Lincoln High School - Portland, OR

BORA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shared Community Builds Shared Humanity
Located in downtown Portland, Oregon, Lincoln High School serves a student body shaped by significant socioeconomic diversity, where daily experiences can differ dramatically. To prevent these differences from fragmenting the student experience, the design creates intentional opportunities for connection, visibility, belonging, mutual understanding, and respect.

Communal Space as a Social Catalyst
A light-filled Commons at the heart of the school acts as its social and cultural center, bringing students together through shared daily rituals. Designed as the crossroads of the community, the Commons transforms lunch into a collective experience. Its success can be measured in the threefold increase in lunches served as well as the large number of students who now choose to eat together in this inclusive, integrated space.

Healthy Connections
The architecture prioritizes shared moments–movement up and down the open stairs, informal gathering in learning neighborhoods, and visual connections across the school and city. Simultaneously, the building connects urban life to the high school by activating adjacent streets with views to Lincoln's stairs, media center and active outdoor spaces, reinforcing the close connections between the school and Portland's broader communities.

Designing for Dignity & Belonging
The focus on inclusive space extends beyond the Commons into every aspect of the building. Flexible Learning Areas, dynamic CTE instructional spaces, and all-user restrooms reduce barriers and support a wide range of identities and learning styles. These spaces are not isolated–they are embedded, visible, and normalized within the daily life of the school.

Celebrating Diversity
From its site design inspired by the Chinese vegetable gardens that once grew on the land, to the graphics throughout the school that honor the many languages spoken at this International Baccalaureate School, to the Multicultural Center placed at the Commons in the school's heart, every space in the new Lincoln High School celebrates the diversity of its student body and the history of the site.

Lincoln High School shows how architecture can actively shape culture–using shared space and everyday experiences to cultivate connection, empathy, and a stronger sense of shared humanity.



SCOPE + BUDGET

Owner
Portand Public Schools

Completion Date
2023

Site Area
11 acres

Gross Square Footage - New Construction
289,261

Total Construction Cost
$198,280,000

Grades Served
9-12

Targeted Student Capacity
1,700

Certification
LEED Gold

SCHOOL + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Lincoln High School site in Portland's Goose Hollow neighborhood sits above the historic Tanner Creek Gulch, where a natural stream once carved a deep ravine flowing from Portland's West Hills toward the Willamette River. In the late 1800s, Chinese immigrants cultivated extensive vegetable gardens along the creek, supplying Portland with fresh produce and forming a vibrant community. Between the 1880s and early 1900s, the creek was buried and the gulch filled to support urban development. In the 1950s, the new school was constructed over this infilled landscape, leaving no visible trace of the creek or gardens.

This is the fifth iteration of Lincoln High School, having first originated as Portland High School in 1869 within the historic downtown core. The 1950s version of the building was seismically unsafe, incapable of supporting student needs, and chronically overcrowded. By the 2000s, the school was deemed in need of a full replacement.

Key development constraints:

- Students needed to stay on site in the existing school during construction of the new facility, due to a lack of appropriate swing sites
- The historic Tanner Creek ran below ground across the site in an 8' brick culvert, with a deep layer of unconsolidated fill materials leveling the old gulch. The new building could not be built over the creek location.
- The City's planning regulations for its downtown core applied to the new high school, requiring provision of public access through the middle of the school property and the creation of an "active streetscape."

For Portland Public Schools, the most pressing challenge was how to create a school environment that felt welcoming and inclusive to every student who would attend Lincoln. The school catchment area includes some of Portland's wealthiest and privileged neighborhoods as well as several homeless shelters. As an International Baccalaureate school with a reputation for college preparedness, a key challenge for the replacement project was to maintain this legacy while providing programs and resources that would ensure every student could thrive.

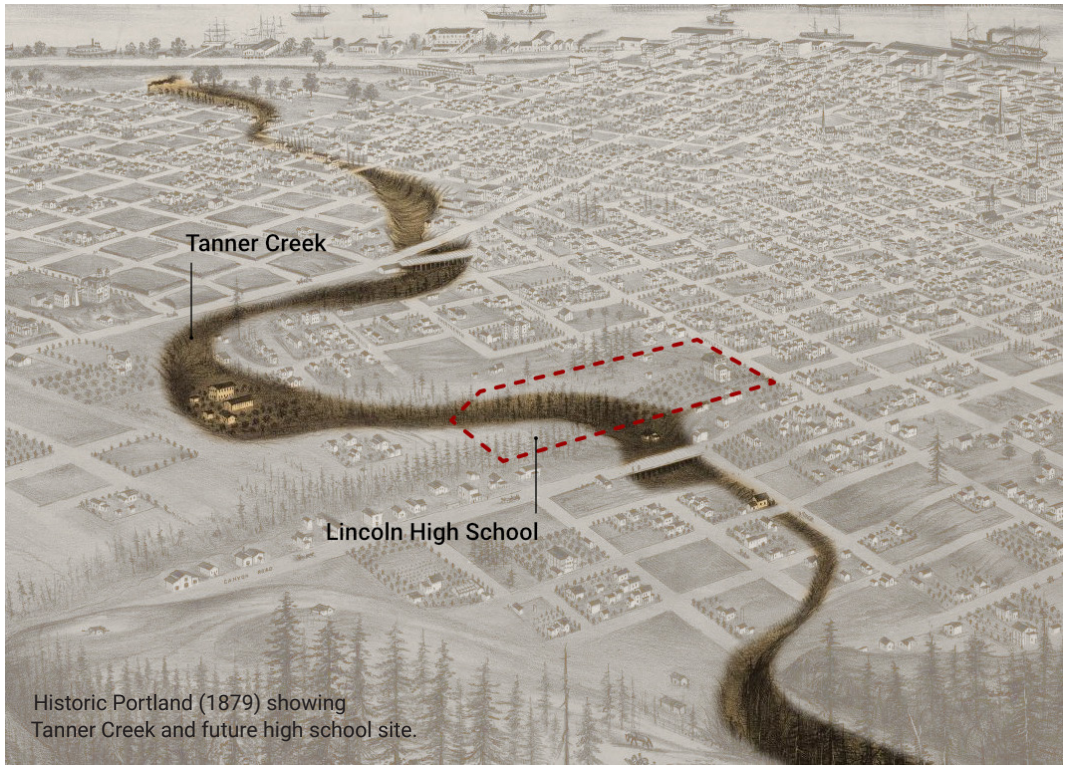












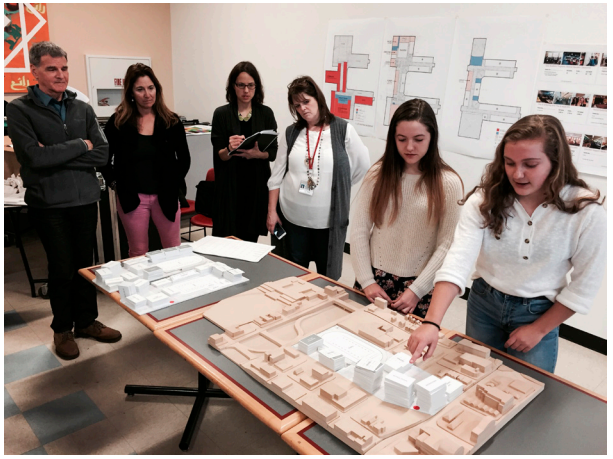
Historic Portland (1879) showing
Tanner Creek and future high school site.

