



Entrance Showcasing Historic Restoration

EL RODEO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HISTORIC REHABILITATION

Beverly Hills Unified School District

Bridging Centuries



Tower Showcasing Historic Restoration



Aerial View of Campus

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preserving the Past, Embracing the Future

El Rodeo School, a historic public school in Beverly Hills, underwent a comprehensive modernization, transforming 118,000 SF across its 6.5-acre campus while preserving its architectural legacy. Originally built in 1927 with cast-in-place concrete, the historic Neighborhoods A, B, and C were renovated in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Key upgrades included reinforced Spanish Renaissance Revival cast-stone facades, a replicated tower dome, and restored historic windows with insulated replacements that maintain the original design. The auditorium received a restored ceiling, new theater rigging, and advanced audiovisual systems.

Campus-wide enhancements improved accessibility with new outdoor pathways, a community garden, and modern infrastructure, including artificial turf fields, landscaping, irrigation, fencing, and shade structures. Safety and efficiency were also prioritized with new fire alarms, fire protection systems, upgraded MEP infrastructure, and a state-of-the-art security system. With 48 teaching stations, the revitalized campus now meets modern educational standards while honoring its historic significance.

Goals and Outcomes

- Enhance seismic resilience by exceeding Division of the State Architect's recommendations and district seismic evaluations.
- Preserve the building's listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and maintain eligibility for the National Register.

- Highlight and restore key historic features to reinforce the building as an educational tool.
- Design a K-5 campus with advanced curriculum and next-generation learning strategies.
- Improve accessibility by enhancing deficient access points and vertical circulation.
- Maintain cost control throughout all project phases, identifying savings opportunities.
- Implement innovative, cost-effective solutions that align with bond funding while preserving the historic integrity.
- Integrate sustainability strategies within the existing buildings and site.



Aerial View - 1936



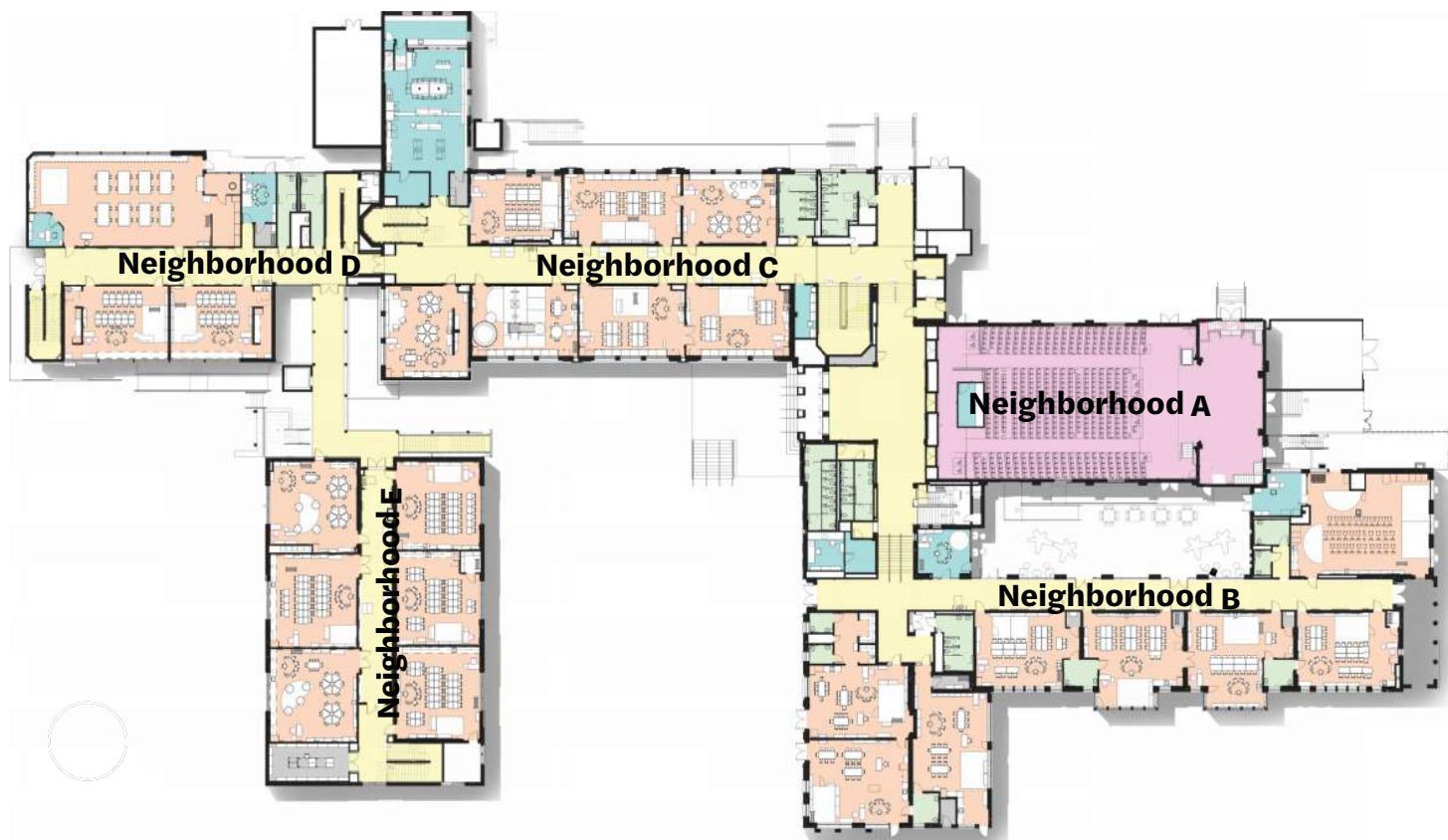
Aerial View - 2024



Exterior View - 1927



Exterior View - 2024



2 SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

Voluntary Seismic Retrofit and Historic Rehabilitation Foundation

El Rodeo de Las Aguas voluntary seismic retrofit and historic rehabilitation was an opportunity to highlight an iconic 1927 Spanish Renaissance Revival architectural beauty that bears symbols of both California and American history. This retrofit which was the initial driving force behind this comprehensive modernization not only provides a strengthened facility that honors the community's cultural heritage, it also provides the foundation for future-focused learning.

In 2008, through district-wide master planning efforts conducted by Beverly Hills Unified School District (BHUSD), a seismic risk evaluation was performed to evaluate structures that have potential for significant structural damage that could present fire-life safety risk.

This led to the passing of Measure E that authorized the BHUSD to issue general obligation bonds totaling \$334,000,000.

In 2011, through district-wide facilities assessment efforts conducted by BHUSD, a detailed analysis of all existing mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and civil equipment, system's, and utilities was performed to establish the aging systems deficiencies.

Public institutions rely on state and local resources for construction

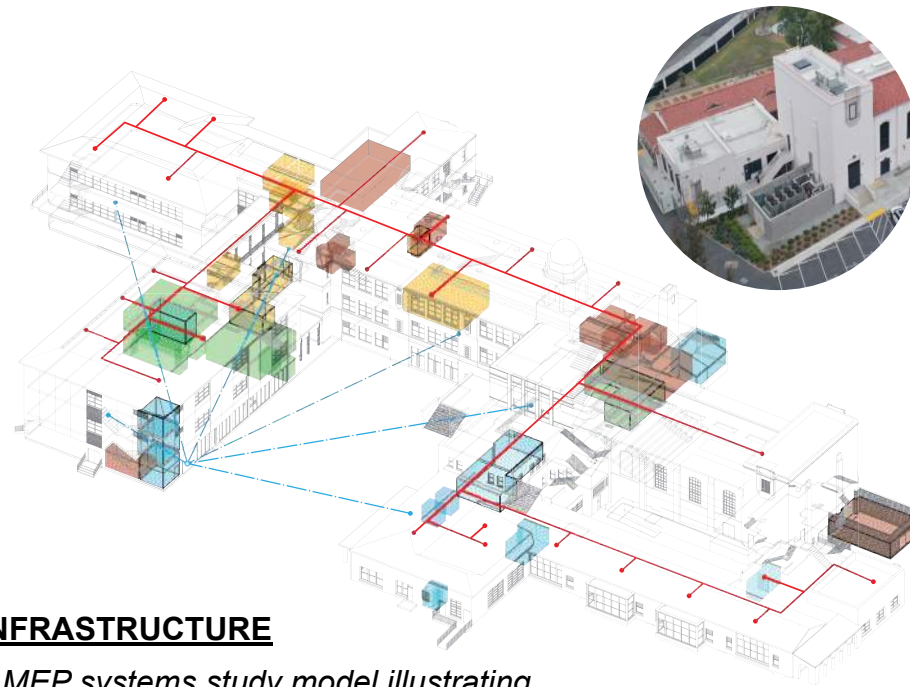
modernization and typically suffer from lack of funding, therefore driven by tight budgets as well as aggressive schedules. Priority is primarily focused on fire-life safety concerns and in projects that involve historic properties, the character-defining details in such buildings can be the first items to be value engineered out of the project due to cost and the time it takes to reproduce/restore. At El Rodeo School, the seismic and infrastructure scope accounted for the majority of the funds therefore leaving minimal funds for the modernization and historic needs of the campus.

