

El Monte Union High School District | El Monte, CA

Fernando Ledesma High School Multipurpose Room, Gymnasium & Fitness Center



01 Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fernando Ledesma High School is a continuation high school for at-risk youth. Its new Multipurpose Room, Gymnasium & Fitness Center brings a transformational presence to the school and district. A large space for athletic events, the facility also provides an inspiring and motivational fitness center for exercise, integrated outdoor areas for socializing and wellness, and a dynamic venue to be used flexibly for performances, community gatherings, and student club activities.

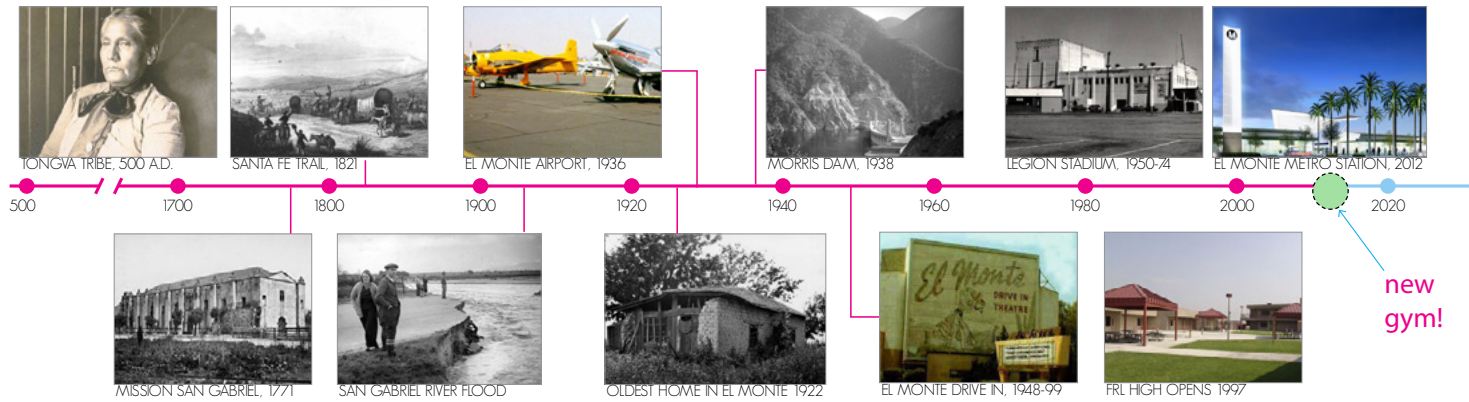
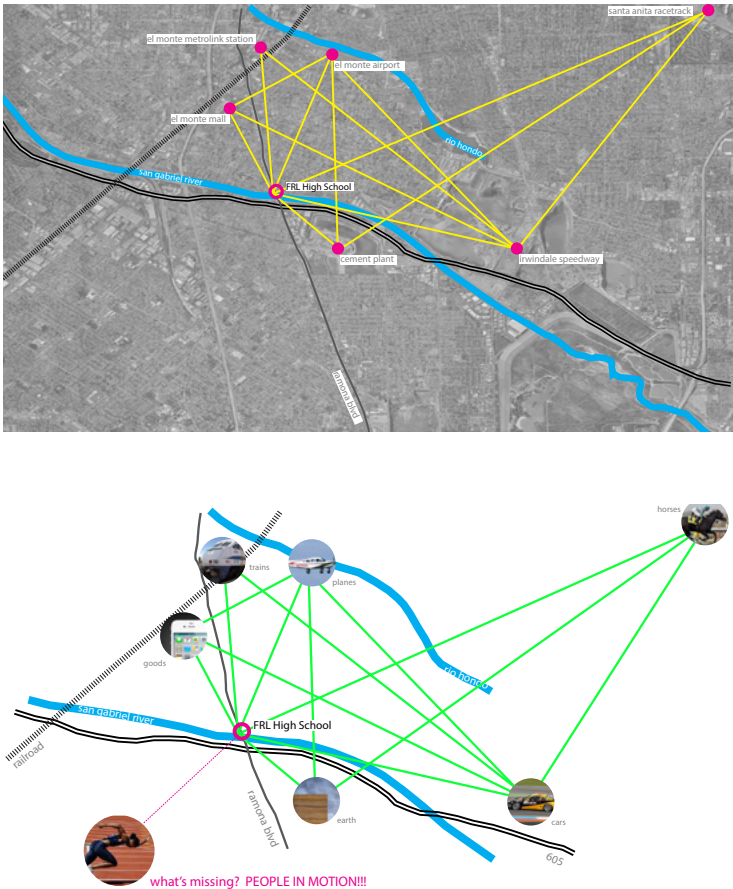
“A good school is the price of peace in the community.”

– Ursula Franklin

Ursula Franklin’s quote, displayed prominently in the entrance lobby of the new Multipurpose Room, Gymnasium & Fitness Center at Ledesma High School, captures the higher purpose of the new facility in one brief statement. The continuation high school had long been plagued by gang violence, until a classroom on the modest modular campus was converted into a weight room with donated gym equipment. This seemingly minor effort had outsized impact – the more time students spent working out, the more they improved their grades, showed up to class, formed stronger bonds with their teachers, and ultimately, stayed out of trouble.

The converted weight room was the inspiration behind a larger goal – to pursue a more ambitious vision of health and wellness for the students at Ledesma High School and to provide facilities to better accommodate this and all healthy, productive student activity.

Despite initial funding challenges, the community in and around El Monte, California, would come to recognize that in supporting a new multi-purpose gym and fitness center, they would be making a crucial investment in the safety and advancement of their community by supporting the health and wellness of Ledesma’s “at-promise” students.



“We married [the design team’s] vision of architecture with our culture, and it’s a been a big success.”