An Inclusive Visioning Process

The pre-bond Master Planning effort was shaped by a collaborative, multi-layered engagement process that was intentionally inclusive, iterative, and consensus-driven. A diverse Master Plan Committee (MPC)—comprising students, teachers, parents, community members, and institutional partners—guided the effort, selected to reflect a broad range of perspectives. Over six months, the MPC met regularly to establish goals, explore ideas, and refine design directions. Their work was complemented by three public workshops and additional outreach through staff listening sessions, and neighborhood and partner meetings.

The MPC and Community Workshop processes emphasized hands-on co-creation, with interactive exercises that translated inputs into physical design concepts. Participants evaluated multiple design scenarios, weighing trade-offs and priorities to shape a preferred consensus plan. This work was grounded in a shared vision of creating an innovative, inclusive, and community-centered learning environment, supported by clearly articulated guiding principles. Resulting from this effort were three design options that focused on equitable outcomes, including improved accessibility, inclusive spaces, and support for diverse learning needs and community services.













Clockwise from top left: Members of the Master Planning Committee consider the challenges of site constraints and the limited options for sports and fields on open space.

During Master Planning, teams incorporating students consider dense urban development options, including the potential for housing on the site.

The Master Plan documented the various considerations for site development, including modernizing and expanding the existing school.

VISION STATEMENT

School → The redeveloped Lincoln campus will be an innovative hub of life-long learning; it will help students reach their goals in a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment.

Community → The campus will be the center of an active, healthy, urban community and will support educationally-related public and private partnerships.

Catalyst → The project will be an example of schools promoting positive change in our neighborhood, city, state, and region.

Iterations and Consensus Building

Master planning culminated in the successful passage of a public obligation bond to fund design and construction of a new high school for the Lincoln community, but a final decision about the new school's location on its dense urban site remained. Two intensive community-driven processes ensued:

1. A "Due Diligence" study finalized the location and basic organization of the building on its site (see diagram of three options at right).
2. A "Comprehensive Plan" further developed the selected option to Conceptual Design level, with full district Education Specifications tailored to the school's unique needs and the construction budget. This was approved by the Board of Education and became the basis of the final design.

The two studies were guided by a structured and iterative engagement process similar to the master planning effort. A steering committee provided leadership from the School District, setting priorities and making key decisions, while a diverse Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC)—including staff, students, parents, and community members—served as the primary advisory body, representing broader stakeholder perspectives.

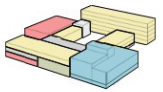
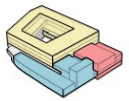
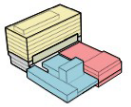
Once the Board of Education approved the project scope and budget, CPC members were invited to join a new "Design Advisory Committee" (DAG) which continued to provide input on design iterations and financial decisions, including program priorities, through the remainder of the design process.

Community engagement extended beyond the CPC and DAG, with members acting as liaisons to gather additional input and keep the broader public informed. Additionally, a series of Community Design Workshops broadened input. Stakeholder feedback was actively used to test and refine design options, adjust program elements, and guide the selection of preferred solutions.







	RENOVATION + ADDITION	FULL REPLACEMENT	
	Wrapper	Horizontal	Vertical
			
Site - Building Location	East Parcel	West Parcel	West Parcel
Height	5 Stories	5 Stories	9 Stories
Potential Challenges	Inefficient use of land, Swing Site costs	Structural and acoustical issues	Deep foundations
Meets Ed Specs (Quality and Quantity)	✓	✓	✓
Meets Health & Safety and Security Needs	✓	✓	✓
Provides Student-Centered Facilities	✓	✓	✓
Minimizes Disruptions During Construction	X	✓	✓
Long Term Operational Efficiency	✓-	✓	✓
Meets Goals Cost-Effectively	$252M Total Project Cost	$187M Total Project Cost	

Lincoln High School: Pre-Design / Diligence Final Report, March 2017

Left: The Design Advisory Group met nine times. Here, the DAG considers the look and feel of the building and discusses program options in a series of hands-on exercises.

Above: the 2017 Due Diligence Report resulted in a recommendation to develop the Vertical Full Replacement option.

Co-Creating Public Art in the City

Lincoln High School is situated within Portland's downtown core and therefore required to comply with Central City Design Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to ensure that new development contributes positively to the city's urban core by reinforcing neighborhood character and enhancing the public realm by prioritizing the pedestrian experience, active programming on the ground floors, and strong visual connections to streets and open spaces.

The requirement for "active ground floors" was a particular challenge for a school that also needed to comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) general restrictions on locating regularly scheduled classroom spaces on the ground floor when adjacent to sidewalks and other public areas. Balancing this need for visual privacy while also maintaining a sense of connectivity between school and city became a key design driver; outcomes are discussed later in this dossier.

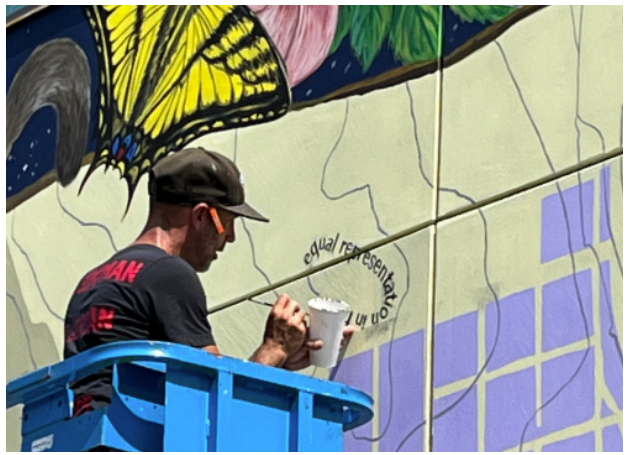
The Central City Design Guidelines require that long buildings are articulated to reflect the City's 200-foot block organization. For Lincoln, the design team responded to this requirement by proposing a large mural facing Main Street on its western elevation. PPS engaged the Regional Arts Council to find a local team of artists who worked with students to co-create the 15'x30' exterior mural.

Per artist Shu-Ju Wang, the team "designed engagement workshops and spent Fall 2022 with students, neighbors, and community members. We commissioned video lectures from regional experts to give participants a broad look at the cultural, ecological, and urban histories of Goose Hollow. Workshop participants then responded to the prompt: What kind of changes to the area would you like to see going into the future? How can you make that a reality?"

The final design is a combination of several forms of maps to describe the neighborhood–from historical to a hoped-for future, from topographical to ecological, from Google map to the old-fashioned foldout map.







EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Connecting Communities

One of the primary goals for the new Lincoln High School was to keep the high educational standards of this traditionally college-preparatory school while creating a physical environment that could dismantle any cultural hierarchies that had built up over time.