Although initially El Rodeo School suffered from lack of local bond funds to fully and properly rehabilitate this almost century old facility, the District and community understood that an additional bond, Measure BH, was needed in order to bring El Rodeo School back to its original glory.



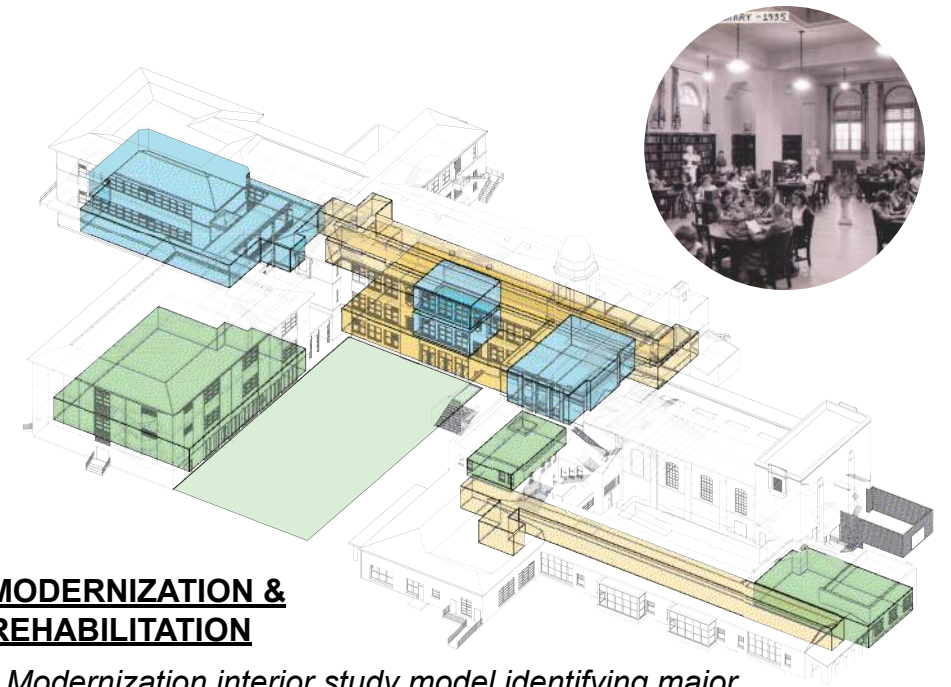
SEISMIC RETROFIT

- Voluntary Seismic Retrofit study model illustrating seismic deficiencies throughout the (5) building units.



INFRASTRUCTURE

- MEP systems study model illustrating infrastructure improvements throughout the (5) building units.



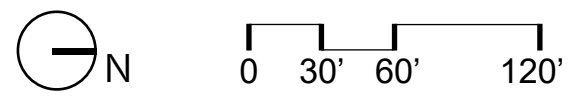
MODERNIZATION & REHABILITATION

- Modernization interior study model identifying major interior improvements throughout the (5) building units including areas with historic significance.





New Site Plan



2 SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

Site Improvements

El Rodeo is a public school in Beverly Hills, California, spread across a 6.5 acre sloped topography on the eastern edge of Beverly and Cheviot Hills. The existing buildings follow the natural slope of site which led to the “terraced” design that created accessibility obstacles throughout the buildings interior and exterior.

This site encountered Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) investigations and remediation efforts for former abandoned underground oil storage tanks.

Per California Geological Survey (CGS), fault hazard assessments impacted the southeast corner of the site that required extensive investigations to rule out the existence of the potential active fault (West Beverly Hills Lineament). Fortunately, results demonstrated that no faulting was present at El Rodeo.

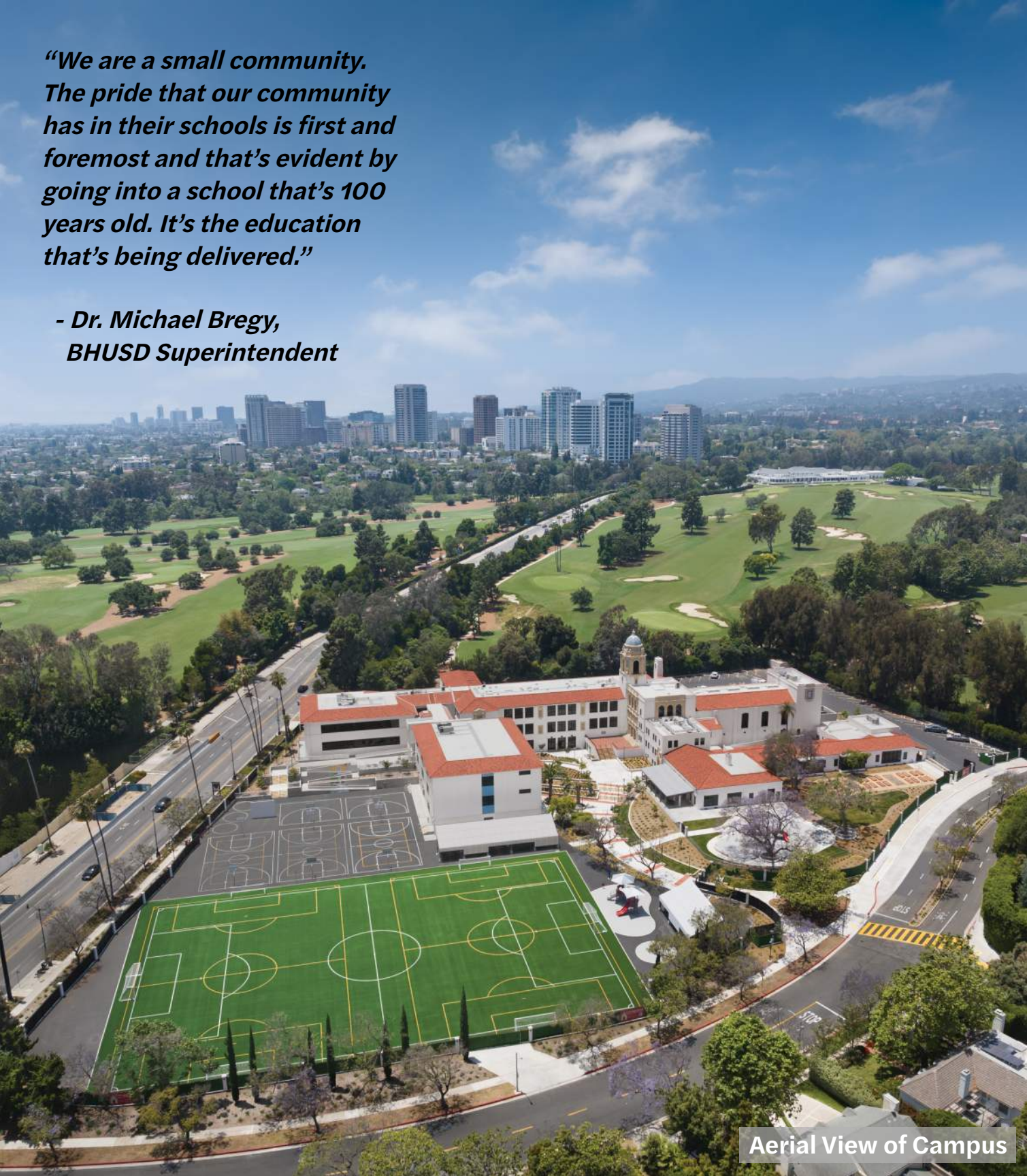
Essentially, just about every square foot of the 6.47 acre site was improved. With such a tight site, it was also imperative to provide as much landscape area as possible while incorporating sustainable plant materials and a community garden.