– Freddy Arteaga, Principal of Ledesma High School

The design concept, “Bodies in Motion, Building in Motion,” transcends the traditional understanding of a gymnasium or multi-purpose building. It aligns with the El Monte Union High School District’s mission to foster a dynamic and supportive environment for students. The design concept leverages El Monte’s history, culture, and location as a crossroads of transportation, travel, and commercial activity to drive the vision of the new facility as dynamic hub of physical activity and wellness for students on the Ledesma campus. By integrating educational spaces that emphasize movement, sustainability, and collaboration, the design reinforces the District’s commitment to a healthier, more engaged student body.

This submission tells the story of how the creativity of the design team, the passion and effort of its stakeholders, and the commitment of the community came together, delivering a facility that would provide immeasurable value to students and the El Monte area. Highlights include:

- ▶ The design team’s strategies to efficiently accommodate a multi-purpose program on a narrow and challenging site
- ▶ A building design that melds physical, mental, and social well-being, through extensive indoor-outdoor connections, views of nature, natural ventilation, ample daylighting, and accommodation of visible, freedom-centric learning and activity
- ▶ Integrated design strategies that encourage a new sense of school and community pride and personal empowerment for the students, many of whom are dealing with unique challenges and pressures in their lives and at home

“It makes me feel connected to the community because it makes me feel that the community actually cares about at-promise and at-risk students.”

– Ledesma High School Student

Completed in 2023, the new MPR/Fitness Center replaced a set of sloped basketball courts in disrepair with a state-of-the-art, multi-faceted physical education facility.

This submission will describe how the facility has impacted the students, school, and community by:

- ▶ Serving as a truly multi-purpose hub of activity for sports, fitness, meditation and mindfulness, academics, student clubs, and community social events.
- ▶ Hosting events for the broader district and community, demonstrating the school’s strong culture of high expectations and becoming a go-to facility for campus and district events
- ▶ Radically improving student academic performance, participation rates, and health outcomes
- ▶ Transforming the community’s perception of Ledesma High School as a “throwaway school for throwaway kids” into one of pride, respect, and confidence

The success of this project is not only due to the innovative design but also to the visionary leadership that steered it. From the district’s Superintendent to the Principal, the collaborative partnership between the El Monte Union High School District and the design team ensured that this building would not only meet the needs of students today but also serve as a sustainable, adaptable resource for future generations.

02 Scope of Work and Budget



SCOPE OF WORK AND BUDGET

Master Planning, Planning, Programming, Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents, Construction Administration

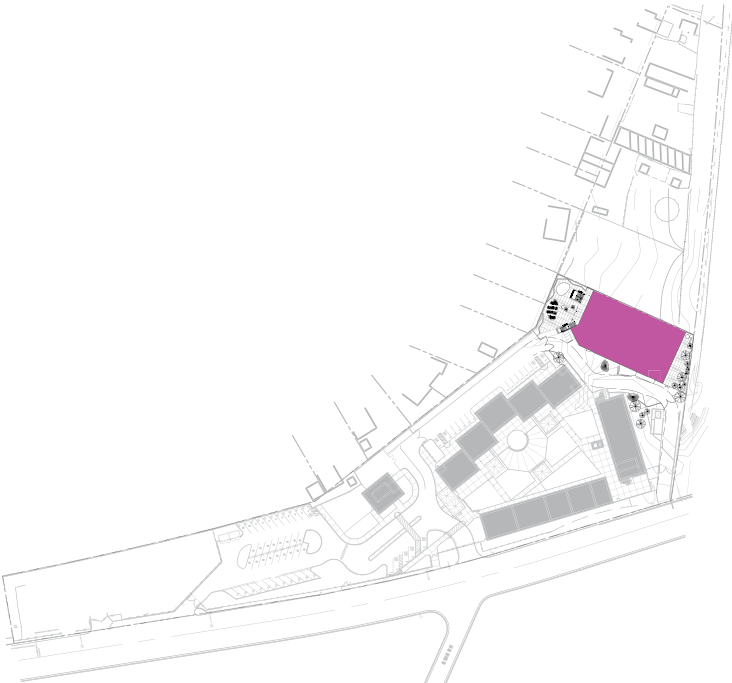
Budget: \$10 million

Project Size: 12,000 SF

Program: Multi-purpose gymnasium and fitness center, including basketball court, bleachers, performance space, community gathering space, lockers, restrooms, offices, and outdoor weight room.

Total Population of High School: 361 students

Total Population of High School in the District: 7,677 students



03 School & Community Research and Engagement



THE COMMUNITY

El Monte, California is a town in Los Angeles County of about 110,000 residents. Approximately 200,000 people reside in EMUHSD’s attendance boundaries. The area that the District serves represents a cross-section of interests, professions, and groups. The majority of income for people in this area is broadly grouped into industrial and factory work and retail sales, with many families in the middle to lower income economic groups. As of 2020, about 17% of the population lived below the poverty line.

As a continuation high school, Ledesma’s curriculum is designed for “at-promise” students who may struggle with achieving their potential in a traditional high school setting. Ledesma High School draws students from five comprehensive high schools in the district, serving youth from six cities and four feeder elementary school districts.

The Ledesma High School campus and its surroundings had historically experienced problems with gang violence. According to the school’s Principal, Freddy Arteaga, problems with violence had led to a sense of hopelessness for years, with the school and its population being overlooked or regarded poorly in the community. Through this time, Principal Arteaga championed a strong health and wellness focus after observing positive outcomes for students who took the time to work out using the limited facilities that existed on campus prior to the MPR/Fitness Center.

STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders for the MPR/Fitness Center included Ledesma students, teachers, the Principal Freddy Arteaga, the Facilities Director, the District Board, local business owners, parents, and community members – all of whom participated in workshops and planning activities. The Campus Advisory Committee, with members representing each school campus in the district, also participated in master planning as the facility would be utilized across the district.