Educational Atmosphere

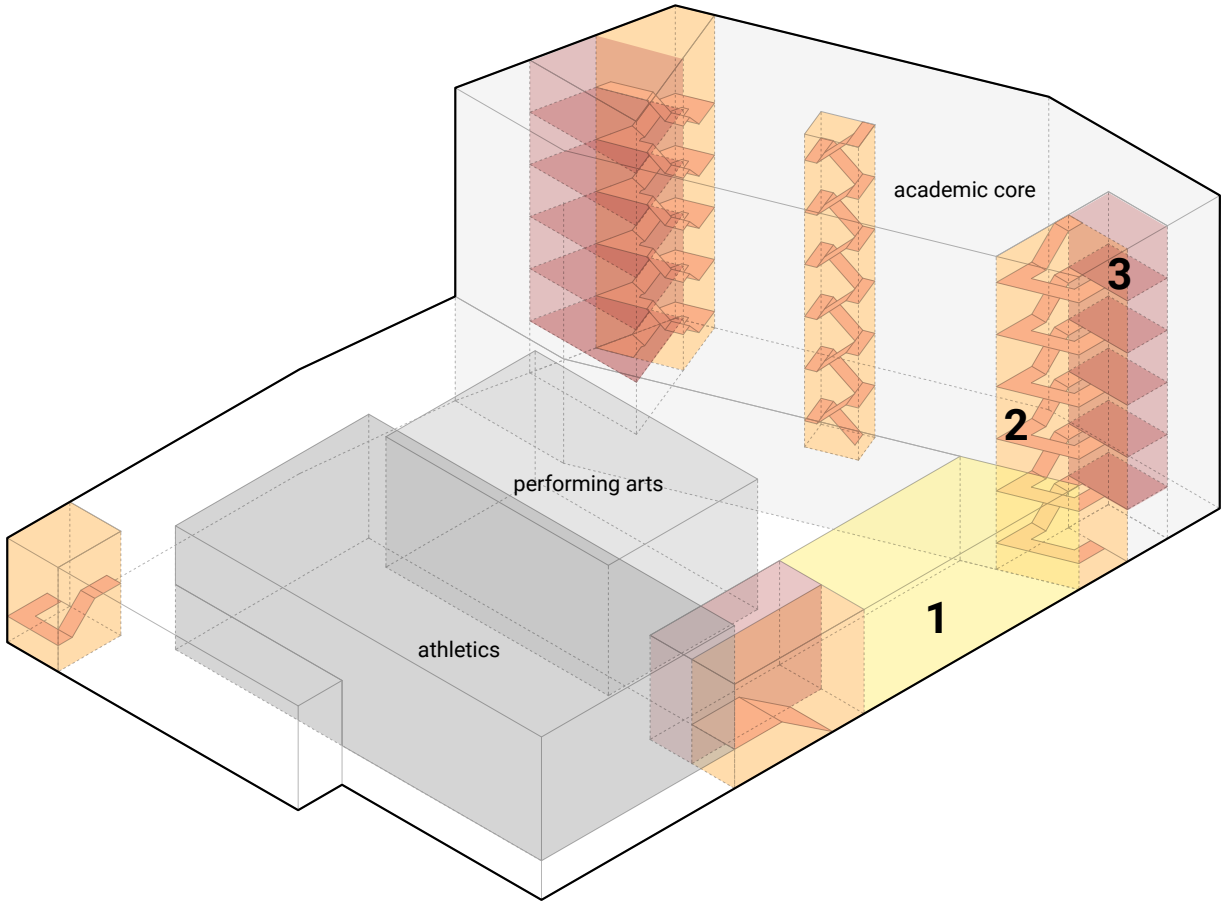
Lincoln High School offers a comprehensive curriculum anchored by the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which emphasizes critical thinking, global awareness, and interdisciplinary learning. The school also provides a range of electives, including visual and performing arts, world languages, and career and technical education opportunities, creating a rigorous yet inclusive academic environment that prepares students for college, careers, and active civic engagement.

Social Atmosphere

At the same time, Lincoln also serves both the most and least privileged students in Portland–from the most exclusive residential neighbors to several central city homeless shelters. Before the modernization, in part due to overcrowding, the school community had fragmented and become socially and economically stratified—with the school dining space, in particular, used almost entirely by those without alternatives to food assistance.

Creating One Community

The modernized school places the cafeteria and Commons at the heart of the school, a "crossroads" for the entire community. Site development constraints resulted in the need for a tall building (the classroom bar is six stories high) and the design team proposed a series of generous "social stairs" that connected the building vertically, while optional "Flexible Learning Areas" from the Education Specification were strategically located throughout the building. These connective tissues are at the heart of the school's approach to bring together its diverse communities into places where social learning and connection can easily and organically take place.





1 - GATHERING
IN THE COMMONS



2 - WELLNESS
ON THE SOCIAL STAIRS



3 - COLLABORATION
IN THE FLEX ZONES

Building Community One Meal at a Time

Lincoln High School's Commons illustrates how design can directly address inequity and reshape school culture. In the original 1952 building, the cafeteria was relegated to a basement, disconnected from circulation and lacking identity. As a result, students avoided it, gathering instead in hallways and fragmented all over the building in socially separated and stratified groups.

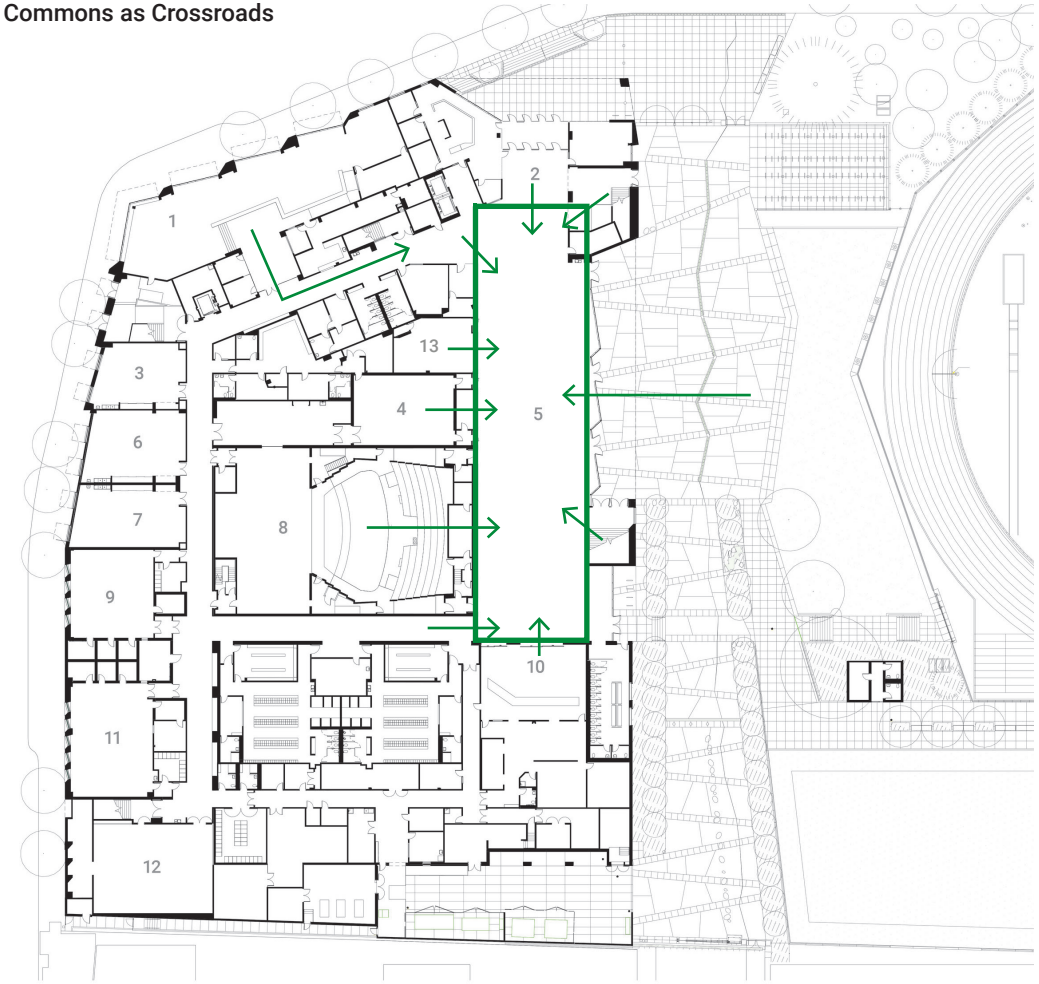
In addition, because Lincoln's open-campus policy and dense urban location offered students abundant off-site dining options, those with financial means regularly left campus for lunch—leaving those who could not afford outside food behind. For some students, being seen receiving cafeteria "food aid" was enough of a reason to skip lunch altogether; the school literally couldn't give lunches away. All told, the Lincoln cafeteria became a space defined by stigma and wealth disparity rather than community.