IMPACTFUL SITE DEVELOPMENT FEATURES

- 1 Extensive Accessible Path of Travel Upgrades Throughout
- 2 Bridge Improvements with New Access to All Levels
- 3 Dual Purpose Lunch and Outdoor Learning Shade Structures
- 4 Perimeter Ornamental Fencing with Secured Entry/Exit Points
- 5 Significant Expansion of On-site Staff and Visitor Parking
- 6 Direct Access to Restroom Facilities from Playfields
- 7 Direct Access to New Relocated Administrative Suite
- 8 Renovation of All Playfields and Landscape Areas

“We are a small community. The pride that our community has in their schools is first and foremost and that’s evident by going into a school that’s 100 years old. It’s the education that’s being delivered.”

***- Dr. Michael Bregy,
BHUSD Superintendent***



Aerial View of Campus

3 SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Pride and excellence are at the heart of the Beverly Hills community— a District committed to providing a high-quality public education. The District’s and Community’s mission is educational excellence through future focused learning coupled with a strong emphasis on preservation while being fiscally responsible.



Community Chest - 1936

El Rodeo School’s goals include:

- Ensure that students are humane, thinking, productive citizens through an educational system characterized by state-of-the-art technology.
- Provide a dynamic interdisciplinary curriculum.
- Deliver an exemplary instructional and support team.
- Foster student-centered, active learning.
- Reinforce respect for diversity.
- Endorse strong parent and community involvement.
- Create a nurturing environment where all share a common purpose and a joy for learning.

Community involvement was integral to the project, with the school maintaining a strong partnership through the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), allowing shared use of facilities. Spaces such as the auditorium, dining hall, and new artificial turf playfields were designed for both student and community use. This collaboration ensured seamless transitions between district and public activities, reinforcing the community’s connection to the school.

Pride and excellence define both BHUSD’s educational values and the community’s historic campuses. Beverly Hills’ commitment to fine civic architecture is exemplified by its five public schools, which share a unifying design language with landmarks like City Hall and the La Cienega Water Treatment Plant—many featuring towers and Spanish Revival styling. Designed by some of Los Angeles’ most renowned architects, these schools stand as a testament to preservation, with Beverly Hills maintaining its 1920s-era school buildings rather than replacing them.

The design process was unique in that the project was initially developed as a K-8 facility as it had been for decades. Immediately after agency approval and upon construction commencement, a significant challenge emerged when BHUSD experienced an educational reconfiguration where the (4) existing K-8 schools were separated into dedicated TK-5 and a middle school. This determination was based on the belief that this will bring enduring educational improvement. The district and design team immediately formed a new education task-force comprised of key future TK-5 department staff whose focus was to identify program needs and re-evaluating previous direction. It was an intense experience that led to successful outcomes that met the project delivery schedule and budget.