CHALLENGES

The MPR/Fitness Center experienced its share of challenges. Because the space had such strong community support, it was shepherded through every setback with collaborative work and the passion of the school’s principal and stakeholders for the project.

Funding challenges: Inadequate bond funds put the project on hold after design had started in 2014 and had received Division of the State Architect (DSA) approval. The design team provided visuals and a design package to assist Principal Arteaga in his community outreach efforts and to get the project on the next bond. The design concept had achieved such widespread buy-in that this helped revive the project with proper funding and get it to construction in late 2019.

Once funding became an issue in 2015, the design team worked directly with the principal to identify areas for bid alternates that, if removed, would not impact the educational value, such as built-in casework and reduced site work. Once bidding occurred four years later, none of these deductive alternates were selected or needed – but planning ahead helped bring more flexibility into the execution of the project. A street beautification project also demonstrated the will of the community to get the project built despite its funding delays. The city planted trees, cleaned up sidewalks, painted buildings, and fixed medians, helping to build momentum for the new addition to campus.



Design challenges: A narrow site posed design challenges for the project. After the district sold some adjacent land to a developer, surveys revealed property lines that the already in-progress design had not accounted for. To avoid constructing a building that would be roughly 10 feet from a new housing development, the design team moved the building to ensure better access to daylight and alignment with fire lanes.

The site required a retaining wall, but this would also make daylight access difficult and potentially reduce the amount of openings in the building. The design team was able to adjust the location of the retaining wall to create an outdoor patio that would maximize glazing. The final design of the space incorporates a big picture window looking out over the mountains with operable sliding doors, which many users cite as a highlight of the facility.



Construction challenges: As construction started in 2019, the project experienced multiple delays related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Supply chain delays, labor shortages, and other general process delays threatened timely completion of construction, along with the challenge of working year-round on campus while school was in session. The design team worked closely with the Construction Manager, remaining available and on hand to answer all questions promptly to move the project forward.



AVAILABLE ASSETS

Located in the San Gabriel Valley, the Ledesma campus and site of the new MPR/Fitness Center are rich in surrounding geography and views. The building is prominent due to its location on a hill. It is highly visible from the adjacent freeway and viewable as you enter town, reinforcing the building and school as a beacon of the community.

The building is also situated alongside the San Gabriel River Trail, a thoroughfare for cyclists and pedestrians, and benefits from stunning views of the San Gabriel Mountains. The design leverages the prominence of the site and abundance of surrounding nature to instill and inspire local pride for all users of the facility.

Along with these physical assets, the creation of the MPR/ Fitness Center would not have been possible without the passionate dedication of the school’s principal, an existing focus and recognition of the importance of mental and physical wellness for students, and support from the community.

THE VISIONING PROCESS FOR THIS PROJECT

The initial design concept, “Bodies in Motion, Building in Motion,” received an overwhelmingly positive response from the community. Drawing from insights gathered during a district-wide visioning process, the design team collaborated closely with the Campus Advisory Committee, which included representatives from every district campus – reflecting the project’s goal of serving all comprehensive high schools.

Through a combination of site walks, staff questionnaires (including input from principals and teachers), and stakeholder workshops conducted during the master planning phase, the design team identified the most critical need for the campus: a new multi-purpose room (MPR). These findings were reinforced by structured discussions among stakeholders, which culminated in a share-out presentation to the Board. Based on this collective input, the Board approved a proposal for a new MPR, gym, and fitness center.

Envisioned as a multi-functional facility, the new building would provide space for both school and community events as well as exercise and wellness activities. With strong advocacy from the campus principal and broad community support, the project was awarded approximately \$13 million – one of the largest funding allocations in the bond program. The design team, in close coordination with community leaders, remained unified in driving this shared vision forward through design and into construction.

THE VALUE OF PROCESS AND PROJECT TO COMMUNITY AT LARGE

With gang violence plaguing the school and area through the 1990s, Ledesma High School was, in the words of the school’s principal, regarded as a “throwaway school for throwaway kids.” Students struggled with performing at school, and the school lacked the kind of amenities other comprehensive high schools had, such as for fitness, exercise and a place to gather for school and community events.

After the principal converted an existing classroom to a small workout space, procuring gym equipment through donations, student participation followed and positive outcomes became evident: test scores went up and class attendance improved. These results helped garner broader support in the community and district for a larger facility to accommodate student activities, sports, and fitness.