The modernization reimagined this dynamic by placing the new Commons at the center of student life. Positioned along primary circulation routes and directly connected to the main entry, the space is encountered by all students throughout the day. Its adjacency to classrooms, multicultural affinity spaces, athletics, and performing arts transforms it into a shared crossroads, dissolving the physical and social barriers that once so sharply defined Lincoln's lunch experience.



Students eat lunch in the hallways at the previous Lincoln High School.

Commons as Crossroads



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1 Media Center
2 Reception and Lobby
3 Makerspace
4 Blackbox
5 Student Commons
6 Construction CTE
7 Product Design
8 Theater
9 Choir
10 Servery
11 Band
12 Wrestling & Cheerleading
13 Multi-Cultural Room

Equally important is the shift in atmosphere and program. Drawing from global precedents, including Finnish schools where communal meals foster both well-being and academic success, the Commons is designed as a bright, welcoming, and non-institutional environment. Lighting and casework are designed to emulate café and retail spaces, appealing to students who might otherwise leave campus. Food options are familiar, flexible, and globally inspired, allowing students to personalize their food and seek variety. These strategies reduce the stigma historically associated with school meals by normalizing participation across all student groups.

The impact has been measurable. Since the school opened in 2022, the number of students eating school meals has more than tripled—from fewer than 100 to over 300 per day—and more students are choosing to remain on campus during lunch. Rather than a fallback, Lincoln's Commons has become a destination.

Today, this space supports a cohesive, empathetic, and connected community—where shared space and shared meals foster a shared sense of belonging.

In her research to find inspiration for the new school, Lincoln's Principal Peyton Chapman found that Finland has the highest academic outcomes as measured by the international PISA tests, and is also routinely ranked #1 for being the "happiest" country. Upon asking colleagues at the Finnish schools what makes them so successful academically and socially, Peyton heard the same consistent answer: "We eat meals together."

> **"Shared food in shared spaces builds a shared humanity.**
>
> Peyton Chapman, Principal







Leveraging Connections: Building Neighborhood Communities

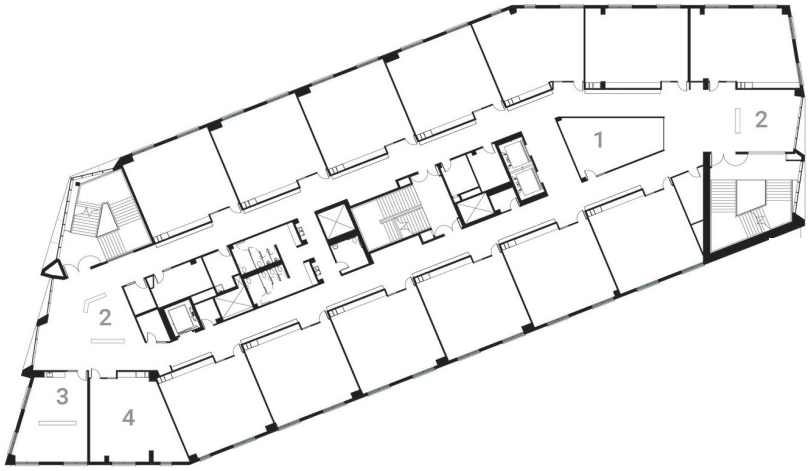
If the Commons is the crossroads at the heart of the new school, the stairs and Flexible Learning Areas, along with the carefully designed hallways, form its "connective tissues."

At six stories tall, early analysis of the classroom bar resulted in the recommendation for up to fourteen elevators to move students efficiently between classes at passing time. Instead, the academic core is developed around just three elevators, complemented by three generous "social stairways." Students are expected to use their own two feet to move between classes. This promotes health and wellbeing, and results in stronger social connections between students during passing periods. As a testament to the success of the new building's compact plan and stairs, passing times remain the same in the modernized school as they were in the overcrowded facility it replaced.

Flexible Learning Areas provide extended learning environments. Supported by white boards and integrated audio-visual systems, they offer students organic space for small group work, independent study, and presentations. These flex areas are positioned to encourage use at busy intersections throughout the new school—including just off the east and west stair towers as well as near CTE spaces—ensuring each learning area has direct visual supervision from adjacent teaching or planning spaces.

Right: The 4th floor plan is representative of floors 3-6 at Lincoln.





FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

1 Small Instruction Space
2 Student Flex Area
3 Teacher Planning Office
4 Learning Resource Center

Connecting with Food through Culinary Arts

Food plays a key role in the life of Lincoln High School. As shown in the success story of the Commons and demonstrated in the Culinary Arts program, gathering together around food is a powerful tool to build community and share connections across cultures.

Many classrooms are designed for project-based and interdisciplinary work, and some are designed to emulate the workplace. Lincoln High School offers a variety of Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities to its students and has leveraged its connections in the local business community to bring subject experts into the school to teach students at professional levels. Even before the modernization, Lincoln's Culinary Arts program was oversubscribed. Functioning out of a unused section of the old kitchen, with a coffee shop space hacked from an old storeroom, the teacher was leveraging available space creatively.

The modernized school now enjoys a state-of-the-art, professional-grade teaching kitchen, with an adjacent classroom that can be used to practice dining service. The new coffee shop opens to a Flexible Learning Area which doubles as an informal café seating area, benefiting from a sculptural skylight that brings generous natural light into an otherwise interior space.







Top: The new culinary arts classroom features professional-grade equipment, complemented by an audio-visual design providing students with clear views of the demonstration cooking counter.

Lower Left: Lincoln's original Coffee Cart was carved out of an unused closet in a school hallway.

Lower Right: The culinary classroom includes a "Coffee Bar" where student baristas use a donated espresso machine and learn the business side of the Culinary Arts. The adjacent skylit Flexible Learning Area doubles as café seating.

Connecting to Portland's Creative Communities

Portland is a hub for athletic clothing, footwear design, and many other creative industries. In response, Lincoln High School's academic offerings include programs that forge direct connections to these local industry partners, including a Product Design CTE curriculum as well as Photography, 2D and 3D art programs. The Product Design CTE classroom was designed to support a wide range of instruction, with carefully organized storage systems for various tools and equipment as well as infrastructure (such as a large vented hood) to support student safety.

