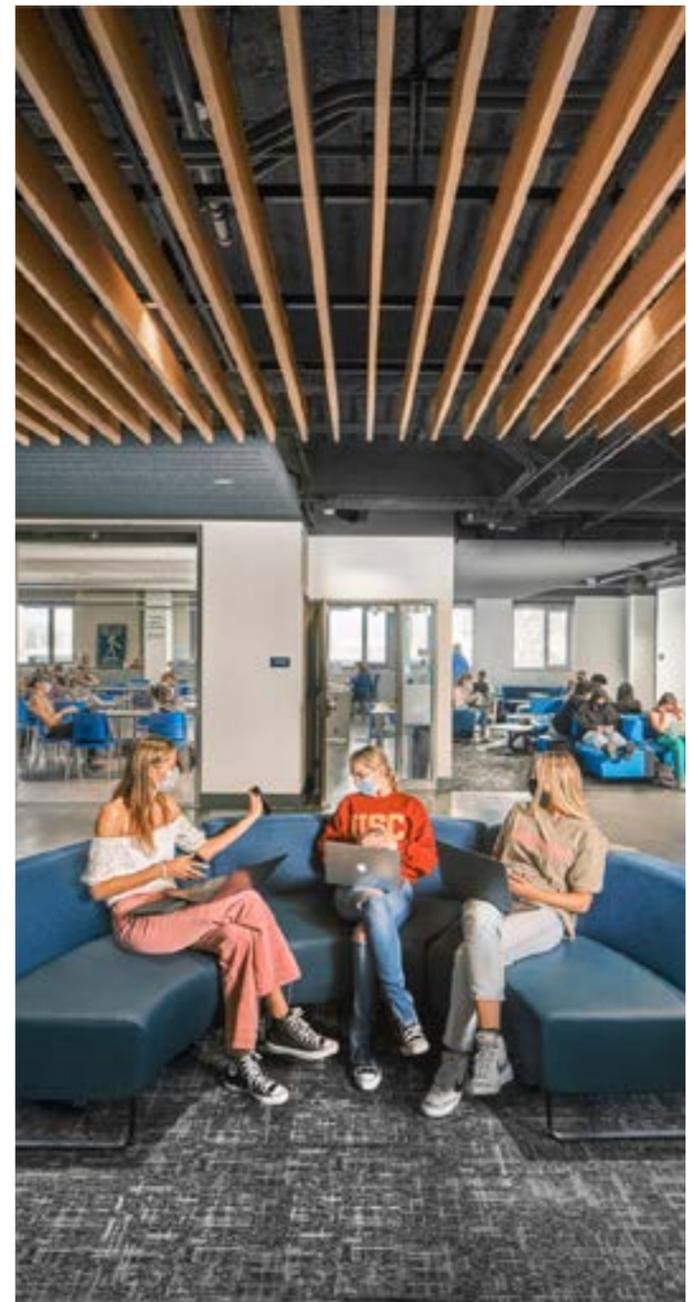
that support project-based learning, team session, individual research and socializing. The program includes a computer center, community meeting rooms, a medically fragile suite for longer-term students with special needs, and a large textbook distribution center. Two levels of underground parking at the base of this building have also been designed for change. With open column grids and flat slabs, these spaces can be converted to other uses in the future. Maximizing natural light and air has led to a healthy building with operable windows, trickle vents, folding glass walls and huge overhead doors that emphasize transparency, openness and the seamless integration of indoor and outdoor spaces. The central courtyard, with its sweeping bleacher stairs and balconies connects the new building to the adjacent Centennial Plaza and welcomes students in.

In addition to planned learning spaces, varied, interconnected spaces, inside and out, connected by external stairs and bleacher seating, centrally located elevators and overhead bridges knit this complex together in a way that promotes chance meetings, casual socializing as well as a variety of teaching and performing opportunities. For example, the courtyard with its open stairs and bridges has already been the setting for a school choral concert and much more is being planned.

**Describe & illustrate how the environment is adaptable and flexible**

A typical school building is designed for a 50-year life cycle but is often obsolete long before it is replaced. Using Open Building principles, the design team designed a flexible and adaptable building that would accommodate frequent changes for at least 100 years, allowing teaching spaces to adapt incrementally and continuously to evolving pedagogy. By clearly distinguishing between a fixed shell and core and an infill system of non-structural partitions and by introducing a raised floor system for air supply, power and data, change is more manageable from a financial perspective and the building will maintain its utility and flexibility for years to come.