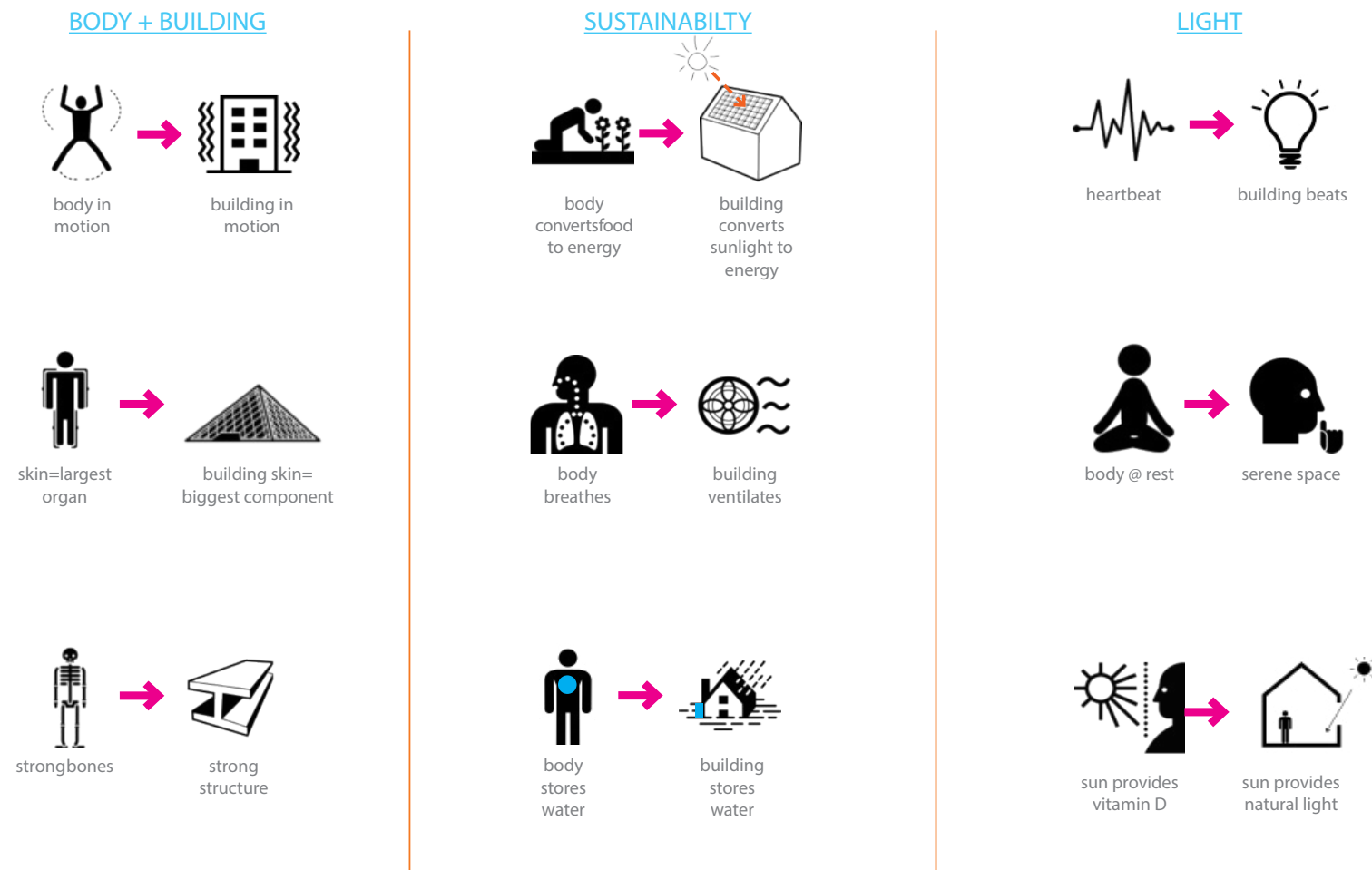
The building represents a belief that a community must provide a support system for students who struggle in society, for reasons that include poverty, homelessness, mental wellness, family issues, and foster youth struggles. Another major factor for the support of the building was to provide area youth with positive alternatives to gang intervention and negative influences in the local area. The value to the broader community in setting students on a productive path – by nurturing and strengthening health and wellness in their formative years – is evident as these students mature into adults, start careers and families, and go back into the community to serve as role models.

HOW THE ENGAGEMENT FOSTERED JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Equitable access to space that meets educational needs: As a continuation high school for “at-promise” students, Ledesma High School lacked the kind of facilities other comprehensive high schools in the district had. The master and facility planning processes uncovered the value a MPR/ Fitness Center would have for the school as well as the district.

Now that the facility is complete, it has enjoyed wide acclaim across the district and local community groups. It is in high demand for use beyond the confines of the Ledesma campus, boosting the school’s standing in the community. Its popularity and usefulness have created a strong sense of pride on campus – Ledesma is now sought after for its high-quality, modern facility that flexibly accommodates a wide range of activities.

School pride in line with comprehensive high schools: Atypical for a continuation high school, Ledesma has a dedicated mascot and sports team (the Mustangs). This, along with its school colors are strongly used in branding and graphics throughout the facility. The imagery helps to place the school on par with comprehensive high schools and foster teamwork, school pride, and healthy competition.



04 Physical Environment Design



THE PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING BUILDING(S) AND SITE.

Site and Exterior Physical Environment

The MPR/Fitness Center is located over existing asphalt basketball courts that were too sloped to be useful, occupying a very narrow footprint and designed to optimize the constraints of the site.

The building’s entrance is angled off the building toward the southwest corner of campus to maximize the tight footprint of the site and connect visitors from the parking lot to the gym whose orientation is more rectilinear on the available site area. The entrance intentionally navigates the massing of the two building forms, maximizing functionality within the project’s budget. The prominent entrance draws visitors in from the parking lot with its double-height glass curtainwall, glowing at night from the light inside.

To the west of the building is a large outdoor plaza with planting and areas of tables and seating. The space accommodates gathering, studying, and fitness activities with views of the San Gabriel Mountains. This outdoor area is connected to the 2nd floor fitness center and weight room via prominent red stairs in Ledesma school colors, and a large deck area.

Students working hard in the weight room have inspirational panoramic views to the north through a wide set of sliding doors, as well as access onto the patio overlooking the city and mountains. On the building’s east side, an extensive courtyard with potted plants has peaceful views of the San Gabriel Trail and River. This outdoor space can be used flexibly for yoga, meditation, games, or other fitness activities.

A band of glazing around the gym at the ground floor provides daylight and views to the south toward the rest of the school campus. An outdoor stage is angled to accommodate a fire lane and connects to the gym via a glazed garage door. It provides space for student performances with ample surrounding hardscape for an outdoor audience. The façade of the building on this side can also be used to project films onto.

Vibrantly colored pathways connect key programmatic functions of the new building to the existing campus, in order to provide an engaging source of wayfinding and connection.