Located adjacent to the Media Center, the Product Design CTE space sits adjacent to the Construction CTE and Maker Space to highlight creative, hands-on learning. The Maker Space in particular acts as a shared resource for the whole school community, with specialized equipment that can be accessed by teachers to support project-based learning as well as for students to explore their own ideas in making.

These classrooms include flexible furniture with power drops from ceiling-mounted cord reels, and vented hoods at the perimeter. All furniture are height-adjustable and on casters to allow the work space to easily be reconfigured based on the tasks at hand. Abundant open storage displays projects and materials. A short-throw projector and abundant white boards provide multiple mediums for instruction. All three Product Design CTE classrooms feature large windows to the corridor to showcase the activities within, including display cases celebrating student work that inspire passers-by and spark curiosity in the creative "making" fields.





Connecting to Each Other for Belonging: Celebrating Student Work

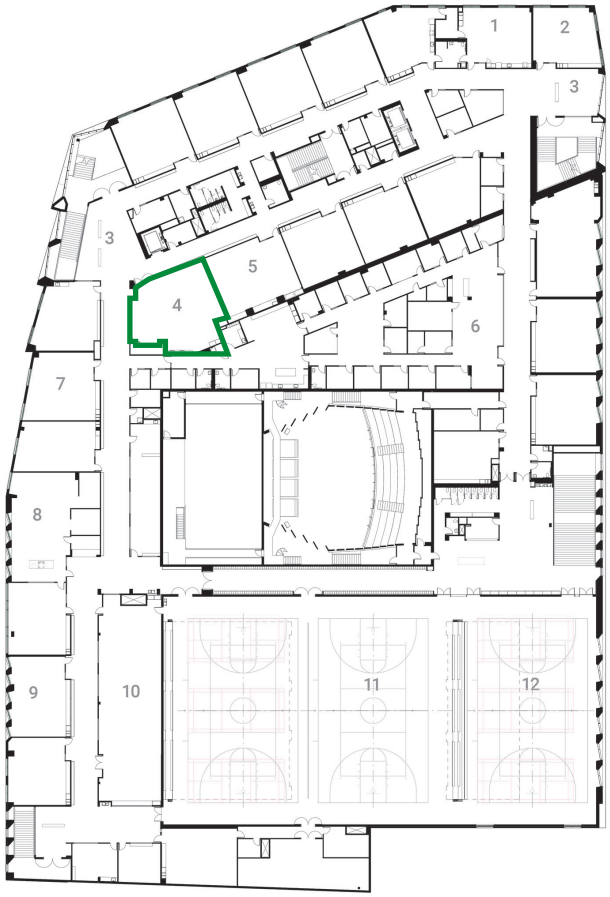
Classroom entrances are a place to celebrate the diverse academic offerings at Lincoln High School and the student work happening within. Each science and art classroom entry area includes a glass display case that can be used to showcase the functions of the space–from students' creative projects to scientific instruments. These "portals" are an opportunity to communicate the activities that happen in each classroom. Adjacent hallways offer additional opportunities for students to display work with ample tackable surfaces. This simple strategy helps break down silos and promotes learning opportunities to students as they move through the halls between classes.

Located at a crossroads on the second floor, just above the Media Center, the Robotics Classroom celebrates the work of its students with a full glass wall that includes a storage system for robotics components as well as current student projects. This wall also gives the teacher direct visual oversight of the adjacent Flexible Learning Area, where students can "run" their robots during class time.

Below Left: Robotics Classroom display wall

Below Middle: Door alcove and display window showcasing scientific instruments

Below Right: Fine Arts classroom display windows and hall exhibit



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

1 Special Education Suite
2 Learning Resource Center
3 Student Flex Area
4 Robotics Classroom
5 Computer Lab
6 Career Center
7 Business Classroom
8 Culinary Arts CTE Kitchen
9 Health Classroom
10 Weightlifting
11 Main Gym
12 Auxiliary Gym









Teen Parent Center

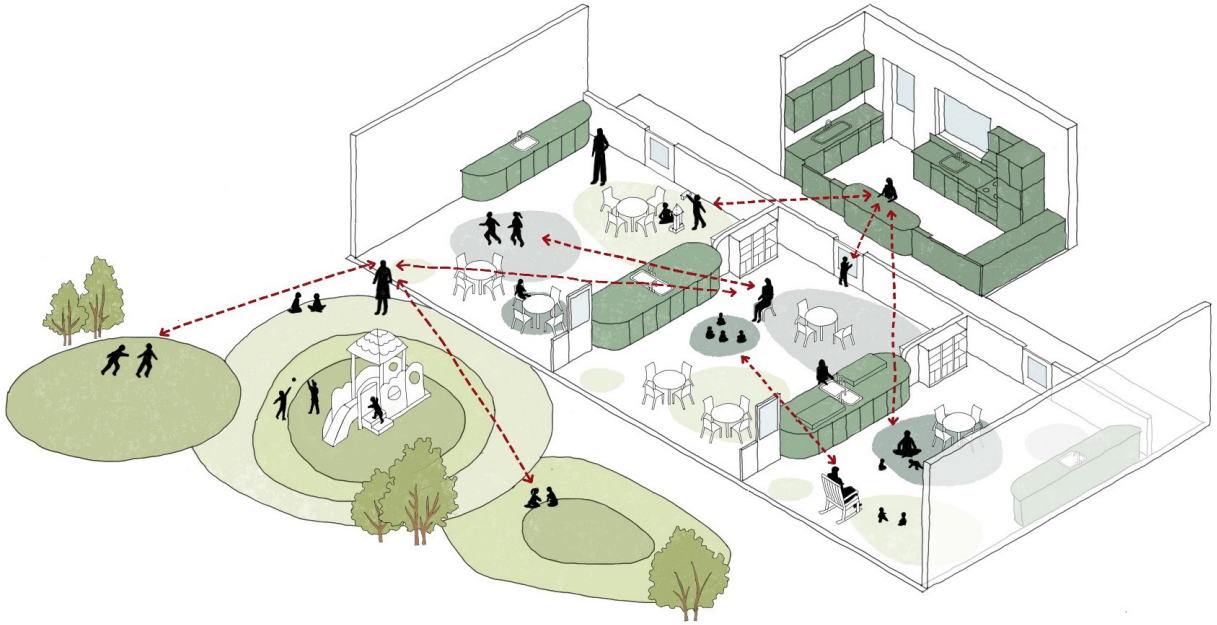
A Nest for the Cardinals' Little Chicks

Prior to the replacement of Lincoln High School, student-parents would have to transfer to another school if they wanted to be close to their children during school hours. The new high school includes a stand-alone Teen Parent Center on campus—an essential support mechanism for some of the District's most vulnerable students.

The Center offers a place of refuge alleviating the daily stressors faced by teen parents and their children. Like a bird's nest offering protection to its chicks—a nod to Lincoln's Cardinals mascot—the Center is a nurturing environment that fosters a sense of safety and calm.

Welcoming children ages six weeks to three years, the Center features an open floor plan with partial-height walls and casework to divide learning areas by age and skill level while maximizing visibility and communication across the facility for teachers and staff. Each learning area is easily reconfigurable and features soft and resilient floor textures, multicolored and in the shape of pebbles, to allow the floor surface to double as a teaching tool. A shared outdoor play space whimsically crafted around children's developmental stages inspires interaction and exploration. Careful attention to sightlines ensures staff are able to monitor their charges with ease.