Community Support at Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



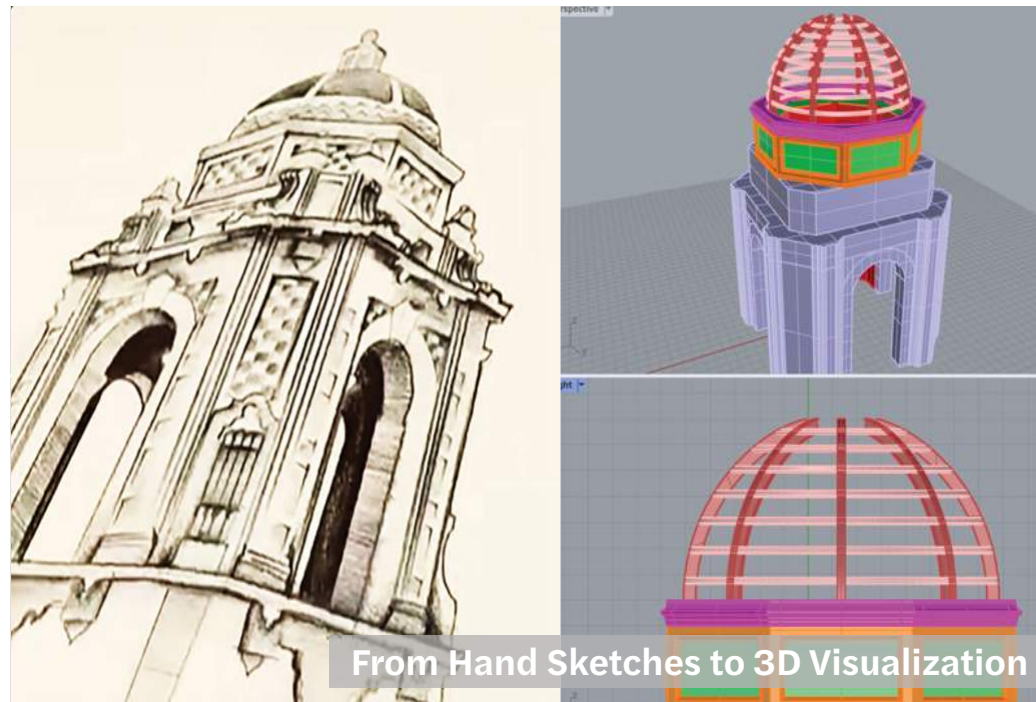
Completed Tower



Tile "Biscuit,"
Color Matching,
and Crayon Template



Tower Substrate after Dome and Base Removal



From Hand Sketches to 3D Visualization

4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

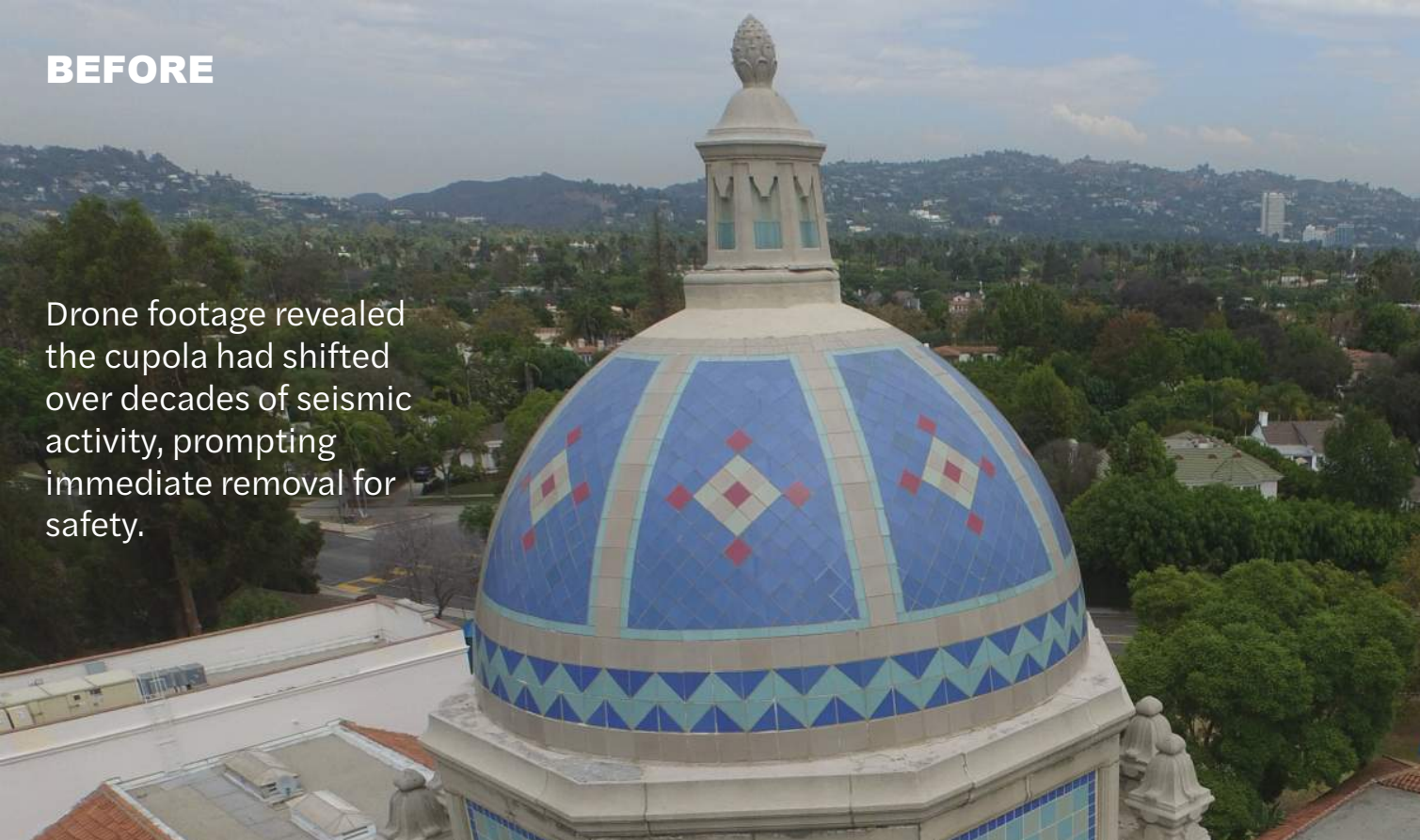
Tower Dome

The renovation preserved the school's architectural heritage while addressing structural deficiencies, reinforcing its role as a symbol of both community identity and national history. Seismic retrofits and infrastructure assessments revealed critical safety issues, prompting district-wide upgrades to mitigate seismic risks and modernize outdated systems.

A key focus was restoring the tower's historic dome. Structural improvements extended from the cupola through each building floor down to a reinforced foundation designed to bear the tower's gravity loads. The dome's decorative tiles were meticulously documented for future replication, and assessments revealed that its original steel supports were severely compromised. To ensure stability, a new hemispherical steel structure was introduced to support both the dome and the replicated cupola.

Early drone footage revealed that the original cupola had never been anchored and had shifted due to decades of seismic activity. This discovery led to an emergency removal, requiring a temporary campus-wide closure for safety.

BEFORE

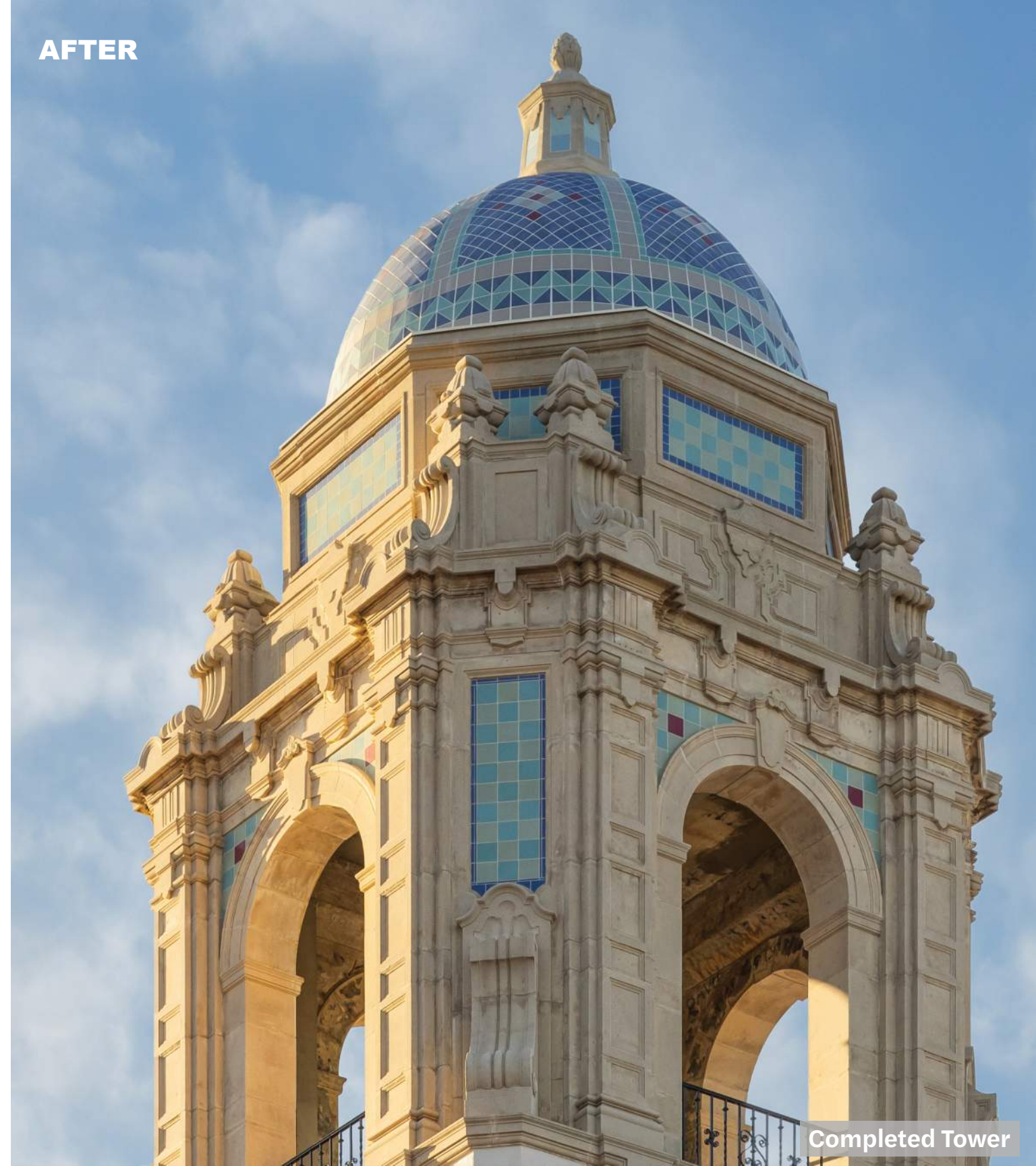


Drone footage revealed the cupola had shifted over decades of seismic activity, prompting immediate removal for safety.

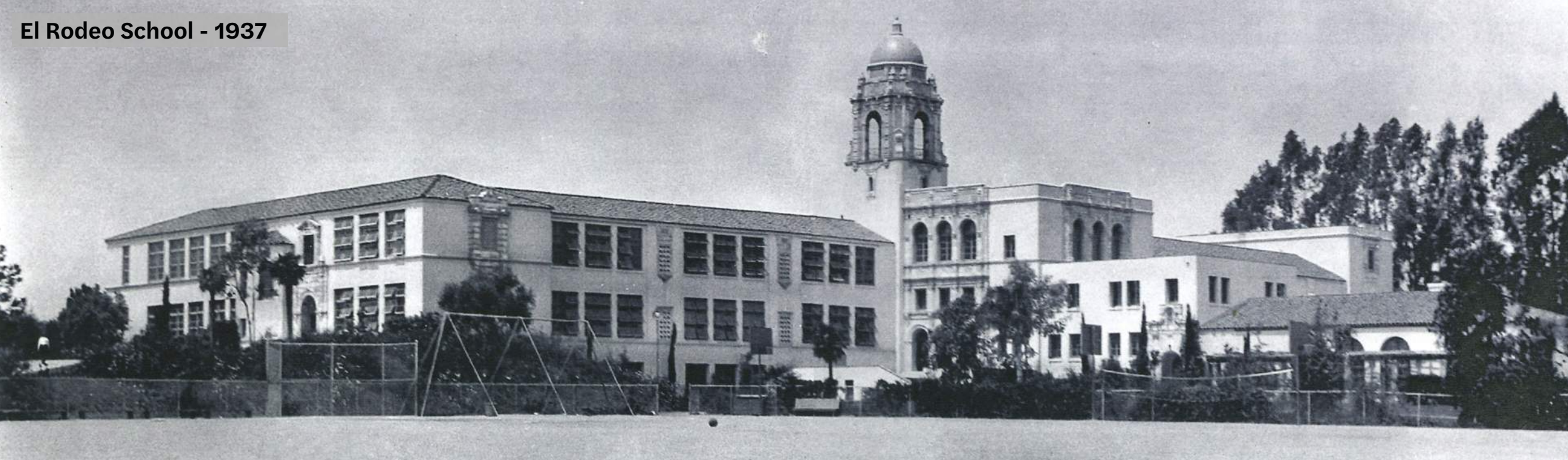


Using a rubbing technique to capture the original tile pattern and dimensions for replicating tile "biscuits."