Interior Physical Environment

Entrance: The design of the MPR/Fitness Center aims to create environments that inspire healthy living and collaboration. Flexible spaces and a porous building envelope promote the building’s design concept, “Bodies in Motion.” The lobby becomes a beacon that will draw students and visitors from the main campus courtyard and when approaching from the parking lot to the southwest. The lobby has an angled form to act as a connector from both these points of access, to the gym. The double-height glass curtainwall displays the main purpose of the facility: students improving their physical and mental health as they work out in the 2nd floor fitness center.

Lobby: As students and visitors walk into the lobby, they see an exposed concrete wall and trophy case on the left which illustrates school and community history. They are also greeted by a quote selected by the school’s principal, displayed on a raised aluminum sign: “A good school is the price of peace in the community,” by prominent physicist, educator, and social activist Ursula Franklin. The quote is a meaningful reminder of the history, challenges, and achievements that this MPR/ Fitness Center represents. The processional entry bends around and the gym comes into view.

Shifting planes on both the interior and exterior are employed in the design to express movement. For example, at points of material transition, two walls seem to slice or shift past each other, creating dynamic spaces and an energetic exterior aesthetic.

Concessions Area: This area to the right of the lobby serves as a warming kitchen, with three options for serving windows: the gym, the lobby and the exterior. This provides maximum flexibility for various events, lunch-time as well as merchandise sales.

Worth noting that this is the high schools only “public” or multi-functional facility (unlike the other district schools which have gym, dining, auditorium, etc as separate spaces) so it had to be agile enough to serve many functions while still having it’s main focus support fitness and wellness.

Ancillary Spaces: To the left of the lobby, the building accommodates bathrooms that double as changing rooms with benches for the students to change if needed, storage spaces, and an office for coaches.



SITE PLAN

Scale : 1" = 40'-0"

Fitness Center and Weight Room: On the 2nd floor is the fitness center and weight room. Soffits at the ceiling create visual separations of space. Natural light is maximized in all the spaces; a wall of large sliding doors on the north takes advantage of the balcony, northern diffused light, and panoramic mountain views, while the glazing on the southern façades have overhangs to protect from direct sun. Extensive branding and graphics using school colors and Mustang imagery bring team spirit into the space.

Throughout the fitness center and gym at the first level, concrete and concrete masonry units are used as a part of the structural system. Beams and ductwork in both spaces are exposed and painted in a contrasting color to illustrate the metaphor of “healthy bones” from the Bodies in Motion design concept.

Key structural elements, such as the exposed steel frames and the integration of large glazing systems, are not only visually striking but serve practical purposes—maximizing natural light and fostering an open, inviting environment. The innovative use of materials like concrete masonry units for durability and sustainability further ensures the building remains a lasting educational asset.

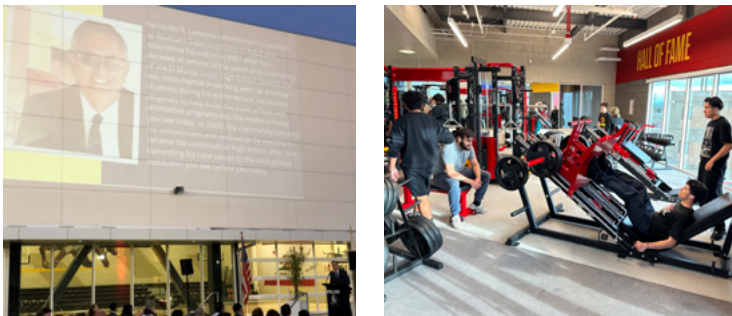
Gym: Steel-braced and moment frames allow for an open and porous façade with storefront glazing wrapping the south and east sides, putting “bodies in motion” on display. A glazed garage door and two other doorways accommodate indoor-outdoor connections. The volume above is metal panel, which serves to visually create a light volume and to create hierarchy by distinguishing materials.

THE FACILITY FITS WITHIN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNITY

A history of movement and activity: El Monte sits at both a historic and present-day crossroads of travel, movement and human activity. Historically, the city was a landmark for “The End of the Santa Fe Trail,” a commercial corridor for traders in the 19th century. The El Monte Legion Stadium reflected the emergence of the rock ‘n’ roll era and brought together a diverse group of youths. From the El Monte Airport which opened in 1936 to the new 2012 metro station, the city has a strong connection to transportation and movement. Ledesma High School itself sits at a confluence of movement – from its proximity to the freeway to its adjacency to the San Gabriel River and Trail. The infusion of this rich history into the design is intended to fuel a strong sense of pride for students and the community.

Bodies in Motion: Combining the energy of the school’s location, community, and local history with the district’s educational goals around health and wellness, the building’s design is based on a “Bodies in Motion” concept. Much like a body in motion, the function, aesthetic and systems of the building can convey a building in motion. Exposed structure conveys strong bones and parallels the healthy body; natural ventilation promotes a healthy and sustainable environment. At night, the building glows, making visible not only the activity that occurs within, but also the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Much like the body’s heart and heartbeat, the building glows at night, shining as a beacon of life, wellness, and human flourishing – to the school and the larger community.

A community asset: The school’s lobby displays the quote, “A good school is the price of peace in the community,” by Ursula Franklin. Selected by the school’s principal, it captures the depth of the community’s support for the facility and school and the facility’s role in fostering stability and positivity in an area with social challenges.



HOW THE PROJECT INSPIRES AND MOTIVATES

Nature and views: Extensive connections between indoors and outdoors, natural daylight exposure, and views of nature help to supplement physical fitness with mindfulness and mental well-being throughout facility.