The design draws upon the principles of Trauma-Informed Design, integrating awe and wonder into every element. The mass timber structure, abundant natural light through skylights, a green roof, and seamless indoor/outdoor connections encourage play and access to nature, even within the facility's urban setting.







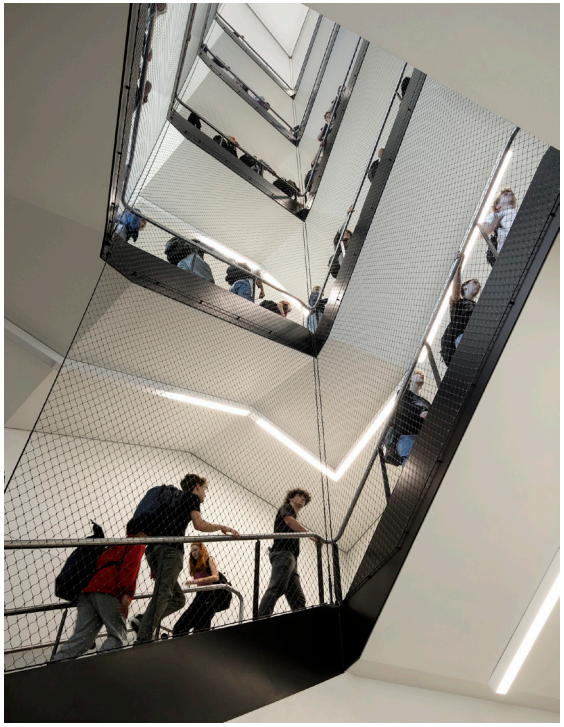
Promoting Health + Wellness

One of Lincoln High School's stated goals for its students is to "understand and practice the skills and balance necessary to develop, protect and enhance physical and mental health and to make appropriate decisions affecting their future"–a reflection of the challenges faced by many of today's teenagers.

Inclusivity. All-gender restrooms provide privacy and prevent bullying. The theater dressing rooms and make up room are also gender-inclusive. And the Teen Parent Center, addressed earlier, enables parents of young children to remain in school more easily.

Natural light. Interior spaces are organized around long views with access to daylight at all levels of the building.

Physical health. The 6-story stairs promote wellness as students use them to navigate between classes–with great daylight and access to views, these stairs celebrate movement, a key component of health and wellness.









Above: All-User restrooms are designed for privacy and supervision.

Upper Left: Health and wellness are integrated into the daily routine of moving between classes with students navigating a light-filled, six-story stair.

Upper Right: Stairways offer abundant natural light and views to Portland's urban heart.

Bottom: Student flex spaces connect with the stairs through large, place-based glass graphics (see page 20).

The Vertical School as a Response to Complex Site Constraints

The building balances the requirements of Portland Public Schools to provide safe, state-of-the-art learning spaces for students with the City's urban design requirement to activate life at street level. Three other existing constraints further complicated the proposed design: the need to keep students in the existing school on the compact site, the presence of site-splitting easement for underground utilities, and the culverted but still active Tanner Creek.

To maintain adequate site capacity for its track and field and grandstand, the new school was stacked six stories to create a "vertical school"–optimizing south-facing spaces with simple massing and compact form. To offer ground-floor access to critical support areas like the kitchen, maintenance, mechanical, and storage, the gymnasiums were moved to the second floor. This novel move relieved the ground floor from significant space pressure and created new opportunities for gymnasium daylight and views out to the site and city beyond.

The project was constructed in two phases. The first phase was to build the new high school and the surrounding access on the old field. Once this was complete, the students moved out of the old building, which was then demolished to make room for the new track and field, the Teen Parent Center, and a baseball/ softball support facility.

Due to the site being above an infilled gulch, the school is constructed on undocumented fill up to fifty feet deep. To stabilize these poor soil conditions and create a solid foundation, the building sits on a grid of rammed aggregate piers and a forest of augured piles.





Above: The finished school within the dense urban city and hills

Bottom: The existing school remaining fully operational while construction of the new school was underway on the previous track.

An Urban School that Activates its Community

The new school creates a strong urban corner at the intersection of Salmon Street and SW 18th Avenue. With a new apartment building constructed to the north, the school's positioning helped create a new entry point from Portland's residential West Hills as people travel towards the city center. This busy intersection also sits along the MAX line, Portland's light rail system. At this corner, two key building elements strive to address the City's design requirement for an active urban street frontage: a significant vertical stair, and the school's Media Center.

Lincoln's stairs offer students light-filled and generous passage as they move among the six levels of the main academic bar of the school. From an urban design perspective, they also bring activity to the street frontages as the students' movements are visible to passers-by.

Similarly, the Media Center sits at this important intersection. It not being a "regularly scheduled class" enabled its ground-floor placement along the public street, enabling the community views into this academic heart of the school–a careful balancing act that meets FERPA needs for privacy with the City's desire for an active streetscape.

The plaza to the east of the school building also juggles many urban demands. The school district and the City of Portland negotiated a public easement through this space that balances the City's desire for public access and "connectivity" through the superblock the school campus creates in the heart of downtown Portland, with the district's need to protect students' safety. The compromise is a school campus that is closed and secured during the school day, creating a large outdoor space immediately adjacent to the Commons, and which is protected by fences and gates. When school is out, and on evenings and weekends, the gates are opened to provide public access through the site.





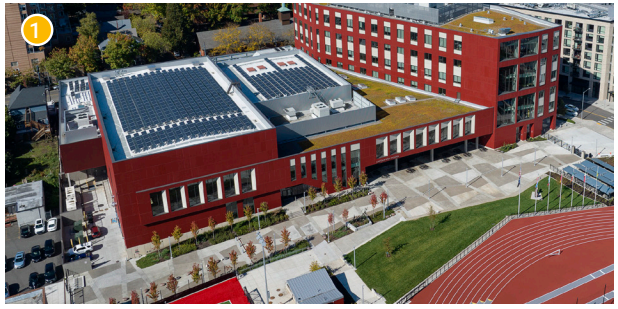
Shared Space Building a Shared Community

The cross-block connector, which also functions as a central plaza, is constructed directly above the culverted Tanner Creek and a major utility easement that significantly constrained the placement of the new school (1). More than a circulation route, the plaza creates an important shared civic space that strengthens connections between the campus and the surrounding neighborhood. Its design draws inspiration from the historic Chinese vegetable gardens that once occupied the site, expressed through paving patterns and landscape organization. The plaza also features carefully placed "pebble seats" made of polished, colored concrete, inspired by similar elements at Qatar's National Library in Doha. These features were suggested by Lincoln High School's principal and students following a curricular trip to Doha through the school's International Baccalaureate program.

Given the intense pressure on the constrained urban site to accommodate academic and student support spaces, the design team worked closely with the City of Portland to prioritize meaningful connections between the school and the public realm. In addition to the student plaza, a public open space along SW Salmon Street was developed as a small "belvedere" pocket park (2) overlooking Lincoln's track and field. This informal gathering area invites community members to share in the life and activity of the campus and provides a unique vantage point opposite the main grandstand.