The application of Open Building strategies led to the selection of certain systems - a prefabricated steel moment frame and a raised floor system - to achieve long term resilience and adaptability. While these are premium systems, the additional costs represent less than 1 percent of the total construction cost and are already proving to be a valuable asset as changes have been made to the floor plans up until almost the conclusion of the construction phase of the project. At critical stages in the design of this project, client and design team have quickly come to consensus about what is essential to the future resilience of the building. The employment of a steel moment frame structure means that there are no fixed shear walls within the overall building footprint, meaning learning spaces can be easily reconfigured. Data, power and floor diffusers for air distribution can easily be rearranged within the raised floor system and can respond readily to incremental change, even if it is related to the needs and desires of a single instructor.





## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### Describe & illustrate the physical attributes of the environment

The creation of an open, flexible 'loft' building facilitating continuous change is at the heart of the design concept for the Discovery Building. The exterior of the building is characterized by generous bands of windows and undulating, white plaster walls that are a contemporary interpretation of the campus' Art Deco heritage. Grand, operable glass storefronts at ground level open the building up to surrounding terraces, courtyard and adjacent plaza. The learning environment is engaging, welcoming comfortable and varied, allowing teachers and students alike to feel 'at home'.

The sustainable strategies that have been incorporated into this project give the building a distinctive presence; the building's orientation, massing and layout have, in turn shaped these strategies to create a holistic solution. The courtyard with its two-story living wall combines passive strategies that allow the building to breathe and achieve natural cooling while bringing day lighting deep into the building. At the same time, it creates a versatile social gathering space and extends the life of adjacent Centennial Plaza. It creates program space in the most economical way possible. The photovoltaic arrays which offset power from the grid take the form of a highly visible canopy hovering 15 feet above the roof and providing economical shelter for the rooftop outdoor classroom. Its visibility and clarity of its exposed systems becomes an important teaching tool. Similarly, the solar thermal array because a prominent cap to the living wall and point to a more extensive array which helps to reduce the heating load of the swimming pool below. All of the outdoor spaces are accessible, well connected to adjacent indoor spaces and readily available to all students and staff and are designed with the same palette of hardscape and plant materials.

### Describe & illustrate how the facility fits within the larger context of the community

The multi-faceted building, highly visible at the northeast corner of the campus is accessible by car, van, bus, bicycle / scooter and pedestrian in an urban setting. Its amenities are therefore highly visible and readily available to a broad spectrum of the population. The new building sits on the axis of Michigan Avenue, a street which originally bisected the site as a public right of way but is now contained with a secured campus. The campus is open for pedestrian access for neighbors and citizens in the evenings and on weekends for access to sports and community events on the playing fields, aquatic center, auditorium, amphitheater. The Discovery Building adds to this complex to create a series of outdoor rooms along the Michigan axis, a rooftop classroom that can be used for special functions and events, the aquatic center which is offered for community use. The students, teachers and their families reflect a remarkable diversity of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This is celebrated in a very visible way on a two-story high 'word' wall at the interior bleacher stairs connecting 2nd and 3rd floor classrooms. Attributes chosen in a facilitated student workshop cover the wall in silkscreen and projected letters and set in six major languages spoken on campus.



Santa Monica is a community where wealth and privilege exist side by side with the poor and underserved. Previous to the completion of this project, the children of wealthy families ordered lunch via uber and the old cafeteria served free breakfasts and lunches to those in need, creating a sharp distinction between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. The new building has a central kitchen which serves the southern half (and lower income side) of the School District and a dining room that supports the entire campus. Although the District is still providing free breakfasts and lunches to many in need, they are now being served alongside the more economically privileged in a setting that dignifies and celebrates the student body as a whole. The presentation and serving of food has been elevated and now draws the whole community in.

The medically fragile suite which teaches life skills to the disabled provides a safe, secure and self-contained environment which is highly accessible and centrally located within the building, promoting a sense of belonging, equity and connection.