AFTER



Completed Tower



El Rodeo School - 1937

4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Constructed in 1927, El Rodeo de las Aguas School has undergone a series of exploratory exercises to document the current condition and repair strategies for the Spanish Renaissance Revival cast-stone clad façades, ornate tower, and plaster restoration. Studies included non-destructive evaluation, forensic exploratory destructive testing, visual assessments, infrared thermal imaging, ground penetrating radar, material analysis, and structural evaluations in order to determine the appropriate repair approach for all exterior surfaces and façades.



BEFORE

Exterior, Historic Building Neighborhoods A, B, and C



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Environment

The renovated campus offers a welcoming atmosphere, maximizing natural light by removing HVAC obstructions and dropped ceilings. Insulated glazing enhances daylighting and thermal comfort while preserving the historic aesthetic of the original windows.

Exterior Windows & Sustainability

Sustainability was a key focus. Dual-paned, Low-E coated glass windows in custom aluminum-clad steel frames restore the original window geometry. The roof was upgraded with a thermoplastic membrane over rigid insulation for improved energy efficiency. High-efficiency chillers reduce energy consumption and carbon footprint, while low-flow plumbing fixtures are projected to cut water use by 20%. The campus also features LED lighting, drought-tolerant native landscaping, and an expanded community garden that supports nutrition education and hands-on learning.

BEFORE

Previous fire protection systems obstructed the historic ceilings and mural. The required fire safety upgrades were carefully integrated to preserve the space's character-defining features.

In 1934, artist Hugo Ballin supervises the painting of his School Days mural in El Rodeo School's main lobby.

AFTER

"One of the things that is amazing about El Rodeo and part of this project is that the mural that is right outside of this auditorium was preserved. That is from the '30s as part of the New Deal and part of the painting and artists that were funded as part of the New Deal. It makes our school part of history and part of American history."

- Sarah Kaber, El Rodeo Principal


4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Lighting Fixtures

El Rodeo School underwent a historic assessment to catalog its character-defining features. The design team identified historic details affected by the seismic retrofit and, in collaboration with the project's historic architect, determined appropriate restoration and replication techniques based on preservation briefs.

Many original light fixtures had been lost and required replication, each contributing to the unique character of its space. A notable example is the pendant fixture at the auditorium foyer, which highlights the restored decorative ceiling preserved by local artisans.

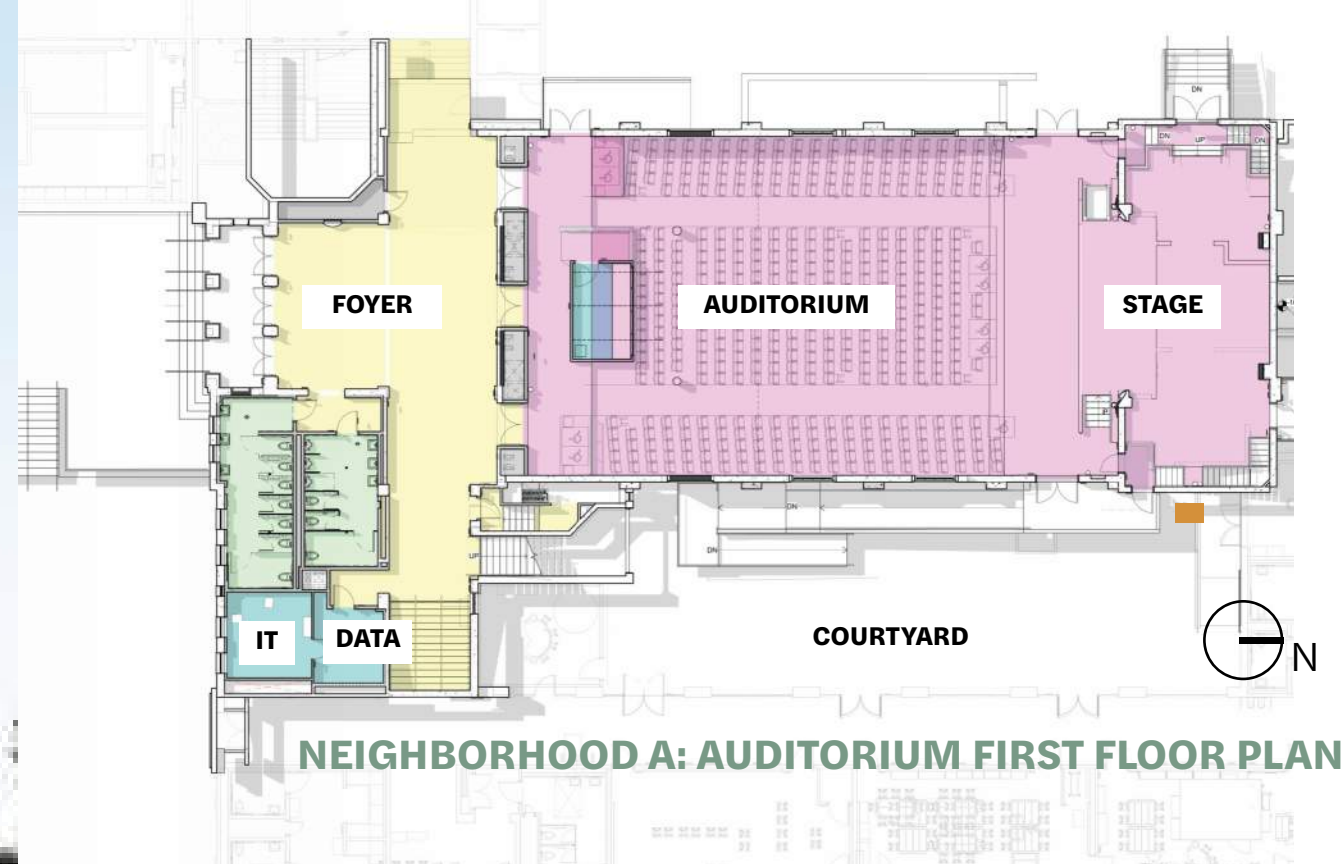
From a sustainability perspective, these replicated fixtures were retrofitted with energy-efficient LED lighting, maintaining their historic design while improving efficiency.



Spanish Revival-style replicated drum pendant light illuminating the restored painted ceiling.



*Replicated exterior wall sconces and vaulted ceiling pendant enhance the historic design