Pride and self-esteem: Branding and graphics throughout the building reinforce a sense of pride in the history of the school and community. Fernando Ledesma, an important community figure who was a champion of the school as well as its namesake, adapted the colors of his alma mater, USC, for the high school. These colors, branding and graphics are applied extensively throughout the facility to highlight the school’s team, the Mustangs, and spur school and team spirit. A large display case in the lobby shares Ledesma’s story and local history. Mentions of famous students who went to the school are used throughout the physical environment to inspire and motivate.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Structural systems: A mix of structural supports, including concrete, CMUs, steel-braced frames and moment frames are both cost-effective and enable key design elements, such as: contrasting materials through the interior, signifying movement, and the continuous band of glazing around the gym.

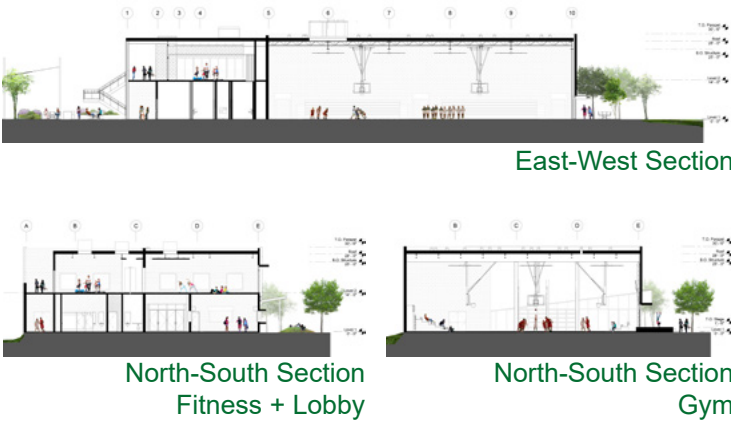
Porous design: Multiple porous aspects throughout the facility encourage movement, active learning, and connections to nature, including extensive glazing in both the fitness center and gym, and various openings from sliding doors on the 2nd level to the glazed garage door on the ground level.

Multi-purpose accommodation: The gym, which serves as the multi-purpose room, accommodates far more than just basketball games and sports due to its unusually light and comfortable environment, enabled by extensive ventilation and daylight through the ground-level band of glazing. The gym has played host to student clubs and district conferences.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOSTERS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Inclusion through transparency: The high transparency of the gym and fitness center and connectivity to the outdoors makes all activities, whether indoors or outdoors, accessible to any student. The abundance and range of student activity that the facility accommodates – from sports to fitness to student clubs – is made available for any interested student to explore through the design’s openness.

Equity through quality of space: The high standard of design, materials, and equipment used throughout the building gives this “at-promise” student population equitable access to top-grade facilities typically enjoyed in higher-income communities. It gives every student an equal chance at achieving success.



THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOSTERS SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS

Sustainability: The MPR/Fitness Center employs passive strategies and durable materials for greater energy efficiency. Strategies include:

- ▶ Exterior overhangs shade the south-facing band of glazing on the gym. Interior window shades are used to black out windows when needed for glare, events and movies.
- ▶ Multiple points of natural ventilation throughout the building promote low energy use.
- ▶ Sensors in the operable garage doors indicate to the HVAC system when the outdoor temperature is comfortable enough to not require conditioning.
- ▶ Sola tubes/skylights in the roof channel natural daylight into the center of the building and are controlled with a switch.
- ▶ The use of CMU throughout the building is a durable, cost-effective material solution that helps to insulate the structure from heat gain.
- ▶ Exposed downspouts provide a visible learning opportunity about rainwater collection and also efficiently water plantings and filter into the storm drain system.

Wellness: The gym and fitness center support both physical and mental well-being. The facility offers an antidote in a community where rates of obesity are high, fast food is a regular feature of daily life, and social problems affect the mental wellness of youth.

The fitness center features state-of-the-art workout equipment. The gym’s design combines a traditional voluminous gymnasium space with expansive ground-level glazing that maximizes daylight, ventilation, and connection to the outdoors – a perk for mental well-being alongside physical activity.

The variety of outdoor spaces to the west, south, and east of the building provide different vantage points of the stunning geography of the area. These spaces also encourage socializing and use of the outdoors for fitness activities.

05 Educational Environment Design



A good school is
the price of peace
in the community
— Ursula Franklin



THE EDUCATIONAL VISION AND GOALS OF THE SCHOOL

Ledesma High School and EMUHSD have a long-term vision for supporting the health and wellness of its students. Healthy eating, exercise, and ensuring mental well-being are seen as crucial to helping students from this population effectively deal with the physical and emotional challenges of daily life and the circumstances from which they come. Tied to that vision is also encouraging students to remain active and involved in clubs, organizations, and other extracurricular activities. The MPR/Fitness Center is the culmination of a decades-long effort to provide a facility that would help the high school realize this vision.

A key part of the overall vision for this facility was to instill a sense of pride and history in the local area that these students call home. The design team worked closely with the principal to understand how important it was to honor the El Monte community and San Gabriel Valley area in the design and to tell a compelling story that would inspire students to stay active as well as feel proud of the facility.

HOW THE DESIGNED ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS THE CURRICULUM

The designed environment of the Fernando R. Ledesma High School Multi-Purpose Building directly supports the curriculum by providing flexible, dynamic spaces that enhance both physical and academic learning. The integration of health-focused design, such as fitness areas, outdoor classrooms, and spaces for physical education, encourages active learning and wellness. The building's adaptable layout, with movable walls and multiple entry points, allows for diverse educational activities.

HOW THE DESIGNED ENVIRONMENT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING & TEACHING STYLES

Every element of the design has been thoughtfully integrated as a teaching tool. The exposed structure serves as a visual lesson in engineering and construction as well as the importance of healthy bones for a healthy body. Natural light is maximized because of the insight research provides on its benefits for mental wellness, academic success, and safety – all elements that contribute to a healthy body in motion. Operable windows and thermally efficient building

systems are designed to be interactive, encouraging students to explore and understand the importance of sustainable practices. The fitness spaces and outdoor classrooms offer additional opportunities for experiential learning in health, science, and environmental studies.