At the northeast corner of the site, a grove of mature trees, including one of Portland's designated historic Black Walnut trees (3), was carefully preserved through complex site regrading and root protection measures. Together, these elements reinforce the campus as both a secure learning environment and a civic asset woven into the fabric of downtown Portland.







Experiential Graphic Design

Lincoln High School is a newly built, six-story International Baccalaureate high school that focuses on developing inspired, global thinkers—serving its mission as a neighborhood high school with an international emphasis.

Our experiential graphic design created a visual language that celebrates the power of community and place paired with global thinking through the use of varying scale, maps, and repeated graphic cues throughout the building.

Main common areas are identified through the use of large typography in nine different languages spoken by the student body. Consistently listing the translated languages in alphabetical order—from Arabic to Vietnamese—supports both familiarity and equity.

Adjacent to the stairwells on levels two through six, flex spaces are defined by large glass panes featuring a series of map graphics that showcase the school's location at varying scales. Rather than taking a common approach to displaying regional maps, each level's map showcases a story unique to Lincoln High School's history and population:

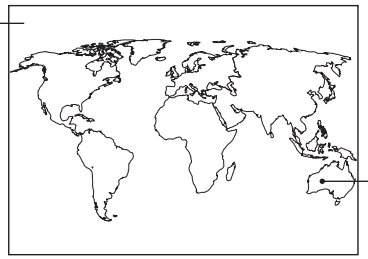
- Each map is accompanied by a plaque describing its content and source, encouraging students to think deeply about their place in the world from local, regional, and global perspectives.
- By designing wayfinding elements that are both functional and educational, Bora infused the new building with Lincoln's academic and cultural personality.

> **"The Bora team treated every space as an educational opportunity.**
>
> Peyton Chapman, Principal



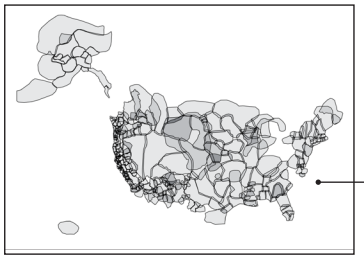






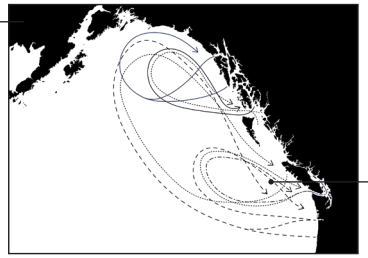
Level 6

Global origin of today's 7,000+ living languages



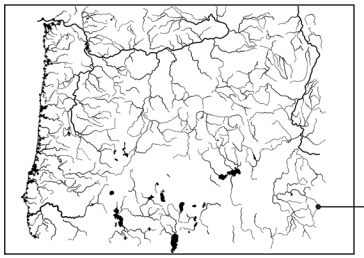
Level 5

Roots of Indigenous languages in the United States



Level 4

Pacific Northwest salmon migration



Level 3

Oregon's waterways



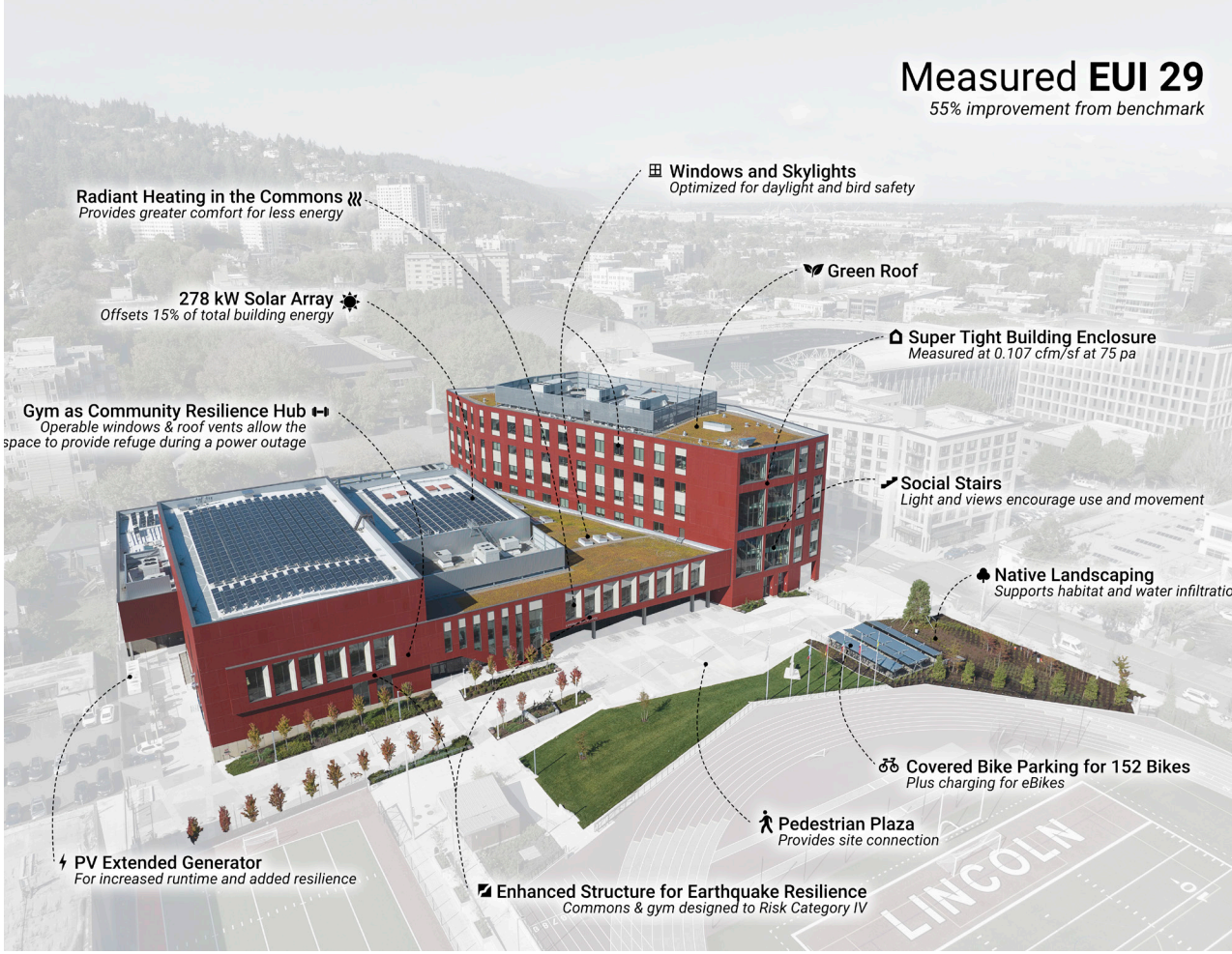
Level 2

Historic locations of Lincoln High School in Portland

Sustainability — Metrics

Lincoln High School is designed as a high-performance urban school that integrates a variety of sustainability strategies to achieve notable environmental, health, and equity goals. The project aimed for an Energy Use Intensity (EUI) below 30 kBtu/sf/year, a 60 percent reduction from typical high school buildings, and successfully tracks at an EUI of 29 kBtu/sf/year. This was achieved primarily through **low-tech, smart, and holistic design strategies rather than additional costly features**. The school's compact urban form and careful solar orientation optimize energy performance. A 278 kW solar photovoltaic array on the roof generates clean energy on site, coexisting with extensive "green roof" plantings that aid in water retention, roof longevity, and reduced cooling loads.