**Describe & illustrate how the project inspires and motivates**

This is a building that engages the whole student body rather than a specialized subset because it combines two academic houses with a series of community-oriented and campus-wide facilities. The building offers a glimpse of college ahead and both inspires the student users and welcomes them in. Transparency and connections between internal and external spaces invite students and teachers to interconnect experiences and ideas to enrich and diversify the student learning experience. The exterior spaces seamlessly extend the activity from inside the building and are designed to accommodate different types of activities and provide a variety of spaces for students and staff to use for gathering, dining, performance, and learning. Tying the outdoor spaces to the indoor spaces expands the usable area for school activities.

The building engages body mind and spirit. From the word wall representing the multiple languages spoken in the school to the roof top open air classroom with sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean and the proximity to and integration with a state-of-the-art aquatic center challenge and inspire students intellectually, physically and emotionally.



## RESULTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

### Explain how the project achieves educational goals and objectives

Santa Monica High School (Samohi)'s pedagogy is in transition from classroom only accommodation and instruction from the front to a diverse spectrum of learning suites and labs complemented by breakout 'Commons' areas where learning styles are diverse and multi-directional. Reflecting this dynamic, the Discovery Building—a 260,000 SF addition to the 2,800 student campus—embraces the Open Building approach to both layout and construction, ensuring long term resilience for the community and lasting value for the initial investment.

An abiding ethos here is that there is learning everywhere, all the time. In contrast to single and double-loaded corridor layouts common in California, the five-level Discovery Building has deep floor plates that allow the clustering of spaces and activities in a greater variety of sizes and formats, supporting different modes of learning. Large classrooms, up to 1,200 SF, are able to accommodate multiple activities simultaneously. The building wraps around an open entry court with cascading stairs and bleachers for informal gathering. The building is designed as a 'loft' building with a flexible, open column grid, raised floor for air supply, power and data and non-load bearing walls which can be reconfigured over time.

Like resilience, sustainability is integrated and visible in the project's living green wall, displacement ventilation, and rooftop photovoltaic and solar thermal arrays. The classrooms are filled with natural light and many have operable glass walls to connect to commons areas. And the building, in particular its rooftop classroom with overhead photovoltaics, weather station and aquaculture displays—is part of the curriculum.

### Explain how the project achieves district goals

The District supports the needs of its students at Samohi through a diversity of learning environments that allow personalized approaches for its students. It also utilizes a House system that has one House Principal, two Advisors, a Teacher Leader and an administrative assistant to help support and track the progress of every student. Each of the five Houses on campus—two of which reside in the Discovery Building, consists of approximately 560 students. The upper two floors of the new building have been carefully orchestrated to reflect this structure. The resulting environment supports the District's mission to have students actualize their passions through a variety of experiences.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District is undergoing a fundamental pedagogical shift from traditional instruction confined to classrooms to a much more varied scenario that incorporates collaborative participation, project-based learning and self-directed study. As a result, the core instructional spaces in Discovery are oversized classrooms with flexible furnishings that can be readily reconfigured. Folding glass walls connect them to a varied series of common areas with walls of interactive projection and comfortable, informal furniture that can be rearranged to support large and small group activities. Throughout the building, there are opportunities to learn and gather both inside and outside.

One of the most notable learning spaces is the 3,500 square foot outdoor classroom which, with a weather station, demonstration gardens and aquaria becomes a hands-on, 3-dimensional science experience. Terraces, balconies, and both indoor and outdoor bleachers provide informal venues for performances, socializing and study. Many of the classrooms and common areas overlook the aquatic center which has been fully integrated into the building. This center of fitness and competition is a catalyst for holistic approach to the education of Santa Monica High School's students, integrating body, mind and spirit in a dynamic campus setting.

This building serves Samohi's whole student body rather than a specialized subset. It combines its two academic houses with a series of publicly accessible and campus-wide facilities that also welcome the broader community in. The building offers a glimpse of college life ahead, inspiring the students and making them feel at home. Transparency and interconnections between internal and external spaces invite students and teachers to link ideas with concrete experiences, thus enriching and diversifying their learning perspective. The exterior spaces seamlessly extend the activity from inside the building and are designed to accommodate a wide variety of activities by providing diverse spaces for social interaction, dining, performance, and learning. The Discovery Building becomes a model for fostering an evolving, progressive, and participatory pedagogy.