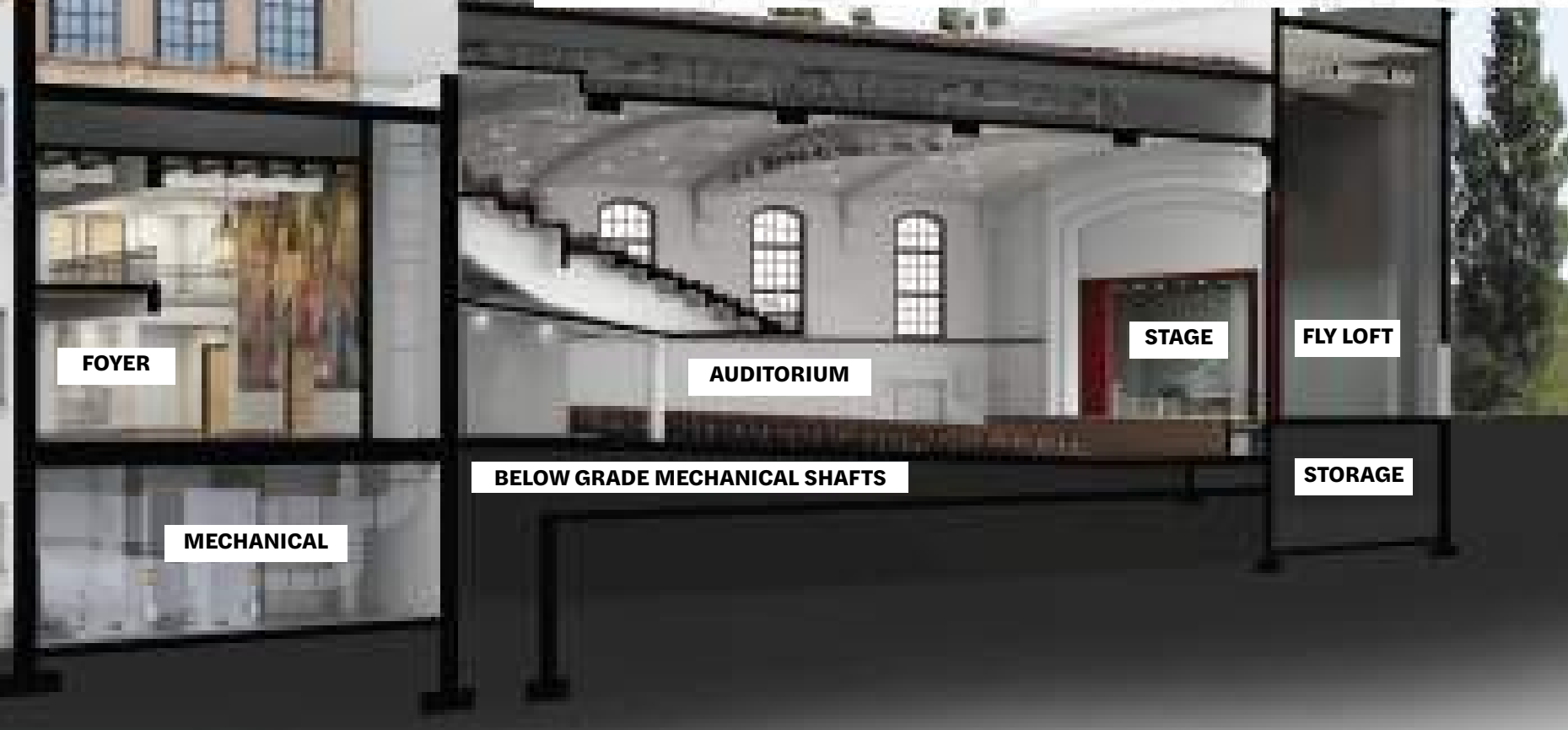
4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Auditorium

El Rodeo School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and listed in the California Register of Historical Resources. Built in the 1920s, it reflects the development of the Beverly Hills Unified School District and embodies Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture, designed by renowned architect John C. Austin.

This architectural style features clay tile roofs, ornate facades, exterior courtyards, arched ceilings and entrances, and plaster finishes. The school's auditorium exemplifies these historic details and underwent a full restoration, including a ceiling replacement, new finishes, upgraded theater seating, and advanced audiovisual systems.

During demolition, unforeseen conditions—such as the discovery of hollow clay tile—necessitated additional wall demolition and reconstruction beyond the original project scope.



4 PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Auditorium (con't)

The modernization was driven by a 2008 seismic risk evaluation and a 2011 infrastructure assessment, which identified critical safety concerns. This led to district-wide upgrades, including replacing the original plaster ceiling, reinforcing concrete shear walls with fiber-reinforced polymer, and replacing the floor slab due to foundation deficiencies.

To address seismic risks, the design team introduced a custom operable lineshaft to house theatrical lighting, minimizing exposed equipment on the restored auditorium walls. The project meticulously restored elements at every scale, from intricate filigree details to large site features, ensuring authenticity to the original craftsmanship.

Local artisans replicated corbels, mechanical vent grilles, and crown molding using Glass Fiber Reinforced Gypsum (GFRG), while additional trim molding honored the original plaster ceiling profiles throughout the auditorium.



Auditorium Audience Chamber Before Modernization



Auditorium Audience Chamber after Abatement & Demolition



**Replicated Historic Auditorium Ceiling Details,
Including GFRG Corbels, Mechanical Grilles, and
Patterned Trim Molding.**



Vaulted Ceiling - Framing



Vaulted Ceiling - Drywall Finish

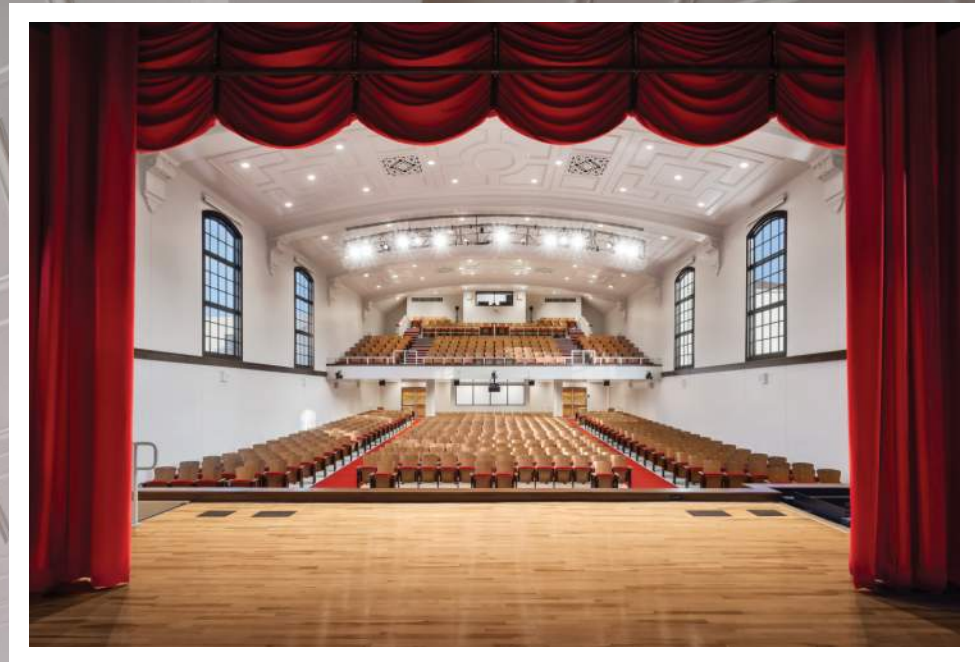


Vaulted Ceiling - Trim



BEFORE

AFTER



Auditorium Featuring Custom Lineshaft Lighting Truss System in Performance Mode

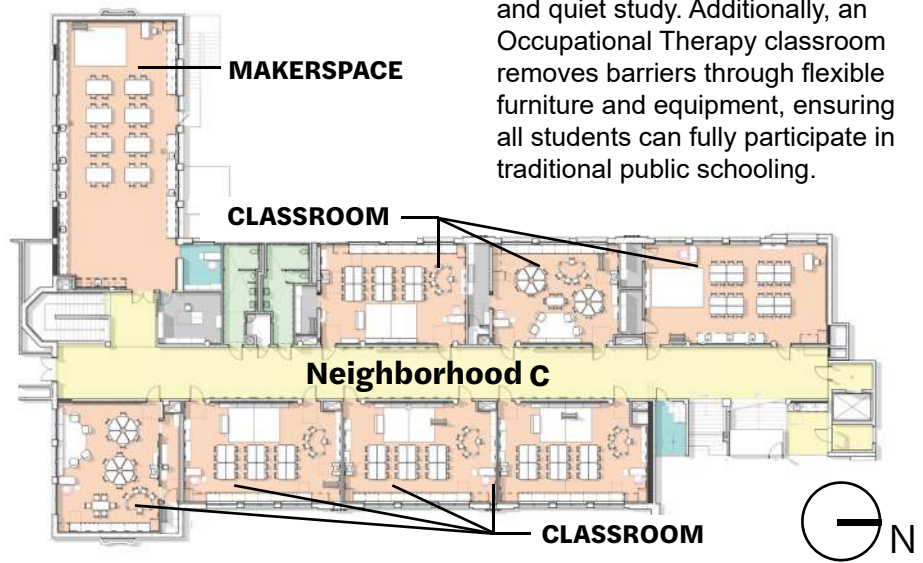


5 EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The renovated campus creates a welcoming environment with abundant natural light, enhanced by the removal of HVAC obstructions and dropped ceilings. Despite transitioning from a K-8 to a K-5 school, key learning spaces—including science labs, makerspaces, and a media center—were preserved, maintaining a dynamic and engaging atmosphere. The school offers robotics and plans to introduce

3D printing, while classrooms are designed for flexible, collaborative learning tailored to individual student needs.