The goal of the MPR/Fitness Center was to create a dynamic environment blending physical and mental wellness for students, ultimately providing a strong foundation for greater academic success. The environment that the MPR/Fitness Center creates strongly supports the pillars of the curriculum as well as multiple teaching and learning styles:

Connecting physical with mental health: Views of the mountains, river, and maximized exposure to daylight through a large, continuous band of glazing at ground level and large floor-to-ceiling windows on the 2nd level connects the practice of physical fitness with mental health. Outdoor courtyards and patios encourage connection with nature and offer places to rest or socialize.

Transparent activity and freedom-centric learning:

The high transparency of the gym and fitness center and connectivity to the outdoors makes multiple concurrent student activities observable and supervisable by teachers through open sightlines. This also allows students to see other activities, encouraging participation and curiosity – for example, when students use the perimeter of the gym for walking or other activities while other students play basketball. Outdoor areas are fluid and accommodate multiple activities for multiple practice or learning styles. Whether meditating alone or participating in a small-group activity, students have a range and choice in setting matching every need.

Multi-purpose use: The original goal from master planning focused on the necessity of a multi-purpose space to accommodate student clubs and activities. The flexibility built into the design supports this goal alongside physical fitness and wellness. (See “Describe & illustrate how the environment is adaptable and flexible” for a description of the facility’s flexible features)

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The MPR/Fitness Center is innovative and groundbreaking for Ledgesma High School and its community in a number of ways. As the high school's only "public" or multi-functional facility, the MPR/Fitness Center is agile enough to serve many functions while its main focus remains supporting student fitness and wellness.

- ▶ This concessions area to the right of the lobby serves as a warming kitchen, with three options for serving windows: the gym, the lobby and the exterior. This provides maximum flexibility for various events, lunch-time as well as merchandise sales.
- ▶ The fitness center can be divided into two spaces, accommodating multiple concurrent uses and providing for future flexibility as needs change.
- ▶ A band of glazing around the gym at the ground floor maximizes daylight penetration and views to the outdoors and school campus, unusual for a gymnasium. The continuous band of glazing is made possible with a mix of brace frames and moment frames.
- ▶ A glazed garage door directly connects the gym to an outdoor stage, viewable from inside to form a double-sided stage. Performances and events can take place inside or outside of the gym, efficiently maximizing the site. Along with other doorways along the band of glazing, this encourages indoor-outdoor connections and maximizes transparency of activities. Activities may also happen concurrently, such as a band playing on-stage during a basketball game. The building façade can also act as a large outdoor movie screen for community events.
- ▶ Passive sustainable strategies allow the building to take advantage of the temperate climate of southern California. Multiple openings along the glazing, shading that mitigates the southern exposure, and a Big Ass (brand) fan in the gym create an exceptionally comfortable and pleasant environment not just for sports but also for large gatherings of teachers and administrators and other student activities. The CMU structural mass of the building also helps regulate the temperature.
- ▶ The facility has wide flexibility in the range of uses and user groups it can accommodate, using both indoor and outdoor areas. An outdoor patio to the east serves as an area for yoga, meditation, or other fitness activities. To the west, the outdoor area features seating and space for students to use for breaks, studying, and gatherings as well as outdoor fitness and weightlifting. It connects to the fitness center and weight room on the 2nd floor via stairways leading up to a deck area.

EL MONTE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Space Program
Fernando R. Ledesma High School

Multi-Purpose Building Addition

12-Aug-14

Project No:	A1402-00	Lot Code:		Fund Source:	
Location:	12347 Ramona Boulevard, El Monte CA 91732	Acres:		Seats:	
Program:	Fernando R. Ledesma - Multi-Purpose Building	DTB:		OPSC	CDE
Architect:	Architecture for Education, Inc.	DM:			
Local District:	El Monte Union HS	BM:			
Local Dist.Supt.					
	Facility Area Selected	15.103		Graded Classroom:	
	Square Feet per Seat			Special Ed Classrooms:	
				Total Classroom Count:	

4.07 C

Area Totals:		15,103 SF
SPACE PROGRAM		
ALL TO BE REUSE EXISTING		
PHYSICAL EDUCATION / ATHLETICS	Physical Education / Athletics Total:	15,103 SF

PHYSICAL EDUCATION FACILITIES

Units	Description	Total SF
1 8,450 s.f. per rm.	Gym & Bleachers	8,450
1 280 s.f. per rm.	Lobby	280
1 690 s.f. per rm.	Tickets / Concession & Storage	690
0 240 s.f. per rm.	Public Restroom Restroom	-
0 120 s.f. per rm.	PA/Sound Room (in Control Room)	-
1 620 s.f. per rm.	Storage	620
2 120 s.f. per rm.	Equipment Room	240
1 75 s.f. per rm.	Custodian	75
1 1,100 s.f. per rm.	Multi-Purpose Classroom	1,100
1 1,800 s.f. per rm.	Fitness	1,800
Subtotal		13,215
1 120 s.f. per rm.	Faculty Office	120
1 120 s.f. per rm.	Faculty Shower / Locker / Toilet	120
0 400 s.f. per rm.	Lockers	-
0 300 s.f. per rm.	Team Room	-
2 350 s.f. per rm.	Student Toilets	700
0 100 s.f. per rm.	Showers/Drying (4 Showers)	-
Subtotal		940

OPTIONAL FACILITIES

0 6,400 s.f. per rm.	Practice Gymnasium / Multi-Purpose	-
0 1,300 s.f. per rm.	Wrestling Room	-
0 900 s.f. per rm.	Classroom	-
0 120 s.f. per rm.	Snack Bars/Concession Stand	-
0 300 s.f. per rm.	Field Restrooms	-
0 200 s.f. per rm.	Storage Rooms (Outdoor equipment)	-
0 1,000 s.f. per rm.	Training Room	-
0 100 s.f. per rm.	Washer / Dryer	-
0 200 s.f. per rm.	Press Box	-
0 480 s.f. per rm.	Visitor Team Rooms	-
Subtotal		-