The building's envelope features targeted glazing percentages and mineral wool rigid insulation for thermal efficiency, combined with an extremely tight air sealing of **0.107 CFM/sf**, well below code requirements, resulting in better air quality, thermal comfort, and energy efficiency. Efficient mechanical systems include hydronic radiant heating with partial energy recovery from the school's servers and computer lab, contributing to reduced mechanical loads and energy use.



Main School



Teen Parent Center

1. Optimized Glazing
   Skylights balance light with north facing windows
2. Direct indoor/outdoor connection in all play spaces
   Provides access and visual connection to all play spaces
3. Green Roof
   For passive cooling and water absorption
4. Native Landscaping
   Supports habitat and water infiltration
5. Mass Timber Structure
   Provides warmth and carbon sequestration
6. Preserved Mature Canopy Tree
7. Material Health
   Minimal palette that prioritizes IAQ and connection to nature

Sustainability — Resilience

From a resilience perspective, the school serves as a refuge for students and staff on site during a natural disaster. As temperatures rise and extreme weather events become more frequent, resilient design is an essential component of any modern building. Studies show that the first step for community recovery is for schools to reopen, making resilience especially important for schools. With this context in mind, and the fact that Portland, Oregon, exists within a high seismic risk zone, Lincoln High School incorporated a series of design strategies to support the school community and the surrounding downtown neighborhood:

Advanced Structural Design

The gym and Commons were designed to Risk Category IV standards, a level beyond what is required by structural code. This will allow these areas of the building to continue to serve the community following "the big one," a potentially large subduction zone earthquake.

Emergency Power Generation

One of the two backup power generators is supported by the building's rooftop solar array. This connection extends the duration of the power without additional fossil fuel and allows longer operation in the event of a blackout.

Passive Ventilation and Daylight

To ensure safe operations during a prolonged blackout, the gym is equipped with operable windows and rooftop air vents to allow for adequate ventilation and light during daylight hours.

Emergency Water Storage

A large underground cistern stores water on site that can be used to supply fire sprinklers in the event that the municipal water system goes down.





Above: A community food drive in the Commons

Below: Lincoln's auxiliary gym hosts an American Red Cross blood drive.

Stewardship of Financial Resources

Weathering a global pandemic, including the related supply-chain shortages, the project was **delivered on time and under budget**. As a result, the Lincoln High School team at Portland Public Schools returned $17 million to the Bond Office for investment in other high-priority projects in the District.

Stewardship Beyond the Project

In addition to a focus on culture, health, and equity for the school and community, the General Contractor's team engaged subcontractor businesses certified with the state's Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) to support diverse design and construction teams. By the end of the project, the project achieved 18% utilization by Certified Businesses.

Secondly, while most projects create a construction mockup of the exterior wall systems at the start of construction, the team deliberately designed and built the exterior mock-up so that it could be donated as a tiny house after project completion. The form was conceived to create a comfortable interior space with an operable window and secure entry door, while the structure was carefully coordinated to facilitate the rigors of transportation and delivery. After the mock-up had served the project by verifying the construction of the building skin, it was moved by flatbed truck at dawn, avoiding traffic, to its next life at Portland's Dignity Village.





Above: Opening day for the new Lincoln High School.

Left: The school's exterior mockup, eventually repurposed to support those experiencing houselessness.

Achieving District & Community Goals

The following **Vision Statement** for the new Lincoln High School was written with consensus from a broad range of stakeholders, including the district and community:

School: The redeveloped Lincoln campus will be an innovative hub of lifelong learning; it will help students reach their goals in a safe, inclusive and inspiring environment.

Results: The design is shaped by its attention to inclusivity, bringing together Lincoln's diverse communities in a new, light-filled vertical school that promotes health, wellness, and belonging.

Community: The campus will be the center of an active, healthy urban community and will support educationally-related public and private partnerships.

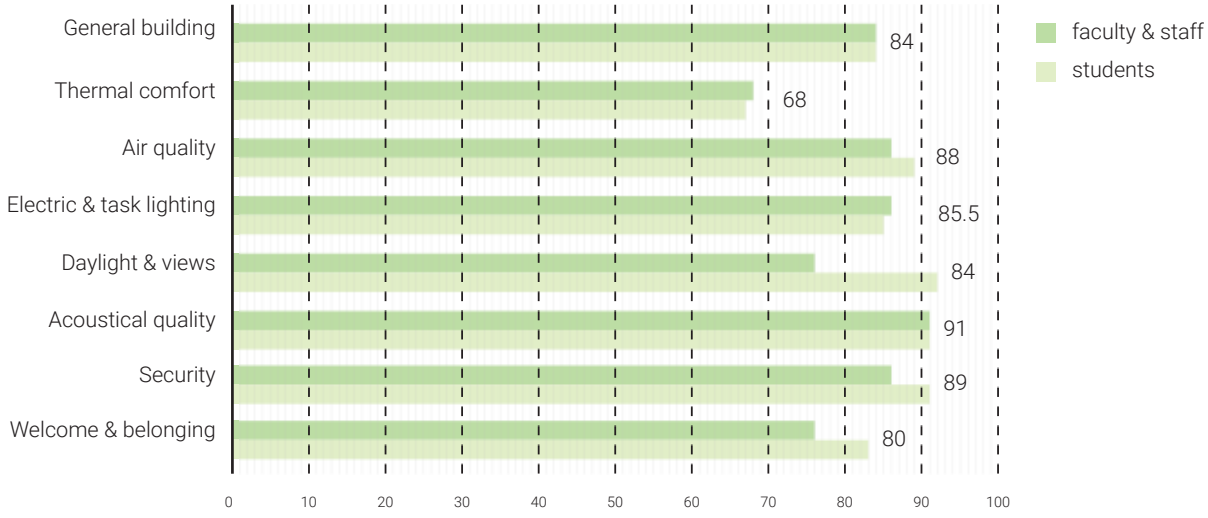
Results: Portlanders are welcomed into the site when school is out, and the site is a bustling community hub on weekends and evenings. The CTE programs foster connections to the business community, and the new building and its site are available for community use. The project has reconnected parts of Goose Hollow that had previously been divided by the old campus configuration. The building's transparency and active street presence make the school more integrated with downtown Portland rather than isolated from it.

Catalyst: The project will be an example of schools promoting positive change in our neighborhood, city, state and region.

Results: The school has been featured in professional and public tours, including LearningSCAPES conference programming, where educators and designers toured the campus to study its innovative educational spaces, vertical circulation system, and community-oriented design. These events emphasized how the building reconnects the surrounding neighborhood and creates active, public-facing spaces through plazas, transparent stair towers, and shared amenities.



Post-Occupancy Survey





> **It makes you want to be here. It makes you want to learn and study more.**
>
> Lincoln High School Senior

> **It doesn't feel cramped; the rooms feel purposeful and aligned with the original intention of the spaces.**
>
> Lincoln High School Teacher

> **The design foregrounds the deep history of Lincoln High School, and the city as the foundation, for the next 100+ years of student Cardinals to embrace and to learn from.**
>
> Jason Trombley, Chair of Lincoln's Design Advisory Committee