**Explain how the project achieves community goals**

SMMUSD is committed to building the schools' and families' capacity for strong parental engagement; ensuring effective involvement of parents; supporting partnerships among district schools, parents, and the community; and improving student academic achievement through district/school-wide activities and programs.

The new Discovery Building is carefully scaled to meet the community's goals for educating its children. It is the District's goal to ensure that all community members understand their role and responsibility of empowering all students with the creative, intellectual, and decision-making skills necessary to become academically, socially, physically, and emotionally successful and responsible contributing citizens.

Samohi has its own broader role in the City of Santa Monica, with a variety of school and non-school programs that bring the public onto campus throughout the year. Balancing off hours public access with normal daily security relies on smart campus planning, with clear, efficient movement of visitors from limited entry points to the particular venues for events.

Major components of the Discovery Building promote community use and engagement. The open air Aquatic Center with its 50+ meter competition pool is open to the Santa Monica community in the evenings. Located at the most visible public side of the site, the Olympic-sized pool visually identifies Santa Monica high School as a dynamic public center of health and recreation as well as education. The District is also in discussions with other entities about their use of other outdoor spaces outside of school hours, which could become a way for the high school to generate additional revenue for the Education Foundation. The central kitchen located on the ground floor with a central loading dock below simultaneously serves the entire student body at Samohi and acts as a food distribution center for the entire School District.

Samohi's Discovery Building is a campus integrator for a public school -- and a demonstration of how we can design for value. This project was created with short-term flexibility and long-term adaptability in mind. In the midst of an urban neighborhood, this building is a permeable, approachable hub that knits the campus together. In one building, the strands of the campus are drawn together, completing the whole.

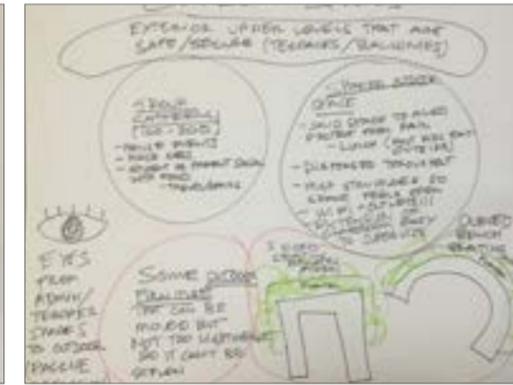
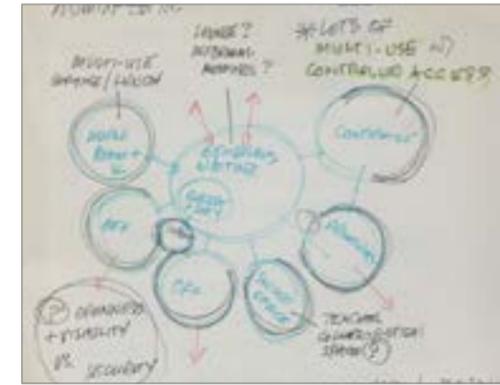
**Explain any unintended results and achievements of the process & project**

Having just been occupied in August 2021, the Discovery Building has achieved an unanticipated popularity as a new campus focal point. It has quickly become a home base and focal point for the northeastern corner of the campus. Its courtyard extends from Centennial Plaza to expand outdoor venues for gathering, performances and socializing. The cafeteria is placed at the intersection of two major pedestrian routes and its expansive overhead doors, open all during the day, create a seamless connection between well-populated indoor and outdoor spaces. The varied spaces defined within and outside the building to learn or just hang out are already well-used and popular with the students. To quote the high school's principal, "When they first walked into the new building, many said, 'Wow, this is like a college campus!' " and he adds that, at the end of the day, "We have to tell them, 'Hey, it's time to go home!' "

**EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS**

The Educational Specifications for Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District can be found [here](#)

**SAMPLES OF VISIONING DOCUMENTS**



We held multiple visioning roundtable discussions with the community and stakeholders of Samohi that included Curriculum Mapping Workshops, various student surveys, culture questionnaires, and a 'post-it' note aspirations and concerns activity.