FIELD/STADIUM (Exterior Areas)

127,600 s.f. per m.	Baseball Field w/ Dugouts	-
67,600 s.f. per m.	Softball Field w/ Dugouts	-
225,000 s.f. per m.	Football Field / Track	-
80,000 s.f. per m.	Soccer Field w/ Joggng track	-
5,500 s.f. per m.	Basketball / Volleyball Courts (Combined)	-
6,000 s.f. per m.	Tennis Courts	-
800 s.f. per m.	Handball	-
Subtotal		-

Phys. Ed. Subtotal (Building)	14,155
Circulation @ 5%	708
Shared Ed. Areas Total	14,863

P.E. / Athletics Total	14,863
Mechanical / Electrical	240
Multi-Purpose Building Total	15,103



06 Results



Si Se Puede

A. EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

According to Principal Freddy Arteaga, the impact of the facility on the students and on the school has been transformative. Since the completion of construction in 2023:

- ▶ The building has inspired a 30% increase in student participation in physical education programs. The overall student participation rate in clubs, activities, and sports is nearly 100%.
- ▶ Physical education offerings have expanded to include activities such as badminton and yoga. The school has hired a full-time teaching assistant to support these new offerings.
- ▶ Student weight loss has been noticeable, with some students losing between 50-80 pounds when combining weightlifting with aerobic activities such as basketball or walking.
- ▶ While a typical school year at Ledesma might see several fights/physical altercations between students, since the MPR/Fitness Center has opened, there have been zero incidents.
- ▶ Current seniors who struggled as freshman during the Covid pandemic drastically improved their academic performance, communication levels, and participation in clubs and sports via the new facility.
- ▶ The facility has helped reinforce high expectations for performance, communication, and behavior on campus.
- ▶ The facility and its outdoor spaces accommodate the school's health and wellness curriculum as well as academics and student clubs, making it a hub of activity on the school campus. Examples of activities include mock trials, Halloween events, the senior luncheon, and lunchtime karaoke.



B. ACHIEVING SCHOOL DISTRICT GOALS

In addition to supporting the district-wide vision for health and wellness education, the MPR/Fitness Center has supported all five comprehensive high schools in EMUHSD through their own gym renovations, accommodating basketball, volleyball, and color guard/band programs. The facility was selected by the Associated Student Body (ASB) to host its Leadership Day for over 350 students from five local districts. While the ASB usually travels to a different school every year for their event, they have selected the MPR for their next meeting. The MPR also hosted the first ever three-day teacher training “Launch” event for all EMUHSD teachers prior to school year starting. Prior to the MPR/Fitness Center project, Ledesma would never have been a candidate for such activities due to lack of physical space as well as formerly negative perceptions of the school.

C. ACHIEVING COMMUNITY GOALS

According to Principal Arteaga, the quality of the facility and the success of student outcomes have given the community a new respect for the school's culture and standards. Broader usage beyond the immediate student population has helped spread the word.

The MPR is hosting Mission Valley League basketball and volleyball games and a community wrestling program, Jedi Wrestling, for K-8 students. A national program called Beat the Streets has agreed to partner with Ledesma High School and the Jedi program in using the facility, which will bring kids from different cities to campus as they compete in matches.

The MPR/Fitness Center has also attracted the efforts of the city, which implemented a street beautification initiative in front of the school. The facility helped rally the support of local vendors who donated fitness equipment and branded graphics.

In line with the original Bodies in Motion design concept, the facility is already serving as a beacon of health, wellness, and positive activity in the community, and promises to continue doing so.

D. UNINTENDED RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROCESS & PROJECT

Principal Arteaga reports seeing numerous unintended positive outcomes and uses for the MPR/Fitness Center:

- ▶ Kids who have gotten into trouble outside of school, e.g. with drug use or drunk driving, are participating in the after-school program and using the gym to lift weights and work out as a form of therapy and dealing productively with their problems
- ▶ After the success of the ASB event, the district's Director of Instruction noticed the positive response and booked the MPR for the annual teacher three-day training in August. The event went exceptionally well. The Principal noticed teachers were not rushing to go home, instead lingering, having conversations, and remaining with their teams in the space. Many commented on the comfortable environment even in the middle of August summer heat.
- ▶ Principal Arteaga believes they are just scratching the surface as far as uses for the MPR. They have started to use the space to bring back alumni from the school to talk to current students about their career paths.

E. PROVIDING VALUE AND GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Principal Arteaga commented that the facility's value is being realized in serving not just Ledesma students, but the broader community of five cities that the district serves. He believes the facility has been responsible for giving the community a vision they could be part of. In this sense, taxpayers have made an investment with wide impact.



F. THE PROJECT'S SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS OUTCOMES

The MPR/Fitness Center is proving to be an important center of health and wellness for students, with the overall student participation rate in clubs, activities, and sports at nearly 100% since the opening of the new facility. Critically, the building has also become a center of community health due to its broad use by groups both inside and outside the district. By creating a welcoming space for both students and the larger El Monte community, the building becomes a dynamic point of interaction and growth.

The MPR/Fitness Center has provided tangible environmental benefits. The building efficiently replaces existing basketball courts on campus that were sloped and in disrepair. Energy-efficient systems and strategies have reduced the school's overall utility consumption by 20%. By incorporating sustainable features such as rainwater harvesting, solar energy solutions, and a commitment to reducing carbon footprints, the MPR/Fitness Center aligns with the district's environmental goals.