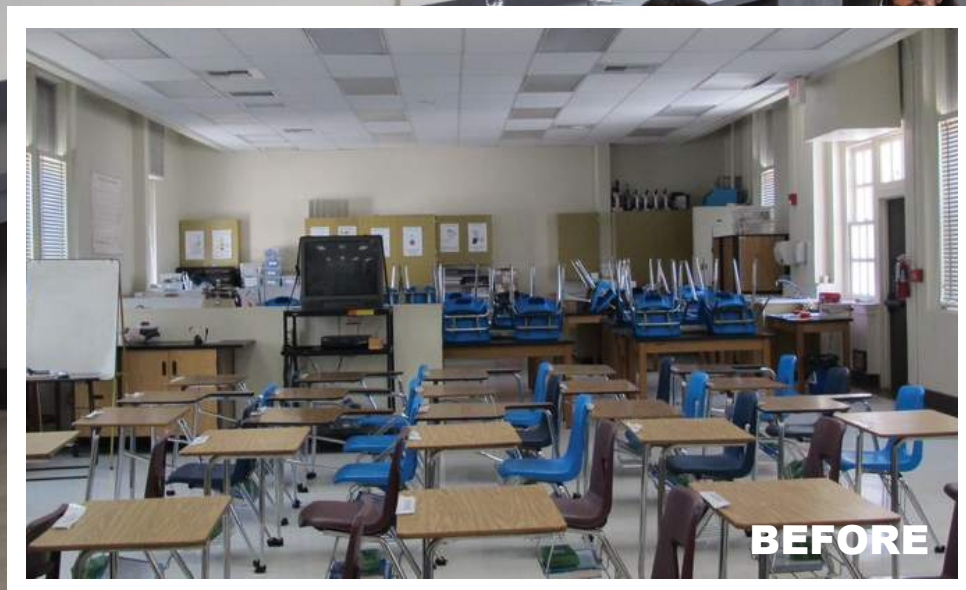
Blending modern, technology-driven spaces with the building's historic character, the design incorporates advanced tools like touchscreens and projectors starting in kindergarten. A variety of learning environments—including a makerspace, media center, science lab, and library—support both hands-on exploration and quiet study. Additionally, an Occupational Therapy classroom removes barriers through flexible furniture and equipment, ensuring all students can fully participate in traditional public schooling.



Typical Classroom Interior View with Flexible Furniture Systems with Opportunities for Small Breakout Areas

Occupational Therapy Classroom

AFTER



BEFORE



Renovated makerspace classroom designed for future-focused learning with modern technology and breakout spaces, supporting diverse teaching and learning styles. In this 100-year-old building, obstacles were removed to create open, flexible spaces, while new exterior windows maximize daylight to enhance student performance and engagement.



AFTER - Renovated Kindergarten Classroom

5 EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

As part of BHUSD's restructuring, El Rodeo School transitioned from a K-8 to a K-5 campus, allowing for expanded Kindergarten classrooms and the introduction of a Transitional Kindergarten program with a developmentally appropriate, thematic-based curriculum.

Every classroom—from TK to STEM-focused makerspaces—features the latest technology, ensuring equitable access and flexible learning opportunities across the campus.



New Kindergarten Classroom With a Dedicated Reading and Play Area



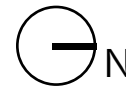
Outdoor Gathering and Learning Shade Shelter

1



Outdoor Gathering and Learning Shade Shelter

2



5 EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Seven months into construction, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, prompting BHUSD and the design team to enhance safety measures. A key upgrade was implementing a higher-rated filtration system to improve indoor air quality.

Outdoor learning, initially planned as a program feature, became essential. El Rodeo now offers multiple outdoor

learning spaces, including two shaded shelters with markerboards near the turf field, gathering areas by the bridge connecting Neighborhoods D & E, a historic courtyard by the TK/Kindergarten building, and an expanded community garden. These spaces foster creativity, sustainability, and innovation for the next generation.



Outdoor Gathering and Learning Space

3



AFTER - Restored Library with Reading Nooks

5 EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Traditional Library

The library was restored to its original configuration, featuring replicated reading nooks in each corner. As the campus integrates modern learning spaces like a new media center, the library remains dedicated to maximizing shelving to house as many physical books as

possible, encouraging students to engage with printed materials.

Due to the growing need for additional teaching spaces, the original library was previously converted into a science classroom for the K-8 program. However, with the district's restructuring of the campus to a K-5 model and the site's request for a traditional library, the space was reestablished to serve its original purpose.

BEFORE



New Library Shelving

- 1**

DESIGN FOR INTEGRATION

Collaborative design process that assessed complex structural modifications for their impact to the historic fabric while never losing sight of future-focused education.
- 2**

DESIGN FOR COMMUNITIES

Accessibility improvements throughout the campus exterior and interior that allow equitable freedom of movement for individuals of all abilities.
- 3**

DESIGN FOR ECOLOGY

Remediation of residual oil from previously removed underground storage tanks to protect global ecosystems.
- 4**

DESIGN FOR WATER

Incorporation of drought-tolerant landscape materials as well as integration of low-flow plumbing fixtures as water conservation solutions throughout the campus.
- 5**

DESIGN FOR ECONOMY

Preservation projects + retrofit = high fiscal impacts. It was imperative to find innovative and cost-effective solutions while maintaining an elements historic integrity: ex. window systems.
- 6**

DESIGN FOR ENERGY

Plagued by antiquated infrastructure, assessments determined that complete replacement of all existing equipment with more efficient and higher-rated systems was essential.
- 7**

DESIGN FOR WELLNESS

Impacted by the pandemic, in the midst of construction the design team was able to upgrade the filtration system to a higher rating to combat this new airborne threat.
- 8**

DESIGN FOR RESOURCES

Established as a district standard, El Rodeo incorporated GREENGUARD Gold Certified furniture systems that minimize an occupants exposure to chemical emissions.
- 9**

DESIGN FOR CHANGE

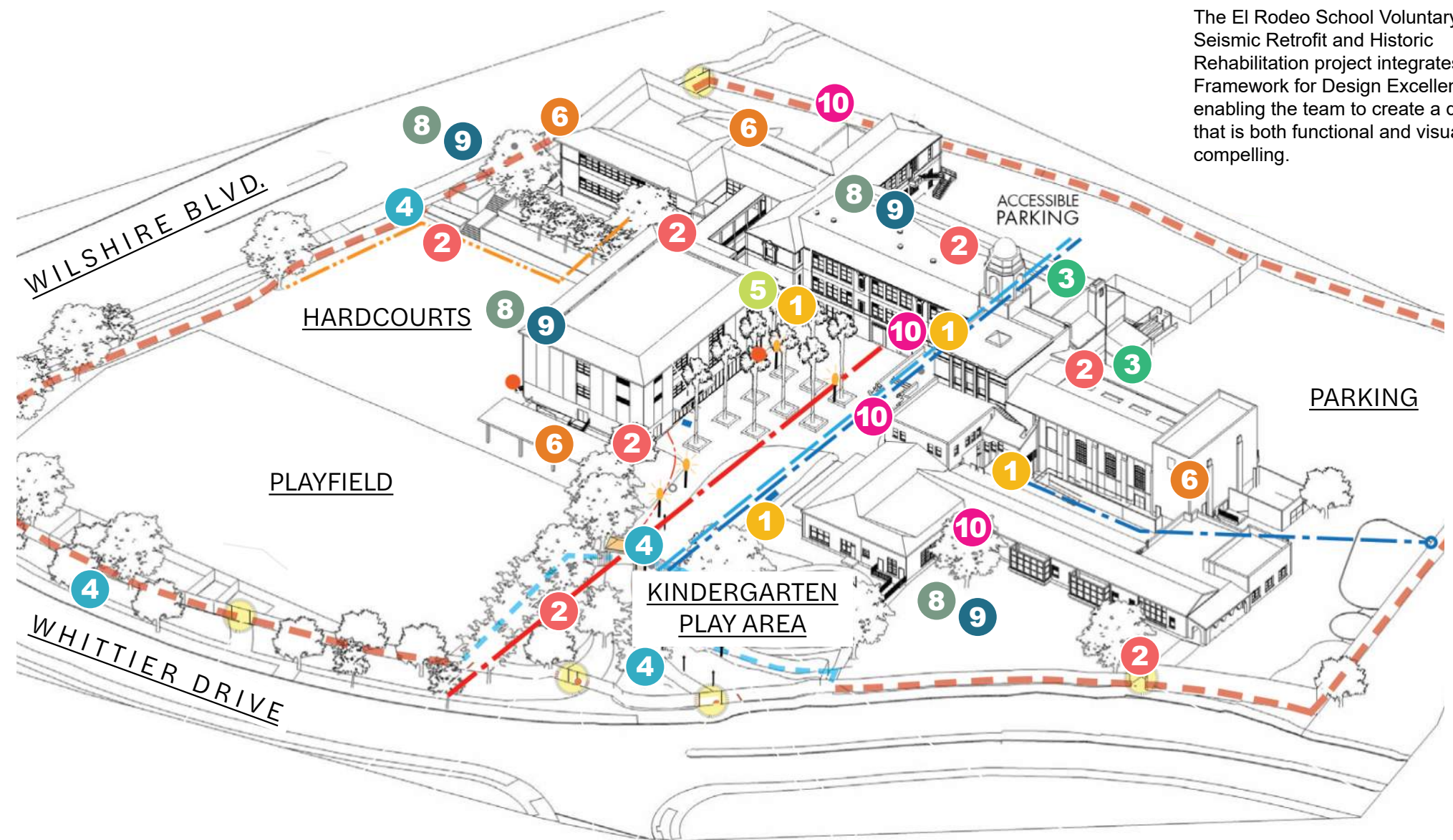
Resilience of historic properties: Preservation of the past, addressing structural deficiencies for continued functionality while pushing for change through future-focused education.
- 10**

DESIGN FOR DISCOVERY

Reinforced by its historic designation, El Rodeo provides a daily reintroduction to the building's historic significance through its preserved details and dedicated historic room.

6 PROJECT OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The El Rodeo School Voluntary Seismic Retrofit and Historic Rehabilitation project integrates AIA's Framework for Design Excellence, enabling the team to create a design that is both functional and visually compelling.

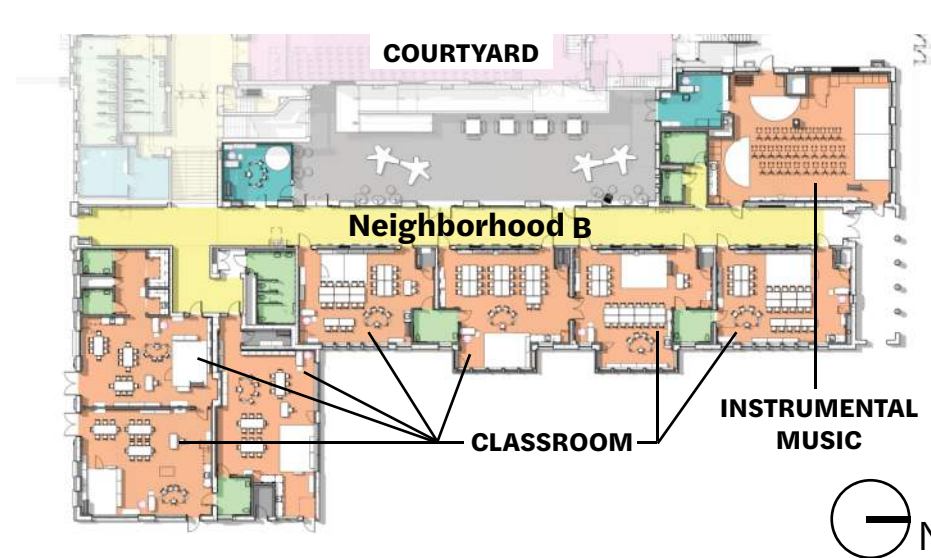


Site Improvements





Auditorium Entrance

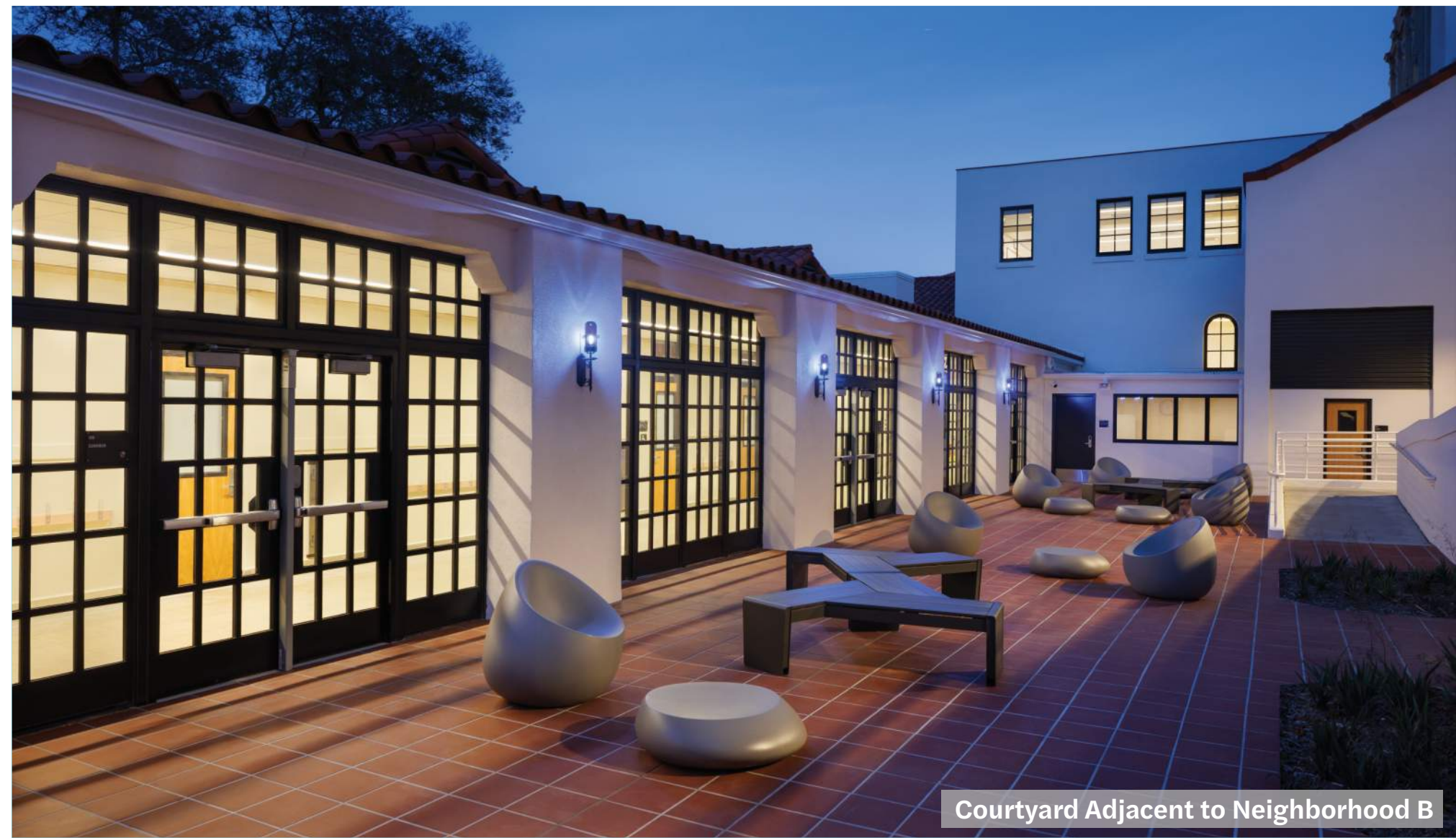


6 PROJECT OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

The El Rodeo School Voluntary Seismic Retrofit and Historic Rehabilitation project is a beacon of what is possible when heritage preservation meets modern innovation. By marrying seismic safety with meticulous historic restoration, this endeavor has safeguarded a beloved landmark while

equipping it for the future.

From the meticulous replication of architectural details to the seamless integration of sustainability and advanced educational facilities, the project is a testament to the power of thoughtful design. It preserves a symbol of cultural and architectural significance and breathes new life into a campus that will inspire generations. This achievement exemplifies a commitment to preserving the past, protecting the present, and pioneering a resilient future.



Courtyard Adjacent to Neighborhood B



Campus Exterior
Showcasing its Historic
Charm and Modern
Enhancements



Watch this short video to hear firsthand insights from BHUSD's Superintendent and Principal on the impact of this project:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQyBpXc1M6c>

